

THE TRULY BLESSED MAN

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly; nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord: and in His Law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.”
Psalm 1:1-3.***

IT is an old saying and possibly a true one, that every man is seeking after happiness. If it is so, then every man should read this Psalm, for this directs us where happiness is to be found in its highest degree and purest form! “Blessed,” says David, “is such-and-such a man,” and the word which he uses is, in the original, exceedingly expressive. It implies a sort of plurality of blessedness—“Blessednesses are to the man” and it is scarcely known whether the word is an adjective or a noun, as if the blessedness qualified the whole of life and was, in itself, better even than life itself! The very highest degree of happiness is blessedness, “these blessednesses,” as Ainsworth says, “heaped up, one upon the other.” Surely this is the very highest to which the human heart can aspire! Let us then, this evening, come with attentive hearts to consider in the Light of Revelation, the character of the blessed man. We will begin by considering—

I. WHO THE “BLESSED MAN” IS.

The description given of him is simply this, that *he is a man*. There are moral qualities given, but the only thing said of him, in the first place, is that he is a man. Here is something very suggestive, for he is a person *subject to the common sorrows of humanity*. If we hear of a person greatly blessed by the sense of Christ's Presence and so enabled to walk in holiness and much usefulness, we cherish the delusion that he must have been better than the ordinary run of men, certainly not such an one as ourselves! Ah, but how great is the mistake! God fashions all hearts alike and if there are distinctions, *they are of Divine Grace*, not of being better

by nature! The most blessed man is still a man. He must suffer pain, or pine in sickness, endure losses and crosses—and yet in it all be a blessed man!

Being a man, he is also *subject to infirmities*—perhaps of a quick temper, or of a high and haughty spirit. He may be tempted to sloth or a besetting sin of another kind. Still being a man he must have some infirmity and yet, none the less is he blessed. Do not dream that the best of men are yet without fault! They will confess to you that they have—

**“To wrestle hard as we do still
With sins and doubts and fears.”**

More than this, it appears that *he has to endure the same temptations that we have*. “The way of sinners” often crosses his path. The “seat of the scornful” is sometimes next door to his own—or even under the same roof. He is not blind—he is obliged to see the dust which struts through the street. He is not deaf—he is forced to hear the lascivious song as it floats on the midnight air. He is subject to like passions and tempted in all points as we are, and yet he is blessed! Only a man, but much more than he would have been had not God blessed him!

Observe, too, he does not hold any eminent position. It is not, “Blessed is the king, blessed is the scholar, blessed is the rich,” but, “Blessed is the man.” This blessedness is as attainable by the poor, the forgotten and the obscure, as by those whose names figure in history and are trumpeted by fame! It is not to the hermit who lives alone, but to the workman toiling among his fellows. Not to the man who wears a surplice and assumes the exclusive title of, “priest”—but it comes to any man, or woman in fustian, or corduroy—who loves God and seeks to obey Him. His position has nothing to do with it. His character has everything to do with it! He is a man and nothing but a man, though Divine Grace makes him much more.

The Psalm reveals to us, too, that in order to secure his blessedness, *he is a man needing help*. He is likened to a tree. It must drink of the rivers of water and so this man must live upon Divine Grace. “His way” is said to be “known to the Lord,” implying that God’s approval of his way brings him strength. The best of men cannot live upon themselves. Our hearts are like the fire in the Interpreter’s house which the enemy tried to quench, but blazed the more because a man stood behind the wall and fed the flame from a vessel of oil in his hands. His is a secret and mysterious power—the work of the Holy Spirit—who “works in us to will and do of God’s good pleasure.” In ourselves we are as weak as we can be, and left to ourselves would soon fall into some sin.

There is in the Psalm, however, one word which truly describes this man, and that is that *he is a righteous man!* Observe the last verse—"The Lord knows the way of the righteous." The balance of this man's nature has been readjusted by the Divine Scale-Maker. He was once all out of gear—put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—but now his judgment is rectified and in spirit and character he is a righteous man. Once he was naked and defiled, but he has been washed in the fountain filled with blood and clothed with the Righteousness of Christ, a garment glittering with gold and silver threads—and all by faith!

This is the description of the "blessed man," but still I beg you to remember he is only a man. Some such were born in the lowliest paths of life, educated in the most slender fashion, yet they have been among the finest witnesses and most heroic martyrs for their Lord. The brightest spirits that now wave the palm branch and strike the golden lyres most rapturously, were but sons and daughters of Adam, like ourselves. Ezekiel, privileged to see more visions, perhaps, than any other Prophet, is constantly called "son of man," as if God would keep him humble, reminding him of the hole of the pit from where he was dug. However blessed you may get, my Brothers and Sisters, it is still only, "Blessed is the man." So I have tried to put the ladder down to you who are beginners in the heavenly life, to show you that there is not a long step to take at first. You are a man, and the text comes to you with, "Blessed is the man!" May it be true of all of us! Now, we get following on this—

II. WHAT THE "BLESSED MAN" AVOIDS.

There is, I believe, a book published which is entitled, *What to Eat, Drink and Avoid*. I should imagine the third section to be by far the largest portion, for there are a thousand things to be avoided. Now in this Psalm it appears that the Divinely blessed man avoids *the common way of ungodly persons*. The ungodly are not necessarily drunks or swearers. These are ungodly, of course, but not all ungodly persons are like they. The ungodly are just your go-easy sort of people. They may go to Church or Chapel, or go nowhere. They are often very respectable, good neighbors, kind to the poor. They may hold public office and enter Parliament. There is no place they may not fill, for it is not considered an offense among men to be "ungodly." The tragic folly and sin of these people is that they have neglected the chief thing to be remembered, namely, that there is a God, that they are His creatures and, being His creatures, ought to live to Him. But they give God no part of their lives and He is in none of their thoughts. They will think of their neighbors, remember their friends and acquaintances. The duties of the second table of the Law of

God they observe in a measure, but the first table is despised as though it had never been written!

The blessed man, however, avoids this. He sees that God, who fills all things, ought to fill His thoughts and that the great end of his being should be “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” It is chiefly here that the godly man differs from others. He does not consider first how the world regards a thing but how God looks at it. If they ask, “Is it fashionable?” he replies, “the fashion of this world passes away.” “But will you gain by it?” “Ah,” he says, “that is not the measuring line I carry. I am content to lose, so that I can keep my word and serve God.” The first thought of the truly blessed man is how he can best glorify the name of Christ and in so doing he avoids “the counsel of the ungodly.”

In the next place he avoids “*the way of sinners*.” Sinners live for pleasures. The Christian has his, but they would never please the worldling, nor would the worldling’s gratify his new tastes. The sinner can do a thousand things which the saint cannot do and would not if he could—and the Christian can do a thousand things of which the sinner knows nothing. Let a thing be labeled, “sin,” in God’s Book, and though men may laugh at it, call it a mere joke, a piece of fun, a peccadillo, the godly man accepts God’s labeling of it and leaves the “way of sinners” let it be ever so smoothly turfed, and grassed ever so attractively.

The true Christian shuns “*the seat of the scornful*.” It makes his blood boil when he hears God’s name profaned. His heart is full of horror because of the wicked who obey not God’s Law. Though he is told to “prove all things,” he knows that a very slight test is enough for some things and he puts them quickly aside to hold fast only that which is good. Some professors like to sit near the seat of the scornful, “for argument’s sake,” they say. ‘Twas thus that Mother Eve ruined the whole world, by listening to the serpent’s suggestions—and much mischief has been done in a similar way since then to Christian faith and simplicity! Ah, the further I can get from the scorner’s seat, the better, and there let him sit alone! Away! Away! Away, for behold the day comes when like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the profane shall go down alive into the Pit! Happy is the man who shall escape that horror by keeping far, far away. These are some of the things the truly “blessed man” avoids—and the more he avoids them, the more blessed he is!

Once more, he avoids *the very persons of sinners* except as far as he has to deal with them in civil matters and the common courtesies and duties of life. They are not his bosom friends—he would never dream of being unequally yoked with them in marriage! He shuns their company all he can, for his congenial associates are elsewhere. Their ways, exam-

ple, words, he avoids. As he would keep from plague-infected places and people, so he strives to keep aloof from men who blaspheme, lest their profanity should taint and defile him. “Father,” said a young fellow, “I can go into such-and-such company and not be hurt.” The father stooped down to the fireplace and picked up a piece of coal. “There,” said he to his son “take that in your hands.” The son shrank from the black cinder. “Why,” said the father, “it will not burn you!” “No! but it will blacken me,” he replied. Ah, bad company can blacken even where it does not burn, so stay away from it! You can never retain this blessedness unless, like the man described here, you walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, you stand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. And now for the third Truth of God here insisted on—

III. WHEREIN THE “BLESSED MAN” DELIGHTS.

“His delight is in the Law of the Lord.” Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing. As we remarked the other night when our text was, “Then the devil left Him and, behold, angels come and ministered unto Him”—man cannot be alone, for if evil departs, [See Sermon #2236, Volume 37—PRODIGAL LOVE FOR THE PRODIGAL SON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] good will come—but if good is driven away, evil will come. If you do not fill the measure with wheat, the arch-enemy will fill it with chaff. If the river flows not with sparkling sweet water, it will soon reek with pestilent discharge! Take care to have something worthy to delight in! I do not know how those people go through the world who never have any sort of pure excitement, but always go moping about from the first of January to the last of December. Life must be a sorry drag to them. The sparkling eyes and the smiling face are the things God meant men to have, and they do not realize life’s full beauty unless at times they possess them. Why, the Christian, above all men, should have what the world calls his, “holidays and bonfire nights”—his days of rejoicing, times of holy laughter, seasons of overflowing delight. No! I think he should strive to always have them, for we are told, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” If we take our religion as men do medicine, it is of little good to us. Some folks go to the House of God as you might suppose criminals would go to be the whipping-post. But I like to see people come up to the House of God with cheerful willingness, like children going home, or like those who are bound for the place—

***“Where my best friends and kindred dwell,
Where God my Savior reigns!”***

The true Christian has his holy delights and chief among them is his reveling in the Law of the Lord, the Word of God. Of course, David had not a fourth of what we possess—it was a very little Bible, then—but it has gone on increasing like a majestic river, until it is the wondrous volume we have! We, therefore, should take ten times more delight in it than the Psalmist did. Why do Christians delight in it? Because it is God's Law! *Anything* belonging to God should delight the Believer! A child far from home is intensely pleased with anything that his father gave him. A letter from home is a welcome and joyous thing. Here is a letter from home telling us of our Father's Grace and permitting us to read the precious secrets of His heart of love for us. We delight in it *because it comes with Divine Authority to us* and so brings confidence and joy to our hearts!

The other day I was reading a book in which six reasons were given why the Christian delights in God's Law. First, *because of its antiquity*. Many people delight in old coins. Some will go down to the Thames and buy pieces of old iron that are rusty, under the idea that they are antiques—which they may or may not be. Ah, there is nothing so old as this Book! The first writings of Hesiod fall short at least 500 years of the writings of Moses, so that that part of the blessed volume has Divine Antiquity about it, and is radiant with Divine Inspiration. Let us always delight in it!

We delight in it *because of the justice of it*. There is a law revealed in it, if perfectly carried out, no man would hurt his neighbor, but love him as he loves himself! No rank or class would press heavily upon another and each would remember, consider, try to bless the other. It is made as no human law can be made, and every person yielding to it feels it in his conscience to be just.

We prize the Book, too, *because of its lofty wisdom*. There is more wisdom for the life here than anywhere else. We do not come here for astronomy, or geology, but we come here for the highest of all wisdom—the science of God—for, though Pope says—

“The proper study of mankind is man,”

we beg his pardon! A yet more proper study of mankind is God and here, in this Book of God, we learn of His love to us in the Person of Christ Jesus and grasp the science—heavenliest wisdom—of a crucified Redeemer!

We delight in the Book, also, *because it is true*. Fiction may be read or not, as men's tastes may direct, but it is of infinite value to have a book in which every word stands fast, when like a dream, Heaven and earth shall have melted away.

Again, we delight in it because *it is pleasant*. There are sweetnesses in it better than the honey droppings from the honeycomb. When we read it, it makes the godly heart to beat at a high and glorious rate and sometimes takes him on the wings of eagles bearing him to a loftier Pisgah than Moses ever stood upon, and so helping him to see the land on the further side of Jordan—his eternal rest and heritage!

Lastly, the Christian delights in “the Law of the Lord,” *because it is profitable*. This book enriches with the best of wealth and stored-up treasures for all eternity! Now gathering up all these reasons I want to earnestly ask each one of us here, “Do you delight in this Book?” Not, do you read it—but do you read it with delight? To go to it dragged there by duty, is miserably to miss its best messages and is no evidence of true godliness. To put a sentence of it under the tongue as a sweet morsel, to grow healthy upon it when you are sick, rich upon it when poor—this is one of the truest tests of being a “blessed man”—but if you do not enjoy this, God help you to begin at the foundation! Repent of sin, seek the Savior, or otherwise where God is you can never go!

But I must hasten on to ask—

IV. WHAT OCCUPIES THE “BLESSED MAN’S” TIME?

“*In His Law he does meditate day and night.*” By day he gets little intervals of time to read it, so he steals from his nightly rest, moments in which to meditate upon it. Reading reaps the wheat, meditation threshes it, grinds it and makes it into bread. Reading is like the ox feeding—meditation is it digesting when chewing the cud. It is not only reading that does us good, but the soul inwardly feeding on it and digesting it. A preacher once told me that he had read the Bible through 20 times on his knees and had never found the Doctrine of Election there. Very likely not. It is a most uncomfortable position in which to read. If he had sat in an easy chair, he would have been better able to understand it. To read on one’s knees is like a Popish penance! Besides, he read in the wrong way—if instead of 20 times galloping through, he had read once and pondered continually—he probably would have seen clearer than he evidently did.

It is said of some horses that they “bolt their oats.” This good brother was “bolting” Holy Scripture, and so getting little nutriment out of it! The inward meditation is the thing that makes the soul rich towards God. This is the godly man’s occupation. Put the spice into the mortar by reading, beat it with the pestle of meditation—so shall the sweet perfume be exhaled.

May I ask whether there are not some here who do not meditate on God’s Word at all? If so, then this solemn thought will seize us—if you

have not the blessedness of God's Word, you must inherit its curse! Let us see to it and now, beginning at the Cross of Jesus Christ, study the mystery of His wounds for our sin, and then go on afterward to meditate in His Law day and night.

This brings us now to the very center of the Psalm's teaching.

V. WHEREIN IS THIS MAN SO DIVINELY "BLESSED"?

Very briefly on each point. He is blessed first of all, *for life*. "He shall be like a tree." Not a dry, dead, sapless pole. His life is such that unregenerate men are strangers to it. He has been begotten again unto a living hope. The sap of God's Grace is in him—he is united to Christ, his Root—and because He lives and lives in him, he lives also. He has *stability*. The tree planted. Well-rooted in the ground. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away, but the Christian's life is stable. "Solid joys and lasting pleasures" are his portion. He has, too, the *gladness of growth*. The tree remains not the sapling, but grows upward, downward, abroad, spreading its branches. So the godly man is always learning more of his Heavenly Father and endeavoring to be more conformed to the image of his Lord. He has the blessing, too, of *favored position*. Planted by God, Himself—not self-sown or the foundling of the wind. If he is a servant, he believes God has put him where he should be. Poor or rich, he learns to be content for he is a tree Divinely planted. He is *well sustained*. Whatever is really good for him, God has pledged Himself to give. Not a tree in the desert, but placed where the water comes rippling to his roots. He hears his Master say, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

He has yet again, *beauty in God's sight*. Beauty of an unfading kind—"his leaf, also, shall not wither." When personal beauty decays by reason of old age, and beauty of wit and learning are assailed by approaching death, still he shall be fair, in the likeness of his Master, as a young olive tree, and grow as a cedar in the court of his God! And to crown all, he has *constant prosperity*. "Whatever he does shall prosper." He may not grow rich, but he still prospers. His ships may be broken at El-Geber, but he can thank God even for that, for their breaking may help him to heavenly Grace through his very tribulations—so he is content to lose his possessions if his soul is made wealthy in faith and love and sweet submission to God's will. This metaphor of the flourishing tree is a very beautiful one. See it there, always green, loaded with fruit, standing where it can never know drought. If God has taught us to delight in His Law, that is our true picture and portrait. Is it ours?

But to close, here we are made to ask—

VI. WHO IS THIS BLESSED MAN'S GUARDIAN? There must be somebody who takes care of him, or he could not be so blessed as he is. Ah, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous." If you are resting in Christ for salvation, the Lord knows your way. The minister knows nothing of your trials—you half wish you might dare tell him so that he might guide and comfort. But if he knows not, the Lord knows all your way. Are you sorely depressed? Do waves of grief roll over your soul? Well, pour out your heart to God, for He knows, and knows how to help! If the Lord did not look after us in our best days, we would perish by the sunstroke of too much prosperity! And if He did not watch us in our worst days, we should be frost-killed by the cruel Arctic winds of adversity!

But says one, "How may I begin this way?" "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and this is the fear of the Lord—to trust your soul in the hands of God's appointed Savior and know you are safe! Say from your very heart—

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

If your very soul sings that, you are on the road to true blessedness and all that is in this Psalm shall be yours in life, in death and throughout eternity! May God bless you thus, for Jesus' sake. Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 32.

"A Psalm of David, Maschil," that is to say, an instructive Psalm. I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to Divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience—either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Twice he says "blessed." He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled. And now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die," he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed not the man who has never sinned, blessed is he who having sinned, is forgiven—not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew it sounds very much alike, the sacred *kopher*, the cover which covers sin so that it is hidden even from the eyes of God, Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that

Divine covering! “Blessed,” says he, “is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.” All along after David’s sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile! You know the dodges that he had to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God, Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous thing to do—he was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months until he received the Divine rebuke, but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy and he was trying this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it! So he sought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God—giving up his crooked ways and his ideas of excusing himself. And when he had done that—when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing! “Blessed, blessed!” If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up! I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the free Grace of God. The two things go together, guilt and guile—the two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed! Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin and yet was not right with God.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* A wanton glance, the sin with Bathsheba—where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones got old as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die!

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.* God was pressing him heavily with His hand, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, “My sin is always before me.” Oh, the misery of sinning to a child of God! Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin—the worldling may, but the Believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison!

4. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer. He tried to make a Psalm but it was a dried-up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God! His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer in David’s country was a very droughty thing, indeed! Every human thing despaired. The grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up and you will be like a parched, withered thing. “Selah.” It was time to have a pause in the music, he was on so base a key, he had

need now to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution! “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord”—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin yourself and to tell the Lord that you see it—and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, “I said I will confess and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” God took away the sin! Yes, the very pith and marrow of it—“the iniquity of my sin”—taking the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too. “You forgave the iniquity of my sin”—it has all gone, wholly gone! By one stroke of God’s Divine Grace, the sinner was pardoned! “Selah”—again.

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* For this (because of this), and for this blessing, “shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found.” The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.” The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David’s country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God’s people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come near unto them. Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.”

7. *You are my hiding place.* Precious words! “You are my hiding place.” Not, “You are a hiding place,” but “You are *my* hiding place.” A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, “Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there,” but he runs to it! Beloved, run to your hiding place this evening! Each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ, run to Him now, and say—

7. *You shall preserve me from trouble, You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* David has come up to us out of the roaring to the singing! All daylong he roars, and now all daylong he sings! He sees songs everywhere! He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad.

Well may he put another “Selah,” for he has smitten the strings very joyfully and they again need tuning!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* Here the Speaker is changed. “I will instruct you.” “I have forgiven you.” “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.” “I have prayed you back to the way, now I will teach you in the way you shall go.” “I will guide you with My eyes”—your own might lead you astray. “I will guide you with My eyes.” I will be on the path. I will fix My eyes upon you. “I will guide you with My eyes”

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* “Be you not as the horse,” not only David, but all of you! If God will guide you, be guided. If He will teach you, be teachable. If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery! He shall have a bodyguard of mercy, God will be gracious to him, tender to him and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous.” Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. “Be glad in the Lord.” You may always be glad in Him! Here is an unchanging source of joy. “Rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy.” Here, the man that was silent has now gone as far as shouting. Is it not enough to make him so? Twice he was blessed in the first and second verses—and now, he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy! Why, he must be glad! “Shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.” God bless you in the reading of His Word.

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

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

THE CHAFF DRIVEN AWAY

NO. 280

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“The ungodly are not so: but are like the
chaff which the wind drives away.”
Psalm 1:4.*

AND who are the ungodly? Are they open and willful sinners—men who take God’s name in vain and curse and blaspheme—men who break the laws of man, the laws of the State—men who are scarcely to be trusted with liberty? Certainly these are included, but these are not mainly intended. While such men come under the category of “sinners” and “scorners,” there is another class expressly aimed at by the term “ungodly.”

And who are the ungodly? Are they the men who deny God’s existence, who neglect the outward forms of religion, who scoff at everything that is sacred and make a ribald jest of things at which angels tremble? These are included, most certainly, but neither are these the men specially aimed at. They are the scornful, the pestilent—these are the men whose iniquities have gone beforehand to judgment against them and whose sins are clamoring before the throne for justice. Another class of men is intended under the term “ungodly.”

And who are they? Surely, my Brethren, the answer may well strike you with awe. I do trust there are not many in this hall who may be called scorners. And, perhaps, not very many who would come under the denomination of open profligates and rebels. But how large a proportion of all those who attend our places of worship may justly be ranked under the character of the ungodly! What does this mean, exactly? Let me just show its differences, once again, and then more precisely define it.

We sometimes call men irreligious. And, surely, to be irreligious is bad enough. But to be religious is not good enough. A man may be religious, but yet he may not be godly. There are many who are religious. As touching the law outwardly they are blameless—Hebrews of the Hebrews, Pharisees of the straightest sect. They neglect no rubric, they break no law of their Church, they are exceedingly precise in their religion. Yet, notwithstanding this, they may rank under the class of the ungodly. For to be religious is one thing and to be godly is quite another.

To be godly, then—to come at once to the mark—to be godly is to have a constant eye to God, to recognize Him in all things, to trust Him, to love Him, to serve Him. And the ungodly man is one who does not have an eye to God in his daily business, who lives in this world as if there were no God. While he attends to all the outward ceremonies of religion, he never goes to their core, never enters into their secret heart and their deep mys-

teries. He sees the sacraments, but he sees not God therein. He hears the preaching, he comes up to the house of prayer—into the midst of the great congregation—he bows his head, but there is no present Deity to him, there is no manifest God. There is no hearing of His voice, there is no bowing before His Throne.

Doubtless, there are a large number here who must confess that they are not trusting in the blood of Christ. They are not influenced by the Holy Spirit, they do not love God. They cannot say that the bent and tenor of their fires is towards Him. Why, you have been the last six days about your business, occupying all your time—and quite right is it to be diligent in business—but how many of you have forgotten God all the while? You have been trading for yourselves, not for God. The righteous man does everything in the name of God—at least this is his constant desire. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he desires to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. But you have not recognized God in your shop. You have not acknowledged Him in your dealings with your fellow men. You have acted towards them as if there had been no God whatever.

And, perhaps, even this day you must confess that your heart does not love the Lord. You have never gone into His company. You do not seek retirement. You do not relish private prayer. Now God's children cannot be happy without sometimes talking to their Father. The sons of God must have frequent interviews with Jehovah. They love to cling to Him. They feel that He is their life, their love, their all. Their daily cry is, "Lord, draw me to Yourself; come to me, or draw me up to You." They pant to know more of God. They long to reflect more of His image, they seek to keep His Law. And it is their desire that they may be saturated with His Spirit. But such are not your desires. You have no such longings as these. It is true you are not addicted to strong drink, you do not swear—you are no thief, you are no harlot—in all *these* things you are blameless.

But yet you are ungodly—without God in the world. He is not your Friend, He is not your helper. You do not cleave to Him with purpose of heart. You are not His child. You have not "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." You could do as well without a God as with one. In fact you feel that the thought of God, if you think of it solemnly, strikes you with terror and excites in your breasts no emotions of delight. You are ungodly. Well then, mark—whatever I have to say this morning belongs to you. Don't be looking round you and saying, I wonder how this will suit my neighbor? Do not, I beseech you, be thinking of some thriftless loon who has spent his estate in extravagance and debauchery, but be thinking of *yourself*.

If you are not born again, if you are not a partaker of the Spirit, if you are not reconciled to God, if your sins are not forgiven, if you are not this day a living member of the living Church of Christ, all the curses that are written in this Book belong to you—and that part of them in particular which it will be my solemn business to thunder out this morning. I pray God that this part may be applied to your soul, that you may be made to

tremble before the Most High and seek Him who will certainly be found of you, if you seek Him with all your hearts.

You will readily perceive that my text may be divided into three parts. You have, first, a fearful negative—"The ungodly are not so." You have in the next place a terrible comparison—"they are like the chaff." Then you have, thirdly, an awful prophesy—"They are like the chaff which the wind drives away."

I. First, then, you have here A FEARFUL NEGATIVE. The vulgate Latin version, the Arabic and Septuagint, read this first sentence thus—"Not so the ungodly, not so." For according to their version there is a double negative here—"Not so the ungodly, not so." Now in order to understand what is meant by this negative you must read the third verse. The righteous man is said to be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither. And whatsoever he does shall prosper"—"Not so the ungodly, not so."

To explore the negative, we must take each clause of this sentence. The ungodly are not like a tree planted. If they may be compared to a tree at all, they are as trees "twice dead plucked up by the roots." Or if they are to be compared to anything that has life, then are they like the tree in the desert which is planted there by a chance hand, which has nothing to nourish it. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Christian man that he is like "a tree planted." That is to say, there is a special Providence exercised in his position and in his culture. You all know the difference between a tree that is planted and a tree that is self-sown.

The tree that is planted in the garden is visited by the husbandman. He digs about it. He fertilizes it. He trims it, prunes it and looks for its fruit. It is an object of property and of special care. The wild tree in the forest—the tree which is self-sown upon the plain—no one owns, no one watches over it. No heart will sigh if the lightning flash shall shiver it. No tear will be wept if the blast should light upon it and all its leaves should wither. It is no man's property. It shelters no man's roof. No man cares for it. Let it die, why does it stand there to suck nourishment from the soil and yield no fruit?

The ungodly are, it is true, the subjects of a universal Providence, even as everything is ordered of God. But the righteous have a special Providence over them. They are trees planted. Everything which takes place works together for their good. The Lord their God is their Guardian. He watches the earth that it should bring forth for them its fruit. The precious things of the heavens, the dew and the deep that couches beneath and the precious fruits brought forth by the sun and the precious things put forth by the moon—these are their heritage.

He watches everything round about them. If pestilence stalk through the land, He permits not one of its shafts to hit, unless He sees it is for good. If war arises, behold, He stretches His protection over His children. And if famine comes, they shall be fed and in the days of scarcity they shall be satisfied. Is it not a glorious thing for the Christian to know that the very hairs of his head are all numbered, that the angels of God keep

watch and ward over him? The Lord is his Shepherd, and therefore he shall not want. I know this is a doctrine that often comforts me. Let what will, happen, if I can but fall back upon the thought that there is a Providence in everything, what do I need? A Providence in the great and in the little there assuredly is to every child of God.

It may be said of every tree of the Lord's right hand planting—"I the Lord do keep it and will water it every moment. Lest any hurt, it I will watch it night and day." Upon the righteous there are not only ten eyes, but there are all the eyes of the Omniscient ever fixed both by night and day. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. They are like the planted tree. Not so you that are ungodly, not so you. There is no special Providence for you. To whom will you carry your troubles? Where is your shelter in the day of wrath? Where is your shield in the hour of battle? Who shall be your sun when darkness shall gather about you? Who shall comfort you when your troubles shall encompass round you? You have no eternal arm to lean upon. You have no compassionate heart to beat for you. You have no loving eye to watch you. You are left alone! Alone! Alone! Like the heath in the desert, or like the forest tree which no man regards, until the time comes when the sharpened axe shall be lifted up and the tree must fall. "Not so," then, "the ungodly, not so." It is a fearful negative—the ungodly man is not the object of the special Providence of God.

But we must proceed. The righteous man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Now a tree that is planted by the rivers of water sends out its roots and they soon draw sufficient nourishment. The tree that is planted far away upon the arid desert has its times of drought. It depends upon the casual thunder-cloud that sweeps over it and distils the scanty drops of rain. But this tree planted by rivers of water has a perennial supply. It knows no drought, no time of scarcity. Its roots have but to suck up the nourishment which pours itself lavishly there.

"Not so the ungodly, not so." They have no such rivers from which to suck their joy, their comfort and their life. As for the Believer, come what may, he can—even if earth shall fail him—look to Heaven. If man forsakes him, then he looks to the Divine Man, Christ Jesus. If the world should shake, his inheritance is on high. If everything should pass away, he has a portion that can never be dissolved. He is planted not by brooks that may be dried up—far less in a desert, which only has a scanty share—but by the rivers of water. Oh, my beloved Brethren, you and I know something about what this means. We know what it is to suck up the promises, to drink of the rivers of Christ's fullness.

We know what it is to partake and satisfy ourselves with marrow and fatness. Well may we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, for our storehouse is inexhaustible, our riches can never be spent. We have wealth that cannot be counted—a treasury that never can be drained. This is our glory, that we have a something to rely upon which can never fail us. We are trees planted by the rivers of water.

Ah, but not so you that are ungodly, not so. Your days of drought shall come. You may rejoice now, but what will you do upon the bed of sick-

ness, when fever shall make you toss from side-to-side, when head and heart shall be racked with anguish, when death shall stare upon you and shall glaze your eyes? What will you do when you come into the swellings of Jordan? You have joys today, but where will be your joys then? You have wells now, but what will you do when these are all stopped up, when these shall all fail, when your skin bottles are dried when your broken cisterns have emptied themselves of their last drop—what will you do then, you ungodly? Surely, this negative is full of awful threats to you.

You may have a little mirth and merriment now, you may enjoy a little excitement at present, but what will you do when the hot wind comes upon you—the wind of tribulation? And above all, what will you do when the chilling blast of death shall freeze your blood? Ah, where, oh where will you then look? You will look no longer to friends, nor to the comforts of home. You cannot find in the hour of death, consolation on the bosom of the most loving wife. You will be quite unable then to find peace in all your riches or your treasures. As for your past life, however good it may seem, if you are ungodly, you will find no comfort in the retrospect. And as for the future, you will find no comfort in the prospect, for there will be for you nothing but “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” Oh, my ungodly Friends, I beseech you, think upon this matter—for if there were nothing worse—the first sentence of my text sounds like the trumpets of doom and has in it bitterness like the vials of the Revelation.

Again we must go forward. It is said of the righteous man, that he, “brings forth his fruit in his season.” “Not so the ungodly, not so”—they bring forth no fruit. Or if there is here and there a shriveled grape upon the vine, it is brought forth in the wrong season when the genial heat of the sun cannot ripen it and therefore it is sear and worthless. Many people imagine that if they do not commit positive sins they are all right. Now let me give you a little sermon in the midst of my sermon. Here is the text—“Curse you Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof. Because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” First, what has Meroz done? Nothing. Secondly, is Meroz cursed? Yes, cursed bitterly. What for?—for doing nothing. Yes, for doing nothing. “Curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof”—for what they did not do—“because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

Did Meroz fight against God? No. Did Meroz put on a buckler and boldly lay on shield and spear and go forth against the Most High? No. What did Meroz do? Nothing. And is it cursed? Yes, cursed bitterly, with the inhabitants thereof, “because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Preach that sermon to yourselves when you get home. Draw it out at length and perhaps while you are sitting down you will say, “Meroz! Why, that is myself. I don’t fight against God, I am no enemy to Christ, I do not persecute His people—in fact, I even love His ministers—I love to go up and hear the Word preached. I should not be happy if I spent my Sunday anywhere but in God’s House. But still that must mean me, for I do not go up ‘to the help of the Lord

against the mighty.’ I do *nothing*. I am an idle do-nothing. I am a fruitless tree.”

Ah, then remember you are cursed and cursed bitterly, too. Not for what you do, but for what you don’t do. So here it is—one of the sad curses of the ungodly—that they bring forth no fruit in their season. Why look at many of you. What is the good of you in this world? With regard to your families, you are their main-stay and prop. God bless you in your work and may you train up your children well. But as to the Church, what good are you? You occupy a seat—you have had it these years. How do you know but that you have been occupying a seat which might have been the place where some other sinner would have been converted had he been there? It is true, you sit and hear the sermon. Yes, but what of that, if that sermon shall add to your condemnation?

It is true that you make one among many, but what if you should be a black sheep in the midst of the flock! What are you doing for Christ? Of what value are you? Have you added one stone to His spiritual temple? Have you done as much as the poor woman who broke the alabaster box upon His head? You have done nothing for Him. He has nourished you and brought you up and you have done nothing for Him. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib,” but you do not know, you do not consider. Behold, the Lord has a controversy with you this day—not for what you have done, but for what you have not done. He has sent you the ministry. You are invited every Sabbath. With tears running down my cheeks have I warned you and invited you. You are hearing the Word continually. You are enjoying privileges. God is feeding you in His Providence, clothing you in His compassion and you are doing nothing for Him. You are a cumberer of the ground, bringing forth no fruit at all.

O my dear Hearer, I beseech you lay this to heart, for this is a curse as well as a sign to you. It is not only a bad trait in your character, but it is a curse from God. You are ungodly and therefore fruitless. You love Him not, therefore you are useless. You trust not in Christ, and therefore you are not like the tree which “brings forth his fruit in his season.” Continue with the description—his leaf also shall not wither. “Not so the ungodly, not so.” The ungodly man’s leaf shall wither.

I see before me this day many proofs that God’s promise is verified to His people. Look round and behold what a large number of gray-headed men assemble every Lord’s Day to hear the Word. There are many of them who loved Christ in their youth. Then they had “a joy unspeakable and full of glory” in making a profession of His dear name. And now they have come into what men call the sear and yellow leaf of life, but they do not find it so, for they still bring forth fruit in old age, they are still fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. Their leaf has not withered, they are just as active in the cause of Christ as ever they were and perhaps ten times more happy. Instead of bringing forth no fruit, they bring forth richer and more luscious clusters than ever they did before.

Walking in the midst of the younger ones they shine as lights in the midst of the world. Or to return to the simile, they are like trees whose

branches hang down by reason of the abundance of their fruit, even as their heads bow down by reason of the abundance of their years. What a mercy it is, dear Brethren, to have Christ for your portion in youth and such a Christ, too, as will last us all our life long. To see good old Rowland Hill preaching when he was tottering on the borders of the grave and talking of the faithfulness of Christ—what a glorious sight! There was a proof! That leaf did not wither—was there ever a tree like this that would maintain its greenness eighty years and yet not wither? Was there ever a religion like this that would make the old men youthful and make their tottering feet leap for joy? And yet this is the religion of Christ. Our leaf withers not.

But oh, “Not so the ungodly, not so.” Your leaf shall wither. At least when they that look out of the windows are darkened, when the grinders fail because they are few, when your days of old age shall come upon you and the grasshopper shall be a burden, if not before, shall your leaf wither. And how many there are whose leaves do wither! There comes a blight from God and the tree which looked once green becomes brown and dead and at last it blackens and has to be removed. We have seen such in our lives. Men that seemed to be getting on in this world, rich and happy and respected by almost everybody—but they had no solid background, they had no rock to stand on—no God to trust. I have seen them spreading themselves like a green bay tree and I have often envied them as the Psalmist did, but “I looked and lo, they were not.” I passed by and lo, there was not so much as a stump of them left—God had cursed their habitation. As a dream when one awakes, their image had been despised, as the wax before the fire, they had melted away—like the fat of rams had they been consumed. Into smoke did they consume away.

“Not so the ungodly, not so,” says the text and surely experience proves it—the ungodly man’s leaf must and shall wither. And then it is added concerning the righteous man, “whatsoever he does, shall prosper.” Godly men, it is true have many tribulations, but I am not sure that they have more than the wicked. I do think that when a man is converted he will find it to be true that religion’s “ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace,” and he has a better hope of even worldly prosperity when he becomes a Christian, than the ungodly man has. Christian habits are the best business habits, if men would but believe it. When a man mixes his religion with his business and allows every act of his life to be guided by it, he stands the best chance in this world, if I may be allowed such a secular expression, for, “Honesty is the best policy” after all, and Christianity is the best honesty.

The sharp cutting competition of the times may be called honesty—it is only called so down here, it is not called so up there, for there is a good deal of cheating in it. Honesty in the highest sense—Christian honesty—will be found, after all, to be the best policy in everything and there will ordinarily be a prosperity, even worldly prosperity, attending a good man in the patient industrious pursuit of his calling. But if he does not have that success he craves, still there is one thing he knows, he would have it

if it were best for him. I often know Christian men talk in this fashion, "Well, I do but very little business," says one, "but I have enough coming in to live upon comfortably and happy. I never cared much for push and competition. I never felt that I was fit for it and I sometimes thank God that I never thrust myself out into the rough stream, but that I was content to keep along shore."

And I have marked this one thing—and, as a matter of fact, I know it cannot be disproved—that many such humble-minded men are the very best of Christians. They live the happiest lives and whatsoever they do certainly does prosper, for they get what they expected though they did not expect much and they get what they want though their wants are not very large. They are not going in for anything very great and therefore they do not come out plucked and empty handed, but they just hold on their way, always looking to Providence, for their supplies and they have all they require. And whatsoever they do, prospers.

The man that has no God, has no prosperity. Is he fat? He fattens for the slaughter! Is he in adversity? Behold the first drops of the fated storm have begun to fall on him. To the ungodly man there is nothing good in this life. The sweet that he tastes is the sweetness of poison. That which looks fair is but as paint upon the harlot's face—beneath there are loathsomeness and disease. There may be a greenness and a verdure upon the mound, but within there lies the rotting carcass, the loathsomeness of corruption. Whatsoever the Believer does, it shall prosper. "Not so the ungodly, not so." Surely this first part of my text is quite bad enough—to have the gate of blessedness shut against you, to have the promises denied you, to be without the blessing which is given to the godly—this punishment of the lost surely were enough to make us start in dismay.

II. Now very briefly upon the second point. Listen awhile to THE TERRIBLE COMPARISON. "The ungodly are like the chaff." They are not like the wild tree, for that has life and they are dead in sin. They are not compared here even to the dead tree plucked up by the roots, for that may be of some service. Floating down the stream, the hand of poverty may recall it from the water and kindle its fire and relieve its cold. They are not even like the heath in the desert, for it has some uses and tends to cheer the arid waste. They are like nothing that has life, nothing that is of any value. They are here said to be like chaff which the wind drives away.

Now you will at once see how terrible is this figure, if you look at it a moment. They are like chaff. Chaff envelopes good corn, but when the wheat is cut down and carried into the barn, the corn alone is useful, the grain alone is looked at and that chaff which has grown side by side with the good living wheat is now become utterly useless and is to be separated and driven away. And the wicked are compared to chaff—think for a moment, of two or three reasons. First, because they are sapless and fruitless. Chaff has no sap of life in itself. It is of no use, of no service. Men do but desire to get rid of it. They take the fan into their hands that they may thoroughly purge their floor. They cast up the wheat before the wind with the winnowing shovel, that the breath of the air may blow away the chaff

and leave the wheat pure. All that they care for the chaff is that they may get rid of it—that it may be blown away to waste—for it is sapless and fruitless.

Then again, you notice that it is light and unstable. The wind sweeps through the wheat, the wheat remains unmoved, the chaff flies away. When cast up in the shovel, the wheat soon finds its place and returns to the spot from which it has been lifted up. But the chaff is light, it has no stability. Every eddying wind, every breath moves it and carries it away. So are the ungodly. They have nothing stable. They are light, they are but as the froth upon the water. They are but as a bubble on the breaker—seen today and gone—here and there and then carried away forever.

Again—the wicked are compared to chaff because it is base and worthless. Who will buy it? Who cares for it? In the East, at least, it is of no good, no use whatever can be made of it. They are content to burn it up and get rid of it and the sooner they are rid of it, the better pleased are they. So is it with the wicked. They are good for nothing, useless in this world, useless in the world to come. They are the dross, the offal of all creation. The man who is ungodly, however much he may value himself, is as nothing in the estimation of God. Put a gold chain round his neck, put a star upon his breast, put a crown upon his head and what is he but a crowned heap of dust? He is useless, perhaps worse than useless—base in God's sight, He tramples them beneath His feet.

The potter's vessel has some service and even the broken potsherd might be used. Some Job might scrape himself with it. But what shall be done with the chaff? It is of no use anywhere and no one cares for it. See, then, your value, my Hearers, if you fear not God. Cast up your accounts and look at yourselves in the right light. You think, perhaps, that you are good for much, but God says you are good for nothing. You are "like the chaff which the wind drives away." I linger no more upon this comparison, but choose, rather to dwell upon the third head, which is:

III. THE AWFUL PROPHECY contained in the verse—"They are like the chaff which the wind drives away." How near the chaff is to the grain! It is, in fact, its envelope. They grow together. My Hearers, I wish to speak now very pointedly and personally. How nearly related are the ungodly to the righteous? One of you, it may be, now present, an ungodly man, is the father of a godly child. You have been to that child what the chaff is to the wheat. You have nourished the child—cherished it in your bosom—you have been wrapped about it like the chaff about the grain. Is it not an awful thing for you to think that you should have been in such close relationship to a child of God, but that in the great day of division you must be separated from it? The chaff cannot be taken into Heaven with the wheat.

I point to another. You are the son of a godly mother. You have grown up at her knee. She taught you, when you were but a little one, to say your little prayer and to sing the little hymn—

***"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."***

That mother looked upon you as her joy and her comfort. She is gone now. But you were once to her what the chaff is to the wheat. You grew, as it were, upon the same stock, you were of the same family and her heart was wholly wrapped up in you. You were her joy and her comfort here below. Does it not cause you one pang of regret that, dying as you are, you must everlastingly be separated from her? Where she is you can never go.

Perhaps, too, I have here a mother who has lost several infants. She has been to those infants what the chaff is to the wheat—wrapped up in her bosom for a little while she fondled them. And they, God's good wheat, have been gathered into the garner and there they are now in Jesus' floor. There are their little spirits rejoicing before the Throne of the Most High. The mother who is left thinks not of it, but she is the mother of angels and, perhaps, herself a child of Hell. Ah, Mother! What do you think of this? Is this separation from your child eternal? Will you be content to be found at God's great winnowing-day, the chaff and will you be driven from your children? Shall you see them in Heaven—they in Heaven and yourselves then cast out forever? Can you bear the thought? Has your heart become brutish? Is your soul harder than a nether mill-stone? Surely, if it is not, the thought of your present intimate connection with God's people and of your sure separation will make you tremble.

And oh, my Hearers, here are some of you sitting side by side with the godly. You sing as they sing, you hear as they hear. Perhaps you assist the outward wants of the Church. You are to the Church just what the chaff is to the wheat. You are the outward husk, the congregation which surrounds the inner living nucleus of the Church. And must it be—must you be separated from us? Are you content to go from the songs of the saints to the shrieks of the doomed? Will you go from the great convocation of the righteous to the last general assembly of the destroyed and cursed in Hell? The thought checks my voice. I must speak slowly on this matter for awhile. Well, dear Brethren, well I know that this thought used to be dreadful to me. My mother said to me once, after she had long prayed for me and had come to the conviction that I was hopeless, "Ah," said she "My son, if at the last great day you are condemned, remember your mother will say, "Amen" to your condemnation."

That stung me to the quick. Must the mother that brought me forth and that loved me say "Amen" to my being condemned at last? Yet such things must be. Does not the wheat say, "Amen" to the chaff being blown away? Is it not, in fact, the very prayer of the wheat that it may be separated from the chaff? And surely when that prayer is heard and awfully answered, the wheat must say, "Amen" to the chaff being blown away into fire unquenchable.

Think, my dear Hearers, think again. And must it be—must I bid farewell to her I love, who served the Lord in spirit? Must I see her body committed to the grave and as I stand there must I bid her a last, a final farewell? Must I be forever separated from her, because I fear not God, neither regard Him and therefore cannot have a portion among the Lord's chosen

ones? What? Have you lost your relatives forever? Are your pious fathers and mothers buried in a “sure and certain hope” to which you are strangers? Will you never sing the song of rejoicing with them in Heaven? Is there never to be another salutation? Is death a gulf that cannot be bridged to you?

Oh, I hope it is the joy of some of us to know we shall meet many of our kindred above and as we have lost one after another this has been our sweet consolation—they are gone, but we shall soon follow them. They are not lost but gone before. They are buried as to their flesh, but their souls are in Paradise and we shall be there, also. And, when we have seen our Savior’s face and have rejoiced in that glorious vision, then shall we see them, also, and have deeper and purer fellowship with them than we ever had before in all the days of our lives.

Well, here is a sad prophecy! The wicked are “like the chaff which the wind drives away.” But you will remark that the awful character of my text does not appear upon the surface. They “are like the chaff which the wind drives away.” Where—where—where? Where are they driven? The man is in health. The sun shines, the sky is calm, the world is still about him. Suddenly there is seen a little cloud the size of a man’s hand. A little signal overtakes him. The hurricane begins to rise but first it is but a faint breath. The wicked man feels the cold air blowing on him, but he screens it with the physician and he thinks that surely he shall live. The storm is on. God has decreed it and man cannot stop it. The breath becomes a gale, the gale a wind, the wind a storm, the storm a howling hurricane. His soul is swept away.

To go to Heaven on angels’ wings is a glorious thing. But to be swept out of this world with the wicked is an awful thing—to be carried, not on wings of cherubs—but on the eagle wings of the wind. To be borne, not by yon songsters up to their celestial seats, but to be carried away in the midst of a howling tempest by grim fiends. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Do you not catch the thought? I do not know how to bring out the fullness of its poetry—the great storm sweeping man from the place on which he stands. He is driven away. And now cannot your thoughts go further on while I again repeat the question, Where is he driven? Ah, Where is he driven? I see him driven from the solid shore of life. He is carried away. But—

***“In vain my fancy strives
To paint the moment after death.”***

I cannot tell you into what state that soul at once enters, that is to say, I cannot tell you by any guess of my own—that were frivolous and were to play with a solemn matter. But I can tell you one thing, Jesus Christ Himself has said it—“He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” You die, but you die not. You depart, but you depart to fire that never shall be quenched. I will not dwell upon the topic. I return again to ask the question—“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Who here is prepared to make his bed in Hell? Who shall lie down and rest forever in that lake of fire? You will, my Hearers, if you are ungodly, unless you repent.

Are there any of you here who have been living without Christ and without hope in the world? Are there any of you? Surely there are some such. I beseech you, think of your destiny—death—and after death the judgment. The wind and after the wind the whirlwind and after the whirlwind the fire and after the fire, more fire—forever, forever—forever lost, cast away, where ray of hope can never come. Where eye of mercy can never look upon you and hand of grace can never reach you. I beseech you, oh, I beseech you by the living God, before whom you stand this day, tremble and repent!

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” “Tophet is ordained of old, yes, for the king it is prepared. He has made it deep and large. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.” “Turn you, turn you, why will you die O house of Israel?” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts—and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to touch some ungodly hearts now and make you think. And remember my dear Hearers, if there is in your bosoms this morning one desire towards Christ, cherish it, blow the little spark till it comes to a flame. If your heart melts ever so little this morning, I beseech you resist not, quench not the heavenly influence. Yield up yourselves and remember the sweet text of last Sunday morning, “whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” I thunder at you, but it is to bring you to Christ. Oh that you would but come to Him! Oh poor hearts would that you did but feel! Oh, that you knew how to weep for yourselves as I could weep for you now! Oh, that you knew what a fearful thing it will be to be cast away forever into Hell!

Why will you die? Is there anything pleasing in destruction? Is sin so luscious to you that you will burn in Hell forever for it? What? Is Christ so hard a Master that you will not love Him? Is His Cross so ugly that you will not look towards it? Oh, I beseech you by Him whose heart is love, the crucified Redeemer, who now speaks through me this morning and in me weeps over you. I beseech you look to Him and be saved, for He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost and he that comes to Him He will in nowise cast out, for “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

Today, O Spirit bring sinners to Yourself. I exhort you, Sinners, lay hold on Christ! Touch the hem of His garment now. Behold, He hangs before you on the Cross. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is Jesus lifted up. Look, I beseech you, look and live! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. As though God did beseech you by me, I pray in Christ’s place, be reconciled to God. And O, may the Spirit make my appeal effectual! May angels rejoice this day over sinners saved and brought to know the Lord. Amen.

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AN EARNEST INVITATION

NO. 260

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 3, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”
Psalm 2:12.***

IT will not be needful for me this morning to be controversial in my discourse. For but two Sabbaths ago I addressed you from that text, “The mighty God,” and endeavored with the utmost of my ability to prove that Christ must be “very God of very God”—co-equal and co-eternal with His Father. Without, then, attempting to prove that, let us drive onward towards the practical issue. For, after all, practice is the end of preaching—or, if you will have it, I will put it into Herbert’s words —

***“Attend sermons, but prayers most,
Praying’s the end of preaching.”***

And that, too, is in the text, for what lip can give the kiss of sincerity to the Son of God, save the lip of prayer? We drive onward, then, towards the practical conclusion. May God the Holy Spirit assist us.

Now it has sometimes been disputed among most earnest and zealous ministers which is the most likely means of bringing souls to Christ—whether it is the thunder of the threat, or the still small whisper of the promise. I have heard some ministers who preferred the first. They have constantly dwelt upon the terrors of the Law and they have certainly, many of them, been eminently useful. They have had Scripture for their warrant, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” With “terrible things in righteousness” declaring the just anger and judgment of God against sin, they have alarmed those who were sitting at ease in a graceless state and have thus been the means in the hands of God of inducing them to flee from the wrath to come.

Some, on the other hand, have rather decried the threats. They have dwelt almost entirely upon the promises. Like John, their ministry has been full of love. They have constantly preached from such texts as this—“Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”—and such like. Now, these also have been eminently useful. And they, too, have had Scriptural warrant in abundance, for thus spoke Christ’s Apostles full often and thus spoke Jesus Christ Himself, wooing with notes of mercy and melting with tones of love those whom the Law’s terrors would but have hardened in their sins.

My text, however, seems to be a happy combination of the two and I take it that the most successful ministry will combine both means of bringing men to Christ. The text thunders with all the bolts of God—"Lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." But it does not end in thunder, there comes a sweet soft, reviving shower after the storm—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

This morning I shall endeavor to use both arguments and shall divide my text thus—First, the command, "Kiss the Son." Secondly, the argument used, "lest He be angry and you perish from the way." And thirdly, the benediction with which the text closes—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." This benediction being a second reason why we should obey the commandment.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND—"Kiss the Son." This bears four interpretations. A kiss has many meanings in it—progressive meanings. I pray that we may be led by grace from step to step, so that we may understand the command in all its fullness by putting it in practice.

1. In the first place, it is a kiss of reconciliation. The kiss is a token of enmity removed, of strife ended and of peace established. You will remember that when Jacob met Esau, although the hearts of the brothers had been long estranged and fear had dwelt in the breast of one and revenge had kindled its fires in the heart of the other—when they met they were pacified towards each other and they fell upon each other's neck and they kissed—it was the kiss of *reconciliation*. Now, the very first work of grace in the heart is for Christ to give the sinner the kiss of His affection, to prove His reconciliation to the sinner. Thus the father kissed his prodigal son when he returned. Before the feast was spread, before the music and the dance began, the father fell upon his son's neck and kissed him.

On our part, however, it is our business to return that kiss. And as Jesus gives the reconciling kiss on God's behalf, it is ours to kiss the lips of Jesus and to prove by that deed that we are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Sinner, you have up to now been an enemy of Christ's Gospel. You have hated His Sabbaths. You have neglected His Word. You have abhorred His commandments and cast His Laws behind your back. You have, as much as lies in you, opposed His kingdom. You have loved the wages of sin and the ways of iniquity better than the ways of Christ. What do you say? Does the Spirit now strive in your heart? Then, I beseech you, yield to His gracious influence and now let your quarrel be at an end. Cast down the weapons of your rebellion—pull out the plumes of pride from your helmet—and cast away the sword of your rebellion. Be His enemy no longer, for, rest assured, He wills to be your Friend.

With arms outstretched, ready to receive you, with eyes full of tears, weeping over your obstinacy and with a heart moved with compassion for you, He speaks through my lips this morning and He says, "Kiss the Son." Be reconciled. This is the very message of the Gospel—"The ministry of reconciliation." Thus speak we, as God has commanded us. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." And is this a hard thing we

ask of you, that you should be at friendship with Him who is your best Friend? Is this a rigorous law, like the commands of Pharaoh to the children of Israel in Egypt, when He bids you simply strike hands with Him who shed His blood for sinners? We ask you not to be friends of death or Hell. We beg you rather to dissolve your league with them. We pray that grace may lead you to forswear their company forever and be at peace with Him who is incarnate love and infinite mercy. Sinners, why will you resist Him who only longs to save you? Why scorn Him who loves you? Why trample on the blood that bought you and reject the Cross which is the only hope of your salvation? “Kiss the Son.”—

**“Bow the knee and kiss the Son,
Come and welcome, sinner, come.”**

That is the first meaning of the text—the kiss of reconciliation. The Spirit of God must work a change in man’s heart before he will be willing to give this kiss. It is my heart’s desire, that by the words which shall be uttered this morning, the Spirit may bow the obdurate heart and lead you to give Christ the kiss of reconciliation this very day.

2. Again—the kiss of my text is a kiss of allegiance and homage. It is an Eastern custom for the subjects to kiss the feet of the king. No, in some instances their homage is so abject that they kiss the dust beneath his feet and the very steps of his throne. Now Christ requires of every man who would be saved, that he shall yield to His government and His rule. There are some who are willing enough to be saved and take Christ to be their Priest—but they are not willing to give up their sins—not willing to obey His precepts, to walk in His ordinances and keep His commandments. Now salvation cannot be cut in two. If you would have justification you must have sanctification, too. If your sins are pardoned they must be abhorred. If you are washed in the blood to take away the guilt of sin, you must be washed in the water to take away the power of sin over your affections and life. Oh, Sinners, the command is, “Kiss the Son.” Bow your knee and come and own him to be a monarch and say, “Other lords have had dominion over us. We have worshipped our lusts, our pleasures, our pride, our selfishness, but now will we submit ourselves to Your easy yoke. Take us and make us Yours, for we are willing to be Your subjects”—

**“Oh, Sovereign Grace our hearts subdue,
We would be led in triumph too,
As willing captives to our Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word.”**

You must give Him the kiss of fealty, of homage and loyalty. And take Him to be your king. And is this a hard thing? Is this a rigorous commandment? Why look at Englishmen, how they spring to their feet and sing with enthusiasm—

**“God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!”**

And is it a hard thing for you and me to be bid to cry, “God save King Jesus! Spread His kingdom! Let Him reign, King of kings and Lord of lords! Let Him reign in our hearts”? Is it a hard thing to bow before His gentle scepter? Is there any cruelty in the demand that we should submit ourselves to the law of right, rectitude, justice, and love? “His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace.” “His commandments are not grievous.” “Come unto Me,” says the Lord, “and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you.” It is not heavy, “take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

O Sinner, leave that black monarch—turn your back upon the king of Hell. May grace enable you now to flee away from him who deludes you today and shall destroy you forever. Come to the Prince Immanuel, the Son of God and now declare yourselves to be the willing subjects of His blessed kingdom. “Kiss the Son.” It is the kiss of reconciliation and the kiss of homage.

3. Again—it is the kiss of *worship*. They that worshipped Baal kissed the calves. It was the custom in the east for idolaters to kiss the god which they foolishly adored. Now the commandment is that we should give to Christ Divine worship. The Unitarian will not do this—he says, “Christ is but a mere man.” He will not kiss the eternal Son of God. Then let him know that God will not alter His Gospel to suit his heresy. If he rebelliously denies the Godhead of Christ, he need not marvel if in the last day Christ shall say—“But those My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me.” It is no marvel if he who rejects the Godhead of Christ should find that he has built his house upon sand and when the rain descends and the flood comes, his hope shall totter and great shall be the fall thereof. We are bid to worship Christ and O, how pleasant is this command, to kiss him in adoration! It is the highest joy of the Christian to worship Jesus. I know of no thrill of pleasure that can more rejoice the Christian’s breast and thrill his soul to music, than the song of—

**“Worthy is He that once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died,
Worthy to rise and live,
And reign at His Almighty Father’s side.”**

Surely that shall be the very song of Heaven, to sing “Worthy the Lamb,” and yet again to shout louder still, “Worthy the Lamb! Worthy the Lamb!” Well, Sinner, you are bid to do this—to acknowledge Christ your God. “Kiss the Son.” Go to Him in prayer this very day. Cast yourself on your knees and worship Him. Confess your sins committed against Him. Lay hold of His righteousness. Touch the hem of His garment. Adore Him by your faith, trusting in Him. Adore Him by your service, living for Him. Adore Him with your lips, praising Him. Adore Him with your heart, loving Him and surrendering your whole being to Him. God help you in this way to, “kiss the Son.”

4. There is yet a fourth meaning and I think this is the sweetest of all. "Kiss the Son." Ah, Mary Magdalene, I need you this morning! Come here, Mary—you shall explain my text. There was a woman who had much forgiven and she loved much and as a consequence, loving much she desired much the company and the presence of the Object of her affection. She came to the Pharisee's house where he was feasting, but she was afraid to enter for she was a sinner. The Pharisee would repulse her and tell her to go away. Why was a *harlot* there in the house of a holy Pharisee? So she came to the door, as if she would peep in and just get a glimpse of Him whom her soul loved. But there He lay beside the table and happily for her, the Pharisee had slighted Christ, he had not put Him at the head of the table, but at the end and therefore His feet—laying backward as He declined—were close against the door.

She came and oh, she could not dare to look upon His head. She stood at His feet, behind Him, weeping. And as she wept, the tears flowed so plenteously that she washed His feet—which the Pharisee had forgotten to wash—with her tears. And then unbraiding her luxurious tresses, which had been the nets into which she had entangled her lovers, she began to wipe His feet with the hairs of her head. And stooping down she kissed His feet and kissed them yet again. Poor Sinner, you that are full of guilt, if you have played the harlot, or if you have been a sinner in other ways, come, I beseech you, to Jesus now. Look to Him, believe in Him—

***"Trust in His blond, for it alone
Has power sufficient to atone."***

And this done, come and "kiss the Son"—kiss His feet with love. Oh, if He were here this morning, methinks I would kiss those feet again and again. And if any should enquire the reason, I would answer—

***"Love I much? I've much forgiven,
I'm a miracle of grace."***

Jesus, do You permit me to kiss Your feet with the kisses of affection? And may I pray like the spouse in the Canticles—"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better than wine"? May I so pray? Then, glory be to Your name, I will not be slow in praying it! If I may be so highly favored I will not lose the favor through negligence and coldness of heart. Even now my soul gives the kiss of deep and sincere affection—

***"Yes, I love You and adore,
O for grace to love you more."***

"Kiss the Son." Do you see, then, the meaning of it? It is a kiss of reconciliation, a kiss of homage, a kiss of worship and a kiss of affectionate gratitude. "Kiss the Son."

And what if in this great assembly there should be some soul that said, "I will not kiss the Son, I owe Him nothing, I will not serve Him, I will not be reconciled to Him"? Ah, Soul, there are tears for you. Would God that all the people of Christ would weep for you until your heart were changed—for the terrible part of the text which we are to read belongs to you—and before long you shall know its fearful meaning. But may we not hope better things? Have we not somewhere in this great hall some poor

trembling penitent, who with the tear in his eye is saying, “Kiss Him and be reconciled to Him!—Oh that I might. My fear is, Sir, if I should try to draw near to Christ, He would say, ‘Get you gone, I will have nothing to do with you. You are too vile, too hardened. You have too long resisted the Word, too long despised My grace—get you gone.’”

No, Soul, Jesus never said that yet and He never will. Whatever are your sins, as long as you are in the body there is hope. However great your guilt, however enormous your transgression, if you are now willing to be reconciled, God has made you willing and He would not have put the will if He did not intend to gratify it. There is nothing that can keep you from Christ if you are willing to come. Christ casts out none that desire to be saved. There is in His heart enough for all that seek Him, enough for each, enough for evermore. Oh, think not that Christ is ever slower than we are. We never love Him before He loves us. If our heart loves Him, His soul loved us long ago. And if we are now willing to be reconciled to Him, let us rest assured that Jehovah’s melting heart yearns to clasp His Ephraims to His breast. May God bless this exhortation to every heart now present and to Him be the glory.

II. This brings us to the second part of the text. “Kiss the Son”—and THE ARGUMENT is “Lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Read it—“Lest He be angry.” And can He be angry? Is He not the *Lamb of God*? Can a lamb be angry? Did not He weep over sinners? Can He be angry? Did not He die for sinners—can He be angry? Yes, and when He is angry, it is anger, indeed! When He is angry it is anger that none can match. The most awful word, I think, in the whole Bible is that shriek of the lost, “Rocks hide us! Mountains, fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

What a fearful conjunction of terms—“the wrath of the Lamb”? Can you picture that dear face of His, those eyes that wept, those hands that bled, those lips that spoke notes of love, such words of pity—and can you believe that one day those eyes shall know no tears, but shall flash with lightning? That those hands shall know no mercy, but shall grasp a rod of iron and break the wicked into pieces like potter’s vessels? And those feet shall know no errands of love, but He shall tread upon His enemies and crush them, even as grapes are trod by the wine pressers and the blood thereof shall stain His garments and as He comes up from their destruction they shall ask Him, “Who is this that comes”—not from Calvary, not from Gethsemane, but “Who is this that comes from Edom”—the land of His enemies—with dyed garments from Bozrah”?—The land of His stoutest foes—“this that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength”?

And what shall be the answer? It is most terrible. Who is this that has trod His enemies and crushed them?—“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why, Jesus, if You had said, “Mighty to destroy,” we might have understood You. But “mighty to save”—and so He is—this gives the edge to the whole sentence, that when He shall destroy His ene-

mies, He that is mighty to save will be mighty to crush, mighty to damn, mighty to devour and rend His prey in pieces! I know nothing, I repeat, more fearful than the thought that Christ will be angry and that if we live and die finally impenitent, rejecting His mercy and despising His sacrifice we have good need to tremble at this sentence, "Kiss the Son lest He be angry."

And now do you see again that if Christ once is angry, it must be all over with our hopes or our rest? We will suppose now some poor girl who has stepped aside from the paths of right. She has persevered in her iniquity despite many warnings. Friends rise up to help her, but they drop off one by one, for she becomes incorrigibly wicked. Others come to help her, but as often as they rise they fall again, for she sins and sins and sins again. There is, however, one who has oftentimes received her to his bosom, erring though she is—her father. He says, "Shall I forget the child I have begotten? Sinner she is, but she is still my child," and often as she sins and goes away he will not reject her. He receives her to his house again. Tainted and defiled, again he gives her the kiss of fond affection.

At last she perseveres in her iniquity and goes to such a length that one day in her desperate despair, someone says to her, why not seek a friend to deliver you in this your awful hour of distress and anguish on account of sin? "Oh," says she, "I have none left." "But there is your father. Have you not father or a mother?" "Yes," says she, "but he is angry and he will do nothing for me." Then her last door is shut and her hope is over. What wonder that—

***"Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled —
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world"—***

she ends her life because her only helper is angry and her hope is gone? Despair must seize her then, when her best, her only helper is angry with her.

Let me give you another picture—a simpler one. There is a dove long gone out of Noah's ark. Suppose that dove to have been flying many hours till its wings are weary. Poor, poor dove! Across the shoreless sea it flies and finds never a spot whereon its weary feet may rest. At last it remembers the ark. It flies there, hoping there to find a shelter—but suppose it should see Noah standing looking through the window with crossbow to destroy it—then where were its hope? Its only hope has proved the gate of death. Now let it fold its wings and sink into the black stream and die with all the rest. Ah, Sinner, these two are but pictures of the desperateness of your despair when once the Lamb is angry—He who is the sinner's friend, the sinner's wooer, He of whom we sometimes say—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

When He is angry, where, where, oh where can sinners hide? When He is angry, when He takes a bow and fits an arrow to the string, where is your shelter then?—where your defense and refuge? Sinners, "Kiss the Son,"

bow before Him now and receive His grace. Acknowledge His sway, lest He be angry with you and forever shut you up in black despair, for none can give you hope or joy when once He is angry.

And now mark the effects of Christ's anger. "And you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Let me give you a picture. You have seen the maid light the fire. At first it is the match, the spark and there is a little kindling. A kindling but a little. What is that compared with the fire that is to succeed? You have heard of the prairie burning. The traveler has lit his fire and dropped a spark—the fire is kindling but a little and a small circle of flame is forming. You cannot judge what will be the mighty catastrophe when the sheet of flame shall seem to cover half the continent. And yet, mark you, your text says that, "when God's wrath is kindled *but a little*," it is even then enough to utterly destroy the wicked, so that they, "perish from the way." What a fearful thought it presents to us if we have but eyes to see it! It is like one of Martin's great pictures—it has more cloud in it than plain outline. It has in it great masses of blackness. There is only this little kindling and there is the sinner destroyed.

But what is that! Black thick darkness forever. What must become of the sinner, then, when the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone shall blow up Tophet till its flames reach above all thought and till the fire burns, beneath, even to the lowest Hell? His wrath is kindled but a little, then! Calvin, together with several other excellent commentators, gives another interpretation to this—"In but a little," and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled very soon, or, "in but a little time." So it may be well translated without any violence whatever to the original. God's anger kindles very speedily when once men have rejected Him. When the period of their mercy is passed away, then comes the hour of their black despair and His wrath is kindled in a little time. This should make each one of us think about our souls—the fact that God may take us away with a stroke and a great ransom cannot deliver us.

We had, last Sabbath Day a terrible picture of how soon God can take away a man with a stroke. On our common, you will remember, at Clapham, a man sought shelter beneath a poplar tree and in a moment a bolt fell from Heaven and rent his body in pieces and he died. I should not have marveled if last night, when I was reading my text by the glare of the lightning, thinking it over amidst the roaring of the thunder, if many such deaths had occurred. God can soon take us away. But this is the wonder, that men will visit that tree by which their fellow died and go away and be just as careless as they were before. You and I hear of sudden deaths and yet we imagine we shall not die suddenly. We cannot think God's wrath will be kindled in a little time and that He will take us away with a stroke. We get the idea that we shall die in our nests, with a slow and gradual death and have abundance of time for preparation. Oh, I beseech you, let no such delusion destroy your soul! "Kiss the Son now, lest He be angry in a little while and you perish from the way." Now bow before Him and receive His grace.

However, I return to the old reading of the text, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." How terrible is the doom of the wicked! The little kindling of God's wrath kills them. What shall the eternal burnings be? Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall abide with everlasting burnings? There is a land of thick darkness and despair where dwells the undying worm, which in its ceaseless folds does crush the spirits of the damned. There is a fire quickly burning, that dries up the very marrow of body and soul and yet destroys them not. There also is the pit that knows no bottom, the hopeless falling without a thought of ever coming to an end. There is a land where souls linger in eternal death and yet they never die—crushed, but not annihilated—broken, but not destroyed. Forever, forever, forever, is the ceaseless wave which rolls its fresh tide of fire upon a shore of agony, whose years are as countless as the sands of the sea.

And shall it be your lot and mine to dwell forever with the howling spirits of the damned? Must these eyes weep the briny tear that cannot assuage thirst? Must these lips be parched with infinite heat? Must this body be everlastingly tormented and this soul, with all its powers, become a lake of grief into which torrents of Almighty wrath shall roll ceaselessly with black and fiery streams? Oh, my God, and can the thought be uttered—there may be some in this hall this morning, who, before long, shall be in Hell? If you should see an arrow fitted to a string pointed in yon direction, would you think it a hard prophecy if I should say, that, before long, the arrow would find its mark over yonder? "No," you would say, "it is but nature that it should go in the way in which it is directed." But, Sinners, some of you are this day fitted on the bow of sin. Sin is the string that impels you forward. No, more than this. Some of you are whistling onward towards death, despair and Hell. Sin is the path to Hell and you are traveling in it with lightning speed. Why do you think me harsh if I prophecy that you will get to the end before long and reap the harvest to your soul?

Oh, "kiss the Son," I beseech you. For if you kiss Him not, if you receive not His grace and mercy, you must perish. There is no hope for you—desperate, without remedy—your end must be, if you will not yield your pride and submit to Jesus. Oh, what language shall I use? Here were a task for Demosthenes, if he could rise from the dead and be converted and preach with all his mighty eloquence and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come. Here is a text that might exhaust the eloquence of the Apostle Paul, while with tears running down his cheeks, he would plead with you to flee to Christ and lay hold upon His mercy.

As for me, I cannot speak my soul out. Would that my heart could speak without my lips to tell of the agony I feel just now concerning your souls. Oh, why will you die? "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Will you make your beds in Hell? Will you wrap yourselves about with flames forever? Will you have the merriment of sin in this life and then reap the harvest of destruction in the world to come? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I

beseech you by the living God, by death, by eternity, by Heaven and by Hell. I implore you, stop! Stop, and “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way.”

Oh, the terrors of the Lord! Who shall speak them?! Last night, we saw, as it were, the back parts of the terrible God, when His garments of light swept through the sky. He made clouds His chariot and He did ride upon the wings of the wind. Sinners, can you stand before the God of thunder? Can you war against the God of lightning? Will you resist Him and despise His Son and reject the offer of mercy and dash yourselves upon His spear and rush upon His sword? Oh, turn! Turn now! Thus says the Lord—“Consider your ways.”—

***“Bow the knee and kiss the Son;
Come and welcome, Sinner, come!”***

III. And now give me your attention just a moment or two longer while with all earnestness I endeavor to preach for a little while upon THE BENEDICTION WITH WHICH THE TEXT CLOSES. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” I have been beating the big drum of threat and now let us have the soft, sweet harp of David, of sweet, wooing benedictions. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Do you put your trust in Him, my Hearer? Beneath the wings of God we nestle and we know of no security elsewhere. This is enough for us. Now the text says that those that trust in Him are blessed. And I would observe, first, that they are *really* blessed. It is no fiction, no imaginary blessing. It is a real blessedness which belongs to those that trust in God—a blessedness that will stand the test of time, the test of life and the trial of death. A blessedness into which we cannot plunge too deeply, for it is none of it a dream, but all a reality.

Again—those that trust in Him have not only a real blessedness, but they oftentimes have a conscious blessedness. They know what it is to be blest in their troubles, for they are in their trials comforted and they are blest in their joys—for their joys are sanctified. They are blest and they know it, they sing about it and they rejoice in it. It is their joy to know that God’s blessing is come to them. Not in word only but in very deed. They are blessed men and blessed women—

***“They would not change their blest estate
For all the world calls good and great.”***

Then, further they are not only really blessed and consciously blessed, but they are increasingly blessed. Their blessedness grows. They do not go downhill, as the wicked do, from bright hope to black despair. They do not diminish in their delights—the river deepens as they wade into it. They are blessed when the first ray of heavenly light streams on their eyeballs. They are blessed when their eyes are opened wider still, to see more of the love of Christ. They are blessed the more their experience widens and their knowledge deepens and their love increases. They are blessed in the hour of death and, best of all, their blessedness increases to eternal blessedness—the perfection of the saints at the right hand of God. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Time fails me to

enter into this blessed benediction and therefore I pause and come back to my old work again, of endeavoring to reach you by earnest entreaty, while I urge you to “kiss the Son.”

Sinner, you are bid to trust in Christ this morning. Come, this is your only hope. Remember, you may do a hundred things, but you will be none the better. You will be like the woman mentioned in Scripture who spent all her money on physicians and was none the better, but, rather, grew worse. There is no hope for you but in Christ. Rest assured that all the mercy of God is concentrated in the Cross. I hear some talk about the uncovenanted mercies of God—there is no such things. The mercies of God are all emptied out into the Covenant. God has put all His grace into the Person of Christ and you shall have none elsewhere. Trust, then, in Christ—so you shall be blessed, but you shall be blessed nowhere else.

Again—I urge you to “kiss the Son,” and trust Christ, because this is the sure way. None have perished trusting in Christ. It shall not be said on earth nor even in Hell shall the blasphemy be uttered, that ever a soul perished that trusted in Christ. “But suppose I am not one of God’s elect?” says one. But if you trust in Christ you are. And there is no supposing about it. “But suppose Christ did not die for me?” If you trust Him, He did die for you. That fact is proved and you are saved. Cast yourself simply on Him. Dare it, run the risk of it—venture on Him, venture on Him, (and there is no risk). You shall not find that you have been mistaken. Sometimes I feel anxiety and doubt about my own salvation. And the only way I can get comfort is this—I go back to where I began and say—

“I the chief of sinners am.”

I go to my chamber and once more confess that I am a wretch undone, without His Sovereign Grace and I pray Him to have mercy on me yet again. Depend on it, it is the only way to Heaven and it is a sure one. If you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first of the kind. Do you think God would allow any to say, “I trusted in Christ and yet He deceived me. I cast my soul on Him and He was not strong enough to bear me”? Oh, do not be afraid, I beseech you.

And I conclude now by noticing that this is an open salvation. Every soul in the world that feels its need of a Savior and that longs to be saved, may come to Christ. It God has convicted you of sin and brought you to know your need, come, come NOW—come, come NOW! Come NOW—trust now in Christ and you shall now find that blessed are all they that trust in Him. The door of mercy does not stand ajar, it is wide open. The gates of Heaven are not merely hanging on the latch, but they are wide open both night and day. Come, let us go together to that blessed house of mercy and drive our wants away. The grace of Christ is like our street drinking fountains, open to every thirsty wanderer. There is the cup, the cup of faith. Come and hold it here while the water freely flows and drink. There is no one can come up and say it is not made for you. For you can say, “Oh, yes it is, I am a thirsty soul. It is meant for me.” “No,” says the devil, “you are too wicked.” No, but this is a free drinking fountain. It does not say over the top of the fountain, “No thieves to drink here.” All that is

wanted at the drinking fountain is simply that you should be willing to drink, that you should be thirsty and desire. Come, then—

***“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him.”***

He has given you this. Come and drink. Drink freely. “The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that hears say come. And whosoever is thirsty, let him come and take the water of life freely.”

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AN EARNEST ENTREATY

NO. 3550

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

***“Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way,
when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all
they that put their trust in Him.”
Psalm 2:12.***

LET us have a little quiet talk tonight. I have known a simple, earnest conversation turn the whole current of a man's life. I recollect a good man, who lived at a certain market town in Suffolk. He was no preacher, as far as I know. He had never tried to preach, yet he was a mighty soul-winner. He had noticed how commonly it happened in that town, as in most of our smaller towns, that the lads, as they grew up, sought employment in London, or in some other large center of industry and, consequently, they left their home, their parents, guardians and the associations amidst which they had been trained, to enter a new sphere—where they would lack much of the oversight that had hitherto checked them when prone to wander. His watchful eyes and ever-listening ears having ascertained within a little when any young man was going, he sent a polite invitation to tea. And at that tea table the words he used to speak, the cautions he gave, and the necessity he urged of being decided for Christ before leaving, and especially the earnest prayer with which he concluded the evening—these things have been remembered by scores of young men, who, on removing to the larger towns, could never shake off the impression which his quiet, devout conversation had made! Some of them even traced their conversion to God, and their subsequent perseverance in the paths of righteousness, to the evening they had spent with that humble, but wise and earnest individual! I wonder whether any of us remember, in our young days, any such talk as that which exerted an influence upon us? I wonder more if, instead of trying to preach anything great tonight which is not much in my line, I try to talk very seriously and pointedly to all present who are unconverted, whether God will not bless it by His Holy Spirit and make it a turning point to decide the present course and eternal destiny of some of my hearers?

Our text contains some very sound advice. Let us ask—to whom was it originally addressed? And to whom is it appropriately addressed now?

I. TO WHOM WAS IT ADDRESSED.

“*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.*” Look at the 10th verse, “Be wise now, therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.” Thus to monarchs and potentates of this world—to those who made and those who administered the laws, in whose hands were the liberties, if not the lives of their subjects—were these words spoken! People make a great fuss about a sermon preached before Her Majesty. I must confess to having wasted a shilling once or twice over those productions. I could never make out why they should not have been sold for a halfpenny, for I think better sermons could have been bought for a penny. But, somehow, there is always an interest attached to anything that is preached before a king or a queen, and still more so if it is pointedly preached to a king. Now this was a little private advice given to kings and judges. Still, it offers counsel by which persons of inferior rank may profit. You, Sir, are not so great in station but this advice may be good enough for you! If it was meant for those who sat on thrones, wielded scepters and exercised authority, you will not have to humble yourself much to listen earnestly, and receive gratefully this admonition of wisdom!

Let me take you by your coat, and hold you for a minute, and say, Be wise now. This is the day for reason. Exercise a little judgment—put on your considering cap—do not spurn the monition, or put it on one side with a huff and a puff, as though it were not discreet or urgent. This was language meant for kings—listen to it—it may be a royal word to you! Perhaps—for strange things happen—it may help to make you a king, too, according to that saying which is written, “He has made us kings and priests unto God.” The language which would command the attention of kings would certainly claim heed of such humble and obscure persons as are here assembled! Surely, when the expostulation proceeds from the mouth of God, and when it is spoken to the highest in the world, you might account it a privilege to have the matter made privy to yourselves! And as it intimately concerns you, there is the more cause that you take heed thereunto.

The words were spoken to *those who had willfully opposed the reign of our Savior*, the Son of God, the Lord’s Anointed. They had determined to reject Him. They said, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” A terrible, a disastrous course to resolve upon in the teeth of a destiny that no plot can hinder, no confederacy can avert! Hence, the caution and the counsel appeal to all or to any who have been opposers of Christ and of true religion. I do not suppose there are many such here, who are actively and ostensibly revolting against the Gospel, yet there may be some such and, if there are, I would sound an alarm and ring loudly the warning, “Be wise now, therefore! Be instructed! Do listen a little!” It is good to be zealous in a good cause. But suppose it is a bad cause? Saul of Tarsus was vehement against Christ, but after some consideration, he became quite as enthusiastic for Him. It may cost you

many regrets another day to have been so violent against that which you will find out to have been worthy of your love rather than of your fierce opposition! Every wise man, before he commits himself to defend or withstand a policy, should make quite sure, as far as human judgment can, whether it is right or wrong—to be desired, or to be deprecated! Surely I do not speak to any who would willfully oppose that which is good. Or, if prejudice has prompted you, there is all the more reason why your judgment should now be impartial. Stop, therefore, and give ear! It may be your relenting will be kindled, and wisdom will enlighten your heart. These words were spoken to those who ought to have been wise—to kings and judges of the earth. Those mighty ones had been mistaken, otherwise the rebuke would have been untimely and superfluous—“Be wise now, therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.” It appears they had rebelled—partly through ignorance, but mainly through jealousy and malice—they had rebelled and revolted against the Christ of God. Doubtless they did not rightly understand Him. Perhaps they thought His way was hard, His Laws severe, His government tyrannical. But He meets your wild rage with His mild reasoning! To the gusts of your passion, He responds with the gentle voice of His mercy, “Be wise, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.” Learn a little more. Get a little more knowledge—it may correct your vain imaginations. A ray of light shining into your minds might make you shudder at the darkness in the midst of which you dwell! A view of the right might, perhaps, show you that you have been wrong. It might take the tiller of your soul and turn the vessel around into another course. We are, none of us, so wise but we could profit by a little more instruction! He that cannot learn from a fool, is a fool himself. When a man says, “I know enough,” he knows nothing! He who thinks that his education is “finished,” had need begin his schooling afresh, for a fair start he has never yet made. With a sound basis, the edifice of education may proceed satisfactorily, but it never can be completed. Excelsior is the student’s motto. He sees higher and higher altitudes as he rises in attainment—and as long as he sojourns in this world, fresh fields of enquiry will continue to open up before him!

Once again, I believe the words of our text leave an especial reference to *those who are thoughtless and careless about their best interests*. The kings of the earth were deliberating how they might successfully oppose Christ, but they were strangely and culpably negligent of their real interest. Hence the remonstrance, “Be wise now; be instructed, you judges of the earth.” The general lack of intelligence in the present day with respect to religion is, to my mind, appalling. The knowledge with which most men are content is superficial in the extreme. They do not think! They do not take the pains to make reflections and draw inferences from the facts within their reach, but they allow themselves to drift with the

tide of what is called “public opinion.” Were it the fashion for people to carry brains in their heads, some religions which are now very rife would soon come to an end! I have stood aghast with wonder and with awe at the sublime folly of mankind, when I have seen how eagerly and devoutly they will bow down before baubles and street shows, while they vainly imagine that they are worshipping God! Have they no brains within their skulls? Have they no faculty of thought? Have they no reasoning power? What singular defect can be traced to their birth, or with what fatal folly have they renounced their commonsense? Ought we to pity, to chide, or to scorn them? In indictments for witchcraft, I suppose, you punish the impostor as a knave, while you laugh at the victim as a dupe. But in cases of priestcraft, you divide the scandal more equally. So the Sunday theatricals run their course till the force of thought, the voice of conscience, and, I might add, the love of liberty, shall pronounce their doom! People do not think. Some of them are of the religion of their ancestors, whatever that may be! You hear of Roman Catholic families and Quaker families. Not conviction, but *tradition* shapes their ends. Others are of the religion of the circle in which they live, whatever that may be. They are good Protestants, they say—had they been born in Naples, they would have been as good Papists! Or had they been born at Timbuktu, they would have been as good heathens—just about as good in any case! Thought, reason, or judgment never entered into their reckoning. They go up to their place of worship—they pray as others do, or they say, “Amen,” in the service. Thought they have none. They sing without thought, hear without thought and as the thing is to be done, I suppose, they preach without thought!

Talk of preaching, I have specimens at home of sermons which can be bought for nine pence each. They are underlined, so that the proper emphasis is apparent—and the pauses to be made between the sentences are fairly indicated. Preaching made easy! We shall be favored, one of these days, with preaching machines—we have already got down to *hearing* machines. The mass of our hearers is not much more animated than an automaton figure. Life and liveliness are lacking in both. Preaching and hearing may both, perhaps, be done by steam! I would it were not so. Men are evidently thoughtful about other things. Bring up a sanitary problem and there are men that will work it out somehow. Is some new invention needed, say, a gun or a torpedo, to effect wholesale destruction of life? You shall find competitors in the arena, vying, one with another, in their study of the murderous science! Man seems to think of everything but of his God—to read everything but his Bible—to feel the influence of everything but the love of Christ, and to see reason and argument in everything except in the inviolable truth of Divine Revelation. Oh, when will men consider? Why are they bent upon dashing into eternity thoughtlessly? Is dying and passing into another world of no more ac-

count than passing from the parlor to the drawing room? Is there no hereafter? Is Heaven a dream and Hell a bugbear? Well, then, cease to play with shadows! No longer foster such delusions! Be these things true or false, your insincerity is alike glaring. Like honest men, repudiate the Scriptures if you will not accept their counsel. Do not pretend to believe the solemnities of God's Word and yet trifle with them! This is to stultify yourselves, while you insult your Maker! I appeal to the conscience of every thoughtless person here, if reason or commonsense would justify such vacillation. Having thus tried to find out the people to whom my text applies, let me now direct your attention to the advice it gives them.

II. THE ADVICE WHICH IS GIVEN.

The advice is this—*rebel no more against God*. You have done so, some of you actively and willfully. Others of you, by ignoring His claims and utterly neglecting His will. It is not right to continue in this rebellious state! To have become entangled in such iniquity is grievous enough, but to continue therein any longer were an outrageous folly and a terrible crime. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Do you say, "We hear of advice and are willing to take it—our anxiety now is to find out the way in which we can become reconciled to God. How can we be restored to friendship with Him whom we have so bitterly wronged and so grossly offended?" Here is the pith of the advice. "Kiss the Son, pay Him homage, yield the affectionate fealty of your hearts to the Son of God." Between you and the great King, there is an awful breach. You can obtain no audience of Him. So grievous has been your revolt, that He will not see you. He has shut the door and there cannot be any communication between you and Himself. He has hung up a thick veil, through which your prayers cannot penetrate. But He refers you to His Son. That Son is His other Self—One with Himself in essential Deity, who has condescended to become man, has taken your nature into union with Himself, and in that Nature has offered unto Divine Justice an expiatory Sacrifice for human guilt. Now, therefore, God will deal with you through His Son. *You must have an Advocate*—as many a client cannot plead in court, but must have some counselor to plead for him who is infinitely more versed in the law and better able to defend his cause than he is—so the Lord appoints that you, if you would see the face of your God, must see it in the face of Jesus Christ! The short way of being at peace with God is not to try and mend your ways, or excuse yourself, or perform certain works, or go through certain ceremonies, but to repair to Christ, the one and only Mediator, who once was fastened to the Cross, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. He is now at the right hand of God, and you are required to worship Him, to trust in Him, to love Him. Thus do, and the reconciliation between you and God is effected in a moment! The blessed Jesus will wash you from your guilt, and the righteousness of Christ will cover you with beauty which will make

you acceptable in the sight of God. "Kiss the Son." It means render Him homage, just as in our own country they speak of kissing the Queen's hands when certain offices are taken and homage is required. So come and kiss the Savior! No hard work this! Some of us would gladly *forever* kiss His blessed *feet*! It would be Heaven enough for us. Oh, come and pay your homage to Him! Acknowledge that Christ is your King! Give up your life to His service. Consecrate all your powers and faculties to do His will. But do trust Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." That is the true kiss! Trust Him, rely upon Him, depend upon Him—leave off depending upon yourself, and rely upon Jesus! Throw yourself flat down upon the finished work of Christ! When you have so done your faith has reconciled you to God, and you may go your way in peace. Only go your way henceforth to serve that King whose hand you have kissed, and to be the willing subject of that dear Redeemer who ought to have you because He bought you with His precious blood!

This advice is urgent. *Do it at once*. I am not speaking, now, after the fashion of the orator, but I am talking to you as a friend. I wish I could pass along those aisles, or over the tops of those pews, and gently take the hand of each one, and say, "Friend, God would gladly have you reconciled to Him, and it only needs the simple act of trusting Jesus and accepting Him to be your Leader and your King." Do it now. If it is ever worth doing, it is worth doing at once! It is a blessed thing to do. Why delay? It is a simple thing to do! Why hesitate? It is the very least thing God could ask of you, and even that He will not require you to do in your own strength. Are you willing, but weak? He will help you to do what He commands you to do! Now, as you sit in your pew, what say you to this? "I will think it over," says one. Does it need any thinking over? If I had offended my father, I should wish to be at peace with him immediately—and if my father said to me, "My son, I will be reconciled to you if you will go and speak to your brother about it," well, I would not think it difficult, for I love my brother as well as my father, and I would go to him at once—and so all would be well. God says, "Go to Jesus. I am in Him. You can reach Me there—go round by His Cross—you will find Me reconciled there. Away from the Cross I am a Judge and my terrors will consume you. With the Cross between you and Me, I am a Father, and you shall behold My face beaming with love to you." "But how am I to get to Jesus?" you ask. Why, have I not told you?—simply to trust Him—to rely upon Him! Faith is trusting Christ. This is the Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Put your entire trust in Him. Renounce all lordship that has ever been exercised over you by any other master and become Christ's servant! Rely on Him to land you safely at the right hand of God, and He will do it. "Kiss the Son." Oh, Friend, I cannot make you do it—it must be done of your own will. God alone can lead that will of yours to yield itself up to Christ's will! But I pray you do

it—kiss the Son, and do it now! Pursuing our quiet talk, I come to my third point, which is—

III. HOW IS THIS ADVICE PRESSED HOME UPON US?

The vanity of any other course is made palpable. Be reconciled to God because *there is no use in being at enmity with Him*. The kings of the earth opposed God, but while they were plotting and planning, God was laughing. “Yet,” says He, “have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” I think if I were a king and had the misfortune to be driven to go to war, I would not like to fight one that had ten times my own strength! I would rather engage in a somewhat equal combat, with a prospect that by dint of valor and good generalship, victory might be gained. To contend against Omnipotence is insanity! For any man, I care not who he may be, to put himself in opposition to God is utter folly! I have often watched, as doubtless you have done, the foolish moth attracted by the glare of the candle or the gas. He plunges at it, as though he would put it out, and he drops, full of exquisite pain, upon the table. He has enough wing left to make another dash at the flame, and again he is filled with another pain, and unless you mercifully kill him outright, he will continue as long as he has any strength to fight with the fire which destroys him! That is an apt picture of the sinner’s life—and such will be the sinner’s death! Oh, do not so, dear Friend—do not so! Speak I not with voice of reason when I thus dissuade you? If you must fight, let it be with someone that you can overcome. But sit down now and reckon whether you can hope to win a victory against an Almighty God! End the quarrel, Man, for the quarrel will otherwise end in your death and eternal destruction!

We are further pressed to the duty commanded by *the claims of the Son*. “Kiss the Son.” As I read the words, they seem to me to have a force of argument in them which explains itself and vindicates its own claims. Kiss! Kiss whom? “Kiss the Son.” And who is He? Why, He is Jesus, the Well-Beloved of the Father! And among the sons of men, the Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely! Surely Christ is such a princely One that He ought to receive homage of mankind! He has done such great things for us and He has shown such good will towards us, that to pay Him reverence seems not so much the call of duty as the natural impulse of love! The worship which is His due should flow spontaneously from the instincts of Grace rather than be exacted by the fiat of law! Even those who have denied the authenticity of Inspiration have always been charmed with the Character of our Lord, and you will notice that the most astute opponents of Christianity have had little, if anything, to say against the Founder of it, so transparent His virtue, so charming His humility. Oh, Kiss the Son, then! He is God—trust Him. He is Man, a perfect Man—confide in His friendship. He has finished the work of human redemption, therefore, hail Him as your King and pay your homage

to Him now! Oh, that God's eternal Spirit may lead you so to do without hesitation or objection!

Were I talking to some of you in a quiet corner I might gather an argument from the simplicity of the promise here offered you. "Kiss the Son." Is that all? Pay Jesus homage. Is that all? The Emperor of Germany, in the olden times when Popes were Popes, had offended his Unholiness—and before he could be restored to favor, he had to stand for three days (I think it was) outside the castle gate, in the deep snow, in the depth of winter, and do penance. I have seen, myself, in Rome and elsewhere, outside of the older churches, places uncovered and exposed to wind and rain, to the heat of summer and the frost of winter, where backsliders were made to stand, sometimes for years, even, before they were restored, if they had committed some offense against ecclesiastical statutes! You will sometimes see in old country churches of England little windows that run slanting and just look toward the communion table, through which poor offenders who professed repentance, after some months of standing in the church yard, or perhaps outside of it, were at last allowed to take a peep at the altar, at the expiration of their weary term of penance! All this is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, for the spirit of the Gospel is, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool." The spirit of my text is, "Kiss the Son, now"—and that is all. Though those lips were once blaspheming, let them kiss the Son! Though these lips have uttered high words and proud words, or perhaps lying and lascivious words, "Kiss the Son." Bow down at those dear pierced feet and trust Emmanuel, and acknowledge yourself His servant, and you shall be forgiven—forgiven at once, without delay and this night you shall be accepted in Christ! I am right glad I have got so good a message to tell! I would that you would receive it with gladness. May it drop like the snowflakes on the sea, which sink into the waves. May each invitation sink into your soul, there to bless you henceforth and forever!

Moreover, the exhortation of our text is backed up with *felicitations for those who yield to it*. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him." Those of you who do not know anything about trusting in Christ must have noticed how joyously we sang that hymn just now—

**"Oh, happy day that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad."**

Don't you think there was some fervor in our tones? Was it not sung as if we meant it? If nobody else meant it, I did! And I could see by the look of your eyes that a good many of you were stirred with grateful recollections. It was the happiest day in all our lives when Jesus washed our sins away! Far be it from us to deceive any of you by saying that to be a Christian will save you from the sorrows of the world, or from trials and

tribulations, from physical pain or from natural death. Nothing of the kind! You will be liable to sickness and adversity in their manifold forms, as other men are, but you will have this to comfort you in every dark, distressing hour—that these light afflictions, which are but for a season—will come to you from a loving Father’s gentle hand, with a gracious purpose, and they will be dealt out to you in weight and measure according to His judgment, while some sweet consolations will always be sent with them. And, above all, there is perpetual joy and perennial satisfaction in that man’s heart who knows that he is right with God. Although his house may not be as he would have it, yet he has accepted God’s way of reconciliation—he is reconciled by the blood of Christ! God loves him and he loves God! He is confident, therefore, that whether he lives or dies, he must be blessed, because he is at peace with God! Oh, happy day, happy day, thrice happy day, when a man comes into this blessed state! I have heard many regret that they have pursued the pleasures of sense and been fascinated with them, but I never yet heard of one who had found the dear delights of faith pall on his taste! It has never fallen to my lot yet to attend a dying bed where I have heard a Christian regret that he put his trust in his Savior! Neither have I ever heard at any time of anyone who died believing in Jesus who has had to say, “Had I but served the world with half the zeal I served my God I should have been a happier man.” Oh, no! Such bitter reflections on misspent and misused talents befit the worldling, and the world’s poet put it into the dying man’s mouth in another form from that in which I gave it, for, “what we might have been,” and, “what we might have done,” make the sum of life’s bewailing when death in view makes such repentance unavailing! The Christian’s satisfaction is, on the other hand, only shaded by the wish all feel that they had loved the Savior more intensely, trusted Him more confidently and served Him more diligently! Never have I heard any other kind of compunction and self-reproach.

“Come along, then, Friend, Come along,” they say to us! “What matters so long as you are happy?” I have often heard them say so. And let me say to you, if that is one of your slogans and *you really do seek after happiness*, you cannot do better than pay homage to the Son of God, end the awful rupture between you and your Creator, and henceforth put your trust in Him. One other motive I must mention. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” A striking expression! If Christ gets a little angry, men perish from the way! Then what must His *great anger* be? If His anger, kindled but a little, burns like a devouring fire, and men perish from the way of life, and from all hope of salvation, what must His great wrath be? Is there a fear suggested here that anybody will provoke Christ to fiercer anger? There is. Alas, there is! Shall I tell you the likeliest person to do it? Not, I think, that abandoned sinner who was born and bred in an

immoral atmosphere and has followed a vicious course to the present hour. To him I would say, "Come to Jesus, and He will wash you now, and cleanse you from all your pollution." But the man I tremble for as most likely to make Him swear in His wrath is such a one as I was—privileged with godly parents, watched with jealous eyes, scarcely ever permitted to mingle with questionable associates, warned not to listen to anything profane or licentious—taught the way of God from his youth up! In my case there came a time when the solemnities of eternity pressed upon me for a decision and when a mother's tears and a father's supplications were offered to Heaven on my behalf. At such a time, had I not been helped by the Grace of God, but had I been left alone to do violence to conscience, and to struggle against conviction, I might have been at this moment perhaps dead, buried, and doomed, having, through a course of vice, brought myself to my grave! Or I might have been as earnest a ringleader among the ungodly as I desire to be for Christ and His Truth! When there is light given, when one is not left to grope in darkness, when conscience is kept tender, a little provocation may then very much anger Christ!

I am afraid some of you young people that are growing up here stand in deep need of remonstrance. You have got good parents. You have been instructed in the Scriptures from your infancy and you have had great many deep impressions while sitting in these pews listening to the sound of the Gospel—and yet you are playing with them, you are trifling with them! Nothing bad about you, so you think. You are not conscious of having grossly violated any moral law. But have you never heard of a gentleman in India who had a tame leopard that went about his house? It was as playful as a cat, and did no one any harm till one day, as he lay asleep, the leopard licked his hand and licked until it had licked a sore place and tasted blood. After that there was nothing for it but to destroy it—for all the leopard-nature was aroused by that taste of blood! And some of you young people, with all the godly associations that are round about you, will—I am always afraid—get a taste of the devilry outside, of the world's vice and sin. And then there is the leopard's nature in you. If you once get the taste and flavor of it, you will be prone to be always thirsting for it. Then, instead of the hope we now cherish, that we shall soon see you at your parents' side, serving Christ—see you take your father's place, young man, in later years—see you, young woman, grow up to be a matron in the Church of God, bringing many others to the Savior—we may have to lament that the children are not as the parents, and cry, "Woe is the day that ever they were born." I, therefore, want you to decide, lest you perish from the way—from the way of God and the way of righteousness—while His wrath is kindled but a little, lest He say, "Let them alone," and throw the reins on your neck, for if He should once

do that, woe the day! Nothing can happen worse to a man than to be left to himself. Kiss the Son, then!

Affectionately and earnestly do I entreat you—not standing here ex-officio to deliver pious platitudes, but from my very soul, as though I were your brother or father, I would say, Young man, young woman, kiss the Son now! Yield your heart up to Jesus now! Blessed are they who trust in Him now. Oh, tonight, tonight, tonight—your first night in Grace, or else your last night in hope! Tonight, tonight! The clock has just struck. It seemed to say, “Tonight.” God help you to say, “Yes, it shall be tonight, for God and for Christ!”—

**“Songs of triumph then resounding
From your happy lips shall flow!
In the knowledge of salvation
You true happiness shall know,
Through Christ Jesus,
Who alone can life bestow.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:36-48.**

Verse 36. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. They sat according to the Eastern custom of sitting, which was rather lying at length, with the feet far out upon the couch or sofa.*

37. *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner. In a particular sense, a sinner—one whose very trade was sin.*

37, 38. *When she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet, behind Him, weeping. As she could do, you see, without coming into the room, except for a few yards, especially if the Savior’s feet were close against the door.*

38. *And began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. For water she gives her tears, for a towel, her hair—to heal the blisters of His weary pilgrimage, there are her soft lips for liniment and then, for ointment, comes this precious salve.*

39. *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is who touches Him; for she is a sinner. “She is a sinner, and does He let her touch Him, kiss His feet and show such tokens of affection? What Man must He be who allows a harlot’s kiss, even though it is upon His feet?” Ah, poor foolish Pharisee! He judged according to the sight of the eyes, or else he might have known that the best of men would never be angry at a harlot’s tears, for the*

tears of repentance, come from whatever heart they may, are always like diamonds in the esteem of those who judge rightly.

40-42. *And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have something to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay—And were, therefore, likely to be cast into prison, and to be sold as slaves.*

42-43. *He frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. There were no bonds, no promises of what they would do in the future, but he frankly forgave them both.*

44. *And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? I entered into your house—And it was, therefore, your duty to attend to Me.*

44. *You gave Me no water for My feet. Though that was the common custom.*

44, 45. *But she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head You gave Me no kiss. Which was the customary welcome to every honored guest—a kiss upon the cheek or upon the forehead.*

45. *But this women since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet. She has done what you ought to have done; she has done it better than you could have done it; she has done it when there was no claim upon her to do it, except that she has been forgiven much, and, therefore, loved much.*

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint. This, too, was the usual custom.*

46-48. *But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven.*

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

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

THE GREATEST TRIAL ON RECORD

NO. 495

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1863,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
 against the Lord and against His Anointed.”*
Psalm 2:2.

AFTER our Lord had been betrayed by the false-hearted Judas, He was bound by the officers who had come to take Him. No doubt the cords were drawn as tight, and twisted as mercilessly as possible. If we believe the traditions of the fathers, these cords cut through the flesh even to the very bones, so that all the way from the garden to the house of Annas, His blood left a crimson trail. Our Redeemer was hurried along the road which crosses the brook Kedron. A second time He was made, like unto David, who passed over that brook, weeping as he went.

And perhaps it was on this occasion that he drank of that foul brook by the way. The brook Kedron, you know, was that into which all the filth of the sacrifices of the temple was cast. And Christ, as though He were a foul and filthy thing, must be led to the black stream. He was led into Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate, the gate through which the lambs of the Passover, and the sheep for sacrifice were always driven. Little did they understand, that in so doing, they were again following out to the very letter the significant types which God had ordained in the law of Moses.

They led, I say, this Lamb of God through the Sheep Gate, and they hastened Him on to the house of Annas, the ex-high priest, who, either from his relationship to Caiaphas, from his natural ability, or his prominence in opposing the Savior, stood high in the opinion of the rulers. Here they made a temporary call, to gratify the bloodthirsty Annas with the sight of his victim. And then, hastening on, they brought Him to the house of Caiaphas, some little distance off, where, though it was but a little past the dead of night, many members of the Sanhedrim were assembled.

In a very short time, no doubt informed by some speedy messenger, all the rest of the elders came together and sat down with great delight to the malicious work at hand. Let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ, not, like Peter, afar off, but, like John. Let us go in with Jesus into the high priest's house. And when we have tarried awhile there, and have seen our Savior despitefully used, let us traverse the streets with Him, till we come to the hall of Pilate. And then to the palace of Herod, and then afterwards to the place called “the pavement,” where Christ is subjected to an ignominious competition with Barabbas, the murderer. And where we hear the howling of the people, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

Brethren, as the Lord gave commandment concerning even the ashes and offal of the sacrifices, we ought to think no matter trivial which stands in connection with our great Burnt Offering. My admonition is, “Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost.” As gold-

smiths sweep their shops to save even the filings of the gold, so every word of Jesus should be treasured up as very precious.

But, indeed, the narrative to which I invite you is not unimportant. Things which were purposed of old, prophesied by Seers, witnessed by Apostles, written by Evangelists and published by the ambassadors of God, are not matters of secondary interest. They deserve our solemn and devout attention. Let all our hearts be awed as we follow the King of kings in His pathway of shame and suffering.

I. Come we, then, to the hall of Caiaphas. After the mob had dragged our Lord from the house of Annas, they reached the palace of Caiaphas, and there *a brief interval* occurred before the high priest came forth to question the Prisoner. How were those sad minutes spent? Was the poor Victim allowed a little pause to collect His thoughts, that He might face His accusers calmly? Far from it—Luke shall tell the pitiful story—“And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote You? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him.”

The officers were pausing until the chairman of the court should please to have an interview with the Prisoner, and instead of suffering the Accused to take a little rest before a trial so important, upon which His life and Character depended, they spend all the time in venting their bitter malice upon Him. Observe how they insult His claim to the Messiahship! In effect, they mock Him thus—“You claim to be a Prophet like unto Moses. You know things to come. If you are sent of God, prove it by discovering your foes. We will put You on trial and test You, O Man of Nazareth.”

They bind His eyes and then, smiting Him one after another, they bid Him exercise His prophetic gift for their amusement, and prophecy who it was that smote Him. Oh, shameful question! How gracious was the silence, for an answer might have withered them forever. The day *shall* come when all that smite Christ shall find that He *has* seen them, though they thought His eyes were blinded. The day shall come, Blasphemer, Worldling, careless Man, when everything that you have done against Christ's cause, and Christ's people, shall be published before the eyes of men and angels—and Christ shall *answer* your question—and shall tell you who it is that smote Him.

I speak to some this morning who have forgotten that Christ sees them. And they have ill-treated His people. They have spoken ill of His holy cause, saying, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” I tell you, the Judge of men shall, before long, point you out and make you, to your shame and confusion of face, confess that you smote the Savior when you smote His Church.

This preliminary mockery being over, *Caiaphas, the high priest came in.* He began, at once, to interrogate the Lord prior to the public trial, doubtless with the view of catching Him in His speech. The high priest asked Him, first, of his *disciples*. We do not know what questions he asked. Perhaps they were something like these—“What do You mean, to allow a rabble to follow You wherever You go? Who are You, that You should have twelve persons always attending You, and calling You Master? Do You in-

tend to make these the leaders of a band of men? Are these to be Your lieutenants, to raise a host on Your behalf?

“Or do You pretend to be a Prophet, and are these the sons of the Prophets who follow You, as Elisha did Elijah? Moreover, *where* are they? Where are Your gallant followers? If You are a good man, why are they not here to bear witness to You? Where are they gone? Are they not ashamed of their folly, now that Your promises of honor all end in shame?” The high priest, “asked Him of His disciples.” Our Lord Jesus, on this point, said not a syllable. Why this silence? Because it is not for our Advocate to accuse His disciples. He might have answered, “Well do you ask, ‘Where are they?’ The cowards forsook Me. When one proved a traitor, the rest took to their heels.

“You ask, ‘Where are My disciples?’ *There is one yonder*, sitting by the fire, warming his hands, the same who just now denied Me with an oath.” But no, He would not utter a word of accusation. He whose lips are mighty to intercede *for* His people, will never speak *against* them. Let Satan slander, but Christ pleads. The accuser of the Brothers and Sisters is the prince of this world—the Prince of peace is ever our Advocate before the Eternal Throne.

The high priest next shifted his ground and asked him concerning *His doctrine*—what it was that He taught—whether what He taught was not in contradiction to the original teachings of their great lawgiver Moses—and whether He had not railed at the Pharisees, reviled the Scribes, and exposed the rulers. The Master gave a noble answer. Truth is never shame-faced—He boldly points to His public life as His best answer. “I spoke openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort. And in secret have I said nothing. Why ask me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.”

No sophistries—no attempt at evasion—the best armor for the truth is her own naked breast. He had preached in the market places, on the mountain’s brow, and in the Temple courts. Nothing had been done in a corner. Happy is the man who can make so noble a defense. Where is the weakness in such a harness? Where can the arrow pierce the man arrayed in so complete a panoply? Little did that arch-knave Caiaphas gain by his crafty questioning. For the rest of the questioning, our Lord Jesus said not a word in self-defense. He knew that it availed not for a lamb to plead with wolves. He was well aware that whatever He said would be misconstrued and made a fresh source of accusation.

And He willed, moreover, to fulfill the prophecy, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” But what power He exerted in thus remaining silent! Perhaps nothing displays more fully the Omnipotence of Christ than this power of self-control. Control the Deity? What power less than Divine can attempt the task? Behold, my Brothers and Sisters, the Son of God does more than rule the winds and commend the waves, He restrains *Himself*. And when a word, a whisper would have refuted His foes and swept them to their eternal destruction, He “opened not His mouth.” He who opened His mouth for His enemies, will not utter a word for Himself.

If ever silence were more than golden, it is this deep silence under infinite provocation.

During this preliminary examination, our Lord suffered an outrage which needs a passing notice. When He had said, "Ask them that hear Me," some over-officious person in the crowd struck Him in the face. The margin in John 18:22 very properly corrects our version and renders the passage, "with a rod." Now, considering that our blessed Lord suffered so much, this one little particular might seem unimportant, only it happens to be the subject of prophecy in the book of Micah 5:1, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."

This smiting while under trial is peculiarly atrocious. To strike a man while he is pleading in his own defense, would surely be a violation of the laws even of barbarians. It brought Paul's blood into his face and made him lose his balance when the high priest ordered them to smite him on the mouth. I think I hear his words of burning indignation—"God shall smite you, you whited wall! For do you sit to judge me after the Law, and command me to be smitten contrary to the Law?"

How soon the servant loses his temper! How far more glorious the meekness of the Master. What a contrast do these gentle words afford us—"If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil. But if well, why do you smite Me?" This was such a concentrated infamy, to strike a man while pleading for his life, that it well deserved the notice both of Evangelist and Prophet.

But now *the court are all sitting*. The members of the great Sanhedrim are all in their various places, and Christ is brought forth for the public trial before the highest ecclesiastical court. It is, mark you, a foregone conclusion that by hook or crook they will find Him guilty. They scour the neighborhood for witnesses. There were fellows to be found in Jerusalem, like those who in the olden times frequented the Old Bailey—"straw witnesses"—who were ready to be bought on either side. And, provided they were well paid, would swear to anything. But for all this, though the witnesses were ready to perjure themselves, they could not agree one with another.

Being heard separately, their tales did not tally. At last two came with some degree of similarity in their witness. They were both liars, but for once the two liars had struck the same note. They declared that He said, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands," Mark 14:58. Now here was, first, misquotation. He never said, "I will destroy the temple." His words were, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." See how they add to His words, and twist them to their own ends? Then again, they not only misquoted the words, but they misrepresented the sense, willfully, because He spoke concerning the temple of His body, and not the literal temple in which they worshipped.

And this they must have known. He said, "Destroy this temple"—and the accompanying action might have showed them that He meant His own body, which was raised by His glorious resurrection after destruction upon the Cross. Let us add, that even when thus misrepresented, the witness was not sufficient as the foundation for a capital charge. Surely there could be nothing worthy of death in a man's saying, "Destroy this temple

and I will build it in three days." A person might make use of those words a thousand times over—he might be very foolish, but he would not be guilty of death for such an offense.

But where men have made up their minds to hate Christ, they will hate Him without a cause. Oh, you that are adversaries of Christ—and there are some such here today—I know you try to invent some excuse for your opposition to His holy religion! You forge a hundred falsehoods! But you know that your witness is not true, and the trial in your conscience, through which you pass the Savior, is but a mock one. Oh that you were wise, and would understand Him to be what He is, and submit yourselves to Him now. Finding that their witness, even when tortured to the highest degree, was not strong enough, *the high priest*, to get matter of accusation, *commanded Him* by the Most High God to answer whether He was the Christ, "the Son of the Blessed."

Being thus entreated, our Master would not set us an example of cowardice—He spoke to purpose—He said, "*I am*," Mark 14:62, and then, to show how fully He knew this to be true, He added, "you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven." I cannot understand what Unitarians do with this incident. Christ was put to death on a charge of blasphemy, for having declared Himself to be the Son of God. Was not that the time when any sensible person would have denied the accusation? If He had not really claimed to be the Son of God, would He not *now* have spoken?

Would He not now, once and for all, have delivered our minds from the mistake under which we are laboring, if, indeed, it is a mistake, that He is the Son of God? But no, He seals it with His blood. He bears open testimony before the herd of His accusers. "*I am*." *I am* the Son of God, and *I am* the sent One of the Most High. Now, now the thing is done! They want no further evidence. The judge, forgetting the impartiality which becomes his station, pretends to be wonderfully struck with horror. He rends his garments, turns round to ask his co-assessors whether they need any further witness. And they, all too ready, hold up their hands in token of unanimity and our precious Master is at once condemned to die.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters—and no sooner condemned, than the high priest, stepping down from his divan—spits in His face! And then the Sanhedrim follow and smite Him on His cheeks. And then they turn Him down to the rabble that had gathered in the court, and they buffet Him from one to the other, and spit upon His blessed cheeks, and smite Him. And then they play the old game again, which they had learned so well before the trial came on. They blindfold Him for a second time, place Him in a chair, and as they smite Him with their fists, they cry. "Prophet! Prophet! Prophet! Who is it that smote You? Prophecy unto us!"

And thus the Savior passed a second time through that most brutal and ignominious treatment. If we had tears, if we had sympathies, if we had hearts—we should prepare to shed those tears, to awake those sympathies, and break those hearts *now*. O Lord of Life and Glory! How shamefully were You treated by those who pretended to be the curators of holy Truth, the conservators of integrity, and the teachers of the Law!

Having thus sketched the trial as briefly as I could, let me just say that throughout the whole of this trial before the ecclesiastical tribunal, it is

manifest that they did all they could to pour contempt upon His two claims—to Deity and to Messiahship. Now, Friends, this morning—this morning, as truly as on that eventful occasion—you and I must decide on which of two sides we are on. Either this day we must cheerfully acknowledge His Godhead and accept Him also as the Messiah, the Savior promised of old to us. Or else we must take our post with those who are the adversaries of God and of His Christ.

Will you ask yourself the question, on which side will you now stand? I pray you, do not think that Christ's Deity needs any further proof than that which this one court gives. My dear Friends, there is no religion under Heaven, no false religion, which would have dared to hazard such a statement—for that yonder Man who was spit upon, and buffeted, was none other than incarnate God. No false religion would venture to draw upon the credulity of its followers to that extent. What? That Man there who speaks not a word, who is mocked, despised, rejected, made nothing of—what?—He is “very God of very God?” You do not find Mohammed, nor any false Prophet asking any person to believe a doctrine so extraordinary!

They know too well that there is a limit, even to human faith. And they have not ventured upon such a marvelous assertion as this, that yonder despised Man is none other than the Upholder of all things. No false religion would have taught a truth so humbling to him who is its founder and lord. Besides, it is not in the power of any man-made religion to have conceived such a thought! That Deity should willingly submit to be spit upon to redeem those whose mouths vented the spittle! In what book do you read such a wonder as this? We have pictures drawn from imagination—we have been enchanted along romantic pages—and we have marvelled at the creative flights of human genius. But where did you ever read such a thought as this?

“God was made flesh and dwelt among us”? He was despised, scourged, mocked, treated as though He were the offscouring of all things? He was brutally treated, worse than a dog, and all out of pure love to His enemies? Why, the thought is such a great one, so God-like, the compassion in it is so Divine, that it *must* be true! None but God could have thought of such a thing as this stoop from the highest Throne in Heaven to the Cross of deepest shame and woe. And do you think that if the doctrine of the Cross were not true, such effects would follow from it?

Would those South Sea Islands, once red with the blood of cannibalism, be now the abode of sacred song and peace? Would this island, once itself the place of naked savages, be what it is, through the influence of the benign Gospel of God, if that Gospel were a lie? Ah, hallowed mistake, indeed, to produce such peaceful, such blessed, such lasting, such Divine results! Ah, He is God. The thing is *not* false.

And that He is Messiah, who shall doubt? If God *should* send a Prophet, what better Prophet could you desire? What Character would you seek to have exhibited more completely human and Divine? What sort of a Savior would you wish for? What could better satisfy the cravings of conscience? Who could commend Himself more fully to the affections of the heart? He must be, we feel at once, as we see Him, One alone by Himself, with no competitor—He *must* be the Messiah of God.

Come, now, Sirs, on which side will you set yourselves? Will you smite Him? I put the question—"Who is it that will smite Him this day? Who is it that will spit upon Him this day?" "I will not," says one, "but I do not accept nor believe in Him." In *that* you smite Him, Fool! "I do not hate Him," says another, "but I am not saved by Him." In refusing His love, you smite Him. Whoever among you will not trust Him with your soul—in *that* you smite Him, smite Him in the most tender part—since you impugn His love and power to save.

Oh, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." That suffering Man stands in the place of everyone that will believe on Him. Trust Him! Trust Him!—you have then accepted Him as your God, as your Messiah. Refuse to trust Him!—you have smitten Him. And you may think it little to do this today—but when He rides upon the clouds of Heaven you will see your sin in its true light, and you will shudder to think that ever you could have refused *Him* who now reigns, "King of kings and Lord of lords." God help you to accept Him, as your God and Christ, today!

II. But our time flies too rapidly and we must hasten with it and accompany our Savior to another place.

The Romans had taken away from the Jews the power to put a person to death. The Jews sometimes did it still, but they did it, as in the case of Stephen, by popular tumult. Now, in our Savior's case, they could not do this because there was still a strong feeling in favor of Christ among the people. A feeling so strong, that had they not been bribed by the rulers, they would never have said, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" You will remember that the priests and rulers did not arrest Him on the feast day, "lest," they said, "there be a tumult among the people."

Besides, the Jewish way of putting a person to death, was by stoning—therefore, unless there was a sufficient number of persons who hated Him, a person would never get put to death at all. That is why the method of putting to death by stoning was chosen, because if a person was generally thought to be innocent, very few persons would stone him. And although he would be somewhat maimed, his life might possibly be spared. They thought, therefore, the Savior might escape as He did at other times, when they took up stones to stone Him.

Moreover, they desired to put Him to the death of the accursed. They would identify Him with slaves, and criminals, and hang him like the Canaanite kings of old. Therefore they took him away to Pilate. The distance was about a mile. He was bound in the same cruel manner, and was doubtless cut by the cords, He had already suffered most dreadfully. Remember the bloody sweat of last Sunday week. Then remember that He has already twice been beaten. And He is now hurried along, without any rest or refreshment, just as the morning is breaking, along the streets to the palace where Pilate lived.

Perhaps the tower of Antonia, close to the Temple itself—we are not quite sure. He is bound and they hurry Him along the road. And here the Roman writers supply a great number of particulars of anguish out of their very fertile imaginations. After they had brought Him there, a difficulty occurred. These holy people, these very righteous elders, could not come into the company of Pilate, because Pilate, being a Gentile, would

defile them! Now there was a broad space outside the palace, like a raised platform, called “the pavement,” where Pilate was likely to sit on those high days, that he might not touch these blessed Jews.

So he came out on the pavement, and they, themselves, went not into the hall, but remained before “the pavement.” Always notice that sinners who can swallow camels will strain at gnats! Crowds of men who will do great sins are very much afraid of committing some little things which they think will affect their religion. Notice, that many a man who is a big thief during the week, will ease his conscience by rigid Sabbatarianism when the day comes round. In fact, most hypocrites run for shelter to some close observance of days, ceremonies and observations—when they have slighted the weightier matters of the Law.

Well, Pilate receives Jesus bound. The charge brought against Him was not, of course, blasphemy. Pilate would have laughed at that, and declined all interference. They accused Him of stirring up sedition, pretending to be a king, and teaching that it was not right to pay tribute to Caesar. This last charge was a clear and manifest lie. *He* refuse to pay tribute? Did not He send to the fish’s mouth to get the money? *He* say that Caesar must not have his due? Did He not tell the Herodians—“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s?” *He* stir up a sedition?—the Man that had “not where to lay His head?” *He* pretend to snatch the diadem from Caesar?—He, the Man who hid Himself, when the people would have taken Him by force and made Him a king? Nothing can be more atrociously false.

Pilate examines him and discovers at once, both from His silence and from His answer, that He is a most extraordinary Person. He perceives that the kingdom which Jesus claims is something supernatural. He cannot understand it. He asks Him what He came into the world for—the reply puzzles and amazes him, “To bear witness to the truth,” says Jesus. Now, that was a thing no Roman understood—for a hundred years before Pilate came, Jugurtha said of the city of Rome, “a city for sale”—bribery, corruption, falsehood, treachery, villainy. These were the gods of Rome, and *truth* had fled the seven hills. The very meaning of the word was scarcely known.

So Pilate turned on his heel and said, “What is truth?” As much as to say, “I am the procurator of this part of the country. All I care for is money.” “What’s truth?” I do not think he asked the question, “What is truth?” as some preach from it, as if he seriously desired to know what it really was, for surely he would have paused for the Divine reply and not have gone away from Christ the moment afterwards. He said, “Pshaw! What’s truth?” Yet there was something so awful about the Prisoner, that his wife’s dream, and her message—“See that you have nothing to do with this just Person,” all worked upon the superstitious fears of this very weak-minded ruler.

So he went back and told the Jews a second time, “I find no fault in Him.” And when they said, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning at Galilee to this place,” Pilate caught at that word “Galilee.” “Now,” he thought, “I will be rid of this Man. The people shall have their way, and yet I will not be guilty.” “Galilee?” said he. “Why, Herod is ruler there. You had better take Him to Herod at once.” He thus

gained two or three points—he made Herod his friend—he hoped to exonerate himself of his crime—and yet please the mob.

Away they go to Herod. Oh, I think I see that blessed Lamb of God again hounded through the streets! Did you ever read such a tale? No martyr, even in Bloody Mary's time, was ever harried thus as the Savior was. We must not think that His agonies were all confined to the Cross. They were endured in those streets—in those innumerable blows, and kicks, and strikes with the fist, that He had to bear. They took Him before Herod and Herod, having heard of His miracles, thought to see some wonderful thing, some piece of jugglery, done in his presence. And when Christ refused to speak and would not plead before, "that fox," at all, Herod treated Him with a sneer. "They made nothing of Him."

Can you picture the scene? Herod, his captains, his lieutenants—and on down to the mean soldiers—treat the Savior with a broad grin! "A pretty king," they seem to say. "More like a miserable beggar! Look at His cheeks, all bruised where they have been smiting Him—is that the color of royalty's complexion?" "Look," they say, "He is emaciated, He is covered with blood, as though He had been sweating drops of blood all night. Is *that* the imperial purple?" And so they "made nothing of Him," and despised His kingship.

And Herod said, "Bring out that costly white robe. If He is a king, let us dress Him so," and so the white robe is put on Him—not a purple one—that, Pilate put on afterwards. He has two robes put on Him—the one put on by the Jews, the other by the Gentiles, seeming to be a fit comment on that passage in Solomon's song, where the spouse says, "My beloved is white and ruddy"—white with the gorgeous robe which marked Him King of the Jews, and then red with the purple robe which Pilate afterwards cast upon His shoulders, which proved him King of nations, too.

And so Herod and his men of war, after treating Jesus as shamefully as they could, looking at Him as some madman more fit for Bedlam than elsewhere, sent Him back again to Pilate. Oh, can you not follow Him? You need no great imagination—as you see them dragging Him back again! It is another journey along those streets. Another scene of shameful tumult, bitter scorn and cruel smiting. Why, He dies a hundred deaths, my Brothers and Sisters, it is not *one*—it is death on death the Savior bears, as He is dragged from tribunal to tribunal.

Look, they bring Him to Pilate a second time! Pilate again is anxious to save Him. He says, "I have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof you accuse Him—no, and neither Herod—I will therefore release Him!" "No, no," they say. And they clamor greatly. He proposes a cruel alternative, which yet He meant for tender mercy. "I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go." He gave Him over to his lictors to be scourged. The Roman scourge was, as I have explained before, a most dreadful instrument.

It was made of the sinews of oxen and little sharp pieces of bone, which, you know, cause the most frightful lacerations, if by accident you even run your hand over them. Little sharp pieces, splinters of bone, were intertwined here and there among the sinews. Every time the lash came down, some of these pieces of bone went right into the flesh and tore off

heavy large pieces, and not only the blood but the very flesh would be rent away.

The Savior was tied to the column and thus beaten. He had been beaten before—but this of the Roman lictor was probably the most severe of His flagellations. After Pilate had beaten Him, he gave Him up to the soldiers for a short time, that they might complete the mockery, and so be able to witness that Pilate had no idea of the royalty of Jesus, and no complicity in any supposed treason. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head and bowed before Him and spat on Him. They put a reed in His hands. They drove the crown of thorns into His temples. They covered Him with a purple robe.

And then Pilate brought Him out, saying, “Behold the Man!” I believe he did it out of pity. He thought, “Now I have wounded Him and cut Him to pieces. I will not kill Him. This sight will move their hearts.” Oh, that *Ecce Homo* ought to have melted their hearts, if Satan had not made them harder than flints, and sterner than steel. But no, they cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” So Pilate listens to them again, and they change their tune. “He has spoken blasphemy.” This was a wrong charge to bring—for Pilate, having his superstition again aroused—is even more afraid to put him to death.

And he comes out again, and says, “I find no fault in Him.” What a strong contest between good and evil in that man’s heart! But they cried out again, “If you let this man go you are not Caesar’s friend.” They hit the mark this time, and he yields to their clamor. He brings forth a basin of water, and he washes his hands before them all, and he says, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.” A poor way of escaping! That water could not wash the blood from his hands, though *their* cry did bring the blood on *their heads*—“His blood be on us, and on our children.”

When that is done, Pilate takes the last desperate step of sitting down on the pavement in royal State. He condemns Jesus and bids them take Him away. But before He is taken to execution, the dogs of war shall snap at Him again. The Jews, no doubt, having bribed the soldiers to excessive zeal of scorn, they a second time—(oh, mark this! Perhaps you thought this happened only once. This is the *fifth* time He has thus been treated)—the soldiers took Him back again, and once more they mocked Him, once more they spat upon Him, and treated Him shamefully.

So, you see, the first time was when He first went to the house of Caiaphas. Then after He was condemned there. Then Herod and His men of war. Then Pilate after the scourging. And then the soldiers, after the ultimate condemnation. Do you see, now, how manifestly, “He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief”? “We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”

I do not know when I ever more heartily wished to be eloquent than I do now. I am talking to my own lips, and saying, “Oh, that these lips had language worthy of the occasion!” I do but faintly sketch the scene. I cannot lay on the glowing colors. Oh, that I could set forth Your grief, You Man of Sorrows! God the Holy Spirit impress it on your memories, and on

your souls, and help you pitifully to consider the griefs of your blessed Lord!

I will now leave this point, when I have made this practical application of it. Remember, dear Friends, that this day, as truly as on that early morning, a division must be made among us. Either you must this day accept Christ as your King, or else His blood will be on you. I bring my Master out before your eyes and say to you, "Behold your King." Are you willing to yield obedience to Him? He claims, first, your implicit faith in His merit—will you yield to that? He claims, next, that you will take Him to be Lord of your heart and that, as He shall be Lord within, so He shall be Lord without. Which shall it be? Will you choose Him *now*? Does the Holy Spirit in your soul—for without Him you never will—does the Holy Spirit say, "Bow the knee and take Him as your king?"

Thank God, then. But if not, His blood is on you, to condemn you. *You* crucified Him. Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the Jews and Romans, all meet in you. *You* scourged Him. *You* said, "Let Him be crucified." Do not say it was not so. In effect you join their clamors when you refuse Him. When you go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, and despise His love and His blood—*you* do spiritually what *they* did literally—you despise the King of kings. Come to the fountain of His blood and wash and be clean, by His Grace.

III. But we must close with a third remark. Christ really underwent yet a third trial. He was not only tried before the ecclesiastical and civil tribunals, but He was really tried before the great democratic tribunal, that is, the assembly of the people in the street.

You will say, "How?" Well, the trial was somewhat singular, but yet it was really a trial. Barabbas—a thief, a felon, a murderer, a traitor—had been captured. He was probably one of a band of murderers who were accustomed to come up to Jerusalem at the time of the feast, carrying daggers under their cloaks to stab persons in the crowd and rob them, and then he would be gone again. Besides that, he had tried to stir up sedition, setting himself up possibly as a leader of the bandits.

Christ was put into competition with this villain. The two were presented before the popular eye, and to the shame of manhood, to the disgrace of Adam's race, let it be remembered that the perfect, loving, tender, sympathizing, disinterested Savior was met with the word, "Crucify Him!" And Barabbas, the thief, was preferred. "Well," says one, "that was atrocious." The same thing is put before *you this morning*—the very same thing! And every unregenerate man will make the same choice that the Jews did—only men renewed by Divine Grace will act upon the contrary principle.

I say, Friend, this day, I put before you Christ Jesus, or your sins. The reason why many come not to Christ is because they cannot give up their lusts, their pleasures, their profits. Sin is Barabbas—sin is a thief—it will rob your soul of its life. It will rob God of His glory. Sin is a murderer—it stabbed our father, Adam—it slew our purity. Sin is a traitor—it rebels against the King of Heaven and earth. If you prefer sin to Christ, Christ has stood at your tribunal and you have given your verdict that sin is better than Christ.

Who is that man? He comes here every Sunday. And yet he is a drunkard? Where is he? You prefer that reeling demon Bacchus to Christ. Who is that man? He comes here. Yes. And where are his midnight haunts? The harlot and the prostitute can tell! You have preferred your own foul, filthy lust to Christ. I know some here that have had their consciences openly pricked, and yet there is no change in them. You prefer Sunday trading to Christ. You prefer cheating to Christ. You prefer the theater to Christ. You prefer the harlot to Christ—you prefer Satan, himself, to Christ—for Satan it is that is the father and author of these things.

“No,” says one, “I don’t, I don’t!” Then I do again put this question, and I put it very pointedly to you—“If you do not prefer your sins to Christ, how is it that you are not a Christian?” I believe this is the main stumbling stone, that, “Men love darkness rather than light, *because* their deeds are evil.” We come not to Christ because of the viciousness of our nature, and depravity of our heart. And this *is* the depravity of your heart, that you prefer darkness to light, prefer bitter for sweet, and choose evil as your good. Well, I think I hear one saying, “Oh, I *would* be on Jesus Christ’s side, but I did not look at it in that light. I thought the question was, ‘Would *He* be on *my* side?’ I am such a poor guilty sinner that I would stand anywhere, if Jesus’ blood would wash me.”

Sinner! Sinner! If you talk like that, then I will meet you right joyously. Never was a man one with Christ till Christ was one with Him. If you feel that you can now stand with Christ, and say, “Yes, despised and rejected, He is, nevertheless, my God, my Savior, my King. Will he accept me?” Why, Soul, He *has* accepted you! He has renewed you, or else you would not talk so. You speak like a saved man. You may not have the comfort of salvation, but surely there is a work of Divine Grace in your heart! God’s Divine election has fallen upon you and Christ’s precious redemption has been made for you, or else you would not talk so.

You cannot be even *willing* to come to Christ, and yet Christ reject you. God forbid we should suppose the possibility of any sinner crying after the Savior, and the Savior saying, “No, I will not have you.” Blessed be His name, “Him that comes to Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” “Well,” one says, “then I would have Him today. How can I do it?” There is nothing asked of you but this—Trust Him! Trust Him! Believe that God put Him in the place of men—believe that what He suffered was accepted by God, instead of their punishment. Believe that this great equivalent for punishment can save *you*.

Trust Him. Throw yourself on *Him*—as a man commits himself to the waters, so do you—sink or swim! You will never sink, you will never sink—for, “he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life and shall never come into condemnation.”

May these faint words upon so thrilling a subject bless your souls! And unto God be glory, forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

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CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL KINGDOM AND HOW IT COMES NO. 1535

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Ask of Me and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance
and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them in pieces
like a potter's vessel.”
Psalms 2:8, 9.***

OBSERVE, dear Friends, the wonderful contrast between the violent excitement of the enemies of the Lord and the sublime serenity of God Himself. He is not disturbed though the heathen so furiously rage and their kings and mighty ones set themselves in battle array. He smiles at them—He has them in derision. You and I are often downcast and depressed and our forebodings are dark and dismal, but God sits in His eternal peacefulness and serenely overrules tumult and rebellion. The Lord reigns and His Throne is not moved, nor His rest broken whatever may be the noise and turmoil down below. Notice the sublimity of this Divine calm. While the heathen and their princes are plotting and planning how to break His bands asunder and cast His cords from them, He has already defeated their devices and He says to them, “Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.” “You will not have My Son to reign over you, but nevertheless He reigns. While you have been raging I have crowned Him. Your imaginations are, indeed, vain, for I have forestalled you and established Him upon His Throne. Hear Him as He proclaims My decree and asserts His filial sovereignty.”

God is always beforehand with His adversaries—they find their scheming frustrated and their craft baffled even before they have begun to execute their plans! By God's decree the Ever-Blessed Son of the Highest is placed in power and exalted to His Throne. The rulers cannot snatch from His hand the scepter, nor dash from His head the crown—Jesus reigns and must reign till all enemies are put under His feet. God has set Him firmly upon Zion's sacred hill and raging nations cannot cast Him down! The very idea of their doing so excites the derision of Jehovah, He disturbs not His great soul because of their blustering. As if it were a banquet rather than a conflict, the Lord God, as Himself King, speaks to the King's Son, even to His Anointed on His right hand and having acknowledged His royal rank, confers upon Him the highest honors.

At great feasts many a monarch has been known to say to his favorite, “Ask what I shall give you and nothing shall be denied you this day.” Even thus does the great Father say to His glorious Son, the Prince of Peace, “Ask of Me and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance and the

uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” He bids Him open His mouth wide and request a boundless dominion! He will give Him distant nations, yes, and the whole round earth to be His kingdom. There is an air of regal festivity and peaceful joy about all this which strangely contrasts with the uproar of the adversaries.

Brothers and Sisters, I wish we could enter, in some measure, into this sublime quiet. We may well be confident since God is so. If the Captain is assured of victory, it behooves the common soldier to be bravely hopeful. The battle is the Lord's and since He is the Lord God Omnipotent, fear about the issue of the conflict is foolish and wicked. All events are in His hands—His hands who can dash whole worlds to dust or create them when it pleases Him. What can stand against the almighty will? Who shall say unto Jehovah, “What are You doing?” In this eternal All-Sufficiency is our rest and we may, therefore, cease from anxiety! Stand still, my weary Brother, and see the salvation of God! Put not forth your timorous hands to stay the trembling ark, but know that Jehovah can protect His own!

Lay your Martha cares aside, my Sister—sit at your Savior's feet and listen to His voice! He will tell you that God still reigns and that His Anointed shall reign, also. Things are not as they seem—all is well when all looks ill. If the heavens are clouded, the sun is not put out! If the evening has darkened, even to midnight, yet the morning comes! To the moment shall it break, nor can all the powers of darkness hinder the dawning day! Jehovah's fixed decrees remain engraved as in eternal brass, nor can the craft of Hell efface a single line nor stay the execution of a single purpose! Despite all opposition, the sacred purpose will blossom into the actual Providence and the Providence will ripen into salvation. God's plan will be carried out without failure in any point and there is no cause for alarm.

If we were more calm and restful we would do our work better, for do we not gather both wisdom and courage when we abide in quietness and confidence? The joy of the Lord is the strength of His saints. The assurance of faith, if we were filled with it, would make us go forth “fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.” Alas, our short-sighted fretfulness, our anxious mistrust and our timorous suspicion cause us needless distress, weaken us for service and expose us to the assaults of our adversaries! Without the preparation of the Gospel of peace our feet are unshod and we are unfit for the heavenly pilgrimage.

Groveling here below among the troubles of the hour, the majority of Christians are a timorous people and act like the tribe of Reuben in the day of Barak's battle, to whom Deborah cried, “Why abide you among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleating of the flocks?” O you who lie among the pots and do servile work in abject fear, arise to a braver spirit! Up to the everlasting hills and breathe a purer air—gird yourselves with the belt of confidence in God and you shall be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!” May God grant that the subject of this morning may help us out of the depressing influences which surround us and raise us into fellowship with the calm in which Jehovah sits smiling and out of which He says, “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.”

Our text suggests to us this morning, first, that the kingdoms of the earth and the earth itself are Christ's inheritance—"I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance." Leave out those little words which the translators have inserted, for they but feebly help the sense. "I will give the heathen, Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth, Your possession." When we have dwelt upon that we shall then notice that this is to be had for the asking—"Ask of Me and I shall give." Thirdly, we shall note that the power by which the dominion shall be gained is altogether of God—"I shall give." And fourthly, we shall remark that in order to complete the conquest of the world all existing and all future confederacies against the Lord and against His Christ shall be utterly destroyed—"You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

I. For our comfort let us notice the teaching of the text that THE LORD WILL GIVE TO CHRIST THE HEATHEN AS HIS INHERITANCE AND THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH AS HIS POSSESSION. This I take to refer to our Lord as Man. Already as God, the kingdom of the Divine Son rules over all. There never was a limit to the reign of Jesus as God, not even when He was hanging on the Cross—He was the everlasting Father even when He was "the Child born, the Son given." It is in His wondrous Nature as God-Man Mediator that these words may be understood, for so the Apostle Paul evidently interpreted them.

The mysterious sentence, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You," may refer to the deep and secret Truth of God of the Eternal Filiation of our Lord, whatever that may be. But Paul quotes it in the 13th chapter of Acts as referring to His *Resurrection*. Here are His Words, "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You." It is in *resurrection* power that Christ comes forth and God gives to Him dominion over the earth and all that is upon it.

Because He lives and was dead He has the keys of Hell and of death. By virtue of His humiliation He reigns. For the suffering of death He is crowned with Glory and honor. The heavenly host proclaim His worthiness to take the Book and open its seven seals, singing, "For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." He descended that He might ascend above all things and fill all things! He laid aside His Glory that He might be crowned with this new Glory and honor and might have all things put under His feet as the Son of Man. We speak, therefore, of Jesus Christ the Risen One, who once died, but has now risen from the tomb and quit this earth for the splendors of the New Jerusalem.

Our conviction is that this same Jesus is to reign over the whole world. I shall not enter into the question whether this will be accomplished *before* His Second Advent or will be the *result* of His glorious appearing. I should not like to assert that this consummation will be reached *before* His Advent, for that might seem to work against our duty to watch for His coming which may be at any moment. On the other hand, I would not venture to assert that the Gospel cannot be universally victorious before

His coming, because I perceive that this opinion is a pillow for many an idle head and is ruinous to the hopeful spirit of missionary enterprise.

It is enough for me that a wide dominion will be given to our Lord at some time or other and that assuredly His kingdom shall embrace all the nations of mankind. The whole earth shall yet be filled with His Glory! The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head and clear the world of his slimy trail!

For the next few minutes you will be so good as to keep your Bibles open, for the appeal must be to God's own Word. I gather that the kingdom of Christ is to be so extensive as to comprehend all mankind, first, because, of the exceeding breadth of the prophecy of it which was made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. That is an old Covenant promise which refers to Abraham as the father of the faithful and to his one great seed, even Jesus, the promised Messiah. Here are the far-reaching words—"In you shall all families of the earth be blessed." Assuredly they are not as yet all blessed in him to such an extent as to exhaust the Divine meaning. When God, in Covenant, promises a blessing it is no light thing and, therefore, I am sure that this grand Covenant blessing of the nations is something more than a name.

Though I doubt not that the whole earth is, to some extent, the better because of the coming of Christ and His peace-making death and the spread of His pure faith, yet I cannot believe that multitudes who live and die in the thick darkness of ignorance and idolatry are really blessed in Christ in such a sense as to make it a Covenant blessing. How much are Tartary, China and Tibet blessed by the Gospel? There must yet be something better for all the families of the earth than anything they have up to now received. All the families of the earth shall yet know that the promised Seed has lived and died for them and some of every kindred and tongue shall find salvation in Him.

Jacob, too, when He spoke concerning the Shiloh in Genesis 49:10, said, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." By *the people* is not meant the seed of Israel, but the nations, or the Gentiles. So the Septuagint and the Syrian understand it and so, indeed, it is. Jesus, our great Shiloh, sets up the standard and His chosen rally around in ever growing numbers till the dispersed of Babel shall find in Him a new center and a pure language shall be given to them in Him. The words mean not, "gathering," only, but a willing *obedience*, the fruit of faith and the expression of piety. To this is parallel the word of Paul in Romans 15:12—"And again, Isaiah says, There shall be a root of Jesse and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust."

It is evident, then, that the *nations* shall come to trust in the Messiah and thus shall they find life eternal. Moses, too, in Deuteronomy 32:21, to which passage Paul, in Romans, so especially refers, speaks of the heathen nations when he says, "I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Truly this is fulfilled in these days when the Gospel line has gone out throughout all the earth and its words unto the ends of the earth—and this, our own foolish nation, this once barbarous people which seemed shut out

from God, worshipping idols with all the cruel rites of the Druids, has been brought into Covenant with God and made to rejoice in Him!

Degraded heathens in all lands have become Believers and so shall all nations be brought believingly to Jesus' feet, that Israel may be angered and provoked to jealousy until her time shall come when she shall look on Him whom she has pierced and shall mourn for Him and turn to Him with full purpose of heart. When we reach the Psalms, we come into the clear light of prophecy concerning the kingdom of our blessed Master. Our text stands first and is sufficient in itself—the heathen are to be His inheritance and the utmost bounds of the world are to be His possession!

Turn to that famous passion Psalm, the twenty-second. Its pathos with regard to the griefs of the Crucified One is deep and touching. You see Him hanging on the tree, a laughingstock to scoffers, with His tongue cleaving to His jaws and His heart melting like wax in the midst of His bowels—and yet before the Psalm closes the plaintive gives place to the triumphant and the dying One cries—“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the Governor among the nations. All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive His own soul.”

On the Cross this prospect cheered our dying Master's heart, that the kingdoms should be the Lord's and that all the kindreds of the nations should come and worship before Him! Let it cheer us, also. Do you think that the crucified Lord will be disappointed of the end for which He died? Will you venture to assert that a single drop of His blood was shed for nothing? Rest assured that He shall see of the travail of His soul, till even His great loving heart shall be content! God has said it, “I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He has poured out His soul unto death.” And you can be calmly confident that the Word of the Lord will stand!

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 66:4 and there you come upon another word of comfort—“All the earth shall worship You and shall sing unto You; they shall sing to Your name.” This sentence is not merely the passionate hope of an enthusiastic worshipper, but a voice inspired of the Holy Spirit plainly declaring that all peoples shall adore their Maker with hearty praise and joyful song! How glowing is the language of Psalm 72. Can we expect too great things for our King when we remember the gracious words beginning at the 8th verse—“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.”

Read on at verse 17—“His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.” These terms include the most barbarous tribes that exist and they specially mention nations which boast that they were never conquered, such as the untamed rovers of the wilderness who

centuries ago laughed at the Roman power. The legions which subdued all other peoples could not conquer the sons of Ishmael! Fleet of foot as a rabbit and swift as a young roe, they fled over the desert sands out of reach of the pursuer. Yet *these* shall bow before our Lord and joyfully pay Him homage! He will sway His scepter where scepter was never acknowledged before! He shall set up a throne where all other authority has been laughed to scorn!

You will not be wearied if I ask you to look at Psalm 86:9. There you will find it written, "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord; and shall glorify Your name." It is not to be mere outside worship that shall be paid, for the nations are to *glorify* His name which is a high form of praise! All nations are to glorify the Lord and this they have not done as yet. We expected to find and we are not disappointed in our expectation, that Isaiah would be sure to speak concerning these things. I would rather you heard the Word of God by far than *my* word and, therefore, we will keep to our reading.

It will bring you encouragement and cheer your heart to know what Prophets said in the olden times when only Israel had the light. They did not think the light would be confined to the one peculiar people, but they expected that light would break on all the nations which sat in darkness and they, also, would seek the Lord. Turn to Isaiah and read. See what he says in his second chapter. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths for out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

I can but give samples. The passages abound all through Isaiah in which there is the intimation of the general spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Turn to Isaiah 49:6, 7—"It is a light thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to a Servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful and the Holy One of Israel and He shall choose You." And now, verse 12—"Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim." And verse 18—"Lift up your eyes round about and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to you."

Nor is Isaiah alone in such prophecies as these. I cannot detain you by reading what Ezekiel says concerning the ever deepening waters which shall carry life to all lands and I will only mention one word of Jeremiah, because it so peculiarly proves that the homage paid by heathen nations to our Lord will be that of their hearts—and that the reign of Christ, what-

ever else it may be, will certainly be a *spiritual* reign. Jeremiah 3:17—“They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.” Christ will work a *heart-change* when He shall win the nations to allegiance and this shall lead to a manifest change of life—“neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

Daniel, that John of the Old Testament, of course saw more clearly than any, the coming kingdom of the Anointed One. Listen what he says beginning in 7:18—“But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. Until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole Heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Can anything be more positive than this last word?

Look how the idols are to be destroyed according to the Prophet Zephaniah (2:11)—“The Lord will be terrible unto them: for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, everyone from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.” Zechariah says, to the same effect, (9:10)—“He shall speak peace unto the heathen and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” Lest I should weary you, I dare not quote any more. To me it is evident beyond all contradiction that according to the whole run of Scripture the kingdom of Christ is to extend over all parts of the earth and over all races and conditions of men and, therefore, I charge you never despair for the grand old cause!

An infidel notion is abroad that these different religions have sprung up at different times as developments of the religious instinct and that they may all profitably exist side by side with ours. It is admitted that the religion of Christ is excellent and that it deserves a large following, but still other religions have their advantages and must not be despised—as if to say that something better than the Gospel of Christ may yet be discovered. This is the current talk in certain circles and we would at once express our horror at it! Jesus is not to share a divided Throne! Cast with abhorrence from your souls every such blasphemous thought! Jesus must reign till all enemies are put under His feet and to Him all *rivals* are enemies!

If Jesus is King, He is the only Potentate. Christians are enlisted under a banner which does not allow another standard side by side with it! They serve a Prince who will not share dominion with others—who will not submit that even a province shall be torn away from His government! He shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! Like a burst of thunder let all hearts that love Him say, Amen!

II. It appears from our text that THIS UNIVERSAL DOMINION IS TO BE ASKED FOR. Thus says the Father to His glorious Son, “Ask of Me and I will give You.” Beloved, Jesus fails not to ask. We do not doubt that He responds to the Father’s invitation and asks for His inheritance. This is the

way in which the Psalm before us touches upon the priestly character of Christ as combined with His kingly office. He always lives to intercede and a part of His daily intercession is to ask that the heathen may be His inheritance.

Now, Beloved, this is a lesson to us. We belong to Christ. We are members of that body of which He is the mystical Head and it is ours to act with Him in His lifework—as He asks, we are to ask with Him. As Jesus suffers in His people, so He pleads in them. Let us cry day and night unto God for the coming of the kingdom of our Lord! Let the Throne of the Highest be surrounded by our perpetual prayers! Let us urge for the Lord Jesus His suit in the courts above, that the heathen may be His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. We are so truly one with Him that His sympathies and hopes are ours! His Glory is our glory! His victory our victory and, therefore, our supplications should naturally and spontaneously arise for Him every day of our lives.

Our union with Him has given us a kingdom, the same kingdom as that which He claims. He Himself has said it, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." As surely as He sets His Son upon His holy hill of Zion, so surely will the Lord bring us all there! Our prayers, therefore, should daily rise together with the pleading of the great Intercessor, Himself. O Lord, Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory! Let Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven! This prayer is one which is commanded by God Himself. About its fitness we can, therefore, have no doubt. Your Savior taught you to say, "Your kingdom come." In this text we find it prescribed as a prayer to the Well-Beloved—"Ask of Me"—and, therefore, it is certainly a proper prayer for us and we may use it without question.

We are highly honored in being permitted to present such a petition—to be allowed to pray for myself is mercy, to be permitted to pray for my fellow man is favor—but to be allowed to pray *for Jesus* is an honor! It is written, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually," and thus there is a special honor put upon those who intercede. My Lord's prayer for me saves me, but when He bids me pray *for Him*, He dignifies me and I say with David, "Your gentleness has made me great." Whatever else we forget, never from our private intercessions let us omit the prayer that the heathen may come to glorify Christ! It is a joy to know that this prayer will be effectual to the fullest. It is no vain desire, no dream of a fevered brain—the infinite wisdom of God, Himself, suggests it, for He says, "Ask and I shall give You."

This union of precept and promise is found attached to every Covenant blessing, but here it is conspicuously and distinctly stated in so many words—"Ask and I shall give You." Concerning this thing, the promise of God is definite! We may, therefore, pray with full assurance. Let us avail ourselves of this plain direction every hour of our lives. O Church of God, ask, on Christ's behalf, and the Lord God will give Him the kingdom! Heir of Heaven, ask on behalf of the Elder Brother, for the Elder Brother pleads in you and God will hear both you and Him and He will grant the united request! My heart is full of confidence when pleading upon this subject! What surer guarantee do we need than, "Ask and I shall give You"?

Let our prayer be wide and far-reaching. Let our desires embrace the *world*. Pray not only for your own country, though it needs it and God, alone, knows how much—but pray for the colonies, the continent and the far off lands. Ask that all heathens may become Christians! Plead that the whole round earth may be the Lord's—that the uttermost parts of the earth may resound with songs in His praise! On this earth His blood has fallen! The precious drops could not be gathered up again and so this globe remains blood-marked—the one star upon which the Son of God poured out His life! It must be the Lord's! The Sacrifice of Calvary has made it sacred to the Son of God! As our Government marks with the broad arrow those stores which belong to it, so did Christ, upon the tree, when the blood fell from His hands and feet and side, mark, as it were, with something more full of meaning than the broad arrow—this round earth on which He bled—and it must be forever and ever His by right of purchase and ransom!

It was made subject to vanity for a little season, but it is to be redeemed from it—and when it shall be purified and beautified in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, you will not know it, for it will come forth as “a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” Its sister stars have long wondered at its silence, or its discord, but at the sight of its restoration to the choirs of holiness, they will sing in deep delight and chant a new song unto the Lord! With what admiration will they perceive, rising up from this once beclouded orb, a flame of unquenchable praise with pillars of perfumed smoke, the incense of eternal gratitude! Sweeter the offering of this once fallen world than that of any other sphere, for it has been redeemed and upon it have been seen marvels of free Grace and dying love such as no other world has known.

Oh, may this soon come to pass! May the prayer be heard and God be praised. But it can only be accomplished through His own appointed method, the asking of Christ, the pleading of the Church. Oh, awaken, Church, to ask! Awake from your unholy lethargy and cry day and night unto God! Cease not, but with anguish, like a woman in travail, cry aloud and spare not until He gives the risen Lord the heathen for His inheritance and makes His Throne higher than the kings of the earth!

III. Thirdly, THIS DOMINION IS TO BE GAINED BY THE POWER OF GOD. Notice the text, for it is very explicit—“Ask of Me and I shall give You.” The power and Grace of God will be conspicuously seen in the subjugation of this world to Christ. Every heart shall know that it was worked by the power of God in answer to the prayer of Christ and His Church. I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that the length of time spent in the accomplishment of the Divine plan has, much of it, been occupied with getting rid of those many forms of human power which have intruded into the place of the Spirit. If you and I had been about in our Lord's day and could have had everything managed to our hand, we should have converted Caesar straight away by argument or by oratory. We should then have converted all his legions by every means within our reach. And, I guarantee you, with Caesar and his legions at our back we would have Christianized the world in no time, would we not?

Yes, but that is not God's way at all, nor the right and effectual way to set up a spiritual kingdom! Bribes and threats are, alike, unlawful. Eloquence and carnal reasoning are out of court. The power of Divine Love is the one weapon for this campaign. Long ago the Prophet wrote, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." The fact is that such conversions as could be brought about by physical force, or by mere mental energy, or by the prestige of rank and pomp are not conversions at all! The kingdom of Christ is not a kingdom of this world, otherwise would His servants fight! It rests on a *spiritual* basis and is to be advanced by *spiritual* means. Yet Christ's servants gradually slipped down into the notion that His kingdom *was* of this world and could be upheld by *human* power.

A Roman emperor professed to be converted, using a deep policy to settle himself upon the throne. Then Christianity became the religion patronized by the State—it seemed that the world was Christianized, whereas, indeed, the Church was heathenized! Hence sprang the monster of a State Church, a conjunction ill-assorted and fraught with untold ills. This incongruous thing is half human, half Divine! As a theory it fascinates, as a fact it betrays! It promises to advance the Truth of God and is, itself, a negation of it! Under its influences a system of religion was fashioned which, beyond all false religions and beyond even Atheism itself, is the greatest hindrance to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Under its influence dark ages lowered over the world. Men were not permitted to think. A Bible could scarcely be found and a preacher of the Gospel, if found, was put to death! That was the result of human power coming in with the sword in one hand and the Gospel in the other and developing its pride of ecclesiastical power into a triple crown, an Inquisition and an "infallible Pope"! This parasite, this canker, this incubus of the church will be removed by the Grace of God and by His Providence in due season. The kings of the earth who have loved this unchaste system will grow weary of it and destroy it.

Read Revelation 17:16 and see how terrible her end will be. The death of the system will come from those who gave it life—the powers of earth created the system and they will, in due time, destroy it! Frequently do we meet with the idea that the world is to be converted to Christ by the spread of civilization. Now civilization always follows the Gospel and is, in a great measure, the product of it, but many people put the cart before the horse and make civilization the first cause. According to their opinion, *trade* is to regenerate the nations! The *arts* are to ennoble them and *education* is to purify them. Peace Societies are formed, against which I have not a word to say, but much in their favor. Still, I believe the only efficient Peace Society is the Church of God and the best peace *teaching* is the love of God in Christ Jesus!

The Grace of God is the great instrument for lifting up the world from the depths of its ruin and covering it with happiness and holiness. Christ's Cross is the Pharos of this tempestuous sea, like the Eddystone lighthouse flinging its beams through the midnight of ignorance over the raging waters of human sin, preserving men from rock and shipwreck, piloting them into the port of peace! Tell it among the heathen—the Lord

reigns from the Cross—and as you tell it *believe* that the power to make the peoples believe it is with God the Father and the power to bow them before Christ is in God the Holy Spirit. Saving energy lies not in learning, nor in wit, nor in eloquence, nor in anything except in the right arm of God who will be exalted among the heathen, for He has sworn that surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

The might of the Omnipotent One shall work out His purposes of Grace and as for us, we will use the simple processes of prayer and faith. “Ask of Me and I shall give You.” Oh, that we could keep in perpetual motion the machinery of prayer! Pray, pray, pray and God will give, give, give—abundantly and supernaturally above all that we ask, or even think! He must do all things in the conquering work of the Lord Jesus. We cannot convert a single child, nor bring to Christ the humblest peasant, nor lead to peace the most hopeful youth! All must be done by the Spirit of God, alone, and if ever nations are to be born in a day and crowds are to come humbly to Jesus’ feet, it is Yours, Eternal Spirit, YOURS to do it! God must give the dominion or the rebels will remain unsubdued!

IV. Thus the power of God works to bring about the kingdom of Christ and THIS INVOLVES THE BREAKING UP OF ALL THE CONFEDERACIES WHICH NOW EXIST OR EVER SHALL EXIST FOR THE HINDRANCE OF THE REDEEMER’S KINGDOM. Our text employs a figure which is very full of meaning. “He shall break them with a rod of iron.” He breaks not the subject nations, nor the inherited heathen, but the *kings of the earth* who stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. Against *these* He will lift up His iron rod of stern justice and irresistible power!

Over His own inheritance He will sway a silver scepter of love. Over His own possession He shall reign with gentleness and Grace, but as for His adversaries, He will deal with them in severity and display His power in them. How shall they stand out against Him? They have formed their confederacy with great care and skill—as when men prepare clay and make it pliable for the potter’s use, so have they made all things ready—they have set their design upon the wheel and caused it to revolve in their thoughts and with great skill they have fashioned it. Lo, there it stands—finished and fair to look upon! Yet at its very best it is nothing more than a potter’s vessel. It may be of the purest clay and of such exquisite workmanship that it shall enchant every man of taste, but it is nothing more than an earthen vessel and, therefore, woe unto it when the rod of iron falls upon it.

Woe to *all* human societies and brotherhoods which are framed to resist the Lord! Mark the conflict and its end! It is brief enough. A stroke! Where is the hope of the Lord’s adversary? Gone, gone, utterly gone! Only a few potsherd remain. Oh for such a smiting of the apostasy of Rome! Oh for one touch of the iron rod upon the imposture of Mohammed! Oh, for a blow at Buddhism and a back stroke at the superstition of Brahmanism and at all the idols of the heathen! Woe unto the gods of the land of Sinim in that day! A single stroke shall set the potsherd flying. Why, then, should we fear, although they plot and plan? Although a solemn conclave of cardinals is held. Though the “Pope” fulminates his bulls.

Though the Sultan ordain that every convert to Christianity shall be put to death. Though the scoffers still revile at Christianity and say that it spreads not as once it did, a speedy answer shall confound them, or if not speedy, yet the stroke shall be sure!

Our King waits a while. He has leisure. Haste belongs to weakness. His strength moves calmly. Only let Him be awakened and you shall see how quick are His paces! He redeemed the world in a few short hours upon the Cross and I guarantee you that when He gets that iron rod once to working, He will not need many days to ease Him of His adversaries and make a clean sweep of all that set themselves against Him! If you want to see how it will be done, read, I pray you, Daniel 2:31—"You, O king, saw and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."

It was a strange conglomeration—all the metallic empires are set forth as combined in one image—which image is the embodied idea of monarchical power which has fascinated men even to this day. The Prophet goes on to say, "You saw still that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and broke them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

And so it is to be—the vision is being each day fulfilled. The Gospel stone, which owes nothing to human strength or wisdom, is breaking the image and scattering all opposing powers. No system, society, confederacy, or cabinet can stand which is opposed to the Truth of God and righteousness. I, even I, that am but of yesterday and know nothing, have seen one of the mightiest of empires of modern times melt away all of a sudden as the frost of the morning in the heat of the sun. I have seen monarchs driven out of their tyrannies by the powers of a single man and a free nation born as in an hour. I have seen states which fought to hold the Negro in perpetual captivity subdued by those whom they despised, while the slave has been set free!

I have seen nations chastened under evil governments and revived when the yoke has been broken and they have returned to the way of righteousness and peace. He who lives longest shall see most of this. Evil is short-lived. Truth shall yet rise above all. The Lord says, overturn, overturn till He shall come whose right it is and God shall give it to Him. Woe unto those that stand against the Lord and His Anointed, for they shall not prosper. "Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

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CHRIST'S GLORY TURNED TO SHAME

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"O you sons of men, how long will you turn My Glory into shame?"
Psalm 4:2.

DAVID had many times been the subject of cruel mockery and, therefore, while writing this Psalm probably in the first place about himself, he also described in it one of the bitterest of our Savior's sufferings. What an illustration this is of the union which exists between Christ and His people in the matter of experience! He had a Cross to bear and so have they. He was "despised and rejected of men," and so are they. The Church of God is not like the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, which had a head of gold and feet of iron and clay, but as is the Head, such are also the members. As the Head had to endure cruel mocking, the members must not expect to be exempted from similar treatment. This is why so many of the Psalms of David are equally applicable to David and to his Lord. And I believe that we have, in this verse, a reference not only to David, himself, but also to "great David's greater Son." In the case of both of them, the sons of men turned their glory into shame, but I want especially to call to your remembrance the sufferings of our Savior in this respect.

I. So, in the first place, notice that EVERYTHING ABOUT OUR SAVIOR THAT WAS GLORIOUS WAS MADE THE SUBJECT OF SCORN.

Begin with *His glorious Person*, and think how shamefully that was treated by the sons of men in the time of His humiliation. He was betrayed, but the betrayer was one who had been His disciple and who, in the very act of betrayal called Him, "Master." This was shameful cruelty on the part of Judas, not only to betray Him to His enemies, but to hail Him as "Master," in mockery and to kiss Him in scorn. There was shame even in the way in which they went to Gethsemane to arrest the Savior—with swords and staves, lanterns and torches—as though He had been some desperate malefactor who would resist to the utmost the officers of the law. No lanterns or torches were needed to show the way to the Light of the World! And their swords and staves would have availed them nothing if He had chosen to put forth His Omnipotent power! When He was dragged before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, His precious Person was the constant subject of scorn, so that He could truly say, "I gave

My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” “The soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They put on Him a purple robe and said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they struck Him with their hands.” And when Pilate brought Him forth to the people and cried, “Behold the Man!” instead of pitying Him in His distress, they shouted, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” His agonies upon the Cross provided further subjects for their contempt and scorn. He could truthfully employ the language of the 22nd Psalm—“All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.” They looked upon His Person as being so utterly contemptible that they desired that He should suffer death in its most ignominious form, “even the death of the Cross.”

And while they treated thus shamefully the Human Person of our Lord, we cannot forget the jeers and taunts with which they assailed His Deity. When He said, “Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven,” the high priest tore his clothes and charged Him with being a blasphemer, while the whole assembly declared that He was guilty of death! And to show their contempt for Him, “then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands.” Even when He was enduring all the agony of the crucifixion, we read that, “they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.” Was it not sufficient to degrade His spotless Humanity? No, the Glory of His Deity must also be turned into shame—in both His Natures, as Son of God and Son of Man, He must be “despised and rejected of men.” Alas that for so long the Prophet’s words were true concerning us, “we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not.”

Not only was Christ’s blessed Person thus despised, but *all His offices were the subject of scorn*. I do but tell you what you all well know. I do but point you to the picture upon which you have often gazed. Remember how they mocked Him as a Prophet. “When they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck you?” They treated His prophetic office as though it had only been worthy of a jest or a jeer. He claimed to be the King of the Jews, so with ribald shouts they cried, “A king! Bring here His throne and seat Him upon it! Bring His royal robes and let Him be fitly adorned.” Their idea of fitness was some soldier’s discarded mantle cast over His shoulders in mockery of the royal purple. They put a reed into His hand as a mock scepter. And the only crown they thought worthy for Him to wear was made of thorns! To show their contempt for His royalty, they mockingly bowed the knee before Him and rendered Him only the semblance of homage. The only gifts they brought to Him were cruel blows and

coarse insults which must have been peculiarly trying to His gentle, gracious spirit. I must not stay to tell how they turned the Glory of His office as our Great High Priest into shame, but all His offices were treated with the utmost contempt and scorn.

They even laughed contemptuously at His deeds of love. “The chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others. Himself He cannot save.” It seems to me that they meant thus to cast contempt upon His miracles of mercy. “He saved others.” Yes, that He did, He saved the famishing by multiplying the loaves and fishes and feeding thousands of people! He saved the sick by touching them or by speaking the word which made them perfectly whole! He saved even the dead by calling them back from the unseen world to live again in the abodes where they had before lived! Yet all these miracles of mercy are now to have contempt poured upon them because He does not choose to come down from the Cross at the mocking call of the scoffing priests and scribes and elders! “O you sons of men, how long will you turn His Glory into shame?” It was His Glory that He had saved others and it was also His Glory that He could not save Himself—yet both of these were turned into subjects for shame by those who had no pity for Him even when they had hounded Him to His death!

Perhaps it was worst of all when these *wicked men scoffed at Christ's pangs and prayers*. If you have hurt yourself and someone laughs at the accident, you feel indignant. If you are tossing to and fro upon a bed of sickness and someone sneers at your pains, you know how such unkindness cuts you to the quick. If you were dying and in your agony you cried aloud to God—and somebody ridiculed your prayer—it would be a terrible trial to you. So must it have been to Christ when He was dying upon the Cross, forsaken by His friends, forsaken even by His Father because He was then occupying the place that *we ought to have occupied*. Then, when He uttered that heart-melting cry, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?”—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”—the heartless spectators made a sort of pun upon His words and mockingly said that He was calling Elijah, though many of them must have recognized the quotation from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm! To mock a man's prayers when he is dying seems to me the very lowest depth of cruel contempt! I do not remember ever reading of any other mob but this one that was so brutal as to turn into mockery the last cries of One who was in his death agony! Yet, at Calvary, the last expiring groans of our blessed Savior were the subject of the mocking mirth of the rabble around the Cross. How all this must have pained His sensitive spirit and made Him cry out with David, “O you sons of men, how long will you turn My Glory into shame?”

II. NOW, secondly, THE GLORY WHICH CHRIST OUGHT TO HAVE RECEIVED AMONG MEN WAS RENDERED TO HIM ONLY IN SHAME.

A German writer has given us an outline of the way in which worldlings mockingly honored Christ. First of all, he says, *they gave Him a procession of honor*. When a victorious general returns from the wars, he rides through the streets amidst the plaudits of the crowds that gather to welcome him. And when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was to be honored by the world, He also had a procession, and what a procession it was! "He bearing His Cross went forth"... "and there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him." That weeping and wailing company of the daughters of Jerusalem was the only element of real honor in the whole procession—all the rest was mockery and shame—and what a shameful thing it was! O men of the world, if you had known that He was the King of kings and Lord of lords, would you have crucified the Lord of Glory? Instead of a band of children and a fickle mob strewing palm branches in His way and crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," kings and princes, judges and senators ought to have felt honored by being allowed to cast their royal robes and costly garments in His road, that He might ride in state over them amid the welcoming shouts of the whole race of mankind! Instead of that, see the poor weary Man of Sorrows painfully toiling on and presently sinking beneath the burden of the Cross on which He was about to die in ignominy and shame—while all around Him the clamorous multitude is hoarsely crying, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!!" That was the kind of procession of honor that men gave to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, *they gave Him a cup of honor*. When a great man comes as a visitor from a foreign country, it is the custom to honor him with a grand banquet and other marks of hospitality. But when Christ came to this earth on a mission of mercy, what did they give Him? First, a stupefying draft which He would not drink, for He would not have any of His powers deadened by any drug. And then, when He was so parched that He cried, "I thirst," "they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth." And Luke expressly says that this was done in mockery by the soldiers, who at the same time tauntingly said to the Savior, "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." Thus again men turned His Glory into shame.

Then, *they gave Him a guard of honor*. Men who have performed deeds of renown often have a bodyguard allotted to them to attend them wherever they go and to ensure their safety where they stay. But what bodyguard did the world allot to the Savior—a guard of gamblers! The soldiers parted His other garments among them, and then cast lots—probably throwing dice—to see which of them should have His seamless coat, little thinking that they were thus fulfilling the prophecy that had been written hundreds of years before! But what a guard was this for Him who was King of kings, and Lord of lords—rough, cruel men whose hearts had been shriveled and in whose breasts no sign of tenderness remained! Thus also was His Glory turned into shame.

Then, *they gave Him a seat of honor*. We are accustomed to conduct our noble visitors to the platform at the end of the hall and to lead them to the chair of state or the most honorable position we can find. And the world conducted its honored Guest down the Via Dolorosa with a body-guard of gamblers around Him up to the seat of honor! There it is—the accursed tree! He will have little rest there, for the great nails will be roughly thrust through the most tender parts of His hands and feet, making every nerve in His body quiver with pain! And then, as they brutally jerk the Cross down into the hole prepared for it, His whole frame will be so jarred and shaken that He will cry out, in the language of the Psalmist, “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.” Thus they turned His Glory into shame.

Then, once more, *they gave Him a title of honor*. When the Queen wishes to put special honor upon any of her subjects, she makes them knights, or baronets, or peers of the realm. But the world only thought Christ worthy of the title of “King of thieves.” You will perhaps tell me that they called Him, “the King of the Jews.” It was Pilate who did that, and he would not alter it even when the chief priest asked him not to do so. But the Jewish and Gentile world practically called Him “King of thieves” by crucifying Him between two thieves as though He had been the worst of the three. He was no thief. He had never injured anyone, but had scattered blessings broadcast with both His hands. He had given Himself and all that He had to save the lost, yet they called Him, “King of thieves,” by their actions if not by their words. Thus again they turned His Glory into shame.

O Beloved, I wish I could speak upon this theme in appropriate language! Yet I feel that there is no tongue that can adequately describe the Savior's griefs, and no pen or pencil that can worthily depict Him in His agonies! You must yourselves sit down at the foot of the Cross and look, and look, and look again at your blessed Lord and Master as He hung there for your sakes. It used to be more common than it is now for godly men and women to spend hour after hour in solemn meditation upon the agonies of Christ upon the Cross. I tried, one day when I was alone, to get a vivid realization of that awful tragedy—and I succeeded to the breaking of my own heart—but I cannot describe the scene to you. That is a matter for private meditation rather than for public speech. So, when many of us gather presently around the Table of our Lord in obedience to one of His last commands, let us try to realize what it meant to Him when wicked men turned His Glory into shame even when He was in the very throes of His death agony.

When the Savior was nailed to the accursed tree, there was a great crowd before Him composed of all sorts of people from the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees down to the lowest rabble of Jerusalem. And there were doubtless, as on the day of Pentecost, “Parthians, and Medes,

and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians.” How did this great mixed multitude treat the august Sufferer upon the Cross? I have already quoted to you our Lord’s own words, “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn.” And Mark further says, “They that passed by railed at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, You that destroys the Temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the Cross.” With the exception of a little band of timid disciples, all that vast crowd exerted itself to the utmost by hideous gestures and grimaces and by cruel taunts and jeers, to show its contempt and scorn for the Christ of God, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son! I suppose this great congregation now gathered in the Tabernacle is but a mere handful in comparison with the enormous throngs that assembled to see that great sight, but if I had to be the unhappy victim of the malice and scorn of all of you—if you were all seeking by some word of contempt or expression of loathing and hatred, to set me at nothing and mock me—what a dreadful position mine would be! But this was not the treatment accorded to a man in full vigor of health and strength, as I am just now, who might be able to defy his foes to do their worst, or who might stand unmoved amidst the hail of calumny and obloquy! Christ’s was the case of One who was dying in indescribable agony, forsaken even of His God—and you can hardly conceive how such an experience as that takes all one’s strength away. Yet, do you know? As I meditated upon this sad scene—while my eyes were streaming with tears on the Savior’s account, it seemed to me that the ribald crowd was unconsciously honoring Him, after all, because contempt from such people was true honor for Jesus. If they had applauded Him, He might have blushed at the disgrace of being praised by such miscreants! But when they despised and rejected Him, it brought Him true honor! Thus virtue received the homage of vice and the beauty of holiness was the more plainly manifested in contrast with the ugliness of sin! They must have felt that although they seemed to be victorious over Him, Christ was really the Conqueror, or they would not have been so anxious to show how much they despised Him. They must have had some sort of consciousness of the true dignity of His Character or they would not have vented their malice so ferociously in mocking Him.

While I have been trying to bring before your minds this picture of the suffering Savior, as it has been all vividly present to my own mental vision, I wonder if anyone here has been saying, “Oh, Sir, I also have to endure the cruel mocking of the ungodly! They call me this name and that, and I feel that I cannot endure it.” What? Are you—

***“A soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb”—***

and do you need to turn coward when they mete out to you something of the treatment that they gave to Him? Look at your Master in the hour of His agony on the Cross and never be afraid again! Remember how He forewarned His followers concerning this very matter—"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Cheerfully accept all the contempt and scorn that the world pleases to pour upon you—take it as a tribute to the likeness to Christ that even worldlings can see in you—and praise the Lord that you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name's sake!

Perhaps some self-righteous person says, "I wish I had been there. I would have taught those miserable wretches not to treat the Savior in such a shameful fashion!" Ah, that is the way one of our English kings once talked. "I wish," said he, "that I had been there with my soldiers—I would have cut them in pieces!" But somebody who stood by said, "Ah, that speech shows that you have not yet learned how to be like He." He could have cut them all in pieces in a moment! He could have asked for more than 12 legions of angels to come to His rescue! But how, then, could He have accomplished the purpose for which He came to this earth? And how would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? It was written concerning Him, seven centuries before His birth, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." And that prophecy was literally fulfilled when He stood silent before Caiaphas and before Pilate, and when He endured without a murmur all the insults of the mocking crowd at Calvary!

I think I hear someone say, "If I had been there, I would not have mocked the Savior as they did." Ah my Friend, I am not so sure that you would not! Do you love Him now? Do you love His people? Do you love His ways? Do you love His Word? Do you love His House? Do you love Him? If you do not, I do not see why you should imagine that you would have behaved better than most of the men and women at that time did. You would not have known the Lord of Life and Glory any more than they did, and you would probably have joined them in heaping scorn and contumely upon Him! His stern rebukes of your sin would have made you as angry as they were. "He that is not with Me is against Me," is still one of the infallible tests by which He tries the sons of men! And if you are not with Him, you are against Him! If you are not out-and-out for Him, you are mocking Him in your way even as the Jews did in theirs!

Possibly somebody asks, "Why did the Savior endure all that mockery and scorn?" Ah, some of us can tell! We once mocked religion and perhaps even poured contempt upon the name of Jesus, so He was mocked even while He was making Atonement for our sin of mockery! Besides,

sin is always so contemptible a thing that it ought to be held up to derision by all sane men—and as Christ took upon Himself the sins of all His people—it was necessary that He should be despised even when He was only by imputation bearing the sins of others—

***“For sins not His own
He came to atone”***

and, therefore, as the Sin-Bearer, the Substitute for His people, He had to bear all the scorn that their sins deserved.

Now, in closing, I say to you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, your Master has been despised for your sakes, mind that you greatly honor Him. He was made nothing of, as far as that was possible to men—see that you make much of Him. For every thorn that pierced His blessed temples, give Him some precious pearl that you highly prize. For every hiss of scorn that greeted His holy ears, give Him a song of grateful praise. Oh, how I wish that we could continually lift Him up higher and higher before the sons and daughters of men! If He would but make us as the dust beneath His feet so that He might be exalted so much more in the eyes of sinners, we would count it our highest Glory to be trampled beneath His feet. Oh, for more crowns to put upon His blessed head!—

***“Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne.”***

It shall be the Heaven of Heaven to us when He gives us the crown of life, the crown of righteousness and the crown of glory, and we cast them all at His feet crying, “Not unto us, O Lord, be the Glory,” but, “unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever.” But why not begin to honor Him here? I hope many of us are doing so already, but let us do it more and more! O Lamb of God, bleeding, languishing, despised, rejected, what can I do to honor You more than I have ever done before? Is not that the language of your heart, my Brother, my Sister? Come to His Table and honor Him by obeying this as well as all His other commandments, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” And then go tomorrow into the world wherever your business and your duty call you, and say—

***“Now for the love I bear His name
What was my gain I count my loss.
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross.
Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake—
Oh, may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake.”***

Is there anyone here who has despised and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ? Alas, I fear that many, even in this assembly, have done so. Have you set Him at nothing? Have you thought nothing of Him? Have you mocked Him? Have you put a crown of thorns upon His head? Oh, if you

have hitherto been numbered among His enemies, quit their ranks this very hour, bend your knees before Him in true homage and submission, give Him your hearts to be His royal throne, give Him yourselves to be His loyal subjects and servants forever! Look unto Him as He was upon the Cross and as He is upon the Throne of God! Trust Him with your whole heart, for whoever believes in Him has everlasting life! God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 4; 5.**

Verse 1. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.* Good men want to be heard when they pray. They are not satisfied with merely praying—they must have God's answers to their supplications. See how David pleads the past mercy received from God—"You have enlarged me when I was in distress." Cannot my own heart look back to God's loving kindness to me in days gone by? Oh, yes! Then, as He is the same God, what He has done in the past is an argument for what He will do in the future! There are some of us here who can adopt the Psalmist's language and say, "You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

2. *O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you slander me, how long will you slander God, how long will you turn the Gospel into ridicule, how long will you resist the Spirit of God?*

2. *How long will you love vanity, and seek leasing?* That is, after falsehood, after lying. Why do men seek after falsehood? What attraction can it have for them? Why, only this attraction—that it suits a fool's heart to feed on falsehood.

3. *But know that the LORD has set apart him that is godly for Himself.* [See Sermon #2530, Volume 43—"A PECULIAR PEOPLE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You cannot hurt him, for God has hedged him about. You may say what you please against him, but God loves him and will take care of him.

3. *The LORD will hear when I call unto Him.* What a sweet assurance! O Brothers and Sisters, the Mercy Seat is always open to us! It will be a blessed thing if everyone of us can say with David, "The Lord will hear when I call unto Him."

4. *Stand in awe, and sin not.* This is good advice to ungodly men! Let them feel aright the awe of God's Presence and they must turn from sin. Holy reverence is a great preservative from sin.

4. *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.* Hold private communion with yourself, in a private place, at a private hour. "Be

still.” We are far too noisy—most of us talk too much. It would often make men wiser if they were more still. If a still tongue does not make a wise head, yet it tends that way.

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.* This is a capital rule for the whole of life. Serve God and trust in Him—do what is right, and rest in the God of Right.

6. *There are many that say, who will show us any good?* We all need to see anything that is really good, we do not care who shows it to us, even if it is the devil himself. “Who will show us any good?” That question may have another meaning, for there are some who have no desire for spiritual good—for such good as God calls good.

6. *LORD, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us.* David began the Psalm with a personal petition, “Hear me when I call,” but now he begins to glow in spirit and, as his prayer burns more vehemently, he prays for others, also—“Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us.” This is our highest joy, this is our greatest good—to walk in the light or God’s Countenance! If we have the favor of God, and know that we have it, we need ask for nothing else, for every other blessing is assured to those who have the favor of God!

7. *You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* The harvest and the vintage were the two seasons of greatest joy in the East. They shouted, “Harvest Home,” with gladness that the fruits of the earth had again been ingathered, and they drank the new wine and danced for joy. But David says to the Lord, “You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” When God puts gladness in the heart, it is real gladness, for God is not the Giver of a sham joy! It is lasting gladness, for God does not give temporary gifts.

David says, “You have put gladness in my heart,” and then he compares it with the gladness of the sons of men, and he says that his joy was greater than theirs when their earthly stores were increased. Boaz went to sleep on the threshing-floor, but he that sleeps upon the bosom of God has a far softer bed than that!

8. *I will lay me down both in peace, and sleep: for You, LORD, only make me dwell in safety.* [See Sermon #2033, Volume 34—PLAIN DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAVED FROM SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He who has Jehovah as his God is at home even when he is abroad! He is well guarded even when he has none upon earth to protect him! And he can go to sleep in calm confidence when others would be disturbed in mind and too timid to close their eyes!

Psalm 5. Verse 1. *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.* Sometimes we pray right off, as David did when he cried to the Lord, “Hear me when I call.” At other times, we sit down to meditate, and think over what we want to say to the Lord in prayer, as David did when he

said, "O Lord, consider my meditation.' What I have considered do You consider." A well-considered prayer is very likely to succeed with God.

2. *Hearken unto the voice of my cry*—"When I have not confidence or comfort enough to present a well-ordered prayer to You—but, like a child in pain, cry unto You, 'Hearken unto the voice of my cry'"—

2. *My King, and my God.* What? Will a king hearken to a cry? Men generally prepare elaborate petitions when they come into the presence of royalty, but although the Lord is far greater than all earthly sovereigns, He is far more condescending than they are.

2. *For unto You will I pray.* I trust that we all pray. I am sure that all Believers do, but let us pray more, let us pray much more than we have done and let us, each one truly say to the Lord, "Unto You will I pray." He is a King, so serve Him with your prayers! He is God, so adore Him with your prayers! And if you can put both your hands on Him and say, as David did, "My King, and my God," what abundant motives you have for abounding in prayer to Him!

3. *My voice shall You hear in the morning, O LORD.* "When the dew is on all Nature, and on my spirit, too, then shall You hear my voice in prayer. Before I go out into the world, my first thoughts shall be of You." Never see the face of man, Beloved, until you have seen the face of God.

3. *In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up.* Adjust your prayer as the archer fits his arrow on the bow. Look up as you shoot it and keep on looking up and looking out for an answer to your supplication. You cannot expect God to open the windows of Heaven to pour you out a blessing if you do not open the windows of your expectation to look for it! If you look up in asking, God will look down in answering. It is always well to take good aim in prayer. Some prayers are like random shots, they cannot be expected to hit the target. But David's prayer was well aimed and he expected it to prevail with God—"In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up."

4. *For you are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with You.* In both of these Psalms there is a clear line drawn between the righteous and the wicked, this is a line which still needs to be kept very clear, and we must all seek to know on which side of that line we are.

5, 6. *The foolish shall not stand in Your sight: You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy them that speak lies: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.* These are strong words, but not too strong—God is not tolerant of evil and those who are most like He in other respects will be like He in this matter, also.

7. *But as for me, I will come into Your House in the multitude of Your mercy.* "I will be like a child who goes in and out of his father's door as often as he pleases because he is at home. I will not go there on my own merits, but 'in the multitude of Your mercy.'"

7. *And in Your fear will I worship toward Your holy Temple.* There was no temple on earth when David wrote this Psalm, but God was his Temple, and so the pious Jew opened his window and looked towards Jerusalem. So do we look towards God upon the Throne of Grace in Heaven and seek to worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

8. *Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies, make Your way straight before my face.* David does not say, "Make my way straight." He does not want to have his own way, but he wants to walk in God's way. Thus sweet submission blends with a desire for perfect obedience. "Make Your way straight before my face."

9. *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth.* You cannot expect ungodly men to speak that which is right. "There is no faithfulness in their mouth."

9. *Their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher.* Pouring out foul, putrid gas. They cannot speak without using filthy or blasphemous expressions, or if they do, there is falsehood lurking behind their words, for deceit and evil of all kinds are in their hearts.

9. *They flatter with their tongue.* Always beware of people who flatter you, and especially when they tell you that they do *not* flatter you and that they know you cannot endure flattery—for you are then being most fulsomely flattered—so be on your guard against the tongue of the flatterer!

10. *Destroy You them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against You.* "It does not matter what they do against me, but O Lord, "they have rebelled against You." David speaks here like a judge pronouncing sentence upon the guilty—not out of malice, but out of loyalty and devotion to God!

11, 12. *But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice: let them always shout for joy because You defend them: let them also that love Your name be joyful in You. For You, LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor will You compass him as with a shield.*

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

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

“A PECULIAR PEOPLE”

NO. 2530

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*“But know that the LORD has set apart him that is godly for Himself:
the Lord will hear when I call to Him.”*
Psalm 4:3.

If you read this Psalm through, you will notice that when David wrote it, he had been pestered and troubled by certain ungodly men who had made a mockery of that which was his greatest delight. They had turned his glory into shame and had proved that they loved folly and falsehood. So he said to them, “O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity and seek after leasing”—or, “lying?” In order that he might stop them from angering him, he reminded them of two great facts. “But know”—he said—understand, do not doubt it, rest assured of it, “know that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself: Jehovah will hear when I call to Him.” Why did David want these men to know those two facts?

Well, first, that they might cease to oppose him, for, if they did but know that the man whom they mocked was really a child of God, set apart by the Most High by a Divine choice to be His own peculiarly favored one, surely they would not go on with their persecution! Those who put Christ to death did it in ignorance, “for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” And we are persuaded that there are many men who now oppose the servant of God who would not do so if they did but know that he really was a servant of God, and that God looked upon him with delight. Therefore David, to stop the cruel mocking of his persecutors, said to them, “Know that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself: Jehovah will hear when I call to Him.”

He may also have had a still better motive and I think that he had—namely, to draw these men towards his God. There is no better way of taking flies than with honey and no better way of getting men to Christ than by drawing them to Him by a display of the privileges and advantages which belong to a godly life. “Know, then,” he said, “you who are saying, ‘Who will show us any good?’ And who are seeking after mere vanities that never can satisfy you—know you that in true religion there is to be found that which will delight you, and which will give you rest and peace. Know this, ‘that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself.’” I would to God that some to whom we describe the choice privileges of the people of God may be moved to cry—

**“With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity!”**

But, whether this Truth of God has either or both of these effects upon the minds of men, or whether it shall have no effect at all, still it is a Truth never to be denied, “that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” So, as God may help me at this time, I shall briefly speak, first, upon *a peculiar character*. “Him that is godly.” Secondly, upon *a peculiar honor*. “Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” And, thirdly, upon *a peculiar privilege*. “Jehovah will hear when I call to Him.” Oh, that every one of us may possess the character, receive the honor and enjoy the privilege of which our text speaks!

I. First, then, let us notice A PECULIAR CHARACTER—“him that is godly.”

On reading the Psalm, it is very clear that this is *a man misunderstood*, or, *not understood on earth*. The ungodly cannot comprehend the godly! They scoff at them, they turn their glory into shame because they, themselves, love vanity and seek after lying. The godly man is not understood by the people among whom he dwells—God has made him to be a stranger and a foreigner in their midst. They who are born twice have a life which cannot be comprehended by those who are only born once! Those who have received the Spirit of God have a new spirit within them which is so amazing that the carnal mind cannot perceive what it is! Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. When a man has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, the old creatures round him cannot make heads or tails of him. They look at him, they see him actuated by motives which they cannot understand! They see that he is kept in check by forces which they do not acknowledge, that he is constrained by energies of which they are not partakers and that he looks for a something which they do not desire. So the Christian becomes, in a measure, like Christ, Himself, of whom the poet sings—

**“The Jewish world knew not their King,
God’s everlasting Son.”**

“Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” “You are a very peculiar person,” said one to a Christian. “I thank you for that testimony,” answered the Christian, “for that is what I desire to be, as Peter says, ‘You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.’” “Ah,” said the other, “but there is a strangeness about you that I do not like. I feel, sometimes, that I cannot endure your company.” “I thank you again,” replied the Christian, “for you only fulfill our Lord’s words, ‘Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.’”

Yes, dear Friends, it is so, and if you never strike the worldling as being a strange person. If you never get the mocking laughter of the ungodly. If they never slander you. If you never detect any difference between yourself and them—and they never discover any between themselves and you—it must be because *you are not a genuine child of God*. Ishmael will mock Isaac. It is not possible that the two seeds—the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—should agree together if they act

according to their nature. Do not wonder, therefore, if you, like David, have to bear persecution from those who cannot comprehend your new life, “for you are dead,” and the world says, “Bury the dead out of sight.” “You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” But the worldling does not understand the peculiar character of the godly, or delight in it.

But notice that, according to our text, this peculiar character is *understood in Heaven*. God knows what godliness is, for He has created it, He sustains it, He is pledged to perfect it and His delight is in it! What matters it whether you are understood by your fellow men or not, so long as you are understood by God? If that secret prayer of yours is known to Him, seek not to have it known to anyone else. If your conscientious motive is discerned in Heaven, mind not though it is denounced on earth. If your designs—the great principles that sway you—are such as you dare plead in the Great Day of Judgment, you need not stop to plead them before a jesting, jeering generation. Be godly and fear not! And if you are misrepresented, remember that should your character be dead and buried among men, there will be “a resurrection of reputations” as well as of bodies! “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” Therefore be not afraid to possess this peculiar character, for though it is misunderstood on earth, it is well understood in Heaven!

Let us inquire what this character is which is misunderstood on earth, but understood in Heaven. What does the text mean when it mentions, “him that is godly”?

Well, it means, first, *a God-fearing man*. This is a common term, “a God-fearing man.” There are many who have not the fear of God before their eyes. Whether there is a God or not, is a matter of small consideration to them. They do not care which way the discussion terminates, for God is not in all their thoughts and, as long as He is not there, it does not matter to them whether He is anywhere! There are some who are not afraid of the terrors of God even with regard to the world to come! At any rate, they flatter themselves that they shall die at ease even if they live in wickedness and, for the present, they even dare to defy the Most High! They have been heard—and our blood has chilled as we have heard them—they have been heard to invoke condemnation from His hand as they have blasphemed His holy name!

The godly man is one who fears God. He would not take God’s name in vain, he would not willfully violate God’s Law, he would not do anything that would grieve the Most High. And when he does so through infirmity, or sudden temptation, he is, himself, grieved that he should have grieved his God, for the fear of the Lord is upon him! He would not wish to stand at the judgment-bar of God, to be judged according to his works, apart from Jesus Christ, his Lord. He would dread such a thing! The name of God, the Person of God—the Character of God—these are matters of holy awe with him. His soul is filled with hallowed trembling while he thinks

thereon—and everything that has to do with God is sacred to him. Heaven is no trifle and Hell is no trifle to him. The Book of God is no fable to him, the Day of God is hallowed by him and the Church of God is dear to him, for he is a God-fearing man! Often would he have done this or that, but he said, with Nehemiah, “So did not I, because of the fear of God.” When he is sorely tempted to evil, he asks, with Joseph, “How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

Now, dear Friend, if you go no further than that, and are a God-fearing man, I have great hopes for you and I ask you to look at my text with hope—“Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.”

But, advancing another step, a godly man is a *God-trusting man*. He is one who has learned to entrust his soul to the hands of God as unto a faithful Creator, one who has trusted his sin with God, beholding it laid upon the Divine Substitute. He has trusted his eternity with God. He believes that he shall die the death of the righteous and that his last end shall be like His. He is resting in the living God, he trusts God about the present, he takes his troubles to God, yes, and if the day opens without trouble, he will not enter upon it without taking his day to God, nor will he fall asleep without committing his night to God. He trusts in God for little things, saying, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He trusts in God for great things, saying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

So, dear Friend, if you are a God-trusting man, as well as a God-fearing man, take my text—for it tastes like a wafer made with honey—lay it on your tongue and let it dissolve into your soul and sweeten your whole life! “Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.”

Then advance still further and understand the word, “godly,” as meaning a *God-loving man*. A godly man loves God! He is one whose heart has gone out after God. He loves his dear ones here below, but his God he loves more than all of them! He loves them in God and loves God the more for giving them to him, but God, Himself, has become his great object of delight! I am sure that he is a saved man who can follow David in saying, “God, my exceeding joy.” When one comes to joy in God, it is a sure evidence of godliness! The hypocrite has no delight in God. He may have a delight in the outward parade of religion, or in the name of godliness—possibly he has a delight in the bliss of Heaven which he sometimes hopes that he may enjoy—but in God, Himself, he has no delight. Whereas, to the true Believer, God is Heaven—

**“Were I in Heaven without my God,
‘Twould be no Heaven to me.”**

“Delight yourself, also, in the Lord,” says David, and the genuine Believer does! He can say of his God—

**“You are the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll.
The circle where my passions move,
The center of my soul.”**

So that he is a godly man who is a God-loving man.

And, assuredly, he is a godly man who is *a God-knowing man*. He does not merely fear and trust and love God but he has come into personal acquaintance with God. The other day I saw a book entitled, “Is God Knowable?” Well, dear Friends, that is a question that can be answered by some of us. We can say, “We know Him. We have spoken to Him and He has spoken to us. Our spirit has come into actual contact with the Divine Spirit! We do not need anybody to prove this Truth of God to us, for it is a matter of faith, no, of joyous, ecstatic, delicious experience!—

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

“My God, it is a fact that I have touched You and that You have touched me—that I have spoken to You and that You have spoken to me—and it is that fact which has forever made me glad.” O Beloved, if you know not God, what do you know? How are you a child of God if you do not know your Father? How are you saved if you do not know your Savior? How can you come to the Table to remember Him whom you never knew? And must you not expect to hear Him say at the last, “Depart from Me; I never knew you”? If we know Him, we are known of Him—the two things go together and are much the same—but, if we know Him not, then He knows us not in the sense of acquaintance and of love.

Once more, a godly man is *a God-like man*. We reach this point, you see, by steps—the man is God-fearing, God-trusting, God-loving, God-knowing and then, God-like. Can a man be like God? Ah, me, what a wide discrepancy there must always be between God and the best of men! We are unlike God even in our likeness to Him! He who is most like God is only like He as a dewdrop is like the sea, or as a glowworm is like the sun! Yet Grace does make us like God in righteousness, true holiness and especially in love. Has the Holy Spirit taught you, my dear Friend, to love even those that hate you? Have you a love that leaps out like the waters from the smitten rock so that every thirsty one may drink? Would you gladly love the poorest and the most depraved into the wealth and glory of your Master’s love? Do you love even those that render you no love in return, as He did who gave His life for His enemies? Then are you, to that extent, made like God. And do you choose that which is good? Do you delight yourself in peace? Do you seek after that which is pure? Are you always gladdened with that which is kind and just? Then are you like your Father who is in Heaven! You are a godly man and this text is for you—“Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.”

II. This leads me to dwell with pleasure upon A PECULIAR HONOR which has been conferred upon this peculiar character. “The Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.”

You see, then, that *God discerns godliness in men*. There is a great deal of dross in all of us, but God spies whatever gold there may be. If there is any gold in the ore, God preserves the lump because of the precious metal that is in it. I know, my dear Brother, that you are not per-

fect. Perhaps you are, at this moment, grieving over a great fault. If so, I am glad you have the godliness that makes you grieve over sin. I know, my dear Friend, that you are not what you want to be, or wish to be, or ought to be. Still, you *do* fear the Lord and you *do* trust Him and you *do* love Him. Now, the Lord can spy all that out and He knows about the good that is in you. He casts your sin behind His back, but that which is of His own Grace, He sets apart for Himself—and He sets you apart for Himself because of the good which is in you. I like to notice, in Scripture, that although God’s people are described as a very faulty people, and although the Lord is never tender towards sin, yet He is always very gentle towards them. If there is any good point about them, He brings it out and He is most gracious to them—and His love casts a mantle over a thousand of their mistakes and errors! If God’s people mentioned in the Old and New Testaments had all been perfect, I should have despaired, but, because they seem to have just the kind of faults that I grieve over in myself, I do not feel any more lenient toward my faults, but I have the more hope that I, also, am among those whom the Lord sets apart for Himself because they are godly.

And, dear Friends, know yet further that *God makes those who are really godly to differ from the world*. He will not let them be like the world. Some of them try to be so, but they must not. And the world sometimes gets the victory over them for a time and makes them like itself—but they soon get out of its power. Poor Samson told the secret of his great strength and the Philistines cut off all that long hair of his which used to hang down his back till he seemed to be like a wild man of the woods! The Nazarite told his secret and then they clipped away his hair and set him to grind in the mill when they had put out his eyes! They should have had a razor drawn over his head every morning, but they forgot to do that—and when his hair had grown, again, he pulled the pagan temple down upon his enemies and, in his last moments, won a glorious victory for his nation, Israel!

If the devil ever does cut the Nazarite locks of a true child of God, they will grow again in time. They must grow again and they grow when the devil is not noticing them—and then the old strength of Grace comes back again. I have known a child of God fall, like Peter did, when he denied his Master. Yet, when the locks of his consecration had grown, again, in a short time there was Peter preaching a sermon that brought 3,000 to Christ! And the devil had not made much of a gain of Peter, after all, when once he came back to his Lord. But, oh, what a mercy it is to be kept so as never to lose those locks of consecration! Oh, that we may differ from the world in a thousand respects, so that we may go through it as Mr. Bunyan pictures his pilgrim going through Vanity Fair! “Buy, buy, buy,” the merchants cried, but he did not buy any of their wares. And when they pressed him very hard, he said, “We buy the truth and sell it not.” All he had to do was to go through the fair—and that is what you and I have to do. Let us go through the world as those who are in it but not of it—the Lord always, by His Grace, making us to differ

from other men! There is no need to take off the collar of your coat, or to talk differently or to dress differently from ordinary folk. Dress and talk like other people who act as they should, but let your difference from the world be *spiritual*—real, true, not merely indicated by some outward emblem or badge—but seen in the deportment and carriage of your entire life!

Further, the Lord sets apart him that is godly for Himself by *dealing with His people differently from others*. I fancy that I hear somebody say, “I stoutly deny that!” Well, deny away, brother, if you like, for, apparently the Lord does *not* deal with His people differently from what He does with others, and it says, even in Scripture, “All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and the wicked.” Here is a man of God, but the Sabeans steal his oxen and his asses. The Chaldeans carry away his camels, the fire of God burns up his sheep and his servants. And his children are destroyed by a great wind from the wilderness. Yes, yes, yes! But read the whole of Job’s story and see that when God turns, again, his captivity and gives him twice as much as he had before, and enables him to gain a great victory over the devil, after all, God did not deal with Job as He dealt with others!

“Oh,” says another, “but whom the Lord loves, He chastens!” Yes, and that is one of the ways in which He differs in His dealings with them and with others, for, sometimes, He does not chasten the ungodly, but lets them have no trouble in their lives and no pangs in their death. He lets them have as much pleasure as they can have, for what they get *here* is all they will ever have! Whereas He chastens His own people for their present and eternal good. My dear Friend, there is never exactly the same Providence to the ungodly as to the godly. There is a difference, somewhere. There is a difference in the end, if nowhere else, for to you and to me, as God’s people, “all things work together for good.” But they do not work together for good to the ungodly! There may, apparently, be the same causes at work, but they do not produce the same results.

So God *does* make a difference between the godly and the rest of mankind. And there is one peculiar point of difference—He has set them apart for Himself! For what purpose? That they may be His Friends, and *that He may converse with them*. God does not usually come to this earth to talk with kings and princes—the greatest king is but a brother-worm like the rest of us—but God has often been here to converse and commune with His poor people. If men are godly, whether they are rich or poor, God has fellowship with them! It seems amazing to me that God should so often be unknown in His own world. The great majority of His creatures never hear His voice and never give a response to His call! But the godly, when they hear the voice of their God saying to them, “Seek you My face,” cry out at once, “Your face, Lord, will we seek!” There are thousands at this moment speaking with God, but all of them are godly people. And God is speaking to them. The Holy Spirit is holding high communion with many of the sons and daughters of Adam, but only with those who are godly! Even now there is a great gulf between God and the

ungodly—their backs are turned to Him and, at the last He will bid them keep on doing what they have been doing, for He will say to them, “Depart from Me, you cursed.”

But His people are always coming, coming, coming to Him and, at the last He will bid them continue to do what they are now doing, for to them He will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father.” Oh, yes, amazing as it is, it is true that we do have conversation with God, for “the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself” to be His friend and His constant companion!

Moreover, God has also set apart him that is godly *that He may use him*. If you are a godly man, God will make you His own servant and He will send you on His errands. And He will be with you all the while. He will employ you to carry messages of comfort, messages of warning, messages of invitation to those who need them. If you are godly, God will use you! He will not use dirty vessels, but when we are clean, washed by His own hands in the cleansing Fountain, then He will use us for His own purposes. He has reserved us, He has monopolized us for Himself alone! We sometimes sing—

**“Take my hands, and let them be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”**

We say to God, “Take my lips, my eyes, my ears, my feet, my whole being; reserve me for Yourself.” That is exactly what the Lord has done with the godly! You sometimes see certain things marked, “Reserved.” That is the label that God has put on every Christian—“The Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” Nobody but your God is to have you in His possession or control, for you belong wholly unto the Most High!

Know this, Beloved, for, *at the last, God will acknowledge you as His*. Before astonished worlds, when ungodly men shall not dare to lift up their faces, God will acknowledge you in that day as belonging to Him if you are godly. Your righteousness shall come forth as the light and your judgment as the noonday, for God has made you His own and set a hedge about you! And none shall destroy you, or separate you from His Son. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels,” for He has set apart the godly for Himself!

III. Now I must close by speaking briefly of a peculiar privilege. “The Lord will hear when I call to Him.”

This means, first, “He *will grant me an audience*. He will hear what I have to say.” There were certain princes of Media and Persia who had the right to come to the king whenever they pleased. Such is the right of all the godly—whenever you desire to speak with God, God is waiting to hear you. Oh, what a privilege is this! There are none of us who could go to see earthly kings and queens whenever we liked—we would have to be properly introduced and go through all manner of forms and ceremonies. But through the one Mediator between God and men, we have the right at any moment of the day or night to have an audience with the King of kings and Lord of lords!

It means, next, *“The Lord will not only hear, but He will answer me.”* Answer is intended in the word, “hear”—“The Lord will hear when I call to Him.” Ask what you will, O you children of the King, and it shall be done unto you! Ask Him not merely for the half of His Kingdom, but for the whole of it, and you shall have it. “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?”

I am not going to preach about that part of my subject, I only want to apply it. Many of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, desire to commune at the Lord’s Table, yet I hear one say, “I feel so dull, I do not know whether I dare come to the Table. I seem as if I were dead and I cannot get out of this cold, lethargic state.” Let me whisper this message in your ear—“The Lord will hear you when you call to Him.” Now, then, pray, “Lord, quicken me.”—

***“Dear Lord! And shall we ever lie
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to You
And You to us so great?
Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,
And that shall kindle ours.”***

You need not be dull, you need not be lethargic—up with you, for you have wings! Ask the Lord to help you to stretch them out that you may rise superior to everything earth-born and groveling, up into communion with the Most High. Try the power of prayer now!

“Ah,” sighs another, “but I feel so desponding, I am as heavy as lead. If I were thrown up, I should fall down again. I have so many doubts, I have such a sinking of spirit that I often question whether I am a child of God at all.” Now listen to our text—“The Lord will hear when I call to Him.” Call unto Him, “Lord, bring my soul out of prison! Lord, appear to Your poor servant!”—

***“Shine, Lord, and my terror shall cease,
The blood of Atonement apply.
And lead me to Jesus for peace,
The Rock that is higher than I.”***

There is no need for you to be “down in the dumps.”—

***“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?”***

Come, Brothers and Sisters, you can get rid of those clouds—

***“Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.”***

Try it now, believing and expecting that the Lord will hear you! You see, He has set you apart for Himself—you belong to Him, you are His treasure, His jewel, the signet on His finger, the delight of His heart! Your name is engraved on the palms of His hands! Do you think He wishes you to be in this miserable state? Oh, no, He has sent the Comforter to

deal with just such as you are! One Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of comforting the people of God, therefore He must want you to be happy and comfortable. Cry to Him to bring you up out of your low estate.

But I hear a Brother say, “I have a great trouble on me, I have sustained a very heavy, a very serious loss in my business.” Another says, “I have lost a dear child and there is another loved one sickening.” “Ah,” cries one, “if you were to step into my house, you would find it like the wards of a hospital! Everybody in it seems to be ill. I am the man that has seen affliction?” Are you, dear Brother? Then you are the very man who ought to pray and to say, “The Lord will hear when I call to Him.” He will either take your trouble away, or else make you glad that it ever came. He will either take your burden off, or else He will give you a strong back to bear it! I do not think it matters much which it is—whether He takes off the burden or strengthens the back. You know, the deeper your troubles, the louder shall be your song at the last—and God will get more glory out of you by a life of trial than if you had a smooth path all the way. Come, then, call to Him!

“The Lord will hear when I call to Him.” This seems a very wonderful sentence. What is there in me which is a reason why the Lord should hear me when I call to Him? Let me explain this marvel. There is a little boy who lives at your house and I say to him, “I have called to see your father, but he will not see me.” “Oh,” says the lad, “he always sees me.” “Your father will not let me speak to him.” “He always lets me speak to him,” says the boy. What is there in that little child that makes the man hear *him* when he will not hear *me*? Why, you see, it is his own boy! And the father will, of course, see and hear his own child. And you are the Lord’s own child, so He will hear you! Therefore take your troubles to Him. If the father will not hear his boy in ordinary times, yet when the lad cries, “O father, I feel so ill!” the loving parent says, “Come here, my child, and tell me all about it.” That is what the Lord says to you now, my poor, weary, heavy-laden Brother. The Lord will hear you, I am quite sure of it. Therefore call on Him and get rid of those burdens.

“Ah,” says one, “but my trouble is that I want to have my children converted.” Then, pray for them, pray for them! “Oh, but it is my husband who is not a Christian!” says another. Then, pray for him. “I have prayed,” says one. Pray on, dear Sister, and the Lord will hear you! “I am afraid my husband will not be saved.” Well, you must not be afraid, but say with David, “The Lord will hear when I call to Him.” “Ah,” says another, “but I have to go back tomorrow into business and I shall have to work with so many ungodly men—my life is one long struggle.” Well, never mind about that tonight—it is not Monday, yet. Let us get Monday’s Grace when Monday comes! And let us now enjoy ourselves as we repeat this precious text, “The Lord will hear when I call to Him.”

He will either stop those wicked men’s mouths, or else He will open yours. He will give you the right word by way of reply, or else He will not let them say anything that needs a reply. Only tell the Lord about them!

You would like to come and see me and tell *me* about them, but I do not particularly want to hear it and I cannot do you much good if I *do* hear it. Go and tell my Master about it! "I want to speak with some Christian friend." Well, do so, if you like, but remember that—

***"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"***

"The Lord will hear when I call to Him." Call unto Him now and He will hear and answer you! And so let us come to His Table, happy and joyful, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-32.**

Verse 25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word.* "I feel heavy, unhappy, dull. 'My soul cleaves unto the dust.' Or I feel worldly, lethargic, lifeless. 'My soul cleaves unto the dust.' There is nothing but the power of new life that can separate me from that dust! 'Quicken me according to Your Word.'" Divine life is the great cure for most spiritual evils. When a man has vigorous life in his constitution, he throws off many diseases. And when the soul is full of spiritual life, it masters a great number of evils. "My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word." That is good pleading—"according to Your promise, for You have promised to quicken me. It is the nature of Your Word to be quick and quickening; therefore, Lord, 'quicken me according to Your Word.'"

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* "I have confessed my wrong; now, O Lord, teach me what is right! I have acknowledged my sin; now, O Lord, lead me in the paths of holiness! 'Teach me Your statutes.'"

7. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* He who fully understands the way of God's precepts must talk of His wondrous works. There is a power about that Truth of God in the heart to unloosen the most stammering tongue! We are bound to speak of that which God teaches us. "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works."

28. *My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen me according to Your Word.* Are any of you, dear Friends, in that condition? Do your hearts melt within you? It is a sore trouble, as I know full well. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," but when his very soul melts for heaviness, what is he to do, then? Why, even *then* he may pray! No, then he *must* pray and this may be the burden of his prayer, "Strengthen me according to Your Word." Notice, Beloved, how the Psalmist keeps harping upon that string—"according to Your Word." If your prayer is according to God's Word, you may expect a comfortable answer, sooner or later. We know that God will not act contrary to His Word. He who is not a man of his word is despised and if there could be One who was not a God of His

Word, what would be said of Him? But, my tried Friend, He will make His Word true to you to the very letter! Therefore still cry to Him, “Strengthen me according to Your Word.”

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously.* “Lord, let me not be pestered by liars, and let me never fall into any measure of falsehood myself.” There is a way of thinking better of yourself than you deserve, which is a form of lying. There is a method of supposing that you have experienced what you never have experienced and that you have attained to what you never have attained—that also is a way of falsehood. May God remove it from us and may we have the Law of the Lord written on our hearts! “Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously.”

30. *I have chosen the way of Truth.* “I want to be true, I want to know the Truth of God, I want to feel the Truth, I want to practice the Truth—I have chosen the way of Truth.”

30. *Your judgments have I laid before me.* “Like a map, so that I might follow the way of Truth as I see it drawn out in letters of light in Your Word.” The man who spreads out God’s Word before him, like a map of the road, is not likely to make a mistake in his journeying!

31. *I have stuck to Your testimonies.* I like that word, “stuck.” “I have stuck to Your testimonies.” “I could not be drawn or dragged away from them. Some have told me of some fine new ideas and modern grand discoveries, but ‘I have stuck unto Your testimonies.’ They came before me with something very artistic and scientific, but ‘I have stuck unto Your testimonies’”

31. *O LORD, put me not to shame.* You may rest assured that He never will! If a man clings to God, God will cleave to him. If we are not ashamed of God, He will never put us to shame, but we shall go from strength to strength glorying in His Truth and Grace.

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* There is an enlargement of the heart that is very dangerous, but this kind of enlargement of the heart is the most healthy thing that can happen to a man! A great heart, you see, is a running heart. A little heart goes slowly, but an enlarged heart runs in the way of God’s Commandments. Oh, for a heart full of love to God! And then to have that heart made larger, so as to hold more of God’s love! Lord, enlarge my heart in that sense! Let me feel at home and at liberty with You! Let the last link of my bondage be snapped. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—146 (VERSION II), 89, 87.

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

PLAIN DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAVED FROM SIN NO. 2033

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 15, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed
and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
and put your trust in the Lord.”
Psalm 4:4, 5.*

DAVID was surrounded with many wicked and cruel enemies. They touched him in a tender place when they mocked his religion and so turned his glory into shame. They invented all kinds of lies against him. But the worst of all was that they said, “There is no help for him in God.” As much as to say, “God has cast him off. Therefore, let men cast him off. He that is forsaken of the Lord is not fit to sit upon the throne of Israel. Let us set up Absalom in his place.” This was malice, indeed.

David first made his appeal to God in prayer. Herein he showed his wisdom. You can drive a better business at the Mercy Seat than in the world's jangling markets. You will get more relief from the righteous Lord than from ungodly men. To enter into debate is never so profitable as to enter into devotion. Carry not your complaint into the lower courts but go at once to the Court of King's Bench, where the Judge of All presides. Imitate David and David's Lord, who in the days of His flesh with strong crying and tears poured out His soul before the Father.

After David had prayed, he expostulated with his adversaries. The first showed his sonship towards God, the second his brotherliness towards men. There is nothing of bitterness in the words I have read to you—they have a kindly voice in them. If his foes had been at all reasonable they would have listened to his pleadings. But it is to be feared they were otherwise minded. He urges them to cease from sin and he teaches them the way to do so. In four sentences he helps them to escape from their evil ways and to become better men. Had God's Spirit applied David's words to their consciences, they would have been pricked in their hearts and there would have been no need for them to be smitten on the cheekbone, that their cruel teeth might be broken.

Upon these four precepts I would speak this morning as the Holy Spirit shall give me utterance, trusting, hoping, believing that many who desire a better life may find it while I speak. May God begin with them that they may begin with God! I have no confidence in my own persuasions. Yet, being called to use them, I trust in Him that sent me to make them effectual.

David mentions four things as helpful towards ceasing from sinning. The first is, feel reverent awe—“Stand in awe and sin not.” The second is, use thoughtful self-examination—“Commune with your own heart upon

your bed and be still.” The third advice is make a right approach to God—“Offer the sacrifice of righteousness” and the fourth is the greatest of them all—exercise faith—“Put your trust in the Lord.” Here are four stepping-stones across the filthy slough of sin—may you mark them well and step from one to the other by the help of God’s Spirit—till you reach the other shore and stand on safe and clean ground!

I. First, FEEL REVERENT AWE—“Stand in awe.” It might be translated, “Tremble and sin not.” Hardened sinners sin and tremble not. Penitent sinners tremble and sin not. Gracious work in the heart usually begins with trembling. I cannot believe a man has been saved if he has never trembled before God because of the evil of sin. The old house of depraved nature shakes before it comes down. The returning prodigal must feel, “I am not worthy to be called Your son,” or he will never be called a son. He seeks his Father’s face with much trembling, because he has so grievously offended.

Awe is not a common emotion nowadays. This is a flippant age. Men are rather triflers than tremblers. If there is any doctrine which has peculiar weight and solemnity about it, they try to pare it down to less terrible proportions. Sin is not exceeding sinful to them, nor its punishment exceeding terrible. They would not have us know the terrors of the Lord, though by these very terrors we persuade men. True religion must have a savor of awe about it—“My heart stands in awe of Your Word,” is the expression of one that knows God and is reconciled to Him.

Let me say, then, to you who have been thoughtless and careless about your souls until now—we earnestly desire you to consider these words—“Stand in awe.” Remember, there is a God—whatever you may think, or others may declare, there is a God who made you and in whose hand your breath is. There is a God that sits in Heaven, who beholds all the sons of men—and however much you may dislike the thought, there He is, and there He ever will be—and you will have to deal with Him and He with you, before long.

God is everywhere present, at all times. He has seen all your evil ways and heard all your hard speeches. No night is so dark as to hide from His eyes. No chamber so retired as to shut Him out. He has even read your thoughts and imaginations. He notes all and forgets nothing. All things are ever present to Him. The days of your youth and the years of your manhood lie open before Him like a book. If men could but realize that God is there, how could they dare to sin before His very eyes? If at this moment anyone of my hearers who is without Christ could only be filled with this one thought, “God, You see me,” surely he would stand in awe and at least desire to sin no more.

Well may the preacher speak very solemnly when he feels that he is surrounded with God and that God is within him as well as around him! Well may his hearers tremble if he feels that all his thoughts are at this moment read by God! Stand in awe, I pray you, of God, who is now filling this house and is in your own houses. Will you sin in God’s Presence? Can you blaspheme Him to His face? Will you disobey Him while His eyes

are fixed upon you? I pray you stand in awe of the eternal God, in whom you live and move and have your being!

Remember that this God, who is everywhere, and sees everything, is your Judge. He is pure and holy and cannot bear iniquity. He is angry with the wicked every day and will surely visit them for their transgressions. Every sinful act shall have its recompense of reward. Do not doubt it. The world is all in a tangle now but there will be a day when the Lord will draw out a straight thread for each man. Today the wicked prosper but God will turn their way upside down. And though the righteous are often under a cloud, He will bring forth their judgment as the noonday. Men respect an earthly judge. Therefore, I pray you, stand in awe of the Judge of all the earth.

Do not forget, also, that your God is almighty. He has but to will it and the strongest of us would be crushed more easily than a moth. There is no escaping from the Lord—neither the heights of Carmel nor the depths of the sea could afford shelter for a fugitive from the Lord. Neither can any resist Him, for none have any power apart from Him. You have heard His thunder, and trembled at the bolts of His lightning. Behold how dreadful is God in arms! How dare you sin against a God so great! Stand in awe. Even holy Job, when he came near to the Lord, exclaimed, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” How can you feel Him near and not be filled with awe?

Stand in awe of God because He is infinitely good. To me, personally, some little time ago, the Lord drew very near in a most special and memorable Providence. As I saw the hand of the Lord stretched out so marvelously, I felt my very flesh creep, not with alarm but with a joyful awe of One who could work so tenderly and condescendingly for His tried servant. I knew that He was God by His marvelously gracious care over me and nearness to my soul in adversity. Verily Jehovah is God and a great King above all gods. He is to be had in reverence of them that are round about Him. I know now why Jacob said at Bethel, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven.”

He was filled with a holy dread and solemn awe because God had been so near. I therefore say to you—stand in awe of God, because He is infinitely great and good. The illustration which I quoted from my own personal experience, I could not withhold, because it is, even at this hour one of the most vivid recollections of my life. God has dealt with me very graciously. Oh, His great goodness! A sense of it is overwhelming. We fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord makes to pass before us. Think of sin forgiven, of righteousness imputed, of spiritual life imparted, of that life preserved, supplied, nurtured.

Think of Providence with all mindful foresight and abounding supplies. The love of God should make us reverent as angels and humble as penitents. If the impudence of pride might dare to insult justice, yet it should scorn to injure love. There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared—His Grace, if not His Glory, should command the reverence of the

most obdurate hearts. I pray you stand in awe of God and sin not. If thoughts of this kind could but dwell in men's minds they would surely perceive that sin is a great wrong to the Lord and they would flee from it, crying like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

My dear Hearers, stand in awe in reference to a future state. You do not doubt the Truth of God which the Holy Spirit has revealed that when you die you will not cease to be. There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust—"for we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." Oh, that all persons would remember this wherever they go! I have heard of a soldier—I think he was employed in the survey of Palestine—who was in the valley of Jehoshaphat, outside Jerusalem, and someone remarked that it was reported by some that this valley would be the scene of the Last Judgment and in that place the multitudes would be gathered.

The soldier, hearing this, said, "What a crowd there will be! I shall be there and I will sit on this stone." He sat down to realize the scene and his imagination acted so powerfully that he seemed to himself to be among the throng and to behold the Great White Throne. He was seen to swoon and fall to the ground. Do you wonder? If anyone of us could, in our inmost souls, behold that scene, should we not be overcome? I wish I could so speak this morning that some of you would picture that last tremendous day for which all other days were made. Behold that "diesirae" that Day of Wrath, that day when justice will sit upon the throne! Behold it by anticipation, for it will soon be upon you in very deed.

As surely as you live, you will live again—and for every act on earth you must give an account in that last assize. Trifle not, for the Judge is at the door. We may hear His trumpets before this day is over. Let not this thought be driven from you—rather welcome it and let it abide in your minds—if you were to think of nothing else for a time you might be justified, since it is of such overwhelming importance that you prepare for your final state. Shall a man live and never think of the end of life? Can a man think it wise to occupy himself with frivolities throughout the whole of his earthly existence? While he is shaping his eternal condition, will he do nothing else but sport?

Will he never think of that day when his position shall be fixed by the verdict of the great Judge? O my dear Hearers, do not forget that you have to live in a future state and that you will see Him who died upon the Cross, seated on the Throne in that day when all nations shall be gathered before Him and He shall divide them, the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. May the thought of the eternal reward also rest on your minds! Hear you, even now, that word of the King to the righteous—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Hear, also, that dread sentence to those on his left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, think of these things and "stand in awe, and sin not"! This awe

is one of the strongest moral disinfectants—use it largely. There is no fear of your having too much of it. He that has no fear of God before his eyes sins with a high hand but awe of the Lord leads to purity of life.

II. In the second place, David admonished the ungodly to practice **THOUGHTFUL SELF-EXAMINATION**. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.”

I am not trying, my dear Hearer, to preach a sermon this morning—I am longing to take you by the hand and to lead you in the right way. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you willing to follow my gentle guidance. My dear Friend, you are now asked to think about yourself—“commune with your own heart.” When once men choose the way of evil they run in it with their eyes shut. They do not wish to consider. It is easier to go blindly on. They will think about their worldly concerns, their profits and losses, their pleasures and amusements. But they refuse seriously to consider their condition before God.

O my Friend, think of what you are and where you are, what you have done, what you are doing, what it will all lead to! Are you such a fool that you will not consider? Then put on the cap and bells, and wear a clown suit and take to your proper trade. And yet, even if you were a merry Andrew, it would become you sometimes to be wise as well as merry and to take a look into the future, lest you have to take a leap in the dark, at last.

Especially think of the state of your heart. This is the vital point. Are you right with God? Do you serve your Maker? Have you truly repented of former sin? Have you fled to Christ as your Refuge? Have you been born again? Are you the subject of sanctifying grace? “Commune with your own heart” upon these essential points—he that would have his face clean must look in a glass to see his spots. And he that would have his heart clean must gaze into the mirror of God’s Word that he may discover his secret faults.

Your heart may be diseased while your cheek seems ruddy with health. Look within you, Man, and be not deceived as to the fountain of your being. Have you really passed from death to life? Does the Spirit of the God of Truth dwell in you? Such questions as these are all-important. I pray you answer them as before the living God, without partiality or negligence.

Think by yourself, alone and in quiet. Oh, how I wish I could induce you to spend an hour or two closeted with yourself! “Commune with your own heart upon your bed”—at that time when companions are out of the way—when the jest is silenced and the common talk is hushed. Get by yourself, when you think of yourself or it will be an impossible task. Choose the hour of night when all is still around you and darkness lends its solemnity. You can forego a little natural sleep, if thereby you may be aroused from the sleep of spiritual death. The bed and sleep are instructive emblems of the grave and death—they may aid you in the serious work of examining your hearts.

Remember that as you put off your clothes and go to your bed, so you must put off your body and quit the scene of life’s activities. Are you ready for that undressing? Make your bed the place of your contrition, even as

David did when he said, “All the night make I my bed to swim.” The earth outside has its dews, let your heart have its tears. Think *by* yourself, *of* yourself and then think *for* yourself. You have been carried away by your companions. You have tried to think as they think. The general opinion of the age may have influenced you towards indifference. With a family round about you, you have looked at things too much in the light of business and personal benefit.

But it will be wise to lay aside all this. As you will have to die alone and to put in a personal appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it will be prudent to divest yourself of your surroundings and “commune with your own heart.” I commend this text most heartily to your immediate practice. If you are unsaved—think, rather than sleep. The tendency of most men with regard to eternal things is to go to sleep and let matters drift—I pray you, don’t do it. I dare not let you take your rest while all is wrong with you. Sleep, if you like, in a house that is on fire. Sleep, if you like, in a ship that is settling down and rapidly sinking. But I charge you do not sleep while you are an unforgiven man and your soul is nearing the eternal judgment—“Commune with your own heart upon your bed”—use your bed for seeking instead of sleeping.

I remember the time when I dared not go to sleep, for fear I might wake up in Hell. Many, when under conviction of sin, have at length resolved not to sleep until they found Christ. I wish that some such feeling as that would steal over you at this moment.

Keep on thinking till you come to be still. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.” Do you know what that means? There comes a time with men whom God is saving that all grows quiet within them. Their old pleasures and desires are hushed. The voice of the outside world is still and they hear in the silence of their souls “the still small voice” of conscience. Oh, that you were at this moment still enough to hear that warning note! Memory also commences her rehearsals—it tells of the past and brings forgotten things before the soul, Oh, that all of you would remember and think yourselves that God requires that which is past.

Best of all, God speaks in the soul. It was at night, when young Samuel was on his bed, that the Lord said to him, “Samuel, Samuel.” And it is when the heart at last has grown still that God’s voice of mercy is heard calling to the man by name. Oh, that in such a case you may have Divine Grace to answer, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”!

I beseech you, give yourselves space for thought, before thought becomes the worm of eternal misery to you. Remember, before you hear that voice from Heaven which spoke to the rich man in Hell and said to him, “Son, remember.” You slaves of fashion and frivolity, think, I pray you! You serfs of daily money-grubbing, rest a while and hear what God the Lord shall speak to you! You can hardly hear the great bell of St. Paul’s when the traffic is thundering around but it sounds solemnly in the stillness of night. We who live in the more remote suburbs hear Big Ben of Westminster at night but we seldom note it amid the stir and noise of the

day. Do give an opportunity for the eternal voices to pierce the clamors of the hour.

Do, for God's sake and for your soul's sake, hear what wisdom teaches concerning everlasting things! O Lord, give Your Grace to my dear Hearers, that they may consider their ways and turn unto Your statutes!

III. Very briefly, let us note that David gives a third piece of advice, which in essence means APPROACH UNTO GOD ARIGHT—"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness."

Now, I do not quite know what David, himself, may have intended by it, but this is how I interpret it. Come to God. Come to God in His own way. Come as Israel came to the Tabernacle in the wilderness, bringing their sacrifices with them.

When they brought their sacrifices, the first thing they did was to lay their hand on the victim and make a confession of sin. Come, then, with broken and contrite hearts unto the Lord. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Own your shortcomings and transgressions. Do not cloak or excuse your sins. Get to your chamber and tell the Lord what you have done. Pour out your hearts before Him—turn them upside down, as it were, and let all flow out, even to the dregs. Confess your pride and unbelief, your Sabbath-breaking, your dishonesty, your falsehood, your disobedience to parents, your every breach of the Divine Law. Whatsoever you have done amiss, confess it before Him and thus go to Him in the only way in which He can receive you, even as sinners owning your guilt.

Go also to the Lord with gracious desires to be rid of sin. Entreat reconciliation, saying, "I would no longer be what I have been. I throw down the weapons of my rebellion, I pluck out the plumes of my pride. O Lord, I stand before You guilty and I pray You will forgive me and then rid me of the tyrant evils which now rule me so terribly! Oh, that I may sin no more! If I have been a drunkard, help me from this day to relinquish the intoxicating cup. If I have been a swearer, wash out my mouth. May I, henceforth, speak nothing but that which will be acceptable to You! If I have been unchaste, cleanse my mind, that I may keep my body pure!" In this way come to God with contrite hearts. How much do I long that you may draw near to God with true repentance and hearty resolves to conquer sin!

The main thing, however, is to bring unto the Lord the offering which He has Divinely appointed and provided. You know what that is. There is one sacrifice of righteousness without which you cannot be accepted. Come to God by faith in Jesus Christ. Plead the precious blood of atonement and say, "My Lord, for His dear sake who died upon the tree, receive Your wanderer and now be pleased to grant me that repentance and remission of sins which He is exalted to give."

My Hearers, am I talking so as to reach your hearts? If not, I do not want to talk any longer. I had far rather be silent lest I minister to your condemnation. Hearts that have forgotten your Lord till now, oh, may His Spirit constrain you to return to Him this day through the sacrifice of Jesus! If you come through Christ, you will never be cast out. The Father will receive any sinner that pleads the name of Jesus. And Jesus is willing

that you should plead His name. He died on purpose to be the propitiation for our sins—God grant that you may accept Him as such!

Come to your God—this is the great necessity of the hour. Say, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” If the prodigal had said, “I will arise and go to my brother,” he would have made a great mistake, for the elder brother would have shut the door in his face. Even if his brother had been of a kinder sort, he could not have forgiven the transgressor—his father alone could do that. Come, then to your God with earnest prayer. For it prevails with Heaven. Come also with humble praise. For it is much that you are yet alive and not yet cast into the pit. Come to your God and Father with the resolve to render Him your life’s service, saying, “O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us—but by You only will we make mention of Your name!”

IV. I must now close with the fourth point, which is, in some respects, the most important of all—EXERCISE FAITH. When holy awe and thoughtful self-communion have led us to seek the Lord, then we are prepared for the great precept which follows. It is the command of the Gospel in its Old Testament form—“Put your trust in the Lord.” In whom should a man trust but in his God? It may seem reasonable to trust our fellow creature. But, alas, man is a frail thing and to lean upon him ensures a fall. It is, therefore, unreasonable to trust in the creature but to rely upon the Creator is the dictate of pure reason. May God the Holy Spirit, lead you at once to a childlike faith in our faithful God!

“Put your trust in the Lord.” First, trust Him as willing to receive you, to forgive you, to accept you and to bless you. Are you despairing? Do you say, “There is no hope”? “Put your trust in the Lord.” Are you saying, “I am without strength and therefore cannot be saved”? Why not? “Put your trust in the Lord.” Does the Evil One say that God will not receive you? “Put your trust in the Lord,” who is infinitely gracious and full of compassion. He says, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

Surely, you may trust in Him whose mercy endures forever. Especially trust in the Lord as He reveals Himself in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. In Him you see love written out in capital letters. “Put your trust in the Lord” as having provided the one sacrifice for sin whereby He has put away forever all the sins of those who believe in Him. God is just, and the Justifier of him that believes. Believe that the precious blood can make you whiter than snow, scarlet sinner as you are. Come with that daring trust which ventures all upon the bare promise of a faithful God.

Say, “I will go in unto the King and if I perish I perish.” If you do not trust in Christ, you must be lost. Therefore come and try the Divine way of salvation. The Lord Jesus is God’s unspeakable gift, freely bestowed on all who by faith receive Him. Dare to grasp what God holds out to you as the one hope of your spirit. Put your trust in the Lord, I beseech you. By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious resurrection and ascension, I entreat

you to trust in the Son of God, who has once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Trust in the Lord, next, that by the work of His Holy Spirit He can renew you. The glorious Lord, who made the world out of nothing, can make something out of you. If you are given to anger, the Holy Spirit can make you calm and loving. If you have been defiled with impurity, He can make you pure in heart. If you have been groveling, He can elevate you. I may be addressing a forlorn man who thinks that nothing can be made of him. I tell you, you have no idea what God can do with you. He can put heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. He can set you at last among the heavenly choristers, that your voice, sweeter than that of angels, may be heard among their everlasting symphonies.

He will even here put you among the children and set you with the princes of His people. Believe that the Holy Spirit can create you anew, can raise you from your dead condition and can make you perfect in every good work to do His will. Put your trust in the Lord for this. In fact, "Put your trust in the Lord" for everything. Poor Sinner, when you begin to trust God, you will look to Him mainly to put away your sin. But when that benefit is received, you may go on to trust Him about all your affairs. You may look to Him concerning your poverty, your sickness, your bereavements, your children, your business. You may trust Him for time, and trust Him for eternity—trust Him about little things, trust Him about great things. Once under the shadow of His wings you are covered altogether. Nothing is left out in the cold. To trust in God is to be your perpetual business, "For the just shall live by faith."

My closing theme is this—it has been asserted by certain of the modern school that we preach up salvation by a simple intellectual operation—salvation by merely believing a certain doctrinal statement. This is their way of stating, or mis-stating, justification by faith, which we do assuredly preach and preach most distinctly and confidently. We are not responsible for their caricatures of our teaching but we would be moved thereby to be more and more explicit. As far as faith is an intellectual operation, it is simple enough. But simple faith is no trifle. Fire is a simple element but it has a measureless power. Connected with faith there are forces of the mightiest kind for influencing character and purifying life.

Faith is the surest of all sin-killers—in fact its tendency is to extirpate sin. The moral and spiritual change which accompanies faith and grows out of it is of the most remarkable kind. Faith's work in the soul is something to be wondered at and to be admired to all eternity. For, mark—when a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ—when he believes that Jesus so died for him that he is effectually redeemed, when he believes that the Lord Jesus has cleansed him and that he is saved—the result upon his heart and life cannot be common-place. A Divine persuasion operates upon his whole nature—he is filled with adoring gratitude and that gratitude breeds an intense love—which fervent love sets itself to work for the glory of God by the purification of the soul for sin.

"My Jesus died because of my sin," says the pardoned sinner, "therefore no sin shall abide in my heart. Away, O sin! Away, forever." Some fa-

vorite sin cries, "Let me lodge within you," but he cries, "It cannot be, for I love Jesus." Sin slew our Savior—how can we be on friendly terms with it? We hate it with perfect hatred. Sin pleads, "Is it not a little one?" But the grateful heart sees great evil in a little sin, since the great Father abhors all iniquity. If the little sin was not the spear which pierced the Lord, it helped to make the crown of thorns which tore His blessed brow and therefore away with it, away with it—

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

Nothing creates more indignation and revenge against sin than a grateful sense of "Free Grace and dying love." Surely this is no mean help towards moral purification. Faith in God is effective for the noblest ends upon the soul because it elevates the mind. The man who is hoping to be saved by his own works and efforts begins on earth and ends there. But the habit of looking up to God is in itself a blessing. It is something to have learned to look beyond this dunghill of fallen humanity in which no one will ever find a pearl. It is something, I say, to wait upon God because your expectation is from Him.

Trust in the sacred Trinity teaches us to be familiar with higher and better things than we can find in ourselves or in this poor world. A hold of Heaven is a help towards drawing us there. I find that those who do not put their trust in the Lord are by no means spiritual men, nor men whose conversation is in Heaven. But the faith which they despise puts our foot on that ladder the top of which reaches up to God.

Faith in God brings new ideas of God's demands. When we do not know God, we read His Law and judge it to be harsh. "This is too strict. This is too holy. How can we obey this hard Law?" But when we have faith in God, we correct our estimate and judge that these laws of our heavenly Father are all meant for our good. He only forbids what would harm us and He only commands what is most truly for our benefit. By faith we look upon the Law as a loving directory—a chart of life's voyage showing what channel to follow and what rock to avoid. "His Commandments are not grievous." He takes from us no real pleasure and imposes no crushing burden.

To form so much better an estimate of God's Law is a great moral change, is it not? Must it not greatly affect the man's behavior? The man who puts his trust in the Lord sees the pleasures of sin in a new light. For he sees the evil which follows them by noting the agonies which they brought upon our Lord when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Without faith a man says to himself, "This sin is a very pleasant thing, why should I not enjoy it? Surely I may eat this fruit, which looks so charming and is so much to be desired." The flesh sees honey in the drink but faith at once perceives that there is poison in the cup. Faith spies the snake in the grass and gives warning of it. Faith remembers death, judgment, the great reward, the just punishment and that dread word—eternity.

Faith sees the end as well as the beginning. Faith, while the feast is going on, reminds the revelers of the reckoning. Faith feels that she cannot buy the transient joys of earth at the countless cost of an immortal soul. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Faith destroys the power of temptation. When Satan says, "You are in trouble and here is an easy way of escape—only do a little wrong and you will get a great good." "No," says faith, "it is God's business to get me out of my trouble and I will not go to the devil for his aid." "Ah," says Satan, "everybody else does so!" Faith answers, "I have to do with nobody but God and that which is right."

Ah, Brethren! If Satan should offer us all the kingdoms of this world if we would do his bidding, true faith would baffle him by saying, "What can you offer me? I have all these things already—for all things are mine in Christ Jesus my Lord." When faith is in its true place, covering the Believer, all the wicked suggestions of the Evil One are caught upon it and quenched by it like fiery darts which fall upon a shield. We are preserved from temptation by the buckler of faith.

Moreover, faith is always attended with a new nature. That is a point never to be forgotten. No man has faith in God of a true kind unless he has been born again. Faith in God is one of the first indications of regeneration. Now, if you have a new and holy nature, you are no longer moved towards sinful objects as you were before. The things that you once loved you now hate and therefore you will not run after them. You can hardly understand it but so it is, that your thoughts and tastes are totally changed. You long for that very holiness which once it was irksome to hear of and you loathe those very pursuits which were once your delights.

When the Lord renews us it is not half done. It is a total and radical change. If there were no work of the Holy Spirit connected with faith and if faith were nothing more than human assent to truth, we might be blameworthy for preaching salvation through it. But since faith leads the van in the graces of the Spirit of God and turns the rudder of the soul, we are more and more concerned to place faith where God places it and we say without hesitation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Remember you will thus be saved from the power of sin and from the practice of sin by being saved from the love of sin. O Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid to preach to you justification by faith alone! Look to Jesus and live! I would bid the sinner come to Jesus just as he is and take Him to be his complete salvation. We do not preach to you the hope of going to Heaven and yet keeping your sins—indeed, till sin is stopped, there can be no Heaven. Our Lord Jesus has opened a hospital and into it He receives all manner of sick folk. Yet He does not receive them that they may continue sick but that He may heal them and make them whole.

He receives the sinful that He may make them holy. He saves men by changing their natures and infusing into them a heavenly life. Come, then, you leprous in heart, come to Him whose touch can make you clean! Come, you with withered limbs, incapable of holy exercise—He can, with a

word, restore you! Come here, you blind, for He will give you sight! Yes, rise, you dead, for He shall give you life! Repentance and remission are twin gifts which He is exalted to bestow. Come now to Him and receive out of His fullness!

The thought of death is constantly forced upon me by the largeness of this congregation and the fact that there seldom passes a week but what some one among you is taken away. Soon your bodies will lie beneath the greensward and your souls will be in the eternal state. In due time you will stand where your past will be revived. For the books shall be opened and you will be judged out of the things which are written in those books. What a record you have written within the Book of Remembrance, to be read aloud in that day! Oh, you ungodly ones, what will you do then? Christ-rejecting Sinner, how will you bear to hear those items read before the assembled world?

If from this pulpit I were to read out certain incidents of your past lives, I do not suppose you would get up to go out, for that would convict you. But you would want to go very badly. How, then, will you endure to have your sins laid bare by the hand of God while every eye beholds them? How will you bear that shame and everlasting contempt which will be the result of your true character being blazoned abroad? How infinitely good it will be if all your past offenses shall be blotted out! How joyful to be wholly absolved by the Lord of Pardons! If by believing in Christ Jesus you receive a change of nature and live a different life and stand at the Last Day accepted in the Beloved, what bliss it will be!

What joy will be yours when Jesus comes, when His smile shall light up the universe, and when He shall acknowledge you before the angels of God! You were with Him in His humiliation, you shall be with Him in His exaltation. You loved Him and served Him here below, you shall sit upon His Throne and reign with Him forever and ever. Ah, then, whatever little you may have suffered for His sake will be as nothing in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory. Whatever struggling of heart and pain of soul you felt in escaping from the sin which enthralled you will be your joy when the result is seen in your eternal perfection. The bliss of beholding the face of our Beloved will be Heaven enough for us.

Even now I feel eager to quit this feeble body at the bare thought of being with the Bridegroom of my soul—

***“My eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to You?”***

May you and I, by God’s Grace, behold our Redeemer when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! Amen.

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THE SEARCH AFTER HAPPINESS

NO. 3105

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“There are many who say, Who will show us any good? LORD,
lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us.”*
Psalm 4:6.

THIS is a text which, by the rich assistance of the Holy Spirit, may serve as a touchstone to try our state. See, here are two classes of men—*the many* panting after the good of this world—and *the few* turning the eyes of faith to their God and begging that He would lift up the light of His Countenance upon them.

I. Let us contemplate with sadness and with searching of heart, THE MANY—trembling lest we should find ourselves among the number!

“THE MANY.” What multitudes of thoughts cluster around these two words! The million-peopled city, the populous town, the wide-spread country, this isle, kingdoms, empires, continents, the world—all seem to issue forth like armies from the hundred-gated Thebes, at the mention of those two words, “The many.” Here we see the toiling peasant and his lordly squire, the artisan and the princely merchant, the courtier and the king, the young and the old, the learned and the unlearned all gathered within the compass of a word.

And all that form this vast gathering of human souls are joining in one cry and moving in one direction! This is a thought at which the faithful may well weep, for their cry is SELF, their course is SIN. Here and there are the chosen few struggling against the mighty tide, but the masses, the multitude, as in the days of David, are hurrying along their mad career in search of a fancied good and reaping the fruit of their futile search in disappointment, death and Hell! O my Hearer, are you like the dead fish floating with the stream—or are you, by constraining Grace, drawn onward and upward to the bliss prepared for the elect? If a Christian, I beseech you to pause and admire the Grace which has made you to differ. If your heart is right with God, I know you will confess that there is no intrinsic natural goodness in you, for, like your friend the speaker, I doubt not that you are made to groan over a strong propensity within which often tempts you to join in the world’s chase and leave “the fountain of Living Waters” for the “broken cisterns” of earth and, therefore, you will join with the preacher in singing—

**“Tis all of Free Grace we were brought to obey,
While others were allowed to go
The road which, by nature, WE chose as our way,
Which leads to the regions of woe.”**

Come then, with me and behold the evil and the folly of the world. Listen to their never-ceasing cry, “Who will show us any good?”

Mark, first, its *sensual character*. “Who will SHOW us any good?” The world desires something which it may see, taste and handle. The joys of faith it does not understand. We, by Divine Grace, do not walk by sight. But the poor sons of earth must have visible, present, terrestrial joys. We have an unseen portion, an invisible inheritance—we have higher faculties and nobler delights. We need no carnal showman to bid the puppet joys of time dance before us. We have seen “the King in His beauty” and, spiritually, we behold “the land which is very far off.” Let us pity the worldling who is seeking water where there is none, in a salt land, a thirsty soil. Let us earnestly intercede for poor, short-sighted man, that he may yet have “the wisdom that is from above,” and the eye-salve of Divine Illumination—then will he no more seek for his happiness below, or look for pleasure in things of time and sense.

Take care, my Hearer, that you do not suffer under the same delusion! Always pray that you may be kept from hunting in the haunts of sense and fixing your affection on earthly things for, be sure of this—the roses of this world are covered with thorns! And her hives of honey, if broken open, will surround you with stinging remembrances, but not a drop of sweetness! Remember to lay to heart the words of a holy poet—

**“Nor earth, nor all the sky
Can one delight afford.
No, not a drop of real joy,
Without Your Presence, Lord.”**

Notice, next its *indiscriminating nature*. “Who will show us ANY good?” The unregenerate mind has no discernment in its choice. One good is to it as desirable as another. Men easily allow toleration here. The intoxicating cup is the “good” of the winebibber. The indulgence of lust is the object of the voluptuary. Gold is the miser’s god and fame or power the choice of the ambitious. To most men, these are all “good” in their way—if not esteemed good morally, they are looked upon as forbidden fruits, only untasted because of the penalty and not abhorred because of a real distaste. O my Hearer, have you sufficient judgment to see that *any* good will not suit you? Have you made an election of “solid joys and lasting pleasures,” and are the dainties of time tasteless to you? You are not like the bee, which can find her food in nettles and poisonous weeds. “The Rose of Sharon” is the flower of your choice and, “the Lily of the Valley” is to you the perfection of beauty. No longer can you ask for ANY good, for you have found *the* one, the only good and in HIM is such a fullness, such an abundance, that your song will always be—

**“God is my all-sufficient good,
My portion and my choice.
In Him my vast desires are filled
And all my powers rejoice.”**

Remark attentively *the selfish nature of the question*, “Who will show US any good?” Here the poor man of this world is seeking for himself and his fellows, but not for God or the good of others. He has no fear of God, nor any love, nor reverence for Him. Let but his barn be stored, his purse filled, his body fed, his senses gratified and the great Maker and bounteous Giver may be forgotten! What does he care whether there is a God, or whether He is worshipped or not? To him Venus, Brahma, Woden and Jehovah are all alike gods! He cares not for the living and

true God—he lets others have religion—to him it would be a weariness and a labor. Or, if he puts on the outward guise of religion, he is but a Gibeonite in the Temple, “a hewer of wood and drawer of water.” He is selfish in his worship, selfish in his praises and his prayers.

But we, Beloved, are, we trust, no longer lovers of self. We have become adorers of God and purely from gratitude we pay our glad homage at His Throne! We do not now put self foremost—we wish to experience a self-annihilation, a death to self. We have learned to sacrifice our own desires on the altar of Divine Love and now one passion concentrates our power and truly we exclaim—

**“Christ is my light, my life, my care,
My blessed hope, my heavenly prize!
Dearer than all my passions are,
My limbs, my heart, or my eyes.”**

Observe, also, *the futility of the enquiry*—“WHO will show us any good?” Echo might answer, “Who?” Where lives the fortunate discoverer, the man who has stumbled on this pearl of price unknown? Ah, Sinner, call again, like the priests of Baal, for there is neither hearing nor answering! Go to those Arcadian groves of poetry and find them a fiction! Taste the nectar of the epicure and find it gall! Lie on a bed of down and loathe the weakness which effeminacy engenders! Surround yourself with wealth and learn its powerlessness to ease the mind! Yes, wear a royal crown and mourn a king’s uneasy head. Try all—like the preacher of wisdom, open each cabinet in the palace of pleasure and ransack each corner of her treasure house! Have you found the long-sought good? Ah, no! Your joys, like bubbles, have dissolved at your touch! Or, like the schoolboy’s butterfly, have been crushed by the blow which won them!

Pause here and realize the emptiness of sublunary joys. Entreat the Spirit of all Grace to reveal to your soul the hollowness of terrestrial baubles. Take earth and, as Quarles has it, “*Tinnit inane*”—it sounds because it is empty. Despise the world, rate its jewels at a low price, estimate its gems as paste and its solidities as dreams. Think not that you shall thus lose pleasure, but rather remember the saying of Chrysostom, “Despise riches and you shall be rich. Despise glory and you shall be glorious. Despise injuries and you shall be a conqueror. Despise rest and you shall gain rest. Despise earth and you shall gain Heaven!”

Here may you and I close our review of the foolish multitude by learning the three lessons spoken of by Bonaventure, “The multitude of those that are damned, the small number of the saved and the vanity of transitory things.”

II. A happier sight now awaits us. Yonder is a company whose constant utterance is widely different from the enquiry of the many. These are THE FEW—not so many as the moralist and formalist believe them, but at the same time not so few as Bigotry in her narrowness would make them, for God has His hidden thousands whose knees have never bowed to Baal!

These *seek* not a good, for they have found it! They ask not a question, but they breathe a prayer! They apply not to mortals, but they address to

their God this petition, “Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us.”

Let us tarry on the very threshold of these words and devoutly ask for Divine searching, lest we should be deceived in our belief that this is our prayer. Let us not take the words lightly on our unhallowed lips, lest we ask for our own damnation. Perhaps, my Hearer, if the light of God’s Countenance were at once to shine upon you, your heart is so far from God, so full of hatred to Him, that it would suddenly destroy you, for remember, He is “a consuming fire.”

Let us, however, if the answer of conscience and the inward witness are agreed to give us hope, behold the Countenance of our God.

For, first, *it is a reconciled Countenance*. “Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me.” “I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” The anger of God towards Believers in Jesus is forever appeased! They are so perfect, in the righteousness of Christ, that He sees no spot of sin in them. Though of “purer eyes than to behold evil,” He does yet regard poor sinners with affection and towards you, my Christian Brother or Sister, He has no sentiments but those of unmingled love. Think of your glorious condition—reconciled! Beloved! Adopted!

Next, *it is a cheering Countenance*. The smile of a fond friend will nerve us to duty. The approving glance of a wise man will give us courage in trial. But the looks of God, the smiles of our Father who is in Heaven—these are better than the applause of a colossal audience, or the shouts of an empire of admirers! Give me the comforts of God and I can well bear the taunts of men. Let me lay my head on the bosom of Jesus and I fear not the distraction of care and trouble. If my God will always give me the light of His smile and the glance of His approval, it is enough for me. Come on, foes, persecutors, fiends, yes, Apollyon, himself, for “the Lord God is a sun and shield.” Gather, you clouds and cover me—I carry a sun within! Blow, wind of the frozen North, I have a fire of living coals *within!* Yes, Death, slay me, but I have another life—a life in the light of God’s Countenance!

Let us not forget another sweet and precious consideration. *It is a peculiar Countenance* from the fact that *it is transforming, changing the beholder into its own likeness*. I gaze on beauty, yet may be myself deformed. I admire light and may yet dwell in darkness. But if the light of the Countenance of God rests upon me, I shall become like He—the lineaments of His visage will be on me and the great outlines of His attributes will be mine. Oh, wondrous mirror which thus renders the beholder lovely! Oh, admirable mirror which reflects not self with its imperfections, but gives a perfect image to those that are uncomely! May you and I, Beloved, so fix our contemplations upon Jesus and all the Persons of the Godhead, that we may have our unholiness removed and our depravity overcome! Happy day when we shall be like He! But the only reason of it will be that, then “we shall see Him as He is.” Oh, could we look less to the smile and favor of man and more to the regard and notice of Heaven, how far would we be in advance of what we are! Our puny spirits would become gigantic in stature and our feeble faith would, through Grace, wax mighty! We would no longer be the sport of

temptation and the pliant servants of our corruptions. O our God, amid our folly and our sin, we turn to You with strong desire, crying out, “Lord lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us!”

We will only note, in concluding our brief but instructive musings, that *God’s Countenance is unchanging*. The light may seem to vary, but the face is the same. Our God is the Immutable Father of Lights. He does not love *now* and cast away in the *future*. Never did His love begin and never can it cease. It is *from* eternity and shall be *to* eternity. The things of time are mutable, confessedly and constantly so, but the things of eternity are always the same. Away with the horrid suggestion that God may forget and forsake His own children! Oh, no! The face which was once radiant with love is not now clouded with wrath—the heart which overflowed with affection is not now filled with anger! Great as my sins have been, they are not so great as His love! The file of my backsliding shall not be permitted to divide the golden links of the chains of His mercy. If my gracious Lord and Savior has assured me that my name was always enrolled among the sons of Zion, then “the powers of darkness” cannot “erase those everlasting lines.” Go, poor menial of Satan, pursue your weary drudgery. Go seek the unsteady will-o’-the-wisp of carnal delights, but I have a surer joy, a substantial happiness beyond your reach. My Hearer, it will be well with you if you can pity *the many*, and join with *the few*, singing—

**“Turn, then, my Soul, unto your rest.
The merits of your great High Priest
Have bought your liberty—
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear your banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 66; ROMANS 8:1-9.**

PSALM 66:1, 2. *Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands: sing forth the honor of His name! Make His praise glorious.* In a company of advanced saints, silence may be sometimes profitable. The first verse of the previous Psalm should read, according to the Hebrew, “Praise is silent for You, O God, in Zion.” Full-grown saints may have their times of waiting in silence before the Lord, but when the heathen are to be brought in—and when new hearts are to be taught new songs—then there must be a noise! And not merely a noise, but a noise that is full of joy—“Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands.” This should be the chief point about it, that it should be a joyful noise. Many of the newly invented tunes which have put the good old tunes out of favor appear to have been made to rattle through the hymn as quickly as possible, as though the composer had written, “Let us praise God at express speed and get it done. And the quicker, the better.” But I prefer those tunes in which we can sometimes repeat the words and roll them under the tongue until our heart gets thoroughly saturated with the spirit of them.

“Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands,” but let that joyful noise be orderly, not like the shouts of those who cry around the car of Juggernaut. Let it be joyful singing unto the Lord! “Sing forth the honor of His name.” God is worthy of the highest honor, so let our praise of Him be given in such a way that it shall really honor Him. “Make His praise glorious.” It is only giving back to God what rightly belongs to Him when we give Him glory, and it is our highest earthly glory to be giving glory to God. We are never so near to the condition of the glorified saints above as when we are, with heart, and soul, and voice, glorifying God!

3. *Say unto God, How terrible are You in Your works!* Our praises should be directed to God—“Say unto God.” Our hymns should be a form of speaking unto the Most High, and an ascription unto Him of His own Glory. The first attribute of God that influences men is the attribute of power—which fills them with terror of His awful majesty and might. Afterwards, they perceive more of His love, goodness, wisdom and other attributes. But, at first—yes, and perhaps at last—there is a time in which there is much solemn stately music in this utterance, “How terrible are You in Your works!”

3, 4. *Through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You. All the earth shall worship You and shall sing unto You; they shall sing to Your name.* From the marginal reading of the 3rd verse, it appears that God’s enemies will only “yield feigned obedience” to Him. But whether the submission is feigned or real, it shall not be possible for any man or any power to finally resist His Omnipotence—and the day shall come when all the earth shall worship Him and sing unto Him!

4. *Selah.* Here is a little pause for the lifting up of the heart and of the strain, and well there may be, for what a joyful thing it is to think of all the earth worshipping God and singing unto Him! I know of no topic that is more calculated to excite the admiring gratitude of God’s servants than the prospect of the universal supremacy of our God and of His Christ!

5, 6. *Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land.* You must often have noticed that the sweet singers of Israel are never singing very long unto God without mentioning that wonderful deliverance that He worked at the Red Sea. What God did when He brought His people out of Egypt will be the subject of joyous and grateful song unto God forever, for even in Heaven “they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” The Red Sea as the grand type of redemption and the Lamb as the great Worker of redemption are joined together in that triumphant song of “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” Here the Psalmist sings of what God did for His people at the Red Sea—“He turned the sea into dry land.”

6. *They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in Him.* Perhaps some of you say, “But we were not there.” No, we were not personally there, but do you not remember what the Prophet Hosea says about God meeting with Jacob at Bethel? It is written, “There He spoke with us.” We were not personally there, yet Believers have been everywhere in the Bible where other representative Believers have been

before them! “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” What God spoke to any *one* of His people, He has spoken to *all* of whom that one was typical. Paul tells us that the Lord has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” yet it was to Joshua that He said that. But, as He said it to Joshua, He virtually said it to me, for I am a Believer even as he was. All the promises belong to us who are in Christ Jesus, for the heavenly inheritance is left to all the spiritual seed. And if we are in the Lord’s family, we shall share alike with all the rest of the children.

“There did we rejoice in Him.” Then if we rejoiced in the Lord there, let us rejoice in Him here! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us rest assured that when our turn to go through the sea shall come, we shall find that the Lord has “turned the sea into dry land” for us, whether it is a sea of troubles or the sea of death. “They went through the flood on foot” and so shall we! The God who made a way for them through the sea, virtually made a way for us, also, for the army of God is one and when the first ranks of the innumerable host passed through the flood, the army itself began to pass through, and that army can never be divided. So we are passing through the flood at this moment and rejoicing in the God who cleaves the sea in two to make a highway for His people.

7. *He rules by His power forever.* What He did in the past, He is still doing in the present and He will do in the future.

7. *His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves.* The rebellious may, for a while, exalt themselves, but they will, sooner or later be pulled down. These eagles may fly as high as they will, but God’s arrow can always reach them. The Lord pulled down the haughty Pharaoh from his throne, but He lifted up the people whom the proud monarch had trodden down and oppressed. The Lord overthrew the hosts of Egypt, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep and guided them through the wilderness, even as He is doing at this very moment.

7. *Selah.* That is, pause again and lift up the heart and the sacred strain, too. And when all the strings of your heart and of your harp are tightened, then go on with your music again.

8, 9. *O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard: which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved.* I bless God for this verse and as many of you as have found it true should also praise and bless Him. Observe the two things that are mentioned here—living and standing. “Which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved.” There are some who have a certain standing in the Church and who keep up their reputation among their fellow members, yet they are not spiritually alive. It is a dreadful thing to be standing and yet not living—like those in Sardis who were only living in name. Then there are those who are living, but not standing—at least not standing fast. They are often caught tripping, falling and wounding themselves. They go with broken bones on their way towards Heaven by reason of their many falls. But what a blessing it is to be kept both living and standing, and what reason there is to bless God for this great mercy—not congratulating ourselves on our steadfastness and being

exalted and proud, but magnifying the Lord for His Grace in granting to us this double blessing—living and standing!

10. *For You, O God, have proved us: You have tried us, as silver is tried.* That is, with fierce furnaces, and with carefully graduated heat, for silver needs delicate refining. Christ still sits as the Refiner of silver, patiently watching until the process is complete.

11. *You brought us into the net.* Did not our enemies entangle us? Oh, yes, but God often uses our enemies to carry out His Divine purposes! He rules over *all* things. So, when you are caught in the net, do not sit down and say that such-and-such a person did it, or that the devil did it. No, but look to the Great First Cause. If You strike a dog with a stick, he tries to bite the stick because he does not know any better. But you are not a dog, so do not look at the second cause of your troubles, but learn to sing, as the Psalmist does here, “You brought us into the net.”

11. *You laid affliction upon our loins.* Not merely upon our backs, where we might be better able to bear it, but right on our loins, so that we were pressed and squeezed almost out of our very life.

12. *You have caused men to ride over our heads.* And when they mount their high horse, they vow and exalt themselves over God’s afflicted servants.

12. *We went through fire and through water.* They were subjected to a double test, for what fire does not burn, water will drown, yet God’s people “went through fire and through water.” There is no fire that can burn them. Nebuchadnezzar tried it and failed. And there is no water that can drown them. Even though their bodies may be burned or drowned, their real selves shall still survive and stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, triumphant over both fire and water!

12. *But You brought us out into a wealthy place.* That is to say, the Lord brought the Israelites out from all manner of oppression under Pharaoh and brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey. Nothing that Pharaoh could do could destroy the chosen nation. He tried to kill all the male children that were born, yet the Israelites still increased and multiplied, and they came at last to Canaan! It will be just so with God’s people in all times and all climes, they shall not die, but live and shall ultimately come into that most wealthy of all places, even the heavenly and better Canaan! We cannot fully tell what joy awaits us there. We cannot measure the height of our joy by the depth of our sorrows, for, after all, our sorrows are shallow, but the Glory of God, which the saints are to share, is a depth unfathomable, a height that no man can measure. O Lord, bring us into that wealthy place right speedily if it is Your holy will!

13. *I will go into Your house with burnt offerings.* Here is one worshipper breaking away from the rest—a child of God who is not satisfied by merely joining in the general praise of the whole assembly, so he brings his own personal thanksgiving and thank-offering to God. Dear Brother, dear Sister, try to do this! Break away from all the rest of us, and say to the Lord, “I will go into Your house with burnt offerings.”

13-15. *I will pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth has spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt sacrifices of fatlings.* “I will give You the best that I have.”

15. *With the incense of rams.* Not only one of the best, but the best of two kinds of offerings.

15. *I will offer bullocks with goats.* “I will present to You great services and smaller sacrifices. I will obey You in the great ordinances and in the lesser ordinances, also. I will bring both bullocks and goats. I will make an all-round offering. I will try to do all that I can for You, my God, since You have done so much for me.”

15. *Selah.* Here the Psalmist pauses again while the smoke of the sacrifice ascends. Let us also pause and meditate upon the better Sacrifice which Christ offered for the sins of all who put their trust in Him.

16, 17. *Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue.* “I mixed crying and singing together. I cried when I was in trouble, and I extolled the Lord as soon as He delivered me from it. No, by faith expecting to be delivered, I began to extol Him even while I was yet crying unto Him!”

18, 19. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God has heard me.* It is a blessed thing to be able to say that. And if you can truthfully say it, I pray you to say it—“Verily God has heard me.” Some people tell us that there is no such thing as an answer to prayer. They say that it is a piece of superstition on our part. Well, I believe that I am as honest a man as anyone who denies the power of prayer, and I can truthfully say, “God has heard me.” There are scores of us—there are hundreds of us—there are thousands of us who can stand in the witness box and each one of us can say, “Verily God has heard me.” If our testimony is not accepted by unbelieving men, we cannot help that. We know what we know, and we know that God has heard and answered our prayers again and again!

19, 20. *He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.*

ROMANS 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* My Hearers, we are, each of us, by nature, under the condemnation of God. We are not only subject to condemnation, but we are condemned already! And, on account of sin, there is judgment recorded in God’s book against everyone of us, considered in our fallen state. But if we “are in Christ Jesus,” if we are made partakers of Jesus, if we have hidden ourselves in the cleft of the Rock, Christ, and if our trust is solely in Him, oh, precious thought, “there is therefore now no condemnation” for us! It is blotted out. The old judgment that was recorded against us is now erased and in God’s book of remembrance there is not to be found a single condemnatory syllable, nor one word of anger written against any Believer in Christ Jesus! Glorious freedom from condemnation! How may I know whether I have been thus set free? This is the question that should enter into each of our hearts. The answer is, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” My Hearers, after which of these are you and I walking? Are we following the flesh? Are we seeking to please ourselves—to indulge our bodies, to gratify our lusts, to satisfy our own

inclinations? If so, we are not in Christ Jesus, for those who are in Christ Jesus “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and everyone of you who is fleshly and carnal is not in Christ, but is still under condemnation!

2, 3. *For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.* He did accomplish it. The Law could not condemn sin so truly and so thoroughly as God did when He condemned sin in the Person of Christ. O Believer, let not your sins grieve you—however great or however tremendous they may have been, weep over them, but do not be distressed about them, for they have been condemned in Christ Jesus! They may have been enormous, but if you are in Him, Christ was punished for you and God’s justice asks not for a second punishment for one offense. Christ offered once a complete Atonement for all Believers, and if I am a Believer in Him, there is no possible fear of my ever being condemned. There cannot be, for Christ was condemned for me—my sins were laid upon His head—and in the awful moment when He sustained the stroke of His Father’s vengeance, those sins ceased to be and, “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

4. *That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Mark, again, how Paul brings us to this as the great evidence of our being in Christ Jesus—the not walking after the flesh. Now, every man, as he is born into the world, left to himself, is sure to “walk after the flesh.” It is only the man who has the Spirit of God put into his soul—who has the heavenly gift from on high—who will “walk after the Spirit.” It is not *talking* after the flesh, but it is *walking* after it, that condemns us, and it is not talking after the Spirit that will save us, it is walking after the Spirit that is the evidence of salvation—not talking, but walking! How many of you are there who are talkative, who can talk religion and give us as much as we like of it, but whose life and conversation are not such as become godliness? “Be not deceived! God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” If you sow to the flesh, you “shall of the flesh reap corruption,” but if you sow to the Spirit, you “shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

5-7. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.* That mind with which we are all born is enmity against God! And however much refined or polished a man may be, however amiable or polite, however he may shine among his fellow creatures—if he has not had a new heart and a right spirit—he is at “enmity against God” and he cannot enter Heaven until there has been a Divine change worked in him. Some of you suppose because you have never been guilty of any vice, because you have not indulged in any great transgression, that therefore you do not require the work of regeneration in your hearts. You will be mightily mistaken if you continue under that delusion until the Last Great Day. “For to be carnally minded,” even though that carnal mind is in a body that is

dressed in silks and satins, “To be carnally minded is death,” even though it is whitewashed till it looks like a spiritual one. “To be carnally minded,” even though you sow the carnal mind with a few good garden seeds of the flowers of morality, will still be nothing but damnation to you at the last. “To be carnally minded is death”—only “to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.”

7. *For it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* The opponents of the Free Grace Gospel, which it is our delight to preach, assert that men can be saved, if they will—that men most certainly can repent, can believe, can come to God of their own free will and that it is not through any defect in any powers that they have if they are not saved. Now, we are not over prone to controvert that point, but at the same time, we do not understand the meaning of this verse if what they say is correct. It says here, “The carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.” Some say that men could repent if it were their inclination. Exactly so, but that is what we assert—that it never will be and never *can be* their inclination, except they are constrained to do so by the Grace of God.

Rowland Hill uses a very singular and odd metaphor in his “*Village Dialogues*.” Two parties are speaking together on this subject and one of them, pointing to the cat sitting on the hearth says, “Do you see that cat? She sits there and licks her paws and washes herself clean.” “I see that,” said the other. “Well,” said the first speaker, “did you ever hear of one of the hogs taken out of the sty that did so?” “No,” he said. “But he could if he liked,” said the other. Ah, verily, he could if he liked, but it is not according to his nature and you never saw such a thing done! And until you have changed the swine’s nature, he cannot perform such a good action—and God’s Word says the same of man. We do not care about fifty thousand aphorisms, or syllogisms, or anything else—God’s Word against man’s any day! Jesus said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Men cannot come to Jesus unless the Father draws them to Him. We assert that from first to last, the work of salvation is all of Grace and we are not afraid of any licentious tendency of that Doctrine, or anything of the kind. God’s Word, in all its simplicity, must be preached and we leave Him to take care of His own Truth. Blessed be God, this humbling Truth of God is of far more use than the other doctrine which puffs men up with pride, telling them that they can perform what most assuredly they cannot do! “It is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.”

8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* No man “in the flesh” can please God. Oh, what a sword this is—a sharp two-edged sword against many of you, my Friends! Some of you who regularly attend this House of Prayer, and others of you who stray in here in the evening, you, “are in the flesh” and you “cannot please God.” Perhaps you have been attempting to do it. You have said, “I will attend the House of Prayer regularly.” You cannot please God by doing that, as long as you are “in the flesh.” You may be as moral as you please and we beseech

you to be so, but unless you have the Spirit of God—unless you are really changed in heart and made new creatures in Christ Jesus—all that you can do, as long as you are “in the flesh, cannot please God.” Virtues in unregenerate men are nothing but whitewashed sins! The best performance of an unchanged character is worthless in God’s sight! It lacks the stamp of Grace upon it and that which has not the stamp of Grace is false coin. Be it ever so beautiful in model and finish, it is not what it should be. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot praise God.”

9. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* O Beloved, we have need, each of us, to put ourselves in this scale! Come, Preacher, be not too sure of your own salvation. Come, Church Member, do not be too certain of your own regeneration. Come, Christian, put yourself in this scale—“If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” If he has not the Holy Spirit really dwelling in him, guiding him, directing him, teaching him, comforting him, supporting him—he is none of Christ’s! And if we do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ in our character—if we have not gentleness, meekness, purity, holiness, benevolence—we are none of Christ’s! Ah, this will take some of your flimsy Christians to pieces! Half of your professors, we fear, will at the last be found not to have had “the Spirit of Christ.”

It is one thing to profess religion, Beloved—it is quite another thing to possess vital godliness. We may sit down at the Communion Table, but oh, if we never had the Spirit of Christ, we “are none of His.” We may plead our own goodness before the Throne of God at the last, but Jesus Christ will say, “You have not My Spirit. You are none of Mine.” And then, however much we may have striven to serve God, unless we have the Spirit of Christ, there shall be nothing for us but the fearful curse, “Depart! Depart! Depart!” “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Let us ask Him for His Spirit! Let us plead with Him for His Grace and though some of you have never had it, yet if you now ask for it, our God is a gracious God, full of mercy and pity—whoever calls upon His name shall be saved! And though the chief of sinners, if you sincerely ask for pardon and for Grace, you shall receive it at His hands. The Lord help you so to pray, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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

JOY, JOY FOREVER

NO. 2146

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice: let them
always shout for joy, because You defend them: let those
also that love Your name be joyful in You.”
Psalm 5:11.***

“THE Lord does put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” There is an ancient difference which He has made in His eternal purpose and this is seen in every item of the Covenant of Grace. “The Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” But it is also written, “The foolish shall not stand in Your sight: You hate all workers of iniquity.” You that have believed are of the house of Israel and heirs according to promise, for they that are of faith are the true seed of faithful Abraham. See that you make manifest this difference by the holiness of your lives. “Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.”

Display this difference always by the joyfulness of your spirits. Let not noisome cares invade you, for we read, “I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there.” Fear not that the wrathful judgment of God will fall indiscriminately, for we read, “Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” The servants of the Lord should wear the royal garments—those garments are made of the fine cloth of holiness, trimmed with the lace of joy! Take care that you exhibit both holiness of character and joyfulness of spirit, for where these two things are in us, and abound, they prove that we are not barren nor unfruitful.

To us there should be joy to strikingly contrast with the unrest of the unbeliever. Over all the land of Egypt there was darkness which might be felt, even thick darkness, for three days—“They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days—but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” If it is so with you, that the Lord has given you the light of joy, let your faces shine with it! If you walk in the light as God is in the light, go forth and let men see the brightness of your countenances and take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him His gracious calm as well as His holiness. “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Your Lord desires that your joy may be full. He gives you a joy which no man takes from you—it is His legacy. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you.”

The subject for this morning is joy, the joy of faith, the joy which is the fruit of the Spirit from the root of trust in God. May we not only talk about it at this hour, but enjoy it now and always! It is pleasant to read and hear and think about joy—but to be *filled* with joy and peace through believing is a far more satisfying thing! I want you to see not only the sparkling fountain of joy, but to drink deep drafts of it—yes, and drink all week and all month, and all the year—and all the rest of your lives, both in time and in eternity! “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

I. First, let us speak a little upon THE KIND OF JOY WHICH IS ALLOTTED TO BELIEVERS—“Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice: let them always shout for joy, because You defend them: let those also that love Your name be joyful in You.” Note, first, concerning this joy, that *it is to be universal to all who trust*—“Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice.” This is not only for the healthy, but for the sick—not only for the successful, but for the disappointed. It is not only for those who have the bird in the hand, but for those who only see it in the bush. Let *all* rejoice!

If you have but a little faith, yet if you are trusting in the Lord, you have a right to joy. It may be your joy will not rise so high as it might do if your faith were greater but still, where faith is true, it gives sure ground for joy. O you babes in Divine Grace! You little children! You that have been newly converted and sadly feel your feebleness—rejoice, for the Lord will bless them that fear Him—“both small and great!” “Fear not, you worm, Jacob.” “Fear not, little flock.”

There is a joy which is as milk to nourish babes—a joy which is not as meat with bones in it—for the Lord adds no sorrow to it. The little ones of the flock need not vex themselves concerning the deep things of God, for there is joy in those shallows of simple Truth where lambs may safely wade! The joy of the Lord is softened down to feeble constitutions lest it overpower them. The same great sea which floods the vast bays also flows into the tiny creeks. “Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice.” You, Miss Much-Afraid over yonder, you are to rejoice! You, Mr. Despondency, hardly daring to look up—you must yet learn to sing. As for Mr. Ready-to-Halt, he must dance on his crutches and Feeble-Mind must play the music for him. It is the mind of the Holy Spirit that those who trust in the Lord should rejoice before Him.

This joy, in the next place, is to be *as constant as to time as it is universal as to persons*. “Let them always shout for joy.” Do not be content that a good time in the morning should be followed by dreariness in the afternoon! Do not cultivate an occasional delight—aim at *perpetual* joy! To be happy at a revival meeting and then go home to groan is a poor business. We should “feel like singing all the time.” The Believer has abiding arguments for abiding consolation. There is never a time when the saint of God has not great cause for gladness—and if he never doubts and worries till he has a justifiable reason for distrust he will never doubt nor worry! “Rejoice in the Lord always and again”—what? “Always” and yet does the

Apostle say, “and again”? Yes, he would have us rejoice and *keep on* rejoicing and then rejoice more and more! Brothers and Sisters, go on piling up your delights! You are the blessed of the Lord and His blessing reaches “unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”

Next, *let your joy be manifested*. “Let them always shout for joy.” Shouting is an enthusiastic utterance, a method which men use when they have won a victory—when they divide the spoil, when they bear home the harvest, when they tread the vintage—when they drain the goblet. Believers, you may shout for joy with unreserved delight! Some religionists shout and we would not wish to stop them—but we wish certain of them knew better what they were shouting for. Brothers and Sisters, since you know Whom you have believed and *what* you have believed and what are the deep sources of your joy, do not be so sobered by your knowledge as to become dumb! Imitate the children in the Temple, who, if they knew little, loved much and so shouted in praise of Him they loved. “Let them shout for joy.”

A touch of enthusiasm would be the salvation of many a man’s religion. Some Christians are good enough people—they are like wax candles—but they are not lit. Oh, for a touch of flame! Then would they scatter light and thus become of service to their families. “Let them shout for joy.” Why not? Let not orderly folks object. One said to me the other day, “When I hear you preach I feel as if I must have a shout!” My Friend, shout if you feel forced to do so. [Here a Hearer cried, “Glory!”] Our Brother cries, “Glory!” and I say so, too. “Glory!” The shouting need not always be done in a public service, or it might hinder devout hearing—but there are times and places where a glorious outburst of enthusiastic joy would quicken life in all around. The ungodly are not half so restrained in their blasphemy as we are in our praise! How is this? They go home making night hideous with their yells. Are we never to have an outbreak of consecrated delight? Yes, we will have our high days and holidays and we will sing and shout for joy till even the heathens say, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

This *joy is to be repeated with variations*. One likes, in music, to hear the same tune played in different ways. So here you have it. “Let them rejoice. Let them always shout for joy. Let them be joyful in You.” There is no monotony in real joy. In the presence of mirth one grows dull, but in living joy there is exhilaration. Commend me to the springing well of heavenly joy—its waters are always fresh, clear, sparkling—springing up unto everlasting life! Joy blends many colors in its one ray of light. At times it is quiet and sits still beneath a weight of glory. I have known it weep, not salt drops, but sweet showers. Have you never cried because of your joy in the Lord? Sometimes joy labors for expression till it is ready to faint and others it sings till it rivals the angels! Singing is the natural language of joy, but oftentimes silence suits it even better. Our joy abides in Christ

whether we are quiet or shouting, whether we fall at our Lord's feet as dead, or lean on His bosom in calm delight.

This joy is logical. When I was a child and went to school, I remember learning out of a book called, "Why and Because." Things one learns as a child stick in the memory and therefore I like a text which has a "because" in it. Here it is: "Let them always shout for joy, because You defend them." Emotions are not fired by logic and yet reasons furnish fuel for the flame. A man may be sad though he cannot explain his sadness, or he may be greatly glad though he cannot set forth the reasons for his joy. The joy of a Believer in God has a firm foundation—it is not the baseless fabric of a vision. The joy of faith burns like coals of juniper and yet it can be calmly explained and justified. The joyful Believer is no lunatic, carried away by a delusion—he has a "because" with which to account for all his joy—a reason which he can consider on his bed in the night watches, or defend against a scoffing world! We have a satisfactory reason for our most exuberant joy—"The Lord has done great things for us; thereof we are glad." Philosophers can be happy without music and saints can be happy despite circumstances. With joy we draw water out of deeper and fuller wells than such as father Jacob dug. Our mirth is as soberly reasonable as the worldling's fears.

Once more, the happiness is *a thing of the heart*, for the text runs thus—"Let them that *love Your name* be joyful in You." We love God. I trust I am speaking to many who could say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Is it not a very happy emotion? What is sweeter than to say, with tears in one's eyes—"My God, I love You, too!" To sit down and have nothing to ask for, no words to utter, but only for the soul to love—is not this heavenly? Measureless depths of unutterable love are in the soul and in those depths we find the pearl of joy. When the heart is taken up with so delightful an object as the ever-blessed *God*, it feels an intensity of joy which cannot be rivaled. When our whole being is steeped in adoring love, then Heaven comes streaming down and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I feel I am talking in a poor way about the richest things which are enjoyed by saintly men. Many of you know as much about these matters as I do, perhaps more. But my soul does even now magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior. Although I feel unworthy and unfit to speak to this vast throng, yet I have a great sympathy with my text, for I am "glad in the Lord."—

***"Oh, what immortal joys I feel,
And raptures all divine
For Jesus tells me I am His,
And my Beloved mine!"***

If you sit before the Lord at this time and indulge your souls with an outflow of love to God and His Son Jesus Christ—and at the same time perceive an inflowing of heavenly joy—it will not much matter how the poor

preacher speaks to your ear, for the Lord Himself will be heard in your soul and Heaven will flood your being!

II. Now I come to the second head, where we will consider THE GROUND AND REASON OF HOLY JOY. I am bound to speak upon this matter, for I have told you that the joy of the Believer is logical and can be defended by facts and so, indeed, it is. First, *the Believer's joy arises from the God in whom He trusts.* "Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice."

When, after many a weary wandering, the dove of your soul has at last come back to the ark and Noah has put out his hand and "pulled her in unto him," the poor, weary creature is happy. Taken into Noah's hand and made to nestle in his bosom, she feels so safe, so peaceful! The weary leagues of the wild waste of waters are all forgotten, or only remembered to give zest to the repose. So, when you trust in God your soul has found a quiet resting place, a pavilion of repose! The little chick runs to and fro in fear. The mother hen calls it home. She spreads her soft wings over the brood. Have you ever seen the little chicks, when they are housed under the hen, how they put out their little heads through the feathers and peep and twitter so prettily?

It is a chick's Heaven to hide under its mother's bosom! It is perfectly happy. It could not be more content. Its little chick nature is full to the brim with delight. This is your joy, also—"He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust: His Truth shall be your shield and buckler." My Nature gets all its needs supplied, all its desires gratified when it rests in God. Oh, you that have never trusted God in Christ Jesus, you do not know what real happiness means! You may search all the theatres in London and ransack all the music halls, clubs and public-houses, but you will find no happiness in any of their mirth, or show, or wine! True joy dwells where dwells the living God and nowhere else. In your own home with God, even though that home is only a single room and your meal is very scanty, you will see more of Heaven than in the palaces of kings! Have God for your sole trust and you shall never lack for joy!

Our joy arises next *from what the Lord does for us.* "Let them shout for joy, because *You defend them.*" God always guards His people from whomever may attack them. "The Lord is your keeper." Angels are our guardians, Providence is our protector—but God Himself is the Preserver of His chosen. "You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday." No fortress guards the soldier so well as God guards His redeemed. The God of our salvation will defend us from all evil. He will defend our souls. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Further, *our joy arises out of the love we have towards our God*. “Let them that love Your name be joyful in You.” The more you love God, the more you will delight in Him. It is the profusion of a mother’s love to her child which makes her take such delight in it. Her boy is her joy because of her love. If we loved Jesus better, we should be happier in Him. You do not, perhaps, see the connection between the two things—but there is a connection so intimate that little love *to Christ* brings little joy *in Christ*—and great love *to Christ* brings great joy *in Christ*. God grant that in a full Christ we may have a full joy!

Do you see what I mean? When a man comes to God in Christ and says, “This Savior is *my* Savior. This Father is *my* Father. This God is *my* God forever and ever,” then he has *everything* and he must be joyful! He has no fear about the past—God has forgiven him. He has no distress about the present—the Lord is with him. He is not afraid about the future for the Lord has said—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” If you understand my text and put it into practice, you possess the quintessence of happiness, the essential oil of joy! He that has joy on his barn floor may see it bare! He that has joy in his wine vats may see them dry! He that has joy in his children may bury that joy in the grave! He that has joy in himself will find his beauty consume away—but he that has joy in *God* drinks from “the deep which lies under”—his springs shall always flow, “in summer and in winter shall it be.”

I have pointed to the deep sources from which the joy of the Believer wells up, but I must also add, it is by *faith* that this joy comes to us. *Faith makes joyful discoveries*. I speak to those of you who have faith. When you first believed in Christ you found that you were saved and knew that you were forgiven. Some little while after that you discovered that you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. Oh, the rapture of your soul when the Lord appeared of old unto you, saying, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you”! The glorious doctrine of election is as wines on the lees well-refined to those who by faith receive it. It brings with it a new, intense and refined joy such as the world knows nothing of.

Having discovered your election of God, you looked further into your justification—“for whom He called, them He also justified.” What a pearl is justification! In Christ the Believer is as just in the sight of God as if he had never sinned! He is covered with a perfect righteousness and is accepted in the Beloved. What a joy is justification by faith, when it is well understood! What bliss, also, to learn our union to Christ! Believers are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Because He lives we shall live also. One with Jesus! Wonderful discovery, this! Equally full of joy is our adoption! “Beloved, now are we the sons of God,” “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Faith thus heaps fuel on the fire of our joy, for it keeps on making discoveries out of the Word of the Lord!

The more you search the Scriptures and the nearer you live to God, the more you will enjoy that great goodness which the Lord has laid up in store for them that fear Him. Though “eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him,” yet, “He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit” and thereby He puts gladness into our hearts more than increasing corn and wine could bring!

Furthermore, *faith gives cheering interpretations*. Faith is a Prophet who can charmingly interpret a fearsome dream. Faith sees a gain in every loss, a joy in every grief. Read aright and you will see that a child of God in trouble is on the way to greater blessing. Faith views affliction hopefully. Sorrow may come to us, as it did to David, as a chastisement for sin. Faith reads—“Whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.” Better to be chastened with God’s children, here, than to be condemned with the world hereafter! Faith also sees that affliction may be sent by way of discovery to make the man know himself, his God and the promises better. Faith perceives that affliction may be most precious as a test, acting as does the fire when it shows what is pure gold and what is base metal.

Faith joys in a test so valuable. Faith spies out the Truth of God that affliction is sent to develop and mature the Christian life. “Ah, well!” says Faith, “then, thank God for it. No trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it works out the peaceable fruit of righteousness in those that are exercised thereby.” Faith sees sweet love in every bitter cup. Faith knows that whenever she gets a black envelope from the heavenly post office, there is treasure in it. When the Lord’s black horses call at our door they bring us double loads of blessing.

Up to this moment I, God’s servant, beg to bear my unreserved testimony to the fact that it is good for me to have been afflicted. In spiritual life and knowledge and power, I have grown but little except when under the hand of trouble. I set my door open and am half-inclined to say to pain and sickness and sadness, “Turn in here, for I know that you will leave a blessing behind. Come, crosses, if you will, for you always turn to crowns.” Thus faith glories in tribulations, also, and in the lion of adversity finds the honey of joy.

I have said that trial comes to us as chastisement, as we see in the case of David—as a discoverer of Divine Grace, as we see in Abraham—or as a test, as we see in Job. It can also be a *preventive*, as in the case of Paul, who wrote, “Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.” In every tribulation God is moved by love to His people and by nothing else. If He cuts the vine with a sharp knife, it is because He would have fruit from it. If He whips His child till he cries, like David, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning,” it is for his profit, that he may learn obedience by the

things which he suffers. All things work together for the Believer's good—and so faith interprets sorrow itself into joy.

Moreover, *faith believes great promises*. This opens other wells of joy. I cannot stop to quote them to you this morning, but the Book of the Lord is full of them. What more can the Lord say than He has said? The promises of God are full and as varied as they are full, and as sure as they are varied and as rich as they are sure. "Exceedingly great and precious promises." When I wrote "*The Check Book of the Bank of Faith*" I was at no loss to find a promise for every day in the year—the difficulty was which to leave out! The promises are like the bells on the garments of our Great High Priest forever ringing out holy melodies. When a man gets a promise fairly into the hand of faith and goes to God with it, he must rejoice! The children of the promise are, all of them, worthy to be called Isaac, that is, "Laughter," for God has made him to laugh who lives according to promise. To live on the promises of man would be starvation—but to live on the promises of God is to feed on fat things full of marrow!

Above all, *faith has an eye to the eternal reward*. She rejoices in her prospects. She takes into her hands the birds which to others are in the bush. To be with Christ in Glory is the joy of hope, the hope which makes not ashamed. Our hope is no dream—as sure as we are here today, we who are trusting in Christ will be in Heaven before long—for He prays that we may be with Him where He is and may behold His Glory! Let us not wish to postpone the happy day! Shall our bridal day be kept back? No, let the Bridegroom speedily come and take us to Himself. What a joy to know that this head shall wear a crown of glory and these hands shall wave the palm branch of victory! I speak not of myself alone, my Brothers and Sisters, but of you, also, and of all them that love His appearing. There is a crown of life laid up for you which the righteous Judge will give you. Therefore, have patience a little while. Bear, still, your cross. Put up with the difficulties of the way, for the end is almost within sight—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long:

So we'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

May the Lord give us the ears of faith with which to hear the bells of Heaven ringing out from afar over the waters of time!

Faith has always reason for joy since God is always the same, His promises are the same and His power and will to fulfill are the same. In an unchanging God we find unchanging reasons for joy! If we draw water from the well of God, we may draw one day as well as another and never find the water abated. But if we make our joy to depend in part upon creatures and circumstances, we may find our joy leak out through the cracks in the cistern. Last Sunday morning I cried out to you, "Both feet on the Rock! Both feet on the Rock!" and the words led one poor heart to try the power of undivided faith in God. This is the road to joy and there is no other!

Drink waters from your own fountain and do not gad abroad after others. Is not the Lord enough for you? Is it not sufficient to say, "All my

fresh springs are in You”? Neither life, nor death, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor bereavement, nor slander, nor death, itself, shall quench your joy if it is founded in God alone!

III. We will look, for a minute or two, into a third matter which is THE FAILURES REPORTED CONCERNING THIS JOY. I think I hear somebody say, “It is all very well for you to tell us that Believers are joyful and have logical reasons for gladness, but some of them are about as dull as can be and create dullness in others.” I am obliged to speak very carefully here, for I am afraid that certain Christians give cause for this objection.

Let me say to some of you who love to raise objections, *What do you know about this joy?* Are you unbelievers? Well, then, you are out of court—you are not competent to judge. The griefs of Believers you do not know and with their joy you cannot intermeddle. You have no spiritual taste or discernment and what judgment can you form? A genuine Believer may be as happy as the angels and yet you may not know his joy because you are not in the secret. You have not a spiritual mind and the carnal mind cannot discern spiritual things. I would have you speak with bated breath when you talk on this matter. When a blind man goes to the Royal Academy, his criticisms on the pictures are not worth much, but they are quite equal in value to yours when you speak of spiritual things! You cannot know what joy in the Lord means for, alas, you are a stranger to such heavenly things.

Alas, *some professors of religion are mere pretenders*—these have no joy of the Lord. To carry out their presence, these persons even imagine that it is necessary to pull a long face and to talk very solemnly, not to say dismally! Their idea of religion is that black is the color of Heaven. But, dear Friends, we cannot prevent hypocrites arising—it is only a proof that true religion is worth having. You took a bad half-sovereign the other night, did you? Did you say, “All half-sovereigns are worthless, I will never take another”? Of course not!—you became more careful—and you were quite sure that there were good half-sovereigns in currency, or else people would not make counterfeit ones. It would not pay anybody to be a hypocrite unless there were enough genuine Christians to make the hypocrites pass current. Therefore do not say too much about hypocritical weepers, lest you slander true men.

Next, remember that *some persons are constitutionally sad*. They cried as soon as they were born. They cried when they cut their teeth and they have cried ever since. Their spirits are very low down and when the Grace of God gets into their hearts it lifts them a great deal to bring them up to a decent level of joy. Think of what they would have been without it! Many would have died in despair if it had not been for faith. The Grace of God has kept them up or they would have lost their reason. I am sorry there should be persons who have bad livers, feeble digestions, or irritated brains, but there are such. Pity them, even if you blame them. They must

not so pity themselves as to make an excuse for their unbelief—but we must remember that often the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.

When you have met with Christians who are not happy, did it never strike you that their *depression might only be for a time* under very severe trial? You may go to the South of France, where the days are sunny and you may happen to be there for a couple of days, only, and it may rain all the time—it would be unfair on that account to say that it is a gloomy place! So it may be that the Christian is under extreme pressure for the time and when that is moderated he will be very joyful. I do not excuse his loss of joy but still, there is a November of fogs in the year of most men. Judge no man by the day, but watch his spirit on a larger scale and see whether he does not usually delight himself in God.

Moreover, I would like to say a very pointed thing to some people who charge the saints with undue sadness. *May you not be guilty of making them so?* There is an unkind, morose, wicked, drinking husband and he says, “My wife’s religion makes her miserable.” No. It is not her *religion*, but her husband! You are enough to make 20 people unhappy—you know you are—and therefore do not blame the poor woman, if, when she sees you, tears are in her eyes. Alas, when she thinks of your going down to Hell and knows that she will be parted from you forever, the more she loves you the more sad she is to think of you.

“Oh,” says some wild boy here, “my mother is wretched!” I do not wonder! I should be wretched, too, if you were my son! If any of you are living ungodly lives, it makes your parents’ hearts ache to see you going headlong to perdition. Is it not abominable that a man should make another miserable and then blame him for being so? If you were but saved, how your mother’s face would brighten up! If your father saw his boy turn to the Lord, he would be as happy as the birds in spring! Speak tenderly on this matter lest you accuse yourself!

If you say that some Christians are unhappy, *must you not also admit that many of them are very happy?* I was once waited upon by an enthusiast who had a new religion to publish. Numbers of people have a crack which lets in new light and this man was going to convert me to his new ideas. After I had heard him, I said, “I have heard your story, will you hear mine?” When I talked to him of my lot and portion in the love of a Covenant God and the safety of the Believer in Christ, he said, “Now, Sir, if you believe all this, you ought to be the happiest man in the world.” I admitted that his inference was true and then I said to him, which rather surprised him, “So I am. And I am going to be more so all the rest of my life.”

If a man is chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. If he is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. If he is quickened by the Holy Spirit and renewed in the spirit of his mind. If he is one with Christ and on his way to Heaven—if he is not happy, he ought to be! Surely we ought to rejoice abundantly, dear Friends, for ours is a happy lot! “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord.” If God’s people are not happy at times,

it is not their faith which makes them unhappy—ask them. It is not what you *believe* that makes you unhappy—it is your lack of faith, is it not? If a man begins to doubt, he begins to sorrow, but as far as his faith goes, he has joy. Oh, for more faith! Faith does create joy. We can answer all objections by the fact that “we that have believed do enter into rest.”

IV. I close by mentioning THE ARGUMENTS FOR ABOUNDING IN JOY. You cannot argue a man into gladness, but you may possibly stir him up to see that which will make him happy. First, you see in my text *a permit* to be glad—“Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice.” You have, here, a ticket to the banquets of joy! You may be as happy as ever you like. You have Divine permission to shout for joy! Yonder is the inner sanctuary of happiness. You cry, “May I come in?” Yes, if by faith you can grasp the text, “Let all those that put their trust in You rejoice.” “But may I be happy?” asks one. “May I be glad? May I? Is there joy for me?” Do you trust in the Lord? Then you have your passport—travel in the land of light!

But the text is not only a permit, it is *a precept*. When it says, “Let them shout for joy,” it means that they are *commanded* to do so. Blessed is that religion wherein it is a *duty* to be happy! Come, you mournful ones, be glad! You discontented grumblers, come out of that dog house! Enter the palace of the King! Quit your dunghills! Ascend your thrones! The precept commands it—“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” We have here more than a permit and a precept, it is *a prayer*. David prays it—the Lord Jesus prays it by David. Let them rejoice, let them be joyful in You! Will He not grant the prayer which He has inspired by causing us to rejoice through lifting upon us the light of His Countenance? Pray for joy yourself, saying with David, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.”

The text might be read as *a promise*—“All those that put their trust in You shall rejoice.” God promises joy and gladness to Believers. Light is sown for them—the Lord will turn their night into day. Listen to the following line of argument which shall be very brief. You only act reasonably when you rejoice. If you are chosen of God and redeemed by blood and have been made an heir of Heaven, you ought to rejoice. We pray you act not contrary to Nature and reason. Do not fly in the face of great and precious Truths of God. From what you profess, you are bound to be joyful. You will best baffle your adversaries by being happy.

“They say.” “They say”—let them say! “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” But the attack is cruel. No doubt it is, but the Lord knows all about it. Do not cease to rest in Him. If your heart is full of God’s love you can easily bear all that the enemy may cast upon you. Abound in joy, for then you will behave best to those who are round about you. When a man is unhappy he usually makes other people so—and a person that is miserable is generally unkind and frequently unjust. It is often indigestion that makes a man find fault with his servants and wife and children. If a man is at peace with himself, he is peaceful with others.

Get right within and you will be right without. One of the best medicines for a good temper is communion with God and consequent joy of heart.

You yourself, also, if you are happy, will be strong—"The joy of the Lord is your strength." If you lose your joy in your religion, you will be a poor worker—you cannot bear strong testimony, you cannot bear stern trial—you cannot lead a powerful life. In proportion as you maintain your joy, you will be strong *in* the Lord, and *for* the Lord. Do you not know that if you are full of joy you will be turning the charming side of religion where men can see it? I should not like to wear my coat with the seamy side out—some religionists always do that. It was said of one great professor that he looked as if his religion did not agree with him.

Godliness is not a rack or a thumbscrew. Behave not to religion as if you felt that you must take it, like so much medicine but you had rather not. If it tastes like nauseous medicine to you, I should fear you have got the wrong sort and are poisoning yourself! Believe not that true godliness is akin to sourness. *Cheerfulness* is next to godliness! "When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." Weed out levity, but cultivate joy. Thus will you win other hearts to follow Jesus. Remember that if you are always joyful, you are rehearsing the music of the skies. We are going there very soon—let us not be ignorant of the music of its choirs. I should not like to crowd into my seat and hear the choirmaster say, "Do you know your part?" and then have to answer, "Oh, no, I have never sung while I was on earth, for I had no joy in the Lord."

I think I shall answer to the choirmaster and say, "Yes, I have long since sung, 'Worthy is the Lamb'"—

***"I would begin the music here
And so my soul shall rise:
Oh, for some heavenly notes, to bear
My passions to the skies!"***

With joy we rehearse the song of songs! We pay glad homage now before Jehovah's Throne. We sing unto the Lord our gladsome harmonies and we will do so as long as we have any being. Pass me that score, O chief musician of the skies, for I can take it up and sing my part in bass, or tenor, or treble, or alto, or soprano as my voice may be! The key is joy in God! Whatever the part assigned us, the music is all for Jesus! May some of you that have never joyed in Jesus Christ learn how to praise Him today by being washed in His precious blood! You that have praised Him long, may you learn your score yet more fully and sing in better tune from now on and for evermore! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms 4 and 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (SONG I); 4; 103 (VERS. II).**

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TURN OR BURN

NO. 106

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“If he does not turn, He will whet His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.”
Psalm 7:12.***

“IF the sinner turns not, God will whet His sword.” So, then, God has a sword and He will punish man on account of his iniquity. This evil generation has labored to take away from God the sword of His Justice. They have endeavored to prove to themselves that God will, “clear the guilty,” and will by no means, “punish iniquity, transgression and sin.” Two hundred years ago the predominant strain of the pulpit was one of terror—it was like Mount Sinai. It thundered forth the dreadful wrath of God and from the lips of a Baxter or a Bunyan, you heard most terrible sermons, full to the brim with warnings of judgment to come! Perhaps some of the Puritan fathers may have gone too far and have given too great a prominence to the terrors of the Lord in their ministry. But the age in which we live has sought to forget those terrors, altogether, and if we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, it is charged upon us that we want to bully them into religion! And if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it, certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness! Now we care not what men mockingly impute to us—we feel it our duty, when men sin, to tell them they shall be punished—and as long as the world will not give up its sin, we feel we must not cease our warnings. But the cry of this age is that God is merciful, that God is Love! Yes, who said He was not? But remember, it is *equally* true God is Just, severely and inflexibly Just! If He were not God, He would not be Just! And He could not be merciful if He were not Just, for punishment of the wicked is demanded by the highest mercy to the rest of mankind! Rest assured, however, that He *is* Just and that the words I am about to read you from God’s Word are true—“The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God.” “God is angry with the wicked every day.” “If he does not turn, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself, the instruments of death; He ordains His arrows against the persecutors.” Indeed, because this age is wicked, we are told it is to have no Hell—and because it is hypocritical, it would have but feigned punishment! This doctrine is so prevalent as to

make even the ministers of the Gospel flinch from their duty in declaring the Day of Wrath. How few there are who will solemnly tell us of the judgment to come! They preach of God's love and mercy as they ought to do and as God has commanded them—but of what use is it to preach mercy unless they also preach the doom of the wicked? And how shall we hope to effect the purpose of preaching unless we warn men that if they “turn not, He will whet His sword”? I fear that in too many places the Doctrine of future punishment is rejected and laughed at as a fancy and a fantasy—but the day will come when it shall be known to be a reality!

Ahab scoffed at Micaiah, when he said he would never come home alive. The men of Noah's generation laughed at the foolish old man (as they thought him), who bid them take heed, for the world would be drowned. But when they were climbing to the treetops and the floods were following them—did they then say that the prophecy was untrue? And when the arrow was sticking in the heart of Ahab and he said, “Take me from the battle, for I must die,” did he then think that Micaiah spoke a lie? And so it is now. You tell us we speak lies when we warn you of judgment to come, but in that day when your mischief shall fall on yourselves and when destruction shall overwhelm you, will you say we were liars, then? Will you then turn round and scoff and say we spoke not the Truth of God? Rather, my Hearers, the highest gift of honor will then be given to him who was the most faithful in warning men concerning the wrath of God! I have often trembled at the thought that here I am, standing before you, and constantly engaged in the work of the ministry, but what if, when I die, I should be found unfaithful to your souls? How doleful will be our meeting in the world of spirits! It would be a dreadful thing if you were able to say to me in the world to come, “Sir, you flattered us. You did not tell us of the solemnities of eternity. You did not rightly dwell upon the awful wrath of God. You spoke to us feebly and faintly. You were somewhat afraid of us—you knew we could not bear to hear of eternal torment and, therefore, you kept it back and never mentioned it!” Why, I think you would look me in the face and curse me throughout eternity, if that should be my conduct! But by God's help it never shall be! Come fair or foul, when I die I shall, God helping me, be able to say, “I am clear of the blood of all men.” So far as I know God's Truth, I will endeavor to speak it. And though on my head disgrace and scandal is poured to a ten-fold greater extent than ever, I'll hail it and welcome it—if I may but be faithful to this unstable generation, faithful to God and faithful to my own conscience! Let me, then, endeavor, and by God's help I will do it as solemnly and as tenderly as I can—to address such of you as have not yet repented—most affectionately reminding you of your future doom if you should die impenitent. “If he does not turn, He will whet His sword.”

In the first place, *what is the turning, here meant?* In the second place, let us dwell on the *necessity there is for men's turning, otherwise God will punish them.* And then thirdly, let me remind you of the *means whereby men can be turned from the error of their ways, and the weakness and frailty of their nature amended by the power of Divine Grace.*

I. In the first place, my Hearers, let me endeavor to explain to you the NATURE OF THE TURNING, HERE MEANT. It Says—"If he does not turn, He will whet His sword."

To commence, then. The turning, here meant, is actual, not fictitious—not that which stops with promises and vows, but that which deals with the real acts of life! Possibly one of you will say, this morning, "Lo I turn to God! From this time forth I will not sin and I will endeavor to walk in holiness. My vices shall be abandoned, my crimes shall be thrown to the winds and I will turn unto God with full purpose of heart." But, perhaps, *tomorrow* you will have forgotten this. You will weep a tear or two under the preaching of God's Word, but by tomorrow every tear shall have been dried and you will utterly forget that you ever came to the House of God at all. How many of us are like men who see their faces in a mirror and straightway go away and forget what manner of men we are? Ah, my Hearer, it is not your *promise* of repentance that can save you—it is not your *vow*. It is not your *solemn declaration*, it is not the *tear* that is dried more easily than the dewdrop by the sun. It is not the transient *emotion* of the heart which constitutes a real turning to God! There must be a true and actual *abandonment of sin* and a *turning unto righteousness* in real act and deed in everyday life. Do you say you are sorry and repent, and yet go on, from day to day, just as you always have gone? Will you now bow your heads and say, "Lord, I repent," and in a little while commit the same deeds, again? If you do, your repentance is worse than nothing and shall but make your destruction yet more sure—for he that vows to his Maker and does not pay, has committed another sin, in that he has attempted to deceive the Almighty and lie against the God that made him! Repentance, to be true, to be evangelical—must be a repentance which really affects our outward conduct.

In the next place, repentance, to be sure, *must be entire*. How many will say, "Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other, but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep and hold." O Sirs, in God's name, let me tell you, it is not the giving up of one sin, nor 50 sins, which is true repentance—it is the solemn renunciation of *every* sin! If you harbor one of those accursed vipers in your heart, your repentance is but a sham! If you indulge in but one lust and give up every other—that one lust, like one leak in a ship—will sink your soul! Think it not sufficient to only give up your *outward* vices. Fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of your life—it is all or none which God demands! "Repent," says

God, and when He bids you repent, He means repent of *all* your sins, otherwise He can never accept your repentance as being real and genuine. The true penitent hates sin in the race—not in the individual—in the mass, not in the particular. He says, “Gild you as you will, O sin, I abhor you! Yes, cover yourself with pleasure, make yourself gaudy like the snake with its azure scales—I still hate you, for I know your venom and I flee from you, even when you come to me in the most specious garb.” All sin must be given up or else you shall never have Christ! All transgression must be renounced, or else the gates of Heaven will be barred against you! Let us remember, then, that for repentance to be *sincere*, it must be *entire* repentance.

Again, when God says, “If he does not turn, He will whet His sword,” He means *immediate* repentance! You say when we are nearing the last extremity of mortal life and when we are entering the borders of the thick darkness of futurity, *then* we will change our ways. But, my dear Hearers, do not delude yourselves! It is few who have ever changed after a long life of sin. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, let him that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well.” Put no faith in the repentances which you promise yourselves on your deathbeds—here are ten thousand arguments against one, that if you repent not in health—you will never repent in sickness. Too many have promised themselves a quiet season before they leave the world, when they could turn their face to the wall and confess their sins—but how few have found that time of repose! Do not men drop down dead in the streets—yes, even in the House of God? Do they not expire in their business? And when death is gradual, it affords but an ill season for repentance. Many a saint has said on his deathbed, “Oh, if I had to seek my God, now—if I had to cry to Him, now, for mercy—what would become of me? These pangs are enough, without the pangs of repentance! It is enough to have the body tortured, without having the soul wrung with remorse.” Sinner! God says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me and proved Me.” When God the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, they will never talk of delays! You may never have another day in which to repent! “Therefore,” says the voice of Wisdom, “Repent now.” The Jewish Rabbis said, “Let every man repent one day before he dies—and since he may die tomorrow, let him take heed to turn from his evil ways today.” Even so, we say immediate repentance is that which God demands, for He has never promised you that you shall have any hour to repent in, except the one that you have now!

Furthermore, the repentance here described as absolutely necessary is *heartly* repentance. It is not a mock tear. It is not hanging out the ensigns of grief while you are keeping merriment in your hearts. It is not having

an illumination within and shutting up all the windows by a pretended repentance. It is the putting out of the candles of the heart! It is sorrow of soul which is true repentance. A man may renounce every outward sin and yet not really repent. True repentance is a turning of the *heart* as well as of the *life*. It is the giving up of the whole soul to God, to be His, forever and ever—it is a renunciation of the sins of the heart as well as the crimes of the life! Ah, dear Hearers, let none of us fancy that we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance. Let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature! Let us not dream that we have savingly turned to God, when, perhaps, we have only turned to ourselves. And let us not think it enough to have turned from one vice to another, or from vice to virtue. Let us remember it must be a turning of the *whole soul*, so that the old man is made new in Christ Jesus. Otherwise we have not answered the requirement of the text—we have not turned unto God.

And lastly, upon this point, this repentance must be *perpetual*. It is not my turning to God during today that will be a proof that I am a true convert—it is forsaking of my sin throughout the entire of my life—until I sleep in the grave. You need not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a proof that you are saved—it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change which *God works* is neither a transitory nor a superficial change—not a cutting off the top of the weed, but an eradication of it! Not the sweeping away of the dust of one day, but the taking away of that which is the cause of the defilement! In old times, when rich and generous monarchs came into their cities, they made the fountains run with milk and wine. But the fountain was not, therefore, always a fountain of milk and wine—on the morrow it ran with water as before. So you may, today, go home and pretend to pray. You may, today, be serious—tomorrow you may be honest and the next day you may pretend to be devout. Yet if you return, as Scripture has it, “like the dog to its vomit and like the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire,” your repentance shall but sink you deeper into Hell, instead of being a proof of Divine Grace in your hearts!

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance. However, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished and, at the risk of tiring you, we will just notice one or two of them—and may God grant that you may find them in your own souls! Legal repentance is a fear of damning—evangelical repentance is a fear of *sinning*. Legal repentance makes us fear the wrath of God—evangelical repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath—*sin*. When a man repents with that Grace of repentance which God the Spirit works in him, he repents not of the punishment which is to follow the deed, but of the *deed, itself*. And he feels that if there were no pit dug for the wicked, if

there were no ever-gnawing worm and no unquenchable fire, he would still *hate sin!* It is such repentance as this which everyone of you must have, or else you will be lost. It must be a *hatred of sin*. Do not suppose that because when you come to die, you will be afraid of eternal torment, therefore, that will be repentance. Every thief is afraid of prison, but he will steal tomorrow if you set him free. Most men who have committed murder, tremble at the sight of the gallows, but they would do the deed, again, could they live. It is not the hatred of the *punishment* that is repentance—it is the hatred of the *deed* itself! Do you feel that you have such a repentance as that? If not, these thundering words must be preached to you again—“If he does not turn, He will whet His sword.”

But one more hint, here. When a man is possessed of true and evangelical repentance—I mean the Gospel repentance which saves the soul—he not only hates sin, for its own sake, but loathes it so extremely and utterly that he feels that no repentance of his own can avail to wash it out! And he acknowledges that it is only by an act of Sovereign Grace that his sin can be washed away. Now, if any of you suppose that you repent of your sins and yet imagine that by a course of holy living you can blot them out—if you suppose that by walking uprightly in the future, you can obliterate your past transgressions—you have not yet truly repented—for true repentance makes a man feel that—

**“Could his zeal no respite know,
Could his tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save and Christ, alone.”**

And if it is so in you, that you hate sin as a corrupt and abominable thing—and would bury it out of your sight—but you feel that it will never be entombed unless Christ shall dig the grave, then you have repented of sin. We must humbly confess that we deserve God’s wrath and that we cannot avert it by any deeds of our own. And we must put our trust solely and entirely in the blood and merits of Jesus Christ! If you have not so repented, again we exclaim in the words of David, “If you turn not, He will whet His sword.”

II. And now the second point—it is a yet more terrible one to dwell upon—and if I consulted my own feelings, I would not mention it. But we must not consider our feelings, in the work of the ministry, any more than we would if we were physicians, of men’s bodies. We must sometimes use the knife where we feel that mortification would ensue without it. We must frequently make sharp gashes into men’s consciences in the hope that the Holy Spirit will bring them to life. We assert then, that there is a **NECESSITY** that God should whet His sword and punish men, if they will not turn! Baxter used to say, “Sinner! Turn or burn! It is your only alternative—TURN OR BURN!” And it is so. We think we can show you why men must turn, or else they will burn.

1. First we cannot suppose the God of the Bible could suffer sin to be unpunished. Some may suppose it. They may dream their intellects into a state of intoxication so as to suppose a God apart from justice—but no man whose reason is sound and whose mind is in a healthy condition can imagine a God without justice. You cannot suppose a king without it to be a good king, much less of God, the Judge and King of all the earth, without Justice in His bosom. To suppose Him all Love and no Justice, were to undeify Him and make Him no longer God! He were not capable of ruling this world if He had not Justice in His heart. There is in man a natural perception of the fact that if there is a God, He must be Just. And I can scarcely imagine that you can believe in a God without also believing in the punishment of sin. It were difficult to suppose Him elevated high above His creatures, beholding their disobedience and yet looking with the same serenity upon the good and upon the evil! You cannot suppose Him awarding the same praise to the wicked and to the righteous! The idea of God *presumes* justice—and it is but to say, Justice, when you say God.

2. But to imagine that there shall be no punishment for sin and that man can be saved without repentance is to fly in the face of all the Scriptures! What? Are the records of Divine History nothing? And if they are anything, must not God have mightily changed if He does not, now, punish sin? What? Did He once blast Eden and drive our parents out of that happy garden on account of a little theft, as man would style it? Did He drown a world with water and inundate Creation with the floods which He had buried in the bowels of this earth? And will He not punish sin? Let the burning hail which fell on Sodom tell you that God is Just! Let the open mouth of the earth which swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abiram, warn you that He will not spare the guilty! Let the mighty works of God which He did in the Red Sea, the wonders which He worked on Pharaoh and the miraculous destruction which he brought on Sennacherib, tell you that God is Just! And it were, perhaps, out of place for me in the same argument to mention the judgments of God even in our age, but have there never been such? This world is not the dungeon where God punishes sin, but still, there are a few instances in which we cannot but believe that He actually did avenge it. I am no believer that every accident is a judgment. I am far from believing that the destruction of men and women in a theater is a punishment upon them for their sin, since the same thing has occurred in Divine Service to our perpetual sorrow. I believe judgment is reserved for the next world. I could not account for Providence if I believed that God punishes *here*. “Those men upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you no.” It has injured religion for men to take up every Providence and say, for instance, that be-

cause a boat was upset on the Sabbath, it was a judgment on the persons that were in it. We assuredly believe that it was sinful to spend the day in pleasure, but we deny that it was a punishment from God! God usually reserves His punishment for a future state. But yet, we say, there have been a few instances in which we cannot but believe that men and women have been, by Providence, punished in this life for their guilt. I remember one which I scarcely dare relate to you. I saw the wretched creature, myself. He had dared to imprecate on his head the most awful curses that man could utter. In his rage and fury, he said he wished his head were twisted on one side, that his eyes were put out and that his jaws were made fast. But a moment afterwards the lash of his whip—with which he had been cruelly treating his horse—entered his eye. It brought on first, inflammation, and then lock-jaw—and when I saw him, he was in the very position in which he had asked to be placed, for his head was twisted round, his eyesight was gone and he could not speak except through his closed teeth! You will remember a similar instance happening at Devizes, where a woman declared that she had paid her part of the price of a sack of meal when she had it in her hand and, immediately dropped down dead on the spot! Some of these may have been singular coincidences. But I am not so credulous as to suppose that they were brought about by accident. I think the will of the Lord was in it! I believe they were some faint intimations that God was Just and that although the full shower of His wrath does not fall on men in *this life*, He does pour a drop or two on them, to let us see how He will, one day, chasten the world for its iniquity!

3. But why need I go far to bring arguments to bear on you, my Hearers? Your own consciences tell you that God must punish sin. You may laugh at me and say that you have no such *belief*. I do not say you have, but I say that your *conscience* tells you so—and conscience has more power over men than what they think to be their belief! As John Bunyan said, Mr. Conscience had a very loud voice and though Mr. Understanding shut himself up in a dark room, where he could not see, yet he used to thunder out so mightily in the streets that Mr. Understanding used to shake in his house through what Mr. Conscience said. And it is often so. You say in your understanding, “I cannot believe God will punish sin”—but you know He will! You would not like to confess your secret fears, because that were to give up what you have so often most bravely asserted. But because you assert it with such boast and bombast, I imagine you do not believe it, for if you did, you would not need look so big while saying it! I know this, no sooner than you are sick, you cry out for mercy! I know that when you are dying, you will believe in a Hell. Conscience makes cowards of us all and makes us believe, even when we say we do not, that God must punish sin!

Let me tell you a story. I have told it before, but it is a striking one and sets out in a true light how easily men will be brought, in times of danger, to believe in a God and a God of Justice, too, though they have denied Him before. In the backwoods of Canada there resided a good minister who, one evening, went out to meditate, as Isaac did, in the fields. He soon found himself on the borders of a forest which he entered and walked along a track which had been trod before him, musing, still musing until, at last, the shadows of twilight gathered around him and he began to think how he would spend a night in the forest. He trembled at the idea of remaining there, with the poor shelter of a tree into which he would be compelled to climb. All of a sudden he saw a light in the distance among the trees and imagining that it might be from the window of some cottage where he could find a hospitable retreat, he hastened to it. But to his surprise he saw a space cleared and trees laid down to make a platform and upon it a speaker addressing a multitude. He thought to himself, "I have stumbled on a company of people who, in this dark forest, have assembled to worship God and some minister is preaching to them at this late hour of the evening concerning the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." But to his surprise and horror, when he came nearer, he found a young man declaiming *against* God, daring the Almighty to do His worst upon him—speaking terrible things in wrath against the Justice of the Most High and venturing most bold and awful assertions concerning his own disbelief in a future state! It was altogether a singular scene. It was lighted up by pine-knots, which cast a glare here and there, while the thick darkness in other places still reigned. The people were intent on listening to the orator and, when he sat down, thunders of applause were given to him, each one seeming to emulate the other in his praise! Thought the minister, "I must not let this pass. I must rise and speak. The honor of my God and His cause demands it!" But he feared to speak, for he knew not what to say, having come there suddenly. He would have left, anyway, had not something else occurred. A man of middle age, hale and strong, rose, and leaning on his staff he said, "My friends, I have a word to speak to you tonight. I am not about to refute any of the arguments of the orator. I shall not criticize his style, I shall say nothing concerning what I believe to be the blasphemies he has uttered, but I shall simply relate to you a fact—and after I have done that—you can draw your own conclusions. Yesterday, I walked by the side of yonder river. I saw on its floods, a young man in a boat. The boat was unmanageable. It was going fast towards the rapids. He could not use the oars and I saw that he was not capable of bringing the boat to the shore. I saw that young man wring his hands in agony. By-and-by he gave up the attempt to save his life. He kneeled down and cried with desperate earnestness, 'O God! Save my soul! If my body cannot be saved,

save my soul!' I heard him confess that he had been a blasphemer. I heard him vow that if his life were spared, he would never be such again. I heard him implore the mercy of Heaven for Jesus Christ's sake and earnestly plead that he might be washed in His blood. These arms saved that young man from the flood. I plunged in, brought the boat to shore and saved his life. That same young man has just now addressed you and cursed his Maker. What do you say to this, Sirs?" The speaker sat down. You may guess what a shudder run through the young man, himself, and how the audience in one moment changed their notes and saw that, after all, while it was a fine thing to brag and bravado against Almighty God on dry land, when danger was distant, it was not quite so grand to think ill of Him when near the verge of the grave! We believe there is enough conscience in every man to convince him that God must punish him for his sin. Therefore we think that our text will wake an echo in every heart—"If he does not turn, He will whet His sword."

I am tired of this terrible work of endeavoring to show you that God must punish sin! Let me just utter a few of the declarations of His Holy Word, and then let me tell you how repentance is to be *obtained*. O Sirs! You may think that the fire of Hell is, indeed, a fiction and that the flames of the nethermost pit are but popish dreams! But if you are believers in the Bible, you must believe that it cannot be so! Did not our Master say, "Where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched." You say it is metaphorical fire. But what meant He by this?—"He is able to cast both *body* and soul into Hell"? Is it not written that there is reserved for the devil and his angels, fearful torment? And do you not know that our Master said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"? "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? "Yes," you say, "but it is not philosophical to believe that there is a Hell, it does not consort with reason to believe there is." However, I should like to act as if there were, even if there is no such place. For as the poor and pious man once said, "Sir, I like to have two strings to my bow. If there should be no Hell, I shall be as well off as you will. But if there should, it will go hard with you." But why need I say, "if"? You *know* there is! No man has been born and educated in this land without having his conscience so far enlightened as to know that to be a Truth of God. All I need to do is to press upon your anxious consideration this thought—Do you feel that you are a fit subject for Heaven right now? Do you feel that God has changed your heart and renewed your nature? If not, I beseech you, lay hold of this thought—unless you are renewed—all that can be dreadful in the torments of the future world must inevitably be yours! Dear Hearer, apply it to yourself, not to your fellow men, but to your own conscience and may God Almighty make use of it to bring you to repentance!

III. Now briefly what are the MEANS of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe any man can repent with evangelical repentance of *himself*. You ask me, then, to what purpose is the sermon I have endeavored to preach, proving the necessity of repentance? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God, by its conclusion. Sinner! You are so desperately set on sin that I have no hope you will ever turn from it of yourself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high, “to give repentance and remission of sin.” Do you, this morning, feel that you are a sinner? If so, ask Christ to give you repentance, for *He* can work repentance in your heart by His Spirit, though you cannot work it there yourself! Is your heart like iron? He can put it into the furnace of His love and make it melt! Is your soul like the nether millstone? His Grace is able to dissolve it like the fog is melted before the sun! He can make you repent, though you cannot make yourself repent! If you feel your need of repentance, I will not now say to you, “repent,” for I believe there are certain acts that must precede a sense of repentance. I would advise you to go to your houses and if you feel that you have sinned and yet cannot sufficiently repent of your transgressions, bow your knees before God and *confess your sins*. Tell Him you cannot repent as you should. Tell Him your heart is hard. Tell Him it is as cold as ice. You *can do that* if God has made you feel your need of a Savior! Then if it should be laid to your heart to endeavor to seek repentance, I will tell you the best way to find it. Spend an hour, first, in endeavoring to remember your sins—and when conviction has gotten a firm hold on you, then spend another hour—where? At Calvary, my Hearer! Sit down and read that Chapter which contains the history and mystery of the God who loved and died. Sit down and look at that glorious Man, with blood dropping from His hands and His feet gushing rivers of gore! And if that does not make you repent, with the help of God’s Spirit, then I know of nothing that can! An old divine says, “If you feel you do not love God, love Him till you feel you do. If you think you cannot believe, believe till you feel you believe.” Many a man says he cannot repent while he is repenting! Keep on with that repentance till you feel you have repented. Only acknowledge your transgressions—confess your guiltiness—acknowledge that He were just if He should destroy you. And say this, solemnly—

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

Oh, what would I give if one of my hearers should be blessed by God to go home and repent! If I had worlds to buy *one* of your souls, I would readily give them if I might but bring one of you to Christ! I shall never forget the hour when I hoped God’s mercy first looked on me. It was in a place very different from this, among a despised people, in an insignifi-

cant little chapel, of a peculiar sect. I went there bowed down with guilt, laden with transgression. The minister walked up the pulpit stairs, opened his Bible and read that precious text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." And as I thought, fixing his eyes on me, before he began to preach to others, he said, "Young man! Look! Look! Look! You are one of the ends of the earth. You feel you are. You know your need of a Savior. You are trembling because you think He will never save you. He says this morning, 'Look!'" Oh, how my soul was shaken within me, then! What, thought I, does that man know me and all about me? He seemed as if he did. And it made me "look!" Well, I thought, lost or saved, I will try. Sink or swim, I will run the risk of it. And in that moment I hoped, by His Grace. I looked upon Jesus! And though desponding, downcast, ready to despair and feeling that I would rather die than live as I had lived—at that very moment it seemed as if a young Heaven had had its birth within my conscience! I went home, no more cast down! Those about me, noticing the change, asked me why I was so glad, and I told them that I had believed in Jesus and that it was written, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Oh, if one such should be here this morning! Where are you, you chief of sinners, you vilest of the vile? My dear Hearer, you have never been in the House of God, perhaps, these last 20 years, but here you are, covered with your sins, the blackest and vilest of all! Hear God's Word—"Come, now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool and though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." And all this for Jesus' sake! All this for His blood's sake! "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved," for His Word and mandate is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned."

SINNER! TURN OR BURN!

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

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

END OF VOLUME 2

GOD GLORIFIED BY CHILDREN'S MOUTHS

NO. 1545

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

IN CONNECTION WITH THE CENTENARY OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS

***“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You
ordained strength because of Your enemies, that You
might still the enemy and the Avenger.”
Psalm 8:2.***

THIS Psalm sings of the grandeur of God as seen in creation. Who has not been impressed with the sight of the starry sky and the moon walking in her brightness? Truly, God is great! Who can stand at night and gaze upward to yonder distant worlds without saying, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your Glory above the heavens.” The Psalm with equal vigor treats of the condescension of God which is all the better seen when we have a view of His greatness and Glory. It is not for us to stoop—we are so low already. We sometimes use the word, condescension, in reference to man, but worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow worms as to be capable of real condescension—that belongs to God alone. “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?”

Because of this Divine condescension great honor is put upon man by God and the Psalm sings of it, telling of the exaltation of man who, in his original, was made a little lower than the angels, but by God's gentleness has been made great and crowned with glory and honor. Hence the inspired poet sings of the Glory of God *in* man, for he never thinks of extolling man. He only means to say that God is glorious on account of the great things which He has done in and for such a poor creature as man is. So when he has said that man is made to be the viceroy of God over this earth and is set over the works of God's hands, he concludes, not by praising man, but by reverently singing, “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!”

Mark right well the greatness of God, stooping to the littleness of man and glorifying itself thereby—the stupendous grandeur of the Highest bowing down to the lowest and uplifting it into a place hard by itself and so getting to itself abundant renown. This morning our subject is the power of God displayed in human weakness—strength out of babes' mouths—the way He glorifies Himself by using the very least and causing them to show forth His praise to the confusion of His adversaries. There is a Glory of God to be seen in creation, but in *redemption* there are peculiarly bright manifestations.

In creation there was no opposition. When God framed this world there was no opposing force to fight against Him—"He spoke and it was done." Absolute nothingness was no hindrance to the creation. "In the beginning" neither chaos or darkness were resisting forces in the framing of the world. "Let there be light," said God, and there was light. He speaks life and things live! No trace of rebellion is seen. It is in the sphere of *moral* and *spiritual* things that "the enemy" is met with and here is a labor worthy of God—to overthrow this enemy and still the evil voice which curses the sons of men. It is in conquering the opposition of the powers of evil that God gets to Himself a Glory more remarkable than that which He obtains by the greatest feats of *creative* power.

I. So our first thought is that THERE IS A CONFLICT. Our text speaks of "enemies" and of "the enemy and the Avenger." We know who the enemies are. Are they not the seed of the serpent? Are they not the men of this world, the children of darkness? The enemies of God are all men who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds—all who have not been turned "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." God has—alas that we should have to say it!—many enemies and, above all, there is the enemy, that leading spirit, the "prince of the power of the air," who has dominion over the children of disobedience and over those apostate angels whom he seduced into mutiny so that they revolted, with him, from beneath the standard of God.

Satan is the enemy who contends against the cause of the Truth of God and love, which is the cause of God. He is spoken of as "the Avenger" because he seeks to revenge himself on God. Through his own sin and folly he was expelled from Heaven. The "Son of the Morning" became the Prince of Darkness by his own willful deed and he wanders up and down the universe of God seeking to take revenge upon the just and holy Judge for the sentence which He has passed upon him. There always rages a tremendous battle between good and evil, between God and this avenger and the evil powers associated with him. This battle rages from day to day and will never cease till the Lord has put all enemies under the feet of His glorious Son who is manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

Victory shall crown the strife between good and evil and the cry shall be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" This strife began—I hesitate to conclude the sentence for the *origin* of evil is not revealed, but the first historic circumstance we know of was the revolt of the angels who kept not their first estate. How they fell we think we know, but to a large extent our notions are, as a rule, drawn rather from poetical imagination than from positive history. But we do know that the devil was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth (1 John 8:44) and that, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell" (2 Peter 2:4). Satan carried the warfare into this world at the Fall. Finding a happy pair in Eden, he assumed a serpent's form and seduced them with a lie, leading them to partake of the fruit of which their God had said, "In the day that you taste thereof you shall surely die."

From that moment the conflict has never ceased throughout the whole human family and you find everywhere the seed of the serpent in conflict with the "Seed of the woman." God leads the armies of the right and the

true against the spiritual wickedness which maintains the throne of wrong and falsehood. The serpent's seed has continued to fight against the Lord Jesus and against His chosen ones, using all sorts of weapons against them—by lying and slandering, by false doctrine, by soft temptations, by cruel persecutions, by death itself, the enemies have sought to destroy the children of the living God! It is a battle royal here below, even as it was above, for we read, "There was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels and he prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in Heaven."

The day shall come when there shall be no place found for evil upon earth. But until then the god of this world seeks to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ and all that are in Him and we must wrestle with him until we prevail. On God's part, this conflict is mainly carried on by moral and spiritual means. He does use other means at times and He will, in the end, use all the resources of Nature for the overthrow of His adversaries. Remember the song of the Red Sea where God used the great deep to destroy His foes? Even now I hear the jubilant voices of the maidens as they answer one another saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." For the most part, however, this battle is not with weapons of Nature, but with weapons of Grace.

And as far as we have to do with it, it is never with the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood, for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," though they are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The warfare of which we speak is the battle of good against evil, of right against wrong, of holiness against sin—in a word, of love against hate. And God uses the weapons of His Truth, of His Gospel, of the love of man and especially of the sweet life and Divine power of the Holy Spirit to bring men to the feet of Jesus Christ, "whom He has appointed heir of all things," that He might reign over them and "reconcile them unto God, even the Father."

This strife goes on every day *around* us and *within* us and you and I are taking one side or the other in it. We are either enemies of God by nature, or we are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son." We are under the banner of "the Avenger," or else we follow the standard of the Redeemer—one of these two. I invite you, at the outset of our discourse, to earnestly ask yourselves on whose side you are. "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" Are you for God and for His Christ, or are you still at enmity with your Maker, alienated from God by wicked works? With this fact we have opened our discourse—there is a conflict.

II. Secondly, in this conflict THE WEAPONS ARE VERY SINGULAR. What are those weapons? The text replies, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength." Bring here yon sweet babe and let us look into its lovely face! See that little mouth—it challenges a kiss! And note with joy that God may use that little mouth as His conquering weapon against the devil! By men's *mouths* God's warfare is carried on and all mouths that have ever spoken for Him were once the mouths of "babes and sucklings." I have seen many ancient cannons upon which were molded in bronze the words—"The last argument of kings." Yes, but

the gracious arguments of the King of kings are sent home by a human mouth—these *mouths* are fashioned and framed on purpose to hurl against the enemy the hot shot of the Gospel!

Of our Lord Jesus, Himself, we read, “He went forth conquering and to conquer,” and it is written concerning Him, “Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations.” O mouth of a little child, it seems strange that out of *you* should come the great strength of God which shall silence His enemies and yet so it shall be! “The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.” It was the publication of the God-given Word by human tongues which won the victory! The tongue is the glory of man's frame and by it the Glory of God is exceedingly manifested and His foes are baffled.

It must greatly anger Satan to think that his craft is not met by craft, nor his clever devices by the wisdom of the world, but that God uses the foolishness of *preaching* to overthrow him! When our Lord sent out His Apostles, He did not commission them to assemble squadrons of soldiers, but He bade a tongue of fire sit on each one of them! He did not charge them to establish His religion by the authority of earthly princes and seek the endowments of the State for it, but He gave them the endowment of the Holy Spirit and the power to speak His Gospel! In them was fulfilled the promise made to Ezekiel, “I will give you the opening of the mouth in the midst of them and they shall know that I am the Lord.”—

***“What gifts, what miracles He gave!
And power to kill and power to save!
Furnished their tongues with wondrous words,
Instead of shields and spears and swords.
Thus armed, He sent the champions forth,
From east to west, from south to north—
‘Go and assert your Savior's cause;
Go, spread the mystery of His Cross.’”***

Already the testimony of feeble men has been used as the great power of God to subdue the nations to Himself. Satan's kingdom has been shaken and the empire of Jesus extended by the gracious words which have proceeded out of human mouths—mouths which once were those of sucklings. See there, fiend of Hell, the armory of God? Do you see, in yonder infant class, the weapons which the Lord is preparing against you? The child that sucks at its mother's breast is born to smite you with the Word of God and, before long, when the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, he shall batter down your high places with his proclamation of the Gospel! O smiter of the human race, the youngest, weakest, feeblest of the sons of Adam shall yet tread you under foot! God shall make use of children's mouths to vanquish and silence the enemy and the Avenger.

How are these amazing weapons used? These strangely soft, yet sharp, feeble, yet mighty weapons—how are they used? They smite the enemy by *prayer*. Children pray while they are children and, blessed be God, their little pleas are heard in Heaven. I like to remember the words of Luther when things were going very badly. He went into a room and found a number of children in prayer and he exclaimed, “It is well, for the children are praying for us: God will be sure to hear them.” And so He will, Broth-

ers and Sisters. He will not let the cries of Samuels and Timothies remain unheard. Thus, from the heavenward side, the prayers uttered by children's mouths will bring prosperity to the great cause.

As these children grow older it is by their mouths that they shall bombard and batter the power of the enemy from the ramparts of prayer and so shall bring an overthrow upon evil and error and God's Word shall be triumphant. O blessed power of prayer, nothing can stand against you! The man, the child, the babe who knows but how to pray shall certainly prevail with God and "still the enemy and the Avenger."—

***"Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try,"***

and yet it is one of the most effectual forms of assault against the powers of darkness. These little mouths, too, shall be used for praise and that is another powerful blow against the Avenger. For whenever we praise God we cast down the pride of the great enemy. Praise glorifies God and that is what Satan cannot bear. In proportion as God is glorified, he feels himself degraded and, therefore, it is a blessed thing to magnify the Lord. Little children, when they are rightly taught, praise the Messiah early and, as they grow up with deeper voices and fuller volume of sound, but perhaps not, even then, with truer hearts, they praise and bless the God of their fathers. The mouths of babes and sucklings are used by God to lower the pride of His adversaries, while they cry, "Hosanna!" and sing the praise of Jesus' name.

Nor is this all, for out of man's mouth God sends forth testimony by His Holy Spirit and this is the sharpest blow of all. The enemy dreads nothing so much as witness-bearing to the Gospel, for he knows that it pleases God, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Under the head of testimony I would include all sorts of speech concerning our Lord Jesus and the Gospel of our salvation, whether it proceeds from the mouths of men, women, or children. The testimony of Jesus is *strength*, however feeble may be the voice which utters it. Whoever publishes the salvation of Jesus Christ is, with his mouth, smiting the enemy! When they that fear the Lord speak often, one to another, about the Glory of God—when they tell again and again, "the old, old story, of Jesus and His love"—then is God, out of human mouths, stilling the enemy and the Avenger!

How sweet to think, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we never know what one child's mouth can do! One would like to have seen little George Whitefield when first he began to prattle. Who would have thought that the mouth of such a youngster would ultimately set two nations on fire by its zealous declaration of the Truth of God? I should like to have seen John Wesley, when he was a little child, on the knee of that remarkable woman, "the mother of the Wesleys!" Who would have thought that he would awaken the masses as he did? Out of the mouths of little George Whitefield and little John Wesley—out of those two babes' mouths—how grandly did the Lord smite the adversary!

Aha! Aha! O Satan! To be overcome by behemoth or leviathan might make you angry! But to be smitten out of infants' mouths causes you to bite the dust in utter dishonor! You are sorely broken, now that, "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" you are put to shame! Mouths that

pray and praise and publish salvation are the Lord's pieces of ordnance with which He defeats His adversaries in the great battle of salvation. His Son is the Word, but these mouths supply the voices by which the Word is sounded forth in the ears of men! Jesus is not made known except through His people—they are His heralds, who cry, "Behold the Lamb." This agency is "mighty through God" and so it was ordained to be, for it is according to the Divine ordinance that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings strength should come.

The Word of God, though it is spoken by the feeblest mouth, is essential strength, a thing of majesty and might. The Hebrew has it, "Have You *found* strength," as if the very foundation of the strength of the Church lay, under God, in the mouths that God moves to speak. The preaching of the Gospel is at the bottom of the battle axe and weapons of everything—holy teachings are war of the Gospel campaign. The Septuagint, as quoted by our Lord, translates it—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You *perfected* praise." From children's mouths there will come the highest form of adoration. Praise perfected, which goes up before the Lord, does not come from cherubim and seraphim, but from human lips which once were those of infancy! Lips that press the mother's breast are the instruments of music which yet shall be attuned to the sweetest of Heaven's own songs! Glory be to His name for this! Let us bless Him that He graciously chooses such poor creatures to be the noblest of His choristers above.

III. Having dwelt long enough upon this point, let us notice, in the third place, that THE WARRIORS IN THIS WARFARE ARE VERY SPECIAL. The weapons are amazing and the warriors, themselves, are remarkable, for the text says that God perfects His praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. We may read this spiritually with the guarantee of Scripture for, first, such as are like babes in spirit are God's chosen. Their character cannot be better described than by calling them, "newborn babes who desire the unadulterated milk of the Word of God." Hear, dear Brothers and Sisters, your Master's own words as He speaks in the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew—"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes."

Childlike men and women, simple-hearted, honest, trustful, loving spirits are the chosen of God. Those who are so very wise and know such a great deal that they feel bound to quibble, pick holes and raise idle questions—these are *not* God's elect. He does not choose the wise, but the foolish things—those who do not know, nor pretend to know, but take their instruction from the Divine Teacher. As to mere knowledge which puffs up so many, there are some things which Believers do not wish to know. There are some difficulties which they do not desire removed—they are glad to have ample room and space enough for faith—and though this causes wise people to despise them, they care little for that, since their names are written in Heaven—and it is out of their mouths, weaklings as they are, that God has ordained strength!

No, more than this, not only are such the Lord's chosen, but such are His witnesses. I want to call attention to that, because in that 25th verse of the 11th chapter of Matthew our Lord was speaking to His Apostles. He had been sending them out to preach and the Evangelist records, "All that time Jesus answered and said." That is to say, at the very time when He sent out these special servants of His who were, in the judgment of scribes and Pharisees, nothing better than poor babes, He thanked God because they were of a kind which He delights to use! He thanked God that He had not committed the Gospel Revelation to the wise and to the noble, but unto these child-like ones who had guileless minds and capacity for believing and nothing more.

These poor men could do little else but speak when they were spoken to and say what they were told—and that is the best qualification for a minister that I know of—for him to speak only when God speaks to him and then utter what God has said to him and nothing more. The Father chooses just such. See how Paul states this fact in the opening chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians—"For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." See what strange champions God has ordained for His battle—the very weakest among men, babes and sucklings in their own esteem. These who are weakness, itself, are to go forth and contend for the Truth of God!

Such, my Brothers and Sisters, are those who proclaim the triumphs of Christ in the world. Our Lord would get little honor from our race if all children's voices were hushed and all child-like spirits with them. Scribes and Pharisees never cry, "Hosanna!" they are so busy binding on their phylacteries, washing their hands and devouring widows' houses. The first to cry, "Hosanna!" are the children and the next are those who are like they. Some say, "To shout and sing is children's work." So it is and it is ours because we are children, too! May God make us to grow in Grace till we are as little children and are, therefore, ready and eager to praise our great Father!

Those who are reputed to be wise men do not praise too much—they go upon the noncommittal principle and prefer criticism to gratitude. They are always criticizing the weather—if it is good for the turnips it is bad for the wheat—and if dry for hay-making, it is too dry for something else. The worldly-wise man never says, "Blessed be God for this delightful season; nothing can be better; we are highly favored." No, he thinks he shows his wisdom by finding fault! God Himself cannot escape from his sage remarks. But if a man is not wise enough to be forever grumbling and is so foolish as to be happy, so foolish as to believe the Truth of God, so foolish as to trust in the most trustworthy of all beings, namely, his God—he is also the sort of man that praises God and from such hearts God gets His chief praises.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, not to ride upon an ass, or upon a colt, the foal of an ass, but to reign in Glory! And when He comes, the first to meet Him and salute Him will be those poor, babe-like ones who did not boast of culture, but believed in God; who knew little, but yet knew their Lord and longed for His appearing, sighing often, "Oh that He would come and end the strife! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" These are they who find Him first, as the shepherds found Him at Bethlehem when the wise men rambled round by Jerusalem. And these are they who joy and rejoice over Him while scribes and Pharisees quarrel about Him. The poor have the Gospel preached to them and the babes in spirit hear that Gospel and live!

Thus have I spoken to you concerning the warriors God has chosen. They are simple people, trustful people, unaffected people—made so by Divine Grace—converted into little children. They are ready to believe their God. They are not wise, or noble, or anything great in their own esteem and yet out of their mouths God has ordained strength and by their witness He silences the disputers of this world and all the wisdom of men.

IV. Now let us note, in the fourth place, that THE QUALIFICATION OF THESE WARRIORS LIES IN THEIR WEAK SIDE. If it lay on the strong side, the text would have been written in another manner and we should have read, "Out of the mouth of men of middle age, in the prime of life—out of the mouth of wise old men who have gray hairs upon their head, indicative of their long experience—out of *their* mouths God has ordained strength." But He takes men at their weakest and speaks of "babes," or children who are quite young. The word must not be confined to *infants*, for it includes young children who are able to run about the streets.

The sucklings, also, are older children than they would represent with us, for eastern mothers often nurse their children till they are three years of age, so that some sucklings speak distinctly. The idea is that if you take man at his *least*, out of his mouth God ordains strength. He regards not man as grown up and strong, but man in his greatest weakness and out of the mouth of weak man God ordains strength. What does this teach? I take it that whatever is weakest about man is that in which the Grace of God glorifies itself most. Man is not only a soul and spirit, but he is, in part, material and, therefore, a poor creature composed in part of the lower elements. He is not a pure spirit, like an angel, but linked on to mother earth by a cumbrous and hampering body of clay.

He is a worm and yet an angel—half-way between dust and Deity—brother to the worm and to corruption and yet immortal! Satan is, no doubt, filled with scorn of man when he looks at him and measures him with himself. "Is this the creature that is to be set over all the works of God's hands—made of earth and water, phosphates and metals? I am far nobler than he! Can I not flash like lightning, while he must creep about the world to find himself a grave?" Yes, but herein is the Glory of God's conflict and victory. The Lord intends to overcome the Prince of Evil by a poor creature like man, who is but of yesterday and is crushed before the moth! It is glorious, to my mind, that the Lord should deign to embody His power in weak creatures as we are and in that way make Satan see that

the right and the true in the feeblest being is unconquerable and that in this form God carries the war into his own territory and defeats him.

Thus the Lord puts the adversary to a perpetual reproach. He pits a child against His giant foe and overcomes him. He hurls defiance to Satan out of a babe's mouth! Go your way, O enemy! You are dishonored by the victory which feebleness gains over you. God is glorified in man's grievous infirmity. Man is, at his best, of all creatures one of the feeblest and there is not so very much difference between full-grown men and babes. A few years ago we could not help ourselves at all, for we were abjectly weak in our infancy. But are we much better now? How did you feel yesterday afternoon in the storm, when the thunder rolled overhead and the lightning flashed and flamed across the sky? Did you not feel that you were helpless as a babe?

Put out to sea in a storm and you will soon learn your babyhood, I guarantee you, and feel that when "rocked in the cradle of the deep" you are as powerless as a child in its mother's arms! We need not be ashamed of this, but glory in it because the power of God rests upon us! The great God seems to say to Satan, "It is by these poor feeble things that I will anger you, O haughty prince of the air! By such beings as these I will overthrow your usurped dominion! Though they suffer, though they are tempted, yet by My Grace they shall triumph over you." We have the power to suffer and herein lies a great part of our qualification to do the Lord's service before His enemies. It is our Redeemer's qualification. He could not save us until *He* suffered! He could not redeem us until He died! Not His strength, but His *weakness* saved us, for He was crucified in weakness and by that Crucifixion He redeemed our souls!

Think of the men and women who have glorified God on beds of sickness, bearing their pains with patience and blessing God all the while. Think of the many on the rack and at the stake who have there extolled the Lord their God! Of all the music God ever heard, there is none that can equal in intense sweetness the cries of His dear, suffering, martyred people when every limb has been tormented by the persecutor and yet every particle of their body and every power of their soul had willingly yielded up itself to maintain His cause and glorify His name! True music lies not in the sound, but in the *spirit* of the song and, therefore, I say none can match, much less excel, the songs of the host of martyrs! Blessed be God that we can suffer! We should be denied a privilege if we had not been able to endure the will of God as well as to do it. Surely of all diadems, that crown which is set with rubies, the crown which adorns the martyr's brow, is the most resplendent!

Yes, it is man's weak side, his suffering and his dying side, by which God has shown the enemy that men can love their God even unto death, that virtue can triumph over all selfishness, that true hearts can make sacrifices, that mortal man can defy temptation and can, through God's Grace, follow after that which is good to the uttermost of loss and pain. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, dwell on this thought and meditate on the fact that our power to serve God lies on our weak side. He uses not our greatness, but our littleness. You know what the learned men say is the weak part of some of us—they put it something like this—"We regret

the preacher's total inability to keep abreast of the times. He has no capacity for modern thought and his lack of affection for the higher culture which is so much the characteristic of this marvelously enlightened century." That is our weakness! Yes, and our strength and, therefore, we glory in it!

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." If all God's servants will come to this, they will secure far more success than by the pretentious style of so-called "culture," which is nothing but the science of growing more weeds than usual. That which is new in theology is not true! The Gospel was of full stature at its very birth! No man can add to it or take from it. It cannot be improved and it only needs to be told out in the power of the Holy Spirit and it will perform wonders even as of old. Our infirmity we will glory in, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels and if the vessel had not been of earth, we might never have received the treasure. "But," cries one, "surely we need wisdom to guide us!" I answer, "Jesus Christ is made unto us Wisdom," and we have but to learn of Him.

We hear much, nowadays, of "great thinkers," but we prefer to be great believers! Deep thinking is a very shallow affair, after all, when the thoughts are our own. We only get into real depths when we receive the thoughts of God. So far as I can see, these "thinkers" generally empty their places of worship when they preach and the poor souls that most need comfort get none whatever. Rather than copy their example, we may well prefer to sing with Paul, "When I am weak then am I strong." We will believe what God says and take it as a matter of fact, just as a child does. And oh, what a sweet thing a child's faith is! Many a time when a dear little girl has come to join the Church and looked at me with her expressive, believing eyes which seemed to see Jesus, I have admired and envied her pure, unquestioning confidence.

Knowing nothing about those horrible doubts which are now sown like thistles everywhere, such as these have the rest of faith without its struggles! I have desired to be a little child again and wished that I had never heard of the existence of a quibbler. Those fine books of the broad school which came from Germany years ago, but which we now produce at home—it is a pity to have seen the binding of them. Even doctors of divinity favor us with denials of plenary inspiration and aid in that form of undermining work—they may have all their books so long as we can keep our Bibles and God gives us firm faith in Himself.

Let us but know Jesus and lean our heads on His bosom and the learned men may speculate as they please. Oh, when the Church gets back to her simple faith in Jesus she shall be qualified for victory! She shall vanquish the world when she has thrown away her wooden sword of carnal reason and has taken up the true Jerusalem blade of faith in God! Then out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God will do what He never will do out of the mouths of Scribes and Pharisees and wise men. Out of the mouths of weak people, who believe what God tells them—the mouths of weak people who have no capacity except the capacity of faith—out of these will God perfect praise and glorify Himself!

V. That leads me, in finishing, to plead for a loving reverence for childhood. If the Lord uses the weak side of man and if He is engaged to win His ultimate victory over the devil by feeble man at his feeblest, then God bless the children! It seems to me that in the Lord's battle there is always a babe in the fore-front. The armies of olden times placed a huge champion in their van, like Goliath of Gath. But it is not so in God's army—there a babe leads the way! Pharaoh oppresses Israel and crushes the people down till their cry goes up because of their sore bondage. God is going to deliver them. How does the work begin? Here is the opening of the campaign—"And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to wash herself."

And there she spied a little ark made of bulrushes which she sent her maid to fetch and there was a Hebrew child within it. "And behold! The babe wept." Thus was the champion of Israel introduced upon the scene! The goodly child whom his parents, in faith, had hidden was he by whom God would break Rahab in pieces! The still loftier story of the battle of the Lamb opens in like manner—"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." "She brought forth her first-born son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger." That was the signal for the heat of the conflict—that Babe led the way! The Holy Child Jesus is at the head of all our marches! One may well honor infancy and childhood since this is the case!

Let our subject prevent our entertaining doubts about the possibility of children's conversions—that would be insanity and almost blasphemy! Do you not know that unless you are converted and become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven? Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." The childlike spirit is no disqualification—in some respects it is a vantage ground. Christianity is the religion of children! Other religions, as a rule, aim at older folk and pretend to mystery. Other religions are not worth understanding, but yet they affect depth and secrecy—you must be initiated and pass through years of study before you can hope to derive any advantage from them. But the religion of Jesus Christ was meant for the poor and for the lowly. All that which is necessary for the saving of the soul can be speedily learned and understood, the Holy Spirit being the teacher.

As far as the practical, saving part of Christianity is concerned, it is the religion of children. If a preacher can interest a child, he can interest anybody. Is it not all a mistake when we say, "Oh, he is only fit to talk to children"? If he is fit to do this, he is fit to talk to Apostles! Let us heartily believe, also, in children's praises. I am sure you must do so if you are like your Lord, for He delighted in them. He would not stop the boys when they shouted, "Hosanna!" The scribes sneeringly asked, "Do You hear what these say?" Yes, He did hear it, and He said, "Out of their mouths God has perfected praise." Let the children sing and do not despise their hymns because they are more fit for children than for you. Let the children sing and thank God they sing. Never despise them. Do not say, "Oh, they are only a parcel of boys and girls." What if they are? May they not be a better parcel than some of you? If we were half as free from guile and

unbelief as boys and girls, it would be better for us! If we could get the simple trustfulness of childhood back, again, it would be a great gain to character. Let us not undervalue their praises or their service.

My text supports me in the strongest appeal which I can make. Hear it yet again—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength." Let the children serve God and let us put forms of service in their way. That is a sweet verse—"And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." The child Samuel and the Lord Jehovah! What an amazing combination! God who fills all things and Hannah's little boy! God give us to see our boys and girls ministering before the Lord while they are yet in their frocks and pinafores! The linen ephod is as suitable for a child as for an ancient priest. No robe is more glorious than the garment of *service* and whether it is worn by old or young, it is a right royal dress.

Last of all, let us expect victory to come to the Church through little children. It may happen that God will bring the world to Christ's feet by the children. It is written, "A little child shall lead them." Who knows how many are led to Jesus by children? This city of ours is better evangelized by our Sunday schools than by all the rest of us put together! I don't mean to flatter Sunday school teachers, but I must speak well of the children. When they go home they find that father is hardly dressed. He has not been to a place of worship, but he has been reading the Sunday paper. He does not need any of your singing and preaching. Little Mary and Tommy come back and they don't ask him anything about it, but they begin to sing. And when they have their dinner they talk about what teacher said and, perhaps, they say something about the sermon and so Father gets more singing and preaching than he bargained for.

When they go to bed they clasp their little hands and pray for their father and he is obliged to hear them. Thus he gets praying as well as singing. The children are missionaries and they enter where others cannot. The city missionary may be shut out, but Father cannot shut out Tommy or Mary and they must be allowed to sing or they will cry and that is worse—so that their witness cannot be silenced! What little children are doing for London and for our great cities is impossible for us to calculate! The darlings die and in this they often do more than by their lives. How many hard hearts have been broken and stubborn wills subdued by the deathbeds of infants? How many a mother has had her first desires for Heaven kindled by the flight of her little cherub up to the bosom of Christ?

They do God's work here below in a wonderful manner. It is true and will be truer every day, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord has ordained strength, because of His enemies, that He might still the enemy and the Avenger. God's blessing be with all of you who work among the children. Amen.

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DILEMMA AND DELIVERANCE

NO. 287

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek You.”
Psalm 9:10.***

THERE are many men who are exceedingly well read in heathen mythologies. They can tell you the history of any of the heathen gods, but who at the same time know very little of the history of Jehovah and cannot rehearse His mighty acts. In our schools to this day there are books put into the hands of our youth that are by no means fit for them to read—books which contain all kinds of filth and if not always filth, yet all kinds of fables and vanities which are simply put into our hands when we are lads because they happen to be written in Latin and Greek. Therefore, I suppose it is imagined that we shall all the better remember the wickedness that is contained in them by having the trouble of translating them into our own mother tongue.

I would that instead of this, all our youth were made acquainted with the history of the Lord our God. Would that we could give them for classics some books which record what He has done, the victories of His glorious arm and how He has put to nothing the gods of the heathen and cast them down even into the depths. At any rate, the Christian will always find it to be useful to have at hand some history of what God did in the days of yore. The more you know of God's attributes, the more you understand His acts. The more you treasure up His promises and the more you fully dive into the depths of His Covenant, the more difficult will it become for Satan to tempt you to despondency and despair.

Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. Meditate on His Law both day and night and you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Your leaf shall not wither. You shall bring forth fruit in your season and whatsoever you do shall prosper. Ignorance of God is ignorance of bliss. But knowledge of God is a Divine armor by which we are able to ward off all the blows of the enemy. Know yourself, O man, and that will make you miserable. Know your God, O Christian, and that will make you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, this morning, in addressing you, I shall divide my text into three parts. First, I shall note a certain fiery dart of Satan. Secondly, I shall point out to you Heaven's Divine buckler, as hinted at in the text—"You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek you." And then, in the third place,

I shall notice man's precious privilege of seeking God and so of arming himself against Satan.

I. First, then, I am to dwell for a little time upon A CERTAIN FIERY DART OF SATAN WHICH IS CONSTANTLY SHOT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD. There are many temptations, there are many suggestions and insinuations—and all these are arrows from the bow of the Evil One. But there is one temptation which exceeds all others, there is one suggestion which is more Satanic, more skillfully used in effecting the purposes of Satan than any other. That suggestion is the one referred to in these words of the Psalmist—the suggestion to believe that God has forsaken us. If all the other arrows of Hell could be put into one quiver, there would not be so much deadly poison in the whole as in this one. When Satan has used up every other weapon, he always betakes himself to this last, most sharp, most deadly instrument. He goes to the child of God and pours into his ear this dark insinuation, “Your God has forsaken you. Your Lord will be gracious no more.”

Now, I shall remark with regard to this arrow, that it is one that is very often shot from Satan's bow. Some of us have been wounded by it scores of times in our life. Whenever we have fallen into any sin, have been overtaken by some sudden wind of temptation and have staggered and almost fallen, conscience pricks us and tells us we have done wrong. Our heart, like David's heart, smites us. We fall upon our knees and acknowledge our fault and confess our sin. Then it is that Satan lets fly this arrow, which comes whizzing up from Hell and enters into the soul—and while we are making the confession, the dark thought crosses our soul—“God has forsaken you. He will never accept you again. You have sinned so foully that He will blot your name out of the Covenant. You have stumbled so fearfully that your feet shall never stand upon the rock again—you have stumbled to your fall. You have fallen to your destruction.”

Have you not known this, Christian? When for a season you have been led to backslide, when you have lost your first love and have become degenerate, when you have put out your hand to touch the unlawful thing through some sudden surprise—has not this been thrown in your teeth? “Ah, wretch that you are, God will never forgive *that* sin—you have been so ungrateful, such a hypocrite, such a liar against the Lord your God, that now—now He will cast you away, throw you upon a dunghill like salt that has lost its savor and is fit for nothing.” Ah, Friends, you and I know what this means. And I dare say, David did, too. He had to feel all the power of this poisoned arrow after his great sin, when he went up to his chamber and wept and bemoaned himself and there cried out in agony, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

A select opportunity this for shooting this arrow. Just where the sin has been Satan marks and then he sends a suggestion. Wherever there is a wound of sin, it is wonderful how this arrow will work and what a burn-

ing it will give to our blood till every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on. And all our flesh is made to tingle with this evil thought, "I have sinned and the Reprover of man has reproved me to my face and cast me from His presence and He will be gracious to me no more."

Another season when Satan usually shoots this arrow is the time of great trouble. There is a broad river across your path and you are bid to ford it. You go in and you find the water is up to your knees. As you wade on it becomes breast-high. But you comfort yourself with this thought, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." Cheered with this you go on. But you sink and the water becomes deeper still. At last it is almost gurgling in your throat! It is flowing over your very shoulders.

Just then, when in the very deepest part of the stream, Satan appears on the bank, takes out his bow and shoots this fiery arrow—"Your God has forsaken you." "Oh," says the Christian, "I feared not as long as I heard the voice saying, 'Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God.' But now," says he, "my God has forsaken me." And now the Christian begins to sink, indeed, and if it were not for the mighty power of God, it will not be Satan's fault if he does not drown you in the midst of the flood. What a malicious devil is this—that must always send us a fresh trouble and most grievous of all, send it when we are in our very worst distress.

He is a coward, indeed. He always hits a man when he is down. When I am up and on my feet I am more than a match for Satan, but when I begin to stumble through great trouble, out comes the dragon from the pit and begins to roar at me and to draw his sword and hurl his fiery darts. For now, says he, "man's extremity shall be my opportunity. Now that his heart and flesh fails—now will I make a full end of him." You also know, some of you, what that means. You could bear the trouble well, but you could not bear the dreary thought that God has forsaken you in your trouble.

Another season, too, in which Satan shoots this fiery dart is before some great labor. I am often vexed and perplexed with this dark thought when I have to appear before you on the Sabbath-Day. I frequently come here with that ringing in my ears—"God will forsake you. You shall fall before the congregation. The Word shall not go home with power. You shall labor in vain and spend your strength for nothing." Thousands of times have I preached the Gospel, yet to this day does that same arrow come flying up and still does it vex and perplex my heart.

If there is anything greater for a Christian to do than he has been accustomed to do in former times, it is generally then that Satan levels this battle. When there is a deep soil to be plowed and the plow is heavy and the oxen are faint and the plowman thinks he shall not accomplish his

weary work—then it is that up comes this dark thought—“The Lord has forsaken you and where are you now?” The like does he do at another season, namely times of unanswered prayer. You have been up to God’s throne asking for a blessing. You have been five, six, twelve times and you have had no answer. You go again. And you are just wrestling with God and the blessing seems as if it must come. But no, it does not come and you bring your burden away on your back once more.

You have desired to cast all your cares upon God and come away rejoicing. But now you find that prayer has no return of blessing. It seems to be a waste of words. Then up comes Satan, just at the moment and he says, “God has forsaken you, if you were a child of God, He would answer your prayer. He would not leave you crying so long in the dark as this, if you were one of His beloved children. Why, He hears His people! Look at Elijah how He heard him. Remember Jacob—how he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. Oh,” says Satan, “God has forsaken you.”

Ah, Satan we have heard that before. “Yes, but,” says he, “His mercy is clean gone forever. The heavens have become like brass, the Shekinah is gone up from between the wings of the cherubim, His house is left empty and void. Ichabod is written on your closet. You shall never have an answer again. Go speak to the winds, spread your griefs to the pitiless sea, for God’s ear is shut and He will never move His arm to work deliverance for you.”

Now, am I not justified in saying that this arrow is very often shot? I may not have mentioned all the instances in which it has been shot at you, but I am certain that if you are a child of God, there have been times and seasons when this desperate insinuation has come up from Hell—“God has forgotten you. He has cast you off. You are left to yourself and you shall perish.” At any rate, if you have never said it, remember it is written in God’s Word that Zion says, “My God has forgotten me.” And call to your recollection that gracious answer, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” The arrow, then, is often shot.

Then let me remark with regard to this arrow, again, that it is most grievous. Other troubles only wound the Christian’s flesh. They do but pierce with skin deep wounds. But this is a shot that goes right deep into his heart. When Satan is shooting other arrows we can laugh at him, for they rattle against our buckler. But this one finds out the joints of the harness and it goes right through from one side to the other, till we are compelled to say, “As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God?” This is hitting the target in the very center. This is skillful, indeed, when Satan is able to send this arrow right into the eye of the soul.

Other troubles are like surface storms. They toss the ocean into an apparent storm and there are big waves on the top, but all is still and calm down in the caverns beneath. But this dark thought makes the ocean boil to its very bottom. It stirs the soul up until there is not one place in which there is rest—neither a cavern of the heart, nor a corner of the conscience in which the spirit has peace. This arrow, I say, is one of Hell's masterpieces. There is more craft and skill in it than anything else Satan has ever done. It is the worst of his arrows because it grieves the Spirit exceedingly. And there is another thought I must throw out.

Not only is this arrow grievous, but it is very dangerous. For if, my Brethren, we believe this accusation against God, it is not long before we begin to sin. Let the Christian know that his God is with him and temptation will have little power, but when God has forsaken us, as we think that He has, ah, then, when Satan offers us some back door by which to escape from our troubles, how very easily shall we be tempted to adopt his expedients. A merchant who knows that his God is with him, may see trade going from him and his house near bankruptcy, but he will not do a dishonest thing. But let him imagine that God is against him, then Satan will say, "See, Merchant, one of God's children, you have been deceived, He will never help you."

And then, he is tempted to do something which in his conscience he knows to be wrong. "God will not deliver me," he says—"then I will try to deliver myself." There is great danger in this. Take heed to yourself, then, that you "take unto you the whole armor of God," and "above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." I will make but one other observation upon this fiery dart. And that is, it bears the full impression of its Satanic maker. None but the devil could be the author of such a thought as this—that God has forsaken His people. Look it in the face, Christian, and see if it has not got the horns of the Evil One stamped on its brow! Does not the cloven foot peep out? Look at it—why, it is the devil's own child. Why, Christian, this Evil One is making you doubt your own Father. He is bidding you distrust a faithful God.

He is calling in question the promise which says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He is making you accuse God of perjury. As if He could break His oath and run back from the Covenant which He has made with Christ on your behalf. Why, none but the devil could have the impudence to suggest such a thought as that! Cast it from you, Believer. Fling it away to the very depths of the sea. It is unworthy of you to harbor it for a moment. Your God forsake you? Impossible! He is too good. Your God forsake you? It is utterly impossible! He is too true. Could He forsake His children, He would have forsaken His integrity. He would have ceased to be God when He ceased to succor and help His own. Rest, then, in that and ward

the fiery dart off. For hellish, indeed, it is and the name of its maker is stamped upon it legibly.

II. In the second place, let me notice THE DIVINE BUCKLER WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR HIS CHURCH AGAINST THIS FIERY DART. Here it is—it is the fact that God never has forsaken them that fear Him and that, moreover, He never will do so.

Ah, my Brethren, if we could but once believe the doctrine that the child of God might fall from grace and perish everlastingly, we might, indeed, shut up our Bible in despair. To what purpose would my preaching be—the preaching of a rickety Gospel like that? To what purpose your faith—a faith in a God that cannot and would not carry on to the end? To what use the blood of Christ, if it were shed in vain and did not bring the blood-bought ones securely home? To what purpose the Spirit, if He were not omnipotent enough to overcome our wandering, to arrest our sins and make us perfect and present us faultless before the Throne of God at last?

That doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is, I believe, as thoroughly bound up with the standing or falling of the Gospel as is the article of justification by faith. Give that up and I see no Gospel left. I see no beauty in religion that is worthy of my acceptance, or that deserves my admiration. An unchanging God, an Everlasting Covenant, a sure mercy—these are the things that my soul delights in and I know your hearts love to feed upon. But take these away and what do we have? We have a foundation of wood, hay, straw and stubble. We have nothing solid. We have a fort of earth-works, a mud hovel through which the thief may break and steal away our treasures. No, this foundation stands sure—“The Lord knows them that are His.” And He does so know them that He will certainly bring them every one to His right hand at last in Glory everlasting.

But to return to our text and to offer you some few words of comfort which may tend to quench the fiery dart of the Wicked One. The Psalmist says, “You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek You.” I call up before you now, one by one, as witnesses, the saints of God in the olden time. You are in great trouble today and Satan suggests that now God has forsaken you. Come here, Jacob! We read your testimony. Were you a man of trouble? “Ah,” says he, “few and evil were my days.” Evil, man?—what do you mean? “I mean that they were full of sorrow, full of perplexity, full of fear and trouble.” And what is your testimony, Jacob? We have heard that you did seek God in prayer. Did you not wrestle with the angel at the brook Jabbok and prevail? Speak, Man, and tell these doubting hearts, did God forsake you?

Methinks I see that hoary Patriarch lifting up his hands and he cries, “I trembled to meet my brother, Esau. I stayed at the brook Jabbok and I said, ‘Lord, give deliverance from him whom I think bloodthirsty.’ I crossed the brook full of fear and trembling, but tell it, O let it be known for the comfort of others in like trouble with me, I met my brother Esau

and he fell upon my neck and kissed me! He would not take the tribute which I offered him. He became my friend and we loved each other. God had turned his heart and he took no vengeance upon me.

“But,” continued the Patriarch, “I was always a doubting man, I was always a careful man. I had so much cunning and craft about me that I could not trust anything in the hands of my Covenant God and this always brought me into care and trouble. But,” says he, “I bear my witness that I never had need to have troubled myself at all. If I had but left it all in the hand of God, all would have been well. I remember,” says he, “and I tell it to you now, when my son Joseph was sold into Egypt what sorrow I had in my heart, for I said, ‘My gray hairs shall be brought with sorrow to the grave, for Joseph my son is, without a doubt, rent in pieces.’ And then it happened on a day that Simeon was taken away from me. And there came a message out of Egypt that Benjamin must go down. And I remember well what I said ‘Joseph is not and Simeon is not and now they will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.’”

“But they were not against me,” says the old man, “they were for me, every one of them. Joseph, that I said was not, was. He was sitting upon the throne. He had prepared for me a habitation in Egypt. As for Simeon, he was a hostage there. And that was not against me, for perhaps I should scarce have sent my sons down at all if it had not been for the hope that they would bring Simeon back. And now,” says Jacob, “I retract every word I have said against the Lord my God and I stand before you to bear my testimony that not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised. My shoes were iron and brass and as my days so was my strength.”

I hear a mourner say, “Mine is not a case of trouble and sorrow—mine is a case of duty. I have a duty to perform that is too heavy for me and I am afraid I shall never accomplish it.” Here comes another of the ancients to bear his witness. It is Moses. Let him speak. “I thought,” said he, “when God called me from keeping the flocks of my father in the desert by the mount of Horeb, I thought I never could be strong enough for the office to which I had been ordained. I said unto my Lord, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh? And I said unto Him again, Lord, you know I am not eloquent. The children of Israel will not believe me, for I shall not have skill enough in oratory to persuade them to follow my words. But the Lord said, Certainly I will be with you.

“And lo,” says Moses, “as my days so was my strength. I had strength enough to stand before Pharaoh, strength enough to shake the whole land of Egypt and strength enough to divide the Red Sea and drown all Pharaoh’s hosts. I had strength enough to endure with an evil generation forty years in the wilderness, strength enough to take their idol god and grind it in pieces and make them drink the water upon which I had strewn the atoms. I had strength enough to lead them on from day to day, to command

the rock and it gushed with water, to speak to the heavens and they sent down the manna. And when I went up at last to my grave and looked from the top of Nebo, I, who had once been fearful, saw with transport the land to which the Lord's people had been brought and my soul was taken away with a kiss and I departed in peace." Hear that, then, O laboring one. The God that helped Moses will help you. Moses sought God and God did not forsake him. Nor will He forsake you.

"But," says another, "I am exposed to slander, men speak evil of me—no lie is too bad for them to utter against me." Ah, my Friend, permit me to refer you to another ancient saint. It is the saint who wrote this Psalm—David. Let him stand up and speak. "Ah!" says he "from the first day when I went forth to fight Goliath even to the end of my life I was the subject of shame and slander. Doeg the Edomite, Saul and multitudes of men. The men of Belial, like Shimei, all accused me. I was the song of the drunkard. I was the harlot's jest. Nothing was too bad for David. All my enemies went round about the city like dogs, that bay all night and rest not even at morning."

And what did you do, David? "Oh," said he, "I said, 'My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.'" And did you prove that God was your deliverer? "Ah, yes—yes," says he, "I have pursued my enemies and I have overtaken them.' 'You have smitten all my enemies upon the cheek-bone. You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.'" And so shall you find it, my Hearers, God has not forsaken you, even though you are slandered. Remember it is the lot of God's greatest servants to bear the worst character among worldlings. Whose character is safe in these days? What man among us may not be accused of any indecency? Who among us can hope to stand immaculate when liars are so rife and charges are so abundant? Be content and bear the slander.

Remember, the higher the tower the longer will be the shadow. And often, the higher a man's character the fouler will be the slander that comes out against him. But remember, "no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. And every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord."

If you need any other witnesses I could bring them. Let Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego come forth. You Hebrew children, you stood in the midst of coals when the furnace was white with heat—did God forsake you? "No," they say, "our hair was not singed, nor had the smell of fire passed on our garments." Speak, O Daniel! You did stand a night in the midst of the furious lions, who had been starved for days that they might devour you in their hunger. What do you say? "My God," says he, "has sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths. My God, whom I serve, has not forsaken me."

But time would fail me if I should tell you of those who have “shut the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, obtained promises, wrought victories, put to flight the armies of aliens.” Yet we might enlarge for a moment upon the history of great martyrs. Has God left one of them? They have suffered at the stake. Their limbs have been stretched on the rack. Every nerve has been strained, every bone has been dislocated. They have had their eyes plucked out. They have had their flesh rent away piecemeal to the bone with hot pincers. They have been dragged at the heels of horses, burnt on gridirons, hung up before slow fires. They have seen their infants cut in pieces before their eyes, their wives and daughters ravished, their houses burned, their country laid desolate. But has God forsaken them? Has the world triumphed? Has God left His children?

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Another question is suggested, however, for your comfort, Christian. I have brought many witnesses to prove that Christ does not forsake His children. Let me ask you to step into the witness box. You say that God has forsaken *you*—I will put a question or two to you. When your wife lay sick and there were three little ones in the house and she approached death and you cried in agony to God and said, “God, You have forsaken me. My business fails me and now my wife is to be taken from me! What shall I do with these little ones?”

Answer this question—did God forsake you then? “No,” you say, “my wife still lives, she was restored to me.” But when one of your children lay dying and the others were seized with fever, you then said, “My wife again is sick. What shall I do with this house of sickness? Now, God has forsaken me. I shall never bear this trial.” Did you bear it? “Oh, yes,” you say, “I passed through it and I can say, ‘Blessed be the name of God, the affliction was sanctified to me.’ ” Do you remember the heavy loss you sustained in business? Not one but many—loss came after loss—every speculation in which you had been engaged broke down under you. You had many bills coming in and you said, “Now, I shall not be able to meet them.” And as a Christian man you shuddered to think of bankruptcy. You even went up with your wife into your chamber—and you two went on your knees and poured out your case before God and asked Him to help you.

Did God leave you? “No,” you say, “as by a miracle I was delivered. I cannot tell how it was, but I came out of it clean.” And yet again, another question to another one of you. Do you remember when you were in sin, before you had received pardon, your guilt was heavy upon you and you sought God and cried to Him. Did God deny you? “No,” you say, “blessed

be His name, I can remember the happy day when He said, ‘your sins which are many are all forgiven.’” Well, you have often sinned since then. But let me ask you, when you have made confession of sin, have you not been restored? Has He not lifted up upon you once more the light of His countenance? “Well,” you say, “I must say He has.”

Then I ask you in the name of everything that is true and holy—no, in the name of everything that is reasonable—how dare you say that God has forsaken you now? Retract the word! Slay the thought! It cannot, must not be—

***“Each sweet Ebenezer you have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure
To help you quite through.”***

He would not have done this much for you if He meant to leave you. Thus, it cannot be, that He who has been with you in six troubles will leave you in the seventh. He has not brought you through so many fires to let you be burned at last. No, take heart—

***“His grace shall to the end
Stronger and brighter shine,
Not present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark Divine”***

within your heart—much less quench the fire even which still burns in His infinite breast. God has not forsaken you as yet.

Still further to drive the thought away, I will very rapidly run through a few precious things. Were you not cold on your way here this morning. Did you not see the snow upon the ground and do you dare to doubt God? He has said, “While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat shall never cease.” And He keeps His word. And yet you think though He keeps that word He will forget the word that He has spoken concerning you? You come here in trouble this morning. Do you not see that God is true?—that your very trouble is a proof that He has not forsaken you? If you never had any trouble, then God would have broken His promise, for did not Jesus Christ leave you it as a legacy? “In the world you shall have tribulation.”

There, you have got it. That proves that God is true. Now you have a part of the legacy. You shall have the rest—“In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” So that the very weather without and your troubles within ought to forbid your doubting the faithfulness of your God. But look here. Has not God made you a promise, saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you?” Would you like to be called a promise-breaker? Shall I point my finger at you and say, “There’s a man whose word is not to be relied on”? Will you point that same finger at God and say, “His word is not to be taken, He is not to be trusted”? What? Do you think your God is dishonorable? That He will give a promise and break it?—not keep it? Forget it? Fail to remember it? What? God, the God of Glory, prove dishonorable?

It must not, cannot be. Recollect again—He has given you His oath. Can you think that He will break that? Because He could swear by no greater He swore by Himself. Shall God be perjured? You would not think that of your meanest fellow creature—will you think that of your greatest and best Friend? Again, would you leave your child? Would you forsake it utterly? You might hide your face from it for awhile to do it good, because it had been disobedient—but will you chasten your child always? Never kiss it, never caress it, never call it your loved one? It is not in a father's heart to be always angry with his child. And will God forsake you? Will He cast you out into this wide, desolate world and let you die and become the prey of His great enemy?

Oh, think not so harshly of your Father. If any man should come to me and tell me that my father had said such-and-such things about me that were unkind and disrespectful, I would show him the door and say, "Get you gone! My father would never do that—he loves me too much to do that." And when the devil comes and says, "Your Father has forgotten you," tell him to be gone—you know too much of your Father ever to believe that. Say to him, "Get you gone! It cannot be! Get you gone, Satan! Tell it to your own companions, but tell it not to the heir of Heaven."

Then again, Christian, you believe that God has loved you from before the foundation of the world. And yet after having loved you so long He has left off loving you now? Strange thing! Love without a beginning, yet such love to have an end! Singular thing! Eternal at one end and temporal at the other. Strange supposition! Put it away from you. Besides, can Christ forget you! Are you not a member of His body, of His flesh and His bones? Has the Head forgotten a finger? Has He, who did hang upon the tree and who wrote your name in wounds upon His hand and on His side—has He forgotten? What? Jesus your own Brother, your Husband, your Head, your All, what? He forget? He forsake? Down with the blaspheming thought! Back to the Hell from which you did spring! Down! Down! Down! My soul lifts up her head triumphantly and cries, "You, Lord have not forsaken them that seek You," nor will He do so, world without end.

III. I now come to the third and last point and on this I shall dwell very briefly—**MAN'S PRECIOUS PRIVILEGE TO SEEK GOD IN HIS DAY OF TROUBLE.**

To what use, to what purpose is the buckler if we wear it not? Of what service the shield if it is permitted to rust in the house? We must take hold upon the promise of a faithful God. We must seize the comfort which He offers. But how is it to be done? Why, in prayer. Seek the Lord you tried and troubled ones and you shall soon find your troubles stayed, your trials sweetly alleviated. We go rambling round and round and round to find peace. Would that we could stay at home in our closets with our God. We should find peace much better there. We go to our neighbors, we call our friends, we tell them our woes and ask their sympathy—

***“Were half the breath that’s vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me.”***

Go, Christian Brothers and Sisters in your troubles and seek God. It is not possible that you can perish praying. If you could perish singing, you could not perish praying on your knees. Do you think that while you can plead a Father’s love and cry with the Spirit of adoption to Him, that you can be forsaken? If you forsake the Throne, then may you indeed have a fear that you are forsaken. But when the Spirit draws you to the Mercy Seat, such a fear must vanish. For if you are at the Mercy Seat, God is there, too. God loves the Mercy Seat better than you do. He dwells between the cherubim. You only go there sometimes. But that is His abiding place, His Mercy Seat, where He always sits. Go then, I tell you, and you can not be destroyed—your ruin is impossible, while you cry—

“Let us pray!”

And have I here this morning some that are oppressed with guilt? Dear Hearer, however great your sins may have been, if you seek God, you can not perish, for, “You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek You.” Methinks, I hear someone say, “Oh, that just suits me. I fear I have no faith. I am afraid I don’t repent as I ought. But I know I seek Christ. I am sure I am seeking Him.” Ah, so then this promise is *yours*. Take it home with you. Suck it—get at its juice. Here, indeed, is a cluster full of new wine for you. Take it home with you— “You, LORD, have not forsaken them that seek you.” Seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall surely be opened to you.

May God now grant His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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TENDER WORDS OF TERRIBLE APPREHENSION!

NO. 344

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all
the nations that forget God.”
Psalm 9:17.*

MANY of God’s ministers have been accused of taking pleasure in preaching upon this terrible subject of “the wrath to come.” We were, indeed, strange beings if so doleful a subject could afford us any comfort. I should count myself to be infinitely less than a man if it did not cause me more pain in delivering myself of the impending sentence of condemnation, than it can possibly cause my Hearers in the listening to it. God’s ministers, I can assure you, if they feel it to be often their solemn duty, feel it always to be a heavy burden to speak of the terrors of the Law.

To preach Christ is our delight. To uplift His Cross is the joy of our heart. Our Master is our witness—we love to blow the silver trumpet and we have blown it with all our might. But knowing the terror of the Lord, these solemn things lie upon our conscience. And while it is hard to preach of them, it were harder still to bear the doom which must rest upon the silent minister. The unfaithful watchman, who does not warn the sinner, must, therefore, eternally bear the sinner’s blood upon his head, because he warned him not.

Think not, this morning, that I am about to speak upon the terrors of the world to come. I shall not do so. I shall but open the subject by making one or two remarks which may, in some measure, shield us from the enmity of those who accuse us of harshness of spirit when we lay bare these predicted woes. You must confess, my dear Hearers, that Jesus Christ was the most tender-hearted of men. Never was there one of so sympathetic a disposition. But not all the Prophets put together—though some of them as stern as Elijah, though many of them seemed commissioned expressly to dwell upon terrible things in righteousness—not all of them put together can equal in thunderclaps the sound of that still voice of Him, who albeit He did not cry nor lift up His voice in the

street, spoke more of Hell and the wrath to come than any that preceded Him.

The loving lips of Jesus have furnished us with the greatest revelations of God's vengeance against iniquity. None ever spoke with such terrible emphasis. No preacher ever used figures of such glaring horror, as did Jesus Christ the Son of Man, the friend of Publicans and sinners. Let me remind you that the wrath of God and the judgment of the Day of the Lord cannot be a trifling matter. How emphatically are we told in Scripture, that, it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Upon such a subject we cannot afford to trifle. Besides, the mystery of Calvary indicates to us that sin must deserve at God's hand a terrible penalty.

Did Jesus suffer so bitterly to save men and will not the unsaved endure bitterness indeed? Must the eternal and holy Son of God, upon whom sin was only an imputed thing—must He bleed and die and offer up His life, with His soul exceedingly heavy even unto death—and is the world to become a thing about which men can afford to sport or idly dream? Foreshadows have fallen on our path, from which we dismally recoil. You know that sin, even in this world, is a tormentor of unequalled cruelty. How miserable are some men when they are chased by conscience, when the furies of sin have been let loose upon them even in this world!

Some of you may know, if you are not given up to hardness of heart, what it is to be conscious of guilt and to be hunted about in every place, whether you sleep or whether you wake, with a consciousness of your transgression. Many a man has hurried himself to a premature grave, has sought to end his misery by the knife or by the halter, not because he was enduring Hell but only of the present penalty of sin. What, then, must be "the wrath to come"?

Again, I say, it cannot be a theme at which any but fools would presume to jest, nor can it be such that we can, any of us, afford to disregard its trumpet-tongued warning. That dread sentence in our text ought to ring like a death knell in your ears, if you are among the wicked. "The wicked shall be cast into Hell"—the drunkard, the swearer, the fornicator and such like shall receive their well-deserved portion in the bottomless pit. God will not treat them with leniency. He will not wink at their follies. He will not pass over their sins, as though they were but mistakes, or little errors. He will mete out punishment for such serious offenses.

But observe the companions of the wicked, those who are to be the sharers with these profane ones in their eternal punishment. They are such as forget God. If I mistake not, I am addressing a very large number of those who forget God. It may be I have a few here of the outwardly

wicked. Let them hear the text in all its fullness. But, doubtless, I have many hundreds who come under the second description—they forget God. Oh, let them feel the full force of such a text as this. They must be companions hereafter with those whom they would not associate with now. They must have the destiny of men, whom perhaps they now look down upon with contempt—they must be cast into Hell with the wicked, with those who are infidels in the sight of God and demoralized among men.

Now, this morning, I shall first endeavor, as God's servant, to charge this sin upon the conscience of men. Secondly, to unmask the real reasons for this forgetfulness of God. Thirdly, to refute such excuses any heart may make. And then, come lovingly and earnestly to persuade you to repentance of this sin.

I. First, let me CHARGE THIS SIN UPON YOU.

I wish not now to preach to you in the mass, but to each man as an individual. You can each judge in your own conscience how far what I say is applicable to you. If the fear of God and the love of Jesus are in your hearts, these accusations belong not to you. Occupy yourself with earnestly praying that the Word may go where the reproof is needed—that the arrow may reach its mark. You who have faith in Christ, lift up your souls and pray, "O Lord, send home Your arrow in the heart that is forgetful of You."

Sinner! I charge you with forgetting God—for sure I am you forget His infinite majesty. Do you know what it is to be overawed with a sense of the glory of God? Have you ever thought of Him, before whom the angels veil their faces with their wings and solemnly cry, "Holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"? Why, you know very well that the glory of God is to you as much a mere matter of speculation, as the glory of some great eastern prince. As you are never affected with the splendor of the Persian Court, so are you just as little subdued and overawed by the splendor of the King of Heaven.

Do you not walk about this world as though God had no Throne, or as if the Throne of the universe were entirely vacant? To Him you give no songs. Before Him you offer no prayers. To Him you have made no confession of your littleness and unto Him you have ascribed no songs of praise for His greatness. You are unconscious of His majesty. The thought never strikes you, it never humbles you, never casts you down. If now and then, when you behold the starry heavens, you are a little subdued by the power which the mighty works of God will certainly have upon your intellect—if sometimes in the midst of thunder and lightning your spirit bows before the awful majesty of God—these are but as fits and starts in the slumber of your habitual forgetfulness. This is not your abiding

condition of soul, it is but a spasm. The spirit of your heart is not adoration of His majesty, but forgetfulness of His glory.

Remember, too, oh Sinner, that you have forgotten God in His mercies. Day after day you have fed at the table of His bounty. He has supplied your means of livelihood. You have lacked nothing. But how seldom have you ever thought of thanking Him? You have ascribed your wealth to your own prudence. Your competence to your own industry. If you have a god at all, that god is your strong self. You thank yourself for the clothes that are upon your back and for the meat which cheers your spirit. And all this while you know not that the breath in your nostrils comes from Him.

You know not without Him there were no marrow in your bones—no power in your nerves. Without Him you would fall back to your mother dust and crumble to the earth which brought you forth. Why, you do not praise Him! You have songs for your lusts, but none for your God. You have praise for your earthly friends and thanks for those who help you here. But He is as much forgotten by you as He is by the beasts that perish. You call not your family about you, you say not unto your little ones, “Come, bless your father’s God.”

You lift not holy hands over your table, thanking God for every mercy that is there. You live as though these things came to you by chance. God is not in all your thoughts. And though He draws your curtain every night and sheds light upon you every day—though it is His earth upon which you tread, His air which you breathe, His water which you must drink—yet He is as much forgotten by you as though He were dead and had ceased to be.

Consider how constantly you forget his Laws. When there is an action proposed to you, how seldom do you pause and say, “Is this right in the sight of God?” You are careful of the laws of men, but the Laws of God are waste paper to you. You would not cheat your neighbor. You would not rob your companion. But how often will men rob God! Men who are scrupulously honest in giving to man his due and in “rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s,” give not, “unto God that which is God’s.”

Man is proud and self-willed. He loves to be his own master and to have his own way and he cries, “Let me break His bands asunder and cast away His cords from me.” He finds that the easiest way to do this is to ignore the fact that God ever made laws—or that He is the world’s moral governor—or that He will reward and punish. So the sinner goes on in his iniquity. God is not in all his thoughts. I charge this home upon many, many of you now present. Look to your own heart and see if the accusation is not just. Surely many of you must plead guilty to it. You forget His majesty, as though He were not “King of kings and Lord of

lords.” You forget His mercies, as though He were not the giver of every good and perfect gift. And you forget His Laws, as though He had not a right to your service—as though His service were not freedom, and obedience to His Laws a delight. The wicked forget God.

And oh how often do you forget His Presence, too! In the midst of a crowd, you are conscious every one of you, of the presence of man, but perhaps this very moment you are ignoring the fact that God is here. In your shop on the morrow how carefully you will take heed that your conduct is circumspect if the eye of your fellow man is observant of you. But before the Presence of God, with the Eternal eye upon you, you can presume to practice the paltry tricks of trade, or to do that which you would not have revealed to mortals for all the world.

You are careful to shut the door and draw the curtain and hide yourselves in secret from men—strangely forgetting that when the curtain is drawn and the door is shut, God is there, still. No walls can shut Him out. No darkness can conceal the deed from His eyes. He is everywhere and sees us in all things. Why, my Hearers, we are all guilty in this respect, in a measure. We forget the actual Presence and the overlooking eyes of God. We talk as we dare not talk if we were thinking that He heard us. We act as we would not act if we were conscious that God was there. We indulge in thoughts which we should cast out if we could but bear in perpetual remembrance the abiding Presence of God, the Judge of the whole earth.

Forgetting God is so common a sin that the Believer, himself, needs to repent of it and ask to have it forgiven, while the unbeliever may solemnly confess this to be his crying sin, a piece of guilt in respect to which he dare not profess innocence—God is not in all, perhaps not in *any* of your thoughts.

And, O sinner! How forgetful you have been of God’s justice! How seldom do you set before your eyes—

***“The pomp of that tremendous day,
When He with clouds shall come.”***

You sin as though sin were a thing of today and would not be thought of tomorrow. You go to your follies and your pleasures as though God had no book of remembrance in which to write down your sins and no tablets of brass on which to engrave, as with an iron pen, all your iniquities.

Why, if sin were but a mistake, if iniquity never could be punished, if Hell had resolved itself into a few dying embers, if the Throne of God were shaken—if the balances were dashed from His hand, if His sword had grown blunt, men could not be more callous, or more careless than they are now! What is it but forgetfulness of God, who has sworn that He will

by no means clear the guilty? What is it but obliviousness of the fact that God avenges and that He will surely give to every transgression its just recompense of reward? What is it but this, that leads men to sin with both hands greedily and to go on in their iniquities as quietly and as peaceably as though they were serving God with all their hearts and hoping to stand before Him accepted in their own righteousness?

If a heathen were to come and walk among us, would he ever suspect us of having a God at all? In the old days of the Spaniards, when the Spaniards had invaded Mexico, a large number of Indians had fled to Cuba for shelter. One of them, the chief of the tribe, gathering together his companions, assured them that the Spaniards' god was gold and having a chest of it, he thought that it would be best for them to propitiate the Spaniards' god that they might be no more subject to the Spaniards' cruelty.

They accordingly offered sacrifice before this box of gold and danced around it till they had wearied themselves, and then fearing the presence of so great a god in their midst, they cast it into the depths of the sea that it might not in future disturb them even if they had made a mistake in their prayers. Sensible heathens those! Very sensible heathens, indeed! For surely, if they should walk through London among many men, they might make the same mistake but it would be a very little mistake—it would be as near the truth as possible. Their wealth, their substance, their worldly business, as it were, painted on their retina—always before their eyes—but the God to whom they build their temples, being behind their backs, utterly and entirely forgotten!

Why, Sirs, if God were taken away—if there were no God—it would be but a very little loss to some of you. You would not be like Micah of old, who, when the sons of Dan stole his seraphim, ran after them crying, "They have taken away my gods." No, surely, you love not the true God, as much as He loved the false one. Were God taken away, you might clap your hands for very joy, for you would say, "He was never a Person whom I esteemed. I never had any reverence for Him. I can do better without a God than I could do with one, I can feel vastly more comfortable in my course of life without God to pry into all my ways, weigh all my actions and declare that He will award to me, at last, a recompense for all my sins."

I charge home, then, upon your consciences this guilt, that you belong to the number of those who forget God. If it is not so with you, thank God and rejoice before Him. But if you do forget God, let this great trumpet sound in your ears like the trump of the day of doom, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God."

II. Now I want to UNMASK THE REASONS OF THIS FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.

Sinner, you who forget God, I tell you that the reason of your forgetfulness of Him is as great a sin as the forgetfulness itself! In the first place, you do not remember Him because the thought of Him makes you afraid. You know that you have offended Him, you are conscious that you can not meet Him with joy and peace and, therefore, you are like Adam, when he hid himself among the trees of the garden and God has need to cry unto you, "Adam, where are you?" If you had not sinned, nothing would give you greater delight than the society of God as the Father from whom you did derive your being. And if your sin were now washed away and your heart renewed by the Spirit, instead of dreading the thought of God, it would be full of delight to you.

You would say, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?" It is your *sin* that makes you dread the Presence of your Judge. He who knows that he is innocent, though he may lay in jail, longs for the day when the sessions shall come round, or when the assizes shall be held. And if he hears the trumpet in the street proclaiming that the judge has come, he is glad, for says he—"Now shall I have deliverance." But the guilty man always dreads the eye of the judge. But is this wise on your part? Remember, while you forget Him He does not forget you.

You may cover your head, but you cannot escape by merely hiding from yourself the thought of your doom. The foolish ostrich when driven by the hunter buries its head in the sand and fancies it is safe, whereas it is all the more certain to meet with death. It is so with you. You shut your eyes upon a doom which is certain. It were greatly wise if you would but open your eyes. It were the most prudent act that you could do—instead of shunning your God—to sit down solemnly and think of Him.

Let His justice impress your heart. Let His mercy encourage you to seek His face. And His love, working in your spirit, shall renew your soul. Forgetfulness of God is profound folly, but remembrance of God is to the soul her highest wisdom. You dread God, oh Sinner! and therefore, it is why you forget Him.

Besides, the thought of God is irksome to you. It affords you no joy. Were I to make you sit down for ten minutes and think of nothing but God, you would impatiently look at the clock till the ten minutes were passed. Even now, though I speak in earnest, you would rather I were speaking upon some other theme. Your heart revolts. You say, "Why should I think of God? It will not make my heart dance within me, nor my eyes sparkle." And why? Because you do not love God. We seek the

company of those whom we love and if you did love God, you would like to hear of Him. Your spirit would long to get nearer and nearer to Him and your desire would be to be like He, and at last to see Him face to face. You love not God. It is a solemn charge to bring against you. But as long as you forget Him, I cannot help accusing you.

Yet another sin underlies the fact that you do not like to have God in your thoughts. Your real reason is because you find that thinking of God and going on in sin, are two things that are incompatible with one another. You say, "I cannot go to the theater and carry God in my heart with me there. I cannot sit down at the ale-house with the profane and have a thought of God's Presence with me there. It is not easy for me to go to any haunt of vice or sin and still carry with me the recollection of the Omniscient eye."

No, Sinner, dishonest in business, you know you could not practice the arts of your trade if you did always keep God before your eyes. You are conscious that the two things will not suit each other. You are quite certain that these are two principles that will no more mix than fire and water, or light and darkness. So you prefer your sins, before God. You love the lusts of the flesh and the delights thereof—the sins of this world and the reward thereof—better than you love Him who made you and who, if you love Him, will take you up to dwell with Himself forever.

Sin once hated, God is loved—but sin loved, God is abhorred. When a man knows that he has been stealing something and has a parcel of goods about him which is not his own, he will take care not to go on the same side of the street with the policeman. And when a man has been doing something wrong, he is quite certain not to go near his God, for he wishes not to be discovered—he desires not to be detected. He is like Adam in his nakedness, he would sew fig leaves together and run from the Presence of God, because he knows that he is naked and cannot stand before his Maker's face.

These are solemn considerations. Let them sink deep into your heart. Steel not your conscience against them. If they are true let them have full weight with you and who knows, while I thus speak but the arrows of conviction may be piercing your heart? And what are they? Are they not gracious weapons by which God slays us first, in order that He may afterwards renew us with the Divine life?

III. Oh, that I could SLAY EVERY EXCUSE WHICH ANY OF YOU MAY BRING FOR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD!

"But," you say, "is not a man excusable for forgetting God if he has not had enough in early youth to impress God upon his memory?" Ah, Sir, then some among you in this respect are inexcusable, indeed. You can remember that one of the first sounds your ears ever heard was the name

of Jesus. One of the first sights your infant eyes ever beheld was your mother, with her lips moving in silent prayer while tears were falling upon your infant brow.

She was praying, then, that you might be dedicated to God. Do you remember that family meeting which was held each morning, when the big Bible was opened and your father read from Holy Scripture the Words of Truth! Have you forgotten the prayers which he then put up for you, when he said, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You! Oh Lord, save the kindred of Your servant. May they all be bound up in the bundle of life with the seal of the Lord my God."

Have you forgotten your mother's personal appeal to you! The Bible in which she wrote your name with that prayer—and you little knew how well she meant that prayer—that prayer in the beginning of the book, that you might know Him whom that Bible had revealed? Have you forgotten that earnest charge your father gave you when you first came to London to be bound apprentice, or to take a situation in some large shop—how he conjured you by the living God not to be led astray?—Not to fall into sin?

And now gray hairs are on your head and *your* children are grown up, too, and perhaps, the grandchild may sit upon your knee and your father's prayers have not dwindled from your memory. Nor have your mother's tears been utterly blotted out. I say, if you remember not God, you cannot plead the excuse of the heathen, even if they are without excuse—for God is to be seen in the visible world—you are without any cloak for your sin, for you have had the name, the Person, the Being of God represented to you by those who could best reach your heart and best enlist your attention.

If some of you—and I may be speaking to such—if some of you have ceased to attend the House of God—if you have given up even the outward observances of religion, at least let this be on your mind—that in the Last Great Day you cannot look your father in the face and say, "Sir, you who did bring me forth, my blood is on your head." Nor can you look on her that bare you and say to her—"Woman, I curse the breast on which I hung, because the heart beneath it yielded no sympathy for my eternal state and never beat with anxious prayers that I might be saved." I strip you of this excuse—what other have you now to make?

Maybe you tell me that to think of God always and not to forget Him is very hard. Be it so, but let me ask you—have you ever made the attempt? Have you ever tried to think of God? No. You know that instead thereof you have often strived to thrust the thought out of doors. And when it has come into your heart you have looked upon it as an intruder and you have either said to it with the politeness of Felix, "Go your way for this time,

when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Or else with the harshness but honesty of Ahab you have said, “Have you found me, O my enemy?”

You know right well that you do not check yourself in the middle of a speech with the thought—“But I am forgetting God.” You do not correct yourself in the very center of an action and turn from it because you are conscious that you are permitting the Word of God to slip from your memory. No, Sir, you have tried to remember a thousand things, but you never tried to remember your God! You make memoranda of your business. Take out from your pocket that little ivory tablet now and see how the engagements for the next week are scored there that they may not be forgotten.

Do you ever make any such memoranda with regard to God? Did you ever say to your soul, “My Soul, be fixed and abide hard and fast near to God this week”? Did you ever charge your spirit, saying, “Keep the Lord always before you and set Him at your right hand”? Whatever you have tried, you have never even made the attempt to think of God. How, then, do you know that it is hard work? And if it is hard, what excuse is it for you when you have not even made the attempt?

But, further, you tell me that you cannot—but even if you could not, you are still guilty, for I put it thus to you—Did you ever weep because you had forgotten God? Though you have found it hard to remember him, the least thing you could have done would be to have been sorry because you could not do it. Did you ever charge your eyes to weep because you have forgotten Him who gives them light? Did you ever bid your heart dissolve with anguish because it would not cleave to Him who made it beat? Oh no, Sirs, you know that sin is sweet to you and forgetfulness of God is a dainty morsel to you and you roll it under your tongue.

Oh, were it bitter to you, then indeed, you would soon be cured of it. If once forgetfulness of God became a burden and a plague, then you would seek grace that you might escape it. But instead it sits so sweetly upon your shoulders—it is not like a chain of iron but rather like a chain of gold. It is not like a yoke, but like a pleasant burden which you are only too glad to carry. I charge this on you, that you do willfully and wickedly forget the Lord your God. For if it were not willful and wicked you would repent and be sorry that you had forgotten Him.

Oh Sirs! Vain are your excuses—while in forgetting God you have, indeed, to strain yourselves and divert your attention to do it. If you would but let the world speak to you it would make you remember Him. There is not a star in the sky which would not look out of Heaven and whisper to you—“Man, remember Him who lives above the skies.” There is not a blade of grass in the meadows which would not speak to you and say,

“Consider, consider the God who has made you as the grass and before whom you must soon wither away.” Oh, if you would only hear, the very mountains and the hills would break out before you—preaching to you of their God—and the very trees of the field clapping their hands in adoration.

Besides, go to your own house—look into the eyes of your child, sit down at your table—eat your bread and that which God has added thereunto. Go to your bed and dream—wake up and find yourself alive and see if all these things do not tell you of God. Why, God’s name is printed on every part of your habitation, God’s name is written on the very streets along which you walk. Does He not fill Heaven and earth and is He not everywhere? Surely if you forget Him you are without excuse.

What warnings some of you have had! You have been at sea and the timbers of the ship have creaked and she seemed to be as an egg-shell in a giant’s hand. And then you thought you would never forget God again. When the thunderclap made you deaf for a moment with horror and the lightning flash seemed to blind you with dismay, you thought, then, that you could never forget God. Remember too, that little room and the fever, think of the street you live on and the cholera as it stopped at door after door and it passed you by.

Think, I pray you, of the many times you have been exposed to instant or sudden death and say—has not God spoken to me, not only once but twice? Has consumption begun its deadly work with you, fair maid? It is God’s solemn voice to you—“Prepare to meet your God.” Has some disease taken a deep root in your frame, O strong man? Has the physician warned you that it may carry you off and that, right suddenly? Has he said your heart is so diseased that you may fall dead in the streets? God has spoken to you. Shall the Eternal find you turn a deaf ear?

Oh, no, I bid you now, however much you have forgotten Him—forget now all the world besides and think of Him. Better to have no memory and no thought for the most important things of time, than to give all your attention to this present world of shadows and to forget the world of substances and the God who gives solemnity to them. God bless these my words and pluck your excuses away from you and rend them in pieces before your eyes.

IV. May God now give you a heart to listen while I seek to PERSUADE YOU TO REPENTANCE. This is my closing task.

You who have forgotten God! You are standing self-condemned and convicted this morning! I have two arguments to ply you with—two great Truths of God which I would force home upon your conscience. But, alas,

it is not I who can do it. Only God the Holy Spirit can bless the Word. Well, forgetter of God, I would first plead with you by the tenor of the Law—"Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Law, we persuade men." You will soon be forced to remember God. You shall lie upon your dying bed and the thought of a God so long neglected, whose Gospel has been rejected, whose Son has been defied, shall then be as gall unto you. The remembrance which might be sweet to you now, shall be as gravel in your mouth, then, to break your teeth in sunder.

You shall lie upon your bed and toss from side to side with a pain which medicine cannot cure. You shall know anguish to which even sleep itself can give no respite. Many such have I seen, and fearful has been the sight—men whom nothing could pacify, whose pain drugs could not allay, whose peace utterly departed. Their bodies and souls seemed as if they were rent in pieces of lions—as if they were set on fire of Hell before their time.

Nor will you be able to forget Him at the Day of Judgment, when your soul shall come up from the place of its separate existence, when your body shall spring up from the grave and the two shall be re-united. You will see the Lord, whom you have despised, sitting upon His Throne of Glory and what would you give if you could shut your eyes then, or if you had never shut your eyes upon Him before? Then will you say, "Would to God I had now a time of respite. Would that mercy could again be proclaimed to me. That there was still found some minister of Christ, some open Bible, some sanctuary, some space for repentance, some pleading terms, some praying ground on which I might yet stand hopefully before my God!"

But, no! All through the time of the preparation of that judgment, the trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long, shall ring destruction in your ears. The black darkness shall blot out hope from you and the ever-flashing lightning shall slay your pride and your pretensions. And when the sentence is pronounced—when Christ has discharged the awful volleys of His wrath against you—you will not be able to forget Him then. In Hell the thought of God shall be as a dagger in your soul—a viper nestling in your bosom, poisoning the fountains of your life and sending hot venom through all your veins.

"Son, remember!" That was the cry of Abraham from Heaven and doubtless an awful cry to Dives in Hell—"Son, remember!" It is the voice of mercy today. "Son, remember!"—it shall be the voice of judgment tomorrow. Son, remember! Son, remember! Son, remember the invitations neglected. Son, remember the warnings despised. Son, remember that solemn Sabbath, when the minister preached, "As though he never might preach again, a dying man to dying men."

“Son, remember,” the open Word of God—remember your mother’s prayers—your father’s exhortations. Son, remember yours oaths, your blasphemies, your sins, your follies, your laughing at the Word, your despising of Christ. It will tear your hearts asunder only to look back, with that sounding ever in your ears—“Son remember, Son remember.” I bid you then, by the terrors of the Law, to repent of this great sin of having forgotten God. Oh, Spirit of God, grant repentance now! Will you make your bed in Hell, will you abide with everlasting burnings? I pray you be not foolhardy—there are other ways of being a fool besides damning your soul.

Come, dress in motley attire, paint your face and play the clown if you must be a fool, but damn not your soul to prove yourself full of folly. Dash your head against a wall—spend your money for that which is not bread. Hurl your purse into the sea, but don’t destroy yourself. Is there no happiness in this world except the happiness of entailing eternal torment? Oh, could I plead with you as my heart longs to do. Could I speak to you as my Master would speak if He were here this morning, surely I might reach your hearts! Ah, but unless the sacred Spirit is here, vain are the most earnest entreaties, vain the sternest attacks against the barricades and bulwarks of a hard and iron heart. Oh, Lord, turn the sinner and by the terrors of the Law drive him to Yourself!

But now to use perhaps a more forcible argument. God send it home. By the mercies of God, Sinner, I bid you to forget Him no more. He is not a hard Taskmaster, or an austere God. His own words are, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” He is stern—justly so. He is severe—He must be so. To be judge of all the earth He must do right. But this is the day of Divine Grace, this is the time of mercy. You are not shut up in Hell. The gates of the grave have not yet enclosed you. The iron door is not fast bolted yet. There is hope—hope even for the negligent—hope for the despiser of Christ.

And let me tell you—that hope lies not in anything that is in you, but in Christ Jesus. “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Whoever seeks finds and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” If you shall come to yourself this morning, as the prodigal did in the midst of the swine, and if you shall say—“I will arise and go to my Father and will say unto Him, ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You and am no more worthy to be called Your son’ ”—then, Sinner, God will rejoice to see you come to Him. He will have eyes of mercy for you to see you afar off. He will have feet of mercy to run and meet you. He will have arms of mercy to receive you.

He will have kisses of mercy to cheer you, He will have depths of mercy to wash you. He will have garments of mercy in which to clothe you—jewels of mercy with which to adorn you. And feasts of mercy and music of mercy to make you glad. If I, today, had made my father angry with me. If I had left his house voluntarily and spent his substance, I might be afraid to come back to my father's house. "Lo," I might say, "he will never forgive me, I fear he is a stern man." But if a messenger should come from him and say to me, "Young man, your father's heart yearns to press you to his bosom, he does not wish you to be a stranger to him any longer. He bade me tell you to come to him just as you were—rags and ulcers, sores and filth—just as you are"

Why, I think I can say that the sight of my father's messenger, especially if it were my own brother, with tears in his eyes saying to me, "Brother, come back, come back, our father loves us still. I was like you once and father received me—come and he will do the same for you." I think I would put my unreluctant hand into his and say, "My Brother, I will go with you to my father's house and I will fall upon my knees and confess my folly and my fault and perhaps he will admit my plea. Perhaps he will hear my prayer."

In the name of God our Father I plead with you. As vile as any of you have been, I have been—but I know I am forgiven. I bear Him witness He has blotted out my sins. He will do the like with you. Is there no Brother here who will say, "I'll go with you to Jesus—at His Cross I'll bow and at my Father's face offer my prayer"?

Two little parables by way of further encouragement and I have done. There may be one here who says, "Sir, I don't know how to pray. I don't know how to find my way to Christ, for I have learned the language of sin so well that I cannot speak the language of grace." Oh, Sinner, if you only know what it is you want and have a desire to find it, you shall find it. I compare you to a woman whom I met last Friday. We were walking up the lane near where I live and there was a poor woman who accosted us.

She spoke in French. This poor soul had some children at Guildford—she was wanting to find her way to them, but did not know a single word of English. She had knocked at the doors of all the gentlemen's houses down the lane, and of course the servants could do nothing for her, for they could not understand a word she said. So she went from one place to another and at last she did not know what would become of her.

She had some thirty miles to walk—she did not mind that—but then, she did not know which way to go. So I suppose she had made up her mind she would ask everybody. All she knew, she had written on a piece of paper—the word "Guildford." And she held it up and began to ask in French on the road. She had met with someone who could tell her the

path and beautifully did she express her distress. She said she felt like a poor little bird who was hunted about and did not know how to find her way to the nest. She poured a thousand blessings on us when we told her the way.

And I thought—how much this is like the sinner when he wants to find the way to Heaven. All he knows is, he wants Christ. That is all he knows—but where to get to Him and how to find Him—he does not know. And he knocks at one door and then at another door. And perhaps the minister at the place of worship does not understand the language of human sympathy. He cannot understand the sinner's need, for there are many servants in my Master's house, I am sorry to say, who do not understand the language of a sinner's cry.

Oh, Sinner, you shall surely find Christ, though you know not how to find Him. He will say to you, "Whom do you seek?" and you will say, "I seek Jesus," and He will say—"I that speak unto you am He." I am much mistaken this morning, if He who speaks in your heart is not the very Jesus whom you seek. His speaking in your heart is a token of His love. Trust Him, believe in Him and you shall be saved.

There is a story told concerning Thomas a'Becket—a story connected with his parentage. His father was a Saxon gentleman, who went into the crusades and was taken prisoner by the Saracens. While a prisoner among the Saracens, a Turkish lady loved him and when he was set free and returned to England, she took an opportunity of escaping from her father's house—took ship and came to England. But she knew not where to find him she loved. All she knew about him was, that his name was Gilbert. She determined to go through all the streets of England, crying out the name of Gilbert, till she had found him.

She came to London, first, and passing every street, persons were surprised to see an Eastern maiden, attired in her Eastern costume, crying, "Gilbert, Gilbert, Gilbert!" And so she passed from town to town, till one day as she pronounced the name, the ear for which it was intended caught the sound and they became happy and blessed.

And so, Sinner, today you know little perhaps of religion, but you know the name of Jesus. Take up the cry and go today, and as you go along the streets, say in your heart, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" When you are in your chamber say it still, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" Continue your cry and it shall reach the ear for which it is meant. If your relations laugh, say, "Ah, I did not call for you." If your friends say that you are mad, reply, "Ah, it may seem so. The riddle is always foolish till you know the meaning of it."

But if you should cry, "Jesus," till Jesus shall answer you, oh happy shall it be! There shall be a marriage between Him and your soul and you,

with Him, shall sit down at the marriage supper in the glory of the Father and dwell with Him forever and ever. God add His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEEDY

NO. 2878

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation
of the poor shall not perish forever.”
Psalm 9:18.*

These words will fall upon different ears with quite different effects. If any of you are, in the Scriptural sense, “poor and needy,” God the Holy Spirit will enable you to see much in these gracious sentences, but if you fancy that you are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” you will care nothing whatever for such words as these. You know right well that the value of a text to any soul depends upon the condition of that soul. I know not how many stars may be visible at the present moment. I do not think that I even looked up at them before I came here and, perhaps, you have not. But to the mariner, who needs to know his position when far out upon the sea, even one lone star gleaming amid the clouds may be very precious. So, if you are among the poor and needy ones, the Light of God in this text will be most joyful to your heart! But if you are not among them, perhaps you will scarcely condescend to look up to see its light. When Richard I was shut up within the gloomy walls of a foreign prison, you remember that he heard a song sung by his faithful friend who was traversing all Europe, as a troubadour, to try to find him. There were many ears that heard that strain and, possibly, some of the listeners had noticed the sweetness of the music—yet there was nothing very special in it to them. But the imprisoned king, when he heard that song, could sing the refrain to it and, therefore, it had a peculiar value to him, for it re-opened his communion with the world outside and ultimately led to his release! So, it may be that my text has a refrain that you do not know, and if it is so, you will not care for it. But if your heart is very poor—if you are consciously very needy—if you are reduced to spiritual destitution, then these simple words, “The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever,” will awake echoes in your soul which will be the means of bringing you great joy!

Here let me remark what a blessed thing it is to be poor in spirit and down among the lowly in heart. The best things come to those who are in such a condition! Up there, on the mountaintops, you are in a conspicuous but very cold position. If there are any storms about, they will be

sure to gather around the mountain's brow, but if there are brooks, they will be sure to flow down there in the quiet seclusion of the valley where the nourishing grass grows for the feeding of the sheep. He who dwells in the Valley of Humiliation lives in a place where he may delight himself with safety because he is certain, while he abides there, to give all the glory for his delight to his God. It is not a land that every man chooses—it lies too low for some men's tastes. There are those who love the high places of the earth where they can exalt themselves. But he who is wise will choose to be numbered among the hungry whom the Lord fills with good things and not among the rich whom He sends away empty. He will delight to be reckoned among those that are of low degree, whom God exalts, even the humble and the meek—and he will not wish to be gathered with the proud, against whom the Lord has registered His solemn declaration that He will stain the pride of their glory.

If you look at our text as it stands, it bears, first of all, the literal and natural meaning that God will take care of the poor and needy. As a general rule, they are forgotten. In the regulations of many kingdoms, no provision whatever has been made for the poor. Christianity has done much to cause modern governments to make some recognition of the rights of the poor and needy—and also to provide, to some extent, for them—yet this provision is often handed out to them with great coldness and sternness. Our poor laws are not, even with the best intentions, always administered justly. And there are lands where everything seems to be done to increase the riches of the rich and to make the poor still poorer. Well, it will not always be so! There are better days coming for you that are despised, poor and needy. You need not fight, strive and be envious and make discord—there is One in Heaven who is your Helper—and He is coming down to earth again! And when He comes, “He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy and shall break in pieces the oppressor.” The reign of Jesus Christ, though it may seem to be long in beginning, will assuredly come at the appointed time! And when it comes, then all tyranny and oppression and wrongdoing shall be speedily ended. “In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.” In His days shall no man be robbed of his rights—no man be down-trodden—no man be oppressed. Behold, the Lord has laid help upon One who is mighty! He has exalted One chosen out of the people! His coming is the world's hope! His appearing will be the signal for the world's deliverance from all that is opposed to Him and to His Gospel!

But I am going to take our text in a spiritual sense and refer it to those who are “poor and needy” in the Scriptural meaning of those words. This is a description that is very frequently applied to the people of God. They have been taught, by the Spirit of God, to realize their poverty. They know it and they confess it. They also feel that they have many needs—indeed, they seem to themselves to now have more needs than they ever had before! And were it not for the Infinite fullness which is treasured up in Christ, the very thought of their needs would crush them and drive

them to despair! “Poor and needy” is a fair and full description of all those who have been taught of the Lord to see themselves as they really are in His sight.

I want to give some good cheer to the poor and the needy, and my text seems to me to refer to three pairs of things which concern them. First, it speaks of *two bitter experiences which will come to an end*. Then, *two sad fears which are removed by the text*. And, thirdly, *two precious promises which are given to us in the text*.

I. First, there are TWO BITTER EXPERIENCES which many of God’s people—no, *all* God’s people have more or less had, especially if they happen to be poor and needy in temporal things as well as in spiritual.

The first bitter experience is that *they have been forgotten*. The text says, “The needy shall not always be forgotten,” plainly implying that they *have* been forgotten—forgotten by those who used to know them, forgotten by those who fed at their table and who landed and flattered them in the days of their high estate. They do not know you now. You are the same, but your coat is different, your house is different, your purse is different and, therefore, though they loved you—oh, so fervently!—their love is now gone because the various adjuncts, which, after all, were the real ground of their love, have departed.

The leaves are withering, so the swallows, which gathered in the summer, are all gone before the winter comes. Many friends are of that sort—their friendship withers like the leaves of autumn and, like the swallows, they are gone to find other summers somewhere else! If you become prosperous, again, and get another summer, they will come back and seek to ingratiate themselves with you again. Like dogs, they will follow you as long as you have a bone to give them, but, unlike many dogs, they will not stay with you even when you have nothing to bestow upon them. If you are a poor man, who was once better off, you have passed through this bitter experience, I have no doubt, and have been forgotten because your circumstances have changed.

Possibly, you have been forgotten ever since you have been a Christian. While you were self-righteous, like other men, they knew and respected you. You helped to keep each other’s self-righteousness up, just as tradesmen, with their accommodation bills, help to keep each other financially afloat. But you suddenly became poor in spirit—you began to see that you needed a better righteousness than your own. They called you melancholy and no wonder that they did, for you were, indeed, melancholy! You were very uncongenial company for them. You used to heave a deep sigh when they would rather have heard a noisy laugh and now that you have gone right over, as they say, to the Puritan Party, and left their merry-making, they have forgotten you—they do not know you—they look down upon you and despise you! They say, sometimes, “You are a canting hypocrite,” and they have other equally pretty names that they apply to you. If they remember you, it is that they may scoff at you—but they say they have forgotten you and it is a great mercy if they have! And it will be another great mercy if you also forget them.

There is a message in the 45th Psalm which may be addressed to you—“Forget also your own people, and your father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and worship you Him.” You are to go outside the camp, bearing Christ’s reproach, and to be forgotten by your former friends and acquaintances because of your religion. It will be a painful ordeal to you, but you may go through it without any very serious loss.

Possibly, too, dear Friends, you have often thought that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of God’s people since you have come among them. You are so needy, perhaps in pocket, but certainly in spirit, that when arrangements have been made for the help and relief of others, you fancy that you have been overlooked. Do not be quite certain that it is so, for I have known some poor people who have been a little too sensitive on these points and have suspected unkindness when everything has been really planned for the best. Do not be ready to misjudge your fellow Christians if they are better off than you are. As it would be a sin, on their part, to be proud, it would be equally a sin, on your part, to be envious. It would be wrong for them to be unkind to you, but it would be just as wrong for you to be unkind to them by thinking that they are unkind when they are not. Still, I should not wonder if it does sometimes happen that you fancy yourself forgotten even in the arrangements that are made in connection with the House of God.

So, too, you may have had the experience of seeming to be forgotten in various regulations which are passed by your fellow Christians. For instance, someone has been declaring the proportion that every Christian should give to the cause of God out of his substance. It has been laid down by some, as a hard and fast rule, that nobody should give less than a tenth—a good rule, mark you, and a rule applicable to nearly everybody, but, sometimes there is a needy saint who says, “I could not spare a tenth from my poor pittance. I can scarcely spare a penny from the little that I have, so this rule presses hard upon me.” Well, then, give what you feel to be right, and do not trouble yourself about the matter. When we speak to various classes, we cannot always mention the exceptions—you know that there are exceptions to all rules and we do not wish any rule to press hard upon anyone. The poor widow gave her two mites and so may you, but do not fret and worry, though I have no doubt it sometimes pains you when, in such utterances, you seem to be forgotten.

It is also very painful to a Christian who is poor and needy in spirit, when, in the preaching of the Gospel, there seems to be nothing for the poor lame sheep, for the halting, for those that are weak-kneed, for those who are ready to perish. I have heard sermons which have related to very glorious experiences in which I have taken some delight. But I have felt, all the while, “I wonder what the poor weaklings of the flock think of this, when they hear about this experience and are told that they can have it if they like, and that they *must* have it, or else they have no real saving faith at all?” At such a time, my mind always goes to those who can only touch the hem of the Savior’s garment, or say to Him, “Lord, I believe;

help my unbelief.” My witness is that some of the best children in the whole family of God never have the enjoyment of full assurance, but they are so careful, so watchful, so sensitive that their very sadness of heart drives them close to Christ. They seem to be so conscious of their own weakness and so afraid of sinning against God, that though in them there is not the perfect love that casts out fear—I wish it were—yet I would be the last to condemn them.

There is One who will not condemn them—even He who carries the lambs in His bosom and who is tender and full of pity to all the weak ones in His flock. We must mind, when we are preaching experience, that we do not so put the experience of the strong as to make it the standard for the weak. That is almost as wrong as to make the experience of the weak to be the standard of the strong, as some have done. The fact is, there is no experience that is a real standard of the Christian life except the experience of a change of heart and of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, dear Heart! I know what you mean when, after listening to a sermon, you have said, “Alas, I am forgotten! There seems nothing there for me. There are no crumbs for those who have lost their teeth and have only sore gums! There is no bread and milk for the children. It is all rounds of beef—strong meat for grown-up men, but, woe is me, there is nothing that I can eat.” I should not wonder if that is what you have felt, but, if so, do not feel it any longer, “for the needy shall not always be forgotten.”

And, perhaps, up till now, you have even experienced a forgetfulness on the part of Providence as you have understood the term. Others of your family have risen in the world, but you have not. Your friends have set up in business and have done well, but you have not. You have sought to obtain a competence, but you have not secured it yet. You wished, at any rate, to get out of financial trouble, but you are still in it and you are apt to fear that when the Lord distributes His favors, He forgets you—at least, as far as His Providential mercies are concerned. Well, now, let this fear be gone, I pray you! Let this bitter experience come to an end! Believe that you are not forgotten, after all, by Him who is in Heaven and who beholds all His people—and if you have experienced, in some measure, a sort of forgetfulness, real on the part of man, but never real on the part of God—believe that it will not last forever.

The second painful experience is that *you have been disappointed*, as well as fancied that you have been forgotten. Our text says, “The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever,” which implies that it has sometimes perished.

Now, dear Friend, I know that if you are a Christian, you have had some of your expectations that have perished and a good many of them, too. Why, you expected, at one time, to find your own way to Heaven—you expected that your own righteousness would make you acceptable to God and that you could do everything that was necessary to gain His favor! That foolish expectation has perished forever, has it not? Your self-righteousness is such a mass of filthy rags that you never mean to try to

patch those old rags together and make them into a garment to wear in the sight of God.

Then, you thought that you might expect, when you believed in Jesus Christ, that you would have perfect peace directly. Yet, possibly, you did not have it. Believer as you were, you had to live by faith without much experience of inward joy. And you also expected that you would never be troubled any more with any sort of bitter experiences, certainly not with any sins. You had lost your burden at the foot of the Cross and you meant to go singing all the way to Heaven! In fact, you imagined that you were to ride there in a carriage—in a most luxurious and delightful style, having two heavens—one here—and another hereafter! That expectation has not been realized, has it? You have found that the way to Heaven is a rough road, that there are many hardships in the pilgrim's pathway and that there are giants to be fought and slain. Alas, also, there are sins within that have to be contended with from day to day.

Perhaps you had even entertained some very high expectations that you were going to be one of the brightest stars that ever shone among the spiritual constellations of God! Oh, what wonders you were going to do! You were going to be the leader among the people of God. There would be no diminution of zeal in you—no lack of life in you, no declension from Grace in you—no neglected prayer in you. You would be the very paragon of virtue! You would push the world before you and drag the Church behind you. I do not know how high your expectations soared, but I would not wonder if some of them have perished before now and you have come down to be, even in your own estimation, a very ordinary sort of person! In fact, you have continued to grow smaller and smaller ever since you have known Christ, till now you have come down to be nothing—and you are on the way to being less than nothing! And you will be wonderfully near the mark when you get down to that point.

How many human expectations turn out to be mere wind? As I studied my text, turning it over and over again, it occurred to me that the needy, the poor, are generally the people who have the greatest expectations. I have talked with many poor men and I have found, over and over again, that they have a great, great uncle somewhere or other, who may leave them a lot of money some day. Or else they think they are entitled to property somewhere, only the lawful owner keeps them out of it! They have proofs that there was someone in their family who left—well, I do not know whether it was some millions of money that now lie in the Bank of England and they are expecting to get it! Ah, he that butters his bread with such expectations will find it very dry. And he who waits till expectations of that kind are fulfilled will, I am afraid, find that he is waiting in vain. But poor people generally have plenty of expectations and, as a rule, those expectations come to an end. This is a part of the bitter experiences of life and always will be—so, let us bear it patiently, for our text assures us that our disappointment shall only be temporary.

II. Now, in the second place, there are TWO SAD FEARS WHICH THE TEXT REMOVES.

The first sad fear is that, perhaps, *we may be forever forgotten of God*. Oh, what, a sad day it would be for us if God should ever forget us! You remember what varied experiences David had. Once he wrote, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong: You did hide Your face, and I was troubled." At another time, he wrote, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Ah, that is how the greatest saints have to sometimes talk, but what a fall in the barometer that indicates! From being up there at, "set fair," it has gone down to, "much rain" and "storms." "Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." This fear will come to the child of God at certain times. It may take this shape, "What if God should forget me in my present trouble? None but He can get me out of it. I am so bowed down and distressed that without Divine Consolation I know that I shall surely sink in the deep waters! Yet the consolation does not come, the help I need does not arrive. I cannot see any way of escape and I am as much in perplexity, now, as I was six months ago. I have made it a matter of prayer and waiting on the Lord, but I sometimes fear that He has forgotten me. What shall I do if He never helps me? If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, I would long ago have sunk into despair—but what shall I do if He deserts me now? I can never escape out of this difficulty without Him."

Possibly the Believer is not so much in temporal trouble as burdened under a sense of sin. He used to feel joy and peace through believing in Christ, but he has wandered away from fellowship with his God and God is walking contrary to him because he is walking contrary to God. He is dwelling under his Father's frown—He is smarting under his Father's rod. Now he says within himself, "What will happen to me if He should never again give me the kiss of reconciliation?" He cries, "Deal mercifully with Your servant, O Lord, and restore unto me the joy of Your salvation!" Yet still he walks in darkness and sees no Light. He is under a cloud and his cry is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him whom my soul loves!" There comes to his heart the horrible fear that God has forsaken him. It is a horrible fear, but it is quite unfounded—there is no real reason for it. God cannot forget His chosen ones whom He has engraved upon the palms of His hands. And though a woman may forget her sucking child, God cannot forget any of His people, sorrowful or sinful though they may be.

Then, too, this thought will come—"I am sick. My health is failing. I have less strength every day and, soon I shall have to go through the cold river of death. And what if, then, I should be without my God? It will be hard to suffer and harder, still, to die—to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay and, as a disembodied spirit, to be launched into an unknown world. What if there should be no guardian angels around my dying bed and no Savior to receive my departing spirit? What if, after all, my hope should turn out to be a delusion, my faith a fiction and my experience a dream?" I do not wonder, when such thoughts as these cross

your minds, that you should feel distressed, as hundreds before you have been, “who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But our text is a blessed cure for this sad fear—“For the needy shall not always be forgotten.”

The other dreadful fear is, *lest, after all, your expectation should perish.* Your expectation, Beloved, is that since you have trusted in God, you shall never be confounded—and that because you have relied upon the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you shall be numbered with His saints in Glory everlasting. Yet, sometimes you sorrowfully say, “Shall I hold on to the end? Shall I be able to persevere? I am so weak, so unstable, so apt to slip and slide, that I fear what will happen to me. Will my hope endure to the end?” Then you look around and see the strong temptations that beset your path—you live, perhaps, where there are few Christians to help you and where everything seems to go against your progress in the Divine Life and you say, “I shall surely one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How can I hope to outlive these many perils and dangers?”

Possibly your constitutional temperament is a hindrance to you and you cry, “Woe is me, because I have such corruptions within—such a fierce temper—such a cold heart—such a stingy disposition. Can I ever, after all, be fashioned into the likeness of my Lord? Can such gritty granite as my soul is made of ever be melted down and run into the Divine Mold, or be turned like wax to the Divine Seal?” It does make you fear and tremble, especially when trials come, the likes of which you never saw before! And you say, “My expectation will perish. I thought that, by God’s Grace, I should leap over a wall and break through a troop. I hoped that I should continue to trust in the Lord even though all creature aid should fail. But now I tremble and fear! I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with horses and, above all, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?” Well, now, this is the sort of fear that arises in the hearts of God’s children—yet that fear need not be entertained for a single moment! It is your duty and privilege to shut it out of your heart, for thus says the Lord, “The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.”

III. Now I come to our third and last point—TWO PRECIOUS PROMISES ARE HERE GIVEN TO US.

The first is given to the needy and it declares that *they shall not always be forgotten.* Possibly some of you think that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of Providence. Listen, troubled one. If you can only wait with patience and stand still and see the salvation of God, you will find that the needy shall not always be forgotten. Have you ever noticed how a father carves for a large family. You do not expect him, at a single stroke, to carve enough to fill every plate, do you? There is a little child who is ill, so there must be a suitable portion sent away for that one. And, likely enough, that will be the first portion sent from the table. Then the father serves his other children according to a certain order which he has in his own mind and there must be some who come after the others. I have known carvers keep someone waiting till they have

reached the most juicy part of the meat—they only made him wait till they could give him something especially choice! So, if you are kept waiting for your portion, you will not lose anything by waiting a while. Patience is rewarded in due season. If ships are longer on their voyage, we expect them to bring home all the richer freight. If the trees are slower than usual, this year, in putting forth their buds—if the peach blossoms or the apricots are not visible as soon as in other seasons—let us hope that it will be all the better for the ultimate fruit-bearing of the trees. Be you content to come last rather than first, for sometimes last is best and, “there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.” Poor as you are, you shall not always be forgotten! There is a portion in reserve for you—even for you.

You shall not be forgotten at the Mercy Seat. You have been there many times without receiving an answer to your petitions. Perhaps, poor heavy Heart, you have prayed seven times and no reply has yet come. Possibly you have gone to your God as often as the poor widow went to the unjust judge and you have gone as importunately as she went. But so far there has been no sweet relief such as your soul longed for. Yet you shall not be always forgotten, so, continue in prayer! If the promise tarries, wait for it, for, in due season, the answer shall surely come.

You shall not always be forgotten in the Word. You have been reading it, yet no promise has seemed to comfort you. In fact, as you turn over the pages of your Bible, you find bitter things recorded there, as if they were written against you. But read on! Read on and one of these days you will come to a passage that will seem to leap up out of the Scriptures to meet you! It will woo you—the very sight of it will fascinate you and you will say, “The Lord has spoken this message to my soul—and I bless and praise His holy name!”

You shall not always be forgotten from the pulpit. Perhaps there is someone here who has long been listening to the Gospel and who sorrowfully says, “I find that others are comforted, but I am not. God seems to give a portion to all the rest of His people, but none to poor me. Alas, I come and I go, but it seems to be all in vain! I love to go where I see others getting a blessing, yet I find no comfort there for myself.” Well, you shall not always be forgotten! God will bid His servant drop a handful on purpose for you. Perhaps this very text is a message to your heart just now!

You shall not always be forgotten at the Lord’s Table. You have gone there hoping that He who often reveals Himself to His servants in the breaking of bread will be pleased to manifest Himself to you at His own Table. Yet you have not had a smile from Him. You have sat with others at the King’s Table, but the King, Himself, did not seem to sit there with you. You ate the bread, but you did not spiritually feed upon His flesh. You drank the wine, but you did not spiritually drink His precious blood. Well, you shall not always be forgotten! If you are really trusting in Jesus, there are brighter days yet in store for you. The King shall yet bring

you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be Love and you shall see such changes that you shall sing—

***“My mourning, He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth, joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long Your favor lives.”***

And you shall not always be forgotten in the service that you are rendering unto God. You have not yet seen a soul converted through your instrumentality, but you shall not always be forgotten in that respect. And in the sufferings that you are called to bear for Christ's sake, you shall not always be forgotten. Patience will yet have her perfect work and the suffering will end when it has accomplished its purpose. You are persecuted and despised, perhaps, but you shall not always be forgotten. You shall yet learn the sweetness of being reproached for Christ's sake. You may seem to be forgotten for a little while, but you shall not really be so. God, the Holy Spirit, will not forget you—He will sustain, instruct, illuminate and console you. God the Son will not forget you. He paid too high a price for you to ever forget you. You are His bride! He loves you as He loves Himself. You are part and parcel of Himself, so He will never forget you. And God the Father will not forget you. You have been His from all eternity and He has “begotten you again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” You will die soon, but you will not be forgotten, for the holy angels will convoy you home to Heaven!

The rich man died and was buried with many waving plumes over his mourning coach. His will was read, his property was squabbled over and that was the end of him. Everybody soon forgot him. But the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom! They had not forgotten Lazarus. The dogs had licked his sores, but the angels had loved him! The dunghill was his couch, but Abraham's bosom was his throne! If you are a Believer in Jesus, you are not forgotten up in Glory! Rowland Hill, when he was very old, used to like to go and see aged people when they were dying and he used to say to them, “When you get to Heaven, give my love to the three glorious Johns up there, and be sure to tell them that poor old Rowley hopes they have not forgotten him.” There is no fear that they will forget any of you who are going there! There is a crown in Heaven which will fit nobody's head but yours and that crown must hang as a useless thing until you get there to wear it! There is a mansion in Glory that nobody but you can inhabit and you cannot suppose that it will be allowed to stand empty forever, can you? Oh, no! *You* must be there to occupy it and you may rest assured that He who is preparing the place for His people will bring His people to it, for He has not gone to Heaven to prepare a place for His people without resolving that His people shall not perish on the way there!

“The needy shall not always be forgotten.” They will be especially remembered when Christ comes and He says to them, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” They will be remembered as they enter into the joy of their

Lord and then, throughout the eternal ages, they will never be forgotten of Him! They may well bear whatever comes upon them now in the anticipation of the Glory that is yet to be revealed!

The other promise in our text is that *“the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.”* What is your expectation—you who have believed in Jesus, yet who feel very poor and needy? You have been expecting to get peace, have you not? You shall have it in due time. A friend said to me, quite recently, “Supposing a person has believed in Jesus, but does not feel immediate peace, what then? Is that person to believe that he is saved? What is his evidence that he is?” I replied, “God says that whoever believes in His Son is not condemned, so I need not ask to have peace within my soul in order to corroborate the declaration of God. I am bound to take the Truth of God as it stands and believe myself to be saved, whether I feel any peace or not. If I will do this, then I shall have the peace. But if I say that I will not believe myself saved till I feel peace, then I am not really believing God at all—I am asking Him to give me peace to corroborate His evidence, as if the evidence in the Word were not strong enough to satisfy me.” Dear Friend, it may be that you have not yet enjoyed peace because your faith is not as simple and as clear as it should be. But if you are really poor and needy and cast yourself on the promises of God, you may depend upon it that the expectation that you have rightly founded upon the Gospel shall not be disappointed. You shall have peace! Yes, and you shall have perfect peace one day. “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

You are expecting, too, that you shall triumph over sin. God has promised that sin shall not have dominion over you. It may struggle very hard and, for a while, you may seem to be under its power. No, more—you may come under its power in a measure, but it never shall reign over you! Sin may, for a time, conquer a part of Mansoul, but it can never conquer the citadel of the heart! So rest assured of that. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” and you shall yet feel the power of holiness and the mighty work of the Eternal Spirit in your soul. “The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.”

You have been expecting, too, to get out of trouble. Well, you shall get out of trouble. You have been expecting to see good come out of evil. Well, good will come out of evil. I cannot tell you when you shall be delivered, but delivered you shall be, for thus it is written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” One of these days you will receive a warrant that will set you free from all trouble forever and ever! How soon it may come, I cannot tell, but, till it does, you may patiently wait and quietly hope for the salvation of God.

You have also been expecting to enjoy the full assurance of faith and your expectation, in that respect, shall not perish forever. The Lord will make your faith grow—every day’s experience will help to establish it and even your difficulties and troubles will tend to strengthen it. If a boy is apprenticed to a blacksmith, I should not wonder if, for months, his arm

aches dreadfully through swinging the big hammer. But keep on, Boy, keep on! Your muscles will grow hard, your sinews will get braced and you will become strong just where you need to be strong. So, dear Friend, shall it be with your faith—you shall become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

You expected to have very special spiritual joys, did you not? You expected that your soul would be made like the chariots of Amminadib, did you not? You expected to be in such a condition that whether in the body or out of the body, you could not tell. Well, you shall realize all that in due season, for God will reveal it unto you when it seems good in His sight. As for myself—and I may also speak for all who love the Lord—I am expecting to be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory. I am expecting to be like He and to overcome and sit with Him upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father upon His Throne.

And, Brothers and Sisters, if this is your expectation, it shall not perish forever, but it shall be blessedly realized. I have told you before some of the last words of my venerable grandfather, but I may venture to repeat them to you. One of my uncles said to him, “You know, Father, that hymn of Dr. Watts—

**“Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.
If I am found in Jesus’ hands,
My soul can never be lost”?**

“Ah, James!” he replied, “I do not like the metaphor that Dr. Watts uses there, ‘Firm as the earth.’ Why, the earth is sinking from under my feet! I need something much firmer than that. I like better what the Doctor says when he sings—

**“Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”**

“That will do for me now, James,” said the dying saint, “that is Divine Sovereignty. The Lord is King and, as surely as He is King and sits upon His Throne, so surely will He fulfill His promise to a poor feeble worm like I, so I shall behold His face with joy.”

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

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

JOY IN SALVATION

NO. 3503

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 30, 1871.

*"I will rejoice in Your salvation."
Psalm 9:4.*

I DESIRE to continue the topic of the morning, [See Sermon #1003, Volume 17—YOUR OWN SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] only we will look at another side of the same important matter.

We spoke this morning, as you have not forgotten, upon these words, "Your own salvation." I trust most of us—would God I could hope *all* of us—were earnest about our own personal salvation! To those who are earnest, this second text will be the complement of the first. They desire that their own salvation shall be secure. It is their own salvation when they obtain it—but here is the guide as to what is the *right* salvation—what our own salvation ought to be. It is not our own in another sense—it is God's. "I will rejoice in Your salvation." While it becomes our own by an act of faith, it is not our own so that we can claim any merit or take any part of the glorying to ourselves. The only salvation that is worth being our own is that which is God's. "I will rejoice in Your salvation." Having this morning somewhat at length explained what salvation is, showing that it was not a mere deliverance from wrath to come, but from the present wrath of God and yet more essentially from sin, from the power of evil within us, there is no need that we should go over that again, I trust. But we shall begin by noticing the speciality which is in the text, dwelling upon the Divine Salvation. "I will rejoice in Your salvation." So, then, we look at once at—

I. A DIVINE SALVATION.

The salvation we have already spoken of is God's and it is God's salvation in many ways. It was His in the planning. None but He could have planned it. In His Infinite Wisdom He devised it. The salvation which is revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ in the Gospel is, every part of it, in all its architecture the fruit of Divine skill! We may say, "Or with whom took He counsel and who instructed Him and who taught Him knowledge?" In every part the Divine hand may be seen—it is of God's planning and ordaining, before the earth was. *So is it of God's providing.* You have salvation wrapped up in the gift of the Person of Jesus Christ. All of it lies in Christ. Because He died, our sin is put away. Because He lives,

we shall also live. And Christ is the pure gift of God. All salvation is in Him and, therefore, all salvation is thus procured by God. It is God's salvation. And what is more, God not only plans and procures, but *He also applies salvation*. I believe in free agency, but I never yet met with a Christian who was able to say that he came to Christ of his own free will without being drawn by the Spirit of God! Whatever our doctrinal view may be, the experimental fact is the same in every case. All Believers will confess that they are God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. "No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him." There is a need of power. "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." There is a need of will and the Spirit of God, therefore, applies the salvation which God has planned and which God has provided. And as the first application of this salvation is of God, so is it all the way through. I do not believe, dear Brothers and Sisters, that our religion is like the action of a clock wound up at first by a superior hand and then left to go alone. No! Every day the Holy Spirit must continue to work upon us and in us, to will and to do according to God's good pleasure. And if you and I should ever get right up to the gate of pearl and should hear the songs of the blessed within that gate, we should not be able to take the last step, but should turn back to our sin and folly if He that began a good work in us should cease to carry it on! He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. He makes the rough draft of it in conviction upon our conscience. He goes on to complete the picture and if there is one touch in the picture that is not of God, it is a blot upon it! If there is anything of the flesh, it will have to be wiped out—it is not consistent with the work of God. Of God is it in all respects!

Now we know that this salvation is of God, not only because we are told that He planned it, provided it and applies it, but *because it has the marks of God upon it*. There is a certain line of poetry. I know it is Shakespeare's. Well, you know, I cannot quite tell you why, but yet I am sure no one ever wrote exactly in that way. I am reading the Psalms through and I read and I say, "That is David's." I observe certain critics who say, "No, this belongs to the time of the captivity." I am certain it does not. And why? Because there is a Davidic ring about it! The son of Jesse, and he, alone, could have said such things! Now in salvation there are the marks of Divine Authorship. I once saw a painting by Titan at Venice—and he had written, "*Fecit, fecit Titian.*" He claimed it twice over, as if to make sure that someone else should not claim it. And God has put it three times over that there should be no doubt, whatever, that salvation is of God and He must have the glory of it. Now observe the marks of God—what I may call the broad arrow of the King—set on salvation. It is full of mercy. Here is salvation for the blackest of sinners—salvation for all manner of sin—forgiveness for all manner of sin—salvation so full of Grace that only God could have conceived it. "Who is a pardoning God like You?" But this salvation is equally congenial with justice, for God

never absolutely forgives a sin. There is always punishment for sin in every case! Jesus Christ, the Substitute, comes in and satisfies Justice before the word is spoken to the sinner, “Your transgression is blotted out.” In the salvation which God has provided on the Cross by the death of His dear Son, there is as much justice as there is mercy—and there is an infinity of both! Now this is God-like! Man, if he brings out one quality, usually clouds another with it. But God exhibits His Character in harmonious completeness—as merciful as if He were not just, and as just as if He were not gracious! In the Gospel, on this account, we also see Divine Wisdom. Whatever some may say about the Doctrine of Substitution, Christ is still the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. The way, so simple, yet so sublime, by which God is just and yet the justifier of him that believes, exhibits the Infinite Wisdom of the Most High!

But I won’t keep you by mentioning all the Divine attributes. It is certain they all shine in the Gospel, nor can any tell which of the letters are written best—the Power, the Wisdom, or the Grace. They are all there, proving the salvation to be of God!

And there is one other matter. True salvation is of God because it draws toward God. If you have God’s salvation, you are being drawn towards your heavenly Father, nearer and nearer every day. The ungodly forget God. The awakened seek God. But the saved rejoice in God! Ask yourself this question, “Could you live without God?” The ungodly man would be happier without God than he is with Him. It would be the best piece of news in the newspaper to thousands, if we could publish it tomorrow, that God was dead! To ungodly men it would be like ringing the bells of universal joy—they would run riot after their own will! And where would the Believer be? He would be an orphan! His sun would be blotted out! His hopes would be dead and buried! Judge by this whether you are saved. If you are saved, you are drawn to God, you seek to be like God, you desire to honor God. If there are none of these things in you, then I charge you see to it, for you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! God have mercy upon you! I need not further say that the salvation is of God and God must have all the glory of it. All on earth who are saved and all in Heaven who are saved will ascribe their salvation entirely to the ever blessed God and join with Jonah, who in the very depths of the sea made this, his confession of faith, “Salvation is of the Lord.” But now, secondly, our text (having noticed the Divine Salvation in it) has—

II. AN OUTSPOKEN AVOWAL.

“I will rejoice in Your salvation.” Here is someone springing out from the common crowd and saying, “I have heard of God’s salvation. I will rejoice in it! I will rejoice in it! *Some despise it.* They hear it and they turn a deaf ear. When they have listened to it the longest, they are most weary of it. But *I will rejoice in Your salvation.*” Here is a distinguished character, who is made so, doubtless, by distinguishing Grace! Oh, I hope there are many of us here who could stand up and say—if this were the time

and place—“Let others say what they will and count the Cross a thing to mock and Jesus Christ to be forgotten, I am His servant—I will rejoice in His salvation.” There are *some that rest in another salvation*. We all did so once. But he who speaks in the text throws aside self-righteousness as filthy rags! He puts it all aside and says, “I will rejoice in Your salvation.” If I were righteous, I would not say so. Had I a perfect holiness, I would not mention it in comparison with the righteousness of Christ, but being an unworthy sinner without a single merit of my own, I will not be so foolish as to patch up a fictitious righteousness, but I will rejoice in Your salvation! You see them there!—those worshippers of the scarlet woman—they are resting in their priest! He puts on millinery, blue, pink, scarlet, white and I know not what—all kinds of little toys to please fools with! And there are some that rejoice in that salvation that comes from an “infallible” sinner—that comes from a sham priest of God! But we are looking to Christ who stands before the Eternal Throne of God and pleads the merits of His own blood. We say—

***“Let all the forms that men devise
Assault our faith with treacherous art,
We’ll call them vanity and lies
And bind the Gospel to our heart.”***

“I will rejoice in Your salvation.” There may be some tonight to whom I shall speak who are rejoicing in God’s salvation through His abundant Grace who have very little else to rejoice in. You are very poor. Ah, how welcome you are to this house! How glad I am that you have come! I feel it always a joy that the people have the Gospel preached to them. Well, you have no broad acres, you have no gold rings on your fingers—you come in the garb of toil—never mind, my Brother or Sister, lay hold on eternal life and say, “I will rejoice in Your salvation.” Perhaps you are sick tonight—your poor weak body could scarcely drag itself up to the assembly of God’s people. Well, well, it is a heavy thing to have to suffer so, but if you cannot rejoice in a hale body, yet rejoice in His salvation! Look tonight to Jesus! Put your trust in Him, alone, and you will have a sufficient wellspring of joy if you have nothing else! Possibly some of you who lay hold on Christ and rejoice in Him will have hard times of it at home—your father will mock at you, your mother will not sympathize with you. Your workmates, tomorrow, if they hear that you are converted, will laugh and jest, and jeer at you. What say you? Are you a coward? Will you back out of it because it demands a sacrifice? Oh, if it is so, then you are, indeed, unworthy of the name and you count yourself so! But if you are what you should be, you will say, “Let them laugh at me as they will, and spit upon me as they please, I will rejoice in Your salvation.”—

***“If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach may be.
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For You’ll remember me!”***

It takes some pluck, but we ought to have it in the cause of Christ. Your mean, miserable wretches that will only go out to follow Christ in sunny weather, but disappear when a cloud darkens the sky, deserve well the wrath that comes upon them! They are like the Nautilus, very well on the placid sea, but the first billow that arises, they furl their sails and drop into the deep and are seen no more! Oh, beware, beware, beware of a sunny-weather religion! Beware of a religion that will not stand the fire, but be you such that if all the world forsook Christ, you would say, "I will rejoice in His salvation." And if you were turned out of doors—if you were turned out of the world, itself, and thought not fit to live—you would yet be content to have it so—if you might be numbered with the people of God and be permitted to rejoice in His salvation! Does this, as I try to speak it, awaken a holy emotion in any soul here? Is there someone who has been a stranger to my Lord, who tonight can say, "I desire to rejoice in His salvation"? I cannot forget, when I sat as a young lad under the gallery of a little place of worship, hearing the Gospel simply preached—the blessed moment when I was led to resolve to follow Christ! I have never been ashamed of having done so. I have never had to regret it. He is a blessed Master! He has handled me roughly lately, but He is a blessed Master. I would follow at His heels if only like a dog, for it is better to be His dog than to be the devil's darling! He is a blessed Master, let Him say what He wills and do what He wills. Oh, is there no young man here, no youth, no child, no girl—is there no gray-headed one who will say, "I will rejoice in Your salvation"? O eternal Spirit, come and touch some heart and make this their spiritual birthright, that they may say, "I—I—I will rejoice in Your salvation!"

But we must pass on, for time presses. We have, in the third place, to consider in the text—

III. A DELIGHTFUL EMOTION.

We have noticed the Divine Salvation and the outspoken avowal. Now we will notice the delightful emotion. "I will rejoice in Your salvation." It is an unfortunate thing that Christianity gets associated with melancholy. I will not forbid the blahs, for they are not very near of kin, but I wish they were further apart every day. It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian—it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy! If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and flashing eyes, it is the man whose sins are forgiven him and who is saved with God's salvation! In order for any man, however, to rejoice in God's salvation, *he must, first of all, know it.* There must be an intelligent apprehension of what it is. Next, he must grasp it by an act of faith as his own. Then, having grasped it, he must study it to know the price at which it was bought and all the qualities—the Divine Qualities that follow from it. Then *he must hold it fast* and seek to get out the sweetness from it. What is there in God's salvation that should make us rejoice? I do not know what to select, for it is all joy and all rejoicing! It is enough to make our heart to ring with joy to think

that there should be a salvation at all for such poor souls as we are! We may well hang out all the streamers of our spirits and strew the streets of our soul with flowers, for King Jesus has come to dwell there! Ring every bell! Give Him a glorious welcome. Let all the soul be glad when Jesus enters and brings salvation with Him, for the salvation of Christ is so suitable that we may well rejoice in it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are saved, I know the salvation of Christ suited you! It did me—exactly—it was made on purpose for me! I am as sure of it as if there were no other sinner to be saved. It was the Gospel that brought power to the weak, no, it brought life to the dead! It brought everything to those that had nothing. It is just the sort of Gospel for a penniless, bankrupt sinner like myself. We rejoice in *the suitability of the Gospel*. We rejoice in the freeness of it. We have nothing to pay—we have no price to pay, neither of promise, nor of anything that was our own. Salvation was freely given to us in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice in it, then! Oh, rejoice in the richness of that salvation! When the Lord pardoned our sins, He did not pardon half of them and leave some of them on the book, but with one stroke of the pen He gave a full receipt for all our debts! When we went down into the fountain filled with blood, and washed, we did not come up half-clean, but there was no spot nor wrinkle upon us—we were white as driven snow! Glory be to God for such a rich salvation as this! And He did not in that day save us with a perhaps and a chance salvation that set us on a rock and said, “Keep yourself there—you must depend upon yourselves.” No, but this was the Covenant He made with us—“A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you.” It was a complete salvation which would not permit a failure!

The salvation which is given to the soul that believes is on this wise, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” I believe the perseverance of the saints to be the very gem of the Gospel! I could not hold the Truth of Scripture if this could be disproved to me, for every page seems to have this upon it, if nothing else, that “the righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger.” In this my soul rejoices, that I have a salvation to preach to you which, if you receive it, will effectually save you if your hearts are given to Christ and will keep you, and preserve you, and bring you into the eternal Kingdom of His Glory. I will rejoice in the certain and abiding character of that salvation. Oh, there is enough in the salvation of Christ to make Heaven full of bliss! There is enough to make us full of praise! Let us take up the theme. Let us talk by the way to one another about it! Let us talk to sinners about it. Let us recommend religion by our cheerfulness. Levity be far from us, but happiness let it be the happiest sphere in which we live if we have little else to rejoice in, we have enough here! Whatever may be our condition or prospects, we may still rejoice in God’s salvation—and let us not fail to be filled with this most blissful emotion!

And now I must close. The text has in it a word of the future which we must not quite overlook. Here is a joyful Gospel, "I will rejoice in Your salvation." You may read it, if you like, "I shall"—"I shall" or, "I will"—it would be quite right. The Hebrew has no present. It seems to have given up all tenses—like God, Himself, who Was, and Is, and is to come. I shall rejoice in Your salvation! Now here is—

IV. A BLESSED PROSPECT.

You may live to grow old. Well, we shall never grow weary of Christ. If we are His people, we shall never have any cause to part from Him. "I will rejoice in Your salvation." I could bring up to this platform an aged Brother whom all of you would know, who has infirmities and has age creeping upon him. But there is not a happier soul in this house than he! And when I had made him speak to you, I could bring you many more aged women, too, and I would ask them what they think of Christ and I am sure they would say with greater emphasis than I can, "I will rejoice in Your salvation!" I almost wish my grandfather were alive and behind me tonight, for on one occasion I preached with him in the pulpit and when I came to speak of experience, he pulled my coattail and came to the front and said, "My grandson can tell you that he believes it, but I can tell you experimentally"—and on the old gentleman went with it! Well, many an aged Christian can tell you he has rejoiced in God's salvation! He does rejoice and, instead of age making the joy of his youth to become dim, it has mellowed and sweetened the fruit which was sweet even at the first! Oh, that we may, when these hairs grow gray with years and the snows of many winters lie white upon our head—may we still rejoice in God's salvation! But then, whether we reach old age or not, there is one thing that is certain—we shall assuredly die—and when we come to die, what shall we do? I know what you are thinking. You say, "I will groan." Yes, Sinner, you are thinking of the friend that is wiping away the clammy sweat from the brow and those closed eyes. Now those may never occur! We often hear them mentioned in reference to dying beds, but they are not so constantly there as to be necessary. And if they were there, if we did lose sight itself before life fails—what then? Why, the vision of the Christ, who is our salvation, and in whom we rejoice, shall then be more gloriously clear and radiantly beautiful—because the sights and sounds of earth will have vanished from us!

Now, instead of looking at these outward parts of dying, think of this, "I will rejoice in Your salvation." When I parted from our dear brother, Cook, a few days ago, he could not say much. He was very, very weak, but what he did say was just this, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is All." Well, I talked, and read, and prayed, and so on, and when we had done, he simply said, "The blood—the blood, the blood—that is all my hope." Why, he looked as calm in prospect of dying as any of you do in sitting here! And he was as delighted with the hope of being where Jesus is as ever bride was at the coming of the marriage day! It was delightful to see the blessed calm and peace that was upon that man of God! And when I

come to die, whoever I may be, however little my standing in the Church of God is, if I am in Christ, I will rejoice in His salvation! I will make the dark valley ring with His praises! I will make the river of Death, itself, roll back as the Red Sea did of old, with my triumphant songs! I will enter Heaven with this upon my heart and upon my lips, "I will rejoice in Your salvation! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and power, and dominion, and glory forever and ever!" And, Brothers and Sisters, if that is what we may do in dying, this is what we shall do forever and ever—"I will rejoice in Your salvation." Millions of ages, throughout all the cycles of years that interpose before Christ delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, and then onward, even through eternity—this always shall be our own ground of rejoicing—"I will rejoice in Your salvation."

Now I cannot come and stand at the door and speak to everyone as the congregation withdraws, but if it were possible, I would like to stand there and shake the hand of everyone that has been in the house tonight, and say, "Well, Friend, how fares it with you? Can you say, 'I will rejoice in Your salvation?'" If I cannot do that, I wish it were possible to speak in the silent shades of night to you when you awoke, so that you might hear a voice ringing in your ears, "Do you rejoice in God's salvation?" Perhaps some of you may have come a long distance across the sea. You may be, by-and-by, on shipboard again. It may be that you will be in peril, or it may be that afterwards you shall be in sickness. Well, may this evening's congregation in this day of July rise up before your minds. And if you forget the preacher (and that will not matter), yet if you hear a voice that says, "Can you rejoice in God's salvation?" I hope that, even if it is 20 years to come, it may then be as the voice of God to your soul and bring you to the Savior! But better far would it be if you would come to Him tonight—and you may! May the Spirit of God bring you! Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life! The whole of the Gospel is wrapped up in Christ's message which He has sent by His Apostles, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To you each this—this—is the word, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house." God add His own blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 THESSALONIANS 5.**

Verses 1, 2. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.* The great point is that it comes—will certainly come, and it will come when it is least expected. There are certain signs given, by which the righteous shall know of its appearing, but all study of dates and fixing of the time is contrary to the very spirit of the Christian dispensation! We are to abide, always looking for it, be-

believing it may come today, believing it may not come today—believing that the secret of the time is with God. You err if you say it shall be this or that season! You equally err if you say it shall not be then. Let it remain as it is—a secret in the heart of God—you yourselves always ready, expecting it to come.

3. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* Sudden and acute shall be the terror of the ungodly when the Lord Jesus in flaming fire shall be manifested!

4. *But you brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* You are brought out of darkness into His marvelous light! Your element is light. “You are all the children of light.” “You are not in darkness that the day should overtake you as a thief.” You know the signs and, being watchful, you will observe them when the hour comes.

5, 6. *You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.* It is the proper and fitting season for it. That the children of darkness should slumber is no wonder! They are the children of a sleepy time. You are the children of the day—if you sleep, you will be acting contrary to your nature.

7. *For they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night.* People were a little more decorous in the Apostle’s day than they are now, for there are some who are drunk in the day, now-a-days, and though we have certainly improved in some things, we seem to have gone back in this! But at any rate, drunkenness may seem suitable to night persons, but it is not suitable to those who profess to have the light of God’s Grace!

8. *But let us who are of the day, be sober; putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.* We are of the day, but it is a day of battle. Therefore put on armor! Be as soldiers that are covered with a panoply. Especially take care of your heart—put on the breastplate. Faith and love are the sacred protection for this. Take care that you have both. Take care of your head—that also is a vital part. Put on the helmet. Hope will do that. A good hope in Christ Jesus will guard you from many violent attacks that will be made upon your judgment.

9. *For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.* There is no ordination to condemnation. Believing in Christ, we have the evidence that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit and obedience, and sprinkling of blood.

10, 11. *Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do.* It is a good Church of which we can say this, especially if we can say it of all the members, that they edify one another. Living stones in a living temple should seek to build each other up! May we all try to have a sacred commerce in our knowledge and oth-

er gifts as one trading with another. All may enrich and edify one another. “As also you do.” Why did he tell them to do it, then, if they were doing it? Answer—that they might keep on doing it! The horse that runs best may still be the better for a spur.

12, 13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.* Consider them in your prayers! Give them all the help you can. Do not be strangers to their office and to the burden which it brings. God has set them over you. Regard them in that light. Esteem them very highly, not as masters, as though they were lords, but as being over you—

“Esteem them highly in love for their works’ sake.”

13. *And be at peace among yourselves.* There is an end to Church prosperity when there is an end of peace!

14. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.* There are some that never will be ruled—their very idea of being a Christian is that they shall do just as they like! It is a somewhat happy circumstance that there are sects where they can do so. There are formed, now-a-days, you little knots of people, who will have no rule and church government, and who meet to edify one another. Though they speedily go to pieces, it is perhaps the better for the churches that they are quit of them!

14. *Comfort the feeble-minded.* They need cheering. You needed it once—return the benefit you have received. Do not be out of patience with them for being so foolish. If their minds are feeble, you cannot expect much better from them.

14. *Support the weak.* Give them something to cling to. As some climbing plants put out their tendrils and need to be helped up, so may you be a prop to these climbers.

14. *Be patient toward all men.* Think of what patience God has with you. “Be patient toward all men.”

15. *See that none render evil for evil unto any man.* Not in any case. The world advises you to pay a man in his own coin, but if he pays you bad coin, he is wrong—and if you pay him bad coin there will be two wrongs. Do not do it!

15, 16. *But always follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore.* You have always something to rejoice in—make the world ring with Christian music.

17. *Pray without ceasing.* Praise and prayer are fit companions. You will soon leave off rejoicing if you leave off praying! By spurts, keep up your prayers while at your books. You will not disturb your avocations by continuing still in supplication and prayer. That provender hinders no man’s journey.

18. *In everything give thanks.* Try to do so for everything, but if you cannot do it, in everything give thanks for something else—when you are in circumstances which do not excite your thankfulness just then.

18. *For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* God wills it. This moved the Crusaders to war. Let this suffice to move you in thanksgiving.

19. *Quench not the Holy Spirit.* Do not hinder His movements in yourself. Do not try to hinder them in others. If any man has a gift which he might use to edification, do not discourage him, but rather encourage him to get more Grace. God may find him opportunities of making use of it. Quench not the Holy Spirit.

20. *Despise not prophesying.* If they are vain and false, despise them if you will, but that prophecy especially which deals with the Word of God, for the Word here does not signify merely prophecies of the future—it is often used in regular preaching. Despise not anyone who speaks in God's name! He may speak with blunders of grammar—forget them! If he is correct in his teaching of Divine Truth. If he speaks to your heart. If he warns you. If he warns under the Spirit of God, never despise him!

21. *Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.* That first sentence is got to be quite a proverb, but that last, I believe, is taken away, which is another instance of the common truth that half the truth is a lie. You must give it all or none. “Prove all things,” is mischievous teaching unless you “hold fast that which is good.” And, after all, in the very first sentence it is not so much, “Prove *all* things,” as, “*Prove* all things”—that is, take nothing on trust. Do not believe it because you are told so. Search the Scriptures! Test what you have received, but when you have tested it, do not go about to be forever proving it. Hold it fast. Grip it. Grapple it to you as an ox to the stall. Hold fast that which is good.

22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.* By which is not meant, as some read it, “from everything that somebody likes to say looks like evil.” This would be to mar the Christian liberty! But wherever evil puts in an appearance, when it appears to be good, when it has been dressed out—for the word may refer to a Roman spectacle, or grand procession. Avoid evil even when dressed out in its best, when it comes on in all its gallant show to attract you. Avoid every species and kind of evil—that might almost be the translation—abstain from it altogether!

23. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* In the Christian there is a trinity. His nobler nature is that which he got when he was regenerated, and it is his spirit. His soul he has got in common with other men. His body he has in common with animals. All, however, must be fully consecrated to God. I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24. *Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.* What a word of good cheer that is! Sanctification often seems to be a thing far off, but He will do it. He that called will perfect. The work which His wisdom began, the arm of His strength will complete. His promise is yes and amen. God never did forget yet.

25. *Brethren, pray for us.* Because sometimes people think that those of high spiritual attainments do not need their prayers. Remember, if they have a higher position, they have greater dangers.

26. *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.* This was the token of friendship in the East. To attempt to import it to the West would not only be absurd, but wicked! I may properly read, then, “Greet all the brethren with a hearty handshake. Keep up the outward form of fellowship, for if you don’t, you will soon forget the fellowship itself.” The kiss was the Oriental custom—it was to be kept up. The handshake is our Western custom. Let it be kept up. And I delight to see it when Christians meet and cordially greet each other after the custom of their land.

27. *I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren* The Pope would charge you that it be read to nobody! But who is he? It seems that this Epistle was intended to be read by all the Churches, and so also the whole Bible. It is said it is not safe to trust it with the brethren—it is not safe to trust them without it! It is not safe to keep back God’s Word from any man! Let the whole Book be read, and I am sure the more read, the better, especially if the last verse is true of every reader—

28. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

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

THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND

NO. 3059

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1907.

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*"The poor commits himself unto You."
Psalm 10:14.*

GOD is the poor man's Friend. The poor man, in his helplessness and despair, leaves his case in the hands of God and God undertakes to care for him. In the days of David—and I suppose, in this respect, the world has but little improved—the poor man was the victim of almost everybody's cruelty and sometimes he was very shamefully oppressed. If he sought redress for his wrongs, he generally only increased them, for he was regarded as a rebel against the existing order of things. And when he asked for even a part of what was his by right, the very magistrates and rulers of the land became the instruments of his oppressors and made the yoke of his bondage to be yet heavier than it was before. Tens of thousands of eyes, full of tears, have been turned to Jehovah and He has been invoked to interpose between the oppressor and the oppressed, for God is the ultimate resort of the helpless. The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed—He undertakes the cause of all those that are downtrodden.

If the history of the world is rightly read, it will be found that no case of oppression has been allowed to go long unpunished. The Assyrian empire was a very cruel one, but what is now left of Nineveh and Babylon? Go to the heaps of ruins by the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates and see what will become of an empire which is made to be only an instrument of oppression in the hands of an emperor and the great men under him. It has ceased to be more than a name—its power has vanished and its palaces have been destroyed. In later times there sprang up the mighty empire of Rome and even now, wherever we wander, we see traces of its greatness and splendor. How came it to fall? Many reasons have been assigned, but you may rest assured that at the bottom of them all was the cruelty practiced towards the slaves and other poor people who were absolutely in the power of the aristocracy and oligarchy who formed the dominant party in the empire. There is a fatal flaw in the foundations of any throne that does not execute justice—and it matters not though the empire seems to stand high as Heaven and to raise its pinnacles to the skies—down it must come if it is not founded upon right. When ten thousand slaves have cried to God, apparently in vain, it has not really been in vain, for He has registered their cries and in due season has avenged their wrongs! And when the poor toilers who

have reaped the rich man's fields have been deprived of their harshly-earned wages and have cast their complaints into the court of Heaven, they have been registered there and God has, at the right time, taken up their cause and punished their oppressors!

For many years the Negro slaves cried to God to deliver them and, at last, deliverance came to the joy of the emancipated multitudes, yet not without suffering to all the nations that had been concerned in that great wrong. And here, too, if the employers of labor refuse to give to the agricultural laborer his just wage, God will surely visit them in His wrath. At this very day we have serfs in England who, with sternest toil, cannot earn enough to keep body and soul together and to maintain their families as they ought to be maintained. And where masters are thus refusing to their laborers a fair remuneration for their work, let them know that whoever may excuse them and whatever may be said of the laws of political economy, God does not judge the world by political economy! He judges the world by this rule, that men are bound to do that which is just and right to their fellow men—and it can never be right that a man should work like a slave, be housed worse than a horse and have food scarcely fit for a dog! But if the poor commit their case to God, He will undertake it and I, as one of God's ministers, will never cease to speak on behalf of the rights of the poor. The whole question has two sides—the rights of the employers and the rights of the men. Let not the men do as some workmen do, ask more than they ought—yet, on the other hand, let not the employers domineer over their men, but remember that God is the Master of us all and He will see that right is done to all. Let us all act rightly towards one another, or we shall feel the weight of His hand and the force of His anger.

Now, having thus given the literal meaning of my text, I am going to spiritualize it, which I should have no right to do if I had not first explained the primary reference of David's words, "The poor commits himself unto You."

I. THERE ARE SPIRITUALLY POOR MEN and these do what other poor men have done in temporal things—they commit their case into the hands of God.

Let me try to define the spiritually poor. They are, first, *those who have no merits of their own*. There are some people in the world who are, according to their own estimate, very rich in good works. They think that they began well and that they have gone on well—they hope to continue to do well right to the end of their lives. They do confess, sometimes, that they are miserable sinners, but that is merely because that expression is in the Prayer Book. They are half sorry it is there, but they suppose that it must have been meant for other people, not for themselves. So far as they know, they have kept all the Commandments from their youth up. They have been just in their dealings with their fellow men and they do not feel that they are under any very serious obligations even to God, Himself. I have nothing to say to such people except to remind them that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but

sinner to repentance.” Christ came to bring healing to those who are spiritually sick—you say that you are perfectly well, so you must go your own way and Christ will go in another direction—towards sinners.

Further, the poor people of whom I am speaking are not only totally without anything like merit, absolutely bankrupt of any goodness and devoid of anything of which they could boast, but they are also *without strength to perform any such good works in the future*. They are so poor, spiritually, that they cannot even pray as they would—and they do not even feel their poverty as they would like to feel it. After having read this Bible, they wish they could re-read it with greater profit. And when they weep over sin, they feel their sin in their very tears and need to weep in penitence over their tears. They are such poor people that they can do absolutely nothing without Christ and so poor that in them, that is, in their flesh, there dwells no good thing. They did once think that there might be something good in them, but they have searched their nature through most painfully and they have discovered that unless Divine Grace shall do everything for them, where God is they can never come.

Perhaps some of you say, “These must be very bad people.” Well, they are no better than they should be, yet I may tell you another thing concerning them—they are no worse than many of those who think themselves a great deal better. They have this lowly opinion of themselves because the Grace of God has taught them to think rightly and truthfully about themselves in relation to God. They are, in outward appearance, and as far as we can judge, quite as good as others and better than some. In certain respects, they might be held up as examples to others. This is what we say of them, but they have not a good word to say of themselves. Rather, they put their finger upon their lips and blush at the remembrance of what they feel themselves to be. Or if they must speak of themselves at all, they say, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way.”

II. That brings me to notice, secondly, WHAT THESE POOR PEOPLE DO. They commit themselves unto God. This is a very blessed description of what true faith does. The poor in spirit feel that their case is so desperate that they cannot keep it in their own charge and, therefore, they commit it to God. I will try to show you how they do that.

First, *they commit their case to God as a debtor commits his case to a surety*. The man is so deeply in debt that he cannot pay his creditors even a farthing in the pound. But here is someone who can pay everything that the debtor owes and he says to him, “I will stand as security for you. I will be bondsman for you. I will give full satisfaction to all your creditors and discharge all your debts.” There is no person who is deeply in debt who would not be glad to know of such a surety, both able and willing to stand in his place and to discharge all his responsibilities! If the surety said to this poor debtor, “Will you turn over all your liabilities to me? Will you sign this document, empowering me to take all your debts upon myself and to be responsible for you? Will you let me be your bondsman and surety?” “Ah,” the poor man would reply, “that I will, most gladly!” That is just what spiritually poor men have

done to the Lord Jesus Christ—committed their case with all their debts and liabilities into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ—and He has undertaken all the responsibility for them!

I think I hear someone say, "But will Christ really stand in the sinner's place in such a way as that?" Oh, yes, for He did stand, in anticipation, in the sinner's place before the foundation of the world and He actually stood there when He died upon the accursed tree. By His death He obtained a full discharge of the debts of all those whose Surety He had become. [See Sermons #694, Volume 12—SIN LAID ON JESUS and #925, Volume 16—INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Dear Soul, will you not commit all your affairs into His hands? Are you not willing to let Him stand as your Surety, to clear you of all your liabilities? "Willing?" you say! "Ah, that I am and not only willing, but right glad shall I be for Him to take my place and relieve me of the burden that is crushing me to the dust." Then it is done for you and so done that it can never be undone! Suppose that one of you had taken all my debts upon you and that you were quite able and willing to pay them? I would not go home and fret about my debts. I would rejoice to think that you had taken them upon yourself and that, therefore, they would no longer be mine! If Christ has taken your sins upon Himself—and He has done so if you have truly trusted Him—your sins have ceased to be! They are blotted out forever! Christ nailed to His Cross the record of everything that was against us and now every poor sinner who is indebted to God's Law and who trusts in Christ, may know that his debt is cancelled and that he is clear of all liability for it forever!

Next, *we commit our case to Christ as a client does to a solicitor and advocate*. [See Sermon #515, Volume 9—THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You know that when a man has a suit at law, (I hope that none of you may ever have such a suit), if he has an advocate to plead his cause, he does not plead for himself. He will probably get into trouble if he does. It is said that when Erskine was pleading for a man who was being tried for murder, his client, being dissatisfied with the way in which his defense was being conducted, wrote on a slip of paper, "I'll be hanged if I don't plead for myself." Erskine wrote in reply, "You'll be hanged if you do!" It is very much like that with us—if we attempt to plead for ourselves, we shall be sure to go wrong. We must have the Divine Advocate who alone can defend us against the suits of Satan and speak with authority on our behalf even before the bar of God. We must commit our case to Him, that He may plead for us—and then it will go rightly enough.

Remember also that any man who has committed his case to an advocate, must not interfere with it himself. If anybody from the other side should wait upon him and say, "I wish to speak to you about that suit," he must reply, "I cannot go into the matter with you. I must refer you to my solicitor." "But I want to reason about it. I need to ask you a few questions about the case." "No," he says, "I cannot listen to what you have to say—you must go to my solicitor." How much trouble Christians would save themselves if when they have committed their case into the hands of Jesus, they would leave it there and not attempt to deal with it

on their own account! I say to the devil, when he comes to tempt me to doubt and fear, "I have committed my soul to Jesus Christ and He will keep it in safety. You must bring your accusations to Him, not to me. I am His client and He is my Counselor. Why should I have such an Advocate as He is, and then plead for myself?" John does not say, "If any man sins, let him be his own advocate"—he says, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Dear Brothers and Sisters, leave your case with Christ—He can handle it wisely—you cannot! Remember that if the devil and you get into an argument, he is much older than you are and far more clever than you are—and he knows a great many points of Law that you do not know. You should always refer him to the Savior, who is older than he is and knows much more about Law and everything else than he does—and who will answer him so effectually as to silence him forever! So, poor tried and tempted Soul, commit your case to the Great Advocate and He will plead for you before the Court of King's Bench in Heaven—and your suit will be sure to succeed through His advocacy!

Further, *sinners commit their case to Christ as a patient commits his case to the physician*. We, poor sin-sick Sinners, put our case into the hands of Jesus that He may heal us of all our depravities, evil tendencies and infirmities. If anyone asks, "Will He undertake my case if I come to Him?" I answer—Yes, He came to be the Physician of souls, to heal all who trust Him. There never was a case in which He could not heal, for He has a wonderful remedy, a catholicon, a cure for all diseases. If you put your case into His hands, the Holy Spirit will shed abroad His love in your heart—and there is no spiritual disease that can withstand that wondrous remedy! Are you predisposed to quickness of temper? He can cure that! Are you inclined to be indolent? Is there a sluggish spirit within you? He can cure that! Are you proud, or are your tendencies towards covetousness, worldliness, lust or ambition? Christ can cure all those evils! When He was on this earth, He had all manner of patients brought to Him, yet He never was baffled by one case. And your case, whatever it may be, will be quite an easy one to Him if you only go and commit it into His hands! This building seems to me like a great hospital [See Sermon #2260, Volume 38—CHRIST'S HOSPITAL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] full of sin-sick souls and I pray the Great Physician to come here and heal them all! No, I must correct myself, for He is here and as He walks through these aisles, and around these galleries, I beseech you to say to Him, "Good Master, I commit myself to You. I take You to be my Savior. O save me from my constitutional temperament, my besetting sins and everything else that is contrary to Your holy will!" He will hear you, for He has never yet refused to heed the cry of a poor sin-sick soul. Do not let Him go by you without praying to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Come, Lord, and lay Your hands upon each one of us and we shall be made perfectly whole!

As to the future, the spiritually poor commit themselves to Christ in the same way in which the pilgrims described in *The Pilgrim's Progress* commit themselves to the charge of Mr. Greatheart, that He might fight

all their battles for them and conduct them safely to the Celestial City. In the old war times, when the captains of merchant vessels wanted to go to foreign countries and they were afraid of being captured by the privateers of other nations, they generally went in company under the convoy of a man-of-war to protect them. And that is the way you and I must go to Heaven. Satan's privateers will try to capture us, but we commit ourselves to the protection of Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of all the seas! And we poor little vessels, by His Grace, sail safely under His convoy! When any enemy seeks to attack us, we need not be afraid. He can blow them all out of the water if He pleases, but He will never suffer one of them to injure a solitary vessel that is entrusted to His charge. Sinner, give yourself up to the charge of Jesus to be convoyed to Heaven! And you over-anxious children of God, lay down all your anxieties at the feet of Jesus and rest in His Infinite Power and Love which will never let you be lost!

I might thus multiply figures and illustrations of how we commit ourselves to Christ. We do it very much in the way in which our blind friends, sitting under the pulpit, got here this evening—*they came by committing themselves to the care of guides*. Some of them can walk a good long way without a guide, but others could not have found their way here tonight without some friend upon whose arm they could lean. That is the way to get to Heaven, by leaning upon Jesus! Do not expect to see Him, but trust yourself to Him and lean hard upon Him. He loves to be trusted and faith has a wonderful charm for Him. I was once near the Mansion House and as I stood there, a poor blind man, who wished to cross over to the bank, said to me, "Please, Sir, lead me across. I know you will, for I am blind." I was not sure that I could do so, for it is not an easy task to lead a blind man across that part where so many cabs and omnibuses are constantly passing, but I managed it as best I could. I do not think I could have done it if the poor man had not said to me, "I know you will," for then I thought that I must. And if you come to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, will You lead me to Heaven?" and tell Him that you are sure that He will never let a poor blind soul miss its way, that you are sure you can trust Him, that He is such a kind-hearted Savior that He will never thrust away a guilty sinner who thus commits himself into His hands—I am sure that He will be glad to save you and that He will rejoice over you as He leads you safely home to Heaven! If any of you can see with your natural eyes and yet are spiritually blind, be glad that there is a blessed Guide to whom you can commit yourself! Christ leads the blind by a way that they know not and He will continue to lead them until He brings them to the land where they will open their eyes and see with rapture and surprise the splendors of Paradise and rejoice that they are all their own forever!

Is not this work of the poor committing themselves to Christ a very easy task? It is a very easy thing for a debtor to commit his debts to his surety, for anyone to commit his case to his advocate, for a patient to trust himself to his physician, for a pilgrim to feel safe under a powerful convoy and for a blind man to trust in his guide—all this is very simple

and easy. It does not need much explanation—and faith in Jesus is just as simple and just as easy as that! Why is it that we sometimes find that faith is difficult? It is because we are too proud to believe in Jesus. If we did but see ourselves as we really are, we would be willing enough to trust the Savior—but we do not like going to Heaven like blind people who need a guide, or like debtors who cannot pay a farthing in the pound. We want to have a finger in the pie. We want to do something towards our own salvation. We want to have some of the praise and glory of it. God save us from this evil spirit!

While it is a very simple thing for the spiritually poor to commit themselves to Christ, let me also say that it is an act which greatly glorifies God. Christ is honored when any soul trusts in Him—it is a joy to His heart to be trusted. When the feeble cling to Him, He feels such joy as mothers feel when their little ones cling to them. Christ is glad when poor sin-sick souls come and trust Him. It was for this very purpose that He came into the world—to meet the needs of guilty sinners. So this plan, while it is easy for us, is glorifying to Him.

And I will add that it is a plan that never fails any who trust to it. There never was a single soul that committed its case to Christ and then found Him fail—and there never shall be such a soul so long as the earth endures! He that believes in Christ shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life,” and everlasting life can never be taken away from one who has received it!

I close by asking a question—If the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God, what comes of it? Why, it makes them very happy! But are they not sinful? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to God's Grace and His Grace blots out all their sins forever! Are they not feeble? Oh, yes, but their feebleness leads them to commit themselves to His Omnipotence—and His strength is made perfect in their weakness. Are they not needy? Oh, yes, but then they bring their needs to Him and they receive out of His fullness, “Grace for Grace.” But are they not often in danger? Oh, yes, in a thousand dangers! But they come and hide beneath the shadow of God's wings and He covers them with His feathers and there they rest in perfect security! His Truth becomes their shield and buckler so that they need not fear any foe. But are they not apt to slip? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to Him who gives His angels charge over them—to keep them in all their ways and to bear them up in their hands, lest they should dash their feet against a stone. But are they not very fickle and changeable? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to Him who says, “I am Jehovah, I change not.” But are they not unworthy? Oh, yes, in themselves they are utterly unworthy! But they commit themselves to Him who is called The Lord Their Righteousness—and when they are clothed in His Righteousness, they are looked upon by God as being “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” But have they no sickness? Yes, but they commit themselves to Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord the Healer—and He either heals their sickness, or gives them the Grace to endure it. Are they not poor? Yes, many of them are extremely so! But they commit themselves to the faithful Promiser and so bread is

given them and their water is sure. But don't they expect to die? Oh, yes, unless the Lord should first come, but they are not afraid to die! This is the point, above all others, in which the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God. They have learned that sweet prayer of David so well that it is often on their tongues, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." They committed their spirit into God's hands years ago and He has kept them until now—and they know that He will not fail them in their dying hour.

In conclusion, I pray every spiritually poor heart to commit itself to God. I like to do this every morning. Satan often comes and says, "You are no Christian! All your supposed Christian experience is false." Very well, suppose it has been false? Then I will start afresh—saint or no saint! I will begin over again by trusting Christ to be my Savior. When you, dear Friend, wake tomorrow morning, let this be the first thing that you do—commit yourself to Jesus Christ for the whole of the day. Say, "My Lord, here is my heart which I commit to You. While I am away from home, may my heart be full of the fragrance of Your blessed Presence. And when I return at night, may I still find my heart in Your kind keeping!" And every night, before we go to sleep, let us pray—

***"Should swift death this night overtake us,
And our couch become our tomb,
May the morn in Heaven awake us,
Clad in light and deathless bloom!"***

Are you going to a foreign land? Then renew the committal of your life to God. Are you going to change your state, and enter upon the joys and responsibilities of married life? Then commit yourself to God. Are you going to a new situation, or opening a new business? Is any change coming over you? Then make a new committal, or a re-committal of your soul to the Lord Jesus—only take care that you do it heartily and thoroughly—and make no reserve. I rejoice to feel that I have committed myself to Christ as the slave of old committed himself to his master. When the time came for him to be set free under the Jewish Law, he said to his master, "No, I do not want to go. I love you, I love your children, I love your household, I love your service. I do not want to be free." Then you know that the master was to take an awl and fasten him by the ear to the doorpost. I suppose this was done to see whether the man really wanted to remain with his master or not. Ah, Beloved, some of us have had our ears bored long ago! We have given ourselves up to Christ and we have a mark upon us which we can never lose. Were we not buried with Him by Baptism unto death—a symbol that we are dead to the world and buried to the world for His dear sake? Well, in that same way, give yourself wholly up to Jesus! Commit yourself to Him. As that young bride commits all her life's joys and hopes to that dear bridegroom into whose face she looks so lovingly, so, O Souls, commit yourselves to that dearest Bridegroom in earth or Heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ! Commit yourselves to Him, to love and to be loved—His to obey, His to serve and His to be kept—His in life—and you need not add "till death us do part," but you may say, "till death shall wed us more completely and we shall

sit together at the marriage banquet above and be forever and forever one before the Throne of God.”

Thus the poor soul commits itself unto Christ, is married unto Christ, gets the portion which Christ possesses, becomes Christ's own and then lives with Christ forever! Oh that this might be the time in which many a man and many a woman would commit themselves to Christ! I do not merely mean you who are poor in pocket, but you who are poor in spirit—I am asking you to commit yourselves to Christ. Do not put it off, but may this be the very hour in which you shall be committed to Christ and He shall take possession of you to be His forever and forever! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 31.

Verse 1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* This is a good beginning. This is the fulcrum which will give us the necessary leverage for lifting any weight of sorrow or trouble that may be burdening us—“In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust.” Can each of us truthfully say that to begin with? If so, we may go on with David to the petitions that follow.

1. *Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness.* It would be to us the shame of shames if God, in whom we put our trust, could fail us. Then, indeed, might the scoffers say, “Where, now, is their God?” And what should we then be able to say of the righteousness of God? He has pledged Himself that He will never fail nor forsake any of His people. So, if He ever did fail them, what would become of His honor?

2. *Bow down Your ear to me.* “Listen to me, O Lord! Stoop down out of Your Glory to catch the faint accents of my sorrowing, almost expiring spirit.”

2. *Deliver me speedily.* “My case is urgent, Lord, for I am in deep distress. Delay will be dangerous and may be even fatal—‘Deliver me speedily.’”

2. *Be You my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me.* David was so accustomed to hide in the rocks of Engedi and similar fastnesses, that we do not wonder that he found such a comparison as this come naturally to his mind—“Be You my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me.”

3. *For You are my rock and my fortress.* Why did David just now pray God to be to him what he here says that God is? Surely it was in order that he might know *experimentally* what he already knew doctrinally—he wanted the Truth of God, in which he already believed, to be proven in his own experience, so he prayed to the Lord, “Be You my strong rock...for You are my rock and my fortress.”

3. *Therefore for Your name's sake.* “For Your glory's sake, for Your honor's sake.”

3. *Lead me and guide me.* “Lead me as a child needs to be led. Guide me as a traveler in a foreign land needs to be guided. I need You to both lead and to guide me.”

4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me: for You are my strength.* Sometimes the Believer gets so entangled that he sees no way of escape. He is caught like a bird in the fowler's net and he is so surrounded by it that he cries to the Lord, "Pull me out of the net." He feels that he can only be delivered by the putting forth of God's power—and that is the reason why he adds, "O Lord, use Your strength on my behalf! Give a desperate tug and pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me; for You are my strength."

5. *Into Your hands I commit my spirit.* The dying words of Jesus may well be the living words of each one of His redeemed people. We ought continually to commit our spirit into our great Father's hands, for there is no other place that can be so safe and blessed as between the strong, almighty, never-failing hands of the eternal God!

5. *You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.* Redemption is such a blessed ground for confidence in God. Even the ordinary redemptions, such as David had experienced when the Lord had redeemed him out of the hand of his enemies and redeemed him out of troubles of many kinds, were great sources of consolation to David. But what shall we say of that rich, full, free redemption which Christ accomplished for His people upon Calvary's Cross? Think you that God will not keep those whom He has purchased with the blood of His own dear Son? Will He suffer those to perish who have cost Him so dearly? Oh, no! None shall pluck them from His hands. This is a sound argument that David uses—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth."

6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities.* That is, those that trusted in their idol gods which he calls by this contemptuous name, "lying vanities." David was not very respectful to false religions. He called them vanities and lies, and said, "I have hated them that regard them."

6, 7. *But I trust in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy: for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities.* "You have considered my trouble.' You have looked at it, weighed it, understood it." When a wise man gives his consideration to a thing, we respect his judgment, but what shall we say of the consideration of God? This is a wonderful expression—"You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities." "When I hardly knew myself, and could not make out what I was or where I was, You have known all about me. You have known me when I was in rags and tatters, when I was so down at the heel that nobody else would acknowledge me. You did not discard me—You have known my soul in adversities."

8-10. *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: my eyes are consumed with grief. Yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.* That is better than spending our years in sinning! Yet it is a painful experience when every breath seems to be drawn with a pang and the effort to live is itself a struggle, as it is in certain trying diseases.

10, 11. *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors.* They were the nearest to him and, therefore, could smite him the most keenly.

11. *And a fear to my acquaintance.* They did not like to acknowledge him even as an acquaintance. They were afraid of him. Yet what a light this verse throws upon David's previous declaration, "You have known my soul in adversities"!

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.* The very man in whose honor, in the former times, the women out of all the cities of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," now had sorrowfully to say, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind."

12. *I am like a broken vessel.* "Men think me of no more value than a piece of broken crockery that is flung away on the dunghill as utterly useless."

13. *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side.* The very best of men have had to smart under the wounds caused by that cruel, accursed thing, slander! No quality of purity, no degree of piety can screen a man from the tongue of slander. In fact, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, it is often the best of men who are most slandered.

13, 14. *While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD: I said, You are my God.* That is a grand utterance of the Psalmist! Now he is coming back to the point where he began—the Psalm is now in harmony with its keynote.

15. *My times are in Your hands.* My times are not in the hands of my enemies—they cannot hurt me without God's permission.

15, 16. *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* Oh, for the shining of God's face! How blessed and glorious they are! It is Heaven on earth to dwell within the circle of that light—but if we get out of the range of those rays, what joy can we have?

16. *Save me for Your mercies' sake.* That is a prayer for a sinner and a prayer for a saint—a prayer for every day of the year. "Save me for Your mercies' sake."

17-19. *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You.* Then be of good courage, you tried ones! Think of all the good things that are laid up in store for you—the treasures that are put away for the present. Nor is this all—"How great is Your goodness."

19. *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men!* So there is goodness in the present as well as goodness in the future—goodness worked out as well as goodness stored up!

20. *You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

There is nothing much worse than the strife of tongues. A pack of wolves would not be half as bad as a pack of tongues let loose upon a man! Wolves do but tear the flesh, but tongues devour a man's character and eat up his very life. Oh, how blessed it is to be kept secretly in God's royal pavilion from the strife of tongues!

21. *Blessed be the LORD; for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city.* He has kept me in safety, and preserved me from every foe. Blessed be His holy name!

22, 23. *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the LORD, all you His saints.* It seems as if David felt that he could not love the Lord sufficiently by himself, so he calls upon all the saints to bring their hearts full of love and yield their treasure unto God.

23. *For the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer.* He gives him a sharp blow with the back of His hand, but He gives to the righteous a full-handed mercy!

24. *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.* Your heart is faint, but the Lord will put strength where there now is weakness. Therefore "be of good courage." Cowardice weakens, fear saps a man's strength—so "be of good courage," for your strength shall be equal to your day—and you shall yet win the victory, "all you that hope in the Lord."

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THOUGHT-READING EXTRAORDINARY

NO. 1802

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear.”
Psalm 10:17.

NOTICE at the outset, the logic of this verse. It is very simple, very forcible, very accurate logic. It runs thus—“You have”—“You will.” “Lord, *You have* heard the desire of the humble: *You will* prepare their heart.” When you know that the Lord God is immutable, “the same yesterday, to-day and forever,” you may conclude without mistake that what He has done, He is prepared to do again. The argument from the past to the future would be a sorry one if you were dealing with fallible man, for what man has done is no sure guarantee of what he may do! He is such a creature of freaks and whims, but when you have to deal with the Eternal God, who is faithful and true, and changes not, you may reckon with safety that the thing which has been is the thing which shall be. Well did the Apostle say, “Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.”

On looking at the text, again, you will see that the same blessed logic is carried a step farther, for you read, “You will,” and then, again, “You will”—“*You will* prepare their heart, *You will* cause Your ear to hear.” Faith, first of all, concludes that God will bless because of *former* blessings. And then she is so sure of her conclusion that upon it she is prepared to build up a further confidence. This is a noble faith, worthy of imitation—but it is by no means common—not a hundredth part as common as it ought to be! To doubtful minds it is difficult, even, to infer the future from a present fact immediately before their eyes, but to the believing heart it is an easy thing to do something *more* than that! Namely, to draw an *inference* of hope from a *former* inference of hope.

Faith builds a sure abode with invisible stones. She expects, because she has experienced, and experiences what she expects! Why not? Is not faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen? Since that which we believe is sure, it is worthy to be the foundation of further faith. We are very fond of that verse—

***“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”***

By such language we praise God for mercy not yet received. And our text suggests another practical use of “things not seen as yet,” namely, to make them, as apprehended by our faith, the basis of a still higher confidence in God. This is to be built up on our most holy faith. Rest assured that this is not constructing castles in the air, for our faith is no delusion! It is made of solid, substantial stuff, before which even the supposed infallibilities of science are trifles light as air.

Because our Good Shepherd has made us to lie down in green pastures, we argue that there is no cause for fear though we walk through the valley of death-shade—and from that we surely gather that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives. Such reasoning is as accurate as the demonstrations of geometry! The Lord will never leave us to be ashamed of our hope. Learn this logic and it will keep you in good stead in times of distress, when nothing but certainty will sustain you. The Lord *is* good and, therefore, He *will be* good! He will keep the feet of His saints and because He will do this, we shall enter His palace with joy.

Apply this logic to prayer. God has answered prayer and, therefore, He will answer it! Of this first statement many of us are witnesses. The evidences of that Truth of God are with us in daily experience—we have proofs of the power of prayer as innumerable as the stars of Heaven. Because the Lord has heard us out of His holy place, we infer that He *will* still hear us and, therefore, as long as we live, we will we call upon Him. This is no casual thing, but it is Jehovah’s perpetual name and standing memorial—the God Who Hears Prayer! Never while the earth endures will He forsake the Throne of Grace and turn a deaf ear to the cries of His suppliant Israel!

The subject of this morning is thus introduced to you. It is *necessary* that you pray, for the needy must cry to their helper. And it is *profitable* that you pray, for the bosoms of suppliants are filled with benedictions. It is not a vain thing to wait upon God—it is your comfort, your strength, your life! If you seek honor, it should be your delight to pray, for nothing is more ennobling than to win the ear of the Lord of All! A man admitted to audience with the Most High is honored in an unspeakable degree. We shall speak, this morning, in the way of five observations drawn from our text. May each one be made profitable to us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. Our first observation is written upon the surface of the Scripture before us—THE LOWLIEST FORM OF PRAYER MAY BE MOST TRUE AND ACCEPTABLE. And what is that lowliest form of prayer? Is it not described in the text? “The *desire* of the *humble*.” It is not the prayer of the serene faith of Abraham, nor the wrestling of energetic Jacob, nor the intercession of prevailing Moses, nor the pleading of holy Samuel, nor the commanding cry of Elijah shutting and opening Heaven—it is only a *desire*—a motion of the heart towards good things! And yet the Lord hears it. Indeed, the lowliest form of prayer may be the truest, for the *essence* of all real prayer is *desire*. Words are but the habitation of prayer, the living tenant is desire.

We see from our text that desires are prevailing prayers, for the Lord has made a point of hearing them—"You have heard the desire of the humble." Other forms of prayer may be attractive to man and yet they may have no influence whatever with the living God. But this manner of supplication has been successful from of old, even as it is written—"He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him." And again, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." In fact, prayer is desire, as our poet puts it—

***"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast."***

The lowest form of true prayer secures the ear of the Highest and what more is needed?

Observe, it is only a desire—"the desire of the humble." A desire may be altogether unattended by speech. The suppliant may not be able to put his desire into words at all. He may be too sorrowful; his emotions may choke his utterances. He may be too quiet and so may be quite unversed in the use of speech. He may be only able to pour forth groans that cannot be uttered and tears whose eloquence is silent—yet God is pleased to hear the desire which lacks expression! Many prayers are very prettily expressed. In fact, they are expressed so grandly that their tawdry fineries will not be tolerated in Heaven! Those prayers will never enter Heaven's gate which are meant to catch the applause of man! God will say, "They were meant for men, so let men have them." He does not stoop to accept man's leftovers and if a prayer is meant to be a feast for *man*, God will not be a second-rate guest at its table!

On the other hand, many sincere persons condemn themselves because they cannot offer public prayer as their Brethren do—they even tremble, perhaps, to pray before their *families*—and this is a grief to them. I think, if they are men, they should prove their manhood by overcoming such diffidence. I would urge them to make the attempt with much resolution and perseverance—and should they fail in it through positive inability, there will be cause for regret—but no reason for self-condemnation. There may be more prayer in the silent than in the fluent. God has heard prayers which nobody else could possibly have heard because there was no vocal sound about them. So quick is the ear of God that He hears that which is not properly the subject of hearing—the true prayer which abides in silence shall not meet with a silent God!

This desire may not be recommended by any conscious attainments on the part of the offerer. The man may reach far in his desire, but he may have attained to little beyond. He may have a wealth of desire and a poverty of everything else and yet he may be heard of the Lord. Possibly his confession may run thus—"I desire to be humble, but I lament my pride. I desire to be strong in faith, but I mourn my unbelief. I desire to be fervent, but I sigh over my lukewarmness. I desire to be holy, but I confess my transgressions. I desire my prayer should be such as God can accept, but I fear that I waver, or ask amiss." Now such a confession, if penitently

presented, will not prevent our obtaining the promise, for the Lord has heard the desire of the humble.

If your heart seethes and boils with desires, the steam thereof will rise to Heaven! If your stock-in-trade is made up of empty vessels and of little else, the Lord can deal with you as He did with the Prophet's widow, "who had empty vessels not a few." Your little oil of Grace He can multiply till every vessel is filled to the brim! Have you desires?—great, hungry, thirsty desires? Then bring them to the Lord! Are your desires as insatiable as the horseleech, which is always sucking, but which always craves for more, crying always, "Give, give, give"? Then say with David, "All my desires are before You," and be assured that the Lord satisfies the desire of every living thing! Be comforted if your desires are awake. You are praying and your cry is being heard! You shall yet say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him." Your desires have voices of their own—they knock hard at Heaven's door and it shall be opened unto them.

Note, again, that this desire may be unaccompanied by any confident expectation. When you pray you ought to believe the promise and expect its fulfillment. It is the duty and the privilege of every suppliant to believe that when he prays in the name of Jesus, he *must* and *shall* be heard. But sometimes humility, which is a good thing, is attended by a lack of faith—which is an evil thing—and this much hinders prayer. Humility is deceived by unbelief and so it gives way to the dark thought that its poor feeble prayer will not speed with God. I fear that in some cases this lack of expectancy is an effectual *barrier* to prayer and prevents its being answered. But it is forgiven to naturally despondent, heavily-laden spirits whose fears are not so much doubts of God as a deeply humiliating judgment of themselves.

It is not so much the case that their faith is sinfully defective as that they have a painfully acute sense of their own unworthiness—and so when they cry they *hope* that the Lord will hear them and they mean to wait upon Him till He does—but they are sorely afraid. They will go nowhere else, for they have no other hope but that which lies in the Free Grace and sovereign mercy of God. But they do not exercise that happy expectancy which the sure promise warrants their enjoying. My Brothers and Sisters, I would chide your unbelief, but I would still encourage your desires, for that desire which God hears is not to be despised! The text says, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble," and the Lord will yet hear your humble sighs and groans! And you shall be surprised to find the Lord doing for you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or even thought! May your faith grow exceedingly, being fed upon the heavenly food which the Lord deals out to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

This leads me to observe that this commencing form of prayer which the Lord nevertheless hears, is here further described as, "*the desire of the humble.*" It has this advantage about it, that it is free from pride! Some men's prayers, if they were to pray them as their foolish hearts really desire, would be requests that they might be made famous. Be not startled

when I say it—I fear that many men *proudly* ask to be humble! They desire to be humble in order that they may be admired for it! I have no doubt, whatever, that some professors seek great Grace that they may be highly thought of and greatly set by in the market of the Church. Have we not all found that in the rushing stream of our earnest zeal there will be some backwater which runs not towards God but towards ourselves? Have we not even strived to win souls that we might be notable as soul-winners?

Yes, and have we not sought to glorify God that we might shine in the reflection of that glory? “Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord,” has been the language of many a Jehu! Oh, it is hard to keep out pride! This Psalm says much concerning the proud man and the oppressor, whom God abhors, and will surely visit in *judgment!* But then this bright word shines forth like a lone star in a dark night! Never was a precious pearl found in a rougher oyster shell! May the Lord *keep* us humble if we are so—and *make* us humble if we are not! I believe every Christian man has a choice between being humble and being humbled. Now, to be humble is a sweet thing—there is no lovelier spot on the road to the Celestial City than the Valley of Humiliation—he that lives in it, dwells among flowers and birds, and may sing all day long, like the shepherd boy whose song ran thus—

**“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.”**

If you do not choose to be humble you will have to be humbled—and that is not at all a desirable thing. To be humbled is to be sorely smitten and made to suffer shame in the estimation of your fellow men, both ungodly and godly. Certain persons who have carried their heads very high have struck them against the beam and have had to go with bruised foreheads for the rest of their lives! God resists the proud, but gives Grace to the humble. Therefore may God help us to offer before Him, “the desire of the humble.” “The desire of the humble” is saturated with a Gospel spirit and, therefore, is acceptable with the God of all Grace! Pride seems born of the Law, though I scarcely know why it should be, for the Law censures and condemns. Humility is the child of the Gospel and is brought up upon the knees of Grace. If you would be a child of God, you must be lowly in your own esteem. If you would be heard in prayer, you must come to God as needy and empty. Low thoughts of ourselves are the companions of prevailing prayers. No man may expect to receive out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ Jesus until he is willing to confess his own poverty. Grace for Grace will be given only to those who feel need upon need—all successful pleading must find their argument in Free Grace!

We must never urge claims against the Lord as though He were our debtor, for then Mercy will not deal with us—we have appealed unto the Caesar of justice and unto Caesar we must go! Let us have done with merits and rewards! Let this be our cry, “For Your mercy and for Your truth’s

sake, and for Your Son's sake, hear You the voice of my prayer." This is the proper Gospel spirit. If we plead in any other fashion, we shall be sent away empty. Still, this, "desire of the humble," is apt to be somewhat restricted and straitened. If we contract our desires to the measure of our just deserts, they will shrivel into *nothing*, for our deserts are less than nothing! It is ill to pray according to your sense of what you have a right to ask. You have a legal right to ask for *nothing* but justice! And who among us can abide its action apart from Jesus? "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

You had better pray according to God's command—and that runs thus—"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The truest humility is that which is immediately obedient to the gracious precept and accepts, without question, that which the Lord so freely gives. We have a natural *right* to nothing—but when the Lord commands us to open our mouth wide, He thereby gives us a *Covenant* right to all things! Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, if your humility should cramp your desire. If you feel as if you would *desire* a great gift but dare not ask, still it is a desire. If you say, "I see the sweetness of the mercy, but it seems too good for such a soul as mine," yet I spy at the back of your humility a true and strong *desire* and I pray that the Lord may hear that desire and answer you for His mercy's sake. Forget not this first Truth of God—that what seems to be the lowliest form of prayer is, nevertheless, *true* prayer.

II. Our second point is full of comfort to those who have begun to pray. GOD IS QUICK TO HEAR THE LOWLIEST PRAYER—"You have heard the desire of the humble." *This must be a Divine science*—this art of hearing desires. We have heard a good deal, lately, about thought reading. I give no opinion of that matter among men, but here is a wonderful instance of it with the Lord. "You have heard the desire of the humble." This kind of desire reading is the prerogative of God, alone! He knows our desires even when *we* do not know them, ourselves! Sitting in this Tabernacle you are desiring, but it is quite impossible for the person sitting next to you to know your wishes—and it is quite as well, perhaps, that it is so.

Certain it is that the servant of God, Eli, himself, fresh from the shrine of the Most High, could not read Hannah's desires. Her lips were moving and one would think if *anything* could be learned, it might be from the moving of the lips. But Eli thought her drunk and, therefore, chattering to herself, and so he rebuked her. Was it not a mercy for Hannah that *God* heard her humble desire and knew all about it? Beloved, the Lord is reading your thoughts now! My dear Sister, your groaning out of the very deeps has ascended to the heights! You would not like to tell your inward feelings—perhaps your secret is too painful to be told—never mind, God's ear is so quick that He can hear your *desires*! Wonderful art! We would be very glad if the Lord had promised to hear us when we *speak*, but He has gone far beyond that—He hears the unspeakable and unutterable!

Was there ever power and pity like this? Be comforted, you that are full of desires, this morning, and are sitting here with hearts ready to break, crying in your spirit, "Oh that the Lord would hear me! Oh that He would

give me peace! Oh that the days of my mourning were ended! Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" Do not sink in despair! There is no reason for fear—your case is among the most hopeful—for it is the way of the Lord to hear the desire of the humble.

It is an art which has been exercised by God in all ages. He does not merely possess the power, but He exercises it! I like my text for putting it in the past tense—"You have heard the desire of the humble." It is a matter of frequent fact and not merely a possible event! It is not the bare assertion of a power, but the record of a deed! All along through history, wherever gracious men have lived, their hearts have talked with God as well without words as with them. The pulsing of human spirits, God has heard as surely as if they had been loud as the beat of a drum! The sigh of the soul has come up before Him as clearly as if it had been the note of a clarion! The Lord's ear is never heavy. He is not weary of the feebleness and faults of the poor man's petition. The Lord still hears in the day of trouble—and the name of the God of Jacob defends us—

***"When God inclines the heart to pray,
He has an ear to hear!
To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."***

Today let this be told! It ought not to be buried in ungrateful silence. It is mentioned in the text, let it be mentioned in your conversation. If some here present had the opportunity, we could tell you how God has heard our desires and how, at times, *before* the desire has actually been formed in the soul the answer has come, according to that Word of God, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." We had a desire laid upon our heart which we never communicated to any living person except the living God—and we carried that desire in our heart for weeks and months, constantly allowing it to burn in our bosom, and frequently letting it break out in groans and broken cries—and in due time our sighs reached the heart of God! As surely as we have sown in prayer, we have, in due season reaped a harvest of blessing!

Our Lord, even in Gethsemane, was heard in that He feared—sure pledge to all His redeemed that they shall be heard in their hour of darkness! Happy are they who dwell in God, for they may have what they please at the Mercy Seat. Is it not written, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart"? Has it not been so with you, O you who abide under the shadow of the Almighty? I charge you, then, to abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness! Fail not to tell your experience of the Lord's faithfulness—for God loses much glory and poor sinners and saints, too, lose much encouragement to pray—when children of God are silent about their success at the Throne of Grace.

Oh, I wish I could be the means of stirring some, this morning, to pray the prayer of faith while sitting here! You may say, "I will pray when I get home." You may do so, if you please, but I am urging you to something more speedy! Remember the publican? It was in God's house that he

prayed and though he did not dare to lift his eyes to Heaven, yet He sighed in his soul this prayer—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And he went down to his house justified rather than the other! I do not ask you to withhold that prayer till you reach home, but would it not be a grand thing to be saved *here*, and to go home justified? You shall have that unspeakable blessing, now, if your desire is a true one and you pour it out at once, believingly, before the Lord! He has heard the same many times and is prepared to hear you in the same manner.

Why should not this first Sunday in October be a day of Grace unto your souls? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." This is an accepted time! The Spirit of God is near! If God is now inclining you to pray, do not resist the gentle movement of His Spirit, but let your prayer come forth, encouraged by the sweet language of my text. Say unto the prayer-hearing God, "You have heard the desire of the humble. Why should You not hear my desire at this hour, and bless me, even me, also, O my Father?"

III. Thirdly, we will remark that THE HEART IS THE MAIN MATTER IN PRAYER. That is clearly shown in the text—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." Desires are the fruit of the *heart*. "You will prepare their heart." When God comes to deal with men in a way of Grace, His first business is to prepare their heart so that, most assuredly, the state of the heart is of prime importance. The heart is the source, the seat and the *essence* of supplication. Prayer with the heart is the heart of prayer—the cry of our soul is the soul of our cry.

Without the heart, prayer is a wretched mockery. There is as much Divine Grace in the bark of a dog or the grunt of a swine as in a form of prayer if the heart is absent. And God is as likely, no, *more* likely, to hear the cry of ravens and young lions, than to regard prayers uttered in Chapels, Churches, Meeting Houses or Cathedrals, if the mind is not in earnest. Do not say, "I read my collect this morning"—you may read 50 collects and be none the better! Do not say, "I went through the prayers which I learned from a godly mother"—you may go through them 20,000 times and yet never pray once! Unless the heart speaks with God, you have done nothing for your own good with all your "Pater Nosters" or other goodly words—no, you may have done something to your own *hurt* in all this pretence of praying!

I fear that much so-called public prayer is nothing better than presumptuous sin. If your child should come to you and ask a favor in an affected voice, would you notice him? If, instead of saying, "Dear Father, I want such-and-such," he should take up a book and intone such words as these, "Dearly beloved Father, I have to request of you that you, in your great affection, will give unto me such-and-such things," you would not regard his nonsense! You would say, "Come, boy, what do you want? Tell me plainly!" And if he continued to intone, you would drive him out of the room, perhaps, with the aid of your foot! I fear that this praying in sing-song is the most fearful mockery God ever hears. Fancy Peter, when he was beginning to sink, intoning, "Lord, save me!" When the heart really

gets to speak with God, it cannot talk in affected tones—it throws such rubbish overboard!

But cannot a man pray with his heart and yet use a written prayer? Certainly he can! Many have done so for years. If you cannot walk without your crutches, I would sooner you walked with them than not at all. Still, it is not the best words put together by the most devout men that ever lived, nor the holiest language composed extemporaneously by yourself, that can make up prayer if the heart is gone. Words are seldom more than the baggage of prayer. Language, at best, is but the flesh in which prayer is embodied. The desire of the *heart* is the life of the prayer! See you to your heart, for God sees to it—“You will prepare their heart.” Sometimes the Lord puts words into men’s mouths. He says, “Take with you words, and come unto Me,” and thus He prepares words for their use. But in general, the main concern with God is that the heart is prepared to plead with Him.

Without the heart, prayer is a nullity and *when there is but little heart, prayer is a failure*. He that prays with little desire asks God to refuse him. If you go through your prayer and your mind is wandering up and down about a thousand vanities, your desires are feeble and your supplication will have little effect. Prayer must be fervent to be effectual. It must be ardent to be acceptable. If the utter failure of your prayer would not greatly grieve you and if its success would not much gratify you, then depend upon it, you will have to wait long at Mercy’s wicket before it will admit you. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Importunity is indispensable! Our Lord has given us many parables to that effect. To play at praying will never do—your heart and soul must be fully awake, for no sleepy prayer can enter Heaven. We must praise God with our whole heart and we must pray in the same manner. If double-minded man may not expect to receive anything of the Lord, neither may a half-hearted man. Above all things, keep your heart with all diligence if you would speed at the Throne of God.

Success comes to the prayer of a glowing heart. When the soul grows warm, the spirit is fervent and desires are strong, then, Brothers and Sisters, do not spare your prayers! We are not always in that condition—let us pray much when we are. We are bound to prepare ourselves for prayer, but I believe the best qualifications are strong desires and intense longings. No preparation for food is equal to intense hunger. You have the best sauce with your meat when you are hungry. It will be your wisdom, when your desires are sharp, to pray more than you ordinarily do. You cannot always pray alike, but when good times come, use them! When a fair mind fills the sails of desire, then make all possible headway. Set apart a longer season for private devotion when the soul is all alive and active in it. At another time you may have to try very hard and make but small progress, for the chariot wheels may be taken off—let it not, at such a time, be a source of regret that you wasted a happier season. Cease not to obtain blessings beyond number both for yourself, for the Church and for a per-

ishing world—but take heed that your heart is found greatly exercised with longings of soul before God.

IV. Fourthly, GOD HIMSELF PREPARES THE HEARTS OF HIS PEOPLE. “You will prepare their heart.” I am greatly rejoiced by this statement that God will prepare our hearts to pray, because it is a most *important* business on which so much depends. On the heart, the whole machinery of life depends and it needs preparing, especially for devotion. You cannot spring out of bed and, on every occasion, pray in a moment without thought or reflection. You cannot say to yourself, “I have just been listening to ungodly talk and now I am going to pray.” It will be poor, pitiful praying which springs up from the barren soil of thoughtlessness. We need *preparation* in coming into the courts of the Lord’s house—the soul has to take her shoes off her feet because the place is holy.

But this preparation is often as difficult as it is necessary and, therefore, it is a great mercy that our God undertakes to work it in us. Surely none but the Lord can prepare a heart for prayer! One old writer says it is far harder work to raise the big bell into the steeple than to ring it afterwards. This witness is true. When the bell is well hung you can ring it readily enough—but in that uplifting of the heart lies the work and the labor. Before musicians begin to play, they attend to their strings and see that their instruments are in order—you wish, perhaps, that the operation could be dispensed with, but it cannot be—it is one of the most necessary parts of the musician’s work. Until he has learned to tune his instrument, what does he know? Until he has tuned it, what can he do? I wish we were all made ready, as a people prepared for the Lord.

These processes by which the heart is prepared *may have commenced far back*. Our gracious God may have prepared the heart of a man to pray today by a work which He worked upon him, or for him, 20 years ago. The Lord may be working a man up to a certain prayer by years of sorrow or joy. The poet who composes a sonnet may not be able to tell you why the inspiration came to him at that particular moment, for it may have been the outcome of his soul throughout the whole of his life. That which the songster threw into words, today, may have lain hidden in his soul from his boyhood. He was not prepared for penning his stanzas, then, but his later life trained him to speak in numbers and to clothe noble thoughts in the dress of attractive language. So may it be with our prayers—they may be the juice of a life-vintage, the ripened harvest of youth and manhood. In any case, *God* prepares the heart to be blessed when He is prepared to bless it.

One of the most difficult things in preparation for prayer is the *restraining of loose and wandering thoughts*. I do not know how *perfect* Brothers and Sisters keep themselves free from every evil thought, for I find myself defeated often when I would shut out these vile intruders! Honestly, I may express my belief that these carnal boasters have as many vain thoughts as other people. The ravenous birds will come down upon the sacrifice even when *Abraham* offers it—and it costs infinite pains to drive them away. Intruding thoughts surround us like a plague of flies—they are

here, there, and everywhere! It is well, indeed, that God should prepare our hearts, for in this *one point* our weakness is complete. Egypt suffered from a plague of flies which all Pharaoh's armies could not drive away, but when the Lord heard the prayer of Moses, it is said, "The Lord removed the swarms of flies: there remained not one." That was a deliverance, indeed—truly this was the finger of God!

When the Lord comes to prepare His people's hearts by His Spirit, He chases away every wandering thought so that there remains not one. Tradition says of Solomon's temple that though much meat was consumed there, and this naturally attracts flies, yet there was never a fly in the holy place. I wish it were so with our holy place! O that it might be so that whenever we pray, all evil thoughts may be driven out. This is a miracle, and none can perform it but the Lord our God. "You will prepare their heart."

Next, the Lord prepares His people's hearts by *giving them a deep sense of what they need*. I know your grief, your temptation, your misery and the crying out of your spirit under the lashes of conscience, but all this is right, thus you are instructed in the art and mystery of supplication. Nobody cries to Christ so well as the man who is beginning to sink. Jonah's cry in the whale's belly was the most intense prayer he ever prayed. When the iron enters into your soul, then you cry unto the Lord in your trouble! A sentence of death in your own soul is a mighty quickener of supplication. When your spirit is overwhelmed with sorrow, then look up to Christ, the Savior, and find Him to be your soul's joy! Our desires are apt to sleep, but when the Lord, by His Spirit, reveals to us our spiritual poverty, we long, pine and sigh for spiritual blessings.

When a man, out of the anguish of his heart cries for mercy, then he begins to search out and *lay hold upon the promise*. To bring the promise to remembrance is a part of the Holy Spirit's work—He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. Oh, how blessedly a man can pray when he gets hold of a promise, when he is sure that God has a blessing in store for him, when he is positive that the Lord is faithful to His covenant and will not withhold any good thing from him! The Lord also works in us *strong faith, holy perseverance and high expectancy*. And in all these ways He prepares our hearts to pray.

Nor is this all. The text does not say that God will only prepare the heart *to pray*, but it says, "You will prepare the heart," and this is a wider work, making ready for other matters besides prayer. He will prepare the heart to receive the answer, for many of us are not as yet ready to enjoy what God is ready to bestow. Do you need anything which Jesus can give you? Give your heart up to the Holy Spirit, that He may prepare you to seek the blessing and prepare you to receive the blessing when the time comes for the Lord to grant it. "You will prepare their heart"—this is wonderful condescension on God's part—and on our part we ought to feel the utmost encouragement to prepare our own hearts for earnest supplication.

V. Lastly, PRAYER FROM PREPARED HEARTS MUST BE HEARD. “You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear.” I wish you would join these two sentences together in your minds and carry them home with you. Let the two bells ring in harmony—“You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear.” Ring them over and over, again, and let their blended music linger in your ears.

First, *if God has had love enough to prepare your heart to pray, He has Grace enough to give you the blessing.* The more difficult thing of the two is not to give the blessing, but to prepare your heart to cry for it! If He has done the one, He will certainly do the other. Consider *the truthfulness, the faithfulness and the goodness of God*—and you will see that it is not possible that He should teach a man to pray for a blessing which He will not give! I cannot imagine any of you tantalizing your child by exciting in him a desire that you do not intend to gratify. It were a very ungenerous thing to offer alms to the poor and then, when they hold out their hand for it, to mock their poverty with a denial. It were a cruel addition to the miseries of the sick if they were taken to the hospital and left there to die untended and uncared for.

Where God leads you to pray, He means you to receive. You find a holy desire in your heart? The Lord put that desire into your heart and, for the honor of His infinite majesty, lest He stain His goodness and dishonor His great name, He *must* hear you! With what comfort would I address those here who are beginning to pray. I know I speak to some who are uneasy, unrestful. You tell us you are seeking peace, that day and night a desire for salvation occupies the entire chamber of your soul. Well, this did not come from your own nature—neither the devil nor the old Adam has taught you to pray!

Dear Hearer, you can be sure that the great Father who is moving you to cry to Him is hearing you! He is inclining His ear to catch the faintest moan of your spirit. Believe that He is hearing you. Cast yourself at the feet of His dear Son. Behold the wounds of Jesus—let them invite you to draw near to God. I know of no such eloquent mouths as the wounds of the dying Lord! Let them persuade you to come to Jesus—to trust, to rest at His dear feet—for since He has inclined your heart to pray, He is about to hear you and bless you! The Lord be with you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 102.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (VERSION II), 998, 86.**

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A NEW YEAR'S RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT NO. 2342

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 7, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THE EVENING OF NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1871.**

***"LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will
prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."
Psalm 10:17.***

IT has been sometimes said that a good Sabbath makes a good week. Sir Matthew Hale long ago said—

***"A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content,"***

while George Herbert quaintly wrote—

***"The Sundays of man's life
Threaded together on
Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday, Heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife;
More plentiful than hope."***

Sunday is the market day of the week and if a man does well at market, he considers that he has done well for all the week. The Sabbath oils the wheels of the week—its bodily rest is useful, but its spiritual anointing is far more so!

Now, if that is the case, and I think it is, I might venture to say that a good first Sabbath in the year will go a long way towards making a good year. Very often things go on as they begin. It is very seldom that troubles come alone and it is still more seldom that mercies are given to us singly. We may always say, when we get a blessing, "Gad, a troop comes." So I would that we might receive a great blessing on this first Sabbath of another year, that a troop of blessings might follow on the heels thereof, and that a host of mercies might continue to come to us even till we reach the last day of the year—and then that we might begin, again, with new tokens of our Lord's loving kindness and tender mercy~

I thought our text might be a very serviceable Word of God for this first Sabbath evening in the year of Grace, 1871. It is intended to be of use, not only for tonight's sermon, but to be remembered all the year round. I think there is something in it which will render it suitable to all of us at

all times during the next 12 months and, indeed, during the whole of the rest of our lives. We do not know, as we said in prayer just now, which way our pilgrimage may lead us, but I feel persuaded that, with this Inspired passage laid up in our hearts, if we make a right use of it, beneath the cover of Jehovah's wings we may go happily on from this place till again we pitch our tent upon the borders of another year.

Looking at the text, we may divide it into two parts. In the first portion, we have *a very blessed fact*—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." In the second part, we have *two very blessed assurances*—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

I. We will begin with what the text says about A VERY BLESSED FACT—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

I call this a very blessed fact, first, because *it always has been a fact*. In all ages and in all places, wherever there has been a humble heart that has lifted up its desire to God, the Lord has heard that desire! Whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the palace or in the poorhouse, whether in sickness or in health, whether in poverty or in wealth, whether in life or in death, no difference has ever been made—if the desire has been a humble one, from the first man who ever prayed down to this present time—God has always been ready to hear.

And, blessed be His holy name! It is not only an old fact, *it is as much a fact, tonight*, as it was when David first penned these words, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." At this very moment, God's ear is hearing the beating of your hearts. O humble Soul, Jehovah's heart discerns the throbbing of your desire though they are unexpressed in words! His eyes of fire, which pierce us through and through, are reading every longing desire of every anxious bosom here.

It is so now and *it will be a fact all through this year*, God will hear the desire of the humble. It is a fact of the olden times, but it is also a fact of present import and of the future, too. Notice how the Psalmist puts this fact—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." David does not say, "You have heard the *prayer* of the humble." He means that, but he also means a great deal more. Sometimes we have desires that we cannot express—they are too big, too deep—we cannot clothe them in language. At other times we have desires which we dare not express—we feel too bowed down, we see too much of our own unworthiness to be able to venture near the Throne of God to utter our desires—but the Lord hears the desire when we cannot or dare not turn it into the actual form of a prayer. I know you have sometimes said, "I wish I could pray like So-and-So." Often you have thought, "If I could only put a great many beautiful sentences together into goodly shape, then I might be heard." Do not talk so foolishly! If you cannot put two words together correctly, if your *desire* is right, God will hear the desire—

***"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed."***

Prayer is not in the expression or the non-expression—prayer is the soul's sincere desire. The very heart of prayer is in the desire—the essence of the whole matter, the kernel of the nut—is the desire of the heart, not the utterance of the lips. Words without the desire are mere empty husks, but the desire, even without words, is sweet to God, and He accepts it. Can you catch the blessedness of this thought? I say again, before your desire takes a shape in which language could cover it, God will hear it!

You sometimes can hear people's desires, yourself. Many a mother hears her boy's desire. He has gone to sea, but before he went, his mother packed his box. She did not tell him all she put into it—there are some things there that he has not yet seen and he will not find them till he searches to the bottom of the chest. How did she know that he would desire those things? Because she foresaw the position in which he would be placed and the needs which would arise in such a case—and she gathered, from that foresight—what her boy's desire would be. You have seen a poor hungry person shivering in the cold. If he has not accosted you and asked you for alms, yet you have heard the desire beating beneath that ragged coat and you have said to yourself, "That man needs help." You have heard his desire by just looking at him—his very silence seemed to speak to you of his great need. O Soul, God can hear your needs! Jehovah can hear your anguish! The Lord can hear what no one else can hear and what you cannot express!

I have always thought that to be a very clever way of begging, when a man sits down and huddles himself up at a street corner and just writes on the pavement with a piece of chalk, "I am starving." But perhaps it is quite as efficient a plea if the beggar does not write the words—but only if his face looks like starvation and his whole body appears emaciated with need and hunger. You know the man's desire from his very looks. And oh, how sweet it is to think that God looks down with a comprehensive glance, upon humble souls, takes in their whole condition and position with His compassionate eyes and hears their desire though they are unable or afraid to express it!

Notice, however, that David does not say, "Lord, You *will* hear the desire of the humble," but, "Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble. As soon as ever it was born, You heard it." You desire and God hears the desire at the same moment! No, let me correct myself and say that *before it was a desire in your heart*, God knew it would be there and He heard it. He had looked on you when as yet you had not looked on Him and, even then, it might have been truly said, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

What kind of a desire is it that God hears? He does not accept all desires. Some are trifling, some are vain, some are foolish, some are wicked and He is not pleased with such desires. It is the desire of the *humble* that the Lord hears. "Ah," says one, "I am afraid I am not humble." Brother, Sister, it is one mark of a truly humble man that he does not *think himself humble*. If you meet with a person who says he *is* humble, you may con-

clude at once that he is proud, for, usually, there is no boasting in the world that is so full of pride as the boasting of the man who talks of his humility! You humble? Ah, Sir, you need to be humbled a great deal before that will be the truth! The very man who mourns over his pride is, probably, the really humble man.

A humble desire, or the desire of a humble man, has this characteristic—the man knows there is no merit in his desire. If it is a good desire that he has in his heart, he feels, “It will be all through the infinite mercy of God if this desire is realized.” He does not compliment himself and say, “Well done, Self, you have right desires in your heart—there is something good in you.” No, but he fears lest the desire should not be sincere and, when it is deepest and truest, he still strips himself of all rags of self-righteousness, for he cannot see any good, whatever, in the desire that is in his own heart.

A humble man does not desire anything of God for his own honor. He thinks too little of himself to wish to exalt himself and he longs, in all things, to glorify God. He desires his own salvation, but he knows that he does not deserve it, and he, therefore, gives God all the glory even while he rejoices in his own deliverance from going down into the Pit. He sings, with Toplady—

***“Not to myself I owe
That I, O Lord, am Thine.
Free Grace has all the shades broke through
And caused the light to shine.
Me You have willing made
Your offers to receive—
Called by the voice that wakes the dead,
I come to You and live.”***

A humble desire is one which leaves everything in God's hands. The man who has it, says, “Now, though I desire this, it may be it is not a right desire. Lord, I desire only to desire what I ought to desire! My desire is that Your desire should be written on my heart, that I may desire what You desire. Your will be done in my Soul, in my body, in my circumstances and in me, in all respects.”

Now, beloved Friends, I think it will not be very difficult for you to see whether you have that desire of the humble which God hears. But to help you still further, let me give you some of these desires.

This is one of the desires of the humble—“Lord save me! I am lost unless Your mercy comes to my rescue. I am guilty! Forgive me! I have been an enemy to You! Reconcile me! I am diseased with sin! Heal me, for You are the only Physician!” I cannot hear your desires. Let me stop and listen as long as I may, I cannot hear the longings of anyone here who wants God to save him, but, oh, dear Soul, wherever you are and whoever you are, there is a better ear than mine that has *heard* your desire, and that ear belongs to One who will fulfill your desire! Surely, some of you are praying that prayer that I uttered just now—perhaps one who seemed least likely to offer it—God has dropped a hot coal of desire right into his

bosom, right into her soul, and he or she is saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That is one of the desires of the humble that God hears. I will suppose, however, that the Lord has heard that desire in your case and that He has graciously fulfilled it. Now I think I hear some humble soul saying, "Lord, save my children! Lord, convert my boys and girls! I have tried to train them up for You, but I dare not hope that any teaching of mine will be effectual for their salvation unless You put Your hand to the work." I cannot hear the beating of your hearts as you plead for your children. I cannot hear the wife's desires as she inwardly cries, "Lord, save my husband!" Neither can I hear that Sister's longing as she says within her spirit, "O Lord, let my sister live before You! May my brother learn to know Christ!" But, though I cannot hear those desires—and no human being can hear them—God hears them! "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." Make yours a large desire, beloved Friends! Take in all your kinsfolk, take in mine, take in my hearers, take in all this congregation, take in this city of London and let the desire go up that God would save tens of thousands of souls, for He will hear the desire of the humble!

Another desire should be this—"Lord, guide me aright this year!" The young man who feels the force of his passion, should pray, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil!" The merchant who knows the deadening influence of the cares of this world, should cry, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word!" The housewife who looks forward to, she knows not what, of trouble in the family—a suitable prayer for her is, "Let Your Grace, O Lord, be always sufficient for me! Guide me, O Lord, lead me in a plain path! Direct my footsteps and let me, this year, walk in holiness!" I say again, I do not know who is breathing that petition. I hope many of you are doing so, but there is One sitting in the highest heavens, hearing the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who yet condescends to hear the desire of the humble when it takes such a form as this.

I think I know some of you, tonight, who are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in me!" I *do* hear that desire in one heart here, I *can* hear it in my own heart. And God hears it, I trust, in many others. The Sunday school teacher is saying, "Lord, honor Yourself in my class this year! Bring my boys, my girls, to the Savior's feet." You who are preachers are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in our ministry. Give us many souls that shall be our crown of rejoicing, but Your Glory forever!" You who have not had any particular form of duty are saying, "Lord, give me something to do this year! Do not let me be an idler—suffer me not to be a barren tree—get honor to Yourself out of me this year, I beseech You!" Now, wherever such a desire is going up, God hears it! I trust, also, that you are not only desiring God's Glory through yourself, for, if so, that may *not* be a humble desire, but that you are also desiring God's Glory through *all* His servants. Let this be your petition, "O Lord, prosper every minister of Christ, every Sunday school teacher, every visitor of the sick, every tract distributor, everyone who is doing anything for You! O Lord, revive Your work in the

midst of the years! O send out Your Light and Your Truth! Let multitudes of sinners be saved!" If that is your heart's desire, be thankful that God hears the desire of the humble this night and be earnest in presenting that desire at the Throne of Grace.

Now I will leave this first part of my subject. I really think there is much in it which, while it causes you joy as you think of it this evening, may also cause you joy tomorrow and every other day in the year. Suppose you are in a workshop and cannot kneel down to pray—you can *desire* and God will hear that desire even if it is not expressed in words. Perhaps you work where there are ungodly men and you cannot vocally offer your petition to the Lord. If so, you can *desire*. Therefore, thank the Lord that He hears the desire of the humble. Whatever can stop my voice, *nothing* can stop my heart's desire! I can go on desiring and, Glory be to God, He will go on hearing the desire of my heart!

II. Now we must pass on to the second part of our subject, TWO VERY BLESSED ASSURANCES—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

The first assurance is this, "You will prepare their heart." Turn this declaration into a prayer, "Lord, prepare my heart!" We ought all to make some sort of preparation for coming days as far as prudence suggests and circumstances allow. There is a laying up in store for a rainy day that every sensible man will make as far as he is able, but, Brothers and Sisters, the best preparation for the future lies in having a prepared heart! If you get all else prepared, but the heart is not, you have left the major part undone. But if the heart is prepared and a good deal else, unprepared, things may yet come right in the end. All gets right when the heart is right. Out of the heart are the issues of life and those issues of life are true and good when the heart is right. God only can prepare the heart for that which is right—He alone can prepare it for holy living, for happy dying—and for eternity! I want you to get hold of this assurance as a promise for you all through this year, "You will prepare their heart." How shall we understand this expression?

First, God will prepare the heart of the humble *to receive Christ*. "Oh," says one, "I do not feel fit to come to Christ." All the fitness that is needed, God will give you. "You will prepare their heart." You need to be empty, to be broken, to be wounded—all this, the Spirit of God will work upon your conscience by the operation of the Law of the Lord. Do not stand back from Christ because you are unprepared to come to Him. God will prepare you for Christ as He has already prepared Christ for you.

Next, "You will prepare their heart" *to receive more of Christ*. Those of us who have had Christ as our hope and our trust want to get more of Him. I should be very sorry if I thought that, this year, I should not learn something more of my Master than I have known before. I should think it a dreary year if it should pass over my head and I should have no fresh instruction concerning the beauties of His Person and the excellence of His Character. Oh, that we might all receive Christ more fully into our heart!

The heart needs sweeping, cleaning and preparing—and here is the promise that this work shall be Divinely performed! “You will prepare their heart.” Not only for Grace, but for more Grace, will God prepare the heart of the humble!

This year, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall need heart-preparation for the many *duties we shall have to perform for God*. Look forward to them with trust in God. Those who examine the palms of the hand and pretend to foretell the future are fools! Those who believe them are not wise. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth, but we know that every day will bring its need of service. Well then, God will prepare our hearts for it. “You will prepare their heart.” I like to think that nothing shall come for me to do but God will fit me for it. I may be called to a work that I have never attempted before. If so, I shall have Grace given which I never had before! You may change your condition of life this year, my dear Friend, but you shall be prepared for that change! You may have to emigrate to the other side of the world and find fresh duties awaiting you there—but you shall be prepared for your new sphere of service. You may be called from being a servant to be a master, or you may have to come down in the world and from being a master, you may have to become a servant, yet, whatever God shall put before you to do, He will prepare your heart for it. Only plead this declaration in prayer and you may expect to have it fulfilled!

In addition to our active service, there may be and probably will be, for many of us, a great deal of passive service—*we may have to endure suffering this year*. Poverty may fall upon some who are now in a comfortable position in life. Bereavement may make a widow of that smiling sister, or that happy father over yonder may be left childless. Before the year has run its course, who of us may have to toss upon the bed of sickness by the month, together? Who may be slandered? Who may be persecuted? It is not for us to know, but here is something we *may* know—“You will prepare their heart.” It is wonderful how God gets His people ready for trouble when it is coming. You remember what Solomon said about the wise woman? “She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.” She has made such warm garments for them that she says, “Let the snow come if it likes. They are prepared to resist the cold.” So God’s wisdom and Grace will clothe us all with such warm garments of consolation that, when trouble comes, we shall be fully prepared to bear it. For duty, or for suffering, “You will prepare their heart.”

And ah, this year, *some of us may have to die*. Many of our members passed away last year. Some dear sweet souls—the very pick of this Church—were taken up to Heaven. It may be my lot, it may be your lot, dear Brother or Sister, to go Home this year, but we will fall back on this gracious assurance, “You will prepare their heart.” Why, it seems to me that if I can keep this Word of God in my heart and on my tongue all this year, nothing shall be able to disturb me! I shall be like the man of whom

it is written, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings—his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "You will prepare their heart" and, therefore, they shall not be afraid of all the enemies that can come against them! You shall not be afraid of sickness, of famine, or of death, itself, for God will prepare your heart to meet it! Slip aside, now and again, during this year, when an unexpected trouble comes, and say, "Lord, prepare my heart for this sorrow!" When you meet with a strong temptation that comes all of a sudden, hasten away into some quiet corner and pray, "Now, my Master, prepare my heart to resist this assault of the adversary!" He will keep your sword sharpened for you! He will have your shield well bossed for you! He will keep you strong, He will keep you happy, He will keep you blessed, He will prepare your heart!

Now for the last part of my text. You do not know, perhaps, that I have a license to keep on as long as I like, to-night, for my pulpit clock has stopped! I am obliged to look round to see how the time flies. Before I close, I should like to say a little about this last part of my subject, the second blessed assurance—"You will cause Your ear to hear." I think, Brothers and Sisters, that this preparation of the heart means, in the first place, that God will prepare His people's hearts to pray and then He will cause His ear to *hear* their prayers. But I will take it out of its connection for just a minute or two.

"You will cause Your ear to hear." I understand by this phrase that *the Lord will hear us soon*. Sometimes, when we pray, the answer does not come directly. Pray again, Brother, Sister, for if God has not caused His ear to hear, yet, He *will* cause His ear to hear! The answer to your prayer shall come speedily. Do not postpone your expectations too long. Prepare to wait if God tarries, but be prepared for the reply if He does not tarry. Some Christians do the first, but not the second—they seem so ready to wait that God makes them wait! Oh, prepare with such vigor and earnestness, when you are pleading for your own salvation, or for the salvation of others, that God shall make haste and at once cause His ear to hear! He will hear you soon—expect, during this year, many speedy answers to your prayers!

"You will cause Your ear to hear." That means, next, I think, that *the Lord will always hear us*. He will, as it were, exert Himself to hear your supplication. "You will cause your ear to hear." This is a blessed Word of God for this new year! My God, how earnestly I will pray, now that I know I have Your ear! I remember that dear Mr. Cowper said, when he was in despondency and distress, writing to Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, "You have advised me to pray, but there is no reason in the world in my praying, there is no passage of Scripture that gives me any right to pray." He was, of course, insane at the time. Yet he said, "If there were such a text, I would never leave off praying as long as I lived. You tell me that Jonah prayed in the whale's belly, but I am in a worse plight than he was in. If I were only as bad as Jonah was, I would pray to God night and day."

I catch at that thought—if I am permitted to pray, then I will pray. And if I may have whatever I ask of God in the name of Jesus, oh, I will ask! Do use your privilege in praying to the Lord, for He will cause His ear to hear. If you had the ear of the great ones at court and could get whatever you liked, I am sure that you would use the privilege! And now that you have the ear of the great King of Kings, O you intercessors, you who are the Lord's remembrancers, plead with Him day and night "and give Him no rest till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth," for He will cause His ear to hear you! The Lord will always hear you, Sinner, if you call upon Him! He will soon hear you—He will effectually hear you.

When it is said, "You will cause Your ear to hear," does it not mean that *the Lord will so hear as to answer our petitions?* As a Church we have prospered by prayer. Glasgow flourished by the preaching of the Word and the Tabernacle has flourished by the prayers of Believers. That has been the secret of our strength! Therefore let us still believe in the efficacy of prayer. God listens to the voices of His children. He regards the cry of the humble. He is moved by the desires of His own people. Let us, then, during this year, be more in prayer than ever! Let us pray in faith, pleading the precious blood of Jesus and the promises of God's Word. And let us hear the Lord saying to us, "Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, command you, Me." There is need of a great revival of religion—the wave of the late revival has gone and now we need another. We have had a long winter, spiritually—we need to have an awakening springtime, a glorious summer and a golden autumn in the Church. Let us pledge ourselves to pray for it—and not merely pledge ourselves, but really pray! Let us cry mightily till the Lord shall hear us and bring in tens of thousands who shall be the reward of the Savior's sufferings and death! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and make this year to be very rich in fruit-bearing to God's Glory in every one of us!

And as for such as were not saved when they came into the Tabernacle this evening, I trust that God will, this very night, make them desire to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and He will hear their desire and lead them to look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! As we who love the Lord come to the Communion Table, we can use our text, for I am sure the desire of the humble is that they may see Christ in the Supper. "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart." Oh, it is sad to go to the Lord's Table with an unprepared heart! Lord, prepare our heart to come to Your banqueting table, tonight and then, "You will cause Your ear to hear." You will grant us Grace to feed upon Christ and to be satisfied! May it be so to every communicant! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 103.

One's heart naturally turns to this passage when one desires to magnify the Lord. It is specially suitable for a New Year's meditation.

Verse 1. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Come, my Soul, wake up! Bestir yourself! You have great work to do, such work as angels do forever and ever before the Throne of God. Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this Divine service! Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart—all that is in me, be stirred up to magnify and bless His holy name! "Bless the Lord, O my Soul"—for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being—it must be myself, my very self, that praises God!

2. *Bless the LORD, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits.* This shall be the first note—"We love Him because He first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise, they lie at home. Forget not all His benefits to you, my Soul—His overwhelming, His innumerable benefits which have to be summed up in the gross as "all His benefits"—forget them not!

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Come, come, my Soul, can you not praise God for sin forgiven? That is the first note, and it is the sweetest note in our song of praise. "Who forgives all your iniquities"—not *some* of them but the blessed Scapegoat has carried into the, "No man's land of oblivion," the whole mass!

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He is the Physician for you, my Soul—your diseases are the worst of all diseases, for they would drag you down to Hell if they were not cured. But Jehovah Rophi heals all your diseases!

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Oh, my Soul, praise God for redemption! If you cannot sing about anything else, sing of Free Grace and dying Love. Keep on ringing those charming bells.

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* What? Can you wear a crown and not praise Him who placed it on your head? Can you wear such a crown as this, made up of loving kindness and tender mercies, and not bless the Lord? Oh, let it not be so! Let us each break forth in spirit in one song, tonight, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* Heavenly feasting on heavenly bread! Divine satisfaction from the finished work of Christ! Oh, my Soul, pray to God to give you new life, tonight, so that your youth may be renewed, so that your wing feathers may grow, again, and that you may mount as eagles do! Surely, dear Friends, this little list of mercies, so small in number, contains an immensity of mercy! Let us bless the Lord for every one of them.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor and the down-trodden sing unto the Lord. He will take care of you! He is the Executor of the needy and the Executioner of the proud. "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Therefore, let us bless Him, the God of Revelation, who does not hide Himself from His creatures, but who makes known His ways and His acts unto His people! An unknown God is an unpraised God, but when He shows Himself to His people, they cannot refrain from blessing His name.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Praise Him for this! Bless His name at every single mention of His Divine attributes. Let your hearts beat to the music of praise tonight!

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Let the afflicted praise Him! Let the downcast and the despondent sinner praise Him! If he cannot sing about anything else, let him bless the name of the Lord that He will not keep His anger forever.

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Let us thank God we are not in Hell—we are yet on praying ground and on pleading terms with Him. Some of us will never go into Perdition, for He has saved us with an everlasting salvation. Truly, if we did not bless Him, every timber in this building and every iron column beneath this roof might burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude! We must bless His name!

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Look up into the blue sky—up, up beyond the stars and say to yourself—“So great is His mercy.” Let us, therefore, praise Him accordingly. “Loud as His thunders, shout His praise and sound it lofty at His Throne.”

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God's Grace is boundless! Let us, therefore, unstintedly praise Him.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.* He has a tender heart. He never strikes without regret, but His love always flows freely. No father or mother is half so mild and loving as is the Lord of Hosts!

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Our bodies are but animated dust and even our souls might be compared to dust in His sight. Not iron or granite, but we are mere dust. It is a wonder that men live so long when there are such mighty forces, even in Nature, arrayed against them. Who can control earthquakes and volcanoes? And when men Cross the sea in times of storm, it is a wonder that they come to land, again!

15. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.* You are like the primrose by the river's brim, or the buttercup and the daisy in the field that is visited with the scythe. That is all we are—not cedars, not oaks, not rocks—but flowers of the field.

16. *For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Some of the hot winds of the East come over a meadow and it is immediately burned up. I have seen the fairest and loveliest flowers look, in a short time, as if they had been burned with a hot

iron when the Sirocco had blown across from Africa—and such are we. We speak of the breath of the pestilence—it is but a puff of wind—and we are gone.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them.* “But”—and this is a blessed, “but.” “But the mercy of the Lord”—that is *not* a fading flower, that is *not* a withering wind—“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.” Here are ten thousand blessings in one! You have everlasting mercy, Covenant mercy. Oh, if we do not praise God when we think of the Covenant, what has happened to us? We must be possessed with a dumb devil if we do not praise the name of Him whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!

19. *The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all.* Now, children of a King, will you go mourning all your days? You that dwell in the Light of His Throne, will you not be glad? Rejoice, O Zion, for your King lives and reigns forever! “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.”

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* “Bless the Lord, you His angels.” We cannot do it well enough, but help us, then, you angels that excel in strength. Put out all your strength when you praise Him, “you that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” Your actions are your praises, O you angels! Would God that we had learned to do His commandments as you do them! We are praying for this, even as our Lord taught His disciples to say, “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.”

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His host; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All living things, and all the forces and powers of Nature are calling upon men to praise the Lord! And all the hosts of God, the organs of Omnipotence, ring out the grand chorus, “Bless you the Lord.”

22. *Bless the LORD, all His work, in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul.* I must not go grumbling up to Heaven, nor stumbling among the works of God. I must gratefully come to Him and, myself, praise Him! And so, with the Psalmist, I cry, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—1037, 10, 1042.

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AN IMMOVABLE FOUNDATION

NO. 691

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”
Psalm 11:3.*

WE are walking along through the vineyard of this Psalm, plucking the clusters on the right hand and on the left, when suddenly, with a tremendous roar, the “if” of our text, like a young lion, leaps out upon us. What shall we do with it? Let us play the man, like Samson, and rend it as though it were a kid and doubtless we shall find honey in it, and shall have again to put forth our riddle, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” These “ifs” are terrible lions, but when Divine Grace enables us to slay them, they become good store-houses for sweetness.

As the children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians and made themselves rich from the spoils of their oppressors, both when they left Egypt and after the passage of the Red Sea, so let us gather riches of comfort and arms for future warfare from this “if” which threatens to enthrall the mind of the Christian and hold him in the chains of fear and doubt. It comes to us as a keen shaft from the camp of the foe, but by the Grace of God we will fit it to our string, and with the arms of faith shoot it back again and may God in mercy guide it to the joints of some foeman’s harness.

This “if” may have a bitter taste at first, but I am persuaded that it will have a wholesome effect upon us to use it. Yes, it will yield some spiritual sustenance to our souls. We will welcome its searching and shaking power now, as it will only tend to prepare us for the time when the four winds may come upon our house and the blast of the Terrible One be as a storm against the wall. If we use this giant battering ram “if,” now, it will show us our weakness and our strength so that we may correct the one and rejoice over the other.

We shall take this “if” in two ways. First, we shall consider it as an “if” which is nothing but an “if.” And secondly, we shall consider it as an “if” which is a great deal more than an “if.”

I. We shall first CONSIDER THIS “IF” AS BEING NOTHING BUT AN “IF.” “If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?” My Brethren, there are certain spiritual foundations which God has laid in Zion which never can be removed. There are certain foundations against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail—which time cannot shake—and which eternity will only confirm. If we venture to speak of *these* foundations being removed, it can only be in hypothetical terms and with the word, “if”—for there must always be in our souls the conviction that the foundations of God stand sure.

I will mention a few of these foundation—things which we know cannot be removed, but we will ask the question—if they should be removed,

what then? First we will take the foundation Book. This Word of God, this Revelation of Himself which He has made to us by Prophets and by seers, by Apostles and by evangelists, and by His own dear Son. This Book we believe to be true even in its jots and tittles. Whatever form of thought we may adopt as to the method of inspiration, we believe this Book to be inspired throughout, and we accept all its utterances as the teachings of the Most High.

From the first Word of it to the last we give our “unfeigned assent and consent” to it as being nothing less and nothing more than the Word of Jehovah, the Lord our God. But if it should not be so, what can the righteous do, then? If, after all, the attacks of modern skeptics should have some force in them. If they can dislodge part of the Word of God from its sure resting place. If first one stone shall topple from the summit of the battlements and then another shall be loosened from the embankment, and by-and-by its enemies should come to work with their great bars upon the very lowest and most valuable stones in the wall—what then?

What if the Book should be a delusion? What if it should be false? Ah, then, my Brothers and Sisters, what can the righteous do? Oh, it had been better for us that we had never been born than that the Bible should not be true! Here is the only balm that heals the wounds that sin has made! Here is the only bread that satisfies the hungering of our spirits! If that is not true, O God, why did You create us, and why did You suffer such a Book as that to come across our path to mock us, supplying, as it does, all that hope can desire, and all that our deepest interests can crave after?

Oh, cruel God, to permit so sweet a dream to charm us even for a while, if it is not true! But oh, Beloved, we come back with a sacred recoil to this—it *is* true—it must be true and if for no other reason because it so suits the craving of our inward consciousness. Because it so uplifts us out of the natural beggary and meanness of our condition and puts us on such a heavenly footing. It makes us commune with the Most High and fills us with such rapt and heavenly thoughts! It must be true, or else what could we do?

Cling, then, to the Divine authority of the Scriptures with a death grip! Let those give up the Inspiration of the Bible who can afford to do so, but you and I cannot! Let those cast away the sure promise of God who have got something else to comfort them—who can go to their philosophy or turn to their self-conceit. But as for you and for me, it is a desperate matter for us if this Book is not true, and therefore let us be ready to defend it at all costs, and if need be, to die for it! Oh, Brethren, it were better to die, this Book being true, than to live, this Book being false!

It were better for us that all the miseries of this life should fall upon us, this Book being an unmoved foundation, than for all the joys of life to be ours if this Book is once taken away. Clasp it to your heart! Enfold it in your bosom! Hold it as the very core of your life’s comfort and the very strength of your existence! Remember that if this is removed there is nothing for the righteous to do but despair and die. I hope we shall always sing—

***“Should all the forms which men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,***

***I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind this Bible to my heart."***

But now we turn from the foundation Book to the foundation doctrine. What is the foundation doctrine? I shall not shock any one of you if I say that it is admitted by all evangelical Christians that the standing or falling in the Church is that of justification by faith. The Church which holds that doctrine is in the body—the church which is tampering with that doctrine is *not* in the body. I will not merely say the church that is not holding it, but the church that is not holding it in the most distinct form is not to be acknowledged as a part of the body of Christ.

Justification by faith alone is such a Truth of God that it must not be hidden. To obscure those words, legible in their own light—"Believe and live"—is to commit high treason against the majesty of God and to make one's self an outlaw from God and from mercy! The great standing or falling doctrine, then, is this—"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Therefore we are justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law."

We hold that it is of faith that it might be of Divine Grace through Christ Jesus. Holding this Truth of God—that every soul who believes in Christ is thereby made a partaker of the merit of His passion and is saved—what joy and peace are opened up to us! Some of us live in a sense of pardon. Oh, Brethren, this is a river to swim in, when we can sing—

***"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Savior's blood my full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."***

Oh, the blessedness—as Ainsworth translates it—"The heaped-up blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Oh, the blessedness of being justified by faith, and of possessing peace with God! But if that is removed, what can the righteous do? My Brethren, the righteous can do nothing! They can do nothing, and they must at once give up their peace, give up their joy, give up their hopes—and then give up existence altogether. This one thing I know—though I have preached my Master's Gospel with perpetual industry and have sought to honor Him—yet I have no more hope of Heaven apart from the merits of Christ than the greatest criminal that is banished from his country for his crimes.

That poor wretch who was, till lately, under sentence of death for many murders, would have as good a hope of entering into eternal life as the best among you were it not for this precious doctrine—that is to say, she would have no hope, and you would have no hope, either—for we are all alike shut up under condemnation. Good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, we are all alike condemned under the Law of God, and there would be no more hope for one than for another if this doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ were not true. We are all in this one boat together—I mean as many of us as have believed—the weakest cannot sink unless the ship goes down, and the strongest cannot float unless the ship should bear them.

If this foundation were removed, I will ask you gray-haired saint, hoary with many years of service, what could you do? You bow your head and

say, "Alas, my master, what could I do but die in despair?" I would ask the bravest of Christ's Apostles, the most earnest and indefatigable of the servants of the living God, what could they do if salvation was not the result of faith in Christ, and they would reply unanimously, "We were of all men the most miserable if our only hope were gone!"

But oh, Brethren, we will come back to this, that it is by faith in the blood of Jesus that we are saved. For this doctrine let us be prepared to bear any reproach. And for the spread of this doctrine let us make any exertions. Let us publish it to every wind! Let us invoke the help of every wave to bear it abroad! My Brothers and Sisters, help those of us who are engaged in telling out this precious truth of salvation by faith, and then proclaim it far and wide yourselves.

Distribute it in a printed form! Speak of it with your warm and loving lips! Tell it, tell it the wide world over that there is a foundation already laid in Zion—a cornerstone elect and precious! Proclaim that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous!" Proclaim that "whoever believes in Him is not condemned."

We will now go a step further. We have had the foundation Book and the foundation doctrine, and now we come to the foundation *fact*. The fact upon which our faith rests is this, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The great fact on which genuine faith rests is this, that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that having taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, for us.

The great Truth which makes the Gospel worth proclaiming is the Truth that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," that Christ also has suffered for sin, "the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." In one word, the great fact on which the Christian's hope rests is *substitution*.

The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the sinner. Christ suffering for the sinner. Christ's being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Christ offering up a true and proper expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice in the place and stead of as many as the Father gave Him, who are recognized by their trusting in Him—this is the cardinal fact of the Gospel. Now, if this is true, what will we *not* do? Do? Why, we will sing of Christ in time, and sing of Him in eternity! We will sit at the foot of His Cross and—

***"View the flowing
Of the Savior's precious blood.
With Divine assurance knowing
He has made our peace with God."***

We will praise Him when we get to Heaven and sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood." But—oh, horrible "but"! If this is not true—if God was never Incarnate, if God never did in the Person of His Son Jesus bleed and die—if no Atonement was ever made for human guilt, then howl because of it! Let each man put his hands upon his loins as a woman in childbirth, and let sorrow pierce the

heart of every child of Adam—for sin must be punished—and if it was never punished in Christ it must be punished upon each one of us! Wrath, and a certain terrible looking for judgment and fiery indignation—these are all that await us!

“As when a man wipes a dish and turns it,” said the Prophet, even so will it be with us—wiped out and turned upside down if it were not true that Christ died. As when the potter with a rod of iron breaks the vessel into shivers, so should we, too, be broken into shivers with each particle to be full of pain and covered with grief, if it were not that Jesus died. Oh, if this foundation were removed what could we do? But it cannot be removed! We know it! We rest on it! We trust in it! And our joy is to hold it, to understand and to study it, to be actuated and moved by it in every part of our life and conversation. But if it were removed what could the righteous do?

There is just now, and there has been for many years, a direct attack made upon the doctrine of the Atonement. Men cannot bear substitution. They gnash their teeth at the thought of the Lamb of God bearing the sin of man. Ah, but we will proclaim it in defiance of them and hurl it in their teeth! We will neither dilute it, nor change it, nor fritter it away in any shape or fashion. It shall still be Christ a positive Substitute, bearing human guilt and suffering in the place of men, for if this is not so what could we do?

We cannot, dare not give it up for it is our life! I have thus given you three matters, and now just a word upon another point, namely, the foundation work. The blood of Jesus, Brethren, must be applied by the Spirit of Divine Grace, and the foundation of our inward confidence must be in the work of Grace in our own souls.

Now the foundation in us was laid in *repentance*, and in *faith* in Christ—and we have gone on to build thereon, much, I am afraid, of wood, hay, and stubble, but still, something of gold, and silver, and precious stones. Now, if the Grace of God could cease to work. If the eternal love of Jehovah could be removed, and if the effectual might of the Holy Spirit’s arm could be withdrawn, what could you and I do? Would it not be as hard to get to Heaven by the Gospel as by the Law if it were not for the work of Grace in us?

Brethren, Calvary is no nearer to Heaven than Sinai if the Spirit of Grace works not in us. If Christ is not crucified *in* us, His being crucified *for* us will be of no avail! We must have Christ formed in us the hope of Glory. Now, what do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Suppose this foundation work were all removed—what could you do? Do? Why the brightest of you would become as smoking flax without light! You who are pure as crystal now in your daily life would become like a polluted stream! You who now are the delight and joy of the Church of God would be as reprobate silver cast out, or as salt that has lost its savor and is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.

We must ever keep in mind that we are only channels for Divine Grace—we are not even pools and reservoirs—we must have a continual supply of Divine gifts. We must have an abiding union with the fountain of all good or we should soon run dry. And only as fresh streams flow into us

are we kept from becoming mere dry beds of sand and mire. But we know that He will never fail us. This spring is high up in Heaven near the Eternal Throne and it ripples down through the means of Grace from the God of all Grace—and we receive daily of His fullness Grace for Grace.

Joyful truth for us, that because He lives we must live also! Till Jesus bows His head in death, we, the living members of His mystic body, can never droop or fail. His might is our strength. His resources our never failing supply. And we, through His Spirit, are daily tended and sustained—

***“Oh! To Grace, how great a debtor,
Daily I’m constrained to be!”***

Were that Grace once gone what should I do? Hold fast, then, to that which you have received, that no man take your crown. Cling to the doctrine of the work of the Spirit with a death grip! Never give it up. Having begun in the *Spirit* do not seek to be made perfect in the *flesh*. Do not look to *excitement*. Do not let your faith stand in the wisdom or the speech of man, but in the power of God, and in the invincible might and majesty of the Holy Spirit! If you go anywhere else, the foundation will be removed and then what can you do? O God! You have begun the good work and You will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ. This foundation shall not be removed.

Once more, there is also a foundation *hope*—something which we may, I think, call a foundation—since our joy and our peace very much depend upon it. You and I possess tonight, dear Friends, a hope which is sometimes called “a blessed hope,” and at another time, “a good hope.” It is a hope partly that Christ may come and a hope that *when* He comes, “we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” It is a hope that whether He comes in our lifetime or not, yet, if we fall asleep, we shall sleep in Jesus. We have a hope that sometimes bursts out into a song and then we tune it in warbling such as this—

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

Or sometimes it is—

***“Jerusalem! My happy home!
Name ever dear to me.
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and you?”***

Or, perhaps it is—

***“Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest.
Beneath your contemplation
Sink heart and soul oppressed.
We know not, oh! we know not,
What joys await us there!
What radiance of Glory,
What bliss beyond compare.”***

At any rate, whatever notes we may use to warble out the hope, the hope is still the same—

***“It is the hope, the blissful hope,
Which Jesus’ Grace has given.
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in Heaven.”***

Now, if that were removed, what could we do?—

***“What is there here that I should wait?
My hope’s alone in You.
When will You open Glory’s gate,
And take me up to You?”***

“Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire besides You.” Take Heaven away, and the world to come, and what a dreary desert, what blackness and darkness, what a gulf of mad despair it would speedily become! But, oh, Brethren, that foundation cannot be removed! Because He lives, we shall live also. “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory.” That hope abides sure and steadfast! Let us think of it more than we do.

Let us plume our wings of flight every now and then. Come, you birds of Heaven, you eaglets of God—how is it that you keep below upon the earth as though you had no wings? Come, plume your callow pinions and begin to fly! The clouds are your atmosphere—beyond there is the blue sky where all is fair and clear. Up with you! Up, nearer to God, nearer to eternity, nearer to your home, nearer to your everlasting mansion. Remember that you—

***“Nightly pitch your moving tent
A day’s march nearer home,”***

and let the thought that you shall soon be—

“Forever with the Lord”

come over your hearts and sweep like the touch of some master harpist’s hand as he sweeps the ten-stringed instrument and wakes it up to thunders of sacred melody. Be glad in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy, you upright in heart! This foundation cannot be removed and you need not fear!

II. And now we change our note for a few minutes. Let us TAKE THIS “IF” AS BEING SOMETHING MORE THAN AN “IF.” The foundations may be removed—not the *spiritual* foundations at all, but the temporal foundations. The foundations of civil government, the foundations of commerce, the foundations of one’s estates, the foundations of trust between man and man—these may be removed. They have been grievously and terribly shaken during the last few days.

War may arise. There seem to be many indications of a coming tempest and when the eagles are gathered together to the prey, the fight will probably thicken. And instead of a few combatants it may be that there will be a multitude of nations engaged in a terrible slaughter and the foundations of the various kingdoms of Europe may be removed. Revolution, too, may come. We remember 1848, and some of you, perhaps, are old enough to go farther back than that, to dates when revolutions were the order of the day.

There are some who are always putting on their blue spectacles and who can see very wonderful revolutions here. May their heads never ache before their predictions come to pass, but still these things may occur, for men are men, and if they should, what then? If the foundations should be removed, what would the righteous do? A panic has come and man does not trust his fellow man. But he plays the fool, the wild lunatic in the

street, destroying commerce for the sake of commerce—and to get gain, himself—destroying the tree that bears the fruit.

I suppose no greater proof of folly could have been known in the nineteenth century than might have been seen last Friday in Lombard Street. If anyone had whistled for a thousand fools, he need not have traveled a thousand yards, but might have found them on the spot! Now, if there should be such a thing, there may be ground for all this fear, for the foundations of human things are not made by God—they are only man's management, and consequently they may be shaken—but what then? I am going to suppose the very worst—that the social fabric is rocking like the walls of old Jericho and that the very foundations are falling.

I will even suppose that the cornerstone is being removed. What then? What can the righteous do? Well, he can do as well as another man and he can do a great deal better! Let me tell you what he can do. The first thing he can do, if the worst comes to the worst, is that he can bear it with a holy equanimity. He can say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." If the ship is wrecked, his treasure is not aboard it. He knows that if the banks should break, he will only part with some of his odd spending money—His true treasure is up there—not in an iron chest where the burglar can break through, but—

***"Hid with Christ in God
Beyond the reach of harm,"***

so that if the worst comes, he can still fold his arms and say, "It is written, 'I will never leave and never forsake you,' and so long as I have bread to eat and raiment to put on, so long will I bless the name of the Lord Most High from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same."

Now, dear Friends, prove this if it should happen to you. Do not do as the worldling does, who puts his hand to his fevered brow and says, "I am a ruined man!" You cannot be a ruined man. Do not say, "I have lost my all!" You cannot lose your all—your all is Christ—and Christ is not to be lost. Just accept the blow. Kiss the rod. Touch the hand that smites, and say, "Blessed be You, my Father, for it is the Lord."

Then the Christian not only bears the worst patiently but the next thing he can do is to hope for the best cheerfully. I think if there is any man who can see clearest, even a spot of blue sky, it should be the Christian. "Oh," he says, "things are not what they seem. The dark cloud has a silver lining! Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart." It is very much in the struggle of life to keep a brave heart. And you, Christian, have many arguments for doing so. Why bow your head at yonder crested billow as though you should be drowned by it? O Man, it will only wash your face!

It is all that it will do for you, and you shall lift your brow, when the spray has cleared it, towards Heaven, and shall see your God the better because the dirt is washed out of your eyes. Therefore, look cheerfully for something bright in the midst of the darkness. Out of all this apparent loss, God can bring for you true gain in *spiritual* things. You may part with things temporal with equanimity, if they are likely to be restored to you transmuted by God's alchemy into things spiritual and eternal.

If God takes away from His people, He can restore again, as in the case of Job, twice as much as they had before, even in worldly goods—and with

these a gracious work of His Spirit in the heart—which is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Adam was laid asleep and God took a rib and made it into a helpmeet for him. If God shall take anything from you, yes, though it lies near your heart, do not mourn as one that has no hope.

In patience possess your soul. Rest on the Lord, for He will bring it to pass that out of all this shall come a spiritual power which, in after days shall gladden your heart and make you the joyful parent of much good to others in this world of sin and woe. Christ became poor that He might make many rich. And in His poverty He was as a lamb before its shearers dumb, and opened not His mouth. His prayer was, “not My will, O Father, but Yours be done.” So may we hold our peace, if God has done it. Never charge God foolishly, but say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

If the foundations are removed what can the righteous do? Why, they can do one thing—they can do the right. They cannot guarantee results, but they can do the right. They cannot tell whether they shall fail in business or not, but they can be upright. They cannot tell whether the fall of this house or the crash of that bank may injure them, but they can tell that they will have clean hands and come out of it all with a spotless character. And when everything is lost there is but little lost if honor still remains, and if, by Divine Grace integrity is still preserved. He that wears the herb hearts-ease in his bosom is richer than he that can wear diamonds upon his fingers, if those fingers are stained with guilt.

It is comparatively easy to be correct and upright when these things pay—when we can, by them, secure the esteem of our fellow men and that confidence which is as good as money to a man in business, because of the credit it brings with it. But it is quite another thing to do the right when it means to strip oneself of all and to give up long-loved and cherished possessions, hopes, and prospects, both for ourselves and family.

This is the hour of temptation when Satan comes with his glory and wealth in one hand and a suggestion of evil in the other. He bids us open our lap to receive them, reminding us that to deny him is to close with injury and loss to reputation, to our business, and to our loved families at home. How many have made the dread compact with the Prince of Darkness! They have gained the world but lost their soul! They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage and bartered Heaven for Hell! Time has been taken and eternity rejected. The honor of men has been esteemed more than the praise of God.

They have grasped the gold and it has been a millstone round their neck, and into the deepest depths of woe it has dragged them. Lost! Lost! Lost forever! Oh, that men were wise, that they would remember this—that they would consider their latter end. For what can a man give in exchange for his soul? Come what may, trust in God and do the right.

There is another thing we can do if the foundations are removed, namely, if we have a hand to spare we will help a comrade. If the foundations are removed and there is a common calamity, when others are selfish the Christian man will hear his Savior’s words—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” “Well,” he says, “it is a time of general suffering.

And when a boat is at sea with a few survivors from a wreck, no man hoards his biscuit—no man keeps that little drop of pure fresh water wholly to himself—but like a generous man he divides his biscuit with his fellow sufferers and drinks his drop with the rest.”

So will the righteous do. When things are bad they will say, “Now is the time for me to exhibit some degree of generosity.” I like the action of a man who was once waited upon for a subscription, and contrary to expectation, gave the minister who asked him a very large check—I think it was one hundred pounds. The minister was about to retire when the merchant, happening to open one of his letters, found that he had lost a vessel worth from ten thousand to twenty thousand pounds. He called the minister and said, “You must give me back that check, I have just opened a letter and found that I have been a very great loser.”

The poor country minister, whose chapel was in a very bad plight, looked very blank about the matter. But the merchant said, “I find my money is going fast. I suppose I have not made good use of it, and so the Master has taken it away, but I will save some of it anyhow.” And he wrote out another check for five hundred pounds. Now, this was a right way of acting—provided, of course, the money was his own—for no man has a right to give away other people’s property.

But if it were his own, this was the true and wise pathway to choose to make some of it safe—a much better plan than when my lord comes fresh from his bank with his money in his hand, and says, “Go and do likewise, my brave fellows! Get your money out like this!” And then finds five minutes afterwards that somebody else has his money without giving him a receipt for the deposit, or anything of the kind—for it has gone into the hands of a pickpocket who is not so much to be blamed, perhaps, in such cases as he might have been in some others.

Now, I can recommend to you when things are going bad, to make good investments. “Give a portion to seven and also to eight, for you know not what evil may be upon the earth.” “Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of righteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” Once again. There is something more which the righteous man can do if the foundations are removed, and that is, he can trust in God that it will be well in the end. The worldling says, “It will be all the same a hundred years from now.” The Christian says, “I do not want to look so far ahead as that. It is all right now.”

But the wind blows! “It is all right.” But the waves dash! “It is all right.” But all the sails are reefed! “It is all right!” But the ship flies before the wind! “It is all right.” But there are rocks ahead! “It is all right.” Why? “Because He who is at the helm knows all about it. He created both wind and wave and He knows how to cope with the storm. I cannot see that it is right, but I know that it is, and I walk by faith, and not by sight.” Oh, Christian, this is what you can do! If the foundations are removed you can bring faith into heavenly exercise, and you can sail against the wind.

The night may be dark and dreary but it will usher in the brighter morn! And merrily will the celestial music and songs greet his ears as the fresh dawning light triumphs over the fleeing darkness and spreads itself till it bathes with its splendor all things which were even in the darkness

working together for the good of God's people. Yes, the rough March winds and the dreary April showers were all fulfilling their task then—and now we can see it and rejoice in it as well as in their result. We will sing in our dungeon with Paul and Silas, for all is well now as it will be hereafter in Heaven. It is only in degree and realization that earth's joys differ from Heaven's to the true Believer in Christ.

Lastly, if the foundations are removed, the righteous can commune with Christ therein. We should never have such fellowship with Jesus as we do if we had not such troubles as we have. You cannot see the stars in the daytime but they tell us that if you go down into a well you can. Sometimes God sinks wells of trouble and puts His servants into them—and then they see His starry promises. You might hunt in vain for glowworms by day, but they shall all be seen at night—and so shall the comfortable words and thoughts of Holy Scripture.

The fireflies shall flash best at night when the sunlight is gone, and so oftentimes the light of the promises is better seen in the night of trouble than in the day of outward prosperity. The black foils of trouble shall bring out the brighter jewel of Divine Grace. You cannot know Christ except by following in His footsteps. Poverty will reveal Him who for our sakes became poor. Sickness will show Him whose visage was more marred than any man's. Shame will teach you His shame—and suffering will reveal to you His suffering.

And even death itself, which shall remove the foundations, shall give you conformity to His death that you may have part in His resurrection. Courage then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and to the question, "If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?" give this answer, "We can do as the righteous ought to do. We can do as God enables us to do." Let us go and show the world what that will be and let the superiority of our faith and of our religion reveal itself in our times of darkness and in our hours of suffering.

I have been thinking all the while I have been thus talking that this text has an application to those who are *not* righteous because if the righteous cannot do anything if the Grace of God fail, then what can the wicked do? They can do nothing, but then they can do as much as the righteous, who can do nothing either—and so here is comfort for the very worst, and for those who feel themselves to be farthest from God. So long as the foundation stands there is hope for every soul that believes, and though you are the worst of the worst, yet if you trust Christ there is hope for you! Though there would not be any if the foundations were removed, even if you were the best of the best.

Come, then, needy Sinner! Come, though years of sin have heaped up their iniquities upon you! Come to Jesus—He can cleanse you. Trust Him, trust Him! Trust Him now, and you are saved and shall be His in the day of His appearing! Build on this foundation! Christ Jesus died for the ungodly. Trust Him to save you and when the floods arise, and the rain descends, and the winds blow, your house shall never fall because it is built upon a rock, a foundation that can never be removed!

I would that some here tonight would learn to leave the treacherous path of sin and seek an interest in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do

you know that the road you tread is undermined and that sooner or later you will fall through, and sink on, on, on through the grave into the pit which has no bottom, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone? Turn! Turn! Why will you die? There is a sure foundation which cannot move—on which you may build and never fear an overthrow!

Come, then, with all your load of guilt, and rest at once and forever on Him who says, Come unto Me, and him that comes I will in nowise cast out. Heaven and earth may pass, but He will save to the uttermost all who come by faith to Him. God bless these remarks to you according to His will, for Jesus' sake. Amen.—

***“Yes! He is mine! And nothing of earthly things,
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings
Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.
‘Go, worthless world,’ I cry, ‘with all that’s yours.
Go I to my Savior’s arm, and He is mine.
Whatever may change, in Him no change is seen,
A glorious sun that wanes not, nor declines.
Above the clouds and storms He walks unseen,
And sweetly on His people’s darkness shines:
All may depart—I fret not, nor repine,
While I my Savior’s am, and He is mine.”***

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

“Help, LORD.”
Psalm 12:1.

THIS was a prayer of David. It was offered under peculiar circumstances. He had been treacherously betrayed again and again. He delivered the city of Keilah from the Philistines and then had to flee from the place, or the men of Keilah would have delivered him up to his enemy, Saul. He went to the wilderness of Ziph and the men of Ziph at once ran to Saul to betray him. Doeg was present when David received some help from Ahimelech the priest and he set off straightway to inform the king. Everyone seemed to act treacherously with David while he was in his state of wandering. He therefore turned away altogether from men in whom he could put no confidence—and he cried, “Help, Lord.”

Let us spend a few minutes, first of all, in remarks upon the prayer itself. Then let us offer a few suggestions as to when it may be used. And we will close up with some encouragement to expect and answer.

I. First as to THE PRAYER ITSELF.

That which strikes you at once is its shortness—“Help, Lord.” Two words—and one of these is rather the direction of the prayer than the prayer itself. It is the very soul of brevity. “Help, Lord.” I may, however, say that it is none too short for all that for there is a fullness and suggestiveness in it which could not readily be exhausted. It is no fault in our prayers if they are short. And I think in our public petitions, especially at Prayer Meetings, it is a virtue to be aimed at to be brief. Mr. Jay says, with regard to his sermons, that he knew there were some excellences which would cost him much pains to attain, “But,” he said, “there was one I knew to be within my reach, namely, brevity, and therefore I made not the sermon too long.” Praying, indeed, being a more spiritual exercise than even preaching, must not be protracted. It is remarkable, if you remember, that Joshua’s arm never grew weary while he was fighting the Amalekites, but Moses’ hands grew weary while he was up on the mountain in prayer. Because prayer is a more spiritual exercise than fighting and, consequently, the spirit being our weaker part, we feel the weakness the sooner there. Let us not, then, pray our members into a good frame and then pray them out again—but when we have expressed our desires with that fewness of words which is proper in the Presence of God, let us close our supplications and let some other Brother take up the note. This is a short prayer.

Do you not see, dear Friends, that those of you who have been saying, "We do not pray because we have not time," are guilty of a great falsehood? It cannot be lack of time. "Help, Lord." Why, it takes scarcely a second to offer such a prayer as that! It is not lack of time—it is lack of heart and lack of inclination. People talk about praying as though they needed an hour to pray every morning and every night. I grant you it would be a very blessed thing if we could get the hour. I wish that, like the Puritans, we could always get an hour for devotion every morning and likewise at evening, but this is not absolutely necessary. You working men must not say, "We cannot pray because we have not time." Why, in your work, in the midst of your goings to and fro, if God has given you the heart of prayer, you will be lifting up your soul to God! I think it is a good thing to have some small change of prayer about you. I compare this prayer to our small change. It has been said of some great men that they could not talk in company—when they got upon their feet and had a prepared discourse, they could speak very much to edification, but in general society they could not edify anyone. Someone said they had gold, but it was all in bullion—it was not minted—they could not put it into a shape so that it might be current in society. Well now, we must have the bullion of prayer, so as to be able to wrestle with God by the hour together if necessary, but to have the minted small change of brief or exclamatory prayer, to send a thought up to Heaven—the glance of an eye, a tear-bedewed word to let drop before the Throne—that, also, is well! I invite you to adopt the prayer, brief as it is, and use it tonight, tomorrow, all your days—"Help, Lord."

Besides being very short, it was very *seasonable*. It is well to have seasonable prayer, for those prayers speed best that spring out of an emergency which, as with a fair wind, drives the soul to the Throne of God. The worst of those forms of prayer which are of merely human composition, I think, is that they are very much like those ready-made clothes which we see for sale—they are intended to fit everybody, and yet rarely do they fit anybody. Forms of prayer must, from the necessity of the case, be unseasonable. That is the best prayer which draws its adaptation from my present circumstances, its intensity from my present feelings and its aspiration from my present faith. It makes me cry in just such language and plead just such promises that I could not plead any other—I could not wish for any other, I could not ask in any other style than I now do. That is a seasonable prayer. David, you see, had been betrayed and deceived. He had met with flattering lips and deceitful hearts. He found all men in his day gone aside from honesty and so he turned right away from those broken cisterns that were leaking at every point, to cry to the great Fountain that he might have a draught from the cooling stream! "Help, Lord!" Men will not help me. I am reduced to an extreme so far as the creature is concerned. Now is Your turn, O You gracious One! Put out Your mighty arm, now that man's puny arm is broken. 'Help, Lord!' Help, I pray You!"

How distinct this prayer is! There are many, many prayers that one has heard, but when uttered, you could not say what had been asked. If

anyone should ask you, "What has that Brother been praying for?" you would think and say, "I really do not know. He *has* said, 'Lord, bless us!' but what particular blessing he desired, I was not able to make out." Many of our dear Brethren edify us with an account of their experience and with a little exposition of the Doctrines of Grace—very edifying and proper in any other shape—but as a prayer—terribly out of place! The Lord knows your experience, He knows the Doctrines of Grace and does not need you to inform Him upon these matters. This prayer is to the point, "Help, Lord." The man knows what he needs and he asks for it. He does not ask wealth, health, long life—he needs help. He has come to a dead lift and he cannot lift his burden, so he cries, "Help, Lord." It is one word, but that one word goes straight to the mark. What a mercy it is to be able to pray pointed prayers! David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You." Now, according to some scholars, the Hebrew there is, "I will marshal up my prayers." "As the sergeant sets the soldiers in a row when he is about to drill them and marshals them, and as the commander-in-chief forms them into battalions and so on, even so will I set my desires in proper order and marshal them in battalions before the Mercy Seat, that I may show that I am not uttering the crude, undigested thoughts of a careless mind, taking solemn words upon a thoughtless tongue, but that I am speaking to God that which has caused me thought—which fills me with emotions and comes from my soul with an intent and a desire, myself knowing what that intent and desire may be." Oh, let us stand fast in prayer to direct petitions—short, but seasonable and direct!

We have something else to say of it—it is rightly aimed. The Psalmist evidently looked straight up to God. He says, "Help, Lord." It is no roundabout way of praying. It is no crying, "Help, you saints and intercede for me! Blessed Virgin, plead for me!" It is, "Help, Lord." Straight to the Throne he goes! There is no knocking at the doors of second causes and human helps. "Straightforward makes the best runner." He runs immediately to his God—there is no beating around the bush to ask that he may have Providential assistance, or that a friend may be raised up for him, or that in some way he may be delivered—it is simply this, "Lord, I leave all the rest to You. Only do, You Yourself, come and undertake my cause. Put Your arm where the weight is. Put Your shoulder to the wheel. This surpasses my power and I turn entirely from all creatures to You. 'Help, Lord.'" It is a well-aimed prayer. He knew to Whom he was speaking, to One full of love and faithfulness, strength and wisdom—and so he says at once, "Help, Lord."

Nor can you fail to observe that this prayer has in it a confession of weakness. A man does not cry for help—at least, a man with such a heart as David had does not cry for help unless he needs it. Shall I ask of God for that which I already have? No, a sense of need makes me pray. David has been striving with all his might, but he finds his strength inadequate to the task. He has been looking about for help everywhere, but he finds there is no help and, sensible of his own utter nothingness and vanity, he turns at once to God. It is well when prayer is steeped in

the oil of repentance, when it is dipped in a sense of need. No prayer speeds so well with God as that which comes with an empty hand before His Throne. If you bring your pitchers full, you shall take them all away empty—but if you bring your pitchers empty, you shall take them away full! “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he has sent away empty.” Lord, help me always to come as an empty-handed beggar to the Throne of Your mercy, that I may go away as a full-handed rejoicing saint!

And yet, with a confession of weakness, I think there is also here a resolution to exert oneself. The very word, “Help,” seems to imply that he did not expect to sit still and do nothing. In the matter of our own personal salvation, all the work is done for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, “it is finished.” But in the matter of Christian service and Christian labor, it is not done for us. We are expected, having the New Life within, to set about working out our own salvation “with fear and trembling.” He who has saved us expects us to run the race as pilgrims, to fight the fight as warriors, to plow the fields as husbandmen, to build the walls as laborers together with God and to work in general for Him in all sorts of ways. Now, if I cry, “Help, Lord!” that means that I intend to exert myself. You have no right to sit down and say, “Lord, help me,” and not go out to seek work. He will help you—yes, help you into the jail or workhouse, but no other kind of help will you get! You have no right, when you have a besetting sin, to fold your arms and say, “Well, I hope the Lord will help me to overcome it.” He will help you, but remember the old proverb, for it is true, “He helps those that help themselves.” When He has taught you to smite with your sword against sin, then He will smite too. He works *with* you. He works *in* you to will and to do. He does not work in us to sleep and to slumber after our own carnal propensity, but He works in us “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” We hold not with salvation by works, but we do hold with works by salvation. We know that works cannot save—but we know that a man being saved produces good works. When I pray, then, “Lord, help! Help, Lord!” it is implied that if it is a case where I can do anything in the service of God, I shall put the strength which He has given me into active exercise and then lean upon Him.

II. Well, now, SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS PRAYER, “Help, Lord.”

There are some articles of merchandise of which we are told on the label that they will keep in all climates, and will be useful at all times. I think I may say the same of my prayer. This prayer is a sword of two edges—it is an article that can be used for a thousand different things! It is a most handy prayer. It turns every way. You may use it in all cases, at all times. Let us take one or two.

Temporal circumstances may involve you in difficulty. I suppose, Beloved, there are many of you who are often in trouble with regard to Providence. You work and do your best to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but no one can foresee crushing misfortunes.

Sometimes employment fails. At another time the dishonesty of others may bring you down from competence to poverty. Sometimes sickness may fall upon you and you may be disabled. In a thousand ways you may be brought to feel that you need help in Providential matters. Now, dear Friend, today you may have been trudging all over the city looking for a friend. You have written letters and you have gone to all you know—and you are getting pretty near to the end of all your earthly hopes. I suggest that, before you leave this sanctuary, you pray this prayer, “Help, Lord.” Use it, appropriate it, expand it according to your faith and your feelings somewhat thus—“Help, Lord. You did feed Your servant Elijah by ravens and You made the widow’s cruse of oil and handful of meal to last. ‘Help, Lord.’ I do not expect a miracle, but I expect the same help which a miracle would bring me and expect it in the ordinary course of Providence. If You do not put Your hand out of Heaven to help me, You will assist me by some ordinary means which would not, however, have been available if You had not so arranged it. ‘Help, Lord.’” It really is marvelous, and most of our lives will prove it, how good the Lord is in a pinch. Just when you have said, “Now it is all over with me,” then it is that the Lord has appeared for your deliverance. When your hopes have been like Lazarus in the grave, not only dead, but something more, for Martha said, “Lord, by this time he stinks; for he has been dead four days”—yet even then, when Christ has appeared, there has been a resurrection to your circumstances and your comforts and you have again been able to rejoice!

Some of you are students of Scripture. Your difficulties are not pecuniary ones. You turn over, day by day, this precious Book and it is your desire to understand it, but you are vexed with certain perplexities. There are things in it which are hard to be understood and you need to arrive at definite, distinct truth, to know true knowledge. Let me suggest to you, dear Brother, that when you have studied the Scripture anxiously and carefully, and sought out the opinions and judgments of good and gracious men who were taught of God, that you should never forget to add to all this the prayer, “Help, Lord. Help, Lord!” There is more got out of the Bible by praying than by anything else. When a certain Puritan had a dispute upon matters of doctrine with another, he was observed to speak very fluently and with great power. While his opponent spoke, he was observed taking notes—and one desired to see his notes—and what do you think they were? They were just these words, “More light, Lord! More light, Lord! More light, Lord!” That is the best way of taking notes—a cry for more Light of God! All of a sudden, that very text of Scripture which seemed as hard as a flint, will fly open by a touch of the Holy Spirit’s finger when you have said in prayer, “Help, Lord.”

This prayer will well suit those who are engaged in inward conflicts. I have heard of some Christians who do not believe in inward conflicts. Brother, take care lest you have to prove them beyond all other men. I heard today something which reminds me of how different our experience is at one time from what it is at another. A dear servant of the Lord was good Mr. Harrington Evans—perhaps a very model preacher, one who

spoke very sweetly of Christ. A Brother was telling me today that he remembers hearing Mr. Evans say that he hardly liked a Christian to pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He said, "I do not like it. The saint is forgiven. I know he sins, still he is thoroughly forgiven and there is a kind of clank of the chain about the prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" "Yet," said my informant, "if I am not mistaken, on Mr. Evans' tombstone are those words, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" So that what he thought was a clank of the chain once, he came to look upon as being a most precious and comfortable prayer after all! And some of our Brothers do, at times, get a little top-heavy and say, "I do not make confession of sin." More the pity, Brother—you are making a birch for your own back! You will have it before long, depend upon it. There is no position for the child of God so safe, so Scriptural, so true as that of still clinging to Jesus as you did at the first—still mourning for sin and rejoicing in the Atonement made for you as a sinner! I must confess that I cannot ordinarily get that comfort by drawing near as a saint which I can get by coming to Christ as a sinner! My evidences often fail me and when they do I give up all seeking after them and go straight away, without any evidences, to Christ over again as the sinner's Savior and find fresh joy and peace in believing! May we be kept in such a frame of mind as this!

How many of you are exercised with conflicts tonight? You do not know which will get the upper hand, good or evil. There is conflict and combat going on within as though a pitted battle were being fought there. The soil of your heart is torn up by the prancing of the hoofs of the enemy horses. You think, "I shall surely perish after all." Brother, Sister, in your time of conflict here is a prayer for you, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord! Help the newborn babe to conquer the old man! Help the vital spark to keep its flame alive now that floods are poured out against it! Let not the dragon swallow up the man-child! 'Help, Lord.' Help! 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Help You me, Lord, and I will yet sing, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord!'"

Will not this prayer suit those of you who are just now desirous to honor God in your *sufferings*? You have lately fallen into sickness. You have to be much on your bed and you are afraid that you will get impatient. I know aged persons are sometimes troubled with the fear that if they should be long living in infirmity, they might get peevish and petulant—doubtless it is the vice of old age. Well, at such a crisis, dear Friends, whether aged or young, this prayer will suit you, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord! Help me if my pains multiply. Help me!" This is a prayer for dying saints at the stake. How often it has sprung from their lips! When the flames have leaped up upon them, they have prayed, "'Help, Lord.' Help me to burn! Help me to be faithful. Suffer me not to turn aside from my Master! 'Help, Lord.' Now I have more to suffer than the creature can bear, sustain me, Lord!"

Not less meet is this prayer for those of you who are not suffering, but *working*. Most of us, I hope, are workers for Christ. And why should we

ever go out to our work without the prayer, "Help, Lord"? And when we are in it, we cannot expect to prosper except the desire is still coming up, "Help, Lord." And when we have done the work, it is a sweet evening's prayer with which to close the day, "'Help, Lord.' Make my work to stand. 'Help, Lord.'" I give this prayer to you, my Brothers and Sisters in the Church, elders and youngsters, overseers and deacons—to you, Brothers and Sisters, who teach the young of this flock. To you who are toiling in our classes. To you who preach in the streets, or go from place to place proclaiming the Word of God. Be this your prayer henceforth, "'Help, Lord.' Help us to declare the Gospel faithfully and fully, and to be the means of bringing souls to Yourself."

Indeed, I do not know where this prayer would not be suitable! There is Mary just going out to a new situation, leaving her mother's roof, and she is thinking, "Now I do not know who my master may be, but I am a Christian and I hope I may be able, as a servant, to show what Christianity is." I am glad, Mary, you have got that wish. Now pray before you go into that new situation—"Help, Lord.' Help! I have not been all I ought to be. I have not always honored my Lord and Master, but now please help me to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things." And there is a dear Brother, perhaps, very young, who is just entering upon a new sphere of labor. It is labor new to him—his heart is in it, but still he does not quite understand it and he wants to do it so that God may be glorified. Well then, Brother, do not go out of the door till you have said, "Lord, help. Help, Lord, and sustain me!"

And this is a prayer, I think, that we must take up, all together, in these days when Romanism is coming back all over the land. "In these perilous times, when the false prophets and the magicians are abroad seeking to entrap men with their gaudy ceremonies and their sumptuous shows, it is for us to protest and to preach the Word, but help, God of Luther! Help us to deal a death-blow to the dragon! Help, God of Calvin! Help us to unfurl the banner of the Gospel once again! Help us, God of Zwingli, to stand steadfast in the day of trial! 'Help, Lord.' It is only Your right arm that can save England from once again being under the hoof of the Pope of Rome! Come and deliver Your saints in this, their day of trial. 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'"

III. By way of ENCOURAGEMENT TO EXPECT AN ANSWER, let me now address a few closing words.

"Help, Lord." We may expect that He will do so in the future because He has done so in the past. You remember your conversion—

***"Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold me up but Thee?"***

You have had much help, dear Friend. Were you to write your history, could you remember all the interpositions of Divine Providence and put them down? It would make a strange story. So I sometimes think with regard to myself. Yet I am not sure that it would, for I suppose our stories would be very much alike! We have all had to say of the goodness

and mercy of God, “By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation.” We have had judgment like a sentence of death in ourselves, but we have had deliverance like life from the dead! There have been drops of wormwood, but there have been seas of milk and honey! Our souls have to raise an Ebenezer here and we expect to raise one more on Jordan’s shore and to the last to sing, “Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.” I know what the devil tells you. He is telling you that you have got into an extraordinary position now and, though God helped you before, yet this is a new trial, a wilderness where there is no way out. Well, then, “His mercies are new every morning.” In new straits you shall have new mercies! Our God is the same “yesterday, today and forever,” but the phases of His mercy are as numerous as the phases of our grief. He has helped you, so go to Him and He will help you again!

Take this thought to console and to comfort you—*His relationship as a Covenant God to you as a sincere Christian necessitates His helping you.* You have a child. That child is up to his neck in the mire and he will soon be swallowed up alive in the bog, but he cries, “Father, Father, help!” Now, some passerby who had a brutal heart might ignore the cry, but you are his father, you cannot resist his cry! “What? Not help my child?” Why, every man here feels that I would insult his manhood with the supposition that he could leave his child to perish who he might help! No, you would fly as on the wings of love to help your child! If we, being evil, would help our children, how much more shall our Father, who is in Heaven, help us?

Moreover, He is related to us in another relationship—“Your Maker is your Husband.” Let any husband here imagine his wife to be in distress and she looks him in the face, and says, “My Husband, it is a time of emergency, my heart is breaking, help me.” Would she have to ask twice? Not of those of us who have learned the word, “Husbands, love your wives.” And surely God is the best of husbands! And if our heart can but feel the marriage-bond between our souls and Christ, we need not fear but that He will respond to our tears and to our cries. He will say, “Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God.” “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers; they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” I might enlarge on this thought, but you can think it out for yourselves. God’s relationships necessitate that He should help us.

All the attributes of God are involved because they are pledged to the help of His people. Suppose He did not help us—then the enemy would say that He could not! That would be a reflection on His power. Or the foe would say that He *would* not. That would be an imputation on His love and, considering His promise, it would be a stain upon His Truth. He has brought us into our present condition and if He does not deliver us out of it, then that would be a stain upon His wisdom—and the enemy would say that He steered the ship where He could not manage it. But

that could never be, so trust Him and fear not! Your life is secure. He will preserve His children to the end.

But, Beloved, God *will* help us—we have the promise He has given. It is very beautiful to notice this in the Scriptures. When you get a prayer in one chapter, you get a promise in the next which is the very counterpart of the prayer. I may say that the promise is the type and the prayer is very often the copy printed off that type. Listen to this, “Help, Lord.” Then listen to this, “I will help you.” You know there is such a promise as this, “I will help you.” You say, “Help, Lord,” and He says, “I will help you.” Do you believe your God, Christian? “I will help you.” Do you believe Him? You dare not disbelieve Him! Well, then, lift up your head, brush away those tears, let those heavy hearts again be exalted and let that dull heart of yours begin to sing! You have asked for help and He has promised to give it. The thing is done. Go your way! Rejoice in your God and remember how He has said, “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

All this I have spoken to Christians, but there would be plenty of room and opportunity, if we had the time, to put this prayer into the lips of the sinner, too! In many respects it suits the sinner. “‘Help, Lord.’ I have a load of sin, take it from me. ‘Help, Lord.’ I have a hard, stubborn heart, melt it. ‘Help, Lord.’ I am blind, I am lame, I am sick. Here I lie at mercy’s gate, ‘Help, Lord.’” O Sinner, if you can only pray this prayer from the bottom of your soul and present it through the blood of Jesus Christ, you shall have help! I pray you, do not go to bed tonight, do not shut those eyes of your in slumber till from your heart you have uttered this prayer, “‘Help, Lord. Help, Lord!’” And every morning rise with it. And every night retire with it till you shall have the answer! And then when you have got the answer, you may still go on and plead it in another shape, and in another form—even in the hour of death you may still plead it, “‘Help, Lord.’” When the river Jordan swells up to your chin, you may still say, “‘Help, Lord.’” Till you get up to the Throne of God and even there I was about to say, one might say, “Now, Lord, I do not need help any longer, except it be to praise You. Oh, help me to extol You, to magnify You! Give me more and more the seraph’s fire, the angel’s tongue. Help me to hymn Messiah’s name and praise the splendor of His Grace world without end.”

I leave you, then, with the prayer, “‘Help, Lord.’” May the Lord help you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 18.

Verses 1-3. *I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and my horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I shall call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.* At first he says, “I will love You,” then, “I will trust You.” Now he says “I will call upon You,” and that calling upon God is especially in the sense of praising Him. And when you have just

experienced a Divine deliverance, how full your spirit is of sacred gratitude!

4-7. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry.* God was angry with Saul and with all David's persecutors because they hunted that good man like a partridge upon the mountains! The prayer of the poor suppliant called down the anger of God upon his adversaries.

8. *There went up a smoke out of His nostrils and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.* This is a wonderful picture of the anger of God. The Hebrews always connected manifestations of anger with the nose and mouth just as they ascribed various passions and feelings to the different members of the body. So David says, "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils and fire out of His mouth devoured." Does someone ask, "Can prayer move God in this way?" Yes, it seems so. Of course David had to speak after the manner of men—there is no other way in which men can speak, so he describes God as being thus stirred by the cry of His poor child when it came up into His ears. Nothing brings a man's temper into his face like an injury done to his child. And God, as a Father, cannot endure to have His children hurt. "He that touches you touches the apple of His eye."

9, 10. *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.* So quick is God to come to the deliverance of His persecuted people!

11-13. *He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail storms and coals of fire.* Behold the dread artillery of Heaven as God turns His terrible guns against the enemies of His people and pours out hot shot from His lofty bastion—"hail stones and coals of fire."

14, 15. *Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.* The Psalmist is evidently describing the passage of the Red Sea, and likening the descent of God to His individual help to that memorable descent of God to the rescue of His entire people. And indeed, God is as great in His help to one as in His help to all! He is never little. When God helps you, my Brother, He is a great God, and greatly to be praised, as greatly so as when He comes to the rescue of an entire nation! Therefore sing unto the Lord, whose arm is lifted up for you, even for you, as truly as it was lifted upon Israel

when He brought them out of Egypt “with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror.”

16. *He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.* [See Sermon #1432, Volume 24—DIVINE INTERPOSITIONS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Lord made another Moses of him. Pharaoh’s daughter gave the name of Moses, that is, one drawn out, to the child who was brought to her, “because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

17. *He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me.* Is that the reason why God interposed on David’s behalf? Then let all His weak children find comfort in the fact that when our enemies are too strong for us, God will come and deliver us! Let us be thankful for burdens that are too heavy for us to bear and cast them upon the almighty shoulders that can easily sustain them. If we could do without God, we would do without God, but as we cannot, God will come to us and help and deliver us!

18, 19. *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me.* What a sense of Divine love God’s gracious deliverance brings! Perhaps David would never have known how greatly God delighted in him if he had not been in such dire distress and had not had such a great deliverance.

20-24. *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.* If God gives you Grace to be honest, upright, true and steadfast in the time of temptation, you may be quite sure that He will deliver you! In fact, He has already worked the greater part of your deliverance in thus keeping you from sin! The worst thing that a trouble can do for a Christian is to carry him off his feet and make him forsake his integrity.

25-27. *With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the forward You will show Yourself forward. For You will save the afflicted people; but will bring down high looks.* If your faith cannot endure testing and trying, it is but poor faith. It will not do to die with if it will not do to live with it. But if you cry to the Lord and He enables you in the time of your distress to be faithful to Him, then He will certainly give you deliverance sooner or later.

28-30. *For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect.* If you practice self-reliance, but not God-reliance, you will be sure to fail. What poor strength that is which does not come from God! Is it worthy of the name of strength at all? Is it not impotence and impudence combined? May

God keep us from imagining that we can do anything apart from Him! At the same time, may His gracious Spirit work in us the sure confidence that we can do everything He bids us do when He is our Helper! David had that confidence, for He goes on to sing.

30-37. *The word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those who trust in Him. For who is God says the LORD? Or who is a rock says our God? It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great. You have enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.* Remember that this is a soldier's song—a song under the old covenant when men might fight as they may not fight now. We must, therefore, spiritualize this ancient war song as we read it.

38-45. *I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For You have girded me with strength unto the battle: You have subdued under me those that rose up against me. You have also given me the necks of my enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but He answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; and You have made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.* So it came to pass that the Philistines were afraid of David and he delivered his people from the attacks of all invaders, and brought them that blessed peace which Solomon enjoyed with them.

46-50. *The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God that avenges me, and subdues the people under me. He delivers me from my enemies: yes, You lift me up above those that rise up against me: You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto You, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Your name. Great deliverance gives He to His king; and shows mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed forevermore.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE POWER OF A SIGH

NO. 2464

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 10, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1886.

*“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.”
Psalm 12:5.*

YOU must all have noticed that David lived in very evil times. When he wrote this Psalm, the days were dark and his cry was, “Help, Lord; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men,” from which I gather that, bad as the times may be in which we live, there have been bad times before these. We are not the first persons who have had reason to complain of the evils by which we are surrounded. If we have to say that the love of many is waxing cold and the Truth of God is scarcely to be found, such experiences have happened to God's servants many times before. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial we have to endure, as though we were the first persons to whom that trial has come. No, dear Friends, I feel greatly comforted when I remember that all through the history of God's people, there have been periods of darkness as black as that in which *we* live—times of trial and perplexity when it has seemed as if the whole course of nature was out of order—and as if the very foundations were removed, so that men were ready to cry, “What can the righteous do?” If it is so, that we are only weathering storms like those which tossed the boats of our fathers before us, and if their ships came safely into the harbor, notwithstanding the hurricane, let us take comfort and be assured that we, too, shall weather this raging tempest—and that for us there will yet be a season when we shall be glad because we are quiet, because the Lord has brought us into our desired haven.

My subject on this occasion leads me to speak to those who are in personal trouble and to say something concerning God's gracious dealings towards them. The text seems to me to tell us three things. First, that *God's people may be in a very sad case*. Secondly, that *God's people have a Friend at hand*, a Friend who can hear even their sighs. And, thirdly, that *this Friend will do them a good turn* when once He arises and takes their cause in hand. And He is certain to do it, for the text is virtually a promise—“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.”

I. First, then, GOD’S PEOPLE—His own people—His elect people—His redeemed people—His well-beloved people—MAY BE IN A VERY SAD CASE.

Certainly, to begin with, *they may be poor* and, in addition to that, *they may be needy*, for I take it that the words, “poor,” and, “needy,” have not quite the same meaning. A man may be very poor and that condition is bad enough, yet his needs may not be many. When he puts on his hat, he covers his whole family, and when he takes a crust into his mouth, he feeds his whole family. But, alas, there are many who cannot say that, for, in addition to being poor, they are very needy. They have a *number of mouths* to feed and a number of backs to clothe—they have more needs than *one* person would have if he were by himself. A man may have many who are so attached to him by the ties of nature that their needs become his needs and, therefore, in addition to being poor, he is needy as well.

It should not surprise any of us if we find ourselves to be poor and needy. The poor will never cease out of the land and, until Christ shall come again, there will be afflicted and poor people left who shall trust in the name of the Lord. Let us not say that because we are poor and needy, therefore we are not the Lord’s. No, but let us rather argue the other way, for it is the *poor* to whom the Gospel is preached! It is often from among the poor that God chooses His very best and brightest servants. Certainly, if you take the line of history, you shall see electing love looking far more often into the cottage than into the palace! You shall see the redemption of Christ purchasing to itself precious souls more often among peasants than among peers and princes! They who have had least of this world’s good have often had most of the good of the world to come—and they who have had most of this world’s portion have, as a rule, had no portion at all in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Remember our Lord’s solemn warning, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” And forget not Paul’s words, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” So the Apostle James writes, “Hearken, my beloved Brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?” You may, therefore, be poor and needy, and yet not only be among the Lord’s servants, but be among the very best of them, among the very richest of them, among those whom He loves best of all!

But, next, God’s best servants may be *oppressed* as well as poor and needy. The man who wrote this Psalm, the Lord’s servant, David, was a man much oppressed. In his boyhood I imagine that he was the most despised of his father’s family. I gather that from the fact that when his brothers came home to attend the sacrifice with Samuel, the Prophet, David was left alone to keep the sheep. Jesse brought all his sons except

young David, and set them before the Prophet. And even Samuel, when he looked on Eliab, said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me." But it was not so and after the seven sons of Jesse had appeared, and been rejected, the Prophet asked, "Are here all your children?" And the father answered, "There remains yet the youngest and, behold, he keeps the sheep." As soon as David came, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

When the stripling went down to the battle, he was snubbed by his eldest brother Eliab, although he was the one by whom the Lord meant to deliver Israel and to strike the Philistines! From his early days until the time when God set him in safety from him that puffed at him, David was terribly oppressed. Saul grew jealous as he heard the voices of the women singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." It soured the heart of the king of Israel and he could not bear to think of it! Gloomy and dark of mind, he thought of David as his supplanter and hurled a javelin at him, seeking to slay the one to whom he owed so much! David had to escape out of Saul's sight—you know how the king pursued him all over the country and followed him to the caves of the wild goats and to the valleys of the desert. David, though perfectly inoffensive, had to flee from his father-in-law, whose life he disdained to take when it was in his power. He was always kind, generous and faithful to Saul, yet he was always the subject of slander and oppression.

So, you see that God's servants may be oppressed. You may be a child of God and yet get a very bad name for yourself, yes, even through doing the things that are right and through being something more than what men ordinarily are! Poor Joseph was cast into prison, not through wrongdoing, but as the result of his chastity and purity. And many a child of God has brought upon himself an ill name by simply being faithful to the Truth and faithful to his God. Do not wonder if somebody who is set over you, deals very harshly with you. It may be that, in the Providence of God, it is intended that it should be so with you, especially in your youth. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." And there are some men I know of who had very hard times as apprentices and as journeymen, who, nevertheless, in later life were obliged to feel that it was good for them that they were thus broken in. It was a breaking in, but it was a rough colt that needed it—and though the treatment was unrighteous and unjust on the part of the oppressor—yet God overruled it and made it work for good! He often takes His Joseph, who is hated of his brethren, and makes all the sheaves to be obedient to that sheaf—and the sun and the moon and the eleven stars of the family are obliged to honor that lone star which once they had so much despised.

Do not be astonished if your way is rough on the road to Heaven! Rather wonder if you come to a smooth portion—and when people begin to speak well of you, look about you and be a little afraid of what they are trying to do! Be not at all surprised when they abuse and misrepresent and slander you. Take all that as a matter of course and go to God with it. But when they begin to cry, "Hosanna!" do not think much of it. The same folk who shout, "Hosanna!" today, may cry, before the week is out,

“Away with him, crucify him, crucify him.” Palm Sunday is not far off from Good Friday. The day of acclamations is followed very swiftly by the day of crucifixion!

Further than that, God’s people may sometimes be so oppressed that they scarcely are able to speak for themselves at all. They may feel quite shut up and silenced. Read the text, “For the oppression of the poor, for the *sighing* of the needy.” They dare not speak. They have to confine their language to a sigh! They dare not go and expostulate with the oppressor and state their claims to justice. They dare not go and tell a friend about the wrong, lest further mischief should come of it. They are so bound and shut up that they cannot come forth out of their prison—all that they can do is bear their burden in secret—and sigh like that holy woman whom God loved so much, whose adversary “provoked her sorely, for to make her fret.” Hannah was a woman of a sweet poetic mind, perhaps the greatest poetess mentioned in Scripture, but she was so broken down by her sorrow that when she went up to the House of the Lord, she could not speak out! “Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” She was so overcome with sorrow that the priest of God did not understand her real condition, but began to rebuke her as though she had been drinking, whereas the only wine she had tasted had been the bitter cup of wormwood which her adversary had made her drink. You also, my Hearer, may truly be a child of God and yet be in a similar state to that of Hannah—unable to utter a word, but obliged to resort for relief to deep sighing—that expressive token of an inward, unutterable grief.

Once more, we may be God’s people and yet *we may be very much despised*. The text speaks of the righteous man as being puffed at—“Him that puffs at him.” You know, those who act thus, say, “Oh, he! Pshaw! She—oh, well! She—pooh!” Just as if they could not say anything that would express their contempt of such persons and so they just cry, “Pooh, Pooh! Why, they are not worth mentioning!” They cast out your name as evil. They will not say what the evil in your character is—but that is always worse than stating it. I have occasionally heard a person say of another, “Oh, So-and-So! Humph!” with not another word, but only a shrug of the shoulders. That is an abominable way of attacking another! If you have anything to say against a person, say it out, and let us know what it is. But that, “Pooh!” or that shrug, which may mean so much and yet may have nothing in it, is dastardly! It is like a poisoned dagger which should never be used by an honest hand. We may be God’s people, yet we may be thus assailed.

Have not some of those who have fought their way to the front, some who have been the bravest champions for God, as David was, been puffed at? Eliab said to his young brother, “I know your pride, and the naughtiness of your heart, for you are come down that you might see the battle.” That was said to the ruddy youth before the fight with Goliath—but the mockers dared not talk like that when he came back bearing in his hand the giant’s gory head which he had cut off with the Philistine’s own sword! They puffed at him and yet he was the man whom God had chosen who should be honored and revered by all the people of Israel! He was to be famous among the greatest of kings, yet he must begin as a

mere despised peasant boy! Never mind, young man, never mind what they say! They say, and they say, and they say—and when they have said it thrice, let them say it again as often as they please! As for you, go on in the path the Lord has marked out for you. Trust in God and serve Him faithfully and then fear not, and be not dismayed, whatever man may do to you!

Thus have I described the sad case in which a true child of God may be found.

II. It is more pleasant to turn to the second head and say that GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE A FRIEND AT HAND.

There is a Sister who may be in the congregation right now. If so, she will be pleased to hear that she gave me my text for this discourse. As many of you know, my dear wife very kindly selects for me the texts that make up the daily portions in our little penny Book Almanac—and she put down this passage among the others, “For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord.” And the dear child of God to whom I refer wrote a letter to say how remarkably God had blessed this text to her comfort. She was in sorrow and trouble and somewhat given to sighing—and she thought that, perhaps, God was grieved with her for sighing—but this text greatly cheered her. She gives a little picture of what she thinks the texts means. I will tell you what she writes, for it will be the best part of my sermon by a long way.

She says, “When I am in bed and my little child wants its mother, if it utters a petulant cry, I do not take any notice of it. I know that it ought not to wake mother up and disturb her with its selfish cry. But if, instead of crying, it seems very weak, and very sad, and it gives a *sigh*, I cannot stand that, but go to it at once! When it does not cry to me, or cry for me, but I only hear it *sigh*, then I get out of bed at once and go over to the little cot to see what is the matter.” “Now will I arise, says the Lord.” See, it is the sigh that fetches the mother out of bed! There is great power about a sigh in the ears of a loving mother! If the child could speak and say, “Mother, come to me,” mother might answer, “Not so, my Dear, lie still.” Or if the child only cried out in hastiness, “Oh, come to me!” mother might reply, “Be still, child, be still. You are not suffering as much as you fancy you are.” But when the child involuntarily, in its weakness and sorrow, utters a little sigh, mother has heard it, and she is at once out of bed and by the side of her little sighing child! Is not that a capital explanation of the text, “For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord”?

See, then, the power that there is in the sorrows of God's children to touch the heart of their great Father when *He hears their sighs!* When those sorrows come to be so bitter that the sufferers can scarcely pray. When they cannot find any language in which to express their grief. When even their desires seem to fail and they are so broken down and made so weak by the various troubles that have crushed them that it comes to just this sighing and nothing more, then God cannot be still, He must get up! He has gone away and hidden His face before, but now He sees that the time has come to manifest His unchanging love and Grace! “Now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that

puffs at him.” Yes, Brothers and Sisters, God hears our sighs even if we cannot hear them ourselves! When we think we have not prayed at all, we have often prayed the best! When we imagine that our groans have been empty, they have often been the fullest! When we sigh because we think we do not sigh, God hears that sort of sighing which is only a *longing* to sigh! He hears the grief when the grief has no voice. He hears the sorrow when the sorrow cannot find a tongue.

Then note that as the Lord hears our sighs, *those sighs touch His heart*. The wicked have been puffing at the godly. They said, “Our tongues are our own, who is the ruler over us?” The Lord took no notice of them but let them blaspheme if they would. But there arose the sad sigh of His children and that touched Him! He could not bear *that*. It seems to me a very wonderful thing that the Almighty, the Infinite, to whom the Heaven of heavens is nothing, who takes up the isles as a very little thing, to whom all this system of worlds is but as the smallest grain of dust that does not turn the scale, yet is, as we say, “all there,” when His children sigh—and His heart is touched, His heart is moved—His whole being is full of an infinite compassion! He cannot bear that sighing. “Now will I arise, says the Lord. I will get up from My Throne of Glory that I may deliver My people. I have heard their sighs and I cannot stay away from them! Love masters My Omnipotence! I feel but one force—the force of my overwhelming love! It sways Me and impels Me to speed to their relief. I will get out of My hiding places, I will end my withdrawals from them, I will rend the veil and come out from between the cherubim. Now will I arise, says the Lord.” What has caused all this mighty movement? Nothing but the sighs of His needy people!

Will you also think that as this sigh is heard by God, it is a wonderful thing that God should speak of Himself as being *fully moved*? “Now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.” “Verily, you are a God that hides Yourself.” The thunder, the tempest are but the hiding of His power—who can understand the fullness of His might? What must God be when He says, “Now will I arise”—like one who leaves his couch, like one who rolls up his sleeve to make bare his arm—like one who sets himself with intent and purpose to do some work that will require all his skill and all his power? Think of God arising in His might! When He arises, He shakes the earth terribly—nothing stands before Him when He once arises! Poor, sick, needy, sorrowing, sighing child of God, it is *you* who can bring Him into this marvelous state of activity! I tremble while I try to describe it—God making Himself fully God—arising, lifting up Himself, putting forth His power!

If you need a picture of it, remember Israel in Egypt. “And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up to God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect to them.” Did you ever hear that text preached from by Handel in his masterly oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*? How he makes all the music of all the stringed instruments and the voices of all the singers bring out that sigh!

“The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage...and God heard their groaning.” Now I can understand all the rest of the song and all the rest of the music! I can understand how the chorus rings out with a great shout, “The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” The beginning, the meaning of it all is that they “sighed by reason of the bondage.” “Now will I arise, says the Lord.” And when He does arise, then the sea in the fullness of its strength is but the trembling instrument of His Omnipotence and soon Pharaoh and his horses and his chariots are drowned in its depths!

The same God lives forever and ever, and lives for you as He lived for Jacob’s seed in the land of Mizraim! And you in your sorrow can still touch the heart of God as their sighing, because of their taskmasters, touched His heart in the days of old! And He will deliver you as He delivered them. Only sigh and cry to Him and He will come to you. He will come riding on a cherub, yes, riding upon the wings of the wind! And He will deliver you and you shall glorify Him, for what He has done, before, He will delight to do again, “for His mercy endures forever.” Hallelujah! Therefore, let His people, even in their sighing, learn to rejoice in Him!

III. Now I must close by dwelling for only a few minutes upon the third point which is, WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE FETCH THEIR FRIEND BY THEIR SIGHS, HE WILL DO THEM A GOOD TURN. What does He say? I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.”

You know what God did for David. There was Saul, hunting him everywhere, and I do not doubt that David was strongly tempted, sometimes, to seek safety for himself. He did some few things that looked as if he meant to preserve himself from the hand of his adversary. But once, when he caught Saul in a cave, entirely in his hands, he only cut off the edge of the skirt of the king’s robe and let him go. It was a grand proof of the power of faith to abstain from touching the man who thirsted for his blood! That was another night of triumph for David when he went out with Abishai and they stole through all the ranks of the sleeping soldiers, threading their silent way till they came where Saul lay asleep in the trench, with his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. And Abishai said to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me strike him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not strike him the second time.”

He was ready to grasp the spear and give one thrust at Saul and pin him to the ground. And there was David, with the remembrance of his bitter persecution hot upon him. But he laid hold of his companion’s hand and whispered, “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless? David said, furthermore, “As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord’s anointed: but, I pray you, take you now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.” So the two brave warriors threaded their way back through the sleeping host, taking with them the cruse of water and the spear that had been by the king’s head, that he might see how nearly he had lost his life and how completely he had been in their hands. No,

David did not deliver himself from Saul's oppression—and it is a splendid evidence of faith when faith can hold her hand!

Perhaps you, also, have been oppressed. You have been ill-treated. You may have an opportunity of avenging yourself and if you are a child of the devil, you will do it. But if you are a child of God, you will say, "No, no, I have no vengeance to return. It is not mine to repay. The only vengeance I would return is to show sevenfold kindness for all the ills done to me. I will not lift my hand to deliver myself." Then God says, "Now I will do it. I will do it. I have heard the sighing of my poor child under all his oppressions, 'Now will I arise, says the Lord.'" And within a short space of time Saul falls by the arrows of the Philistines upon mount Gilboa and David is anointed first king over Judah, and, by-and-by, king over Israel as well! Against him no dog dares to move its tongue—he is the delight of the united nation and leads them forth to victories against the Philistines—for God has set him in safety from him that puffed at him!

Well now, God can take *any* of His children and do just the same for them! He can lift them out of their troubles and put them somewhere else where they shall be masters of those whose servants they formerly were. He shall lead your captivity captive and make you to come to the bright side of the hill if you have but had Grace enough to travel on the bleak side of it clinging only to your God! "I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him."

The Lord does that in many ways. Sometimes He takes His servants and puts them quite out of the power of their adversaries. Many a time in Providence has He done it. Sometimes He does not do anything of the kind, but He lets their adversaries puff at them, only He makes them feel that *all that they can do is puff*. Well, they may puff if they like till they have puffed their breath away! I like that picture Mr. Bunyan gives us when he represents the pilgrims going by the cave where Giant Pope sits and the giant has grown so crazy and stiff in his joints that he can now do little more than sit in his cave's mouth, grinning at pilgrims as they go by, biting his nails because he cannot come at them, and saying, "You will never mend till more of you are burned." But he cannot burn them, so he may sit there and say what he likes! And, sometimes, the children of God get so much Grace and so much faith that those who puff at them may keep on puffing, but the godly are far above it all!

Does it not sometimes happen that a Christian woman lives with a husband who makes everything very unpleasant, but her soul is so full of the love of God and she is taught so much patience that she is set in safety from him that puffs at her? Some child of God has to go and run the gauntlet of persecution and do battle in a workshop with ungodly blasphemers—but he walks so near to God and he is so peaceful and so full of the enjoyment of heavenly delights that, at last, he does not come to take any notice of all the puffing except that he is driven to more prayer and to a closer walk with God! "I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him." I do not know which is the better of the two—to get right away from the persecutors—or to be allowed to stay where you are and feel, "It does not matter. All the bitterness is gone, all the injury is

removed.” Whichever God thinks is better for us and more for His own Glory, He will do, and either way we are content!

It may be that the one who puffs at some of us is neither a man nor a woman—we think that we could bear that kind of puffing—but it is the devil, himself. Oh, Sirs, we had better go a thousand miles around, over hedge and ditch, rather than once come into conflict with *him*! I have had a sharp brush with him now and again, but I still need to pray every morning that prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One,” for all other temptations are as nothing compared with actual contact with that grim Evil One! He knows how to strike and he knows how to wound, but yet, if it were most for the good of others, if we, having to be leaders of others, must sometimes have a battle with the arch-enemy, it is a grand thing if the Lord so covers us with armor of proof from head to foot that He sets us in safety from him that puffs at us and we are made to feel that even the devil’s temptations are but as puffs!

Yet, if that puff might bring a poisoned arrow into your soul, it is a blessed thing to feel that God can set you in safety from it all. For, “who is he that shall harm you?” Who is he? Our Master met him in the wilderness and fought him in a threefold duel and left the marks of His sword upon him. The scars are there and you and I may look that grim adversary in the face and tell him that we know his Master, and that he knows his Master, too, and that we are in that Master and that Master is in us and, as surely as He overcame, and triumphed once for us, so shall we overcome in His strength! So the weakest saint can say, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” With such a text as that, let us give him a deadly thrust and he shall spread his dragon wings and fly sway, discomfited by one whose sighs have brought God to his help, whose cries have brought Omnipotence to be infinitely more than a match for all the powers of darkness!

Now I have finished my sermon, only I have been thinking that there are some here who will say, “Alas, we are not the children of God and yet we are in trouble.” Well, if you do not know yourselves to be the children of God and you are in trouble, yet the Lord our God is full of pity and full of compassion! He has pity, even, for natural and ungodly men when they are in trouble. I wish you would think of that, some of you who never prayed in your lives. If you are in trouble, now is the time to begin to pray! A Brother came to join the Church this week. He had been ill and sick for some time and he had gone to the hospital and obtained medicine, but it had not done him any good. He was about to take a dose of the medicine when it came to his thoughts, “I have never prayed to God to make me well.” So he stopped and prayed a prayer to God, whom he did not know, that He would help him in his sorrow and his sickness and give him health. And he came to tell me how God dealt with him in mercy and how he was led by that answered prayer to put up many other prayers and to trust Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul!

Now, if you are in sore sorrow and in deep trouble, whatever it may be, turn to your God! He hears the young ravens when they cry. They cannot pray spiritual prayers any more than *you* can and yet He hears their

cries. Oh, if you are like the poor raven, yet let your cry go up to God and He will hear you! He is a God full of compassion. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And He even has pity upon those who fear Him not! O my Hearers, try Him and trust Him for yourselves! Do not think harshly of my God! Fancy not that He is made of flint or granite. He will listen to your sighs, your cries and your tears. Only turn to Him with full purpose of heart and He will not cast you away. May He bless you now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:137-152.**

Verse 137. *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments.* It is well to be able to say this when you are being tried, when the hand of God lies heavy upon you. It is hard to kick against the pricks, but it is very sweet to submit and to say, "Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments."

138. *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* "Righteous" for the present, "faithful" for the future. There is no mistake about God's Word—it will never fail—we may trust it implicitly and we shall never be disappointed.

139. *My zeal has consumed me.* The Psalmist had such zeal for God's Word that he seemed like a sacrifice consumed with the fire upon the Lord's altar!

139. *Because my enemies have forgotten Your Words.* First, they despised them, then they neglected them. At last they got as far as even to forget them! Forgetfulness of God's Word is a very dreadful stage of disease of the heart.

140. *Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it.* To love God's Word for its purity is an index of a pure heart. Some love it for its poetry, some love it for its doctrine, some love it for its mercy, but he is an advanced man in the kingdom of Grace who loves it for its *purity*.

141. *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your Precepts.* Others may, but I am not following their example. It is well when a Christian man is a contrast to other men. When they call him a mere nobody, he adopts their words and says, "Yes, I am nothing. 'I am small and despised,' yet I do not forget the Lord's Precepts."

142. *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your Law is truth.* Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Here is the best possible answer—"Your Law is truth." Not only does it contain the truth, but it *is* the Truth. The Word of God is not only true, that is its quality—but it is the Truth of God, that is its essence. It is the cream of all truths. "Your Law is truth."

143. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet Your Commandments are my delights.* "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me." Like two fierce dogs, they had fixed their teeth in him, yet even then he could say, "yet Your commandments are my delights." What a riddle is the man who knows God! He has great trouble and is full of anguish, yet he is delighted! How can these things be? The child of God knows what it is to be troubled on every side, and yet not to be troubled within.

144. *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.* As if he could not live without it! He did not call it true living except as he understood and enjoyed the Precepts of His God!

145. *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your Statutes.* Here we have both a prayer and a resolve; but the resolution grew out of the prayer and was connected with it. The Psalmist prays to God to help him to keep His Statutes. Are any of you hard put to it, just now, by strong temptation? I commend this verse to you—"Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your Statutes." Cry to God, "Help me, O Lord; let not strong temptation drag me away from You! I long to be holy, my whole heart's desire is to keep Your ways; O help me, I pray You!" This verse begins with, "I cried," and the next verse begins in the same way—

146. *I cried to You.* It is good when you can cry. The living child cries and it is the man of God whose prayer is a cry of almost inarticulate utterance and grief—"I cried." "I cried." What did he cry?

146. *Save me, and I shall keep Your Testimonies.* David had no notion of salvation without obedience, so he prays, "Save me, and I shall keep Your Testimonies." Is that the salvation *you* desire—salvation from sin? If so, you shall have it! God, the Holy One, delights to bestow holiness, and He will speedily hear and answer such a prayer as that.

147. *I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried.* The Psalmist was still crying, crying early in the morning. Before the sun was up, he was up, and crying to God.

147. *I hoped in Your Word.* It is well when hope goes with prayer, when you begin to see daylight even before the sun is up. "I hoped in Your Word." Not in any enthusiastic impression of his own, but in God's Word, itself, the Psalmist placed all his confidence!

148. *My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.* As he was up before the sun, so he was praying before they set the guards for the night watch. And when they were changing guards and he heard the cry of the hour from the watchman, he was still crying to God! And at the same time he was meditating—"that I might meditate in Your Word." Ah, that is the way to cry! Meditation is very much neglected nowadays. We read, perhaps, too much. We meditate, for certain, too little. And meditation is to reading like digestion after eating. The cows in the pasture eat the grass and then they lie down and chew the cud and get all the good they can out of what they have eaten. Reading snips off the grass, but meditation chews the cud! Therefore, "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." In this matter we often fail. We shall be wise to imitate David who devoted the early morning to prayer and the night watches to meditation.

149. *Hear my voice*—So the Psalmist used to pray aloud! It is a very great help in prayer if you can do the same. If we pray aloud to be heard of men, it is a sin. But if we pray aloud that we may hear ourselves, so that our devotion may be excited, we shall often find it very profitable. And if people hear us, by accident, so much the better—they are not hearing anything that will do them harm—they are hearing that which may do them good.

149. *According to Your loving kindness.* That is, do not hear it to judge it, to censure it, to criticize it, but hear it as a father hears his child, loving to hear its little voice speaking in broken accents.

149. *O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* Just now, the Psalmist prayed, “Hear me, O Lord!” In the 146th verse, He cried, “Save me.” Now his prayer is, “O Lord, quicken me!” When God puts more life into us, then we have more strength to bear our burdens and, having more spiritual life, we have more power to resist temptation! Quickening is an essential mercy, containing within itself a multitude of blessings. “Quicken me according to Your judgment.”

150. *They draw near that follow after mischief.* He could hear the sound of their feet behind him—they were running after him and he could detect the pitter-patter of their malicious footsteps.

150-151. *They are far from Your Law. You are near, O LORD.* What a comfort that is! They are *trying* to get near, but You *are* near! I can hear the tread of their feet behind me, but I can see Your face close to me! How comforted is the Psalmist in the time of trouble! His adversaries may be as keen of scent as bloodhounds, but God is with him, therefore he fears them not.

151-152. *And all Your Commandments are truth. Concerning Your Testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* So that this Psalm was written by David when he was an old man. He had known the Lord’s Commandments when he was young and now, in his declining days, he can say, “I have known of old that You have founded them forever.” O young men, if you want to be happy old men, begin by knowing God’s Word! If you have known that God has founded His Word of old, you know that which will comfort you when you grow old! In fact, you have found a perpetual spring within your heart, if, from your youth up you have known in the fullest sense the Word of the Lord! Some are changing their creed every day in the week, as the weather changes, but blessed is that man who has so learned Christ to begin with that he keeps in the old way all his life! He is the man who can truly grow. Transplant a tree six times a year and you will not get any fruit from it. But blessed are they that are planted in the courts of the Lord, for they shall flourish there and shall still bring forth fruit in old age!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—728, 747, 753.

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

THE BIBLE TRIED AND PROVED

NO. 2084

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried
in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”
Psalm 12:6.***

IN this Psalm our text stands in contrast with the evil of the age. The Psalmist complains that the “godly man ceases. The faithful fail from among the children of men.” It was a great grief to him and he found no consolation except in the Words of the Lord. What if men fail—the Word of the Lord abides! What a comfort it is to quit the arena of controversy for the green pastures of Revelation! One feels like Noah, when shut within the ark—he saw no longer the death and desolation which reigned outside. Live in communion with the Word of God and even in the absence of Christian friends you will not lack for company.

Furthermore, the verse stands in fuller contrast still with the words of the ungodly when they rebel against God and oppress His people. They said, “With our tongue will we prevail. Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?” They boasted, they domineered, they threatened. The Psalmist turned away from the voice of the boaster to the Words of the Lord. He saw the promise, the precept and the doctrine of pure Truth and these consoled him while others spoke every man vanity with his neighbor. He had not so many of the Words of the Lord as we have—but what he had made his own by meditation, he prized above the finest gold.

In the good company of those who had spoken under Divine direction he was able to bear the threats of those who surrounded him. So, dear Friends, if at any time your lot is cast where the Truths you love so well are despised, get back to the Prophets and Apostles and hear through them what God the Lord will speak. The voices of earth are full of falsehood but the Word from Heaven is very pure. There is a good practical lesson in the position of the text—learn it well. Make the Word of God your daily companion and then whatever may grieve you in the false doctrine of the hour, you will not be too much cast down. For the Words of the Lord will sustain your spirit.

Looking at the text, does it not strike you as a marvel of condescension that Jehovah, the Infinite, should use *words*? He has arranged for us, in His wisdom, this way of communicating with one another. But as for Himself, He is pure spirit and boundless—shall He contract His glorious thoughts into the narrow channel of sound and ear and nerve? Must the eternal mind use *human* words? The glorious Jehovah spoke *worlds*! The heavens and the earth were the utterances of His lips. To Him it seems more in accordance with His Nature to speak tempests and thunders than to stoop to the humble vowels and consonants of a creature of the dust.

Will He in very deed communicate with man in man's own way? Yes, He stoops to speak to us by *words*. We bless the Lord for verbal inspiration, of which we can say, "I have esteemed the words of Your mouth more than my necessary food." I do not know of any other inspiration, neither am I able to conceive of any which can be of true service to us. We need a plain revelation upon which we can exercise faith. If the Lord had spoken to us by a method in which His meaning was infallible, but His Words were questionable, we should have been rather puzzled than edified. For it is a task, indeed, to separate the true sense from the doubtful words. We would always be afraid that the Prophet or Apostle had not, after all, given us the Divine sense. It is easy to hear and to repeat words. But it is not easy to convey the meaning of another into perfectly independent words of your own.

We believe that holy men of old, though using their own language, were led by the Spirit of God to use words which were also the Words of God. The Divine Spirit so operated upon the spirit of the inspired writer that he wrote the Words of the Lord, and we, therefore, treasure up every one of them. To us "every Word of God is pure," and full of soul nutriment. "Man does not live by bread, only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." We can heartily declare with the Psalmist, "You are my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Your words."

Our condescending God is so well pleased to speak to us by words that He has even deigned to call His only-begotten Son, "The Word." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Lord uses words not with reluctance but with pleasure. And He would have us think highly of them, too, as He said to Israel by Moses, "Therefore shall you lay up these My Words, in your heart and in your soul."

We believe that we have the Words of God preserved for us in the Scriptures. We are exceedingly grateful that it is so. If we had not the Words of the Lord thus recorded we should have felt that we lived in an evil time, since neither voice nor oracle is heard today. I say we should have fallen upon evil days if the words that God spoke of old had not been recorded under His direction. With this Book before us, what the Lord spoke two thousand years ago he virtually speaks now—for "He will not call back His Words" (Isa. 31:2). His Word abides forever. It was spoken, not for one occasion, but for all ages.

The Word of the Lord is so instinct with everlasting life and eternal freshness that it is as vocal and forceful in the heart of the saint today as it was to the ear of Abraham when he heard it in Canaan. Or to the mind of Moses in the desert. Or to David when he sang it on his harp. I thank God that many of us know what it is to hear the Divine Word spoken again in our souls! By the Holy Spirit the words of Scripture come to us with a *present* inspiration—not only has the Book *been* inspired, it *is* inspired. This Book is more than paper and ink, it talks with us. Was not that the promise, "When you awake, it shall talk with you"?

We open the Book with this prayer, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." And we often close it with this feeling, "Here I am, for You did call me." As surely as if the promise had never been uttered before but had

been spoken out of the excellent glory for the first time, the Lord has made Holy Scripture to be His direct word to our heart and conscience. I say not this of you all, but I can say it assuredly of many here present, may the Holy Spirit at this hour speak to you again!

In trying to handle my text there will be three points to dwell upon. First, the quality of the Words of God—"The Words of the Lord are pure words." Secondly, the trials of the Words of God—"As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." And then, thirdly, the claims of these words derived from their purity and the trials which they have undergone. Eternal Spirit, help me to speak correctly concerning Your own Word and help us to feel aright while we hear!

I. First, then, beloved Friends, consider THE QUALITY OF THE WORDS OF GOD—"The Words of the Lord are pure words."

From this statement I gather, first, the uniformity of their character. No exception is made to any of the Words of God but they are all described as "pure words." They are not all of the same character. Some are for teaching, others are for comfort and others for rebuke. But they are so far of a uniform character that they are all "pure words." I conceive it to be an evil habit to make preferences in Holy Scripture. We must preserve this volume as a whole. Those sin against Scripture who delight in doctrinal texts but omit the consideration of practical passages.

If we preach doctrine, they cry, "How sweet!" They will hear of eternal love, Free Grace and the Divine purpose. And I am glad they will. To such I say—Eat the fat and drink the sweet, and rejoice that there are fat things full of marrow in this Book. But remember that men of God in old times took great delight in the Commands of the Lord. They had respect unto Jehovah's precepts and they loved His Law. If any turn on their heel and refuse to hear of duties and ordinances I fear that they do not love God's Word at all. He that does not love it *all* loves it *not at all*.

On the other hand, they are equally mistaken who delight in the preaching of duties but care not for the Doctrines of Grace. They say, "That sermon was worth hearing, for it has to do with daily life." I am very glad that they are of this mind. But if at the same time they refuse other teaching of the Lord, they are greatly at fault. Jesus said, "He that is of God hears God's Words." I fear you are not of God if you account a portion of the Lord's Words to be unworthy of your consideration.

Beloved, we prize the whole range of the Words of the Lord. We do not set aside the histories any more than the promises—

***"I'll read the histories of Your love,
And keep Your Laws in sight,
While through the Promises I love
With ever fresh delight."***

Above all, do not drop into the semi-blasphemy of some who think the New Testament vastly superior to the Old. I would not err by saying that in the Old Testament you have more of the bullion of Truth than in the New—for therein I should be falling into the evil which I condemn. But this I will say—they are of *equal authority*—and that they cast such light upon each other that we could not spare either of them. "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." In the whole Book,

from Genesis to Revelation, the Words of Jehovah are found and they are always pure words.

Neither is it right for any to say, "Thus spoke Christ Himself. But such-and-such a teaching is Pauline." No! It is not Pauline. If it is recorded here, it is of the Holy Spirit. Whether the Holy Spirit speaks by Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or John, or James, or Paul, the authority is still the same. Even concerning Jesus Christ our Lord this is true. For He says of Himself, "The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's which sent Me." In this matter He puts Himself upon the level of others who were as the mouth of God. He says again, "For I have not spoken of Myself. But the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak."

We accept the words of the Apostles as the Words of the Lord, remembering what John said—"We are of God: he that knows God hears us. He that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6). A solemn judgment is thus pronounced upon those who would set the Spirit of Jesus against the Spirit which dwelt in the Apostles. The Words of the Lord are not affected in their value by the medium through which they came. The revealed Truth is all of the same quality even when the portions of it are not of the same weight of metal.

Abiding by the text, we observe next the purity of the Words of the Lord—"The Words of the Lord are pure words." In commerce there is silver and silver, as you all know—silver with alloy and silver free from baser metal. The Word of God is the silver without the dross. It is as silver which has been purified seven times in a crucible of earth in the furnace till every worthless particle has been removed—it is absolutely pure. David said truly, "Your word is Truth." It is Truth in the form of goodness, without mixture of evil. The Commandments of the Lord are just and right.

We have occasionally heard opponents carp at certain coarse expressions used in our translation of the Old Testament. But the coarseness of translators is not to be set to the account of the Holy Spirit, but to the fact that the force of the English language has changed and modes of expression which were current at one period become too gross for another. But I will assert this—I have never yet met with a single person to whom the Words of God have of themselves suggested any evil thing. I have heard a great many horrible things said, but I have never met with a case in which any man has been led into sin by a passage of Scripture.

Perversions are possible and probable—but the Book itself is absolutely pure. Details are given of very gross acts of criminality, but they leave no injurious impression upon the mind. The saddest story of Holy Scripture is a beacon and never a lure. This is the cleanest, clearest, purest Book extant among men. No, it is not to be mentioned in the same hour with the fabulous records which pass for holy books. It comes from God and every Word is pure.

It is also a book pure in the sense of truth, being without mixture of error. I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake

whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are mistakes of translation. For translators are not inspired—but even the *historical* facts are correct. Doubt has been cast upon them here and there and at times with great show of reason—doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season. But only give space enough and search enough and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture!

Old manuscripts, coins, and inscriptions are on the side of the Bible and against it there are nothing but theories and the fact that many an event in history has no other record but that which the Bible affords us. The Book has been of late in the furnace of criticism. But much of that furnace has grown cold from the fact that the criticism is beneath contempt. “The Words of the Lord are pure words”—there is not an error of any sort in the whole compass of them. These words come from Him who can make no mistake and who can have no wish to deceive His creatures.

If I did not believe in the infallibility of the Bible, I would rather be without it. If I am to judge the Book, it is no judge of me. If I am to sift it, like the heap on the threshing floor, and lay this aside and only accept that, according to my own judgment, then I have no guidance whatever unless I have conceit enough to trust my own heart. The new theory denies infallibility to the Words of God but practically imputes it to the judgments of men. At least this is all the infallibility which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from Heaven than with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of “modern thought.”

Again, this Book is pure in the sense of reliability—it has in its promises no mixture of failure. Mark this—no prediction of Scripture has failed. No promise that God has given will turn out to be mere verbiage. “Has He said and shall He not do it?” Take the promise as the Lord gave it and you will find Him faithful to every jot and tittle of it. Some of us are not yet entitled to be called “old and gray-headed,” though the iron-gray is pretty conspicuous upon our heads. But up to now we have believed the promises of God and tested and tried them. And what is our verdict? I bear my solemn testimony that I have not found one Word of the Lord fall to the ground.

The fulfillment of a promise has been delayed sometimes beyond the period which my impatience would have desired. But to the right instant the promise has been kept—not to the ear only—but in deed and in truth. You may lean your whole weight upon any of the Words of God and they will bear you up. In your darkest hour you may have no candle but a single promise and yet that lone light shall make high noon of your midnight. Glory be to His name! The Words of the Lord are without evil, without error and without failure.

Furthermore, on this first head the text not only speaks of the uniform character of God’s Words and of their purity but of their *preciousness*. David compares them to refined silver and silver is a precious metal—in other places he has likened these Words to pure gold. The Words of the Lord might have seemed comparable to paper money, such as our own

Bank notes. But no, they are the metal itself. I remember the time when a friend of ours used to go into the western counties, from one farm to another, buying cheese and he was in the habit of taking quite a weight of coin with him. He had found that the farmers of that period did not care for bank notes and would not look at checks. They were more ready to sell when they saw that they would be paid in metal, down on the nail.

In the Words of God you have the solid money of Truth—it is not fiction but the substance of Truth. God's Words are as bullion. When you have them in the grip of faith you have the substance of things hoped for. Faith finds in the promise of God the reality of what she looks for—the promise of God is as good as the performance itself. God's Words—whether of doctrine, of practice, of comfort—are solid metal to the man of God who knows how to put them in the purse of personal faith. As we use silver in many articles within our houses, so do we use God's Word in daily life. It has a thousand uses. As silver is the current coin of the merchant, so are the promises of God a currency both for Heaven and earth—we deal with God by His promises, and so He deals with us.

As men and women deck themselves with silver by way of ornament, so are the Words of the Lord our jewels and our glory. The promises are things of beauty which are a joy forever. When we love the Word of God and keep it, the beauty of holiness is upon us. This is the true ornament of character and life and we receive it as a love-gift from the Bridegroom of our souls.

Beloved, I need not enlarge in your presence upon the preciousness of the Word of God. You have, many of you, prized it long and have proved its value. I have read of a German Christian woman who was accustomed to mark her Bible whenever she met with a passage which was especially precious to her. But towards the end of her life she ceased from the habit, for she said, "I find it unnecessary. For the whole of the Scripture has now become most precious to me." To some of us the priceless volume is marked from beginning to end by our experience. It is all precious and altogether precious—

***"No treasures so enrich the mind,
Nor shall Your Word be sold
For loads of silver well refined,
Nor heaps of choicest gold."***

Furthermore, this text sets before us not only the purity and preciousness of the Lord's Words but the *permanence* of them. They are as silver which has passed through the hottest fires. Truly, the Word of God has for ages stood the fire—and fire applied in its fiercest heat—"tried in a furnace of earth"—that is to say in that furnace which refiners regard as their last resort. If the devil could have destroyed the Bible he would have brought up the hottest coals from the center of Hell. He has not been able to destroy one single line! Fire, according to the text, was applied in a skillful way—silver is placed in a crucible of earth, that the fire may get at it thoroughly.

The refiner is quite sure to employ his heat in the best manner known to him so as to melt away the dross—so have men with diabolical skill endeavored, by the most clever criticism, to destroy the Words of God.

Their object is not purification—it is the *purity of Scripture* which annoys them—they aim at consuming the Divine Testimony. Their labor is in vain. For the Sacred Book remains still what it always was—the pure Words of the Lord.

But some of our misconceptions of its meaning have happily perished in the fires. The Words of the Lord have been tried frequently, yes, they have been tried perfectly—“purified seven times.” What more remains, I cannot guess, but assuredly the processes have already been many and severe. It abides unchanged. The comfort of our fathers is our comfort. The words which cheered our youth are our support in age. “The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God shall stand forever.”

These Words of God are a firm foundation and our eternal hopes are wisely built on them. We cannot permit anyone to deprive us of this basis of hope. In the olden time men were burned rather than cease to read their Bibles. We endure less brutal oppositions but they are far more subtle and difficult to resist. Still let us always abide by the Everlasting Words, for they will always abide by us.

Unchanged, unchangeable are the Words of the Ever Blessed. They are as silver without dross which will continue from age to age. This we do believe and in this we do rejoice. Nor is it a tax upon our faith to believe in the permanence of Holy Scripture—for these Words were spoken by Him who is Omniscient and knows everything. Therefore there can be in them no mistake. They were spoken by Him who is Omnipotent and can do everything. And therefore His Words will be carried out. Spoken by Him who is Immutable, these Words will never change. The Words which God spoke thousands of years ago are true at this hour, for they come from Him who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He that spoke these Words is Infallible and therefore *they* are Infallible. When did He ever err? Could He err and yet be God? “Has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?” Rest you sure of this—“The Words of the Lord are pure words.” But time hastens me on to the next point.

II. Secondly and carefully let us consider THE TRIALS OF THE WORDS OF GOD. They are said to be as silver, which has been tried in a furnace. The Words of God have been tested by blasphemy, by ridicule, by persecution, by criticism, and by candid observation. I shall not attempt an oratorical flight while describing the historical tests of the precious metal of Divine Revelation—but I shall mention trials of a commonplace order which have come under my own notice and probably under yours also. This may be more homely but it will be more edifying. The Lord help us!

In dealing with the sinner’s obstinacy we have tested the Words of the Lord. There are men who cannot be convinced or persuaded. They doubt everything and with closed teeth they resolve not to believe though a man declare it to them. They are encased in the armor of prejudice and they cannot be wounded with the sharpest arrows of argument though they profess great openness to conviction. What is to be done with the numerous people who are related to Mr. Obstinate? You might as well

argue with an express-train as with Mr. Obstinate—he runs on and will not stop though a thousand should stand in his way.

Will the Words of God convince him? There are some in this place today of whom I should have said—if I had known them before their conversion—that it was a vain task to preach the Gospel to them. They so much loved sin and so utterly despised the things of God. Strangely enough, they were among the first to receive the Word of God when they came under the sound of it. It came to them in its native majesty, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It spoke with a commanding tone to their inmost heart. It threw open the doors that had long been shut up and rusted on their hinges and Jesus entered to save and reign!

These who had defiantly brandished their weapons threw them down and surrendered unconditionally to almighty Love, willing Believers in the Lord Jesus. Brethren, we have only to have faith in God's Word and speak it out straight and we shall see proud rebels yielding. No mind is so desperately set on mischief or so resolutely opposed to Christ that it cannot be made to bow before the power of the Words of God. Oh, that we used more the naked sword of the Spirit! I am afraid we keep this two-edged sword in a scabbard and somewhat pride ourselves that the sheath is so elaborately adorned. What is the use of the sheath? The sword must be made bare and we must fight with it without attempting to garnish it.

Tell forth the Words of God. Omit neither the terrors of Sinai nor the love notes of Calvary. Proclaim the Word with all fidelity as you know it and cry for the *power of the Highest* and the most obstinate sinner out of Hell can be laid low by its means. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God—this is His one battering ram with which He casts down the strongholds of sin and self in those human hearts with which He effectually deals. The Word of God will bear the tests furnished by the hardness of the natural heart and it will, by its operations, prove its Divine origin.

Here begins another trial. When you have a man fairly broken down he has but come part of the way. A new difficulty arises. Will the Words of the Lord overcome the penitent's *despair*? The man is full of terror on account of sin and Hell has begun to burn within his bosom. You may talk to him lovingly but his soul refuses to be comforted. Until you bring the Words of the Lord to bear upon him "his soul abhors all manner of meat." Tell him of a dying Savior. Dwell on Free Grace and full pardon. Speak of the reception of the prodigal son and of the Father's changeless love. Attended by the power of the Spirit, and only by the Holy Spirit, these Truths will bring light to those who sit in darkness.

The worst forms of depression are cured when Holy Scripture is *believed*. Often have I been baffled when laboring with a soul convicted of sin and unable to see Jesus. But I have never had a doubt that in the end the Words of the Lord would become a cup of consolation to the fainting heart. We may be baffled for a season but with the Words of the Lord as our weapons, Giant Despair will not defeat us. O you that are in bondage under fear of punishment, you shall come forth to liberty yet—your chains shall be broken if you will accept the Words of God. My Master's Word is a great opener of prison doors—He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron asunder.

That is a most wonderful Word, which, like a battle-ax smashes in the helmet of presumption and at the same time, like the finger of love, touches the tender wound of the bleeding and heals it in an instant! The Words of the Lord—for breaking down or lifting up—are equally effective. In certain instances, the Words of God are tried by the seeker's singularity. How frequently have persons told us that they were sure there was *nobody* like themselves in all the world! They were men up in a corner—strange fish, the like of which no sea could yield. Now, if these Words are, indeed, of God, *they—and nothing else*—will be able to touch every case.

The Words of God have been put to that test and we are amazed at their universal adaptation. There is a text to meet every remarkable and out-of-the-way case. In certain instances we have heard of an odd text, concerning which we could not *before* see why it was written. Yet it has evidently a special fitness for a particular person to whom it has come with Divine authority. The Bible may be compared to the locksmith's bunch of keys. You handle them one by one and say of one—"That is a strange key, surely it will fit no lock that ever was made!" But one of these days the smith is sent to open a very peculiar lock. None of his keys open it. At last he selects that singular specimen. Look! It enters, shoots back the bolt and gives access to the treasure!

The Words of this Book are proved to be the Words of God because they have an infinite adaptation to the varied minds which the Lord has made. What a gathering of locks we have here this morning! I could not describe you all—Bramah and Chubb and all the rest of them could not have devised such a variety—yet I am sure that in this Inspired Volume there is a key in every way suited to each lock. Personally, when I have been in trouble, I have read the Bible until a text has seemed to stand out of the Book and salute me, saying, "I was written especially for you." It has looked to me as if the story must have been in the mind of the writer when he penned that passage.

And so it *was* in the mind of that Divine Author who is at the back of all these inspired pages. Thus have the Words of the Lord stood the test of adaptation to the singularities of individual men. We frequently meet with people of God who have tested the Words of God in time of sore trouble. I make here an appeal to the experience of the people of God. You have lost a dear child. Was there not a Word of the Lord to cheer you? You lost your property—was there a passage in the Scriptures to meet the disaster? You have been slandered—was there not a Word to console you? You were very sick and depressed. Had not the Lord provided a comfort for you in that case?

I will not multiply questions—the fact is that you never were high but the Word of the Lord was up with you. And you never were low but what the Scripture was down with you. No child of God was ever in any ditch, pit, cave, or abyss—but the Words of God found him out. How often do the gracious promises lie in ambush to surprise us with their loving kindness! I adore the infinity of God's goodness, as I see it mirrored in the glass of Scripture.

Again—the Word of God is tried and proved as a guide in perplexity. Have we not been forced, at times, to come to a pause and say, “I do not know what to think about this. What is the proper course?” This book is an oracle to the simple-hearted man in mental, moral and spiritual perplexity. Oh, that we used it more! Rest assured that you never will be in a labyrinth so complicated that this Book, blessed of the Spirit, will not help you through. This is the compass for all mariners upon the sea of life—by its use you will know where lies the pole. Abide by the Words of the Lord and your way will be clear.

Beloved, the Words of God endure another test. They are our preservatives in times of temptation. You can write a book that may help a man when he is tempted in a certain direction—will the same volume strengthen him when he is attracted in the opposite direction? Can you conceive a book which shall be a complete fence encircling a man in all directions? Keeping him from the abyss yonder and from the gulf on the other side? Yet such is the Bible. The devil himself cannot invent a temptation which is not met in these pages. And all the devils in Hell together, if they were to hold parliament and to call in the aid of all evil men, could not invent a device which is not met by this matchless Library of Truth. It reaches the Believer in every condition and position and preserves him from all evil. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Psa. 119:9).

Lastly on this point, here is a grand test of the Book—it helps men to *die*. Believe me, it is no child’s play to die! You and I will find ourselves in that solemn article before we know it and then we shall need strong consolation. Nothing upon earth ever gives me so much encouragement in the faith as to visit members of this Church when they are about to die. It is very sad to see them wasting away or racked with pain, but the chief effect produced upon the visitor is gladsome rather than gloomy. I have this week seen a sister well known to many of you, who has a cancer in her face and may, in all probability, soon be with her Lord.

It is a dread affliction and one knows not what it may yet involve. But the gracious patient knows neither murmurs nor fears. No one in this place, though in the flush of health, could be more calm, more restful than our sister is! She spoke to me with full confidence that living or dying she is the Lord’s and she had bright anticipations of being forever with the Lord. The little she could say with her voice was supplemented by a great deal which she expressed with her eyes and with her whole demeanor. Here was no excitement, no fanaticism, no action of drugs upon the brain—just a sweetly reasonable, quiet, and assured hope of eternal joy.

Brethren, it is not hard to pass out of this world when we are resting on that old and sure Gospel which I have preached to you these many years. Personally, I can both live and die on the Eternal Truths which I have proclaimed to you. And this assurance makes me bold in preaching. Not long ago I sat by a Brother who was near his end. I said to him, “You have no fear of death?” He replied cheerfully, “I should be ashamed of myself if I had. After all that I have learned of the glorious Gospel from your lips

these many years, it is a joy to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

Now, if this Inspired Volume with its wonderful record of the Words of God helps us in the trials of life—directs us in our daily paths and enables us to weather the last great storm—surely it is precious beyond description, “as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.”

III. Now thirdly, what are THE CLAIMS OF THESE WORDS OF THE LORD? The claims of these words are many. First, they deserve to be studied. Beloved, may I urge upon you the constant searching of Inspired Scripture?

Here is the latest new novel! What shall I do with it? Cast it to the ground. Here is another piece of fiction which has been very popular! What shall I do with it? Throw it on one side, or thrust it between the bars of the grate. This Sacred Volume is the freshest of novels. It would be, to some of you, an entirely new book. We have a society for providing the Bible for readers but we greatly need *readers* of the Bible. I grieve that even to some who bear the Christian name, Holy Scripture is the least read book in their library.

One said of a preacher, the other day, “How does he keep up the congregation? Does he always give the people something new?” “Yes,” said the other, “he gives them the Gospel. And in these days that is the newest thing out.” It is truly so. The old, old Gospel is always new. The modern doctrine is only new in *name*. It is, after all, nothing but a hash of stale heresies and moldy speculations. If God has spoken, listen! If the Lord has recorded His Words in a Book, *search* its pages with a believing heart. If you do not accept it as God’s Inspired Word, I cannot invite you to pay any particular attention to it. But if you regard it as the Book of God, I charge you, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat of Christ—*study* the Bible *daily*. Treat not the Eternal God with disrespect but delight in His Word.

Do you read it? Then believe it. Oh, for an intense belief of every Word that God has spoken! Do not hold it as a dead creed but let it hold *you* as with an almighty hand. Have no controversy with any of the Lord’s Words. Believe without a doubt. The brother of the famous Unitarian, Dr. Priestly, was permitted to preach for his brother in his Chapel in Birmingham. But he was charged to take no controversial subject. He was obedient to the letter of his instructions but very rebellious against their spirit—seeing he took for his text—“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” Assuredly there is no controversy among *spiritual* men upon the glorious Truth of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus!

So also, all the Words of the Lord are out of the region of debate—they are to us *absolute certainties*. Until a doctrine becomes an absolute certainty to a man, he will never know its sweetness. The Truth of God has little influence upon the soul till it is fully believed.

Brothers and Sisters, obey the Book! Do it freely, do it heartily, do it constantly. Err not from the Commandment of God. May the Lord make you perfect in every good work, to do His will! “Whatsoever He says unto you, do it.” You that are unconverted, may you obey that Gospel Word—

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Repentance and faith are at once the commands and the gifts of God—neglect them not.

Furthermore, these Words of God are to be preserved. Give up no line of God’s Revelation. You may not know the particular importance of the text assailed, but it is not for you to assess the proportionate value of God’s Words—if the Lord has spoken, be prepared to die for what He has said. I have often wondered whether, according to the notions of some people, there is any truth for which it would be worth while for a man to go to the stake. I should say not. For we are not sure of *anything*, according to the modern notion.

Would it be worth while dying for a doctrine which may not be true next week? Fresh discoveries may show that we have been the victims of an antiquated opinion—had we not better wait and see what will turn up? It will be a pity to be burned too soon, or to lie in prison for a dogma which will, in a few years, be superseded. Brethren, we cannot endure this shifty theology! May God send us a race of men who have backbones! Men who believe something and would die for what they believe. This Book deserves the sacrifice of our all for the maintenance of every line of it.

Believing and defending the Word of God, let us *proclaim* it. Go out this afternoon on this first Sunday of summer and speak in the street the Words of this Book. Go to a cottage meeting, or to a workhouse, or to a lodging house and declare the Divine Words. “Truth is mighty and will prevail,” they say—it will *not* prevail if it is not made known. The Bible itself works no wonders until its Truths are published abroad. Tell it among the heathen that the Lord reigns from the Tree. Tell it among the multitude that the Son of God has come to save the lost and that whosoever believes in Him shall have eternal life!

Make *all* men know that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This thing was not done in a corner—keep it not a secret. Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And may God bless you! Amen.

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HOWLING CHANGED TO SINGING

NO. 2310

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 28, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY, EVENING, APRIL 28, 1889.**

***“How long will You forget me, O LORD? Forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?...I will sing unto the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.”
Psalm 13:1, 2, 6.***

THIS is a very short Psalm, there are only six verses in it, but what a change there is between the beginning and the end of it! The first two verses are dolorous to the deepest degree, but the last verse is joyful to the highest degree. David begins many of his Psalms sighing and ends them singing, so that I do not wonder that Peter Moulin says, “One would think that those Psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary humor.” If I were asked, “Are there two men here, or is there only one?” My answer would be that there is only one, but that one is two, for every man is two men, especially every *spiritual* man. He will find within himself an old man and a new man, an old nature and a new nature—and even the new nature, itself, is subject to strange changes—so that, like April weather, we have sunshine and showers blended. Sometimes it seems as if all the showers were poured on top of the sunshine and the sunshine, itself, were quenched and could scarcely gladden us.

David was a wonderful man for changes of experience. God permitted him to go through many experiences, not so much for himself, as for the good of succeeding generations. Whenever you look into David's Psalms, you may somewhere or other see yourselves. You never get into a corner but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower—and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was up above me, ready to sing his song upon his stringed instrument, even as I could sing mine! These are two instantaneous photographs. The first one gives us the man complaining, the second one gives us the man rejoicing. I wonder whether we shall get two such photographs, tonight—some sitting here complaining, who, before the service is over, will go their way rejoicing? God grant that it may be so!

Possibly somebody here says, “I do not understand what you mean by each man being two men.” Well, let me say a little more on that point.

Every man is a mystery. He is a mystery to other people, but, if he ever thinks, he is a great mystery to himself! And, if he never does think, why then, I think that he is a mystery, indeed, that he should have such a wondrous faculty as the power of thought, and yet should let it lie idle! He who does not *study* himself may think that he understands himself, but it is the judgment of folly. He who has been accustomed to make a friend of himself and has had himself for his companion, and talked to himself, and cross-examined himself, is the man who will say, "I am puzzled. I cannot make myself out. I am often at my wits' end. I am such a strange mixture, and so dreadfully changeable."

You must know yourself, dear Friend, in some measure, or else I am afraid that you will never know the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you do not know Him, then you do not know what eternal life means, for to know Him *is* eternal life! But why is it necessary for us to know ourselves, that we may know Christ? You must have some knowledge of the disease that you may know what the Physician can do—and there is also this Truth of God to be remembered—the Lord Jesus Christ is the model Man and only by knowing something about men do we know much about Him. Is it not strange that the Psalms are often so written that you do not know whether David is writing about himself or about the Lord Jesus? One verse can only be applied to Christ and you are *certain* that David is writing of the Messiah, but the next verse you can hardly apply to Christ, for there are some terms in it which would be derogatory to the Lord Jesus Christ, so it must refer to David. The fact is that there is a wonderful union between David and David's Lord—there is a marvelous union between the saint and his Savior, between the Believer and Him in whom he believes—and you cannot always tell where one begins and the other ends.

So, if you have no knowledge of man, it is to be feared that you have no knowledge of that Son of Man, the Man of men, the Savior of men, the First-Born among many brethren, to whose likeness we are yet to be fully conformed. I invite anybody here who has not yet known the Savior, to pray to God to make him know himself. It may be that the discovery of what *you are* will necessitate your discovering what Christ is! A true estimate of your own poverty may compel you to resort to Him for wealth. A true sight of your own disease may force you to apply to Him for His all-healing medicine. Certainly it is to be urged upon you by the highest of motives that you do not, with all your understanding, forget to understand yourself and that, while you have many books on your shelf, you do not read them so as to forget this Book which lies within, this wonderful Book which concerns you more than all the writings of men, the Book of your own nature, your own needs, your own desires, your own changes! God make you familiar with them and then make you also familiar with the Book of Grace which is written in the life of the Son of Man!

Now, with that as a preface, I invite you to the study of our text.

First, you will see, in the first two verses, *a man complaining*. Go three verses farther on and you will get to a man singing, about whom we will

talk in the second place. And then we shall close our discourse tonight by asking, What are the connecting links between the man complaining and the man singing? How did this complaining man get up to concert pitch and begin to sing before he had gone more than a little way further on the road?

I. First, then, here is A MAN COMPLAINING.

Pardon me if I say that here is a man *howling*. Let me read the first two verses again—"How long will You forget me, O Lord? Forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?" Said I not truly, when I called it howling? There is so much of complaining here, so much of questioning—"How long? How long? How long? How long?"—four times over, that we may call it, as David did once call his prayer—"the voice of my roaring." It is a kind of howling, roaring, moaning complaint before God in the bitterness of his soul. Let us take these four, "How longs?" and speak of them.

Here is, first, *the poor man's grief, as it seems to him*—"How long will You forget me, O Lord? Forever?" Think for a minute. Can God forget? Can Omnipotence forget? Can unchanging love forget? Can infinite faithfulness forget? Yet so it seems to David. So it has often seemed to men in the deepest of trouble. "How long will You forget me?" You have been praying for mercy and you cannot find it—and you think that God forgets. You have been, perhaps, a seeker after peace for years, and yet you have not found it, and you think that God forgets. Or, perhaps, years ago, you were one of the happiest of the happy and you bathed in the light of God's Countenance. But now you are the unhappiest of the unhappy, you are at a distance from your God, you have been trying to get back and cannot get back, and you think that God forgets you. Or else wave upon wave of trouble has rolled over you—you have hardly had time to breathe between the surges of your grief. You are ready to perish with despondency and you think that God forgets you! That is how it looks to you, but it is not so, and *cannot* be so.

God cannot forget anything, it is impossible! "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" Mark that expression, the child that still draws its nourishment from her bosom. That is just what you are still doing, for, albeit you think that God forgets you, you are still living on what He *daily gives you* and you would die if He did not give you of His Grace and strength. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." Lay hold of that great Truth of God and dismiss that which can be only an appearance and an error. God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor has He forgotten you.

The next, "How long?" the next piece of David's howling, represents *his trouble as it really is*. "How long will You hide Your face from me?" That is as it really is with some of you—God has hidden His face from you—not His heart, nor His mind. He has not forgotten you, but He has taken away

from you the comfort of His smile. Are you crying, tonight, “Lord, how long will You hide Your face from me?” I am glad you cry about it! The ungodly do not cry for God’s face to be revealed to them—they wish that God would always hide His face from them. They do not want either His face or His favor. But if you are longing to see His face, it is because that face is full of love to you. I do not wonder that you are unhappy if you have lost the light of God’s Countenance, for he who has ever had it, cannot lose it, no, not for a moment, without feeling his heart ready to break!

“There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us.” Only give us to know that You love us and we will not envy the man who owns the greatest estate, or enjoys the highest degree of human applause. This is enough for us, to have God with us! Oh, dear child of God, if you have lost the light of your Father’s Countenance, and you sigh after it, you shall have it, again! You shall have it very soon! By the degree of your longing, you may measure the length of His absence. If you long but little, He will be absent long, but if you long much, He will come to you soon. You will soon find that the hidings of His face are over and the light of His Countenance is once again your joy.

This is what the trouble really is and a great trouble it is while it lasts, though it works for your good. What plants would grow if it were always day? Does not night make them grow as well as day? Brothers and Sisters, if we always had fine weather, should we ever have a harvest at all? The Arabs have a proverb, “All sun makes the desert.” If there is no rain, how can there be verdure? There is a ripeness given to the fruits by the moon as well as by the sun. Grieve when God hides His face from you, but do not *despair* as well as grieve, but believe that even in this, He still loves you. It is a face of love that you do not see. You believe that, yourself, or else you would not wish to see it. If it were a face of wrath, you would not be longing to see it again. It is a face of love that is hidden from you. Therefore, be of good courage, you shall see it, by-and-by.

Notice next, that we have *the man’s sorrow as it is within himself*. “How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?” He talks to himself! That is the counsel he takes with himself and he does not get any very great help out of that. It is a mark of wisdom to talk with yourselves, sometimes, but not if you make yourself your own oracle. A man may talk to himself until he talks himself into despair, though there is a way of talking with yourself that will talk you up into the Light of God, such as David used when he said, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God.” That is the way to talk to yourself! But yet, as a rule, there is not much good comes of talking to yourself unless there is a third One present—that blessed One who can construe what self may say in mystery—and set right what self might twist into error. Oh, yes, I know some who pour out their hearts within them!

Do you remember what David says in the 42nd Psalm? “I pour out my soul in me.” Now, if it were possible to pour the contents of a jug of water out into itself, the water would be there, all the same, would it not? That is a grand passage where David says, “You people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us.” Take your pitcher and turn it bottom upwards, and let the contents all run out. That is a true easement. To pour out from itself into itself is a poor change. To pour it out before God is to find instant relief. Beloved, it may be that you cannot get any relief and that daily, from morning until evening, you are still in a fret and a trouble. Well, that is the case with David, here—and my text is a photograph of you!

And, once more, the fourth, “How long?” *shows the man’s sorrow as it is without Him.* “How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” It adds very much to a man’s grief when somebody from the outside says, “Oh, you are always miserable! It makes anybody wretched to be near you.” It was thus when Peninnah exulted over Hannah’s barrenness and “provoked her sorely, to make her fret.” It happens to many Christians to have this sort of thing done by somebody, especially a very “candid friend.” A candid friend is only an enemy candied over with a little sugar, as a general rule, and one who takes the opportunity to say nastier things than a downright enemy would say. You may have some such person in your family. Above all, there is our great adversary, from whom may God deliver us, who also delights to triumph and exult over us whenever he can!

And so our trouble outside is that Satan and his allies exult over us and we have not yet learned to say, as we ought to say, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, when I fall, I shall arise.” That last touch may, perhaps, make the photograph depict somebody here who said, “I do not think that I shall see *my* portrait tonight. I have been roaming about and got into great trouble, and I am one by myself.” Well, but here is David, who is with you, and David’s Lord is with you, too!

That is the first photograph—a man complaining.

II. I am glad to pass from the first view and bring on the second one. The second picture of the same person is found in the sixth verse, where we see A MAN SINGING—“I will sing unto the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.”

It is the same man that we saw before, but he has done with his howling and has taken to singing, for, first, *his heart is rejoicing.* Read the fifth verse. He says, “My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.” It is not merely the *appearance* of joy—it is *real* joy—his *heart* is rejoicing! Have you never seen a friend who has been suddenly lifted up by the Spirit of God out of great mourning and of whom you have said, “Well, I should not have known that it was the same person”? Grief throws a peculiar cast over the human countenance. Well do I remember, as a child, a lady who used to come to my grandfather’s house, whose face was terrible to look upon and when I asked who that sad lady was, they said, “Hush, child,” and they made me hold my tongue until she was gone. And then they told me that

she was one who thought that she had committed the unpardonable sin. I do not know what it was that struck me, but there was something about her face which has never gone from my memory, though it must be pretty well 50 years ago that I saw her.

But when a person is full of joy, especially *spiritual* joy, have you ever noticed what a kind of transfiguration the face undergoes? You have been, yourself, to have your photograph taken, and the man places an iron clamp at the back of your neck and you go away, directly, I mean that *you* do. Your body stands there, but you, yourself, go traveling down the rod of iron, and you are not there at all, and the likeness is not yourself—it is your chrysalis, the case in which you used to be, but you are gone! Well, now, when you have joy in your heart, *really* in your heart so that everybody can see it on your countenance, your eyes begin to sparkle and your whole face is lit up, so that people say, “Well, really, he is only an ordinary-looking person as a general rule, but when he is in *that* state of mind, there is a wonderful kind of beauty about him!”

Now, the Lord can work that change for some of you, so that when you go home, mother will say, “Why, Maria, you are quite different from what you were when you went to the Tabernacle! John, how changed you are! You went so dull and heavy, but now you seem to be quite another person.” Yes, the secret is that it is with him as it was with David—his heart is rejoicing!

The next thing is that *his tongue is praising*. “I will sing unto the Lord.” That which is down in the well will come up in the bucket. That which is in the heart is sure to come up to the mouth before long—so the happy Believer begins to sing and, very likely, he breaks out with the children’s hymn—

**“I feel like singing all the time,
My tears are wiped away,
For Jesus is a Friend of mine,
I’ll serve Him every day.”**

You may try, perhaps, to repress your emotion, but if the Lord has really brought you up out of the horrible pit, such as I have been describing, your emotion will not be altogether repressed. You will feel as if, should you hold your peace, the very stones would begin to cry out! A rejoicing heart soon makes a praising tongue!

Notice, next, that *the man’s judgment is content*. That cool, calculating faculty now begins to read God’s dealings, and it comes to a very different conclusion from that which it arrived at before. Some of you used to learn, as children, a book called, “Why, and Because”—and it is a good thing to have a, “why, and because,” for your own feelings. Now, says David, “I will sing unto the Lord, *because*, after weighing and judging the matter thoroughly, I can testify that He has dealt bountifully with me. I thought that He had forgotten me, but He has dealt bountifully with me. I thought that He had hidden His face from me, but He has dealt bountifully with me. I said in my heart that He treats me very harshly, but I take all such lan-

guage back, Lord! I eat my own words with bitter herbs and I regret that I should ever have used them! You have dealt bountifully with me.” “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” This poor man who thought that he was forgotten, now looks at the food which God has put upon his table and he finds that he has Benjamin’s portion—much more than was given to the rest of his brothers—and his verdict is totally changed, now, as to the dealings of the Lord with him. He, says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

And now that his judgment has been set right, now that heart, tongue, judgement—all are right—*his resolve is right*, for he says, “I will sing unto the Lord.” “Not only am I singing now, but I will make up my mind to this, I have been sighing long enough, I will now sing. I have been groaning and complaining, now I will sing! I will sing unto the Lord.” I like this resolve, for it relates not only to present joy, but it is a resolution to project that joy throughout the whole of his life. “I will sing unto the Lord.” I trust that some of you will go out of the Tabernacle, tonight, saying, “Well, I will sing. Yes, I will. God helping me, I will. I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing at my work. I will sing on my bed. I will sing when I wake in the morning. I will sing when I go to bed at night. The Lord has put a new song into my mouth and I cannot keep it there—I must sing it out. I must sing His praises.” I am sure we will not try to stop you! We will encourage you to sing unto the Lord as much as possible.

There is not half enough singing in the world. The music of the early mornings in the country, at this time of the year, always seems to chide me. The birds are up and they wake us up, and when they are up, the first thing they do is to sing! And there is a kind of contention among them, each one tries to sing the most sweetly and the most loudly. And one calls to another and the other answers him. They sing as they fly and they sing as they build their nests! And they make such a wonderful chorus of song that it often astonishes us that such little creatures can make such cataracts, such Niagara of music as they pour forth from their tiny throats! Oh, that God’s people would sing more! I remember a servant who used to sing while she was at the washtub. Her mistress said to her, “Why, Jane, how is it that you are always singing?” She said, “It keeps bad thoughts away.” I remember an old Methodist Brother who was pretty nearly eighty, and I never came across him, as he went along the street at a rather slow pace, without hearing him toot-tooting little bits of tunes as he walked. If you went by his door and heard a noise in his house, it was the old man singing! He never seemed to make any other noise but that of praising and blessing God. Oh, that we might do so continually!—

**“Sing a hymn to Jesus,
When the heart is faint!
Tell it all to Jesus,**

Comfort or complaint,”

and, when you have done that, sing another! And when you have finished that, sing another! Whether it is a hymn of comfort or complaint, still sing to the praise of His name and make this your resolution as you go out tonight, “I will sing unto the Lord, my God, as long as I live.”

There are the two photographs. Put them into your album and take care of them.

III. But how came this change to take place? What are THE CONNECTING LINKS BETWEEN THE MAN COMPLAINING AND THE MAN SINGING? How did No. 1 get to be No. 2? How did this howler become a singer? What process did he pass through?

If you read this 13th Psalm over again when you get home, you will notice that the first thing David did was, *he pleaded with God*. He stated his case to the Lord. He mentioned the separate particulars of it and then he pleaded, “Consider and hear me, O Jehovah, my God: lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” For you, mourners, the first step towards comfort is to go and *take the matter to your God*. You have Rabshakeh’s letter in your pocket—it is a dreadful letter, enough to make you sad. While I have been preaching, you have been sighing to yourself, “Ah, me! When I get home, I shall be thinking about that letter. I shall be awake thinking of it.” Some of you, who are rather of a nervous temperament, will let some little thing keep boring into you like an awl. You cannot get away from it.

Now, I invite you to take that letter out of your pocket when you get home and spread it before the Lord. Many and many a time I have had great troubles—who can be the pastor of such a Church without them? I have done my very best with the matter that has perplexed me and I have only made it worse and, at last, I have laid it before the Lord and prayed over it. And in such cases I have always said to myself, “I will never have anything to do with that matter again; I have done with it.” I advise you to do the same. Cast your burden upon the Lord! Put it upon that shelf. But then if you take it down, again, what good have you done? No, leave it there! *Leave it there* and have done with it! The Lord will bring you out of the difficulty when you clear yourself of it. Do not go on hugging your trouble—take it to the Lord in prayer!

If you have a solicitor and there is a suit at law, and the person against whom the suit is laid comes to you and says, “I want to hear what you are going to do,” do not say anything to him, except, “I have left that with my solicitor. You must be so good as to see him. I refer you to him.” If there are two of you to manage the business, one will be a fool and I think I know who that one will be! Either do not have a solicitor, and be your own lawyer, or else, if you have somebody to attend to the suit for you, let him do it! Why keep dogs and bark, yourself? So let it be in all things. If you lay the matter before God, then do not begin to take it on your own back, as well. That will be an absurdity!

Although I made you smile, just now, by quoting an old proverb, I do seriously urge upon you, my Friends, the impropriety of attempting to undertake a case which you have laid before God in prayer. Leave it there. If you have done so, let your Advocate see you through with the business. Come, Beloved, you shall soon begin to change your mode of talking if you will go and tell your trouble to God, straight away. “Well, I shall see my brother, tomorrow.” Do not see your brother—go and see your Father! “Oh, but I want to call in a friend!” That is what *I want you to do*, but not the friend you are thinking of—call in the Friend of Friends! Tell Him everything about your trouble and your difficulty and when you have done that, have done with it and leave it with Him. You will, then, soon begin to sing.

The next thing is that David, having prayed and brought his cause before God, *trusted in the Lord*. This is the chief point. Read the 5th verse and you will see that the whole story is made plain—“I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.” I seem as if I could leave all you troubled saints, now, just to say to any sinner here who is in deep soul trouble, what you have said to yourself, “That first photograph was very like me. I cannot say that I am at all like the second one.” No, but you will be like that second one if you will, from your heart, say this, “I have trusted in Your mercy.” This is the remedy for the disease of sin and for the disease of the heart—trust Jesus! There He hangs on yonder Cross. Trust Him! “I cannot realize that He is mine,” you say. Did I tell you to realize that? Trust Him! “Oh, but I do not feel as if I had a good heart to bring to Him.” Did I tell you to bring Him *anything*? Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him! Oh, child of God, this is the lesson you need to learn—TRUST! Oh, old sinner, this is the essential lesson for you if you would enter into Light of God and peace—TRUST!

“I have so many sins.” TRUST! “But I have such tendencies to sin.” Trust Him to overcome those tendencies. “But I have tried.” No, I did not say, *try*, but TRUST. “But I, I, I will try.” No, do not *try*. I did not say, *try*. “Sir, I was going to say I will *try to trust*.” I did not say *try to trust*! Trying to trust is the very reverse of trusting! If Christ is a liar, do not trust Him. If He is true, trust Him. If He cannot save you, do not trust Him, but as He is the Almighty Savior, trust Him. Oh, that I could shout that word loud as a thousand thunders speaking at once, TRUST! O Soul, the way of the Law is OBEY—a hard word, with which you cannot comply, for you are too weak. But the Gospel way is trust, trust, TRUST! When you have learned that way, you shall afterwards learn how to obey and you shall obey through trusting! But the first thing is, trust! Is your leg broken, so that you can not walk? Lean on Him who can carry you. Have you a great weight? Lean hard, then. Is it greater than ever it was? Lean harder, then! Trust, implicitly trust! As the blind man puts his hand into the hand of him who can see, that he may lead him, so trust in Jesus. Put your hand into the hand of Him who was crucified and trust Him tonight.

There, you may put away that first photograph. You may sit down, now, if you have trusted, and we will take your likeness again, and I am sure your likeness will agree with the 6th verse, and you will say, "I will sing unto the Lord; I will go home singing! I have trusted. I have found salvation!" Lord, lead these people to trust You! Why can they not trust You? What have You ever done that they should doubt You? Lord Jesus, if I had a million souls, I would trust them all with You, fully persuaded that You could wash them all whiter than snow! Trust, then, beloved Friends! Trust Jesus. God help you to trust, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALMS 12, 13, 14.

Psalm 12:1. *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* One might have thought that David still lived among us, his cry is so timely, so exactly true to the position of affairs today. What a prayer he offers! Driven away from confidence in men, he cries, "Help, Lord! You mighty One, put forth Your power! You faithful One, display Your Truth! 'Help, Lord; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'"

2. *They speak vanity, every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.* They speak vanity. There is nothing in it. It is all froth, no reality. Vain speech about vain subjects, having no real spiritual power to help the man that hears—"They speak vanity." "With a double heart do they speak," saying one thing and meaning another—trifling with words, orthodox to the ear—heterodox to the heart. Oh, how much there is of this falseness in these days! Still are there many who "speak with flattering lips and with a double heart." It is some comfort to us to know that no new thing has happened to us—we are merely going through an old part of the road which David traversed long ago.

3, 4. *The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things: who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?* There is the point in dispute! Man will be lord of himself and God will be Lord of all and everything—and there can be no compromise between these two. Not even a man's lips are really his own. Who gave the gift of speech? Who created the mouth? Who is LORD over us? Why, the answer is simple enough! He that made us, He that redeemed us, He should be Lord over us. Let us willingly put ourselves in subjection to Him.

5. *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD.* God takes notice of the oppression of poor men and, especially, of poor saints when they are tried by the wickedness of the age—"Now will I arise, says the Lord."

5, 6. *I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him. The Words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.* There is no mistake about the words of this blessed Book. The very

Words, themselves, are as accurate, as Infallible, as silver is pure when it has been refined seven times by the most skillful artist. There is no improving upon God's Words. We dare not leave one of them out. We would not presume to put one of our own side by side with them—"The Words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

7, 8. *You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.* When sin gets into the high places of the earth, then it becomes very abundant. Every evil man takes liberty to creep out into public life when some great leader in vice occupies the throne. God save the people when such is the case!

Psalm 13:1, 2. *How long will You forget me, O LORD? Forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?* When you and I have to spread our complaints before God, we are not the first who have done so. When we complain of God's forsaking us, we are not alone. There was a greater than David who, even in the article of death, cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

3. *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.* When it is dark, very dark, we get drowsy. Sorrow induces sleep. Remember how the Savior found the disciples sleeping for sorrow? Therefore David asks for light. Light will help him to stay awake and he fears to sleep, so he prays, "Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

4, 5. *Lest my enemy says, I have prevailed against him; and these that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But.* What a precious, "but," this is! You can hear the chain rattle as the anchor goes down to hold the vessel!

5, 6. *I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing unto the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.* What a climb there is, in this Psalm, from the abyss of sorrow up to the summit of joy! "I will sing unto the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me." I hope many of us know what this blessed change means. If any of you are in great sorrow, tonight, may my Lord and Master lighten your eyes!

Psalm 14:1. *The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.* He was a fool to *think* it. He was not fool enough, however, to say it except in his heart. Fools have grown more brazen-faced of late, for now they not only say it in their hearts, but they say with their tongues, "There is no God." Oh, no, I have made a mistake! They do not call them, "fools," now—they call them "philosophers." That, however, is often exactly the same thing!

1. *They are corrupt,* It is always so. When they will have no God, they will have no goodness "They are corrupt." That is the secret of infidelity. The Psalmist has put his finger on it—"They are corrupt."

1, 2. *They have done abominable works, there is none that does good. The LORD looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if*

there were any that did understand, and seek God. David represents God looking from the battlements of Heaven upon our fallen humanity and, at the time when He looked, He could see none that understood Him, or sought Him. By nature we are all in this condition. Until the Grace of God *seeks us*, we never seek God. Even God looked in vain. He was no stern critic—He was no hypercritic—“The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.”

3. *They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one.* “That was in old Testament times,” says one. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans, you will find that Paul quotes it as being true in his day. It is *always* true and it always will be true, apart from the Grace of God—“There is none that does good; no, not one.”

4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Are they all so foolish?

4. *Who eat up My people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.* They think nothing of God’s people. They could swallow them at a mouthful, they so despise them. Notice, that whenever a man despises God, he soon despises God’s people—it is only natural that he should do so. Meanwhile, he, himself, will not call upon the Lord.

5. *There were they in great fear.* What? These very people who would not call upon God? Were they in great fear? Yes, God can bring great fear upon the men who seem most bold. It is noticed that the boldest blasphemers, when they become ill, are generally the most timid persons. These are the people who begin to cry and give up what they boasted of, when they get into deep waters—“There were they in great fear.”

5. *For God is in the generation of the righteous.* He is with His people. He always will be with His people and when He makes bare His arm, fear takes possession of His enemies.

6. *You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.* They mocked at the idea of a man’s trusting in God for his daily bread, or trusting in God for his eternal salvation, but, mock as men may, there is no other refuge for a soul but God! When the floods are out, there is no safety but in the ark with God. Oh, that men would trust in Him!

7. *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.* May that time soon come! Amen.

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ARE YOU MOCKED?

NO. 3512

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1916.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1871.***

***“You have shamed the counsel of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.”
Psalm 14:6.***

GOD'S Word divides the whole human race into two portions. There is the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman—the children of God, and the children of the devil—those who are by nature still what they always were, and those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There are many distinctions among men, but they are not much more than surface deep. This one distinction, however, goes right through, and it is very deep. I may say that between the two classes, the saved and the unsaved, there is a great gulf fixed. There is as wide a difference between the righteous and the wicked as there is between the living and the dead! The Psalmist, David, in this particular Psalm, calls one class of men fools and another class the poor. You will observe that he begins by describing the fool, by which he does not mean one particular man, but the whole race as it is by nature—the whole of that portion of the human race that remains unregenerate. In our text he describes another class as the poor, in which he comprehends all the saved, all the godly, all the righteous, of whom our Redeemer has said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Now from the very first, between the two seeds there has always been an enmity—an enmity which has never been mitigated and never will. It displays itself in various ways, but it is always there. In some ages the enmity has burst forth into open persecution—Herod sought the young Child to destroy it. Haman sought to destroy the whole generation of Israel! Stakes have been erected and the faithful have been burnt. Racks and inhuman engines of cruelty have been fashioned by the art of man, through the malice of his heart, to exterminate, if it were possible, the children of the living God! For there is war—perpetually war to the knife—war always between the two generations. At this particular time the warfare is not less bitter, but the restraints of Providence do not allow it to display itself as it once did. It now generally takes the form of cruel mocking so that our text is as applicable to the present race as it was in David's time, “You have shamed the counsel of

the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.” The fool has made a mockery of the righteous man, called the poor man. And this has been the subject of his mockery, that the godly man has been fool enough, as he calls him, to put his trust in God and to make this the main point and purpose of his life. There may be some here who have done this—all of us do it to some extent until we are born-again. We ridicule, if not with the tongue, yet in our heart, those who have made God their refuge, but when we begin to value the people of God, it is a sign of some degree of Divine Grace in us—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”—but until we come into that state of Grace there is a hatred or contempt, more or less developed, against those who are resting in the living God!

Now I shall at this time, first of all, speak of *those who are mocked*. Secondly, of *the mockers*. And thirdly, of *how those who are mocked ought to behave towards those who try to put them to shame*. First, then, let us take the subject—the objective—of the mockery of carnal minds.

I. WHO ARE MOCKED?

Here we have three points—“You have shamed the poor,” that is, *the persons*. “The counsel of the poor,” that is *the reasons for their faith*. Then *their faith itself*, “but the Lord is his refuge.”

To begin, it is very common for ungodly men to pour contempt upon God’s people, the poor—and oftentimes they will do it by the use of these words. It so happens that many of God’s people are poor in pocket and they often hear the observation, “Oh, these Methodists, these Presbyterians, these Baptists, they are a set of poor people, mechanics, and servant girls and so on!” And how often is that uttered with a sneer upon the lips! Well now, that is a fine thing to make fun of, isn’t it, for, after all, what is there to be ashamed of in honest poverty? I will stand here and say that if I could stand tomorrow morning in Cheapside, and pick out a dozen poor men—and then if I were to pick out a dozen middle-class men, and then a dozen rich men—I believe, as to character, there would be very much of a difference. You shall go, if you will, and pick out at random, 12 good princes, and see if you could do it. But I will pick you out 12 working men that shall be honest, upright, and chaste—which great men are not always. The poor are no worse than the rich, and have no more right to be despised. And if it were true that all who fear God were poor, it might, perhaps, be rather to their credit than to their dishonor, for, at any rate, nobody would be able to say that their pockets were lined with the result of fraud! If they were poor, they would, at any rate, be free from many of the accusations that might be brought against rich men! I care no more for one class than another, especially when I preach the Gospel—you are all alike to me, one as the other—but this I will say, that of all jests and all sneers, that is one of the most ridiculous and mean against godly people, because they are poor!

But the sneer then takes another form. It is not that they are poor in pocket, so much as that they are very poor in education. "Ah," they say, "these people—well, what do they know? They are not philosophical. They are not among those who cultivate the higher walks of literature. They are mostly plain, simple-minded people and, therefore, they believe their Bibles." Well, I don't believe that! Among Christian people there are many men of as high an education as among any class. The mind of Newton found root in Scripture and discovered depths which it could not fathom. But even if you say that, what of it? If these men have the wisdom which comes from above, they have something that will last when the wisdom which is merely of this earth will have perished! Go, take the skull of the wise man in your hand, and look at it. Is it not as brown, is it not as ghastly a sight as the skull of the peasant? And what matters it to him, now that he lies among the clods of the valley, that once he spent his nights with the lamp, pouring into ancient tomes, or walked with his staff to the skies to measure the distance of the stars, or bored into the depths of the earth? It is all one to him, and if he is a lost soul, ah, who would not give the preference to the man that was learned in the Kingdom of Heaven beyond the man that was only learned in the things of earth? Therefore I see no great reason for jest on the subject. And the sneer is, to say the least, ungenerous, for if the ungodly are so much the wiser, let them show their wisdom by not sneering at those who do not happen to possess their gifts, but who possess what is much more precious!

And then it will take another shape—this shaming of the poor because of their poverty. They will say, "Ah, but they are poor in spirit—they have not good ideas of themselves. Hear them—they are always confessing sinfulness and weakness, and they appear to go through the world without self-reliance, relying upon some unseen power and always distrusting themselves! And they do not seem to have the pluck that the ungodly have. Why, we who know not God can drink, and they will stay away from where we can go. And we can let out an oath, but they are afraid. And there is many a song that we can sing that these fastidious folks would not dare to hear! And there is many an amusement which we can enjoy which they, poor creatures, are obliged to deny themselves." Ah, well, well, if they choose to be miserable, I do not know that you could do better than pity them! It would be a pity to be angry with them for not enjoying what you enjoy. Don't, therefore, sneer! And, after all, Sir, you know very well that there is more manliness in refusing to sin than there is in sinning—there is more pluck in saying, "No, I cannot," than there is in being led by the devil, first into one sin, and then into another! And these men of the world who have this high spirit, and are so bold and brave—what is it better than the high spirit of a lunatic who dares to put his hand in the fire? I dare not do that which would dishonor God! I am

thankful to be such a coward that I dare not venture it. But you shall not say that we are cowardly. Lived there ever a more earnest Christian than Havelock? Were there ever better soldiers than his Highlanders, who learned to bow the knee before Jehovah? But, O Sirs, they could fight! They were men brave enough in the day of battle, though they could not be brave in the way in which the ungodly are. Talk to us Christians about lack of courage? Do you ever wish to see the Ironsides again in England, with old Oliver Cromwell at their head? We hate war, but still we quote these instances to show that a man can bow before God like a sneaking Presbyterian, as you call him, and yet rise up and drive the Cavaliers like chaff before the wind! It is not true that we are poor in spirit in the sense that is often attached to us. We have as much of courage of the right kind as the ungodly have. But, Sir, we can afford to bear your jest. We *are* afraid to be damned! We *are* afraid to take a leap into the dark future, with wrath upon our heads! We *do tremble* before the living God, though we will tremble nowhere else! We count it no dim honor to fear Him who is a consuming fire. But this is commonly the cry, "They're a poor set! They're a poor set of milksops." "You have shamed the counsel of the poor."

But now the next point—a very common jest—is *the reasons that Christians give* for being Christians. You notice the text says, "the counsel of the poor," for the Christian, when he becomes a Believer in Christ, takes counsel about it. He does not believe his Bible because his grandmother did. He does not accept the Word of God because some priest has told him it is true. He takes counsel and considers! This counsel, however, is generally sneered at, as though there were no reasonableness in it. Therefore, let me just state it.

The Christian has taken counsel *with his own weakness*. He says, "I cannot trust myself. I am very apt to go wrong. Therefore will I put myself into the great Father's hands and pray Him to lead and guide me. I will not go to my business in the morning until I have asked for His protection, nor will I close the day without asking, still, that I may be under His care." His reason is because he feels himself to be a weak and fallible creature, and he needs protection. That looks to me to be very reasonable, but to some it seems to be the theme for laughter!

The Christian has next taken counsel *with his observations*. He has looked about in the world and he could not see that ungodly men derive pleasure from their sins. He hears them shouting loudly enough, sometimes, but he knows who has woe, and who has redness of the eyes—"they that tarry long at the wine," men of drink—"they that go to seek mixed wine." He has seen the ungodly in their quieter moments and observed how unsatisfactory all their best things are, and, upon the whole, he considers that what the world offers to its devotees is not worth his seeking! Moreover, the Christian has sometimes seen the sinner die and,

having seen him die, he has discovered that there is nothing in the principles of ungodliness to give a man comfort in his dying hour. Some of us have heard language from ungodly men in their deaths that we would hardly like to repeat—the very memory of which makes our blood chill! I remember once being at the bedside of a man who alternately cursed and asked me to pray. I could not pray as I would desire. I did what I could, and then he would tell me it was no good—his sins would never be forgiven him. And then he would turn again to blasphemy! It was a dread sight. I never saw—and I have seen many ungodly people die—I never saw one die of whom I could say, “Let me die the death of this sinner and let my last end be like his.” Nor do I think such sights are ever to be seen anywhere. The Christian, therefore, having taken counsel of that, looks for something better that may be his stay in the time of trouble and be his comfort in the time of his departure out of this life. That looks to me to be good reasoning! I think it is, and yet there are some who sneer at it.

The Christian has also taken counsel *with the Bible*. Believing it to be God’s Word, he feels that one word of God is worth a ton weight of human reason! He would sooner have a drachma of Revelation than have all the weight of authority that could be brought to bear upon his mind. And assuredly, if God is true, he is not incorrect in his judgment.

Moreover, the Christian has taken counsel *with his own conscience* and he finds that when he walks near to God, he is most happy. He discovers that in keeping God’s commandments, there is great reward, and though he does not expect to be saved by his works, yet he finds himself most sustained when he walks most carefully and jealously before the world, and when most near to his heavenly Father. Taking such counsel as this and finding it so much to his own inward advantage, I cannot blame him that he still puts his trust where he does!

Moreover, the Christian takes counsel *with his own experience*. There are some of us who are as sure that God hears our prayers as we are sure that two times two make four. It is to us not a conjecture, no, nor even a belief, but a matter of fact! We are habitually in the custom of going to God and asking for what we need and receiving it at His hands. And it is no use anybody telling us that prayer is useless. We find it constantly useful! It is of no use for people to say these are happy coincidences. They are very strange, indeed—strange coincidences when they occur again and again, and again, and God continually hears our prayers! The witness that the Christian has to the truth of his religion does not lie in the books of the learned. He is thankful for them, but his chief witness lies here—in his own heart, in his own inward experience. Now we always say that you must speak as you find. The Christian has found God faithful to him. Has found Him support him in the time of trial. Has found Him answer his prayers in the hour of distress. And this is the counsel that he has taken for himself, and he, therefore, for these rea-

sons relies upon God! Well, sneer as some may, I think we will do with our trust in God, my Brothers and Sisters, as the natives of a certain American State are said to have done when they, instead of making a law book, agreed that the State should be governed by the Laws of God until they had time to make better—we will continue to put our trust in God until somebody shall show us something better! We will still pray and get answered! We will still bear our troubles before God and get rid of them! We will still rely upon Christ and find comfort until somebody shall bring us something better, and it won't be just yet! And, until then, sneers and laughter shall not much affect us!

And now, once more, the great point at which the ungodly mostly aim their scoffs is *the actual faith of the Believer*. He has made God to be his refuge. And what, what do they say? Why, "It's all canting talk." I do not particularly know what that means, but if ever Christians are accused of being cants, they can make the retort by saying that the canting is quite as much on one side as the other, for of all cants, the cant against cant is the worst cant that ever was canted! But surely if a man shall speak the truth in other things, and you know he does, it is not fair to say he does not speak the truth when he says he puts his trust in God! The man is not insincere.

"Oh," but they will say, "it is ridiculous—a man trusting in God." Yes, but you do not think it ridiculous to trust in yourselves. Many of you don't think it ridiculous to trust in some public man. Half of the world is trusting in its riches, and is there anything ridiculous in leaning upon that arm that bears the earth's huge pillars up? If so, ridicule on! To trust weakness seems to you to make sense. I say to trust Omnipotence is infinitely superior wisdom and we will continue to trust in God, for to us it seems to be no absurdity!

"But," they will say, "what does your God do for you? Some of you Christian people are very poor. Some of you very sick—very much in trouble." Mark you, our God never said we would not be, but, on the contrary, told us it would be so. What He does for us is this—in six troubles He is with us, and in the seventh He does not forsake us. He never made us a promise that we would be rich. He never made us a promise of constant help. On the contrary, it is written, "In the world you shall have tribulation." But our God does this for us—that we look upon those troubles as being so much fire that shall purge our silver! So much of the winnowing fan that shall drive away the chaff and leave the corn clean. We glory in tribulation and rejoice in the afflictions which God has laid upon us! Still, that will always be a point of jest. But there is one remark I will make before I leave this. I should like any man who doubts the reality of faith in God to go down to Bristol, and go to Kingsdown and see the orphan houses there which Mr. George Muller has built. Now there they stand—substantial brick and mortar, and inside there are 2,500 boys

and girls. They eat a good deal, need a good deal of clothing, and so on. And how comes the money? All the world knows, and no man can deny it, that it comes in answer to prayer and as the result of Mr. Muller's faith—that, that faith has often been tried, but has never failed! What God has done for Mr. Muller, He has done for scores of us after our own way, and in our own walk! And we glorify His name! Though that stands as a palpable witness, we are not less able to say than Mr. Muller, there is a God that hears prayer, and whoever may jest at faith, we continue in it, still, and glory in it, and rejoice! Now this is what is the matter of jest for the mockers. But my time flies, so I must now speak a few words only upon—

II. WHO ARE THE MOCKERS?

Our text says they are fools. Well, that is my opinion, but it does not matter what my opinion may be. The point that does matter, however, is that it is God's opinion of every man who is not a Believer or trusting in Him. In plain English, every such man is a fool! That is God's opinion of him—God who cannot err—who is never too severe, but who speaks the literal truth—that he who is not a Believer is a fool! Let me add, it will be that man's opinion of himself one day. If he shall ever be converted—oh, that he may!—he will think himself a fool to have been so long an unbeliever! And if not, when the truth of Scripture shall be proved, and he shall be cast into Hell, then will he see his folly and acknowledge himself to be what God said before, he was, namely, a fool. O Sir, do not run the risk! There was an observation made by a countryman that is well worth quoting, when he said to the unbeliever, "I have two strings to my bow. You have not. Now," he said, "suppose there is no God? I am as well off as you are! But suppose there is, where are you?" So can we say, "Suppose, after all, our religion should be a delusion? It has made us very happy up till now. But as for you—suppose it should be true? Ah, where are you, then, who have despised it and have turned away from God?" May each man who does not believe in his God know how foolish he is!

Now as I gave you the reasons for the poor man's faith, let me give you the reasons why the unbeliever usually is an unbeliever. It is principally because *he knows not God* and none of us like to trust a person we don't know. He knows nothing of the Most High, has never communed with Him, nor even seen Him in His works and, therefore, he cannot trust Him. The unbeliever will also say that he cannot trust God because he cannot see Him, as if everything that is real must, therefore, be the object of sight as if there were not forces in Nature about which no doubts can be entertained that are far beyond the ken of sight! They will also say that they cannot trust God because *they cannot understand Him*. If we could understand God, He would not be God, for it is a part of the Nature of God that He should be infinitely greater than any created mind. I have heard of a man who went into a smith's smithy one day and he began

complaining of the wet weather. “Why,” said he, “smith, you talk about Providence! There is too much wet by half. If there were any Providence, it would manage things a great deal better! There is the wheat nearly all spoilt, and the barley is going. I tell you,” he said, “there is no Providence—things don’t go right.” The smith took no notice of his observations, but after a while he walked across the smithy and took down an odd-looking tool which he used in his craft, and said to him, “Do you know what this is used for?” “No,” he said, “I don’t.” “Look at it. Look at it and find out.” He did look, and then he said he did not know. The smith put up that tool and took down another, an ugly-looking tool, and he said, “Do you know what I use this for?” “No,” said the man, “I cannot conceive what you do with that.” You can’t? Look at it, and see! Perhaps you will find out.” He looked at the thing, and then he said, “No, I really do not know what is the use you put that to.” The smith put it up, and then walked leisurely back and said, “You are a great dunce! You do not know the use of my tools, and I am only a smith! But you set up to judge of the use of God’s tools, and say what is right and what is wrong! You don’t even know about a smithy, and yet you pretend to know about the whole world.”

It is a most unreasonable reason not to believe in God because I cannot understand Him! The reason at the bottom is this—the ungodly man does not trust God because he is God’s enemy! He knows there is a quarrel between the two. He has broken the Law of God—he has become an enemy to his Maker—and how shall a man trust his enemy? Besides, he knows that God won’t do what he would like God to do. He would like God to give him good health to go on in sin! He would like Him to make him happy in his lusts! He would like Him to let him live a sinner and die a saint! He would like him to shape the world so that man might take his sinful pleasure and live as he liked, and yet, after all, receive the wages of a righteous life! And as God won’t do that—won’t bring Himself down to the sinner’s taste—therefore, the sinner says, “I cannot trust God,” and then he turns round and laughs at the man who can, just to quiet his own conscience and keep the little sense there is within him from rebelling!

Now I spoke of the Christian’s faith. Now let me speak of the unbeliever’s faith. It takes much more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a Believer! I am sure the philosophies of the present age which are currently set forth would require a deal more credulity than I am the master of. I can believe Scripture readily and without violence to my soul, but I could not accept the theory even of the development of our race, which is so much cried up nowadays, nor a great many other theories. They seem to me to require a far greater sweep of credulity than anything that is written in the Word of God! To the ungodly man *this* seems reasonable—“It is reasonable to trust a great man and to hope that he will be the maker of

you. It is reasonable to trust your own reason—to believe you can steer your own course. It is reasonable to be a self-made man, self-reliant. It is reasonable to look after the main chance—it is reasonable to get all the money you can—it is reasonable to put your confidence in it (of course, it has not any wings and won't fly away)! It is a reasonable and discreet thing to live in this world as if you were to live forever in it and never think of another world at all."

To a great many it seems to be philosophy to get as far away from God as ever you possibly can, and then you will get to be a wise man—that the creature is wisest when it forgets its Creator! That is the world's creed and I can only say that if they scoff at our creed, we can fairly enough scoff at theirs! Trust in yourselves? Why, you are fools to think of such a thing! Trust in your wealth? Have you not seen rich men disappear? How about a few years ago when—we must remember it well, and remember it sorrowfully—how a panic came and down went the towers of the great—and those who seemed to be rich burst like bubbles! And oh, the joys of earth! How soon are they scattered, how speedily do they disappear! What are they, after all, but a will o' the wisp? If it is a wise thing to live in this world and never think of dying, God grant that I may be a fool! If it is a wise thing to think all about this poor body and never about my immortal soul, may I never know such wisdom! If it is a wise thing to go into the future as a leap in the dark, believing nothing, and only by that means kept from fear, may I never know such philosophy! Truly it seems to me to be wisdom that I, a creature who certainly did not make myself, should think of my Creator! That I, a sinner, should accept that blessed way of salvation which is laid before me in the Word of God! That I, weak and unable to steer my own course, should put my hand into the great Father's hand and say, "Lead me, guide me by Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." This may be jested at and sneered at, but it can bear a sneer and will outlive the mocker! Now, lastly—

III. HOW OUGHT THOSE WHO ARE MOCKED BEHAVE towards those who mock them? Well, the first thing is *never yield an inch*. You young men in the great firms of London. You working men that work in the factories—you are sneered at. Let them sneer! If they can sneer you out of your religion, you have not got any worth having! Remember you can be laughed into Hell, but you can never be laughed out of it! A man may by ridicule give up what religion he thought he had, but if he casts away his soul, his companions who caused his loss cannot help him in the day of his travail, anguish and bitterness before the Throne of the Most High. Why be ashamed? "They called me a saint." I remember once a person calling me a saint in the street. All I thought was, "I wish he could prove it." Once a man passing me in the street, said, "There is John Bunyan." I think I felt six inches taller at the least! I was delighted to be called by such a name as that. "Oh, but they will point at you." Cannot you bear to

be pointed at? “But they will chaff you.” Chaff—let them chaff you. Can that hurt a man who is a man? If you are a spineless creature with no backbone, you may be afraid of jokes, and jeers, and jests—but if God has made you upright, stand upright and be a man! Moreover, there is one thing you should always do when you are ashamed—pray. The next verse in the Psalm is, “Oh, that God would turn the captivity of Zion.” The best refuge for a Believer in times of persecution is his secret resort to God! Let him go on his knees and say, “My Lord, I have been counted worthy to be spoken ill of for Your name’s sake. Help me to bear it. Now is my time of trial. Strengthen me to bear this reproach. Grant that it may be no heavy burden to me, but may I rather rejoice in it for Your name’s sake.” God will help you, Beloved!

Then next to that, *pray always most for those who treat you worst.* Make them the constant subjects of your prayer.

And then I would say, in your actions *prove the sincerity of your prayers by extra kindness towards those who are unkind to you.* Heap coals of fire upon their head. That is an expression not always explained. When the crucible is to be brought to a great heat, and the metal to be thoroughly melted, it is not enough for the coals all around it to glow. The silversmith that is desiring to melt it thoroughly will heap them so that the metal shall be all surrounded by flames. Do so, I pray you, with any of your enemies—heap kindnesses upon them! A Christian woman had often prayed for a very ungodly and unkind husband, but her prayers were not heard. However she did this—she treated him more kindly than she had ever done before. If there was any little thing that she could think of that would please his palate, if she had to deny herself, that would be on the table. She kept the house scrupulously comfortable and did all she could. And one day someone said to her, “How is it that you, with such a husband, can act so towards him?” “Well,” she said, “I hope I shall win his soul yet, but if not”—and then the tears came in her eyes—“all the happiness he will have will be in this life and so I will let him have all I can possibly give him, since he will have no happiness in the life to come.” Do that with the ungodly! Lay yourself out to oblige and serve them! Let it be known of you that the best way to get a good turnout of you is to give you a bad turn! “Oh,” says one, “it is too hard. Tread on a worm and it will turn.” And is a worm to be an example to a Christian? Christ Jesus, are You not better for an Exemplar than a poor worm that creeps into the earth? What did our Savior do but pray for His murderers? The blood they shed redeemed them who shed it! We have heard the old story of the sandalwood tree that perfumes the axe that cuts it. Do you so, O Christian! Perfume with your love the axe that wounds you! Be like the anvil that never strikes the hammer, but yet the anvil wears out many hammers by its indomitable patience. Be patient, be courteous, be kind—in a word, Christ-like! And how do you know that

these very persons who hate you most, today, will not love you well, tomorrow, and come together with you to the Communion Table, and together rejoice in our blessed Savior?

Now if I have seemed to preach too harshly tonight, it is not so in my heart. Oh, how I wish you all, everyone without exception, knew what a blessed life the Christian life is! I would not lie for God, Himself, but I speak the truth to you. I never knew what perfect peace was until I looked to Christ upon the Cross and rested my soul on Him. I have had trials, and have suffered bitter pains, but I have always found consolation when I have turned my eyes to my bleeding Savior and have given myself up again to the great Father's hands! He is a blessed Lord. I serve a good Master. Trust Him! Give your hearts up to Him and if you have spoken against His people, or rebelled against His love, He is willing to receive you! He has no hard words to say to returning ones. Come to Him! Come and welcome! Come just now and may the Lord receive you for His mercy's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 23:18-25; 32-34.**

Our Lord's last days gave tragic proof of the hate and cruel mockery of His foes—yet how marvelously He endured!

18, 19. *And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas! (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison).* Do you not see how they refuted their own accusation? If Christ was really the leader of sedition, would they have asked that He should be put to death? Would they have preferred a murderer to Him? There can be no danger of a man leading people astray when those very people were crying, "Let Him be put to death!" It must have been a transparent fraud. Pilate must have loathed them. Mean as he was, he must have seen through their meanness.

20-22. *Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.* He thinks a great deal of his own inconsistent conclusion, and many men do. When they came to a conclusion, bad as it is, contradictory, they will stick to it. Adhesive to nothing but to wrong, like a pendulum swinging between right and wrong, was this Pilate! Yet he will stay on the swing. He is only steady in that—"I will, therefore, chastise Him and release Him." Oh, dear Friends, it would be better for you to come to a thorough decision one way or the other—Christ, or no Christ, true religion, or no religion—but to halt between the two is a lame business that will be ruinous to you!

23. *And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.* These men were bribed. The popular feeling was with our Lord to a very large extent, but, under the influence of threats and bribes, they found a mob to cry, "Crucify Him!" You know the old saying, *Vox populi vox Dei.*" There is no truth in it. The voice of the people is not the voice of God, for they said, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

24. *And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.* Again attempting to evade the responsibility by saying that they should be both accusers and judges.

25. *And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.* Sad scene. May our hearts be broken and made tender, and sanctified by meditation upon it. Let us turn now to the later events.

32, 33. *And there were also two other malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary.* The margin reads, "or the place of a Skull," when they were come to the place which is called a Skull.

33. *There they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* Come here, Soul! You who read this Chapter, come to this place of a Skull! It is the first resting place of every weary soul. There is no rest for the soles of your feet till first you come to Calvary, and see your Savior die.

34. *Then said Jesus. As they crucified Him.*

34. *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.*

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

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

CHRIST'S PRAYER AND PLEA NO. 3280

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1866.**

***"Preserve Me, O God: for in You do I put My trust."
Psalm 16:1.***

I BELIEVE that we have in this verse a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some portions of this Psalm cannot apply to anyone but the Savior. And we have the examples of Peter and Paul to warrant us in saying that in this Psalm, David spoke of Jesus Christ. There is no apparent division in the Psalm, so that as one part of it refers most distinctly to Christ, we are justified in concluding that the whole of it refers to Him and belongs to Him! But we know that whatever belongs to Christ belongs, also, to all His people because of their vital union with Him, so we shall treat the text, first, *as our Savior's own prayer*. And then, secondly, we shall regard it also as *the prayer of the followers of the Lamb*.

I. So, first, we will take these words as OUR SAVIOR'S OWN PRAYER. "Preserve Me, O God: for in You do I put My trust." And we will divide the text at once into two parts—*the prayer itself*—"Preserve Me, O God." And *the argument or plea*—"for in You do I put My trust."

In considering these words as Christ's prayer, does it not immediately strike you as a very singular thing that Christ should pray at all? It is most certain that He was "very God of very God," that, "Word," who was in the beginning with God, and who was Himself, God, the great Creator "without whom was not anything made that was made." But, without in any degree taking away His Glory and dignity as God, we must never forget that He was just as truly Man, one of the great family of mankind and, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." Though He remained sinless, He "was in all points tempted like as we are." Being, therefore, Man, and intending to make Himself not only the atoning Sacrifice for His people, but also a perfect example that they might imitate, it became necessary that He should pray. What would a Christian be without prayer, and how could a Christ who never prayed be an example to a Christian? Yet notwithstanding the fact that it was necessary, it was marvelously condescending on our Savior's part! The Son of God, with strong crying and tears making known His requests unto His Father, is one of the greatest mar-

vels in all the ages! What a wondrous stoop it was that Jesus, the unerring Son of God, the thrice-holy One, the Anointed, the Christ for whom prayer is to be made continually, should Himself have prayed to His Father!

Yet, while there is much condescension in this fact, there is also much comfort in it. When I kneel in prayer, it is a great consolation to me to know that where I bow before the Lord, there is the print of my Savior's knees. When my cry goes up to Heaven, it goes along the road which Christ's cry once traveled. He cleared away all impediments so that now my prayer may follow in the track of His. Be comforted, Christian, if you have to pray in dark and stormy nights, with the thought that your Master did the same—

***“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer!
The decent His temptation knew,
His conflict and His victory too.”***

If you have to pray in sore agony of spirit fearing that God has forsaken you, remember that Christ has gone further even than that into the depths of anguish in prayer, for He cried in Gethsemane, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

In addition to being condescending and comforting, this fact of our Savior praying shows the intimate communion there is between Christ and all the members of His mystical body. It is not only we who have to pray, but He who is our Head bowed in august Majesty before the Throne of Grace. Throughout the narratives of the four Evangelists, one is struck with the many times that mention is made of Christ's prayers. At His Baptism, it was while He was praying that “the Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon Him, and a Voice came from Heaven which said, You are My Beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” On another occasion, we read that, “as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” On the Mount of Transfiguration, “as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” Jesus was emphatically “a Man of prayer.” After a long day of teaching the people and healing the sick, instead of seeking repose, He would spend the whole night in prayer to God or, at another time, rising up a great while before day, He would depart into a solitary place and there pray for the needed strength for the new day's duties.

Having thus noticed the fact of Christ's praying, I want now to call your attention to the particular prayer in our text. I ask you first to observe that it is addressed to God in a peculiar aspect. You do not see this in our translation, but in the Hebrew it is, “Preserve me, O El.” That is one of the names of God and the same name that the Savior used when He cried, “Eloi, Eloi, lame Sabachthani?” “My God, My God, why have

You forsaken Me?” Many Christians seem to have only one name for God, but the Hebrew saints had many titles for the one living and true God! Worldlings generally talk of, “The Almighty,” as though His only characteristic was the Omnipotent might which is displayed in great storms on the sea or terrible calamities on the land. But our Savior, whose knowledge of God was perfect, here selects a name of God peculiarly suitable to the condition in which He was when He offered this prayer, for according to most commentators, the word, “El,” means, “The strong One.” So it is weakness crying to the Strong for strength—“Preserve Me, O You who are so strong, so mighty, that You uphold all things by the word of Your power!” Others say that “El” means “The Ever-Present One.” This is a delightful name for God, and one that is most appropriate for a Believer to use when he is in peril on land or sea, in the den of lions or in the burning fiery furnace—“O You ever-present One, preserve me!” Jehovah is indeed “a very present help in trouble.” I wish we could acquire a more intimate knowledge of the Divine Character so that in calling upon Him in prayer, we could seek the aid of that special attribute which we need to have exercised on our behalf. What a blessed title is that of Shaddai which Bunyan uses in His *Holy War*—El Shaddai, God All-Sufficient or, as some render it, “The Many-Breasted God,” the God with a great abundance of heart, full of mercy and Grace, and supplying the needs of all His children out of His own fullness! Then take the other names or titles of God—Jehovah-Nissi, Jehovah-Shammah, Jehovah-Shalom, Jehovah-Tsidkenu—and any others that you can find, and think how much better we could pray if, instead of always saying, “O Lord!” or, “O God!” we appealed to Him under some title which indicates the attribute which we desired to be exerted on our behalf!

Next notice that this is a prayer produced by an evident sense of weakness. The Suppliant feels that He cannot preserve Himself. We believe that the Human Nature of Christ was altogether free from any tendency to sin and that it never did sin in any sense whatever. But still, the Savior here appears not to rely upon the natural purity of His Nature but He turns away from that which might seem to us to be a good subject for reliance in order to show that He would have nothing to do with self-righteousness, just as He wishes us to have nothing to do with it. The perfect Savior prays, “Preserve Me, O God.” So, Beloved, let us also pray this prayer for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was without any tendency to sin, put Himself under the shadow of the almighty wings—then shall I wickedly and presumptuously dare to go into danger trusting to my own integrity and relying upon my own strength of will? God forbid that you or I should ever act thus. Jesus was only weak because He had assumed our Nature, yet in His weakness there was no tendency to sin! But our weakness is linked with a continual liability to evil—so, if Jesus prayed, “Preserve me, O God,” with what earnestness

should each one of us cry unto the Lord, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe"!

I remark, next, that this prayer on the lips of Christ, appeals for a promised blessing. "What?" Someone says, "is there anywhere in God's Word a promise that Christ shall be preserved?" Oh, yes! Turn to the prophecy of Isaiah, the 49th Chapter, and the seventh and following verses, and there read, "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nations abhor, to a Servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You. Thus says the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You: and *I will preserve You*, and give You for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." When the Savior prayed this prayer, He could remind His Father of the promise given through Isaiah, and say to Him, "You have said, 'I will preserve You.' Do as You have said, O My Father!"

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us learn from our Savior's example to plead the promises of God when we go to Him in prayer! Praying without a promise is like going to war without a weapon! God is so gracious that He may yield to our entreaties even when He has not given a definite promise concerning what we are asking at His hands. But going to Him with one of His own promises is like going to a bank with a check—He must honor His own promise! We speak reverently, yet very confidently upon this point. To be consistent with His own Character, He must fulfill His own Word which He has spoken! So, when you approach the Throne of Grace, search out the promise that applies to your case and plead it with your heavenly Father, and then expect that He will do as He has said.

Observe, next, that this prayer of Christ obtained an abundant answer. You recollect the many preservations which He experienced—how He was preserved while yet a Child, from the envy and malice of Herod and how, again and again He was delivered from those who sought His life. He was also preserved many times from falling into the snares set for Him by scribes and Pharisees and others who sought to entrap Him in His talk. How wisely He answered the lawyer who came to Him tempting Him, and those who sought to catch Him over the matter of paying tribute to Caesar! He was never taken as a bird ensnared by the fowler—He was always preserved in every emergency. He was like a physician in a hospital full of lepers, yet He was always preserved from the disease!

Then, to close this part of the subject, notice that this prayer most deeply concerns the whole company of Believers in Christ, for it strikes me that when our Savior prayed to His Father, "Preserve Me," He was thinking of the whole of His mystical body and pleading for all who were

vitally united to Him! You remember how, in His great intercessory supplication, He pleaded for His disciples, “Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.” This is the same prayer as, “Preserve Me,” if we understand the “Me” to include all who are one with Christ. We also are included in that supplication, for He further said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” Yes, dear Friend, though you may seem to yourself to be the meanest of the Lord’s people, even though you are in your own apprehension but as His feet that glow in the furnace of affliction—even you are among those whom Christ entreated His Father to keep—and you may rest assured that He will certainly do so! Christ will never lose one of the members of His mystical body! If He could do so, His body would be imperfect and incomplete, but that it never can be! Paul tells us that Christ’s Church “is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all” so that if He were left without His fullness, He would have suffered an irreparable loss. That can never be the case, so this prayer will be answered concerning the whole body of Believers in Jesus, who shall be presented “faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy.” Blessed be His holy name!

Let us now turn *to the plea which Christ urged in support of His prayer*: “Preserve Me, O God: for in You do I put My trust.” Did Christ put His trust in His Father? We surely need to ask the question and we know at once what the answer must be. In the matter of faith, as in everything else, He is a perfect example to His people—and we cannot imagine a Christian without faith! Faith is the very life of a true Believer in Jesus! Indeed, without faith he is not a Believer, so Christ was his model in this respect as well as in every other.

The words, “in You do I put My trust,” may be translated, “in You do I shelter.” There is in them an allusion to running under something for shelter. In fact, the best figure I can use to give you the meaning of this sentence is that of the chicks running under the wings of the hen for shelter. Just so do we hide ourselves under the overshadowing wings of the Eternal. As a Man, Christ used this plea with God, that He was sheltering from all evil under the Divine Wings of power, and wisdom, and goodness, and truth. This is an accurate interpretation of the passage, and there are many instances recorded in Scripture in which Christ really did this. Take, for instance that remarkable declaration in Psalm 22:9—“You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breasts,” as though very early in life, probably far earlier than any of us were brought to know the Lord, Jesus Christ was exercising hope in the Most High. Then again, in the 50th Chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, we have these words, which must refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, “I gave My back to the

smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked out the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." That verse is immediately followed by this one, "For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." These words were peculiarly appropriate from the lips of Christ, yet each one of His followers may also say, "The Lord God will help me."

Even in His last agonies Christ uttered words which plainly prove that He had put His trust in God, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." There is more faith in that final commendation of His soul to His Father than some of you might imagine, for it takes great faith to be able to speak thus in the circumstance in which Christ was then placed. Not only was He suffering the terrible pangs that were inseparable from death by crucifixion, but He had to bear the still greater grief that was His portion when His Father's face was withdrawn from Him because He was in the place of sinners and, therefore, had to endure the separation from God which was their due. Job said, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"—and this was what Jesus actually did! What wondrous faith it was that trusted in God even when He said, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts!" Yet even then Jesus turned to His Father and said, "Father into Your hands I commend My spirit. I commit Myself into the hand that wields the sword of Infallible Justice. Into the hand that has crushed Me and broken Me in pieces." Talk of faith! Did you ever hear of such sublime confidence as that having been displayed by anyone, else? When a martyr has to lay down his life for the Truth of God, his faith is sustained by the comforting Presence of God—he believes in the God who is smiling upon him even while he is in the midst of the fire. But Christ on the Cross trusted in the God who had forsaken Him! O Beloved, imitate this faith as far as it is possible in your case! What a glorious height of confidence Jesus reached! Oh, that we may have Grace to follow where He has so blessedly led the way!

I want you carefully to notice the argument that is contained in Christ's plea—"Preserve Me, O God: for in You do I put My trust." Christ, as God, had felt the power of that plea, so He knew that His Father would also feel the power of it. You remember that Jesus said to the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will." Her faith prevailed with Him and He felt that His faith would prevail with His Father so that when He said, "In You do I put My trust," He knew that He would obtain the preservation for which He pleaded. Jesus never forgot that the rule of the Kingdom is, "According to your faith be it done unto you." He knew that we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." So Jesus

came to His Father with this plea, "I do trust in You, I have absolute confidence in You, therefore I pray You to preserve Me." My dear Brother or Sister in Christ, can you say the same? Can you look up to God and say, "In You do I put my trust"? If so, you may use it as Christ used it in pleading with His Father. Perhaps you have gazed upon a weapon that has been wielded by some great warrior. If you had that weapon in your hand and were going forth to fight, you would feel, "I must not be a coward while I am grasping a brave man's sword, but I must play the man with it as he did." Well, you have in your grasp the very weapon which Christ used when He gained the victory! You can go before God with the very same argument that Christ used with His Father and He will hear your plea even as He heard Christ's! "Preserve Me, O God: for in You do I put my trust."

II. I had intended, in the second place, to speak of my text as THE PRAYER OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS. But, instead of preaching upon it as I would have done had time permitted, I will merely give you a few notes upon it, and then you can preach the second sermon yourselves by practicing it as you go your several ways to your homes.

First, *what does this prayer mean to a Believer?* It means that you put yourself and all belonging to you under Divine protection. Before you close your eyes, pray this prayer—"Preserve me, O God! Preserve my body, my family, my house from fire, from famine, from hurt or harm of every kind." Specially present the prayer in a spiritual sense. Preserve me from the world. Let me not be carried away with its excitements. Do not allow me to bow before its blandishments, nor to fear its frowns. Preserve me from the devil. Let him not tempt me above what I am able to bear. Preserve me from myself—keep me from growing envious, selfish, high-minded, proud, slothful. Preserve me from those evils into which I see others run and preserve me from those evils into which I am myself most apt to run! Keep me from evils known and from evils unknown. 'Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins—let them not have dominion over me.'

This is a prayer which is more comprehensive in the original than it is in our version. It may be translated, "Save me," and this is a prayer that is suitable for many here. Those of you who have never prayed before can begin with this prayer, "Save me, O Strong One! It will indeed need a strong One to save me, for I am so far gone that nothing but Omnipotence can save me." It may also be rendered, "Keep me," or, "Guard me." It is the word which we would use in speaking of the bodyguard of a king or of shepherds protecting their flocks. It is a prayer which you may keep on using from the time you begin to know the Lord until you get to Heaven—and then you will only need to alter Jude's Doxology very slightly, and say, "Unto Him who has kept us from falling, and presented us faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise

God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Next, *when is this prayer suitable?* Well, it is suitable at this moment! You do not know what dangers you will meet with before you go to your bed tonight. Take special care when you come to what you consider the safe parts of the road, for you will probably be most in danger when you think you are in no danger at all! It is often a greater peril not to be tempted than to be tempted. This prayer is suitable to some of you who are going into new situation where you will have new responsibilities, new duties and probably new trials and difficulties. In the old days of superstition, people were foolish enough to wear charms of various kinds to guard them from evil—but such a prayer as this is better than all their charms! If your pathway should lie through the Enchanted Fields or even through the Valley of Death-Shade, you need not be afraid, but may march boldly on with this prayer on your lips, “Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust.”

Then, *in what spirit ought this prayer to be offered?* It should be offered in a spirit of deep humility. Do not pray, “Preserve me, O God,” as though you felt that you were a very precious person. It is true that God regards you as one of His jewels if you are a Believer in Jesus, but you are not to regard yourself as a jewel. Think of yourself as a brand plucked from the burning and then you will pray with due humility. Pray as a poor feeble creature who must be destroyed unless God shall preserve you! Pray as if you were a sheep that had been shorn and that needed to have the wind tempered to it. Pray as a drowning man might pray, “Preserve me, O God.” Pray as sinking Peter prayed, “Lord, save me,” for so you shall be preserved even as he was!

With what motive ought you to pray this prayer? Pray it especially out of hatred to sin. Whenever you think of sin, the best thing you can do is to pray, “Preserve me, O God.” Whenever you hear or read of others doing wrong, do not begin to plume yourself upon your own excellence, but cry at once, “Preserve me, O God, or it may be that I shall sin even as those others have done.” If this night you are a Christian, the praise for this is not to be given to yourself, but to the Lord who has made you to differ from others! You are only what His Grace has made you, so show how highly you value that Grace by asking for more and more of it!

This must suffice concerning the prayer of the text, for I must, in closing, remind you of the plea and ask if each one here is able to use it—“Preserve me, O God: *for in You do I put My trust.*” Can you, my Friend, urge this plea with God tonight? Perhaps you say that you could do so years ago. Then why not put your trust in the Lord now? It is present faith that you need in your present perils and you cannot pray acceptably without faith, “for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” You know what it

is to trust a friend and, perhaps, to be deceived—but do you know what it is to trust in God and not be deceived? Are you trusting for salvation only to Christ? Do you sing—

***“You, O Christ, are all I need,
More than all in You I find”?***

Is this your plea continually? Are you always trusting in God—in the dark as well as in the light? Many a man thinks he is strong until he begins to put forth his strength—and then he finds that it is utter weakness. There are many who fancy they are full of faith until they try to exercise it, and then they realize how little they have. They are fine soldiers when there is no fighting, and splendid sailors as long as they are on dry land—but such faith as that is of little service when some great emergency arises. The faith we need is that firm confidence which sings—

***“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink!
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”***

If that is the kind of faith you have, you need not fear to pray, “Preserve me, O God,” for He will be as a wall of fire round about you to guard you from all evil! And though you are now in the midst of those who would drag you down to their level if they could, or turn you aside from the paths of righteousness—the Lord, in whom you have put your trust, will never leave you, nor forsake you, but will bring you in His own good time to that blessed place of which He has told you in His Word! And there—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in”—***

you shall be preserved from all evil forever, and faith shall be blessedly exchanged for sight! God grant that everyone of us may be able to pray the prayer of our text, and to use the plea, “Preserve me, O God: for in You have I put my trust,” for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 17.

Can there be found in all the records of mankind, in all the documents that have ever been preserved, anything that can match this record of our Savior’s great intercessory prayer? He seems to pray here as if He already stood within the veil—not pleading in agony as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, but speaking with that authority with which He is clothed now that His work on earth is done! There is as much of the Divine as of the Human in this prayer, and it is remarkable that in it our Lord does not make any confession of sin on account of His people. He does not come before God, as it were, in *forma pauperis*, with many pleas, but the burden of His prayer is that He may be glorified, and that His Father may be glorified in Him. The words of the prayer are among

the most simple that could have been selected, but oh, the depths that lie hidden beneath them! I do not think that this side of Heaven any of us can know to the fullest the meaning of this wondrous Chapter. May the Holy Spirit graciously grant us a glimpse of the glorious Truths of God that are revealed here!

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven—* Not His hands, as we do who are poor suppliants, but His eyes, indicating where His thoughts went. He “lifted up His eyes to Heaven”—

1. *And said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* No mere man would have dared to pray such a prayer as this! Jesus asks that He may be glorified by His Father that He also may glorify His Father. He put the two things together—“Father, glorify Your Son that Your Son may also glorify You.” This is not a plea that is fit for merely human lips. It is Jesus, the Son of God, who, in receiving Glory from His Father, is also able to return it to His Father!

2, 3. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* [See Sermon #2396, Volume 41—ETERNAL LIFE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See how He puts Himself side by side with God as no mere man might dare to do? Only He who was equal with the Father could venture to plead thus, claiming power over all flesh—that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. Here we learn that it is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* “My teaching is all done, My ministry is finished and though there are still some arrears of suffering, yet those shall be fully discharged in due time. ‘I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.’”

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You, Me, with Your own Self with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* You must try and think of who it is that is thus pleading, for so you will get at least some faint idea of the intercession of our great High Priest in Heaven, for after this fashion He still prays to His Father before the eternal Throne of God.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your word.* “They were Yours, my Father, under Your direct government, but You have transferred them to My mediatorial sovereignty, and You have given them up to be Mine in a very special sense, beyond all the rest of mankind and this is one of their distinguishing characteristics, that they have kept Your word.”

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and*

they have received them—Is it so with You, dear Friend? Have You received Christ's words—the very words which the Father gave to Him, and which He has in His turn given to you? O Soul, You are indeed happy if this is the case with you! “I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them”—

8, 9. *And have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world*— [See Sermon #2331, Volume 39—CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is, not in the same special sense as He prays for His people, not with that personal pleading which He offers on behalf of His own chosen ones—“I pray not for the world”—

9. *But for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* In the 6th verse, Jesus had said to His Father, “Yours they were.” And here, in this 9th verse, He says, “They are Yours.” They still belonged to the Father, the transference of them mediatorially to the Son having made no change in the Father's relation to them!

10. *And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* I can understand a man saying to God, “All mine are Yours.” But no man, unless he is something more than man, dares to say to God, “Yours are mine.” But Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man, gives all that He has to God, and all that God has belongs to Him, so that He can truly say, “All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.”

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* It has been well said that this expression, “My Father,” is a binding up of the Old and New Testaments in one. The Old Testament reveals the holiness of God, but it is the New Testament that is peculiarly the Revelation of God as the Father. We put the two together, as Jesus does, and thus He speaks, “Holy Father, make My people one, and keep them one.” Let us close up our ranks, Brothers and Sisters. Let us love each other more and as Christ has prayed that we may be one, let us constantly seek to manifest our oneness among the sons of men!

12-17. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth.* [See Sermon #1890, Volume 32—OUR

LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S SANCTIFICATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] How wondrously our Savior's prayer advances! He asks for His people's unity. He asks for their joy. He asks for their preservation. And now He asks for their purification, their sanctification—"Sanctify them through Your Truth."

17-20. *Your word is Truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone. "For these who are already converted—I pray also for those who are not yet called by Grace."*

20-22. *But for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the Glory which You gave Me I have given them—Who among us knows the full meaning of that wondrous declaration? "The Glory which You gave Me I have given them"—*

22, 23. *That they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, and You have loved Me. [See Sermon #1472, Volume 25—THE GLORY, UNITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a glorious assurance that is! It amazes us to know that the Father has loved us even as He loved His Son!*

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O Righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them and I in them. [See Sermons #1378, Volume 23—THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER KNOWN AND LOVED and #1667, Volume 28—"LOVE AND I"—A MYSTERY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]*

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

LIFE, AND THE PATH TO IT

NO. 2813

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 11, 1903,**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1877.**

***“You will show me the path of life: in Your Presence is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”
Psalm 16:11.***

I THINK YOU must have noticed, while I was reading the Psalm from which my text is taken, that I expounded it partly concerning David and partly concerning David's Lord, Jesus, the Messiah. It often happens, in the Psalms, that you can scarcely tell whether it is David, or Jesus, or both of them to whom the writer is referring. Oftentimes you lose sight of David, altogether, and are quite certain that he is not there, while, at other times, the words seem equally suitable either to David, the type, or to Jesus the antitype. I think that this fact is very instructive to us. It looks as if the Holy Spirit intended, even in those ancient times, to let God's saints know that there is a mysterious union between Christ and His people, so that almost all things which may be said concerning Him may be said, also, concerning those who are in Him. They are so completely one, they are so intimately united in bonds of mystic, vital, eternal union, that it would not be possible to always keep the sayings concerning them apart. As two bank-divided streams flow side by side for a while and, at last, melt into one river—and you can scarcely say which river it is when they are joined in one—so Christ and His Church are united in one mighty stream and, therefore, what is said of the one may, at least in some sense, be said of the other. O Christian, treasure up this precious thought! You are one with Jesus and, consequently, much that is said concerning Him may also be said concerning you!

In this 16th Psalm we are sure that there is a clear reference to the Savior because to no one but to Him could these words be absolutely applied, “You will not leave my soul in the abode of the dead; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” All other bodies see corruption, but His holy body did not. His birth was not according to carnal generation. His Human Nature was perfect, untainted by evil. Such a body belongs to no one else, so these words are, in the fullest sense, only applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we feel no hesitation, as Believ-

ers, in taking them to ourselves, at least to a very large extent, remembering that our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Because I live, you shall live also.” And that He prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom you have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” This proves that we, also, shall tread the path of life which He has trod—that the Presence of His Father, in which He is glorified, is that same Presence which will make our Heaven! That the right hand of God, at which He sits, is the place to which He will also exalt *us* and that the pleasures forevermore, in which He Himself rejoices, are the very pleasures with which He will indulge our souls, for it is His purpose that His joy shall abide in us that our joy may be full.

This brings us to our text, in which there are two things of which I am going to speak to you. First, *an assurance as to the untrodden path*. And, secondly, *an assurance as to the life to which that path leads*.

I. First, then, we have here AN ASSURANCE AS TO THE UNTRODDEN PATH—“You will show me the path of life.”

If you take these words as referring to Christ, they must apply to Him as Man. As a Man, He was to die. His soul was to be, for a little while, separated from His body, yet, even as a Man, He spoke with perfect confidence to His Father. You remember that His dying words were, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” “And having said this, He gave up the ghost.” He spoke with the full assurance that His Father would show Him “the path of life.” Where did the spirit of Christ go when it left His body? In what mysterious way it entered at once into Paradise, it is not for us even to *guess*. There have been a great many questions raised in the Christian Church, in all ages, concerning this matter. Some, taking the words literally, have said that Christ descended into Hell and they have even ventured to affirm that He preached to the dead and delivered the spirits that were in that awful prison. All that kind of talk seems to me very like that which come from dreamland! We know, from our Savior’s own declaration, that He was in Paradise the very day that He died, for He said to the penitent thief, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” But whatever pathway the human soul of Jesus took, it was not unguided—His Father showed to Him, “the path of life.”

His sacred body had to lie three days in the tomb, but it was not corrupted in the least degree. Dr. Watts very sweetly sings—

**“There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”**

That body, lying in Joseph’s sepulcher, wrapped in linen and sweet spices through the love and kindness of Christ’s disciples, must rise again—and once more the Father showed to His Son, “the path of life.” How it came to pass that the Spirit of God worked upon that precious body and raised Jesus from the dead, we cannot tell, for the work of the Spirit is secret and mysterious. But those blessed eyes of Jesus opened again and the pulses of His human heart began to beat once more—and He stood

upon those dear feet that had been pierced by the nails and He unwound the napkin from His head with those very hands that had been fastened to the Cross, but which would never again suffer pain, for He had risen from the dead no more to die! As the first-born from the dead, His Father had showed to Him, “the path of life.”

Then, after tarrying here a little longer—that His re-united soul and body might dwell, for 40 days or so, in the midst of His disciples, that they might be quite sure that it was His own body that had risen from the dead and His own soul that communed with them—He led them out to Olivet and once again His Father showed Him “the path of life.”—

***“Then He arose ascending high,
And showed our feet the way.”***

His disciples beheld Him ascend while He was blessing them. And they gazed upon Him as He ascended, until a cloud hid Him from their astonished gaze. And we are expressly told that at the appointed time He shall come again in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven. Truly, in Him was fulfilled the Psalmist’s confident declaration, “You will show me the path of life.” We can easily imagine that as He passed through that cloud, the angels came to meet Him—squadrons of bright beings from the courts of Heaven hurried down to do Him homage and to escort Him back to the Glory which He had with the Father before He came to sojourn here below! It seems to me to be not merely poetry, but a matter of fact that they did then sing, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.” And He did enter the gates and went straight to the Throne of God which His Father had appointed as the grand reward of His victory—and there He sits—and will continue to sit until His foes are made His footstool!

Thus you see that our text is true concerning our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is also true concerning all who are in Christ—and each of us who is trusting in Him may, with the hand of faith, grasp this Divine assurance, “You will show me the path of life.” I feel quite enamored of this portion of my text and would be perfectly content if I had only to preach from it. *You*, O my God, You who know everything, You will show me the path of life! There is no other guide like You, my God. I trust no priest, no man like myself, nor even an angel. You, who did lead Your people through the wilderness by the cloudy, fiery pillar, You will show me the path of life!

And You will show it to *me*—unworthy as I am—just as if I were the only traveler upon life’s rough way. You will devote Your wisdom and Your strength to me, taking me by the hand and leading me, as a father leads his child. You will be gentle and patient with me and when I am so blind that I cannot see my way, You will go before me and say to me, “This is the way; walk you in it.”

And, my Lord, as there is only one “path of life,” you will show *me* the path. It is but a narrow track and it runs clean contrary to the broad way that leads to destruction. You will show me the path, O Lord, and guide my feet into it! When I know not which way to turn, to the right or to the left, You will show me the path—I know that You will!

And it will be the path of *life* that You will show me. I shall not live in a kind of living death, as others do, but I shall be really quickened by Your Holy Spirit. In that path, I shall find life and, by that path, I shall receive yet more of life and, at last, I shall attain to the perfection of life and see You in the Glory-Life above, far more fully than I can ever see You in the Grace-Life below.

Thus you see that every word is precious and full of meaning, but just for a moment think of the complete sentence, “You will show me the path of life.” That is true, my Brothers and Sisters, about the whole of your life while you are here. You will not be misled if you trust in God! Your own supposed wisdom will surely lead you astray if you follow its guidance, but trust in the Lord and you shall be rightly guided in all times of trouble and difficulty. And when you come to die. When you are, indeed, entering upon a new and untrodden path, the Lord will still show you the path of life. He will teach you the way to be confident even when the dewdrops of death lie cold and clammy upon your brow. He will show you the way to meet your last great adversary without a fear and without even a tremor—and He will teach you how to find life in death and how to triumph in the last dread conflict! Think of what will happen when the parting moment comes and the spirit is launched upon a sea it never traversed before. It leaves the familiar precincts of the house of clay and finds itself stripped and unclothed, and it cries, “Oh, where shall I go? In that unknown land without a track, where shall I go?”

You need not ask that question, Brother, Sister, or, if you do, you can give the answer, “You will show me the path of life.” Up to the realms where angels dwell, borne up on eagle wings, you shall ascend to Heaven! God Himself will stoop from Heaven to be your Guide and He will take you to dwell, as a pure spirit, at His right hand. The ages will speed on and, in due time, there will ring out the mighty blast of the Resurrection trumpet! Where will my body be then? These limbs, all moldered back to dust. These eyes vanished from human kin. The whole mortal fabric dissolved and returned to mother earth. Ah, my Lord! But I shall not have to raise myself from the grave, I could not work that miracle of resurrection—my bones have not to come together to their fellow bones by their own power. God will teach each atom to come to its fellow and each individual life will be identified the same as before, yet wondrously changed! I know not how it will be, but God knows, and He will show us, “the path of life,” the way to be conformed to the image of Christ, the way to attain to the perfection of life everlasting! This is the path that no

eagle's eyes have ever seen and no lion's whelp has ever trod, yet, in blissful confidence I may die and rise again, for the Lord will show me, "the path of life."

Is not this a blessed Truth of God? Then drink it in and if you have any fears of death, let them all fly away as you meditate upon this comforting assurance which your Lord, Himself, has so graciously revealed to you!

II. Now, secondly, we have, in our text, AN ASSURANCE AS TO THE LIFE TO WHICH THAT UNTRODDEN PATH LEADS—"In Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Concerning that life, we are told, first, *the place where it is to be spent*. Many people ask, "Where is Heaven?" Others enquire, "Is there such a place at all?" Assuredly, there is such a place, but where it is, I cannot tell. Some have imagined that, possibly, it is in the central star of our solar system, Alcyone in the constellation of the Pleiades. We may dismiss the conjecture as soon as we have heard it and not be any the better for having heard it! What we do know, however, about Heaven, is that it is in the Presence of God. Do you know, Beloved, what the "Presence of God" means? Yes, in a feeble sense, you have realized it when, in His House and, especially at His Table, He has unveiled His face. When the King has been with us—when we have consciously felt that we were in the royal Presence, we have sung—

***"No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with His earthly courts compare."***

But what must it be to be in His Presence when relieved from the burden of this flesh for a while, or when it is refined and purified—when the dimness that is now in our eyes shall all be gone and the unclouded Glory of God shall shine upon us? A poor prisoner who has seen a little gleam of light down in his dismal dungeon, knows something about the sun, but what a difference there must be between his knowledge of the great orb of day and that which is possessed by the angel whom Milton represents as living in the sun! A contrast as great as this is going to happen to you, dear Friends, in passing from this world—with now and then a glint of Heaven's sunlight—to dwelling with God forever in the Glory that excels anything that we have ever imagined here! I cannot tell you what it will be—and neither will you know it until you get there and learn what it is by actually dwelling in His Presence!

We are also told that Heaven is to be enjoyed at the right hand of God. The right hand, even on earth, is the place of favor, the place of honor and the place of security. The right-hand place is always regarded as the post of dignity and nobility in all courts. God is not going to give His people any left-handed Heaven—they are to dwell at His right hand forevermore! It is the place that Jesus Himself has and that He has promised to His victorious followers—"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Fa-

ther on His throne.” The very choicest place in Heaven shall be yours, Beloved! God will not put you away somewhere behind the doors of His royal palace, but He will guide you to the place of honor at His own right hand where “there are pleasures forevermore.”

Those last words that I quoted tell us something about *the enjoyment of Heaven*—the kind of life which the glorified spend at the right hand of God above. The life of Heaven is a life of joy and the crowning joy is that the pleasures, there, are “pleasures forevermore.” In this world a few drops of joy fall here and there and there are, sometimes, showers of blessing. But up there it is joy, joy, joy forever—“pleasures forevermore.” Let these blessed joy bells ring in your ears and in your heart just now—and if you know even a little of what they mean, you may anticipate that they will mean a thousand times as much on the other side of the Jordan of death—in the heavenly land of Canaan!

Our text tells us of the *quantity*, as well as the quality of the joy of Heaven. It is to be “fullness of joy.” That is what we never reach here, for, when we are most joyous, there is always room for more joy, or there is something lacking to the completeness of our joy. But, in God’s Presence, is “fullness of joy.” It may well be described as the fullness of joy because it is infinite. He who drinks from a cup can soon drain it dry, but he who lies down on the brink of a great river may drink as long as he likes and he will never empty it, for he has come to its fullness.

“Fullness of joy” means that you shall not only have as much joy as you can hold, but that it shall keep on running and your capacity shall be enlarged, but you shall still be filled with joy—and so it shall continue forever! If you are the least among the saints in Heaven, you shall have fullness of joy. And if you are the greatest, you shall still be full of joy. You shall be so full of joy that you could not be more happy! You shall have reached the very summit of eternal happiness! Yes, even there it shall not enter into your heart to conceive anything that shall be above the joy which God has revealed to them that love Him! What indescribable bliss must this fullness of joy be! You know that when you are full of anything, you cannot put anything else in—so, where there is fullness of joy at God’s right hand, no sorrow will ever be able to enter. There are—

**“No groans to mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues.”**

There will not be room for a single doubt there, or for a fear—no, not even for one sad memory! There will not be room for a wish—we shall be so full of joy that we shall have all that we could desire! Every faculty of our body glorified and every power of our soul perfected, the life everlasting shall rush through us and we shall be filled with it, sunk in it, as in an ocean of infinite satisfaction and eternal content! I find that words are but poor things to describe such a theme as this—I wish that I could more worthily speak of this “fullness of joy” in God’s Presence.

Notice next, the *variety* of this joy, for I take it that while the term,, “fullness of joy,” is given to show that it is one, yet the expression, “pleasures forevermore,” may teach us that the bliss is varied. I cannot give to you, Beloved, a complete list of the joys of Heaven, but I will briefly mention a few of them.

The glorified before the Throne of God are forever singing about salvation, praising Him who washed them from their sins in His own blood. A sense of perfected salvation is a part of the bliss of Heaven. They are washed whiter than snow and they know it. They are delivered from all sin and are “without fault before the Throne of God”—and they know it. Now have they been brought right away from all danger of perishing, for they are “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”

There will be a sense of security, too, for all who are at the right hand of God in Glory. They are all perfectly safe there. “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up there, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.” “Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” And they know that it shall be so and, therefore, a sense of their security is one of the sweetnesses of the beatific state.

Coupled with that will be their assurance of victory. They will know that they have overcome all their enemies through the blood of the Lamb. Even the last enemy, Death, himself, will then have been destroyed. When the Resurrection shall be complete, what a vast sweep will the mind’s eye of the glorified Believer take! All human history will open up before him and as he gazes upon it, he will see that God has triumphed, by His Grace, in everything! And the adoring song of victory will go up forever and ever unto Him who has conquered sin, death and Hell, and led captivity captive. The palms will forever be waving and the harps forever ringing out, “Glory, glory, glory to the mighty Grace which has triumphed from the first day even until now!” Victory blending with security will indeed make glad the spirits of the saints at God’s right hand!

There, too, their joy will consist in freedom from every form of evil. No temptation can ever enter there, no carking care, no spiritual weakness. They are eternally clear of all that made them sad in the days of their sinfulness and imperfection. One great part of the joy of the glorified will be the perfection of their characters, for he that is holy must be happy. Perfection of holiness must mean perfection of happiness—the two things must go together. Sin and sorrow cannot be divorced—and holiness and happiness cannot be separated. O Brothers and Sisters, what must it be to feel that you have no tendency to err, no understanding out of balance—that even memory does not bring to you a sinful reflection that would stain your purity—that, altogether, your whole mind is godlike, made holy through the operation of the blessed Spirit and the cleansing blood of Jesus? Oh, to completely get rid of sin! One would not mind keeping a frail body with all its weakness and pains if he could once get

rid of sin. One might be willing to be as poor as Lazarus if he could but get rid of sin. To shake off this viper into the fire—to be altogether clear of even the taint of sin would be Heaven! And we shall have that bliss at God's right hand.

Part of the joy of Heaven will also lie in clear knowledge. Here, we only know in part, but there we shall know even as we are known. Here, "we see through a glass, darkly; but there, face to face." Some of you do not understand the Doctrines of Grace, here, but you will understand them there. You meet with a great many questions that are too difficult for you to answer, now, and you are often puzzled with problems which you cannot solve. You must believe, now, much that you cannot comprehend—but things will look very different in the clear light of Heaven from what they do, now, in the dim twilight of earth! Wait a while and do not worry. Tarry just a little season and the eternal day shall break, and the shadows shall forever flee away and you shall know all that you will desire to know when you are at God's right hand in Glory!

But perhaps it is still sweeter to remember that Heaven's bliss will very much consist in fellowship, first, with the Father. How near we shall be to Him when we are in His Presence! Here, we cannot see His face and live. But there we shall live by seeing His face! It will be the ecstasy of our glorified life to gaze upon Him who is invisible to mortal eyes! There, too, we shall see Jesus. Do not your sacred passions burn at the very thought of such bliss as this?—

***"For there the Man that loved and died,
Sits glorious at His Father's side"***

and these eyes shall behold Him, the God that died for me! Oh, that wondrous sight! Do we not feel as though, like John, we must fall at His feet as dead when we see Him as He is? O blessed Christ, we scarcely need any more of Heaven than to be where You are! Then, too, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, will yet more gloriously manifest His Divine power to us there—

***"O blissful hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God."***

We shall have such fellowship there with the Father, the Son and the Spirit as is not possible before and, then—this is coming down a long way from the sublime height of fellowship with God, yet it is a fact that is worth remembering—we shall have fellowship with the innumerable holy angels and with all the glorified saints!

All who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, even as we are, will be there as our happy companions forever and ever. Are you not anxious to see the Apostles and Prophets who have gone to Heaven before you? Well, Beloved, you shall see them—and the communion that you will have with them will be of the most intimate kind! And your beloved ones who have been called Home before you, you shall meet them, by-and-by, when the Master shall say to you, also, "Come up here." Oh,

yes, there will be “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven . . .the spirits of just men made perfect,” and it will be a part of the delights of Heaven to have fellowship with them! I have heard some people say that they will have such sweet and satisfying fellowship with Christ that they will not want to have any with His people, but that is both absurd and impossible because you cannot have fellowship with the Head without having fellowship with the members at the same time! Christ will never wish you to look upon Him in Heaven as divided from His people—they shall be so completely one with Him that in fellowship with His people, you shall in no degree be diminishing your fellowship with Christ, but rather be enjoying it in the form in which He, Himself, rejoices, for His delights will still be with the sons of men and if, on earth, they were the excellent in whom was all your delight, He would have you take the same delight in them when you meet them before His Throne in Glory.

There is one more pleasure of Heaven that I must mention, and that is rest—not that state of idleness of which some lazy people foolishly think—but that kind of rest which will be perfectly compatible with holy service. We are to serve God day and night in His temple—we shall always have something to do for our God throughout eternity, but that service will be rest to us. Just as, here on earth, we take Christ’s yoke upon us and learn of Him, and so find rest unto our souls—in Heaven itself we shall continue in the service of our God and we shall find therein the very sweetest rest. One part of that service will be everlasting praise. I am longing for the time when I shall have a heart that will never wander from my Lord—what hallelujahs will I sing to His holy name! And will not you, who love Him, do the same? Oh, what shouts we will make together when, as one complete family before the Throne of God, we shall praise the almighty Grace which has brought us safely Home and enabled us to join in the heavenly anthem, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever”!

The last thing to be mentioned is the *duration* of all this bliss—“pleasures forevermore.” It would be robbing Heaven of all that makes it to be Heaven if you could deprive it of its everlasting duration. Our Lord will at the last say, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Your life in Heaven will be everlasting and your joy will be everlasting because you have an everlasting Christ, an everlasting God—and an Everlasting Covenant has been made with you, ordered in all things and sure! A million millions, what must that be? The human mind cannot grasp the meaning of such vast numbers, yet, when millions of millions of millions of millions of years have passed over the heads of Christ’s saints in Glory, this text will not be exhausted! No, more—not one jot or tittle of it will be exhausted—and throughout

eternity it will still be, “pleasures forevermore.” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, this prize is worth winning! Eternal life is worth having! And it shall be the portion of everyone who truly trusts in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last thing I am going to say is this. I greatly fear and tremble for some of you lest you should never enter upon this, “fullness of joy,” and these, “pleasures forevermore.” You know that dreadful word, “*damned*,” which Jesus used—“He that believes not shall be damned.” I will not try to explain to you what the sufferings of the lost must be, for they cannot be described. But a great part of the condemnation of the lost will consist in the fact that they will lose the “fullness of joy” in the Presence of God and the “pleasures forevermore” at His right hand. How dreadful this punishment of loss must be, in addition to all the suffering that must be forever endured in Hell! There stand the pearly gates, but what if you should never enter them? Yonder are the streets of gold, but what if you should never stand upon that radiant pavement? There is the face of Jesus, but what if He should say to you, “I never knew you”? There is the Throne of God, but what if it should burn like a devouring fire for you, so that you should be unable to come near it and to say, “Father,” to Him who sits on it? Shut out of Heaven! Shut out forever! In the outer darkness forever! Away from the marriage feast forever! When once the Master of the house is risen and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not who you are...depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.” Surely there is not a man, or woman, or child, who could look forward, without alarm, to the prospect of being shut out of Heaven forever!

And you will be, as surely as God lives, you will be unless you repent of sin and trust His Son! I am no Prophet of evil, neither do I like to harp upon this string, yet I must remind you that God has declared, concerning Heaven, that “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.” You must, therefore, be washed in the blood of the Lamb if you are ever to be admitted within the pearly gates! Remember the Apostolic message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” for it is as true, now, as when it was first uttered. May the Holy Spirit graciously constrain you to believe in Jesus, now, and at once to yield up your whole being to His supreme sway! Ask Him to show you “the path of life” and to lead you in it, for then you shall enter into His Presence, where there is “fullness of joy,” and you shall stand at His right hand, where “there are pleasures forevermore!”

Somebody recommended all persons, before they go to sea, to wear a lifebelt. I do not believe that people in general are ever likely to follow that advice, but if somebody could invent a belt that made the wearer of it more ready for his work on land—that made him stronger, healthier and more handsome—then everybody would be ready enough to have it!

Well, now, salvation is a life belt for the hour of death, but it is also a strengthening belt, a help, a beauty, a joy and delight for this present life. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” It is as good to live with as to die with and nobody is fit to live who is not fit to die—and nobody is fit to die till he is fit to live! Fitness for work on earth is fitness for rest in Heaven! Depend upon it, these two things go together. Do you all know the Lord? With that question I will conclude.

Do you all know the Lord? If not, you do not know your best Friend. You do not know Him who is the Father of all Believers. Do you know the Lord? If not, I pray you to seek His face this very hour and especially I urge you to obey that word of His Apostle which I quoted to you just now, but cannot quote too often, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” When you trust Christ, you shall see God in Christ and shall come to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit shall reveal Him unto you. The Lord grant that this may be the case, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 16.**

Verse 1. *Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust.* Notice how the Psalmist urges the prevailing plea of faith. A trusted God will be a preserving God. If you, Believer, can truly say that you are trusting God in any time of trouble or danger, you will be safe enough in His keeping.

2, 3. *O my soul, you have said unto the LORD, You are my Lord: my goodness is nothing apart from You; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* “I cannot do You any good, my God; You are too great to need anything from me; but I may be the means of blessing to Your people, Your saints may reap some little benefit from what I do. They are the company I keep, they are the choicest friends I know, and if You will but help me to do something for You which shall bring blessing to them, I shall indeed rejoice.”

4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.* We must be faithful to God—to the God revealed to us in the Book of God, the God of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must keep to Him, not make another god after our own imagination. It is practical idolatry even to conceive of God otherwise than He is revealed in Holy Scripture. This we must not do, but say, concerning the God of the Bible, “This God is our God forever and ever.”

5. *The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot.* One of the great houses of nobility has for its motto the

words, “I will maintain it.” But David’s is a better one—“You maintain my lot.” God is the best Defender that His people can ever have!

6. *The lines are fallen into me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.* Many of us have proved this to be true in our experience. May we continue gratefully contented and more than contented—*delighted* with whatever God appoints for us!

7, 8. *I will bless the LORD, who has given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me. “In my acts by day, and my thoughts by night.”*

8. *Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* Now across the sacred page there comes the wondrous revelation of a glorious One who speaks in the very words that are recorded here. Though, possibly, we have not recognized Him, these words that follow apply especially to Jesus Christ our Lord.

9. *Therefore My heart is glad.* Because in the night watches He had sought His Father and found help in Him, He could say, “Therefore My heart is glad,”

9, 10. *And My glory rejoices: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Hell.* Or, rather, Hades, the abode of the dead.

10. *Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.* Now David was gathered to his fathers and his body saw corruption, as the Apostle Peter rightly observed, so it is clear that he is not speaking of himself, here, not in the first place, at any rate, but of “great David’s greater Son,” our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! “Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.”

11. *You will show me the path of life: in Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—844, 229, 832.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE

NO. 1305

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My
right hand, I shall not be moved."
Psalm 16:8.***

IN the preceding verses we read, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." The speaker, therefore, is a very contented and happy man. It is not the most usual thing in the world to find persons extolling their lot and manifesting a conspicuous emphasis of satisfaction. Far more common is it to hear men surrounded with favors lamenting the hardness of their case! Contented minds are almost as scarce as snowflakes in harvest. The man who rejoices in his goodly heritage deserves attention and we shall do well to learn his secret. How is it that he is able to feel so happy? Let us seek out the way by which he arrived at this peace and discover the silken clue which led him into such a bower of delight. Perhaps his road may fit our feet and, by following it, we may become as perfectly content as he was. O Lord and Giver of peace, help us in the search!

But, first, who is this person who is thus singularly content? To our astonishment we find that the Spirit speaks here by prophecy in the name and Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is He, who, by the Spirit, here said, "The lines have fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage!" He was the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was "despised and rejected of men." He had not where to lay His head. He was often subject to hunger and thirst. He had few friends and those proved faithless in the time of His extremity. So how could He speak thus? All this is so much the more encouraging for us, because if this most sorrowful of men, was, nevertheless, able to feel an inward calm, a sweet contentment, then it must be possible for us to do so whose lot is not so bitter!

We are not sent to make atonement for sin and, therefore, our sorrows are few compared with our Lord's. There was a special reason for His being distressed, for He took our griefs and carried our sorrows. But no atoning griefs are demanded of *us*, nor have we afflictions to bear from the hand of God as punishments for sin, for the Lord has laid all these upon Him and we are clear. If the Lord Jesus, the Man of grief, a mourner all His days, yet said the lines had fallen unto Him in pleasant places and He had a goodly heritage, it must be the more possible for us to rise to the same contentment if we follow His rules and live according to His example.

What, then, is the secret of perfect peace and happiness here below? The price is above rubies—where shall this be learned? The magic lamps and wonderful rings of which children read in fairy stories are as nothing

in value compared with this true philosopher's stone, this mystic secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him—by which His saints are enabled to enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding—which keeps their hearts and minds by Jesus Christ. O Prince of Peace, grant us this rest!

Our text clearly imparts to us the secret of the greatest happiness to be found below the skies and, indeed, it reveals the hidden source of those pleasures above which are at God's right hand forevermore. The first part of the excellent method lies in *always living in the Lord's Presence*—"I have set the Lord always before Me." The second is found in *always trusting in the Lord's Presence*—"Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved."

I. The secret, then, of peace, is, first, ALWAYS LIVING IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE—"I have set the Lord always before Me." We shall try, in order to understand what this means, to keep our eyes upon the life of Jesus and, at the same time, apply the text to the saints. Though this passage is pre-eminently fulfilled in Jesus, yet since the members partake of the nature of the Head, each one, in his own degree, who does that which Jesus did and thereby obtains a holy joy and rest, may enter into the joy of our Lord.

Does not our Lord Jesus bid us take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, that we may find rest unto our souls? I take it that our text means first, that *we should make the Lord's Presence the greatest of all facts to us*. Of all things that are, God chiefly IS, and we should regard Him in that light. It was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He, as a Man, was cognizant of the existence of all the things that are seen, but even more did He recognize the existence of God, who cannot be seen—that great Spirit who is alike invisible and incomprehensible. How vividly the Presence of God must have been realized by Christ at all times, for He was *in* the Father and the Father in Him!

You and I have never seen and understood the Father in the same degree as He did, though the Son has revealed Him to us. He entered into a fuller and more constant recognition of God's Presence in all places and things, than we, as yet, have done. Yet truly we have seen the Father, for we have seen Jesus by *faith*. We have mounted up on wings as eagles and with the eagle's eyes have looked the sun in the face and have not been blinded! Is it not written, "The pure in heart shall see God"? We have been taught to see God around us in all things that exist and in all events that happen. And we bless the Lord that we live not as those who are "without God in the world," that we are taught by the Spirit to recognize our Father's loving, all-pervading Presence!

Yet I know we do not discern it so constantly, clearly and impressively as our Lord Jesus did. He looked upon the mountains and the sunlight on their brows was the smile of His Father. He saw the plains and their harvests were His Father's bounty. To Him the waves of the sea were tossed in tempest by His Father's breath, or calmed by His Father's whisper. He fed the multitude, but it was with His Father's bread. He healed the sick, but His Father did the works. In all things about Him, He continually and distinctly recognized the active Presence of the Most High. Other men re-

marked that the ravens were fed, but He said, "Your heavenly Father feeds them." Other men noticed that the lilies were fair to look upon, but He discerned that, "God so clothes the grass of the field." The heavenly Father was in every place and in every thing to Jesus.

Now, I pray our Lord to grant that by the blessed Spirit we may always be sensitive of the Presence of God wherever we are. Is it not a sad proof of the alienation of our nature that though God is everywhere, we have to school ourselves to perceive Him anywhere? His are the beauties of Nature. His the sunshine which is bringing on the harvest. His the waving grain which cheers the farmer. His the perfume which loads the air from multitudes of flowers. His the insects which glitter around us like living gems! And yet the Creator and Sustainer of all these is far too little perceived! Everything in the temple of Nature speaks of His Glory, but our ears are dull of hearing. Everything, from the dewdrop to the ocean, reflects the Deity, and yet we largely fail to see the eternal brightness. I beseech you, my Brothers and Sisters, to pray that you may have this text worked into your very souls—"I have set the Lord always before Me."

Refuse to see anything without seeing God in it. Regard the creatures as the mirror of the great Creator. Do not imagine that you have understood His works till you have felt the Presence of the great Worker, Himself. Do not reckon that you know anything till you know that of God which lies within it, for that is the kernel which it contains. Wake in the morning and recognize God in your chamber, for His goodness has drawn back the curtain of the night and taken from your eyelids the seal of sleep. Put on your garments and perceive the Divine care which provides you with raiment from the herbs of the field and the sheep of the fold.

Go to the breakfast room and bless the God whose bounty has, again, provided for you a table in the wilderness. Go out to business and feel God with you in all the engagements of the day. Always remember that you are dwelling in His house when you are toiling for your bread or engaged in merchandise. At length, after a well-spent day, go back to your family and see the Lord in each one of the members of it! Acknowledge His goodness in preserving life and health. Look for His Presence at the family altar, making the house to be a palace wherein king's children dwell. At last, fall asleep at night as in the embraces of your God or on your Savior's breast. This is happy living!

The worldling forgets God, the sinner dishonors Him, the atheist denies Him, but the Christian lives in Him! "In Him we live and move and have our being; we are also His offspring." Visible things we look upon as shadows. The things which we touch and taste and handle, perish in the using. The elements of this solid earth shall dissolve with fervent heat, but the ever-present God, whom we cannot see, is the same, and of His years there is no end, and His existence is the only real and true and eternal one to us. He has been our dwelling place in all generations and it were evil, indeed, not to know our own eternal home. This is a main ingredient in the oil of joy—to always realize that the Lord is round about us "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from now on even for evermore."

Secondly, the words of the text signify *the making of God's Glory the one object of our lives*. As a prize is set before the runners in a race, so the Be-

liever's heart sets God's Glory before it as the prize for which the race of life is run. It was even so with our dear Redeemer—from the first to the last He set the Lord always before Him as the object of His life on earth. Do you ever find in Him a selfish motive? Is He ever moved by any groveling ambition? Is He not always seeking the good of men and, by that means, the Glory of God? While yet a youth He goes up to the temple, not to display His precocity, nor, like other children, to gratify Himself with the admiration heaped upon Him for His early wisdom, but He says, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?"

In later days, when He has been anointed to His work, He sits by a well and takes His rest. A woman comes and converses with Him, but He speaks upon no idle theme—He talks to her of the Living Water, seeks her soul to save it and then tells His disciples that He has meat to eat that they know not of—for it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. He presses forward with changeless intensity of purpose towards the completion of the work which the Father had committed to Him.

You see Him present at a wedding, or meeting a funeral procession, but He is found, in both cases, aiming at God's Glory. If you find Him battling with the crowd, or in the chamber, shut in with two or three raising the dead. If you read of His prayers upon the lone mountainside, or listen to His groans in the Garden of Gethsemane, still, evermore—this one thing He does—He glorifies His Father on the earth. Despising shame and trampling under foot the world's honor, He lives to God and to God, alone. Not sometimes and now and then, or as the general aggregate of His life is He found setting God before Himself, but *always* and without exception! In every thought, in every word, in every deed, God was before Him and He lived for God.

Oh, that we could reach to this—whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we would do all to the Glory of God! Oh, that we never dared to do what would dishonor the name of God! Oh, that we walked in all things so as to please Him who loved us and gave Himself for us! I am sure, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you have aimed at this, though you may have fallen far short of your desire, yet in such a path you have found peace unto your souls. This is the king's highway, the way of holiness where no lion shall be found! To know that God is present and to live, by His Grace, wholly to please Him—this is the way of great pleasantness—take care that you keep therein! Never do anything which would dishonor the holy name with which you are called! Leave nothing undone, however hard to the flesh, which would serve the cause of God and so you shall be like your Lord and become partakers of His peace. This is the mode of life by which a man shall have foretastes of the feasts of Heaven while yet in this wilderness world—may the Holy Spirit lead us into it!

A further meaning of setting the Lord always before us is *to live so that the Presence of God shall be the rule and support of our obedience*. So Jesus did. You know right well that to many servants the master's eye is most important in order to make them careful and industrious. How many are eye-servers and men pleasers? Take away the master's eye and how slowly the labor drags along—how often is it slurred over in a slovenly

manner—or left undone altogether? The old proverb declares that the master's eyes do more than both his hands and it is too sadly true! Yet it is not wrong to say that our Master's eyes ought to have a great influence over the servants of God. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."

Beloved, how would you live if God were seen looking on? He *is* looking on! So live. Suppose that in some action of tomorrow you were specially warned—"The Lord will carefully observe you. The Omniscient will fix all His thoughts upon you and detect your motives and scan your spirit, as well as weigh the deed, itself." If you had such a revelation, how would you act? So should you act at all times, for it is always true. "You, God, see me" is an exclamation for every moment of day and night! Can you put your finger upon any part of Christ's life and say, "He forgot that the Father beheld Him in this act"? Is not the whole of Christ's life such a picture that God Himself looked at every line and tint of it with infinite admiration? Have you not, yourself, traversed the gallery of the Savior's life, and pausing at each picture and scene, been filled with amazement and led to exclaim, "He has done all things well!"?

When your mind has been most devout and most holy, have you not more than ever admired every little trait in your Savior's Character, every separate feature of every action of His life, whether public or private? The Father was always with Him and He always did those things which pleased Him. Oh, Beloved, would to God that your obedience were in like manner measured out under the profound consciousness that the great God is watching you in all that you do! He has beset you behind and before, and laid His hands upon you. If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, He is there! Even darkness hides not from Him. Everything that you have done has been enacted in the Presence of your heavenly Father!

Have you felt this? Ah, when you dishonored the Lord Jesus He was, Himself, looking on. He to whom belong those pierced hands heard your cowardly words and saw your traitorous acts. He gazed in wondering sorrow at you, His Friend, betraying Him. When you mingled with the ungodly world and was as one of them, He, too, was there, and now He shows you His wounds and sorrowfully exclaims, "These are the wounds which I received in Your place, the place of My Friend." The blows of friends smite in a tender place! Their wounds are the cruelest that can be received, for enemies pierce sharply, but friends stab with poisoned daggers! When we bring dishonor upon Him whom we profess to love, it is dishonor, indeed! Oh, how much would be left undone and, on the other hand, how much more of another kind would be diligently executed, if in every deed we set the Lord always before us!

Not yet, however, have we completely expounded our text. The words must also mean that we are to set the Lord before us *as the Source from which we are to derive solace and comfort under every trial*. Jesus could say, "I have set the Lord always before Me," for this, it was, that made Him suffer poverty and never complain. This, it was, that made Him encounter shame and spitting and yet remain dumb with wondrous patience, like a

sheep before her shearers. You never hear our Lord cry out until His Father's face is hidden from Him. Then, indeed, He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" When, because of His standing as our Surety, God Himself withdrew the manifestation of His favor, then His pangs were bitter and His grief was overflowing—but you and I will never have to bear the same.

God forsook Him that He might never forsake us. You shall always find the Lord near in the day of trouble and, therefore, if ever you have a Gethsemane, and the bitter cup cannot be passed from you except you drink it, you shall set the Lord before you and in that cheering Presence you shall be able to say, "Not as I will, but as You will," and patiently drink your appointed cup even to the dregs. Are you saying today, "How much I wish that I had more of the comforts of life, but my means are sadly scant and I am very sick and very heavy in spirit"? Your Savior was tempted in all points just as you are, but He set the Lord always before Him and, therefore, He was content and said, "The Lord is My portion, said My soul, therefore will I hope in Him. The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage."

Let all else go, my Brothers and Sisters, for if God is with you, you will still be upheld. Let friends die, one after another, and let earthly comforts fade like autumn leaves, but if you set the Lord always before you—there is such a fullness of joy in every attribute of God, there is such a Heaven in every glimpse of Jesus' face, there is such overwhelming bliss in every drop of Jehovah's everlasting love—you shall not fail nor be discouraged, but you shall sing His praises even in the fiercest fire! To you He will say, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God. When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you. When you go through the fires you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." The Presence of God makes even *death* delightful! "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." Thus you see that setting the Lord always before us ensures us never ceasing consolation.

Yet, further, these words mean that *we are to hold perpetual communion with God*. When Jesus said, "I have set the Lord always before Me," He meant that He was always in fellowship with the Father. Very frequently the fellowship was exercised in prayer, for our Lord, though He is described as praying very much, no doubt prayed infinitely more than any Evangelist has recorded, for He was praying when no one knew it but Himself and His God, when even His lips did not move. His public prayer, or the prayer which could be observed by others, was made manifest for our sakes and their sakes who stood with Him, but it was only a cropping up upon the surface of the great rock of prayer which laid the foundation of His holy living. Right well did He say, when at the grave of Lazarus, "And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it."

He was always talking with the Father, who was, indeed, the only One upon whom He could cast Himself. What consolation could He gather from Peter and James and John? He was like a father with a number of little children around Him who could not so much as understand their fa-

ther's troubles, much less support Him under them! As our Lord was always in sacred fellowship with God, He had great sorrow from beholding the sin of mankind, knowing, as He did, how grievous it was to God! He would mourn before His Father, the people's sin, but continue, still, to intercede, praying all His life as He prayed at last, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus was He at all times in deepest sympathy with the God of Love.

I doubt not that our Lord often spoke with the Father in the form of praise, for while, on one occasion, it is only recorded that He rejoiced, yet doubtless He rejoiced evermore in God. How could His pure Nature do otherwise than joy in the Lord? His whole heart and soul and mind ran in one line with the mind of God! I am, of course, now speaking of Him as Man and as Man His heart was in perfect harmony with the heart of God—there was nothing in Him contrary to the will and design of the Father—His whole human nature was carried along in a parallel course with the mind of the Most High and, therefore, that is why He was always at peace.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, may God grant us Grace to commune constantly with Himself! Prayer should not be a matter of mornings and evenings, alone, but all day our spirit should commune with God! Father, You are so near us and yet how slow we are to speak to You! Teach us, Your children, to be always talking with You so that while we walk on earth our conversation may be in Heaven! The Lord grant us to hold holy commerce with Heaven, hearing what God, the Lord, will speak, and speaking to Him in return. Be it ours to hear the Words of the inspired Book and to regard the advice of the gracious Spirit! And then may our spirit, in its turn, speak with God and make known its requests unto Him. I hope you will be reaching out towards this by the Divine anointing of the Holy Spirit. For this is the grand secret, the sure foundation of a happy life. Perpetual communion with God is the highest state of joy which can be known on earth! Learn to say truthfully, "I have set the Lord always before me," and you have the Lord's secret!

Once again upon this point, dear Friends. If we are to be happy, *we must follow this life of nearness to God because of our delight in it and from the joy which we feel in it.* Indeed, such a life cannot be lived in any other manner. Mere duty and law cannot operate here. If any man shall say, "What a dreary affair this communion with God must be! How dull must be this walking continually with God!" then I reply, your speech betrays you—you have not the first essentials of such a life—neither can you so much as *guess* what it means. Indeed, I am not talking to you at all, it would be useless to press such a theme upon you! Excuse me, you know nothing of the spiritual life, nothing of what it is to be a child of God, or else communion would not be despised by you! You must be born again and, till you *are* born again, such exhortations as these which I am now giving will not apply to you at all.

Does some mere professor sneeringly enquire, "What? Are we always to live to God's Glory and are we to do nothing but what would glorify Him? This is laying down very straight rules and making the road to Heaven very narrow, indeed." Do you think so, Friend? Then I will tell you plainly

my solemn suspicion about you—I am persuaded that you do not know the Lord, for if you did, the way of holiness would be your *delight* and you would not ask for license to sin. I can understand your sinning, but I cannot understand your finding pleasure in it if you are a real Christian! The pleasures of the world are, to a true Believer, as the husks which the swine eat. And if you find them to be good bread for your soul, then assuredly you are none of His!

The hogs may be satisfied with hogs' food, for Providence meant it for them, but the child of God, even when he is a prodigal, cannot be satisfied so! He would gladly fill his belly with the husks, but it is impossible that he should thus be satisfied. I am sure if you are the Lord's, you will look upon living near to God and delighting in Him, not as being a severe task, or a weariness, but as a *luxury* and a delightful *privilege* after which your soul hungers and thirsts. You will say with David, "My soul pants for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" To you the choicest place is that which is nearest to your Lord, though it may be in the dust of contempt, or in the furnace of affliction. It is your ambition to be subdued by the Lord Jesus unto Himself, most completely, and then to be, from now on, the place of His abode, the instrument for His use and, best of all, the object of His love! I would dwell in the house of the Lord forever, as a child at home, considering the present world to be a lower room of that house and Heaven above as the upper story of the same abode. The Presence of God is our bliss!

Now, is there anything about our Lord's life which looks like being under restraint, or being compelled to act otherwise than He would have wished? Can you suspect in His whole career that He was, at any time, acting against His inclination? Was His life constrained and unnatural? Did He walk like a man in irons? Did He live as one pressed into the army of the righteous, denied pleasures which would have been His choice and forced to forms of piety which were distasteful to Him? Not at all! Christ is a free man, living out His inmost, following His heart's best desires. You can see that wherever He is, He acts according to His Nature and is as free in what He does as the fish are free in the sea, or the birds in the air!

Now, such is the Christian in this matter of setting the Lord always before him. He acts not of constraint but willingly, for the Lord has given him a nature which delights in that which God delights in. He does not say, "Woe is me, I am caged like a bird! My life is so precise and Puritanical that I am weary of it." No, he says, "if I had these worldly joys, and might indulge in them, there is nothing in them to please me. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Others are saying, 'Who will show us any good?' But my one petition is, 'Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me.'" He says, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The Christian is never so free as when he is most under Law to Christ! He is never so much himself as when he denies himself, and never so delighted as when he delights himself in the Lord and lives only for the Glory of God!

Now, if such is the case with you, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have learned the secret of joy. The text may be read in the Hebrew, "I have set the Lord *equally* before Me," that is equally *at all times*. He speaks of the

solitary night watches and then His reins instructed Him, for He was with God. In the morning He exclaims, "When I awake I am still with You." We are to have the Lord equally before us under all circumstances—in our business pursuits as well as in Prayer Meetings and hearings of sermons—in seasons of recreation as well as in hours of devotion—in the day of health as well as in the hour of death. If you break the chain of communion by going where you cannot expect to have the Lord's Presence, or doing what the Lord cannot sanction, the broken link can be restored, but it will always show the rivets.

You may lose your roll like Christian in the arbor and you may go back and find it, again, but it is very hard going back over the same ground. And after going back, it is difficult to take to the onward path again. The hardest part of the road to Heaven is that which has to be traversed three times—once when you go over it at first, a second time when you have to return with weeping to find your lost evidences—and then again when you have to make up for lost time. Backsliding causes unhappiness, but abiding with God creates peace like a river, flowing on and on in one long-continued stream. Dear Friends, here is the method of a blissful life! Try it, and the result is certain!

II. I will speak very briefly upon the second head. The second part of the secret follows upon the first—that is TRUSTING ALWAYS IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE. Here is confidence in God—"Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." Here is confidence that God is near us. Confidence that God loves us, for He is not only near us, but in the place of friendly fellowship. And here is confidence that God will practically help us, for the right hand is the dexterous hand, the hand which does the work, and thus God is near unto His people with practical assistance to sustain and to deliver them. How blessed it must be to feel that we have nothing to be afraid of in all the world, for God stands at our right hand to take care of us whatever may happen.

David says, and Christ says through David, "I shall not be moved," that is, first, I shall *not be moved with any regret or remorse as to the past*. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we have set the Lord always before us, we can sit down and meditate upon our course of action and it will bear reflection! The man who knows that he has lived as in the sight of God will not have to wish that he had never been born. On the contrary, he will bless the Lord at all times for all that happens to him. Christ had many sorrows, but no regrets. What a life was His! He never had to look back upon a single act and repent of it. All was done with the Lord before Him and He was not moved.

A lady once told a minister that she was attending the theater, and she remarked, "There are so many pleasures connected with seeing a play. There is the pleasure of anticipation before you go. There is the pleasure of enjoying it when you are there. And there is the third pleasure of reflecting upon it afterwards." The good man replied, "Ah, Madam, there is another pleasure which you have not mentioned and that is the comfort it will afford you upon a dying bed." The irony was well deserved. I may mention this as being the greatest recommendation of setting the Lord al-

ways before you—that it will bear reflection and yield comfort amid sickness and death!

If, by Divine Grace, you are able to live a life of unbroken communion with God, constantly having an eye to His Presence, you will not have to mourn over a misspent life. Your retrospect will be full of pleasure. As for sin, that is already covered by the blood of Christ and, besides that, you will have been kept from a thousand snares by having the fear of God always before your eyes. And so, in reviewing the past, you shall not be moved with bitter remorse. Many things which we now do, we may have to lament in the future, though now we think we are acting very wisely and well. But if the Lord is always before us, our steps will be established because they are ordered by the Lord. Even if you make a mistake as to policy, you will be comforted by the knowledge that it was a fault of your judgment and not of your heart, if, indeed, you desired to serve the Lord.

Beloved, it is well for us to live near God that we may not *be moved from our consistency in the way of true religion*. There are many professors whose lives are jerky—they are walking with God, after a fashion, today, but soon they wander into crooked paths. Then they begin again, but before long they start aside as a deceitful bow. Like Reuben, they are unstable as water and do not excel. In our Lord's life there is no break, it is one continuous harmony. The unities are observed in His grand career, it is like His garment—without seam and woven from the top throughout. Now, Brothers and Sisters, if you set the Lord always before you, you will not be moved, but your path will be like that of the sun in the heavens, rising from dawn till noon!

Setting the Lord before us prevents our being *moved with terror*. It is said of the Believer, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The Believer is not moved with staggering fear. A great trouble is coming upon him, but he has set the Lord before him, and he is not cast down. If like Jesus, Himself, he is for the moment swayed with exceedingly great sorrow, yet does he say, "What time I am afraid I will trust in You," and when he prays he is heard in that he feared. Such a man is not *moved by temptation so as to be swept into surprising sin*. If I set the Lord always before me, I shall not be carried away by a sudden temptation. It is when you are off your guard that sin comes and you fall.

You speak unadvisedly, you get into a hot temper, you make sad havoc of your Christian life—and all because your eyes were off your Lord. If you could but have known that the trial was coming, you would have been protected against it. And if you had set the Lord always before you, you would have been prepared for the world, the flesh and the devil—and shielded from every fiery dart of the Evil One. Let us dwell in God and He will be a wall of fire round about us. He will keep us every moment, lest any hurt us. He will keep us night and day. Thus you will not be *moved so as to fall into failure at the last*. You must all have felt the dread lest, after all, at the end of life it should turn out that you are not saved. Have you not feared that you have deceived yourselves and were not converted when you thought you were?

What if it should turn out to be so? What will you do when the bubble of false hope shall burst? Ah, but if you set the Lord always before you, you shall not be moved by that fear, for you will know that your Redeemer lives! You will have such a consciousness of the Divine Presence that you will commit your departing spirit unto God as to a faithful Creator! You will not be afraid to die, for as Jesus said, "My flesh, also, shall rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." So will *you* say, "My flesh, also, shall rest in hope, for You will not leave my soul in Hell, and though I see corruption as to my body, yet shall I be raised in incorruption in the likeness of my Lord, for I know that my next of kin lives and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not another." Oh, the joy of thus abiding in God and trusting in His present power—having the Lord at your right hand—and then abiding in calm assurance that you cannot be moved!

Just four things and I have done. First, to any of you who are unhappy. Some of you are not Christian people, but altogether of the world. You are not happy and yet I dare say you have a great many things to make you so. You are placed in easy circumstances where you can enjoy *yourselves* as much as you like. The sorriest thing in the world to enjoy is yourself! I can enjoy other people better than I can myself. To enjoy yourself needs a very depraved appetite, for selfishness is sordid and, like the serpent, has dust appointed to be its meat. If you think that you will find pleasure in worldliness, I should like you to remember one who tried that method very thoroughly.

I mean Solomon of old, who had all the wealth a heart could wish and all the wisdom a brain could hold—and yet was both poor and foolish! He ransacked the world for joy, but found it not. At one time he gave all his thoughts to architecture and built splendid palaces. And after he had built them all, he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He took to his books and studied very hard, but after he had poured over them a long time, he said, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

He tried singing men and singing women, and the peculiar delights of kings, but when he had enjoyed himself in this manner to the utmost possibilities of human nature, he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He planted gardens and laid out water courses and practiced engineering. He inclined, at one time, to the pleasures of a fool, and soon he was eager in the nobler pursuits of a wise man! Sometimes he was sober with science and at other seasons he was excited with laughter—he tried everything and found all earthly joy to be as deceitful as the apples of Sodom which are fair to look upon but turn to ashes in the hand.

Nothing beneath the skies and nothing above the skies can make any man happy apart from God, search as you will! Apart from God you may make a Hell, but you cannot make a Heaven, do what you please! Oh, I beseech you, unhappy man, if you have grown weary of the world and are sick of everything—if you are in the sere and yellow leaf though not 40 years of age—remember that there is a place where your leaf can be made

green! If you will set the Lord always before you, you shall find peace in Him.

And, next, I may be addressing some who think themselves perfectly happy in the world. I confess I do not envy you, but still, I like to hear you sing your song and tell the tale of what bliss the world affords. Yet note on what frail pillars this fairy palace of yours is erected! You are healthy, that is at the bottom of it—your bodily frame is in good order and you are merry. But suppose you should fall sick? Or suppose those few gray hairs should, before long, be multiplied, where only lie your mirth? Or if your wealth should take to itself wings and fly away—what then? Or if you come before the Lord in judgement, what then? Oh, Sir, let this frail foundation go! It is not meet to rest your eternal hopes upon! You are like a little child building his little sand house by the seaside! The tide is coming up, O child, leave your sand and flee from the waves! There is a Rock on which you may build a house eternal with massive stones, a palace of happiness that never shall be dissolved! Go there!

Now, you Christian people, if any of you are unhappy, I wish I could preach you out of it by reminding you of this test, but, as I cannot, I leave you in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you draw near to God, you will be as happy as the days are long in midsummer! Your doubts and fears will flee and you will be as merry as birds of the air! And you happy Christians, you of the bright eyes and the elastic footsteps, you can be happier, still, by coming yet nearer to God and abide in fuller communion with Him. And though you are already singing—

“How happy is the pilgrim’s lot,”

you shall be yet more blessed if you become more obedient, more submissive to the Divine will, more in sympathy with Jesus and more abidingly in communion with the Father. This is Heaven below! God grant it to you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 16.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—16, 708.**

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THE HOPE OF FUTURE BLISS

NO. 25

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 20, 1855
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.”
Psalm 17:15.***

IT would be difficult to say to which the Gospel owes most—to its friends or to its enemies! It is true that by the help of God, its friends have done much for it. They have preached it in foreign lands, they have dared death, they have laughed to scorn the terrors of the grave, they have ventured all things for Christ and so have glorified the Doctrine they believed. But the enemies of Christ, unwittingly, have done a great deal, too! For when they have persecuted Christ's servants, they have scattered them abroad so that they have gone everywhere preaching the Word. Yes, when they have trampled upon the Gospel, like a certain herb we read of in medicine, it has grown all the faster—and if we refer to the pages of Sacred Writ, how very many precious portions of it do we owe, under God, to the enemies of the Cross of Christ! Jesus Christ would never have preached many of His discourses had not His foes compelled Him to answer them. Had they not brought objections, we would not have heard the sweet sentences in which He replied. So, with the Book of Psalms—had not David been sorely tried by enemies, had not the foemen shot their arrows at him, had they not attempted to malign and blast his character, had they not deeply distressed him and made him cry out in misery, we would have missed many of those precious experimental utterances we here find! Much of that holy song which he penned after his deliverance and very much of that glorious statement of his trust in the Infallible God we would have lost! We would have lost all this had it not been wrung from him by the iron hand of anguish. Had it not been for David's enemies, he would not have penned his Psalms. But when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, when driven like the timid roe before the hunter's dogs, he waited for a while, bathed his sides in the brooks of Siloa and panting on the hilltop a little, he breathed the air of Heaven and stood and rested his weary limbs. Then was it that he gave honor to God. Then it was he shouted aloud to that mighty Jehovah, who for him had gotten the victory. This sentence follows a description of the great troubles which the wicked bring upon the righteous, wherein he consoles himself with the hope of future bliss. “As for me,” says the Patriarch, casting his eyes aloft—“As for me,” said the hunted chieftain of the caves of Engedi—“As for me,” says the once shepherd boy, who was

soon to wear a royal diadem—“As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.”

In looking at this passage tonight, we shall notice first of all, the *spirit of it*. Secondly, the *matter of it*. And then, thirdly, we shall close by speaking of *the contrast which is implied in it*.

I. First, then, the SPIRIT OF THIS UTTERANCE, for I always love to look at the spirit in which a man writes, or the spirit in which he preaches. In fact, there is vastly more in that than in the words he uses!

Now, what should you think is the spirit of these words—“As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness”?

First, they breathe the spirit of a man *entirely free from envy*. Notice that the Psalmist has been speaking of the wicked. “They are enclosed in their own fat—with their mouth they speak proudly.” “They are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.” But David envies them not. “Go,” he says, “rich man, in all your riches—go, proud man, in all your pride—go, you happy man, with your abundance of children. I envy you not. As for me, my lot is different—I can look on you without desiring to have your possessions. I can well keep that commandment, ‘you shall not covet,’ for in your possessions there is nothing worth my love. “I set no value upon your earthly treasures. I envy you not your heaps of glittering dust. For my Redeemer is mine.” The man is above envy because he thinks that the joy would be no joy to him—that the portion would not suit his disposition. Therefore he turns his eyes Heavenward and says, “As for me I will behold Your face in righteousness.” Oh, Beloved, it is a happy thing to be free from envy! Envy is a curse which blights creation. And even Eden’s Garden, itself, would have become defaced and no longer fair if the wind of envy could have blown on it! Envy tarnishes the gold. Envy dims the silver. Should envy breathe on the hot sun, it would quench it! Should she cast her evil eye on the moon, it would be turned into blood and the stars would fly astonished at her. Envy is accursed of Heaven. Yes, it is Satan’s first-born—the vilest of vices. Give a man riches, but let him have envy and there is the worm at the root of the fair tree. Give him happiness and if he envies another’s lot, what would have been happiness becomes his misery because it is not so great as that of someone else’s. Give me freedom from envy! Let me be content with what God has given me. Let me say, “you may have yours, I will not envy you—I am satisfied with mine.” Yes, give me such a love to my fellow creatures that I can rejoice in their joy and the more they have, the more glad I am of it! My candle will burn no less brightly because theirs outshines it. I can rejoice in their prosperity. Then am I happy, for all around tends to make me blissful when I can rejoice in the joys of others and make their gladness my own. Envy? Oh, may God deliver us from it! How, in truth, can we get rid of it? By believing that you have something that is not on earth, but in Heaven! If we can look upon all the things in the world and say, “As for me, I will be-

hold Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, by-and-by!" Then we cannot envy other men, because their lot would not be adapted to our peculiar taste. Does the ox envy the lion? No, for it cannot feed upon the carcass. Does the dove grieve because the raven can gloat itself on carrion? No, for it lives on other food. Will the eagle envy the wren his tiny nest? Oh, no! So the Christian will mount aloft as the eagle, spreading his broad wings he will fly up to his nest among the stars where God has made him his nest, saying, "As for me, I will dwell here. I look upon the low places of this earth with contempt. I envy not your greatness, you mighty emperors. I desire not your fame, you mighty warriors. I ask not for wealth, O Croesus. I beg not for your power, O Caesar. As for me, I have something else—my portion is the Lord." The text breathes the spirit of a man free from envy. May God give that to us!

Then, secondly, you can see that there is about it the air of a man who is *looking into the future*. Read the passage thoroughly and you will see that it all has relation to the future because it says, "As for me, I *will*." It has nothing to do with the present—it does not say, "As for me I do, or I am, so-and-so," but, "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake." The Psalmist looks beyond the grave into another world. He overlooks the narrow deathbed where he has to sleep and he says, "When I awake." How happy is that man who has an eye to the future. Even in worldly things we esteem that man who looks beyond the present day—he who spends all his money as it comes in will soon bring himself to rags. He who lives on the present is a fool! But wise men are content to look after future things. When Milton penned his book he might know, perhaps, that he would have little fame in his lifetime. But he said, "I shall be honored when my head shall sleep in the grave." Thus have other worthies been content to tarry until time has broken the earthen pitcher and allowed the lamp to blaze. As for honor, they said, "We will leave that to the future, for that fame which comes late is often most enduring." They lived upon the "shall" and fed upon the future. "I *shall* be satisfied" by-and-by. So says the Christian. I ask no royal pomp or fame, now. I am prepared to wait. I have an interest in reversion. I need not a pitiful estate here—I will tarry till I get my domains in Heaven—those broad and beautiful domains that God has provided for them that love Him. Well content will I be to fold my arms and sit down in the cottage, for I shall have a mansion of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do any of you know what it is to live on the future? To live on expectation? To live on what you are to have in the next world? To feast yourselves with some of the droppings of the Tree of Life that fall from Heaven? To live upon the manna of expectation which falls in the wilderness and to drink that stream of nectar which gushes from the Throne of God? Have you ever gone to the great Niagara of hope and drank the spray with ravishing delight? For the very spray of Heaven is glory to one's soul! Have you ever lived on the future and said, "As for me I *shall* have somewhat, by-and-by?" Why, this is the highest motive

that can actuate a man. I suppose this was what made Luther so bold when he stood before his great audience of kings and lords and said, "I stand by the Truth that I have written and will so stand by it till I die, so help me God!" I think he must have said, "I *shall* be satisfied, by-and-by. I am not satisfied now, but I *shall* be soon."

For this the missionary ventures the stormy sea. For this he treads the barbarous shore. For this he goes into inhospitable climes and risks his life—because he knows there is a payment to come by-and-by. I sometimes laughingly tell my friends when I receive a favor from them that I cannot return it, but set it up to my Master in Heaven, for they shall be satisfied when they awake in His likeness. There are many things that we may never hope to be rewarded for here, but shall be remembered before the Throne hereafter, not of debt, but of Grace! Like a poor minister I heard of, who, walking to a rustic Chapel to preach, was met by a clergyman who had a far richer berth. He asked the poor man what he expected to have for his preaching. "Well," he said, "I expect to have a crown." "Ah," said the clergyman, "I have not been in the habit of preaching for less than a guinea." "Oh," said the other, "I am obliged to be content with a crown and what is more, I do not have my crown now, but I have to wait for that in the future." The clergyman little thought that he meant the "crown of life that fades not away"! Christian! Live on the future. Seek nothing here, but expect that you shall shine when you shall come in the likeness of Jesus, with Him to be admired and to kneel before His face adoringly. The Psalmist had an eye to the future.

And again, upon this point, you can see that David, at the time he wrote this, was *full of faith*. The text is fragrant with confidence. "As for me," says David, no *perhaps* about it. "I *will* behold Your face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake up in Your likeness." If some men should say so now, they would be called fanatics and it would be considered presumption for any man to say, "I will behold Your face, I shall be satisfied." And I think there are many now in this world who think it is quite impossible for a man to say to a certainty, "I know. I am sure. I am certain." But, Beloved, there are not one or two, but there are thousands and thousands of God's people alive in this world who can say with an assured confidence—no more doubting of it than of their very existence—"I *will* behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." It is possible, though perhaps not very easy, to attain to that high and eminent position wherein we can say no longer do I *hope*, but I *know*. No longer do I trust, but I am persuaded. I have a happy confidence—I am sure of it. I am certain. For God has so manifested Himself to me that now it is no longer, "if," and, "perhaps," but it is the positive, eternal, "shall." "I *shall* be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." How many are there here of that sort? Oh, if you are talking like that, you must expect to have trouble, for God never gives strong faith without fiery trial! He will never give a man the power to say that, "shall," without trying him. He will not build a strong ship without sub-

jecting it to very mighty storms. He will not make you a mighty warrior if He does not intend to try your skill in battle. God's swords must be used! The old Toledo blades of Heaven must be smitten against the armor of the Evil One and yet they shall not break, for they are of true Jerusalem metal which shall never snap! Oh, what a happy thing to have that faith to say "I shall." Some of you think it quite impossible, I know. But it "is the gift of God," and whoever asks for it shall obtain it—and the very chief of sinners now present in this place may yet be able to say long before he comes to die, "I shall behold Your face in righteousness." I think I see the aged Christian. He has been very poor. He is in an attic where the stars look between the tiles. There is his bed. His clothes ragged and torn. There are a few sticks on the hearth—they are the last he has. He is sitting up in his chair. His paralytic hand quivers and shakes and he is evidently near his end. His last meal was eaten yesterday at noon. And as you stand and look at him—poor, weak and feeble, who would desire his lot? But ask him, "Old man, would you change your attic for Caesar's palace? Aged Christian, would you give up these rags for wealth and cease to love your God?" See how indignation burns in his eyes at once! He replies, "As for me, I *shall*, within a few more days, behold His face in righteousness. I *shall* be satisfied soon. Here I never shall be. Trouble has been my lot and trial has been my portion, but I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Bid high. Bid him fair—offer him your hands full of gold—lay all down for him to give up his Christ. "Give up Christ?" He will say, "no, never!"—

***"While my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the miser's gold."***

Oh, what a glorious thing to be full of faith and to have the confidence of assurance, so as to say, "I *will* behold Your face; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."

Thus much concerning the spirit of David. It is one very much to be copied and eminently to be desired.

II. But now, secondly, THE MATTER OF THIS PASSAGE. And here we will dive into the very depths of it, God helping us. For without the Spirit of God I feel I am utterly unable to speak to you. I have not those gifts and talents which qualify men to speak. I need Inspiration from on High, otherwise I stand like other men and have nothing to say. May that be given me. For without it I am dumb. As for the matter of this verse, I think it contains a double blessing. The first is a beholding—"I will behold Your face in righteousness," and the next is a satisfaction—"I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."

Let us begin with the first, then. David expected that he would *behold God's face*. What a vision will that be, my Brothers and Sisters! Have you ever seen God's hand? I have seen it, when sometimes He places it across the sky and darkens it with clouds. I have seen God's hand, sometimes, when the cars of night drag along the shades of darkness. I have seen His hand when, launching the thunderbolt, His lightning splits

the clouds and rends the heavens. Perhaps you have seen it in a gentler fashion, when it pours out the water and sends it rippling along in rills and then rolls into rivers. You have seen it in the stormy ocean—in the sky decked with stars—in the earth gemmed with flowers. But there is not a man living who can know all the wonders of God's hand! His Creation is so wondrous that it would take more than a lifetime to understand it. Go into the depths of it, let its minute parts engage your attention. Next take the telescope and try to see remote worlds and can I see all God's handiwork—behold all His hand? No, not so much as one millionth part of the fabric. That mighty hand wherein the callow comets are brooded by the sun, in which the planets roll in majestic orbits—that mighty hand which holds all space and grasps all beings—that mighty hand, who can behold it? But if such is His *hand*, what must His *face* be? You have heard God's voice sometimes and you have trembled. I, myself, have listened awe-struck and yet with a marvelous joy, when I have heard God's voice, like the noise of many waters in the great thunders. Have you ever stood and listened while the earth shook and trembled and the very spheres stopped their music while God spoke with His wondrous deep bass voice? Yes, you have heard that voice and there is a joy marvelously instinct with love which enters into my soul, whenever I hear the thunder. It is my Father speaking and my heart leaps to hear Him. But you never heard God's loudest voice. It was but the whisper when the thunder rolled. And if such is the voice, what must it be to behold His face? David said, "I will behold Your face." It is said of the temple of Diana that it was so splendidly decorated with gold and so bright and shining that a porter at the door always said to everyone that entered, "Take heed to your eyes, take heed to your eyes. You will be struck with blindness unless you take heed to your eyes." But oh, that view of Glory! That great appearance—the vision of God! To see Him face to face, to enter into Heaven and to see the righteous shining bright as stars in the firmament. But best of all, to catch a glimpse of the eternal Throne! Ah, there He sits! 'Twere almost blasphemy for me to attempt to describe Him. How infinitely far my poor words fall below the mighty subject! But to behold God's *face*? I will not speak of the luster of those eyes, or the majesty of those lips that shall speak words of love and affection. But to behold His face, you who have dived into the Godhead's deepest sea and have been lost in its immensity—you can tell a little of it! You haughty ones who have lived in Heaven these thousands of years, perhaps you know, but you cannot tell, what it is to see His face. We must, each of us, go there. We must be clad with immortality. We must go above the blue sky and bathe in the river of life—we must outsoar the lightning and rise above the stars to know what it is to see God's face. Words cannot set it forth. So there I leave it. The assurance the Psalmist had was that he would see God's face.

But there was a *peculiar sweetness mixed with this joy*, because he knew that he would behold God's face *in righteousness*. "I shall behold

Your face in righteousness.” Have I not seen my Father’s face here below? Yes, I have, “through a glass darkly.” But has not the Christian sometimes beheld Him, when in his heavenly moments earth is gone and the mind is stripped of matter? There are some seasons when the gross materialism dies away and when the ethereal fire within blazes up so high that it almost touches the fire of Heaven! There are seasons, when in some retired spot, calm and free from all earthly thought, we have taken our shoes off our feet because the place whereon we stood was holy ground. And we have talked with God! Even as Enoch talked with Him, so has the Christian held intimate communion with his Father. He has heard His love whispers. He has told out his heart, poured out his sorrows and his groans before Him. But after all he has felt—he has not beheld His face in righteousness. There was so much sin to darken the eyes, so much folly, so much frailty, that we could not get a clear prospect of our Jesus. But here the Psalmist says, “I will behold Your face in righteousness.” When that illustrious day shall arise and I shall see my Savior face to face, I shall see Him “in righteousness.” The Christian in Heaven will not have so much as a speck upon his garment. He will be pure and white. Yes, on the earth He is—

“Pure through Jesus’ blood and white as angels are.”

But in Heaven that whiteness shall be more apparent. Now, it is sometimes smoked by earth and covered with the dust of this poor carnal world. But in Heaven he will have brushed himself and washed his wings and made them clean. And then will he see God’s face in righteousness.

My God, I believe I shall stand before Your face as pure as You are Yourself, for I shall have the righteousness of Jesus Christ! There shall be upon me the righteousness of a God. “I shall behold Your face in righteousness.” O Christian, can you enjoy this? Though I cannot speak about it, does your heart meditate upon it? To behold His face forever! To bask in that vision! True, you cannot understand it. But you may guess the meaning. To behold His face in righteousness!

The second blessing, upon which I will be brief, is *satisfaction*. He will be satisfied, the Psalmist says, when he wakes up in God’s likeness. Satisfaction! This is another joy for the Christian when he shall enter Heaven. Here we are never thoroughly satisfied. True, the Christian is satisfied from himself. He has that within which is a spring of comfort and he can enjoy solid satisfaction. But Heaven is the home of true and real satisfaction. When the Believer enters Heaven, I believe His *imagination* will be thoroughly satisfied. All he has ever thought of, he will see there—every holy idea will be solidified—every mighty conception will become a reality, every glorious imagination will become a tangible thing that he can see. His imagination will not be able to think of anything better than Heaven—and should he sit down through eternity, he would not be able to conceive of anything that should outshine the luster of that glorious city! His imagination will be satisfied. Then His *intellect* will be satisfied—

“Then shall I see and hear and know,

All I desired, or wished, below.”

Who is satisfied with his knowledge here? Are there not secrets we want to know—depths in the mysteries of Nature that we have not entered? But in that glorious state we shall know as much as we want to know! The *memory* will be satisfied. We shall look back upon the vista of past years and we shall be content with whatever we endured, or did, or suffered on earth—

***“There, on a green and flowery mound,
My wearied soul shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of my feet.”***

Hope will be satisfied, if there is such a thing in Heaven. We shall hope for a future eternity and believe in it. But we shall be satisfied as to our hopes continually—and the whole man will be so content that there will not remain a single thing in all God’s dealings that he would wish to have altered. Yes, perhaps I say a thing to which some of you will object—but the righteous in Heaven will be quite satisfied with the damnation of the lost. I used to think that if I could see the lost in Hell, surely I must weep for them. Could I hear their horrid wailings and see the dreadful contortions of their anguish, surely I must pity them. But there is no such sentiment as that known in Heaven. The Believer shall be there so satisfied with all God’s will, that he will quite forget the lost in the idea that God has done it for the best—that even their loss has been their own fault—and that He is infinitely just in it. If my parents could see me in Hell they would not have a tear to shed for me, though they were in Heaven. They would say, “It is justice, great God. And Your justice must be magnified, as well as Your mercy.” And moreover, they would feel that God was so much above His creatures that they would be satisfied to see those creatures crushed if it might increase God’s Glory. Oh, in Heaven I believe we shall think rightly of men. Here men seem great things to us. But in Heaven they will seem no more than a few creeping insects that are swept away in plowing a field for harvest! They will appear no more than a tiny handful of dust, or like some nest of wasps that ought to be exterminated for the injury they have done. They will appear such little things when we sit on high with God and look down on the nations of the earth as grasshoppers and “count the isles as very little things.” We shall be satisfied with everything. There will not be a single thing to complain of. “I *shall* be satisfied.”

But when? “I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.” But not till then. No, not till then. Now here a difficulty occurs. You know there are some in Heaven who have not yet waked up in God’s likeness. In fact, none of those in Heaven have done so. They never did sleep as respects their souls. The waking refers to their *bodies* and they are not awake yet—but are still slumbering. O earth! You are the bedchamber of the mighty dead! What a vast sleeping house this world is! It is one vast cemetery. The righteous still sleep. And they are to be satisfied on the

Resurrection morn, when they awake. "But," you say, "are they not satisfied now? They are in Heaven—is it possible that they can be distressed?" No, they are not. There is only one dissatisfaction that can enter Heaven—the dissatisfaction of the blest that their *bodies* are not there. Allow me to use a simile which will somewhat explain what I mean. When a Roman conqueror had been at war and won great victories, he would very likely come back with his soldiers, enter into his house and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city and then come in again in triumph. Now, the saints, as it were, if I might use such a phrase, steal into Heaven without their bodies. But on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter in their triumphal chariots. And I think I see that grand procession, when Jesus Christ, first of all—crowns on His head—with His bright, glorious body, shall lead the way. I see my Savior entering first. Behind Him come the saints, all of them clapping their hands—all of them touching their golden harps and entering in triumph. And when they come to Heaven's gates and the doors are opened wide to let the King of Glory in, *now* will the angels crowd at the windows and on the housetops, like the inhabitants in the Roman triumphs, to watch them as they pass through the streets and scatter Heaven's roses and lilies upon them, crying, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" "I shall be satisfied" in that glorious day, when all His angels shall come to see the triumph and when His people shall be victorious with Him!

One thought here ought not to be forgotten. And that is, the Psalmist says we are to wake up in the *likeness of God*. This may refer to the soul. For the spirit of the righteous will be in the likeness of God as to its happiness, holiness, purity, infallibility, eternity and freedom from pain. But specially, I think, it relates to the body because it speaks of the awaking. The body is to be in the likeness of Christ. What a thought! It is—and alas, I have had too many such tonight—a thought too heavy for words. I am to wake up in Christ's likeness. I do not know what Christ is like and can scarcely imagine. I love, sometimes, to sit and look at Him in His crucifixion. I care not what men say—I know that sometimes I have derived benefit from a picture of my dying crucified Savior. And I look at Him with His crown of thorns, His pierced side, His bleeding hands and feet and all those drops of gore hanging from Him. But I cannot picture Him in Heaven—He is so bright, so glorious. The God so shines through the Man. His eyes are like lamps of fire. His tongue like a two-edged sword. His head covered with hair as white as snow, for He is the Ancient of Days. He binds the clouds round about Him for a belt. And when He speaks, it is like the sound of many waters! I read the accounts given in the book of Revelation, but I cannot tell what He is. They are Scripture phrases and I cannot understand their meaning. But whatever they mean, I know that I shall wake up in Christ's likeness. Oh, what a change it will be, when some of us get to Heaven! There is a man who fell in battle with the Word of salvation on his lips. His legs had been shot

away and his body had been scarred by saber thrusts. He wakes in Heaven and finds that he has not a broken body, maimed and cut about and hacked and injured—but that he is in Christ’s likeness! There is an old matron, who has tottered on her staff for years along her weary way. Time has plowed furrows on her brow. Haggard and lame, her body is laid in the grave. But oh, aged woman, you shall arise in youth and beauty! Another has been deformed in his lifetime, but when he wakes, he wakes in the likeness of Christ! Whatever may have been the form of our countenance, whatever the contour, the beautiful shall be no more beautiful in Heaven than those who were deformed. Those who shone on earth, peerless, among the fairest, who ravished men with looks from their eyes—they shall be no brighter in Heaven than those who are now passed by and neglected—for they shall all be like Christ!

III. But now to close up, HERE IS A VERY SAD CONTRAST IMPLIED. We shall all slumber a few more years and where will this company be? Xerxes wept because in a little while his whole army would be gone. How might I stand here and weep because within a few more years others shall stand in this place and shall say, “The fathers, where are they?” Good God! And is it true? Is it not a reality? Is it all to be swept away? Is it one great dissolving view? Ah, it is. This sight shall soon vanish and you and I shall vanish with it! We are but a show. This life is but “a stage where men act.” And then we pass behind the curtain and we there unmask ourselves and talk with God. The moment we begin to live we begin to die. The tree has long been growing that shall be sawn to make you a coffin. The sod is ready for you all. But this scene is to appear again soon. One short dream, one hurried nap and all this sight shall come over again. We shall all awake and as we stand here now, we shall stand together, perhaps, even more thickly pressed. But we shall stand all the same, then—the rich and poor, the preacher and hearer. There will be but one distinction—righteous and wicked. At first we shall stand together. I think I see the scene. The sea is boiling. The heavens are rent in two, the clouds are fashioned into a chariot and Jesus riding on it, with wings of fire, comes riding through the sky. His Throne is set. He seats Himself upon it. With a nod He hushes all the world. He lifts His fingers, opens the great books of destiny and the book of our probation, wherein are written the acts of time. With His fingers He beckons to the hosts above. “Divide,” He says, “divide the universe.” Swifter than thought all the earth shall part in sunder. Where shall I be found when the dividing comes? I think I see them all divided and the righteous are on the right. Turning to them, with a voice sweeter than music, He says, “Come! You have been coming—keep on your progress! Come! It has been the work of your life to come, so continue. Come and take the last step. ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.’” And now the wicked are left alone. And turning to them, He says, “Depart! You have been departing all your life long. It was your business to depart from Me. You said, ‘Depart from me,

I love not your ways.’ You have been departing, keep on, take the last step!” They dare not move. They stand still. The Savior becomes the avenger. The hands that once held out mercy now grasp the sword of justice. The lips that spoke loving kindness now utter thunder—and with a deadly aim He lifts up the sword and sweeps among them. They fly like deer before the lion and enter the jaws of the bottomless pit of Hell.

But never, I hope, shall I cease preaching without telling you what to do to be saved! This morning I preached to the ungodly, to the worst of sinners and many wept—I hope many hearts melted—while I spoke of the great mercy of God. I have not spoken of that tonight. We must take a different line sometimes, led, I trust, by God’s Spirit. But oh, you who are thirsty, heavy laden, lost and ruined, Mercy speaks yet once again to you! Here is the way of salvation! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “And what is it to believe?” asks one. “Is it to say I know Christ died for me?” No, that is not to believe, it is part of it, but it is not all. Every Arminian believes that. And every man in the world believes it who holds that Doctrine, since he conceives that Christ died for every man. Consequently that is not faith. But faith is this—to cast yourself on Christ. As the American slave said, most curiously, when asked what he did to be saved—“Massa,” said he, “I fling myself down on Jesus and dere I lay. I fling myself flat on de promise and dere I lay.” And to every penitent *sinner* Jesus says, “I am able to save to the uttermost.” Throw yourself flat on the promise and say, “Then, Lord, You are able to save *me*.” God says, “Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be white as snow and though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool.”

Cast yourself on Him and you shall be saved! “Ah,” says one, “I am afraid I am not one of God’s people. I cannot read my name in the Book of Life.” A very good thing you can’t, for if the Bible had everybody’s name in it, it would be a pretty large book. And if your name is John Smith and you saw that name in the Bible, if you do not believe God’s promise, now, you would be sure to believe that it was some other John Smith! Suppose the Emperor of Russia should issue a decree to all the Polish refugees to return to their own country. You see a Polish refugee looking at the great placards hanging on the wall. He looks with pleasure and says, “Well, I shall go back to my country.” But someone says to him, “It does not say Walewski.” “Yes,” he would reply, “but it says *Polish refugees*—Polish is my Christian name, refugee my surname and that is me.” And so, though it does not say your name in the Scriptures, it says *lost sinner*. Sinner is your Christian name and *lost* is your surname—therefore, why not come? It says, “lost sinner”—is not that enough? “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.” “Yes, but,” another one says, “I am afraid I am not elect.” Oh, dear Souls, do not trouble yourselves about that. If you believe in Christ you *are* elect. Whoever puts himself on the mercy of Jesus is elect. For he would never do it if he had not been elect. Whoever

comes to Christ and looks for mercy through His blood is elect and he shall see that he is elect afterwards. But do not expect to read *election* till you have read *repentance*. Election is a college to which you little ones will not go till you have been to the school of repentance. Do not begin to read your book backwards and say, "Amen," before you have said your pater noster! Begin with "Our Father," and then you will go on to, "Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." But begin with "the kingdom," and you will have hard work to go back to "Our Father." We must begin with faith. We must begin with—

"Nothing in my hands I bring."

As God made the world out of nothing, He always makes His Christians out of nothing. And he who has nothing at all tonight shall find Grace and mercy, if he will come for it.

Let me close up by telling you that I have heard of some poor woman, who was converted and brought to life just by passing down a street and hearing a child, sitting at a door, singing—

"I am nothing at all

But Jesus Christ is All-in-All."

That is a blessed song. Go home and sing it. And he who can rightly apprehend those little words—who can feel himself vanity without Jesus—but that he has all things in Christ—is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven! And he is there in faith and shall be there in fruition, when he shall wake up in God's likeness!

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

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NO. 2702

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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*“Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”
Psalm 17:7.*

THE Lord’s people, in the time of their trouble, know where to go for comfort and relief. Being taught of God, they do not hew out for themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water, but they turn to the ever-flowing Fountain, they go to the Wellhead—even to God Himself—and there they cast themselves down and drink to the full. David, when he wrote this Psalm, was evidently in very great distress and, therefore, he says, “I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God: incline Your ear unto me, and hear my speech.” What he needed was his God, as Dr. Watts expresses it—

*“In darkest shades if He appears,
My dawning is begun.
He is my soul’s sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun.”*

Believers draw comfort both from God’s ordinary and extraordinary dealings with them, for they regard God’s loving kindness as being both an ordinary and an extraordinary thing. I have heard of a good Sister who, when a friend narrated to her some very gracious dealing of God, was asked the question, “Is it not very wonderful?” and she replied, “No, it is not wonderful, for it is just like Him.” Begging her pardon and admitting the great Truth of God that she meant to convey, I think it is still more wonderful that it should be “just like Him.” The wonder of extraordinary love is that God should make it such an ordinary thing, that He should give to us “marvelous loving kindness,” and yet should give it so often that it becomes a daily blessing, and still remains marvelous! The marvels of men, after you have seen them a few times, cease to excite any wonder. I suppose there is scarcely a building, however costly its materials, and however rare its architecture, as to which, sooner or later, you will not feel that you have seen enough of it. But God’s wonderful works never pall upon you. You could gaze upon Mont Blanc, or you could stand and watch Niagara Falls, yet never feel that you had exhausted all its marvels. And everyone knows how the ocean is never twice alike. They who live close to it and look upon it every hour of the day, still see God’s wonders in the deep!

That God should bless us every day is a theme for our comfort. God’s ordinary ways charm us. The verse before our text says, “I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God.’ I know You will, for the blessing that I am about to ask from You is a thing that I have been accustomed to receive from You. I know You will hear me, for You have heard me in the past; it is a habit of Yours to listen to my supplications, and to grant my requests.” I hope we can argue in a similar fashion, yet, at the same time, God’s people draw equal comfort from the extraordinary character of the mercies He bestows upon them. They appeal to Him to show them His “marvelous loving kindness,” to let them see the wonderful side of it as well as the common side of it. To let them behold His miracles of mercy, His extravagances of love, His superfluities of kindness—I scarcely know what words to use when talking of what the Apostle Paul calls “the riches of His Grace, wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,” “the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

I want, on this occasion, to dwell upon the extraordinary side of God’s loving kindness and, using our text as a prayer, to say to the Lord in the language of David, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” Sometimes a man is brought into such a condition that he feels that if God does not do something quite out of the common order of things, he will assuredly perish. He has now come to such a pass, that if some extraordinary Grace is not displayed towards him, all is over with him. Well, now, such a Brother may think that God will not give this extraordinary Grace to him. He may be troubled at the idea that some marvelous thing is needed. It is to meet that suggestion of unbelief that I am going to address you now.

I. And my first remark is that ALL THE LOVING KINDNESS OF GOD IS MARVELOUS.

The least mercy from God is a miracle. That God does not crush our sinful race is a surprising mercy. That you and I should have been spared to live—even though it were only to exist in direst poverty, or in sorest sickness—that we should have been spared at all, after what we have been and after what we have done, is a very marvelous thing. The explanation of the marvel is given in the Book of Malachi—“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” If God had possessed such a short temper as men often have, He would have made short work with us all. But He is gracious and long-suffering and, therefore, he is very patient with us. The very least mercy that we ever receive from God is a very wonderful thing, but when we think of all that is meant by this blessed word, “loving kindness”—which is a compound of all sorts of sweetness, a mixture of fragrances to make up one absolutely perfect perfume—when we take that word, “loving kindness,” and think over its meaning, we shall see that it is a marvelous thing, indeed, that it describes!

For, first, it is *marvelous for its antiquity*. To think that God should have had loving kindness towards men before the earth was, that there should have been a Covenant of Election—a plan of Redemption—a

scheme of Atonement—that there should have been eternal thoughts of love in the mind of God towards such a strange being as man, is, indeed, marvelous! “What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him?” Read these words with tears in your eyes—“I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” And when you know that this passage refers to *you*, tell me if it is not “marvelous loving kindness.” God’s mind is occupied with thoughts concerning things that are infinitely greater than the destiny of anyone of us, or of all of us put together! Yet He was pleased to think of us in love from all eternity and to write our names upon His hands and upon His heart, and to keep the remembrance of us perpetually before Him, for His “delights were with the sons of men.” This antiquity makes it to be, indeed, “marvelous loving kindness.”

Next, think of *its discriminating character*, that God’s loving kindness should have come to the poorest, to the most illiterate, the most obscure and often to the most guilty of our race. Remember what Paul wrote about this matter—“not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not manly noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” Dr. Watts expresses the same thought in his verses—

**“When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn Divine He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings.
He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul,
With pleasure in His eyes.”**

God’s choice is marvelous! I know of no better word to apply to His loving kindness to His chosen than that which is applied in the text—“Your marvelous loving kindness”—

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

There is no other explanation of this wondrous mercy, this “marvelous loving kindness,” than the poet gives—

**“His love, from eternity fixed upon you,
Broke forth and discovered its flame,
When each with the cords of His kindness He drew,
And brought you to love His great name.”**

So, Beloved, think over the antiquity of God’s loving kindness and then of the discriminating character of it—and surely you will be full of adoring wonder!

After that, think also of *the self-sacrificing nature of His loving kindness*—that, when God had set His heart on man, and had chosen His

people before the foundation of the world, then He should give—what? Himself. Yes, nothing short of that—that He should not only give us this world, His Providence, all its blessings, the world to come and all its glories, but that, in order to our possession of these things, He should give His own Son to die for us! Well might the Apostle John write, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It was not that Christ died for us when we were righteous, “for scarcely for a righteous man will one die,” “but God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Isaiah had long before explained the mystery—“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief.” You who love your children, to lose one of whom would be worse than to die—you can realize a little of what must have been the Father’s love to you in giving up His only-begotten Son that you might live through Him. Dwell on this great Truth of God, dear Friends. Meditate on it and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into its heights, depths, length, and breadths, for these lips cannot fully speak of its wonders! As you think over the Lord’s ancient loving kindnesses which has always been, His distinguishing love towards His redeemed and His self-sacrificing love in giving up His Only-Begotten, you will be obliged to say, “It is marvelous loving kindness! It is marvelous loving kindness, indeed!”

Then go on to think of *the marvelous constancy of it*. That one should begin to love another is not so very wonderful—but that love, after it has been despised and ill-requited, should still continue—that the sweet love of Christ should not long ago have curdled into jealousy, and from jealousy have soured into indignation, is an extraordinary thing! He loved us, Brothers and Sisters, when we did not even know Him and yet hated the Unknown—when we did not even dimly understand His love to us and, perhaps, even ridiculed it, or at least neglected it! Yet He kept on loving us until He loved us into loving Him! But even since then, what has been our character? Are you satisfied with what you have been towards the Well-Beloved? Are you content with your conduct towards the Bridegroom of your souls? I know that you are not, and yet, notwithstanding your lukewarmness, your backsliding, your dishonoring of His name, your unbelief, your pride, your love of others, He still loves you, and even now, if you are not enjoying fellowship with Him, He has not gone away from you, for His Word still is, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

He loves, He loves on and He still loves. Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. It is, indeed, “marvelous loving kindness.” Can you think of a better adjective than that? I cannot, yet I am conscious that even it does not fully express the miraculous character of this all-enduring love which will not take our, “No,” for an answer, but still says, “Yes—yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.” Oh, this wonderful, this matchless, this unparalleled, this inconceivable, this

infinite love! No human language can adequately describe it, so let us sit still and marvel at that which we cannot even understand.

There is much in God’s loving kindness to be marveled at *in its strange ingenuity*. I might keep on with this topic forever, applying one word and another to it, yet I should never have shown you even a tenth of its wonders, for it is an altogether inexhaustible theme! But it is wonderful how God deals with us with such a sacred ingenuity of tenderness. He seems to be always thinking of something for our good, while we, on our part, appear to be always testing His love in one way or another. Some fresh need is discovered only to receive a new supply of Grace. Some fresh sin breaks out only to be blotted out with the ever-pardoning blood of Jesus. We get into fresh difficulties only to receive fresh aid. The further I go on my way to Heaven, the more I admire the road as well as wonder at the goal to which that road shall bring me. “O world of wonders!” said John Bunyan, “I can say no less.”

They tell us, nowadays, that the world is worn-out and that there is no joy in life, and nothing fresh to afford delight. Ah, me, they talk of the attractions of fiction and of the playwright’s art, and I know not what besides. They must travel all round the world to get a new sensation and many a man, today, is like the Emperor Tiberius who offered large sums of money to anyone who could invent a new pleasure, meaning, alas, too often, a new *vice*, or a new way of practicing it. But staying at home with Christ has more wonders in it than gadding abroad with all the wisest of the world! There is more to marvel at in half an inch of the way to Heaven than there is in a thousand leagues of the ordinary pathway of unbelieving men. They call their joys by the name of, “life,” and say that they must “see life.” But the Apostle John tells us that “he that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.” That is to say, he is dead. Death has its varieties of worms and rottenness. There are charnel-houses *and* charnel-houses, various processes and methods of corruption and, no doubt, there is a science that men may learn in the cemetery and call it life, if they like. But, oh, if they did but once see Christ upon the Cross, they would learn that they had been blind till then! If they did but know His loving kindness, they would rejoice in it in the sick-chamber, in the long weary night watches when every bone prevented sleep. They would even recognize it in the arrows of death that smote wife, and child, and brother. They would see it, not only in the table loaded for the supply of hunger, and in the garments furnished against the cold, and in every common blessing of Providence, but they would also see it in every despondency, in every deficiency, in every cross and every loss—and, seeing it, they would keep on saying, “It is all for the best. It is far better than the best could have been if it had been left to me. It is marvelous! It is marvelous loving kindness.”

I believe that when we get to Heaven, one of the wonders of the Gloryland will be to look back upon the road over which we have traveled. It will be marvelous to note the way in which God has led us and we shall, as our hymn puts it—

“Sing with rapture and surprise,

His loving kindness in the skies!

I must now leave this part of my subject with you, only again urging you to think over the Truth of which I have been speaking, that all God’s loving kindness to His people is marvelous.

II. Now, secondly, WE SHOULD DESIRE TO SEE THIS LOVING KINDNESS. The Psalmist says, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” And we ought to ask God to let us see it—and that, I think, in four ways.

First, *let me see it with my intellect, that I may adore.* Help me, O blessed Spirit, to see and understand what is the loving kindness of God to my soul! I know that it is written of some that “they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” Let me be among the number of those truly wise ones. O Lord, make me wise to see the end and design of Your Providence as well as the Providence itself! Make me wise to perceive how You have prepared Your Grace to meet my depravity, how You adapt Your holding me up to the slipperiness of the way and to the feebleness of my feet. Often shed a ray of light upon some passage in my life which otherwise I could not comprehend—and let the light stay there till I begin to see and to know why You did this and why You did that. “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”

I am sure, dear Friends, that the lessons of a man’s own life are too often neglected, but there is in the life of any ordinary child of God—let me pick you out wherever you may be—John, Mary, Thomas—enough to fill you with wonder and admiration of the loving kindness of the Lord if your mind is but sufficiently illuminated to perceive the hand of God in it, and to see what God purposed by it. He sometimes uses strange means for producing blessed results. With His sharp axe, He will cut down all our choice trees. As by a whirlwind or a tornado, He will devastate our gardens and make our fields a desolation. And He will do it all in order that He may drive us away from the City of Destruction and make us go on pilgrimage to the Celestial City, where the axe can never come, and the leaves will never fade. In His mysterious dealings with us, the Lord often seems to push us backward that we may go forward, and to deluge us with sorrow that He may immerse us in blessings! That is His way of wondrously working and if we did but understand it, according to the prayer of the text, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness,” we would be full of adoring wonder.

The next meaning I would give to this prayer would be, *Lord, show Your loving kindness to my heart, that I may give You thanks.* Lord, I know that You have been very good to me, but I pray You to show my heart how good You have been, by letting me see how unworthy I have been of this, Your kindness. It is very profitable, sometimes, to sit down and rehearse the loving kindness of God, mingling with it penitential reflections upon your own shortcoming. If you do this, you will at last break out with some such cry as this, “Why is all this mercy shown to *me*?” I know a dear Brother in Christ, a clergyman, whose name is Curme—he divides it into two syllables, “*Cur me*,” so as to make it mean, “Why *me*? Why is all this goodness given to *me*, Lord?” And that is a question which I, too, would ask, “Why *me*, Lord?”—

**“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”**

Is this kindness, and this, and this, all meant for *me*? Can it really be intended for *me*? Such reflections as these will make me realize more than ever, how “marvelous” is God’s “loving kindness” to me, and will fill my soul with adoring gratitude and thanksgiving.

Then, next, we ought to pray the Lord to *show His “marvelous loving kindness” to our faith, that we may again confide in Him.* If He will cause the eyes of our faith to see that He has this “marvelous loving kindness” toward us, we shall be the more ready to rely upon Him in all the straits into which we may yet be brought. Do you believe it, my dear Friend? Brother in Christ, do you believe that God loves you? You know how sweet it is to be sure that your child loves you. Though it may well do so, because of its many obligations to you, yet is it sweet for its warm cheek to touch yours and to hear it say, “Father, I love you.” But, oh, it is far sweeter for God to say, “I love you.” Read the Song of Solomon through and be not afraid to appropriate the message of that sweet and matchless Canticle! Hear in it the voice of Jesus saying to you, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you.” “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.” Such words as those may be sensuous to those who are sensuous, but they are deeply spiritual to those who are spiritual and, oh, the bliss of having such words as those to come from the Christ of God to us! Why, sometimes, when our Lord thus speaks to us, we hardly know how to bear our excess of joy! I would not ask for a better holiday than to have one hour alone with Jesus—to be undisturbed by any earthly care and to think of nothing else but the love of God—the love of God to me! Oh, that it were now shed abroad, in all its fullness, in this poor heart of mine! O Divine Love, what is there that can ever match Your inexpressible sweetness? Truly it is “marvelous loving kindness.” Again I ask you—Do you believe this? Are you sure you do? Pray God to show it to your faith, distinctly and clearly, so that you shall be absolutely sure of it and practically depend upon it whenever you need it.

One other meaning of the text may be *show Your “marvelous loving kindness” to me, now, in my experience, that I may rest in You.* Let me, now, at this present moment, O my God, experience something of that loving kindness in my soul, in whatever condition I may happen to be, that I may be so flooded with the consciousness of it that I may do nothing else but sit in solemn silence before You and adore You while beholding the blazing splendor of Your love! I cannot say anymore about this part of my theme, but must leave you to fill up the gaps in the sermon. This is not a topic upon which one should venture to speak if he wants to say all that should or could be said upon it.

III. So, thirdly, dear Friends, I remark that IT SHOULD BE OUR DESIRE—and there are times when it should *especially* be our desire—TO SEE THIS “MARVELOUS LOVING KINDNESS” OF GOD DISPLAYED TO US IN ITS MARVELOUSNESS.

I will make plain to you what I mean directly and, first, we would see it as *pardoning great sin*. I expect we have here, in this assembly, at least one whose sin lies very heavy on his conscience. We do not find many such people come out to week-evening services, but yet I thank God that they do come. Your sin is very great, dear Friend. I cannot exaggerate it because your own sense of its greatness far surpasses any descriptions I could give. You feel that if God were to pardon you, it would be a marvelous thing. If He were, in one moment, to take all your guilt away and to send you home completely forgiven, it would be a marvelous thing! Yes, it would. And I beg you to pray this prayer, “Lord, show forth Your marvelous loving kindness in me.” God is constantly doing wonders. Then, glorify His name by believing that He can work this miracle of mercy for you. Do not be afraid to sing—

**“Great God of wonders! All Your ways
Are matchless, God-like, and Divine.
But the fair glories of Your Grace
More God-like and unrivalled shine!
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”**

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and saved immediately! Trust Him, now, and marvelous though it will be to you—I have shown you that God’s loving kindness is all marvelous, that the extraordinary is ordinary with Him, and that the marvelous is but an everyday thing with Him—pray for this “marvelous loving kindness” to be manifested to you and you shall have it! One said, “If God ever saves me, He shall never hear the end of it.” You may say the same and resolve that, henceforth, having had much forgiven, you will love much—having been saved from great sin, you will tell it on earth, and tell it in Heaven and, if you could, you would even wish to make Hell itself resound with the wondrous story—

**“Tell it unto sinners tell,
I am, I am out of Hell”—**

“and what is more, I am on the road to Heaven, for God’s ‘marvelous loving kindness’ has been shown to me!”

So God’s loving kindness may be seen as pardoning great sin. And next, it may be seen as *delivering from deep trouble*. I may be addressing some poor child of God who is sorely perplexed. These are very trying times and we constantly meet with godly people who have a sincere desire to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but who do not find it easy to do. Some very gracious people have got into serious straits and how they will get out, they cannot imagine. If this is your case, dear Friend, I expect you feel very much as John Fawcett’s hymn puts it—

**“My soul, with various tempests tested,
Her hopes overturned, her projects crossed,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.”**

Well, now, if you are ever brought through all your troubles, it will be “marvelous loving kindness” to you, will it not? Then go to God with the prayer, “Show me Your marvelous loving kindness,” and He will do it. He will bring you up, and out, and through—not, perhaps, in the way you

would like to come—but He will bring you out in the best way. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your ways unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Always expect the unexpected when you are dealing with God! Look to see, in God, and from God, what you never saw before, for the very things which will seem to unbelief—to be utterly impossible—will be those which are most likely to happen when you are dealing with Him whose arm is Omnipotent, and whose heart is faithful and true. God grant you Grace, dear Friend, thus to use the prayer of our text as the means of delivering you from deep trouble!

Here is another way to use it. I think you may pray it thus—at any event, I mean to do so, whether you will or not—“Lord, reveal Your marvelous loving kindness to me, *so as to give me high joys and ecstasies of delight.*” I sometimes envy those good people who never go up and never go down, always keeping at one level—theirs must be a very pleasant experience, indeed. Still, if ever I do get on the high horse, then I go up far beyond anything I can describe. If ever I do ride upon the clouds, then I do not envy the people who stay along the smooth road. Oh, what deep depressions some of us have had! We have gone down to the very bottoms of the mountains and the earth, and her bars have seemed to be about us forever. But, after just one glimpse of God’s everlasting love, we have been up there where the young lightning flashes, resting and trusting among the tempests, near to God’s right hand! I think, no, I am sure we may pray for this experience! Should not the preacher of the Word wish to know the fullness of Divine Love? Should not the teacher of the young long to learn all that he can concerning God’s Infinite Love? Though this is the love that passes knowledge, should not every Christian wish to know all that is knowable of this great love of God? Then let us pray, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”

It was truly said, “You cannot see God’s face and live.” But I have been inclined to say, “Then let me see God’s face, and die.” John Welsh said, when God was flooding his soul with a sense of His wondrous love, “Stop, Lord, stop! I am but an earthen vessel and You will break me.” If I had been there and I could have borne no more, I would have said, “Do not stop, Lord! Break the poor earthen vessel—smash it to pieces—but let Your love be revealed in me!” Oh, that I might even die of this pleasurable pain of knowing too much of God, too much of the ineffable delight of fellowship with Him! Let us be very venturesome, Beloved, and pray, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”

And, when we have done that, I think we may put up this prayer for ourselves, *as to our own usefulness.* You want to do good, dear Brother—dear sister. Well, then, pray to God, “Show me Your marvelous loving kindness, O Lord! Use even such a feeble creature as I am. Let Heaven, and earth, and Hell, itself, see that You can save souls by poor ignorant men as well as by inspired Apostles and learned doctors! Lord, in my Chapel, show Your marvelous loving kindness. Crowd it with people and bring many of them to Christ. In my class, Lord, show Your marvelous

loving kindness. If there never was a Sunday school class in which all were saved, Lord, let it be done in mine. Make it a marvelous thing.” A dear Brother, who prayed at the Prayer Meeting before this service, kept on pleading that God would bless me again as He had done before. I liked that prayer—it was as if my friend meant to say to the Lord, “Whatever You did in years gone by, do the same over again. If ever it was a marvelous thing to see how the people thronged to hear the Word, Lord, make it still more marvelous.”

I remember when some people called our early success “a nine days’ wonder.” Well, well, well—it has been a good long nine days! But, oh, that we might have another nine days like it—just such another nine days! May God be pleased to send us as many conversions as we had at the first—yes, and I shall add, and ten times as many! And if ever there have been revivals in the Church of God that have been really marvelous, Brothers and Sisters, let us take up the cry, “Lord, show Your marvelous loving kindness again! Send us another Whitefield, and another Wesley, if such will be the kind of men that will bless the world. Send us another Luther, another Calvin, another Zwingli, if such are the men that will bless the world. Lord, send us another Augustine, or another Jerome, if such are the men by whom You will bless the world. But, in some way or other, Lord, show us Your marvelous loving kindness.”

“Oh, but,” some would say, “we do not need any excitement. That is an awful thing, you know—anything like excitement.” And, then, perhaps, they add, “We have heard so much of what has been done in previous revivals. It has all ended in smoke and, therefore, we really dread the repetition of such an experience.” Well, then, Brother, you go home and pray, “Lord, show me Your *moderate* loving kindness.” When you are on your knees, tonight, pray, “Lord, save half-a-dozen souls here, and there—

**“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground.
A little spot, enclosed by Grace,
Out of the world’s wide wilderness.”—**

“Lord, make it yet smaller, screw us up still tighter, to the glory of Your blessed name!”

I don’t think any of you can pray that prayer! You shall, if you like, but for my part, I mean to pray, and I hope many of you will join me in it, and may God hear us—“Show us Your marvelous loving kindness!” Oh, for some new miracle of mercy to be worked in the earth! Oh, for some great thing to be done, such as was done of old! Shall it be so, or not? On this promise it shall depend—“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” But if our mouths are not open, we cannot expect to get the blessing. “According to your faith be it unto you.” The Lord grant that our faith may expect to see His “marvelous loving kindness” displayed yet more and more! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 17.**

Verse 1. *Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goes not out of deceitful lips.* Good men are often slandered and misunderstood and, at such times, the first verse of this Psalm will well fit their lips. “Hear the right, O Lord.” And, at all times, it is a great blessing when a supplicant can say to God, “Give ear unto my prayer, that goes not out of deceitful lips.” It must be a dreadful thing to pray with lips that do not speak the truth! When men’s thoughts are far away from their prayers, and they are muttering pious words but their heart is absent, what a mockery it must be in the sight of God! A dead prayer—who will claim it? Beware of dead prayers. You may dress them up as finely as you like, but, if there is no life in them, what good are they?

2. *Let my sentence come forth from Your Presence; let Your eyes behold the things that are equal.* It is the appeal of a slandered man to the highest court. He takes his case into the Court of King’s Bench, and asks God, Himself, to give the verdict concerning what he had done. It is a good case that will bear to be so investigated.

3. *You have proved my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me, and shall find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.* Happy is the man who is not afraid for God to come to him suddenly in the night, or to pounce upon him, as it were, at any hour of the day, for, whenever He comes, He will find His servant so acting that he will not mind who examines his conduct. He is keeping his lips, purposing that they shall not transgress God’s Law, and he is ruling his whole body in like manner. Only the Grace of God can enable us to do this.

4. *Concerning the works of men, by the word of Your lips I have kept from the paths of the destroyer.* Notice that verse, young man! There is much-needed teaching there for you. There are many “paths of the destroyer” in this wicked city of London, and all over the world—and it is only by taking heed to our ways, according to God’s Word, that we can hope to escape from them. How pleasant those “paths of the destroyer” often appear to be! How smooth and how alluring they are! All sorts of supposed delicacies and beauties will tempt you to go that way, and the foolish heart readily inclines to these indulgences, but happy is the man whose judgment is enlightened by God’s Word so that he avoids it, and passes by “the paths of the destroyer.”

5. *Hold up my goings in Your paths, that my footsteps slip not.* “I know that I am in Your way, but, O Lord, hold me up! I am like a horse that needs a careful driver, else I shall trip and fall, in rough places or in smooth, ‘Hold up my goings in Your paths,’ for I may fall even there. There are the sins of my holy things, so ‘hold up my goings in Your paths, that my footsteps slip not.’”

6-12. *I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God: incline Your ear unto me, and hear my speech. Show Your marvelous loving kindness, O You that saves by Your right hand them who put their trust in You from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of Your eye, hide me under the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about.* They are enclosed in their

own fat—with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps—they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Many godly men have such cruel enemies as David had, so they will do well to pray as he did!

13-15. *Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Your sword: from men which are Your hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me—* “What do I possess? What is my portion? Am I full of substance, like the men of the world, or have I little of this world’s wealth? It is of small consequence, for, ‘as for me’”—

15. *I will behold Your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness.* That is our portion! God grant that we may prize it more and more! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 18 (VERSION 2), 719.

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

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

AN EARNEST ENTREATY NO. 3470

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1915.

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

*“Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”
Psalm 17:7.*

IF one were about to have an audience with the Queen, or with some other royal personage, he might be apt to say, “How shall I behave myself? What am I expected to do? What is the proper form of address?” Now, in entering into the Presence of the great King of Kings, the Eternal God, we may suppose the trembling penitent saying, “What shall I do? How shall I come before the Most High God? What words shall I use and into what fashion shall I cast my desires?” Well, Holy Scripture has been very rich in answers to this question, for you have hundreds of most appropriate prayers made ready to your hand! We might readily enough compose a Biblical Liturgy, if one believed in Liturgies at all! Nor would it be difficult to find Scriptural words for every desire that could possibly strike the human heart. The Bible, besides all its other excellences, is a great and universal Prayer Book, and has in it petitions suited to all classes and conditions of men at all times, whatever their desires and necessities may be. Now I take out of this Prayer Book this one short supplication. I know the children of God will join with me in praying it, and I trust that before we have done, some who never prayed before may make this their firm prayer, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” Now, in the first place, we may offer up this prayer—

I. DESIRING THAT GOD WOULD SHOW MARVELOUS LOVING KINDNESS IN OUR MEDITATIONS.

What marvelous loving kindness there is for us to look at! Old as the everlasting hills—but old as it is, and majestic as it must be—there are some eyes that never saw it! Others, too, who, though they have read their Bibles and heard Gospel sermons from their infancy, have never yet seen God’s marvelous loving kindness! Let us spend, then, a few minutes in meditation, in order that the Lord may hear this prayer and show us His loving kindness while we muse upon it.

You see the *root-word*, the *core-word* of the text is “love.” The rest is a description of that love. Well now, in meditating upon God’s love, let us remember how extraordinary it has been. It was in love that, before the world was formed, God chose His people and enrolled them in His Covenant. When, with prescient eyes, the Almighty beheld all men immersed in ruin by their sin, His finger pointed to one man and another, “There will I dwell forever. There shall be My rest,” said the Lord of Hosts, “for I have chosen him.” What love was that which made him choose you and me? Or what motive could prompt Him but that He will have mercy on

whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion? Electing love having dug the fountain, consider, Beloved, how vast that love which entered into the Covenant of Grace to effect the purpose of our redemption—when there was a striking of hands between the Persons of the Trinity, that by that Covenant transaction, promises might be made sure to all the seed by the Covenanting God in Christ. Ponder, I pray you, upon the love that did not cool when the Covenant required sacrifice—which did not refrain when the well-beloved Son of the Father must be the Victim! Surely Solomon must have had this in his mind when he said, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Did not Jesus leave His Father and His mother that He might cleave unto His Spouse, and that they two might be made one flesh? Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be our Redeemer!

Need I tell the story of the sufferings of Calvary again? We have painted that picture a thousand times in crimson colors. Dipping our brush into the bloody sweat, we have tried to set forth the agonies of the saints’ Great Substitute. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! You know the results of that love. ‘Twas love that called you when you were afar off, quickened you when you were dead in sin and raised you out of the grave of your corruption! It was love that turned your face Zionward, and is it not love that has kept it there? Shall we not say that love laid the foundation stone, and love has gone on piling up the walls, stone by stone, and love shall bring in the top stone with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it”? Oh, as I read the matchless story of love without beginning, which can never, never cease, I marvel that our hearts are not all on fire, that our passions do not boil over and that our lips do not become like the red lips of Vesuvius when the burning lava sweeps down her sides! Surely our souls ought to feel a fervor and a heavenly flame for love like this! Lord, while we turn these matters over, “show Your marvelous loving kindness.”

But you perceive that *this love issues in “kindness.”* There may be a sort of kindness that is not loving and, on the other hand, there may be a sort of love that is not kindness. We have known man to be very kind to the poor but he never thought of loving them. What thousands of people we meet with every day who would be kind to Negroes, but they would not think of loving them. And we know, too, that there is a sort of love that is not kind—or if there is kindness at the bottom, it is not very gentle and tender in its manifestation. Love can sometimes be cruel, or at least it can give hard cuts and cause acute pain, forgetful of that debt of mercy and compassion which is due to the infirmities of man’s nature. Now we ought, while we look over the Lord’s dealings with us, to remember the minute traits of His kindness as well as the majestic tokens of His love. Beloved, when the Lord made provision for us in the Covenant, He did not merely provide bread and water for us—just enough to keep His people alive—but He provided for you the generous wine of Jesus’ blood! He provided for you the scarlet and fine linen of Jesus’ righteousness, the downy pillow of the Divine Promise and the soft bed of gra-

ciuous, sweet, everlasting peace. He did not provide for you a place where you might take refuge from the storm and solace your soul with humble contentment, but He provided for you a Heaven of delights—a Heaven which eyes have not seen, of which ears have not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive! There are streams of kindness gushing up and flowing out from the Fountain of Love! When He called you by His Grace, how kindly He did it! You were not whipped to Christ, or if you were, how soon the stripes disappeared from off your back! How kindly He met you! Oh, that day when you tremblingly came to the foot of His Cross! How He fell upon your neck and kissed you! How He cried, “Take off his rags and put on the best robe!” How He healed the blisters of your weary feet, put silver sandals upon them and taught you how to dance! How generously He attired you in the sumptuous robe of a prince’s son, put a crown of pure gold upon your head and gave you such thoughts of mercy and such gentle words of loving kindness that your heart, which was earlier ready to burst with grief, was well near bursting with joy! Lord, while we think how kind You have been to us from the day when we first knew You, even until now, we may truly wonder that we do not love You better, and pray that while we turn over Your acts of mercy, You will show Your marvelous loving kindness.

Oh, yes, it is indeed “marvelous !” We must say a word upon that. *What is so fit to excite wonder and keep up a sense of continual surprise as the love of God?* Do men tell us there are no such things as miracles? Why, every Christian is a living reply to their allegation! No such thing as a miracle? The existence of a Believer from day to day is a string of miracles which the laws of Nature will not account for. Every Christian will tell you that his experience is miraculous from the beginning of his faith to this day, and so will it continue to be to the end. What a marvel it was, Brothers and Sisters, that God should ever have bestowed His loving kindness upon such as we have been! We were not among those good people who never did anything wrong. There was nothing in our disposition or character to recommend us. We were sinners, and in our own esteem, sinners of the most crimsoned dye whose iniquities were like scarlet double-dyed! Yet He had mercy on us! We were poor and unlettered, feeble and unbefriended, yet He was moved with compassion toward us! Passing by many of the great and deserving of esteem, He called the base things of our order and the things that men despise, that these might be nurslings of His care and precious in His sight. From what did He call us? From the silliness of the foolish. Some of us from the fellowship of drunkards, from the harlot’s haunts, or it may be others of you from the thief’s den, from the seat of the scorner, or from the chair of the blasphemer. And if not steeped in crime, you were, perhaps, puffed up with self-righteousness and so fast held in Satan’s stronghold. When we think of what we were and what we came from, we see that the loving kindness must be marvelous, indeed!

And then, if you recollect what you would have been if He had not called you, here again is a marvel! Why, we might have been in Hell! Certainly we should have been ripening for it, going on with rapid footsteps

down to the place where hope could never reach us! And think yet further of what He has called us to. Oh, how marvelous is this! The criminal has become a child, the rebel has become a prince, the traitor wears a crown—we who were like firebrands fitted for the flame, are waving the palm, wearing the crown and singing the song! I know not what you think of it, Brothers and Sisters, but in every view I take of the great acts of God's Grace towards Believers, it is to me, marvelous loving kindness! Meditation upon these great acts of Divine Grace might tend very much to promote gratitude, and it were well if we sometimes set apart a time to go over in our thought and recollection all the mighty acts of the gracious God of Israel. But I have said enough upon the first point—so let me proceed briefly to speak upon a second. Surely David meant to say—

II. "SHOW YOUR MARVELOUS LOVING KINDNESS IN OUR EXPERIENCE."

It may be there is a man over yonder who did not think of coming in here tonight at all, till, as he was passing by the building, he saw so large a crowd that he decided he would step in, though he fully meant to go out again. But, somehow or other, here he is. Man, you know what you have been. It is not for me to recount your sins before this assembly, but be assured the darkness of night has not covered them—neither has the silence of your confederates concealed them! The Lord that searches all hearts and tries the reins knows your iniquity. No feature of it is hidden from His eyes. Still, thus says the Lord of Hosts unto you this night, "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die?" And thus say I unto you—Pray this prayer this evening and who can tell but God may have mercy upon you, that you perish not? Pray it now. Let me offer it aloud for you, "Show Your loving kindness." I know you say, "If God should have mercy on me, it will be a great wonder! If He should change my heart and make me a saint, it would be a marvel, indeed!" Just so, Sinner, but that is just why I put this prayer into your mouth, for it suits you—"Show me Your marvelous loving kindness." Do you not see that you have been a marvelous sinner? Marvelously ungrateful have you been! Marvelously have you aggravated your sins! Marvelously did you kick against a mother's tears! Marvelously did you defy a father's counsel! Marvelously have you laughed at death! Marvelously have you made a covenant with death and a league with Hell! But your covenant with death is broken, and your league with Hell is disannulled—and He who does great wonders meets you tonight and says, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Believe on Him that died upon the tree, who Himself bore our sins in His own body! There is life in Jesus Christ for those who turn their eyes on Him! Look to Him! Look to Him, now, and live! I wish this prayer might be taken up in many parts of this congregation by some who have been outcasts in Israel, that they might pray, "Show Your marvelous loving kindness."

Yes, I know that young man yonder, and his history. He has been for months anxious about his soul. Sermon after sermon has stirred him up. He gets no sleep. He goes to his little chamber and cries to his God. He is almost despairing and the devil almost tempts him to make away with

himself, or to give up all hope. "Oh," he says, "God will never have mercy on me! It is too great a thing to hope, too great a wonder to expect!" Young man, here is a new prayer for you, "Show Your marvelous loving kindness." I have heard of a poor old woman who had long been bowed down with a sense of guilt, who said, when she found the Savior, that if Jesus Christ would but save her, He would never hear the last of it, for she would praise Him as long as she had any being! I remember that I thought, myself, if Jesus Christ would but save me, that I would do anything for His sake—and if anybody had told me that I should ever be such a sorry coldhearted dolt as I have been, I would not have believed him nor would any Christian believe it if he were told it about himself! We thought we could do anything for Christ, burn like martyrs, or live like servants! We have not done it, but yet it is a marvelous thing that God should save us! Young man, take that prayer. I was going to say, take it home, but I do not like to put even half an hour between you and this prayer! Now put your hands to your eyes, or, if you do not care to do that, yet say in your soul, "Oh, God, You that do great wonders, You who are the Miracle Worker, show Your marvelous loving kindness." Why, this prayer will just suit my Christian Brother, there, who has come in here tonight. He is a Christian, but he has long been a backslider. Poor man! His Brothers and Sisters have looked very coolly on him—and well they may—for he certainly did disgrace the cause. But he is a child of God for all that, and the Lord still loves him! Brother, you have been much depressed—you have thought the Lord had forsaken you and now you almost think it is impossible that you should be one of His. Well now, here is a prayer that will suit you, "Show Your marvelous loving kindness." Surely it will be a marvel if He should again make your bones which have been broken to rejoice, and restore unto you the joy of His salvation! And He will do it, if you can but plead this prayer!

And I know my Friend over yonder, too, who has had so many losses in business, and such a succession of trials, wave upon wave—

***"You see each day new straits attend,
And wonder where the scene will end."***

Brother, God can deliver you! Oh, what a blessing it is to have such a God to deal with! Come to Him with your great load and say, "Lord, here is wondrous work needed—show Your marvelous loving kindness." But, you say, you are placed in very peculiar circumstances. Just so. Now take the words of my text, you that are growing old in Grace, and are growing feeble in body at the same time—can you not say, "Now, Lord, now, before Your servant goes hence. Before these gray hairs shall lie with the clods of the valley, show me once more Your marvelous loving kindness." And, I think, this is a prayer I would like to die with, when the cold stream begins to rise above the ankles, even up to the knees—when the floods overflow till they come even unto the chin—how sweet it will be to say in death, "Show Your loving kindness." This will help you to die! It will enable you to meet the adversary with the shout of victory! Yes, as you stand on Jordan's shore, you will raise one more sacred pillar, and then mount with joy and sing in Heaven, "Show Your marvelous loving kindness."

So this prayer will do for beginners, and it is alike suitable for those who are ending their course. I may call it the Alpha-prayer and the Omega-prayer—fit for babes, and fit for strong men! Take it up, each one of you, and say, “Show me Your marvelous loving kindness.” Having thus taken this prayer first as to meditation, and then as to experience, we will now take it as—

III. A REQUEST PREFERRED FOR SOME SIGNAL GIFT.

“Show Your marvelous loving kindness by some special revelation to me at this time.” I think one of the best translators of the Hebrew gives it, “Distinguish Your loving kindness.” I do not know which to quote, but several of them seem to treat the passage in this way, “Lord, You have a great many loving kindnesses. I am just now in great trouble. Pick out one of Your loving kindnesses—distinguish—give me in my time of extraordinary need some extraordinary loving kindness. Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” If you lay the stress on the word, “marvelous,” you will then get the pith of it. I think it is Trapp who said that “God is good at a dead-lift”—and he has put a deal of meaning into that homely phrase. When you and I can do nothing, and it has come to a dead-lift, then we need our God and then we may say to Him, “Now, Lord, show me more than Your known goodness—show Your marvelous loving kindness. Oh, let us see what Omnipotence can do! Human wisdom fails—let Omniscience come to our aid! Lord, we are at our wits’ end—may this, our extremity, prove to be Your opportunity. Show Your *marvelous* loving kindness.” Do you not think we shall be warranted in using this prayer as we gather round the Table, tonight, to partake of the Lord’s Supper? (My sermon seems to have more praying than preaching in it). Lord, here are the emblems that set forth Your body and Your blood—now “show Your marvelous loving kindness.” Oh, do give us some choice token for good, some special mercy such as we received not when last we met for this communion! Lord, we are very weary. We have been harassed in the world. We need rest—give us some marvelous peace, some sacred calm, some sweet repose which we have not known before! Gathered as we are here, can we not, as Believers, cry, “Have You not a blessing, O my Father? Give it to me, even to me, O my Father”?

I am always afraid lest, as a Church, your graces should droop, lest your zeal should cool, lest your prayers should grow feeble, lest the green, vigorous life of the Church should begin to wither and lose its force. I put up this prayer for you all—Lord, give us a revival season tonight! “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” Let us now feel the quickening touch of Your Divine Presence. Let us now be illuminated by the Presence of Your Spirit, and comforted with the whispers of Your Son! If any of you here are despondent, I pray that you have “marvelous loving kindness shown you tonight, that the Lord may dip your morsel in His cup, that you may lean on His bosom and feed from His Table! You feeble saints, I pray that the Lord, your Strength, may manifest Himself to you—that He would be pleased to cheer and refresh you by choice Revelations, by the outgoings of His Grace towards you, and by the drawings of your heart towards Himself. Thus you may get the full meaning of this

prayer unfolded and verified to you tonight, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.”

I do not know, dear Brothers and Sisters, how it is with you, but there are times with me when I do get visions of “marvelous loving kindness.” No doubts cast their shadows across my soul, then! No fears alarm, no cares distract me, then. Even my anxieties for you are hushed. I have no remembrance of anybody’s faults, no recollection of my own troubles, no thought about the pressure of work, or the perils of adversity—all is loving kindness from beginning to end! My soul revels in it. Like a strong swimmer, we bathe and swim in the river of His pleasure! We dive to the bottom and rise up again. The spirit is filled with ecstasy and flooded with delight! These seasons, when they do come, give us strength to perform fresh labor and to endure future trial. They are, indeed, the wells of Elim and the palm trees thereof under which we sit and drink! May this night be to us some such season as that!

But you are going away, many of you. I beg you not to pass from under yonder columns until you have paused a minute and said, “Show Your marvelous loving kindness.” Let us all pray that prayer, “O Lord, show Your marvelous loving kindness. Show it to me.”—

***“I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.***

‘Show Your marvelous loving kindness.’ Oh, forgive me. I do accept Your Son. I do believe in Jesus, that He is able to save my soul, and my soul does rest on Him alone. Lord, for Jesus’ sake ‘show Your marvelous loving kindness.’” Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; PSALM 119:145-168.**

PSALM 51.

There are seven penitential Psalms, but this seems to be the chief one of the seven. The language of David is as suitable to us today as it was to him. And though much was lost to the cause of righteousness by David’s sin, yet the Church is enriched for all ages by the possession of such a Psalm as this. It is a marvelous recompense. Surely here the Lord reigns, bringing good out of evil, blessing generation after generation through that which in itself was a great evil!

VERSE 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Observe he appeals to mercy, and mercy only—to mercy, abounding mercy in its most tender and kindest aspect. “According to Your tender mercies.” Note here David does not use his name. He does not say, “Lord remember David”—he is ashamed of his name. And he does not seem to want God to remember that, but to remember mercy—and to have pity upon this nameless sinner. He does not say, “Save the son of Your handmaid,” or “Deliver Your servant,” as he was known to do. He just appeals to mercy, and that is all. And observe it is not, “Have mercy upon me, oh my God.” He is far off now. He has lost the comfortable assurance of the Covenant of Grace and so it is rather more like the cry of

the prodigal when he returned and said, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out—(or as more correctly it might be rendered, "wash out"—"wipe out")—my transgressions. The allusion is rather to a dish—wipe it out, turn it upside down and turn out all that is in it, sweep it away—wipe out all my transgressions. Or it may be as a withdrawal of a record in court when the indictment is withdrawn, "Lord be pleased to quash the indictment against me. Blot out all my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Nothing about the punishment—he does not mention that. The true penitent, though he dreads punishment, much more dreads sin. It is sinfulness—sin that he would be delivered from! "Wash me." You must do it, no other washing will suffice. Wash me thoroughly, till I am perfectly cleansed. Cleanse me from my sin—*my* sin. I do not lay it on anyone else. Cleanse me from it.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* Unless sin is before us, we shall not be likely to spread it before God. But when we have knowledge of it, then we shall make acknowledgment of it to God. "My sin is always before me." He was in such a state of heart that the remembrance of sin seemed painted on his eyeballs. Even in his dreams he remembered it—he was never free from the dread remembrance of it.

4. *Against You only have I sinned.* Yet he had sinned against many more! But just now the thought of his sin against God swallowed up all else. All his offenses against his fellow men were trivial compared with the high treason which he had committed against his God. This is the virus of sin—that it is sin against God.

4. *And done this evil in Your sight.* While You were looking on. For a thief to steal in the Presence of the Judge is impudence, indeed, but yet in Your Presence, O my God, I have done this evil.

4. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* As much as to say, "I make this confession of sin, which is so black that if You should judge me, however severely, or sentence me to however exemplary a punishment, You will be quite clear and quite just. I could put in no plea against whatever You should command. I richly deserve all Your wrath can bring upon me."

5. *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* The black stream leads him to look at the black fountain. How can we expect from parents who have sinned, that there should be born unto them pure and spotless children? No, the tendencies in us all towards evil are there at the very first. He does not at all venture to excuse himself, but rather to aggravate his sin, that he had been a sinner from his very birth!

6, 7. *Behold You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.* He had seen the leper pronounced clean when the hyssop was dipped in blood and sprinkled on him—but then the leper had to be clean beforehand before this could make him ceremonially clean. He is

leaping through the first process and coming to the closing one—his soul anxious to be accepted with God at once!

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* Yet what can be whiter than snow? Snow is not like a white wall that is but white on the surface—it is white all through. And yet when God washes the Believer, He makes him whiter than snow, for the snow soon becomes tainted, soon loses its purity—but we never shall if God shall wash us! There was no provision made for the cleansing of an adulterer under the Law of God. David, therefore, had to look beyond all the sacrifices of the Law to the cleansing power of the great coming Sacrifice, and he so believed in it that with a brave faith—(I know no more brave expression in all Scripture than this)—he says, “Wash me, filthy as I am, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* The original expression is “bones cracked,” or, as one puts it, smashed. His sense of sin had been so great that he felt as one might feel whose very bones had been smashed by some terrible blow. So he seems to say, that as there may be a delightful pleasure in having every one of these broken bones restored, such would be his pleasure if God would pardon his sins.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* If we hide our sins before our faces, then God will turn His face away from our sins. If we hide our sins from our faces, God will set them before His face. But when they are always before us they shall never be before Him.

9, 10. *And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God.* It is a *creation*—the very word is used which is employed concerning the Creation in the first Chapter of Genesis. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence: and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* I have put You away from my Presence by forgetting You, but put me not away from Your Presence. I have been filled with an unholy spirit, but oh, take not your Holy Spirit from me!

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me.* He feels how much he needs it. The burnt child dreads the fire. “Uphold me with Your free Spirit.”

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways: and sinners shall be converted unto You.* And David has been doing that ever since, for this Psalm has been a continual sermon to sinners, teaching them God’s ways in pardoning sin! And many, I doubt not, have been converted unto God by His Spirit through the language of this Psalm. When you and I find Christ, let us tell of our blessed discovery! Have you honey? Eat it not all yourself—go, tell your fellow men. Are you saved? Tarry not, but go and spread the news that others may be saved, too!

14. *Deliver me from the guilt of shedding blood, O God, You God of my salvation.* His faith is growing. He has humbled himself. It is the way to rise. Weaken yourself before God and you shall grow strong. Empty yourself and you shall be filled! Bow low and He will lift you up. “You God of my salvation.”

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* Those tongues that confess sins are the best tongues to sing with! That tongue which has been salted with the brine of penitence is fitted to be sweet with the honey of praise!

15. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.* You know the leper when he was unclean—what did he do? He covered his lips, as much as to confess that he was not fit to speak. So here the unclean David, with the covering of his lips, will not venture to speak until the Lord has taken away his sin and opened his mouth for him. It was this that Isaiah meant when he said, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips”—but when it was said concerning the live coal, “Lo, this has touched your lips,” then he spoke right eloquently. “Lord, open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”

16. *For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings.* Here we have what God does desire, and what He does not. If you turn to the sixth verse, you will see what He does desire. “You desire truth in the inward parts.” Now here He does not desire the mere outward and external worship rendered by sacrifice. It was not the type alone that satisfied Him.

17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* There are some spices that are never perfect in fragrance till they are pounded with the pestle in the mortar, and so is a broken heart. If it is made to suffer and to smart, yet there is sweet pleasure to the Lord when He perceives in His people the smart concerning sin—when they hate and loathe it.

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offerings: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Gratitude ascends when sin is forgiven, and when God appears to bless His Church, then she blesses her God.

PSALM 119:145-168.

Verse 145. *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes.* It is sweet to look back upon our prayers, if those prayers were uttered with our whole heart, for it is no small work of Divine Grace to enable us to throw the whole heart into prayer! And when we get that, we may be quite sure that our prayer will succeed. The God who gives us Grace to pray with the whole heart will be sure to reply to the prayer! After prayer David uttered a resolution, “I will keep Your statutes.” He was resolved upon this with his whole heart, and though a resolution is not enough, for many make resolves and break them, yet no man is likely to keep God’s Word who does not resolve to do so. Therefore it is necessary, first, to cry in prayer, and then to resolve with the whole heart to walk according to God’s will.

146. *I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.* He has got on this string, you see, and he touches it again. First he said, “I cried with my whole heart.” Now again he says, “I cried unto You.” When you are in trouble, if you can remember that you were much in prayer before you entered into the experience which led into the trouble, you

can plead with God that you did not rush into it carelessly and prayerlessly—and you have a good argument to urge with Him why He should help you in your time of need.

147, 148. *I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. I hoped in Your Word. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.* It was not now and then that David was in a devotional frame of mind! He continued so. He began early, but he continued late. The prayer of the dawn was followed by the watch of the midnight!

149. *Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* He is accustomed to put these two things together, all through this judgment—as much as if he felt that he could—as if he felt that he could appeal both to the tenderness and to the justice of God for help in his time of need. For with a God who has entered into the bonds of the Covenant with us, and pledged Himself by promise and by oath, we may plead both His loving kindness and His judgment.

150, 151. *They draw near that follow after mischief: they are far from Your Law. You are near, O LORD: And all Your commandments are truth.* How beautiful is this! The enemies are coming near, but You are nearer. They approach me, but I abide with You, and You abide with me. I am safe!

152. *Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* Oh, Believer, what comfort there is in this for you! If you have known it all your years, it has been a blessed thing to know that God changes not—that as He spoke before the earth was, so will that Word abide when this world shall cease to be!

153. *Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Your Law.* Lord, Your Grace has helped me to remember You. I pray You, therefore, remember my affliction. Look at it with Your eyes of wisdom and deliver me.

154-155. *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to Your Word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes.* Salvation is near to any man who seeks it, but the ungodly, as they will not have God's Word, so shall they not have God's saving Grace They are far from it.

156. *Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments.* Here again, you see, he puts judgment and mercy together—the justice and the tenderness of God—and he leans on both. It is a mark of an instructed Christian when he is able to derive comfort, not merely from the love of God, but also from the holiness and the justice of God, seeing that these are on his side through Jesus Christ's atoning blood.

157-158. *Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your Word.* O child of God, whenever you look upon the transgressors, your heart should bleed that they should transgress so good a Law—that they should grieve so gracious a God—that

they should bring upon themselves so terrible a penalty. “I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.”

159, 160. *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness Your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.* And here is the very sweetness of the Gospel—that it is not a thing of today, which will lose its efficiency tomorrow! “It endures forever.” You that have got it have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you! All the blessings of the Covenant are everlasting blessings. They are “the sure mercies of David.” And he that gets them gets an inheritance which he shall not lose.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of Your Word.* Not in awe of *their* word, but in awe of Your Word. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men! No man who is devout is cowardly. If you fear God with all your heart, you will defy all the devils in Hell, and fear none.

162-165. *I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying; but Your Law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them.* Whatever happens, they shall suffer no ill from it. “There shall no evil befall such, neither shall any plague come near their dwelling,” for they “dwell under the shadow of the Almighty.”

166. *LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Now, cannot some of you feeble people say that? You that cannot talk of full assurance and are half afraid that you are none of the Lord’s people at all, yet you can say, “Lord, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.” And, if so, you have done that which proves you to be His!

167, 168. *My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.* And no man will ever take comfort in that if he is not a renewed man, for to know that all our ways are before God is ground for great distress if we are ungodly—if we are walking contrary to His mind. But if we are, indeed, His children, we love to feel that we are always living under His eye—that there is nothing about us unknown to Him—no secret sorrow which He does not read—no invisible burden which He does not see.

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

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

THE EYE—A SIMILITUDE

NO. 904

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

***“Keep me as the apple of the eye.”
Psalm 17:8.***

THIS prayer is full of meaning and is the outflow of a well-instructed mind. It is no parrot cry, but the leaping up of a living desire from a Grace-taught and thoughtful heart. The man knows something of himself who sincerely offers this plaintive petition to his God, “Keep *me*.” Is there not a deep and sorrowful confession implied in this brief utterance of the suppliant? As though he should say, “Preserve me from my own heart, for it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: guard me from the rising up of my natural corruptions, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Defend me from the turbulence of my own passions, those household foes which are the worst enemies to the peace and purity of my mind. Keep me from that evil man, Myself.”

Has not the man who utters this request a clear perception of the evils surrounding him in his circumstances and his relations and his position in life? Conscious of danger, he desires to be held back from pride. If he is in prosperity he asks to be withheld from pining and unbelief. If he is in adversity he would be restrained from sinning in public or transgressing in private. He desires that he may not be imperiled, even, by the objects of his joy and affection, lest they should become idols and so provoke the Lord to jealousy and cause Him to withdraw His dear Presence and sweet communings from the soul.

The prayer has a singular sensitiveness—it seems to shiver like the leaves of the aspen—to shrink like the sensitive plant. Knowing that there are snares all around him, the pleading soul is desirous that God should at all times encompass his path—“Keep me.” The man has some idea of the craft and malice of Satan, therefore he appeals to God that he may be preserved from that fowler who first decoys and afterwards destroys unguarded souls. He sees his danger. He feels his weakness and seeks to the Strong for help—

***“Love and keep us, blessed Jesus,
Keep us from denying You.
Keep our wayward feet from straying
Into paths of vanity.
Love and keep us, blessed Jesus,
Keep us from denying You.”***

An eye that has looked on the weakness and the wickedness of the little world within our bosom bedews with briny tears the supplication, “Keep me.”

But the man who prays thus intelligently must have some knowledge of the God he prays to. He has learned the vanity of all other reliances and has left forever the arm of flesh. The invocation is addressed to the Most High, for he is well aware that no other can respond to his call, or interpose for his aid. He who uses this prayer intelligently perceives the Omniscience of Jehovah. "You see all my dangers, You foresee all the attacks of my enemies. You are acquainted with all my ways. To You, therefore, I look for safeguard. Better than a hundred eyes are You to me, You who can see all my foes, from whichever quarter they may come. Ever watchful Guardian, keep me."

He believes, also, in God's Omnipotence—that there is no assailant so strong as He who is His Israel's refuge and fortress. Nor is there any danger so imminent that He cannot anticipate and avert it. He relies, moreover, upon the love of God that He is willing of His own heart to espouse his interests. He relies upon the faithfulness of God that He will perform the mercy promised to the fathers, and upon the immutability of God that He will never turn back, but finally achieve the salvation of His servant through keeping him to the end.

Thus, as I have said, the man who could first offer and the man who can constantly appreciate this devout prayer must know something of himself and something of his God. He who has learned these two things has mastered the elements of wisdom. "Man, know yourself," said the heathen sage and he uttered a goodly maxim. "Man, know your God," says the Christian, and he points to wisdom far more sublime. Put the two together! To know ourselves in our weakness and dangers and to know our God in His glorious strength and willingness to protect us, is to have the seed of Divine knowledge implanted in our breasts!

Knowing these two things we can not only pray this prayer with a fervent spirit, but there are many things which we shall be enabled to do by virtue of the good hand of the Lord our God upon us. Such, then, is the importunate request of the Psalmist, to which I am persuaded everyone that is godly among you will say, "Amen." "Keep me as the apple of the eye."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I intend only to touch upon one point and that is the metaphor here used—not, perhaps, limiting myself entirely to the precise and definite meaning which it in this place presents, but uttering with more freedom and latitude some of the thoughts which it suggests.

1. The keeping desired by the earnest Christian is of that kind which men accord to the apple of the eye. What sort of keeping is this?—First, the Psalmist as good as prays, Lord, keep me *with many guards and protections*. In the Providence of God, the apple of the eye is defended with peculiar care and transcendent skill. Those who have studied the formation of the pupil, itself, will tell you with how many coats the retina is preserved. Then the most common observer knows how the eyebrows, the eyelashes, and the eyelids are formed as outworks, fences and barricades,

to protect the pupil of the eye, which is thus made to dwell securely like a citizen within the entrenchments of a fortified town.

God has bestowed extraordinary pains upon all that concerns your eyes. Being one of the most tender organs of the physical frame, He has used many devices that it should be well preserved, notwithstanding its exceeding sensitiveness. Nor is it merely sheltered in its own fastness, but sentries keep ward lest it should be exposed to peril. Whenever it is threatened with even the appearance of danger, no time is lost in consultation with yourself, but with agility so brisk that it seems almost involuntary, the arm is lifted up and the hand is raised to screen it from harm or to resist attack. If you are about to stumble, you naturally put out your hands to save your eyes.

Instinct seems to teach you at once the value of eyesight and your whole strength is put forth to preserve it. In fact, all the members of the body may be regarded as a patrol for the wardship of the eyes—and all the incorporated powers of manhood are in constant vigilance to guard and protect that precious orb. Admiring, then, this beautiful arrangement to conserve the delicate organ of vision, we may pray, “Lord, keep me as the apple of the eye, with many protections. You have been pleased with the strong bastions of Your Providence, to surround Your people. I ask for such protection. Lead me not into temptation. Do not suffer the events of my career or the incidents of my daily life to entangle me so that I shall be unable to escape out of the perplexing snares.

“Let the powers of Heaven fight for me as of old the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Let me be in league with the stones of the field and command the beasts of the forest to be at peace with me. Let my tabernacle be in peace, and let no plague come near my dwelling. Do You, O God, visit my habitation, and so abide with me beneath that lowly roof that I may not by any means through outward circumstances or inward thoughts be led into sin. Guard me, O my God, by all the power of those mysterious wheels whose motions I cannot understand, but of whose results You have said, ‘All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.’ And, Lord, be pleased to shield me by Your Grace as well as by Your Providence. Keep me as the apple of the eye with tutelage of Your restraining mercy. Teach me to sing—

***‘Oh, to Grace how great a debtor,
Daily I’m constrained to be.’***

Brothers and Sisters, how wonderfully does Divine Grace preserve the heirs of Heaven with operations marvelously diverse, but all fulfilling one loving purpose! Sometimes Grace lowers me into the dust. At other times it lifts me up to the Truth of God! It is Divine Grace that empties and Divine Grace that fills my earthen vessel! It is Grace that shows me my ignorance and Grace that makes me wise unto salvation. Let the manifold operations of Your Grace, O God of all Grace, be brought into full play to guard me as the apple of the eye! Whenever I hear a sermon preached, may it keep me from stumbling, lest otherwise my feet should trip. When-

ever I bow my knees in prayer, may it be a safeguard against some temptation or besetting sin which otherwise might have been too strong to resist. When I read Your Book, make its words to be as wholesome counsel and faithful warning to deliver my soul from the paths of the Destroyer.

Grant unto us, Lord, that the ordinances of Your House—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—yes, and whatever else You have enjoined to us by precept, or handed down to us with the example of Your holy Apostles—things commanded and things set in order—let all these be used as auxiliaries to repel assault and preserve our peace. From wandering into any false way, from staining the purity of a good conscience, from bringing dishonor upon the name of Christ, “good Lord, deliver us.” “Keep me as the apple of the eye” with the guardianship of Your Holy Spirit. O that the Divine Comforter might always dwell within me, so that when Satan comes to invade my heart, it may be like the house in which abides the strong man armed who is stronger than the spoiler, and therefore keeps his goods in peace! Thus shall He drive away the thief who would break in to steal my possessions and make me his prey—

***“Keep us, Lord, O keep us ever,
Vain our hope if left by You!
We are Yours, O leave us never,
Till Your face in Heaven we see.
There to praise you
Through a bright eternity.”***

Holy Spirit, I invoke You, whether reproving or comforting, whether quickening or enlightening, whether chastening or sanctifying, whether humbling or perfecting me—be pleased to abide with me and hold You watch over me in all Your sevenfold power, in all Your diversified operations. And, O God, let Your angels have charge concerning me, to keep me in all my ways, for I need many guards, even as the eye has many bulwarks. Bid, then, those ministering spirits, who minister to the heirs of salvation, that they bear me up in their hands lest I dash my foot against a stone! Brethren, do such appeals seem to you like a rhapsody? Do you forget the existence of angels, who excel in strength? Do you give no heed to the capacities with which they are endowed by Him who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire?

I am afraid we are apt to think too lightly of those blessed spirits. Is it necessary to remind you that the being of such an order of God's creatures is not an allegory of the poets—no, not even of sacred inspired poets! Facts abound in both the Old and New Testaments to attest the reality of their services. Have you never heard how that in the Creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? And have you not heard that when the Law was given to Moses, it was received by the disposition of angels? You cannot be unaware of the comfort which Daniel found from the mission of Gabriel, when, while speaking in prayer, the angel appeared as a man flying swiftly, touched the Prophet, talked with him, brought a message to him from Heaven and came forth to give him skill and understanding?

Think, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, of the company of angels caroling that sweet hymn of the Nativity on the plains of Bethlehem on that night when our Savior was born! And never overlook their visit to the wilderness, where, after Jesus had been tempted 40 days and 40 nights, “behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” Yet again in the dark night of His betrayal, when our Lord was enduring the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, don’t you remember that, “there appeared to Him an angel from Heaven strengthening Him”? After such things it may seem needless to tell how angels repaired to the tomb from which Jesus had risen and there, at the sepulcher, cheered the hearts of the sorrowing women. Or to recount to you the story of Peter, released by an angel of the Lord from the prison into which Herod, willing to please the Jews and vex the Church, had cast him!

But I must mention this one thing more. Angels were the bearers, not with black wands, but with flying colors, who carried Lazarus into Abraham’s bosom. Such guard I crave in life and death! I crave it of You, O my God! My soul is enraptured at the multitude of Your loving kindnesses and tender mercies! Keep me with every provision for my safety! Keep me with all Your hosts and holy troops, with cherubim and seraphim, with Providence and Grace and love. “Keep me as the apple of the eye.” In such sense, I think, the metaphor is not strained.

2. Secondly, the prayer may be interpreted with a view *to the constancy, the unintermitting continuance of that keeping which we require of the Lord.* Is not the eye *always* guarded? You are not always thinking of it, it is true, for that would distract you from the duties of life. If you had to reckon the dangers and provide against the mishaps to which the eyes are exposed, your mind would never rest. But to save you such care, the protections God has provided are always ready. If a grain of dust, perhaps, should enter the eye, immediately, by some wonderful arrangement, a watery fluid is exuded in which, if you cannot extract the impediment, by-and-by it becomes dissolved and is carried away.

Though an intruding substance may pain you, the pain is a mercy, for it makes you restless till you get relief for the priceless eye. When you fall asleep and are no longer able to protect the eyeballs, the curtains fall, the blinds of it drop down and the windows are shut up securely with lash and lid. How graciously does God preserve the health of the eye and renew its brightness! It needs many secretions and they are all supplied. The fineness of its organization and the variety of its curious arrangements require adequate provisions to keep it in proper condition and these are all furnished. Yes, and continue to be supplied when the eyes’ functions are suspended in your times of slumber. Without care or thought on your part, at all times, asleep or awake, the eyes are guarded like the bed of Solomon, about which were three-score valiant men.

Right well does the parable of the eye suggest the prayer of the text—Lord, keep me thus, as the apple of an eye is kept. Evermore, O Lord, watch over me. Brethren, permit me to remark here that I believe at no season is a Christian more in danger than when he has just been in

communion with God. Thus I have proved it myself. It is not very often I lose my temper, at least I think not, but it has happened sometimes. And I have noticed that when this sinful frailty has overtaken me, it has been just after I have been near to God in prayer. At such a time somebody has come right across my path and ruffled my spirit. Something has been said or done so cold, so cruel, so unChrist-like, so irritating and on the part of myself so unexpected, that I have in horror spoken unadvisedly with my lips.

Ah, I should not wonder if many of you have found the same surprising sin assails you. When you felt happy and blessed, beyond the reach of fear, the baneful action of the world has so grated upon your too susceptible feelings that you have felt as if it were well for you to be angry. Always beware when you are rich with Divine Grace in present *possession*. The highwaymen, in olden times, did not meddle with the farmers as they went *to* the market—it was when they were coming home, having sold their crops and bringing back their full moneybags, that they planned their attacks! When our ships of war went after the Spanish galleons, they did not attack them as they were going *to* America, but when they came back enriched with bars of gold—when they knew them to be loaded to the water's edge—it was then they stormed the Spaniard to win his bullion!

The devil may not make a dead set upon you when you are poor in Grace and indolent, not trading with the merchandise of wisdom, or seriously engaged in the King's business. But if you have had much spiritual commerce with Heaven whereby your soul has been enriched and your heart has been cheered and your face has shone, then beware of temptation! In watchfulness and prayer, however, put it thus—"Keep me, Lord, alike in my high estate and in my low estate. Keep me when I am engaged in business that I fall not into the tricks of trade, or the excitements of desperate speculation. Keep me when I am at the table, that I sin not against You in the midst of social communion with my family or my friends.

"Lord, where shall I go from the presence of sin, or where shall I fly from the reach of temptation? If I seek the desert and become a lonely hermit, sin is there. If I plunge into the thick of the city and find solitude among the crowds of men, behold, sin reigns there. If I take me to my chamber, sin can haunt me there. Or if I go abroad into the fields, to listen to the voice of Nature, I can be seduced to rebel against You there in full view of all your marvelous works. If I should take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth—if, like the shipwrecked, I lived on a desolate island and saw not the face of man, even there the face of sin would disquiet me, and rebellious thoughts would rise to taint my daily life."

You need keeping, then, always and at every moment. Seek protection, Brothers and Sisters, seek it constantly! Begin not the day without saying, "Keep me." Finish it not without crying again, "Keep me." All day long be not far away from the horns of the altar, to which you may run with the brief ejaculation, "Keep me, keep me, as the apple of the eye." It means

constant care, a perpetuity of Divine guardianship. You need that. Seek it—

***“Lord, we are blind and halt and lame,
We have no stronghold but Your name.
Great is our fear to bring it shame.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”***

3. “Keep me as the apple of the eye.” Does it not mean, “Keep me from *little evils, the dust and grit* of this evil world”? Your eyes need not to be guarded so much from beams as from motes. You would not say, “It is only a tiny grain of dust, therefore let it enter into my eyes.” By no means! The smallest grain that floats in the summer’s breeze will vex and irritate and cause the scalding tears to flow, and you know, by painful experience, how much suffering you may endure from a grain of sand which you could scarcely see. Be this your prayer, then—“Lord, keep me from what the world calls little sins. Lord, keep me from what my callous conscience may make me think to be little sin. Save me, Lord, from thoughts or imaginations, for these are the eggs of which greater mischiefs are hatched. Keep me, Lord, from words which, to carnal minds, might seem but air, but which, in Your sight are weighty matters, especially as coming from Your children who have been brought up to understand the Law of Your mouth.”

I like to see the Christian show the rigidity of that Puritan who said that he could not, even in a word, swerve from the Truths of God he believed, though there were a living or an opportunity of preferment to be had by complying. “Oh, but,” said another, “others have made long gashes in their consciences—could not you make a little nick in yours?” Ah, you know what those “little nicks in the conscience” always come to! When once you begin the nick, how swiftly it runs from the top to the bottom of your conscience! Beware of nicks of the conscience!

Let your prayer be, “Lord keep me! Keep away from me those sins, the wrong of which I hardly know, but whose wickedness and woefulness are open before *You*. Let me never trifle with a sin because it does not look so black or cause such shame as some other iniquities.” Christians will too often indulge wrong habits and tolerate doubtful customs till transgressions seem to them as if they were unavoidable and gladly would they persuade themselves that they are harmless. There was an officer who kept in his house a leopard, a tame leopard, which had been born in captivity and had never known what liberty was. It had grown up as tame as a domestic cat, till one day, when the master was asleep, it gently licked his hand.

Now, it so happened that he had cut the skin during the day and a little blood oozed out as the creature’s tongue was drawn repeatedly over the wound. The taste of the blood roused the wild demon spirit of the beast at once, and had it not been promptly shot, its once loved master would have been its victim! In like manner those little household sins which look not like the destroyers they are, will, one of these days, reveal their true nature and you will have to chase them from your soul and drive them to

their native haunts. It is not safe that they should lodge under your roof! Chase them away before they put you into greater danger. They must be doomed or you will have no peace. They must be destroyed, for your life is in jeopardy.

When the thief cannot break in at the door, himself, he finds a child and puts him through the little window and then the great door is speedily opened. Thus do little sins open the door for a great sin. Men who have appeared to be immune to open temptations to commit a crime have often been enticed by specious allurements. The temptations have come in the garb of virtue and their disguise has not been cast aside until the way of escape has been cut off. “Keep me, then, as the apple of the eye,” means, “keep me from little things that defile and little flaws that disfigure or utterly deface godliness of character.”

4. Do you not think, Brethren, that *the sensitiveness of the organ of vision* may suggest another lesson to be drawn from this prayer, “Keep me as the apple of the eye”? That is to say, make my heart tender and my conscience quick and impressionable? There is nothing more sensitive than the eye. If anything were moved near your hand or arm in the dark, you might not feel its motion, but the eye is keenly perceptive, even of a current of air. It is affected by anything passing near it, as you may readily notice for yourselves. God has made the apple of the eye thus sensitive for its own protection—that it may shrink from rash exposure. So, if we are kept as the apple of the eye, we shall be endowed with this peculiar faculty—a tender sensitiveness that shrinks with nervous trepidation from the presence of evil.

If the eyes grew dull and callous instead of being impressionable, they would be in immediate danger and probably would be soon destroyed. The sensibility of the eye is its own protection—it forecasts the peril and avoids it. Our hearts, my Brethren, must in like manner, to some extent, carry within themselves, by God’s Grace, their own instincts of self-protection. Wesley seized on this thought and paraphrased it aptly when he wrote the verse—

**“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make.
Awake my soul when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.”**

Are there not some men whose senses are never exercised to discern good and evil? They walk in such darkness that they stumble on a sin before they detect it in their path, or a ponderous temptation will *roll on* them and overturn them without their once perceiving the headway it was making, or the necessity of making their escape. There are some nostrils that would not be disgusted at the foulest smells, nor would they be regaled though the daintiest perfumes were loading the air with their fragrance.

But there are other nostrils quick and delicate which soon perceive the noxious odor. It frets their sense while it pollutes the air. The insensitive are exposed to all kinds of disease and pestilence because they perceive not the danger, while those to whom the fume is repulsive would shun it

at once and never rest till the noxious matter that might have bred disease is removed. We want a *spiritual* sensibility that shall be quick and apprehensive of the faintest smell of sin. Only feel that it is loathsome and you will easily convince yourselves that it is dangerous. You will not require the minister to come down and admonish you of his suspicions, or exhort you to forbear the first indications of a wrong practice. You will not need a mother or father to say, "My dear Child, that is a treacherous step you are about to take."

The conscience should be a ready indicator—if in good keeping it would be a wonderful tell-tale. It will startle you from your lethargy. It will arouse you as with an alarm, for it will cry aloud, "You are going astray! You are falling into error! You are wandering after evil! You are setting yourself to do iniquity." God give us this sensitiveness! I delight to see it in young converts. Ah, some of us in the early stages of conviction were half afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong. O that you could keep up that tenderness of heart! It ought to increase.

Be diligent to keep the heart holy, for out of it are the issues of life. With some of you I fear there is a degree of dullness that does not betoken the refinement of your taste in spiritual things. We ought, as we get nearer to Heaven, to become more and more jealous of approximation or contact with anything that defiles, abhorring the very *trail* of the serpent—shuddering at even the appearance of sin—loathing the atmosphere that is corrupted by evil conversation. Keep me, then, like as You keep the eye through its own sensitiveness.

5. Should we not make it our prayer, too, that God will *keep us as the eye ought to be kept*? It should be single. "The light of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is single, your whole body is full of light. But when your eye is evil, your whole body is full of darkness." Keep me single-minded, Lord, consecrated wholly and devoted alone to You. The eye should be clear. Any speck on its retina would obscure our view of the landscape. With "an inlet, so small," as one of the poets writes, "that a grain might close it," the eye needs to be cleansed. God has provided arrangements for this without disturbing the beautiful mechanism of the little orb.

Take heed, Beloved, that the eye of faith is kept clear. We need to be sprinkled with the precious blood and washed with clean water often, that we may be always pure, consciously sanctified. The clean water, you know, is the cleansing water which came with the blood from the heart of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Thereby the conscience is purged and the heart made clean, actively and passively sanctified unto God. The eyes need to be far-seeing. It is a great pity when the eyes can only see a short distance. We strain our natural eyes to see some ship far out at sea that looks, perhaps, like a speck on the horizon. Or we want to stretch our vision far over mountain and valley, river and lake, from some lofty Alp, compassing the entire prospect at a glance.

And oh, it is well when our soul can take a wide view and embrace the grand perspective which Revelation unfolds, free from cloud and vapor, not pestered with the cares of the day so as to obscure the immortal joys that await our arrival at the city of the blessed! It is grand when our view is not earth-bound and absorbed by incidents that transpire within the tick of this clock, but prospecting the fields of light beyond, where moments, hours, days, years, and centuries of years are unknown! Raise your eyes, Christians! Maybe you shall catch a glimpse of the better land—

***“Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers.
Death, like a narrow stream, divides
That heavenly land from ours.”***

May the Lord keep us as the apple of the eye—sensitive, clean, clear, single-eyed, and far-seeing.

My Brethren, the eye is kept and preserved as an ornament. Certainly the most expressive feature of the human body is the eye, and it is the most capable of making the countenance beautiful. Take away the eyes from that fair face—those eyes of hazel or of blue, or those dark eyes that look you through and through and burn your heart as with coals of fire—how dull, unimpassioned and senseless it would be! “A beautiful eye,” it has been somewhere said, “makes silence eloquent. A kind eye makes contradiction assent. And an enraged eye makes beauty itself to be deformed, for it is this little member which gives life to every part about us.”

Take the sparkling eyes away from the sweetest face and how sadly you have marred it. Your marble statues—some of them almost speak—fail to convey the impression of life because there are no eyes. That lack of eyes is lack of all that is lifelike. Let every Christian pray to God that, as the eye is the ornament of the body, he may be kept as an ornament to the Christian Church. What are the ornaments of the Church of God? Are they the wealthy and respectable members? Or are they the learned and intellectual members? These, my dear Friends, are ornaments from man’s too carnal point of view! They will often secure the most notice among their fellows, but they are not ornaments from *God’s* point of view unless there is something higher to commend them than the accidents of rank or education.

The greatest ornaments of the Christian Church are those that labor most diligently, those that pray the most fervently, those that are most filled with love, those that are most Christ-like in temper and disposition, the most humble, the most teachable, the most patient in suffering, the most persevering in service—those who commend the Gospel of the Grace of God by their entire life and conversation—such are the ornaments of the Church of God! And the eyes of faith shed luster on all other features of character. I tell you that when spirits more pure than ours go round about the Church and count the towers there and mark well her bulwarks, it never enters into their thoughts that one part of the building was smeared with the yellow hue of wealth—or that another part of the build-

ing was decorated after the classic manner of Corinth and Athens! They only think of the jasper light and of the sapphire glow of spirituality and holiness as it flashes bright in the sunlight of God over hearts that have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit! Pray that you may be made an ornament of the Church—your light shining before men—being kept as the apple of the eye to shed luster on the saints around and in your degree to irradiate this dark world!

The eye is not only an ornament, but its function in the body is of the greatest usefulness. How sad a privation is the loss of sight, or to lose even a portion of its power how grievous the detriment! The eye is in some respects the most useful part of the mechanism of our bodies. It benefits all our limbs. So, Brethren, ought we to be profitable and conducive to the good of others. When we pray, “Keep me as the apple of the eye,” it behooves us to remember the real interest that attaches to our preservation. Are we worth keeping? Not certainly if we are of no use! Who cares to spare and keep a tree that brings forth no fruit? Or who is zealous to keep an eye that does not see? I suppose those who wear glass eyes would rather not lose them, but I would be bound to say they do not prize them as if they were as tributary to their pleasure and profit as ours are whose eyes are of God’s making and answer His ends.

A genuine Christian will pray to be useful—not to be like a glass eye, a mere counterfeit for appearance’s sake—but being of God’s workmanship in Christ Jesus—that he may be preserved with all his faculties in full vigor, lest his strength should be impaired and spoiled and his capacity to show forth the praises of God, and minister to the welfare of the Church dimmed or utterly extinguished.

My next remark you will, perhaps, think strange and quaint, but as I have not restricted myself to the immediate sense of the metaphor, as limited by the context, I may be allowed to speak of that which relates to the eyes. It occurs to me that Solomon has made this shrewd remark, “The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.” And I would venture to give this a spiritual turn and, in beseeching the Lord to keep me as the apple of the eye, would entreat Him to keep me in *the Head*, that is, to preserve me in *Christ Jesus*. Of what use were the eye of a man if it were not in the head? It would have no vitality if it were taken away from the glorious position of honor which is given to it in the countenance of the living man.

So if we could be divided from our living Head—if we, as members of Christ, could be separated from Him, it were all over with us. When we are united to Him, as the branch is to the vine, we flourish. We bring forth fruit. But if we are separated from Him we are like the dead withered branches that are gathered up and cast behind the wall where all the rubbish is ignobly burned. The best Believer in the world would be only fit for the burning if he were divided from Christ, his living Head. “Because I live you shall live also.” So it stands—Christ’s life is our life. The life of the brain is the life of the optic nerve. The eye lives because the brain lives and because of its place in the head. The life of Christ is the Christian’s

life. You live because of your connection with Christ—because of your vital indissoluble gracious and eternal union with Jesus Christ your Covenant Head!

Be this, then, your prayer, “Lord, let me abide in Christ and may His Words abide in me. Let my thoughts abide in Him. May I meditate much on Him—may my meditation of Him be sweet. Let my purposes and resolves abide in Him. May I be determined to follow Him where ever He goes, to be and to do always in His strength. May my desires always be towards Him, desiring to know Him and to be found in Him—He Himself being the summit of all my hopes and the crown of all my delight. O let my whole soul be in Him! Then shall I be useful. Then shall I be an ornament of the body. Then shall I be preserved and kept.” I commend this prayer to every Believer here. You will often need it—you may need it tonight before you get home.

Pray it in the pew now, that you may have protection from sin—even as you pass along the streets—that you may be preserved to your own door. I have met with persons who have broken their leg on their own stairs. Mind you, do not fall into sin in your own house, where you think you are safest and at times when you could least suppose that you would be in danger. The Lord succor you, and keep you as the apple of the eye. Alas, there are some here to whom this prayer is nothing. They are not Christ’s, they have not believed in Him. Here is another prayer for you. It is this: “Lord, save me, or I perish!”

The fitness of the prayer is obvious, for the reflection appended to it is true. You are near perishing. If you died tonight you must perish forever. “Lord, save me.” He can do it! He *will* if you pray to Him. His precious blood is shed for the remission of sins. He is *always* willing to bless sinners. “Lord, save me, or I perish.” Once saved, you may pray to be kept—and He will keep you.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 17.

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

DIVINE INTERPOSITIONS

NO. 1432

Suggested by the loss of the passenger ship, the "Princess Alice."

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters."
Psalm 18:16.***

I DO not know how you feel, my Brothers and Sisters, at this time, but as for myself, a heavy cloud seems to hang over me all the day. The overwhelming calamity of last Tuesday, so crushing and so far reaching, of which we must have spoken to each other, I suppose, every hour during the past week, cannot be removed from the thoughts of our minds or from the affections of our hearts. The whole of London may well be likened to that ancient city of which we read—"The city Shushan was perplexed." Every man has been asking his fellow, "Have you lost a friend?" and no man wonders when the answer is, "Alas, I have been sorely bereaved." In our own immediate circle we have borne a special share of the grief, for five, at least, of those who are in Church membership with us have been removed from our midst and we can scarcely speak with any of our Brethren without discovering that they have lost some connection or friend.

Alas, that unhappy vessel has sunk with a more precious freight than ever loaded Spanish galleon and her wreck has brought a greater loss to our city than if she had carried untold gold! We cannot help thinking of this dire affliction and, therefore, we had better think of it with some practical purpose. I believe that this sudden grief comes, like every other event, from God, and comes as a voice from God to this, our city—a voice which, we trust, will be heard and regarded. "The Lord's voice cries unto the city and the man of wisdom shall see Your name: hear you the rod, and who has appointed it." (Micha 6:9). We are of the mind of that old Prophet who said, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" (Amos 3:6).

Comes there anything in the form of calamity upon the sons of men without the permission, control and overruling of the Lord? Assuredly not! "The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up." I know that many minds are so stunned by this tremendous blow that they can hardly think of God in connection with it and half wish to believe that the Omnipresent was not there! The problem staggers their reason and they are unable to leave it among the mysteries of faith. As yet they have not gained the confidence of Job who denied that affliction comes out of the dust, but attributed it to the Lord, saying, "He takes away: who can hinder Him?"

Even some who love the Lord and trust Him are somewhat of the mind of Mary and Martha when they said, "Lord, if You had been here, my

brother had not died,” while others who should know better would timidly conceal their belief in an overruling Providence, lest the ribald world should scoff at them. Let them scoff, I say! Our God is none the less glorious because His ways are far above and out of our sight! It is an atheistical thought which would put God out of any place—if He is not everywhere, He is nowhere—Omnipresence is an essential of the Godhead! If His hand rules not over evil, it is not Omnipotent and thus it lacks another essential attribute of Deity. It would be dreadful to suppose Him to have a limited dominion! “His kingdom rules over all.”

We are not as those who believe in two co-existent forces, each supreme, one of whom shall create disasters and the other shall distribute blessings. The Prince of Evil is, according to our faith, subordinate to the great Lord of All! Thus says Jehovah, by the mouth of His servant, Isaiah, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and I create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” He reigns in the calm summer’s day and gives us the precious fruits of harvest, but He is equally present and sovereign in the hurricane which destroys, or the blight which desolates. His Providence speeds the ship to its desired haven, but it is equally His Providence which sinks the ship and its mariners to the bottom of the sea! It is His power which looses the bands of Orion and binds the sweet influence of the Pleiades—His are the lightning as well as the sunbeams, the thunderbolts as well as the raindrops.

He is able to make the Heaven as iron and the earth as brass so that our land shall not yield her increase. He can call for a famine and break the whole staff of bread, for famine, pestilence and war are as rods in His hands. God is everywhere and in all things His hand is present—in the things which seem to us to be evil as well as in the events which appear to us to be good, God is at work! He does no wrong, for God is not tempted by evil, neither tempts He any man! But we speak of physical evil which causes sorrow, pain and death among men and we say that certainly God is there. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, we are sure that no great calamity can befall us apart from Him.

He is not far from us in our deepest sorrow and however we may trace a calamity to the carelessness or the mistake of men, these are but the *second* causes, and we see behind all mere detail the permission of the Lord. If it were not so, mourners would be deprived of the greatest reason for submission and the surest source of consolation. Even where a terrible event is the result of crime, God is not excluded! He shares not the guilt, but He overrules the act. Think of the crucifixion of our Lord and remember that though the sin of it lay heavy upon those who perpetrated it, yet the grand design of it was God’s! Read Peter’s words in Acts—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Who shall deny that God was at Calvary, though sin there reached its culminating point? We freely admit that we do not understand this and, therefore, we do not attempt to explain it—but we believe and adore! Happily, we need not attempt to justify the ways of God to man, for He asks no defense at our hands and deigns not to give any account of His mat-

ters! This is our only resolve, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." Now, the question which has very naturally suggested itself to many is this—If there is a Providence, why does it permit these terrible evils? It is dreadful that human life should be lost on such a scale! God is Omnipotent, nobody doubts that, why, then, does He not interfere to save?

That shall suggest to us the first point of our discourse this morning—that miraculous interpositions in the affairs of this life are not to be expected and we may not hope, literally, to use the words of our text and say, "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." Still, secondly, we shall note that, according to our text, Providential interpositions of another kind are vouchsafed. And thirdly, and best of all, gracious interpositions are given for the salvation of men. Though the Lord does not, nowadays, send from above and take His servants and draw them by miracle out of the waters of the river, yet does He lift us up from the depths of trouble! And especially does He bear us up from the deeps of sin to our eternal salvation, for thus says the Lord, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people from the depths of the sea."

I. First, then, MIRACULOUS INTERPOSITIONS IN THE CALAMITIES OF THIS LIFE ARE NOT TO BE EXPECTED. I am not standing here as an advocate for God to defend His Character because He does not thus interpose, for to objectors His only answer is, "No, but O man, who are you that reply against God?" If you will accuse your Maker, He will not care to answer you. You who have forged the accusation may fashion an answer, if it seems good to you. Yet there is a difficulty which none can deny and that difficulty lies in a fact. Why is there any evil at all, seeing that the good God is almighty and sits upon His Throne? This is the old puzzle which none can answer.

The Negro put it in a very natural form when he asked the missionary, "If God is so much stronger than the devil, why does He not kill the devil and make an end of his mischief?" Just so—that is the top and bottom of the matter. There is the question, but who can answer it? A fool may raise in an hour more objections than the wisest man could remove in a century! Now, the cleverest theory will not alter facts. What you and I may think is a very small matter, may not be, compared with what really is—and it is quite certain that there is moral evil in the world and that there is also a God! It is also evident that there is *physical* evil in the world and yet love is supreme and that the Almighty permits fire and water to destroy His creatures and does not interpose to rescue them—and yet He is full of tenderness and pity.

There are some, of course, who will dare to condemn their Maker and call Him by I know not what horrible names. I have even heard such a word as, "monster," hissed from between proud lips! Again I say it is not worth our while to answer such objectors because such persons are not pervious to explanation nor willing to receive it. And then, again, it is a small matter to the Most High what such persons may think of Him. He does as He pleases and asks no leave from His creatures! But now, for just a minute, let us consider the question which we trust is modestly proposed. Suppose that every time a great danger threatened, we might

expect a miraculous interposition from Heaven, what then? The supposition is not absurd, for there might be such an interposition—we must admit the possibility since God is almighty.

The train is thundering along the iron way. It will dash into another and many lives will be destroyed. But if the Lord willed it, He could put His hand upon the engine and stop it in its full speed! The vessel freighted with 800 lives is about to sink—but if the Lord willed it, He could buoy it up in the hollow of His hand! Yet He does not move! The iron road is strewn with the dead, the river is gorged with corpses! We do not know all the reasons for this non-interference, but yet we think we can see a little, which little we will think upon.

First, such interpositions would change the whole arrangement of the world—it would not be the same place at all. The Lord has made this world and He governs it by certain fixed laws. If those laws were variable and were continually being altered, it would be another form of creation altogether and man had need to be another creature! His physical, moral and even *spiritual* condition would be changed from top to bottom! It was the Lord's arrangement that He should put forth His power in certain ways which we call the Laws of Nature and, by that arrangement He abides. There is no such independent *force* as "Nature," as some are always dreaming! Nor is there any energy in mere Laws of Nature apart from God's own power!

You may write all the laws you like, but there is no power in *laws*—there must be power in the *king* to carry out the laws! All power emanates from God, be it what it may. He is the source and fountain of all the forces which operate throughout creation, but He has been pleased from the beginning to determine that His power shall usually go forth in certain ways and under fixed laws and regulations. He can suspend those laws when He pleases. He can quench the violence of fire, stop the mouths of lions and make water to stand upright as a heap—but He has not often done so—and in these days He *never* does so. I think we can, in a measure, see why, for if such were the case continually, the whole plan and purpose with which He made the present world would have been abandoned and another mode of power would have taken its place.

Remember, too, that whatever the plan of God is, it is now being carried out under the shadow of the Fall. There had been, I suppose, neither pain, nor sickness, nor sighing, nor death had there been no sin. If it had been possible for a race to have multiplied from the glades of Eden and to have gone forth into a wider Paradise as pure and holy as Adam first came from his Maker's hands, I can believe that there would have been no famine, no war, no catastrophe of shipwreck by sea, nor of accident by land. However multitudinous the human race might have become, its records would have been all unstained with agonizing details such as those which blacken the broad-sheets of today.

But, alas, man has fallen and to a race in such a condition it would not be consistent that everything should be of sunlight and summer—there must now be heard the roar of the storm and the cry of death as the fruit of sin. Render calamity impossible and what mark would there be of the

Divine displeasure for man's revolt? Wherein, indeed, would sin differ as to its consequences from obedience and holiness? Think for a little and you will see reason for God's staying His hand from rescue. Furthermore, if interpositions were given to save the lives of only godly men, as some would have it, then *this world* would become the place of judgment which it is not intended to be.

It still remains among many persons as a superstition that if there is an accident and people suffer, there must have been some special *sin* in the victims of the disaster! And yet our Lord has told us that the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above others—and the Galileans who were slain by Pilate were not sinners above other Galileans. I pray you dismiss from your minds the idea that a sudden death is necessarily a judgment! Never draw any inference from the destruction of a building, or the wreck of a ship, or an explosion, or anything of that nature as to the character of the persons who perish, for if you do, you will be guilty of cruel injustice!

What if some gracious man is spared? Ascribe the deliverance to Providence, but do not suppose that those who perished were less gracious than he is! You shall find that men of bad character sometimes escape where saints are left to die. Because I said the other day that Providence had saved a certain godly woman, foolish persons drew the inference that I condemned those who perished! No sentiment could have been further from my mind! I ascribe to Providence death as well as life and draw no inference as to the character of the person! What if a man has found a watery grave in the Princess Alice? Do not therefore imagine that God was angry with him, for he may now be in Heaven and, at any rate, the same wreck carried down with it many of the Lord's beloved!

Now, if God were to interpose and save His own people whenever they were in danger, this world would become the place of judicial separation which it is *not* and is not meant to be! Judgment is reserved for the world to come. When Christ shall descend from Heaven with a shout and sit upon His Great White Throne—then will He separate the tares from the wheat—but now they are to grow together. Then will He put the goats on the left and the sheep on the right, but for the time being they feed in the same pastures. One event happens to them all—as it happens to the fool, so it happens to the wise! This is not the land of judgment, but of long-suffering! This is not the place where God gives sentence, but where He waits patiently. There is a judgment of *nations* in this world. But that of individuals, with rare exceptions, is reserved for the final account.

Beloved, note once again that if God were to interpose in the case of all calamities, it would involve many evils. For, observe, if next year the majority of farmers should refuse to sow the fields—if over whole *nations* the land should be left to produce only weeds—there would be great scarcity of corn. Suppose that in such cases God should interpose and cause harvests suddenly to grow by miracle so that our teeming millions might escape starvation? What would be the consequence? Why, it would encourage idleness everywhere! Men would say, "The Lord is too good to let us

starve and, therefore, we may allow the plow to rust and dance away the hours." Would that be well?

Suppose, again, that when a contagious disease comes into a district, the Lord miraculously prevented it from being fatal, although the carelessness of men may have left fever lairs in rotting, overcrowded houses enough to pollute the very air! Suppose, I say, that we all neglected sanitary laws and then knew that a merciful God would not let the poor people die of fever, or of cholera? Then the filthiness of our cities would increase till they became huge dunghills and man, who is great enough, now, at polluting rivers and defiling God's earth in every imaginable way, would go on to turn the whole earth into one monstrous globe of rottenness! But now even pests and plagues and fevers have their good side—they are watchmen to sound an alarm, prophets to give us warning! They arouse man to discover the laws of his being and thus they benefit the race.

Suppose, again, that whenever there is a likelihood of there being an accident, God were to send an angel at once to interpose and avert the collision or the wreck! What would happen? Why then, of course, every railway and steamboat company might go in for accidents in any quantity, seeing they would be harmless, and might even become attractive! There would be no reason for keeping a watch at the ship's bow and no necessity for brakes or signals. There would be no longer any need to be careful about human life, but we might, each one, be as reckless as he pleased and gratify himself with experiments which could not end fatally! Such a state of things would destroy many of the virtues and render many vices harmless.

I cannot suppose a world regulated upon such a system! I can imagine God divinely interposing and suspending His own Laws, now and then, as pleases Him, for some great purpose of instruction—but it appears wise and good for all concerned that, having made man what he is, the Creator should rather leave him to take the consequence of violating the fixed laws of matter than make those laws variable and uncertain. Again, dear Friends, Divine interpositions of a miraculous sort would not be attended with the advantage to the ungodly which we might suppose. If there were miracles of mercy on the behalf of God's people to snatch them from a watery grave, or from the devouring element of fire, or from the deadly consequences of a collision, then we might expect to have and, naturally should have, miracles of judgment, too!

If you get into the wilderness and manna falls from Heaven and water leaps from the rock, remember you have also entered a land where the earth opens to swallow up Korah, Dathan and Abiram—and where the very sand breeds fiery serpents to sting to death the rebels against God! You cannot have the mercy-wonder interposing without having the judgment-wonder side by side with it! And on the whole it is a more lenient mode of dealing on God's part to let sinners alone and to let one event happen to all men for a while because the long-suffering of God leads the sinner to repentance and the sorrow that falls upon the child of God is blessed to him. If all accidental deaths were *punishments*, it would be a far

more terrible state of things than that which is now before us—and therefore the matter is best as it is.

If we had wonders of miraculous deliverance often before us, they would not impress mankind as we imagine. If God were always suffering the wicked to drown or burn and always snatching the righteous from the midst of every danger, men would not think much of it before long—they might be slightly impressed at first but, by-and-by, they would harden their hearts. In Egypt there was light in the houses of the Israelites when all was dark with the Egyptians and God smote Egypt heavily while He was blessing Israel. But this fact did not affect Pharaoh, for he only hardened his heart the more. When in the wilderness the Israelites, murmuring against God, saw some of their companions swallowed up and destroyed, it very little affected them, for soon after, they began murmuring against Moses and charged him with destroying the people of God!

All things considered, the arrangement is best as it is and the Lord knows it is so and, therefore, continues the method of letting His physical Laws take their course although occasionally it may destroy hundreds of lives. Neither would it be so great a gain to the godly, as some imagine, always to have their lives spared in times of danger. We have to die some day, Brothers and Sisters, and we have nothing here below which might make us anxious to postpone the hour of our departure. It is as well to die one way as another—at least there is small choice in the modes of death. If one were asked by what death he should glorify God, he might be long in the choosing and would probably choose that which would be most painful.

Some are afraid to go to sea lest they should be drowned and yet there is little reason for the fear. When a captain was asked whether he was not afraid to go to sea he said, “Not at all.” “But your father was drowned, wasn’t he, Captain?” “Yes.” “Your grandfather was drowned?” “Yes.” “Your brothers have been drowned?” “Yes.” “Are you not afraid to go to sea?” “No,” he said, “not at all, for I may ask you the same question. Your father is dead?” “Yes.” “Where did he die?” “In his bed.” “And his father, where did *he* die?” “In his bed.” “And his father?” “In his bed.” “And your brothers, where have they died?” “In their beds.” “Are you not, then, afraid to go to bed?” Certainly we must die *somewhere* or other and we shall not die one single minute before the ordained period!

I am a sufficient believer in predestination to feel sure that every bullet has its billet and that no death can befall the man whom God ordains to live. God has appointed all things and His people are safe everywhere, whether they live or die. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.” The powers of darkness cannot harm us though they put forth all their craft and power! The Lord has declared that he who has made God his refuge shall abide beneath His shadow and, therefore, we may go where duty calls us without trembling and we may die when God bids our spirit return without the slightest fear!

We ask no immunity from death! Why should we be absolved from it? It is better to die than to live full often, inasmuch as it is better to be in Heaven than to remain in banishment below. So there I leave that matter

of the non-interposition of God to think very briefly of interpositions which do occur.

II. PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS ARE FREQUENT AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE—they can often say, “He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.” Divine interpositions come in the way of deliverance from floods of trouble. Have you experienced them? How strikingly has God delivered some of us! What remarkable preservations of life have we enjoyed—not *miraculous*, certainly—but full of wonder for all that! We have as much reason to praise God for our deliverances as if the Laws of Nature had been suspended, for we have been quite as completely preserved. What helps we have had in the hour of sorrow when, one after another, our beloved have been taken from us, or when they have gone to the very edge of the grave and yet have been spared to us!

How often have we been helped in business troubles and saved from impending failure or serious loss! In times of slander, when our character has been belied, how graciously has God brought to light our innocence! I say again, not by *miracle*, but yet very marvelously has our God delivered us! In answer to prayer, God works in His own way for the good of His people without stopping one single wheel of Providence. Without violating one single Law of Nature, God is able to work the same end as we sometimes wish He would work by a miracle! He will not quench the violence of the flame, but yet a precious life shall be snatched from a burning house!

He will not prevent the water from drowning and yet in how many cases in answer to prayer have vessels been saved and the lives of men preserved by unexpected incidents! He will not stop the ordinary run of business, nor alter the way in which the world goes on and yet He knows how to help the poor, to bless the struggling tradesman and to bring up the righteous from deep distress. A miracle is a rough procedure, after all, if I may dare say so, compared with the Lord's present methods! The grandest achievement of all is for the Lord God to work miraculous results *without* miracles—to produce by common means, in answer to the cry of His servants, that which appears to be impossible without a suspension of natural laws!

See how the Lord allows all the forces of Nature to drive on in their ordinary course and yet the outcome of it all is that His servant is delivered and His prayers answered! God does this by varied ways. We have known some who have been brought out of deep waters by having health suddenly restored to them, or by having the health of those upon whom their maintenance depended renewed. This is God's mercy and let Him be praised for it! Sometimes circumstances have greatly changed—a man has been going downhill for years as to his business, but something quite unexpected has happened and he has just as gradually risen to a position of comfort. My Friends, believe in the unexpected! I was about to utter a paradox and say expect the unexpected! Believe that God will do for you something which you know nothing about!

The Lord always has a plan in reserve. You think He has reached His last and you will be left to perish, but it is not so. At the right moment He will bring forth some new and surprising stroke of wisdom which He did

but postpone to the particular moment so that when He performs it and draws His servant out of deep waters, the praise and the glory will the more fully redound to His name! We have known the Lord save His servants in the hour of trouble by touching the hearts of their enemies—those that were most unkind and cruel have suddenly become the most generous and thoughtful! At other times enemies have died or have been put to confusion like the wicked Haman when he plotted the destruction of the Jews. The Lord has hanged up Haman that His chosen might be delivered! Mordecai has gone from the king's gate to the king's house and Haman has ascended from the king's table to the king's gallows!

I cannot instance all the ways in which the Lord makes clear the pathway of His people, but this I know, that often in our lives some of us have had to pause and sing, "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." Some will not see the hand of God, but I guarantee you, Brethren, those who have been delivered out of the deep waters will see it! Their experience teaches them that God is yet among us. Others may talk about "Laws of Nature," as if God were gone to sleep and had left the world wound up like a watch to go without Him—but those who have been in sore affliction and tribulation and have been brought out of it will forever bless and extol Him who is a very present help in trouble!

Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, the way by which we have come is as full of God as this city is full of men! There are deserts which the foot of man has never trod, but there is no wilderness where the foot of God has not been. What do you say, my beloved Friends? You are not fanatics, neither has the enthusiasm of devotion carried you out of your minds, but are you not conscious of distinct Providential deliverances? "Conscious of them," you say, "indeed, if we did not speak of them with joy and thankfulness, the very stones of the street would cry out against us for our wicked silence! Many and many a time has He sent from above and rescued us! We are, like Moses, drawn out of the waters and like he, we would be servants of the Lord."

III. Now, thirdly, INTERPOSITIONS IN MATTERS OF GRACE ARE THE CHIEF OF ALL. As best I can, I should like to conclude with a few words upon this subject. God does not, even to save the souls of His chosen, violate any of His Laws. "The soul that sins, it shall die." "Every transgression shall have its just punishment and reward." Yet the Lord would save His people. How should He make these two things agree—how should He be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? It is in the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ that we see how one Law has been made to counteract and yet to honor another—to remove its direful consequence—and yet to make it honorable!

You remember that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered—and there was a law made by Ahasuerus that on a certain day the people of all countries might gather themselves together and kill the Jews. Haman had promulgated this royal edict far and wide and the king could not alter it. Mark the wise method by which the cruel law was met—they made another law which was that the Jews might defend themselves—

might slay those who tried to kill them! And the Jews could take all their property for a spoil. This met the case, though no edict was revoked.

Now God does not and never will alter His Law that sin must be punished! But forth comes another Law that, inasmuch as the first sin was committed by a *representative* man, a representative man should be permitted to come in and bear the penalty which was a consequence of the sin! This has been done! No Law of God has been broken and yet God's mercy has had free course! Now let us think a minute or two upon this great salvation and how it is described in the text. "He sent from above." Oh, blessed Lord, the whole race of man was sinking in the old vessel of the Covenant of Works which had been cut in pieces by the first sin! They were all going down, en masse, to destruction!

Then You did send from above! But who was He that was sent? Not the brightest of the cherubim nor the chief of the angelic band, but HE came—the Messenger of the Covenant, whom we delight in—the Son of God, the Only-Begotten of the Most High, the brightness of His Father's Glory! He was the Messiah, the Sent One, and He descended from above that He might work out our redemption! Brethren, let your hearts leap for joy as you behold the Messenger of the Covenant of Grace, even Jesus Christ, the adorable and ever-blessed Son of the Highest!

Now, note the next word, "He took me." When we had lost all hold on God, then did this blessed Messenger take hold on us. He accepted us as the Father's gift to Him and accepted a charge as the great Shepherd of the sheep that He would keep and preserve those whom His Father gave Him though they were ready to perish! Then what a hold He took on us! He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham by becoming a Man! Baby in Bethlehem, Laborer at Nazareth, suffering Man at Gethsemane, You have taken, indeed, a hold on us, such as You would not relax in life or death! "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and so being sent from above He took hold upon us.

Then what a wondrous drawing took place after that grip had once been given! He drew us out of many waters, entering into them, Himself, plunging into the rivers of grief and infirmity and then into the waters of the curse, being "made a curse for us." Descending deep, as it were, into the very depths of Hell to bring up the Lord's jewels, that they might be delivered from the Pit! Oh, the matchless lifting up which He gave to us when He drew us out of many waters by His own suffering life and agonizing death!

Fix your eyes, Brethren, upon the work of Jesus! See the human race all sinking! Behold how hopeless and helpless it is and see Him descending, walking the waters, snatching with His own right hand sinking men and women from the billows of destruction and landing them on the Rock of Ages, putting a new song into their mouths! As you feel that you are partakers of this deliverance, let each one of you say, "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." This was the great deed, itself, but, just a minute, I ask you to remember the application of it to your own experience. Do you remember when you felt everything sinking beneath you?

My own self-wreck will help me to describe your experience. I had sailed on gallantly in the good vessel of my own works, hearing music and full of delight, never dreaming of danger! But suddenly the Law of God came along, moving unswervingly in its terrible course and it cut into the vessel of my works, as though it had been vanity itself! Down it began to sink and I with it! I looked around for something I could lay hold upon, but nothing availed. The priest was there and offered me his inventions, but I knew him of old and knew that he would sink as well as I. What, then, could he do for me? Ceremonies were there, but I knew that they prove bubbles to a man who trusts in them. Hopes of salvation by self-mortification were there and the like, but they clearly could not bear the weight of such a sinner as I was.

I sank, I sank, nor had I will or wish to be saved, nor did I struggle for life! Yet Jesus came, whose will of Grace precedes our will, whose purpose of love outruns our desire for salvation. "He took me." Well do I remember His grasp! He took me and made me more conscious of my danger than I had been before. He took me, by His Holy Spirit, and I knew that He had taken me, for I began to feel His grip tightening upon me! He drew me gradually to look at Him, to trust Him and to leave myself and all my hopes entirely in His hands. Then He drew me right out of the many waters and made my heart sing for joy!

Do you not remember the time with yourself? As you look with wonder upon some friend who has been rescued from the great calamity of this week, I want you to feel that you may look with equal wonder upon *yourself*, for you have experienced a greater rescue! You have been delivered from sinking into the Pit that has no bottom—a sinking down in sin and into the lower depths of corruption! Jesus came from Heaven. He took you, He drew you out of many waters, therefore praise and bless His name! You were too anxious to hope and yet He taught you to hope in His mercy! You were too despairing to struggle, but He made you exercise holy violence to enter the kingdom! You were too weary and despondent to trust, but He led you to faith! His Divine Spirit worked all your works in you and here you are, sitting in this House of Prayer, this morning, to say, "He has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling."

Now, I should not wonder if since then you have been pretty nearly shipwrecked as to your spiritual hopes and have a second and a third time been rescued! You have begun to grow somewhat cold and you have wandered from the Lord and you have, therefore, dreaded the total destruction of all true religion within your spirit. Then you have cried out in fear, "I have been a hypocrite, or a mere formalist and shall perish, after all." But when you were ready to give all up under the temptation of the powers of darkness, the Lord has again restored you! Has He not sent from above and taken you out of the deep, yet again? Yes, blessed be His name, He has sought you and led you back to His ways! If I address a backslider who feels as if he were sinking deeper and deeper, I would pray for him that he may yet know how Christ can save a sinking Peter and bring a runaway Jonah to the shore again.

Last of all, we shall soon come into the many waters of death. Sooner, perhaps, than we think. To some, the stream of death is very shallow. We have known certain of the saints go over dry-shod, singing all the way. They can hardly have been conscious of death, nor have known when they were last on earth and when they were first in Heaven. But there are others who have to cross Jordan at a time when it overflows its banks and, like Christian in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” they are up to their necks in the stream and need words of comfort. You remember how one said, “Fear not, Brother, I feel the bottom and it is good”? There is a rocky bottom all the way across! No slippery sand nor sucking mud, but sound rock from shore to shore—and however deep it is, it is never so deep as to drown a Believer’s hope nor destroy his soul!

Yet I can imagine the best of saints to be flooded with many troubles in their last hours—physical weakness, depression of spirit, temptations of Satan, family difficulties—all increase the swellings of Jordan. Do you know what will happen? He will send from above! He will take you and He will draw you out of many waters—and you shall rise to Glory! What a Heaven of heavens above others will you feel when you go right up from the depths to the heights! To leap right away from “de profundis,” to, “in excelsis”—from the death-sweat and the expiring faintness to the ecstasy and the ineffable Glory—how transcendent the bliss!

What an exchange it will be, Brothers and Sisters, for those who have grown old and decrepit, or for those who could scarcely say even a *word* to testify their dying faith, to find themselves, all of a sudden, rid of every ache and pain and all their withering flesh—and to be disembodied in perfect liberty, charmed with the Beatific Vision of their Lord from whom they are never to part again! Why, I think we might almost choose the death-road of the two! Some are very fond of expecting that their Lord will surely come in time to prevent their dying. Ah, well, you may be very thankful if it happens, but I do not think it is the way I shall go, nor can I say that I envy you the prospect in which you delight.

In Heaven you will come to us who die and ask us—“What was it to fall asleep in Jesus? What was the feeling of putting off the body? What was the joy of being made like our Covenant Head in death?” I do not say that you will regret that you did not descend into the tomb, but of this I am sure—none of us who shall sleep will think that you had any preference over us!—

**“Where should the dying members rest,
But with their dying Head?”**

If the Master went that way, descending into the sepulcher, and so up by the hill of Resurrection to the golden gate, we will not even envy Enoch and Elijah, though they were permitted to take the reserved route and enter the City by the rear gate! It shall be all well with us if we are resting in Jesus, for at the last He will send from above and take us and draw us out of many waters. To His name be praises! Amen.

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BLESSINGS MANIFOLD AND MARVELOUS NO. 3474

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1915.

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

*“He delivered me, because He delighted in me.”
Psalm 18:19.*

THE experience of Believers has much in common. The language in which they are known to express it bears a close resemblance. You may often take the language out of one good man’s mouth and put it into the mouth of another without committing any violence. The words of David will doubtless suit hundreds and thousands of you who fear the Lord. You will be able to lay hold of this sentence, full many of you, I hope, with the hands of appropriation and be enabled, by God the Holy Spirit, to say, as he said, “He delivered me because He delighted in me.”

These words may suggest to us *a pleasant fact to sing about*—“He delivered me”—*a precious Truth of God to think about*, “because He delighted in me.” *And a proper course to set about*—since His delight in me has issued in my deliverance, let my delight in Him produce a response of gratitude! “He delivered me.” Here is—

I. A FACT IN THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE SAINT which may well provoke the gratitude and inspire the song of him who has witnessed such amazing Grace! We need not disentomb the tale of David’s rescue from peril—let us take our own narrative. And how can I invoke the memory of this better than by referring to some points in John Bunyan’s wonderful allegory? As pilgrims to the Celestial City, we have often had to sing, “He delivered me.” You remember well, when you resided in the City of Destruction, you breathed the same atmosphere, followed the same fashions and indulged the same lusts of the flesh that others did. Prone to sin, and prompt to participate in other men’s sins, you mingled with them in their unhallowed pursuits. You were enemies to God and yet you were on good terms with yourselves! You were at a distance from the great Sun of Righteousness and, instead of sighing for the Light of God, you sought satisfaction in darkness. What you once were—an alien from God and a stranger to His House—you would now be, had He not delivered you! It was Divine Grace which made you restless and put it into your heart to be uneasy. You saw that the wrath of God must rest upon the ungodly. You heard a voice in your ears, “Escape; escape for your life! Look not behind you! Flee to the mountains lest you be consumed.” If you have forsaken the drunkard’s haunts, if you have broken off the swearer’s profane tongue, if the pleasures of sin have ceased their fascination, you must ascribe it to your Redeemer and say, “He delivered me,” for it is Grace that has rescued you from the destroyers!

Do you remember the time when you first set out as a pilgrim for the better country? You ran as best you could. Bright hopes and cheery prospects enlivened you as you thought of entering into the Celestial City. But all of a sudden you were bewildered with doubts and fears. You had fallen into the Slough of Despond! In that miserable plight some of you remained for months. It was my misfortune to be there for nearly five years—and I found it a terrible place! Fears of dying haunted us, and equal fears of living. A dread of Hell came over us and a dreary apprehension that we would soon be swallowed up as those that went down alive into the Pit! With what cold shudders, or with what hot tears some of you must recall that unhappy season when you cried with Job, “O, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto His seat!” You had become the companion of dragons and of owls, and your soul chose strangling rather than life. It is not so with you now. Your face shines—the oil of joy is upon it! Your throat is no longer hoarse with groaning. You can sing a song to your Well-Beloved touching your Beloved. Who made the change? Why, dear Heart, I am sure you can say, “He delivered me! It was His kind hand that snatched me from the mire, lifted me up out of the horrible Pit, and set my feet upon a rock.”

You have not forgotten, dear Friends—in fact, the felicities of Heaven can never be erased from your memory! O, the weight of that burden which pressed you down when your sins laid heavy on your soul. You walked despondingly enough along the road. Christian worship had no charms to enliven you. Did you come where God’s people were singing? You said, “I would, but cannot sing.” Or if they prayed, you likewise excused yourself, “I would, but cannot pray.” Your sins were so harassing that they haunted your mind, vexed your brain and terrified your imagination. What schemes to get rid of them, or to ease your heart of conscious guilt, you resorted to! And yet you got worse, rather than better. You tried to condone your past bad works by doing some fresh good works, but their defects were so palpable that they only aggravated your sore. You resorted to ordinances and ceremonies and you discovered that they were mere quackery, a vile empiricism void of healing virtue, but full of deadly opiates! You seemed as if you would be bent double with your sins! You cried, “O God, my sins, my sins, my sins! How can I be delivered from them?”

And now let me wake up your tender recollections. Do you remember how Christ was evidently set forth crucified before your eyes—how you saw One hanging upon a tree in agonies and blood—and how, as you looked to Him, you felt the cords that bound you begin to crack, and the burden that oppressed you presently roll away? Do you remember how you turned round to seek for it, but it was gone? You sought for it, but it could not be found! You saw, as it were, an open sepulcher, the very sepulcher where once the Savior lay—into that your sins had rolled—there had they been buried forever! Oh, you can sing as you think of this, “He delivered me! He delivered me!” ‘Twas the mighty hand of the Savior that lifted that intolerable load from off you and set you free, so that you

could exultingly say, "I am forgiven! Through the Savior's precious blood I am forgiven! His death my ransom price has paid!"

Since that time your song has swollen and become more sweet and loud. You have added many fresh stanzas to it, but the refrain is still the same, "He delivered me! He delivered me!" A grievous distress befell you when, after you lost your burden, you met with one called, "Adam the First," or, "Old Adam." Do you recollect his inviting you to his house? With pleasant, winsome speech, he told you that the road you were going was very rough—that heavy toil and hard fare must be looked for through the whole course of the pilgrimage—and that he would recommend you to indulge yourself with the bounties of nature, rather than deny yourselves with the austerities of faith. He invited you to go home with him and he would let you marry one of his three daughters and then he would make you his heir! Did you not accept his invitation and go home with him and see his three daughters? The wonder is that you did not marry one of them. Their names you know. The Lust of the Flesh—she was the eldest, and very agreeable in her manners. The Lust of the Eyes—she was the second, and the more you gazed at her, the more she fascinated you! The youngest born, but by far the most imposing in stature and deportment, was The Pride of Life. You went home to the old man's house and when you saw those three daughters, your heart began to beat, and your thoughts were fixed on their dowries. Then he said, in his patronizing manner, "All these things will I give you, and you can still be a pilgrim. You can be a Christian without observing any strict vows of sanctity! Little blemishes and trivial inconsistencies will pass unnoticed if you clothe yourself with the mantle of a comely profession. Scruples of conscience may be easily quieted. If you are as good as your neighbors, they cannot upbraid you." But you were given Divine Grace to run away! You shut your ears against the enticing words—you escaped! How was it, then, that you did not fall a victim to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eyes, or to the pride of life? What reason can you assign but this—"He delivered me!" How marvelous your deliverance! Your steps had well-near gone—your feet had almost slipped—but in the moment when you would have perished, he interposed! Therefore, let His name be praised!

Since that, do you recollect going through the Valley of Humiliation, and fighting with Apollyon? We have not merely to contend with a trinity of sensual lusts, but we have to wage war with Satan, himself! Some of the younger disciples here do not know what this means, but the veterans in the army understand Bunyan's description. Well do some of us remember when we stood foot to foot with the great adversary, hour after hour, and how at last we fell—and his foot was upon us and he said, "Now will I destroy your soul." At that very moment, when the dragon's foot seemed to crush all life out of you, you were enabled to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." How was it that you escaped out of such a terrible conflict? Must you not sing very

sweetly and very loudly, "He delivered me! He delivered me! Blessed be His name!"

Amidst all your travels, have you never passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have you not experienced the gloom of darkness where your spirit was so desponding that you did not know what to do? Though you had been a Christian for many years, you could not discern the hope of your calling! Though you had come to the full assurance of understanding, you could not take hold of one Covenant Promise with the slightest confidence! Though you had been known aforetime to sing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," He hid His face from you! You sought Him, but you found Him not. In sermons you found no refreshment. In prayer no communion. You were reduced to such a low state of mind that you seemed as though you were counted with them that go down into the Pit. You were so haunted with gloomy doubts and fears, that you cried out, "Your wrath lies hard upon me and You have afflicted me with all Your waves." Through that perilous and gloomy valley you walked! Out of that valley, at last, you came into the bright clear sunshine! And when you sat down and looked back upon the place of dragons and the land of terrors, you could sing, "He delivered me." Yes, Lord, You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling! Unto Your name be all the praise!

Since then, my dear fellow traveler on the road to Canaan, you have had many remarkable deliverances. Cover up your face and be ashamed! I feel that I may well blush, as I confess to wandering in Bye-Path Meadow. Do you remember going over the stile because the road was rough? You thought if you went just on the other side of the hedge, it would be so much more pleasant. Do you remember being lost at night? Do you remember, above all, the Giant Despair, who locked you up in his dungeon? Do you remember with sorrow, how wandering from the right way soon brought on sickness of heart and despair? You, Mr. Much-Afraid, have good reason to sing, "He delivered me," when you remember how you were fetched out of the dungeon! And you, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, you, too, lay shut up there, but He delivered you! He who slays despair and puts doubts to flight, He came to your rescue, even though your own sins had brought you into that sad plight. Laud His name as you recollect what wonders He has done for you—and what loving kindness He has shown towards you!

And now, it may be, some of us are going through the Enchanted Ground. I sometimes think that such is the condition of a great majority of pilgrims, now-a-days. The Enchanted Ground was a place where men felt drowsy and had a tendency to slumber and sink into a long and eternal sleep. Is that your temptation, Friend? I know it is mine. I have a sluggish, drowsy soul. I wish I could keep awake and vigorous in my Master's service, but the tendency of my drowsy spirit is to get cold and inert. And I suppose it is the same with most of you. How is it, then, that you have not gone to sleep, that you have not given up all diligence and lost all heart for God's ways? Surely you must say, "He delivered me!"

I would not detain you longer, however, on this retrospect, except that I have two more scenes to bring before you. Did you ever stand and look at that hole in the hill, of which Bunyan speaks, and which he says was the backdoor to Hell? He says that, although Ignorance appeared to have gone almost all the way to Heaven, he was bound and taken back. Some of us have seen, in fact, that which he so touchingly describes in metaphor. We have known members of Christian Churches who have held an honorable position in the eyes of their fellow men, for 10 or 20 years, prove themselves to be detestable hypocrites, prone to manifold vices and to reprobate every good work! They have not taken, like drunkards and swearers, the broad road down to the Pit, but they have committed their transgressions in secret—worn the masks of profession, kept company with saints—and gone by the back door to meet the doom of sinners! I shudder as the procession passes before my mind's eye, of ministers, deacons, Elders and influential professors, who have gone through that backdoor. What to say, I know not. My soul is bowed down. "O God, I had gone there myself, had You not delivered me!" I think you must all feel the same if you know anything of the corruptions of your own heart. Even you, my venerable Brothers and Sisters, who have been preserved so many years in the wilderness, if it were not for the Grace of God, you, too, concerning faith, had made shipwreck—and so have perished, even in the harbor's mouth!

We shall soon reach the last struggle. Jordan is only a narrow stream which parts us from the land of spirits and we shall soon pass through it. But its floods are cold and it is not easy for flesh and blood to anticipate dying with complacency. "But be of good courage, Beloved," we have said up to this time, "He has delivered me." He who has been our Helper will not forsake us. Be assured we shall sing that at the last, and should the angels who meet us on the other side ask how we endured the struggle of the death pang, we will, each of us, bear the same testimony—"He delivered me!"

I said this was a hope to cultivate, that you might sing for joy in the article of death when heart and flesh fail. I hope that you will. Let me encourage you, Christian people, to sing a great deal more than you do. Of old London, in the Puritan time, it was said that you might have heard songs and prayers in well-near every house as you walked at the breakfast hour from St. Paul's to Eastcheap. Family worship was then the prevailing custom! It would not be so now in any town in England—the more the pity. I hear the waggoner in the country, and the costermonger in the city, humming a tune or singing a song. Why should not you, my Friends, enliven your listless intervals with a hymn? The world has its popular music—why should not we stir up some soul-inspiring melodies? Soldiers go to battle with martial airs—let us go to our battle with the songs of Zion! When the sailors are tugging and pulling at the rope and weighing the anchor, they send up a cheery shout and they work better for it, too. Christian Friends, while you work, lighten the toil with sacred song! Serve God with gladness! I have often been charmed at eventide on

the canals at Venice to hear the gondoliers sing in chorus some glorious old chant. So, Christians, as you steer your vessels to Heaven, and tug at the oar, sing as you row, sing as you work! Sing, for you have much to sing about! Be glad, and praise the Lord who has delivered you! And now we have—

II. A PRECIOUS TRUTH TO THINK ABOUT.

“He delighted in me.” “He delivered me because He delighted in me.” Deliverance from sin, deliverance from evil propensities, deliverance from spiritual enemies—all such deliverances bear evidence of God’s love to us. Temporal mercies betoken the freeness of the Divine bounty, but they are never bestowed as the earnest of God’s special love. Such inferior gifts He often lavishes in abundance upon those who are not His people. Spiritual blessings He reserves for His own redeemed, regenerate family! Their value is enhanced by their significance, because they are proofs of His eternal love towards us. While they grant us safe conduct through the wilderness, they guarantee to us eternal life when these pilgrimage days are over and done. If you have experienced the kinds of deliverance I have been describing, you have many tokens of His good will and the tenderness with which He delights in you.

I shall not talk much about this, but I hope you will think much about it. How much He delights in you it is not possible to say. *The Father delights in you* and looks upon you with doting love—like as a father takes pleasure in his child, so does He rejoice over you. And Jesus delights in you. He saw in you the recompense of His agonies, the purchase of His blood, the partakers of His Glory. And the Holy Spirit delights in you. He has formed your heart anew and made you a temple for Him to dwell in and, therefore, He watches you with jealous care. Does it not seem well-near incredible that God should ever take delight in His creatures? He is so eternally happy in Himself, so infinitely blessed, so supremely glorious. Surely His delights cannot be enhanced or diminished by the welfare or the adversity of such worms as we are! Yet He certainly delighted in David and He most surely does delight in every one of those who put their trust in Him! Nor does He merely say that He delights in us, now, but He assures us that He did delight in His people long before the world was made! He wrote their names in His book. He ordained them. In His decrees He had them before His mind’s eye. He delighted in them before ever He laid the foundation of the earth, or stretched the canopy of the skies! Why was this? Some suppose that it was because He foresaw they would be good and deserving of His esteem. I cannot see anything that is attractive in rebellious men, in sinful mortals! I dare say you can all join with me in echoing the sentiment of our hymn—

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

The reason for God’s delight we cannot tell. It is hid in God’s eternal breast. This only we know, that He delights in us because we are the objects of His choice. From among the dense masses of mankind He chose us. In Infinite Sovereignty He said, “They shall be Mine in the day when I

make up My jewels.” He ordained us to be vessels of honor fitted for the Master’s use and He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover, He delights in us because, in addition to having chosen us, He has *bought* us. Christ has paid too dearly for His people not to love them. When He looks into the face of the penitent sinner, He sees the reflection of His own tears and languish, yes, and of His bloody sweat! He sees His own wounds and recollects the price they cost—and the purchase He paid.

They are precious to Him because of the power He has exerted upon them in making them His workmanship. We prize a thing sometimes that has not any intrinsic value, for the sake of the skill and workmanship bestowed upon it. The Holy Spirit has put out the force of His Omnipotence to construct a Christian. It takes as much Divine Energy to make a saint as to create a world and, therefore, God rejoices in every one of His elect as being the work of His hands—the very choice design of His heart.

Yet more, He delights in us because *there is a relationship established* whereby we are made partakers of a Divine Nature. This is a Truth of God to be spoken of very reverently. The angels are not related to God—they are His creatures—but MAN is next-of-kin to the Deity! He whom the heavens adore as God Over All, blessed forever, has taken our nature and is a Man like ourselves! The Lord Jesus Christ, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and identified Himself with our circumstances! The Son of Man is the Son of the Highest! In Christ there is a relationship, a kindred, an affinity between man and God—the Creator and the creature whom He created in His own image! Hence the delight He takes in us.

But to go farther, there is an alliance yet closer predicted in Scripture, wherein Christ, being married to His Church, shall develop the great mystery, whereby, as husband and wife are one flesh, so there shall be an eternal indissoluble union between Christ and His Church. Oh, mysterious union! Blessed cause of delight! Like the head delights in the members, after such manner the Lord Jesus delights in every saved sinner who is vitally united to Himself!

The day, Beloved, comes on apace when Christ will prove His delight in all His people, by calling their bodies from the grave and reuniting their souls with their risen frames! They shall be clothed upon with His glorious majesty and made to sit upon His throne with Himself. Then the world will know that, though they were “despised and rejected of men,” as He was, they were the delight of God—and He will forever delight in them! “Because He delighted in me, therefore He delivered me.”

I cannot convey to you the full sense of these manifold and marvelous blessings. I can only talk about them. But I pray God the Holy Spirit to make the reflections as sweet to you as they have been to me. My heart seems to leap at the thought that the Most High should take any delight in me. I know He has delivered me, all honor to His name! I know I am no longer what I once was, glory be to His dear love! He has saved me from my sins and I draw an inference, the correctness of which I cannot

doubt, that He would not have delivered me if He had not delighted in me! Do draw that inference, each one of you, for yourselves. If God has delivered you, He delights in you! But there are some of you who never were delivered. You are still in bondage, still the slaves of sin. Yet, remember, the Gospel is still preached to you. "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Trust Christ, poor Soul, and you shall be delivered, and that deliverance shall be to you the evidence that you were the objects of God's electing love, and that you shall be written on His heart forever! A word to the wise. One word to the wise is enough, though twenty words to the foolish would be of no use. Here is—

III. A RESOLUTION TO BE ACTED UPON.

You sang it just now. I want you to act it out in your lives—

***"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn!
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return."***

It is the least you can do if He delight in you, to delight in Him. Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid there are many of us who do not take a delight in our religion. Then I should advise you to challenge the quality of your profession, for though genuine religion does not always yield delight, that is only because of the infirmity of the creature. True Grace in the heart, a conscience void of offense—in a word, the life of a consecrated man should be a perennial fountain of joy! Some people go to their place of worship because they think they ought. Their legality holds them in constant bondage. "You shall not. You shall not," is the burden of their creed. They never rejoice. Their eyes never sparkle—they never think of going up to the House of God with the festive joy of those that welcome the holiday. Ah, my dear Friend, I advise you to see whether you have a sound conversion, for those who truly love God exalt in His name. What if they have their troubles, still their faith and their fellowship are the blessings, not the bane, of their mortal existence. What if they have their cares and anxieties, still the cheer and palliatives are never wanting while they can cast their care upon Him who cares for them! His service is their solace. Their sorrow is that they cannot serve Him more! Christian, delight yourself in the Lord, and you shall have the desire of your heart!

But then your resolution will not only be to delight in God, but to show it. He delighted in you and, therefore, He delivered you. You delight in Him and, therefore, you serve Him. What can you do to express your gratitude? You are saved—how can you extol His great salvation? Perhaps you are doing a little, but can you not do more? Is there not some fresh thing that you can do for Jesus? Can you not get new crowns for His head, Beloved? Let us give Him fresh praise and if there is any fresh branch of usefulness, any new mode of serving Him which we have not yet tried, let us ask for Grace to try it now! And as for the good old works in which we have been engaged, oh, for fresh fire that we may do them better! I would that we served God with more vigor. It is not more preaching we need, but more *fiery preaching!* It is not merely to multiply the number of our prayers, but the need of more earnest pleadings, more fer-

vent intercessions. The service that we render is too languid and heartless—we need to summon our whole heart, and soul, and strength in untiring efforts to do His will and speed the triumph of His glorious Gospel! By the vision of the thorn-crowned head. By the five wounds of Him who died in agony. By the mangled, murdered body of your blessed Lord suffering unto death for you, I do implore you, the servants of God, to lay yourselves as living sacrifices upon the altar of Jesus Christ! You do, some of you, profess to love Him, but you never speak of Him! You say you serve Him, but what do you do? You profess to “love your God with zeal so great that you could give Him all,” and what, after all, do you give Him? Oh, how much outward religion is nothing but inward hypocrisy! How much of our talk about religion is mere gossip! God save us from vain talk and impart to us a living energy, so that our deeds may proclaim our faith! Oh, may we spend and be spent in the Master’s service till we shall—

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

As for those who know not God, they have no capacity to serve Him. My prayer to God for you is that He may bring you to see Christ Crucified. When you put your trust in Him, you shall be delivered. Then you shall sing, “He delivered me because He delighted in me.” And after that it shall be your welcome mission to go and tell what great things He has done for you. May this be the joyous occupation of all of us! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* These were your grave clothes. You were wrapped up in them. No, this was your tomb! You were shut up in it, as in a great stone coffin—“Dead in trespasses and sins.”

2. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.* You were once no better than the workshop of the devil. He is the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, as the blacksmith works in his forge. When you hear foul language, when you see bad actions, these are the sparks coming out of the chimney that let you know who is at work within, down below. What a dreadful thing it is—a man dead to all that is good, but alive through the indwelling of the devil that is within him! “The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.”

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* Not children of God, even as some profanely assert when they talk about the universal fatherhood of God. You were children of wrath, even as others. And the best of men were no better than others by nature. They were as dead, as much under the influence of Satan, as much under the influence of the lusts of

the flesh as others are who are left where they are. It is only Sovereign Grace that makes us to differ. “Were by nature,” not by error—by nature! Not by a mistake, not by a few actions, but by nature, the children of wrath, even as others! See what you used to be? Let this make you humble. See what you would have been? Let this make you grateful. “You has He quickened.” He has put life into you. He has made you quit your graves. He has made you come from under the dominion of Satan and the devices of your own heart. Will you not bless His name tonight?

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.* Wonder! The life that quickens. Christ quickens all the members of His mystical body, and this has come to us through the riches of God’s mercy. Whatever God has, He has in abundance, but of His mercy we read that He has riches of it—and truly all those riches of mercy He has shown in our case. We cannot but have riches of gratitude for such riches of mercy!

5. *By Grace you are saved.* See, Paul puts that in a parenthesis. It was not necessary to the sense, but he knew that there would come a time when men would not like this Doctrine, so he puts it in, “By Grace are you saved.” They cannot bear it and, therefore, they shall have it. They shall have it when the sense does not seem to demand it. To make it quite clear, he will insert it. “By Grace you are saved.”

6. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* We are not only raised from the dead with Christ, but we are spiritually raised into the heavenly places with Him. It is a great thing when a man learns to look up from earth to Heaven. It is a greater thing when he learns to look down from Heaven upon earth—to have you sitting at the right hand of God, and then to look down on all the things of this present life as far below you!

7. *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* Brothers and Sisters, we are to be a show, an exhibition, in which God will exhibit the riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Angels will count it a high joy to study the life of a regenerate man, to see him rise from death in sin to the Glory of God in Christ Jesus! What is so precious in God’s esteem ought to continually excite our praise.

8. *For by Grace are you saved.* There it is again! Paul rings that silver bell in the deaf ears of men. “By Grace are you saved.”

8, 9. *Through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.* We would be sure to boast if we could. We are a boasting people! Man is a poor mass of flesh, and he is largely given to the corruption of pride. He will boast if he can.

10. *For we are His workmanship.* If there is any good thing in us, He put it there. It is not for us to boast. It is for Him to boast if He pleases.

10, 11. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember—Oh, that is a good word for us, “Remember.” We are so apt to forget. “Remember”—*

11, 12. *That you, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by those who are called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ. Had you to do with Christ? The Jews call you uncircumcised dogs! What had you to do with the Messiah? Was not the Messiah for God's Israel? You did not belong to Israel.*

12. *Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of promise. The Covenant was in Isaac. You are not the children of Isaac. You are not descended from Abraham. You were strangers from the Covenants of promise.*

12. *Having no hope. Either here or hereafter.*

12, 13. *And without God in the world. But now— Oh, what a contrast—*

13. *In Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ. You are brought near to Israel! You are brought still nearer to Israel's God! Now you are not aliens. You are not strangers from the Covenant. You have a hope, you have a God!*

14, 15. *For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace. There is no Circumcision and Uncircumcision now, for that is done away with. There is now no Israel according to the flesh, and Gentiles who are not of God, for there is a *spiritual* Israel, to which we belong, as well as those of Abraham's race. He has swept out of the way all the ordinances which divided us, and we are now one in Him!*

16, 17. *And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. To the Gentile and to the Jew, to the atrociously wicked, and to those who were religious after a fashion—He has brought them both in by the Cross.*

18. *For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Here you have the Trinity in a single line of Scripture, and it needs the Trinity to make an acceptable prayer! Through Him, (that is, Christ), we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and now, today, the Church of God is one in prayer, whether Jew or Gentile. We come to God by the same Mediator, helped by the same Spirit. We have answers of peace from the same Father!*

19. *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God—There are many here whom we do not know. We have not seen their faces before, but if they are in Christ and we are in Christ, we are very near of kin! There is an old saying that blood is thicker than water, and depend upon it that when there is the blood of Christ sprinkled upon us, it makes very near kinship! When we are bought with the same price, quickened by the same life, and are on the way to the same Heaven, we are very near of kin! We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the*

saints and all the household of God! They make a great fuss when they give a man the key of the City of London. There is a fine gold box to put it in. You have got the key of the New Jerusalem and your faith, like a golden box, holds the deeds of your citizenship. Take care of them and rejoice in them!

20, 21. *And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief cornerstone: In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord.* The Church is a framed house. It has an Architect. Some seem to think that it is a load of bricks. They have no church officers. There are none set apart to this work, and none to the other. It seems to be just a heap of stones thrown down any way. But a true Church is, by the Spirit of God, a building fitly framed together. One is a door, another is a window. One lies low and hidden in the foundation. Another may have a more prominent position in the wall. And it should be so with us—that we should each have a place that God has appointed him, and keep to that place. Lord, build up Your Church upon earth at this time!

22. *In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* We are not built to stand like a carcass. It is a ghastly sight to see houses in London nearly finished, but never occupied—but it is the glory of the Church of God that it is inhabited! It is a habitation of God through the Spirit. Holy Spirit, dwell more evidently in Your Church! Keep open house for all poor sinners who come to Christ and glorify God!

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

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

KEPT FROM INIQUITY

NO. 2432

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 29, 1895.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1887.**

***"I kept myself from my iniquity."
Psalm 18:23.***

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards His servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul. He deserved so much of the king that it was doubly difficult for David to be treated so badly. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to flee for his life like a partridge upon the mountains—and all the while, no doubt—Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did *not* attribute to David! But he was upright before God and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so, for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he refused to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and, in great Grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver His servant.

If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again! If He does not do so in this life, remember that at the Resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. "They say. What do they say? Let them say." Let them say till they have done saying—it little matters what they say! Yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument—it cuts like a razor and pierces, even, to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms and crush the arches of Heaven than fail to deliver His servant! He will still do so, depend upon it! "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

David attributes his Providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct. "I kept myself from my iniquity." Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through, but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking lies, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience will find that he has made a great mistake. Trust so in God as to hold to your integrity. "Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you." Ponder the path of your feet and God will bring you through as surely as He is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as *you* are alive, for, as the Lord lives, before whom we stand, He will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve Him faithfully!

This is the passage we have to consider, "I kept myself from my iniquity." Here is, first, *a personal danger*—"my iniquity." And, secondly, here is *a special guard*—"I kept myself." And then, thirdly, here is *a happy result*. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, "I kept myself from my iniquity." There was no boasting in this declaration, but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man, he defended himself, for he was truthfully able to say, "I kept myself from my iniquity."

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER—"my iniquity."

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house! A man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have, each of us, to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every closet. I do not know whether that is true, but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal—and it takes a special shape in each good man. There is some particular sin which he may call "my iniquity." Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it—"All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned, everyone, to his own way.*" There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too—each man has his own way of sinning, so that he can speak of "my iniquity."

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its specialty, perhaps, *from our natural constitution*. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine—they are expecting great things and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion—they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief and even into despair which will be very grievous to the God who is always gra-

scious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favored by God with a godly ancestry, who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity and proud of their own uprightness—and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear Friend, you have some tendency, peculiar to yourself, and there is a special point where you lie open to the attacks of temptation! Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin and it behooves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity!

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the mirror than look out the window! Looking out of the window you see one for whom you are not responsible, but looking in the mirror, you see one of whom you must give account to God—and you will do well to ask God to keep that one! You will, likely enough, within a day's march, not see a much worse man than he is, if you know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge's quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the portraits of many ministers and he would say to his friend, "Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and-So." And then, leading his visitor to a mirror, he would say, "Here is the devil." Yes, he is somewhere about there where you are looking. If you look long enough, you may detect some of his handiwork, at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all! Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that "my iniquity" may be *engendered by education*. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother's fingers when we are 50 years of age and it is not gone from us even when we are old and gray-headed. Things that were done at our father's home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard when we were very young may abide with us and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us remember that as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint from it and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by Grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery!

I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by Sovereign Grace out of very dens of iniquity! There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord—and when they go home tonight, it will be a great pain to

them as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the House of Prayer where they have worshipped. Well, my dear Brother or Sister, we sympathize with you in your trial and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow *out of our particular condition*. The young man has his iniquity—it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people—pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of life through which you are going! He who leaves the shores of England for Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view! Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal. And let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that within a few days he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along, we need God's Grace!

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle! It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches. But with God all things are possible! Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through—his straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations so that, whether you have much or little, pray God that you may keep yourself from your iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one, but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very quickly, you are much like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night Prayer Meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition! Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Savior go which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God and to put forth your hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, you who are losing everything, that He will keep you from your iniquity! You

need not pray, like Pharaoh, “Take away the frogs,” but pray like David, “Take away my iniquity.” That is the prayer of the true child of God!

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, “Lord, keep me from my iniquity,” for great talent is a very dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great Grace. And, if you have but one talent, your iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five! Therefore, pray the Lord to keep you from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which you are found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to, “cut the thing fine,” as they say, and to cut the *truth* much finer than anything else—and say a great deal that is not true under the notion that, somehow or other, it will help business. If there are customs in your trade which all others follow and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them! Say, “Lord, keep me from my iniquity.” You need not begin to say, “Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans all have their iniquities.” Think about *your own*—quite enough iniquities may crowd into *your* shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O Beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I know! I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working men and women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this House of Prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, “We cannot live there and we do not know where to live to keep our children out of the temptations which now surround them.” I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of today should make Christians walk very near to God and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as we can and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist, not conforming to the world, to be out and out Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation!

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be *that iniquity which you have most often fallen into in your previous life*. What has been your toughest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is your iniquity. Doubt and mistrust?

That is your iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which, up to now, has stained your life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless you watch and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for your protection! That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, yes, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts *not* to do it—that is your iniquity! That which you have returned to after having smarted for it. That which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again and which yet has, in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried you away with a rush—that is your iniquity! Oh, how can you keep yourself from it unless God shall keep you? Cry unto the Most High to enable you to keep yourself from your iniquity! That is your iniquity which has overtaken you even after you have prayed against it and labored against it—that you have concluded that surely you will never do it again—and yet you have done it.

Let me tell you one thing more—that *which you do not like to hear condemned*, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you wriggle in your seat and feel, “I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home”—that is your iniquity! And if you can not bear that your wife should speak to you about it, or that your brother or your sister should give you a friendly word of advice concerning it—that which you are most loath to hear, probably has to do with your iniquity! We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which you are most *loath* to hear that you have most *need* to hear. Instead of being angry with him who points it out to you, you should be willing to *pay* him for doing it! When you go to your doctor and ask him to examine you—if he says, “There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs,” do you knock him down? Do you get angry with him for telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea and even thank him for imparting bad news! And should we not thank those who rebuke us and tell us of our faults? When God does not send you a faithful friend, I pray Him to send you an honest enemy who will deal straightly with you—and let you know where your weakness is, that you may then cry to God—“Lord, keep me from my iniquity.”

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD—“I kept myself from my iniquity.”

Someone may perhaps say, “I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it.” Let me ask you, first, who you are—are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, “No,” I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ and ask for cleansing in His

precious blood and renewal by the Holy Spirit. I am now talking to the child of God—the man or woman who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, because you can, by God's Grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must *find out what it is*. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavor *to get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God*. Ask the Lord to make you hate, most, that sin to which you are most inclined. Remember that you are a child of God—it ill becomes you to be friendly with any of the King's enemies! Remember that Christ has bought you—you belong to Him—you should not be the slave of any sin. You must not be such if the life of God is in you. The life of God in the soul hates sin! You cannot take pleasure in any sin if you are, indeed, a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to you, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of your particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as you have an extraordinary horror of it, you may set that over against your tendency to it.

Then, *be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome*. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately, but, if you have one sin that is more to you than another, drag it out from the crowd and say, "You must die if no other does. I will hang you up in the face of the sun." Strive against your anger. Strive against your covetousness. Strive against your envy. Strive against your evil temper, your malice, if that is your fault, for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till you get your foot upon its neck. "I cannot do it," says one. Why? The Lord has said that He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely if you are to have the devil under your feet, you can get all sin under your feet by God's help—and you *must* do it. It is a part of that work that must be worked in us to bring every thought into captivity to Divine Grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ, but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master you!

I tell you that if you let any sin master you, you will be lost! If any sin should remain unconquered, you are ruined, for this is the way of salvation—the *absolute conquest of every sin through the Grace of the Holy Spirit*. It must be so with you before you can enter Heaven—and you *are* able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ! If you have an iniquity that more than another haunts you, then keep away from all that tempts you to it. Is there a house where your company is much liked, but where you are never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house! It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once

sported. You may go into some company to do good, but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire—they may be pulled into it themselves! No, come out from among them! Be you separate! Touch not the unclean thing! You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin—that necessity should warn you not to go there!

The true path of safety is to *pray and believe against all sin*. We conquer sin by faith in Christ! This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree—and there is no other that will do it. Believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior, who died for you, and then believe in Him as living again and willing to help you in every conflict against sin. Go, having Christ Crucified with you, and ask Him to crucify your sin and nail it up to His Cross. So you shall be helped to overcome, but there must be care, prayer, watchfulness, trust and continual looking up to the Lord for Grace. Only so can you say, “I kept myself from my iniquity.”

III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, “I kept myself from my iniquity.” He does not say that he *could* not sin, but that he *would* not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, “I do not sin like those young people.” No, because you *cannot*—it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do! That is not what we want—it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you—it is a *change of heart* that is needed. “I kept myself from my iniquity.” That is, “Though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the Grace of God I would not yield.”

I pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that if we live 10, 20, 30, or even 50 more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, “By His great Grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from my iniquity,” because, if we do so, *see what a blessing it will be to us*, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble! If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men who were great losers, at first, by being godly, but they kept themselves right—and they always had to thank God for it afterwards.

I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker’s clerk. On a certain day he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest. He told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month’s notice. It was a country bank and he was not sent about his business at once—and he had time to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children and when he went home, it was

not easy to tell the wife that the excellent position that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity. He said that he was sure God would bring him safely through and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do.

It was within twelve months that he obtained the position of manager for that very bank—and it belongs to him at this moment! He very speedily became a man in a much better position than he could have expected to have obtained simply from the fact that it had been proven that he could be trusted. It is not always so—some people have to be a long time under a cloud—but, in the long run, if you, as a child of God, will but stand fast, God will not let you be a loser. If He does, it shall be your glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish your character! You shall find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong! If you are able to say, “I kept myself from my iniquity,” then you shall *also* be able to say with David, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.”

Next, if you act thus, *it will be a triumph of Divine Grace*. Brethren, we want to show the world what Grace can do, and every member of the Church ought to feel that he is put upon his behavior to prove what the Grace of God has done in him! What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go, at last, where worldlings go! If Grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the Grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ’s honor is in danger by our ill behavior and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in Heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, *this will be our best testimony to others*. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips. But you can *all* preach with your feet and by your lives—and that is the most effective preaching! The preaching of holy lives is living preaching! The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew! God help you to do this!

And, lastly, *what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience!* Though we know we are saved by Grace, hear this, you ungodly! There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ—yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of Grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, “I have kept myself from my iniquity.” A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort upon our dying bed and bid farewell to all our dear ones

and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory and thank and praise His holy name! Begin at the Cross—*there* is the source of your salvation! Then go and live like the living Savior. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

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

ONE TROPHY FOR TWO EXPLOITS NO. 2823

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 22, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.**

*“For by You I have run through a troop; and by
My God have I leaped over a wall.”
Psalm 18:29.*

IT sometimes puzzles the unenlightened Believer to find that the Psalms often relate both to David and to David's Lord. Many a young Believer has found himself quite bewildered when reading a Psalm—he has scarcely been able to make out how a passage could be true of both David and of the Lord Jesus Christ, “our superior King.” This he cannot understand. But he who has grown far enough in Grace to understand the meaning of conformity to Christ sees that it is not without a high and heavenly design that the Holy Spirit has presented to us the experience of Jesus in that model of experience through which David passed.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we all know as a matter of doctrine, but we have not all proved as a matter of sweet experience that we are to be like our Head. We must be like He upon earth, like He despised and rejected by man in our generation. We must be like He, bearers of the Cross. Yes, we must not shrink, in any way from what is meant by being crucified with Him and buried with Him in order that we may know, in later days, how to rise with Him, how to ascend with Him and how to sit with Him upon His Throne. No, I will go further—even in this life the Believer is to have a conformity to Christ in His present glories, for we are even now raised up together with Christ and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! In Him, also, we have obtained the inheritance, for we are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. There is such a conformity between Christ and His people that everything that is said of Christ may, in some measure, be said of His people. Whatever Christ has been, they should be or have been. Whatever He has done, He has done for them and they shall do the like, after some fashion or other. Whatever He has attained unto, they shall also enjoy. If He reigns, they shall reign, and if He is Heir of a universal monarchy, they shall also be kings and priests unto God and shall reign with Him forever and ever!

Thus the riddle becomes solved, the parable is expounded, the dark saying of David's day shines clearly in Gospel light! You can see not only how it is possible that the same Psalm can relate to David and to David's

Lord, but that there is a Divine mystery and a most rich and precious lesson couching beneath the fact that the Holy Spirit has chosen to set forth the doings, the sufferings and the triumphs of Christ under the figure or model of the doings, sufferings and victories of the son of Jesus! You will not, therefore, be surprised to hear me remark that this text has relation to Christ and the Believer, too. The doings and triumphs of Jesus must, accordingly, first engage our attention and, in the second place, observe that we have here a picture of the wondrous doings of faith when the Believer is enabled to triumph over every earthly ill and over every human opposition—"By you I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

I. Let us take the first sentence WITH REGARD TO CHRIST.

"*By You I have run through a troop.*" How accurately Christ's enemies are here described! By their number they were a troop. The Captain of our salvation, although single-handed in the combat, had to fight with a legion of foes. It was not a mere duel. It is true there was but one on the Victor's side, but there was an innumerable host in antagonism to Him. Not only the Prince of Darkness, but all the powers and the principalities thereof came against Him. Not merely sin in the mass, but sin in daily temptations of every kind and sin of every shade and form—not only from earth a host of human despisers and human opponents, but a yet greater host from the lowest depths of Hell! These, from their number, are well compared to a troop.

Nor does this expression merely describe their number, but also their discipline. They were "a troop." A crowd of men is a great number, but it is not a troop. A crowd may be far sooner put to route than a troop. A troop is a trained company that knows how to march and marshal itself—and to stand firm under attack. It was even so with Christ's enemies. They were a crowd and a mob, but they were also a troop, marshaled by that skillful and crafty leader, the Prince of Darkness. They stood firm and were well disciplined in a close-knit body—they were not broken. As though they were but one man, they sustained the shock of Christ's attack and marched against Him, hoping for victory. In such a character, His opponents still appear. However well you might discipline a crowd of men, yet they would not become a troop unless they also had been trained for warfare. A troop means a body of well-disciplined men, all of them prepared to fight and understanding how to make war. Thus, all Christ's enemies were well trained. There was the archfiend of Hell, who, in hundreds of battles against the Lord's elect in the olden time, had gained a thorough knowledge of all the weak points of manhood and understood how to temper his attack—and wherein lay the greatest chances of victory. After him, came all the fiends of the Pit—and these were all well exercised, each of them mighty, of giant stature like Goliath—all of them strong to do great exploits with any man less than God, however mighty that man might be!

And as for sin, was it not a mighty thing? Were not our sins, all of them, mighty to destroy? The least one among the sins that attacked

Christ would have been sufficient to destroy the human race and yet there were tens of thousands of these—well disciplined, ranged in order—and all thoroughly prepared for battle. All these came on in dread array against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was a troop! I have not exaggerated this description, for Calvin translates this term, “a wedge,” for, in his day it was customary, in battle, for the soldiers to form themselves into a wedge-shape, so that when they attacked the enemy, the first man made an opening, though he fell. The next two advanced and then after them the three, and as the wedge widened, it broke the ranks of the enemy. So it seems as though the Holy Spirit would here describe the regular and well-directed attack which the enemy of man’s soul made upon Christ. He came against him in settled order. It was no rush of some wild Tartar host against the Savior—it was a well arranged and well-regulated attack—and yet, glory be to His name, He broke through the troop and ran through them more than a conqueror!

Another old and eminent commentator translates the term, “troop,” by the old Greek term, “a phalanx,” to show again how strong, how mighty, how great and powerful were the enemies of Christ. It will often be of excellent use to us, for the stimulation of our faith and for the excitement of our gratitude, if we remember the might of the enemies of Christ. When we undervalue the strength of His enemies, we are apt to underestimate His Omnipotence. We must go through the ranks of His foes and look His ghastly opponents in the face. We must march through the long lines of our sins and look at the hideous monsters—and see how mighty they are and how powerless all human strength would have been to resist them. And then we shall learn, in an ample measure, to estimate the might and the majesty of the glorious Son of God when all unarmed and unassisted, He ran through the troop and put them all to the rout!

Several different eminent expositors of God’s Word give other interpretations of this sentence, each suggesting a fresh meaning and helping to bring out that which is certainly true, if not the precise meaning. One good translator says this verse might be rendered, “By you I have run to a troop,” and takes this to be the sense. Our Savior is represented to us as not waiting till His enemies came to Him, but running to them—willingly and voluntarily resigning Himself to their attack. He did not wait till Judas came to the upper room and salute Him in the chamber as He sat at supper. Neither did He tarry on His knees in that terrible agony of His in the olive grove, but He went forth to meet Judas. Judas had come forth with swords and with staves to take Him as a thief, but He sought not to make His escape. “Jesus went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek?” Thus did He manifest both His willingness to undertake our redemption and also His courage in facing the foe. There was, at one time, a human fear which seemed as if it would hold Him back from the battle, when He said, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But this once expressed, the Holy One of Israel anointed Him with fresh courage and to the battle He went with quick but majestic

steps! He would not wait till they rushed on Him, but He would take the initiative and begin the fight. See the conquering Hero rush to the fight and dash through the troop! And look what Divine mercy, what holy courage is here found in the Lord Jesus Christ—that He ran to our enemies!

But our version has it, “I have run *through* a troop,” and this is also exceedingly accurate, if you couple with it the idea which you will find in the margin of your Bibles—“By You have I broken through a troop.” Christ made a dash at His foes. They stood firm, as if they would not flinch before Him, but His terrible right hand soon found for Him a way. They imagined, when His hands were nailed to the Cross, that He was now powerless, but in weakness was He strong! The bowing of His head, which they perhaps thought to be the symbol of His defeat, was but the symbol of His victory and, in dying, He conquered! In suffering He overcame. Every wound that He received was a deathblow to His enemies and every pang that tore His heart was as when a lion tears the prey and Christ, Himself, was tearing them when they thought that they were tearing Him! He ran through a troop.

It will do your souls good if you have imagination enough to picture Christ running through this troop. How comparatively short were His sufferings! Compare them with the eternal weight of punishment and misery which we ought to have endured. What a stride was that which Jesus took when He marched right through His enemies and laid them right and left, and gained to Himself a glorious victory! Samson, when he grasped the jawbone of an ass, slew his thousand men and said, “With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.” He did it all in haste and then threw away the jawbone, as if it were but little he had done. And even so, our mightier Samson, meeting with the hosts of sin, death and Hell, laid them all in heaps and then, crying out, “It is finished,” He seemed as strong and mighty as if He had not endured the fatigues of the fight, or suffered the horrors of death and was ready, if they required it, to meet them all again and give them another defeat!

There is yet another version—“By You I have run *after* a troop.” After our Savior had met and fought with His antagonists and conquered them, they fled. But He pursued them. He must not simply defeat them but take them prisoners. There was Old Captivity. You know his name. He had been the oppressor of the human race for many and many a day—and when Christ routed him, he fled. But Jesus pursued him and, binding him in adamant chains, “He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” He pursued the troop and brought back old Satan in chains, bound him in fetters, slew grim Death and ground his iron limbs to powder—and left his enemies no more at large to wander where they would, but subject to His Divine power and to His Omnipotent sway. He ran *after* a troop and took them prisoners.

Perhaps, however, the most striking thing in our text is the combination of those two little words, “by You.” What? Did not Christ fight and obtain the victory by His own innate strength? Did not the Son of God,

the Redeemer, find strength enough within Himself to do all that was necessary for us? It would not be heterodoxy if I were to assert that it was so. Indeed, it is clearly pointed out to us in the fact that, as the Servant of God and as our Redeemer, He is continually spoken of as being strengthened, assisted and animated by His Father and the Holy Spirit. Especially will you notice this in the Gospel according to Mark. The Evangelist Mark speaks of Christ, through the whole of his Book, as a Servant. Each of the Evangelists has a distinct view of Christ. Matthew speaks of Him as a King, Mark as a Servant, Luke as a Man and John as God. Now, in reading through Mark, you will observe, if you take the trouble to read it carefully, the recurrence of such phrases as this, “And *immediately* the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.” This follows close on His Baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove. And then, when He came up to Nazareth, we read that, as a Servant, Christ needed anointing as well as any other. So, when He begins to preach, His text is, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.” Now, I take it that this is a very eminent instance of the condescension of our Divine Master, that He in all things was made like unto His brethren and, as they are utterly powerless without the Holy Spirit, and without the Father’s drawing, can do nothing, so Jesus Christ did, as it were, divest Himself of His own Divine Power and, as our Brother, He fraternized even with our infirmities. Thus He was strengthened, helped and assisted by His Father and by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is strictly accurate to remark that even Christ, Himself, could subscribe to this sentence, “By *You* I have run through a troop.”

Does this seem to you, Beloved, to lower your view of the Person of Christ? At first sight it may seem so. But think again—there is much rich consolation here. O my Soul, learn that you have not only God the Son to be your Helper, but that you have God the Father and God the Spirit also! Oh, it is sweet to see that in Redemption, itself, where we are too apt, with our poor blind eyes, to see but one Person of the Trinity—in Redemption, itself, the Triune Jehovah was engaged! If this is not the view of the work of Redemption which is commonly taken, I am sure it is Scriptural. It is true that the Son paid the penalty and endured the agony. But, still, it was His Father who, while smiting Him with one hand, sustained Him with the other. And it was the Spirit who, wrapping Him about with zeal as with a cloak and inflaming His soul with Divine ardor, enabled Him to dash through His enemies and become more than a conqueror! This sweetens Redemption to me. The Father and the Holy Spirit are also engaged and interested on my behalf. Our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel—the Lord of Hosts is His name! We may say of the three Persons of the Divine Trinity that each of these is our Redeemer because they have all brought to its full completion the grand work of our redemption from the power of sin, death and Hell. “By *You* have I run through a troop.” My Soul, lift up your eyes before you turn from this passage and see all your sins forgiven in the Person of Christ. Look here

and behold the old dragon's head broken! See Death pierced through with one of his own shafts. See how the old serpent drags along his mangled length, writhing in his agony, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. He also has become our salvation and in Him, and through Him and by Him, we have broken through a troop and are more than conquerors!

Let us now turn to the second sentence, "*By My God have I leaped over a wall.*" How is this to be understood? I think that David, if we take this as alluding to David, is here described as having stormed and taken some strongly-armed and well-walled city. He had, by the power of God, taken the strong place from the inhabitants of Jebus and so he had leaped over a wall. But we are not now speaking of David, but of Christ. In what sense can we say that Jesus Christ has leaped over a wall? I must be allowed to be figurative for a few minutes. The people of the Lord had become the slaves of Satan and, in order that they might never more escape from his power, he had put them into his stronghold and had walled them round about that they might be his perpetual captives.

There was, first of all, the tremendous bulwark of sin gathering strength from the Law of God, with its ten massive towers mounted with ten hundred pieces of ordnance, in the shape of threats of destruction! This wall was so high that no human being has ever been able to scale it—and so terrible that even the Omnipotence of God had to be exercised before it could be removed. Next to this there was a second rampart—it was the rampart of diabolical insinuation and Satanic suggestion. Satan had not only allowed the Law to stand so as to keep the soul in despair, but had added to this his own determination that he would not leave a stone unturned might he but keep the human race in his own power. Thus Hell made the second rampart, while it seemed as if Heaven had built the first. Outside thereof was a deep ditch and then another mound, called human depravity. This, as we must observe, was as difficult to be stormed as either of the others. Man was desperately set on mischief. He would be a sinner, let what might be said to him or done for him. He would seek greedily with both hands to work out his own destruction and that love of destruction, which was in his heart, constituted one of the great barriers to his salvation.

Christ Jesus came and He leaped over all these walls! He came and in your Redemption He broke through the Law. No, He did not break through it—He mounted it, He scaled it! The Law of God stands, to this day, as fast and firm as ever—not a stone has been taken down, not one of its castles has been dismantled—there it stands in all its awful majesty, but Christ leaped over this. He paid the penalty, endured the wrath and so He took His people out of the first ward of the Law. Whereas, after this came a second—the wall of Satan's determination to keep them prisoners. Christ, our Lord and Master, dashed this into a thousand pieces, springing the tremendous mine of His Covenant purposes and throwing the whole mass into the air—and there it was destroyed, once and for all—no more to hold the people of God in captivity and bondage!

The last wall which He had to leap in order to get His people thoroughly free and bring them out of the stronghold of sin and Satan, was the wall of their own depravity. This, indeed, was hard work to storm. Many of His ministers went up to the stronghold and tried to storm it, but they came away defeated. They found that it was too strong for all human battering-rams. They hammered at it with all their might, but there it stood, resisting the shock and seeming to gather strength from every blow that was meant to shake it. But, at last, Jesus came, and using nothing but His Cross as the most powerful battering-ram, He shook the wall of our depravity, made a breach, entered it and let His people out into that liberty wherewith He had made them free! Oh, how sweet it is to think of Christ thus leaping over the walls! He would have His people. He came down to earth and was with them in all their misery and took upon Him all their sin. He determined to enter in and save them from the dungeon. He made His own escape and brought them with Him. He not only came, Himself, through sin, and death, and Hell, triumphant, but brought all His children on His shoulders, as Aeneas did his old father Anchises. The whole generation of the elect was redeemed in that hour when Christ leaped over every wall!

Thus have I tried to expound to you the text as relating to the Person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I would only repeat once more the remark that in this verse, it is said, "By My God have I done it." As Mediator, in His official capacity, and in His service for our redemption, He received the strengthening aid of His Divine Father and He could truly say, "By My God have I leaped over a wall." It will do you good, O Believer, if you will often stay and look at your Savior accomplishing all His triumphs! O my Soul, what would you have done if He had not broken through a troop, if He had not routed your foes? Where would you have been? You would at this hour have been the captive of sin death and Hell. All your sins would now be besetting you, howling in your ear for vengeance. Satan, with all the hosts of Hell, would be now guarding you, determining that you should never escape. Oh, how joyous is this fact, that Christ has once and for all routed them and now we are secure! Then, my Soul, what do you think, what would you have done if He had not leaped over a wall? You would have been dead this day, shut in within the rampart of your own hard heart, or within the stronghold of Satan and with the mighty fiends of Hell you would have been trebly guarded and trebly enslaved. Now your fetters are all broken, as "a monument of Grace, a sinner saved by blood," lift up your heart, and your hands, and your voice, and shout for joy and gladness, "He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." He has leaped over a wall and brought you out of your prison-house!

II. This brings me now to the second part of my discourse and I must ask your patience and pray again for the assistance of the Holy Spirit that in this, especially, Christ's people may find a word of edification. We are now to regard our text as being **THE LANGUAGE OF THE BELIEVER.**

He can say, "By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

I shall divide my text after another fashion on this second point. I shall note, first, with regard to the Believer, *how varied are his trials!* Sometimes it is a troop of enemies. At another time, a wall of difficulties. When a man has one labor to accomplish, he soon begins to be skillful in it. If he is to be a soldier and fight a troop, at length he learns how to get the victory. But, suppose that his labors are varied—after fighting a troop, he has to go clambering over a wall—then you will see the critical situations by which he is embarrassed. Now, this aptly pictures the position of God's people—the Spirit is continually varying our trials. There are no one day's trials that are exactly like the trials of another day. We are not called to one undeviating temptation, or else it would cease to have its force, but the temptations are erratic—the darts are shot from different directions and the stones come from quite opposite quarters.

This is well set out in one of the Lord's parables. He speaks thus of the trials of the righteous—There was a certain wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended—trials from above. And the floods came—trials from beneath. The winds blew—mysterious trials from every quarter—and they all beat upon that house and it fell not. Trials of every shape attend the followers of the Lamb. The archers come against us and we repel their fiery darts. The company of swordsmen come and we rebuke them. And then the slingers sling their stones against us and then the company of spearmen, so that we must be armed at all points and ready for every kind of attack. Our Savior in this was like to us. He says to us in one place, "Dogs have compassed Me"—that was bad enough. "Strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round." That was not all, "they gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." Only fancy that! A man has to fight with dogs and then with bulls—and then with lions—and yet, this is just the Christian's state!

We cannot guess, from the trials of the past, what will be the trials of the future. We think it is to be all fighting, but we are mistaken. Some part of it is to be climbing over this or that wall. I have known God's people, sometimes, try to break through a wall and to climb over a troop. This is very absurd. If they had a troop of spiritual enemies, they have tried to climb over them and endeavor to escape them. At another time, they have had a difficult trial, like a wall, and they have been so headstrong that they must try to go through it. Ah, we have much to learn. Some things we must fight *through*, others we must climb *over*. It is not always right for the child of God to let his courage get the better of his discretion. Let him have courage for the troop, to run through them, and discretion for the wall, and not try to run through that, or he will break himself in pieces. There are exercises and trials in various ways. The Believer's trials, how varied they are!

And, next to this, *how unflinching is his faith!* There is the troop, he runs through them. There is the wall, he leaps over it. He finds that his

faith is sufficient for every emergency. When his God is with him, there is no difficulty too great for him. He does not stop to deliberate. As for the troop, he runs through that and then there is the wall at the other end—he takes a leap and is over that! So, when God strengthens our faith, when the Holy One of Israel is with us and the might of Omnipotence girds our loins, difficulties are only the healthy exercises of our faith! God will exercise faith. There is not a single grain of faith in the breast of any living Believer that is not exercised. God will not allow it to sleep—a sleeping faith, a dormant faith—I do not believe such a thing exists! If you have faith, my Brother, expect labor, for, as surely as God gives faith, He will put it into the gymnasium and make it exercise itself—sometimes dashing at a troop and then trying its limbs another way, no more to exercise its arm in fighting, but its legs in climbing over a wall. We have all sorts of exercises to keep our faith in order that we may be ready for any emergency, whatever it may be. Some men seem as if they only had to meet one form of trial. They remind me of the Indian fakir—he holds his arm straight up—that is the triumph of his strength! Now God does not exercise a Believer's limbs till they grow stiff, but He exercises them in every way, that they may become supple, so that, come what may, he is ready to achieve any exploit.

With faith, how easy all exploits become! When we have no faith, then to fight with enemies and overcome difficulties is hard work, indeed, but when we have faith, oh, how easy our victories! What does the Believer do? There is a troop—well, he runs faith, then, to fight with enemies and overcome difficulties. There is a hard wall, what about that? He leaps over it! It is amazing how easy life becomes when a man has faith. Does faith diminish difficulties? Oh, no, it increases them, but it also increases our strength to overcome them. If you have faith, you shall have trials, but you shall do great exploits, endure great privations and get triumphant victories! Have you ever seen a man made mighty through God? Have you ever seen him in an hour of desertion? He goes out, like Samson, to meet the Philistines. “Oh,” he says, “I will shake myself as at other times.” But his locks have been shorn and when the cry is raised, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson,” he shakes his limbs with vast surprise, makes a feeble fight and loses his eyes. They are put out, and he returns in blindness.

But, when God is with him, see what the Believer can do! They have woven the seven locks of his head with a web, and he just carries the loom away. Soon they bind him with seven green ropes that have never been dried, but he breaks them as easily as fire burns twigs. All things are possible, to him that believes—no, not only possible—but easy when God is with him! He laughs at impossibilities and says it shall be done, for faith can do all things. “By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.”

And yet, though the victories of faith are thus easy, we must call to mind that *these victories always are to be traced to a Divine source*. That man who takes the credit of his victories to himself has no faith, for faith

is one of the self-denying Graces. Faith called a parliament of all the Graces and passed a self-denying ordinance. It decreed that whatever any of the graces did, it should give all the glory of it to God. Christ once upon a time took the crown off His head and put it on the head of Faith. "When was that?" you ask. Why, Christ healed the poor woman and, therefore, it was He who deserved the crown, but, He said, "Your faith has saved you, go and sin no more." He thus put the crown upon Faith. What was the reason? Why, because Faith always puts its crown on the head of Christ! True faith never wears its own crown. It says, "Not unto me, Lord, but unto Your name be all the glory." This is the reason why God has selected Faith to achieve such mighty victories, because Faith will not allow the glory or honor to cleave to its own wings, but shakes off all self-praise, just as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. Faith says, "No, no, give me not thanks, or praise, or honor. I have done nothing." Faith will have it not only that it does nothing, but that Christ, who dwells in it, has done it all.

And now, my dear Friends, there is one consolation with which I will close this sermon. The Psalmist says, "By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." I think, if he were here at this time, he would permit me to add, "and by my God *shall* I leap over a wall, and by You *shall* I break through many a troop." What faith has done once, by its God, it can do again. We have met Satan once in the battlefield and when he chooses to attack us once more, that old Jerusalem blade that once gave him a bitter blow, is ready to give him another! That shield, which once caught his fiery darts, is still unbroken and still prepared to receive another shower of them when he chooses to hurl them! Martin Luther, you know, often used to defy Satan to battle. I care not to do that, but he used to say, in his strange, quaint way, "I often laugh at Satan and there is nothing makes him as angry as when I attack him to his face and tell him that, through God, I am more than a match for him. I tell him to do his worst and yet I will beat him. And I tell him to put forth his fury and yet I will overcome him." This would be presumption if done in our own strength. It is only faith in the Grace of God that can enable us to say so. He that has made God his refuge need fear no storm, but, just as sometimes in Christmas weather, the wind and snow and storm outside make the family fire seem warmer, and the family circle seem happier, so the trials and temptations of Satan do sometimes seem to add to the very peace and happiness of the true Believer while he sits wrapped up in the mantle of godly confidence—

***"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall.
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All."***

And when we know that we shall reach our Home, even the storms or the tempests matter but little. Come, poor Believer, pluck up your courage! I have tried to give you some strong meat—feed upon it. As the Lord Jesus Christ had a troop to face and broke through them, so shall you! Even as He overcame, so shall you overcome. Did He enter Heaven and is there a

long cloud of witnesses streaming in behind Him—everyone a warrior? So, if you are His warrior, you shall be one of that long stream! You, also, shall wear a crown and wave the palm, and sing a song of victory, and talk of triumph purchased through the blood of and achieved through faith in the Lamb!

And, dear Friends, what may we expect if we do this? What may the fainting ones expect if the power of God rests upon them? They may expect that when “the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,” their power—the power that they have received from God—shall become the more conspicuous. The promise is, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.” That is the first thing we shall do. We who were faint and feeble and lying among the pots shall be, “as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold,” and we shall mount above the clouds in an ecstasy of holy joy! Power will be given us to look the sun in the face even as the mighty eagle does.

But we shall do more than that—“They shall run, and not be weary.” “But,” you say, “running is not so noble an action as flying.” That is what *you* think—that is what young people naturally think, for they are anxious to fly high—but, as you grow in Grace, you do not care so much for flying. You are content to move more soberly here below. You run at a quick pace and if God’s power is really resting upon you, you are not weary.

But you shall advance yet another stage, for the promise ends thus—“They shall walk, and not faint.” “But,” asks someone, “is that advancing—going from running to *walking*?” Yes, it is. You do not read much in the Bible about running with God, but you do read a good deal about walking with God. That expression means that you go at a good steady pace in which a man may continue all his life. It is the lad who runs in his play, but older people, who are attending to the business of life, are not runners, but walkers—and they get over the ground at a good solid pace. Now, if the power of God rests upon us, we shall sometimes take the eagle’s flight—away we shall go, far beyond the experience of ordinary Christians and get up there among the sublimities. But, if God’s power is upon us, we shall also be eager to be employed in His service and shall rush forward with holy impetuosity and flaming zeal. But, better still, if the power of God is on us, we shall learn how to plod on in our daily life in obedience to the will of God, whether it is in the domestic circle, in the common round of business, or in the service of the Lord. We shall, in fact, make our whole life a continual progress towards Heaven through the Grace and power of God. So may it be to each one of you and in your experience may the Lord fulfill His ancient word, “He gives power to the faint,” for His dear Son’s sake!

I must pause one moment while I address myself to those who know nothing of God and nothing of Christ. Well, my Hearers, you have a troop, too, and you have your walls of difficulty. But you have no God to help you! Whatever trials the Believer has, he has a God to fly to. “Look,”

said a poor woman to a lady who called to see her, “look, ma’am, I’ll show you all I’m worth. Do you see that cupboard, ma’am? Look in.” “Yes,” said the lady, who looked, and saw but little, “but there is nothing in it but a dry crust.” “Well,” continued the woman, “do you see this chest?” “Yes, I see it, but it is empty,” was the reply. “Well,” she said, “that is all I am worth, ma’am, but I have not a doubt or fear with regard to my temporal affairs. My God is so good that I can still live without doubts and fears.” She knew what it was to break through a troop and leap over a wall!

Now, perhaps there are some of you with cupboards just as empty as that poor woman’s—but you cannot add, “I have a God to go to.” O miserable creature—miserable if you are rich, thrice miserable if you are poor—to be like a packhorse in this life, carrying a heavy burden and then not to be unloaded at the grave, but to have a double burden laid upon you! O poor men and women without Christ—with the few comforts which you have in this life, with its many privations, with its hunger, thirst and nakedness, oh, that you should not have a better world to go to! Above all, it seems a miserable thing that you should go through poverty here to a place where a drop of water shall be denied you to cool your burning tongue! If Christ is precious to the rich on earth, you must think that there is a peculiar sort of relish with which the poor man feeds on the Bread of Heaven!

“But,” you ask, “may I not have a hope of Heaven?” Assuredly, my Friend. Do you long for Christ at this moment? Then He longs for you! Do you desire to have Him? Then He gives you that desire! Come to Him, for the message of the Gospel is, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—

***“None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude.”***

The invitation is free. May many accept it! Oh, that some of you may be led to go to your houses, now, and on your knees ask for forgiveness of sin and seek that you may become the children of God through faith in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins! Amen.

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

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DIVINE GENTLENESS ACKNOWLEDGED NO. 683

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***“Your gentleness has made me great.”
Psalm 18:35.***

THERE are several interpretations of this text. A moment will suffice to give them to you. The word is capable of being translated, “Your goodness has made me great.” David saw much of benevolence in God’s action towards him and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. “Your Providence” is another reading, which is, indeed, nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is Providence in embryo—Providence is goodness fully developed. Goodness is the bud of which Providence is the flower—or goodness is the seed of which Providence is the harvest.

Some render it, “Your help,” which is but another word for Providence. Providence is the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Some learned annotators tell us that the text means, “Your humility has made me great.” “Your condescension” may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which we have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God’s making Himself little, which is the cause of our being made great.

We are so little that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet. But God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, bends His eyes yet lower and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings. For instance, the Septuagint, which reads, “Your discipline”—Your fatherly correction—“has made me great.” The Chaldee paraphrase reads, “Your word has increased me.” Still the idea is the same.

David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in Heaven. I trust we all feel that this sentiment is echoed in our hearts and we also confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at His feet, and cry, “Your gentleness has made me great.” We intend, this morning, to keep to the authorized version: “Your gentleness has made me great.” And in handling the text we shall have three points.

First the text suggests historical illustrations from the life of David. Secondly it awakens personal gratitude. And thirdly it declares gracious privilege—we are made great.

I. The life of David is exceedingly full of illustrations of the truth which he here uttered—“Your gentleness has made me great.” We will briefly review it up to the time of his becoming king. David, as the youngest of the family, contrary to the general rule, appears to have been despised by his parents so that when Samuel came to keep the feast they sent for all their sons except David who was left in the fields keeping the sheep. I should suppose, judging from the conduct of his brothers to him in the valley of Elah, that they held him in very small esteem.

Probably their habits were very different from his. They could not enter into the holier ways of the shepherd songster, nor could he enjoy their ruder and less seemly exercises. He was the despised one of the family, a reproach unto his mother’s children. Nevertheless the Lord had chosen him in preference to all the rest, for the gentleness of God delighted in David the shepherd boy.

What a balm must that Divine love have been to his wounded spirit! How often, sitting alone with his flocks, must he have sang to his harp, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up”! The gracious gentleness of his God to him must have encouraged his broken spirit when he felt the roughness of his father and the scorn of his brothers. His early life was peculiarly a season of hallowed rest and consecrated enjoyment of the gentleness of the Lord.

His first entrance upon public life was greatly marked by the sternness of those who should have discerned his worth and treated him with love. His father sent him to the army, not as a soldier, though never was there a more valiant man than this youngest son of Jesse. But he was employed as a mere burden-bearer. “Take now for your brothers an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers. And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand.”

He was a mere porter and messenger to his more honored brothers. When he began to enquire concerning the giant—“Who is this that defies the armies of the living God?” His brothers asked in a most snarling and contemptuous way, “With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? Because of the pride and naughtiness of your heart to see the battle are you come.” Very different was the gentle communing of his heavenly Father!

When in the inner chamber of his spirit his heart talked with God, he received no contemptuous epithets from the Most High. It is true he had all the outward marks of youth and consequent unfitness for the fight—but the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart, and that bold heart was chosen to meet the Philistine. David was a man after God’s own heart, and God’s gentle communing with him strengthened him and made him so great that he dared to say, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.”

The harshness of his brothers might have cowed him, but the gentleness of God encouraged him. He might have quailed before their irony and sarcasm, but the tender promise of God was the still water of which he drank and the green pasture in which he rested. Now David comes to court, but he is no sooner among the courtiers than Saul hates him. "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands" was a song most unmusical to Saul's jealous ears. "Saul eyed David," and in later days, when David played upon the harp, the evil spirit came upon Saul and he hurled his javelin at the young harpist, hoping to pin him to the wall.

But mark the gentleness of God—while Saul hated him the people loved him—all Judah and all Israel loved David because he went in and out before them, and better still, the God who tried him with Saul comforted him with Jonathan. I like to think of those generous consolations which Jonathan rendered to the man whom his father so grievously maltreated. Those quiet evening walks, those tender interchanges of affection when the love of Jonathan, which surpassed the love of woman, made glad the tender heart of David, must have helped to make David greatly glad.

He must have felt at times as if he would leave Saul's court and fly from the service of his country. But then Jonathan was the tie to keep him in his proper place—the gentle silken bond which bound him to the horns of God's altar. It was God's gentleness in raising up Jonathan as his companion which kept David in the place where greatness was possible to him, and enabled him still to live in those courts of which he was soon himself to be the master.

There was gentleness even about the character of his wife Michal. The father would destroy, but the daughter saves her husband's life. When David at last fled from Saul he fled to Nob, to the priests. I think that was great gentleness on the part of God which permitted David to take the show bread and the consecrated sword. I never hear David rebuked for that bold deed! Our Savior mentions it without a single word of censure. According to the strict letter of the Law it appears to be perfectly unjustifiable—but the gentleness of God saw the need of His servant and inclined the heart of all the priests towards David—so that they gave him bread, and gave him what was equally necessary under his difficulty—the sword of Goliath.

When David fled into the wilderness, we cannot read the story of him among the caves of Adullam and the goat tracks of Engedi with any feelings of pity, for his joys ran high in his banishment! I can understand him sighing for the House of God, and declaring that he "dwelt in a dry and thirsty land where no water was," but, on the other hand, one might almost envy David there in his solitary fastnesses, for his God was his Companion, and the blessings of the Most High were showered upon him. There was gentleness towards him even in those wild places, so that the gypsy life of David was rendered very happy. And the wanderer banished from his native land was not banished from his God but felt the Presence of the Most High in the midst of his solitude. "Your gentleness has made me great."

There are two points in David's history where I think the gentleness of God eminently worked with him. One particularly is connected with Nabal. That churl sent a very insulting message to David—"There are many servants, nowadays, that break away from their masters." I must not say that David was a Welshman, but he possessed much of the hot blood of our Brethren, and was warm in temperament. David had a hot heart within him, quick for love and quick for anger, too—and in an instant his soul was on fire with resentment—"God do so to me, and more also," said he, "if I leave anything of him before the morning light."

Away he goes with his band to slay Nabal! Now, what is to prevent him? Nabal cannot resist him. But here comes a wise and amiable woman—no one more susceptible to kindly female influence than David—here comes the wise Abigail with her laden asses, bearing presents. How wisely she puts it! How her lovely face, and streaming eyes, and bended knees, all aid her while she adds—"This shall be no grief unto you, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that you have shed blood causeless, or that my lord has avenged himself." It was a blessed interposition of Divine Grace which sent Abigail just then! David would certainly have taken terrible vengeance and have stained his character with vindictive blood-shedding if it had not been for the gentleness of God which found so good a wife in so bad a house and prompted her to interpose!

Take another case. It must have been gentle influence from on high which kept David back, when, as he walked at night over the field where Saul and his host all slept, he penetrated within the trenches and through the armed men and came to the place where the king lay with his men at arms all round him, every man asleep. There was the water at the king's head, and his spear stuck in the ground. And Abishai, one of those fierce-minded sons of Zeruah who are always ready for a blow, said to David, "Let me smite him. I will smite him but this once." But David holds up his hand and declares that he will not be guilty of the blood of the Lord's Anointed.

There must have been a marvelously gentle influence over David just then to have kept back his hand! I will not say that nine out of ten warriors would have done it, and have been justified in so doing, according to martial law, but I will say that there is scarcely a case to be found in history where a man would have spared his cruel, inveterate, and malicious foe. Remember that Saul was engaged in open and relentless warfare with him when such an opportunity had been put into his hands. David had never been so great if Divine gentleness had not restrained the blow!

Running on in the history of David we find that he was not always wise. How like a fool he looked when he scrabbled on the wall and spat upon his beard, and played the madman before the king of the Philistines! Ah, David, what a miserable spectacle! Though fit to be a companion of angels, he acted as if he had been only fit to herd with lunatics! But God delivered him! And after he had been delivered, you remember he wrote that beautiful Psalm in which he says, "Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord," and so on—a most beautiful expres-

sion of gratitude to God, and an earnest desire to teach others in God's way.

Even when His people play the fool, God does not cast them away. When we are such that God Himself might be ashamed of us and say, "Take him away! Have I need of a madman to play the fool before Me?" yet even then our God, who knows that we are but dust, has pity upon us and delivers us out of the mischief into which our folly has thrust us. Possibly in David's life there is not one moment in which his anguish was more acute than when he returned to Ziklag. He had been marching with Achish to invade his own native land. He was in a very awkward position—he could not fight against his own countrymen—and yet having taken refuge with the Philistines he was bound to go with them to war.

In that dilemma the Lord interposed for him. The Philistines' chieftains became jealous and distrustful of him and through their influence the king of the Philistines dismissed him. However, when he went back to Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt, he found it burned to the ground. The wives of his comrades and all their goods had been carried away. Not a vestige left of their happy home—children and family all gone! It is said that the men of war "lifted up their voice and wept." It takes a great deal to make a soldier sit down and weep. But in their anguish they went further and spoke of stoning David. What did David do? He "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He turned himself to the kindness and gentleness of the Most High, and took comfort in his God!

Surely the gentleness of God must then have shone out in contrast with the bitterness and ferocity of the men with whom he was associated. What could David do? It was not his fault that Ziklag had been burned. How could he prevent the robbers from plundering? He turned to his God when he was thus falsely accused and comfort flowed in like a mighty stream! And not many hours afterwards he overtook the spoilers and came back joyfully victorious. I think I have proven my point and need not delay you longer, that wherever any roughness from man had to be borne by David, there was always some gentleness on the part of God shown at the same time to sustain his spirit.

When it seemed as if he must be quite crushed and overcome, and all hands were against him and none to help him, then it was that a consolation gently given by the right hand of the Most High made David to play the man again so that he triumphed over all his adversaries. Thus much for historical illustration.

II. Now, we will turn to your own history, for the text EXCITES PERSONAL GRATITUDE. Have you that little book with you? I suppose you do not all keep one, but still your memory will serve you as a diary—do not print it, we have too many autobiographies already! But if you do not print it for other people, keep it for yourselves. May I ask you to turn to an early page in it? Do you remember when your heart was broken with a sense of sin? A truly broken heart is anguish, indeed!

Do you remember when you realized your righteousness was as filthy rags, and your hope changed into despair? Do you recollect the felling

that the anger of God pursued you? When death seemed to be before you, and you could see no way of escape? I shall not go over the dark details, but you remember well when you were in that condition! Do you also recollect the gentleness of the Savior? That was a very tender promise which first came to you like oil poured into your wounds. That was a very tender hand, a very cheering influence of the Holy Spirit which lulled the tempest into a calm, and hushed the thunder into the whisper of love.

Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Some of us never can forget the rapture all Divine when He showed us His hands and His feet, and said to us, "I have suffered all this for you. Weep no more, your sins were laid on Me." There was peculiar gentleness about that first action of God the Holy Spirit. He has never, perhaps, seemed quite so gentle with us since, for we have never been so weak as we were then. We were shorn lambs and He tempered the wind to us. Our wounds were very raw and bleeding and He touched us very softly, knowing that He who would heal a sick soul must have downy fingers with which to touch it. Gentleness, indeed, was on His part which said to us, "Live!" when He saw us wallowing in our blood.

Since then, dear Friends, what tokens of gentleness you and I have had! How many times He has checked our imprudence! When we first began our spiritual life we meant to drive the Church before us, and to drag the world behind us—our own idea was that there never would be such an earnest Christian as we would be! We looked with pity upon the coldness of many professors and we resolved in our own souls that we would far outdo them all! And what excitements we got into, and what things we said, and what strange things we did! There was much to be envied about our first spiritual life—but there was much to be pitied in it, too.

Oh, what fools we were, and we thought ourselves so wise! What blockheads we made of ourselves every now and then and all the while wondered that everybody else did not do the same. But by what gentle means the Lord curbed us! He did not do as some of our friends did, who put wet blankets on us enough to extinguish our zeal. He let the zeal burn but He gently checked the imprudence of it. We did not know how weak we were—He let us fall and cut our knees and learn by experience our utter inability to go it alone.

When a schoolmaster has a very dull boy, he would gladly teach him some useful knowledge—but after twenty times teaching he does not know it—and the master says, "What shall I do with this child? How shall I ever make anything but a dunce of him?" Yet he tries again! And so our God might well have said of us! Yet, how seldom has He used the rod after all. He has been obliged to take to it sometimes, but oh, how *seldom* comparatively. He has dealt so gently with us, teaching us with much pain and care.

When a man has taken to gardening who does not understand it, if he takes his knife in the pruning season—at what a rate he goes to work! His cutting here and there will do ten times more harm than good! The gardener who is well skilled is gentle with the knife—and truly, dear Friends,

our great Husbandman has been very gentle with the knife with all His trees.

Some of you have lost a husband or a child, and you have come from wealth to poverty. Yes, He has used the knife, or else He were not wise—but He has still spared you some comforts, or else He were not kind. At any rate He has spared you Himself, and He is more than all to your languishing spirit. Thus in the way in which He has dealt with your excrescences, and imprudence, and sins, the Lord has had a world of gentleness with you.

In looking over our diary we may say that God has dealt very gently with us in accepting our first endeavors. When you began to preach, my dear Friend, the first time, if the Lord had really let you know what a bad preach you made of it, you would never have tried again! And the first time you were asked to pray in public, if you could have heard the opinion of some of those who heard you, you would not have felt very happy! But very happily for you, you never did hear those opinions and you have been able to keep on till now you pray with much acceptance and profit to your Christian Brethren.

Our beginnings are very much like our children's beginning. Many a young apprentice spoils a great deal more than he earns and yet his master knows that he cannot learn without spoiling something, and so he bears with him. And our God has let us spoil a great deal of work that we may one day be skilled workers. Through Jesus He accepts our prayers and our efforts. And though we are very blundering servants He has not discharged us, but He still keeps us in His service and blesses us in it. In His mercy He gives us to see the work of His hands prospering. That same gentleness also displays itself in caring for us in our sorrowful circumstances and particularly in our inward fears.

There are distresses to which God's people are subject with which their fellow Christians can have but little sympathy. There are some Christians whom I have tried at times to comfort, but their fears have been so silly that I have felt more inclined to laugh at them than to console them. There are many of God's saints who are the victims of foolish fears, but the fears are none the less painful and vexatious because of their folly.

Now our God is so tender and gentle that He even condescends to deal with our silly fears. Take such a one as this—"I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." Now it really is foolish of us to think that God will leave us or forsake us, and yet He condescends to meet that foolish and even wicked unbelief of ours, and gives a promise to meet it! To suppose that He can forget is the height of absurdity, and yet He is pleased to meet that absurd fear of ours by saying, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?"

Even the absurdity of our sorrow does not move the anger of God—in His great gentleness He enters into the childish troubles of His children. He lets them tell out their troubles and sorrows, and, "as a father pities," not a man of his own size, but "his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." You have seen a father bring himself down to his child. Two or

three children have been at play—some of them have been cross and unkind to the little one, a child of three or four years of age—and father talks as if he were a child of three years of age himself! And though the trouble, when it is stated is so very little—such a very insignificant trouble that a man would be ashamed to mention it—yet father enters into it altogether.

That is what the Psalmist means—“Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.”

His gentleness shows itself in His being afflicted in our afflictions and entering into our sorrows, and putting Himself side by side with us in the battle of spiritual life. I trust I may not weary you while I remind you of all this. I shall not, if all the while you continue blessing and praising God for what you have tasted and handled of these good things. How much patience and gentleness God has had with us in suiting truth to our understandings and experiences! “I have many things to say unto you,” says Jesus, “but you cannot bear them now.” It is so with us.

I suppose we did not learn the doctrine of election during the first week of our spiritual life. Higher and more sublime truths are left for later experience and belong, rather, to advanced saints than to the babes in grace. If the babe in Christ knew so much about the filthiness of his own heart as the advanced man of God, he might not be able to bear up under the grief occasioned by such knowledge! Inward discoveries come by degrees, and as we see the light of the Cross we see the darkness of sin. As we are assured of our salvation in Christ, we discover our utter and entire ruin by the Fall of Adam.

It is gentleness which makes the all-wise One stoop down to our ignorance and teach us by slow degrees. What gentleness our God has shown to us in the timing and the tuning of our trials! We are such poor weaklings at times that if we were tempted much we should not be able to bear it. The timing of heavy trial is of very great importance. If I had lost my friend a year ago what should I have done? But just now it is a great sorrow, yet it has its alleviation. Had I been tempted as I now am but last week, I must have yielded. But now I have received strength from on high, and I can pass with safety through the fire.

Have you not often felt that either when you have had an opportunity to sin you have not felt the temptation, or else when you have been tempted you have not found the opportunity? When you have been weak you have not experienced the trial, or when you have borne the trial you have not been weak. I will not say more, except I beg your hearts to praise God. I pray you wake up your souls to bless Him. How much we lose by not blessing God more! Oh that I could praise Him! If I might choose my vocation on earth, I think I would choose above all things to write hymns and psalms, such as the Lord’s people might sing when they praise Him!

My highest wish would be to be one of Heaven’s poets—to write psalms for the spirits before the Throne and compose celestial sonnets for the blood-bought ones who praise him day and night. Oh to praise the Lord! Oh to bless Him and to magnify Him—to spend and to be spent in the praise and glory of my God! Wake up, you slumbering ones! Arouse your-

selves, you that are dull and dead of heart! Wake up, my glory, awake psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early while I remember that His loving kindness has made me great.

III. Our third duty is to **DECLARE OUR GRACIOUS PRIVILEGE.** “Great,” says one, “why, the text applies to David, it does not apply to us.” Ah, but we have a body of great people here this morning. I do not suppose you will see their names in the Times tomorrow, but for all that we are honored with great company this morning. I will be bold enough to say that I question whether the House of Commons, and the House of Lords, and Windsor Castle thrown in together, hold more great folks than this Tabernacle does this morning.

Great people! Yes, really great people! The true aristocracy! Let us describe them. There is a greatness of birth which God gives to His children. “It is no mean thing,” said David, “to be a king’s son-in-law.” But to be a king’s *son*—to have the blue blood in your veins! You do not think much of it because you have not got it, but you suppose those who have it think it the most wonderful of all privileges. To be descended from that thievish crew who came over to England at the Norman Conquest is thought to be a high honor!

But how much more is it to be descended from the King of kings! The blood imperial of Heaven is in the veins of every regenerated man and woman! No matter though your garb is fustian, and your home is the abode of poverty—you are a prince of the blood royal the moment that you are born-again and made a child of God, and adopted into the family of the Most High! These are the princes of the living God! These are they who shall be crowned with immortal honor in the day of the Lord’s appearing!

Though here they may live unknown and despised, yet angelic eyes detect them and the whole world shall see them. “When He shall appear they shall appear with Him in glory.” Men court much the greatness which comes by election. There are presidents of republics who become great by the national vote—it is no mean greatness to be dignified with imperial rank, not by the accident of birth but by the well-earned respect of honest men. This is something that men may covet. Well, we have this very greatness put upon us by the election of God! Everyone who believes in Christ Jesus was chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. What are the votes of men? What the applause of the many after all? The choice of God is to be desired most! Because He has set His love upon me my soul shall sing and rejoice. Election makes all the objects of it great! Now, as you think of your birth and your election in Christ Jesus, you can say, “Your gentleness has made me great.”

There is a kind of greatness in the world to which most people pay quite enough respect, namely, the greatness of wealth. A man is very much thought of in proportion to the contents of his iron safe. After all, people do not respect men so much nowadays as they do iron safes. The iron safe is the god of thousands. However, saints can stand on an equality with any men—city men, or whatever they may be. Every Believer in Jesus Christ can sing—

***“This world is mine and worlds to come,
Earth is my lodge and Heaven my home;
All things are ours, the gifts of God,
The purchase of a Savior’s blood.”***

Poor rich men have to take care of these things for us, but they belong to us. The sons of the alien are our plowmen and our vinedressers. They are serfs of God’s Providence, slaves in the kingdom in which we are sons. He who on bended knee can lift his streaming eye to Heaven and say, “My Father!” is rich to all the intents of bliss—rich enough for earth. And when all the treasures of earth shall be melted—when the rust shall have corrupted and the thief shall have broken through and the moth shall have eaten up all the world’s treasures—then shall the wealth of the truly great shine forth forever more.

Some men are great on account of their victories. How they crowd the streets when a Caesar or a Napoleon returns in triumph from the slaughter of his fellow creatures! Lo, I triumphed! Sound the trumpets! Beat the drums! Hang out the garlands! Gather, you crowds! Here comes the red-handed man, crimson with the blood of his fellows! What glory is this? Bah! It smells of the butcher’s shambles. The glory of a child of God is the glory which Christ has given him of having slain his *sins*, of having trampled under foot his *corruptions*. The glory of having fought with devils and overcome them, having wrestled with principalities and powers and laid them in the dust. This is true glory! And what glory shall that be which awaits every true Believer when up the everlasting hills he shall ascend to be welcomed where his Master sits, welcomed with the same words of congratulation, “Well done!”

There are great men, too, about the world, who are great in influence. All the world is governed by the backstairs. There are persons who sit behind the throne and pull the strings. People always touch their hats to men of influence. They may want a situation in the Customs for their first son. They may require to get an introduction into the Admiralty for the third boy. But what shall I say of every Believer? Beloved, his influence is unbounded! I wish you would use your influence for *me*. When you are speaking with the King of kings, since He has promised you that whatever you shall ask He will give it to you, speak for me!

I think I have some claim on some of you. When it is well with you, think of me. When you are in the King’s courts, you that are the King’s and have an audience with Him—that sit at His table and lean your heads upon His bosom—pray for His poor servant who has many cares, and many labors, and longs to see the King’s face always. Beloved, the influence which the saints have with the King of kings is marvelous! They can touch the sinews of the Omnipotent arm, and it will do for them whatever their hearts desire. If you did but know it, the poorest saint, though bedridden, is more to be honored for the influence which she may have with the King of kings, than the greatest peers of the realm for the influence which they may have in the courts of royalty.

But I must not tarry, else I was about to say that we have a greatness of history. There are some men who have a peculiar greatness on account of their history. Everyone wants to see them. If they go into a crowd everyone whispers, "That is he." What do you say of a child of God? There is more to be seen in him than in any other person! Shall I tell you his history? What would you think of a man who has been dead and buried and is alive again, and is the same man and yet not the same! Himself, but yet a new man in Christ Jesus! A man who has been born twice?

Such is every Believer. He has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is dead with Christ and is risen with Him! And even now he does not live upon earth but is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why, he is the greatest curiosity in the world! A Christian man is a wonder to angels, a wonder to devils, a wonder to himself! And if men were wise he would be a wonder to them! Great men, again, there are because of their great discoveries. We admire the men who penetrated into the center of Africa and found out the source of the ancient river.

Believers, also, have made discoveries in the vast desert of their own nature and have found out the source of the eternal love of God. They can sing with Kent—

***"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood.
The streams of love I trace,
Up to their fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."***

It is better than finding out the source of fifty Niles, to find out my name inscribed upon the heart of God and to find myself chosen and dear to God! Truly then, though we are little and despised, we can say without any exaggeration, "your gentleness has made me great."

Two things and I have done. The first is to Christian people. As you go your way, you who have believed, do not go out of this place with your heads hanging down and do not behave like dispirited people. You are great! I want you to live like great folks. Live up to your spiritual incomes—you will spend a great deal if you do. Live happily, live joyfully, live holily, live triumphantly! Live as those who are to live in Heaven. Do not live like the pauper sons of earth who with their gold and their silver are yet naked, and poor, and miserable. But live like the sons of God who are clothed in the scarlet and fine linen of the righteousness of Christ, and fare sumptuously every day!

The next time you are met by some would-be great man who wants to domineer over your faith, look him respectfully but firmly in the face and tell him that consciences and hearts were made for God alone. The next time the world attempts to win you by its bribes, tell the world it does not know what you are worth or else it would not attempt to bribe you. Every man has his price, but your price is too great for the world to give! Tell the

world that you can look it in the face and are not afraid to dare it to do its worst or its best, for you are one of the blood royal of Heaven.

I hate, above all things, Christians getting into the way of being honest with themselves. Mind you, the Puritans were not proud—they were humble men—but at the same time they knew that a man of God has something in him and they would not lay their necks beneath the feet of tyrants. When kings began to devour the saints, they quoted the old Psalm about “binding kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron,” and soon the Ironsides were to the front in the day of war for the Lord, and for the faith, and for the Covenant.

We want no carnal weapons now! We have learned better than they. We care little about politics. Let the potsherders of the earth strive with themselves about that. But when it comes to truth and righteousness for God and for His cause, shall we put our finger on our lips and speak with bated breath? Never, as the Lord our God is our helper! Brethren, get a little touch of the old Lutheran spirit—it is needed nowadays. This England of ours is going to the Pope as fast as it can. All sorts of heresies are springing up and the most of men are soft animals without the appearance of a backbone in them.

I pray that you Christian people may get a thoroughly sound backbone of high spiritual principle and may feel that you cannot give up the smallest atom of truth, but must stand fast for it and by it come what may. These are the men the edge of whose sword the fiend has felt of old and he trembles at the thought of them still.

This advice of mine would be very dangerous if I did not couple it with the whole of the text. Remember where all true moral greatness must come from—it must come from God alone, and from His gentleness. Who are you to use these big words? Nothing! A swollen mass of emptiness, except as God’s love dwells with you. But oh, Brothers and Sisters, the tenderness of God, while it makes us lie in the very dust before Him, yet lifts us up in the presence of our fellows!

The love and gentleness of God makes us feel that we are less than nothing, less than the least of all His mercies—but oh, it makes us feel that we cannot sin! That we cannot yield to our fellow men in matters of conscience. That we must stand up for Him who has done so much for us. May you realize in your lives and in your hearts the meaning of my text, “Your gentleness has made me great!”

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PROMPT OBEDIENCE

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*“As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the
strangers shall submit themselves unto me.”*
Psalm 18:44.

THERE is no doubt that we have David speaking to us in this Psalm, but it is equally certain that we must not limit it to David. Paul quoted verses 2 and 49 as applying to David's Lord, and we shall not be wrong in following his example with regard to our text.

I. I am going to make several observations upon the text, and the first is that IT TELLS US THE SAVIOR'S CLAIMS UPON THE HEARTS OF MEN. He claims that they should obey Him and submit themselves unto Him. The great practical end of the Gospel is to bring the human heart into obedience to Christ and to make the stubborn will acknowledge allegiance to His sway.

Now, in this matter many great mistakes are made by men. *Some think it is sufficient to go to a place of worship and to hear or repeat solemn words.* This is a good thing to do, of course, but if all ends there, the purpose of the Gospel is not served. Such people will find, to their cost, that it is not the mere hearers of the Word, but the *doers* of it who are blessed. We still need the message that the Apostle James wrote long ago, “If any is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself and goes his way, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was.” It is the wayside hearers who simply hear the Word, but neither understanding nor receiving it, they derive no benefit from it. Let none of us be numbered among them, nor among those who merely repeat certain forms of words without feeling the force and power of them in their hearts.

Others think it is enough if they carefully attend to the Gospel. If they do that, they seem to imagine that this is all that can be expected of them. This also is good as far as it goes—we have not a word to say against it, but much to say in its favor. But, my dear Hearer, if you pay ever so much outward attention to the Word of God, unless you submit your soul and spirit to its dominion, you cannot possibly expect to receive benefit from it. You are in the position of one who pays much atten-

tion to his physician's prescription who spells out the Latin words, notes the quantities of the various drugs that are to be compounded, but who never gets a chemist to make up the prescription, or if he does go as far as that—never tastes the medicine! Such a man will never be cured of his malady in that way, nor will you be cured of your soul-sickness unless you actually take the remedy which the Great Physician has so graciously prescribed. You may carefully note all the bakers' shops that you pass on your way home tonight. You may correctly calculate the quantity of bread that would be required for your family—and you may accurately estimate what it would cost—yet your household will not be fed unless you actually purchase the bread and give to each one a portion in due season. And your soul will not be fed unless you really partake of the Bread of Life.

What Christ requires of you who hear His Word is that *you should obey Him and submit yourselves unto Him*. How are you to do this? The Apostle John writes, "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." This is Christ's claim upon us, that we should trust Him—trust Him as our Savior, trust Him as our Lord and Master—trust Him so as to obey Him in all that He has commanded us. If we do this, we shall find that His commandments are not grievous and that obedience to them will yield to us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. He says to you, Sinner, "Give up all other confidences and come and trust in Me. If you would be saved, do not merely hear Me say to you, 'Look unto Me,' but really look unto Me, believe in Me, trust Me, forsake all your false refuges, leave those Babel buildings of your own devices and come to the sure Rock whereon a soul may safely build for time and for eternity." When you hear this command of Christ, give heed to it—obey Him and submit yourself to Him!

Then, if obedience to that command is truly rendered, there will follow obedience to all the Savior's commands. No man is really saved unless he is, in his heart, obedient to Christ. I do not say that you will be perfect, but you will desire to be so. I do not say that you will not be tempted to sin until you die, but there will be no sin that you will love, there will be no sin from which you will not long to be delivered. Your spirit will cheerfully bend down its neck to wear the collar of sacred service and as far as your inner and spiritual man is concerned, you will cry mightily unto God against the very thought of sin—and pray that you may walk in holiness and in the fear of the Lord all the days of your life.

If any of you have thought that trusting Christ does not involve obeying Him, you have made a great mistake. They do very wrong who cry up believing in Christ and yet depreciate obedience to Him, for obeying is believing in another form and springs out of believing. Neither may anyone say, "I will obey one command of Christ, but I will not obey another." The

very principle of trustful obedience lies in your not making any choice as to which commands you will obey. A soldier asks no question and makes no objection when he receives his orders—his captain bids him go and he goes—or he bids him come and he comes. He never says, “I will go thus far in obedience, but no further.” So must it be with you if you enlist under the banner of the Captain of our salvation—your obedience must be wholehearted and complete. If tonight you are the Lord’s, you must say to Him out of the very depths of your soul, “Show me, my Master, what You would have me do. You have bidden me trust You, and I do trust You. And out of that trust springs a reverent desire to submit absolutely to Your holy will. Help me, by Your gracious Spirit, to obey You in everything. And from this time forth, O blessed Savior, reign as the undisputed Lord of my whole life!”

We see, then, what the claim on Christ upon the hearts of men really is. And we who preach the Gospel must never rest satisfied until our hearers really submit themselves unto Him. It brings tears to our eyes as we recall how earnestly they often listen to our message—and how they even compliment us upon our faithfulness in delivering it—yet how they will be obedient to a part of it and yet be disobedient to the rest, for they will not obey Christ and submit themselves unto Him. Oh, that they had more submissive hearts, but neither you nor I can give them such hearts. We can proclaim the Truth of God in their hearing and we can weep before the Lord if they do not receive it—but the power to save them lies not in human hands—we must look up to the Almighty Savior and trust that He will bless the message which we have delivered in His name!

II. The second inference which we draw from the text is that IN ORDER TO RENDER OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST, THERE IS NO NEED OF A LONG PROBATION—“As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me.”

It seems that some, as soon as they heard of Christ, yielded themselves up to Him. It used to be a very common notion, and the idea still prevails in some churches, that in order to have faith in Christ there must be long preparatory exercises. Many of the Puritans, excellent as they were, made a mistake in this matter. They felt afraid to say to a sinner, when they found him just as a sinner, “Believe on Christ”—they thought it was necessary that he should first undergo a certain amount of Law-working and conviction-plowing—and then they might come in with the preaching of the Gospel. I owe much to Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and I used to recommend it to others, but I do not do so now. That book does show the way of salvation, but it is done in a roundabout fashion—very different from the simple Gospel plan, “Believe and live,” “Look and be saved.” It is true that many do have the experiences which Doddridge describes, but that is no proof that they

need have them! It is probable that most Christians do go through that Slough of Despond which Bunyan so graphically describes, but it is not absolutely necessary that any one of them should go through it! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life,” whether he has been in the Slough of Despond or not!

If it were necessary, I could pick out scores of members of this Church whose conversion is beyond question, and who have been faithful followers of Christ for years, yet their faith in Christ came all of a sudden. The Gospel just knocked at the door of their hearts and entered at once—no, in many cases, it seemed to enter without knocking! Think of Saul of Tarsus, “breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” yet suddenly arrested near Damascus, and crying out to that very Jesus whom he was persecuting, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Think of the jailer at Philippi—a rough heathen who was about to commit suicide, almost immediately crying out, “What must I do to be saved?” And very soon afterwards baptized, “believing in God with all his house.” Think of the thief on the cross, joining with his fellow malefactor in reviling at Christ, yet presently praying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” and receiving the cheering answer from Christ, “To-day shall you be with Me in Paradise”! These were sudden conversions which were worked without that long and painful preparation which has been so cried up in some of our churches that it has become a great hindrance to many! We must put nothing before the Cross of Christ—His great atoning Sacrifice is the one object to which we must direct the sinner’s gaze! Genuine evangelical *repentance* runs in double harness with *faith* and they should never be separated. To suppose that we are to go through a sort of quarantine before we can be admitted into the harbor of salvation is a very serious mistake. Our text flatly contradicts this idea, for it says, “As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me.”—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

There is life for a *look*—even though the heart should be as hard as the nether millstone! There is life for a *look*—even though as yet the character has undergone no change! There is life for a *look*—even though you cannot see any signs of Grace—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

Jesus Christ does not look for anything in you except sin and need, but finds in Himself both the source of mercy and the means by which that mercy may come to the very chief of sinners. May the Holy Spirit make it very clear to you that there is no necessity for you to wait a long while before the blessing of salvation may be given to you, but that you may have it this very moment! The pool at Bethesda was only efficacious for the healing of the first one who stepped into the water after it had been troubled by the angel, so that the afflicted might wait there for years and still remain unhealed. But the pool which Christ filled with His precious blood always has efficacy in it, so that whoever steps in, though

he may not have been waiting by the pool for even a minute, though it may be the first time he ever heard of the precious blood of Christ—if he trusts in the finished work of God’s dear Son, he shall be immediately saved!

III. A third remark which I think may be fairly based upon the text is this—IN SOME CASES, THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION WINS A VERY SPEEDY VICTORY.

It was very remarkable that three thousand persons should have believed on Christ after Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost. We scarcely seem to expect, nowadays, to see three thousand souls converted, baptized and added to the Church in a single day, but when the Gospel was first proclaimed, converts were gathered very rapidly. It seemed as though a great pile of dry wood had been accumulated and it only needed a torch to set it aflame at once! In the time of the Reformation, so rapidly was the Gospel spread that men said that the writings of Luther were borne on the wings of angels—and so many of all classes believed the Truth of God that hallelujahs arose from the plowman in the field and the servants in the kitchen as well as from the lords and ladies of the land! “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it,” and still greater the multitude of those that received it! When Whitefield preached to great crowds of people who had never heard the Gospel before, it was like plowing virgin soil—the Truth appealed to them with all the force of novelty—and also with the conviction that it was exactly suited to their case so that they received it with sudden joy and thousands were converted!

Many persons come to this Tabernacle who have never previously listened to the Gospel—and it often happens that the very first sermon they hear is blessed to them! Last Tuesday, when I saw some 33 candidates for Baptism, one or two of them said that they had never been to any place of worship until they came here. Curiosity had prompted them to come and they were surprised to find that the preacher seemed to know all about them, for his message exactly suited their case. They received the Word suddenly, but so mightily did it affect them that they would not give it up, for it had come to them “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” There is no place where I feel so happy or so much at home in preaching as on this familiar spot—with your eyes fixed upon me and your heart drinking in the Truth of God—but for the winning of souls in great numbers, give me a congregation that has never heard the Gospel! If I were a fisherman and were asked where I would prefer to fish, I would answer, “Where nobody else has ever fished.” So, if a preacher of the Gospel might pick his place, he might well say, “Let me preach where the people have never yet heard the Gospel.” If we can get among certain classes of society, high or low, to whom the Gospel is a novelty, I feel persuaded that the grand prophecy of the text shall be gloriously fulfilled in

their midst—"As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." Let us *expect* this blessed result of our labors and be constantly in earnest breaking up fresh soil and casting the Gospel net into waters that have never yet been fished. Oh, that some who are here for the first time tonight may obey Christ as soon as they hear of Him! He came into the world to save sinners! He took upon Himself our flesh and took upon Himself our sins—and suffered in our place for our sins—"the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." If we trust in Him who bore our sins in His own body on the Cross, that trust brings us salvation! And it works in us peace and joy, gratitude and love—and helps us to serve the Lord with reverence and holy fear!

IV. Now we advance to a fourth point which is that STRANGERS WILL ALSO YIELD THEMSELVES TO CHRIST.

The point to which I want now to call your very special attention is not so much the suddenness of the conversion as the condition of the people who, according to our text, shall submit themselves to Christ. There are some who, in the fullest sense of the term, are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of praise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Some of you who regularly attend a place of worship, are "aliens" in the sense in which Paul used the word—you are like the mixed multitude that came up with the children of Israel out of Egypt. Though you are not part of "the commonwealth of Israel" spiritually, you are at present eternally mingled with the true Israelites, the believing children of Abraham. But there are many others who are in a very definite way, "strangers." The Sabbath bell brings no Sabbath music to them. They may rest on Sunday, but their rest consists in simply lolling about in their shirtsleeves and reading the Sunday newspaper. They never think of going into a place of worship unless it is for a wedding, or a funeral, or what they call "a christening." There are thousands in this so-called Christian land who have never looked inside a Bible and know absolutely nothing of its contents! I have no doubt that there are to be found in London thousands of persons who, if they were asked what is meant by the Atonement, would reply that they had never heard of such a thing! And as to the simple Doctrine of trusting for salvation to the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, there could not be a greater piece of news to many of our fellow citizens than this!

Well now, these people whom I have been describing are, indeed, strangers to Christ, yet He says in our text, "the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." They do not know Him. But "the Lord knows them that are His" and I trust that among the strangers there are many whom the Lord has foreknown from all eternity who shall, in due time, hear His voice and follow Him, rejoicing in that eternal life which is the portion of His sheep! In the very heart of the apostate Church of Rome, God may

have some of His elect—and I have no doubt that He has! I pray that His Spirit may soon bring them forth into the light. Among those who are besotted with superstition and among those who have given themselves up to work with both hands in the way of carnal confidence, God may have His chosen ones. And if He has, He will surely fetch them out. Never despair concerning the Church of God! The greatest blasphemer may yet become the boldest preacher of the Gospel! He who hates Christ most today may love Him most tomorrow—and he will do so if the Spirit of God takes possession of him! It is not merely in the House of Prayer that God has His elect—they may be tonight in the alehouse, or in the theatre, or in still worse places—but the Spirit of God can find them wherever they are! Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, not only takes care of the 99 that are safely sheltered in the fold, but He goes out to seek and to find the one sheep that is lost! Even though all Hell's hosts may have surrounded the poor wanderer, the prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered.

Are you a stranger, dear Friend? Are you a stranger to the Gospel, a stranger to Grace, a stranger to your God? Are you a stranger to the bended knee and the Throne of Grace? Are you a stranger to this blessed Bible and to the hope of Heaven which it clearly reveals? “Oh, yes!” you say, “I am indeed a stranger and there is no hope for me!” But listen to the text, Friend—“the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me.” Give good heed to other gracious messages in this most precious Book. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The heart of Everlasting Love is moved with pity towards you and God, Himself, speaks through a man's voice as He cries to you from Heaven, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die?” Surely, if there are any of these strangers here tonight, they ought to be compelled to yield to Christ by the prophecy of the text, “the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me.”

V. Now I come to my fifth remark which is that OUR TEXT BEING TRUE, IT SHOULD GREATLY ENCOURAGE THOSE OF US WHO ARE WORKING FOR CHRIST.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am devoutly thankful to God that so many of you are watching for souls, and not only so, but that you are winners of souls! It was but little that you could do, dear Friend, but you saw a stranger here and you spoke kindly to him. Perhaps you gave him a tract, certainly you prayed for him! And God blessed your efforts and the stranger yielded himself to Christ. You have sometimes visited a neighbor in time of sickness and have dropped a word in season for Chr-

ist, and you did well, for that kindly action was the means of winning a soul for the Savior! So let the past cheer you and let the text encourage you to persevere in such holy service. Possibly you know some persons who never go to a place of worship and who are quite ignorant of the Gospel. Do not think of them as unlikely to be blessed! On the contrary, believe that they are the very persons who are the most likely to be influenced for good when once they are brought under the sound of the Gospel! There are, alas, many who have so long heard the Word preached that they have become Gospel-hardened—the Truth of God has become to them a savor of death unto death instead of a savor of life unto life. But it is not so with these people of whom I am speaking—they are not Gospel-hardened, so be hopeful about them—go and seek them out, bring them to hear the Gospel and then pray that they may be among the strangers who shall submit themselves to Christ!

If I had bread to give away, I should not be in a hurry to take it to those who had refused it again and again. But if I knew where there was a colony of hungry folk who had not tasted food for days, I think it would be among them that I should be made welcome! The place to take the Gospel is not where the Light of God has long been shining and men have closed their eyes to it—but down the dark court and alley where they have not before had the Light and, consequently, have not had the opportunity of rejecting it. Take the Gospel there and it may be that the very first time you do so, souls will be converted! If not, go again and again! Keep on sowing the Good Seed of the Kingdom, believing that ancient promise, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

If one should spend one’s whole life for God and win only one soul by the most earnest and devoted effort, it would be a rich reward to see that one star shining forever in the firmament of Heaven, to see that one gem glistening forever in the diadem of Christ, to see that one sheep feeding forever in the pastures of Eternal Life! It strikes me that it will help to make Heaven even more heavenly to us when God has blessed us to the bringing of other souls to share our bliss in Glory. Some of us will not be among strangers when we have passed through the gates of pearl! We have spiritual children already there for whom we have travailed in birth until Christ was formed in them! And whatever may be the fate of all earthly relationships, our spiritual relationships will abide forever. How blessed it will be to be welcomed there by those whom we have begotten through the Gospel and with what joy we shall present them to our God as we humbly yet gratefully say, “Here am I, Father, and the children whom You have given me”!

VI. My last remark is a sad one. It has been uppermost in my mind all the while I have been speaking upon the other points. It is this, that al-

beit there are some who obey as soon as they hear the Gospel and others who once were strangers who willingly yield themselves unto Christ, yet it is painfully evident that THERE ARE SOME WHO DO JUST THE OPPOSITE.

As for hearing the Word, there are some of you who are always hearing it! You scarcely ever miss an opportunity of hearing it! Thickly as the leaves in autumn fall from the trees will the remembrances of Gospel ministrations come back to you, but they are all as faded and as worthless to you, now, as are those dead leaves themselves! Some of you will never be lost for lack of hearing the Gospel—what would others give if they could only hear what you have heard? Some of you have heard the story of the Cross from your early childhood. The softest and sweetest of all lips, your mother's, told it to you as long ago as you can remember. Then you heard it again and again from the lips of the earnest Sunday school teacher in whose class you sat so long. Some of you heard it from a loving wife or from a fond husband. You heard the Gospel preached by a godly minister now in Glory. And last of all, you have heard it from me, also, and I can add that you have heard it preached very plainly, for whatever my faults may be, clouding the Gospel or hiding its meaning is not one of them. Yes, you have heard the Gospel all these years—and while others have believed it and have been saved—you appear to be no nearer doing so than when first you heard it! And I tremble lest those solemn words of the Lord Jesus Christ should be true concerning you, “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.” Remember how the Savior upbraided the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because “they repented not”—and beware lest their doom should also be yours!

Our text says, “The strangers shall submit themselves unto Me,” but you have not submitted yourselves to Christ. The great sinners, the very chief of sinners, have yielded themselves up to the sway of Christ, but you have not done so. This is not because you do not understand the way of salvation, for you know clearly what the Gospel is and what it requires. With some of you it is not because of lack of feeling, for you have felt a great deal—you have been the subjects of all sorts of impressions. Your thoughts have often been like a case of knives cutting into your inmost spirit, or like a nest of adders stinging your soul. Friend, it has come to this pass with you—mere hearing of the Word is of no service to you, even the bare remembrance of it is of no use—you must either yield to Christ or you must perish! There must be no more tarrying, delaying, dilly-dallying. You are lingering on the very brink of the precipice and you must either fall over or be saved by clutching at the garments of the Savior who stands close beside you. O Soul, is it not a mercy that you are pushed to this extremity? Is it not a blessing that you are brought to this emergency—that you must either yield yourself to Christ or die as

His enemy? Oh, submit yourself to Him! Your hand trembles, but stretch it out and touch the hem of His garment. You cannot save yourself, but He can save you! Look unto Him, for again I remind you that—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

When the bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness there was no need for the serpent-bitten Israelites to come up close to the pole on which it was suspended—all they had to do was to look—and as many as looked, lived! That is what you have to do! Look to Jesus! Look and live! Give the faith-look at Him who died upon the Cross as the sinner’s Substitute and Surety—and as soon as you look, you shall live—and live forever! There is no need for you to uncover your wounds to show where the serpent has bitten you. There is no need for you to wait until the venom of the serpent reveals its deadly character more than it has already done. But look at once, lest you should tarry until you are unable to look!

Let me ask you a most solemn question—Does the Son of God, Himself, bleed and die for sinners and is not that all that is required to put away your guilt? Is Jehovah, Himself, satisfied with the sufferings of His well-beloved Son? And are you *not* satisfied? Has Christ woven the spotless and perfect robe of righteousness in which sinners may stand forgiven before the Great White Throne, and are you seeking to add to it some of the filthy rags of your own righteousness? O Soul, think not that you can share the work and the Glory of salvation with the almighty Savior! Yoke a gnat with an archangel if you will, but never think of linking yourself with Christ in order to complete the great work of salvation. Oh, no! In that matter it must be none but Jesus, for—

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

I wish I could put the Truth of God so plainly that you could not help seeing it, yet I know that the Holy Spirit must open your eyes or you will never see it, however clearly it is set before you. I pray Him to do it and to do it now—and so to fulfill those two glorious “shalls” in my text—“As soon as they hear of Me, they *shall* obey Me: the strangers *shall* submit themselves unto Me.” This is my comfort—He who gave this promise and prophecy in its fullest and deepest meaning will certainly fulfill it! Blessed Master, make these potent “shalls” true in our midst tonight! Many have heard of You—give them the Grace to obey You! There are strangers here—may they submit themselves unto You and so be no longer strangers, “but fellow citizens with the saints; and of the household of God”! So may it be, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:1-17.**

Verses 1, 2. *And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the pal-*

sy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. [See Sermons #2337, Volume 39—THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and #3016, Volume 52—GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Our Lord dealt first with the greater evil, for sin is worse than even such a dreadful disease as the palsy. Forgiveness of sin is an even greater mercy than the healing of sickness.

3-7. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, why think you evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house.* Jesus first proved His Divinity by reading the secret thoughts of the caviling scribes—and then gave a further evidence of it by working this very notable miracle!

8-9. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of customs: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.* [See Sermon #2493, Volume 42—“A MAN NAMED MATTHEW”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This was another notable miracle, and equally set forth the power of Divine Grace.

10-11. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners? He was more at home with publicans and sinners than with scribes and Pharisees! And they were more likely to welcome Him as their Lord and Savior.*

2-13. *But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* If He had come to call the righteous, where would He have found them? His call was not likely to be heeded by the self-righteous, but sinners heard it with joy—and so were made righteous by Him.

14. *Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples fast not? We must not suppose that because a thing is proper for ourselves, it must, therefore, be binding upon everybody else. It might be fit and right that the disciples of John should often fast—their circumstances might require it—but it might be quite wrong for the disciples of Christ to fast, as they might be in very different circumstances.*

15. *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, so long as the bridegroom is with them? Could Christ's disciples*

fast while Christ fed them with heavenly foods? While His Presence was to them like Heaven begun below, it would have been inconsistent for them to be mourning and fasting.

15. *But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then shall they fast.* And nobody would say that they were turncoats if, when their circumstances had so greatly altered, they acted in harmony with their changed circumstances. The disciples could not mourn while Christ was with them! Can you, Believer, fast while Christ is with you? It cannot be. But when He has gone from you, then you will sorrow fast enough. So we must neither judge others by ourselves, nor judge ourselves at one time by what we were at some other time.

16. *No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment—When it shrinks—*

16. *And the tear is made worse.* There must be a fitness about things. Do not impose fasting upon a joyful heart, or the singing of joyful hymns upon a sad spirit.

17. *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.* Do not expect from a young beginner that which would be unsuitable to him, even though it should be most comely and seemly in an aged Christian. And do not expect to see in an aged Christian all the vigor and alertness of spirit that you look for in ardent souls in all the fervor of their first love to Christ. Let us mind the relations of things.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE WARNINGS AND THE REWARDS OF THE WORD OF GOD NO. 2135

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 16, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping
of them there is great reward.”
Psalm 19:11.*

THIS is the declaration of one of God's servants—“by them is *Your servant* warned.” Only for men made obedient by Divine Grace is this passage written. My Hearer, are you God's servant? Let us begin with that question. Remember that if you are not God's servant you are the bond-slave of sin and the wages of sin is death. The Psalmist, in this Psalm, has compared the Word of God to the sun. The sun in the heavens is everything to the natural world—and the Word of God in the heart is everything in the spiritual world. The world would be dark, dead and fruitless without the sun—and what would the mind of the Christian be without the illuminating influence of the Word of God?

If you despise Holy Scripture, you are like one that despises the sun! It would seem that you are blind and worse than blind, for even those without sight enjoy the warmth of the sun. How depraved are you if you can perceive no heavenly luster about the Book of God! The Word of the Lord makes our day! It makes our spring! It makes our summer! It prepares and ripens all our fruit! Without the Word of God we should be in the outer darkness of spiritual death. I have not time, this morning, to sum up the blessings which are showered upon us through the sun's light, heat and other influences.

So is it with the perfect Law of the Lord—when it comes in the power of the Spirit of God upon the soul, it brings unnumbered blessings—blessings more than we, ourselves, are able to discern. David, for a moment, dwelt upon the delights of God's Word. He said, “More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” The Revelation of God enriches the mind with knowledge, the heart with comfort, the life with holiness, the whole man with Divine strength. He that studies, understands and appropriates the statutes of the Lord is rich in the truest sense—rich in holiness for this life and rich in preparedness for the life to come. You have mines of treasure if you have the Word of God dwelling richly in your heart.

But in the sacred Book we find not only an enrichment of gold laid up, but a present abundance of sweetness to be now enjoyed. He that lives upon God's Word tastes the honey of life—a sweetness far superior to honey—for honey satiates, though it never satisfies. The more you have of Divine teaching, the more you will wish to have and the more will you be

capable of enjoying. He that loves the Inspired Book shall have wealth for his mind and sweetness for his heart.

But David is mainly aiming at the practical. So, having introduced the sun as the symbol of God's Word because of its pleasurable influence, he adds, "Moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." On these two things we will meditate under the following heads—First, *their keeping us*—"By them is Your servant warned." Secondly, *our keeping them*—"And in keeping of them there is great reward."

I. First, THEIR KEEPING US—"By them is Your servant warned." We are in an enemy's country. We are always in danger—we are most in peril when we think ourselves most secure. You will find in the histories of the Bible that the most crushing defeats have fallen upon armies *suddenly*—when they were off their guard. The army of Christ has need always to set its pickets and appoint its sentinels lest the adversary take us unawares. We can never tell when we are likely to be assailed—we shall be wise to assume that we are always surrounded by enemies.

God's Word is our keeper, the watcher of our souls—and when a danger is approaching it rings the alarm and gives us warning. The different parts of Scripture—the statutes, the doctrines, the ordinances, the promises, the precepts—all of these act like pickets to the army and arouse the Lord's soldiers to resist sudden assaults. "By them is Your servant warned."

In what way does God's Word warn us? In many forms it thus operates. I would say, first of all, by *pointing out sin and describing its nature and danger*. We have here the mind of the Lord as to moral conduct and so we are not left to guesswork—we know by unerring teaching what it is that the Lord abhors. Those Ten Commandments are the lanterns set around an opening in the street that no traveler may drive into danger. God only forbids that which would injure us and He only commands that which will be for our lasting good. Spread out before you the Law of God and you may say of it as you read it, "By these commandments is Your servant warned."

In my walks I see notices bearing the words, "TRESPASSERS BEWARE!" And I am kept from wandering. It is well to be acquainted, not only with the letter of the Law of the Lord, but with the *spirit* of it. Numberless sins are condemned by the Ten Commandments—truly we may say of the Law of God, "Your commandment is exceedingly broad." All of these are foghorns warning us of dangers which may cause shipwreck to our souls. Studying the Word of God, we are made to see that sin is exceedingly sinful since it dishonors God, makes us enemies to our best Friend—yes—and drives us madly to destroy our own souls.

Sin, according to God's Word, is murderous—it slew the Savior of men. Wherever sin comes, death follows it. Sin may bear pleasure in its face but it has ruin at its heels. Eternal destruction is the finishing of the work of sin. God's Word is very plain and explicit about these grave facts. It forbids our trifling even with the *appearance* of evil—it warns us against sins of thought and temper as well as against transgressions of speech and

act. He that is graciously familiar with his Bible will be preserved from those pitfalls into which so many have rushed in their careless contempt of God's Word and holy commandments.

A precept of Scripture is like a lighthouse upon a quicksand or a rock. It quietly bids the wise helmsman steer his vessel another way. The whole coast of life is guarded by these protecting lights and he that will take note of them may make safe navigation. But remember, it is one thing for the Scripture to give warning and another for us to take it! And if we do not take warning, we cannot say, "By them is Your servant warned." Oh, that our hearts may be in such a state that a hint from the Word may set us on our watch against evil!

Next, the Word of God warns us *by reminding us of our duties*. We are not only taught negatively what we should not do, but positively what we ought to do—and thus we are warned against sins of omission. I wish that professors who are neglectful of many points in the Savior's example would study His Character more, marking down the points where they come short of it. If we were to read the lives of holy men recorded in Scripture and notice where we fail to be like they, it might do us much service. Truly, Lord, Your servants would be profitably warned if we more often enquired, "Lord, what would You have me do?"

Turning over these sacred pages we remark a choice blessing coming upon a man of God in connection with a certain virtue. Then we are warned to cultivate that virtue if we would have that blessing. The Lord does not pay us for our work as though we were hirelings and our labor meritorious. But still, according to His Grace, He rewards His faithful servants and so diligently encourages them to obey. Every Bible precept should be an arrow aimed at the heart of our carelessness and forgetfulness. Then should we often say with David, "By them is Your servant warned." Like our Lord in His youth, we must be about our Father's business and we must continue there till, like He, we can say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do."

The Word of God also *warns us of our weakness in those duties which it commands and of our tendency to fall into those sins which it forbids*. It sets before us a noble example, but it bids us remember that only by Divine power can we follow it. It spreads before us a program of perfect holiness, but it does not flatter us with the notion that by our own strength we can carry it out! It humbles us by showing that we cannot even *pray* as we ought without the Spirit's teaching, nor so much as *think* a good thought without His aid. Scripture is continually warning us of the deceitfulness of our hearts and of the tendency of sin to advance from one stage of evil to another.

Holy Scripture shows us our spiritual inability, apart from the Divine Spirit—and greatly do we need warnings in this way, for we are given to be self-sufficient. Pride will shoot forth with the very least encouragement. We buckle on our harness and begin at once to shout as if the battle were won. How soon we think ourselves near perfection when, indeed, we are near a fall! We are apt to sit down and imagine that we have won the race when we have not yet traversed one half the way.

The Word of God continually checks our carnal confidence and disturbs our self-satisfaction. It bears constant protest against our imagining that we have already attained when we are as yet only babes in Divine Grace. How plainly it tells us, "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool!" It shows us where our great strength lies, but it calls us off from all trust in our own past experience, or firmness of character, or strength of determination, or depth of sanctification to lean solely and alone upon heavenly Grace which we must receive hour by hour. If we give way to pride, it is against the admonitions of the Divine statutes, for in this matter, "By them is Your servant warned."

So does the Word continually *warn us against the temptations which are in the world in which we live*. Read its story from the first day of Adam's Fall to the last chapter of its record and you shall find it continually representing the world as a place of trial for the heir of Heaven. It is, indeed, as a sieve in which the true corn has no rest, but much tossing to and fro. Christ seems praying over us every day as we read the Scripture, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One."

If you fancy that your position in life puts you beyond temptation, you are sadly deluded. Poverty has its evil side and riches are full of snares. Even in a Christian family we may be seduced into great sin as well as among the ungodly. There is no place under Heaven where the arrows of temptation cannot reach us. With this also comes persecution, for because we are not of the world, the world hates us. "In the world you shall have tribulation," is a sure prophecy. If you meet with no persecution you should remember that the smiles of the world are even more dangerous than its frowns. Beware of prosperity! Thank God if you have the world's wealth, but hold it tenderly and watch over your heart carefully lest you bow before the golden calf.

Adversity has less power to harm than prosperity. Of the evils peculiar to various positions, the Holy Spirit tells us in these sacred pages: "By them is Your servant warned." We are continually warned to put on the whole armor of God and not to lay aside the shield of faith for a moment. We are urged to watch at all times and to pray without ceasing—for in the most quiet life, in the most pious company and in the regular work of the day—dangers are lurking. Where we think we may be very much at ease, lying down as on a bank of flowers, we are most likely to be stung by the deadly serpent. We are like the first settlers in America—the cunning Red Indians of temptation may be upon us with the deadly tomahawk of lust while we are dreaming of peace and safety.

Here, let me add, *we are warned over and over again against the temptations of Satan*. Certain theologians, nowadays, do not believe in the existence of Satan. It is singular when children do not believe in the existence of their own father! But it is so that those who are most deluded by him are the loudest in repudiating all faith in his existence. Any man who has had experience of his temptations knows that there is a certain mysterious personage—invisible, but almost invincible—who goes about seeking whom he may devour. He has a power far beyond that which is human—

and a cunning that is equal to that of a thousand of the most clever of men.

Satan will endeavor to influence our minds in a way which is contrary to their true intent—to turn our thoughts in directions which we abhor—to suggest questions about Truths of God of which we are certain and even blasphemies against Him who, in our heart of hearts, we worship lovingly. But, Beloved, the power of Satan in a Christian's life is a force with which he must reckon, or he may fail through ignorance. Some especially have had sore conflicts with this Evil One and certain tried ones are scarcely a day without being tormented either by the howling of this dog or else by his snapping at their heels.

He cannot possess us as he possesses many of the ungodly, but he *worries* whom he can't devour with a malicious joy. Whatever "modern thought" ministers may have to say about Satan, the Inspired Scripture does not leave us ignorant of his devices, but sets us on our guard against his terrible power, bidding us pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." The temptations of the world and of the flesh are more upon our level than the assaults of Satan—he is the Prince of the evil forces and his attacks are so mysterious, so cunningly adapted to our infirmities and so ingeniously adjusted to our circumstances that unless the Lord, the Holy Spirit, shall daily cover us with His broad shield of Divine Grace, we shall be in the utmost jeopardy. O Lord, by these words of Yours is Your servant warned to resist the enemy and escape his wiles! Glory be to Your loving care!

The teachings of the Lord also *warn us to expect trial*. The Bible never promises the true Believer an easy life. Rather it assures him that he is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. There is no soaring to Heaven on the wings of luxurious ease—we must painfully plod along the pilgrim way. We see on the pages of Inspiration that we cannot be crowned without warfare, nor honored without suffering. Jesus went to Heaven by a rough road and we must follow Him. Every Believer in the Cross must bear a cross. If things go easily with you for a long time, do not, therefore, say, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved," for God has only to hide His face and you will be troubled. Those happiest of men, of whom it could be said that God had set a hedge about them and all that they had—these, in due course—had to take their turn at the whipping post and smart under the scourge. Even Job, that perfect and upright man, was not without his troubles.

Beloved, expect to be tried! And when the trial comes, count it not a strange thing. Your sea will be rough like that which tossed your Lord. Your way will be hot and weary like that which your Master trod. The world is a wilderness to you as it was to Him. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." Seek not to build your mansion *here*, for a voice cries to you out of the Word, "This is not your rest, for it is polluted." Think of that verse of our favorite hymn—

***"Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation, or pain?
He told me no less.***

The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word.

Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.”

Therefore, Beloved, you are forewarned that you may be forearmed.

God’s Word also warns us by prophesying to us of things to come. I cannot enter, just now, into what is a very interesting point of experience, namely, the singular fact that the Bible is used of God to warn individuals of events about to occur to them. The Book is full of prophecies for nations, but at times it becomes prophetic to individual Believers. Have you never had impressed upon your mind a passage of Scripture which has followed you for hours and even days, and you could not tell why, till an event has happened which has so exactly tallied with that Scripture that you could not but remark it as having prepared you for the circumstance?

Will not your morning reading sometimes forestall the sorrow or the duty of the day? Have you not often found that if you read the Bible consecutively, somehow or other, the passage which comes in due course will prove to be as truly a lesson for the day as if it had been written on purpose to meet your case? I am far from being superstitious, or wishful to encourage faith in mere *impressions*—but I cannot shut my eyes to facts which have happened to myself. I know that I have received, through this Book of God, messages to my heart which have come with peculiar power and suitability so that I have been compelled to say, with emphasis, “Moreover by them is Your servant warned.”

But the Bible warns us all of certain great events, especially of the Second Advent of the Lord and the coming judgment. It does not clearly tell us when our Lord will appear, but it warns us that to the unprepared He will come as a thief in the night. It warns us of the General Judgment and of the day when all men shall live again and stand before the Great White Throne. It warns us of the day when every secret shall be revealed and when every man shall receive for the things that he has done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it is good or evil. “By them is Your servant warned.”

If I live like one of yonder cattle, in the immediate present, or if I have no eye for the future that is hurrying on—if my soul never places herself in vision before the Judgment Seat of Christ, or if I never foresee the day when Heaven and earth, before the Presence of the great Judge, shall flee away—why then I cannot be a diligent reader of the Word of God! If I search the Scriptures I shall be called to walk in the light of the Last Day and shall be made to gird up my loins to face the dread account. Oh, that we might all be warned to be ready, that we may give our account with joy! Oh, that we may so take the warnings of Holy Writ as to be ready for death, ready for judgment and ready for that final sentence which can never be reversed! If we were truly wise these warnings would put salt into our lives and preserve them from the corruption which is in the world through lust.

Beloved, I trust that every one of us who knows the Lord will use His Holy Book as the constant guard of his life. Let it be like a fog signal to you, going off in warning when the road is hidden by a cloud. Let it be like the red lamp on the railway suggesting to you to come to a stop for the

road is dangerous. Let it be like a dog at night, waking you from sleep because a robber is breaking in, or as the watch on board a ship who shouts aloud, "Breakers ahead!" Let the Word of God be like one who, during the great flood in America, rode on a white horse down the valley, crying out, as he rode along, "To the hills! To the hills! To the hills!" The waters were following fast behind him and he would have the people escape to the mountains lest they should be destroyed.

O precious Book, thus bid me seek the hills! Ring the alarm bell in my ears and compel me to flee from the wrath to come! Day and night, wherever I may be, may a Word from the oracle of God sound in my ears and keep me from sleeping on the brink of the abyss! May no enemy be able to steal upon us when sleeping in false security, for it is high time that we awake out of sleep! And this Book tells us so. So far have we spoken upon the Word as keeping us.

II. And now, secondly, I have to speak to you upon OUR KEEPING THE WORD OF GOD. "In keeping of them there is great reward." What is meant by *keeping* the testimonies of God's Word? You know right well that it will not suffice to have the Holy Book in your houses to lie upon a table so that visitors may see that you have a family Bible! Nor is it enough to place it on the bookshelf where the dust may thickly cover it because it is never used. That is not keeping the Bible, but burying it!

It does not warn you, for you smother it—you do not keep it, for you dishonor it by neglect. You must have a reverent esteem for it and a growing familiarity with it if you would keep it. "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly." To keep the Word of God is, first of all, *earnestly to study it* so as to become acquainted with its contents. Know your Bible from beginning to end. I am afraid there is but little Bible searching nowadays. If the Word of God had been diligently studied there would not have been so general a departure from its teachings. Bible-reading people seldom go off to modern theology. Those who feed upon the Word of God enjoy it too much to give it up. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual, they learn to prize all the revealed Truths of God and they hold fast the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

Dear young people, if you never read a single book of romance you will lose nothing—but if you do not read your Bibles you will lose everything! This is the age of fiction and therefore the age of speculation and error—leave fiction and give yourself wholly to the Truth of God! Eat that which is good and spend not your money on that which is not bread. The Bible is the Thesaurus of heavenly knowledge, the encyclopedia of Divine science—read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the same—and then you will be keeping the sayings of God!

But we cannot keep them without going further than this—*we must be zealous in their defense*. May it be said of each one of us, "You have kept My Word." When you find others denying God's Truth, hold the faster to it! When they argue against it, be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. It is not an easy task to stand fast in the faith, today, for the current which runs towards unbelief is strong as a torrent and many have been taken off their feet by it and are being

carried down to the cataracts of error. May God help you to say with the pilgrims in *Vanity Fair*, “We buy the Truth”!

Buy it at any price and sell it at no price! It ought to be dearer than life, for it was so to the martyrs of our own country and to the Covenanters of Scotland in whose steps we would tread. They cared little whether their heads were struck off or not, but they cared *everything* for King Jesus and the statutes of His Word. Beloved, happy in the end will that man be who for a while has suffered contempt and misrepresentation and separation from his Brethren because of fidelity to the Truth of God! Come what may, he that sides with Truth will be no loser in the end. Oh, for more Luthers nowadays—we need them! Those who buckle to error are everywhere—even those in whom we trusted have betrayed their Lord.

But this is not all, we must go much further—*there must be a careful observance of the Law of the Lord*. We cannot be said to keep God’s Word if we never carry it out in our own lives. If we know the Commandments but do not obey them, we increase our sin. If we understand the Truth of God and talk about it but are slow to live according to it, what will become of us? This is not to keep God’s Word, but to hold the Truth of God in unrighteousness! This may, in some cases, be a presumptuous sin. When your knowledge far exceeds your practice, take heed lest you are guilty of sinning willfully. We must keep the Word of God in the sense in which our Lord used the word when He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

Once more, even this is not enough—we are to keep the Truth of God not only by reverent study of it, by zealous propagation of it, by careful observance of it, but also by *an inward cleaving to it in love* and a cherishing of it in our heart of hearts. What you believe you must also love if you are to keep it. If it comes to you in the power of God, it may humble you, it may chasten you, it may refine you as with fire—but you will love it as your life. It will be as music to your ears, as honey to your palate, as gold to your purse, as Heaven to your soul! Let your very self be knit to the faithful Word. As new-born babes desire the unadulterated milk, so desire the teachings of the Spirit that you may grow thereby. Every Word of God must be bread to us after which we hunger and with which we are satisfied. We must love it even more than our necessary food. For that which God has spoken we must have an ever-burning, fervent love which no floods of destructive criticism can quench or even damp.

But now the text says, “In keeping of them there is great reward”—and here you must have patience with me while I set out *the great reward which comes to obedient Believers*. There are many rewards and the first is, *great peace of mind*. “Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them.” When a man has done what God bids him do, his conscience is at peace and this is a choice gift. I can bear anybody to be my foe rather than my conscience. We read of David, “David’s heart smote him.” That was an awkward knock! When a man’s own conscience is his foe, where can he run for shelter? Conscience smites home and the wound is deep.

But when a man can conscientiously say, "I did the right thing. I held the Truth. I honored my God," then the censures of other men go for little. In such a case you have no trouble about the consequences of your action for if any bad consequence should follow, the responsibility would not lie with you—you did what you were told. Having done what God Himself commanded you, the consequences are with your Lord and not with you. If the heavens were likely to fall, it would not be our duty to shore them up with a *lie*. If the whole Church of God threatened to go to pieces, it would be no business of ours to bind it up by an unhallowed *compromise*! If you should fail to achieve success in life—what men call success—that is no fault of yours if you cannot succeed without being dishonest. It will be a greater success to be honest and to be poor, than to grow rich through trickery.

If, through Divine Grace, you have done the will of God, your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Can you think of a greater reward than this? I cannot. A quiet conscience is a little Heaven. A martyr was fastened to the stake and the sheriff who was to execute him expressed his sorrow that he should persevere in his opinions and compel him to set fire to the pile. The martyr answered, "Do not trouble yourself, for I am not troubling myself. Come and lay your hand upon my heart and see if it does not beat quietly." His request was complied with and he was found to be quite calm.

"Now," he said, "lay your hand on your own heart and see if *you* are not more troubled than I am! And then go your way and, instead of pitying me, pity yourself." When we have done right we need no man's pity, however painful the immediate consequence. To do right is better than to prosper. A heart sound in the Truth of God is greater riches than a houseful of silver and gold. There is more honor in being defeated in truth than in a thousand victories gained by trickery and falsehood. Though Fame should give you the monopoly of her bronze trumpet for the next 10 centuries, she could not honor you so much as you will be honored by following right and the Truths of God, even though your integrity is unknown to men. In keeping the Word of the Lord there is great reward, even if it bring no reward. The approbation of God is more than the admiration of nations. Verily this is great reward!

The next great reward is *increase of Divine knowledge*. If any man will know the will of Christ, let him *do* that will. When a young man is put to learn a trade, he does so by working at it—and we learn the Truth which our Lord teaches by obeying His commands. To reach the shores of heavenly wisdom every man must work his passage. Holiness is the royal road to Scriptural knowledge. We know as much as we do. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." It may be you sit down and consider the doctrine but you cannot understand it. You turn it over and consult a learned divine—but still you cannot understand it. Be obedient, pray for a willing heart to do the will of God and you have already received enlarged capacity—and with it a new light for your eyes—you will learn more by holy *practice* than by wearisome *study*.

The Lord help us to follow on to know the Lord, for then shall we know! Practice makes perfect. Obedience is the best of schools and Love is the ablest of teachers. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge is the gift of Grace to the faithful—is not this a great reward?

Moreover, in keeping the commandments *we increase in conformity to Christ and, consequently, in communion with God*. He that does as Christ did is like Christ, for our likeness is moral and spiritual. In measure we receive His image as we work His deeds and then, as Christ lived in constant fellowship with God because He always did the things that pleased God, so do we walk in the light as God is in the light—when we yield obedience to the Divine will. If you walk in sin, you cannot walk with God. If you will be obedient, then shall all clouds be chased away and your light shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Sinning will make you leave off communion with God, or else communion with God will make you leave off sinning—one of the two things must occur. If you are kept from sin and made to be obedient you shall bear the image of the heavenly and with the heavenly you shall have daily communion.

This will be followed by the fourth great reward, namely *power in prayer*. Jesus says, “If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” If you will read in the Gospel of John, you will frequently see how success in prayer is, in the case of the Believer, made to depend upon his complete *obedience*. If you will not listen to God’s Word, neither will He listen to your word! Some people complain that they have no power with God—but has God any power with them? Look to the faultiness of your lives and cease to wonder at the failure of your prayers! An inconsistent life downstairs means unprofitable prayer upstairs—if, indeed, there is any prayer at all!

You cannot have God’s ear in the closet if He never has your ear in the shop. If you live as worldlings live, the Lord will treat you as He did Cain, to whose offering He had no respect. Wonder not at your leanness in private devotions if there is license in your public life! O Lord God the Holy Spirit, sanctify us in our daily lives and so shall we obtain access to God through Jesus Christ and our pleading shall be accepted in Him!

One great reward is *habitual holiness*. The man who has, by Divine Grace, long kept the way of the Lord, finds it more easy to do so because he has acquired the habit of obedience. All things are difficult at the beginning, but all things grow easy as we proceed. I do not say that holiness is ever easy to us—it must always be a labor and we must always be helped by the Holy Spirit—but at the same time it is far easier for a man to obey who has obeyed than for one to obey who has lived in constant rebellion. If you have faith you will have more faith almost as a necessary consequence. If you pray much you will pray more—it is all but inevitable that you should do so.

There are Believers whom the Lord has put on the *rails* of life—they do not run on the road like common vehicles—they are placed on tram lines of habit and so they keep the ways of the Lord. Sometimes a stone gets on the track and there is an unhappy jolt, but still they do no iniquity but keep on in one straight line even to their journey’s end. This is a great re-

ward of Divine Grace. If you are obedient, you shall be rewarded by being made *more* obedient. As the diligent workman becomes expert in his art so shall you grow skillful in holiness. What a joy it is when holiness becomes our second nature—when prayer becomes habitual as breathing and praise is as continual as our heart-beats! May hatred to sin be spontaneous and may desire for the best things be the habit of our soul! I scarcely know of a greater reward than this habitual holiness which the Lord in His Grace bestows on us.

This will generally be followed by another great reward, namely, *usefulness to others*. He that keeps the Commandments of the Lord will become an example that others may copy and he will wield an influence which shall constrain them to copy him. Don't you think that many Christians are spiritually childless because they are disobedient? How can God allow me to bring others to Himself if I myself backslide from Him? The power to bless others must first be a power within ourselves. It is useless to pump yourself up into a pretended earnestness at a meeting and then to think that this sort of thing will work a real work of Grace in others—the seed of *pretence* will yield a harvest of *pretenders*—and nothing more.

Nothing can come out of a man unless it is first *in* him and if it is in him it will be seen in his life as well as in his teaching. If I do not live as I preach, my preaching is not living preaching. I could mention men of great talent who see no conversions—and one does not wonder—for even in *their* lives there is no holiness, no spirituality, no communion with God! I could mention Christian people with very considerable gifts who have no corresponding measure of Divine Grace and therefore their labor comes to nothing. Oh, for more holiness! Where *that* is manifest there will be more usefulness.

Lastly, we shall have the great reward of *bringing glory to the Grace of God*. If we are made holy, men seeing our good works will glorify our Father who is in Heaven—and is not this the very end of our existence? Is not this the flower and fruit of life? I pray you, therefore, walk humbly and carefully with God that He may be honored in you. There are two things I want to say before I sit down. The first is, *let us hold fast, tenaciously, doggedly—with a death grip—the Truth of the Inspiration of God's Word*. If it is not Inspired and Infallible, it cannot be of use in warning us. I see little use in being warned when the warning may be like the idle cry of, "Wolf!" when there is no wolf.

Everything in the railway service depends upon the accuracy of the signals—when these are wrong lives will be sacrificed. On the road to Heaven we need unerring signals or the catastrophes will be far more terrible. It is difficult enough to set myself right and carefully drive the train of conduct, but if, in addition to this, I am to set the Bible right and thus manage the signals along the permanent way, I am in an evil plight, indeed! If the red light or the green light may deceive me, I am as well without signals as to trust to such faulty guides. We must have something fixed and certain, or where is the foundation? Where is the fulcrum for our lever if nothing is certain? If I may not implicitly trust my Bible, you may burn it,

for it is of no more use to me. If it is not Inspired, it ceases to be a power either to warn or to command obedience.

Beloved, others may say what they will, but here I stand bearing this witness—"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." While you hold fast its Inspiration, *pray God to prove its Inspiration to you.* Its gentle but effectual warning will prove its Inspiration *to you.* This precious Book has pulled me up many times and put me to a pause, when otherwise I had gone on to sin. At another time I should have sat still had it not made me leap to my feet to flee from evil or seek good. To me it is a monitor whose voice I prize! There is a power about this Book which is not in any other. I do not care whether it is the highest poetry or the freshest science—each must yield to the power of the Word of God!

Nothing ever plays on the cords of a man's soul like the finger of God's Spirit. This Book can touch the deep springs of my being and make the life floods flow forth. The Word of God is the great power of God and it is well that you should know it to be so by its power over you. One said, "I cannot believe the Bible." Another answered, "I cannot disbelieve it." When the question was raised—"Why do you believe?" the Believer answered, "I know the Author and I am sure of His truthfulness." There is the point—if we know the Author, we know that His witness is true—and knowing it to be true, we take His warnings and follow His commands.

May the Lord work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure—then shall the Book be more and more precious in our eyes—and this sense of its preciousness will be one of the rewards which come to us in keeping the statutes of the Lord. So be it unto you through Christ Jesus! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 19.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—908, 479, 19.**

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DAVID WARNED AND REWARDED NO. 2775

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 20, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1881.

*“Moreover by them Your servant is warned: and
in keeping them there is great reward.”
Psalm 19:11.*

DAVID was constantly singing the praises of God's Word, although, as I have often reminded you, he had only a small portion of the Scriptures compared with the complete Bible which we possess. If, then, it had pleased God that the Canon of Revelation should have been closed in David's day, it would, by the aid of His Spirit, have been even then a sufficient Light of God to lead the saints of God into the way of holiness. You would be very sorry if the Pentateuch and the earliest Historical Books should be all that you had of the Scriptures, yet they are, evidently, so rich, so full, so instructive, that they were all that David needed for the practical purposes of a holy life! Never allow anybody to make you depreciate the Old Testament. No part of the Bible is to be set up above the rest, or to be treated as of secondary importance. “All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

So I gather, from what David says, that if we had no more Books of the Bible than he had, we should still possess all inestimable treasure for which we ought daily to bless and praise the name of the Lord. But now that we have the complete Revelation of the will of God, as contained in the Old and the New Testaments, we ought to rejoice with exceedingly great joy. We have a Bible which is large enough to be a perfect library and which is also so compact that we can carry it about with us wherever we go! It is exactly the right size and it is just right in all other respects. It is just adapted to every individual in the world and it is also the most fit Book for any nation to use as an everyday guide as to its morals, its laws and its conduct in relation to both God and men.

There are two things mentioned in the text which made the Scriptures very dear to David. The first is that *they had warned him against evil*—“by them Your servant is warned.” And the second is that *obedience to the Scriptures had brought him a great reward*—“and in keeping them there is great reward.”

I. First, then, THE SCRIPTURES HAD WARNED DAVID AGAINST EVIL.

We are so dull and so foolish that unless we are taught of God the Holy Spirit, we really know nothing as we ought to know it. Yet we are so headstrong and so obstinate that if we are not Divinely checked, we run with heedless impetuosity into all manner of evil. We need to be goaded on to everything that is good, but we need to be held in with a tight rein, or we shall plunge into many things that are evil. Even when we do not willfully choose the wrong, we seem to run into it by a sort of natural tendency—and we find ourselves bogged down before we know where we are. If, however, the Scripture is made to be our constant companion and guide, we shall be saved from many mistakes into which, otherwise, we are sure to fall. Where we should have rushed on madly to our destruction, we shall find ourselves suddenly stopped and we shall hear a Voice behind us saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” And, through giving heed to that warning Voice, we shall turn back from the broad road of our own choosing to the narrow way of God’s choice.

God’s Word warned us, first, *concerning our soul’s disease and its remedy*. To some of us, our first warning concerning the evil of our nature came from the Scriptures. There are some persons who must, very early in life, have been made aware of the evil of their nature. I mean persons with a hot, impetuous, passionate temperament, or those with a strong animal tendency and others who were brought up in the midst of vice, and who themselves eagerly plunged into it. One would think that such people ought to be able to see that they are not what they should be. But there have been others with a gentle nature who have been trained up in the midst of piety. Even without the Grace of God, they would not be likely to become vicious like those to whom I have referred. They have also, through helpful training, become honest, upright and amiable. There is everything about them that is pleasing and beautiful. They go to church, or to the meeting house, and they join with others in making confession of sin, yet, somehow, they do not seem to realize that the confession applies to themselves exactly as it stands, for they are not openly as sinful as others are. There are some people in such a condition of natural excellence that if it had not been for the Word of God, they would not have known what evil was sleeping within their hearts!

A leopard may have been kept under restraint from the time it was a cub and it may appear to be perfectly harmless. But if it should taste blood, its real fierceness will soon be seen. You may walk over a grassy hill and think yourself perfectly secure, yet, underneath, there may be a slumbering volcano, liable to break out at any moment. Everywhere about us there is that which flatters us and makes us think that we are better than we are, but, by the Word of God, we are faithfully warned that there is a sink of iniquity within our soul—a black and fetid spring—a foul generator of everything that is evil in the very fountain of our nature! What a blessing it is for us to be warned of that evil, lest we should go on dreaming that all was right and never find out the truth till we were past conversion—past the possibility of being renewed because we would have entered that other world where hope and mercy can never come! What a blessing it is that God’s Word warns us concerning the

disease and tells us of the remedy for it—warns us that we are lost and reveals to us the glorious Truth of God concerning the Savior who has come to seek and to save that which was lost!

Then, next, God's Word warned us *concerning our danger and the way of escape from it*. Did you ever find yourself, dear Friend, forming associations with ungodly persons and gradually becoming more and more pleased with them and, then, did the Word of God come to you with power, saying, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"? Did you also hear this command applied to you, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says, the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"? If so, I am sure that as you tore yourself away from the fatal embrace of the ungodly, and escaped for your life out of the Sodom of which you had almost become a citizen, you could not help prizing and praising the Book by which you had been warned to flee from the peril which threatened to destroy you!

Did you ever find yourself thinking that all was well within—that you were really getting to be somebody of importance—that you might hang out your streamers? And did the Word of the Lord then come home to you, saying, "You say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"? Did you haul down your flags? Did you hide your face for shame? Did you get away alone and confess to God the proud mistake that you had made, and not feel safe again until you were lying at the foot of the Cross, looking up to your Savior for mercy and forgiveness? If so, I feel sure that you took your Bible in your hand and you said, "By this blessed Book Your servant is warned to escape from self-delusion and from being puffed up with the conceit that he was something when he was nothing."

How many, many dangers there are in this life against which the Word of God warns us! I recollect being on board a steamboat going up the Thames, early in the morning, when the fog had not cleared away and when a man in the bow of the vessel shouted out as loudly as he could for us to go astern, for we were out of our track and should soon have been ashore. As I heard that shrill cry of warning, I could not but be grateful for it and you and I, dear Friends, would long ago have gone aground if the Word of the Lord had not called out to us, sometimes in sharp, stern tones, "Stop! There is danger just ahead!" And we have been compelled to alter our course and go where our natural inclination would never have induced us to go. Blessed be God that we were not only warned, at the first, concerning our spiritual disease, and directed to Him who could cure it, but, many a time since then we have been warned of unseen dangers in our holy pilgrimage! So let us prize and bless the Book that has been our Mentor and our Monitor, always seeking to keep us in the right path, or to draw us off from the wrong.

God's Word has also been a warning to us, oftentimes, *concerning our duty and our obligation*. Many a professing Christian is not living as he or she should live. But if they would diligently read their Bible and obey its injunctions, there would soon be a great alteration in them. Hundreds of

Believers, while searching the Scriptures, have been powerfully affected by some text and have been led not only to see their shortcomings, but also to perceive the way to a nobler and better life. "I must do something," says one, "to prove my love to Him who has done so much for me. I have fallen short even of the standard that I set for myself, and that standard is far below what I find in the Word of God." And, it may be, under the influence of a single verse, the man has become generous, self-sacrificing, earnest, fervent and has glowed with a zeal for God which he never knew before! Many of us can testify how often the Word of the Lord has quickened us—so let us be wise enough to go to it whenever we become lethargic and dull, so that, under the Inspiration of its sacred pages, we may be again awakened and revived. O Spirit of God, we bless Your holy name that when duties lay neglected and precepts had been entirely forgotten, You did bring them up again before our minds in this precious Book—and then, by Your Grace we made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments because Your Word has warned us concerning our duty and our obligation!

Brothers and Sisters, God's Word warns us *concerning the whole of our life and even concerning some things to come which, otherwise, we could never have known*. If any Brother is impressed with the thought that Jesus Christ may come at any moment, and call him to account, that is an admirable reason why he should, every day, watch unto prayer, and get himself ready for his Lord's coming. But, sometimes, when I read the Word of God, and when I travel through this great city, I am led to contemplations of another sort. I think that whether the Lord comes soon, or not, does not affect my responsibility and yours concerning the people now living, and the generations that may yet come. If this great London is to go on increasing. If the population shall still keep multiplying, what will be said of us if we allow street after street to be built, houses by the thousands to be erected, and hardly any new houses for the worship of God, while public bars may be measured by the mile? It seems to me a dreadful thing to live at this particular time in which, if the Gospel seed is not plentifully sown, the waste ground of centuries—if the world lasts so long, will cry out because of our indolence! But if the seed were scattered broadcast, then the harvests that shall be reaped in the centuries that may yet come shall redound to the Glory of God and also to the credit of those who faithfully served their Lord.

I believe that if ever men stood in a place where they could have power over a vast tremulous mass of humanity—if ever men were in contact with wondrous wires that may influence ages that are yet to be, and nations still unborn—we are the men who stand in just such a position! That which is done, or left undone, today, will have certain effects throughout eternity, but it will, perhaps, be sufficient for us to limit the consideration and to remember that our service or our neglect may affect generations of our fellow creatures for good or evil. May God help us to remember that solemn verse which warns us that "none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself." May the Holy Spirit also bring to our memories our Savior's words, "You are the salt of the earth." And

“You are the light of the world.” If we salt not the earth, what can come to it but corruption? And if we enlighten not our generation, what can come to it but the blackness of darkness? By the consideration of these things are God’s servants warned to be up and doing while it is called today. May God grant that we may not neglect the warning, but may we prize it, and thank God that in the Sacred Scriptures there is provision made to wake us up when we sleep, and to keep us active in His holy service! “By them Your servant is warned.”

I would like to pass the question round to all who are here—Dear Friends, are you being warned by God’s Word? Does it ever stop you, like an angel in the way when you are going forward contrary to the will of the Lord, and make you suddenly start and stand still? Does God’s Word ever, as it were, put its finger up to silence you just as you are going to speak? Does it ever seem to lay its hand upon your arm just as you are going to stretch out your hand unto iniquity? Does it ever warn you? Does it operate upon you as a drag, a check, a restraint? If it does not, then you have yet to learn the first elementary lesson of true piety! You are not as David was—you are not yet taught of the Spirit of God—for, if you were, you would frequently be warned by God’s Word and you would love to have it so. May God, in His mercy, grant that we may all learn, experimentally, the meaning of this first sentence of our text—“By them Your servant is warned”

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, in which I take much delight. It tells us that OBEDIENCE TO THE SCRIPTURES BROUGHT TO DAVID A GREAT REWARD.

Holy Writ was very precious to David and he says, concerning God’s commandments, “in keeping them there is great reward.” He does not say, “*for* keeping them.” That is the old legal system—so much pay for so much obedience. It is a poor system even if it could be worked out, but it is not God’s plan at all. “You are not under Law, but under Grace.” We are to do nothing for payment, but everything for love. Observe the difference between the two sentences. “For keeping them there is great reward.” That is beggarly! It is a hireling’s utterance. “In keeping them there is great reward.” *That* is the language of one who loves obedience. It is a child’s sentence—the sentence of one who is perfectly free in his obedience and who does not render it because he must, but because he delights to do so. That is the difference between the legal spirit of bondage and the evangelical spirit of holy freedom before the living God.

So, then, there is a great reward to gracious men in the keeping of God’s commandments and that reward consists, first, in *the pleasure of obedience*. To those of us who love the Lord, it is a great delight to do what God bids us do. For instance, He bids us draw near to Him in worship and I can confidently appeal to many of you who are here, and I am sure that you will sympathize with me when I say that the happiest moments of my life are those that are spent on this spot where I am now standing. Or down in the Prayer Meetings or at the Communion Table, for, when I begin to worship and adore the Lord, my heart finds wings and I soon rise above all cares, troubles and carnal considerations into a

high, holy, happy, spiritual condition! I am certain that I have experienced more true happiness on this platform than can have been enjoyed in any other place on the face of the earth! Whether you have been happy while I have been praying, I cannot tell, but I know that I have seemed to be in the immediate Presence of God while I have been leading you in supplication and, therefore, I judge that it has been much the same with you. And when you have a happy time alone in prayer, or in singing God's praises, or reading His Word, is it not the very vestibule of Heaven to your soul? Well, that is an illustration of the Truth of God that in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward!

That refers to one part of the commands of God—the drawing near unto Him in worship. Now turn to the Second Table, where you are bid to love your fellow men, and see how far you have obeyed its commands. Have you done all you could to help the poor? Have you distributed alms among them? Have you been a nurse to the sick? Have you taught the little children? Have you tried to instruct grown-up people whom you have found under soul-concern and sought to lead them to Christ? What have been the happiest evenings that you have ever spent when you have reviewed the engagements of the day? Have they been those in which you have had a season of gaiety with your friends—I do not mean anything objectionable or wrong, but ordinary amusement—a day, for instance, when you have been in the country and you have been full of mirth and merriment? Has that been your happiest day?

I do not think so. I believe that the happiest days you have ever lived have been those in which you have been downright weary in the cause of God! You have put your head on your pillow and you have slept, oh, so sweetly! Or, if you have been too tired to sleep, you have had joy-bells ringing in your heart because you have been doing somebody good. It is a great delight to give away money for Christ's sake—to help the poor and to succor such as are unable to help themselves! Just try to relieve a poor widow of part of her burden of care, or seek to supply the needs of an orphan child and see whether it will not bring you joy and gladness! It is a whole day's holiday to be permitted to spend a day in doing well. In saying this, I am not dreaming—I am merely telling you what I know to be a matter of fact. Those who love the Lord find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward! There is a pleasure in the obedience, itself.

Then, dear Friends, there is *a reward in the healthiness of this exercise*. Either in worship and serving the Lord, or in loving and doing well to your fellow men, there is most healthful exercise to your spirit. There are some forms of physical labor that quickly wear out the human frame—and there are some processes of thought that bring on brain weariness and mental exhaustion. But, in the service of God there is a refreshment which makes the labor light. If we could have a machine that would manufacture its own oil, provide its own coal and repair its own waste, it would be a wonderful triumph of mechanism—and the spiritual mind is, by God's Grace, made something like that. It bears within itself a well of living water springing up into everlasting life! It is an engine that

creates its own fuel, oil and water as it runs along its way. God, by His Infinite Power, gives to the Believer such spiritual strength within him that even “though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” There is nothing that does a man so much good as to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. A little heavenly excitement is a blessed refreshment and revival for the entire manhood and—turning again to the other side of the subject—to walk uprightly towards our fellow men, to forgive those who injure us and to bless with our beneficence all those who need anything at our hands is a kind of exercise that is eminently suitable to our renewed manhood! And, the more we have of it, the more are we refreshed. If you want to grow to be what you ought to be, keep God’s commandments, for in keeping them there is this blessed healthiness of spirit that comes to the obedient. He who would be whole, must be holy. Holiness is, indeed, a kind of wholeness or spiritual health.

Let me give you a few specimens of the way in which some of us have found the keeping of God’s commandments to be truly profitable to us—

***“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world’s light.
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright.”***

I obeyed that command and I can bear testimony that a great reward was at once given to me. Oh, how quickly the heavy burden rolled from my shoulder! How my soul did leap like a roe or a young hart the very moment that I obeyed that command of the Lord, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Then there is that command, “Trust in the Lord,” which is the perpetual precept for a Believer’s whole life—have not many of you found a great reward in keeping that command? Why, that trust in God has enabled you to cast your burden of daily care and every other burden that has been upon you, upon Him! And when you have trusted Him, you have been placid, and calm, and joyful and strong, and fully equipped for all your labor and service. What a great reward faith brings to all who exercise it! It is a most soul-enriching Grace and, where it is in active operation, untold spiritual wealth comes pouring into the coffers of the saint!

Now take another command. For instance, “Pray without ceasing.” In keeping that command, have you not had a great reward? True prayer is true power. Prayer brings every blessing from on high. There is no need to do more than just mention it, for many of you know that when you have kept that command, there has been given to you a great reward.

Let me remind you of a command which is often forgotten—the command to forgive them that trespass against you. If you have done that, have you not found a great reward in the fact of having done it? Someone well said, “If my fellow men do not praise me for what I have done, I do not mind. I am quite satisfied to have done that which deserved their praise.” So should it be with you and those whose wrong-doing you have forgiven. If you have borne long with their ill manners and your kindness has only increased their enmity so that they have reviled you more than ever, feel that it is quite sufficient reward for you to have done the right thing in forgiving them.

Or suppose it is not the duty of forgiveness that is in question, but some other, such as that of holy self-sacrifice? How do you stand with regard to it? Have you made sacrifices for Christ? Have you given of your substance to His cause until you have pinched yourself in doing so? That is one of the sweetest things a Christian can ever do—and there is a great reward in doing that. Have you denied yourself some pleasure in order to spend your time in doing good to others? If so, I am sure it has proved to be one of the best things you have ever done. It does not breed boastfulness or self-conceit, but there is a kind of moral sense within the spirit that makes our heart feel happy whenever we are doing a right and noble thing. We do not ask that we may be praised for it, or rewarded for it—it is quite sufficient delight for us to have had the privilege of doing such a thing as that.

One of the greatest rewards that we ever receive for serving God is the permission to do still more for Him. The reward for a man who has faithfully served God as the leader of 50 people is to be permitted to serve Him as the leader of a hundred. And, in the case of a man who has lost a great deal of money through being faithful to his conscience, perhaps the greatest reward that God can give him is to let him lose twice as much by being still more faithful if that is possible! He who has been honest and upright—and who has been slandered—it may be that he shall be rewarded by being slandered still more! The highest reward that God ever gives His servants on earth is when He permits them to make such a sacrifice as actually to die in His service as martyrs. That is the highest reward of which I can conceive—the acceptance that God gives to the very body, blood and bones of His servants, as a whole burnt-offering unto Him.

Do you remember what reward the Spartans had when they fought most valiantly? A Spartan was once asked, “Suppose you fight like a lion today, what reward will you have?” He answered, “I shall have the honor of always being in the front rank where there is the most danger.” A coward would have preferred to be in the back rank where there was the least danger, but the brave Spartan said, “If I have proved my courage, I shall have the permission to suffer more, and to venture more for my country.” And this is the kind of reward that God will give to us. If we keep His commandments, we shall be permitted to have more to do for His dear sake.

I have not time to speak of the peace that comes from the keeping of God’s commandments, or of the ennobling character which it produces, but I must just mention the great reward which this obedience brings to us *in the power and capacity which it is gradually breeding in us for the perfect service of Heaven*. God can make a man fit for Heaven in a minute if He pleases to do so. That I am sure of, for Christ took the dying thief there, but, as a general rule, the education of God’s children is a matter of time. We have to be prepared for the enjoyments and the employments of Heaven by processes of discipline here on earth. Now, Brothers and Sisters, when you get to this state of spiritual experience—that it is your one joy and delight to glorify God—when you can bless God for suffering,

when you can praise Him for heaviness of spirit if He chooses to send it—when your will is entirely subject to the will of God and your whole life is entirely absorbed in seeking the Glory of God, then you are fit for Heaven, for Heaven principally consists of perfected natures with the capacity to do the will of God without question or hindrance forever!

Now I must conclude with two observations. The first is, dear Friends, that you may know the profitableness there is in keeping God's commandments by considering the opposite thing. Do not try it, but just think of it! Suppose that you Christian people do not keep God's precepts—suppose that, in certain ways, you violate them? What will happen? I am not now referring to your *eternal* safety, but I am quite sure that you will never derive any benefit from disobedience to God. You may get more money, perhaps, by a certain course in business, but that will not be true profit—it will be bad money which will canker all the rest that you have. Whatever you get in that way will be infinitely worse than losing. Look at David when he broke God's commandments. It was an evil day for him when he looked with lustful eyes upon Bathsheba. And, from that first moment in which he turned aside, there was a cloud over his entire life. Although God had made with him, “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure,” yet that last part of his life was full of grief and sorrow—and you can trace it all to that turning aside from keeping the precepts of his God. O Brothers and Sisters, do you want to curdle your whole life? Then, let a drop of uncleanness fall into it! You may do, in half an hour, what will embitter the next 20 years of your life—yes, and will make your dying pillow to be full of thorns. There can be no possible profit to a child of God in disobeying his Lord's commands.

This is my last remark. There must be a great reward in keeping God's commandments, for I never yet heard anybody say that he was sorry that he had kept them. I have met with many persons who have, for a time, suffered because of their faithfulness to conscience, but they have taken that as a matter of course and they have found such a great reward in obeying Christ, and following their conscientious convictions that if it had cost them a hundred times as much, they would have cheerfully submitted to the loss! Never has there been a man who, on his deathbed, has regretted that he has followed the Lord fully. Is there one here who has kept God's commandments and who regrets that he has done so? Is there one such person on earth? Was there ever one who could truthfully say, “I served God with all my heart and He has cast me out—and I am sorry that I ever had such a Master”? No, there has not been such a person, nor shall there ever be one who can say that as long as the world stands, for in keeping God's commandments there is great reward!

God bless you, dear Brothers and Sisters, and give you that reward, according to the riches of His Grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 19.**

This Psalm has the same subject as Psalm 119. Both of them are full of praise of God's Word. God has written two books for us to read—the volume of the Creation and the volume of the Sacred Scriptures—and these two are in complete harmony. Happy are they who can read both these books and see the same vein of teaching running through every page.

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.* The heavens are always declaring God's Glory. If we gaze up to them by day or by night, we always read in them the power, the wisdom, the goodness, the greatness, the Immutability of God.

2. *Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.* If we have but ears to hear and hearts to understand, how much of God may we see in that vast volume of Nature which is spread out above us both by day and by night!

3, 4. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* All men must hear God's voice in Nature if they are only willing to do so. Paul wrote to the Romans, "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." So that those who will not see "are without excuse."

4-6. *In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. Its going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* The sun has its place, and keeps it, so let us keep ours. The sun is glorious in its goings forth—"as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber"—glad himself, and making all things glad in his gladness—the whole world rejoices at the sight of the face of the sun. The sun is strong to go through its appointed orbit and fulfill its ordained course. So may it be with us—may we not only have the gladness of our conversion when we are "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber"—but may we have strength and Grace to run the race set before us from the start to the finish. The sun makes its influence felt wherever it goes—"there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." So also may it be with us—may our influence be felt wherever we go! The sun is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, but it is also a type of what every Christian should be, for "the path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day." And there should be nothing hid from the fervent heat of our Christian character. We ought to serve God so that our influence should be felt everywhere. May God give us more of His Light and His heat that we may shine and burn to His Glory!

7-9. *The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.* Six sentences, ac-

ording to the parallels of Hebrew poetry, all in praise of God's Word! Let us always regard this holy Book as the Word of Jehovah! Let us never look upon the Bible as being on a level with other books. The Word of the Lord is our ultimate Court of Appeal—we accept its teaching as Infallible, we obey its commands, we desire to reflect its purity. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." Nothing may be taken from it and nothing added to it, for it is perfect as it is. It is without admixture of error and without adulteration of falsehood. And it proves its supernatural power by converting men from the error of their ways. What other book can convert the soul of man except so far as it contains Biblical truth?

"The commandment of the Lord is pure." There is no other code of morals so pure as that revealed in the Bible. The Gospel reflects glory on all the perfections of God and, therefore, it makes wise the simple. Poor simple-hearted folk, conscious of their own ignorance, come to this Book and not only find wisdom in it, but are themselves made wise by it. It is also, "sure," as well as, "pure." There is no question about its teaching—it is certainly true. If we learn only what is sure, we may be sure that we shall not have to unlearn it. "The statutes of the Lord are right," and they will set us right if we obey them. They will also rejoice our heart, for unrighteousness brings sorrow, sooner or later—but rightness in the end brings joy.

"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." There is a close connection between the eyes and the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Sin in the heart puts dust in the eyes—we cannot see right unless we feel right. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." When you come to know God and the power of true religion in the form of holy, child-like fear, you never lose it—it is yours forever! Time cannot destroy it, eternity will but develop it. "The judgments of the Lord are true." There is no alloy of falsehood here. Whatever destructive criticism may be brought to bear upon it, no part of sacred Scripture will ever be destroyed—"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

10. *More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold.* Or, the very best gold. No riches can so enrich the mind and heart as the Word of God does. A man may have tons of gold and yet be utterly miserable, but he who is pure in heart, he who has God's Word and the love of it in his heart, is truly rich, however poor he may be in temporal things.

10. *Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* As I read those six poetic lines in praise of the Word of God, I could not help thinking how the bees build their honeycombs in hexagons of six-sided combs, all full of honey. Such is this portion of the Word of God with its hexagons of commendation, every part of which is full of sweetness to the true Believer.

11, 12. *Moreover by them Your servant is warned: and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors.* While David is speaking of the Book that has no errors in it, he is reminded of his own errors—and they strike him as being so many that he cannot understand them. Every sin is really an error, a mistake, a blunder, as well as some-

thing a great deal worse. It is never a wise thing to do wrong. At the end of a book, we sometimes find that the printers insert a list of, “errata”—errors made in the printing of the volume. Ah, me, we shall need to have a long list of “errata” at the end of the volume of our lives! How many mistakes we have made! Augustine, in his “*Confessions*,” amended what he had written amiss in his previous books. The best of men need to continually confess their errors, but God’s Book has no error in it from beginning to end!

12. *Cleanse me from secret faults.* “Cleanse me from the faults which I cannot see and which no mortal man has ever seen. You, Lord, see them. Be pleased, therefore, to cleanse me from them.” This view of the Omniscience of God is very comforting to the Believer because he perceives that even if he cannot see his sin, so as to acknowledge it and confess it, yet God can see it so as to forgive it and cleanse it!

13. *Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins.* If we indulge in secret sins, we may gradually slide down an inclined plane until we come to presumptuous sins—sins committed willfully, sins known to be sins, daring, God-defying sins! Lord, keep me back from such sins as these! If others urge me to advance in this wrong direction, O Lord, keep me back! “Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins.”

13. *Let them not have dominion over me.* For, when a man once sins presumptuously, the tendency is for him to become a slave to that sin. It gets dominion over him. The worst slave owner in the world is sin and presumptuous sin is a tyrant with many a cruel whip in its hand.

13. *Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* “That greatest transgression of all, that sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven. If I am kept from presumptuous sin, I shall never fall into that fatal pit.”

14. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer.* David does not hope to be accepted till he has, first of all, been pardoned. But when the Lord has forgiven him and sanctified him, then he comes with both mouth and heart to serve his God and his prayer is that he may be acceptable in the sight of God, to whom he owes the strength to worship and through whom he hopes to be accepted because he has a Redeemer. “O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.” May each one of us be thus acceptable in the sight of God, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—768, 718, 703.

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

SECRET SINS

NO. 116

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Cleanse You me from secret faults.”
Psalm 19:12.*

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS arises partly from pride but mainly from ignorance of God’s Law. It is because men know little or nothing concerning the terrible character of the Divine Law that they foolishly imagine themselves to be righteous. They are not aware of the deep spirituality and the stern severity of the Law or they would have other and wiser notions. Once let them know how strictly the Law deals with the thoughts, how it brings itself to bear upon every emotion of the inner man—and there is not one creature beneath God’s Heaven who would dare to think himself self-righteous in God’s sight in virtue of his own deeds and thoughts! Only let the Law of God be truly revealed to a man, let him know how strict the Law is and how infinitely just—and his self-righteousness will shrivel into nothing! It will become a filthy rag in his sight—whereas before he thought it to be a goodly garment!

Now, David, having seen God’s Law and having praised it in this Psalm, which I have read in your hearing, is brought by reflecting on its excellency, to utter this thought, “Who can understand his errors?” and then to offer this prayer, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true Believer must confess his sins, all of them, once each year to a priest, and they affixed to it this declaration—that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter Heaven! Besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins which are as truly sins as those which we observe but which are secret and come not beneath our eyes! Oh if we had eyes like those of God, we would think very differently of ourselves. The sins that we see and confess are but like the farmer’s small samples which he brings to market when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared

with those which are hidden to ourselves and unseen by our fellow creatures! I doubt not it is true of all of us who are here that in every hour of our existence in which we are active, we commit tens of thousands of sins for which conscience has never reproved us because we have never seen them to be wrong, seeing we have not studied God's Laws as we ought to have done! Now, be it known to us all that sin is sin, whether we see it or not—that a sin secret to us is a sin as truly as if we knew it to be a sin, though not as great a sin in the sight of God as if it had been committed presumptuously, seeing that it lacks the aggravation of willfulness. Let all of us who know our sins offer this prayer after all our confessions—"Lord, I have confessed as many as I know, but I must add an etcetera after them and say, 'Cleanse You me from secret faults.'"

That, however, will not be the essence of my sermon this morning. I am going after a certain class of men who have sins not unknown to themselves but secret to their fellow creatures. Every now and then we turn up a fair stone which lies upon the green sward of the professing Church, surrounded with the verdure of apparent goodness and, to our astonishment, we find beneath it all kinds of filthy insects and loathsome reptiles! And in our disgust at such hypocrisy, we are driven to exclaim, "All men are liars! There are none in whom we can put any trust at all!" It is not fair to say so of all, but really, the discoveries which are made of the insincerity of our fellow creatures are enough to make us despise our kind because they can go so far in appearances and yet have so little soundness of heart. To you, Sirs, who sin secretly and yet make a profession—you who break God's Covenants in the dark and wear a mask of goodness in the light—to you, Sirs, who shut the doors and commit wickedness in secret—to you I shall speak this morning! O may God also be pleased to speak to you and make you pray this prayer—"Cleanse You me from secret faults."

I shall endeavor to urge upon all pretenders present to give up, to renounce, to detest, to hate, to abhor all their secret sins! And, first, I shall endeavor to show the *folly of secret sins*. Secondly, *the misery of secret sins*. Thirdly, *the guilt of secret sins*. Fourthly, *the danger of secret sins*. And then I shall try to apply some words by way of remedy—that we may, all of us, be enabled to avoid secret sins.

I. First, then, THE FOLLY OF SECRET SINS.

Pretender, you are fair to look upon. Your conduct is outwardly upright, amiable, liberal, generous and Christian. But you indulge in some sin which the eyes of man have not yet detected. Perhaps it is private drunkenness. You revile the drunk when he staggers through the street. But you can, yourself, indulge in the same habit in private. It may be some other lust or vice. It is not for me, just now, to mention what it

is. But, Pretender, we say unto you, you are a fool to think of harboring a secret sin and you are a fool for this one reason—that your sin is *not* a secret sin—it is *known* and shall one day be revealed. Perhaps very soon! Your sin is not a secret. The eyes of God have seen it. You have sinned before His face. You have shut the door and drawn the curtains and kept out the eye of the sun, but God’s eyes pierce through the darkness. The brick walls which surrounded you were as transparent as glass to the eyes of the Almighty! The darkness which did gird you was as bright as the summer’s noon to the eyes of Him who beholds all things. Know you not, O man, that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do?” As the priest ran his knife into the entrails of his victim, discovered the heart and liver and what else did lie within, so are you, O man, seen by God! Cut open by the Almighty, you have no secret chamber where you can hide yourself. You have no dark cellar where you can conceal your soul. Dig deep, yes, deep as Hell, but you cannot find earth enough upon the globe to cover your sin! If you should heap the mountains on its grave, those mountains would tell the tale of what was buried in their bowels. If you could cast your sin into the sea, a thousand babbling waves would tell the secret! There is no hiding it from God! Your sin is photographed in high Heaven. The deed, when it was done, was photographed upon the sky and there it shall remain and you shall see yourself, one day, revealed to the gazing eyes of all men, a hypocrite, a pretender, who did sin in fancied secret, observed in all your acts by the all-seeing Jehovah!

O what fools men are, to think they can do anything in secret! This world is like the glass hives wherein bees sometimes work—we look down upon them and we see all the operations of the little creatures. So God looks down and sees all our eyes are weak. We cannot look through the darkness but His eyes, like orbs of fire, penetrate the blackness and reads the thought of man and sees his acts when he thinks himself most concealed! Oh, it were a thought enough to curb us from all sin, if it were truly applied to us—“You, God, see me!” Stop thief! Drop that which you have taken! God sees you! No eyes of detection on earth have discovered you, but God’s eyes are now looking through the clouds upon you! Swearer! Though none at whom you swore heard your oath, God heard it! It entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabbath. And those who lead a filthy life and yet are respectable among men—your vices are all known—they are written in God’s book. He keeps a diary of all your acts. And what will you think on that Day when a crowd shall be assembled, compared with which this immense multitude is but a drop in a bucket, and God shall read out the story of your secret life and men and angels shall hear it? Certain I am there are none of us who would like to have all

our secrets read, especially our secret thoughts. If I should select out of this congregation the most holy man. If I should bring him forward and say, “Now, Sir, I know all your thoughts and am about to tell them,” I am sure he would offer me the largest bribe that he could gather if I would be pleased to conceal at least some of them! “Tell,” he would say, “of my *acts*—of them I am not ashamed. But do not tell my thoughts and imaginations—of them I must ever stand ashamed before God.” What, then, Sinner, will be your shame when your private lusts, your closet transgressions, your secret crimes shall be heralded from God’s Throne, proclaimed by His own mouth and with a voice louder than a thousand thunders preached in the ears of an assembled world? What will be your terror and confusion, then, when all the deeds you have done shall be proclaimed in the face of the sun, in the ears of all mankind? O renounce the foolish hope of heresy, for your sin is this day recorded and shall one day be advertised upon the walls of Heaven!

II. In the next place, let us notice THE MISERY OF SECRET SINS.

Of all sinners, the man who makes a profession of religion and yet lives in iniquity is the most miserable. A downright wicked man who takes a glass in his hand and says, “I am a drunkard, I am not ashamed of it”—shall be unutterably miserable in worlds to come. But brief though it is, he has his hour of pleasure. A man who curses and swears and says, “That is my habit, I am a profane man,” and makes a profession of it, he has, at least, some peace in his soul. But the man who walks with God’s minister, who is united with God’s Church, who comes out before God’s people and unites with them and then lives in sin—what a miserable existence he must have! Why, he has a worse existence than the mouse that is in the parlor, running out, now and then, to pick up the crumbs and then back again to his hole! Such men must run out, now and then, to sin! And, oh, how fearful they are to be discovered! One day, perhaps, their character turns up. With wonderful cunning they manage to conceal and gloss it over, but the next day something else comes and they live in constant fear, telling lie after lie to make the last lie appear truthful—adding deception to deception—in order that they may not be discovered—

**“Oh, ‘tis a tangled web we weave,
When once we venture to deceive!”**

If I must be a wicked man, give me the life of a boisterous sinner who sins before the face of day! If I must sin, let me not act as a hypocrite and a coward! Let me not profess to be God’s and spend my life for the devil! That way of cheating the devil is a thing which every honest sinner will be ashamed of. He will say, “If I serve my master, I will serve him out and out, I will have no sham about it. If I make a profession, I will carry it out

but if I do not, if I live in sin, I am not going to gloss it over by cant and hypocrisy.” One thing which has hamstrung the Church and cut her very sinews in two has been this most damnable hypocrisy!

Oh, in how many places have we seen men whom you might praise to the very skies if you could believe their words—but whom you might cast into the nethermost pit of Hell if you could see their secret actions? God forgive any of you who are so acting! I had almost said I can scarcely forgive you. I *can* forgive the man who riots openly and makes no profession of being better. But the man who fawns and cants and pretends and prays and then lives in sin—that man I hate—I cannot stand him! I abhor him from my very soul! If he will turn from his ways, I will love him, but in his hypocrisy he is to me the most loathsome of all creatures! ‘Tis said the toad wears a jewel in her head, but the hypocrite has none but bears filthiness about him—while he pretends to be in love with righteousness! A mere profession, my Hearers, is but painted pageantry to go to Hell in! It is like the plumes upon the hearse and the trappings upon the black horses which drag men to their graves—the funeral array of dead souls! Take heed above everything of a waxen profession that will not stand the sun! Take care of all that needs to have two faces to carry it out. Be one thing, or else the other. If you make up your mind to serve Satan, do not pretend to serve God. And if you serve God, serve Him with all your heart! “No man can serve two masters.” Do not try it, do not endeavor to do it, for no life will be more miserable than that. Above all, beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called “*The Dream of Eugene Aram*”—a most remarkable piece it is, indeed, illustrating the point on which I am now dwelling. Aram has murdered a man and cast his body into the river—“a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme.” The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

**“And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye—
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry!”**

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the forest and left the secret bare before the sun—

**“Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep!
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.”**

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave and trod him down with stones but when years had run their

weary round, the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death!

Guilt is a “grim chamberlain,” even when fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights until men burn out their consciences and become in very deed ripe for the pit of Hell! Hypocrisy is a hard game to play, for it is one deceiver against many observers. And for certain it is a miserable trade which will earn, at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy! Ah, you who have sinned without discovery, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And remember, it may find you out before long. Sin, like murder, will come out—men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has sometimes made men so pricked in their consciences that they have been obliged to come forward and confess the crime. Secret sinner! If you want the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in your secret sin, for no man is more miserable than he who sins secretly and yet tries to preserve a character! Yonder stag, followed by the hungry hounds with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is followed by his sins. Yonder bird, taken in the fowler’s net and laboring to escape, is far more happy than he who has weaved around himself a web of deception and labors to escape from it day by day by making the toils more thick and the web more strong! Oh, the misery of secret sins! Truly, one may pray, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

III. But now, next, the guilt—THE SOLEMN GUILT OF SECRET SIN.

Now, John, you do not think there is any evil in a thing unless somebody sees it, do you? You feel that it is a very great sin if your master finds you out in robbing the till—but there is no sin if he should not discover it—none at all. And you, Sir, you fancy it to be very great sin to play a trick in trade—in the event you should be discovered and brought before the court! But to play a trick and never be discovered, that is all fair—do not say a word about it, Mr. Spurgeon, it is all business! You must not touch business—tricks that are not discovered, of course you are not to find fault with them. The common measure of sin is the notoriety of it. But I do not believe that! A sin is a sin, whether done in private or before the whole world. It is singular how men will measure guilt. A railway servant puts up a wrong signal—there is an accident. The man is tried and severely reprimanded. The day before, he also put up the wrong signal, but there was no accident and, therefore, no one cursed him for his neglect! But it was just the same, accident or no accident—the accident did not make the guilt—it was the *deed* which made the guilt, not the notoriety nor even the consequence of it! It was his business to have taken care and he was as guilty the first time as he was the second, for he negligently exposed the lives of men! Do not measure sin

by what other people say of it, but measure sin by what God says of it and what your own conscience says of it!

Now I hold that secret sin, if anything, is the worst sin because secret sin implies that the man who commits it has Atheism in his heart. You will ask how that can be? I reply, he may be a professing Christian, but I shall tell him to his face that he is a practical Atheist if he labors to keep up a respectable profession before man and then secretly transgresses. Why, is he not an Atheist who will say there is a God, yet at the same time thinks more of man than he does of God? Is it not the very essence of Atheism—is it not a denial of the Divinity of the Most High when men lightly esteem Him and think more of the eyes of a creature than of the observation of their Creator? There are some who would not for the life of them say a wicked word in the presence of their minister, but they can do it even knowing God is looking at them. They are Atheists! There are some who would not trick in trade for all the world if they thought they would be discovered. But they can do it while God is with them, that is, they think more of the eyes of man than of the eyes of God. And they think it worse to be condemned by man than to be condemned by God! Call it by what name you will—the proper name of that is *practical Atheism*. It is dishonoring God. It is dethroning Him—putting Him down below His own creatures! And what is that but to take away His Divinity? Brothers and Sisters, do not, I beseech you, incur the fearful guilt of secret sins! No man can sin a little in secret—it will certainly engender more sin. No man can be a hypocrite and yet be moderate in guilt—he will go from bad to worse and still proceed—until when his guilt shall be published—he shall be found to be the very worst and the most hardened of men! Take heed of the guilt of secret sin!

Ah, if I could preach as Rowland Hill did, I would make some people look to themselves and tremble! It is said that when he preached, there was not a man in the window, or standing in the crowd, or perched up anywhere but said, “There, he is preaching at me! He is telling me about my secret sins.” And when he proclaimed God’s omniscience, it is said men would almost think they saw God bodily present in the midst of them looking at them! And when he had finished his sermon, they would hear a voice in their ears, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the Lord.” I would I could do that—hat I could make every man look to himself and find out his secret sin. Come my Hearer, what is it? Bring it forth to the daylight. Perhaps it will die in the light of the sun. These things love to not be discovered. Tell your own conscience, now, what it is. Look it in the face. Confess it before God and may He give you Divine Grace to remove that sin and every other and turn to Him with full pur-

pose of heart! But know this—your guilt is guilt discovered or undiscovered—and if there is any difference it is worse, because it has been secret. God save us from the guilt of secret sin! “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

IV. And note, next, THE DANGER OF SECRET SIN. One danger is that a man cannot commit a little sin in secret without being, by-and-by, betrayed into a *public* sin. You cannot, Sir, though you may think you can, preserve a moderation in sin! If you commit one sin, it is like the melting of the lower glacier upon the Alps. The others must follow in time. As certainly as you heap one stone upon the mound, today, the next day you will cast another, until the heap, reared stone by stone, shall become a very pyramid! See the coral insect at work—you cannot decree where it will stop its work. It will not build its rock just as high as you please. It will not stop until it shall be covered with weeds and until the weeds shall decay. And then there shall be soil upon it and an island shall be created by tiny creatures. Sin cannot be held in with bit and bridle! “But I am going to have a little drink now and then, I am only going to be intoxicated once a week or so. Nobody will see it. I shall be in bed directly.” You will soon be drunk in the streets! “I am only just going to read one lascivious book, I will put it under the sofa when anyone comes in.” You will keep it in your library yet, Sir! “I am only going into that company now and then.” You will go there every day, such is the bewitching character of it. You cannot help it. You may as well ask the lion to let you put your head into his mouth! You cannot regulate his jaws—neither can you regulate sin! Once go into it, you cannot tell when you will be destroyed! You may be such a fortunate individual that like Van Amburgh—you may put your head in and out a great many times—but rest assured that one of these days it will be a costly venture!

Again—you may labor to conceal your vicious habit but it will come out—you cannot help it. You keep your little pet sin at home. But mark this, when the door is ajar, the dog will be out in the street! Wrap him up in your bosom, put over him fold after fold of hypocrisy to keep him secret—the wretch will be singing some day when you are in company! You cannot keep the evil bird still. Your sin will gad abroad. And what is more, you will not mind it some of these days. A man who indulges in sin, privately, by degrees gets his forehead as hard as brass. The first time he sinned, the drops of sweat stood on his brow at the recollection of what he had done. The second time, no hot sweat was on his brow—only an agitation of the muscle. The third time there was the sly, sneaky look but no agitation. The next time he sinned a little further. And by degrees he became the bold blasphemer of his God and exclaims, “Who am I that I should fear Jehovah and who is He that I should serve Him?”

Men go from bad to worse! Launch your boat in the current—it must go where the current takes it. Put yourself in the whirlwind—you are but a straw in the wind—you must go which way the wind carries you—you cannot control yourself! The balloon can mount, but it cannot direct its course. It must go whichever way the wind blows. If you once mount into sin there is no stopping! Take heed if you would not become the worst of characters. Take heed of the little sins. They, mounting one upon another, may at last heave you from the summit and destroy your soul forever! There is a great danger in secret sins!

But I have here some true Christians who indulge in secret sins. They say it is but a little one and, therefore, do they spare it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I speak to you and I speak to myself, when I say this—let us destroy all our little secret sins! They are called little and if they are, let us remember that it is the foxes, even the little foxes, that spoil our vines, for our vines have tender shoots. Let us take heed of our little sins! A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveler to Heaven walk very wearily. Little sins, like little thieves, may open the door to greater ones outside. Christians, remember that little sins will spoil your communion with Christ. Little sins, like little stains in silk, may damage the fine texture of Fellowship. Little sins, like little irregularities in the machinery, may spoil the whole fabric of your religion! The one dead fly spoils the whole pot of ointment. That one thistle may seed a continent with noxious weeds. Let us, Brothers and Sisters, kill our sins as often as we can find them! One said—“The heart is full of unclean birds. It is a cage of them.” “Ah but,” said another divine, “you must not make that an apology, for a Christian’s business is to wring their necks.” And so it is! If there are evil things, it is our business to kill them! Christians must not tolerate secret sins. We must not harbor traitors. It is high treason against the King of Heaven! Let us drag them out to light and offer them upon the altar, giving up the dearest of our secret sins at the will and bidding of God. There is a great danger in a little secret sin. Therefore avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and shun it—and God give you Grace to overcome it!

V. And now I come, in finishing up, to plead with all my might with some of you whom God has pricked in your consciences. I have come to entreat you, if it is possible, even to tears, that you will give up your secret sins. I have one here for whom I bless God. I love him, though I know him not. He is almost persuaded to be a Christian. He halts between two opinions. He intends to serve God—he strives to give up sin, but he finds it a hard struggle and as yet he knows not what shall become of him. I speak to him with all love—my Friend, will you have your sin and go to Hell, or leave your sin and go to Heaven? This is the solemn

alternative—to an awakened sinner I put it—may God choose for you, otherwise I tremble as to which you may choose! The pleasures of this life are so intoxicating, the joys of it so ensnaring that did I not believe that God works in us to will and to do, I should despair of you! But I have confidence that God will decide the matter. Let me lay the alternative before you—on the one hand there is an hour's merriment—a short life of bliss and that a poor, poor bliss. On the other hand there is everlasting life and eternal glory! On the one hand, there is a transient happiness and afterwards overwhelming woe. In this case there is a solid peace and everlasting joy and after it overflowing bliss! I shall not fear to be called an Arminian, when I say, as Elijah did, "Choose this day whom you will serve. If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God serve him." But, now, make your choice deliberately. And may God help you to do it! Do not say you will take up with religion, without first counting the cost of it. Remember, there is your lust to be given up and your pleasure to be renounced—can you do it for Christ's sake? Can you? I know you cannot unless God's Grace shall assist you in making such a choice! But can you say, "Yes, by the help of God, earth's gaudy toys, its pomps, pageantries, gewgaws, all these I renounce"?—

***"These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ or else I die!"***

Sinner, you will never regret that choice, if God helps you to make it! You will find yourself a happy man here and thrice happy throughout eternity!

"But," says one, "Sir, I intend to be religious, but I do not hold with your strictness." I do not ask you to do so. I hope, however, you will hold with God's strictness and God's strictness is ten thousand times greater than mine! You may say that I am Puritanical in my preaching—God will be Puritanical in judging in that Great Day. I may appear severe, but I can never be as severe as God will be! I may draw the harrow with sharp teeth across your conscience, but God shall drag harrows of eternal fire across you one day! I may speak thundering things—God will not speak them but hurl them from His hands! Remember, men may laugh at Hell and say there is none, but they must reject their Bibles before they can believe that lie! Men's consciences tell them that—

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

Sirs, will you keep your secret sins and have eternal fire for them? Remember it is of no use—they must all be given up—or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both! It cannot be God and the World. It cannot be Christ and the devil. It must be one or the other!

Oh, that God would give you Grace to resign all, for what are they worth? They are your deceivers, now, and will be your tormentors forever! Oh, that your eyes were open to see the rottenness, the emptiness and trickery of iniquity! Oh, that God would turn you to Himself! Oh, may God give you Divine Grace to cross the Rubicon of repentance at this very hour! May He give you Grace to say, "Henceforth it is war to the knife with my sins. Not one of them will I willingly keep but down with them, down with them—Canaanite, Hittite, Jebusite, they shall all be driven out!"—

***"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be—
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee!"***

"But oh, Sir, I cannot do it, it would be like pulling my eyes out!" Yes but hear what Christ says—"It were better for you to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire." "But it would be like cutting my arm off." Yes and it would be better for you to enter into life crippled or maimed, than to be cast into Hell fire forever. Oh, when the sinner comes before God at last, do you think he will speak as he does now? God will reveal his secret sins—the sinner will not then say, "Lord, I thought my secret sins so sweet, I could not give them up." I think I see how changed it will be then. "Sir," you say now, "you are too strict." Will you say that when the eyes of the Almighty are glowering on you? You say now, "Sir *you are too precise.*" Will you say that to God Almighty's face? "Sir, *I mean to keep such-and-such a sin.*" Can you say it at God's bar at last? You will not dare to do it then! Ah, when Christ comes a second time there will be a marvelous change in the way men talk. I think I see Him. There He sits upon His Throne. Now, Caiaphas, come and condemn Him now! Judas! Come and kiss Him now! What do you stick at, man? Are you afraid of Him? Now, Barabbas! Go see whether they will prefer you to Christ now! Swearer, now is *your* time. You have been a bold man—curse Him to His face now! Now, *drunkard*—stagger up to Him now! Now, *infidel*—tell Him there is no Christ now—now that the world is lit with lightning and the earth is shaking with thunder till the solid pillars thereof do bow themselves—tell God there is no God now! Now laugh at the Bible! Now scoff at the minister. Why Men, what is the matter with you? Why, can't you do it? Ah, there you are, you have fled to the hills and to the rocks—"Rocks hide us! Mountains fall on us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne." Ah, where are your boasts now? Alas! Alas for you in that dread day of wonders! Secret Sinner—what will become of you? Go out of this place unmasked. Go out of here to examine yourself. Go out and bend your knees. Go out to weep and to pray, but God give you Grace to believe! And oh, how sweet and

pleasant the thought—that this day sinners have fled to Christ and men have been born-again to Jesus!

Brothers and Sisters, before I finish, I repeat the words at which so many have quibbled—it is now or never, it is turn or burn! Solemnly in God's sight I say it. If it is not God's Truth, I must answer for it in the Great Day of Account. Your consciences tell you it is true. Take it home and mock me if you will. This morning I am clear of your blood—if any seek not God but live in sin, I shall be clear of your blood in that day when the Watchman shall have your souls demanded of Him. Oh, may God grant that you may be cleared in a blessed manner! When I went down these pulpit stairs a Sabbath or two ago, a friend said to me words which have been in my mind ever since—"Sir, there are 9,000 people this day without excuse in the Day of Judgment." It is true of you this morning. If you are damned, it will be not for want of preaching to you and it shall not be for want of praying for you! God knows that if my heart could break of itself, it would, for your souls! God is my witness how earnestly I long for you in the heart of Christ Jesus. Oh, that He might touch your hearts and bring you to Him! Brothers and Sisters death is a solemn thing. Damnation is a horrible thing. To be out of Christ is a dreadful thing. To be dead in sin is a terrible thing. May God lead you to view these things as they are and save you, for His mercy's sake! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."—

***"Lord, search my soul, try every thought!
Though my own heart accuse me not
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of Your eyes,
Does secret mischief lurk within?
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
O turn my feet whenever I stray,
And lead me in Your perfect way!"***

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

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

SIN IMMEASURABLE

NO. 299

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 12, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Who can understand his errors?”
Psalm 19:12.***

WHAT we know is as nothing when compared with what we know not. The sea of wisdom has cast up a shell or two upon our shore, but its vast depths have never known the footstep of the searcher. Even in natural things we know but the surface of matters. He that has traveled the wide world over and has descended into its deepest mines, must yet be aware that he has viewed but a part of the mere crust of this world. That as for its vast center, its mysterious fires and molten secrets, the mind of man has not as yet conceived them. If you will turn your eyes above, the astronomer will tell you that the undiscovered stars, that the vast mass of worlds which form the milky way and the abundant masses of nebulae—that those vast clusters of unknown worlds, as infinitely exceed the little that we can explore, as a mountain exceeds a grain of sand.

All the knowledge which the wisest men can possibly attain in a whole lifetime is no more than what the child may take up from the sea with his tiny cup, compared with the boundless waters which fill their channels to the brim. Why, when we are at the wisest, we have but come to the threshold of knowledge—we have taken but one step in that race of discovery which we may have to pursue throughout all eternity. This is equally the case with regard to things of the heart and the spiritual things which concerns this little world called man. We know nothing but the surface of things.

Whether I talk to you of God, of His attributes, of Christ, of His atonement, or of ourselves and our sin, I must confess that as yet we know nothing but the exterior. That we cannot comprehend the length, the breadth, the height of any one of these matters.

The subject of this morning—our own sin and the error of our own hearts, is one which we sometimes think we know, but of which we may always be quite sure that we have only began to learn. And that when we have learned the most we shall ever know on earth, the question will still be pertinent, “Who can understand his errors?” Now, this morning I propose first of all, very briefly indeed, to explain the question. Then at

greater length to impress it upon our hearts. And lastly we will learn the lessons which it would teach us.

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE QUESTION.—“Who can understand his errors?”

We all acknowledge that we have errors. Surely we are not so proud as to imagine ourselves to be perfect. If we pretend to perfection we are utterly ignorant, for every profession of human perfection arises from perfect ignorance. Any notion that we are free from sin should at once teach us that we abound in it. To vindicate my boast of perfection, I must deny the Word of God, forget the Law and exalt myself above the testimony of truth. Therefore, I say, we are willing to confess that we have many errors, yet who among us can understand them? Who knows precisely how far a thing may be an error which we imagine to be a virtue? Who among us can define how much of iniquity is mingled with our uprightness—how much of unrighteousness with our righteousness? Who is able to detect the component parts of every action, so as to see the proportion of motive which would constitute it right or wrong?

He were indeed a crafty man who should be able to unmask an action and divide it into essential motives which are its component parts. Where we think we are right, who knows but what we may be wrong? Where even with the strictest scrutiny we have arrived at the conclusion that we have done a good thing, who among us is quite sure that he has not been mistaken? May not the apparent good be so marred with internal motive as to become a real evil?

Who again can understand his errors, so as always to detect a fault when it has been committed? The shades of evil are perceptible to God, but not always perceptible to us. Our eye has been so blinded and its vision so ruined by the Fall, the absolute black of sin we can detect, but the shades of its darkness we are unable to discern. And yet the slightest shadow of sin is perceptible to God and that very shade divides us from the Perfect One and causes us to be guilty of sin. Who among us has that keen method of judging himself, so that he shall be able to discover the first trace of evil? “Who can understand his errors?”

Surely no man will claim a wisdom so profound as this. But to come to more common matters by which perhaps we may the more understand our text. Who can understand the *number* of his errors? The mightiest mind could not count the sins of a single day. As the multitude of sparks from a furnace, so innumerable are the iniquities of one day. We might sooner count the grains of sand on the seashore, than the iniquities of one man’s life. A life most purged and pure is still as full of sin as the sea is full of salt. And who is he that can weigh the salt of the sea, or can detect it as it mingles with every fluid particle? But if he *could* do this, he could

not tell how vast an amount of evil saturates our entire life and how innumerable are those deeds and thoughts and words of disobedience which have cast us out from the presence of God and caused Him to abhor the creatures which His own hands have made.

Again—even if we could tell the number of human sins, who, in the next place, could estimate their guilt? Before God's mind the guilt of one sin and such an one as we foolishly call a little one—the guilt of one sin merits His eternal displeasure. Until that one iniquity is washed out with blood, God cannot accept the soul and take it to His heart as His own offspring. Though He has made man and is infinitely benevolent, yet His sense of justice is so strong, stern and inflexible, that from His presence He must drive out His dearest child if one single sin should remain unforgiven. Who, then, among us can tell the guilt of guilt, the heinousness of that ungrateful rebellion which man has commenced and carried on against his wise and gracious Creator?

Sin, like Hell, is a bottomless pit! Oh, Brethren, there never lived a man yet who really knew how guilty he was. If such a being could be fully conscious of all his own guilt, he would carry Hell in his heart. No, I often think that scarcely can the damned in perdition know all the guilt of their iniquity, or else even their furnace might be heated seven times hotter and Tophet's streams must be enlarged to an immeasurable depth. The Hell which is contained in a single evil thought is unutterable and unimaginable. God only knows the blackness, the horror of darkness, which is condensed into the thought of evil.

And then again, I think our text would convey to us this idea. Who can understand the peculiar aggravation of his own transgression? Now, answering the question for myself, I feel that as a minister of Christ I cannot understand my errors. Placed where multitudes listen to the Word from my lips, my responsibilities are so tremendous that the moment I think of them, a mountain presses upon my soul. There have been times when I have wished to imitate Jonah and take ship and flee away from the work which God has thrust upon me. For I am conscious that I have not served Him as I ought. When I have preached most earnestly, I go to my chamber and repent that I have preached in so heartless a manner.

When I have wept over your souls and when I have agonized in prayer, I have yet been conscious that I have not wrestled with God as I ought to have wrestled and that I have not felt for your souls as I ought to feel. The errors which a man may commit in the ministry are incalculable. There is no Hell methinks that shall be hot enough for the man who is unfaithful here. There can be no curse too horrible to be hurled upon the head of that man who leads others astray when he ought to guide them in the

path of peace, or who deals with sacred things as if they were matters of no weight and but of slight importance.

I bring here any minister of Christ that lives and if he is a man really filled with the Holy Spirit, he will tell you that when he is bowed down with the solemnity of his office, he would give up the work if he dare. That if it were not for something beyond, mysterious impulses that drive him forward, he would take his hand from the plow and leave the field of battle. Lord have mercy upon Your ministers, for, beyond all other men, we need mercy.

And now I single out any other member of my congregation and whatever is your position in life, whatever your education, or the peculiar Providences through which you have passed, I will insist upon it that there is something special about your case which makes your sin such sin that you cannot understand how vile it is. Perhaps you have had a pious mother who wept over you in your childhood and dedicated you to God when you were in your cradle. Your sin is doubly sin. There is about it a scarlet hue which is not to be discovered in an ordinary criminal.

You have been directed from your youth up in the way of righteousness and if you have gone astray, every step you have taken has been not a step to Hell but a stride there. You do not sin so cheaply as others. Other men's scores run up fast. But where there are pence put down for other sinners there are pounds put down for you—because you know your duty but you do it not. He that breaks through a mother's bosom to Hell goes to its lowest depths. There is in Hell a degree of torture and the deepest should surely be reserved for the man who leaps over a mother's prayers into perdition.

Or you may never have this to account for. But you may have an equal aggravation. You have been at sea, Sir. Many times you have been in danger of being shipwrecked. You have had miraculous escapes. Now everyone of these shipwrecks has been a warning to you. God has brought you to the gates of death and you have promised that if He would but save your wretched soul that you would lead a fresh life—that you would begin to serve your Maker. You have lied to your God. Your sins before you uttered that vow were evil enough. But now you break not only the Law but your own covenant which you voluntarily made with God in the home of sickness.

You have, some of you perhaps, been thrown from a horse, or have been attacked by fever, or in other ways have been brought to the very gates of the grave. What solemnity is attached to your life now! He that rode in the charge of Balaclava and yet came back alive—saved alive where hundreds die—should from that time consider himself to be a God's man, saved by a singular Providence for singular ends. But you, too, have

had your escapes, if not quite so wonderful, yet certainly quite as special instances of God's goodness. And now, every error you commit becomes unutterably wicked and of you I may say, "Who can understand his errors?"

But I might exhaust the congregation by bringing up one by one. Here comes the father. Sir, your sins will be imitated by your children. You cannot, therefore, understand your errors, because they are sins against your own offspring—sins against the children that have sprung from your own loins. Here is the magistrate. Sir, your sins are of a peculiar dye, because, standing in your position, your character is watched and looked up to and whatever you do becomes the excuse of other men.

I bring up another man who holds no office in the State whatever and who perhaps is little known among men. But, Sir, you have received special grace from God, you have had rich enjoyment of the light of your Savior's countenance. You have been poor, but He has made you rich—rich in faith. Now when you rebel against Him, the sins of God's favorites are sins, indeed. Iniquities committed by the people of God become as high Olympus and reach the very stars. Who among us, then, can understand his errors—their special aggravations, their number and their guilt? Lord, search us and know our ways!

II. I have thus tried briefly to explain my text. Now I come to THE IMPRESSING OF IT ON THE HEART, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me. Before a man could understand his errors there are several mysteries which he must know. But each one of these mysteries, methinks, is beyond his knowledge and consequently the understanding of the whole depth of the guilt of his sin must be quite beyond human power.

Now the first mystery that man must understand is the Fall. Until I know how much all my powers are debased and depraved—how thoroughly my will is perverted and my judgment turned from its right channel—How really and essentially vicious my nature has become—it cannot be possible for me to know the whole extent of my guilt. Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil. Yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron?

Now, Brethren, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers. Your sins the sparks. If you could count them (which you cannot do) yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities—eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls? Yet must you know this before you know the whole sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the

weeds upon the surface soil. But I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep, the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land.

And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and center, we should find it as fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness. The fact is that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved, that no description which can be given of him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is. An ancient writer said once of the iniquity within that it was like the stores of water which are hidden in the depths of the earth—God once broke up the fountains of the great deep and then they covered the mountains twenty cubits upward.

If God should even withdraw His restraining grace and break up in our hearts the whole fountains of the great depths of our iniquity, it would be a flood so wondrous that it would cover the highest tops of our hopes and the whole worm within us would be drowned in dread despair. Not a living thing could be found in this sea of evil. It would cover all and swallow up the whole of our manhood. Ah, says an old Proverb, “If man could wear his sins on his forehead, he would pull his hat over his eyes.” That old Roman who said he would like to have a window into his heart that every man could see within it, did not know himself, for if he had had such a window he would soon have begged to have a pair of shutters and he would have kept them shut up, I am sure. For could *he* ever have seen his own heart, he would have been driven raving mad.

God, therefore, spares all eyes but His own that desperate sight—a naked human heart. Great God, here would we pause and cry, “Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. You desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”

A second thing which it will be needful for us to understand before we can comprehend our errors is God’s Law. If I just describe the law for a moment, you will very readily see that you can never hope by any means fully to understand it. The Law of God, as we read it in the Ten great Commandments, seems very simple, very easy. When we come, however, to put even its naked precepts into practice, we find that it is quite impossible for us to keep them fully.

Our amazement, however, increases, when we find that the Law does not mean merely what it says, but that it has a *spiritual* meaning, a hidden depth of matter which at first sight we do not discover. For instance,

the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” means more than the mere act—refers to fornication and uncleanness of any shape, both in act and word and thought. No, to use our Savior’s own exposition of it, “He that looks upon a woman to lust after her, commits adultery already with her in his heart.” So with every commandment. The bare letter is nothing compared with the whole stupendous meaning and severe strictness of the rule.

The commandments, if I may so speak, are like the stars. When seen with the naked eye, they appear to be brilliant points. If we could draw near to them, we should see them to be infinite worlds, greater than even our sun, stupendous though it is. So is it with the Law of God. It seems to be but a luminous point, because we see it at a distance—but when we come nearer where Christ stood and estimate the law as He saw it—then we find it is vast, immeasurable. “The commandment is exceeding broad.” Think then for a moment of the spirituality of the Law, its extent and strictness. The Law of Moses condemns for offense, without hope of pardon, and sin, like a millstone, is bound around the sinner’s neck and he is cast into the depths.

But much more—the Law deals with sins of thought—the imagination of evil is sin. The transit of sin across the heart leaves the stain of impurity behind it. This Law, too, extends to every act—tracks us to our bed-chamber, goes with us to our house of prayer and if it discovers so much as the least sign of wavering from the strict path of integrity, it condemns us. When we think of the Law of God we may well be overwhelmed with horror and sit down and say, “God be merciful to me, for to keep this Law is utterly beyond power. Even to know the fullness of its meaning is not within finite capacity. Therefore great God cleanse us from our secret faults—save us by Your Grace, for by the Law we never can be saved.”

Nor yet, even if you should know these two things, should you be able to answer this question. For, to comprehend our own errors we must be able to understand the perfection of God. To get a full idea of how black sin is you must know how bright God is. We see things by contrast. You will at one time have pointed out to you a color which appears perfectly white. Yet it is possible for something to be whiter still. And when you think you have arrived at the very perfection of whiteness, you discover that there is still a shade and that something may be found that is blanched to a higher state of purity.

When we put ourselves in comparison with the Apostles, we discover that we are not what we should be. But if we could bring ourselves side by side with the purity of God—O what spots! What defilements should we find on our surface! The Immaculate God stands before us as the bright background to set out the blackness of our iniquitous souls. Before you

can know your own defilement your eyes must look into the unutterable glory of the Divine Character. Him before whom the heavens are not pure—who charges the angels with folly—you must know Him before you can know yourself. Hope not, then, that you shall ever attain to a perfect knowledge of the depths of yours own sin.

Again—he that would understand his errors in all their heinousness must know the mystery of Hell. We must walk that burning marl, stand in the midst of the blazing flame—no, *feel* it. We must feel the venom of destruction as it makes the blood boil in each vein. We must find our nerves converted into fiery roads, along which the hot feet of pain shall travel, hurrying with lightning pace. We must know the extent of eternity and then the unutterable agony of that eternal wrath of God which abides on the souls of the lost, before we can know the awful character of sin.

You may best measure the sin by the punishment. Depend upon it, God will not put His creatures to one pain more than justice absolutely demands. There is no such thing as sovereign torture or sovereign Hell. God does not stretch His creature on the rack like a tyrant. He will give him but what he deserves and, perhaps, even when God's wrath is fiercest against sin, He does not punish the sinner so much as his sin might warrant, but only as much as it demands. At any rate, there will not be a grain more of wormwood in the cup of the lost than naked justice absolutely requires.

Then, O my God! If Your creatures are to be cast into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone—if into a pit that is bottomless, lost souls must be driven—then what a hideous thing sin must be! I cannot understand that torture, therefore I cannot understand the guilt that deserves it. Yet am I conscious that my guilt deserves it, or else God would not have threatened me with it, for He is just and I am unjust. He is holy and righteous and good and He would not punish me more for my sins than my sins absolutely required.

Yet once more—a last endeavor to impress this question of my text upon our hearts. George Herbert says very sweetly—“He that would know sin let him repair to Olivet and he shall see a man so wrung with pain that all His head, His hair, His garments were bloody. Sin was that press and vice which forced pain to hunt its cruel food through every vein.” You must see Christ, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood. You must have a vision of Him with the spittle running down His cheeks, with His back torn by the accursed whip. You must see Him going on His dolorous journey through Jerusalem. You must behold Him fainting under the weight of the Cross. You must see Him as the nails are driven through His hands and through His feet.

Your tearful eye must watch the throes of the grim agonies of death. You must drink of the bitterness of wormwood mingled with the gall. You must stand in the thick darkness with your own soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death. You must cry yourself that awful earth-startling cry of "Lama Sabachthani." You, too, must, as He did, feel all that weighs of God's almighty wrath. You must be ground between the upper and nether millstones of wrath and vengeance. You must drink of the cup to its last dregs and like Jesus cry—"It is finished." Or else you can never know all your errors and understand the guilt of your sin.

But this is clearly impossible and undesirable. Who wishes to suffer as the Savior suffered, all the horrors which He endured? He, blessed be His name, has suffered for us. The cup is emptied now. The Cross stands up no longer for us to die thereon. Quenched is the flame of Hell forever for the true Believer. No more is God angry with His people, for He has put away sin through the sacrifice of Himself. Yet I say it again, before we could know sin we must know the whole of that awful wrath of God which Jesus Christ endured. Who, then, can understand his errors?

III. I hope to have your patient attention but a few moments longer while I make THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION, by touching upon the lessons which are drawn from such a subject as this.

The first lesson. Behold the folly of all hope of salvation by our own righteousness. Come here, you that trust in yourselves. Look to Sinai, altogether in a smoke and tremble and despair. You say that you have good works. Alas, your good works are evil, but have you no evil ones? Do you deny that you have ever sinned? Ah, my Hearer, are you so besotted as to declare that your thoughts have all been chaste, your desires all heavenly and your actions all pure?

Oh, Man, if all this were true, if you had no sins of commission, yet, what about your sins of omission? Have you done all that God and that your brother could require of you? Oh these sins of omission! The hungry that you have not fed, the naked that you have not clothed, the sick ones and those that are in prison that you have not visited—remember it was for sins like these that the goats were found at the left hand at last. Not for what they did do, but for what they did *not* do—the things they left undone, these men were put into the Lake of Fire.

Oh, my Hearer, have done with your boasting. Pull out those plumes from your helmet you rebellious one and come with your glory dragging in the mire. And with your bright garment stained, confess that you have no righteousness of your own—that you are all unclean and full of sin.

If but this one practical lesson were learned, it were sufficient to repay this morning's gathering and a blessing would be conveyed to every spirit that had learned it. But now we come to another—how vain are all hopes

of salvation by our *feelings*. We have a new legalism to fight with in our Christian Churches. There are men and women who think they must not believe on Christ till they feel their sins up to a most agonizing point. They think they must *feel* a certain degree of sorrow, a high degree of sense of need before they may come to Christ at all. Ah, Soul, if you are never saved till you know all your guilt—you will never be saved—for you can never know it. I have shown you the utter impossibility of your ever being able to discover the whole heights and depths of yours own lost state.

Man, don't try to be saved by your feelings. Come and take Christ just as He is and come to Him just as you are. "But, Sir, may I come? I am not invited to come." Yes you are, "Whosoever will, let him come." Don't believe that the invitations of the Gospel are given only to characters. They are, some of them, unlimited invitations. It is the duty of every man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is every man's solemn duty to trust Christ—not because of anything that man is—or is not, but because he is commanded to do it. "This is the command of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent."—

***"O, believe the promise true,
God to you His Son has given."***

Trust now in His precious blood, and you are saved and you shall see His face in Heaven. Despair of being saved by feeling, since perfect feelings are impossible and a perfect knowledge of our own guilt is quite beyond our reach. Come, then to Christ, hard-hearted as you are and take Him to be the Savior of your hard heart. Come, poor stony conscience, poor icy soul, come as you are. He will warm you, He will melt you—

***"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us near;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."***

But again—another sweet inference—and surely this might well be the last—what Grace is this which pardons sin—sin so great that the most enlarged capacity cannot comprehend its heinousness? Oh, I know my sins reach from the east even to the west—that aiming at the eternal skies they rise like pointed mountains towards Heaven. But then, blessed be the name of God, the blood of Christ is wider than my sin. That shoreless flood of Jesus' merit is deeper than the heights of my iniquities. My sin may be great, but his merit is greater still. I cannot conceive my own guilt, much less express it—but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Infinite guilt, but infinite pardon. Boundless iniquities, but boundless merits to cover all. What if your sins were greater than Heaven's breadth? Christ is greater than Heaven. The Heaven of heavens cannot contain

Him. If your sins were deeper than the bottomless Hell, yet Christ's atonement is deeper still, for He descended deeper than ever man himself as yet has dived—even damned men in all the horror of their agony, for Christ went to the end of punishment and deeper your sins can never plunge. Oh, boundless love, that covers all my faults!

My poor Hearer, believe on Christ now. God help you to believe. May the Spirit now enable you to trust in Jesus. You can not save yourself. All hopes of self-salvation are delusive. Now give up, have done with self and take Christ. Just as you are, drop into His arms. He will take you. He will save you. He died to do it and He lives to accomplish it. He will not lose the spirit that casts itself into His hands and makes Him his All in All.

I think I must not detain you longer. The subject is one which commands a far larger mind than mine and better words than I can gather now. But if it has struck home I am thankful to God. Let me echo again and again the one sentiment I wish for you all to receive, which is just this—we are so vile that our vileness is beyond our own comprehension—but nevertheless, the blood of Christ has infinite efficacy. And he that believes in the Lord Jesus is saved, be his sins ever so many. But he that believes not must be lost, be his sins ever so few.

God bless you all for Christ's sake.

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

PRESUMPTUOUS SINS

NO. 135

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 7, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”
Psalm 19:13.***

ALL sins are great sins but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there are some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is *not* greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness and a more double scarlet dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the *presumptuous sins* of our text are the chief of all sins—they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish Law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception—“But the soul that sins presumptuously shall have no atonement, it shall be cut off from the midst of My people.” Under the Christian dispensation in the Sacrifice of our blessed Lord, there is a great and precious Atonement for presumptuous sins whereby sinners who have sinned in this manner are made clean. Yet without a doubt, presumptuous sinners dying without pardon must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God and a more dreadful manifestation of the unutterable anguish of the torment of eternal punishment in the Pit that is dug for the wicked.

I shall this morning, first of all, endeavor to *describe presumptuous sins*. Secondly, I shall try, if I can, to *show by some illustrations why the presumptuous sin is more heinous than any other*. And then thirdly, I shall try to *press this prayer upon your notice*—the prayer, mark you, of the holy man—the prayer of David—“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN? Now I think there must be one of four things in a sin in order to make it presumptuous. It must either be a sin against light and knowledge, or a sin committed with deliberation, or a sin committed with a design of sinning merely for sinning’s sake, or else it must be a sin committed through hardihood, from a man’s rash confidence in his own strength. We will mark these points one by one.

1. A sin that is *committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge*, is a presumptuous sin. A sin of ignorance is not presumptuous unless that ignorance is also willful, in which case the ignorance is, itself, a presumptuous sin. But when a man sins for lack of knowing better—for lack of knowing the Law, for lack of instruction, reproof, advice and admonition, we say that his sin, so committed, does not partake to any great extent of the nature of a presumptuous sin. But when a man knows better and sins in the very teeth and face of his increased light and knowledge, then his sin deserves to be branded with this ignominious title of a presumptuous sin. Let me just dwell on this thought a moment. Conscience is often an inner light to men whereby they are warned of forbidden acts as being sinful. Then if I sin against conscience, though I have no greater light than conscience affords me, still my sin is presumptuous—because I have presumed to go against that voice of God in my heart—an enlightened conscience. You, young men, were once tempted, (and perhaps it was but yesterday), to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted, conscience said, “It is wrong, it is wrong”—it shouted *murder* in your heart and told you the deed you were about to commit was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Your fellow apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience. In him it was guilt—guilt which needs to be washed away with the Savior’s blood. But it was not such guilt in him as it was in you—because your conscience warned you! Your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment and yet you dared to go astray against God—and therefore you sinned presumptuously! You have sinned very grievously in having done so. When a man shall trespass on my ground, he shall be a trespasser though he has no warning. But if straight before his face there stands a warning and if he knowingly and willingly trespasses—then he is guilty of a presumptuous trespass and is to be so far punished accordingly. So you, if you had not known better. If your conscience had been less enlightened, you might have committed the deed with far less of the criminality which now attaches to you because you sinned against conscience and, consequently, sinned presumptuously.

But, oh how much greater is the sin when man not only has the light of conscience, but has also *the admonition of friends*, the advice of those who are wise and esteemed by him! If I have but one check—the check of my enlightened conscience—and I transgress against it, I am presumptuous! But if a mother with tearful eyes warns me of the consequence of my guilt and if a father with steady looks and with affectionate determined earnestness, tells me what will be the fate of my transgression—if friends who are dear to me—counsel me to avoid the way of the wicked and warn me what must be the inevitable result of continuing in it, then I am presumptuous and my act in that very proportion becomes more guilty! I would have been presumptuous for having sinned against the light of Nature, but I am more presumptuous, when added to that, I have

the light of affectionate counsel and of kind advice! Therein I bring upon my head a double amount of Divine wrath. And how much more is this the case when the transgressor has been gifted with what is usually called a religious education? In childhood he has been lighted to his bed by the lamps of the sanctuary, the name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. The music of the sanctuary woke him like a hymn at morning. He has been rocked on the knees of piety and has sucked the breasts of godliness. He has been tutored and trained in the way he should go—how much more fearful, I say—is the guilt of such a man than that of those who have never had such training but have been left to follow their own wayward lusts and pleasures without the restraint of a holy education and the restraints of an enlightened conscience!

But, my Friends, even this may become worse. A man sins yet more presumptuously *when he has had a most special warning from the voice of God against the sin*. What do you mean? you ask. Why, I mean this—you saw but yesterday a strong man in your neighborhood brought to the grave by sudden death. It is but a month ago that you heard the bell toll for one whom you once knew and loved, who procrastinated and procrastinated until he perished in procrastination! You have had strange things happen in your very street and the voice of God has been spoken loudly through the lips of Death to you. Yes, and you have had warnings, too, in your own body. You have been sick with fever—you have been brought to the jaws of the grave and you have looked down into the bottomless vault of destruction! It is not long ago since you were given up. All said they might prepare a coffin for you, for your breath could not long be in your body. Then you turned your face to the wall and prayed—you vowed that if God would spare you, you would live a goodly life, that you would repent of your sins—but to your own confusion you are now just what you were! Ah, let me tell you, your guilt is more grievous than that of any other man! You have sinned presumptuously in the very highest sense in which you could have done so! You have sinned against reproofs, but what is still worse, you have sinned against your own solemn oaths and covenants and against the promises that you made to God! He who plays with fire must be condemned as careless, but he who has been burned once and afterwards plays with the destroying element is worse than careless! And he who has been scorched in the flame and has had his locks all hot and crisp with the burning—if he again should rush headlong into fire—I say he is worse than careless, he is worse than presumptuous, he is mad! But I have some such here. They have had warnings so terrible that they should have known better. They have gone into lusts which have brought their bodies into darkness and, perhaps, they have crept up this day to this house and they dare not tell their neighbor who stands by their side what is the loathsomeness that even now breeds upon their frame! And yet they will go back to the same lusts! The fool will go again to the stocks, the sheep will lick the knife that is to slay

him. You will go on in your lust and in your sins, despite warnings, despite advice, until you perish in your guilt. How worse than children are grown-up men! The child who goes for a merry slide upon a pond, if he is told that the ice will not hold him, starts back frightened. Or if he daringly creeps upon it, how soon he leaves it if he hears but a crack upon the slender covering of the water! But you men have a conscience which tells you that your sins are vile and that they will be your ruin! You hear the crack of sin, as its thin sheet of pleasure gives way beneath your feet—yes, and some of you have seen your comrades sink in the flood and lost—and yet you go sliding on, worse than children, worse than mad are you, thus presumptuously to play with your own everlasting state! O my God, how terrible is the presumption of some! How fearful is presumption in any! Oh, that we might be enabled to cry, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

2. I said, again, that another characteristic of a presumptuous sin was *deliberation*. A man, perhaps, may have a passionate spirit and in a moment of hot haste he may utter an angry word of which in a few short minutes he will sincerely repent. A man may have a temper so hot that the least provocation causes him at once to be full of wrath. But he may also have a temperament which has this benefit to balance it—that he very soon learns to forgive and cools in a moment. Now, such a man does not sin presumptuously—when suddenly overcome by anger—though without doubt there is presumption in his sin unless he strives to correct that passion and keep it down! A man, again, who is suddenly tempted and surprised into a sin which is not his habit, but which he commits through the force of some strong temptation, is guilty—but not guilty of presumption—because he was taken unaware in the net and caught in the snare. But there are other men who sin deliberately. There are some who can think of a lust for weeks beforehand and dote upon their darling crime with pleasure. They do, as it were, water the young seedling of lust until it grows to the maturity of desire and then they go and commit the crime! There are some to whom lust is not a passerby but a lodger at home. They receive it, they house it, they feast on it and when they sin, they sin deliberately—walk coolly to their lusts and in cold blood commit the act which another might haply do in hot and furious haste. Now, such a sin has in it a great extent of sinfulness—it is a sin of high presumption! To be carried away as by a whirlwind of passion in a moment is wrong, but to sit down and deliberately resolve upon revenge is cursed and diabolical. To sit down and deliberately fashion schemes of wickedness is heinous and I can find no other word to fitly express it. To deliberate carefully how the crime is to be done and Haman-like to build the gallows and set to work to destroy one’s neighbor—to get the pit dug that the friend may fall into it and be destroyed, to lay snares in secret, to plot wickedness upon one’s bed—this is a high pitch of presumptuous sin. May God forgive any of us, if we have been so far guilty!

Again, *when a man continues long in sin and has time to deliberate about it*, that is also a proof that it is a presumptuous sin. He that sins once, being overtaken in a fault and then abhors the sin, has not sinned presumptuously. But he who transgresses today, tomorrow and the next day, week after week and year after year until he has piled up a heap of sins that are high as a mountain—such a man, I say, sins presumptuously. In a continued habit of sin there must be a deliberation to sin. There must be at least such a force and strength of mind as could not have come upon any man if his sin were but the hasty effect of sudden passion. Ah, take heed, you that are sod in sin, you that drink it down as the greedy ox drinks down water—you who run to your lust as the rivers run to the sea and you who go to your passions as the sow to her wallowing in the mire—take heed, your crimes are grievous and the hand of God shall soon fall terribly on your heads unless, by Divine Grace, it is granted to you to repent and turn to Him! Fearful must be your doom if God should condemn you for presumptuous sin. Oh, Lord, “keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

3. Again—I said that a presumptuous sin must be *a matter of design* and have been committed with the intention of sin. If at your leisure at home you will turn to that passage in the Book of Numbers where it says there is no pardon for a presumptuous sin under the Jewish dispensation, you will find immediately afterward, a case recorded. A man went out on the Sabbath to gather sticks. He was taken in the act of Sabbath-breaking, and the Law being very stringent under the Jewish dispensation, he was ordered at once to be put to death. Now the reason why he was put to death was not merely because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath, but because the Law had just then been proclaimed, “In it you shall do no manner of work.” This man willfully, in order, as it were, to show that he despised God—to show that he did not care for God—without any necessity, without any hope of advantage—went straight out in the very teeth of the Law to perform not an act which he kept in his own house, which might, perhaps, have been overlooked—but an act which brought shame upon the whole congregation because infidel-like, he dared to brazen it out before God! As much as to say, “I care not for God.” Has God just commanded, “You shall do no manner of work?” Here I am! I do not need sticks today. I do not need to work. Not for the sake of sticks, but with the design of showing that I despise God, I go out this day and gather sticks. “Now,” says one, “surely there are no people in the world who have ever done such a thing as this.” Yes there are and there are such in the Surrey Music Hall this day! They have sinned against God, not merely for the pleasure of it, but because they would show their lack of reverence to God. That young man burned his Bible in the midst of his wicked companions—not because he hated his Bible, for he quivered and looked as pale as the ashes on the hearth when he was doing it. But he did it out of pure bravado, in order to show them, as he

thought, that he really was far gone from anything like a profession of religion! That other man is accustomed, sometimes, to stand by the way-side when the people are going to the House of God and he swears at them. Not because he delights in swearing, but because he will show that he is irreligious, that he is ungodly! How many an infidel has done the same—not because he had any pleasure in the thing, itself, but because out of the wickedness of his heart he would spite God! He desired, if it were possible, to let men know that though the sin, itself, was cheap enough, he was determined to do something which would be like spitting in the face of his Maker and despising God who created him! Now, such a sin is a masterpiece of iniquity! There is a pardon for such an one—there is a full pardon to those who are brought to repentance, but few of such men ever receive it. For when they are so far gone as to sin presumptuously just because they will do it—sin merely for the sake of showing their disregard of God and of God’s Law—we say of such, there is pardon for them, but it is wondrous Divine Grace which brings them into such a condition that they are willing to accept it. Oh that God would keep back His servants here from presumptuous sins! And if any of us here have committed them, may He bring us back to the praise of the Glory of His Grace!

4. But one more point and I think I shall have explained these presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin is also one that is committed *through a hardihood of fancied strength of mind*. Says one, “Tomorrow I intend to go into such-and-such a society because I believe, though it hurts other people, it does not hurt me.” You turn round and say to some young man, “I could not advise you to frequent the Casino—it would be your ruin.” But you go yourself, Sir? “Yes.” But how do you justify yourself? “Because I have such strength of principle that I know just how far to go and no farther.” You lie, Sir. Against yourself you lie. You lie presumptuously in so doing! You are playing with bombshells that shall burst and destroy you! You are sitting over the mouth of Hell with a fancy that you shall not be burned. You have gone to haunts of vice and come back tainted, very much tainted—but because you are so blind as not to see the taint, you think yourself secure! You are not so. Your sin, in daring to think that you are immune to sin, is a sin of presumption. “No, no,” one says, “I know that I can go just so far in such-and-such a sin and there I can stop.” Presumption, Sir. Nothing but presumption! It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church and stand upon his head. “Well, but he might come down safely, if he were skilled in it.” Yes, but it is presumptuous! I would no more think of subscribing a farthing to a man’s ascent in a balloon than I would to a poor wretch cutting his own throat! I would no more think of standing and gazing at any man who puts his life in a position of peril than I would of paying a man to blow his brains out! I think such things, if not murders, are murderous. There is suicide in men risking them-

selves in that way. And if there is suicide in the risk of the body, how much more in the case of a man who puts his own *soul* in jeopardy just because he thinks he has strength of mind enough to prevent its being ruined and destroyed? Sir, your sin is a sin of presumption! It is a great and grievous one. It is one of the masterpieces of iniquity!

Oh, how many people there are who are sinning presumptuously to-day! You are sinning presumptuously in being today what you are. You are saying in a little time I will solemnly and seriously think of religion. In a few years, when I am a little more settled in life, I intend to turn over a new leaf and think about the matters of Godliness. Sir, you are presumptuous! You are presuming that you shall live—you are speculating upon a thing which is as frail as the bubble on the breaker! You are staking your everlasting soul on the deadly odds that you shall live for a few years—whereas, the probabilities are that you may be cut down before the sun shall set—and it is possible that before another year shall have passed over your head you may be in the land where repentance is impossible and useless were it possible! Oh, dear Friends, procrastination is a presumptuous sin! The putting off of a thing which should be done today because you hope to live tomorrow, is a presumption! You have no right to do it—you are, in so doing, sinning against God and bringing on your heads the guilt of presumptuous sin. I remember that striking passage in Jonathan Edward's wonderful sermon which was the means of a great revival, where he says, "Sinner, you are this moment standing over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You are hanging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope and the strands of that rope are now creaking." It is a terrible thing to be in such a position as that and yet to say, "tomorrow," and to procrastinate. You remind me, some of you, of that story of Dionysus the tyrant, who, wishing to punish one who had displeased him, invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the viands that were spread upon the table and rare the wines of which he was invited to drink. A chair was placed at the head of the table and the guest was seated within it. Horror of horrors! The feast might be rich, but the guest was miserable, dreadful beyond thought! However splendid might be the array of the servants and however rich the dainties, yet he who had been invited sat there in agony. For what reason? Because over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, a furbished sword, suspended by a single hair! He had to sit all the time with this sword above him, with nothing but a hair between him and death! You may conceive the poor man's misery. He could not escape, he must sit where he was. How could he feast? How could he rejoice?

But, oh my unconverted Hearer, you are there this morning—with all your riches and your wealth before you, with the comforts of a home and the joys of a household (or with none of these if you are poor)—you are there this day, in a place from which you cannot escape! The sword of death is above you, prepared to descend. And woe unto you when it shall

cleave your soul from your body! Can you yet make mirth and yet procrastinate? If you can, then verily your sin is presumptuous in a high degree. "Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins."

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, with which I shall deal very briefly. I am to try and show you THERE IS GREAT ENORMITY IN A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN.

Let me take any one of the sins—for instance, *the sin against light and knowledge*. There is greater enormity in such a presumptuous sin than in any other. In this, our happy land, it is barely possible for a man to commit treason. I think it would be rather difficult for him to do it, for we are allowed to say words, here, which would bring our necks beneath the guillotine if they were spoken on the other side of the channel! And we are allowed to do deeds here which would bring us long years of imprisonment if the deed were done in any other land. We, despite all that our American friends may say, are the freest people to speak and think in all the world! Though we have not the freedom of beating our slaves to death or of shooting them if they choose to disobey. Though we have not the freedom of hunting men, or the freedom of sucking another man's blood out of him to make us rich. Though we have not the freedom of being worse than devils, which slave-catchers and many slave-holders most certainly are—we have liberty greater than *that*—liberty against the tyrant mob, as well as against the tyrant king! But I suppose it *is* possible to commit treason here. If two men should commit treason—if one of them should tomorrow wantonly and wickedly raise the standard of revolt—if he should denounce the rightful sovereign of this land in the strongest and most abominable language; if he should seek to entice the loyal subjects of this country from their allegiance and should draw some of them astray to the hurt and injury of the commonwealth—even so, he might have in his rebellious ranks one who joined incautiously. That one, not knowing whereunto the matter might tend, might have come into the midst of the rebels not understanding the intention of their unlawful assembling. He might not even had known of the law which prohibited them from being banded together. I can suppose these two men brought up upon a charge of high treason—they have both, legally, been guilty of it. But I can suppose that the one man who had sinned ignorantly would be acquitted, because there was no malignant intent and I can suppose that the other men, who had willfully, knowingly, maliciously and wickedly raised the standard of revolt, would receive the highest punishment which the Law could demand. And why? Because in the one case it was a sin of presumption and in the other case it was not so. In the one case the man dared to defy the sovereign and defy the law of the land willfully—out of mere presumption! In the other case not so. Now, every man sees that it would be just to make a distinction in the punishment because there is—conscience, itself, tells us—a distinction in the guilt!

Again—some men, I have said, sin *deliberately* and others do not do so. Now, in order to show that there is a distinction here, let me take a case. Tomorrow the bench of magistrates are sitting. Two men are brought up. They are, each of them, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. It is clearly proved in the one case that the man was hungry and that he snatched the loaf of bread to satisfy his necessities. He is sorry for his deed. he grieves that he has done the act. But most manifestly he had a strong temptation to it. In the other case, the man was rich and he willfully went into the shop merely because he would break the law and show that he was a law-breaker. He said to the policeman outside, “Now, I care neither for you nor the law. I intend to go in there just to see what you can do with me.” I can suppose the magistrate would say to one man, “You are discharged. Take care not to do the same again. Here is something for your present necessities—seek to earn an honest living.” But to the other I can conceive him saying, “You are an infamous wretch! You have committed the same deed as the other, but from very different motives. I give you the longest term of imprisonment which the law allows me and I can only regret that I cannot treat you worse than I have done.” The presumption of the sin made the difference. So when you sin deliberately and knowingly, your sin against Almighty God is a higher and a blacker sin than it would have been if you had sinned ignorantly, or sinned in haste.

Now let us suppose one more case. In the heat of some little dispute someone shall insult you. You shall be insulted by a man of angry temper. You have not provoked him, you gave him no just cause for it. But at the same time he was of a hot and angry disposition. He was somewhat foiled in the debate and he insulted you, calling you by some name which has left a stain upon your character, so far as epithets can do it. I can suppose that you would ask no reparation of him, if by tomorrow you saw that it was just a rash word spoken in haste, of which he repented. But suppose another person should waylay you in the street. Should week after week seek to meet you in the marketplace and should, after a great deal of toil and trouble, at last meet you. And there—in the middle of a number of people—unprovoked, just out of sheer, deliberate malice, come before you and call you a liar! I can suppose that Christian as you are, you might find it necessary to chastise such insolence, not with your hand but with the arm of that equitable law which protects us all from insulting violence. In the other case I can suppose it would be no trouble for you to forgive. You would say, “My dear Fellow, I know we are all hasty, sometimes—there, now, I don’t care at all for it, you did not mean it.” But in this case, where a man has dared and defied you without any provocation whatever, you would say to him, “Sir, you have endeavored to injure me in respectable society. I can forgive you as a Christian, but as a man and a citizen, I shall demand that I am protected against your insolence.”

You see, therefore, in the cases that occur between man and man, how there is an excess of guilt added to a sin by presumption! Oh, you that have sinned presumptuously—and who among us has not done so?—bow your heads in silence, confess your guilt and then open your mouths and cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a presumptuous sinner.”

III. And now I am nearly done—not to weary you by too long a discourse we shall notice THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER—“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

Will you note that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*, the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the “man after God’s own heart” need to cry, “Keep back Your servant”? Yes, he did. And note the *beauty* of the prayer. If I might translate it into more metaphorical style, it is like this, “Curb Your servant from presumptuous sin. Keep him back, or he will wander to the edge of the precipice of sin. Hold him in, Lord, he is apt to run away. Curb him. Put the bridle on him. Do not let him do it. Let Your overpowering Grace keep him holy. When he would do evil, then draw him to good, and when his evil propensities would lead him astray, then check him. Check your servant from presumptuous sins!”

What, then? Is it true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah, it is true. It is a solemn thing to find the Apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection,” and such like. What? Do saints need warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins unless kept by Divine Grace. You old experienced Christians, even in your experience, may yet trip unless you cry, “Hold me up, Lord, and I shall be safe.” You whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, “I shall never sin,” but rather cry out, “Lord, lead me not into temptation but when there, leave me not there, for unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall, decline and prove an apostate after all.” There is enough tinder in the heart of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest Hell unless God should quench the sparks as they fall! There is enough corruption, depravity and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity—if Free and Sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, you have need to pray this prayer! But I think I hear you crying, “Is your servant a dog that I should do this thing?” So said Hazael, when the Prophet told him that he would slay his master. But he went home and took a wet cloth and spread it over his master’s face and killed him—and he did, the next day, the sin which he abhorred the day before! Think it not enough to abhor sin—you may yet fall into it. Say not, “I never can be drunk, for I have such an abhorrence of drunkenness.” You may fall where you are most secure. Say not, “I can never blaspheme God, for I have never done so in my life.” Take care. You may

yet swear most profanely. Job might have said, "I will never curse the day of my birth." But he lived to do it! He was a patient man, he might have said, "I will never murmur, though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." And yet he lived to wish that the day were darkness wherein he was brought forth. Boast not, then, O Christian, that you stand by faith. "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."

But if this needs to be the prayer of the best, how ought it to be the prayer of you and me? If the highest saint must pray it, O mere moralist, you have good need to utter it! And you who have begun to sin, who make no pretensions to piety—how much need is there for you to pray that you may be kept from presumptuously rebelling against God?

Instead, however, of enlarging upon that point, I shall close my few remarks this morning by just addressing myself most affectionately to such of you as are now under a sense of guilt by reason of presumptuous sins. God's Spirit has found some of you out this morning. I thought when I was describing presumptuous sin that I saw, here and there, an eye that was suffused with tears. I thought I saw here and there a head that was bowed down, as much as to say, "I am guilty there." I thought there were some hearts that palpitated with confession when I described the guilt of presumption. I hope it was so. If it were, I am glad of it. If I hit your consciences, it was what I meant to do. Not to your ears do I speak but to your hearts! I would not give the snap of my finger to gratify you with mere words of oratory, with a mere flow of language. No, God is my witness, I never sought effect yet, except the effect of hitting your consciences! I would use the words that would be most rough and vulgar in all our language if I could get at your heart better with them than with any other. If any of you feel, then, that you have presumed against God in sinning, let me just bid you look at your sin and weep over the blackness of it. Let me exhort you to go home and bow your heads with sorrow and confess your guilt and weep over it with many tears and sighs. You have greatly sinned and if God should blast you into Perdition right now, He would be just! If now His fiery thunderbolt of vengeance should pierce you through—if the arrow that is now upon the string of the Almighty should find a target in your heart—He would be just. Go home and confess that—confess it with cries and sighs. And then what will you do next? Why, I bid you remember that there was a Man who was God. That Man suffered for presumptuous sin! I would bid you this day, Sinner, if you know your need of a Savior, go up to your chamber, cast yourself upon your face and weep for sin. And when you have done that, turn to the Scriptures and read the story of that Man who suffered and died for sin. See Him in all His unutterable agonies and griefs and woes and say—

***"My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."***

Lift up your hand and put it on His head who bled and say—

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

Sit down at the foot of His Cross and watch Him till your heart is moved, till the tears begin to flow again, until your heart breaks within you. And then you will rise and say—

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

O Sinner, you can never perish if you will cast yourself at the foot of the Cross! If you seek to save yourself, you shall die. If you will come, just as you are—all black, all filthy, all Hell-deserving, all ill-deserving—I am my Master’s hostage—I will be answerable at the Day of Judgment for this matter if He does not save you!

I can preach on this subject now, for I trust I have tried my Master myself. As a youth I sinned, as a child I rebelled, as a young man I wandered into lusts and vanities—my Master made me feel how great a sinner I was and I sought to reform, to mend the matter, but I grew worse. At last I heard it said, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” And I looked to Jesus. And oh, my Savior, You have eased my aching conscience, You have given me peace, You have enabled me to say—

***“Now freed from sin I walk at large
My Savior’s blood’s a full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”***

And oh, my heart pants for You! Oh that you who never knew Him could taste His love! Oh that you who have never repented might now receive the Holy Spirit who is able to melt the heart! And oh that you who are penitents would look to Him now! And I repeat that solemn assertion—I am God’s hostage this morning. You may feed me bread and water to my life’s end—yes, and I will bear the blame forever—if any of you seek Christ and Christ rejects you! It must not, it cannot be. “Whoever comes,” He says, “I will in nowise cast out.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” May God Almighty bless you and may we meet again in yonder Paradise! And there will we sing more sweetly of redeeming love and dying blood and of Jesus’ power to save—

***“When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
Lies silent in the grave.”***

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

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

“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

NO. 1020

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”
Psalm 19:4, 5, 6.*

*“The Sun of Righteousness.”
Malachi 4:2.*

WE should feel quite justified in applying the language of the 19th Psalm to our Lord Jesus Christ from the simple fact that He is so frequently compared to the sun. And especially in the passage which we have given you as our second text, wherein He is called “the Sun of Righteousness.” But we have a higher justification for such a reading of the passage, for it will be in your memories that in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul, slightly altering the words of this Psalm, applies them to the Gospel and the preachers thereof. “Have they not heard?” said he, “Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” So that what was here spoken of the sun by David, is referred by Paul to the Gospel, which is the light streaming from Jesus Christ, “the Sun of Righteousness.”

We can never err if we allow the New Testament to interpret the Old—comparing spiritual things with spiritual is a good mental and spiritual exercise for us. And I feel, therefore, that we shall not be guilty of straining the text at all when we take the language of David in relation to the sun and use it in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not your hearts often say, “What shall we do, or what shall we say to render honor unto our Redeemer?” Have you not often felt confounded as to what offering you shall bring to Him? If you had been possessor of all the worlds, you would have laid them at His feet. If the universe had been your heritage, you would cheerfully have resigned it to Him, and felt happy in stripping yourself of everything, that He might be rendered the more glorious by your sacrifice.

Since you have not all this wealth, have you not again and again asked of your soul—

*“Oh what shall I do,
My Savior to praise?”*

I would write the best of poems if so I could extol Him, but the faculty is not in me. I would sing the sweetest of songs, and compose the most melting music, if I could, and count art, and wit, and music exalted by being handmaidens to Him. But how shall I adore Him, before whom the best

music on earth must be but discord? And how shall I set Him forth, the very skirts of whose garments are bright with insufferable light? At such times you have looked the whole world through to find metaphors to heap upon Him. You have culled all the fair flowers of Nature, and made them into garlands to cast at His feet. And you have gathered all earth's gems and precious things to crown His head, but you have been disappointed with the result, and have cried out with our poet—

***"The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my Lord.
Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own."***

At such times, while ransacking land, and sea, and sky for metaphors, you have probably looked upon the sun, and have said—"This great orb, the lord of light and lamp of day, is like my Savior. It is the faint image of His excellent Glory whose countenance shines as the sun in its strength." You have done well to seize on such a figure. What Milton calls the golden-tressed sun is the most glorious object in creation, and in Jesus the fullness of Glory dwells. The sun is at the same time the most influential of existences, acting upon the whole world, and truly our Lord is, in the deepest sense, "of this great world both eye and soul." He, "with benignant ray sheds beauty, life, and joyance from above."

The sun is, moreover, the most abiding of creatures. And therein it is also a type of Him who remains from generation to generation, and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The king of day is so vast and so bright that the human eye cannot bear to gaze upon him. We delight in his beams, but we should be blinded should we continue to peer into his face. Even yet more brilliant is our Lord, for as God, He is a consuming fire—but He deigns to smile upon us with milder beams as our Brother and Redeemer.

Jesus, like the sun, is the center and soul of all things, the fullness of all good, the lamp that lights us, the fire that warms us, the magnet that guides and controls us. He is the source and fountain of all life, beauty, fruitfulness, and strength. He is the Fosterer of tender herbs of penitence, the Quickener of the vital sap of Grace, the Ripener of fruits of holiness, and the Life of everything that grows within the garden of the Lord. Whereas to adore the sun would be idolatry—it were treason not to worship ardently the Divine Sun of Righteousness. Jesus Christ is the great, the glorious, the infinitely blessed. Even the sun fails to set Him forth—but, as it is one of the best figures we can find, it is ours to use this day. We will think of Jesus as the Sun this morning—first *as in the text*. Secondly, *as He is to us*. And then, thirdly, for a few minutes, *we will bask in His beams*.

I. First, then, we will contemplate Jesus AS THE SUN IN THE TEXT. Note how the passage begins—"In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun." Kings were accustomed in their pompous progresses through their dominions to have canopies of splendor borne aloft over them so that marching in the midst of their glittering soldiery they were, themselves, the main attraction of the gorgeous pageant. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His Church is, as it were, traversing the heavens in a majestic tabernacle,

and, like the sun, scattering His beams among men. The Redeemer is canopied by the adoration of His saints, for He “inhabits the praises of Israel.”

He is, from day to day, advancing in His glorious march through the universe, conquering and to conquer, and He will journey onward till the dispensation shall terminate and the Gospel age shall be closed by His second advent. When the text says that there is a tabernacle set for the sun in the firmament, we are reminded of Christ as dwelling in the highest heavens. He is not alone the Christ of ancient history, but He is the Christ of today. Think not always of Him as the lowly Man despised and rejected, as nailed to the Cross, or buried in the tomb. He is not here, for He is risen, but He still exists, not as a dream or phantom, but as the real Christ.

Doubt it not, for up yonder, in the seventh Heaven, the Lord has set a tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness. There Jesus abides in splendor inconceivable, the Joy and Glory of all those blessed spirits who, having believed in Him on the earth, have come to behold Him in the heavens—

**“Bright, like a sun, the Savior sits,
And spreads eternal noon.
No evenings there, nor gloomy nights,
To want the feeble moon.”**

That Jesus lives is a deep well of consolation to the saints, and did we always remember it our hearts would not be troubled. If we always remembered that Jesus both lives and reigns, our joys would never wither. We worship Him, it is true, as one who was slain and has redeemed us unto God by His blood. But we also extol Him as one who is “alive forever more, and has the keys of death and of Hell.”

Let your faith today behold Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father. He sits there because His atoning work is done, and He is receiving the infinite reward which His Father promised Him. He is exalted as a King upon His Throne until His enemies are made His footstool. He dwells within His tabernacle of praise, adored and admired by angels and glorified spirits. He sits there, not as a weary one, feeble and exhausted, but with the keys of universal monarchy at His girdle, for “the government is upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God.”

I want you fully to grasp the thought of the living Savior—of the Sun in His tabernacle in the highest heavens, for this must be the fulcrum upon which we shall work this morning. We shall get our leverage here—the living Savior, the mighty Savior, the reigning Savior. He is the Church’s Joy and Hope in the present and for all years to come. The text proceeds to speak of Jesus as the Sun, and describes Him, first, as *a Bridegroom coming out of His chamber*. A beautiful description, indeed, of the sun when he rises in the early morning. He comes forth from the vast obscure, as from within a secret chamber. He withdraws the veil of night, and floods the earth with fluid gold. From curtains of purple and vermillion, he looks forth, and scatters orient pearl around him. Clad with a blaze of glory, he begins the race of day.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose from the dead, was as the sun unveiling itself. He came forth from the sepulcher as a bridegroom from his chamber. Observe that dear name of bridegroom. The Lord of Heaven and earth, between whom and us there was an infinite distance, has deigned to take our humanity into union with Himself of the most intimate kind. Among men there is no surer mode of making peace between two contending parties than for a marriage to be established between them. It has often been done so, and thus wars have been ended, and alliances have been established.

The Prince of Peace on Heaven’s side condescends to be married to our nature, that from now on Heaven and earth may be as one. Our Lord came as the Bridegroom of His Church out of His chamber when He was born of the virgin and was revealed to the shepherds and the wise men of the east. Yet, in a certain sense, He still continued in His chamber as a Bridegroom all His life, for He was hidden and veiled. The Jewish world knew not their King—though He spoke openly in their streets and sought not mystery—yet He was unknown, they did not discern Him. And in some respects He did not, then, desire to be discerned, for He often bade His disciples to tell no man what was done. That was the time when the Bridegroom was in His chamber, being made perfect through suffering and perfectly conformed unto His Church, hearing her sicknesses and her sorrows, suffering her wants, enduring her shame, and thus completing the marriage union between the two.

To this end He actually descended by dark steps of anguish into the silent inner room of the grave, and there He slept in His chamber, perfectly wedded to His Church. Come and look at Him, you who admire the Lover of your souls—He stooped to death and the sepulcher because manhood had fallen under their yoke. His Church was subject to death, and He must die. She deserved to suffer the penalty due to God’s insulted Law, and, therefore, Jesus bowed His head to the stroke—

***“Yes, said the Son, with her I’ll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe.
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pains of death to bear.”***

And He did bear them, and in the darksome chamber of the tomb He proved how true a Bridegroom He was to His Church. Before His great race began, of which we are soon to speak, it behooved our mighty Champion to descend into the lowest parts of the earth and sleep among the dead. Before every day there is a night where darkness seems to triumph. It behooved Christ to suffer, and then to rise again. His descent was necessary to His ascent—His sojourn in the chamber to His race and victory.

Thus I have introduced to you the prelude of the race—the Bridegroom in His chamber. Now observe *the coming out of it*. The sun comes forth, at the appointed hour, from the gates of day, and begins to gladden the earth. Even so on the third day, early in the morning, Jesus, our Lord, arose from His sleep and there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher. Then did the Sun of Righteousness arise. Then did the great Bridegroom come forth from His chamber and begin His joyful race.

It must have been a ravishing sight to have beheld the risen Savior—well might the disciples hold Him by the feet and worship Him. I think if ever angels sung more sweetly at one time than another, it must have been on that first Easter morning when they saw the Divine Champion break His bonds of death asunder and rise into the glorious resurrection life. Then was He revealed to the sons of men. And, no longer hidden, He began to tell His disciples the meaning of those enigmas which had been dark to them—things which they had not understood—which seemed inexplicable, were all opened up by Him, for now was His time to come out of His chamber.

His words, though plain enough, had aforesaid hidden Him even from those who loved Him. But now He speaks no more in proverbs, but shows them openly concerning Himself and the Father. He has laid aside the incognito in which He traversed the earth as a stranger, and He is now Divinely familiar with His friends, bidding them even touch His hands and His side. In His death the veil was rent, and in His resurrection the High Priest came forth in His robes of Glory and beauty. In a little while He was gone away, but He returned from the secret chambers of the ivory palaces, and showed Himself unto His disciples.

Blessed were the eyes that saw Him in that day. Though during the forty days in which our Lord lingered among His followers upon earth we may truly say that He had come out of His chamber, we perceive that He more fully did so when, after the forty days had been accomplished, He took His disciples to the top of Olivet and there ascended into Heaven, out of their sight. Then had the Sun, indeed, ascended above the horizon to make His glories stream along the heavens! See you not the angelic bands poising themselves upon the wing in mid-air, waiting until He shall return all glowing with the victory after the long and deadly fight? Mark you well that matchless spectacle as He is “seen of angels.”—

***“The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks,
With wings displayed.”***

They have hastened to meet the Prince of Glory, and attend Him to His ancient patrimony. Right glad are all the heavenly band to welcome back the Captain of the Lord’s Host, and, therefore, they harp in loud and solemn choir to Heaven’s triumphant Heir. As for the glorified of mortal race, redeemed of old by His blood which in the fullness of time was shed, they hail Him with most glad hymn, and lift up their sweetest symphonies to extol Him who finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness! Then the Bridegroom came out of His chamber with fit marriage music—His beauties hidden awhile in the chamber, where He was regarded as without form or comeliness—He blazed forth with renewed splendor, such as confounded both sun and moon.

In another respect, Christ came out of His chamber at His ascension, because, when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, He received and gave gifts for men. The gifts were intended for the manifestation of Himself. His Church, which is His body, was by His own command sitting, still, in the chamber, tarrying till power was given. But, on a sudden the

Bridegroom’s power was felt, for there was heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place, and then descending upon each favored head came the cloven tongue, and straightway you could see that the Bridegroom had come out of His chamber, for the multitude in the street began to hear His voice.

It was Peter that spoke, we say, but far rather was it Christ, the Bridegroom, who spoke by Peter. It was the Sun, from the chambers of the east, bursting through the clouds, and beginning to shine on Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Rome, and Egypt, and making the multitudes in far-off lands to see the day which Prophets and kings had waited for, but which had never visited their eyes. Do you hear the joyful motion among the people—the joy mingled with the sorrows of repentance? This is the singing of birds, and these the dew-drops which hail the rising Sun.

The people cry, “What must we do to be saved?” The shadows are fleeing. They believe in Jesus, and are baptized into His name—the true light is shining. Three thousand souls are added in one day to the Church, for truly the Bridegroom is awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine (Psa. 78:65)! Then was the Gospel race commenced with a glorious burst of strength, such as only our champion could have displayed. Meditate at your leisure upon this first general manifestation of our Lord to the general multitude. He had not gone out of Israel before. “I am not sent,” said He, “save to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Palestine was His chamber—He went to the windows of it, and looked forth on Tyre and Sidon wistfully.

But He had not come forth of His chamber till that day when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles, also. And in fulfillment of the gift of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, the Apostles went everywhere preaching the Word of God. When even we, the dwellers in the far off northern isles, received the Gospel, then, indeed, had the Bridegroom come forth out of His chamber!

But enough of this, or time will fail me. After the coming forth, we have to consider in the text *His course*. The course of Jesus has been as that of the sun, or like that of a mighty champion girded for running. Notice, under this head, *His continuance*. Our Lord’s Gospel has been no meteor that flashed for a while and then passed away, but it has remained as the sun in the heavens. What systems of philosophy have come and gone since on Calvary the Christ of God was lifted up? What speculations, what lo-heres and lo-theres have shone forth, have dazzled fools, and have been quenched in the night since He left the chamber of His marriage? Yet He continues still the same.

Nor, Brothers and Sisters, are there any marks of decrepitude either in Him or in His Gospel. They tell us that the idolatry of Hindustan is evidently crumbling—it falls not yet, but it is worm-eaten through and through. Equally sure is it that the false prophet holds but a feeble swath among his followers, and we can all see that though popery makes desperate efforts, and its extremities are vigorous, yet it is paralyzed at its heart, and the Vatican is made to feel that its time of power is short. As

for the Gospel, it wears the dew of its youth after eighteen centuries of struggles. And it predominates most in those young nations which have evidently a history before them.

The old systems are now most favored by those nations which are left behind in the race of civilization, but the peoples whom God has made quick by nature are those to whom He has given to be receptive of His Grace. There are grand days coming for the Church of God! Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity—and so he did, but it was the twilight of the morning—not the twilight of the evening. Glory be unto God, the little cloud the size of a man's hand is spreading! It begins to cover the heavens, and the day is not far distant when the sound of abundance of rain shall be heard.

Christ was not a strong man who bounded forth at a leap, and then put forth no more strength. He rejoiced to continue His work, and to run His race. He was not a shooting star that sparkles for a moment, but a sun that shall shine throughout the livelong day. Note next in this metaphor *the unity of our Lord's course*, for it is clear in the text—"Rejoicing as a strong man to run the race." A race is one thing—there is the one goal—and the man gathers up his strength to reach it. He has nothing else to think of. They may throw the golden apples in his road, but he does not observe them. They may sound harp and sackbut to the right, and breathe the lute or sweeter instruments of music to the left, but he is deaf to all.

He has a race to run, and he throws his whole strength into it. This is a fit image of our Lord. He has never turned aside, He has never been compelled to retrace His steps, to revise His doctrine, to amend His system, or change His tactics. On, on, on has the course of Jesus been, shining more and more unto the perfect day. A certain people, nowadays, who yet dare to call themselves Christians are always hankering after something new, pining for novelties, and boasting of their fresh discoveries. Though, indeed, their fresh things are only fragments of broken images of heresies, which our fathers dashed to shivers centuries ago. The great thinkers of the present day are nothing more than mere translators—you know the London meaning of that word—buyers of old shoes who patch them up, and send them forth again as if they were something new.

Old shoes and clothes are common enough among those Gibeonites who would deceive Israel, and whose boast is that they have come from far and bring us treasures of wisdom from remote regions. Sirs, we want not your new things, for our Lord's race is the same as of old, and as He continues in one course so also will we. To spread righteousness and, in so doing, to save sinners and to glorify God—this is the one purpose of Christ—from it He will never cease, and nothing shall ever tempt Him from the pursuit of it. Look, I pray you, with pleasure and see how our Lord, from His first coming out of His chamber until now has continued still in the Gospel to shine forth with rays of glory, without variableness or shadow of a turning.

Though *we* believe not, He abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself. He changes not in work or way. For Zion's sake He works up to now, and the

pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand. But now, observe next, the notable idea of *strength* which the text conveys to us. “Rejoicing as a strong man to run his race.” It is no drudgery for the ascended Lord to carry on His cause—

***“The baffled prince of Hell
In vain new efforts tries,
Truth’s empire to repel
By cruelty and lies.
The infernal gates shall rage in vain
Conquest awaits the Lamb once slain.”***

There is a race to be run but Jesus is strong enough for it. He does not come panting up to the starting place and from there go creeping on. But like a strong man He surveys the course. He knows that He is equal to it, and, therefore He delights in it. When He began His race He was opposed, but the opposition only made Him triumph the more readily, for “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.”

When our Lord arose like the sun, the clouds were thick and heavy, but He painted their fleecy skirts with gold. Persecution hung over the eastern horizon, but He turned it into the imperial purple of His Sovereignty. As He pursued His course the ice of centuries melted, the dense gloom of ages disappeared. No chains could bind Him, and no bonds could hold Him. He dashed on with undiminished energy, and the gates of Hell could not prevail. As no cloud has ever stayed the sun as he has “whirled his car along the ethereal plain,” so no difficulties impeded the onward course of the Gospel in the days of its dawning. To the first days of the Church, Thomson’s lines to the sun are fully applicable—

***“Now, flaming up the heavens, the potent sun
Melts into limpid air the high-raised clouds,
And morning fogs, that hovered round the hills,
In party-colored bands, till wide, unveiled,
The face of Nature shines, from where earth seems
Far stretched around, to meet the bending sphere.”***

The Gospel soon shed its light in every land, and all nations felt its benign power. Men ceased to persecute and bowed before the Cross. Soon fresh clouds arose, and the Church passed through them. Errors and heresies multiplied. Filthy dreamers led away a huge apostasy. Rome became the mother of harlots and abominations, but the true Church, and the true Christ within her, went right on. The Church was not less triumphant in her second trial than in her first.

Papal Rome was overcome as surely as pagan Rome. Popes were no more her conquerors than bloody emperors had been of yore. To the thoughtful eye the Sun of Christ is not less bright over the valleys of Piedmont than over the waves of the sea which bore Paul and his fellow Apostles. The Champion’s race was as eager and as triumphant as before. Since then, dense banks of spiritual deadness and false teaching have barred the visible heavens and have appeared to mortal sight an ebony wall impenetrable as steel, but the Lord reigns.

He that sits in the heavens does laugh—the Lord does have them in derision. Strong is His right hand, and His enemies shall be broken. On goes the Sun of Righteousness—nothing impedes Him—His tabernacle is above

them all. He rides on the heavens, yes, He rides on the wings of the wind. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Christ has failed in nothing. The decrees have been executed. The eternal purposes have been fulfilled. The elect have been saved—His kingdom is established—and shall continue as long as the sun. Who shall stay His hand? Who shall resist His will?

Observe, therefore, how the force is coupled with *joy*. Weakness brings sorrow, but strength begets joy. Christ is always glad and He would have His people rejoice, for His cause goes right on and He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He rejoices as He divides the spoil with the strong. When a man has a task to do which is easy to him, and which he can readily perform, he sings at his work. And so this day does Christ rejoice over His Church with joy, and triumph over her with singing. His cause goes on in spite of foes, and His strength is so great that even the battle fills Him with delight.

I remember to have heard a Welsh preacher make use of the following simile. He was speaking of the joy of Christ in Heaven, and he said, “You tell me that the Church is sorrowful on earth and I tell you that Christ is joyous in Heaven. And then you ask me how this can be? You see yonder mother with her babe, and she is washing the child. Its face is foul and she desires to see it shine with brightness. She would see it white as the marble mingled with the redness of the rose. Therefore she washes it—but the child cries. It is fretful and knows not what is good for it—so it whines and struggles. The mother does not cry, or share its sorrow, she keeps on singing because she knows that all is right and that her darling will smile like a cherub when all is over. She sees the good results coming, while the babe only feels the present discomfort, so she sings her song and never stops, let the child cry as it may.”

And so the Lord Jesus has pleasure in His work. He is purifying His Church, and making her fit to be presented to Himself, and though she winces and laments, it is the flesh that makes her to do so. The Lord sings still joyously because He sees the end from the beginning! Earth may be swathed in mist, but the Sun is never so, He shines gloriously evermore. The text mentions one other fact connected with Jesus as the Sun—“*There is nothing hid from the heat thereof;*” by which is meant nothing is able to escape the powerful influence of Christ Jesus. His own chosen people must, in due season, feel His power to save.

They may wander as they do, and sin as they may—but when the time appointed comes they shall be redeemed out of the land of the enemy. The sun’s power is felt in the dark and deepest mines. That there is a sun still shining might be discoverable even in the heart of the earth! And so, in the dark haunts of sin, God’s elect shall be made to feel the Sovereign power and Omnipotent Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you and I shall die, and when we shall be buried in the grave, we shall not there be hid from the heat of this Sun of Righteousness. By-and-by He shall kindle life within our bones again. He shall create a soul within the ribs of death, and we shall spring upward as the grass, and as the willows by the water-courses when the sun renews the year.

Our dry bones shall live, and in our flesh we shall we see God. Meanwhile, while the gracious operations of Christ thus fall on all His elect, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, other operations are at work on all the sons of men. He rules in Providence over all people, whether they believe in Him or not, and if men do not accept the Gospel, yet they are affected by it in some way or other. Even the dark parts of the world feel something of the Presence of the Christ of God. Responsibility is heaped on those that hear of Him and reject Him. He becomes a savor of death unto death where He is not a savor of life unto life. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Oh, how this ought to encourage you Christian people to work! The Lord has gone before you—there is nothing hid from the heat of His Presence. Jesus is King of the dark settlements of the heathen, and He reigns in the lowest haunts of London’s vice. Go there, for you are not intruders. You have a right to go anywhere in your Master’s dominions. And the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof. Be not afraid to face the vilest blasphemer, or the most foul-mouthed infidel, for Christ is Master—and if you bring the Gospel before His enemy—he will be made to feel its power, either so as to yield to it a willing submission, or else to be condemned by it.

In either case, you shall have done your part, and uttered your testimony, and freed your head of his blood. In these thoughts combined, we see Christ Jesus, the risen Savior, pursuing His ever glorious course till He shall descend again the second time to take His people to Himself to reign with Him.

II. Very briefly, indeed, in the second place. Let us think for a moment of JESUS AS A SUN TO US. Worship and bless our Savior! It is ever meet and right to do so. Let Him be extolled and be very high. Some would give Him a secondary place, let it never be so with us. As the sun is the center, so is Christ. As the sun is the great motor, the first source of motive power, so is Christ to His people. As the sun is the fountain from which light, life, and heat perpetually flow, so is the Savior. As the sun is the fructifier by which fruits multiply and ripen, so is Christ—and as the sun is the regulator and rules the day, and marks the seasons—even so is Jesus owned as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Think these thoughts over in the following respects. When you take the *Bible* remember that Christ is the center of the Scriptures. Do not put election in the center. Some do, and they make a one-sided system. Do not put man in the center—some do, and they fall into grievous errors. Christ is the center of the entire system of the Gospel, and all will be seen to move with regularity when you perceive that He is the chief fixed point. You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him. He is the center and King of all Truth. He is the center of the *Church*, too. Not the pastor, not the Church itself, not any rule or government, no bishop, no priest, and no Pope can be our center—Christ alone is our central sun.

We follow as planets where He leads the way—around Him we revolve, but we own no other Lord. Let it be so in *the world* that even there Christ governs and is the center of all history. You will understand history better

when you know this—for this is the key of the world’s story—the reason for the rise and fall of empires. You shall understand all things when you know Immanuel, God with us. And let Him have this place in *your hearts*. There enthrone Him! Establish Him as the central sun, and let Him rule your entire being, enlightening your understanding, warming your hearts, filling all your powers, passions, and faculties with the fullness of His Presence. To have Christ in us, the hope of Glory—oh, what blessedness! But let us take care that it is so, for we know not Christ aright unless we give Him such a place in our hearts as the sun occupies in God’s world.

III. But time fails me, and we must now pass on to the last point, and let us for a minute or two BASK IN HIS BEAMS. How shall we do it? First, we must *realize that He Is*. Sinner, saint, Christ lives—He who trod the wave of Galilee lives on! He who was marked with the nails rules on! Oh, Sinner, does not that comfort you? The Savior lives! The Redeemer lives! He who forgives sins still lives. Saint, does not this comfort you? The Man of the tender heart still lives—with a bosom still to be leaned upon—and with lips still ready to speak endearing words. There is a tabernacle for the Sun—He is not extinct. He shines still, He blesses still. Bask in His beams, then, by realizing that He Is.

Then come and *lay your souls beneath His Divine influence*. O my Soul, if you are guilty, come and rest in His Atonement. If you are unrighteous come and take His righteousness. If you are feeble lay hold upon His strength. If you can not pray, accept Him as your Intercessor. If you are in yourself nothing, take Him to be your All in All. Some creatures delight to warm themselves in the sun, but oh, what a pleasure it is to sun oneself in the Presence of Christ. Never mind how little I am, how nothing I am, how vile I am, how foul I am. All I am He has taken to Himself, and all He has belongs to me. I sin, but He has taken all my sin—He is righteous and all His righteousness is mine. I am feeble, He is mighty—His mightiness is mine, I wrap myself in His Omnipotence.

Christ is All and Christ is *mine*. Why, I utterly fail when trying to talk about such things as these—talking is but stuttering on such a theme! Faith must enjoy, rather than express, her delight. Come, plunge, all of you, into this sea of sweetness—dive deep into this abyss of happiness—Christ Jesus is yours forever and forever! The sun is very great but it is all for me, and Christ is very bright and glorious, and He is all my own.

Then next, if you would sun yourself in His beams, *imbibe the joy of His strength*. He is like a bridegroom rejoicing to run his race. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I am often afraid, lest in serving God, we should grow dispirited and downcast, and think that things are not going on as they should. Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength. If you begin to say, “Our cause is very feeble, the Gospel will not prevail among us,” you will slacken your efforts. Do not so, but remember that Jesus Christ does not fret or sadden Himself about His kingdom. He runs with full strength and rejoices as He runs. And I bid you, in the power of the Holy Spirit, do the same. Cast away your doubts and fears, the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He will deliver His adversaries into your hands.

I fret and worry myself, sometimes, about these inventors of new doctrines, and those Ritualists who bring up the old rates and stale tallow of the past ages. Let us fret no more, but think that these are only like the clouds to the great sun. The Gospel will still proceed in its career. Let us laugh the enemies of God to scorn and defy them to their faces. They defy the Lord God of Israel as did the Philistine of old, but God Himself is mightier than they, and the victory is sure to the true Church and to the Gospel of His Son. Be very courageous! Be not alarmed with sudden fear! Trust in Jehovah, for the Lord will surely give unto His own servants the victory in the day of battle.

And Brethren, if you would sun yourselves in Christ’s beams, let me bid you *reflect His light* whenever you receive it. He is the Sun and you are the planet, but every planet shines, shines with borrowed light. It conceals no light, but sends back to other worlds what the sun has given to it. Cast back on men the light which Jesus gives you. Triumph in Christ’s circuit—that it is so broad as to comprehend the world, and compass all time. Enlarge your own hearts, and let your light shine far and wide, believing that the power of God which gives you light will go with the light which you reflect.

Comfort your hearts! “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Who shall stop the Christ of God in His race? Let him first go pluck the sun from his sphere. Who shall stay the champion of God who has girt Himself for His race? Whoever comes in His way, woe unto him, for if Samson smote a thousand men hip and thigh, what shall our Immortal Samson do? Let all the armies of Pope and devil come against Him, He will utterly defy them, and drive them like chaff before the wind.

Sing you unto His name, for He has triumphed gloriously! Begin the everlasting song, for He is the Lord and God, and to the uttermost ages shall He reign! Yes, forever and ever is He priest and King. God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 19.

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REVELATION AND CONVERSION

NO. 2870

A SERMON
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“The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.”
Psalms 19:7.

WHEN he spoke of “the Law of the Lord, David did not merely mean the Law as it was given in the Ten Commandments, although that also is perfect and is used, to some extent, in the conversion of souls. The term includes the entire Doctrine of God—the whole Divine Revelation and though, in David’s day, there was not so full and clear a Revelation as we have—for the New Testament was not then given, nor much of the Old Testament, yet the text has lost none of its former force, but has rather gained more. So I shall use it as applicable to the entire Scriptures—to the Law and to the Gospel—and to all that God has revealed. And speaking of it in that sense, I may truly say that it is perfect and that it converts the soul.

A tree is known by its fruit and a book must be tested by its effects. There are some books which bear their fruit for the hangman and the jail—and such books are very widely read nowadays. They are frequently embellished with engravings and put into the hands of boys and girls—and a crop of criminals is constantly the result of their publication and circulation! There have been books written which have spread moral contagion throughout centuries. I need not mention them, but if it were possible to gather them all together in one heap and burn them as the Ephesians burnt their books of magic, it would be one of the greatest blessings conceivable! Yet, if that *were* done, I fear that other wicked brains would be set to work to think out similar blasphemies and that other hands would be found to scatter their vile productions.

The Word of God must be tested, like other books, by the effect which it produces, and I am going to speak upon one of its effects to which many of us here present can bear personal witness. The old proverb says, “Speak as you find,” and I am going to speak of the Bible as I have found it—to praise the bridge that has carried me over every difficulty until now—and that has carried a great many of you over, also. We know that the Law of the Lord is good because it converts the soul and, to our mind, the best proof of its purity and power is that it has converted *our* soul.

My first objective will be to show *how the Word of God converts the soul. Then to show the excellence of the work of conversion. And, therefore, thirdly, the excellence of that Book which produces conversion.*

I. First, then, I am to show HOW THE WORD OF GOD CONVERTS THE SOUL.

Man's face is turned away from his Maker. Ever since the fatal day when our first parents broke the Law of God, we have been, all of us, guilty of the same great crime. We stand as men who have their backs to the light and we are going the downward road, the road which leads to destruction. What we need is to be turned around, for that is the meaning of the word, "converted"—turned right about. We need to hear the command, "Right about face," and to march in the opposite direction from any in which we have ever marched before. Our text truly says that the Word of God turns us around. It does not mean that the Word alone does that apart from the Spirit of God, because a man may read the Bible through 50 times and, for 50 years hear sermons that have all come out of the Bible, and yet they will never turn him unless the Spirit of God makes use of the Word of God or the preacher's sermons. But when the Spirit of God goes with the Word, then the Word becomes the instrument of the conversion of the souls of men.

This is how the work of conversion is worked. First, *it is by the Scriptures of Truth that men are made to see that they are in error.* There are millions upon millions of men in the world who are going the wrong way, yet they do not know it. And there are tens of thousands who believe that they are even doing God service when they are utterly opposing Him. Some who, as far as it is in their power, are even slaying Christ, know not what they are doing. One of the pleas that our Savior used upon the Cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To take my own case, I know that for years I was not conscious of having committed any great sin. I had been, by God's restraining Grace, kept from outward immoralities and from gross transgressions and, therefore, I thought I was all right. Did I not pray? Did I not attend a place of worship? Did I not do what was right towards my fellow men? Did I not, even as a child, have a tender conscience? It seemed to me, for a time, that all was well and, perhaps, I am addressing someone else who says, "Well, if I am not right, I wonder who is? And if I have gone wrong, where must my neighbors be going?"

Ah, that is often the way we talk! As long as we are blind, we can see no faults in ourselves. But when the Spirit of God comes to us and reveals to us the Law of God, then we perceive that we have broken the whole of the Ten Commandments in the spirit, if not in the letter of them. Even the most chaste of men may well tremble when they remember that searching word of Christ—"Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." When you understand that the Commandments of God not only forbid wrong *actions*, but also the *desires, imaginations and thoughts* of the heart—and that, consequently, a man may commit murder while he lies in his bed—may rob his neighbor without touching a penny of his money or any of his goods—may blaspheme God though he never uttered an oath—and may

break all the commands of the Law of God, from the first to the last, before he has put on his garments in the morning—when you come to examine your life in *that* light, you will see that you are in a very different condition than you thought you were!

Think, for instance, of that solemn declaration of our Lord, “I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.” It is by bringing home to the heart such Truths of God as these that the Spirit of God, through the Word, makes a man see that he is in error and in danger! And this is the beginning of his conversion! You cannot turn a man around as long as he believes he is going in the right way. While he has that idea in his head, he goes straight on, marching, as he supposes, safely. So the very first thing to be done to him is to let him see that there is a terrible precipice right before him—over which he will fall if he goes on as he is going. When he realizes that, he stops and considers his position.

Then the Word of God comes in, in the next place, *to take the man off from all attempts to get around by wrong ways*. When a man knows that he is going wrong, his instinct should lead him to seek to get right, but, unhappily, many people try to get right by getting wrong in another direction! A good man sent me a volume of his poems the other day. As soon as I looked into it, I saw that there was one line of the verse that was too short. The good Brother evidently felt that it was, so he tried to set the matter right by making the next line too long, which, as you see at once, made two faults instead of one! In like manner, you will find that men who are wrong in one direction with regard to their fellow men, often become very superstitious and go a great deal further in another directions than God asks them to go and so, practically, make a long line towards God in order to make up for the short line towards men! And thus they commit two errors instead of one.

Here is a sheep that has gone astray. It has wandered so far to the East that, in order to get right, it tries to go just as far to the West—and if convinced that it is on the wrong road, all it does is to stray just as far to the North and, by-and-by, to the South! It is wandering all the while in a different way with the intent to get back to the fold and, in this respect, sinners are just as silly as the sheep! Now, the Word of God tells a man that by the works of the Law he cannot be justified. It tells him that his heart is defiled, that he, himself, is already condemned, that he is shut up under condemnation for having broken God’s Law. And it indicates to him that whatever he may do, or however much he may struggle, if he does not seek salvation in God’s way, he will only make the bad, worse, and be like a drowning man who sinks the faster the more he struggles! When the Word of God shows a man *that*—and makes him feel as though he were hopeless, helpless, shut up in the condemned cell—it has done a great deal towards turning him around!

The next thing the Word of God does is *to show the man how he might get right*. And, oh, how perfectly it shows him this! It comes to the man and says to him, “Your sin deserves punishment. God has laid that punishment upon His only-begotten Son and, therefore, He is ready to forgive you freely for Christ’s sake—not because of anything good in you, or

anything you ever can do—but entirely of His free mercy! He bids you trust yourself in the hands of Jesus that He may save you.” Come, then, and rely upon what Christ has done and is still doing for you, and believe in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, to all who trust Him! Oh, how clearly the Word of God sets Christ before us! It is a sort of mirror in which He is revealed. Christ Himself is up in Heaven and a poor sinner, down here on earth, cannot see Him however long he looks. But this Word of the Lord is like a huge mirror, better, even, than Solomon’s molten sea—and Jesus Christ looks down into this mirror and then, if you and I come and look into it, we can see the reflection of His face! Blessed be His holy name, it is true, as Dr. Watts Sings—

***“Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost in every page.”***

There is scarcely one chapter in which Christ is not, more or less clearly, set forth as the Savior of sinners. So the Word of God, you see, shows the man that he is in the wrong, takes him away from wrong ways of trying to get right, and then puts him in the way to get right, namely, by believing in Jesus!

But the Word of the Lord does more than that. In the power of the Holy Spirit, *it helps the man to believe*, for, at the first, he is quite staggered at the idea of free salvation—instantaneous pardon—the blotting out of sin—all for nothing—pardon for the worst and vilest freely given and given now! The man says, “Surely, it is too good to be true.” He is filled with amazement, for God’s thoughts are as high above him and as far out of his reach as the heavens are above the earth! Then the Word comes to him and says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The Word also says to him, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” The Word says, “The mercy of the Lord endures forever.” “He delights in mercy.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins.” I need not go on repeating the texts with which I hope many of you have long been familiar. There is a great number of them—precious promises, gracious invitations and comforting Doctrines—and, as the sinner reads them, with trembling gaze, the Spirit of God applies them to his soul and he says, “I can and I do believe in Jesus! Lord, I do gladly accept Your pardoning mercy. I look unto Him who was nailed to the Cross and I find in Him the cure for the serpent bites of sin. I do and I will believe in Jesus and venture my soul upon Him.” It is thus that the Word of God converts the soul—by helping the man to believe in Jesus.

And when it has done that, *the man is converted*, for when a man looks to Christ, alone, he has turned his face towards God. Now he has confidence in God and out of this grows love to God. And now he desires to please God because God has been so very gracious in providing such a Savior for him. The man is turned right around—from rebelling against God he has come to feel intense gratitude to his Redeemer—and he seeks to live to God’s Glory as he would never have thought of doing before!

I ask you who are the people of God, whether you have not felt, since your conversion, the power of the Word of God *in sustaining you in your converted condition*. Do you not often feel, as you hear the Gospel preached, your heart grow warm within you? Some time ago, when I went away for a week's holiday, I was more than a little troubled about many things. I had been, for a long while, preaching to others and I thought I should like to feel the power of the Word in hearing it myself. I went to a little chapel in the country and there I heard a lay brother—I think he must have been an engineer—preach a sermon. There was nothing very grand in it except that it was full of Christ. And as I listened to it, my tears began to flow. I wish that, sometimes, some of you, my Brothers, would preach and let me take my turn at listening. Well, on that occasion, my soul was melted as I heard the Gospel proclaimed very simply, and I thought, "After all, I do feel its power! I do enjoy its sweetness!" And while I listened to it, my heart overflowed with joy and delight—and I could only sit still and weep as I heard the simple story of the Cross.

And have not you, Beloved, often found it so, in your experience, as you have been reading the Word of the Lord? If you ever get dull in the things of God, it is not the Bible that has made you so! If ever your heart grows cold, it is not the promises of God that have made you cold! If ever you cannot sing, and cannot pray, it is not the searching of the Scriptures that has brought you into that condition. And if you ever have the misery of hearing a sermon that deadens your spiritual life, I am quite certain that that sermon is not in harmony with the mind of God and not according to the teaching of the Word of God. But when you hear the Gospel fully and faithfully preached, if your heart is at all capable of feeling its power, it stirs your spirit, it wakes you up, it produces holy emotions—love to God, love to your fellow men, heart-searching, deep humiliation, ardent zeal and all the Christian Graces in full exercise! The Word of the Lord is perfect and its effect is continually to restore and revive the soul of the Christian.

This has been to me one of the great evidences of the Truth of Inspiration. Standing alone at night and looking up to the starry vault of Heaven, I have asked myself, "Is this Gospel which I have believed, which I have preached to others for so many years, really true?" Being absolutely certain that there is a God—for none but a fool can doubt that—I have said, "Well, this Gospel has made me love God. I know I love Him with all my heart and soul. And whenever it exerts its rightful power over me, it makes me try to please Him. Whenever I am under its influence, it makes me hate all wrong, all meanness and all falseness. Now, it would be a very strange thing if a lie could lead a man to act like that, so it must be true." The moral effect of the Word of God upon one's own nature, from day to day, becomes, in the absence of all other proof—even if we had no other—the surest and best evidence to a man that "the Law of the Lord is perfect," for it converts his soul!

I once heard a charming story about Robert Hall—that mightiest of our Baptist orators—perhaps one of the greatest and most eloquent ministers who ever lived. He was subject to fits of terrible depression of spi-

rits and, one night, he had been snowed up, on his way to a certain place where he was going to preach. There was such a great depth of snow that he was obliged to stay for the night at the farmhouse where he had stopped. But he must preach, he said. He had his discourse ready and he must deliver it—so they fetched in the servants and the farm people, and he preached the sermon he had prepared—a very wonderful one to be delivered in a farmhouse parlor. And after the others had all gone, he sat down by the fireside with the good man of the house and he said to him—a plain, country farmer, “Now tell me, Mr. So-and-So, what do you think is the sure evidence of a man being a child of God, for I sometimes am afraid I am not one?”

“Oh,” said the farmer, “my dear Mr. Hall, how can you talk like that?” “Well, what do you think is the best evidence that a man is really a child of God?” “Oh,” replied the farmer, “I feel sure that if a man loves God, it must be all right with him.” “Then,” said the farmer, as he told the story, “you should have heard him speak. He said, ‘Love God, Sir? Love God? If I were damned, I would still love Him! He is such a blessed Being—so holy, so true, so gracious, so kind, so just!’ He went on for an hour praising God, the tears running down his cheeks as he kept on saying, ‘Love Him? I cannot help loving Him! I must love Him! Whatever He does to me, I must love Him!’”

Well, now, I have felt just like that, sometimes, and then I have said to myself, “What made me love the Lord thus? Why, this that I have read about Him in this blessed Book! And this that I believe that He has done for me, in the Person of His dear Son. And that which brings me into such a state that I love Him with all my nature must be a right and a true thing.”

The Word of God is perfect, converting the soul. You will find it to be so the longer you live and the more you test and try it. Whenever you go astray, it is because you get away from the Word of God. And as long as you are kept right, it is because you are drinking in the precious Truths of God concerning Jesus as they are revealed in the Bible. That is the one perfect Book in the whole world and it will also make *you* perfect if you will yield to its gracious influence. Only submit yourself to it and you will, one day, become perfect and be taken up to dwell where the perfect God, who wrote the perfect Book, will reveal to you the perfection of bliss forever and forevermore! God grant to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to know the power of this converting Book!

If any of you have backslidden, I pray that this same blessed Book may bring you back. I had a letter, the other day, from the backwoods of America that did my heart good. It was from a man who was one of my first converts at New Park Street Chapel. He had been for years a member of the Church, but he grew cold and ceased to attend the means of Grace and, at last, he had to be excommunicated from the Church. He went out to America and there, far away, he began to examine himself—and the Spirit of God brought home to his heart the old texts which he used to hear. He writes that he was brought to his knees and now he is actively engaged in the service of God, endeavoring to bring other backsliders and sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ! It is the Word of God that

will restore you, Backslider! I hope it will do so this very hour and that, soon, you will come to us, and say, "Take me into the Church again, for the Lord has restored me to fellowship with Him through His blessed Word."

II. I must be very brief upon the second part of my subject, which is, **THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK OF CONVERSION.** That is a boundless theme, but I must be content just to touch upon a few points of this excellence.

When the Word of God converts a man, *it takes away from him his despair, but it does not take from him his repentance.* He does not now think that his sin will cast him into Hell, but he does not, therefore, think that his sin is a trifle. He hates the sin as much as if he feared that it would destroy him forever. That is a grand kind of conversion—that the man, who had been in despair because of his sin, is made to know that his sin is forgiven and yet he is not led to trifle or tamper with sin. By faith he sees the wounds of Jesus and he knows how Christ bled to set him free from the bondage of sin—and that makes him forever hate sin. Is not that an excellent conversion?

True conversion also *gives a man pardon, but does not make him presumptuous.* His past transgression is all forgiven him, but he does not, therefore, say, "I will go and transgress in the same fashion again. If pardon is so easily obtained, why should I not sin?" If a truly converted man ever talked like that, or, if such a thought ever occurred to him, he must have said at once, "Get you behind me, Satan, for you savor not the things that are of God." Such talks as that would be diabolical! "Shall we sin, that Grace may abound? God forbid!" Though the man is pardoned, he hates sin as the burnt child dreads the fire. He is afraid lest, by any inadvertent step, he should grieve his Lord who has blotted out the past.

Further, true conversion *gives a man perfect rest, but does not stop his progress.* He knows that the work that has saved him is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he has not to add even one thread to the robe of righteousness which has been given to him! Yet he desires to grow in Grace, to become holier and holier, more like his Lord and Master. While he perfectly rests in Christ, he spreads the wings of his soul that he may fly higher and higher towards his Lord and Master.

Again, true conversion *gives a man security, but it does not allow him to leave off being watchful.* He knows that he is safe and that he shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of Christ's hands—but he is always on the watch against every enemy—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. One of our hymn-writers puts this double Truth of God very sweetly—

***"We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose
But we would ne'er this Grace abuse,
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."***

True conversion also *gives a man strength and holiness, but it never lets him boast.* He glories, but he glories only in the Lord. He knows that a great change has been worked in him, but he still sees so much of his own imperfections that he mourns over them before the Lord. He has no time for boasting because all his time is taken up with repenting for his

sins, believing in his Savior and seeking to live to the praise and glory of God!

True conversion, likewise, *gives a harmony to all the duties of Christian life*. It makes a man love his God better and love his fellow men better. I have no opinion of that religion which consists in a so-called profession of religion which makes a young woman leave her father and mother and all her family—and go and shut herself up in a convent, or become a sister of misery of some sort or other! If my child, when he says that he is converted, leaves off loving his father, I have very grave doubts about his conversion! I think it must be a conversion worked by the devil, not by God. But wherever there is true love to God, there is sure to be love to our fellow men also. The same God who wrote on one tablet certain commands in reference to Himself, wrote on the other tablet the commands with regard to our fellow men. “You shall love the Lord your God,” is certainly a Divine Command—and so is the other, “and your neighbor as yourself.” True conversion balances all duties, emotions, hopes and enjoyments.

True conversion *brings a man to live for God*. He does everything for the Glory of God—whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does. True conversion *makes a man live before God*. He used to try to fancy that God did not see him. But now he desires to live as in God’s sight at all times and he is glad to be there—glad even that God should see his sin—that He may blot it out as soon as ever He beholds it. And such a man now comes to *live with God*. He has blessed communion with Him, He talks with Him as a man talks with his friend and, by-and-by, he shall dwell with God throughout eternity in the palace above! This ought to convince you what an excellent thing true and real conversion is.

III. I have no need to say much, in the third place, concerning THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. The Law of the Lord which accomplishes such an excellent work, must itself be excellent. I will, therefore, only make one or two brief remarks and then close.

“The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,” *right away from the beginning of conversion to the end*. Whenever we want to have converts—and I hope that is always—the best thing for us to do is to “preach the Word.” There is nothing better! There can be nothing more—there must be nothing less! I do not wonder that in some churches and chapels, there are no conversions—because the sermons that are preached there are not adapted to that end. They are like a book I reviewed, the other day, of which I said that there was, possibly, one person in the world who understood it, and that was the writer of the book. And that if he did not read it through every morning, he certainly would not know, the next day, what he meant by it. In some such fashion as that, there are sermons that are so involved—perplexing, metaphysical and I know not what besides—that I do not see how any souls can ever be converted by them! The people need to have a dictionary in the pew, instead of a Bible! They need never turn to any Biblical references, but they need someone to explain to them the meaning of the hard words which the preacher is so fond of using. Have I not also read sermons which were very highly polished, and which, I daresay, were preceded by a prayer

that God would convert souls by them? But it was morally impossible that the Lord should do anything of the sort unless He reversed all His usual methods of procedure, for there was nothing in the sermon that could have been made the means of the conversion of a soul.

But, my dear Brother, if you preach the Word of God. If you lift up the crucified Christ on the pole of the Gospel you need not be very particular about the style of your speech! You need not say, "I must be a first-class speaker. I must be a brained rhetorician." I believe that a great deal of that first-class speaking is simply the means of veiling the Cross of Christ—and that fine talk about Jesus Christ is about the last thing that poor sinners need! I sat at a hotel table, in Mentone, one evening at dinner, and I wanted to speak to a friend who was sitting opposite to me, but someone had put a most magnificent bouquet of flowers in a very splendid vase between us. I was grateful that those flowers bloomed in the middle of winter, and I was pleased to see and to smell them, but, by-and-by, I moved them on one side because they stood in the way of my view of my friend's face. So I admire fine language—nobody enjoys it more than I do in its proper place—I even think that I could manage a little of it myself if I were to try. But whenever it stands between a poor soul and Christ, I would like to say, "Break that vase into a thousand pieces! Fling those flowers into the fire! We do not want them there, for we want the poor sinner to see Christ!"

It is the Word of God that converts the soul—not our pretty figures about the Word, not our fine talk about it—but the Word itself. So, dear teachers, and dear Brother-ministers, let us give them the Word! Yes, that is a very handsome scabbard, but, if you are going to fight, you must pull it off! There is nothing like the naked blade, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to cut and hew, and hack and kill, in a spiritual sense! That same Word will, by God's almighty Grace, make men alive again, so we must "preach the Word" if we want to have conversions!

There is another thing that I feel I must say to you. *We must not think that in order to have conversions, it is necessary to leave out any part of the Gospel.* I am afraid that some people think that if you stand and shout, "Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, you will convert any number of people—but it is not so. You must tell your hearers *what* they have to believe. You must give them the Word of God, the Doctrines of the Gospel, for the people who are said to be converted without being taught from the Scriptures will very soon need to be "converted" again. There must be shot and shell in our guns if any real execution is to be done! Blowing off a lot of powder and making a great noise may sound very well for a time, but it comes to nothing in the end. Just the same Gospel adapted as to its tone and method, but the same Gospel—that I preach in this place, I would preach in a thieves' kitchen, or to the poorest of the poor—and the most illiterate of mankind! It is the Gospel and only the Gospel that will convert the soul.

Now, dear Friends, you who are not converted, my closing word is to you. If you really wish for strength, life, salvation—you will get it through hearing the Word of God, or through reading this precious Book. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Eye-Gate is not

usually the way by which Immanuel rides into the city of Mansoul. The lifting up of the host, the pretty decorations on the priest's robe, the crucifix, the stations of the cross, and all that Roman Catholic mummery will save nobody! That is not God's way of salvation!

Christ comes into Mansoul through Ear-Gate. "Incline your ear, and came unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." Whenever the Gospel is preached, dear Hearer, do really hear it. Remember how our Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear"? Some people do not hear. I have often been thankful, when I have heard some people talk, that I have two ears, because, though their conversation goes in one ear, I thank God I can let it go out the other, and so it does me no harm! But if you are hearing the Gospel, mind that you do not act like that. Then let your two ears be two entrances for the Word. Do not have one for entrance and the other for exit, but, "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it go in both ears and remain in your memory until it reaches your heart. I do not believe that anybody is an earnest and attentive hearer, longing to hear to his soul's profit, without his so hearing if the Gospel is preached to him. As I have already told you, the promise is, "Hear, and your soul shall live." And if you come with a willing mind—willing to judge, weigh and then to believe the Word—the moment you do believe it, you are saved! That Word of God which leads you to believe has already converted you, so, come out and confess what God has done for you, and then go on your way rejoicing! May God bless everyone of you without a single exception, for His name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 658, 561.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 19.

This Psalm teaches us the excellence of the two Revelations which God has made to man. The first is the Revelation which He has made in Nature, and the second is that which He has made in His Inspired Word. The Psalmist first sings of God as He displays Himself in His works in Creation.

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.* So much is this the case that it has been well said that "an undevout astronomer is mad." There are such traces of the Infinite and the Omnipotent in the stars, that the more thoroughly they are studied, and the science of mathematics is brought to bear upon them, in order, in some degree, to guess at the incalculable distances and mighty weights of the starry orbs, that a man must perceive in them traces of the Divine handiwork if he is only willing to do so! "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

2. *Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.* Every day speaks to the following one, even as the day that went before it spoke to it, and each day has its own message. Its history is an echo of the Voice of God and if man had but ears to hear, he would perceive that the things which happen from day to day proclaim the Presence and

power of God. And even night, with her impressive silence, reveals the Most High in the solemn hush and stillness. In the great primeval forests, the winds seem with songs without words to declare the Presence of the Most High. There is a something there, in the stillness of the night, as weird-like and so solemn, which has made Unbelief retreat and caused Faith to lift up her eyes and see more in the heavens at night than she had seen by day—"Night unto night shows knowledge."

3, 4. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Though Nature does not speak, yet its words go to the ends of the earth and, silently, they sing the praises of God. To the inner ears of an enlightened man, there is a measure of spiritual teaching always going on.

4-6. *In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. Its rising from one end of Heaven, and its circuit to the other end: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* All this is emblematical of the spread of the Gospel—so Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Romans, "Their souls went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Our Lord Jesus, springing up from the couch where He slept awhile, has sent His Light even to the ends of the earth—

***"Nor shall His spreading Gospel rest
Till through the world His Truth has run—
Till Christ has all the nations blest,
That see the light, or feel the sun."***

There are brighter days yet to come to us! The strength of Christ, as He daily runs the Gospel race, has not diminished. Indeed, He puts it out yet more and more, and the day shall come when, as the full sunlight makes the perfect day, so shall the full Revelation of the Gospel to the eyes of all men fill the whole earth with the praises of God! Now let us read concerning the Book of God. We have read about His works, now let us read about His words.

7. *The law of the LORD is perfect.* "The Doctrine of the Lord (as it may be read) is perfect."

7. *Converting [or, restoring] the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure.* Oh, what a mercy that is! What could our souls do with *ifs* and *buts* and *perhaphses*? But the teachings of God's Word are certain, positive, Infallible!

7. *Making wise the simple.* No matter how foolish, how childlike we may be to begin with, so long as our minds are free from cunning and craftiness, and so are simple and sincere, this Book will make us truly wise.

8. *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.* You know they do. Oftentimes has your heart leaped for joy when the statutes of the Lord have been made known to you.

8-11. *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Your servant warned.* Do you not find it so—that of-

tentimes a text of Scripture comes to your mind just at the moment when you were about to suffer spiritual shipwreck? When you would have done something that would have caused you lifelong grief and vast damage, the Word of God has stepped before you with the flaming danger signal and you have been stopped in time!

11. *And in keeping of them there is great reward.* Not for keeping of them, for it is not of debt, but, “*in keeping of them.*” It is always best to do as God bids you. You never forget a duty, or refuse to do it without suffering loss, and every mistake you make, with regard to your Lord’s will, is a damage to yourselves. The keeping of His commands is most soul-enriching. The most profitable business that a child of God can carry on is the business of obedience to his Lord’s commands. “*In keeping of them there is great reward.*”

12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.* The man who searches his heart most will yet leave some sin undiscovered and he who says, “I have no sin. I am living without sin,” has surely never seen into his own heart at all! He must be an utter stranger to the condition it is in. Let this be the prayer of each one of us—“*Cleanse me from secret faults.*”

13. *Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.* “Let me never dare to do what I know to be wrong. Let me not say, ‘I will go just so far and then stop.’ Let me not tempt the Holy Spirit of God. Oh, let me never tempt the devil to tempt me and put myself into a dangerous position under the notion that God will keep me if I am His child! ‘Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.’”

13. *Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* You will never go into apostasy if you are watchful against presumption. Those men who, like Judas, commit the great transgression and utterly perish, are men who knew nothing about watching their own hearts, but who presumed, and were sinfully bold and self-confident—and so came to an ill end. You know where John Bunyan says Heedless and Too-Bold went—and there are many like them.

14. *Let the word of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight; O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer.*

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

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GOD IN NATURE AND IN REVELATION

NO. 3314

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1866.

“The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”
Psalm 19:7-9.

[Another Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the first clause of verse 7 is #2870, Volume 50—REVELATION AND CONVERSION—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

WHAT I have to say this evening will really be an exposition of the whole Psalm. I have only selected these three verses for the convenience of having a short text. The Psalm begins upon a high note—“The heavens declare the Glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Only let the film of unbelief be taken from our eyes and we shall see that everything in the great temple of Nature proclaims the greatness and the Glory of God. Only let the naturally deaf ear be unstopped and there will be heard voices—mysterious yet clearly intelligible—revealing that God is still here working in Providence, as of old He worked in Creation. It seems to me that those persons who think that Christians are not to be delighted with the wonders and beauties of the natural world, differ very widely from the Psalmist whose words we are considering. One truly excellent man, whom we all very highly esteem, declared that when traveling up the Rhine, he did not look at the landscape because he desired to have his thoughts completely taken up with spiritual things. I cannot condemn the good man, yet I think that as I am dwelling in my Father’s House, I ought to take delight in my Father’s works—and I must be a strange sort of child if I think it is a token of my affection for my Father not to care to look at the garden which He has laid out or the House which He has built! While earnestly exhorting you to be spiritually-minded, I would remind you that it is just as easy to be spiritually-minded with your eyes open as with your eyes shut to all the beauties of Nature by which you are surrounded!

There are two things in the Psalm about which I am going to speak. The first is *a parallel intended*. And the second, *praise expressed*.

I. First, there is A PARALLEL INTENDED.

This parallel was suggested to my mind while reading Bishop Horne's Commentary upon this Psalm. He confesses his acknowledgment to some older author for the idea. The parallel is this—David first extols the Revelation of God in Nature, and then extols the Revelation of God in His Word. And he seems to imply that there is a likeness between the two Revelations—that they are, in fact, two books of the same Revelation or two parts of one great poem!

In reading David's remarks concerning the heavens, we may truthfully apply them to the Scriptures. *Like the heavens, the Scriptures declare the Glory of God, and like the firmament, they show His handiwork.* Only that while the firmament shows God's handiwork in Creation, the Word of God shows that same handiwork in Redemption, in that *new* creation by Him who says, "Behold, I make all things new." Consider first the vast expanse of the heavens. Who can measure the great curtain which God has stretched out as a tent to dwell in? Who knows the height thereof or the breadth thereof? Where are the compasses that can describe this wondrous circle? And the Scriptures are just as expansive as are the heavens—no man has yet compassed all the Truth of Divine Revelation. As we look up to the great doctrines that tower above us like the high mountains, we may well say, "They are high, we cannot attain unto them." The length and breadth and depth and height of Scripture all surpass the comprehension of mortal men! And though we do unfeignedly believe and devoutly rejoice in them, it is not within the range of our powers to fully comprehend them. There are some persons who talk as if they know the whole circle of Divine Truth. They think they have put the great ocean of Revelation into the small measure of their mortal capacity, but you know, dear Friends, that it is not so. No man will ever be able to hold the heavens in his hand or to compass the firmament with a span. But even if he could do this, he would still find that the Word of God in all its wondrous immensity was too vast for him to grasp! We must hold firmly whatever we have learned of the Truth of God, but we must always be prepared to learn more. To say of my Bible that I have attained to every height that it reveals, is as foolish as to say that I have reached the highest degree of spiritual life that is possible. Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And when I have strived my utmost to know the Word of God, I still feel that I have need to pray, "Teach me Your statutes, O Lord, and enlarge my understanding that I may know more and more of Your Truth!" For expanse, for loftiness, for brightness, for glory, the Scriptures are comparable to the heavens which declare the Glory of God—and to the firmament which shows His handiwork.

Then the Psalmist goes on to say, "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge," and so, *the Revelation of God in the*

Scriptures is always speaking to men. Let them turn to it whenever they may—it has a message for them at all seasons. When we are happy and rejoicing, it has a voice for our brightest day! And when we are mourning and sorrowing, it is the comfort of our darkest night. During this long night of the Church’s history—the long night of her Lord’s absence—His true ministers are enabled to shine as stars in His right hand and many a sorrowful spirit is cheered, and many a mariner upon the sea of life is guided by their light. By-and-by, the blessed Sun of Righteousness shall again arise with healing in His wings—and then throughout the long and bright millennia day, and afterwards throughout that everlasting day to which there shall be no night—we shall continue to learn more and more of the wonders of that Revelation which He has given us in His Word.

One great glory of the heavens is that they have a voice to all lands—“There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In a language understood by all the sons of men—not in the language of only the Jew or of the Gentile, not in the language of the barbarian or the Greek, alone, but in the language of all alike—ancient and modern, bond and free—the voice of the heavens has gone forth the wide world over declaring the Glory of God! So is it with the Gospel! No matter where you introduce it, its message is adapted to all the sons of men. Paul proved the power of the Gospel among the idolaters of Lycaonia and among the sages of Greece. It has a voice for men of all temperaments. It speaks with equal authority to the sturdy Anglo-Saxon and to the more volatile Frenchman. It has a peculiar facility for adapting itself to all nationalities—it is neither the Gospel of the Englishman, alone, nor of the American, nor of the African, but it speaks to—

“All people that on earth do dwell!”

Wherever the Bible goes, it appears not as an exotic, but as a homegrown flower! And whenever the Gospel is preached, it comes, not as a Revelation from the East, or the West, or the North, or the South, but as God’s message to all mankind in the whole world!

The glory of the Scriptures is like the glory of the heavens—“in them has He set a tabernacle for the sun”—and *in the Word of God there is a tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness*. It is within the Truths of Divine Revelation that Jesus Christ abides as the sun does in its proper sphere. What would the heavens be without the sun? And what would the Scriptures be without the Sun of Righteousness? I may truly say of the Bible—

***“Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost on every page.”***

The glory of the Gospel is that in it, God is revealed as manifest in human flesh—all the Divine attributes are displayed in the Person of Emmanuel, God With Us. Take Jesus Christ away from the Gospel and its power is gone—and take Jesus Christ away from the Christian ministry and it becomes utterly powerless. I am grieved to have to say it, but I be-

lieve that it is because there has been so little preaching of Christ in many of our pulpits that the hearers have been driven off to Romanism and to all sorts of errors. The human heart needs some supreme object of affection—and it can never be satisfied with philosophical essays, or discussions about morality, or similar themes which have wasted hundreds of Sundays and made the services of the sanctuary a weariness to God's people. Oh, that there were more preaching of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! If He is lifted up, He will draw all men unto Him—and He must be lifted up, or else the preaching is a mere sham, a joy to devils, but to no one else!

David next very expressively says of the sun, “which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,” and is not this a true picture of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures? He compared Himself to a bridegroom during His earthly ministry and this is His relationship to His Church, which is “the bride, the Lamb's wife.” He is here said to be “coming out of His chamber,” as He came out of the council chamber of the Divine decree, saying, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart”—coming out of the chamber of the Divine and invisible, and dressing Himself in the humble robes of our humanity! Coming to a life of sorrow and suffering, yet coming to it with joyous steps because He delighted to do the will of God and was charmed to redeem His spouse from death and Hell! Then later, coming out of the chamber in which He had concealed the glories of His Deity during the 33 years of His sojourn among men. And now, coming out of His chamber continually as His Gospel is faithfully proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit! Verily, this is a true picture of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures, “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.”

It is also a picture of Him as a Champion—“and rejoices as a strong man to rule a race”—“as a strong man”—not as a weakling, panting and struggling to stay on the track, but as a strong man rejoicing because he knows that he shall victoriously reach the goal! Coming forth in the Gospel, Sunday by Sunday, and week by week, our Lord Jesus Christ does not come forth to be defeated! He does not come forth, as some of my Brothers seem to imagine, needing their proofs of His existence and Deity! Or their apologies for His Gospel, but He comes forth to achieve His everlasting purposes, that He may be able to say to His Father at the last even as He said when here upon the earth, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.” “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” Like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, He is confident that He shall reach the goal and win the prize. It is a long race, a toilsome race, a race in which there are many competitors—but as Jesus looks at them, He knows that He will beat them all—and that the crown of victory shall surely be His!

I hope some poor troubled soul will be comforted by the next verse of the Psalm—"His goings forth is from the end of the Heaven, and His circuit unto the end of it." The light of the sun reaches even the ice-caves of the frozen North and it pours down its shining rays most lavishly upon—

"India's coral strand"—

and—

***"Where Africa's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand."***

So is it in the going forth of Christ in His Gospel—"His going forth is from the end of Heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it." The light of His Gospel shines upon all ranks, all classes and all characters—the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate! And the time shall come when it will shine over the whole world, for—

***"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run—
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall grow and wane no more."***

Then the Psalmist adds, "and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." The heat of the sun finds out the little flower in the darkest glade of the forest and no doubt it exerts a mysterious influence even in the depths of the sea and at the bottom of the deepest mines! "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof," even though much is hid from the light thereof. So is it with the Gospel and with the love of Christ. Where some of you are tonight, you may imagine that you are hidden from the heat of the Savior's love, but is it so? You hear the Gospel, do you not? That is something, but you say that you want to find the Christ who has His tabernacle in the Gospel. But that very *desire* of yours proves that you are not hidden from the heat of the Savior's love, for that desire is one of the gifts of His Grace! If you have any brokenness of heart, any consciousness of guilt, any inclination towards repentance, this is the work of Christ! Trust His EverBlessed Spirit! The flower does not know that it could not bloom without the sun, but it is true. Perhaps it thinks that the sun has too much to do in watching over the wide expanse of sea and land, and in seeing its beams reflected from the glittering palace roof to notice one poor little poppy in a glen or one primrose hidden away in a mossy bank! But it is not so. The sun sheds its beams upon all and is none the poorer for doing so! And so is it with the love of Christ. If you feel even a *longing* after Him, that is a proof that you are not hidden from the heat of His love! Breathe this prayer again and again, "Jesus, You glorious Sun of Righteousness, shine on me and fill me with Your Divine Grace!" As the sunflower is said to turn its face to the sun, so turn your face to Christ! I have noticed that flowers which grow in that part of the garden which is much in the shade always try to twist themselves into the sunlight if they can—and you have probably noticed that when you have flowers at your windows at home, they always try to grow towards the

glass. Do seek, especially if you are a Believer, to grow towards the light, and most of all to grow towards Christ who is *the* Light, the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness! Try to catch as many of His heavenly beams as you can. Remember that the sun is none the less glorious because he gives so many of his beams to the flowers—and Jesus Christ will be no loser by the gift of His Grace to you! The Sun of Righteousness will be just as bright and just as glorious as before! No, He will be all the more glorious as His Glory is displayed in you!

I want you, then, to look upon the Word of God with great reverence and affection because therein is set a tabernacle for Jesus Christ. If you would learn all that you can concerning Jesus Christ, you must diligently study the Word which reveals Him to us.

II. Having spoken upon the parallel intended, I now turn to our second subject which is PRAISE EXPRESSED. I remind you again that I am giving an exposition rather than preaching a sermon—and I very much question whether it would not be better if we more often expounded Scripture rather than gave utterance to so many of our own words and thoughts.

In speaking in this Psalm concerning the Word of God, David uses six different expressions to describe it. And to each one he attaches a special tribute to commend it to us. As a rule, the ungodly know the Bible only by one name or, perhaps, two. They call it the Bible or the Scriptures—and that is about all that most of those know concerning it. But a man who is well acquainted with its contents has many names for it. The most notable instance of this is the 119th Psalm, which contains 176 verses, almost everyone of which has a mention of the Word of the Lord. It would be a profitable exercise to read that long Psalm through carefully—and to note all the variations of expression that the Psalmist uses concerning the Scriptures as far as they were known to him. But for our present purpose it will suffice if we confine our thoughts to the six descriptions and tributes that we find in this 19th Psalm.

First, David says, *“The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”* In the margin, we have the word, “Doctrine,” as another rendering of the word, Law, and we know that the term, “the Law of the Lord” is not restricted to the Decalogue, so we shall not do wrong if we apply this expression to the Gospel which is God’s special means of converting souls—and to the whole Revelation of God’s plan and method of salvation which we find in the Scriptures. If I want to know how I am to be saved, I come to this blessed Book and I read here, “the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which Paul said had made him free from the Law of sin and death. I read here Christ’s own words, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I read here the matchless story of Him on whom I am to believe. I read about His Person, His Character, His Doctrine, His mission—and this “Law of the Lord” begins to operate upon my heart as I read it! It not only changes my outward actions, but it renews my mind,

it alters the whole bent and purpose of my life—in David’s phrase—it converts my soul! The springs of my being, which once were poisoned by sin, become purified by Grace. I know that you have found this to be true, Beloved, and that, therefore, you love this “Law of the Lord.” McCheyne says that it is God’s Word, and not our comments upon it, that saves souls. And I have frequently noticed, in conversions, that it has not been so much the word of the preacher that has been blessed as the Word of God, itself—though this, of course, is a rule to which there are exceptions, for our Lord Jesus, Himself, said in His great intercessory prayer, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word”—not only through Christ’s own word, but through the truthful and faithful testimony of His servants—and still is the word of earnest, believing preachers and teachers blessed to their hearers and scholars! Yet the great converting agency is the Word of God, for this “Law of the Lord is perfect”—there is nothing in it in excess and there is nothing omitted from it. It is perfect in all its operations upon my nature, perfect to inspire my whole life and to kindle enthusiasm in my soul, perfect to enlighten my understanding and to subdue my will, perfect for everything which is needed for the conversion of my soul!

David next says, “*The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*” I take this word, “testimony,” to mean the Revelation of Himself which God has given us in His Word. He gives testimony to His own Fatherhood and to His adoption into His family of all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. He gives testimony to all His attributes as they are revealed in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives testimony to His own everlasting love and to His faithfulness to every promise which He has made to His elect. He gives testimony to many things which we could never have discovered from Nature and all His testimony makes the simple wise. Over the porch of one of the academies in Athens was written, “He that is ignorant of arithmetic may not enter here.” But over the porch of God’s Word is inscribed, “He that is ignorant is welcome here.” “The testimony of the Lord” is full of Divine Wisdom, yet it is put into such plain language that even children can understand it—so the simple come to it that they may be made wise and, often that which is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed unto babes—for so it seems good in God’s sight!

I take the Word of God, then, as first of all teaching me how my soul may be converted. And then, being converted, I come to this blessed Book with quite another objective—not to find out how I am to be saved, but that I may learn more concerning the God who has saved me! And as I read His testimony with regard to Himself, it makes my simple soul wise.

When I have got as far as that, I need something more, and David next says, “*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*” By this word, “statutes,” I understand the Lord’s ordinances of decree, the King’s royal edicts and mandates—and also His promises which are a transcript of His decrees. David says that these “statutes of the Lord are right.” Of course they are, because they are His statutes—and that they cause the heart to rejoice—a statement we can confirm from our own experience! I have often confessed that when my spirit gets depressed, nothing will sustain it but the good, old-fashioned, Calvinistic Doctrine. You may be content with the fare set before you by the modern school of preachers when you are not hungry. You may enjoy it when there is fine weather. But when storms of tribulation are howling around you, when you are conscious of a great need of soul-satisfying food, then I believe that the old Augustinian Doctrine—which is the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul and of His Lord and Master, Jesus Christ—is the only fare upon which your heart can feast with rejoicing! How sweet it is, at such a time, to fall back upon the eternal purposes of God in Christ Jesus! To know one’s calling and election sure, to know that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”—this is, indeed, “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” King Lemuel’s mother said, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts.” And in a Spiritual sense, it is the strong drink and the nourishing wine of the Doctrines of Grace that can alone sustain those who are spiritually ready to perish and heavy of heart!

There are some who would agree with David as far as we have gone, but they are not so eager to listen to his next sentence—“*The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*” Being converted, a man learns all he can of the testimony of the Lord, then his heart rejoices in the statutes of the Lord and he goes on to get further enlightenment from the commandment of the Lord. Some persons never seem to have their eyes enlightened because they neglect to obey the Lord’s precepts. Disobedience is sure to bring its own punishment and there are some who cannot clearly read their own interest in Christ because their neglect to keep His commandments has closed their eyes just as a cloud of dust might have done. There is a great reward for those who obey His precepts and although we are saved by Grace, and not by our works, yet in the economy of Grace there are certain rewards which are only given to them who diligently keep the King’s commandments! Happy are they who, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully. Surely they shall be among the virgin souls that, in the heavenly Mount Zion, “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

David next mentions a very practical matter—“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.” Some kinds of fear are anything *but* clean! “The fear of man” has been a foul snare in which many have been captured for the devil. Compromise is very popular, today, but the Bible is a most un-

compromising Book—and “the fear of the Lord” is a most uncompromising principle! Once let this gracious fear thoroughly permeate our soul and we shall never lose it, for David truly says that it endures *forever*. If ever a man is really dead, buried and risen with Christ, there is no fear of his ever undergoing such a backward process as being dead with Christ and then alive again to the world! There are some principles which are only powerful for a time, but the principle of Grace, which produces the fear of the Lord, exerts a permanent influence upon everyone in whom the Holy Spirit works it—and there is no possibility of the love of the world or the fear of man casting it out! May that gracious Spirit work this holy fear in each one of us!

Then, lastly, David says, “*The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*” Whenever I think of the judgments of the Lord in the olden times, I always regard them as righteous judgments. Just were You, O Lord, when You did pour down the fiery hail upon Sodom and Gomorrah! When You did smite Pharaoh and overthrow his hosts in the Red Sea, and when Your angel slew the army of Sennacherib! Just have You been, O God, in overturning ancient monarchs which had become hoary in iniquity! And these are “the judgments of the Lord” which are yet to be executed, concerning which we have the repeated declarations of Revelation that they will all be “true and righteous.” These are the very words that are used concerning the Lord’s judgments upon that great harlot which has corrupted the earth with her fornications! With this blessed Book in our hands—and especially if its Truths are enshrined in our hearts—we may confidently face the future and not be alarmed by any of the errors and heresies that may spring up around us! The teachers of falsehood are only imitating the folly of the builders of Babel—and all their inventions will but end in their own confusion.

The sun has gone down and in an hour or two the world will appear in a more somber dress than it now wears. If you come out at midnight, you will see nothing but the twinkling stars and a few glimmering lamps. Yet the sun is not put out—his light is not quenched. Wait till the appointed time and the great light of day shall again be “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race.” Darkness may be covering your mind tonight. Darkness may cover your circumstances. Darkness may, for a while, cover even the Church of God on earth—but that old promise is still true—“Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteous arise with healing in His wings.” Only be sure that you are on the Lord’s side! Put your trust in the precious blood of Jesus and wait for Him more than they that watch for the morning. And then, when He comes, it will be to you a day of light and not of darkness, and the days of your mourning will have ended forever! So may the Lord comfort your hearts, sustain you under every trial, keep you in His love

and enable you patiently to wait for His coming, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:9-32.**

Verse 9. *How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your Word.* “How shall a young man cleanse his way?” A vital and solemn question. His way is full of temptations and he, himself, has strong passions. How shall he make his way clean and keep it so? “By taking heed thereto according to Your Word.” Without heed he will soon be in the mire, but carefully walking with God's Word as his rule, by the blessing of God's Grace it will keep him out of sin.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments.* There might be thought in this confession to be some commendation of himself and, therefore, he salts it with this prayer—“I have sought You, Lord, sincerely, but still, notwithstanding that, I am very apt to stray away. And I shall sadly wander unless You keep me. O let me not wander from Your commandments.”

11. *Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.* The best thing put into the best place for the best of all purposes! There is no antidote against sin like the possession of the Word of God in the soul.

12. *Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes.* You are blessed, make me blessed. You are the happy God, instruct me in the way of happiness.

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth.* I am a learner, but I have tried to be a teacher, too. I have not kept the Word of God to myself as though it were only a personal treasure for me, but what I have heard in the secret chamber of fellowship, that have I spoken on the housetops. Have you published abroad what you know? Then you are the person to learn more. When men drop their money into a money box, they have to break it to get it out again, and if they have not need of it they will not do so. God does not care to drop His treasure into a heart that never uses it and imparts it. Let your lips speak what your heart learns!

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.* If all sorts of riches were put together, I have found them all, and more than them all in Your testimonies! I am rich in all respects when I have You.

15. *I will meditate on Your precepts, and have respect unto Your way.* Meditation treads the wine press and gets the juice out of the grapes. A man may read too much if he reads without meditation. “I will meditate.” It is the harvesting by reaping of what we have sown by reading.

16. *I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.* I will take a deep pleasure in them and I will find an intense joy in every pondering of them. “I will not forget Your Word.” I will never let it go out of the precincts of my memory. I will recall again and again. I will always have a text of Your precious Book ready to my tongue.

17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your Word.* Give me much of Your comfort, royally of Yourself! Deal bountifully with me. I have great necessities. I am a mass of needs, therefore, “Deal bountifully with me that I may live.” And I have great tendencies to wander. Great risks and perils. Give me abundance of Grace that I may keep Your Word.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.* The wonders are there—cause me to behold them! A man may have a fair landscape before him, rich in all beauties of form and color, but if his eyes are closed, is he better for it?

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* “I am a stranger in the earth.” I do not now belong to it. I am born and bound for Heaven. I am a pilgrim here—men do not understand me, neither have I any settled business here. “I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.” Oh, remember that I am Your alien, Your banished one! Send me love messages from the old home and loved country.

20. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times.* Broken souls are many. But not on this account! Oh, how few are in danger of breaking through such a longing as this! Would God there were many more that did sigh and cry after the Word of God—for longings such as these are sure to lead to an earnest search—and the earnest search will increase knowledge and increase Grace.

21. *You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* A proud man is surely a sinful man. He may think himself a righteous man, but he cannot be so. He has gone far astray from the very essence of God’s Law, which is that he should walk humbly with his God.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Your testimonies.* A man that does that is pretty sure to be reproached and to be condemned by man, for they think that one who follows God faithfully “is very old-fashioned, he has not much spirit, he has not drunk in the philosophy of the age, he is a fossilized Christian,” and so on. Well, we can bear all such reproach—still we are truly glad when we escape it.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.* And a great man’s word goes a long way with some people. They think a prince a great authority. “But Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.” He did not burst out in angry reply. He did not give fierce railing for railing, but he sat himself down as quietly as he

could—the more abundantly to meditate on God’s statutes. What calmness there is here and what wisdom! For if princes should speak against us, and the great ones of the earth should rail, what does it matter? If they drive us away from our faith, it would matter—but if they drive us *to our Bibles*, it is a benefit!

24, 25. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors. My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your Word.* Here He prays for *quicken*. He felt the spiritual death that was so natural to him, the heaviness of his heart, the tendency to sink, the attractions of the world.

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* Open confession is good for the soul and I have made this confession. You have heard me. Now “teach me Your statutes.”

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts, so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* Lord ground me and found me in Your knowledge. Give me to know fully, firmly, what I do know. I would not be as a man that eats, but thinks not from where the bread came, but I would wish to understand the way of Your precepts. “So shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”

28. *My soul melts for heaviness. Strengthen You me according unto Your Word.* Will not this prayer suit some that are in this house this evening who are very dull and depressed? Oh, if your soul sinks, still pray and say, “Strengthen You me.” You need strength, dear Friends. If you had more strength, your troubles would not crush you. Your soul would not melt if you had more strength and confidence.

29, 30. *Remove from me the way of lying: and graciously grant me Your Law. I have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me.* As a captain lays out his chart so as to keep his course correctly and safely, so I try to sail by it. I have chosen Your Law and precepts and commands as my course, and I would gladly keep to them.

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.* I am glued to them—there is no separating me, no tearing me apart from them! “O Lord, put me not to shame.”

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments when You shall enlarge my heart.* I will go quicker and faster, I will have more energy, more flaming zeal in Your service—“When You shall enlarge my heart.” O Lord, it is very narrow and very contracted. I cannot think great thoughts, nor do great things, nor believe great promises unless You shall enlarge my heart! Lord, give me a larger heart, stronger to obey, more tender to love for Your name’s sake!

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

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

GOODNESS GOING BEFORE

NO. 3329

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1912.

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“You prevent Him with the blessings of goodness.”
Psalm 21:3.

OUR text is one of many instances of the way in which words change their meanings. The word, “prevent,” as we now use it, has a very different meaning from that which it had when our translators used it. It now signifies to get before one, to stop up his path, to prevent his going a certain way, just as the angel “prevented” Balaam, standing with his sword drawn in his hand that he might not pass that way. This is only the modern use of the word, but the real and ancient use of it was simply, “to go before.” “You go before Him with the blessings of goodness.” That is the real meaning of the word—and when we speak of, “preventing Grace,” we do not intend to describe the Grace that keeps us from sin, but the Grace which goes before our actually believing in Christ—“prevenient Grace,” as we are accustomed to call it theologically—Grace which comes to us while as yet we are not conscious of its power, or have no desire towards it.

The meaning of the text, then, is *not* that Christ was prevented, or hindered from doing anything that He wished to do, by God’s goodness, but that God’s goodness went before, preceded, heralded Him. That word, “preceded,” has taken in our language in the present age the force and meaning which the word, “prevent,” had at the time of the translation of our authorized version of the Bible, so that now we should say, instead, “You precede Him, got before Him with the blessings of Your goodness.”

I shall take the text on this occasion, then, in two ways. First, noticing *its application to our Lord Jesus Christ, personally, and then its application to Him mystically*—that is to say, to *every believing soul that is truly in Him.*

First, then—

I. ITS APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST PERSONALLY. It is quite certain that God did precede Him with the blessings of goodness. That is to say, before our Lord Jesus Christ actually came into the world and bowed His head in death, multitudes of spirits were given to Him as His reward—that tens of thousands entered into God’s Redemption by

virtue of an Atonement that was not as yet offered—and washed away their sins in a fountain filled with blood which had not been literally opened, but which was opened in the purpose of God and in its Divine Operation from before the foundation of the world, for is He not called, “the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world”? Brothers and Sisters, see the wondrous power of the death of our Savior! His blood not only cries from the ground when it is spilt, but it cried all down the ages which preceded the actual blood-shedding! It opened the gates of Heaven to sinners, it was sprinkled on the consciences of Believers and made sinful men to be “accepted in the Beloved” even before it had dropped in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, or had been made to flow in streams under the lash in Gabbatha, or had been poured forth from the five sacred wounds upon the Cross of Calvary! “You precede Him with the blessings of goodness.”

Just as some mighty conquerors, when they entered in triumph into Rome not only had behind them the trophies of their victory, but before them the streets were strewn with flowers and made sweet with the perfumes rained upon them before they came, so was it with the Savior. Before He came, the world was blessed by His coming! Before He, Himself, appeared, I may say that death and Hell were defeated in anticipation. Just as in our own land there is a brightness that covers the sky before the sun has actually risen above the horizon, so was it with the world—there was the Light of God in it before Christ came. It was Light, however, which came from Him, for He is the Light of the World, the Light that lights every man that comes into the world—but it came before He, Himself, appeared! In this verse, then, it must be said of King Jesus, “You precede Him with the blessings of goodness.”

And to ponder another phase of this same thought, our Lord Jesus Christ was *honored among the sons of men before He had performed His great work.*

We honor our Lord because He has redeemed us, and it is this that makes them sing before the eternal Throne of God, “He has loved us, and redeemed us unto God by His blood.” But long before the Redemption price had been paid, I doubt not that Christ was honored by the saints in Heaven, for they knew that their coming there was on the same ground and footing as the saints do now! I believe, therefore, that long before He lived and died on earth, they cast their crowns at His feet and said, “You are worthy.” I have frequently heard it said that there was no faith in Heaven, but I have never been able to receive that idea. At any rate, there must have been faith in Heaven before Christ died! The celestial spirits must have had a firm conviction that Christ would come upon the earth and must have felt that their security depended upon the Infallible oath and promise that in the fullness of time He would offer Himself as a Sacrifice. Indeed, it seems to me that there is still faith in Heaven as to that matter, for they have to believe as we do in the Second Advent, in the re-

surrection of the dead and in many wondrous promises which as yet have not been fulfilled. Certainly, Beloved, we may say of the Master that His head was crowned with the Glory of the crown of thorns before it was crowned with the shame! And in this sense He was preceded with the blessings of goodness. Abraham saw His day. He saw it and was glad—and in that gladness of Abraham, Jesus Christ rejoiced! David sang of Him and rested upon Him with such faith that in that faith the Savior found a solace. All those who were able to look through that smoke of the types and ceremonies—and to see the substance of the true Redemption—all gave honor and Glory to Him, and this I say was before He had actually won that Glory by His death—“You precede Him with the blessings of goodness.”

It seems to me, however, that the text need not be read literally, or interpreted exactly according to its words, but the spirit of it is more to be observed. That spirit appears to be this—that Christ does not tardily obtain from His father the blessings of goodness, but *they come from God with freeness and Divine liberality*, so that it may truly be said, “You precede Him with the blessings of goodness.” Take an instance. Our Savior says, “I will not pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, for you have loved Me.” It was as if He put it in these words and had said, “I should not have to wait pleading at the Throne, for the Father, Himself, is so willing to give, that He will precede me with the blessings of goodness.” Ah, my dear Friends, if it is a promise which belongs to us poor pleaders that before we call, He will answer, and while we are speaking He will hear, do you not think that this blessing emphatically belongs to the Great Intercessor—the Lord Jesus—so that the Father precedes Him with “the blessings of goodness”? We are accustomed to sing to Him as pleading before the Eternal Throne, but we must forever banish from our minds all idea of His needing to plead because God is unwilling to hear! No, what the Son desires, the Father desires—that which He seeks at the Divine Throne is flowing from that Throne—but His intercession it not the *cause* of it, but the *channel* through which it comes to us! We know that God’s goodness was not caused by the death of Christ—

**“Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people known
That Jesus, from the realms above,
On His kind errand came!
‘Twas not the pangs that He endured,
Nor all the woes He bore
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was Love before!”**

God loved His people with a love that surpassed all thought *before the Savior came*. And now that that Savior pleads for us, His plea is not the

cause of the blessing, but the *channel* through which the blessing comes down to us “You precede Him with the blessings of goodness.”

But then, Beloved, what a sweet thought this is, that wherever the Savior comes, *God’s blessings come with Him, come behind Him, no, even come before Him!* Sometimes when a man walks, his shadow goes before him. The shadow of Peter healed the sick, and so the shadow of the Savior, when He is coming to a soul, begins to heal it. Why, I have known some who have been blessed by the very shadow of Christ—I mean that before they were actually converted, before the new heart and the right spirit were given to them, the very shadow of Christ, at least more or less, made them desire to change their ways. The very shadow of Christ, I say, falling before them had somewhat of a healing effect upon their souls even before they had put their fingers into the print of the nails or thrust their hands into His side! You, Brothers and Sisters, who have had communion with Christ, will know that before you are actually conscious of the love of Christ being shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will often have some notion of it, for a calm suddenly comes upon you before He, Himself, comes.

He makes all things ready just as He did at the Passover, when He sent His disciples to prepare the upper room. His Holy Spirit often comes to make ready your heart to receive Him so that when He comes you may be ready to open the door because He has been preceded by the “blessings of goodness.” Even before He comes, comes a blessing from Him! Beloved, what must be the treasures that are in Him? What the troops of angelic mercies that surround Him? What the heavenly blessings, what the waves upon waves of celestial benedictions that must be in Himself, in His own Person! If His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, where did they get the sweet odor from but from Himself? They smell of the cassia, but He is the cassia! “A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved unto me.” As a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of Engedi, is He to those who know His fragrance and delight in His sweetness! We may say of Him, “You precede Him with the blessings of goodness,” but as for Himself, He is goodness itself! Do you not think that Bernard of Clairvaux had the right idea when he penned that ancient hymn which has been so sweetly translated—

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

Then he goes on—

***“To those who fall how kind You are!
How good to those that seek!
But what to those who find? Ah, this,
Nor tongue, nor pen can show!
The love of Jesus—what it is,
None but His loved ones know.”***

So, then, we leave this point as it refers to our Lord, personally, reminding ourselves that all the blessings of God's goodness are, "Yes, and Amen, in Christ Jesus to the Glory of God," to us, and they all come to us through Him. We now turn to our second point—

II. ITS APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST MYSTICALLY, that is, TO EVERY BELIEVING SOUL IN HIM. We too, can say to God, "You have preceded us with the blessings of goodness."

I want you to go back a little in your own histories. Just take out your diaries and turn back to the book of His mercies. I want you to think of *prevenient Providences*. You may open your children's hymnbook if you like, and you may sing—

***"I thank the goodness and the Grace,
Which on my birth have smiled
That in this land I passed my days,
A happy English child.
I was not born a little slave,
To labor in the sun,
Wishing I were put in my grave,
And all my labor done.
I was not born as thousands are,
Where God was never known
And taught to pray a senseless prayer
To blocks of wood and stone.
My God, I thank You who have planned,
A better lot for me!
And placed me in this happy land,
Where I can hear of Thee."***

I remember hearing it once said that this was a hymn for little Pharisees, but the man who said that did not know any better and was, therefore, to be pitied. It is a hymn which a child may very gratefully sing and which we may all join in when we thank God for the Providence which caused us to be born where the Gospel is preached!

Let us be thankful, too, many of us, that *we were born in households where the name of Jesus was among the earliest sounds that caught our ears!* We were rocked in our cradles to the hymns of Zion and the name of the Savior mingled with the very hush of the lullaby. With some here, alas, it was oaths and curses and the first sounds they heard were drunken brawls and profanity and blasphemy! If, dear Friends—as many of you have been—you were born into Christian families, I want you to think of it and then say, "You precede me with the blessings of goodness." Then after your birth, but long before your conversion, what wonderful Providences fell to our lot! Our conversion may even have been brought about by the most trifling circumstances. When you were a bound apprentice, young man, perhaps you were from an ungodly family and it was a remarkable Providence which put you under a Christian master! And you, my young Friend, when you first went out to service, or

as nursery-governess, it was a great mercy that you had a Christian fellow servant, or met with someone to speak with you concerning the things of God! How many chances, as we say, there were that you would *not* go to such a place and make them into strong helpers to your highest good! And since then, just think over the preserving Providences that you had even before you were converted. If you had died before conversion, where would you have been? Think, too, of the Providences which tended to bring you to the place where you live and where you first heard the Word of God, and the Providences which prepared your soul to be saved.

I have no doubt that sometimes a man who has been afflicted is more likely to be blessed by a sermon than he would be if he had not been so afflicted. And so, the loss of a child, or having a sick wife, or a serious injury to property are all plows which God uses in Providence to make a man ready to receive the Gospel. "I would never have seen," said one man, "if I had not lost my eyes." "Ah," said another, "I would never have been able to run if I had not broken my legs." Our so-called misfortunes are sometimes our greatest blessings and are often overruled by the Lord to be the means by which we are brought into the way of being blessed—and where He may afterwards meet with us with the blessings of goodness! You have been praying for prosperity, my Friend, but God has not heard you. And you now say that God does not hear prayer. You have asked for a certain position and He has not given it to you, for it is a position, perhaps, in which you would be ruined. Perhaps you are of such a spirit that if you were not afflicted in Providence you would be running into all manner of mischief, but God loves you well and, therefore, He will not let you rush blindly down to destruction, but puts a clog upon you to keep you back! Let us think, then, Brothers and Sisters, of the Providence which came to us before our quickening.

But a wider field opens up to us when we come to think not merely of preventing Providence, but of *preventing Grace*, the Grace that came to us before we knew Christ at all. First, Brothers and Sisters, there was *the Grace of restraint* which kept some of us back from committing sins which might have placed us out of the world, out of society, or out of the reach of the ordinary means of Grace. It is something to have been kept from drunkenness—it will be a theme for perpetual gratitude if we have been kept from the grosser vices by which the body, as well as the soul, may become defiled and polluted! It is no small blessing to have preserved in social life an untarnished reputation among men. Had such a woman fallen, she might never have dared to go where the Gospel was preached and was blessed to her. Had such a young man really put his hand into the till when he was severely tempted to do it, he might have lost his standing and never have been at Sunday school or in the Bible class where God met with him. Perhaps you have been strongly tempted to do a certain thing, but something came upon you—you did not know what it was—which told you, you must not do it. Preventing Grace has

come and prevented you from knowing the depths of your carnal nature, because Providence has put you into a position where you cannot do as you would!

I do not doubt, Brothers and Sisters, that there is a Grace which precedes quickening, a Grace for which theology has no name, which prepares the soul for the reception of the Divine Word, which makes the soul ready before the Living Seed comes. It is a kind of Grace, at any rate, which educates the man, which makes him candid, casts out his prejudice, makes him live honestly and keeps him from falling into conceit. We know some who are unconverted whom we are very thankful to know, for we have great hopes for them. If they have not received the Truth of God in the love of it, yet they have a great love for the Truth and do not, by their outward actions, lead others into sin. I trust, in some cases at least, that these are not mere Pharisees, but that of many of them we may truly say, "You precede him with the blessings of goodness."

Now I shall leave this point and go on to remark that the text is true of us who are Believers in the following senses—God *has preceded us in the order of merit*. If He had stopped until we *deserved* His Grace, He would never have come! We had never known salvation if He had waited until we were worthy to receive it, for we are not worthy now! For years some of us have been serving Him, either by preaching the Gospel or in some other way, but we have no merit even now! Our poor merits have broken their legs and cannot travel. No, our merit has been waterlogged. It has gone down and foundered at sea. We have done with all thought of our own merit! And yet let us recollect that when we come to God, if we are never so guilty, He precedes us with the blessings of goodness! Though our vileness would seem to be upon our forehead, like the leprosy of old, yet we have access with boldness unto this Grace whereby we stand and rejoice in hope of the Glory to be revealed. Truly, "His ways are not as our ways, neither are His thoughts as our thoughts, for so high as the heavens are above the earth even so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." I have not run an inch in the road of merit! But He has run ten thousand leagues, for in the road of merit, He precedes us with the blessings of His goodness!

And it is not only true in the sense of merit, but it is equally true *in the sense of desire*. God did not wait to save us until we desired to be saved. Let me not be misunderstood, however, in the assertion. Did not Christ die to save us before we were born? Was not the Gospel sent to us before we desired to hear it? Although we sat in the House of God indifferent and did not care about it, yet it was ringing in our ears all the while! And even if we had desires, yet where did those desires come from? Were they our own desires, or were they given to us by Christ?

Those of my Brothers who choose to take the alternative, may do so, but as far as I am concerned, I must say—

**“Twas not that I did choose You,
For, Lord, that could not be!
This heart would still refuse You,
But You have chosen me!”**

I cannot take any credit to myself for coming to Christ! I did come, but I am persuaded it was a secret whisper of His love that attracted my soul. And because of that text which Jeremiah gives us so blessedly, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Or as the poet sings—

**“He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to obey the voice Divine.”**

God, in this, preceded us with the blessings of goodness! He taught us to desire when we neither willed nor ran, and so fulfilled the text, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

Then, besides this, God also precedes us in *endeavor*. Brothers and Sisters, you and I have been endeavoring to grow in Grace and, notwithstanding the little progress we have made, yet, on the whole, God has given us a great deal more than our exertions might have led us to expect. When I look on the little zeal which some of us exhibit in private prayer and upon the little diligence which some of us have in studying the Word of God, it is amazing that we should have been enabled to have so much joy and to have so much knowledge of Divine things as we have! We have sown but little and reaped but little compared with what we might have done, but our harvest has been of infinitely greater value than the sowing might have led us to expect. Christian, you are now more advanced in the Divine Life than you might have been, or would have been on the mere ground of your own exertions! You have not advanced far because you have strived with but little earnestness, but you have had a far greater result than you might have expected. Sometimes I have found in my own soul that I have longed to have communion with Christ. I have thought that if I could but get a whisper from Him, I would be content—and before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib! I heard no whisper fall on my outward ears, but His voice to my soul was clear and sweet! I had no vision of Christ granted to my bodily eyes, but before my faith, there stood my Beloved near to me and my heart was charmed by His Presence long before I thought I could ever reach such a state! Christ came and seconded my endeavors, no, carried me far beyond all my endeavors! When, on the other hand, I lay like a dull, dead log, and my spirit seemed unable to move, suddenly the wheels of my soul began to whirl until the axles grew hot with speed!

Certainly, too, the Lord has preceded us in *the order of our experience as to time*. Mark tells us that when Christ fed the multitudes, they sat down on the green grass and that there was much grass in that place. God knew that Christ would need a banqueting hall and, therefore, He

made a carpet for Him long before He came there! The pasture must come before the sheep, or else while the grass grows the flock will starve. Always notice the forestalling of God's Providence and the forestalling of God's Grace! He prepares before our actual necessity comes. Have you not observed this in your trials? You had a great trouble a little while ago. You had a death in the house—but a month or two before the death came, you had an unusual season of joy and you did not know why. Now you know it was sent to prepare you for your unexpected trouble! Or perhaps it was another way—this last trouble of yours did not oppress you as you thought it would because you had had another trouble before, and another before that—so that you had, as it were, grown used to troubles. You had been in the fire till you had become like a sword blade that gets annealed in the heat! I am told that before army horses are taken into battle, they are trained to bear the noise of guns firing. Certainly God trains His own chargers and makes them bear all the din and tumult of battle. He prepares us by small trials to bear larger ones! He goes before us and leaves, thus, the blessings of goodness to our souls. He is our great sympathetic Pioneer, going before us through the thick forest and jungle of trial and trouble, clearing a way for us through the brambles and thorns, and making straight in the wilderness a highway for His people, being to us as He was to Israel a cloudy fiery pillar and so, preceding us with the blessings of goodness!

Yet again He sometimes precedes us *in our labors*. Before our missionaries went to the South Seas, there was a peculiar preparation of the minds of the people. They had a tradition or legend that white men would come in ships and tell them of the true God. Their minds were ready! They were looking for the vessels, and when they arrived, the people were not only waiting, but willing to receive them! You, too, will perhaps find—some of you who may be going to sail to Australia, or change your position in life—that the people among whom you are going are prepared for you and you are especially prepared as God's witness for them! Believe that wherever you are going, that God who knows all about you and who orders your footsteps, will prepare your way before you! He will not let you go an unknown path, but one that should be trodden by the foot of His love before it shall be trodden by you. He will precede you with the blessings of goodness.

And, lastly, my text has a very sweet meaning when we think that *God will precede even our expectations*. Some of us never expected the Christian life to be as happy as it has been. We have had—oh, how often!—some expectations about Heaven. I do not care to read many books about Heaven. If most of the books that have ever been written about Heaven were destroyed, I think we should know nearly as much as we do now, with them! We know more about Heaven, I believe, from our hymns than we do from our books. The hymn—

***“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy, and peace, and thee!”***

has more of Heaven in it than half the books that have been written upon the subject, or that other hymn—

***“Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest,
Beneath your contemplation sink heart and voice op-
pressed!
We know not, oh we know not, what joys await us
there—
What radiance of Glory, what bliss beyond compare.”***

Now these hymns take us up even into the pearly-gated city itself, and sometimes when we have been singing—

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

We have almost seen the—

***“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green,”***

and we have been ready to ask to go to be with our Savior, with whom we shall dwell forever! We expect to meet a blessed company of the saints there. We expect to have wondrous nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are expecting, everyone of us, to have a bright crown. We are expecting to have perfect freedom from every ill, from pain, from sin and from sorrow! And to have what the Apostle calls “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

We are expecting to see such a place as imagination never pictured! To hear such music as has never ravished mortal ear! We are expecting to drink from such pure streams as never flowed from Lebanon’s untrodden snows! We expect something beyond what eye, or ear, or heart can teach us! Well, Brothers and Sisters, when we get there we shall find, any of us who have had great thoughts about Heaven, that our minds were too narrow and our thoughts too contracted! We shall be like the Queen of Sheba when she said, “I heard a good report in my own land, but the half has not been told me.” We shall not be able to turn to the old Book and say, “Ah, God, You have not fulfilled Your promise! I do not find this state of Glory so wondrous as I had been led to think it was.” No, Beloved, but we shall have to say even there, “You precede my imagination, my expectancy with the blessings of goodness,” and we shall have to add—

***“Imagination’s utmost stretch
In wonder dies away!”***

I like that verse which our Friends sometimes sing which says that we shall—

***“Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving kindness in the skies,”***

for so I doubt not, for a long time, at any rate, in Heaven, surprise will be one of the most blessed of our emotions—surprise to think that Heaven should be such as it is, that Christ should be so glorious and that we should be permitted to partake of His Glory! We shall feel that God has exceeded His own word and outrun His own promise, and that it was not in human speech, even with God, Himself, using it, to convey to the human mind any adequate idea of this which surpasses all comprehension and imagination—the joys which God has for those who love Him!

My only regret in thinking on such a text as this is that *some of you have no part in it*. Oh, Friends, may God give you Grace to look to Him! How can you live on the brink of a stream and never think of the fountain? How can you receive daily mercies and yet so cruelly treat your God who gives you everything? Worse than the ox treats its owner, for the ox knows his owner and the donkey its master's crib, but you do not know, you do not consider!

Ah, He has indeed preceded you with the blessings of His goodness in keeping you alive, in permitting you to hear the Gospel and, above all, in this one respect, that this very night He invites you to turn to Him! The Father's heart beats towards you and He says to you, "My erring one, come to Me, come to Me! He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Turn you, turn you, why will you die?"—

***"Return, O wanderer, to your home!
Your Father calls for you.
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery.
Return, return!"***

If you come to Him, there shall be no rejection, but a warm reception, and you shall be blessed forever in Jesus Christ!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138:1-6.**

A Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* Before the heathen gods, however highly exalted—I will sing Your praises as in their very teeth! And the magistrates and princes and kings who think themselves gods on earth—I will not fear them or be silenced by them!

2. *I will worship toward Your Holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.* For You were far more glorious in Revelation than in Creation—Your promise did greatly transcend every other display of Yourself above all we have ever known or conceived of You! You have

magnified Yourself by Your Covenant of Grace and Your works of Grace toward Your people. For this worship and praise are forever due!

3. *In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* That is a thing to make a man sing—when in the day of trouble God comes to him, hears his prayer and works his deliverance when none else can help! God’s rescues demand our grateful songs—His deliverances our new anthems of exultant praise!

4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth.* When Your Gospel is preached and they know it, they shall count it their honor to honor You. It is ignorance of its Glory and Grace that makes silence possible, but to hear it as God’s Word of caring love is to be compelled to extol!

5. *Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the Glory of the LORD.* David was a king and he danced before the Ark. And he anticipated the time when other kings should not be ashamed of exuberant rejoicing in the King of kings. Oh, that it were come! May the Lord hasten it in His own time, and the choral hosts of Heaven be swelled by the presence of the crowned monarchs of earth!

6. *Though the LORD is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.* That is a sweet text! One who was a scoffer met a humble child of God one morning and he said to him, “Tell me, is Your God a great God or a little God,” and the poor man said, “Sir, He is both, for, though He is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He makes Himself so little that He condescends to dwell in my poor heart.” Ah, it was sweetly said. He who fills the heavens, no, fills all things, will be our abiding Guest and Friend if we will but welcome Him.

6. *But the proud He knows afar off.* He has enough of them. He does not want them to come near Him. When they are miles away He knows all about them. They make a fair show, but He sees that it is all a fable and pretence. He knows them—afar off!

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

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

CHRIST'S CROWNING GLORY NO. 2876

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1876.

*"His glory is great in Your salvation: honor
and majesty have You laid upon Him."
Psalm 21:5.*

I FEEL quite sure that David here sings first concerning himself and then concerning the far greater King, "great David's greater Son," the Lord Jesus Christ. But I shall apply the text entirely to our blessed Redeemer and, surely, the Psalmist's language is most appropriate to Him.

Some of us are going to meet, presently, around the Table of our Lord to commemorate His death for us and, of course, there must be some sorrowful processes connected with that ordinance. How can we remember His death without sorrowing over the sin which made that death necessary? How can we remember "that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and broke it," without feeling that there is a somberness of spirit which becomes us as we surround His Table? Yet we must not indulge the mournful strain too much, for we must never forget that it is a joyous feast, not a funeral repast, to which our Lord invites us! It is a feast which reminds us of His triumph as well as of His conflict and agony. "After supper," we are told, in the record of its institution, "they sang a hymn" and our Lord Jesus Christ would have us come to His Table in the spirit of hymn-singing, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. No funeral dirge is appropriate, here, no muffled drums nor wailing pipes—but let the daughters of song sound the loud timbre, as Miriam and the women of Israel did at the Red Sea!

Let it not be forgotten, too, that the last time this supper will ever be celebrated on earth, it will not die out amid groans and lamentations, but it will cease to be observed any longer because He will have come, whose coming will have been welcomed by the acclamation of all His saints, both those that are alive and remain, and those who come with the King and all His holy angels! This ordinance is full of joy, for each time it closes with a hymn when it is properly celebrated and, at the last, like all external symbols, it shall pass away amidst the hallelujahs of eternity! Come, then, Beloved, let us not be in a dolorous mood as we come to the Table of our Lord, but let us take all our harps down from the willows and wake their glad strings to exultant music! He, whom we remember in this ordinance, is not here, for He is risen! He is not there, on yonder

crucifix. His wounds bleed no longer. No thorns surround His brow, no nails pierce His feet and hands, no spear tears open His side, for He has gone back into the Glory which was His before the worlds were made, and it is thus that we are now to think of Him—"His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."

In meditating upon this text, we shall notice, first, that *it reminds us of a Divine Salvation*. Secondly, *it sets forth the glory of Jesus in that salvation*. And, thirdly, *it reveals to us the reward which Jesus has obtained for that salvation*—"Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."

I. First, then, THE TEXT REMINDS US OF A DIVINE SALVATION. It speaks of "*Your salvation*," that is to say, the salvation of God, by which is intended, according to the Hebrew idiom, not merely the grandest of all salvations, the chief of all deliverances, but, actually, that the salvation of which we speak is God's! O Brothers and Sisters, though the Truth of God is very simple and the observations I shall make upon it may be very trite, yet is it a Truth never to be put in the background that "salvation is of the Lord"!

Remember that *the salvation of man is God's, in the conception of it*. He first conceived the idea of redeeming the rebellious sons of Adam. It must be so, for the sons of Adam were not born when the Lord first planned the way of their salvation. From old eternity, before yet the sun had opened its eye of fire, God, in far-reaching foresight had beheld the sons of Adam ruined by the Fall—and He resolved that, out of them He would choose a people who should be redeemed and who, to all eternity, should show forth His praise! From the august mind of the Infinite God, the first thought of salvation sprang and it was He who sketched and mapped it all out, electing unto eternal life as many as it pleased Him, settling the way by which they would be redeemed, the method by which they would be called, arranging the place, the day, the hour, the means by which they would be converted—fixing it all, according to His eternal purpose, in Infinite wisdom and prudence—for in every part it was to be of Him and through Him and to Him! Even as in the old tabernacle in the wilderness, every board, curtain, hook, silver socket, every badger skin and every vessel of the sanctuary was ordained by God—and man was only left to carry out God's plan—even so is it in the salvation of God! In its minutest details, as well as in its grand outline, the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord! And so it is in His salvation.

But you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it was not only His in the arranging but *it was also carried out by God*. Who is He that has redeemed us by His blood, but He who is over all God, blessed forever? Who trod the winepress side by side with Him? Did He not stand there alone and, singlehanded, win the victory? And from where comes every blessing of salvation? Who provided it? Has man any share in the provision of any of the mercies by which sinners are taken out of sin into righteousness and raised from the ruins of the Fall to all the glories of Heaven? No, from first to last, all the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord! And so it is in His salvation.

No, more than that, God has not only planned and provided everything relating to it, but *it is He who applies the salvation which He has thus provided*. No one believes that Jesus is the Christ but by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me," says Christ. Much is said by some people about free will, but free will has never done anything in this world yet—unless moved by Free Grace—except to ruin mankind! Leave men to themselves and they are sure to choose that which is evil. As naturally as the river runs downwards to the sea, so does the heart of man turn towards that which is unclean. If the heart ever ascends towards holiness, Christ and God, it is because it is drawn upward by Divine Grace—and the Lord is working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. From the first sigh of repentance to the last hymn of thanksgiving, everything in us that is good is His workmanship! And so, in that respect, our salvation is of the Lord.

And, Beloved, when it is all finished—when everyone who ever shall be called, has been called—when every one of the Lord's elect has been regenerated, justified, sanctified and glorified—when the whole of the blood-washed family of God shall surround His Throne above, all the glory shall be given unto the Lord alone! There will be no jarring note in Heaven, no whisper of human merit, no claim of a reward for good intentions—but every crown shall be cast at Jesus' feet and every voice shall join in the ascription, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory of the salvation which You have worked out for us from first to last."

Let me pause, just a minute, to put this question to each one here—Do you, dear Friend, know anything about this salvation which is all of God? I fear that there are many who have no more religion than they have made themselves. Their religion is the result of their own efforts to improve themselves. Ah, Sirs, our Savior's words are still true, "You must be born-again!" And, as it was in our first birth, so must it be in our second birth—not our own act. Depend upon it, if all the good you have, has been fetched out of yourself as the spider draws its web out of its own bowels, it will all have to be brushed away! All that Nature spins will have to be unraveled, and all that Nature builds will have to be pulled down. God must save you, or you will be lost forever! The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, must come upon you and quicken you into newness of life, and renew you in the spirit of your mind, or else you will fall short of that which is requisite for admission into the Kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The best flesh is only flesh and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Consequently, the Spirit of God must operate upon us, or else we shall remain unspiritual—not able to understand spiritual things—and not possessing that spiritual life without which we cannot enter, at the last, into the enjoyment of those spiritual pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore. One thing I can say without any doubt. I, personally, know that it is God's salvation that has saved me. And I think I speak the mind of many here when I say that they feel that if the Holy Spirit does not work in them

from the first to the last, their salvation will never be accomplished. I do not know any Doctrine which my experience more fully confirms than that to which Jonah gave utterance when he was in the whale's belly—"Salvation is of the Lord." It is, as our text reminds us, a Divine Salvation!

II. Now, secondly, I come to the subject which I desire to impress most deeply upon your memory, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE SALVATION OF GOD—"His glory is great in Your salvation."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the tongues of men and angels can never fully tell the glory of Christ in salvation! It is a subject to be thought over by the loftiest intellects! It is a theme for men who lie awake at nights to meditate upon! It is a topic worthy of the thoughts of those who linger on the verge of Heaven! Dr. John Owen's pen was somewhat heavy in its style, but it never glowed and burned as much as when he wrote upon the Glory of Christ. This is a theme which the glorified spirits before the Throne of God perpetually contemplate. And the more fit we are to be among them, the more delightful will this subject be to us. As to that Glory, oh, if I had the allotting and the measuring of it, what glory I would give to my dear Lord and Master! I read, the other day—I cannot exactly quote the words, though I give the sense—a sentence by Samuel Rutherford in which he said that he would like to pile up ten thousand million heavens upon the top of the third Heaven to which Paul was caught up—and put Christ in that high place—and then He would not be as high as He deserved to be put and, truly, no honors seem sufficient for Him who stripped Himself of all He had that He might become the Savior of sinners!

And, first, it is His glory that *He has redeemed His people from stupendous evils*. When a statesman or a warrior rescues a country from a cruel despotism and brings to it the blessings of liberty, he deserves great praise. But, my Brothers and Sisters, the tyranny of sin, from which Christ has delivered His people, was a thousand times worse than the rule of the worst human despot! Consider, for a moment, the position in which His people were in the sight of God. They had sinned and they had, therefore, become exposed to the wrath of God. Unless some power greater than their own should intervene, they must be cast into Hell forever. God Himself could not lay aside His justice, for God would cease to be if He ceased to be just—and an unjust God is a contradiction in terms, an impossible combination! How, then, were these, who had sinned against God, to be delivered from the peril which hung over them? Moreover, they were held in bondage by sin, so that, even if the punishment of their past sin could be removed, they were still members of an enslaved race. Satan had cast his iron chains about them and they were led captive by him at his will.

Ah, Sirs, it is from this bondage that Christ has set us free, for He has taken away our guilt, bearing it in His own body up to the tree and then hurling it away from the tree into His grave to be remembered against us no more forever! By bearing the punishment that was due to us, Christ has delivered us from the yoke of Satan and of sin and, by the wondrous

redemption which He has worked out, and brought in, He has made His people "free indeed." No curse now hangs above their heads. No sin now has dominion over them, for they are not under the Law, but under Grace. Therefore, sound aloud your Deliverer's praises, all you who have been thus delivered! Think of what stupendous evils these were from which Christ set us free. To overthrow an oppressive empire is a great achievement. To rout the vast hordes that are led into the battlefield by great tyrants is no slight victory. The conqueror's statue is set up on high and his name is emblazoned upon the scroll of earthly fame. Then what honor shall be given to Christ who has set us free from mightier foes than ever trampled upon a nation's liberties?

Recollect, too, that He has not only delivered us from stupendous evils, but, *in the process, He has crushed the mightiest powers.* It did seem, at one time, as if evil would get the mastery in God's universe. God had permitted the strange experiment, as it seemed, of making creatures gifted with free agency—with whose free agency He would not interfere. These creatures broke His Law. How was the evil to be prevented from spreading? They would multiply and increase as, indeed, they have done. And, multiplying and increasing, there would be many millions of spirits in the universe, all rebellious against God and, consequently, all suffering! There would be countless myriads, born into God's world, all bearing hearts of sin within their bosoms and all, therefore, subject to the wrath of God. How Satan exulted at the prospect of increasing evil!

But when Jesus came into this world, He put His foot upon the head of the old dragon and so effectually crushed him to the earth so that he has never been able to rise again. Satan saw Christ hanging upon the Cross and thought that was his opportunity for gaining a decisive victory, yet it proved to be the hour of his greatest defeat! Death drove his sting right through the heart of Christ, but it so fixed itself in His Cross that it could never be drawn out again and, now that sting of death, which is sin, is gone, as far as all Believers in Christ are concerned. He has vanquished all the powers of evil—sin, death and Hell—and shattered their forces forever! Listen to this great shout of victory! Oh, that I had a voice loud enough to make it ring round the globe—"You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Perhaps the main point of Christ's Glory in the salvation of His people is that *He has achieved this by means which reflect unbounded honor upon His holy name.* I have often read the story of Cromwell's Ironsides and, sympathizing deeply with them in the objective of their fight, I have greatly admired their stern courage and consecrated ardor. But, still, I cannot think of battles and of fighting for the best of objectives without something of a shudder, so I cannot approve of the means which they employed. Doubtless, our country owes her present liberties to those brave men, yet, for all that, I grieve over the awful price of blood at which those liberties were purchased. Our blessed Lord and Master conquered all our foes, but what were the weapons He used to secure so glorious a victory? Do you look up to Him and enquire, "Where is Your battle-axe, O

Lord Jesus? Where are Your spear, Your sword, Your quiver and Your arrows?" He bids you look at His hands, His feet, His side, His heart—these are the weapons with which He overcame all the powers of darkness! There was much suffering in that awful conflict, but the suffering was all His own. There was a terrible gory sweat, but it came from His own body. There were wounds and there was death, but the wounds were in His precious body, the death was all His own. This is how evil was conquered—by love which denied itself, even to the death, for the sake of others! This is how human stubbornness was vanquished—by an almighty patience that could suffer at the hands of rebellious sinners till it bled to death! This is your death, O Death—this is your Hell, O Hell—this is your destruction, O Destruction—that God Himself bore the consequences of His creatures' sin!

No, start not back at that expression, I pray you. Do not think of Christ as being separated from God. God did not find somebody else to be the Substitute for sinners, but He gave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who is the equal and in all respects One with the Father. It was God Himself, in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus who bore the penalty that was due to human sin. It was God, in the Person of His Son, suffering, agonizing, groaning, dying, to put our sin away forever! I cannot conceive, nor do I think that cherubim and seraphim could conceive of anything more noble and more glorious than this Self-sacrifice of the Son of God! He conquers, not by making others suffer, but by sufferings all His own!

A kindred thought to that is this. Christ's Glory is great in the Divine Salvation, because *it developed and revealed the most wonderful attributes*. Suppose England were to win a great victory at sea. We would probably ascribe it to her superior men-of-war. Generally, battles are decided, as Napoleon said, by the big battalions, or by the excellence of the weapons that are used by the soldiers. If one man has an old Brown Bess and another a modern rifle, we can pretty well guess on which side the victory will be. We call it, "glory," when one fellow, who is twice as big as another, knocks the little one down—at least, we call it, "glory," when the nation which has the better ships and the bigger army wins the victory. I saw a huge Newfoundland dog pick up a poodle and shake him—there was about as much "glory" in that as when great nations war against little ones and overpower them! It is the same kind of "glory" as being a bigger bully and having a harder fist and stronger muscles than anybody else. That may be the sort of glory for a bull, or a lion, or an ass—but it is not the glory that is suited to men—and especially to Christians. But when Christ came and redeemed us, there was, on His part, no display of physical or mere brute power. There was a display of power, but it was the power of goodness, the power to suffer, the power to be patient, the power to love. As if God said to men, "Sinners and rebels as you are, I love you more than you hate Me. And great as your badness is, My goodness shall overwhelm your badness, My pardoning mercy shall overpower your power to transgress."

As the result of His death upon the Cross, our Lord Jesus has saved a multitude whom no man can number. And a part of His Glory consists in *the fact that there are so many whom He has saved*. The salvation of God is not for just a little privileged company. I know that certain "sound" brethren imagine that the blessings of salvation are confined to just a few favored individuals in Little Zoar, or Rehoboth—they delight in the idea that there are only a few that will be saved. I trust that we have no sympathy with such narrow views—for my own part, I rejoice to know that, in Heaven, there will be "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who shall cry, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb." So our Lord Jesus Christ has great glory from the fact that He saves so many sinners.

There is this peculiarity about all whom He saves, that *they are attached to Him forever*. His Glory is great in their salvation because every one of them is, from that day forth, Christ's man, Christ's woman forever and forevermore. In travelling through France, lately, I have been greatly amused at seeing in various public squares, pedestals that were evidently intended for equestrian statues, but there are no statues upon them. And there are shields upon town halls which look as if there should have been medallions upon them, but there are no portraits where the medallions should have been. On making enquiries, you will find that a statue of Napoleon the Third used to stand on that pedestal and a medallion of him used to be on that town hall. That must be a fine country for stonemasons, because they so frequently have fresh governments and need, also, to have fresh statues! I have heard of a man, living in Paris, who used to ask, every morning, whether he was under a republic, or a monarchy, or an empire. And when he was told which it was, he was not at all sure that it would last till the evening. No matter how good the ruler has been, nor how many times they have painted his likeness, or set up his image, the moment he has ill fortune, away go all the representations of him!

You would have thought that many rulers would have obtained a permanent place in the hearts of their people, yet we know from the history of various countries that very few have done so. Those who are idolized today are despised tomorrow. But our Lord Jesus has a Glory which is great in our salvation because His image is forever enshrined in our hearts! The great Napoleon hit the nail on the head when, at St. Helena, musing upon his own position, he said to one who walked with him, "Jesus Christ is the most wonderful of men. I founded an empire which has passed away, but His never will, and I see the reason for that. Mine was founded upon force, but Christ's is founded upon love." Ah, that is the reason for our devotion to Him! He has loved us so much that He has won us to Himself forever! These hands of mine are manacled with blessed, invisible, but unbreakable bands of love—never was I truly free until I felt those fetters binding me to my Lord! This heart of mine is fast riveted to Christ. It never was really my own till it became His, but now it is His forever and ever! "I bear in my body," said Paul, "the marks of the

Lord Jesus.” He felt it to be an unspeakable honor to be the branded slave of Jesus Christ, with the Cross burnt into his very flesh by the suffering which he had endured for the sake of his dear Lord and Master!

Truly, Brothers and Sisters, to rule over other men is a great thing. To have moral power over men is no mean matter. But to get men to so love you that they would willingly die for you—to get them to so love you that they would sooner cease to live than cease to love you—this is to occupy a glorious high throne! And such is the throne upon which Christ sits in the hearts of all His people! Such is the dominion which He wields over all the hosts that He has purchased with His precious blood! Well says the Prophet in our text—for the Psalmist was a true Prophet—“His glory is great in Your salvation.”

III. Now, thirdly, Our text REVEALS THE REWARD WHICH JESUS HAS OBTAINED FOR THIS GREAT SALVATION—“Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him.” I do not intend to preach upon this last point, but only to give you a few sentences by way of an outline of the honor and majesty which God the Father has laid upon Christ.

First, *our Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted, as Man, to reign over the angels.* As God, He was always Ruler, Governor and Lord of all. But the Man Christ Jesus died, was buried and rose again—and then ascended into Glory—and now He is Head over all principalities and powers, and all the holy angels that have never fallen, delight to do His bidding. My Brother, in that very sweet prayer before the sermon, to which I assented with all my heart, pleaded that we might get a view of Jesus Christ within the veil in His Glory. That is how I want you to think of Him—that very Man who hung upon the tree. That very Man who was the butt of all the reproaches and scorn of His enemies, now sits upon the Throne of God and around Him all the cherubim and seraphim are gathered, all worshipping and adoring Him and praising and magnifying His holy name!

Then, my Brothers and Sisters, *God has given to the Lord Jesus to be the Head of His Church.* Over all the redeemed, on earth and in Heaven, Christ presides and rules. While He is the Lord of the angels, He is also the Lord of all elect men. His Father gave them to Him from eternity and made Him to be the Head and made them to be the members of His mystical body. Christ is the one and only Head and supreme Ruler of His Church. It is true that there are men who sat themselves up as governors of Christ's Church. And there is an antichrist, at Rome, who calls himself the head of the church, but that is only a wicked fiction, a manifest lie! There is but one Head of the Church and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only supreme Ruler and before Him all His loyal subjects bow. “Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him.”

Being Head of His Church, *He is also Head over all things outside of His Church in which His Church is concerned.* Joseph ruled Egypt for the good of Israel and, in like manner does Christ rule the whole world for the good of His people. All the arrangements of Providence are under His control. Nothing is done in the entire universe without His command or His permission. Does that statement startle you? It is, nevertheless, true! He who was made Lord of the angels, has had all things put under His

feet and He is, at this moment, Lord of all! And, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see this demonstrated soon, for He is coming. As surely as He went up to Heaven, literally and Personally, so surely will He come again, literally and Personally—and when He does come, it will be as Ruler and Lord over all, for He will come to judge the quick and the dead according to His Gospel. Then will all created intelligences behold the honor and majesty which God has put upon Him!

There will have to appear, before the Judgment Seat of the Nazarene, the spirits that fell ages upon ages ago. Satan shall come and receive his final sentence and be banished forever to Hell. Then shall come the unbelieving world, to hear from Christ's lips the terrible message, "Depart, you cursed!" The earth shall reel beneath His Presence—that earth which could scarcely lend Him a sepulcher. And Heaven and earth shall flee away from that Face which earth once seemed to scorn and Heaven to forget! Ah, it will be seen who the Christ is in that day! A trumpet blast more terrible than that which startled the echoes of Sinai shall ring over land and sea. A cloud shall come and on it shall stand the Great White Throne—and upon it shall be seated the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." But, oh, how changed!—

"With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,"

He shall come—with a face shining above the brightness of the sun and with eyes like flames of fire, He shall come in all the Glory of His Father, with all His holy angels to attend Him, and to swell the triumph of His appearing! O Brothers and Sisters, let us anticipate that glorious appearing and begin to clap our hands with exultation over our Lord's triumphal advent!

But are we all His people? Do not desire that day if you are not His, for the Day of the Lord will be darkness, not light, to all who are His enemies! The more glorious Christ is to His own people, the more dreadful will His appearance be to you if you live as unbelievers and if you die without trusting in Him! O Christians, I bid you be glad in your Lord, and I also bid you pray for the unsaved, that they may trust, and love, and serve Jesus, too—and rejoice with you in recollecting that He is coming again to receive unto Himself all to whom He is both Lord and Savior! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:18-50.**

Verse 18. *And the disciples of John showed him of all these things. John was in prison and, possibly, troubled in spirit.*

19. *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, are you He that should come? Or look we for another? Did John doubt? Perhaps not. It may be that he saw that his disciples doubted and that he wished their fears to be removed. It is possible, however, that he did have doubts. It is no unusual thing for the bravest hearts to be subject to fits of doubt. Elijah, you remember, sat under a juniper tree in the wilderness, "and he requested for himself that he might die," though he*

was the man who never was to die. And John—the Elijah of the Christian dispensation, though a man of iron, was but a man, so he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, “Are you He that should come, or look we for another?”

20-22. *When the men were come unto Him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us unto You, saying, Are You He that should come, or look we for another? And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard.* Our old proverb says that actions speak louder than words, so an answer in His actions would be more eloquent with these enquirers than even an answer in our Lord's own words. He bade them look at the evidences of His Messiahship which He gave them by His miraculous cures, and then He said to them, “Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard.” It would be well if our lives were such that if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common everyday life and conversation!

22, 23. *How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in Me.* According to our Lord's testimony, the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is as great a proof of His Messiahship as the raising of the dead! Then how highly it ought to be prized by them and how glad should they be who have the Gospel now preached freely in their hearing!

24. *And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?* The wind on the banks of the Jordan, where there are plenty of reeds growing—did you see a man who would bow before every breath of popular favor or popular wrath? Was John the Baptist such a man as that? No, certainly not.

25. *But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.* They do not preach repentance. As is their clothing, so is their doctrine. They try to show a royal road to Heaven—a smooth and easy path. But was John the Baptist a preacher of that kind? No, that he was not.

26-28. *But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and much more than a Prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way before you. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* Passing into the dispensation of clearer Light of God, he who is least among the Believers of the Gospel of Jesus is, in some respects, greater than this man who could only preach repentance and point to a coming Savior!

29-32. *And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the Baptism of John. But the Pharisees and law-*

yers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, To what, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace. At play—the playing of children is often according to the manners and customs of grown up people.

32. And calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and you have not danced. “You would not play a merry game when we asked you to do so.”

32. We have mourned to you, and you have not wept. “You would not play either at funerals or weddings.”

33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say, he has a devil. “He came among you as an ascetic, denying himself, not only the luxuries of life, but even the common comforts that others enjoyed. And you say, ‘He has a devil.’”

34. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking. “He does not pretend to be an ascetic. He comes, on the contrary, to show that neither meat nor drink can save a man. What do you say, then, of this Son of Man?”

34, 35. And you say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children. Though the world contemns all wisdom’s children, whichever way they go, and is not pleased with their manners, whatever manners they possess, yet, in the long run, when the Wisdom of God shall be all unfolded, it will be seen that the roughness of John and the gentleness and loving kindness of Jesus were both right in their proper place. If fish are not caught in the Gospel fishery, it may sometimes be the fisherman’s fault, but more often it is the fault of the fish. Here we have two very different kinds of fishermen, yet neither of them attracts all, though each of them draws some.

36, 37. And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold. For it is a wonder of Divine Grace—“Behold.”

37. A woman in the city, which was a sinner. A sinner by profession, a public and notorious sinner.

37-44. When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for

My feet. “Though it was only a common act of courtesy, such as should always be shown to a guest, you did neglect that.”

44. *But she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.* “She has given My feet no common washing, for she has washed them with her tears. You would only have brought Me a linen napkin, but she has wiped them with the hairs of her head.”

45. *You gave Me no kiss.* Which was usually given as a greeting to guests at that time. Simon had not given to Jesus the honor which was due to Him, which would have been to kiss His forehead.

45. *But this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet.* Every word is emphatic to show how far she had gone beyond Simon, who thought himself so much better than she was.

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint.* Another usual Eastern custom with guests whom the host intended to honor.

46. *But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* Anointed them, not with ordinary olive oil, but with precious costly ointment.

47. *Therefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.* “You know that her sins were many, and I tell you that they have been forgiven, and you can see, by her actions, that she loves much.”

47, 48. *But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven.* What music that sentence, “Your sins are forgiven,” must have been to her! “Ah,” says one, “I also should like to hear that sentence. Beyond everything else in the whole world would I desire to hear Jesus say to me, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’” Then put yourself in the place that this woman occupied. When Joab clung to the horns of the altar, he had to die there, but this woman had fled to the feet of Jesus—and she did not die there—nor shall you, but at those blessed feet, weeping for sin, and trusting the great Sin-Bearer, you shall receive assurance of pardon. “Your sins are forgiven.”

49, 50. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgives sins also? And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* He did not want this young convert, this beginner in the Christian life to hear the bickering and controversies of these coarse spirits, so He said to her, “Go in peace.”

And, dear Soul, if you have begun to find out that even in the Christian Church there are many opinions concerning many things, do not trouble yourself about those things. This is enough for you—“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” There may be some who are galled to contend for this or that point of the faith but, as for you, poor Child, if, with your broken heart you have found the Savior and if you love Him with an inward, warm and hearty love, do not spoil that love by getting into a controversial spirit—“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

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

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

EXCEEDING GLADNESS

NO. 1827

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 8, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON DECEMBER 21, 1884.**

***“For You have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him
exceedingly glad with Your countenance.”
Psalm 21:6.***

You have heard a great many sermons upon the Man of Sorrows. I am sure that you have not heard too many and if, from this time to the end of your life, you should, every Lord's Day, hear of Him and of His sufferings, you will not be nauseated with that theme. You will still feel an intense pleasure in hearing the story of your Lord's griefs and in having fellowship with Him in His sufferings, for by His agonies and death He has redeemed you unto Himself. Probably you have never listened to a discourse upon, “The Man of Joys!” I venture, thus, to name the Christ of God. We do not often enough meditate upon the happiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember that it was for the *joy* that was set before Him that He endured the Cross, despising the shame, and the expectation of joy is joy.

The light of His coming reward shone on our Lord's daily path and made it bright with a glorious hope. Sin is the mother of sorrow and Jesus knew no sin. Conscience never made Him a coward; remorse never pricked His heart; malice, envy and discontent never gnawed at His soul. He was the Prince of Peace even when He was despised and rejected of men. Deep as were His griefs, we may reckon Jesus of Nazareth among the happiest of men. There was nothing of that efflorescence, that effervescence, that froth of joy which *carnal* men value so highly—but there was a deep peace, a calm content which is beyond all price. Jesus did not enter into such mirth as might have befitted Herod's palace, or Dives' gilded saloons, or Caesar's luxurious banquets. But He knew such joy as the Son of God must know when His Father always hears Him and as the Savior of men must know when His every word and act are blessing a fallen race!

He felt a supreme delight in doing the will of the Father and in carrying out the purpose of His own gracious mind. He was filled with a mighty resolve so strong that it beat off every force which would have turned His mind aside from His chosen path. And He felt an infinite love which found intense satisfaction in yielding up everything for its objects. There was, in fact, even in the midst of the sorrows which were necessary to His service, a satisfaction in bearing those sorrows, a delight in passing through those

depths of agony which were necessary for the accomplishment of His grand design!

A man cannot be full of such benevolence as that which filled the heart of Christ and yet be utterly miserable. Unselfishness necessarily brings with it a measure of joy. A man could not open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, make lame men leap, heal lepers, raise the dead and yet remain comfortless! As well suppose that the sun, which scatters so much heat, may be, itself, a huge globe of ice! The fountain which yields such streams of blessing has its own flash and sparkle—we feel sure of it. As pearls may lie in plenty in caverns, over which there rolls a dread tempestuous sea, so there slept in the heart of Jesus, treasures of joy, even when the ocean of His holy Soul was lashed with hurricanes of woe. There is a joy in doing good which cannot be separated from the doing of the good—and the Savior possessed it beyond conception. There is a joy in living entirely out of one's self for the good of others—and this Jesus drank to the fullest! There is a joy in achieving a great purpose, even when it is only by sorrow that our design is worked out—and that, also, our Redeemer knew. In Him was perfectly explained that enigma of Paul, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

I am not going to say more of the joy of our Lord on earth. And only for a few moments shall I enlarge upon the exceeding gladness of the God-Man, Christ Jesus, at this present moment in Heaven, though it is to this that our text primarily refers. Jesus has gone up into Glory and the eyes of faith can see Him at the right hand of the Father, forever exalted as Head of the Church, and Head over *all* things for her sake. In that position our Lord is filled with superlative felicity. His death is rewarded by the Father with an endless life of bliss—"He asked life of You, and You gave it Him, even length of days forever and ever. His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For You have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance."

I need not enter into the joy of Christ as God, for this is inseparable from His Godhead, but I speak of Him, now, as Mediator, in His complex Person, standing between God and man. In that capacity, as risen from the dead and gone into Glory, He is supremely glad—glad because His work is finished. Such a work as His had so taken up His whole heart and engrossed His whole being, that it became a baptism to be baptized with—and He was straitened until it was accomplished. It is accomplished, now, and the straitening is ended. He has not another act to do by way of obedience to the Law. He has not another pang to bear by way of fulfillment of penalty due for our guilt. "It is finished," is the *finis* of His God-like labor! There is not another drop of blood to be shed! No more chastisement of our peace is to be laid on Him! No more stripes are to be exacted for our healing—

***"No more the bloody spear.
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore."***

“Consummatum est” is written at the foot of His Throne. His work is so finished that all the results of it are sure—those for whom He died are safe—that which He purchased by His blood He has obtained. He has left nothing undone in any point so that a degree of failure may yet occur. He has left no stone of the wall to tumble from its place. His work is so completely done that, as He looks upon it all, He feels unmingled joy and content. The Father looks upon Him with such a perfect satisfaction in His glorious work, that our text is fulfilled beyond the letter. “You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance.”—

***“A life eternal as Your years
A glory infinite like Thine
Repays Him for His groans and tears,
And fills His soul with joy Divine.”***

Nor is this all, for Jesus Christ our Lord rejoices to think that now, from this day forth, *God has made Him to be the fountain of priceless, numberless, endless blessings to men.* Observe the first clause of our text and remember that it may be read thus—“You have made Him *blessings* forever.” That is to say, God has now opened, in His Son Jesus Christ, a well of blessings which will never cease to flow as long as there are men to drink. He is no curse to men, but only blessing! He is not *one* blessing only, but *all* blessings! These blessings are the chief gifts that even God can give and they are in Christ Jesus to all eternity! The Lord Jesus, who was once the center of grief, has now become the source of love, favor, help, healing, benediction, delight, Heaven and whatever else may be called blessing—

***“Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown.”***

No, blessings do not only come *from* Him, but He *is* blessings! He is, Himself, made or constituted blessings to all eternity. O blessed Lord, we pause to adore and bless You even now! This makes our Lord exceedingly glad, to think that He is, in His own proper Person, the very center of all blessing to His people. Fullness of blessing abides in Him. There is no blessing that you need, poor Sinner, but what Jesus has it, has it for *you!* “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” No blessing that you need, dear child of God, shall be denied you, for, “of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” That fullness abides where it is—it has never diminished and it never will be diminished throughout eternity!—

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

Whenever God makes any one of you to be the channel of blessing to other people, are you not happy? Yes, certainly, in your measure. But what must be the superlative gladness of the Christ in being the Center of centers, the Fountain of fountains to all those who draw near to Him? God has made Him, beyond all others and inclusive of all others, to be blessings forevermore! Must He not be filled with gladness?

Our Lord has joy beyond this. I want you to think much of His gladness that you may be able to obey Him, now, should He say to you, "Enter you into the joy of your Lord." At this very hour may His joy be in you that your joy may be full. Jesus sympathizes with you in your sorrows—will you not sympathize with Him in His joys? Should we not rejoice with them that rejoice and especially with Him, the Bridegroom of our souls? This is a further part of His gladness—He *joys in the conversion, the comfort, the justification, the salvation of every soul that comes to Him*. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Almost everybody who preaches from that text is content with the undoubted Truth of God that the angels rejoice over sinners that repent. No doubt they do so—but the text does not tell us so. It says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God"—that is to say, *they are present* where there is joy—they look upon the face of Christ and see the joy which fills His heart as His redeemed ones are renewed by Grace!

Angels behold the delight that fills the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as sinners turn from the error of their ways. If, at this moment, a sinner, conscious of his sin, is flying to the Cross for refuge, he is making Christ happy! If he is now bowing the knee and crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," that cry of his is music to the soul of his loving Savior! When that repenting sinner casts himself upon the great Atonement and rests in the Sacrifice of Jesus, the heart of Jesus receives a part of its infinite reward and the promise is, in a measure, fulfilled, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." You know the meaning of the suggestive figure couched in those words—the soul of Christ was in pangs, like a woman in travail, for these souls—and they are born to eternal life as the result of His soul's labor. And then, as the mother sees the child, and remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so does the Savior see each one of His beloved ones born to Himself and feels a joy so great that He is more than recompensed for having died on the cruel tree!

Oh, the joy of Christ over a soul that turns to Him! O my Hearer, think of it! Consider! Is it really so? You are capable of making the heart of Christ to throb with unspeakable joy even now! My beloved Hearer, you have lived in sin and I fear you will die in it. Nobody thinks much of you and you feel the neglect. You are even now sighing, "No man cares for my soul." But Jesus cares for you! And if you come to Him, you shall fill His loving heart with gladness! Your forgiveness, renewal and salvation will cause Him to rejoice in spirit. What do you say? If the Christ in Glory values you, I beseech you, do not trifle with yourself, or lie down in despair!

Moreover, I believe that Jesus in Glory finds great *joy in all the deeds of His saved people*. Whenever He sees one of His believing people counting His reproach to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, our Lord is glad. When He sees a heart that has been washed in His blood, true to Him, refusing to believe false doctrine, or to do that which is unjust, then is Christ glad over His disciple! When He sees you plotting and planning how you can honor Him; when He marks your self-denials; when He sees you prayerful, earnest, active, spiritual, loving—His gladness is great! I tell

you all the love you have for Him, He delights in! And your childlike confidence in Him and your little struggling light which seeks after more light—and your earnest longings for His coming and His Kingdom, and those broken words of yours by which you speak to others of His love—all these things He sees with exquisite pleasure! These are flowers that would not have grown in your garden if He had not sown them there. If there is anything that is honest, true, holy, heavenly and Christ-like, it is all His work—and He is right glad to see it! I know you will think that He sees in us much to grieve Him and I grant you that He does, but He knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust. But when He sees anything that His own Spirit has worked in us, He beholds it with intense complacency and deigns to take a continual pleasure therein.

Moreover—and I speak gently and softly here—I believe that our Master derives a Divine satisfaction from *the holy sufferings of His people* when they bear pain with patience—when they praise His name on their beds and adore Him in the fires and, when coming to die—they bear themselves calmly in the last dread article, behaving themselves as men who know no fear. When they walk through the very jaws of death, fearing no evil, simply confiding in the eternal Christ—then is Jesus glad to see how well they have learned the lesson which He taught them! When they come up on the other side of Jordan, like sheep from the washing—when they appear before His Throne, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”—when the shining ones draw near before Him and cast their crowns at His dear feet. When they lift their united hallelujahs unto Him that loved them and washed them from their sins in His precious blood—then is the King exceedingly glad!

My tongue cannot possibly tell you of the *joy of our Lord in His people's joy*. It is from Christ that Heaven's gladness comes and it is into Christ that hearers' gladness flows. He gives the redeemed all their bliss and He receives from them all that bliss as they lovingly ascribe their salvation to Him alone. He, at this moment, is Heaven's center, the happiest of the happy, the blessed Leader of a blessed company, the triumphant Captain of a triumphant band who, having gone forth conquering and to conquer, have, at last, finished the fight, sheathed the sword and shared their Master's victory! They cry unto Jehovah, “You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance” and they, themselves, partake of that gladness!

All this is my preface at this time and I need not apologize for the length of it, since its theme might fitly have been that of the whole discourse. The sermon shall be somewhat short and I trust it will be sweet. This is the subject of it—I desire that the Lord's people may enter into this joy of Christ and that, as each one of them is made a king, the text may be fulfilled in each one of them. I have not described to you the gladness of our Lord as it ought to be described, but I can do no better. If you will endeavor to share in it, you will make up for my deficiencies. May the Holy Spirit aid you!

I. First, I would remark that GLADNESS IS THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGE OF SAINTS. “Happy are you, O Israel!” “Rejoice in the Lord, you right-

eous.” Why should we not be glad? *It is all right between us and God.* If, having rebelled against Him, we had never repented and had never been reconciled, we ought to be miserable. He that is out of order with God may well be out of order with himself. But we have been brought near—we have been adopted into the family of God—we have obtained reconciliation through the precious blood and have enjoyed the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His Grace! Ought we not to be glad?

Dear Heart, there is no quarrel between you and God! Peace has been made through Jesus Christ. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. If you have not a right to be happy, who has? In a well-ordered government, those that are friendly with their prince have a right to rejoice in his courts. And in the government of God, it seems but right and natural that those who are made to be at peace with God should be among the happiest of Heaven’s courtiers. It is meet that we should make merry and be glad! Let us take advantage of that right and may the Spirit of Joy make us glad at this good hour!

In addition to the fact that they are right with God, *Believers have their present solaces* in many ways. Grace endows them with immediate joys. I like that part of our song which we sang just now—

**“The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.”**

If I were to try and tell all the things that make Christians glad, even here below, I should have to make an endless catalog! Where should I begin? Once beginning, where should I leave off? You can count your sorrows, dear Brothers and Sisters, I dare say. You are quite *au fait* at adding them all up, but I would have you to recapitulate your *joys* with equal readiness! Why not? Review the shining ranks of your mercies. Are they not new every morning? Is not the faithfulness of God exceedingly great? Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, God has done so much for us that we are glad! He has surprised us with the greatness of His goodness!

If I had been sure, 35 years ago, that I would have possessed, in the Covenant of Grace, such a portion as I have at this hour, I think I would have leaped out of my body for joy! When I was under a sense of sin, if I had been assured that I should yet be forgiven, I do not know that I could have contained myself for delight! When I was lying under the chastening hand of God on account of my transgressions, if I had known that He would turn His face upon me and smile upon me, and make me His child, and put me into the ministry and permit me the great privilege of telling of the wonders of His Grace, I verily believe that it would have been too great a weight of joy—it would have crushed me with too much delight!

And yet, at this moment, I am not half as glad as I should be warranted in being because of the unspeakable mercy of God to me. Just apply that reflection to your own cases. Is there not about you, now, that which would have made your mouth water if you had known 20 years ago that you would be what you are now? Yes, 50 or 60 years ago, perhaps, if it could have been revealed to you that you would live to be a man verging

upon 80, still rejoicing in God, you would have said, "No, not I. I shall fall a prey to the enemy long before that. I shall go back and prove to be a hypocrite long before that." You would not have credited that the Lord would ever have done so much for you as He has actually done! Come, do not rob your God of His praises! Defraud not your King of His revenue of Glory!

Do not get to fretting and stewing about nothing at all, but rejoice in the Lord *always*, and then rejoice again! This is an appointed feast; let us keep it. "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." I heard a Brother in a Prayer Meeting say, "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof *we desire to be glad*" and I wanted to jump down that man's throat and pull that passage back, again, and put it into its natural shape! What business had the Brother to change the Bible and talk such wretched stuff? "Whereof *we desire to be glad*"? Why, if the Lord has done great things for us, we *are* glad, we cannot help it! And, blessed be His name, we do not *wish* to do so!

In addition to that, *we have a brilliant future before us*. We are the heirs of great expectations. The children of God not only possess present mercies, like the leaves and flowers of summer, but things which God has prepared for them that love Him, laid by in store like the fruits of autumn! Come, think of Heaven for a moment or two and anticipate its Glory. Put on your crown for a little while and wear your white garments! Can you not take a palm branch in your hand in imagination, and sing the new song in your heart? You know that you will be thus arrayed and thus occupied within a short time—then go through your part, rehearsing it by a lively hope! The glorious hour will soon arrive when you shall be near and like your God and reign with Him forever!

At this present moment there is a place in Heaven for me that nobody can ever fill but myself—and Jesus has gone before, not only to prepare it, but to prepare it for *me*. There is a crown that no head but mine can ever wear and a song that no tongue but mine can ever sing! And I shall soon cast my crown at Jesus' feet and chant before Him my hallelujahs! That is true of every Believer here. Be glad! Yes, rejoice before the Lord with all your might! Brothers and Sisters, you have not much here, but you will have everything hereafter! You have but a little farther to journey through the great and terrible wilderness and you will be in Canaan and possess the land that flows with milk and honey! Be glad!

The children of God have further cause to be glad because *they have all blessings secured to them*, so that they shall never lose them. That which their God has promised them shall never be taken from them. They are in a position of indisputable security, for they are hidden in the wounds of Christ, as in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. They shall never die, for they are members of His body who is immortal. They are in that hand from which none can ever snatch them. "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish: neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Let us begin to be merry, as it is said in the parable of the prodigal son. "They began to be merry." I have read that parable ever so many times and I have looked to see whether it is written that they ever left off being

merry—and I cannot find that they did. “They began to be merry.” Very well, let us begin to be merry at this hour, dear Friends, and let us never leave off as long as we live! Let us rejoice *forevermore*. As long as we have a God to rejoice in, let us rejoice! As long as we have a Heaven to go to, let us rejoice! As long as we have an eternal Covenant ordered in all things and sure, let us rejoice! As long as we have any being, let us rejoice in the Lord!

II. Secondly, let me remark that THE SAINTS’ GLADNESS IS OF A PECULIAR SORT.

The gladness which is peculiar to the children of God is *a gladness that God has worked in them*. “You have made Him exceedingly glad.” Oh, yes, I heard him! He seemed very glad, but when he began to explain to me his gladness, I could tell by his hiccough where he got it—he owed it to the deadly cup. Shame on him! Oh, yes, he was exceedingly glad, but when I saw his merriment, I could tell that it was his youth and his good health that gave him his gladness! These will soon vanish away. But the child of God owes his gladness to a deeper source—*God* has made him glad! He that can touch the secret springs of the heart, apart from circumstances or conditions, has often made a man glad when he has been racked with pain, or when he has been in the depths of poverty, or when he has been suffering at the demoniacal hands of inquisitors.

Saints drink from a spring which neither dries in summer nor freezes in winter, *for that which is of God’s making remains*. “Your joy no man takes from You.” If God has made you glad, then the devil cannot make you sad. If God has made you glad, then it is not the weather and it is not your property, and it is not your health, and it is not your friend, neither is it your foe that can make you unhappy. If it is written, “You have made him glad,” then the man is glad, indeed. Beloved, I wish that every one of you had that joy which only God can give you, that better part which, once obtained, none can take away. It comes from God and from God, alone, and when He bestows it, it is yours forever, for His gifts are without repentance—He never takes back that which He has once granted! This is the joy which is worth having, for it is full, deep, lasting, everlasting. They say that philosophers can be merry without music and certainly Christians can joy in God without outward comforts—and they can even take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. They are happy people, to whom even losses are gains and burdens are helps!

Notice, next, in the text, that the gladness which God gives to His people is no ordinary gladness, but *an exceeding joy*. “You have made him *exceedingly* glad”—exceeding—exceeding hope, exceeding measure, exceeding the gladness of others, exceeding any delight that can come from any other source. “You have made him exceedingly glad.” One man has become wealthy and he is glad. But the child of God, if the Lord has smiled upon him, is *exceedingly* glad. Here is one that feels his blood leaping in his veins with health and he is merry as the birds in summer time because of it. When the Lord turns, again, the captivity of His people, and smiles upon them, they are exceedingly glad. I wish that I could tell you how our eyes sometimes dash and sparkle, how our whole spirit dances

within us for excessive joy when a sense of Divine Love is poured into our souls!

I cannot communicate by any description what it is, but, Brothers and Sisters, you can surely guess, for you, perhaps, have felt the same—and if you have, you would not change with Caesar for his empire, nor with an archangel for his starry throne! No, when God lifts up the light of His Countenance upon His people, it is a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of Glory which He lays upon them! Then do they sing, “Joy, joy, joy!” I speak of what I know and testify what I have felt. May you know it! May you feel it now! I know that worldlings imagine that we Christians are a miserable crew and I fear that too often we turn our worst side foremost when we are with them. I am told that many shop-keepers are so poor that they put the most of their goods in the shop window, but this is a method which few Christians follow—for the opposite is the fact—their window is badly set out and yet they have a costly stock upon their shelves.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of Light in this as well as other things. I would recommend such Believers to dress their window a little and show some of their better things. Put your ashes into the back yard and pour out the oil of joy in the parlor. Let people see that, after all, there are great advantages in belonging to the Lord’s household! But whether we seem to be happy or not, I can speak as one who has not been without abundant affliction and trial—we who believe in Jesus are a happy people, an enviable people. “Happy are you, O Israel,” said Moses, and we can bear witness that he spoke the truth. I would change with no man. So long as I know whom I have believed, I would prefer my own lot to that of any I have ever seen or heard of. I leave that point, but you can be sure of this—God-given joy is no *common* treasure!

But, according to the text, this joy *comes to us in one way*. “You have made Him exceedingly glad *with Your countenance*.” Have you not, sometimes, been made very glad with the look of a friend’s face? I believe that there is more heart-cheer in the sight of some countenances than in sun, moon and stars. Oh, the joy that I had, a little while ago, in looking upon one dear face that I shall not see again for many a day, for it must necessarily be seen on the other side of the globe! What joy I have had in looking upon some of you when you have come to tell me what the Lord has done for you and I have seen your joy in the Lord! “Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” Certain friends of ours carry with them countenances which are always a half-day’s holiday to me whenever I look on them!

I do not say that this is true of *all* of you, for I know some Knights of the Rueful Countenance, whose faces are long and dismal, and I would urge these to look into the face of Jesus till His brightness illuminates them! There are those among us who are so brimming over with sacred joy that a glance at their faces refreshes our hearts! Now, catch my thought—What must the countenance of *God* be? The countenance of a friend to a friend, of a bridegroom to his bride, of a wife to her husband, of a father to

his child—each of these spreads gladness—but what is the countenance of God to His elect? It is a countenance that seems to say, “I am reconciled! Your sin is put away.”

Oh, the gladness of seeing that face! It is a face that seems to say, “I am watching you; I am caring for you; I am smiling upon you.” Is not this a gladdening look? Lord, You have made me glad with Your countenance. “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Carefully and continually You think upon me and watch over me, to do me good.” Thus to see the observing countenance of God is a great delight to His people.

What shall I say of His approving countenance? When God has looked upon you and seemed to say, “you are doing right. Men blame you, but I accept you. Dear child of Mine—you are doing My will. You are following Me in reproach and I will abundantly reward you”—this makes a man exceedingly glad and nerves him to bear reproach and misunderstanding, however cruelly they may assail him.

Again, when you come before God in prayer and you are pleading with Him. And your faith discerns that glorious face—the face of Jesus—your heart cries, “I am accepted! God is hearing my prayer. I may ask what I will and it shall be done unto me. I am not praying like a stranger; I am pleading like a child. I have my Father’s ear and heart and His countenance is toward me.” Oh, then it is a glad time with you! You are being heard and answered—and your heart beats to music. When the Lord looks on His chosen follower and says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love. I love you inexpressibly; I love you without measure—I love you as I love My Only-Begotten—and I will love you when time shall be no more. I will never leave you, nor forsake you”—then, again, our heart is glad and our glory rejoices! We should not be afraid for our flesh to rest in hope, for at such a time we could either live or die without a question, so fully is our heart filled with God.

Then does our face shine like that of Moses when he came down from the mountain. Out of Heaven there is no gladness that is worthy to be compared with the bliss of knowing that the Lord has set His love upon us! This is the fullness of the vintage and all beside is as the gleaning of the grapes when the summer is ended. I have not time, you see, to open up this grand subject, fully, but such is the joy of God’s people. It comes from a clear sense of the Divine approbation. We must walk with God and be heartily agreed with Him, or we shall not possess this happiness. Whenever the child of God feels, “I was wrong; God is grieved with me,” then he goes slinking off to bed like a child that cannot have a goodnight kiss—and there is no gladness for him. But when, on the contrary, the Lord turns to him in love and mercy and says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” And when He smiles upon us in Christ Jesus, then we can say with the Psalmist, “You have made me exceedingly glad with Your countenance.”

I will not detain you many minutes more, except to say that this joy of the Believer *comes to him through many channels*. Heaven has many win-

dows and out of each one of them the Lord pours out benedictions upon His chosen. Let me read a part of the Psalm. "The king shall joy in *Your strength, O Lord.*" Oh, it is a great thing, when you are weak, to be strong in God, for then you will be happy! Divine strength brings Divine gladness with it. "And in *Your salvation* how greatly shall he rejoice!" God's salvation, the election that brings us into it, the redemption that makes us full possessors of its blessings, the effectual calling which leads us to accept it, the eternal love which holds us fast in it—why, in all these, how greatly we rejoice!

Next, *answers to prayer* make us rejoice. "You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips." When a man comes from the Mercy Seat, like Luther, saying, "I have conquered! I have won my suit with God," what gladness has the Lord given him! "For You prevent him with the blessings of Your goodness." God is beforehand with us—He outruns us in love. Here is another source of joy—when God *gives us mercies before we seek them*—when He lays them in our road and there they are, ready for us before we come to the spot! When David was made a king, I am sure he said, "I never thought, nor sought, nor worked to be a king." Many of us have received choice blessings of which we said, when we obtained them—"Why this to me? I never dreamed of this. This was not in my plan. I never proposed this to my soul in her hours of largest desire. You prevent me with the blessings of Your goodness." Brothers and Sisters, such things as these tend to make God's people glad in their hearts.

This is my last word to you—be glad in the Lord. I do not ask you to *simulate* happiness—to *pretend* to be glad when you are not. I do not ask you to sing when your heart feels that it must sigh. But I do ask you to be glad when there is reason to be! Be true and real in all your expressions, but let that truth and that expression spring from an educated soul that has been in the school of Christ and has learned what the facts of the case really are! Let your feelings be according to truth and your condition of heart according to the eternal settlements of Immutable Love. What are the facts of the case? Here they are—"O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me! Your anger is turned away and You comforted me." If I do not praise You, the timber out of the wall must cry out against me. If I do not rejoice in You, I shall be a traitor to my own consciousness and false to my own convictions, for You have brought my soul up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—and You have set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings—and I must have a new song in my mouth, even praise forevermore!

I would, if I could, stir you all up to a burst of holy joy, a blaze of sacred gladness! Put on your silver sandals and your bridal ornaments. Take off your weeds and gird yourselves in white raiment. Doff the sackcloth and ashes—and put on your beautiful array. Cast aside your chains! Leave them for those to wear who love them and walk at large, in liberty, bedecked with the jewels of infinite Grace, and crowned with the diadem of loving kindness! Sing unto the Lord a new song and end it not till you get to Heaven—and then it will never end. "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."—

***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Savior Jesus Christ
Who has blessed us with such blessings, all uncounted and
unpriced!
Let our high and holy calling, and our strong salvation be
Theme of never-ending praises, God of Sovereign Grace, to
Thee!”***

Hallelujah! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms 20, 21.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—333, 21, 720, 288.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—As requested, I append a line or two to the sermon in which my personality must appear far more than I would choose if it were left to my option. This week I am considerably improved and believe that I have fairly turned the corner and may hope to come back in good order for future service. I cannot yet call myself free from fits of deep depression which are the result of brain-weariness, but I am having them less frequently and, therefore, I hope they will vanish altogether.

I have preached twice to the little gathering in this town. After the first sermon, I felt very much wearied and could not sleep. But on the second occasion, that experience will not, I trust, be repeated. I cannot be sure, for I am writing just as the service has ended, but at present I feel refreshed by having told out, once more, the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I regret that during the last two weeks the funds for the College and Orphanage have been coming in very scantily—and for the Colportage and Evangelists there is next to nothing. Colportage is always deserving and always needing more aid, but not getting it. The work of our Evangelists, by which, under God, many sinners have been converted and Churches revived, is just now very short of income. With one grand exception, namely Weston-super-Mare, the churches visited of late by our Evangelists, Messrs. Fullerton and Smith, have not been able to defray the cost and this is likely to be the case in several future instances.

At this moment I do not see how such needs will be met. This is God’s work and I think it meet to say to my Brothers and Sisters, that I should be glad of help in it before I am tempted to be anxious about it! I am not troubled about it at present, but as I am only my Lord’s steward and have no means of my own for carrying on this most blessed service, I can only mention it to Him and to His servants. For all these works, God will provide. Without our spending money in advertised appeals, He will use this simple hint and lead His stewards, who judge us to be faithful, to keep the army of the Lord supplied with ammunition.

To one and all I send hearty Christian love.

Yours to serve, for Christ’s sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, March 1, 1885.

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CRIES FROM THE CROSS

NO. 2562

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 2, 1856.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of My roaring?”
Psalm 22:1.

(This was the first evening Sermon preached by Mr. Spurgeon after the fatal calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall two weeks previously. [Someone yelled “Fire!” and ensuing rush to leave building by some resulted in someone being trampled to death.—Editor.] On commenting on his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon said, “The observations I have to make will be very brief, seeing that afterwards we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper. I shall make no allusion to the recent catastrophe—that theme of my daily thoughts and nightly dreams, ever since it has occurred. I hope, however, to speak about that event at some future period.” This Mr. Spurgeon did, in many memorable utterances which will be included in Vol. II of his *Autobiography*, now in course of compilation).

WE here behold the Savior in the depths of His agonies and sorrows. No other place so well shows the griefs of Christ as Calvary and no other moment at Calvary is so full of agony as that in which this cry rends the air, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” At this moment, physical weakness brought upon Him by fasting and scourging, was united with the acute mental torture which He endured from the shame and ignominy through which He had to pass—and, as the culmination of His grief, He suffered spiritual agony which surpasses all expression on account of the departure of His Father from Him. This was the blackness and darkness of His horror. Then it was that He penetrated the depths of the caverns of suffering.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” There is something in these words of our Savior always calculated to benefit us. When we behold the sufferings of men, they afflict and appall us, but the sufferings

of our Savior, while they move us to grief, have about them something sweet and full of consolation. Here, even here, in this black spot of grief, we find our Heaven while gazing upon the Cross. This, which might be thought a frightful sight, makes the Christian glad and joyous. If he laments the cause, yet he rejoices in the consequences.

I. First, in our text, there are THREE QUESTIONS to which I shall call your attention.

The first is, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” By these words we are to understand that our blessed Lord and Savior was, at that moment, forsaken by God in such a manner as He had never been before. He had battled with the enemy in the desert, but thrice He overcame him and cast him to the earth. He had striven with that foe all His life long and even in the garden He had wrestled with him till His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful.” It is not till now that He experiences a depth of sorrow which He never felt before. It was necessary that He should suffer, in the place of sinners, what sinners ought to have suffered. It would be difficult to conceive of punishment for sin apart from the frown of Deity. With crime we always associate anger, so that when Christ died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”—when our blessed Savior became our Substitute—He became, for the time, the victim of His Father’s righteous wrath, seeing that our sins had been imputed to Him in order that His righteousness might be imputed to us. It was necessary that He should feel the loss of His Father’s smile—for the condemned in Hell must have tasted of that bitterness—and therefore the Father closed the eyes of His love, put the hand of justice before the smile of His face and left His Son to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

There is no man living who can tell the full meaning of these words—not one in Heaven or on earth. I had almost said, in Hell there is not a man who can spell these words out with all their depth of misery. Some of us think, at times, that *we* could cry, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” There are seasons when the brightness of our Father’s smile is eclipsed by clouds and darkness. But let us remember that God never really forsakes us. It is only a *seeming* forsaking with us, but in Christ’s case it was a *real* forsaking. God only knows how much we grieve, sometimes, at a little withdrawal of our Father’s love, but the real turning away of God’s face from His Son—who shall calculate how deep the agony which it caused Him when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

In our case, this is the cry of unbelief. In His case it was the utterance of a fact, for God had really turned away from Him for a time. O you

poor, distressed Soul who once lived in the sunshine of God's face, but are now in darkness—you who are walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—you hear noises and you are afraid! Your soul is startled within you, you are stricken with terror if you think that God has forsaken you! Remember that He has not really forsaken you, for—

***“Mountains when in darkness shrouded,
Are as real as in day.”***

God in the clouds is as much our God as when He shines forth in all the luster of His benevolence! But since even the *thought* that He has forsaken us gives us agony, what must the agony of the Savior have been when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

The next question is, “*Why are You so far from helping Me?*” Up to now, God had helped His Son, but now He must tread the winepress alone—even His own Father cannot be with Him. Have you not felt, sometimes, that God has brought you to do some duty and yet has apparently not given you the strength to do it? Have you ever felt that sadness of heart which makes you cry, “Why are You so far from helping me?” But remember, if God means you to do anything, you can do it, for He will give you the power! Perhaps your brain reels, but God has ordained that you must do it and you shall do it! Have you not felt as if you must go on, even while every step you took, you were afraid to put your foot down for fear you should not get a firm foothold? If you have had any experience of Divine things, it must have been so with you. We can scarcely guess what it was that our Savior felt when He said, “Why are You so far from helping Me?” His work is one which none but a Divine Person could have accomplished, yet His Father's eyes were turned away from Him! With more than Herculean labors before Him, but with none of His Father's might given to Him, what must have been the strain upon Him? Truly, as Hart says, He—

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

The third enquiry is, “*Why are You so far from the words of My roaring?*” The word here translated, “roaring,” means, in the original Hebrew, that deep, solemn groan which is caused by serious sickness and which suffering men utter. Christ compares His prayers to those roars and complains that God is so far from Him that He does not hear Him. Beloved, many of us can sympathize with Christ, here. How often have we, on our knees, asked some favor of God and we thought we asked in faith, yet it never came? Down we went upon our knees again. There is something which withholds the answer and, with tears in our eyes, we have wrestled with God some more—we have pleaded, for Jesus' sake, but the heavens have seemed like brass! In the bitterness of our spirit we have

cried, “Can there be a God?” And we have turned round and said, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from the words of my roaring?’ Is this like You? Do You ever spurn a sinner? Have You not said, ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you?’ Are You reluctant to be kind? Do You withhold Your promise?”

And when we have been almost ready to give up, with everything apparently against us, have we not *groaned* and said, “Why are You so far from the words of my roaring?” Though we know something, it is not much that we can truly understand of those direful sorrows and agonies which our blessed Lord endured when He asked these three questions—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?”

II. Let us now, in the second place, ANSWER THESE THREE QUESTIONS.

The answer to the first question I have given before. I think I hear the Father say to Christ, “*My Son, I forsake You because You stand in the sinner’s place.* As You are holy, just and true, I never would forsake You. I would never turn away from You, for, even as a Man, You have been holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—but on Your head rests the guilt of every penitent—transferred from him to You and You must expiate it by Your blood. Because You stand in the sinner’s place, I will not look at You till You have borne the full weight of My vengeance. *Then, I will exalt You on high, far above all principalities and powers.*”

O Christian, pause here and reflect! Christ was punished in this way for you! Oh, look at that Countenance so wrung with horror—those horrors gather there for you! Perhaps in your own esteem you are the most worthless of the family—certainly the most insignificant—but the meanest lamb of Christ’s flock is as much the object of purchase as any other. Yes, when that black darkness gathered round His brow and when He cried out, “Eloi, Eloi,” in the words of our text, for the Lord Omnipotent to help Him. When He uttered that awfully solemn cry it was because He loved *you*, because He gave Himself for *you* that you might be sanctified here and dwell with Him hereafter! God forsook Him, therefore, first, because He was the sinner’s Substitute.

The answer to the second question is, “Because *I would have You get all the honor to Yourself*—therefore I will not help You lest I should have to divide the spoil with You.” The Lord Jesus Christ *lived* to glorify His Father, but He *died* to glorify Himself in the redemption of His chosen people. God says, “No, My Son, You shall do it alone, for You must wear the crown alone. And upon Yourself shall all the regalia of Your Sovereignty be found. I will give You all the praise and. therefore. You shall

perform all the labor.” He was to tread the winepress alone and to get the victory and glory alone to Himself.

The answer to the third question is essentially the same as the answer to the first. *To have heard Christ’s prayers at that time would have been inappropriate.* This turning away of the Divine Father from hearing His Son’s prayer is just in keeping with His condition as the sinner’s Surety. His prayer must not be heard! As the sinner’s Surety, He could say, “Now that I am here, dying in the sinner’s place, You seal Your ears against My prayer.” God did not hear His Son because He knew His Son was dying to bring us near to God. And the Son, therefore, cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

III. In conclusion I shall offer you A WORD OF EARNEST EXPOSTULATION AND OF AFFECTIONATE WARNING.

Is it nothing to some of you that Jesus should die? You hear the tale of Calvary but, alas, you have dry eyes! You never weep concerning it. Is the death of Jesus nothing to you? Alas! It seems to be so with many. Your hearts have never throbbed in sympathy with Him. O Friends, how many of you can look on Christ, thus agonizing and groaning, and say, “He is *my* Ransom, *my* Redeemer”? Could you *say*, with Christ, “*My God*”? Or is God another’s and not yours? Oh, if you are out of Christ, hear me speak one word—it is a word of warning! Remember, *to be out of Christ is to be without hope!* If you die unsprinkled with His blood, you are lost!

And what is it to be lost? I shall not try to tell you the meaning of that dreadful word, “*lost*.” Some of you may know it before another sun has risen. God grant that you may not! Do you desire to know how you may be saved? Listen to me. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” To be baptized is to be buried in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Have you believed in Christ? Have you professed faith in Christ? Faith is the Divine Grace which rests alone on Christ. Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should feel himself to be lost—that he should know himself to be a ruined sinner and then he should believe this—“It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the very chief of sinners! You need no mediator between yourselves and Christ! You may come to Christ just as you are—guilty, wicked, poor—Christ will take you just as you are. There is no necessity for washing beforehand. You need no riches—in Him you have *all* you require—will you bring anything to, “*all*”? You need no garments, for in

Christ you have a seamless robe which will amply suffice to cover even the biggest sinner on earth, as well as the least!

Come, then, to Jesus at once. Do you say you do not know how to come? Come just as you are. Do not wait to *do* anything! What you need is to leave off doing and let Christ do all for you. What do you need to do when He has done all? All the labor of your hands can never fulfill what God commands. Christ died for sinners and you must *say*, “Sink or swim, I will have no other Savior but Christ.” Cast yourself wholly upon Him—

***“And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool humbly bow,
O Sinner! Sinner! Prostrate now!”***

He is able to pardon you at this moment. There are some of you who know you are guilty and groan concerning it. Sinner, why do you wait? “Come, and welcome!” is My Master’s message to you! If you feel you are lost and ruined, there is not a barrier between you and Heaven—Christ has broken it down. If you know your own lost estate, Christ has died for you! Believe, and come! Come, and welcome, Sinner, come! O Sinner, come! Come! Come! Jesus bids you come and as His ambassador to you, I bid you come as one who would *die* to save your souls if it were necessary—as one who knows how to groan over you and to weep over you—one who loves you even as you love yourself! I, as His minister, say to you, in God’s name and in Christ’s place, “Be you reconciled to God.” What do you say? Has God made you willing? Then rejoice! Rejoice, for He has not made you willing without giving you the power to do what He has made you willing to do! Come! Come! This moment you may be as sure of Heaven as if you were there, if you cast yourself upon Christ and have nothing but Jesus for your soul’s reliance!

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

UNANSWERED PRAYER

NO. 3344

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1866.

*“O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.”*
Psalm 22:2.

It is very clear to everyone who reads this Psalm that these are not so much the words of David as they are the words of David's Son and David's Lord, our blessed Master. He prayed with strong crying and tears. He came before His Father's Throne with supplications and for a long time it seemed as if He would have no answer. It did appear as if God had utterly forsaken Him and that His enemies might persecute and take Him.

Now, why was the Savior permitted to pass through so sad an experience? How was it that He whose lightest word is prevailing with Heaven, that He who pleads with Divine Authority this day in His continual intercession, was permitted, when here below, to cry, and cry, and cry again and yet to receive no comforting answer? Was it not mainly for this reason—that *He was making an Atonement for us*—and He was not heard because *we, as sinners, did not deserve to be heard?* He was not heard, that we might be heard! The ears of God were closed against Him for a season, that they might never be closed against us—that the mourner's cry might forever find a way to the heart of God—because the cry of Jesus was shut for awhile out from Mercy's gate. He stood the Surety for our sins and was numbered with the transgressors! Upon Him the Lord laid the iniquity of all His people and, therefore, being the sinner's Representative, He could not, for awhile be heard.

There was also, no doubt, another reason, namely, *that He might be a faithful High Priest having sympathy with His people in all their woes.* As this not being heard in prayer, or being unanswered for awhile, is one of the greatest troubles which can fall upon the Christian, and fall it does, the Savior had to pass through that trouble, too, that so it might be said of Him—

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

When I fear that I have not been heard in prayer, I can now look upon my Savior and say—

*“He takes me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before.”*

He can now have a tender, touching sympathy with us because He has been tempted in all points like as we are.

Was it not, also, once more in our Savior's case, *with a view to display the wondrous faith, fidelity and trustfulness of the obedient Son of God?* Having been found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to His Father's will. Now, obedience is not perceived until it is tried, and faith is not known to be firm and strong until it is put to the test and exercised. Through what an ordeal did this pure gold pass! It was put into the crucible and thrust into the hottest coals—all glowing with a white heat, they were heaped upon Him and yet no dross was found in Him! His faith never staggered! His confidence in His God never degenerated into suspicion and never turned aside into unbelief. It is, "*My God! My God!*" even when He is forsaken. It is, "*My God and My Strength*" even when He is poured out like water and all His bones are out of joint! In this thing He not only sympathizes with us, you see, but *He sets us an example.* We must overcome, as He did, through faith. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even your faith." And if we can copy this great High Priest of our profession who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself—if we can copy Him so as to be neither faint in our minds, nor turn from our Master's work—we shall triumph even as He overcame!

But my chief objective in considering this theme is not so much to speak of the Savior's trial as to address myself to those of our number who may even now be passing through the same experience as our Lord. It will already comfort you to know that *Christ has been where you are.*

It will already comfort you to know that *Christ has been where you are.* It will already guide you to know that He has set you an example and that He bids you follow in His steps. Let us now draw near to His sorrow and think on it for awhile for our instruction and comfort.

In the first place, the text—without any inquiry into the cause of unanswered prayer, seems to give—

I. A GENERAL GUIDE FOR OUR CONDUCT.

Suppose that we have been seeking some blessing from God for many months and have not obtained it? Whether it is a personal blessing, or on behalf of others, what ought to be our conduct under such a trial as that, the trial of a long delay, or an apparent refusal?

In the first place, Brothers and Sisters, it is clear the text teaches us that *we must not cease to trust God.* "O my God." Oh, that appropriating word! It is not, perhaps, "My Father." The spirit of adoption is not here so much as the spirit of reverent trustfulness, but still there is the hold-fast word—"O my God." Christian, never be tempted to give up your hold upon your only strength, upon your solitary hope! Under no conceivable circumstances, ever give place for an instant to the dark thought that God is not true and faithful to His promises! Though you should have seven years of unanswered prayer, yet suggest any other reason to your mind than one which would dishonor Him. Say with the Savior in this Psalm, "But You are holy." Settle that in your mind. Oh, never allow the

faintest breath of suspicion to come upon the fair fame of the Most High, for He does not deserve it! He *is* true. He *is* faithful. In this apparently worst of all cases, He did deliver His Son and come to the rescue in due time. In all other cases He has done the same—and I pray you never to distrust your God until you have some good and valid occasion for it. Never cast a slur upon His integrity till He really does forsake you—till He absolutely gives you up to perish! Then, but not till then, shall you doubt Him. Oh, believe Him to be good and true! You may not know why it is that He deals so strangely with you, but oh, never think that He is unfaithful for an instant, or that He has broken His Word. Continue to trust Him! You shall be rewarded if you do—and the longer your faith is tried, it shall be with you as when the ship is longest out at sea—it goes to the richest climes and comes home with the heaviest and most precious freight. So shall your faith come back to you with joy!

Your faith may lie among the pots for many a day, but the time of her deliverance shall come and, like a dove, shall she mount with wings covered with silver and her feathers tipped with yellow gold! “Trust in the Lord at all times you people, and pour out your hearts before Him.”

Once again, as we are never to cease to trust, so we are *never to cease to pray*. The text is very expressive upon this point. “I cry in the daytime, but You hear not: and in the night seasons I am not silent.” Never cease your prayers! No time is a bad time for prayer. The glare of daylight should not tempt you to cease—and the gloom off midnight should not make you stop your cries. I know it is one of Satan’s chief objectives to make the Christian cease praying, for if he could but once make us put up the weapon of all-prayer, he would easily vanquish us and take us for his prey. But so long as we continue to cry to the Most High, Satan knows he cannot devour the very weakest lamb of the flock! Prayer, mighty prayer, will yet prevail if it has but time!

Oh, if this is the dark suggestion of the Evil One, “Forsake the closet! Give up private devotion. Never draw near to God, for prayer is all a fancy”—I pray you, spurn the thought with all your might and still cry, both in the daytime and at night, for the Lord will still hear your prayer!

And while you never cease from your trust, nor from your prayer, *grow more earnest in both*. Let your faith be still more resolved to give up all dependence anywhere but upon God, and let your cry grow more and more vehement. It is not every knock at Mercy’s gate that will open it—he who would prevail must handle the knocker well and dash it down again, and again, and again! As the old Puritan says, “Cold prayers ask for a denial, but it is red-hot prayers which prevail.” Bring your prayers as some ancient battering ram against the gate of Heaven and force it open with a sacred violence, “for the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by storm.” He that would prevail with God must take care that all his strength be thrust into his prayers! The Lord will not hear you if you only bring up a rank or line of the display of your desires. There must be no reserves—the whole army of your soul must come into

the conflict and you must besiege the Mercy Seat, determined to win the day, and then shall you prevail! If there are delays, take them as good and sound advice to be more firm in your faith and more fervent in your cry!

And yet again, *cease not to hope*. The New Zealander has a word for hope which means, “the swimming thought,” because when all other thoughts are drowned, hope still swims. She lifts her head out of the foamy waves with her tresses all trailing and sees the blue sky above her and hopes, as it is there. So if you have prayed ever so long, yet hope on! “Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the strength of my life and my portion forever.” As long as there is a place of prayer and a promise of an answer, no Believer ought to give way to despair. “Go again,” said Elijah to his servant seven times! It must have been weary work to the Prophet to have to wait so long. He did not stand up once and pray to God as on Carmel—and then instantly came down the fire to continue the sacrifice—but again and again and, getting more humble in posture, with his face between his knees, he beseeches the Lord, not for fire, which was an unusual thing, but for *water*, which is the common gift of the skies! And though he pleads for that which the Lord, Himself, had promised, yet it did not at once come! And when his servant came back, four, five, six times, the answer was still the same—there was no sign of rain, but the brazen heavens looked down on an earth which was parched as if in an oven! “Go again!” said the Prophet, and at the seventh time, lo, there appeared the cloud like unto a man’s hand—and this cloud was the sure forerunner of the deluge and storm! Christian, go again seven times! No, I will venture to say 70 times seven, for God *must* keep His promise! Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of Jehovah’s Word can fail. “The grass withers, the flower thereof fades away, but the Word of our God endures forever.” Do you plead that enduring Word of God? Let no dark thoughts drive you to despair. Continue to trust! Continue to pray! Increase in your fervency and in the hope that the blessing will yet come! It did come to the Savior. The morning broke upon His midnight after all. Never tide ebbed out so far as in the Savior’s case, when the great stretches of misery and sorrow were visible where once God’s love had rolled in mighty floods. But when the time came, it began to turn, and see how it has turned now in mighty floods of matchless joy! The love of God has come back to our once suffering Savior and there, upon the Eternal Throne He sits, the Man, the Crucified, who bowed His head under mountains of almighty wrath, which broke in huge billows and covered His soul. Be of good courage, Christian! Hope on, poor Soul, and hope on forever!

Thus much by way of general direction. But we now go on to a second point and shall inquire into—

II. THE CAUSES OF UNANSWERED PRAYER.

We shall, perhaps, on this theme, get a few special directions which may be available in particular cases. Dear Friends, there are some of us who are not often troubled about unanswered prayer—on the contrary,

our own experience is such that the existence of a God who hears His people's cry is reduced to an absolute, mathematical certainty!

I have no more doubt about this than about my own existence, not because I can see it clearly and understand it perfectly, nor because with a blind credulity I submit myself to the Bible as being the Infallible Revelation of God, but because I have had real dealings with God, have tried and proved His promises to be true and have found out that according to my faith, it has been done unto me in a thousand instances! This is truth that those who have learned to live in the spirit world and to talk with God understand and know as plainly as they understand and know that when a child speaks to its father, its father grants its request. It has become to many Believers not at all a matter to be argued or talked of by way of dispute—they *know* that they have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and their prayers are answered. But occasionally, to all Believers, I suppose, there will come staggering moments when they scarcely know how to reply to their doubts because certain of their prayers have not been answered.

It may possibly happen that the cause of unanswered prayer may many times lie *in something connected with sin*. Do you not think that unanswered prayers are often a Fatherly chastisement for our offenses? The Savior, in that wonderful Chapter where He tells out His love to us, says, "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love," and then He notes, as a special favor, if a man abide in His love and keep His commandments, he, "shall ask what he wills and it shall be done unto him." Now it seems to me to be only reasonable that if I will not do what God wills, God will refuse to do what I will—that if He asks of me a certain duty and I refuse it—when I ask Him for a certain privilege or favor, it is not unkind, but, on the other hand, most wise and kind that He should say, "No, My Child, no. If you will not listen to My tender command, it is kind to refuse you your desire until you repent and obey."

Perhaps this is the way in which, too, are visited upon God's people *some neglects of ordinances*. "He that knows his Master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." And one of these stripes may surely be our failure in prayer! It may also be temporal affliction, but probably this is one of the main ways in which the Master inflicts the stripes upon His children. They are negligent of His commands and He says, "Then you shall tarry awhile. I will not yet grant you what you seek. But when you come to a better mind and are more scrupulous and tender in the fulfilling of My commands, then your longings shall be satisfied."

It may occur, too, that this delay may be a sort of *disclosure* to us as to wherein our sin lies. Sin sometimes lies in a Christian unrepented of because he only dimly realizes that it is there. Hear what Job declares—"Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?" That is to say, if you love selfish ease and feeble comforting. If you do not prevail with God in prayer, is there some secret sin in you

which keeps back the blessing? God does, as it were, say to us, "Search and look." Unanswered prayer should be to every Christian a search warrant—he should begin to examine himself to see whether there is not something harbored within which is contrary to the will of God. Oh, Believer, this is not a hard work for you to do, surely, but it is a very necessary one! Search yourself and breathe the prayer, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways, and see if there is any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I think this is one great reason for unanswered prayer, namely, that it is a chastisement for sin committed or an admonition against sin harbored.

Sometimes there may be great sin in the prayer, itself! Are not our greatest sins often connected with our holiest things? We must be aware of our prayers. There is such a thing as polluting the Mercy Seat. Remember what became of Nadah and Abihu, who offered strange fire before the Lord. Beware, Christian, beware—you may sin against God in the prayer chamber as well as you can in the market—and you may offend on your knees, as well as when you are in your business! Have a care, for how can you hope that a prayer thus stained with sin can ever succeed unless you bring it to the blood to have it purged and cleansed from all defiling before it mounts to the Throne of Grace?

And I sometimes fear, too, that our prayers do not speed because the thing asked for, though as we think good for us, is *asked for from a wrong motive*.

If, for instance, a Christian minister asks that he may win souls in order that he may gain reputation and fame as a useful and successful Evangelist for his Master, he will probably not be heard, for he asks from an unworthy motive. If I seek to be useful merely that I may be known to be a useful man or woman, I am really seeking *my own honor*—can I expect God to minister to and pamper that?

I must take care, then, that even when I ask for a good thing, I ask it for the purest of reasons—for God's Glory. Oh, what washing even our prayers need! What cleansing, what purging! Can we wonder that they do not succeed when we so often make mistakes, both in the substance of the prayers and the motives from which we offer them?

Praying seems, to some persons, to be simply a child's play or a formal habit. They will take a book, read a form of intercession, and perhaps offer a few extemporary words and that is all. But these are all nothing and naughty prayers unless God shall touch them and give them life!

Sometimes, then, failure in prayer may be caused by sin. In such a case, heart-searching, deep repentance and especially a speedy going to the Cross to have renewed fellowship with the cleansing blood and to be brought once more in contact with the holy sufferings of the blessed Substitute will make us speed.

But we go on to notice that failure in prayer *may sometimes be the result of ignorance*.

I think persons often offer *very ignorant prayers, indeed*. I am sure I have good evidence that some do. There is scarcely ever a week passes in

which I do not receive intelligence from different persons who are on the verge of bankruptcy, or deeply in debt, that they have prayed to God about it—and that they have been guided by God to write to me to get them out of their difficulties and to pay their debts! Now, I am always perfectly willing to do so as soon as ever I am directed expressly by God, Himself! But I shall not receive the direction at secondhand! As soon as I receive it myself—and I think it is only fair that I should receive it, as well as they—I shall be quite willing to be obedient to His direction, provided, too, the funds are in hand, which does not often happen! But folks must be very foolish to suppose that because they ask God that such-and-such a debt may be paid by miraculous means, it will certainly be done! I have a right to ask for anything which God has promised me, but if I go beyond the range of the Divine Promises, I also go beyond the range of assured and confident expectation. The promises are very large and very wide, but when one gets a fancy in his head, he must not suppose that God is there in his fancy. I have known some fanatical persons who thought they could live by faith. They were going to preach the Gospel, having no gifts whatever for preaching. They were going to be missionaries in a district having no more gift to be missionaries than horses in a plow. But they thought they were destined to do it and, therefore, they tried to live by faith. And when they had been nearly half-starved, then they complained against the goodness and abandoned the labor. Had God really inspired and sent them, He would have sustained and kept them, but if they go about it willfully and stubbornly on their own account, they must be driven back to realize their own ignorance of the Divine Will. Now, we must not pray ignorantly—we must pray with the understanding and with the spirit, so that we may clearly know what we are praying about. Get the promise and then offer the prayer—and the prayer will be answered as sure as God is God! But get your own fancy into your head and you will only have to get it out again, for it will be of no service to you.

And then oftentimes we pray in a way *in which our prayers could not be heard consistent with the dignity of the Most High*. I love a holy familiarity with God and I believe it to be commendable, but still, man is but man, while God is God and, however familiar we may be with Him in our hearts, we must still remember the distance there is between the Most High and the most elevated and most beloved of His creatures—and we are not to speak as though it were in our power to do as we will and as we please. No, we are children, but we are to remember that children have a limit as to how they are to speak to their father. Their love may come as near as they please, but their impertinence may not—and we must mind that we do not mistake the familiarity of communion for the impudence of presumption! We must be careful to distinguish between the two, for he who is taught of God and waits upon Him according to His mind will find, as a general rule, that he will not be long without an answer to his prayer.

Now, if it is ignorance that thus prevents the answering of your prayers, you should get better instructed and search especially into such texts as bear upon the matter of prayer, that you may know how to use your private key of Heaven and open the sacred portals, the gate of the Divine Mercy, for ignorance will often make you to fail.

Again, does it not often happen that there may be *reasons for delay lying in our own infirmity?*

Sometimes, if a mercy were to come to a Believer immediately when he asked for it, it would come too soon. But God times it until it appears only at the right and best moment. When a gracious godly soul has been much exercised in his mind concerning a special mercy—has studied it, weighed it, arrived at a proper apprehension of it and arranged his plans for its proper use and benefit—then, just at the time that the barn was swept and all the lumber taken out—then God's harvest of bounty comes home and the man, being quite ready for the blessing, the blessing comes!

Perhaps you are not yet ready for the blessing. You have asked for strong meat, but you are but as yet a babe and, therefore, you are to be content with milk for a little while longer. You have asked for a man's trials, a man's privileges and a man's work, but you are as yet only a child growing up into manhood—and so your good Father will give you what you ask for, but He will give it to you in such a way as to make it not a burden to you, but a blessing. If it came now, it might involve responsibilities which you could not handle, but coming by-and-by, you shall be well prepared for it!

There are reasons, too, I doubt not, *which lie in our future*, why our prayers are not answered. Delays in prayer may turn out to be a sort of training school for us. Take the Apostle's instance. The "thorn in the flesh" was very painful, and though he was a chosen Apostle, yet he had no answer. Thrice he cried, but still the "thorn in the flesh" was not removed. It was well that it was not, for Paul needed to be taught tenderness in order that he might write those loving Epistles of his and, therefore, he received an answer of another sort, "My Grace is sufficient for you." Oh Christian! If you could get rid of the trouble in which you now are, you would not be able to comfort poor mourners as you shall yet do! You would not be a full grown, strong man if you had not these stern trials to develop your manly vigor! Men do not learn to be intrepid sailors by staying on dry land. You are to put out to sea in the midst of the storm, so that you may learn how to manage and guide the vessel of your soul! You are going through a rough drill, that you may be a valiant and stalwart, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for battles are yet to come and grim foes yet to face—for you have many fights between now and the blessed active ease of Heaven!

You have not yet won the crown, but you will have to cut your way, inch by inch and foot by foot, and the Master is making you an athlete that wrestling with your enemies you may overcome. He is strengthening

your muscles and tendons, sinews and power by the arduous exercise of unanswered prayer that you may be finely useful in the future!

Still, yet again, perhaps the reason why prayer is not always quickly answered is this—a reason which no tongue can tell, but *which is inscrutable lying in the Sovereign purposes and wisdom of God.*

Now, look! If I cannot tell why God does not hear me, what must I say? I had better say nothing but put my finger on my lips and wait. Who am I that I should question Him as to what He does? Who am I that I should arraign my Maker before my bar and say to Him, “What are You doing?”? Almighty Potter, You have a right to do as You will with Your own clay! We have learned to submit to Your will, not because we must, but because we love that will, feeling that Your will is the highest good of Your creatures and the most sublime wisdom! Why should we be so anxious to know the depth of the sea which cannot be fathomed by our line? Why must we be toiling to heave the lead so often? Leave these things with God and go on with your praying and your believing—and all shall yet be well with you!

And now I conclude this point by saying that if the Christian, after looking into the matter, cannot find a reason why he should not be answered, let him still expect that he shall be, and *still wait upon God*, remembering, however, that he may never be answered after his own fashion, but that he shall be answered after God’s fashion.

I like that verse of old Erskine’s, for though rough and quaint, it is true—

***“I’m heard when answered soon or late.
Yes, heard when I no answer get!
Yes, kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when hardly used.”***

In Heaven every Believer will realize how great was this truth—and so here I leave it.

And now, to conclude, I thought I would say a few words upon a very special case which may occur, and which may be here represented this evening. I have no doubt that it is in more than one instance. It was once my case. It is not the case of a Christian asking a blessing for himself, but it is the case of *a sinner, conscious of his danger as a sinner, asking for mercy.*

Brothers and Sisters, it was a very unhappy lot to have to seek the Lord with such earnestness as I could command as a child for four or five years—with sighs, and cries, and entreaties—but to have no comfortable answer whatever, to be as one that chooses strangling rather than life because of a sense of God’s anger in my soul. To desire reconciliation, to live in the midst of Gospel Light and to hear the Truth of God preached every Sabbath day, indeed, every day in the week, after a fashion, and yet not to discover the way to Heaven was a great affliction. Now, sometimes it is not good advice to say to such a person, Go on praying. It is good advice! I must correct myself, there, but it is *not the best advice* in such a case. Soul, if you have been seeking mercy and you

cannot find it, go on praying by all means—never relax that, but it is not by praying that you will ever get peace. The business of your soul is to listen to Christ's command—and His command is contained in the Gospel, which Gospel is *not*, "Go you into all the world and tell every creature to pray," but it is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Now, your business is to pray, certainly, but your first business is to believe! Your prayers before you believe have but little weight in them. Unbelieving prayers! Shall I call them prayers? Prayers without faith? They are birds without wings, ships without sails and beasts without legs! Prayers that have no faith in Christ in them are prayers without the blood on them! They are deeds without the signature, without the seal, without the stamp—they are impotent, illegal documents! Oh, if you could but come as you are and look to Christ on the Cross! It is not your prayers that can save you—it is Christ's prayers, Christ's tears, Christ's sufferings, Christ's blood and Christ's death! If you trust to your prayers, you have gone back to the old beggarly elements of the Law. You might as well trust to your good works as to your prayers, but to trust either will be to rest in "a refuge of lies." Your hope, Sinner, lies in the altogether gratuitous mercy of God—and that mercy only comes to those who rest in Jesus Christ, alone, waiting patiently for Him! Oh, that you could but come just as you are and lay yourself at Mercy's door with such a word as this on your lips—

***"My hope is fixed on nothing else
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness!"***

There are no doings of yours needed to complete the work. No! I venture to say, not even any praying of yours. Your praying and your doings shall each occupy their proper place, afterwards, and then they shall be essential in their way, but now, as a sinner, your business is with the sinner's Savior! If you are now enabled to look completely out of self and see all that your flesh can do as dead and buried forever in the grave of Christ—and as being nothing and worse than nothing! And if you can see Jesus, the mighty Savior, distributing the gifts which He has received for men, even distributing them to the rebellious—if you can thus trust Him, you are saved! What do you say, Sinner? Are you enabled to do it now? Can you fall flat before His Cross? Oh, the happy day when I learned that I was no longer to look to self, but found that the Gospel was, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Many of you have looked, Brothers and Sisters! Look again to that sacred head once wounded and filled with pain and grief, but which now is crowned with glory! Look and renew your vow of dedication and He will lift you up to be above the angels and only second to God, Himself!

Oh look now!

And as to you who have never looked before, I pray the Master to open your blind eyes and cause the scales to drop, so that you may look now and, while you look, may see everything you need laid up for you in Jesus! Everything a sinner needs can be richly supplied by Him—and then the sinner can go his way rejoicing and singing, "Christ is All, and happy

am I that I have sought and found Him.” The Lord bless you all for His name’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.**

This is a great Psalm of Grace, a Psalm in which a sinner, cleansed by Sovereign Grace, adores and blesses the mercy of God.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* This is not a blessing for the man who says he has no sin—this is not a benediction for the innocent who talk about their own good works—but blessed is the man who, having sinned, is pardoned, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! In a word, it is a Gospel blessing—it is the blessing of Free Grace.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He had a thousand iniquities. He transgressed in all sorts of ways. The Lord does not impute these things to him. He has set them down to the account of Another who has ventured to stand in the sinner’s place and be made sin in the sinner’s place! But to this man, this blessed man, God does not impute iniquity—and in his spirit there is no guile—he confesses his sin with honesty, he is pardoned with certainty and in his spirit there is no cunning concealment.

3, 4. *When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* This is the experience of those men whom God saves. Till they confess sin, that sin rankles in them like venom—it boils their blood, it eats into their bones, it makes life worse than death, it makes them dread the wrath to come—their days are nights, and their nights are Hells! They cannot stand themselves. This was David’s experience and it has been the way by which God has led thousands of His redeemed ones that He might bring them to Himself. As long as we cloak our sin and conceal it and pretend that we are innocent, the fire burns within us—but when we just confess the sin, then it is that we are dealing with God aright—and God deals with us in Grace!

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* All gone, gone forever, gone at a stroke! Oh, what a mercy this is, that when once we will take the place of sinners and plead guilty, then it is that we are absolved at once! We have but to acknowledge that we deserve the punishment and immediately that punishment is remitted! This is the way of Grace, the plan of Infinite condescending Love!

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* The man that has so prayed as to find complete forgive-

ness, he is the man that will never leave off praying as long as he lives! The one gain which covers everything, the gain of conscious forgiveness, inspires a man to pray about anything and about everything as long as he lives! “For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You.” “You are my hiding place.” You see God was his hiding place when he was in a storm of sin, and now he takes God to be his hiding place in every time of trouble, from all the afflictions of his life, all the sorrows of the way. “You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble.” Shall He not, since He has blotted out our sins? Oh, if God has preserved us from the wrath to come, what is there to be afraid of? “You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” I shall live in a ring of music! I shall march onward to Heaven as in the center of song! Why, it may well be so, when once God has freely blotted out our sins—“You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Yes, says God, that I will, and I will do more!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* I have not blotted out your sins to leave you to wander back into them again—I will be your Teacher, your folly shall not be your ruin, your ignorance shall not be your destruction. I will guide you—look at Me!—“I will guide you with My eyes.” “A glance, a look, shall be enough for you! I will give you such a heart that you shall understand the least motion of My finger. No, I will guide you with My eyes.”

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* A pardoning God may well ask this of us, that we would be tender. Oh, let us be very willing to do the Lord’s will, plastic in His hands like clay in the hand of the potter! It is a great pity, Brothers and Sisters, when we won’t be guided by the gentle leadings of God and must be whipped and spurred, and tugged at. For God *will* govern us if we are His people. If one bit will not do it, He will get a tougher bit that shall cut us and hurt us, but He will rule us! And so He ought to do, blessed be His name!

10, 11. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.*

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

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

JESUS, THE EXAMPLE OF HOLY PRAISE

NO. 799

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You. You that fear the Lord, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel.”
Psalm 22:22, 23.***

WE greatly esteem the dying words of good men, but what must be the value of their departing thoughts! If we could pass beyond the gate of speech and see the secret things which are transacted in the silent chambers of their souls at the moment of departure, we might greatly value the revelation, for there are thoughts which the tongue could not and must not utter, and there are deep searchings of heart which are not to be expressed by syllables and sentences. If, by some means we could read the inmost death-thoughts of holy men, we might be privileged, indeed.

Now, in the Psalm before us, and in the words of our text, we have the last thoughts of our Lord and Master, and they beautifully illustrate the fact that He was governed by one ruling passion—that ruling passion most strong in death was the glory of God. When but a Child, He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” Throughout His work-life He could say, “The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up.” “It is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him that sent Me.” And now, at last, as He expires with His hands and His feet nailed, and His body and soul in extreme anguish, the one thought is that God may be glorified!

In that last happy interval, before He actually gave up His soul into His Father’s hands, His thoughts rushed forward and found a blessed place of rest in the prospect that, as the result of His death, all the kindreds of the nations would worship before the Lord, and that by a chosen Seed the Most High should be honored. O for the same concentration of all *our* powers upon one thing, and that one thing—the glory of God! Would God that we could say with one of old, “This one thing I do,” and that this one thing might be the chief end of our being—the glorifying of our Creator, our Redeemer, the liege Lord of our hearts!

My object, this morning, is to excite in you the spirit of adoring *gratitude*. I thought that as last Sabbath we spoke of Christ as the example of protracted prayer, it might seem seasonable at the end of a week of so much mercy to exhibit Him to you as the example of grateful

praise and to ask you as a great congregation to follow Him as your Leader in the delightful exercise of magnifying the name of Jehovah—

**“Far away are gloom and sadness;
Spirits with seraphic fire,
Tongues with hymns, and hearts with gladness,
Higher sound the chords and higher.”**

I shall ask your attention, in considering these verses, first, to our Lord’s example: “I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.” And, secondly, I shall invite you to observe our Lord’s exhortation: “You that fear the Lord, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel.”

I. We begin with OUR LORD’S EXAMPLE. The praise which our Jesus as our Exemplar renders unto the Eternal Father is twofold. First, the praise of declaration, “I will declare Your name unto My brethren.” Secondly, the more direct and immediate thanksgiving, “In the midst of the congregation will I praise You.”

1. The first form of the praise which our blessed Mediator renders unto the eternal Father is that of declaring God’s name. This, my dear Friends, you know He did in His teaching. Something of God had been revealed to men before. God had spoken to Noah and Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob and especially to His servant Moses—He had been pleased to reveal Himself in different types and ceremonies and ordinances. He was known as Elohim, Shaddai and Jehovah, but never until Christ came did men begin to say, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” This was the loving word by which the Well-Beloved declared His Father’s name unto His brethren.

The sterner attributes of God had been revealed amidst the thunders of Sinai, the waves of the Red Sea, the smoke of Sodom and the fury of the deluge. The sublimities of the Most High had been seen, and wondered at by the Prophets who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But the full radiance of a *Father’s* love was never seen until it was beheld beaming through the Savior’s face. “He that has seen Me,” said Christ, “has seen the Father.” But until they had seen Him they had not seen God as the Father. “No man can come unto the Father,” says Jesus, “Except by Me.” And as no man can come affectionately in the outgoings of his heart or fiducially in the motions of his faith, so neither can any man come to God in the enlightenment of *understanding* except by Christ, the Son.

He who understands Christianity has a far better idea of God than he who only comprehends Judaism. Read the Old Testament through and you shall value every sentence, and prize it above fine gold—but still you shall feel unrest and dissatisfaction—for the vision is veiled and the light is dim. Turn, then, to the New Testament and you discern that in Jesus of Nazareth dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! Then the noontide of knowledge is around you. Then the vision is open and distinct. Jesus is the express image of His Father, and seeing Him you have seen God manifest in the flesh! This sight of God you will assuredly obtain if you are

one of the Brethren to whom, through the Spirit, Jesus Christ in His teaching declares the name of the Father.

Our Lord, however, declared the Father more, perhaps, by His *acts* than by His words, for the life of Christ is a discovery of all the attributes of God in action. If you want to know the gentleness of God, you perceive Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them. If you would know His condescension, behold the loving Redeemer taking little children into His arms and blessing them. If you would know whether God is just, hear the words of a Savior as He denounces sin—and observe His own life—for He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Would you know the mercy of God as well as His justice? Then see it manifested in the ten thousand miracles of the Savior's hands, and in the constant sympathy of the Redeemer's heart.

I cannot stay to bring out all the incidents in the Redeemer's life, nor even to give you a brief sketch of it, but suffice it to say that the life of Christ is a perpetual unrolling of the great mystery of the Divine attributes, and you may rest assured that what Jesus is, that the Father is. You need not start back from the Father, as though He were something strange and unrevealed, for you have *seen* the Father if you have seen Christ. And if you have studied well and drunk deep into the spirit of the history of the Man of Sorrows, you understand, as well as you need to, the Character of God over all, blessed forever.

Our Lord made the grandest declaration of the Godhead in His death—

***“Here His whole name appears complete,
Nor wit can guess, nor reason trace,
Which of the letters best is writ—
The power, the wisdom, or the Grace.”***

There at Calvary, where He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, we see the Godhead resplendent in noonday majesty, albeit that to the natural eye it seems to be eclipsed in midnight gloom. Would you see stern justice such as the Judge of all the earth perpetually exhibits (for shall not He do right)? Would you see the justice that will not spare the guilty, which smites at sin with determined enmity and will not endure it? Then behold the hands and feet, and side of the Redeemer welling up with crimson blood! Behold His heart broken as with an iron rod, dashed to shivers as though it were a potter's vessel! Harken to His cries. Mark the lines of grief that mar His face. Behold the turmoil, the confusion, the whirlwinds of anguish which seethe like a boiling caldron within the soul of the Redeemer! Here is the vengeance of God revealed to men so that they may see it and *not* die—may behold it and weep—but *not* with the tears of despair!

At the same time, if you would see the Grace of God, where shall you discover it as you will in the death of Jesus? God's bounty gleams in the light, flashes in the rain and sparkles in the dew. It blossoms in the flowers that paint the meadows, and it ripens in the golden sheaves of

autumn. All God's works are full of goodness and truth! Even on the sea itself are the steps of the beneficent Creator—but all this does not meet the case of guilty, condemned man. Therefore, to the eye of him who has learned to weep for sin, Nature does not reveal the goodness of God in any such a light as that which gleams from the Cross. Best of all is God seen as He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” “For God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Your thoughtful minds will readily discover every one of the great qualities of Deity in our dying Lord. You have only to linger long enough amidst the wondrous scenes of Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha to observe how power and wisdom, Grace and vengeance, strangely join—

**“Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased blessing mine.”**

Beloved, in the midst of the Brethren a dying Savior declares the name of the Lord and thus magnifies the Lord as no other can. None of the harps of angels, nor the fiery, flaming sonnets of cherubs can glorify God as did the wounds and pangs of the great Substitute when He died to make His Father's Grace and justice known.

Our Lord continued to declare God's name among His Brethren when He rose from the dead. He did so *literally*. Among the very first words He said were, “Go to My Brethren,” and His message was, “I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God.” His life on earth after His resurrection was brief, but it was very rich and instructive, and in itself a showing forth of Divine faithfulness. He further revealed the faithfulness and glory of God when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. It must have been an august day when the Son of God actually passed the pearly gates to remain within the walls of Heaven enthroned until His second advent! How must the spirits of just men made perfect have risen from their seats of bliss to gaze on Him!

They had not seen a risen one before. Two had passed into Heaven without death, but none had entered into Glory as *risen* from the *dead*. He was the first instance of immortal resurrection, “the First Fruits of them that slept.” How angels adored Him! How holy beings wondered at Him while—

**“The God shone gracious through the Man,
And shed sweet glories on them all!”**

Celestial spirits saw the Lord that day as they had never seen before! They had worshipped God, but the excessive splendor of absolute Deity had forbidden the sacred familiarity with which they hailed the Lord in flesh arrayed. They were never so near Jehovah before, for in Christ the Godhead veiled its thrilling splendors, and wore the aspect of a fatherhood and brotherhood most near and dear. Enough was seen of Glory, as much as finite beings could bear, but still the whole was so sweetly shrouded in

humanity that God was declared in a new and more delightful manner—such as made Heaven ring with newborn joy!

What if I say that I think a part of the occupation of Christ in Heaven is to declare to perfect spirits what He suffered, how God sustained Him? To reveal to them the Covenant and all its solemn bonds—how the Lord ordained it, how He made it firm by Suretyship, and based it upon eternal settlements—so that everlasting mercy might flow from it? What if it is not true that there is no preaching in Heaven? What if Christ is the Preacher there, speaking as never man spoke and forever instructing His saints that they may make known unto principalities and powers yet more fully the manifold wisdom of God as revealed both in Him and in them—in them the members, and in Him the Head? I think, if it is so, it is a sweet fulfillment of this dying vow of our blessed Master, “I will declare Your name unto My brethren.”

But, Brothers and Sisters, it is certain that at this hour our Lord Jesus Christ continues to fulfill the vow by the spreading of His Gospel on earth. Do not tell me that the Gospel declares God, but that Jesus does not! I would remind you that the Gospel does *not* declare God apart from the Presence of Jesus Christ with the Gospel. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” is the Gospel’s true life and power. Take Christ’s Presence away and all the doctrines, and the precepts, and the invitations of the Gospel would not declare God to this blind-eyed generation—this hard-hearted multitude! But where Jesus is by His Spirit, there is the Word the Father declares.

And, my Brethren, this great process will go on. All through the present dispensation Christ will declare God to the sons of men—especially to the *elect* sons of men, to His own Brothers and Sisters. Then shall come the latter days of which we know so little, but of which we hope so much. Then, in that august period there will be a declaration, no doubt, of God in noonday light, for it shall be said, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them.” Of that age of light Jesus shall be the sun! The great Revealer of Deity shall still be the Son of Mary, the Man of Nazareth, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!

We shall, each one of us, tell abroad the savor of His name till He shall come. And then we shall have no need to say one to another, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest—and know the Lord for this reason, because they know *Christ*, and have seen Jehovah in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son. I cannot leave this passage without bidding you treasure up that precious word of our Master, “I will declare Your name unto My brethren”—

***“Our next of kin, our Brother now,
Is He to whom the angels bow.
They join with us to praise His name,
But we the nearest interest claim.”***

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” “For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

The Savior’s Brethren are to know God in Christ. You who are one with Jesus—you who have been adopted into the same family—have been regenerated and quickened with His life. You who are joined together by an indissoluble union, you are to see the Lord. I said an *indissoluble* union, for a wife may be divorced, but there is no divorce of Brethren. I never heard of any law, human or Divine, that could ever “unbrother” a man! That cannot be done—if a man is my brother, he is and shall be my brother when Heaven and earth shall pass away. Am I Jesus’ brother? Then I am joint heir with Him. I share in all He has and all that God bestows upon Him. His Father is My Father. His God is My God. Feast, my Brethren, on this dainty meat, and go your way in the strength of it to bear the trials of earth with more than patience!

The example of our Lord, under this first head, I must hint at and leave. It is this—if the Lord Jesus Christ declares God, especially to His own Brethren, be it your business and mine, in order to praise Jehovah, to tell what we know of the excellence and surpassing glories of our God! And especially let us do it to our kinsfolk, our household, our neighbors, and, since all men are in a sense our brethren, let us speak of Jesus wherever our lot is cast. My Brothers and Sisters, I wish we talked more of our God—

***“But ah! how faint our praises rise!
Sure ‘tis the wonder of the skies,
That we, who share His richest love,
So cold and unconcerned should prove.”***

How many times this week have you praised the dear Redeemer to your friends? Have you done it *once*? I do it often *officially*—but I wish I did it more often spontaneously and personally—to those with whom I may commune by the way.

You have doubtless murmured this week, or spoken *against* your neighbors, or spread abroad some small amount of scandal, or, it may be, you have talked frothily and with levity. It is even possible that impurity has been in your speech—even a Christian’s language is not always so pure as it should be. Oh, if we saved our breath to praise God with, how much wiser! If our mouths were filled with the Lord’s praise and with His honor all the day, how much holier! If we would but speak of what Jesus has done for us, what good we might accomplish! Why, every man speaks of what he loves! Men can hardly hold their tongues about their inventions and their delights. Speak well, O you faithful, of the Lord’s name! I pray you, be not dumb concerning One who deserves so well of you! Make this the resolve of this Sabbath morning, “I will declare Your name unto my Brethren.”

2. Our Master's second form of praise in the text is of a more direct kind—"In the midst of the congregation will I praise You." Is it a piece of imagination, or does the text really mean this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as Man, adores and worships the eternal God in Heaven, and is, in fact, the great Leader of the devotions of the skies? Shall I err if I say that they all bow when He as Priest adores the Lord, and all lift up the voice at the lifting up of His sacred psalmody? Is He the chief Musician of the sky, the Master of the sacred choir? Does He beat time for all the hallelujahs of the universe? I think so. I think He means just that in these words: "In the midst of the congregation will I praise You."

As God, He is praised forever—far above all worshipping—He is Himself forever worshipped! But as Man, the Head of redeemed humanity, the ever-living Priest of the Most High God, I believe that He praises Jehovah in Heaven. Surely it is the office of the Head to speak and to represent the holy joys and devout aspirations of the whole body which He represents. In the midst of the congregations of earth, too, is not Jesus Christ the sweetest of all singers? I like to think that when we pray on earth our prayers are not alone, but our great High Priest is there to offer our petitions with His own.

When we sing on earth it is the same. Is not Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation—gathering up all the notes which come from sincere lips—to put them into the golden censer, and to make them rise as precious incense before the Throne of the infinite majesty? So then, *He* is the great singer rather than we! He is the chief player on our stringed instruments, the great master of true music! The worship of earth comes up to God through Him, and He, He is the accepted channel of all the praise of all the redeemed universe! I am anticipating the day—I hope we are all longing for it—when the dead shall rise and the sea and land shall give up the treasured bodies of the saints. Then glorified spirits shall descend to enliven their renovated frames, and we who are alive and remain shall be changed and made immortal, and the King Himself shall be revealed!

Then shall be trod under our feet all the ashes of our enemies! Satan, bound, shall be held beneath the foot of Michael, the great archangel, and victory shall be on the side of truth and righteousness. What a "Hallelujah" that will be which shall peal from land and sea and from islands of the far-off main—"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" Who will lead that song? Who shall be the first to praise God in that day of triumph? Who first shall wave the palm of victory? Who but He who was first in the fight and first in the victory? Who but He who trod the winepress alone and stained His garments with the blood of His enemies? Who but He that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?

Surely He it is who in the midst of the exulting host, once militant and then triumphant, shall magnify and adore Jehovah's name forever and forever! Has He not Himself said it, "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation"? What does that expression mean which is so hard to be understood, "Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father"? What does that dark saying mean, "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son of God also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in All"?

Whatever they may mean, they seem to teach us the *mediatorial* crown and government are temporary and intended only to last until all rule, authority and power are put down by Jesus—and the rule of God shall be universally acknowledged. Jesus cannot renounce His Godhead. But His mediatorial sovereignty will be yielded up to Him from whom it came—and that last solemn act in which He shall hand back to His Father the all-subduing scepter will be a praising of God to a most wonderful extent beyond human conception! We wait and watch for it, and we shall behold it in the time appointed.

Beloved Friends, we also have in this second part an example—let us endeavor to praise our God in a direct manner. We ought to spend at least a little time every day in adoring contemplation. Our private devotions are scarcely complete if they consist altogether of prayer. Should there not be *praise*? If possible, during each day, sing a hymn. Perhaps you are not in a position to sing it aloud—or very loud, at any rate—but I would hum it if I were you. Many of you working men find time enough to sing a silly song—why cannot you find space for the praise of God? Every day let us praise Him when the eyelids of the morning first are opened, and when the curtains of the night are drawn. Yes, and at midnight—if we wake at that solemn hour—let the heart put fire to the sacred incense and present it unto the Lord that lives forever and ever.

In the midst of the congregation, also, whenever we come up to God's House, let us take care that our praise is not merely lip language, but that of the heart! Let us all sing, and so sing that God Himself shall hear. We want more than the sweet sounds which die upon mortal ears—we want the deep melodies which spring from the *heart*—and which enter into the ears of the immortal God. Imitate Jesus, then, in this twofold praise, the declaring of God, and the giving of direct praise to Him.

II. My time almost fails me, and I have need of much of it, for now I come to the second head, OUR LORD'S EXHORTATION. Follow me earnestly, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and then follow me practically, also. The exhortations of the second verse are given to those who fear God, who have respect to Him, who tremble to offend Him, who carry with them the consciousness of His Presence into their daily lives and who act towards Him as obedient children towards a father. The exhortation is

further addressed to the seed of Jacob, to those in covenant with God, to those who have despised the pottage and chosen the birthright, to those who, if they have had to sleep with a stone for their pillow, have, nevertheless, seen Heaven opened and enjoyed a revelation of God. It is addressed to those who know what prevalence in prayer means, to those who, in all their trouble, have yet found that all these things are not against them, but work their everlasting good, for Jesus is yet alive and they shall see Him before they die.

It is, moreover, directed to the seed of Israel—to those who once were in Egypt in spiritual bondage, who have been brought out of slavery, who are being guided through the wilderness, fed with Heaven's manna and made to drink of the living Rock. It is directed to those who worship the one God and Him only, and put away their idols and desire to be found always obedient to the Master's will. Now, to them it is said, first, "Praise Him." Praise Him *vocally*. I wish that in every congregation every child of God would take pains to praise God with his mouth as well as with his heart. Do you know, I have noticed one thing—I have jotted this down in the diary of my recollection—that you always sing best when you are most spiritual!

Last Monday night the singing was very much better than it was on Sabbath evening. You kept better time and better tune, not because the tune was any easier, but because you had come up to worship God with more solemnity than usual—and therefore there was no slovenly singing such as pains my ear and heart sometimes. Why, some of you care so little to give the Lord your best music, that you fall half a note behind the rest! Others of you are singing quite a false note, and a few make no sound of any kind! I hate to enter a place of worship where half-a-dozen sing to the praise and glory of *themselves*, and the rest stand and listen. I like that good old plan of *everybody* singing—singing their best—singing carefully and heartily.

If you cannot sing artistically, never mind, you will be right enough if you sing from the heart and pay attention to it—and do not drawl out like a musical machine that has been set and runs on mechanically. With a little care the heart brings the art, and the heart desiring to praise will, by-and-by, train the voice to time and tune. I would have our service of song to be of the best. I care not for the fineries of music and the prettiness of chants and anthems. As for *instrumental* music, I fear that it often destroys the singing of the congregation and detracts from the spirituality and simplicity of worship.

If I could crowd a house 20 times as big as this by the fine music which some Churches delight in, God forbid I should touch it! Let *us* have the best and most orderly harmony we can make—let Believers come with their hearts in the best humor and their voices in the best tune—and let them take care that there be no slovenliness and discord in the public

worship of the Most High. Take care to praise God also *mentally*. The grandest praise that floats up to the Throne of God is that which rises from silent contemplation and reverent thought. Sit down and think of the greatness of God—His love, His power, His faithfulness, His sovereignty—and as your mind bows prostrate before His majesty you will have praised Him, though not a sound shall have come from you!

Praise God, also, by your *actions*. Your sacrifice to Him of your property—your offering to Him, week by week, of your substance. This is true praise and far less likely to be hypocritical than the mere thanksgiving of words. “You that fear the Lord, praise Him.” The text adds, “Glorify Him, you seed of Jacob”—another form of the same thing. Glorify God—that is, let others know of His glory. Let them know of it from what you *say*, but specially let them know of it from what you *are*. Glorify God in your business, in your recreations, in your shops and in your households. In whatever you eat and drink, glorify the Lord!

In the most common actions of life wear the vestments of your sacred calling and act as a royal priesthood serving the Most High. Glorify your Creator and Redeemer! Glorify Him by endeavoring to spread abroad the Gospel which glorifies Him. Magnify Christ by explaining to men how by believing they shall find peace in Him. Glorify God by yourself—boldly relying on His Word in the teeth of afflicting Providence and over the head of all suspicions and mistrust. Nothing can glorify God more than an Abrahamic faith which staggers not at the promise through unbelief. O you wrestling seed of Jacob, see to it that you fall not off in the matter of glorifying your God!

Lastly, the text says, “Fear Him,” as if this were one of the highest methods of praise. Walk in His sight. Constantly keep the Lord before you. Let Him be at your right hand. Sin not, for in so doing you dishonor Him. *Suffer* rather than sin. Choose the burning fiery furnace rather than bow down before the golden image. Be willing to be despised sooner than *God* should be despised. Be content to bear the cross, rather than Jesus should be crucified afresh. Be sooner put to shame, than Jesus should be put to shame. Thus you will truly praise and magnify the name of the Most High.

I must close by a few remarks which are meant to assist you to carry out the spirit and teaching of this sermon. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, this morning I felt, before I came to this place, very much in the spirit of adoring *gratitude*. I cannot communicate that to you, but the Spirit of God can. And the thoughts that helped me to praise God were something like these—let me give them to you as applied to yourselves—glorify and praise God for He has *saved* you—has saved you *from Hell*—saved you *for Heaven*. Oh, how much is comprehended in the fact that you are saved! Think of the election which ordained you to salvation! Think of the Covenant which secured salvation to you! Think of the Incarnation by

which God came to you, and the precious blood by which you now have been made near to God!

Hurry not over those thoughts though I must shorten my words. Linger at each one of these sacred fountains and drink—and when you have seen what salvation involves in the *past*—think of what it means in the *future*. You shall be preserved to the end! You shall be educated in the school of Divine Grace! You shall be admitted into the home of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. You shall have a resurrection most glorious, and an immortality most illustrious! When days and years are passed, a crown shall adorn your brow, a harp of joy shall fill your hand. All this is yours, Believer—and will you not praise Him?

Make any one of them stand right out, as real to you *personally*, and I think you will say, “Should I refuse to sing, surely the very stones would speak.” Your God has done more than this for you. You are not *barely* saved, like a drowning man just dragged to the bank—you have had more given you than you ever lost! You have been a *gainer* by Adam’s fall! You might almost say, as one of the fathers did, O beata culpa, “O happy fault,” which put me into the position to be so richly endowed as now I am! Had you stood in Adam, you had never been able to call Jesus, “Brother,” for there had been no need for Him to become Incarnate! You had never been washed in the precious blood, for then it had no need to be shed!

Jesus has restored that to you which He took *not* away. He has not merely lifted you from the dunghill to set you among men, but to set you among *princes*, even the princes of His people. Think of the bright roll of promises, of the rich treasure of Covenant provision, of all that you have already had and all that Christ has guaranteed to you of honor, and glory, and immortality—and will you not in the midst of the congregation praise the Lord? Brothers and Sisters, some of us have had special cause for praising God in the fact that we have seen many saved during the last three weeks, and among them those dear to us. Mothers, can you hear the fact without joy? Your children saved! Brothers, your sisters saved! Fathers, your sons and daughters saved! How many has God brought in during the last few weeks?

And you Sunday school teachers who have been the instruments of this—you conductors of our classes who have been honored of God to be spiritual parents! You elders and deacons who have helped us so nobly, and who have now to share the joy of the pastor’s heart in these conversions—will you not bless God? “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be praise.” But oh, we cannot be silent! Not one tongue shall be silent! We will all magnify and bless the Most High! Brothers and Sisters, if these do not suffice to make us praise Him, I would say think of God’s own glorious Self! Think of Father, Son, and Spirit—and what the

triune Jehovah is in His own Person and attributes—and if you do not praise Him, oh, how far must you have backslidden!

Remember the host who now adore Him! When we bless Him, we stand not alone—angels and archangels are at our right hand—cherubim and seraphim are in the same choir! The notes of redeemed men go not up alone—they are united to, and swollen by the unceasing flood of praise which flows from the hierarchy of angels! Think, Beloved, of how you will soon praise Him! How, before many days and weeks are passed, many of us will be with the glorious throng! This last week three of our number have been translated to the skies—more links to Heaven—fewer bonds to earth. They have gone before us. We had almost said, “Would God it were our lot instead of theirs!” They have seen, now, what eye has not seen, and heard what ear has never heard—and their spirits have drunk in what they could not otherwise have conceived!

We shall soon be there! Meanwhile, let each one of us sing—

***“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!
There you that love my Savior sit,
There I would gladly have a place
Among your thrones, or at your feet,
So I might see His face.”***

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GOOD NEWS FOR SEEKERS

NO. 1312

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"They shall praise the Lord that seek Him."
Psalm 22:26.***

THESE are the words of Jesus on the Cross, which the inspired Prophet wrote beforehand concerning Him. When the Savior uttered this sentence, He had just passed through the experience of a seeker as far as it was possible for Him to do so. He had been engaged in earnest, fervent, pleading prayer on account of His having been left without His Father's Presence. He had cried, "Be not You far from Me, O Lord: O My Strength, hasten You to help Me." With strong crying and tears He had implored salvation from the lion's mouth. He had, at last, been heard and delivered, and He exclaimed with joy, "He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the Afflicted, neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him He heard. My praise shall be of You in the great congregation: I will pay My vows before them that fear Him."

Thus, you see, because He had known the agony of an anxious seeker, had been heard in His seeking and, therefore, felt praise rising in His own soul. He learned sympathy with all seeking souls of every age and foresaw that they, also, would magnify the name of the Lord. Jesus knows every experience, for He has passed through the same. Does not this thought already whisper comfort to your soul? My seeking Friend, is it not a good omen that Jesus was heard in that He feared? Does not the fact that Jesus can sympathize with you raise some hope in your heart? It is true He never lived without the Presence of God, as you have done, in consequence of personal *sin*, but for a grand reason, namely, because He stood in our place, He was forsaken of God and, therefore, was compelled to cry after Him, even as you are doing, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?"

He, therefore, understands the grief which troubles your fainting heart and enters into all your distresses while you are bewailing yourself and lamenting that you cry in the daytime and the Lord hears not, and that in the night season you plead in vain. This reflection, at the outset of our discourse, should be as the note of a silver bell, soft and restful to your wearied ears! Jesus foretells your success in seeking as the result of His own experience! Our Lord's great objective in laying down His life upon the Cross was the Father's Glory. No other objective was worthy of Him. He sought the salvation of men in order to the Glory of God and, so, in His extreme agonies our Lord Jesus placed this joy before Him and consoled Himself by foreseeing that God would be praised by seeking souls in consequence of His death.

He solaces Himself with the reflection, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship You.” He dwells upon the Truth of God that, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him,” and He sees in this honoring of God the reward which His soul sought after! What He foresaw from His lookout upon the Cross is actually taking place everyday—for seekers are learning to be *singers*! The choirs of Heaven, how shall they be filled? As yet there are many vacant seats and the full chorus is not as yet heard. From where shall they come who shall complete that orchestra? They shall be called by Grace from among ungodly men and led to long for God—“They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

Fear not, for the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and no part of Heaven’s music shall flag for lack of minstrels. From the choirs of earth the saintly souls are being withdrawn, one by one, to unite in the harmonies of Heaven. Just when their voices become most mellow and most clear, they leave us for the ivory palaces and their ceaseless melodies. How shall the praises of God be maintained here below? If one by one the sweet voices grow dumb and the singers are laid in the sepulcher, from where shall we replenish our numbers and maintain the daily praise? Fear not, there are new voices on the way. “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” There are souls now weeping because of sin and longing for a Savior who will soon find Him—and then will become most hearty singers of the new song! They are coming, coming in their thousands even now!

The music of praise shall be continued as long as the sun and the Glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From generation to generation shall the name of the Lord be praised! This brings great gladness to my spirit as a pastor, for I know that there are some present here this day who are seeking the Savior, and it rejoices me to know that they will soon be among the most earnest in praising the name of the Lord! They will not always wear sackcloth. They will put on the silken garments of praise before long. We do not know where they are, for seekers are usually very quiet and retired, but there are some present whom I suspect of secret searches after my Lord. The Lord has seen them as He did Nathanael under the fig tree and even His servant begins to spy them out.

There are young children seeking—boys and girls who dare not yet speak to their parents—are in private, praying for Grace. Blessed be the Savior of the young! These little ones shall grow up and praise God when their fathers have gone to their reward. Young men and maidens, too, are turning to Christ, though perhaps they would blush if personally charged with the holy search. Men, too, who are in their prime, are coming to Jesus to spend their strength in the service of the Redeemer. The Lord is gently touching many hearts and drawing them to Himself, and each one, when he finds the Lord, will make a sweet singer to swell the tune of Divine Grace. Perhaps in this place there may even be some aged people whose voices are becoming feeble with lapse of years who, nevertheless,

will sing with their hearts most melodiously to the Glory of the God of all long-suffering. Be they who they may, when they have found the Lord Jesus Christ, they must and will glorify the God of their salvation!

So, you see, the great objective of our Lord Jesus was that God might be praised and He foreknew that this objective would be effected by the praises of those who, in seeking, should find His Grace. This assurance which Christ here gives, that they shall praise the Lord that seek Him, ought to be very encouraging to all seekers, for, my dear Friends, it were wise for you to seek the Lord even if you had no stronger hope than a mere, "perhaps He will save us." It would be wise to do as the men of Nineveh did, to repent and turn to God, even if you had nothing better than, "who can tell?" to encourage you in so doing. But since our Lord Jesus Christ, in dying, felt confident that seekers would find peace and joy and so would come to praise God, we have double comfort. He could not have been mistaken, rest you sure of that and, therefore, seekers shall have reasons for praising the Lord!

It is from the fact that He died upon the Cross that it becomes certain that the seeker shall be a finder. This it was which made Him sustain the scorn of men, the faintness of fear, the darkness of death and the horror of desertion—because He knew that His prostration in agony and His yielding up the ghost would render it certain that no seeking soul should ever seek the Lord in vain! Had there been no suffering Savior, there had been no way to God. Had there been no dying Christ, there had been no living consolation! But now that His atoning work is accomplished and He has said, "It is finished," they shall live that seek Him and their lives shall be spent in His praise.

The subject of this morning is the plain statement of the text in which I shall handle in all simplicity of speech. "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." And you have here three things—the persons, the promise, and the praise.

I. Observe first of all, THE PERSONS—"They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Notice how unrestricted the description of the persons is. It does not say *certain* persons who seek God, but *any* persons who seek Him shall ultimately praise Him. You, my Friend, among the rest! None are excluded from the sweep of this precious promise, provided they are really seekers. In other matters many seek and but few find, but the rule of the Gospel Kingdom is, "He that seeks finds," and the rule has no exceptions!

But what is meant by "seeking" the Lord? Who are the seekers to whom this promise is made? They include, first, *those who really desire to commune with God*. Some, when they say a prayer, are satisfied with the mere *form*. But he who really prays, desires to *converse* with God in prayer—he longs that his desires should be heard by the Most High—and that he should obtain the needed blessings for which he asks. No devotion can ever satisfy a true heart but that which brings him into contact with the Most High. We do not seek fine words in prayer. We do not seek choice music in praise. We do not seek the Church—we seek God—and when any

man is really awakened to seek after God, although he may know but very little yet of the true faith, he has a desire within him to which the Lord always gives an answer of peace.

You may be a stranger and a foreigner and you may have stepped in here, dear Friend, quite ignorant of the doctrine and teaching of the Lord Jesus. But if in any nation any man shall really seek after the one only living and true God, he shall receive further light and shall ultimately come to praise the Lord! Those who seek after God Himself very soon discover that they are at a distance from Him, so that one mark of a true seeker is that he is humbly conscious of his having gone astray from the Lord, his God. What a man has, he does not seek after, and what is close at hand is not an object of search. But when a man longs after God, there suddenly springs up in his soul a consciousness that he has departed from the Most High. And he cries unto the Lord to remove the separating mountains and to fill up the dividing valleys—and he that does this, in very deed, is the man who shall yet live to praise God!

The soul that is, *by the Holy Spirit* made conscious of distance from God, if it is really seeking God, is anxious that everything should be taken away which created the distance and which keeps it apart from God. If it is unpardoned sin, the true seeker longs for such forgiveness as God may justly give. If it is the power of sin in his members, the earnest seeker cries for power to overcome every *thought* of evil. The awakened soul soon becomes conscious that nothing separates it from God like the love of sin and, therefore, it seeks to have sin slain, lust crucified and the enmity towards God forever destroyed. O how we long to be delivered from every false way, from every pollution and even from every *appearance* of evil which would tend to prevent our walking in happy fellowship with God!

We know that two cannot walk together except they are agreed and, therefore, seeking after the Lord leads the soul to grieve over sin and to strive, with all its might with holy violence, to break away from pernicious habits which bind it, and to tread under foot tendencies which would lead it astray. Are you conscious, dear Friend, of such a seeking of God as this? Do you desire Him as the weary watcher on the castle wall desires the morning light? Do you pray to have everything taken away from you which separates between you and your God? Do you long for someone to bridge the chasm and to bring you near to the Lord in spirit and in truth? If such is the case, the promise of the text is certainly yours! “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

What the seeker longs for is that he may so approach the Lord as to feel himself a Friend of God and know that Divine love is most surely all his own. Oh, the sweetness of knowing that there is nothing between God and you but amity and Love—that all the sad past is forgiven and even blotted out of the Lord’s remembrance—and that now you may speak to Him without fear and trust in Him without dread! Atonement has removed His righteous wrath and settled fast His boundless love! Now you may come and lie in His bosom, for it is your *Father’s* bosom and hide, even, under the dark shadow of His wing, for it is your *Father’s* wing and it will cover

you from all harm even as a hen covers her chickens. It is the prelude of Heaven to feel that—

***“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas,
This amazing God is ours!”***

All His power is for our protection. All His wisdom for our direction. All His tenderness for our consolation. All His truth for our encouragement. All His grandeur for our ennobling. All the infinity of His Nature for our eternal glorification! He wills that we should be partakers of the Divine Nature and dwellers in the Divine blessedness.

This is very sweet and this is what the soul that seeks God is following after. It aspires to walk with God and to dwell with God. It longs to abide in Him, to be forever His beloved, to be accepted in Christ Jesus and to become daily more and more conformed to the Divine image. To be cleansed from everything which is alien to the design and the Nature of God and to be perfectly at one with God is our grand ambition! O Beloved, this is a blessed longing for a soul to have and he that has it, by the Grace of God, though he may mourn and languish now, shall, one day, praise and bless God!

It may help you to discern whether you have such longings if I say that the man who really has them is in earnest to seek after God *now*. He hates the idea of postponement. A moment's delay to a seeking soul is a dreadful thought—he desires immediate salvation—he would be reconciled to God at once! As the hungry man does not wish the meal to be postponed, but would gladly be fed at once, so in the true seeker his heart and his flesh cry out after God, for the living God—even as the hart pants after the water brooks, so does his soul pant after God. This desire is abiding, and cannot be turned aside to another object.

Not always can a man perceive this desire with vividness because he is in the world and his thoughts must be somewhat diverted by his ordinary business and cares. But, still, the desire is always alive in his soul and whenever the stress of worldly care is taken from his mind, his heart flies back to its longings and begins, again, to sigh and cry after God. Such a man will break away from his fellows to plead with God alone. He will be praying without so much as the movement of his lips, even when he is in company. He will lie at night tossing on his bed and saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” He will wake in the morning with this desire strong upon him and will seek after the Lord as one that searches for hidden treasure. This desire hovers over the man who is subject to it. It overshadows his being and masters him completely! I have known it deprive food of its tastefulness and home of its comfort and make the seeker cry, “Woe is me until I find my God! I draw near unto the gates of death until He appears! Let others ask for the increase of their corn and wine, Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me, for this, and only this, will content my soul.”

Now, Beloved, all this seeking of the soul which I have feebly described prepares a man for praising God when he finds mercy at the Cross, as you will readily see upon reflection. This is the *Holy Spirit's* way of tuning the harp for future Psalmody. No man can praise God like the Believer who has sought the Savior, sorrowing as His mother and Joseph did in the days of His flesh, and at the last found Him. The seeker knows the bitterness of sin and, therefore, he can appreciate the sweetness of pardoning mercy. He has been made to know his own lost estate and, in consequence, he will be the more rejoiced when he is *found* by the Good Shepherd and restored to his home by his Great Father!

He knows his helplessness. No one knows it better, for he has tried the works of the Law and failed. He has even tried prayer and Gospel ordinances—but he has not succeeded in them so as to find rest unto his soul. He knows that he is broken in pieces, all asunder and, therefore, when he finds his help in the Lord Jesus, even he who feels himself to be such a helpless worm, what praises Christ will have and what love in return for all His gracious aid! The poor seeker has known in his own heart what he deserves at the hands of the Law. He has had a glimpse of the world to come and the terrors of Judgment and the burnings of eternal wrath. And with the unquenchable fire scorching his very face, he must and will praise His Deliverer who has plucked him as a brand out of the burning!

All his seeking, I say, helps him to prize Divine Mercy, when he receives it, and trains him to praise God according to the promise of our text, "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Never is a babe so dear to its mother as when it has just been restored from a sickness which threatened its life. Never does a father rejoice over his little child so much as when he has been long lost in the woods and, after a weary search, is at last brought home. No gold is so precious to a man as that which he has earned by hard labor and self-denial—the harder he has toiled to gain it, the more rejoiced is he when, at length, he has enough to permit him to rest.

No freedom is so precious as the new found liberty of a slave, no enlargement so joyous as that of one who has long been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron. No return to a country is so full of delight as that of sorrowful exiles who come back from cruel Babylon, by whose waters they sat and wept, yes, wept when they remembered Zion. "When the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like men that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad."

If there are any seekers here at this good hour, I hope that if they have seen themselves in the picture which I have outlined they will still further be enabled to take heart and be of good courage! I am laboring, this morning, to drop words of consolation, even as the reapers, when Ruth came

into the field of Boaz, let fall handfuls on purpose for her, that she might glean and return with a full portion.

II. Now we come to THE PROMISE—"They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Blessed promise! It is gradually, but surely, fulfilled. First, *it is fulfilled unconsciously while the man is seeking*. Did you ever think of this? Without knowing it, the humble seeker is *already* praising God. That confession of sin which he made with so many tears was a glorifying of God by bearing witness to the justice of God's Law and the truth of the charges which it brings against our fallen nature. "My son," said Joshua even to Achan, "I pray you give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him." There is a measure of true praise in confession and it is as pure and real as that which angels present before the Throne of God!

The seeker, when he acknowledges that he deserves to be sent to Hell is, in fact, praising Divine Justice—he is adoring the Judge of All. Even though in so doing there is a mixture of unbelief and a forgetfulness of other attributes, yet there is a firm belief in Divine Justice and a suppliant adoration of it which is far from being unacceptable. There is also in the seeker a measure of delight in God's mercy, for while the poor sin-smitten soul is craving for pardon, it confesses heartily how sweet mercy is, in itself, if it might but obtain it, how gracious forgiveness is, how precious loving kindness is if it might but be favored with them. No living man has so keen an eye to the tender attributes of God as he whose soul is covered all over with wounds, bruises and putrefying sores through a sense of sin!

Meanwhile, the seeking soul is really praising the Lord Jesus by appreciating the preciousness of His love and the value of His blood and saying within itself, "Oh that I might know the value of these in my own case! Oh that I could but touch the hem of His garment for myself! Would God I did but know what it is to be washed in His blood and to be covered with His righteousness!" There is in all these emotions a measure of latent praise none the less accepted of the Lord because it is not perceived by man. There is a precious fragrance of deep reverence and holy awe about a seeker's prayers which render them sweet unto the Lord. So, you see, the seeker is already praising God and, thus, in a measure, the promise is fulfilled.

But the praise exceedingly abounds when the desire is granted. As a bird lies hidden among the heather but is seen when, at last, it is startled and made to take to the wing, so does praise take to the wing and display itself when, at last, those who seek the Lord are permitted to find Him! What thunderclaps of praise come from poor sinners when they have just found their All in All in God in the Person of Christ Jesus! Then their joy becomes almost too much for them to hold, vastly too much for them to express! Oh, the praises, the day and night praises, the continuous praises which rise from the returning, repenting soul which has, at last, felt the Father's arms around its neck and the Father's warm kisses on its cheek, and is sitting down at the table where the happy household eat and drink and are merry! *Praising* time has come, indeed, when *finding*

time has arrived. Happy day! Happy day when we meet with God in Jesus Christ!

Now, dear Soul, the promise secures that you *shall* find God in Christ, because the promise is that you shall praise Him—and you cannot praise *Him* until you have found His Grace and favor in *Christ*. Therefore I am sure you will enjoy salvation before long! Oh, it is not to be thought of that a soul should seek after God and not find Him! Imagine the penitent prodigal son seeking after his father, reaching his father's house, searching in the chambers of his father's mansion, going abroad into his father's fields and crying, "My Father, my Father, I have lost you! Will you not be found of me?"—doing all this, I say, and doing this by the month and the year together and not finding his father, after all! There is no such parable as that in Holy Writ, nor could there be one—it would not be God-like or Christ-like!

There is nothing like it, as a matter of fact, nor shall there ever be, except where *unbelief* comes in and wickedly misrepresents the Lord. My God, in Your universe You think of everything! The beast has its lair and the sea bird has its home. The fish finds its food and even the insect has a table provided for it! And as for Your poor creature, man, though greatly erring, You do not forget him! You have made us wonder that You are so mindful of him, that You have such tender regard unto him and do visit him so graciously! It is not possible that any of all your creatures should be seeking after You like a child that cries after its mother in the dark and not find You, after all! You are not far from any of us!

God may try you, He may let you wait awhile before He grants you the comforts of realized pardon. There may be that about you, especially that *unbelief* about you, which prevents your finding Him, but found of you He must be and He shall be before long! Which of you has a child who has offended you, but who, with many tears, comes to you and says, "My Father, forgive me," and you will not forgive? You know that, for a while, you may chide and say, "The offense is great, it has been oft repeated. I cannot readily pass by it this time." But if you see your child still weeping and still with a broken heart imploring your favor, does not your heart yearn over him? Do you not long to say, "My Child, I have forgiven and forgotten your fault"? You know you do! And if you, being evil, know how to forgive your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give pardon and Free Grace to them that seek Him! You shall praise the Lord that seek Him! Lay hold on that promise.

Well, and when you have found Him, to the joy of your heart, the promise of the text shall be fulfilled in a third sense, *for you shall go on seeking and you shall go on praising*. Seeking the Lord is sometimes used in Scripture as the alias for *true religion* and it very aptly describes it, for our life consists in endeavoring to know the Lord yet more and more. Now, since Christ has died, true religion is *praise*. The genius of the Christian religion is joy, its proper spirit is delight, and its highest exercise is praise! "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Now we go up to the House of the Lord with the congregation of the faithful with songs of holy joy! Now we

draw near to the feast of communion at the Lord's Table with delight and, before we depart, we sing a hymn. Now we go forth to the good fight of faith and our battle song is a jubilant Psalm! Now do we even go to our beds of painful sickness and sing the Lord's high praises there! Since Jesus died, our heaviness is dead, our murmuring is buried in His tomb. Since Jesus endured the wrath of God, which was due to us, that wrath has passed away forever and it is now the privilege, no, the *duty* of every Christian to rejoice in the Lord! Let all the people praise Him and let the redeemed of the Lord be foremost in the joy!

Nor is this all. There comes another day and another state, when we shall be in another place and then we shall praise the Lord, even we who seek Him. *Every soul that has sought God on earth shall see Him and delight in Him in Heaven.* What praises will you and I pour forth then! There are reasons why I consider myself to have been the greatest debtor to God of any man that ever lived—I can see special undeserving in my own case and special mercies on the part of God towards me. I challenge you all to bear witness that I am under bond to praise the name of the Lord more ardently than you because I am more deeply indebted to His Grace. Each one of you, I have no doubt, cater to the same vein of thought and not without reason. You will each feel as if you had the most cause to magnify His blessed name when you find yourself seated among the blood-washed and in your hands the palm branch of eternal victory! Oh, what a song shall go up then! What “shouts of them that triumph, and songs of them that feast” shall make Heaven's high arches ring in that glad day when “they shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

What a promise this is! I leave it in your hands, only remarking that it takes the most delightful shape possible, because if you are a true seeker, the thing you want above all things is to be able to glorify God! You desire to be pardoned and to be renewed in heart with this objective—that you may be able to render acceptable praise to Him whom you have offended. Well, that is the very blessing which is promised you! “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” And it includes, of course, the removal from your heart of everything that would prevent your praising Him—and the breaking down of every barrier that would keep you back from joining celestial choirs who, day without night, with their eternal symphonies circle His throne rejoicing!

III. Thirdly, THE PRAISE. “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” What will the praise be about? What will be the subject of the song? Ah, now I have before me an utterly endless task if I am to catalog the subjects of praise for a seeking soul when it has found peace with God! Why, Beloved, *we praise Him to think that we found Him as we did!* Some of you found Him so readily—you only heard a sermon and that one sermon led you to Christ! Others of us did not find Him so soon or so easily and, yet, we found Him in the very nick of time. Just when we were going to lie down in despair, when Satan suggested that no hope remained, then man's extremity was God's opportunity and we found the Lord exactly to the tick of the clock at the best moment! Blessed be His name!

Oh, to find Him at all! How great a blessing! If a man should lie a thousand years in the prison of despair, yet if he did but find Christ, at last, it were worth while to have suffered the thousand years of daily death! If we may but at last say, “My God, my God,” with unfaltering tongue and a heart that feels itself reconciled to Him, we shall make it our Heaven to praise Him with all our might! The chief point of praise, perhaps, with most saved ones is *that they found such a Savior*. Our Lord is represented as on the Cross when He utters this promise, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him,” and when we find the Lord we always find Him in Christ upon the Cross—and the Atonement becomes a chief feature in our joy.

Do you remember the first time you had a view, by faith, of the Incarnate God bearing human sin—when that grand doctrine of Substitution flashed on your soul like the first sight of the sun to a man that had been blind? Do you remember when you first really knew that God did lay on Christ *your* iniquities and that *He* was punished instead of you, so that you cannot, by any possibility, be punished, for it were unjust, twice, to exact the penalty for one offense? Did you ever get the glory of that light concentrated on your soul, so that you knew, absolutely, that God, for Christ’s sake had forgiven you and justly forgiven you because of the blood of Jesus? Did you ever drink in the meaning of those words, “faithful and just to forgive us our sins”? Then I know after the first overwhelming impression of intense delight you did praise God, yes, and you have not left off doing so, for there is enough in that one simple fact to set you praising God throughout the ages of eternity! Salvation by substitution so satisfies the conscience that it fills the heart with overflowing delight—

***“The love I prize is righteous love,
Inscribed on the sin-bearing tree.
Love that exacts the sinner’s debt,
Yet, in exacting sets him free.
Love that condemns the sinner’s sin,
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals.
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet
In saving, righteousness reveals.
This is the love that calms my heart,
That soothes each conscience-pang within,
That pacifies my guilty dread,
And frees me from the power of sin.”***

Oh, to think that such an One as Jesus should be our Savior, that Heaven’s Darling should condescend to assume our nature and become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! That He should live such a life and die such a death! That He should present to God a work so perfect, without flaw, without excess! Is there not room for praises here? Now we are as clean before the Lord because we have been washed in Christ’s blood, yes, we are as pure as if we had never sinned! And standing arrayed in Christ’s righteousness, we are more righteous, even, than Adam before the Fall, for he had only a human righteousness, but we have a *Divine* righteousness. In Christ Jesus, the second Adam, we are nearer to God than if we had been born of the first Adam while untainted by sin!

Now, there is a man who is akin to God, even Jesus, our Brother, who is also very God of very God. Man is exalted to the highest conceivable degree in the Person of Jesus Christ and we have become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. As the seeking soul learns more and more of this, it praises God more and more. Is it not so? Does not your soul bless the Savior? Yes, and the longer we live and the more we know about the Lord the more we find causes for extolling Him! Indeed, everything around us, within us and above us seems to suggest a reason for blessing His name! Think of *our security*, at this moment and, again, praise God!

Many a song has been poured from my soul as I have remembered that my Lord has given me a life that cannot die—that He has written me on His heart from where my name can never be erased—that He has made a Covenant with me to which He has pledged His honor and His word! And He has sealed it with His blood! I am His child and, by His Grace, I know that He never did and never can tear from His heart's love even the least of His children—the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His peace can never be removed—for so He has declared—

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

There is abundant raw material for praise in all this! Where can you find better? “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

Brothers and Sisters, *we see cause for praise in the very fact that we ever sought the Lord at all.* Think what it was which made us seek Him—what but Sovereign Grace? What bedewed our eyes with the first tears of repentance? What fetched from our soul the first sigh of desire after Christ? What, I say, but GRACE? And from where came that Grace but from His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was? And from where that purpose but from His Divine Sovereignty, even as it is written, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? Therefore let us glorify His holy name and think not of works or merits, or anything in man that could have won for us the love of the Most High! Boasting is excluded, but praise is secured! Give all the Glory to His holy name forever and forever, and let the text stand true in your case, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

Our final thought on this occasion shall be, if these things are so, let us praise the Lord, even we who have sought Him! If our poor friends, the seekers, are soon to bless His name, let us show them the way! We sought and we found—let us magnify the Lord at once! Do you think we praise our heavenly Father half enough? Do we not rob Him of His Glory by getting down in the dumps and giving way to care and, perhaps, to murmur-

ing? This is not the right spirit for a Christian! Where there is so much undeserved mercy, there ought to be more grateful joy! Do you think we are demonstrative enough in our praise? I am sure we are not! Few around us would ever dream that we were half as favored as we are!

Do we sing one-tenth as much as Christians ought to sing? We hum over a tune, now and then, very quietly, but we are terribly afraid of being heard and of annoying people. I do not find the giddy world much afraid of annoying us with *their* songs—do they not wake us up at night with their lewd discords? If we were half as earnest as we ought to be, we should sometimes, at least, make the streets ring with the praises of God! It would be well to be a little indiscreet occasionally and, now and then, provoke the charge of fanaticism, for this would be a proof of earnest sincerity! Once, at least, in our lives we should let our Lord ride through the streets, again, in public triumph amid our own most hearty enthusiasm, till Pharisees rebuke us and say, “Do you hear what these say?”—

***“Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break!
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Savior’s praises speak.”***

Yes, and all inharmonious tongues, too! Let all creatures that have breath praise the Lord—

***“Yes we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame.
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To Your adored name!”***

May the Lord set our hearts on fire! May we be full of exulting praise, marching on with hosannas and hallelujahs, magnifying, praising and extolling the Lord whom we sought in the hour of trouble, and whom we found in the day of His Grace!

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 22.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—563, 775, 548.***

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THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

NO. 1047

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 21, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord:
and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You.”
Psalm 22:27.*

SOME have thought that this Psalm was used as a soliloquy by our Lord when He was expiring upon the Cross. It may be so. Fitter words could scarcely have been conceived, even by our Lord Himself. We must not, however, strain a point to establish a conjecture, nor attempt to prove that which is not revealed to us. We have no sort of hesitation, however, in asserting that this Psalm describes both the outward sufferings and the inward emotions of our expiring Lord—and in that light it becomes a very wonderful Psalm, indeed. Its clear prophetic description is an evidence of our Lord's Messiahship, and indeed, it is so full and plain that it is a key to His sufferings.

Here the Prophet explains the Evangelist, just as in ordinary cases the Evangelist is the expositor of the Prophet. Towards the close of this Psalm its tone is singularly altered—mournfulness departs and joy occupies its place—the mighty Hero sees the conflict ended, anticipates the victory and begins to chant the conquerors paean. We have selected our text out of that part of the Psalm which overflows with the joy of anticipated triumph, and we trust that this morning the joy of the Lord may be our strength so that we may be moved to prayer and nerved for action. As this is the annual Missionary Sabbath, I feel bound to preach upon the subject, yet, while I do so, I shall at the same time desire to speak personally to the souls of all present.

Remembering that we are in a dying world, I, a dying preacher to dying hearers, would not deliver even a single discourse without appealing to the consciences and aiming at the hearts of those who are present. Because we are thinking of heathens, or of the coming triumphs of Christ in the latter days, we must not forget those who are perishing before our eyes. Excuse me, therefore—no, *commend* me—if every now and then I drive right away from the subject to assail men's hearts.

I. Our first point this morning is, I think, pretty clear in the text, namely, that THE CONVERSION OF THE NATIONS TO GOD MAY BE EXPECTED. “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship Him.” We are all agreed that such a thing is to be desired. It is, indeed, a “consummation devoutly to be wished,” since this is the true and only remedy for the ills of human society. Nothing else will ever cure earth's woes but the bringing of her back again to her God from whom she has wandered.

We are equally well agreed, I think, in the sorrowful conclusion that such a consummation does not appear at all likely to the eye of observation and the judgment of reason. How little progress has the Kingdom of God made in the world in these latter days! In the heroic age of Christianity the Cross was borne as a conquering symbol from land to land in a short space of time! The Apostles were clothed with extraordinary power and their immediate successors, retaining much of their spirit, went from strength to strength till the nations heard the testimony of Christ and myriads submitted to it.

A long pause has intervened, with only occasional breaks, such as the Reformation, the times of refreshing under the Methodists, and the partial revival of our own times. Despite these hopeful outbreaks of life, the progress of Christianity has been very slight, indeed, compared with what might have been expected from its rapid strides at the commencement, and compared with what might have been expected from the force of its essential truth, and from the fact that its message commends itself to the best sympathies of the human heart. Alas, alas! The battle is long and weary, and the end is not yet. So far from going on to victory, we so decline that men taunt us with the decadence of our holy faith and foretell that we are nearing the period of decay when something better will supplant the Gospel.

We do not believe the insinuation! We reject it as blasphemy! And yet we should not wonder if our lethargy and non-success have been the soil in which this noxious thought has grown. It is unquestionable that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, except to those who regard it with very sanguine eyes, has not progressed of late as we could have desired. It would be fair to conclude, judging of things to come by the things that appear, and setting aside the hopes of faith and the teachings of Revelation, that it is not probable that so spiritual a faith as that of Christ should ever subdue the nations. Men need a coarser system of religion—their minds are groveling, they desire a creed which will tolerate their lusts—they crave a religion which will afford scope for their pride and their self-will.

The doctrines of the Gospel kindle men's hostility when they are fairly and honestly preached—there would be more opposition to it if it were not so frequently diluted, and even falsified by its professed teachers. True Christianity causes a warfare and a division, and has to force its way against inveterate hatred. Only the Grace of God can make it spread. Yet, for all that, Brothers and Sisters, we judge not after the sight of the eyes, neither do we look into the future through the glass of human calculation. We believe in God, and viewing the future with the eyes of faith, we expect a complete triumph! As in the past, so in the future, the Church walks by faith. We are to believe, and we shall be established. The sooner we have done with reasoning and conclusions drawn from things that can be seen, the better! After all, our only reason, as far as I can see, for the firm conviction that the Gospel will yet subdue the nations lies in this—that God will have it so—He has promised it, and He can effect His own purposes.

Certain persons in these days tell us that we must not expect to see the nations converted to Christ, nor hope for any general spread of the Gospel. I have heard it said that we are to look upon the world as a great wreck, going to pieces out on the yonder surf where a thousand breakers loosen every timber, and quicksand is hungry to engulf the whole—and all we can hope to do with a life boat is to pluck, here and there, a soul out of the general catastrophe. God's elect will be rescued but the nations will perish, and the mass of mankind will be castaways. According to this theory we are not to hope for a glorious future upon earth in the last days—at least not one brought about by the conversion of men under the preaching of the Gospel.

They give us another picture which I need not paint this morning—but the universal spread of the Gospel in the world is thought by them to be unscriptural! I cannot agree with them. I think them in error, and I have these reasons for it. Our new-born nature craves for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom and prays for it instinctively. Nor is the instinct wrong—for the Lord, when He was asked by His disciples to teach them to pray, said, "After this manner pray you," and He gave them as part of the manner of their prayer the right to express the desire, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth as it is done in Heaven." Do not your souls long for the conversion of your families? Does not the same desire make you pant for the salvation of the people among whom you dwell—your townfolk and your countrymen?

And when you are nearest to God and most spiritual, have you not still larger aspirations? Do you not pray for the conversion of all mankind? Yes, have you not found yourselves breaking out with a cry like that of dying David, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory?" Do you think the Lord has taught His spiritual people to desire this, not in moments of excitement, but in times of sober fellowship with Himself, and will He not grant it? Surely God the Holy Spirit knows what the mind of God is! Does He not make intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He has taught us to desire and long for, and pray for this because He intends to give it! The prayers of the saints are the shadows of coming blessings. As you may prognosticate the storm by the motion of the mercury in the barometer, so may you much more infallibly foretell the future from the emotions, the longings, and the agonies of the saints of God! Therefore I feel that the whole earth must be filled with the Lord's Glory because the souls of His saints pine for it.

Does it not, again, seem a very unlikely thing to you that on this earth, where God has stood, as it were, foot to foot in the Person of His dear Son with evil, that evil, after all, should vanquish Him and win the day? Eden has been blasted, Calvary has been stained with blood—this is defeat so far—at least Satan thinks it so. Will it ever end in triumph? Shall it always be that the Deliverer's heel shall be bruised, and is the time never coming when the same wounded heel shall break the serpent's head? Is half the prophecy uttered at the gates of Eden to be fulfilled, and the other half to be null and void?

Up to this moment we see the Church persecuted, the Truth of God despised, God dishonored, Christ rejected, idols set up, doctrines of devils taught and the whole world lying in the Wicked One! Is Satan forever to have his own way? Shall the King of kings never win this world unto Himself? Has He not died for the whole world? Is it not so said? We who hold the doctrine of a special redemption of the elect, and hold it firmly, yet never quarrel with those texts which speak of the redemption of the race, because we look for it, and believe that it will yet come. We trust the time shall hasten on when, as the morning chases away the darkness, so the Truth, and the right, and the Christ of God shall, from among the sons of men, destroy sin, error, and rebellion! In his den has the old lion been bearded, and in his own forest shall he be slain?

Even here, where Satan has held high carnival and been Lord of Misrule, even here shall he be defeated and his power abolished! The strong man in his own house shall be bound by a stronger than he, and Christ shall be victor where the foe of God and man once reigned supreme. For this purpose He came into the world, that He might destroy the works of the devil, and I see not how this could well be if there is not to be a wider spread of the Gospel than we have seen as yet. And again, Brethren, we look for the extension of the Redeemer's reign in the world on account of the promises of reward for His Redemption—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

Do you think that He is satisfied yet—satisfied with a mere handful? For, certainly, not enough are saved as yet out of the world's vast population. Is Christ, the great King, satisfied to settle down in a corner of the world as ruler over one scanty province? Think you that He does not expect to divide the spoil with the strong when the nations shall flock unto Him and their kings shall bow down before Him? Brothers and Sisters, the present state of affairs does not satisfy *us*, and since our Lord's heart is larger than ours, it surely does not satisfy Him! What Christian minister is satisfied with the progress of the Gospel? What lover of the souls of men is fully at ease under present conditions? I shall never be at peace while so many of my hearers are unsaved!

Yet, none of us bore the pangs which He endured, and cannot, therefore, measure the vastness of the expected recompense. Surely the ascended Redeemer deserves a numerous seed, a countless progeny, to be His crown of rejoicing! Shall not Jesus at last have the pre-eminence? Shall He not win more souls than Satan shall destroy? Is sin to prove itself mightier than Divine love? When the tale is told and the number is made up, shall there be more in the kingdom of Satan than in the kingdom of Christ? Shall it be so? I dare not think it! My soul revolts from the dreary supposition and therefore I look forward to the spread of the Gospel over all parts of the world, and a period of the ingathering of the sons of men to Christ so large as to make up innumerable multitudes and swell the army of the saved beyond all human computation.

But, Brethren, these are only inferences and hopes, though fairly gathered from our spiritual instincts and from Divine Truths. Let us turn to Scripture and read a few of its utterances which appear to us full of

hope for the future. David shall be our first witness. Mark you, I am not about to give all the texts on the subject, nor a tenth of them, nor even do I suppose that I have selected the best. I have merely gathered a few as I remembered them. In the Second Psalm God declares, concerning His dear Son, our Lord Jesus, "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree the Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You." What is added? "Ask of Me and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." Will the heathen never be His? Shall He never possess the far-off lands and call them His own? Be you sure that His prayers will yet be heard!

Turn next to that Seventy-second Psalm, of which I might read the whole, for from beginning to end it flows over with gracious promises, but, as we should not have time to go through the whole, let us read from the eighth verse. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." Turn to the 17th verse—"His name shall endure forever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him blessed."

If David is questioned yet again, he will reply in something like the same manner in the Eighty-sixth Psalm, at the ninth verse—"All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name." We see not this as yet, neither in any era of human history has it been performed. We, therefore, confidently expect it by-and-by. That glorious Evangelist of old prophecy, Isaiah, has many passages to the same effect, and we will, therefore, quote one or two of them. In his second chapter, at the second verse, you will find him saying, "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Of a similar purport is the 11th chapter pretty nearly all through, where he speaks of the days of peace wherein the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and says in the ninth verse, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The 40th chapter also is a bright window through which the future may be seen resplendent in the sunlight of God. If you turn to the fifth verse, the Lord concerning the first advent of His

Son: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." This is but one verse out of many similar ones in the same connection.

In the 60th chapter he begins, as you know, with these words, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see, and flow together, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you. The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you."

The whole of Isaiah is full of such clear visions and plain promises. If you will read in Daniel, you will find that the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands is to break in pieces the image of gold, and iron, and clay, and is to fill the whole earth. In one of his night visions Daniel saw four great kingdoms, typified by four beasts. All these have passed away, as we know, and another part of his dream is even now being fulfilled. But then he saw a fifth monarchy, altogether dissimilar from those which had preceded it, which is most assuredly to be of equal extent, consequence, and glory with those which preceded it—yes, it is infinitely to excel them.

We do not pretend to go into the minutiae now or at any other time, for our knowledge thereof is slender but, at any rate, we gather from Daniel and others that a day is coming when the kingdom of Christ shall be conspicuously among men and His scepter of right and truth shall sway mankind. Time fails me, otherwise there are many passages I might mention, such as Habakkuk 2:14—"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord," and Micah 4:1-3. Note, however, our Lord's own parable of the mustard seed which was the least of all seeds, but it grew and became a great tree. Some may think that the mustard seed parable has been fulfilled, and to these we grant that, compared with its beginning, the Gospel is a great tree—but I cannot feel that we have reached at all to the satisfactory fulfillment of the prophetic parable as yet.

There are birds of the air yet to come and build their nests in the branches of it. Though little at the beginning, the Gospel kingdom is to be far greater than any of us have dreamed. The beloved Disciple, I think, learned the future aright, when in the visions of God at Patmos, he heard a voice which said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." That is yet to be, and for it we hopefully and joyfully look.

Now, Brethren, I have reminded you of this doctrine, which I believe is held by most of you, not because I thought you needed confirming in the belief of it, but because the consideration of its joyful hope is likely to fire you with holy ardor. We shall not labor well if we do not labor in hope. If we think mission work to be a forlorn enterprise, we shall go about it with faint hearts and slack hands. If we do not believe in a great success ultimately to come, we shall not use great means. We shall straiten ourselves in action if we narrow our expectations. Certainly we have not used very great means yet, for all the missionary operations now being carried on in the world are very little more than casting the crumbs from under our table to the poor heathen dogs. We have not done so much as to give the fragments of the Gospel feast to the nations.

A few cheese parings and candle ends Christians have given away to missions, but little more. Liberality has barely yielded the tail-corn of her barn and the dregs of her wine vat. We have not learned self-denial for Christ, and pinching ourselves for His service is a rare thing among us. The men who have gone abroad have not always been the pick and chief of the Church—honor to them that they have gone at all—but small honor to the men of greater ability who ought to have gone forth but have laid out their talents in some poor worldly business, and occupied their time in a far less worthy cause. If the Church expects small results from missions, I readily concede that she is acting consistently with her anticipations! And if she has, indeed, given up the work as a hopeless case, I think she is doing about as little as she could consistently with the bare appearance of obeying her Lord's commands to evangelize the nations.

May the day come when her spirit shall revive, when she shall feel that the earth belongs to Christ and shall hear her Master's voice pealing like thunder within her conscience, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." May she rise to the dignity of her position and perceive that her field is the *world*, since the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. All things are possible to him that believes—may we yet receive the faith which subdues nations! When the Church is ready for great events they shall occur to her.

God has blessed us already up to the full measure of our fitness to be blessed, and perhaps a great deal beyond it. We have seen more gracious results than we could have expected from our poor efforts, but when the whole Church shall become fired with the love of Christ—when every man's heart shall glow with a furnace heat of ardent desire for the glory of Jesus—then like molten lava from the red lips of a volcano the current of Church life shall burn a passage for itself. As soon as Zion shakes herself from the dust and goes forth to war in the strength of her Lord, she shall cause her enemies to flee before her as Midian fled before the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

II. Our text teaches us very plainly that THE CONVERSION OF THE NATIONS WILL OCCUR IN THE USUAL MANNER OF OTHER CONVERSIONS. And here it is that I need the attention of unconverted persons especially. "The nations," it says, "shall remember and shall turn

unto the Lord, and shall worship before Him.” Observe the first step. They shall “remember.” In this manner conversion begins in men. When he had come to himself the prodigal said, “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare?” He remembered the house from which he came. The nations will one day remember God.

Mysterious traditions are floating among them now. In mystic verse and hoary legend memories of the Creator are still preserved. Man is far off from God, but there lingers in the race some recollection of a happy past when God and man were friends. It is so with individuals after their kind. Oh, may some of you have recollections which look God-ward and remind you of what you learned at your mother’s knee, of what was taught you by a father’s earnest lips! May you remember from where you have fallen and repent! Such regrets are holy and healthful. The prodigal remembered his sins, they came forcibly before him. The harlots and the wine cups were remembered with sorrow and loathing. May you, dear Hearers, be moved by penitent memories of all the unhallowed past, for so shall repentance be created within you.

The nations will, by-and-by, remember the wickedness they committed—their debauchery, covetousness, tyranny, cruelty, and idolatry will be seen in their true colors—and they will mourn for them with sincere hearts. Oh, when will it come—that blessed Bochim? At this moment I pray God’s Spirit to make some of you remember your transgressions. May they come up in dread array before you! May you be convicted of sin and made to tremble before God! The nations will remember their idolatries against God and the disappointments which have come of them. They will say, one to another, “To what purpose is it that we have worshipped these gods of stone? Have they helped us in the day of trouble? We have sacrificed unto them. Have they given us rain in the day of drought? Have they helped us in the hour of death?”

And, as they recollect this, they will turn unto God. I would that some here might remember and say, “What has the flesh done for us? What have the pleasures of the world ministered to us, after all? We are even now degraded and made ashamed. What fruit have we in these things?” Blessed memories will one day come over this wicked world and lead it to turn unto the Lord. It is the work of the missionary to stir the world’s memory—to go and tell it over, and over, and over again about its Savior—for there is a power which God has kept alive in human consciences which will respond to the voice of the Gospel. I hope that response will be found in some here today. But, the day is coming when the conversion of the nations shall begin by their remembering their *God*, remembering their *sins*, remembering the disappointment of their idols and remembering to *turn* unto the Lord.

The next step in the conversion of the nations will be their turning to the Lord. Do you note that? “They shall remember and turn unto the Lord.” It is not merely they shall turn. Ah, my dear Hearers, there is a vast difference between “turning” and “turning to the Lord.” Some of you turn from drunkenness to total abstinence and I am glad enough of that, but it is far short of a *saving* change! Others turn from profanity to decent

speech! And we are thankful for that, but that, also, is not salvation! Genuine conversion lies in turning to the Lord. Therefore, in Hindustan, it is a very small gain that has been effected by educational institutions—the people are evidently turning, but what does it matter if they turn from a false god to no god? Is it really a turn for the better?

I do not know whether we might not more hopefully contend against an idolatrous Hindustan than with an infidel Hindustan. It is much the same devil, though he may appear in a different shape. The conversion of the heathen will not come through their being gradually civilized into Christianity—do not entertain any hope in that direction. God will turn them to Himself and the gracious work will be done. We do not at home see sinners gradually come to God by *processes* of reformation, for generally these reformations lead to self-righteousness. But we find them coming to God first, and then reforming afterwards—and even so shall we find it with the heathen. We have first to seek their turning to God, and after that we may look for civilization, education, refinement and so on. Man must first, in the Gospel, come to his Father, and then shall he lose his rags of barbarism and put on his robes of education and his shoes of progress and liberty, and hear the music and the dancing of joy. First, the kingdom of God and His righteousness must be sought, and all the rest shall follow.

Note the next point. “They shall worship before Him.” Every sinner who has truly turned to God becomes a worshipper—he adores the Christ, he adores the Father, he adores the Spirit—he was a rebel before, he is a worshipper now. What a blessed sight it will be to behold an adoring world! At this day around the august Throne of Heaven all the stars are floating, perhaps inhabited each one by a distinct race—from every star as from a silver bell there ascends to the Throne of God music most sweet and solemn. From only one star—this sin-darkened earth—discordant sounds arise. This poor earth shines not in the light of Jehovah as once it did—a demon’s wing has covered it and hidden from it the light of the central sun—it is swathed in cloud and mist today.

But can’t you see, it begins to shine forth! Seen from the Throne of God it is not altogether darkness. As when the new moon first shows her slender ring of light, so the earth is rimmed and edged with a Divine illumination which shall increase till the whole circle of the globe shall be irradiated and shall, in full orbéd splendor, reflect the Glory of God! Then, also, shall music blend with the growing brightness—light and sweetness shall be wedded again—and earth, like a lamp of God’s sanctuary and a golden bell of the high priest’s garment shall shine forth and ring out the praises of her God. O blessed consummation! May the Lord send it, and send it soon!

But, you can plainly see that the conversion of the nations follows the usual rule, and by no means differs from the conversion of men at home. It is a remembering, a turning to the Lord, and a worshipping of Him. They turn to Christ, they look to Him and are enlightened—and then, straightway, they begin to adore and reverence Him who has saved them. It is clear, then, that we are to seek the salvation of the nations by using

the ordinary means. If we expect to see them saved in some extraordinary way differing from what we have up to now seen, we shall be disappointed, and we shall be led into practical mistakes. We have nothing to do in Hindustan, or in Caffraria but just what the Apostle did in Asia Minor, and what we are doing here—we are to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I do not believe that any race of men needs a peculiar Gospel, or a novel mode of administering it. There may be different styles of preaching—God will give us those—but there need be no other mode of action than the Apostolic one—“They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” The mode prescribed in the marching orders of our grand Captain is this—“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”—not found schools, nor debate with skeptics, nor civilize, but “preach the Gospel.” “Preach the Gospel.” “Preach the Gospel.” Do this to every creature and the sure results will follow in one place as in another! Men shall remember, shall turn unto the Lord, and shall worship Him.

Dear unconverted Hearer, the very best means for your conversion are being employed now, and, therefore, I would have you remember that if these fail, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. This deserves your solemn consideration and I beseech you to lay it to heart.

III. The last point is the most important of all. THE MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS RESULT ARE TO BE FOUND AT CALVARY. Our text is in a Calvary Psalm. Its connection is full of sacrificial suffering. If you desire to comprehend its real meaning you must hear it from the dying lips of the Incarnate God. It is through the Cross that the nations shall fear and tremble and turn to God.

Note then, first, that the death of Christ secures the conversion of the nations. Every conversion is the result of the death of Christ. It is the Spirit’s work to minister life and spiritual health, but Your blood, O Christ, has the glory of it! It were vain to talk of conversion if there had been no Redemption, or to speak of man’s remembering and turning to God if Your Cross, O Savior, had not been lifted up as the way of salvation for all who look to it! On the Cross the Lord Jesus redeemed effectually all His people and He must have them. On the Cross He established the Covenant of Grace for all the souls for whom He died, and He will lose none of them, nor suffer them to miss the blessing. His blood shall not be shed in vain!

The stipulations of the Covenant—signed, sealed, and ratified by His own blood—must stand fast and firm! And one of those stipulations is this, “in You shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” It must, therefore, be so! I do not look for the triumph of the Church to her treasuries, nor to her institutions of learning, nor even to her zeal, or to the popular ability of her preachers. I look to the Cross! O conquering Crucified One, You have secured the victory, for You have finished the redemption of myriads, and therefore they must be saved! Let us, when

fainting in conflict, fall back into the arms of a dying Savior and we shall find courage for our future fray.

The death of Christ is, moreover, our motive for attempting the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. Because Jesus died we feel that He must be glorified. I never feel so ardent for His cause as when I have been baptized afresh into His agonies. If we stand at His Cross and view His crown of thorns, and His marred Countenance, and His pierced hands, and nailed feet. And if we gaze with affection into the gash where the soldier's spear set—if we approach His heart—we cannot but feel that we must have human hearts to worship Him.

He is Lord of my soul, and I would gladly see Him equally dear to my brothers. Jesus has won many hearts in England and in other countries, too, but oh, He must have more! He must have more! He must have all of England for His own! He must have Scotland! He must have the United States! He must possess Europe—He must govern the whole world—it is imperative that He should possess them! We feel that He must reign! If we could throw ourselves upon the spikes of His foes to win victory for Him we would rejoice. If like the old Swiss hero we could gather up all the death-bearing lances into our own bosom and die in opening a road to victory for our fellow soldiers it were a destiny for which to bless God!

It would be a glorious thing to die, if by our martyrdom the world might be won for Him! High thrones for Jesus, where shall we find them? Bright crowns for Jesus, where shall we find them? We will snatch them from your heads, you kings, if there are no others! No, your diadems are too mean for His brow, and are only worthy to be thrown into the dust before Him—they have not luster enough for Him. We will find jewels for Him in the tears of penitents, and gold in the songs of Believers! We will weave wreathes for Him out of emancipated souls and perfected spirits! He must have them! He must have them! Such an One as He cannot but be great unto the ends of the earth.

And, Brethren, as His death is thus the security of future triumph and is to us the impelling motive for the winning of it, so is His Cross the instrument of our victory! We shall conquer the world, but it will be by the Cross! The old legend of Constantine, "In hoc signo vinces," has truth in it for us. By this shall we conquer—by the Cross, by the preaching of Jesus Christ, and nothing else! I charge the Church of God not to hamper herself with a mass of lumber, either of ceremonies, buildings, schools, or officers—but to go forth with the sling and the stone of David! Saul's armor is, however, in good favor at this hour, and the Church looks everywhere but to her God.

It is miserably amusing to mark the way in which our so-called National Church tries to win men to God. It has recently been stated that in seven of the leading Ritualistic churches in London the subscriptions to foreign missions only reached the sum of £7 13s. 2d. for a whole year! It is fair to add that one of them contributed £5 13s. 10d. to a special fund for Honolulu, but even with this extra effort the total is not raised to £14, and the average is not £2 apiece! These seven superfine Apostolic Churches contributed between them £13 7s. for foreign missions, and yet the

incumbent of one of them, before the Ritual Commission, stated in his evidence that the cost of his choir, alone, was “about £1,000 a year”!

O model Church, with what wisdom have you acted? Behold you give £2 for the salvation of the heathen, and a £1,000 for a box of whistles and a set of singing men and singing women to make music with! Verily, this is a plain index of the whole business! Theirs is a religion of sensuous gratification and not of soul-winning. To charm ears with music, eyes with dainty colors, and noses with incense—this is their religion! Men pay money for these delights, even as they would for the opera or any other amusement in which their tastes find pleasure. But, for the winning of souls abroad, a few halfpence may suffice to show the lack of zeal.

Dear Friends, we know that souls are not to be won by music. If the world were, indeed, to be conquered by chants, to be converted by songs, regenerated by organs and saved by little boys in surplices, then it would be time for us to cease our ministry and give place to choir boys, opera singers, organists, and organ blowers! Then might we set up a vast array of gilded pipes, lift up the crucifix, wave the censor, cry, “These are your gods, O Israel.” But, while the Word of God remains unchanged, we shall rely upon the blood of the Lamb and resolve to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Our hope of success lies, under God, in the preaching of the Gospel. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The preaching of the Cross will win the world, but all else is vanity of vanities!

Therefore, Brethren, let our ministry be full of Christ! Whether we preach at home or abroad, let us preach Substitution and tell of the vicarious sacrifice of Calvary! Let Jesus’ death be our first theme and our last theme—utter all others in proportionate harmony—but let this be first and chief. Let our Lord in our ministry be “the chief among ten thousand.” Let His Cross be the standard to which all other Truths of God shall rally. Oh, preach Christ, live Christ, catch the spirit of Christ, devote yourselves to Christ, drink of His Cross and be baptized with His Baptism—and then it shall be that all the nations shall remember and shall turn unto the Lord—and all the kindreds of the people shall worship before Him!

Sinner, your hope is at the Cross! Hasten there! Anxious Soul, your peace is at the Cross! Fly there! Despairing Soul, your salvation is at the Cross! Look there! One look will save you! God help you to give it now. Through those tears which dim your eyes look at once, for Jesus smiles upon you Look to Him and you shall now have everlasting life! God bless you all, and God prosper His work in the world, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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LIFE'S NEED AND MAINTENANCE

NO. 1300

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 18, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"None can keep alive his own soul"
Psalm 22:29.

WE must commence by noticing the connection so that we may arrive at the first meaning of the words. There is a day coming when the true God will be acknowledged as Lord and God by all mankind, for the 27th verse tells us—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You." In that day the greatest of men will bow before Him. The verse from which we cull our text says, "All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship." The prosperous ones, those who have grown rich and great, shall receive good at the hands of the Savior and shall rejoice to adore Him as the Author of their fatness! Kings shall acknowledge Him as their King and lords accept him as their Lord.

Then shall not only the riches of life, but the poverty of death, also, render Him homage, for as men shall go down to the dust of the grave, in their feebleness and weakness they shall look up to Him for strength and solace, and shall find it sweet to worship Him in death. Men shall know that the keys of death are in His hands. "All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him," and it shall be known all the world over that the issues of life are in the hands of Jesus Christ. They shall understand that He is appointed as Mediator to rule over all mortal things, for the government shall be upon His shoulders. He shall open and no man shall shut, and shut and no man shall open, for it is His Sovereign prerogative to kill and to make alive. "None can keep alive his own soul."

I pass on from this meaning with the hopeful belief that this dispensation is not to end, as some suppose, without the conquest of the world to Christ. Surely "all kings shall bow before Him, all nations shall serve Him." The shame of the Cross shall be followed by honor and glory—"men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed." The conviction grows with me every day, the more I read the Scriptures, that the disheartening views of some interpreters are not true, but that before the whole of prophecy shall be worked into history, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Leaving this, we come to consider a more *spiritual* meaning which we believe to be as truly the sense of the passage as the other. You will notice, if you read the Psalm carefully, when you come to its close, that our Savior seems to delight Himself in being made food for the saved ones among the sons of men. In the 26th verse He says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." Here, He is thinking of the poor among men, to whom He has ever been the source of abounding comfort. To them His Gospel has been preached and thousands of them have found, in Him, food for their

souls which has satisfied them, filled their months with praise and made their hearts live forever.

The poor from the highways and hedges feast to the full at His royal table! Yes, the blind, the cripple and the lame—the very beggars of the streets—are among His household guests! Christ is very mindful of the poor and needy. He redeems their soul from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in His sight. Especially do the poor in spirit feed on Jesus. Over them He pronounced the first benediction of the Sermon on the Mount and of them He declares, “theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” What a feast do poor perishing spirits enjoy in Jesus when His flesh becomes to them meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed!

Nor is this all the feeding upon Christ, for in the 29th verse we hear of it again. Not only the poor feed upon the Bread of Heaven, but the great, the rich and the strong live upon Him, too—“all they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship.” There is no other way of life for them, for, “none can keep alive his own soul.” The saints, too, when they have grown in Grace. When they have satisfied their hunger and are fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord’s House, must still eat of the same heavenly food. The fat need Jesus as much as the lean, the strong as much as the feeble, for none can do without Him—“none can keep alive his own soul.” Thus the rich and the poor meet together and Jesus is the Food of them all. The empty and the full, alike, draw near to the Redeemer’s fullness and receive Grace for Grace.

Among those who feel their need of Jesus, there are some of a mournful type of character who count themselves ready to perish. They dare not number themselves among the meek who shall eat and be satisfied, much less could they think of themselves as the fat upon earth who shall eat and worship. No, they stand back from the feast as utterly unworthy to draw near. They dare not believe themselves to be spiritually alive unto God. They reckon themselves among those that go down into the Pit. They bear the sentence of death in themselves and are prisoners under bondage through fear. Their sense of sin and personal unworthiness is so conspicuous—and so painful—that they are afraid to claim the privileges of the living in Zion.

They fear that their faith is expiring, their love is dying out, their hope is withered and their joy departed. They compare themselves to the smoking flax and think themselves to be even more offensive than the nauseous smell given forth by the smoking wick. To such comes the Word which precedes my text—“They that go down to the dust shall bow before Him.” Christ shall be worshipped, even by them! Their last moments shall be cheered by His Presence. When, through depression of spirit, through the assaults of Satan and through inability to see the work of the Spirit in their souls, they shall be brought so low as to be down to the dust, they shall be lifted up from their misery and made to rejoice in the Lord, their Redeemer, who will say to them—“Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and sit down. Loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”

When souls are thus brought down, they begin to learn for themselves that, “none can keep alive his own soul.” A poor broken-hearted spirit

knows this, for he fears that the inner filth within his soul is at its last gasp, and he is afraid that his faith, love and all his graces will be as bones scattered at the grave's mouth. But then he learns what I trust we shall believe at this time without such a painful experience to teach it to us, namely, that none of us can keep our own soul alive, but that we must have food continually from *above* and visitations of the Lord to preserve our spirits. Our life is not in ourselves, but in our Lord!

Apart from Him we could not exist spiritually, even for a moment. We cannot keep our own soul alive as to Divine Grace. That is to be the subject of this morning's meditation and may the Holy Spirit render it profitable to us!

I. The first point of consideration out of which the rest will come is this—THE INNER LIFE MUST BE SUSTAINED BY GOD. We are absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of our spiritual life. We, all of us, know that none of us can *make* his own soul live. You have destroyed yourself, but you can not make yourself live again. Spiritual life must always be the *gift* of God—it must come from without—it cannot arise from within. Between the ribs of death, life never takes its birth. How could it? Shall the ocean beget fire, or darkness create light? You shall go to the morgue as long as you please, but, unless the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound there, the dry bones will remain in their corruption. The sinner is “dead in trespasses and sins” and he will never have even so much as a right *desire* towards God, nor a pulse of spiritual life, until Jesus Christ, who is “the Resurrection and the Life,” shall quicken him.

Now, it is important for us to remember that we are as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus and the power of His Spirit for being kept alive as we were for being made alive in the first place. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Do you remember when you first hung upon Christ for everything? That same dependence must be exercised every day of your life, for there is need of it. You remember your former nakedness, your poverty, your emptiness, your misery, your death, apart from Christ? Remember that the case is not one whit better if you could now be separated from sin. If now you have any Grace, or any holiness, or any love, you derive it entirely from Him and from moment to moment His Grace must be continued to you. For if connection between you and Christ should by any possibility be severed, you would cease to live *spiritually*. That is the Truth of God we want to bring forward.

Here let us remark that this is not at all inconsistent with the undying nature of the spiritual life. When we were born-again there was imparted to us a new and higher nature called the *spirit*. This is a fruit of the Spirit of God and it can never die. It is an “incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.” When it is imparted to the soul it makes us partakers of the Divine Nature. And it keeps us, so that the Evil One touches us not so as utterly to destroy us. Yet this fact is quite consistent with the assertion that we cannot keep our own soul alive, for it is because the Lord keeps us alive. The newborn nature is safe because the Lord protects it—it survives the deadly influences of the world because the Lord continues to quicken it.

Our new nature is united to the Person of Christ and we live because He lives. We are not kept alive by independent power, but by perpetual *renewal* from the Lord. This is true of every man living. "None can keep alive his own soul"—no, not one. You young people think, perhaps, that old Christians get on better than you do. You imagine that their experience preserves them, but, indeed, they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can! You tried and tempted ones sometimes look with envy upon those who dwell at ease, as though their spirituality was self-supporting! But no, they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can! You know your own difficulties, but you do not know those of others. Rest assured, however, that to all men there are these difficulties and that no man can keep his own soul alive.

This is the Truth of God at all times—at no one moment can we keep ourselves alive. While sitting in this House of Prayer you may dream that assuredly you can keep yourself *here*, but it is not so. You might sin the foulest of sins in your heart while sitting here! And you might grieve the Holy Spirit and cloud your life for years while worshipping among the people of God. You are not able to keep your own soul alive in your happiest and holiest moments! From your knees you might rise to blaspheme and from the Communion Table you might go to the seat of the scorner if you were left to yourself—

***"All our strength at once would fail us,
If deserted, Lord, by You.
Nothing, then, could use us,
Certain our defeat would be
And those who hate us
Their desires would see."***

I seldom find myself so much in danger as when I have been in close communion with God. After the most ecstatic devotion, one is hardly prepared for the coarse temptations of this wicked world. When we come down, like Moses from the mountain, if we encounter open sin we are apt to grow indignant and break all the commandments in the vehemence of our wrath. The sudden change from the highest and holiest contemplations to the trifles and vexations of earth subjects the soul to so severe a trial that the poet did well say—

***"We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight."***

Even when our delight is of a *spiritual* kind we need to be on our guard after having been filled with it—for then Satan avails himself of the opportunity. We are never safe unless the Lord keeps us.

If we could take you, my Brothers and Sisters, and place you in the society of saints. Give you to keep perpetual Sundays, make every meal a sacrament and set you nothing to say or do but what should be directly calculated to promote the glory of God, yet even *then* you could not keep your own soul alive! Adam in perfection could not keep himself in Paradise! How can his imperfect children be so proud as to rely upon their own steadfastness? Among angels there were those who kept not their first estate. How shall man, then, hope to stand unless he is held up? Why is this? How do we know that our text is true?

We gather arguments from the analogies of Nature. We do not find that we can keep our own bodies alive. We need Divine preservation, or disease

and death will deftly make us their prey. We are not self-contained as to this mortal existence, any one of us, no, not for five minutes can we live upon ourselves. Take away the atmospheric air and who could keep himself alive? The heaving lungs need their portion of air and if they cannot be satisfied, man soon becomes a corpse! Deprive us of food—leave us for a week without meat or drink—and see if we can keep our natural body alive. Take away from us the means of warmth in the time when God's cold rules the year and death would soon ensue.

Now, if the physical life is not to be sustained by itself, much less can the higher and spiritual life! It must have food. It must have the Spirit to sustain it. The Scriptures present to us this figure of the body which dies if severed from the vital organs, and of the branch which is dried up if cut off from the stem. Toplady versifies the thought and sings—

***“Quickened by You, and kept alive,
I flourish and bear fruit.
My life, I from Your sap derive,
My vigor from your root.
“I can do nothing without You!
My strength is wholly Yours.
Withered and barren should I be
If severed from the Vine.”***

Yonder lamp burns well, but its future shining is dependent upon a fresh supply of oil. The ship in rapid motion borrows force from the continuance of the wind, but the sails hang idle if the gale ceases. The river is full to the bank, but if the clouds should never again pour out their floods it would become a dry trail. All things depend on others and the whole upon the Great Supreme! Nothing is self-sustained! Unless God, Himself, sustains it, no being exists. Even immortal souls are only so because He has set His seal upon them and declared that they shall inherit eternal life, or in consequence of sin shall sink into everlasting punishment. Hence we are sure that “none can keep alive his own soul.”

But we need not rely upon analogy, we can put the matter to the test. Could any Believer among us keep any one of His graces alive? You, perhaps, are a sufferer and, up to now you have been enabled to be patient. But suppose the Lord Jesus should withdraw His Presence from you and your pains should return again? Ah, where will your patience be? Or, I will suppose you are a worker and you have done great things for the Lord. Like Samson you have been exceedingly strong. But let the Lord be once withdrawn and leave you to attempt His work alone and you will soon discover that you are as weak as other men and will utterly fail!

Holy joy, for instance, take that as a specimen. Did you rejoice in the Lord, this morning, when you awoke? It is very sweet to wake up and hear the birds singing within your heart. But you cannot maintain that joy, no, not even for an hour, do what you will. “All my fresh springs are in You,” my God, and if I am to joy and rejoice, You must anoint me continually with the oil of gladness! Have you not, sometimes, thought in the morning, “I feel so peaceful and calm, so resigned to the Divine will. I think I shall be able to keep up this placid spirit all day long.” Perhaps you have done so and, if so, I know you have praised God for it. But if you have become perturbed, you have learned, again, that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which you would, you find not.

Well, if for any one fruit of the Spirit we are dependent upon the Lord, how much more will this be true as to the essential *life* from which each of these Graces springs? This Truth of God is equally illustrated by our need of help in every *act* of the Divine life. Dear Friends, have you ever tried what it is to perform any spiritual act apart from the Divine power? What a dull, dead affair it becomes! What a mechanical thing prayer is without the Spirit of God! It is a parrot's noise and nothing more! It is a weariness, a slavish drudgery. How sweet it is to pray when the Spirit gives us feeling, unction, access with boldness, pleading power, faith, expectancy and full fellowship! But if the Spirit of God is absent from us in prayer, our infirmities prevail against us, and our supplication loses all prevalence.

Did you ever resolve to praise God and come into the congregation where the sweetest Psalms were being sent to Heaven? Could you praise God till the Holy Spirit came like a Divine Wind and loosened the fragrance of the flowers of your soul? You know you could not! You used the sacred Words of the sweet singers of Israel, but hosannas languished on your tongue and your devotion died. I know that it is dreadful work to be bound to preach when one is not conscious of the aid of the Spirit of God! It is like pouring water out of bottomless buckets, or feeding hungry souls out of empty baskets! A true sermon such as God will bless, no man can preach of himself! He might as well try to sound the archangel's trumpet. We must have You, O blessed Spirit, or we fail! O God, we must have Your power, or every action that we perform is but the movement of a robot and not the acceptable act of a living, spiritual man!

Have you ever, dear Friends, had to know that you cannot keep alive your own soul by your own blundering and failures when you have resolved to be very wise and correct? Did you ever get into a self-sufficient state and say, "Now, I shall never fall into *that* temptation, again, for I am the burnt child that dreads the fire"? And yet into that very sin you have fallen! Have you not said, "Well, I understand *that* business. There is no need to wait upon God for direction in so simple a matter, for I am well up in every particular relating to it and I can manage the affair very well"? And have you not acted as foolishly in the whole concern as the Israelites did in the affair of the Gibeonites, when they were deceived by the old shoes and clothes and the moldy bread, and asked no counsel of the Lord? I tell you, our *strength*, whenever we have any, is our greatest weakness! And our fancied wisdom is our real folly.

When we are *weak* we are strong! When, in a sense of entire dependence upon God, we dare not trust ourselves, we are both wise and safe! Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian—go without your morning prayer, into the house of business—and see what will befall you! Venture, my Sister, down into your little family without having called upon God for guidance and see what you will do! Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonored you a few days ago—and depend upon the strength of your own will and the firmness of your own purpose—and see if you do not, before long, discover to your shame how great your weakness is! No, try none of these experiments, but listen to the Word which tells you, "None can keep alive his own soul."

And now, should any think that he can keep his own soul alive, let me ask him to look at the enemies which surround him. A sheep in the midst of wolves is *safe* compared with the Christian in the midst of ungodly men! The world waylays us, the devil assaults us! Behind every bush there lurks a foe. A spark in mid ocean is not more beset, a worm is not more defenseless. If the sight of foes without are not enough to make us confess our danger, look at the foes within. There is enough within your soul, O Christian, though you are one of the best of saints, to destroy you in an hour unless the Grace of God guards you and keeps your passions in check—and prevents your stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations.

Oh, what a powder keg the human heart is, even at its best! If some of us have not been blown up, it has been because Providence has kept away the sparks, rather than because of there being any lack of powder within. Oh, may God keep us, for if He leaves us, we need no devil to destroy us—we shall prove devils to ourselves—we shall need no tempters except the lusting after evil which now conceals itself so craftily within our own bosom! Certainly, dear Brothers and Sisters, we may be quite sure that “none can keep alive his own soul” when we remember that in the Gospel, provision is made for keeping our soul alive! The Holy Spirit is given that He may continually quicken and preserve us—and Jesus Christ, Himself, lives, that we may live, also.

To what purpose would be all the splendid provisions and the special safeguards of the Covenant of Grace for the preservation of the spiritual life, if that spiritual life could preserve itself? Why does the Lord declare, “I, the Lord, do keep it,” if it can keep itself? The granaries of Egypt, so full of corn, remind us that there is a famine in the land of Canaan! The treasures laid up in Christ Jesus assure us that we are in need of them! God’s supplies are never superfluous, but are meant to meet *real* needs. Let us, then, all acknowledge that no man among us can keep alive his own soul.

II. This brings me, secondly and briefly, to notice that THIS TRUTH BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Weak-minded professors are prone to trust in man, but they have, here, an evident warning against such folly! How can they trust in a man who cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I crouch at the feet of my fellow man and ask him to hear my confession and absolve me when I know that he cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I look up to him and call him, “father in God,” and expect to receive Divine Grace from the laying on of *his* hands, when I learn that he is a weak, sinful being like myself?

He cannot keep alive his own soul! What can he do for me? If he lives before God, he has to live upon the daily charity of the Most High—what can he have to give me? Oh, look not to your fellow virgins for the oil of Grace, for they have not enough for themselves! And whatever name a man may dare to take, whether it is priest, “Father,” or Pope—look not to *him*—but look to JESUS in whom all fullness dwells! The Glory which accrues to Christ from our daily dependence is seen in His becoming to us our daily Bread. His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! And we must feed upon these continually or die! Eating is not an opera-

tion to be performed only once, but throughout life, and so we have to go to Jesus again and again and find sustenance in Him as long as life lasts.

Beloved, we honored our Master when He first saved us—and through being daily dependent upon Him we are led to honor Him every day. If our hearts are right, we shall honor Him more and more every day, as we more and more perceive our indebtedness to Him. He is our daily Bread upon which we feed continually, and the Living Water of which we continually drink. He is the light which everlastingly shines upon us. He is, in fact, our All in All daily to us and all this prevents our forgetting Him. As at the first He saved us, so He still saves us! And as at the first we prized Him, we still prize Him. More than that, as our *life* is maintained, not only by Him, but by our abiding in union with Him, this leads us to abide in *love* towards Him. Union is the source of communion and love.

The wife remains a happy wife by loving fellowship with her husband. When the betrothed one is married to her beloved, the wedding day is not the end of it all. The putting on of the ring is the beginning, not the end. And so, when we believe in Jesus, we are saved, but we must not idly feel, "it is all done, now." No, it is only just begun! Now is the life of dependence, the life of faith, the life of obedience, the life of love, the life of union commenced and it is to be continued forever! This makes us love, honor and adore our Lord Jesus, since we only live by being one with Him. We have, also, to remember that our life is daily supported by virtue of what the living Redeemer is still doing for us, as well as by receiving the fruit of His death and of our spiritual union with Him.

He ever lives to make intercession for us and, therefore, He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." The life of the ascended Redeemer is intimately bound up with our life—"Because I live, you shall live, also." How this honors Christ, for we are thus led to realize a *living* Savior, and to love Him as a living, breathing, acting Person. It is a pity when men only think of a *dead* Savior, or of a *baby* Savior carried in the Virgin's arms, as the Church of Rome does. It is *our* joy to have a LIVING Christ, for while He lives, we cannot die! And while He pleads, we cannot be condemned! Thus we are led to remember Him as a living Savior and to give Him honor He is due.

But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what must be the fullness of Christ when all the Grace which the saints have must come out of Him and, not merely all they *have* had, but all they obtain every day comes from Him? If there is any virtue. If there is any praise. If there is anything heavenly. If there is anything Divine—all this of His fullness have we received and Grace for Grace! What must be that power which protects and preserves *millions* of saints from temptation and keeps them amid perils as many as the sands of the sea? What must be that patience which watches over the frail children of God in all their weaknesses and wanderings, in all their sufferings, in all their infirmities? What must be His Grace which covers all their sins and what His strength which supports them under all their trials? What must the Fountainhead be, when the streams which flow to any one of us are so deep that we cannot fathom them, so broad that we cannot measure them?

Yet millions of happy spirits are, each one, receiving as much as any one of us may be, and still there is a fullness abiding in Christ the same as before, for it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell! Not a saint lives a moment apart from Him, for, "None can keep alive his own soul." The cries of babes in Grace and the shouts of strong men who divide the spoil all come from the life which He lends and the strength which He gives! Between the gates of Hell and the gates of Heaven in all those pilgrims whose faces are towards the royal city—all the life is Christ's life and all the strength is Christ's strength—and He is in them, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus who thus supplies all His people! Does not this display the exceeding riches of His Grace?

III. Thirdly and practically, THIS SUBJECT SUGGESTS THE PATH OF WISDOM FOR OURSELVES. "None can keep alive his own soul." Then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, what manner of persons ought we to be? Let me have your earnest thoughts on this point for a minute. Do not let anyone among us look back to a certain day and say, "On that occasion I was regenerated and converted, and that is enough." I fear that some of you get into a very bad condition by saying, "If I can prove that I was converted on such-and-such a day, that will do."

This is altogether unjustifiable talk! Conversion is a turning onto the right road—the next thing is to *walk* in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the beginning if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle—to him that overcomes the crown is promised! To start in the race is nothing. Many have done that who have failed! But to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man's salvation as conversion. Remember this, you not only need Grace to begin with, but Grace with which to *live* in Christ Jesus.

Learn, also, that we should diligently use all those means whereby the Lord communicates fresh support to our life. A man does not say, "Well, I was born on such-and-such a day, that is enough for me." No, the good man needs his daily meals to maintain his existence. Being alive, his next consideration is to *stay* alive and, therefore, he does not neglect eating nor any operation which is essential to life. So you, dear Friends, must labor for the meat which endures to eternal life—you must feed on the Bread of Heaven. Study the Scriptures daily—I hope you do not neglect that. Be much in private prayer—your life cannot be healthy if the Mercy Seat is neglected. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some. Be eager to hear the Word of God and endeavor both to understand and practice it.

Gather with God's people in their many spiritual meetings, when they join in prayer and praise, for these are healthful means of sustaining the inner life. If you neglect these, you cannot expect that Grace will be strong within you—you may even question if there is any life at all. Still, remember that even if a man should eat and drink, that would not keep him alive without the power of God! Many die with whom there is no lack either of air or food. You must, therefore, look beyond the outward means, to God, Himself, to preserve your soul. Let it be your daily prayer, "Oh

Savior, by whom I began to live, daily enable me to look to You that I may draw continuous life from Your wounds and live because You live." Take these things home and practice them.

Keep, dear Friends, also, clear of everything which has a tendency to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison. If he knew it, he would not touch the cup in which it had been contained. We are careful to avoid any adulteration in our food which might be injurious to life and health. We have our chemists busily at work to analyze liquids, lest inadvertently we should imbibe death in the water which we drink. Brethren, let us be equally careful as to our souls! Keep your chemist at work analyzing the things of this life. Let conscience and understanding fit up their laboratory and *prove* all things. Analyze the sermon of the eloquent preacher lest you drink in novelties of doctrine and falsehoods because he happens to put them prettily before you.

Analyze each book you read lest you should become tainted with error while you are interested with the style and manner, smartness and elegance of your author. Analyze the company you keep. Test and try everything lest you should be committing spiritual suicide, or carelessly squandering life away. Ask the Lord, the preserver of men, above all things, to keep you beneath the shadow of His wings that you may not be afraid of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction which wastes at noonday. Because His Truth has become your shield and buckler, you are safe. Watch your life carefully, but look to Jesus Christ from day to day for everything.

Do not become self-satisfied so as to say, "Now I am rich and increased in goods." If ever a child of God imitates the rich man in the parable and says, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," he is a fool as much as the rich man was! I have known some become very exalted in spiritual things. The conflict is almost over with them—temptation has no power, they are masters of the situation—and their condition is of the most elevated kind. Well, ballooning is very pleasant to those who like it, but I think he is safest who keeps on the ground! I fear that spiritual ballooning has been very mischievous to a great many and has altogether turned their heads. Their high conceit is falsehood.

After all, my Friend, to tell you the truth very plainly—you are no better than other people, though you think you are and in one point I am sure you miserably fail—*humility*. When we hear you declare what a fine fellow you are, we suspect that you wear borrowed plumes and are not what you seem. A peacock is a beautiful bird, what can be more brilliant? But I am not enraptured with his voice, nor are you! And so there may be fine feathers about certain people, perhaps a little too fine, but while they are showing themselves off, we know that there is a weak point about them and we pray that it may not cause dishonor to the cause of Christ. It is not our part to be hunting about for the failings of our fellow Christians, yet *boasting* has a tendency to make us examine the boaster!

The practical thing is to believe that when we are proud, ourselves, there is something wrong with us. Whenever we stand before the mirror and think what fine fellows we are, we had better go, at once, to the Great Physician and beseech Him to give us medicine for our vanity! Mr. Pea-

cock, you are certainly very handsome, but you should hear yourself croak! Professor, there are fine points about you, but there are sorry ones, too! Be humble and so be wise. Brother, if you get an inch above the ground you are just that inch too high! If you have anything apart from Christ—if you can live five minutes on past experience—if you think that you can live on yesterday's Grace you are mistaken!

You put the manna away so very carefully. You stored it up in the cupboard with such self-content. Go to it to-morrow morning, instead of joining the rest of your Brethren in gathering the fresh manna which will fall all around the camp. Go to the cupboard where you stored up yesterday's manna! Ah, as soon as you open the door you close it again! Why did you shut that door so quickly? Well, we need not look inside the cupboard—the smell is enough! It has happened as Moses foretold it—it has bred worms and it stinks as he said it would. Cover it up as quickly as you can. Dig a deep hole and throw it all in and bury it! That is the only thing to do with such rottenness. Day by day go to Christ and you will get your sweet manna. But begin to live on past or present attainments and they will breed worms and stink as sure as you are a man. Do not try it, for, “none can keep alive his own soul.”

IV. Last of all, THIS SUBJECT INDICATES A WAY OF USEFULNESS for everyone here present who is a child of God. I think the great business of the Christian's life is to serve God and he can do that, mainly, by aiming at the conversion of sinners! It is a grand thing to be blessed of God to turn sinners from the error of their ways. But listen, Brothers and Sisters, there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints. The old Roman said he thought it as much an honor to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country—and he was right. There is as much acceptance before God in the work of instrumentally *preserving* souls, alive, as in being made the means of making souls to live in the first place.

The upholding of Believers is as necessary an exercise for Christian workers as the ingathering of unbelievers. I want you to think about this. If there is a person nearly drowned, a man will leap into the water to bring him out. And he gets great credit for it and deserves it. And so when a man saves a soul from death by earnest ministry, let him be glad and thank God. But if a man is starving and ready to die, and you give him bread. Or if he is not reduced to that point, but would have been so had you not interfered, you have done as good an action in preserving life as the other friend who snatched life from between the jaws of death! You must never think little of the work which instructs the ignorant Christian, which clears the stumbling blocks out of the way of the perplexed Believer, which comforts the feeble-minded and supports the weak. These necessary works must be done, while soul-saving must not be left undone!

Perhaps some of you never will be the means of the conversion of many. Then try to be the means of comfort to as many as you can. To be the means, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of nurturing the life which God has given, is a worthy service and very acceptable with God. I would urge the members of this Church to watch over one another. Be pastors to each other! Be very careful over the many young people that have come among

us and, if you see any backslide—in a gentle and affectionate manner endeavor to bring them back. Do you know any despondent ones? Lay yourselves out to comfort them! Do you see faults in any? Do not tell them of them hastily, but labor, as God shall help you, to teach them a better way. As the Lord often preserves *you* by the help of others, so in return seek to be, in God's hands, the means by which He shall keep your Brethren from going astray, from sinking in despair, or from falling into error.

I hold it out to you as a good and blessed work to do—will you try to accomplish it? Now, if you say, “Yes,” and I think every Christian, here, says, “Yes,” then I am going to speak to you concerning the collection, Brothers and Sisters. This is Hospital Sunday and we must contribute our full share! Do you see any connection between this subject and the collection? I think I do. Here are these poor sick folks who will die unless they are carefully looked to, unless medicine and a physician's skill are provided for them. I know you are ready, enough, to look after sick *souls*—the point to which I have brought you is one which involves such readiness.

Well, now, he who would look after a sick soul will be sure to care for a sick body! I hope you are not of the same class as the priest in the fable who was entreated by a beggar to give him a crown. “By no means,” said the reverend father, “why should I give you a crown?” “Will you give me a shilling, Holy Father?” No, he would not give him a shilling, nor even a penny. “Then,” said he, “Holy Father, will you, of your charity, give me a farthing?” No, he would not do anything of the sort. At last the beggar said, “Would not, Your Reverence, be kind enough to give me your blessing?” “Oh yes, my Son, you shall have it at once! Kneel down and receive it.” But the man did *not* kneel down to receive it, for he reasoned that if it had been worth a farthing the “holy father” would not have given it to him. And so he went his way.

Men have enough practical sense to always judge that if professed Christians do not care for their bodily needs, there cannot be much sincerity in their zeal for men's souls. If a man will give me spiritual bread in the form of a tract, but would not give me a piece of bread for my body, how can I think much of him? Let practical help to the poor go with the spiritual help which you render to them! If you would help to keep a Brother's soul alive in the higher sense, be not backward to do it in the more ordinary way. You have an opportunity of proving your sincerity and gratifying your charity, for the boxes will go round at once!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 22.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103 (VER. III), 407. 668.**

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KEEPING THE SOUL ALIVE

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“None can keep alive his own soul.”
Psalm 22:29.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY is the sin of nature—all-sufficiency is the supply of Divine Grace! Ishmael, sent away into the wilderness with his bottle, is man trusting in himself—Isaac, dwelling by the never-failing wells of Gerrar, is man led by Grace to trust in the unfailing supplies of the God of all consolation! It is as hard to get man away from self-trust as it would be to reverse the course of Niagara. He begins by believing that he can make himself alive—and when he is convinced that this is not possible, he then tries to entrench himself behind the idea that he can *keep* himself alive. No, though man is dead in trespasses and sins and it is but a rank absurdity to imagine that death can produce life, yet the sinner still thinks that by something of his own he can create a soul within the ribs of death, that a sinner may grow into a saint of himself, that the man who is as full of sin as the leopard is full of spots, may yet, by his own innate energy, cast off his spots and become pure! I say that when man is cured of that rank absurdity, he then will need as much trouble to be cured of another, for even those who are alive unto God fall, more or less, into the false confidence that they can keep their own souls alive, and he out of us all who best knows that he can do no such thing has, nevertheless, sometimes caught himself acting as if he did believe that he could keep his own soul alive! To be sound in Doctrine is one thing, but to have that orthodoxy in the heart is another thing. To believe that I am dependent every day upon the Grace of God is easy, but to carry that dependence and the sense of that dependence into all my dealings with God and with man—this is not nature, but is in itself a work of Grace!

Now, it is upon our entire dependence upon God as Believers that I am to speak tonight. We have, if we are Believers, been made alive from the dead. Our souls have been quickened by the life of Christ—we live with the life that Christ has given to us, but we cannot keep ourselves alive any more than we could first make ourselves alive. That is the point to be thought over tonight—may its rich and humbling instructions be sanctified to us all. First, let me—

I. BREAK UP THIS DOCTRINE A LITTLE.

It is like one of the loaves brought to Christ—it needs breaking and we will break it up thus. The Believer's life must be dependent upon God. He cannot maintain it by his own strength *because of its very nature*. It is a derived life. We know how plainly our Savior puts this in the parable of the vine. The life of the Christian is not the life of the separate plant put into the soil to suck for itself through its own throat, the nourishment out of the earth. It is the life of a plant which derives all its sap through the stem—through a root that is not in itself. It does not bear the root, nor a root, but the root bears it, so that once you cut away the branch from the vine, you have taken away the life from the branch, for though the life is in the branch as long as it is joined to the vine, yet it is not so in the branch, itself, that it is there at all apart from the vine. You are dead—then where is your life? Your life is hid with Christ in God, and if you live at all, this is the reason! “Because I live, you shall live also.” Your life is not in yourselves as a separate life. Your life, the true life of your soul, is a derived one, and is in Christ Jesus! Another illustration from the same blessed Word of God gives us the like sense. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. There is life in my hand—undoubted life—but let that hand be laid down upon the block, and the headsman's axe separate it from the arm, and there remains no life whatever in the hand that is separated from the vital center, the heart. The limb moves and has life in itself, in a certain sense, but it is derived life, relative life—it only lives at all, in fact—because it is joined to something else in which its life more truly dwells. You see then, Brothers and Sisters, that none can keep his own soul alive, because the soul's truest life is not in itself, but lies in Another, even in Christ its Head!

Furthermore, the life that is in a Believer *is a very dependent life*. We are born in regeneration, but after a child is born it will not live if the mother's care shall cease. It must be nursed. It must be fed. It must have a thousand little needs supplied, which, if neglected, would be pretty sure to end that little life right speedily. When our dear converts are born to Christ, our anxieties for them are not ended. Their life is but a frail and feeble thing and though we believe they shall not die, but live, yet they only live because the great Father of the Christian family takes care that they shall be supplied with the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, that they shall be continually nursed in the ordinances of God's house, that they shall be trained and instructed and brought up until they come to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, just as the life of the baby would not be sustained unless something was done for it which it could not do for itself, so the life of the Christian is of the same sort—dependent upon the blessed offices of God the Holy Spirit, and of the gracious Redeemer who watches over all the children of Grace as a nurse watches over her child. Yes, but you tell me that this is a great Truth of God for young Believers, but what of those that become adults in Christ? I reply that still if the figure does not hold good, yet the Truth, itself, does, and we will change the figure and come

back to the one we had before. The fully-developed arm will die if separated from the trunk, just as surely as the infant's arm—and yonder huge branch of the ancient oak, itself a tree—yet were it sundered from the oak, must wither. It matters not how great the growth of a Christian, nor how mature his experience, he still owes all he has and all he is to his union with Christ—he cannot keep his own soul alive! If I might use such an allegory, it is something like this—all Believers are pensioners upon the court of Heaven. They begin, we may say, as pensioners when they are converted, to draw out of Heaven's bank but a small pension. They are poor in Grace, poor in faith, poor in everything—but they draw a pension just as large as they can manage to live upon. By-and-by they are promoted, and their pension is now not £50 a year, but £100. By-and-by they are promoted yet again, but as they are promoted and draw more pension money, they spend more. There are certain demands upon them which require them to spend whatever they get! So at last we will suppose that one of them has come to a high rank and he draws out of the court of the King's Bank at the rate of £10,000 a year. Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, if at any moment that pension should be stopped, he is just as poor a man as he that drew his £50, for, as I have said, he spent it as he received it—and if he is now rich, he is only rich because of the constant income which his gracious King is pleased to give him! But if that were stopped, he could no more keep alive his own soul, though he has come to the first rank in Grace, than he could who has just commenced to draw from the Bank of the King of Kings! Your spiritual riches all flow in from Christ, and if you are once separated from Him, you are naked, and poor, and miserable, be you who you may!

Still further breaking up this one Truth of God, let me remark that *the Believer's life is always an endangered life*. In some way or other it is always in such danger that no man can keep it alive. I find that with some Christians, and with myself, one chief spiritual danger is that of sloth. I mean a tendency to grow lethargic, to stop short where you are, to be pleased with attainments already reached, to lose youthful elasticity and ardor. Well now, when is a soul more in danger than when it falls into spiritual sloth? Then, indeed, the great arch-enemy comes into the Christian camp, as David and Abishai stole into the camp of Saul—and as the great dragon, the enemy of souls—finds a Christian sleeping, he lifts his spear, and if he might but smite him this once, he would not need to smite him a second time! Oh, if Sovereign Grace did not hold back that diabolic hand, if he could but give that one stroke, he would make a full end of the Christian! Now, as we are, most of us, given to slumber at certain times, and may be surprised with it, the truth is most sure that we cannot keep our own souls alive! But if our temptation should not be that of slumbering, yet who among us does not sometimes get faint? The most valorous Believer sometimes finds his faith turn to unbelief. When David was in the midst of battle, we find that the king waxed faint, and

Ishbosheth, the son of Goliath, had almost slain him! And there have been times when the offspring of some gigantic evil which in other days we slew, has now been too much for us, and then we feel faint just when we most needed to be strong! He that never has fainting fits may laugh at this, but I think he knows but little of spiritual life, for spiritual men find that all too often these fainting fits come upon them and then they feel that they cannot keep their own soul alive. Moreover, if we are neither faint nor slumbering, yet—I think I may speak for every Christian here—our life is attended with many temptations. Is there one Christian here who is never tempted? I was about to say I wish I could pursue his calling, but I think he cannot have looked at it correctly. There are temptations everywhere! Some of you work among ungodly associates. Some of you are in places still more perilous, namely, with those who profess to be religious, but who lie and whose example is generally more evil than the example of even outrageously godless men! Oh, there are snares in your business and there are snares in your pleasures! There are temptations in your needs, you poor. There are temptations in your plenty, you rich. There are perils in your knowledge, you men of reading. There are perils in your ignorance, you who read not at all. There are evils that will pursue you in the street, that will follow you to your homes, that will even come to your beds! They will not let you find a shelter anywhere from them, for Satan spreads his snares wherever he sees God's birds of paradise! Who, then, amidst such dangers, can hope to keep his own soul alive? Even if we had an independent life, which I have shown you we have not, yet with such perils surrounding us, the Psalmist was absolutely correct when he said, "None can keep alive his own soul."

Once more. Remember that all *the supplies of our spiritual life are put, not in us, but into Christ*. We are not like the camel that can traverse the desert and carry with it, its own supply of water for many days. No, we must drink continually from the flowing Well, Christ Jesus, or we die. Everything that any one of us shall need between here and Heaven is ready for us, but it is all in Christ—there is not a grain of it in ourselves! When the Egyptians were passing through the seven years of famine and had eaten up all their own food, there was quite enough corn in Egypt to keep them through the seven years, but it was all under lock and key in the granary, and Joseph had to keep it all. And so for the spiritual famine between here and the gates of Heaven there is enough heavenly corn provided, but it is all in the granaries of the Covenant, and it is all in the keeping of Jesus! If you want it, you must go to Jesus for it! There is nothing but emptiness, beggary, famine and death in all the fields of Nature. You shall ransack heart, head, memory and judgment through and through—but you shall not find so much as a solitary meal for your hungry soul to live upon within yourselves! Only in Christ is there enough! And there is enough in Him for all of His people, blessed be His name! So, then, because all the stores are in Christ, and there are no stores in ourselves, the text comes true again—"None can keep alive his

own soul.” We have thus broken up the Doctrine. And here we will pause a minute. Secondly, let us—

II. SEE WHAT OUR EXPERIENCE SAYS TO THIS DOCTRINE.

I will speak of some of the experience of God’s servants and I should not wonder but what I shall be, as it were, holding up a mirror in which many here will see themselves! Many of us have verified that we cannot keep our own souls alive in the following way—first, by having our carnal security all shipwrecked. Do you remember years ago, now, or it may be only months ago with some of you, that you felt so confident? You had had a long time of peace and happiness. Whenever you went up to God’s House, the Word was very sweet to you. In private prayer you had much fellowship with Christ. At the Lord’s Table you sat at the King’s banquet and you said to yourselves, “I wonder how it is that so many Christians are doubting and fearing? I am not. My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved.” You hardly dared to say that, but you whispered it to yourselves. You felt grateful to God that it was so, but I think there was a little self-congratulation—and you looked down a little upon some of your Brothers and Sisters who were not quite so joyous and confident as you! Well now, shall I tell the story? It has happened to me, and I must blushing tell it. I doubt not it has also happened to you. Within a very short time a temptation surprised you and you fell into the trap. God’s face was hidden from you—your soul was troubled and the scene was all changed—and whereas yesterday you could write yourselves down in big letters with certainty as a child of God, now you felt that if you were one, you were the meanest of them all! You could have taken the chief seat in the synagogue yesterday, but now if there were a mouse hole you would have been glad to creep into it, and if there were a doorkeeper’s place vacant, you would be happy to take it if you might but still be numbered with the household of God. I should not wonder but what you were a better man in the last case than you were before, though you did not think so. Well, it was then when you began to perceive that you could not keep alive your own soul, for what you built up so delightfully, turned out to be only just a card house—and Satan had but to give it one flip with his finger and over it went! You had piled up your habitation, and you thought it was all made of strong stone, but it was only rubbishing cement—and the first frost that came, cracked it from the foundation right up to the top—and soon it began to totter about your ears! You have passed through that, and if you have, you know that you cannot keep your own soul alive!

Again, did you ever feel like this, my dear Brothers and Sisters? The Sabbath is coming round and on Saturday night you are very glad that tomorrow is the Sabbath, but somehow or other you do not feel that interest in spiritual things that you did some months ago. You go up to the House of God and take your seat. The preacher seems different—perhaps you half think he must be—but yet you hear of others who are feeding on

the Word and so you conclude that there is a lack of appetite in yourselves, for you do not seem to enjoy it. Then those hymns—why, they used to be like archangels' wings to you, and now you are just criticizing the style of the music and not much else. You do not drink into the Word when you get home and get your Bible open. Why, it used to blaze before your eyes! The promises seemed as if they were written in letters of light—but now that Bible is very dull to you. You pray you could not give that up, but you rise from your knees as if you had not prayed—and you feel in all your religious exercises a kind of dullness and sleepiness. You go about it all. You cannot give it up and do not want to give it up. You would not give it up—you would sooner die than give it up—but still, you cannot stir your soul. I have often felt spiritually like those poor people who have taken opium, or some other drug, who have to be walked about by the hour together, for fear lest they should go to sleep—and I have heard of people sticking pins into them to keep them awake. I have tried to stick pins into myself in a spiritual sense to try to wake myself up. What is wrong with me, to be sleeping while poor souls are perishing? How is it that I do not feel this Truth of God more? Why does not that Truth of God affect me more? It did once—why does it not now? Well now, whenever you are in that state of mind, you have learned this lesson—you cannot keep your own soul alive. Why, you cannot even wake your soul, much more quicken it! You cannot even stir it to vigor, with all your attempts, much less, then, could it be possible for you to preserve spiritual life! That must be a work of Grace—your experience must teach you that.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, have you ever found, under a severe trial, how difficult it is to exercise the Grace that you before thought you possessed very abundantly? You are just now, perhaps, being tried in your faith. You used to sing Luther's Psalm—

***“Loud may the troubled ocean roar!
In secret peace our souls abide.”***

Well, now the ocean has hardly begun to roar. It is only just a little storm—but the sacred peace—where is that? Why, you are running to your neighbor to say, “What shall I do? There is such-and-such about to happen!” Your neighbor might well reply. “Did not I hear you sing the other day—

***‘Let mountains from their seats be hurled
Down to the deeps and buried there!
Convulsions shake the solid world—
My faith shall never yield to fear,’***

and yet here you are! Here you are!” Ah, yes, we may smile, but we have all been through it. It reminds me of what an old country man used to tell me. “Ah,” he said—old Will Richardson—“I always find, Sir, that I could do a long stretch of mowing in the winter! And I often think when the snow is on the ground and I see my old sickle hanging up, that I'd like to go out and do some harvesting, and I'd do it with the best of the

young'uns, but, you know, when the time comes for mowing I find that old Will cannot do much of it, and when the harvest comes round I find that it is very little that makes a good day's work for an old man like me." And you and I think like that sometimes. We say, "Oh, if I had a temptation now, how I could master it!" And then it comes and we find that we cannot master it. "Oh, if I were tried, how I could stand!" And we are tried and we cannot stand. Now this ought to teach us that we cannot keep our own soul alive. Depend upon it, Brother, that the very Grace which you set most store by is probably that in which you are most deficient—and that virtue which you could almost wish to expose to peril because you feel yourself so safe in that respect—is just the joint in the plating of your armor through which the arrow would find its way! Boast not of anything! Above all, boast not of your best things, for they may prove your worst in the day of trial! You have found it so. It may be so again. "None can keep alive his own soul."

Another piece of experience is this. You who love the Master may, perhaps, have been sometimes in a position in which *you have been fascinated by a temptation*. You know the figure I am using now in connection with the word *fascination*. Some of those large pythons that have to be fed upon living animals will have a rabbit, perhaps, put into, their cage for them to feed upon. We are told that the poor little rabbit will sit up on its haunches quietly, calmly and still—because the python has fixed its eyes on the creature and fascinates it—and if it could escape, if the cage door were open so that it could run away, it cannot! It feels itself spell-bound and sits there, incapable of that motion by which it might escape—fascinated by the serpent's eyes. Have you ever been in that position under a sin, and you would have fallen into it, only just then the spell was broken by Providence? Something happened that you could not have looked for, and you escaped because you were a child of God! If you had not been a child of God, that fascination would have continued till it would have ended in your destruction! And if you have ever been under that fascination you will dread ever to expose yourselves to it again. You will take care to keep out of harm's way again, but you will have learned at least this lesson, that you may be cast, even in Providence, in such positions that nothing but the Supernatural Grace of God could deliver you, and you will then have seen that none can keep alive his own soul!

But one more illustration taken from our experience. *We have seen others fall into great sin* and that observation must have helped us to see that we could not keep ourselves. I do not wish to revive old memories for the sake of pain, but I would revive them for the humiliation they ought to cause us all. Have you ever known a man whose prayers comforted and edified you, whose language about the things of God was full of savor, full of instruction to the young and even of comfort to the old? Have you ever seen that man earnest, indefatigable, generous? Have you ever thought to yourselves, "I wish I were half as good as he"? Have you not

known the time when a look from his eyes would have cheered you, and a good word from his lips would have been a blessing to you? And yet you heard one day—and it was as though you had been felled to the earth—you heard that man had been living a life of sin, had been a hypocrite and deceived the people of God! Well you remember that! Perhaps you remember that such a thing has happened not once, nor twice, and there are black marks down in your recollection concerning such an one, and such an one, and such an one. Did you write down after that in your diary, “But I should never do the same”? Then you are a fool, be sure of that! But if, instead of that, you wrote down in your diary, “Hold You me up and I shall be safe.” If you fell on your knees and said, “Lord, keep me, for—

**“Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last,”**

then you have learned a good lesson, and you have learned also the meaning of my text, “None can keep alive his own soul,” for that is what God meant to teach you! May you learn it from others, and not have to painfully learn it by your own falls into sin. My time has failed me, yet must I keep you a little longer while I dwell with great brevity, in the next place, upon—

III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS OF THE TEXT.

I have shown you the Doctrine and the experience which backs it up. Now what are the practical lessons? They are these. First, *never entertain a good opinion of ourselves*. “What, never believe that I am saved?” Oh, yes, if you are saved, always believe that! But then, what is your ground for believing that you are saved? If that lies in your goodness, then away with it, for it is a bad foundation and the sooner you get off of it, the better! My dear Brother, you are no better than the poor publican when he smote upon his breast and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and if you think you are any better than he, you do not know yourself! You will go down from this Tabernacle without a blessing if you are able to get higher up than he, and can say with the Pharisee, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men.” Nothing but a heap of dust and ashes—and a mass of misery and sin—are you but for Sovereign Grace! “In me,” says the Apostle, “that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing.” That is to say, “In me, inexperienced me, uninstructed me, unenlightened me, whatever else of good or of virtue may be appended to the word, me, there dwells no good thing!” Grace, Grace, Grace alone can keep and must keep us! But as for any absolute personal acquirement, no confidence can be placed in any of these! Dear Brothers and Sisters, take care that you have never a good opinion, then, of yourself.

The next lesson is never get away from the Cross. This Psalm is all about Christ on the Cross. “None can keep alive his own soul.” The life of souls is in the dying and living Savior. If you can live a day without feeling the blood of sprinkling, you have lived a dangerous day! If you feel

that you can afford to go into any Christian duty without a Mediator, you are in danger! Dear Brothers and Sisters, always sing —

“There is a Fountain filled with blood,”

and sing it always because you always need that Fountain and always need the washing!

Another lesson is *never neglect the means of Grace*. If you cannot keep alive your own soul, then do not neglect the means through which God helps your soul to live. If you could live without food, why then, you would not come to the table at the time of meals, but as you cannot keep alive your soul, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. I have known some who have said, “Oh, well, I can do as well at home. I can read this good book or that.” Sir, I know what it always comes to—it comes to bringing leanness into the soul and, by-and-by, if persisted in, it ends in apostasy, and proves that the man never had the Grace of God at all! I find that I cannot do without the means of Grace, and I believe that if I cannot, you cannot, my Brothers and Sisters.

But there is a further lesson—*never rest on the means of Grace*, for even by their use you cannot keep alive your soul! Do we live on sermons, live on hymns, live on other people’s prayers? Oh, no! The sermon is only useful because it is like a ladder to help you to climb. The prayer of another is only useful because it may be like a torch from another altar to set your sacrifice on a blaze. Never neglect the means, but *never depend upon the means*. Go above the means to the God of the means, and do not be satisfied with the mere means of Grace, but try to get the Grace of the means!

So let me add again, and I will sit down, *never run into temptation*. If you cannot keep your soul alive on safe ground, what can you do in the midst of pestilence? Those Christian people who are always saying, “Well, I do not see the harm of this,” and, “I think I may do that”—I am afraid their Grace must be very problematical—they cannot have any at all, or they would not talk in that way! A man who wishes to be living and healthy, but who feels his life to be in jeopardy, will not run any unnecessary risks. Go you not into the path of temptation, for even while the devil tempts you, you may expect Divine help, yet if you tempt the devil to tempt you, I do not know that there is any promise that God will help you! Bless God daily, dear Friends. Bless God daily if you are kept. As you cannot keep alive your own soul, if your soul is kept alive, bless God for it! Oh, I think that the children of God, when they get to mourning and saying, “I have not as much faith as So-and-So, I have not the love of the Apostle Paul, I have not the joy of such-and-such a Christian,” they would do quite as well if they were to sit down and say, “Lord, while I mourn that I have not these things, I do bless You if I have half a grain of faith, for that will keep me out of Hell.” If you have not got sunlight, do be thankful for candlelight. Ah, the day may come when you will be glad

to get the slightest evidence, so while you have got it, thank God for it! We ought to lament that we have not more Grace, but we ought to be thankful that we have any at all! If I am not a full-grown man in Christ, and ought to be, I ought to mourn over my dwarfed estate! But if I am a child of God at all, there is something to be thankful for! Praise His name, then! Lift up the notes of song, you mournful ones! Yes, let every Believer bless the name of the Lord!

And so let us close by saying this—if God has kept you alive, and you bless His name for it, *show your gratitude by helping others*. “None can keep alive his own soul,” but often a word from a Brother may be a word from the great Father of us all. A gentle admonition from a matron may help a young Sister. A word of wisdom from a father in Christ may help the young Brother. Oh, watch over one another! Be pastors to each other. “Bear you one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” I am sure that in this great London of ours, much of our safety against a wicked world will lie in keeping our ranks close. I know that young men coming up to London, even if they have the Grace of God in their hearts—if they get isolated and separated, are very likely to be led astray. Therefore, if there is any young Christian in the Tabernacle tonight who is spending his first Sunday evening in London and does not know anybody here, I say, my dear Brother, hook on to one of our classes! Lay hold of somebody tonight that belongs to the Church and try to make friends with him, for none of us can keep alive his own soul, and it is not good for man to be alone! God may mean by joining you with this Church and bringing you into some of the various classes, to bless you and keep your soul alive!

Ah, you have come up, have you, and taken a job in London. And you come out on Sunday evenings, and your mother told you to come here, and you are glad to listen to my voice tonight. Well, next Sunday afternoon, my Sister, there is Mrs. Bartlett’s Bible Class downstairs where you will meet with many Sisters in Christ who will be glad to talk with you and cheer you. Perhaps if you do not go into that class, you will be quite lonely, and by degrees grow cold and get laid aside. You will not be able to stand alone, very well, so come and get a hold of some of your Sisters in Christ, and by God’s Grace, though you cannot depend upon them, yet they may be the means in God’s hand of helping you to stand! Soldiers, close your ranks! Each man to his fellow stand firm for Christ! The enemy is doing all he can to break our solid ranks. Let us be true to one another, and true to the great Captain who is at our head! Up to where the blood-red Cross is the banner to which we all shall rally, let each man turn their eyes, and then next, let each man look right and left upon his fellows and help to hold up such as begin to stagger in the dreadful battle—and who knows but that thus we may help to keep ourselves upon our feet, for he that helps others shall be helped himself! He that waters others shall be watered himself. God grant it may be so with you all, and may Jesus make and keep alive all our souls! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.**

Very much of the language of David used here, I trust we can make our own. May the Spirit of God lead us to understand, by experience, what he has written.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation.* I find no comfort anywhere else but in Him, and expect salvation from none but Himself. “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”

1. *Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Who can stand against Him? What strength can resist His strength? What darkness can baffle His light? What foes can prevent His salvation?

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* “They wanted to destroy me altogether—to eat me right up.” If they did not destroy me, it was not from lack of heart to do it, nor even from lack of power, for there were many of them. But I had not to fight, for they fell before they reached me. “They stumbled and fell.”

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* Let them come on. They fell before—they will fall again. Let them come on. God was strong enough to meet them and overthrow them once. He will do it again! Therefore, why should we fear? Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, those who have had the most experience of the Divine fullness will rest most confident that nothing can harm them!

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His Temple.* He only wished to be always like a child at home—live in God’s house—no temporal structure, but wherever he was, he wished to feel that he was near to God—that all places were the mansions of the great Father, so that he might always have his eyes fixed upon the beauty of the Lord, and his ears always open to listen to the voice of the Lord. Ah, if we can once get ourselves wholly given up to God, it will take our thoughts off the various oppositions we meet with—and we shall no more be afraid!

5, 6. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret places of His Tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His Tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* It is a blessed resolution, not always easily carried out, but still it ought to be. Our life ought to be singing. It used to be sinning—it ought now to be singing, since the sin has been put away. Oh, happy are the men that know their God! If the whole world

would be full of storms, yet may they rest in peace! Get near to God—acquaint yourself with Him and be at peace! The remedy for all trouble is dwelling near to God!

7, 8. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you My face, my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD will I seek.* Are we always mindful of Divine motions? When the still small voice in the heart says, “Seek you My face,” Brothers and Sisters, do we always at once respond and say, “Your face, Lord, will I seek”? I am afraid we are often as the horse and the mule which have no understanding—and need to have the bit, and the bridle, and the rod. But happy are those who have a sensitive nature—quickly feel the movements of the Spirit of God!

9, 10. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger: You have been my help: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* He prayed, you see, and it looked a little unbelieving when he said, “Leave me not, neither forsake me.” But it was not so, for at once he confessed that he did not think that God would leave him, even when our father and mother, who are the last to leave us, should do so. “Then the Lord will take me up.”

11-14. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies, for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say on the LORD.* I suppose he meant that last sentence to be his own personal recommendation, derived from his own experience. “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” He had tried it—proved its wonderful power as the restorative to his heart, and so he says—“Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

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

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

FAITH AMONG MOCKERS

NO. 1767

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

***“He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”
Psalm 22:8.***

DAVID experienced what Paul afterwards so aptly described as “cruel mockings.” Note the adjective, *cruel*—it is well chosen. Mockings may not cut the flesh, but they tear the heart. They may shed no blood, but they cause the mind to bleed internally. Fetters gall the wrists, but the iron of scorn enters into the soul. Ridicule is a poisoned bullet which goes deeper than the flesh and strikes the center of the heart. David in the wilderness, hunted by Saul and on the throne abused by Shimei, knew what it was to be the butt of scorn, the football of contempt. Many a time and often he was the song of the drunk and the byword of the scoffer.

But what have I to do with the son of Jesse? My heart remembers the Son of Man. What if David suffered despising and scorn? He knew it but in small measure compared with our blessed Lord! Well is it said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord.” It is not amazing that such an one as David should have to cry, “My soul is among lions,” when the Lord of All, the perfectly pure and Holy One, was driven to utter the same cry, saying, “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you have to pass through a like painful experience, count it no strange thing, for a strange thing it is not! Reproach is the common heritage of the godly. Do not think that this fire which you suffer is the first that ever burned a saint. Others have had to bear the enmity of the world long before you! Remember that, of old, from the first moment when sin came into the world, there were two seeds, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and between these two seeds there is an enmity of the most deadly kind which will never cease! It may assume different forms and it may be held in check by many forces, but it will always continue, forever the same, while men are men, sin is sin—and God and the devil are opposed.

It was so, you know, in the house of Abraham—he was a man that walked before God and was perfect in his generation—and yet in his family there were the two opposing powers. Ishmael, born after the flesh, mocked him that was born after the Spirit. When Rebekah had brought forth twin sons, yet the fact of their being twins of holy Isaac did not prevent the enmity that arose between Jacob and Esau. Nothing will prevent

the seed of the serpent from exhibiting its spite towards the Seed of the woman! Even kinship and brotherhood go for little in this strife. In fact, a man's foes full often are they of his own household. Count it no marvel, then, if you are derided! It seems to be a necessity of the holy Nature of God that it should incur the enmity of the evil nature of fallen man and that this evil nature should show itself by direct and bitter attack.

Remember "Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." Henceforth, bow your shoulders to the yoke! *Expect* that if you follow the Crucified, you will have to bear the Cross, for so it will be. I trust that our present meditation may be useful to any of God's servants who are feeling the sharp lash of envious tongues, that they may not, thereby, be driven from their steadfastness. If any, in their hearts, are bowed down because they are conscious that possibly they have given the scoffers some opportunity to mock them, may they even in this, take heart, for David had done so, and yet he was not crushed by the blasphemies of the wicked.

I. The first thing to which I shall call your attention at this time is that a truly gracious man is like David and like the Lord Jesus, in that HIS TRUST IN GOD IS KNOWN. Even the enemies of this holy man who is mentioned in the text, and, as I interpret it, even the enemies of our Divine Lord and Master, never denied that He trusted in God. This, indeed, is the commencement of their scoff—"He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him." From which I gather that every gracious man should have an apparent, manifest, public trust in God. He should not merely trust Him in his heart, alone, but that trust should so enter into his entire nature that he does not conceal it nor *think* of concealing it.

He should be so open in the avowal of his confidence, that his enemies, before whom he is naturally restrained and on his guard, nevertheless are able to spy out this precious thing within him and are forced to bear their witness, though it is mockingly and jestingly, that, "He trusted on the Lord." Such a testimony is all the more valuable as coming from an enemy! You know our character is not likely to be drawn too prettily by those who hate us—the utmost will be sure to be said against us! But if even our *enemies* say of us, "He trusted on the Lord," we may be very thankful that we have so lived as to extort this testimony from their lips.

What, then, ought a child of God to do in order to show that he really does trust in the Lord? How did Jesus do this? Well, I think that in our Lord's case it was His *wonderful calmness* which compelled everybody to see that "He trusted on the Lord." You never find Him in a flurry. He is never worried nor confused. He is beset behind and before with men who try to catch Him, but He is as self-possessed as if He spoke among friends. He does not appear to be the least upon His guard and yet, instead of their catching Him, before long *He* either catches *them*, or else they retire, saying, "Never man spoke like this Man." He was always cool, peaceful, ready, self-composed. You notice His inward quietude not only when enemies are round about Him, but when He is surrounded by a great mob of people all hungry, starving, famishing—He breaks the bread and multiplies it—but not before He has made them all sit down on the green grass by hundreds and by fifties.

He will have them in companies, arranged in ranks, for convenient distribution. And when they are all placed in order, as if it had been a well-marshaled royal entertainment, then it is that He takes the bread and, looking up to Heaven, with all deliberation asks a blessing and breaks and gives the food to the disciples. The disciples make no scramble of it—it is an orderly festival and the thousands are all fed in due time and in majestic decorum—for Christ was calm and, therefore, master of the situation! He never looks as if He had fallen into difficulties and then adopted expedients to get out of them! His whole life is pre-arranged and ordered in the most prudent and peaceful manner.

Nothing upon this earth, although He was so reduced that He had nowhere to lay His head and although He was sometimes so weary that He sat down upon a well to rest, could put Him out of the way, or disarrange His perfect collectedness! He was always ready for every emergency. In fact, nothing was an emergency to Him! What a beautiful picture that is of Christ on board ship in a storm! While they that are with Him are afraid that they will go down, that the wind will blow them into the water, or blow the water over them, so that they will certainly be drowned—what is He doing? Why, He is asleep! Not because He forgot them—no, but because He knew that the vessel was in the great Father's hands!

It was His time for sleep. He was weary and needed rest and so He carried out that which was the nearest duty—and in all peacefulness laid His head on a pillow and slept! His sleep ought to have made them feel at ease. Whenever the captain can afford to go to sleep, the passengers may go to sleep, too. Depend upon it, He that manages everything would not have gone to bed if He had not felt that it was all right in the hands of the Highest, who, at any moment, could stop the raging storm! I wish we could be similarly restful, for then even our enemies would say of us, "He trusted on the Lord." I wish we could have that steadfast, imperturbable frame of mind in which our Lord untied the knots with which His foes would have bound Him—for then our assailants would marvel at our quiet confidence.

Jesus knew no hurry, but calmly and deliberately met each matter as it came and grandly kept Himself free from all entanglement. Oh, for the holy quiet which would prevent our going about our business in haste! "He that believes shall not make haste," but do everything as in the infinite leisure of the Eternal who is never before His time and is never behind. If we could do that and did not get so flurried and worried, and tossed about and driven to our wit's end, then our enemies would say with astonishment, "He trusted on the Lord!"

Brethren, this ought, also, to come out not merely in our calm and quiet manner, but also *by our distinct avowal*. I do not think that any man has a right to be a *secret* believer in the Lord Jesus Christ at this time. You will tell me that Nicodemus was—that Joseph of Arimathaea was—and I answer, "Yes," but therein they are *not* our exemplars. These weak Brothers were forgiven and strengthened—but we may not, therefore, presume. Times, however, are different now—by the death of Christ the thoughts of many hearts were revealed—and from that day those secret disciples were among the foremost to avow their faith! Nicodemus brought

the spices and Joseph of Arimathaea went in boldly and begged for the body of Jesus.

Since that day when Christ was openly revealed upon the Cross, the thoughts of other men's hearts are revealed, too, and it is not now permissible for us to play hide and seek with Christ. No, "He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved." "He that with his heart believes and *with his mouth makes confession of Him*, shall be saved." The open confession is constantly, in Scripture, joined with the secret faith! The Lord Jesus Christ puts it, "He that denies Me before men, him will I deny." And if you read it, the text sets denying in opposition to *confession*, so that it really means, "He that does not *confess* Me before men, him will I not confess when I come in the Glory of the Father." Our Lord does not reckon upon leading a body of followers who will always keep behind the hedge, hiding themselves in holes and corners whenever there is anything to be done for His Glory—and only running out at mealtimes when there is something to be had for themselves!

I know some professors of that sort, but I have very little to say to their credit—they are a cowardly crew. No, no! We ought to distinctly declare that we believe in God and we should take opportunities, as prudence dictates, of telling our friends and neighbors what our experience has been about trusting in God—telling them of deliverances we have received, of prayers which have been answered—and of many other tokens for good which have come to us as the result of our faith in God. To trust in man is a thing of which we may be ashamed, for we find man to be as a broken reed, or as a spear that pierces us to our heart when we lean on him. But, blessed are they that trust in the Lord, for they shall be as trees planted by the rivers of water! They shall bring forth their fruit in their season and even their leaves shall not wither! God, in whom they trust, will honor their faith and bless them yet more and more! Let them, therefore, honor their God and never hesitate to speak well of His name.

So, then, I say, first, a calm belief and, secondly, an open avowal should cause even our adversaries to know that we have trusted in the Lord. And, then, I will add to that, that *our general conduct should reveal our faith*. The whole of our life should show that we are men who rejoice in the Lord, for trusting the Lord, as I understand it, is not a thing for Sundays and for places of worship, alone—we are to trust in the Lord about *everything*! If I trust the Lord about my soul, I must trust Him about my body, about my wife, about my children and all my domestic and business affairs. It would have been a terrible thing if the Lord had drawn a black line around our religious life and had said, "You may trust Me about that, but with household matters I will have nothing to do." We need the whole of life to be within the fence of Divine care. The perfect bond of Divine Love must tie up the whole bundle of our affairs, or the whole will slip away.

Faith is a thing for the closet, the parlor, the counting house and the farmhouse—it is a light for dark days and a shade for bright days—you may carry it with you everywhere and everywhere it shall be your help. Oh, that we did so trust in the Lord that people noticed it as much as they notice our temper, our dress, or our tone! The pity is that too often we go forward, helter-skelter, following our own wisdom, whereas we ought to

say, "No, I must wait a little while, till I ask counsel of the Lord." It should be seen and known that we are distinctly waiting upon God for guidance. What a stir this would make in some quarters! I wish that without any desire to be Pharisaical, or to display our piety, we, nevertheless, did unconsciously show the great principle which governs us!

Just as one man will say, "Excuse me, I must consult a friend," or, "I must submit the case to my solicitor," so it ought to be habitual with a Christian—before he replies to an important matter—to demand a moment wherein he may wait upon God and obtain direction! In any case, I wish that it may be so usual with us to ask guidance from above that it may be noticed as our habit to trust on the Lord. Once more, I think this ought to come out most distinctly *in our behavior during times of trouble*, for then it is that our adversaries are most likely to notice it. You, dear Sister, have lost a child. Well now, remember that you are a Christian woman—and sorrow not as those that are without hope. Let the difference be real and true, and do not be ashamed that others might observe it.

When your neighbor lost her child, it occasioned a quarrel between her and God, but it is not so with you, is it? Will you quarrel with God about your baby? Oh, no! You love Him too well. And you, Brother, you are perplexed in business and you know what a worldling does—if he has nothing more than outward religion, he complains bitterly that God deals harshly with him and he quarrels with God! Or, perhaps, to make things better, he does what he ought not to do in business and makes them a great deal worse. Many a man has plunged into rash speculations until he has destroyed himself commercially! But you, as a Christian man, must take matters calmly and quietly—it is not yours to speculate, but to confide. Your strength lies in saying—"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

You must not be so eager to be rich that you would put forth your hand to do iniquity in order to seize the golden apples—that is the *reverse* of faith! You are now to play the man and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you are now with resignation, no, with more than that—with a sweet acquiescence to the Divine will—to show men how a Christian can behave himself. I have never admired Addison's words as some have done, who, when he came to die, sent for a lord of his acquaintance and said, "Watch how a Christian can *die*." There is a little pride about *that*, but I desire that every Christian should say in his soul, "I will show men how a Christian can *live*. I will let them see what it is to live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Those who do not believe there is a God shall yet be led to feel there must be a God, because my faith in Him does speed so well and I obtain so many unnumbered blessings as the result of it."

I say, most earnestly, that especially in the time of sorrow and bereavement, when other people are sore put to it because they have lost their joy, and the light of their house is quenched, it is the Believer's duty and privilege, by his holy calm of heart, to show his trust in God! If religion cannot help you in trouble, it is not worth having! If the Spirit of God does not sustain you when you lose your dearest friend, you ought to question whether it is the Spirit of God! You ought to ask, "Can this be the

Spirit which bore up the martyrs at the stake?”—if now that you are passing through these waters, you are carried away by them? If our faith shines out in dark times, even as the stars are seen by night, then is it well with us!

Oh, that you and I might, in all these ways so live that all who see us should *know* that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be ridiculous if a man went into society with a label on his coat, “*This man trusts in God,*” and it would be a pretty clear sign that he needed to be thus ticketed. I would have you shun all distinctive phylacteries in matters of religion as too much flavored with the leaven of the Pharisees! But when the possession of godliness proclaims itself, even as a box of precious spikenard tells its own tale, you need not be ashamed of it! Display and ostentation are vicious, but the unrestrained use of influence and example is commendable. In these days when men glory in their unbelief, let us not be bashful with our faith!

If, in a free country, men should not persecute an infidel, they certainly ought not to silence a Believer. We do not intend to smuggle our religion through the land. It is not contraband and, therefore, we shall bear it with us, openly, in the sight of all men—and let them say if they please—“He trusted on the Lord.”

II. Secondly, THIS TRUST ON THE PART OF BELIEVING MEN IS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE WORLD. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him.” Observe that they restricted the Savior’s trust to that point—“He trusted on the Lord *that He would deliver Him.*” But now, in the first place, *our faith is not confined to merely receiving from God.* No, Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord does *not* deliver us, we will trust Him. See how firmly Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood to it that they would not bow before the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up! “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But *if not*, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”

There was great faith in that, “if not.” We must not live and wait upon God with a kind of cupboard love, just as a stray dog might follow a man for bones. we must speak well of our God even if He scourges us, for therein lies both the truth and the strength of faith. Job has put it—“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Whatever happens to us—if our faith is the work of the Holy Spirit—we shall hold on to our trust in God. *Neither is our faith limited to what men call deliverance.* It is a misrepresentation when His enemies say, “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him” because though it is the truth, it is not the whole truth.

Our blessed Lord continued to trust in the Father though the cup did not pass from Him and though no legions of angels were sent to deliver Him from Pilate. Though the enemy was permitted to exercise all his malice upon Him until His blessed body was nailed to the accursed tree, yet the faith of our Divine Lord and Master was not moved from its steadfastness. He trusted in God for something higher than deliverance from death,

for He looked beyond the grave and said, "You will not leave My Soul in Hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." In all His pains His heart said, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him."

The blind world cannot understand this. They say, like their father, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" They insinuate that Christian people trust God for what they get out of Him. Now I have often thought that if the devil could have put it the other way, he would have been very rejoiced to do so. Suppose he could have said, "Job serves God for nothing," then the ungodly world would have shouted, "We told you so! God is a bad Paymaster! His servants may serve Him as perfectly as Job, but He never gives them any reward." Happily, the accuser's grumble is of quite the opposite kind. Neither one way nor another is there any pleasing the devil—and it is not a thing we desire to do. Let him put it as he likes! We serve God and we have our reward, but if the Lord does not choose to give us exactly what we look for, we will still trust in Him, for it is our delight!

It is a misrepresentation to say of a Believer that, "He trusted on the Lord *that He would deliver him,*" if he is supposed to trust for no other reason. And, dear Friends, *our faith is not tied to time.* That is the mistake of the statement in the text. They said, "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him"—as much as to say, "If God does not deliver Him *now*, His trust will have been a folly and God will not have answered to His confidence." But it is not so. Brethren, if we are in the fire, tonight, and we are trusting in God, our faith does not mean that we expect to come forth from the furnace at this very hour. No, we may not come out tonight, nor tomorrow, nor next month—it may be not for years! We do not tie God down to conditions and expect Him to do this and that—and then if He does not, in His wisdom, see fit to do it, threaten that we will trust Him any more!

The very worst we could do would be to make the Eternal God a slave to *time*, as though He must do everything at *our* bidding and measure His Divine movements by the ticking of a clock! The Lord *did* deliver His Son, Jesus Christ, but He suffered Him to *die* first! He was put into the grave before He was lifted up from the power of death. And if it had not been that He died and lay in the tomb, He could not have had that splendid deliverance which His Father did vouchsafe Him when He raised Him, again, from the dead! Had He not yielded to death, there could have been no Resurrection for Him or for us! So, Beloved, it may be God has not effected His purpose with you, yet, nor has He quite prepared you for the height of blessing to which He has ordained you. Receive what He is going to give you and gratefully take the painful preliminaries. High palaces must have deep foundations and it takes a long time to excavate a human soul so deep that God can build a gorgeous palace of Grace therein!

If it is a mere cottage that the Lord is to build in you, you may escape with small troubles. But if He is going to make you a palace to glorify Himself with, then you may expect to have long trials. Coarse pottery needs not the laborious processes which must be endured by superior vessels. Iron, which is to become a sword for a hero, must know more of the fire than the metal which lies upon the road as a rail. Your eminence in Grace can only come by affliction! Will you not have trust in God if se-

vere trials are ordained for you? Yes, of course you will! The Holy Spirit will be the All-Sufficient Helper of your infirmities! I say it is misrepresentation if we limit the Holy One of Israel to any *form* for our deliverance, or to any *time* for our deliverance. Let not the Lord of Love be treated like a child at school, as if He could be taught anything by us!

So, also, *our faith must not judge at all by present circumstances*. The ungodly world judges that God has not delivered us because we are now in trouble and are, at present, distressed by it. Oh, how wrongly the world judged Christ when it judged Him by His condition! Covered with bloody sweat and groaning out His soul to God beneath the olives at midnight—why, they that passed by who did not know Him must have judged Him to be a man accursed of God! “Look,” they would have said, “we never heard of a man that sweat blood before—sweat blood in *prayer*! And yet listen to His groans! He is not heard by God, for evidently the cup does not pass from Him.” If any man had looked at our Lord Jesus when He was on the Cross and had heard Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” they would have certainly concluded that He was the most ungracious and undeserving of men—for had He been a saint, surely, they say—“God would not have forsaken Him.”

Yes, but you see they only saw a little of our blessed Master’s career! They only looked upon a span of His existence! What a grievous error it was to have estimated His life by His brief passion, knowing nothing of its grand intent! Look at Him, now, while harps unnumbered sound His praises and all Heaven rejoices to behold His Glory and the Father looks upon Him with ineffable delight! This is the same Jesus who was crucified! What do you think of Him now? You must not measure a man by a little bit of his life, nor even by the whole of his earthly career, for it is nothing compared with the hidden future of his life in eternity!

These men measured David’s faith and measure *our* faith by what they see of us on one day—we are sick, we are sorry, we are poor, we are troubled and they say—“We told you so! This faith of theirs is not worth having, or else they would not fare so roughly or be found in so much heaviness.” Faith and feeling are in contrast. Outward circumstances must never be made the tests of the value of pious trust in our God! We must not judge God by His dealings with us nor judge ourselves by them! Let us still hold on to this pure, simple faith that the Lord is good to Israel. Let us love the Lord for a whole eternity of His love and then for *everything*—for every turn of His hand, for every frown and stroke and rebuke—for He is good in everything, unalterably good! If with this faith of ours we are praying and pleading and God does not answer us, does not help us, but leaves us in the dark, yet still let not our trust waver. If any man walks in darkness and sees no light, let him trust and trust on until the light shall come.

So, then, we have just touched upon two points—that a true man’s faith is soon made known, but that, though it is known, it is usually misunderstood. We live among blind men—let us not be angry because they cannot see!

III. Thirdly, THIS TRUE FAITH WILL, IN ALL PROBABILITY, BE MOCKED AT SOME TIME OR OTHER. It is a great honor to a man to trust

in God and so to have his name written upon the Arch of Triumph which Paul has erected in the 11th Chapter of Hebrews where you see name after name of the heroes who served God by faith. It is a glorious thing to mingle our bones with those who are buried in that mausoleum which bears this epitaph, "These all died in faith." It is an honorable thing to be a believer in God, but there are some who think the very reverse and these begin to scoff at the Believer.

Sometimes *they scoff at faith itself*. They count faith itself to be a folly of weak minds. Or else they insult over one particular Christian's faith. "Oh," they say, "he professes to trust in God. This man talks after this mad fashion! Why, he is a working man like other people—works in a shop along with me! What has he to do with trusting God any more than I have? He is conceited and fanatical." Or in other circles they cry, "This is a man of business! He keeps a shop and I dare say he knows as much of the tricks of the trade as we do, and yet he talks about trusting in God! No doubt He pretends to this faith to win religious customers." Sometimes the mockery comes from one of your family, for Faith's foes live in the same house with her.

The husband has been known to say to his wife, "Ridiculous nonsense, your trusting in God!" Yes, and parents have said the same to holy children and, alas, children have grown up to speak in the same fashion to their parents to the wounding of their hearts. As if faith in God were a thing that could be scoffed at, instead of being the most wise, proper and rational thing under Heaven! Faith in God is a thing to be revered rather than reviled! True religion is sanctified common sense! It is the most commonsense thing in the world to put your trust in One that cannot lie! If I trust myself, or trust my fellow man, I am thought to be in the first case, self-reliant, and in the second case I am judged to have a charitable disposition. Yet in either case I shall, sooner or later, prove my folly!

But if I trust God, who can bring a reason against my confidence? What is there to be ridiculed in a man's trusting his Maker? Can HE fail that created the blue heavens, that settled the foundations of the earth and poured out the waters of the great sea? Can the Almighty retract His promise because He is unable to fulfill it? Can He break His cord because circumstances master Him and prevent His performance of it? "Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." The day shall come when it will be known by all intelligent beings that unbelief of God is folly, but that faith in the Eternal is essential wisdom. God give us more faith in Himself! No doubt we may expect to have all the more of the laughter of the ungodly who will make a spectacle of us for our faith—but what of that? We can bear mockery and much more for His sake who died for us.

And then *men scoff at the very idea of Divine interposition*. They judge the Lord's deliverance to be the main point of our faith. "He trusted God that He would deliver Him." "Look," they say, "he fancies that God will deliver *him*, as if the Creator had not something else to do besides looking after *him*, poor miserable creature that he is! He is nothing to God—a mere speck—the insect of an hour, and yet he trusts in God to interfere on his behalf." The philosophers laugh whenever you speak of Divine in-

terposition and figure that we must be in the last stage of lunacy to expect anything of the kind! They believe in laws, they say—irreversible, immutable laws, that grind on like the great cogs of a machine which, when once they are set in motion, tear everything to pieces that comes in their way. They do not believe that God fulfils promises, or answers prayers, or delivers His people. Their God is a dead force, without mind, or thought, or love, or care.

He, who in Nature acts according to law is yet believed to have no power to carry out His own Word which must always be Law to a truthful being. Why, some of us are as sure that God has interposed for us as if He had rent the heavens and thrust forth His right hand visibly before the eyes of all beholders! The wise ones laugh at us for this, but we are not abashed—rather do we reply, “Laugh if you like, and as long as you like; but we daily receive unnumbered blessings from God in answer to our cries! And your laughter no more affects us than the noise of the dogs by the Nile disturbs the flow of the river. We shall believe in spite of all your merriment and if it please you to go on with your laughter, we, also, will go on with our faith.” The object of the ungodly man’s scorn is the idea that God should ever interfere to help His people in human affairs, but you stand to it, O true Believers, for He does still show Himself strong on the behalf of them that trust in Him. Let them say and laugh at you as they say it, “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him,” but let none of these things move you.

Further, we have known this mockery to extend to *all kinds of faith in the Divine Love*. “Let Him deliver Him,” they say, “seeing that He delighted in Him.” Perhaps you have unwisely told out the tale of God’s special love to those who are now making fun of you—you have cast your pearls before swine and they turned against you. They say, “This man says God loves him above others! That He chose him before the world began! That He redeemed him from among men with the blood of Christ! He says that God has called him by His Holy Spirit; that He has admitted him into His secrets and made him His child!” And then they laugh right lustily, as if it were a rare jest!

How the world rages against electing love! It cannot endure any speciality in Grace. The idea that one man should be more Beloved of Heaven than another, it declares as horrible. The heathen could not understand a certain brave saint because he called himself, Theophorus, or, “God-bearer.” But he stuck to it, that he was so, and this made his foes the more wrathful. God dwelt in him, he said, and he would not give up his happy belief and, therefore, they ceased not to mock. It was a carrying out of our text, “Let Him deliver him, seeing He delights in him.” Well, well! We can afford to bear these mockings, for if we are beloved by a King—it will not much matter if we are sneered at by His subjects! If we are beloved by God, it is a small concern though all men should make us the subject of their jest!

Ungodly men are exceedingly apt to find *amusement in the trials involved in the life and walk of faith*. Their cry of “Let Him deliver Him” implies that their victim was in serious difficulty from which He could not extricate Himself. This is no novelty to the Believer, but it makes rare fun

for the ungodly. What is the good of faith if the Believer suffers like others, endures the same pains, losses and diseases as others? So the men of the world argue. They would be Believers, too, if it would bring them a fortune, or a handsome salary, or at least a loaded table and a full cup! But when they see a saint on the dunghill with Job, or in the pit with Joseph, or in the dungeon with Jeremiah, or among the dogs with Lazarus, they sneer and cry, "Is this the reward of piety? Is this the recompense of godliness?"

They like to spy us out in our time of trouble and taunt us with our confidence in God and, alas, there is so much unbelief in us that we are all too prone, in such seasons, to question the justice and faithfulness of the Lord and to say with David, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." It seems hard for us to be mocked by the base ones of the earth—to become the song and the byword of the ungodly—yet this has happened to the excellent of the earth and will happen yet again. Set your account that this is a part of the covenanted heritage and accept it with joy for Christ's sake!

IV. Now, I must close with this point (though there is much more to be said)—THE TIME SHALL COME WHEN THE FAITH OF THE MAN WHO HAS TRUSTED IN GOD SHALL BE ABUNDANTLY JUSTIFIED. I think it is no small thing to have *the ungodly bearing witness* that, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him." I have known what it is to be exceedingly grateful to ungodly men for helping me to believe that I am truly a child of God. Somebody, years ago, uttered an atrocious lie against me—an abominable slander. I was very low and heavy of spirit at the time, but when I read it, I clapped my hands for joy, for I felt, "Now I have one of the marks and seals of a child of God, for it is written, 'Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.'"

The love of the Lord's Brethren and the hatred of the Lord's enemies are two things to be desired! We may gather that we are not of the wicked when they will not endure us in their company—when our very presence irritates them—and they begin to rail and jeer. It has happened to us even as Jesus said—"If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." So that there is justification, as it were, of our faith even from the lips of adversaries—and we ought to be thankful for it instead of being downcast about it.

Another justification awaits us and in due season it will come. Brothers and Sisters, the day will come when *God will deliver His people*. You will be brought out of your trouble—it may not be immediately, but it will be seasonably. You may most wisely, in the meantime, learn to glory in your tribulation! Your bitters shall turn into sweets and your losses into gains. Your sorrows shall be your joys, your struggles your triumphs—perhaps in this life this transformation may occur, even as the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before—but certainly in the life to come you will find the tables turned. Then, what will the ungodly say? They say now, "He trusted on God that He would deliver him," but they will be compelled to say as they gnash their teeth, "God has delivered him."

Whereas the ungodly ridicule the idea that God delights in His people, the day shall come when they shall be made to see that He *does* delight in them. When the Lord appears on behalf of His people and gives them “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning,” the wicked shall gnash their teeth and be filled with confusion! When the Lord shall turn, again, our captivity, even our most desperate foes shall be made to say, “The Lord has done great things for them.” They shall wonder and be sorely vexed to see how the Lord has such favor to His chosen. If they do not see it in *this* life, oh, what an exhibition ungodly men will see of His delight in His people in the world to come!

Dives sees Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom—what a sight for him! They that scoff at God’s poor people, here, shall see them exalted to be kings and priests to reign with Christ forever and ever! And what will they say, then? What *can* they say but be compelled to bear witness that their faith was justified! Brethren, at the Last Great Day, ungodly men will be witnesses on behalf of the saints. If any doubt whether the saints trusted in God, the wicked will be compelled to come forward and say, “They *did* trust, for we laughed at them for it.” Of this and that man they shall say, “He trusted on God that He would deliver him.” In that day the unbelieving will be swift witnesses against themselves, for as they ridiculed the children of God here, they will have it read out before them as evidence of their enmity against the Lord—and how will they answer it?

A man is generally much grieved with anyone who injures his children. I have known a man behave patiently to his neighbors and put up with a great deal from them. But when one of them has struck his child, I have seen him incensed to the last degree. He has said, “I cannot stand that! I will not look on and see my own children abused.” The Lord says, “He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” Jesus rises from His Throne in Glory and stands up indignantly while His servant Stephen is being stoned. If I had no other amusement whatever, I would not, for merriment sake, mock the people of God, for it will go hard with those who make unhallowed mirth out of the saints of the Host High! If any of you have ever done so—if you have done so ignorantly—may the Lord forgive you and bring you to be numbered among His people, as was Saul of Tarsus.

And if any of you have done so knowingly, be humble and penitent, and the Lord will forgive you and receive you among His people. But whether you revile or flatter, it is all one to us. We are at a pass with you—we trust in God that He will deliver us—and we cannot be removed from this confidence. O you mockers, we will not be fooled out of our hope, nor jested out of our peace! We cannot find anyone like our God to trust to, and so we will not depart from Him in life or death, but will rest in Him, by His Grace, come what may, even till we see Him face to face!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 22.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—675, 22 (PART II), 56.**

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“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD”

NO. 3006

**A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, BROMLEY, KENT,
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 16, 1866.**

***“The LORD is my shepherd.”
Psalm 23:1.***

I CANNOT say anything that is new upon this text. I have not even the desire to do so, but if I can remind you of old and precious Truths of God and also put you in remembrance of sweet experiences which are past, this will not be an unprofitable topic for our meditation.

I like to recall the fact that this Psalm was probably written by David when he was a king. He had been a shepherd and he was not ashamed of his former occupation. When he had to wear a crown, he remembered the time when he had handled the shepherd's crook and, as a lad, with his sling and stone, had kept watch over his father's sheep in the wilderness. Some persons are too proud to remember their early employments, though such pride is both their folly and their shame. Many persons would not like, in their public devotions, to make use of expressions which would have any reference to their secular calling, but it seems to be perfectly natural, in David's case, to hear him say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” for he had, himself, been a shepherd and knew just what the word implied.

By the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, let us see what we can get out of the metaphor used in our text. We must, of course, remind ourselves that we are not in the country where these words were written. We must, in thought, go to the East in order to get the full meaning of them. It is a great mercy that the Bible was not written according to the fashion of the West, for everything has changed in our part of the world. If this Book had been written, for instance, in the style of the earliest literature known in England, probably we would not have fully understood it, and other nations would have been altogether puzzled by it. But, in the East there has been little or no change for centuries. Oriental manners and customs are almost the same today as they were in the days of David, so that if we could go to Palestine at the present moment, we might find just such a shepherd as David was and, in examining his habits and actions, we would learn the meaning of the metaphor that David used when he said, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

We shall notice three things about the text. First, *this sentence, if it is true to us, guarantees us certain privileges.* Secondly, *it involves us in duties.* And thirdly, *it suggests to us enquiries.*

I. First, if this sentence is, indeed, true of each one of us, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” then THIS GUARANTEES US CERTAIN PRIVILEGES.

And first, *the Eastern shepherd was the guide of his flock*. The sheep never thought of going before him—it would have been an anomaly in nature for the sheep to go first and for the shepherd to follow. They had no need whatever to know the way across the trackless dessert—it was enough for them that the shepherd knew it. They need not know where the green pastures still remained throughout the droughts of summer, or where there were quiet resting places where they might lie down at noon. It was sufficient for the sheep that the shepherd knew—all that they had to do was patiently to follow where he led the way. David had, no doubt, often gone on in front of his flock, thinking with an anxious heart of the place where he would lead them. And as he looked back at them, he could see that they were patiently following him, with no distraction to trouble their poor brains and no vexations to worry their quiet minds. Happy that they were provided for, they grazed as they went along the way, not knowing and not needing to know where they were going, but quite content because their shepherd led the way.

Transfer this thought, Christian Brother or Sister, to yourself, and see how the Lord is your Guide. Look at the past and note how He has guided you. How very little you and I have had to do with it, after all! We have struggled. We have fretted. We have repined and we have fumed against the working of Providence, but, after all, I do not know that we have had much more to do with it than the sheep in the stream has had to do with the way in which it has floated to the other side! There is far more of the hand of God in our life than there is of our own hand—if our life is what it ought to be. Think of our childhood, of the home where our lot was cast, of our youth, of the place where we were bound as apprentices, or where we first learned the rudiments of our various callings. And since then, what strange paths some of us have trod! If we had been told, years ago, that we should be found here today, in the circumstances in which we are now found, we could not have believed it. There have been times, in our past history, when it has seemed as if a single straw might decide our destiny. We were at the crossroads and the left road might have led us into endless sins and sorrows, but we were guided in the opposite direction, and so we were made to walk beside the still waters and to lie down in green pastures. There have been many times when only a word was needed—no, when a weight no heavier than a feather from the wing of a butterfly was all that was needed to turn the scale against us and to send us into quite a different orbit from that in which we now move! We can truly say that we have been Divinely led until now and, although the journey has been like that of the children of Israel in the wilderness—in and out, backwards and forwards, progressing and then retrograding and often standing still—yet the Lord has led us by a right way up to this present moment and we can truthfully say—

**“Still have we found that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood!”**

***Still is He faithful, wise, and just,
And still in Him let Israel trust.”***

It is easy to say that the Lord has been our Shepherd in the past. It may not be so easy to say that He is our Shepherd in the present and will be our Shepherd in the future. Yet we have nothing to do with the future except to follow in the path of humble trust in the Lord and of obedience to His Word. It is not for me to sit down and make a plan of all I mean to do next week, or next month and so on through all my life. I have no right to forestall my troubles, or to begin to calculate my future needs. I am bound to live in simple dependence upon God, who sends just enough manna for each day, but no more. If I am in any dilemma, if I am in any difficulty, if I do not know which way I should take, had I not better go and tell my Heavenly Father and ask Him to direct me? I must remember that I am not my own shepherd and that I am not to guide myself any more than the sheep is to guide itself—but that I am to look to my great Shepherd, to watch for indications of His will and to receive those indications either from His Word, or from His Providential dealings with me, or from the operations of His gracious Spirit within my heart. And then I am to follow where God leads me, having nothing to do with the making of the road, but only following the Lord, my Shepherd, wherever He leads me.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I wish we remembered this Truth more than we do. I mean, in all things. For instance, in the matter of doctrinal opinions, some people have a certain minister as their shepherd. You know that there are certain people who will not go an inch beyond the point to which Mr. A___ leads them. Then Mr. B___ is the Prophet of somebody else. Mr. C___ is the very pope of another and Mr. D___ is the perfection of doctrine to a fourth! And beyond these earthly leaders none of them will go. Let us, however, all follow the Lord as our Shepherd! I am to make my appeal to this blessed Book and to ask His gracious Spirit to teach me what is here revealed—and when His Spirit has taught it to me, I am to let that be sufficient and to believe it. Even if I am the only person who so believes it, that shall make no difference to me. If God has guided me, I must follow!

So is it with regard to all the various stages of our life. The young Christian ought to seek God’s guidance in the important matter of marriage. And the young tradesman should seek Divine guidance as to where he shall set up his business, or commence his daily labor. In emigrating to another land, in moving from one house to another, in every step of life, we act wisely when we say, “O Lord, let everything be as You will. We bring here the ephod that we may enquire what is Your will even as they did of old.” There ought to be a distinct recognition on our part that we desire that God should guide us—and we should constantly come to Him to consult with Him, for, if we do not, we shall be constantly making mistakes and getting into confusion. And, then, who but ourselves shall bear the blame in that we went before the fiery-cloudy pillar, chose our own path and so fell into the ditch? One of the Puritans said, “He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty

plate.” And it is so, in the order of God’s Providence. And another said, “He who runs before the cloud goes on a fool’s errand and will have to come back again.” And so it shall be. The sheep before the Shepherd is out of place and out of order—but the sheep *behind* the Shepherd—quietly, patiently and humbly following him, is both according to the order of Nature and the order of Grace. Let us, then, as the Lord’s sheep, learn to take that position and not attempt to usurp the prerogative of our great Shepherd!

Another great privilege which naturally comes to us through this relationship is that *we have provisions for our needs*. An Eastern shepherd, of course, provides for his flock as far as he can. This may not be a very difficult matter in England, but it is exceedingly difficult in countries where fodder is not so readily obtainable as it is here. In the summer droughts, the shepherd will have to go on foraging afar. And when those droughts have continued a long while, there will be only a few places, by the banks of the deep rivers, where grass can still be found. Then the prudent shepherd, as soon as he finds that the winter is coming on, will seek to shelter his flock in those secluded pastures which still remain green. And then, as spring returns, he conducts them to the spot where the young grass is waiting for them. He has to be always thoughtful and they have to be *never* thoughtful, at least with regard to their daily provender. He thinks of autumn while it is still springtime and he has his eyes upon the winter even in the midst of the summer. As for the sheep, it is enough for them if they lie down in the grass that is nearest to them, or walk gently by the still waters just where they are.

Now certainly, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as the Eastern shepherd thus provides for his sheep, so will God provide for us! We have a double set of needs, yet we shall find that God is as all-sufficient for us as He would be if we had a sevenfold set of needs! I say that we have a double set of needs. There are, first, our bodily needs, and these are many and they are constantly recurring. I am not quite certain that to have a sure provision for this life is the most excellent thing for our spirituality. It is, of course, the most comfortable thing and, in many respects, the most desirable and gives the most opportunities for usefulness. But I am not sure whether fullness of bread is not always a very great temptation. Certainly, if I have need to find deep, robust, vigorous piety, I must confess—though I have no preference for one class over another—that I have usually found it among those who have had to live from hand to mouth and to struggle hard for their daily bread—for this experience brings men and women into real and palpable contact with the God of Providence and, as I appeal to these children of poverty and ask them whether God supplies their needs, they take out their little diaries or, if they do not carry them in their pockets, they carry them in their hearts—and they begin to tell of instance after instance in which the God of Abraham has revealed Himself to them as Jehovah-Jireh and, as they look forward to the future, they confidently cry, “The Lord will provide!” Sometimes, such a promise as this, “Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure,” is very sweet to me, but when I have heard it

from the lips of some poor bedridden old woman who has long been depending upon the charity of others—and she has told me of remarkable interpositions of the Lord’s hand in her times of need—then the promise has seemed to glisten and glitter with unusual and extraordinary radiance! Are not some of you, dear Friends, sometimes in such a plight that you have to say, in the morning, “Where shall I get bread for this evening’s meal?” This must be a choice text for you, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Remember that ancient promise, “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.”

Our greater need, however, is our *spiritual* need—and there are often moans among God’s people because they are not spiritually fed as they ought to be. It is the crying sin of some ministries that they are not *feeding* ministries. If I am to believe what I am told by many of God’s people, they do not find the service of the sanctuary to be satisfactory to their souls. Brothers, if we profess to preach the Gospel and this is the case with us, it is a grievous fault on our part and we must mend our manners in this respect! But far oftener, I think, the Lord’s people are not fed because of their own folly. They look up to the pulpit, but they do not see much there—if they looked up to the hills, from where comes their help, they would never be disappointed! When we look to the pastor, but not to the Master, the Master says, “They are looking to the wrong person, so they shall get nothing.” But when we look to the Master, He often supplies our needs *through* the pastor! Let us esteem the Divinely-chosen channel as far as we should, but let us never forget that it is the Fountain that yields the supply! Though you may be tempted to say, when such-and-such a man is taken Home, “I shall never be able to enjoy any other ministry as I have enjoyed that man’s,” you must check yourself and say, “It is the same living Truth of God that survives, it is the same God who still lives, whoever else may die.” “The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you” and, therefore, you shall still be fed, for the Lord is your Shepherd!

He, who can truly say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” may make sure of a third blessing, namely, that of *constant keeping and safe protection*. How many are our enemies! Brethren and Sisters, we are exposed to attack on all sides. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” A cold shiver has often gone through me when I have witnessed or heard of the fall of some whom I have honored and respected—and of whom I would have said that it was more likely that the stars would fall from their orbits than that these people should fall from their integrity! But, alas, the best of men are but men at the best and some brightly shining objects in the Church’s sky have proved to be only meteors—“wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” It is pitiable and it is also humbling—and it should lead to great heart-searching and make each one of us ask, “Shall I forsake Him too?” And

why should you not do so? What is there in you, dear Friend, more than there is in any other professor? Why should you not prove to be an apostate after all? What is there about me that I should stand where so many others have fallen? There is nothing to hold me up if I am left to myself—but if, confessing my liability to fall, confessing my liability to be seized by the lion, the bear and the wolf, I can still say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” I am safe! The sheep is not safe because it says, “I am stronger than the lion,” or, “I am able to escape from the bear,” or, “I shall always be able to avoid the wolf.” Silly sheep, what can you do to protect yourself from your foes? Yet the sheep might feel safe enough if it knew that David was near, to snatch it out of the jaws of the lion, or to rescue it from the paws of the bear and, Beloved, we know that our Shepherd will never let any of His sheep perish! He has owned us too long and bought us too dearly—and loved us too well to ever let us go. You remember that He said to His disciples, even concerning the children who believed in Him, “It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” He also said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any (man or devil) pluck them out of My hand.”

So, if you are the Lord’s sheep, you shall be protected, provided for and guided till you reach the upper fold on the hilltop of Glory!

You all know that the meaning of the text has not been even half brought out by these three thoughts, for, *to shepherdize, to pastorize, to exercise the pastoral office is a very great and important work*. The work of a true shepherd is not restricted to guiding, supplying and protecting the sheep—there are a thousand other things that he has to do. I think I have heard that there is no animal (except a man) that has so many forms of sickness as a sheep has. It may be afflicted in any part of its body, from its feet up to its head. There is not a single portion of a sheep but seems to be subject either to internal or to external ailments—it almost always seems to need doctoring. A shepherd requires to be to his flock all that a father is to his family, only that he has 50 families instead of one! At certain seasons, he must be up all night looking after the lambs and yet be all day watching over the sheep. Then, in addition to their sicknesses, sheep have a great number of follies. If there is a hole in the hedge, they are sure to find it out and press through it. If there is the richest clover in the field and nothing but dry sand outside, they will get through the hedge! And if but one leads the way, all the rest will follow it in its folly! If one should leap over the railing of a bridge into a river, they would all follow, even though they should all be drowned. They are prone to wander and ready for all sorts of mischief—but they never assist the shepherd in the slightest degree. In this respect, we are just like the silly sheep, yet, our good Shepherd supplies all the needs, pities all the infirmities and pardons all the wanderings of His poor wayward flock. We may indeed say that like as a shepherd pities his flock, and cares for them, so our Heavenly Father pities them that fear Him, and lovingly tends them day and night with constant care. Just as Jacob told Laban

that in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night, so that his sleep departed from his eyes, Christ can say that He watches over His blood-bought flock and keeps everyone of the sheep with meticulous care!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I feel as if I could not say any more about these privileges of the Lord's sheep, but as if I needed to stop and sing about them. What music there is here—“The Lord is my Shepherd.” That little word, “is,” puts the whole matter beyond all question. “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Then I shall be safely guided right up to the hilltop of Heaven! I shall always be amply provided for! My fortune is made and I shall be no loser, come what may. My bank is good and its wealth can never be diminished. While as to all other matters—protection from my foes, or whatever else I shall need between here and Heaven—all is secured to me because Jehovah is my Shepherd!

II. Now, in the second place, I must speak more briefly upon THE DUTIES WHICH ARE INVOLVED IN THIS RELATIONSHIP.

As a shepherd has duties appertaining to his office, so also have the sheep. The first duty of a sheep—that which naturally comes to a sheep—is *confidence in the shepherd*. When I have heard people talk of silly sheep, I have often wondered whether, if the sheep could speak, they might not talk of more silly men, for, of all the foolish things that a sheep never did, surely this is one—as it was in the meadow, eating the grass, it never did stop all of a sudden and say to itself, “I do not know what will become of me in the winter! There will be deep snow on the ground and I shall not be able to get at the grass. I cannot really see how I shall be provided for!” I never heard, even in a fable, of a sheep's woolly head being disturbed in that fashion—it has a shepherd to provide for it and it relies upon him to provide for all its needs! Yet you and I dear Friends, sometimes do this silly thing which a sheep would not do! We say, “we cannot imagine what we shall do if we are ever in such-and-such circumstances!” We probably shall never be in such circumstances, yet we keep on supposing what we would do if that were our lot! Some persons have a little factory in their house for making trouble. When God does not send them any, they make some for themselves! And I have heard that homemade troubles are just like homemade clothes—they never fit properly and they always last longer than any others! The trouble that I make for myself is sure to be a far greater trouble than any that God sends me!

You smiled at what I said just now, but it is a fact that many Christians who might be happy and who ought to sing all day long, begin foretelling tomorrow's sorrow and, as God will not give them tomorrow's strength until tomorrow comes, they find their imaginary burden too heavy for their backs to bear! You know how the brave little band of warriors fought at Thermopylae. Bravery alone would have been of small service to them, so they took their stand in a narrow pass, where their foes could only advance one at a time and, consequently, Leonidas and his brave followers, though very weary, could hold the pass against the

Persian host! Now, Beloved, you are at the narrow pass of “today.” Therefore, meet your troubles one by one and, as they come, God’s Grace will make you more than equal to them and enable you to overcome them! But when you get into the broad field of months and years and begin to think of a month’s troubles, and a year’s trials, you will fear that you will never be able to conquer them! Get into your proper place and stand there like a sentinel who is willing, if necessary, to die at his post.

Our first duty, then, as the Lord’s sheep, is confidence in our Shepherd. And, next, *we must love our Shepherd*. Dr. Thomson, in his admirable work, *The Land and the Book*, tells us that in the East, there often springs up an intimate affection between the shepherd and his sheep. There are some sheep which will keep at a distance from the shepherd. If he sits down at one end of a field, they are pretty sure to be at the other end! But there are others which keep closer to him and there are some which are so fond of the shepherd that you never see him without also seeing them close by his side. If he stops, they stop. If he moves, they move. They love the pasture, but they love the shepherd still better. Dr. Thomson tells us that these sheep are generally the fattest of the flock because the shepherd is sure to give them the best of the food. They love him and he loves them. He loves all the sheep, but he loves these with a very special kind of love and, Beloved, if we loved Christ more, we would have more true happiness, more real spiritual enjoyment. I am afraid that some of us who love our Lord are like Peter when he followed Christ afar off. We would be far happier if we could take John’s position and lean our heads upon Christ’s bosom.

There is an election inside the Election of Grace. You know that Christ had many disciples, but that out of them He chose 12 to be His Apostles. Out of those 12 Apostles, He chose three favorites, Peter, James and John—and out of that select band of three—He chose one who was called “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” They were all the sheep of the Good Shepherd and all of us who believe in Jesus are God’s children, but there are some who seem to be more dutiful and more obedient children than others are—and who walk in closer communion with their Lord. And these have the best of the Christian life and the highest degree of spiritual enjoyment. I hope that you and I, who call Christ our Shepherd, love Him much and feel that the love of Christ constrains us to yield to Him our heart’s deepest affection.

Another duty of the sheep is that of *following the shepherd*. It is a fractious, wandering, troublesome sheep that is always wanting to have its own way and to go where it pleases. It is true that the shepherd still loves the wandering sheep and that he seeks it until he finds it. But there is another thing that he does which the parables do not tell us, and that is he punishes the wandering sheep. When the shepherd finds his wandering sheep, he rejoices over it, but he takes care that the sheep shall not rejoice, and he makes it sorrow for having wandered from him. We are told, by those who have watched Syrian sheep, that they are often lame. A shepherd who was asked by a gentleman what made a certain sheep lame, replied, “I lamed that sheep. I did it on purpose.” “Why did

you do that?” asked the gentleman, and the shepherd answered, “It was always wandering and I could not afford the time to go after it, so I lamed it, and it cannot wander away now.” Sometimes when the sheep have been wandering, they get such a stroke from the shepherd’s crook that you would think it would break their backs. Certainly, this is what you and I will get if we are Christ’s sheep and yet persist in wandering. Like the Eastern shepherd does, He will lame us because He will not lose us. He will even beat us because He loves us. Whether obedient children will escape the rod, or not, it is certain that those who are disobedient shall be made to smart for it as surely as their father loves them!

There is one other thing that ought to be true of me if the Lord is my Shepherd, and that is, *I ought to recognize His rights over me and His property in me.* The Eastern shepherd is usually the owner of his sheep. He may sell it, or kill it, or do what he likes with it—and no one can dispute his right to do so. And a genuine Christian feels that Christ has an absolute right in him. Whether he is to live or to die, to sorrow or to rejoice, should be no matter of choice to a Christian. He should feel that whatever is his Master’s will is also his will. The seal of an American Missionary Society is an ax standing between an altar and a plow, with the motto, “Ready for either”—ready to work in God’s field yoked to the plow, or ready to fall beneath God’s sacrificial axe and to smoke upon God’s altar—ready, with Paul, to be offered up when the time of our departure is at hand! We have not a true idea of the rights of God over us, or even of our own condition before Him unless we feel that we are the sheep of His pasture and that He may do with us exactly as He wills.

III. Now I want, just for a few minutes, to speak upon the third point, which is this—THE TEXT SUGGESTS A GREAT MANY ENQUIRIES.

We must not flippantly talk as if all the promises in Scripture belonged to all of us! For, my dear Friend, it may be that the Lord is *not* your Shepherd—and if that is the case, the sheep’s portion is not yours. We ought to be very careful not to put God’s promises into the hands of those to whom they do not belong. The other day I saw a little tract bearing this title, “It is certain that God loves you.” And I burned it, for I was afraid that somebody who had no right to it, might see it and believe that it was true. I do not believe that God loves every individual who might pick that tract up in the sense in which such an individual would understand the expression. I know that God loves, in a certain sense, all the creatures that He has made. But such love as that gives me no comfort as long as I am an unreconciled sinner under condemnation because I have not believed in God’s dear Son! I dare not say to everyone of you, “The Lord is your Shepherd,” for I do not think that all of you are His sheep. I cannot help fearing that there are some here who have no part nor lot in this matter, for they are still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.”

I am going to put a few questions to you, or to point out some of the characteristics of one who can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” If I am the Lord’s sheep, *I shall have something of the sheep’s disposition.* I shall

perceive that His Spirit has worked in me, at any rate, some Divine gentleness. I know some professors who seem to me to be more like wolves than sheep. They snap their jaws like wolves do and their very speech seems to be like a wolf's howl. They dislike this and they hate that, and they cannot endure the other—in fact, nothing pleases them. A sheep has its likes and its dislikes, but it does not snarl, snap, howl, or growl—it is the wolf that does that—the sheep is of a gentler disposition. A man who cannot bear an insult is surely not a Christian. A man who always revenges an injury done to him is surely not a Christian—that is, one who is like Christ—“who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.” He could truly say, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” The giving up of what is our right—the giving up of what we may fairly claim as our own—is the very mark of Christ's sheep!

Again, *sheep are known by being gregarious in their habits*. They always like to be in flocks and “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Many a time have I blessed the Holy Spirit for having inspired John to write that verse! And it is quite possible that some of you, dear Friends, when you could not find any other evidence of Grace, have been glad of such a mouse-hole as this into which your poor, tried, timid soul might creep and hide—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” A genuine love to the true children of God is a sure sign that we are Christ's sheep, just as the fact that the sheep flock together helps to prove that they are sheep! May we have more of this love to all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ—not merely a love to some saints because they happen to be our own relations, or because they belong to our denomination, or because they agree precisely with us in sentiments!—but a love to all the saints, as saints, for Christ's sake—yes, a love even to the bad-tempered ones, the irritating ones, the unsaint-like “saints.” It is very hard work to love some of these “saints.” I have often said that I know some good people with whom I would sooner live in Heaven forever than live for half an hour on earth, for they always seem to look at things at so curious an angle that I cannot possibly agree with them. Yet I must love them for Christ's sake, for, if I do not love them, I must question whether I really am myself one of Christ's sheep.

Another evidence of being a sheep is that *they are very particular in their feeding*. A wolf can eat what the sheep would not touch, for the sheep must have nothing but that which is sweet and clean to feed upon. We have heard of some professors who can enjoy very questionable food. Mr. Rowland Hill had a man in his church who used to go to theatres and when Mr. Hill questioned him as to how he could make a Christian profession and yet frequent such places, he said, “Well, you see, Mr. Hill, I do not often go there. I only go occasionally just for a treat.” “Ah,” said the good minister, “then you are worse than I thought you were.” And then he used this illustration. “Suppose somebody should spread a report that Mr. Hill was accustomed to eat carrion? Well, it would be a

horrible story, but suppose I should say, ‘Oh, no! I do not eat carrion every day as a common article of diet—I only have a little now and then for a treat’? People would say, and say truly, ‘What a filthy taste he must have! What a horrible appetite to call that a treat which is so foul!’ So, my Friend, when you say that you do not go into evil company except sometimes for a treat, that proves which way the wind blows in your soul—and proves the direction in which your heart is set. It proves that you really love sin, or you would not roll it as a choice morsel under your tongue.”

Oh, that God would teach us, by His Grace, to estimate the true value of our actions, not by their outward appearance, but by the desire of our heart that prompts us to them. For, if we are kept back from sin merely by motives of respectability, or because our fellows are looking upon us, we are as guilty before God as if we had actually committed the sin because our heart still goes after its filthy idols!

We may also judge whether we are Christ’s sheep by one or two texts which Christ Himself has given us. I quoted to you, just now, our Lord’s own words, “My sheep hear My voice.” Did you ever hear *Christ’s* voice? I did not ask whether you ever heard your minister’s voice, but whether you ever heard Christ’s voice. Did He, Himself, ever speak to you so that you recognized that it was Christ’s voice that you heard? Besides that hearing of their Savior’s voice, Christ’s sheep have a wonderful discriminating power by which they recognize Him. I heard a gentleman who had traveled in the East say that he thought the sheep must know their shepherd because of the clothes which he wore, so he put on a shepherd’s garments and went up to some sheep, but not one of the sheep mistook him for their shepherd. Then he called one of the sheep by its proper name, but it took no notice of him—and that reminded him of our Savior’s declaration, “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” The sheep have such a keen ear that they can detect the tones of their own shepherd’s voice and can distinguish it from all others.

So is it with Christ’s sheep—they are not deceived by the voice of strangers, though others are deceived. I venture to prophesy that within 10 years from this date, the whole of this country will be permeated by Popery. The advance that Romanism has made during the last 10 years is so terrible that if it continues to increase at only half that rate, my prophecy will prove to be a true one. The very name of Protestantism will die out unless God sends us a revival of Evangelical religion, for the fashion of the age is so set towards that which is gaudy, sensuous and sensational—and the whole trend of ecclesiasticism is so directly towards ceremonialism, that if we who love the old faith, do not bestir ourselves, we and our fellow countrymen will plunge into the Stygian bog of Popish superstition! Some of you will hardly believe what I am saying, but if you will only turn your mind’s eye in the direction to which I am pointing, you will see that the advance of Romanism and Ritualism in this land is quite extraordinary. The only people who will not be swept away by this

tidal wave of ceremonialism, are those who have heard the voice of Christ and so have the first mark of His sheep! If you have ever been justified by faith in Jesus, you will not be cajoled by a so-called “priest.” If you have ever spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, you will never degrade your Christian manhood by munching the man-made wafer-god! If you have ever really known Jesus Christ as your Savior, what will you care for the so-called “sacrifice of the mass”? You will know that it is only a Satanic invention to delude souls! If you have ever been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the fiction of “baptismal regeneration” will be an abomination to you! If you have ever been vitally united to Christ, the living Vine, all the false and foolish talk about being saved by the power of sacramental efficacy will be as a stench in your nostrils which you cannot endure!

So I come back to the question I asked just now—Have you heard the voice of Christ? Do you know the meaning of the whispering of His Spirit? Have you passed from death unto life? Have you been transformed from a wolf into a sheep? Have you been translated out of the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son? If so, relying upon the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood has redeemed every one of His chosen flock, you can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” But if not, and you continue to follow your own devices, they will lead you to destruction! God grant that this may not be the lot of any one of us, but may we all come, with childlike confidence, and put our trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the one and only Savior of sinners. And then shall each one of us be able to say, with David, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

May God bless each one of you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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NO. 3060

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”
Psalm 23:1.***

[See Sermon #3006, Volume 52—“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.” Sermons on the Parable of the Good Shepherd are as follows—#1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD; #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK; #995, Volume 17—THE SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH. Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

DOES not this sound just like poetry or like singing? If you read the entire Psalm through, it is written in such poetic prose that though it is not translated into meter, as it should have been, it reads just like it. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” It sounds like music for this, among other reasons, because it came from David’s heart. That which comes from the heart always has melody in it. When men speak of what they know and from the depths of their souls testify to what they have seen, they speak with what we call, eloquence, for true eloquence is speaking from the soul. Thus David spoke of what he knew—what he had verified all his life—and this rendered him truly eloquent.

As “truth is stranger than fiction,” so the truth that David spoke is more sweet than even fancy could have imagined. And it has more beauty than even the dream of the enthusiast could have pictured. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” How naturally it seems to strike on the ear as uttered by David who had, himself, been a shepherd boy! He remembers how he had led his flock by the waters in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river, how, on sultry days, he had led them on the high hills that they might feel the cool air and how, when the winter set in, he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the stormy blasts. Well could he remember the tender care with which he protected the lambs and carried them—and how he had tended the wounded of the flock. And now, appropriating to himself the familiar figure of a sheep, he says, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” I will try to preach experimentally

tonight and I wonder how many of you will be able to follow the Psalmist with me while I attempt to do so?

First of all, *there are some preliminaries* before a man can say this—it is absolutely necessary that he should feel himself to be like a sheep by nature, for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep. Secondly, *there is a sweet assurance*—a man must have had some testimony of Divine care and goodness in the past, otherwise he cannot *appropriate* to himself this verse, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” And thirdly, *there is a holy confidence*. I wonder how many there are here who can place all their future in the hand of God and can join with David in uttering the last sentence, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

I. First then, we say THERE IS A CERTAIN CONFESSION NECESSARY BEFORE A MAN CAN JOIN IN THESE WORDS. We must feel that there is something in us which is akin to the sheep. We must acknowledge that in some measure we exactly resemble it or else we cannot call God our Shepherd.

I think the first apprehension we shall have if the Lord has brought us into this condition, is this—we shall be conscious of our own folly—we shall feel how unwise we always are. *A sheep is one of the most unwise of creatures.* It will go anywhere except in the right direction. It will leave a fat pasture to wander into a barren one. It will find out many ways, but not the right way. It would wander through a forest and find its way through ravines into the wolf’s jaws, but never by its wariness turn away from the wolf. It could wander near his den, but it would not instinctively turn aside from the place of danger. It knows how to go astray, but it knows not how to come home again. Left to itself, it would not know in what pasture to feed in summer, or where to retire in winter.

Have we ever been brought to feel that in matters of Providence, as well as in things of Grace, we are truly and entirely foolish? I think no man can trust Providence till he distrusts himself—and no one can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” until he has given up every idle notion that he can control himself or manage his own interests. Alas, we are, most of us, wise above that which is written and we are too vain to acknowledge the Wisdom of God! In our self-esteem we fancy our reason can rule our purposes and we never doubt our own power to accomplish our own intentions! And then, by a little maneuvering we think to extricate ourselves from our difficulties. Could we steer in such a direction as we have planned, we entertain not a doubt that we could avoid at once the Scylla and the Charybdis—and have fair sailing all our life! O Beloved, surely it needs but little teaching in the School of Divine Grace to make out that we are fools! True wisdom is sure to set folly in a strong light.

I have heard of a young man who went to college and when he had been there a year, his father said to him, “Do you know more than when

you went?" "Oh, yes!" he said, "I do." Then he went the second year and was asked the same question, "Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, no," he said, "I know a great deal less." "Well," said the father, "you are getting on." Then he went the third year and was asked, "What do you know now?" "Oh," he said, "I don't think I know anything." "That is right," said his father, "you have now learned to profit since you say you know nothing." He who is convinced that he knows nothing as he ought to know gives up steering his ship and lets God put His hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom and cries, "O God, my little wisdom is cast at Your feet. Such as it is, I surrender it to You. I am prepared to renounce it, for it has caused me many an ill and many a tear of regret, that I should have followed my own devices. But from now on I will delight in Your statutes. As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so shall my eyes wait upon the Lord my God. I will not trust in horses or in chariots; but the name of the God of Jacob shall be my refuge. Too long, alas, have I sought my own pleasure and labored to do everything for my own gratification. Now would I ask, O Lord, Your help that I may seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and leave all the rest to You." Do you, O my Friends, feel persuaded that you are foolish? Have you been brought to confess the sheepishness of your nature? Or are you flattering your hearts with the fond conceit that you are wise? If so, you are indeed fools! But if brought to see yourself like Agur when he said, "I am more brutish than any man and have not the understanding of a man," then even Solomon might pronounce you wise! And if you are thus brought to confess, "I am a silly sheep," I hope you will be able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I cannot have any other, I want none other—He is enough for me."

Again, a sheep is not only foolish, but *it is a very dependent creature*. The sheep, at least in its domesticated state, as we know it, must always be dependent. If we should take a horse, we might turn him loose upon the prairie and there he would find sufficient food for his sustenance. And years later we might see him in no worse condition than that in which we left him. Even the ox might thus be treated and still be able to provide for itself. But as for the silly sheep, set it alone in the wilderness, let it pursue its own course unheeded—and what would be its fate? Presently, if it did not wander into places where it would be starved, it would ultimately come to ruin, for assuredly some wild beast would lay hold upon it and it has no means of defense for itself.

Beloved, have we been brought to feel that we have of ourselves no means of subsistence and no power of defense against our foes? Do we perceive the necessity for our dependence upon God? If so, then we have learned another part of the great lesson that the Lord is our Shepherd. Some of us have yet to learn this lesson. Gladly would we cater for

ourselves and carve for ourselves—but as the good old Puritan said, “No child of God ever carves for himself without cutting his fingers,” we sometimes fancy that we can do a little for ourselves—but we shall have that conceit taken out of us very soon. If we, indeed, are God’s people, He will bring us to depend absolutely upon Him day by day. He will make us pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”—and make us acknowledge that He opens His hands and gives us our food in due season. Sweet is the meal that we eat, as it were, out of His hands! Yet some will rebel against this dependence as very humiliating. Men like to vaunt their independence—nothing is more respectable in their eyes than to live in independent circumstances. But it is no use for us to talk of being independent—we can never be.

I remember a dear Christian who prayed very sweetly each Sunday morning at a certain Prayer Meeting that I once attended, “O Lord, we are *independent* creatures upon You.” Except in such a sense as that, I never knew any independence worth having! Of course he meant, “we are dependent creatures upon You.” So we must be. We cannot be independent even of one another—and certainly we are not independent of God, for when we have health and strength, we are dependent upon Him for their continuance. And if we have them not, we are dependent on Him to restore them to us. In all matters whatever, it is sweet, it is blessed to see the tokens of His watchful care. If I had anything of which I could say, “God has not given me this,” I hope, by Divine Grace, I would turn it out of doors. Food, raiment, health, breath, strength—everything comes from Him and we are constantly dependent upon Him! As Huntington used to say, “My God gives me a hand-basket portion. He does not give me an abundance at once, but He gives it, basket by basket, and I live from hand to mouth.” Or, as old Hardy once said, “I am a gentleman commoner on the bounty of God. I live day by day upon morning commons and evening commons—and thus I am dependent upon Him—independent of the world, but dependent upon God.” The sheep is a dependent creature, always needing some help. And so is the Christian. And he realizes the blessedness of his dependence when he can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

These are the two principal points upon which we view this Truth of God with regard to Providence. I might wander from what I wished to be the subject of this evening. And I might be doing good if I were to show you some other points of comparison between the Christian and the sheep. O Beloved, there are some of you here present who know yourselves to be *sheep by reason of your frequent wanderings*. How often have we made this confession, “We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep”? And we feel it this night, bitterly ruing the waywardness of our hearts. But it is well to be the sheep of God’s pasture even if we have been wandering sheep! We do not read of wandering dogs, because dogs are naturally wild, while sheep are always

accounted to be someone's property. The straying sheep has an owner—and however far it may stray from the fold, it ceases not to belong to that owner. I believe that God will yet bring back into the fold every one of His own sheep and they shall all be saved. It is something to feel our wanderings, for if we feel ourselves to be lost, we shall certainly be saved! If we feel ourselves to have wandered, we shall certainly be brought back.

Again, we are just like sheep *by reason of the perverseness of our wills*. People talk about free-will Christians and tell us of persons being saved and coming to God of their own free will. It is a very curious thing, but though I have heard a great many free-will sermons, I never heard any free-will prayers. I have heard Arminianism in preaching and talking, but I have never heard any Arminian praying. In fact, I do not think there can be any prayer of that sort—it is a style that does not suit prayer! The theory may look very nice in argument and sound very proper in discourse, though we somewhat differ from it. But for practical purposes it is useless! The language will not suit us in prayer and this alone would be sufficient reason to condemn it. If a man cannot pray in the spirit of his own convictions, it shows they are a delusion from beginning to end, for if they were true, he could pray in that language as well as in any other! Blessed be God, the Doctrines of Grace are as good to pray with as to preach with! We do not find ourselves out of order in any act of worship when once we have the old fundamental Doctrines of the blessed Gospel of Grace! Persons talk about free-will Christians coming back to Jesus of themselves. I intend to believe them when they find me a free-will sheep that has come back of itself—when they have discovered some sheep, after it has gone from its fold—stand bleating at its master's door, asking to be taken in again! You will not find such a sheep and you will not find a free-will Christian, for they will all confess, if you thoroughly probe the matter, that it was Grace, and Grace alone that restored their souls—

***“Grace taught our souls to pray,
And made our eyes overflow—
‘Tis Grace that keeps us to this day
And will not let us go.”***

II. The next thing is THE ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD. It is very easy to say, “The Lord is a Shepherd,” but how shall we appropriate the blessedness to ourselves and be able to say, “The Lord is *our* Shepherd?” I answer that He has had certain dealings with our souls in the past which have taught us that He is our Shepherd. If every man and every woman in this assembly should rise up and say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” I feel convinced it would be, in many instances, the solemn utterance of a lie, for there are, it is to be feared, many here who have not God for their Shepherd. He is their Guide, it is true, in some sense, because He overrules all the hearts and controls all the affairs of the children of men. But they are not the people of His

pasture, they are not the sheep of His hand. They do not believe—therefore they are not of His fold. And if some of you should say that you are, your own conscience would belie you! How, then, does a man come to know that the Lord is his Shepherd?

He knows it, first, *because Jesus Christ has brought him back from his wanderings*. If there is anyone here who, after a course of folly and sin, has been fetched back from the mountains of error and the haunts of evil. If there is one here who has been stopped in a mad career of vice and has been reclaimed by the power of Jehovah Jesus, such a one will know, by a happy experience, that the Lord is his Shepherd! If I once wandered on yon mountaintop and Jesus climbed up and caught me, and put me on His shoulders and carried me home, I cannot and dare not doubt that He is my Shepherd! If I had belonged to some other sheep-owner, He would not have sought me. And from the fact that He did seek me, I learn that He must be my Shepherd! Did I think that any man convinced me of sin, or that any human power had converted me, I would fear I was that man's sheep and that he was my shepherd. Could I trace my deliverance to the hand of a creature, I would think that a creature might be my shepherd! But since he who has been reclaimed of God must and will confess that God alone has done it and will ascribe to His free Grace, and to that alone, his deliverance from sin, such a one will feel persuaded that the Lord must be his Shepherd because He fetched him back from his wanderings—He snatched him out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear.

We know still further that like a shepherd, *He has supplied our needs*. Some of you, Beloved, know of a surety that God is your Provider. Sometimes you have been brought into such straits that if it had not been for an interposition of Heaven, itself, you never could have had deliverance! You have sunk so deep down into poverty and loved ones and acquaintances have stood so far aloof from you that you know there is but one arm which could have fetched you up. You have been reduced, perhaps, to such straits that all you could do was to pray. You have wrestled at the Throne of God and sought for an answer, but it has not come. You have used every effort to extricate yourself and darkness has still compassed your path. Again and again you have tried till hope has well-near vanished from your heart. And then, adding vows to your prayer, you have said in your agony, "O God, if You will deliver me this time, I will never doubt You again!" Look back on the path of your pilgrimage. Some of you can count as many Ebenezers as there are milestones from here to York! Ebenezers piled up with oil poured on the top of them—places where you have said, "Hitherto, the Lord has helped me." Look through the pages of your diary and you will see, time after time, when your perils and emergencies were such as no earthly skill could relieve and you felt constrained to witness what others among you have never felt—that there is a God, that there is a Providence—a God

who compasses your path and is acquainted with all your ways! You have received deliverance in so marvelous a way, from so unseen a hand and so unlikely a source, under circumstances, perhaps, so foreign to your wishes—and yet the deliverance has been so perfect, so complete and wonderful—you have been obliged to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Yes, He is! The sheep, we know, fed day by day in good pasture, may forget its Shepherd. But if for a time it is taken from the pasture and then brought home again, after having been nearly starved, it says, “Truly, He is my Shepherd.” If I had always been supplied with bread, without the pinch of anxiety, I might have doubted whether He had given it, and ascribed it to the ordinary course of passing events. But seeing that “everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,” I acknowledge that it is my God who supplies all my need! Yes, and with gratitude I will write it down for a certainty—“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

But, Beloved, do not be distressed even though you should not have had these particular trials and deliverances, for there is a way whereby we can tell that the Lord is our Shepherd without encountering so many rough and rugged passes, as I will show you presently. I have heard it said, by some, that a man cannot be a child of God unless he has gone through a certain set of trials and troubles. I recollect hearing a sermon from these words, “Who passing through the Valley of Baca makes it a well.” Certainly the preacher did not make his sermon a well, for it was as dry as a stick and not worth hearing. There was nothing like cheerfulness in it, but a flood of declamation all the way through against hopeful Christians, against people going to Heaven who are not always grumbling, murmuring, doubting, fumbling for their evidences amidst the exercises of their own hearts, always reading and striving to rival Job and Jeremiah in grief, taking the Lamentations as the fit expression of their own lips, troubling their poor brains, vexing their poor hearts, smarting, crying and wearying themselves with the perpetual habit of complaining against God, saying with poor Job, “My stroke is heavier than my groaning.” Such persons measure themselves by their troubles, trials, distresses, tribulations, perplexities and no end of things—things that we will not stop to recount! We believe, indeed, that such things will come to a child of God. We think every Christian will be corrected in due measure—we would be the last to deny that God’s people are a tried people! They must all pass through the furnace of affliction and He has chosen them there, but still, we believe that religion is a blessed and a happy thing and we love to sing that verse—

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

And what though some of my Hearers have not yet had to swim through the rivers. Though they may not have had to pass through the fiery furnace of Providential trial, they have had trials enough and trials that no heart has known except their own suffering which they could not tell to flesh and blood, which have gnawed their very souls and catered into the marrow of their spirits. Bitter anguish and aching voids such as those who boast about their trials nearer felt, such as mere babbling troublers did never know, deep rushing of the stream of woe with which little bubbling narrow brooks could never compare! Such persons fear to murmur—they cannot reveal their sufferings because they think it would be showing some lack of trust in God. They keep their trials to themselves and only speak of them into that ear which hears and has no lips to babble afterwards.

“But,” you say, “how can you tell that the Lord is your Shepherd if you have not been tried in any of those great deeps?” We know that He is *because He has fed us day by day in good pasture*. And if He has not allowed us to wander as far away as others, we can lift up our eyes to Him and each one of us say, “Lord, You are my Shepherd. I can as fully prove that You are my Shepherd by Your keeping me in the grassy field as by Your fetching me back when I have wandered. I know You are as much my Shepherd when You have supplied my needs day by day as if you had allowed me to go into poverty and given me bitterness. I know You are as much my Shepherd when granting me a continual stream of mercy, as if that stream had stopped for a moment and then had begun to flow again.” People say, if they have had an accident and been nearly killed, or have narrowly escaped, “What a Providence!” Yet it is as much a Providence when you have no accident at all! A good man once went to a certain place to meet his son. Both his son and he had ridden some distance. When the son arrived, he exclaimed, “Oh Father! I had such a Providence on the road.” “Why, what was that?” “My horse stumbled six times and yet I was not thrown.” “Dear me!” said his father, “but I have had a Providence too!” “And what was that?” “Why, my horse never stumbled at all! And that is just as much a Providence as if the horse had stumbled six times and I had not been thrown.”

It is a great Providence when you have lost your property and God provides for you. But it is quite as much a Providence when you have no loss at all and when you are still able to live above the depths of poverty! And so God provides for you. I say this to some of you when God has blessed and continually provided for you from your earliest youth. You, too, can each of you say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” You can see this title stamped on your mercies, though they come daily. They are given to you by God and you will say, by humble faith, the word, “my,” as loudly as anyone can! Do not get to despising the little ones of the flock because they have not had as many trials as you have had! Do not get to cutting the children of God in pieces because they have not been in such fights

as you have! The Shepherd leads the sheep where He pleases and be you sure that He will lead them rightly! And as long as they can say from their hearts, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” do not trouble yourselves about where or how they learned it!

III. Now we finish up with THE HOLY CONFIDENCE OF THE PSALMIST. “I shall not want.”

“There,” poor Unbelief says, “I am wanting in everything. I am wanting in spirituals, I am wanting in temporals and I shall always want! Ah, such distress as I had a little while ago you cannot tell what it was—it was enough to break one’s heart and it is coming again—I shall want.” That is what Unbelief says, but you must write your own name at the bottom and then I will repeat this, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” That is what David said and I think David’s faith far preferable to your unbelief. I might take your evidence in some matters, but I really would not take it before David’s. I would accept your testimony as an honest man in some respects, but the words of Inspiration must be preferable to your words of apprehension! When I find it written, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” I would rather take one of David’s affirmations than 50 of your negations.

I think I hear someone saying, “I would bear the want of any temporal good if I could but obtain spiritual blessings. I am in want this night of more faith, more love, more holiness, more communion with my Savior.” Well, Beloved, the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want even those blessings—if you ask of Him, He will give them to you, though it may be by terrible things in righteousness that He will save you. He often answers His people in an unexpected manner. Many of God’s answers to our letters come down in black-edged envelopes, yet mark you, they will come. If you want peace, joy, sanctification and such blessings, they shall be given to you, for God has promised them. The Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. I have often thought of that great promise written in the Bible—I do not know where there is a greater one—“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “No good thing!” It is a mercy that the word, “good,” was put in, for if it had said, “He, will withhold nothing,” we should have been asking for many things that would be bad for us. But it says, “no good thing!” Now, spiritual mercies are good things and not only good things, but the *best* things so that you may well ask for them! For if no good thing will be withheld, much more will none of the best things! Ask, then, Christian, for He is your Shepherd and you shall not want! He will supply your needs. He will give you whatever you require. Ask in faith, doubting nothing, and He shall give you what you really need.

But still there are some who say, “The text applies to temporal matters,” and persist in it. Well, then, I will accept this sense—the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want for temporal blessings. “Ah,” cries

one, "I was once in affluence and now I am brought down to penury. I once stood among the mighty and was rich—now I walk among the lowly and am poor." Well, David does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not come down in society." He does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have 500 or a thousand pounds a year." He does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have whatever your soul lusts after." All David says is, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There are different ways of wanting. There are many people whose foolish craving and restless anxiety make them always in want. If you gave them a house to live in and fed them day by day, they would always be wanting something more. And after you had just relieved their necessities, they would still want. The fact is theirs are not real wants, but simply fancied wants. David does not say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not fancy that I want," for though God might promise that, it would need His Omnipotence to carry it out, for His people often get to fancying that they want when they do not. It is real needs that are referred to. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not really want." There are many things we wish for that we do not really need, but there is no promise given that we shall have all we wish for. God has not said that He would give us anything more than we need, but He will give us that.

So lift up your head and do not be afraid! Fear not, your God is with you! He shall prevent evil from hurting you. He shall turn darkness into light and bitter into sweet. He has led you all the way and all the way this shall be your constant joy—He is my Shepherd, I shall not really want that which is absolutely necessary. Whatever I really require shall be given by the lavish hands of a tender Father. Believer, here is your inheritance, here is your income, here is your yearly living—"He is your Shepherd, and you shall not want." What is your income, Believer? "Why," you say, "it varies with some and others of us." Well, but, a Believer's income is still the same. This is it—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." That is my income and it is yours, poor little one. That is the income of the poorest pauper in the workhouse who has an interest in the Grace of God—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the income of the poor foundling child who has come to know the Lord in early life and has no other friend—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the widow's inheritance—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the orphan's fortune—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the Believer's portion, his inheritance, his blessing!

"Well now," some may say, "what is this Truth worth?" Beloved, if we could change this Truth for a world of gold, we would not! We had rather live on this Truth of God than live on the finest fortune in creation! We reckon that this is an inheritance that makes us rich, indeed—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Give me ten thousand pounds and one

reverse of fortune may scatter it all away. But let me have a spiritual hold of this Divine Assurance, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and then I am set up for life! I cannot break with such stock as this in hand! I never can be a bankrupt, for I hold this security—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Do not give me ready money now—give me a checkbook and let me draw what I like. That is what God does with the Believer. He does not immediately transfer his inheritance to him, but lets him draw what he needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus! The Lord is his Shepherd; he shall not want. What a glorious inheritance! Walk up and down it Christian! Lie down upon it, it will do for your pillow—it will be soft as down for you to lie upon. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Climb up that creaking staircase to the top of your house, lie down on your hard mattress, wrap yourself with a blanket, look out for the winter when hard times are coming and say not, "What shall I do?" but just hum over to yourself these words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

That will be like the hush of lullaby to your poor soul and you will soon sink to slumber. Go, you business man, to your counting-house again, after this little hour of recreation in God's House, and again cast up those wearisome books. You are saying, "How about business? These prices may be my ruin. What shall I do?" When you have cast up your accounts, put this down against all your fears and see what a balance it will leave—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There is another man. He does not lack anything, but still he feels that some great loss may injure him considerably. Go and write this down in your cash-book. If you have made out your cash-account truly, put this down—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Put this down for something better than gold and silver—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He who disregards this Truth, knows nothing about its preciousness, but he who apprehends it, says, "Ah, yes, it is true, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He will find this promise like China wind of which the ancients said that it was flavored to the lips of him that tasted it! So this truth shall taste sweet to you if your spiritual palate is pure—yet it shall be worth nothing to you but mere froth if your taste is not healthy.

But Beloved, we must divide our congregation before we send you away and remind you that there are some of you to whom this Truth of God does not belong. Perhaps some of you professors of religion may want this Truth badly enough, but it is not yours. The Lord is not your Shepherd—you are not the sheep of His pasture and the flock of His hand. You are not sheep, but goats—unclean creatures, not harmless and undefiled as sheep, but everything that is the very reverse! Oh it is not only eternal loss, it is not only everlasting injury that you have to regret—it is also present loss and present injury—the loss of an inheritance on earth, the loss of an inheritance below. To be deprived of

such a comfort as this is a terrible privation. Oh, it is enough to make men long for religion if it were only for that sweet peace and calm of mind which it gives here below! Well might men wish for this heavenly oil to be cast on the troubled waters of this mortal life even if they did not anoint their heads with it or enter into glory with the joy of their Lord upon their countenance!

Beloved, there are some I know here—and your conscience tells you whom I mean—who have a voice within your own hearts which says, “I am not one of Christ’s sheep.” Well then, there is no promise for you that you shall not want! The promise and the Providence are for Believers, not for you. There is no promise that all things shall work together for your good, but rather you shall be cursed in your basket and cursed in your store, cursed in the field, cursed in your house, cursed in your going out and cursed in your coming in, for, “the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.” It does not merely peep in at his window but it is in his house! Yet God “blesses the habitation of the just.” If you do not repent, the curse shall follow you until your dying day and not having Christ for your Shepherd, you shall wander where that hungry wolf, the devil, shall at last seize upon your soul—and everlasting misery and destruction from the Presence of Jehovah must be your inevitable, miserable and inexpressibly awful doom! May the Lord in mercy deliver you from it!

And this is the way of salvation—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” “He that believes and is baptized”—we omit nothing that God has said. “He that believes and is baptized”—not he that is baptized and then believes (which would be reversing God’s order), but “He that believes and is baptized—not he that is baptized without believing, but the two joined together! He that believes with his heart and is baptized, confessing with his mouth—“he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Do you neglect one part of it? It is at your peril, Sir! “He that believes and is baptized,” says God. If any of you have neglected one portion of it—if you have believed and have not been baptized—God will save you. Still, this promise says not so. “He that believes and is baptized.” It puts the two together and “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” What He has ordered let no man disarrange. “He that believes”—that is, he that trusts in Jesus—he that relies upon His blood, His merits, His righteousness—“and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

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

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

MY RESTORER

NO. 1149

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He restores my soul.”
Psalm 23:3.***

THIS sweetest of the Psalms sings of many mercies which the happy soul of the Believer receives—and it traces all those benefits to one Source—namely to the Good Shepherd, Himself. “I shall not want.” Why? Because the Lord is my Shepherd. I lie down in delicious repose in green pastures. Why? Because “He makes me.” I march onward making holy progress beside the still waters. Why? Because “He leads me.” In the prospect of death I am calm and free from fear. Why? Because He is with me, His rod and staff they comfort me. The crown is composed of many costly things—gold, pearls and rare gems from the land beyond the river—they are all blended in one diadem—and that diadem is, without a question, joyfully placed upon the head of the Great Shepherd of Israel. The poet laureate of Scripture sings surpassingly in this Psalm, and every line is dedicated to the Beloved of his soul, in whom were all his fresh springs.

My object, while handling a part of one of his verses shall be the same as his own—I also would speak of “things which I have made touching the King,” with the view of extolling His name. I desire to glorify Him from one particular point of view, namely, as The Restorer who, Himself, brings back our wandering spirits when we forsake His ways. I would just now write the first word of the text in capitals, capitals as large as you can find. “HE restores my soul.” He, He alone, He and not another. Unto Him be praise!

I. The text is full of lessons and reminders, and reminds us, in the first place of OUR TRUE POSITION as Believers. Let us dwell upon it in that light. What is the true position of every Believer? It is that of a sheep abiding close to its Shepherd. The text suggests that the sheep has gone astray and the Shepherd brings it back in order to put it into the position which it ought never to have left. The fittest condition of a Believer is in communion with Christ. It ought not to be a privilege occasionally enjoyed—it should be the everyday life of the soul. We are to abide in Jesus, walk with Him and live in Him.

Paul did not say, “For me to specially rejoice is Christ,” or, “For me to feast on holydays is Christ.” No, he said, “For me to *live* is Christ.” Christ is the ordinary bread of the common meal as well as the fat things full of marrow for the banquet. He is water from the rock as well as wine on the lees well-refined. To us, His name is the watchword of earth as we expect

it to be our passport into Heaven. We need fellowship with Jesus, not as a luxury for red-letter days and Sabbaths, but as the necessary provision of every day of our lives. “Abide in Me” is His Word to us for all seasons, and we ought to strive to realize it, so that always, by night and by day, on the Sunday and equally on the weekdays—in our joys and in our cares—we should abide in Him.

Christ is not merely a harbor of refuge, but a port for all weathers. Do not think, Beloved, that I am setting up too high a standard when I say this. I am so sure I am *not* that I will repeat what I have said—the proper condition of a child of God at all times is that he should sit with Mary at the Master’s feet, or, with John, should lean his head upon the beloved Redeemer’s bosom. I think this will be clear, first, if we remember our *obligations* to Jesus. When we were newly converted and first knew our sins to be blotted out, if we had been asked how we should, in the future, act towards our Lord, we should have set up a very high standard.

“Did He die for me, bearing all my sins in His own body? Then I will forever view His death as the grandest miracle of love! And my grateful heart shall have communion with Him by love and praise. Has Jesus really forgiven me? Am I clean through being washed in His most precious blood, clean every whit, and made a child of God, and accepted in the Beloved? Oh, then, I will praise Him and bless Him, and magnify Him, and live to Him all my days! As to ever being weary of Him—impossible! As to ever growing cold and indifferent towards Him—better my heart should cease to beat than that it should ever be.”

Do I not accurately describe what you thought at the first? Have I not truthfully described the ardor of your espousal love? You have not realized your ideal, but that is what you rightly judged to be, and, Beloved, it is what you ought to have been. It is not a higher condition than your solemn obligations to Christ really demand. If an angel had never heard of men before, and should suddenly alight upon this earth and meet with one of our race—and hold talks with him—he would be filled with wonder at what he discovered. Suppose that we should tell him that we fell into sin and were condemned to die, but that the great Maker of Heaven and earth condescended to take upon Himself our Nature, and died in our place? Can you imagine the angel’s astonishment at the condescension of the Son of God?

After his first amazement had passed away, he would say to us, “And do you not love Him infinitely? Are you able, within the limits of your little heart, to hold all the love you feel for such unutterable Grace? How do you live? Do you not feel that you cannot do half enough for Him? You certainly will never fail in obedience to Him! In trust of Him. In zeal for Him—that would be quite impossible!” How deeply would we blush and strive to cover our faces as we confessed to our angelic questioner that for such surprising love we have made but a poor return.

I am quite sure, however, that we should quite agree with the angel as to what was *due* to our Lord—our conscience and our heart awarding Him

the highest affection and the most constant service. Such deeds of love as Jesus has performed for us can never be adequately requited, but at the very least they ought not to be insulted by lukewarm and casual communion! They demand our heart, our soul, our all. With Him who has healed us we desire evermore to remain. With our Ransomer we would live in life-long discipleship and be His servants, to go no more out forever.

Moreover, our relationships to the Lord Jesus require perpetual communion with Him. Know you not that you are the *friends* of Christ? And if you are friends, will you not show yourselves friendly? But how can you be friendly if by the space of a week you have no converse with Him in the house, or in the field, or by the way? Is this your kindness to your Friend? You are more than friends—you are His brothers and sisters. “The same is my brother, and sister, and mother,” said He, and can you treat a Brother so indifferently as to walk towards Him as if He were a stranger and a foreigner—and scarcely exchange a token of affection by the months together? Is this brotherly? Did David treat his Jonathan thus?

More than that, in wondrous love Jesus has called Himself your Husband and taken you to be His spouse. Is not that strange love, or the lack of it, which would allow a married pair to walk together week by week without the fellowship or affection? Surely, their marriage bands would be bonds, and their unity would be misery! I can conceive of scarcely any worse torment than conjugal union without affectionate communion! Shall I be the bride of Jesus and my love never be displayed in converse with Him? Shame upon me, a thousand times shame, if I allow a day to pass unblest with thoughts, and words, and deeds of love!

Yet more, the Lord has been pleased to call us members of His body. Now, every member of the body must carry on vital fellowship with the head. It must exercise inevitable, though not always conscious, fellowship. In the *spiritual* body communion should be consciously enjoyed at all times. Shall the hand become indifferent to the head, or the foot refuse commerce with the brain? If we are in good health, no such schism in the body will ever occur—but with the head all the members will abide in affectionate, unbroken communion. We may suspect paralysis if life ceases to flow through the entire corporate body, and so communion is suspended. It is clear to all who are taught of God that our relationships certainly require of us that we abide in the Lord Jesus.

Moreover, Beloved, this case ought to need no pleading, for if we would have happiness, where is happiness to be found but in walking near to Jesus? I speak what I know, and the common testimony of all the saints is with me—we say that out of Heaven there is no Heaven but nearness to Christ! Fellowship with Him is Paradise without a serpent in it. It is Canaan, itself, without the Canaanite foe. Communion with Jesus is the porch of Glory. It is the Saturday night of the eternal Sunday. It is the dawn of the heavenly day. Communion with Christ, if it is not actually Heaven, is certainly the choicest suburb of the new Jerusalem!

Did not our poet cry—

***“Where can such sweetness be,
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?”***

Now, men do not ordinarily need to be stirred up to that which is their delight! Their spirits fly after their joys as eagles to the spoil. Where their heart moves with pleasure, it draws all their powers after it. And if, indeed, it is so, (and who shall contradict it?), that fellowship with Christ is the richest of all joys, the most intense of all delights, why are we so hard to move? Oh, how sluggish are our hearts, how dull our spirits, that we do not fly after Jesus with rapture of desire and do not labor perpetually to abide in Him!

While this should draw us, another consideration should drive us, namely, that our daily necessities *demand* that we should live in fellowship with Him. If we are foolish and ignorant, where should we dwell, but with the Teacher? If always weak, to whom should we resort but to the Strong for strength? Let the child abide by its parent, the scholar with the master, the patient by his physician, the poor man with his helper. To whom should we go in our hourly needs but to Him who has, up to now, been our All in All? Israel could not afford to be a single day without the manna, nor can we be satisfied for an hour without the Bread of Life. “Without Me, you can do nothing,” says our Lord, and we have proven His words to be true. Do we need more humiliating evidence? Are we willing to fall into a condition in which we can do nothing else but sin? I hope not. We ought never be satisfied except when, abiding in Jesus, we are clothed with His power and are bringing forth much fruit to His praise.

Remember, yet further, that when out of fellowship with Christ our perils are infinite. When unfaithful to His love we are readily seduced by every temptation. Without His love in our hearts we become victims to other loves which lead us into idolatry, plunge us into hurtful lusts and poison the wells of our joy. We must either be enthralled by the surpassing love of Jesus, or we shall be fascinated by the world’s deceits. One of the two masters must rule us, either the Prince of the power of the air, or the King of Kings! When Christ is with us we are safe, for what wolf can rend a sheep when it is close to the Shepherd’s hand? When we are away from Jesus, we are not only in peril, but are already despoiled—to lose fellowship with Jesus is loss enough, in itself—even if no further calamity occurs.

Ships without a pilot, cities without watchmen, babes without a nurse, are we without Jesus. We cannot do without Him. The less we attempt it the better. Samson without his locks is the sad type of a Believer out of fellowship. How dare we go forth to business on any day without the Presence of the Lord? As well might the warrior go to battle without shield and buckler! Should we not daily pray, “If Your Presence go not with me, carry me not up there”? How can we go to our beds till He has kissed us with the kisses of His mouth? May not even the dreams and visions of the night prove our downfall if our souls are not committed to His keeping?

For my part, I love to murmur to myself, as I place my head on my pillow, those charming lines—

***“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior’s breast.”***

The benefits of fellowship with Christ should constrain us to abide in it. If any man would grow in Grace. If he would be filled with the Spirit. If he would know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. Especially if he would be made like to Him in all things who is the Head, he must abide in Christ. The whole compass of a Christian’s permissible ambition is to be realized in fellowship with Jesus and nowhere else. All that I ought to be, or can desire to be—when I am in a right state—I can be in my Lord, by walking near to Him. Nothing good can any Believer obtain by forsaking his Master. Following Christ afar off is evil, only evil! And that continually abiding in Him is peace, joy, holiness, Heaven!

Therefore, Beloved, I say again, let us strive after that which ought to be the habitual position of every Christian, namely, abiding in Christ—this is for babes in Grace as well as men in Christ Jesus, for the obscure as well as the famous.

II. Our text, in the second place, reminds us of OUR FREQUENT SIN. “He restores my soul”—He often does it. He is doing it now. Now, the Lord would not do what is unnecessary and, therefore, this shows me that I often wander from Him, or else I would not need to be brought back. Beloved, I grieve to say that with man’s professors of godliness, suspended communion is the chronic state of things. I must confess my inability to comprehend the Christian life of many who are called Christians. It is not for us to judge their real condition before God, nor will we attempt to do so, but we cannot help observing the inconsistency of their *acts*.

They have believed in Christ, let us hope. Let us hope, also, that their faith produces enough good works to prove itself to be a living faith. But, for all that, their religion is cold, joyless, passionless. There are thousands of Christian people whose religion seems to lie entirely in attending religions services on Sunday, and occasionally, perhaps, coming out on a weekday to a lecture. They observe private devotions of a very stereotyped order and keep a Bible somewhere or other, and this is about it. To them prayer is a formality, praise is forgotten, the reading of the Bible is a drudgery, meditation a mere memory and their whole Christianity more like a mummy than a thing of life. With them the complaint that they are out of communion with Jesus is superseded by the question, “Were they ever in it?”

I am afraid we have in this Church and in all Churches, scores and hundreds of members whose highest emotions in reference to love to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches no higher than the inquiry—

***“Do I love the Lord or not?
Am I His, or am I not?”***

Conscious enjoyment of the love of Jesus and familiar communion with Him they know nothing of, and indeed, they look upon such things as the luxuries of a high class of saints, very pleasant to read of in biographies, but not matters of daily possession. They heartily admire the good people who can attain to such eminent positions, but to dwell there, *themselves*, has never occurred to them as at all possible. Beloved, this is a sad state of things! It is a condition of life in which I tremble for you, because you are starved in the midst of plenty, you are willfully pinching yourselves with penury while infinite wealth is all around you.

You live as hired servants and not as sons! You get the duty of religion without the enjoyment of religion. You wear its yoke but do not feed in its pasture. You seem to me to forego all the cream of our holy faith and to partake of nothing but its skimmed milk. You leave the sunny plains of communion for the frozen regions of negligent living and therefore you shiver with fear while others exult with gladness. You have chosen your position in the outer courts of the temple. You never enter into the holy of holies. You do not pass within the veil to behold the Glory of the Lord. You are sailing to Heaven, but you are stowed away in the hold in the dark.

You appear to me in your religion to live like the beggars who come round to our back doors for the bones and the stale crusts. And therefore I am not very much surprised when I hear that some of you feel a craving for amusements and say that you are very dull, and need lively company and gaiety to make life bearable. If my child were to say that he must go continually to the confectioner's or to the eating-house, I should say to myself, "Surely the food on my table is sufficient for him." But if upon inquiry I found that he did not eat at my table except occasionally, and that he always made choice of the barest bones and driest crusts, I should be at no loss to comprehend why he was so frequently seen at other places of supply. If you are not living upon Jesus, and rejoicing in the measureless bliss which He is capable of bestowing upon you, I do not marvel if you go off to the world for your sweetmeats and feel a leaning towards the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt!

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are, indeed, His people, may the Holy Spirit save you from the dull religion in which you live and bring you into that condition in which you shall see your Lord, abide in Him, and rejoice in Him! A miner who lives the most of his days underground is not doing his country justice when he speaks of it as dourly, close, and suffocating. It is so down below, but it is not so up above! Religion wears but a grim aspect to those who know nothing of its secret joys, its sacred banquets, its ecstasies, and its calm satisfactions.

There is a bleak side and a sunny side to every hill. Those who are careless in their fellowship will know the worst side of things. The bright-eyed dweller in the sunny south is a very different man from the Eskimo who drive their dogs among the ice fields and hide away through long months of winter in which the sun never sends forth a glimmer to cheer the earth. Who cares to be one of the Eskimos of Christianity, or the Laps

and Fins of the Church? Yet, alas, these abound on all sides! We have to confess that others of us, in whom this departure from Christ is not chronic, are, nevertheless, subject to acute attacks of declension—and there are seasons when it is, indeed, well for us that He restores our souls.

How soon are we turned out of the way! How little a thing may mar our joyful fellowship with Christ! Have you been in worldly company in the evening? Did you marvel that you could not enjoy communion at evening prayer? Have you become fond of your possessions, or have you been eager to increase them? Then your idols have grieved your Lord. Have you been unreconciled to your losses and fretted against God for His dark Providences? “If you walk contrary to Me,” He says, “I will walk contrary to you.” When our proud spirits chafe and fret against our heavenly Father, we cannot expect smiles and caresses from Him. We may easily lose fellowship with Christ by pride and self-esteem—if He indulges us with happy hours of sacred joy, we are very apt to think that we are somebody—and straightway we hold our heads very high. And whenever that happens we are very likely to fall into the mire and be there until our own garments abhor us and we cry for help like the sinners we are.

Christ delights to meet us on terms of Grace. He is to be fullness and we emptiness! He the mighty Helper and we the fainting sinner. He the Savior and we the lost ones. While we say that we are rich and increased in goods, He knows that we are false and He leaves us. But when we see that He has the gold and the white raiment, and we the nakedness and the beggary, then are we arrived at terms which befit both Him and us. Vain is it to boast, for we have no beauty! His are the eyes which are as a flame of fire. His the countenance goodly as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His the crown of light and the mantle of glory.

Unto Him must all honor be ascribed. Those who honor Him, He will honor. Humility sits at Jesus’ feet and that is the chosen place of loving fellowship. We may lose the Presence of Christ by forgetfulness of duty, or of His Truth. We may, on the other hand, lose it by evil thoughts and absorption in fleeting cares. We may lose the company of Christ by inconsistent actions or by idle conversations. “Oh,” some of you say, “is that so? Will Jesus be gone from us so soon?” It is even so. Those who know Him best have found out that He is like His Father and there is a trait in His Father’s Character which is very conspicuous in the Son. It is written, “The Lord your God is a jealous God,” and Jesus is a jealous Lover. He will not cast away His people—He is faithful to the worst of them—but if we do not walk with Him in holiness He will withdraw Himself from us for a while.

Can two walk together unless they are agreed? If we grieve Him He will make us grieve. Cold, unloving, irreverent walking will soon cause the beams of the Sun of Righteousness to glance no more upon us. Blessed be the name of our Beloved, He comes back before long, and He says, “For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercy will I gather

you.” But even the small moments of His forsaking are all too long! A little of His absence is painful for a true spirit to bear. But I leave this mournful point for something more consoling.

III. The text reminds us, also, of OUR LORD’S FAITHFUL LOVE. “He restores my soul.” This is not what He might have done, or would have done had He been *changeable* as we are. There are some who teach that Jesus leaves His roaming sheep to perish. As a punishment for their wanderings He gives them up to the wolf. I hope that very few believe that doctrine now—it is so dishonoring to the Good Shepherd that I hope all God’s people will give it up once and for all. Yet such was the belief of many at one time.

Ah, I do not wonder that some believed it, for I have often been hard pressed with the fear that it would turn out to be so in my own case. But I am here this morning to say concerning my Lord, “He restores my soul.” He has not cast me off, or left me to myself, or abandoned me to my own devices—but in love to my soul He has plucked my feet out of the net, drawn me up from the horrible pit and set my feet upon the Rock of His immutable love. To leave His sheep to perish is not like our Savior. The heart refuses credence to such an idea, it so unlike He. My witness is that, “He restores my soul.” He has done this so often that He may well be described as *always* doing it.

The Psalmist puts it in the present tense, as if the Lord were in the habit of doing so, and were even at this moment in the act of restoring his soul. Truly I must confess that I wander and He restores me. Child of God, as numerous as your sins have been, so numerous have His restorations been! After a hundred times erring, you might have provoked Him to say—“He is given unto his idols, let him alone; My Spirit shall no longer strive with him.” But no, He turns His hands again upon you and once more leads you in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

The mother forgets not her suckling, though it is often fretful and peevish. She still has compassion upon the son of her womb—and even thus it is with Jesus. We are too deeply engraved on the palms of His hands to be, at last, left to die. We have cost Him too dearly for Him to relinquish us. Having restored our soul a hundred times, He still restores it. It is the way of Him—it is the habit of His love. The text lovingly insinuates that He is ready to restore us now. He is at His old work again. Even now, “He restores my soul.”

Where are you, dear Brother? Dear Sister? Have you grown very dull and cold of late? Jesus is waiting to make your heart burn within you. Do you feel half-dead spiritually? Your Lord and Master is even now ready to quicken you by His Word and to restore unto you the joy of His salvation! If you ask me why the Lord is thus quick to restore His people, I can find no answer in *them* or their merits, but a little further on the Psalmist gives you the reason why Christ thus acts in faithfulness and tenderness. “He leads me in the paths of righteousness *for His name’s sake*.” He would not restore us for *our* sakes. There is nothing in us which could be pointed

out to the eye of Justice as a claim for restoration, though much might be remembered which, on the footing of the Law, would ensure our ruin!

Here is our safety. The Lord Jesus has willed to save us, and He stands to His purpose and decree. He has put forward His own veracity and immutability as guarantees of the Covenant! His own honor would be in jeopardy should one of His people be lost. Therefore for His own name's sake He restores the wanderer, lest His enemies should say, "God has forsaken His people," and lest the hosts of Hell should boast, saying, "The Lord began to save them, but He was not able to finish the work." "For His name's sake." Deep and blessed reason! Immutable, immovable foundation of comfort! For His name's sake He restores our souls when we wander from His way.

Strange are the means He uses. Sometimes it is a most heavy rod. At other times a sweetly fascinating love call. Singular are the modes of dealing with His people. He will break them in pieces and crush them beneath His feet, apparently in hot displeasure, but all with the view of making them sick of sin and eager after Himself. He will tear them as a lion tears his prey, and this not to destroy, but to save them. Is it not written, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal"? Often by dispensations of terror He leads us into ways of Grace and frequently that which appears to be our utter destruction ends in our complete restoration, according to His Grace. Let the text stand as a type and testimony of His immutable love. "He restores my soul."

IV. During the short time which remains for me to discourse to you, I want to throw my whole strength into the last consideration. Our text, emphasized as I have emphasized it, reminds us of HIS SUPREME POWER. "HE restores my soul." HE, HE, HE alone restores my soul! From first to last my revivals and refreshing come from Him. He Himself first made my soul to live—yes, He was Life itself to me. You had no life, Beloved, till Jesus passed by and saw you lying dead in sin and said to you, "Live." You were like Lazarus in the tomb. You were beginning to stink with corruption and sin, and His voice, when it said, "Lazarus, come forth," was life to you.

You did not help the Savior in your quickening—how could you? You exercised no concurrent action—He took the first step and quickened you when you were dead in sin. He began to save you because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. You owe your regeneration entirely to Him and it is not surprising that your revival should come from the same source. Surely He who regenerated can restore! He who created can renew! Restoration is not a more difficult work—no, it is but a *secondary* work compared with the new creating of the soul. The Lord, even Jesus Christ, who did at the first give you life, can revive you again—and He can do it by Himself—being to your soul her medicine as well as her physician.

All the evils under which a Christian smarts arise from the absence of Jesus, or else obtain their power to injure from the fact of the Lord's being

away. There are corruptions which dwell always in us, but these do not dare to show their faces when Jesus reigns within in revealed Glory. The traitors lurk in their holes when the King is in the city—they will not venture forth till they hear that He is offended and is gone. While the flag flies on the castle to mark that my lord is at home, His enemies are on their best behavior, for they have a dread of His sword. When our fellowship with Jesus is active, sin lies dormant, or is so thoroughly subdued that it makes but a struggling gasp for life.

So, then, if at this time I have become proud, or petulant, or idle, or cannot pray, or will not submit to the Divine will, or have fallen into spiritual sickness—it is quite certain that all the mischief is occasioned by the loss of my Lord's company—and it is clear that His coming back to me will restore my soul. If His absence has developed all this evil, then His Presence can surely put it away. Should it happen that the temptation is outward, still no outward temptation has any force when Christ is present. Let all the world's charms attempt to seduce us, they are horrible distortions when contrasted with the loveliness of Jesus. Only let us see His face and all earthly witcheries have lost their enchantment.

Suppose that we were tempted to skepticism? Christ is the antidote for that venom. No man doubts when Christ is present with him. At the sight of Him even Thomas cries, "My Lord and my God." Can we despond while He consoles? Can the children of the bride chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? On the other hand, pride cannot live where Jesus is seen. "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead," said the beloved Apostle. His Presence is the death of every sin, the life of every Divine Grace. Therefore it is that the text says, "He restores my soul."

The hunger, famine, and disease of war need but one cure, and that is peace. The woes of the Believer's soul need but one remedy, and that lies in the words, "Abide in Me." The Presence of Christ has everything in it that the soul can possibly need. I see the green leaves of a plant most dear to all who love the woods in spring. It is now nestling under a hedge upon a shelving bank, just alone a trickling stream. I ask it why it does not bloom and it whispers to me that it will bloom by-and-by. "But, sweet primrose, why not put forth your lovely flower at once and gladden us with your beauty?" She answers, "I am waiting for him."

For whom do you tarry, you herald of spring?—

***"All love on you to rest their weary eyes,
Rending therein a history of dearest ties."***

She meekly answers, "I am waiting for my lord, the sun." Do you not need other friends and helpers? "No," she says, "the coming of my lord will be enough, and when he puts forth his strength I shall put on my beauty." But will you not need soft, pearly drops of dew to glisten on the leaves? Are not your blossoms most frail to gaze upon when all around keeps time and tune therewith, when the violet and harebell are in your company, when the buds are swelling and "the green-winged linnet sings"? To which she replies, "He will bring them, he will bring them all." But are you not

afraid of the killing frosts and the dreary snowstorms? “He will chase them all away,” says the little plant. “I shall be safe enough when he brings on the spring.”

Believer, you are that plant and Jesus is your Sun! He will bring you healing beneath His wings and joy in the light of His Countenance. He restores our entire manhood—every regenerated faculty grows strong when He is near. Every Grace drinks in new life from communion with Christ! Faith triumphs, love burns, hope prophesies, patience becomes strong for endurance and courage is bold for conflict. Christ is such fare that all the Graces can feed on Him, and all grow strong upon the sacred viands. The best of all is that He is a restoration which is available now, available at once. I felt, the other day, heavy at heart, dull, dead. I thought of myself as though I were a branch of a tree cut off and so I meditated thus with myself—“If I am a branch of the vine, and have been removed from my stem, my only hope is to get back into the place from where I came and be grafted in again, and begin to suck the sap again, and feel the life flowing through me,”

Then was it sweet to remember that there is no possible state into which a Believer could fall, even if it were the most desperate that could be conceived, but what Christ can restore him perfectly and at once! Then for my own comfort and renewal I began with my Lord thus—I looked at Him upon the Cross. I stood before Him as a sinner and wondered at Him that He should die for sinners. And I trusted Him and I said to Him, “Lord, You know I trust You. I have no hope but in You and I cling to You as a limpet clings to the rock. With all my heart and soul I cling.” I began to feel the sap flow from the stem into my branch at once as soon as I had got into contact with my Lord! By a simple faith, I felt that virtue went out of Him to heal my soul.

Once having established the flow of the sap, it flowed more, and more, and more, for as I thought about my salvation through Him, being myself guilty, and He my Righteousness, I began to love Him and my soul began to glow with a passion towards Him. And I wanted to be telling others what a dear, good Savior He was, and in a few moments after I had be-moaned myself as dead to Him and a castaway, I felt as much warmth of love to Him as ever I had done in all my life, and could say in the language of the spouse, “Or ever I was aware, my Soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib”!

Now, I believe that this is the natural process to go through for the restoring of your soul. Some of you professors may be feeling, “I do not know how it is, but I am not what I ought to be, I am out of gear with Christ. I wish to act into a better state of heart, to be more pleasing to God than I am, by walking nearer to Him.” If such is your state, mind what you do. Try what I have described, or, unless you are wide awake, there will come to you Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and tell you there are other ways of getting your souls restored.

First, he says, you should repent bitterly of all this wandering of heart. That is correct enough, but who is to give you this repentance? And then, says he, you must be more attentive to the outward means of Grace, you must set aside longer times for prayer and be more diligent in searching the Scriptures privately. That also is all correct. Whatever he bids you, that observe and do, as Christ said of the Pharisees, but that is *not* the way to obtain restoration of soul! The way to Heaven is never round by Sinai! Always be afraid of directors who lead you in that direction. All our healing lies in *Christ*. Christ is the Physician, and Christ is the Medicine, too.

The way to get your soul restored is not to try to restore it *yourself*, nor to undergo any processes by which it may work itself right. No, but go straight away to Christ and lay hold on Him, just as you are, whatever your condition may be. Coming into contact with Him, you shall soon have to sing in the words of the text, "He restores my soul." Let others talk of their sacraments, "He restores my soul." Let men boast and glory of special ways of raising their souls to Heaven, "He restores my soul." Let some rejoice because their souls need no restoring, but are always strong, I cannot say that, but I can say, "He restores my soul."

I hope this morning I shall have many Beloved Brothers and Sisters of like mind, who will go out of this house saying not only, "I knew He could restore my soul," but, "He restores my soul. I was very cold when I came in here, as cold as the weather itself, but Jesus has thawed the ice of my heart." Perhaps you have to confess that you were in a very bad state of mind—ugly-tempered—and I do not know what besides. Perhaps you were worried out of anything like peace and rest. Now, then, is the time to try the great Restorer. Before you leave your seat, labor to get into contact with Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Do, I pray, return to Him as at the first. O Branch, come back to the Stem! Let the sap flow again. "But I am not in a fit condition," you say. What? Have you gone back to that old Sinai idea of fitness? Have you gone back to that legal demand? Come as you are! Come as you are to Jesus. I mean you saints. Are you going to play the fool as sinners do? Sinners say they are to get ready for Christ, and fools they are for saying it. Are you about to say the same? You will be worse fools still! Come just now. Whatever you have been, let the connection between you and Christ be consciously felt and quickened by an immediate application to Him by simple faith, and you shall yet say, as you rise into more than your former vigor, "He restores my soul."

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END OF VOLUME 19

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH NO. 1595

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for You are with me; Your rod
and Your staff, they
comfort me.”
Psalm 23:4.*

Do you know I had laid this text by? I meant that this choice promise should be kept in store and stock till I came near the Jordan and I hoped that then, in my last hours, I might be privileged to enjoy its sweetness and sing with joyful lips—

*“Yea, though I walk through death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;
For You are with me, and Your rod
And staff me comfort still.”*

The other day I found that I needed to eat this heavenly loaf at once and I did so. Fathers tell their children, “You cannot have your cake and eat it, too,” but this rule does not hold good of the consolations of God. You can enjoy a promise and still have it. Yes, and all the more because your faith has fed upon its fatness. I got honey out of this verse some days ago when a tempest howled around me, but its sweetness is still there. I shall enjoy it, I doubt not, as I come near death’s gate, but I have had it already sealed to my own soul with richness and fullness of comfort by the blessed Spirit of our God. Would to God that every Believer who is burdened might find it as precious to his heart as I have found it to mine.

This verse is, no doubt, very applicable to the experience of when he comes to die but, for certain, that is not its only intent. It has an inexpressibly delightful application to the dying, but it is for the living, too! And at this time if, through any peculiar trials, your heart is cast down within you and you are walking through the death-shade, I pray you to repeat the words of the text and may the Lord help you to feel that they are true—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” The words are not in the future tense and, therefore, are not reserved for a distant moment. Do not postpone to the future that which you so greatly need in the present.

Though I walk, even at this hour, through the dark valley, You, O Lord, are with me! Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. David was not dying—the Psalm is full of happy, peaceful life. He is lying down in green pastures and following his Lord by still waters. And if a cloud has descended upon him and he feels himself like one threatened with death, he nevertheless expects goodness and mercy to follow him through all his

days. The song is not to lie upon the shelf till our last day, but is to be sung upon our stringed instruments all the days of our lives! Therefore let us sing it at this hallowed hour in the courts of the Lord's House and in the midst of them that love Him.

I. I call your attention, first, to THE PASS AND ITS TERRORS—"the valley of the shadow of death." Get the idea of a narrow ravine, something like the Gorge of Gondo or some other stern pass upon the higher Alps where the rocks seem piled to Heaven and the sunlight is seen above as through a narrow rift. Troubles are sometimes heaped on one another, pile on pile, and the road is a dreary pass through which the pilgrim, on his journey to Heaven, has to wend his way. Set before your mind's eye a valley shut in with stupendous rocks that seem to meet overhead, a narrowing pass, dark as midnight itself. Through this valley, or rocky ravine, the heavenly footman has to follow the path appointed for him in the eternal purpose of the Infinite mind. Through such a dreary rift many a child of God is making his way at this moment—and to him I speak.

Our first observation about it is that it is exceedingly gloomy. This is its chief characteristic. It is the valley of the shadow—the shadow of death. Death is terrible and the very shadow of it is cold and chill and freezes to the marrow. I have stood under rocks which have not merely cooled me, but have cast a horribly damp chill as though the embrace of death had been about me and its cold within me. One hastens to escape from such a deadly shade which has tended to strike you with fever. And such, it seems to me, is the shade cast by the wings of death when the man feels that he is under such trouble that he cannot live and would not even wish to do so if he could. The joy of life has been like the sun under an eclipse and in the chill, dark, damp shade of a terrible sorrow the man has cowered down and beneath the icy touch of doubt has shivered, has felt fevered and frightened and has been as one out of his mind.

I speak to some young hearts here who, I hope, know nothing about this gloom. Do not wish to know it! Keep bright while you can. Sing while you may. Be larks and mount aloft and sing as you mount! But there are some of God's people who are not much in the lark line—they are a great deal more like owls. They sit alone and keep silent. Or if they *do* open their mouths, it is to give forth a discontented hoot. Companions of dragons and very suitable companions, too, such mournful ones need all the gentle sympathy we can afford them. Even those who are bright and cheerful do, many of them, occasionally pass through the dreary glen where everything is doleful and their spirits sink below zero.

I know what wise Brethren say, "You should not give way to feelings of depression." Quite right—we should no more. But we do. And perhaps when your brain is as weary as ours, you will not bear yourselves more bravely than we do. "But desponding people are very much to be blamed." I know they are, but they are also very much to be *pitied* and, perhaps, if those who blame quite so furiously could once *know* what depression is, they would think it cruel to scatter blame where *comfort* is needed. There are experiences of the children of God which are full of spiritual darkness and I am almost persuaded that those of God's servants who have been

most highly favored have, nevertheless, suffered more times of darkness than others.

The Covenant is never known to Abraham so well as when a horror of great darkness comes over him and then he sees the shining lamp moving between the pieces of the sacrifice. A greater than Abraham was early led of the Spirit into the wilderness and yet, before He closed His life, He was sorrowful and very heavy in the Garden. In this heaviness, for which there is a necessity, Believers have a black foil which sets out the brightness of eternal love and faithfulness. Blessed be God for mountains of joy and valleys of peace and gardens of delight! But there is a Valley of Death-Shade and most of us have traversed its tremendous glooms.

Moreover, there are parts of human life which are dangerous as well as gloomy. In journeying through the passes of the East, an escort is usually needed, for robbers lurk among the rocks and shoot down upon the traveler, or block up his way with sword and spear. The name of the Khyber Pass is still terrible in our memories and there are Khybers in most men's lives. There are points in human history that are specially dangerous. Oh, you that are beginners, I do not wish to frighten you! I do not want to tell you that the ways of wisdom are terrible, for they are not! No, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." But, for all that, there are enemies on the road to Heaven and there are, "Cut-throat Lanes" where, when the enemy finds your spirits cast down, he pounces upon you unawares with temptation—and before you know it you may be wounded and sorely grieved.

There are spots in the Valley of Death-Shade where every bush conceals an adversary; where temptations spring out of the very ground like the fiery serpents from among the desert sand; where the soul is among lions, even among them that are set on the fire of Hell! If you have not yet come to that part of your pilgrimage, I am glad of it and I hope that you may be spared it, in answer to that needful prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." But if you are called to walk through this dangerous ravine, what will you do? Why, say this—"Yea, though I walk through that dangerous pass of which I have heard, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Remember that a Christian man is never so much in danger from abundance of temptation as from the carnal security of his own heart. We are often most in jeopardy when we are *not* tempted—and the worst devil in the world may be no devil at all. "Deliver me," said a man of great experience, "from a *sleeping* devil, for if he roars at me, he keeps me awake. But when he leaves me alone, then my heart presumes that all is safe and I am betrayed." You young people, or old people, too, who are placed, in the course of Providence, in positions of great trial and temptation need not wish for an easier pathway, for it may be that you are safer now, being on your guard, than those who are not fiercely tried, but sit at ease and are in great peril from sloth and spiritual indifference. Better consume with fire than perish of dry rot!

The cold mountains of trial are far safer than the sultry plains of pleasure. I am not, therefore, alarmed at manifest danger—neither would I have

you greatly dismayed because there is a gloomy gorge between you and Heaven. One of the chief reasons of the gloom is the fact that this terrible pass is shrouded in mystery. You do not know what the sorrow is. The shadow—the shadow of death—what does it mean? You cannot discern the form which broods over you. You cannot grasp the foe. It is of no use drawing a sword against a shadow! Bunyan represents the pilgrim as putting up his sword when he came into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He had fought Apollyon with it, but when he came into the midnight of that horrible valley, it was of no use to him. Everything was so veiled, magnified and blackened in the dark.

Hob-goblin as he called them, hovered around—strange shapes and singular forms of doubts which he could not meet with reasoning or overcome with argument. A man can pluck up courage against a thing he knows, but an evil which he does not know unmans him! He does not know what the trial is and yet a strange, joy-killing feeling is upon him. He cannot see the extent of his loss in business, but he fears that his all will go—he does not know the end of his child's illness, but death appears to be threatening. All is suspense and surmise and the evil of evils is uncertainty.

That which frightened Belshazzar when the handwriting was on the wall was, no doubt, that he could see the hand, but he could not see the arm and the body to which the hand belonged. It seemed so singular to see the mystic handwriting in letters of lightning and no more! So, sometimes, it seems to us as if we could not make out our condition—could not understand God's dealings with us. We have seemed to be at cross-purposes with Providence. We have come to a place where two seas meet and we cannot understand the current. Our temptation has been comparable to a cyclone and we do not know which way the hurricane is sweeping—we are in the power of a whirlwind, jerked to and fro.

Such things happen to God's people now and then. And what are they to do when they get into these perplexities, these mysterious troubles that they cannot at all describe? They must do—and God help them to do—as this blessed man did, who in the peace and confidence of faith went on his way *singing*—Yea, though I walk through the valley shaded by the mysterious wings of death and though I know nothing of my way and cannot understand it, yet will I fear no evil, for You are with me. You know the way that I take. There are no mysteries with my God. You have the thread of this labyrinth and You will surely lead me through. Why, therefore, should I fear? Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me!

Gloom, danger, mystery—these three all vanish when faith lights up her heavenly lamp, trimmed with the golden oil of the promise. Nor is this all. The idea of solitude is in the text. The path is lonely and the pilgrim sings, “Yea, though I walk”—as if he walked alone, no one sharing his shadowed pathway! Solitude is a very great trial to some spirits and some of us know a great deal of what it means, for we dwell alone, in a *spiritual* sense. But you will say, “Do you not mingle with crowds?” Yes, and there is no solitude like it. When your office and position set you as on a moun-

tain all alone, you will know what I mean. For the sheep, there are many companions, but for the shepherd few.

Those who watch for souls come into positions in which they are divided from all human help. Nobody knows your cares or can guess the burden of your soul. And those who try to sympathize with you fail in the generous attempt. Some of you, perhaps, are in a position in which you complain, "Nobody was ever tried as I am. I feel as if God had set me as a mark for His arrows." Or possibly you murmur, "There may be many more afflicted than I, but none in my peculiar way. I suffer a singularity of trial." Just so and that is an essential part of the bitterness of your cup—that you should lament that you are alone. But will you not say, with your Divine Master, "You shall leave me alone and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me"?

Now is the time for *faith*. When you trust God and a friend, there is a question whether it is God you trust or the friend. But when the friend has left you and only God is near, no question remains. If you and I are walking together and a dog follows us, who knows which is the dog's master? But when you go off to the left and I turn to the right, all men will see which one of us owns the dog by seeing which he follows! If you can trust God alone, then you are really trusting Him! And if, when creature streams run dry, you can stoop down to the Creator's overflowing well and drink there, then you are a Believer and there is no mistake about it.

It is profitable to be driven into loneliness that we may prove whether we are solely trusting in God or not. It is a bad thing to be standing with one foot on the sea and the other on the land. An angel stood in that fashion and it suits angels—but it is not a safe posture for such burdened beings as men and women! We must get both feet on the Rock of Ages, or the foot which stands upon the sea of changeable self will be our downfall. My Soul, wait only upon God! When Faith's *only* foundation is the power and faithfulness of the Lord, she learns to glory in the absence of all visible help and sings with joyful heart—"Yea, though I walk through death's dark valley, unattended by human companion, I will fear no evil, for my God is near!"

Let me remark, further, that though this valley is thus gloomy, dangerous, mysterious and solitary, yet it is often traversed. Many more go by this road than some people dream. Among those who wear a cheerful countenance in public there are many who are well acquainted with this dreary valley—they have passed through it often—and may be in it now. When I wear the sackcloth of sorrow, I try to bind it about my loins *under* my outer garments and not where all shall see it, for has not the Master said, "You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast"? Why should we cast others down? There is enough sorrow in the world without our spreading the infection by publishing our troubles.

Storybooks are sent me to review and when I perceive that they contain harrowing tales of poverty, I make short work of them. I see quite enough of sorrow in *real* life—I do not need fiction to fret my heart. If men and women must write works of fiction, they might as well write cheerfully and

not break people's hearts over mere fabrications. If I must weep, let it be over an actual grief and not over a painted affliction. But so it is—some like to tell the story of their sorrows and care little what may be the influence upon others—they might have a little more consideration for their fellow man. If my own heart is bleeding, why should I wound others? Sometimes it is brave to be speechless, even as the singer puts it—

***“Bear and forbear, and silent be.
Tell no man your misery.”***

It is surely true that a great number of God's best servants have trod the deeps of the Valley of the Shadow and this ought to comfort some of you. The footsteps of the holy are in the Valley of Weeping. Saints have marched through the Via Dolorosa—do you not see their footprints? Above all others, mark one footstep! Do you not see it? Stoop down and fix your gaze upon it! Go on your knees and view it! If you watch it well, you will observe the print of a nail. As surely as this Word of God is true, your Lord has felt the chill of the death-shade. There is no gloom of spirit, apart from the sin of it, into which Jesus has not fallen! There is no trouble of soul, or turmoil of heart which is free from sin, which the Lord has not known. He says, “Reproach has broken My heart and I am full of heaviness.”

The footprint of the Lord of Life is set in the rock forever, even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death! Shall we not cheerfully advance to the Cross and death of Jerusalem when Jesus goes before us? I shall close my remarks upon this Via Mala of terrors by showing that dark and gloomy as it is, it is not an unhallowed pathway. No sin is necessarily connected with sorrow of heart, for Jesus Christ our Lord once said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.” There was no sin in Him and, consequently, none in His deep depression! We have never known a joy or a sorrow altogether untainted with evil, but in grief, itself, there is no necessary cause of sin. A man may be as happy as all the birds in the air and there may be no sin in his happiness. And a man may be exceedingly heavy and yet there may be no sin in the heaviness. I do not say that there is not sin in all our feelings, but still, the feelings in themselves need not be sinful.

I would, therefore, try to cheer any Brothers and Sisters who are sad, for their sadness is not necessarily blameworthy. If their downcast spirit arises from unbelief, let them flog themselves and cry to God to be delivered from it. But if the soul is sighing, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” its being slain is not a fault. If the man cries, “My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You,” his soul's being cast down within him is no sin. “If need be,” says the Apostle, “you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Not only, “If need be you are in the temptations,” but, “you are in *heaviness* through them.” There is a necessity for the heartbreak, for it is in the heaviness of the spirit that the essence of the trial is found.

Does not Solomon say, “The blueness of a wound cleans away evil”? If the blow is not such as to leave its bruise, there has been no chastening that will do us good. Heaviness of spirit is not, therefore, on every occa-

sion, a matter for which we need condemn ourselves though it will be well, always, to turn a severe side to one's self. However we may censure ourselves for heart sorrow, we must be careful not to condemn others—for the way of sorrow is not the way of sin, but a hallowed road sanctified by the praying of myriads of pilgrims now with God—pilgrims who, passing through the valley of Baca made it a well, the rain also filled the pools. Of such it is written, "they go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God."

Thus much upon the dark and dangerous Valley of the Shadow.

II. Our second head, upon which we shall speak for a little while, is THE PILGRIM AND HIS PROGRESS. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." The pilgrim, you observe, first, is calm in the prospect of his dreary passage. I do not think that it is one-half so hard to bear a trouble as it is to think of it beforehand. The poet well said that many of us—

"Feel a thousand deaths in fearing one."

The outriders of trouble are often of a fiercer countenance than the trouble itself. We suffer more in the dread of something than in the endurance of the stroke. Here we have a man of faith who is calm in expectancy of trouble—"I shall walk," says he, "through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. I expect to do so, but I will fear no evil."

Have you, my Friend, a trouble evidently drawing near to you? Are there tokens of a storm all around you? Then look bravely at the future! Let not your heart fail you while waiting for the thunder and the hurricane. David said, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Encamped enemies generally trouble us more than actually contending foes. When once the enemy raises the war cry and comes on, we are awakened to valor and meet him, foot to foot. But while he tarries and holds us in suspense, our heart is apt to eat into itself with perplexity.

We can see that our deadly foe is in his camp, but we do not know whether he will attack us at the middle watch of the night, or at the dawn of the day. We do not know when his onslaught will be—this suspense distresses the soul and, therefore, the glory of a faith that can say—"Though I know that I shall soon suffer, yet in the prospect of it I am at rest. I fear no evil." Beloved, pray to be calm in the prospect of trial—it is half the battle! Is it not written of the Believer, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord"? Furthermore, the pilgrim is steady in his progress. "Yea, though I walk through the valley," he says. He does not run in haste. He walks quietly along.

We are generally in a hurry to get our trouble over, like those who say, "If medicine must be taken, let it be taken as soon as possible." There is a season for all things. Let us wait till the trouble comes from the hand of the Lord, for He will time it to the second. "There! I must know the worst of it," cries one. "I feel in such a horrible state of suspense that I must end it one way or another." But, my dear Friend, faith is not in such a frightful bustle—"He that believes shall not make haste." Faith is quick when it has to serve God, but it is patient when it has to wait for Him.

There is no hurry about the Psalmist, “Yea, though, I walk” he says—quietly, calmly, steadily. The pace of the experienced man of God is a walk. Young people fly—“they shall mount up with wings as eagles.” Growing men “run and are not weary.” But when a man of God becomes a father in the Church and is endowed with abounding strength, he walks and does not faint. Walking is the regulation pace for veteran soldiers of Christ—all the rest is for the raw recruits! So David, in effect, declares—I shall walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death as quietly as I walk my garden in the evening, or go down the street about my business. My affliction does not unfit me for duty. I am not flurried and worried about it. May God give you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, this calm faith. I pray that He may give it to me, for I greatly need it. I have often confessed my need of it and confessed it with shame and confusion of face, for I serve a blessed Master and I ought never to fear, nor allow pain of body to produce trembling of heart. O sacred Comforter, shed abroad in my heart the peace of God!

The next point about the pilgrim’s progress is that he is secure in his expectancy. “Yea, though I walk through the valley.” There is a bright side to that word, “through.” He expects to come out of the dreary pass to a brighter country! Just as the train of his life enters into the dark tunnel of tribulation, he says within himself, “I shall come out on the other side. It may be very dark and I may go through the very bowels of the earth, but I am bound to come out on the other side.” So is it with every child of God. If his way to Heaven should lie over the bottom of the sea, hard by the roots of the mountains where the earth, with her bars, is about him, he will traverse the road in perfect safety. Jonah’s road to Heaven lay that way and a special conveyance was started for him—“The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.”

I do not suppose there was ever any other fish of the sort. Naturalists cannot find such a whale, they say, nor need they look for it, for the Scripture says, “The Lord *prepared* a fish.” He knew how to make it to hold Jonah and the fish accommodated its passenger and brought him right to shore. Providence makes special preparation for every tried saint. If you are God’s servant and are called to a very peculiar trial, some singular Providence, the like of which you have never read of, shall certainly happen to you to illustrate in your case the Divine goodness and faithfulness! Oh, if we had more faith! Oh, if we had more faith, life would be happy, trials would be light! Brethren, is it not an easy thing to walk through a shadow? If you get up in the morning and saunter down the field and the spiders have spun their cobwebs across the path in a thousand places, you brush them all away—and yet there is more strength in a cobweb than in a shadow!

The Psalmist speaks without fear, for he regards his expected trials as walking through a *shadow*. Trials and troubles, if we have but faith, are mere shadows that cannot hinder us on our road to Heaven. Sometimes God so overrules afflictions that they even *help* us on to Glory! Therefore let us walk on and never be afraid. Let us be sure that if we walk in at one end of the hollow way of affliction, we shall walk out at the other. Who

shall hinder us when God is with us? The main point about this pilgrim and his progress is that he is perfectly innocent of fear. He says, "I shall fear no evil." It is beautiful to see a child at perfect peace amid dangers which alarm all those who are with him. I have read of a little boy who was on board a vessel that was being buffeted by the tempest and everybody was distressed, knowing that the ship was in great peril.

There was not a sailor on board, certainly not a passenger, who was not full of fear. This boy, however, was perfectly happy and was rather amused than alarmed by the tossing of the ship. They asked him why he was so happy at such a time. "Well," he said, "my father is the captain. He knows how to manage." He did not think it possible that the ship could go down while his father was in command! There was folly in such confidence, but there will be none in yours if you believe with an equally unqualified faith in *your* Father who can and will bring safely into port every vessel that is committed to His charge! Rest in God and be quiet from fear of evil! This pilgrim, while he is thus free from fear, is not at all fanatical or ignorant since he gives a good reason for his freedom from alarm. "I will fear no evil," says he, "for You are with me."

Was there ever a better reason given under Heaven for being fearless than this—that *God* is with us? He is on our side! He is pledged to help us! He has never failed us. He must cease to be what He is before He can cast away one soul that trusts Him. Where, then, is there room for terror? The child is confident because his mother is with him—much more should we be serene in heart since the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Immuta-ble God is on our side! "Whom shall I fear?" Whom shall we select to honor with our dread? Is there anybody that we need to fear? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?" Christ has died and risen again and sits up yonder at the right hand of God as our Representative—who, then, can harm us? Let the heavens be dissolved and the earth be melted with fervent heat, but let not the Christian's heart be moved! Let him stand like the great mountains whose foundations are confirmed forever, for the Lord God will not forsake His people or break His Covenant. "I will fear no evil, for You are with me."

There is something more, here, than freedom from fear and a substantial reason for it, for the true Believer rejoices in exalted companionship. "You are with me." You—You, You—the King of kings, before whom every seraph veils his face, abashed before the awful majesty of his Maker. "You are with me"—You before whom the greatest of the great sink into utter insignificance—YOU are with me! How brave that man ought to be who walks with the Lion of the tribe of Judah as his guard! What steady footsteps should that man take who treads upon a rock and knows it. "You are with me."

Trembling Brother, you would feel perfectly safe if you had your eyes opened to see the companies of angels that surround you. You would rejoice in your security if you saw horses of fire and chariots of fire encompassing you. But such defenses are as nothing compared with those which are always around you! God is better than myriads of chariots! "The

chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels,” but the glory of it is that, “God is among them as in Sinai.” God is with every one of His children! We dwell *in* Him and He dwells in *us*. “I in them and they in Me,” says Christ. A vital, everlasting union exists between every believing soul and God—then what cause can there be for fear? “You are with me.” Oh for Grace to be brave pilgrims and to make steady progress with heavenly company as our glory and defense!

III. Now, I shall close with my third head, which is most evidently in the text—THE SOUL AND ITS SHEPHERD—for David says, “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” You see the Psalm is all about a shepherd and a soul that feels itself to be like a sheep. The rod and staff, the tokens of shepherdry, are the comforts of the saints. What are the uses of the rod and staff? Consider, first, that the rod was used for numbering the sheep. “Then shall the sheep pass, again, under the hand of him that counts them.” The shepherd holds his rod and the sheep are counted as they pass under it.

It is a very blessed thing when the soul can say, “The Lord counts me one of His. I am in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but I am one of the Lord’s own purchased flock. I am in great sadness, but I am numbered with His redeemed.” The Good Shepherd keeps all His sheep and He will preserve them in the gloomy valley. “The Lord knows them that are His.” And the Lord will show Himself strong on behalf of His own. He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” If He numbers me among His own, though I am the meanest of them and the feeblest in faith and lowest in Grace, yet He will protect me! Since I can say, My Beloved is mine, and I am His, I am sure of every good thing! We need no better comfort, for when His disciples rejoiced because the devils were subject unto them, their Master said, “Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” If with His rod, the Shepherd of Israel has pointed you out as His own, you may well be of good cheer, for the Lord will not lose one part of His portion, nor suffer the enemy to devour one of His flock.

Next, the rod is used for rule. The shepherd’s crook, which is now put into the hand of a bishop to show that he ought to be a shepherd, is the emblem of power and government. The shepherd is not only the keeper, but the lord of the sheep. Remember that your Savior is your Sovereign. You call Him Master and Lord and you say well. Do you feel the spirit of obedience? I trust I do, for I long to serve Him. I am not what I ought to be nor what I want to be, but my heart longs to obey His will. I accept His Law to be my Law and I wish always to be one of His most loyal subjects. I delight to think that the Lord reigns. It is a part of my song—“The Lord is king.” My heart shouts it! I would proclaim it at the market of every town! Let Jesus Christ reign and reign forever and ever. The joy is that He does reign! His rod and staff are the emblems of the Shepherd-King and as we submit to His supreme sway, we find a comfort in His royal power and dignity.

A third meaning, for the words are very full of doctrine—is this—the rod and staff are meant for guidance. It is with his rod that the shepherd leads his flock. It is most sweet, most comfortable to believe that the Lord is guiding us. “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory.” We are not half awake as the sheep of Christ, but if we were to watch our Lord, we should see Him gently leading His by a right way. When we are not willful, but wait upon Him, He leads us on in a way which we should not have chosen of our own accord—but it is the safe and right way. When we do not know which road to take, we are not left to make a foolish choice, but we hear a voice behind us saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” It is a blessed thing, when we are in a troubled condition, to be quite confident that the Lord, Himself, brought us there, for then we are sure that the road must be right, since our Shepherd never misleads His flock. If we follow where Jesus leads, the Guide is responsible for the road.

The next meaning of the rod and staff is that of urging onward. The sheep, sometimes, are lazy and will not stir. And then the shepherd pushes them on, a bit, with his rod and staff. Have you ever felt the Divine nudging? Perhaps in a sermon you have had a pretty sharp thrust. I know I have had to lay on the rod, at times, in the Master’s name, upon certain fat sheep who are not quite as nimble as they ought to be. But their wool is so thick that I can scarcely make them feel! The Great Shepherd knows how to touch them. He can give such a push, when sheep are lingering behind, that all of a sudden you see them leap forward and you wonder how it is that they go to the front so eagerly! If I am troubled and I feel that it speeds me on in the right road—if it drives me to prayer, if it makes me honor God more—then the rod and staff comfort me.

It is a happy thing to be afflicted towards Heaven! It is an evil thing to be comfortable in doing nothing—a horrible thing to be sinking into indifference and not to care whether you get out of it or not. But it is good to be tried and so made earnest for more Divine Grace. It comforts a wise man to perceive that the rod is working for his good. The rod and staff mean chastisement, for if a sheep goes astray, the shepherd pulls it back by the leg with his crook and makes it feel that it cannot wander without suffering for it. So does the Lord chasten us. Blessed be His name for chastening, though it is not joyous but grievous, “nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.”

Oh, how blessed are those words, “nevertheless, afterward!” It is a condescending thing for God to take enough notice of you to chasten you! A man does not whip other people’s children and when God afflicts a Believer and his soul within him is broken down, let him say within himself, “Blessed be God for this tribulation! Whom He loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.” Sweet is the pain that seals the Father’s love! Blessed is the anguish caused by our Shepherd’s hand! Oh, dreadful pleasure that would arise out of God’s letting me alone, to never taste it! But blessed grief, blessed heartbreak which assures me that God

has not forgotten me! O Lord, Your rod, when it chastens me, does comfort me!

But, last of all, the rod and the staff are used by the shepherd to protect his flock. With these he contends against the beasts of the field that the lambs may not be torn apart. And, oh, how glorious is Christ when He comes forth with the weapons of His eternal power to fight the lion that would tear our soul! Think of Him in Heaven pleading for His people, pleading the merits of His blood, using His intercession as a staff with which He smites the wolf and chases away the lion and the bear so that not one of us may be destroyed! He must, He will protect His own elect! You may think that Christ bought His people with His blood and that He will lose them, but I do not believe it. When a thing has cost you dearly, you take great care of it—and if it cost you your life—you would not readily part with it.

“Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life.” And when he has once given up his life, that which he has purchased with it is dearer to him than all the world. Christ would sooner lose His life than lose His people! He died once to save them and until He dies, again, they shall never perish! Has He not said it Himself, “Because I live you shall live, also”? Unless they live, He does not live! His life has entered into them and it can never leave them. “I give,” says He, “unto My sheep eternal life.” And what can, “eternal life,” mean but a life which lasts forever? Oh, may God give to everyone here the faith which I have been talking about!

Perhaps some of you have never trusted your souls with Christ. You know that faith is the way of salvation—why do you not follow it? Simply trust Him. Simply trust Him. Simply trust Him now! It is wonderful, the power of faith to change the heart! When you trust a man, you love him. You cannot be an enemy to a man in whom you trust. The effect of faith upon the affections is marvelous—it changes their whole nature and bent. God give you to know Christ, for they that know His name will put their trust in Him and when you know Him and trust Him, then shall you confess with us unto the Lord, “Blessed is the man that trusts in You.” God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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***“My cup runs over.”
Psalm 23:5.***

THE Psalm culminates in this expression. The poet can mount no higher. He has endeavored to express the blessedness of his condition, in having the Lord for his Shepherd, but after all his efforts, he is conscious of failure. His sonnet has not reached the height of the great argument, nor has his soul, though enlarged with gratitude, been able to compass the immeasurable gifts of Grace. And therefore, in holy wonder at the lavish superfluities of mercy, he cries, “My cup runs over.” In one short but most expressive sentence he does as good as say, “Not only have I enough, but more than enough! I possess not only all that I am capable of containing, but I inherit an excess of joy, a redundancy of blessing, an extravagance of favor, a prodigality of love—my cup runs over.”

We do not know when David wrote this Psalm. There seems, however, to be no period of his life in which he could have used this expression in reference purely to his temporal circumstances. In his youth he was a shepherd boy and kept his father’s flock. And in such an occupation there were many hardships and discomforts, in addition to which he appears to have been the object of the ill-will of his brothers. He was not rocked on the knee of luxury, nor pampered with indulgences. His was a hardy life abroad and a trying course at home. And unless he had been deeply spiritual, and therefore found contentment in his God, he could not have said, “My cup runs over.”

When he had come forth into public life and lived in the courts of Saul, and even had become the king’s son-in-law, his position was far too perilous to afford him joy. The king hated him and sought his life many times. If it were not that he spoke of Grace and not of outward circumstances, he could not have, then, said, “My cup runs over.” During the period of his exile, his haunts were in the dens and caves of the mountains and the lone places of the wilderness, to which he fled for his life like a hunted partridge. He had no rest for the soles of his feet—his thirst after the ordinances of God’s house was intense and his companions were not such as to afford him solace—surely it could only have been in reference to *spiritual* things that he could, then, have said, “My cup runs over.”

When he came to be king over Israel, his circumstances, though far superior to any which he may have expected to reach, were very troublous ones for a long season. The house of Saul warred against him and then the Philistines took up arms. He passed from war to war and marched

from conflict to conflict. A king's position is, in itself, a thorny place, but this king had been a man of war from his youth up, so that, apart from the Grace of God and the choice blessings of the Covenant, he could not even, on the throne, have been able to say, "My cup runs over." In his later days, after his great sin with Bathsheba, his troubles were incessant and such as must have well near broken the old man's heart.

You remember the cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son"? That was the close of a long trial from his graceless favorite—a trial which had been preceded by many others—in which first one member of his family and then another departed from the paths of right. Nor did it close the chapter of his adversities, for the troubles of his heart were enlarged even to the last, and the good old man had to say upon his deathbed that, though he rejoiced in the sure Covenant of God, yet his house was not so with God as his heart could have desired.

We cannot, therefore, take the text and say, "This is the exclamation of a man in easy circumstances who was never tried. We cannot say this was the song of a favorite of Providence who never knew an ungratified wish." Not so. David was a man of troubles. He bore the yoke in his youth and was chastened in all his old age. You have before you, not a King Croesus, whose long prosperity became, itself, a terror, nor an Alexander whose boundless conquests only excited new ambitions, nor even a Solomon whose reign was unbroken peace and commercial gain, but *David*, the man who cried, "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of the waterspouts; all Your waves and Your billows have gone over me."

So did the spiritual outweigh the natural, that the consolations of the son of Jesse exceeded his tribulation, and even in his most troublous times there were bright seasons of fellowship with the Lord, in which he joyfully said, "My cup runs over." Let us think of *some cups which never run over*. And then consider, *if ours runs over, why it does so*. And then, thirdly, *what then?*

I. SOME MEN'S CUPS NEVER RUN OVER. Many even fail to be filled because *taken to the wrong source*. Such are the cups which are held beneath the drippings of the world's leaky cistern. Men try to find full satisfaction in wealth, but they never do. Pactolus fills no man's cup, that power belongs exclusively to the river whose streams make glad the city of God. As to money, every man will have enough when he has a little more, but contentment with his gains comes to no man. Wealth is not true riches, neither are men's hearts the fuller because their purses are heavy. Men have thought to fill their cups out of the foul pools of what they call, "pleasure," but all in vain, for appetite grows, passion becomes voracious and lust, like a horseleech, cries, "Give, give."

Like the jaws of death and the mouth of the sepulcher, the depraved heart can never be satisfied. At the polluted pool of pleasure no cup was ever filled though thousands have been broken—it is a corrosive liquor which eats into the pitcher and devours the vessel into which it flows.

Some have tried to fill their souls with fame. They have aspired to be great among their fellow men and to wear honorable titles earned in war, or gained in study. But satisfaction is not created by the highest renown. You shall turn to the biographies of the great and perceive that in their secret hearts they never gained contentment from the most grand successes they achieved.

Perhaps if you had to look at the truly miserable, you would do better to go to the Houses of Parliament and to the palaces of those who govern nations, than to the outskirts of poverty, for awful misery is full often clothed in scarlet, and agony feasts at the table of kings. From the sparkling founts of fame no cups are filled. Young man, you are just starting in life. You have the cup in your hand and you want to fill it. Let us warn you (those of us who have tried the world) that it cannot fill your soul, not even with such poor sickly liquor as it offers you. It will pretend to fill, but fill it never can! There is a craving of the soul which can never be satisfied, except by its Creator. In God, only, is the fullness of the heart, which He has made for Himself.

Some cups are never filled for the excellent reason that *the bearers of them suffer from the grievous disease of natural discontent*. All unconverted men are not equally discontented, but some are intensely so. You can no more fill the heart of a discontented man than you can fill a cup which has the bottom knocked out. A contented man may have enough, but a discontented man never can—his heart is like the Slough of Despond into which thousands of wagon loads of the best material were cast—and yet the slough swallowed up all and was none the better. Discontent is a bottomless bog into which if one world were cast, it would quiver and heave for another.

A discontented man dooms himself to the direst form of poverty, yes, he makes himself so great a pauper that the revenues of empires could not enrich him. Are you the victims of discontent? Young men, do you feel that you never can be content while you are apprentices? Are you impatient in your present position? Believe me, as George Herbert said of incomes in times gone by, “He that cannot live on 20 pounds a year cannot live on forty.” So may I say—he who is not content in his present position will not be content in another though it brought him double possessions. If you were to accumulate property, young man, until you became enormously rich, yet, with that same hungry heart in your bosom you would still pine for more. When the vulture of dissatisfaction has once fixed its talons in the breast, it will not cease to tear at your insides.

Perhaps you are no longer under tutors and governors, but have launched into life on your own account, and yet you are displeased with Providence. You dreamed that if you were married and had your little ones about you, and a house all your own, then you would be satisfied. And it has all come to pass, but scarcely anything contents you. The meal provided today was not good enough for you. The bed you will lie upon tonight will not be soft enough for you. The weather is too hot or too cold,

too dry or too damp. You scarcely ever meet with one of your fellow men who is quite to your mind—he is too sharp and rough-tempered, or else he is too easy and has “no spirit.” Your type of a good man you never see—the great men are all dead and the true men from this generation fail.

Some of you cannot be *made* happy—you are never right till everything is wrong—nor bearable until you have had your morning’s growl. There is no pleasing you. I know men, who, if they were in Paradise would find fault with the glades of Eden and would propose to turn the channels of its rivers and shift the position of its trees! If the serpent were excluded, they would demand liberty for him to enter and would grow indignant at his exclusion. They would criticize the music of the angels, find fault with the cherubim and become weary of white robes and harps of gold—or as a last resource they would become angry with a place so completely blessed as not to afford them a corner for the indulgence of their spiteful censures. For such unrestful minds the cup which runs over is not prepared.

Some, too, we know, whose cup never will run over because *they are envious*. They would be very well satisfied with what they have, but someone else has more, and they cannot bear it. If they see another in a better position in society, they long to bring him down to their level. Now, surely, Friend, if you find your own lot hard to bear, you cannot wish another man to suffer it, too! If your case is a hard one, you should be glad that others are not equally afflicted. It is a happy thing when a man gets rid of envy, for then he rejoices in the joy of others and with a secret appropriation which is far removed from anything like theft, he calls everything that belongs to other men his own, for he is rich in their riches, glad in their gladness and, above all, happy that they are saved.

Some of us have known what it is to doubt our own salvation and yet feel that we must always love Jesus Christ for saving other people. I charge you, cast out envy! The green dragon is a very dangerous guest in any man’s home. Remember, it may lurk in the hearts of very good men. A preacher may not be able to appreciate the gifts of another preacher because they seem to be more attractive than his own. Good people, when they see another useful, are too much in the habit of saying, “Yes, but he does not do *this*,” or, “She does not do *that*,” and the remark is made, “He is very useful but very eccentric,” as if there ever was a man who did anything in this world that was not eccentric. Their very eccentricities, (which are uncomfortable things), God often overrules to be the power of the men and women whom He means to employ in striking out new paths of usefulness.

What you call imprudence may be *faith*, and what you condemn as obstinacy may only be strength of mind necessary for persevering under difficulties. Bless God for gracious men as you find them and do not want them to be other than they are. When Divine Grace has renewed them, help them all you can and make the best use you can of them. And if their bell does not ring out the same note as yours and you cannot change its tone, and yet you feel that your note would be discordant to theirs, pray

God to tune your bell to harmony with theirs, that from the sacred steeple there may ring out a holy, hallowed, harmonious chime through the union of all the bells and all their tones in the sole praise of God. Envy prevents many cups from running over.

So, once more, in the best of men *unbelief is sure to prevent the cup running over*. You cannot get into the condition of the Psalmist while you doubt your God! Note well how he puts it. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He has no fears, or forebodings, or doubts. He has given a writing of divorce between his soul and anxiety. And now he says, "My cup runs over." What are you fretting about, my Sister? What is the last new subject for worry? If you have fretted all your life, your husband, your children and your servants have had a sad time of it. Your husband feels, with regard to you, "Good woman. I know nothing in which I could find fault with her, except that she finds fault with others and that she grieves when there is no cause for grieving."

May the Lord be pleased to string your harp so that it may not give forth such jarring notes as it now does, but may yield the joyful music of praise. Your great need is a more childlike faith in God! Take God's Word and trust it and, good Sister, *your* cup will run over, too. What is *your* trouble, Brother? You were smiling just now at the thought of how some women are troubled, for you thought, "Ah, they do not have the cares men have in business!" Little do you know! There is a burden for women to carry which is as heavy as that of their husbands and brothers. But what is your distress? Is it one that you *dare* not tell to God? Then what business have you with it? Is it one which you *cannot* tell to God? What is there in your heart that forbids your unburdening it?

Is it one which you *refuse* to tell to God? Then it will be a trouble and a curse to you—and it will grow heavier and heavier till it will crush you to the earth. But, O, come and tell your great Helper! You believe in God for your sons—believe in Him about your property! Believe in God about your sick wife or your dying child! Believe in God about your losses and bad debts and declining business! A bare bosom before the Lord is necessary to perfect satisfaction. I have proven God and I speak what I know—I have had a care that has troubled me, which I could scarcely communicate to another without, perhaps, making it worse. I have done my best and I have prayed over it but have not seen a way of escape and, at last, I have left it with God, feeling that if He did not solve it, it must go unsolved. I have resolved that I would have nothing more to do with it and when I have done that, the difficulty has disappeared—and in its disappearance I have found an additional reason for confidence in God—and have been able, again, to say, "My cup runs over."

We must walk by faith with both feet. Some try to walk by faith with the left foot, but their right foot they will not lift from the earth—and therefore they make no progress at all. Wholly by faith, wholly by faith must we live! He who learns to do that will soon say, "My cup runs over." I have not

time to enlarge, although much more might be said, for there are cups which never have run over, and never will.

II. But now, secondly, WHY DOES OUR CUP RUN OVER? Assuming that we have really believed in Jesus and that not with a wavering faith, but in downright solemn earnest, then joy will follow our faith. Our cup runs over, first, because, having Christ, *we have in Him all things*. “He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also, freely give us all things?”—

***“This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and Heaven our home.”***

Between here and Heaven there is nothing we shall need but what God has supplied. The promise is, “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” As the old Puritan puts it, earthly comforts are like paper and string which you need not go to buy, for you will have them given to you when you purchase more valuable things.

Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Our God is not like the Duke of Alva, who promised to spare the lives of certain Protestants and then denied them food so that they died of starvation. He does not give His eternal life and then deny us that which is necessary to the securing of it! He will give us manna all the way from Goshen to Canaan, and cause the gushing Rock to follow us all the time we are in the wilderness. “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “Your shoes shall be iron and brass and as your days so shall your strength be.” I climbed a hill the other day, and as I went down the steep side a sharp stone made a tremendous gash in my shoe, and then I thought of that promise, “Your shoes shall be iron and brass.” If the road is rough, a strong shoe shall fit the foot for it. As with the Israelites, their feet did not swell, neither did their garments wax old upon them, so shall it be with you. You shall find all things in God and God in all things.

But there is another reason why our cups run over. They run over *because the infinite God, Himself, is ours*. “The Lord is my shepherd.” “My God,” the Psalmist styles Him. One of the most delightful renderings ever employed in a metrical translation of the Psalms is that of the old Scotch version—

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

I feel as if I could stop preaching and fall to repeating the words, “My own God,” “My own God,” for the Lord is as much my God as if there were no one else in the world to claim Him! Stand back, you angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and all you hosts redeemed by blood! Whatever may be your rights and privileges, you cannot lessen my inheritance! Assuredly all of God is mine—all His fullness, all His attributes, all His

love, all Himself, all, all is mine, for He has said, "I am your God." What a portion is this! What mind can compass it?

O, Believer, see, here your boundless treasure! Will not your cup run over, now? What cup can hold your God? If your soul were enlarged and made as wide as Heaven you could not hold your God! And if you grew and grew and grew till your being were as vast as seven heavens and the whole universe, itself, were dwarfed in comparison with your capacity, yet, *still*, you could not contain Him who is Infinite! Truly, when you know, by faith, that Father, Son, and Spirit are all your own in Covenant, your cup must run over!

But when do we feel this? When do we see that our cup runs over? I think it is, first, *when we receive a great deal more than we ever prayed for*. Has not that been your happy case? Mercy has come to your house and you have said, "Why have I received this? I never dared to seek so great a blessing." "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think." You knelt down and prayed God to deliver you in trouble—He has done it, but instead of just barely carrying you through, He has set your feet in a large room and you have said, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God? Had you delivered me by the skin of my teeth I had been grateful, but now my cup runs over." You asked the Lord to give you sufficient sustenance for the day and, look, He has bestowed upon you a great many worldly comforts and His blessing with them all. Must you not say, "My cup runs over"?

You asked Him to save your eldest daughter, but in His infinite mercy He has been pleased to convert several of your children, perhaps all. You began to teach in the Sunday school and you prayed to the Lord to give you one soul. Why, He has given you a dozen! Will you not say, "My cup runs over"? When I began to preach I was sure my little meeting house seemed large enough and my sphere sufficiently extensive. And if the Lord had said to me, "I will give you a thousand souls as your reward before you shall go to Heaven," I should have been overjoyed and cried my eyes out with weeping for delight. But now, how many thousands has He given me to be the seals of my ministry? My cup runs over! My God has dealt with me beyond all my expectations or desires!

It is His way! He gives like a king! He has outstripped my poor prayers and left my faith far in the rear. I am persuaded, Beloved, that many of you know many things concerning God which you never asked to know. You possess Covenant blessings which you never sought and you are in the enjoyment of attainments which you did not think it possible for you to gain—so that the cup of your prayer has been filled to the brim and it runs over! Glory be to the All-Bounteous Lord! So has it been with *the cup of our expectation*, for we ask many things and then from lack of expecting them we fail to receive them. But have you not indulged large expectations, some of you? Have you not had your day-dreams in which you pictured to yourself what a Christian might do?

And the Lord has given you more than imagination pictured! You sat at Mercy's gate and said, "Would God I might but enter to sit among the hired servants." But He has made you sit at the table and killed for you the fatted calf! You were shivering in your rags, and you said, "Would God I might be washed from this filthiness and my nakedness clothed a little!" But He has brought forth the best robe and put it on you! You said, "Oh, that I had a little joy and peace!" But, lo, He has made music and dancing for you, and your spirit rejoices abundantly in the God of your salvation! I will ask any Christian here if Christ is not a good Christ?

You know when Henry the Eighth married Anne of Cleves, Holbein was sent to paint her picture with which the king was charmed. But when he saw the finished work, his judgement was very different and he expressed disgust instead of affection. The painter had deceived him. Now, no such flatteries can ever be paid to our Lord Jesus Christ. The painters, I mean the preachers, *all* fall short—they have no faculty with which to set forth beauties so inexpressibly charming, so beyond all conception of mind and heart! The best things which have ever been sung by adoring poets, written by devout authors, or poured forth by seraphic preachers all fall below the surpassing excellence of our Redeemer! His living labors and His dying love have a value all their own!

There are great surprises yet in store for those who know the Savior best. Jesus has filled the cup of our expectation till it runs over. And I may say the same of every mercy that He has brought in His hands—it has been a richer mercy, a rarer mercy, a more loving mercy, a more rapturous mercy, a fuller mercy, a more lasting mercy than ever we thought it possible for us to receive! I speak to some who live by faith in their Lord's service. You have learned to expect great things, my Brothers and Sisters, and you will learn to expect greater things, still! But has not God always kept pace with our expectation? Has He not outrun us? Has He not presented us with His kindness? The path of a man who lives by faith is like a gigantic staircase—it winds up, up, up, in God's sight, into the clear crystal—but as far as we are concerned it seems to wind its way among dense clouds, full often dark as night.

Every step we take, we stand firmly on a slab of adamant, but we cannot see the next landing place for our foot! It looks as if we were about to plunge into an awful gulf, but we venture on and the next step is firm beneath our feet. We have ascended higher and higher—and yet the mysterious staircase still pierces the clouds—though we cannot see a step of the way. We have found our Jacob's ladder until this time to be firm as the everlasting hills! And so we climb on and we mean to do so, with the finger of God as our guide, His smile as our light and His power as our support. The blessed Voice is calling us and our feet are borne upward by the summons, climbing on and on in the firm belief that when our flesh shall fail, our soul shall find herself standing on the threshold of the new Jerusalem! Go on, Beloved! God will do far more than you expect Him to do, and you shall sing, "My cup runs over."

Sometimes, too, the text is true of the Christian's *joy*, "My cup runs over." The other night as I sat among our young men in the ministry, and we were all singing, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me," I did not wonder that the writer of that piece made them repeat that delightful Truth over and over again. "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." You can excuse monotonies, repetitions and tautologies when that dear word is ringing in the ears, "Jesus loves me," "Jesus loves me," "Jesus loves me." Ring that bell again and yet again! What need of change when you have reached a perfect joy? Why ask variety when you cannot conceive of anything more sweet? There is music, both in the sound and the sense, and there is enough of weight, force and power in the simple utterance of, "Jesus loves me," to allow of its being repeated hundreds of times and yet never palling upon the ear!

Now and then I hear of an interruption of a sermon by a person who has found the Savior—how I wish we were often interrupted in that way! I wonder, when men first learn that Jesus suffered in their place, that they do not shout and make the walls ring! Surely it is enough to make them! What a blessing it would be if that old Methodist fire, which flamed so furiously in men's souls that they were forced to let the sparks fly up the chimney in hearty expressions, would but blaze away in our cold, formal assemblies! Come, let us pour out a libation of praise from our overflowing cups, while we say, again, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." Have you not sat down when you have been alone and felt, "I am so happy because I am saved, forgiven, justified, a child of God! I am beloved of the Lord! This fills me with such joy that I can hardly contain myself"?

Why, if anyone had come to you at such a time and said, "There is a legacy of 10,000 pounds left you," you would have snuffed at it, and felt, "What is that? I have infinitely more than that, for I am a joint heir with Christ. My Beloved is mine and I am His. 'My cup runs over.' I have too much joy. 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me.'" At such times *our gratitude ought to run over, too*. Our poet's gratitude ran over when he wrote that remarkable stanza—

***"Through all eternity, to You
My grateful song I'll raise;
But, oh, eternity's too short
To utter half Your praise!"***

I have heard cold critics condemn that verse and therein prove their incompetence to enjoy poetry! Would they cramp the language of love by the rules of grammar? May not enthusiasm be allowed a language of its own? It is true it is incorrect to speak of eternity as, "too short," but the inaccuracy is strictly accurate when love interprets it! When a cup runs over it does not drip, drip, at so many drops per minute—it leaps down in its own disorderly fashion—and so does the grateful heart!

Its utterances are as bold as it can make them, but they never satisfy itself. It labors to express itself in words and sometimes it succeeds for a while, and cries, "My heart is composing a good matter, I speak of the

things which I have made touching,” but before long its rushing overflow stops up the channel of its utterance and silence becomes both necessary and refreshing. Our souls are sometimes cast into a swoon of happiness in which we rather live and breathe gratitude than feel any power to set it forth. As the lily and the rose praise God by pouring forth their lives in perfume, so do we feel an almost involuntary outgush of our very selves in love which could, by no artistic means, tell forth itself. We are filled and overfilled, saturated, satiated with the Divine sweetnesses—

**“Your fullness, Lord, is mine, for oh,
That fullness is a fount as free
As it is inexhaustible,
Jehovah’s boundless gift to me.
My Christ! O sing it in the heavens!
Let every angel lift his voice;
Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,
With me, you heavenly hosts, rejoice!”**

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT THEN? The first thing is, *let us adore Him who has filled the cup.* If the cup runs over let it run over upon the altar. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” Remember, dear Christian Friends, that preaching is not a *result*—it is a *means* to an end—and that end is the worship of God. The design of our solemn assemblies is adoration. That, also, is the aim and result of salvation, that the saved ones may fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb in His Glory. Preaching and praying are like the stalks of the wheat, but hearty worship is the ear itself. If God has filled your cup, worship Him in the solemn silence of your soul. Let every power, passion, thought, emotion, ability and capacity adore the Lord in lowest reverence for the Fountain from which flow the streams which have filled us to the brim.

The next thing is, if your cup runs over, *pray the Lord to make it larger.* Does not the Apostle say, “Be you also enlarged”? Does not David speak of having his heart enlarged? There is too much of narrowness in the largest-hearted man! We are all but shallow vessels towards God. If we believed more and trusted more, we should have more, for the stint is not with God. Pray like Jabez of old, “Oh, that you would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast.” The next thing is, if your cup is running over, *let it stop where it is.* Understand my meaning—the cup stands under the spring and the spring keeps running into it and so the cup runs over. But it will not run over long if you take it from where the spring pours into it.

The grateful heart runs over because the fountain of Grace runs over. Keep your cup where it is! It is our unwisdom that we forsake the fountain of living waters and apply to the world’s broken cisterns. We say in the old proverb, “Let well enough alone,” but we forget this practical maxim with regard to the highest good. If your cup runs over, hear Christ say, “Abide in Me.” David had a mind to keep his cup where it was and he said, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” When I preach away from here, I always like to go to the same house in the town, and I say to my host, “I

shall always come to you, as long as you invite me, for I do not think there is a better house.”

If a man has a good friend, it is a pity to change him. The older the friend, the better. The bird which has a good nest had better keep to it. Gad not abroad, I charge you, but let the Lord be your dwelling place forever. Many have been fascinated by new notions and new doctrines and, every now and then, somebody tells us he has found a wonderful diamond of new truth, but which generally turns out to be a piece of an old bottle. As for me, I need nothing new, for the old is better and my heart cries, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Until they find me a better fountain than the Lord has opened in Christ Jesus, His Son, my soul will abide in her old place and plunge her pitcher into the living waters! Where my cup is filled there shall it stand and run over, still.

Once more, does your cup run over? *Then call in your friends to get the overflow.* Let others participate in that which you do not wish to monopolize or intercept. Christian people ought to be like the cascades I have seen in brooks and rivers, always running over and so causing other falls which, again, by their joyful excess cause fresh cascades and beauty is joyfully multiplied! Are not those fountains fair to look upon where the overflow of an upper basin causes the next to fall in a silver shower, and that, again, produces another glassy sheet of water? If God fills one of us, it is that we may bless others! If He gives His ministering servants sweet fellowship with Him, it is that their words may encourage others to seek the same fellowship. And if their hearers get a portion of meat, it is that they may carry a portion home.

If you get the water for your own mill and dam it up, you will find that it will become overgrown with rank weeds and becomes a foul thing. Pull up the sluices, Man, and let it run! There is nothing in the world better than circulation, either for Grace, or for money! Let it run! There is more a-coming, there is more a-coming! To withhold will impoverish you, to scatter is to increase! If you get the joy of God in your heart, go and tell it to poor weeping Mary and doubting Thomas—it may be that God sent you the running over on purpose that those who were ready to perish might be refreshed.

Last of all, does your cup run over? Then *think of the fullness which resides in Him from whom it all proceeds.* Does your cup run over? Then think of the happiness that is in store for you when it will *always* run over in everlasting Glory! Do you love the sunlight? Does it warm and cheer you? What must it be to live in the sun, like the angel Uriel that Milton speaks of! Do you prize the love of Christ? Is it sweet to you? What will it be to bask in its unclouded light? O, that He would draw up the blinds, that we might catch a glimpse of that face of His which is as the sun shining in his strength! What will it be to see His face and to enjoy the kisses of His mouth, forever? The dew which distils from His hands makes the wilderness rejoice! What must it be to drink of the rivers of His pleasure?

A crumb from His table has often made a banquet for His poor saints, but what will it be when the Tree of Life will yield them 12 manner of fruits and they shall hunger no more?

Bright days ought to remind our souls of Heaven, only let us remember that the brightest days below are not like the days of Heaven any more than a day in a coal mine when the lamp burns most brightly can be compared to a summer's noon! Still, still, we are down below. The brightest joys of earth are only moonlight. We shall get higher before long, into the unclouded skies, into the land of which we read, "there is no night there." How soon we shall be there, none of us can tell! The angel beckons some of us. We hear the bells of Heaven ringing in our ears even now. Very soon—so very soon—we cannot tell how very soon, we shall be with Jesus where He is, and shall behold His Glory! Brethren, the thought of such amazing bliss makes our cups run over! And our happiness overflows as we remember that it will be forever and forever and forever!

Eyes never to weep again, hands never to be soiled again, bones never to ache again, feet never to limp again, hearts never to be heavy again—the whole man as full as it can be of ineffable delight, plunged into a sea of bliss, deluged with ecstatic joy—as full of Heaven as Heaven is full of Christ! Dear Hearer, the last word I have to say is this, do you know what it is to be filled with the love of God? Unconverted Hearer, I know you are not happy. You say, "I wish my cup would run over!" What are you doing with it? "I am trying to empty it of my old sins." That will not make it run over. "I have been washing it with my tears." That will not make it run over. Do you know the only way of having joy and peace in your heart?

What would you do with an empty cup if you were thirsty? Would you not hold it under a fountain until it were full? This is what you must do with your poor, dry, empty soul! Come and receive of Jesus, Grace for Grace. "For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." Hold your empty cup under the stream of Divine Fullness which flows to the guilty through Jesus Christ and you shall also joyfully say, "My cup runs over." The Lord pour His mercy into you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalms* 23.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—725, 708, 711.**

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THE OVERFLOWING CUP

NO. 874

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING JUNE 6, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“My cup runs over.”
Psalm 23:5.

THE fault of being too happy, if it exists anywhere, must be a very scarce one. A far more prevalent vice is that of dwelling upon the dark shades of life, to the forgetfulness of its brighter lights. We drink our wormwood in ostentatious publicity, but eat our honey behind the door. It is noteworthy that if a man's life is prosperous, it glides away rapidly and leaves little trace upon his memory. We write sorrows in marble and mercies in the sand! The history of nations becomes dull and unromantic when it flows happily, so that it has been wisely written, “Blessed is that nation which has no history.”

When affliction comes, there is an event to mark, a notch to be scored on the tally—war, famine, pestilence—these are landmarks of history. But when nations continue in an even flow of peace, history is like a vast unbroken dead level. Our mind tenaciously retains the remembrance of its sorrow, but human nature is so constitutionally ungrateful as to forget its mercies without an effort. How much of the staple of our conversation consists in complaint! It is so cold for the season, it is so intolerably hot—there is too much drought, or the rain is perfectly awful. Business is shocking. The young wheat is turning yellow for want of dry weather, or the turnips are just good for nothing for lack of rain.

We are great experts in discovering reasons for murmuring—like ill-humored curs, we bark at everything or nothing. And I suppose if we should fail to discover any reasons for discontent, we should think it quite sufficient cause for utter weariness of this mortal life. More or less we are all bitten with this madness. It comes so natural to us to detail our grievances and hardships, and only by mere accident, or as a conscientious duty, do we relate the story of the Lord's goodness towards us.

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us see if we cannot touch a sweeter string this morning. Let us lay aside the trombone and try the dulcimer. With Christians, a cheerful carriage should be the *rule*. Of all the men that live, we are the most fitted to rejoice. We have the most reasons for it and the most precepts for it—let us not fall behind in it. Heaven is our portion and the thoughts of its amazing bliss should cheer us on the road. Christ has given to us such large and wide domains of Grace and glory that it would be altogether unseemly that there should be poverty of happiness where there is such an affluence of possession.

In considering our own portion, which must be a blessed one, since “the Lord is the portion of our inheritance and of our cup,” let us see if we cannot find themes for song and abundant cause to stir all that is within us to magnify the Lord.

I. Our privileged lot is described in the text as a *cup* and a view of that happy portion will, I trust, be suggestive of gratitude. I shall invite you, in

the first place, TO SURVEY YOUR PRIVILEGED PORTION. You have a cup. There is no small privilege implied in the use of such a term as that to describe your lot. Remember you were once, (and not so long ago but what your memory may well carry you back to it), wandering in a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. Hungry and thirsty, your soul fainted within you. You hastened to the broken cisterns, but they held no water.

All your former confidences were as deceitful brooks which fly before the hot breath of summer. The wells of pleasure were empty and you were in a parched land where hope smiled not. Your former delights proved to be but a mirage, fair to look upon, but unsubstantial as a dream. You crouched at the foot of Sinai and even presumptuously attempted to climb its ragged sides—but you failed to find a drop of water there. Do you remember when Christ said to you—

***“Behold, I freely give
Living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live”?***

Oh, what a change for you! You thirst no longer, for within your soul Jesus has an ever-springing well of living water. You believe in Him and all the cravings of your nature are supplied. Think of the full cup which Jesus holds to your lips—contrast it with your former poverty when you were ready to perish in despair—and rejoice this morning that you have a royal cup to drink of which will never fail you. Time was, too, when you were in something more than need—you were in a degradation whose remembrance crimsons your cheek. Your riotous living ended in a mighty famine and you gladly would have filled your belly with the husks that swine did eat.

A trough was then far more your portion than a cup. Many of us recollect with shame and confusion of face, to what excess of riot we ran. And wonderful, indeed, it is that the cup of a holy God should be at our lips! In many cases blasphemy defiled the lips and lasciviousness polluted the body. But we are washed, renewed, sanctified, by God’s Divine Grace, and now, with rags removed and a fair white robe girt about our loins, we are permitted to sit at the table of the banquet where music and dancing make glad the heart and the wines on the lees well-refined refresh the guests.

From such need to such abundance, from such shame to such honor, what a change! Our portion is no longer that of the forlorn or the degraded. We do not pine in despair or wallow in pollution, but we sit as children at the table, drinking with joy from our allotted cup. Remember too, Beloved, and the contrast will, I hope, inflame your gratitude, that another cup was once set at our place at the table and of it we should have been compelled to drink had it not been for the interposition of the Surety of the Covenant.

That deep and direful cup of the Lord’s wrath, into which He wrings out the wormwood and the gall till its bitterness is beyond degree, was once ours. Of that black cup you and I must have been made to drink forever and ever—for we could never have emptied it—but must eternally have been filled with the horror and amazement which are its dregs. Now, as we showed you last Lord’s-Day morning [CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US, NO. 873] our Divine Redeemer has drained that cup on our behalf, for He

was made a curse for us and now we have to bless God that our portion is not with the wicked whom the Lord shall destroy, but with the chosen whom the Lord accepts in the Beloved.

Ours is not the cap of *damnation*, but the cup of *salvation*—not the vial of wrath, but the flagon of consolation. We have nothing to do with that cup, the dregs whereof “all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them,” but ours is a golden goblet which to the last drop is full of bliss and immortality. From the depths of condemnation to our present standing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, what a change! As we think of the portion of our inheritance this morning, how shall we sufficiently admire that amazing love which brought us from the jaws of gaping Hell and set our standing on a rock at the very gates of Heaven?

To make this cup, which represents our present privileged position, stand out yet more brightly before you, let me now speak of it at length. The intention of the Psalmist was to picture himself as a *favoured guest* in the house of the Lord. When you are entertained in an Oriental house, a portion of meat is served out for you which constitutes your mess or portion. To highly esteemed and welcomed guests, a further honor is given—oil is poured upon the head. And yet further, a certain cup is placed before the favored one containing the portion which he is to drink.

Now David felt himself to be not a beggar knocking at the door of mercy, receiving a crust and a sip by the way, but he felt that he had been received by the great Master of the feast and permitted to sit down to receive the supply of all his necessities and, what was more, to receive of the luxuries of the feast as one who was thoroughly and heartily welcomed to all that was provided. Brothers and Sisters, a little while ago you and I were among the blind and the halt and the lame lurking in the hedges and the highways, far off from the heavenly banquet—but Eternal Mercy has brought us, by living faith, to sit down at the feast which Mercy has prepared.

This day ours is the lot of those who are saved! Ours is a portion with the justified! We sit at the table, this day, with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob—having been made children and heirs of God, even as they were. We participate in the pardon, the justification and the security which God gave to his saints in the olden times and which Christ clearly revealed to His Apostles in the latter days. All heavenly things are ours! We are denied none of the luxuries of the banquet of mercy. Whatever belonged to any child of God belongs to us! Whatever was enjoyed by the brightest of the saints may be enjoyed by us, if by faith we are sitting at the table of Divine Grace!

This day we are no more strangers and foreigners, no more excluded and shut out—we are brought near by the blood of Jesus and our portion today is like that of the ewe lamb which ate of its master’s bread and drank from his cup. In David’s use of the term, “cup,” far more is included, for I take it he refers to accepted *worship*. In some of the rites of the Jewish law, you will remember that after the sacrifice the worshippers and the priest together sat down and partook of the remainder of the thank offering. God had received His portion of the meat offering. Then the drink offering was poured or laid upon the altar, and then the worshipper, himself, in token of God’s acceptance, was permitted to eat and drink of the same.

Now, Beloved, at this moment every Believer here is accepted in the Beloved. That precious Christ, who has satisfied God on our behalf, has now become our satisfaction, too. He who offered Himself to God an offering of a sweet smell, has become to us our meat, indeed, and our drink, indeed—what God feeds upon, we feed upon, too. As He feels an intense satisfaction in the life, and work and death of His dear Son, we find the very same kind of satisfaction after our measure and degree. Is it not most delightful to think that it is a part of my life's privilege, as a child of God, to live as an accepted worshipper, dear to the heart of God? It is a high joy to know that my prayers and praises, my soul's high desires to honor her God, her sighs, her tears and her works, are all accepted of God. Oh, greatly blessed is that life which is thus honored! He has made us priests unto God and we drink from the bowls before the altar with holy joy and reverent exultation.

But by the cup was meant yet more than loving entertainment and sacrificial acceptance, for the Psalmist, in the 116th Psalm, at the 13th verse, speaks of taking the "cup of salvation." Such a heavenly cup belongs to every Believer throughout the world! It is a part of your heritage this day, Beloved, that your sins are forgiven. That you are justified through the righteousness of Christ. That you are saved from the wrath of God—so saved as to be preserved in future and to be ultimately brought into the kingdom and the Glory. You have, at this hour, salvation as your portion! Some of God's people only *hope* that they are saved. Such can scarcely sing that their cup runs over. Others conceive that they are saved for the present, but are not thereby saved eternally.

Oh, but those who have come to know that God never plays fast and loose with us! That if He has saved us once, our salvation is secured beyond all risk. That the love of God is everlasting love and cannot be removed. That the blood of Jesus Christ does not in *part* redeem, but effectually redeems—those, I say, who have come to understand the fullness, the infinity, the immutability, the eternity, of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus—those are they who can rejoice in an overflowing cup! The lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places and they have a goodly heritage. The lot of the saved is a lot to be envied—theirs is a right royal heritage.

Jeremiah further mentions a "*cup of consolation*," and that cup of consolation, O Believer, is also yours this morning! You have your trials, but, oh, what a comfort to know that your trials work your lasting good! You are vexed with adversities, but what bliss to learn that they last but for a moment and end in eternal Glory! We mind not the black clods of trouble when we learn that light is sown in them for the righteous. It is true we are sometimes, if need be, in heaviness through manifold temptations, but our mourning ends at morning. Our dark nights will soon be ended and then a daylight comes of which the sun shall go down no more forever.

The cup of comforts, which the Holy Spirit fills and brings to us, is so rich, so suitable, so operative upon our nature that we may well rejoice as we think of it this morning. The saint's lot has its blacks, but it has also its whites. Drops of wormwood are ours, but milk and honey are not denied us. We mourn at Marah, but we sing at Elim. Bochim still stands, but Bethel is ours, too. The lion roars, but the turtledove also yields her cheering note. Clouds are above us, but the stars smile on us. Our sea has its ebbs, but, by turns, it comes to the flood. Winters bluster and

freeze, but summer comes soon and blossoms with merry joys, and autumn follows with its mellowness. We are cast down, but we are not destroyed—no, we are not even injured—for if for a little time we seem to be losers by our castings down, we before long discover our greater gain.

Happy are the people that are in such a case, yes, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. The cup of tried David is far better than that of proud Belshazzar. None are so comforted as those to whom the Holy Spirit is Comforter. Still let us dwell for a minute or two longer upon the portion of the righteous. We read in the New Testament of the “*cup of blessing*,” and although that alludes to the cup at the Lord’s Supper, yet without wresting the words, we may say that the whole portion of God’s saints is a cup of blessing. You are blessed in all respects, Believer.

As last Sabbath morning it was our painful duty to remind the *unconverted* that they were *cursed* everywhere—in basket and in store, in their home and abroad, in all that they had and did—so now with joy we remind you that those who love the Lord are *blessed* in all respects! Their cup, that is to say, their lot in life, is all blessing. Even that which you like least is filled with blessing. You are blessed by every morning’s sun—its beams speak benediction. You are blessed with every setting sun—the darkness is but a curtain to screen your rest. You are blessed in your poverty—contentment shall cheer you. You are blessed in your abundance—Grace shall consecrate it. Every way you are blessed. Your cup has not a single drop in it from the surface to the bottom but what is sweetened with the unchanging love of your Divine Father.

The cup of our life is, moreover, a *cup of fellowship*. The whole of a Christian’s life ought to be fellowship with Jesus. What the cup is at the Lord’s Table, that our entire life should be. If we suffer, we suffer with Christ. If we rejoice, we should rejoice with Him. Bodily pain should help us to understand the Cross and mental depression should make us apt scholars at Gethsemane—while the high joys which our soul sometimes partakes of should conduct us to Tabor and lead us upward even to the place where the Conqueror sits high aloft on His Father’s Throne. It is a great blessing to a child of God, whatever happens to him, if he can see it overruled to the conducting of him in the footsteps of his Master into fellowship with his Covenant Head.

I shall notice but one more matter about this cup, though, indeed, the phrase seems to me to be rich even to excessiveness with suggestions for thought. Our life cup is distinctly *connected with the Covenant*. “This cup,” said the Lord at the table, “is the New Covenant,” and so the whole of life which is compared in our text to a cup, manifests the Covenant faithfulness of God. Nothing happens to a child of God but what was in the Covenant. The whole of Christian life is studded with God’s fulfillment of the Covenant. You have your troubles, but it was promised that you should have them. In your sadness you are revived with consolation, for it was promised you that God would set the bow in the cloud that you might look upon it and see that He was faithful, still.

Oh yes, if you did but know it, the smallest event of your history as well as the largest incident in your biography—all would fit together like pieces of mosaic and when all fitted together you would read clearly, “Covenant love and Covenant faithfulness.” To come back to our simile, all the wine of the cup of human life is to the Believer warm with the spices of eternal

faithfulness. There is not a single drop in all the contents which is not aromatic with the unchangeable, immutable veracity and faithfulness of our Covenant God. Will you, dear Hearers, put these things together, which I have poured from the cornucopia of the text?

Look upon the whole of your life, O Christian, in that light now cast upon it—for life is a very sacred thing with us, and though the many say death is a very solemn thing—we have learned that life is equally so. Regard a Christian's life as sublime—reaching far beyond the level of the unbeliever's barren existence—because the *spiritual* is elevated, pure, heavenly. It is God in man struggling with Satan—the Christ of God fighting with evil. Heaven and Hell in the Believer's life find a battlefield where hottest warfare rages. Our life in Christ is a sublime thing, a thing that angels look down upon with wonder and astonishment. The cup which is set on our Master's table for us is no common cup—it is a celestial chalice for solemnity. It is a royal bowl for dignity—a golden cup for richness.

The portion of every Believer, when it shall be seen by clearer eyes and understood by loftier intellects, will be perfectly amazing in its rare displays of the loving kindness and faithfulness of God!

II. Secondly, I invite every Believer here to REJOICE IN THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS PRIVILEGE. "My cup *runs over*." Two or three words about this as far as it may relate to *temporals*. A small number of Believers are entrusted with much of this world's goods—their cup runs over with wealth. Here is cause for thankfulness, for God has never taught us to deprecate riches, nor to wring our hands in sorrow if they happen to fall to our lot. Be thankful to the bounteous Lord for your abundance!

At the same time, here is a note of danger. Our Lord Jesus once said and He has never retracted the saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." That is to say, in plain language, it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, unless something more than ordinary is done. Our Lord has told us, however, that while it is impossible with man, it is possible with *God*—and we rejoice to constantly find a slender line of these camels going through needles' eyes. Rich men are led into the kingdom of Heaven—the human impossibility becomes Divine fact! Still, riches are no small hindrance to those who would run in the ways of the Truth of God.

The danger is lest these worldly goods should become our *gods*—lest we should set too great store by them. Andrew Fuller one day went into a bulion merchant's and was shown a mass of gold. Taking it into his hand, he very suggestively remarked, "How much better it is to hold it in your hand than to have it in your heart!" Gold in the hand will not hurt you, but gold in the heart will destroy you! Not long ago, a burglar, as you will remember, escaping from a policeman, leaped into the Regent's Canal and was drowned—drowned by the weight of the silver which he had plundered! How many there are who have made a god of their wealth and in hastening after riches have been drowned by the weight of their worldly substance!

Notice a fly when it alights upon a dish of honey. If it just sips a little and away, it is fed and is the better for its meal. But if it lingers to eat again and again, it slides into the honey, it is bedaubed—it cannot fly—it is rolling in the mass of the honey to its own destruction. If God makes

your cup run over, beware lest you perish, as too many have done through turning the blessing into a curse. If your cup runs over, take care to use what God has given you for His Glory. There is a responsibility attached to wealth which some do not seem to realize. Among our great men, how few use money as they should! Their gifts are nothing in proportion to their possessions.

Alas, things are even worse than this with some who are miscalled honorable and noble. Our hereditary legislators are some of them a dishonor to their ancient houses and a disgrace to the peerage from which they ought to be ignominiously expelled. What right have gamblers to be making laws? How shall we trust those with the affairs of the nation who bring themselves down to poverty by their gambling and set an example which the poorest peasant might well scorn to follow? God will visit our land for this! Wickedness reigns in high places and there the reckoning will begin. Would to God that our great men would remember that they are responsible and that wealth is not given them to lavish upon their passions, but to employ for God and for the common cause. If your cup runs over, call the poor to catch the drops and give an extra spill that they may have the more!

Moreover, the Church of God needs your substance. Thank God we can, some of us, say with regard to our Churches, there is not so much a lack of Divine Grace, or a need of men, or of anything as of the financial means—and the gold and the silver are somewhere. God has given it to His Church—it is somewhere. But there are very many Church members who hold back the wealth which they ought to consecrate to the cause of God—and if they do this, their running-over cup will witness to their judgment and will not be to their honor and glory in the day when God shall judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ!

But I do not intend to dwell on that. I shall speak rather of *spirituals*. I want each Believer here now to look at his lot in a *spiritual* light and in it to feel that his cup is running over. Our cup overflows because of the infinite extent of the goodness itself which God has bestowed. The spiritually good things which God has given to us are so many that we never can contain them all! If the capacity of our mind could be enlarged a thousand-fold, yet such are the exceeding riches of God's Christ that we never could contain all that God has laid up in Him as the portion of His people. Think for a minute—the Lord God has given to every Believer here, a whole Christ, a full Christ, an everlasting Christ, an exalted Christ—to be his eternal portion!

Now who can hold the whole of Christ? Behold His matchless Godhead, His immaculate Manhood, His power, His wisdom, His beauty, His Grace! Look at His works, His life of innocence, His death of disinterested affection, His triumph over Hell and the grave! Look at His Second Coming and the splendors of His millennial reign. Now all these belong to us if we belong to God. And how shall we compass them all? Must not our cup of necessity run over? Remember next that God has made with every one of you who love Him, even the poorest and the weakest, a Covenant of Grace of which the beginning is beyond all human doubt—for that Covenant was made before the earth was—a Covenant which is ordered in all things and sure and which will never run out because it is the *Everlasting Covenant* and will stand as long as eternity endures.

In that Covenant all things are yours! God has given over to you even Himself! “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” God the Father is yours! God the Son is yours! God the Holy Spirit is yours! Oh, what can you say if all this is yours? Your soul cannot hold them all, your cup *must* run over! Look again, Beloved, at the *promises* which are given us in holy Scripture. Why, any one promise is more than enough for us. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Why, there is a meal for a man for the next 12 months if he will never read another verse. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.”

Oh, do but let *that* lie under your tongue like a wafer made with honey! Take but one such promise and you shall be like Ruth, who did eat and was satisfied, “and left”—for you cannot receive it all. But then take the range of the promises from Genesis to Revelation. How is this Book, like a beehive, filled with 10,000 cells and every cell distilling virgin honey such as enlightens the eyes of the man that tastes of it! Oh, who can hold the fullness of the promise? Who can contain all the words which the Holy Spirit has written, full of consolation to the mourning children of God? But suppose you could, by some enlarged capacity, grasp all the promises? Yet, Beloved, how would you be able to receive *God Himself*, and yet He is yours! The Infinite God is the portion of the faithful!

You have enjoyed, sometimes, the visits of the Holy Spirit. You know what it means for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your soul. Now, I am sure you will bear witness that at such times you have been conscious of the narrowness of your soul. You have felt, “O that I could hold my God. This sweet love of His, of which I am now conscious, is more than a match for me. Holy Spirit, how can You come to dwell with such a poor one as I am? I am but a bush and You a fire, and matched with You I am like a glowing, burning bush. How can I bear such Glory? I tremble lest I am consumed with over excess of bliss and love.”

Many of God’s saints have been ready to die while they have had vivid impressions of the love of God and of the Glory which God had prepared for His elect. Their joy has been too great! One heart could not palpitate fast enough! One soul could not hold one 10th of the bliss which God was pleased to pour into it! By reason, then, of the greatness of the blessings themselves and the infinity of their number, it often happens that our cup runs over. O you that are sad today and yet Believers. You who are poverty-stricken today, and yet heirs of all this wealth! I would lovingly chide you and ask how you can thirst when your cup can no more contain all that God provides for you than the hollow of an infant’s hand can hold the wide, wide sea?

Furthermore, does not our cup often run over because of *our sinful contractions of its capacity*? I have already hinted at the necessary narrowness of our capacity because we are mortal. But how often you and I fill up our soul with carnal joys and cares and then if God’s love *does* come into us, it must soon run over, for there is so little room! How often, too, are we sadly straitened in our longings after Divine things, so that when they come to us we have not room enough to receive them! I must confess that I have enjoyed more of God than my desires have ever aspired after. Oh, what stunted desires we have! He has said, “Open your mouth wide

and I will fill it.” But we scarcely open our mouths at all. Men who are eager after wealth stretch their arms like seas to grasp in all the shore—but we win a little of Divine Grace and then we sit down basely content.

We have not the consecrated ambition we ought to have. O that our desires were like the horseleech, so that concerning God they should always cry, “Give, give.” O that we never felt we had attained, were always dissatisfied with ourselves, seeking to do more, to know more, to love more, to kill self more and to be more consecrated to our dear Lord! Oh, our flat desires! I have heard that in the old times in England, on Christmas morning, the poor villagers were allowed to call at the house of the lord of the manor, each one with his basin, which it was the custom to fill to the brim. I guarantee you the basins grew sensibly larger every year, till one would think they had rather brought the bushel measure from the barn than the basin from the cupboard!

It was wise of the poor folk, for His Lordship could not do less than fill whatever they brought. Alas, we are not so wise! We rather lessen our vessels than increase their size. You have not because you ask not, or because you ask amiss. God has done exceeding abundantly above what we have asked, or even thought. Mind how you read that text, it does not say, “above what we *can* ask”—no, no! We can ask for what we will and can think of boundless things and God can make us think of as great things as He can do, but *above* what we have asked, or think, God frequently gives to us. Beloved, I will now ask you a question. How would it be with you if God had filled your cup in proportion to your faith? How much would you have had in your cup?

Alas, I lament to say, while my God has never once failed me, but has been very faithful, *constantly* faithful, *abundantly* and *richly* faithful, yet my poor faith, if it were unusually tried, would hardly be found to His honor and Glory, unless He should be pleased to greatly enlarge and graciously to sustain it. Sad that we should have to make such a confession, but we do, with shame. Is not that the confession many of us must make? If it were only to us according to our faith and God did not, in Sovereignty, step beyond His own rule in the kingdom, how poor should we be, measured by our faith! Our cup runs over, indeed.

Suppose, my Brethren, our portion were to be measured by the returns that we have ever made to God for mercies we have enjoyed? Ah, should not we be starved from this day forth? What have I done for Him that died to save my wretched soul? Will you dare turn to the page in which memory records the service you have rendered to your Lord in thankfulness for His great love—ah, cover it up, it is not worth remembering. You have taught a child or two, you have preached to a congregation, you have offered a few prayers. Oh, our teaching, how feeble! Our preaching, how little in earnest! Our praying, how heartless! Our giving, how scant and how grudging! Oh, how little are our returns compared with what we owe to Him from whom we have received all we possess! We are, indeed, unprofitable servants.

If our portion of meat were measured out according to our labor and devotion, long fasts would be our lot and feast days would be few and far between. But the Lord’s thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways, for such is the abundance of His forgiveness and longsuffering that our cup still runs over. I shall only detain you with one more

remark on this point. Note *the supreme excellence* of every blessing which God has given, for this tends to make the cup overflow. Every Covenant mercy which the child of God enjoys has this distinguished excellence in it—that it is eternal. The sinner’s best lot is only for a time. Ours, if it were slender, would far exceed the sinner’s, because it lasts forever! Better that a man have but a shilling a day forever, than that he have a gold piece but once in his life, which, being spent, he has no more.

If the Lord pardons you, it is *forever*. If He adopts you, it is *forever*. If He accepts you, it is *forever*. If He saves you, it is *forever!* There is eternity set as a Divine stamp upon every mercy. Believer, does not this make your cup run over, to think that everlasting love is yours? Moreover, your portion, whatever it may be, is received direct from God. Ishmael was sent into the desert with a bottle, but the bottle dried up, and Ishmael was thirsty. But we read of Isaac that he lived by the well Lahai-roi. There was always an abundance for Isaac, for he lived by the well. You have seen a rustic lad lie down at full length at the springhead on a summer’s day and drink—behold in him a picture of the Believer’s life.

The saint does not drink of the stream far down in the valley, warmed by the world’s sun and mired by the world’s sin. He drinks at the wellhead where the current leaps up all cool and living from the great deep. There is another quality about the Sovereign gifts of Grace—they come to us in living union with Christ. If I get a mercy apart from Christ, it is like a rose plucked from the bush—it delights me with its perfume and appearance for an hour, but soon it withers and I put it away. But a *spiritual* mercy is like a living rose on the bush—it blooms and lasts and we smell it again and again and again. Our blessings are dear, indeed, as they come to us through Christ Jesus.

And what is best of all, every one of these blessings in the Covenant are best to us because they are brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You know a table may be well spread and yet a man may not be satisfied because he has no appetite, or he cannot reach the food. But the Holy Spirit has a way of making our cup run over because He gives us an appetite—He brings the food to us and helps us to receive it. He enables us to digest it and inwardly to be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The mercies of the Infinite are the more choice because the Holy Spirit understands how to break the bread for us and feed us. He makes us to lie down in green pastures.

We would fumble with mercies and spoil them like bad cooks that spoil good meat—but the Holy Spirit knows how to bring up the meat ready dressed for us and to give us the appetite and to make us feed upon His dainties with spiritual palates and refined tastes.

IV. Now to close, I call upon those who have this cup to RESOLVE ON SUITABLE ACTION, seeing that this is their position, “My cup runs over, then let me, at any rate, drink all I can. If I cannot drink it all as it flows away, let me get all I can.” “Drink,” said the spouse, “yes, drink abundantly, O my Beloved.” The Master’s message at the communion table always is, “Take, eat!” And again, “Drink, drink all of it.”

Oftentimes, when the Lord says to us, “Seek My face,” we answer, “But, Lord, I am unworthy to do so.” The proper answer is, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” If you bring a man to a table and he is not hungry, you tell him to eat, but he may be bashful and he does not like to help and cut and carve

for himself, and he takes but little. I guarantee you, however, if his hunger becomes very vehement, he will not wait for two permissions—he will cut and carve for himself after a mighty rate! O that our spiritual hunger were greater, for Christ never thinks believing sinners presumptuous in applying the promises, or laying hold upon the provisions of Divine Grace!

The worst form of presumption is *not* to take what Christ offers. I know some in this House, today, who are very presumptuous, for they might have peace, but they will not. God has provided comfort for them, but they will not receive it, and they write bitter things against themselves. Month after month and week after week their cup runs over and yet they do not drink. There are promises exactly suitable to their case, but they think they are too humble to drink. It is not so, it is always *proud* humility—wicked, base, *bastard* humility—rank pride, that makes us think Christ is unwilling to forgive, or accept, or bless us. O dear Heart, never be hungry for lack of will to come and take! Let God's invitations be your persuasions. Let His precepts to believe be accepted over the head of your unworthiness.

Say to yourself, "I know these things are too good for me and I am not worthy of them. But if He does not shut me out, I certainly will not shut myself out. If He bids me come and take and believe, He means it—He offers like a king and I will take as a needy one should take from one so rich, who cannot miss it, but who will be glad to bestow it." Well, that is my first piece of advice—your cup runs over—*drink!* The next is, if your cup runs over, Christian, and you drink of it, *communicate to others*. We too much neglect the comforting of those that are bowed down. Should not it be a part of the duty of every Church member to be a pastor to others who may be dispirited and sad? In such a Church as this, of course, the pastorate of one man is something even less than nominal, for I will not even accept the name if it is intended that I am thereby to carry out the duty.

We can never have in a Church of 4,000 members proper oversight unless every member exercises oversight over the other, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the Law of Christ. I charge you do this! I know many of you are diligent in this duty, but be more so! Look after the sad and disconsolate and let the telling of your experience be as the putting of the bottle of cooling water to their thirsty lips. Again, if God has made your cup to run over, then *seek to serve Him*, not after the order and measure of bare *duty*, but according to the enthusiasm of gratitude. I mean, *give* to God, you that have it! If he has given much to you, give much to Him! Depend on it, there is great wisdom in this, even from a selfish point of view. Good measure, pressed down and running over, will God return into your bosoms.

If you cannot give money, then give your *time*, your *talents*—and, believe me, the more you do for God, the more you *can* do and the more happiness you will have in the doing of it! It is lazy Christians who grow rusty. It is unused keys that lose their brightness. You that rot away in inglorious ease, you know not the joy that belongs to the child of God! The Christian should feel, "I shall do all I can do and a little more, getting more strength from God than I had, that I may do, still, a little in excess. I will not measure my duty by what others say I ought to do, but reckon that if I draw back, I would not. If I might make some reserve, I could not.

If I might deny my Lord something, yet I dare not, would not think of such a thing. The love He plants in my heart will not permit me.”

If your cup runs over, let your service run over. Be “fervent in the Spirit, serving the Lord.” Let your generosity run over—give without stint. Let your prayers run over—pray without ceasing. Let your hymns run over—praise Him as long as you have breath. Let your talk of Him run over—tell the universe what a good God He is to you. Praise Him! You can never praise Him enough. Exaggeration will be impossible here. Let the loftiest praise be heaped upon the head of Christ and He will deserve something better. Let the angels make way for Him and let them pile their thrones one upon the other. Let them conduct Him to the seventh Heaven—over to the Heaven of heavens and let Him fill a lofty Throne there, yet, even then, He is not so high as His Father has set Him!

Words cannot describe His Glory—it bows down all language beneath its weight. Metaphors, similes—though they were gathered with the wealth of wit and wisdom from all quarters of Heaven and earth—cannot reach even to the hem of His garments. Your love and your fidelity, your diligence and your zeal are not fit, even so much as to unloose the laces of His shoes, He is so great and so good. O talk much of Him, then! Let your talk run over like the language of Rutherford in his letters, where he seems, sometimes, to break through reason and moderation to glorify his Lord! Let your language of Christ be like the Apostle Paul, where he puts aside all syntax, grammar, speech and all else and makes new words and coins fresh expressions, and confuses tenses and moods and I know not what beside, because his soul could not express itself after the commonplace language of mankind!

O let your praise run over to your Lord and King! Love Him! Praise Him! Exalt Him! Magnify Him! Live out His life again! You can but praise Him so! Die in His arms, that you may forever extol Him in the upper skies! May God grant us to be Christians rich in spiritual wealth, spending our strength and substance like the princes we are, for Him who is more than a prince and greater than a king!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 23, & 30.

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CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

NO. 396

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?”
Psalm 24:3.*

THERE is little doubt that this Psalm has a primary reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who alone ascended up on high by His own merits and by virtue of a perfect obedience stands in God’s holy place. He alone of mortal race has clean hands and a pure heart. He has not lifted up His soul unto vanity, nor has He sworn deceitfully—therefore has He received the blessing and righteousness from the God of His salvation. At His ascension the glorified spirits flooded Heaven with music while they sang the language of the seventh verse, “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up, you everlasting doors and the King of glory shall come in.”

It would be a delightful theme for Christian meditation to consider the ascension of Christ in relation to His work—what we obtain by it—and the glories with which it was accompanied, when, with a shout of saved joy, He returned to His own Throne and sat down forever having finished the labor which He had undertaken to perform. But this morning, I must take the text apart from its connection for I desire to make it the basis of a set of parables or illustrations with regard to Christian life. I think we may fairly compare the life of a Christian to the ascent of a mountain and we may then ask the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?”

This has been, in fact, a favorite metaphor and even that mighty master of allegory, John Bunyan, who needed never to borrow from another, must have the Hill Difficulty somewhere or other to make his story complete. He must tell how the pilgrim “fell from running to going and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees because of the steepness of the place.” Without putting any strain upon the text, I conceive I may use it as a most serious question while I picture our course to Heaven as an ascent into the hill of the Lord.

Behold, then, before your eyes, Believer, the hill of God. It is a high hill even as the hill of Bashan, on the top thereof is that Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all. That rest—

*“To which our laboring souls aspire,
With fervent pangs of strong desire.”*

This mount of which we speak is not Mount Sinai, but the chosen hill whereon are gathered the glorious company of angels, the spirit of the just made perfect, the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven. And we are the pilgrims, full often joyous with faith but sometimes weary and footsore making the best of our way to the top of this mountain of God, where we shall see His face and rejoice in Him forever more.

I, your fellow pilgrim, propose the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" No sooner does the question escape my lips than I hear a jubilant shout from a company yonder who cry, "We shall—assuredly we shall! There is no doubt about our eternal safety. We shall most certainly attain the summit, rest our wearied feet thereon and dwell with God forever." Well, confidence is good if it is good, but if it is presumption, nothing can be more ill. Let us, then, look at those who are so sure that they shall ascend into the hill of the Lord.

I notice, first, that some who speak thus are *young beginners*. They have not yet trod the rough part of the mountain. They have only as yet danced upon the green knolls which are at the base of it—no wonder that their untried sinews find it easy work to ascend an easy pathway. Their limbs are supple, their muscles strong and the marrow in their bones is as yet not dried up. They laugh at difficulty and they defy danger. "Ah," they say, "whatever the danger may be, we can brave it. And however stern the toil, we are sufficient to surmount it."

Ah, young Man, but be you warned—if you speak thus in your *own* strength you shall soon find it fail—for the boastful man who journeys in his own strength is like the snail which, though it does but crawl, yet spends its own life and wastes itself while it makes but sorry way. *Your* strength is perfect weakness. And your weakness such that difficulties shall soon subdue you and terror shall cow your spirit. Oh, do you not know there are troubles to come and you have not endured them yet? There are attacks of Satan. There are temptations from without and from within. You will find it go hard with you if you have nothing but your own strength. You will lie down to die of despair before you have reached one-tenth of the way and the summit you shall never see.

Oh, young Man! There are rocks most sharp and steep which mortal strength can never climb and there are rugged ravines so tangled with briars and so bestrewn with flint stones that they shall cut your feet. No, cut your very heart and make it bleed if you have not something better to trust to than your own strength. How much of our early courage in the Christian life is the courage of the flesh. And though it is a sorrowful thing to lose this, yet it is a blessed loss. To be weak is to be strong, but to be strong is to be weak. It may seem a paradox, but we are never really so mighty as when our might has fled and never so truly weak as when we are filled with our own strength and are reckonings upon ease and security.

Be not so bold—take warning and look to a superior arm—

***"For they that trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die";***

while those who trust in the Lord—

***"Swift as the eagle cuts the air,
Shall mount aloft to His abode;
On wings of love their souls shall fly
Nor tire amidst the heavenly road."***

In looking upon this group who are so confident that they shall ascend the hill of the Lord, I detect some others who speak out of sheer *ignorance*. "Oh," they say, "it is not far to Heaven. It is little matter to be a Christian—you have but to say—'God be merciful to me,' and the thing is

done—it is but a mere trifle. As for the new birth,” they say, “no doubt it is a great mystery, but possibly it may be of very little importance. It will be, no doubt, found after all, that ministers and Christians make much ado about nothing, for it is a mere run to the mountain summit.”

Ah, poor ignorant Soul, your folly is too common. To the unaccustomed traveler there is nothing more deceptive than a lofty Alp. You say, “I could reach the mountain-top in half-an-hour,” and you find it to be a day’s full journey, for its twisting roads and rugged sides and precipitous acclivities come not into the reckoning of a distant observer. And so is it with religion—men think it so simple, so easy—but when they once begin to ascend they find it stern work to climb to Glory.

The young soldier gets on his armor and says, “One rush and I will win the battle,” but when his banner is torn and his armor is indented and battered with the heavy blows of the adversary, he finds it quite another thing. I beseech you, count the cost—you who say that you can ascend into the hill of the Lord. I tell you, Sirs, that it is so hard a thing that the righteous scarcely are saved. And where shall the ungodly and the wicked appear? It is by the skin of their teeth and often so as by fire that many who are saved enter into the eternal rest.

I will not merely say it is *hard*, but I will say it is *impossible*. It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle as for any man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven if he rely in any degree upon his own strength, or think that the passage thereto is easy and he needs no help that he may pass through it. Be you persuaded, O ignorant Man, that the hill of God is higher than you dream. That is not the summit which you see—the mountains brow is far beyond your eyesight. It is higher than your understanding, it is loftier than your groveling conceptions. The eagle’s wing has not reached it, man has not with his eye beheld it. To the spiritual only is it manifest and they know that it is higher than the clouds. Be not you so ignorantly brave, but learn the read from the lips of Jesus and then ask Him to help you to run therein.

But among this very presumptuous group I perceive others who say, “We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord,” for in their hearts they imagine that they have found out a smooth grassy way which they shall avoid all the roughness of the road. Some new prophet has preached to them a new salvation. Some modern impostor has declared to them another way besides the good old path and they think that they shall now, without wearying their limbs and blistering their feet, be able to ascend to the summit. Take care, take care, presumptuous Soul, for rest assured the greener the path may look the more is the danger of it. On the sloping sides of the lofty mountains there are verdant splits so deliciously green that even after a shower they can look no greener. But only put your foot upon them for a moment, only venture your weight and you will be swallowed up, unless there is someone near at hand to lay hold upon you.

The green mantle covers a tremulous mass of mire. The verdant carpet is only a coverlet for a deadly bed of bottomless bog—for the bogs and quagmires are deceptive enough. And so these new systems of divinity, these new schemes of getting to Heaven by some universal fatherhood, or by part-obedience, or gorgeous ceremonies—I tell you, Sirs, these are but

quagmires which shall swallow up your souls! Green deceptions, they may seem to be like velvet beneath your feet, but they shall be as Hell if you dare to trust them. Still to this day, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way and few there are that find it." Still as there is no royal road to learning, there is no royal road to Heaven—no way by which you can pamper your sins and yet be saved—indulge the flesh and yet inherit eternal life.

There is no way by which you can avoid the new birth and still escape from the wrath to come. No way by which you may enter into Heaven with iniquity hidden in your soul. Corruptions must be taken away. Lust must be denied. The right arm must be cut off and the right eye must be plucked out. There is no new, no easier path to Heaven—and you who think you have found it are mistaken, indeed.

Some few others I mark in this group who say, "We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord." And why, Sirs? You look as if you had a heavy load to carry. "Yes! Yes!" they say, "but these are necessities for the journey. We have half a dozen staves under our arm that if one of them should break we may take another. And we have bottles of rich wine that we may refresh ourselves. We have food so that when we grow weary we may recruit our strength. We have excellent garments that when a storm comes on we may cover ourselves from it. We are fully provided for the journey—we shall certainly ascend the mountain."

This is just the way in which the worldly-wise and self-sufficient talk—and those who are rich and lumbered with much serving in this world. "Ah," they say, "we shall readily ascend to Heaven. We are not poor—we are not ignorant—we are not led away by the depraved vices of the vulgar mass. We shall be able to climb certainly, for we have all things and abound." Yes, but this is what makes your climbing difficult. You have a load to carry. You would ascend better if you had it not—one staff is good for a traveler—a competence you may seek for, but a bundle of staves must be heavy to carry. And multiplied riches make it hard to climb the narrow way of life for they bring many cares and many sorrows and thus they cause the feet to slip when they might stand fast.

Say not because of your wit and your wisdom and your own moral strength that you are the better equipped for the journey. These are your *dangers*. Your confidences are your weaknesses. That on which you rest shall give you no rest and that on which you depend—if it is anything but God—shall pierce you to your very soul. O Sirs, if you can say, "I shall ascend into the hill of God"—if with your hand upon your heart you can appeal to Heaven and say—"The ground-work of my confidence is not in myself, but in the Promise—not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—not in man but in God, not in what I am but in what God has promised to do for me"—then be as confident as you will.

Then let no stammering stop you of your boasting, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. But if this confidence springs from anything short of a firm, fixed, simple, unmingled faith in Christ—I pray you give it up—for it is a deadly snare and will certainly destroy your soul.

We have thus paused to listen to the group who are so sure of ascending the hill of the Lord. But hark! I can hear groans and sobs and moans.

I look around and certainly my eyes are gladdened with the aspect of these men who seem to be so sad. Why do you mourn, Brethren? Why are you sad? “Oh,” they say, “we shall never ascend the hill of God. We shall never reach the top-most height.” Brethren, if I had been allowed to judge, I should have thought you the very men who would ascend and yet you say you shall not? And if I had looked at the other group, I should have thought they never would gain the top and yet they say they shall. How strong it is!

Men so often misjudge their own state that the most unlikely think themselves sure, while the most holy are the most afraid. Come, Brethren, I would stop your mourning and wipe your eyes. I would put a song into your mouths instead of the notes of lamentation. Let me have your reasons that you think shall you never ascend the hill of God. The first reply is, “I shall never get there, for I am weak and the hill is exceedingly high. And, Sir, you have told us that godliness is a great steep and that true religion is a towering up and I am so weak. To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not. I can do nothing. I am emptied entirely—I know that this can never be performed by me.

“To perfect holiness and perfect rest I can never come, for I am the weakest of the entire family and that steep is too lofty to be attained by tottering feet like mine. My bones ache, my knees bend, hot sweat drenches my garments. My head is giddy and I drag my bleeding feet with anguish from crag to crag.” Oh, my dear Brother, be of good cheer! If that is your only cause of mourning, lay it aside, for remember while you are weak, it is not *your* strength which is to carry you there, but God’s. If nature had undertaken to ascend into the celestial mountain, indeed, you might despair—but it is grace—all-conquering grace that is to do it—

**“Weak as you are, yet through His might,
You all things shall perform.”**

It is true the hill is steep, but then God is omnipotent. It is certain that the Alp is high, but higher still is the love and grace of God. He has borne you, He has carried you and He will carry you even to the end—when you cannot walk He will take you in His arms. And when the road is so rough that you cannot even creep along it, He will bear you as on eagles’ wings till He bring you to His promised rest. Again, I say, if it were *yourself* that you had to look to, it would be right in you to mourn—but you are not to look to self. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. “Ah, but,” says a second, “my difficulty is this—not only am I weak, but I am so sorely tried, the road is very rough to me. You spoke of grass just now—there is none where I am—I have looked at that promise, ‘He makes me to lay down in green pastures,’ and I cannot say it is true of me.

“Instead of it I must say He leads me by the rough torrents and suffers me not to lie down at all, but upon the steep ascents where the stones cut my feet, He leads my weary and sorrowful way. I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath—all His waves and His billows have gone over me. If the road is rough like this, I shall never ascend into the hill of God.” O Christian, Christian! I beseech you take down your harp from the willow now. For if this is all your fear, it is a foolish fear indeed. Why, man, “the road is rough”—is this a new thing? The road to Heaven

never was anything else but rough and so you may be the better assured that this is the right way.

If your road were smooth, you might fear that you were like the wicked who stand in slippery places. Because your pathway is rough, the better foothold for a mountain-climber. There is nothing so much to be feared as that smooth glass-faced rock on which the foot slips back and slides. No, those stones and flints give foothold. Stand then, strong in the strength of God and be of good courage. Your afflictions are proofs of your sonship. Bastards may escape the rod, but the free-born child of God must not—would not if he might. You know, too, that these afflictions are working for your good. They are rough waves but they are driving your ship into port—they are blustering winds but they make your ship scud over the briny deep into the eternal rest which remains for your soul.

Your troubles, I tell you, are your best mercies. Where did the Israelites get their jewels, their earrings and necklaces? Why, from Egypt, from Egypt only. And so you, too, though you have lain among the pots, shall yet be as the dove whose wings are covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. Let not the roughness of the road dismay you—it is the better proof that it is the right road to Heaven. Why, you will have a worse trouble yet, perhaps. That is poor consolation, you say—but, then, save your tears till you get to it. Cease your weeping now and if this is poor comfort, yet methinks it is true common sense. You will come to places soon where you will have to crawl on your hands and knees. And when you think to grasp the root of some tree to drag you up you will grasp a thorn and every thorn shall pierce your flesh.

But even then those thorns shall be heavenly lancets to let out your bad blood. And that roughest part of the road shall be the speediest way to Heaven—for the steeper the road—the sooner we shall be at the summit. So be of good cheer and mourn not until you come where there is more cause to mourn. And then mourn not, for you shall come to a place where there is more cause for joy. The more sorrow, the more consolation. Therefore up, you poor dispirited one. You shall yet ascend into the hill of God!

“But I,” says another—“I have been sorely tempted. Across my path there is a torrent—a swollen torrent. And I cannot wade through it. I fear the deep waters would carry me down and dash me on the rocks. I shall never be able to ascend.” During last week, while in one of the wild valleys of Cumberland, we were rained in for two or three days, so that we could not get home. And I feared I should not be able to arrive in town to preach today. For across a high mountain-pass which we had to traverse, the little brooks had been swollen by the heavy rains till they roared like thundering rivers and it would have been impossible for any creature to pass without great danger of being swept away.

So it sometimes happens in the Christian's career. Temptation gets swollen to its brim, no, bursts its banks—and roaring like an angry torrent—it bears all before it. Ah, well, Christian, the Lord knows how to deliver you out of your trouble. He never did yet send temptation without making a way of escape. I was pleased to notice but last Thursday, how, across these brooks, the sheep which fed upon the mountain side could

spring from stone to stone, rest a moment in the middle, while the angry flood roared on either side. And then leap and spring again—you would think they must be drowned. But yet their feet were fast and firm. I thought then of that text, “He makes my feet like hind’s feet and makes me to stand on my high places.”

Do you not know, tried Christians, that others have gone through as much temptation as you and they did not perish?—nor will you! Job was sorely tried—the brook was swollen indeed, but it did not carry him away. He was safe, for he could say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Come, now, there are stepping-stones across the brook if you have but faith enough to find them. You shall leap from stone to stone—though they be wide apart—they shall not be too wide for you. And though they shall seem as though they would be moved yet they shall never be, till you have safely passed by the swelling danger.

“Ah,” says another, “but my trouble is worse than that. I have lost my way altogether. I cannot see a step before me. A thick fog of doubt and fear hangs over me. I shall never ascend into the hill of the Lord.” And we, too, have passed through the damp and clinging mists. The dense mists on the mountain summit wet you through very speedily, ruin the prospect and cause alarm to the timid. The descent on the left hand seems bottomless and the ascent on the right appears to be lost in clouds. Mist is the mother of exaggeration—all things loom out in indefinite greatness. The little brook magnified by the haze swells into a river and then enlarges into a tremendous lake. The mountain tops are in the seventh heavens.

Every stone becomes a rock in the mist—such is the exaggeration which an imagination can perform when nature wears her veil. So when a poor Christian comes into doubts and fears everything looks bad and black against him. “Oh,” says he, “I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy.” It is only a cart-rut—he is sure he will be drowned in it. It is only a stone, which he might put into a sling and throw at some Goliath but he fears it is a tremendous rock and shall never be able to pass by it. He is in a mist and sees no light and knows not his way. Well, Christian, so you say you shall never get to the top because of this?

Why, man, there have been tens of thousands who have been in quite as thick a mist as you and yet they have found their way. Many a Christian has had quite as black doubts and fears as you and yet have come to light at last. Doubts and fears never kill the Christian. They are like the tooth-ache—they are very painful—but they are never mortal. So doubts and fears are very grievous to a believer, but a myriad doubts and fears will not suffice to kill him, or deprive his soul of his interest in Christ. Come, Man, do you not know what the text says? “If any man walk in darkness and see no light, let him”—do what? Let him despair? No. “Let him trust in the Lord”!

Now is the season for faith. When you have nothing else to trust—put your hand within the hand of the Eternal God and He will wisely lead and powerfully sustain and bring you on your way to the promised rest. Let not these doubts fret you, nor distress you, nor cast you down. It is this very mist through which David passed and all God’s people have been

surrounded with more or less of it and it does not prove that you are out of the way.

“But,” says another, “my woe is worse. I have been going down hill. My faith is not so strong as it was—I am afraid my love has grown cold. I never felt so much of the blackness of my nature as I do now. I think I have grown worse. My depravity has broken up like the floods in the days of Noah. I am sure now it is all over with me. I thought I was vile when I began but I know I am depraved now. I shall never ascend to the hill of God.” And so, Believer, you have been going down hill, have you? Allow you not that most men who have to go up had must sometimes to descend? You say, “How is that?” Well, in climbing a mountain, it often occurs that the path winds downward for a season, to enable the traveler to avoid a precipice, or comb a beetling crag, or reach another peak of the range.

Part of the road to Mont Blanc, the king of the Alps, is a descent—and on the great mountain passes there are frequent spots where the load runs readily at the horse’s heels. “But how can going down help me to get up?” you say. It is a strange paradox, but I do not believe Christians ever mount better than when they descend. When they find out more of the baseness of their hearts., when they are taken from chamber to chamber and shown the idolatry and blasphemy of their hearts—it is then they are growing in grace. “Oh,” say they, “it is all over with me now.” It would have been all over with you if you had not come here. “Ah,” say they, “the Lord is about to slay me now.” No, no—only to slay your *pride*. He is putting you in your proper place—

***“If today He deign to bless us,
With a sense of pardoned sin;
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within.
All to make us
Sick of self and fond of Him.”***

It is all up hill, Brethren, even when it is down hill. It is all towards God, even when sometimes it seems to be away from Him. And when we are discovering most our own baseness and vileness, it is only that our eyes washed with tears may be like the eyes of doves washed with milk and fitly set—that we may behold the King in His beauty—seeing less of self and more of Him.

I will not keep you much longer on that point, for I fear by the aspect of some of your countenances that I weary you. And yet I know not why I should. For surely this is a question which is important to each of us and I seek to put it in as comely a parable as I can. I hear yet another groan. “Ah,” says one, “I shall never ascend into the hill of God.” Why? “Oh,” he says, “because, though I have come up a little way, I feel in such danger.” Brethren, do you know when a Christian man looks down it is enough to make his head swim? The Christian life is very much like the walk of Blondin upon his lofty rope. There he is high up in the air. If he look down he must perish.

Sometimes Christians with a little faith think of looking down—and what a cold shudder thrills them! The hypocrite has fallen. I may fall. Such-and-Such a professor has come down, I may come down, too. There

is the roar of a tumultuous crowd beneath who are expecting that we may fall. No, they are longing to say, "Aha! aha! The eyes of Samson are put out and the mighty are destroyed." Now Little-Faith, what business have you with looking down? Look up, man. Look up! The Scripture does not say, "Let us run with trembling the race that is set before us, looking to our own tottering legs." No, it says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

What if the crag is steep and the precipice is grim? What is that to you? You will never fall while your faith is fixed on your God! What if the jaws of death are open wide and his teeth are sharp as knives—what is that to you? Because Christ lives you shall live also. What if the fires of Hell are hot and the flames of Tophet vehement—what is that to you? There is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus—who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Up man! Look up! As the poor sea boy, climbing the giddy mast, dares not look down upon the awful deep but upward to the calm blue sky—where shines the bright unclouded sun—so must you look up to the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Or if it is dark with you, look up to yon star of Bethlehem, who shines still calmly, lovingly above your head. He bids you silently look unto Him and stand securely. Look up, poor Little-Faith and you Much-Afraid, for you shall ascend into the hill of the Lord.

I shall crave your attention a moment or two, while I now, in the third place—having listened to those who said they could climb and to those who said they could not climb—picture to you the man who is able to ascend into the hill of the Lord. Methinks I see him. He has nothing in himself. But he has everything in his God. Let us look at him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. You notice, first, that he has put on shoes of iron and of brass. His feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. You will want those shoes, O heavenly pilgrim! When the Lord said He would give you those shoes of iron, you thought they would be too heavy for you, but you will find out that you have to tread on stones that are hard as iron.

When He said He would give you shoes that were made of brass, you thought they would be too strong. You will find it a long way and a very stiff ascent and anything else than brass would be worn out. Young Christian, have you had your feet shod yet? You are of no use for climbing unless you have. Unless you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, which is the preparation of the Gospel of peace, you can never ascend into the hill of Lord. But observe that the pilgrim is girt about his loins to keep his garment from tripping him up—he is girt with the girdle of Truth and sincerity.

You, too, my Hearer, must be sincere in your profession—your heart must be right in the sight of God—or else climbing will be fatal work to you, because you climb presumptuously and you shall come down desperately. I observe that the pilgrim has in his hand a strong staff. It is cut from the Tree of Life, it is called the Staff of Promise. And he knows how to thrust his Alpenstock deep into the ground and to draw himself up thereby, or stop himself as he is going down a crag, lest his foot slipping,

he fall. He has a Staff of Promise. See to it that you get it. Get a promise every day. Don't be content when you pray, unless you can plead the promise of God, or else you will be like a man going to the bank without a check.

You must take the promise when you go to God and you will get that bestowed upon you which the promise guarantees. Go not up the mountain, Pilgrim, without this staff. Take warning once more. If yonder pilgrim is ever to ascend the summit, his shoes of iron and of brass will not be enough—his girdle not enough, his staff not enough—he must have a Guide. He that travels without a Guide will lose his way in this ascent to the hill of God. It reminds me of the old story of the man who said to his advocate when he was about to be tried—"I'll be hanged if I don't plead for myself." "You will be hanged if you do," said the lawyer. So there are some men who say they will try for themselves—they will be their own guide—they will find their own way.

Yes, but they will be lost if they try it. If they put their souls into their own keeping and rely upon their own wisdom, they shall find their wisdom to be fully worthless. Christian, rely upon your Guide, your Comforter—the Holy Spirit. Go not one step of the way apart from His monitions and His promptings. Wait on Him. Be of good courage, saying, "I waited patiently for the Lord, for He will assuredly direct me in the path of peace."

But even with a Guide, that man will never gain the summit unless He marks the way. And what is the way? The way to the hill of God, you know, as well as I can tell you, is Christ Himself. "I am," says He, "the Way." We begin in Christ, we must go on with Christ, we must end with Christ. As guilty sinners we come to Christ for pardon. As needy sinners we must come to Him to receive of His fullness day by day and at the last, when with joyful spring we shall leap to the flowery summit and be safe—that last spring must still be taken in the one blood-besprinkled way—the open side, the pierced hands and feet of Christ. For another way to the summit of the hill of God there is none—and he that thinks there may be shall be mistaken now—and fatally deluded at the last.

Be wise, then, Pilgrim and with your shoes upon your feet, with your staff in your hand, your girdle about your loins, your Guide by your side and the loving Lord before you, climb with patience into the hill of God. But take care that you lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset you, or the road will be painful to you and your end shall not be such as you would desire.

I come, in the last place, to complete the picture. I come to end the allegory and to stimulate the exertions of every climber of this heavenly mountain by describing what is to be seen and to be enjoyed upon the summit. He who shall ever climb the hill of God and come to Heaven at last will find, first of all, that all his toil is done—

***"Servant of God, well done
Rest from your loved employ,
The battle's fought, the victory's won,
Enter your rest of joy."***

No crags, no slippery places now. No roaring torrents, nor ascending or descending paths—

***“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me,
Now shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and You.”***

Brethren, do you and I think enough of Heaven? Do we not think too much of earth? Do we not think too much of the toil and too little of the time when it shall all be over? A few more days and you and I, Believers, shall have done fighting with Satan, have done with temptations, have done with cares, have done with woes. An hour's work and an eternity of rest! One day's toil. And when I shall have accomplished as an hireling my day, then You come, O sweet and gentle rest! “For they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” Courage, Pilgrim, courage! Up that crag, man! Now put hand and knee to it—up!—for when you have climbed a little higher, yes, but a very little, you shall lie down to rest and then no more fatigue or sorrow.

And there too, when we come to the top of the hill of God, we shall be above all the clouds of worldly care and sin and temptation. Oh, how deep is the rest of the people of God above! How calm is their sky!—

***“No vain discourse shall tempt my soul,
Nor trifles vex my ear.”***

No need to go out to a business which distracts my longing spirit. No need to toil at a labor which fatigues my body and thus puts my soul into an ill state for prayer. No need to mix with worldly-minded men, who make a jest of my solemnities and would engage my mind with trifles unworthy of notice. No, above the world, above its distractions and attractions, my soul shall rise when it shall ascend into the hill of God.

And, Brethren, what a prospect there shall be from the summit! When we shall mount to the hill of God what sights we shall see! You know from lofty mountains you can look on that side and see the lakes and the rivers. And on this side the green and laughing valleys and far away, the wild black forest. The view is wide, but what a view is that which we shall have in Heaven! There shall I know even as I am known. “Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face.” And chief and foremost—best of all—my eyes shall see the King in His beauty. We shall behold His face. We shall look into His eyes. We shall drink love from the fountain of His heart and hear the music of His love from the sweet organ of His lips.

We shall be entranced in His society, paradised on His bosom. Up, Christian, up. Christ waits for you! Come, man, tread the thorny way and climb—for Christ stands on the summit stretching out His hands and saying, “Come up here, to him that overcomes will I give to sit upon My Throne, even as I have overcome and am set down with My Father upon His Throne.”

And there is this sweet reflection to close with—all that we shall see upon the top of the hill of God will be ours. We look from earthly mountains and we see, but we do not possess. That mansion yonder is not ours. That crystal beam belongs not to us—those wide-spread lawns are beautiful, but they are not in our possession. But on the hilltops of Heaven all that we see we shall possess. We shall possess the streets of gold, the harps of harmony, the palms of victory, the shouts of angels, the songs of cherubim, the joy of the Divine Trinity and the song of God as He

reigns in His love and rejoices over us with singing. No, God the Eternal One Himself shall be ours and ours forever and forever.

What better encouragement can I give to you poor tired, worn-out, wearied and all-but-despairing Christians? Take courage. The last six days have tired you very much. Put away your trials today—you have had enough to cast you down—but is not the reflection of today enough to lift you up? Oh, remember the summit will repay you for the toil in climbing it. Though rough may be the road, it is but short at the longest and the rest, the rest, will make amends. O man! Men will suffer more to get rich than you do to be found in Christ. Go on, go on, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly Beloved—and having done all—still stand.

Would that some here who have never tried to climb that mountain would remember that if they climb it not now, they will have to descend forever! If now they turn not their faces to the steep ascent and go up it like men, they must fall eternally. Good God, what a fall! On what slippery places do they stand! I see them reeling even now! What a desperate dash was that! They fall, they fall, on through darkness, through blackest darkness, black as death and Hell—on, on they fall, for the pit is bottomless! Down, down descending from the lower depths to the lowest depths, from Hell to Hell's profoundest deep, from eternity of woe, on, on, on to woe trebled, multiplied sevenfold!

May God grant that we, having faith in Christ, may tread the blood-marked way and enter into “the rest which remains for the people of God!”

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A TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE

NO. 750

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13, 1866,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift them up, you everlasting doors!
 And the King of glory shall come in.”
 Psalm 24:9.*

ON Monday evening we expounded this Psalm. We then enlarged upon the glorious ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and His triumphal entrance within the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, to which we believe this verse is to be referred. Having on that occasion endeavored to set forth the literal and proper meaning of the words, amplifying them at some length, we trust we may be permitted to use them tonight rather by way of accommodation while we speak on quite another subject, and give a different turn to the flow of our thoughts. Not that we wish to supersede the natural sense of the prophetic song, although we think that without violence, and even with profit, we may borrow a sentence from it to point a moral of practical godliness.

It is worthy of observation that the Scotch commentator, Dixon, gives what I am about to suggest to you as the true meaning of the text, as also do some one or two other authors, to say nothing of our hymn writers who claim poetical license for the boldness of their paraphrases. I should myself very strongly object to tamper with the literal sense. The allusion of the Psalmist, no doubt, is primarily to the ascension of the Ark of the Covenant into Mount Zion, where it was permanently to be lodged, and that historical fact was a type of the ascension of Christ into the Jerusalem which is above, where He sits as the Representative of His people. Let the meaning be fully understood and admitted, then we shall feel at liberty to use the words we here find for certain practical purposes.

Give ear then, dear Friends, to the doctrine which I am anxious to set before you. The Lord Jesus Christ, in order to our salvation, must not only enter into Heaven but He must enter into our *hearts*. He must not only sprinkle the blood within the veil, but He must sprinkle the blood within our conscience. All that Christ has done for us will be of no use unless there shall be a great work done *in us*. It is not only Christ on the Cross who is our hope, but “Christ in you,” says the Apostle, “the hope of glory.

At the time of conversion, Jesus Christ enters into the soul, and it is by such a triumphant entrance, when His Word comes into our *hearts*, that we get the *personal* knowledge of salvation.

I. First, then, THE GREAT THING TO BE DESIRED BY EACH OF US IS THE ENTRANCE OF THE KING OF GLORY INTO OUR SOULS. Brethren,

what if I should say that Heaven would not be Heaven without this? Certainly there would be no happiness here on earth, no Heaven below to any one of us unless we had Christ in our hearts!

There is nothing but mischief in man's heart when Christ is not there and another lord usurps dominion over Him. In vain is the Gospel preached to any one of the sons of men so long as they, like the strong man armed, keep the gates of the castle of their heart. The eyes of the understanding are blind to the way of peace. Until Christ shall come and take that castle by storm, there is no doing anything for that man—the spirit that works in him is the “spirit that works in the children of disobedience”—he is deceived by Satan and made a willing slave to that tyrant of evil.

What you need, Sinner, for your salvation, is that Christ should come unto you, for if He should come unto you, then that dead soul of yours would live. His Presence is life. He quickens whom He will. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. When He comes into a soul, spiritual life is there. The sinner wakes up to consciousness and rises from the grave over the mouth of which his reckless indifference, like a great stone, has been rolled, and he cries, “What must I do to be saved?” When Christ comes into the heart, sin is seen to be sinful. In the light of the Cross man begins to repent. He sees that his sin has slain the Savior, and he loathes it. He now seeks to be delivered both from its guilt and from its power.

The coming of Christ does that. It takes away the guilt of man. Christ in the heart, revealed to the soul, speaks peace to the troubled conscience. We look to Him and are lightened, and our faces are not ashamed. We see the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness in Christ. Here we wash and are made clean—as for the reigning power of sin, nothing can ever conquer that but the incoming of Christ. If a man serves an evil master, the only way of getting rid of that hated despot is to bring in the rival Sovereign. “No man can serve two masters.” The introduction of the King of Glory, Christ Jesus, is the sure way of casting out that old master, Satan, the prince of the power of the air.

When the Lord Jesus comes, bringing life, and light, and pardon, He puts down the power of sin and every blessing comes in His train. Oh, when Christ rides through the streets of our souls they are strewn with flowers of hope and joy! Then we hang out the streamers of our sacred bliss! We sing of His praise! We are ready to dance before Him for holy mirth! Then straightway we love purity and seek for perfection! Then we adore the living God whom we had before forgotten, but of whom we can now say, “Our Father who are in Heaven.” We receive the spirit of adoption to which we had been strangers before!

Then, as soon as Christ has entered our heart, our course is heavenward—our way is towards our Father's face, whereas before, with our backs to the Sun of Righteousness—we wandered into denser gloom. And we would have found our way into outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. O Sinner, if you could but get Christ into your heart, you would say, “I have all things, and abound. I am full!”

But until then you will be naked and poor, and miserable. Or if you are, indeed, a living soul, you will be uneasy and dissatisfied until Christ has entered into you with all His glorious train, His Spirit and His Word. You will be like a house without a tenant, cold, cheerless, dilapidated, desolate. Your heart will be as a nest without a bird—a poor, sad thing! You will be like a body without the soul that quickens it.

But if Jesus comes, He will make a man of you after another sort than that frail image which your father Adam bequeathed you. He will make you new in the image of Him who created you. “Behold, I make all things new,” He says. Oh, you cannot tell the influences of His scepter when He sits upon the throne of the heart! You cannot tell what showers of mercy, what streams of benediction, what mountains of joy, and hills of happiness shall be yours when Jesus comes and reigns in your soul!

This, then, is the great business that we ought to see to—that Jesus Christ should come unto us—not merely that we should hear of Him with the ear, or talk of Him with the tongue, but that we should *have* Him as a priest before the altar, as a king upon the throne of our heart, the chief and highest in the reverence and the affection of our inmost soul.

II. Secondly, THERE ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO CHRIST THUS COMING INTO OUR HEARTS. The text speaks, you notice, about “doors” and “gates.” Surely, if there were doors and gates that needed to be lifted up before Christ could enter into Heaven, much more are there doors and gates that must be opened to receive Him into our hearts! Remember that when Jesus Christ went up into Heaven, the doors were lifted up, and the gates were opened, and they have never been shut since.

There is no passage that says, “Down with your heads, you gates, and be you fast closed, you everlasting doors!” Not a word of that sort. Heaven’s gates are open wide. What, then, is shut? Why, the gate of the human *soul*, the door of the human *heart*. There are many gates and doors, bars of iron, and bolts of triple steel that stand in the way of Christ. Sometimes it is our wicked prejudice. We do not want to know the Gospel. We are confirmed in our own self-righteousness, or we hold the traditions of our fathers who trusted in some outward forms and ceremonies. We do not want to know Christ.

Perhaps the very name of the preacher of the Gospel is hateful to us, and the name of the place where Christ is lifted up is detestable to us. What a blessing it is to us when these gates of prejudice are taken away, and the hearing ear is given, and the soul pants to know what this Gospel is! Alas, though, it too often happens that when prejudice is removed, there then remains the gate of depravity—our love of sin is a strong barrier. We should soon have hailed Christ were it not that we had harbored an old foe of His. We do not care to give up our former love to lay hold of the true Bridegroom of men’s souls.

The great difficulty in the way of sinners getting to Heaven is that they love sin better than they love their souls. A little drink, a little merriment, a favorite lust, a Sunday holiday—any of these trifling joys, these groveling husks that are only fit for swine—will keep souls from Christ and pre-

vent their laying hold of eternal life. Man loves his own ruin! The cup is so sweet, that though he knows it will poison him, yet he must drink it! And the harlot is so fair, that though he understands that her ways lead down to Hell, yet like a bull he follows to the slaughter till the dart goes through his liver! Man is fascinated and bewitched by sin. He will not give up the insidious pleasures which are but for a season, and to gain them he will run the risk of the everlasting ruin of his undying soul. Oh, when God takes away the love of sin, *then* the gates are lifted up and the doors are opened. What is there that could prevent our welcoming Christ if we did but hate our sins?

Another great door is our love of self-righteousness. Though I have spoken of the love of sin as the strongest door, ought I not to correct myself, and say that, perhaps, the love of our own righteousness is a stronger door still? Men may give up their grosser sins while they will hold fast to their fair, but carnal righteousnesses. Yet your own righteousness will as certainly destroy you as your iniquities. If you rest upon what you have done, however good in your own eyes, or however praiseworthy in the esteem of your fellow men that doing may be, you rest on a foundation that will certainly fail you. Your merits or your demerits are alike useless for salvation. God grant that we may no longer boast of ourselves, but put away the Pharisee's pride and never utter the Pharisee's prayer. The doors must be lifted up.

Then, again, there is that door which I may call the iron gate that enters into the city, the innermost door of all, the key of which it is, indeed, hard to turn—the door of unbelief. Oh, that unbelief! It is the ruin of souls, and ah, what trouble, and labor, and anxiety it gives to us who are ministers of the Gospel! When talking with anxious enquirers we are often amazed at the ingenuity with which they resist the entrance of Light and Truth into their hearts. I do not think I have ever been so much astonished at the invention of locomotive engines, electric telegraphs, or any other feats of human mechanism as I have been at the marvelous ingenuity of simple people in finding out reasons why they should not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

After we have proved to them to a demonstration that it is both the most reasonable and the fit thing in the world to trust themselves with Christ, they ask, "Why this?" Or, "Why that?" Or they argue, "But one thing, and but another." We may patiently go through the whole process again, and even when that is done there comes another, "but." I have hunted these people till they have got to their holes, and I have tried to dig them out, and unearth them, but I find that they can always burrow faster than I can follow them. It is only the Grace of God that can deliver us from this ruinous thing, unbelief!

You would count it a strange thing, if, when a man condemned to be hanged had a pardon presented to him, he were so ingenious as to find out reasons why he should not escape the gallows! And when these reasons were all refuted, their fallacy exposed, and the good tidings confirmed, he should keep on finding out more reasons why the sentence of

execution should be carried into effect! You would say, "Why, foolish man, let these sophistries alone. Put your wits to better use. Get your liberty first, and then enquire into the manner it was procured afterwards." Men will not take God at His word, and trust Christ at His call. That great doctrine of, "Believe and live," they will reject.

Still, still they will object! O that these gates and doors were all removed! Do not, I beseech you, my dear Hearers, do not let me talk about this matter as though I were speaking to people on the moon. It is into your own hearts that admission is sought, and remember that there are doors which keep Christ out. There are gates and doors which some of you willfully close against Him. Though in His stead I have stood these many Sundays knocking as best I could at the door—no, not I, but *Christ* knocking there *through* me—you have resisted every appeal. You know that His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, yet you have kept these doors fastened still.

They have shaken sometimes a good deal. They have almost seemed to me as if they were on the jar—I have hastened to see if I could not put my finger in at the hole of the door—but could not do so. I wish my Master would! How is it that with such a Friend outside, standing there in such a lovely attitude, laden with blessings, and ready to enter that He may bless *you*—how is it that still you will invent further bars, and make fresh locks to keep Him out?

III. Our third point is this—IN ORDER FOR CHRIST TO ENTER WE MUST BE WILLING TO REMOVE THESE BOLTS. You will notice that the text says, "Lift up your heads, O you gates," as if the gates were to lift their own heads up. It is addressed to them as though they were to get out of the way. Continually, dear Friends, I have to tell you that salvation is by Divine Grace—emphatically I shall have to impress this upon you presently. Yet, at the same time, we never did say, and we hope we never shall say that we see no necessity to make any appeals to your will.

We never said that God would save you against your will. We never thought so. We never believed that a man was plunged into the blood of Jesus Christ if he was unwilling to be washed in it. We never believed that a man had the robe of righteousness put on him by force, he, meanwhile, resisting with all his might. We never believed that there were pilgrims on the road to Heaven who went there driven like convicts in the chain gang, instead of marching willingly and cheerfully towards their desired rest. We never meant to say that you were mere machines whom God had deprived of free agency, or that in order to make you saints He made you blocks of wood or pieces of marble.

No! We have been in the habit of addressing you as reasonable beings, and of talking to you as those who had a will to choose or to refuse. We have tried, with the motives of the Gospel, to influence that will. Let us remind you that the gates are bid to lift up their heads—therefore, in God's name, Sinner, be willing! Be willing that Christ should enter into your heart, for, remember, He never does enter against our will. He makes us willing in the day of His power, but willing we must be. True, willing-

ness is His gift, but we are *made* willing. In the case of every soul that comes to Christ there is first given to him the willing mind.

“Oh!” says one, “I am willing enough!” Thank God for that, dear Hearer, for the most of men will not come unto Him that they may have life. “Oh!” says another, “I am sure my will is good to come to Christ!” I am glad to hear that, for there is a question we have often to ask, “Will you be made whole?” But there are some men who do not want to be made whole, and would rather hobble on their crutches, cripples as they are! They would rather indulge their inclination as sinners than be purified and brought into the obedience of faith.

Among those I address tonight there may be individuals, perhaps, who would not like to have their conscience touched. Here is one man who is making money in a bad trade. “Oh,” he says, “I do not want that preacher to make me uneasy!” There is another man here who has been getting so used to his sinful pleasures that it would now be inconvenient for him to give them up. He has even made an appointment that he feels he must keep, and if he were apprehensive that the Grace of God might come and overtake him tonight, he feels as if he would rather not. Do not be frightened! It will not occur to you, for the Lord will first give you this premonition of His intending to bless you. He will make you long to be blessed. Before He puts that cup of cooling water to your month, He will make you thirsty.

Before He enriches you with His treasure He will make you feel that you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Before Christ goes through the gate, the inhabitants of the city shall be willing to receive Him. No, with outstretched hands they shall look over the battlements and say, “Come in, King of Glory! I long to see You! Come, and welcome! I will throw the gates of my soul wide open to receive You, do but come! I long for You! I watch for Your coming as they that watch for Your appearing! Yes, more than they that watch for the morning light.”

IV. Fourthly, while you must thus be made willing, IT IS GRACE THAT MUST ENABLE YOU TO BE SO. Notice, “Be you lift up, you everlasting doors.” “Lift up your heads.” “Be you lift up.” We speak to a man as a man, and so we must speak to him. Next to this we speak of what God can do, blessed be His name, as a God, when He comes to deal with us, making us willing. And then coming in, with that great arm of His power, entirely to remove those gates which creature strength could not push an inch out of the way.

I think I see the inhabitants of that city when the cry is heard, “Lift up your heads, O you gates!” trying to lift them up! Trying with all their might, but they cannot do it. The gates are too heavy. The bars seem to be rusted. The bolts are fast in their places. The people cry, “How shall we ever open the gates of this city, and how can we let in the King?”—when an invisible Spirit stands by the side of the wall amid all the struggles, and as He puts out His power, the gates go up, and the doors fly wide open!

This is how it is with the sinner. God the Holy Spirit comes in and helps our infirmities. And what we could not do because we are weak through the flesh, He helps us to do. The love of sin is given up to begin with, and then the Holy Spirit enables us to give up the sin which we no longer love. Unbelief becomes to us a burden, and we cry, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief!" and He does help that unbelief and we do believe! That which we could not do, we do! He who made us willing, makes us able! Where the will is present, the power is not withheld. When God has subdued the obstinacy of your heart, He will speedily overcome the infirmity of your hands. If you are thirsty, you shall drink. If you are hungry, you shall eat. If you would have Christ, you shall have Christ, for if you can not open the gates, He can.

The difficulty with these gates is that they are everlasting! Though I cannot say that the gates which shut Christ out of our hearts are everlasting in one sense, yet they certainly are as old as our own nature—for the old inbred corruption of that stood out against Christ. And they are such perpetual gates that they never would have been removed if it were not for the Grace which came to remove them. And they are everlasting in such a sense that they will be there in time and there in eternity. The man who will not have Christ now, will not have Him when he comes to die, and will not have Him in eternity. Even then the gates will still shut out the Savior. The Savior will be forever a stranger and an alien to that man's heart! May God give to you who have been shutting Him out the will to open the door, and then may He come and say, "Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors," and may Jesus Christ come in!

V. Not to linger, however, on any one point, let us proceed to notice the willingness of Christ to enter. We have shown you that it should be our great desire that Christ should come in, but that there are obstacles. We know that we must be willing to remove them, and that Divine Grace will come to our assistance. What next?—JESUS WILL ENTER. There is no difficulty put here after once the gates are lifted up. There is no suspicion nor surmise that He will not enter. It seems to follow as a matter of course. "And the King of Glory shall come in."

Oh, yes! When the gates are opened, He shall come in! He was willing to come in before. He had sent His servants, and said to them, "Open the gates." He had finished the work which He came to do. He was waiting to be gracious. There was never any unwillingness in Him! The unwillingness was all in us! And as soon as ever that unwillingness is taken away, and the gates are opened, the King of Glory shall come in. May the Lord bless me in speaking for a moment to some here who are willing to have the Savior, but who think that He will never come into their hearts.

O Beloved, do not suffer this infernal suggestion to depress your spirits! Are you poor? Believe me, it does not matter what dress you wear, nor in what humble cottage you live, nor how your face may be begrimed with your toil if you are willing! The King of Glory will come in! He loves to live in those men's hearts whose bodies, like His own, suffer fatigue, and wear the garments of the workman. Perhaps you say, "But my body has been

defiled with sin.” But where He comes He cleanses the house by His Presence!

You never hear it said, “The world is not fit for the sun, because it is so dark, for where the sun comes he makes light.” And if after a long winter the world has grown cold and frostbitten, it is not said of the spring, “You must not come, for the world is not fit for you!” No, but the genial influences of spring loosen the rivers, and clothe the earth with verdure, and bid the bonds of frost be removed! And so spring makes a palace fit for herself and strews it with flowers from her own hands.

My Master will come into your house and live, though you are not worthy that He should come under your roof. He was born in a manger where the horned oxen fed. He will be born in your heart, where devils once dwelt. My Lord, when He does stoop, may well stoop as low as He can. It is the greatest wonder that He should stoop at all—not that He stoops in any one particular direction, for, after all, though some of you may have been gross offenders, while others of us, from our youth up, have never uttered an oath, nor entered upon a lascivious action—yet there is not so much difference between you and us as that it should seem strange that He should come to you.

If you are black in one sense, we are black in another. And if you have been a drunkard, well, I have been an unbeliever. And if you have been a thief, well, I have played false to God. And if there is one sin into which I have not plunged, I have plunged into another. We are very much alike, after all, and it is not so wonderful a thing, if we once get our hearts filled with the true wonder that Christ should have saved sinners at all, that He should condescend to display that wonderful Grace by saving those who, in the recklessness and daring of their crimes, are ostensibly such great sinners! Jesus Christ *will* come in.

“Well, but suppose He should not?” says one. Ah, never suppose what cannot be! “Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.” Why, the very angels must sometimes be astonished as they say, “Lord, here is such a one coming—shall we shut the gate?” “No,” says He, “for I have said that him that comes, I will in nowise cast out.” Surely, when the angel of mercy saw Saul of Tarsus coming, he said, “Lord, here is a man who has had his garments spattered with the blood of Stephen! Here is that fierce wolf who has whetted his fangs in the blood of many of the saints! Here comes this blasphemer, this persecutor—must not *he* be excluded?”

No. The gate stood open and he found admittance. And as he entered he turned round, and said to the others who were timidly standing outside, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” O Soul, if you desire to have Christ, there is no reason why you should not have Him! No, you *shall* have Him! If you have got so far, by His Grace, as to have said, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors,” then “the King of Glory shall come in,” and you shall find a Savior in your heart if you are but willing to receive Him there.

VI. And now, lastly, observe that our text says, “THE KING OF GLORY SHALL COME IN. This title belongs to the Savior. It proclaims Him in His highest authority. How shall I interpret this to you? The weight, the exceeding eternal weight of glory which belongs to the King of Glory, I cannot explain. O that your thoughts may excel my words! I think I hear a cry, “Behold, your King comes! The King! The King! Stand back, make way! The King comes.”

There is a moment’s bustle, and it is succeeded by a breathless pause. Everyone forgets the business in which he was engaged and loses the thread of thought in which he was absorbed. All eyes turn, as if by instinct, to look from what direction that cry has broken on their ears: “THE KING OF GLORY!” A thrill passes through your nerves, a shock goes to your heart as you listen to the note which tells of His high prerogative. “Who is this King of Glory?” What peerless Prince is this, with a name above every name, and a royalty higher than the kings of the earth?

“THE LORD OF HOSTS, HE IS THE KING OF GLORY.” And while you look, He is near. You look, you gaze, you behold the pageantry of His high estate, and awe stifles your breath, admiration chains your senses. “Could I have one wish,” said that eloquent preacher at the Hague, Mr. James Saurin, “Could I have one wish to answer my proposed end of preaching today with efficacy, it would be to show you God in this assembly.” And I say to you, Brothers and Sisters, could I present at the door of your hearts the King of Glory, and constrain you to see Him, you would not hesitate, but open wide the gates to admit Him!

Behold the King! Resplendent with all the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world! Invested with all the offices of dignity which Jehovah has put upon Him! Wearing all the brilliant trophies of His victorious achievements. Hark! Hark! The trumpeters proclaim Him! Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, in loud and swelling notes announce His advent! The acclamations of the redeemed, a vast throng, greet Him! And He rides in triumph straight up to your heart!

One glance at Him, Sinner, shows you plainly that He challenges your submission by all the grandeur of His title, by all the illustrious insignia of His solemn functions, by all the renown of His mighty acts. As the King of Glory, He must come in—

***“But know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign.
To reign, but not with partial sway,
Thoughts must be slain that disobey.”***

As liege subjects, then, you must yield Him all your homage. Oh, are you willing that the priest should come in? “Yes,” you say, “that is what I want. I want Christ to come in with His precious blood, like a priest, and sprinkle me with hyssop, and take away my sins.” He will come as a priest, but not if you refuse him as your King.

“Yes,” says another, “I am quite willing to receive Christ as a prophet. I want to understand the doctrines. They have puzzled me a great deal, and I want to comprehend them.” Well, Christ will come as a prophet, but He

will not come as a prophet unless you are willing to receive Him, also, as your King. O Sinner, Jesus Christ must have the mastery in your heart, or you shall not have Him at all! Come, now, you have followed your own will—that must be given up. Do you not like that yoke? Do you say, “No, I never did wear one”? You *must* wear it, or you will be lost.

Look at it, now—see how softly it lies! It will never gall your shoulders. “My yoke is easy: My burden is light.” Now, you know you have been your own master and what incessant mutiny there has been in your members. Your own will has been too impotent a ruler to hold the reins of government or maintain peace. You know very well that your own passions have made a great slave of you. Why, the man who gives way to drunkenness—where is there a worse slave in the world than he? Or, take the man who has a passionate temper—why, he does and says a thousand things that he is disgusted with afterwards—but he seems to be driven by his foolishness without the slightest self-control. A worse slavery than that of any galley slave that was ever chained to the oar, is that slavery of a bad temper.

Now, would it not be better to be a servant of Christ than to be the slave of your own hateful lusts, or your own capricious whims? I know what you will say—you cannot serve King Jesus, for your companions would laugh at you, and hold you up to ridicule. Oh, what a mean-spirited creature, then, you must be! And so will you let any peering fool be your chieftain, and become the vassal of any man bolder in wickedness than you are? Why, Sir, do you call yourself an Englishman? Are you a man at all, that you can yield yourself up to be chaffed after this fashion? What? Would you let the gibes or taunts of a workmate restrain you from following what you believe to be good?

Why, I am ashamed of you! Putting aside Christianity altogether, I blush for you as a coward. Surely, you might say to them, “What do I care for your laughs, I can always give you as good as you send, only I take care it shall not be in your spirit. I can hold my own, and if you choose to serve the devil, surely it is a free country. I have as much right to serve the King of Glory as you have to serve the Prince of Darkness. If you choose to go to Hell, let me go to Heaven, surely, you will not pass a law against that!”

There are workmen, I believe, and men of business, and gentlemen, as they are called, of the upper circles who are the most abominable tyrants in their dealings with one another. If you choose to be a Christian, you are sure to get the cold shoulder among the upper classes. No, but the very working men, who prate their democracy, will not let you be a Christian without meeting you at the shop door and saying, “Ah, here is a Presbyterian,” or “a Methodist,” or something of the sort. What is this but trampling upon liberty of conscience with arrogant tyranny? How can we boast of our love of freedom while such a state of things prevails? Surely, a man has a right to his religion, and you have no right to interfere with him about it.

But now, my dear Friend, you are afraid of being laughed at. Let me ask you, which is better, to be a servant of man or a servant of Christ? Whichever way you may judge, you can never enter Heaven's door, to wear Christ's crown unless you are *here* willing to be Christ's servant, and to bear Christ's Cross. "Well, but I do not like this. I do not like that." Refer to the Bible—that is the Master's Book. As it is written there, so let your life and actions be ruled. You remember what the mother of Jesus said to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee? "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I do not see how you can serve Christ if there is anything in that Book which you see to be there, and yet willfully neglect.

Perhaps there are some of you whom that sentence will hit very hard. I know persons who say they are Baptists in principle, but they have never been baptized! Baptists without any principle at all, I call them—persons who know their Master's will, but who will not obey it. I can make great excuses for Brethren who do not see it. I think they might see it if they liked. But if they do not discern the precept, I can understand their not obeying it. But when people know their Lord's will, and do it not—though I am sure I would not wish to speak hastily on such a matter—I am not certain whether willful disobedience to a known command of Christ may not be a token of their *rejecting* Christ altogether. I should not like to run the risk for myself, at any rate.

I should feel it unsafe to say that I believed I was saved, while there was some command of my Lord which I could obey, which I clearly saw to be my duty, and yet to which I solemnly declared I would withhold my obedience. Surely, in such a case, I have not let Christ come into my heart! If you would have Christ, He will be absolute Lord and Master—every humor and stubbornness of yours must be set aside—for where He comes He comes to reign. As He makes His entrance, He comes as the "King of Glory." That is to say, He must be a glorious King, glorious to you—One whom you seek to glorify.

You must not receive Him as though He were some paltry potentate that you did not care for, but He must be full of glory to you—the "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"—you must receive Him into your *heart!* Not as men receive a common guest, but as men receive their dearest and most honored friend—one whom they love and reverence with all the powers of their nature. He must be the King of Glory to you. And from now on it must be your desire to glorify Him. This is not a hard thing to ask, for oh, it is the pleasure, it is the ante past of Heaven! It is unspeakable bliss to live to the glory of Christ!

Even when one is suffering, suffering is sweet if it brings Him honor! If one is despised for Christ, it is delightful to be reproached if it does but make Him more glorious—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me."***

Oh, to glorify Christ! I think Heaven would lose half its charms for me if I could not glorify Christ there. And the vast howling wilderness were Heaven on earth to me if I might but glorify His name here below! To glorify Christ is far more to the Christian's mind than harps of gold, streets of crystal, or gates of pearl. *This* is the true music of the soul! The true excitement of triumph! The true chorus of eternity—that He ever lives, that the crown is on His head—that God also has highly exalted Him. Oh, this is our exultation, this is our joy, our triumph, our blessedness! If we can but promote His glory, the place where we can best promote it shall be our Heaven. The sick bed, the hospital, or the poor house shall be our Heaven, if we can there best serve the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of Glory.

The year is fast drawing to a close. We call it "the year of Grace, 1866." Oh, that it may, indeed, be "the year of Grace" to some unconverted persons here! It may be that I am not casting my net tonight where there are many such to be found. Most of you, my Hearers, are members of the Church of Christ. You are saved, I trust. Still there are sure to be here and there, like weeds growing in a garden of flowers, some who are still strangers to the Lord Jesus Christ. I would to God that the Holy Spirit would move them to say, "Come in, Savior! Let the King of Glory come in!"

Oh, let this true saying of the faithful and true witness be your encouragement: "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." What a blessed thing! You breakfasted with the devil, and dined with the world—what a mercy if you should sup with Christ! And what a blessed supper you would have! Why, when you woke tomorrow it would be to breakfast with Christ! It would be to hear Him say, "Come and dine," and then to sup with Him again, and so on until you come to eat bread at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

May the Lord bless you. And if He grants me *my* heart's desire, you will each of you say to your souls, "Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift them up, you everlasting doors! And the King of Glory shall come in."

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THE COVENANTER

NO. 1975

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 31, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such
as keep His Covenant and His testimonies.”
Psalm 25:10.***

THIS Psalm is intensely earnest. “Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” The sentences are ingots of gold. Every word is exceedingly weighty with sense and sincerity. I take it that one reason for this weight is the fact that David was in affliction. He says, “I am desolate and afflicted. Look upon my affliction and my pain.” Pain is a great disenchanter. Flowery speeches suit the summer tide of our health, but we find them not in the winter of our grief. Pain kills fine phrases as a mighty frost kills butterflies and moths. You can play with religion until you are laid low and then it becomes serious work. The romance of religion is one thing—the reality of it is another. It would be a great blessing to some if they were shriveled with a little pain, otherwise they will grow unbearable in their pride. The frog drinks and drinks—and thinks he will soon swell into an ox—one single bitter drop is mingled with the stream and he is back into a frog again. It is often the best thing that can happen to us that we should be reduced to our true selves and not be left to strut about as noble somebodies. May our meditations this morning be solid and leave on our minds no savor of unreality!

Mixed also with David's suffering was a sense of sin. Read verse eleven, “For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” And again, in verse eighteen, “Forgive all my sins.” No man need have a worse trouble than conviction of sin. A thorn in the flesh is nothing to a thorn in the conscience. A sense of sin is another great disenchanter. This bursts the bubbles of conceit by thousands. When the heart is awakened and sin is laid bare by the Spirit of God, so that we are truly humbled by it, life ceases to be sport and an awful earnestness pervades our being. To carry burning coals in the bosom is nothing compared with bearing sin in an awakened conscience. There is no cheating your soul when sin lies hard on it and no attempt is then made at dealing with God in a dishonest manner. But, crushed into the dust, we pine for a real atonement and a real faith in it—and the true seal of the Spirit to make our pardon sure. When sin is truly felt, we come before the great Father, not with mimic sorrow, but with downright soul-weeping and heartbreaking. We cry to Him, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” If we feel either of these two things, pain or sin—and who among us can hope to be without them at all times?—then we shall see the solemn side of life and look for those sure

consolations by which we may be sustained. I hope that our subject of discourse today may help in that direction.

One other thing is notable about David in writing this Psalm—whatever his trouble might be and however deep his sense of sin—he always looked Godward. He cries, “Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” “Remember me for Your goodness’ sake, O Lord.” In our text his mind dwells upon “the paths of the Lord.” The ungodly fly away from God when He chastens them, but the saints kiss the chastening rod. The child of God goes home when it grows dark. We seek our healing from the hand which has wounded us! Which way do you look in a storm? If the Lord is now your haven, you shall fly to Him in the last dread storm, for that way your eyes have turned these many years. If you look for everything from God, you are looking out of the right window. When your eyes look toward the great sea of Divine All-Sufficiency, you shall not look in vain. You may have to come again seven times before you see your deliverance and when you see it, it may seem no bigger than a man’s hand, but you shall not be ashamed in the end. I trust this mark and evidence of a child of God is upon many of you this morning and if it is, you are among the Lord’s host whom I would call to the battle! With your eyes looking right on and your eyelids straight before you, come with me to the rallying-place of the Lord of Hosts!

In my text I see two things worth talking about. The first is, *the spiritual covenanter*—“such as keep His Covenant and His testimonies.” And, secondly, here is *his notable experience*—“all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant.”

I. Observe in the text the footprint of THE SPIRITUAL COVENANTER. You have all heard of the old Covenanters of Scotland. Their decision of mind and force of character—their theory of government for the kingdom of Scotland was quaintly unpractical—but it grew out of true and deep fear of the Lord. The Old Testament spirit in them was not enough tinctured with the meekness of the Lord Jesus, or they would not have touched the weapons of steel, but in this mistake they were very far from being alone. In my bedroom I have hung up the picture of an old Covenanter. He sits in a wild glen with his Bible open before him on a huge stone. He leans on his great broadsword and his horse stands quietly at his side. Evidently he smells the battle afar off and is preparing for it by drinking in some mighty promise. As you look into the old man’s face you can almost hear him saying to himself, “For the crown of Christ and the Covenant, I would gladly lay down my life this day.”

They did lay down their lives, too, right gloriously, and Scotland owes to her covenanting fathers far more than she knows. It was a grand day, that in which they spread the Solemn League and the Covenant upon the tombstones of the old Kirk yard in Edinburgh—and all sorts of men came forward to set their names to it! Glorious was that roll of worthies. There were the lords of the covenant and the common men of the covenant—and some pricked a vein and dipped the pen into their blood, that they might write their names with the very fluid of their hearts! All over England there were men who entered into a like Solemn League and Covenant and met together to worship God according to their right and not according to

human order-books. They were resolved upon this one thing—that Rome should not come back to place and power while they could lift a hand against her—neither should any other power in throne or Parliament prevent the free exercise of their consciences for Christ's cause and Covenant!

These stern old men, with their stiff notions, have gone. And what have we in their places? Indifference and frivolity! We have no Roundheads and Puritans, but then we *do* have scientific dress-making and we play lawn tennis! We have no contentions for the faith, but then our amusements occupy all our time! This wonderful 19th Century has become a child and put away manly things. Self-contained men—men in whom is the true grit—are now few and far between as compared with the old covenanting days!

But I want to speak this morning, not of the old covenanters, but of those who at this day keep the Covenant of the Lord. Would to God we had among us great companies of “such as keep His Covenant and remember His Commandments to do them”! *The true covenanter is one who has found God* and, therein, has made the greatest discovery that was ever made. He has discovered not only a God, but the living and true God—and he is resolved to be on living terms with Him for time and for eternity! He will henceforth never shut his eyes to God, for his longing is to see more and more of Him. He is determined to be right with God, for he feels that if he were right with all his fellow creatures and everything about them, yet if he were wrong with God, he would be out of order in the main point. He has settled in his own soul that he will know the Lord, be right with Him, at peace with Him, yes, and in league with Him! It is not natural for men to thus cling to God and seek after Him—but it has become natural to this man—so that he hungers and thirsts for the living God. By this very fact the man is ennobled! He is lifted up above the brutes that perish. A man capable of the idea of covenant with God and taken up with a passion for it, must surely be born from above! There must be a Divine Nature within him, or he would not be drawn towards the Divine One above him. It is even so—the Spirit of God has been working here!

Already, too, *this man has discovered another Covenant, whose ruins lay between him and God and block the road.* Turning to his Bible, the Believer discovers that we were, from the first, under covenant towards God. He reads of the first Covenant, the Covenant with our first father, Adam, which was broken by his disobedience, whose fatal breach has brought upon us unnumbered losses and woes. This Covenant the Believer has not ignored, for he has felt his share in its failure and come under the condemnation of it. His very desire to be right with God has brought home to him the judgment of the Law. He has smarted under the lash of it. He has seen the Lord arrayed in robes of justice avenging the quarrel of His Covenant and he has said to himself, “What shall I do? The Law is holy and the Commandment holy and just and good. But I am carnal, sold under sin.”

Brothers and Sisters, we are condemned under the first Covenant, not only by the act of our representative, but also through our personal en-

dorsement of his rebellion by our own actual sin. That Covenant, which should have been a Covenant of life, has become a Covenant of death to us. You know what I mean, for I speak to many who know, by deep personal experience, what it is to be the prisoners of the Covenant, shut up in soul despair and numbered for destruction. You could not keep the Law—you felt you could not, though you wished you could—the *future* was against you. As for former violations of the Law, you could make no amends for them—the *past* was against you. Even then your inward corruptions were gnawing at your heart like the worm that never dies and the horseleech that is never satisfied—the *present* was against you. Yet despite all this, you still followed after the Lord and could not live without Him!

This covenanter of whom I speak is one who has, through Divine enlightenment, perceived a better Covenant and sure salvation therein. He has seen in the Lord Jesus a Second Adam, greater than the first, and he has heard the glorious Lord exclaim, “I have given Him as a Covenant for the people.” He has seen Jesus pledged unto God to make good the breaches of the broken Covenant! The Believer has seen the Son of God arrayed in blood-stained garments coming from Gethsemane. He has seen Him answering at the bar for the broken Law, scourged with the chastisement of our peace and bound with the bands of our condemnation. I say the Believer has seen the beloved Surety of the New Covenant meeting the Law’s demands at Calvary, surrendering His hands to be nailed for our sins, His feet to be fastened up for our wanderings and His heart to be pierced for our wantonness!

O my Soul, have you not seen your Lord bareheaded amid the tempest of Divine wrath for sin? Have you not heard Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me”? If so, you have seen how, out of the old Covenant, the new was born, like life from between the ribs of death! Our soul has stood in the midst of the horrible tempest, half-blinded by the lightning and deafened by the thunder. At last there has been a tear in the black mantle and a shower of wondrous love has followed the black tempest—and a Voice has been heard, sweeter than the harps of angels, saying, “It is finished.” Thus have the Lord’s covenanted ones come forth from under the old Covenant into a Covenant of Grace, in which peace and joy abound! Now are we in happy league with God! Now we would think and feel and act in harmony with God! Our covenant with Him shall compass all our life—we are His and He is ours. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul” and, on the other hand, “The Lord’s portion is His people.” Henceforth we would have no life except for the living God! He is our ambition and our expectation, our end and our way, our desire and our delight! He rejoices over us to do us good and we rejoice ourselves in Him and seek His Glory.

The spiritual covenanter has the Covenant with God written on the tablets of his heart. I have known Believers, when first converted, follow a hint given them by Dr. Doddridge in his, “Rise and Progress of Religion,” where he draws up a covenant which he invites the reader to sign. Some have executed a deed with great solemnity and have also observed the day of its signature from year to year. Very proper, no doubt, to some natures,

but I fear that to the more timid and conscientious, such covenants are apt to cause bondage. When they find that they have not, in all things, lived up to their own pledges, they are apt to cut themselves off from all part and lot in the matter—this is the Covenant of Works and not of Grace! It is a covenant on *paper* and not the Covenant written upon the heart and mind. The true covenanter wills the will of God. It is not merely that God commands him to do right, but he *longs* to do it. God's Law is his love. That which is pleasing to God is pleasing to His people because their hearts are made like His own. The Divine likeness is restored by the Spirit of Grace and, therefore, the will of the Lord is written out upon the new-born nature. Holiness is the passion of a true Believer. He consents and assents to the Law, that it is good, and the Divine Life within him delights itself in the Law of the Lord. This is the surest sort of Covenant—this Divine writing in the nature, according to that gracious promise—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." O happy man whose covenant with God is the Covenant of his own desire, who wills and wishes and longs and labors to yield himself fully and wholly unto the Law of his God!

This covenanting man does not regard himself any more as one by himself, for he is joined unto the Lord and has entered into the closest fellowship with Him. None can separate him from God—the union is vital and complete. He has thrown his little all into God's *great* all and taken God's great all unto himself to be his heritage forever! And now, therefore, he is in God and God in him. You ask me what it is which thus binds the man to God? I answer—he feels that he is joined unto the Lord for many reasons and among the best because the Lord has *chosen him* to be His own. He is old-fashioned enough to believe that God has a choice in the salvation of men and he perceives, because faith has been granted him, that the Lord has evidently chosen him unto salvation. He often cries, "Why me? Why me?" and yet knowing that those whom the Lord calls by Grace, He first predestinated thereto, he is not ashamed to believe in his election!

Now the man that believes that God has chosen him—that is the man to enter into covenant with God and to keep that covenant! He that is chosen of God chooses God and chooses Him because he is chosen. The vows of God are upon him. Such amazing Grace compels him to a consecrated life.

Moreover, in addition to the choice of God, this covenanter sees a blood-mark upon his body, soul and spirit. The *redemption* made on the Cross, whatever its other bearings, is seen by the Believer to be specially for him. He cries, "For me the bloody sweat! For me the spitting and the scourging! For me the nails and the spear! Truly I am not my own, I am bought with a price." This blood-bought man feels that he cannot be as other men are—he must subscribe with his hand unto the God of Jacob and acknowledge and confess that he belongs only to the Lord. Others may be their own lords, but as for us, we have been redeemed, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God! O Sirs, if you know your election and your redemption, you must and will dedicate yourselves unto the Lord by a covenant which

cannot be broken! If the choice of the Father and the redemption of the Son do not supply us with a potent force towards holiness, what can do so? Well may we be the covenanted ones of God when we are thus distinguished.

Besides, the covenanting Believer feels that he has been the subject of a *special call*. Whatever God may have done with others, he knows that He has dealt specially with him in a way of Grace and mercy. The Lord has said to him, "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." A Voice has called him from his kindred and from his father's house as surely as Abraham was called. The Lord, Himself, has brought him out of darkness into marvelous light. Whatever the Gospel may be to the congregation at large, it has been the power of God to him, for in it he has felt the touch of a Hand unfelt before and heard the sound of a Voice unheard in all the days gone by. Omnipotent Grace has awakened the echoes of his soul. "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." This special and effectual call is another mighty reason for entering into league and covenant with God. By that Omnipotent call, O Lord, I render up myself to You. Let the world do as it wills, we cannot account for its folly, but as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord. Our bonds of amity with the world are broken—let it do and say what it will—but to the Lord are we bound forever by that same power which has fetched us out of our former slavery. What with election, redemption and calling, what more can we say?

Yes, I can say something more, for this true covenanter feels that he is now *united to God in Christ Jesus*. Matchless doctrine, unity with God through Jesus Christ! No man knows all the name and nature of the man quickened of the Spirit. You cannot tell from where he comes, nor where he goes. We talk of aristocrats, but Believers are the aristocrats of Heaven and earth! We often hear the words, "royalty," and, "blood royal"—the blood royal of the universe is in the man that believes in Jesus! He has made us unto our God, kings and priests. By virtue of our union with Christ, we are one with God and partakers of the Divine Nature. The day shall come when all the gewgaws and trappings of courts shall be laid aside as faded tawdriness—and then the true dignity and honor of the twice-born, the quickened by the Holy Spirit, shall be truly seen. To be members of the body of Christ—this means glory, indeed! To be married unto the King's Son, even to the Lord Jesus—this means such bliss as angels cannot reach! Do you wonder that because of such immeasurable privilege we make a sure covenant with God?

There are three or four things I would say briefly about this true covenanter—the Lord make each one of us to be of his stamp! You may know him by his attachment to the Lord Jesus, who is the sum, substance, surety and seal of the Covenant. You may also know him by his *zeal for the Gospel* through which the Covenant is revealed to the sons of men. He will not hear anything which is not according to the old Gospel, for he counts another Gospel to be a pestilent evil. He is very fond of the word, "Grace," and with the thing itself he is altogether enamored. The man that is in covenant with God cannot bear the idea of human merit—he loathes it—it raises his indignation. Have I not known some Christian people

come out from hearing certain sermons with their souls on fire with holy wrath? I feel, in casting my eyes over many modern writings, as if I had breathed poisonous gas and was likely to die. We cannot endure the smell of sacramentarianism, priestism and human righteousness! Others may feed on philosophical morality, but nothing but the Grace of God will do for us! Cats and dogs may feed on any rubbish, but men of God must live on the Grace of God and nothing else! Our keeping the Covenant and the testimonies binds us to a firm adherence to the Inspired Gospel and the Grace of God which is the Glory of it.

He who is, indeed, in covenant with God is known by his continual regard to the life, walk, and triumph of *faith*. He has faith and by that faith he lives and grows. He is and has and does all things by faith—and you cannot tempt him away from that faith wherein he stands. Carnal sense and fleshly feeling are not able to tempt him from believing. The highest enjoyment proffered by a fancied perfection cannot charm him from standing by faith. “No,” he says, “I must trust, or else it is all over with me. My element is faith and, as a fish out of water dies, so do I die and all my covenanting with God dies, too, unless I cling by faith to the promise of a faithful God.” Though all men should live by sight and feeling, yet will not the true covenanter quit the hallowed way of faith in the Lord!

This covenanting man will also be known by his stern resolve to preserve the Gospel in its purity and hand it on to others. When the Truth of God was made known to Abraham, it was committed to him and to his descendants as a sacred deposit of which they were to be the guardians and trustees. It was theirs to keep that lamp burning by which the rest of the elect would, in due time, would be saved from darkness. At this hour the eternal Truths of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ are given over to certain chosen men and women to be preserved by them till the coming of the Lord. This keeping is to be accompanied with a constant proclamation, so that the Truth of God may spread as well as live, and may go on conquering and to conquer. O you who are the covenanted ones of God, let not His Gospel suffer damage!

I charge you that love the Lord to bind the Gospel about you more firmly than ever. Bear aloft the standard of our grand army. The blood-stained colors of the Cross—bear them to the front—spread them to every wind and uplift them on every hill! And if you cannot spread the Truth and are shut up to defend it, then do so even to the death! Wrap the colors about your heart! Be wrapped in them as in your shroud if you cannot live bearing them as your flag! A true covenanter says, “Sooner death than false of faith.” The crown of our Lord Jesus shall never suffer loss. We will do everything for Jesus! We will, for His sake, bear reproach and for His sake labor to win souls unto God. We vow that He shall be glorified in our mortal bodies and that by some means His great name shall be made known to the ends of the earth. O my comrades! I am revived by the very thought of you. God has yet His faithful covenanters who have not bowed the knee to Baal, to whom the Lord is God and King forever and ever!

II. Under our second head let us now study THE COVENANTER’S NOTABLE EXPERIENCE. The text says, “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant and His testimonies.”

Observe, first, that *the Lord makes many approaches to covenanting men*. He does not leave them alone, but He comes to them and manifests Himself to them. By the expression, "All the paths of the Lord," I learn that the Lord has many ways of drawing near to His chosen. Not in the public highways of Grace, only, does He meet those with whom He is on terms of peace, but in many private and secret paths. In a grass field, a path is made by constant treading, and God makes paths to His people by continually drawing near unto their souls and communing with them. The Lord has many paths, for He comes to them from different points of the compass, according as their experience requires. He sometimes uses this way and sometimes another, that He may commune with us. He will never leave His covenanted ones alone for long. Often does He say, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

I like the word, "paths," as we have it in our English version, for it seems to say that the Lord has walks of His own. He makes ways for Himself and comes along them quietly, taking His people at unawares. On a sudden He whispers a Word of heavenly promise and then is away again. But He is not long gone—He makes another path and comes to us with new unction and fresh revealings. His visits to us have been many and gracious. O my Hearer, if you will give yourself to God, God will give Himself to you! Young man, I invite you to the grand destiny of one that shall henceforth live with God, to whom God shall manifest Himself. Will not this be a distinguished honor? Do not think it unattainable! God may be reached—if you will consecrate yourself to Him this day by a Covenant of Salt through Jesus Christ the Ever-Blessed Sacrifice—you shall know the visitations of the Almighty! You shall, like Enoch, walk with God!

Believe me, I speak truth and soberness. Between this place and the pearly gates, the Lord will come unto you, yes, He will take up His abode with you. When you cannot get to Him, He will come to you, for He is a great path maker. His ways are in the sea and He leaps over the mountains. He has a desire to the work of His hands and that desire will break through stone walls to reach you! What a life is that to which the Lord makes innumerable paths! Happy shall He be who shall attain to it!

Note, next, *that all the dealings of God with His people are in a way of mercy*. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy." This is well, for the best of the saints will always need mercy. Those who keep His Covenant are still kept by His mercy. When they grow in Grace and come to be fully developed Christians, they still need mercy for their sins, their weaknesses, their necessities. The Lord exercises mercy to the most highly instructed Believer as well as to the babe in Grace—mercy to the most useful worker as much as to the most weary sufferer. Thank God that His mercy towards us is forever!

That mercy will always be "tender mercy," abiding mercy and abounding mercy. His mercy is constant as the day, fresh as the hour, new every morning. Mercy covers all. In every gift of Providence and in every way of predestination, mercy may be seen. It would be greatly to our advantage to think more of the mercy of God to us. So much of His mercy comes and

goes without our noticing it! Shame that the Lord should thus be deprived of the revenues of His praise!

In Hebrews I find the word here used is, “wheel tracks,” such ruts as wagons make when they go down our green roads in wet weather and sink up to the axles. God’s ways are, at times, like heavy wagon tracks and they cut deep into our souls—yet they are, all of them, mercy. Whether our days trip along like the angels mounting on Jacob’s ladder to Heaven, or grind along like the wagons which Joseph sent for Jacob, they are, in each case, ordered in mercy! I stand by the happy memories of a tried past, as in summer weather I walk down a green lane and as I look at the deep ruts which God’s Providence made long ago. I see flowers of mercies growing in them. All the crushing and the crashing was in goodness. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life! Yes, “all the days of my life”—the dark and cloudy, the stormy and the wintry—as surely as in “the days of Heaven upon the earth.” Brothers and Sisters, we may sing a song of unmingled mercy! The paths of God have been to us nothing else but mercy. Mercy, mercy, mercy! “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.”

The Psalmist says, “All the paths of the Lord are mercy *and truth*.” That is to say, God has always shown the Truth of His Word. He has never been false to His pledges. He has done according to His Word. Moreover, the blessings which God has promised have always turned out to be as He represented them. We have followed no cunningly devised fables. The blessings of Grace are not fancies or frenzies, exaggerations or mere sentiments. The Lord has never fallen short of His promise. He has never kept His Word to the ear and broken it to the heart. All the ways of God have not only been merciful and true, but they have been essential “mercy and truth.” We have had truth of mercy; verity of mercy; substantial, solid, essential mercy. I have found no delusion in trusting in God. I may have been a dreamer in some things, but when I have lived unto God I have then exercised the shrewdest common sense and have walked after the rule of prudence.

It is no vain thing to serve God—the vanity lies on the other side. I know that many of you think that Christian experience leans to the region of sentiment, if not of imagination—but, indeed, it is not so! The surest fact in a Believer’s life is God’s nearness to him, care for him, love to him. Other things are shadows or shinings which come and go, but the goodness of God is the substance, the truth, the reality of life. How I wish I could persuade you of this! But, alas, the carnal mind will not receive spiritual things! I may bear witness of that which I taste and handle, but you will not believe me. Divine Spirit, come and open blinded eyes!

To this rule there is no exception—“All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant.” They say there is no rule without an exception, but there is an exception to that rule. All God’s dealings with His people are gracious and faithful. Sometimes the ways of God are full of Truth and mercy manifestly—they have been so to me in many a notable instance. I hope I do not trouble you too often with personal experiences. I do not narrate them out of egotism, but because it seems to me that every Christian should add his own personal testimony

to the heap of evidence which proves the Truths of our God. If I tell you about John Newton, you answer, "He is dead," but if I tell you of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he stands before you!

Some 10 days ago I was called to bear a baptism of pain. I had a night of anguish and the pangs ceased not in the morning. How gladly would I escape from these acute attacks, but it seems I may not hope it! I felt worn down and spent. Far on in the morning my ever-thoughtful secretary came by my bedside and cheered me greatly by the news that the letters brought tidings of considerable help to the various enterprises. In fact, there was far more coming in than is at all usual at this season! A legacy was reported of £500 for the Orphanage and £500 for the College. Another will was mentioned in which the Orphanage was made residuary legatee. Living friends had also sent large sums as by a kind of concert of liberality! They did not know that their poor friend was going to be very ill that morning, but their Lord knew, and He moved them to take away every care from His servant. It seemed to me as if my Lord said to me, "Now, you are not going to fret and worry while you are ill. You shall have no temptation to do so, for I will send you so much help for all My work that you shall not dare to be cast down."

Truly in this the paths of the Lord to me were mercy and truth! Many and many a time have I been lost in wonder at the Lord's mercy to His unworthy servant. I bow my head and bless the name of the Lord and cry, "Why this to me?" Ah, Brothers and Sisters! One can bear rheumatism or gout when mercy flows in as a flood! "Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?" Seeing it all comes from the same hands, we should receive it with equal cheerfulness. Now will I suffer with patience and endure with tranquility, for the Lord has dealt graciously and tenderly with His servant! I have often found His consolations abound in proportion to my tribulations, insomuch that I am on the lookout for the mercy when I begin to feel the smart, even as a child looks for the sweet when he finds himself called upon to take medicine. Those more closely around about me say, "Now that you have a bad time of personal suffering, you will see the Lord doing wonderfully for you"—and they are not disappointed. Indeed, I serve a good Master—I can speak well of Him at all times—and specially do I find Him kind when the weather is rough around His pilgrim child!

Have you not found it so in your way? Come, dear Friends, you cannot speak this morning, for one is enough for a public assembly, but you can speak when you have had your dinners and your children are round about you. Tell them how gracious God has been to you in your times of trouble. Utter exceedingly the memory of His great goodness!

Mark you, when we cannot see it, the Lord is just as merciful in His ways to us. We may not expect to be indulged and pampered by being made to see the mercy of God, like silly children that will be in a pet and a fume unless their father stuffs their mouths with sweetmeats and their hands with toys. God is as good when He denies as when He grants! And though we often see the marvelous tenderness of our God, it is not necessary that we should see it to make it true. Our God is wise as a father and tender as a mother—and when we cannot comprehend His methods, we

still believe in His love. This is not credulity, but a confidence to which the Lord is fully entitled! There can be no doubt about it, that “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant.”

I hear some say, “These things do not happen to me. I find myself struggling, alone, and full of sorrow.” Do you keep the Covenant? Some of you professing Christian people live just any way and not by Covenant rule. You do not live to God. You do not keep His Covenant. You do not observe His testimonies. You are not living consecrated lives! Therefore, if you do not enjoy His mercy and His truth, do not blame the Lord! The text says that all His paths are mercy and truth “unto such as keep His Covenant.” Remember the saying and do not expect the blessing apart from it. O child of God, be more careful to keep the way of the Lord—more concentrated in heart in seeking His Glory—and you shall see the loving kindness and the tender mercy of the Lord to you. God bless this feeble testimony of mine to all who are assembled here this morning!

I have this much to add to it—What a bliss it is to have entered upon the spiritual life and to be in covenant with God! If there were no mercy joined to it of a Providential character, it would nevertheless be the grandest thing that ever could happen to any of us to be living onto God. I call all short of this death and I know no other name for it. What solidity we have in godliness! It puts eternal rock beneath our feet. There are fascinating things in life about which you are almost afraid to enquire, for fear they should not prove to be what they seem. All earthborn joys are of this kind—their charms are on the surface, their beauty is skin deep. But in regard to the life consecrated to God by His Covenant and then enriched by His mercy—you may pry, dig, search—and the more you do so, the more you will be positive that *now* you are in the land of realities! Though we do not *see*, yet we perceive with a perception clearer than sight—and we shall so perceive through life! And when they fling back those golden gates and we peer into the spirit land, then shall we value, most of all, the life which observes the Covenant of God and is surrounded with mercy and truth!

What a wondrous thing the life of a consecrated man will seem to be when it shall be viewed in its completeness in the light of the eternal Throne of God! Then will the embroidery of love be seen in its beauty and the fabric of life will be acknowledged to be worthy of a God. Things not seen as yet will be seen, then—and things known in part will be seen in all their bearings! I suppose that one of the engagements of Heaven will be to observe how kindly our God has dealt with us upon the road. At any rate, when we come to the Glory Land, we shall only reckon that to have been true life which was spent in communion with God. Link us with God and we live—divide us from Him and we are dead!

I hear worldlings mutter—“What is the man thinking? We know nothing and care nothing about being in covenant with God.” Truly you despise the life I set before you, but it is your own way of life which most deserves scorn, O you who live for gain or pleasure! I will sketch you with the pencil of the Truth of God. It is a country scene and it passed under my own eyes but a few hours ago. I sat by the river, at a point where abundant springs poured forth new streams. It was a brook, wide but shallow, and

the pure water glided along refreshingly under the overhanging boughs. Little children were there, wading into the stream and enjoying its cool waters. One of them was a true representative of your wealthy merchants. He went fishing with a bright green glass bottle and his ventures were successful. Again and again I heard his voice ring out most joyously and impressively, "Look! Look! Here! Here! Such a big 'un! I have caught such a big 'un!" It was by no means a whale which he had taken, but a fish which might be half-an-inch long. How he exulted! "Such a big 'un!" To him the affairs of nations were as nothing compared with the great spoil which he had taken. That is the gentleman upon the Exchange who has made that successful speculation! For the next few days he will astonish everybody as they hear that it was "such a big 'un!" Earth, Heaven and Hell—time and eternity—may all accept the go-by, now that the glass bottle contains its prey! I confess I was not carried away with admiration for the child's fortune, neither did I envy him the fullness of his satisfaction.

His brother, not far off, varied my picture for me. He was less richly endowed and yet he had a very serviceable tin can with which he fished most diligently. Soon I heard his voice pitched in another key—"Nasty little things! They won't come here! I can't catch 'em! They're good for nothing! I won't try any more." Then the impetuous genius threw his tin can with a splash into the water—and his enterprise was ended. That is the gentleman whose company has been wound up, or whose goods will not command a market. Things will not come his way. He cannot get on. He has made a failure of it and is in the *Gazette*. All society is out of order, or he would have been sure to succeed. He is sick of it all for the present. You smile at my boys! O worldlings, these are yourselves! You are those children—and your ambitions are their stories—

***"O happy man that lives on high,
While men lie groveling here."***

Without God you are paddling in the brooklet of life, fishing for minnows! If you get a grip of God, because He has laid hold on *you*, O Man, there is then a soul in you! Then have you come to be allied with angels and akin to seraphim! Apart from God you subside into shameful littleness. O Lord Jesus pity those who forget You! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 25*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—116 (SONG II), 664, 663.**

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GREAT PARDON FOR GREAT SIN NO. 2988

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1862.

*“For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”
Psalm 25:11.*

THIS striking prayer is hemmed in, as it were, between two promises. It looks like a fossil embedded in a mass of stone! What is the meaning of it being here? Why is it put in such a peculiar position? The Psalmist is both praising and preaching—how is it that he turns to praying? Beloved, I think it was to teach us that prayer is never out of place. When the Apostle Paul was writing the most doctrinal of his Epistles, he sometimes paused in the midst of them to offer a supplication, as when he said, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” When engaged in any holy duties, you may even refrain from praise for a moment in order to present a prayer to God. Nor would it be amiss for us, sometimes, to break the thread of a sermon, that the people might pause and join with the preacher in asking God’s blessing upon the message of mercy and upon all who hear it. Certainly, my dear Friends, you will never find any time inopportune for prayer if your heart is true and your faith in full force.

The Mohammedans have their fixed hours for prayer and when they hear the signal from the minaret of the mosque, wherever they may be—in the street or in the market place—they bow their heads to Allah and repeat their form of prayer. Without *their* boastful showiness, you may “pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” We need not be confined to special seasons when a summons is given, but, at all times and in every place, we may “continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” When your hands are measuring out your goods, when they are pushing the plane, or driving the nail—when you are driving the plow, or threshing the corn—if you are speeding along the iron way, or walking among the cornfields, your heart may have fellowship with Him—

***“Who is within no walls confined,
But habits the humble mind”—***

who counts all places holy where men are holy, and all spots suitable places for prayer when the heart is in a prayerful frame! My Soul, wait upon God in your daily calling and think not that you can ever approach Him at an unseasonable hour, or lift up your cry to Him when He is otherwise engaged, so that He cannot attend to your petition!

Were it necessary to my present purpose to explain the connection of this prayer with the scope of the Psalm, it would not be difficult. The

promise that the Psalmist had just recited is, “unto such as keep His Covenant.” It was the besetting sin of Israel to break the Covenant. Do you not see that the condition here mentioned would shut the door of hope to many? The greatness of the promise often stirs up our deepest anxieties, lest any of us should seem to come short of it. Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer for pardon which is never unfitting at any time, can never be more fitting than when our hearts are lifted up with the loftiest apprehension of God’s Covenant!

My principal aim tonight, however, is to bring my Hearers and myself, all of us, to feel with David that our iniquity is great. When I have done this, I shall very briefly try to show how the very greatness of our iniquity may become a plea with God—“Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” And I shall close with some earnest entreaties to those who have never sought pardon for sin, to seek it now.

I. Well then, first, DAVID DECLARED THAT HIS INIQUITY WAS GREAT.

The word used in the original conveys the idea of quantity as well as of quality. Not simply was his sin great in its atrocity, but there was very much of it! Any one sin was great, but it was not merely one, but ten thousand times ten thousand in multitude! His sin was as great in its bulk as it was black in its heinousness. Now, I do not know, although David had one very terrible fall, that any humble-minded person here would consider himself to be superior to David. He was a man after God’s own heart and, notwithstanding the great blot upon this sun, we would not hesitate to say he is a sun for all that. For David presents a character so admirable, so all but matchless in the harmony of the different Graces that we think he certainly approaches very near to his great Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, if David felt his iniquity to be great, it would be very foul presumption in any of us to think ours to be little! At any rate, we must come out, one by one, and say, “I reckon myself to be a better man than David was,” or else we ought to subscribe heartily with our hand to the Truth of God that if David’s was great, our iniquity must be great, too!

But leaving David out of the question—not comparing ourselves with others—we will draw some few pictures by which the greatness of our iniquity may be seen. Our sin is great *when we consider against Whom it is committed*. In an army, if a soldier strikes his comrade, it is, of course, a misdemeanor. But if he should strike some petty officer, it is considered to be a more grievous offense. And if he should strike the commander-in-chief, it would become so great a crime that I know not what penalty short of death might be awarded to it! Now, in the world of morals, as God sees it, there is much difference in sin when we consider the difference in the person against whom it is committed. You and I think the worst sin is the one that hurts *us* the most!

We have heard, I daresay, the story of the lawyer who was waited upon by a farmer, who asked him what would be the penalty for a man whose horse was always going into his neighbor’s field and eating his corn. He had warned him several times and told him it was the result of his broken fence which he ought to have mended. The lawyer said, “Of

course, there would be a considerable fine, no doubt." "Well, Sir," the farmer said, "it is *your* horse that has done this." "Oh," said our friend the solicitor, "that is quite a different question. I did not know it was *my* horse before I gave my opinion." So it is, generally, with regard to anything that is done amiss—if it hurts you, or if it hurts me—we feel very indignant about it. But if it only offends the Majesty of Heaven, we make light of it! What fools we are! If it shall offend such puny, insignificant creatures as we are, there is something seriously wrong in it—but if the Divine Majesty is insulted, we pass it by as though it were a mere trifle!

There really is a difference in the sin according to the person against whom it is committed. I will put it thus. A man has just now been striking another—striking him with an intent to do him harm. "That is bad," you say. "Yes, but it was his own father that he struck." "Yes," *now* you say, "that is far worse for him to have injured the man whom he ought to have loved and honored."

So, since God is our Creator, any attack that is made upon His government, any willful violation of His Law is aggravated by the fact that we owe Him such unfounded allegiance! "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Sinners, did you ever think of this? You have offended Him who made you, in whose hands your breath is and under whose control are all your ways. When you have used profane words, it has been against the High and Lofty One, against Jehovah, who rides upon the sky and launches abroad His thunderbolts and shakes Heaven and earth with His terrible voice! Against Him, before whom the holy angels veil their faces, and humbly bow themselves, unworthy to lick the dust of His feet—it is against God that you have offended! Sinner, you think this is a little matter, but I tell you that it is the fact that makes your iniquity great!

Yet further, sin derives some degree of its sinfulness *from the fact that it is at once against a most just and equitable Law*. We sometimes read in the newspapers that persons are severely punished for offenses against the game laws of our country. Well, I suppose it is a very wicked thing to shoot another person's hares and pheasants and partridges. Were I a preserver of game, I daresay I would consider the offense of the tenant farmer who shot a bird that was feeding on his corn, to be very aggravated. As I am not, I do not particularly see its flagrant character. No doubt it is wrong, though it looks to me more like a misdemeanor than a felony. When a law is proved to be harsh and severe, there will always be some mitigation in our judgment of the culpability of breaking it. If we consider such-and-such a law hard and tyrannical, not suited to the times and out of keeping with the age, then we say, when a person breaks it, "Well, he had better not have done it—it is an offense against statute law and he ought not to have committed it." Still, we do not think it to be so black as when the offense is against a just, equitable, proper and righteous law which harmonizes with strict, unvarying equity. Now, such is the Law of God.

What can be more fitting than the law of the Ten Commandments? Infidelity itself has burned pale before those Ten Commandments. We have heard of men who have attempted to improve the Law of God by a new commandment and have found themselves unable to do it, for they perceived it to be so complete that it embraced all forms of criminality. Those who have abhorred other parts of Scripture have said, as they read the ten precepts, "These are just and righteous." They are, indeed, the fundamental stones of natural morality! They are such as even Nature, itself, would approve to be right and proper for the government of the world. Well then, Sirs, if you have broken these good commandments. If you have run your head against these holy, just, and righteous precepts, your iniquity is great! If you could turn to any Law of God, and say, "This is harsh, this is tyrannical," there might be some excuse for you—but those commandments were made for your good! If you keep them, they will bring you their own reward. If you break them, they will bring their own penalty into your body, mind and heart. Why, then, have you been so foolish as to violate them? Assuredly, in so doing, your iniquity has become heavy as a millstone and if it is about your neck when you come to die, it will sink you in the floods forever!

But, dear Friends, we ought, each of us, to remember that *our sin is all the greater because it has been committed by us*, for sometimes an offense is all the worse because of the person who has committed it. When the noble Caesar saw Brutus stab him, he said, "And you, Brutus!" There was force in his dying words, for Brutus had been his dear friend, one who owed no little to him and, surely, the Lord might say to us, when we sin, "And you, too. And you! You whom I have fed day by day. You who are clothed by My charity and nourished by My bounty! You, living in this fair province of the universe which is called the world, this beautiful fair round green earth! You—partakers of such innumerable favors—you sin against Me?" Ah, Christians, you who are Heaven's favorites, you who are allowed to enter into the Lord's cabinet councils and to understand the secrets of His Covenant, you who are Christ's own spouse, the bride of the Prince of Heaven—your sin is all the blacker because of that light of His Countenance in which it has been your privilege to walk!

But to hurry on, as I throw off these hints to be worked out in your own minds rather than to be dwelt upon in my discourse, let me remind you again that *our sin is certainly very great because of the amount of it*. Innumerable times have we transgressed. It is not as though we had done wrong *once* and then washed our hands of it. Who can count his errors? What man can tell the number of the small dust of his transgressions? As for the drops of dew twinkling in the morning light, as for the drops of the ocean making that vast flood, as for the stars of Heaven and the sand of the seashore—the incalculable number of all these sinks into insignificance when compared with the infinite host of our transgressions against You, O God of Heaven and earth! This very day, have there not been more sins than moments, more transgressions than heartbeats, more offenses than pulses? God only knows the total of the sins of man! Only His Infinite mind can reckon the iniquity that

crops forth from the polluted soil and wells up from the deep spring of depravity that is hidden in the very core of our corrupt nature! Count your sins if you can, O you children of God, and then fall on your knees, bow your heads, cover your faces and say, "Our iniquity is indeed great."

Nor is this all. We ought also to remember that *we have sinned and offended without any provocation*. When a poor wretch, pinched with hunger, snatches a loaf from a bake shop and eats it ravenously in the street, what magistrate could forbear to treat him leniently? But when a rascal does a wanton mischief without cause, or commits a willful robbery without conscience, what defense can he set up? With such utter defiance of law and order, we have patience and we say, "Let the full punishment fall upon his guilty head." And that is what you and I have done—we have sinned for sinning's sake. When we spent our money in sin, it was for that which is not bread, and our labor of iniquity was for that which did not profit us. You and I have not been gainers by all that we have done amiss. There may have been times when you had the excuse of getting something by sin, but not always. For instance, what excuse is there for swearing? Lust may plead a pleasure, wine may ease a pain, avarice has an eye to gain, but the cheap swearer, from his open sluice, lets his soul run out in sorry curses, losing all the patience he possesses for the mere sake of venting forth black and ugly words that have no meaning. This is infamous! What if I say it is infernal to sin for the mere sake of sinning? We heard of one, the other day, who said, when reproved for cursing, that he would continue to swear—yes, if he had an angel on each shoulder, he would still go on cursing! There seem to be some of this sort who, for the mere sake of dabbling in the mire, will do it and, in truth, we have all, in our time, sinned in open defiance of the Almighty and, therefore, our iniquity is heavy.

Sons of men, I put it to you, as one of yourselves and, therefore, willing to be your advocate—but I must rather take up the cause of Him against whom we have offended—what has He ever done to us that we should hate Him? He has made us, fed us, clothed us—for which of these good works do we forget Him? He has sent His Son to redeem His people—is this a cause why we should despise Him? He follows us day after day with invitations of mercy, stirs up our consciences, hedges up the road to Hell as though He would not let us perish—for which of these things do we requite Him with evil? What has the Most High done to provoke you? Has He ever done you a displeasure? In what respect has He thwarted you except for your good? What pleasure that is a real pleasure has He denied you? Is His yoke heavy? Is His burden intolerable? Are His Commandments like the whips of Solomon, or His Laws like the scorpion of Rehoboam? Has He made His little finger thicker than the wires of human law? Do you not know that men, in superstition, will make laws ten times harder than God's Laws ever were—and will keep them? It cannot, therefore, be that God has thus offended you. O why then, sons of men, do we despise our God? What can there be so good in sin that we will have it *and* God's anger with it? What can there be so sweet in Hell that we choose it and despise the

glories of Heaven? Verily, in this arrant folly, this flagrant malice, this frantic madness, our iniquity is indeed great!

Yet further, what if I should say that *we have gone on in sin after we have, some of us, known and felt the evil of it?* I speak advisedly when I appeal to almost all of you now present and ask—must not your iniquity be great because it was not done in ignorance? Many here were nursed in the lap of godliness. Your sins, therefore, are 10 times heavier than other men's! The lamp of the sanctuary lit some of us to our cradles. The hush of lullaby had the name of Jesus mingled with it. Perhaps the first song we learned to sing was concerning the children's best Friend. The first book that we began to read contained His sweet name and many were the times when we were pressed by godly ones to think of Jesus and to give our young hearts to Him. But we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness—and knowing the good from the evil, we did willfully choose to do that which is wrong. Ah, for this thing, when we have sinned against light and knowledge, does not our transgression become greater than that of the people of Tyre and Sidon who perished in their sin?

And then, when we had learned by experience, as well as by education, that sin was bitter, we still went on in it. There is a young man yonder who went astray once and smarted for it—and he thought he would never be such a fool again. But it has happened to him according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Some men seem only to get out of one ditch to roll into another! There are plenty of persons who, when they put their fingers in the fire and burn them, run and get them bound up and healed, only to go to the next fire and thrust in, not their finger, this time, but their arms up to their elbows! Take care that one of these days, Man, you do not have your body and soul consumed in that fire which can never be quenched! How foolish some are who have been in the spendthrift line! After they have emptied their pockets and found themselves beggars, they have gone to their friends who used to take a glass with them—such jolly companions, such dear friends as they used to be—but they do not know them now. "Oh, no!" they say, and give them the cold shoulder, now that their clothes begin to look a little out at elbows. I have seen these people get employment again and throw themselves out of it by their ill character. I have seen them get a respectable situation perhaps two or three times and then go and ruin themselves all over again—and still expect their friends to set them up once more—set them up on purpose that they may have the pleasure of tumbling down! When men do this so many times, certainly their iniquity becomes heavy.

I have put the case strongly concerning one or two delinquents. They are, however, only representatives of us all, for when we have smarted for an offense, we have committed it again. Burnt children are afraid of the fire, but burnt sinners are not—they will go to the fire again, like the moth which gets to the candle, singes her wings and flies off a little—but she must go again and if you lift her out of the melted grease around the light, she will fly back again the first opportunity she gets, as if she

thought it her ambition and her life's best glory to be consumed in the fire! Iniquity is indeed great when it is committed against experience! Men deliberately run upon the pikes of damnation—they destroy their own souls by a sort of spiritual suicide!

At times, men's offenses to their fellow men lose some of their guiltiness by an apology. Why, sometimes, when we have been aggrieved by some little offense and a proper apology has been promptly made, we could have wished we had never taken notice of it, for we did not like to see the good man so sorry about it. We freely forgave him, and felt as if we did not need him even to feel that he had done wrong because he took it too much to heart, so we passed over the offense because of the repentance. But how great is the guilt of that man who, having sinned, refuses to repent? And is not this exactly the case of many here present—sinning from your cradles, but never repenting? Repentance is hidden from your eyes—you go on from bad to worse, from dark to deeper stains. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin, nor the leopard his spots. You have sought no physician for your healing. You have let the deadly gangrene grow yet more putrid, until the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. Careless Sinner, I would that I could play the part of Mr. John Bunyan's Captain Boanerges and his ensign, Mr. Thunder, and run up the black colors before your eyes, bearing as the escutcheon the flaming thunderbolts of God's Justice! You who will not repent must incur the fierce wrath of God. Lo, He has bent His bow and made it ready! He has fitted His arrow to the string—He takes aim at you tonight! The arrow shall soon fly and reach your heart! Oh, that you had Grace given you to repent! O Spirit of God, break the man's heart! Take hold of Your great hammer with which You do cleave mountains and dash that heart in pieces, that the sinner may cry out, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

With some men, their iniquity becomes all the greater because *they have sinned against promises which they have made, vows which have been registered in Heaven and covenants which they have signed with the Most High*. You know who I mean. You were ill with the fever some few years ago—you were given up! You turned your face to the wall and you remember how, in the bitterness of your soul, you cried, "O God, if you will but spare me, mine shall be another and a better life for the future!" You were spared, but your life has been worse, rather than better. You remember, too, when the cholera was abroad and there were many falling on the right hand and on the left—you were terrified and alarmed—and you sought God after a sort and told Him that if He would but spare your life, that life would be spent in His service. What have you been doing since then? It is true that you sometimes go to the House of God, but it is only in the evening when you have made your money in the morning! You do not mind giving God the tail end of Sunday! The first two or three weeks after you got better, the shutters were up, there was no rioting, no swearing, no loose conversation. Your neighbors said, "What has come over the fellow? He is quite a different man." Yes, you had *another* heart for the time, but not a *new* heart—and now you are as reckless as ever.

Do you think God has forgotten your promises? Do you think that registered covenant of yours has been blotted out? No, Sinner, no! It stands fast against you to make your guilt more infamous and your transgressions more heavy. Take heed! Take heed! Take heed! When God shall hold it up against you, at the last tremendous day, you will read your doom in that broken promise—in that lie which has been uttered against the God of Grace and goodness!

Most of us, at some time or other, have sinned thus against resolutions and promises and, consequently, our iniquities are heavy. O dear Friends, I have a task too hard for me in such a subject as this! When I talk of the glories of the love of Christ, I feel at home. When I speak of the matchless Grace of the Everlasting Covenant, my heart is well at ease. But to prove man's sin heavy is a task too hard for me! Not that it is hard in itself. The evidence is clear, but to procure a conviction is the difficulty. The jury is not impartial. Your conscience is like an unjust judge. Oh, how hard it is to make any man believe himself to be so bad as the Word of God says he is! None but the Spirit of God can make a man call himself a sinner and mean it. Nothing but the Irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit can ever bring a man as low as the Word of God would have him lie. If you can feel, in your soul, tonight, that your iniquity is great, that it deserves God's wrath, displeasure and punishment—if you can pray from your very heart, "O Lord, pardon You my iniquity, for it is great"—I shall have hope of you that the first sparks of the Divine Light have fallen into your soul, never to be quenched, but to blaze out in the brightness of salvation forever!

II. I shall now turn, very briefly, to the second part of my subject—to show how THERE IS A PLEA IN THE VERY GREATNESS OF OUR SIN.

Is not this a very strange text? Look at it again. One needs to read it over 20 times. Is it really so written, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great!" Can you believe your own eyes? Imagine a prisoner at the Old Bailey pleading with the judge that he would kindly let him off because he was such a great offender! We would think that it would be a very legitimate reason why he should *not* be pardoned. The pith, however, of the whole text lies in those words which we sometimes forget to quote, "For Your name's sake." That alters it. It is now an argument—it was not before. "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

Let me show you that there is a plea here. If salvation were by merit, then, supposing all men to have fallen and none of them to have any merit, yet it would be a rule that the man who was the least offender should have the first turn at being saved. If the choice of God depended in any way upon *man's* condition, we would naturally expect that the man who had the least sin would be forgiven first, for, putting all on an equal basis in all other respects, the choice, if made at all, with reference to the man, would naturally be the choice of the man who had committed the least iniquity. But, dear Friends, please remember that in the Covenant of Christ and the way of salvation, the choice is made upon reverse principles—not according to man's merit, but according to God's Glory. The aim, end, and objective of God in salvation is to glorify His own Character! Therefore, if His choice may be said to be guided by any

principles which we can at all understand, that choice would be guided to select those who would the most magnify His Grace and glorify His own name. Well now, if God would do that great work of pardoning sin in such a way as to glorify His own name, the most fitting persons to be saved are the biggest sinners!

Let me put it thus. Here is a number of persons and they are all sick. And here is a physician who intends to get a name for himself. He is full of benevolence and kindness, but, at the same time, one part of his objective is to get a name. Now, you will perceive that in the selection of his patients, he will not pick out a man who has a sore finger, for it will never tell very much to his credit that he healed a man who had a sore finger. But there will be, perhaps, a few cases among the sick of a very extraordinary sort. Some of them will have an affliction, a disease quite unknown to the faculty. Medicines have been tried, but their cases have been so stubborn that the best doctors have given them up as hopeless. Now, the physician says, "These are the cases that I will select." Granting that he is able to cure whomever he wills, you can see that if the objective is his own glory, he would rather take those in which there is the most room for the display of the healing art than those who have the least sickness and might be the most readily cured.

Yet again. Suppose a man means to have a character for generosity. There are a number of debtors assembled and he is determined to discharge their liabilities. There is a man who owes sixpence and another who owes a pound. Well now, if he pays their debts, he will never have much credit for liberality there! But another man comes in who is head over heels in debt. What is the sum he owes? Fifty thousand pounds? Let us say a hundred thousand pounds! Let us say half a million! Well, now, here is the opportunity for the liberal man to display his liberality because here there is room for it! So is it in Divine Grace. You, proud Pharisee, come to God and say, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men." And He replies, "Then there is no room in you for My Grace to work." But yonder poor publican dares not lift so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smites upon his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" "There is a case for Me," says Sovereign Mercy—and the pardon comes to the poor sinful publican!

Mark, when I speak of sinners, I do not mean merely those who have been great sinners, or those who have been, in comparison with others, little sinners, but I mean those who *feel themselves* to be great sinners. I say the more we feel our guilt, the more fit we are for mercy. The more broken down we are with hopelessness on account of our own lost estate, the more room there is for the triumphs of Christ's Grace. Now, there is many a moral man here tonight who never offended against the laws of his land, or the laws of outward propriety, yet he feels himself to be as black as Hell. Well then, there is room in him for Grace to glorify itself! We have noticed that men of the worst character are often the most self-righteous. There is many a Pharisee whose morals would not pass muster though he vaunts his piety as a harlot flaunts her broidery and many a scamp who would be a disgrace to the meanest society if his

character were known, brazens it out as though he never had offended against a single Law of God. Again, I say you who *feel* that you are the very chief of sinners! You who groan and mourn on account of sin, be not silenced at the Mercy Seat because of the greatness of your guilt! But rather, with the inimitable skill of the Syrophenician woman, turn the very desperateness of your case into a reason why the Lord should save you!

Now tonight, upon your knees, wrestle with the God of Mercy, and say, "Pardon me, for my transgression is great. And my Hell will be great. But if You will save me, Your honor will be great! If You will redeem me, the power of Your blood will be great! If You will give me a new heart, the transforming power of Your Spirit will be great! O God, save me! God be merciful to me, a sinner!" This is, as Luther says, to cut off the devil's head with his own sword. When the devil says to you, "You are a sinner," say to him, "I am, and Christ died to save sinners." And when he says, "But you are a big sinner, you are a Jerusalem sinner, a bigger sinner than any other," say to him, "Yes, that is true, but Jesus said 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'"

I have tried, and I am trying, to preach a wide Gospel. I do not like to have a net with such big meshes that the fish get through. I think I may catch you all if the Lord wills. If the vilest are not shut out, then you are not shut out, Friends. And if you believe in Christ with all your heart, you shall be saved! But oh, what if you should say, "I care not for forgiveness. I do not want pardon, I will not seek it! I will not have it—I love my sins—I love myself"? O Sinner, then, by that deathbed of yours where you shall see your dreadful sins in another light. By that resurrection of yours where you shall see eternity to be no trifle. By that doom of yours. By the last dread thunders. By the awful sentence, "Depart, you cursed," of the Judge, I beseech you, do me but this one favor! Acknowledge that you had an invitation tonight and that it was affectionately pressed upon you. I have told you, in God's name, that your sin is not a trifle with God—that it is not a matter to be laughed at or to be whistled over. I have told you that the greatness of your sin need not shut you out. What is needed is that the Spirit of God should teach you these things in your heart. But do remember, if your ears refuse these Truths of God, and if you reject them, we are a sweet savor unto Christ as well in them that perish as in them that are saved! But woe unto you—woe unto you, who, with the Gospel ringing in your ears, go down to Hell!" Verily, verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for you! May God save you, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 10:1-15.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Let this be our "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel." Sorrows upon sorrows have come to the Lord's ancient people

even down to this day—and they have been scattered and peeled, and rent and torn in almost every land. Who does not pity their griefs and woes? Let it be our heart's desire and daily prayer for Israel that they may be saved through faith in the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.* In Paul's day, they were most diligent in the observance of every form of outward devotion—and many of them sincerely desired to be right with God. But they did not know how to attain the desired end.

3. *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* Perhaps I am addressing some who are very anxious to be right with God. They are by no means hypocrites, but are really awakened to a sense of their danger, yet they cannot get peace of mind. And the reason is that, like the Israelites, they are "going about to establish their own righteousness." "Going about"—that is to say, struggling, striving, searching, worrying themselves to get a righteousness of their own which they will never obtain—and being ignorant of "the righteousness of God" which is completed in Christ and which is freely bestowed upon all who believe in Him. Alas, they "have not submitted themselves unto this righteousness of God" and there is a kind of hidden meaning in the Apostle's expression. They are so proud that they will not submit to be saved by the righteousness of another, even though that other is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. Yet this is the main point—the submission of our proud will to the righteousness of God.

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* Christ is the ultimatum of the Law of God and when we go to the Law, accepted and protected by Him, we present to the Law all that it can possibly demand of us. Christ has fulfilled the Law on behalf of all who believe in Him, so that its curse is abolished for all of us who approach it through Christ.

5-9. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven; (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* "The righteousness which is of faith" is quite another thing from the righteousness which is of the Law of God. It is not a thing of *doing*, and living by doing, but of *trusting*, and living forever by trusting. What are you doing—you who would gladly clamber up to the stars, or you who would plunge into the abyss? There is nothing for you to do! There is nothing for you to feel! There is nothing for you to be in order that God

may accept you! But, just as you are, if you will receive Christ into your heart and confess Him with your mouth, you shall be saved! Oh, this glorious way of the salvation of sinners—so simple, yet so safe—so plain, yet so sublime—for me to lay aside my own righteousness and just take the righteousness of Christ and be covered with it from head to foot! I may well be willing to lay aside *my* own righteousness, for it is a mass of filthy rags, fit only to be burned!

10-14. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How can there be true prayer where there is no faith? How shall I truly pray to God if I do not really believe in Him? “For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

14. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?* We must know what it is that we are to believe—and knowing it we shall be helped by the Holy Spirit to believe it.

14. *And how shall they hear without a preacher?* If the Word of the Lord does not get to a man either by the living voice, or by the printing press, which often takes the preacher’s place, how is he to believe it? You see here what I have often called “the whole machinery of salvation.” First comes the preacher proclaiming the Gospel. Then comes the sinner listening to it. Then comes the hearer *believing* it and, in consequence, calling upon the name of the Lord as one who is saved with His everlasting salvation!

15. *And how shall they preach, except they are sent?* Here is the great engine at the back of all the machinery—God sending the preacher—God blessing the Word—God working faith in the heart of them that hear it!

15. *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

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

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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1914.

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

***“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,
and He will show them His Covenant.”
Psalm 25:14.***

THIS text is a great deep, but at the outset we must say that we have neither the time nor the skill at this time to attempt to fathom it. Our business just now is not so much to dive into its profound mystery, as to skim over its sparkling surface, to touch it with our wing as the swallow sometimes does the brook, leaving its soundings still unexplored. The current of thought here is too deep and too broad for the short meditation of a weekday evening. But where the very surface is rich, as it were, with “dust of gold,” we cannot fail, if God the Holy Spirit blesses us, to be enriched by even the superficial reflections we may gather up from it.

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Mark the word used—“THE LORD”—Jehovah in the original—the I AM THAT I AM. The very name is associated in the thought of every right-minded person with awe. Is it not the name of the one only living and true God, and none who take it in vain shall be held guiltless? The gods of the heathen are no gods, but our God made the heavens! It is by Him that the heavens were stretched out as a curtain and as a tent to dwell in. He is the Preserver of all things. In Him “we live, and move, and have our being.” As we find Him manifested, both in the book of Nature and in the Book of Revelation, He is a God “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.” The Lord is a good God, and we cannot think of Him without awe. If you have ever heard His voice in pealing thunder or the rolling avalanche, or if you have seen the flashes of His spear in the lightning of the tempest, or if you have marked His going upon the mighty waves at the tempestuous sea, you must have felt within yourselves that He is high and mighty—in truth, a terrible God! Yet it seems from our text that there are some persons in the world in whom all emotions of dread in connection with God are suppressed by feelings of quite another kind. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, they have evidently passed through the clouds and have come to the other side of the darkness, for “the secret of the Lord is with them.” Before Him goes the pestilence. And hot burning coals are cast forth at His feet, but these persons

must evidently have been preserved from the devouring pestilence by some mysterious power—and have escaped those burning coals by some gracious deliverance! They have come into familiarity with God! They know His secret and He shows to them what He does not make known to other men—His Covenant—the counsel of His will! There are such persons in the world, now, to whom the Eternal Majesty is so tempered by Infinite Mercy that they can devoutly sing—

***“The God who rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
Who rides upon the stormy skies,
And manages the seas.
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our Love.
He shall send down His heavenly powers,
To carry us above.”***

Think of “the Lord,” then, according to this grand revelation of His name—Jehovah. Oh, that your thoughts of Him might bow you down with the lowly worship of the bright cherubim, and make you veil your faces as they do! Oh, that you might be led to feel how great God is and how little you are! Oh, that Grace were now given you to draw near to God and that the passage on which we have alighted might become a place of communion with Him!

Observe, then, first of all, *a glorious privilege which may be possessed.* Secondly, *a favored class of people who do possess it.* And thirdly, *a choice and peculiar manifestation which God makes to them.*

I. THERE IS A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE WHICH MAY BE POSSESSED.

The word, “secret,” here might, with greater propriety, be translated, “friendship.” “The friendship of the Lord is with them that fear Him,” but it also signifies in its root, that conversation which familiar friends hold with each other. Conversation in its most cherished exercise, that homely conversation which springs from mutual confidence and is, on the part of one man, the unbosoming of himself to another, is thus implied. If I may open it up in a phrase, it means, “The amity of true friendship.” Such is the favor vouchsafed to those who fear God. But taking the word as it stands, (for I dare say the translators weighed all these variations well before they chose the one before us), we will endeavor to give amplitude to the sense, while we keep to the word, “secret.”

Beyond a doubt, then, *those who fear God have the secret of His Presence revealed to them.* If a man rambles amidst the wonders of Nature with an atheistic heart, he may look up to the snowy peaks and down again upon the sweet grassy slopes. He may listen to the music of the waterfall. He may stand and admire the eagle as it soars aloft, or watch the wild goat as it leaps from crag to crag—and all these things may be to him but so much animated Nature—matter in so many various shapes and nothing more! I suppose it is possible for men to be familiar with all that is beautiful and sublime in the world of Nature, that “living visible

garment of God,” and yet never catch the secret of His Presence, the traces of His handiwork, or the whisper of His voice. How different it is with the man who fears God, who has bowed before God’s Justice and seen it satisfied through the atoning Sacrifice of Calvary! Such a man, as he looks upon the things that are made, those silent witnesses of the eternal power and Godhead, says, “My Father made them all!”

“Not hear God?” he says, “I as distinctly heard God speak in the thunderclap as I have heard my own father’s voice!” Not see God? Why, the veil seems thin that hides His glorious features while the works shine transparent that unveil His wondrous attributes! So that to the Christian it becomes a moral phenomenon that there should be people in the world who can survey the gorgeous plan, the unfailing order and the ample furniture, as it were, of this earth, with its wonderful adaptation of the means to the end, and then peer upwards to the heavens so grandly garnished, and contemplate the celestial bodies, ever restless, ever orderly in their motions, yet fail to apprehend the greatness, the wisdom, the goodness of the Creator! To us He is apparent everywhere—

***“These are Your works, Father of good, Almighty!
Yours this universal frame!”***

He knows, he feels that fallen as he is, he can, while walking through this world, commune with God as Adam did before Paradise was lost to him. The secret of God’s Presence is with them that fear Him. We have heard of some who have said that they have never had any consciousness of the existence of spirit. Very likely. Very likely. I do not suppose, either, that pigs or asses, or any dumb driven cattle ever had any spiritual apprehensions! But some of us have a very clear consciousness thereof and, as honest men giving testimony, we claim to be believed. No, what is more, we are certain that we have not only a consciousness of the existence of spirit, but of a great and all-pervading Spirit we have a like clear knowledge! We cannot be mistaken about it! We are as sure that there is a God as we are that there is a world. No, sometimes more persuaded of the one than of the other! It is a part of our real consciousness. We have come to feel it, not merely in our imaginative moods, but when all our faculties were in full play—the secret of the existence of the pervading Presence of God is with us if we fear Him! No, it is not only in the open fields, amidst the enchanting scenery of the world, but much more in shady nooks and secluded places that we have found that Presence!

Some months ago, I sat by the side of a woman who had not left her bed for several years. It was in a sloping room at the top of a cottage. The only walls were just the plastering that roofed it in. The room was hung round with texts of Scripture, which she had painted as she had been lying there. She was always full of pain—restless nights and weary days were her constant lot. When I sat down to talk to her, she said, “You

cannot tell how the Presence of God has made this room seem to me, Sir! It has been such a palace that I have not envied kings upon their thrones when I have enjoyed the visits of Christ here. Though I have not known a wakeful hour free from pain for years, I assure you this chamber has been a very Heaven to me.” She was not an excitable, hysterical, silly, weak-minded woman. Far from that, she was as simple and sincere a creature as you might have found in fifty miles’ walk. The daughter of an honest, smock-frocked laborer and his quiet, godly wife. There was this poor woman declaring that God was ever in her room. As I talked with her, I began to feel that her witness was true, and to think that I had not felt more conscious of the Presence of the Almighty among the baseless, boundless mountains, or upon the watery plain of the vast ocean, where mighty waves in ceaseless concert roll, or even in the midst of the vast congregation, when on the Sabbath our solemn hymns, the outflow of feeling hearts, have swelled to Heaven with music such as pleases well the ear of God! Thus I did then perceive the mysterious secret of His Presence when I lingered by the lowly couch of His suffering saint! Why, had some skeptic called in there and merely suggested that “there is no God,” we would have laughed him to scorn, or else, perhaps, our pity for this ignorance might have turned our laughter into tears. Truly the secret of God’s Presence everywhere is with them who fear Him. They trust Him, they love Him, they lean upon Him and they get to feel that He is—and they have communion with Him as a man communes with his friend!

And this secret of God’s Presence *leads to the discerning of His hand*. To the man who looks no higher than second causes, things that baffle his shallow wits like a continued drought in spring, or heavy rain in harvest, seem alike dreadful and bewildering. Though he cannot understand, perhaps, the laws of fluidity, he is likely enough to murmur at the dispensations that frustrate his conjectures. But the Christian says, “I believe that God ordains every drop of rain, or withholds every genial shower when He binds up the bottles of Heaven. I can find philosophy in faith.” And here he is right. It has well been said, “There is more wisdom in a whispered prayer than in the ancient lore of all the schools.” And wonderful it is how this simple, silent trust gives the Christian calmness and composure. At sea, when the tempest rages and the billows roar, the man who knows of nothing but the devouring element beneath and around him, full of alarm, may sigh to the winds. But the Christian who firmly believes that God holds the sea in the hollow of His hands and, that “all must come, and last, and end, as shall please his heavenly Friend,” waits the leisure of the righteous God, commits his way unto Him, assured that He has control over the storm and fulfils His great decrees unmoved by threatening clouds or scolding winds. Faith feeds his fortitude! Listening with the ears of faith, he constantly hears the foot-

falls of Jehovah. In the loneliness of his sorrow, he catches a sweet whisper, saying to him, "It is I, be not afraid." The Divine Presence and the Divine hand, mysteriously hidden though they are, from all mortal eyes, are discerned by such as live in fellowship with God, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Hence it is that *the child of God carries on a secret conversation with Heaven*. See him on his knees—he talks with God, he pours out his heart before the Lord. And in return—whether the world chooses to believe it, or not, it is a matter of fact with us—in return the great Invisible Spirit pours into the praying heart a stream of sacred comfort, keeps it in its time of trouble and gives it to rejoice in its moments of sadness. Oh, some of you are living witnesses that God talks with men! Had you never talked with Him, you would not be qualified to speak upon this question, but knowing that He hears you, and being conscious that He also answers you and speaks to you, you can declare and rejoice in the declaration that the secret of the Lord in this respect is with you. Why, the Christian makes communications to God of such a sort as he would not venture to make to his fellow men. I consider the confession of sins to a priest most degrading to that priest. To make his ear the common sewer of all the filth of a parish is horrible—and for any man to tell his sin at all to another is depraving to his own mind. But to tell it to God is a different matter, to lay bare his bosom, to let its inmost secrets be exposed to the great Searcher of Hearts, to pour out what one cannot say in words, nor even perhaps convey with signs before the great eye which still sees, the great Searcher who discerns it all—oh, this is blessed! Every child of God can say, when he is in a right state, that there is no reserve or disguise in the dealings of his soul with God! Is there a care which I dare not cast on Him? Is there a sin which I would not humbly and tearfully confess before Him? Is there a need for which I would not seek relief from Him? Is there a dilemma in which I would not consult Him? Is there anything so confidential that I may not divulge to man, but which I may not breathe out to my God? Oh, when we are in spiritual health, we do verily pour our hearts before the Lord to the very dregs! We wear our heart upon our sleeve as we draw near to the Most High. I tell Him all my woes and weaknesses, all my sorrows and sins, likewise, so my secret is with Him. Then the Lord is pleased in return to manifest Himself unto His people. He shows to His trustful saints what He never shows to faithless sinners. When the sinner reads the Bible, he sees only the letter—that is all he can see—but the Christian sees the Spirit of the Word! He perceives that "within this awful volume lies the mystery of mysteries"—and he is one of those—

***"Happiest of the human race,
To whom their God has given Grace,
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch to force the way."***

Thus he enters into the secret chamber of Revelation, while the unconverted, the unregenerated, the unsanctified, stand in the outside court and find no entrance within the veil. The heart of God is poured out into the Christian's heart, so far as the Infinite can disclose itself to the finite. And as we tell the Lord what we are, He is pleased to tell us what He is. Surely, dear Friends, as these intercommunications go on, *it would be hard to say how richly the inmost secrets of God may become known to His privileged people.* Shall I be understood if I say that man may know a great deal more than he thinks he knows? He may know more of God than he knows he knows, for it is one thing to know, and another thing to know that we know! Do you notice how John says, "That we may know that we know Him"?—as if we might know Him and yet be hardly able to recognize how much we know Him. Now, many a time you have known the secret decrees of God, though you have not known that you knew them. "Oh," you say, "how is that?" Well, God decreed, purposed and determined to save such-and-such a soul. You felt an irresistible impulse to go and pray for that soul as you had never prayed before. You mentioned that particular person by name before God and then you went out and exercised all the spiritual Grace you had in order to bring that soul to the knowledge of the Truth of God—and God blessed your endeavor and that soul was saved. Now, how was this? Why, the secret purpose of God had been made to act mysteriously upon you! You became God's instrument—His conscious instrument in the fulfillment of it—and thus you were made privy to the decree, though scarcely aware that you were so!

I think there is such a harmony between the feeling of Christians and the purposes of God that you and I can never tell where these two unite, or where they separate. It often seems as if the Lord said to His people, "Now, I have ordained such-and-such things—in the volume of My Book they are written—and you shall desire and purpose just such things in your heart! And so the things that are in your heart shall carry out the things that are in My Book—I will not let you know it so as to go and tell it to others, but I will make you so know it that you will go and act upon it! I will let the secret of the Lord be with you." We know not how often God gives His people premonitions of what He is about to do, nor how frequently! Unknown to ourselves, we take a course of action which is precisely the right course, without our knowing why we took it—only that we are led and guided by the Holy Spirit into such a track. I believe that this is especially the case with the ministry of the Word. I have sometimes been very sharply taxed about this matter. I was, a few days ago, upbraided by a good soul for exposing all her faults from the pulpit! I have been, not merely now and then, but very often thought by some people to be so dreadfully personal that they did not know how they could bear it—and yet I never saw those people, except from the pulpit,

and did not know anything at all about them! The Word of God is quick and powerful, and “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” When, therefore, we ask God to direct us in speaking His Word, it is no marvel that the effect is searching! Ah, and did we always, with all our hearts, give ourselves up to the motions of His Holy Spirit, we would be led and guided in a mysterious manner which we, ourselves, would scarcely understand—but it would make full proof of the fact that the “secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

I will venture to say that *the Christian gets to know more of God, of the real Essence of God, by Divine Grace than all the philosophies in the world could ever have taught him.* I read of God that He is a loving Father, that He is gracious towards the children of men. Now, if I fear Him with a filial reverence, He disposes me, by His Grace, to love the souls of men—He makes me tender and compassionate. Thus I get to apprehend, by a devout sympathy, something of what His love, and tenderness, and compassion must be. To meditate upon the attributes of God is one means of seeking knowledge, but to be conformed to His image is quite another way of understanding Him. Not till God makes you like Himself can you know what He is! In proportion, then, as we grow in Grace, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit more abundantly, we shall be more and more admitted into the secret of the Lord. The day is coming, Beloved, when we shall know more of God by our hearts—to say nothing of our heads, which probably never will be able to find out the Almighty to perfection—we shall know more of God by our hearts than we ever thought it possible to know, because our hearts shall be filled with Him! Everything obnoxious to Him shall be chased out and we shall be like His only-begotten Son, dwelling in His Light and basking in His Love forever! “The secret of the Lord,” as to His very Character, “is with them that fear Him.” As they thus go from strength to strength, their heart pulsates with a love like the Divine Love. Their souls yearn towards sinners with a benevolence like the Divine Benevolence. They begin to make sacrifices comparable, in kind, though not in degree, to the great Sacrifice of God when He spared not His only-begotten Son. Their hearts move. Their spirits yearn. They cry over souls, as God is said to cry over them. “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together.” Whenever God would picture Himself to us, He uses words suitable to our nature. But oh, how passing wonderful shall it be when God shall be seen in us, and we shall see God in ourselves—and so shall see God! That blessed promise, “The pure in heart shall see God,” is but another rendering of our text—“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” I wish it were in my power to explore this testimony of the Lord more fully and expound it more clearly, but for the present I

must leave these few simple thoughts with you and pass on to observe that we have—

II. A REFERENCE TO A FAVORED CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS.

A peculiar privilege is conferred on a peculiar people, for it seems that the secret of the Lord is with some men, but not with others. Who are they who possess this sacred gift? A great outcry has been raised in this country of late about class and class interests. In our manufacturing districts, particularly, the rights of the upper class, who find the capital, and the claims of the working class, who bring their skill and labor into the market, are paraded before us in hot debates which often lead to an angry lock-out on the part of the employers, or a sullen strike on the part of the employed. Such feuds seldom bring much credit to either party. A great deal may be said concerning some of each to their praise, and not a little concerning some of both to their censure. So long as the struggle lasts, it must cause much heart-burning. I would the day were come when all this class talk was over, that we felt and acknowledged the common ties and mutual obligations by which all men depend upon all men—each class being dependent for its welfare and prosperity upon each other class, even as—“God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth.” Still, there always will be a favored class. God has so ordained it. But let me say they will neither be accepted because they are rich, nor rejected because they are poor. The favored class before the Lord *has nothing to do with any position in society!*—

**“None are excluded then, but those,
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”**

Neither has this secret of the Lord anything to do with education. It is not with every Oxford graduate—it is only with a very few of them! The secret of the Lord is not with every Cambridge M.A. nor with every man who has taken his degree at any university. You may read the Scriptures in the original languages. With Hebrew and Greek you may be familiar. Excellent and profitable studies they are, but you cannot discover the secret of the Lord by mere classical attainments. No mathematical researches or astronomical observation can discover it to you. In vain does one mount to Heaven and thread the spheres! Alike in vain does another walk the earth and beg the old rocks to tell him what happened before Adam held the lease of its broad acres, or tilled its soil! No, it is beyond the province of human learning, as it is foreign to the privilege of creature rank. Some people think that the secret of the Lord is lodged in mystic rites and draped in gorgeous ceremonies. There is among us a sect of ritualists who professes to have acquired it. They pretend to derive it from some man in lawn sleeves who put his hand on their heads! And if they cannot exactly communicate it, themselves, yet they can

communicate a great deal, for they affirm that every little child sprinkled by them becomes, without more ado, a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! With their guild I have no fellowship—of their weird arts I know little. Still, they say it is so—and it is all right with the little ones, no doubt, if they die in infancy, for are they not buried in consecrated clay? Listen to these gentlemen, these “successors of the Apostles,” these men who have “gifts” which empower them to declare and pronounce absolution and remission of sins! Do you hear the Gospel from them? Well you may from some of them, but then they tell you that they do not believe in the literal construction of the words they are paid to repeat, so they deliberately utter a lie! Or listen to others of them. Do they give you the Gospel? No, they display themselves in petticoats, embroidered vestments and such apparel as it were unlawful to appear in, save only when they are acting in their ecclesiastical theatres! You get no Gospel truth from them, nothing but priestcraft from beginning to end! Were they honest, they would go at once to Babylon, to Rome, to the Mother of Abominations, and consort with their own kindred! Thus we say the rite of ordination confers no privileges, and restrains no abuses! It does not teach a man the secret of the Lord, for the best ordained priest in England may still be as ignorant of God, our enemies, themselves, being judges, as if he had never been ordained at all.

To whom, then, is it given to know the secret of the Lord, but to those who fear Him and hallow His name? To be conscious that I have sinned, to be humbled before God on account of it, to behold Jesus Christ as the way of Atonement, to accept Christ as my Savior, to come to God, blessing Him that I am saved through His dear Son—to feel a love to God because of His Grace to me, to yield up myself to His service, by His Holy Spirit to be led to live to His Glory—this it is to fear Him and thus it is that His secret is with me! “Why,” says one, “then the secret of the Lord may be with any poor servant girl!” Bless the Lord it may! “Oh, then,” says another, “the secret of the Lord may be with any humble workman, even though he is an illiterate and uneducated man!” Yes, certainly it may! “Then,” says yet another, “what becomes of the priesthood?” Why, I answer, we are all made priests! If we fear the Lord, we are admitted and initiated into the secret mysteries of religion—we become instructed in the way of the Lord, the Holy Spirit having promised that He will teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatever Christ has told us. Though we cannot claim rank, nor wealth, nor diploma, we can yet humbly say, “The secret of the Lord is with us, for He has taught us, by His Grace, how to live upon Him, how to trust Him, how to serve Him.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

Do you answer to this description, my dear Hearers? Do you walk in the fear of the Lord? Says one, “I am a member of a Dissenting Church.”

I do not inquire about that, for it has nothing to do with the secret. Do you fear God, I ask you? "Well," says another, "I have always done my duty ever since I can remember, from my youth up." That is your duty toward man, and it is well that you should never neglect it. But do you fear the Lord? Is the Lord the subject of your thoughts, the object of your love? And do you, therefore, revere and worship Him? If so, the promise is yours and the privilege shall not be withheld from you. "I want to know," says one, "which is right among all the contending sects." Well, go to the Bible—search the Scriptures—yet not as one who is proud of his own wits, but rather as one who fears the Lord greatly and inquires at His holy oracle prayerfully. Then, although you may not find every knotty point solved, or every quibble settled, you shall surely find this saying good, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." Come to the Lord for instruction and there is nothing in His Word which He will keep back from you any more than from others, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." And come to the Lord for guidance and you shall not be left in doubt what fellowship of Believers to join, for, "it shall come to pass that in what tribe the stranger sojourns, there shall you give him his inheritance, says the Lord God." The last thing we have to notice is—

III. THE CHOICE AND PECULIAR MANIFESTATIONS WHICH GOD MAKES TO HIS PEOPLE.

He will show them His Covenant. What a soft, sweet, encouraging assurance this Covenant gives us! To see God in Covenant is to find Grace in His eyes. To serve a Covenant God is perfect freedom and exquisite delight. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. Luther was known to say, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." The fear with which we think of God is all terror, dread and fright—in which we exceedingly tremble and quake until He unveils Himself in this mellow light of the Covenant of peace! For what could the vision do but scare me to destruction? But God, in the Covenant of His dear Son, is the hope, the desire, the delight of everyone that is godly—and their fear is not that of horror, but that of homage! What, then, does God teach His people His Covenant? Much every way. He shows them that His Covenant is *everlasting*. It was made in Christ before the world began. It abides steadfast and will forever remain unchangeable. So sure is it, that every blessing it provides is unconditional and irrevocable, being entailed upon all those who have an interest in its gracious provisions! He teaches them the fullness of this Covenant, that it contains all that is necessary for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. He teaches them the freeness of this Covenant—that it was made with them in Christ Jesus, not because of their good works, but because of the abounding of His Grace towards them. He teaches them that this Covenant is not the result of their tears or vows, their penitence or prayer, but that it is the *cause* of all these—

ordered in all things and sure, it comprises all that their needs could lack, and all that their hearts could crave—it is all their salvation and all their desire! The Lord then shows His people that this Covenant was made on their behalf. Ah, there is the beauty of it!

Each one of the blood-bought trophies of mercy is led to see that the Covenant was made with David's Lord for him. So each heir of Heaven sets to his seal that God is true and makes David's saying his own—"Though my house is not so with God, yet He has made *with me* an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." He also shows His people that this Covenant is made with them by Sacrifice through the precious blood of Jesus, wherein God smells a sweet savor of rest. No Covenant could be of use to them, except it were a Covenant made with blood and based on propitiation. They understand that the old Covenant of Works failed because the first Adam was not able to carry out his part of it. God spoke to Adam after this manner, "If you will be obedient, you and your children shall be happy." That, "if," proved fatal. Adam could not observe the condition. The Second Covenant is on another footing. It was made with Christ. "If You will be obedient, You and those in You shall be blessed." Christ was obedient, He kept the Law. He suffered to the death His Father's will—and we come, without an, "if," or a, "but," to inherit the blessing which Christ has merited for us! Now it is no more, "If you do this, I will do that." It is, "You *shall* do this and I *will* do that." "A new heart *will* I give you; and a right spirit *will* I put within you; you shall repent of sin, you shall follow in My ways; you shall love Me; you shall serve Me; you shall persevere in holiness; and I will bless you." There is not an, "if," nor a, "but," nor a, "perhaps" to foul the stream of God's loving kindness! The Covenant was made with every elect soul in Christ beyond the hazard of a doubt, and beyond the chance of a forfeiture!

Oh, Soul, has God ever shown you this Covenant? Do I hear anyone murmur that it is a horrible Doctrine? Then I am quite certain he has never been shown it. Or do I hear another affirm that were he to believe it, he would live in sin? I think very likely he would. I do not doubt it. To sin is your propensity, whatever you believe! But mind this, I do not exhort you to believe in that which has never been revealed to you, and has nothing to do with you. But yet another voice greets my ear—it is that of a penitent who says—"I come to Christ just as I am. I welcome the promise! I thank God there is now nothing left for me to do in order to make the promise sure, or to make the Covenant fast! I am a poor, lost, undone soul and throw myself at the foot of the bloody Cross. I look up to the Savior and say, "Jesus, I trust You to save me. I altogether trust You. I believe You have saved me—saved me in such a way that I can never be lost, for the Covenant that was made with me never can be broken and I shall never be cast away."

Surely, then, dear Friend, you have no wish to tamper with the lusts of the flesh, or to wallow in uncleanness! The Doctrine does not instigate you to live in sin! You would be a monster, indeed, if it did! No, you will say, "If God has made a Covenant with me, saved me from the curse, and endowed me with blessing—out of gratitude to Him, what is there I can render to Him for all His benefits? Nothing shall be too hard, nothing too heavy—

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

Let slaves go and work under the rod of the taskmaster if they will! Let the sons of the bondwoman pour contempt on the inheritance of the seed of promise if they like, but a seed shall serve Him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation! The child of God has been shown the Covenant—therefore he knows he shall never be cast out of the family, for the love of the Father towards him will never change. He cannot love us more—He will not love us less. Such love in Him begets more love in us. What manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

I can only pray that some hearts may be led to look to Jesus, that they may discover the choice secret. Christ is not only a party to the Covenant and the Representative of the Covenant, but He is the very impersonation of the Covenant itself! "I will give *Him*," says the Lord, "To be a Covenant for the people." Oh, if you have looked to Christ, you need not despair! He is holy! He is true! He has the key of David which can unlock the secret treasury in which are stored all Covenant blessings. Fear Him! It is the beginning of wisdom. Trust Him! It is the first breath of faith! Desire Him as newborn babies crave milk. Oh, that the fear of the Lord may haunt you through the watches of the night, and abide with you all the day long. So may the Lord bless you now and forever. Amen.

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

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

A TROUBLED PRAYER

NO. 741

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

“Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.”
Psalm 25:18.

IF this Psalm were, indeed, written by David at the time when his son Absalom had raised the rebellion against him, we can readily understand the distinction which he draws between his “affliction,” and his “pain.” It is a great “affliction” to have a son become a rebel and that subjects who owed so much to their monarch should become traitors against his gentle government. “Pain” was the acute sensation which David’s own heart experienced as the result of such calamity. He knew—

***“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child.”***

None of us can guess the “pain” which David must have felt from the “affliction” of having such a son as Absalom, and the “pain” of mind, again, which he felt in being betrayed by his familiar counselor, Ahithophel, and in being forsaken by his subjects who in former days had honored him and rejoiced in him. He asked the Lord, therefore, to look not only upon the trouble, but also upon the misery which the trouble caused him. “If needs be,” says the Apostle, “we are in heaviness through manifold temptations”—as if not only the temptations were to be observed, but also the heaviness consequent thereof. So here we may bring before God’s notice not only our trial, but the inward anguish which the trial occasions us.

I can understand, also, why David should add, “And forgive all my sins,” because he knew that the revolt of Absalom was mysteriously connected with the Divine purpose as a *chastisement* for his sin with Bathsheba. He recollected how Nathan had told him that he should have war all the days of his life—and now he remembered it all—the bitterness of gall sickened his soul as he remembered that sin which had once been so sweet to his taste. He went back to the fatal day and the tears stood in his eyes as he thought of all the filth and guilt of his conduct—what a traitor he had been to Uriah—how he had dishonored the name of God in the midst of the whole land!

Well might he have said, “Lord, when You look upon this well-deserved affliction, and when You see the pain with which it brings my soul, then, though it will bring my sin to Your mind as it does to mine, yet let forgiveness blot it out. Yes, not for that sin only, but for all others that have preceded or followed it grant me a gracious pardon—forgive, I pray You, all my sins.”

1. It is well for us, dear Friends, WHEN OUR PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SORROWS ARE LINKED WITH PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SINS—WHEN, BEING UNDER GOD’S HAND, OUR SOUL IS NOT WHOLLY TAKEN UP WITH OUR PAIN, BUT WE ALSO REMEMBER OUR OFFENSES AGAINST GOD. I do not think it would have been worth one’s while to have preached from the text if it had only said, “Remember my affliction and my pain.” But when it is, “Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins,” the two things put together are very instructive.

Let us seek to get some edifying counsel from them. Our sorrows are profitable when they bring our sins to our minds. Some sorrows may do this by giving us lime for thought. A sickbed has often been a place of repentance. While the man was occupied with his daily work and the active labor of his hands, or could be from morning till night at business, sin escaped his notice. He was too busy to care about his soul. He had too much to do with earth to remember Heaven. But now he cannot think of business, or if he does he can get no profit or satisfaction from all his thoughts—now he cannot go to his work but must lie upon his bed until his health is recovered.

And oftentimes the quiet of the night, or the stillness of the day which once was given up to toil and drudgery has been blessed of God to work a solemn stillness in the soul in which the voice of God has been heard, saying, “Turn unto Me! Turn unto Me! Why will you die?” Some of you do not often hear God’s voice. You are in the midst of the clitter-clatter of this great city and the roar and din of it are so perpetually ringing in your ears that the still small voice of your heavenly Father you do not hear. And it may, perhaps, be a great mercy to you if, in your own house, or in the ward of an hospital, you may be compelled to hear Him say, “Turn unto Me! Turn unto Me! For I will have mercy upon you!”

Other afflictions remind us of our sins because they are the direct result of transgression. The profligate man, if God should bless those scourges of the body which have even sprung from his own vices, may find the disease to be a cure for the misdemeanors which produced it. We ought to thank God that He will not let us sin without chastisement. If any of you are sinning and find pleasure without penalty in the self-indulgence, do not congratulate yourself upon the apparent immunity with which you violate the laws of virtue—for that is the badge of the reprobate.

To sin and never smart is the mark of those who will be damned. Their smart, like their doom, being in reserve and stored up for sorer judgment. But if any man among you here is now smarting for the sin he has committed, I will not say, let him be hopeful, but I will say, let him be *thankful*! Let him remember that evidently God has not quite given him up—He has touched him with the rod, but He has not thrown the reins upon his neck! He has put a curb in his mouth and He is pulling him up

sharply. God grant that it may be blessed to turn him from his wild career.

The extravagant man who has spent his money and finds himself in rags ought to look upon his sins through his rags. His present poverty may well remind him of his previous prodigality. The man who has lost a friend through ingratitude and now needs a friend but cannot find one, may thank himself for it, and be reminded of his baseness by his bankruptcy. There are many other sins, though we have not time to mention them, which are evidently the fathers of sorrows. And when you get the sorrowful offspring you should think of the guilty parentage—and if you would be rid of the child, go to God and ask Him to deliver you from the sin and divorce you from the transgression that produced it.

Other sorrows, likewise, remind us of our sins because they bear their likeness. It has been well remarked that oftentimes when God would punish us He just leaves us to eat the fruit of our own ways. He has nothing more to do than to let the seed which we have sown ripen, and then allow us to eat it. How often in reading the Holy Scriptures may you observe the quality of men's sins in the nature of their punishment! Jacob deceived his father, and what then? Why, he was always being deceived all his life long!

He was a great bargain-maker, so everybody cheated him, of course! He would use his wily cleverness and as he would be clever and supplant, he had to become a dupe and be supplanted. That was the misery of his life because it was the besetting sin of his character. Now when a man loses money, loses it continually—notwithstanding all the skill and efforts he can employ—I would have him ask himself whether there may not have been some sin in connection with his money which has brought the punishment on him. He may have loved it too much! He may have obtained it in an illegal way! He may not have used it when he had it in a proper spirit—it may have been dangerous for it to remain with him lest it should have corroded his heart by its own cankering.

The losses a man suffers in business, I doubt not in many cases, and I am sure of it in some cases, ought to make him look earnestly at the way in which they came upon him. When we have heard of some who have gained wealth by one speculation and have lost it again by another speculation, I think it ought to be made the subject of enquiry with them how far their dealings were lawful, if indeed it were lawful for them to have entered upon such traffic in any shape or form. The question must be asked whether God may not have had a controversy with them in their counting-house. Is this an obligation with money?

Surely it often is so with the rearing of your family. If your affliction should come through your children turning out evil in life, or through what is a far lighter affliction—though, perhaps, you may not think it so—through your children dying in infancy, you may say to yourselves, “How have I behaved towards those children?” Is my child willful and

disobedient? Then how about the training and the management that I have observed? Is my child perverse, vicious, worldly? How about my example as it was seen at the family hearth? May not my boy's sins be only a reproduction of my own? Might not the fledglings that I have hatched roost in my family, disturb my peace, and bring me sorrow? May not my daughter's stubbornness of heart be only my own obduracy that breaks out in the girl?

Might I not hear the voice of God saying to me, "See how you treated Me, and is it not meet you should eat the fruit of your own ways? You are a father, and how do you like to be thus treated—to be slighted in your discipline, and your affections set at nothing?" So I might continue, passing from our households to our respective positions in society. We sometimes find ourselves unable to maintain our station. With chagrin and mortification we have to take a lower place, and may we not then ask, Did we acquit ourselves before God in all that we might have done in our former standing? Did the rank we held elevate us and puff us up with vanity?

At any rate, we may bring ourselves to great searching of heart. When sorrow takes any particular shape it suggests its own particular questions. The problem must be studied to get at the solution. With regard to sickness, I am not certain whether the chastening hand of God for sin ought not to be more immediately recognized than is now, for the most part, common among us. In one sense God never *punishes* His people for sin. There is nothing vindictive in the rod He uses, and nothing expiatory in the sufferings they endure. God's redeemed people were punished in Christ and it cannot be, therefore, that the penalty of the Law is exacted on them a second time.

Yet there is a sense in which the Church of God, under paternal discipline, is continually exercised with chastisement. Do you remember the Apostle's words about the Corinthian Church? They had fallen into a very lax method of receiving the Lord's Supper. They brought, everyone, his own bread and wine. Some of them were full, and others were hungry, beside which, other breaches of Church order were rife among them. And the Apostle says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Therefore I gather that sickness, at any rate, in the *early* Church, was likely to be sent by God upon the members for ecclesiastical offenses. I am not sure whether in like manner sacred corrections, though in a way not so easily discoverable, may not still be in exercise among the members of the Christian Church. I see that in ordinary Providence God visits men, and as there is a special Providence for His people, surely there is nothing harsh or unwarrantable in attributing a strong flood of adversity, as well as a refreshing stream of prosperity, to the hand of the Lord!

When a Christian, therefore, finds himself chastened in his body, he should go to God with this question, "Show me why You contend with me.

Why do You lay Your rod upon me, my Father? You do not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is not from the heart, as though You had ceased to love. It must be from Your unerring judgment where in measure You do rebuke. Tell me, therefore, my Father, what is the cause? If You see a reason, tell me what that reason is—

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

Our sins, then, may sometimes be discovered by the very image of our sorrows. What a great blessing it is to us when our sorrows remind us of our sins by driving us out of an atmosphere of worldliness! There is our nest, and a very pretty, round, snug nest it is. And we have been very busy picking up all the softest feathers that we could find, and all the prettiest bits of moss that earth could yield. And we have been engaged night and day making that nest soft and warm. There we intended to remain. We meant for ourselves a long indulgence, sheltered from inclement winds, never to put our feet among the cold dewdrops, nor to weary our pinions by mounting up into the clouds.

But suddenly a thorn came into our breast. We tried to remove it but the more we struggled the more it chafed, and the more deeply the thorn fixed itself into us. Then we just began to spread our wings and as we mounted it would seem as though the atmosphere had changed, and our souls had changed, too, with the mounting, and we began to sing the old forgotten song—which in the nest we never should have sung—the song of those who mount from earth and have communion with the skies.

Yes, when God is pleased to take away our health, our comfort, our children, our friends, it very frequently happens that *then* we think of Him! We turn from the creature with disgust. We leave the broken cisterns because they hold no water and begin to look out for the overflowing Fountain. And so our sorrows, driving us to God, make us, in the light of His Countenance, to behold and to grieve over our *sins*. This is a great blessing to us! Sometimes, again, our sorrows remind us of our ingratitude. You are unwell—*now* you recollect how ungrateful you were for your health. You are poor—“Ah,” you think to yourselves, “I used to grumble once over a good meal that I should be glad to have now.”

“Ah,” you say, “those garments that I used to think so shabby—how much I should prize their warmth now!” It is said that we never know the value of mercies till we lose them. It is a great shame that such a proverb should be true. We ought to be grateful to God without needing the bitter teaching of adversity. Our sorrow thus administers a rebuke—and kindles in us a remembrance of the goodness that we had never welcomed with our praise till the shadows fell upon us—and the night hid it from our view.

No crime among men is accounted more base than ingratitude, but few sins we less bewail before God. Bunyan has well said that he who forgets

his friend is ungrateful to him, but he that forgets his *Savior* is unmerciful to himself. And I remember some other author who says that we are never surprised at the sunrise of our joys, as we are at their sunset. On the contrary, when storms of sorrow burst upon us we are sorely amazed, but when they pass away we take it as a matter of course. You all know how sad a blemish it was upon the character of Hezekiah that he rendered not again unto the Lord according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up in vainglory. The provocation of a thankless heart to a merciful God is no light matter. As the guilt is heavy, let our repentance be sincere.

Sometimes, again, sorrow reminds us of the sin of need of sympathy with those in like sorrow. "Ah," says one, "I used to laugh at Mrs. So-and-So for being nervous. Now that I feel the torture, myself, I am sorry that I was ever hard upon her." "Ah," says another, "I used to think of such-and-such a person that he must be a fool to be always in so gloomy a state of mind! But now I cannot help sinking into the same desponding frames, and oh, I would to God that I had been more kind to him!"

Yes, we would feel more for the prisoner if we knew more about the prison! We would feel more for the poor if we understood more of the pangs of need. Our sorrows may often help to remind us of our harshness towards some of the best of God's afflicted ones. And I think, also, that affliction may be sent to admonish us of our neglect of Divine teaching. "Why that rod?" "Why that whip and that bridle?" Because I have been like the horse and the mule which have no understanding! Had I listened to the voice of God that I heard from the pulpit. Or had I hearkened to the counsels given to me in the pages of Scripture. Or if I had even noticed the dictates of my own *conscience*—yes, had I been more jealous of the motions of the Holy Spirit in my soul—I might never have entailed all this trouble upon me.

You know the old fable we used to read in our school books about the boy in the apple tree who would not come down when the good man with soft words admonished him. Then the man took to throwing turfs at him, but still he would not heed. And at length the man betook himself to stones and compelled him to come down. Oh, when God betakes Himself to stones, and we get cut with them, we might well say to ourselves, "Ah, light afflictions, you would not do! We laughed at the kind words, and even the turfs which struck our conscience without wounding our flesh would not do! And now He has come to blows with us!"

God is always loath to use the rod. He is an unwise father who never chastens, but a much worse father he who chastens for nothing. God will chasten His people, but it takes Him a long time to bring Himself to use the rod. He does not wish to strike His children. He delights in their happiness and not in their sorrow. And when at last He does come to it, it is—if I may use such an expression in reference to Him—because our ill manners force Him to it. O Christian, in these your sorrows, be humble

before the Lord your God. But still use Job's enquiry, "Show me why You contend with me."

I wish that some here, who have not the fear of God before their eyes, would look at it in this light. If you are inclined to pray about your troubles, take your sins into consideration, too. If you feel that you must go to God under the particular trial which is vexing you at present, go to Him about your besetting sins as well. Make the two into one bundle and go to Him, and say, "Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins."

This, then, is our first remark. It is fit that our sorrows should bring our sins to remembrance.

II. Secondly, IT IS WELL WHEN WE ARE AS EARNEST ABOUT OUR SINS AS WE ARE ABOUT OUR SORROWS. This is the mark of a genuine penitent. I think you will have noticed in the late "Report" of the chaplain of Newgate the remark that many of the prisoners will pretend very great repentance when the chaplain is talking to them about spiritual things. But the chaplain can very readily discover those who are not truly penitent by their constantly trying to bring him round to tell them something about their punishment.

Before the trial they frequently ask for information as to what term of imprisonment—how many months or years they are likely to get. Then, when they are undergoing punishment they frequently try to get some trifling favor through the means of the chaplain, showing that they think more of the punishment than of the theft. They are like the unhappy wretch in the condemned cell who often repents of the gallows that is to end his career, but does not repent of the murder that cut short his victim's life. There are many such.

So, if I go to God and only ask to have my sorrows taken away from me, what is that? I am no true penitent! I am like the child who cries bitterly because he smarts, but when the smart is over, he goes back to the offense again. If we were true children of God and had a truly repentant spirit, we should feel the rod to be less than nothing compared with the *sin*. We should say, "Lord, strike me! If You have but forgiven me I can bear the strokes! Strike, Lord, strike as hard as You will, for my sin is forgiven."

A good child will say, "My Father, you have forgiven me the offense. Ah, well, if I must be chastened, I will cheerfully bear it, for my sorrow is not that I smart, but that my sin should have caused you to be angry, and to make me smart." This, then, is the mark of a genuine penitent—that he is as earnest about his sins as he is about his sorrows. Your trials have never worked in you what they were meant for until it is so. God sends your trial to make you see yourself—your weaknesses, your folly, your sinfulness, your distance from Him. And when those sins, those sweet sins of yours become bitter—when your soul nauseates and loathes them—then, probably, your affliction will be taken from you.

But if you still yield to your sins with your left hand and would gladly lay hold of God's mercy with your right, there is need that the rod be laid on your back again, and again, and again—for you have not yet feared the rod nor Him that has appointed it! Let any of you who are in trouble here, mend your prayer tonight. If you have been saying, "Lord, take away the sickness from my dear child," you should say, "Lord if it is Your will, heal my child, but forgive my sin."

Or if any of you are very poor tonight, or if you are not well and you have a sense of sin, I pray you, I entreat you, as you kneel by your bedside—which I trust you all will—while you ask God to restore your health, or to remove your poverty, be quite as earnest about the forgiveness of your sins, or else it will betoken two things—that you are not a genuine penitent, and that, therefore, the affliction has not worked in you its great design.

III. But, thirdly, IT IS WELL TO TAKE BOTH SORROW AND SIN TO THE SAME PLACE. It was to *God* that David took his sorrow. It was to *God* that David took his sin. Observe, then, we must take *our* sorrows to God. Ah, my dear Sister over yonder, where do you take your sorrows? Why, to your next door neighbor, to Mrs. This, and to Mrs. That! We are very, very fond of pouring out our tales of woe into the ear of some earthly friend. That may be a slight relief if discreetly done, but I think the verses of the hymn is not wrong which says—

***"Have you no words? Ah, think again
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be
'Hear what the Lord has done for me.'"***

Some children run and tell Mother, or tell Father. Do you the same! Go and tell your Father—you can tell your brethren afterwards if you will—but you had better let your Father know *first*. I think we should often hesitate to mention our troubles lest we should depress our fellow creatures. I am sure we should hesitate to mention them to men if we made it a rule *first* to bring them before our God. Your little sorrows you may take to God, for He counts the hairs of your head! Your great sorrows you may take to God, for He holds the world in the hollow of His hand! Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find Him willing and able to relieve you!

But we must also take our *sins* to God. Possibly this is a more difficult point. The sinner thinks that he must fight this battle for himself, wrestle with his own evil temper himself, and he himself must enter into conflict with his lusts and his besetting sins. But when he comes into the fight he soon meets with defeat, and then he is ready to give it all up. Take your sins to God, my Brothers and Sisters. Take them to the Cross that the

blood may fall upon them to purge away their guilt and take away their power. Your sins must all be slain.

There is only one place where they can be slaughtered—the altar where your Savior died. If you would flog your sins, flog them with the whip that tore your Savior's shoulders. If you would nail your sins fast, drive the same nails through them which fastened your Lord to the Cross. I mean let your faith in the great Surety, and your love to Him who suffered so much for you, be the power with which you do conflict with evil. It is said of the saints in Heaven, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." That is how you must overcome! Go to Jesus with your sins!

No one else can help you. You are powerless without Him. You may confess *all* your sins *to* Him with a view of leaving them all *with* Him. He receives sinners! He receives their sins, too, when they are brought to Him in penitence. God has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of all His people, and you may take your sins and leave them in the hands of Jesus, who will counter-plead them with His merits and put them away in His mercy. And so shall you come away rejoicing! And, as we have remarked that we are not to take up the battle with our sorrows alone, nor with our sins alone, we may further say that the most sorrowful and the most sinful are welcome to the Lord Jesus.

The most sorrowful may come! I mean those in *despair*. Those who are at their wits end. Those poor souls, who, through superabundant difficulty, are ready to do the most unreasonable things—ready, it may even be, to give way to that wicked, Satanic temptation of rushing from this present life into a world unknown by their own hands! Go, sorrowful one, go now to Jesus, whose tender heart will feel for you! Has your friend forsaken you? Have your lover and your acquaintance become your enemies? Seek no *human* sympathy just now, but first and foremost, in a flood of tears, reveal your case to the great invisible Helper.

Kneel down and tell Him all that racks your spirit and fills your tortured mind, and plead the promise that He will be with you, and you shall find Him true though all else be false. And, as the most sorrowful, so the most sinful are welcome to Christ—the sinful certainly, but the *most sinful* especially. If your sin has become so outrageous that it were wrong for me to mention it here. If it has become so tremendous in its power, that, like the chain and ball at the convict's foot, you cannot escape from it, yet still come with all your sins to Jesus! You vilest sinner out of Hell! You who are nearest to the gates of perdition! You who have had fellowship with devils till you have become almost a devil yourself! You who have lain steeped in the scarlet of sin till it has ingrained and entered into the very warp and woof of your being! You who are all over black within and without—go to the Savior, and take these words in your mouth—"Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

And suppose the two conditions should have met in your heart—that you are at the same time the most sorrowful and the most sinful? Still go!

The gates of Mercy are very wide! When Christ opened the Holy of Holies He did not make a little slit, but the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom so that the biggest sinner that ever lived might come through it to the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat. Oh, the amazing mercy of God! “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts.” Sin is, after all, a thing of the *creature*, but mercy is an attribute of the *Creator*, and the Creator’s attribute swallows up the creature’s fault. Thus says the Lord, “I will take away their iniquities and cast them into the depths of the sea.” The most sorrowful and the most sinful may go!

And let us add that God can, with equal ease, remove our sorrows and our sins. It is wonderful how difficulties fly when Omnipotence encounters them! The sick man who has been given up by the physician has often recovered. And it has been, perhaps, his mercy that the physician gave him up, for where man has come to an ending, God has come to a beginning. The old proverb says that, “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity,” and most certainly that is true. God has but to will it and fevers fly and diseases disappear. As the soldier goes at the captain’s bidding, so does God say to Death, “Go,” and he goes, or “Come,” and he comes. Thus is it in our circumstances. How very often a day which opened as black as gathering clouds could make it has ended with a bright sunset! How frequently the beggar has found himself lifted up from the dunghill and made to sit among princes!

I should not wonder but what some of you, in looking back and remembering the circumstances you are now in, are quite surprised to find yourselves where you are. This very morning I was talking with a gentleman who said to me, “I cannot bear waste in my household, and one reason is this—if ever there was a poor wretch who could live on hard fare once, and envy the very dogs a piece of bread, I am just that one—but God has been pleased to prosper me, and I often look back upon that season of poverty and of need, and thank Him for having helped me through it.”

Well, you see, dear Friends, that God can turn the wheel and make the bottom spoke to be the uppermost one, and He can do it all in a few days. Come, then, though sin and sorrow rest like a double burden upon our body and soul—let us go to Him and say, “Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.”

IV. Perhaps our last observation is more strictly to the text than anything else. It is that **WE ARE TO GO TO GOD WITH SORROWS AND WITH SINS IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT.** You notice that all that David asks about his sorrow is, “Look upon my afflictions and my pain.” But the next petition is more express, definite, decided, plain—“Forgive all my sins.”

Some people would have put it, “Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins.” But David does not say so. He says, “Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I do not say much about that—Lord look at it. I will leave that to You. I should be glad to have it removed. Do as You will.

Look at it. Consider it. But as for my *sins*, Lord, I know what I want there—I must have them forgiven. I cannot bear them.” A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin. He can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot endure the burden of his guilt, or the weight of his transgressions.

Here are two guests come to my door. Both of them ask to have a lodging with me. The one is called Affliction. He has a very grave voice, and a very heavy hand, and he looks at me with fierce eyes. The other is called Sin, and he is very soft-spoken, and very fair, and his words are softer than butter. Let me scan their faces. Let me examine them as to their character. I must not be deceived by appearances. I will ask my two friends who would lodge with me to open their hands. When my friend Affliction, with some little difficulty, opens his hand, I find that, rough as it is, he carries a jewel inside it, and that he meant to leave that jewel at my house.

But as for my soft-spoken friend, Sin—when I force him to show me what that is which he hides in his sleeve—I find that it is a dagger with which he would have stabbed me. What shall I do, then, if I am wise? Why, I should be very glad if they would both be good enough to go and stop somewhere else, but if I must entertain *one* of the two, I would shut my door in the face of smooth-spoken Sin and say to the rougher and uglier visitor, Affliction, “Come and stop with me, for maybe God has sent you as a messenger of mercy to my soul.” “Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sin.” We must be more express and explicit about sin than we are about trouble. Take the two expressions together. Use them and whether you blend, or contrast them, either or both will prove to be full of instruction.

Before I close my sermon and dismiss this assembly, it may be necessary to notice some among you who have no affliction or pain. In too many instances I am afraid you have sin, so the latter part of the text will well suit your case. But oh, if you have not any affliction *or* pain, nor yet any cause of fear because your sins are forgiven, let me then suggest to you that you should be exceedingly happy! Your cup should overflow with joy.

I do not think, Brothers and Sisters, that you and I rejoice enough. When engaged this morning, seeing enquirers coming in one after another, I thought within myself, “I have known the time, when I first began to preach the Gospel, that *one soul* God had given me as a fruit of my ministry made me so happy that I was ready to leap out of the body. Truly it is a happy thing to be the means of bringing one soul to Christ.” The poet says that—

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

But a thing of Divine Grace is much more truly so, for the things of beauty here on earth may be consumed—but a work of Grace is

everlasting! To be the means of saving one soul ought to set a silver bell ringing in your hearts that will never stop!

You will say, "I am very poor, and very sick, but I have not lived for nothing, there will be one gem in the Redeemer's crown that came there through my instrumentality. There will be one voice in the orchestra of the skies, which, humanly speaking, would not have been there if the Lord had not enabled me, by His Grace, to be the means of bringing that soul to Christ." This ought to make us joyful! But then I thought, here have I been seeing thirty today, and most of them owed their conversion to the preaching of the Gospel here, and I have seen, perhaps, in my little lifetime, several thousands of souls and know of many others whom I never saw, who have been brought to Christ through our instrumentality.

What? And down-hearted, and sometimes wretched, and distracted with care after *this*? I thought to myself, what a fool I am! And I suspect that if you and I, or any of us, were to consider the goodness of God to us, the fact that our names are written in Heaven, that Christ is ours, that Heaven is ours, that we are the children of God, and that we are justified by faith—we should say, "Why, why am I moaning and groaning about these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and which will work out for me a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory? Come, my Soul, take down the harp and let your fingers roam among its strings. Say with old Herbert—

***"My God, my God,
My music should find You
And everything shall have its attribute to sing."***

So, if we cannot go to God, asking Him to look on our affliction, let us ask Him to look upon our *joy* and to help us to increase it, and to grow in it, and then to keep us from sin in the future and to lead us in the paths of duty and of blessed service, to the honor of His name and the comfort of our own souls. May the Lord give you, in parting, His own blessing.

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“My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the Lord.”
Psalm 26:12.

You will remember our taking a pathetic verse for our meditation, some little while ago, which was the prayer of a saint in trouble, whose prayer was, “Look upon my affliction and my pain.” [See Sermon #741, Volume 13—A TROUBLED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We must now look upon the reverse of the picture and think upon a Christian in prosperity and joy and, perhaps, as there may have been some comfort to afflicted souls before, so there may be some instruction tonight to those who are prosperous.

It is worthy of remark, at the outset, that *the condition of a Christian cannot readily be judged by anyone but himself*. Certainly his outward condition is a very unfair test of his real state. When Paul and Silas had been scourged and laid with their feet fast in the stocks, they seemed to others to be very miserable. But when, in the dead of the night, they began to sing God’s praises and the prisoners heard them, they proved themselves to be among the happiest of men! So was it with David. When the Psalmist wrote this song, he was slandered and vilified—every evil thing was laid to his charge. This was the case externally, and yet within, his mind was at such perfect peace that he could say, “My foot stands in an even place.”

It seemed to the common onlooker as though his foot would slip, as though he were like one hurled from the Tarpeian rock to be certainly dashed to pieces—but his soul’s experience was the absolute reverse of this. He seems to say to them all, “Hoot at me if you will! Seek to trip me up as you please! God is high above you all, and in Him I shall still stand my ground, for, blessed be His name, notwithstanding every attempt of the enemy to throw me down, my foot stands in an even place and in the congregation will I bless the Lord.”

There are two things in the text to which I would call your attention. The first is *a Believer in a happy position*. And the second is, *a Believer engaged in a happy occupation*. His “foot standing in an even place,” a happy position. “Praising and blessing God,” a happy occupation. We have here, first, then—

I. A BELIEVER IN A VERY HAPPY POSITION.

Now, what does he mean by his “foot standing in an even place”? Well, is it not the very worst evil that a genuine Christian can suffer to fall into sin? To fall finally, would, of course, be our everlasting ruin. To fall at all, in any sense, is our greatest grief. Every true child of God would sooner sorrow a thousand times than sin once. His Father’s rod he has learned to love, but sin, even when it is the choicest pleasure, he has learned to hate. “Lord,” he says, “allow me to go anywhere except into sin. If the way is rough, so be it, if it is Your way, I will bless You for being in it. But if the road is ever so smooth, allow not my feet to tread it, if it is Bye-Path Meadow.” The worst evil that can befall a Christian, I say, is to fall into sin and continue to do so. On the contrary, one of the richest blessings that a Christian can enjoy is to be kept aright in his walk and conversation—year after year to wear a spotless character—year after year to be such an one as Daniel, that even the man’s enemies can find nothing against him except touching the Law of his God. Oh, this is a great honor! This is a rare jewel! There are some of God’s servants who will get to Heaven who never wore this jewel. They have been the Lord’s people, but yet their slips and falls have given them broken bones and troubled hearts—and they have been saved at the last “so as by fire.” But it is a choice mercy if the child of God is able not only safely to get into the harbor, but to get into the harbor without having touched a rock, without having sunk in a quicksand, without having suffered shipwreck—not only to come safely to Heaven, but to have “an abundant entrance ministered to him” into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now, dear Friends, the standing which is spoken of in the text relates to *the secure standing of the child of God in respect to sin*—and it may be understood in two senses. Sometimes the Christian is in an even place with *regard to common, outward sin*. And secondly, he is at all times in an even place with *regard to the sin of other men*—there he stands in such an even place that sin touches him not.

First, I say there are some Christians who may take the language of the text *in regard to outward sin* and thank God that they are not just now exposed to vehement temptations. They are not journeying in slippery places, but their foot stands in an even place.

This may be occasioned by several causes. *Sometimes it is caused by Providence*. My Brothers, you have, perhaps, sometimes wished that you were rich. You have been in a little way of business and you have thought, “I wish I had a larger capital that I might launch out a little, that I might speculate, that I might get a larger income and accumulate at a faster rate.” Ah, you do not know. Those high places are slippery places, as some of late have proved to their own sorrow. You have need, instead of asking God to put you there, to thank Him that you are not so rich, that you are not therefore subject to the peculiar temptations incidental to great transactions of business, or great accumulations of gold. Comparatively, you may sit down and thank God that you are not in this position, but that your “foot stands in an even place.”

You may be thankful, too, if you are not extremely poor, for extreme poverty, like extreme wealth, is a very dangerous position. When a person is extremely poor, he may be tempted to steal. If he should be able to overcome that, he will be tempted to envy and may be very jealous of those who are better off than himself. And I do not know a more miserable spirit than an envious one! Nothing can be more un-Christian than to be angry with my fellow man because he happens to have more of outward good, and of inward excellence, too, perhaps, than I may happen to have. Thank God that your lot is cast in the middle place! If Agur's prayer is fulfilled in *you*—"Give me neither poverty nor riches"—if you have just enough to have food and raiment, be content therewith and say, "I thank God that Providentially I am not exposed to the temptations of fashion and all its mazes, and I am not thrust into the temptations of penury with all its grief—in that respect my foot stands in an even place."

How many a young man is dazzled with the idea of fame! "Ah" he thinks, "if I could but carve my name on that rock! If I could, I would mount higher than that last, and carve my name high up there!" Yes, but how many have rolled back, have tried to scale the battlements and have fallen to the bottom, mangled corpses?—

"The path of glory leads but to the grave!"

Be thankful, young man, if God should mark out for you a quiet path of usefulness in the Sunday school, or in some village station, or in some place where, in the midst of your little family, you may bring your children up as a godly parent should, and at last, before the clods of the valley shall close over you, you may have, before you go hence, to thank God that your foot stood in an even place, though it might have slipped if you had been called to a more dangerous point on the hill! It is best for us to be thankful for the position in which Providence has placed us, for I suppose that most of us now present will see that we are not peculiarly exposed to either of the extremes and, therefore, in that sense our "foot stands in an even place."

Sometimes this is the case not so much with regard to our own condition, as to the place of our abode and the surroundings of our family circle. How many of you young people ought to bless God that you are converted and live where you do! I know the temptation with some young persons is to wish to get away from the parental roof very early and to try to set up on their own account. Young woman, if you have a godly father and a godly mother, be in no great hurry to go away from the hearth where piety has been your joy! Young man, if you are apprenticed with godly people, do not be in such hot haste to be away from the place. This is a wicked city and for every place where a young man's foot may stand "in an even place" in it, there are 50 places where it will need all the Divine Grace he has and a great deal more that only God can supply, to keep him from giving way to temptation!

I am afraid that now-a-days, such is the general business habit, as we say, and the fastness of our living, that many of our young people do not think enough of religious privileges. I have read of a Jew who would not trade in a certain town because there was no synagogue in it—he said he would rather be at another place because there was a synagogue there. And what the Jew felt in this respect, surely the Christian ought to feel far more! If you have to put up with far less money, yet if you have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel, and mixing with God’s people, be not in a haste to throw away your golden privileges for the sake of those poor brazen gains which are pitiful in comparison with spiritual wealth! It is a wonderful mercy—a mercy which some of my dear Friends now present would prize very much if they could have it—it is a wonderful mercy, I say, to live in the midst of godly people! Contrast it to the living with the ungodly! There are those in this place now who, when they go home from this place of worship tonight, will hear oaths and blasphemy before they fall asleep. They will probably be startled in the morning by hearing the name of God profaned. Their religion provokes the animosity of their dearest friends! They cannot be at their work without hearing ribaldry and without being selected to be the butt of all the archers who shoot at them, sorely wound them and grieve them—for though there are no burnings at the stake now-a-days, yet there are “trials of cruel mocking,” and these “mockings” are sometimes very “cruel” indeed! There is all the difference between the plant in the sheltered corner of the garden and the other plant set out in the wild, bleak waste for every frost to nip! Be thankful, dear young friends, yes, and let us be thankful who are not so young, if we are placed in a position where we are not continually exposed to the vicious example, or to the frowns of gainsayers. Let us say thankfully with David, “My foot stands in an even place in that respect: and in the congregation will I bless the Lord for it.”

Besides this, *our foot may be kept by Providence and Grace combined.* Providence may have placed us where the ministry is instructive and established—and then our foot stands in an even place. I have known some shepherds of flocks and, in the short time in which it has been my privilege to preside here, I think I have seen them veer to all points of the compass. There are some I know now whose particular position in theology no one ever did know and, I suppose, will never be able to ascertain, for there seems to be no definite teaching, no declaration of Doctrines, no laying down of established Truths of God! And, mark you, it is a great mercy when the Lord teaches us something and makes us know what we do know, and when what we hear we understand and receive into our souls by the teaching of the Holy Spirit! It is a great mercy when we are not carried away by this fanaticism, nor the other enthusiasm, but when we are cast into connection with people who hold fast to the faith which is delivered to them and are not to be carried about by every novelty, but are conservative of the grand old Truths and hold fast to the Doctrines of the Cross of Christ! It may have been the lot of some of you, dear

Friends, to sometimes be members of one church and sometimes of another—sometimes of a church given to quarrel and to break up, or, on the other hand, members of churches that are taken up with every novelty. Oh, be thankful that you have, many of you young Christians, round about you, fathers in Christ and matrons in Israel who confirm you in the faith, under God, and through whom your foot has been made to stand in an even place. For this mark of Grace, bless the Lord!

But to go still farther. Sometimes the Christian may thank God for his standing, not so much because of his position in life, nor because of the outward means of Grace, but *because of the inward establishment and spiritual growth which God the Holy Spirit has given him*. Oh, what a mercy it is, Christian, if your experience has been your own and you are come at last to a settled state of rest of heart! The devil sometimes says to you, “You will never be able to attain to the Glory and the Kingdom—you will never overcome your foes.” But you can say, “Ah, in this respect my foot stands in an even place, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day.” Sometimes your outward troubles are very many and the fear is that they will be too much for you—but oh, what a mercy it is to be able to stand in an even place in that respect, and say, “Goodness and mercy followed me all the days of my life, and I am persuaded that they always will. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God will be with me to be my Stay!” When experience and patience have produced in us unstaggering faith in God, what a blessed life we lead! But the unbelieving heir of Heaven, the man of little faith and little confidence in God—he is blown about by every wind and every difficulty staggers him—he is ready to weep under every trial! But the true Christian knows that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for him a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory! He believes that Jesus walks the stormy waters. He can hear Him say, “It is I,” and he is not afraid. He feels that he cannot suffer shipwreck while Christ is in the vessel with him and, therefore, if not always rejoicing, yet he is calm and patient, waiting for the salvation of the Lord. I think I know some of you who have been for years in this condition. You are not now as you used to be—all in Heaven one day and all in the depths the next. You are not so readily excited as you once were. An earnest Prayer Meeting fills you with holy joy, but it does not transport you quite out of the body as it once did. On the other hand, if some sharp affliction should come upon you, it still distresses you, but it does not perplex you and cast you into despair as it would once have done! You are no longer an infant, but you have become a man or woman in Christ Jesus! You have grown strong. You are rooted, grounded, and settled in the faith! Now, be very tranquil, dear Friends, and thankful that you can say concerning these things, “I am not to be moved by them—temptations that were once formidable to me are so no longer, for I know

the promise and the faithfulness of my God—and my foot stands in an even place.”

Once more. This may sometimes be peculiarly true of the Christian, *when he has been enjoying near, dear, and ripened fellowship with the Lord Jesus*. We sometimes stand on Tabor with our transfigured Lord! It is not always Gethsemane. It is sometimes the mount of the first Glory and sometimes whatever occurs has no more effect upon us than tempests upon solid rocks! The joy of the Lord, the Presence of our Savior, the light of His love, the feast at His banqueting table—these things become so all-absorbing to us that we can say with Dr. Watts—

***“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Still I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.”***

Such a soul, all taken up with Divine Love, sitting at the feet of Christ with Mary, has neither room nor time for Martha’s cares and encumbrances, but can rejoice and say, “My heart is fixed, oh my God! My heart is fixed, I will “sing and give praise.” Such an one may be poor and yet cannot be poor! Such an one may be sick and yet must be well! Such an one may be alone and yet not alone, for his Lord is with him! I wish that you and I could more often say in this respect, “My foot stands in an even place, and in the congregation I will bless the Lord.”

Now you can see that all this view of the text is but occasional. But there is a view of the text that is permanent. As I have already said with regard to the great sin, the sin which is unto death, the sin which would destroy a Christian, every child of God may at every time say, “My foot stands in an even place.” The child of God may sin, but he cannot sin away his birthright. The heir of Heaven may fall, and he may fall foully, too, but though he falls seven times, he shall be lifted up again—and the eternal hand of God shall keep him, even to the end! Beloved, it is our mercy to believe that—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

If you stand on the Rock of Ages, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you stand on a Rock which never can reel beneath you, and from which no power, either earthly or infernal, can ever tear you! If you are in the hands of Christ, you know what He says—“No one is able to pluck them out of My hands; My Father which gave them to Me is greater than I, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hands.” Oh, how safe they are, then, in the hands of Christ, first, and in the hands of God after—as if to give a double security, a two-handed guarantee—the power of Christ and the power of the Eternal Father being both guaranteed to the safety of the Believer!

But may the Believer ever say within himself that he is safe? Beloved, he may never say that he is safe in himself! No, that were, indeed, but a lie! But he may always say that he is safe in Christ Jesus. He may never

say, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." But he may say—

***"My life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm,"***

And, "Because He lives, I shall live also." He may not say, "I know that I, by my own strength, shall persevere to the end." But he may say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." The perseverance of the Christian is not ensured by the Christian's resolve to persevere unto the end, nor by the Christian's own power, nor by any plans which the Christian can adopt! That perseverance is secured by the promise of Christ, by the energy of the Spirit, by the watchfulness of God and by the faithfulness of God to His own Covenant!

Oh, Christian, how happy are you to be loved with an everlasting love, to have your name written in an Everlasting Covenant, to know that if your house is not so with God, yet He has made with you an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure! Your foot stands at all times, in this respect, in an even place where justice and mercy are sweetly balanced, where justice and truth have taken away all irregularities, where the path is even and plain! Oh, let your tongue sing praises unto the Lord!

And now just a few words, and only a few words, though as earnest as possible, upon—

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S HAPPY OCCUPATION.

The Psalmist says, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord," and surely we ought to do the same. Oh, think, dear Friends, in your own remembrance, how many professors have perished! I scarcely dare to look back upon them. They once floated as calmly upon the surface of the sea as you or I do. There they are. I see the broken hulks, the boards and broken pieces still tossing upon the surf! Can you see the corpses as they strew the ocean—corpses of warriors apparently as brave and as well armed as we are! There is Demas, he has made shipwreck. There is Judas, too, the first son of perdition. Now, Brothers and Sisters, if we have been kept, if our feet have been made to stand in an even place and we do not bless the Lord, the very stones will cry out against us! Why is it that we have not fallen into sin as many others have done? Why, indeed, but that the Grace of God has prevented us? There was everything in us that would have led us into the same mischief—the same sin, the same unbelief, the same evil habit of departing from the living God—and if it had not been for preventing Grace which has held us fast, we would have made shipwreck as well as others! Let us praise God if, after 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years, or perhaps more, we are still spared to stand in the midst of the Christian Church upholding our integrity! Surely we ought to say, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord."

And then, again, as the Christian ought to do it, so it is the *best thing that he can do, for nothing can be more useful to him.* I fancy if we praised

God when we are in the enjoyment of mercies, we would keep mercies longer. If God had more gratitude from us when we are well, He would help us to continue in good health, but He knows that we need to be sick, sometimes, to make us know the value of health and, therefore, He sends us to the bed of sickness that we may learn a lesson of gratitude? And if we were more grateful, we might, perhaps, be spared some of our troubles. And so while we are kept standing, if we bless the Lord for it, it may be that He will continue thus to keep us, but if not, He may allow us to slip in order that we may learn where our great strength lies—and may thenceforth praise His name! Christian, to praise God will be of the utmost service to you. The fact is, you must praise somebody—and if you do not praise God, you will slip into praising yourself—and that will make you hateful in God’s esteem, for the Lord hates a proud look. If you once begin to say, “It is my own goodness and the excellency of my natural temperament that have kept me,” you will soon come down—and great will be the fall thereof. But if you praise God, it will keep you from, self-conceit.

To praise God is, also, one of the sweetest medicines for worldliness. Most medicines are very strange—sour or bitter. I sometimes think doctors make them thus, for many persons would not think them effectual if they were not nasty! Probably there might just as well be sweet medicines as bitter. I do not know why there should not be. Certainly praise, though it is sweet and pleasant, is profitable and curative, too!

It will cure you of worldliness quite as much as will sorrow. If you sit down to a loaded table and bless the Lord for it, the abundance will not give you “fullness of bread.” If you go abroad in the world and God increases your wealth, and you are grateful for it, it will not eat as does a canker, nor injure you, but the gratitude you have will be a sweet corrective force to keep you from being a mere earth-grubbing mole—as you would have been if you had not been lifting your eyes to Heaven and mounting up on the wings of praise, as the eagle does, with his face towards the sun! Praise God that you have been able to bear your prosperity and you will probably have a longer time of it, and you will get good out of it. Moreover, as you ought to praise God and it is useful to praise God, so let me say that it *is honorable to God that you should praise Him*. There ought to be somebody to speak well of Him, for this wicked world is constantly abusing Him. If a man’s own children do not praise him, where can he expect to have a good name? Oh, you who are the children of God, I am afraid you sometimes give your God a bad Character! Those long faces of yours. Those dolorous tales about Providential afflictions—when they hear and see these, the world says, “Ah, we always said so—they are a miserable set and they serve a very hard Master!” But it is a gross lie! There never were servants that had such a good Master as we have! We love His House! We love His service! We love His wages! We love Him! We are the happiest people in all the world and though the worldling will have it that we must be wretched because we are religious,

we reply, "Our religion is our joy and our comfort! It is our delight and our bliss! We wish we had more of it! We serve a blessed God and we will speak well of His name."

To bless the Lord, while it is honorable to Him, *will often be useful to our fellow creatures*, and this should be the most practical point. David said, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord," by which I understand he felt that his blessing God might be useful to others, else he might have shut himself up in his room and praised God there. David was not like some of whom we know. I hear of some about the country who say, "I shall not go to the place of worship in my village. I cannot get on with the minister. I buy Mr. So-and-So's sermons and I find more Truth in them, so I shall stay at home." You remember the view the Apostle took of this when he wrote, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is"—a very bad manner, let me say, by the way the Apostle mentions it! If there are a few people of God anywhere, join with them, and if they are such a people as you cannot think of joining as people of God, open a place of your own! Make it a point of conscience that where you have a house, God shall have one, and that where there is a tent for you, there shall be an altar for Him! How much might the Kingdom of God spread if Christian people everywhere took care of this! David could have praised God alone, it is true, but he was not satisfied with it. He loved that genial warmth, that glow of holy fire which always comes when hearts come together. And so he says, "In the congregation will I praise the Lord."

There are several ways of doing this. You may praise the Lord, you know, by singing—and what a delightful employment that is! I sometimes wish we all knew how to sing. It is very well for us to sing our best, but that best might be a great deal better. Our Moravian friends can, nearly all of them, sing, and if you were to go to their settlement you would find all of them able to join in the sacred song. It is miserable work where there are two or three fellows in white surplices who get up to praise God, or where there is a big machine out of which the music is brought. I suppose the Lord does have mercy upon such folly, but how there can be anything like spiritual worship coming from a box of pipes I cannot understand! The hearts of God's people praise Him out of living organs! We must bring something like spiritual worship and when we have learned to praise God with the understanding as well as with our hearts, surely it will be none the less acceptable to Him, but all the more! He ought to have the best of the best and when we bring Him our praise it should be the best praise that it is possible for even hearts to make!

But there are other ways of blessing Him. You who cannot sing, can perhaps *praise Him by your preaching*. Oh, how we can help the Lord when we speak well of His name from the pulpit! It enlarges the scope and sphere of our praise when we can call upon hundreds, or on these occasions here, in this house, upon thousands of others, and say, "Oh,

magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together! Come, let us bow down and worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker—let us come into His Presence with thanksgiving and unto His courts with joy.” It is sweet work to preach when our preaching is blessing God!

Some of you cannot preach and you cannot sing. Well, you can *bless God by your conversation*. May the Lord give us many of His servants to bless Him in the farmyard, in the counting-house, behind the counter and in the factory! To bless Him when they are driving their carts, whose hearts are so full of praise that they naturally speak well of God as they speak well of some good friend who has helped and prospered them! Let me enlist you to bless God this very night before you go to bed—bless Him, I mean, in talking to someone else to whom your testimony for God may be blessed. Now, I charge you—you who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are His followers—if He has treated you badly, tell of it, speak honestly!

If you have found Him to be a hard Master, tell it to warn others against Him! But I know you cannot! You dare not say a word against Him, though you can say ten thousand words for Him—and would do so if it were not for your bashfulness. You can all say—

**“Lord, unloose my stammering tongue.
Who should louder sing than I?”**

Tell others that you have tasted and handled the good Word of Life, that you have found it a delightful thing to weep the tears of penitence, to turn with faith to the Savior and trust in Him. Do you say, “To whom shall I tell it?” Go, husband, tell it to your wife! My good Sister, tell it to your husband! Tell it to your child! Tell it to your brother! “Andrew first finds his own brother, Simon Peter.” You go and do the same! Tell others and so help them to praise Him, too!

And there is another way of blessing God, even without much time. A Christian can *bless God by his life*. I heard somebody say of a Christian Brother at Manchester that “he preached with his feet.” Ah, that is a noble way of preaching! May we have many such preachers! That is to say, by practical living, by walk and conversation. May you praise God by your consistent cheerfulness! There are Brothers and Sisters in this place to look at whose face is always enough to make one feel happy! They are not better nor richer than many I know of, but they seem always happy. They seem to live with Jesus—and when they speak, they speak well of Him. I am sure they are the most likely people to bring in converts. Ask the Lord to make your face to shine. Pray that you may look at Him until you are changed from glory unto glory! You know what that means—that the Glory there is in Christ may come upon you—from glory to glory—that your face may shine like that of Moses, the Light of God’s Countenance being upon you through your praising and blessing Him!

I am afraid my sermon has no relation to some here present, but I ask them whether God has not been good to them in many respects. They

have been kept alive—let them be grateful for the mercies they have and let their gratitude lead them to penitence, to think that they have sinned against so good a God! Ah, my Hearers, if you will but repent and come to Him, He will be found of you. Knock and His door will be opened. Speak to Him and He will hear and listen to you! Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and He will wash you in His blood and bring you to His Father's right hand in the Kingdom! The Lord bless these words, spoken in much conscious weakness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37:17-40.**

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* They must stand, therefore, for how shall he fall whom God upholds?

18-19. *The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* These are bad times now. Everyone complains and, indeed, there seems to be abundant cause, for distress is universal. But let us fall back on the promise. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

20-23. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrow and pay not again: but the righteous show mercy and give. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth: and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way.* There is a mutual delight, you see. If we delight in God, God delights in us. He delights in the conduct of His people. When they walk with Him, He takes pleasure in every step that they take. What do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Have you tried to live today so that God may take pleasure in you? He cannot do it if we have lived carelessly, or fruitlessly, or selfishly. But when we live to Him, then the Lord delights in our way.

24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* Just going to fall, but in came the interposing hand. Grace catches us up when sin would throw us down.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It was so unusual a thing that David had never seen it. I have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but in every case it has been because of their drunkenness or their laziness, or because of their own vice which they brought upon themselves. But, as a rule, God takes care of the children of His children. He does not allow them to want. They may be brought into great straits, but He will not permit them to come to beggary.

26-29. *He is always merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. There is a grand time coming (oh, that God would hasten it!) when truth and righteousness shall rule the earth, and then shall the godly have their portion! At the present time—*

***“Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”***

But the day shall come when the vile person shall cease from off the earth and the saints shall have the Kingdom.

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. You may often judge a man by his mouth. The physician looks at the tongue to see how the man is—and so is a righteous man known by his mouth and his tongue, for he talks of justice.*

31-40. *The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright. For the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.*

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

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

THINK WELL AND DO WELL

NO. 956

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For Your loving kindness is before my eyes: and I have walked in Your Truth.”
Psalm 26:3.*

THROUGHOUT this Psalm David is laboring under the fear that he should be judged and condemned with the ungodly world. He feels in his own heart that he is not one with the enemies of God, and he shudders lest having hated their society on earth he should be shut up in their company forever. His agonizing prayer is, “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.” In urging reasons before the Throne of Grace why he should not be reckoned in the same condemnation as the ungodly, he urges not self-righteously, but truthfully and confidently that there was a difference made by Grace between himself and them.

“I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers. And will not sit with the wicked.....Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells.” There was a difference, he declares, between himself and the wicked, even in the current of his thoughts. While their thoughts ran upon the world, vanity, sin, rebellion, hypocrisy, and violence, his meditations were upon all the marvelous works of God, and especially upon His loving kindness—“Your loving kindness is before my eyes.” it is an encouraging fact when we can honestly feel as before God that our thoughts are habitually exercised upon Himself and upon Divine Truth. “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”

We may form a better judgment of ourselves probably from the tenor of our thoughts than from any other evidence. If our thoughts all go downward, downward we ourselves are going. But if there are some breathings towards the heavenly, some aspirations of our spirit towards the pure and perfect Father of Lights, then may we have hope that we, also, are ascending towards the heavenly places, and shall dwell in them hereafter. David could urge, besides the secret evidence of his devout thoughts, the public proof of his holy acts—“I have walked in Your Truth.” It would be vanity for a man to find evidence of a renewed heart in his private meditations if those thoughts were not sufficiently deep to lead him to practical godliness.

The thoughts become a valuable evidence because of their influence upon the life, but if they were so powerlessly superficial that our daily life was in no degree affected by them, they would be as salt that has lost its savor. If our actions are evil, it is vain to take comfort from our thoughts. If actions speak louder than words, they may well speak louder than thoughts. We must display outward holiness, or else our inward experience of Grace exists only in pretense. You may think of what you will, but

if your whole conversation is according to the will of the flesh and not after the will of God your thoughts are nothing—you have deceived yourself as to their tenor—they cannot be as you say they are, thoughts truthful, holy, devout and Divine.

Put the two together, holy thoughts and holy living, and you have two sure evidences of a renewed nature. And if God has given you both of these, though you will probably confess that you have them not in the measure in which you would desire to have them, yet bless the Grace that has so worked upon you, and rejoice this morning, and go on in holy confidence to ask for a greater measure of the same Divine working. Would to God our thoughts may become uniformly gracious, and our lives perfectly consistent with our thoughts—and with the Divine Word.

I mean, this morning, to take the two parts of the text separately, and then to consider the link which unites them. First, then, we shall have to consider the mind occupied with a fruitful subject. Secondly, the life ordered by a right rule. And thirdly, the link which connects the two.

I. First then, may every Christian experimentally know to a fuller degree what it is to have A MIND OCCUPIED WITH A FRUITFUL SUBJECT. “Your loving kindness is before my eyes.” It is exceedingly profitable to the Christian to have always some subject of thought upon his mind. The mind that is vacant, frivolous, unoccupied, will be sure to issue in a barren and unprofitable life. I fear, to a very large extent, in this age the minds, even of good people, are empty, and void, and a waste.

Years ago, when the influence of the Puritan age yet lingered among us, the female members of Christian Churches were generally women of very considerable education. Their range of reading was very different from that of their sisters in these days, and their theological knowledge was profound. While the men who were members of our Nonconformist Churches, were, as a rule, persons of very clear doctrinal knowledge—perhaps rather too much given to controversy, and to pushing their own views without sufficient tolerance for the views of others.

On the whole, Nonconformist Christianity was highly intelligent, thoughtful, and meditative. Men and women then, when they joined the Church, knew what they believed, and believed what they knew. They were prepared to be counted singular for their belief, but were equally prepared to justify themselves for talking up so separated a position. They were students of the Word of God and of such books as opened up to them the Word of God—so that our armies of Believers, if they were fewer than now, were nevertheless very strong, because the warriors handled their weapons well, were well drilled, and at home in the holy war.

I fear a great many Christian people do not think much about their religion. They give their guinea subscription, they occupy their seat at the meeting house, they attend the Prayer Meetings, but they are little given to thinking out a system of doctrine, or to ransacking the weaning of Scripture. Contemplative pursuits are not so general among Christian professors as I could wish. Not that I desire to see an increase of a certain amateur class of people who are always expounding prophecy, or spelling

out types, and leaving ragged people to perish in ignorance, and the masses of our city to remain not evangelized.

The sooner we bury the last of our Prophetic pretenders the better. They expose the Truth of God to ridicule and rather hinder, than promote, the cause of religion. Louis Napoleon was to be the Antichrist, and to conquer all Europe—I wonder how they will play their cards now! Of late they have grown so impudent as to foretell the future with all the brass of a Sidrophel, a Lilly, or a Dr. Dec. I hope their failures will open the eyes of the public to their folly.

I so reverence the inspired prophecies that I wish a race of students would succeed these charlatans. We need devoutly meditative people who will think about the precious things of God in a practical, gracious way, such as the Holy Spirit inspires. We need men who are not forever occupying themselves with theories and speculations, but with the solidities and with the practical parts of theology. A band of such men, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, would have a great influence for good. And if all professors were such, the Church would be rich, indeed.

Observe, that when the mind does not receive holy matters to feed upon, as a rule it preys upon itself. Like certain of our bodily organs which, if not supplied with nutritive matter, will soon begin to devour their own tissues, and then all sorts of aches, pains, and ultimately diseases will set in. The mind, when it eats into itself, forms doubts, fears, suspicions, complaints, and nine out of ten of the doubts and fears of God's people come from two things—walking at a distance from God, and want of spiritual nutriment for the soul.

If you, Believer, do not meditate upon some Scriptural subject, your minds will probably turn to vanity or to some evil within yourselves, and you will not long think of the corruption within without becoming the subjects of a despondency which will turn you into Mistress Despondencies or Mr. Feebleminds, whereas by musing on the promises of the Holy Spirit you would grow into good soldiers and happy pilgrims. Of some who do not feed their souls constantly with spiritual nourishment Satan takes an advantage and fills them with unholy thoughts.

It is a very frequent complaint with persons who desire to be in the fear of God all day long, that they are molested with horrible insinuations, dreadful suggestions, and revolting ideas. And they fly to the pastor sometimes to know whether they can be the children of God at all, or if the children of God, what remedy they can use by which they shall be able to escape from this horrible torment.

I suggested yesterday to a friend laboring under this serious complaint, that he should take care never to go out in the morning without placing under his tongue a text of Scripture like a wafer made with honey. And I exhorted him at all times to occupy his mind with heavenly subjects, so that there should be the less likelihood of the thoughts running after that which is evil. The best way to prevent a bushel measure from being filled with chaff is to fill it first with wheat. If the channel of the soul is filled with a strong stream of devout thought, there cannot be much mud and filth lying in the bottom.

A powerful stream of holy contemplation will scour the thoughts and bear away the foul deposits of unholy thought. There is nothing like keeping the mind occupied, for Satan finds some evil still for idle brains to think upon. It is true that weeds and nettles choke the good seed, but it is equally true that when the good seed gets strong above ground it will choke the weeds. Where Jesus is, the buyers and sellers are driven out of the temple. Dagon falls where the ark comes.

When Israel comes in the Canaanite must go out. Fill the cage of your heart with the birds of Paradise, and the foul birds will not have it all to themselves. If our soul shall become so full of thoughts of God and things Divine, that vain thoughts shall be banished, it will be a fine growing time for the plants of the Lord's right hand planting. Learn from the text the usefulness of having some sacred topic before the mind's eye.

David, in selecting the topic of Divine loving kindness did well, for let us remark upon that subject, that it is, first of all, a rightful subject of meditation. I mean, it is our bounden duty to think much upon it. Some things we may not think of, certain other topics we are barely allowed to think of, but other themes we must think of. Now the loving kindness of God is one of the things which is not left to our choice. We are bound to meditate much upon that. As Dr. Watts says—

***“Oh, bless the Lord, my Soul,
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.”***

Shall God, day after day, send such stores of mercy to such unworthy ones as we are, and shall we treat His continuous generosity as a matter of course, and not even think of it? Base ingratitude! Let us scorn such meanness. If we ought to think of our duty to God, and of our violation of that duty, yet much more of the loving kindness which makes our duty pleasure, and which covers over with a mantle of love the transgressions of our lives. Infinite goodness is a rightful subject of meditation, and it deserves a large share of our thoughts.

It is, besides, a good subject. It is good in itself, and it will do us good. The loving kindness of God—it is not possible any harm can come to us from retaining that subject too long in our minds. A man who has but one idea will sometimes become an unbalanced, inharmonious man—oftentimes he will fall into obstinacy, bigotry, or rashness through the excessive indulgence of that one thought—just as one feature exaggerated out of proportion with the rest will make an ugly countenance.

But you cannot think too much upon Divine loving kindness. You may make this, if you will, the one sole topic of your thought and yet escape narrow-mindedness or one-sidedness. It has so many links of union with all other subjects, that when you consider this it will bring up, as it were, compendiously a whole circle of profitable meditation. Think of the Divine loving kindness, and it shall be good, only good, and that continually. As you muse upon it your thoughts will humble you. “Why such goodness to *me*, to me who is less than the least of all Your mercies?”

The same theme will be equally sure to comfort you. “Is the Lord so good to me? Then amid every adversity my spirit shall rejoice in the Lord,

and glory in the God of my salvation.” To think of this will stimulate you to be full of loving kindness to others who may have acted unjustly or ungenerously towards you. As God has loved you so bounteously you will be bound to pity and assist the poor and needy.

This subject will benefit you in all respects, and harm you in none. Ring this silver bell again and again, it is good for the hearing. Moreover, dear Brethren, it is a wide subject. To set His loving kindness before our eyes is not to select a narrow theme which we can soon exhaust. It is a boundless topic. The loving kindness of the Lord has no beginning. You may fly backward to the ages past in meditation deep and long—Divine loving kindness shall have no end.

You may look into the ages yet to come with joyful musings. Loving kindness is high as Heaven, to which it shall lift you. It is deep as Hell, from which it has redeemed you. It is wide as the east is from the west, for so far has He removed all your transgressions from you. Here is a subject in which you may expatiate without limit or fear of repetition. If up to now you have bathed in this stream up to the ankles, proceed in meditation deeper still, for you shall find it a river to swim in—a very broad river that cannot be passed over. The width of the subject is one thing which leads me to commend it to you as a theme for the most expanded intellect in time and in eternity.

And it is a pleasing subject. “Your loving kindness is before my eyes.” Nobody need grow weary of this. It is like traversing a country in which every single inch of the road opens up a new prospect. Here you see the loving kindness of God in the land in which you were born, in the times in which your life is cast, in the mercies with which your life is surrounded. You may see the loving kindness of God in your temporal mercies. You cannot go to your house or bedchamber without seeing it there. You see that loving kindness even more clearly in spirituals.

What a blessing to be interested in the Covenant of Grace! How many a holy hymn awakens memories of the tender mercies past! How this very House, and the seat you sit on, refreshes your recollections as to what God has done for you in days gone by! “The loving kindness of the Lord.” I never knew a man grow heavy in spirit from meditating upon this! I never knew a man become weary of the cares and burdens of life through thinking of God’s loving kindness! No, but he has grown stronger to bear his burden, or to fight his way through time’s conflict, when the loving kindness of the great Preserver of men has come visibly before his mind.

And you may add, it is a very plain and simple subject, and one that is suitable to us all. The loving kindness of the Lord is a topic that can be reached by the babe in Grace, and yet will not be superfluous to the most advanced. There are topics in Scripture so profound and surrounded with such metaphysical difficulties, and rendered so much more perplexing by the wisdom, or the unwisdom, of divines, that one might almost say to the Christian thinker, “You may pass those by, for you will never get much out of them. The quartz is too hard. There is too little gold to pay for breaking up.”

But when you come to this subject the unskilled convert may sit down and meditate on the loving kindness of God and be edified. While at the same time the most proficient scholar in the school of Christ shall find something fresh and new every time he meditates thereon. You are little read, you say. You have little access to the thoughts of great men. Your Bible is your only book. Ah, well, but the Providence of God will make you a second, and the experience of your heart, touching Christ and things Divine, will make you a third volume!

And put the three together, the book of Revelation, the book of Providence, the book of your inward experience, and with these three you have a wondrous library! And in them all you may read the loving kindness of the Lord towards your soul. I will finish this part of my subject by saying that this is always a suitable and a seasonable topic. The young Christian, in the early flush of his joy, may think on the loving kindness of God. It will help to keep him joyful and yet to make him sober.

The venerable Christian matron may, before she departs, dwell still upon this topic, and tell her children and her children's children of what God has done for her. In your health or in your sickness, in your wealth or in your poverty, in your joy or in your sorrow—still, this theme of the loving kindness of God will be congenial and healthful. This you may study on the top of Amana when you have passed by the leopards' dens. This you may rehearse in the Valley of Humiliation when you lie down with the shepherd boy among the flocks and sing—

***“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride.”***

This you may think of when you are fighting with Apollyon, and the darts fly thick as hail, yes, fiery darts that burn as well as wound. And this you may think of in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when heart and flesh fail you. This may be your last song, and as you enter into Glory it may be your first—

***“Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail.
O may my last expiring breath
His loving kindness sing in death!
Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day,
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies.”***

I have thus introduced to you the topic for mental contemplation. We will at once proceed to the second part of our subject.

II. The Psalmist sets before US A LIFE ORDERED BY A RIGHT RULE. “I have walked in Your Truth.” I wish we could say this as positively as he does, each of us. I am afraid we should have to alter it, and say, “I *desire* to have Your loving kindness before my eyes, and to walk in Your Truth.” I shall invite each of you to look over your diaries to see how you could make such a statement, and the following remarks I offer as reflections to help you.

He means, first, by the words, “Your Truth,” “I have tried to order my religion according to the Truth concerning God and the way in which He

would be worshipped. I have worshipped the true God in the true way. I have searched to see what and who God is, how He would be served, and in what way. And according to what I have learned from Himself I have walked in His Truth.” Can you all say that?

Why, even all Christians cannot say as much! They worship God—yes, but how? As their fathers did or their grandmothers? Why have they worshipped God as they now do? Because the Word of God so teaches? No. But because their family has been so brought up. They never took the trouble to see whether it was right, and would not like to take the trouble now. Their family always did it, therefore they will always do it. Such people can say, “I have walked according to my ancestors.” But they cannot say, “I have walked in Your Truth.”

If their fathers had worshipped the devil, they would have done the same. If their family had worshipped Juggernaut, they would have worshipped him, too. It makes no consequence to some people what it is, they go in for, “follow my leader.” They are of one mind with the old Saxon king, who, when he was about to be baptized, stood with one leg in the water, and enquired of the bishop, “Where do you say my ancestors are gone? They knew nothing about your Christianity.”

“All cast into Hell,” said the bishop. “Well, then,” said this fine old conservative, “I will go with them. I should not like to be parted from my kith and kin.” Very much of this principle rules our country still. The majority of men do not walk in God’s Truth, nor care to know what God’s Truth is. I know they will say there are so many sects, and so on, as if there, after all, was such a difficulty about the Word of God that a simple-minded man could not find out what the Truth is. The Bible is a plain enough book, and if a man wishes to understand it he can.

Dear Brethren, if you are Christians, do be able to say, “I have desired to know the Truth about Yourself, O my God, and how You would be worshipped, and so far as I have learned I have walked in Your Truth.” He means next that he had walked according to God’s Law. He believed God’s Law to be the essential right, the just rule of action, and he had tried to do right in all respects. There is a line of Truth which you can clearly see, which needs not be laid down in words.

And it is a glorious thing when a man can say, “I may not have been always prosperous in business, I may not have succeeded as some have done, but what does that matter? I have kept a conscience void of offense. As a Christian man I have done the right and left the consequences with God.” This is true evidence of Grace reigning in the heart, when we can confidently say before God that, notwithstanding all our sins, transgressions, and infirmities, yet towards men we have walked in the Truth as God would have us walk. This is to have the outward life ordered in Truth.

And did not he mean this, also, that as God had been truthful to him, so he had been enabled by Grace to be truthful to God? “I have walked in Your Truth.” My God, You have never lied to me. I have also strived to be true to You. I have found Your promise to be always certain. I have labored to make my vows, which I have presented to You, as certain as the

fulfillment of Your promises. Have you all done this? Years ago some of you put on Christ, and avowed yourselves His followers.

By your Baptism you made a declaration of death to the world, and of life in Christ—has it been so? Have you walked in God's Truth? He has never failed in anything towards us. Alas, what is there in which we have *not* failed towards Him? He has been true to us in the Covenant of His Grace—have we kept the pledge and bonds which bind us to His Church and to His cause? Can we say, "As You have walked in Your Truth to me so have I walked in Truth to You"?

If we have failed here I should not wonder it is because we have failed in the first part of the text. Our thoughts have not been enough with God and therefore our lives have not been true to Him. May we be helped in both parts of the text, so that while our hearts feed upon His Truth our feet may walk in His Truth, and we may be faithful Christians before the Lord our God.

III. But time flies, and I need space for the third head, which is, THE LINK WHICH BINDS THE TWO PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER. "Your loving kindness is before my eyes. I have walked in Your Truth." The one has been the consequence of the other. Because I thought much of Your love, therefore have I walked in Your Truth. Our thoughts very greatly influence our actions. It is questionable whether a man could long think on any subject without the course of his life being colored by it. Like certain silkworms which yield silk colored according to the food they have fed on, so our life gradually takes the tinge and hue of the thoughts to which we most accustom ourselves.

We have had in our police courts of late frequent instances of this. Boys have been studying literature of the Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin order—and they have become thieves of necessity. Men who have been deeply read in French novels, Byronic poetry, and German metaphysics have become dissolute and skeptical, and none could wonder. You cannot send the mind up the chimney and expect it to come down white. Whatever read, the thoughts traverse—all the faculties of manhood will go after them. So you see, Brethren, David had thought upon God's loving kindness, and very soon his whole spirit went after big thoughts, and he walked in God's Truth.

Let me show you a little of this. I will suppose, this morning, that you and I are meditating upon the subject suggested. Let us set God's loving kindness before our eyes, and one of its most striking points is its *eternity*. It is certain that God loved those whom He now loves before time began. Those who are the favored sons of God have not lately come into the possession of His love—they were loved of Him before the foundation stone of creation was laid. It is a glorious doctrine! There is room for the soul to revel and riot with holy delight in it.

Everlasting love, love without beginning towards unworthy worms! Well, now, what comes of it? Why, naturally, the moment the heart gets into the enjoyment of it, it cries, "I will walk in God's Truth. This great doctrine leads me to receive other great doctrines. I am not afraid, now, of doctrinal knowledge. If it is so that God has loved me before the world began, and

has blessed me with all spiritual blessings accordingly as He chose me in Christ Jesus, then I am not afraid to consider the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, the doctrine of His foreknowledge and of His predestination, and all the other doctrines that spring therefrom. The brightness of this one gem has attracted me to enter into the mines of Divine thought, and I will seek from now on to be conversant with the deep things of God.”

Many would be much more sound in doctrine if they meditated more upon the eternity of Divine loving kindness. Now turn that loving kindness round again, get another view of it. Let another ray of light flash from this diamond. Think of the freeness of it! God’s loving kindness to us was utterly undeserved. He loved us, not because there was anything lovable about us, but because He chose to do so. He is an absolute Sovereign, and He does as He wills with His own. It is because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, that He has had mercy upon us.

Unworthy, did I say? More unworthy was I than any, least likely, as it seemed, of any of the sons of men to be a partaker of Divine love. If He so freely loved *me*, what shall I say? I must freely love Him in return. I cannot but reciprocate this love. If I cannot love Him as He loves me in degree, yet will I at any rate love Him as freely and willingly. Has He chosen me? I choose Him. Has He ordained me that I should be saved? My heart ordains that He shall be glorious. And if there is anything that I can do to serve Him, let me know what it is, for it *must* be, it *shall* be done.

Turn that loving kindness round again, look at another side of it, namely, its *certainty*. It is no fiction that God loves His people. If you are Believers in Christ Jesus, trusting alone to His merits, God as surely loves you as He is God. There is no question about the matter. His Divine love is as certainly yours as His power is displayed in creation. Well, then, let your obedience be real in return.

If He really loves me, then will I really love Him, and truly serve Him. It shall not be talk, and resolution, and pretense. There shall be that gift given, even if I deny myself to give it. There shall be that deed done, whatever self-denial it may cost me. The Cross I will take up—the singularity of being a Christian I will dare to encounter. The persecution it will bring I will rejoice in—the love of God to me shall produce obedience in my heart in return.

Then, again, another view of it. Set the loving kindness of God before your eyes, and think of the faithfulness of it. God’s loving kindness never pauses a minute. It has been as constant as the flight of time—never a moment but there has been love for that moment. Never an hour, but there has been the hour’s portion of loving kindness. You have often forgotten the Lord, but He has never forgotten you. You have turned aside from your fidelity ten thousand times, but He never once. If He had dealt with you justly, and not graciously, He had long ago divorced you from His heart.

But you are as dear to Him now as ever, and you shall be dear to Him when Heaven and earth shall pass away. Well, what then? Why, then, as constantly seek to serve Him. Let every day have its duty, and let each day’s duty be your pleasure and privilege. Do not be receiving without also

giving out. As the sovereign goodness of God comes to you without a pause, and there are no miscarriages in Divine Grace, so let there never be any forgetfulness, negligence, or delay in your gratitude, and the obedience which spring's of it.

I would like you to think of the *exactness* of God's loving kindness, and how it goes into detail with us in little things. Much of our life's happiness depends upon little things happening rightly. If God ordained only the great events, and left the little things to chance, we should be very unhappy. But the loving kindness of God, while it gilds the whole landscape with sunlight, also has a beam for the tiniest insect and a ray for the eye of the smallest bird. Let our love to God also go into the minutest details—let us be earnest to be right in matters essential. But let us not be indifferent to things nonessential, as men call them.

God's loving kindness goes into detail, so let my obedience. Let gratitude to God permeate my entire life. Let it flood the whole of my faculties. Let it saturate my manhood through and through. Great God, Your love surrounds me, I breathe it, I live upon it, I shall die in it, I shall live forever in it, it shall make my eternal bliss! So would my soul in obedience give up herself, her thoughts, her works, her desires, her judgment, her tastes, her everything to Your sweet love which has so wondrously embraced and encompassed me!

You see, there is a logical consistency between thinking of the love of God, getting to see its details and attributes, and the ordering of our life in the way of Truth. The one is the natural cause from which the other is sure to spring. Once more, let me say, when we are thinking upon God's loving kindness, we must not forget what it is preparing for us. Within a short time you and I shall have faced the last article of death, or Christ Himself shall have come, and we shall be forever with the Lord. We have been washed in the blood of Jesus, our souls have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and for us there is prepared and reserved a crown of life that fades not away.

Anticipate the triumphant hour when this head which often aches with weariness shall be encircled with the crown of Glory! Think of the time when the hands that are worn with toil shall grasp the palm branch! And the feet that are weary with this pilgrimage shall stand upon the sea of glass—when our constant occupation shall be to glorify Him who has uplifted us from the miry clay, set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings forever! All this loving kindness is prepared for us, entailed upon us, ordained for us, and we are ordained to it by a decree which neither death nor Hell can change.

What then? Why then the trials of this life shall be treated as "light afflictions which are but for a moment." And if duty at anytime involves these trials, we will not take them into consideration—but for the joy that is set before us will endure the Cross, despising the shame. Men and women of God, God's loving kindness has prepared for you this heritage inconceivable, which heart cannot imagine, and, therefore, tongue cannot express. Will you not, for the sake of this, be willing to be despised, and

be ready, if need be, to be spit upon and rejected from the society of men? Why, this, methinks, it was that glistened in the martyrs' eyes.

There they stood at the stake, all calm and confident, though every bone was soon to be burned to cinder, and the whole frame of their bodies to become a mass of agony. The light that shone in the martyrs' eyes was not the flame of the torch which kindled the firewood, but the light of everlasting Glory! The joy that made their hearts glad was not that of obstinacy which holds fast to its own way, but it was the firmness of a soul that is one with the immortal Christ, and anticipates being with God forever and forever!

The loving kindness of God before our eyes is that which can make us walk in God's Truth though it be to prison and to death. God grant us more of the holy contemplation, and we shall be quite certain to have more of holy, consistent walking in the Truth.

I have done when I have made two or three more remarks. I have set these things before you as they *ought* to be, but things are not in this world as they *should* be. There are some men who have the first part of the text, at least they say they have, but they despise the second. They have set God's loving kindness before their eyes, but do not walk in God's Truth. They talk about being God's elect, God's Beloved, God's dear people. Alas, some of them are dear at any price, their lives being, in many cases, utterly inconsistent with their profession.

What do we say of men who make the Doctrines of Grace an excuse for licentiousness? They have the Doctrine of Grace, but not the Grace of doctrine. What say we of them? Why, what Paul said—"Their damnation is just." All their pretences to soundness, all their talk about orthodoxy is so much wind, nothing more. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The man who can cheat in business. The man who can lie. The man who is an unkind husband, a bad father, an unholy man—he may believe what he likes, or disbelieve what he likes—but he will be swept away from the Presence of God and the glory of His power when He whose fan is in His hand shall purge His floor and gather the wheat into His garner—and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

There are also men who say, "I have walked in God's Truth," but God's loving kindness is never before their eyes. They boast about their admirable character, but they never think upon the Grace of God. They indulge the Pharisaic spirit. Permit us to say to such that they know not what spirit they are of. That life of theirs which they think to be so blameless seems to be correct because they are *blind*.

If the light shone in upon their actions they would discover their imperfections. Then would they find that they needed a Savior, and finding that they needed a Savior they might then be led to apply for one, and find one. But as long as they wrap themselves up in the notion that they are good, and that they keep the Law and have done so from their youth up—we must remind them with all earnestness that they are shutting themselves out of Heaven. They are denying themselves all prospect of everlasting life, for, "by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." We must be saved by Grace and by Grace alone.

My last word is this. Brethren, depend upon it that you shall find, each of you when you get dull and flagging in the practical part of your religion, that the proper way to revive it is to think more than you have done upon the loving kindness of God. I do not know whether you ever feel stupid. I do, dreadfully. When one gets a bad cold the mind feels terribly dead and dull. Some people are dull enough even when they are well, but what they are when illness is added it were hard to say.

Well, then, one says, "How can I consider myself to be a child of God? Why, I cannot pray. I kneel down and pour out what ought to be my desires, but I am afraid I do not desire them. I read the Bible, but it does not glow and glisten before my eyes as it once did. I try to love God, but do not seem to have any emotion left. I am like a dead log or stone." What is the best way to quicken one's self when you have got to be just a mere inanimate mass, and cannot awaken yourself into life? Of course—the Holy Spirit is the Quickener—but what *means* shall we use?

"Why," says one, "turn over your sins and begin to think of them." Well, I have known some become more dead than they were before through *that*, and the little life they had seemed to go out of them as they saw their transgressions. I believe there is no reflection that has so much, under God the Holy Spirit, of quickening power in it as a remembrance of the *loving kindness of the Lord!* I have said unto my soul, "You are dull and heavy today, my Soul, but Jesus did not love you because of your brightness and liveliness. You have, at any rate, a desire not to be so dull.

"Who gave you that? Was not it His own Grace that made you hate yourself for being so dull and stupid? And He loves you just the same." Why, then, I am aware my soul makes me like the chariots of Amminadab—before I have hardly got through a little meditation upon my Lord's love, my love is kindled. Dr. Watts hit the mark when he said —

***"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours."***

If you doubt Christ's love to you, you will not love Him. But remember that He still loves you, believe it, hold on to it, and your love will revive—

***"And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim,
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God your help shall be."***

If I am a dead soul and a lost soul and have not a grain of Grace, and have everything that is bad about me, still I will cling to the Cross, and say, "I will never depart from this place: if I perish, I will perish *here*." Light will come unto you again, and the joy of the Lord will return, and your heart will wonder to find its own hardness depart, and your dumb tongue shall sing, and you, though once so lame, shall leap as a hart! God the Holy Spirit cause these meditations to be the means of quickening our spirits, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SAINT'S HORROR AT THE SINNER'S HELL NO. 524

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Gather not my soul with sinners.”
Psalm 26:9***

WE must all be gathered in due course. When time shall have ripened the fruit, it must hang no longer upon the tree, but be gathered into the basket. When the summer's sun has perfectly matured the corn, the sickle must be brought forth and the harvest must be reaped. To everything there is a season and an end. There shall be a gathering time for every one of us. It may come tomorrow. It may be deferred another handful of years. It may come to us by the long process of consumption or decline. It may advance with more rapid footsteps, and we may in a moment be gathered to our people.

Sooner or later, to use the expressive words of Job, the Almighty shall set His heart upon each of us and gather unto Himself our spirit and our breath. That gathering rests with God! The prayer of the Psalmist implies it and many Scriptures affirm it. As Young sings in his Night Thoughts—

“An angel's arm can't hurl me to the grave.”

Accidents are but God's arrangements. Diseases are His decrees—fevers His servants, and plagues His messengers. Our mortality is immortal, till the Eternal wills its death. “Return, you children of men” can be spoken by none but our heavenly Father, and when He gives the word, return we must without delay.

I do not know, my Brothers and Sisters, seeing that our death is certain, and remains entirely in the hands of our gracious God, that there is any prayer which we need to offer concerning it, except, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And this brief sentence, “Gather not my soul with sinners.” Scarcely can I commend those who plead to be delivered from sudden death, for sudden death is sudden Glory! Hardly can I advise you to request a hasty departure. For flesh and blood shrink from speedy dissolution. Pray not for long life, nor for an early grave—cheerfully leave all these matters to the choice of infinite Wisdom, and concentrate all your desires upon the one desire of the text.

Filled with a holy horror of the Hell of sinners, let us make most sure of our calling to the Heaven of the blessed. Let the fear of being cast forth with the withered branches increase our fruitfulness, and let our horror of the sinner's character and doom lead us to cleave more closely to the Savior of souls.

We will divide our discourse thus—first, *the gathering*, and here let us behold a vision. Next, *the prayer*, and here let us note an example. Thirdly, *a fear*, and here let us observe a holy anxiety. And then fourthly, *an answer* yielding a consolation.

I. First, THE GATHERING. Let the man who has his eyes open behold the gathering of sinners, and in the sanctuary of the Lord let him understand their end. There have been many partial gatherings of the ungodly, all ending in sudden ruin and overthrow. Turn your eyes here. Two hundred and fifty men have impudently taken censers into their hands and have dishonored the Lord's chosen servants, Moses and Aaron. Mark well their proud reviling of the Lord's Anointed. In the gainsaying of Korah they all have a part. The people hasten from their tabernacles and they stand alone. It is but for a moment. Look! The earth cleaves asunder. They go down alive into the pit and the earth closes her mouth upon them. My soul trembles and hides her face for fear—and my fainting heart groans out her desire—"Gather not my soul with sinners"!

Look yonder, my Brothers and Sisters, to the city of palm trees surrounded by its strong munitions. All the inhabitants are gathered together within it. From the top of the walls they mock the feeble band of silent Israelites, who for six days have marched round and round their city. The seventh day has come and the rams' horns give the signal of destruction. The Lord comes forth from His rest, and at the terror of His rebuke the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground. Now where are your boastings, O congregation of the wicked? The sword of Israel is bathed in your blood, O accursed sons of Canaan. As we hear the shriek of the slaughtered and mark the smoke of the city ascending up to Heaven like the flames of Sodom of old, we reverently bow the knee unto Jehovah and cry, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

Leaping over centuries—with weeping we behold the Holy City, beautiful for situation—once the joy of the whole earth, but now forsaken of her God—and beleaguered by her foes. All the Jewish people have come together from the four winds of Heaven—as the flesh is cast into the caldron and the fire burns fiercely, so are they gathered together for judgment. Well might their rejected Messiah weep over the devoted city as He remembered how often He would have gathered her children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and they would not. Now are they gathered in another manner—and the wings of vultures flutter over them, hastening for the prey.

See yonder the Roman armies and the mounds which they have cast up! Woe unto you, O city of Zion—for the spoilers know no pity. They spare neither young nor old. "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." For the day of the Lord's vengeance is come and the words of Moses are fulfilled, when he said—"The Lord shall bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies. A nation whose tongue you shall not understand. A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young.

"And you shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters, which the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the desperate straits, wherewith your enemies shall distress you." Hark! The clarion summons the warrior to arms. The veterans of Vespasian and Titus dash to the assault. Where are you now, O city polluted with the murder of Prophets, and stained with the blood of the

Prophets' Lord? Your walls protect not your sons, they keep not the temple of your glory. Look! A soldier's ruthless hand hurls the red firebrand into the sacred precincts of the Temple, and its smoke darkens the sky!

Can you walk those smoldering ruins and behold the heaps of ashes mingled with burning flesh—the crimson streams of gore—and the deep pools of clotted blood? Can you linger there where desolation holds her reign supreme and refuse to see the justice of the God of Israel, or fail to breathe the humble prayer of the Psalmist, “Gather not my soul with sinners”? Wherever the enemies of God are gathered, there we have, before long, confusion and tears and death in whatever place sinners may hold their counsels. When the Judge of all the earth comes out against them, we soon see an Aceldama—a field of blood.

But, forgetting all these inferior gatherings, illustrious in horror though they are, my eyes behold a greater gathering which is proceeding every day to its completion. Every day the heavens and the earth hear the voice of God, saying, “Gather you, gather you My foes together, that I may utterly destroy them.” “Therefore wait you upon Me, says the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them My indignation, even all My fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.”

As the huntsman, when he goes forth to the battle, encompasses the beasts of the forest with an ever narrowing ring of hunters—that he may exterminate them all in one great slaughter—so the God of Justice has made a ring in His Providence round about the sinful sons of men. Within that circle of Divine power are imprisoned monarchs and peasants, peers and paupers. That ring encompasses all nations, polite or barbarous, civilized or rude. No impenitent sinner can break through the lines. As well might a worm escape from within a circle of flame. Every hour the lines grow narrower, and the multitudes of the Lord's enemies are driven into the center where His darts are flying, where His sharp arrows shall pierce them.

I hear the baying of the dogs of Death today, hounding the unbelieving to their doom. I see the heaps of slain, and mark the terrible arrows as they fly with unerring aim. Multitudes of sinners are scattered from the equator to the poles, but not one of them is able to escape the Avenger's hand. High and haughty princes, boasting their imperial pomp, fall like antlered stags, smitten with the shafts of the Almighty. Their valiant warriors, like wild boars of the forest, perish upon the point of His glittering spear.

The vision of the Apocalypse is no mere dream. He whose name is THE WORD OF GOD, shall tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And meanwhile, the angel standing in the sun cries with a loud voice to all the fowls which fly in the midst of Heaven, “Come and gather yourselves together into the supper of the great God: that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men: and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them: and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.”

At the remembrance of all this, we may well exclaim with Habakkuk, "When I heard, my belly trembled. My lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when He comes up unto the people, He will cut them in pieces with His troops." O God of all Grace, I pray You, by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus in which I trust, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Let that Providence which gathers Your people from among men, lay hold on me. Let Your angels who keep watch and ward about Your people, keep me from the snare of the fowler and from the destruction which wastes at noonday.

But the scene changes—we see no longer the assembling of the multitudes in the great valley of the shadow of death—we track them further till we find ourselves on the threshold of the abode of spirits. You have seen the prisoners in their cells, waiting for their trial at the next assize. The strong hand of Law has laid them in durance, where they await the summons to appear before the judge. I pray you note the company and before the trumpet announces the judge, see what a strange gathering the prison contains. Do you mark them? There is the murderer, with blood-red hands. There is he who smote his fellow to his wounding. Yonder lies the wretch who perjured himself before God.

And here the man who pilfered his neighbor's goods. However they differed from one another before, they are on a level in rank in this house of detention—and they all await one common jail delivery. It is no pleasant sight to visit these cells before the assize comes on. Crime, although as yet not condemned, is no comfortable vision. But what of earthly prisons? My heart sees a sight far more terrible—

***"Look down, my soul, on Hell's domains,
That world of agony and pains!
What crowds are now associated there,
Of widely different character.
What wretched ghosts are met below,
Some once so great, so little now;
So gay, so sad, so rich, so poor;
Now scorned by those they scorned before."***

Multitudes are gathered together in the state where souls abide until their final doom is pronounced, both on their bodies and on their souls. It is a place of misery where not a drop of water cools their parched tongue. A state of doubt and terror and suspense—a place from which consolation is banished, where the "wrath to come" perpetually afflicts them. There in captivity abide the formalist, the hypocrite, the profane, the licentious, the abandoned, those who despised God and hated Christ and turned away from the glory of His Cross. There they are gathered, tens of thousands of them, at this day, waiting till the great assize shall sit. O God, "gather not my soul with sinners," but let me be gathered with those whose spirits wait beneath the altar for their redemption, to wit, the resurrection of their bodies. Gather me with those who cry day and night until God avenges His own elect. Gather me with the multitude of spirits who wait the coming of the Son of God from Heaven, that their bliss may be complete.

But now, my eyes, prophetic in the light of Scripture, see another gathering. The trumpet has sounded, the prison doors are loosed and the

gates of death give way. They come, bodies and souls—souls from the place of waiting in the pit of Hell. And bodies from their graves, from ocean and from earth—from all the four winds of Heaven, bodies and souls come together and there they stand—an exceeding great army. This time it is not in the valley of suspense. But “multitudes, multitudes in the valley of *decision*.” “And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army. For His camp is very great: for He is strong that executes His word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible: and who can abide it?”

“Assemble yourselves and come, all you heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: there cause Your mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down. For the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.” “And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it. And death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged, every man according to their works. And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Oh, well may you and I pray that we may have a part in the first resurrection—upon such the second death has no power. Grant us, O Lord, that we may not be with the wicked, the rest of the dead, who rise not until after a thousand years are finished. But give us a portion among those whose iniquities are blotted out, who have not received the mark of the beast in their foreheads, who therefore live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

May we be gathered with the harvest of the Lord, when He that sits on the cloud shall reap it with His golden sickle. But this gathering of which my text speaks is not the harvest of the righteous. It is the vintage of the wicked. When “the angel which had power over fire” shall cry, “Thrust in Your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth: for her grapes are fully ripe.” How dreadful that great winepress of Divine Wrath which shall be trod without the city, and how terrible that flow of blood, like a mighty stream of wine, so deep that it ran even unto the horses’ bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. “Gather not my soul with sinners,” O God, in that terrible day.

I need not stop to paint—for colors equal to its terrors I have none—that dreadful place where the last gathering shall be held. That great synagogue of Satan, the place appointed for unbelievers and prepared for the devil and his angels. Where “sullen moans and hollow groans and shrieks of tortured ghosts” shall be their only music. Where weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth shall be their perpetual occupation. Where joy is a stranger and hope unknown. Where death itself would be a friend. No, I will not attempt to describe what our Savior veiled in words like these, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” “Where their worm

dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” “Outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” We drop the curtain, hoping that you have seen enough to make you pray, “Gather not my soul with sinners.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we recollect that that last gathering will be a perfect one. That there will be no sinner left with the saints—that, on the other hand, no saint will remain with sinners. When we recollect that it will be a final one—no redistribution will ever be made and that it will entail an everlasting separation—a great gulf being fixed, which none can cross, it remains for us to be solemnly anxious to be found on the right hand and to put up, with vehemence, this prayer—“O Lord, gather not my soul with sinners.”

II. Having thus shown the vision of the gathering, let me, with deep solemnity, conduct your minds for a little time to THE PRAYER ITSELF. I am sure we are all agreed about it, everyone of us. Balaam, if he is here this morning, differs not from me. The worst and most abandoned wretch on earth agrees with David in this. Sinners do not wish to be gathered with sinners. Balaam's prayer is, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,” which only differs in words from David's petition, “Gather not my soul with sinners.”

But then *the reasons* of the one prayer are very different in different persons. We would all like to be saved from Hell, but then there is a difference in the reasons why we would so be delivered. The same prayer may be uttered by different lips. In the one it may be heard and accepted as *spiritual* prayer, and in the other it may be but the natural excitement produced by a selfish desire to avoid misery. I know why you would not wish to be gathered with sinners—those of you who are ungodly and impenitent—you dread the fire, the flames which never end. You dread the wrath, the suffering. You dread the horrors of that world to come.

Not so with the Christian. These he dreads as all men must, but he has a higher and a better reason for not wishing to be gathered with sinners. I tell you, Sirs, if sinners could be gathered into Heaven with their present character, the Christian's prayer would be what it now is—“Gather not my soul with sinners.” If sin entailed happiness. If rebellion against God could give bliss, even then the Christian would scorn the happiness and avoid the bliss which sin affords. His objection is not so much to Hell, as to *sinners* themselves. His desire is to avoid the contamination and distraction of their company.

Many of you will say, “Now I dislike the company of sinners.” Indeed, most moral people dislike the society of *a certain class of sinners*. I suppose there is scarcely one here today who would wish to be found in the den of the burglar, where the conversation is concerning plunder and violence. You would not probably feel very easy in the haunt of the harlot, where licentious tongues utter flippantly lascivious words. You shun the house of the strange woman. The pothouse is not a favorite resort for you. You would not feel very much at ease at the bar of the gin palace. You would say of each of these—“This is no joy to me.”

Even those of you who are not renewed by Christ despise vice when she walks abroad naked. I fear you cannot say as much when she puts on her silver slippers, and wraps about her shoulders her scarlet mantle. Sin in

rags is not popular. Vice in sores and squalor tempts no one in the grosser shapes. Men hate the very fiend whom they love when it is refined and delicate in its form. I want to know whether you can say, "Gather not my soul with sinners," when you see the ungodly in their high days and holidays? Do you not envy the fraudulent merchant counting his gold—his purse heavy with his gains, while he himself by his craft is beyond all challenge by the Law?

Do you not envy the giddy revelers spending the night in the merry dance, laughing, making merry with wine and smiling with thoughts of lust? Yonder voluptuary, entering the abode where virtue never finds a place, and indulging in pleasures unworthy to be named in this hallowed house—does he ever excite your envy? I ask you, when you see the pleasures, the bright side, the honors, the emoluments, the gains, the merri-ments of sin, do you then say, "Gather not my soul with sinners"? There is a class of sinners that some would wish to be gathered with—those easy souls who go on so swimmingly. They never have any trouble. Conscience never pricks them. Business never goes wrong with them. They have no bands in their life, no bonds in their death.

They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are like the green bay tree which spreads on every side until its boughs cover whole acres with their shade. These are the men who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Can we say, when we look at these, when we gaze upon the bright side of the wicked, "Gather not my soul with sinners"? Remember, if we cannot do so without reservation, we really cannot pray the prayer at all. We ought to alter it and put it, "Gather not my soul with openly reprobate sinners." And then mark you, as there is only one place for all sorts of sinners, moral or immoral, apparently holy or profane, your prayer cannot be heard, for if you are gathered with sinners at all—with the *best* of sinners—you must be gathered with the *worst* of sinners, too.

I know, children of God, you can offer the prayer as it stands and say, "In all their glory and their pomp. In all their wealth, their peace and their comfort, my soul abhors them, and I earnestly beseech You, O Lord, by the blood of Jesus, 'Gather not my soul with sinners.'"

Brethren, why does the Christian pray this prayer? He prays it, first of all, because *as far as his acquaintance goes with sinners, even now he does not wish for their company*. The company of sinners in this world to the saint is a cause of uneasiness. We cannot be with them and feel ourselves perfectly at home. "My soul is among lions, even among them that are set on fire of Hell." "Rid me from strange children." We are vexed with their conversation, even as Lot was with the language of the men of Sodom. We lay an embargo upon them—they cannot act as they would in our society—and they lay a restraint upon us. We cannot act as we would when we are with them.

We feel an hindrance in our holy duties through dwelling in the tents of Kedar. When we would talk of God, we cannot in the midst of company to whom the very name of Jesus is a theme for jest. How can we well engage in family devotions when more than half the family are given up to the world? How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? You who so-

jour in Mesech, you know how great a grief it is, what a damper it is to your spirituality, what a serious hindrance it is to your growth in Divine Grace. Besides, the company tempts Believers to sin. Who can keep his garment pure when he travels with sinful companions? If I am condemned to walk continually in the midst of thorns and briars, it is strange if I do not mar my garments. Often our nearest friends get a hold upon our hearts and then, being enemies to God, they lead us to do things which we otherwise would never have dreamed of doing.

The company of the sinner is to the Christian a matter of real loss in another respect, for when God comes to punish a nation, the Christian has to suffer with the sinners of that nation. National judgments fall as well upon the holy as upon the profane, and therefore, through being mingled with the ungodly of this world, the Christian is a sufferer by famine, war, or pestilence. Well may he, from the little taste he has known of their company, cry, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

Why, Brothers and Sisters, I will put you for a moment to the test—you shall be in the commercial room of an inn—you are on a journey and you sit down to attend to your own business, or to await the train. Now, if two or three fast men come into the room and they begin venting their filth and blasphemy, how do you feel? You do not wish to hear. You wish you were deaf. One of them cannot speak without larding his conversation with an oath. There is another, perhaps a man elevated above the situation which his education fits him to occupy, who, in his conversation utters the most abominable and atrocious language and the others laugh at him.

Before many minutes you will steal out of the room, for you cannot endure it. What must it be to be shut in with such persons *forever*? On board a steamboat, it may be, you fall into the middle of a little knot who are talking on some infidel subject in a manner far from palatable to you. Have you not wished yourself on shore, and have you not walked to the other end of the boat to be out of their way? I know you have felt that kind of thing. Your blood has chilled. Horror has taken hold upon you because of the wicked who keep not God's Law. If such has been your experience, you can well understand the reason of the Psalmist's prayer, for much of such torment you could not bear.

Moreover, I do not know any class of sinners whose company a Christian would desire. I should not like to live with the most precise of hypocrites. What ugly company to keep! You cannot trust them anywhere—always hollow—always ready to deceive and to betray you. I would not choose to live with formalists, self-righteous people, because whenever they begin to talk about themselves and their own good deeds, they do, as it were, throw dirt upon the righteousness of Christ, which is our boast—and that is ill company for a Christian. The Believer triumphs in the free Grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the efficacy of the blood of Jesus.

But the self-righteous man speaks only of his Church attendance or his going to Chapel, his fasting, his almsgivings and the like. We cannot agree with the person who relies on his self-trust. We could almost as well associate with the profane as we could with the self-righteous. As for blas-

phemers, we could not endure them a moment. Would you not as soon be shut up in a tiger's den as with a cursing, swearing, thievish profligate? Who can endure the company of either a Voltaire or a Manning? Find out the miserly, the mean, the sneaking, the grasping—who likes to be with them?

Who wants to be with the angry, the petulant who never try to check the unholy passion—one is always glad to be away from such folks. You are afraid lest you should be held responsible for their mad actions, and therefore if you must be with them, you are always ill at ease. With no sort of sinners can the child of God be a fellow. Lambs and wolves, doves and hawks, devils and angels are not fit companions. And so through what little trial the righteous have had, they have learned that there is no sort of sinners that they would like to be shut up with forever.

But then, we have other reasons. We know that when impenitent sinners are gathered at the last, *their characters* will be the same. They were filthy here, they will be filthy still. Here on earth their sin was in the bud—in Hell it will be full-blown. If they were bad here, they will be worse there. Here they were restrained by Providence, by company, by custom—there, there will be no restraints. Hell will be a world of sinners at large, a land of outlaws, a place where every man shall follow out his own heart's most horrible inclinations. Who would wish to be with them?

Then again, the *place* where they will be gathered alarms us—the pit of Hell, the abode of misery and wrath forever—who would be gathered there? Then, their *occupation*. They spend their time in cursing God—in inventing and venting fresh blasphemies. They go from bad to worse—climbing down the awful ladder of detestable depravity. Who would wish to be with them? Remember too, their *sufferings*. The pain of body and of soul they know, when God has cast both body and soul into Hell. Who would wish to be with them? Remember, too, that they are *banished forever from God* and God is our sun, therefore they are in darkness. God is our life, therefore they are worse than dead. God is our joy, therefore they are wretched to the extreme.

Why, this would be Hell, if there were no other Hell to a Christian—to be banished from his God. Moreover, they are *denied the joys of Christ's society*. No Savior's love for them, no blissful communion at His right hand, no living fountains of water to which the Lamb shall lead them. O my God, when I think of what the sinner is, and where he is, and how he must be there forever, shut out from You, my soul may well pray with anguish that prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners."—

***"You lovely chief of all my joys,
You sovereign of my heart!
How could I bear to hear Your voice
Pronounce the sound 'Depart'?
Oh wretched state of deep despair,
To see my God remove,
And fix my doleful station where
I must not taste His love.
Jesus, I throw my arms around,
And hang upon Your breast;
Without a gracious smile from You
My spirit cannot rest."***

III. But I am afraid I weary you and therefore, dear Friends, let me take you very briefly to the third point. There is in our text A FEAR, as if a whisper awakened the Psalmist's ear to trembling, "Perhaps, after all, you may be gathered with the wicked."

Now, that fear, although marred by unbelief, springs, in the main, from holy anxiety. Do you not think that some of us may well be the subjects of it? This holy anxiety may well arise if we recollect our *past sins*. Before we were converted we lived as others lived. The lusts of the flesh were ours. We indulged our members. We permitted sin to reign in our mortal bodies without restraint. And there will be times to the pardoned man, even though he has faith in Christ, when he will begin to think—"What if, after all, those sins should be remembered and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?"

Then again he recollects *his present backwardness*. And as the little apple on the tree, so sour and unripe, when it sees the crabs gathered, is half afraid it may be gathered with them, so is he. With so little Grace, so little love, he is afraid he shall be gathered with the ungodly. He recollects his own *unfruitfulness* and as he sees the woodman going round the orchard, knocking off first this rotten bough, and then cutting off that other decayed branch, he thinks there is so little fruit on him that perhaps he may be cut off, too. And so, what with his past sins, his present backsliding and unfruitfulness, he is half afraid he may yet have to suffer the doom of the wicked.

And then, looking forward to the future, he recollects *his own weakness and the many temptations* that beset him. And he fears that he may fall, after all, and become a prey to the enemy. With all these things before him, I wonder not that the poor plant, set yonder in the garden, is half afraid that it may be pulled up with the weeds and burned on yonder blazing fire in the corner of the garden. "Gather not my soul with sinners."

What man is there among you who has not need, sometimes, to tremble for himself? If any of you can say you are always confident, it is more than I can say. I would to God I could always know myself saved and accepted in Christ, but there are times when a sense of sin within, present evil, and prevailing corruptions make the preacher feel that he is in jeopardy and compel him to pray, as he does sometimes now, in fear and trembling, "O God, gather not my soul with sinners."

IV. And here comes in, to conclude, THE ANSWER TO THIS PRAYER, which is a word of consolation. Brothers and Sisters, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character is rightly described in the Psalm before us, be not afraid that you ever shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two things that David had—the outward walking in integrity and the inward trusting in the Lord? Do you endeavor to make your outward conduct and conversation conformable to the example of Christ? Would you scorn to be dishonest toward men, or to be undevout toward God? At the same time, are you resting upon Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, then rest assured with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for there are one or two things which render that calamity impossible.

The first is this, that the rule of the gathering is *like to like*. "Gather you together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them"—all the tares *together*—"but gather the wheat into My barn." It is not, "Make a mixture of them. Throw them together in a heap—put the corn and the tares in My garner." Oh, no—"Tares in bundles. Wheat in sheaves." If then, you are *like* God's people, you shall be *with* God's people. If you have their life within, their character without. If you rest on their Savior. If you love their God. If you have a longing towards their holiness, you shall be gathered with them—like to like.

There is another rule—*those who have been our proper comrades here are to be our companions hereafter*. God will be pleased to send us where we wish to go in this life. That is to say, if in this life I have loved the haunt of the sinner. If I have made the theater my sanctuary. If I have made the drinking house my abode of pleasure and have found my solace with the gambler, and my comfort with the debauched. If I have lived merely for business and for this world, and never for the next, then I shall go with my companions. I shall be sent where I used to go—being let go, I shall go to my own company among the lost.

But on the other hand, if I have loved God's House. If I can say with the Psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of Your House and the place where Your honor dwells." If the excellent of the earth have been my companions, and the chosen of God have been my Brothers and Sisters, I shall not be separated from them. I shall have the same company in Heaven that I have had on earth. If I have walked with God here, I shall reign with God there. If I have suffered with Christ here, I shall reign with Christ hereafter. That is another thing which prevents your being gathered with the wicked.

Again, you cannot be gathered with the wicked, for *you are too dearly bought*. Christ bought you with His blood and He will not cast you into the fire. It is a doctrine we never can hold, that Christ redeemed with His precious blood any that are damned in Hell. We cannot conceive it possible that Christ should have stood their Sponsor in suffering and yet they should be punished, too. That He should pay the debt and then they should have to pay it also.

And again, *you are loved too much*. God the Eternal Father has loved you long and well, and proved that to you by His great gift and by His daily consideration and care of you. And it is not, therefore, possible that He should permit you, the darling of His heart, the child of His desire, a member of the mystical body of His only Beloved Son, to perish forever in Tophet.

Again that *new nature within you* will not let you be gathered with sinners. What does your new nature do—what *must* it do? It must love God. What? Love God and be in Hell? Your new nature must *pray*. What? Pray in the pit? Your new nature must praise the God that created it. What? Sing songs to the Divine Being amidst the howling of the damned? Impossible! If you have a new heart and a right spirit. If your soul clings with both its hands to the Cross of Christ. If you love Jesus and long to be like He is, you may have this fear, but it is a groundless one—for you shall

never be gathered with sinners! Your feet shall stand in the congregation of the righteous in the day when the wicked are cast away forever.

I had hoped, this morning, so to have handled my text that perhaps God might bless it to the sinner—and who can tell it may be so? Sinner, if it is a dreadful thing to be gathered with you, what a frightful thing your gathering must be! My dear careless and thoughtless Hearer, this morning I have no burning *words* with which to awake you. I have no earnest *tones* with which to startle you. But still, *from my soul* I do entreat you consider that if it is a subject of horror to us to dwell with you forever, it must be an awful thing to be a sinner. And will you be a sinner any longer? Will you abide where you now are?

Alas, you cannot save yourself. You are hopelessly ruined—you have lost all power as well as all virtue. You are as a dead thing, as a potter's vessel that is broken to shivers with a rod of iron. But there is one who can save you, even Jesus. And His saving voice to you this morning is, "Believe in Me and you shall be saved." To believe in Him is to believe that He can save you, and therefore to trust Him. Do you not believe that of Him who is God? Can you not believe that of Him whose ways are not as your ways, whose Grace is boundless, and whose love is free! Will you now believe that Christ *can* save you and that He *will* save you?—and will you now trust yourself to Him to save you?

Say in your heart, "Here, Lord, I give my soul up to You to save it. I believe You will and You can. Your nature and Your name are love, and I trust Your name. I believe in Your goodness. I repose in You." Sinner, you are saved! God has saved you. No soul ever so believed in Christ and yet was left unpardoned. Go your way. Be of good cheer, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven you." Rejoice in Him evermore, for you shall never be gathered with sinners. May God give His blessing to you now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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SEEING GOD'S GOODNESS HERE

NO. 3017

A SERMON
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*"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness
of the Lord in the land of the living."
Psalm 27:13.*

WE were favored with very much of God's goodness last Sabbath evening, when we considered the rule of Grace in guiding a Believer's life, namely, that instead of seeing in order to believe, he has learned to believe in order to see. [Sermon No. 766, Volume 13—BELIEVING TO SEE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] "Unless I had believed to see," says the Psalmist, "I had fainted." And we should never have known true refreshment, nor enjoyed the comforts of the Lord, but should have been full of doubts and distracted with fears if we had not learned the sacred art of believing although we did not see, or even believing in spite of what we did see, or believing in order that we might see—fully expecting that sight would inevitably follow if our faith were but simple and true!

Those of you who were present last Sabbath evening will remember that I restricted my remarks, for the most part, to the one matter of our salvation. I tried to show to seekers that instead of first looking for evidences of salvation and *then* believing in Christ, *they were to believe in Christ in order to obtain those evidences*—that, instead of looking to their repentance and then having confidence in Christ, their *repentance sprang from their confidence in Christ*—that instead of saying, "We are not fully sanctified and, therefore, we fear we are not saved," they were to remember that the certainty of their being saved by Grace, through faith, would be to their minds and hearts, the great motive power by which they would be enabled to obtain that sanctification which cannot be theirs as long as they remain in legal bondage and have doubts about being "accepted in the Beloved." There were some set at liberty last Sabbath evening who had really known the Lord for years but were afraid to say definitely that they had trusted in Christ and that, therefore, they were saved. May God grant that all of us may not only come to Christ, but may we also exercise a simple, childlike faith which takes God's Word as it stands in this blessed Book, believes it, receives it, lives upon it, asks no questions concerning it and will allow none to be asked by others!

On this occasion I propose to make a particular application of the general principle of our text. David was a man of many troubles.

Especially in the latter part of his life, he was incessantly in the furnace and he says that he would have “fainted” under those many troubles if he had not “believed to see,” in the particular matter of his trials, “the goodness of the Lord” in that land which is the special sphere of trouble. David believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not only in the Glory Land yonder, but also in this land here below. He believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not merely when he emerged from the furnace, but also while he was in it! As a pilgrim and a stranger, he believed to see the goodness of the Lord during the days of his pilgrimage. He did not always see it, but he believed to see it—he believed in it and anticipated it and, by believing in it—he did actually come to see it with the eyes of his mind and to rejoice in it!

We all know that this world is a very unpromising field for faith. According to our varied experiences, we must all subscribe to the declaration that this earth is, more or less, a valley of tears, that it is not our rest, for it is polluted. There are too many thorns in this nest for us to abide comfortably in it. This world is under the curse, so it still brings forth thorns and thistles and, in the sweat of our brows do we eat our bread until we return to the earth out of which man was at first taken. Were this world really to be our home, it would be a terrible fate for us! If we were always to live in this huge penal settlement, it would be sad, indeed, for us to know that we had continually to dwell where the shadow of the curse always lingers and where we have only the shadow of the Cross to sustain us under it. But faith comes into this unpromising field and believes that she shall see the goodness of the Lord even here! She rushes into the fiercest fight that ever rages, fully believing that she shall see the banner of the Lord's mercy and Truth waving even there. She bears the burden and heat of the earthly toil and expects to experience the loving kindness of the Lord beneath it all. She knows that she will see more of her God in the land beyond the flood, but still, she believes to see the goodness of the Lord even in this land of the living which is so distracted and disturbed with sorrows, cares and trials and tribulations!

I want to show you, first, *that faith is infallibly persuaded of God's goodness here.* Secondly, *that she expects clearly to see that goodness here.* And thirdly, *that it is this expectation and belief which sustain the soul of the tried Believer.*

I. First, then, FAITH IS INFALLIBLY ASSURED OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD IN THIS TIME STATE.

She is persuaded of this from what she knows of God, Himself. She could not believe that He could be otherwise than good. She reads the promises recorded in His Word and she believes that they are all true and reliable. She can detect nothing that is unkind or ungenerous in any of them—they are all couched in the softest, gentlest and most consoling words. The language used seems to her to have been selected on purpose to meet her case and to make the promise suitable and sweet to her sorrowing heart. She feels sure that God could not be unkind. With the Psalmist, she cries, “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a

clean heart." And though, like the Psalmist, she may have to write afterwards, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well near slipped," yet she stands fast to her first declaration, "Truly God is good to Israel," however much surrounding circumstances may seem to prove the contrary! She knows that from the necessity of the Divine Nature, God must be good to His people both here and hereafter.

When faith turns to the Bible and reads the history of the Lord's people, she sees that God has been good to them. And, knowing that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," she draws the cheering inference that He will also be good to her. Inasmuch as she can distinctly see that the trials and difficulties of the saints in the olden times always worked their lasting good, she is convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her trials and troubles, overruled by the same loving Lord who cared for them, will work to her lasting good and that God will bless her, now, as He blessed His saints in the olden time.

Perhaps some of you have faith, but yet possibly through lack of thought, you have not exercised it upon this particular point. If you are given to murmuring against God, you will often think thoughts which you would not like to hear or to see in spoken or written language. If someone should say to you, "God has been very unkind to you. I am sure that you cannot see the goodness of God displayed in your life," you would at once turn round upon such a slanderer and defend the Character of your God from such an unjust accusation! Although you often murmur against the Lord in your spirit, yet, if another person should say in words what you have felt in your heart, you would then see the wickedness of your murmuring and you would also see that in the depths of your soul, there is a firm confidence in the goodness of God to you. You need to stir up that holy fire and set it blazing, so that you may get comfort from its warmth, for it is true and it must be true, that God is now good and always good, and good to the highest possible degree of goodness to all His children in their worst calamities and their darkest seasons of sorrow.

But there are some conditions of life in which it is really a trial to faith to believe in the goodness of the Lord, as, for instance, that of *long-continued, dire poverty*. Some of God's choicest saints are so poor that they not only lack luxuries, but they even lack the very necessaries of life. As a rule, possibly without exception, God does give His people bread and water, but sometimes the bread is only a very small portion and the cup of water—a very tiny one. I have known a child of God, who has said to me, "I have struggled hard against poverty. I have undertaken first, this, and then that, but, in every case, I have failed. My little vessel has tried to enter the harbor of prosperity, but the cruel winds have always driven it back again into the rough sea of adversity. If I had been a spendthrift. If I had been wasteful in the days of my prosperity, or if I had not used my substance for the cause of God, I could understand my failures. If God would again entrust me with ample means, I would cheerfully give to His cause, as I used to do, but, alas, I have not anything left after my daily needs are supplied." Unbelief asks, "can this

be the goodness of the Lord?" But Faith answers, "Yes, it is, and it must be. I would faint in this poverty. I would give up in despair if, under all my trials and hardships, I were not sure of the goodness of God to me! If I were even starving to death, God would still have a good word out of my dying mouth. Even if He should let me die of starvation, it must be right—and He must be good!"

There are others of God's children whose trials come from *constant sickness*. And some forms of illness are so trying that we are apt to ask ourselves why we should be subjected to them. I talked, this morning, with an aged Sister in Christ who, years ago, met with a Providence by which her head was so severely injured that every other day her pain is almost unbearable. She can never go up to the House of God because the sound of the preacher's voice, or of the singing of the congregation would be more than she could endure. When we talked together, gently and softly, concerning the things of God, she quoted to me Psalm 119:75—"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me." If anyone asks, "Can it be the goodness of the Lord thus to keep away one who really loves His House and prizes His ordinances, to send her such sore sickness?" We must reply, "Yes, it must be right. We cannot see how God's goodness can thus be manifested, but we are to believe that it is." I may be addressing some others who are subject to peculiarly trying infirmities, which keep you from the work you love and the field of service where you have long been so happy and useful. Well, dear Friends, in such a case as that, you must believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living in thus making your life to be one of sickness, weariness and pain!

The same rule also applies to *our bereavements*. How mysterious are the dispositions of Providence in this matter! Many whom we cannot afford to lose are taken away from us—while others who seem to do no good—continue to live. Death appears to spare the hemlock and to cut down the oak and the cedar! Where there is a man who only cumbers the ground, he is often allowed to remain, while others who are like pillars of Christ's Church are taken away. I know a little village where there were but a few poor inhabitants and one man of substance whom I very greatly esteemed. Towards the small salary of the pastor in that village, my friend contributed three-fourths, if not nine-tenths. He was the mainstay of that little Christian community. When I found him, last week, very ill with fever, and joined with other friends in earnest prayer that his life might be spared, it seemed to us absolutely essential to the welfare of that village church that he should be kept here at least a little longer. But now that the Lord has taken him Home to Himself, what can we say? We must not begin to cavil at what God has done, but say to Him, We are sure that whatever You do is right. It cannot be wrong, it cannot be unkind! It must be the kindest thing that could have happened, the very thing which we would have wished to happen if we could have known what You know and if we could have formed our judgment upon the same principle as swayed Your Infallible Judgment."

We sometimes fancy that we should like to make a slight alteration in some of the arrangements of Divine Providence. We would not interfere with the great wheels that are always revolving, but just here and there, where a small cog rather inconveniently touches our personal interests, we would like to have it so altered as to let us alone. But, remorselessly, as we sometimes imagine, the great wheels grind on—our comforts are taken from us and our joy is destroyed. What then? Why, let us still say, “Lord, not our will, but Yours be done.” And let us kiss the hand that wields the rod as much as the one that bestows choice gifts upon us! It is far easier for me to say this than it is for yon poor widow to carry it out. It is easier for me to say it than it is for that weeping mother who has seen all her children taken before her to the silent tomb. But, my Sisters, my Brothers, if it is harder for you, then so much the more earnestly would I urge you to say it, for the very difficulty of the submission, when you have rendered it, would prove the sincerity of your confidence in your God and bring more Glory to Him! So, as we take our friends and relatives to the tomb and commit the precious dust to the earth, let us still believe to see the goodness of the Lord even there! If we do not look at our sorrows in that light, we shall faint under our repeated losses and bereavements. But if that is the light in which we view them, we shall see a Glory gilding even the graves that cover the bodies of our departed loved ones—and we shall rejoice in the full assurance of the goodness of the Lord to us, and even more to those who have gone to be “forever with the Lord.”

Another matter may, perhaps, have greatly troubled some of you, namely, *your unanswered prayers*. You have been praying for certain people for a long time, but so far you have received no answer to your supplications. There is a Brother here who has prayed for years for the conversion of his wife—yet she is still unconverted. If he yields to unbelief, he will have many difficult questions to answer. God has said, “Ask, and you shall receive.” You have asked for a thing which, apparently, is for God’s Glory, yet you have not received it. And this will sometimes be a staggering blow to the earnest pleader. Some of you have prayed, as I have done, for the life of a friend, or you have sought some other favor from the hands of God, but He has not granted it. I believe there is a Brother here who has carried an unanswered prayer about with him for ten or a dozen years. I have known cases of Believers praying for 30 years and yet not obtaining what they asked for. And some of them, like the worthies of old, have “died in faith, not having received the promises.” They have not lived to see one of their children converted, yet their children *have been converted*, and saved through their prayers, too, long after the parents slept in their graves!

In the cases of unanswered prayers, there is always the temptation to believe that God has not been faithful to His promises, that this bitter draught of unbelief is an addition to the sorrow which you feel at your failures at the Mercy Seat. This is the time when you will faint unless you believe to see the goodness of the Lord even now and here! You must feel that, in any case, God’s will must be done. You must still continue to

pray, for you do not know what God's will is, but you must pray with resignation, after your Savior's perfect model in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." You will be comforted and helped if you can look upon your unanswered prayers in that light.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, there is another thing that will sometimes press upon you very heavily, namely, *the desertions which occasionally fall to the lot of the Believer as to his communion with God*. Sometimes we are left in the dark. Whether you are, or not, I know that I have been where I could not see sun, or moon, or stars, or even get so much as a look from my Master to cheer my sad heart, or a word from His mouth to make my spirit glad. At such times we must remember that ancient message, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." If you cannot see, you must believe to see. And if your heart feels like a stone, still believe that Christ is your life. And if, instead of holy meditations, your soul is racked with blasphemous temptations and evil thoughts, still hold on to Jesus, sink or swim! If, instead of clear evidences of salvation, you are half afraid that the Lord has forsaken you, and given you up—and you fall into an unbelieving frame of mind—go again to the Fountain filled with blood, that this sin, like all others, may be washed away! Trust Christ all the more "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," for then, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Those must be strange Christians who never have any conflict raging within their souls. If that is true Christian experience, I wish I could get it—to be always at peace and at rest and never again have to wrestle with sins, doubts and fears! But, Beloved, if we cannot attain to that position—and I believe that the most of us cannot—let us still walk by faith, for, so we shall walk triumphantly even under the discouragements of our inward spiritual conflicts!

One other point I must mention, and then I will leave this part of the subject. To many Believers, the sharpest trials they ever have to endure arise from *troubles connected with the Church of Christ*. What a grief it is to the godly when any portion of the Church of Christ does not prosper—when bickering arises among the members, when one Brother or Sister is jealous of another and when all our attempts to mend the split only make it worse. It must be very trying for some of you to have to go on the Lord's-Day to listen to a minister who does not edify you, but rather provokes you to wrath! Or to attend church meetings, as I know that some do, and find them anything but a means of Grace. Or to have to meet with professors who, in their common conduct and conversation, instead of leading you onward and upward, do you as much mischief as if they were men of the world! It is sad to see even one of God's ministers sound asleep and to see other professing Christians careless and worldly, and to see the whole ship of the Church like the vessel described by the Ancient Mariner—

***"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean"***

when there was no motion, no advance. When—

“The very deep did rot.”

It is a dreadful thing when there is such a horrid deathlike calm as this! Yet, even amidst such trials as these, we must believe to see the goodness of the Lord. We must still believe that the great Head of the Church has not forgotten her, that in her darkest times He still wears her name upon His heart and that He will yet return to her in mercy, cast out all her enemies, repair her broken walls and cause the banner of His love to float again over her citadel.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, FAITH NOT ONLY BELIEVES IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD, BUT SHE EXPECTS TO SEE IT EVEN HERE

Sometimes, she sees it very soon. God does not guarantee to let His people see here the reason for all His Providential dealings with them, but He does occasionally do so. There is many a Believer who has lived to see the goodness of God to him. Bernard Gilpin's case was a very clear one. As he was on his way to London to be burned at the stake, his leg was broken and he had to stop on the road. He said it was all for the best, and so it was, for, when he reached London, the bells were ringing, for Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had come to the throne—so he was not burned! The breaking of his leg had saved his life! Some of us have also seen the goodness of the Lord displayed under very strange circumstances. It was so in connection with that terrible calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. Notwithstanding all the sorrow and suffering that it brought upon us, as we now look back upon it, we see how God, by means of that calamity, called public attention to the preaching of His Word—and I have no doubt, that for every life that was then lost, a thousand souls have since been saved from going down to the Pit—so let God's name be praised for that gracious overruling of a terrible crime! You may not have to wait even a day before you will distinctly see the goodness of the Lord! But you must believe it before you see it. It must be a matter of duty to you to now believe it and then, by-and-by, it may be a matter of privilege to you to see it!

But *faith does not always expect to see the goodness of God here at once.* She knows that this is the land of mist and fog, and she is glad if she can see even one step before her. Yes, and she is quite satisfied to go on even if she cannot see a step before her. She puts her foot down on what seems to be a thick cloud, but she finds the ground solid beneath her. Without seeing where she is going, she takes the next step, relying upon the faithfulness of God—and again she is safe—and so she pursues her way in the thick darkness and with greater joy than those who see far ahead and compliment themselves upon their shrewdness! She knows that the day has not yet dawned, for the shadows have not yet fled away, so, while she is in this mortal state, she walks by faith, not by sight.

Faith understands, too, that *man is not endowed with that degree of judgment which might enable him, at present, even if the light were clearer, to distinctly see the goodness of the Lord.* With such an intellect

as he now has, a child is not likely to see the wisdom of his father in the use of the rod. Even if he is a well-instructed child, he may still scarcely be able to see it. The father is the better judge—he has seen more of life, he knows what the child does not know and foresees what the child does not even dream of! How can I, who can only see a little pool in front of me, judge as to how the Lord should manage the great ocean? Here I am sailing my tiny toy boat upon a pond—am I to lay down rules of navigation for God in steering the leviathans of the deep across the shoreless seas? Here I am, an ant of an hour, creeping about upon the little anthill which I call my home—am I to judge as to how God manages all the affairs of time and eternity? Down, foolish pride! What do you know? You are wise only when you know that you are a fool! But you are such a fool that you do not even know *that* until God teaches it to you! Lie down, then, and *trust* where you cannot *understand*.

Faith also knows that, *at present, she cannot see the whole plan and procedure of God's Providential dealings with men*. We cannot fairly judge the working of Providence by gazing at a part of it. There is an old joke about a student who took one brick to the market in order to show the people what kind of house he had to sell. But who could rightly judge of a house by looking at a single brick? Yet this would be less foolish than trying to judge as to the goodness of the Lord by the transactions of an hour! If, instead of trying to measure with a ruler the distance between Sirius and the Pleiades, we would just believe that God has measured that vast distance to an inch and leave such measurements to the Almighty Mind which can take in the whole universe at one sweep, how much wiser it would be on our part! God sees the end from the beginning and when the great drama of time shall be complete, then will the splendor as well as the goodness of the Lord be seen! When the whole painting shall be unrolled in one vast panorama, then shall we see its matchless beauty and appreciate the inimitable skill of the Divine Artist. But here we only look at one little patch of shade, or one tiny touch of color and it appears to us to be rough or coarse. It may be that we shall be permitted, in eternity, to see the whole of the picture, but meanwhile, let us firmly believe that He who is painting it knows how to do it and that He who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will, cannot fail to do that which is best for the creatures whom He has made and preserved in being!

III. So finally THERE IS A WONDERFULLY SUSTAINING INFLUENCE ABOUT THIS PRACTICAL BELIEF IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

There is a man lying upon the surgeon's operating table and the skillful surgeon has to cut deeply. Why does the man endure that operation? *Because he believes it is for his lasting good*. He believes that the surgeon will not cause him an atom of pain more than is necessary and, therefore, he lies quietly and endures it all. But imagine that any of us were there and that we fancied that the surgeon meant to do us harm instead of good! Then we would rebel! But the conviction that it is all right helps us to play the man and to bear the pain with patience. That should be your attitude towards God, my dear Friend. May your belief in

His goodness enable you to bear the sharp cuts of the knife which He is using upon you!

He must have been a bold man who was the first to plow the ground, all to bury bushels of good, golden wheat in the earth! But nowadays, our farmers do it as a matter of course. They go to the granary, take out that which is very valuable, go off to where they have made the death trench ready to receive it and cast it in there, knowing that unless it is cast in there to die, it will not bring forth fruit. And they believe they will see the fruit that will spring from it! Every farmer, when he sows his wheat, has the golden sheaves before his mind's eye and the shouts of the harvest home ring in anticipation in his ear! And, therefore, he parts with his treasured store of wheat and parts with it cheerfully. So, dear Friends, let us part with our friends, and part with our health, and part with our comforts, and part with life, itself, if that is necessary, believing that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Let me just add that if there is such sustaining power about believing to see the goodness of the Lord even here, *what must result from the still higher belief of seeing the goodness of the Lord in another and better world than this?* The expectation of that bliss may well bear us up on its wings far above all the trials and troubles of this present life. So let us entreat the Holy Spirit to administer to us this heavenly cordial. Then, in the strength of the Lord, let us go forth to serve Him with body, soul and spirit, to the highest degree that is possible to us!

If there are any of you who have never believed, let me just tell you what is necessary before I close my discourse. The way of salvation is this—Believe God's Word. Believe that your Maker cannot lie. Trust His Son, whom He has given to be the Savior of all who trust Him. And rely upon what His Word has declared—"He that believes on the Son *has* everlasting life." If you trust in Christ, even if you have not a fraction of other evidence of your salvation, you are a saved soul on that evidence alone! Cast yourself upon Him and you shall find that declaration to be true to you, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." But if you believe not, remember that this declaration is equally true, "He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." May God save all of you from that awful doom, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 27.

David is in the darkness of sorrow. His enemies are many and mighty and they make a dead set against him and seek to utterly destroy him. But he finds his comfort where every true Believer must always seek his solace, that is, in his God. Thus sweetly does the Psalmist sing.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* David leaves the broken cisterns of the earth which can hold no water, and

goes directly to the Divine Fountainhead. He does not say, "Ahithophel is my light, Uzzia, the Ashterathite, is my friend and my joy. He says, "Jehovah is my light." Candles soon burn out, but the sun shines on and, eventually, "the sun shall be turned into darkness," but Jehovah, our God, is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." David does not say, "Joab is the strength of my life. Benaiah and the Cherethites are my bodyguard." He says, "Jehovah is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" It is the height of Christian faith to find everything good in God. And it is an evil hour for us when we begin to trust anywhere but in Him. Build your foundation for eternity on a firm and unyielding soil, O Believer, and let every stone that is laid thereon be quarried from the Rock of Ages.

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* If we are on the Lord's side, discomfiture of our enemies shall be total and final—they shall fall to the ground. They may be very many, and very varied, so as to be described under two names—enemies and foes. They may be very ferocious, so that, like the wild beasts of the forest, they are ready to tear the flesh of their prey and devour it. And they may be able to make such attacks as actually come upon us—but just at the moment when they think they shall be able to swallow us, our God will interpose for our deliverance! It is marvelous how near to the edge of the precipice of ruin the Lord sometimes lets His people go, yet He always delivers them just at the right moment—and causes their enemies to stumble and fall.

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* True and simple faith in God alone always begets courage. It is the man who is trusting to the creature who is the coward. He who truly trusts in the Creator becomes a hero. Faith is the food upon which God would have His children fed. So, if you would do deeds of daring, lean only upon God—and then you shall have your heart's desire.

4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.* A true Christian is a man of one idea, but that one idea is the noblest that ever possessed the human mind, or influenced the human heart. This idea is one which not only finds a lodging in his brain, but he carries it on in the practice of his daily life—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." And what is that one thing?

4. *That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* That is, to gaze upon the mystery of God in Christ, for is not Christ "the beauty of the Lord?" He is rightly called "the brightness of His Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person." So all that we need on earth, or in Heaven, is a perpetual vision of Jesus Christ! "To behold the beauty of the Lord," and constantly to be enabled to present our petitions in His Temple, and to receive gracious answers of peace to our supplications. "Father, my soul would gladly abide within Your Temple, near Your side. But if my feet must depart from there, still keep Your dwelling in my heart."

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* The pavilion was the many-colored tent of the king, embroidered with needlework and richly furnished. It was always placed in the center of the encampment, so that if there were a night attack, the enemy must first break through the ranks of the armed men before reaching the royal pavilion. So the Christian is put into the very center of the Lord's host! God's Sovereignty encloses him and God's angels surround him—and the enemy must first break through the angelic guard and overcome all the heavenly powers—before any Believer can be destroyed.

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* “The secret of His tabernacle” was the Holy of Holies, into which no man but the high priest ever entered—and even he only entered it once a year! But now the Christian is admitted into the holiest place of all, through the Sacrifice of Christ, and Christ's Atonement and the Sovereignty of God conjoin to make the Christian's position absolutely safe forever!

5. *He shall set me up upon a Rock.* The Rock of ages is immovable. It stirs not in the fiercest storm that ever rages. God is Immutable. He abides the same forever, so that we have three firm grounds of confidence—God's Sovereignty, Christ's Sacrifice and God's Immutability.

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies around me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy: I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* As David's trust was in his Lord, all his praise was to his Lord. And where we place our confidence, there let us also display our gratitude. If we trust in men, it is not surprising if we worship and praise men. But if we trust alone in God, our homage and gratitude will be laid at His feet.

7, 8. *Hear, O LORD, When I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you my face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.* Happy is the man who has a tender conscience—whose heart is like the waves of the sea which are easily moved by the breath of Heaven—so that when God breathes upon him by His Holy Spirit, his soul is moved and controlled by that Spirit.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger.* The sharpest trial a Christian can know is to be forsaken of his God. As the very pith of the agony of Christ upon the Cross lay in His being deserted by His Father, so the extremity of a Believer's anguish is found when he, also, has to cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Send us any trial that You will, O Lord, but let us never lose the light of Your Countenance! We are rich in poverty, we are strong in weakness, we are healthful in sickness, we are living even in death while we have our God with us—but if our Lord shall once hide His face from us, we are in trouble, indeed!

9. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, use your past experience to encourage you for the present. Draw arguments from your past experience to use with God in prayer, even as David did—“You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my soul was burdened with sin, You were my Helper. You did

enable me to look to Christ when I lost friend after friend, when I passed through fierce conflicts with the devil, when I was sick, and health and strength failed me, You were my Helper.” Many of you can thus look back upon a long life and say to God of it all, “You have been my Helper.” And this gives you a foothold in your wrestling with the great Angel of the Covenant—so mind that you grasp Him firmly and say, “Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!”

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me.* They are not likely to do that, yet, if they should do so, what then?

10, 11. *Then the LORD will take me up. Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* This is a prayer which all Christians have good need to pray, for there are so many enemies who will, if they can, cause us to stumble. So many who watch for our halting that we need to pray, “Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.” Yet let me also say to you that it matters not how carefully and warily you may walk, nor how holy you may be—you will be sure to be slandered—yes, and sometimes by Christian people, too! There are always some to tell the lie, and others to repeat it, and some to believe in it, and even to rejoice in it. It would be a mercy if some people had no tongues, for, if they had none, they would commit far less sin than they now do!

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses have risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* David found enemies, as will you—and the holier you are, the more shall you have of them. Birds pick the ripest fruit. The highest towers cast the longest shadows and so is it that the highest holiness is generally the object of the most cruel attacks. Well, what are they to do who are passing through this trial? Do? Why go to their God about it as well as about everything else!

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* With troubles without, and fears within, and slanderers and enemies of all sorts around him, the Christian had almost fainted; but faith puts the Divine smelling salts to his nose and as soon as ever the nostrils perceive the sweet perfume of God's faithfulness, the man is revived! “I had fainted, unless I had believed.” So you see that you must do either the one or the other—you must either believe or faint, for, by unbelief and sin, a spiritual fainting fit will soon come on.

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* Wait on no one else! Wait only on Him and then you shall not be discouraged or faint-hearted. Therefore, “wait, I say, on the Lord.”

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

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

BELIEVING TO SEE

NO. 766

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

*“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness
of the Lord in the land of the living.”
Psalm 27:13.*

I HAVE taken the whole verse for my text, but I am not sure that I shall keep to it. The words in it at which I catch are these, “Unless I had believed to see.” Most people see to believe, but in David’s case the process was reversed and put into Gospel order—he believed to see and this is the keynote of our discourse. The prayer of my heart is that some may be led to believe to see, and that those who have been trying to see in order to believe may now come and trust in Jesus and believe and see the Grace of God. Here we have in the words I select for the text, a doctrine stated, many difficulties removed, and some directions afforded for the Christian life.

I. We have here before us a fundamental truth and DOCTRINE of our faith that the great act by which a man is saved, so far as *he* is concerned, is the act of faith. That is to say he gives up all other righteousness and casts himself upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment he does that he is saved—his past sins are forgiven him—his future is secure. That one simple act of confidence in Jesus, insignificant as it may appear to be, is the dawn of spiritual life, the evidence of security, the token of eternal salvation!

And here is the reason for this, namely, that faith is God’s appointed mark which He sets upon His favored ones, and by this may a man know whether he is saved or not, whether he is ordained unto eternal life or not—by his answer to this one question—“Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” Or, in other words, “Do you trust in the Son of God?” The case is ordered in this wise—we have sinned, we have broken God’s Law—God’s Law must be honored. Sin cannot be committed without a penalty being inflicted.

The Lord Jesus Christ determined and stipulated in the Covenant of Grace that He would take upon Himself the form of Man and that He would suffer for the chosen many, even for His people, what they had deserved to suffer themselves on account of their sins, or a punishment that would be equivalent to that suffering. In due time the Lord Jesus Christ appeared. True to His word of promise He went up to Calvary—there He received, at God’s hands, that which was due from His people to the great offended Judge. There He paid their debts.

There, once and for all, He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against them and put it away, nailing it to His Cross. Now, virtually, all for whom Christ died were then saved. Their debts were then paid. Their punishment was then discharged. The debt due to the Sovereign

Justice of God was then altogether borne, and Jesus Christ, then and there, “finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness” for His people. This Man, by His one offering, has perfected forever them that were set apart!

Once yielding His soul unto death and giving Himself up a sacrifice for men, He then and there saved His people as before the bar of God. These saved ones are known by their being brought to trust in Him as their once dead but now ever-living Lord. Without faith in Christ, my Hearer, you have no share in His blood. You have no interest in His righteousness. What He did upon the tree will have nothing to do in saving you. All His griefs, and groans, and pangs you will have no share in. Your debts remain unpaid. Your punishment has not been borne for you. You will have to endure the wrath of God forever!

In the prison you will be forever bound in chains of fire. Inasmuch as you have not believed, you have no share in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. But if you have come and trusted yourself with Christ. If, fully convinced that there is salvation nowhere else, you believe in Him, then your debts are paid! The punishment of your sin has been endured. You can never suffer, for God cannot punish two for one offense. You can never be summoned to God’s bar to be tried for your life. You are clear. Through Jesus’ blood you are ransomed. You are justified, accepted, adopted, saved. Who shall lay anything to your charge, seeing that Christ has died for you and made a propitiation for your sin?

Now, the whole of this hinges upon a man’s *believing*. If he believes then the great Gospel truth is that he is saved. Throughout all the Bible this is the one ray of light that comes out of the darkness to poor troubled man—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” These assertions occur over and over and over again so that I may safely say that this is the *Gospel*—that he that believes is saved, and that the faith by which he lays hold of Christ is to him proof positive that he is saved. He has God’s Word for it that he is redeemed in Christ.

II. We have now briefly stated the doctrine, but the main part of my subject will be to try and remove those many DIFFICULTIES which people newly awakened and quickened are sure to raise. The doctrine is that he that believes is saved. But men ask a thousand questions about it and see as many more difficulties—let us, therefore, try to meet and answer some of them.

1. And, first, how often do we hear it said, “I cannot think that *I* am saved. I do not trust in Jesus Christ—I am sure of it, and fear I am not saved because I feel no worthiness in me.” This is a difficulty which we can slay at once. If you did feel any worthiness in yourself, then you might rest assured that you were *not* saved because nothing is more clear in God’s Word than the fact that salvation is not by *merit* but by Divine Grace.

The Apostle Paul is very clear upon this point. He says, “It is not by works, but of grace.” And if any say it may be partly of each, he says, “No, if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more

grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Salvation is altogether, from first to last, a gratuitous act of GRACE—hence you do not need to look for any merit in yourself.

The case is parallel with this—It is sometimes the custom, when a new king attains to the throne, for a general amnesty to be proclaimed, and for all the prison doors to be opened. This is done, of course, not on account of the *merit* of the prisoners, but to do honor to the great mercy of the king. Now I think I see you, troubled one, sitting as a prisoner in a cell and the door is opened to you. You are told that you are free because the king would honor the day of his coronation.

But you reply, "I cannot believe that I am free, for I do not feel that I deserve it. The sentence which was passed upon me was one which I richly merited, and according to justice I cannot, therefore, walk out of that prison door because I know that I have done nothing to merit my discharge." But, Man, if the ground of your discharge is not in any degree your merit, but only to the honor of the king, how simple-minded you are to sit on that stone slab any longer! Up with you, Man! Walk abroad! Take your liberty and do honor to the king's bounty! O Sinner, you have no merit, that is true, but God forgives you to the praise and glory of His Grace, to the honor of His dear Son, to give Him a coronation! Come, then, walk out at liberty!

Or it is as though this should happen—Someone who is in a consumption has applied for admission to enter, say, into Brampton Hospital. By-and-by this person obtains the order, but no sooner does she get it than she is afraid to use it. She does not dare go to the hospital. and why? "Because," she says, "I am not in good health." Now, we answer at once, "But if you *were* in good health, you would have no need of an hospital. It is, in fact, your *sickness* and your bad health which give you any sort of congruity in entering there."

So, when you tell me that you have no merit, my reply is, but if you had any, you would not want a Savior! Your demerit renders yours a suitable case to be met with by the merit of the Savior. It is your *sinner-ship* which, if there is any fitness, is your fitness. Not your righteousness, Sinner, but your *guilt* must be your plea when you wish to be pardoned. If money is to be given away, men do not urge their being possessed of riches as a reason why they should receive the charity, but one cries, "I am exceedingly poor," and another says, "I am poorer still." It is their *poverty*, not their substance, which is their plea with the generous heart.

And so it is between God and you. Not your fullness, but your *emptiness*! Not your goodness, but your *badness*! Not your merit, but your *demerit*! These you must plead before God, seeing that salvation is by Grace. Now, then, what do you say, Sinner? God tells you that if you believe in Christ you are saved. Is God a liar or not? I must push that with you. Does God speak truth or not? As for this trumpety objection of yours, that you have no *merit*, I have shown you that it is without a foundation—for if you had any merit, then why should you come to God for mercy?

But, meritless, worthless, altogether without any goodness, still the text says, “Blessed is he that works not, but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly.” What do you say—will you take God at His word, and believe what He says to be true?

2. But I hear another objection, one which is very frequently made, indeed. Someone says, “But I want to see in myself the *evidences* of salvation. I know that when a man is saved there very soon appears in his character certain signs and tokens which mark the work of the Holy Spirit. And I cannot believe that I am saved on the mere Word of God. I want to see the *evidences* of it.” I will tell you a story then.

When the Emperor Napoleon the First was one day reviewing his troops on what is now called the Place de la Concorde, sitting on his horse and thinking of other things, he let go of the bridle and in a moment his high spirited charger galloped away with him. A *private* in the ranks saw the danger, rushed from his place, seized the bridle, and saved the life of the emperor, who said to him, “Thank you, Captain,” and went on. “Of what regiment, Sire?” asked the soldier. “Of my guards,” was the reply.

Now it was a strange thing that the emperor should in a moment make him a captain for so small an act as that, and stranger still that the man should so simply and fully believe him as not to doubt for a minute, but ask at once of what regiment he was to be the captain! Now, what do you suppose the soldier did? Going back to his regiment he put down his gun, and said, “Whoever likes may take care of that,” and walking across the review ground up to the staff, he joined with them.

A general looking round at him said, “What does that fellow want?” “That fellow is a captain of the guard,” said the man, and gave the military salute. “You are mad, Friend!” “I am not mad. I am a captain of the guard.” “Who said so?” “He said so,” pointing to the emperor riding along. “I beg your pardon,” replied the general, and recognized him at once in his new office. The man took the emperor at his word. He wore no shoulder ornaments. He was not adorned with any gold lace. He had not received any of a captain’s pay. He had passed through no formal ceremony, but the emperor had simply called him “captain,” and that was enough for him.

Now I want to know whether the Lord Jesus Christ’s word is not as well worth taking as the word of the Emperor Napoleon. When he says to you, “Believe. He that believes has everlasting life,” the proper way for you to act is to feel and say, “That is true! I have everlasting life, although, as yet, I have not a jot of evidence of any other kind—yet if He has said it, that is enough for me! Though I may have come in here an ungodly, unconverted sinner, yet, since I have learned to trust the Savior this night, and *do* trust him, then I am saved! I will try to get these evidences by-and-by.”

I have no doubt that that soldier I told you of very soon began to look after his regimentals. He would not like to continue dressed as a private after that, but would want an officer’s uniform, and to appear in the army as a captain should appear. And so will it be with you by-and-by—

but at first, my dear Friends, your faith must be grounded on the word of Jesus Christ, and on nothing else. Perhaps the devil will say to you, "What is that fellow doing here?" Tell the devil and all his angels, "HE said it who died on the Cross! HE said it who reigns in Heaven, that 'Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Stand to it that if He said it, that is enough. You have the King's Word for it! The imperial Word, the Word of the blessed and only Potentate who cannot lie. So, then, it is sufficient evidence to the believing heart that it has God's Word to rely upon. Let me point you to the 36th verse of the third chapter of John: "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And to the 18th verse of the same chapter, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Are not these words quite sufficient, though as yet no other evidence can be seen?

But sometimes I have heard persons saying, "Well, but we *must* have evidences. We cannot trust Christ without them." And consequently they try to *manufacture* signs of Divine Grace, whereas, be it never forgotten, that evidences are the *product* of faith, and not the *cause* of faith. You go into a room at winter time, and you say to yourself, "There is not heat enough in this room. I must try to make more heat." And you set to work, by some plan or other, to do this. You say there is no evidence of there being a fire because there is no heat. True, but you will never make the heat *produce* the fire. Would it not be much better to go and look to the fire at once? And then you would get the heat which is the *result* of a fire.

So you say, "I am not so earnest, so reverent, so prayerful, so penitent as I should be, therefore I cannot believe." Now, would it not be better to say, "If I believed more, I should have more of these evidences. Therefore let me go to my faith, which is the *cause* of the evidences, and not go to my *evidences* to get faith out of them"? It is as though you had a piece of ground and you said to yourself, "Well, now, here are these trees. They produce very little fruit—if I could secure a large crop, that would be evidence that the soil is good. I must put fresh fruit on the trees, and then *that* will prove that the ground is fertile."

Not at all so. Make the *soil* good, and then the fruit will come naturally. So with your faith. Faith is the soil in which the fruits of faith must grow. Do not be thinking about the *evidences*. Think about the *faith* that will grow the evidences! Seek to go to Christ and trust in Him, and you will get the signs of Divine Grace soon enough. Your main business is with Jesus, not with evidences. Rest in Him—His finished work and ascension power—and if you depend there, without evidences, you will soon have plenty of them! But, if you look to external or other signs in order to get faith, you look, as I have already told you, in the wrong quarter, and reverse the order of Divine Grace.

To use an old proverb you "put the cart before the horse." You do not go logically and properly to work. Trust in *Christ* for evidences, and you will have plenty of them in due time.

3. Commonly enough we hear people say, "I want to have a deeper *repentance* and then I could believe that I am saved." Christ says, "He that

believes is saved.” You say, “Well, that is what Christ says, but I am not satisfied with that.” Oh, atrocious thing! To make Christ a liar and suspect His Word! Still, you say you want a *deeper* repentance. Now, you are very like a man who is in a high fever, and delirious, and he cries out, “I want to feel that I am in this fever! I want to know the top and the bottom of this typhus! I want to know when it goes, and how it will go.”

But the doctor says, “Never mind, my dear Friend. Never mind the typhus. Just trust to me. Take the medicine.” He calms the man’s mind by reminding him that if he had not the typhus, he would not want the doctor. But now that the fever is there, it is not for him to know the disease so much as to trust the remedy. And when he gets well, he will understand about it better. So, poor Sinner, till you have come to Christ, your repentance is not worth a penny.

If you had a ton weight of it, your repentance would be of no value till you trusted Jesus. We must get you well first and then you shall know about the disease. Trust Jesus and believe His Word, and do not, in your delirium, be looking for those dark experiences which would not comfort you, though you think they would.

There is a man who has written a very offensive letter to a very kind friend who has often obliged him. This friend, when he received the letter, said, “Well, it was very wrong of you to write this letter, but I freely forgive you.” But the other said, “I do not think my friend has forgiven me, because I do not feel regretful enough. If I felt more repentant then I should think that he had forgiven me.” As if his friend’s forgiveness were not quite well enough assured to him by his friend’s word!

But now, supposing that man should bring himself to believe that his friend had forgiven him? Why, then he would find it an easy matter to repent, because he would say to himself, “Has my friend been kind enough to overlook so great a fault? Then how wrong it was of me to have written so against him! How grieved, how shocked I am to think that I should have fallen into such an offense against so generous a friend!”

My dear Hearers, you cannot get repentance by refusing to believe Christ’s Word. Trust Him! Trust Him and believe that you are saved, and then the sluices will be drawn up and you will repent! You will see Jesus Christ dying that you might live and you will say, “Did I slaughter that blessed Savior? Did I wound Him? Did I scourge Him and put Him to death? Then, you monstrous sins, away with you! Away with you!” You must first *believe*, and then repentance will come—not look to REPENTANCE as being the evidence, but look to Jesus, and to Jesus only, and, looking to Him, repentance will follow as a matter of course.

4. Then, running to the other extreme, we have heard many troubled ones say, “I cannot think that I am saved because I do not feel great *joy*. If I had greater joy then I should know that I was forgiven.” Somebody has left you a large estate, and you say to yourself, “Well, I have just read the letter in which the lawyer tells me that I am left a large estate, but, somehow or other I do not believe it, for if it were true, I should feel greater joy about it.” Why, you talk like a fool, Sir! If you believed it you would feel joy. It is because you do *not believe* it that you do not have joy.

You turn the thing upside down and want your joy to help your faith, whereas your joy must flow *from* your faith, and cannot possibly contribute to it. So, Man, if you will come and trust my Lord's Word, and believe that you are saved because you trust Him, then you will have joy. You cannot be without joy. If you believed tonight that your sins were pardoned, would you not be glad? Certainly you would. Well, then, believe it! If you are trusting Christ, if you are resting wholly upon Jesus, He tells you that you are saved. Do not begin to say, "I have not the bliss I hoped to have." You shall have that joy when you have looked for it, and have looked alone to Christ.

5. Then, I have known others who have said, "I could believe that I am saved if I had more *sanctification*." That also is the wrong way to go to work. In a sweet little book which I have read lately, the writer well remarks, "Suppose you were in Brazil and you were in some of those brooks where diamonds are occasionally picked up and you found a large one unpolished. No matter how rough it might be, if you knew it to be a diamond, you would get it polished. But if you had any suspicion about it, you would not be likely to incur the expense and trouble of polishing it. It is your assurance of its being a diamond that would set you to work to take it to the lapidary to have it put upon a seal, and set."

So we find salvation, and when we get it, it is a rough, uncouth thing. We want to have it, as we say, *sanctified*. Now, if we believe it is a diamond, if we believe that it is really and truly salvation, we shall then be in earnest to get that salvation perfected—to have the diamond's facets all made to glitter in the light of Heaven. But so long as we have any doubts about the matter, we shall not think, nor be troubled, about perfecting our salvation.

The fact is that strong faith is the great sanctifying agent through the power of the Holy Spirit and the application of the precious blood of Jesus. You will never overcome your sins by doubting Christ! You will never get sanctification by putting *your holiness* into the place of Christ's righteousness. It is no faith to believe that I am saved being sanctified. But it is faith to believe that I, being sanctified, and with all my sins about me, am still saved through the precious blood of Jesus! O Sinner, do not look to sanctification to back up the testimony of God's Word. God's Word is enough!

O take it! Rest upon it! Remember, you dishonor God when you want any other evidence except His naked Word. What would you, dear Friends, think of this in your own case? You promise your child a present and he wants evidences! You tell him that you love him and he wants you to call to him somebody else to bear witness to it. Shame on your naughty child, or else there must be something ill about yourself.

Now, as we cannot lay the blame on our heavenly Father, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind—shame on us that we should be saying we want something else to make us believe God's Word. O Beloved, let us believe Him when we cannot see it. And if we do not feel that we are saved, let us believe the Word which says we are, seeing it is the Word of Christ. I like that in Martin Luther. He says the devil said to him

once, “Martin, do you feel that you are saved?” “No, I do not,” he said, “but I am quite as sure of it as if I did. Get you behind me, Satan!”

And that is the true way. Do you feel that you are saved? No, I do not expect to feel it—it is a matter of *belief*. I trust my Lord and Master. It is very sweet to get feelings, but Mr. Liveby-Feeling, as you well remember, according to John Bunyan, was a Diabolian, and got hung! I wish he had been hung to better purpose, for he still lives about these parts. If you live by feeling, it is miserable living. It is poverty sometimes, and riches at others. But if you live by *faith* upon the Son of God who loved you, and gave Himself for you, that is blessed living!

O for Divine Grace to do this, not to see to believe, but to believe to see! Put *believing* first—and repentance, sanctification—evidences and all else—will come afterwards!

6. I shall not weary you, I hope, if I mention that there are some who say they cannot trust Christ, cannot believe His affirmation that they are saved because they do not feel more love for Him. They are like a child who should say, “I do not believe my father’s word because I do not feel so much love for him as I ought to do.” Oh, but, my Child, if you believed your father’s word, a true and good love would come as the consequence!

And, Sinner, while you are saying, “I cannot believe because I cannot love,” you are putting things altogether out of gear. That is neither God’s method nor the way of wisdom at all. Go and believe your Father and then you shall feel a flame of love within your heart which you have never known before.

7. But another one says, “I could believe that I were saved if I had more of likeness to Christ about me.” Here again, you see, Christ has said, “He that believes has everlasting life,” and you say, “No, Lord, I do not agree with that. I believe that he that is *like* You has everlasting life, and I cannot see that I am like You, though I once hoped I would be, and therefore I cannot think that I am saved.”

That is to say Christ and you differ in opinion, and you set your, “No,” up against Christ’s, “Yes.” Oh, down, down, down with your proud, “No,” and just take this sweet assurance, that “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Now, here is a man who has been cutting a seal and making your crest, but when you come to stamp your letters with it, you find that the impression is very bad, that it is not your crest at all. You cannot make out what it is!

It may be a crest, but it is not at all like one. Well, what will you do? Will you try to polish up your wax, and so make the impression like what you wanted it to be? Would it not be a great deal wiser if you were to get the seal altered? Would not that set it all right directly? If you were to send the seal back to the man who cut the die, and get him to make the seal properly, would not the stamp then be right? Now, how do we get likeness to Christ?

Why it is *faith* which puts the stamp there, and instead of saying, “The impression upon my character is not like Christ, therefore I must try to alter it,” my dear Friend, think about your faith! Go to Christ and through Him get your faith altered. And when the stamp is set right, then

the impression will be perfect. There is no holiness, no true holiness apart from faith! It is not by doubting that we come to be holy. I never could overcome a sin by saying, "I am afraid I am not a child of God." The devil knows this and consequently, whenever he can get us alone, he always begins with this, "If you are the son of God."

He did this with our Lord, and if he could have led our Lord to doubt whether He was God's Son, we know not what might have come of it, for certainly when he gets us to doubt whether we are children of God then we very soon glide into other sins. But when we can say to him, "Now, Satan, I am not ignorant of your devices. I know you are about to tell me of my unfaithfulness and of my great sin. I know all that, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses me from all sin. You may paint me as filthy as yourself, and filthier, too, if it so pleases you, and I will acknowledge that it is true. But then I will remind you that Christ has said, 'I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.'"

Why, you are more than a match for the devil then! O Brothers and Sisters, let us take Christ's Word as we find it! I bring you back to the story I told you about the emperor and the soldier. And seeing He has said that we are saved, let us believe we are! If we have nothing else to prove it, let us stand to it before angels and devils, the assembled courts of Heaven and of Hell, all joined together, and say, "I have God's Word for it, and I would put God's Word even before an angel's word. If Christ has said I am saved, then I am saved! If He has declared that the Believer has eternal life, I do believe! I do trust in Jesus, and therefore I have eternal life, and I cannot perish—neither can anyone pluck me out of Christ's hands."

Now, that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I would to God you had Grace to receive it! I pray that every one of us may be brought to depend upon the veracity of God and the merit of Jesus, and then, *believing* to see, instead of *seeing* to believe, we shall be sustained, and comforted, and greatly blessed.

III. And now I have a FEW DIRECTIONS TO GIVE TO MORE ADVANCED BELIEVERS upon the same subject. Beloved in the Lord, the whole course of the Christian's life must be believing to see. We walk by faith, and not by sight. I hope the day may soon come when the noble example which has been set by our esteemed Brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol, will be more constantly followed in all the Lord's work.

Rest assured that if we will but believe to see, we shall see great things! I cannot forbear mentioning to you tonight what God has enabled us to see of late as a Church. We met together one Monday night, as you will remember, for prayer concerning the Orphanage and it was not a little remarkable that, on the Saturday of that week God should have moved some friend who knew nothing of our prayers to give 500 pounds to that cause!

It astonished some of you that, on the following Monday, God should have moved another to give 600 pounds! When I told you of that at the next Prayer Meeting, you did not think, perhaps, that God had something

else in store, and the following Tuesday another friend came with 500 pounds! It was just the same in the building of this House. We were a few and poor people when we commenced, but still we moved on by faith, and never went into debt. We trusted in God, and the Tabernacle was built, to the eternal honor of the God who hears and answers prayer.

And, mark you, it will be so in the erection of this Orphan House. We shall see greater things than these if only our *faith* will *precede* our sight. But if we go upon the old custom of our general societies and first look out for regular income, and get our subscribers, and send round our collectors, and pay our percentages—that is, do not trust God, but trust our *subscribers*—if we go on that rule, we shall see very little, and have no room for believing.

But if we shall just trust God and believe that God never did leave a work that He put us upon, and never sets us to do a thing without meaning to help us through with it, we shall soon see that the God of Israel lives and that His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear! Brethren, let us remember Israel when they came to the Red Sea. There it was, a roaring, billowy sea—and they were bid to march *through* it! And they did march! And though the waters roared before them fiercely, yet so soon as the priests' feet touched the flood, the depths stood upright on a heap and the waters were congealed in the heart of the sea!

And so shall it be with you, Brothers and Sisters, and with your faith. Believe in God and face your difficulties and they shall flee before you. Then, remember the Egyptians. They decided to do the same thing. They thought, "Oh, that is all right. We will do as these have done before us." But notice, they said this because all their difficulties had been cleared away. There was the Red Sea all dry before them. Any fool could march through there! But, unfortunately, while faith can march through a sea dry-shod, *unbelief* only begins to march when it is all-dry—and presently, unbelief gets drowned.

Unbelief wants to see and God strikes it blind. Faith does not want to see, and God opens its eyes, and it sees God, ever present to help and deliver it. Now, you who are working for Christ, and you who are troubled in your business, you who are in any way exercised—remember the life of faith. Remember that you are not called to walk by sight, but by faith! Like David, believe to see, and great shall be your joy.

Now, beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, the same thing must happen in our inward conflicts. If we want to grow in Divine Grace, we shall not do so by humbling ourselves, as we call it. The way to make advances in Divine life is to believe that you can only grow in Grace by God's Spirit. To believe that since Jesus Christ is yours, all things are yours. My Brother, have you a bad temper? You will never overcome that temper by saying, "I cannot overcome it." But if, by faith, you are able to say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," you will overcome it yet.

No sin is ever slain by your saying, "Oh, it is my disposition. It is *natural* to me." I know it is, and all manner of wickedness is natural to us.

You have to rest upon a *supernatural* arm—you are a twice-born man. You are a new creature and you must not sit down in peace in any form of sin, but believe that you can overcome it by the power of your faith and of the Holy Spirit that is in you! Believe in order to see yourselves growing in Grace! Believe to see yourselves conquering sin in the name of Christ, and you shall do so!

And again, with regard to our perplexities in doctrines and matters of faith you must apply the same rule. Believe first and *then* you will see the Truth as it is in Jesus. How often the Christian comes across a passage of Scripture which seems to be dark and mysterious. He cannot, for a time, understand its preciousness, nor behold its beauty. But though he cannot see the golden ore, he knows that it is there, and, like one that searches for gold amidst the nuggets of quartz where it is embedded, in due time he will be enriched. It will not do to cast it away because nothing at present is *seen*—for before long the full value of it shall be known.

The Christian drinks water from a well which is deep, and by nothing but Faith's long arm can he reach down so as to draw the living water. It is no surface supply which will do for us. Down deep in the depths of God's spiritual Truths where no hand of reason can reach, we can let down our faith and the clear, fresh water will be drawn up to refresh our thirsty souls. If ever you are in a difficulty, bring faith to bear upon the Truth of God first, and you will understand and see afterwards. It depends upon which end of the telescope you use first and put to your eye how much you will see of the landscape—and the lengths and breadths of the Truth of God are only discovered when faith is first of all brought into exercise.

Remember, moreover, my beloved Brethren, that our only safeguard in times of prosperity is to exercise faith beforehand. Our text says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Expect great things from God—work for them—and believe that God intends to do good to you. David was not taken by surprise when he saw God's goodness. He had always believed in it—and when the full tide of Divine beneficence met his view he was not overcome, for he always, by faith, comprehended it.

You, my Brothers and Sisters, now high up in the mount, still let your faith lead your eye upwards, and you will not grow giddy and fall. Walk by faith and you will find yourself safe alike in trouble and in joy. In the night of adversity it will be as a pillar of fire to give you light, and in the daytime it will refresh you with its sheltering shade all through the wilderness. Believe, and you shall see without fainting, "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

And once more, Beloved, we are on our journey to the skies. We are on our way to Heaven and if we want to have a foretaste of it, how shall we get it? We must not believe in Heaven only because we have had enjoyments on the road—we must believe that there *is* a Heaven because *God has promised* it, and we must go after it because the Word declares there is a great reward. And there, if we believe to see, we shall, even in this life, soon see something of that which we have believed.

Brothers and Sisters, we are tonight like Columbus in search of the New World. Eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it—but we believe in it and in our frail vessels we have launched, leaving the world behind us. Unbelief sometimes tells us that there is no goodly country, no land of life-unending, no city of the blessed, no haven of peace, no “Jerusalem the golden.” We have never *seen* it, but we *believe* in it. God has said it in His Word—“There remains, therefore a rest for the people of God.”

Therefore, up with all sail! Steersman, hold to the wheel! We are bound for another and a better land! We have no abiding city on that shore which we have left. If we were mindful of it, we might return to it. But we have left it once and for all, and we are now steering for the land which eye has not seen. And you know what happened to Columbus! It is happening to some here—to some of my gray-headed Brothers and Sisters. Ah, and young as I am, I, also, know something of that which I am about to describe.

When Columbus was drawing near to the shores of America, though he could not see the land, yet he marked the land birds flying round and round the masts, and lighting upon the cordage of the vessels, and he pointed up and said, “That is a bird that is not seen far out at sea. There is land somewhere!” His companions had been ready to throw him overboard and make back for Spain. But they thought better of it now. And by-and-by there came floating along weeds and branches of land produce, and they said, “Ah, after all, the old-fashioned navigator is right. We shall come to the land of gold!”

Now, sometimes God gives us blessed foretastes, happy earnest, delightful tokens that there is a better land till some of us, having believed to see, are almost come to see! I envy some of my dear friends who have been long in the Divine life, and are getting gray because I know that the angels often bring them bundles from the hills of myrrh and make glad their spirits with tastes of the wines on the lees well refined which are reserved for the feasts of the immortals when they sit down in the banqueting halls of the Eternal, and see the King in His beauty, and bask in the vision of His glory!

Oh, let us go on, we who are younger, who have scarcely begun the voyage, knowing that all is well! Storms may toss us about. Waves may dash against our hull. The billows may seem as if about to swallow us up. But our fathers have gained the beach. Their ships, like those of Columbus, are drawn up on yonder shore. They are safe and blessed. Hark! We can almost hear their song. Their, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” might almost be heard even here, were not this earth so full of noise—were not the whirl of the wheels of business so incessant. Let us, then, O let us *believe to see*, and we shall soon see it and glorify Him who taught us so to believe!

May God bless you, dear Friends, very richly in this believing to see, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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BRAVE WAITING

NO. 1371

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 26, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen
your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”
Psalm 27:14.***

THE Christian's life is no child's play. All who have gone on pilgrimage to the Celestial City have found a rough road, sloughs of despond and hills of difficulty, giants to fight and tempters to shun. Hence there are two perils to which Christians are exposed—the one is that under heavy pressure they should stay away from the path which they ought to pursue—the other is lest they should grow fearful of failure and so become faint-hearted in their holy course. Both these dangers had evidently occurred to David and in the text he is led by the Holy Spirit to speak about them. “Do not,” he seems to say, “do not think that you are mistaken in keeping to the way of faith. Do not turn aside to crooked policy. Do not begin to trust in an arm of flesh, but wait upon the Lord.”

And, as if this were a duty in which we are doubly apt to fail, he repeats the exhortation and makes it more emphatic the second time—“Wait, I say, on the Lord.” Hold on with your faith in God. Persevere in walking according to His will. Let nothing seduce you from your integrity—let it never be said of you, “You ran well, what hindered you that you did not obey the Truth of God?” And lest we should be faint in our minds, which was the second danger, the Psalmist says, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.” There is really nothing to be depressed about. There is no real danger—you are safe while God lives, while Christ pleads and while the Spirit of God dwells in you—therefore be not dismayed, nor even dream of fear. Be not timorous and unbelieving, but play the man! “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.”

The objective of our discourse this morning will be the encouragement of those who feel in any degree dispirited and depressed on account of the hard places of the way, or the opposition of the world. May the Divine Spirit, whose peculiar office it is to be the Comforter of His people, now give the oil of joy to all who mourn and courage to all who tremble! We shall look at our text under four heads. First, God is to be waited on. Secondly, courage is to be maintained. Thirdly, waiting upon God will sustain courage and, fourthly, experience has proven this—for David sets his own seal to the text when he says, “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” As much as to say—I have tried and proven the power of communion with God and, therefore, personally give my advice that you continually wait upon the Lord and you will be greatly strengthened.

I. First, then, dear Friends, GOD IS TO BE WAITED ON. That word, “wait,” is so exceedingly comprehensive that I quite despair of bringing out every shade of its meaning. The word, “walk,” describes almost the whole of Christian life and so does this word, “wait,” for, rightly understood, waiting is active as well as passive, energetic as well as patient and to wait upon the Lord necessitates as much holy courage as warring and fighting with His enemies. We are to wait *on*, wait *upon* and wait *for* the Lord, for it is written, “They that wait *on* the Lord shall inherit the earth.” “They that wait *upon* the Lord shall renew their strength.” And, “blessed are all they that wait *for* Him.”

What do we mean, then, by, “wait on the Lord”? I say, first, let us wait on the Lord as a beggar waits for alms at the rich man’s door. We are very poor and needy, laboring under such necessities that the whole world cannot supply what we require. Only in God is there a supply for the deep poverty of our souls! We have gone to His door, many of us, and knocked and waited. And, in so doing, we have obtained very gracious answers. If others of us have not seen the door of Mercy open to us, let us still wait at the posts of the Lord’s door. Let us still knock and still hope for His salvation.

Are you seeking the Savior and are you trusting Him? Have you not yet obtained the peace which comes with believing? Then with great importunity continue in prayer and wait on, remembering that the blessing is worth waiting for—it is such a treasure that if you had to wait for a *lifetime* to fully obtain it, you would be well repaid when it came. Wait, but knock as you wait, with fervent pleading and strong confidence, for the Lord Himself waits to be gracious to you. Agonize in desire and let not the knocker of Heaven’s gate ever rest! Make the door of Mercy resound again and again with your resolute blows upon it.

The Lord is good to them that wait for Him. He will, in due time, answer you. It shall never be said that any were sent away empty from His gate. He has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth, nor said unto the seed of Jacob, “Seek you My face in vain.” Pray on, believe on, and as surely as God’s promise is true, He will, in due time, grant you conscious salvation. Your head shall be lifted high above your enemies round about you and you shall rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! The devil bids you cease from prayer. He tells you that the little faith you have will never save you. Do not believe him! Stand fast, pray on, believe on, expect on—though the vision tarries, wait for it—it shall come, it shall not be long.

The Lord grant you Grace to wait in all humility, for what are you but a beggar, and beggars must not be choosers! It is good that a man both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God, for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Him. To cling to the Cross, to rest at the altar of our Lord’s Atonement is the safest course. Believingly to wait upon the Lord, pleading the all-prevailing name of Jesus, is the suppliant’s best posture. I trust many in the House of God this morning have passed from this stage to the next—they wait as *learners* for instruction. The disciple

waits at His Master's feet and, according as the Teacher chooses to speak, so the disciple's ears are opened.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet. Some stand in the crowd and listen a little and soon they are gone, but the true disciple abides in the school and waits to hear what his Master will say. We bow down at His feet with this humble resolve, that whatever He says we will hear and whatever His doctrine, precept, or promise may be, we will drink it all in with intense delight. The pupils of the old philosophers were apt to walk in the groves of academia till the wise men were ready to come and speak with them. And when any one of the wise men began to speak, the young disciples quietly followed his steps, eagerly catching up every precious sentence which he might utter.

Much more should it be so with us towards our Lord Jesus. Let us follow Him in every page of Inspiration, study every line of creation and learn of Him in all the teachings of His Providence. Let us catch the faintest whisper of His Spirit and yield to each Divine impulse. "Wait, I say, on the Lord." If you are to be instructed disciples it must be by a diligent, patient, persevering waiting upon Him who is the Fountain of all knowledge and the Sun of all light. May we never outrun our Master by conceited speculations and vain imaginations, but may we wait till He speaks and be content to remain in ignorance unless He chooses to withdraw the veil.

A third form of this waiting will come out under the figure of waiting as a servant waits upon his lord. A true servant is anxious to know what his master wishes him to do and, when he once knows it, he is happy to undertake it and carry it through. In great houses certain servants enquire of the master in the morning, "Sir, what are your orders for the day?" Imitate this and when you rise in the morning, always wait upon your Lord to know what His commands are for the day. Say, "Show me what You would have me do. Teach me Your ways, O Lord. Lead me in a plain path. Inform me as to what to seek and what to shun, for my will is to do Your will in all things."

Notice how maid-servants watch their mistresses when they are waiting at table or serving about the house. A word is enough and sometimes a look or a nod of the head is all the direction needed. So should it be with us—we should eagerly desire to know the mind of the Lord and carefully watch for indications of it. As the eyes of a maiden are unto the hands of her mistress, so should our eyes wait upon the Lord our God. We, who are the ministers of the Lord Jesus, ought to be looking all around to see what we can do in God's House. Good servants do not need to be told of every little thing—they have their master's interest at heart and they perceive what should be done and they do it.

Oh, to be always waiting to do more and more for Jesus! I would go up and down my Master's House, seeing what I can do for His little children whom I delight to cherish! What part of the House needs sweeping and cleaning, that I may quietly go about it? What part of the table needs to be furnished with food, that I may bring out, as His steward, things new and old? What is there to be done for my Master towards those who are

outside and what is to be done for those already in His family? You will never be short of work if, with your whole heart, you wait upon the Lord! We do evil if we stand idly gazing up into Heaven expecting His coming and making it a pretense for doing little or nothing to win souls! Our wisest course is, as men that expect their Lord, to stand with our loins girt and our lamps trimmed.

You know what the Orientals meant by having their loins girt—they gathered up their loose flowing garments when they meant work—even as a hard-working man among us takes off his coat and works in his shirtsleeves. Stand like workmen with your sleeves up—that is the English of it, ready for any work which your Master may appoint! You put on the uniform of the Lord Jesus years ago when you were baptized into His name—take care to keep it spotless, for it is known to be connected with a sinless Prince! Never, by disobedience, make the uniform to be a lie, for if you are not His servant, why should you wear the garb of His household? Beloved, “He that waits upon his master shall be honored.” Let us not fail in waiting upon ours.

Sometimes the servant will have to wait in absolute inaction—and this is not always to the taste of energetic minds. I suppose that walking round Jericho six days and doing nothing must have been very distasteful to the men of war who wanted to be coming to blows. They might have said, “Why should we and all the multitude march round the walls and do nothing? The men of war chafed in their harness and longed to be at the foe! It is said that Wellington kept back the Guards at Waterloo till far into the fight and it must, I should think, have needed much courage on their part to remain calm and quiet while cannon were roaring, the battle raging and the shots flying about them.

They must not stir till the commander-in-chief gives the order, “Up, Guards, and at them!” Then will they clear the field and utterly annihilate the foe. They were as much serving their country by lying still, till the time came, as they were by dashing forward when, at last, the word was given! Wait, then, upon your Lord in all sorts of service and patience, for this is what He would have you do. Another form of this waiting may be compared to a traveler waiting the directions of his guide, or a mariner waiting upon the pilot who takes charge of his ship. We are to wait upon God for direction in the entire voyage of life. He is at the helm and His hand is to steer our course.

I am fearful that some Christians very greatly fail in waiting upon the Lord for guidance, yet the types and examples of the Old Testament very strongly enforce this duty. I will give you one type and one example. The type shall be Israel in the wilderness. There was a straight way to Canaan and, I suppose, it would not occupy many days to go from Goshen to Jerusalem. They must not, however, take that way, but follow their leader. When they had wandered for a year in the wilderness, they might soon have reached the land, for, in fact, they were near its borders. But no, they must go where the famous pillar, which indicated the Presence of God, should conduct them!

If it remained stationary for a year, the tents must not move. If it was up early in the morning, again, and again, and again for a whole succession of weary marching days, Israel must not dare rest. Under the shade of the pillar of cloud must they abide by day and its light must be their glory by night. Everywhere they were to wait for the heavenly signal and never choose their own path. Do you watch the cloud, my Brethren? Do you wait upon the Lord for guidance? Do you continually say, "I pray You show me Your way"? Do you commit your own way unto the Lord? If not, how little you have learned the true position and privilege of the people of God!

The example I take from David's own life. If you have noticed the 14th Chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, you will read that David, being threatened by the Philistines, enquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up against them?" And he had for an answer, "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hands." Encouraged by the oracle, he went forth to the attack and carried all before him like the breaking forth of a flood. The Philistines rallied again and spread themselves abroad in the valley—surely David might have felt quite safe in falling upon them again. What further directions could he need? Would not the former oracle avail, now that the same circumstances were occurring?

But no, the man of God did not feel safe until he had laid the *new* case before the Lord and it is recorded, "Therefore David enquired, again, of God." This time the response was very different. Possibly to his own surprise David received orders not to go up after the Philistines, but to turn away from them and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. When he should hear a sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees, he was to bestir himself, but not just then. He followed the new directions and again smote the host of the Philistines!

Brothers, wait on the Lord often! Though you were wise in the last intricate business, you may be a fool over the next simple matter! In fact, it is over the simple matters that we make our great blunders in life, even as Israel did with the Gibeonites when they came with old shoes and bread that was moldy—half an eye might have sufficed to see through their trick but Israel acted hastily, ate bread with them, made a treaty with them—and inquired *not* at the hand of the Lord. Not so David—he was never slow to seek Divine guidance.

I admire that which comes out, incidentally, about him in the saying of Abimelech, the priest at Nob. When Saul accused him of having enquired of the Lord for David, Abimelech replied, "Did I *then* begin to enquire of God for him?" As much as to say, "He is an old frequenter of the Lord's courts. He has enquired of God many and many a time before this. To accuse me of inquiring of the Lord for him, as though I was abetting rebellion, is unjust, for I only did for David what I had often done before." And so it was that David behaved himself wisely in a perfect way—because he followed not his own judgment but waited on the Lord.

There was one occasion, when he marched against Nabal in the heat of his wrath, when he went in his own spirit and not under heavenly influences. And had it not been that the Lord sent a wise woman to cross

his path, he would have shed blood that day and it would have been a grief of mind to him all his life. Oh that we did more sincerely wait upon the Lord in the sense of seeking instruction as to our path in life—then would He fulfill His promise to us—“Your ears shall hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it.”

I have not yet exhausted the word, “wait,” for we ought to wait upon God as a child waits upon its parent. Our children can seldom be accused of having small expectations with reference to us. They have almost countless desires and wants—and they always expect their parents to readily supply them—in which reckoning, I have no doubt, they have been strongly confirmed by their past experience! No little child thinks of providing for himself, nor does he dream of directing his own course in life. You cannot get that little head to be thoughtful about tomorrow’s food! You cannot force that little heart to be anxious about the next suit of clothes. To all suggested doubt, the little lips reply, “My father knows what I need and I am sure he will give it to me.”

Such is the happy, restful life of a loving child and this is as it should be with *us*. It is my Father’s business to provide for me. His name is Jehovah-Jireh. It is my Father’s business to preserve me. He has given His angels charge to keep me in all my ways. It is my Father’s business to mark out the future for me—I cannot see, even, into tomorrow! My eyes are dim, but my Father knows all about what shall be and He will be ready for whatever shall happen—therefore I should wait upon Him, raise no questions and expect great mercies. Blessed are they who are thus found waiting.

And then, perhaps, I may add one more thing—we should wait upon the Lord as a courtier waits upon his prince. He that is at court and seeks to rise to favor waits upon his prince with the desire to be employed in the royal service, that he may prove his loyal zeal. He counts any sort of employment at court to be a great honor. He tells his friends and they accept it as a subject of congratulation that he has obtained such-and-such work to do for the king. He delights to increase the honor and dignity of his prince’s court, for he shares in it himself.

Brethren, how carefully should you and I endeavor to show forth the honor of our Lord Jesus among the sons of men! Has He not made us kings and priests? And should we not exalt His glorious name forever? We should seek to make our Lord Jesus famous to the world’s end—our daily conversation and our current character—our private and public behavior should all tend to increase our Master’s honor among the sons of men. We must be ready for anything for Jesus and everything for Jesus—counting that we, ourselves, are honored by *disgrace* if we bring honor to Him.

Sir Walter Raleigh was wise in his generation when he took off his richly embroidered cloak to spread it over a miry place, that Queen Elizabeth’s feet might not be dampened. The courtier knew how to smooth his own road by caring for his queen. And thus, with unselfish motives, out of pure reverence for our Lord, let us be willing to be made as the street to be walked over if Jesus can be honored! Let us lay out for our Lord the best that we have, even our life, itself, if by so doing we may

bring glory to the holy and blessed name of our Redeemer! From now on it is ours to live unto the Lord and die unto the Lord! We will wait on the Lord and keep His way and may His Grace enable us daily to say, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope."

II. Secondly, COURAGE IS TO BE MAINTAINED. "Be of good courage." Our good Lord and Master ought not to be followed by cowards. Be of good courage, you that wait on the Lord! Have the courage of hope concerning the faith which you are exercising upon Christ. You are just beginning, some of you, to believe in Jesus, and you are afraid that He will cast you away, or fearful that you will not obtain full salvation from sin. I have already told you to continue to knock at Mercy's door—do so, but be of good courage—for that door will certainly open to you. He that asks receives, he that seeks finds and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

Take heart, poor fainting one, the Lord has a tender eye towards mourning souls! He is very good to those who seek Him. Though you are like poor trembling Mercy who fainted outside the door of the interpreter's house, yet your Lord thinks upon you and He says, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside?" He will not suffer those to perish who humbly wait on Him. The light of His countenance shall yet be yours. Be of good courage, O Seeker! Be, also, of good courage, you who have newly found Him. Be bold to avow your faith. Remember that the trust which you repose in Jesus is a justifiable one and can be vindicated against all comers—therefore do not hide it.

I hate to see a Christian act like a rat behind the wall who comes peeping out, when everything is still, to see if anybody is about so that he may get his crumbs. If there is half a sound of a foot anywhere—away he slips and hides himself in his hole! No, if you belong to Christ, acknowledge it! What is there to be ashamed of? To believe the Truth of God—shall a man blush at that? To follow infinite purity and holiness incarnate in Christ Jesus—is there anything to be ashamed of in that? No, rather let us wear our colors before the face of all men and lift high our banner in all companies, for it is a cause for glorying rather than for blushing that we are on the Lord's side! It is the best thing about us! It is the greatest mercy we have ever received! Why should we conceal it? Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and confess your faith before men, you that have newly been brought to Jesus.

Then go farther. Be of good courage in endeavoring to spread the faith which you have received. When you go to speak to others about the great salvation, be not afraid! If it is new work for you, I dare say you will tremble, but still do it and ask the Lord to give you greater confidence in proclaiming the tidings of His Grace. If you speak with infidels, be of good courage, though for a while you cannot lead them to believe. If you speak to those who are incensed against the Truth of God, be of good courage—what harm can they do to you that shall be equal to the harm you will suffer by being a coward? Be of good courage and undertake great things for Christ! Do not expect a defeat, but dare and venture all for Him.

Do something more than you are able to do, expecting strength beyond your own to be afforded you, and it will certainly come. "Wait on the Lord:

be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.” Be of good courage, then, in the way of practical energy for the advancement of your Redeemer’s cause. Be of good courage when you pray for others. Wait on the Lord about your children and be of good courage and expect to see them saved. Wait on the Lord about your servants, about your brothers and sisters, about your neighbors—be of good courage about them—believe that God hears prayer and that your intercessions will bless those for whom you pray.

Intercession has great influence with God. It is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord for the souls of others. Thousands now in Heaven owe their conversion to the prayers of the saints and, therefore, plead with great courage! Never cease to pray! And when you pray, pray not as though you spoke to a tyrant reluctant to hear, or to a forgetful God who would fail to answer, but wait on Him with quiet confidence and you shall not come away empty. Be of good courage, too, in making self-sacrifices for the cause of Christ. If you lose a situation because you are honest, be of good courage—you will be no loser in the long run.

Are there some who despise you because you are a Christian? Be of good courage, their opinion is of very little worth and in the judgment of angels and good men you stand very high. Are you like Moses when he refused the treasures of Egypt with all the honors of the court? Be of good courage, the Lord will give you, even in this life, a recompense and, in the world to come, life everlasting! If it should come to losing all you have for Jesus’ sake, be of good courage, for he that loses his life for Christ’s sake shall find it and he that becomes poor for the cause of Christ shall be eternally rich! Be of good courage!

Once again, if you are called to endure great affliction, sharp pain, frequent sickness. If business goes amiss, if riches take to themselves wings and fly away. If friends forsake you and foes surround you, be of good courage, for the God upon whom you wait will not forsake you. Never let it be said that a soldier of the Cross flinched in the day of battle! Bear your Father’s will, glad to have such a Father’s will to bear! If Grace cannot enable us to endure all that Nature can heap upon us, what is Grace worth? Now is the time, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in the floods of adversity, to see whether your faith is real faith or not! Mere sunshine faith is not worth having! We need that which will outlive the most terrible storm that ever beclouded the heavens.

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, though heart and flesh should fail you. Though eyes grow dim and the light of day should be quite shut out. Though hearing should fail and the daughters of music be silent. Though all the doors of the senses should be closed. Though the bearers of the body should totter and the keepers of the house should tremble, yes, though *death* itself should remove this feeble body, yet there is no cause for fear! We may exclaim with dying Jacob, “I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord.” Let not your hearts be troubled! Wait on the Lord and courage shall revive.

III. Our third point is that WAITING UPON GOD SUSTAINS COURAGE. Beloved, if ever you begin to grow weary in the good ways of God, wait

upon Him with double earnestness. You have heard of the famous giant whom Hercules could not kill because the earth was his mother. Every time Hercules dashed him down, he obtained fresh strength by touching his parent and rose again to fight. We are of like nature—every time we are driven to our God, though we are dashed upon Him by defeat—we grow strong, again, and our adversary's attempt is foiled. Our foe will never destroy us unless he can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and that is impossible! Waiting upon God is the way to renew our strength until we mount up with eagle's wings and leave the world below.

In the first place, our heart is strengthened by waiting upon God because we thus receive a mysterious strength through the incoming of the Eternal Spirit into our souls. No man can explain this, but many of us know what it is. We do not know how the Holy Spirit operates, but we are conscious that after a season of prayer we are often much refreshed and feel as if we had been ground young again. We have gone in before the Lord haggard and worn, desponding and, (shame upon us, we must add), ready to give up, turn tail and run away!

We have not long drawn near God before we have felt our spirit revive. Though our approach was mostly a groan, yet we did wait upon the Lord and the Eternal Strength came into us. How wonderfully do the secret springs of Omnipotence break into the feeble soul and fill it with might in the inner man! Through the sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit we have been made to shout for joy! We have been so glad in the Lord that we could not contain our joy! He that made us has put His hands, a second time, to the work and restored unto us the joy of His salvation, filled our emptiness, removed our weakness and triumphed in us gloriously!

The poor harp which had been long played upon could not, at length, yield music to its owner's hands. In vain the fingers roamed over the strings, the more heavily they were struck the more discordant were the sounds. The harp was taken from the hall and laid aside in a quiet chamber and there its maker came to deal with it. He knew its frame and understood the art of tuning it. He put new strings here and there and set the rest aright—and the next time the harper laid his fingers among the strings, pure music floated forth and flooded the palace with melody! Where discord had peopled the air with evil spirits, all was changed and it seemed as though angels leaped forth with silver wings from every chord! Yes, go to your God, poor Soul, when you are out of order! Wait on the Lord and He will strengthen your heart by His mysterious power.

Besides this, waiting upon the Lord has an effect upon the mind which, in the natural course of things, tends to strengthen our courage, for waiting upon God makes men grow small and dwarfs the world and all its affairs till we see their real littleness. Poor David sat fretting about the ungodly as he saw them prospering in their way, while as for himself he was plagued all day and chastened every morning. Foolishly and ignorantly he complained of the Lord and questioned His justice, "until," he said, "I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end."

Set your great troubles before the infinite God and they will dwarf into such little things that you will never notice them again!

He takes up the isles as a very little thing and the nations are as a drop in a bucket—and this great God will teach you to look at earthly things in the same light as He does, till, though the whole world should be against you, you would smile at its rage and though all the devils in Hell should rise against you, you would defy their fury! Our worst ills are utterly despised when we learn to measure them by the line of the Eternal. Thus you see that waiting upon God strengthens the heart by lessening the causes of fear.

And then it inflames the heart with love. Nothing can give us greater courage than a sincere affection for our Lord and His work. Courage is sure to abound where love is fervent. Look among the mild and gentle creatures of the brute creation and see how bold they are when once they become mothers and have to defend their offspring! A hen will fight for her chicks, though at another time she is one of the most timid of birds. Mr. White, in his book on Selborne, tells of a raven that was hatching her young in a tree. The woodman began to fell it, but there she sat. The blows of the axe shook the tree, but she never moved—and when it fell, she was still upon her nest! Love will make the most timid creature strong and, oh, Beloved, if you love Christ you will defy all fear and count all hazards undergone for Him to be your joy!

In this sense, also, perfect love casts out fear. It hopes all things, endures all things and continues, still, to wait upon the Lord. To have more love we must more continually wait upon the Lord and this will mightily renew the strength of our heart. Again, waiting upon the Lord breeds peace within the soul and when a man is perfectly at rest within, he cares little for trials or foes. It is conscience that makes cowards of us all, but let conscience be pacified through the atoning blood of Jesus and you can smile when others spit their venom at you and, like your blessed Master, you can bear their taunts without reply, for there is a heavenly calm within. A heart unsettled towards God is sure to be afraid of men, but when the soul waits on the Lord in glad serenity, it stoops not to fear.

And, Beloved, this waiting upon the Lord produces the effect of increasing our courage because it often gives us a sight of the eternal reward. And if a man gets a glimpse of the crown of glory, the crown of thorns will no more prick his temples. He that sees what he shall be in the day when Christ shall be revealed, mourns not because of what he now is while he bears the reproach of Christ. In fact, waiting upon God makes us see that we are in fellowship with Christ and causes us to know that the load we carry is a cross of which He always bears the heaviest end! It lets us see that His heart is full of sensitive sympathy towards us and so it makes us suffer without complaining. Is it not sweet to sing—

***“If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame
For You will remember me”?***

Thus waiting upon the Lord pours power into the central reservoir of our strength.

IV. Now I finish with the fourth point, which is, EXPERIENCE PROVES THIS. I want you to keep your Bibles open at the 27th Psalm and see how my text is a summary of the entire Psalm. All the rest of the verse may be compared to the figures of an account and this closing verse is the casting up of the whole—waiting on the Lord is the path of wisdom. For, first, in the opening verses David had been surrounded by enemies. He waited upon the Lord and the Lord made them stumble and fall. Afterwards, when they fought against him, he told his sorrow to God and God lifted his head high above his enemies till he could sing in the sanctuary songs of exultant joy unto the Lord.

My Brothers and Sisters, do the same when you are assailed! You are not in a country subject to actual war, but you have many adversaries, spiritual and otherwise. You have the Prince of Darkness armed against you and a host of evil spirits in high places. Wait on the Lord in this conflict and He will give you victory. Your strength is to sit still. Fret not! Quietly refer all the contests to Him who returns from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, because His foes and yours are trod beneath His feet. Wait on the Lord. Get away to the shadow of His pavilion. Hide in the secret of His tabernacle. Climb up upon the Rock and stay there—and all the adversaries of your soul shall be broken in pieces.

Next, read the 7th and 8th verses and you will see David occupied in prayer, and there, too, he succeeded and prospered abundantly because in prayer he waited on the Lord. The very *essence* of prayer is to get the ear of God. You might as well whistle as pray, unless you pray in spirit and in truth—and the very spirit and truth of prayer must lie in communion with God Himself. If you have been praying after a fashion and you have not gained that which you prayed for, surely you have not yet reached the ear of God! Get into the secret place. Go close to your Lord and wait upon Him in very deed—then you shall have great courage in prayer, renew your strength and come back victorious.

Next, David had been enveloped in darkness. He was afraid that God was about to forsake him. He had lost the light of Jehovah's Countenance. I think I hear one say, "What am I to do in such a case?" Wait on the Lord! If He does not smile, still wait on Him. The smile of His face is delightful, but if you lose it, hide under the shadow of His wings! When He does not smile, He still loves. "Though He slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in Him." Even when He seems an angry God, throw yourself at His feet! Let nothing drive you away from Him. If He lifts His sword to strike you, the further off, the heavier the blow will fall. Run close in, dear child, if your Father is going to whip you! Run close in, then He cannot strike hard.

Draw very near to your Father's heart. Lay hold on His strength and put Him against Himself, as it were, pleading His love against His wrath and saying, "You have sworn that You will not be angry with me, nor rebuke me, therefore deal tenderly with Your child." If any walk in darkness and see no light, let him still trust and wait on the Lord. In the next sense we find David forsaken by everybody. Father and mother had left him—still he waits upon the Lord and the Lord takes him up. Now

that you are quite alone, dear widow, and the husband of your love is gone, wait on the Lord! Now that the children, one by one, have been carried to the silent tomb, wait on the Lord and He will be better to you than 10 sons!

Now, young man, you are drifting about London without a helper—wait on the Lord and He will direct your ways. Yes, all of you who, either from persecution or bereavement, have come to be alone, remember the Lord sets the solitary in families and makes them families like a flock. Wait upon Him and all will be well. Next we find David in a difficult road, so that he prays, “Teach me Your ways, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.” But waiting on the Lord met the case exactly. Whenever you cannot tell what to do, wait upon the Lord. When the road turns this way and that and you know not which is right, kneel down and pray—you will know which way to go when you rise from your knees, or if you do not, kneel down again. The directing post is best seen when we are in prayer. The oracle shall answer to you out of the excellent majesty when you have resigned your will and believingly sought directions from the Most High.

To conclude, we find, next, that David had been slandered by His enemies—“False witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.” What then? Wait upon the Lord! “Oh, but I must answer them.” Yes, and then you will make bad, worse. Your slanderers will forge another lie when you have answered the first. “Oh, but,” one says “I could bear such a charge if it were true.” Ah, but then you ought not to bear it! The truth of an ill report ought to grieve you, but if it is not true, never mind, let it alone. “Oh, but they say ____.” What do they say? Let them say it! No hurt will come of it. Wait upon the Lord!

They rail at you. Take care not to rail back. Make no reply to howling wolves. When dogs bark, let them bark, for it is their nature. They will leave off when they have done and so, with all our adversaries, they will confute themselves if we will but leave them alone. Our strength is to wait upon the Lord! Tell Him about it and leave it with Him. Go to the Law? Yes, but get a suit which will not wear out in a hurry. Go to the Law and bring upon yourself no end of troubles. In all other things except slander—if you want a thing done—do it yourself. But there, if you want to be well defended, let others defend you. Dirt will rub off when it is dry—be bravely patient.

Wait upon the Lord, commit everything to Him and He will see you through, even to the triumphant end. All that you can do in your own justification will only make more mischief. Hands off, there, and leave it with the Most High. So we close by repeating our blessed text—“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord,” May He keep you waiting courageously, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE ECHO

NO. 767

BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIAR'S ROAD.

***“When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said
unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.”
Psalm 27:8.***

THIS ready response to a Divine call may be looked at in three ways. It may be said of it, first, that it is the natural duty of man to God such as his responsibility to his Creator demands. I should not like to think it necessary to prove that statement in this assembly. Surely when God creates a man it is but a matter of right that the man created should answer to the call of his Maker. When the Creator says, “Seek you My face,” it is the natural duty of the creature to reply, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” And the more is this so, because our Creator renews our obligations hourly by exercising His sustaining power and maintaining our existence. In a certain sense we are “created” every day, because the creature would go back to its native nothingness—our bodies would return to the dust, and our spirits would expire—if it were not for a continued action of Divine Omnipotence by which we are retained in being.

Being, therefore, every day dependent upon the Preserver of men, it is but an everyday obligation that when God says, “Seek you My face,” the daily debtor should cheerfully reply, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” If any should say that this is *not* a duty on such grounds, I would reply that the commands of God are always so good and so reasonable that it must be the duty of man to obey them. If it were possible for the Most High to command anything unrighteous, or unreasonable, the question of His claims might be raised. But since what the Word of God commands is always most to our interest—at once the wisest and the best thing that we could possibly do—it becomes the duty of a rational and an intelligent being to follow the wise, loving, and tender counsels of the great God.

And when his heavenly Father bids him seek His face, he should readily answer, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” But, while I am quite sure that this is the case and dare never say otherwise, although prompt obedience is a *duty*, wherever it exists, it is a work of the *Holy Spirit*. There never was a mere man in this world, since the days of Adam, who ever did heartily make the reply mentioned in the text unless the Holy Spirit made him *willing* to do so in the day of God’s power.

We do not excuse those who are disobedient, but if any are obedient, the glory of their obedience must be given to the Holy Spirit who works all our works in us and makes us both to will and to do of the Lord’s good pleasure. We are quite certain that in our own case this was so, for the Lord said unto us, “Seek you My face,” hundreds and thousands of times, in our infancy, in His own Word—both when we read it and when we heard it preached—but we would not reply to the demand of God, but set our faces like a flint and went after our own devices.

But when He spoke *effectually* with that still small voice of the Holy Spirit which penetrates the soul, enlightens the understanding, sweetly bows the will, constrains the affections, and changes the nature—then it was, but never till then that we said, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” We heartily join in Mr. Bonar’s sweet verses—

**“All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all my own.
All that I am, I owe to You,
My gracious God, alone.
The evil of my former state
Was mine, and only mine.
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Yours and only Yours.
The darkness of my former state,
The bondage—all were mine.
The light of life in which I walk,
The liberty—is Yours.”**

And, therefore, in the third place, we may always view such a spirit as our text indicates as being an evidence of Election, an evidence of a saving interest in Divine Grace. How can we tell the Lord’s people? They are discovered by the Lord’s call. The call is general, and put in the plural, “Seek you My face,” but the response to it is *personal*, put in the singular, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” This becomes, sooner or later, the answer of every chosen soul! Everyone ordained unto eternal life receives, in due time, the new nature—and this living and incorruptible seed, hearing the Gospel of its great Author—responds to it as an echo to the voice.

There is a very excellent image which is sometimes used to illustrate this Truth of God. When our brave King Richard was shut up in prison, far away in Germany, you know how he was found out by Blondel, a troubadour. The king and the minstrel had composed a song between them. First the minstrel sang one verse, and then the king sang one, and no other man the whole world over knew what the verses were except the king and the minstrel. So the minstrel wandered through many realms, and sang the first verse of his song, sang it at all kinds of castle gates and dungeon doors, but there came no response, for the king was not within.

But at the last, as Providence would have it, he sang it in the right place and faintly from within he heard from the deep dungeon the voice which knew, and could sing, the second verse. And as he sang the third, and the fourth came through the iron bars, he knew that the king was there, for the verses could have been sung by no other than he. I am sometimes occupied in preaching the Gospel, and I preach it to thousands who give no response. There is no evidence of the Lord’s having chosen them. But another time there is a heart that says, “You say, ‘Seek you My face.’ My reply is, ‘Your face, Lord, will I seek.’”

Then I have found out the Lord’s chosen ones, found out the hidden ones, discovered as many as were ordained unto eternal life—for their *believing* is the response to God’s Gospel—and the *evidence* of their being the favorites of Heaven. They, and they alone, thus believe. As for those who believe not, they perish in their sins, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that

believe on His name.” Look, then, at the text, in these three ways. I should be happy if I felt that you would all accept it in these lights, for I find too much of chopping and choosing among Christians between this Truth of God and that, and, by the Lord’s help, I am determined, so far as I know it, to pander to no man or set of men, but to hold myself ever free to preach every Truth that I find in my Master’s Book.

You may call it Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatever “ism” you like, yet, if it is in this Book, you shall have to account for it at the Last Great Day, whether you receive it or not. I say, again, then, that the *obedience* of the text is but the natural *duty of man* but wherever it is carried out, it is by the *work of the Spirit alone*, and wherever it exists, it is an evidence of election and a proof of the indwelling of the Grace of God in the soul. But I intend to handle the text in another way and shall endeavor to speak of the spirit of loving obedience to God’s Word which this text breathes. I shall first say something upon the *absence* of that spirit. Then upon the *cultivation* of that spirit. And then upon a special *outlet* for that spirit, and, lastly, upon a *reward* for that spirit.

I. First, then, let me make a few remarks upon THE ABSENCE OF THIS SPIRIT IN SO MANY PERSONS. Ah, my dear Friends, it is mournful to think how few there are who can say, “When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek,” for the great mass of men, if they spoke honestly, would have to confess, “When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord neither will I be obedient unto Him.”

With some of you now present this has mournfully been the case. There has been in your heart a total absence of every response to the Divine Word. It has come to you in all sorts of ways, till it might be asked, “What further can be done to you?” You heard it from a mother’s tender lips, and she spoke it as no one else could have done. You had it after that in your own flesh, when through sickness you tossed on your bed. You had it afterwards from kind teachers, from earnest ministers. Some of you get a good word almost every day. The very glance of your wife is a loving, constant sermon.

Some of you are not without sharp pricks of conscience—the stabs of that sharp little dagger within your soul that would gladly slay your sins. But, for all this there has been no answer to God’s call. You have lived for vanity, if not for sin. You are neglecting the great salvation! He says, “Seek you My face.” It is the cry of all these houses of prayer which are open every Sunday, “Seek you My face.” But your answer has been, “I will seek anything but the face of God.” And this has been continued with some of you. Oh, that I should have to put this so seriously! You have done this, not for a week—a week is a long time for a sinful creature to hold out against God—but you have done this for months, yes, and even for years!

A year is a long time for a child to hold out against its father. How few monarchs can keep their patience with a besieged city for 12 or 14 years: “No,” they say, “we will drag each stone from its place and hang every citizen in the city by the neck.” Their patience soon grows cold and their wrath waxes hot. But God has laid siege to some of you, by the

instrumentality of the Gospel, for 30, 40, 50, 60—did the little bird say 70 years?—and all the time you have continued to give God the negative. And while the demands of friends, and the requests of kindred have been complied with that wonderful Word, “Seek you My face,” it has received from you nothing but the cold reply, “With God I will have nothing to do.”

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me! The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Oh, wonder of deep ingratitude—man—year after year turns a deaf ear to the sweet commands of Divine Grace! Now, in some of you, this cold negative has been disturbed a little, but not broken. Perhaps, from this very pulpit, some of you have heard appeals which have considerably shaken you. Many of us, before conversion, were frequently the subjects of impressions, and some of you unconverted ones are not long without them.

Christ has knocked at your door and you have heard His voice again and again. You are not long without such knocks. Christ has often knocked. He stands at the door and knocks, as the Scripture says. He does not knock and walk away, but He stands at the door and knocks. The knocks have been repeated and continued, and you have frequently but falsely said, “I will open.” You have vowed that you would change and turn. Shall all those vows be registered against you? Shall all those resolutions help to increase your doom, being evidence of your trifling with God and attempting to deceive the Omniscient One?

O Sinner, how much has been done for you? What more can be done for you, vain Man? What more shall be done for you, careless Woman? It is useless that you should be stricken any more—you will revolt more and more. You have suffered and you have smarted till your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, and God’s rod has made you smart till you are full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores—but still you do not turn!

I have this much to say to you, and then I shall have to leave you to go to another part of the text. There is in this Book a very terrible passage which I commend to you who have up to now declined to accede to the Divine Word. You will find it in the first chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse, “Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

That is the voice of God to you, Sinner, you who have said, “I will not serve the Lord.” Take that bitter morsel and chew it. Roll it over again and again till you have got the very bitterness out of it. O may God make your *sins* as bitter as the *judgment* upon your sins! May the blessed

Spirit lead you to the Cross of Christ, for you never will yield to the Cross of Christ unless the Holy Spirit constrains you. O that you may “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way”—the worst place to perish—to perish *in* the way and *from* the way, “when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Now, I will read the text again, and if any of you feel that its ready obedience is not found in you, that its joyful conformity to God does not in any way describe you, you need not listen to the rest of the sermon but just cover your faces, and may God help you to pray, and then, I trust, before the sermon is done, you will get an answer to your prayer. “When You said, Seek you my face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Lord, if I cannot say that, break my heart now with Your great hammer and help me to yield myself up to Your will that I may be Yours now and Yours eternally.

II. Now, leaving that—not forgetting it in our hearts, though, for I trust we shall continue praying God to bless that short word to the unconverted—I now come to talk to the Believer about THE CULTIVATION OF A CONSTANT SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD’S WILL. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will you please notice in the text two or three points which I want you to attend to, and will you labor, by the help of God’s Spirit, to get your spirits up to them?

The first point is, notice the universality of this spirit of obedience in the text. David says, “When You said, Seek you My face,” he does not mention any *time*. Notice, “When You said.” If it were early in the morning, his heart said, “Your face, Lord, will I seek. I want You, for I have the day before me.” If it were at midday and the Spirit of God said, “Seek you My face,” David’s heart said, “O Lord, I will seek You. I want You now that the sun is scorching.” If it were towards evening and the voice said, “Seek you My face,” David said, “Ah, Lord, the day is far spent. I may well seek Your face now.” And if it were in the dead of night, when he awoke, his heart was still with God, and still ready to hear the Divine Word.

“When You said, then I said. When You commanded, I obeyed. When You called effectually, I yielded cheerfully.” Oh, what a mercy it would be if every Believer’s heart were in this state! Then we would not be *sometimes* obedient and sometimes have our own way—sometimes respond to the Divine voice and at other times put our fingers in our ears. Then we would be in so sanctified a frame of mind that whenever the Master came to us, whether at cock-crowing, or at the evening watch, He would find us with our loins girt about willing to go forth in His service. The text, you see, breathes the true spirit of *service*.

It shows a mind that was constantly under Divine influences, perpetually subject to the Divine will. The magnetic needle always desires the pole—the Christian’s heart should always desire communion with God. The rivers run into the sea—their waters continually flow into the mighty ocean—let our souls, by the stress of their new nature, continually be seeking conformity to the Divine will. Oh, it is easy to *say* it, but it is hard to *do* it when it comes to the pinch. To say, “Your will be done,” on the top of Tabor, is as easy as possible. But to say it in the

gloom of Gethsemane is so difficult that none but God Himself can enable us to say it.

And yet it may be attained—entire resignation is within reach—for all things are possible to him that believes. Let us seek it with the fullness of intense desire—

***“Jesus, spotless Lamb of God,
You have bought me with Your blood,
I would value nothing beside Jesus—
Jesus crucified. I am Yours, and Yours alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And, in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Your praise.”***

Next to the universality, I would draw your attention to the promptness of the spirit of obedience expressed in the text. “When You said, then I said.” He did not ask questions. He did not stop to say, “Lord, when shall I do it? How shall I do it? Where shall I do it?” No, but, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Beware of a questioning spirit in plain matters of duty—to delay to fulfill a conviction is to abide in sin! The Lord’s command is not to be quibbled at, but to be obeyed at once. We find not quibbling here, much less do we find any objection. There are no objections about himself, the work, or its difficulties. David at once, and on the spot acts as with the prompt movement of a soldier when commanded by his officer.

The Word is no sooner heard than the mind is swayed by it when the mind is under the sweet influences of Divine love. The Gospel according to Mark is regarded by some students as being peculiarly the Gospel of service. It is said that in the early Church the emblem for Mark was an ox to signify service. And it is very singular, whether that is so or not, that the evangelist Mark uses the word eutheos, or “straightway,” more frequently than any of the other Evangelists when he is speaking of Christ.

If you will notice, Mark always says, “straightway,” or “immediately.” For instance, in the very first chapter, “And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and immediately the spirit drove Him into the wilderness...And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them.” This is the very mark of the true servant—when he knows his Lord’s will, he gives himself to it at once.

As the centurion said, “I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it,” so should it be with us. There should be a prompt response at once to the Divine will. Do you always find it so? Does not God have to speak to some of us many times and put a bit in our mouth, and a very sharp and cutting one, too, and tug at the reins a long while? Yes, and take to the whip, too, before He can get us to be as we should be? “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.”

But seek, my Brethren—this is what I am driving at—seek to cultivate a spirit of prompt obedience to the Lord’s will. Take the advice of Mary

which she gave to the guests at Cana's feast, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Whatever is the Word of God follow it in the strength of God at once, and without delay. There is a little story told of an infant class being examined by its teacher. The text to be thought about was, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," and the teacher said to the little girls, "How is that, my Dears? How do they do God's will in Heaven?" One said, "They do God's will in Heaven always, Sir."

"That is well, but what next?" "They all do it; they all do it cheerfully, Sir." The next one said, "Please Sir, they do it directly," and the next, "They do it without asking any questions." Good answers, certainly, and that is how we should do the Lord's will—and so make a Heaven of this poor earth. O that our lagging feet were winged with sanctified alacrity, our obstinate necks made pliant with hallowed submission, our wavering hearts confirmed in constant holiness! This is one of the noblest works of the Spirit of holiness—may He make our nature the seat of so transcendent a miracle, so glorious a change!

Observe that next to universality and promptness, we are bound to note the *personality* of David's reply. "You said, Seek you My face." That was the command to *all* Your people, but, "Your face, Lord will I seek," was the *personal* reply of the waiting servant of God. Egotism is, no doubt, a very bad thing when it means self-conceit, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-laudation—but *egoism* in the sense of realizing one's own individual responsibility is a most desirable virtue. We need two words—egotism to signify that vice which admires and loves itself, and is thoroughly detestable. And then egoism which determines that self shall be obedient, and pure, and firm, whatever others may be—this to be cultivated daily.

Look at good old Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Oh, it is a grand thing to see a man forcing his way up the stream, struggling with manful vigor against the general current, swimming as live fish will do, against the stream, not floating down it as the dead fish do, but saying, "Let the world take its way. I take mine." "I, Athanasius, against the world," said that brave old confessor. And so must we say sometimes, "I, I will seek Your face, Lord—let others do as they will." Let us not be so attentive to other people's vineyards that our own vineyard is not kept. Whatever else we neglect, let our own personal godliness be the object of our constant care.

Let our heart be sound in the statutes of Jehovah. Let us see that our own garments are kept unspotted from the world and that in our pilgrim life we keep to the very center of the road. True religion must begin at home. Unless we, ourselves, are in good condition, our Christian efforts cannot be healthily conducted. Depend upon it, the worm at the root of our usefulness is bred amidst the decay of our personal piety. When you and I lose power in the family, power in the Church, power in the world, it is because we have lost power with God in private. The Lord give us the habit and spirit of close, consistent, careful, conscientious personal obedience.

Then, too, the heartiness of David's obedience demands our attention. "My *heart* said." Not my lips only, but my very heart said it. My soul was stirred to its depths and moved to its center by the voice of God. Men

who have great hearts are the men for power—they are full of force because their inmost nature is on fire. There have been some men in this world who have had little else to recommend them except that by which they have attracted their fellow men to yield them homage—like Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance—when he said to his soldiers at Austerlitz, “Soldiers, this battle must be a thunderclap; we must hear no more of the foe.”

And the men, filled with eagerness by his passionate energy, did his bidding and made it such a thunderclap that all Europe shook beneath the march of those men-at-arms. He had the power, somehow or other, of making men yield to him as if they were all machines, impelled by the force of his personal will. They were not *dragged* into battle, but *rushed* with enthusiasm to the fight, longing to win glory or death.

Now the voice of God should be to the Christian a voice that speaks to all his soul, wakes up his dormant faculties and stirs the enthusiasm of his noblest nature so that his heart says, “I will, indeed, seek Your face.” As the British sailor, when Nelson said to him, “Ready?” replied, “Ready, yes, ready,” and fired red-hot shot at the foe, so should our hearts respond to God’s, “Seek you My face.” “Lord, blessed be Your name for telling me to do that, for You and I are of one mind here. You love me to seek Your face, and I love to seek You. My heart responds—not my lips, not my body, dragged slavishly into the form of obedience—but my *heart* says, ‘Your face, Lord, will I seek.’ ”

Dear Friends, get, hold, *live* out a hearty religion! Depend upon it that the religion which has not your heart in it is best left alone. I scarcely can recommend you to go through religious performances if you look upon them as a dull routine. Do let your souls be in the ways of God. If ever you have a happy feast, let it be on Sunday! If ever there is a delightful walk, let it lead up to God’s House! If ever there is a sweet song, let it be one of the songs of Zion! If ever there is a choice, retired, happy moment, let it be the moment which you spend in your closet in communion with God! O for more heart-work in our devotions!

Once more, cultivate the spirit of resolution in this matter. “Lord, Your face will I seek.” Not “I *hope* I shall. I *trust* I may. I *desire* to. I sometimes think that one day I *shall*.” No, but, “My heart said, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Men do not grow much better in this world by *hoping* that they will. If a man does not get so far as resolution, he may reckon that he has not started upon his journey. The Christian man resolves in his soul—

**“Though floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes.”**

And if he cannot always carry out his resolution as he would, yet oftentimes his Master accepts the will for the deed.

To use John Bunyan’s homely metaphor, “You send your servant for a doctor, and put him on the horse: the horse is but a sorry jade and cannot go fast. But if the man tugs at the bridle, and uses the spur, and kicks and strains as if he would go if he could, you set the pace down as what the man would have it to be. You do not blame him for not going faster because you clearly perceive that he would go fast if he could. So the Lord often looks upon His servants and regards them.”

But what shall I say to those who would not go if they could, who do not say, "Your face, Lord, will I seek," but who hope, and who trust, and so on? That means that they will give God the go-by with mere hopes and fears, and trusts, instead of the strong resolution—"Your face, Lord, will I seek." In the teeth of all my natural sluggishness, in the face of all my business cares, I am resolved and set on this, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Cultivate, then, a spirit of universal response to the Divine Word—prompt, personal, hearty, and resolved.

Before I leave this point—and then I will not detain you long with the rest—I cannot help thinking on an image which keeps coming to my mind while I am speaking. In the usual route which everybody takes in going through Switzerland there is a long tract of country where there are innumerable beggars and people trying, in various ways, to get money from the traveler. One way which generally succeeds is that of blowing an enormous horn just opposite certain rocks. As soon as this horn is blown, the rocks resound on either side, repeat the note exactly, and then again, and again, and again—sometimes, perhaps, 12 or 20 times the echoes take up the notes and prolong them, producing some of the sweetest effects that ever charmed the human ear—"Linked sweetnesses long drawn out."

You want the boy to blow again, and as he blows another blast, and gives intonations and notes to it, the rocks begin to sing again. Those rocks reminded me, as I stood and listened to their sweet notes, of God's people. Ah, I thought, you could not sing if it were not for the horn! You could not make any of these sweet notes if it were not for the living breath that is here! But you are so placed by God in His arrangements that as soon as the sound is made by the living mouth, it is taken up and repeated, sweet, and sweet, and sweeter still each time.

Thus should all the people of God be, so that when the Lord speaks, all the Lord's people should take up the echo, and repeat it again and again by practical obedience to the Divine command. As the echo to the voice, so should your heart and mine be to the voice of God.

III. But, now, thirdly. We have spoken of the absence of this spirit, and the cultivation of this spirit. Now a word or two upon THE SPECIAL OUTLET FOR THIS SPIRIT SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT. The outlet suggested is seeking God's face which I shall interpret to mean meditation, and especially the private and public worship of God. Now, you who love the Lord, you are all day long hearing God say, "Seek you My face," when the morning light awakens you, it is God saying, "Up, My child. The natural light streams from the sun—come and seek the spiritual light—seek My face."

If you wake to abundant mercies, why, all the provisions on the table ought to say to you, "I am God's gift to you. Seek the face of the Giver." Go to Him with a note of praise. Be not ungrateful. And suppose that you are in need and have to say, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink?" Why, all your needs say to you, "Seek the Lord's face. He has provision, go to Him." Your abundance or your need may equally be a signpost to point you on the road to God. Suppose your child comes and asks you for something—it is God teaching you to do the same—to go like a child to your heavenly Father.

If you are full of joy, should not your joy be like the chariots of Amminadib, to bear you to Jesus' feet? And if you are full of grief should not your sorrow be as a swift ship that is blown by the winds? Should you not get nearer to God? During the day perhaps you hear of the fall of some professor. What does that say to you? "Seek God's face, that you may be held up." Perhaps you hear a sinner swear. What does that say to you, but, "Pray for that sinner"? All the sins we see other men commit ought to be so many jogs to our memory to pray for the coming of Christ, and for the salvation of souls. In this way you may go through the world, and the very stones in the street will say to you, "Seek you the Lord's face."

If you meet a funeral, what does that say? "You will soon be dying. Seek the Lord's face now." And when Sunday comes, what a call is that—"Seek you My face!" Brothers and Sisters, I wish that we responded to each one of these invitations of our heavenly Father. His likeness is stamped in some of its lineaments on all His works. By the visible things of God the invisible things are to be discovered. Go forth, like Isaac, and meditate at eventide and you will find the heavens declaring His glory and the firmament showing forth His handiwork. The lilies of the field will tell you of One who has hidden His wisdom in the raiment which decks them more brilliantly than Solomon in all his glory.

As the Master Himself often retired for meditation and prayer to the mountainside and the garden's shade, that alone with his Father He might seek the face of His God, so let us leave, awhile, the busy scenes of life and the haunts of men to spend a still hour in quiet meditation over the works of God's hands. And then let us pour out our hearts into His ever-loving breast. How much we lose by not noticing God in Nature and the Presence of our Father besetting us behind and before! I wish we were more in prayer. I long for it for myself—I desire it for you, also. I wish we were more in praise, too. Well would it be for us if the blessings of God, poured out upon us so lavishly, excited in us true gratitude at all times. Happy would that man be who responded to each touch of God's beneficent hand like a well-made instrument answers to the fingers of the player.

If our whole life were thus vocal with praise, the music of our grateful souls would come up with acceptance before God and we should find in our joyful spirits a continual feast! This joy of the Lord would be our strength—we should have meat to eat which the world knows not of. O that our days were more filled up with what will be our heavenly occupation, namely, adoring love, grateful wonder, thankful praise! As God is so continually saying to us, "Seek you My face," let our spirit find vent for itself in this, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

IV. And, now, the last thing is WHAT WILL BE THE REWARD OF SUCH A SPIRIT? Have you a marginal Bible with you? If so, kindly read the margin. It runs thus, "My heart said unto You, Let my face seek Your face." Ah, there is a new meaning there, and a blessed meaning, too. Let me read it again, "My heart said unto you, Let my face seek Your face." I suppose that is the more literal, probably the more accurate rendering, and I gathered from that the thought of the reward of those whose spirits yield to the will of God.

That is to say they enjoy *communion with God*. It is the long-lost blessedness of Eden restored to us with greater sweetness added to it. In Paradise God came and talked with Adam as a man talks with his friend. Our first parents had communion with God which they lost by sin, but it is now more than restored to us in Divine Grace. Heaven will be the place of perfect fellowship but we may foretaste much of the bliss of the future world, and eat of the grapes of Eshcol before we ever tread the green fields of the better land. Yes, it means lost blessings *restored*, and future ones realized when we can set ourselves face to face with God, and hold blessed communion with Him.

Now, is this the life we are leading? Many Christians contrive to live without getting into the heart of Christianity at all. In the wilderness the children of Israel dwelt round the tabernacle, each tribe marching or resting in its appointed place. They were all under the protection of the cloud and followed the guiding pillar, and enjoyed the Divine blessing. But this was not enough—they might enter, and were bound to do so, the precincts of the tabernacle—and there witness the worship of God. And, bringing their sacrifice they also took part in the homage paid to their God and King. Beyond the outer court of the people was that of the priests—and there the favored few might go and present the incense before God on the altar of gold, spread before Him the show bread and light the seven-branched lamp. These enjoyed nearer fellowship with God—they were emphatically called the “servants of the Lord.”

There was, however, an *inner* place shut out from the eyes of priest and people alike, where once a year the High Priest entered alone, with blood, and he of all men living, drew near to God who dwelt between the cherubim in the Holy Place. Now, we are a royal priesthood and through the torn veil we have boldness of access to the very Mercy Seat in the holiest of holies, and we ought to realize and enjoy daily our high privilege! Far be it from us to remain in the camp outside the tabernacle. It is true we may be safe there and enjoy many mercies, but it is not living up to our blessings.

Go into the court and present your offering of prayer and praise! Go as a priest and enter the inner place, and stay till you have trod the secret place of the Most High—and face to face with God upon the Mercy Seat had real dealings with Him Himself. This is your right, and to neglect it is to despise one of the choicest blessings conferred by God on fallen, but now in Christ, redeemed ones. Let your hearts ever cry—

***“Lord, let me see Your beauteous face!
It yields a Heaven below;
And angels round the Throne will say,
‘Tis all the Heaven they know.
A glimpse—a single glimpse of You,
Would more delight my soul
Than this vain world, with all its joys,
Could I possess the whole.”***

But we find in the text another thought of blessedness. On our face is reflected the likeness of God so that men see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. We, by communion with God, may become manifestly like He, partakers of the Divine nature. As men we were made in God’s likeness—we fell and lost it—but by Divine Grace we are restored. How shall I illustrate this? Why, there is Moses. Moses on

the Mount for 40 days sees God and when he comes down, the result, as shown in his face, is that his face shines! How could it be otherwise? God had been shining right into his face and he could not but reflect that delightful glory! That is the meaning, I suppose, of the passage, “Being changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord.”

It is our looking upon God, producing sanctification—the light of God shining into our faces till our faces, also, shine with the reflected glory. “Let my face seek Your face.” Ah, Beloved, I could say some things I scarcely like to say about that text, for it looks not only as if the saints said to God, “Lord, look at me, and let me look at You. Show me Your face, and You look at my face. Lord, let us spend our time and our eternity in lovingly looking at each other.” But I wish the saint to understand that there is another way in which our face seeks Christ’s face.

It is thus expressed by the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine”—when the soul of the saint and the heart of the Well-Beloved fall into such visible union with each other that the conjugal kiss is given, and they come into the fullest, nearest, ripest, richest, and most celestial fellowship that can be known this side Heaven—

**“Like some bright dream that comes unsought,
When slumbers over me roll,
Your image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravished soul.”**

And again, as Dr. Watts has well put it—

**“The smiles of Your face,
How amiable they are!
‘Tis Heaven to rest in Your embrace,
And nowhere else but there.
You are the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll;
The circle where my passions move,
And center of my soul.”**

May you and I often have in our hearts that panting, that longing, that sighing, that crying after fullness of fellowship with Jesus. May our hearts always say, “Lord, let my face seek Your face. Let my face never be satisfied till it sees Your face. Let my love never be satisfied till it is lost in the ocean of Your love. Let me never be content till self is wholly lost in the all-absorbing love of Divine Immanuel.” O so may it be! Then so shall it be, if your heart now says, in answer to God’s voice, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

I hope you have not forgotten the first point, however, and what I said about the unconverted. Let them take their portion. God grant that by getting their portion tonight, they may not get their portion in the flames of Hell. Then you Believers get your portion, also. Remember, the Lord’s portion is His people, and, on the other hand, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I trust in Him.” The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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A MIGHTY PLEA

NO. 1144

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 23, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me.”
Psalm 27:9.***

IN times of distress it is somewhat a difficulty to have a choice of helpers, because while we are making our selection, the danger may have overtaken us. While the fox was considering which way to run, the hounds had seized him. While the sick man was selecting the physician and considering the medicine, his disease carried him off. It is well to be shut up to one sole help, if that help is all we need. It is for our good, in such a case, to have no alternative, but to have, as the old proverb has it, Hobson's choice—that or none.

The Believer is exactly in that condition. He must trust in his God or remain without hope. He dares not look to others as he once did, for he has discovered their incompetence. He cannot rely upon himself as once he was foolish enough to do, for he has learned, by bitter experience, the folly of self-confidence. He is compelled to look to the Lord, alone. Blessed is that wind which drives the ship into the harbor. Blessed is that wave which washes the mariner upon the rock of safety, and blessed is that distress which forces a man to rest only in his God! Such was the condition of the Psalmist when he wrote the text. His spirit looked to God, alone.

In his past experience the goodness of the Lord shone forth as the pole star of his life's voyage and, therefore, as to the future, he fixed his eyes steadily on that one sure guiding light, and trusted in the God of his salvation. In supplicating the Lord it is well to have a plea ready for use, a plea available under all circumstances and conditions—a plea of our own—not borrowed from the mouths of other men and perhaps but half suitable to ourselves. We need a plea which wells up from our inner consciousness and is our own personal plea, felt to be weighty in our own souls and therefore confidently urged before the Throne of Grace.

It is well to have a simple plea and one which we can understand, ourselves, for when we are in doubt we are like men in a mist and must have plain directions or we miss our way. If we have a chart in a fog we want it to be a very clear one, or else we shall not be able to see it. And when we plead with God in trouble we want the plea to be a very plain one, or else our minds may be so confused we shall not be able to urge it. A soul in sore distress is in no fit condition to puzzle itself over deep and dark rea-

soning—it needs a child’s plea, just as Dr. Guthrie, when near dying, needed “Bairn’s hymns.”

Blessed, then, is it, if we have a plea like this of the text, “You have been my help,” for this is a homely, personal, suitable, simple argument not fetched from afar by subtle wit, but grown at home in our own experience. He that runs may read it, and poor wayfaring men may comprehend it. The illiterate can use it as well as the learned. “You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me.” Besides, this plea is good and full of real power. And I hope, before we have done this morning, we shall be able to show that there is much heavenly logic in it and that it is eminently full of that kind of argument which is most sure to prevail with the Host High.

Perhaps it may be well, here, to confess that the plea before us is not one which would ordinarily be available with our fellow creatures, for if *they* have helped us before, they generally conclude that the next time we ought to knock at some other door. Francis Quarles has well compressed the usual manner of men—

***“Man’s plea to man is, that he never more
Will beg, and that he never begged before—
Man’s plea to God is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and therefore sues again.
How good a God we serve, that, when we sue,
Makes His old gifts the examples of His new!”***

Yet there are exceptions to the general custom of mankind, for I read the other day a case in point, in Mr. Moody Stuart’s, “Recollections of Dr. John Duncan, of Edinburgh,” who was a beautiful character, and a famous Hebrew scholar, and has lately gone to Heaven, much to the loss of the Free Church.

In that book I met with the following passage—“He was easily imposed upon, but the imposition never soured him, and he was willing to submit to it for the chance of doing good. He said, ‘I find they know how to get round me. They say, “You helped me before,” and I can never resist that. It teaches me how to pray.’” And now I think of it, many of us like to help our old pensioners, and they come up very boldly to our door remembering the many times in which they have succeeded. If you grant a man a favor several times, he becomes very free in seeking it again. So it seems that even among men it may be a plea, “You have been my help,” and most assuredly it is most prevalent argument with God.

No man shall be repulsed from the gate of Mercy who comes with this upon his lips—

***“You have helped in every need,
This emboldens me to plead.
After so much mercy past,
Will You let me sink at last?”***

I shall speak this morning thus—First, I shall try and depict Experience gratefully telling her tale—“You have been my help.” Then Necessity urgently pleading with Experience—“Leave not, neither forsake me.” And

then Experience soundly instructing Faith—teaching her how to pray and how to expect an answer—“You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me.”

I. First then, dear Friends, let us listen to EXPERIENCE GRATEFULLY TELLING HER TALE, “You have been my help.” I, the preacher, can say, and must say, with all my heart, “O God, You have been my help.” Rest a minute and let the testimony be repeated by all who can declare it. I know that many of you, if this were the fitting time, would rise up and say, “O God, You have been my help.” What would we have done without the help given us in time of need, given us from the Lord, Himself? How grandly has our God displayed His power and His mercy on our behalf!

Many of you whose heads are adorned with the silver locks of age will say, with troubling, tearful emphasis, “You have been my help.” Yes, and those of you in middle life, battling with its cares and trials, can do no otherwise but cheerfully confess, “The Lord is my helper, and has long been such.” And the younger ones among us, who have lately put on the harness would not like to be left out, for even in their short conflict they have received such aid that they gladly admit, “You have been our help.” If hands had to be held up now, that we might see at a glance those who could say that God has been their help, what a forest of hands would go up in this Tabernacle this morning! Yes, Lord, we Your servants, assembled here in thousands, do solemnly confess that You have been our help.

Now, as I cannot describe the individual experiences of everyone here present, I will just say a little concerning the man who wrote these words. As we find them in this Psalm, and as his experience is singularly like that of every other saint, we may, perhaps, touch most of you in some point or other. David could very early say, “You have been my help,” for while he was yet a youth the son of Jesse sought the Lord and struggled into spiritual life. I should think that his early experience was a very distinct and marked one—and one in which much saving help was displayed. He had deep convictions of sin, a clear view of the great Substitutionary Sacrifice that was to be offered, and in the end he obtained a very joyful sense of justification by faith.

David could look back to the days of his boyish conversion, when he fought hard with doubt and fear, and sin committed and sin dwelling within him, and yet was able to put his trust in the great Sacrifice, so that he said in retrospect, “You have been my help.” I invite every converted person here to look back upon that trying time when he was seeking the Lord with a burden of sin upon his back, assailed by a thousand sins and hindered by ten thousand temptations. You were, then, most wonderfully helped! You were helped to fall at the foot of the Cross and helped to look up and view the perfect Atonement there, presented by the Redeemer.

You were helped to leave your burden in your Savior’s sepulcher and helped to come away with a new song in your mouth—the sweet flavor of which is there to this hour. You were helped to repent and helped to believe—helped out of self-righteousness and helped out of despair. In mem-

ory of that matchless help you may well resolve to trust in the Word all the days of your life. "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." David, however, soon after his conversion, entered upon a scene of severe trial—at least, so I suspect.

He appears to have been sent from home to serve as a shepherd boy in the wild places of Judea. I fancy that his condition with regard to his brothers was very much like that of Joseph—they either envied or despised him. When Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint him, you will remember that all the rest of the family were at home and the youthful David was not summoned until the Prophet especially required it. But, as though he were not worth noticing, he was required to be away watching the flocks. And so, also, when he went, at his father's request, to the battle against the Philistines, his brothers treated him with great scorn, as though he had no business to come near them, or to associate with great men like themselves, in battle for their country.

Poor David, therefore, was the marked one of the family, a speckled bird, the butt of household ridicule. But he could say, in looking back upon the times of his loneliness, "You have been my help." Sweet were the songs which he sang among the sheep, such as, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Happy were the quiet hours which he spent amidst the hills and vales of his native land, and by the rivers and the brooks where he made his flock to lie down. Many a time that harp of his, upon which he had learned to play so skillfully, had borne up his devout spirit on wings of music to the Throne of God, when his young heart sang in solitude the praises of the Most High.

Perhaps some of you look back upon your early troubles as among the bitterest you ever knew. We are always hearing people say that our young days are the happiest we shall ever see. It may be true with many, but there are others whose young days were darkened with sorrow. They had to bear the yoke in their youth and they can say, in looking back, that it was good for them it was so, for in those times the Lord was their helper. David's father and mother had, in a measure, forsaken him, but God took him up. The Lord had regard to him when others despised him. He was the Lord's Anointed when he was an alien from his mother's children.

What joy it is if our early sorrows have left this inscription upon the tablets of our hearts, "You have been my help." But David did not merely suffer when he was young, but did work for God—yes, he did grand exploits for his God and for his country while yet a youth—of which he could say with great fervor, "You have been my help." It was no little thing when the shepherd lad rushed against the lion and took him by his beard and slew him. And when the bear had taken the lamb, it was no slight matter for a raw youth to battle with the monster of the woods and slay it in the name of God, that he might deliver his sheep from destruction.

The Lord was his helper that day, and grandly did he feel it, when he went with his sling and his stone to meet the gigantic Philistine! And openly did he confess his faith when he came back with the giant's head,

all dripping with gore, to magnify the Most High, who had delivered him and delivered Israel out of the hand of this mighty adversary. “You have been my help.” “The Lord delivered me out of the mouth of the lion and from the paw of the bear, and the Lord has delivered me from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine.”

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, I do not ask you to look back upon what the Lord enabled you to do in your younger days by way of self-congratulation. I do not ask the old soldier to “shoulder his crutch and show how fields were won” that he may command admiration from younger warriors. But, that *God* may be glorified, I ask you to remember how the Holy Spirit came upon you in those early days and enabled you to be valiant for the Truth of God! Perhaps you had more zeal than knowledge in those days! Perhaps you possessed more confidence than prudence—but you did grand things for God and God was with you! He was with you, and so you might be content to go back to all the mistakes of youth if you might win back, again, its simple trust and burning love!

At any rate, stand here today and admit that whatever you may have accomplished which will bless your fellow men and honor your God, the glory of it is *all* due to the help given you by the Lord. David, after those first trying times, passed through another series of afflictions. He was called to court, but the king was jealous of him and very soon he had to escape from Saul’s murderous attacks. What continuous help did David receive from the God of his salvation! He was almost a prisoner in the caverns of Engedi but God delivered him. He was well-near captured among the hills, but Jehovah called off his pursuers. Many a time did he hold his life in his hand, for he was hunted like a defenseless partridge upon the mountains—but always, by some means or other, the Lord delivered him as a bird out of the snare of the fowler—the snare was broken and he escaped.

Look back upon the troubles through which God has brought *you*, my beloved Brothers and Sisters! Remember the times in which your feet had almost gone and your steps had well-near slipped, and say with grateful emotion, “You have been my help.” God helped David by raising him up many true friends. When he was in the cave brave spirits came to him, valiant and faithful men, who loved David as they loved their own souls. And when he asked for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, they went, their lives in their hands, to gratify his wish and let him drink of the water which he was accustomed to taste in his boyish days, for they were denoted to him.

Now, it is no small thing to have good, kind, faithful, earnest friends and adherents. And if you have had such, or have been favored with parents, brethren and friends who have been greatly attached to you, be sure to praise the Lord for them this morning, as I, myself, joyfully do in the midst of many tried and attached supporters, and say, “You have been my help.” On one or two occasions David found the Lord to be his help when he was in positions where he might scarcely have expected Divine aid.

When we plunge ourselves into trouble through our own fault, it is but natural to fear that we may be left to suffer for our folly. And it is peculiarly gracious on the part of our heavenly Friend to come to our rescue.

David had unwisely sought refuge with the king of Gath and there was placed in great jeopardy of his life, so that he had to play the madman in order to escape. But escape he did, through God's gracious help. Yet another time, in his unbelief, he went and joined the army of this heathen king—and if the lords of the Philistines had not spoken against his going down to the battle, he would have been placed in a very awkward position, in having been called to fight against his own countrymen—but God delivered him, even then. With what regret may some of us look back upon our own follies! And with what thankfulness may we survey the mercy which plucked our feet out of the net. Where others would have left us in anger, because of our waywardness and ingratitude, You, O Lord, have been our help.

David obtained help under very strong temptations. It was a very strong temptation when he saw his adversary in the cave all alone, and might with one stroke of his sword have taken off his head. He was helped of God to spare his foe and he only cut off the hem of the king's robe to let him see how completely he was in his power. Help also did he need when, in the dead of night, he went with Abishai, his captain, through the sleeping hosts of Saul and came to the place where lay his cruel enemy asleep. His spear stood temptingly near his pillow and a deep sleep was on him. And Abishai said, "Let me smite him, let me smite him but once, one stroke shall end it all."

Who among ordinary men of war must not have wished to let that one single blow be struck? In what surer manner could a bitter quarrel be ended? But no, "I will not lift up my hand against the Lord's Anointed." David must have felt that God was superlatively his Helper that night to keep back his hand from blood. You, too, dear Friends, have been in such a position that you were strongly tempted to do wrong. Impulses both of your own nature and of Satan were strong upon you and you had almost put forth your hand unto iniquity. But you have been kept with an unblemished character to this day and you are compelled to say, this morning, "You have been my help."

Yes, and David could remember, again, when God helped him in times of direst distress. Perhaps the greatest sorrow of David's life, before he fell into sin with Bathsheba, was the destruction of Ziklag. He came back from the Philistines' country to his own town of Ziklag and found the town totally sacked, everything taken away. And, what was worse, his own wives and children, and those of all his men, carried away captive. David might have borne up under this had his friends cheered him, but they were so exasperated that they fell angrily upon *him* and spoke of stoning him! He was their *leader*—he was not to blame in any respect for their loss—but merely in the bitterness of their hearts they spoke in foolish anger and hot haste.

Generally, at such times, men need a *victim* and in this case they would have made their noble leader the object of their wrath. It is written, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and sorely did he need to do so. God brought him out of it, for he never lost a farthing by the sack of Ziklag, nor any of his men. They recovered their wives and their children, and, beside that, not only all their own goods, but all the spoil the plundering band had taken from other places. David could have sung, and no doubt did sing, "Ebenezer, up to now the Lord has helped us!" Or, in the words of the text, "You have been my help."

Have not you had your Ziklag, you businessmen, when things were going all to the bad? You could not help yourself and bankruptcy stared you in the face. You did what you could, but it seemed as if you must be ruined. That was your Ziklag and the Lord helped you. Or perhaps there was disease in your house—one child had gone, another was sickening—your wife was laid by. You were unable, yourself, to lift hand or foot to help, all things were against you—it was your Ziklag. Or perhaps you are a minister of the Gospel and there was, in your Church, spreading disaffection and cruel ill will—and no one was found to stand up for you. Though you had been faithful before the Lord God of Hosts, you seemed quite left and deserted. It was your Ziklag, but you were helped through it.

And therefore, I beg you, do not, for the glory of God and for the comfort of tried saints, keep back your testimony, but say, "I was brought low, and He helped me, and, therefore, blessed be His name." We do not talk enough about our deliverances! When you get home this afternoon, after dinner, if a friend or two should call, you will go over your bad times and your troubles, but you will not recapitulate your mercies. Have we not had enough of complaining? Let us touch another string and bless the Lord for all His loving kindness! What a tale some of us could tell of His mercies! No novel that was ever composed could possibly equal, in interest, my own experience of God's goodness, and I think there are many here of whose lives the same could be said.

Rich with incident, crowded with wonders, crammed full of miracles have our lives been, for God has dealt so well with us that we often stand astonished at what He has done. "You have been my help." Oh, yes, I will sum up the whole of my life in the one sentence, and, as we have seen a portrait sketched in a few lines, so will I give you my whole career in miniature—"You have been my help." Listen, then, to the song of Experience, and hasten to join in it! It is most charming and cheering—"You have been my help."

II. Our second point is NECESSITY PLEADING EXPERIENCE. "You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me." First, You have been my help, therefore it is consistent with Your holiness to help me. Lord, I am a poor sinner, unworthy to be noticed, and my doubts and fears sometimes tell me that it would not be fit for Your infinitely holy Majesty to look upon such a rebellious worm as I am. But, Lord, You have done it already! You have been my help and if it were not wrong for You to

help me once, it will not be wrong for You to help me twice. If it did not stain Your spotless robe to hold out your hand to a fallen and condemned soul in years gone by, it will not stain Your purity to lend me Your hand again.

I therefore bless Your condescending goodness and ask You not to leave me! You have been my help. Therefore, in the second place, it is within Your power to help me, for, Lord, my case today is not worse than it was when You did help me before, or, if it is, You are All-Sufficient. Lord, help me out of this affliction, for You did redeem me on a former occasion. I was weak and friendless then, and could not help myself. But Your own arm of mercy was fully equal to the emergency. Lord, I know it is quite sufficient now. If You had never delivered my soul out of such a puzzling, perplexing and intricate case as mine, I might have doubted, but as You have already been my help in times of great strait, when no way of relief was visible, You are able to help me again. Therefore I lay hold upon the hands of Your power and the arms of Your strength.

You have been my help. Therefore You can help me again, O Jehovah! I know You can! Again, my appeal is to Your Wisdom. Lord, You have been my help and if You do not help me now, all that help will go for nothing! It is of no use to have helped me so far, if You do not help me to the end. Now, Lord, I know You do not begin to build, and then leave the world incomplete, so that they that go by may say, "He began to build, but was not able to finish." You have made an investment in me, good Lord. You have gone deep in expenditures of mercy and love with a poor worm like I, and if You stop Your hand, Lord, You will lose all you have invested. You must go right through with it, Lord, or else You will have lost all the works of Your love and Your power and Your goodness which You have already so lavishly spent upon me.

Is not that good pleading? "You have been my help"—Lord, if it were wise to help me so far, it must be wise to go through with it. Would it have been wise to bring Israel into the wilderness and feed them with manna for 40 years and then to let them die of starvation? What would the Egyptians say? Would they not ask, "Why did He bring them into the wilderness? Why did He conduct them so far and afterwards suffer them to perish?" Well does our poet put it—

***"The work which wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy never forsakes."***

For, if it is wise to begin with, it must be wise to carry it on. Lord Jesus, You have loved my soul as Jacob loved Rachel, and he was bound to serve for seven years to win her. And if he had served six and a half years, and then left off, he would never have had his Rachel. And You have, in Your infinite love, served for me these years, but if You leave off now, I shall never be Yours at last—my poor soul must perish unless, till the last hour of life, You shall still wait upon me in mercy, and refresh me with Your Grace.

To my own soul at this moment this plea, “You have been my help,” is a very powerful hold upon Divine Wisdom, and is an urgent reason why I may ask for Grace, still, to be given me. Perhaps the backbone of the argument lies in the attribute of Immutability. “You have been my help, if You can change, then can You leave me. But if You are, indeed, Jehovah, “I Am that I Am,” the same forever and forever—if You have once blessed, You are bound by the force of Your Nature to bless right on—as long as You are God and I require Your blessing. Have you not said, “I am God, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? What blessed notes that text contains! He who has kept you to this day, if He changed, might leave you. But since He cannot change, He will bear you right through!

How wicked we are to doubt our faithful God! The sun rose yesterday and nobody doubted but what it would be up this morning. And there is not a man living but what believes the sun will shine tomorrow. Do you trust the sun and will you not trust the God who kindles its light? The tide comes up to the shore and then recedes according to the regular motion of the moon, and everybody trusts the tide and is prepared for its coming in and its going out. And can you trust the unstable sea, and its fickle wave, and not rest upon the Immutable God?

You say the thing that was shall be, and surely God was forever and ever, and has kept His promises to His people—and therefore the thing shall be. If Heaven above can be measured, or the earth searched out. If the ordinances of the sun and of the moon can be changed, then may God forsake His people, but it can not, *shall* not be while He is still the same. I think there is one more argument here, namely, a plea to God’s love. “You have been my help.” Lord, surely if You did love me enough to help me before, You love me enough to help me still. It is the plea of a child to a father. “Father, you have always fed me, will you let me starve? You have always clothed me, will you let me be naked?” It is the argument of a spouse to her husband as she says to him, “My Husband, you have never failed me yet. Whatever I have needed you have supplied to me. Leave me not, neither forsake me.”

You know how the plea has power with a heart which is touched with true affection. It is with us and our God as though He had guided us halfway through a wilderness. We did not know one inch of the road and had no provision for it, but He has helped up to now. If, when He had brought us right into the center of the waste, He should say to us, “Now I am going to leave you”—if we were in such a plight that on desert sand, where there was no pathway and no shelter, our guide should say, “Now I must leave you to yourselves”—we would clutch him by the sleeve and say, “Leave me not! I pray you do not leave me, else why have you brought me here at all?”

“All the kindness of the past will be but cruelty, a studied tantalizing of me, if you leave me. Why did you bring me here? All the way I have come, I have depended upon you for everything. I could not have found my way

so far, alone, and will you leave me now?" Oh, I think no man would be so brutal as to resist such an argument. He would say, "If in my kindness I have undertaken the conduct of this poor ignorant creature and brought him so far, I cannot leave him till I have landed him safely at home." Shall the Lord be less kind than man? Imagine that a child has fallen into the sea and you are a strong swimmer and have swam from the boat and clasped the child, and you are bearing him on your shoulders and swimming to land.

Suppose you should suddenly say, "My child, I have done something for you, but will do no more. I must drop you into the sea." Would not the little one say, "Sir, you picked me up when I was sinking. I should have been dead long ago but for you. Do not throw me off, Sir. Strike out again, Sir! Let me still cling to you." We may reason in the same manner with God. "My God, my God, if You had meant to let me be lost, why did You not do it years ago, and let me go down to Hell without hope? But now You have given me a hope of Heaven! You have let me know something of the joy of holiness. Some love to You and some longings after You have stirred my soul. Will You leave me now, O my God? It cannot, must not be."

The pleading is mighty, Brothers and Sisters, I know of none better—"You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me."

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, here is EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTING FAITH. My venerable Brothers and Sisters, the first word of this instruction is to you. Experience says to Faith, "Trust God, for He has been your help so long." How long? Fifty years for some of you. How old are you? Seventy, eighty? God has been your help, then, all that time! How long do you expect to live? To be eighty. You are 70 now. All you have seen through seven-eighths of life is that He is a faithful God. Can you not trust Him for the other eighth?

Your sun is going down, its shadows are lengthening, but from early dawn all through the hot noontide He has been good to you. Can you not trust Him for the last few hours of eventide? Surely, surely God deserves that such long-continued kindness should not be received with ungrateful doubts! If He had meant to be a liar to you, you would have found Him out before this. If His promises were intended to be failures, they surely would have been failures to you before you had gone so far! Oh, believe Him for the rest of life and go singing into Heaven, "You have been my help." May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, enable you to put down all unbelief! The Lord has been our help so constantly that the fact confirms our faith.

If, in looking back upon our lives, we could find a point or two where God had failed us, we might, then, let our faith flag. I can only speak as I find—I cannot find one instance in all my life in which God was untrue or unkind to me. If we ever doubt God till we have cause for it. We shall never entertain any doubts so long as we live. Yesterday, as I looked at some little birds in a cage, I thought to myself, "These poor little creatures

are entirely dependent upon those who feed them. If seed and water are not supplied to them, they cannot help themselves and must die. And yet there they sit and sing with all their might! Their state of dependence never distresses them. They have perfect confidence in their keepers.”

And, I thought, that is just my position. I am God’s singing bird. Perhaps I wonder where I shall get my bread from, or my sermon for next Sunday—and a great many cares and troubles come to me. But why should I be troubled? Instead of mistrusting my Keeper, who has fed me these many years, had I not better sit and sing as loudly as I can? Would not that be the best thing to do? The bird does it, and why should not a *man* do it, who is supposed to have more brains than a bird, but who sometimes does not seem to have half as much? Come, Brothers and Sisters, come! The Lord has constantly been true, let us not doubt!

And then He has helped us so singularly. Some here present have been in very remarkable tribulations—trials the like of which have not befallen other people—at least, so they think! They have fallen to their lot and yet they have had singular rescues and helps. Well, then, when you come into the singular predicament of dying, you shall have the singular Grace of being able to rejoice when you die! Or, if any other remarkable trial should waylay you between here and Heaven, you shall find extraordinary deliverance from Him who has been your help.

And I might say, in closing, God up to now has helped us in such a way that He has glorified Himself. We could not have believed that He could have so delightfully illustrated His Divine attributes as He has done in our past biography! There have been such flashes of light out of His excellent Glory that we have been astounded! So it will be to the last. God will be glorified in our mortal bodies while we live and when we come to die. He has been our help and He will be our help till, like a scroll, this world is rolled up and time itself expires, and we have reached eternity.

I have two or three more thoughts to utter and I have done. To self-righteous persons our text can have no sweetness. You have always done your best and have been very religious. You have believed that you *deserve* eternal life, and you have been on very good terms with yourselves. God has not been *your* help. You did not want Him—you have done very well without Him. You do not need washing in the blood of Jesus—you were never a very great sinner. You do not require help from the Holy Spirit—you have always been able to attend to the formalities of religion without assistance from supernatural power. And so this is your secret judgment of your condition.

You cannot say, “You have been my help.” And I dare say you do not pray, “Leave me not, neither forsake me.” You do not see the need of it. Well, your fancied salvation is such an one that the sooner you are rid of it the better! It is such an one that if you can put a millstone about its neck and sink it in the sea, you will do well, for if you do not do that, it will sink *you* in Hell forever! That hope of salvation which is not grounded upon Christ and the power of God, but which rests in *self*, is nothing but

counterfeit—it is damnation gilded, nothing better. Away with it! Away with it! And oh, may you be made to go as guilty, as helpless, as entirely dependent upon mercy and Divine strength—and then you will be in the way of salvation, but not till then.

Oh, may the Spirit of God teach you this! I have, here, some poor trembling soul who is seeking Christ and he says, “O Sir, I could not use the plea of the text this morning.” Well, beloved Friend, perhaps not in the strong sense in which the Christian can, but you may still use it in a measure. For instance, you need to be forgiven. You need to be saved. You can say to your heavenly Father, “O God, You have preserved my miserable life. You have bid the sun to shine upon the evil as well as the good. You have sent the showers and the harvest for me as well as for the best of Your servants. Oh, if You have done this, do more and send me the gifts of Your Grace!”

Besides, poor Heart, you can say, “You have given me this Sunday. You have permitted me to go and sit with Your servants. Though the meanest of them all, You permit me to hear the voice of Gospel invitation. You speak to me, and say, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.’ Oh, crown these gifts by giving me faith, by granting me life—the life of Your Holy Spirit! Save me, save me with a great salvation!” I think that is good pleading and especially if you can add, “O God, You have set forth Your Son Jesus to be a Propitiation for sin, and declared that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. By Your Grace I do trust in Him and rest my soul upon Him, alone. Do not reject me! Let me know Your great salvation, or I languish, faint, and die.”

You shall not be long in such a case as that. If you believe, all things are yours! If your only hope is in Him who bled on the Cross, your transgressions are already blotted out! Go, and sin no more! Peace be unto you! Be of good courage! The Lord has looked upon you already with an eye of love! You are His and He will never leave you nor forsake you, world without end. God bless you all, dear Friends, and He shall have the honor and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 27, 28.

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SAFE, THOUGH SURROUNDED BY SIN

NO. 3535

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1869.

“Unto You will I cry, O Lord, my Rock. Do not be silent to me, lest if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.”
Psalm 28:1.

[The original title of this sermon was **SAFE, THOUGH SIN-SURROUNDED**]

I HAVE no doubt that the first and most natural meaning of these words is this, that David passed through such mental distress, such accumulated grief, that unless his prayer should bring him consolation from Heaven, he felt that he must despair and so become like those who sink into everlasting despair, going down into the pit of Hell. I think it is a cry against his misery which vexed him—an earnest petition that he might not have to suffer so long as to drive him into that same despair which is the eternal inheritance of lost souls.

But in reading the other day Masillon's *Reflections of the Psalms*, I noticed that that eminent French preacher gives quite another turn to the passage, and he seems to regard this as being the prayer of David when he was exposed to the association of the ungodly, fearful lest he should become in character like those that go down into the pit, and even if that should not be the first meaning of the text, it seems to me to be a natural inference from it, and if not, still the thought, itself, is one which contains so much of holy caution about it that I desire to commend it to all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus tonight, and especially to such as are usually exposed to danger from evil society. We will begin, then, by remarking that—

I. MANY OF THE BEST OF GOD'S SAINTS ARE CALLED IN THE ORDER OF PROVIDENCE TO BE TRIED BY EVIL COMPANIONSHIP.

“I pray not that You should take them out of the world,” said Christ, “but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” Hence we are not shut up in monasteries or nunneries. We have not to—

***“Lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade.”***

We are placed in the midst of our fellow men! We are not even placed among a selected body of men, but for the most part we are thrown down in the midst of society and, in the case of some, the society which they must inevitably keep is of the very worst and most dangerous kind. I say

that first of all. This is, in a measure, the case with all, or nearly all of us. We are placed in a world in which there is nothing that is friendly to Grace, but everything that is opposed to the spiritual life. That man must be very happily circumstanced, indeed, who does not find himself a stranger in a strange land, and a foreigner among aliens who do not understand him! Go out into the world at all, and you have need to put your armor on, for it is an enemy's country. There is no profession, no form of labor, no walk of life, no publicity, no retirement in which the Christian is not, in some measure, exposed to the deteriorating influence of ungodly society. As long as we are in this world, it must, in a measure, be so. There are few, indeed, who are screened from this danger, but there are some who are peculiarly exposed to it—some in the highest walks of life. It is not easy to be a Christian and to be among the great. "Gold and the Gospel," said John Bunyan very truly, "seldom agree." The high mountains are cold. The tops of the hills—the tempest sweeps along them. We have had mournful examples, lately, that the most eminent rank does not secure morality or guidance, even by the rules of common-sense. I have been inclined, lately, when I have read the papers, to interpret the term, "the scum of society," to refer to those who float on the top, for certainly there is no rank of society that could have figured more abominably in the Divorce Court, no rank of society that could have exhibited itself so detestably upon the racecourse, than the peerage of this realm! And unless God mends the manners of the Right Honorables, their names will have to be Right Abominables—the term will be more suitable to them by far! It is difficult, depend upon it, to be great and to be good! No man need, then, be very ambitious to climb to the high places. Brains swim when risen aloft, that had been calm enough below. Be contented where you are, and rest satisfied with Agar's portion, who prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

It must be difficult, too, for a man to keep himself free from the contamination of company in what are called the lowest ranks. Oh, how many of you, Christian Brothers, there are, the sons of toil—pure, and good, and holy men—who have tomorrow morning to go and mix with those who insert almost every sentence with an oath! I remember it was the complaint of one of our Sisters in the Poor House, not that the diet was sparse, not that the bed was hard, but that the language used by those with whom she must associate vexed her soul! Only in the lowest ranks men do not cover up their profanity. They have not learned that politeness which can blaspheme God secretly, but they speak right out their enmity and they couch their offensive thoughts of the Most High in the most offensive words! And hence the people of God thrust into such society are like holy Lot in the midst of Sodom who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly! Oh, dear young people, be very thankful, you that are yet nestling under the wing of parental care and have not to go into a rough and wicked world! I am afraid for some of you good young creatures to join the Church, lest your piety should not stand the

test of this rough world, when you must, by-and-by, be thrust out into it! And you, my Brothers and Sisters, who, through the goodness of Providence are kept from being exposed to the temptations peculiar to the extremes of life, be very grateful, but, as you have less to contend with in this respect, bring forth more fruit unto God and seek to be more eminent Christians because of the advantages of your circumstances!

Yet Brothers and Sisters, I may as well come back to where I started. I suppose that we are, all of us, in whatever way of life we may be walking, exposed more or less to the associations of those who are not the servants of Christ. What business could a man select in which he would find that all with whom he had to deal were Christians? If there were, indeed, a parish of All Saints, it might be a very desirable place for residence, though I hardly know whether any man would be right in going to live there, since God's objective in making saints on earth at all is that by casting them like salt in the midst of the earth, they may work for good and savor the mass. You must, you must mix, more or less, with those who will tempt you! Do not be in a hurry, therefore, to change your position in life. If it is not, in itself, sinful—in case it is so, give it up tomorrow—but if it is not, in itself, sinful, stand not aghast at its peculiar temptations! There are temptations elsewhere. You may go from the frying pan into the fire, as the old proverb has it, very readily. In getting out of one temptation, you may soon get into another and, on the whole, probably the temptation that is troubling you most is the best that you can have. It is the temptation that would not trouble you that would be the most dangerous, and when a man's cross has been long on his shoulder, it begins to fit him—and he had better not change it for another. In every condition it is your lot to be crying to God for help, but do not be earnest to get out of the fire. This much the first point, then. The second is this. It appears from the text that—

II. THE GREAT DANGER OF GOOD MEN IS LEST THEY SHOULD BECOME LIKE THE UNGODLY THROUGH ASSOCIATION WITH THEM.

Brothers and Sisters, I shall speak very much from observation, actual observation and, I fear, also partly from personal experience, when I briefly describe the way in which association with the ungodly tends to make Christians like they are.

First, it too frequently happens that *the Christian's testimony is silenced*. We always try to make excuses for not doing what it is disagreeable to do. Now it is the duty of the Christian, wherever he may be, to bear witness for his Lord, but self-love and the love of ease come in and they say, "You must not make religion offensive! You must not cast your pearls before swine—you must not bore people with your godliness." This is said to be prudent and, to a great extent, it is prudent, but it is the easiest thing in all the world to think that we are prudent when we are really cowardly—and to make it out that we are using judgment when, instead thereof, we are only trying to protect ourselves from the sneers and jeers of the wicked! It is an easy thing only to bear witness for our Lord

in the midst of those who thank us for so doing and who confirm our testimony—but to stand out for Christ before the congregation of the wicked—this is not so easy a task and oftentimes, when the good man has found himself in evil company, he has been tempted, as he thinks by a due regard for prudence, not to say anything for his Lord and Master. Now, in this, you become like they who go down into the pit of Hell! They do not praise God. They are silent about Christ. They talk not of the preciousness of His blood—they speak not of His eternal and unchangeable love. You speak not, either, and therein you become like they. Who shall tell the difference when both are silent?

The next stage is *when the Christian does actually fear, though he may not think he does, the sneers of his associates*. You are like they the moment you are afraid of them! They have discovered in you a likeness to themselves the moment you tremble at them! But there are some tongues so foul, some whose wit is so sharp, whose remarks are so sarcastic that it is not to be quite marveled at that Christians are afraid to be thorough Christians in their presence! And yet, my Brothers and Sisters, what is there to be afraid of in the greatest man that ever breathed? What is there in our holy Christianity that we wish to cover up, to conceal in the presence of the most skeptical, the most witty, the most severe of the sons of men? Who are you that you should be afraid of man and the son of man who is but as a moth or a worm? Your Lord has given you in charge His precious Truth, and to live out that Truth of God in your own proper character—and will you, for fear of a feeble man, hide and conceal, and cover up with a bushel the Light your God has given you? Ah, then this is, indeed, to become like they, for they who fear man more than God make man their god! And what is this but to be idolatrous and to be godless? God deliver us from this!

Another tendency will next crop up, and that is *the inclination in Christian people to just yield a point or two*. We are told that we must not be too precise and severe. Have I not often heard words like these, “If we exhibit too much of the Puritanism of religion, we shall probably disgust those with whom we associate—and more especially youthful minds will be repelled by the severity of our piety”? Oh, I could laugh, if I did not weep, when I hear men talk so, for to tell me that in this age there is any fear of any man being too severely Puritanical is to assert the thing that is not! It is a lax age. Their tackling is loosed, the old landmarks are pulled up! Principles—why, what do men care for principles, nowadays? There is no fear of being too tight and too precise, and if it were not so in this age, yet since we serve a jealous God we need never be afraid that we can be too jealous of our own hearts! George the Third, in his older days, did some very curious things which, very frequently, made people think him insane—but there was a kind of method in all his madness! One day he met a Quaker gentleman, and accosted him, and was introduced to his wife. George said, “And are you one of the Society of Friends, Madam?” She said she was. “Isn’t there a little too much lace there” he said,

putting his hand on some portion of her dress. She said, "Well, I have deviated a little from strictness, I am sorry to say." "And I am sorry to see it, Madam," he said, "for when people once get away from their strictness, they generally go a very long way from it." And there is very much truth in that. Albeit I am not speaking now about dress, but merely quote it as an instance, still, it is so, that when Christian people tolerate a little sin, they will tolerate a great sin—and when they give up some little point of virtue, they will give up some great point. "No," says the thief. "I do not mean to break open that door! No, I do not mean to try and force my way into that house." There is a little window, just a little window there, and here is a very little boy, and you mean to put him in? "Yes," and when that little boy is in, he opens the big door, and the burglar enters! And it is so with the Church of God. Some little sin, as men will have it—some little deflection from the rigid line of right is tolerated—and then the door is open and all manner of mischief comes in thereby. God grant that we may not, by giving way here and there, pull down the bulwarks of our Church and so make the children of God to become like those that go down into the pit of Hell!

There is a point, my Brothers and Sisters, I would bring before you in which oftentimes, I am afraid, Christians become like ungodly men—and that is in joining in a laugh over a jest which almost compels laughter, but which is not altogether clean. George Herbert tells us that in a jest we should take the wit, but leave out that which is evil, for—

"He pares his apple that would cleanly feed,"

but it is not always easy to pare the apple just at the time. When a Christian in company is seen to laugh over a doubtful jest, he has committed himself far farther than he thinks. It were much better if he drew himself up and said, "I could laugh with you at what little wit may sparkle in that quotation, but I cannot endorse the sentiment with which it is accompanied, nor allow it to pass without entering my protest against it." Do we always do so? I am afraid that almost always we neglect the doing of that and, in that respect, we become like those that go down into the pit of Hell.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, how easy it is for us to fall little by little into the ways of the ungodly, to get to do as they do, and talk as they talk, and act as they act—and though on the Sabbath we take a different rule, yet on the weekday how much is the life of the professed Christian like that of the ungodly? I am not here to impeach the common Christianity of the age, but, if I were, what an impeachment might be brought against it! It is, alas, too true that many a tradesman who is a professing Christian is no more to be trusted than his infidel neighbor—that the Christian merchant is not proof against the injurious influence of the custom of his trade! We have had good men, whom, God forbid, that we should censure too severely, who ought to have stood out against the methods of mercantile finance in years gone by, but who fell into the custom of the rest and, therefore, the *world* can scarcely condemn them, but from the

judgment of the Christian teacher, they cannot go unscathed! They ought to have known and to have done better. It is no excuse for a Christian that it was the custom of the business! He has no right to make himself the slave of men, nor yield to custom. Follower of Christ, independence of mind in carrying out integrity of purpose is that which you are bound to exhibit—and which the Holy Spirit will help you to achieve! May the day come when it shall not be our sorrowful task to have to utter such sentiments, but we are obliged to utter them now! And we beg Believers here to put up the prayer, and pray tonight that God would let His voice be heard in your hearts, lest you should become like they who go down into the pit of Hell!

Brothers, just one moment here. There is nothing more horrible that I know of than that a man who professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ should defile himself as others do! What a dishonor to that dear name before which the angels bow, that we who wear it should act as Christ's enemies do! Paul says, "I tell you, even weeping, that there are some who are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, for their god is their belly; their end is destruction; they glory in their shame"—and these were professors! Nothing can be worse for the Church—nothing more disastrous to the world—than for Christians to become like the unconverted! The flood came upon the earth when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men. The day of chastisement is always near the day of sin—and the day when the godly assimilate with the Christless will be the prelude of the great overwhelming flood of fire that shall sweep away the earth! Do let us, if we would bless our age, be firm for the right and for the Truth of God! If we would be happy, ourselves, if we would honor and glorify Christ, let our prayer constantly be that we may not be as the wicked are. But I must not tarry longer, for I have to notice, in concluding—

III. THE REMEDY TO WHICH DAVID RESORTED AGAINST THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY WHICH HE FELT.

David was a great deal better man than we might have expected him to be in the position he occupied. When you hear persons condemn the glaring fall of David, you may join in their condemnation, but you may also ask them to remember the remarkable circumstances in which David was found. The sin which David committed, great and grievous as it was, was all too common—what if I say *is* all too common—in a soldier's life! The first part of David's life he spent as a captain of free-booters. That word does not quite describe his band, for they were not lawless robbers, but they were men, we are told, who were discontented and who fled from regular government—and we know from their character and conduct that they were rough, unbridled soldiers who would never have been governed by anyone less strong in character than David. Now associations like these he must often have felt to be extremely dangerous to his spirit.

Notice, then, what this practical Christian used as his remedy. *It was prayer*—prayer with an earnest cry. He felt as if he were slipping and he cried, “Lord, grasp me, hold me! Arrest the sliding of these feet.” It was a cry such as a child uses when it is lost, and it cries for its mother—a piteous cry of sorrow, of fear, of alarm. “My God, my Father,” he seems to say, “I beseech You interpose. I slide. I fall. The precipice is beneath me—the ungodly seek to thrust me over it—come to my rescue, my God! Make haste and come to my rescue now.”

Now, if David used prayer, I will confirm that by reminding you of David’s Master. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth he had many temptations to sin. His heart was not like yours and mine, a tinderbox to catch every spark of temptation but yet even He could not live here without much prayer. I say not that He could have sinned, but I do say that His holy Nature seemed instinctively to understand that it must use prayer, that it must use *much* prayer in order to constantly cast off the temptations of the world! Cold mountains, therefore, and the midnight air continually witnessed to the intercessions and pleadings of Christ when He held communion with His God.

I shall not need, I think, to spend even a moment in making the personal application, and yet I will do so, after all, on second thought. If there is a working man here who is called to work with many men who are drunks and blasphemers, let him take this word of advice tonight—pray twice as much as if you worked with the godly! If there is a young woman here placed in peculiar circumstances of temptation, let me say—keep up your communion with God with greater earnestness than if you were living at home with Christian parents! Pray more! Pray more intently! Live nearer to God in communion. When a man is sick of some disease that takes away his strength, the physician urges him to take a more liberal diet. So with you. Live better, now that there are greater drains upon your spiritual constitution—if you do not do so you will be sorely sick, but if you maintain this, you will be kept above the evil.

But I need your attention, in closing, to the last thought suggested by the text. The objective of David’s prayer was that he might hear the voice of God in his soul, “lest,” says he, “if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.”

IV. WHAT, THEN, WAS THIS VOICE OF GOD WHICH DAVID DESIRED TO HEAR?

Let me guess at it for a minute. Was it not, first, *that voice which would awaken sacred memories*? You have been exposed to temptation, my Brothers and Sisters, and you are ready to yield, but a voice reminds you of the day of your first espousals when your heart was warm towards Christ—of the days of your Baptism, when you were buried with Christ, professing to be dead to the world! It reminds you of the solemn vows that you made in years gone by, of solemn declarations that were registered before high Heaven that you would be firm and faithful, and keep Covenant with God. What? Will you, you, you—will you *sin*? A member of

a Christian Church, one whose head has been leaning on Christ's bosom, one who has heard His voice and rejoiced in it—can you, can you turn aside? Perhaps you have an invitation for tomorrow—can you accept it when it involves sin? It may be that this very night you would have fallen, but by the recollection of those holy and happy seasons that you have had at the Lord's Table, those times of private prayer, those hours when it was well with you, and you did walk with God, the still small voice of God calls to you, "What are you doing here, Elijah? Servant of God, what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Turn aside from the ways of sin and seek your God."

That voice would do something more, however, than startle the recollections of memory—it *was intended to infuse vigor and courage*. Sometimes a captain's voice has been known to win a battle, when the ranks are beginning to waver, when the pikes of the enemy are pushing forward. Here he comes—the gallant captain, always first in every charge. "Tis he! 'Tis he!" they say, and he comes to the front and cries, "Will you flee before them? Will you play the coward? Standard-bearer, unfurl the banner and advance!" And at that word, so full of fire, and force, and energy, the enemy is made to quail, and on they dash and the victory is won! My God, let me hear Your voice within my soul just after that sort. When I shall begin to run before my spiritual foes, when association with them has almost overthrown me, let me hear the voice of Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself—and my Leader's voice, as it calls me on, shall re-animate my spirit that I may win the day!

The voice of God, moreover, may be regarded as *that which actually impels the soul*. "Let there be light," said God, and light flitted through the darkness. God's voice creates, upholds, strengthens, perfects! And when God's voice comes into the heart of a sinking Christian, when that Christian thinks, "It is no use standing out any longer. I may as well give it up and become as others are"—then if that voice comes, it speaks to the heart and it throbs healthily! It speaks to the judgment, and it puts no longer bitter for sweet! It speaks to the will, and the will becomes firm for the right and for the truth! God's voice, that breaks the rocks and splits the cedars of Lebanon, inspirits and encourages the heart of the Believer! Put up your prayer, then, tonight, you that are much tried and tempted, "Lord, let me hear Your voice! Let me hear it every morning before I go into the world." Beloved, never look man in the face till you have seen the face of God! Oh, lock up your hearts every morning by prayer and give God the key, so that no evil may get in while you are out of doors. Oh, you do not know how some members of this Church grieve us by their inconsistency! I would sooner bury you than that you should sin so as to grieve God's Spirit and cause the enemy to blaspheme. The Lord has kept many, many of you with garments white and unspotted, but if you want our hearts to break, profess to be Christians, and then go into sin!

May the Lord keep you, my Beloved, keep you fast and firm amidst this crooked and perverse generation! You young people, you young men and women—may the Lord grant that none of you may ever turn your backs in the day of battle! And you old people—the greatest pain we have ever had has been brought to this Church not by young people, but by old people! It is the old fools that are the biggest fools when they are fools! When old people are wise, they are the wisest—but when they are foolish, they are the most foolish! God keep the aged, and preserve their reverend heads, that they may not disgrace them, but may be a crown of glory to them! The Lord keep the pastors, keep the Elders, be with you all, and keep you all pure and unspotted from the world! This is our prayer and desire. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DANIEL 6.**

Verses 1-3. *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. And over these three governors, of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the governors and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.* Kings are never satisfied. The empire of Darius was always growing—and a Chapter or two farther on we find that he had 127 provinces. There is no end to the greediness of man, and what does he get by it, after all? One pair of hands can only do one man's work! He only gains more toils and he has now to distribute the cares of his State among others. Then how good it is for any man when he is guided to a right, honest and hearty helper! Such was the lot of Darius. How advantageous, too, it may be for the people of God when a man like Daniel is put in the high places of the land! Doubtless he was exalted, not only for his own sake, but that he might be as a bronze shield and bulwark for the people of God in that foreign land. No extortions would now be committed on the Jewish race, for they had a friend at court. Blessed be God, we have a Friend at court, too, One who will take up our cause and speak for us to the King of Kings!

4. *Then the governors and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault.* Who can stand before envy? High places furnish very uncomfortable seats, for even if God exalt a man, men will try to pull him down! But he is an honorable man, indeed, who puts his enemies to their shifts before they can find anything against him.

4-7. *Forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God. Then these governors and princes assembled together to the king, and*

said thus unto him, *King Darius live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of you, O King, he shall be cast into the den of lions.* We do not know with what ingenious arguments they moved the king's mind to pass this, but we think we can conceive them. He had just conquered Chaldea—they would, therefore, say, "It will be an excellent test of the obedience of your new subjects if you touch them upon the point of their religion—try whether they will, for 30 days abstain from addressing their deities." Perhaps, too, since Darius had a colleague on the throne, the younger Cyrus, who was much more popular than he, they may have egged him on by hinting that Cyrus was much too vain and that, therefore, if he would not allow anyone to address a petition, even to Cyrus, for 30 days, it would tend to show who was really loyal to Darius and would also test the temper of Cyrus. I cannot tell how they did it, but somehow or other they managed to lead the foolish old man to carry out their designs.

8. *Now, O King, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not.* The Babylonians entrusted their king with absolute power. Hence he could will this or that as he chose. The Persians believed their kings to be possessed of perfect wisdom—hence they never allowed a law to be changed, for that would be to suppose that the king who made it had made a mistake—a thing which could by no possibility ever occur. There is an amusing instance given by a modern traveler, who tells us that a few years ago one of the later Persian kings said he would never leave his tent in the plains until the snow had gone from some mountains to which he pointed. It happened to be a very late summer and the snow was long in melting—and his gracious majesty had to keep his place in his tent, while his troops were perishing with fever in a low marsh district, until they procured men to sweep the snow from the tops of the mountains in order that he might be able to move. It is inconvenient for men to play God—they cannot do it without bringing serious difficulty and danger upon themselves. So did Darius on this occasion. I never like men who, when they speak a hasty word, say they cannot change it. Rash vows are better broken than kept. You had no right to say you would do the thing, much less have you any right to do it when you have said you would do it. However, the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered.

9, 10. *Therefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house.* That is right. The less we have to do with man, and the more we have to do with God, the better. He did not go to the king to complain, but he went into his house to tell his God about it!

10. *And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem—That much-loved city, though now in ruins.*

10. *He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before.* 'Twas bravely done. A man in a meaner position might have carried out his devotions in private without sin, but not so Daniel. He is a representative man—he must not play the coward—it is incumbent upon him to be more especially and deliberately public in all that he does, for if he is seen to slink in ever so small a degree, then all the saints will lose heart.

11-13. *Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree: Have you not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true. According to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel—Here is impudence! But they called Jesus Christ, "this Fellow." Why, Daniel was the chief of the governors, the prime minister of the king, and yet they said, "That Daniel." Evil hearts generally have evil mouths, and what can you expect but evil words out of evil mouths?*

13. *That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah. That captive, that slave, that serf—so they seemed to put it, forgetting that he was their master by virtue of his high office.*

13-14. *Regards not you, O King, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sorely displeased with himself.* There was a little conscience left. Calvin did not like the man at all. He said, "What right had he to hastily sign a decree which might take away the lives of the best men in his dominion? And his repentance does not seem to be a repentance of the act, but only of the consequences."

14. *And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.* Here was a great king, made himself out to be a god, and yet he cannot have his own way! When that famous potter, who was a true Christian, was brought before the king, the king said to him, "Unless you change your views, I shall be compelled to have you burned." "Ah," said Bernard de Palissy, "you are a king and yet say, 'I shall be compelled,' and I am a poor potter, but no man can make me use those words—I will be compelled to do nothing against my conscience." Oh, the holy bravery of men who are saved! When Bonner had one of the martyrs before him, he said, "I will convince you! Blazing wood will convince you!" "A fig for your wood," said the man, "or a wagon-load of them. I can stand and burn better than you can wear your miter." So the saints of God are strong and can bid defiance to the adversary through Divine Grace.

15. *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O King, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree*

nor statute which the king establishes may be changed. This is the reason of his deliverance, not his innocence, but his faith—we are told by Paul that it was faith that shut the mouths of lions.

16-24. *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spoke and said unto Daniel, Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spoke and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O King, live forever! My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O King, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives. Which was a piece of injustice, the throwing in of their wives and children, though we cannot say as much of the throwing of them in.*

24. *And the lions had the mastery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

A SACRED SOLO

NO. 1423

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

***“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him,
and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices
and with my song will I praise Him.”
Psalm 28:7.***

THIS passage has, to my mind, a peculiar charm. I do not know whether it breaks on your ears with like pathos and power. To me it seems charged with softness and sweetness, like some gentle strain of tender music. Let us read it again. “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.” I think I see a battle raging furiously, yet he whom it most concerns, after having displayed his prowess and fought valiantly, steps aside and, sitting down in a quiet place, bomb-proof and almost out of sound of the cannons’ roar, thus talks with his heart. He forgets the raging strife—he is expecting a joyful victory! He knows his weaknesses, but he has caught a glimpse of the Divine strength which is guaranteed to him.

He is trembling, perhaps, from the toil of the fight, and yet he rests as one insensibly subdued to settled calm and mild composure—he rests in God. In like manner, I want you, dear Friends, to get out of the crowd a while, this evening, and take shelter in a quiet place. Forget, just now, the various troubles of business. The domestic cares which often harass you and the inward conflicts which vex your souls. Whatever there may be to disturb, distress, or distract you, let it alone! Now, for a while, revel in that sweet peace which God, alone, can give, the peace of God which passes all understanding—and say unto your soul—“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.”

The sentence, you will notice, divides itself into three parts. The first tells us of an assured possession—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” The second speaks of a definite experience—“My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” There are no, “ifs,” no, “buts,” no suspense of the soul midway between hope and fear—he speaks without a trace of hesitancy, for he tells of his own actual experience. The third part of our text very properly closes with an expressed emotion—a very deep emotion it is—“My heart greatly rejoices.” And then, you see, the inward emotion is interpreted in a most proper fashion by an audible utterance—“With my song will I praise Him.”

I beg to call your studious attention to the remarkable form of this verse! There is a pair in the case of each of my divisions and the pair in each case consists of inward and outward. Notice, “The Lord is my strength,” that is inward. “My shield,” that is outward. “My heart trusted

in Him,” that is inward. “And I am helped,” that is outward. “Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,” that is inward. “And with my song will I praise Him,” that is outward. It is by no means trifling to note these arrangements in the structure of sacred poetry, for there is a lesson to be learned—it teaches us that truth and beauty are to be linked together and that to be holy we need not be uncouth.

Full often we may observe a beautiful form and an admirable fashion in the language which embodied the thoughts of the inspired Psalmist. If we look at them long enough and meditate upon them fondly enough, we shall discern a symmetry in all his hallowed compositions which charms the taste, rivets the attention and helps the memory. The sacred poet served the Lord with his best powers, reckoning nothing to be good enough for the Lord whom he loved so well! Slovenly preaching, doggerel verses and discordant singing ought to be avoided, if possible, and our devotion should have the sweetest possible expression.

I. Let us begin with the first division of our text and may the Spirit of God give us full faith to accept it in all its depth of meaning. We have here A SURE POSSESSION—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” With a double grip he takes hold of the Divine Covenant. “The Lord is my strength and my shield.” He gets a two-handed grasp of the God of Salvation. A touch of the hem of the Savior’s garment will heal—what Divine virtue, then, must stream into a man who can hold with both hands—not merely the garment’s hem, nor even the garment itself, but the Lord Himself! “The Lord is my strength and my shield.”

Perhaps some of you cannot give the double grip. Then give the finger’s touch and it will save you! But do not be always content with that touch—ask to lay hold upon Jesus and say, “I held Him and I would not let Him go.” Ask to grasp Him, like Jacob at the brook Jabbok with the brave resolve—“I will not let You go except You bless me.” No, get beyond that and pray to have Paul’s hold of Christ, which was so strong and firm that he said, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Both hands take hold, for the Psalmist sees a double blessing! He knows, also, that he has a double *need*, and so he takes a double grip. “The Lord is my strength and my shield.”

Were you to leave out the, “my,” repeated again and again in this verse, how the sense would be spoiled! Let us try it—“The Lord is a strength and a shield.” Well, that is very true, but of what use is that to *me*? My comfort must come from the fact that, “the Lord is *my* strength and my shield.” Faith matured by *experience*, faith strengthened by the *promise*, faith invigorated by the *Holy Spirit*, who is the Nourisher as well as the Author of it—such faith is fired with sacred energy when it dares to lay hold on God and say, “The Lord is my strength and my shield!” This is blessed work! God grant that each of us may know how to perform it and to this end let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit, without whom we can do nothing.

Notice what it is that David lays hold upon with his hands. “The Lord is my strength and my shield”—it is not the Lord’s promised Grace, nor is it the bounties of Providence which He has bestowed on me which I regard as my strength and my shield. It is not even the Lord’s work in my soul,

nor the assurance of my faith, nor the ardor of my love that has become my strength and my shield. It is not the Lord's Book, even, though its Inspired Oracles can enlighten the eyes, fortify the heart and refresh the spirit. It is not the Lord's attributes of power and faithfulness and watchfulness—no, but it is JEHOVAH Himself who is strength and shield to me!

Now, he that lays hold on God has done a daring deed, at which even, "the man greatly beloved," might stand aghast, were it not written, "Let him take hold of My strength." Oh to say, "*My God!*" There is more eloquence in those two words than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero! All the genius, learning and penetration of the heathen world could never teach us how to claim the Deity and take possession of the God of the whole earth! What can we discover in the philosophy of Pythagoras, Aristotle, or Socrates that will compare with this? The man who can truly say, "The Lord is *mine*," has an inheritance which death cannot wither, which space cannot compass, which time cannot limit, which eternity cannot explore!

He may be poor in pocket-money, as I suppose the owners of large estates occasionally are, but he is infinitely rich, for he has real property and an absolutely indefeasible title to it. He may feel distressingly weak, but he is infinitely strong. He may account himself to be empty, but he has all things and abounds—he, I mean, who can say—"The Lord is mine." Come, my Brothers and Sisters, be bold enough to look into your privilege! Think of it! What if you could say, "The world is mine"? It will be consumed by fire. What if you could say, "Heaven is mine"? Yet if the God of Heaven were not there, it would be a wilderness. Oh, Beloved! If you can say, "GOD is mine—Father, Son and Spirit are mine"—what more do you need to gratify your eager quest for unspeakable joy?

Come, can you conceive satisfaction more substantial than to be sure that God is your Father, your Redeemer, your Sustainer, your All—your All in All? Do you wish for a better song than this—

***So I my best
Beloved's am,
So He is mine."***

Can you imagine any sweeter music than the minstrelsy of a love so tuneful, touching as it does the strings of that mysterious instrument, the soul? Is not this the climax of all wishes, all passions, all desires, all delights? We hail you, son of Jesse, as the harmonious music of your sublime Psalms breaks on our ears! But oh, You Son of David! We adore You that You have taught us to take up the strains as our own! We, ourselves, have felt in *fact* what the sweet Psalmist felt in figure. We, as Your willing followers and Your acknowledged disciples, do now, by right and privilege which You have given us, appropriate to ourselves the poems, parables and prophecies which once vibrated in dark sayings from David's harp, as precious utterances concerning heavenly favors to which Your Sovereign Grace has made us to be fairly and fully entitled!

Unhappy you must be who cannot call this God your God, whatever else you may have to glory in! But happy you who know that God is yours, however little of this world's store may fall to your portion! Thus have we

considered the double grip and what it lays hold upon. Let us not pass on till we have imitated the grasp of faith and appropriated the infinite treasure. May the Holy Spirit enable us! Notice under what aspects God is thus laid hold of. Inwardly, first, as we have said, as our strength—"The Lord is my strength." Brothers and Sisters, do you know how strong you are? If you have said, "The Lord is my strength," I challenge you to say how strong you are! "Ah, Sir," you say, "I know how *weak* I am." That I will also take liberty to question, for albeit that you know yourself to be as weak as water, you are weaker yet—weaker than even your despondency has dreamed!

"I know I am nothing," you say. Yes, but you would not even have had Grace enough to know you were nothing if God had not given it to you! To be nothing is ours by nature, but to *know* that we are nothing and to *confess* that we are nothing is a *gift* of His Grace! Brethren, we are emptier than emptiness and more vain than vanity! We may tax language and use extravagant hyperboles, but we shall never be able, fitly, to estimate our own utter insignificance! We are weakness itself, hampered with the conceit of power! And yet, if we can say in truth, "The Lord is my strength," we cannot estimate how strong we are, for there is no measuring Omnipotence!

Come, let us consider the matter and let each Believer speak personally. He who made the heavens and the earth is my strength. He who fixes the mountains firm so that they start not from their places in the day of tempest, when the cedars are breaking, is my strength. Although He will one day rock Heaven and earth and before His Presence all creation shall flee away, yet He is my strength! These are but the hidings of power, but, truly, all the force reserved and lying latent in the Almighty bosom is engaged for His saints and is my portion. Whatever Omnipotence can do—(and that is a wrong expression to use, for Omnipotence knows no frontier or confines to its sphere of possible action)—is ours! All that God has done is but little in comparison with what He can effect when His arm shall be bared to complete His mighty purposes. Yet all the possibilities that pertain to God belong to His people! "The Lord is my strength."

With Jehovah for our strength, we obtain a matchless capacity for endurance! It is marvelous how much a Believer can bear when the Lord sustains him. "Out of weakness we are made strong." See that bruised reed over yonder? It is a fit emblem and a fair picture of a man alone. You cannot trust the weight of an ounce to it. It bends under its own slender weight even though there is no pressure to force it down. That is you, dear Brother! That is you, dear Sister! But see that strong and potent column which bears upon it a huge roof or an iron road across which will thunder thousands of tons? That is yourself when God is with you! Yes, you are *stronger* than that, for *nothing* shall be able to break the man to whom God is His strength!

"I could not bear that," you say, "I know I should be crushed." What are you thinking about—the loss of that favorite child? Thinking about the death of your dear husband? God grant that you may not have to suffer it. The death of a wife? The loss of all your goods, the cruel wounds of slan-

der, or the desertion of friends? Are all those trials likely to befall you, and do you say, "Alas, I could not live if such afflictions should overtake me"? My dear Friend, if you can say, "The Lord is my strength," you can bear *anything* and *everything*! You could bear a martyr's death if the Lord should be your strength! He could make a stalk of wheat to bear up the whole world if He strengthened it—and the faintest and most trembling child of His that ever whispered a prayer—He can make to bear the greatest griefs and the heaviest trials without the slightest repining, for His Spirit can infuse unconquerable patience into the believing heart.

Of course, the power to endure depends upon the strength *imparted* and not upon the inherent fortitude of the individual. It does not make much difference what the struggle or what the sorrow if we have sufficient strength. A little child with a small basket may be overloaded, while His father with ten times the load to carry will walk briskly and whistle as he carries his burden along the street, thinking lightly of his burden. The increase of the burden is not the thing to groan about if there is a proportionate increase of strength! Emigrants have told us that they could labor with less fatigue in Australia than they could loiter in England! Whether that is so or not, assuredly it is easier to toil with Divine aid than to rest without it.

"As your days your strength shall be." Mark that. If the Lord shall heap the load upon your poor shoulders, He will impart courage to your mind and vigor to your spirit so that you shall suffer all His righteous will and find your soul thrice blessed in the endurance! "The Lord is my strength." Then we can, like Samson, slay the lion and find honey in it, or smite the Philistines and divide their spoil—

***"Let me but hear my Savior say,
'Strength shall be equal to your day!'
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient Grace."***

If the Lord is our strength, our inward strength, we can do anything! At times we faintly reckon that we cannot get through our task, for the tale of bricks appears to be doubled and straw is hard to find. Look up, for the Great Taskmaster always bestows upon us special ability when He demands of us peculiar service!

Perhaps we are called to a high and solemn engagement of more than common responsibility. We shrink with timidity and put our mouths in the dust at the thought of it, and say, "Who am I, and what are my qualifications, that I should be summoned to speak for God, to act as His ambassador, or to fill a post of such vast importance? I am but a child! How shall I undertake an enterprise at which venerable sires might well be daunted?" But the Lord's answer is, "I will be with your mouth. I will be your strength." Well, then, we may cry with David, "I will speak of Your statutes before kings and will not be ashamed!" If the Lord make us strong, there is no office upon which we may not venture, there is no duty we cannot perform, there is no sacrifice which we cannot cheerfully offer, there is no battle in which we cannot prevail!

Very likely I may be addressing someone who does not know or appreciate the faith which thus fortifies the feeble followers of Christ. Are you a

very strong man and do you boast of your strength? Friend, the strength of Samson served him a sorry turn when he was without his God—let his blindness warn you! Another man, conscious that he is a man of education and culture, doubts not that he can make his way in the world. Oh, Sir, Solomon's wisdom was of poor account when he forgot the statutes of the Lord, pursued the fashions of his times and suffered altars to be built to the strange gods of his wives whose sensual fascinations took away his heart! There is no strength of muscle or of mind but in God. "God has spoken once. Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." Blessed are they who look for strength to the strong, for wisdom to the wise, for safety to the Savior. They shall say, in the words of our text, "The Lord is my strength."

David, in two grips, laid hold upon God as to the outward manifestation—"He is my strength and my shield." Looking back upon the past, I trust that many of you can say that God has been your shield. It is He who protects us from known adversaries, from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. He protects us from all the arrows that fly by day and from all the terrors that haunt us by night. From adversaries of whom we know and against whom we would be ever on our guard if we could, God is our shield. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." He who has made the Lord his refuge and the Most High his habitation shall be safe. No real evil shall happen unto the just. "The Lord is my shield."

Nor is He only our shelter from open enemies, He is our guardian against those dangers which we know not. How many perils may have menaced your personal safety, your domestic happiness, or your fair reputation of which you never knew! Thank God for unknown mercies, as well as for hair-breadth escapes! Often in traveling you may be within an inch of death and never be aware of it. Our gratitude to God may be stirred when we perceive a danger and escape it, but are we not even *more* beholden to Him when we do not even perceive the peril and reach our journey's end, or awake in the morning, or live through a year without sickness, without calamity, without alarm? Without violently imagining mischiefs or nervously inventing perils, we may soberly judge that dangers have frequently hovered around us even in the calmest hours—and from all these we have been preserved because the Lord is our shield!

It is the greatest comfort to feel God's Spirit within you making you strong. But it is no small joy to know that God is round about you, making you safe. "He is my shield." Knowing, as we do, that our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour, and that he may be, perhaps, trying to seize upon one of us at this very moment—our security from his hostile attacks is this—"The Lord is our shield." Satan wastes his arrows against the Eternal Buckler. There may be a plot formed against you by a cruel adversary whose hatred is unknown to you, but fret not yourself with fear of hidden dangers. Let them lie where God permits them to conceal themselves! Do not unearth the foxes nor stir up the young lions, for you are safe in your simplicity.

Is it not written that “the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den”? “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.” Though earth and Hell should blend their malice, they are safe whom God protects! The close designs and crooked counsels of those who conspire against the saints shall all be foiled, for there is One who frustrates every evil device and takes the wise in their own craftiness. “Where would you hide yourself,” said one to Luther, “if the elector of Saxony should withdraw his protection?” He smiled, and said, “I put no trust in the Prince of Saxony. Beneath the broad shield of Heaven I stand secure against Pope and Turk and devil.”

So he did and so do we. If we have but faith in God, we can sing, in the language of the text, “The Lord is my strength and my shield. He strengthens me within and He protects me without. What more do I need?” Before I leave those first two sentences, I want you to notice that this is a matter of fact, a fact which many here present can attest—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” It is not a pretty speech that we have selected as an appropriate slogan for a retrospect, nor is it a piece of sentimental religious poetry which counterfeits a Christian’s experience! It is a positive *fact*, to which full many of us who have been tried and tutored in the pilgrimage of life can bear our personal testimony. “The Lord has been my strength.”

At this moment I set my hand and seal to that statement before you all. I should have proved myself to be weakness itself in many an emergency had not Eternal Power upheld me! I should have been far from calm resolution and drifted near to madness—not firm and steady, but frail and faltering—had He not interposed on my behalf and kept this heart in the hour of trouble! Is not the same confession due from each of you? You have waded through your trouble, dear Sister. You have escaped from that dilemma, my Brother. And do you not ascribe your deliverance to the Lord who strengthened you? Come, now, from where else did you get your strength? You cannot trace it to any other than a Divine source! Has not the Lord been your shield? Have not some of you been in positions in which no one else could have guarded you?

Perhaps your own fault has placed you in predicaments out of which you could never have extricated yourself had He not stretched out His hand and plucked your feet out of the net. Then you said to your soul, “This is no fiction. This is the finger of God!” It is right-hearted sincerity and not wrong-headed enthusiasm which prompts us, personally, to avow—“The Lord is our strength and our shield.” We can say it as deliberately as the miser might say, “The bank is my confidence, my money is my trust,” or as the merchant might say, “My wealth is on the sea, my ships bring me in my yearly income,” or as the mother might say, “My children are my joy.” We can boldly publish it and challenge all gainsayers, for it is really so, “The Lord is our strength and our shield!” Beyond doubt or question this is an assured possession!

II. Now, have patience with me while I endeavor, in the second place, to expound to you A DEFINITE EXPERIENCE. It is related in these words—

“My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” Here, too, we have both inward and outward, as I told you before—“My heart trusted in Him,” that is work done indoors, within the soul. “I am helped,” that is mercy received outdoors, openly and actually. Notice the scrupulous loyalty of the Believer whose entire confidence is centered in God. “My heart trusted.” I did not say, ‘I trusted,’ as one who makes a profession with his lips, but rather with strong conviction and profound emotion, “my *heart* trusted.”

It is truly shocking to see people stand up and recite a creed to the truth of which they attach no importance. They say or sing, “I believe this and I believe that,” and as they repeat the words prescribed for them, they superstitiously turn in a certain direction. But happy is that man who, turning east, west, north, or south, does in his heart trust—does in his secret soul believe! There is no believing worthy of the name except heart-believing. If your head believes a thing, it is of small consequence. But in soul-saving faith the heart is so believing as to trust and the mind is so assured as to be at peace. “My heart trusted in Him. My poor heart fluttered in the time of trouble, it was agitated, it was distressed, for all its visible refuge had fled away. But at last I said, ‘I must hang upon my God and to Him I must cling.’ In very despair of all other things, I cast myself at the foot of His Throne. My heart trusted in Him.”

Has it been so with you of late? Has your heart been trusting in God? That is a very strong expression of the Prophet when he speaks of the heart going a whoring from God. The language is vehement even to coarseness, but it is none too forcible, for it involves the commission of a spiritual uncleanness when the heart trusts any other helper than God. “My heart trusted in Him.” Oh, it is so easy for the heart to get to trusting in itself! And he that trusts his own heart is a fool! It is frightfully easy for the heart to rely upon man, as we know right well! Did you ever notice the middle verse of the whole Bible? It is the eighth verse of the 118th Psalm—“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” The comparison will not bear a thought, the preference is infinite—for confidence in man will betray your hopes, but faith in God will enrich you beyond your expectations! May our heart always keep to that—trusting God—trusting in God alone. “My heart trusted in Him.”

In the next clause of the sentence, which is the outward manifestation of the inward experience, we have the result—“I am helped.” If I had been writing this Psalm of my own head, I think I should have written it thus—“My heart trusted in Him, and I *was* helped,” for it is a rule in composition that if you bracket two sentences together you should write them in the same tense. But, as old Master Trapp says, faith has no tenses, because faith deals with a God who has no tenses except the present, for His name is, “I AM.” Faith does not say, “I trusted in Him and I *was* helped.” No, she has all former mercy present before her eyes and she sings, “I *am* helped.” Nor does Faith say, “My heart trusted in Him, and I *shall* be helped.” Perhaps the needed help has not yet arrived, but she is so sure that it will come that she cries, “I *am* helped! Am I as poor as I was before I prayed? No, I am not, for I have obtained the blessing I asked for. I appear to be as weak as I was before I trusted Him, but I am not, for the

Lord is my strength and, having trusted in Him, I am helped.” I wish we lived more in that blessed present tense in which God dwells!—

**“He fills His own eternal ‘now,’
And sees our ages pass.”**

Now, Brothers and Sisters, let all the past of God’s mercy come up to your memory and let that be a part of the “now.” And then just take, as it were, a spring, and bounce forward into the future—yes, leap right across life, as though it were a narrow rivulet, into Heaven, and put the eternal future into the present, “now,” and sing as our sweet poet does—

**“Lo! A ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set:
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”**

“I am helped.” I have now the good I crave. By faith I realize it as a present possession. I am helped. I am helped. The past lives in my gratitude, the future lives in my confidence and both alike meet in the present and my soul is glad! “My heart trusted in Him and I am helped.” You must notice, reverting again to the words of the text, that this confidence was, from first to last, confidence in *God* and, therefore, was it honored with a gracious result. “My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” Many and many a time we have been obliged to say, “My heart trusted in So-and-So, and I am deceived.” But here it is, “and I am helped.”

Sometimes it happens, “My heart trusted in such an one and I am disappointed, though not deceived. He would have helped me, but he could not.” But here it is, “My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped,” All has happened according to promise—there has been no failure of faithfulness, no breach of Covenant, no forgetfulness, no delay. I am helped sufficiently, punctually, continually and so I always shall be helped till toiling and traveling days are over! Glory be to God for this! Dear Friends, have all of you who are Christians attained to a Christian experience? Doctrine, you know, is very important. It is well that you should learn it, understand it and adhere to it—but doctrine is only the Truth of God in which you are instructed and is useless for growth in Divine Grace until you *experience* the power of it in your own souls!

Do you know why so many people run away from the Truth, as it is in Jesus, and take up with strange conceits and new-fangled notions? It is because they have no inward *experience* of the old Truths of God. Let a man once have a deep experience of the evil of sin and I will guarantee you he will feel his need of a Savior and the necessity of the Atonement made by blood. Let him have an experience of the power of the blood upon his conscience, the peace that comes out of Substitution, and he will cling to the Cross! He will be ready to *die* for the Cross! He has such joy rising out of it as he never found elsewhere. I am obliged to cling to the Gospel, for if it is not true I am a lost man! I must hold fast to it, for all my hope is fixed there and if it is taken away, my sun is quenched, the well of my joy is dried up and life becomes a lingering death!

And, Beloved, an experience of those blessed Truths which God has revealed to us by His Spirit writes them where they cannot be erased! Not upon the tablet of the *brain*, from which they may be erased, for men for-

get, but upon the tablet of the *heart* from which they cannot be obliterated, for men do not disclaim that which has become a part of their inward consciousness and which God has made as dear to them as their lives! May you all have such a definite experience as the text sets before us. The Holy Spirit will work it in all the saints.

III. Lastly, here we have A DECLARED EMOTION—"Therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him." Here, again, is the *inward* phase, you see, "My heart greatly rejoices," and then there is the *outward* embodiment of the internal feeling—"and with my song will I praise Him." Behold a heart rejoicing with a sacred and intense delight! Some people's rejoicing is but skin deep. They laugh, their face is surfaced over with smiles and their mouth bubbles up with silly glee. To my mind there is hardly anything more sad than the frequent laughter which exposes a vacant mind. The moment company has gone, this volatile mirthfulness subsides and the jolly companions resolve into solitary individuals, each one dull and dreary—far enough from any of them being happy.

You may, perhaps, have heard of Carlini, one of the most celebrated clowns of the beginning of this century. He was a man whose wit and humor kept all Paris in a roar of laughter! But he, himself, had little share of the cheerfulness he simulated so well and stimulated so much. His comedies brought *him* no comfort. Though a professor of mirth, he was a victim of melancholy. He consulted a physician and asked him for a prescription to relieve his lowness of spirits and habitual despondency. His physician gave him some medicine, but advised him by way of recreation to go to the theater and hear Carlini, whose fun and frolic were of such repute. "If he does not fetch the blues out of you, nobody will." "Alas! Sir," said he, "I am Carlini."

And so, doubtless, it has often happened that men make glee for others when they are full of gloom themselves. The face smiles like summer, but the heart is freezing with the cold of winter. Not so the man who has laid hold on God. "My heart rejoices," he says, "my heart rejoices." No, he puts in the word, "greatly." "My heart *greatly* rejoices," as if it were as full of joy as ever it could be! As though it throbbed and danced joyously with a fullness of delight. "My heart greatly rejoices!" And Christians can say this whenever they lay hold on God, even though they are surrounded with a world of trouble! We know, sometimes, what it is to wear a sad face with a glad heart, just as some others are wearing a glad face with a sad heart. Blessed is the man whom God has taught greatly to rejoice! Let him indulge the holy humor to the best of his ability!

What, now, is the outcome of this sacred, soul-satisfying joy? He says, "With my song will I praise Him." Whenever you feel exceedingly glad in the Lord, be sure to let people know! This is one of the emotions which ought never to be concealed. When I have been preaching among the Primitive Methodists, at the very mention of joy in the Lord, I have heard them shout out, "Hallelujah." In Wales I have heard the, "Gogoniant"—glory be to God! We do not commit such improprieties here, do we? We are too quiet and proper to transgress the rules of enforced decorum! And yet, sometimes, it might be the most natural thing in the world for a Christian

to feel that he could not hold his strong emotions in stiff restraint, but must shout aloud, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!"

Do you think, dear Friends, we sing enough? I do not think we do. The world is very pleased with singing of a certain sort. Tuneful airs are tacked on to trashy words. What foolishness we hear in the popular songs of the day! I have been quite unable to understand the sense when the sound has jingled in my ears. When I have asked, "What does it mean?" nobody has been able to interpret, or at least to make me comprehend it. To them it may have appeared like a clever ballad, but to me it seemed mere empty doggerel! Well, if they are not ashamed to sing their bacchanalian songs and sometimes to make night hideous with their choruses, surely we need not be ashamed to sing the songs of Zion—and to sing them with spirit, too!

Good woman, why don't you sing? You would handle that box-iron just as well if you sang a Psalm. You could mend those children's clothes quite as cleverly if you would sing a hymn. Good Friend, there, you could crack your whip as you walked along by the side of your pair of horses pulling the cart and yet hum a favorite tune. To get alone and sing some sacred melody by yourselves is very refreshing. My father had, years ago, a servant who was always singing. And when he asked her why, she said that it helped to keep bad thoughts away. I knew a boy who was so fond of singing the praises of the Lord that his employers would let him go out on the Common, sometimes, to give vent to his vocal powers, for he sang rather too much and too loud for a quiet house.

I love to see young Christians fall of joy! It is good, sometimes, to get away and have a time to yourself, as much as if you said, "I am not singing for any of you, but I am singing to God." I listened one night and heard the nightingale with its delicious, "joog, joog, joog," pouring forth such sweet music that it seemed to make the moon stand still, charmed with the strain! I know that the nightingale did not sing to *me*. He did not know that I was listening, nor would he have cared if he had known! Perhaps if he had noticed that I had been so close, he might have flown away! He was singing without regard to human ears. It is a sweet thing just to sing unto the Lord. Classical music is all very well, but *heart* music is the essence of sweetness. "My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him."

Did you ever, when you walk through the woods in springtime, come upon a stretch of blue hyacinth? You fancy that a piece has been torn away from the azure mantle of the sky and thrown down among the trees! Why are those hyacinths clothed in such cerulean splendor? For what purpose is their sweet perfume poured forth in such lavish profusion? Do you say, "They waste their sweetness on the desert air"? No, O Man! Know, rather, that God is near! Those flowers are His and this is His garden! He delights to gaze on their living sapphires! Did you ever light upon a clump of lovely flowers in a lone spot of forest, moor, or common where the foot of man has seldom profaned the soil? Have you not paused to admire?

There they stand with their golden cups, like chamberlains of a king! Why are they here in such gorgeous livery? Who is all this beautiful variety of form and color intended to greet? “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” What king has come to dine here and sip from those jeweled chalices? It is the eternal God who made them and who takes delight in the work of His hands! It is He who walks among these solitary beauties in the cool of the day. Did you not see the flowers bow their heads in worship as they felt His breath among their foliage? Down deep at the bottom of the sea the coral grows in luxuriant abundance and many-tinted shells that seem like unfinished rainbows are lying there unseen, never to be seized by human hands, or bartered in the market for gain. The Lord visits those cool grottoes and takes pleasure in His own delicate handiwork!

All things are not for greedy man! The Lord has His reserved gardens, His springs shut up, His fountains sealed. So let it be with us. Do not let us wait to praise the Lord till we can get an audience of our fellow creatures, though we may sometimes wish that our songs would charm their ears and win their love for Jesus. But let us, oftentimes, retire into holy solitude and *then*, all alone, break the silence of our loneliness, saying, “My heart greatly rejoices, and with my song will I praise the Lord. As long as I live and when I die, and when I rise again, and through eternity, with my song will I praise Him.”—

***“In blessing You with grateful songs,
My happy life shall glide away.
The praise that to Your name belongs,
Hourly with lifted hands I’d pray.
Abundant sweetness! While I sing
Your love, my ravished heart overflows;
Secure in You, my God and King,
Of glory that no period knows.”***

How I wish that some would begin at this moment a life of praise! Begin by taking God to be your strength—begin by trusting in Christ to be your shield! Begin by an experience of the power of prayer to bring you help! If you do, you shall rise from height to height in your flights of praise! You shall, first, join with us below to sing as best you can and, afterwards, you shall mount into the upper orchestra where all the chosen singers meet and sit and chant with them the endless anthem which ascends unto Jehovah, our strength and our song!

God bless you, Beloved, and give you to know and prove the sweetness of this blessed text—and make you to sing David’s Divine song to the stringed instruments of your renewed hearts all the days of your lives. Amen.

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

A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT NO. 768

BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

***“Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also,
and lift them up forever.”
Psalm 28:9.***

LET me direct your attention to the verse *before* the text, and then let us read the text in connection with it, “The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed. Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.” You have in the eighth verse the Church militant reviewed, and in the ninth verse the Church militant prayed for. With regard to the Psalmist’s review of the militant Church, it is summed up in two sentences: “Jehovah is their strength,” and “Jehovah is the saving strength of His anointed.” The people of God are strong, then, for their strength is spoken of. They are weak in themselves, yes—they confess themselves to be weakness itself—yet by faith, when they grasp the power of the Almighty, they are no longer feeble but they venture to say with the Apostle, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.”

The power of the army of the Lord does not lie in connection with any one of His soldiers, in the man himself—the Lord is their strength. They may differ in many respects but this is true of every single warrior in the host of the Lord, that the Lord is his strength. He has no strength in the flesh. He cannot find anything there which can assist him. All his springs are in his God and he draws all his supplies for power in spiritual conflicts from God and from God alone. If you were to review the Prussian army, you might very properly say that the needle-gun is their strength—and years ago we used to feel quite sure that the Armstrong gun was *our* strength.

But if you examine the ranks of the Lord’s people, you will perceive that they rest in no chariots, nor horses, nor weapons of war—whether carnal or spiritual—the Lord Jehovah is the strength of the whole company! Can you not picture David reviewing his troops, looking along the ranks of the king’s mighties who had been with him in the cave of Adullam and had done good service in his attacks upon the Philistines, and in various skirmishes and battles in their youth, and their riper years? Can you not hear him say, “The Lord is their strength”? Can you not hear him, as he relates the heroics of his heroes, declaring that in every case they were made mighty by the God of Jacob?

David adds that the Lord is *his* strength, too. The confidence of the soldiers was also the confidence of the captain. “He is the saving strength of His anointed.” The margin has it, “He is the strength of salvation to His

anointed,” for David had many salvation’s, many remarkable escapes and deliverances—and these he does not attribute to his own agility, foresight, wit, or wisdom, much less to the valor of his brave right hand—but he confesses that the Lord who was the strength of the soldiers was also the savior of their anointed monarch.

Put in David’s place tonight, before the eyes of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and He will say the same! He, in His day of feeble flesh, fought and overcame by the power of the Spirit with which He was anointed. He fought the battle for us in the strength of the Most High. And now, looking all along the ranks of those whom He leads to battle and to ultimate victory, He testifies tonight, “The Lord is their strength. He is the strength of salvation to His Anointed.”

I do not intend, however, to dwell upon that verse but shall take you at once to the text which is a prayer for the Church militant, a prayer divided into four parts. We ought to pray constantly for the people of God—they always need it and it is always our duty to remember their necessities. It is always our privilege to pray for one another. Prayer is always useful to the Church and therefore we should delight to exercise it. The fire upon the altar of intercession should never go out, neither by night nor by day! Our prayer for the Lord’s people should be comprehensive. The Church of God needs many things and we must not be content to ask for one thing when the Church needs many.

We must be thoughtful about our prayers, so that, like David, we may say much in little. Some people’s prayers have very little in them. They much abound with the chaff of *utterance* but have but one grain of the wheat of *meaning*. We must not rush into God’s Presence and there offer any words that may come to mind, but we should direct our prayer unto God and meditate upon it, so that when we utter it there may be something in it, some meaning—not asking for a shadowy something, but pleading wisely for what we intelligently desire.

I make that remark because this prayer of David’s is peculiarly rich, eminently suggestive and full of meaning: “Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.” Here are four choice blessings—let us take them one by one.

I. The first is, “SAVE YOUR PEOPLE.” In how many ways may this be desired for the elect of God? It may be offered, first, in reference to their conversion from their natural estate of sin, darkness, and death. Brothers and Sisters, we who are saved should never cease praying, “Lord, save the chosen who as yet are uncalled! Save those who are redeemed by blood but who are not yet redeemed by power! Save your people!” If you do not pray for sinners, I am afraid you are a sinner yourself, and know nothing about prayer. The old proverb is, “He that would go to Heaven alone, shall never go there at all.” And he who never has any melting of his heart towards the lost sheep who as yet are not gathered into the fold is most probably a wolf himself.

I am sure that one of the first instincts of the new nature is to begin to agonize for others. We may make our prayers as wide as we will, but still we must at times make them discriminating and peculiar. And while we say, “Let Your saving health be known among all nations,” it becomes us

also to recollect the doctrine of Discriminating Grace, and to say, “Save Your people, O Lord! You have ordained them to eternal life. Fulfill Your purpose! O Lord Jesus, You have paid the price for them. Rescue out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear Your own precious sheep!”

We may plead here with mighty arguments. We may besiege the Throne with irresistible weapons when we come with such a plea as this—“Lord, save Your people. Some of them know nothing about You. Some of them know more than they have ever practiced. Some of them are soaked in the crimson dye of sin. Some of them have grown gray in vice. Some of them, despite warnings, have hardened their necks and seem as if they would be suddenly destroyed without remedy. But, O Lord, we come in as intercessors for them. In the name of Jesus we plead for them as He pleads for them! Lord, save Your people! By some means, by any means, by our means if it may please You to honor us with such an honor, save Your people, those whom You love, but who as yet love You not!”

It is well often to pray—

***“If some poor wandering child of Yours
Has spurned today the voice Divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin!
Let him no more lie down in sin.”***

But the words may be applied, also, to the carrying on of the work of sanctification in those who, in a certain sense, are saved. All who have believed in Christ are saved from the guilt of sin, but they are not all as yet completely delivered from the *power* of sin. No, we believe that *none* of them are, so that we may daily pray, “Lord, go on with the work of saving Your people. If You have brought them up out of Egypt, Lord, lead them through the wilderness till they enter into the Canaan of perfect holiness and rest. Some of Your people have very weak faith, save them from their unbelief, for it is a great sin and at the same time a great sorrow to them.

“Some of Your children have hot and angry tempers, Lord, save Your people from being passionate. Many of Your children are desponding—they give way to it, Lord—save them from unbelief. Others of them are proud and high-minded, Lord, save them from that folly. Numbers of them grow inactive, Lord, save them from lethargy. And others are slothful, Lord, save Your people from idleness.” It should be our object ourselves to “grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” and after that, we should seek our Brothers and Sisters good by the use of edification, and by the use of this prayer, “Lord, carry on the work of the saving of Your people.”

The text may also be very very much used in our prayers in reference to backsliders. I am afraid we often forget that very numerous class of people, backsliders. But when we think of them, we should evermore cry, “Lord, save Your people.” Some of them have been such dreadful hypocrites and have brought such dishonor on the Cross of Christ that we can hardly pray for them as the Lord’s people. Let us then plead for them as *sinner*s. On the other hand, there are some even among the worst backsliders who have the vital spark in them. They *are* the people of God. They are God’s sheep, even though they have sadly gone astray—and for these

our prayers must be constant, incessant, fervent, believing. “O Lord, save Your people.”

I exhort you who are walking in the light of God’s countenance to pray for your poor Brothers and Sisters who have been allowed to fall into sin. They are often despised by those who are at ease, and if you despise them, remember you may at some time fall into the same case yourself. “Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.” Meanwhile, you that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of weakness. Let the prayer go up for that very, very numerous band of sadly broken hearts who, like David, have gone astray and brought shame upon themselves. Let us say, “Lord, save Your people; let them be as brands plucked out of the burning, and though we hate the garment spotted with the flesh, yet, Lord, save Your people.”

And do you not think that the prayer should be frequently put up by us in private for those of God’s people who are much tempted? There are some who go on the road to Heaven with finer weather than others, but there are not a few who always seem to have temptations dogging their heels. They are, perhaps, themselves, like Mr. Fearing, of whom John Bunyan writes that he did get from the Slough of Despond. “But, somehow, he seemed to carry the Slough about with him.” He had got the Slough in his own *heart*. There are some such still. They not only sometimes get doubts and fears, but their constitutional temperament is such that it keeps on doubting. Or there may be some other besetting sin and you may be constantly tempted by it. Let us pray for such.

And, again, some of God’s people are placed in positions in life where they are more tempted than others are. You good people, you children of godly parents, you husbands and wives who live in happy family circles perhaps scarcely know the miseries of some who are placed where ungodly people can dominate over them. It is a sad thing when the red of the wicked rests upon the lot of the righteous—the temptation is lest the righteous should put forth his hand unto iniquity.

Let us pray for such. They are plants of God’s own right-hand planting, but they seem to be planted in a bleak soil—not house plants, as some of you are—who can go often to the House of God and hear the Gospel. Perhaps they are living in some country town where there is no Gospel ministry, or where there is a mere make-shift pulpit with somebody in it who knows nothing about the Gospel. Now these people are just like plants that are pinched by the frost. Pray for them, that the great Farmer may shelter and protect them. Pray for these shorn lambs, that the good Shepherd may temper the wind to them, and let this be the prayer in every case, “Save Your people.”

And, Beloved, this prayer may also be applied to the whole Church. The Church of God at this day is said to be in great danger from a form of Popery. Certainly a form of Popery is very rampant just now in this land. It has a great deal of force about it so that it is not to be laughed down, but is to be met with sterner weapons than mere arrows of raillery. But we can cry for the Church, “Lord, save Your people! And whether it is philosophical speculation or superstitious error which may put Your Church, as some men may think, in danger, do You be pleased to keep the gates of

Zion so that the gates of Hell may not prevail against her! Save Your people!”

Let us not tremble for the Ark of the Lord as if strange things were happening to us, and the Church should be overcome by these delusions. Many false professors will fall, but the elect are safe. “Christ’s sheep will hear His voice and follow Him; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” We believe that if for awhile they turn aside to cunningly devised fables, they will soon discover that it is not the pasture they desire, and He who restores our souls will bring back His wandering ones. We are not afraid for the Church, but still it becomes us to fence her around, to ward off the foe and to protect God’s chosen. And therefore we must use all means, and none are better than this petition to the Great Shepherd to preserve His flock. I trust that so long as ever we live this will be one of our morning and evening prayers, “O Lord, save Your people!”

Before I leave this point, however, let me observe that if we pray this prayer, we must take care that we also carry it out in practice. To pray to God for that which I am not willing to promote by my own personal activity is to mock God! If, then, I say, “Lord, save Your people,” what ought I to do? Why, to put myself constantly on the alert to be the instrument of saving God’s people! For instance, if I meet with sinners, I should try to talk with them about Christ. If I meet with the ignorant, I should try to instruct them in the way of salvation. I should, whenever I go to the House of God, try, if possible, to get a word with somebody.

How can I say, “Save Your people,” and yet not try to do something to save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins? If I mean what I say, I shall help the sanctification of my Brothers and Sisters who are Believers. I shall try to reclaim the backslider. I shall endeavor to strengthen tempted men, and I shall, so far as possible, bear my witness against the errors of the times, or else how can I go to God and say, “Save Your people,” when I have not myself in any way contributed to that desirable result?

And how can some of you pray this prayer who have never cared for sinners? How can you say, “Save Your people,” when you only go up to a place of worship to get fed yourselves, and have no thought and no care about the dying sons of men? How can you say, “Save Your people,” when you neither give to God’s cause nor speak for Christ’s name? How can you dare to pray a prayer which must freeze upon your lips or rise up in judgment against you to condemn you for your hypocrisy? O dear Friends, let us take care that our prayers do not become swift witnesses against us to condemn us! Our bad example has a tendency to destroy others—can you and I pray, “Lord, save Your people,” when we are doing our best to lead them astray?

Our mere silence has a tendency to make men think that the Truth of God is not precious, and how can we pray, “Save Your people,” when, through our own slothful ignorance we help to lull men’s consciences into a slumber which could end in their everlasting destruction? Lord, burn this prayer into our souls as with a hot iron, but at the same time help us

to feel its *practical* force in all the actions of our life: “ ‘Lord, save Your people.’ Help us to save them through Your Spirit.”

II. And now we come to the second prayer, “BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE.” After men are saved they have still many needs. We should not be satisfied with being saved. Some people are. They are thankful for it and they are satisfied with it—but we should not be so. There is a wreck yonder. The ship is going to pieces. Some brave men enter the lifeboat. They tug over those mountainous billows! They return in safety from the ship—they bring a half-drowned mariner on shore. He is saved! He is saved! Let us be thankful, but is that enough? Certainly not! Kind hands are preparing dry garments. Food is being procured. A cordial is ready for the man to drink, and if he has lost his all, a subscription is made for him that he may start anew in his business, and begin life again.

That the man should be sent back to his friends and to his country saved is a blessing, an unspeakable blessing. If only on broken boards and broken pieces of the ship we all get to land, it will be a great mercy. But when Paul and his crew got to shore in that way, it was not thought to be enough! They began to light a fire and Paul gathered sticks. And so, saved men want comforts after they are rescued. And, consequently, the prayer of the text is not superfluous—“Bless Your inheritance.”

Now, what does this prayer mean? It means a great deal more than I can tell you tonight. I should need to preach 20 sermons on such a text as this, but I will just mention two or three points upon which I hope we pray that God would bless His heritage. The first thing is that He would bless His Church with greater unity. The Church of God is too much divided. I thank God there is a real and hearty love among the Lord’s people in many places, and in this district I am sure there is no lack of it. Our being in this very Surrey Chapel tonight is a direct answer to the calumny of those who say that there is no love among God’s people. We *do* love each other, and we seek each other’s good. But it is not so everywhere.

There are some places where Ephraim envies Judah, and where Judah vexes Ephraim. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are some who are a great deal fonder of the *tribe* than they are of the nation, and much more earnest for the prosperity of a *regiment* than for the victory of the army. It must not be so among us! We must pray, “Bless Your inheritance! Unite their hearts, O God. Give them to know one Lord, one faith, one Baptism! Take away everything which divides them, every error which splits them into sections. Bring them to be one in truth, one in Christ, one in love to each other.”

With this we ought to pray that they may be more earnest. Truly, this is the prayer that is needed, “Bless Your inheritance. Bless them with a drop or two of the Savior’s love in their hearts. Bless some of them with a little heavenly fire.” This is the great need of the times. The Church of God is well organized. Perhaps never in the history of the world has the Church of God been so potent in its organizations and possessions as it is now. But it lacks the first *fire*, the pristine *zeal* and *energy* which the Apostles and their immediate successors had. We want to have again the spirit of revival, not merely as we have it now, I trust, in a measure, but with sevenfold energy! O that the Lord would bless His people in this way, knitting

them together in one and then sending the holy fire down upon the entire Church!

The Church stands too often like a train made up at the station, waiting for the steam to get up. We need the *fire* which shall create the impetus to carry us forward in our onward career. It is not enough to have right forms and orthodox creed—we need the holy zeal to make all these things instinct with life and power. Now, we can never *work ourselves* up into this state—we may *pray* ourselves into it, however. I do not believe in getting up a revival by the methods which some adopt. If we are to have a true quickening it will be by the Holy Spirit given to us in answer to fervent prayer. Therefore I say pray to God, “Bless Your inheritance,” and He will give us the sacred zeal which is now so much needed. God grant us it for His Son’s sake.

I believe that many of God’s people also need blessing in another respect, and that is with more happiness. It really is lamentable to see how, in certain quarters, misery is common among the people of God. They are a feeble folk in some places. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, whom John Bunyan speaks of, must have been the father of a very large family. I should say that the manufacture of crutches will never die out altogether—and really, in some places, it must be a most lucrative business—for many of the Lord’s people never get beyond, “I hope so,” or, “I trust so,” and no hymn in the hymn book is so sweet to them as—“’Tis a point I long to know.”

I did not put that hymn in “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK.” I had a debate with myself about it. I thought to myself, “Ah, well, they will know all about that without my putting it into the hymn book.” And I thought that if any of you wanted to sing it, you could sing it *alone* at home, but it did not seem to me to be a hymn that a whole congregation should use. It is a blessed hymn: I have to sing it myself sometimes, I am sorry to say. It is an excellent hymn, as expressing the feelings of some of God’s people—but it will not do for a whole congregation to get into that state! It is very well for the good wife to have a little black draught at hand when the child wants it sometimes, but to give the whole family the same might be a great deal more injurious than beneficial.

And so it is with regard to that class of hymns. It is suitable to a certain case of diseased spiritual condition, but it would be wrong to suppose or to insinuate that all the people of God at any one time, in one congregation, could be found in exactly the same condition of sad decrepitude of faith. Brethren, we must pray for the entire Church of God that it may be happier. May we have more faith in the promises, more reliance upon the “immutable things where it is impossible for God to lie!” May we have more confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit! More dependence in the abounding Presence of Jesus Christ to be the Succor and the Help of His people, so that, setting up her banners the Church may not creep along under mists and clouds, but be “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

Lord, bless Your people! Bless them with unity! Bless them with earnestness! Bless them with happiness! Bless them with confidence! And, indeed, there might be made a list so long that you might never cease prayer. And when you had completed it, you might begin again and your

supplications would be an endless chain of blessings. “Bless Your inheritance.” Would it not be well, dear Brethren, for us to select some out of God’s inheritance when we are praying the prayer, in order to make this distinction and pray especially for them? It is not a bad habit of mentioning some persons in prayer before God in private by name.

Only do not do that in the way in which a man I used to know did it. Whenever he was offended with anybody he used to threaten them that he would pray for them. And really, such prayer as that, which was offered out of a sort of gracious malice is to be avoided. But do it without saying anything to anybody about it, and not making a boast of it. Put down some of God’s people who need certain blessings. For instance, there are certain ministers who need to be helped. Say, “Lord, bless Your inheritance.” There are certain workers in the Sunday school and elsewhere—certain Christians you know to be weak—certain others you perceive to be in peril. Put up prayers for such, that special blessings may come to them.

Remember how our Lord said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” We know that He prayed for all of His elect because we have His prayer in the Gospel of John. But here He prayed for Peter by name, apart from the others, because Peter needed it. So must we particularize at times our prayer for the Church and plead for some by name. I am sure that Christians can never err if they pray for their own pastors and plead with God on behalf of those who watch over them as those that must give an account of the souls of all their hearers.

The Apostle says, “Brethren, pray for us.” And all God’s servants ever since have felt the need of the Church’s prayers. Pray for me, my Hearers. And you who worship here, pray for your esteemed pastor. And all of you pray much for those who minister to you in holy things. And before I leave this point, let me add take care that you practically prove the genuineness of your prayer. “Bless Your inheritance.” Take care that *you* bless them. So far as is in your power, seek to confer blessings upon all your fellow Christians. There are some of you who are always grumbling at the Church of God. You pretend to say, “Lord, bless Your Church,” and yet you curse it.

Why should you go and spread abroad the faults and follies of your own Brethren? Remember what Noah’s sons did with their father? Do you imitate them and not bring upon yourselves the curse of Ham? True, there is much that is mischievous in the Church of God, and among other mischiefs, there is the habit of always finding fault with Christian people. Pray, “Bless Your inheritance.” Bless that inheritance yourselves—if it is in your power—by conveying to others any spiritual or temporal gift to confer a blessing upon any of the purchase of the Savior’s blood. Be not slack to do so, lest your prayer should be a witness against your unfaithfulness to and your forgetfulness of the Lord’s people. “Bless Your inheritance.”

III. The third prayer is, “FEED THEM ALSO.” God’s people need, after they have life, to have that life sustained. They must have food or they will become faint with hunger—food, or they will become weak from want of nourishment—food, or they would actually die for want of the staff of life.

In order that God's people may be fed, I believe that it is His usual appointment to provide them ministers. When you pray, therefore, "Feed them also," do not forget to ask for those disciples to whom Christ gives His bread that they may break it to the multitude.

When you are praying for the sheep, ask God to send those under-shepherds whose business it is to lead the flock into the green pastures in their Master's name. Do not forget to pray for students to be raised up and guided into the ministry. I remind the Church of this, for ought we not to pray that the Lord would send forth laborers into His harvest? Is not this a prayer that is constantly forgotten? When Jesus Christ ascended up on high we are told He received gifts for men, and those gifts were Apostles, Evangelists, and pastors.

I am afraid we do not plead for these *ascension gifts*. We do not use the office of an ascended Savior as we should, but let us try to do it from now on and never forget to say, "Lord, send pastors after Your own heart who shall feed Your people with knowledge and with understanding." This prayer includes not only the *agent* by which they are to be fed but the very *food* with which they are to be fed. Pray, therefore, that the Lord would give His people a clear insight into the Truth of God that they may not be mistaken and so feed upon pernicious herbs instead of the sweet and tender grass by the still waters.

Ask the Lord to illuminate His people's minds as to the doctrines of Covenant Grace, that they may see into the ancient things—that they may get to the depth that lies under and that rolls beneath, and may reach to the precious things of the everlasting hills. Why, half of the Lord's people do not feed because they do not believe that that is bread which God puts on the table! They are afraid of some of His Truths because they have been told, "Oh, they are so *high*—it is such high doctrine." "Savory meat," I say, "such as my soul loves!" O that these people had but an appetite to feed upon these things from which they are kept back—not because the things are not good—but because they have been warned against them! Whatever is in this Book is fit for our souls to live upon! If God has revealed the Truth, O Believer, be not ashamed to accept it and to make it the nutriment of your soul!

Still, even if we had the prayer answered as to good pastors and sound doctrines, that is not all we need—the soul's food is to really feed upon Christ *Himself*. Jesus Christ is received by the heart through communion with Him, and it is only by *fellowship* with Jesus that, after all, we get the marrow and the fatness of the Gospel. "The truth as it is in Jesus" is the only truth which really nourishes the spiritual man.

Talking this day with a Brother in the ministry—one who has been many years a preacher—he was telling me that he had been to the British Museum library. He was looking for sermons upon Christ, and in turning the books over, he said, he thought he had found pretty well 500 upon any other subject to one upon the Lord Jesus! Perhaps he was wrong in his estimate. But even supposing he had found but five upon other subjects to one upon the Lord Jesus, would not that account for the fact of the lamentations that are made about the leanness of the pulpit? Leave Christ out? O my Brethren, better leave the pulpit out altogether!

If a man can preach one sermon without mentioning Christ's name in it, it ought to be his last—certainly the last that any Christian ought to go to hear him preach! If I saw a notice in the Blackfriars Road that there was a baker there who made a loaf of bread without any flour in it, I should not deal with him. He might say, "Well, I only did it that once." Never mind, Sir. If you did it once, that is enough. If you could do it once, you have a fatal faculty that renders it impossible for me to confide in you. And if you can get through a sermon without Christ, my dear Friend, you may get whom you like, I shall not help you at your place, at any rate.

No, we must have the Lord Jesus Christ preached! And even the proclamation of Christ is not enough unless the Holy Spirit brings Christ home to the soul, opens up the spiritual faculty to receive Him, gives us a heavenly appetite, and *then* enables us to assimilate Christ—to take Him into ourselves, into our inward parts—and make Him part and parcel of ourselves by a holy appropriating faith. Unless this comes we cannot be fed! Though it seems a strange thing to say, yet I believe this prayer, "Feed Your people," has a *literal* meaning about it in *spiritual* things. God Himself must absolutely put the spiritual food into our mouths or else all the pastors with the best doctrines and the best preaching of Christ will not accomplish the purpose. We are babes—we must receive our nourishment from our *God*—and from nowhere else! And if He is not pleased to convey it to our souls, we shall hear the Word, and see the Word, but feed upon the Word we never shall!

Now, what a good prayer this will be for next Sunday morning when you go to your places of worship, "Lord, feed Your people." And as soon as ever the minister is seen, "Lord, feed Your people." As soon as ever he opens his mouth, and you begin to enjoy the Word, do not stop short, but say, "Lord, make it real food to me, and to all my Brothers and Sisters. Feed them, also, for You alone can do it." I think I ought to say before I leave that last point, that if you pray, "Feed them also," you must remember that you must practically carry it out, just as Peter did, to whom the Lord said, "Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs." If you know anything, tell it! If you have had any experience, declare it! If you have had any illumination, reveal it!

Do not eat your honey alone, or it will turn sour. Give it to others! If the Lord has given you but a crust, go and share it with some other hungry soul. If you would have God's people fed, feed them with what God has given you. "Oh," says one poor widow woman here, "how can I feed any of God's people? I know so little." Ah, you are like the woman of Zarephath who said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

Ah, but still that woman fed the greatest Prophet that was in the land, and with that very handful of meal! So it may be with you. A simple word which you may speak to some of God's greatest servants may be a comfort to them for many a day. Do not despise in your soul the day of small things. Thank God for a little experience of His Divine Grace and tell that little experience out—for God can make your barrel of meal so that it shall

not be exhausted, and your cruse of oil so to be multiplied as never to dry up!

IV. And now the last prayer is, “LIFT THEM UP FOREVER.” God’s people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove that lies among the pots. They need Divine Grace to make them mount on wings covered with feathers of silver and of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. “Lift them up forever.”

David himself said, “Unto You, O God, do I lift up my soul,” and he, here, feels the necessity that other people’s souls should be lifted up as well as his own. There are three ways in which God’s people need to be lifted up. They want to be elevated in character. “Lift them up. O Lord, do not suffer Your people to be like the world’s people. Lift them up forever. The world lies in the Wicked One, lift them out of it. The world’s people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures and the gratification of their lusts. Lord, lift Your people up above all this! Keep them from being muck-rakers, as John Bunyan calls the man who was always looking after gold. Keep them from having their eyes always downwards. Spare them from becoming carnal and sensual, lest they also become like others—devilish. O let Your Grace lift Your people up, so that in whatever neighborhood they may be found, they may be lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”

O my Brothers and Sisters, this is a prayer for which we might all go down on our knees 10 times a day for ourselves and for our fellow Christians, that God would elevate the general tone of true religion, that Christianity might become more powerful! I am not saying it is a fact, but I sometimes am afraid that the greatest mischief that there is in the world at the present time is an abundance of religious profession which is not genuine. You know very well how bad it is for trade when there is a great quantity of paper money about and not enough sterling bullion to back it up with. There is sure to come a panic and a crash.

I am afraid that the Christian Church issues a great deal of paper religion and has not enough bullion to back it up! After all, in God’s sight it is nothing but the solid gold that is worth having and the paper profession will be burnt to ashes in the fire. May God “lift up” His Church, and make her a truly golden Church, that her piety may be a true bullion piety! That the circulation of the Church may be a truly golden medium, and not a mere bill and paper piety. Elevate Your people in character, O God!

In the next place, “Lift them up forever,” that is, prosper Your people in conflict. In the battle, if they seem to fall, yet be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe is upon their necks for a moment, yet help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit and eventually to win the triumph. Lord, encourage Your people! Do not let them sit in the dust, mourning forever—

***“Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”***

Suffer not the adversary to vex them and make them afraid, but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them, like Hannah, sing to the mercy of a delivering God! “Lift them up forever.”

And then, thirdly, lift them up at the last. Lift them up by taking them Home! Lift them up *forever* by bidding them dwell in Your Presence where there is fullness of joy! Lift them out of that sick bed! Lift them out of the tomb! Lift them up from the worm, from the rottenness of the grave! Lift them up at the last blast of the archangel's trumpet, not their souls, alone, which You lift up as soon as they die, but their *bodies* also, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit! lift them up in *both* their natures, the spiritual and the material! Lift them up forever and cause them, as complete men, made perfect in Christ Jesus, to forever rejoice in Him! Lift every one of them up—

***“From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day.
Feed them also, and lift them up forever.”***

O my Brothers and Sisters, that you and I may but get Home at the last! How I love that desire of David's, in the 27th Psalm, where he says, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord.” That one desire sucked all the others up, and this is the one desire, I trust, which we have—

***“Jerusalem! My happy home!
Name ever dear to me.
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and in you?”***

Oh, to see the king's face at Home in His own land! To see Him here in this exile through the perspective glass of faith is rich delight—but when this cheek shall lie upon His bosom, and these lips shall feel the kisses of His love—oh what ravishment, what infinite delight, what perfection of bliss to our complete manhood!

Courage, my Brothers and Sisters! Set your faces against the steep! Go up the hillside with Christ in the rough weather, for the top of the hill and the Palace Beautiful will make amends for it all in that land where the windows are agates, and the gates carbuncles, and all the borders are of precious stones—where the saints shall be lifted up forever! Oh, it will be joy and bliss to be there indeed! Till then, we will put the prayer together, and say, “Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.”—

***“Pray that Jerusalem may have
Peace and felicity.
Let them that love You and Your peace
Have still prosperity.
Therefore I wish that peace may still
Within your walls remain,
And ever may your palaces
Prosperity retain.
Now, for my friends' and brethren's sakes,
Peace be in you, I'll say;
And for the House of God our Lord,
I'll seek your good always.”***

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THE PEACE OF THE DEVIL AND THE PEACE OF GOD

NO. 2157

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.”
Luke 11:21.***

***“The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord
will bless His people with peace.”
Psalm 29:11.***

PEACE is a condition of things greatly to be desired. To dread no outward disturbance and to feel no inward storm—who does not desire such a state? Peace has been called a pearl and rightly, for it is precious and smiles with soft, mild radiance bedecking the heart that wears it. It is, indeed, a pearl of great price—he that has it has more than riches. If his peace is, in very deed, the true pearl, he who wears it in his breast is one of the favored sons of God. There may be some few people in the world who do not love peace, but we love not their spirit. Certain stormy natures delight in tempest and, like sea birds, ride on the crests of raging billows. Men of the Byron type are restless and an atmosphere of peace suits them not. Their spirits, like thunderbolts, rush onward, finding pleasure in the crash with which they force their willful way.

I need not go out of my way for such, for in vain we speak to those who will not hear. The most of us were cast in another mold. We are not ravens and cannot remain forever on the wing. But, like the dove of Noah, we seek rest for the soles of our feet and we fly here and there until we find the olive leaf of peace. How often, amid the disturbances of this troubled world, have we cried, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest!” We were not reared like eaglets on stern crags among the callow lightning—we listen to the turtle’s voice and love the brooks that warble music as they flow. I know that many of you sigh for rest—you labor that you may enter into it. If you have found the rest which Jesus gives, your heart is sure to sing—

***“Forever here my rest shall be
Close to Your bleeding side:
This all my hope, and all my plea—
For me the Savior died.”***

Peace and rest are two names for a flower which buds on earth, but only found full-blown in Heaven! Yet even the faint perfume of the unopened blossom excites our strong desire. Gently does the Savior attract us to Himself by that sweet call—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Every precious thing in this

world is sure to be counterfeited. If the government mint issues gold and silver money, rogues will be found to make spurious coin. The more a thing is cried up, the more is there need of caution that you are not taken in with base imitations of it. Satan is the cunning ape of God and whatever God does, he tries to do the same with his enchantments. Therefore, while there is a peace more precious than the gold of Ophir, there is another peace which is worse than worthless! When a soul is borne up upon the waters of false peace, its case is hopeless till that peace is dried up and the soul is stranded in self-despair.

I thought this morning I might do you some service if I tried to set forth the two peaces, the peace of the devil and the peace of God. May God the Holy Spirit give discerning hearts to all of you, that you may not be deceived by the poisonous imitation of the waters of peace! May you discern the counterfeit and reject it with indignation! And may you find the true peace at the feet of the Prince of Peace! Oh, for “the peace of God, which passes all understanding”! For my part, I should dread to give peace to anyone, upon any subject at the expense of the Truth of God. A temporary hope is ill purchased at the cost of cruel disappointment.

A poor woman was the loving mother of an only son. He was very dear to her. He fell sick, indeed, he was sick unto death but the mother could not bear to think so. She scraped together the necessary fee for a physician and, oh, the peace of heart she had when the trusted man came downstairs and said to her, “Your son will recover. There is no grave cause to fear. Nurse him carefully and very soon he will be at his post again.” The mother was restful of heart, for she believed the doctor. Within a single day her son died and those hours of false peace were the wormwood and the gall of her affliction. It was a sad, sad pity to have raised her hopes for she cried, “Oh, if I had known that he was going to die, I should not then so bitterly have felt his loss! But I am grievously disappointed. How could the doctor tell me he would live?”

The physician was either greatly mistaken, or else wished to soothe the mother’s manifest anguish. If the latter was the case, his untruthfulness was not wise. I cannot follow the same course. It is a pity to create a peace which is baseless. It is lamentable to me that anyone of you should be slumbering in peace when a great danger is near which will cause that peace to vanish as a dream when one awakes. Avoid that peace which will prove deceptive in the present and ruinous in the future—long for that which will keep your heart and mind today and forever. Follow me, I pray you, while I speak of the two forms of peace set forth in my two texts.

I. First, there is THE DEVIL’S PEACE. The foul spirit keeps things quiet in the heart over which he rules—“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.” The heart of man is not lawfully Satan’s palace, but he has made it so by capture. In his pride he loves to dwell in the midst of this captured stronghold so that he may vaunt himself over the Most High from whom he has taken the heart of His creature. Satan values a conquered human heart as a palace—he takes pleasure in domineering over the soul which he has forcibly torn away from God. That he

may dwell securely, he covers himself with armor and he keeps constant watch and ward. Hence the house is quiet, for his watchful power puts down every token of mutiny against his tyranny.

The Psalmist describes the dreadful peace of the wicked in Psalm seventy-three—"There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Everything goes smoothly with the man who is left in this fatal condition—"Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." Though it would seem that they are really prospering, it is not so—they are set in slippery places and they will be cast down unto destruction. There is really nothing enviable in the condition of the godless, but everything pitiable. They cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. What peace can there be to those whose rebellions are so many? Satan makes conscience lie still that his power may be confirmed over the heart of the ungodly.

I may be speaking to some here who are in good health, have a fair trade and enjoy credit with their neighbors and therefore they have an *earthly* peace and care nothing about being at peace with God. My design shall be to disturb that peace, for if it is the peace of the devil. The sooner it is broken the better for the soul. *This peace is often merely outward.* Men put on the air of peace when they do not feel it in their hearts. You will often meet with irreligious men who tell you that they are perfectly happy and then ask—What do they want with Christ? They feel themselves all right—what need have they of a new birth? They are getting on so well without God's blessing that they do not care to seek it. Their laughter is loud, their jests are endless, their cares sit lightly upon them.

They appear to have no anxiety for the faults of the past, the temptations of the present, or the recompenses of the future—and yet this peace is all external. The crust of ice is hardly strong enough to bear a fly. Follow them to their beds and see their fear! Listen to them in a thunder-storm—see them at sea in a tempest and you will find that they are the victims of an awful dread. Some display a peace of sheer bravado. They want to *seem* happy and therefore they put on the mask of the merry Andrew. The plowboy, when he goes through the churchyard, is afraid of ghosts and therefore whistles to keep his courage up—and many who are loaded with apprehension try to conceal it by those flippant songs in which they boast of "driving dull care away." In the secret of their soul that same dull care sits on the throne of their hearts and is not to be driven away by the ballad, the fiddle or the dance.

Those are often the slaves of misery who figure as the children of mirth. Is it not so with many? When they speak of pleasure, it is from the teeth outward, for there is no Artesian well of joy springing from the depths of their soul. They hold themselves up as the mirror of pleasure while their heart is breaking with unutterable pain. In all who have not come to Christ and found peace through His precious blood, *their peace is false.* Let them say what they will of it, it has no foundation or justification. They have no peace with God for it is written, "There is no peace, says my

God, to the wicked.” The great God is the high contracting party with whom peace must be made and if He disowns it, in vain will a man pretend to possess it!

A sinner may say, “I am at peace as to God” but if this comes of forgetting or ignoring Him, it is a sorry sham. If a man has to forget God before he has peace, that fact betrays a fatal secret. If the man, on remembering God, is troubled, then his peace is a mere writing on the sand. Such peace is false peace and what true man will solace himself with that which is false? Better know that we are at war, if it is so, than dote upon a peace which is a fool’s paradise and only exists in fancy. I had rather be wounded in a thousand spiritual conflicts than be soothed into eternal destruction by a false peace! Let my hopes be slain by the sword of the Truth of God rather than nourished on the bread of lies. God forgive that we should prophesy smooth things for ourselves while the pen of justice is signing our death warrant!

One prayer I often pray—“Lord, let me know the worst of my case.” And though there is no great pleasure in such a petition, I would suggest that all of you should offer it. It can do you no harm. Pray with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” See to it that you are not liars unto your own souls. To many *this peace comes through ignorance*. They do not know those terrible Truths which would make peace impossible. They know not that sin is a deadly viper and therefore they toy with it as with a bird.

They are scarcely conscious that they have committed any sin worth mentioning, but if the light of God’s Law were turned upon them they would see that they are guilty before God and exceedingly vile. They are not innocent, as they suppose, but guilty before the living God! Let the Holy Spirit work in a man a sense of sin and an expectation of judgment to come and I guarantee you he will have no more peace till he has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel! If any of you are wrapped up in a peace woven in the loom of ignorance, I pray God it may be torn to shreds! “But,” cries one, “Where ignorance is peace, ‘tis folly to be wise.” No, no! But where peace is founded on ignorance, it is folly begetting folly!

Oh, be wise, and drink not the fool’s cordial! Know your true condition even though that knowledge may cost you present loss of rest. To keep men ignorant is one of Satan’s devices because they are then easier to govern—he dreads that you should go where the Gospel is preached! If any of you are under Satan’s dominion, you are here this morning against your tyrant’s wishes. If he could have his way you would never come within earshot of God’s Word! Even now he will try to make you feel drowsy and inattentive lest the arousing Gospel should awaken you. O my Hearers, shun the ignorance which fosters false peace and the false peace which would make you content without the knowledge of God!

The devil greatly rejoices because in these days so many ministers do not preach the Gospel—Satan is glad if he can poison the stream at the fountainhead! He rejoices if he can make the preacher of the Gospel a

mere moral essayist, or a talker of his own inventions, for then those who go to hear him will be in no danger of being driven by trouble of mind to fly to Christ. I pray you, if you are wrapped in a peace that will not bear the light of day, bestir yourselves and escape from your perilous condition!

With many, however, it is not so much ignorance as *thoughtlessness*. Multitudes of persons know, if they would know, but they make no use of their knowledge for they never *think*. What a pity to perish forever from lack of consideration! A man has a letter given to him. He puts it in his pocket and does not open it. He goes out tomorrow for his day's pleasure and he promises himself that he will open the letter on Tuesday, when the Bank Holiday is over. Suppose in that letter there should be a warning of some plot against his life, or information of his mother being at the point of death, or of the sudden illness of a favorite child? What will he say to himself if he opens that letter too late? The Bible is to many a man God's unopened letter. Alas, how little do men search the Scriptures! If they do read them, they do it mechanically and do not think over their warnings.

Why will not men think? Thoughtlessness is one of Satan's great nets in which he entangles many. If the devil can keep you from thinking, he will keep you from believing! If he can keep you in the giddy whirl of vicious pleasure, or even of idle levity, he can make sure of you. Possibly he can effect his purpose by getting you absorbed in politics, or parish matters, or science, or business. Little does he care which, so long as he can draw you off from thinking of *God* and of your soul and of eternal things. Oh, that I could draw a mighty bow and shoot some piercing shaft which would go over the wall and carry death to that traitor, False-Peace! How gladly would I blow a blast most loud and break the spell of the Father of Lies and bring you from under his fatal fascination!

This peace, in many cases, is also *the result of carnal security*. Men say, "Well, well. We have not been much troubled yet and why should we care? We have lived in sin and we have not suffered for it. In fact, we have prospered through our contempt of scruples." Of old, men said, "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." And today they cry, "No deluge of fire has broken out upon us. These Christians say that the earth and all the works of men will be burned up and the very elements will melt with fervent heat! But we see no likelihood of it! In the heavens there is no sign of the Son of Man—no cloud, no Great White Throne—no token of the Judgment! Everything goes on calmly enough—why need we disturb ourselves?"

Thus, like the sluggard in the Proverbs, they ask for a little more slumber. They are willingly ignorant that once upon a time, in the olden days, it was so upon this earth and men married and were given in marriage. And they ate and drank and were drunken—and as it was told them, so it happened—for the Flood came and swept them all away! "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them." Beware, O men of this generation, lest this happen unto you, also, and the deluge of fire be upon you before you have escaped to Christ who alone is

the Ark of souls! Will things always be as they have been? Can you be sure of it? Are you not warned that it will not be so? Your eyes are not so clear as once they were! Your limbs are not so vigorous as once they were. If there is no change in the world, there is a great change in *you* during the last few years!

Before tomorrow's sun has risen you may lie upon the bed of death! Therefore, I pray you, set it not to your seal that you have much goods laid up for many years—for this night your soul may be required of you. In a moment shall you be troubled—the Avenger shall leap through the window, though you think you have made fast the door—and you shall not escape. O Sirs, shall not my voice disturb your wicked slumbers, or must you sleep on till the trumpet shall awaken you, not to hope, but to condemnation? Soon shall He come who now would save you, but then must condemn you to the place of everlasting banishment! O Lord, have mercy upon those who are bewitched by carnal security! Break the enchantments of the deceiver.

Some, again, have *a peace that comes of superstition*. “Well,” they say, “we know that this is true which has been spoken, but it does not bear upon *us*. We are all right—we were made members of Christ, children of God and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven in our infant baptism! We have been confirmed and we have partaken of the holy communion. We have attended our church, or we have gone to our meeting-house with much regularity. Therefore we feel that for us there is a sure hope.” O Souls, beware of saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.” Joab, in the day when Solomon executed the vengeance of God against him, instead of confessing his fault and seeking mercy, hoped for safety in the sanctuary and therefore stood with his hands upon the horns of the altar.

The tidings came to the king, “He is by the altar.” But the stern sentence was given, “Fall upon him, and bury him.” And so he perished in the Holy Place where God's sacrifice was known to be offered. So will you die if you do not trust in the Lord Jesus—even though your hands should lie upon your Baptism and your Lord's Supper. No outward performance can enable you to dispense with inward repentance and faith. If your heart is not right with God you shall perish with the sacramental bread in your mouth and go from the baptismal waters to the fires of Hell! Beware of the peace which is drawn from the stagnant pool of superstition—it will carry death into your soul.

Alas, there is a peace which does not lie in believing too much, but in believing too little! *Unbelief brings false peace to thousands*. If Satan can persuade you that, after all, these things are not so. If he can lead you to disbelieve your Bible. If he can lead you to think that there is no God, or that, if there is a God, He takes no account of men and will never call them to judgment—then the arch-deceiver will make sure of you and keep his goods in peace! I charge you, beware of that peace which is founded upon the denial of those Truths of God which your own conscience teaches you. Sin must be punished and if your peace is built upon the

supposition that it will not be so, your foundation is even less to be depended upon than the sand. Hazard not your soul upon a lie!

I fear that many are kept in peace through *companionship*. Hand joins in hand—the man would be troubled, but he meets his old friend who is a skeptic—and he laughs his fears out of him. The woman gets home and talks with what she calls, “her friends,” who are as godless as herself—and she is by their tattle confirmed in her carelessness. O Sirs, your friends cannot deliver you if you lose your souls through their means! Choose rather as friends those who roughly tell you solemn truths than those who with excess of sweetness would flatter you to your everlasting undoing.

Once more, dear Friends, I say this—and may God make it come with power to some—*peace caused by the devil is often the awful prelude of the last tremendous storm*. One who described to me the earthquake in the south of France said, “That morning when we rose, I never saw more lovely weather. Everything smiled deliciously across the blue Mediterranean and the azure sky was without a cloud. Suddenly, without a moment’s warning, a tremor seized the earth and there was a great cry of men and women in their fright.” It usually happens, before tremendous convulsions of Nature, that there is an ominous calm. You must have noticed, a few minutes before a storm, how awfully still everything becomes. The air is motionless, the birds sit mute upon the bough—not a leaf is stirring, all is silent expectation.

Deceive not yourself—with wings of flame the tempest is hurrying on and while you speak it bursts upon you—casting all things into confusion and amazement. Before the last dread hurricane of doom a soul may be asleep and all around it there may be a deep calm. Beware of the treacherous peace! Beware of insensibility! Your unfeeling state should warn you that you are given over to destruction. In the higher and colder latitudes, when men feel a sleepiness stealing over them, their companions stir them up and rub them and will not let them slumber—for to sleep is to wake no more. The man pleads, “Let me sleep a half-an-hour and I shall be so refreshed.” Alas, if he sleeps he shall do ill, for he will grow rigid in the death which frost brings to one! Go on, wise friends, and compassionately shake him! Hurry him to and fro, or rub him vigorously till he grows sore!

I cannot get hold of you at this present hour with my hands, nor would I wish to give you a bodily shaking, but oh, that I could do this *spiritually* and wake you up! I cannot leave you to sleep your soul into perdition! Come, Woman, you must bestir yourself, you must quit this fatal stupor, this deadly peace or else you will pass away from the world of hope, and wake up in the dungeon of despair! I have now spoken as much as I think wise upon this terrible subject—may the Holy Spirit bless it to you all! It is not my *speaking*—it is your *thinking* which is now needed. The Lord move you to holy thought!

II. Now we come to the second part of our discourse upon which we hope to speak with far greater pleasure. The Psalmist says, “The Lord will

bless His people with peace.” Here we have THE LORD’S PEACE. I trust numbers of you are now enjoying it! A man of God lay dying, but he was very calm—more—he was supremely happy! He filled the house with cheerfulness. All who came to see him, knowing that he was about to die, as he well knew himself, went away edified and comforted by the interview with this thrice-happy man.

One said to him, “Friend, how is it that you have such peace?” He answered, “I can see no ground or cause for it save this—it is written, ‘You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.’” Was not that a satisfactory reply? There is a weight of argument in it. If your mind is stayed on God He will keep you in perfect peace. You could not keep yourself in perfect peace in the hour of tribulation, or faintness, or decay—but the Lord can keep you. When heart and flesh fail, God will be your joy! Then shall you receive Christ’s legacy—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” I love that text because of the double view it gives of the Peacemaker. Here is a dying Savior making His will and saying, “Peace I leave with you.” Here is the living Savior stretching out His hands and saying, “My peace I give unto you.” He has not only left it in His will, but He has given it with His hands.

Now, Beloved, the peace that we should desire to possess is, first of all, *a peace which is a blessing*—“The Lord will bless His people with peace.” False peace is a curse, but to be soundly at peace with God is an unalloyed blessing and it brings no sorrow with it. To fall back upon the Father’s bosom and say, “I know that He Himself loves me and I know that I love Him”—to look up to Jesus and to say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me”—to feel the moving of the Holy Spirit and to yield ourselves up to His influences—this is peace unspeakable! To have no quarrel with God. No, to have no difference between His will and your own—this is a delightful experience!

Men may hate me, but if my God loves me, what does it matter? I may feel the cut of sharp, ungenerous words, but if my God speaks peace unto me, who can make trouble? “He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints.” This is joy, indeed! Do you know it? It is not only a blessing in itself, but it is a blessing in its consequences. There is no man so humble as the man that is at perfect peace with God—he marvels at the blessing he enjoys! There is no man so grateful. There is no man so courageous. There is no man so little affected by the world. There is no man who bears suffering so patiently. There is no man who is so ready for Heaven as the man who is at perfect peace with God and knows it! The peace of God, which passes all understanding, is a sacred guard to the soul—it shall keep our hearts and minds by Jesus Christ.

The value of peace as keeping the heart and mind is exceedingly great. It wards off all sorts of evils and preserves us unto the day of the Lord’s appearing. The more you enjoy peace with God the better. False peace is as stupefying and deadly as opium. Even the smallest drop of this sleeping mixture may be mischievous to the spirit and you may soon imbibe so much of this false confidence that it may deaden the conscience and cre-

ate a fatal hardness of heart. But of God's own peace you may drink to the full and no harm will come of it! You may be as happy in the Lord as possible and be all the better for it. Get strong faith and even full assurance and it will never make you idle—it will be a blessing and only a blessing to you all your days. "The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Note, next, that *this peace only comes from God*. "The lord will bless His people with peace." You cannot get that peace apart from the Lord himself—it is of no use to try to work it out yourself. You say, "I will get better. I will keep the Law, I will do this and do that"—you will never dig peace out of the soil of your own works. You cannot spin peace out of your own heart, as a spider spins her web. You must go to the Lord for peace and there is only one way in which you can go to Him—Jesus says, "I am the way." Go to the Father through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit! Trust the Father, rest in Christ, yield to the Holy Spirit and you shall have the peace that God gives!

O dear Hearers, if you could come and talk with me and I could comfort you, it might be of no use to you. If you could go to some full-fledged priest and he could absolve you, it might only be one of the darkest of delusions. But if you go to God and get His peace, that peace is solid and abiding—it is founded on eternal Truth! It is guaranteed by the God of holiness! It is judged to be sound by the Judge of all the earth! Here we have peace from lips that cannot lie, peace from a heart which cannot change, peace through the blood which has made a full atonement! I pray you, seek this peace and make sure of it. You see how spiritual it is, for you must come to God for it and you can only come to Him in spirit and in truth. You see how little it depends upon externals, upon chapel-going, or church-going—it is only by a *spiritual* approach to God that this blessing can be obtained. Come to the Lord and Giver of peace. Come to Jesus who is our peace! Oh, may the Divine Spirit lead you to come to Jesus now, at this moment, for in coming to Him you shall receive rest! Plead now this promise—"The Lord will bless His people with peace."

This peace comes only to His own people—"The Lord will bless His people with peace." He will never bless those with peace who remain in rebellion against Him. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Say, are you one of His people? Are you loyal to the Prince Emmanuel? If so, the Lord has bought you with His precious blood and you are His. The Lord will bless His blood-bought people and cause them to be His by power as well as by price. Do you rest in Christ alone? Is the atoning Sacrifice your soul's great hope? If so, you have been begotten again unto that lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the Lord will bless with peace His people who have risen with His own dear Son.

If you have the faith of God's elect, you are one of His elect! If you have done with self, the world and sin as the main desire of your heart, you are among His people. If you yield yourself to God to live unto Him, then you are one of His people and the Lord will bless you with peace. The more closely you cling to the Lord Jesus, the more clear and full will your peace

be. Do you belong to Him so that He can call you one of His people? "Well," says one, "I belong to the Church." That is a secondary matter. Many are in the visible Church who do not belong to God. "Oh, but I belong to such-and-such a place of worship well known for spiritual life." So you may, and yet not be one of the Lord's people, for tares grow among the best of the wheat.

Say, O Heart, do you trust alone to Jesus the Savior? Have you given yourself over to the Lord, to be your own no longer? Are you affianced unto Christ, your all to be His and yourself to be His bride? Then the Lord will bless you with abundance of peace. Here is a practical statement, see if it is not true. Notice, again, that this is *peace in the time of tempest* and peace after storm. Read over again this 29th Psalm—it is the Psalm of the thunderstorm. Hear how the voice of God thunders through it from end to end. The great cedars of Lebanon are split, the mountains are moved, the wilderness of Kadesh is shaken and the trembling hinds drop their young in their fright! The whole earth rocks beneath the tremendous Voice and is lit up with flames of the lightning of the Lord. Yet the Psalm ends with those gracious words—"The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Some of us enjoy our greatest peace when the Lord is abroad and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. We feel a rapture as we perceive that our Father is very near and is speaking so that we hear His voice. In spiritual storms that voice is our comfort and after the tempests are over the Lord speaks a sweet hush to the hearts of His children. He allays our fears while He whispers, "It is I, be not afraid." Brothers and Sisters, you will have many a tempest between here and Heaven, but before the tempest, through the tempest and after the tempest, "The Lord will bless His people with peace."

As I turned my text over last night, it seemed to me to be a very wonderful passage. It is a sort of revolving text, like a gun which is always loaded and may be perpetually discharged. It is a flowing fountain, ever beginning with fresh streams. "The Lord will bless His people with peace." We have had peace with God those 40 years, yes, but we have a promise of peace for *today*. Suppose we should live another 40 years? We shall still have the same promise—"The Lord will bless His people with peace." I should like an everlasting check from some millionaire running thus—"So often as this check is presented at the bank, pay the bearer what he asks." Few persons possessed of such a document would fail to put in an appearance at the bank! We should be regular visitors!

O you children of God, you have such a promissory note in the text before you! The Lord has endless, boundless peace within Himself and when you have long enjoyed peace with Him you may go to Him again and say, "Lord, renew my peace. I am troubled, but You are unmoved—bless me with Your peace." When you are rich and find that riches bring cares, bring these to your God who will bless His people with peace. When you are poor, do the same. When children are born to you and with them come family cares, take the new burden to the Lord, for He gives peace. And if the children die and you weep as your young shoots are cut off, still

turn to the Lord and believe that He will bless you with peace. If you grow sick, yourself, and the tokens of a deadly disease appear upon you, still be calm, for He will bless you with peace. When you must go upstairs and lie down upon your last bed to rise no more, then, even then, the Lord will bless you with His ever-living peace! And when you wake up at the sound of the last trump the Lord will still keep you in perfect peace.

“There remained a rest for the people of God.” This is always the heritage of His believing ones—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Whatever shall befall our race according to the dark page of prophecy. Whatever of terror shall break forth throughout the endless ages of the yet-to-be, the Lord will bless His people with peace! Take this Truth of God home to your heart and live upon it and you may dwell perpetually in the Presence of the King. I have done when I have said the following words. First, let us enquire whether we are resting on a false or a true foundation. Am I addressing a stranger to this Tabernacle, here today for the first time? I would not wish to do you anything but real good and yet I should like to search you to the foundation.

Is your hope built on a false peace? Then I would like to overthrow it and leave no stone upon another. Refuges of lies must be swept away before refuges of Divine Grace will be sought. If you take shelter behind “a bowing wall and a tottering fence,” I would desire to find a hand towards sending it over, for it will go before long, and it had better go while you can seek another shelter. You will never be on a right foundation until you are off the wrong one. As long as your happiness and peace are false and yet are fair to look upon, you will not seek true peace! Therefore, I would break the idols to shivers! Will you look to this? Will you give over being too secure? May I ask you to accept nothing as a ground of comfort which is not true?

Do not believe in a security which is only of temporary value. Believe eternal Truth and seek eternal life. Do not wrap yourself about with a comfort which you dare not prove and test. If you dare not examine it to the very bottom, away with it! If it will not bear the closest search, leave it to those who can afford to run great risks, for you cannot. If you dare not think about your state, you can be sure that there is something wrong with it. Walk in the light of God and have no fellowship with unfruitful hopes which are works of darkness. May I entreat you, when you have laid these things to heart, to seek at once to have close dealings with God? Do not say, “I will begin searching the Scriptures.” That is a good thing in itself, but if you rest in Scripture reading and do not go to *God Himself*, your Bible may be made a stumbling stone for your soul!

Do not say, “I shall attend more religious services.” This, also, may be well, but religious services will ruin you if you put them in the place of personal dealings with God! Your living soul has personally to do with the living God. Come to HIM this morning if you have never been before. Come at once. Delay no more! Do you shrink? Do you want an introduction? Do you need a friend to go with you to Heaven’s high court? Behold, the Son of God waits to be your Mediator and Intercessor! Come to the Fa-

ther through the Son and you will in no wise be cast out! Get a hope, O my Hearer, which will last you to the last! Get a hope which you can die with! I charge you by the living God and by Christ Jesus, who will surely come to judge the quick and dead, get a confidence which will endure the test of death, judgment, and eternity!

Seek to have “boldness in the day of judgment.” No small matter *this*. Make sure work for the day of trial. How can you be sure unless your trust is built upon the Foundation which God Himself has laid? Behold the All-Sufficient Sacrifice! Rest in the Divine Expiation, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. “But can we be sure?” cries one. There are thousands of us who possess the assurance of a child-like faith. We could not rest a minute if we were not sure in such a matter! I could not be content with a salvation which did not give me certainty in my soul, for sin is real and I must have real pardon—my trouble of heart is real and I must have real confidence in a Savior! My inward sinfulness is real and I must have a real new birth unto holiness.

In the day when I took hold of Christ Jesus my Lord, I found in Him such real peace that I knew and was persuaded that He is able to save. If any call me a dogmatist, I plead guilty to the charge. I must dogmatize when I am sure! I cannot live without being certain! Doubt in this matter is death! I accept my Lord’s Atonement! I rest on it and I find peace to my soul. “If,” “but,” “perhaps”—those are daggers in my heart! Where is the comfort to any soul in what he does not know to be true? The sap and substance of consolation lie in the certainty of the truth believed. If you are not sure, never rest till you are! Once know assuredly that God is good to Israel and that He will bless His people with peace and then go on to enjoy as much of that peace as your soul can hold!

Sing both by day and by night. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.” As for me, I know whom I have believed and the resolve of my soul is to magnify my Lord, world without end—

***“Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast
To witness Your eternal love,
And give my spirit rest.
My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die,
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity.”***

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73, 29.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—734, 715, 726.**

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 22 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”
Psalm 29:4.*

ALL God's works praise Him whether they are magnificent or minute. They all discover the wisdom, the power and the benevolence of their Creator. "All Your works praise You, O God." But there are some of His more majestic works which sing the song of praise louder than others. There are some of His doings upon which there seems to be engraved in larger letters than usual, the name of God! Such are the lofty mountains which worship God with uncovered heads both night and day. Such are the rolling seas, too mighty to be managed by man, but held in check by God. And such, especially, are the thunder and the lightning. The lightning is the glance of the eyes of God and the thunder is the uttering of His voice. The thunder has usually been more especially attributed to God, though philosophers assure us that it is to be accounted for by natural causes. We believe them, but we prefer, ourselves, the first great cause and we are content with that odd and universal belief that the thunder is the voice of God. It is marvelous what effect the thunder has had upon all kinds of men. In reading an ode of Horace the other day, I found him in the first two verses singing like a true Ithurean, that he despised God and intended to live merrily. But, by-and-by, he hears the thunder and acknowledging that there is a Jehovah, who lives on high, he trembles before Him! The most wicked of men have been obliged to acknowledge that there must be a Creator when they have heard that marvelous voice of His sounding through the sky! Men of the stoutest nerve and the boldest blasphemy have become the weakest of all creatures when God has, in some degree, manifested Himself in the mighty whirlwind, or in the storm. "He breaks the cedars of Lebanon," He brings down the stout hearts. He lays down the mighty and He obliges those who never acknowledged Him to reverence Him when they hear His voice! The Christian will acknowledge the thunder to be the voice of God from the fact that if he is in the right frame of mind, it always suggests to him holy thoughts. I do not know how it may be with you, but I scarcely ever hear the rolling thunder but I begin to forget earth and look upwards to

my God. I am unconscious of any feeling of terror or pain—it is rather a feeling of delight that I experience, for I like to sing that verse—

***“The God that rules on high
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.”***

He is our God and I like to sing that and think of it. But why is there something so terrible in that voice, when God is speaking—something so terrific to other men and humbling to the Christian? The Christian is obliged to sink very low in his own estimation. Then he looks up to God and cries, “Infinite Jehovah, spare a worm, crush not an unworthy wretch! I know it is Your voice. I reverence You with solemn awe. I prostrate myself before Your Throne. You are my God and beside You there is none else.” It might well have occurred to a Jewish mind to have called the thunder the voice of God when he considered the loudness of it when all other voices are hushed. Even if they are the loudest voices mortals can utter, or the most mighty sounds—yet are they but indistinct whispers compared with the voice of God in the thunder! Indeed, they are entirely lost when God speaks from His Throne and makes even the deaf hear and those who are unwilling to acknowledge Him hear His voice!

But we need not stop to prove that the thunder is the voice of God from any natural feeling of man. We have Scripture to back us up and, therefore, we shall do our best to appeal to that. In the first place, there is a passage in the book of Exodus where I would refer you. There, in the margin, we are told that the thunder is the voice of God. In the 9th Chapter and the 28th verse, Pharaoh says, “Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunder and hail.” The original Hebrew has it, and my margin has it—and the margin of all of you who are wise enough to have marginal Bibles—“Voices of God.” “Let there be no more voices of God and hail.” So you see it is not a mere illusion, but we are really warranted by Scripture in saying that, “the thunder is the voice of God lifted up in the sky.” Now, for another proof. To what shall we refer you unless we send you to the book of Job? Beginning in his 37th Chapter at the 3rd verse, he says, “He directs it under the whole Heaven and His lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His excellency: and He will not stay them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice; great things does He, which we cannot comprehend.” And so he says in the 40th Chapter at the 9th verse, “Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder

with a voice like He?” I am glad, in this age, when men are seeking to forget God and put Him entirely out of the Creation—trying to put laws in the place of God, as if laws could govern a universe without Someone to execute those laws and put power and force into them—I am glad, I say, to be able to bear testimony to something which men cannot deny to be caused immediately by God, the Mighty One, Himself!

There is one striking proof I would offer to you that the thunder is the voice of God and that is the fact that when God spoke on Sinai and gave forth His Law, His voice is then described, if not in the first passage, yet in the reference to it, as being great thunders. “There were thunders and lightning, exceedingly loud and long.” God spoke, then, and He spoke so terribly in thunder that the people requested that they might hear that voice no more! And I must refer you to one passage in the New Testament which will bear me out thoroughly in describing the thunder to be, indeed, the voice of God. Look at John, in the 11th Chapter, where Jesus lifted up His voice to Heaven at the tomb of Lazarus and asked His Father to answer Him. And then a voice came from Heaven and they that stood by said, “that it thundered.” It was the voice of God which was then heard and they ascribed it to the thunder. Here is a remarkable proof that the thunder has usually been ascribed to God as being His voice! And when God’s voice has been heard on any remarkable occasion, it has always been accompanied by the sound of thunder, or, rather, has been the sound of thunder itself.

Well, now, leaving these considerations altogether, we come to make some remarks, not upon the voice of God in the thunder, but upon the voice of God as elsewhere heard. It is not only heard there, naturally, but there are spiritual voices and other voices of the Most High. “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” God has spoken in various ways to man in order that man might not think Him a God so engrossed with Himself that He does not observe His creatures. It has graciously pleased the Divine Being to sometimes *look* upon man, at other times to stretch out His hand to man and, sometimes, to reveal Himself in mortal appearance to man and frequently to speak to man. At sundry times He has spoken absolutely without the use of means—by His own voice—as, for instance, when He spoke from Sinai’s blazing mountaintop. Or when He spoke to Samuel in his bed and said unto him several times, “Samuel, Samuel.” Or when He spoke to Elijah and Elijah said, “he heard the whirlwind and he saw the fire.” And after that there was “a still small voice.” He has spoken immediately from Heaven by His own lips on one or two occasions in the life of Christ. He spoke to Him at the waters of Jordan, when He said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He spoke to Him on another occasion, to which we have already referred. He spoke—

it was God that spoke, though it was Jesus Christ—He spoke to Saul, when on his way to Damascus, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” He has spoken several times by His own voice without the intervention of means at all. At other seasons, God has been pleased to speak to men by angels. He has, as it were, written the message and sent it down by His messenger from on high. He has told to man many wonders and secrets by the lips of those glorious beings who are flaming spirits of His, that do His pleasure. As frequently, perhaps, God has spoken to men in dreams, in visions of the night when deep sleep falls upon them. Then, when the natural ear has been closed, He has opened the ear of the Spirit and He has taught Truths which, otherwise, men could never have known.

More frequently, still, God has spoken to men by men. From the days of Noah even until now, God has raised up His Prophets, by whose lips He has spoken. It was not Jeremiah who uttered that lament which we read—it was Jehovah—God in Jeremiah speaking through the natural organs of his voice! It was not Isaiah who foresaw the future and foretold the doom of millions—it was God in Isaiah thus speaking. And so with every Prophet of the Lord now living and every minister whom God has raised up to speak—when we speak with power and efficacy and unction—it is not we, who speak, but it is the Spirit of our Father who dwells in us! God speaks through men and now, also, we know that God speaks through His own written Word of Inspiration. When we turn to the pages of Scripture, we must not look upon these words as being, in any degree, the words of men, but as being the Words of God. And though they are silent, yet do they speak. And though they cause no noise, yet, verily, “their God has gone forth throughout all the world and their noise unto the ends of the earth.” And again—God even now speaks by the use of means. He does not make man speak, He does not make the Bible speak merely of itself, but He speaks through the Bible and through the man—as really as if He had used no books or employed no man to speak for Him! Yes, and there are times when the Spirit of God speaks in the heart of man without the use of means. I believe there are many secret impulses, many solemn thoughts, many mysterious directions given to us without a single word having been uttered but by the simple motions of God’s Spirit in the heart. This thing I know, that when I have neither heard nor read, I have yet felt the voice of God within me and the Spirit, Himself, has revealed some dark mystery, opened some secret, guided me into some Truth, given me some direction, led me in some path, or in some other way has immediately spoken to me, Himself. And I believe it is so with every man at conversion—with every Christian—as he is carried on through his daily life and especially as he nears the shores of the grave—that God, the Everlasting One, speaks, Himself, to his soul with a

voice that he cannot resist, although he may have resisted the mere voice of man. The voice of the Lord is still heard, even as it was heard before. Glory be to His name!

And now, my Beloved, I come to the Doctrine, “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” First of all, *essentially*. “The voice of the Lord” *must* be “full of majesty.” Secondly, *constantly*. “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” Thirdly, *efficaciously*, in all it does, “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”

I. First, then, “The voice OF THE LORD IS FULL OF MAJESTY.” Yes, and so it should be. Should not that voice be full of majesty which comes from Majesty? Is not God the King of Kings and the Ruler of the whole earth? Should He, then, speak with a voice below His own dignity? Should not a king speak with the voice of a king? Should not a mighty monarch speak with a monarch’s tongue? And surely, if God is God, and if He is the blaster of all worlds and the Emperor of the universe, He must, when He speaks, speak with the monarch’s tongue and with a majestic voice! The very Nature of God requires that all He does should be Godlike. His looks are Divine looks. His thoughts are Divine thoughts. Should not His words be Divine words, since they come from Him? Verily, from the very Essence of God we might infer that His voice would be full of majesty!

But what do we mean by a voice having majesty? I take it that no man’s voice can have majesty in it unless it is true. A lie, if it should be spoken in the noblest language, would never be majestic! A lie, if it is uttered by the most eloquent lips, would be a mean and paltry thing, however it might be spoken! And a lie, wherever uttered and by whomever, is not majestic! A lie can never be truth and truth only can ever have majesty about it. And because God’s Words are pure Truth, unalloyed with the least degree of error, therefore does it come to pass that His words are full of majesty. Whatever I hear my Father say in Scripture, wherever He speaks to me by the ministry, or by His Spirit—if He speaks it, there is not the slightest alloy of untruth about it! I may receive it just as it is—

**“My faith may on His promise live,
May on His promise die.”**

I need not reason about it, it is enough for me to take it and believe it because He has said it! I need not try to prove it to the worldling. If I were to prove it, he would believe it none the better. If the voice of God’s majesty does not convince him, surely the voice of my reasoning never will. It need not stand and cut and divide between this voice of God and the other, I know it must be true if He has said it and, therefore, I will believe all that I believe God has said, believing that His voice is full of majesty!

Then, again, when we speak of a majestic voice, we mean by it, that it is *a commanding voice*. A man may speak truth and yet there may be but little majesty in what he says because he speaks it in a tone that never can command attention and catch the ear of his fellow creatures. In fact, there are some men, expounders of the Truth of God, who had better hold their tongues, for they do Truth an injury. We know full many who affect to preach God's Truth. They go out to battle, they take the lance in their hands to defend the honor of Christ, but they wield the lance so poorly—they have so little of God's Spirit—that they do but disgrace His holy name! It would have been better had they remained at home. Oh, Beloved, God's voice, when He speaks, is always a commanding voice! Let the monarch arise in the midst of his creatures—they may have been conversing with each other before—but hush, his majesty is about to speak! It is so with the majesty of God—if He should speak in Heaven, the angels would hush their hallelujahs and suspend the notes of their golden harps to hear Him! And when He speaks on earth, it is at all times becoming in all His creatures to hush their rebellious passions and make the voice of their reason be silent. When God speaks, either from the pulpit or from His Word, I hold it to be my duty to keep silent! Even while we sing the glories of our God, our soul stands trembling. But when He speaks forth His own glories, who is he that dares to reply? Who is he that shall lift up his voice against the Majesty of Heaven? There is something so majestic in the voice of God, that when He speaks, it commands silence everywhere and bids men listen!

But there is something *very powerful* in the voice of God and that is the reason why it has majesty in it. When God speaks, He speaks not weakly, but with a voice full of power. We poor creatures, at times, are clothed by God with that might and when we speak, Grace comes pouring from our lips. But there are oftentimes seasons when we meet with small success. We talk and talk and have not our Master's feet behind us, nor our Master's Spirit within us. And, therefore, but little is done. It is not so with God—He never wasted a word yet! He never spoke a solitary word in vain. Whatever He intended, He had but to speak and it was accomplished! Once he said, "Let there be light," and instantly light was. So He said in past eternity that Christ should be His first Elect, and Christ was His first Elect! He decreed our salvation—He spoke the word, and it was done. He sent His Son to redeem and proclaimed to His elect, justification in Him. And His voice was a powerful voice, for it did justify us! Any other man's voice could not pardon sin—none but the voice of the monarch can speak pardon to the subject. And God's is a majestic voice, for He has only to speak and our pardon is at once signed, sealed and ratified! God is not pompous in His words. He does not speak big-sounding

words without meaning. The simplest word He utters may have little meaning to man, but it has a power and meaning in it equal to the Omnipotence of God. There is a majesty about the voice of God which might suffice to nerve my soul to fight the dragon. To say, "Where is your boasted victory, Death? Where is the monster's sting?" That one promise has majesty enough in it to make the dwarf a giant and the weakling one of the mightiest of the Most High! It has might enough in it to feed a whole host in the wilderness, to guide a whole company through the mazes of mortal life—Majesty enough to divide the Jordan, to open the gates of Heaven and admit the ransomed in! Beloved, I cannot tell you how it is that God's voice is so majestic except from the fact that He is so mighty and that His words are like He!

But just one more thought concerning the voice of God being essentially majestic and I must trouble you to remember this even if you forget everything else that I have said! In some sense, Jesus Christ may be called the Voice of God. You know He is called the Word of God frequently in Scripture—and I am sure this Word of God, "is full of majesty." The Voice and the Word are very much the same thing. God speaks—it is His Son. His Son is the Word, the Word is His Son and the Voice is His Son. Ah, truly the Voice, the Word of God, "is full of majesty." Angels! You can tell what sublime Majesty invested His blessed Person when He reigned at His Father's right hand. You can tell what was the brightness which He laid aside to become Incarnate. You can tell how sparkling was that crown, how mighty was that scepter, how glorious were those robes bedecked with stars! Spirits, you who saw Him when He stripped Himself of all His glories—you can tell what was His Majesty. And oh, you glorified, you who saw him ascend up on high, leading captivity captive—you beloved songsters who bow before Him and unceasingly sing His love—you can tell how full of majesty He is! High above all principalities and powers you see Him sit—angels are but servants at His feet and the mightiest monarchs like creeping worms beneath His Throne! High up there, where God, alone, reigns, beyond the sight of angels or the gaze of immortal spirits—there He sits, not merely Majestic, but *full of majesty*. Christian, adore your Savior! Adore the Son of God! Reverence Him and remember at all seasons and times how little you may be, your Savior, with whom you are allied—the Word of God—is essentially full of majesty!

II. Now the second point. IT IS CONSTANTLY FULL OF MAJESTY. God's voice, like man's voice, has its various tones and degrees of loudness. But it is constantly full of majesty—whatever tone He uses—it is always full of majesty! Sometimes God speaks to man with a harsh voice, threatening him for sin—and then there is majesty in that harshness. When man is angry with his fellows and he speaks harshly and severely,

there is little majesty in *that*. But when the just God is angry with sinful mortals and He says, “I will by no means spare the guilty,” “I, the Lord, am a jealous God.” When He declares Himself to be exceedingly angry and asks who can stand before the fury of His Countenance—when the rocks are cast down by Him—there is a majesty in that terrific voice of His! Then He adopts another voice. Sometimes it is a gentle didactic voice, teaching us what He would have us learn. And then how full of majesty it is! He explains, He expounds, He declares. He tells us what we are to believe—and what a majesty there is in His voice then! Men may explain God’s Word and have no majesty in what they say. But when God teaches what His people are to hold to be Truth, what majesty there is in it! So much majesty, that if any man takes away from the Words that are written in this Book, God shall take away his name out of the Book of Life and out of the holy city—so much majesty, that to seek to mend the Bible is a proof of a blasphemous heart—that to seek to alter one Word of Scripture is a proof of alienation from the God of Israel! At another time God uses another voice—a sweet consoling voice. And oh, you mourners who have ever heard God’s comforting voice—is not that full of majesty? There is nothing of the mere trifling that sometimes we employ to comfort poor sick souls. Mothers will often talk to those who are sick in some gentle strain—but somehow it appears to be affected and is, therefore, not full of majesty. But when God speaks to comfort, He uses His majestic words. “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed,” says the Lord who has mercy on you! Oh, is there not majesty in this sweet voice? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I never forget you.” How sweet, but yet how majestic! We cannot avoid being comforted by it if God speaks it to our souls. Sometimes God’s voice is a reproving voice—and then, too, it is full of majesty. “The ox knows his owner,” He says, “and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” And He speaks reprovingly, as if He had a controversy with them and calls the mountains and the hills to hear His reproof of them on account of sin. “I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against Me.” But God’s reproving voice is always full of majesty! At other times it is a voice of command to His children, when He appears to them and says, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.”

And how majestic are God’s commands, how mighty is His voice when He tells us what to do! Some of you have a very poor estimation of what God’s voice is. God tells you to be baptized in honor of your Lord and Master. He speaks to you and He tells you to come round His Table and

to remember His dying sufferings. But you do not think much of it. It seems to be lost upon you. But let me tell you that God's voice of command is as full of majesty and ought to be as much regarded by His people as His Word of promise or His Word of Doctrine! Whenever He speaks, there is a majesty about His voice. Whatever tone He may adopt, there is majesty. Ah, Beloved and there are times coming when God will speak words which will be evidently full of majesty—then He will speak and say, "Arise, you dead and come to judgment." There will be majesty in that voice for Hell shall then be unlocked and the gates of the grave sawn in two. The spirits of the dead shall again be clothed with flesh and the dry bones shall be made alive once more. And He will speak, by-and-by, and summon all men to stand before His bar. And there will be majesty in His voice, then, when He shall say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." And oh, dread thought, there will be tremendous majesty in His voice when He shall exclaim, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Again—God's voice is full of majesty *in all the different degrees of its loudness*. Even in calling, there is a difference in the loudness of God's voice. Many of you were called gently to Christ and you did not seem to hear the thunders of Sinai, like many of God's people. But whether the voice is loud or soft, it is always full of majesty!

And *in all its mediums* it is full of majesty. God has, sometimes, chosen the poor to speak His wisdom. If I go and hear a countryman or an untaught man, preach—who makes many mistakes in grammar—yet if it is God's Word that He preaches, it "is full of majesty." And sometimes when a little child has repeated a text, we have not noticed the child by reason of the majesty of the voice! In fact, the meaner the instrument employed, the greater the majesty in the voice, itself. I have noticed a tendency in many to despise their poorer Brothers and Sisters, members of smaller Churches, where there is a more humble minister than one they are in the habit of hearing. This is all wrong, for God's voice is full of majesty and He can speak as well by one as the other!

III. In the last place, I must briefly refer to the majesty of God's voice **WHEN IT IS REVEALED IN ITS EFFECT**—when it is spoken home to the heart of man. Just look at the Psalm and let me briefly refer to the facts here mentioned. I shall not understand them naturally, though, doubtless, they were so intended by David, but I shall understand them *spiritually*. As Dr. Hawker remarks, "Doubtless, they were intended to set out gracious operations, as well as natural ones."

First, the voice of the Lord is a *breaking* voice. "The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars." The most proud and most stubborn sinner is broken

before Him when He speaks! I believe that even the spirit of Voltaire, stubborn as that spirit was, and hard as a millstone, would have been broken in a single instant if God had but spoken to him. The hardest heart I have here needs only one syllable from God to break it in a moment! I might hammer away to all eternity, but I could not do it. Only “the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.”

In the next place it is a *moving* voice, an overcoming voice. “He makes them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.” Who would ever think of a mountain moving? It stands so fast and firm. But God’s voice, like His voice in Zerubbabel, speaks to the mountain and says, “Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” There is not a mountain standing in this world that God cannot move away by His voice, whether it be the mountains of Rome, or the mountains of the false prophet, or the mountains of colossal systems of heresy, or infidelity, or idolatry! God has only to speak the word and the idols shall fall from their thrones and the firm mountains shall skip like a calf!

In the next place, the voice of God is a *dividing* voice. “The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire” or, as it should be, “The voice of the Lord puts out with flames of fire.” You saw the lightning on Friday and you remarked, then, when God’s voice was heard, that the flash seemed to part the cloud and divide the sky. Just so with God’s Word. Where God’s Word is faithfully preached and His voice is *spiritually* heard, it is always a *dividing* voice. You bring all kinds of different characters into a Chapel and God’s word splits them all in two. It is in this place God divides you. The Son of God holds His Throne and sits in judgment here. It divides men from men. It divides sinners from their sins. It divides sinners from their righteousness. It splits through clouds and darkness. It divides our troubles, breaks a way for us to Heaven. In fact, there is nothing that the voice of God cannot divide! It is a dividing voice.

And then, again, the voice of the Lord is such a loud voice, that it is said to shake the wilderness. “The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.” Stand in the middle of a wilderness or a desert and conceive if *you* could make anything hear. But when God speaks, His voice rings through the wilderness and startles the desert, itself! Minister of God, you have only to speak God’s voice and you will be heard! If you have only half-a-dozen to hear you, you will be heard further than you know of! None of us can preach a Gospel sermon, but it is heard and talked of more than we imagine. Yes, there is not a pious conversation with a poor woman but may be carried all over the world and produce the most wonderful effects! Nobody can tell how loud is God’s voice and how far it may be heard. “Lift up your voice; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities

of Judah, Behold your God.” And your voice may be ever so weak and your ability ever so little—only lift it up and God Almighty, by His Grace, may make the very wilderness to shake—yes, He may make the very wilderness of Kadesh to tremble!

And then in the 9th verse there is another idea which I must not pass over, although I might have preferred to do so. “The voice of the Lord makes the cattle to calve.” By this I understand what the ancients believed—that so frightened were the cattle by the noise of the thunder, that the period of calving was often hastened on and frequently premature. It is just so with God’s voice. If a man has in him a desire towards Christ, the voice of God makes him bring forth that desire to the joy and rejoicing of his soul. And very frequently, when a man has a bad design towards God, God has only to speak and his design becomes abortive. It is brought forth, as it were, before its time and falls like an untimely fruit to the ground! Whatever man has within him, God can make it come out of him in a single moment. If he has a desire towards God—God can bring forth that desire and He can bring forth the soul and make it live. And if it is a desire *against* God, God can frustrate that desire, kill it, overwhelm it and overthrow it—“for the voice of the Lord makes the cattle to calve.”

And in the next place, the voice of God is a *discovering* voice. It “discovers the forests.” The trees were your former hiding place—but in the forest, however thick it may be, there does the lightning gleam. Under the mighty trees, however thick their covering, the voice of the Lord is heard. God’s voice is a discovering voice. You hypocrites! You get to hiding yourselves under the trees of the forest—but God’s voice thunders after you when it speaks! Some of you hide under ceremonies, good lives, resolutions and hopes. But God’s voice will discover the forests. And remember, there will be a day with some of you when you will hide yourselves, or seek to do it, under rocks and mountains, or in the deepest parts of the forests—but when He sits upon His Throne, the voice of the Lord will discover the forests! You may stand under the old oak, or creep within its trunk and feel that there you are hidden—but His eyes, like balls of fire, shall see you through and through—and His voice, like a voice of thunder, shall say, “Come forth, culprit; come forth, man! I can see you—

***‘My eyes can pierce the shades and find your soul as soon
In midnight’s darkness as in blazing noon.’***

Come forth, come forth!” And vain, then, will be your disguises, vain your subterfuges—“The voice of the Lord discovers the forests.” Oh, I would to God that He would speak to some of you this morning and reveal your souls! I wish He would reveal to you, your lost and hopeless condition—that you are damned without Christ—every one of you! Oh that He would

show you how horrible is your position considered apart from the Savior! Show to you the fallacy of all your legal hope and of all your experiences, if they are not experiences allied to Christ! I pray that He would reveal to you that all your good works will come tumbling on your head, at last, if you build them for a house and that you must stand surrounded by no covering, but unveiled before the God who discovers the forests!

I would have preached to you this morning, but I cannot. Yet, perhaps, amidst the multitude of my words there may be some still small voice of God which shall reach your heart. And if the rest of you should despise it, what of that? The voice of God will be as full of majesty in the reprobate as in the elect! If you are cast away into Hell, God shall get as much glory from the voice which you heard and which you despised, as He does from His voice which the elect heard and at which they trembled and fled to God! Do not think that your damnation will rob God of any of His honor! Why, Sirs, He can be as much glorified in your destruction as in your salvation! You are but little creatures in the account of His Glory. He can magnify Himself anyhow! Oh, humble yourselves, therefore, before God! Bow down before His love and His mercy and hear, now, what the plan of salvation is, whereby God brings out His elect. It is this—"he that believes," in that Voice, that Word, that Son of His, "he that believes,"—not he that hears—"he that *believes*"—not he that talks—"he that *believes*"—not he that reads—"he that *believes*"—not merely he that hopes—"he that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned."

Ah, Hearers, if I could leap out of my body and could lay aside the infirmities of my spirit, I think that *then* I might preach to you! But I know right well that even then it must be God who speaks—and therefore I leave the words—My God! My God! Save these, my people, for Jesus' precious name's sake. Amen and Amen.

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

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

SINGING SAINTS

NO. 2489

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 1, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1886.**

***“Sing to the LORD, O you saints of His, and give thanks
at the remembrance of His holiness.”
Psalm 30:4.***

DAVID had been seriously ill and the Lord had graciously restored him to health. He says, “O Lord my God, I cried to You and You have healed me. O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” As soon as he has recovered his health and strength, the holy instincts of the man lead him to praise the Lord. The first thing to do, when the throat is clear after an illness, is to sing praises to God! The first thing to do, when the eyes are brightened again, is to look up to the Lord with thankfulness and gratitude. Some people need to be told this, but the Psalmist did not—it came to him as a matter of course. Now that he was restored, he would take his place among the heavenly choristers and sing to Jehovah. He was not satisfied to sing alone, what child of God is? Among the birds in the springtime, when the first one wakes in the morning and begins to sing, does he not call up his fellows? Is not his song an invitation to all the feathered songsters of the grove to join with him and pour out their united harmony? In like manner, it is characteristic of a praiseful heart that it naturally desires society in praise. We do not like to praise God alone—we *can* do it and we *will* do it if we must—but our heart often cries aloud to our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, “Praise to the Lord.” Our very, “Hallelujah,” is intended to stir up others to this holy exercise, for it means, “Praise you the Lord.”

My one desire, just now, is that those of us who have received special mercy from God should praise His name and then that all the rest, if there are any who have not received such remarkable mercies as others of us have, should also feel exhorted to join in the sacred song of thankfulness to our God!

This is a duty which is pleasant—there is nothing more delightful than to sing praises to the Lord. It is also a duty that is profitable—it will be as blessed to yourself as it will be pleasing to God. Singing has a curative effect upon many of the maladies of the soul. I am sure that it lightens the burdens of life and I was about to say that it shortens the weary way of duty if we can but sing as we travel along it. This holy employment is pleasant and profitable and it is preparatory for another world and a higher state! I like to sing with Dr. Watts—

***“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”***

We are on the way to Glory, so let us sing as we journey there and, as the lark, ascending up to Heaven’s gate sings as she soars, her wings keeping time with her music and mounting in her song as she rises through the air, so let it be with us—every day a Psalm, every night a day’s march nearer Home, a little nearer to Heaven’s music and a little better imitation of it! Let us sing, now, in our hearts if not with our lips, and when the time comes, let us join our lips with our hearts and sing to the Lord! That is our text, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

It strikes me that our text is very suitable for a communion Sabbath evening. We are about to gather at this table whereon are spread the memorials of our Savior’s death. And there are three things about the text which make me think it a very proper one for such an occasion. They are, first, *the peculiar fitness of the exhortation to our present engagement*—“Sing to the Lord.” Secondly, *the special suitability of the subject for our meditation*—“The remembrance of His holiness.” Then, thirdly, *the admirable suitability of the company invited to join in the song* for they are the same people who are invited to sit down at the table—“Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

I. So, first, let us consider THE PECULIAR FITNESS OF THE EXHORTATION TO OUR PRESENT ENGAGEMENT—“Sing to the Lord.”

You are to come to the table where you remember your Savior’s death, where you are to feed upon the memorials of His passion. Come there with a heart prepared for song. “Oh,” says one, “I thought I had better come with tears.” Yes, come with tears—they will be very sweet to Christ if you let them fall upon His feet to wash them with your penitential streams. “Oh, Sir,” says another, “I thought that surely I must come with deep solemnity.” So you must. Woe be to you if you come in any other way, but do you know of any divorce between solemnity and joy? I do not. Levity is akin to sorrow and soon curdles into it—the laugh is but superficial—and just below the surface lies the sigh. But he who is calmly, quietly, soberly thoughtful, is the man in whom there may be deeps of joy which can never be fathomed. There is a little shallow joy that goes prattling over the pebbles of the brook and is soon gone. I invite you not to that sort of mirth, but to that deep solemn joy which godly men feel and which can be fittingly expressed in holy song. “Sing to the Lord.” That is no frivolous music! “Sing to the Lord.” That is no ballad or ditty—it is a *Psalm*—deep, solemn, profound. And the joy of it is great. “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.”

“Still,” you say to me, “we do not quite see the suitability of singing at this Communion Table.” Well, then, if you do not, I think you soon will, for I remind you that at this table, we celebrate *a work accomplished*. Solomon said, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” The joy is not in the sowing, but in the reaping! Our Lord bids us put bread and wine upon the table to show that His work is finished by His

death. There is the bread and there is the wine—they are distinct and separate. They indicate the flesh and the blood, but the blood separate from the flesh—a sure mark that death has taken place. It is Christ's death that we celebrate by this communion and that death has written across it these words, "It is finished!" He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do and, therefore, He gave up the ghost. I rejoice that Christ's death is an accomplished fact! We have sung, in plaintive tones, with an almost bleeding heart, the sad story of the Cross, and nails, and spear, and crown of thorns. And it has been a sweet relief to us when the poet has led us to sing—

**"No more the bloody spear,
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore."**

It is an infinite satisfaction to us that—

**"The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now."**

All the shame and sorrow are done with. All that is over and we come to this table to eat this bread and to drink of this cup in memory of a glorious work, an unrivalled work, a work which cost the Savior His life, but a work that is complete and perfect and accepted of God! Talk of the labors of Hercules? What are those compared with the toil of the Christ of God? Talk of the conquests of Caesar? What are those beside the victories of Christ who has led captivity captive and received gifts for men? Beloved, I think that no music can be too loud, too pleasant, too joyous, as we gather about this table and say, one to another, "We are celebrating the full accomplishment of that which Jesus undertook to do when He was born at Bethlehem, when He lived at Nazareth, when He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane and died on the Cross at Calvary." Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!"

I think I see another reason also why we should come to this table with holy song and that is not only because of a work accomplished but because of *a result realized*, at least in a measure. Look, Sirs. Instead of flesh, I see bread. Instead of blood, I see wine. I know that the bread and the wine are symbols of the flesh and the blood, but I also know that they are something more—they are not only symbols of the things, themselves—but also of that which comes out of those things. This is what I mean. This day, because Christ has died, a table is spread for the starving souls of men. God keeps open house. Like a great king, He sets His table in the street, sends out His servants and bids them invite the hungry, the poor, the needy, the thirsty, to come and eat and drink and be satisfied. And, inasmuch as maddened and besotted by their sin, they will not come, He adds this command, "*Compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled."

And, Brothers and Sisters, when you and I gather around this table, if we have, indeed, come to Christ *spiritually*, He sees in us a part of the reward of His sufferings! The festival has been going on these 1800 years. Relays of guests have been continually feasting at the Table of the great King who says, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed," and His guests are still coming, myriads of them, who would all have

died if they had not lived by feeding upon Christ! They would have all been lost if they had not been saved by the precious blood of Jesus! They are still coming and our prophetic eyes see, in the companies that are gathering together this Sabbath all over the world, the vanguard of a mightier host that no man can number, out of every nation, kindred, tribe, people and tongue! Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His." The very setting up of the Communion Table and the gathering of men and women to it that they may spiritually feast upon their dying Lord is a reason for thankfulness!

There is, in the third place, this reason why some of us should sing to the Lord, for here is a *blessing enjoyed*. Not only are many coming in various parts of the world and feeding spiritually upon the flesh and blood of the Crucified, but it is a special joy that you and I are also here. I am glad, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you are here. It is a great joy to me that my brother in the flesh should be here and it is a great delight that many of you with whom I have lived so long in happy fellowship should be here. But I could not afford *not* to be here myself! If I had to go away at the close of the service and leave you to commune with the Lord—and I had no part nor lot in the matter—I should have to miss an exceedingly great joy! You who love the Lord, will you look back to the days when you did not know Him, but when you longed to know Him? There was a time when you sighed and cried for Him and if anybody had said to you, "You will sit with the great company at the Communion in the Tabernacle on such a night, and the Lord Jesus will be very precious to you, and your heart will be brimming over with delight," you would have said, "I am afraid that is too good to be true! I cannot expect it ever to be *my* case." There was a time with me when, if I might but have been the least dog under Christ's Table and have picked up the crumbs and the stale crusts, and the bones that others despised, I would have licked His feet for very joy! Yet now, lo, here I sit among His children and am one of them! And I have the pleasure of passing to you, my Brothers and Sisters, the sweet dainties which He put on the Table—and if you do not sing, I must! If none of you will sing, I shall have to sing alone! I cannot help it. But I believe that each one of you feels the same wonder, delight and gratitude to think that you, also, are here.

There is yet another matter to sing about in coming to this table, for this Communion reminds us of a *hope revived*. What said the Apostle Paul concerning this ordinance? "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes." This is one of the tokens which our Lord has given us that He *will come again*! In effect, He says, "Eat that bread, drink of that cup, and I will be coming nearer and nearer every time that you thus assemble around My Table." Well now, if you did not sing last time, you ought to sing at the thought that Jesus is coming again! He has not gone away forever. According to the Scriptures He has not gone for long. Every hour brings Him nearer and it cannot, now, be very long before He will be back again. Remember what the two men in white apparel said to the disciples, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come"—literally and personally—"in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

As surely as Jesus lives, His feet will stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet and He will come to gloriously reign among His ancients! This Second Coming of our Lord, not as a Sin-Offering, not in shame and humiliation, but in all the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels, makes us strike together with a joyous clash the high-sounding cymbals! We already anticipate the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ when all His enemies shall bow before Him. It will be, it *shall* be, and this supper is the memorial that it *certainly* shall be! Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!"

I think I have given good proof that this exhortation well befits our present engagement.

II. Now, secondly, dear Friends, notice THE SPECIAL SUITABILITY OF THE SUBJECT FOR OUR MEDITATION—"Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

It needs a holy man to give thanks at the remembrance of a holy God. Sinners hate holiness because they dread holiness, but the saints love holiness because they have no cause to dread it and because, on the other hand, it has become a fountain of comfort and joy to them.

I want you, at this Table, to think, first, of *Divine holiness vindicated*. God loved us, Brothers and Sisters, and He wished to save us, but even to save us He would not be unjust. His great heart was full of love, but even to indulge that heart of love He would not suffer His righteous Law to be dishonored, nor His moral government to be impaired. Men sometimes talk of God's punishing sin as if it were a freak with Him. It is a necessity! It is imprinted upon the very existence of moral beings that holiness must bring happiness, and unholiness must bring sorrow—and God will not reverse what He has so properly ordained to be the everlasting order of things! God must be just and He could not, therefore, wink at human guilt and pass it by. What, then, must be done? He, Himself, in the Person of His dear Son—for never forget that God the Father gave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son—He, Himself, in the Person of His dear Son, came into this world, assumed our nature and in that nature became the Representative of His people. And as their Representative He took upon Himself their sins. And being found with their sins imputed to Him, God dealt with our sin as laid upon Him! He found it there and He smote it there—and because of our sin Jesus bled and Jesus died! And now, when we come into a state of peace with God, it is not over the ruins of a broken Law. It is not over the shattered tablets which Moses broke at the foot of the mountain!

We come to the holy God in a holy way! Sinners are forgiven in a righteous way, the unjust are reckoned as just in a just fashion! There is not, in the salvation of a sinner, any keeping back or veiling of the Justice of God. He is just, yet He is the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I love this glorious Truth of God—it seems to me to be the charm of mercy in Christ that it is righteous mercy. This is the quintessence of delight that, when the saint gets to Heaven, he will be as rightly there as the sinner in Hell will be rightly *there*. There will be as much of the Divine holiness seen in the salvation of the dying thief as in the damnation of that other thief who perished in his sin! So let us, as we come to the Lord's Table,

“give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.” We are going to commune with a God who, so that He might commune with us and indulge His love to His chosen, would not break His own Law, or do that which, on the strictest judgment, could be regarded as unjust! I rejoice in that unquestionable fact—and my heart is glad as I remind you of it!

And, next, let us give thanks at the remembrance of *Christ’s holiness declared*. It is a happy occupation to look upon the perfect Character of our dear Redeemer. If there could have been found a fault or flaw in Him, He would not have been a suitable Substitute for us. If He had committed a single sin, He could not have taken our sins upon Himself, nor could He have put them away. Think, then, as you sit at this table, what a pure Christ He was! What a perfect Man as well as perfect God, what a spotless Character He possessed! And then, inasmuch as this was absolutely necessary to the completeness of the Atonement which you celebrate at this table, “give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.” I think I see Him coming in before us in His snow-white garments, girt with the golden girdle, with a face that for purity and brightness looks like the sun when it shines in its strength. And I fall down and admire and adore, not only His mercy and His meekness, and His charity, but the perfect holiness of my Redeemer and Lord! As you come to the table, Beloved, give thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of Him who sits at the head of the feast—the Lord Jesus, Himself, who passes you the cup and says to you, “Drink you all of it.” And who breaks the bread and says, “Take, eat. This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” “Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

I think, also, that it will be quite congruous with our present engagement if we think of *God’s holiness as the guarantee of our salvation*. This may seem a striking thing to say, but it is assuredly true. Blessed be the righteous God! It is, after all, upon the righteousness of God that we rest our hope! If God can lie, then not one promise of His is to be trusted. If God can do an unrighteous thing, then His Covenant may be flung to the winds! But God is not unrighteous to forget the work of His dear Son and, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love.” He who has pledged His word to you, saying, “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels,” will keep that pledge and you shall be there! He who has said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me,” will keep His promise and you shall never be ashamed! You, poor sinners, when you first come to Christ, look to God’s mercy and trust to it—and you do quite rightly. But after you have been a little while with Christ and begin to know the Father through knowing the Son, you come to “give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.” You see that, at the back of His mercy, as the very foundation and pillar of His Grace, there stands His righteousness! Beloved, as we come to the Communion Table, we give thanks at the remembrance of a hope that is grounded upon the righteousness of God! And we therefore sing praises to His holy name.

Once more. I think that, at this table, we may give thanks that *the holiness of God is our mark*, the objective for us to aim at, yes, and that to which we shall one day attain. “Be you holy, for I am holy.” “Be you per-

fect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” I sometimes ask our young friends, when they come to join the Church, whether they are perfect. And they open their eyes and look at me and say, “Oh, no; far from it!” Then, when I ask, “Would you like to be perfect?” their eyes sparkle with delight, as much as to say, “Why, that is the Heaven we are looking for, to be absolutely free from sin! We would not mind sorrow, sickness, pain, persecution, or anything of that sort, so long as we could but get rid of sin.”

“If sin is pardoned, I’m secure. And if sin is conquered, I am perfectly happy.” This will be the case with all Believers one of these days, but not here. Of all the people whom I have ever met with—who have told me that they were perfect—I can say that I was morally certain they were not! They had only to talk for about five minutes and they proved their own imperfection. But, Beloved, we *shall* be perfect one day. “He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He has you now like an unfinished vessel on the potter’s wheel—you are in the clay state and the great Potter is putting His finger on you and molding you. You are not half-fashioned yet, but He will never throw you away! He does not begin to make a vessel to honor and then cease His work, but He perfects that which He begins. And, one of these days you and I shall stand together as a part of the perfected work of God of which even He shall say, “It is very good.” Therefore, when we come to this Table, though we come sighing over our own imperfections, let us come singing because of the holiness of God—that holiness which we shall yet share!—

**“O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God.”**

The children shall yet bear the image of their Father, the brethren shall yet be conformed to the glories of the First-Born! Therefore, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

III. Lastly, the text is very appropriate for the Communion because of THE SUITABILITY OF THE PEOPLE of whom it speaks, for they are the same people who ought to come to this table—“Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His.”

First, then, those who come to this table should be “*saints*.” “Ah,” says one, “that is what I called a person this afternoon—‘one of your saints.’” I suppose you thought it was an ugly name, did you not? Well, you are perfectly welcome to call me by that name if you like, only I wish that you would prove the title to be true. “There,” said one to a Christian man, as he shoved him into the gutter, “take that, John Bunyan!” What did the other man say? Why, he picked up his hat and said, “You may fling me into the gutter again if you call me by that name! I am perfectly satisfied to take the compliment.” You call a man a, “saint,” and then think you have done him an ill turn? Why do you not call him a nobleman? Why do you not call him a peer of the realm? For many of your noblemen, your peers of the realm are poor stuff compared with the “saints!” I would sooner be a saint than be an emperor, or all the emperors rolled into one! A “saint”—why, it is a glorious title!

“Oh,” says one, “I mean Cromwell’s saints.” Do you? Well, they were not a bad sort of saints, after all, whether you try them by the strength of their arms in the day of battle, or by the strength of their lungs when they sang, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,” and shouted in Jehovah’s name in the midst of the battle! Or when they went back to their tents and knelt in prayer and communed with the Most High. But *I* do not mean Cromwell’s saints and I am not going to talk more about them! I say that this is what *every* Christian ought to be—a “saint.” It means a holy person, one who aims at being holy, one who is set apart for the service and glory of God. These are the people who are to give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness because God has made them holy, too! They are partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, and so they are saints. And they are the people who ought to come to the Table of the Lord.

But notice that they are not only saints, they are “saints of *His*.” That is to say, they are *God’s saints*—not Rome’s saints, but God’s saints! They might be Cromwell’s saints, but, better than that, they are God’s saints! “O you saints of *His*.” That is to say, they are saints of His making, for they were great sinners till He made saints of them. And they are saints of His keeping, for they would soon be sinners, again, if He did not keep them! They are saints enlisted in His service, sworn to serve under His banner, to be faithful to Him to death. They are “saints of *His*,” that is, they are saints whom He purchased with His precious blood and whom He means to have as His forever because He has bought them with so great a price! They are saints who shall be with Him in that day when He shall appear with all His holy ones. Then, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.” If God has made you holy. If you belong to Christ and so *are* holy, let your heart sing! Fling away your doubts, cast away your fears, forget your sorrows! “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.”

Further, these people who are spoken of in the text, the kind of people who ought to come to the Communion Table, are *God’s thankful saints*. They “give thanks at this remembrance of His holiness.” The man who has no thanks to give ought not to be at the Table of the Lord, for it is called the Eucharist, which signifies the giving of thanks. It is intended to be a giving of thanks from beginning to end. Jesus took the bread and gave thanks. After the same manner, also, He took the cup and gave thanks. So, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His and give thanks.” If we would come aright to the Table of the Lord, we must be thankful saints.

Then, lastly, they who come to the Lord’s Table should be *singing saints*. “May not mourning saints come?” Oh, yes! Come and welcome, but learn to sing! “May not weak and feeble saints come?” Oh, yes! But let them not remain weak and feeble. “May not groaning saints come?” Yes, they may come if they like, but groaning is out of place when you have your head on Christ’s bosom and have His flesh and His blood to feed upon! It should stop all your groans and moans when you once begin to feast on Him. I wish that more of God’s people would take to singing. I have known some few who were truly singing saints. I remember an old gentleman in my very young days. The first thing he did, when he rose in the morning, was to sing a hymn while he was washing and

dressing. When he came downstairs, the family knew by his singing that he was about. When he went into the street, he used to hum some little bit of a ditty and the people laughed, and said that old Father So-and-So was always singing. You could never put the good old man out, for as soon as he finished one hymn, he began another, and if anybody stopped him, so that he could not sing, he only waited till he could begin again and, all the while, he kept going over it silently in his heart.

We have not enough singing saints! The other Sunday morning I noticed that there was a lifeboat crew over at the farther end of the Tabernacle, and one Brother began saying, "Amen!" as soon as ever I commenced to pray. Somebody stopped him and I cannot say that I felt very sorry for my own sake and the congregation, generally, but after the service was over he and his mates said that they enjoyed the preaching, but what a dead lot of people we were! He was a red-hot Methodist, accustomed to cry out, "Glory!" and, "Hallelujah!" He said he could not make us people out. One of our friends said to me, "If I had not said, 'Hallelujah!' the other Sunday morning, I must have burst altogether." I like people to get into that condition and if, sometimes, they should break the silence and cry, "Glory!" why, it is better than that they should burst, at any rate! It is a great mercy that they feel their hearts so full that they are ready to burst. People express their praise and delight spontaneously concerning far less things than the joys of God and the privileges of His people, therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Now you must finish my sermon for me by standing up and singing—

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

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:39-65.**

In anticipation of the Communion service that is to follow this service, [The Scripture exposition always took place *before the sermon was preached.*—EOD] let us read once more the story of our Lord's agony and arrest, as recorded in the 22nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Probably we are all familiar with the narrative of the event which happened on that dreadful night. May the Holy Spirit teach us what He meant!

Verse 39. *And Jesus came out and went, as He was known, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.* The garden of Gethsemane had often been the place of our Lord's private prayer and it was, therefore, well selected as the scene of His fierce struggle with the foe. Where we get strength from God in private, it may often happen that we shall have to endure our greatest conflicts. Singularly enough, it is said that the Jews had a custom of taking the red heifer to the Mount of Olives before it was sacrificed, as if they set forth in that very act, the leading of Christ Jesus into Gethsemane and the bringing Him back again with His raiment all red with His own blood. We might alter the Prophet's words a little and ask, "Who is this that comes from Olivet, with dyed

garments from Gethsemane?” and the Divine Sufferer, Himself, might answer, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”

40. *And when He was at the place, He said to them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.* He knew what sore temptation meant and He was about to feel it at its utmost. And He, therefore, exhorted His disciples to pray even as He had formerly taught them in the model prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.”

41-43. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.* This is so plain a proof of Christ’s condescension as a Man that it has overwhelmed some persons. They can hardly understand how it could be true. Therefore, I believe this 43rd verse is omitted in some versions of the Scriptures and there have been several learned men who, while they could not disprove the existence of the verse in the most ancient manuscripts, have yet labored hard to cut it out, since they thought it too great a stoop for Christ to take. But, my dear Friends, in this condescension of our Lord we learn how truly He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Doubtless, we receive much strengthening from angels—“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” And why should not Christ, who was in all things made like His brethren, also be strengthened by an angel?

44. *And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* The Greek has the idea of the stretching of the sinews—Christ prayed to the very stretching of His nerves and sinews. As when men wrestle for their lives, so did Christ in prayer strain every power of mind and body that He might prevail. Luke alone describes this dread scene of Christ’s agonizing even to blood, but there is no doubt whatever, from this passage, that our Lord Jesus did actually sweat blood—not something *like* blood, but blood itself—and that in great drops and in such quantities that it did not only adhere to His flesh and stain His garments, but there was such an abundance of it that in great drops it fell down to the ground.

45, 46. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said to them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* Our Lord was Himself so smarting under the pain of fierce temptation that He would have His disciples pray even to an agony that they might not be led into it. And oh, if you and I have to pray that we be not led into temptation, how much more should we be instant in supplication when we are in the furnace of temptation! Then, indeed, if we restrain prayer before God, we shall be in an evil case.

47. *And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and He that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.* It is a remarkable fact that we do not read in Scripture that any other of our Lord’s Apostles—not even John—ever kissed the Savior! It seems as if the most impudent familiarity was very near akin to dastardly treachery. The eleven would have thought it a high honor to be al-

lowed even to kiss Christ's *feet*, but Judas, having lost respect for his Master, it was no very great descent for him, first to sell his Lord, and then to betray Him with a kiss. Mark you, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ is generally betrayed thus. How, for instance, do men usually begin their books when they mean to undermine the Inspiration of Scripture? Why, with a declaration that they wish to promote the truth of Christ! There is the Judas-kiss and the betrayal comes quickly afterwards. How is it that Christ's name is often most grossly slandered among men? Why, by those who make a loud profession of love to Him and then sin foully as the chief of transgressors!

48. *But Jesus said to Him, Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* Christ might put that question to many of His nominal followers in the present day—"Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49. *When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said to Him, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?* There is always that tendency, even among Christian people, to get their hands on a sword, but a good man's hand is never more out of place than there! When he has his hands clasped in prayer, or placed upon the promises of God, then it is well. But a Christian with his hand upon his sword is something like an angel putting forth his hand to iniquity.

50-53. *And one of them smote the servant of the High Priest, and cut of his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness.* "This is the time when I am given up, on the one hand to the temptations of Satan—the power of darkness—and, on the other hand, to you. "This is your hour." And, as beasts that prowl in the darkness are generally the most ravenous and fierce, so were these chief priests and captains and elders most determined in seeking the blood of Christ! Paul afterwards wrote that none of the princes of this world knew the hidden Wisdom of God, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." It was the darkness of their minds that led them thus to hunt the only Savior of sinners to His death. Satan himself would scarcely have had a hand in crucifying Christ had he understood that by that very Crucifixion, Christ would break the old serpent's head forever!

54. *Then they took Him and led Him, and brought Him to the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.* For which he is not to be altogether blamed. I do not find that any other disciple followed Christ so near as Peter did. John was, probably, even farther off at first. Yet, dear Friends, you and I may rest assured that if we follow Christ afar off, it will not be long before we deny Him! Those disciples who are ashamed of their Master, who never come out and openly confess their faith in Him, have the seeds of treachery already sown within them. O Brothers and Sisters, be bold and cleave close to Christ, for this is the way to walk securely!

55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Get up, Peter, and run away! What business have you sitting there? Better be in the cold, far off from evil company, than in the warm in the midst of sinners.*

56, 57. *But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not! See how the most courageous are often cast down by the very slightest means? The tongue of a poor feeble woman is too much for this valiant Peter who said that he never would deny his Master, even though he should die with Him.*

58-60. *And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say. Matthew and Mark tell us that to prove this statement, and to make it quite clear that he was not a follower of Christ, he began to curse and to swear, as if the best evidence that he was not a Christian would be afforded by his cursing and swearing.*

60, 61. *And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. How that look must have pierced Peter through and through!*

61-64. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You? Upon this passage a good man well observes that one of these days Christ will answer this taunt. With His unerring finger, the Judge of All shall point them out and say to each one, “You are the man.” There are many of you, perhaps, who are committing sin in private and you think it is not known. You are almost ready to ask the question of Him whom you look upon as a blindfolded God, “Who is it that struck You?” Ah, but He sees you all the while! He reads the secret thoughts of your hearts and the day will come when He will let you know that *nothing* has escaped His all-seeing eyes!*

65. *And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him. The Lord bless to us all the reading of this sad, sad story! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—713, 938, 287.

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

“MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND”

NO. 2205

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“My times are in Your hand.”
Psalm 31:15.*

DAVID was sad—his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing. His sorrow had wasted his strength and even his bones were consumed within him. Cruel enemies pursued him with malicious craft, even seeking his life. At such a time he used the best resource of grief, for he says in verse 14, “But I trusted in You, O Lord.” He had no other refuge but that which he found in faith in the Lord, his God. If enemies slandered him, he did not render railing for railing. If they devised to take away his life, he did not meet violence with violence, but he calmly trusted in the Lord. They ran here and there, using all kinds of nets and traps to make the man of God their victim, but he met all their inventions with the one simple defense of trust in God. Many are the fiery darts of the Wicked One, but our shield is one. The shield of faith not only quenches fiery darts, but it breaks arrows of steel. Though the javelins of the foe were dipped in the venom of Hell, yet our one shield of faith would hold us harmless, casting them off from us!

Thus David had the grand resource of faith in the hour of danger. Note well that he uttered a glorious claim, the greatest claim that man has ever made—“I said, You are my God.” He that can say, “This kingdom is mine,” makes a royal claim! He that can say, “This mountain of silver is mine,” makes a wealthy claim. But he that can say to the Lord, “You are my God,” has said more than all monarchs and millionaires can reach! If this God is your God by His gift of Himself to you, what more can you have? If Jehovah has been made your own by an act of appropriating faith, what more can be conceived of? You have not the world, but you have the *Maker of the world*—and that is far more! There is no measuring the greatness of his treasure who has God to be his All in All!

Having thus taken to the best resource by trusting in Jehovah and having made the grandest claim possible by saying, “You are my God,” the Psalmist now stays himself upon a grand old doctrine, one of the most wonderful that was ever revealed to men. He sings, “My times are in Your hand.” This to him was a most cheering fact—he had no fear as to his circumstances, since all things were in the Divine hands. He was not shut up unto the hands of the enemy, but his feet stood in a large room, for he was in a space large enough for the ocean, seeing the Lord had placed him

in the hollow of His hand! To be entirely at the disposal of God is life and liberty for us.

The great Truth of God is this—all that concerns the Believer is in the hands of the Almighty God. “My times”—these change and shift—but they change only in accordance with unchanging love and they shift only according to the purpose of One with whom is no variableness nor shadow of a turning! “My times,” that is to say, my ups and my downs, my health and my sickness, my poverty and my wealth—all those are in the hands of the Lord who arranges and appoints according to His holy will, the length of my days and the darkness of my nights! Storms and calms vary the seasons at the Divine appointment. Whether times are reviving or depressing remains with Him who is Lord both of time and of eternity—and we are glad it is so!

We assent to the statement, “My times are in Your hand,” as to their result. Whatever is to come out of our life is in our heavenly Father’s hands. He guards the vine of life and He also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life is as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman and the harvest of that field is also with Him! The ultimate results of His works of Grace upon us and of His education of us in this life are in the highest hands! We are not in our own hands, nor in the hands of earthly teachers, but we are under the skillful operation of hands which make nothing in vain! The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates, but by the hands of Love. We shall not die before our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long!

Not only are we, ourselves, in the hand of the Lord, but all that surrounds us. Our times make up a kind of atmosphere of existence—and all this is under Divine arrangement. We dwell within the palm of God’s hand. We are absolutely at His disposal and all our circumstances are arranged by Him in all their details. We are comforted to have it so.

How came the Psalmist’s times to be thus in God’s hands? I should answer, first, that they were there in the order of nature, according to the eternal purpose and decree of God. All things are ordained of God and are settled by Him, according to His wise and holy predestination. Whatever happens here happens not by chance, but according to the counsel of the Most High! The acts and deeds of men below, though left wholly to their own wills, are the counterpart of that which is written in the purpose of Heaven. The open acts of Providence, here below, tally exactly with that which is written in the secret Book which no eye of man or angel as yet has scanned. This eternal purpose superintended our birth. “In your Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” In your Book, every footstep of every creature is recorded before the creature is made! God has mapped out the pathway of every man who traverses the plains of life. Some may doubt this, but all agree that God foresees all things—and how can they be certainly foreseen unless they are certain *to be*? It is no mean comfort to a man of God that he feels that, by Divine arrangement and sacred predestination, his times are in the hands of God!

But David’s times were in God’s hand in another sense, namely, that he had, by faith, committed them all to God. Observe carefully the 5th verse—“Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” In life we use the words which our Lord so patiently used in death—we hand over our spirits to the hands of God. If our lives were not appointed of Heaven, we would wish they were. If there were no overruling Providence, we would crave for one. We would merge our own wills in the will of the great God and cry, “Not as we will, but as You will.” It would be a hideous thought to us if any one point of our life story were left to chance, or to the frivolities of our own fancy. But with joyful hope we fall back upon the eternal foresight and the Infallible Wisdom of God and cry, “You shall choose our inheritance for us.” We would beg Him to take our times into His hands, even if they were not there.

Moreover, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, our times are in the Lord’s hands because we are one with Christ Jesus. “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Everything that concerns Christ touches the great Father’s heart. He thinks more of Jesus than of all the world! Therefore it follows that when we become one with Jesus, we become conspicuous objects of the Father’s care! He takes us in hand for the sake of His dear Son! He that loves the Head, loves all the members of the mystical body! We cannot conceive of the dear Redeemer as ever being out of the Father’s mind—neither can any of us who are in Christ be away from the Father’s active, loving care—our times are always in His hands. All His eternal purposes work towards the glorifying of the Son and quite as surely they work together for the good of those who are in His Son. The purposes which concern our Lord and ourselves are so intertwined as never to be separated!

To have our times in God’s hands must mean not only that they are at God’s disposal, but that they are arranged by the highest wisdom. God’s hand never errs and if our times are in His hand, those times are ordered rightly. We need not puzzle our brains to understand the dispensations of Providence—a much easier and wiser course is open to us, namely—to believe the hands of the Lord work all things for the best. Sit still, O child, at your great Father’s feet, and let Him do as seems Him good! When you cannot comprehend Him, know that a babe cannot understand the wisdom of its parent. Your Father comprehends all things, though you do not—let His wisdom be enough for you! Everything in the hand of God is where it may be left without anxiety and it is where it will be carried through to a prosperous issue. Things prosper which are in His hands.

“My times are in Your hand,” is an assurance that none can disturb, or pervert, or poison. In that hand we rest as securely as rests a babe upon its mother’s breast. Where could our interests be so well secured as in the eternal hands? What a blessing it is to see, by the eye of faith, all things that concern you grasped in the hands of God! What peace as to every matter which could cause anxiety flows into the soul when we see all our hopes built upon so stable a foundation and preserved by such supreme power! “My times are in your hand!”

Before I go into this subject, to show the sweetness of this confidence, I pray every Christian here to read the text and take it in the singular, and not as we sang it just now—

**“Our times are in Your hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.”**

We find it in the Psalm, “*My times are in Your hand.*” This does not exclude the whole body of the saints enjoying this safety together, but, after all, the Truth of God is sweetest when each man tastes the flavor of it for himself. Come, let each man take to himself this Doctrine of the Supreme Appointment of God and believe that it stands true as to his own case, “*My times are in Your hand.*” The wings of the cherubim cover *me*. The Lord Jesus loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*—and *my times* are in those hands which were nailed to the Cross for *my* redemption! What will be the effect of such a faith, if it is clear, personal and enduring? This shall be our subject at this season. May the Holy Spirit help us!

I. A clear conviction that our times are in the hand of God WILL CREATE WITHIN US A SENSE OF THE NEARNESS OF GOD. If the hand of God is laid upon all our surroundings, God, Himself, is near us. Our Puritan fathers walked with God the more readily because they believed in God as arranging *everything* in their daily business and domestic life. They saw Him in the history of the nation and in all the events which transpired. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. Men will scarcely tolerate a Creator, now, but everything must be evolved. To get God one stage further back is the ambition of modern philosophy, whereas, if we were wise—we would labor to clear out all obstacles and leave a clear channel for drawing near to God—and for God to draw near to us. When we see that in His hands are all our ways, we feel that God is real and near.

“My times are in Your hand.” Then there is nothing left to chance. Events happen not to man by a fortune which has no order or purpose in it. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Chance is a heathenish idea which the teaching of the Word has cast down, even as the Ark threw down Dagon and broke him in pieces. Blessed is that man who has done with chance, who never speaks of luck, but believes that from the least, even to the greatest, all things are ordained of the Lord. We dare not leave out the least event! The creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence as the march of a pestilence through a nation. Believe this, for if the least is omitted from the supreme government, so may the next be, and the next, till nothing is left in the Divine hands. There is no place for chance, since God fills all things.

“My times are in Your hand” is an assurance which also puts an end to the grim idea of an iron fate compelling all things. Have you the notion that fate grinds on like an enormous wheel, ruthlessly crushing everything that lies in its way, not pausing for pity, nor turning aside for mercy? Remember, if you liken Providence to a wheel, it must be a wheel which is full of eyes! Its every revolution is in wisdom and goodness! God’s

eyes leave nothing blind in Providence, but fill all things with sight. God works all things according to His purpose, but then *He* Himself works them. There is all the difference between the lone machinery of fixed fate and the Presence of a gracious, loving Spirit ruling all things. Things happen as He plans them, but He Himself is there to *make them happen*, to moderate, guide and secure results! Our great joy is not, “My times are in the wheel of destiny,” but, “My times are in Your hand.” With a living, loving God to superintend all things, we feel ourselves at home, resting near our Father’s heart.

“My times are in Your hand.” Does not this reveal the condescension of the Lord? He has all Heaven to worship Him and all worlds to govern, and yet, “my times”—the times of such an inconsiderable and unworthy person as I am—are in His hands! Now, what is man that it should be so? Wonder of wonders, that God should not only think of me, but should make my concerns His concerns and take my matters into His hands! He has the stars in His hands and yet He puts us there. He deigns to take in hand the passing interests of obscure men and lowly women!

Beloved, God is near His people with all His attributes, His wisdom, His power, His faithfulness, His immutability and these are, under oath, to work for the good of those who put their trust in Him. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Yes, God considers our times and thinks them over, with His heart and soul planning to do us good. That august mind, out of which all things spring, bows itself to us and those eternal wings, which cover the universe, also brood over us and our household, and our daily needs and woes! Our God sits not still as a listless spectator of our griefs, suffering us to be drifted like waifs upon the waters of circumstance, but is busily occupying Himself at all times for the defense and perfecting of His children. He leads us that He may bring us home to the place where His flock shall rest forever.

What a bliss this is! Our times, in all their needs and aspects, are in God’s hands and, therefore, God is always caring for us! How near it brings God to us and us to God! Child of God, go not tomorrow into the field, lamenting that God is not there! He will bless your going out. Come not home to your chamber, crying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” He will bless your coming in! Go not to your bed, dreaming that you are left an orphan—neither wake up in the morning with a sense of loneliness upon you—you are not alone, for the Father is with you!

Will you not feel how good it is that God should come so close to you and handle your bread and your water, and bless your bed and your board? Are you not happy to be allowed to come so close to God, as to say, “My times are in Your hand”? There is a great deal in this first point as to the nearness of the Lord—and if you will turn it over—you will see more and more that a conviction that our times are in God’s hand tends to create a happy and holy sense of the nearness of God to us.

II. THIS TRUTH IS A COMPLETE ANSWER TO MANY A TEMPTATION. You know how craftily Satan will urge a temptation. He says, “Now you have a large family and your chief duty is to provide for them. Your posi-

tion brings with it many needs. Here is a plan of making money—others follow it. It may not be quite straight, but you must not be particular in such a world as this, for nobody else is.” How will you meet this? Can you say to Satan, “It is not my business to provide for myself or for my family—my times are in God’s hand and His name is Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord Will Provide. And I will not do a questionable thing, though it would fill my house with silver and gold from the cellar to the chimney pot. I shall not meddle with my Lord’s business. It is His to provide for me—it is mine to walk uprightly and obey His Word”?

This is a noble answer to the arch-enemy! But supposing he says, “Well, but you are already in difficulties and you cannot extricate yourself if you are too precise. A poor man cannot afford to have a conscience—it is an expensive luxury in these days. Give your conscience a holiday and you can soon get out of your trouble.” Let your reply be, “O Prince of Darkness, it is no business of mine to extricate myself! My times are in God’s hand. I have taken my case to Him and He will work for me in this matter better than I can do for myself! He does not wish me to do a wrong thing, that I may do for myself what He has promised to do for me.” We are not called upon to eke out God’s wisdom with a bit of our own wickedness. God forbid! Do the right, even if the heavens should fall. The Lord who has taken your business into His hands will bear you through.

“Well,” says one, “we may use a little discreet policy in religious matters and keep the peace by wise compromise. We may accomplish our end all the sooner by going a little roundabout. If you can just let the Truth of God wait for a little until the fine weather comes, and the silver slippers are in season, then she will be saved a good deal of annoyance!” Brothers and Sisters, it is not for us to pick and plan times in this fashion. God’s cause is in God’s hands and God would not have us help His cause by a compromising hand being laid on His Ark. Remember what the hand of Uzzah brought on him, though he meant well. Let us continue steadfast in the integrity of our walk and we shall find our times are in God’s hand—and that they are well ordered and need no hasty and unholy interposition on our part.

Brethren, is it not a delightful thing for us to know that though we are on a stormy voyage, the Lord, Himself, is at the helm? The course we do not know, nor even our present latitude and longitude. But the Pilot knows all about us and also about the sea. It will be our wisdom not to interfere with our Captain’s orders. They put up a notice on the steamboats, “Do not speak to the man at the wheel.” We are very apt, in our unbelief, to dispute with Him to whom the steering of our vessel is entrusted. We shall not confuse Him, thank God, but we often confound and confuse ourselves by our idle complaining against the living Lord! No, when you are tempted to presume, or to act in a despairing haste, or to hide your principles, or to do something which is not defensible in order that you may arrange your times more comfortably, answer with a decided “No,” and say, “My times are in God’s hand”—and there, by His Grace, I will leave them!”

When the devil comes with His subtle questions and insinuations, refer Him to your Lord, in whose hands your times are placed. When you have a lawsuit, the opposite side will likely come and talk with you, to see if they can get something out of you. It will be your wisdom to reply, “If you have anything to say, say it to my solicitor.” If the devil comes to you and you get into an argument with him, he will beat you, for he is a very ancient lawyer and he has been at the business for so many ages that you cannot match him. Send him to your Advocate! Refer him to the Wonderful, the Counselor! Always shelter beneath this fact, “My times are in His hand. I have left the whole business to Another and I cannot dishonor Him by meddling.” Satan knows the Christ too well to go to Him—he knows the taste of His broadsword, of, “It is written.” He will not contest with Jesus if we leave Him to plead the causes of our soul!

III. In the third place, THIS CONVICTION IS A SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AGAINST THE FEAR OF MEN. We may say to ourselves, when our enemies bear very hard upon us, “I am not in their hands. My times are in Your hand.” Here are gentlemen judging and condemning us with great rapidity. They say, “He has made a great mistake. He is an old bigot. He has snuffed himself out.” This is easier said than done. The candle still shines. They say of you, “He is foolish and headstrong and, on religious matters, he is as obstinate as a mule! But he will come to grief.” You have not come to grief, yet, in the way they predict, and they had better not prophesy till they know! The godly are not in the hands of those who mock them! The wicked may gnash their teeth at Believers, but they cannot destroy them! Here is their comfort—they have committed their spirit to the hands of God—and He will sacredly preserve the precious deposit. Fear not the judgments of men! Appeal to a higher court. Take the case to the King’s Bench. Go to God, Himself, with the matter, and He will bring forth your judgment as the light and your righteousness as the noonday.

Do the malicious resolve to crush you? They will use to the utmost their little power, but there is a higher power which will hold them back. Rejoicingly say, “My times are in Your hand.” Do they treat you with contempt? Do they sneer at you? What does that matter? Your honor comes not from men! Their contempt is the highest *compliment* the wicked can pay you.

Alas, many professors place their times in the hands of the world! If they prosper and grow rich, they see an opportunity of social advantage and they quit their humbler friends to join a more respectable sect. How many are lost to fidelity because their prosperous times are not in God’s hands, but in their own? Some, on the other hand, when they are in adversity, get away from the Lord. The excuse is, “I cannot go to the House of God any more, for my clothes are not so respectable as they used to be.” Is your poverty to take you out of your Lord’s hands? Never let it be so! But say, “My times are in Your hand.” Cleave to the Lord in losses as well as in gains and so let *all* your times be with Him.

How often we meet with people who are staggered by slander! It is impossible to stop malicious tongues. They wound and even slay the characters of the godly. The tried one cries, “I cannot bear it! I shall give all up.”

Why? Why yield to mere talk? Even these cruel tongues are in God’s hands! Can you not brave their attacks? They cannot utter a single whisper more than God permits! Go on your way, O righteous man, and let false tongues pour forth their poison as they will. “Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” If my times are in God’s hands, no man can do me harm unless God permits it. Though my soul is among lions, yet no lion can bite me while Jehovah’s angel is my guard!

This feeling, that our interests are safe in the highest keeping, breeds an independent spirit. It prevents our cringing before the great and our flattering the strong. At the same time, it removes all tendency to envy, so that you do not wish for the prosperity of the wicked, nor fret yourself because of evildoers. When one knows that his times are in God’s hands, he would not change places with a king! No, nor even with an angel!

IV. A full belief in the statement of our text is A CURE FOR PRESENT WORRY. O Lord, if my times are in Your hands, I have cast my care on You, and I trust and am not afraid! Why is it, my Sister—for this habit of worrying abounds among the gracious sisterhood—why do you vex yourself about a matter which is in the hands of God? If He has undertaken for you, what cause have you for anxiety? And you, my Brother—for there are plenty of men who are nervous and fretful—why do you want to interfere with the Lord’s business? If the case is in His hands, what need can there be for you to be prying and crying? You were worrying this morning and fretting last night—and you are distressed, now, and will be worse tomorrow morning. May I ask you a question? Did you ever get any good by fretting? When there was not rain enough for your farm, did you ever fret a shower down? When there was too much rain, or you thought so, did you ever worry the clouds away? Tell me, did you ever make a sixpence by worrying? It is a very unprofitable business!

Do you answer, “What, then, are we to do in troublous times?” Why, go to Him into whose hand you have committed yourself and your times! Consult with Infinite Wisdom by *prayer*. Console yourself with Infinite Love by fellowship with God. Tell the Lord what you feel and what you fear. Ten minutes’ praying is better than a year’s murmuring! He that waits upon God and casts his burden upon Him may lead a royal life—indeed, he will be far happier than a king!

To leave our times with God is to live as free from care as the birds upon the bough. If we fret, we shall not glorify God, and we shall not constrain others to see what true religion can do for us in the hour of tribulation. Fret and worry put it out of our power to act wisely. But if we can leave everything with God because everything *really* is in His hands, we shall be peaceful and our action will be deliberate. And for that very reason it will be more likely to be wise. He that rolls his burden upon the Lord will be strong to do or to suffer—and his days shall be as the days of Heaven upon the earth. I admire the serenity of Abraham. He never seems to be in a fluster, but he moves grandly, like a prince among men. He is much more than the equal of the greatest man he meets—we can hardly see Lot with a microscope when we have once seen Abraham! Why was that? Because he believed in God and staggered not.

Half the joy of life lies in expectation. Our children get greater pleasure out of expecting a holiday than they do out of the day, itself. It is much the same with ourselves. If we believe that all our times are in God's hands, we shall be expecting great things from our heavenly Father. When we get into a difficulty we shall say, “I am now going to see the wonders of God and to learn, again, how surely He delivers them that trust in Him!” I thank God I have learned at times to glory in necessities, as opening a window into Heaven for me, out of which the Lord would abundantly pour forth His supplies. It has been to me so unspeakable a delight to see how the Lord has supplied my needs for the Orphanage, the College and other works, that I have half wished to be in straits, that I might see how the Lord would appear for me!

I remember, some time ago, when, year after year, all the money came in for the various enterprises, I began to look back with regret upon those grand days when the Lord permitted the brook Cherith to dry up and called off the ravens, with their bread and meat, and then found some other way of supplying the orphans' needs! In those days, the Lord used to come to me, as it were, walking on the tops of the mountains, stepping from peak to peak and, by marvelous deeds, supplying all my needs, according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!

Do you know, I almost wished that the Lord would stop the streams and then let me see how He can fetch water out of the Rock! He did so, not very long ago. Funds ran very low and then I cried to Him and He heard me out of His holy hill. How glad was I to hear the footsteps of the ever-present Lord, answering to His child's prayer and letting him know that his times were still in his Father's hands! Surely it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man! It is a joy worth worlds to be driven where none but the Lord can help you—and then to see His mighty hand pulling you out of the net! The joy lies mainly in the fact that you are sure it is the Lord and sure that He is near you. This blessed realization of the Lord's interposition causes us to glory in tribulation! Is not that a cure for worry, a blessed cure for anxiety?

V. Fifthly, a firm conviction of this truth is A QUIETUS AS TO FUTURE DREAD. “My times are in Your hand.” Do you wish to know what is going to happen to you in a short time? Would you look between the folded leaves of the future? You can buy a penny newspaper which will tell you the fate of nations this very year. But you may be well-near sure that *nothing* will happen which is thus predicted—and thus it may be of little use to you! Be content with the prophecies of Scripture, but follow not every interpreter of them. Many people would pay great sums to have the future made known to them. If they were wise, they would rather desire to have it concealed! Do not want to know—such knowledge would answer no useful purpose. The future is intended to be a sealed book. The present is all we need to have before us. Do your day's work in its day and leave tomorrow with your God. If there were ways of reading the future, it would be wise to decline to use them. The knowledge would create responsibility, arouse fear and diminish present enjoyment—why seek after it? Famish idle curiosity and give your strength to believing obedience! Of this you

may be quite sure, that there is nothing in the book of the future which should cause distrust to a Believer! Your times are in God’s hands—and this secures them.

The very word, “times,” supposes change for you. But as there are no changes with God, all is well. Things will happen which you cannot foresee, but your Lord has foreseen all and provided for all! Nothing can occur without His Divine allowance and He will not permit that which would be for your real or permanent injury. “I should like to know,” says one, “whether I shall die soon.” Have no desire in that direction—your time will come when it should. The best way to live above all fear of death is to die every morning before you leave your bedroom. The Apostle Paul said, “I die daily.” When you have got into the holy habit of *daily dying*, it will come easy to you to die for the last time!

It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours. As you take off your garments at night, rehearse the solemn scene when you shall lay aside your robe of flesh. When you put on your garments in the morning, anticipate the being clothed upon with your house which is from Heaven in the day of Resurrection. To be fearful of death is often the height of folly. A great Prophet once ran away many miles to escape from death by an imperious queen. He was one of the bravest of the brave and yet He hurried into solitude to escape a woman’s threat! When he had finished his weary walk, he sat down and actually prayed, “Let me die.” It was a singular thing to do, to run for his life, and then to cry, “Let me die.” That man never did die, for we speak of Elijah who rode to Heaven in a chariot of fire! God does not answer all His people’s prayers, for He has better things for them than they ask. Do not tremble about what may never happen. Even we may never die, for it is written, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Some of us may be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. Who knows? Behold, He comes quickly! At any rate, do not let us worry about death, for it is in His hands.

VI. Again, a full conviction that our times are in His hands will be A REASON FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE. If God has undertaken my business for me, then I may most fitly undertake such business for Him as He may appoint. Queen Elizabeth wished one of the leading merchants of London to go to Holland to watch her interests there. The honest man told Her Majesty that he would obey her commands, but he begged her to remember that it would involve the ruin of his own trade, for him to be absent. To this the Queen replied, “If you will see to my business, I will see to your business.” With such a royal promise he might willingly let his own business go, for a queen should have it in her power to do more for a subject than he can do for himself.

The Lord, in effect, says to the Believer, “I will take your affairs in hand and see them through for you.” Will you not at once feel that now it is your *joy*, your *delight*, to live to glorify your gracious Lord? To be set free to serve the Lord is the highest freedom! How beautiful it is to read in the book of Isaiah, “And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers”! Outsiders

shall do the drudgery for you and set you free for higher service! Read on and see—“But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God.” Faith sets us free from the wear and tear of carking care that we may give ourselves up wholly to the service of the Lord our God! Faith causes us to live exempt from fret, to serve only the blessed God. Set free from the burden of earthly things by God’s kind care of us, we present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord our God. He has not made us slaves and drudges, but priests and kings unto God!

I am sure, dear Friends, if we get this Truth of God fully saturating our souls, that our times are in God’s hand, it will make life a grander thing than it has ever seemed to be. Do you believe that God’s hand is working with you and for you? Then are you lifted above the dumb-driven cattle that surround you, for the God of Heaven thinks of you and puts His hand to your affairs. This connection with the Divine puts heart into a man and rises him to high endeavor and great belief. We feel we are immortal till our work is done! We feel that God is with us and that we are bound to be victorious through the blood of Jesus! We shall not be defeated in the campaign of life, for the Lord of Hosts is with us and we shall tread down our enemies! God will strengthen us, for our times are in His hands and, therefore, we will serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul, being fully convinced that, “our labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

VII. Lastly, if our times are in God’s hands, here is A GRAND ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. He that takes care of our times will take care of our eternity. He that has brought us so far and worked so graciously for us will see us safely over the rest of the road. I marvel at some of you older folks, when you begin to doubt. You will say, “Look at yourself.” Well, so I do, and I am heartily ashamed that ever a grain of mistrust should get into the eye of my faith. I would weep it out and keep it out for the future.

Still, some of you are older than I am, for you are 70 or 80 years of age. How much longer do you expect to travel in this wilderness? Do you think you have you another 10 years? God has been gracious to you for 70 years and will you fret about the last 10, which, indeed, may never come? That will never do! God has delivered some of you out of such great trials that your present ones are mere fleabites. Sir Francis Drake, after he had sailed around the world, came up the Thames. And when he had passed Gravesend there came a storm which threatened the ship. The brave commander said, “What? Go around the world safely and then get drowned in a ditch? Never!” So *we* ought to say! God has upheld us in great tribulations and we are not going to be cast down about trials which are common to men!

A man of energy, if he takes a work in hand, will push it through and the Lord our God never undertakes what he will not complete. “My times are in Your hand” and, therefore, the end will be glorious! My Lord, if my times were in my own hands, they would prove a failure, but since they are in Your hands, You will not fail, nor shall I! The hands of God ensures success all along the line. In that day when we shall see the tapestry which records our lives, we shall see all the scenes therein with wondering

eyes. We shall see what wisdom, what love, what tenderness, what care was lavished upon them! When once a matter is in God’s hands, it is never neglected or forgotten, but it is carried out to the end. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

I have not been able to preach on this text as I hoped to do, for I am full of pain and have a heavy headache. But, thank God, I have no heartache with such a glorious Truth of God before me! Sweet to my soul are these words—“My times are in Your hand.” Take the golden sentence home with you! Keep this Truth in your mind. Let it lie on your tongue like a wafer made with honey. Let it dissolve until your whole nature is sweetened by it. Yes, dear old lady, you that have come out of the workhouse this morning to hear this sermon, say to yourself, “My times are in Your hand.” Yes, you, dear Friend, who cannot find employment and have been walking your shoes off your feet in the vain endeavor to seek one—*you*, also, may say, “My times are in Your hand.” Yes, my dear Sister, pining away with consumption, this may be your song—“My times are in Your hand.” Yes, young man, you that have just started in business and have met with a crushing loss, it will be for your benefit, after all! Therefore say, “My times are in Your hand.” This little sentence, to my mind, swells into a hymn—it buds and blossoms into a Psalm! Few are the words, but mighty is the sense, and full of rest.

Now, remember, it is not everybody that can find honey in this hive. O Sinners, you are in the hands of an angry God and this is terrible! The God against whom you continually sin and whom you provoke by refusing His Grace, has absolute power over you! Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces! You have provoked, offended and grieved Him, but there is yet hope, for His mercy endures forever. Though you have vexed His Holy Spirit, yet return unto Him and He will have mercy upon you and abundantly pardon you! It is certain that you are in His hands and that you cannot escape from Him. If you should climb to Heaven, or dive to Hell, you would not be out of His reach! No strength of yours can resist Him, no speed can outrun Him. Yield yourselves to God and then this great power of God, which now surrounds you, shall become your comfort!

At present it ought to be your terror. The eyes of God are fixed upon you. The hands of God are against you and if you are unsaved, one touch of that hand will mean death and everlasting destruction! That hand which the Believer devoutly kisses, is the hand which you may well dread. Oh, that you would flee to Christ Jesus and find shelter from wrath beneath the crimson canopy of His precious blood! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 31.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—910, 701, 703.**

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“MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND”

NO. 2205

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“My times are in Your hand.”
Psalm 31:15.*

DAVID was sad—his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing. His sorrow had wasted his strength and even his bones were consumed within him. Cruel enemies pursued him with malicious craft, even seeking his life. At such a time he used the best resource of grief, for he says in verse 14, “But I trusted in You, O Lord.” He had no other refuge but that which he found in faith in the Lord, his God. If enemies slandered him, he did not render railing for railing. If they devised to take away his life, he did not meet violence with violence, but he calmly trusted in the Lord. They ran here and there, using all kinds of nets and traps to make the man of God their victim, but he met all their inventions with the one simple defense of trust in God. Many are the fiery darts of the Wicked One, but our shield is one. The shield of faith not only quenches fiery darts, but it breaks arrows of steel. Though the javelins of the foe were dipped in the venom of Hell, yet our one shield of faith would hold us harmless, casting them off from us!

Thus David had the grand resource of faith in the hour of danger. Note well that he uttered a glorious claim, the greatest claim that man has ever made—“I said, You are my God.” He that can say, “This kingdom is mine,” makes a royal claim! He that can say, “This mountain of silver is mine,” makes a wealthy claim. But he that can say to the Lord, “You are my God,” has said more than all monarchs and millionaires can reach! If this God is your God by His gift of Himself to you, what more can you have? If Jehovah has been made your own by an act of appropriating faith, what more can be conceived of? You have not the world, but you have the *Maker of the world*—and that is far more! There is no measuring the greatness of his treasure who has God to be his All in All!

Having thus taken to the best resource by trusting in Jehovah and having made the grandest claim possible by saying, “You are my God,” the Psalmist now stays himself upon a grand old doctrine, one of the most wonderful that was ever revealed to men. He sings, “My times are in Your hand.” This to him was a most cheering fact—he had no fear as to his circumstances, since all things were in the Divine hands. He was not shut up unto the hands of the enemy, but his feet stood in a large room, for he was in a space large enough for the ocean, seeing the Lord had placed him

in the hollow of His hand! To be entirely at the disposal of God is life and liberty for us.

The great Truth of God is this—all that concerns the Believer is in the hands of the Almighty God. “My times”—these change and shift—but they change only in accordance with unchanging love and they shift only according to the purpose of One with whom is no variableness nor shadow of a turning! “My times,” that is to say, my ups and my downs, my health and my sickness, my poverty and my wealth—all those are in the hands of the Lord who arranges and appoints according to His holy will, the length of my days and the darkness of my nights! Storms and calms vary the seasons at the Divine appointment. Whether times are reviving or depressing remains with Him who is Lord both of time and of eternity—and we are glad it is so!

We assent to the statement, “My times are in Your hand,” as to their result. Whatever is to come out of our life is in our heavenly Father’s hands. He guards the vine of life and He also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life is as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman and the harvest of that field is also with Him! The ultimate results of His works of Grace upon us and of His education of us in this life are in the highest hands! We are not in our own hands, nor in the hands of earthly teachers, but we are under the skillful operation of hands which make nothing in vain! The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates, but by the hands of Love. We shall not die before our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long!

Not only are we, ourselves, in the hand of the Lord, but all that surrounds us. Our times make up a kind of atmosphere of existence—and all this is under Divine arrangement. We dwell within the palm of God’s hand. We are absolutely at His disposal and all our circumstances are arranged by Him in all their details. We are comforted to have it so.

How came the Psalmist’s times to be thus in God’s hands? I should answer, first, that they were there in the order of nature, according to the eternal purpose and decree of God. All things are ordained of God and are settled by Him, according to His wise and holy predestination. Whatever happens here happens not by chance, but according to the counsel of the Most High! The acts and deeds of men below, though left wholly to their own wills, are the counterpart of that which is written in the purpose of Heaven. The open acts of Providence, here below, tally exactly with that which is written in the secret Book which no eye of man or angel as yet has scanned. This eternal purpose superintended our birth. “In your Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” In your Book, every footstep of every creature is recorded before the creature is made! God has mapped out the pathway of every man who traverses the plains of life. Some may doubt this, but all agree that God foresees all things—and how can they be certainly foreseen unless they are certain *to be*? It is no mean comfort to a man of God that he feels that, by Divine arrangement and sacred predestination, his times are in the hands of God!

But David’s times were in God’s hand in another sense, namely, that he had, by faith, committed them all to God. Observe carefully the 5th verse—“Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” In life we use the words which our Lord so patiently used in death—we hand over our spirits to the hands of God. If our lives were not appointed of Heaven, we would wish they were. If there were no overruling Providence, we would crave for one. We would merge our own wills in the will of the great God and cry, “Not as we will, but as You will.” It would be a hideous thought to us if any one point of our life story were left to chance, or to the frivolities of our own fancy. But with joyful hope we fall back upon the eternal foresight and the Infallible Wisdom of God and cry, “You shall choose our inheritance for us.” We would beg Him to take our times into His hands, even if they were not there.

Moreover, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, our times are in the Lord’s hands because we are one with Christ Jesus. “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Everything that concerns Christ touches the great Father’s heart. He thinks more of Jesus than of all the world! Therefore it follows that when we become one with Jesus, we become conspicuous objects of the Father’s care! He takes us in hand for the sake of His dear Son! He that loves the Head, loves all the members of the mystical body! We cannot conceive of the dear Redeemer as ever being out of the Father’s mind—neither can any of us who are in Christ be away from the Father’s active, loving care—our times are always in His hands. All His eternal purposes work towards the glorifying of the Son and quite as surely they work together for the good of those who are in His Son. The purposes which concern our Lord and ourselves are so intertwined as never to be separated!

To have our times in God’s hands must mean not only that they are at God’s disposal, but that they are arranged by the highest wisdom. God’s hand never errs and if our times are in His hand, those times are ordered rightly. We need not puzzle our brains to understand the dispensations of Providence—a much easier and wiser course is open to us, namely—to believe the hands of the Lord work all things for the best. Sit still, O child, at your great Father’s feet, and let Him do as seems Him good! When you cannot comprehend Him, know that a babe cannot understand the wisdom of its parent. Your Father comprehends all things, though you do not—let His wisdom be enough for you! Everything in the hand of God is where it may be left without anxiety and it is where it will be carried through to a prosperous issue. Things prosper which are in His hands.

“My times are in Your hand,” is an assurance that none can disturb, or pervert, or poison. In that hand we rest as securely as rests a babe upon its mother’s breast. Where could our interests be so well secured as in the eternal hands? What a blessing it is to see, by the eye of faith, all things that concern you grasped in the hands of God! What peace as to every matter which could cause anxiety flows into the soul when we see all our hopes built upon so stable a foundation and preserved by such supreme power! “My times are in your hand!”

Before I go into this subject, to show the sweetness of this confidence, I pray every Christian here to read the text and take it in the singular, and not as we sang it just now—

**“Our times are in Your hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.”**

We find it in the Psalm, “*My times are in Your hand.*” This does not exclude the whole body of the saints enjoying this safety together, but, after all, the Truth of God is sweetest when each man tastes the flavor of it for himself. Come, let each man take to himself this Doctrine of the Supreme Appointment of God and believe that it stands true as to his own case, “*My times are in Your hand.*” The wings of the cherubim cover *me*. The Lord Jesus loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*—and *my times* are in those hands which were nailed to the Cross for *my* redemption! What will be the effect of such a faith, if it is clear, personal and enduring? This shall be our subject at this season. May the Holy Spirit help us!

I. A clear conviction that our times are in the hand of God WILL CREATE WITHIN US A SENSE OF THE NEARNESS OF GOD. If the hand of God is laid upon all our surroundings, God, Himself, is near us. Our Puritan fathers walked with God the more readily because they believed in God as arranging *everything* in their daily business and domestic life. They saw Him in the history of the nation and in all the events which transpired. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. Men will scarcely tolerate a Creator, now, but everything must be evolved. To get God one stage further back is the ambition of modern philosophy, whereas, if we were wise—we would labor to clear out all obstacles and leave a clear channel for drawing near to God—and for God to draw near to us. When we see that in His hands are all our ways, we feel that God is real and near.

“My times are in Your hand.” Then there is nothing left to chance. Events happen not to man by a fortune which has no order or purpose in it. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Chance is a heathenish idea which the teaching of the Word has cast down, even as the Ark threw down Dagon and broke him in pieces. Blessed is that man who has done with chance, who never speaks of luck, but believes that from the least, even to the greatest, all things are ordained of the Lord. We dare not leave out the least event! The creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence as the march of a pestilence through a nation. Believe this, for if the least is omitted from the supreme government, so may the next be, and the next, till nothing is left in the Divine hands. There is no place for chance, since God fills all things.

“My times are in Your hand” is an assurance which also puts an end to the grim idea of an iron fate compelling all things. Have you the notion that fate grinds on like an enormous wheel, ruthlessly crushing everything that lies in its way, not pausing for pity, nor turning aside for mercy? Remember, if you liken Providence to a wheel, it must be a wheel which is full of eyes! Its every revolution is in wisdom and goodness! God’s

eyes leave nothing blind in Providence, but fill all things with sight. God works all things according to His purpose, but then *He* Himself works them. There is all the difference between the lone machinery of fixed fate and the Presence of a gracious, loving Spirit ruling all things. Things happen as He plans them, but He Himself is there to *make them happen*, to moderate, guide and secure results! Our great joy is not, “My times are in the wheel of destiny,” but, “My times are in Your hand.” With a living, loving God to superintend all things, we feel ourselves at home, resting near our Father’s heart.

“My times are in Your hand.” Does not this reveal the condescension of the Lord? He has all Heaven to worship Him and all worlds to govern, and yet, “my times”—the times of such an inconsiderable and unworthy person as I am—are in His hands! Now, what is man that it should be so? Wonder of wonders, that God should not only think of me, but should make my concerns His concerns and take my matters into His hands! He has the stars in His hands and yet He puts us there. He deigns to take in hand the passing interests of obscure men and lowly women!

Beloved, God is near His people with all His attributes, His wisdom, His power, His faithfulness, His immutability and these are, under oath, to work for the good of those who put their trust in Him. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Yes, God considers our times and thinks them over, with His heart and soul planning to do us good. That august mind, out of which all things spring, bows itself to us and those eternal wings, which cover the universe, also brood over us and our household, and our daily needs and woes! Our God sits not still as a listless spectator of our griefs, suffering us to be drifted like waifs upon the waters of circumstance, but is busily occupying Himself at all times for the defense and perfecting of His children. He leads us that He may bring us home to the place where His flock shall rest forever.

What a bliss this is! Our times, in all their needs and aspects, are in God’s hands and, therefore, God is always caring for us! How near it brings God to us and us to God! Child of God, go not tomorrow into the field, lamenting that God is not there! He will bless your going out. Come not home to your chamber, crying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” He will bless your coming in! Go not to your bed, dreaming that you are left an orphan—neither wake up in the morning with a sense of loneliness upon you—you are not alone, for the Father is with you!

Will you not feel how good it is that God should come so close to you and handle your bread and your water, and bless your bed and your board? Are you not happy to be allowed to come so close to God, as to say, “My times are in Your hand”? There is a great deal in this first point as to the nearness of the Lord—and if you will turn it over—you will see more and more that a conviction that our times are in God’s hand tends to create a happy and holy sense of the nearness of God to us.

II. THIS TRUTH IS A COMPLETE ANSWER TO MANY A TEMPTATION. You know how craftily Satan will urge a temptation. He says, “Now you have a large family and your chief duty is to provide for them. Your posi-

tion brings with it many needs. Here is a plan of making money—others follow it. It may not be quite straight, but you must not be particular in such a world as this, for nobody else is.” How will you meet this? Can you say to Satan, “It is not my business to provide for myself or for my family—my times are in God’s hand and His name is Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord Will Provide. And I will not do a questionable thing, though it would fill my house with silver and gold from the cellar to the chimney pot. I shall not meddle with my Lord’s business. It is His to provide for me—it is mine to walk uprightly and obey His Word”?

This is a noble answer to the arch-enemy! But supposing he says, “Well, but you are already in difficulties and you cannot extricate yourself if you are too precise. A poor man cannot afford to have a conscience—it is an expensive luxury in these days. Give your conscience a holiday and you can soon get out of your trouble.” Let your reply be, “O Prince of Darkness, it is no business of mine to extricate myself! My times are in God’s hand. I have taken my case to Him and He will work for me in this matter better than I can do for myself! He does not wish me to do a wrong thing, that I may do for myself what He has promised to do for me.” We are not called upon to eke out God’s wisdom with a bit of our own wickedness. God forbid! Do the right, even if the heavens should fall. The Lord who has taken your business into His hands will bear you through.

“Well,” says one, “we may use a little discreet policy in religious matters and keep the peace by wise compromise. We may accomplish our end all the sooner by going a little roundabout. If you can just let the Truth of God wait for a little until the fine weather comes, and the silver slippers are in season, then she will be saved a good deal of annoyance!” Brothers and Sisters, it is not for us to pick and plan times in this fashion. God’s cause is in God’s hands and God would not have us help His cause by a compromising hand being laid on His Ark. Remember what the hand of Uzzah brought on him, though he meant well. Let us continue steadfast in the integrity of our walk and we shall find our times are in God’s hand—and that they are well ordered and need no hasty and unholy interposition on our part.

Brethren, is it not a delightful thing for us to know that though we are on a stormy voyage, the Lord, Himself, is at the helm? The course we do not know, nor even our present latitude and longitude. But the Pilot knows all about us and also about the sea. It will be our wisdom not to interfere with our Captain’s orders. They put up a notice on the steamboats, “Do not speak to the man at the wheel.” We are very apt, in our unbelief, to dispute with Him to whom the steering of our vessel is entrusted. We shall not confuse Him, thank God, but we often confound and confuse ourselves by our idle complaining against the living Lord! No, when you are tempted to presume, or to act in a despairing haste, or to hide your principles, or to do something which is not defensible in order that you may arrange your times more comfortably, answer with a decided “No,” and say, “My times are in God’s hand”—and there, by His Grace, I will leave them!”

When the devil comes with His subtle questions and insinuations, refer Him to your Lord, in whose hands your times are placed. When you have a lawsuit, the opposite side will likely come and talk with you, to see if they can get something out of you. It will be your wisdom to reply, “If you have anything to say, say it to my solicitor.” If the devil comes to you and you get into an argument with him, he will beat you, for he is a very ancient lawyer and he has been at the business for so many ages that you cannot match him. Send him to your Advocate! Refer him to the Wonderful, the Counselor! Always shelter beneath this fact, “My times are in His hand. I have left the whole business to Another and I cannot dishonor Him by meddling.” Satan knows the Christ too well to go to Him—he knows the taste of His broadsword, of, “It is written.” He will not contest with Jesus if we leave Him to plead the causes of our soul!

III. In the third place, THIS CONVICTION IS A SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AGAINST THE FEAR OF MEN. We may say to ourselves, when our enemies bear very hard upon us, “I am not in their hands. My times are in Your hand.” Here are gentlemen judging and condemning us with great rapidity. They say, “He has made a great mistake. He is an old bigot. He has snuffed himself out.” This is easier said than done. The candle still shines. They say of you, “He is foolish and headstrong and, on religious matters, he is as obstinate as a mule! But he will come to grief.” You have not come to grief, yet, in the way they predict, and they had better not prophesy till they know! The godly are not in the hands of those who mock them! The wicked may gnash their teeth at Believers, but they cannot destroy them! Here is their comfort—they have committed their spirit to the hands of God—and He will sacredly preserve the precious deposit. Fear not the judgments of men! Appeal to a higher court. Take the case to the King’s Bench. Go to God, Himself, with the matter, and He will bring forth your judgment as the light and your righteousness as the noonday.

Do the malicious resolve to crush you? They will use to the utmost their little power, but there is a higher power which will hold them back. Rejoicingly say, “My times are in Your hand.” Do they treat you with contempt? Do they sneer at you? What does that matter? Your honor comes not from men! Their contempt is the highest *compliment* the wicked can pay you.

Alas, many professors place their times in the hands of the world! If they prosper and grow rich, they see an opportunity of social advantage and they quit their humbler friends to join a more respectable sect. How many are lost to fidelity because their prosperous times are not in God’s hands, but in their own? Some, on the other hand, when they are in adversity, get away from the Lord. The excuse is, “I cannot go to the House of God any more, for my clothes are not so respectable as they used to be.” Is your poverty to take you out of your Lord’s hands? Never let it be so! But say, “My times are in Your hand.” Cleave to the Lord in losses as well as in gains and so let *all* your times be with Him.

How often we meet with people who are staggered by slander! It is impossible to stop malicious tongues. They wound and even slay the characters of the godly. The tried one cries, “I cannot bear it! I shall give all up.”

Why? Why yield to mere talk? Even these cruel tongues are in God’s hands! Can you not brave their attacks? They cannot utter a single whisper more than God permits! Go on your way, O righteous man, and let false tongues pour forth their poison as they will. “Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” If my times are in God’s hands, no man can do me harm unless God permits it. Though my soul is among lions, yet no lion can bite me while Jehovah’s angel is my guard!

This feeling, that our interests are safe in the highest keeping, breeds an independent spirit. It prevents our cringing before the great and our flattering the strong. At the same time, it removes all tendency to envy, so that you do not wish for the prosperity of the wicked, nor fret yourself because of evildoers. When one knows that his times are in God’s hands, he would not change places with a king! No, nor even with an angel!

IV. A full belief in the statement of our text is A CURE FOR PRESENT WORRY. O Lord, if my times are in Your hands, I have cast my care on You, and I trust and am not afraid! Why is it, my Sister—for this habit of worrying abounds among the gracious sisterhood—why do you vex yourself about a matter which is in the hands of God? If He has undertaken for you, what cause have you for anxiety? And you, my Brother—for there are plenty of men who are nervous and fretful—why do you want to interfere with the Lord’s business? If the case is in His hands, what need can there be for you to be prying and crying? You were worrying this morning and fretting last night—and you are distressed, now, and will be worse tomorrow morning. May I ask you a question? Did you ever get any good by fretting? When there was not rain enough for your farm, did you ever fret a shower down? When there was too much rain, or you thought so, did you ever worry the clouds away? Tell me, did you ever make a sixpence by worrying? It is a very unprofitable business!

Do you answer, “What, then, are we to do in troublous times?” Why, go to Him into whose hand you have committed yourself and your times! Consult with Infinite Wisdom by *prayer*. Console yourself with Infinite Love by fellowship with God. Tell the Lord what you feel and what you fear. Ten minutes’ praying is better than a year’s murmuring! He that waits upon God and casts his burden upon Him may lead a royal life—indeed, he will be far happier than a king!

To leave our times with God is to live as free from care as the birds upon the bough. If we fret, we shall not glorify God, and we shall not constrain others to see what true religion can do for us in the hour of tribulation. Fret and worry put it out of our power to act wisely. But if we can leave everything with God because everything *really* is in His hands, we shall be peaceful and our action will be deliberate. And for that very reason it will be more likely to be wise. He that rolls his burden upon the Lord will be strong to do or to suffer—and his days shall be as the days of Heaven upon the earth. I admire the serenity of Abraham. He never seems to be in a fluster, but he moves grandly, like a prince among men. He is much more than the equal of the greatest man he meets—we can hardly see Lot with a microscope when we have once seen Abraham! Why was that? Because he believed in God and staggered not.

Half the joy of life lies in expectation. Our children get greater pleasure out of expecting a holiday than they do out of the day, itself. It is much the same with ourselves. If we believe that all our times are in God's hands, we shall be expecting great things from our heavenly Father. When we get into a difficulty we shall say, “I am now going to see the wonders of God and to learn, again, how surely He delivers them that trust in Him!” I thank God I have learned at times to glory in necessities, as opening a window into Heaven for me, out of which the Lord would abundantly pour forth His supplies. It has been to me so unspeakable a delight to see how the Lord has supplied my needs for the Orphanage, the College and other works, that I have half wished to be in straits, that I might see how the Lord would appear for me!

I remember, some time ago, when, year after year, all the money came in for the various enterprises, I began to look back with regret upon those grand days when the Lord permitted the brook Cherith to dry up and called off the ravens, with their bread and meat, and then found some other way of supplying the orphans' needs! In those days, the Lord used to come to me, as it were, walking on the tops of the mountains, stepping from peak to peak and, by marvelous deeds, supplying all my needs, according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!

Do you know, I almost wished that the Lord would stop the streams and then let me see how He can fetch water out of the Rock! He did so, not very long ago. Funds ran very low and then I cried to Him and He heard me out of His holy hill. How glad was I to hear the footsteps of the ever-present Lord, answering to His child's prayer and letting him know that his times were still in his Father's hands! Surely it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man! It is a joy worth worlds to be driven where none but the Lord can help you—and then to see His mighty hand pulling you out of the net! The joy lies mainly in the fact that you are sure it is the Lord and sure that He is near you. This blessed realization of the Lord's interposition causes us to glory in tribulation! Is not that a cure for worry, a blessed cure for anxiety?

V. Fifthly, a firm conviction of this truth is A QUIETUS AS TO FUTURE DREAD. “My times are in Your hand.” Do you wish to know what is going to happen to you in a short time? Would you look between the folded leaves of the future? You can buy a penny newspaper which will tell you the fate of nations this very year. But you may be well-near sure that *nothing* will happen which is thus predicted—and thus it may be of little use to you! Be content with the prophecies of Scripture, but follow not every interpreter of them. Many people would pay great sums to have the future made known to them. If they were wise, they would rather desire to have it concealed! Do not want to know—such knowledge would answer no useful purpose. The future is intended to be a sealed book. The present is all we need to have before us. Do your day's work in its day and leave tomorrow with your God. If there were ways of reading the future, it would be wise to decline to use them. The knowledge would create responsibility, arouse fear and diminish present enjoyment—why seek after it? Famish idle curiosity and give your strength to believing obedience! Of this you

may be quite sure, that there is nothing in the book of the future which should cause distrust to a Believer! Your times are in God’s hands—and this secures them.

The very word, “times,” supposes change for you. But as there are no changes with God, all is well. Things will happen which you cannot foresee, but your Lord has foreseen all and provided for all! Nothing can occur without His Divine allowance and He will not permit that which would be for your real or permanent injury. “I should like to know,” says one, “whether I shall die soon.” Have no desire in that direction—your time will come when it should. The best way to live above all fear of death is to die every morning before you leave your bedroom. The Apostle Paul said, “I die daily.” When you have got into the holy habit of *daily dying*, it will come easy to you to die for the last time!

It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours. As you take off your garments at night, rehearse the solemn scene when you shall lay aside your robe of flesh. When you put on your garments in the morning, anticipate the being clothed upon with your house which is from Heaven in the day of Resurrection. To be fearful of death is often the height of folly. A great Prophet once ran away many miles to escape from death by an imperious queen. He was one of the bravest of the brave and yet He hurried into solitude to escape a woman’s threat! When he had finished his weary walk, he sat down and actually prayed, “Let me die.” It was a singular thing to do, to run for his life, and then to cry, “Let me die.” That man never did die, for we speak of Elijah who rode to Heaven in a chariot of fire! God does not answer all His people’s prayers, for He has better things for them than they ask. Do not tremble about what may never happen. Even we may never die, for it is written, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Some of us may be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. Who knows? Behold, He comes quickly! At any rate, do not let us worry about death, for it is in His hands.

VI. Again, a full conviction that our times are in His hands will be A REASON FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE. If God has undertaken my business for me, then I may most fitly undertake such business for Him as He may appoint. Queen Elizabeth wished one of the leading merchants of London to go to Holland to watch her interests there. The honest man told Her Majesty that he would obey her commands, but he begged her to remember that it would involve the ruin of his own trade, for him to be absent. To this the Queen replied, “If you will see to my business, I will see to your business.” With such a royal promise he might willingly let his own business go, for a queen should have it in her power to do more for a subject than he can do for himself.

The Lord, in effect, says to the Believer, “I will take your affairs in hand and see them through for you.” Will you not at once feel that now it is your *joy*, your *delight*, to live to glorify your gracious Lord? To be set free to serve the Lord is the highest freedom! How beautiful it is to read in the book of Isaiah, “And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers”! Outsiders

shall do the drudgery for you and set you free for higher service! Read on and see—“But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God.” Faith sets us free from the wear and tear of carking care that we may give ourselves up wholly to the service of the Lord our God! Faith causes us to live exempt from fret, to serve only the blessed God. Set free from the burden of earthly things by God’s kind care of us, we present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord our God. He has not made us slaves and drudges, but priests and kings unto God!

I am sure, dear Friends, if we get this Truth of God fully saturating our souls, that our times are in God’s hand, it will make life a grander thing than it has ever seemed to be. Do you believe that God’s hand is working with you and for you? Then are you lifted above the dumb-driven cattle that surround you, for the God of Heaven thinks of you and puts His hand to your affairs. This connection with the Divine puts heart into a man and rises him to high endeavor and great belief. We feel we are immortal till our work is done! We feel that God is with us and that we are bound to be victorious through the blood of Jesus! We shall not be defeated in the campaign of life, for the Lord of Hosts is with us and we shall tread down our enemies! God will strengthen us, for our times are in His hands and, therefore, we will serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul, being fully convinced that, “our labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

VII. Lastly, if our times are in God’s hands, here is A GRAND ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. He that takes care of our times will take care of our eternity. He that has brought us so far and worked so graciously for us will see us safely over the rest of the road. I marvel at some of you older folks, when you begin to doubt. You will say, “Look at yourself.” Well, so I do, and I am heartily ashamed that ever a grain of mistrust should get into the eye of my faith. I would weep it out and keep it out for the future.

Still, some of you are older than I am, for you are 70 or 80 years of age. How much longer do you expect to travel in this wilderness? Do you think you have you another 10 years? God has been gracious to you for 70 years and will you fret about the last 10, which, indeed, may never come? That will never do! God has delivered some of you out of such great trials that your present ones are mere fleabites. Sir Francis Drake, after he had sailed around the world, came up the Thames. And when he had passed Gravesend there came a storm which threatened the ship. The brave commander said, “What? Go around the world safely and then get drowned in a ditch? Never!” So *we* ought to say! God has upheld us in great tribulations and we are not going to be cast down about trials which are common to men!

A man of energy, if he takes a work in hand, will push it through and the Lord our God never undertakes what he will not complete. “My times are in Your hand” and, therefore, the end will be glorious! My Lord, if my times were in my own hands, they would prove a failure, but since they are in Your hands, You will not fail, nor shall I! The hands of God ensures success all along the line. In that day when we shall see the tapestry which records our lives, we shall see all the scenes therein with wondering

eyes. We shall see what wisdom, what love, what tenderness, what care was lavished upon them! When once a matter is in God’s hands, it is never neglected or forgotten, but it is carried out to the end. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

I have not been able to preach on this text as I hoped to do, for I am full of pain and have a heavy headache. But, thank God, I have no heartache with such a glorious Truth of God before me! Sweet to my soul are these words—“My times are in Your hand.” Take the golden sentence home with you! Keep this Truth in your mind. Let it lie on your tongue like a wafer made with honey. Let it dissolve until your whole nature is sweetened by it. Yes, dear old lady, you that have come out of the workhouse this morning to hear this sermon, say to yourself, “My times are in Your hand.” Yes, you, dear Friend, who cannot find employment and have been walking your shoes off your feet in the vain endeavor to seek one—*you*, also, may say, “My times are in Your hand.” Yes, my dear Sister, pining away with consumption, this may be your song—“My times are in Your hand.” Yes, young man, you that have just started in business and have met with a crushing loss, it will be for your benefit, after all! Therefore say, “My times are in Your hand.” This little sentence, to my mind, swells into a hymn—it buds and blossoms into a Psalm! Few are the words, but mighty is the sense, and full of rest.

Now, remember, it is not everybody that can find honey in this hive. O Sinners, you are in the hands of an angry God and this is terrible! The God against whom you continually sin and whom you provoke by refusing His Grace, has absolute power over you! Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces! You have provoked, offended and grieved Him, but there is yet hope, for His mercy endures forever. Though you have vexed His Holy Spirit, yet return unto Him and He will have mercy upon you and abundantly pardon you! It is certain that you are in His hands and that you cannot escape from Him. If you should climb to Heaven, or dive to Hell, you would not be out of His reach! No strength of yours can resist Him, no speed can outrun Him. Yield yourselves to God and then this great power of God, which now surrounds you, shall become your comfort!

At present it ought to be your terror. The eyes of God are fixed upon you. The hands of God are against you and if you are unsaved, one touch of that hand will mean death and everlasting destruction! That hand which the Believer devoutly kisses, is the hand which you may well dread. Oh, that you would flee to Christ Jesus and find shelter from wrath beneath the crimson canopy of His precious blood! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 31.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—910, 701, 703.**

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DAVID'S HOLY WONDER AT THE LORD'S GREAT GOODNESS NO. 773

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for
them that fear You, which You have worked for them
that trust in You before the sons of men!”
Psalm 31:19.*

YOU will observe in reading this Psalm that David was in deep distress. These are the words of his lamentation: “My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintances: they that did see me outside fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.”

In this forlorn condition he found consolation by turning his contemplations away from his present trouble to the goodness of his God, even as a mariner turns the helm and so escapes the rock. Herein he was wise and instructed us to be wise, also. To ruminate upon our sorrows is but to increase them. To turn them over, and over, and over again is but to squeeze from them the most bitter drops which they contain. The more the turbid pool is stirred, the blacker will it become. Relieve your thoughts, then! Trade in another market! Let your minds exchange the pressing sorrow for sustaining consolation.

And what can be better, what nobler as a theme for inspiring hope, what mightier as a lever for uplifting the mind than reflection upon the amazing goodness of God? It has been said by a great physician that when persons find much difficulty in sleeping they have sometimes been able to win the embrace of “tired nature’s sweet restorer,” by fixing their minds upon a single sublime subject, a grand absorbing topic, a master theme or thought. As soon as the mind has been thoroughly absorbed in contemplation it has been at rest, and the body has rested, too. I know not how that may be, but certainly, when God would give “His beloved sleep” in times of distraction, and would lull their souls into a calm repose, there is no better sleeping pill which His hand can administer to the troubled spirit than a meditation upon the amazing goodness of the Lord our God.

Or, to change the metaphor, we know that when young lads first go to sea, if they have before been unaccustomed to climb to elevated places they are apt to grow dizzy when called to perform their duties on the mast. Then the experienced captain instructs them to “look up,” for if

they look down, and measure timidly the height of the mast, and count the waves as they roll against the sides of the vessel, and terrify their minds with thoughts upon the heaving of the ship, and the terrors of falling from their hold, they are most likely to fall! But, looking to the motionless stars, and the calm, blue sky, the brain grows calm and the foot maintains its standing.

We would say, then, to any who are tossed upon the sea of trouble tonight—imitate the example of David and “look up.” Turn away your minds from the slanderer and the persecutor. Forget awhile the fever and the need, and remember the loving kindness of Jehovah. You may find it almost impossible to keep your minds always tending upwards, but at any rate, while you are here, “look up” with eyes uplifted to the hills from where your help comes. Happy will it be for you if, by the good Spirit of God, you can but get your eyes so fixed upon the goodness of God that you shall become so fascinated that your attention cannot be taken off that glorious object! It will be a blessing to you, a great blessing which will bear you through all your trials and make you suck honey from the rock and oil out of the flinty rock.

Now note the text carefully. David thought of the goodness of God till he was lost in wonder, and being quite unable to express his feelings he uttered an exclamation, “Oh, how great is Your goodness!” We will consider, first, the subject of holy wonder mentioned in the text. Secondly we will consider the partakers of this Divine goodness. Then, thirdly, we shall note some general matters which tend to enhance our admiration of the goodness of God. And fourthly, we will notice sundry teachings which flow from the whole subject.

I. In the first place, observe in the text THE SUBJECT OF HOLY WONDER—“Your goodness.” We here perceive God’s goodness in a two-fold aspect, as laid up in store and already displayed in a measure, “Oh how great is Your goodness which You have laid up!” And secondly, “Oh how great is Your goodness which You have worked before the sons of men!”

1. We shall devoutly take the first of these. David is astonished at the great goodness of God which is laid up—the goodness of God which David had not as yet tasted, had not actually received—but which his faith realized and looked upon as its fixed and settled heritage. The spirit of our text is that of Miss Waring’s delightful hymn in which she exclaims—

**“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”**

We magnify the Lord for the Grace which is yet to come—the laid up goodness, the corn that is in the granary, which the good Joseph is keeping till the time of famine comes—the water which is but just bubbling from the spring and has not yet come streaming down to the plain—where our thirst will by-and-by require it.

Now think, Christian, of what God has laid up for them that fear Him! First, how much He laid up in His eternal purpose when He chose His

people, and laid up for them the grand intention, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels." Think of electing love, and of all the consequences which well up from that eternal fountainhead. Here you have a subject for a life-long wonder—

***"Father, 'twas Your love that knew us
Earth's foundation long before:
That same love to Jesus drew us
By its sweet constraining power,
And will keep us
Safely now, and evermore.
God of love, our souls adore You!
We would still Your Grace proclaim,
Till we cast our crowns before You,
And in Glory praise Your name
Hallelujah, be to God and to the Lamb!"***

Oh, how great is Your goodness which Your eternal purpose ordained and settled upon Your saints by an everlasting decree that it should be theirs—for so You had decreed it according to the counsel of Your own most wise and sovereign will. How great is Your goodness that You should choose us and predestinate us to be conformed into the image of Your Son, that He might be the First-Born among many Brethren, and we the happy Brethren who should be transformed into His likeness! How great is the goodness of God which He laid up in the Covenant of Grace! He determined to bless us in a way of Covenant relationship into which He entered on our behalf with our federal Head, the Lord Jesus.

To attempt, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to read to you the treasures which God has made over to us in the Covenant of Grace were to attempt an impossibility. The catalog is far too comprehensive. Behold, He has given all things to you in the Covenant of His eternal love, for all things are yours, whether things present or things to come—life and death, time and eternity—no, more, God Himself is yours! "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." The Father is your Father! The Son of God is your Brother! The Spirit of God is your Comforter who abides with you forever! In that golden case of the Covenant of Grace all the wealth of the Eternal is stored up for the chosen!

David laid up in store for the temple, but Jesus has treasured up far more for His Church. Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brothers, but our heavenly Father has given to all the family an inheritance surpassing all conception. Angels, nor principalities, nor powers can fully estimate the infinite wealth of blessedness laid up in the Everlasting Covenant. Think, too, of what God has laid up in the Person of His Son—the same treasure, only now more clearly revealed to us and brought forth in the Person of the Well-Beloved so that we may the more readily partake of it. In the ark of old there were laid up the golden pot of manna and sundry other marvelous things—but what is there laid up in the ark of *our* Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Beloved, there is laid up in Him all things that are necessary for you! Pardon for all your sins! Justification through faith in His Sacrifice! Life through His death! Sanctifying power is in the blood of Jesus! Your pre-

servation is in Christ's hands! Your acceptance depends upon Him—a daily intercession goes up from the heart of your Lord Jesus on your behalf and He constantly represents you before the golden throne! All that you can want for the whole journey from the place where you now are, right up to the right hand of the Most High—all this is laid up for you! You are complete in Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

If you fear Him and trust Him, though meanest of all His people, yet all needful Grace and promised glory is laid up for you in the Person, work, offices and relationships of the Lord Jesus Christ. And think, Beloved, of what is laid up for you in the work, office and mission of the Holy Spirit! You have not yet realized what the Holy Spirit can do. You have been regenerated by Him! You have been made to pass from death unto life. You have been taught somewhat of the Truth of God—He has revealed some of the things of God to you. You have been somewhat illuminated, somewhat strengthened, somewhat comforted, somewhat assisted in prayer—but none of you are aware of all that the Holy Spirit can do!

When we see some men who have become eminent in Divine Grace. When we read their heavenly biographies and observe how they walked with God, and seemed to live a life above the common lot of earth-born mortals, we should remember that they enjoyed no monopoly of Grace! The bread on which they fed is common to all the household—whatever Grace the best of men have had, you may have as much and more! When we measure the abundance of Divine power in the Holy Spirit by what we see in eminent martyrs, confessors, Apostles, and saints—we may cry with the Psalmist, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You!"

How happy, how blessed, how holy might Believers be if they would but come and receive of the fullness of the Spirit's power! Do not imagine, my beloved Friends, that the standard of your attainment is the maximum of a Christian! Do not consider that you have obtained all that God is willing to bestow! "You are not straitened in Him, but you are straitened in your own heart." There are loftier degrees of sanctification! There is a more eminent nearness of communion than the most of us are aware!

The laid-up treasures in the Holy Spirit are probably vastly greater than any of us have ever been enabled to conceive. I shall pause but a moment to observe that the greatest goodness of all, we sometimes think, but perhaps improperly, is that goodness which is to be revealed when this life is over which God has laid up for them that fear Him. I am not sure that this is the greatest since eternal love, itself, as a cause already given, is greater than the effect which is to follow. Courage, my Brothers and Sisters! The night lasts not forever—the morning comes. See you not the day star? Do you not see the hind of the morning leaping over the hills of darkness? The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Now whatever may be the splendor of the millennial reign, we shall share in them. And I confess that the Word of God seems to me to reveal much of coming glory—but to reveal it in such a manner that it is not possible for any of us to cast it into a mold and to say, with decisive certainty—“That is just what the prophecy means.” The glory that comes is too excessive for us to point to *details*. It is a blaze that might well blind those who seek to look upon it and count the flashing beams. But there is a glory coming such as the world never saw, and a kingdom which will swallow up all other kingdoms as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the pretenders.

There is a glory to come that shall be brighter than the glory of the sun, though that sun should flash forth with the light of seven days. A glory comes which excels and endures and in this Believers shall, all of them, have their share. I am inclined to think that they do err from the truth and pierce themselves through with many sorrows who teach that some of God's people will be shut out from this glory. There is nothing which God will give to some of His people, which He will not give to *all* His people. They shall all be with Christ where He is, that they may behold His glory. They shall all have a share, and I think an equal share, too, in all the excellent things which God has laid up for them that fear Him.

Whatever those things may be—and surely the most glowing language fails to picture them for they are all too rich and rare for words—we can say of them without fear, “Oh, how great is Your goodness!” Then ponder well the glories of the eternal state. Think of—

***“Jerusalem the golden
With milk and honey blest.”***

Let your faith bear you on its wings to the bejeweled city where—

***“They stand, those halls of Zion,
Jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
And all the martyr throng.”***

Those many mansions, the haven of rest, the shrine of holiness, the home of happiness, the summit of perfection, the abode of love, the royal palace, the Throne of the great King. Long you not to soar? Pant you not for the better country? Do not heart and voice feel the sweet oppression of too much anticipated joy? Is it not a relief to cry, “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You”?

Let us, dear Friends, before we leave this subject, rejoice in what God has laid up! It is a pity that we should rejoice in nothing but our own experience for this will sadly narrow the sphere of our praise. Our experience may be very slender as yet but we should rejoice in what is laid up! If I cannot rejoice in what I *am*, I will rejoice in what I *shall be*, remembering the precious thought, that, “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” If I cannot rejoice in what I have in the hand of experience, yet will I glory in that which I can grasp with the hand of faith, for even now it is mine, though it is laid up till I reach my majority, and have come to years when I shall be fit to receive it!

2. Now we must note that it is not *all* laid up. It is not all light that is sown for the righteous. We have some wheat that has grown up and yielded sheaves. There are some treasures which we enjoy *now*, and therefore we find David saying, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men!" The last few words look in our translation as if they belonged to the words, "Them that trust you," but this is not the correct reading. There are certain reasons which render it necessary to read the sentence thus—"Which You have worked before the sons of men for them that trust you."

Now God has worked out many marvelous things for us before the sons of men. I will not stay long, for your thoughts are often there upon that which Christ worked out before the sons of men in Gethsemane's sweat and blood, in Gabbatha's scourging, in Golgotha's death. Worked out! Ah, indeed, He worked out and brought in an everlasting righteousness! He has perfected forever them that are set apart. That one sacrifice of His secured the perfect salvation of all for whom He died as a Surety. What did He *not* work out then? "It is finished!" He said, and He knew what He said. He knew that he had worked out, then and there, the perfect redemption of every one of His people.

But we may remind you tonight of what God has worked out for you in your own experience in the work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. Do not forget, doubting Christian, that there was a time when you had not enough Grace to doubt. Do not forget, poor trembling one, that there was a time when you had not enough life to tremble. Be thankful, then, for the little Grace which you can perceive in yourself. Do not hide from your eyes what God has done. Be grateful for what you have! Remember what I have often said to you—be thankful for the starlight, and you will get moonlight. Be thankful for the moonlight and your God will send you sunlight.

We must prize the smallest degree of Divine Grace. We often neglect what we have and bemoan ourselves much because we are not perfect—though there is a measure in which we are to do that. But it were well not to do this too much or too exclusively. We must think of what God has done and be grateful and bless His name, and then be encouraged in faith to ask for more. Blessed be God, with a thousand imperfections and faults I still find in my soul some inkling of love towards His name. I feel some desire for the promotion of His glory. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see—I see my sinfulness, see my weakness, see that Christ is just such a Savior as I need and I do with my whole heart rely upon Him!

Shall I not be thankful for this? Is not this far more than nature could have given me? If you can honestly use such language as I have just uttered in your hearing, be thankful and in deepest humility rejoice! Be grateful for Grace within, and say, "Oh, how great a thing is this—for a dead soul to be made to live! For a filthy soul to be washed in the blood! For a naked soul to be clothed with heavenly righteousness! For a lost sheep to be brought into the fold! For a prodigal to be made to sit at his father's table! Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have worked

out for me, which has taken me away from my evil companions—turned me away from haunts of vice and iniquity, and made me to love what once I hated—and to delight in that which was once dreary and dull to my soul.”

But, Brethren, we have also another instance of what God has worked out for us in the shape of Providential mercies. How great is the goodness of God as shown in what He has worked out for us in Providence! We have all some Providence to remember which seems very special to us. But all Providence is special if we look at it from the right point of view. A certain father had agreed to meet his son at a spot halfway between their residences which were far removed from each other. When the son reached the halfway spot, he said, “Father, I have great reason to bless God, for I have met with a very special Providence. My horse stumbled and threw me three times, and yet I was not injured.”

“Thanks be to God,” said the father, “and I have met with a very special Providence, too, for which I thank God, and that is that my horse never stumbled once, but brought me safely all the way.” If you happen to meet with an accident and are almost killed, you say it is a special Providence if you are preserved. But is it not a Providence that you go many and many a journey and no harm befalls you whatever? Let us bless God for the mercies we do not see—the innumerable dangers from which we are preserved—the great needs which are supplied before we know them to be needs! From childhood up to youth and on to manhood what flowers of mercy have bloomed in our pathway! What tender hands have led us! What mighty arms have upheld us! What a watchful eye has been fixed upon us! “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.”

Perhaps you do not perceive any great goodness of God in your particular position at this present crisis. You are very poor and very lonely. Well, there will be a day, if you are the Lord's child, when you will see superlative love in the lot marked out for you. For the present believe it, and, believing it, you have an opportunity of honoring God in your distress which would not be yours if you were in another condition. When you shall know the end as well as the beginning, you will see that it was better for you to have been poor and needy than to have been rich and increased in goods. Meanwhile count it enough reason for perpetual song that you possess—

***“What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy.”***

There are other aspects in which I might have brought out the text, but I prefer to leave each one among you to tune his own harp and give to his Lord the sweet spontaneous music of a soul aglow with gratitude.

II. I shall now, very briefly, take you on to the second point, which is THE FAVORED PERSONS WHO ENJOY THE LORD'S GREAT GOODNESS. “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You, which You have worked for them that trust in You.” As you know, the phrase, “the fear of God,” is used especially in the Old Testa-

ment for the whole of *piety*. It does not signify merely the one virtue of fear—it does not signify that feeling at all in the sense of slavish fear—but it takes a wide sweep.

The man who had the fear of God before his eyes was one who believed in God, worshipped God, loved God, was kept back from evil by the thought of God and moved to good by the desire to please God. The ungodly were the wicked ones—those who had no God. Those who had a godly fear were found diligently walking in holiness. The fear of God, I say, was the expression used for the whole of religion!

Still, fear itself is a very important element in the Christian's character if it is the right kind of fear. We have nothing to do with the terror of the bond slave, for we are free and "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Blessed be God, we have no fear of Hell. It is not possible for a Believer to be there! Talk of casting a Believer into Hell? As well talk of casting the Redeemer Himself there! It is impossible. We have no fear, even, of losing our standing before God, for we do not stand before Him in ourselves, but in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot fall, finally and fatally, unless *Jesus* can fall. "Because I live," He says, "you shall live also."

But *this* is our fear—the fear which a dear child has of a tender father. It is not afraid that its father will kill it, or cease to love it, or banish it and turn it out of his house. It knows better! It trusts its father too well to indulge in such mischievous suspicions. Because it loves him, it fears to offend him. This is the very atmosphere in which a Christian breathes. He fears God and consequently desires to keep His commandments. But you notice that the synonym used in the text is "trust," and therefore it is plain that *trust in God* is the sum and total of *religion*.

Why is it put so—"Laid up for them that fear You. Worked for them that trust in You"—unless it is true that he who *trusts* God *fears* God? The whole compass of the fear of God is gathered up into a center in that point of *trust*. Why so? Why, my Brethren, because trust is the root of true fear! To trust God is the root of all genuine religion. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Faith is the foundation of all the other Graces. Faith unites us vitally to the Lord Jesus Christ and then from Him, as from the trunk, the sap of Divine Grace flows into the branch and the fruit is produced. But take away faith and we are separated from Christ, and then there can be no fruit. Therefore, because faith is the root, the seed containing the whole of the substance and essence of *piety*—it is put for the entire fear of God.

Then again, faith, or trust is the test of the *genuineness* of religion. He whose religion is everything else but trust in God has no true religion. He may be very precise in ceremonies. He may be exceedingly exact in morality, but if he is relying upon *these* things, then he has no true trust and he has no right fear of God. But he who observes the Lord's will and at the same time rests upon God, and upon Him, alone—depending upon the precious blood of Jesus as his only confidence—he is the man whose fear of God is such as God can accept. So you see, because trust is thus the touchstone of true religion, therefore it is put for the whole thing.

Moreover, trust is the flower of the fear of God. After all, the grandest thing that a man can do is trust God! I should be prepared to prove, if there were time tonight, that there is in trust in God the whole compass of all the other virtues. Or, to put it in other words, if you will put trust under the necessary conditions, it will educe out of its own loins all the other attributes of the perfect man. Only let a man trust in Christ, and he has done the grandest thing that can be done! The highest morality is to trust Christ. What did the Master, Himself, say? The Jews asked Him, "What is the work of God?" They wanted to know what was that highest work which man could do that was worthy to be called God's work, the work of God, the highest work and the best. And Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom He has sent."

When you have trusted God you have done more than they who have kept the ceremonies of the Law to the letter. When you have trusted God you have done more than they who cringe at Moses' feet, and shake and quake before the mountain that was altogether on a smoke. They crawl like slaves, abjectly, at their Master's feet—but you stand up like free-born sons! You do the Lord far higher homage when you trust His love, His power, His Truth than legalists do with all their toiling and their striving and their works! The grandest virtue, the very highest point of all excellence is to trust in God as He reveals Himself in His Word.

Now, it appears that the goodness of God is laid up for them that fear Him, and worked for them that trust Him. Dear Hearer, will you ask yourself anxiously whether you fear God, and further, whether you fear Him in such a way as to have trust in Him? Have you these two indispensable spiritual gifts? Are you believers in Jesus Christ, dear Hearers? Some of you are, I know. I rejoice with you that God has brought you into the ark of salvation by the door of faith. But are you all such as shall be saved? There is no salvation except by faith, remember—all other methods are delusions. It is faith in Jesus Christ which brings eternal salvation to you! Without this, despair is your portion.

If you have not this precious Grace, may the Lord bestow upon you the faith which works by love and purifies the soul, that you, believing in Him, may have the power given you to become the sons of God, which power He gives to as many as believe on His name.

III. And now, only two or three words upon the third point, and that is coming back to the first reflection—the greatness of God's goodness to the people who have been described. There are ONE OR TWO THINGS WHICH MAKE US SEE THAT GREATNESS. First, observe the multitude of these people. God's people have been 10,000s times 10,000s in number. They are a "little flock" in comparison with the outside world, but no doubt they shall be, at the end, "a multitude that no man can number." Now, the goodness of God to any one of them is quite unsearchable and not to be estimated. But what must be the great goodness which He has laid up for all His people, for all them that fear and trust Him?—

***"Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines!"***

It is no small task to water one garden in the heat of the summer so that every flower shall be refreshed, and no plant overlooked. How great is the might of Him who, from the salt sea, extracts the precious clouds of sweet rain to fall not only on gardens, but the pastures of the wilderness and the wild forest trees till all nature laughs for joy, the mountains and the hills break forth into singing and the trees of the field clap their hands! Brethren, it is a great thing to put a cup of cold water to the lips of a disciple—it shall not lose its reward. To refresh the heart of *one* of God's saints is no mean thing. But think how great is God's goodness which puts a cup of salvation to *every* Christian's lips! Which waters every plant of His right-hand planting so that everyone can have his leaf continually green and his fruit ever brought forth in due season!

Think again, dear Friends, of the undeservingness of each one of these! There is not one of those who feared and trusted Him that was worthy of the least grain of His mercy. They were many of them the chief of sinners—some of them peculiarly so—and yet this goodness, this great goodness, came to them exemplifying its greatness because of the greatness of their transgressions. Was there anything of worthiness about the prodigal who had devoured his substance with harlots in his riotous living? Was not his prodigality a fire to set off the brightness of the father's love, who said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it. And let us eat and be merry: for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found"?

When God saved Jonah by the whale which was prepared for him, did He do it because Jonah was deserving of it? Very far from it! He was fleeing from God's Presence and the path of duty, and God's goodness to him is thrown out in bold relief by the dark unworthiness of that unfaithful and timid Prophet. Well may we say, as we notice our own waywardness and folly, and contrast it with Divine mercy, "Oh, how great is Your goodness!"

Remember, too, the need they were in. You can measure the greatness of the goodness of God by the distance from the place where Adam left his fallen posterity, broken by the Fall, to the position at the right hand of Christ where God's eternal mercy shall place them forever! Picture to yourself a place full of all manner of vile and loathsome diseases, where the deadly fever and the living-death called leprosy, are found. See yon man who enters, braving all the dangers of infection that he may heal the sick and restore the wretched ones to health and life! How great his goodness!

But is even *that* to be compared to the goodness of God's Son who not only ran the risk with no chance of escape, but deliberately "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"? "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree" willingly, deliberately, and came of set purpose to die for us—

***"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,***

His pity never withdrew."

Think, Brothers and Sisters, of the great goodness of God to His saints—and this will help to make it greater—in contrast to the great evil of man to them. Some of these saints have died cruel deaths. The most of them have had to pass through disgrace and scorn, but oh, how great is Your goodness which You have worked in them, sustaining them all, and making them more than conquerors through Him that loved them!

David speaks in one of his Psalms of his enemies as besetting him "like bees." And in another place he says of his God, "You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me." Now, how great the Divine goodness must have appeared to him in contrast with the stinging malice of his foes! Or, when the Master said to Peter, "Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." The love of his Lord must have appeared to him, if not at that time, yet afterwards, in brighter colors, because of Satan's dark designs against him.

If Daniel mused in the lions' den, or the three holy children in the fiery furnace, they must have thought, all of them, as we should, amidst all our trials and conflicts, "How great is the goodness of God in opposition to the cruelty of man." There was a great purpose. There was a great Covenant. There was a great Sacrifice. There is a great Providence. There is a great Heaven, and there is a great Spirit to bring them there. Oh, how great is Your goodness to Your people!

I shall not further preach on that topic. I put you at the river's edge and bid you wade in, hoping that you may proceed as far as the Apostle, when he said, "Oh, the depths!"

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT SHOULD THIS TEACH US? Should not this make us grateful to God for such wondrous kindness? The Lord has not given His people to drink of a twinkling rivulet, but He has been pleased to give the river of *Himself* to them that they may drink to the full! Did you ever get the meaning of that passage, "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God"? Oh, that is a text that one would like to preach from in Heaven! If there are pulpits there, and congregations, give me that for a text above all others, except that best of all, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory."

"Filled with all the fullness of God!" Beloved, have you learned this wonder? Will you now bless the Lord that there is such a marvel of love for you to learn? You have already had as much as you could bear of God's goodness! You have had Providential goodness and spiritual mercies. Is there no spark of gratitude in your soul? Can you not afford a song—at least a stanza? O you who think yourselves banished tonight, and are in the dark—lift up your heads! Sing of the light you once had and of the light that is yet to be revealed—that is laid up for them that fear Him, and which shall yet bless your eyes. Be grateful.

In the next place, when you think of the great goodness of God, be humble. I know of no consideration which tends more to humble us than the great mercy of God—like Peter's boat, which floated high in the water

when there was nothing in it, but when it was filled with fish it began to sink—our minds are humbled by a sense of undeserved love—

***“The more your mercies strike my eye,
The more humble I shall be.”***

A sense of Divine goodness will never puff us up but will mightily pull us down. It tends to make the Believer say, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the Truth which You have showed unto Your servant!”

And, lastly, let this inspire us with confidence. If tonight we are bowed down and distressed, let us think of the laid-up goodness of God and go to Him for it. He will surely give, for He has laid it up! He will not deny, for He has prepared it. God seems to say to His people tonight, as of old He said to the multitudes outside His banqueting hall, “My oxen and fatlings are killed, come to the supper!” All that you can want is provided in Christ. Come in, come in! “Eat, eat,” says the spouse in the song, “drink, yes, drink abundantly.”

O Beloved, you cannot diminish the fullness of Christ! Come, now, and put your mouths down to the wellhead and drink a draught such as old behemoth drank when he said he would drink the Jordan dry at a draught. You may have all you can take, Believer! There is no stint or limit here! “Open your mouth wide,” says the Lord, “and I will fill it.” Be not slack concerning the promise, in receiving it, for God will not be slack in keeping it. Only be strong, and full of *trust*, and you shall live to bless the Lord your Rock, in whom is no unrighteousness nor unfaithfulness, but who keeps truth unto His people forevermore.

I would to God that all of you had experienced this great goodness of God, but if you have not, and I know some of you have not, there are three thoughts, at least, I would leave upon your minds which should make you feel that He is great and good—“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Trust the Master, and you are saved! May boundless goodness magnify itself in us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

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

CONSOLATION FOR THE DESPAIRING

NO. 1146

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes, nevertheless
You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You.”
Psalm 31:22.*

I DESIRE at this time to speak to those who are much depressed in spirit, the sons of despondency and daughters of mourning who dwell upon the dreary confines of despair. It may seem objectionable among so large an audience to address my discourse to a class so comparatively small, but I must leave it to your compassion to excuse me. No, I think I hardly need do that, but may urge as my apology the nature of my calling. When the shepherd comes in the early morning to his flock, do not his eyes single out the sick, and does he need forgiveness if, for a while, he devotes all his skill and his care to those sheep which need it?

He does not reason with himself that because of the largeness of the flock and his anxious care that all should be fed, renders it impossible for him to bind up that which is broken and heal that which is diseased, but, on the contrary, his attention to all is proved by his special interest in the particular cases which most require his tenderness. Or take another parable—the watcher on the beach, with his telescope in his hand, paces to and fro and keeps guard for his appointed time. He looks through the glass again and again, but a glance contents him so far as most of yonder gallant vessels are concerned, which are now in the offing.

But by-and-by his glass remains steadily at his eye—his gaze is fixed and in a few moments he gives a signal to his fellows and they haul the boat to the sea and launch her. What has there been so peculiar about this craft that it has gained the watcher's attention and stirred him to action? He saw signals of distress, or by some other token he knew the ship's need, and therefore he bestirred himself and engaged every willing hand to lend her help. I, too, remain upon the lookout, and surely it is right that my eyes should rest most anxiously where the distress signals are visible, and where souls bound for eternity are floundering in doubt and ready to perish in despair!

I feel deeply for the mourners in Zion and I pray the Lord to cause His Word, through my ministry, to be as the oil of joy to them. Surely we may expect the Divine help of the Holy Spirit in our endeavor to console them, for the special office of the Holy Spirit under the present dispensation is to be “the Comforter,” who is to abide with us forever. While we bring forth the oil and wine from His own stores, we may hope that He will pour them into the wounds of the afflicted, for this is His office and it would be blas-

phemy to imagine that He will neglect it. He comforts effectually in an all-sufficient and Omnipotent manner.

I feel, too, that I have a Scriptural warrant for introducing such a subject as this into the midst of a congregation where there are many joyous hearts, because this Psalm, which is, to a large extent, sorrowful, was, nevertheless, intended for public worship, for it bears the inscription, "To the chief Musician," as do several others which are even more full of grief. As, for instance, the 22nd which is the Psalm of the Passion, and, nevertheless, is committed to the chief leader of sacred song in the house of the Lord. If, therefore, griefs which to the fullest could only be known by a few, were nevertheless to be made the subject of public psalmody, I am quite sure they ought not to be passed over in public ministry, but we ought to consider the cases of the ones and twos whose garments are sackcloth and whose drink is wormwood.

It is our bounden duty to sympathize with them and speak with them for their good. Nor need we fear that the rest of the assembly will suffer, for the 99 sheep in the wilderness never come to any ill because the shepherd is seeking the one lone wanderer. I do not intend considering the text strictly in its connection, but shall use it as a suitable expression of the mental grief of those I would benefit. Notice that it indicates an inward sorrow, it speaks of a rash expression—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes." It mentions a pleading cry and it bears witness to a cheering result to that cry—"nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You."

I. At the outset, note that there is implied in the text a deep, bitter, INWARD SORROW. The man who wrote the verse before us was pained in his heart. There are many in like case at this moment. Their soul faints with heaviness and their life is a burden. How came they are so? Verily, there are many causes for melancholy. Some have their spirit pitched upon a low key constitutionally—their music may never reach the highest notes till they are taught to sing the new song in another world. The windows of their house are very narrow and do not open towards Jerusalem but towards the desert. Something is wrong with their bodily frame—the tacklings are loosed, they cannot strengthen the mast—and the vessel labors terribly. When there is a leak in the vessel, it is little wonder that the waters come in even unto the soul.

With other mournful ones depression began through a great trial. As we have heard of some that their hair turned gray in a single night through grief, so doubtless many souls have aged into sorrow in a single trying hour. One blow has bruised the lily's stalk and made it wither. One touch of a rude hand has broken the crystal vase. Suns have been shaded in the midst of the brightest summer days and a morning of delight has been followed by an evening of lamentation. In some cases, God knows how many a secret sin, unconfessed to the Father, has festered into misery. There may have been wanton presumption, or pride of heart, or discontent, or inward rebellion against the will of God. There may have been willful neg-

ligence of the means of Grace, or despising of the value of the fellowship and joy of the Holy Spirit—and therefore the Lord may have hidden Himself for a while in chastisement.

Or it may be that there has been a gradual fretting of the spirit with minor vexations, long-continued and wearisome, which have worn the heart, even as constant dripping wears away stones. Incessant opposition or neglect from those we love may, at last, cause the spirit to yield. And when that takes place, life becomes bondage. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” I have also known an unwise ministry add to the sorrower’s woe. A legal ministry will do it and so, also, will that teaching which bids men look within for comfort—and sets up one uniform *experience* as the standard for all the people of God.

The causes are various but the case is always painful. O you who are walking in the light, deal gently with your Brothers and Sisters whose bones are broken, for you may also suffer from the same! Lay yourselves out to comfort the Lord’s mourners. They are not good company and they are very apt to make you unhappy as well as themselves, but for all that, be very tender towards them, for the Lord Jesus would have you so. Remember what woes Ezekiel pronounces upon the strong who roughly push the weaker sort. God is very jealous over His little children, and if the more vigorous members of the family are not kind to them, He may take away their strength and make them, even, to envy the little ones whom once they despised.

You can never err in being tender to the downcast. Lay yourself out as much as may be in you to bind up the broken-hearted and cheer the faint—and you will be blessed in the deed. When the natural spirits sink in those men who have no God to go to, their depression takes its own particular shape. Any physician can tell you of instances of mental distress in which persons have surrounded themselves with imaginary ills and made themselves martyrs to fancied disorders. We have seen cases which might almost compel an observer to laugh if they had not been so terribly serious to the patients, themselves.

If a man is a Christian, it is very natural that his troubles should assume a *spiritual* form. The only shades which can effectually darken his day are those which arise from sacred things. The fears which haunt him are not fears about his daily bread, but fears about the Bread of Life and fears as to his entrance into the Eternal Kingdom. The disease, from the physical side, is at bottom probably the same in the Christian as in the ungodly man, but, as his main thoughts are set upon Divine things, he, in his depression, naturally dwells most upon his *soul’s* affairs.

At such times the spiritually afflicted are filled with horrible apprehensions. What, let me ask you, is the most horrible apprehension that a Christian man can have? Is it not that of the text, “I am cut off from before Your eyes”? Nothing distresses a Christian so much as the fear of being a castaway of God. You shall find no real Christian in despair because he is

becoming poor. You shall not find him utterly cast down because worldly comforts are taken away. But let his Lord hide His face and he is troubled. Let him doubt his sonship and he is overwhelmed. Let him question his interest in Christ and his joy has fled. Let him fear that the life of God never was in his soul and you shall hear him mourn like a dove.

How can he live without his God? Yet this bitter sorrow has been endured by not a few of the best of men. If it could be said that only those Christians who walk at a distance from Christ, or those who are inconsistent in life, or those who are but little in prayer have felt in this way, then, indeed, there would be cause for the gravest disquietude. But it is a matter of *fact* that some of the choicest spirits among the Lord's elect have passed through the Valley of Humiliation and even sojourned there by the months together. Saints who are now among the brightest in Heaven, have yet, in their day, sat weeping at the gates of despair and asked for the crumbs which the dogs eat under the Master's table.

Read the life of Martin Luther. You would suppose, from what is commonly known of the brave Reformer, that he was a man of iron, immovable and invulnerable. So he was when he had to fight his Master's battles against Rome. But at home, on his bed, and in his quiet chamber, he was frequently the subject of spiritual conflicts—such as few have ever known! He had so much joy in believing that at times he was carried away with a tumult of boisterous exultation. But on other occasions he sank to the very deeps and was hard put to it to bear up at all. And that happened, too, even in his last moments, so that the worst battle of his life was fought upon that mysterious country which stretches towards the gates of the Celestial City.

Do not condemn yourself, my dear Sister. Do not cast yourself away, my dear Brother, because your faith endures many conflicts and your spirits sink very low. David, himself, said in his haste, "I am cut off from before Your eyes," yet there sits David in the blessed choir in Heaven! And even here on earth he was a man after God's own heart. There are great benefits to come out of these severe trials and depressions. There is a need that for a season we should be in heaviness. You cannot make great soldiers without war, or train skillful seamen upon shore. It appears necessary that if a man is to become a great Believer, he must be greatly tried. If he is to be a great helper of others, he must pass through the temptations of others. If he is to be greatly instructed in the things of the Kingdom, he must learn by experience. And if he is to be a loud singer to the tune of Sovereign Grace, he must hear deep calling unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts.

The uncut diamond has but little brilliance. The unthreshed corn feeds none and so the untried professor is of small practical use or beauty. Many have a comparatively smooth pathway through life, but their position in the Church is not that which the experienced Believer occupies, neither could they do his work among the afflicted. The man who is much worked and often harrowed may thank God if the result of it is a larger

harvest to the praise and glory of God by Jesus Christ. The time shall come with you, whose faces are covered with sorrow, when you shall bless God for your sorrows! The day will come when you shall set much store by your losses and your crosses, your troubles and your afflictions, counting them happy which endure—

**“From all your afflictions His Glory shall spring,
And the deeper your sorrows the louder you’ll sing.”**

II. I will speak no more upon this inward sorrow, a handful of bitter herbs is enough. I shall now pass on to notice THE RASH EXPRESSION of the Psalmist’s aching heart, “I said in my haste.” We have in the Psalms other instances in which David spoke hastily. He had better have bitten his tongue. We may speak, in a moment, words which we would give the *world* to recall. Oh, if some rash speeches could be unsaid! The price would be too dear to purchase their unsaying—unkind, provoking, cutting things towards men—and unbelieving, fretful, petulant, injurious words towards God. Better count to 10 before we speak, when we are in an agitated state of mind.

It is a common sin for persons whose hearts are in bondage to allow their tongues too great a liberty. David said, “I am cut off from before Your eyes.” And many have not only said this in haste, but they have continued to repeat it for a long time, which is much worse. Some have spoken in this fashion by the months together—yes, and some for years! Sorrowful is it that they should have done so, but so it has been. Now this rash speech rests altogether on insufficient grounds. Why does a man in despondency argue that God has cast him away? He reasons, first, that his circumstances show it. He is surrounded with much difficulty and tribulation and therefore he infers that God is angry with him.

But is there any force in that argument? You might as well say that God had cast away His own dear Son when He allowed Him to say, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man have not where to lay My head.” You might as well say that God had cast away the martyrs when He left them to lie in prison, or suffered them to be burned. Many of the Lord’s dearest children have a rough passage to Glory. After all, your circumstances are not so bad as those of far better men. It would be most unfair to argue that you are, therefore, a castaway. Is it not written, “In the world you shall have tribulation”? Do you not know that affliction is a Covenant *blessing*? Therefore no argument derived from circumstances is worth listening to.

But others argue from their *feelings*. They feel as if God had cast them away. Can there be anything more uncertain to argue from than our feelings? I might be quite sure that I am safe for Heaven today if I judged by my feelings. Tomorrow I might be equally as certain that I am a reprobate if I judged by the same rule. Judged by changeful feelings, one might be lost and saved a dozen times a day! The wind does not veer more fitfully than does the current of our emotions. Draw inferences from the waves before you reason from your feelings! Do you not know that many persons

who are full of very confident feelings are nevertheless deluded and deceived? "Peace, peace, where there is no peace" is a very common cry. These persons judge themselves by feelings, and consider that they are safe for Heaven, but their lives show the contrary. And, on the other hand, others judge themselves to be castaways, who are true Christians.

Apply these facts to your own case. Feelings are a very uncertain and erroneous gauge, indeed, and are not to be relied upon. And to build such a terrible inference as that of your being lost upon a few gloomy feelings, or even a great many of them, is absurd to the last degree! Have you ever heard the story of the man who, traveling in the dark over a new country, suddenly came to a place where the earth crumbled under his feet and he felt sure that he was slipping over an awful precipice? Clutching at the roots of a tree which grew out of the bank, he maintained his hold in desperation, feeling that if he let go he should be dashed into a thousand pieces.

There he hung till his hands were unable to bear the strain any longer, and, giving all up for lost, he fell but alighted upon a soft couch of green sward which was just an inch or two beneath his feet! So do great dreads frequently arise from nothing at all! Fancy, with her magic wand, is busy at creating sorrows. In many and many a case, if the patient would believe the truth, or at least would cease to believe in his own unreasonable surmises, he might drop into perfect peace at once. The foundation of the mental troubles of very many lies nowhere but in their own settled determination to be miserable. They have resolved to believe that everything is wrong with them and that obstinate resolution stands to them instead of reason.

They are deaf as adders to all comfort but are not silent as to their woes. They ask to see the minister, but they will not give him opportunity to do them good. Did you ever have an interview with a despairing woman? If you have been able to get in six words edgeways between her incessant talk, you must have been a very clever person, for it is by no means an easy thing. They ask for advice, but do not mean to listen to it or to follow it, for they know better than their advisers—they only want the opportunity of pouring out their lamentations—they are not prepared to receive consolation. Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death. In vain do you argue! They cannot be reasoned with—it would be as wise to try and argue away a typhus fever, or reason a broken bone into soundness.

Instead of reasoning, their stand is solemn decision not to be comforted. If they saw such a resolve in other people, they would call it absurd and perhaps be vexed with them. Oh, that they would see their conduct in the same light! But while they remain in their present mind, what can we do for them? We quote a promise and they tell us it does not apply to their case, though it is as plain as the nose on their face that it *is* for them. You shall next remind them of a doctrine which contains a general principle applicable to themselves. They cannot deny the Truth of God, but by dex-

terous devices they escape from its cheering influences. It is amazing how exceedingly learned and profound, despairing people are in their own esteem!

I met, the other day, with a person who insists upon it that he has committed the unpardonable sin. Now, I know as much about the Scriptures as he does, yet upon the subject of the unpardonable sin he is fully informed and I am in the dark. I can prove that, according to the Scriptures, my desponding friend has not committed the unpardonable sin. But he knows he has and is as sure of it as if he could prove it rationally. Scriptural proof he cares little about, but says over and over again that he knows, and is quite sure, and nobody shall ever convince him to the contrary. You might as well argue with a bottle of vinegar, in the hope of turning it into wine.

It is nothing to him that all the divines in Christendom who have ever written about this sin have regarded it as a dark subject—he is wiser than seven men that can render a reason. In neatly instances the cause of their distress is impalpable, ghost-like, misty—they cannot describe it—and you cannot deal with it. It is unreasonable and preposterous, else might a little calm conversation be a means of Grace to them. As I have already remarked, instead of reason stands this declaration of theirs—they will not be comforted, but prefer to nestle down in hopeless melancholy. Poor souls—poor souls! What a choice they make!

Here let us say that the declaration that God has forsaken us, or forsaken *any* man who seeks him, is diametrically opposed to Scripture. There is not, in all the pages of Inspiration, one single text which advises any man to despair of the mercy of God. I challenge the most diligent reader to find one solitary passage in which any seeking soul is bid to believe that there is no mercy for him. I shall even go further and say that there is not one solitary passage of Scripture which warrants any soul to give itself up in despair, no matter though it may be a strong passage upon election, or a terrible threat of Divine wrath against sin! There is no text, nor anything *like* a text, which would warrant a soul in saying that there is no mercy in God for him.

Further than that, there is not a text in Scripture which gives an excuse to *any* man to despair. If God Himself were to appear and say to the despairing, “You have dared to doubt My mercy, and to declare yourself to be finally given up—bring me a solitary Word out of my Book which can excuse you for saying this”—no such text could be brought. Indeed, the whole of Scripture *condemns* unbelief. Faith is the Grace which Scripture commends—it never urges men to despair. It is full of promises to the most sinful. It reaches to the greatest extremity of our need and cries in generous love, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” The Lord Jesus declares, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And in summing up the testimony of Scripture it is fair to say with Dr. Watts—

“No mortal has a just pretense

To perish in despair.

“Oh, but still I know there is no hope for me.” My dear Friend, you know nothing of the kind! It is a dream, a horrible nightmare and there is no truth in it. This blessed Scripture sounds from the Cross to you, like sweet music, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” As long as you breathe, the blessed lamp of Grace still burns to light your joy! “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” And remember, O my despairing Friend, that your belief that God has cast you away is very derogatory to God, Himself. Do you know how merciful He is? Will you think harshly of Him? Did He not save Manasseh? Did He not blot out the sins of Saul of Tarsus?

Has He not declared, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live”? Will you snatch the pen out of the hand of Mercy and write your own death warrant with it? Why be so ill-advised? Will you dishonor God rather than receive salvation through Jesus Christ? Why do you madly yield to despair? Do you not know how much you grieve the Spirit of God, and how sadly you dishonor Jesus? None of all the pangs He bore on Calvary grieve Him like that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive.

What? Your hating your sin and yet Jesus hating you? Impossible! What? You with a strong desire after eternal life, yet left to perish? Impossible! What? Your casting yourself upon His mercy, hoping to touch the silver scepter of His Grace, and yet driven from His Presence? Impossible! Among the damned in Hell there is not a soul that ever came and rested upon the blood of Christ, and there never shall be such! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but it never shall be said that seeking ones were cast off, or that those who gave themselves up to the Covenant mercy of God were rejected. Do not, then, I pray you, dishonor the love and glory of the Lord of Mercy!

One thing I would like to put in here by way of interjection—this giving of one’s self up to despair is so very unlike what we generally do in other things that it appears all the less defensible. Yonder vessel has been broken in a collision. She will soon sink to the bottom. The sea rushes in most furiously. Let us take to one of the boats. This boat cannot be stirred, what then? We will fly to another. We will seize a lifebelt, or clasp a spar. At any rate, we will leave no means unused, if, by any possible way we may escape. A sensible man does not fling himself down on the deck and give all up for lost. His fears awaken him and he bestirs all his faculties with the utmost energy. He seizes anything which promises deliverance.

Look at a person sick with a deadly disease. He has tried his family physician and he is no better. But he hears of another practitioner and he goes straight to him. Yes, and if 50 quacks were recommended to him, he would sooner try them than die! Even a forlorn hope he will pursue sooner than utterly perish. Yet here are persons who know and cannot deny that

they know it—that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto Him—and yet, because they unreasonably conclude that their case is hopeless, they will not go to Jesus, but prefer to die in their sins! Oh, madness, madness, to doubt the infinitely loving One! Insanity reaching its very height to dare to think that He who died on Calvary will repulse a coming sinner!

I should like an artist to attempt to draw a picture of Jesus Christ scorning a sinner who asks mercy at His hands. How would the man proceed? He must cover the face of the Lord, for that lovely visage could not look unkindly. He must leave out the scars from the hands and the nail prints from the feet, for these could not repel a sinner. There is not a part of Jesus' body or soul which could be made to reject a lost sinner—His whole Nature would revolt against being so represented! Oh, if you could but know Him as some of us know Him, you would fly into His arms! Poor guilty one, if He had two swords, one in each hand, you would sooner fly on the points of His swords than not come to Him, for you would perceive that He is such a gracious Redeemer, and so mighty to save that you must rely upon Him, and cry with the patriarch of Uz, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

I am bound to add that this despair, to a very large extent, involves sinful *unbelief*—and of all sins this is the most damning. It amounts to this—that Jesus says, "I can save"—and the sinner says, "You cannot." And so he makes Christ a liar! God says, "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost." But the sinner denies it, point blank. Now if the sinner will make God a liar, what can he expect? When the Lord comes to judge the quick and dead, what will be the portion of the unbelieving? God save us from it! May that rash expression be withdrawn and may we say no longer, "I am cut off from before Your eyes."

III. Thirdly and briefly, we have before us the interesting topic of A PLEADING CRY. When David feared that he was cut off from God, he was wise enough to take to crying. He calls prayer, crying, and it is a very significant word. Crying is the language of pain—pain cannot cumber itself with letters and syllables and words—and so it takes its own way and adopts a piercing mode of utterance, very telling and expressive. Crying yields great relief to suffering. Everyone knows the benefit of having a hearty good cry—you cannot help calling it, "a good cry," for, though one would think crying could never be especially good, it affords a desirable relief.

Red eyes often relieve breaking hearts. Madness has been prevented by the soul's finding vent. Prayer is the surest and most blessed vent for the soul. In prayer the heart runs over, as the eyes do in crying. To pray is just as simple a matter as to cry. Do not get down that *book*—bishops and other prayer-makers can write good prayers for people who have no particular trouble upon them—but when you really need to pray, no ready-made prayers will suit your case! You never heard of a form of common *crying*. I never remember seeing in my life a form of crying for a bereaved

woman, a form for a babe to cry when it is hungry, and another form for a child to cry when it is put to bed in the dark.

No, no! Forms are out of the question when we cry. Men and women, and children—when in trouble—cry without a book. And so when a man really needs the Savior, he does not require book-prayers. Never say, “Oh, I cannot pray!” My dear Friend, can you cry? You need to be saved—tell the Lord that. If you cannot say it in words, tell it with your tears, your groans, your sighs, your sobs. Prayer, like crying, is a natural utterance and an utterance available on all occasions. As sure as a child is in trouble, it can cry without putting on its best frock—and so can we without gowns and capes and surplices.

No child needs to be educated in Greek and Latin in order to know how to cry. Neither is learning needed in order to effectual prayer. God teaches all His little ones to pray as soon as they are born. They have but to confess their sins and plead their needs and they do really pray. Never is a child in such a bad plight that it cannot cry. It never says, “Mother, it is so dark I cannot see to cry.” No, no, the child cries in the dark! And are you in the dark and in terrible doubt and trouble? Then cry away, my dear Friend, cry away, cry away! Your Father will hear and deliver you!

Now, crying is by no means a pleasant sound to hear. There is no music in it, except, I suppose, it is the crying of the very little ones in their mothers’ ears. A cry is a kind of music one would be glad to have ended and yet our poor prayers—which might be thought to grate in the ears of God, for He must note their imperfections—are, nevertheless, regarded by Him. Though a cry is an unpleasant sound, it is very powerful. If you were walking the streets and heard or saw a poor child crying, you would be far more affected by it than by the oration of the pretended beggar who is eloquently stating his needs to the dwellers on both sides of the way. A poor child crying in the dark, under your window, in mid-winter, in the snow—would move your pity and obtain your help. Even if it were a foreigner and knew not a single word of English, you would fully feel its pleading.

The eloquence of a cry is overwhelming—Pity owns its power and lends her aid. There is a chord in human nature which responds to a child’s cry and there is something in the Divine Nature which is equally touched by prayer. The Lord will not suffer a young raven to cry in vain and much less will He suffer men who are made in His own image to cry to Him in the bitterness of their hearts and find Him deaf to their entreaties! According to our text this cry was addressed to the Lord. David thought the Lord had cast him away, and he did not cry to anyone else. He felt that if God did not help him, nobody else could. To whom or where should I go if I should turn from You? It is important to observe that he cried to the Lord, even though he thought himself cut off from hope. “I am cut off from before Your eyes,” says he, yet he cries to God!

Ah, Soul, if you are in despair, yet resolve to pour out your heart before your God. Do you fear He will refuse you? Cry on. Has He been angry with you long? Cry on! Has He, up to now, shut out your prayers? Cry on! Do

you think He has reprobated you altogether? Nevertheless cry on! Have you said, "His mercy is clean gone forever, and He will be favorable no more"? Yet cry on! For David felt in his soul that he was cut off from before God's eyes, yet still he cried. Do so, poor Heart! Yes, the more sad you are, cry the more, for if a little child's mother were to say, "Now go along with you, I will never love you again. I will put you out of doors and you shall never be my child again," what would the little one do? Would she say, "Therefore I will not cry"? Oh no, but she would sob her little heart out and the more she believed the severe words of her parent, the more she would cry!

O despairing Soul, the more you despair, the more you should pray—and then it will be well with you. The Psalmist cried to a God concerning whom he entertained unbelieving thoughts. You, poor Mourner, do not believe as you should believe. Your faith, if you have any, is like a spark smoldering in the smoking flax. Yet pray on! I was about to say, when your faith seems dead, cry, "Lord enable me to believe. I am a poor, dead, lost, ruined, sinner, but do have pity upon my misery." That is good crying, and good will come of it.

IV. This is my last point, **THE CHEERFUL RESULT.** This poor soul in despair continued to cry and the Lord heard him. "You heard the voice of my supplication when I cried unto You." This blessing went beyond the promise. The promise is that God will hear believing prayer, but the Lord in mercy goes beyond His promises—such is the Infinite Sovereignty of His Grace that He meets, even, with unbelieving ones—and when they are crying in their unbelief He gives them faith and saves their souls.

Now, if this is not guaranteed in the promise, yet the action is quite consistent with the Divine Character. Indeed, it is like the God whose name is Love to listen to the cries of the wretched! We are like lost children in the forest, all scratched by the briars, weary with having lost our way and ready to die from cold and hunger. All we can do is cry—and will God leave us to die in the dark? Oh, do not believe it! Do not let the devil make you believe it—that God will hear you cry and yet not come to your help! I will never believe of God what I would not believe of man! I cannot dishonor Him so!

Do but cry, dear Heart, out of your soul's despair, and the Lord's infinite goodness will constrain Him to come to you! He has taught you to cry and He will assuredly answer your prayers. Inasmuch as David says that God heard him, how encouraged you ought to be, for He who has heard one will hear another. Let me tell you one thing—you are in a position, poor, despairing Soul—to be made the means of honoring Christ more than anybody else. Are you the vilest sinner that ever existed? Do you think that your case is the most desperate that ever was on the face of the earth? Are you just the one person who is least likely ever to be saved? Do you think so?

Oh, what a splendid specimen you will make for Christ's Grace to triumph in! There is no honor to Him in washing those sinners who have

only a few pale spots upon them if there are such people. But, O you foul and altogether polluted Sinner—*your* washing and cleansing will bring Him Immortal renown! The angels tune their harps for new songs when an unusual sinner is reclaimed. You cannot conceive your own salvation to be possible, you say? Oh that you would believe it possible! Oh that you would come, now, to the foot of the Cross and say, “Dear Savior, You have never saved such a soul as I am! This day You shall have greater glory than You have ever had before, for I cast myself at Your dear feet, believing that you will save even *me*, for You have said, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.’”

Do you not see that the badness of your case gives you a glorious opportunity to glorify Christ by greater faith than other men, and by putting it in His way to do a more splendid act of Grace than, to your apprehension, He has ever done before? I hope to be most importunate in prayer with God the Holy Spirit that He may bring just such cases as yours under the power of mighty Grace. One Truth of God remember and take away with you. If you are in the dark, the only light for you is in the Sun of Righteousness. If you are lost, the only help for you is in Jesus, the Lord. If you want to see the Savior where His light is brightest and His salvation clearest, think of His Cross! Look at those dear hands and feet, and bleeding side—those wounds are windows of hope for the prisoners of despair!

There is no hope for you, whoever you may be, except in Jesus! Look at His thorn-crowned head and His face more marred than that of any man! Look at His emaciated body, and at the spear gash in His side! Look at Him in the agonies of death, with shame and scorn waiting upon Him! Gaze till you hear Him cry, “It is finished!” before He gives up the ghost—and I pray you believe it to be finished, so that there is nothing for you to do, since everything is done. All that is needed to render you acceptable with God is fully accomplished—there is nothing for you to do but to accept what Christ has completed.

Weave no more garments, there is the robe! Fill no more cisterns, there is the Fountain! Lay no more foundations, there is the precious Cornerstone! Come, you despairing! The Lord help you to come and find peace, at this hour, through Jesus Christ your Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 31.

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

A HASTY EXPRESSION PENITENTLY RETRACTED NO. 1589

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

***“I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless
You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You.”
Psalm 31:22.***

THAT is a bit of genuine experience, honestly told, in the most natural manner. How glad we ought to be that David never fell into the hands of an ordinary biographer, for such a piece of weakness as this text records would have been carefully repressed lest the good man's reputation should suffer. It was only a hasty expression and every friendly biographer would have felt that it ought to be taken as unspoken. Here, however, stands this piece of human weakness upon David's life and we are right glad of it—it is a comfort to us little folks to perceive the champions were men of like passions with ourselves! As a bee sucks honey out of nettles, so does faith find comfort even in the failings of David. But we must mind that we do not turn his errors into excuses, for that were to extract poison instead of wholesome juices.

The experience of a good man, of a great man, of a tried man like David, is exceedingly instructive and impressive. The children of God delight in doctrinal preaching and in practical preaching—but I believe that nothing is so sweet to them as *experimental* preaching by which we are not only taught the Truth of God in the head and in the hand, but something is said of Truth in the heart! This it is which endears the Book of Psalms to the whole Church and makes the explanation of that volume so important. Nothing more sweetly cheers the straggler after better things than to hear of the life-struggles of godly men.

Behold, then, a written confession, dictated by the penitent heart of David who withdraws the curtain from his own innermost life! I should not wonder if his experience should turn out to be very like your own for, as in water, face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man and this is the reason why the experience of one man is his best means of interpreting the feelings of another. Take heed, however, when you are reading the histories of the saints, that you use them with prudence, for it is not all the experience of a Christian that is Christian experience! A Believer may experience much which he does not experience as a Believer, but because his believing is failing him! Sometimes we are rather to regard the experience of good men as beacons to warn us from rocks than as lighthouses to show us where the harbor may be.

Rheumatism is certainly a human disease, but I would, by no means recommend a person to seek after it in order to prove his manhood! We

can well do without some things which were characteristic of certain eminent men, since they did not adorn or strengthen them, but rather disfigured and weakened them. In David's case, it is well to follow David—but it is better to follow David's son—for David, sometimes, went astray like a lost sheep—but David's son was that great Shepherd of the sheep whose every step it is safe for the flock to follow! Do not let us imitate David in his speaking in haste, or in his saying, "I am cut off from before Your eyes." But, at the same time, let us take care that we closely copy him in confessing conscious fault, as he does here, in crying to God in the hour of trouble as he tells us he did—and also in bearing witness to the exceeding goodness of God, notwithstanding our faults—as he here bears witness when he says, "Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You."

For our edification we will consider the text thus—here is, first, an utterance of unbelief—"I am cut off from before Your eyes." Secondly, here is incidentally mentioned an effort of struggling faith—David says, "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." And, thirdly, here is a testimony of gratitude, for David joyfully declares that notwithstanding his unbelief, the Lord heard and answered his cries. O for the touch of the Holy Spirit to make this outline into a living sermon! Here are the altar and the wood—O Holy Spirit, You be the fire!

I. Let us begin by listening to AN UTTERANCE OF UNBELIEF—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes." Note here, first, that unbelief is generally talkative—"I *said*." It had been better for him not to have *thought* it, even, but when he did think thus wrongly, it was most unwise to *speak* the thought. I have heard it said, "If it is in the mind it may as well come out," but this is not true. If I had a rattlesnake in a box on this platform, I think you would, none of you, vote for the creature's being let loose! Poison in a vial is deadly, but it will hurt no one until the cork is drawn and then we cannot tell how far the mischief may go. Lions and tigers and vipers are best shut up—the wider range you give them, the more you empower them to do mischief. If you have an ill thought, repent of it, but do not repeat it—it may harm *you*—but it will not harm others if you let it die within doors.

Do as David did in another case, when he had a very ugly thought. He said, "If I shall speak thus I shall offend against the generation of Your people," and he would not, therefore, put his thought into words lest he should offend the godly. If you have a harsh thought of God, utter it not in the presence of His own children. Would you grieve your Brethren? Utter it not in the presence of His enemies. Would you open their mouths to speak against Him? Where will you utter it? Speak it not upon earth, for it is His footstool. Say it not in prayer, for you are bowing at His Throne. Say it *nowhere*, for God will hear it if no one else should. Bury in silence that offspring of your soul of which it has good cause to be ashamed. Let it be cast over the wall as the untimely figs and consumed upon the rubbish heap of forgotten things.

Alas, unbelief does not understand holding its tongue! We read that the children of Israel murmured in their tents. They could not be quiet at home. They complained of God in their families and very soon the murmuring in the tents became a murmuring throughout all the camp till they gathered together in crowds against God and His servant Moses! Yes, unbelief will prattle. I have known believing men slow of speech, but when a man has anything to complain of, he is fluent even to overflowing! He will go from one neighbor to another and lament the badness of trade; how the crops are failing; how ill he is; what a sickly family he has and a legion of other grief! The gazette of sorrow has long columns and is generally crowded with items! It is published every hour of the day and you can get a new edition at almost any house, for unbelief must publish its inventions. The strife of the many tongues of unbelief causes much mischief in the world. Its quiver is full and its arrows are death. It would have been wiser for David to have bit his tongue than to have said what he ought not to have said. However, this much is clear—unbelief is generally talkative.

Our next observation shall be that the utterances of unbelief are generally hasty—"I said in my haste." There was no reason for saying such a thing at all and certainly not for being in a hurry to say it, for he said to God, "I am cut off from before Your eyes." Look at this statement! It is a very solemn thing to make such a declaration. See if it is founded on fact. Do you think it is true? Search a little more. Set your supposed condition in another light and see whether, after all, you may not have made a mistake. But no. Unbelief blunders it out, right or wrong—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes." I suppose the reason for the hot haste was this—when a man's mind is much distracted and driven to and fro, he needs to come to some sort of conclusion and, though that conclusion may be totally false and may be as far from right as possible, still, his troubled thoughts require some sort of a conclusion.

John Bunyan says of the pilgrim that he was much tumbled up and down in his thoughts. It is a forcible Saxon expression and most of you know what it means. You do not know whether you are on your head or your heels, as the old saying is—you are in a horrible confusion and countless difficulties surround you—and so it is that you blunder at a conclusion and say in your haste what should not be said. But why in such haste to write bitter things against yourself? Why in such haste to write your own condemnation? Why in such haste to misjudge your *God*? Stop a bit, Brothers and Sisters. Stop a bit! There is time enough for this when the worst has come to the worst. Wait awhile, for when the brain is heated, waiting will cool the brow and prepare a place for wisdom. Why are you so desperately eager to play the fool?

Don't you know that the utterances of unbelief are hasty and hasty things are raw and sour and cannot display the maturity of prudence? What a man says in his haste he generally has to repent in his leisure. If it is a good thing, say it at once! But if it is a doubtful thing, stop! Then stop again. Then stop again and if the stopping should end in your not speaking, there will be a little more of golden silence in the world! I have

heard say that one of the greatest points in good speaking is to know when to pause. I do not know about that, but I am sure that one of the wisest things in good *living* is to know when to pause, to stop, to question and to deliberate! To go blindly on as though it were neck or nothing with you is to make sure shipwreck some day or other. Do nothing till you are sure that it is right to do it and say nothing till you know that what you say is true.

Hasty deeds and hasty words make up the most horrible parts of human history—the warnings of the past forbid all recklessness. Nevertheless, when once we grow despondent, this is our temptation and it will be well to bit and bridle both mind and tongue lest we fall into the evil. Frequently when a man speaks in haste, his expressions are the result of his temper. “We are quick-tempered,” some will say. If you are quick-tempered, it is very likely that you are also quick tongued and this is a great pity. You speak in a moment what you cannot unsay in a century! Now, it is very evil when we are in a temper with *God*. Is that always the case? Oh yes. I fear that professing Christians are often out of temper with God. A good woman was wearing deep mourning years after the loss of him whom she mourned and a Quaker said to her, “Friend, I perceive you have not yet forgiven God.”

There he hit the nail on the head! Many have not yet forgiven God—they have taken umbrage against Him either because of bereavement, or loss of property, or sickness, or disappointment, or trial and they keep on sulking because they cannot have their own way. Surely they have never heard the question, “Should it be according to your mind? “Will you sit on the throne and judge your God? Will you—

***“Snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,
Re-judge His judgment, be the God of God”?***

This is blasphemy! And yet too often such blasphemy enters into the human heart. Who is to be master? Are we to be lords over all? Who is to order Providence? In whose hands should be the issues of death? Is God to wait on us and ask our will and do our bidding? That is, indeed, the turning of things upside down and it cannot, must not be! It is because we get into wayward, foolish, rebellious tempers with God that we speak in our haste what we ought not even to think! Thus David penitently confesses, “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes.”

Again, it is very clear from the text that the utterances of unbelief are frequently exaggerated. “I am cut off from before Your eyes.” No, David. No, no! It is not so—you are cut off from the esteem of men through slander and you are cut off from the friendship of those who once professed to love you—whose minds have been soured by an evil report—but you are *not* cut off from God! It is true you are cut off from the public services of God’s House and obliged to hide away in the rocks and caves of the earth. That is true, but you are not cut off from before God’s eyes! You know you are not, so why do you say you are?

Oh, but some people always talk big about everything! It is a great pity because it is so near to lying that I do not know whether it is not the same

thing! There must be a very narrow line, fine as a razor's edge, between a lie and the unguarded expressions of exaggeration. Some people talk about their trials on a scale which allows a mile for every inch! Their afflictions are awful. They are dreadful. They are without parallel. There were never any like them and there never will be again! They endure the most extraordinary pains and the most amazing afflictions and they are altogether quite equal to Job and Jeremiah rolled into one. Never did any persons undergo sufferings comparable to theirs. You cannot sit down by their side to comfort them but they will tell you at once that you do not know anything about the great deeps where they are doing business! You are only knee-deep in the waters of trouble, while all God's waves and billows have gone over them.

I meet with some who are almost impossibly afflicted—their tribulations exceed that which is common to man and that which is uncommon, too! But this may be accounted for by the large organ of imagination with which they are endowed. By using this imagination to paint their spectacles, they are soon able to see all manner of dreadful visions and they talk accordingly. That is the way of our unbelief—it will talk at random about trials and troubles. This is not pretty. God does not love His children to talk in that fashion. The lips that speak truth are His delight and if our unbelief will not speak truth, (and it very seldom does)—perhaps never does—then it is a great pity that it cannot hold its tongue. May I ask if any friend here has been exaggerating his trouble? Is there any sister here who is fretting out of all reason—making a great deal out of what may be much, but is not everything? Then stand rebuked at this hour! Your cup is not all gall. Your bread is not all turned to ashes. All your comforts have not fled—many a mercy is left you. Come, come, Friend, we are not quite cut off from before the Lord! Let us leave off exaggeration lest we be guilty of falsehood.

Once more, the utterances of unbelief dishonor God. "I am cut off," says David, "from before Your eyes." He does, as it were, blame the Lord! Before Your very eyes I have suffered this! You have so forsaken me and given me over to the enemy that I am cut off from before Your eyes. Why do You not deliver me? He spoke in his haste as if God, at the very least, had been forgetful, even if He had not been untender and unfaithful! "I am cut off from before Your eyes." It would greatly dishonor God if He did suffer one that could say, "In You, O Lord, have I put my trust," to be cut off from before His eyes. It would be contrary to His promise, for He has said that He will not suffer the righteous to perish. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry"—there never was a godly man cut off from God, yet, and there never will be till time shall be no more!

All the attributes of God forbid the destruction of a soul that is resting on the Almighty arm! And yet the unbelieving heart declares that such a destruction has taken place in its own case. Oh, wondrous unbelief, to think the Lord to be so unrighteous as to forget our work of faith and labor of love—to forget His children, to cast away His own, His covenanted

one—with whom He has entered into solemn league by oath, saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He puts His promise very strongly in that passage, using many negatives in the original tongue. “I will not, not, not—never, never leave you. I will not, not forsake you”—many times over negating the idea that He could possibly forsake one of His own.

Brothers and Sisters, let us consider whether you and I may not have given utterance to words of unbelief. If we have, let us cut up those words tonight—let us call them back and drown them in our tears! Those cruel charges were, none of them, true! They were spoken in haste. They were the offspring of petulance and folly. Lord, have mercy upon Your servants and cast these grievous words of ours behind Your back! Let them be as though they were never spoken, for we never had any reason to speak so and what we have said, we do thoroughly repent of and pray that You would blot it out forever!

II. So much, then, upon the first head—an utterance of unbelief. We are now ready to look within the sorrowing heart and mark the signs that Grace is still living there. We have not far to search, for, secondly, in the text there is mentioned AN EFFORT OF STRUGGLING FAITH. Though David said, “I am cut off from before Your eyes,” yet he prayed and prayed directly to God. He says, “You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You.” O child of God, cry to a smiting God! Cry to God even when He seems to cast you off, for where else can you go? What remains for you but to cry to Him, even if He shuts His ears to your plea? What if He frowns upon you? Still cling to Him! Where else can you get a glimpse of hope?

To whom, or *where* could you go if you should turn from God? What if His Providences seems harsh? What if He uses the rod upon you till your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint? What if He even appears to put His hand to His scabbard to draw out the sword to slay you? Even then there remains no resort for you so hopeful as believing prayer! Say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Cling to Him still! Sink or swim, live or die, do not doubt your God—but pray! What did Jonah do when the weeds were wrapped about His head and He went down to the bottoms of the mountains? He still made supplication to the Lord God of salvation and trusted his spirit in the Divine hands. He tells us, “Out of the belly of Hell I cried.”

Wherever you may be drifted and however desperate your case, yet still pray—still pray! If you can do nothing else—if your hands are bound as to any form of effort, still pray. Never cease from crying, though you cannot rise a note above the most pitiful wailing. When Bunyan’s pilgrim went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he found that he had no weapon with which he could smite the fiends that surrounded him except the weapon of all-prayer. The adversaries were too impalpable for sword or spear, too mysterious for battle-axe or bow—but PRAYER could find them out and smite them to the heart!

Believer, this is the most convenient and useful of all the weapons in our heavenly panoply. All-prayer will help you against man or devil! It will

help you to bear up under trials that come from God and tribulations that mysteriously approach you from earth or Hell. As long as you live, you should pray, for while you can pray you cannot perish. You must, under no pressure, cease from prayer, my Brothers and Sisters. It is your last resort. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Please notice that David prayed in downright earnest, for he says, "You heard the voice of my supplications," so that he offered *many* prayers—prayers with voices to them—and he describes them under the term, "I cried." His was a crying prayer! Those are the very best prayers.

Our eyes, sometimes, light upon, "prayers to be said or sung"—we have no wish to depreciate such compositions for others, but they are of no possible use to us who delight to tell our desires to our heavenly Father in our own broken speech. That is the prayer which is neither said nor sung, but CRIED—it drops from the eyes in tears, it breaks forth from the lips in moans—and from the breast in groans that cannot be uttered! Those prayers of ours which we could not endure for any human ear to hear are among the best of prayers. A little child may begin to speak and call to its mother in words and, perhaps, Mother will not come to it. But let it give up words and try *crying* and you will see if Mother does not come! Let it cry again and again, and Mother's ears will be caught by the child's cry. There is no prayer to God like the crying of a childlike spirit.

A cry is not a very pleasant sound. No—but it is a very *prevalent* sound! A cry is not even articulate. No—but it's expressive! Crying is the language of pain. It is the eloquence of grief. It is the utterance of intense longing. When you use crying prayer—when you must have the blessing and, therefore, cry for it—you shall have it! We do not always give our children what they cry for, but this *is* the rule of our heavenly Father, "The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Well did Isaiah say, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." The rule is invariable and many are the cases which go to prove it. We know who said, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Even in his despair, I say, David prayed—and that praying took the form of an earnest and passionate cry.

Note well that God heard his prayer! We sometimes fancy that God will not hear us if any measure of unbelief is mixed with our prayers. If that were the case, I am afraid that the Lord would not often hear us, for there is a measure of unbelief even in our strongest faith! It is a great mercy that even when we are lamenting, "I am cut off from before Your eyes," yet, if at the same time we can pray, our petition is accepted of the Lord. The Scripture says, "According to your faith be it unto you." Suppose that text had run like this, "According to your unbelief be it unto you." Ah, me, where would you and I have been? Our unbelief would have involved us in the curse and condemnation which rest upon all who believe not in the Lord Jesus! Unbelief would sour and spoil all.

God did not deal with David according to his unbelief, but He dealt with him according to his *faith*. We are a sorrowful mixture of natures and if we were reckoned with according to our evil side, who among us could

stand? David's faith was small, but still it was true. It was an infant faith that could cry—a struggling faith that could plead. It was a patient faith that could wait and so it was an accepted faith which obtained favor of the Lord! It was a faith which, if it had not an arm to fight with, had a *voice* to cry with and, therefore, it prevailed with God. My Friend, you who are in trouble, whoever you may be, let me urge, persuade, entreat you not to listen to the voice of Satan who tempts you to cease from prayer! Do not say, "God will not hear me because I am in this wretched condition." Remember the words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord." Cry to Him wherever you may be, or whoever you may be!

However desperate your plight, you shall survive it if you pray! However dire your danger, a way of escape shall be made for you if you cry unto the Lord! Cannons have been styled, "the last arguments of kings"—but I may better call PRAYERS the last arguments of needy sinners! Cling to the Mercy Seat when you can cling nowhere else! Cling to the Mercy Seat when Justice lifts her sword to slay you! Increase your earnestness in proportion as you are tempted to cease from prayer and may God the Holy Spirit, who is the God of Grace and of supplications, intensify your desires, help your infirmities and teach you how to pray and what to pray for as you ought.

III. Our text next supplies us with A TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE. The Psalmist says, "Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications." Notice that God acted in directly the opposite manner from that in which the Psalmist's unbelief acted, for, first, his unbelief spoke and said this and that, but God did not speak. He was a *listener*—"You heard." Not a word came from God—there had been too many words in the business already. When we begin to grumble with anybody it takes two to make a quarrel and if number two answers to our murmuring, we soon stir up a fierce quarrel.

If God were as man is, if His thoughts were as our thoughts, He would say, "Murmur, do you, when I am dealing with you so kindly? Then you shall have cause for complaining. Is My little finger heavy? You shall feel My hand! Is My hand heavy? You shall know the weight of My loins." Well might God say to us, "What? Do you find fault while you are surrounded with so many blessings? Tell Me I have forsaken you? Say to Me that you are cut off from before My eyes when I am dealing graciously with you all day long? Do you dare talk to Me so? Then I will do as you have said. I will take you at your word and make your complaints true."

But oh, the marvelous patience of God! He says nothing. There was the strength of Christ—as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth in the midst of His accusers—and here is a part of the marvelous power of God—the Omnipotence which restrains Omnipotence so that He is not provoked, or, being provoked, speaks not in anger and deals not with His servants in wrath—otherwise we had long ago been consumed. Oh, how sweet to look back and think He did not answer me according to my folly, or walk stubbornly with me because I walked stubbornly with Him! His Word says, "With the froward You will show Yourself

forward,” but He did not fulfill that threat to me, nor walk contrary to me though I walked contrary to Him! In gentleness and patience He regarded not my evil words and answered me not according to my folly! You see, then, the difference between the quiet of God and the clamor of our unbelief. David bears cheerful testimony to the fact that he was in error when He spoke so hastily and that God was exceedingly gracious in taking so little notice of His foolish complaint.

The next contrast is seen in the fact that though David spoke in a hurry, there was no haste in God. “I said in my haste.” Yes, but God did not *reply* in haste. Notice the glorious leisure of infinite love, for it is written, “You heard the voice of my supplications.” God was quietly hearing while His petulant servant was fiercely complaining. We had a meeting of ministers a short time ago at which it was agreed that for five minutes each one should relate an experience with our congregations. One of the Brothers gave us this thought which I shall not soon forget. He said, “It is a great thing for a minister who visits his people to be a good listener. The afflicted value this faculty above gold. Perhaps the pastor calls upon a poor woman who is in great trouble and he sits down and she tells him her mournful tale. Bless her heart! He has heard that tale a dozen times before, but he sits quite still and takes it all in, listening most earnestly. He has not, perhaps, the power to help her at all, but she feels very thankful to him because he has heard her case and it has comforted her to tell it.”

It is a great thing to be willing to sit and listen and hear a story which, perhaps, is very badly told and is not at all pleasant to hear—which even creates sorrow in your own mind as you listen to it. Such hearing displays tender sympathy. Hence the Scriptures say of God, “O You that hears prayer.” Mark, it is not “*answers*,” but “*hears*.” Those Brothers who need to be exceedingly correct tell us, “God is the hearer *and* answerer of prayer.” Yes, that is very proper. But the Scripture is content to write, “O You that *hears* prayer.” It is a wonderful thing that God should sit down, as it were, and listen to the prayers of His people and put up with their nonsense—their complaining and their crying. David does not cease to wonder that in his unhappy condition he had yet been regarded of the Lord—“You heard the voice of my supplication.”

How beautiful that is! “I spoke in haste.” All the Lord did was He heard it all, took it all in, considered the case David’s fevered brain meant and how far that out of it and, therefore, forgave the sad unbelief which spoke out so audaciously in words of repining. Oh, it is beautiful, that gentleness of God which led Him to give no answer to the hurried, passionate speech of David, but just to hear it and no more! Well did David say in another place, “Your gentleness has made me great.” It is delightful to see how the Lord always notes the good and ignores the evil when dealing with His saints. In David’s case He would not hear the foolish and false charges of his unbelief, but He heard the cries of his struggling faith! Remember the instance of Sarah? She doubted as to her bringing forth a child when she was old and asked, “How shall it be, my Lord being old,

also?" The Holy Spirit says nothing in the New Testament about Sarah's unbelieving speech except that He commends that one good word in it and notes that she, "obeyed her husband, calling him, Lord." If the Lord can spy a beauty in His people, He fixes His eyes on it—and as for all their defilements, He washes them away, saying, "They shall not be remembered against them any more forever."

Let us go a little farther in our contrast between David and his Lord. There was no exaggeration with God. Unbelief exaggerates—He diminishes the evil of His servants till it comes to nothing, putting it all away. He heard the feeble cry of faith in David's heart and did not allow the voice of his unbelief to drown it. He did not look upon His servant's fault till it hid His Grace—but He smiled upon the work of Grace, little as it was. And though, as we have said, unbelief dishonored God, yet God did not dishonor His servant's prayer for all that! No. He might have said to David's prayer, "Go your way, I will not hear you. Does the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter? I heard David say, just now, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes.' Am I going to hear out of the same mouth, a charge against My faithfulness and a cry for help? If He thinks I have forsaken Him, let it be so."

But not so our God! He will not dishonor prayer, even though prayer is very feeble and though there is an unbelief in it which is grievous in His sight. It never shall be said that faith and prayer came back from the Throne of God with blushing faces! He will maintain His memorial untouched and the motto of that memorial is—"The God that hears prayer." "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." We dare not make much out of our English version by way of dogmatic teaching and yet, somehow, I feel inclined to pull each little word of the text in pieces just for a minute. Look at it. "Nevertheless You heard the voice." "Never-the-less," as much as to say, Though I had spoken as I ought not to do, yet You did not lessen Your attention to me, but You did just as much hear my prayer as if I had never sinned with my tongue. Not one jot the less was Your pity or Your bounty—Your ears did not, in any measure, lose their readiness to hear my prayer, nor Your heart its willingness to feel for me. Not one particle the less for all my transgressing, "You heard the voice of my supplications."

O gracious God, never-the-less do you deal out Your mercies though it seems as if ever-the-more we sin! Nevertheless do You love though ever the more do we err. Oh grant that ever the more we may be grateful to You and never, oh never, may we again grieve You by our unbelief!

The time has come for me to wind up with SUNDRY LESSONS IN A FEW WORDS. The first is, let us repent heartily of every harsh thought we have ever had of our God and Father. I am forced to look back upon some such sins of thought with much distress of mind. They have come from me in serious pain and depression of spirit and now I pray the Lord, in His great mercy, to look at them as though I had never thought them, for I do heartily abhor them and I loathe myself in His sight that I should ever have questioned His tender love and gracious care. If you have similarly

transgressed, dear Friends, in your dark nights of trouble, come, now, and bow your heads and pray the Lord to forgive His servants concerning this thing, for He is so good, so gracious, that it is a wanton cruelty to think of Him as otherwise than overflowing with love.

There is none like unto Him among the sons of men! The kindest of mortals have not His heart of compassion! There is none like unto You, Jehovah, even among the gods—no fabled deity, however painted in glowing colors can be compared to You! Let us take back our words if at any time we have said anything against Him and make the utmost amends by magnifying His holy name! In the next place, let us earnestly pray that if ever we shall be tempted again to harsh, mistrusting thoughts, we may be able to put a check upon our language and to keep our mouth as with a bridle. Oh that our tongue, which is given us to praise our God, may never be perverted into an instrument of complaint against our greatest Benefactor! O you vile tongue, how could you ever, in your hottest haste, let slip an angry word against the Lord? Better far to be dumb than to dishonor a name so dear!

The next lesson is this—let us always continue to pray, come what may. Brothers and Sisters, never cease praying! What I have said before, I say again—continue in prayer. Call upon your God! Cry to Him! Cry to Him! While breath lasts and life gives power to feel a desire, never cease to supplicate the Lord. Last of all, let us always speak well of His mercy. If we have bitterly complained, let us, with equal vigor, declare His goodness! I wish that you who are given to grumble would make up your minds that the time past will suffice you to have grumbled and now you are going to growl *backwards*—to recall all your harsh speeches—and to praise God as much as you have formerly complained against Him. I should like farmers to break into a wonderful excitement of gratitude so that all the nation would ring with it and all men would confess—“Whenever you meet a farmer, you meet with a man who is always praising God for the weather.” It will be a wonderful change if that should ever come to be the general remark!

I wish you tradesmen would suddenly put a new leaf into your books and become the most thankful set of men alive so that it would be universally said, “Whenever we meet a tradesman, we always find him praising God for His goodness to him in his business.” For many years most traders have done the other thing and it is time they should pitch a new tune and sing another song! There have been “very bad times—dreadfully bad times,” quite long enough! Are there no better times coming? Bad as times are, these grumblers live and live in comfort, too! Do they live on their losses? They cannot well do that and so we may suppose that they are living on the savings of former years—so it is clear that they must have had some wonderfully good times, once, when we did not hear much about them!

They ought to praise God, now, for those wonderful seasons four, five, or six years ago when things were so marvelously good that they were able to lay up stores for the years of famine! It will be a blessed thing for us

when all times are good because our minds are good and our hearts are content. May we grow like the shepherd who was asked, “Will there be good weather today?” And he answered that there would be good weather. “Don’t you think it will rain?” “Very likely, or perhaps it will snow.” “But you said that it would be good weather.” “Yes,” he answered, “if God sends it, it cannot be anything else but good.” “But I mean, do you think there will be such weather as pleases *you*.” “Yes, that there will,” he said —

“for whatever pleases God pleases me.”

May God give us a happy, childlike, rejoicing spirit! We have done enough murmuring to last a lifetime! Let us change the tune. Suppose that you were to say, “I will make up my mind that just as much as I have ever disbelieved, mistrusted, murmured, so much will I do in the way of trusting and praising the Lord”? But suppose you were actually to do as much—that would be a poor life of which you could merely say, “There was as much praise of God in that man’s life as there was of murmuring.” Shall we be content with such a summary? No, no, no! We must rise to something better than that! We must praise God a thousand times to every complaint! No—we must even get above that—we must have done with *all* complaining! God deliver us from it and lift us right out of unbelief—and when we do speak in our haste, again, may it only be to exclaim, “Bless the Lord, hallelujah!”

If somebody sincerely remarks, “That was a bit of bold sincere remarks. That was a bit of enthusiasm,” you may reply, “Oh yes, but as I am a hasty man and rather quick-tempered, that is the way in which I show my hastiness—I bless the Lord while my heart is hot and then keep on doing so till I have cooled down.” Lift up a hallelujah when nobody is prepared for such a word of praise! Startle your friends by crying, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name!” The Lord lift you all up to this and keep you there, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE SAINTS' LOVE TO GOD

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*"Oh love the LORD, all you His saints."
Psalm 31:23.*

DO we, if we are called the saints of the Lord, need to be exhorted to love Him? If we do, shame upon us! And we do, I am quite sure, so let us be ashamed and confounded that it should ever be necessary to urge us to love our Lord! Why, after He has done so much for us and manifested such wondrous love to such unworthy ones as we are, we ought to love Him as naturally as sparks of fire ascend towards the sun, or as the waters of the river run towards the sea. It should be our second and higher nature to always love the Lord without the slightest prompting. What the Law of God required, the Gospel should have worked in us, namely, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength! But, Brothers and Sisters, we need this exhortation—we feel that we do. Well, then, let us take it home to ourselves and let us hear it as though it had been spoken personally to each one of us who are the Lord's saints—"O love the Lord." Do nothing else just now. Bid every other thought be gone and every other emotion, too. Let your affections be graciously melted and let them all run in this one blessed channel—towards God—"O love the Lord, all you His saints."

Remember that the man who here exhorts the saints to love their Lord was one who had been enduring very sharp trials. This Psalm is, in many respects, a very sad one. If you will read it through, you will see that David had been afflicted by slanderous and other cruel enemies. And yet, while he was still suffering from their attacks and also fearing that he was cut off from the Lord's Presence, he still said, "O love the Lord, all you His saints," for my Lord is so good that I will speak well of Him even when He smites me. He is such a gracious God that I can truly say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Though He may smite me ever so hard, yet will I still adore Him. I will still bless and magnify His name as long as I have any being."

If a tried child of God could talk like that, how ought we, who have comparatively few trials, to love the Lord? If your pathway has been smooth of late—if temporal mercies have abounded—if spiritual comforts have been continued to you, then, O you happy saints, love the Lord! If David, when so sorely tried, could do so, how fervently should you do it,

who stand upon the mountaintops of full assurance and walk in the bright sunlight of confidence in God! I address myself to all here who have really been set apart unto God and who realize that they are among the Lord's saints. And I repeat to them this exhortation of David, "O love the Lord, all you His saints."

I. So first, let us remember that THIS EXHORTATION REFERS TO EACH PERSON OF THE DIVINE TRINITY.

We can never understand how Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be Three and yet One. For my part, I have long ago given up any desire to understand this great mystery, for I am perfectly satisfied that if I *could* understand it, it would not be true, because God, from the very nature of things, must be incomprehensible! He can no more be contained within the narrow bounds of our finite understanding than the Atlantic Ocean could be held in the hollow of a child's hand. We bless Him that He is one. As Moses said, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord," yet we also bless Him that Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each in His separate Personality, should be worshipped as God.

O then, you saints, *love God the Father!* We sometimes meet with Christians who are so ignorant as scarcely to give the same degree of love to the Father as they give to the Son. They foolishly suppose that the Son has done something to *make* the Father love us. That is not the belief of any Spirit-taught children of God, for we say, with good John Kent—

***"Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His Throne above
A suffering Man became.
'Twas not the death which He endured
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before."***

It was because of His love that the Father gave His Son! It was not the Son who came to make that love possible! O Christians, love the Father, for He chose you! Before the earth was, the Father concentrated His love upon you and gave you to Christ to be His portion and His reward. Why did He choose you? He might well enough have passed you by, as He passed by so many others—but, inasmuch as He has chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, love Him, I pray you! In choosing you, the Father adopted you into His family and gave you a name and a place among His sons and daughters. If you are this day children of the great Father, it is because He has taken you out from among the rest of mankind and has made you "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." It is the Father, too, who has given you the nature as well as the name and the position of children, for He "has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away." And He "has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." For your election unto everlasting life, for your salvation by Christ Jesus, for your regeneration by the Holy Spirit, for

your adoption into the family of God, "O love the Lord, all you His saints!" I know that you do, but I want you to realize it afresh just now. Let your soul swim as in a sea of love and each one say, "My Father, my God, my own God, I love You! My soul exults at the very thought of Your great love to me which has made my love to You possible!"

And then, O you saints, *love God the Son!* I know that you do this, also, for there is not a Peter among us who, if Christ said to Him, "Do you love Me?" would not reply, "Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You." How shall I speak of what God the Son has done for us? Think of the Glory that He left and of the shame that He endured for our sakes! Picture Him hanging at a woman's breast at Bethlehem and afterwards hanging on a Cross at Calvary! Let your eyes lovingly gaze upon Him in the weakness of His Infancy and then in the greater weakness of His death-agony—and remember that He suffered all this for you! For you the crown of thorns! For you the spittle on His cheeks! For you the plucking of His hair! For you the accursed lash that scourged His sacred shoulders! For you the nails, the sponge, the vinegar, the gall, the spear, the tomb—all for you! "O love the Lord, all you His saints," as you think of His amazing love to you! I would almost ask you to come to those dear feet of His and to do as the woman who was a sinner did—to wash His feet with your tears and to wipe them with the hairs of your head, while you might softly sing—

***"Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll bathe,
Constant still in faith abiding
Life deriving from His death."***

And then, O you saints, I must not forget to dwell upon the thought that you must *love God the Holy Spirit!* Never let us forget Him, or speak of Him, as some do, as, "It," for the Holy Spirit is not, "It," or talk of Him as though He were a mere influence, for the Holy Spirit is Divine and is to be revered and loved equally with the Father and the Son! It was that blessed Spirit who quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and sins! It was He who illuminated us and removed our darkness and, since that time, it has been He who has taken of the things of Christ and revealed them to us. He has been our Comforter to cheer us and our Instructor to teach us and, most wonderful of all, He dwells in us! I have often said that I do not know which mystery to admire the more—the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! For Christ to take our nature upon Him was, doubtless, marvelous condescension, but that only lasted for a little over 30 years. But the Holy Spirit comes and dwells, century after century, in successive generations of His people, abiding and working in the hearts of men. O you saints, love the Lord the Spirit!

So, gathering up all that I have said, let us adore the mystic Three in One and, more than that, let us love the Lord, let us give our highest affection to Him who was, and is, and is to come, the almighty God, Father, Son, and Spirit!

II. Then, in the second place, note that THIS EXHORTATION MAY BE UNDERSTOOD IN THE FULLEST CONCEIVABLE SENSE—"O love the Lord, all you His saints."

You may pull up the sluices of your being and let all your life-floods flow forth in this sacred stream, for you cannot love God too much. Some passions of our nature may be exaggerated and, towards certain objects, they may be carried too far—but the heart, when it is turned towards God—can never be too warm, nor too excited, nor too firmly fixed on the Divine Object! "O love the Lord, all you His saints."

Put the emphasis upon that sweet word, love—*love the Lord as you cannot love anyone or anything else*. Husband, you love your wife. Parent, you love your children. Children, you love your parents. And all of you love your friends and it is well that you do. But you must spell all other love in little letters, but spell LOVE to God in the largest capitals you can find! Love Him intensely, love the Lord, all you His saints, without any limit to your love!

Next, *love Him with a deep, abiding principle of love*. There is a certain kind of human love which burns very quickly, like brushwood, and then dies out. So, there are some Christians who seem to love the Lord by fits and starts, when they get excited, or at certain special seasons. But I pray you, Beloved, to let your love be a deep-seated and lasting fire. What if I compare it to the burning in the very heart of a volcano? It may not always be in eruption, but there is always a vehement heat within—and when it does burst forth, oh, what heaves there are, what seething, what boiling, what flaming and what torrents of lava all around! There must always be the fire in the heart, even when it is somewhat still and quiet. Love the Lord with a deep, calm, thoughtful, well-grounded affection, for, if you do not, excitements may go as easily as they come, frames and feelings may change—and your love will turn out to be evanescent and anything but intense.

Then, after that, *love the Lord with an overwhelming emotion*. You will not always feel like that and you need not wish to do so—the human mind is not capable of continually feeling, to an overwhelming degree, the emotion of love to God. There may be a slackening of conscious emotion, for we have to go to our business and to be occupied with many cares and with thoughts that, necessarily, claim our attention. But we do not love the Lord any less because we are not so conscious of our love as at others times. Still, you must have your times when you are conscious of the emotion of love to God. Set apart special seasons when you may pray the Lord to come to you in an unusual manner. On such occasions you do not want to do anything but just love Him and give your soul full liberty to gaze upon the unspeakable beauties of your God. Oh, it is delightful to be utterly carried away with this emotion! There are some of the saints of God who have found that this emotion has been too strong for them and they have had to cry to the Lord, "Hold! Hold! For I am but an earthen vessel and if more of this amazing love is poured into me, I shall be unable to bear it!"

There have been very remarkable experiences with some of the saints when this sacred passion has completely overpowered them. They have been forgetful of all other things and have seemed absent-minded and abstracted—whether in the body, or out of the body, they could not tell. Well, Beloved, indulge that emotion all you can! If you cannot get the highest degree of it, get as much of it as you can. Have the principle of love and then ask the Lord to give you the emotion which arises from it. Yes, dear Friends, I would go still further and join you in praying that our love to our God might come to be a very passion of the soul—a passion that can never be satisfied until we get to Him and are with Him forever! That is the true love which grows so eager and impatient that it counts life a banishment so long as it is spent down here. It is well with your soul when it sometimes cries out, “Why is His chariot so long in coming?”—when you can truly sing that blessed verse—

**“My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay!
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”**

For, surely, the spouse desires the return of her Husband! Does not the boy at school long for the holidays when he may get back to his parents’ embrace?

And if we really love the Lord, we shall feel that passionate longing to be with Him and, in the strength of it, if we must tarry here for a while, we shall feel that we can do anything for Him “till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”

III. Having thus shown you that this exhortation is applicable to each Person of the Divine Trinity and that it may be understood in the most emphatic sense, now let me say, in the third place, that IT HAS A THOUSAND ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE IT.

Brothers and Sisters, the short time we have for this service will not allow me to mention many of these reasons; but this is my comfort—that *a soul that truly loves God does not need any reasons for loving Him*. We have an old proverb which says that “love is blind.” And certainly, love is never very argumentative. It overcomes a man so that he is completely carried away by it and he who really loves God, will feel that this supreme passion puts aside the necessity for cold reasoning. Hear could you, by logic, produce love even between two human beings? You may prove that you ought to love, but “ought to love” and love, itself, are two very different things! Where true love is, however, it finds a thousand arguments for its own increase.

This love, to which God’s saints are exhorted, is in every way deserved. *Think of the excellence of His Character whom you are bid to love*. God is such a perfect Being that I feel now that, altogether apart from anything He has done for me, I love Him because He is so good, so just, so holy, so faithful, so true. There is no one of His attributes that is not exactly what it ought to be. If I look at His dear Son, I see that His Character is so gloriously balanced that I wonder why even those who deny His Godhead

do not worship such a Character as His, for it is absolutely unique. When I think of the Character of the ever-blessed Spirit—His patience and His wisdom—His tenderness and His love to us—I cannot help loving Him. Yes, Beloved, we must love Father, Son and Spirit, for never had human hearts such an Object to love as the Divine Trinity in Unity.

If you will let your mind specially dwell upon God's great goodness, surely you must feel the throbs of strong affection towards Him. What is God? "God is Love." That short word comprehends all! He is a great God, but He is as gracious as He is great. We might conceive of a god who was a great tyrant, but it was impossible that our God should be one. "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works." He is as full of goodness as the sun is full of light and as full of Divine Grace as the sea is full of water. And all that He has, He delights to give out to others. It is His happiness and glory to make His creatures happy—and even when He is stern and terrible, it is only of necessity that He is so because it cannot be for the good of the universe which He governs that sin should be lightly treated or allowed to go unpunished. God, my God, You are altogether lovely! And where the heart is in a right condition, it must love You! I should think that the anatomist, taking each bone to pieces and observing the singular adaptation of every joint to promote the comfort of the creature—I should think that the naturalist, observing all the habits of birds and beasts and fishes, and seeing what wonderful delight, upon the whole, is enjoyed by such creatures—must often feel that God is a blessed God!

Certainly, I cannot walk the glades beneath the forest and listen to the singing of the birds, and observe how even the insects in the grass leap up for very joy, without saying, "He is a blessed God, indeed, who has made such a beautiful world as this!" Some men and women seem to think that this world was made for them and they talk about flowers wasting their sweetness upon the desert air, but let them gaze upon the marvels of beauty in the fair woods and let them look at the myriad ants which build their cities there. They appear to be happy enough, in their way, and to be bringing some honor and glory to the God that made them and this beautiful world in which they dwell. With all the stain of sin there is upon it, you may find many places where—

***"Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."***

Standing on the brow of some high hill and beholding the lovely scenery all around you, you might well burst forth in the lofty language attributed by Milton to our first father, Adam, but if you do not speak thus to His praise, "O love the Lord, all you His saints," for He is a blessed Creator!

Then think of the Providence of God— especially His Providence to you. I cannot tell the various ways in which the Lord has led each one of you, but I can speak for myself. If there is any man under Heaven who has reason to love the Lord for every step of the way in which he has been led, I am that man! But I hope there are many others here who

could say just the same if I gave them the opportunity. Notwithstanding all your trials and troubles, dear Brothers and Sisters, has not the Lord been a good God to you? I have heard many strange things in the course of my life, but I have never heard one of the Lord's servants, when he came to die, regret that he had taken Him for a Master. Nor have I ever heard one of them rail at Him because of even the heaviest blows of His hand, but, like Job, they have said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yes, as much blessed when He takes away as when He gives!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if I call to your remembrance the great mystery of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ—if I only utter these words—"Incarnation"—"Substitution"—"Justification"—"Sanctification"—without dwelling upon the great Truths of God that they represent, surely they must awaken responsive echoes in your spirit and, as far as your faith has grasped these precious things, you must feel that you have many weighty reasons why you should love the Lord!

I must pass on to remark that another reason for loving the Lord is that *it is such a pleasant and profitable exercise*. If David had said, "Dread the Lord's anger, fear the Lord as a slave fears the lash," that would have been a crushing, weakening, sorrowful message. That is not what you are bid to do, but, "O love the Lord, all you His saints." If it had merely been said, "Obey the Lord, whether you do it cheerfully or not; just do what you are told to do"—well, that is a poor sort of religion that consists in a formal round of performances and nothing more! If it had then said, "Submit to the Lord: you cannot do otherwise, for He is your Master"—well, we should have been obliged to do it, but it would have been cold work and there would have been no comfort to be derived from it. If it had been written, "Understand the Lord," we might have given up the task in despair, for how can the finite comprehend the Infinite? But when it is written, "O love the Lord"—why, one of the most delightful exercises of the human heart is to love! Many who have had no other sources of happiness, have found great joy in domestic love. And those who have been denied domestic love have found a sweet relief of their grief in the love of benevolence towards the poor. That heart may well be wretched that has no one to love!

I have heard of a rich nobleman who had large estates, but whose life was a constant misery to him, and who, in sheer despair, was about to drown himself in a canal. But, as he was going, a little boy plucked his coat and asked him for a few pence. He looked in the face of the little fellow and noticed that his face was pinched with poverty and hunger. And the nobleman said to him, "Where do you live?" and the boy led him into a dreary place where his mother lay stretched upon the bed, dying of starvation, and his father, looking like a ghost, was scarcely able to move. The nobleman went off to various shops, made several purchases and returned and fed these poor people! And, as he saw how great was their joy as he supplied their needs, he said to himself, "There is something worth living for, after all!" That benevolent love which had led

him to feed the hungry, had given him back some joy in his life! If this is the result of love to our fellow creatures, how much more must it be the effect of our love to our God! If you want to be happy and to do the best thing that is possible in your whole life, love your God! When you want to have a season of ecstatic bliss, this is the way to it—by the road of love to God you will get to the purest, highest joys that can be known even in Heaven itself! Now that you have this blessed secret communicated to you, make use of it and love your God because it is such a pleasant and profitable exercise!

Let us love the Lord, next, *because it is so beneficial to do so*. The man who loves God is delivered from the tyranny of idols—and idols are great tyrants. Suppose you make an idol of your child—you directly have a tyrant. Suppose you make an idol of your money—there is not a more grim tyrant even in Hell than Mammon is! Do you make an idol of other people's opinion of you? The poor galley slave who is flogged at every stroke of the laborious oar, is free in comparison with the man who lives upon the breath of popularity, who craves the esteem of his fellow men and is afraid and trembles if they censure him. Whatever idol you have, you will be the slave of that idol, but, dear Friend, if you love God, you are free! The love of God makes men true and, making them true, it also makes them bold—and making them bold, it makes them truly free!

Moreover, *to love God is the way to be cleansed from sin*. I mean that the love of God always drives out the love of sin. The one who really loves the Lord, when tempted to sin, cries with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Every act of sin arises out of the absence or the decline of the love of God, but perfect love to God leads to the perfect life with God.

Love to God will also strengthen you in the time of trial. Love will bear His will without repining, will endure bereavements and the loss of worldly substance and, even when the suffering saint lies panting on the bed of sickness, or on the bed of death, love will enable Him to sing—

"You, at all times, will I bless!

Having You, I all possess.

How can I bereaved be

Since I cannot part with Thee?"

And, then, *love to God will also strengthen you for service*. A man is strong to serve his God, spiritually, just in proportion as he loves God. Love laughs at what men call impossibilities! Perhaps someone here says, "I could never go abroad as a missionary, leaving my native land and living among heathens." Brother, you could do it if you had love enough. Another says, "I could never spend my whole life in the back slums of London among the filthy and the ragged, trying to raise them up! I recoil from such work." Brother, you would not recoil from it, but you would rejoice in it if you had more love. There is a power in love to God, which makes that pleasant which, without love, would have been irksome and painful—a power which makes a man bow down his shoulders to carry the Cross and then finds the Cross grow into a seraph's wings enabling him to mount up toward his God! Only love God

more, Brother, and you can do anything! You know that if a thing is very hard, you only need to get something that is harder and it will go through it, so, if the work is hard, get more love to Christ and you will be able to accomplish it, whatever it may be!

I might continue to give you reasons for loving the Lord, but I will only give you one more and that is, *it is most ennobling*. He who loves God is certainly akin to the holy angels, for this is what they do. He is also akin to glorified saints, for this is what they do. He is also akin to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, for this is what He does. The three Persons of the Divine Trinity delight in one Another and when *we* delight in Them, we have fellowship with Them as well as with one another. "God is love and He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." The less love you have to God, the lower is your rank among His saints—and the more love you have to Him, the higher is your rank! May we all know, to the fullest extent possible, what it is to be ennobled by being filled with love to our Lord!

Now, having given you all these reasons why we should love the Lord—and really I have only skimmed the surface of the subject as the swallow touches the brook and is up and away again—I want to propose to my Brothers and Sisters in Christ something which I hope will be congenial to them. It is this—O LOVE THE LORD, ALL YOU HIS SAINTS!

Sit there and feel that He loves you! Sit there, and love Him and then say to yourself, "*Now, if I really do love the Lord, I must do something to prove it.*" Every now and then I like to do something for the Lord which I would not have anybody else know, for that would spoil it—something which I do not do for you, nor for my wife and children, nor for myself, but purely and wholly for God. I think we ought to have something in our purse which is not to be given even for the winning of souls, or the relief of the poor, or the comfort of the sick—though these are most important things which must not be neglected—but something which shall be for God alone. I like to think of that woman breaking the alabaster box and pouring out the precious ointment upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There was Judas, the traitor, who shook his head and said that it might have been sold for much and given to the poor—he being the representative of the poor and intending to see that a portion of the money should remain adhering to his own palms! But the woman had no thought of pleasing Judas, on Peter, or anybody but the Lord Jesus Christ whom she loved so intensely!

Cannot you, Beloved, select something which you can do out of love to Him? What can I suggest to you? Is there some sin that still lurks within your heart? If so, hunt it out and destroy it for Christ's sake! Fling down the gage of battle and say that you will contend against the evil thing, in the name of God, with this as your war cry, "For the love of Christ!" You will get the mastery over it in that way. And when you have done that, is there not something that you could give distinctly to the Lord? Have you ever done that? If not, you have missed a very pure form of happiness and I think that love to God suggests that we should sometimes do this—

telling nobody about it, but keeping it entirely to ourselves. Cannot you also think of some service which you could render distinctly to God? It is a very wonderful thing that God should ever accept any service at our hands! It is thought to be a great act of condescension when a king or queen accepts a little wild flower from some country child, yet these is not much cause for wonder in that! But it is a marvelous condescension when God accepts the services even of cherubim and seraphim—and it is truly amazing that He should be willing to accept anything from *us*!

Is there not something, my Sister, that you can do over and above what you have been doing—something, perhaps, which you do not quite like the thought of doing? Yet you mean to do it and you will like to do it because you will do it out of love to your Lord. Do not neglect anything that has now become a part of your duty, but I want you to do something more than that—not that we can ever do more than our duty, for when we have done all, we shall still be only unprofitable servants to our great Lord and Master—and, in all that we do, let this be our highest motive, “We want to do something altogether and especially for our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Shall I suggest something else? You know that there is nothing which pleases our Lord more than when we try to be like Him. Have not you, father, been greatly pleased when you have seen your little ones imitating your way of walking and your way of talking? Yes, and our Lord loves to see Himself reproduced in us, even though it is in a very childlike way and more like a caricature than a true image. For instance, He is very great at forgiving those who have offended Him. Is there somebody with whom you have been out at elbows for a while? Then, for love of your Lord, seek out that somebody—I do not know who it may be—a former friend, perhaps—possibly a child, or a brother. Seek him out. Go and find him. “Oh, no,” you say, “he must come half-way to meet me!” No, you go all the way, dear Brother, for the love of Christ. You would not do it for anybody else, but you can go all the way for Christ’s sake! I remember two Christian men who had been greatly at variance one day, but they both happened to remember the text, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” So each of them started off to go to his friend’s house and they did meet half-way. That is how it ought to be, but still, if the other one does not come to meet you—that is the very reason why, for the Lord’s sake, you should go all the way to find him!

Then is there somebody who has never quarreled with you, but who is a very objectionable person and a very ungodly person about whom you have always felt, “I should not like to have anything to do with that person”? Yet, perhaps, God means to bless a word from you to that man’s salvation—will you not try to bring him to Christ? You know that there are many others who will look after the very pleasant people. We are always glad to bring them with us to hear the sermon and we can talk to them about Christ because if they do not like it, they will not say so, for they are so gentlemanly or so ladylike. There are always plenty of people willing to go after *them*, so will you not try to take up one of those

hedgehog sort of people that nobody else cares to handle? If he pricks your hands, you can say, "Ah, my Lord was pierced far deeper than this for my sake! I am glad to bear the sharp cuts and hard words for His sake—the more there are of them, the better I like it, for I feel that I am bearing all for His sake." You know that when you have something to do for a friend, you like it to be something big. If you love him very much and he says, "I want you to promise to do such-and-such a thing for me," you hardly like it when it turns out to be some insignificant thing scarcely worth mentioning. You say, "No, no, no, I have such ardent affection for you that if you had asked some very hard thing, I would have been only too pleased to do it!" Well now, try to do for your Lord Jesus Christ something which will cost you much—perhaps a good deal of pain, or the overcoming of strong natural tendencies—and do it for His sake.

Perhaps you are called to suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Well, I have told you this story before, but I will tell it again. There was once a king's son who came down to a country which ought to have been his home, but it was full of traitors and rebels against him who would not receive him. They saw that he was their Prince, but they hated him and, therefore, they heaped all sorts of insults upon him. They set him in the pillory and pelted him with filth and finally put him in prison. Now there was, in that country, one loyal subject. And when he saw the Prince, he knew him and went and stood by his side. He was close by him when the mob surged around him and they hooted him as well as the Prince. When the Prince was put into prison, they pushed this man in with him to keep him company. And when they put the Prince in the pillory, this man also stood there, putting his own face, whenever he could, in front of the Prince's face, so as to catch the filth that was thrown at him. When a stain came upon the royal visage, he wiped it off with his handkerchief, and stood there in tears, entreating the wicked man to leave their Prince alone—and always interposing himself to receive any filthy garbage or stone that was aimed at the Prince.

Years went by and the Prince came to his throne, his enemies having been trod underfoot. He alone reigned supreme and his courtiers thronged around him. You know that Prince and who His courtiers are—angels, cherubim, and seraphim! And the Prince, looking among the throng, cried out, "Make way, angels! Clear the road, cherubim! Stand back, seraphim! Bring here the man who was My companion in the prison and in the pillory. Come here, My Friend," said He and He set him upon His own throne and honored him that day in the sight of the whole universe! Brother, is that man, you? I charge you to let it be so, for the day shall come when you will be rewarded ten thousand times over for any little jests, and jeers, and sarcasms, and lies that men may have poured upon you because you were loyal to Christ! As for me, this is my declaration to my Lord and Savior—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,***

***All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me!***

Perhaps I am addressing some *whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, but who have no knowledge of that blessed fact.* They are strangers to themselves and strangers to God, yet in His eternal purpose He has ordained that they shall be saved. It is possible that this very hour is to be the time in which they shall be brought out of Nature's darkness into God's marvelous light! Let me ask them—have you not lived long enough in sin? Will not the time past suffice you to have worked the will of the flesh? What profit have you had in all your sinning? And you self-righteous people who have tried to save yourselves, how much nearer to God are you now than when you began that task which you will never finish? Have you not put your money into a bag that is full of holes? “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?” Surely you have lived long enough at enmity against God and you have had time enough to prove whether this world is true or false—and whether her joys are real or delusive! How far has your experience in this matter gone and, as far as it has gone, what has been the result? Will you not trust the Lord Jesus Christ?

If you can do nothing else, come and wash His feet with the tears of your repentance! If you can do nothing else, come and lean on His bosom! If you cannot give Him anything else, give Him yourself! Give Him your whole heart, or give Him your broken heart. After all, Sinner, you are the man who can really honor Christ. I do not read that our Lord Jesus ever said to one of His *disciples*, “Give me to drink.” But He did say that to the woman at the well who had had five husbands, and the man with whom she was then living was not her husband! Jesus did say to her, “Give me to drink,” for a sinner is capable of satisfying the innermost thirst of Christ when that sinner comes and believes in Christ! Oh, that some of you might do that this very moment! That would be the best result of this service. I pray the Lord that it may be so and then, Father, Son, and Spirit—the one true God—we, who believe in Jesus, will love You forever and ever! Amen.

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

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

CONSTRAINING LOVE

NO. 325

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 3, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.”
Psalm 31:23.*

LOVE Jehovah—so the text goes. God the Father demands your love and He deserves the warmest affection of your hearts. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. He has given His Son that He might redeem you with His precious blood. He has taken you into His family by Divine adoption. He has “begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It is to Him that you address your prayers. It is He who grants you your requests. It is He who glorified His Son Jesus, receiving Him into the heavens as your representative. And He will glorify Him yet again by gathering you together with all His people into the mansions provided for the blessed.

“Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” Love the Son! It is He whose delights were with the sons of men of old, He who entered into suretyship and covenant engagement on the behalf of His elect. It is He who with His precious blood has ransomed our souls and delivered them “from going down into the pit.” He is our Mediator through whom we pray and our intercessor who prays for us. He is our Head, our Husband, our King. He it is, even Jesus, who took our nature and wears a body like our own. It is He who imparts to us His mind now and promises that hereafter we shall bear His likeness in glory.

“Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” Love the Holy Spirit! He has been revealed to us and is known by us as “the Comforter.” How endearing!—

***“He in our hearts of sin and woe
Has bid streams of grace arise,
Which unto endless glory flow.”***

He has quickened us when we were dead in sins. He has given us the grace of repentance and of faith. He has sanctified us and kept and preserved us up till now. He has taken of the things of Christ and has showed them unto us. He has dwelt in our poor hearts, He has been our Comforter, our Instructor and our daily Teacher. It is He who convicted us of sin when as yet we perceived not its malignity and it is He inspires our hearts and souls with the supernatural will and disposition of living to God.

It is of the Holy Spirit we are born again and made partakers of the new creation. It is by the same Spirit we are ultimately to be changed into the image of our Lord from glory to glory. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” If a blind world sees no beauty in its God and therefore does not love Him, yet oh you saints, love your God. If the enemies of the Most

High set up other gods and bow down before them—if they turn aside into crooked ways and go a whoring after their false gods—yet, oh you saints of His, stand fast and turn to your Jehovah and love Him ever more. Do not merely serve Him, but love Him.

O house of Israel be not His slaves—serve not your God as the heathen serve their gods—out of terror and fear, but “love the Lord all you saints.” Be not as the subjects of Pharaoh, flogged to their work with the whip, but be you the dutiful children of your loving Father. Serve Him, I say and rejoice before Him. Let love sweeten all your services. Give Him all your hearts. Make Him the object supreme of all your heart’s desire. Ever live to Him as you live by Him.

I shall have to ask your patience this evening, while I take a liberty with my text. It is this. I mean to confine its exhortation to one Person of the Divine Trinity. I have already accepted it in its comprehensiveness, “Oh love Jehovah, all you His saints.” Tonight I propose to use it as consonant with such an occasion as the present, when we shall celebrate the Supper of our Lord—“Oh love the Lord Jesus, all you His saints.” And I shall endeavor, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me, first of all to stir you up to love Jesus, by showing how meet and befitting it is that you should do so. And then I shall seek to show the excellencies of loving Jesus—how profitable it will be to your spirit, if your heart is wholly inflamed with love to Him.

I. First, then, my Beloved, let one sentiment animate every mind and one emotion fill every heart. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” I feel in beginning to exhort you to love Christ. That love is a stream which must flow spontaneously, a fountain that must bubble up of its own accord. When grace makes a man love Christ, it does not do it by force, for love is a wine that cannot be trod out of the grapes with pressure. It must freely distil. The heart cannot be forced to love. It is true it can be constrained by love, but by no other constraint. Moses, with all the thunders that gave extraordinary sanction to his mission, never could make a heart love God.

There is nothing but love that can create love and love itself comes like droppings from the honeycomb. The only pressure it will deign to endure is the pressure of love. “Draw me,” says love, “I will run after you—drive me and I cannot but resist—my desire cannot even stir, much less can I run after you with fervent attachment. My heart melted while my Beloved spoke, because He was my Beloved. Because He loved me and spoke right lovingly, my heart melted. Had He been angry with me, had He spoken with coarse words my soul might have melted with fear, but it never could have been dissolved with love.”

Love, I say, is the only pressure which may be used to produce love and yet, methinks, I may “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” It may so happen that while I strike some fear sparks, they may touch the inflammable passion of your new-born spirits. The breath of the Spirit may fan them and nurture them, till the love of your heart will seem as if it had received new fire. Oh Love! Let me bring forth some of your

delicious sweets. Let me reason with the most tender logic of the heart. "Love the Lord Jesus all you His saints," because His Father loves Him.

It must always be right for us to love whom God loves. Now the Father has much love, but His pre-eminent love is for His only begotten Son. One with the Father from before all worlds, one in essence, as well as in dwelling-place and attribute, our Jesus was ever so dear to His Father's heart, that no tongue can tell, nor ever heart conceive, how deep the well-spring from where love flowed from the Father to the Son. "The Father has loved the Son and given all things into His hands." He has loved Him, not only because of the unity of their nature and because of their being one God, but the Father's love has flowed out to Christ as the Mediator.

He has loved Him for His obedience which He perfected, for the sufferings which He endured, for the ransom which He paid, for the battle which He fought, for the victory which He won. There was one eye that always followed Christ more closely than any other. There was one heart that always understood His pains and one face that was always filled with celestial delight, when Jesus Christ overcame His enemies. "He who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." When He had delivered Him up, methinks His heart yearned for Him, His heart followed Him and His soul loved Him, as He saw Him rising superior to every enemy He stooped to meet, victorious in every conflict He deigned to wage, bearing every Cross He condescended to undergo and casting every load away from Him when He had borne it the predestined time.

The Father, I say, has loved the Son because of the great things He has done. And therefore has He delivered all things into His hands. And, oh heavenly Father! Do You love the Lord Jesus and shall my heart refuse to love Him? Am I Your child and shall not the Object of my Father's love be the darling of my heart? What You delight in shall be my delight. Where You see beauty, my eyes shall gaze with rapture. And where Your heart finds solace, there shall my heart find unceasing repose and ineffable joy. Does Christ lie in Your bosom?—He shall lie in mine. Is His name engraved on Your heart?—Oh let it be engraved on mine also. Do you love Him? Do You love Him so that You could not love Him more?—Be it my privilege to love Him thus with all the force and vehemence of my ransomed renovated nature, giving up all my spirit to be devoured by that consecrated fire of love to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again—may I not stir you up my Brethren, to love Jesus Christ, by reminding you how the angels love Him? They have ever loved Him since they have known Him. It is true they are but the creatures of yesterday compared with Him. He is the Everlasting Father. He is the Eternal One and they, excellent in strength though they are, are but *created* ones. But, oh how they have loved Him! It was their greatest pleasure to fly at His will before He descended from Heaven to earth. He had but to speak and it was done. His angels were spirits and His ministers were flames of fire to do His will. Whatever had been the sacrifice He demanded of them, they would have thought it their highest deed to have performed His will.

And when He left the shrine of the blessed to come to earth and to suffer, you know, my Brethren, how they followed Him along His starry road. How they would not leave Him till the last parting moment and then their songs pursued Him down to earth, while they chanted, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." You know how ever afterwards they watched over Him, how they came to Him in the desert—His great battle with the enemy—and ministered to Him. You know how He was seen of angels all along His pilgrimage, how in the garden there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him.

You understand how around the bloody tree they pressed in strong desire to see God in agonies. They wondered what it all could mean, until He said—"It is finished." They visited His tomb. An angel descended from Heaven to roll the stone away from the door of the sepulcher. Yes, more, angels formed His escort when He ascended up to the realms of Heaven. Well have we been taught to sing—

***"They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."***

You know how they bow before Him, casting their crowns at His feet and how they join the everlasting song of "Glory and honor and majesty, and power and dominion and might be unto Him that sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Do the angels love Him—the angels that have never tasted of His flesh, that never needed to be washed in His blood and shall not my heart love Him? Spirits, spirits, spotless ones! Do you cry, "Worthy the Lamb"? My heart shall echo back your notes in louder strains—

***"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
"To be exalted thus."***

"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply—

"For He was slain for us."

Stand back Angels! Give to man the first place in love. You may adore, but you cannot love as we love, for He is our Brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." He is ours more than He is yours. He is Man, He was never angel. He is our Brother and kinsman, our next in blood. Jesus, our souls must love You. We cannot permit even angels to be our rivals here. We will be jealous even of them. We press nearer to Your Throne than even they can do.

On each of these themes I am compelled to be short, though there were indeed room enough for expansion, "Oh love the Lord all you His saints," because your brothers that are caught up to the third heavens love Him. And here let us just seek to bring this theme home to each one of us. How many dear friends and kinsfolk according to the flesh we have up yonder—where the clouds float not and winters are not known? Where tears trickle from no eyes and furrows mar no brows! Up yonder we have friends. How often do we speak of them as lost, but how foolish we are. They were never more truly found. Is that mariner lost who has escaped

from a shipwrecked vessel and stands upon the Rock? No, no. They need not our pity. They might rather commiserate us, if there could be such a thing.

We are struggling in the surf to reach the shore as they have done. And oh, my Brethren, methinks that whatever they do above should be sufficient example for us to do the like here below. And now, hark, hark how they sing before the Throne! Methinks among those glad voices I can distinguish some friends, of fellow-laborers here below, of parents, of husbands, of wives, of children, that here worshipped with us, but have now gone up yonder to the higher seats of the Divine synagogue, to sing in nobler strains than we can do. Hark how they sing and what their theme—

***“Jesus, the Lord their hearts employ
Jesus, my love, they sing;
Jesus, the life of both our joys,
Sounds loud from every string.”***

And oh, how they love Him! Methinks I see them. They have no tears, but joy may moisten their eyes as they look at that dear face and as they talk to one another with their hearts burning—burning with fiercer fire and clearer flame than those favored disciples who went to Emmaus with their Lord. They say to one another, “How glorious He is and we are like He.” Methinks I hear their sweet conversation as they count the crowns upon His brow. As they bow down and adore. As they stand up and admire and then, transported with delight, fly into His arms again. With Him in Paradise continually, in sweet communion with Him—oh, how they love! We are such cold creatures. Like icebergs are our hearts—but theirs are like flames of fire. Oh, shall it not be enough to stir us up to love the Savior, when we think how they love Him who have crossed the Jordan and have gone before?

But, come, we will take another argument. Surely I need not say to you, let us love the Lord Jesus, because everything that could possibly honor our souls and constrain our love is to be found in Him. There is a thing called beauty which wins upon the hearts of men. Strong Samson is weak as a child before its enchantment. Mighty men, not a few, have bowed before it and paid it homage. But if you want beauty, look into the face of Jesus. That marred visage has more loveliness in it than in all the smiles of Cleopatra or of the fabled maiden of days of yore. There is no beauty anywhere but in Christ. O sun, you are not fair, when once compared with Him. You stars, you are not bright, if you are set side by side with His eyes, that burn like lamps of fire.

O fair world and grand creation of a glorious God, you are but a dim and dusky blot compared with the splendors of His face. When you shall see Christ, my Brethren, you will be compelled to say that you never knew what loveliness was before. When the clouds are swept away, when the curtains that hide Him from your view are drawn aside, you will find that not anything you have seen will stand a moment’s comparison with Him.

You will be ready to break out, “O, black sun, black moon, dark stars, as compared with my lovely Lord Jesus.”

I say, my Brethren, if you want one to love fairer than the children of men—One who shall always be worthy of your love and always show to the eyes of others that there was a sufficient reason for your giving up your heart to Him—love Jesus, for there never was such beauty in the world as there is in him.

Does wisdom still the love of men? Can he who is into martial triumphs, prowess and renown, subdue the hearty Daughters of Jerusalem—would you love a hero? Go forth and meet King Jesus as He returns red from the battlefield, glorious in triumph.

Do men sometimes give their love because they at first are led to reverence the character and then afterwards to esteem the person? Oh, think of the matchless character of Christ Jesus! Were there ever such perfections as meet in Him? He has not the excellency of one man, but of *all* men without the faults of any. He is not merely the Rose of Sharon, but He is the Lilly of the Valley. He may not only be compared at one time to the citron among the trees of the wood, but later He is as the goodly cedar. All types of beauty fail and “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” lose their force when we come to treat of Him.

We must coin new words before we can describe the excellencies of Christ. In fact, we must have done with tongues and go into that land where spirits utter their thoughts without the motion of lip or the expiration of breath, before we shall be able to express the surpassing beauty, the unuttered excellency of the glorious character of Christ. Oh, love Him, then, you people of God! Love Him! Look into His face and see if you can help it. Look, I say, at His character and see if you can resist it. But I tell you, if you love Him not, it is because you do not know Him—

***“His worth if all the nations knew
Sure the whole earth must love Him, too.”***

It were impossible to know Christ and yet not to have the heart affected by Him. You must be overpowered by His charms. One look of His eyes, one touch of His hand shall ravish your heart. Once see His face and let Him but dart a glance at you, your two hearts must be united. Is your soul to you like a river rippling in its bed alone? And is Christ yonder, like another river gloriously flowing towards the sea? Pray the Lord to bend the stream of your love till it falls into the river of His love and then you shall be as two streams, whose banks were once divisions, but both are now melted into one. You can then say with the Apostle, “For me to live is Christ.” Run in the same channel—“and for me to die were gain.” You shall be lost in the ocean, swallowed up in boundless and eternal love. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.”

Yet once more—and this perhaps shall be the best argument I can give. The one which, after all, has the most effect upon us. We love Him—why? Because the Father loved Him? Oh no. We are too gross for that. Do we love Him because the angels love Him? We are not wise enough for that. Do we love Him because the redeemed love Him? I fear, my Brethren, we

are still too carnal for that. Do we love Him because of His own excellencies? I know not at first that is an after attainment of grace. We love Him, because He first loved us. Come, then, love Him, Oh you saints, because He first loved you.

Here is a theme before me which almost imposes silence on my tongue. There are some themes which make one wish that some teacher more able would accept the responsibility of explaining them, because we are afraid of marring their symmetry while we grapple with their details. The picture stretches out as it were before my mind's eye with dazzling glory, but I cannot sketch it so that others can see all its grandeur. Christ's love to us we sometimes guess at, but, ah, it is so far beyond our thoughts, our reasoning, our praises and our apprehension too, in the sweetest moments of our most spiritual ecstasy—who can tell it? “Oh, how He loved us!”

When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus the Jews exclaimed with surprise—“Behold how He loved Him.” Verily you might say the like with deeper emphasis. There was nothing in you to make Him love you, but He left Heaven's Throne for you. As He came down the celestial hills, methinks the angels said “Oh, how He loved them.” When He lay in the manger an infant, they gathered round and said, “Oh how He loves.” But when they saw Him sweating in the garden, when He was put into the crucible and began to be melted in the furnace—then indeed, the spirits above began to know how much He loved us.

Oh Jesus! When I see You mocked and spit upon—when I see Your dear cheeks become a reservoir for all the filth and spittle of unholy mouths—when I see Your back rent with knotted whips—when I behold Your honor and Your life both trailing in the dust—when I see You charged with madness, with treason, with blasphemy—when I behold Your hands and Your feet pierced, Your body stripped naked and exposed—when I see You hanging on the Cross between earth and Heaven in torments dire and excruciating—when I hear You cry, “I thirst,” and see the vinegar thrust to Your lips—when I hear Your direful cry, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” my spirit is compelled to say, “Oh how He loves!”

He could die, but He could not cease to love. He could be rent in pieces, but He could not be rent away from His people. He could be buried in the grave, but His love could not be buried. It must live. It must exist. It cannot be taken from His chosen. Think, too, my Brethren, how much He must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call His ministers hypocrites—His people fools. His Sabbaths were idle days with you. His Book, His precious Book, was unread. You never sought His Grace. Sometimes, perhaps, you used to curse Him, perhaps persecute Him in His children and yet He loved you.

And when His Spirit came after you, you tried to quench it. You would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience. You went to the theater, you tried to quench the Spirit, but His love would

not be mastered by you. He had resolved to have you and the bridegroom would still your heart. Oh how He loved you when He received you all black and filthy to His bosom—gave you the kiss of His lips and saluted you as His own fair spouse. Since then, remember, how He has watched over you in sickness, how He has carried you in His bosom when the road was rough, how He has covered you with His wings and nurtured you with His feathers.

Think, I beseech you, how He seems to have Heaven and earth to bless you. How He has always had a ready ear to hear your prayer and a swift foot to run to your immediate help. Remember this, above all things—how ill you have requited all His love. You have served Him but little. You have given Him the little ends—you have brought Him no sweet cane—neither have you filled Him with the fat of your sacrifices. You have given Him no bullocks out of your fold, no goats out of your flock. You have offered to Him the blind and the maimed. You have given Him sacrifice, but have you requited Him according to His kindness to you? He bled for you—have you resisted unto blood—striving against sin?

He gave His whole self for you—have you given your whole being up to Him? There was not a single nerve in His body which did not thrill with love to you. There was not a drop of blood which had not in its red fluid your name. Surely His body and soul was all yours—His humanity and His Godhead, too. And are you all His, and can you say—no, I will not ask you, you cannot say—that you have made a dedication to Him, as truly as He made for you?

Oh, love Him then, because of His love to you. I am sure you don't know how much He loved, because if you did it would break your heart to think you love Him so little. Sweet Master, if You were here tonight to tell Your people how You love them, how would it break their hearts! I am a poor spokesman for You, Jesus! Would that You would speak Yourself. Come here—no, You *are* here. You are wherever two or three are met together. Come here to Your people, then, and wrap them in Your crimson vest and tell them all Your name! Speak unto them and say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Shed Your love in their hearts. May they have an infinite consciousness of Your infinite, Your boundless, Your fathomless, Your endless love to them—and then Your work is done. There will be no need for Your poor servant to cry, "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints," for they will love You to the full.

II. In the second part of my subject I am now to show you some of THE EXCELLENCIES OF LOVING JESUS.

"Oh love the Lord all you His saints." There are many excellencies which come from love. Love is an ointment that gives forth a sweet smell—but better than that—it is an ointment which heals wounds, that gives health unto the marrow of the bones. Love has a wondrous power. It may seem but little in itself, but it makes men giants. He who bathes in the stream of love becomes invulnerable. No, he becomes omnipotent. Wherein he does not love he is weak.

But so far as he loves is he strong beyond all thought of weakness. Brethren, one of the first things which love to Christ will do for you is it will make you bear suffering for Christ with joyousness. Remember the martyr Lambert, one of the earliest of the martyrs burnt for Christ's sake by the papists? He was treated as badly as any could have been—for when tied to the stake, the firewood was green and the fire exceeding slow and he burnt away by slow degrees. His feet and legs were consumed while yet life was in the body. And that poor soul, when the fire was just about to take away life, though he had been hours burning, was seen to lift up such poor hands as he had—black and charred things—and clap them as best he could and say, out of that poor black face that looked like a cinder in the flame, “None but Jesus. None but Jesus.”

With that he rode in his chariot of fire up to Christ. Perhaps you have to endure some cruel mockings at times. It may be that to serve Christ becomes arduous work for you. Love Him and you cannot tell how easy it will be to suffer for Him. In fact, the more you have to suffer for Him the more happy you will be. You will count it all joy. No, you will rejoice in that day and leap for joy when you are allowed to suffer for the name of Him who suffered so much for you.

As sure as ever you flinch at the little fire which these mild and gentle days can afford you, as sure as ever you start back at the faint rebukes which the world gives you now—you may infer that you don't love your Master as you ought. When you love Him, then will you feel that anything and everything that the world can do, can never move you from Him—

***“The cords that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may rend them off,
But they can never, never part
The hold I have on Christ my Lord.”***

Love will not only make suffering easy, but further, it will make service joyous. Oh, don't you know in the Church how much shrinking there is from labor for Christ? Why is it in any Church that there are found Brethren who are always for getting others to work and not wishing to do it themselves?

It is lack of love, my Brethren. For as soon as ever we love, we shall be wanting to do something for Christ. When we love each other, what things we think of in order to give pleasure. With what solicitude does the wife think what she could do to bring the smile upon the husband's face. And how will the loving husband think of some means by which he can show his love to his wife! It is so with parents and with children. Have not you seen the mother sitting up night after night without any sleep and yet she was not weary? Oh, she was very, very weary, but she did not know it—her love would not let her feel it.

Have you ever seen the tender spouse watching over her husband at the brink of death, never taking her eyes from him, forgetting to eat bread, thinking of nothing but him? She sleeps as she sits in that chair. It is hardly for a moment. Did he start? She wakes. Was not the fever heavy on

him? She is ever awake. All the while she holds, though her eyes are red with sleeplessness. She says she could do it and she certainly could do it, too, night after night and never fly. And so, do but get your heart full of love to Christ and it is wondrous what you can do for Him! Nothing you can do for Him will be too much.

See how the Moravians served their Master. There was an island in the West Indies upon which some of the Moravians came to land and they wanted to preach the Gospel to the blacks. They asked what would be the condition upon which they would be allowed to land. The cruel terms were these—that they must themselves become slaves. Two of those Moravian Brethren became slaves. They bent their back to the lash that they might toil by day, in order to have the opportunity by night of preaching the Gospel to their poor black companions in captivity.

You will remember, too, that when there was found somewhere in Africa a place where there were lepers confined, persons whose limbs had rotted away with foul disease, two Moravians were found to go in there. And though they knew they could not come out alive and that they must soon be the subjects of leprosy themselves and die by slow degree—they were ready enough and willing enough to do it all. The love of the Moravians, Brethren, seemed to me to be one of the chief examples of what the love of every Christian should be. There should never be any choice nor stopping.

Does Jesus want me here? Can He make better use of me dead than alive? Let me die. Will He be more honored in my poverty than in my wealth? Let me be poor. Will He be more glorified by my toil than by my rest, or by my sickness than by my health? Then be it so. As He surrendered all to the Father, so will I surrender all to Him. As the Father gave all into His hands, so will I give all into His hands to be His forever and ever. Love to Jesus will make all service for Him to be joyous.

Again—love to Christ will make obedience sweet. “Love makes our willing feet in swift obedience move.” What things we will do for those we love that we would not do for anybody else! So for Christ we will do many things, because we love Him, without consulting our feelings, or considering whether any benefit is to accrue, or whether, as some say, it will be of any use. Be it absolutely a command, or more gently, a counsel—“whatever He says unto you, do it.”

Sometimes when I think of many good Brothers and Sisters here that know it to be their duty to be baptized in His name, and come to His Table and celebrate His ordinance in remembrance of Him—and they don't do it, though Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep my Commandments”—I don't know what to say for them. I must let them speak for themselves. I sometimes think, surely if they loved their Master better, they would count obedience a pleasure. I think they would say, “I made haste and delayed not to keep Your Commandments,” and they would be ready at once to run in the Lord's way, without making exceptions to any of His Commandments.

Still more, my Brethren, love for Christ will make communion very sweet. How pleasant it is to talk to those in love. Give us a good friend and you have given us a very great blessing. A rainy day in doors with a good companion is very happy. But the best landscape on a sunny day in the society of those for whom we have no affection is but a poor thing. Let me be with Christ in the meanest place, rather than with the sinner in his high places. Luther used to say “I would rather fall with Christ than stand with Caesar.” And might you not say you would rather be with Christ in poverty than with anybody else in all the glory and grandeur of this world?

Once love Christ and you will never be content to be far away from Him. You will say with the spouse, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet unto my taste.” Friend, how long is it since you had fellowship with Christ? Ask the question round, Brethren. Each man and each woman answer it. You are a Believer. Your faith is in Christ. How long is it since you have seen your Master? How long since you have talked with Him? How long since He has spoken to you? Pass that question round again, I say, and let every man answer it.

I am afraid there are some Christians who have not communion with Christ by the months together. No, I fear by years together. Oh, what Christians must you be! Where is that wife’s love who never wishes for a husband’s smile all through the year? Were there much affection between two friends who could live in the same house and not speak? Oh, Brothers and Sisters let us examine ourselves and begin to doubt if we can be happy without fellowship with Christ!

Christ is so precious to a Believer, that the Believer and Christ should be like two turtle doves, that cannot fly unless they are in each other’s company. Of the turtle dove it is said that when its mate is gone you can nearer make the turtle consort with another, brings all the doves you will. It is a lonely dove and will not be consoled. There it sits and pines and coos itself to death, mourning for its mate. The only way to kill a Christian would be to take Christ from him. You might bring him other things and yet never find another name, never another to whom his heart would be knit. No, if you took up all the saints that have been buried, you could never find one that the Believer could consort with as he has consorted with Christ and held fellowship with Him. Let us all be like the dove, then, and cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

I think there is no need to say any more on this point, or add another syllable, except it be just this one—love to Christ will make trust easy. I say love to Christ will make *trust* easy. You have heard that often-told story of the wife on board ship who saw her husband cool and calm when the wind was blowing hurricanes and the masts were creaking. She asked how it was and the husband, reaching a sword, ran upon her, put it to her very breast and the wife didn’t start for a minute. “Wife,” said he, “how is it you are not afraid?—this sword is sharp.” “Oh,” says she, “but it is in

my husband's hand." "Well," said he, "and though that wind is terrible, it is in my Father's hands."

Love can trust under any circumstances. It is wonderful how some men have been betrayed into trust. You could not excuse them at first. They have put their hand and become security for another, because they really loved the person so much that they could not think it possible he could deceive them. And we must not be too severe, because we don't know the circumstances between the two in these cases. We love because we cannot help it. We trust where we love. How the child trusts the mother. The mother has lost her way. She is on a bleak hill. The snow is falling and she cannot find the track. The path is covered and there may be a wolf in the distance and the mother may hear it, but the infant does not start. It sleeps on her breast and if it wakes it toys with the mother's cheek and while she is full of alarm, it knows no fear because it loves.

And see how the child will spring into your arms, though he is on some height—and if he should fall he would hurt himself. "I will catch you child," and it is done. He springs. And so, where there is love there will be trust. Do you find it hard to believe Christ? Love Him better and it will be easy. Do you find it hard to think that all things will work together for your good? Love Him and you will be sure of it. You will be quite sure of it. "It cannot be," says you, "that my sweet Lord Jesus will ever do me an ill turn. I love Him so well and He loves me so well. Let Him smite me and I will kiss His hand. I am sure that He means it in love. It is but a love pat upon a child. Even when He frowns at me I will still believe that He has a smiling face, only He conceals it to make better known the purpose of His Grace. Yes, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I will say, He did it, I will trust in Him.

Thus, Brethren, I think I have given you ample reasons for loving Christ. As for those of you who have never trusted Him, I cannot say to you, love Him. Trust Him first and you shall love Him afterwards. Give your soul up into His hands. I charge you by the living God, have done with your self-righteousness and flee to Christ who has bled on the Cross and when you have been washed in His blood and robed in His righteousness, then shall you love Him. O Jesus, O Jesus, come forth and win men's hearts tonight! You heavenly Lover, our sweet Master, come we beseech You! When I tell Your story, men will not love You. No, should I tell it with tears in my eyes they would not believe me.

Come, tell it Yourself to them. On their way home break their hearts in love to you. May they tonight fulfill the verse we have often sung in Your honor—

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

Jesus! Bring the wanderers home. Reclaim Your lost sheep! May there be joy on earth and joy in Heaven, over sinners whom You have found, sinners whom You did come to seek and to save. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house." The Lord add His blessing for Jesus' sake.

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A CURE FOR A WEAK HEART

NO. 2455

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1886.

*“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart,
all you that hope in the LORD.”
Psalm 31:24.*

THERE is no preaching like that which grows out of our own experience. You perceive, dear Friends, that David had trusted in the Lord. In very sore and singular trouble God had delivered him and, at the close of that deliverance, he wrote this Psalm, to be sung by the faithful of all times and every clime, and then he gave this exhortation which grew out of his own experience. O my Brothers, we shall never speak to the heart of our hearers unless what we say has been first engraved on our own hearts! The best notes of a sermon are those that are written on our own inner consciousness. If we speak of the things which we have tasted, and handled, and made our own, we speak with a certainty and with an authority which God is pleased to use for the comfort of His people. Think, then, that you can hear David, who has long since fallen asleep, speaking out of his royal tomb and saying, as the result of his own happy experience, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord.”

I. In considering this text, I would first of all bid you notice AN APPROVED COMPANY to whom the Psalmist is speaking—“all you that hope in the Lord.”

We must not regard all parts of the Bible as addressed alike to every individual. It has many messages to all the sons of Adam, but there are certain portions of it which are enclosed and belong only to that seed according to promise which is distinguished by faith, whereby it is known to be in Covenant with God. Holy Scripture discriminates—it makes some general promises, but its choicer words are given to persons of a special character. Judge for yourselves how far you come under the description of the text, “all you that hope in the Lord.”

You perceive, first, *that they are men of hope*. They have not yet all they expect to have—they have not yet entered into possession of their full inheritance. They have a hope which is looking out for something better than before. They have a living hope which peers into the future beyond even the dark river of death, a hope with eyes so bright that it sees things invisible to others, and gazes upon glories which the unaided human eye has never beheld! Have you this good hope? Do all your measures lie about you or behind you? If so, the text speaks not to you—this arrow flies beyond you. If you are, indeed, a child of God, your hope

lies where as yet your eyes do not see, nor your hands grasp. God's people are a hoping people and, therefore, hoping for the fulfillment of the promises God has made to them.

Next, *they hope for good things*. This is implied when the Psalmist speaks of those that hope in the Lord, for no man hopes for evil things whose hope is in the Lord! We are not led, by hoping in the Lord, to hope even for temporal things beyond a certain limit. We hope not for riches! We hope not for a long continuance here, for we have heard a voice saying unto us, "This is not your rest, for it is polluted." Our hope could not, even if it would, content itself with the things which are seen and temporal—we are hoping for a city whose Builder and Maker is God! We are hoping for joys which eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man. We are hoping for things so good that they can only come from God, Himself! Our hope about them, therefore, is entirely in Him. Are you a man with this good hope? Are you a man with a hope that you would not exchange for ten thousand worlds? Perhaps, out of your box, like Pandora's, everything that seemed solid has gone—but at the bottom there lies a hope which does not fly away. This is the bird which sits and sings both day and night within your soul, even though you are shut up from going into the common haunts of men. You have a hope, a good hope, a hope of good things to come in the hereafter, in the islands of the blessed, where you shall be forever at home with your God!

If you are the persons spoken of in the text, *this hope of yours is rooted, grounded and established in the Lord*—"all you that hope in the Lord." You have not a hope apart from the ever-blessed Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the Father you look with the expectation of a child who is an heir. To the Son of God you look, waiting for that wedding feast which shall be kept with Him to whom you are affianced by a betrothal that never can be contravened. To the Holy Spirit you look, for He is with you even now as the earnest of your inheritance, and you expect your inheritance to be of the same nature as the earnest which you already enjoy—and that you will be filled with His light, love, purity and blessedness. For this you are looking, "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Can you say that? We are men of great expectations, but our expectations are not in men that die, or men that live—our expectations are in Him who never dies, never fails and never disappoints those who put their trust in Him. Say, dear Hearer—I cannot come round and put the question to all of you individually—but say, Do you belong to this approved company of men that hope in the Lord?

I may further say that *some of them do not get much beyond hope*. I would not condemn them because of this—I must not judge those whom God has not condemned. I like to hear a child of God speak of the full assurance of faith, for full assurance is the proper tone of an educated faith. He that believes ought to be assured of the thing which he believes—otherwise, why does he believe it? And it is good when the milk of faith has stood so long that you can see the cream of full assurance floating upon the surface of it. Yet I know that if you do *not* have full assurance and if the most you say is, "I hope," you are included in the blessed

company to whom the Psalmist speaks—"all you that hope in the Lord." O Little-Faith, Miss Much-Afraid, Mr. Feeble-Mind and Mr. Fearing—all of you who belong to that very numerous family, all of you who are like Pharaoh's lean cattle—God loves you! These feeble ones are carried in the Savior's bosom, or gently led by His loving hand. Do not exclude yourself, I pray you, from any sweetness which lies in the text, "all you that hope in the Lord." Indeed, my text seems to me to have an arm like that of the Good Shepherd. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm," as if He would put His arm around them to draw them close up to His heart.

"All you that hope in the Lord"—you who are so little, you who are so useless, you who are so trembling, you who are not what you want to be, you who can see your own imperfections rather than anything else, you who groan rather than sing because you cannot as yet overcome your besetting sins—do you hope in the Lord? My text speaks to all that hope in the Lord and I should like so to preach from it that if I should omit any of you who are strong, I should, at any rate, apply the text to those who are very weak and trembling! "All you that hope in the Lord." This passage picks up the undermost. It seems to come like the men with the ambulance, to look after the wounded and carry them on at the same pace as those who march in the fullness of their strength!

This, then, is the approved company—"all you that hope in the Lord." Not, "you that hope in yourselves." Not, "you that hope in your priests." Not, "you that have any confidences anywhere else"—but you who hope in God alone!

II. Well now, secondly, my text seems to intimate that there is AN OCCASIONAL WEAKNESS—I might say, A FREQUENT WEAKNESS which is apparent in many of those that hope in the Lord.

It is a dangerous weakness, for it is *a weakness of the heart*. The text says, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your *heart*." Wherein it is implied that sometimes the heart of them that hope in the Lord grows weak. As you well know, heart disease is a very dangerous disease—even if a very little is wrong with the heart, it is a serious matter—for every other part of the body will be affected. Some of God's own people are occasionally and, many of them very often, subject to a weakness of the heart. They lose their courage, their joy departs from them and they become timorous and fearful.

This weakness *occurs on many occasions*. Sometimes we have seen those who hope in the Lord very weak in heart under great suffering. Pain follows pain—it seems as if every cut of the knife went deeper than the last and that the knife was sharper every time. Oh, let me tell you who are in vigorous health, have no bodily pain and do not always sympathize as you might with those who are the subjects of acute suffering—it is not as easy as you think to bear such pain as some of us have to endure! Let a man have an intolerable headache by the week, together, or it may be a sharp attack of rheumatism. Let sciatica come upon him or some of those terrible nerve pains that touch us to the very quick and you will see whether he who boasted of his strength finds that he has any strength to spare! At such times the spirits sink and the heart's action grows feebler and feebler.

So is it, also, in the battle of life. A man is struggling hard to gain a livelihood. Perhaps he has not any means of earning even bread for his wife and children. It is very trying for a man when the cupboard is bare and the children's clothes scarcely cover them from the cold. In such circumstances his heart sometimes fails him and then it is that God bids him be of good courage and strengthens his heart.

This weakness of heart is particularly felt in times of temptation. I have known Christian men who have had to work among ungodly companions and their spirits have been vexed every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked—and their taunts, and jeers, and blasphemies! And in such cases the heart has oftentimes grown very heavy, sick and faint. Those of us who love the old-fashioned Gospel cannot look abroad, today, and see so many pulpits turned against our God and many so-called “thinkers” deserting the old faith, without feeling that this is a burden which presses upon us very sorely. And our heart grows heavy and, perhaps, becomes weak.

I have also seen some Christians troubled with this complaint in the midst of great labor for the Lord. They are doing all they can do and yet they do not see the success they expected. They are not weary of the work, but they are weary *in* it. They see very clearly the imperfections in their service and they are further troubled because some who should help them, do not. They meet with cold hearts where they reckoned on enthusiasm! Instead of generosity, it may be that there is stinginess and, instead of prayerfulness burning like coals of juniper, there is lukewarmness or spiritual death. At such times the man of God puts his hand on his bosom and he says, “My heart, my heart fails me.” Then the message of the text comes in, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord.” Most men are subject to fainting fits at times. Even David became weak and faint. And Samson, after he had cried exultingly, “With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass, have I slain a thousand men,” yet, for lack of a drink of water, was ready to lie down and faint and die! The best of men are but men at the best and, therefore, who wonders if their heart sometimes fails them in the day of suffering, in the hour of battle, or under the broiling sun when they are laboring for their Lord?

If this weakness of the heart should continue, it will be very injurious. At the present time, I believe that *it restricts enterprise*. That young man would go as a missionary to China, but his heart fails him. There is another who would be found in the Congo, seeking to preach Christ, but he has not the needed courage. There is a Sister who would be taking a Bible class, or visiting in the district where she lives, but she cannot summon the resolution to begin. Oh, how many good resolves and holy projects never come to anything! We see the bud and blossom, but they do not knit into fruit as they ought to! I hardly dare to think of the vast quantity of talent in the Redeemer's Kingdom that lies unused, often for lack of moral courage and confidence in God! I do not think that we are at all lacking in confidence in *ourselves*—at any rate, some of us are not—but it is confidence in *God* which is needed—and that is quite another thing. This confidence makes the feeble strong and the timid

brave—may we all have a large share of it! God deliver us from faintness of heart lest we injure the Kingdom of our Lord by withholding our service!

And, dear Friends, this weakness of heart *endangers the success of the best worker*. He who fights most valiantly may be on the verge of victory and yet be defeated if his heart should then fail him. I have no doubt, in reading the records of many campaigns, you, too, must have noticed that men have gone on from victory to victory and suddenly there has been a pause because their hearts failed them just when, had they followed up their previous successes, they would have swept all before them! Beware, you who have served God with courage, lest fear should take hold upon you and you should flinch in the day of battle and miss that which you might have won for your Lord!

This feeble heart *pleads many excuses*. I do not marvel that it does—how can I, when I know myself? O Brothers, Sisters, if you look within, well may your hearts fail you! And if you look without, upon the temptations that waylay you, upon the powers of darkness so strongly entrenched within their fortresses, well may you faint! What a task we undertake in trying to win a single soul, much more in seeking to win a city or the world for Christ! Well may our hearts fail if we begin to look away from God. The fable is told of Hercules, that he fought with a famous giant whom he could not, for a while, overcome because he was born of the earth and every time he was hurled to his mother, earth, he rose renewed in strength. Hercules tugged and strove with his gigantic foe and felt that the struggle was hopeless, till he discovered his adversary's secret—then he took him in his arms and hugged the monster to death!

You and I are invincible though a thousand stronger than Hercules should be against us—as long as we can fall back on our God! And the only hope of the enemy's victory is if he can keep us away from God. But even if he should throw us down and seem to break us in pieces, yet in that fall we fall upon our God and rest on Him, alone. We may lie prone upon the earth and cry, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." Come into contact with your God, fall upon Divine power and you will rise with new force and new strength! But, if you should once be separated from Him, then it would be all over with you. Yet, blessed be His name, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

III. Now, thirdly, I call your most earnest heed to the trumpet voice of the exhortation in the text, A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION—"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart."

I like the way this is put. It is not alone, "Be of good courage." There is an, "*and*" with it—"and He shall strengthen your heart." At the same time, the exhortation is not omitted. It does not say, "He shall comfort your heart, therefore you need do nothing." They err from the Scriptures who make the Grace of God a reason for doing nothing—it is the reason for doing everything! They who say that predestination and the working of a living God put man out of the field, make a gross mistake—it is these facts that bring man into the field. The most stern predestination is not the least in conflict with the most perfect freedom of the human will. I

may not be able to explain how it is so to you, but I know that it is so as a matter of fact—and that God requires us to be of good courage at the same moment that He says that He will strengthen our heart.

Dear Friends, if you want to get out of diffidence, timidity and despondency, you must *wake yourselves up*. This is incumbent upon you, for the text puts it so—“Be of good courage.” Do not sit still, rub your eyes and say, “I cannot help it, I must always be dull like this.” You must not be so! In the name of God, you are commanded in the text to “be of good courage.” If you are indolent like that, you must not expect the Grace of God to operate upon you as though you were a block of wood and could be made into something against your will. Oh, no! You must determine to be of good courage. Therefore, arise, and shake yourself from the dust. Believe, dear Friend! Put your trust in God. “Give to the winds your fears.” Take down your harp from the willows. “I cannot play it,” you say. Get it down, all the same—even if you cannot play it, lay your fingers upon the strings—it is wonderful how, when once those accustomed fingers touch the well-beloved strings, it seems as if they were charmed into music. Do what you can and God will do for you what you can by no means do for yourself!

I know that a great many who are very sad and low in spirit come in here on a Thursday night—and their friends say to them, “We wish that we could cheer you up.” I do not say *that*, but I do say *this*, “Be of good courage. Be of good courage!” It is the Lord’s *command* to you. Do you not think that *your God deserves to be trusted?* What has He ever done that you should doubt Him? Does He not deserve your most confident faith? And what do you expect to get out of your timidity? He that is afraid of the weather—can he change it? He says that there will be a long frost—can he shorten it a single day by fretting over it? There is great depression in business and he will be ruined—will he be less likely to be ruined by worrying? Don’t you see, then, that your God deserves your trust and that common wisdom bids you be of good courage?

If you are not of good courage, *what will happen to you?* I will not say that you will be a coward, but I will say that you will look very much like one. I have heard of one who said that he was of a very retiring disposition—he could not take a Sunday school class, or speak a word to anybody for the Master, he was so retiring! I have also heard of a soldier who, in the day of battle, was so very retiring that they shot him as a deserter! I would not have you deserve the coward’s doom and speak of it as, “retiring.” No, get not into that class—be you rather like that soldier of Alexander who was always to the front—and the reason was that he bore about with him what was thought to be an incurable disease and he suffered so much pain that he did not care whether he lived or died! Alexander took great pains to have him healed and when he was quite well, he never exposed his precious life to any risk, again! Oh, I would rather that you should be stung into courage by excessive pain than that you should be healed into cowardice! Christ ought not to be served by feather-bed soldiers! He deserves that we trust Him and bring ourselves into His service with a courage that cannot be daunted. Though it is upon the pikes of His adversaries, let us find Paradise there, for we shall

find it if we follow Christ faithfully to the death! God grant us, then, to be of good courage!

Why are you afraid? Is God with you and yet are you afraid? What ails you? Has God forsaken you? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has Omnipotence grown weak? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has the manna ceased to fall, or the waters to flow? Go, yield yourself up to Him! Ask Him, by His Grace, to make you heroic instead of being numbered among the fearful and the unbelieving who turn their backs in the day of battle and seek their own selfish ease and comfort.

IV. I finish up with A CHEERING PROMISE—"He shall strengthen your heart."

God, alone, can strengthen the heart. I suppose that physicians can do something for weak hearts, though I do not know. As a general rule, when a man dies suddenly and they do not know what it is that killed him, they say, "It is disease of the heart." The heart is a mysterious portion of our being and needs great care. Spiritually, the mercy is that God, who made the heart, understands the heart and He who sees its weakness, knows how to strengthen it!

How does God strengthen men's hearts? Well, sometimes, *by gracious Providences*. Something very unexpected happens. I have, myself, learned to *expect* the unexpected. I have known what it is to almost wish on purpose to get into a situation in which there was no way of escape, that I might see the Lord cleave the hills asunder, or divide even the sea to make a way for His people! It is a grand thing to get into such deep water that you cannot touch the bottom and must swim—and then to feel the eternal buoyancy of God's Providence bearing you up! It is grand swimming when there are ten thousand fathoms of ocean below you—there is no fear of knocking your foot against a rock, then, and when you get right out into a simple dependence upon the living God and feel the waves of His eternal influences round about you—then will you be happy and blessed!

The Lord also has a way of strengthening men's hearts *by the kindly fellowship of friends*. Paul was often much refreshed by Christian associates. The Lord can send someone who, "as iron sharpens iron," may sharpen you and make you ready for service. "A word fitly spoken"—"a word upon wheels," as the Hebrew has it—how good it is when it comes in just at the right time! It "is like apples of gold in baskets of silver." Such are goodly words brought to us by men of faith and experience whom God sends to us.

So, too, have I known a man's heart to be mightily strengthened *by a precious promise*. Who knows the wonderful power of a text of Scripture? We used to have, 30 years ago—I do not know whether you have them now—"poor men's plasters" which we used when we felt weak in the back—but a promise out of the Scripture is a poor man's plaster, indeed! What strength it gives to the loins! How we seem to be braced up when we truly lay hold of a promise of God and it really gets a grip upon our spirit!

Beside all that, *God the Holy Spirit has a secret way of strengthening the courage of God's people which none of us can explain*. Have you ever

felt it? You may have gone to your bed, sick at heart, “weary, and worn, and sad,” and you wake in the morning ready for anything! Perhaps in the middle of the night you awake and the visitations of God are manifested to you—and you feel as happy as if everything went the way you would like it to go. No, you shall be more happy that everything should cross you than that everything should please you if it is God’s sweet will! You feel a sudden strengthening of your spirit, so that you are perfectly resigned, satisfied, prepared and ready. I have known a man of God in a tight spot. Everything has seemed to be going wrong and he has got worried and troubled till he has stepped aside and retired for a little prayer to his God. He has not been absent five minutes yet he has come back feeling, “Now I am ready for you.” All the flurry has gone, all the worry has gone—God has revived his spirit and strengthened his heart!

I have seen a good woman when her husband has just died and all her hope has seemed withered. The first burst of grief has passed and she has bowed by the side of that bed, lifted up her heart to God and then has brushed her tears away and given herself up to fight the battle of life for her children—and God has strengthened her heart as in a moment! Oh, do not give up! You need not be cowards! Do not give up. Do not say, “I am beaten. I will always be despondent. My life is crushed.” You need not be so! “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.” Get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, pour out your heart before God! Tell your trouble to the Most High and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, He must and will help those who put their trust in Him! Has he ever failed any who trusted in Him? Who has ever stopped His hand, or withdrawn Him from His designs? Who has ever made Him deny His promise, or retract His word? If you will trust Him, He will be better to you than your fears! No, better to you than your *beliefs*, or your largest hopes! Stay yourselves upon Him! Lean upon the bosom of eternal Love! Lean hard, lean all your weight there and leave that weight there, and the Lord be with you and bless you! Blessed are all they that trust in the Lord.

How I wish that all here had trusted in the Lord, or that they would seek Him, even now, if they have never yet found Him! The Lord be gracious to each of you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 31.

Verse 1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* Can we say as much as that? However else this Psalm of David may end, it strikes a grand keynote, that which should be the first indication of our spiritual life—confidence in God. Here is an ancient weather-beaten saint who, in the very midst of the storm, can say, “In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust.” There will the anchor of his soul find a sure hold!

1. *Let me never be ashamed.* “How can You let me be put to shame after having trusted in You, O my God? I shall be ashamed if You forsake me, if Your promises are not kept to me, O my Lord! Therefore, ‘let me never be ashamed.’”

1. *Deliver me in Your righteousness.* David dares to appeal even to the faithfulness, truth and justice of Jehovah, that He should keep the promise upon which His servant had placed his trust.

2. *Bow down Your ear to me.* “I am very weak, I am also very unworthy—it will be a great instance of Your Divine condescension if You hear me—yet I cry unto You, ‘Bow down Your ear to me.’”

2. *Deliver me speedily.* We may not set the time for God to answer our petitions, yet may we expect that His sure mercies will be swift mercies when our necessities are very urgent. So the Psalmist pleads, “Lord, come not late to me, lest You come too late to me, for I am in sore distress! My case is urgent, therefore help me now, ‘deliver me speedily.’”

2. *Be You my strong rock, an house of defense to save me.* He remembered Adullam and Engedi and he worked these places into his supplication. A man’s prayer should be the index of his life’s history. The scenes to which he has been most accustomed should rise up vividly before his spirit when he is at the Throne of Grace. It was so with David—“My God, be You an immutable, immovable, impregnable rock to me and let me dwell in You. Be not merely a refuge for the moment, but be ‘a house of defense to save me.’”

3. *For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name’s sake lead me, and guide me.* David is of a logical turn of mind. Notice the, “therefore,” in this verse. What an amazing, “for,” there is here! “Be You my strong rock,” “for You are my rock.” What God is already, we may ask Him to be! What we believe Him to be by faith, we may ask Him to be in our experience. Observe that David’s appeal is not in any degree to his own merit, but. “for Your name’s sake”—“because I trust in Your name, and if You do not do as You have said, Your great name will suffer dishonor. How can I believe in Your veracity if You do not do for me according to Your promise and Covenant? ‘Therefore, for Your name’s sake, lead me.’ ‘Guide me,’ too, even when I do not think of Your Presence. Lead me like a child and guide me like a traveler.” There are shades of meaning, here, so that there is no redundancy of expression in the words, “Lead me, and guide me.” But even if the two words meant the same, it would be quite lawful for the Psalmist to repeat the prayer, since he felt his need of leading and guiding to be so great. “Lord, I am so foolish, and the way is so difficult, ‘therefore, for Your name’s sake, lead me, and guide me.’”

4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength.* “Lord, my enemies have entangled me! Before I was aware of it, I was taken in the meshes of their net—will You not pull me out, O Lord? It will need a strong pull, but then, ‘You are my strength.’ ‘Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength.’” Sometimes our strength is crippled and we are baffled by the net in which we are enclosed. We feel ourselves hampered. We cannot use the strength we have, but God’s strength is always available. There seems to me to be a very blessed turn in the expression here used—“Pull me out of the net: for You are my strength.”

5. *Into Your hands I commit my spirit.* You notice that this Psalm [31] is dedicated to the chief musician. I have studied these Psalms, not only by

the hour, and by the day, but sometimes by the month, together. Some of these Psalms have been the pillow for my head at night. Others of them, like wafers made of honey, have lain in my mouth till I have sucked out of them their Divine sweetness. I have often noticed that when one of these sacred songs is dedicated to the chief musician, The Chief Musician generally appears somewhere in the Psalm—He from whom comes all the music that ever makes bleeding hearts, glad, usually shows some traces of Himself within the Psalm itself! In this instance, the living words of David were the dying words of David's Lord—"Into Your hands I commend My spirit." What David did and what the Lord Jesus Christ did, let us do, and do it every day—let us commit our spirit into the hands of our God.

5, 6. *You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth, I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.* Men are sure to have some kind of trust or other on which they rely. In David's day some trusted to false gods, others relied upon their own strength. The Psalmist does not speak in soft tones concerning these people, but he says, "I could not bear them. 'I have hated them that regard lying vanities.' I would not come into their secret, or have any connection with them. I was astonished at them, that they should turn away from God! But as for myself, 'I trust in Jehovah.'" Look how he comes back to the note with which he started—"In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust"—and now he repeats it, "I trust in Jehovah." It is an unfashionable thing—many will not do it—yet David says, "I trust in Jehovah," as if he dared to stand alone and did not mind how singular he seemed to be.

7. *I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.* What a grand faith! Should there not, sometimes, be the sounding of the cymbals even in the midst of our supplications? Though we must often put on sackcloth, yet we must lift up our song of praise whenever we can—"I will be glad and rejoice"—there shall be a reduplication of my delight—"I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy."

7. *For You have considered my trouble.* "You did not send it without due consideration. You weighed it and now You look upon me and You study my trouble, You know all about it." You know what is meant by human consideration, but how wonderful must Divine consideration be! When a single glance suffices for Jehovah to know all that is transpiring in the whole universe, what must His consideration be! "You have considered my trouble."

7. *You have known my soul in adversities.* "When others did not know me, You did. You were familiar with me and sympathetic towards me, especially in the day of adversity. 'You have known my soul.'" God knows His own children even when they are in rags and when their faces are stained with tears, and their spirits are depressed almost to despair—"You have known my soul in adversities."

8. *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.* "No. I may get into the enemy's prison, but there is no bar to it. 'You have not shut me up.' I may seem to get into my enemy's hand, but he cannot shut that hand." Truly, it must be so because David had already put his soul into

the hands of God—“Into Your hands I commit my spirit.” How, then, could he be shut up in the hands of the enemy?

8. *You have set my feet in a large room—*
**“Stone walls do not a prison make,
 Nor iron bars a cage.”**

Wherever the child of God is when his faith is in active exercise, his feet are in a large room—by faith he walks at liberty!

9. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble.* In this short sentence of four words—“I am in trouble”—David gives the text of which the next few verses are a kind of sermon with divisions and subdivisions.

9. *My eyes are consumed with grief.* “My eyes seem burnt up with scalding tears.” The salt of our tears wears out the very strength of our life. “My eyes are consumed with grief.”—

9. *Yes, my soul and my belly.* Or, “body.” The inward part of my being seems washed away with the deluge of my tears.”

10. *For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.* Better spend them in sighing than in sinning! Yet it is a sad case when we seem to measure our days by the bars of our grief.

10. *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed.* Now he sees to the bottom of his sorrow—“My strength fails because of my iniquity.” We can bear those sorrows which have no connection with our sins, but, alas, where are *they* to be found? It may be that David’s great sin seemed to him to lie at the very root of all his grief.

11. *I was a reproach among all my enemies.* They had found something to fling at him and they were delighted to throw it with all their malicious force! “I was a reproach among all my enemies”—

11. *But especially among my neighbors.* Those that are nearest can stab the sharpest. Those who knew David the best endeavored to find some silly tale to use against him.

11. *And a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside, fled from me.* This Psalm may have been written after Absalom’s rebellion, when Shimei cursed the king, and when everybody seemed to be forsaking him. Then was David brought into a low estate, indeed.

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.* This was the same David who slew the Philistine giant! This was the great deliverer of his country, yet the people had forgotten all that. Earthly popularity is the most fleeting thing under Heaven. The world is a hard and cruel master—it forgets its servants when they grow old—it has nothing good to say of them when there is nothing further to be got out of them. So David laments, “I am like a broken vessel”—a potsherd that can hold nothing and is flung away upon a dunghill.

13. *For I have heard the slander of many.* To have one slanderer attacking your character is bad enough, but to have many such cruel enemies about you—to have a whole brood of Hell’s hornets, as it were, stinging you—oh, what misery is this! You who, happily, have never experienced this torture, cannot imagine what agony it causes. I hope you may never know it.

13, 14. *Fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O*

LORD. Here he is back on the old Rock, and rejoicing as his feet stand once more on this firm foundation—"I trusted in you, O Jehovah."

14, 16. *I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hand.* "My enemies cannot do anything against me without Your permission." Divine Providence is a downy pillow for an aching head, a blessed salve for the sharpest pain. He who can feel that his times are in the hand of God need not tremble at anything that is in the hand of man!

15, 16. *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies' sake.* "If Your face shines upon me, Lord, they may look as black as they please. If You will but deliver me, I care not how cruelly they persecute me. If You will save me, who can destroy me?" O you who are in trouble at this time, hasten to your God! Where should the little bird fly when pursued by the hawk, but to its shelter in the rock? Where can you go, O sheep of Christ's flock, but to your Shepherd?

17. *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* There is something of the harshness of the old dispensation about that prayer, so we will turn it into a prophecy and say, "The wicked shall be ashamed—they shall be silent in the grave."

18, 19. *Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You.* Is not that a blessed expression to be used by the man who said that his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing?

19. *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men!* Not only has the Lord abundant goodness stored up for His children, but His goodness is brought out for others to see and for His people to feed upon even in the presence of their enemies!

20. *You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* They shall not be wounded by all the malice of their adversaries—they shall be preserved in the King's royal pavilion.

21-23. *Blessed be the LORD for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the LORD, all you His saints.* See what a fountain of happiness there is in the Psalmist's heart? He longs for all the saints to love the Lord!

23, 24. *For the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.* In this Psalm we have heard the wail of the sackbut and the clashing of the cymbals—but we finish with the blast of the silver trumpets!

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

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS NO. 2644

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1882.

*“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.*

*“Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.”
Psalm 31:5.*

*“And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
Acts 7:59.*

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28—*The First Recorded Words of Jesus*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, “How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,” if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, “It is finished,” which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, “It is finished,” which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.”

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, “Father, into your hands I commend My spirit,” see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, “Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?” Jesus is putting Himself into the Father’s hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father’s house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the

Father's hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, “Jesus,” under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God.* Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, “never man spoke like this Man.” Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, “I thirst,” but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, “It is finished!” And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, “Fa-

ther, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, “It is finished!” So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression, “Into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim’s Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, *that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God.* “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” God is to some men an unknown God. “There may be a God,” so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. “All things are God,” says another. “We cannot be sure that there is a God,” say others, “and, there-

fore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He will interfere in our affairs." Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy "Father of everything," who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands—and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, "as a man speaks unto his friend"? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," He said, "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in *spirit* he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit." He said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be at My Father's—that I must be in My Father's house!" Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, "My Father." And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit"!

What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that—

"It is not death to die."

Quoting the Savior's words, "It is finished," and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our *Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die*. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—"Into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a *charm*—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we *must die*—and dying is *not* an *act* on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death.

But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the spirit which He might have kept if

He had chosen to do so. "No man takes it from Me," He said concerning His life. "I lay it down of Myself."

And there is here a cheerful *willingness* to yield up His spirit into His Father's hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as *dying*. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death *was an act* and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death.

But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father's hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord." "My Father." "Let Him do as seems good to Him."

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." It seems to me that THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer's death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God* and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God's keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, "I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father's hands." You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to

live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you *ever* done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, *O Lord God of Truth.*" Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your *duty* to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed

through the roof and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, "I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—"Father." David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "Father, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You." The Psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and, "Providence did that," and, "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is Providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, Providence is Providence." That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature—well, it is—nature." Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, "Well—well—it is nature." And that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping." So live, Beloved, and you shall live safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit,

but we may speak of Christ *receiving* it and say with Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality*. Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He did not say, “I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die.” No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel’s trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, “Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me.” “Yes,” said the Christian, “and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any *hope*?” “Hope, Sir? *Hope*, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir.” “Ah, then!” replied the other, “despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up.” And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ’s hands—shall be “forever with the Lord.”

The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near*—so near that the man speaks to Him and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” In Stephen’s case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands*. Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, *that He is quite willing to take us into His hands*. Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure

that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

***"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay—
To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory thro' death led the way."***

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it—

***"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."***

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let

me open my mouth and swallow him!” All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-8.**

Verse 1. *I am the true vine.* Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical but real union. “I am the true vine.”

1. *And My Father is the vinedresser.* Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called “holy father” at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* There are many such branches, in Christ’s visible Church which are not fruit-bearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is some work, then, for the knife upon *all* the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

3. *Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.* The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* “Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. ‘Abide in Me.’”

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me that I may have something in

hand, some spending money of my own.” No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did run well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. “You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” No, if you will not hear God’s words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God’s will in other places—it must be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ’s house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

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

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

PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION NO. 3054

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”
Psalm 32:1.*

FEW men judge things correctly. Most people measure by appearances—few know the test of reality. We pronounce the man blessed who grasps the scepter or wears the crown, whereas perhaps no peasant in his dominion enjoys less happiness than he does. We pronounce that man blessed who has uninterrupted and perpetual health, but we know not the secret gnawing of the heart devoured by its own anguish and embittered by a sorrow that a stranger cannot perceive. We call the wise man happy because he understands all things—from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar of Lebanon—but he says, “Of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” We are all for pronouncing our neighbor’s lot happier than our own. As Young says of mortality, “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” And we are apt to think all men happy but ourselves. But oh, if we could see things as they are. If we were not deceived by the masquerade of this poor life. If we were not so easily taken in by the masks and dresses of those who act in this great drama, be it comedy or tragedy—if we could but see what the men are behind the scenes, penetrate their hearts, watch their inner motions and discern their secret feelings—we should find but few who could bear the name of “blessed”! Indeed, there are none except those who come under the description of my text, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” He is blessed, thrice blessed, blessed forevermore, blessed of Heaven, blessed of earth, blessed for time, blessed for eternity! And the man whose sin is *not* forgiven is not blessed—the mouth of Jehovah has said it and God shall manifest that cursed is every man whose transgression is not forgiven, whose sin is not covered!

Dearly Beloved, we come to the consideration of that most excellent and choice blessing of God which bespeaks our pardon and justification—and we trust that we shall be able to show you its extreme value.

The blessedness of the person enjoying this mercy will appear if we consider, first, *the exceeding value of it in its nature and its characteristics*. Then, if we notice *the things that accompany it*. And, afterwards, if we muse upon *the state of heart which a sense of*

forgiveness would engender, we shall see that a man whose sin is covered and whose transgression is forgiven, must indeed be blessed!

I. Let us first look at THE BLESSING AS IT IS.

It is an unpurchasable blessing. No one could purchase the pardon of his sin. What though we should each offer a hecatomb to our God, the sacrifice would smoke in vain, for “Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.” If we could make rivers of oil as wide as the Amazon and as long as the Mississippi, we could not offer them to God as an acceptable present, for He would laugh at its value. We might bring money to Him in vain, for He says, “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine.” No oblation can add to His wealth, for He says, “Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.” These are all God’s own creatures, so we could only offer to Him what is already His! Nothing that man can present to God by way of sacrifice can ever purchase the blessing of forgiveness.

Next, consider *the utter difficulty of procuring the blessing in any human way.* Since it is not to be purchased, how can it be procured? Here is a man who has sinned against God and he makes the inquiry, “How can I be pardoned?” The first thought which starts up in his mind is this, “I will seek to amend my ways. In the virtue of the future I will endeavor to atone for the follies of the past—and I trust a merciful God will be disposed to forgive my sins and spare my guilty but penitent soul.” He then turns to Scripture to see if his hopes are warranted and he reads there, “By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” He fancies that if he should reform and amend his life, he will be accepted, but there comes from the Throne of God a voice which says, “Having sinned, O man, I must inflict punishment for your sin.” God is so inflexibly just that He has never forgiven and will never forgive the sinner without having exacted the punishment for his sin! He is so strictly true to His threats and so inexorably severe in His justice, that His holy Law never relaxes its hold upon the sinner till the penalty is paid to the utmost farthing.

“Well,” says the sinner, “if I amend for the future, there is the dark catalog of past offenses still pursuing me. Even if I run up no other debts, there are the old accounts—how can I get *them* paid? How can I get my past sins forgiven? How can I find my way to Heaven.” Then he thinks, “I will seek to humble myself before God. I will cry and lament and I hope, by deep penitence, heart-felt contrition and by perpetual floods of tears, God may be induced to pardon me.” O man, your tears will not blot out a single sin! Your sins are engraved as in brass and your tears are not a liquid strong enough to burn out what God has thus inscribed—

***“Could your tears forever flow,
Could your zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone.
Christ must save, and Christ alone.”***

You might weep till your very eyes were wept away and until your heart was all distilled in drops and yet not remove one single stain from the bronze tablet of the memory of Jehovah! There is no atonement in tears or repentance! God has not said, "I will forgive you for the sake of your penitence." What is there in your penitence that can make you deserve forgiveness? If you did deserve forgiveness, you would have a set-off against your guilt. This were to suppose some claim upon God and there would be no mercy in giving you what you could claim as a right. Repentance is not an atonement for sin!

What, then, can be done? Justice says, "Blood for blood, a stroke for every sin, punishment for every crime, for the Lord will by no means clear the guilty." The sinner feels within his heart that this judgment is just. Like the man to whom I talked some time ago, who said, "If God does not damn me, He ought to. I have been so great a sinner against His Laws that His equity would be sullied by my escape." The sinner, when convicted in his own conscience, must acknowledge the righteousness of God in His condemnation. He knows that he has been so wicked, he has sinned so much against Heaven, that God in justice must punish him. He feels that God cannot pass by his sin and his transgression. Then there must be an atonement in order to obtain pardon, he thinks, and he asks, "Who shall effect it?" Speed your way up to Heaven, for it is vain to seek it on earth! Go up there where cherubs fly around the Throne of God and ask those flaming spirits, "Can you offer an atonement? God has said that man must die and the sentence cannot be altered. God Himself cannot revise it, for it is like the laws of the Medes and Persians, irrevocable! Punishment must follow sin and damnation must be the effect of iniquity. But O you blazing seraphs, no satisfaction would be yielded to Infinite Justice even if you all should die! You angels, I have no hope from you! I must turn my eyes in another direction. Where shall I find help? Where shall I obtain deliverance?"

Man cannot help us. Angels cannot help us—the greatest archangel can do nothing for us. Where shall we find forgiveness? Where is the priceless prize? The mine has it not in its depths. Stars have it not in their brilliance. The floods cannot tell me as they lift up their voice—nor can the hurricane's blast discover to me the profound mystery! It is hidden in the sacred counsels of the Most High. Where it is I know not until, from the very Throne of God, I hear it said, "I am the Substitute." And looking up there, I see, sitting on the Throne, a God and yet a Man—a Man who once was slain! I see His scarred hands and His pierced side. But He is also God and, smiling benignantly, He says, "I have forgiveness, I have pardon—I purchased it with My heart's blood. This precious casket of Divinity was broken open for your souls. I had to die—'the Just for the unjust.' I had to suffer for your sake, excruciating agony, unutterable pains and woes such as you cannot comprehend." And can I say that this amazing Grace is mine? Has he enrolled my worthless name in the Covenant of His Grace? Do I see the blood-mark on the writ of my pardon? Do I know that He purchased it with such a price? And shall I

refuse to say, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”? No! I must and will exult, for I have found this jewel before which earth’s diadems do pale and lose their luster! I have found this “pearl of great price” and I must and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus’ sake, for having found this indescribable blessing which could not be bought except with the precious blood of Jesus, I must shout again, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.”—

**“Happy the man to whom his God
No more imputes his sin
But, washed in the Redeemer’s blood,
Has made his garments clean!”**

It would be well for you, Christian, if you would often review this mercy and see how it was purchased for you. If you would go to Gethsemane and see where the bloody clots lie thick upon the ground. If you would then take your journey across that bitter brook of Kedron and go to Gabbatha and see your Savior with His hair plucked by the persecutors, with His cheeks made moist with the spittle of His enemies, with His back lacerated by the deep furrows of knotted whips and Himself in agony, emaciated, tormented—then if you would stand at Calvary and watch Him dying, “the Just for the unjust”—and having seen these bitter torments, remember that these were but little compared with His inward soul-anguish, then you would come away and say, “Blessed, yes, *thrice blessed* is the man who has thus been loved of Jesus and purchased with His blood! ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.’”

Another thing concerning this blessing of justification is not only its immense value and its unpurchasableness, but *its coming to us instantaneously*. You know it is a Doctrine that has been taught by Divines long enough and taught in Scripture that justification is an instantaneous act. The moment God gives me faith, I become justified and, being justified by faith, I have peace with God! It takes no time to accomplish this miracle of mercy. Sanctification is a lifelong work, continuously effected by the Holy Spirit, but justification is done in an instant! It is as complete the moment a sinner believes as when he stands before the Eternal! Is it not a marvelous thing that one moment should make you clean? We love the physician who speedily heals. If you find a skillful physician who can heal you of a sad disease even in years, you go to him and are thankful. But suppose you hear of some wondrous man who, with a touch, could heal you—who, with the very glance of his eyes, could stanch that flow of blood, or cure that deadly disease and make you well at once? Would you not go to him and feel that he was, indeed, a great physician? So is it with Christ. There may be a man standing over there with all his sins upon his head, yet he may be justified—complete in Christ, without a sin—freed from its damning power, delivered from all his guilt and iniquity in one single instant! It is a marvelous thing beyond our power of comprehension! God pardons the man and he goes away that same instant perfectly justified—as the

publican did when he prayed, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” and received the mercy for which he prayed.

But one of the greatest blessings about this mercy is that *it is irreversible*. The irreversible nature of justification is that which makes it so lovely in the eyes of God’s people. We are justified and pardoned, but then the mercy is that we can never be unpardoned—we can never again be condemned! Those who are opponents of this glorious Doctrine may say what they please, but we know better than to suppose that God ever pardons a man and then punishes him afterwards. We would not think the Queen would give a criminal a free and full pardon and then, in the course of a few years, have him executed. Oh, no! I thank God that I can say and that each of the Lord’s believing people can say—

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

It is complete pardon that Jesus gives—for that which is to come, as well as for that which is past—

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

God never did anything by halves. He speaks a man into a justified condition and He will never speak him out of it again! Nor can that man ever be cast away. O God, do any persons teach that men can be quickened by the Spirit and yet that the quickening Spirit has not power enough to keep them alive? Do they teach that You first forgive and then condemn? Do they teach that Christ stands Surety for a man and yet that the man may afterwards be damned? Let them teach so if they will, but we “have not so learned Christ.” We cannot use words so dishonorable to the blessed Savior, so derogatory to His Deity! We believe that if He stood as our Substitute, it was an actual, real, effectual deed and that we are positively delivered thereby. We believe that if He did pay the penalty for our sin, God cannot by any means exact it twice! We believe and teach that if He did discharge our debt, it is discharged! That if our sin was imputed to Christ, it cannot also be imputed to us. We say, before all men, that Heaven itself cannot accuse the sons of God of any sin! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect,” if God has justified and Christ has died? Ah, Christian! You may well stand and wonder at this mighty justification—to think that you are so pardoned that you never can be condemned! That all the powers in Hell cannot condemn you! That nothing which can happen can destroy you! That you have a pardon that you can plead in the Day of Judgment and that will stand as valid, then, as now! Oh, it is a glorious and gracious thing! Go, you who believe in another gospel and seek comfort in it if you will, but yours is not the justification of the blessed God! When He justifies, He justifies forever and nothing can separate us from His love!

II. This is the mercy itself. Now I turn to the second point. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” BECAUSE THAT MERCY BRINGS EVERYTHING ELSE WITH IT.

When I know that I am pardoned, then I can say that all things are mine! I can look back to the dark past and all things there are mine. I can look at the present and all things here are mine. I can look into the deep future and all things there are mine. Back in eternity, I see God unrolling the mighty scroll of the Book of Life and lo, in that volume I read my name! It must be there, for I am pardoned—and whom He calls, He had first predestinated. And whom He pardons, He had first elected. When I see that Covenant roll, I say, “It is mine.” And all the great books of God’s eternal purposes and infinite decrees are mine. And what Christ did upon the Cross is mine. The past is mine! The revolutions of all past ages have worked for the good of myself and my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Standing in the present, I see Divine Providence and that is mine. Its various circumstances are working together for the good of all the chosen people of God. Its very wheels—though high and wonderful—are working, wheel within wheel, to produce some great and grand effect which shall be for the general good of the Church of Christ! Afflictions are mine to sanctify me—a hot furnace where my dross is taken away. Prosperity is mine to comfort me—a sweet garden where I lie down to be refreshed in this weary journey. All the promises of God are mine. What though this Bible is the prince of books—what though each letter is a drop of honey and it is filled with sweetness—there is not a precious text here which is not mine if I am a Believer in Christ! There is not a promise which I may not say is my own, for all is mine! All these present things I may take without fear, for they are my Father’s gift to me, a portion of my heritage.

I rejoice also to know that all the future is mine, whatever that future may be. I know that in the future there shall come an hour when, at God’s command, the long pent-up fires of earth shall start up from between her brazen ribs—her mountains shall be dissolved and the earth shall pass away. But even this last great conflagration is mine! I know that on a certain day I shall stand before the judgment bar of Christ—but that Judgment Day is mine! I fear it not, I dread it not. I know that soon I must die, but the River of Death is mine! It is mine to wash me, that I may leave the dust of earth behind. It is a glorious river though its waters may be tinged with blackness, for it takes its rise in the mountains of love, hard by the Throne of God! And then after death there will come the resurrection and that resurrection is mine! In a perfect body, clear as the sun and fair as the moon, I shall live in Paradise! And then whatever there is in Heaven is mine! If there is a city with azure light and with jasper walls—it is mine. What though there are palaces there of crystal and of gold that sparkle so as to dim poor mortal eyes. What though there are delights above even the dream of the voluptuary. What though there are pleasures which heart and flesh cannot conceive and which even spirit itself cannot fully enjoy—the very intoxication of

bliss! What though there are sublimities unlawful for us to utter and wonders which mortal men cannot grasp. What though God in Heaven does unravel His Glory to make His people blessed—all is mine! The crown is bright and glorious, but it is mine, for I am pardoned! Though I may have been the chief of sinners and the vilest of the vile, if God shall justify me tonight, all things in Heaven are mine, however glorious, bright, majestic and sublime! Oh, is not this a wondrous mercy? Verily, as we consider what comes with the mercy, we must say, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

III. We would that time and bodily strength permitted us to dilate upon this wide subject, but we must pass on to the last point. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” BECAUSE IT MAKES HIM BLESSED BY THE EFFECTS IT HAS UPON HIS MIND.

What glorious *peace* it brings to a man when he first knows himself to be justified! The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Some of you in this chapel do not know what peace means. You never had any real, satisfactory peace. “What?” you say, “never had any peace when we have been happy and merry and joyous?” Let me ask you, when the morning has appeared after your evening of mirth, could you look back upon it with joy? Could any one of you look back upon it and say, “I rejoice in these unbridled revellings. I always find such laughter productive of a sweet calm to my heart”? No, you could not unless you are utterly hardened in heart. I challenge you to tell me what fruit you have ever gathered from those things of which you are now ashamed. You know that you have not had any true peace. When alone in your chamber and a leaf fell, or some little insect buzzed in the furthest corner, you trembled like the leaves of the aspen and thought perhaps the angel of death was there with a dreary omen! Or, passing from the haunts of fashion, you have walked along some lonely road in solitude and your disordered fancy has conjured up all sorts of demons. You had no peace and you have no peace now, for you are at war with the Omnipotent, you are lifting your puny hands against the Most High God, you are warring against the King of Heaven, rebels against His government and guilty of high treason against the Eternal Majesty! Oh, that you did but know what true peace is—“the peace of God which passes all understanding”!

I compare not the peaceful mind to a lake without a ripple—such a figure would be quite inadequate. The only comparison I can find is in that unbroken tranquility which seems to reign in the deep caverns and grottoes of the sea—far down where the sailor’s body lies, where the seashells rest undisturbed, where there is nothing but darkness and where nothing can break the spell—for there are no currents there and all is still—that is somewhat like the Christian’s soul when God speaks peace to him. There may be billows on the surface and by these he may be sometimes ruffled, but inside his heart there will be no ebb or flow. He will have a peace that is too deep to fathom, too perfect for the ungodly to conceive—for none but they who prove it know what it is. Such peace

that tonight you could lay your head down to sleep with the knowledge that you would never wake again in this world as calmly as you could if you knew your days were to be, like Hezekiah's, lengthened out for 15 years! When we have peace with God we can lie down and if an angel visited us to say, "Soul, your Master calls you," we could reply, "Tell my Master that I am ready." And if grim Death were to come stalking to our bedside and were to say, "The pitcher is about to be broken at the fountain, and the wheel to be broken at the cistern," we might answer, "We are quite prepared. We are not afraid. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace here and we are glad to go and have that peace consummated up yonder in the better world." Could you all say that? Some of you know that you could not. If I were to go round this building and ask you, you would have to say, "No. I am not at peace with God. I am afraid to die, for I do not know that my sins are blotted out." Well, poor Soul, at any rate you will say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." You know that *he* is blessed, though you are not yourself blessed—and you feel that *you* would be blessed indeed if you could once get your sin covered and your transgression forgiven.

Justification not only gives peace, it also gives *joy*. And this is something even more blessed. Peace is the flowing of the brook, but joy is the dashing of the waterfall when the brook is filled, bursts its banks and rushes down the rocks! Joy is something that we can know and esteem—and justification brings us joy. Oh, have you ever seen the justified man when he is first justified? I have often told you what I myself felt when first I realized that I was pardoned through the blood of Christ. I had been sad and miserable for months and even years—but when I once received the message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," verily I could have leapt for joy of heart, for I felt then that I understood the meaning of that text, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

I remember hearing Dr. Alexander Fletcher, when speaking to children, tell them a simple anecdote in order to illustrate the joy of a man when he gets delivered from sin. He said, "I saw on the pavement three or four little chimney-sweeps jumping about and throwing up their heels in great delight. And I asked them, 'My boys, why are you making all this demonstration?' 'Ah,' they said, 'if you had been locked up for three months, you would do the same when you once got out of prison.'" I thought it a good illustration and we cannot wonder that people are joyous and glad when, after being long shut up in the prison of the law, all sad and miserable, they have felt their bonds broken, seen the door of the jail opened and obtained a legal discharge! What cared they, then, about trials and troubles, or anything else? The heart seems scarcely big enough to hold their joy and it bursts out so that they hardly know what to do or to say! Thus it is at that wondrous hour which comes but once in a Christian's life—when he first feels himself delivered, when God for

the first time says to him, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” I verily think that hour is a fragment of eternity cut off and given us here! I am sure it is a foretaste of the happiness at God’s right hand! It is a day of Heaven upon earth, that blessed day when God first gives us a knowledge of our own justification! Heaven’s bliss itself can scarcely exceed it! We seem to drink of the very wine that saints in Glory quaff. We need nothing else—what more can we desire? “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”—it gives him joy and it gives him peace.

Have you ever noticed one thing that I must mention here? If you have ever had a great trouble, you have found that it has swallowed up all little troubles. Suppose the captain of a ship finds something on deck that is not quite right? He fidgets and worries himself about this, that and the other. And soon a great storm arises. Big clouds appear and the winds begin to whistle through the cordage. The sails are torn and now the ship is driving before the wind over mountains and into valleys of water. He fears the ship will be wrecked and that he will be lost. What cares he now for the little things on deck, or the furniture of the cabin, or such things as those? “Never mind about those things,” he says, “the ship is in danger of being lost.” Suppose the cook should run up and say, “I am afraid, Sir, the dinner will be spoiled.” What does he say? “The ship,” he says, “may be lost, and that is of much more consequence than the dinner.” So is it with you! If you once get into real trouble on account of your souls, you will not fret much about the little troubles you have here, for they will all be swallowed up by the one giant alarm. And if you get this everlasting joy into your souls, it will be much the same—it will consume all your smaller joys and griefs. That joy will be like Moses’ rod which ate up all the serpents that the magicians produced before Pharaoh—it will eat up all other joys! It will be enough for you if you can say—

***“I’m forgiven! I’m forgiven!
I’m a miracle of Grace!”***

That is a nice little house of yours. Well, be thankful for it, but yet you can say, “If I had not got it, I should be a happy man.” You have a certain property. Thank God for it, but yet you can say, “If I had not got it, I should be happy in my poverty.” You remember what the poor slave said, “Ah, it’s all very well for you freemen to find fault with your lot. Give me freedom and I would need nothing more! Give me freedom and I will gladly live on crusts and drink water—only let me know that I am free—that is all that I desire. Let me stand on God’s free soil and feel that no man can say, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet that I am his, and I will be happy.” The slave says so, and so may you. If you can but feel yourself justified. If you know that you are delivered, that you are, indeed, pardoned, that you are beyond the clutches of the Law of God, you can rejoice that you know and feel the truth of the saying, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

Now let me ask, in conclusion, *How many such blessed men and women are there here tonight?* How long shall I give you to answer the question? I wish formal preaching were done away with and that we had a little more talking to one another. I wish to lay the formalities of the pulpit aside and talk to you as if you were in your own houses. That, I believe, is the true kind of preaching. Let me inquire, then, how many of you, my Friends, can claim the title of “blessed” because you are justified? Well, I think I can see one Brother who puts his hands together, and says—

**“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing.”**

“I know I am forgiven.” My Brother, I rejoice to hear you speak thus confidently. But I come to another and I ask—What about you, my Friend? “Ah, Sir! I cannot say as much as that Brother did, but I hope I am justified.” What ground have you for your hope? You know that we cannot properly hope unless we have some grounds for our hope—what are your grounds? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? “Yes,” you say, “I do believe on Him.” Why, then, do you say, “I *hope* I am justified”? Dear Brother or Sister, you *know*, if you really believe on Christ! You have no need to talk about *hope* where you may be certain! And it is always better to use words of confidence when you can. Keep your head as high as you may, for you will find troubles enough to drag it down.

The next one replies—

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

I have heard a great deal said against that hymn, but I have myself had occasion to sing it sometimes, so I cannot find much fault with it. That state of mind is all very well if it lasts a little while, though not if it lasts a long time and a man is always saying, “I long to know,” or, “I am afraid.” Paul says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” You would not always have this anxiety if you were brought to realize your justification in the sight of God. You may have it sometimes, “when the eye of faith is dim,” but I do not like to see people contenting themselves with any measure of faith short of that which apprehends full redemption! Do not let me distress the weak ones of the flock, for I often say—

**“Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment can never boast—
To His name eternal praises,
None of them shall ever be lost.”**

Their names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life before the world was made! But if any of you are always in distress and doubt, if you never did at any time feel confident, you should begin to be apprehensive, for I think you should now and then get a little higher. You may pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death sometimes but, surely, sometimes the Spirit of God will also carry you up to the top of the mountain that is called, “Clear.” Yet, if you are still dwelling on this point, “I long to know,”

are you not anxious to settle the question? Suppose you do not belong to Christ? Put it in that way—for, in a doubtful case, it is best to look at the worst side—suppose you do not love the Lord? Nevertheless you are a sinner. You feel that you are a sinner, do you not? God has convinced you that you are a sinner. Well, as long as you can claim sinnership, you can go to His feet! If you cannot go as a saint, you can go as a sinner! What a mercy this is! It is enough to save us from despair. Even if our evidence of *saintship* seems clean gone, we have not lost our *sinner'ship*! And the Scripture still says, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And while it says that, we will hang on it!

Another one says, “I don’t know whether I am justified and I don’t care much about it.” Let me tell you, Sir, when you *will* care. When you come near your end, young man, you will care then! You may think you can live very well without Christ, but you cannot afford to *die* without Him! You can stand very securely at present, but death will shake your confidence. Your tree may be fair to look at now, but when the great testing wind comes, if it has not its roots in the Rock of Ages, down it must come! You may think your worldly pleasures good, but they will then turn bitter as wormwood to your taste—worse than gall shall be the daintiest of your drinks when you shall come to the bottom of your poisoned bowl!

But there is another who says, “I wish I were justified, but I feel that I am too great a sinner.” Now I like to hear the first part of your speech, but the last is very bad. To say that you are bad is right—I know you are. You say you are vile and that is true enough and I hope you mean it. Do not be like some men of whom I have read. There was a monk who on a certain occasion described himself as being as great a hypocrite as Judas. And a gentleman at once said, “I knew it long ago! You are just the fellow I always thought you were.” But up jumped the monk and said, “Don’t you be saying such things as those about me.” His humility was feigned, not felt. Thus people may make such a general confession as this, “We are all sinners,” who would resist any special charge brought home to their consciences, however true it might be. Say to such an one, “You are a rogue,” and he replies, “No, I’m not a rogue.” “What are you, then? Are you a liar?” “Oh, no!” “Are you a Sabbath-breaker?” “No, nothing of the kind.” And so, when you come to sift the matter, you find them sheltering themselves under the general term, sinner, not to make confession, but to evade it! This is very different from a real conviction of sin.

But if you feel yourself to be a real, actual sinner, remember that you are not too bad to be saved, because it is written in Scripture that Christ came to save sinners and that means that He came to save *you*, because you are a sinner! And I will preach it everywhere, without limitation, that if a man knows himself to be a sinner, Jesus Christ died for him, for that is the evidence that Christ came to save him! Let the sinner, then, believe on Jesus as his Savior! Let the “outcasts” come to Jesus, for the Psalmist

says, "He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." There is an outcast here tonight. There is a backslider over there who has been cut off from the Church years ago. Behold his sad plight. As Achish said of David, "He has made his people Israel utterly to abhor him: therefore he shall be my servant forever." But he escaped and you shall yet escape! The prey shall not be taken from the Mighty! The lawful captive shall not be taken from Jesus Christ! The Captain of our salvation conquered his soul once, and He will yet save it.

But another says, "I never was a member of a church and I am afraid I never shall be. I am a hardened sinner, a reprobate." Well, do you confess it? Then hear the word of the Lord—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." "He that believes"—that is, he that believes *on* Jesus and *in* Jesus. He that casts himself on Christ. Our hymn bids us "venture" on Christ, but that is not right—there is no venturing, it is all safe—he who trusts himself on Christ—throws himself flat on Sovereign Mercy—"He that believes"—notice what follows, "and is baptized." Baptism is to come afterwards, not for salvation, but as a profession of his faith—he that with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses—"He that believes and is baptized—shall be saved! And he that believes *not* shall be damned." I dare not leave any word out, whatever any of my Brothers may do. Whether a man is baptized or not, if he does not believe, he shall be damned. But the word, "baptized," is not put into the last sentence because the Holy Spirit saw there was no necessity for it, for He knew if the ordinance were correctly administered, no person who did not believe would be baptized! So it was the same thing as saying, "He that believes not shall be damned."

Oh, may God grant that you may never know the meaning of that last dreadful word, but may you know what it is to be saved by Divine Grace!

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

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

A CHEERING CONGRATULATION NO. 3563

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

*“Blessed is he who transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.”
Psalm 32:1.*

MEN have, all of them, their own ideals of blessedness. Those ideals are often altogether contrary to the sayings which our Savior uttered in His Sermon on the Mount. They count those to be blessed who are strong in health, who are abundant in riches, who are honored with fame, who are entrusted with command, who exercise power—those, in fact, who are distinguished in the eyes of their fellow creatures! Yet I find not such persons called, “blessed,” in God’s Word, but oftentimes humble souls who might excite pity rather than envy, are congratulated upon the blessings which they are heirs to and which they shall soon enjoy. To the penitent there is no voice so pleasant as that of pardon! God, who cannot lie—who cannot err—tells us what it is to be blessed. Here He declares that, “blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.” *This is an oracle not to be disputed. Forgiven sin is better than accumulated wealth.* The remission of sin is infinitely to be preferred before all the glitter and the glare of this world’s prosperity. The gratification of creature passions and earthly desires is illusive—a shadow and a fiction—but the blessedness of the justified, the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness is substantial and true! How apt we are to say in our hearts, “Would God Adam had never fallen, for blessed must be the man who never sinned!” Could any man have attained to a perfect life which deserved commendation at God’s hands, blessedness would surely glow around him like a halo! At his feet the earth would blossom! In his nostrils the air would breathe sweet odors and his ears would be regaled with the sweet singing of birds—“content, indeed, to sojourn while he must, below the skies, but having there his home.” Such a man would feel and find the beams of brightness playing over the entire expanse of life and the thrill of gladness filling his heart with unbroken peace! The mountains and hills would break forth into singing and all the trees of the field would clap their hands, to multiply his inlets to happiness. But it is not of such imaginary bliss that our sacred Psalmist loves to sing, because, however true, it would be a mere mockery to tell us, who are so deeply fallen, of sweet delights that those, alone, could know who never fell! Our time of probation is over. We of mortal race were proved, tried and condemned long ago. It is not possible, now, for us to have the blessedness of uncorrupted innocence. And yet, thank God, blessedness is still possible to us, sinners though we are! We may

hear the voice of the Ever Blessed of God pronouncing us to be blessed! His mercy can secure to us what our merit could never have earned, for so it is written, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." May everyone of us partake of this blessedness and know and rejoice in the full assurance of it!

Now the observations I address to you shall be very simple. But if they come home to us as true, and we can grasp them with a lively faith, they will be none the less gratifying to us because they seem common.

I. EVIDENTLY THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD—TRANSGRESSION MAY BE FORGIVEN.

It is spoken of here, not as a flight of fancy, or a poetic dream. It is not an imaginary or a possible circumstance, but it is described as a fact that does occur, and has been the happy lot of some who knew its sweet relief and felt its strange felicity—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Do take the words with all their weight of meaning, for though taught in our catechisms, embodied in our creeds, and admitted in our ordinary conversation on religious subjects, the belief in the forgiveness of sins is not always sincere and hearty. When the guilt of sin is felt and the burden of sin grows heavy—and when the wound stinks and is corrupt, as the Psalmist says—we are very apt to doubt the possibility of pardon, or, at least, of our own pardon. Under deep conviction of sin and a sense of the peculiar heinousness of our own guilt, there is a haze and more than a haze—a thick fog which hides the light of this Doctrine from our view! We think all men pardonable except ourselves. We can believe in the Doctrine of Forgiveness of Sin for blasphemers, for thieves, for drunkards, even for murderers—but there is some particular aggravation in the sins which we have committed that appear to us to admit of no place of repentance, to find no promise of absolution. So, writing bitter things against ourselves, we become our own accusers and our own judges—and seem as if we would even become our own executioners! In our distraction we are thus prone to doubt that our transgression can be forgiven.

And, Beloved, I am not sure that those of us who are saved do not, sometimes, have misgivings about this grand Truth of God. Although I know that I am saved in Christ, yet at times when I look back upon my life, and especially dwell upon some dark blots which God has forgiven, but for which I can never forgive myself—the question comes across me, "Is it so? *Is that really blotted out? It was so, crimson, So scarlet—can it be that the spot is entirely gone?*" We know that being washed in the blood of Christ, we are whiter than snow, but it is not always that our faith can realize the forgiveness of sins while our heart and conscience are revolving the flagrancy of their guilt. It should not be so! We ought to be able to bear, at one and the same time, a vision of sin in all its horror and a full view of the Sacrifice for sin in all its holiness and acceptance to God! We ought to be able to feel that we are guilty, weak, lost and ruined, yet to believe that Christ is not only able to save to the very uttermost, but that He *has saved us*—we ought to be able to confess our crimes while we

cast ourselves without a question into His blessed arms! I trust that we can do this, but, alas, a fly may find its way into the sweetest pot of ointment! A little folly may taint a good reputation and an unworthy doubt may tarnish the purest faith—so it may be profitable to remind even the forgiven man that forgiveness of sin is possible, that forgiveness of sin is presented in the Gospel as a Covenant Blessing, that forgiveness of sin is the possession of every Believer in Jesus, that his sin has gone entirely and irreversibly and that for him all manner of sin has been forgiven, blotted out and put away through the precious blood of Jesus, seeing that he has believed in God's great propitiatory Sacrifice!

Perhaps there has strolled into this sanctuary tonight some professing Christian who, though a true child of God, has foully stained his profession. It may be, my dear Friend, that in your weakness, and to your shame—and to your confusion of face—you have forsaken God and have fallen into sin. You knew better, you who have instructed others, you who would have denounced such conduct with great severity in your fellow creatures, have fallen into the transgression, yourself, and now you are conscious that both the sin and its results are very bitter. You are smarting under the rod, your bones have been sorely broken and, perhaps, while I am speaking, it seems as if my words were putting them out of joint again where there had been a little healing! Beloved Brother or Sister in Christ, if your sin is a public sin, a grievous sin, a black and foul sin—if it is a sin which conscience cannot for a moment tolerate, a sin which God's people must detest, even though it is in you who are dear to them, let me entreat you not to suffer the deceitfulness of sin to drive you to despair! In the anguish of remorse, do not shun the Mercy Seat! *Doubt not that the Lord is still ready to pardon you. Let not Satan persuade you that you have sinned a sin which is unto death!* No, come to the Cross of Christ! The blood of Jesus was real and it was really shed to wash away real sin, not sin in the abstract, as we talk of it here, but sin in the concrete as you have committed it—such sin as yours—no, *your* sin, that special sin, that degrading sin, that sin which you are ashamed to mention! That sin which makes you now, even at the very thought of it, hang your head and blush. Know of a truth that your sin is pardonable! Do you ask me why I draw this inference from my text? I answer that it was penned by David when his crimes were complicated, his character corrupted and his case seemed beyond the possibility of a cure! “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God!” Whatever your sin may have been, it can scarcely have exceeded his in atrocity! You know how he added sin to sin—you know how high he stood and how low he sunk—and you know how sweetly he could sing, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.” It shines forth more clearly, now, than ever it shone before! Sin is pardonable! The Lord God is merciful and gracious! Hear the heavenly invitation, “Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Hear Jeho-

vah's voice out of Heaven, "I, even I, am He that blots out your iniquities for My name's sake: I will not remember your sins."

With such a peerless proclamation of perfect pardon we leave this point. We trust, however, that you will not leave it till you have proved its preciousness and its power.

Observe now that the pardon being proved, the—

II. BLESSEDNESS MAY BE ENJOYED.

So much sadness comes from a sense of sin that it is not easy for a penitent to regard pleasure as within his reach, or for a criminal to imagine that cheerfulness can become his habitual condition. How have I heard a man say, "Were God to forgive me, I do not think I could be happy, such is my sin that though it should be put away, the memory would haunt me, the disgrace would distract me—my own conscience would confound me, I never could blend with the blessed ones." Is not this just what the prodigal said, "I am not worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants"? He could not think so well of his father as to suppose that he could receive him again into his affections as his child and, therefore, he would be content to take the yoke of *service*, and to be a hired servant of his father's. Not a servant born in the house, though these were common enough among the Jews—but a hired servant, willing to be even with the lowest class of servants—so that he might but live in his father's house! I know that this is often the feeling of humble souls, but look at the text and observe the blessed Truth of God which it teaches. *You may not only be forgiven, my dear Friends, but you may enjoy, notwithstanding your past sin, blessedness on earth!* Oh, look up through those tears! They can all be wiped away! Or should they continue to flow in a long life of penitence, if they do but fall upon the Savior's feet, which you would gladly wash with the tears of your affection and wipe with the hairs of your head, you shall find those tears to be precious drops! Though evangelical repentance may be compared to bitter herbs in one respect, to be eaten lamenting, yet in another respect there is no Grace as sweet as repentance! In Heaven, it is true, they do not repent, but here on earth it well becomes the saints. It is sweet here below to sit and weep one's heart away in sorrow for sin at the foot of the Cross of Christ, saying, "with my tears, His feet I bathe." And although we shall have done with it when we reach those blissful shores, until then, repentance shall be the occupation of our lives!

But, dear Friends, you may suppose that as sincere repentance always leads to great searching of heart, it cannot be blessed—yet it really is so. Repentance, as we have already said, is a sweet Grace. You remember that the prodigal shed his tears, his best tears, in his father's bosom, when he put his face, as it were, close to his father's heart, and sobbed out, "Father, I have sinned!" Oh, what a place for repentance is the bosom of God, with His love shed abroad in the heart, making you contrite and moving you to say, "How could I have sinned against so good a God? How could I be an enemy to One who is so full of Grace? How could I run away and spend my substance with harlots, when here was my Father's

deep care for my welfare? How could I choose their base love, when a love so pure, so true, so constant, was waiting for me?" Oh, it is a holy sorrow that has a clear life ensuing and I tell you that, however deep your repentance may be, it shall not stand in the way of your being blessed, but shall even prove to be one contributory stream to the blessedness of your experience!

Does the memory of your sins haunt you, and do you feel that you shall always hang your head as one whom pardon could not purge? Not thus did the Apostle Paul reflect on his many sins. Though he bewailed the wickedness of his heart, and was ashamed of the evil he had done, yet his humility after he was converted took the form of gratitude, cheering his very soul with the most lively impulse! While confessing that he was the very chief of sinners, at the same time and in the same breath he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Conscious of his own infirmities, he could exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet, confident of his full redemption, he could add, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Moreover, hurling defiance at all his accusers, he asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" No bolder or more triumphant champion of Divine Grace than that Apostle who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious—but now rejoices to bear record, "I obtained mercy that, in me, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." What? Though your past offenses are ever so rank, and your present shame should sting you with ever so much poignant sorrow, yet with thrills of bliss you shall prove the full blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!

I think I hear one say, "*Few men have fallen more deeply into sin than I have.*" If converted, I might be pointed out as an illustrious monument of Divine Grace. Yet, what with vanities which have matured into vices, and passing follies which have grown into positive evil habits, it is not likely I should ever attain the same eminence in Grace as those who were trained from childhood in the sanctuary and never lived a dissolute life, or risked a desperate death, as I have done." Let me assure you that this is a great fallacy! The heights of Glory are now open to those who once plunged into the depths of sin. Say not, slave of Satan, that you cannot be a soldier of the Cross! You can be a heroic soldier! You may win a crown of victory. Why *need* you be weak in faith? You cannot be languid in love. Great sinner as you are, you have in this, a sort of advantage—you will love much because you have had much forgiven you. Surely, if your love is warmer than that of others, you have the mainspring of zeal, the mightiest force within to mold your future course! Instead of being less than others, you should seek to outdo them all, not out of carnal emulation, but out of holy strife. I counsel you, poor Sinner, when you come to Christ, do not try to hide yourself in some obscure corner, but

come to the light, that you may have near and intimate fellowship with your Lord. For the love you have to Him, show kindness to His lambs. By your generosity to His disciples, show your gratitude to the Master. Grudge no service. Be ready to spend and to be spent—yield yourself a living sacrifice to Him who redeemed you from your sins and restored you to His favor.

I liked what one said to me today when I was seeing enquirers who are seeking membership with us. “By God’s Grace,” he said, “I will try to make up for lost time.” Let this be your resolve, dear Friends! If you are called by Grace when the day is far spent and the time in which you can hope to serve your Lord is getting brief, do not waste an opportunity, but engage with all your heart and soul in the work of faith and labor of love for the Lord Jesus! Some of us were called at the first or second hour of the day and while we were yet children, we found some employment in the vineyard. Still, we cannot serve Christ as we would. Oh I wish I had a thousand tongues that I might proclaim His love, and could live a thousand lives to proclaim His Grace among the sons of men! But as for you, whose time must, in the course of nature, be so short—you who have given so much of your lives to Satan—do not let Christ now be put off with the little end, but give him the very best of your love, the fat of your sacrifice, the strength and soul of your being!

And as to the matter of enjoyment, I cannot believe for a moment that when a great sinner is blessed with a great pardon, he should fail to have the fullness of joy which so Divine a benefit must properly excite. My observation has been that the joy of those who have been graciously forgiven after having greatly transgressed, rather exceeds than falls short of the joy of such as are more gradually brought into Gospel liberty! Oh, no, my Master will not adjudge you to take a second rank!

He who was by birth an alien, and in open rebellion an enemy to God, shall have all the rights of citizenship and partake of all the privileges of the saints! Not he who, like Samuel, was lighted on his couch in childhood by the lamps of the sanctuary, is more welcome at the Father’s board than the returning prodigal! Such blessedness is in store for some of you. You have fallen. You have lost your character. You have stifled the voice of your own conscience. You have forfeited all title to self-respect. But by Christ, redeemed, in Christ, restored, this infinite blessedness shall be your portion! Have you been put out of the Church? Have your Brothers and Sisters been compelled to withdraw from fellowship with you because of your flagrant sin? Have you been convicted of a crime and suffered a term of imprisonment? There is yet a blessedness possible to you! There may have strayed in here one who from the fold has wandered very far. Though you have forfeited your good name, I simply and sincerely point out to you the means whereby you may yet transform your blighted life into a blessed life! Glory to God and peace to your own soul shall immediately follow your trust in the Sacrifice of Christ! “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Seems it not to you that this is the very fountain of all blessings? You

come here to the stream head, to the source of the great wide river of mercies! Those of you, therefore, who believe in the forgiveness of sins should not be satisfied till you have the title deeds, enjoy the possession, and revel in the blessedness of this reconciliation to God! “If I am a Christian,” said a Sister to me hesitantly. “But I do not like that ugly ‘if,’” she added—“I must get rid of it.” So she prayed the Lord, “Let there be no ‘if’ between me and You.” I would have you pray in like manner. Oh, those horrible, “ifs”! They are spiritual mosquitoes that sting and harass us—they are like stones in our shoes—you cannot travel with them. Hear what David says—“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Still enlarging upon our last point, rather than venturing on to anything fresh, observe—

III. THAT THE STATE OF FORGIVENESS IS EVIDENTLY A STATE OF BLESSEDNESS IF WE REMEMBER THE CONTRAST IT INVOLVES.

Ask the sinner, conscious of his guilt and its penalty, who is bemoaning himself and crying out—“God, be merciful to me a sinner!”—what would you think if your condition could be changed and your conscience cleansed by one line of the pen, or by one word of the lips that can pronounce a pardon? Would not that be blessed beyond wishful thought or wakeful dream? “Oh,” you say, “I would count no penance too severe, no sacrifice too costly, if I might but get my sins cancelled, forgiven and completely obliterated!” Look at poor Christian, wringing his hands, sighing and crying. Why was it? He needed to have his burden taken off. Had you spoken to him, he would have told you he was willing to go through floods and flames if he could get relief from his burden and be clean rid of it. Seeing how every anxious soul longs for forgiveness, clearly it must be a state to be greatly desired, and those who do attain it find it to be full of gladness, delight and rejoicing! It is, indeed, blessed to have sin forgiven, but, oh, how wretched to face its infamy, to feel its malignity, to fear its terrible penalty! Witness a soul in despair—that is a dreadful sight! I think I would sooner walk 50 miles than see a despairing soul! I have seen several such shut up in the iron cage. You may talk, talk, talk and try to give some cheer, but it is of no use. No promises can comfort. The Gospel, itself, seems to have no charm. Were you to put the question to a despairing soul, “Would it be a blessed thing to have sin forgiven?” sharp, quick, and decided would the answer be. Not the lips only—the heart would express itself in every muscle of the face, in every limb of the body—the nerves all tingling with joy, the eyes shining with gleams of Heaven!

Ask dying sinners, stung with remorse at the memory of their lives, and filled with dread at the prospect of the future, whether it is not a blessed thing to have sins forgiven. Through they may have trifled up to now, the hour of death forbids dissembling. Now the vanities of time pass like a shadow and the realities of eternity come up like a spectra. “*Too late!*” they cry. “*Too late!* Had we but fled to Christ before! Had we but

turned our eyes to Him in years gone by, then hope would have cheered us in this extremity!" But it is not death they dread so much as the after-death—not present dissolution, but (shall I say it?) the damnation that may follow. Unforgiven sin! Who can paint the sentence it must meet? Could we peer into that world where wicked spirits are tormented always and forever, and there ask the question, "Would it be a blessed thing to be forgiven?" Ah, you can guess the answer. I pray you, Friend, tempt not the terror for yourself. Trifle not with kind entreaty—know that 'tis treason to do so! The pardon spurned will recoil on your own head. You will bewail in everlasting misery the mercy that, through your willfulness, was unavailing. Blessed must he be whose sins are forgiven, for it enables him to escape from the horrible doom of the impenitent!

But you shall have a witness nearer at hand. You know, as a fact recorded in the Gospels, that *the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins*. You know, too, from the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles, that His Name—by faith in His Name—is invested with the same power. By the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one may hear now, as in days of yore, a voice of Divine Authority saying, "Your sins are forgiven you; go in peace." It was only last week I met with one who had been forgiven on the previous Sunday. The sweet relief, the calm belief and the true blessedness of that man was such that you could see it flashing from his eyes and animating every faculty of his being! The whole man was so full of joy that he did not know how to contain himself! The drift of all his conversation was, "I have found Christ! I have laid hold on eternal life! I have trusted in Jesus! I am saved!" His joy, though uttered in part, was unutterable! I sympathized in his ecstasy, remembering that it was so with me. I wanted to tell everybody that Christ was precious—and was able to save! Oh, yes, the young convert is a good witness, though the old Christian is quite as good! It is a blessed thing to have had 50 years' enjoyment of the forgiveness of sin! I have half a mind to call some of our venerable friends up here to bear their witness. I am sure they would not stammer—or had they lost the power of ready speech through infirmity of this flesh, their testimony would be sound and vigorous—for they would tell you unhesitatingly how blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! I wish I had time to show you that forgiveness of sin is not only blessed of itself, but—

IV. ALL THE FORGIVEN HELP TO SWELL THE TIDE OF BLESSING.

A thousand felicities follow in its train! He who *is forgiven is justified, acquitted, vindicated*, sent forth without a stain or blemish on his reputation. He is regenerated, quickened, invigorated and brought into newness of life! More still, he is adopted, initiated into a Divine Family, invested with a new relationship and made heir of a heritage entailed by promise. The work of sanctification begun in him, here, will one day be completely perfected. He who is forgiven was elected from before the foundations of the world. He was redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. For him, Christ stood as his Sponsor, Surety and Substitute at the bar of Justice. To the forgiven man all things have become new. Our Lord Jesus Christ

has raised him up and made him sit in heavenly places with Him. He is even now a son and heir, a child of God, a prince of the blood imperial, a priest and a king who shall reign with Christ forever and ever! He who is washed in the precious blood is favored beyond any words that I can find to express. Ten thousand blessings are his portion. "How precious!" such a pardoned one may exclaim. "How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

But the—

V. BLESSEDNESS OF THE MAN WHOSE TRANSGRESSION IS FORGIVEN, WHOSE SIN IS COVERED, WILL BE MAINLY SEEN IN THE NEXT STATE.

That disembodied spirit, clear of spot or blemish, washed and whitened in the blood of the Lamb, passes without fear into the invisible world. It trembles not, though it appears before the eyes of Justice. No award can come to the forgiven soul except this, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you." We commit the body of the forgiven sinner to the grave in "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection." We give his flesh to be the food of the worms and his skin may rot to dust—but though worms destroy his body—yet in his flesh shall he see God, whom his eyes shall see for himself and not another! I was astonished some little time ago when I heard a good pastor, standing by the coffin of an honored minister, say, "There lies nothing of our Brother." Not so, I thought! The bodies of the saints were purchased by Christ—though flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption, yet there will be such a marvelous change pass over the body of the forgiven sinner that the same body changed, *but still the same body*—shall be reunited with the disembodied spirit to dwell at God's right hand! Listen! Listen! The trumpet sounds! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we can but speak in prose. These great scenes we shall, all of us, see! We shall then think after another fashion. The trumpet sounds! The echo reaches Heaven. Hell startles at the sound to its nethermost domains. This trembling earth is all attention. The sea yields up her dead. A great white cloud comes sailing forth in awful majesty. Upon it there is a Throne, where Jesus sits in state! But his heart has no cause to quake whose sins are all forgiven! Well may the ransomed soul be calm amidst the pomp and pageantry of that tremendous day, for He who sits upon the Throne is the Son of Man, in whose blood we have been washed. Lo! This is the same Jesus who said, "I have forgiven you." He cannot condemn us! We shall find to be our Friend whom others find to be their Judge. Blessed is that man who is forgiven! See him, as with ten thousand times ten thousand others pure as himself and like to himself, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! He ascends to the Celestial City, a perfect man in body and in soul, to dwell forever there! Hark to the acclamations of the ten thousand times ten thousand, the sound of the harpers harping with their harps, and the song that is like great waters. Write yes, write now,

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” But doubly blessed are they, then, that they rise from the dead! Once they were sinners washed in blood, but then, in body and in soul they shall have come, through the precious blood, to see Jesus face to face!

Oh, how I wish that all of us knew this blessedness! Seek it, Friends, seek it! It is to be found. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near.” I am especially encouraged in preaching the Gospel this evening, because I have just been seeing some who have been recently converted. There are hearers of the Gospel among you who have been listening to me for many years. Often have I feared that, in your case, I had labored in vain. But I have great hope, now, concerning some of you. The Lord keeps bringing in the old hearers of eight, nine, and ten years’ standing. Oh, I pray the Lord to save every one of you and bring you into the fold! I do long and pant that I may present you all before my Master’s face with joy! Even should you go and join other churches, and serve the Lord elsewhere, that will cause me no sorrow or regret. But God forbid that any of you should despise mercy, reject the Gospel and die in your sins! May you prove the blessedness of pardon, and then shall we meet, an unbroken congregation, before the Throne of God.

The Lord grant it, for His Name’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:37-42.**

37. *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.* Christ must be first. He herein claims the highest place in every human breast. Could He have done so had He not been Divine? No mere Prophet would talk in this fashion! Yet we are not sensible of the slightest egotism in His speech, neither does it occur to us that He goes beyond His line. We are conscious that the Son of God has a right to speak thus, and only He.

We must earnestly beware of making idols of our dearest ones by loving them more than Jesus. We must never set them near the Throne of our King. We are not worthy to dwell with Christ, above, or even to be associated with Him here, if any earthly object is judged by us to be worthy to rival the Lord Jesus.

Father and mother, son and daughter—we would do anything to please them—but, as opposed to Jesus, they stand nowhere and cannot, for an instant, be allowed to come in the way of our supreme loyalty to our Lord.

38. *And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me.* Here our Lord, for the second time in this Gospel brings in His

death. At first He spoke of being taken from them—but now of the Cross. There is a cross for each one which he may regard as “his cross.” It may be that the cross will not take us up, but we must take it up, by being willing to endure anything or everything for Christ’s sake. We are not to drag the cross after us, but to take it up! “Dragged crosses are heavy; carried crosses grow light.” Bearing the cross, we are to follow after Jesus—to bear a cross without following Christ is a poor affair. A Christian who shuns the cross is not Christian—but a cross-bearer who does not follow Jesus equally misses the mark! Is it not singular that nothing is so essential to make a man worthy of Christ as bearing his cross in His tracks? Yet it is assuredly so. Lord, You have laid a cross upon me—do not permit me to shirk it, or shrink from it!

39. *He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.* If to escape from death, he gives up Christ, and so finds a continuance of this poor mortal life—by that very act he loses true life. He gains the temporal at the expense of the eternal! On the other hand, he who loses life for Christ’s sake does in the highest sense find life, life eternal, life infinitely blessed! He makes the wisest choice who lays down his life for Jesus and finds life in Jesus!

40. *He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him who sent Me.* What blessed union and hallowed communion exist between the King and His servants! The words before us are especially true of the Apostles to whom they were first addressed. Apostolic teaching is Christ’s teaching. To receive the 12 is to receive their Lord Jesus, and to receive the Lord Jesus is to receive God, Himself. In these days certain teachers despise the Epistles which were written by Apostles, and they are, themselves, worthy to be despised for so doing! This is one of the sure tests of soundness in the faith. “He that is of God hears us,” says John. This bears hard on modern critics who in a hypocritical manner pretend to receive Christ and then reject His Inspired Apostles!

Lord, teach me to receive Your people into my heart, that thus I may receive You. And as to the Doctrine which I hold, be pleased to establish me in the Apostolic faith.

41. *He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet’s reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.* Men may receive a Prophet as a patriot, or a poet—that is not the point in hand. The Prophet must be received in his highest character, “in the name of a Prophet,” and for the sake of his Lord! And then the Lord, Himself, is received, and He will reward the receiver in the same way in which His Prophet is rewarded. If we cannot do all the good deeds of a righteous man, we can yet partake in his happiness by having fellowship with him, and by uniting with him in vindicating the faith and comforting his heart. To receive into our homes and our hearts God’s persecuted servants is to share their reward. To maintain the cause and character of good men is to be

numbered with them in God's account. This is all of Grace, since the deed is so little and the recompense so large!

1917
ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING THE
SUSPENSION OF PUBLICATION:

It is with sincere regret that the Publishers announce the suspension of publication of C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons. This step is rendered necessary by the present shortage of paper and other difficulties due to war conditions. There are still a number of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons which have never been issued in printed form, and it is hoped that when peace returns, it will be possible to publish these in some attractive form. The last issue of these Sermons, for the present, will be that of May 10th.

It is hoped that the suspension of publication will not in any way tend to lessen the world-wide ministry of these Sermons. Practically all the back numbers may still be obtained, so that those who know and appreciate the blessing which has been forthcoming from these weekly messages may still provide for their needs by selecting from the earlier issues. A Textual Index* will be found useful in making a choice of subjects and texts, free on application from Marshall Brothers, Ltd., 47, Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4.

* http://www.spurgeongems.org/sindex_ot.pdf (Old Testament Scripture index)
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END VOLUME 63 AND SERIES!

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

GUILF FORSAKEN WHEN GUILF IS FORGIVEN NO. 1346

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 25, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.”
Psalm 32:2.***

THE only blessing the Law can give, it bestows on those who do no iniquity and walk perfectly in God's ways—the Gospel, alone, has a blessing for the *guilty*. Upon their believing in Jesus, it pronounces the benediction, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.” To be “blessed” is to be in the most desirable state—at peace with God, happy in yourself and full of Divine favor. A man cannot be more than blessed, or, what if I say, *doubly* blessed since the benediction is pronounced twice? Nor is it a stinted blessing, for no limiting word is put before it or after it to mark an inferior benediction.

When our Lord opened His mouth in the Sermon on the Mount, He poured forth a stream of blessings, and even so does the Gospel, when it speaks to the soul—rivers of blessing flow from its every word! The language of the text is very emphatic in the original and implies a multiplication of blessings. There cannot be a more true, real and assured blessedness than that which belongs to the forgiven sinner. All the blessedness which could have come to a perfect man comes to the man whose transgression is forgiven.

O you who have sinned against God and are conscious of it, rejoice that you are not shut out from blessedness! If, by faith, you can believe in the sin-forgiving God and accept the matchless Atonement which covers all your guilt and if you will exercise faith upon that blessed system by which sin is no longer imputed, then you are even *now* among the blessed! God Himself has blessed you and neither men nor devils can reverse the benediction. Now, mark that at the very same time that the guilt of sin is taken away and blessedness is bestowed, it happens unto the forgiven man that he undergoes a change of *nature*.

The work of the Spirit is linked with the work of the Son—when the Son removes guilt, the Spirit removes guile. He who takes away our offenses, also cures our deceit. When we begin to be Believers, we cease to be liars. He who was, before, crafty as Jacob no sooner receives the blessing of the Lord in answer to prayer than he becomes “an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.” It is to this fact that I am going to draw your attention at this time. As I desire to use it as a means for self-examination and awakening, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply it with power to many souls.

You must all have noticed in David's case, that after he had fallen into his foul sin with Bathsheba, he ceased to exhibit that transparent truth-speaking character which had charmed us so much before. Until he had obtained a sense of pardon for his great crime, David was as crooked and perverse as he could be. Guile was as abundant in him as guilt, for he made no confession of his sin and would not allow himself to see the heinousness of it. He must have put a fearful strain upon his conscience to have hushed its protests against his grievous offense. Perhaps even months passed without any honest acknowledgment to his own conscience and to God that he had so foully sinned. His entire endeavors were concentrated upon the concealment of his crime and, to that end, all his wits were set to work with horrible cunning.

What crafty devices he practiced in seeking to hide his sin—such as bringing Uriah back and making him drunk! Could this be David—the honest and conscientious David of former days? Could he have become so mean, so full of low scheming? Could he be the Psalmist who sung so sweetly? Could he deliberately plan the death of the man whom he had so fearfully wronged? Yes, and worse, when Uriah, being willfully exposed to danger, fell in battle, David manifested no compunction, nor uttered a word by way of confession. He put it off with apparent indifference, saying, “the sword devours one as well as another.”

He knew right well how Uriah came to die, and Joab knew, also, and yet he trumped up a message, as if nothing had been arranged between them beforehand. Ah, David, what a deceitful heart you had and how you did practice guile upon guile! Yes, so blind had his mental vision become, as to his own sinfulness, that when Nathan outlined a picture which was the very photograph of his own case, he did not see it, but pronounced a fierce sentence against the supposed culprit! It needed the Prophet to come forward and say, “You are the man,” before that guileful heart of David was able to perceive that Nathan spoke of him!

Yes, sin gives a twist to our entire manhood and makes us play a thousand tricks both with our conscience and with God. But notice, as soon as Nathan said, “The Lord has put away your sin: you shall not die,” David became another man! He wrote the 51st Psalm, which is one of the most honest pieces of writing that ever fell from human pen. How plain-spoken it is all through! How bare is the penitent's bosom! In it you do not so much hear the sound of vibrating harp-strings as of throbbing, breaking *heart*-strings! All through it, the man's soul is running over at his lips and at his eyes—concealment and trickery are quite out of the field. Pardoned sin makes an honest heart, but while sin is unconfessed and unforgiven the serpent rules within and men twist, wriggle, wind and turn in a thousand deceitful ways.

My first head tonight is this—many men play tricks with God and their consciences. Secondly, the forgiven man gives evidence of having ceased from this evil habit—“In His spirit there is no guile.”

I. While I speak upon my first head—that **MANY MEN PLAY TRICKS WITH GOD AND THEIR CONSCIENCES**, I shall be very glad if you will each carefully notice how much of what is said belongs to you personally.

I want to be very honest with you, but I should be sorry to be unjust. Do not take home what does not apply to you, but anything which is really yours, I pray you to lay to heart. Court the entrance of the Truth of God, even though it should cut you to the quick. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Avail yourselves of the opportunity which the Lord is now affording us to search our hearts, as in the presence of the Lord who weighs the spirits. May the Holy Spirit aid us in this business.

The guile of the human heart shows itself in a refusal to come to serious consideration. Men cannot be induced to examine themselves and to look to the state of affairs between God and their souls. We press them to it and plead with them, even to tears, but they refuse to do themselves this necessary service. They are more or less conscious that something is very wrong, but they have no mind to enquire. Is this truthful? Is it reasonable? If their house were reported to be on fire, would they not see to it? But no, they could not enjoy the fool's paradise of false peace if they were seriously to think and enquire and, therefore, they prefer to take matters easily and ignore as much as possible all that is unsatisfactory about their condition and prospects.

From week to week there is no calling of conscience to account. Sabbaths follow one another and though there may be a little occasional awakening, there is no resolute determination to cast up accounts and find out the soul's actual condition. They prefer to shut their eyes and stop their ears rather than see signs and hear tidings which would distress them. What childishness is this! It is worse—it is dishonesty to their souls and God. When a steward declines to render an account, you may easily guess the reason. When a shipmaster refuses to have his vessel surveyed, you shrewdly suspect the sea-worthiness of the ship. When a merchant does not care to look into his books, you judge on which side the balance has turned.

Honest men are prepared to go into matters and are willing to see the naked truth, but men who are not brave enough to face uncomfortable facts play the foolish game of bandaging their eyes. Putting the telescope to the blind eye and declaring that you see nothing is an old trick, and commonly practiced even now. May we never be suffered to persevere in the self-deception which is supported by a heedless disregard of warnings. Most men will do anything sooner than think about eternal things. The most frivolous amusements, the most stupid songs, the most carking cares and even the most weary ceremonial fashions are adopted as a happy release from the labor of reflection. Death, judgment, eternity, Heaven and Hell—they dare not think of these—and why? Because they know that all is wrong with them and so they practice a crafty carelessness and a cunning indifference.

Others who *do* think a little are partial in their judgments of themselves. They present accounts, but these are cooked and made to appear other than they should be by a sort of spiritual financing. Ungodly men color all that they do with a rosy tint and endeavor to be gratified with the appearance of their lives. Is it not very usual for business men, when their

financial position is becoming more and more unsound, to make a show of prosperity in order to keep up their credit? Doubtful investments are reckoned as available assets and heavy liabilities are toned down by clever adjustments. Public companies often show us fine specimens of the art of coloring. Alas, that reasonable beings should practice this art upon themselves in relation to their most vital interests—yet they do so year after year!

They put darkness for light and light for darkness, and reckon themselves to be rich and increased with goods while they are naked and poor and miserable. Well-skilled are many in the method of “making the worse appear the better reason.” They exaggerate any little excellence which they think they possess and greatly underestimate their faults. They deny, or extenuate, or altogether excuse their sin—they blame their nature, or their circumstances, or the Tempter—but they, themselves, must be excused. How could they help sinning? Others would have done the same had they been in their shoes—why, then, should they be blamed?

Moreover, what they did was not so very bad, after all, and there are all their good deeds as a set off against the bad! Men use false weights and deceitful balances when they are dealing with their souls. They will not endure honest handling. They cry, “peace, peace,” where there is no peace and prophesy smooth things for themselves. Like the unjust steward, they permit false statements to be made of what is due to their Lord and when they come up to their false standard they congratulate themselves as if they were the pink of honesty! Again, many are evidently tricking themselves willfully because they rest on such frivolous grounds of confidence. Could any man depend on his own good works unless he had juggled with his judgment?

What do you think? Do you believe that any man would build his hope for eternity upon his being christened when he was a baby and his having taken the communion at certain seasons since if he were not anxious to be deceived? Do you think that any man, unless willingly duped, could believe that he was made a child of God by an outward *ceremony*? Do you think any man would rely upon sacraments unless he desired to be misled? A mortal man believes in absolution given to him by a fellow sinner who calls himself a priest—is he not willingly deceived? If any man relies upon outward performances as a means for the putting away of sin, do you think he has not sense enough in him, if he chooses to use it, to know that this is utter absurdity?

True, many are duped by the teachings of others, but if they possess even so much as a *trace* of brain, might they not see through such false teaching if they chose? If a man would sit down and only think, would he not see that confidences based upon such frail foundations are as sure to fall as houses built upon the sand? But, alas, *multitudes* of men play such tricks with themselves so that they are led by the nose by the servants of Antichrist! They see that others yield their assent to the pretensions of priests and they conclude that they will go with the many. It is inconvenient to be too particular and so they leap with the majority!

But what a wretched way of doing business and how hollow the peace which comes of it! Men will trust their souls upon statements so flimsy that they would not risk a half-crown upon them. There is guile at the bottom of this and those who profess to be easy in these confidences are not so. Sirs, there is no man honest in his peace but the man who gained it through the blood of Jesus Christ! If you come to testing and trying, all other confidences fail you except confidence in the Christ of God! But the sinner is full of guile and does not want to test and try. Like the simple, he believes every word because it would be tedious to discriminate and troublesome to doubt a good report.

Some practice guile in another way. They avoid all home truths and keep clear of searching doctrines. If they hear a faithful sermon and it comes home to them, do you know what they say? "The preacher was so very harsh. I could not hear a man like that. I want more *love*." Of course they cannot abide a ministry which reveals their true state, for, "he that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Only honest hearts ask to hear that searching Word of God which lays bare the thoughts and intents of the heart—gracious men know that to be turned inside out by a searching discourse is the very thing they need—and they are grateful to the honest man of God who will not spare them.

Those persons must be very foolish who prefer a doctor who, when they are dreadfully diseased and near to death, nevertheless flatteringly says, "Oh, this is but a small matter! I shall soon set you right. Here is my wonderful pill—take a certain quantity of boxes and you will be perfectly restored. I have seen many cases worse than yours completely cured." The poor wretch is almost in his grave and yet he promises him long life! Sensible men hate such a deceiver. Rational men choose a trustworthy physician who will, so far as he knows, tell them what ails them and not bolster them up in falsehood. So, if men would but let their senses exercise themselves on the *best* things, they would prefer an honest teacher and prize his faithful warnings. And they would be glad that things should be put plainly, even if harshly, lest haply they should perish in self-deception.

Very commonly we meet with people foolish enough to endeavor to turn the edge of an unpalatable home truth by finding fault with the preacher. He is too censorious and that is your excuse for remaining in spiritual apathy. He blundered in pronunciation, or grammar, or style—and that is tacitly placed as an excuse for your rejecting the Gospel which he preached. Even books come in for the same censures! The plain-speaking volume is not "conceived in a gentle spirit," or is too narrow, bigoted and one-sided. The witness is hated because he prophesies only evil. If the sinner cannot escape the censure of his conscience, he will raise a deal of dust and throw handfuls of it upon those who seek his good, so that in the fog he may effect a retreat. Ah, foolish trickery!

Beyond this, many are clever at parrying home thrusts by introducing other themes. Many imitate the Samaritan woman at the well. When our Lord began to unveil her character and touch her conscience about those five husbands of hers, she sought to change the subject by the remark,

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship.” Thus with questions about rites or ceremonies, or doctrines, or types, or prophecies, men shield themselves from the blows of the Spirit’s sword! A brother minister told me, some time ago, that he visited a woman whose husband had died very suddenly, and he found that she had at one time been an attendant upon his ministry.

She was sitting with her brother, who was an elder of the Scot Church, who began at once, somewhat harshly, to remind her of her negligence of Christian ordinances. The woman evidently feared that the minister would follow in the same strain and so she cleverly warded off the expected attack by stating that she had a great difficulty which she could by no means get over. The minister had no idea of rebuking her while just newly made a widow, but her conscience was evidently putting her into a state of alarm. And so she again interrupted the minister’s kindly earnest remarks by saying, “But still, you see, Sir, I cannot get my mind easy about this one thing. In the Shorter Catechism it says that God is without beginning and I cannot understand how that can be. That He should be without end I can understand, but that He should be without beginning is quite beyond me.”

“Well,” said the pastor, “my good Soul, I do not think that this is quite the time to talk about such a mysterious matter. You see the Lord has removed your husband from you and it is well for us to hear the voice of the rod.” It was of no use, for the woman held to her shield and repeated that still she could not understand how God could be without a beginning. At last her brother, the elder, silenced her objection, by saying, “Woman, what are you doing? Why make such a fuss about a plain subject? Of course the Lord never had a beginning and He never needed any, for He was always there.”

This, for awhile, silenced that particular form of caviling, but before long the woman was at the same mode of defense. You know how the lapping pretends to have a broken wing and flies as if it must be taken and all with the view of leading the passenger from her nest—so do our hearers try to lead us away from the main matter. When comparing notes about the way in which the unconverted meet us when we try to deal personally with them, ministers can all bear witness to the cleverness of many in the art of turning the switch and shunting the conversation. You know how it has been with some of you when you have been hard pressed, you have crept under the Doctrine of Election! You have hidden in the dark corner of Predestination, or dodged the Gospel behind some theory of free agency.

This is sheer trickery, a display of evil subtlety, exceedingly mischievous! What would it help you if you could understand *all* mysteries? As long as you are unreconciled to God, what does it matter about what you understand or do not understand? Is it not your business to confess your sin and go and seek mercy at the hands of the Most High? What degree of knowledge will excuse you if you neglect this chief duty? Those points which are worth your knowing, God will teach you in due time by His

Spirit. I beseech you, attend to the main business which is that you should be saved from sin by faith in the Lord Jesus!

Another very cunning trick which is often practiced by sinners who are full of guile is this—they pass on to other people anything which is uncomfortably applicable to themselves. It seemed as if the preacher had made a cap specially to fit that head, but the result was that the person who watched the making exclaimed, “Dear me! How well he has taken my neighbor’s measure.” The letter is meant for him, but he puts it in another envelope, drops it into his friend’s mailbox and runs away! If there is a solemn warning for unregenerate men, he does not see its bearing on himself. He perceives somebody in the crowd who needs just such a serious word and he hopes that it will be useful to him.

You will hear him sometimes say after a sermon in which almost every point has been put personally to himself, “I cannot think how our friend Smith could keep his seat while the pastor was dealing so faithfully with him.” “You are the man” is an application as much needed now as ever, for it is one of the common tricks of sinners to get another to wear their robes that they, themselves, may pass unwounded through the battle. Alas for such wretched deceit!

One sorry piece of craft which Satan teaches to many is to make them doubt, or pretend to doubt, anything in Scripture which frowns upon them. If they find that, dying as they are, they will be driven from the Presence of God forever, they comfort themselves by recollecting that a wise man has discovered that everlasting does not mean forever! And they hear that a clever Divine has found out that there is to be a general jail release in Hell and everybody is to be admitted into Heaven in due time. They hear this and they hear that—and as drowning men catch at straws, so do they cling to any new inventions which promise them ease in their sins. They lay the flattering unction of false doctrine to their souls as if it were the balm of Gilead.

“Perhaps it may be so,” they say, and thus they risk their future happiness upon so poor a chance as the hope that, perhaps, these modern thinkers may turn out to be right and the plain teaching of Scripture prove to be a mistake! It is a wonderfully easy thing to make yourself out to be an honest skeptic and from this earthwork to assail your assailants. And yet all the while you may have no doubt at all, but in the core of your heart you may, like the devil, believe and tremble! Ah, you pretended doubters! If you were stretched on a dying bed, you would believe the old Revelation, fast enough, and begin to cry out for mercy in the fear which the approach of death would bring upon you!

Half the men who talk so much about their not believing, believe a great deal more than they would like to admit—but they dare not test their own imaginary infidelity by spending an hour alone in their chamber at eventide and looking into their own hearts. There are many hypocritical *Believers*, but are there not quite as many pretended *unbelievers* to whom doubting is a mere sop to quiet the cerberus of their conscience? Guile plays its part with the human intellect and conjures up an army of ghosts

in the form of doubts—but when the sun of the Truth of God arises, they immediately disappear.

Let us examine another product of the deceit of the natural heart. While yet they are far from God, many calm and quiet themselves with outward religion. They never pray in sincerity—neither does their heart speak at any time with God—and yet they dare not go to bed at night without kneeling down at their bedside and repeating a form of prayer! They have never repented of sin and yet they will repeat words of confession most humbly. They do not praise the Lord in sincerity and yet their voices may be heard in Psalm and hymn. On the Lord's Day they go up to the House of God and sit there and do as God's people do—and they would not be easy if they did not do so—but their *heart* is in none of the worship.

Far be it from me to discourage even *outward* reverence, but it is a strange cheat that a man puts upon himself when he supposes that mere formal, heartless worship can be a reason for peace of mind! To have mocked God with solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue ought not to be a ground of comfort! Repeating words of prayer without life and feeling should rather move us to self-condemnation than to self-congratulation! How can men feel content with rending their garments when the Lord bids them rend their hearts? O Sirs, if you do not pray with your hearts, what are all your *forms* worth? What are bended knees without broken hearts? If you do not, indeed, repent of sin and lay hold on Christ, what are all your Church goings, or your Chapel goings, however constant they may be? Of what good can external religion be to you while you deny to God the homage of your minds? And yet too many wrap themselves up in this garment of guile.

There are others who conceal in the secret of their hearts a blasphemous notion which they hardly dare to put into words, but it amounts to this—the reason why they are not saved is not by any means due to *themselves*. They reject the Savior and refuse to leave their sins, but *they* are not to blame for it! In fact, they dare not actually say so, but they insinuate that the blame of their condition lies with God, Himself! They have been waiting, but Grace has not come! They are quite ready, but God is not! They are poor *victims* of adverse fate and rather to be pitied than condemned! Or so they endeavor to make out for themselves. Distorted truth is used to support their lies and conscience is drugged into a dangerous slumber. Thus do men trick themselves out of their *souls* with sophistical arguments forged by him who from the beginning is a murderer and a liar!

Be not hoodwinked by this slanderous falsehood, but read God's Word where He declares, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live." He testifies that He waits to be gracious and all day long stretches out His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation! What a strong delusion is this, when men dare to lay their blood at *God's* door and make *Him* to be the Author of their sin! In their consciences they know better, but their inward crookedness delights in lies.

Perhaps the most numerous victims of this guile are those who flatter themselves that they will be right some day. They have been hearers of the Gospel for 20 years and are not saved—but they have a full persuasion that they shall not die as they are now. They nurse the fond idea that one of these days it will be convenient for them to seek the Lord. The convenient day has never come, yet, but still they think it will. There will be a favored hour and a peculiar time—and they half promise that it shall not be very much longer. O you who play at procrastination! You are knaves to your own souls! Think about it—if you resolve that you will repent in a year's time, what is that but a daring defiance of God by declaring that you will continue in *sin* for 12 more months, at least? Have you ever looked at it in that light?

Even if a man knew that he would live a year and that on this day 12 months from now he would carry out his resolution to become a Christian, yet if he should make such a resolution, what would it amount to but this—"I mean for 12 months to refuse the Savior's claims and remain an enemy to God"? Do you think that he who thus resolves is in a hopeful condition? If he is determined to rebel against his Lord for 12 months, do you not conclude that at the end of the year he will be a worse man and be even less likely to yield himself to God?

Thus have I exposed a few of the many "knaveish tricks" by which our unrenewed hearts manifest their deceit. May God the eternal Spirit bless the searching word to all who are deceiving themselves.

II. But now, secondly, THE PARDONED MAN GIVES EVIDENCE OF CEASING FROM THIS GUILE, for, in the first place, he makes an open confession of his sin to God. Here he stands before the Most High and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," for he feels his guiltiness. He takes his fault and criminality to himself and does not cloak his iniquity. He admits that he has sinned against Heaven and in the Presence of the Most High. This he does all the more freely because he has no motive to do otherwise. Why should he hide his sin? There is full forgiveness for him! Why should he deny it when the precious blood of Christ is ready to put it all away?

I think the most honest confession is that which falls from the Believer's lips when he gazes upon the—

***"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."***

"There," says a creditor to his debtor, "you owe me a great deal of money, but if you will bring me the account, I will receipt it all." My Friend, would you not willingly put down all you owed in such a case? Ah, I think you would rather put down too much than too little when such a promise was before you! You would be afraid lest you should overlook anything and would be eager to make a clean breast of all your liabilities. And so when the Lord Jesus gives a full pardon to the soul that believes in Him, it is sure to be met with a full confession. How could it be otherwise?

The pardoned man has, also, done with all sorts of excuses. He does not try to set his virtues in a brighter light than that of Truth of God or to make his sins appear less heinous than they are. He confesses all their

guilt and heartily humbles himself in the sight of God. The lowly words in the language he loves best. The lowest place in the synagogues is his choice. Once he boasted that he was almost a saint, but now he admits that he is altogether a sinner. You shall hear no extenuations, excuses, or denials. The man beholds the pardon of God and it makes him honest.

Now he desires to know the worst of his case and longs to be searched and probed. He who has found peace through Jesus Christ surrenders the keys of the most secret chambers of his soul and asks for inspection. "O Lord," he says, "I pray You make sure work with my case. I beseech You cut from my heart this dreadful cancer of sin, even though the painful knife must follow every root of the hideous evil, for I desire Truth in the inward parts and the complete eradication of the love of sin." He is not content to make the outside of the cup and platter clean and leave the inward part filthy, but he cries for inward cleansing and for renewal in the hidden fountains of thought and action.

Now he courts Divine investigation and begs his Redeemer to let the winnowing fan discover and remove his chaff. Now would he put himself in the full blaze of Jehovah's light and desire the consuming fire to burn up his dross. He cultivates heart-searching and practices daily repentance. He continually desires a lowly estimate of himself because he feels that self-aborrence endears Christ to his heart as the great Savior of unworthy ones. He would rather have a little true Grace than abound in great pretensions and he considers the lowest place among the children of God to be better than he deserves.

Sincerity has, also, entered into the sinner's belief in the terrible things of God's Word. He now sees their certainty and their justice and does not pretend to question them. He is one who trembles at the Word of the Lord and he leaves the cavilers to do their daring work alone. He knows in his own conscience that there is a Hell. He confesses, also, that it is *just* that there should be such a place of punishment and he only marvels that he has not been driven there, himself. Such a man now wishes to be dealt with personally and impartially whenever he reads a book or hears a sermon. He does not want the preacher to speak to others and leave him out. No, but he has come hungering and thirsting after the Word and he opens his mouth and pants for his portion.

And if, instead of getting comfort, he is to receive rebuke, he is reverently ready to receive it so long as it shall be for his real good. He is ready to take bitter medicine, for he is anxious to be healed. He lays bare his breast, for he desires the heavenly Surgeon to inflict any wound rather than leave the heart of stone within his flesh. He delights in the searching Word, and the more closely it tries and tests him the more thankful he is for it. The pardoned man, also, desires everything that he does to be true. He is often afraid to pray in public lest he should say more than he feels. When he rises from his knees in private, he frequently questions himself—"Has it been real devotion? Did I really mean all that I said?" He catechizes himself lest he should be a hypocrite!

And I have known a man, whose sins have been pardoned, when he has dared to preach a sermon, sit down afterwards and take all his sen-

tences to pieces lest he should have said more than he altogether knew and actually felt, for he was exceedingly afraid of going beyond the line of his actual knowledge. The saved soul hates paste gems and mimic jewels. He desires to have true precious stones or none at all. He is afraid of shams. He wants to be real in all things and, therefore, he sometimes doubts his own safety because he is in the habit of pulling himself to pieces—to dissect his heart and to see whether it is sound all through. This habit may be carried to excess, but, in itself, it is an exceedingly good one. It is infinitely better than the dishonesty of setting down all our gilt as gold.

The really pardoned man, also, desires to be rid of all sin. I know some who can never hope to obtain forgiveness, for they continue in their iniquity. Can a woman expect to find peace with God while she goes on taking her sly drop and becoming intoxicated in private? Can a man find joy in God who still clings to the drunk's vice? Will God receive into His favor those who continue to practice dishonesty in trade? Shall sin be fondled and yet pardoned? No one dares to expect it and yet deceitful hearts attempt to think so. They will condemn other people's pet sins and yet excuse their own! They pretend much sorrow for sin in general, but hold to one favorite sin in particular.

Their delicate Agag must live! Kill all the rest, but surely, as to this *one*, the bitterness of death has passed! O Sirs, be not deceived—you must be willing for *all* sin to go! If you desire one sin to live, you will not live yourself! The honest-hearted sinner—he whom the Lord absolves of iniquity—desires to see *all* his sins brought forth and hung up like the kings whom Joshua found in the cave at Makkedah—hung up in the face of the sun that they might die the death—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee.”***

We are not perfect, but every really pardoned man wishes that he were so. Though there are sins into which we fall, there are no sins which we love. Though we come short of the Glory of God, yet we do not rest happy in falling short, and we can never be wholly content till it is no longer so with us.

Beloved, the pardoned man is cleansed from the guile which would ask for quarter for darling sins. He seeks after perfect purity of life and he has heartily ceased from guile, for now, as an heir of Heaven, he lives in the Presence of God and delights to remember the all-seeing eye. Now he does not say to God, “Depart from me: I desire not the knowledge of Your ways,” but he looks upon every action of every day as done before his Father's face. He needs nothing but the Truth of God and that which will bear the test of the Judgment Day. Beloved, I can well understand why a pardoned man becomes a man without deceit—because his pardon is a *real* pardon—there is no fiction in it. God justifies him, but He does not justify him by a deception, as some have blasphemously ventured to say.

No, but there is my sin. Christ took it and was punished for it and, therefore, my sin was honestly put away without any violation of justice,

for Christ has made a full Atonement for it—and so my sin has justly ceased to be! Why, with such an honest foundation as that, an honest pardon may well make an honest man! God makes the Believer righteous—righteous beyond dispute. His faith is counted to him for righteousness, seeing he has believed in Jesus Christ, and that is a righteousness which, at the Last Great Day, will stand the test of the most searching enquiry! The man is saved on honest principles and, therefore, from now on there are no tricks for him. He stands erect and fears no accuser while he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who, also, makes intercession for us.”

The lesson from the whole is this—be honest. Sinner, may God make you honest. Do not deceive yourself! Make a clean breast of it before God. Have an honest religion, or have none at all. Have a religion of the heart, or else have none. Put aside the mere vestment and garment of piety and let your soul be right within. Be honest. And you who are Christians, remember that your blessedness will never be enjoyed by yourselves unless you continue to be without guile. Some Christians live rather by policy than by honesty—I *hope* they are Christians, but I am not sure—for their life is full of scheming. They never go straight. They would not care to go straight—they like going a little round about just to show that they can dodge in and out. There are men of this sort in business and you need not go out of your road to meet them. Even their thinking seems to revolve on a wheel—all round about and round about.

Now, Friends, you will never be happy while you act craftily. The only life in which a man can enjoy the blessedness of pardoned sin is a downright straightforward life. Be like clear glass so that all who choose to do so may see right through you. There is a way of living guardedly in which you never speak your mind, but are diplomatic and reserved. You take your words out of your mouth and look at them—and judge what other people will think of them. And then you put the best of them back again. There is a system of living, as it were, in armor, buckled up, with your visor down—you never dare show your real self, but maintain great prudence and reserve. What is this but to live in fetters? I would sooner die at once—

***“I would rather not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.”***

To speak his heart and to act honestly is, to a true Believer, the path of peace and happiness. If any man chooses another path and tries diplomacy and policy, so he may, but as sure as he lives he will come to a sorrowful ending and find that such a course is not a way which God approves, nor will He let His servants have peace in it. May God, in His infinite mercy, bring us all to follow Jesus, trusting in His blood and treading in His footsteps! And to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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THE DANGER OF UNCONFESSED SIN

NO. 1366

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

***“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.”
Psalm 32:3.***

IT is well known that in ordinary cases grief which is kept within the bosom grows more and more intense. It is a very great relief to shed tears—it gives a vent to the heart. We sometimes pity those who weep, but there is a grief too deep for tears which is far more worthy of compassion—we ought most to pity those who *cannot* weep. A dry sorrow is a terrible one, but clear shining often follows the rain of tears. Tears are hopeful things. They are the dewdrops of the morning foretelling the coming day. So is it, also, a very great consolation to tell your story to a friend. I do not know whether it would not be a comfort, even, to speak it to a little child, even if the child could not understand you.

There is something in telling your sorrow and letting it out, otherwise it is like a mountain lake which has no outlet, into which the rains descend and the torrents rush and, at last, the banks are broken and a flood is caused. It is well for you to let your soul flow forth in words as to your common griefs! A festering wound is dangerous. Many have lost their reason because they had good reason to tell their sorrows, but had not reason enough to do so. Much talk has in it much of sin, but a heart full of agony must speak or burst. Therefore let it talk on and even repeat itself, for in so doing it will spend itself—

***“Sorrow weeps!
And spends its bitterness in tears.
My child of sorrow,
Weep out the fullness of
Your passionate grief,
And drown in tears
The bitterness of lonely years.”***

We shall now, however, think of *spiritual* sorrows and to these the same rule applies. “When I kept silence,” and did not pour out my sorrow when I ought to have confessed it, “my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.” Is it not a great mercy for us that we have the Book of Psalms and the life of such a man as David? Biographies of most people, nowadays, are like the portraits of a past generation when the art of flattery in oils was at its height. There is no greater cheat than a modern biography! It is not the man, at all, but what he *might* have been if he had not been something else! They give you a lock of his hair, or his wig, or his old coat, but seldom the man.

They make huge volumes out of a heap of his letters which ought to have been burned. And they copy little scraps of pictures which he used to draw for friends—and neither the letters nor the sketches ought ever to have been published. Like burglars, they break into a man's chamber and steal his hidden things. They hold up to the public eye what was meant for privacy, only, and expose the secrets of the man's heart and hearth. Things which the man would never have drawn or written if he had thought that they would meet the public eye are dragged forth and brought out as precious things, and so they are, but precious nonsense!

We have no biographers nowadays. When Boswell died, the greatest of all biographers died, and he was not far removed from a fool. If a man lives a noble life, he may well shrink from dying, because he knows what will become of him, nowadays, when writers of his memoirs unearth him and tear him to pieces! David's Psalms are his best memorial. There you have not the man's exterior, but his inward soul. They do not reveal the outward manifestations of the man, but you see the man's *heart*—the inner David, the David that groaned and the David that wept! You see the David that sighed and the David that sinned—the David that yearned after God, and the David that was eaten up with the zeal of God's house—the man who was born in sin and groaned over sin and was yet the man after God's own heart. What a wonderful autobiography of a wonderful life that Book of Psalms is!

David was a many-sided man and his life was like the life of our Lord in this respect—that it seemed to comprehend the lives of all other men within itself. There is no man, I suppose, who has known the Lord in any age since David wrote but has seen himself in David's Psalms as in a mirror and has said to himself, "This man knows all about me. He has been into every room of my soul—into its lowest cellar and into its loftiest tower. He has been with me in the dens of my inbred sin and in the palaces of my fellowship with Christ, from which I have looked upon the Glory of God." Here is a man who "seems to be, not one, but all mankind's epitome."

Though we mourn over David's sin, yet we thank God that it was permitted, for if he had not so fallen, he had not been able to help us when we are conscious of transgression. He could not have so minutely described our griefs if he had not felt the same. David lived, in this respect, for others as well as for himself. I am thankful that David was permitted to try the experiment of silence after his great sin, for he will now tell us what came of it—"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

We shall apply this first, as it should be, to the erring child of God convicted of his sin. Secondly, we shall remind you that the same rule holds good with the awakened sinner in whom the Spirit of God has begun to work a sense of guilt.

I. First, LET US THINK OF THE CHILD OF GOD. Children of God sin! Some of them have claimed to be well-near free from it but—I will say no more—but I think they sinned when they talked in such a lofty strain.

God's children sin, for they are still in the body. If they are in a right state of heart they will mourn over this and it will be the burden of their lives. Oh that they could live without sin! It is this that they sigh after and they can never be fully content until they obtain it. They do not excuse themselves by saying, "I cannot be perfect," but they feel that their inability is their sin. They regard every transgression and tendency to sin as a grievous fault and they mourn over it from day to day. They would be holy as Christ is holy. To will is present with them, but how to perform that which they would, they find not.

Now, when the child of God sins, the proper thing for him to do is at once to go and tell his heavenly Father. As soon as ever we are conscious of sin, the right thing is not to begin to reason with the sin, or to wait until we have brought ourselves into a proper state of heart about it, but to go *at once* and confess the transgression unto the Lord, then and there. Sin will not come to any very great head in a man's heart who does this continually. God will never have great chastisements in store for those who are quick confessors of sin.

You know how it is with your child. There has been something broken, perhaps, by carelessness. There has been some violation of a rule of the house. But if he comes and catches you by the sleeve and says, "Father," or, "Mother, I am very sorry that I have been doing wrong"—why, you know, while you are sorry that he should transgress, you are glad to think that his heart is so right that without being questioned he comes of his own accord and tells you so frankly that he was wrong. Whatever grief you may feel about his fault, you feel a greater *joy* in the frankness of his confession and the tenderness of his conscience! And you have forgiven him, I am sure, before he has got half way through his open-hearted acknowledgment. You feel that you cannot be angry with so frank and penitent a child.

Though sometimes you may have to put on a sour look, shake your head and reprimand and scold a little, yet if the little eyes fill with tears and the confession becomes still more open and the sorrow still more evident—it is not hard to move you to give the child a kiss and send him away with, "Go and sin no more. I have forgiven you." Our heavenly Father is a much more tender Father than any of us and, therefore, if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses? "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him" and, therefore, He has compassion upon the children of men when they acknowledge their offenses. We are not more ready to forgive our children than our heavenly Father is ready to forgive us! We may be quite sure of that.

And so, if it is our habit—and I trust it is—never to suffer guilt to lie upon our consciences, but to go as soon as we are sensible of a fault and admit it before the Lord, asking pardon from Him for Jesus' sake, there will be no great amount of damage done to ourselves and the Lord's anger will not wax hot against us and neither will severe chastisements happen to us. We may endure sharp afflictions, because they are often sent for

another purpose, but we shall not have visitations of paternal wrath. Many trials are not sent for chastisements at all, but as preparations for higher usefulness—for every branch that bears fruit He purges, evidently not because of any offense in the branch, but even because the branch is good and bears fruit and, therefore, it is allowed the special privilege of the pruning knife that it may bring forth *more* fruit.

Speedy and full confession will not prevent tribulations which are meant merely for instruction, but it will avert trials which are intended as severe chastisements—and this will be no small benefit. Did not David pray, “O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath, neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure”? Now, it sometimes happens that God’s children, when they have done wrong—especially if they have done very, very wrong—do not go and confess it. When there is the most necessity for confession, there is often the greatest tardiness in making it. It was so in David’s case. Alas, how foully had he fallen! It is never to any purpose to try and excuse David’s sin.

There are certain extenuating circumstances, but he never mentioned them and, therefore, we need not. Indeed, if David were here, tonight, and we were to begin excusing his sin, he would rise with tears in his eyes and say, “For God’s sake do not attempt it! Let it stand in all its deformity, that the power of God’s mercy may be the more clearly seen in washing me and making me whiter than snow.” But David’s heart, sometimes, was very evil. It was sound towards God as a rule. There was deep love to God always there, but it had become overlaid and crusted with what was always David’s great besetment—the strong passions of his impulsive nature.

He had followed, in some measure, the ill example of neighboring kings in taking a number of wives to himself and this had fed, rather than checked, his natural tendencies. And at last, in an evil hour, he fell into a crime of deepest dye. He knew that he was doing wrong. He sinned against light and knowledge but, alas, he did not hasten to his God and confess the grievous crime. I think I can see why he could not have gone straight away from the sin to confession, for the sin *prevented* the confession—the sin blinded the eyes, stultified the conscience and stupefied the entire spiritual nature of David. Hence He did not confess at once, but surely he felt as if he must admit the fault when the time came for prayer.

I have no doubt that David prayed after a sort, but he must have presented very formal and mutilated prayers so long as he refused to acknowledge his transgression. When the time came for David to finger his harp, perhaps he did so and went through a song or a Psalm. But he could never reach to the essence of true praise by pouring out his heart before God while the foul sin was hidden in his bosom. How could he? His Psalms and his prayers were silence before God, whatever sound he made—for his heart did not speak and God would not hear him.

However sweet the tone or the tune, his songs were nothing to the Most High, for his *heart* was silent. And why was he silent when he knew that he was wrong? Why did he not go to God at once? Well, it was partly be-

cause he was stupefied by his sin. He was fascinated, captivated and held in bondage by it. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, beware of the serpent eye of sin! It is dangerous to even *look* at sin, for looking leads to longing. A look at sin often leads to a lusting after sin and that soon ripens into the actual indulgence. No man even *thinks* of sin without damage!

I saw a magnificent photograph in Rome, one of the finest I had ever seen, and right across the middle there was the specter mark of a cart and two oxen repeated many times. The artist had tried to get it out, but the trace remained. While his plate was exposed to take the view, the cart and the oxen had gone across the scene and they were indelible! Often in the photograph of a fine building you will see the shade of a man who passed by who is represented by a sort of ghostly figure. Upon our soul every sinful thought leaves a mark and a stain that calls for us to weep it out—no, it needs Christ's blood to wash it away!

We begin with thinking of sin and then we somewhat desire the sin. Next we enter into communion with the sin and then we get into the sin—and the sin gets into us and we lie as oak in it. So David did. He did not feel it at first, but there he was, plunged into the evil deeps. In such a state sin does not appear burdensome. A man with a pail of water on his head feels it to be heavy, but if he dives, he does not feel the weight of the water above him because he is actually in it and surrounded by it. When a man plunges into sin, he does not feel the weight of the sin as he does when he is out of that dreadful element—but then, by God's Grace, he is burdened by it. So David did not feel His guilt at first. He knew that he had done wrong, but he did not perceive the exceeding heinousness of his evil deed and, therefore, he did not confess it.

Next, there was much pride in David's heart. Have you a child who, when he has offended, knows he is wrong, but will not admit it? If so, you talk to him, but he will not speak. He is quite silent, or, if he does speak, it is not in the right way. He makes some naughty, obstinate, strong-headed speech. You cannot bring him to say, "Father, I have done wrong." He tries to excuse himself in this way and that. Perhaps he partly denies the fault and only mentions certain things that other people did, by way of excuse for himself.

Now, what our children do to us we have often done to God! We have sullenly stood it out before Him. I remember well a story of a reputable Christian man who, on a certain occasion, was betrayed into drinking. He was a long time in distress of mind about his sin. He had been drunk, but when he was spoken to about it, as he was, by some of the officers of the Church, he said that he was, "overtaken" and added that, "a very little affected him." I *think* that is what he said. And he pleaded that some others had been overtaken, too, and he did not see why such notice should be taken of a little slip. All this he said to leave a loophole for himself. When he had done saying that, he would add—Well, he did not know. He did not believe that he was drunk. He was sure that nobody could prove that he was, though he might have taken a little more than was good for him.

His tongue talked in that way, but his heart knew better! He was a child of God and he knew he was wrong. He never got peace by making these shocking self-defenses. He was, indeed, terribly tortured in his soul, till, at last he went down on his knees and said, "Lord, I have been drunk. There is no use in denying it. I, who am Your servant, have been drunk. Forgive me, for Your mercy's sake, and keep me, from now on, from even tasting of the intoxicating cup." He honestly confessed his transgression and a sweet sense of pardon followed at once! It takes some professors a long time to get up to that point. We call our sin by some other name and fancy that it is not quite so bad in us as it would be in others.

Oh, the ways we have got of trying to extenuate! And, oh, the sullenness which has sometimes been put on and carried out for days and days together before the living God by God's children when they have fallen into an ill-temper. I have no doubt that some have been silent before God for a time as to the confession of their wrong because of fear. They could not believe that, after all, their Father loved them! They thought that if they did confess they would receive a heavy sentence and be overwhelmed with wrath. David had often looked up into the face of God and known His love—but now that he had thrown dust into his own eyes, he could not see God's face.

He only felt God's chastening hand, for He says, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." The sun burned him up, but afforded him none of the sunshine of the face of God. Unbelief is sure to follow sin of the kind committed by David. When it has brought on sullenness of temper, then we begin to think that God deals harshly with us, whereas it is *we* that are dealing harshly with Him. If we would confess, all would be well—but there is the tough part! It is not, if He would forgive, for He is ready to blot out the transgressions of His people—the difficulty lies in if we would believe in His love!

There is a great deal of the Pharisee in many Christians. You may question the statement, but I should not wonder if there is a good deal of the Pharisee in you, or else you would not have doubted the assertion. You are so much of a Pharisee that you do not think yourself a Pharisee! But we are prone to begin thinking, "Surely, surely, I, at such a time was a worthy object of God's love, but now I am not." Oh, then, you were once a wonder of goodness and marvelously worthy and excellent? Do not believe it! My dear Brother, perhaps you were as bad when you had not openly transgressed as you are now, for then your disease may have taken the form of *pride*, and though it has now taken another shape, it may be no worse, for pride is as damnable as any other form of sin. He who says to Himself, "I am righteous. I can stand before God and deserve His love," is as surely lost as though he had fallen into gross sin. Take heed of the Pharisee that lurks within you!

Anyway, whatever was the reason, David was silent about his sin for a long time. The result of it was that his sorrow became worse and worse. He could not pray. He tried to pray, but as he would not confess his sin, it

stuck in his throat. And till that was out, he could not pray. But still he *must* pray. So he took to roaring. That is to say, it was such inarticulate, indistinct prayer and there was so much of his soul in it that he calls it the roaring of a beast instead of the praying of a man! His inward grief over his unconfessed sin was such that his bones began to wax old. They are the pillars of the house, the strongest part of the entire system—but even *they* seemed as if they would decay.

He was brought into ill health of body through the torment of his mind. He could find no peace and yet he would not go and confess the sin! He was still sullenly looking up to God, not as a sinner, but as a saved one and talking to God as if he were righteous—while at the same time his sin was crushing him. All this while, I say, his grief gathered and there was only one cure for it—he ought to have confessed it to the Lord. As soon as it was confessed he was forgiven. How quick was that act of amnesty and oblivion! David said, “I have sinned,” and Nathan said, “The Lord has put away your sin. You shall not die.”

If pardon is so near at hand, who would linger a moment? Who among us would not, at once, repair to our heavenly Father and, with our head in his bosom sob out the confession of our sin? Because He is so ready to forgive we ought to be ready to confess! I may be addressing a child of God, or one who thought that he was a child of God, who has grievously fallen. My Brothers and Sisters, go with haste to your Lord and acknowledge your iniquity! He bids you come. Only confess your iniquity in which you have transgressed against the Lord and He will have mercy upon you now! And oh, what a relief it is when you have discharged the load and when the voice of mercy has said, “You are forgiven. Go in peace.”

“What would I give for that,” says one. Well, you need not *give* anything. Do but confess and if you confess into the ear of God, with faith in His dear Son, for Jesus’ sake He will accept you and seal your pardon home to your soul! Come and unburden your spirit at the bleeding feet of the Redeemer—and leap for joy! Thus have I tried to encourage the Lord’s own children to confess their sins. I do not know for whom these words are particularly meant, but I am driven to say them, for I labor under the strong impression that there is some child of God here who is almost despairing of the Lord’s mercy and who is well near ready to renounce his profession of religion because he fears that the Lord’s mercy is clean gone forever.

My dear Friend, judge not so harshly of Him who still loves you! Did He not love us when we were dead in trespasses and sins? And will He not love us if now our sin has wounded us again? He never loved us because we were good and, therefore, as He knew all that we should be, He will not change in His affection. He “commends His love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly”—died for us as SINNERS! If you never did come to Him—if all your religion has been a mistake—do not begin to argue upon that matter, but come to Jesus *now*, for the first time! Many and many a score of times have I done that! When the devil has said, “Your faith has been mere delusion and your experience has

been all a fiction,” I have replied, “I will not dispute with you, Sir Devil, but I will just go to Christ as a sinner, for I know He came to seek and to save sinners, even lost ones, such as I am. And I will humbly ask Him anew to be my Savior.”

That is a short cut to comfort! May the Spirit lead you into it! Be not baffled by Satanic suggestions, but come to Jesus again, and again, and again, “to whom coming as unto a living stone”—looking unto Jesus—not having looked once, but continually looking and trusting in Him!

II. But now I must have a few minutes, while we use this same subject in reference TO THE AWAKENED SINNER. Some in this place, perhaps, have lately been awakened to a consciousness of guilt before God. But one thing they have not done—they have never made confession of their sin. They feel the burden of it, in a measure, and they will feel it more, but as yet they have kept their grief to themselves. Neither to God nor man have they poured out their souls. To speak to our fellow men about our heart troubles is comparatively of little use and yet, I would not recommend persons under conviction of sin always to hide their souls’ sorrows from their Christian friends.

They might often be much helped if they would communicate their thoughts to those who have gone further on the road to Heaven and know more about Christ and the way of salvation. Yet, for the most part, a wounded conscience, like a wounded stag, delights to be alone that it may bleed in secret. It is very hard to get at a man under conviction of sin. He retires so far into himself that it is impossible to follow him. Ah, you poor mourners, I know how you try to conceal your pains! I will tell you one reason why you do not like to tell your mother, your sister, your brother. It is because you think your feelings are so *strange*—you suppose that *nobody* ever felt like you—you have the notion that you must be the worst person that ever lived and, therefore, you are ashamed to tell what you feel for fear your friends should kick you out of their society.

Ah, poor Soul. You do not know! You do not know! We have all been on your road. When you tell of your sin, you put us in memory of the way in which we talked, perhaps 25 years ago, or more, when we, too, felt sin a burden as you feel it now. When you tell us of the greatness of your sin and think that we shall surely despise you and never speak to you again, tears of joy are in our eyes to think that you feel as we did! We are glad to discover your tender and contrite spirit—we only wish that thousands felt as you do! Do you not remember what George Whitefield said when his brother at the dinner table said that he was a lost soul? Mr. Whitefield said, “Thank God,” and his brother wondered why.

“Why?” said Whitefield, “Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.” The more black you think yourself to be, the brighter is our hope of you! When you poor tremblers give yourselves an awful character, we know it is correct and we do not wish to contradict you, but we are glad to hear you say it and to know that you feel it, because now we see in you that which will prepare you to value a precious Christ! A man who says, “I am well clothed,” is not likely to accept Christ’s right-

eousness. But when he cries, "How naked I am, how useless are these fig leaves," He is the man for Christ's robes!

When you meet with a man who says, "I am full. I feast on my own righteousness," what is the good of inviting him to the Gospel banquet? You *must* invite him, for you are *commanded* to do so, but he will refuse to come. But when you meet with another who is hungry, faint and ready to die—ah, *there* is the man for your money! Bid him come where the oxen and the fatlings are killed and all things are ready! His mouth is watering while you speak to him and he will come with you and sit down at the banquet of the King! We are glad, poor Sinner, to hear your tale and, therefore, the next time you meet with a Christian, I would advise you to tell him a little of it.

But still, that is not what you most need. You need to lay bare your deep sorrow before your *God* and, oh, if you do it, there stands the promise, "He that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." Confession before God was never sincerely offered but absolution from the Most High was sure to follow! Remember, even though you do not go and tell the Lord, He knows already and, therefore, concealment is in vain! He needs not your confession for His information, but for *your* benefit. And if you do not confess to Him, you certainly will never obtain pardon, for there is not between the covers of the holy Bible a single intimation that God will ever pardon unconfessed sin! If you cover and cloak it—and feel no repentance about it and do not bring it to Christ—you cannot expect to receive mercy from the offended Lord.

Now, it happens with some, that, though they are conscious of sin, they do not confess it. And what is the result? Why, it increases their misery! It is impossible that you should find peace while sin continues to gather in your soul. It is a festering wound—the surgeon's knife must be let in, there cannot be rest until it is so. I have known a sinner, before confession of sin, feel as if he could lay violent hands upon himself, so intense was his anguish. Well do I remember repeating to myself the words of the Prophet, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life," for of all the tortures in this world, an awakened conscience, pressed down with a sense of guilt, is the worst!

The Spanish Inquisition invented cruel racks and thumbscrews, but there is no inquisitor like a man's own conscience, for it can put the screw upon the soul to the uttermost degree. Let a man's conscience loose upon him and at once the worm commences to gnaw and the fire begins to burn. They used, in olden times, to ascribe the torment of Hell to the devil—but we do not need any devil for that—conscience can measure out an infinite misery. Let but remorse lay its thongs of wire upon a man and it will scar him and gash him to the very soul! So long as a man continues silent before God and does not admit his sin—if the Lord has really begun to deal with him—he will have to suffer more and more from the pangs of conscience.

But then, increase of sorrow accompanied by this silence is a very dangerous piece of business. I spoke cheerfully just now of those of you who

are under a sense of sin, but it was only in the hope that you would go to God, through Jesus Christ, and confess your sin. But if you refuse to do so, your position is one of very great danger. “What danger?” you ask. Why, if sin remains festering within you and your sorrow increases, you will come to despair altogether—and that is an awful prospect, indeed. You remember John Bunyan’s picture of the man in the iron cage? There is not, in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” an incident more terrible!

Now, you are forging the bars of a cage for yourself as long as you refuse to acknowledge your guilt before God. Those who are in the iron cage of despair will tell you that they delayed to acknowledge sin, that they refused to accept Christ, that they suppressed their feelings and so brought themselves into bondage. They were pleased to hear ministers preach about conviction of sin and speak of deep sorrow and the like—but they did not care to be told that it was *their* duty, then and there, to believe in Jesus! They could not endure that doctrine! They liked to be comforted in the notion that there was something good in feeling a sense of sin, *apart* from believing—whereas, if a soul will not believe in Christ, its sense of sin may be an *evil* instead of a benefit to it!

Nothing can be good that is unsalted with faith. “With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt.” And if the salt of faith is absent, the sacrifice is unacceptable. We have known some who, through getting into despair, have afterwards fallen into utter hardness of heart. They used to be malleable. They used to feel the strokes of the Divine hammer. Now they feel nothing and are as hard as the blacksmith’s anvil. They have got into such a condition that they wickedly say, if God will save them they will be saved, but they have nothing to do with it. They once were tender—now they are presumptuous. They say, “there is no hope” and, therefore, on the theory of the old proverb that they may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, in all probability they will go on to commit worse sins than ever.

Some of the biggest sinners that have ever disgraced the name of humanity have been persons who were once tender of conscience and were on the point of conversion—but they did violence to conviction, came to despair of ever entering Heaven—and in the end determined that as they must go to Hell, they would go there with a high hand and an outstretched arm! He who has seen Heaven’s gate open before him, but has not stepped in, is the man who, above all others, is likely to find the hottest place in Hell!

You may think it strange for me to say so, but I know it is so, for such persons go by the way of despair into hardness of heart and then into the grossest transgression. Yes, and this is the back door to atheism, for when a man feels that God and he can never be at peace—when he has made up his mind that he never will confess his sin—what is the first thing that he does to comfort himself? He says—“There is no God.” And what does the declaration, “There is no God,” mean? It means this—that the man feels that he would be much more happy if there were no God! That is what it means and nothing more. It is the man’s wish, rather than

his creed, and he wishes it because he despairs and his heart has grown hard.

Oh, when God makes your heart soft as wax, mind who puts the seal upon it! If the Spirit of the living God sets not the seal of deep repentance and holy faith upon the softened soul, there is another that will put the seal of despair and perhaps of atheism and of defiant sin upon it! And then woe was the day to you that you ever were born! Refusal to confess is a perilous thing for your soul! I am sure that when a man begins to be awakened to a sense of sin, if he tarries long in that condition, he is being entangled, moment by moment, in the Satanic web. The devil cares little about careless sinners. "Let them alone," he says, "they will come to me by-and-by!" And as for very religious people who possess no true godliness, the devil does not bother them, either. He says, "No, let the hypocrites be in peace. They are going my way as nicely as possible. Why should I awaken them by causing them mistrust as to their state?"

But the moment that souls are startled into a sense of sin, the devil says to himself, "I shall lose them," and so he plies all his arts and uses all his craft, if by any means he may prevent their escape. Man, now is your time to flee away to the City of Refuge without tarrying even for an hour, for even *now* all the devils in Hell are after you! They did not trouble *about* you before, but they are after you now with sevenfold energy! Close in with Christ, then, and at once escape them all! Oh, may the Spirit of God enable you to find eternal mercy through the confession of your sin to God and looking to Christ for mercy—the mercy which He is so willing to give now!

This is the last point. There is no hope, then, of any comfort to a bruised heart except by its confessing its guilt. I would earnestly urge upon every one conscious of sin to go with troubled heart and heaving bosom and confess his transgression to the Lord at once. I would do it in detail if I were you. I find it sometimes profitable to myself to read the Ten Commandments and to think over my sins against each one of them. What a list it is—and how it humbles you in the dust to read it over! When you come to that Commandment—"You shall not commit adultery," "Ah," you say, "I have never been guilty *there*." But when you are told by the Savior that a lustful *glance* breaks that command, how it alters all!

Then you perceive that fleshly desires and imaginations are all sins and you humble yourself in the dust. You read, also, "You shall not kill."—"Well," you say, "I never *killed* anyone." But you change your tune when you hear that, "He that is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer." When you see the *spirituality* of the Law and the way in which you have broken *all* the Commandments 10,000 times over, be sure to confess it all right sorrowfully! I find it good to look all round, sometimes, and think, "I am a father. There are my sins against my children. Have I trained them up for God as I should? I am a husband. There are sins in that relationship. I am an employer. There are sins in that position. How have I acted towards my servants? I am a pastor. How many sins occur in that relationship?"

Why, you will not look around you, if God opens your eyes, without being helped to see what you ought to confess! Take the very limbs of your body and they will accuse you—sins of the brain in evil thoughts! Sins of the eyes in idle glances! Sins of this little naughty member, the tongue, which does more mischief than all the rest! There is no member without its own special sins. There are sins of the ear—how often have we heard the Gospel, but heard it in vain? On the other hand, have we not too often lent a willing ear to unholy words and to wicked stories against our neighbors? I need not read over the calendar of our offenses from this pulpit—go and write it out in your closet—and pour out a flood of tears over it.

If you are willing to confess, everything will help you to confession, and there is good reason for doing it at once. May the Holy Spirit work with His most tender influences to melt your heart into contrition! Remember, while you are confessing, that each one of your sins has a world of evil in it. There is a mine of sin in every little sin. You have taken up a spider's nest sometimes—one of those little money-spinner's nests—and you have opened it. What thousands of spiders you find hanging down and hastening away in many directions! What a myriad of them! So in every sin there is a host of sins. There is a conglomeration of many kinds of evil in every transgression, therefore be humbled on account of each one. Confess your iniquities before God and accept the consequences as being your righteous due.

There stands the block and there is the place for your neck—put it down, and say, “Lord, I submit to my sentence and if You bid the headsmen strike, I cannot complain.” Go before God as the citizens of Calais came before the English king, with ropes about their necks! Submit yourselves to the chastisement due to your offense and then make an appeal *ad misericordiam*, to the mercy of God alone, and say, “For Christ's sake—for His blood's sake—have mercy upon me!”

There is no man, woman, or child in this Tabernacle who shall do that tonight who shall be rejected, for, “Him that comes to Me,” says Christ, “I will in nowise cast out.” And this is the right way of coming—the way of confessing your sin and acknowledging the evil of it—and turning to the great Substitute for deliverance! Say that you deserve to be sent to Hell and cast yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, trusting in the great Surety and Sacrifice, and you shall be accepted in and through Him! This is the way of life and he who runs therein shall find salvation! May the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, lead every one of you without exception to mourn your sin and rest in Jesus. Amen.

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TERRIBLE CONVICTIONS AND GENTLE DRAWINGS NO. 313

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 6, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring
all the day long. For day and night Your hand was
heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.”
Psalm 32:3, 4.***

David here describes a very common experience among convicted sinners. He was subjected to extreme terrors and pangs of conscience. These terrors were continual. They scared him at night with visions—they terrified him all day with dark and gloomy forebodings. “Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” His pain was so extreme that when he resorted to prayer he could scarcely utter an articulate word. There were groans that could not be uttered within his spirit. And hence he calls his prayer roaring—a “roaring all the day long.” Wherever he was, his spirit seemed to be always sighing, sending a full torrent of melancholy groans upwards towards God. A “roaring all the day long.”

So far did this groaning proceed, that at last his bodily frame began to show evidences of it. He grew old and that not merely in the lines of the countenance and the falling in of the cheeks, but his very bones seemed as if they partook of the suffering. He became like an old man before his time. We have heard of some who through severe trouble have had their hair bleached in a single night. But here was a man who did not show merely externally, but even internally, the heavy pressure of grief, on account of sin. His bones grew old and the sap of his life, the animal spirits, were all dried up—his “moisture was turned into the drought of summer.”

So intimate is the connection between the body and the soul, that when the soul suffers extremely, the body must be called to endure its part of grief. Verily, in this case it was but simple justice, for David had sinned with his body and with his soul, too. By fornication he had defiled his members. He had looked out from his eyes with lustful desires and had committed iniquity with his body. Now the frame which had become the instrument of unrighteousness becomes a vehicle of punishment and his body bears its share of misery—“my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.”

We gather from what David says in this Psalm and indeed in all these seven penitential Psalms that his convictions on account of his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of Uriah, were of the deepest and most poignant character and that the terrors he experienced were indescribable, filling his soul with horror and dismay.

Now, this morning, I propose to deal with this case, so common among those who are under conviction of sin. There are many, who, when the Lord is bringing them to Himself, are alarmed by reason of the hardness of the stroke with which He smites them and the sternness of the sentence which He pronounces against them. After having dealt very solemnly with that character, I shall then turn and spend a few moments in trying to comfort another class of persons, who, strange to say, are without comfort because they do not have these terrors and are unhappy because they have never experienced this unhappiness. Strange perversity of human nature—that when God sends the terrors we doubt—and when he withholds them we doubt none the less. May God the Spirit bless my discourse doubly to these two different conditions of men.

I. First, then, let me address myself with loving kindness to those who are now **THE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S REBUKE AND THE TERRORS OF GOD'S LAW.** To you I would speak on this wise—first, detect the causes of your terror. And secondly, tell you God's design in subjecting you there, and then point you to the great remedy.

1. As for the causes of your terror they are many and perhaps in your case the cause may be so peculiar that the wit of man may not be able to discover it. Nevertheless, the remedy which I have to propound at the end will most assuredly be adapted to your case, for it is a remedy which reaches all diseases and is a panacea for all ills. You tell me you are sore troubled by reason of conviction and that your convictions of sin are attended by the most terrible and gloomy thoughts. I am not at a loss to tell you why it is.

I shall this morning borrow my divisions from quaint old Thomas Fuller, whose book happened to be thrown in my way this week by Providence. As I cannot say better things than he said, I shall borrow much of his description of the causes of the terrors of conviction. First, those wounds must be deep which are given by so strong a hand as that of God. Remember, Sinner, it is God that is dealing with you. When you lay dead in your sins He looked on you and now he has begun not only to look, but to smite. He is now wounding you with the design of afterwards making you whole. He is killing you that He may afterwards make you spiritually alive.

You have now entered the battle with no other than the Almighty God. Do you wonder, then, that when He smites, His blows fell you to the

ground? Are you astonished that when He wounds, His wounds are deep and hard to heal? Besides, remember it is an angry God that you have to deal with—One who has had patience with you in your sins these thirty, forty, or fifty years, and now He has come forth Himself, to compel you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion and to take you captive by His justice, that He may afterwards set you free by His Grace. Is it any marvel, then, that when an angry God—a God who has restrained His anger these many years—comes out in battle against you, you find it hard to resist Him and that His blows bruise you and break your bones and make your spirit feel as if it must verily die, crushed beneath the mighty hand of a cruel one?

Be not astonished at all your terrors. God on Sinai, when He came to give the Law, was terrible. But God on Sinai, when He comes to bring the Law into the conscience and to strike it home, must be more terrible. When God did but stretch out His hand with the two tables of stone, Moses did exceedingly fear and quake. But when He throws those tables of stone upon you and makes you feel the weight of that Law which you have broken, it is but little marvel that your spirit is bruised and mangled and dashed into a thousand slivers.

Again—it is no wonder that you are sore troubled when you remember the place where God has wounded you. He has not wounded you in your hand, or in your head, or in your foot. He is striking at your *conscience*—the eye of your soul. He wounds you in your *heart*—in your inmost soul. Every wound that God gives to the convicted man is a wound in the very heart—in the very vitals. He cuts into the core of the liver and makes His darts cut through the gall and parches your inward parts with agony. It is not now a disease that has laid hold merely on your skin or flesh, but it is something which makes the lifeblood boil with hot anguish. He has now shot His arrows into your inmost spirit, thrust His fingers into your eyes and put out their light.

Oh, you need not wonder that your pains are fearful, when God thus smites you on the most tender part of a conscience which He has made tender by His Grace. He may well smart, that has salt rubbed into his wounds. You have been lashed with the ten-thronged whip of the Law till your heart is all bare and bleeding. Now God is scattering, as it were, the salt and making all those wounds to tingle and smart. Oh, you might wonder, if you did *not* feel, when God is thus casting bitterness into the fountain of your life!

Besides these, there is a third cause for your pain, namely, that Satan is now busy upon you. He sees that God is wounding you and he does not wish that those wounds shall heal. He therefore thrusts in his fangs and tears open the flesh and tries to pour his poison into that very flesh which

God has been wounding with the sword. “Now,” says he, “that God is against him will I be against him, too. God is driving him to sadness. I will drive him farther still and urge him to despair. God has brought him to the precipice, to the edge of his self-righteousness and bid him look down and see the yawning gulf. Now,” says Satan, “one push more and over he will go.”

He has come forth, therefore, with all his strength, hoping that the hour of your conviction shall be also the hour of your condemnation. He will tempt you, perhaps, as he did Job, till you cry, “My soul chooses strangling rather than life.” He will seek to bring you low, like Jeremiah, until you are ready to wish you had never been born, rather than that you should suffer like this. You can well understand, if a man had been wounded, that it were hard work for the most skillful surgeon to heal him if some vile wretch should tear away the liniments and rend open the wounds as fast as they began to close.

Oh, pray against Satan! Cry aloud to your God to deliver you from this Fiend, for he is the cause of much of your distress. And if you were rid of him, it may be that your wound would soon heal and you would find peace. But, remember, the remedy that I shall have to propound to you is a remedy against devils. It is the Fiend’s confusion as well as sin’s destruction. Let them come against you as they may. The remedy I shall have to propound can heal the wounds of Satan and the tearing of his fangs, as well as those sorrows of soul which God has brought upon you.

You may discover a yet further reason why you are so sore wounded when you consider the terrible nature of that weapon with which God has wounded you. He has not made a little gash with some slender instrument, but if I understand your case rightly, He has brought against you the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Its Word condemns you. Its threats strike you like barbed arrows. You turn to the Law as it is here revealed and it is altogether on a smoke against you. You turn to the promises and even they wound you, because you feel you have no right to them. You look at the most precious passages, but they do not relieve your grief, but they rather increase it, because you cannot realize them and lay hold upon them for yourself.

Now this is God using His Word against you and you know what a weapon that is—“the sword of the Spirit, which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” They are cut deep that are wounded by the Word of God. If it were my words which had brought you into this fear, you might soon get rid of it. But these are God’s Words. Were it a father’s curse, it might be hard to give you comfort. But it is God’s curse that has gone out against you—the curse of the God who made you.

He Himself has told you that the sinner shall not stand in His sight and that He hates the workers of iniquity. He has Himself brought home to your conscience some of those awful passages—"God is angry with the wicked every day." "He will by no means clear the guilty." "Our God is a consuming fire." "The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God." With such weapons as these—with red-hot shot fired against you with all the power of the Spirit—it remains no longer a wonder that your soul should be sharply racked and your very bones should wax old through your roaring all the day long.

Furthermore, there is another cause for this deep disease of conviction, namely, the foolishness of the patient. Physicians will tell you that they can heal one man vastly more quickly than another, even though the disease be precisely the same and the same remedies be used. There are some men who help the physician by the quietude of their spirits—by the ease and resignation of their minds, their heart—and this gives "health to the navel and marrow to the bones." But other men are fretful, disturbed, vexed, anxious, questioning this and questioning that. And then the remedies themselves cease to have their proper effect.

It is even so with you. You are a foolish patient. You will not do that which would cure you, but you do that which aggravates your woe. You know that if you would cast yourselves upon Christ Jesus you would have peace of conscience at once. But instead of that, you are meddling with doctrines too high for you—trying to pry into mysteries which the angels have not known. And so you turn your dizzy brain and thus help to make your heart yet more singularly sad. You know that you are trying still to work out a righteousness of your own and this is making your wounds stinking and corrupt.

You know, too, that you are looking more to your faith than you are to the Object of your faith. You are looking more to what you *feel* than to what Christ felt. You spend more time in looking at your convictions than you do at Christ's vicarious sacrifice upon the Cross. You are a foolish patient. You are doing that which aggravates your complaint. Oh, that you were wiser and these terrors and these pangs might be over! You would not tarry so long in the prison if you would but use the means of escape, instead of seeking to dash your head against its strong walls—walls that will not move with all your ravings, but which will only break and bruise and wound you the more.

You seek to file your fetters and you rivet them. You seek to unbind them, yourself, and you thrust them the deeper into your flesh. You grasp the hammer and here is the fetter about your wrist. You think to snap it, but you send the iron through the flesh and make it bleed. You make yourself worse by all your attempts to make yourself better—so that much

of your sorrowful conviction is due to your own absurdity—your own ignorance and folly.

And, once more, I must give you another reason. There is no wonder that you are under great and terrible pain when under conviction, for it is a disease in which nothing can ever help you but that one remedy. All the joys of nature will never give you relief. I have heard of some vain man who once wore the gown of a clergyman, who was “visited by a poor creature under distress of mind, in the days of Whitfield.” He said to the penitent, “You have been among the Methodists.” “I know I have,” said he. “Then don’t go among those fellows. They have made you mad.” “But what am I to do to get rid of the distress of mind I now feel?” “Attend the theater,” said he. “Go off to balls. Take to gaming and the like. And in that way you will soon dissipate your woe.”

But as he that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart. It is taking away a man’s garment to make him warm. It is heaping snow upon his head to dissolve the frostbite, sending him back to the hog sty that he may stay his hunger, thrusting him into the kennel that he may get rid of the stench that offends his nostrils. No, if these wounds be truly from God, sinful pleasures will make you worse instead of better. And even the usual comforts of life will lose all power to console you. The words of the most tender wife, the most loving husband, the mercies of Providence, the blessings of home—all these will be of no avail to you to cure this disease. There is one remedy for it. But none of these will so much as touch it.

Quaint old Fuller uses language to this effect—when Adam had sinned, he became suddenly plunged in misery. The birds sang as sweetly, the flowers bloomed as brightly and the air was as balmy and Eden quite as blissful. But Adam was in misery. He had un-paradised Paradise. God had not said a word against him and yet he went and hid himself under the trees of the garden to find a shelter there. There was nothing in the whole garden that could give Adam a moment’s delight, because he was under a sense of sin. And so will it be with you. If you could be put in Paradise, you would not be happier. Now that God has convicted you of sin, there is only one cure for you and that one cure you must have. For you may ramble the world round and you will never find another. You may try your best with all the pleasures and mercies of this life, but you would be in torment, even though you could be taken to Heaven, unless this one remedy should appease your aching heart.

2. I have thus, I think, given you sufficient reasons for the great poignancy of your grief. But now, secondly, what are God’s designs in thus plunging you deeply in the mire? He does not deal so with all His people. Some He brings in a very gentle way to Himself. Why, then, does He deal

harshly with you? The answers to this question are these—there are some questions best unanswered. There are some dealings of God about which we have no right to ask a question. If He draws you to Heaven, though it were through Hell itself, you ought to be content. So long as you are but saved, however fearful the process, you ought not to murmur. But I may give you some reasons, after all.

In the first place, it is because you were such a stony-hearted sinner, so dead, so careless—that nothing else ever would have awakened you but this trumpet. It would have been of no use to bring out the Gospel with its melodious notes. It would have been of little service for David to play on his harp before you. You needed to be aroused, and therefore it is that God has hurled his thunderbolts at you one after another and has been pleased to make Heaven and earth shake before you that you might be made to tremble. You were so desperately set on mischief, so stolid, so indifferent, that if saved, God must save you in such a way, or else not at all.

And then again—the Lord knows that there is that in your heart which would take you back to your old sins and so He is making them bitter to you. He is burning you, that you may be like the burnt child that dreads the fire. He is letting you see the disease in its full climax, that you may from henceforth avoid the company in which that disease was found. He has taught you the full evil of your heart, the full obnoxiousness of sin, in order that from this day forth you may become a more careful walker and may the more zealously hate every false way.

Besides, it may possibly happen that He designs this out of love to your soul, to make you the more happy afterwards. He is filling your mouth with wormwood and breaking your teeth with gravel, that you may have a richer appreciation of the luscious flavor of pardon when He pours it into your heart. He is making you feed on ashes—the serpent's meat—that when you come to eat children's meat—the bread of Heaven—your joy may be multiplied sevenfold. I am one of those poor souls who for five years led a life of misery and was almost driven to distraction. But I can heartily say that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction.

I have to bless God for every terror that ever seared me by night and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since. For now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a trouble as that which bowed me to the very earth and made me creep like a very beast upon the ground by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered. I never can, except I be sent to Hell, know more of agony than I have known. And now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that “no con-

demnation” which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief.

Blessed are You, O God, forever! You have, by those black days, like a dreary wind made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! The shore is never so welcome as when you mount it with the foot of a shipwrecked mariner just escaped from the sea—food never so sweet as when you sit at the table after days of hunger. Water is never so refreshing as when you arrive at the end of a parched desert and have known what it is to thirst.

And yet one other reason let me give you and I need not keep you longer on this point. Possibly, God is bringing you thus, my dear Friends, because He means to make great use of you. We are all God’s weapons against the enemy. All His saints are used as instruments in the Holy War. But there are some whom God uses in the thickest part of the battle. They are His swords whom He wields in His hands and strikes innumerable blows with them. These He anneals again and again and again. He is annealing you. He is making you meet to be a mighty one in His Israel by-and-by. Oh, How sweetly you will be able to talk to others like yourself, when you once get comfort. And oh, how much you will love Him when He once puts away your sin! Will you not?

Oh, I think I see you the first day after your sins are forgiven. Why you will be wanting to preach—I should not wonder if you will be going out into the streets, or hurrying to your old companions and saying to them, “My sins are washed away.” Why there will be nothing too hard for you. The Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. These are Highlanders that carry everything before them. They know the rivers of sin, they know the glens of grief and now that all their sins are washed away, they know the heights of self-consecration and of pure devotion. They can do all things through Christ, who strengthens them—the Christ who has forgiven them.

Do you not think I have just driven the nail home here? Do you not feel in your spirit, that if Jesus would forgive you, you would do everything for Him? Oh, I know if I should give out that hymn—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace,”***

you would say, “Ah, that I will. If ever He forgives such a wretch as I am and takes such a poor worm as me to His bosom, nothing shall be too hard for me. I will give Him all in this life and I will give an eternity of praise in the life to come.”

3. But now I am impatient to come to the word of comfort which I have for you great sinners. Sinners distressed on account of sin and bowed down with terror—there is a way of salvation for you, a way open and accessible—accessible now! You may now have all your griefs relieved and all your sorrows may flee away. Listen to the remedy! And hear it as from the lip of God and take care that you avail yourself of it now, for the longer you tarry, the harder will it be to avail yourself of it.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Do you understand me? Trust Christ and you are saved. Trust Him now and all your sins are gone. There is not one left. Past, present and to come—all gone. “Am I to feel nothing?” No, not as a preparation for Christ. Trust Jesus and you are saved. “Are there no good works required of me?” None, none—good works shall follow afterwards. The remedy is a simple one. Not a compound mixture of your things *and* Christ. It is just this—the blood of Jesus Christ.

There is Jesus on His Cross. His hands are bleeding. His heart is bursting. His limbs are tortured. The powers of His soul are full of agony. Those sufferings were offered to God in the place of our sufferings and, “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Believe on Him now. “But I may not,” says one. You *may*, no, not only you *may*, but you are condemned if you do *not* believe Him now. “I cannot,” says one. Can not believe your Lord? Is He a liar? Can you not believe His power to save? The Son of God in agony and yet no power to save!! “I cannot think He shed His blood for me,” says such an one. You are *commanded* to trust Him. You shall read your title clear in Him afterwards. Your business *now* is simply with Him, not with your interest in Him. That shall be known afterwards.

Trust Him now and you are saved. Faith is believing that Christ died for me. If Christ died for every man, then every Arminian, saved or unsaved, has the true faith—for he believes Christ died for every man. We as Calvinists do not believe this—but we believe faith consists in trusting Christ and whoever trusts Christ shall know the effect of that Truth of God—that Jesus died for him and he is saved. Trust Jesus now. Just as you are, fall flat on your face before Him. Away with that last dirty rag of yours—that last good work. Away with that last filthiness—that last good thought. Your good thoughts and your good works are rags and filthiness.

Come just as you are. Naked, lost, ruined, helpless, poor. If you are so bad that I cannot describe you and you can not describe yourself, yet come. Mercy’s free, mercy’s *free*! I am never afraid of preaching grace too free, or a Christ too willing to save. You do want a Mediator to come to God with, but you want none to come to Christ with. You do need some preparation if you are going to the Father. You want none if you are com-

ing to the Son. Come as you are. And God Himself must be untrue, His Throne must have foundations apart from righteousness, Christ must be false and this Bible a lie, before one soul that trusts Jesus can ever perish. There is the remedy! By the power of the Holy Spirit avail yourself of it. Now God help you and you are fully saved.

II. I shall now want your patient attention for another five or ten minutes, while I take upon myself what was a double duty. Because I was afraid to shout the last part of the sermon, the first part might do hurt. In the last part of the sermon I have to deal with some who have NEVER FELT THESE TERRORS AT ALL and WHO, STRANGE TO SAY IT, WISH THEY HAD FELT THEM.

I suppose I may have conversed now with somewhere verging upon two thousand souls who have been brought to know the Lord under my instrumentality and I have very often noticed that a considerable proportion of these and of the best members of our Church, too, were brought to know the Lord not by legal terrors, but by gentler means. Sitting one day last week, I saw some twenty-three and I should think that there might be as many as twelve out of the twenty-three whose convictions of sin were not distinctly marked with the terrors of the Law.

An excellent young woman comes before me—"What was the first thought that set you really seeking the Savior?" "Sir, it was Christ's lovely character that first made me long to be His disciple. I saw how kind, how good, how disinterested, how self-sacrificing He was and that made me feel how different I was to what He was. I thought, Oh, I am not like Jesus! And that sent me up to my chamber and I began to pray!" I often have cases like this—I preach a terrible sermon upon the Law and I find sinners get comfort under it. I preach another sermon upon Election and I find poor sinners get awakened under it. God blesses the Word in the very opposite manner to which I thought it would be blessed and He brings very, very many to know their natural state by things which we should have thought would rather have comforted than alarmed them.

"The first religious impression I ever had," said another, "that set me seeking the Savior, was this. A young companion of mine fell into sin and I knew that I was likely to do the same if I was not kept by someone stronger than myself. I therefore sought the Lord, not on account of past sin at first, but because I was afraid of some great future sin. God visited me and I then felt conviction of sin and was brought to Christ." Singularly enough, too, I have met with at least a score of persons who found Christ and then mourned their sins more afterwards than they did before. Their convictions have been more terrible after they have known their interest in Christ than they were at first. They have seen the evil after they have escaped from it. They had been plucked out of the miry clay and their feet

set on a rock, and then afterwards, they have seen more fully the depth of that horrible pit out of which they have been snatched.

But it is not true that all who are saved suffer these convictions and terrors. There are a considerable number who are drawn by the cords of love and the hands of a man. There are some who, like Lydia, have their hearts opened not by the crowbar of conviction, but by the pick-lock of Divine Grace. Sweetly drawn, almost silently enchanted by the loveliness of Jesus, they say, "Draw me and I will run after you."

And now you ask me the question—"Why has God brought me to Himself in this gentle manner?" Again I say—there are some questions better unanswered than answered. God knows best the reason why He does not give you these terrors. Leave that question with Him. But I may tell you an anecdote. There was a man once who had never felt these terrors and he thought within himself—"I never can believe I am a Christian unless I do." So he prayed to God that he might feel them and he did feel them and what do you think is his testimony? He says, "Never, never do that, for the result was fearful in the extreme." If he had but known what he was asking for, he would not have asked for anything so foolish.

I knew a Christian man once who prayed for trouble. He was afraid he was not a Christian, because he had no trouble. But when the trouble came, he soon discovered how foolish he was to be asking for a thing which God, in mercy, had kept back from him. O be not foolish enough to sigh for misery. Thank God that you go to Heaven along the walls of salvation. Bless the Master that He does not call you in the cloudy and dark day, but brings you gently to Himself. And be content, I pray, to be called by the music of the voice of love.

May it not happen that Jesus Christ has thus brought you for another reason? He knew that you were very weak and your mind was very frail and if you had felt these terrors you might have gone mad. And you might have been in a lunatic asylum now, if you had passed through them. It is true His Grace could have kept you, but God always tempers the will to the shorn lamb and he will not treat the weak ones as He does the strong ones.

And I think again, it may be that if God had given you these feelings you would have grown self-righteous. You would have trusted in them, so He has not given you them. You have not got them to build on, thank God for that, for now you must build on Christ. You say—"If I had felt these things, I think I should have been saved." Yes, then you would have trusted in your *feelings*. The Lord knew that, and therefore He has not given you them. He has given you nothing at all, therefore you must now rest on Christ and nowhere else but there. Oh, do so now!

It may be, again, that He has kept you there because He means to make you useful—useful to some who, like yourself, have come gradually to Him. You can say to them when you find them in distress, “Why Jesus Christ brought me gently and therefore be of good cheer, He is bringing you, too.” I always like to see in my Church some of all sorts. Now there is a brother I could point out this morning who has never known in his life and I think never will know, about the plague of his own heart to such an extent as some of us have learnt. He has never gone through fire and through water, but on the contrary is a loving-hearted spirit. A man who spends and is spent in his Master’s service—he knows more of the heights of communion than some of us. For my part—though I do not want to change places with anybody—I think I could trust my Master if I had his experience, as well as I can trust Him with my own. For what has *experience* to do with it after all? We do not rest on *experiences* and frames and doings—

**“Our hopes are fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”**

Now to you then, in conclusion, I preach the same remedy. Poor Soul, you long to be troubled. Yes, but I’d rather have you long to get relief. Jesus Christ hangs on the Cross and if you will trust Him, you shall be saved. Just as you are, as I said to my other friend just now—just as you are, take Christ as He is. Now never think about getting ready for Christ. He does not want anything of yours. You need not trim and dress yourselves to come to Christ. Even your frames and feelings are not the wedding garment. Come naked. “But Sir, I am so careless”—come careless, then. “But I am so hard-hearted”—come hard-hearted, then. “But I am so thoughtless”—come thoughtless, then, and trust Christ now.

If you trust Him, you will not trust a deceiver. You will not have put your soul into the hand of one who will let it fall and perish. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” whether convicted by terror or by love, for “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not—feel what he may, and be in terror though he may—“shall be damned.”

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

CONFESSION OF SIN ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASES OF DR. PRITCHARD AND CONSTANCE KENT NO. 641

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I acknowledged my sin unto You and my iniquity have
I not hid. I said, I will confess
my transgressions unto the Lord. And You forgave
the iniquity of my sin.”
Psalm 32:5.*

DAVID’S grief for sin was long and terrible. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame—“his bones waxed old.” “His moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” No remedy could he find until he made a full confession before the Throne of heavenly Grace. He tells us that for a time he kept silent and then his heart became more and more filled with grief—like some mountain lake whose outlet is blocked up—his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow.

He dreaded to confront his sin. He fashioned excuses. He endeavored to divert his thoughts by giving his mind to the cares of his kingdom or the pleasures of his court—but it was all to no purpose. The rankling arrow made the wound bleed anew and made the gash more wide and deep every day. Like a festering sore his anguish gathered and increased and as he would not use the lancet of *confession*, his spirits became more and more full of torment and there was no rest in his bones because of sin.

At last it came to this—he must return unto his God in humble penitence or he must die outright. So he hastened to the Mercy Seat and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the eyes of the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of Divine forgiveness. The bones which had been broken were made to rejoice and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. See, dear Friends, the value of a truthful Grace-worked confession of sin is to be prized above all price, for he that confesses his sin and forsakes it shall find mercy!

Now it is a well known fact that when God is pleased to bestow upon men any choice gift, Satan, who is the god of counterfeits, is sure very soon to produce a base imitation. It will be true in appearance, but worthless in reality—his object is deception and full often he succeeds. How many there are who have made a worthless confession and yet are relying upon it as though it were a work of Divine Grace! They have come before God as a matter of form and have said, “Lord, have mercy upon us, mis-

erable sinners.” And having done so, they imagine that they have received Divine absolution! But alas, alas—it is easy to be deceived and difficult to cultivate within one’s heart that genuine repentance which is the work of God the Holy Spirit!

May God grant us His gracious assistance while we describe two widely different sorts of confession which have been very vividly brought before us during the past week. And then we will have a few words upon the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy which is vested in God—who gives forgiveness to those whose confession is sincere.

I. Let me set before you TWO SORTS OF CONFESSIONS. At this present moment, unhappily, two persons are lying under sentence of death for murders of the most atrocious character. Without wishing to say a single word with regard to the state of the soul of either of these persons—for into that it is no business of mine to pry—it seems to me that the published reports of their cases may very properly furnish us with *types* of two sorts of persons.

It is remarkable that two such cases as those of Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent should be before the public eye at the same moment and that the points of contrast in their confessions should be so exceedingly clear. I cannot but hope and pray that we may gather some few lessons of warning from crimes which have, no doubt, exercised a great influence for evil upon the masses of our country.

The confession which has been made by Dr. PRITCHARD may be taken as a specimen of those which are full often made by impenitent sinners and which can never be regarded as acceptable before the Throne of the Most High. Here is a man who is accused of the atrocious crime of murdering his wife and his mother-in-law. And when he answers to the indictment, we are not astonished to hear him plead, “Not Guilty!” I am far from being severe upon him for so pleading—but viewing him as a *type*, I would remind you that thousands of those who call themselves “miserable sinners” in our public services—if they were called to plead before the bar of God, would have the effrontery to say, “Not Guilty.”

They might not use the exact words. Very probably they would use terms having the opposite meaning, but their heart-plea would be, “not guilty.” If they had the Law of God explained to them and they were questioned upon each Commandment—“Have you broken this? Have you broken that?”—though ready enough to confess in the gross that they have sinned, when it came to *details* they would be for denying all.

We have heard of a woman who readily allowed that she was a sinner. “O yes, Sir, we are all sinners. Just so, Sir.” But when the visitor sat down and opened the Bible, and pointing to the Commandment, said, “Have you ever had any other God save the Lord?”—she did not know that she ever had. “Had she ever taken God’s name in vain?” “O dear no, Sir, I never did anything so wicked.” Each precept was explained and she very positively claimed that she had not broken it. She had not violated the Sabbath. She had not killed anybody. She had not committed adultery. She had not borne false witness, or coveted anything.

She was altogether, in every detail, innocent—though on the whole she was quite willing to say as other people, “Oh, yes! I am a sinner! Of course, Sir, we are all sinners!” which, being interpreted, means, “I am ready to say anything you may like to put into my mouth, but I do not be-

lieve a syllable of it." The inward speech of the unconverted man is, "I am not guilty." Ask the unhumiliated transgressor, "Are you worthy of God's wrath?" and his proud heart replies, "I am not." "Are you worthy to be cast away forever from God's Presence on account of sin?" and the unbroken, uncontrite soul replies, "I am not. I am no thief, nor adulterer, nor extortioner. I have not sinned as yonder publican has done. I thank God that I am not as other men are."

Man pleads, "Not Guilty," and yet all the while, within his heart, so proud and boastful, there may readily be discerned abundant evidence of abounding sin. The leprosy is white upon his unclean brow and yet the man claims to be sound and whole. If there were no other evidence against us, the very pride which boasts of innocence would be sufficient to convict us of sin and will be so when we are taught right reason by the Holy Spirit! The guilty man whose case we are now looking upon as an illustration, endeavored, as a means of defense for himself, to involve another in the dreadful guilt and punishment of his atrocious sin.

There were very distinct signs that he would have been perfectly satisfied if the woman who had ministered to his sinful pleasures had been accused and condemned of the crime for which he alone was guilty! Certainly this is the case with the great mass of those who are compelled to acknowledge their sins. Our first parent could not deny that he had taken of the forbidden fruit, but he laid the blame upon Eve—"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Ah Adam! Where is your manliness? Where is your love to your spouse, that you would involve in the ruin her who was bone of your bone so as to escape yourself?

And she! She will not take the blame for a moment, but it is the *serpent!* She casts all the sin on him! In this first case of sin the attempt was less atrocious than in that of the prisoner before us, because there was real guilt both in the woman and in the serpent—while it does not appear that the servant girl in Pritchard's family had any share in the poisoning. However, the human heart is such that if we could really throw all the shame and blame of sin upon another who was perfectly innocent, there would be a strong temptation to do so if we might by such means be considered innocent.

No, let me show that Adam virtually did that, for he said, "The woman whom you gave me," thus virtually laying the blame of his rebellious deed upon God Himself. And God, what hand had He in Adam's eating of the fruit of the accursed tree? It was an act of Adam's free will—he did as he pleased concerning it, and the most holy God could in no sense be made partaker of his transgression. Yet, think of it! He would sooner that the great God, who is hymned of angels as the thrice Holy One, should bear the fault of his iniquity than he would bear it himself!

Such are we naturally. We may bend the knee and say we are miserable sinners, but unless the Grace of God has taught us to make a true confession we are always for shifting the burden to some other shoulder. We are always making it out that, after all, though nominally miserable sinners, we are not so bad as a great many other people! And we, naturally, have a deal saddled upon us which really is no fault of ours, but belongs to Providence—to fate, to our fellow men, to the devil, to the weather—and I know not what besides!

The convicted criminal who stands before us in our picture made no confession whatever until the case was proved and sentence pronounced. The case was clear enough, but he did his best to make it difficult. Had he been completely free from the crime, his bearing and tone could have been scarcely more confident when asserting his innocence. I admit that it was very natural that he should not aid to convict himself—it is because it is so natural that the man serves so admirably as a representative of *human nature* when it makes its impenitent confessions! When it could not avail the wretch to withhold the truth. When facts were brought out so clearly—when the jury had decided, when the judge had pronounced sentence—then, and not till then, he yielded to tears and entreaties and proffered a confession, such as it was.

So is it always with unregenerate humanity! Though cognizant of sin, we only acknowledge before the Lord that which is too glaring to be denied. Sin may be held up before the eyes of the man who is guilty of it and often he will disown his own offspring or assert that it is not what God's Word declares it to be. Holy Scripture accuses us of a thousand sins which we practically claim to be innocent of, for we flatter ourselves that the Bible puts too harsh a construction upon our actions and that we are not what it declares us to be.

When our fellow men concur in censuring our fault, we are compelled to blush, but of what value is a repentance which owes its existence to the overwhelming testimony of our fellow offenders against us? This force work is far removed from the free and ready acknowledgments of a man whose heart is touched by Divine Grace and melted by the love of Jesus. When men are upon their dying beds. When the ghosts of their iniquities haunt them. When the red hand of guilt draws the curtain. When they can almost hear the sentence of the last judgment—*then* they will make a confession—but may we not fear that it is of little value since it is wrung and extorted from them by fear of Hell and horror of the wrath to come?

True repentance, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, drops as freely as honey drops from the comb, but merely natural confessions are like the worst of the wine squeezed by force from the dregs. O dear Friends, God deliver you from ungracious confessions of sin and enable you sincerely to repent at the foot of Jesus' Cross! When the confession came in the case before us, it was very partial. He had killed one, but he professed himself guiltless of the other's death. Villain as he was on his own showing, he could go the length of owning half his crime! But then he started back and acted the liar. No, she died by accident and he, to avoid being charged unjustly—innocent creature as he was—had put the poison in the bottle afterwards!

He had the wickedness to fake wonderment that his tale was not believed and likened those who doubted him to those who would not believe the Lord of Glory! Now the confessions of unregenerate men are precisely of this sort. They will go the length of owning, if they have been drinking, or if they have broken the laws of the State, "yes, we have offended here." But the great mass of sins against God are not confessed, nor allowed to be sins at all! Men will often lay a stress upon sins of which they are not conspicuously guilty and omit those which are the most glaring. What un-renewed man thinks it a sin to forget God, to forsake the Creator's foun-

tain of living waters for the cisterns of the creature, or to live without God in the world?

And yet these are the most crying of all iniquities! To rob God of His Glory, to despise His Son, to disbelieve the Gospel, to live for self, to be self-righteous—all these are heinous evils! But what carnal man admits as much? Covetousness! Again, who ever confesses that? Thousands are guilty of it, but few will admit it even in private before the Lord. No confession will be acceptable before God unless you are willing to make a clean breast of the whole of your evil ways, words and thoughts, before the Searcher of hearts! I do not wonder if you should fail to tell others your offenses—it were not meet you should do so except when you have offended them and may make retribution by the confession.

But before God you must open all! You must roll away the stone from the mouth of that sepulcher even though your iniquity, like Lazarus, should stink! There must be no mincing the matter! Things must be called by their right names. You must be willing to feel the horrible sinfulness of sin, and, as far as you can, you must descend to the very bottom of its terrible guiltiness and acknowledge its blackness, its heinousness, its devilry, its abomination. No confession will be acceptable before God if you knowingly and willfully gloss over any sin—if you make any exceptions, or are partial with respect to any form of iniquity.

That confession which hides some sins and only confesses certain others stops one leak in the soul and opens another. Nor ought it to be forgotten that when the criminal had confessed his sin, yet still in the last confession—which we may suppose to have been true—there are words of extenuation and nothing to indicate any deep and suitable sensibility of his great transgression. He hints at reasons why he was scarcely accountable—a sort of madness and the influence of strong drink must be blamed for the crime and not the man himself. O God, You know how often in our natural confessions, before Your Grace met with us, we made wretched and mean excuses for ourselves!

We said that a strong temptation overcame us. It was an unguarded moment! It was our constitution and our besetting sins! It was our friend who led us astray! It was God's Providence which tried us—it was anything rather than ourselves! We were to blame, no doubt, but still there were extenuating circumstances. Beloved Friends! A man can never make a true confession till he feels that sin is his own sin and is willing to confess it as such! He must cease to apologize and must just stand forth before the Lord and cry, "I have sinned willfully and infamously, and here, standing in Your Presence, I acknowledge it—and if a word of apology could save my soul I dare not utter it—for I should again be guilty of a lie."

May this teach us to seek out, rather, the aggravations of our sin than fancied extenuations of it. Try to see the worst of your case, Sinner, more than to gloss it or gild it over and make it seem better than it is. All this, remember, was committed by this miserable murderer who is soon to appear before his God, not through ignorance, but in spite of a clear consciousness of the wrong of his deed. Had he been some person of a low mental organization, or of neglected intellect, there might be some plea. If, for instance, he had never been able to read and had received his only education amid thieves and vagabonds, there might have been some ex-

cuse and we might have said, "It is the sin of the community which fails to provide moral and religious instruction for the people."

But here is a man who knows better! He, I suppose, had listened to thousands of sermons. He had a knowledge of the Bible—had pretended to pray—was well taught as to the matter of right and wrong. And yet still, in defiance of all this, he sins. And to make matters worse he shows no signs of softening of heart. No tenderness, no melting—nothing of deep regret, shame, contrition, or humbleness of heart. But, he is, apparently (I say no more) as obdurate in confessing his guilt as when he was denying it.

Ah, but there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know this, that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts—if they do not spring from really contrite spirits—shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most High. Let these suffice as remarks upon an unacceptable confession. Oh Lord, let Your Holy Spirit give to the guilty one, of whom we have been speaking and to us all, that broken and contrite heart which You will accept through Jesus Christ!

The second case must now come before us. And here again I do not desire to speak anything about the state of the heart of CONSTANCE KENT. I only speak of her outward act and only of that as a symbol of true confession. Here is one avowedly guilty of a most atrocious murder, a very great and terrible crime. But when she appears in court she is brought there upon her own confession. Her life was in no danger from the witness of other people. She surrendered herself voluntarily. And when she stood before the judge, she pleaded guilty.

No doubt her anxious friends had suggested to her the desirableness of pleading, "Not guilty," hoping to save her life by failure in the evidence, or plea of insanity, or some other legal method of saving criminals from the gallows. Mark, however, how distinctly she says, "Guilty." And though the question is repeated and time is given her to retract, her reply is still the one self-condemning word, "GUILTY!"

Even so before the Lord, whenever we come to confess, we must approach Him with this cry, "Guilty, Guilty! Lord, I cannot say anything else. If Hell is my eternal portion for it, I dare say no other. The stones in the streets would cry out against me if I denied my guilt. When my memory shows me the record of my days, its truthful witness is that I have broken Your Law. And when my conscience looks at the way in which I have transgressed, it cannot say anything but this, 'You have willfully broken God's Law and you deserve His wrath.'"

Now Sinner, you shall never be at peace with God until you are willing unreservedly to plead, "Guilty." That self-righteous spirit of yours must be cast out as though it were the very devil—for it is next akin to the devil and is quite as evil—and you must be brought down humbly to lie at the foot of Jehovah's Throne and confess that you do richly deserve His wrath. You have defied His righteous Law and sinned against Him with a high hand. You must plead "Guilty," or remain guilty forever!

You shall never find pardon through Jesus Christ till you are willing, truly and really, to admit yourself a sinner. Constance Kent was anxious to free all others from the blame of her sin. Her counsel says, in open

court, "Solemnly, in the presence of Almighty God, as a person who values her own soul, she wishes me to say that the guilt is her own alone, and that her father and others who have so long suffered most unjust and cruel suspicions, are wholly and absolutely innocent."

This is well spoken. I know nothing of this young woman's heart, but using her as an illustration rather than an example, we are safe in saying that it is a very blessed sign of true repentance when the sinner cries out with David, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." There will be, in a gracious penitent, no attempt to lay the blame upon the tempter, or upon Providence—no dwelling upon circumstances, the suddenness of the temptation—or the hastiness of one's temper.

"Oh God," says the sinner, "I myself have sinned. I have nothing in the world that is so my own as my own sin. For this, my sin, I alone am accountable and I feel it. And I cannot, I dare not impeach anyone else with being guilty of my sin. I must stand in my own place before You, O God, even if that involves my eternal ruin." It will never do for you to lay the blame on your mothers and fathers because they did not teach you better—upon the minister for not being earnest enough—or upon your master for telling you to do wrong.

It is true that we may be partakers of your sins in a measure, but if you are sincerely penitent, the guilt which will strike you will not be another man's guilt, nor another man's share in your sin, but your own guilt. A sinner has not been brought truly before the Lord in humble contrition unless his cry is, "Lord! I have sinned! I have sinned so as to be guilty myself, in my own person. Have mercy upon me!" The unhappy young woman now condemned to die needed no witness to come forward to prove her guilt and ensure her conviction.

No one saw the deed. It was done so secretly that the most expert detectives were not able to find a satisfactory clue to the mystery. There may be collateral evidence to support her confession. It may, or it may not be true that her conviction would now have been certain had her confession been retracted. But she did not need that, for without any voice of man to witness, she witnessed against herself! It will never suffice for us merely to confess to the Lord what other people have seen and to feel guilty because we know that the case is reported in the neighborhood. Many people who have fallen into sin have felt very penitent because they knew they would damage their names, or lose their situations.

But to have your private sin brought before you by conscience and voluntarily, without any pressure but the burden of sin itself and the work of the Holy Spirit, to come before God and say, "Lord, You know in this matter I have offended. And though none saw me except Your eyes and mine, yet Your eyes might well flash with anger at me, while mine shall be wet with many a tear of penitence on account of it." That is what you need, Sinner! You must come before God now and let out your heart without any external pressure.

Spontaneously must your soul flow out, poured out like water before the Lord, or you must not hope that He will pardon you. She confessed all. It was a solemn moment when the judge said, "I must repeat to you, that you are charged with having willfully, intentionally and with malice killed and murdered your brother. Are you guilty or not guilty?" Yes, she

was guilty, just as the judge had put it. She did not object to those words which made the case come out so black. The willfulness?—yes, she acknowledged that. The intention, the malice?—yes, all that. The killing, the murdering—was it *just* murder?—was it nothing less?

No, nothing else. Not a word of extenuation. She acknowledges all, just as the judge puts it. She is guilty in very deed of the whole charge. Sinner, will you confess sin as God puts it? Many will confess sin after their own fashion, but will you confess it as *God* puts it? Are you brought to see sin as God sees it? As far as mortal eye could bear that dreadful sight and do you confess now just what God lays at your door—that you have been His enemy, a traitor, full of evil, covered with iniquity? Will you confess that you have crucified His dear Son and have in all ways deserved His hottest wrath and displeasure—will you plead guilty to that?

If not, you shall have no pardon! But if you will do this, He is merciful and just to forgive you your sins through Jesus the great Atoning Sacrifice. She had not, nor had her counsel for her, a single word to say by way of excuse. In fact, at her request, one supposed excuse was utterly discarded—“She wishes me to say that she was not driven to this act, as has been asserted, by unkind treatment at home. She met with nothing there but tender and forbearing love.” Her counsel might have said she was very young—it was hoped that her youth might plead for her. Being young, she might be readily led astray by an evil passion—might not that excuse her?

It was long ago and her confession was her own! She had brought herself there into that dock—might not this be a reason for mercy? Nothing of the kind! The judge might think so if he pleased, but there was nothing said for her about that, nor did she desire that it should be suggested. She might secretly hope, but her confession was so thorough that there was not a single word to sully its clear stream. So, Sinner, if you come before God you must not say, “Lord, I am to be excused because of my position—I was in poverty and I was tempted to steal.” Or, “I had been in bad company and so I learned to blaspheme.” Or, “I had a hard master and so I was driven to sin to find some pleasure there.”

No. If you are really penitent you will find no reason whatever why you should have sinned, except the evil of your own heart—and that you will plead as an aggravation, not as an excuse. “Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! I am, O God, before Your face, guilty! I offer no excuse, no extenuation. You must deal with me upon pure mercy if You do save me, for justice can only award me my well-deserved doom.”

Notice that when she was asked whether she had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon her, there was still a solemn silence. Was there no reason to be given why the dreadful sentence of being hanged by the neck until dead should not be passed upon a young and weeping girl? She did not so much as hint at one. I remember well the time when I thought there was no reason why the flames of Hell should not consume me and why the crushing weight of God’s wrath should not roll over me forever and forever!

I think every sinner who has really come to Christ has been made to feel that however angry God may be with sin, He is not one whit too angry. Until we know the power of Divine Grace we read in the Bible concerning eternal punishment and we think it is too heavy and too hard. And we are apt to kick against it and look for some heretic or other who will teach us

another doctrine. But when the soul is really quickened by Divine Grace and made to feel the weight of sin, it thinks the bottomless pit none too deep and the punishment of Hell none too severe for sin such as it has committed.

This is not the emotion of a mind rendered morbid by sickness—these are the genuine workings of God the Holy Spirit in the soul—bringing the man to stand guilty before the Lord, with his mouth closed, not able to say a word against the sentence of Divine Justice. May God bring such who have never been there yet, there! In the confession, as we read the story, there was much tenderness. I do not wonder that the judge exhibited deep emotion—who could help it?

Remember, I am not pretending to know her heart, I am only judging the externals. As far as externals went there seemed to be a great brokenness of spirit. She appeared really to know what guilt meant and to stand there with this resolve upon her soul—that though she could not make any atonement for her crime she would acknowledge it honestly and accordingly she confessed it as one who felt within her own soul the terrible weight of her guilt.

This is the manner in which we must stand before God if we would find mercy. It is all very well for us to use fine language but words alone are worthless. Those words which come fresh from your lips dictated by your own heart, because the Holy Spirit is there, will suffice if the heart is in them. It is to the *contrite* that the promise is given. Look to Jesus for contrition, for without it there is no pardon!

II. Thus we have tried, as far as we could, to bring out the distinctions which pertain to confessions and now let us have a word or two upon THE EXERCISE OF THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY ON GOD'S PART. "You forgave the iniquity of my sin." In every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given. There is a notion abroad that confession *deserves* mercy. We read in the papers such remarks as these, "expiating sin by confession." Or, "made such atonement as he could by confessing his sin."

Confession makes no atonement in any shape whatever. There is not one single word in that Law which I read to you this morning, in the twentieth of Exodus, about the possibility of taking away sin by mere confession. Justice has but one rule—and that is sin must be punished. If the sinner violates law, law in the case of man may excuse the penalty, but in the case of God, never. The attributes of God are not like the qualities of man—they never come into collision with one another—nor do they abridge the sphere of each other. The justice of God is as awful and all-reaching as if He had not a grain of mercy! While the mercy of God is as unrestrained and almighty as if He were utterly unjust!

The reason why sin can be forgiven in the case of a penitent sinner is because for that sinner Jesus Christ has borne the full weight of all the wrath which his sin deserves. The fire cloud of Jehovah's wrath was waiting for the sinner—the sinner must receive the whole of its dread discharge. But for every sinner that repents and believes in Him Christ stood beneath that terrible cloud and all the lightning was discharged on Him.

Christ suffered, as Incarnate God, all the chastisement which was due to His people. The grief of our Savior we can never tell—the woes of Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha are not to be expressed—but they

were accepted by God in the place of all the suffering and grief which the Law most righteously claimed on every law-breaker. And now, through what Christ Jesus has done, the eternal mercy of God comes streaming forth in perfect consistency with Justice. Mercy provided the great Substitute and now Mercy, with loving heart, calls upon repenting and believing sinners, and assures them that all sin is put away through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Let every sinner know, then, that although his repentance does not *deserve* mercy, the God of Love has been pleased to promise free pardon to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because *Christ* deserves it! Pardon is given to penitent sinners as a matter of justice, as well as mercy, because of the throes and grief and agonies of the Divine Redeemer. How consistent it is with the nature of things that penitent sinners, and penitent sinners only, should obtain mercy through Jesus Christ!

When you read the story of the man who made no confession till it was forced out of him—although you can respond to his wish, “Fellow creatures, pray for me”—you cannot feel much sympathy, if any, with him. His conduct seems to harden one’s heart against him, not merely because of his guilt, but because of the lie of his confession! But, when you read the other story—although it contains no request to pray, you find you do not need one, for your heart cries at once—“Father, forgive her!” And you think within yourself, “If the prerogative of mercy can be exercised in this case, let it be.”

If it were put to a show of hands of all our country whether the law should be executed on Constance Kent, I think we should all say, “Let the penitent sinner live.” Great was her offense and no excuse is to be offered for her, as she offers none for herself. It was a great and dreadful crime which must be a blight upon her all her days. Yet, let her be spared, for she has confessed most fully—not on the ground of justice, but on the ground that this seems to be a case in which, if the prerogative of mercy is to be sovereignly exercised at all, it should now have free scope.

I think when the eternal God sees a poor sinner standing before Himself and hears him cry, “I am guilty, Lord! I am guilty through and through! I alone am guilty! I have broken Your Law! If You destroy me You are just! My heart is broken because I have sinned. I cannot be more wretched than I am now, for sin is my plague and my misery. And while I confess it, I do not think that my confession has any merit in it. Save me for Jesus’ sake!” “Why, I think,” the mighty God says, “I have brought that soul, through My Grace, into a state in which it is ready to receive the precious gift of justification and pardon through the blood of My dear Son.”

See how one Grace gives a fitness for another. The sinner is brought to Jesus. His heart is broken and then it is ready to be bound up. The penitent sinner has paid honor to the prerogative of the Law-Giver. He has, as far as he could do so, dethroned the Law-Giver by his sin—but now, by his confession—he restores Him to His Throne. Such a sinner knows the bitterness of sin, and knowing its bitterness, he will hate it for the future. If he is pardoned he will not go back as the dog to his vomit, or the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.

This pardoned sinner will not take to himself the credit of having been pardoned by his confessions. He will not go abroad and talk lightly of his sin. He will be sure to speak much of the leniency of the Law-Giver and the power of Jesus' precious blood. He will admire forevermore, even in eternity, the mighty Grace which pardoned such as he is. On the other hand, if man were forgiven and no true penitence worked in him, what would be the result? Why, it would be turning wolves loose upon society! I think if God gave forgiveness to men without working a work of Divine Grace in them by which they are brought to repentance it would be offering a premium for sin!

It would be breaking down the floodgates which restrain vice. It would be destroying all the excellent fruits which free Grace is intended to produce. What? Is the man to be pardoned for all the past and to remain without repentance for his evil ways? Then will he make the future just as the past has been—no, he will sin with a higher hand and with a stronger arm—because he sees with what impunity he may rebel!

What? Shall a proud, unhumiliated sinner rejoice in the forgiving love of the Father? Then will he arrogantly boast that there was not much evil in his sin after all! He will be no singer to the praise of Sovereign Grace, but rather, with the boastful lips of the legalist he will render unto himself praise for the dexterous manner in which he has escaped from the condemnation due to sin! God will give *pardon* to those only to whom He *gives repentance*—for it were unsafe to give it elsewhere. God brings us down and lays us in the dust, for then, and then only are we prepared to hear Him say, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you."

I take it for granted that there are some here who will say, "I wish I could repent. I know that it would not merit eternal life. I understand that faith—faith in Jesus Christ is the way by which I must be saved—but I desire to be humbled on account of sin." My dear Friend, your *desire* to be humbled may, perhaps, be an indication that you are *already* in that condition! But, if you are lamenting your hardness of heart, I will suggest two or three things. Remember your past sins. I do not want you to write out a list of them—there is not paper enough in this world for that—but let some of them stand out before your memory. And if they do not make you blush, they ought to do so.

Next, think over all the aggravations of those sins. Recollect the training you had as a child. You were blessed with godly parents. Remember the providential warnings you received. Think of the light and knowledge against which you have offended—that tenderness of conscience against which you kicked. Then I beg you to consider against what a God you have offended—so great, so good, so kind—who has never done you a displeasure, but has been all generosity and kindness to you till this day. Your offenses have been insults against the King of Heaven!

Your transgressions have been undermining, as far as they could, the throne of the Eternal Majesty! Look at sin in the light of God to be humbled. And if this will not do it, let me pray that God the Holy Spirit may take you to the foot of the Cross. Remember, that in order that sin might be put away, it was necessary that God should be veiled in human flesh. No one else could bear the load of sin but God—and He only could bear it by becoming Man. See the suffering of the Savior when "despised and rejected." Mark the spitting, the shame, the smiting. Look at His wounds—

**“Count the purple drops and say,
‘Thus must sin be washed away.’ ”**

And surely, if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, such a meditation will make you see the blackness and vileness of sin! John Bradford said that when he was in prayer he never liked to rise from his knees till he began to feel something of brokenness of heart. Get up to your chamber, then, poor Sinner, if you desire to have a broken and contrite spirit and come not out until you have it! Remember that you will never feel so broken in heart as when you can see Jesus bearing all your sins! Faith and repentance are born together and aid the health of each other—

**“Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”**

Go as you are to Christ and ask Him to give that tenderness of heart which shall be to you the indication that pardon has come—for pardon cannot and will not come unattended by a melting of soul and a hatred of sin.

Wrestle with the Lord! Say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Get a fast hold upon the Savior by a vigorous faith in His great Atonement. Oh, may His Spirit enable you to do this! Say in your soul, “Here I will abide, at the horns of the altar. If I perish I will perish at the foot of the Cross. From my hope in Jesus I will not depart, but I will look up and say, ‘Savior, Your heart was broken for me, break *my* heart! You were wounded, wound *me*! Your blood was freely poured forth for me! Lord, let me pour forth my tears that I should have nailed You to the tree. O Lord, dissolve my soul—melt it in tenderness and You shall be forever praised for making Your enemy Your friend.’ ”

May God bless you and make you truly repent if you have not repented! And if you have, may He enable you to continue in it all your days, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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*“For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You
in a time when You may be found.”*

Psalm 32:6.

ALL men are not godly. Alas, the *ungodly* are the great majority of the human race! And all men who are, to some extent, godly, are not equally godly. The man who fears God and desires to truly know Him has some little measure of godliness. The man who has begun to trust the Savior whom God has set forth as the great Propitiation for sin has a blessed measure of godliness. The man whose communion with God is constant, whose earnest prayers and penitential tears are often observed of the great Father, and who sighs after fuller and deeper acquaintance with the Lord—this man is godly in a still higher sense. And he who, by continual fellowship with God has become like He, upon whom the image of Christ has been photographed, for he has looked on Him so long and rejoiced in Him so intensely—he is the godly man! The man who finds his God everywhere, who sees Him in all the works of his hands. The man who traces everything to God—whether it is joyful or calamitous—this is the godly man. The man who looks to God for everything, takes every suit to the Throne of Grace and every petition to the Mercy Seat—the man who could not live without his God, to whom God is his exceeding joy, the help and the health of his countenance, the man who dwells in God—this is the godly man. This is the man who shall dwell forever with God, for he has a Godlike-ness given to him and, in the Lord's good time, he shall be called away to that blessed place where he shall see God and shall rejoice before Him forever and ever!

Judge yourself, dear Hearers, by these tests, whether you are godly or not. Let conscience make sure work about this matter. Possibly, while I am preaching, you may be helped to perform this very necessary work of self-examination. The text, itself, is a test by which we may tell whether we are among the godly—“For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found.”

In these words we have, first, *the universal mark of godly men*. They pray unto God. Then we have, secondly, *a potent motive for praying*—“For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You.” And then, thirdly, we have *the special occasion when prayer is most useful*, the occasion of which the godly avail themselves abundantly—they shall “pray unto You

in a time when You may be found.” All these points are well worthy of our earnest consideration.

I. The first is, THE UNIVERSAL MARK OF GODLINESS—“For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You.”

When a man is beginning to be godly, this is the first sign of the change that is being worked in him, “Behold, he prays.” *Prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy.* Until he has come to pleading and petitioning, we cannot be sure that the Divine life is in him at all. There may be *desires*, but if they never turn to *prayers*, we may fear that they are as the morning cloud and as the early dew—which soon pass away. There may be some signs of holy *thought* about the man, but if that thought never deepens into *prayer*, we may be afraid that the thought will be like the seed sown upon the hard highway which the birds of the air will soon devour. But when the man comes to real pleading terms with God—when he cannot rest without pouring out his heart at the Mercy Seat—you begin to hope that *now* he is, indeed, a godly man! Prayer is the breath of life in the newborn Believer! Prayer is the first cry by which it is known that the newborn child truly lives! If he does not pray, you may suspect that he has only a name to live—and that he lacks true spiritual life.

And as prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy, it is equally *the mark of godliness in all stages of its growth.* The man who has most Grace will pray most. Take my word for it as certain that when you and I have most Grace, we may judge of it by the fact that there is more of prayer and praise in us than there was before. If you pray less than you once did, then judge yourself to be less devout, to be less in fellowship with God, to be, in fact, less godly! I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than this—the measure of the intensity of your prayer. I am not speaking about the *quantity* of it, for there are some who, for a pretense, make long prayers. I am speaking about the *reality* of it, the intensity of it. Prayer is best measured by *weight* rather than by length and breadth and, in proportion as you grow in Grace, you will grow in prayerfulness, depend upon it! When the child of God reaches the measure of the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, then he becomes like Elijah, a man mighty in prayer. One such man in a Church may save it from ruin! I go further and say that one such man in a *nation* may bring down upon it untold blessings! He is the godliest man who has most power with God in his secret pleadings—and he who has most power with God in his secret pleadings has it because he abounds in godliness! Everyone that is godly shall pray unto the Lord, whether he is but the babe in Grace who lisps his few broken sentences, or the strong man in Christ who lays hold upon the Covenant Angel with Jacob’s mighty resolve, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” The prayers may vary as the degree of godliness differs, but every godly man has, from the beginning to the end of his spiritual life, this distinguishing mark, “Behold, he prays.”

Further, dear Friends, *true prayer is an infallible mark of godliness.* If you do not pray, remember that old true saying, “A prayerless soul is a

Christless soul.” You know how often it has been the case that the highest professions of holiness have been sometimes accompanied by the practice of the deadliest vices. For instance, wherever the doctrine of human perfection has been much held, it has almost always engendered some horrible licentiousness, some desperate filthiness of the flesh which is unknown to anything but that doctrine! In like manner, I have known persons to become, as they say, so conformed to the mind of God, so perfectly in accord with the Divine Will that they have not felt it necessary to pray. This is the devil in white—nothing else—and the devil in white is more of a devil than when he is dressed in black! If anything leads you to decline in prayerfulness, or to abstain altogether from prayer, it is an evil thing, disguise it as you may!

But wherever there is real prayer in the soul, take it as certain that the lingering of holy desire in the spirit proves that there is still life in the spirit. If the Lord enables you to pray, I beseech you, do not despair. If you have to pray with many a groan, and sigh, and tear, think none the less of you prayers for that reason! Or, if you think less of them, the day may come when you will think better of your broken prayers than of any others. I have known what it is to come away from the Throne of Grace feeling that I have not prayed at all! I have despised my prayer and wept over it, yet, some time after, in looking back, I have thought, “I wish I could pray as I did in the time when I thought that I did not pray at all.” We are usually poor judges of our own prayers! But this judgment we may make—if the heart sighs, and cries, and longs, and pleads with God, such signs and tokens were never in an unregenerate heart! These flowers are exotics—the seed from which they grew must have come from Heaven! If you pray a truly spiritual prayer, this shall be, indeed, a sure mark that the Spirit of God is striving within you and that you are already a child of God!

Once more, beloved Friends, *prayer is natural to the godly man*. I do think that it is a good thing to have set times for prayer, but I am sure that it would be a dreadful thing to confine prayer to any time or season, for to the godly man prayer comes to be like breathing, like sighing, like crying. You have, perhaps, heard of the preacher who used to put in the margin of his manuscript sermon, “Cry here.” That is a very poor sort of crying that can be done to order, so, you cannot make the intensity of prayer to order—it must be a *natural* emanation from the renewed heart! Jacob could not always go and spend a night in prayer. It is possible he never spent another whole night in prayer in all his life after that memorable one! But when he spent that one by the brook Jabbok, he could “do no other,” as Luther said. Pumped-up prayer is little better than the bilge water that flows away from a ship! What you need is the prayer that rises from you freely, like the fountain that leaped from the smitten rock. Prayer should be the natural outflow of the soul—you should pray because you *must* pray, not because the set time for praying has arrived—but because your heart must cry unto your Lord.

“But,” says one, “sometimes I do not feel that I can pray.” Ah, then, indeed, you need most to pray! That is the time when you must insist upon it that there is something sadly wrong with you. If, when the time has come for you to draw near to God—you have the opportunity and the leisure for it, but you feel no inclination for the holy exercise—depend upon it that there is something radically wrong with you! There is a deadly disease in your system and you should, at once, call in the heavenly Physician. You have need to cry, “Lord, I cannot pray. There is some strange mischief and mystery about me. There is something that ails me! Come, O Lord, and set me right, for I cannot continue to abide in a prayerless condition!”

A prayerless condition should be a miserable and unhappy condition to a child of God—and he should have no rest until he finds that once more his spirit can truly pour itself out before the living God! When you are in a right state of heart, praying is as simple as breathing. I remember being in Mr. Rowland Hill’s chapel at Wotton-Under-Edge, and stopping at the house where he used to live. I said to a friend who knew the good man, “Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?” He replied, “Well, my dear Sir, I do not know that I can tell you that. And if you were to ask, ‘Where did he *not* pray?’ or, ‘When did he *not* pray?’ I should be unable to tell you. The dear old gentleman used to walk up and down by that laurel hedge and if anybody was outside the hedge, he would hear him praying as he went along. Then he would go up the street and keep on praying all the time. After he had done that, he would come back, again, praying all the while. And if he went indoors and sat down in his study, he was not much of a man to read, but you would find that he was repeating some verse of a hymn, or he was praying for Sarah Jones who was ill, or he would plead for Tom Brown who had been backsliding.”

When the old man was in London, he would go up and down the Blackfriars Road and stand and look in a shop window. And if anybody went to his side, it would be found that he was still praying, for he could not live without prayer! That is how godly men come to be, at last—it gets to be as natural to them to pray as to breathe! You do not notice all day long how many times you breathe. When you come home at night, you do not say, “I have breathed so many times today.” No, of course you do not notice your breathing unless you happen to have asthma! And when a man gets asthma in *prayer*, he begins to notice his praying! But he who is in good sound spiritual health breathes freely, like a living soul before the living God—and his life becomes one continual season of prayer.

To such a man, *prayer is a very happy and consoling exercise*. It is no task, no effort. His prayer, when he is truly godly and living near to God, is an intense delight! When he can get away from business for a few quiet minutes of communion with God, when he can steal away from the noise of the world and get a little time alone—these are the joys of his life! These are the delights that help us to wait with patience through the long days of our exile till the King shall come and take us home to dwell with Him forever!

Those prayers of the godly, however, may *be presented in a great many forms*. Some praying takes the good form of *action*—and an act may be a prayer. To love our fellow men and to desire their good is a kind of consolidated practical prayer. There is some truth in that oft-quoted couplet by Coleridge—

***“He prays best, who loves best
All things, both great and small.”***

There comes to be a prayer to God in giving alms, or in preaching the Gospel, or in trying to win a wanderer, or in taking a child upon your knee and talking to it about the Savior. Such acts are often most acceptable prayers, but when you cannot act thus, it is well to pour out your heart before the Lord in words. And when you cannot do *that*, it is sweet to sit quite still and look up to Him and, even as the lilies pour out their fragrance before Him who made them, so do you, even without speaking—worship God in that deep adoration which is too eloquent for language—that holy nearness which, because it is so near, dares not utter a sound lest it should break the spell of the Divine silence which envelopes it! Frost of the mouth, but flow of the soul, is often a good combination in prayer. It is blessed prayer to lie on your face before God in silence, or to sigh and cry, or moan and wail, as the Holy Spirit moves you. All this is prayer, whatever shape it assumes, and it is the sign and token of a true Believer’s life.

I think that I have said enough upon that first point—the universal mark of godliness is prayer.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A POTENT MOTIVE FOR PRAYING—“For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found.”

The motive seems to be, first, *because God heard such a great sinner as David was*. Possibly you know that this passage is very difficult to interpret. It appears to be simple enough, yet there are a great many interpretations of it. In the Revised Version you will find the marginal reading, “In the time of finding out sin.” Let me read the context—“I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this let everyone that is godly pray unto You in the time of finding out sin.” It runs all right and the context seems to warrant it. I am not sure that it is the correct translation, but the sense harmonizes with it, so let us learn from it this lesson, that God has heard the prayer of a great sinner!

There may be, in this House of Prayer, someone who has gone into gross and grievous sin—and this reading of the passage may be a message from the Lord to that person. David had sinned very foully and he had added deceit to his sin. His evil deeds have made the ungodly to rail at godliness even until the present day, so that infidels ask in contempt, “Is this the man after God’s own heart?” It was an awful sin which he committed, but there came to him a time of finding out his sin. His heart was broken in penitence and then he went to God and found mercy and

he said, in effect, that it was so wonderful that such a wretch as he should be forgiven, that every godly man, as long as the world stood, would believe in the confession of sin to the Lord and in the power of prayer to obtain pardon for the guilty! I like that meaning of the text, for it is sometimes necessary to us, when we are under a sense of sin, to think of such sinners as Manasseh, Magdalene, the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus. There are times, even with those whom God has greatly blessed, when nothing but the *sinner's* Savior will do for them. And when they feel that if there were not salvation for the vilest of the vile, there would be no salvation for them!

So God gives us a case like that of David, that everyone that is godly may pray unto Him in the time of finding out his sin. We might have been afraid to come if David had not led the way! "Come," he says of the broken heart, he who wrote the 51st Psalm, "God forgave *me* and He did it that He might show forth in me all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter repent and believe."

Another motive for prayer which I think the text brings before us is this, *we all need daily pardon*—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You." "For this"—for this covering of sin, for this blotting out of iniquity. Dear Friends, I hope that all of you pray unto God daily for the forgiveness of sins. I am sure that all the godly among you do so. If you commit no sins, then the Savior made a great mistake when He left us the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." What is the need of that petition if we have no trespasses to be forgiven? But for this, that is, for the pardon of his sin, everyone who is godly will pray unto the Lord.

And everyone who is godly will pray unto God for this reason, also, namely, *because he has received the pardon of sin*. You remember when you made your confession to the Judge of All and received absolution from Him? You remember when, with broken heart and downcast eye, you acknowledged your sin unto Him and He put away your transgression? Well then, that is the reason why you should always be praying! He who heard you, then, will still hear you! He who put away your sin, then, by that one great washing in the Fountain filled with blood, will continue to put away your sin by that foot-washing which He continually gives to us, of which Jesus said, "He that is washed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Blessed be God, we shall not cease to pray for pardon although we have received pardon! We will crave the daily renewal of the Divine token of reconciliation. If we received it when we were sinners, much more shall we receive it, now that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son! If we received it when we were outcasts, much more shall we receive it, now that we are His dear children!

Again, "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You," that is to say, *because troubles come*, for the context teaches us this lesson. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble." Brethren, the Lord takes care to keep us praying, does He not, by giving us constant needs? Suppose that I had a friend upon whom I was de-

pendent and whose society I greatly loved, and that he said to me, “I will give you, in a lump sum, as much money as will last you till this time next year, and then you can come and see me and receive another year’s portion. Or, as you like to come to my house, would you prefer to have the amount quarterly?” I would reply, “I will choose the latter plan, for then I should come to you four times in the year and have four dinners with you.”

“Well, then, would you like it monthly?” “Oh, yes! I would like to come monthly and spend a day with you every month.” “Perhaps,” he says, “you would like to come daily?” “Oh, yes! I would prefer that! I would like to have a daily portion at your table.” “Perhaps you would like to stay with me always, as Dr. Watts did when he went to Sir Thomas Abney’s, to stay for a week, and I think that ‘week’ lasted for 28 years, for he never went away till he died. Perhaps you would like to receive everything from my hand and have nothing but what I give you.” “Oh, yes, my Friend, this continual indebtedness, this constant dependence would give me so many opportunities of better knowing you whom I love so much that I would like to have it so.”

You have heard of “a hand-basket portion.” There is a maid to be married and her father says to her, “There, my girl, I will give you so many hundred pounds. Do your best with it, for it is all I shall have for you.” Another girl is married and her father says, “I shall send you down a basketful of things on such a day” and so, every week, a present goes to her. It is a hand-basket portion, and it is always coming! It never comes to an end and she gets a great deal more from the old man than the other does, who has her fortune all at once. At any rate, it comes, every time, “with father’s love.” If it is given only once and is done with, perhaps, an ill feeling, animosity springs up. But if it comes, “with father’s love,” 50 or a 100 times a year, see how affection is increased between father and daughter! Give me a hand-basket portion!

You who like may go and gather a week’s manna—it will stink before the end of the week! I like to have mine fresh every day, just as it comes warm from the ovens of Heaven and ready for the heavenly appetite of the man who learns to live upon the daily gift of God! For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto God. He shall have trouble to drive him, he shall have Grace to draw him, he shall have weights to lift him and they shall be so adjusted that though they threaten to hold him down, they shall really raise him up!

Once more, I think that, broadly speaking, the word, “this,” here means, “*Because God hears prayer*, for this reason shall everyone that is godly pray unto Him.” Now, dear Friends, it always will be a dispute between the true Believer and the mere professor whether God hears prayer. Of course the outside world will always sneer at the idea of God hearing prayer! A man said to me, one day, “You say that God hears your prayers?” “Yes, I do say it.” Said he, “I do not believe it.” “No,” I said, “I never thought you did. And if you *had* believed it, I might have thought that it had been a mistake! I did not expect a carnal mind to receive the

Truth of God.” “Oh,” said he, “there is nothing in it!” Then I asked him, “Did you ever pray, my Friend? Did you ever pray God?” No, he never did. “Very well, then,” I said, “do not say anything about what you do not know! If you know nothing about what it is, hold your tongue till you do—and let those of us who have tried it speak of what we know.”

If I were put in a witness box tomorrow, any lawyer in London would like to have me for a witness. So, when I stand here and declare solemnly that hundreds and even *thousands of times* God has answered my prayers, I claim to be as much accepted as an honest witness as I should be in the High Court of Justice. And I can bring forward, not myself, only, but scores and hundreds of you! Brethren, tell me, does not God hear prayer? [Voices—“Yes! Yes! Yes!”] I know He does and you godly folk can all bear witness that it is so! Calmly and deliberately, you could tell of many instances in which you called upon the Lord and He answered you. I am loath to argue this point, for it is not a point to be argued. If a man said that I had not any eyes, he might say it and my eyes would twinkle as I heard him say it. And when anyone says, “God does not hear prayer,” I am sorry for the poor soul that dares to make an assertion about a thing which he has never tested and tried!

God does hear prayer and because He hears it we will call upon Him as long as we live! “For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You”—because there is reality in it and there is a blessed result from it! Prayer moves the arm that moves the world, though nothing is put out of gear by our praying. The God who ordained the effects that are to follow prayer *ordained the prayer*, itself—it is a part of the grand machinery by which the world swings upon its hinges!

III. I have not time to say more on that part of my subject, though so much more might be said. The last point is one to which I want to call your earnest attention—that is, THE SPECIAL OCCASION WHEN PRAYER IS MOST USEFUL. “For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found,” or, “in a time of finding,” as the margin of our Bibles has it. Is there any set time when God is to be found?

Well, in general, it is *the time of this mortal life*. So long as you live, here, and pray to God, He has promised to answer. Though it is the 11th hour, do not hesitate to pray! Christ’s word is, “He that seeks, finds.” There is a special promise to those who seek the Lord early, but this does not exclude those who seek Him late. If you truly seek Him, He will be found of you.

I think, too, that the time of finding is under this Gospel dispensation. God has always heard prayer, but there seems to be a larger liberty allowed us in prayer, now. The Mercy Seat is unveiled and the veil is torn away that we may come with boldness. But besides that, there are special times of finding God, namely, *in visitations of His Spirit*. Revival times are grand times for prayer! How many there are who put in their suit with God because they feel moved thereto by a heavenly impulse! There

is “the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,” as there was with David, and they begin to bestir themselves.

In closing, I will dwell only upon this one point—*there are special times of finding for individuals* and one of these is the time of the finding out of sin. Come back to the translation which I gave you before. The time when you will find out sin is the time when you will find God. “Why,” you say, “it is a horrible thing for me to find out my sin.” It is, in itself, but it is the best time to find out God! When your eyes are blinded with tears of penitence, you can best see the Savior. Do not say, “I find myself to be so guilty and, therefore, I have no hope.” No, rather, because you find yourself to be guilty, therefore have hope, for the Savior came to seek and to save such guilty ones as you are! The time, I say, when sin finds us out, and we are humbled and ashamed, is the time when we may find our God through Jesus Christ.

So, too, a time of decision is a time for finding God. Some remain shilly-shallying—they have not decided whether they will live for the world and perish, or seek Christ and live eternally. But when the Spirit of God comes upon you and you say to yourself, “I must find Jesus Christ, I must get forgiveness and lay hold of eternal life. Give me Christ, or else I die,” you shall have Him! God has promised that if we seek Him with our whole heart, He will be found of us. When you are decided for God thoroughly and intensely, it will be with you a time of finding.

So will it be when you come to God in full submission. Some of you have not laid down your weapons of rebellion yet. You cannot be reconciled to God while your sword is in your hand—down with it, Man! Some of you have fine feathers on your helmets and you come before God as great captains—off with those feathers! He will accept you in rags, but not in ribbons! He will receive you if you come confessing your sin, but not boasting of your supposed merits. Down with you into the very dust! Yield to God! Oh, that His mercy might make us all pliant as the willow before His mighty power! Then shall we find peace through Christ.

I believe that it is a time of finding when you come to concentration. I have known men, sometimes, say with a holy determination, “I am resolved that I will find Christ. I will find salvation and everything else shall go till I do. I shall go upstairs to my room, shut the door and not come out, again, till I have found the Lord.” When the whole soul is bent on seeking Christ, then will the Lord speedily appear, and it shall be a time of finding!

But especially is it a time of finding when the heart, at last, trusts wholly and implicitly to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. You shall find that *God has found you* when you have done with yourself and taken the blood and righteousness of Christ to be the sole hope of your soul! God lead you to this, dear Hearers, this very hour!

I know that there are some here who are seeking the Lord. There are some who have lately begun to come under great anxiety. I hope that you will not be long in that anxious state, but that you will come right out of it by trusting yourselves with Christ. It is a wonderful end to anxiety

when you have somebody to trust and when you trust that somebody. Now, trust Jesus! He will save you. Yes, He saves you the moment that you trust Him, and He will never let you go, but will bring you to His Glory above!

May God send His blessing on these words, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 33.**

Verse 1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.* Notice the context between the words, “rejoice,” and, “praise.” Joy is the soul of praise. God is not extolled by our misery, but by our holy mirth! Be glad in the Lord, for so can you make Him glorious. “Rejoice” and “praise,” “for praise is comely for the upright.” Praise is the beauty of a Christian. What wings are to a bird, what fruit is to the tree, what the rose is to the thorn, that is praise to a child of God!

2. *Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto Him with the Psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.* In the old days of forms, ceremonies and outward worship, musical instruments were abundantly used. But in the early Christian Church there was no such thing as a musical instrument because the Believers were afraid of going back to Judaism. It is curious that as men get further away from Christ, they get fonder and fonder of such things as these! Still, under certain conditions, they are lawful, though, we think, not expedient. God was acceptably worshipped in the olden time with harp and with Psaltery—and He may be so now—yet we worship Him, so we judge for our own selves, better without them.

3. *Sing unto Him a new song.* For, you see, that all the music had singing with it. “Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him.” “Sing unto Him a new song.” “Unto the Lord, unto the Lord, Oh, sing a new and joyful song!” It was only as it guided and strengthened the *singing* that the instrumental music was tolerated even in those early days.

3. *Play skillfully with a loud noise.* God ought to be worshipped with our best—“Play skillfully.” God ought to be earnestly worshipped—“with a loud noise.” Hearty worship is what the Lord desires and what He deserves. Let us render it to Him.

4. *For the Word of the LORD is right.* Let us praise Him for His Word. Men are depreciating it—let us appreciate it. “The Word of the Lord is right”—from the first page to the last it is right, emphatically right—let us praise Him for it!

4. *And all His works are done in truth.* The book of Providence is full of the Truth of God! Oh, for Grace to read it with thankful hearts! Let us praise God and sing unto Him as every page passes under our eyes.

5. *He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.* You would think, from the way in which most people talk, that the world was full of misery and full of the anger of the Lord, but it is not! Notwithstanding all the evil that is in it, it is still true that “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”

6. *By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.* They did not grow out of something that was there before—they were made out of nothing—“by the Word of the Lord.” All the hosts of innumerable stars were created “by the breath of His mouth.”

7. *He gathers the waters of the sea together as an heap: He lays up the depth in storehouses.* We know not how much God has in store, out of sight, in the vast abysses, but we know that He drowned the world when He broke up the fountains of the great deep.

8. *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.* He is so great a God that all the oceans are in His sight but as a heap! Let us worship, and adore, and bow down before Him.

9. *For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.* With God it is no sooner said than it is done! “He spoke, and it was done.” All that He has to do is but to bid it be so and so it is. And, as it was for creation, so is it for confirmation—“He commanded, and it stood fast.”

10. *The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing: He makes the devices of the people of no effect.* If the folly of man yields to God’s wisdom, so, also, shall the wisdom of man. No matter though men take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, God will certainly carry out His purposes.

11. *The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.* What the Lord intends to do, He will do—there is no turning Him from His purpose—and His dispensations stand fast forever.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.* If you have chosen God, God has chosen you! It is a happy thing when it is so. When these two elections meet—your election of God and God’s election of you—then you are happy, indeed!

13, 14. *The LORD looks from Heaven; He beholds all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* Just as in a glass hive you can see all the bees and all they do, so can God see us—and He can see all that we think and read—and He knows us through and through.

15, 16. *He fashions their hearts alike; He considers all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* Look at Napoleon who marched more than half a million men into Russia—but they nearly all melted away and, after a time—he, himself, became a captive on the lone rock of St. Helena! “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.”

16. *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.* Look at Goliath, stronger than all his fellows, yet how soon he lay prone upon the earth when a single stone from the sling of David smote him in the forehead.

17-19. *An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eyes of the LORD are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from*

death, and to keep them alive in famine. Whatever becomes of kings and princes in the day of need, the Lord will take care of those who fear Him and put their trust in Him! There have been vast numbers of cases of amazing Providences—so many that they have ceased to be amazing—in which God has provided for those who have trusted in Him.

20. *Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield.* Dear Friends, notice those three, “ours”—three firm clasps, three strong hold-fasts—“Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.” Why did He not say, “Our souls wait,” for there are many of us? Ah, but we are so alike in this one thing that it is as if we had only one soul in all these many bodies, so the Psalmist says, “our soul.” You remember when the disciples went to Emmaus and Christ talked with them, they said, “Did not our heart burn within us?” There were two of them—why did they not say, “Did not our hearts burn?” Well, their hearts were so one that he who spoke, called them, “heart,” rather than, “hearts.” And it is so here—“Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.”

21, 22. *For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name. Let your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You.* That is a good prayer with which to close our reading! Let us all present it at the Throne of heavenly Grace!

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

BIT AND BRIDLE—HOW TO ESCAPE THEM

NO. 2190

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go:
I will guide you with My eyes. Be you not as the horse,
or as the mule, which have no understanding:
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
lest they come near to you.”*
Psalm 32:8, 9.

THE joy of full forgiveness is described in the first two verses of this Psalm—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Oh, the blessedness of sitting at Jesus' feet, a sinner washed in His blood! Outside of Heaven there is no greater joy—and even there they sing of blood-washed robes!

After a man is pardoned, anxiety is awakened as to how he shall be kept from sin in the future. The burnt child dreads the fire and, although his burns have all been healed, he dreads the fire none the less, but all the more. These who have been scorched by sin tremble at even a distant approach to the flame. You will always know whether you are delivered from the guilt of sin by answering this question—Am I delivered from the *love* of sin? He who lost his way yesterday feels his need of a guide today and tomorrow. How can the pardoned one endure the thought of sinning, again, against the Lord? David's great anxiety on this score is met by the gracious answer of the Lord—“I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.”

Another thing is noteworthy—David was now rid of guile as well as guilt. Orientals pride themselves on their cunning and David, by nature, had a considerable share of craft about him. But he now drives it from his spirit—he will not, from now on, tolerate himself in deceit. When he had thrown away this false wisdom, this carnal prudence, he felt that he must look elsewhere for guidance. If he is no longer to plot and plan with the cunning which he had shown in the matter of Uriah, he will need other direction—and he looks *up* for it. See how our gracious God comes in with the promise of guidance. “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.” “The Lord preserves the simple.” The upright, who can no longer trust their own deceitful hearts, shall find the Lord an all-sufficient Guide. Happy is it for them that He has spoken such

a word as this—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go."

One other observation. We find David, in this Psalm, reaching to a high state of joy on account of his being forgiven. He exclaims, in the seventh verse, "You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." A very proper state of mind to be in! It is meet that the pardoned sinner should leap for joy. But, at the same time, the wisdom of God comes in, not to check the joy, but to render it more deep, more sure—and to prevent its coming to an untimely end. David is in ecstasies of delight, but he is to be reminded that he is not yet in Heaven, and that he is compassed about with other things besides songs. The voice of God commends his joy, but also reminds him that there lies before him a future full of perils and a life strewn with temptations. He is, from then on, to be a disciple as well as a singer! He needs to be instructed and taught in the way, for he is still a pilgrim and not yet at his journey's end. Sound the timbrel, if you will, and shout for joy and sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! But remember that on the other side of the Red Sea there is a wilderness and you will require much Divine Grace to traverse it—such Grace as only the Shepherd of Israel can give you. You will be wise to address yourselves to your journey and resolve to follow Him whose eyes discern the way, and whose hands can help you in it. A pilgrim's life is not all feasting. He has something else to do besides praising God upon the high-sounding cymbals. We must sit at Jesus' feet, as well as look to His Cross. We are to bear His yoke and learn of Him, that we may find rest for our souls.

This may stand as an introduction, for now I need to conduct you further into this grave business of the saved man. You are pardoned, my Friend, you know you are, and you feel the joy of that knowledge. God grant that your joy may abound yet more and more! Sitting in your seat this morning, you are saying, "Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered!" Yes, but you are not yet in Heaven! Something more is needed—not to secure the love of God, not to complete the work of Sovereign Grace—but to educate you for the skies, to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! About that matter we are going to talk as the Holy Spirit shall enable us.

That I may set before you, to the fullest, the teaching of the text, I would have you note, first, *a privilege to be sought*—Divine instruction, practical teaching and tender guidance. Secondly, *a character to be avoided*—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding." This will bring us to consider, thirdly, *an infliction to be escaped*—"Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." If you do not wish to be bitted and bridled, be readily obedient to the direction of your Lord! We will come to a close by reflecting that there is a freedom to be attained. You may be free from bit and bridle and guided by the eyes of God. You may find your way to Heaven without the need of these rough chastisements which compel obedience. Oh, for the help of the great Teacher in this matter!

I. First, here is A PRIVILEGE TO BE SOUGHT. I will proceed at once to set it forth from the words before us.

This guidance is *very full in its nature*. Three words are used to describe it—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes."

The first word is, "I will instruct you"—a promise more full of meaning than would appear upon its surface. God is prepared to give you an inward understanding of spiritual things, for His instruction is intensely effectual upon the mind. The Lord is prepared to teach you in His Truths—to make you wise in heavenly matters. Though saved, you are, as yet, a mere child, and unfamiliar with great Truths of God. You know but little of Divine things—you know little of yourself, little of your danger, little of holiness and little of God—but the Lord promises, here, to take you for His pupil and to be, Himself, your Instructor! He instructs so effectually as really to build up the mind and, therefore, the Psalmist says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding." Other instructors can awaken that measure of understanding which is already ours, but *God* gives understanding to the simple. A good understanding is one of the gifts of His Grace and blessed are they who receive it!

The second word is, "I will teach you." And this teaching is most practical, for the promise is—"I will teach you in the way which you shall go." God adds the precept to the doctrine and instructs us in both. Eminently precious is that practical teaching by which you are made to know what to do and how to do it. Theoretical teaching is of small importance compared with this practical learning. The Lord will teach us the art and mystery of holiness. He will apprentice us to the Lord Jesus as the Master of Righteousness—he will make us journeymen, one of these days, and turn us into full-blown "workmen that need not to be ashamed." Our great Teacher sends forth fine workmen, whose good works are seen of men and cause them to glorify the Father in Heaven.

The promise of the Lord, in the third word of the verse, goes even further than doctrinal and practical instruction, for we read, "I will guide you with My eyes." Herein is fellowship as well as instruction, for the guide goes with the traveler, and thus will God, in the process of our instruction, give us fellowship with Himself. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes—they have both the privilege of holy walk and heavenly company. It is our high privilege that, while our Shepherd goes before us, He calls us by name and we follow closely in His footsteps, as His well-beloved sheep. We are not only to be *told* the way and *led* into the way, but to be *accompanied* in it by our Teacher and Friend. The education which the Lord provides is complete in all its branches—mind, life and heart are all under the Divine tuition! This is no pauper school, or merely preparatory seminary—the text describes a high school of holiness, a grammar school of Grace, a University of holiness! In this place of sacred instruction, you may take high degrees, if you will, and also become teachers of others! He who forgave you provides everything for you that you can need to make you a disciple, indeed, a learner who in the ages to

come shall make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Who would not be a scholar in such a University as this?

Note, next, that *this teaching is Divine in its source*. See how it runs—“I will instruct you.” How delightful! “I will instruct you: I will guide you with My eyes.” The Lord will not put us in a low class, where some half-instructed usher or pupil-teacher shall look after us. No, we shall, all of us, be taught by the Lord Jesus, Himself, and His Holy Spirit! It is written, “I will instruct you: I will guide you.” Our Lord may instruct us by men who are taught of Himself, but, after all, the best of His servants cannot teach us anything profitably except the Lord, Himself, teaches by them and through them! He alone teaches us to profit. What a wonderful condescension it is that the Lord should become a Teacher! Sunday school teachers, adore the Head of your sacred college, even God Himself! “I will teach you, I will instruct you.” They are well taught that are taught of God and this privilege is common to all the family of love, for the Scripture says, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” It is not said that a *portion* of them shall be left to be trained by angels or archangels, but they shall all be taught of the Lord! Jehovah, Himself, will be the Instructor of every soul that comes to Him through Jesus Christ!

Observe *how wonderfully personal is this promised guidance*. While the address in the ninth verse is in the plural, “Be *you* not as the horse, or as the mule,” the promise is in the singular to each individual—“I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go; I will guide *you* with My eyes.” Wonder of wonders, the Infinite focuses Himself upon the insignificant! We who are less than the motes in the sunbeam, are, nevertheless, individually considered by Him who fills all in all, who is greater than all that He fills! “I will instruct *you*.” Yes, Jehovah will condescend to instruct that Believer who is feeblest of all the company. Rejoice, my Brothers and Sisters, that though your understanding is a commonplace one, and though your position is very obscure, yet the Lord does not say, “I will send you to a preparatory school kept by some inferior teacher.” But He does say, “I will instruct you.” God instructs each Believer as truly as if He were His only child. It is delightful to reflect that while Christ’s death has a sufficient efficacy in it to save a believing world, yet if His design had been to save only me, He would have to have offered the same Sacrifice as He has done. His death would have been necessary to prove that “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” So, while our Lord’s teaching would suffice to instruct myriads of men who are willing to learn, yet does He condescend to bring all His teaching to bear upon each single person—“I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go.” I note with comfort, in the text, what the French call *tu-toi-age*. Speaking to one another very familiarly, they say, “you” and, “you.” How sweetly is this seen in this passage—“I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which you shall go. I will guide *you* with My eyes”! Hear you not the great Father talking to His dear child? Yes, I hear Him speaking to you and to me!

Blessed be His name for such familiar love! Let us profit by its promise even to the fullest.

Furthermore, *this teaching is delightfully tender*—“I will guide you with My eyes.” That is to say, if you are willing to be so directed, the Lord will guide you, not by the rough means of bit and bridle, muzzle and cord, but with His eyes—a way which implies understanding on your part and love on His part. It is a recognition of confidence in us when He promises, thus, to guide us. The mistress at the head of the table gives a nod to Sarah. She knows what it means and the will of the lady is done at once. The master has not to enter into details with old John, who has been with him for so many years. John knows his wishes and a wink or a look will speak volumes! Well-trained children of God have their faces toward Him and soon perceive His mind—and this secures their prompt obedience. They see much in little and they make great account of every Word of the Lord. When we are what we ought to be, the guidance of the Lord is not sent us in thunder, but in a still small voice! And His instruction comes, not in tempests and hailstones, but in sunbeams and dewdrops. Some saints can be effectually led with a thread of hair. Cords of love and bands of a man are at once the most tender and the strongest bonds for a sanctified soul. “I will guide you with My eyes” is a charming promise, but it is of no use to the blind, the stubborn, the careless, or the self-willed. What a pity that any should debar themselves from so choice a privilege!

See, dear Friends, you that have been lately pardoned, and you, of older years, who have long been forgiven, see what guidance there is for you all the way from your starting point to the gate of pearl at the end of the road! I say this because I mean to wind up this point with the remark—*This teaching is constant*. “I will instruct you and teach you; I will guide you.” He that has begun to guide will not suddenly desert! He that has commenced to teach you will never dismiss you from His class! He that has, in a measure, instructed you and given you an understanding, will continue to teach you until He has perfected you in the knowledge of Himself and conformed you to the image of His Son! I feel most happy to think that such a privilege is promised and provided. I have heard of some who dream that, once forgiven, they may live as they wish—but to such I would say, “You know nothing about the matter. You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” The man who believes in Jesus for salvation, believes in Him so as to be set free from his sins—and his great anxiety is to be saved from all iniquity and to be led in the ways of righteousness to the glory of God! Here is comfort for you that are really seeking a holy life—God has made provision for your being led in it! He who has made you His child will put you in school and teach you until you shall know the Lord Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life! You shall soon know your Father’s name and Character and sing unto His praise among the bright intelligences that surround His Throne!

II. I now ask your attention while I show you A CHARACTER TO BE AVOIDED. We are told that since the Lord is ready to instruct us, we are not to be stubborn and wayward. It is ours to be docile and obedient. “Be

you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you.”

We are not to imitate *creatures of which we are the superiors*. Man is made to have dominion over the horse, the mule and the whole animal creation—let him not seek his models among his servants. I have sometimes heard speeches which have looked in that unwise direction. One said, in my hearing, as an excuse for a passionate speech, “I could not help it. If you tread on a worm it will turn.” Is a worm to be the example for a saint? By a worm in that case, I suppose, is meant a serpent—and are you to follow serpents in their malice and venom? I have heard the same thing turned the other way—and it has been made to appear as if an animal might be all the worse for copying a man. The driver of an omnibus was using his whip pretty freely upon one of his horses, and a gentleman sitting on the box-seat observed, “You never strike the horse on this side.” “Bless you!” said the driver, “if I were to touch that mare, when I went near her in the stable at night, she would kick me like a Christian!” What a remarkable simile, was it not? “Like a Christian!” Is that so, that Christians *kick*? That Christians are found taking revenge? Here is a matter about which we would urgently cry, “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule.” Never render evil for evil, railing for railing, for that is to copy the beasts of the field! Let us look upward to the highest for our model and never go down to the beasts of the field for models.

We must mind that we do not imitate *creatures to whom we are so near akin*. The mule has a touch of the ass in it and I fear it is not the only creature of which this may be said. Is not man, as unredeemed, likened to the ass in the types of the Mosaic Law? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are likened in Scripture to many strange beasts, and not without reason! St. Augustine and other ancient writers discuss, at length, the likeness which exists between men and *mules*. I am not going to follow them in their observations, but would simply say with Dr. Donne, “They have gone far in these illusions and applications. And they might have gone as far further as it had pleased them—they have sea-room enough that will compare a beast and a sinner together—and they shall find many times, in the way, the beast the better man.” I am afraid that it is so. David himself says, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You”—and yet he was so good a man that he could add, “Nevertheless I am continually with You.” A large part of us is animal and its tendency is to drag down that part which is more than angelic. How abject and yet how august is man! Brother to the worm and yet akin to Deity! Immortal and yet a child of dust! Be not the prey of your lower natures—as children of God, yield not yourselves to that which it is your duty to subdue! Have the horse and mule in subjection—keep under your body—do not bear the burden of the animal but make the animal your burden-bearer. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule,” but rise superior to flesh and blood. May the Spirit of the Lord help your infirmities in this matter!

I believe the Psalmist here alludes to the horse and mule *as creatures naturally wild and needing to be broken and trained*. We are by nature as the wild ass that inhales the wind of the wilderness—“he scorns the multitude of the city, neither regards he the crying of the driver.” These wild creatures we can make nothing of till we break them in—be not like they—useless, untrained, unbroken. Yet this is how we begin life naturally and spiritually. It is good to get broken in early in life—“it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” It is an ill thing for a man to have no restraint in youth and no trouble in manhood. When men and women follow out their own sweet wills, the end is seven-fold bitterness. A mind uncorrected is a vine unpruned, which yields no fruit, but trails along the ground and rots as it trails. It is a grand thing to learn the meaning of the word, “obey.” It is ill with these who remain unsubdued. They are of little worth to themselves or to others. The Holy Spirit would not have any of the Lord’s people to be of that wild, untamable character, for which there is neither use nor hope.

Furthermore, we are not to imitate *creatures devoid of reason*. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.” He especially lays stress on this—that they are *without understanding*. What does he mean by that? Horses and mules have been so trained that they have needed neither bit nor bridle and have performed marvelous feats at a word. It is possible for these animals to be brought to so high a training that they obey the word of command without the use of force. They come to have an understanding of their owner’s intent and act as if they really entered into their master’s designs. With the horses and mules of *our streets*—and of David’s day—this is not the case. These display little understanding and we are not to be like they. You are a reasoning man—act reasonably! You have understanding—do not act under mere impulse, blind willfulness, or ignorant folly. Here is the point, Brothers and Sisters—what we need is to come to an understanding with God and to stay in that condition. The horse does not understand his driver’s wishes, except as he intimates them through the bit and bridle. When he is to turn, when he is to quicken his pace and when he is to stand still, he must be told through the rein, for, apart from the bit in his mouth, he has no understanding of the man’s mind.

That thought which works in the mind of his driver is not working in the mule’s mind and, therefore, he has to feel a pull at his mouth to make him know his master’s desire. We need to come to an understanding with God. “Be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Be sensitive to the Spirit of God! So dwell in God that He shall dwell in you and His indwelling shall cause you to feel at once what it is that He would have you to do. May your will be so in accord with the Lord’s will that you will only what He wills! This is the highest form of understanding that I know of—may we never rest till we have it. “Give me understanding and I shall keep Your Law.” You know how we say, “I should like to come to some understanding with that man,” for you feel that without it your relations are unsatisfactory. When two friends really understand each

other's purpose and enter into each other's design, then they act as if they were one. Be you so near to God in heart that you can be guided with His eyes because you understand the mind of your heavenly Father and are in full sympathy with Him!

But the Psalmist also adds, concerning the horse and the mule, that having no understanding, they are *creatures with much self-will and waywardness*. "Their mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you." If you look at the Revised Version, you will find it is, "else they will *not* come near to you." And Calvin has it, "lest they kick at you." This is a very obscure passage as to the words, but it is not at all doubtful as to its sense, for the point is that the animal will not do what it should do, but it will obstinately do what it ought not to do—until it gets the bit in its mouth to compel it to do its master's will. So is it with ourselves, but so it should not be! At one time we find men rashly rushing near to God—they have no reverence, no holy trembling and awe. Some appear to be as familiar with God as if He were one of them. Thus the Lord complains in the Psalm, "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself." Such vain people need a bit, lest they come near to God. They need to hear the voice which cries, "Draw not near here: put off your shoes from off your feet." Oh, for more holy reverence!

Others will not come near to God at all and need a bit because they run off from the Lord into infidelity, blasphemy, or open vice. These endeavor to carry out their own wild wills, throwing up their heels as they please, and prancing over hill and plain with a defiant contempt of rule and order. We know that kind of people—let us not in any measure grow like they. There are horses and mules that will kick, bite, and do grievous harm to these round about them unless they are restrained with straps and harness. I am afraid I know some kicking saints as well as kicking sinners and I am more afraid of these kicking professors than of the outwardly wicked. I would sooner be bitten by a wolf than by a sheep, that is to say, I could more readily bear injury from an ungodly man than from a professed Believer. A kick from a Christian causes very serious wounding to a gracious heart. "It was not an enemy: then I could have borne it." Remember the question and answer—"What are these wounds in your hands? Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." These are wounds, indeed, which our Lord receives from a traitorous disciple. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they kick at you." Kick not at the will of your Lord! Kick not at the doctrines of His Word. Kick not at the precepts of His house. Kick not at His servants. Kick not at His Providences. Kick not at His Cross. Surely, I need not further urge you to avoid this unlovely character. None of you would wish to be as the horse, or as the mule.

III. I will now dwell for a few minutes upon AN INFLICTION TO BE ESCAPED. If you mean to be like the horse or the mule, you may readily be so, but you will have to pay the penalty. If the Lord means to save you, He will use a bit and a bridle upon you, if you render them necessary by your

willfulness. If you will be guided by His eyes, there will be no need for such stern work—but if you are stubborn, He will not spare you.

I may say of this bit and bridle, that such trappings are *a curb upon freedom*. A man would not endure to go about wearing a bit and a bridle, yet many a child of God is in that condition *spiritually* because he is not subdued to the will of the Lord. Because he is not tender of conscience, because he is frequently disobedient, because he does not carry out his Lord's will, he has to suffer severe discipline and labor under serious disadvantage. If the man were willingly obedient to the Divine will, things would go more happily with him.

The bit is not applied unless it is found necessary, but *it will be applied if necessary*. My text says, "Whose mouth *must* be held in with bit and bridle. Mark that, "must." That *must* arises out of the nature of the creature dealt with. Some men, if they are to go to Heaven, must be poor on the road, or must be sick, or must be defeated, or must be misunderstood—not because there is any real necessity, apart from their obstinate, cross-grained nature—but because they, themselves, render it necessary. God is resolved to save them and, therefore, he will drive them to salvation with bit and bridle rather than leave them free to rush downward to Hell through the indulgence of their own passions and ambitions!

Dear Friends, *what a wretched descent is this from being guided by God's eyes!* In the first case we have an intelligent servant so in accord with his Lord that a look suffices to set him running in the way of obedience. And in the second case we have an avowedly Christian man so out of accord with God that he has to be treated like a mule which will only yield under compulsion and only obey as it is made to smart! I do not know, dear Brothers and Sisters, if this description applies to any of you, but if it does, kindly take it home—and if I seem to be personal to you—well, I intend to be personal and, therefore, I dare not apologize. I am afraid that many of us ought to make it more personal to ourselves than we are likely to do. There is a hair of the mule's tail in every one of us!

"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule," or you shall have your mouth held in with bit and bridle. *That is always a very unpleasant matter.* It is not comfortable, even to a mule, to wear bit and bridle, and it certainly must be very unpleasant to a man. I have known Brothers and Sisters whom God could not use in the conversion of many souls, for they could not bear prosperity. The Lord did bless the preacher, once, and he grew so great in his own esteem that he was not bearable to these around him. For the man's own sake the good Lord saw that it was not safe to let him be useful. Here is a man who formerly succeeded in business, but he grew so worldly, so purse-proud, so forgetful of God, that it was necessary to take his wealth away from him! And it has been done—and now he is devout and lowly.

Another man, when he is in health and strength, is so full of levity and carelessness that he plays the fool. And, in order to keep him right, it is necessary to let him have a sluggish liver, or an aching head, or a sick home, or something else which may sober him. My Friend, if God means

to get you to Heaven, He will lead you there gently if you will freely go. But if you are obstinate and hard, He will thrust the bit between your jaws and drive you there. The less willfulness the less harness, but if need be, you shall wear all the paraphernalia of an unquiet horse, for the great Trainer will have the upper hand of you and thus He will save you! The Lord would be glad for you to go without these disagreeable things, but if you will have them, you shall have them.

I know a person who is always grumbling and I do not wonder that he always seems to have cause for it. It is like the child that I heard crying and its mother said to it, "Hold your tongue! If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for." Many a child of God has found something to cry for as the result of wanton murmuring. Some Hearers even go to the House of God and complain that the preacher says this, and does not say that, and omits the other. Before long the Lord removes the preacher they complained of and they have nobody to feed their souls—and then they begin to wish they had the old preacher back again! Well, well, if you make rods for your backs, God will use them upon you! It is His custom not to let anything lie idle in His House. So, if you are busy making a rod, He will be busy in putting it to its proper use.

But all this is *unnatural to the child of God*. Your children do not go about your house with bits in their mouths and bridles on their heads. God would not have his own regenerated ones going up and down in the world all bitted and bridled—but it shall be so sooner than they shall be lost! Disobedience is ruin—from that He must deliver His people. If we take delight in holiness, we shall not need rough usage. Here is the sweet alternative—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes." This is God's way! Oh that it may be *our* way! May the good Spirit lead us into it! Do not drive your Savior to be stern with you. Do not choose the way of hardness—the brutish way, the mulish way. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," for then you will become sad, gloomy, dull, stupid and full of disquietude. It is essential that your iniquities should be subdued and they shall be. He will save you—save you from rebellion, save you from self-seeking and self-will. He will bend you to His holy will. And if it cannot come to pass anyway else—then the bit and the bridle shall conquer you! O Souls, submit yourselves to God. Vex not His Holy Spirit by hardness of heart.

IV. Now I close by noticing A FREEDOM TO BE ATTAINED. There are children of God who wear no bit or bridle—the Lord has loosed their bonds. To them, obedience is delight—they keep His commands with their whole heart. The Son has made them free and they are free, indeed!

They are free, first, *because they are in touch with God*. God's will is their will. They answer to the Lord as the echo to the voice. Happy is he who can say, "Whatever You desire, O my Lord, I would desire it because You desire it." Then is it safe for the Lord to leave the man free from compulsion. It is written, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." This large liberty can only be promised to

these whose desires are in accordance with their heavenly delight. When the desires run towards God with delight, they shall surely be granted. When you and God have come to a good, clear understanding with each other, so that you yield to Him in all things. Then He will hear your prayers and give you the blessing which makes rich and adds no sorrow. When you rejoice in Christ Jesus, in whom the Father is well pleased, then will the Lord be pleased with you! When you cry to Him in the day of trouble, coming to the Mercy Seat, where He delights to dwell, then He will meet with you and lift up the light of His Countenance upon you.

You shall be free, next, because *you are tutored*. The Lord cannot trust our wild nature—He gives freedom where He gives His Spirit—“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” How does our Lord put it?—“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” He gives rest through His *blood*. He makes you find rest through learning of Him and bearing His yoke. It is only a horse that has been long taught and trained by great skill that can be trusted to go through a performance without bit or bridle. I sometimes hope there will come a day when these who drive horses will not need to carry whips, because the noble animals have been so trained by kindness as to answer to a *word*. I fear that time is a long way off but I have greater hope of you, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that you will be so trained that no constraint but that of the love of Christ will be needed to be put upon you. The Law was not made for a righteous man. I hope we shall not need Church discipline, or Providential discipline, because we have been trained to joyful, watchful, exact obedience. Oh, that it were so! Teach me, O Lord! Teach me Your way. Show me what You would have me to do. Make me to know the perfect love which casts out fear. When we are thus instructed, the Lord will leave us by His sweet Grace to be encompassed about by mercy and to be guided by His eyes.

We shall be free, again, because *always trusting*. Look at the 10th verse—“He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” Faith gives life and more faith gives light and liberty. When we completely trust in God, we shall do His will completely. When we raise no questions with God—when our reliance upon Him is without reserve; when we know by faith that His will and way for us are perfect—then we shall run in the way of His Commandments because He has enlarged our steps. When we have received life more abundantly through a growing faith, it will be safe for our Lord to take away all bits and bridles—but not till then. When, through Grace, faith has triumphantly mastered our whole being, we shall be victorious over the law of sin and death which dwells in our members and tends to unrighteousness. And then shall the yoke be taken away and the burden be removed. Blessed freedom this!

Especially *free because tender*. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule”—these are thick of skin, tough of mouth—and so they are mastered by hard means. If we become as tender as the apple of an eye, God will guide us with His eyes. If we avoid even the *appearance* of evil and shun every false way with delicate sensitiveness of mind, we shall hear little

about bits and bridles and the many other sorrows which shall be to the wicked. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, what a difference there is between one man and another even in the same Church, holding the same faith! One Christian man needs repeated and urgent warnings, while another is distressed with half a word of admonition! It is hard to stir one to generosity, or to any exertion in the Lord's cause, while another is earnest at once. Love works more in some than fear can produce in others. We have to use strong arguments and sharp cuts of the whip with certain sluggish minds, while others are all sensitiveness and take to themselves censures which were never meant for them.

Oh for a tender heart! May the heart of stone be taken away and a heart of flesh be granted! May we be to the Lord's will as sensitive as the mercury to air and heat! The wave is flowing and a cork upon the water is carried wherever the current moves. That same wave merely ripples at the side of a man-of-war—it does not stir in the least degree. Sainly souls feel the ripples of the Holy Spirit, while self-sufficient professors know nothing of anything less than a tornado! Crave as a choice gift the renewal of a right spirit within you and that right spirit will be eminently tender and pliant to the will of the Lord. My Brothers and Sisters, my longing is that you and I may stand with our faces towards the Lord, watching for the faintest indications of the Divine will. May we be humble, teachable and mild! May our soul be even as a weaned child!

All this will lead to high joy. See how the Psalm ends, "Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart"! When the bit is taken from the mouth, the tongue will show forth the praises of the Lord! When the bridle is gone, the mouth is free to sing to the Most High! If the heart is well adjusted, there will be music in the life. When we follow the Lord's guidance with alacrity, peace shall be our companion—and joy shall hover over us like a guardian angel! This world will be the vestibule of Heaven when we begin, even now, to rehearse that perfect obedience which is the essential condition of bliss. Beloved, all this the Holy Spirit must work in our hearts, or it will never be there. Cry to Him for it in the name of Jesus, and the Lord will give you an answer of peace!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 32.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—30, 651, 649.**

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PRAISE COMELY TO THE UPRIGHT

NO. 3460

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 27, 1915.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 18, 1868.**

***“Praise is comely for the upright.”
Psalm 33:1.***

THE Psalmist was full of praise and, therefore, felt that he could not fully express the Glory of God, but desired to enlist others in the sacred service. You hear him often calling upon sea and land, upon earth and Heaven, upon mountain and valley, upon plants and creeping things, upon living creatures, upon the heavens and the heavens that are above the heavens, to assist him in magnifying the name of the Infinite Jehovah, whose praise still exceeds all the honor that can be given to Him by all His creatures. Praise has a blessed contagion in it. It is like fire—if it burns its way in one place, it will be spreading itself if it can. A man cannot praise God alone. There will always be within him a high ambition to teach others to take up the strain. He will always be longing and desiring to lead others in the same sweet employ. Now let us seem to hear across these ages the voices of those who are with their God as they cry to us, “Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, for praise is comely to the upright.”

I have taken for a text that one sentence—and I will speak of it under four short words which may serve as headings—four words of question. The first is—

I. WHAT?

What is it which is so comely, so comely to the upright? It is praise, the praise Of God! And this praise of God, though it is always the same thing, the same spiritual thing produced by the Spirit of God, yet takes different forms, and in each form it is still comely to the upright. It is so in *that delightful form of music in which we express with accord, hearts and voices keeping tune together, in the great congregation our sense of united adoration.* I think there is nothing more comely than the sweet songs of the sanctuary, and what our friends of the Society of Friends do without singing I scarcely know! I think they will have to recant that one thing at least when they enter Heaven, for surely they cannot be silent *there*, where all shall join in songs like unto great thunder, and like the mighty rolling of the sea in praise of the Infinite Majesty of Him who was slain, but who always lives! I think we could not, anyhow, give up our

song. We would feel as if the Sabbath were shorn of its bloom, as if you had plucked the flowers out of the garden of the soul! Our soul must sing, yes, she will sing praises unto the Lord! So natural does it seem to the renewed heart to join in praise with others, that even when lying in the dungeon, after having been beaten sore with stripes, and with their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas did not only pray, but they *sang praises unto God*, and praise was comely there! It has been comely in many a prison where no one has heard the sound but God. It has been comely among the glens of Scotland when the Covenanters lifted up the Psalm. It has been comely in nooks and corners of England when Puritans, in fear of their lives, nevertheless magnified the name of the Lord. It has been comely at the stakes at Smithfield! Comely from Anne Askew's lips, when she was on the rack, stretched to the utmost! It has been comely anywhere when the voice has poured out itself with musical rhythm in the praise of the Most High!

But there is a second form of vocal praise which is equally comely to the upright—*the spoken praise of God*. I allude to those praises which consist of commendation of the name, and Person, and service, and goodness of the Lord by private Christians to their fellow men. Think not that all praise is gathered up in singing! It is the praise of God when the mother tells her child of the goodness of Him who made the stars, and who spread the world with flowers. It is praise when the young convert tells of the joy of his heart to his companion and bids him fly to the Fountain where he has washed and been made clean. It is praise, praise of a high order, too, when the advanced Believer in his old age tells of the faithfulness of God, and how not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised! And while praise seems to sit in such a comely manner upon the young convert, so that it seems to be the most natural thing in all the world for him to praise, it is equally comely in the aged Christian, for he seems to feel that if such a man as he, preserved so long, did not praise God, the very stones in the street would cry out against him!

That praise which consists in living, loving, personal testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord is always comely to the upright. I wish that some Christians would remember that *murmuring* is *not* comely. That envying others, that finding fault, that ambition, that desiring greater things—that all these are not comely, but the speaking well of His name, the testimony to His faithfulness in Providence and to His goodness in Grace—this is comely to the upright.

But the truest praise, perhaps, *is that which is not expressed in language, because it could not be—meditative praise*. I fear there is but little of this in London. I am not sure that there is any more of it in the country, though there ought to be a great deal more of it in both. I mean such praise as this—when, like David, we sit before the Lord and think of His

exceeding bounty and then say, “What am I, and what is my Father’s house that You have brought me here?” I mean the praise that makes the tear unbidden come to the eyes—not the tear of sorrow, but the tear of overwhelming gratitude for the goodness of God, so that the soul, without making use of words, seems to say—

**“When all Your mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I’m lost In wonder, love, and praise.”**

When thoughts become too heavy for words to carry them—when they break the backs of words, as it were. When “expressive silence,” as the poet calls it, has to come to the rescue and the man is compelled rather to fall prostrate before the Infinite Majesty and goodness than to venture on a sonnet that would fall flat in the presence of such emotions!—

**“Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
But Your compassions are Divine.”**

Where, then, shall it be found possible for words and for tongues to worthily express our praise? I am sure it would be a very refreshing thing to us all—acceptable to God and very blessed to ourselves—if we had more of this quiet praise! It would be refreshing if we could get to some of those cool retreats, those silent shades that with prayer and praise agree, and seem, by God’s kind bounty, made for those who would worship Him. Such praise is comely to the upright. I like to think of George Herbert and those other holy men who led meditative lives walking through the Parsonage Garden and up and down by the banks of the brook, singing within themselves of their God. It seems to fit them as a beautiful vest that is comely upon their shoulders when they are engaged in the meditative praise of God!

But one more remark. Sometimes praise does not even fall into the form of meditation, much less of conversation or of song. It becomes—what shall I call it?—*habitual praise—the spirit of praise*. I will indicate one or two Brothers and Sisters in this congregation who, if it were the depth of winter, would create a smile in my vestry if they would but enter it—who, whenever I meet them, their eyes sparkle like stars, their lips drop pearls, they never seem to be unhappy, never doubting, never distrustful. They are sure to speak every Sabbath morning, “We shall have a good day today. There has been much prayer about it and God always answers prayer. You will be graciously helped through it. Be of good courage.” And on Sunday night it is, “This has been a good Sunday.” In fact, they say they never have anything but good Sabbaths! They always seem to be fed and they are always rejoicing. And if you talk to them, they are not the youngest people in the congregation, perhaps—they may not be the richest, they may not be in the best circumstances, but they are always the most cheerful, always the most happy and they can say—

“We would not change our blest estate

For all the world calls good and great.”

Now, believe me, I think this is most comely to the upright when men or women shall get into the spirit of praise so that they shall always be blessing God. Why, it is such a beautiful dress to wear that they shine in the family, they shine in business, they shine in the church, they shine in the eyes of angels who think that they must be angels, too, they have got into such an angelic frame of mind! Such a man was Bernard Gilpin, who always said “it was all for the best.” If it was fair, it was all for the best. Or if there had been any rain, it was all for the best. Were it hot or were it cold, it was all for the best! Bernard was arrested by the Queen’s order to be brought to London to be burned, but he said it was all for the best. The soldiers, knowing of this expression of his, jeered him all along the journey with blasphemies, and when his horse fell and he broke his leg, they laughed, but he said it was all for the best. He was laid upon the road for a surgeon to set his bones, but he said it was all for the best, and so it proved to be, for this delayed them—and when they got just within sight of London they could hear the bells ringing and, on enquiry, they learned that Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had succeeded—so that Mr. Bernard Gilpin had arrived in London just three days too late to be burned—and he was quite correct in saying that it was all for the best! But I have no doubt that if he had gone to the stake he would have said it was all for the best, and certainly his emancipated spirit, as it left its charred ashes behind, would have sung, “Yes, it is all for the best.” Now that state of heart, not the act of praise, but the *spirit* of praise, in which the soul seems to swim in praise as the fish swims in the river, and to bathe and perfume itself with thanksgiving, as Esther perfumed herself in Ahasuerus’s palace. Such a state of heart as this is extremely comely to the upright! That is the answer to the question—What? The next question is—

II. WHY?

Why is praise so befitting and becoming to the upright? We answer that it is so, and you will soon see it, *from the nature of things*. Wings are most becoming to an angel. You would not think of drawing one of those spirits that are like flames of fire without giving it wings. What for? Why, to mount with, to make him ethereal, to quicken his motions. Well, and the Christian without praise would be without his wings! What is he to mount with? He does not wish to grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, but how is he to mount? Prayer gives him one wing, but praise must give him the other—and when he gets prayer and praise, oh, how he seems to leave sublunary things behind and away he flies, borne by the strong help of the eternal Spirit up to—

***“Where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul.”***

Take away the Christian's power of praising God and you make him a poor earthworm, bound here with doubts, fears and cares. But let him but kindle in his soul the flame that burns in Heaven of seraphic love to God and away he mounts!

Praise is comely to the upright, in the next place, *from the office of the Believer*. When Aaron put on his breast-plate, his belt, his ephod and his bells, everyone said that the garment was comely to Aaron. It would not have been comely to us because we would have no right to wear it, but the office of Aaron made it comely to him. You would not think it comely if I were to come here to preach to you tonight with a red coat on. You would have said, "No, that red coat is exceedingly comely to the soldier—it suits him—but it does not suit the minister." Now the Christian is a priest and praise is a part of the garment of a priest that he must wear. Praise is the employment of a priest. Inasmuch as we are kings and priests unto God, it becomes us that we should swing that golden censor that is full of thanksgiving, and that we should stand before the golden altar and continually offer sacrifice and praise acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It suits our nature and suits our office and, therefore, it is comely to the upright.

Praise is comely to the upright *as flowers and fruits are comely to a plant*. There never was a plant but what the fruit it bore suited it and the greatest comeliness to the apple tree in the garden is to see it loaded with its wondrous blossoms, the most beautiful things in all the world—and then afterwards to see the boughs hanging down with luscious fruit! The comeliness of a plant lies in its coming to perfection and bearing its fruit. So with Christians. The barren Christian has no comeliness, but the comeliness of the Christian, his *spiritual* comeliness, lies in his bringing forth fruit unto God—and what is this but praise? "Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me," says the Lord. Man is made on purpose to glorify God. It is his chief end. Then his chief end is comely to him. If he answers his end, he is comely to Him who made him, and inasmuch as our chief end is to glorify God, praise becomes comely to the upright.

Once again, praise is comely to the upright *as a crown is comely to a king*. It is his highest honor, his chief dignity. It is one of our highest honors to praise God—praise Him that we are His elected, His begotten—that we are His redeemed, His sanctified, His preserved people. When we get to this, we occupy as high a stand as we well can do short of Heaven! And in Heaven I know not if we shall ever seem more comely than when we are, with all the hosts of angels, praising and magnifying the name of the Lord! When we praise God, we do, as it were, put on our crowns, as when they, before the Throne of God, praise God. They also come with their crowns, but make it part of their praise to take them off, again, with, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory!"

Now, Christian, just treasure up this thought, that praise is comely to the upright. There are a great many people in the world who think a great deal of their personal appearance. How they will look in that mirror! How they will turn that hair again! How they arrange that dress! There must not be a pin awry. What does it really matter? After you have dressed yourselves as best you may, flies, bees, and insects of all kinds still excel you! When you have glorified yourselves to the pitch of Solomon, yet you cannot match the lilies—they still excel you! But that idea of comeliness ought to be turned into a better channel. If I want to make myself comely, why should I not desire to be comely in the esteem of those whose opinion is worth the having, *and comely in the eyes of God?* How can this be, then? Well, if I have, first of all, been covered with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, which are the true beauty of the Christian, then the next thing to make me comely is to praise God, to keep His praises continually on my lips! If I begin complaining and mourning when I am harshly treated, I am, as it were, but scratching my own face! It is not comely to me—I am putting on rags! I am soiling my garments. I am pulling off my gold rings. I am stripping myself of my ornaments. But if I praise God, then I am acting according to my better nature, according to my office—I am acting in the most honorable capacity possible and I am answering the end for which God made me. Do, therefore, you who want to be thought comely, be continually praising God!

And now, in the third place, another little word to help your memories, and that shall be—

III. WHEN?

“Praise is comely to the upright.” But when? Now-a-days that which is comely one day is not comely the next, for the fashions change so continually. But let me tell you that *the spiritual fashions never change*, and that which God declares to be comely, today, will be comely next year, and comely forever! Praise is never out of fashion, never out of season, never out of date. You may praise God and utter even the same sentiments as came from the lips of Enoch and there shall be nothing stale therein—it shall still be comely. When is it comely for Christians to praise God? My answer is always. I must comprehend all seasons and all places. It is never uncomely to praise God. When the congregation has met and the service has commenced, it is the time to lift up the voice un-animously! Oh, it is then comely to the Believer to praise the Most High God! If there are but two or three who are met together in some lowly schoolroom, or a shed, or a barn, or under the forest trees—or half a dozen on the deck of a vessel, or down in the cabin or the fore-castle—it matters not where, let us pitch our tent and sing one of the songs of Zion! Praise is comely to the upright from half a dozen in some back-wood settlement, or out in the bush at a settler’s log hut. Sweet everywhere, it is unacceptable nowhere! Praise is comely in all such places

when the saints come together. And, Brothers and Sisters, praise is comely from the Christian at any season. If he wakes in the morning, he sings—

***“Awake! Lift up yourself, my heart
And with the angels bear your part,
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praises to the Eternal King.”***

His morning praise, glistening with dew, is comely. And if in the night watches he tosses restlessly on his bed, why, praise at night again is sweet—and so will it be from the Believer if he can then sing the praises of the Lord. When you are cracking your whip, you that drive a cart in the streets, why, you can sing one of the songs of Zion there! There is many a light and frothy song sung there—why should not ours be sung, too? It will be comely to the upright. When you are in the field digging, plowing, hay making, harvesting. When you good girls are at work at the needle, or the sewing machine, or book folding, or whatever it is! You mothers, rocking your cradles, or whatever it may be—praise will not seem out of place if you are upright in heart. Praise will be comely to you on all occasions!

But there are *certain occasions when praise has a peculiar beauty*. For instance, praise is comely to the upright when you are in poverty. It is easy to praise God when you have all you need. Who would not? A dog will follow you when you feed him. But to praise God when He takes away those gifts that you prize the most—oh, this is comely praise, indeed! To say, with Job, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?”—that is praise! Let me just say that when we lie upon the bed and pain shoots through us, some of us men who are a great deal more impatient than women are, do not find it very easy to praise God, then, and yet oh, it is blessed when we can tighten the heartstrings at last and get them right, and bless the Lord that lives, who will yet bring us up from languishing and restore us from the gates of the grave. Praise in the midst of bodily pain—headache, heartache, or any form of disease, is very comely to the upright! And to praise God when some beloved one on whom your heart is set is sickening—that is difficult, but it is very comely. To see him on whom all your earthly dependence is fixed, sickening and pining, and yet to say, “The Lord’s will be done, and blessed be His name,” oh, ‘tis so comely that I do not know that the angels in Heaven have, any of them, such a piece of praise, so rich and rare as that of the song of resignation when Beloved ones are going! And when the earth rattles on the coffin lid of a dear child, or a friend, or a beloved wife, then to be able to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord”—such praise as that is very comely to the upright. And when these things meet—when deaths, sicknesses and poverty come like many seas meeting at one place—let me tell you that

the harder it is to sing, the more comely it is to do it! There is no music, perhaps, that we relish so much as the song of the nightingale, and that is because it sings in the night. And there is no praise more acceptable to God than the songs of His people in the night when they can praise Him under distress. I have read a saying by an old writer that God's birds sing best in cages, and so they do when the cages have in them some affliction and trial. Then do they pour out their notes sweetly, magnifying the name of the Lord! If I am asked, then, when should the Believer praise God, I say, especially in the time of trial!

I may say yet again, that we never praise God, I think, so acceptably as when *others are blaspheming and profaning His name*. For the Believer then to venture his testimony in the teeth of all defiance, to thrust himself in the way of jeers and sneers for Christ's sake, to bless God when others curse Him—this is very comely to a cross-bearer, to a servant of Him who laid down His life for His Father's Glory. And in times when you come to be slandered and your name is evilly spoken of, and your religion is said to be worthless, and your actions misrepresented, and your motives misconstrued—it is a grand thing, then, to praise God, and say—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”***

At such times, again, praise is sweet.

But, Beloved, there is an hour coming when praise will be comeliest of all—I mean when this mortal frame shall dissolve and our spirits shall be entering upon an unseen world. It is not every Believer that dies singing. It is not necessary to his safety that he should do so, but oh, it is so comely if he can do it! As it is said to sound very sweetly over the water, so certainly over the billows of death the song of the triumphant Christian comes with special sweetness! I shall always remember with great delight one verse of a hymn which I heard from a dying Christian who had become blind just before his death—and which has always since been invested in my memory with a melody I never heard in it before—

***“And when you see my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
Mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!”***

Ah! it is comely to the upright to be praising God when heart and flesh are failing!

But I must leave that. I shall finish with another little word, and that is—

IV. WHOM?

Praise is comely—not to everybody—but to the upright. It is a very sad reflection that during this week some of the most glorious music that ever was composed—some of the noblest words that have ever been written, has been sung—and I do not altogether disapprove of it—but sung, I

fear, by some who have no part nor lot in what they are singing! I refer to Handel's glorious music—the noblest sounds, I think, next to the songs of angels, and one of the highest and holiest enjoyments of earth to listen to! But there are singers there who know nothing of God, or of His praise. It is very sad to think of it, but then it is just the same here on Sundays—just the same. You sing, but you do not sing. The sound is there, but not the heart in the song. As for your professional singing on Sabbath—I believe that that is earthly, sensual, outright devilish! We have heard say of our friends in America that in some of their churches the choir is so much esteemed and so highly esteemed by itself, that if the congregation were to sing, they would almost frown upon them to put them out of tune, and that there is very little sound of the congregation's singing heard compared with those half a dozen perhaps as wicked singers as the music halls could find, stuck up there to glorify God by insulting Him! There has been a good deal of that done in England, too. Some of our churches have gone and picked up people according to their sweet voices and have said, "Now you praise God at so much per week." But the thing won't do—every conscience is convinced that it is wrong and the text utterly condemns it, *for praise is comely to the upright*—it is not comely to anybody else!

The upright. Did you notice that word? It is a grand word, that word, *upright*. It is not the man who goes out of his way here and there. It is not the crooked man. It is the upright man. Nobody praises God like the man that stands upright. God will have a straight musical instrument—He will not have it crooked. If we are to praise Him, we must be upright. And mark, being upright consists in perfect independence of all, except God. The upright man does not lean on anything else, but stands right straight up. Now when a man says, "I would like to be a Christian, but ___"—he is not upright. "I would be honest, but ___"—he is not upright. "I would make a profession of religion, but ___"—he is not upright. He who has two objectives, two ends—who holds with the world and holds with God—is not upright and he cannot praise God! But when a man has been created anew in Christ Jesus. When he has been taught what the right path is and Grace given him to follow it, and who says, "Now, come fair or come foul, my trust is in the living God. I would not lie, though it were to gain a world. Nor would I cheat, though it were to win Heaven itself. I am independent of these things, seeing that God has promised that He will never leave me, nor forsake me"—when a man thus stands upright, he makes very blessed music—and such us God can accept! But your crooked tradesmen, your merchants who can cheat, your sneaks, your fraudulent bankrupts and I know not what besides—God wants no music out of them! It is no credit to a man to be praised by a rogue, and it is no credit to God to be praised by a man who has no character. When a man has character and lives up to it as a Christian, then it becomes

honorable to God to be praised by him. If I heard a bad man speak well of God, I would say, "Ah, I do not like that! As a jewel of gold set in a swine's snout, so is a good word from such a man as that." I am sure, if I lived near any of you, and esteemed your character very highly and I heard all the blacklegs in London say what a good soul you were, I would begin to ask if you had not done something amiss, if you had not done something wrong. Said one of the philosophers when he was praised by a bad man, "What have I done wrong that I should deserve to be praised by such a man as this?" And when ungodly men praise God, we might almost say, "What has God done that such an one as this should praise Him?" Praise is not comely to such—it does not seem right at all. It is either a mere form without life and, consequently, a dead thing that God cannot accept, or else it is hypocritical, and God will not accept that. Or else it is a downright insult and that is to be avoided above all things! Praise is only comely to the upright.

Then, my dear Friends, are you upright? Have you, first of all, been laid flat and brought to the horizontal? If so, then you will soon come to the perpendicular! A man must be brought to lie flat before the Throne of Grace, confessing his own nothingness. And he must look up to the Cross of Christ and rest there, or else he has not yet learned what it is to stand upright, for this, alone, can produce stability of principle—faith in the living God—and the believing man stands where all others fall! Oh, to have this uprightness of heart. If you have it, then go and praise God. It is comely to you. Cease not from it, but say, in the words of our hymn—

***"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death!
I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 130; 1 JOHN 1:4-7.**

PSALM 130.

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* The most eminent of God's saints have been in the depths. Therefore, then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying the Cross? David saw the depths—and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn, therefore, that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth! "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."—

***“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would often be,
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me!’”***

2. *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of man, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best estate.

4. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.* If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and there would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness! Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God’s saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator, to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.* There is a waiting of expectancy—we believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and so we hold out our hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation. We know not what God may do, nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace—’tis a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait for His explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them!

6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient, tossed upon the bed of pain, has waited for the morning, saying, “Would God it were morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease.” And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David’s soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh, there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God! I recollect that Rutherford said, “I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that, the loving of Him will be Heaven enough for me.” Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—

***“To those who call, how kind You are, how good to those who seek.
But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.”***

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God!

7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem

us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning Sacrifice—and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the Throne of God. I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion. May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!

1 JOHN 1:4-7.

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the Doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us that our joy may be full! Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become a Brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* Not a light, nor the light, though He is both, but that He is Light. Scripture uses the term, light, for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is Light, and then in his usual style John, who not only tells you a Truth of God, but always guards it, adds, “in whom is no darkness at all.”

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.* Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God. No, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk. But the darkness here meant is the darkness of *sin*, the darkness of lies. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not speak the truth.

7. *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light—*Not to the same degree, but in the same manner.

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light as He is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order—we still need daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my Soul—it does not say, The blood of Jesus Christ “cleansed,” but, “*cleanses.*” If guilt returns, His power may be proved again and again! There is no fear—all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

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

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

HOPING IN GOD'S MERCY

NO. 3390

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 1914.

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

*"Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,
on those who hope in His mercy."
Psalm 33:18.*

By the term, "the fear of God," we understand in Holy Scripture the whole of true religion. We do not mean by the fear of God, the *slavish* fear which trembles in God's Presence, as the poor slave trembles under his master's lash, but that child-like fear which fears to offend, which fears to be led into error—a reverential fear such as the angels have when they veil their faces with their wings and cast their crowns before the glorious Throne of God—to have such a fear of God before our eyes as to restrain our wandering passions, to keep our hands from doing evil and our tongues from speaking the thing which is not right—to have such a fear of God that we feel as though we were in God's Presence and act, and speak, and think as though we fully recognized the eye that reads the secrets of the heart. When we read, therefore, that the eye of the Lord is upon "them that fear Him," we are to understand that He has gracious regard towards those who delight in Him, who worship Him and are His children.

But the part of the text to which I call your special attention now is that expression, "Those who hope in His mercy." This is intended to be of the same reach and compass as the first. Those who fear God are the same persons as those who hope in His mercy and this is very consoling, for to hope in God's mercy seems to be but a very small evidence of Divine Grace and yet it seems to be a very sure sign, for those who hope in God's mercy are the same persons who are said to fear Him. They are the same persons as are described as being His saved ones, His children—the truly godly ones.

I hope there are many here who can say, "Well, I do hope in His mercy. If I cannot get farther, yet I can get as far as that—my hope is fixed in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ." Then, dear Friend, may the words we shall speak be comforting to you! And may you rejoice that the Lord considers you and has an eye of favor towards you, now, and will have forever!

I am always very anxious about those who have the beginnings of Grace in them. I think I would go a long way out of my way to carry one of the lambs in my bosom and to try to cherish one that was ready to die with doubt. But, on the other hand, I am always fearful of giving any encouragement to those who are on a wrong foundation. Like the ancient mariner who was afraid of the whirlpool on the one hand and the rocks on the other, and found it difficult to steer along the middle of the channel, so may I find it tonight. I would not grieve a trembling soul. I would not bolster up a self-deceived one. Far be it from these lips to ever become a rod for the backs of God's weak ones! And equally far be it from this tongue to speak so as to put pillows under men's arms and under their heads wherewith they may go to sleep and sleep themselves into Hell!

In trying, therefore, to avoid two evils, I shall begin by speaking about a hope in God's mercy which is false—and then I shall say a little about a sound hope in God's mercy. To begin, then, at the beginning—

I. THERE IS A FALSE HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY AGAINST WHICH WE EARNESTLY WARN YOU.

"I do not believe," says a man, "that God will ever cast me into Hell, *for God Almighty is very merciful.*" "What will become of you when you die?" said one man to another. "I do not know," was the answer, "and I do not think much about it because I know that God is a very good God—and I do not think that He will cast the souls of men into Hell, as bigots say, and cause them to be forever banished from His Presence." Now, Friend, if this is your hope, I beseech you to be rid of it, for it is a deadly viper and though you nurse and cherish it in your bosom, it will sting you to your destruction, for do you not know that the God of the Bible is a God of Justice, as well as a God of Mercy? Though He is infinitely good, yet He Himself has said, "I will by no means spare the guilty."

What do you think of this text, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God"? Does that seem as if God would not punish sin? "The soul that sins, it shall die." What do you think of that? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Does that seem like an effeminate and sentimental kindness that will wink at sin? If you are to be saved by the general mercy of God, then let me tell you that this blessed Book of God is all a mistake and deception, for there are no such teachings here, as those of which you dream. Besides, you know better than this—I appeal to your own conscience, *you know better than this!*

We tell people that if they allow filth to accumulate and sewage to become stagnant. If they deprive themselves of fresh air and neglect ventilation and cleanliness, when the fever comes it will be sure to make them its prey! And they might say, "Oh, we don't believe that! God is merciful and we do not believe that He will ever let the fever take people off by scores—we shall not think of clearing away the dung heaps, or cleaning out the sewers, or getting the windows made to open! We tell you it is all

bigoted trash! God will not let the people die of fever!" But they do die of fever and the very people who neglect the laws of health are taken away, God's mercy notwithstanding! And so it will be with you. Sin is like a dung heap—your iniquities are like those fever-breeding drains and your soul will die of the disease which springs from the sin which you so much love. And all your talk about God's mercy you will find to be a dream! If a man shall go to sea tomorrow in a leaky ship which takes in the water while she is going down the Thames, they may keep the pumps always going, but yet the water gets ahead of the men. You say to the man, "Sir, if you go out into the sea—it is only a matter of time—your ship will go down. She is not seaworthy—she will never get down the Channel." "Oh," he says, "don't tell me that—God Almighty is merciful and He will never let a poor fellow drown! I believe that my ship will float and I mean to run the risk of it, for I believe in God's mercy." Down the vessel goes—and the wretch on board of her and all her passengers are drowned! And what do we say? Do we say that God is not merciful? No! But we say that some men are insane—and so say we of you! If you trust in that general mercy of God, but will not obey the Gospel and put from you the way of salvation which God has ordained, you will perish! And on your own head will be your blood since you have foolishly perverted the goodness of God to your own destruction!

In other persons, this belief in the mercy of God takes the shape of saying, "*Well, I have always done my best.* I have been a respectable person ever since I can recall—I bring up my children as well as I can—I send them to the Sunday school. I always pay my debts. I don't swear and I am not a gin drinker—I don't know that I have any particular vice. On the contrary, I am always ready and happy to help the poor and to say a good word for religion and so on. It is true that I am not all I ought to be—no doubt we are all sinners and there is a great deal that is wrong and imperfect about us—though I don't know what it is in particular. But anyhow, God is merciful and what with what I have done and what I have not done—and God's mercy to make up for all the shortcomings—I do not doubt but what it will be all right with me at the last." Now this, again, is a deceit and a refuge of lies—a bowing wall and a tottering fence which will fall on those who take shelter behind it!

You have read of Nebuchadnezzar's image which was part iron and part clay. Had it been all iron, it might have stood, but being part clay, by-and-by, the whole image was broken in pieces! Such is your religion! You trust in part to the mercy of God—I will call that the iron. But you trust in part to your own so-called good works—that is the clay and down your image will fall before long! Why, you are like the man in the proverb who tries to sit on two stools—and you know what becomes of him! Besides, how foolish you are to try to yoke yourselves to God to help Him! Go and yoke a gnat with an archangel, or find a worm and put it

side by side with leviathan—and hope that they will plow the stormy deep together! Then think of Christ helping you and of you helping Christ. Absurd! If you are to be saved by works, then it must be all of works! But if by Grace, it must be all of Grace, for the two will no more mix than fire and water. They are two contrary principles! Therefore, give up the delusion! A hope in God's mercy which is twisted and inter-twisted with a hope in your own works is certainly vain!

But we know others who say, "Well said, Mr. Preacher! I know better than that—I shall never fall into that snare. I trust in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and in Him, alone! I expect the mercy of God to come to me through Christ and I depend upon only Him." Well, you talk very well. You talk very well. I must go home with you! But the man does not want me to go home with him. I do not know where he means to turn in—perhaps once or twice on the road before he gets to his house! When he gets home, we shall ask his wife what sort of a man he is. She will then be compelled to say, "Well, Sir, he is a great saint on Sunday, but he is a great devil all the rest of the week! He can talk a horse's head off about religion, but, Sir, there is no genuine living in the matter—no real, righteous, godly action in him."

Did you never read of Mr. Talkative in *The Pilgrim's Progress*? How he could tell out all the Doctrines! How he could prate about them! He had them all at his fingertips and at his tongue's tip, too, but they never operated on his life. They never affected and sweetened his character. He was just as big a rogue as though Christ had never lived—and just as graceless a villain as though he had never heard of the Savior at all! Now, Sirs—any kind of faith in Christ which does not change your life is the faith of devils! And it will take you where devils are, but will never take you to Heaven! Men are not saved by their works—we declare that plainly enough—but if faith does not *produce* good works, it is a dead faith and it leaves you a dead soul to become corrupt and to be cast out from the sight of the Most High. A genuine hope in God's mercy, according to the teaching of Scripture, purifies a man. "He that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." If you have a hope in the mercy of God which lets you do as the ungodly do with impunity, then, Sir, you have about your neck a millstone that will sink you lower than the lowest Hell! God deliver you from such a delusion!

I fear there are still others who have a bad hope—a hope which will not save them—because they trust in the mercy of God that they shall be all right at the last, *though they have neglected all those things which make men right*. For instance, the Word of God says, "You must be born-again." These men have never been born-again, but yet they trust in the mercy of God! Sir, what right have you to expect any mercy when God has no mercy, except that which He shows to men by giving them new hearts and right spirits? You say you trust in the mercy of God and yet you have no repentance—and do you think God will forgive the man who

not only does not love, but refuses and despises His Son, the only Savior? I tell you there will have to be a new Bible written before this can be true! And there will have to be a new Gospel—yes—and a new God, too, for the God of the Bible never will, nor can wink at sin! Unless He makes you sick of sin, He must be sick of you! And until you hate your iniquities with a perfect hatred, there cannot be mercy in God's heart to you, for you go on in your iniquities!

You tell me you trust in God, and yet there has been no change of life in you! Oh, Sirs! Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven! The first thing God's mercy will do for you will be to turn your face in the opposite direction.

If mercy shall ever come to you, it will make you a new creation, give you new loves, new hates. But if you have not conversion, what have you to do with mercy? The mercy of God, wherever it comes, makes men pray. You never bend your knees and yet you say you trust in God's mercy? Oh, Sir, you are deceiving your own soul!

The mercy of God makes a man love Christ and makes him seek to be like Christ. You have no love to Christ and no desire to be like He. Then, Sir, I pray you give up that falsehood, which has been, up to now, as a soft pillow for your head, and believe me that the mercy of God cannot come in the way in which you expect it!

I wish I might have torn away, from some now present, their false dependences, but I am afraid they are too dear to them for my hands to do it! May God's Holy Spirit deliver men from all false confidences in God's mercy! But now a much more pleasant part of my work comes before me, namely—

II. TO DESCRIBE A SOUND HOPE IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

I shall say of it, first, that *a soundly hopeful soul feels its need of mercy*. It does not talk about sin, but it feels it. It does not talk about mercy, but it groans after it. Beware of superficial religion! I think if I might only say two things before I die, one out of the two would be—*beware of surface godliness*. Take care of the paint, the tinsel, the varnish, the oil! There must be in us a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness! There must be in us the broken heart and the contrite spirit. I like revivals—far be it from me to ever say a word against them—but I have seen scores of men jump into religion just as men jump into a bath—and then jump out, again, just as quickly because they have not felt their deep need of Christ.

You may depend upon it, there is no sound bottom to a man's religion unless he begins with a broken heart. And that religion that does not begin with a deep sense of sin, and a thorough heartbreaking conviction, is a repentance that will have to be repented of before long. God save us from it! If you are to have a hope in mercy, you must know that it is mercy! You must know that you need it as mercy! You must be clean di-

vorced from every confidence except in mercy! You must come to this, that it must be Grace first, last, and midst—Grace everywhere—otherwise it will never serve or save such a poor helpless castaway as you are. A sound hope, then, is one in which a man knows that he needs mercy!

Another mark of a sound hope is that he clearly perceives that mercy can only come to him through the Mediator—Christ Jesus. The Word of God tells us that there is but one door of Grace, and that is Christ! But one foundation for a genuine hope—and that foundation is Christ! God's mercy is Infinite, but it always flows to men through the golden channel of Jesus Christ, His Son! Soul, it will be a good thing for you when you have done with the idea of hunting after mercy here, there and everywhere, and when you come to Christ, and Christ alone, for it! God swears by Himself that there shall be no hope for man out of Christ, but that there shall be hope for them there. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Against all other confidences God thunders out that famous sentence, "He that believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." When you are tied up to Christ. When every other door is shut and barred, and fastened up with iron padlocks. When every cistern is broken. When every hope is shipwrecked and the last broken board has been swallowed up in the whirlpool of despair—if your soul then clings to Christ—you have a sound hope, a hope that can never let you go!

Yet again. That *hope which leads a man to desire to be conformed to God's plan of mercy* is a sound hope. I mean this. There may be someone here who says, "I fear I am not regenerated. You condemned me just now, Sir, but oh, I wish I were! I am afraid I am not converted, but oh, that God in His Grace would convert me! You spoke of repentance—I fear I do not repent as I should, but oh, I wish that I could repent! Oh, that my heart would break! I feel because I do not feel and I sigh because I cannot sigh!" Ah, poor Soul, if you are willing to be what God would make you to be, then is your hope, though not yet a perfect one, yet good so far as it goes! If you will now come and cast yourself on Christ, though you have no regeneration apparent to yourself, yet you shall be saved! If you will come as you are, with all your iniquities about you, without any repentance that you can discern. If you will come empty-handed and cast yourself on what Jesus did upon the Cross and is still doing in pleading before the Throne of God, you shall never perish, but you shall be saved!

Oh, it is a precious Gospel which we have to preach to needy sinners! A full Christ for empty sinners! A free Christ for sinners that are enslaved! But you must be willing to be this—you must be willing to be renewed in the spirit of your mind—and if you can honestly say that you are so willing and that you will now close in with Christ, then yours is the hope upon which God looks with the kindest regard!

I might thus continue to describe this hope, but I shall not detain you longer upon that point. I do hope and trust that I have many here who are beginning to have a little hope in Christ. Oh, it is a mercy to see the first streaks of daylight, for the sun is rising. It is pleasing to see that first dewdrop, the first tear that comes from a troubled heart. I think the Lord is about to bring water out of the flinty rock! I feel so grateful when I meet with some in distress. Sometimes after the service there is somebody that wants to see us. They are so distracted and depressed—and they think they are giving us so much trouble, but oh, it is blessed trouble! There is not one of us but would be glad to sit up all night, I am sure, to see many such troubled ones, if we might but speak a word to them by which they might find joy and peace!

Now, I want to take the text like a very sweet and dainty morsel and just drop it into the mouths of you who are ready to faint for it—"The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy." Though you have got no further than that, yet you have God's eye upon you and you may be greatly comforted! But we must go to another point with great brevity. We have in this house of worship, here and now—

III. SOME WHO ARE AFRAID TO HOPE IN GOD.

They unconsciously desire to trust Him in His own appointed way. They understand it, but they are afraid to do it. Now, my beloved fellow sinner, I beseech you to cast yourself upon Christ and to trust in Him! And remember that *God cannot lie*. It is blasphemy to suppose that God can say a thing that is not true. Now, He has promised, over and over again, to save everyone that trusts in Christ. And if He does not save you, well, then____. You know what I mean. Oh, but God cannot lie! Therefore, come and cast yourself upon His faithful promise! Well do I remember when that text, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," stayed my fainting soul for months together, before I actually had joy and peace. Do you call upon God in prayer? Do you trust in God, however little it may be? Then you shall be saved! Believe it. If any soul here feels himself to be as black as night—imagines himself to be out of the list of the hopeful—yet if he can but come and cast himself upon what Christ did when He died upon the Cross for sinners, God must cease to be God before that soul can perish! Hope then, hope then, Sinner, for God cannot lie!

Then hope, again, because *God has saved and is still saving others!* We have not ceased to have conversions in this Church. I am sometimes afraid that they are not as many as they once were, but they do come and come frequently, too, to the praise of God's Grace! Now, if others are saved when they trust Christ, why should not you be? Who has clambered up into the secret chambers of Heaven and found that your name is not written in the roll of election? Who? Why, no one has done so!

Then, since Christ bids you come and trust Him—come and trust Him! Oh, that you might come, tonight, and as He has accepted others, He will accept you, for He says, “He that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

I beseech you have hope, again, because *it is to God's honor to save sinners*. If it were dishonoring to Christ to receive the ungodly, you might stand in doubt. But since it is one of the jewels in His crown which gladdens His heart and brings Him honor in the sight of glorified saints in Heaven, depend upon it, He is not hard to be persuaded! Christ is quite as willing to save as ever the most longing sinner can be to be saved! It is His delight to give of His liberality, to dispense of His bounty to those who need! Have hope then. The generous Character of Christ should encourage you!

Have hope, I say, once more, *because of what Christ endured upon the Cross*. See Him dying in unutterable pains and pangs! See His hands and feet distilling founts of blood! See His body racked with agonies that cannot be described! His soul, meanwhile, ground and crushed beneath the wheels of Divine Wrath against the sin He bore for our sakes! His whole Being is a mass of suffering in our place! Now, why all this miraculous and sacrificial endurance? Surely that bearing all this, we might be spared and never know its anguish! Oh, when my soul looks to Christ, it seems to see that nothing is impossible with such an Atonement! No sin is too black for that blood to wash and cleanse away! It cannot be that beneath Heaven there can be a sinner so abominable that the blood of Christ cannot make a full atonement for all his sins! Come, then! Come, then—‘tis the voice of Jesus that calls you! Come, you chief of sinners! Come now, before yet another sun shall dawn! Come and find in Jesus' wounds a refuge from the stormy blast that shall soon come to sweep the unconverted into condemnation!

Yet must we still pass on and, only for a moment, linger upon—

IV. THE COMFORT WHICH THE TEXT AFFORDS TO THOSE WHO HAVE A HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY.

It says that the eye of the Lord is upon them. There is a blessing for you. Nobody else's eye is upon you. You have got up to London, away from parents and friends, and nobody looks after you now. You have come into this big Tabernacle and I am sorry to find that there are still some of our members who do not look after strangers—do not look after souls as they ought to do—and you have been coming here and nobody has spoken to you. Now, let me read the text, and I need not say any more, “*The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy.*” God sees you and you do not need anybody else! Be content that God knows all about it. You are up in the top gallery there, somewhere behind where my eye cannot reach you—and hardly my voice—but “the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy.” And mark that eye, as well as being an eye of

observation, is also an eye of pity! God has compassion on you! He stands side by side with you—that bleeding Son of God—and in your groans He groans, and in your griefs He takes a share. He has compassion on you—yes, and He will help you—and even now He loves you. The eye with which He looks upon you is a Father's eye and when a father sees his child broken-hearted, he says to himself, "I can stand anything but this. My child's tears overcome me, overmaster me. I cannot see him sick and sad and sobbing, without pitying him."

Oh, some of you have sons and daughters of your own! And when you see that sick child of yours crying with pain, why, you would spend all you have, if you could but get some doctor that would make him well again. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And that means all those who hope in His mercy, for they are put, as I told you, in the text in the same category as those who fear Him. Your Father's eye is upon you and He pities those tears, sighs and cries of yours—He loves you and He means to bless you!

Now, I want to say to you Believers here, something similar to what I said at this morning's service. I wish that all the members of this Church were more on the alert after those who are beginning to hope in God's mercy. Some are. I cannot find much fault with you. You are my joy and crown—and sometimes I boast—I hope in no wrong way, of the earnestness of many in this Church! But make me not ashamed of this, my boasting, as some might well do, who are cold and careless about the souls of men. Do you know there are lost ones round about you, lost ones about whom you seem to have no concern, though, according to Christ's Law, they are your brethren, your neighbors? What a sad, sad story it is that we have lately been seeing in the newspapers every day—a gentleman lost, rewards offered, the police searching—but he is lost! A hat found. Some sort of clue given. But he is lost! How must the parent hearts break! How must friends, day by day, feel life a burden till they know what has become of him! He is lost! He is lost! Ah, but the loss of a man for this life, though it is a very heavy blow, is nothing compared with the loss of a soul! Ah, Mother, you have got a child who is lost. Ah, Husband, you have got a wife who is lost! Ah, Wife, your husband is lost! And have you never advertised for him? Have you never sought him? God knows where he is! Have you never gone to God and said, "Seek him and find him"? Have you never enlisted the Great Soul-Finder's aid, who came into the world, "to seek and to save that which was lost"?

Are you quite careless about it, whether your servants, your neighbors, your husbands, your wives, your children shall be lost forever or not? Then am I ashamed of you! And angels are ashamed of you! And God's living people are ashamed of you! And Christ Himself may well be ashamed of you, that you have no care for those whom you ought to love!

I do trust that this is not the case with us, but that we do anxiously desire that lost ones should be saved. Come, then, I want you to look up those who are beginning to seek Christ! And when you have done that, and have found them out, then I want you to seek after those who are *not* seeking Christ. I do not think there ought to be a person come within these four walls, into these galleries, or on the area, but shall be attacked, for his good, by someone or other, before the whole assembly is scattered! Surely you might find a way of putting some question, kindly and affectionately—not rudely—but respectfully, so that if I have been the means in any way of making a little impression on their souls, you may follow it up by personal dealing! If I have put in the nail of the Truth of God a little way, you may give it a heavy blow and drive it in deeper—and God grant that the Holy Spirit may clinch the nail so that it may never be drawn out!

Oh, my Hearers, we must have you saved! We cannot go on much longer with some of you as you are because you yourselves will not go on much longer as you are! We have been rather free for the last few weeks from deaths and departures, but do not think that we shall be free from them long! In the ordinary course of nature, as those who calculate the averages of human life will tell you, a certain proportion of a great multitude like this—some 6,000 and more—must soon die. There is no chance about whether we shall or not—*we must*. Now, who shall it be? Who shall stand before his God? To whose ears will the ringing trumpet of the archangel sound? For whom shall the funeral bell be tolled? Over whom shall it be said, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust”? Since we know not to whom the summons may come, may this be the command to all, “Consider your ways and prepare to meet your God.” Oh, that you might prepare this very night, and seek unto the Lord with full purpose of heart! And this is the promise, “He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139.**

This is a Psalm we can never read too often. It will be to us one of the greatest safeguards against sin if we have its teaching constantly before our mind's eyes. The teaching of this Psalm is simply this, “You, God, see me.”

Verse 1. *O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.* You have looked into my most secret part. The most intricate labyrinths of my spirit are all observed by You. You have not searched and yet been unable to discover the secret of my nature, but You have searched me and known me. Your search has been an efficient one. You have read the secrets of my soul.

2. *You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts afar off.* It is a common enough thing to sit down and to rise up and I, myself, oftentimes scarcely know why I do the one or the other, but You know and understand all. "You understand my thoughts afar off." My heart forms a thought that never comes to a word or an act, but You not only perceive it, but You translate it! You understand my thoughts.

3. *You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.* I am surrounded by You as by a ring of observers.

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether.* Not only the words on my tongue, but those that slumber in my tongue, the unspoken words, You know them perfectly and altogether!

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* Your Presence amounts to actual contact. You not only see, but touch, like the physician who does not merely look at the wound, but by-and-by comes to probe it. So do You probe my wounds and see the deeps of my sins.

6, 7. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me! It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?* It seems as if the first impulse was to fly away from a God whose attributes were so lofty. 'Twas but a transient impression, yet David words it so.

8, 10. *If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* How swift he supposes his flight to be, as swift as the light, for he borrows the wings of the morning—and yet the hand of God was controlling his destiny even then! As Watts rhymes it—

***"If mounted on the morning ray,
I fly beyond the western sea,
Your swifter hand should first arrive,
And there arrest Your fugitive."***

11, 12. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* For, mystery of mysteries, and more wondrous still, You not only observe, but You always have observed! And You have not only observed my well-formed being and my visible life, but before I had a being, You did observe what I should be, and when I was yet in embryo, Your all-observing eyes watched me.

13-16. *For You have possessed my reins: You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works: and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You when I was made in secret and curiously*

worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being not perfect, and in Your Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. In so vivid a manner does our holy poet sing of the Omniscience of God with regard to our creation. Before we had breath He formed and fashioned us.

17. *How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How many thoughts has God towards us! We cannot count them! And how kind are those thoughts—we cannot estimate them—how precious, how great!

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.* I suppose I had finished the tale, had counted up all Your thoughts to me and then fell asleep. I should then but begin to count again, for You continue to thrust out mercies from Your hands. My God, my numeration shall never overtake You, much less my gratitude, and the service that is Your due!

19. *Surely You will slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* “Surely”—here is a solemn inference from the Omniscience of God—“surely You will slay the wicked, O God.” You have seen their wickedness. They have committed their wickedness in Your Presence. You will need no witnesses, no jury! You are all in one! Are You not the Judge of all the earth, and shall You not do right? “Surely You will destroy the wicked, O God.” Then I desire not to have those in my company who are condemned criminals and are soon to be executed. “Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.” See how this sets David upon purging his company and keeping himself clean in his associations, since God, who sees all, and will surely punish, would hold it to be evil on the part of His servant to be found associating with rebellious men?

20-22. *For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are bound to love our own enemies, but not God's enemies, since they are haters of all that is good and all that is true—and the essentially Good One, Himself. We love them as our fellow beings, but we hate them as haters of God.

23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NO. 3409

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1869.

*“The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek
the Lord shall not want any good thing.”*
Psalm 34:10.

THE young lions are very strong. They are as yet in the freshness of their youth and yet their strength does not always suffice to keep them supplied. The young lions are very crafty—they understand how to way-lay their game and leap upon them with a sudden spring at unawares, and yet, with all their craftiness, they howl for hunger in the woods. The young lions are very bold and furious, very unscrupulous. They are not stayed from any deed of depredation and yet for all that, freebooters as they are, they sometimes lack and suffer hunger. These are just the type of many men in the world—they are strong men, they are cunning men, they are thoroughly up to the times—smart, sharp men. If anybody could be well supplied, one would think they should be. But how many of them go to bankruptcy and ruin and, with all their cunning, they are too cunning! And with all their unscrupulousness, they manage, at last, full often, to come to an ill end. They do lack and suffer hunger. But here are the people of God—they are regarded as simpletons, such simpletons as to seek the Lord instead of adopting the maxims of universal worldly wisdom, namely, “Seek yourself!” They have given up what is called the first law of human nature—namely, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-serving—and have come to seek the Lord, to seek to magnify Him. And what comes of their simplicity? “They shall not want any good thing.” Notwithstanding their lack of power, their want of cunning and the check which conscience often puts upon them, so that they cannot do what others can to enrich themselves—yet for all that, they have a fortune ensured to them! They “shall not want any good thing.”

Let us look at this text, now, and together consider it thus—first, *the seeking of the Lord which is here intended*. And then following upon that, *the promise that is given upon such seeking*.

I. THE SEEKING OF THE LORD HERE INTENDED.

We must be particular and very precise about this. The promise is so rich that we wish to win it fully, but we do not wish to be dishonest. We would not take a Word of God that does not belong to us, lest we should deceive ourselves and be guilty of robbing God. We must go carefully and

jealously, here, and must search ourselves to see if in very deed and truth we are such as *really* seek the Lord.

Now, the term to “seek the Lord,” I may say, *is the description of the life of the Christian*. When he lives as he should, his whole life is seeking the Lord! It is with this he begins. “Behold, he prays,” that is, he seeks the Lord. He has begun to be conscious of his sin. He is seeking pardon of the Lord. He has begun to be aware of his danger—he is seeking salvation in the Lord. He is now aware of his powerlessness and he is looking for strength to the Lord. Those deep convictions, those cries and tears, that repenting and humbling and, above all, those acts of simple confidence in which he casts himself upon the great Atonement made upon Calvary’s bloody tree—those are all acts of seeking the Lord! Now, perhaps some of you have got no farther than this. Well, you shall have your proportion of blessing, according to your strength. You shall have your share in it, little as you are. He will give to His children at the table their portion, as well as to those who have grown to manhood.

After a man has attained unto eternal life by confiding in the Lord Jesus, he then goes on to seek the Lord in quite another way. No wonder! Since he has found the Lord, or rather has been found of Him, and yet he still presses on to apprehend Him of whom he has been already apprehended! He still presses forward, seeking the Lord, and he seeks the Lord thus. He seeks, now, *to know the Lord’s mind*, the Lord’s Law and will. “Show me what You would have me to do,” he says. “Lord, I went by my own wit, once, and I brought myself into a dark forest—I lost myself—I was at Hell’s brink and You did save me. Now, Lord, guide and direct me. Be pleased to teach me. Open my lips when I speak. Guide my hands when I act. I wait at Your feet, feeling that—

***“For holiness no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”***

The man now seeks the Lord by daily and constant prayer, seeking that he may be upheld, guided, constrained in paths of righteousness and restrained from the ways of sin. He becomes a seeker of the Lord after sanctification, as once he was after justification. And then he becomes a seeker of the Lord in a further sense. He seeks to enjoy the Lord’s love and His gracious fellowship and communion. He seeks to get near in reverent friendship to his Lord. He now longs to grow up in the likeness of Christ, that his conversation with the Father and the Son may be more close, more sweet, more continuous. He feels that God is his Father and that he is no longer at a distance from Him in one sense, for He is made near by the blood of the Cross. Yet sometimes he is oppressed with a sense of his old evil heart of unbelief and in departure from the living God—and he cries out, “Draw me nearer to Yourself!” In fact, his prayer is always—

***“Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee—
Even though it is a Cross that raises me,
Still all my cry shall be,***

Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee.

He seeks the Lord's company. He delights to be in God's house and at God's Mercy Seat, and at the foot of the Cross, where God reveals Himself in all His Glory! He is constantly crying for a larger capacity to receive more of God. And the longing of his soul is, "When shall I come and appear before God?" He feels that he never shall be satisfied till he awakes in the Lord's likeness. Now, all this, which may be private within him and scarcely known to any, operates practically in *an outward seeking of the Lord which makes the man's life to be sublime*. The genuine Christian lives for God. He makes the first objective of all that he does, the Glory of God, the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom, the showing forth of His praise who has brought him out of darkness into marvelous light. He is a young man, an apprentice—he has been converted and he says, "Now, what can I do while I am in this house to make it better, to make it happier and holier, that men may see what the religion of Jesus is? How can I recommend my Lord and Master to those among whom I dwell—to my master and my mistress and my fellow servants?" He becomes a tradesman on his own account, and when he opens that shop door he says, "I do not mean to trade for myself. I will make this to be my objective, that this shall be God's shop. God has got to keep me—He has promised that He will—therefore, I may take what I need for the daily subsistence of myself and my children, but I will keep the shop for God, for all that, and if He prospers me, I will give Him of my substance, but whatever comes of it, I will so trade across my counter, so keep those books and manage those bills that I will let the world see what a Christian trader is! And I will seek thus to recommend my Lord and my God—and my objective shall be to make Him famous."

He seeks the Lord on Sundays. He desires at the Sunday school, or the preaching station, or anywhere he may serve, to be glorifying God. But he equally seeks Him on Mondays and other weekdays, for he believes there is a way of turning over calicoes, weighing pounds of tea, plowing acres of land, driving a cart, or whatever else he may be called to do, by which he can honor God and cause others to honor Him.

Now, I say very solemnly—I hope I am mistaken in what I say, but I fear I am not—I am afraid there are many professors who would tell a lie if they said that they sought God always in their business, for though they are the members of a Church and you would not find them out in anything seriously inconsistent, yet their whole life is inconsistent because for a Christian to live for anything but the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent! It is inconsistent to the very root and core, to the tenor and aim, the supreme objective of life, altogether inconsistent! A man has a right to live, to bring up his family, to educate them and see them comfortably settled in life—but that ought to be only for God's Glory! His acting as a father is expected, for if a man cares not for his own household, he is worse than a heathen and a publican—that God may be glorified by

his doing is his duty! But when I see some people putting by their thousands and getting rich for no sort of reason that I know of, except that people may say, “How much did he leave behind him?” how can I believe that those professors, as they take the sacramental cup, are doing anything but drinking condemnation unto themselves? When I see some Christians who profess to be living for nothing but to be respectable and to be known, and honored and noticed, but never seem to care about the souls of men, nor about Christ’s Glory—never shedding a tear over a dying sinner nor heaving a sigh over this huge and wicked city, which is like a millstone upon the neck of some of us, like a nightmare perpetually upon our hearts—when I see these men so cold, so indifferent, so wrapped up in themselves, what can I think but that their religion is but a cloak, a painted pageantry for them to go to Hell in, which shall be discovered at the last and be a theme for the laughter of the fiends? Oh, may God grant that we may all be able truly to say, “I seek the Lord. I am sure, I am certain that I seek Him,” for if we can feel that that is true, then we can take the promise of the text. If not, we may not touch it. If we, as professing Christians, are not at top and bottom in heart, and soul, and spirit—and in all that we do—really seeking the Glory of God, the promise does not belong to us! But if we can, from our very souls, declare, “Notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, yet, Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You and that I seek Your honor,” then this is true of us, and no one of us shall need any good thing!

Just a word or two more about this, for we must discriminate thoroughly well before we come to the promise. It is too rich and precious to be bestowed upon the wrong persons and there are some who hope to get this promise, who feel that they must not take it. We must be among those who seek the Lord heartily, not merely saying that we do, or wishing that we did but, filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the power of His blessed residence in our souls, we must be heartily panting after God’s Glory! Otherwise I do not see that we can put our hands on the promise without presumption. We must be seeking it honestly, too, for there is a way of seeking God’s good and your own at the same time—I mean having a sinister and selfish motive. We may preach and not be preaching only for God at all. A man may live in the Sanctuary, in holy engagements from morning until night and yet may never ardently, intensely, seek the Lord. A man may be a great giver to charities, a great attendee at Prayer Meetings, a great doer of all kinds of Christian work and yet he may never seek the Lord, but may yet be seeking to have his name known, to be noted as a generous man, or be merely seeking to get merit to himself, or self-complacency to his own conscience. It is a downright honest desire to serve and glorify God while we are here that is meant in the text. If we have got it and I think we may readily see whether we have or not—then is the word of the Psalmist true to us.

We must seek God’s Glory heartily, honestly, and we must seek it most obediently. A man cannot say, “I am seeking God’s Glory,” when he

knows he is disobeying God's command in what he is doing. How can I say that I am desiring to glorify God by following a pursuit which is sinful, by giving loose to my anger and speaking rashly? By giving rein to my passions, by indulging my own desires, by being proud and domineering over my fellow Christians, or by being pliant, fearful, timid after an unholy sort and not being bold for God and for His Truth? No, we must watch ourselves very narrowly and cautiously. We must be very careful of our own spirits. We soon get off the line. Even when we are keeping correct outwardly, we may be getting very inconsistent inwardly by forgetting that the first, last, midst and sole objective of a blood-bought spirit is to live for Christ—and that if saints on earth were what they should be, they would be as constantly God's servants as the angels are in Heaven—they would be as much messengers of God in their daily calling as the seraphs are before the eternal Throne of God! Oh, when will the Spirit of God lift us up to anything like this? The most of us are still hunting after things that will melt beneath the sun, or rot beneath the moon! We are gathering up shadows to ourselves, things which have no abiding substance—we are seeking self, seeking anything rather than the blessed God! Lord, forgive us this sin wherein we have fallen into it, and make us truly such as truly seek the Lord! Now, let us be prepared to behold—

II. THE PROMISE OF THE REWARD OF SUCH SEEKING.

“They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” That is, *not one of them*. They that first stepped into Bethesda's pool were healed—but no others. But here everybody that steps into this pool is healed! That is to say, everyone that seeks the Lord has this promise—the least as well as the greatest—the Little-Faiths and the Much-Afraid as much as the Great-Hearts and the Standfasts. They that seek the Lord, whether they are chimneysweeps or princes, whether they are tender children or seasoned veterans in the Master's great army—they shall want no good thing. “Well, but,” somebody says, “there are some of them that are in need.” They are in need? Yes, that may be, but they are not in need of *any good thing*. They cannot be. God's Word against anything you say, or I say. If they seek the Lord, they shall not, they cannot, they will not need any good thing! “Well, at any rate, they need what appears to be a good thing.” That is very likely—the text does not say they shall not be. “Well, but they need what they once found to be a good thing! They need health—is not that a good thing? It was a good thing to them when they had it before, yet they need health. Does not that go against the text?” No, it does not in any way whatever! The text means this—that anything which is absolutely good for him, all circumstances being considered, no child of God shall ever need. I met with this statement in a work by that good old Puritan, Mr. Clarkson, which stuck by me when I read it some time ago. I think the words were these, “If it were a good thing for God's people for sin, Satan, sorrow and affliction to be abolished, Christ would

blot them out within five minutes! And if it were a good thing for the seeker of the Lord to have all the kingdoms of this world put at his feet, and for him to be made a prince, Jesus would make him a prince before the sun rose again!" If it were absolutely to him, all things being considered, a good thing, he would have it, for Christ would be sure to keep His Word. He has said he shall not want it, and He would not let His child want it, whatever it might be, if it were really, absolutely, and in itself, all things considered, a good thing! Now, taking God's Word and walking by faith towards it, what a light it sheds on your history and mine! There are many things for which I wish, and which I sincerely think to be good, but I say at once, "If I have not got them, they are not good, for if they were good, good for me, and I am truly seeking God, I would have them—if they were good things, my heavenly Father would not deny them to me—He has said He would not, and I believe His pledged Word." I think sometimes it would be a good thing for me if I had more talents, but if it were a good thing I would have more, I would have them. You think it were a good thing if you were to have more money. Well, if He saw it to be good, you would have it. "Oh," you say "but it *would* have been a good thing if my poor mother had been spared to me—if she were alive, now, it would have been a good thing and it would certainly be a good thing for us to be in the position I was five years ago before these terrible panic times came." Well, if it had been a good thing for you to have been there, you would have been there. "I don't see it," says one. Well, do not expect to see it, but *believe* it! We walk by faith, not by sight. But the text says so. It says not that every man shall have every good thing, but it does say that every man that seeks the Lord shall have every good thing. He shall not want any good thing, be it what it may. "Well, I doubt it," says one. Very well. I do not wonder that you do, for your father, Adam, doubted it, and that is how the whole race fell! Adam and Eve were in the Garden, and they might have felt quite sure that their heavenly Father would not deny them any good thing, but the devil came and whispered and said to them, "God knows that in the day you eat of the fruit of that tree, you will be as gods! That fruit is very good for you—a wonderfully good thing—never anything like it—and that one good thing God has kept away from you." "Oh," said Eve, "then I will get it," and down we all fell! The race was ruined through their doubting the promise! If they had continued to seek the Lord, they would not have needed any good thing. That fruit was not a good thing to them—it might have been good in itself, but it was not good for them or else God would have given it to them—and their doubting it brought all this terrible sorrow on us. So it will upon you, for let me show you—you say, perhaps, "It would be a very good thing for me to be rich." God has stopped you up many times. You have never prospered when you thought you were going to. You will put out your hand, perhaps, to do a wrong thing to be rich, but if you say, "No, I will work, and toil, and do what I can, but if I am not prospered, it is not a good thing for me to be prospered, and I would

not do a wrong thing if it would bring me all the prosperity that heart could desire.” Then you will walk uprightly and God will bless you. But if you begin to doubt it and say, “That is a good thing and my heavenly Father does not give it to me,” you will, first of all, get hard and bitter thoughts against your heavenly Father. And then you will get wicked thoughts and wrong desires—and these will lead you to do wrong things, and God’s name will be greatly dishonored thereby. How do you know what is a good thing for you? “Oh, I know,” says one. That is just what your child said last Christmas. He was sure it was a good thing for him to have all those sweets! He thought you very hard that you denied them to him, and yet you knew better. You had seen him before made so ill through those very things he now longed for. And your heavenly Father knows, perhaps, that you could not bear to be strong in body—you would never be holy if you had too robust health. He knows you could not endure to be wealthy—you would be proud, vain, perhaps wicked—you do not know how bad you might be if you had this! He has put you in the best place for you. He has given you not only some of the things that are good for you, but *all* that is good for you! And there is nothing in the world that is really, solidly, abidingly good for you, but you either have it now, or you shall have it before long. God your Father is dealing with you in perfect wisdom and perfect love, and though your reason may begin to cavil and question, yet your faith should sit still at His feet and say, “I believe it. I believe it, even though my heart is wrung with sorrow. I am a seeker of God. I seek His Glory and I shall not need any good thing.”

I think someone in the congregation might say to me, “Look at the martyrs. Did not they seek the Lord above all men?” Truly so, but what were you about to object? “Why, that they needed many good things. They were in prison, sometimes in cold, and nakedness, and hunger. They were tormented on the rack. Many of them went to Heaven from the fiery stake.” Yes, but they never needed any good thing. It would not have been a good thing to them, as God’s martyrs, to have suffered less, for now read their history. The more they suffered, the brighter they shine. Rob them of their sufferings and you strip their crowns of their gems! Who are the brightest before the eternal Throne of God? Those who suffered most below! If they could speak to you now, they would tell you that that noisome dungeon was, because it enabled them to glorify God, a good thing to them! They would tell you that the rack whereon they did sing sweet hymns of praise was a good thing for them because it enabled them to show forth the patience of the saints and to have their names written in the book of the peerage of the skies! They would tell you that the fiery stake was a good thing because from that pulpit they preached Christ after such a fashion as men could never have heard it from cold lips and stammering tongues! Did not the world perceive that the suffering of the saints were good things, for they were the seed of the Church? They helped to spread the Truth of God and, because God would not de-

ny them any good thing, He gave them their dungeons, He gave them their racks, He gave them their stakes—and these were the best things they could have had, and with enlarged reason, and with their mental faculties purged, those blessed spirits would now choose again, could they live over again, to have suffered those things! They would choose, were it possible, to have lived the very life and to have endured all they braved to have received so glorious a reward as they now enjoy!

“Ah, well, then,” says one, “I see I really have not understood a great deal that has happened to me. I have been in obscurity, lost my friends, been despised, felt quite broken down—do you mean to tell me that that has been a good thing?” I do. God has blessed it to you. He will enable you to say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Law.” And if you get more Grace, you will say it is a good thing, for is it not a good thing for you to be conformed to the likeness of Christ? How can you be, if you have no suffering? If you never suffered with Him, how can you expect to reign with Him? How are you to be made like Him in His humiliation, if you are never humbled? Why, I think every pain that shoots through the frame and thrills the sensitive soul helps us to understand what Christ suffered. And being sanctified, gives us the power to pass through the torn veil, and to be baptized with His baptism, and in our measure to drink of His cup and, therefore, it becomes a good thing! And our Father gives it to us because His promise is that He will not deny or withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly.

I feel, Brothers and Sisters, as though my text were too full for me to go on with it! There is such a mass in it, and if you will take it home and turn it over at your leisure, you may do with it better than I can, if I attempt wire-drawing and word-spinning. There is the text. It seems to me to speak as plainly as the English tongue can speak. Give yourselves wholly up to God and live for Him, and you shall never want anything that is really good for you! Your life shall be the best life for you, all things considered in the light of eternity, that a life could have been! Only mind you keep to this—the seeking of the Lord. There is the point of it! Get out of that, and there may be some promise for you, but certainly not this one! You have got out of the line of the promise—but keep to that and seek the Lord—and your life shall be, even if it is a poverty-stricken one, such a life that if you could have the Infinite intelligence of your heavenly Father, you would ordain it to be precisely as it now is! “They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

Why, how rich this makes the poor! How content this makes the suffering! How grateful this makes the afflicted! How does it make our present state to glow with an unearthly glory! But, Brothers and Sisters, we shall never understand this text fully, this side of Heaven. There we shall see it in splendor. They that seek the Lord here shall have up yonder all that imagination can picture, all that fancy could conceive, all that desire could create. You shall have more than eye has seen, or ear has ever heard! You shall have capacities to receive of the Divine fullness,

and the fullness of the pleasures that are with God shall be yours forevermore!

But, again I come back to that, are you seeking the Lord? That is a question I have asked my own heart many and many a time—Do I seek the Lord's Glory in all things? I ask it of you, you young men who are starting in business. Now, you know you can, if you like, go into business for yourselves. I mean you can make your trade tell for yourselves, and live to yourselves, and the end will be miserable and the way to it will not be happy. But if God's Spirit shall help you young men and women early in life to give your hearts to Jesus, and to say, "Now, God has made us so we will serve Him that made us. Christ has bought us, so we will serve Him that bought us. The Spirit of God has given us a new life, so we will live for this new and quickening Spirit"—then I do not stand here to promise you ease and comfort, for in the world you shall have tribulation, but I do say, in God's name, that He will not withhold one good thing from you, and that when you come to be with Him forever and ever, you will bless Him that He did for you the best that could be done even by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love. You shall have the best life that could be lived, the best mercies that could be given and the best of all good things shall be yours here and hereafter.

There may be some here, however, who have long passed the days of youth and up till now have never had a thought of their Maker. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but they have not known God. If you keep a dog, he fawns on you and follows at your heels. There is scarcely any creature so ignorant but what it knows its keeper. Go to the Zoological Gardens and see if those animals that are most deficient in brains are not still obedient to those that feed them! Yet here is God, good and kind to a man like you, and you have lived to be 40 and have never had an idea of loving and serving Him! Have you sunk lower than the brutes? Think of that! But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners such as you. Repent! May God's Eternal Spirit lead you to repentance of this great sin of having lived in neglect of God, and from henceforth, seeking pardon for the past through the Atoning Sacrifice, and strength for the future through the Divine Spirit, seek the Lord and you shall find that you shall not need any good thing. The Lord bring you there and save and bless you eternally! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34.**

"A Psalm of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed."

It was a very painful exhibition and one in which David does not shine, but in which, nevertheless, the Providence and Grace of God are

very conspicuous. And it is very pleasant to find a man of God penning such words as these after his escape.

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* After any very great deliverance, we feel prompted to special gratitude. And it appears to us as if we never should leave off praising God. I wish that perpetuity were real, but, alas, it often happens that the next cloud that sweeps the skies brings back our doubt and our fears—and our song is over. It ought not to be. Our heart's resolve should be, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* What else is there to boast about? But what a proper subject for boasting, the Lord is, because it is legitimate boasting! We can never exaggerate—we can never speak too well or think too well of God! He is high above our thoughts when they are at the best, so that we may make them as big as we may and we shall never be guilty of extravagance!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof and be glad.* Humble souls cannot, generally, endure boasting, but boasting in God is very sweet to them. He that will make God great will always be a choice favorite with a broken spirit. Those that are little in themselves delight to hear of the Glory of God.

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* It is too grand a theme for one! One little heart can scarcely feel it all! One feeble tongue cannot tell it out. Come, then, you saints that know His name—magnify the Lord with me!

4. *I sought the LORD and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* Blessed be His name for this. Are there not many of you, dear Friends, who can bear the same testimony—personal proof of a prayer-hearing God? You tried Him, for you sought Him. You tried Him and you found Him true, for He delivered you from all your fears.

5. *They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* Only a look—and their burden was gone. Only a look! What great things hang on little things! Faith is but a look, yet it brings life, pardon, salvation! Heaven comes that way. Only a look!

6, 7. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps round about them who fear Him, and delivers them.* The angel of the Lord does not merely come to help His people, but he stays with them. He encamps. He has pitched his tent, for he means to tarry. The guardians of God forsake not their charge. They encamp about them who fear Him, for their deliverance.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* It is the grandest of benedictions! It is the sum and substance of the Gospel! "Blessed is the man that trusts in Him." By the way of works we are cursed, but by the way of believing we are blessed. Are you trusting? Dear Heart, are you trusting? Is it a feeble trust? Are you often much tried and distressed? Yet if you are trusting, you are blessed! God

pronounces you so—do not let your faith waver about it, or suffer the devil to tell you that you are accursed, for you cannot be! You are blessed.

9. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no need to them that fear Him.* Sometimes their wishes are not granted, but there is no real need. They shall have all necessaries, if they do not have all luxuries.

10. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.* Strong as they are, and crafty as they are, they sometimes howl because of their hunger.

10. *But they who seek the LORD*—Though they have no craft, no courage, no strength and no foresight.

10. *Shall not need any good thing.* Plead that, tried child of God! Plead it! Plead it if you are in need tonight—if you are in any form of need—plead this gracious Word of God!

11. *Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

A Sunday School teacher's text! Gather the children close to you. Say, "Come near me. I would be familiar with you." It was a king who spoke these words, and yet he delighted to say, "Come, you children." Win their attention. "Hearken unto me." If they do not hear, how shall they understand? "And I will teach you the fear of the Lord." That is your subject—pure religion—heart religion—spiritual religion! I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

12. *What man is he that desires life?* What man is he that does *not* desire life? Love of it is innate in us all.

12, 13. *And loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile.* He begins with one of the hardest practical duties of the fear of God, for he that bridles his tongue is also able to bridle the whole body! The tongue is such an unruly member that if that is kept—and only through Divine Grace can it be so—then we may be quite certain that all the other organs and faculties will be kept, too.

14. *Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.* A great deal packed away into a small compass there. There is the negative, "Depart from evil," and the positive which must go with it, "Do good." And if you do not do good, you will soon do evil. And then there is that blessed precept—"Seek peace." Hunt after it if you cannot find it. And if it runs away from you, follow it—pursue it—hunt after it till you gain it! A peaceable life is a happy life.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous.* He watches them. He loves them too well to let them ever be out of His sight. He views them with complacency. He regards them with affection. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.

15. *And His ears are open unto their cry.* Ready to hear their feeblest prayer—the cry of their pain—their distress. His ears are always open.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* Sets His face against them.

16-17. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* Here is an explanation of the experience of the Believer—first, prayer—then God’s hearing and then deliverance. Who would not pray who has found prayer to be so effectual with God?

18, 19. *The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivers him out of them all.* The first line seemed to have something terrible in it—“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” But there is a blessed, “but,” that comes in—thrown like the tree into Marah’s bitter stream to sweeten it all!

20, 21. *He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked.* Their own evil shall be their destruction! They need nothing more than to be allowed to go on in sin! Sin is Hell. The fire of corruption is the fire of perdition. Evil shall slay the wicked!

21, 23. *And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them who trust in Him shall be desolate.* How grandly does David preach the Gospel! We need not look to Paul to learn salvation by faith! The Psalms are full of it. We have had it just before. “Blessed is the man that trusts in Him.” And now, again, “None of them who trust in Him shall be desolate.” They are sinful, but they shall not be desolate. They often feel as if they were utterly unworthy, but they shall not be desolate. They are, sometimes downcast, but they shall not be desolate. They may be hunted by trials, afflictions and temptations of the Devil, but they shall not be desolate! They may come to the bed of pain and to the chamber of death, but they shall not be desolate! They shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, but they shall not be desolate—not one of them—for it is written, “None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.”

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

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

LIONS LACKING—BUT THE CHILDREN SATISFIED NO. 65

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 10, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST FUND FOR THE RELIEF OF POOR MI-
NISTERS.

*“The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they who seek
the Lord shall not want any good thing.”
Psalm 34:10.*

RIGHT truly did Paul say, “Whereby He has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises,” for surely this promise is exceedingly great, indeed! In the entire compass of God’s Holy Word, there is not to be found a precious declaration which can excel this in sweetness, for how could God promise to us more than all things? How could even His Infinite Benevolence stretch the line of His Divine Grace farther than it has gone in this verse of the Psalm?—“They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” There is here no reserve, nothing is kept back, there is no solitary word of exception. There is no codicil in this will striking out, even, the smallest portion of the estate. There is no *caveat* put in to warn us that there are domains upon which we must not intrude. A large field is laid before the children of God. A wide door is open and no man can shut it! “They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

Now, we shall notice, first of all, the *Christian character beautifully delineated*. “They who seek the Lord.” Secondly, we shall notice a promise set in a glorious light by a contrast, “they shall not want any good thing,” although the young lions do lack and suffer hunger.” And thirdly, we shall consider whether we cannot bring some *evidence to prove the fulfillment of the promise*.

I. First, we have here a very short, but very beautiful DESCRIPTION OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN—he is said to “seek the Lord.” “They who seek the Lord, (or Jehovah, as the original has it), shall not want any good thing.” Ah, Beloved, if some of us had the drawing up of this description, we would have made it too narrow. Possibly some of you might have said,

“They who seek the Lord in the established Church, within the pale of the State religion, shall not lack any good thing.” Others might have said, “They who seek the Lord in the orthodox Calvinistic manner shall not lack any good thing.” Others might have said, “They who seek the Lord in the Baptist fashion, or the Methodist fashion, or some other, shall not lack any good thing.” But it is not written so! It is written, “They who seek the Lord,” in order that it may take in the Lord’s people of all classes and denominations and all shades of character! It is a very brief description, yet full and comprehensive, including Christians in all stages and positions. Now let me show you that the Christian, in whatever portion of his spiritual history he may be, is one who seeks the Lord.

We commence with *conviction of sin*. That is where God begins with us and no man is a Christian unless the Holy Spirit has revealed to him his own entire helplessness, his lack of merit and absence of power to ever accumulate merit in the sight of God! Well, then, the man who is under a conviction of sin and feels his need of a Savior—what is he doing? What is his occupation, now that he is hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Why, he is seeking the Lord! Ask him what is his one need and he will say, “Christ is all my desire—I rise early in the morning and the first thought I have is, ‘O that I knew where I might find Him!’ I am in my business and my prayers go up to Heaven like hands searching for Jesus. And when I lie down upon my bed, my heart says, ‘I seek Him whom my soul loves—I seek Him, but I find Him not.’” Such a man will offer prayer. Why? Not because there is any merit in it, not because he will be praised for it, but to seek the Lord! He turns the pages of Scripture, not as he would a book of philosophy, from curiosity, or for mere instruction, but to seek the Lord! He has one passion, one desire—to *seek the Lord*. For that he would barter his life and be content to have his name cancelled from the register of men below, if he might but find the Lord Jesus. He desires above everything to have his name recorded in some humble place in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Are you thus in the dim morn of spiritual life seeking the Lord? Is He your one objective of pursuit? Rejoice, then, and tremble not, for the promise is to you in this earlier stage of your calling, when you are only just struggling into being, “They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

But let us go a stage further on, when the Christian *has found the Savior* and is justified—when he can say, in those sweet words I so often repeat—

**“Now, freed from sin I walk at large,
My Jesus’ blood’s my full discharge.”**

You will find that he has not left off seeking the Lord. No, he now seeks to know more of Him. He seeks to understand more of the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. I ask anyone here who has an assurance that he is a pardoned man, thoroughly justified and complete in Christ—are you not seeking the Lord? “Oh,” you say, “I thirst, I long to know more of Him, I feel that all I have ever known of Him is like the whispering of the sea in the shell, while the awful roar of the sea, itself, has not yet reached my ears! “I have heard the whisperings of Christ in some little mercy and I have heard His bounties sing of bottomless, eternal, unchangeable love—but oh, I long to plunge into the sea, itself, to bathe myself in the broad ocean of His Infinite generosity and love to me!” No Christian ever fancies that he knows enough of his Master. There is no Christian who has found the Lord who does not desire to be better acquainted with Him. “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go,” is the cry of the man who has had his sins forgiven! He sits down at the feet of Jesus and looks up to Him and says, “Master, teach me more, I am a little child. You are a great Instructor. Oh, I long to love and learn more of You.” He is always seeking the Lord—and in this more advanced stage, the promise to him is, “They who seek the Lord shall not want any good things.”

But go a little further on, when the Christian *has scarcely ever a shadow of a doubt of his acceptance*. He has progressed so far in spiritual life that he has attained to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. His faith has become so confident, that—

**“His steady soul does fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”**

He can read his “title clear to mansions in the skies.” He has climbed the Delectable Mountain. His feet are standing fast upon a rock and his goings are established. But even then he is seeking the Lord—in the highest flights of his assurance, on the topmost pinnacle of his faith—there is something yet beyond! When he had sailed farthest into the Sea of Acceptance, there are Fortunate Isles that he has not reached. There is an *ultima thule*, a distant land, that he has not yet seen. He is still seeking the Lord. He feels that he has “not yet attained,” he is still “pressing forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” But then he seeks the Lord in a different fashion—he seeks Him that he may put a crown on His Head. He is not seeking him for mercy, but to *give Him praise!* Oh, that my heart could find You! That all its strings might sing sweet music to You! Oh that my mouth could find Your ear and that I might bid it open and listen to the whisper of my song! Oh that I knew where You did dwell, that I might sing hard by the

eaves of Your habitation and that You might hear me forever—that I might perpetually send the songs of my gratitude up to Your sacred courts. I seek You that I may break the alabaster box of praise on Your dear sacred head! I seek You that I may put my soul upon the altar and sacrifice my living self to You! I seek You that I may go where cherubim are singing, whom I envy, because they—

***“All night long unwearied sing
High praises to the Eternal King!”***

I will seek You in business, that there I may adorn the Doctrine of God, my Savior, in all things! I will seek You in my songs that I may hymn Your praise! I will seek You in my musings, that I may magnify the Lord in my thoughts! I will seek You in my words, that my conversation may show forth Your praise! I will seek You in my gifts of benevolence, that I may be like my Savior—I will seek You forever, for I have attained enough to know that I am Yours and You are mine!

Though I have nothing else to ask of You, seeing you have given me Yourself—though You are—

***“Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh,
My Kinsman near allied by blood,”***

though now my soul stands perfect in You and—

***“Not a shadow of a spot
Can on my soul be found,”***

yet still I will seek You—seek to honor You—seek to kiss those blessed feet that bled for me—seek to worship that dear “Man who once on Calvary died,” and put crowns of eternal unfading honor upon His blessed, thorn-crowned, but now exalted brow!

Then bring the Christian to the last period of life, to the *brink of death*. Set him on those hoary rocks that skirt the edge of Jordan. Let him sit there, looking down at the dark stream rolling rapidly below, not afraid to wade in, but rather wishing to die that he may be with Jesus. Ask the old man what he is doing and he will answer, “Seeking the Lord.” But I thought you had found Him many a year ago, Old Man. “So I have, but when I found Him, I sought Him more. And I am seeking Him now—seeking Him that I may be complete in Him at His appearing. That I may be like Him when I shall see Him as He is. I have sought to understand more of His love to me and now I do not know it all. I know as much as mortal can know—I am living in the land of Beulah. See this bunch of spices? Angel hands have brought it to me—a present from my King—here are tokens of His Love, His Mercy and His Grace! And do you see yonder the golden light of the Celestial City? And did you hear, just now, the sweet singing of the angels?” “No, no,” says the young man, “I hear them not.” “But,” the old man replies, “I am on the edge of Jordan and

my ears are open, whereas yours are dull. Still I am doing what I have done all my lifelong—seeking the Lord. And till this pulse shall cease its perpetual beating, I will still seek Him, that dying, I may clasp Him in my arms, the antidote of death!”

You will readily confess that this description of a Christian is invariably correct. You may take the youngest child of God—yon little boy, ten years old, who has just been baptized and received into the Church. Ask what he is doing? “*Seeking the Lord.*” Follow him till he becomes a middle-aged man with all the cares of life about him. Ask what he is doing then? Still he answers, “*Seeking the Lord.*” Put a few gray hairs upon his head and let him know that half a century has gone. Again, ask what he is doing? “*Seeking the Lord.*” Then make his head all frosty with the winters of old age and ask him the same question. And he will still reply, “*Seeking the Lord.*” Take away those hairs until the head is entirely bald and the man is trembling on the grave. What is he doing then? “*Seeking the Lord.*” Yes, as long as we are in this body, whatever our position, or condition, this will always apply to us—“They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

But let us not leave this one point without asking you one solemn question. Will you answer it? I beseech you to answer it to yourselves. Are you seeking the Lord? No, some of you, here, if you only can have your bottle of wine and your fowl, that will satisfy you better than seeking the Lord. There is another—give you health and strength and let you enjoy the pleasures of this world and that will be better to you than seeking the Lord. There is another flying in the face of the Almighty, cursing and swearing—you are not seeking the Lord. Another is here this morning who once thought that he did seek the Lord but he has left off doing it now. He went away from us because he was not of us, for, “if he had been of us, he doubtless would have continued with us.” There is a young woman who once thought she sought the Lord but she has gone astray—she has backslidden—proving, after all, that it was mere excitement. Would to God I could include you all in this promise this morning, but can I, dare I, must I? No, I must not. As the Lord lives, if you are not seeking the Lord, the devil is seeking you—if you are not seeking the Lord, judgment is at your heels! Even now, the swift-winged angel of Justice is holding the torch before the fierce messenger of vengeance who, with his naked dagger, is about to execute the wrath of God upon your spirit. Ah, take no lease of your lives—fancy not that you are to live forever. If you have not sought the Lord, as Jonathan Edwards said, “you stand over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank—and that plank is rotten.” You are hanging over Hell by a single rope and all the strands of the

rope are creaking, snapping, breaking. Remember, after death, judgment! And after judgment, woe. And after woe, torment. For woe, woe, woe, must be forever! “The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!” It needs a damned spirit to start from the grave to preach to you and let you know something of it. But though one should rise from the grave with all the scars of all his torments upon him, with his hair all crisp by the hot fire of vengeance—though his body were scorched in the flames which know no abatement, though he should tell you with a tear at every word and a groan as a stop at every sentence and a deep sigh on every syllable, how horribly he feels, how damnably he is tormented—still you would not repent! Therefore we will say little of it. May God the Holy Spirit seek you and then you will seek Him and you shall be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God!

II. Now we come to THE PROMISE SET FORTH BY WAY OF CONTRAST. “They shall not want any good thing.” That is the jewel! “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger,” that is the foil to set off the jewel and make it shine more brightly! “They shall not want any good thing.” I can hardly speak of that, for there is too much to say. Did you ever see a horse let into a wide field where the grass grew so thickly that he scarcely knew where to begin to eat? If not, you have seen children taken into the field where wild flowers grow. It is so full of them in their liveries of white and yellow that the children know not where to pluck, first, they have so wide a choice! That is how I feel when I have such a text as this—“They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” We have heard of the celebrated check for a million pounds which has been preserved—here is one for millions of millions! Here is a promise wide as our needs, large as our necessities, deep as our distresses! There are some persons whose ambitious desires are very much like the Slough of Despond, which, though the king’s laborers cast in thousands of tons of good material, never could be filled up. But the Lord can fill them! However bottomless our desires, however deep our wishes, however high our aspirations, all things meet in this promise, “They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

We take it concerning *things spiritual*. Are we wanting a sense of pardon? We shall not want it long. Are we desiring stronger faith? We shall not want it long. Do you wish to have more love to your Savior, to understand more concerning inward communion with Jesus? You shall have it! “They who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” Do you desire to renounce you sins, to be able to overcome this corruption or that? To attain this virtue, or that excellency? “They who seek the Lord shall not

want any good thing.” Is it adoption, justification, sanctification, that you want? “You shall not lack any good thing.”

But are your *wants temporal*? Do you want bread and water? No, I know you do not, for it is said, “Bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure.” Or, if you do want it somewhat, it shall come before long. It shall not be to starvation. David said, “I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Do you want clothes? You shall have them. “He that clothes the lilies of the valley, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” Do you need temporary supplies. You shall receive them, for “your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things.” Whatever your desire, there is the promise, only go and plead it at the Throne and God will fulfill it! We have no right to look for the fulfillment of the promises unless we put the Promiser in mind of them, although truly, at times, He exceeds our desires or wishes. He gives us these promises as His notes of hand, His bills of exchange and if we do not take our notes to get them cashed at the Throne, it is our fault, for the promise is just as good—“they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

But there is a contrast and we will proceed to that at once. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger but they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” The old Psalter has it—“*The rich* had need and they hungered. But seekers of the Lord shall not be deprived of all good.” It appears that there is only the difference of a very little mark in the Hebrew between the words, “mighty men,” and, “young lions.” But it is of very little consequence, for, doubtless “the young lions” are put by way of figure to denominate certain characters of men who do “lack and suffer hunger.”

There are certain men in the world who, like the lions, are *kings over others*. The lion is lord of the forest and at his roar others tremble. So are there men who walk about among us—noblemen, respectable, great, honorable—persons who are had in reverence and esteem and they suppose, sometimes, because they are lions, they are surely never to have any spiritual hunger! They are great and mighty men. They have no need of a Savior. Are they not the elders of the city? Are they not mighty men of valor? Are they not noble and great? They are, moreover, so excellent in their own esteem that their proper language seems to be when they come before their Maker’s bar—“Lord, I had not a very bad nature and wherein it was a little bad, I made the best of it! And wherein I did not do quite as well as I ought, Jesus Christ will make it up.” Talk to these men about being depraved—they say, “Rubbish!” They know better—their heart is pure enough! They have no need of the Holy Spirit. They are

young lions—you small mice may need it, but not they! They have no need of another's righteousness to cover them—their old shaggy mane is glory enough to them! But do you know these young lions “lack and suffer hunger”? Yes, even when we do not know anything about it. They can play bombast before men, but they “lack and suffer hunger” when they are alone! A suspicion often crosses their minds that their righteousness is not good for much. They know very well that while they can make a long prayer, the poor widow's house sticks in their throat. They know that while they boast of their good works, they are no better than they should be. You may think, perhaps, like David, that, “they are not plagued like other men.” But you don't know that. They are very often plagued when they do not tell you—when they roar so loudly their mane scarcely covers their bare ribs! “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger,” but, blessed be God, “they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” Poor and helpless though they are, having no works of righteousness of their own, confessing their sin and depravity, they shall want no good thing! Is it not amazing? There is a poor sinner who has sinned against God and in every way dishonored His name. Yet he cannot lack any good thing—

***“Poor, helpless worms in Christ possess
Grace, wisdom, peace and righteousness.”***

Again—by young lions, we may understand men of cunning and men of wisdom. The lion goes out at night and prowls silently through the jungle. It has a keen scent and knows where to find its prey. It smells the fountain and knows that the antelope will go there to drink. When he comes, the lion crouches down, with wild eyes, looks upon him and in a moment, before the antelope is aware, he is in the fangs of the lion! Men of cunning and wisdom—have you not seen such? Have you not heard their boastful exclamation, “Submit myself to a dogmatic preacher! No, Sir, I will not! Believe in the plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures? I cannot believe in any such absurdity! Sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him in the Scriptures! No, Sir, I cannot! I like something to discuss. I like an intellectual religion. I cannot believe everything simply because God says it. I want to be allowed to judge for myself! Am I not wise and learned?” And when he sees us in distress, he sometimes says, “Nonsense! You have no brains! You poor Calvinists must be bereft of your senses.” And yet we can show as many men of sense as they can and we are not afraid of them, however much they glory in their wisdom! But sometimes the poor Christian is frightened by them. He cannot answer their sophisms. He does not see his way through their labyrinths and cannot escape from their nets. Well, don't try to escape from them! Let

them talk on. The best answer is often silence. But do you know that these young lions, so gloriously self-sufficient, when in argument with you, in secrecy often “lack and suffer hunger”? There was never an infidel in the world that did not suffer spiritual hunger, though he might not confess it. His creed did not satisfy him. There was a hollow place, an aching void somewhere, which the world could never fill. But “they who seek the Lord,” who take the Scriptures for their guide, who bow implicitly to the words of Jehovah, “do not lack any good thing.” They feel no hollow unoccupied—Christ has filled their hearts—and they are satisfied with His Presence and His Love. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

Again—the young lions denote those who are very strong, so that they hope to save themselves and *very swift* in their course of profession. Some are very fierce in the matter of religion, very anxious to obtain salvation. And they are very strong, so that they think it scorn to borrow strength of another. Like the Jews, they follow after righteousness, but they do not attain it because they seek it by the works of the Law. Have you ever seen what they will do? There is a goodly chapel they have built. They are engaged at six o’clock in the morning at prayers and repeat so many Ave Marias and Pater Nosters. Then comes the daily service, the “mass,” and all that rubbish—the *messe*—as they call it in France and, verily, a mess it is! Then they whip themselves, fetch blood from their bodies and perform all kinds of penances. Even among Protestants, merit-mongers have not quite disappeared. For there are many who are full of holy works in which they are trusting for salvation. The poor Christian says, “I cannot perform all these works. I wish it were in my power to serve the Lord more devoutly.” But do you not know that these “young lions do lack and suffer hunger”? The formalist is never satisfied with all his forms. The hypocrite is never contented. There is always something he misses that makes his heart ache.

Then we may take it in a temporal sense. Young lions may mean deep cunning schemers. Have you ever seen men with their thousand schemes and plans to make themselves rich—men who can overreach others—who are so subtle that you cannot see through them? Their instinct seems to be cunning. They are always lying in wait to take advantage of others. They prowl the world to seize on the helpless widow and the defenseless orphan. Or, perhaps they may be following more legitimate schemes—such as are full of speculation and will involve the exercise of all their wits. Surely such can live if others stand. But no, they are just the men who “lack and suffer hunger.” Their schemes all prove futile—

the arrow which they shoot, returns on their own head and wounds them! But they who lie gently down in passive faith, singing—

***“Father, I wait Your daily will.
You shall divide my portion still.
Give me on earth what seems to You best,
‘Till death and Heaven reveal the rest,”***

do not lack any good thing!

Again—by “young lions” we may understand “rich men”—men who have abundance. We have known persons who have ridden in fine carriages and dwelt in noble mansions brought to the depths of poverty. Every now and then we hear of men, almost millionaires, who are turned out into the very streets. Kings have walked our soil without their crowns and nobles, even now, are living on our charity. Daughters of men in high positions have to work as menials and long, sometimes, to be allowed to do that. The rich sometimes “lack and suffer hunger. But they who wait on the Lord,” poor as they may be, “do not lack any good thing.”

Again—this may apply to you who earn your living by bodily labor. Perhaps you are a weak and sickly man. You are not one of the “young lions,” like your neighbor, a strong big fellow, who can earn his day’s wages without the least difficulty. He says to you, perhaps, “I shouldn’t like to be such a poor lean thing as you are. If you should be ill, what would become of you? You trust in Providence, but I trust in my big arms! The best Providence is to take care of yourself—to go and eat a good dinner and keep yourself trim.” No, no! Have you not seen those young lions, “lack and suffer hunger”? Our missionary can tell of strong men whom he visits who cannot find employment but are brought almost to starvation. While he finds that they who wait on the Lord lack no good thing. Don’t be afraid because you have a sick and weakly frame—labor as hard as you can—and be sure—if you wait on the Lord you will not lack any good thing!

Once more—the lion is a creature that *overcomes and devours all others*. We have some such in our society. You find them everywhere. They put their hand upon you and you feel you are in a vice. They understand law better than you do—and woe be to you if you make a mistake! Won’t they take advantage of you? So in business they can always overreach you. Like sharks, if they do not devour you, altogether, they leave you minus a leg or an arm. Yes, but you have seen these men, too, “lack and suffer hunger.” And among all the miserable miscreants that walk the earth, there is none so destitute as the young lion that lacks and suffers hunger! He puts his money into a bag full of holes. And I think Hell laughs at the covetous man—at him who grasps his neighbor’s wealth. “Ha! Ha!” says the devil, “damn your soul to win nothing! Send your soul

to Hell to win a dream! A thing which you had, but it is gone! You did grasp it—it was a shadow! You sold your immortal spirit to win a bubble which burst in your grasp.” Christian, do not be concerned about temporal things—trust in God—for while, “young lions do lack and suffer hunger, they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

III. And now, I come to the third part, which is THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE. Time fails me and I shall not try to prove to you that God can, in the ordinary course of His Providence, make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. That would be an easy task. While God has the hearts of all men under His control, He can make the rich give where He pleases. And He can influence the Church and those who love the Lord, always to take care of the Lord’s poor. But I am going to state one or two facts by way of stimulating you to assist me in the noble enterprise of endeavoring to support the poor disabled ministers of the everlasting Gospel. Amongst the Particular Baptists, we have a fund called the Baptists’ Fund. It was instituted in 1717 in order to afford assistance to ministers in England and Wales who were in poverty and distress—in consequence of the inability of their Churches and congregations to furnish them with a competent maintenance for themselves and their families. During nearly a century and a half, it has carried out, as far as its funds were sufficient, the benevolent purposes for which it was established. It publishes its accounts yearly. And from the last printed statement for 1854-5, it appears that in that year, one hundred and sixty-five cases were relieved in England and sixty-five in the Principality, by grants in money to the amount of £1,560, no one receiving a larger sum than £10 and no grant being in any case made where the minister’s income from every source exceeded £80. In addition to the money grants, books, also, of the value together of £155 have been presented to 35 poor ministers unable to purchase them. Towards raising the necessary funds to meet these cases, collections are annually made in this and in eight or nine other Baptist Churches in and about the metropolis. And when the number, character and circumstances of the objects to be relieved and the purpose for which the relief is afforded are considered, it will be well understood that this is no ordinary collection. We have the right of four votes, one for the pastor and three messengers sent by us, owing to our fathers having in olden times deposited £150 by way of starting the fund, the interest of which sum and of that given by other Churches, is spent every year. Different legacies having been left by other persons, a considerable sum has accumulated and I believe the yearly income is somewhere about £2,000 at the present time. We need, however, much more. I am not going to detain you long by telling you about the fund, but I will

read you one or two letters from the recipients. The first is from an old minister aged eighty.

[It is thought best not to print these, lest the worthy men who wrote them should feel embarrassed.]

I think I need add nothing more to move you. There are many poor ministers now, who, when they go up the pulpit stairs, are obliged to hold their arms pretty close to their bodies lest they should tear their coats to pieces. And I have seen them with such coats on—as you would not like to put on if you were going into the meanest Chapel in London! I have, myself, found livery for some of these holy men, year by year, but one person cannot supply the necessities of all. I know the case of a preacher who walked to a Chapel within ten miles of this spot and preached in the morning and walked back again. He also preached in the evening and had to walk back to his house. And what do you think the deacons gave him? The poor man had nothing else to live upon and he was nearly 80 years of age. When he had finished (oh, don't hear it, you angels! Pray shut up your ears) they gave him—a *shilling*! That was for his day's work. Another Brother told me some time ago that he preached three sermons, walking eight miles and back again and going dinnerless all the while. And the deacons gave him the munificent sum of—half-a-crown! Oh, if you knew all the circumstances connected with the fund, you would not long restrain your benevolence! The funds are mostly given to those who preach the Gospel—Gospel ministers of the best sort—men who preach what we consider to be Gospel—Calvinistic sentiments. And the funds must always be given in that way, for so the deed directs it. I bless God for this Society and I ask you, under God, to take care of it, that while “the young lions do lack and suffer hunger,” the ministers of the Lord shall “not want any good thing.”

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

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

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

NO. 195

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 23, 1858
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”
Psalm 34:5.***

FROM the connection we are to understand the pronoun “Him” as referring to the word “Lord” in the preceding verse. “They looked unto the Lord Jehovah and were lightened.” But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as He is in Himself, and found any comfort in Him, for “our God is a consuming fire.” An absolute God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, can afford no comfort whatever to a troubled heart. We *may* look to Him and we shall be blinded, for the light of Godhead is insufferable and as mortal eye cannot fix its gaze upon the sun, no human intellect could ever look unto God and find light, for the brightness of God would strike the eye of the mind with eternal blindness. The only way in which any can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.”***

God shrouded and veiled in the manhood—there we can with steady gaze behold Him, for so He comes down to us and our poor finite intelligence can understand and lay hold upon Him. I shall therefore use my text this morning and I think very legitimately, in reference to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.—“They looked unto *Him* and were lightened.” For when we look at God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord and behold the Godhead as it is apparent in the Incarnate Man who was born of the Virgin Mary and was crucified by Pontius Pilate, we do see that which enlightens the mind and casts rays of comfort into our awakened heart.

And now this morning, I shall first invite you, in order to illustrate my text, to *look to Jesus Christ in His life on earth* and I hope there are some of you who will be lightened by that. We shall then *look to Him on His Cross*. Afterwards we shall *look to Him in His resurrection*. We shall *look to Him in His intercession*. And lastly, we shall *look to Him in His second coming*. And it may be, as with faithful eye we look upon Him the verse shall be fulfilled in our experience, which is the best proof of a Truth of God, when we prove it to be true in our own hearts. We shall “look unto Him” and we *shall* “be lightened.”

I. First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE. And here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him in the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. These are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribula-

tion. Come here, you children of God and whatever now are your distresses, whether they be temporal or spiritual, you shall, in the life of Jesus Christ and His sufferings, find sufficient to cheer and comfort you—the Holy Spirit shall now open your eyes to look unto Him.

Perhaps I have among my congregation, indeed I am sure I have, some who are plunged in the depths of poverty. You are the children of toil. With much sweat of your brow you eat your bread. The heavy yoke of oppression galls your neck. Perhaps at this time you are suffering the very extremity of hunger. You are pinched with famine and though in the House of God, your body complains, for you feel that you are brought very low. Look unto Him, you poor distressed Brother in Jesus—look unto Him and be lightened—

***“Why do you complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?—He told you no less;
The heirs of salvation, we know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.”***

See Him there! Forty days He fasts and He hungers. See Him again, He treads the weary way and at last all athirst He sits upon the curb of the well of Sychar and He, the Lord of Glory, He who holds the clouds in the hollow of His hand, said to a woman, “Give me to drink.” And shall the servant be above his Master and the disciple above his Lord? If He suffered hunger and thirst and nakedness, O heir of poverty, be of good cheer! In all these you have fellowship with Jesus. Therefore be comforted and look unto Him and be lightened.

Perhaps your trouble is of another caste. You have come here today smarting from the forked tongue of that adder—slander. Your character, though pure and spotless before God, seems to be lost before man. For that foul slanderous thing has sought to take away that which is dearer to you than life itself, your character, your good fame. And you are this day filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, because you have been accused of crimes which your soul loathes. Come, you child of mourning, this indeed is a heavy blow—poverty is like Solomon’s whip, but slander is like the scorpion of Rehoboam. To fall into the depths of poverty is to have it on your little finger, but to be slandered is to have it on your loins.

But in all this you may have comfort from Christ. Come and look unto Him and be lightened. The King of kings was called a Samaritan. They said of Him that He had a devil and was mad. And yet infinite wisdom dwelt in Him, though He was charged with madness. And was He not ever pure and holy? And did they not call Him a drunken man and a wine-bibber? He was His father’s glorious Son and yet they said He did cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Come! Poor slandered one, wipe that tear away! “If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call they of His household?” If they had *honored* Him, then might you have expected that they would honor you. But as they mocked Him and took away His glory

and His character He blushed not to bear the reproach and the shame, for He is with you, carrying His Cross before you. And that Cross was heavier than yours. Look, then, unto Him and be lightened.

But I hear another say, "Ah, but my trouble is worse than either of those. I am not today smarting from slander, nor am I burdened with penury. But, Sir, the hand of God lies heavy upon me. He has brought my sins to my remembrance. He has taken away the bright shining of His countenance. Once I did believe in Him and could 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies.' But today I am brought very low. He has lifted me up and cast me down like a wrestler. He has elevated me that He might dash me to the ground with the greater force. My bones are sore vexed and my spirit within me is melted with anguish."

Come, my tried Brother, "look unto Him and be lightened." No longer groan over your own miseries, but come with me and look unto Him, if you can. See the garden of Olives? It is a cold night and the ground is crisp beneath your feet for the frost is hard. And there in the gloom of the olive garden, kneels your Lord. Listen to Him. Can you understand the music of His groans, the meaning of His sighs? Surely your griefs are not so heavy as His were, when drops of blood were forced through His skin and a bloody sweat did stain the ground! Say, are your trials greater than His?

If, then, He had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect to do so also. And look to Him in the last solemn hour of His extremity and hear Him say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And when you have heard that, murmur not, as though some strange thing had happened to you. As if you have to join in His "lama Sabachthani," and have to sweat some few drops of His bloody sweat. "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

But, possibly I may have here someone who is much persecuted by man. "Ah," says one, "I cannot practice my religion with comfort. My friends have turned against me. I am mocked and jeered and reviled, for Christ's sake." Come, Christian, be not afraid of all this, but, "look unto Him and be lightened." Remember how they persecuted Him? Oh, think of the shame and spitting, the plucking off the hair, the reviling of the soldiers. Think of that fearful march through the streets, when every man did hoot Him and when even they that were crucified with Him did revile Him. Have you been treated worse than He?

Methinks this is enough to make you gird your armor on once more. Why need you blush to be as much dishonored as your Master? It was this thought that cheered the martyrs of old. They that fought the bloody fight knew they should win the blood-red crown—that ruby crown of martyrdom. Therefore they did endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. For this ever cheered and comforted them. They remembered Him who had "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, that they might not be weary or faint in their minds." They "resisted unto blood, striving

against sin.” For they knew their Master had done the same and His example did comfort them.

I am persuaded, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that if we looked more to Christ, our troubles would not become anything like so black in the dark night. Looking to Christ will clear the ebony sky. When the darkness seems thick, like that of Egypt, darkness that might be felt, like solid pillars of ebony, even then, like a bright lightning flash, as bright but not as transient, will a look to Jesus prove. One glimpse at Him may well suffice for all our toils while on the road.

Cheered by His voice, nerved by His strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as He did, to the death, if He will be with us, even unto the end. This, then, is our first point. We trust that those of you who are weary Christians, will not forget to “look unto Him and be lightened.”

II. And now I have to invite you to a more dreary sight. But, strange it is just as the sight becomes more black, so to us does it grow more bright. The more deeply the Savior dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which He brought up—the greater His griefs, the greater our joys and the deeper His dishonor, the brighter our glories. Come, then—and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints to come with me—come now to Calvary’s Cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death—the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city, where criminals were executed—there stand three crosses. The center one is reserved for One who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals.

See there! They have nailed Him to the Cross. It is the Lord of Life and Glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour full vials of glory. They have nailed Him to the Cross—He hangs there in mid-Heaven, dying, bleeding—He is thirsty and He cries. They bring Him vinegar and thrust it into His mouth. He is in suffering and He needs sympathy but they mock Him and they say, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” They misquote His words, they challenge Him now to destroy the temple and build it in three days.

While the very thing was being fulfilled, they taunt Him with His powerlessness to accomplish it. Now see Him, before the veil is drawn over agonies too black for eye to behold. See Him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did eyes ever seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold Him, come and look to Him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold Him! Earth quakes. The dead rise. The horrors of His sufferings have startled earth itself—

“He dies! The Friend of sinners dies.”

And we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they are, they can find a kind and fond solution here, by looking at Christ on the Cross. You have come

here, perhaps, doubting God's mercy. Look to Christ upon the Cross and can you doubt it then? If God were not full of mercy and plenteous in His compassion, would He have given His Son to bleed and die? Do you think that a Father would rend His darling from His heart and nail Him to a tree, that He might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes and yet be hard, merciless and without pity? God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God or else there had never been a Cross on Calvary.

But do you doubt God's power to save! Are you saying to yourself this morning, "How can He forgive so great a sinner as I am?" Oh, look there, Sinner, look there, to the great atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid. Do you think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify? True, without that Cross it had been an unanswerable question—"How can God be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" But see there the bleeding Substitute! And know that God has accepted His sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all Believers. And then let your spirit dare to think, if it can, that the blood of Christ is not sufficient to enable God to vindicate His justice and yet to have mercy upon sinners.

But I know you say, "My doubt is not of His general mercy, nor of His power to forgive, but of His willingness to forgive *me*." Now I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, do not this morning look into your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty. Do not sit down and look at your sins. They have brought you into the danger—they cannot bring you out of it. The best answer you will ever get is at the foot of the Cross.

Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half-an-hour in quiet contemplation. Sit at the foot of the Cross and contemplate the dying Savior and I will defy you then to say, "I doubt His love to me." Looking at Christ begets faith. You cannot believe on Christ except as you see Him and if you look to Him you will learn that He is able to save. You will learn his loving kindness. And you cannot doubt Him after having once beheld Him. Dr. Watts says—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love Him, too,"***

and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew
Sure the whole world would trust Him, too."***

Oh, that you would look to Him now and your doubts would soon be removed. For there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear as a look into the loving eyes of the bleeding, dying Lord. "Ah," says one, "but my doubts are concerning my own salvation in this respect. I cannot be so holy as I want to be." "I have tried very much," says one, "to get rid of all my sins and I cannot. I have labored to live without wicked thoughts and without unholy acts and I still find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things.' And I wander from God. Surely I cannot be saved, while I am like this?"

Stop! Look to Him and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ. Your business is to come to Christ—sick, weary and soul-diseased—and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own physician and then go to Christ—but just as you are. The only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly, on Christ. As I sometimes put it—make Christ the only pillar of your hope and never seek to buttress or prop Him up. “He is able, He is willing.” All He asks of you is just to trust Him.

As for your good works, they shall come afterwards. They are after-fruits of the Spirit. Your first business is not to do, but to believe. Look to Jesus and put your trust only in Him. “Oh,” another cries, “Sir, I am afraid I do not feel my need of a Savior as I ought.” Looking to yourselves again! All looking to yourselves you see! This is all wrong. Our doubts and fears all arise from this cause—we will turn our eyes the wrong way. Just look to the Cross again, just as the poor thief did when he was dying. He said, “Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.”

Do the same. You may tell Him, if you please, that you do not feel your need of Him as you ought. You may put this among your other sins, that you fear you have not a right sense of your great and enormous guilt. You may add to all your confessions, this cry “Lord help me to confess my sins better. Help me to feel them more penitently.” But remember, it is not your repentance that saves you. It is the blood of Christ, streaming from His hands and feet and side. Oh, I beseech you by Him whose servant I am! This morning turn your eyes to the Cross of Christ. There He hangs this day. He is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up today in your eyes that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

And you children of God, I turn to you, for you have your doubts, too. Would you get rid of them? Would you rejoice in the Lord with faith unmoved and confidence unshaken? Then look to Jesus. Look again to Him and you shall be lightened. I know not how it is with you, my beloved Friends, but I very often find myself in a doubting frame of mind. And it seems to be a question whether I have any love to Christ or not. And despite the fact that some laugh at the hymn, It is a hymn that I am forced to sing—

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
Do I love the Lord or not
Am I His, or am I not?”***

And I am convinced that every Christian has his doubts at times and that the people who do not doubt are just the people that ought to doubt. For he who never doubts about his state perhaps may do so when it is too late. I knew a man who said he never had a doubt for thirty years. I told him that I knew a person who never had a doubt about him for thirty years. “How is that?” said he, “that is strange.” He thought it a compli-

ment. I said, "I knew a man who never had a doubt about you for thirty years. He knew you were always the most confounded hypocrite he ever met. He had no doubt about you."

But this man had no doubt about himself—he was a chosen child of God, a great favorite of the Most High. He loved the doctrine of Election, wrote it on his very brow. And yet he was the hardest driver and the most cruel oppressor of the poor I ever met with and when brought to poverty himself, he might very frequently be seen rolling through the streets. And this man had not a doubt for thirty years. And yet the best people are always doubting.

Some of those who are just living outside the gates of Heaven are afraid of being cast into Hell after all—while those people who are on the high road to the pit are not the least afraid. However, if you would get rid of your doubts once more, turn to Christ. You know what Dr. Carey had put on his tombstone—just these words, for they were his comfort—

***"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
Into Christ's arms I fall.
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All."***

Remember what that eminent Scot divine said when he was dying? Someone said to him, "What, are you dying now?" Said He, "I am just gathering all my good works up together and I am throwing them all overboard. And I am lashing myself to the plank of free grace and I hope to swim to glory on it." So do you. Every day keep your eye only on Christ. And so long as your eye is single, your whole body must and shall be full of light. But if you once look cross-eyed, first to yourself and *then* to Christ, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Remember, then, Christian, to fly to the Cross. When that great black dog of Hell is after you, away to the Cross! Go where the sheep goes when he is molested by the dog—go to the shepherd.

The dog is afraid of the shepherd's crook. You need not be afraid of it, it is one of the things that shall comfort you. "Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." Away to the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters! Away to the Cross, if you would get rid of your doubts. I am certain that if we lived more with Jesus, were more *like* Jesus and trusted Jesus more, doubts and fears would be very scarce and rare things. And we should have as little to complain of them as the first emigrants in Australia had to complain of thistles. For they found none there and none would have been there if they had not been carried there. If we live simply by faith on the Cross of Christ, we live in a land where there are no thistles. But if we will live on *self*, we shall have plenty of thistles and thorns and briars and nettles growing there. "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

III. And now I invite you to a glorious scene—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Come here and look at Him, as the old serpent bruises His heel!—

***"He dies! the Friend of sinners dies,
And Salem's daughters weep around."***

He was wrapped in His grave clothes and put into His grave and there He slept three days and nights. And on the first day of the week, He, who could not be held by the bands of death and whose flesh did not see corruption, neither did His soul abide in Hades—He arose from the dead.

In vain the bands that swaddled Him. He unfolded them by Himself and by His own living power wrapped them in perfect order and laid them in their place. In vain the stone and the seal. The angel appeared and rolled away the stone and the Savior came forth. In vain the guards and watchmen. For in terror they fled far away and He rose the conqueror over death—the first fruits of them that slept. By His own power and might He came again to life.

I see among my congregation not a few wearing the black weeds of sorrow. You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives. There are others here, who, I doubt not, are under the constant fear of death. You are all your lifetime subject to bondage because you are thinking upon the groans and dying strife which fall upon men when they near the river Jordan. Come, come, I beseech you, you weeping and timid spirits, behold Jesus Christ risen! For remember, this is a great Truth—“Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” And the verse of our song just embodies it—

***“What? Though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose,
So all His followers must.”***

There, widow—weep no longer for your husband, if He died in Jesus. See the Master? He is risen from the dead—no specter is He. In the presence of His disciples He eats a piece of broiled fish and part of an honeycomb. No spirit is He. For He says, “Handle Me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” That was a *real* resurrection. And learn then, Beloved, when you weep, to restrain your sorrows. For your loved ones *shall* live again. Not only shall their spirits live, but their bodies, too—

***“Corruption, earth and worms,
Do but refine this flesh.
At the archangel’s sounding trump,
We put it on afresh.”***

Oh, think not that the worm has eaten up your children, your friends, your husband, your father, your aged parents—true, the worms seem to have devoured them. Oh, what is the worm after all, but the filter through which our poor filthy flesh must go? For in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall be raised incorruptible and the living shall be changed. You shall see the eye that just now has been closed and you shall look on it again. You shall again grasp the hand that just now fell motionless at the side. You shall kiss the lips that just now were clay-cold and white and you shall hear again the voice that is silent in the tomb. They shall live again. And you that fear death—why fear to die? Jesus died

before you and He passed through the iron gates and as He passed through them before you, He will come and meet you. Jesus who lives can—

***“Make the dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”***

Why should you weep? Jesus rose from the dead—so shall you. Be of good cheer and confidence. You are not lost when you are put into the tomb. You are but seed sown to ripen against the eternal harvest. Your spirit mounts to God. Your body slumbers for awhile to be quickened into eternal life. It cannot be quickened except it die. But when it dies it shall receive a new life. It shall not be destroyed. “They looked to Him and were lightened.” Oh, this is a precious thing to look to—a risen Savior. I know of nothing that can lift our spirits higher than a true view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have not lost any friends then. They have gone before us. We shall not die ourselves. We shall seem to die, but we shall begin to *live*. For it is written—

***“He lives to die. He dies to live;
He lives to die no more.”***

May that be the lot of each one of us!

IV. And with the greatest possible brevity, I invite you to LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN. After forty days He takes His disciples to the hill and while He discourses with them, on a sudden He mounts upward. And He is separated from them and a cloud receives Him into Glory. Perhaps I may be allowed a little poetical license if I try to picture that which occurred after He ascended into the clouds. The angels came from Heaven—

***“They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His Throne
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done.”***

I doubt not, that with matchless triumph He ascended the hill of light and went to the celestial city and when He neared the portals of that great metropolis of the universe, the angels shouted, “Lift up your heads, O you gates. And be you lift up you everlasting doors.” And the bright spirits from burning battlements, cried out, “Who is this King of Glory—who?” And the answer came, “the Lord mighty in battle and the Lord of Hosts. He is the King of Glory.”

And then both they upon the walls and they who walk with the chariots join the song once more and with one mighty sea of music, beating its melodious waves against the gates of Heaven and forcing them open, the strain is heard, “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in”—and in He went. And at His feet the angelic hosts all cast their crowns and forth came the blood-washed and met Him, not casting roses at His feet, as we do at the feet of conquerors in our streets, but casting immortal flowers, imperishable wreaths of honor that never can decay. While again, again, again, the

heavens did ring with this melody, “Unto Him that has loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—unto Him be glory forever and ever. And all the saints and all the angels said, Amen.”

Now look here, Christians, here is your comfort—Jesus Christ won wrestling with spiritual enemies, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers. You are at war today and maybe the enemy has thrust sore at you and you have been ready to fall. It is a marvel to you that you have not turned your back in the day of battle, for you have often feared lest you should be made to fly like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror and so shall you be.

The day is coming when with splendor less than His, but yet the same in its measure, you, too, shall pass the gates of bliss. When you are dying, angels shall meet you in mid-stream and when your blood is cooling with the cold current, then shall your heart be warming with another stream—a stream of light and heat from the great fountain of all joy and you shall stand on the other side of Jordan and angels shall meet you clothed in their immaculate garments. They shall attend you up the hill of light and they shall chant the praise of Jesus and hail you as another trophy of His power.

And when you enter the gates of Heaven, you shall be met by Christ, your Master, who will say to you—“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.” Then will you feel that you are sharing in His victory, as once you shared in His struggles and His war. Fight on, Christian—your glorious Captain has won a great victory and has secured for you in one and the same victory a standard that never yet was stained with defeat—though often dipped in the blood of the slain.

V. And now once more “Look unto Him and be lightened.” See, there He sits in Heaven. He has led captivity captive and now sits at the right hand of God, forever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture Him today? Like a great high priest of old, He stands with outstretched arms—there is majesty in his manner—for He is no mean cringing suppliant. He does not beat His breast, nor cast His eyes upon the ground—but with authority He pleads enthroned in glory now.

There on His head is the bright shining miter of His priesthood. And look—on His breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of His elect are everlastingly engraved. Hear Him as He pleads, hear you not what it is?—is that *your* prayer that He is mentioning before the Throne? The prayer that this morning you offered before you came to the House of God, Christ is now offering before His Father’s Throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, “Have pity and have mercy”—He is now uttering there.

He is the Altar and the Priest and with His own sacrifice He perfumes our prayers. And yet, maybe, you have been at prayer many a day and had no answer. Poor weeping Suppliant, you have sought the Lord and He

has not heard you, or at least not answered you to your soul's delight. You have cried unto Him, but the heavens have been as brass and He has shut out your prayer. You are full of darkness and heaviness on account of this, "Look to Him and be lightened."

If you do not succeed, He will. If your intercession is unnoticed, His cannot be passed away. If your prayers can be like water spilt on a rock which cannot be gathered up, yet His prayers are not like that—He is God's Son—He pleads and must prevail. God cannot refuse His own Son what He now asks—He who once bought mercies with His blood. Oh, be of good cheer, continue still your supplication. "Look unto Him and be lightened."

VI. In the last place, there are some of you here weary with this world's din and clamor and with this world's iniquity and vice. You have been striving all your life long to put an end to the reign of sin and it seems as if your efforts have been fruitless. The pillars of Hell stand as fast as ever and the black palace of evil is not laid in ruins. You have brought against it all the battering rams of prayer and the might of God, you have thought—and yet the world still sins, its rivers still roll with blood, its plains are still defiled with the lascivious dance and its ear is still polluted with the filthy song and profane oath.

God is not honored. Man is still vile. And perhaps you are saying, "It is vain for us to fight on, we have undertaken a task which cannot be accomplished. The kingdoms of this world never can become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." But, Christian, "Look unto Him and be lightened." Lo, He comes, He comes, He comes quickly. And what we cannot do in six thousand years, He can do in an instant. Lo, He comes, He comes to reign. We may try to build His Throne, but we shall not accomplish it.

But when He comes, He shall build His Throne Himself, on solid pillars of light, and sit and judge in Jerusalem, amidst His saints gloriously. Perhaps today, the hour we are assembled, Christ may come—"For of that day and hour knows no man. No, not the angels in Heaven." Christ Jesus may, while I yet speak, appear in the clouds of glory. We have no reason to be guessing at the time of His appearing. He will come as a thief in the night. And whether it shall be at cock-crowing, or broad day, or at midnight, we are not allowed to guess.

It is left entirely in the dark, and vain are the prophecies of men, vain your "Apocalyptic Sketches," or nonsense like that. No man knows anything of it, except that it is certain He will come. But when He comes, no spirit in Heaven or on earth should pretend to know. Oh, it is my joyous hope that He may come while yet I live. Perhaps there may be some of us here who shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man. Oh, glorious hope! We shall have to sleep, but we shall all be changed. He may come now and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air and so shall be forever with Him.

But if you die, Christian, this is your hope—"I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." And this is to be your duty, "Watch, therefore, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." Oh, will I not work on, for Christ is at the door! Oh, I will not give up toiling ever so hard, for my Master comes and His reward is with Him and His work before Him, giving unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, I will not lie down in despair, for the trump is sounding now. Methinks I hear the trampling of the conquering legion, the last of God's mighty heroes are even now, perhaps, born into the world.

The hour of this revival is the hour of the turning of the battle. Thick has been the fight and hot and furious the struggle, but the trump of the Conqueror is beginning to sound, the angel is lifting it now to his lips. The first blast has been heard across the sea and we shall hear it yet again. Or if we hear it not in these our days, yet still it is our hope. He comes, He comes and every eye shall see Him and they that have crucified Him shall weep and wail before Him, but the righteous shall rejoice and shall magnify Him exceedingly. "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

I remember I concluded preaching at Exeter Hall with these three words, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" and I think I will conclude my sermon of this morning with the same words, but not till I have spoken to one poor forlorn soul who is standing over there, wondering whether there is mercy for him. He says, "It is well enough, Sir, to say, 'Look to Jesus,' but suppose you cannot look? If your eyes are blind—what then?" Oh, my poor Brother, turn your restless eyeballs to the Cross and that light which gives light to them that see, shall give eyesight to them that are blind. Oh, if you can not believe this morning, look and consider and weigh the matter and in weighing and reflecting you shall be helped to believe.

He asks nothing of you. He bids you now believe that He died for you. If today you feel yourself a lost, guilty sinner, all He asks is that you would believe on Him. That is to say, trust Him, confide in Him. Is it not little He asks? And yet it is more than any of us are prepared to give, except the Spirit has made us willing. Come, cast yourselves upon Him. Fall flat on His Promise. Sink or swim, confide in Him and you cannot guess the joy that you shall feel in that one instant that you believe on Him.

Were there not some of you impressed last Sabbath Day and you have been anxious all the week? Oh, I hope I have brought a good message to you this morning for your comfort. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," says Christ, "for I am God and beside Me there is none else." Look now and looking you shall live. May every blessing rest upon you and may each go away to think of that one Person whom we love, even Jesus—Jesus—Jesus!

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A POOR MAN'S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT NO. 2193

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles."
Psalm 34:6*

ON the morning of last Lord's-Day [Sermon #2192, *The Joyous Return*] we labored to bring sinners to their God and the Lord graciously made the Word effectual. We gave voice to the invitation to return and we entreated men to take with them words and turn to the Lord. God's people found it a happy time. It is a very amazing fact, but an undoubted one, that the simple Gospel which saves sinners also feeds saints! Saints are never better pleased than when they hear those first Truths of God which instruct sinners in the way to God. The Lord be thanked that it is so!

On this occasion I want to speak of what happens to those who *do* return to God—because many have newly been brought through mighty Grace. Some of them I have seen and I have rejoiced over them with exceedingly great joy. They tell me that they did distinctly lay hold on eternal life last Sunday—and they are clear about what it means. They came out of darkness into His marvelous Light! They knew it and could not resist the impulse to tell at once those with whom they sat in the pews—that God had brought them up out of the horrible pit—and had set their feet upon the Rock of Salvation!

For this joyful reason I think we will go a step further and talk of the happiness of those who have come *back* to their Father, have confessed sin, have accepted the great Sacrifice and have found peace with God. It is my heart's desire that those sheep who have come into the fold may be the means of inducing others to enter. You know how one sheep leads another and, perhaps, when some come to Christ, many others will follow. When one of our professional beggars knocks at a door and gets well received, he is very apt to send another. I have heard that vagrants make certain marks near the door by way of telling others of the confraternity which are good houses to call at. If you want many beggars at your house, feed one and another of them well, and birds of the same feather will flock to you! Perhaps while I am telling how Christ has received poor needy ones, others may pluck up courage and say, "We will go, also." If they try it, they may be sure of receiving the same generous welcome as others have done, for our Lord keeps open house for coming sinners!

He has distinctly said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." That does not refer merely to those who *have* come, but to those who *are* coming—and to you, dear Hearers, who will come at this hour! Jesus bids every hungry and thirsty soul come to Him at once and be satisfied from His fullness. Our text tells how they have sped who have cried to God. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

I. The first lesson we shall learn, this morning, is upon THE NATURE AND THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER—This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him.—

***"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God ordains to give."***

He gives us prayer as a basket and then He pours the blessings of His Grace into it! We shall learn from the text much about prayer.

Evidently *it is a dealing with the Lord*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He cried to the Lord that the Lord might hear him. His prayer was not intended for men, nor was it mainly meant to be a relief to his own mind—it was intended for the ear of God and it went where it was intended to go! The arrow of desire was shot towards Heaven. It reached the mark it was designed to reach. This poor man cried to the Lord and the Lord is the right Person to whom to appeal in prayer. I am afraid that many public prayers are a performance to please the congregation. And when they are mixed with music, it is hoped that they will influence men of taste.

Even private prayer is not always directed to God as it should be. I have heard ignorant people, sometimes, use the expression, "The minister came and prayed to me." That is a great mistake! We do not pray *to you*—we pray *to God*. We pray *for you*, but not *to you*. Yet I am afraid that the blunder reveals a mournfully dark state of mind as to what prayer is and does. I fear that many prayers are meant for the ears of men, or have no meaning at all beyond being regarded as a sort of incantation which may mysteriously benefit the utterer of them. Believe me, to repeat good words is a small matter—to go over the best composed forms of devotion will be useless, except the heart rises into real dealings with God! You must speak with God and plead with *Him*. I often question those who come to join the Church in this fashion—"You say there is a great difference in you: is there a difference in your prayers?" I very frequently get such an answer as this, "Yes, Sir, I now pray *to God*. I hope that He hears me. I know that He is near and I speak *to Him*, whereas before I did not seem to care whether God was there or not. I said my prayers by rote and it did not seem like speaking to anybody."

Prayer is dealing with God. The best prayer is that which comes to closest grips with the God of Mercy. Prayer is to ask of God, as a child asks of its father, or as a friend makes request to his friend. O my Hearer, you have forgotten God! You have lived without speaking to Him—this has been the case for years. Is not this a wrong state of things? You are now in need—come and spread your case before your God—ask Him to help you. You need to be saved! Beg Him to save you. Let your prayer reach from

your heart to the Throne of God, otherwise, however long it may be, it will not reach far enough to bless you.

From this Psalm we learn that *prayer takes various shapes*. Notice, in the fourth verse, David writes, “I *sought* the Lord and He heard me.” *Seeking* is prayer. When you cannot get to God, when you feel as if you had lost sight of Him and could not find Him, your seeking is prayer. “I sought the Lord and He heard me”—He heard me seeking Him—heard me feeling after Him in the dark. He heard me running up and down if haply I might find Him. To search after the Lord is prayer such as God hears. If your prayer is no better than a seeking after one you cannot as yet find, the Lord will hear it. In the next verse David puts it, “They *looked* unto Him.” Then a *looking* unto God is a prayer! Often the very best prayer is a look towards God—a look which says, “Lord, I believe You. I trust You. Be pleased to show Yourself to me.” If there is “life in a look,” then there is the breath of life in a look and *prayer* is that breath! If you cannot find words, it is often a very blessed thing to sit still and look towards the hills from where our help comes. I sometimes feel that I cannot express my desires and, at other seasons, I do not *know* my desires, except that I long for God—in such a case I sit still and look up. “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up.” A look is a choice prayer—if it is the look of tearful eyes towards a bleeding Savior!

We might describe prayer in many other ways, as, for instance, in this one—“O *taste* and see that the Lord is good,” which you meet with in verse eight. Tasting is a high kind of prayer, for it ventures to take what it asks for. When we come boldly to the Throne of Grace, we have a taste of Divine Grace in the act of coming! That is a very acceptable prayer which boldly ventures to believe that it has the petition which it has asked of God. Believe that God has heard you and you are heard! Take the good your God provides you—take it to yourself boldly and fear not! Come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, that you may find and receive. Lay hold upon the blessing which you need so much and it will be neither robbery nor presumption.

But *frequently, according to our text, prayer is best described as a cry*. What does this mean? “This poor man cried.” This poor man did not make a grand oration—he took to crying! He was *short*—it was only a cry. In great pain a man will cry out. He cannot help it, even if he could. A cry is short, but it is not sweet. It is intense and painful, and it cannot be silenced. We cry because we *must* cry. This poor man cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” That is not a long prayer, but it prays a great deal of meaning into a few words. That was a short cry, “Lord, save, or I perish!” And that other, “Lord, help me.” “Save, Lord,” is a notable cry. And so is, “Lord remember me.” Many prevailing prayers are like cries because they are brief, sharp and uncontrollable. A cry is not only brief, but *bitter*. A cry is a sorrowful thing—it is the language of pain. It would be hard for me to stand here and imitate a cry. No, a cry is not artificial, but a natural production—it is not from the lips, but from the soul, that a man cries. A cry, attended with a flood of tears, a bitter wail, a deep-fetched sigh—these are prayers that enter into the ears of the Host High. O Penitent, the more you

sorrow in your prayer, the more wings your prayer has towards God! A cry is a brief thing and a bitter thing. A cry has in it *much meaning and no music*. You cannot set a cry to music. The sound grates on the ears. It rasps the heart. It startles and it grieves the minds of those who hear it. Cries are not for musicians, but for mourners.

Can you expound a child's cry? It is pain felt, a desire for relief naturally expressed, a longing forcing itself into sound! It is a plea, a prayer, a complaint, a demand. It cannot wait, it brooks no delay, it never puts off its request till to-morrow. A cry seems to say, "Help me now! I cannot bear it any longer. Come, O come, to my relief!" When a man cries, he never thinks of the pitch of his voice, but he cries out as he can, out of the depths of his soul. Oh, for more of such praying!

A cry is a *simple* thing. The first thing a new-born child does is cry—and he usually does plenty of it for years after! You do not need to teach children to cry! Theirs is the cry of Nature in distress. I never heard of a class at a Board School to teach babes to cry. All children can cry—even those who are without their reasoning faculties can cry. Yes, even the beast and the bird can cry. If prayer is a cry, it is clear that it is one of the simplest acts of the mind. O my Hearer, whatever you need, pray for it in the way which your awakened heart suggests to you! God loves natural expressions when we come before Him. Not that which is fine, but that which is on fire, he loves. Not that which is dressed up, but that which leaps out of the soul just as it is born in the heart, He delights to receive! This poor man did not do anything grand—but from his soul he cried.

A cry is as *sincere* as it is simple. Prayer is not the mimicry of a cry, but the real thing. You need not ask a man or woman, when crying, "Do you mean it?" Could they cry, otherwise? A true cry is the product of a real pain and the expression of a real need—and, therefore, it is a real thing. Dear Souls, if you do not know how to pray, cry! Cry because you cannot pray! Cry because you are lost by nature and by practice and will soon be lost forever unless Grace prevents. Cry with a strong desire to be saved from sin and to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! Pour out your hearts like water before the Lord. Just as a man takes a pitcher and turns it upside down, pouring all the water out, so turn your hearts upside down and let them flow out until the last dreg has run away! "You people, pour out your heart before Him." Such an outpouring of heart will be a cry and a prayer.

But now note, further, concerning the nature and excellence of prayer, *that prayer is heard in Heaven*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He was all alone, so that nobody else heard him—but the *Lord* heard him! Yes, the Lord, even Jehovah of Hosts, the All-Glorious, bowed His ear to him! In God's ears the songs of angels are continually resounding. Yes, He hears all the voices of all the creatures He has made! Yet He stooped from His eternal Glory and gave attention to the poor man's cry! Never imagining that a praying heart ever pleads to a deaf God, or that God is so far removed from men that He takes no note of their desires. God *does* hear prayer—He *does* grant the desires and requests of lowly men! I

do not think that we shall ever pray in downright earnest unless we believe that God hears.

I have been told that prayer is an excellent devotional exercise, highly satisfying and useful, but that there its result ends, for we cannot imagine that the Infinite Mind can be moved by the cries of men. Do not believe so gross a lie, or you will soon cease to pray! No man will pray for the mere love of the act, when he has arrived at the opinion that there is no good in it so far as God is concerned! Brothers and Sisters, amidst all the innumerable goings forth of Divine Power, the Lord never ceases to listen to the cries of those who seek His face! It is always true—"The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Wonderful fact this! Truly marvelous! It might surpass our faith if it were not written in His Word and experienced in our lives.

Many of us know that the Lord has heard us. Doubt about this matter has long been buried under a pyramid of evidence. We have often come from the Throne of Grace as sure that God had heard us as we were sure that we had prayed! In fact, our doubts all lie around our own praying and do not touch our assurance that God hears true prayer. The abounding answers to our supplications have been proofs positive that prayer climbs above the region of earth and time—and touches God and His infinity. Yes, it is still the case that the Lord listens to the voice of a man! It is still Jehovah's special title—the God That Hears Prayer! The Lord will hear your prayer, my Hearer, even if you cannot put it into words—He has an ear for thoughts, sighs and longings! A wordless prayer is not silent to Him. God reads the intents of the *heart* and cares more for these than for the syllables of the lips. This poor man could not speak—his heart was so full that he could only *cry*—but Jehovah heard him!

Once more, prayer has this excellence—that *it wins answers from God*. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." God does put forth power in answer to prayer. I know the difficulties which are started concerning this. There is a fixed purpose, from which God does not depart. But this is by no means inconsistent with the prevalence of prayer, for the God who decrees to *give* us blessings has also decreed that we shall *ask* for them! The prayer and the Providence are, alike, appointed by the predestination of God! Our praying is the shadow of God's *giving*. When He is about to bestow a blessing, He first of all works in us earnest prayer for it. God moves us to pray—we pray. God hears and answers—this is the process of Divine Grace. The Lord does, in very deed, answer prayer!

I read yesterday certain notes taken by an interviewer who called on me some years ago. He reports that he said to me, "Then you have not modified your views in any way as to the efficacy of prayer?" In his description he says—"Mr. Spurgeon laughed and replied, Only in my faith growing far stronger and firmer than ever. It is not a matter of faith with me, but of knowledge and everyday experience. I am constantly witnessing the most unmistakable instances of answers to prayer. My whole life is made up of them. To me they are so familiar as to cease to excite my surprise, but to many they would seem marvelous, no doubt. Why, I could no more doubt

the efficacy of prayer than I could disbelieve in the law of gravitation! The one is as much a fact as the other, constantly verified every day of my life.”

The interviewer reported me correctly and I would repeat the testimony! I could speak with even deeper confidence today. More than 40 years I have tried my Master's promises at the Mercy Seat and I have never yet met with a repulse from Him. In the name of Jesus I have asked and received, save only when I have asked amiss. It is true I have had to wait because my time was ill-judged and God's time was far better—but delays are not denials! Never has the Lord said to me, or to any of the seed of Jacob, “Seek you My face” in vain. If I were put into the witness box and knew that I should be cross-examined by the keenest of lawyers, I should not hesitate to bear my testimony, that by many Infallible proofs the Lord has proven to me that He hears prayer!

But, my Hearers, if you need evidence on this point, try it yourselves! Remember, the Lord has said, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” Here is a fair test. Make an honest experiment concerning it. I have no doubt that at this moment I could call upon hundreds in this congregation who would not refuse to stand up and say that the Lord hears prayer. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” I might call on many a man and woman here who could solemnly declare that they cried—and the Lord heard them. Are you at this service, Hannah? You were here the other morning with a sorrowful spirit and now I see by your countenance that the Lord has smiled upon you and your soul is magnifying His name! Prayer has done this for you. Is it not so? God answers the supplications of His believing people and of this we are witnesses!

Thus have I set the matter before you and I would remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” Thus have we been instructed by our text as to the nature and excellence of prayer.

II. Let us move on and note, secondly, that our text leads us to think upon THE RICHNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE. Great Grace is revealed in this statement—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

You will see the richness and the freeness of Grace when you consider *the character of the man who prayed*—“this poor man cried.” Who was he? He was *a poor man*. How terribly poor I cannot tell you. There are plenty of poor men about. If you advertised for a poor man in London, you might soon find more than you could count in 12 months—the supply is unlimited, although the distinction is by no means highly coveted. No man chooses to be poor.

David, on the occasion which suggested this Psalm, was so poor that he had to beg bread of the Lord's priests and though he was a soldier, he had to borrow a sword from their treasury. He had no house, no home, no calling, no income, no country, no safety for his life. He was poor, indeed,

who wrote these words—“This poor man cried.” Why should men imagine that poverty is an injury to prayer? Will the Lord care about the age of your coat? What is it to Him that you have a shallow pocket and a scanty cupboard? “This poor man cried.” Does God hear poor men? Yes, that He does, the poorest of the poor, the *poor in spirit!* He hears those who are so poor that even hope has dropped out of their box—and that is the last thing to go.

This poor man was also *a troubled man*, for the text speaks of “all his troubles”—a great, “all,” I guarantee you. He did not know what to do. He could not see his way in his blizzard of trials. He was surrounded with difficulties, as with an iron net, and he could not hope for a deliverer. He was a troubled man and because he was a troubled man, he cried. People wondered what he cried about, but they would not have done so had they known his inward griefs. His old companions thought he had gone out of his mind—they said religion had turned his brain and they stayed out of his way. This poor man cried and no man noticed him because he was so poor and so wretched—but “the Lord heard him.” *He* does not turn away from the doleful and the desolate—He takes delight in coming to them and binding up their wounds!

This poor man was *a mournful man*—a man altogether broken down, a man who could not hold his head up—he blushed and was ashamed, both before God and man. All he did, when alone, was to cry. And if one watched him closely in company, the tears might be seen forcing their way from his heart through his eyes and down his cheeks. This poor man cried, for he was so feeble, so faint, so forlorn, that he could not do otherwise—but “the Lord heard him.” The Lord so heard him as to make that poor man rich in Divine Grace!

I feel sure, also, that “this poor man” was *a strange fellow*. What did he want with crying when others were laughing? It is not a pleasant nor a usual sight to see strong men weep. Some men weep because they are very tender-hearted, but many others do so, I am persuaded, because they have been given to drink. This man was given to inward crying—he cried day and night unto the Lord because of a secret wound which never ceased to bleed. People could not make him out and they came to despise him, or, at least, to be shy of him—but “the Lord heard him.”

He was also *a changed man*. Why, he used to come in of an evening and was a thoroughly jolly companion! But now he looks as miserable as an owl and nobody desires his company, he is such a kill-joy. “Poor miserable creature!” people say. Even his wife sighs and says, “What has become of my poor dear husband?” He was a poor man and as sad and singular as he was poor. He sought out secret places and there he sighed and cried before the Lord.

But yet he was *a hopeful man*. There must have been some hope in him, though he could not perceive it, for people do not cry for help unless they have some hope that they will be heard. Despair is dumb—where there is a cry of prayer there is a crumb of hope! A cry is a signal of distress and people will not hoist a rag on a pole unless they have a little hope that a passing vessel may spy it out and come to their rescue. There

is not only hope *for* a man, but hope *in* a man as long as he can pray. Yes, as long as he can cry. If you do but long, look, seek and sigh after God, you are one of those poor men whom I have tried to describe—and good will come to you. I can see that poor man now. I used to know him, for he was born in my native town and he went to the school where I was a scholar. He was hardly a man, but only a youth. And then I used to sleep with him, or rather to lie awake at nights with him and hear him groan.

He prayed in my hearing many a time—and very poor praying it was, but he meant what he said. I have been with him in the fields and he used to tell me that he was such a vile creature that he feared that he must be cast into Hell forever! He was afraid that he was not one of the chosen and redeemed people of God, and that he would never be able to believe in Jesus. I knew him when he gave himself up for lost. I know him now. I see him whenever I look in the mirror and I must say on his behalf this morning—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” Oh, the freeness and the richness of Grace, that God should hear nobodies! That God should look upon those who are less than the least of all saints—and the very chief of sinners!

If you desire to further see the richness and freeness of Divine Grace, by the help of the Holy Spirit, I beg you to remember *the Character of the God to whom this poor man cried*. He who prayed was poor and his prayer was poor, but he did not pray to a poor God! This poor man was powerless, but he did not cry to a feeble God. This poor man was empty, but he went to God's fullness. He was unworthy, but he appealed to God's mercy. Our God delights in mercy! He waits to be gracious! He takes pleasure in blessing the weary sons of men! This poor man cried to that Savior who is able to save to the uttermost! O my Friend, never mind how poor you are—you are not crying to your own poor self. Remember, you have not to draw water out of your own emptiness—you may come to God, who is the Fountain of Grace. Your merit is poverty, itself, but the mercies of God are unsearchable riches! The power by which you are to be saved lies not in your own spirit, but in the Holy Spirit! Therefore cry with great hope and believe that God is as great in His Grace as in His power and wisdom!

While we are thinking of the freeness and richness of this Grace in the text, I would have you notice *the character of the blessing*. “The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” He gave him salvation from the whole of his troubles. His *sins* were his great troubles—the Lord saved him out of them all—through the atoning Sacrifice! The *effects* of sin were another set of grievous troubles to him—the Lord saved him out of them all by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. He had fallen into a perilous position by his own fault—and troubles came upon him thick and heavy—but in answer to prayer, the Lord made a way of escape for him, out of them all, and led him into peace. He had troubles without and within, troubles in the family and in the world, and he felt ready to perish because of them—but the Lord delivered him out of them all.

Note that word, “all”—it is large and comprehensive. If you will kindly look at the Psalm, you will see the range of this delightful deliverance. We read in verse four—“He delivered me from *all my fears*.” Sometimes our

fears are more painful than our troubles. We suffer more in *dreading* troubles than in enduring them, but prayer banishes such fears. We see that *all shame* was removed in the same way—"They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Happy men, for the shame of their sin is gone! Their shame and their fears went when their prayers were heard. They were no longer distressed about the past and no longer under apprehension of wrath in the future—"He saved them out of all their fears." If you will look further on you will find that the Lord saved them out of *all their needs* (v 9)—"There is no need to them that fear Him." "They that wait upon the Lord shall not need any good thing." Oh, to be saved from the pinch of dire necessity within the soul—saved from all fear, all shame, all trouble and then from all need! This is a grand salvation! But this is not all, for this poor man was saved from *all dangers* (v 20)—"He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken." He saved him out of all real peril. And, lastly, He saved him from *all apprehension of desertion*—"None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." The salvation that God gives in answer to prayer is a perfect one! And He gives it freely, gives it in answer to a poor man's cry, without money or merit. How complete is God's deliverance!

Did you ever notice how perfect was the answer which God gave to the prayer of Moses when he cried to God for Pharaoh in the day of the plagues? When the locusts covered the land, Moses prayed and we read, "There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" (Exo 10:19). So was it with the frogs and even with the flies—"He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one." Pharaoh could not have found a specimen of locust, or fly in all Egypt! So you may be devoured with troubles as the land by locusts and they may be croaking in your ears like the frogs in the bed-chambers of Egypt—but when the Lord bids them, "Go," they will depart from you and you will be in quiet. He who puts away as a cloud your iniquities and as a thick cloud your sins, will soon drive away your troubles like a swarm of buzzing flies! "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Is not this Free Grace? Is not this rich mercy?

And, once more, think that *this all came through a cry*. A cry is all that the poor man brought. He did not go through a long performance. He did not perform a laborious set of ceremonies—"This poor man *cried*, and the Lord heard him." What can be simpler? Oh, you think you need a *priest*, do you?—a priest on whom a bishop has laid his hands? Or do you dream that you must go to a holy place, a pile of stones put together in architectural form? Possibly you even dream that you must pine all through Lent and not expect joy till you reach Easter! What folly is all this! You have but to cry and the Lord will hear you! There is but one Priest—even the Lord Jesus! There is but one Holy Place—His glorious Person. There is but one holy time and that is today! When the Spirit of God works a cry in the heart of the poor man, that cry climbs up to Heaven by the way of Jacob's ladder—and at the same instant, mercy comes down by the same ladder! Our Lord Jesus Christ is that Ladder which joins earth and Heaven together, so that our prayers go up to Heaven and God's mercy comes down

to us on earth! Oh, that men would be content with the blessedly simple apparatus of Divine Grace—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"!

III. I must be brief on my last head, but it is a very important one. Consider THE NEED AND THE USEFULNESS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY. It is David who says, "This poor man cried." You see he tells the story—he writes it down in a book for us to read. He weaves it into a Psalm for us to sing.

Testimony is a weighty thing for the persuasion and winning of men, but *it must be of the right kind*. It should be *personal*, concerning things which you yourself know—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Never mind if you should be charged with being egotistical. That is a blessed egoism which dares to stand out and bear bold witness for God in its own person! "*This poor man cried.*" Not somebody over the water—"and the Lord heard *him*"—not a man down the next street. The more *definite and specific* your testimony, the better and the more convincing.

One of our evangelists writes me that when he was praying with an inquirer and trying to lead him to Jesus, he was much helped by a working man coming in and kneeling down by their side and saying, "Lord, save this poor soul, even as you saved me at two o'clock this morning!" Afterwards the evangelist asked him how he came to use such an expression. "Well," said the man, "I *was* saved then. Just as the clock struck two, I found the Savior, and I always like to tell when a thing happens." Somehow or other, that "two o'clock in the morning" helped the inquirer mightily—it put such a reality into the transaction, he thought, "This man knows that he was saved at two o'clock in the morning. Why should I not be saved, now, at eight o'clock in the evening?" I do not say that we can all tell the date of our conversion—many of us cannot. But if we can throw in such details, let us do so, for they help to make our testimony striking.

Our witness should be an *assured* one. We must believe and, therefore, speak. Do not say, "I hope that I prayed. And I—I—trust that the Lord heard me." Say, "I prayed, and the Lord heard me." If you begin to stutter when you are giving your evidence for the Lord Jesus, worldlings will not believe you. Are you sure? If you are not sure yourself, you cannot assure others. The accent of conviction is indispensable if you would convince. Be sure that you have cried and be sure that God has heard you—and *then* bear testimony to what you have tried and proved.

Give your testimony *cheerfully*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Do not say it as if it were a line from "the agony column," but write it as a verse of a Psalm—of such a Psalm as this, which begins with, "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Your testimony must have for its sole aim the glory of God. Do not wish to show yourself off as an interesting person, a man of vast experience. We cannot allow the Grace of God to be buried in ungrateful silence. When He made the world, the angels sang for joy! And when He saves a soul, we will not be indifferent. Let us call together our friends and our neighbors and charge them to rejoice with us, for our Lord has found us,

though we were lost! Remember how the father, when the prodigal came back, said to his household, "Let us eat and be merry." So, dear Friends, be glad at heart that the Lord has saved you—and tell others of what He has done, saying, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him."

Testimonies to facts have weight with men. Those who live to win souls have learned from experience that facts are grand things to use in their holy service. When you are teaching people doctrines, they will often be inattentive and unmoved. But when you come to *facts*, they listen and feel their force. I sat not long ago with one whom I would gladly win for my Lord. I told him certain facts with regard to the Lord's hearing prayer for the College and the Orphanage and other parts of my work for the Lord. I marked the deep interest which these facts produced. He believed me to be a man of integrity and he could not resist the conclusion that the Lord is a prayer-hearing God! To yourself and to others, one fact is better than a dozen inferences! Even the hardest of the Gradgrind can only say, "What I need is facts." Test prayer for yourself and then boldly state the results—and you will have power with men. Personal experience is far more convincing than observation—tell facts which you have, yourself, experienced! "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Such testimony will have most weight with the same sort of men as yourselves. When a poor man tells what the Lord did for him, he wins the attention and gains the belief of other poor men. When any event happens to a person like myself, I become interested in it. The poor man says, "I see he is a poor man like myself and if God hears *him*, why should he not hear *me*?" Does not your brother's salvation cheer you and make you feel that you will cry to the Lord, too? How wonderfully God has heard prayer from men in singular positions! He heard Jacob when his angry brother Esau was close upon him with armed men! At Jabbok the Lord heard him by night and he met his brother the next morning with a smiling face. Israel in Egypt was in sore bondage, but the Lord heard his people's cry and sent Moses—and divided the Red Sea, and brought forth His chosen. The Lord heard Samson when he was ready to die of thirst. He heard the men of Reuben who cried to God in the battle against the Hagarites—"and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him."

He heard Hezekiah and Isaiah when Rabshakeh wrote his blasphemous and slanderous letter. We read that, "for this cause they prayed and cried to Heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of Assyria." David prayed in the cave, and Elijah on Carmel, and Jeremiah in prison—and the Lord heard them! There was once a man in the belly of a fish miraculously kept alive. The great fish felt ill with such a thing as a living man within him and, therefore, it dived deep down till the prisoner felt himself to be at the bottom of the mountains! Then, to get vegetable medicine, the fish rushed among the sea meadows and Jonah cried, "The weeds were wrapped about my head!" He was in a strange, dark, horrible place and he says of it, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I." Was his cry of any use? Yes! We read, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice. My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple." Wherever you

may be and in whatever trial you may be involved, the Lord will hear your cry and come to your help. If any soul here is, like Jonah, in the very belly of Hell in feeling and apprehension, yet, his cry will prevail with Heaven and he shall know that “salvation is of the Lord.” A poor man's cry will sound through the telephone of Christ's mediation, in the ear of God—and He will respond to it.

Now, this witness, dear Friends, while it is very strong to those who are like ourselves, *will be increased in force as one and another shall join us.* One person says, “I cried to the Lord, and he heard *me.*” “But,” says an objector, “that is a special case.” Up rises a second witness and says, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” “Well, that is only two and two instances may not prove a rule.” Then, up rises a third, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh—and in each case it is the same story—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” Surely he must be hardened in unbelief who refuses to believe so many witnesses! I remember the story of a lawyer, a skeptic who attended a meeting where the subject was similar to our theme of this morning. He heard about a dozen tell what the Lord had done for them and he said, as he sat there, “If I had a case in court, I would like to have these good people for witnesses. I know them all, they are my neighbors. They are simple-minded people, straightforward and honest, and I know I could carry any case if I had them on my side.”

Then he very candidly argued that what they all agreed upon was true. He believed them in other matters and he could not doubt them in this, which was to them the most important of all. He tried religion for himself and the Lord heard him—and very soon he was at the meeting, adding his witness to theirs! If I were to put the question at this moment to my present audience, what would be the result? Our friend, Mr. Stott, said, just now, in prayer, that we were a very promiscuous company this dark morning. I agree with him. Still I will try it. You that have had answers to prayer say, “Yes.” (The response came like a thunderclap)! I am sure there are none of us who have ever tried the power of prayer who would have to say, “No.” If I were to put the contrary, there would be no answer. All who are accustomed to pray will vote with the ayes. Go home, then, with the words of our text in your hearts and on your tongues—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Glory be to God! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 34.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
67 (SONG II), 116 (SONG I) 34 (VER II).**

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“Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.”
Psalm 35:3.

DAVID knew where to run to for shelter in his hour of difficulty. Many were there that opposed him. He had been much slandered. His course was rough. So, after spreading his case before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter, he turns to the Most High and he cries to Him for succor with one request, as if this would suffice to relieve him from all his troubles—“Say unto my soul, *I am your salvation.*” He thus invokes God to give him a word from His own mouth, to take the buckler and the sword in his defense, and to be his Champion. “Oh, my God, speak to my soul some assuring word and it shall be enough for me!” It is a sign of adoption, a mark of the residence of the Spirit of God within us, if in our times of trouble we fly to our God! Soul, can you find any difficulty in doing so? Is this not one of your spiritual instincts? Then, be afraid lest you are an alien, and no true-born child, for the true-born child seeks its Father's face, cries out for its Father's notice and creeps into its Father's bosom!

This short prayer I commend to everyone present—to saint and sinner, to the young and the old, to those who are assured and to those who are doubtful—“Say unto my soul, *I am your salvation.*” It appears to me to imply *certain doctrines*, to express *certain desires*, and to suggest *certain practical lessons* upon which we may profitably meditate.

I. “SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM YOUR SALVATION.”

Is it not very clear on the surface of the text *that we need salvation?* Salvation is the great necessity of the human race. We need to be saved from the consequences of the Fall, from the results of our own transgressions, from the penalties due to our guilt, the indwelling power of sin and the domination of our corrupt nature. You all know this by the witness of conscience. Therefore I need not argue or attempt to prove it. The main question is whether we know it experimentally, for it is one thing to know the letter, but quite another thing to know the spirit—one thing to know a matter with the head—and another thing to be affected by it in a lively manner in the soul. Answer me, then, have you learned experimentally

that you need to be saved? Did you ever see your past sins in their true color? Did you ever behold what a future sin opens up before you, till you did start back alarmed and terror-stricken? Have you perceived that you need just such a salvation as Christ came to bring? Truly we never seek it till we see we need it! We are usually driven into the Port of Grace by a storm. It is not often that we fly to Christ if there is any other door open. In the sore straits of poverty, we have to cry to Him for sustenance. When we are sick we resort to Him for health and cure.

Moreover, Beloved, we continue to require a continuous salvation. It is well for the Christian to remember that in a certain sense he, too, needs to be saved—not from Hell, for we are saved from that—nor from the guilt of our sins, for, thank God, that is purged by the blood once shed for our remission. But we need to be saved every day from the temptations that assail our souls, from the trials that beset our path, from the corruptions of our nature. Mr. Whitefield said he hoped he was converted, but conversion was a thing to take place every day—not regeneration, mark you—that is once and for all. But conversion, “Why,” he said, “I need to be converted from lying too late in bed in the morning, and converted from idleness all the day long.” So do we! There is something or other we need to be converted from, some wrong thing that we need to be saved from—and until we get within the gates of pearl we shall still have need to cry for salvation from some evil that harasses us! Salvation by blood we have—salvation by the might and power of the Holy Spirit, who is to conquer and to destroy all our dire iniquity and innate depravity—we still need! Do we feel that we need it? Believer, do you feel that you need it? Beware of getting spiritually rich in yourself! Nothing is so near akin to soul-poverty as this! Beware of thinking that you are increased in goods. You are near to bankruptcy when you thus make account of your possessions. I counsel you, therefore, to still bow your knee and cry unto the great Savior, “Lord, save me, or I perish!” That prayer should never be in advance of the most advanced Christian!

Another Doctrine lies on the surface of the text. *His own personal salvation should be the matter of a man’s highest thoughts and greatest earnestness.* “Say unto my soul, I am your salvation,” should be the uppermost and the uttermost cry of your heart. Ask not the Lord to make you rich—you may well reckon that this would involve too high a position and too heavy a responsibility for you to bear with equanimity. Seek not a pinnacle from which you might be in peril of falling. Did you ask to be learned in all the knowledge and languages of the ancients? You might miss the road to Heaven, for oftentimes the shepherds are guided to the place where the Holy Child is, while the wise men miss their way, going to Jerusalem instead of Bethlehem! I will not crave the Lord to give me food for my vanity, or good fortune for my wishes, or anything beside for

which my passions yearn, but, “Lord, give me salvation!” This is a gift I must have. It is essential to my instant and my endless welfare! Let not Your servant be put off with any inferior blessing. If You please to keep me poor on a scanty pittance, or bid me toil hard for slender wages, so let it be. Yet deny me not a draught from the upper springs! Give me the heritage of Your chosen. Grant me Your salvation!

Salvation! Oh, salvation! This should be the chief, the insatiable longing of each man’s spirit! Alas, for the ignorance and callousness that can trifle with salvation as though it were a matter of no immediate concern. Are you mad enough to imagine that whether you have an interest in Christ or not, is a question that may be solved in a few minutes in a fearful emergency upon a dying bed? Ah, it is not so! Wisdom should urge us, or peril should drive us to seek shelter from a calamity that would leave us a total wreck! Nothing lies so near to our interest and our happiness—nothing, therefore, should press so closely on our hearts as to be in Christ and be made, through Him, partakers of everlasting life! Dear Hearer, this question, then, I press upon you. Be pleased to answer it. Have you been led by the Spirit of God to see to this, your first concern? Are you saved? Or are you anxious to be saved with an anxiety that will not rest or abate? Are you striving and struggling in your heart to find the Savior, without whom you are utterly lost, ruined and undone? Unless God’s Holy Spirit clothes it with power, preaching reaches no farther than the ears! Oh, that He would speak to your souls! With what energy you would then be filled!

A third Doctrine is couched in these words. *Salvation, if it is worth the having, must come entirely from the Lord, Himself.* “Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.” The eyes of the suppliant here is evidently turned to God alone, and rightly so, for salvation comes not from the hills, nor from the multitude of the people, not yet from the prowess of individuals. Surely in the Lord, alone, is the salvation of Israel. Never did salvation spring from the devices of this poor heart. In vain do you seek to obtain it by any religious ceremonies, or by any bodily exercises. The source and fountain of salvation are only to be found in the eternal purpose of God! In the Covenant of God it was resolved, in the Wisdom of God it was planned, in the great Redemption of God it was effected and by the Spirit of God it is applied! Jonah went to a strange college to learn this masterpiece of sound theology, that salvation is of the Lord. As for Israel, he could destroy himself, but he could never save himself. In his God he found help, in his God alone! Happy the man that knows this! Thrice happy he who knows it experimentally! He will turn his eyes to the Lord alone.

My Hearer, are you seeking salvation by works—by anything that is meritorious or meretricious? You are spending your money for that

which is not bread! Are you seeking a knowledge of salvation by your own feeling? Do you consult your frames of mind, hopeful or desponding, as one marks the rise or fall of a barometer? Do you dream of being prepared for Christ and fitting yourself to receive mercy? This is to impose on yourself and to insult the Savior! Christ needs nothing from you—He comes to bring everything to you! Even your sense of need He gives you. All your fitness is to be unfit! All your preparation for washing is to be foul! All your prerequisite for enriching is to be poor as poverty can make you! Come as you are to your God through Christ, the Mediator, and in Him you shall find salvation! Do notice particularly that the words are not, “Say unto my soul, I am your Savior,” but more than that—“I am your salvation.” As if God were not only the Giver of salvation, but absolutely *salvation itself*. To get a hold of Christ is to get salvation! To get God on our side is to be saved! Salvation does not merely come from God as a gift—it absolutely involves the appropriation of God, Himself, as the portion of one’s own soul! How wonderful this is! Who can find God? Who can imagine, much less describe, His Infinite perfections? Salvation proceeding from THE LORD, from JEHOVAH, from the GREAT I AM, communicates the wealth of His adorable attributes. “Say unto my soul, I”—our translation reads—“I Am.” Ask, what are You, Lord? The answer comes, “I Am your salvation.” No title, however noble, could enhance the description! He is the “I Am.” His existence is original and pure. “He sits on no precarious throne, or borrows leave to be. “From everlasting to everlasting He is God the Most High. To Him there is neither past nor future, but one eternal Now.”

The God who can save us must be the only true and living God. So great a salvation you cannot realize without a clear apprehension of Jehovah in all His attributes! And if any speak of Christ as delegated Deity, discredit His eternal power and Godhead, or deny that He made the heavens and the earth and bears them on His shoulders, they bring to us a Christ who cannot save! We must have a Redeemer as mighty as the Creator and the Preserver. We must have the strong Son of God, Immortal and Eternal, to rescue our souls from going down into the pit of Hell! If you are leaning on any arm but an eternal one, it will fail you! Poor silly heart, if you are depending on anything for salvation but the same God who bears the earth’s huge pillars up, your dependence will fail you when most you need its help! The strongest sinew of an arm of flesh will crack—even an angel’s wing will flag and the earth, itself, will grow dim with years! This globe, with all her granite rocks, shall melt with a fervent heat! The eternal God must be your refuge, and underneath you must be the everlasting arms, or else the salvation you pretended to have is worse than useless! “Say unto my soul, I, the glorious Jehovah, I am your salvation.”

These doctrines may seem to some of you so commonplace that you will say, "We have heard them ten thousand times." But I refer to them now to press the question—Do you know the vital force of these great Truths of God in your own hearts? Beloved, let each man, let each woman, enquire, "Do I know my need of salvation? Do I know that it must come from God? Have I got it from Him? Have I applied directly to Him for it? Have I received it at His hand in such a way that I have seen the Glory of God therein, so that my salvation shall be to me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off?" If you have had no dealings with God, your soul is in bad plight. Let us turn now to observe—

II. THE DESIRE EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT.

It was David's wish not only to have God for his salvation, but to know it for a fact, and that on the most conclusive evidence, with the best possible assurance, by *a positive communication from God Himself*—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." There are some who doubt whether full assurance of faith can be obtained. They need not discredit an attainment which multitudes possess and daily enjoy! Others suppose that if they could experience a full assurance, it would be dangerous—and yet there are thousands of the saints who, so far from finding the privilege perilous, constantly prove its sanctifying, elevating power while they walk by faith and live near to God! Some have conjectured that any man who knew himself to be saved would inevitably grow listless in character and negligent of his conduct, but it is not so. A man who knows that an estate is really his own, does not become indifferent about its culture. He tills and farms it all the more sedulously. The fact is this—he who knows himself to be saved—being rid of that curse and burden of fear which often renders him incapable of serving God, passes beyond the sphere of a servile bondage! No more does he selfishly seek his own interest. His labor is free, cheered by love and lightened by song—

***"Now for the love I bear His name
What was my gain, I count my loss."***

Out of sheer gratitude he devotes himself to the service of the good God, by whom so great a blessing has been bestowed. If your confidence in your own salvation makes you walk without tenderness of conscience, then rely upon it—you have mistaken vain boasting for pure faith, and haughty presumption for true assurance! They who are really possessed of this Grace are always very tender of the Lord's will. It compels them to walk humbly with God. A king's courtier knows that conduct is expected of him far beyond that of ordinary subjects. He would not encroach upon the freedom he enjoys in approaching his sovereign, lest by any negligence or impropriety he should forfeit the good esteem and grateful smile of his royal master. He is not afraid that the king would kill him, nor is he in terror as if his majesty were a tyrant. But he is jealous of himself,

lest he should provoke the king to take away the light of his countenance from him. And to any child of God who has once enjoyed the favor of Heaven's eternal King and basked in the light of that Countenance which beams with Grace and Glory, there is no attraction in all the world that can compare with the peace and pleasure in which he abides! True assurance of faith is a humble thing, a comforting thing, a sanctifying thing—and it should, therefore, be the desire of all faithful hearts.

This assurance of which the Psalmist speaks is a personal matter, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Oh, Beloved, we must have personal dealings with our God! No proxy will avail. Churches may invent what ordinances they please to gratify their notions of expediency, but there can be no sponsors in godliness—the thing is irrational, it is impossible! Every vow and every offering, to be acceptable, must have its own proper individuality. No eyes but your own can acceptably weep for your sin. No heart but your own can acceptably be broken and contrite for your transgressions. You yourself must repent! Even the Holy Spirit cannot repent for you, as some seem to imagine. He works repentance in you, but you must, yourself, repent. And as to faith, that must be the looking with the spiritual eyes to Christ, and resting on Him with your whole heart. Another cannot do it for you. National religion—if it is depended upon for personal acceptance—is the most deceitful of all delusions! What use is it that we call ourselves a Christian nation if God does not call us so? Might we not be pronounced a heathen nation if we were polled? Take a survey of this great city and see how many there are who never enter a House of Prayer, who spend the entire Sabbath in idleness, or seek their own pleasure in sensual pursuits! What multitudes there are who scarcely know the name of Jesus! Are these Christians? It is a pity we should lend the slightest sanction to such an empty profession. While men live as heathens, we ought to deal with them as such, and seek to convert them from darkness unto God's marvelous Light! And as to the religion which descends in families, this will not suffice, though it is perpetuated from generation to generation. Not a drop of true religion comes in the blood! You are all born of a corrupt stock and you naturally bear the image of the earthly! If, however, you are born of God, it is not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God! "You must be born-again" is as true of the child of a long generation of godly ancestors as it is of the young Hottentot in the kraal who never heard the Savior's name. "You must be born-again" is of universal application! There must be a personal work of the Spirit of God in each individual soul, and the assurance we ought to pant after is our own personal assurance, our own individual interest in the salvation of Jesus Christ!

Have you thought of this, dear Hearer, or, thinking of it, have you trifled with it? Let me urge you, since you will have to die alone. Since

through the iron gates you must pass as solemnly as others. Since in the awful balances you must be weighed alone and before the last tribunal you must come as a separate spirit, I beseech you seek Christ, seek union with Him, that so you may have a blessed Companion in your death and in your everlasting destiny! These vast congregations are made up of units! Oh, that I knew how to reach your conscience one by one! O Man, awake to righteousness! Your brother's conversion, your sister's salvation, your mother's piety, your father's Grace—how will these avail you? Thank God if you have such relatives, for therein God has been so kind to you. But how will they comfort you if you are cast out? What drops of water can they administer to your burning tongue if you are cast away into the place of torment? Oh, I beseech you, be eager, be earnest, be anxious with a sacred covetousness to make your own calling and election sure! It is a personal assurance that we must seek after—so shall our souls be joyful in the Lord—and in His salvation we shall exceedingly rejoice.

But, remember, lest any should be mistaken, that the assurance David sought was *purely spiritual*. When he says, "Say," it is, "Say unto *my soul*." We do not expect that God will make fresh Revelations to us. We are far from believing that voices heard or visions seen, or supposed to be seen, or dreams, can give any satisfactory evidence of the Divine Love to any man. I am ashamed of such ministers as would encourage their hearers in the conviction that their fancies are to be taken as assurances from God! Why, were you to dream tonight that you were in Hell, thank God it would not send you there! Or were you to dream that you were in Heaven, it would not carry you there. If you think that you see angels, or that you hear voices—well, there is much pretence in your tales, but little profit you will ever derive from them. Think as you like about your own experiences, but attempt to build any inference upon them and your construction will prove a baseless fabric. Such things furnish no grounds of dependence. Whether there may ever be supernatural manifestations of this kind to some men, or whether they can have a good effect upon their minds, are questions which I will not discuss, but that these visionary things can afford any evidence of the favor of God, I utterly deny! The voice which alone can confirm you is the voice of God to *your soul*, to your *mind*, to your *spirit*—not to your ears, not to your eyes! Salvation is a *spiritual* thing. It belongs not to external sounds, nor to external impressions upon the eyes. There is an eye inside the eye, an ear far quicker than this organ of sense. It is with that *inner eye* that you must see God, and with that *inner ear* that you must hear the voice of God saying unto your soul, "I am your salvation." Be sure that you cultivate always a spiritual religion. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship

Him.” The assurance that comes from God is addressed to the heart, to the mind, to the conscience, to the soul—it is purely *spiritual*. Seek not, therefore, after visions, fancies, miracles, signs and wonders, but believe when God speaks to your heart, according to all the statutes and testimonies, the precepts and promises which are contained in the sure Word of Revelation.

And now mark this well, *the assurance craved is Divine*. “Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.” Do you ask in what manner does God, Himself, tell a man that He is his salvation? He does it simply enough through His Word. If I read in God’s Word, I shall not find my name enrolled there among the saved—if I did, I would be suspicious that perhaps I was not the person intended. I should be rather dubious as to the spelling of the name, or I might be apprehensive that there was another individual of that same name. But when I find myself properly and fully described, then I cannot doubt my own identity. For instance, it is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Very well, I have believed—I know I have—I know I trust Christ with all my heart. I have also, in obedience to His Word, been baptized. Therefore, if the testimony of God’s Word is true—plain and designed to make mistakes impossible—that, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” the conclusion is reached, the problem is solved, the evidence is transparent! When you find a description answering to yourself, you have only to accept the distinct statement of God’s Word. And, mark you, God’s Word in that old Book—this blessed Bible—is as good as if He rent the heavens and spoke right out from the excellent Glory! It is just as sure and as steadfast to the souls who believe it to be His Word as if He did speak with a trumpet, or as if He sent a message through an angel! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” You have but to make sure that you believes on the Son, and you have God’s assurance that you have everlasting life! But, over and above the testimony or Word, which is as clear as a mathematical demonstration—though Euclid is not more reliable than Moses and the Prophets—there comes a vital force to God’s people with the Word, compelling them to perceive the meaning and to accept it. This mysterious energy comes from the Holy Spirit, Himself! Of this we cannot speak to those who have not proved it, for we only know it and understand it by its *effect*—quickenning us, enlightening our understanding, speaking to us—and saying of God to our soul that He is our salvation!

Moreover, it is an immediate assurance. “Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.” That is a pressing cry for prompt succor. It meant in David’s case that present moment. We, reading it, take it for this very hour. Beware of postponing the expectation of assurance until when you are about to die! You have no more reason to expect it, then, than to expect it now! If you are content to live in doubt and slur over the disquietude of

your soul in the vigor of your days, you will probably be haunted with gloomy misgivings when the time of your departure arrives. It is your duty and your privilege as a Believer not to stand wavering over God's promise, but, knowing it is truthful, to accept it with unstaggering faith! I can understand a man doubting whether he is truly converted or not, but I cannot countenance his apathy in resting quiet till he has solved the riddle. You may say—

“Tis a point I long to know.”

But, oh, Beloved, how can you trifle, how can you give sleep to your eyes till you have known it? Not know whether you are in Christ or not? Perhaps unreconciled, perhaps already condemned, perhaps upon the brink of Hell, perhaps with nothing more to keep you out of Tophet than the breath that is in your nostrils, or the circulating drop of blood which any one of ten thousand haps or mishaps may stop, and then your career is closed—your life story ended! What? Sit on such a volcano, take it easy on the brink of such a precipice and content yourself with merely saying, “I am but a doubting one”? I entreat you, I beseech you, shake off this sluggishness! Ask the Lord to say unto your soul tonight, “I am your salvation.” He is able and He is willing! You know that, Beloved. He will do it for you when you eagerly seek it from Him. How often does He suddenly disperse the doubts that overshadow us like clouds? An autumnal day like yesterday—what a strange, fitful atmosphere we breathed! How fiercely the wind blew—how heavily the rain fell! And then, how quickly afterwards the soft sunshine made the earth look cheerful and the heart of man feel glad! Perhaps you may be dull and heavy, or the raindrops of your weeping and the winds of your fears howling about you. All of a sudden the rain may stop, the clouds disperse, the clear shining come about you. God, by His dear Son, through His Spirit, may shine unto your soul at once. You may come in very heavily burdened, and go out very light-hearted! You may be exceedingly depressed and, all of a sudden, your soul may be like the chariots of Amminadab. Your attire may be changed from mourning to dancing with unspeakable joy and full of glory! You may rejoice in tribulation if the light gleams from His chambers. Pray, then! Let your soul now breathe out the prayer, “Oh, my God, if indeed I have relied upon Your dear Son to be All-in-All to me, whisper to my heart the full assurance of my everlasting safety and my present acceptance in the Beloved.”

The Lord answer such a petition to every troubled spirit. And now—

III. WHAT LESSON DOES THE TEXT TEACH?

Surely it teaches us this—*if we need blessings from God, let us pray for them.* David needed assurance, he needed comfort and he prayed for both one and the other. The quickest road to spiritual wealth is prayer! Every prayer is like a ship sent to the Tarshish of spiritual riches to bring

us back treasures better than gold or silver, or precious stones. Let us not be lax in the commerce, lest our wealth decline. Every cry to God from the true heart brings a result. You see the men in the belfry sometimes down below with the ropes. They pull them and if you have no ears, that is all you know about it. But the bells are ringing up there—they are talking and discoursing sweet music up aloft in the tower. And our prayers do, as it were, ring the bells of Heaven! They are sweet music in God's ears and as surely as God hears, He answers, for, indeed, in Scripture, to hear and to answer are precisely the same things! Praying breath is not spent in vain. They who truly cry shall find that passage true, "The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them, and delivers them out of all their troubles." If a man may have anything for the asking, and he will not ask, he deserves to go without! Why, if you may have assurance of every precious thing merely for the asking—and assuredly you may—if you will not knock and intercede at Mercy's door, if you are such a fool, who is to be blamed but yourself? Be much in prayer, Beloved. What I say to you I say especially to myself. Yet I would press this home upon Believers with the more earnestness because these times are so full of labor and anxiety that they rob Christians of the opportunity for much prayer. Oftentimes, too, we get so fatigued and weary that we have not the inclination to pray as we should. I like to think of Welch, who used to cast a Scotch plaid over the bed where he rested at night, and would always rise in the night and cast this plaid about him, and pray for one or two hours. And he says in his biography, "I cannot understand how a man can sleep through the night without prayer." That is a point to which few of us have ever thought of coming! David Brainerd, too, speaks of rising one morning by four of the clock, and the sun had not risen at six, and he says that in those two hours of prayer he had so wrestled with God that he was wet with perspiration! Such was the earnestness of his spirit as he pleaded before the Lord. I am afraid we do not practice much of this sacred importunity. We are sad hands at this devout exercise, whereby saints became famous in the days gone by. God restore to us the spirit of prayer, and all other blessings will come as the result.

Another lesson is this. *Let everyone of us be satisfied we get a word from God.* This was all David needed. Would God only say, though not do anything? He did not ask Him to interfere practically, or put out His hand to help, but only to *say*. If you go into the city, you may find plenty of merchants who, by simply writing their names, can enable you to get from the bank shovelfuls of gold. Think you not, then, that God's promises always stand to us as good as their fulfillment? Will you blow upon His credit? Will you refuse to take Him at His word? I think I heard a Brother ask, the other day, I know I did—at family prayer—that we might trust God where we could not see Him. I have heard that prayer many

times before. I have prayed it myself, I am sorry to say. But is it not rather a wicked prayer, if you scan it narrowly? Should anyone say at our Monday night Prayer Meeting, "Grant, O Lord, that we may be able to trust our minister when we cannot see him"? I think I would want to know a little about what that Brother thought of me! I am sure if I prayed like that for any of you, I would be likely to see you in the vestry before long to learn my cause for suspecting your character! How dare we, then, pray such a thing about our God?

Yet I suppose this never struck us in that light. It seemed very proper. That is just because we have not learned yet to believe in God. If the Son of Man were to come into this world, would He find pure faith among His disciples? Talk of Diogenes with his lantern looking for an honest man! Were God to look with the sun, He could hardly discover a believing man. Mr. Muller, of Bristol, believes in God for the support of his benevolent institution—and God supplies him with all his needs. But whenever you speak about him you say, "What a wonderful thing!" Has it come to this, that in the Christian Church it is accounted a marvel for Christians to believe in the promises of God, and something like a miracle for God to fulfill them? Does not this wonderment indicate more clearly than anything else how fallen we are from the level of faith at which we ought constantly to live? If the Lord wants to surprise His people, He has only at once to give an answer to their prayers! No sooner had they obtained their answer than they would say, "Who would have thought it!" Is it really surprising that God should keep His own promise? Oh, what unbelief! Oh, what wretched unbelief on our part! We ask and we receive not because we do not believe in God! We waver—we must not expect to receive anything at His hand except what He chooses to give as a gratuity, an act of Sovereign Mercy, not a covenanted blessing. We do not get what we might have as the reward of faith because we have not got the faith that He honors!

I like that story of a godly old woman, who, when told of God's answering prayer, supplemented with a reflection, "Is not that wonderful?" She replied, "No, it is just like Him. Of course, He answers prayer! Of course, He keeps His promise!" We ought to consider it a right, natural, and blessed thing that believing prayer should be answered, and that faith should have its reward. Christian, rest content with a Word from God and be satisfied therewith. And as for those of us who have been living in the enjoyment of the full assurance of our own salvation (and, God be praised, there are some of us who do not often have doubts and fears), how thankful we should be! God likes to give to those who are grateful. Men like to put their jewels into a good setting and a grateful heart is a fit setting for so gracious a mercy! God loves to pour the river of His bounty along the channel of Grace in the soul. Be thankful, and you will

keep your assurance—perhaps, keep it untouched till you die. It is a rare thing, I suppose, though I have known one or two holy men of God who have told me that they did not remember, for the space of 30 years, having been left to question their interest in Christ—they had enjoyed unbroken communion with Him. Why, then, should they doubt it? May we even come to that assurance, if so it pleases the Master!

In what way, however, *can we better show our gratitude than by comforting and assisting such as have not this blessing?*—

***“Thousands in the fold of Jesus
This attainment never could boast.
To His Name eternal praises,
None of these shall ever be lost—
Deeply graven
On His hands, their names remain.”***

Have you faith? You are saved, even if your faith should not develop into assurance. As the Puritan well said, “Faith is necessary to the being of a Christian. Assurance is necessary to his well-being.” Yet, mark you, it is a great necessity. Let us try to comfort, then, such as are distracted, distressed and bowed down. When the Lord sees that we are using our strength and our joy for the help of the rest of the family for whom He cares, He will give us yet more abundantly, and make us to be stewards of the manifold Grace of God in the midst of the Church! Thus shall we glorify His name while we cultivate happiness in our own bosoms.

I would that all whom I now address could have this assurance. Some of you, alas, have not *faith*. “All men have not faith,” said the Apostle. Too true is this testimony! Soul, would you have faith? Consider what it is. You have to believe in God made flesh. Think of the Son of God bleeding on the Cross. It is at the foot of the Cross that faith is brought to light. If you would get faith, Christ must give it to you. Look to Him for the power to believe as well as for the Grace to receive all the benefits that follow. May He give it to you now! To you, oh, Seeker, He will give it. While you are seeking salvation, you shall find it near you. He will say to your soul, “I, even I, am your salvation.” May it be so with many here. Amen.

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

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

SOUL SATISFACTION

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

“Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.”
Psalm 35:3.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is Sermon #384, Volume 7—
FULL ASSURANCE—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS text may very properly be understood as a request that God would teach the soul to rest upon Him in temporal difficulties, straits and distresses. We are all apt to try to work out our own deliverance. We would go back to Egypt, or we would climb the rock on our right hand, or we would, if it were possible, force a passage on the left, but when the Red Sea rolls in front of us, when Pharaoh is behind and there are frowning rocks on the right hand and on the left, this most delightful Truth of God is learned—and probably it is the only occasion when we can learn it—God is our salvation! If you are in trouble, Christian, ask who brought you there, for He shall bring you out again. If you are sorely vexed and deeply grieved, why should you look to a human arm for succor, or why should you turn your eyes to the horses and to the chariots of Pharaoh? Lift up your eyes to the hills, from where your help came, and in the solemn silence of your soul hear the soft and cheering word, “I am your salvation; I have been with you in six troubles, and no evil has touched you; now I have brought you into another trouble, but I will deliver you out of them all; call upon ME in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you.” O Believer, the strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack and the strongest band of human strength will give way! But trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength! Learn to stand still and to see the salvation of God, as He says to you, “I the Omnipotent, I the Omnipresent, I who have servants everywhere will work your rescue, for I am your salvation.”

It is also very necessary for us to learn this verse in its teaching *as to soul-matters*, for no man is saved, or can be saved, unless he knows that God is his salvation. The greatest enemy to human souls—I think I am not wrong in saying this—is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation—

***“From the Cross uplifted high,
Where the Savior deigns to die”—***

there comes a voice, as soft as it is potent, “I am your salvation.” But the sinner stops his ears and listens, perhaps, to the enchantments of Rome,

or to the mutterings of some false priest, or to the equal lying of his own heart while these say, "We are your salvation." We must get away, Brothers and Sisters, from every form of confidence which would take us from the finished work of Jesus Christ! From the beginning to the end of the entire matter, the great "I AM," comprehends our whole salvation! Jesus, the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," was, nevertheless, JEHOVAH, the "I AM," and as the "I AM," He speaks tonight to every soul that desires to know the way of salvation and He says, "I am your salvation."

Sinner, there is no hope for you anywhere else! "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Your hopes, poor Sinner, shall be baseless—they shall be as the fabric of a dream. Rest not in them, but forsake them, pitying your own folly for having ever trusted in them. Jesus bids you renounce them now. Flee away from everything which has up to now yielded you a gleam of comfort, or a ray of joy, to the wounds of Him who suffered in the sinner's place, and to the Cross of Him who was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing! "I am your salvation." You are to trust *now*. Are you saying, "How can I be saved?" Jesus answers, "I *am* your salvation." Not "I *will be*," but "I *am*." *Present* salvation is stored up in Christ—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."***

"But," you say, "what am I to do? What am I to feel? What am I to be?" The answer is—

***"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no!
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago!"***

"Yes, but surely there is something needed to fit me for Him?" No, come just as you are. He does not say, "I will be your salvation when you have done this and that, so as to fit yourself for Me." No, but He says, "I *am* your salvation." If you do but trust Him unfeignedly and with your whole heart—He this moment forgives you, He this moment takes you into the family of Grace, regenerates you and makes you "a new creature" in Himself! May God grant that we may all spiritually learn this Doctrine, "I am your salvation."

Not that I intend just now to use the text in this sense alone, though I think it is highly proper both in temporal and in spiritual dilemmas to feel that God is our salvation. Rather let me show you how it embodies a prayer of the Psalmist for the full assurance of faith. He is asking that, having believed in God, he may have a token for good, that he may be able to—

***"Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies."***

He wants to hear a still, small voice within him saying, "I am your salvation."

I shall try, first of all, *to describe the assurance intended in the text.* Secondly, *to show its blessedness.* And thirdly, *to set forth the way of reaching it.*"

I. First, let me DESCRIBE THE ASSURANCE INTENDED IN THE TEXT.

"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The assurance which the Psalmist seeks in this prayer is *one concerning a very solemn business.* People like to be sure about purchasing their estates. There is a deal of searching every time the land is bought, in order to see that the title is good, valid and indefeasible. Some persons are very particular about their bodily health and they occasionally like to have an assurance from the physician that every organ is in a sound condition. But in this Psalm David is perplexed, neither about his estate, though that was a kingdom, nor about his health, though that was more than a fortune to him—he is concerned only about his soul! O my Brothers and Sisters, if we ought to be sure anywhere, it is here! Would that we were half as diligent to make our "calling and election sure" as some are to make secure their bonds, mortgages and title-deeds! Not to be sure of Heaven? What a wretched state to be in! To have a question about my soul's eternal welfare—a dying mortal, whose breath may depart any second in the hour—oh, this is misery indeed! I had better know my true state. If it is bad, it will be well for me to know the worst of it while there is time, so that it may yet be mended. And if it is good, it will be a sweet thing for me to know that it is certainly so and then my "peace shall be like a river," and my joy shall flow on in perpetual waves of freshness! O my dear Hearers, make sure work for eternity! If you must trifle anywhere, never trifle here! This anchor, this bower-anchor, this sheet-anchor of the soul—see that you have a good cable to this! Let everything else go and now that the dread storm is coming on, see that the anchor holds within the veil—and see, also, that it is God's anchor of faith, worked in you by God the Holy Spirit! Breathe, I pray you, at the very outset of this address, the prayer, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

And you will notice, as it is about a very solemn business, so, also, *it is an appeal to One who knows about it and who can speak on it with authority.* Brothers and Sisters, if you should come to a minister, whoever he may be, and say to him, "Sir, I will tell you my evidence. I will relate my experience—tell me, are these the marks of a child of God?" You may deceive him in your statements and he himself may mislead you in his judgment. What would be the worth of the opinions of all the men in the world as to the state of a soul before God? Certainly it would be very suspicious and would give much cause for fear if God's people were afraid of me, for I should begin to be afraid of myself! But still, though they have accepted me, let me not therefore take it for granted that *God* has done so! I may stand well with His Church. I may be beloved by His servants, but for all that He may know that I am none of His! I may be rather more thickly coated with guilt than some others and yet I may not be real gold. I may be better made and varnished than some and, yes, I

may be but an imitation and not the true wood! But it looks well, my dear Hearers, when you dare to come before God and have an investigation of your case. When a man is willing to have the title-deeds of his estate examined in any court in the world, I should think that those deeds were thoroughly sound. When you can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," or can even pray, as this text does, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation," then there is hope for you!

But observe that *the evidence the Psalmist wants is personal assurance*—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." How many times have we to cry out against that bad habit of generalizing in religion! Beloved, let us repeat what we have said a thousand times before, that national religion is altogether a dream! That even the idea of family religion, excellent as it is, is yet often but a mere idea. The only godliness worth having is personal godliness and the only religion which will really effect salvation is that which is vital and personal to the individual. "You must be born-again." Now there is no way of being born-again by proxy. The Church of England may invent its "sponsors" at will, but God has nothing to do with such things! I pray you, never let the soul-damning lie of another man standing for you be tolerated in your soul for a single second! Another man cannot promise anything *for you*, or, if he should promise it, he would not be able to accomplish what he had promised. These works must be worked in you personally by God the Holy Spirit, Himself, or else you can never be saved. I love you to pray for your children. I am glad, poor woman, that you are anxious for your husband. It is a good thing that you, husband, should pray for your wife, but oh, remember, the salvation of another will be but poor comfort to you if you, yourself, should be cast into the everlasting burnings! Let your prayer be first for yourselves! Let that be the leading point and then you will breathe the prayer more hopefully for others. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation. I hear that showers of mercy are dropping all around, let them drop also upon me. I hear that conversions are numerous, oh, if I am not converted, convert me! I know that You do great wonders, Lord—let me be a monument of Your power to save." It is personal assurance that the Psalmist needs!

Observe, also, for it lies on the surface of the text, that *it is an assurance sent, not to the ear, but to the heart*. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Now God does speak to us through our ears. When the Word is read or preached, we often get a blessing through hearing it. But if the words you hear merely come to the ear, it involves responsibility without insuring a blessing. Certain persons *dream* that God is their salvation! Go to bed and dream again, and dream fifty times, and when you have dreamed the same thing fifty times, there can and will be nothing but dreaming in it, after all! You who build on dreams had better mind what you are doing!

"Well," says another, "but I heard a voice in the air." Nonsense! "But I did," you say. Superstition! "But I am sure I did." Well, what does it mat-

ter? I care not where the voice came from if you heard it only with your outward ears. It is as likely to have been the devil that spoke as anybody else, if, indeed, it was anybody at all! You are as likely to deceive yourself as anything in the world. The prayer of the text, is not, "Say to *my ears*," but, "Say unto *my soul*, I am your salvation." Do you understand what soul-talking is? Oh, dear, dear—the most of people do not understand anything that has to do with the spirit world—there are materialists in Christianity as well as in other matters. They suppose that to worship God means to sing in a certain way, to bend the knees and to say certain words. Why, you may do all that and yet there may not be a fraction of worship in it! And, on the other hand, you may worship God without any of it. A man may sing God's praises without ever opening his mouth! A man may pray unto God and yet never say a word, for it is soul-singing and soul-praying that God accepts! And when God speaks back again to the soul that has learned to talk with Him, He does not speak lip-language, tongue-language, or ear-language, but *soul-language*! I have already said that this soul-language sometimes takes the body of preaching, or of the Word of God and so becomes, as it were, a thing to appeal to the ears, but even then the letter kills—it is only the Spirit that makes alive. It is God's soul talking to man's soul that is needed here. And mark you, dear Friend, if ever God speaks to your soul, you will not have to ask who it is that speaks, for if ever the eternal God comes into direct contact with the human heart, there is no making a mistake! Do you understand this? Some of you think I am fanatical. I would to God you were all as fanatical! May you have God talking with your soul and may the Holy Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! Pray the prayer and may God hear it now, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

Then I want you to also notice that *the prayer here offered is a present one*. It means, "Say *now* unto my soul, I am your salvation." It is not, "Do it by-and-by," but, "now, Lord, now!" Perhaps some of you have heard God's voice in years gone by, but now you have got into Doubting Castle. Well, you may pray this prayer right now, while you are sitting in the pew, and though none shall hear it but yourself, yet God's Spirit shall talk to you and you shall hear Him say, "I am your salvation," and then your heart shall sing, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine!" Pray the prayer now and it need not take a moment to be answered, for, while you are yet speaking it, you shall feel it. You will be bowed down under a sense of gratitude and yet you will be lifted up with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," when you can sing—

***"While Jesus whispers I am His,
And my Beloved's mine."***

Come, Believers, let us all pray this prayer, whether we have heard this voice before or not! O my God make us true Believers and may we all pray it now, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The preacher often needs to use this prayer himself. And he has no doubt that many of his Brothers and Sisters have been constrained to use just such a cry. Well,

let it go up again tonight—"O God, give us back the love of our espousals, our first faith, our early joy and speak with Your own voice to our troubled hearts, and say to our souls, 'I am your salvation.'"

II. And now shall we turn, very briefly, indeed, to the second point? It was to be THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE ASSURANCE ASKED FOR.

I do not think I shall preach on that at all, but leave you to find it out for yourselves. You who know it know that I cannot describe it, for you cannot describe it yourselves. And you who do not know it would not understand it if I told you what it is. You will understand as much as this—that if you were able to feel tonight that God Himself had said to your soul, "I am your salvation," you would feel infinitely more happy than you do now. Some of you are very cheerful, but sometimes you do get troubled and cast down. You apparently have, I know, a great deal of hilarity and mirth about you, but at night, or in the early morning, or when you have to go to a funeral, you do not feel quite as you would like to feel. There is an aching void somewhere or other and you have not found out that which is to fill it yet. Now, if God, Himself, should say to you, "I am your salvation," would not that fill it? Oh, what a different life you would then lead! How happy you would be and, being saved, how holy you would try to be! And, being holy, how near to God you would try to live! "If I were but saved," says one, "then would I, indeed, praise the Lord as long as I had any being." Well, poor Soul, I pray that this may be your case—but the blessedness of it you must taste to know. "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good!" There is no other way of understanding it than this.

I think I told you, once, the little story of the boy at the mission station who had received a piece of sugar from a missionary. When he went home he told his father that he had had something so sweet. The father asked if it were as sweet as such-and-such a fruit? Oh, sweeter than that! Was it as sweet as such another? Yes, much sweeter than that, and when the boy could not make his father understand how sweet it was, he ran down to the station and said, "Oh, Sir, would you give me another piece of that sweet stuff? Father wants to understand how sweet it is and I want to make him understand it, but I can't tell him." So he got another piece of sugar and back he went to his father with it. "Here, Father, now you will understand how sweet it is." A very good illustration is this of the text I just quoted, "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good!" Taste for yourselves—and then you shall know for yourselves.

III. Now let us go to the third point without delay. HOW ARE WE TO GET THIS ASSURANCE? HOW SHALL THE BELIEVER KNOW THAT HE IS SAVED?

The way to assurance is *through the door of simple faith*. The Gospel is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust Christ. Now, if I know that I trust Christ and that I have, in obedience to His command, been baptized, then God says I shall be saved and is not that enough for me? Ought it not to be, at any rate? If God says it, it must be true! I believe His Book to be Inspired and He has put it thus,

“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Well, if I do believe on Him, then I am not condemned. Conscience says, “You are a long way off being perfect.” I know that. Ah, Conscience! I know it to my shame and to my sorrow, but the Word says, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” I do believe on Him and I am not condemned, let Conscience say what it likes! “Well, but” the devil says, “how can this be true?” That is neither my business nor yours, Satan! God says it is so and therefore it is so. That is enough for me! We take men’s word, why should we not take God’s Word? He who simply believes in Jesus Christ must have some degree of assurance, for the simple act of reclining, recumbently resting upon Christ, if it is done truly and sincerely is, in its measure, assuring to the heart. At any rate, it is the milk that brings the cream. Faith is the milk and assurance is the cream! You must get your assurance from your faith—and if it is a simple faith which relies entirely upon Jesus Christ, it will, if not directly, yet very speedily, bring you some degree of assurance of your interest in Christ.

There are many good people who say, “We are trusting in Christ, and we hope we are Christians.” They do not like to say that they *know* they are saved. They think they are very humble in saying, “We trust so. We hope so.” Whereas there is nothing but pride, like a thick sediment, at the bottom of all that kind of talk! What right have I, when God tells me that a thing is so, to say that I *hope* it is so? If I were to promise to give a subscription of ten pounds to a charity and the person to whom I promised it should say, “Well, I hope you will give it,” I should answer, “But I have said that I will.” “Yes, I hope you will.” “But don’t you believe me?” “Yes, I hope I do, but...” Why, if such talk as this prevailed among men of the world, they would be for showing the door to one another! It would be looked upon as an insult not to believe a man—and why should you treat God in a manner in which you would not like to be treated by your fellow men? God says that I am saved if I trust Christ. I do trust Christ and I am saved—if I am not, then God’s Word is not true! It comes to that. Since his Word must be true—then if I really trust Christ and I know that I do—if whatever else I have left undone, my soul *does* cling to Him, sink or swim, not having the shadow of a hope anywhere but in His precious blood—and if I can say this, then I know I am saved, for God says I am! Experience and conscience may say whatever they like, but, “let God be true, and every man a liar.”

The way, however, to increase the measure of our assurance is to be found *in more study of the Word of God*. Some people have not the confidence they might have because they do not understand the Truth. I think that certain forms of Arminianism are injurious to the faith of the Christian—those forms, for instance, which deny the election of God, the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit and the final perseverance of the saints. These denials seem to me to cut from under a man’s foot everything he has to stand upon! And I do not wonder that the man who believes them has no assurance. If I believe that God’s children may fall away and perish, it seems to me that full assurance, at any rate, be-

comes an impossibility, for if they may fall, why may not I? What is there in me that I should stand where others fall? But when I rest alone upon the finished work and righteousness of Jesus and believe it is finished, then I can sing, "Now unto Him who is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, forever and ever. Amen." Study the Word much, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters. Never mind the magazines! Never mind the newspapers! Further than they are necessary to your business, you need not trouble yourself with them. We would, all of us, be a great deal better if we kept to the one Book. Let us be as expansive in our knowledge as possible, but let us keep the Bible as the sun and center of the solar system of our knowledge—and let everything we know revolve around that center! If we knew more of God, we might be content to know less of men.

Next to this, I think if we would have full assurance established, *we must be more in prayer than we are*. You will not be in a healthy state if you live without prayer. You cannot live without it if you are a Christian—and I mean you cannot be healthy if you live without much prayer. I am persuaded that none of us pray as we ought. I am not given to bandying accusations against God's saints without thought, but I am afraid that this is not a praying age. It is a *reading* age, a preaching age, a working age, but it is not a praying age! When one reads of the Puritans prayers, one is astounded! Why, their public prayers were sometime three-quarters of an hour in length and sometimes one hour and a half by the clock. I do not like that. But their private prayers were far longer and days of fasting and of prayer were quite common things. I wish we could have a day of fasting and of prayer about this cattle disease, but I only say this by the way. I wish we all of us prayed a great deal more than we do. We just pray for a short season because we say that we are so busy, but we forget that the more we pray, the more we are able to work. The mower grudges not the time he spends in whetting his scythe, or the scribe the interval for mending his pen. Martin Luther, when he had twice as much to do as he usually had, said, "I must pray for three hours today, at least, or else I shall never get through my work." The more work he had, the more did he pray in order that he might be able to get through it! Oh, that we did the same! We would have more assurance if we were more on the mountain with God!

Let me also advise you *to attend an edifying ministry and to get with well-advanced Christians*. Some of the young plants here, when they get moved away, suffer terribly from the cold. They come, perhaps, from the country full of doubts and fears, and then some of my good Brothers and Sisters get round them and talk to them, and cheer them up, and then they are so glad. Oh, that all Churches were warm-hearted, cordial and affectionate! There is so much stuck-upishness, so much keeping aloof from one another that there can be no talking, one to another, about the things of God! By the Grace of God we will try to break this down and get a little warm-heartedness to one another—and so we will hope to get the

full assurance by talking to one another of the things of the Kingdom of God and so strengthening each other in our work.

But, dear Friends, if you want to get full assurance, I can recommend to you another thing and it is this, *work for Christ*. We are not saved by works, but working for God brings us many blessings. Rest assured that if you spend and are spent for Christ, you shall never be out of spending money! If you lay out your strength for Him, He will lay in for you fresh stores of strength! He does not give us faith that we may bury it as the man buried his talent, but if we have five talents of faith and use them, He will give us five talents more—and so we shall have assurance if we use our faith well.

And then, again, *praise God for what you have*. Old Master Brookes says, “If you only have candlelight, bless God for it and He will give you starlight. When you have got starlight, praise God for it and He will give you moonlight. When you have got moonlight, rejoice in it and He will give you sunlight. And when you have got sunlight, praise Him still more and He will make the light of your sun as the light of seven days, for the Lord, Himself, shall be the light of your spirit.” Praise and bless Him and your assurance shall grow!

Above all, *press through ordinances, and means, and prayers, to the Person of Christ, Himself!* Thomas found that putting his finger into Christ’s wounds was a cure-all for his unbelief. And so will you. Ask Him to—

**“Wrap you in His crimson vest,
And tell you all His name.”**

Pray Him to reveal Himself to you in His sufferings and in His Glory. Ask Him that you may read His heart, that He may speak to you and show you the great unspeakable love wherewith He loved you from before the foundation of the world. Then your communion with Christ shall be as eagle wings to bear you up to Heaven! Your fellowship with Jesus shall be like horses of fire to drag your chariot of flaming love up to the Throne of the Most High! You shall walk the mountain-top, talking with God, for you will have learned to commune with Christ! Your spirit shall make its nest hard by the Throne of the Most High. You shall get above the cares of earth, you shall mount beyond the storm and strife of worldly conflict and you shall even now bathe your soul in the unbroken sea of everlasting calm before the Throne of God!

Let us ask Him to say to each of our souls tonight, “I am your salvation.” Some of us are going to the Communion Table. Perhaps He will say it to us there. And if He does not, we will go home to pray. And if He does not speak to us then, perhaps in the night-watches He will say it. And when we awake, we will still plead on until those lips which said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, shall again say, “Let there be light,” to us, and we shall know that He is our salvation! May God bless you very richly for hearing this prayer, for Jesus’ sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30; 2:1-11.

Philippians 1:21. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* [See Sermon #146, Volume 3—THE GOOD MAN’S LIFE AND DEATH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “To me to live is Christ.” If he lived, he lived to know more of Christ studying His Person and learning by his happy experience so that he increased in his knowledge of his Lord and Savior. If he lived, he lived to imitate Christ more closely, becoming more and more conformed to His image. If he lived, he lived to make Christ more and more known to others and to enjoy Christ more himself. In these four senses, Paul might well say, “For to me to live is Christ”—to know Christ more, to imitate Christ more, to preach Christ more and to enjoy Christ more!

“And to die is gain,” because death, he felt, would free him from all sin and from all doubts as to his state in the present and the future. It would be gain to him, for then he would no longer be tossed upon the stormy sea, but he would be safe upon the land where he was bound. It would be gain to him, for then he would be free from all temptations both from within and from without. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all his enemies—there would be no cruel Nero, no blaspheming Jews, no false brethren then! It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all suffering—there would be no more shipwrecks, no more being beaten with rods, or being stoned! Dying, too, would be gain for him, for he would then be free from all fear of death and, having once died, he would die no more forever. It would be gain to him, for he would find in Heaven better and more perfect friends than he would leave behind on earth. And he would find, above all, his Savior, and be a partaker of His Glory. This is a wide subject and the more we think over it, the more sweetness shall we get out of it.

22. *But if I live in the flesh.* That is a very different thing from living to the flesh.

22. *This is the fruit of my labor.* He lived to work for Christ and to see souls saved as the fruit of his labor.

22, 23. *Yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.* [See Sermons #274, Volume 5—PAUL’S DESIRE TO DEPART and #1136, Volume 19—“FOREVER WITH THE LORD”—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There were the two currents flowing in opposite directions. The Apostle seemed to hear two voices speaking to him. One of them said, “Live, and you will gather the fruit of your labor. You will see sinners saved, Churches established and the Kingdom of Christ extended in the earth.” The other said, “Die, and you will be with Christ!” So he knew not which to choose.

24-26. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more necessary for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.* The Apostle desired to die, yet he was willing to live. Death would have been

gain to him, yet he would endure the loss of living if he might thereby benefit others. Let us also always prefer the welfare of others before our own—and care rather to serve others than to make ourselves ever so happy. Now the Apostle gives these saints at Philippi a loving exhortation.

27. *Only let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else am absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.* The unity of the Church is of the utmost importance. When there is a lack of brotherly love, the perfect bond is lost—and as a bundle of rods, when once the binding cord is cut becomes merely a number of weak and single twigs, so is it with a divided Church. May we always be kept in one holy bond of perfect union with each other!

28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition.* “Away with them! Away with them!” cried the heathen. “Those who are not ashamed to acknowledge the Crucified Christ are only worthy of perdition.” But of what was their courage a token to themselves?

28. *But to you of salvation, and that of God.* For when saints can bear fierce persecution without flinching, it is an evident sign that they are saved by the Grace of God!

29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him.* Which is a great gift.

29. *But also to suffer for His sake.* Which is a still greater gift!

30. *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.* “The same agony,” it is in the Greek, as if every Christian must, in his measure, go through the same agony through which the Apostle went striving and wrestling against sin, groaning under its burden, agonizing to be delivered from it and laboring to bring others out of its power.

Philippians 2:1, 2. *If there is, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* Paul knew that these saints at Philippi loved him. They had sent once and again to relieve his necessities, so he pleaded with them, by their love to him, to love each other. He does as much say, “If you really love me, if it is not a sham, if you have any sympathy with me and with my labors and sufferings. If you really have the same spirit that burns in my breast, make my heart full of joy by clinging to one another, by being like-minded, ‘having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.’”

3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.* This would be a good motto for those who are intending to build new places of worship! Let them not be built through strife, because of a squabble among the people of God, but make sure that all concerned are actuated by right motives and seeking only the Glory of God. But sometimes, if one gives a guinea, another feels that he must give two, so as to excel him—this is giving out

of vainglory. Let nothing be done in this way, but as unto the Lord and as in His sight, let us do all our works and give all our gifts.

3, 4. *But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not, every man, on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Consider how you can help others and in what way you can prosper them both in temporal things and in spiritual. You are members of a body, so one member is not to think for itself alone—the unity of the whole body requires that every separate and distinct part of it should be in harmony with the whole.

5-8. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.* [See Sermon #2281, Volume 38—OUR LORD IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He humbled Himself, so be you not unwilling to humble yourself. Lower than the Cross, Christ could not go, His death was one of such extreme ignominy that He could not have been more disgraced and degraded. Be you willing to take the lowest place in the Church of God and to render the most humble service! Count it an honor to be allowed to wash the saints' feet. Be humble in mind—nothing is lost by cherishing this spirit, for see how Jesus Christ was honored in the end.

9-11. *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* [See Sermon #101, Volume 2—THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Some foolish and superstitious persons make this passage a pretext for bowing their heads at the name of Jesus whenever it is mentioned. Nothing can be more senseless, because the passage means no such thing!

What we are taught here is the great Truth of God that Jesus Christ, though once He stooped to the lowest shame, is now exalted to the very highest Glory and even the devils in Hell are compelled to acknowledge the might of His power! We are also to learn from this passage that the way to ascend is to descend. He who would be chief must be willing to be the servant of all. The King of kings was the Servant of servants—and if you would be crowned with honor, by-and-by, you must be willing to be despised and rejected of men now! The Lord give us this gracious humbleness of mind, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

FULL ASSURANCE

NO. 384

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.”
Psalm 35:3.***

THE Psalmist, when he wrote these words, was surrounded by many and furious enemies. He pleads with God to take hold on shield and buckler and to come forth for his defense. Yet he feels that there is only one thing which God has need to do in order to remove his fears and make him strong in the day of conflict, “Say unto my soul, I am your salvation,” and I will defy them all. In the name of God I will set up my banner. And though weak in myself, yet shall I be able to overcome them readily and tread them as straw is trod from the dunghill, when the joy of the Lord shall be my strength, because You have said unto me, ‘I am your salvation.’ ”

Brethren, there is nothing that can make you strong to labor for God, bold to fight against your enemies and mighty to resist your temptations like a full assurance that God is your God and your sure salvation. Your doubts and fears weaken you. While they nourish your despair and diminish your joy, they do at the same time cut the sinews of your valor and blunt the edge of your sword. A fully-assured Christian is a very giant in our Israel—for happiness and beauty he stands like Saul, head and shoulders taller than the rest—while for strength and courage he can match with David and is like the angel of the Lord.

It is upon the subject of full assurance that I shall address you this morning. Without further preface I shall first bid you *hear objectors*, who oppose themselves to full assurance. Secondly, I shall beg you to *hear the test*. And then I shall request you to *hear the preacher*.

I. First of all, let us HEAR OBJECTORS.

There are some who say it is better that a man should stand in jeopardy of his soul every hour—better for him to be exercised with doubts and fears—than that he should grow confident and have the joy of knowing assuredly that he is a saved man, is in the favor of God and shall never be condemned. We will hear these objectors for a moment and answer them speedily.

One of them advances and he says, “First, I object to your preaching this morning, the doctrine of full assurance, because I believe it to be impossible—I cannot conceive that any man can know in this life whether he shall be saved in the life to come. Perhaps I may grant you that, in the dying hour, some men may get a little confidence—but, with the perception

of a few of the eminently holy and the profoundly spiritual—it cannot be possible that Christians should attain to a full confidence and an infallible assurance of being saved.”

To this, Sir, I reply thus. You say it is impossible—I say it is not only possible, but has been certainly enjoyed by the people of God. Does the Spirit of God teach men to pray impossibilities? Yet David prays for it here—“Say unto my soul, I am your salvation.” The thing is possible, then, or else David would not have asked for it. It *can* be granted by God. It *can* be received by the Christian, else this prayer had never been put in the Inspired Record. Besides, do you think that the Holy Spirit would exhort us to do an impossibility?

And does He not speak by the mouth of Paul and say, “Give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*”? Does He not bid us be assured that we are called by grace and that we are chosen of God? I say that which *may* be a matter of prayer and which is a subject of precept, cannot be an impossible thing. Besides, it has been enjoyed by tens of thousands of even ordinary every-day Christians. We could read you their biographies and find expressions like this—“I have no more doubt of my interest in Christ than I have of my existence.” “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”

And there are many in this house today, who if this were the time for them to give their personal testimony, could say, “I *know* that I have been born again. I *am sure* that my sins are all forgiven. I am neither afraid to die, nor do I fear to live—for, living, Christ is with me and dying, I shall be with Christ—being justified, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord.” Brethren, it is *not* impossible. It is attainable by the man who has faith if he knows how to use the proper means.

But shall I tell you who the gentlemen are who generally raise objections to the glorious privilege of assurance? There are, first of all, the adherents of the Pope of Rome. Of course, the Papist does not like full assurance. And why? The Pope and his priest would have a lean larder if full assurance were well preached. Only conceive, my Brethren, if the Roman Catholic could get the full assurance of salvation, surely the Cardinals would hardly find money enough to buy their red hats. For where were purgatory then? Purgatory is an impossibility if full assurance is possible. If a man knows himself to be saved, then he is not to be troubled with a silly fear about waiting in the intermediate state, to be purified with fire, before he can enter into Heaven.

Purgatory is only acceptable to those poor trembling souls who know of no sure salvation here and are glad of this deceptive hope of a salvation to be worked in the world to come. Purgatory being thus built upon a lying imposition—on the fears of ignorant consciences—becomes what brave old Hugh Latimer used to call it—“Purgatory Pick-purse,” to the poor sinner and “Purgatory Fill-purse” to the vagabond priest. Once let full assurance

be given to all Christian men—first make the Romanist a Christian and then let him be fully assured of his interest in Christ and away goes purgatory and there will never be a soul found to tremble at it any more.

The other persons who object to this doctrine are generally people who have no religion and who want, therefore, to make themselves a little easy by the notion that nobody has any more than they have. Your easy Church-goers and Chapel-goers. Your ladies and gentlemen who think that religion consists in buying a Prayer Book, who imagine that to have a book of Psalms and Hymns, constitutes godliness. Your fine folks to whom religion is as much a matter of fashion as some new color, or some new form of dress—these people, having no vitality in their godliness, never having a religion which could either make them cry or sing, never having godliness enough either to make them miserable, or make them blessed—these think there is nothing more in godliness than they get themselves. They say, “*I never knew my sins were forgiven,*” and judging all others by themselves, they think that no one else can know it, either.

And I am sorry to say and grieved at heart to say it that not seldom I have known professed ministers of the Gospel who have even rebuked those who have reached to the high attainment of assurance. I was waited upon, not very long since, by a lady of considerable standing who had long been seeking rest and nothing would satisfy her unless she knew her sins were forgiven. She had called upon a clergyman, of some standing, too, and he had assured her that the thing was utterly impossible. And she was ready to go mad with the idea that she must all her life go mourning on somewhere between hope and fear—in the balances between despair and hope.

When I told her that it was not only the privilege of the Christian, but his duty, to *know* himself to be saved and that no man ought to rest till he was infallibly assured by the Holy Spirit that he was in a gracious state and delivered from fear of Hell, the joy that flushed her face was something worth beholding and she went on her way to seek and I trust to find, the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

I would have each of you put aside those carnal quibbles which are raised by Romanists and Romanizers against the idea that we can know that we are saved—for not only can we know it—but we ought never to be satisfied till we do know it. And this, mark you, is not *my* statement. It is the manifest testimony of the Book of God and was plainly held by all the fathers of the Church—Augustine, Chrysostom and the like. It is the testimony of all the Reformers—of all the giant Divines of the Puritan times, it is the testimony of all truly evangelical Christians—that every Christian has a right to have a full assurance of his salvation and should never be content until he attains thereunto.

But another objector rises and faintly says, “But I am afraid, Sir. I am afraid of your preaching full assurance, because so many persons have boasted of it and they have been vile pretenders and have perished after

all.” Friend, it is to be admitted that there have been many who have mistaken *presumption* for assurance. They have thought that the arrogant impertinence of a proud unhumiliated spirit was the same thing as the simple child-like confidence of a renewed, regenerated heart. But mark, assurance is not possible to you till you are born again. You have no business to dream of it till you have a new heart and a right spirit. It would indeed be a fearful piece of blasphemy for you to think that God is your Father when your Father He is not, or to dream that your sins are forgiven when your hands are scarlet with them and your soul is black with your crimes.

But because some make the counterfeit, am I to throw away the genuine? Because, indeed, there is some tin shillings, will you cast away all the silver? Because some pass upon you the base forged bank-note, will you therefore burn those which really come from the bank? I think not. And, my dear Brethren, if thousands presumed, that would not be an argument why one true Christian should not be fully assured of his interest in Christ. “Yes, but,” says another, “I am afraid if men get fully assured, they will grow careless.” This is the old objection that was brought against faith in Luther’s time. “If men believe that they will be justified by faith,” said the Romanist, “they will never do any good works.”

Whereas the fact is, men never do any good works till they *are* justified by faith. Those who cry down good works as the ground of hope are the very men who work with all their might in the service of Christ and as assurance is but *faith come to perfection*, the assured man will always be the most industrious man. Why, when I know that I am saved—

**“Then for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross.”**

A well-grounded assurance is the most active worker in the field, the most valiant warrior in the battle and the most patient sufferer in the furnace. There are none so active as the assured. Let a tree be planted in this soil and watered with this river and its branches will bend with fruit. Confidence of success stimulates exertion, joy in faith removes sorrows and realizing assurance overcomes all difficulties. Like the sword of Goliath we may say of assurance, “There is none like it—give it to me.” Who cares for deaths, or devils when he can read his title clear? What matters the tempest without when there is calm within?

Assurance puts the heart *in* Heaven and moves the feet *to* Heaven. Its children are all fair, like the holy children in Babylon and no race can compare for a moment with these “hinds let loose,” these “lion-like men,” these children of the sun. There never were men so self-sacrificing, so daring, so zealous, so enthusiastic in the cause of Christ as the men who know that their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and therefore out of gratitude serve their God. Why, I put it to the sinner here, who

never thought of this matter before—Poor man! If your sins could be all forgiven this morning and you could know it—if God should say to your soul, “I am your salvation,” and if you could go out of this house knowing that you were a child of God, do you think it would make you unholy? Do you think it would make you negligent?

No, I think I see the tear in your eye, as you reply, “I would do anything for *Him*. I would *live* for Him. I would *die* for Him, to show how I love Him who loved me.” Ah, poor Soul, if you believe in Christ *now*, that will be true. If you will cast yourself on Jesus *now*, you shall be forgiven. There shall be no sin left in God’s Book against you. You shall be absolved, acquitted, delivered, cleansed and washed. And then you shall prove in your experience that assurance does not make men sin, but that assurance of pardon is the very best means of making men *holy* and keeping them in the fear of God.

I have one class of objectors to answer and I have done. There is a certain breed of Calvinists, whom I do not envy, who are always jeering and sneering as much as ever they can at the full assurance of faith. I have seen their long laces. I have heard their whining periods and read their dismal sentences in which they say something to this effect—“Groan in the Lord always and again I say, groan! He that mourns and weeps, he that doubts and fears, he that distrusts and dishonors his God, shall be saved.” That seems to be the sum and substance of their very unGospel-like Gospel.

But why is it that they do this? I speak now honestly and fearlessly. It is because there is a *pride* within them—a *conceit* which is fed on rottenness and sucks marrow and fatness out of putrid carcasses. And what, say you, is the object of their pride? Why, the pride of being able to boast of a deep *experience*—the pride of being a blacker, grosser and more detestable backslider than other people. “Whose glory is in their shame,” may well apply to them. A more dangerous, because a more deceitful pride than this is not to be found. It has all the elements of self-righteousness in it. I would sooner a man boast in his good works than boast in his good feelings, because you *can* deal with the man who boasts in his good works—you have plain texts of Scripture and you can convict him of being a legalist.

But this other man boasts that he is no legalist—he can speak very sharply against legality. He knows the Truth and yet the Truth is not in him—in his spirit—because still he is looking to his *feelings* and not looking to the finished work of Christ. Of all the Diabolians that ever stole into the city of Mansoul, Mr. Live-by-Feeling was one of the worst of villains, though he had the fairest face. Brethren, you had better live by works than live by feelings—both are damning forms of trust—but the one is more deceptive and more delusive than the other by far. You are justified by *faith*, not by *feelings*. You are saved by what *Christ felt* for you, not by what *you feel* and the root and basis of salvation is the Cross and “other

foundation shall no man lay than that which is laid." Even though he place his experience there, he builds "wood, hay and stubble," and not the cornerstone, which is Christ Jesus the Lord.

I have thus tried to meet my objectors—I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse.

II. Let us HEAR THE TEXT. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The first thing the text seems to say is, *David had his doubts, then*—for why would he pray, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation," if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Cheer up, Christian Brothers and Sisters! If David doubted, you must not say, "I am no Christian because I have doubts." The best of Believers *sometimes* are troubled with fears and anxieties. Abraham had the greatest faith, but he had *some* unbelief. I envy the Brother who can say that his faith never wavered. He can say more than David did, for David had cause to cry, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

But, next, the text says that *David was not content while he had doubts and fears* but he repaired at once to the mercy seat to pray for assurance, for he valued it as much fine gold. "O Lord!" David seems to say, "I have lost my confidence; my foot slips; my feet are almost gone; my doubts and fears prevail and I cannot bear it. I am wretched, I am unhappy. Say—say unto my soul, I *am* your salvation."

And then the text tells you yet a third thing—that David *knew where to obtain full assurance*. He goes at once to God in prayer. He knows that knee-work is that by which faith is increased and there, in his closet, he cries out to the Most High, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." O my Brethren, we must be much alone with God if we would have a clear sense of His love! Let your cries cease and your eyes will grow dim. Much in prayer, much in Heaven—slow in prayer, slow in progress.

Now pull the text into pieces and let us look at the words. And notice, that David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a *Divine source*. "Say unto my soul." Great God! If the priest should say it, it is nothing! If my minister should say it—if the deacons, the Church officers and all the members of the Church should say it—it is nothing. Lord, *You* say it! Nothing short of a Divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian. The Spirit of God must Himself after a supernatural sort, speak to our consciences and to our hearts. Gracious God! Let me not take my hopes haphazardly. Let not my confidence be ill-founded and built upon sand. Speak Yourself, with Your Word of Truth and Wisdom and say to me, even to me, "I am your salvation!"

Note, next, David cannot be content unless his assurance has a *vivid personality* about it. "Say unto my soul, I am *your* salvation." If you should say this to all the saints, it were nothing, unless you should say it to me. Lord, I have sinned I deserve it not. I am sinful. I scarcely dare to ask it. But oh, say it to my soul even to *my* soul, "I am *your* salvation." Let

me have a pointed, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am Yours and that You are mine.

Next, David must have it come deep into *his inner being*. “Say unto my *soul*. Speak it not merely to my ears—say it to my soul, Great God! Let me not fancy that I heard it in the air. Let me not dream that I listened to it in my sleep, but speak it right into the ears of my spirit and let the inner man hear the echoes of Your peace-speaking voice—‘Say unto my *soul*, I am your salvation.’” Brethren, it is no skimming the surface which will do for us. We must have quiet in the deeps. That blessing “of the depth which lies under” we need and must have. It will not content us to have a fair skin, scarcely concealing with its deceitful gauze the foul and deadly leprosy. Our soul must be sound and healthy to the very core. Lord, say to my soul, in my heart’s inner depths, “I am your salvation.” Put it beyond doubt. Put it beyond all chance, dispute, or hazard, “I *am* your salvation.”

Note again, David wants *present* assurance. He does not say, “Say unto my soul, I *will be* your salvation,” but, “I *am*.” And yet that “am,” as you will see if you look at the text, is not in the original, it is in italics. It has been supplied by our translators. That word “am” is *man’s* word, not *God’s*—therefore I will say but little of it. It may be, “I *will be* your salvation,” or “I *have been* your salvation,” or “I am—” and very rightly there is no word there at all. You can learn as much from God’s silence as you can from His speech and I think this silence means just this. There is no word put there at all, because full assurance enables the Christian to say of God, “He *was* my salvation before the worlds began, He *is* my salvation now, He *will be* when the world shall pass away.”

So you may put up the prayer in any tense you prefer. “Say unto my soul, I ___ your salvation,” The two terms shall be alike. “God ___ the salvation. “I,” the great personal self-existent Deity, “your salvation.” The two shall stand and fall together. They shall both of them be sure, both eternal in the ancient ages, both everlasting in the ages to come. “Say unto my soul, I ___ your salvation.”

I think we have thus heard what the text has to say to us. You will remark, when you look it all the way through, that the only question which we need put is this—How *can* God say to us, “I am your salvation”? You do not expect to hear it as you walk along the streets. You do not imagine that you will see it written on the skies. No, God speaks to His people thus—by His Word, by His ministers and by His Holy Spirit silently and mysteriously imprinting upon the heart the fact that that heart is washed in the Redeemer’s blood.

Dr. Caesar Malan, of Geneva, has put in a very plain light the way in which God in His Word says to us, “I am your salvation.” You are to suppose the minister is talking to a friend. This friend is anxious and doubting and wants to know how the Bible can say to any man that that man is saved. The conversation runs thus—*Pastor*: “He who believes in Jesus Christ, has eternal life” (John 3:36)—do you know this declaration of the

Word of God? Very well, but you appear to think it obscure or ambiguous.” *John*: “Never, I am sure it is true. Yet all those who say, ‘I believe in Jesus Christ,’ are not the elect of God, bought of the Lord, or saved by grace. All these are not chosen, for there are many hypocrites who dare say that they believe in the Son of God.”

Pastor: “You observe that the Word does not say that those who *say* they believe, or *pretend* to believe in Jesus Christ, or who imagine falsely that they believe, have eternal life. But this infallible Word says that those *who believe* in reality really have this life. So, then, the multitude in Christian nations who *profess* to believe in Jesus Christ is not proof that they believe in reality. But if this multitude believes in reality on the Savior, certainly they will have eternal life.” *John*: “Thus, Sir, whoever is able to assure himself that he believes on the Savior, then he will be certain that he has actually the life eternal and that he is also elect.”—*The minister takes a little bit of paper and writes upon it these words*, “Whoever receives from my hand this paper and this declaration, I hold him for my friend.”

He puts his name to these words and presenting it to John, he says to him: “Receive this from my hand and believe my testimony, for I am a creditable person—*John takes the paper and reads what the minister had written*. *Pastor*: “How am I to regard you, John, after this testimony that I have given you?” *John*: “I have the minister for a friend.” *Pastor*: “Is it from you to me that this friendship flows, or is it from me to you?” *John*: “It is from you to me.” *Pastor*: “Do you hesitate to say that I am your friend and that you have become mine?” *John*: “If I said I did not believe you, I should make you a liar.” *Pastor*: “Do you, then, look with affection towards me, or is it I with affection towards you? For you are assured that I am your friend and that I regard you as mine.” *John*: “You, dear Sir, love me and care for me.” *Pastor*: “And how are you assured that this good-will is addressed to you?” *John*: “Because you have been pleased to say it and I do not doubt your veracity.”

Pastor: “I am sure that I have not written your *name*, as my friend. Why then do you know that I have mentioned you in particular?” *John*: “You have written with your own hand that whoever receives this paper, you shall have him for a friend. And because I have received this paper and because I know that you are of good authority, I have no doubt at all upon the subject.” *Pastor*: “That is, then, because you have been certain on the one hand of having received this paper from my hand and on the other hand, that I am of good authority, that you are certain of possessing, at the present, my affection?” *John*: “I do not think that I am able to speak with doubt upon this point, without insulting your veracity.”

The substance of which is this—that when you can take the Word and find that you *are* the character there spoken of, it is as good as if out of Heaven an angel should fly down to you, sitting in your pew now and

should say in your ear, in the presence of this congregation, “God is your salvation.” Now, Brethren, I know this day I have no other trust but in the Cross of Christ—therefore I am saved. And you can say the same, each one of you, if you are resting in Christ alone, There is not an “if” or a “but” about it. You are saved. Oh, do enjoy that thought and go home and live upon it. It shall be marrow and fatness to your spirit.

But then, God often speaks by His minister, as well as by His Word. But that is very much in the same way. While the minister is preaching concerning those who are saved, you listen and you say, “Ah, he speaks to me!” He describes your character and though you are standing far away in the gallery, you say, “Ah, that is *my* character!” He speaks of the weary and heavy laden sinner and he bids him come and you say, “Ah, I am weary and heavy laden and I will come.” And when you have come, Christ has given you rest. You need have no doubt about it. If you can fairly take hold on the promise which is offered to certain characters and states, why, then you can go your way saying, “God has said to me by His servant, ‘I *am* your salvation.’”

Besides this, God has a way of speaking without the Word and *without* the minister, to our hearts. His Spirit can drop like the rain and distil like the dew as the small rain upon the tender herb. We know not how it is, but sometimes there is a deep sweet calm. Our conscience says, “I have been washed in the blood of Christ,” and the Spirit of God says, “Yes, ‘tis true, ‘tis true.” In such times we are so happy—so happy that we want to tell our joys—so blessed that if we could but borrow angels’ wings and fly away, we would scarce know the change when we passed through the pearly gates, for we have had Heaven below and there has been but little difference between that and Heaven above.

Oh, I wish my whole congregation without exception consisted of men and women who had heard the Spirit say, “I am your salvation.” What happy hymns! What happy prayers! You might go home to some poor single room—you might go to a scantily furnished house—and to a table that has barely bread upon it, but happy men! Happy men! Better would be your dinner of herbs, than a stalled ox without confidence in Christ! Better your rich poverty, than the poverty of the rich who have no faith in Jesus! Better all the griefs you have to endure, when sanctified by assurance, than all the joys the worldling has, when unblessed by faith and unhallowed by love to God. *I can say now—*

**“Grant me the visits of Your face,
And I desire no more.”**

I shall now pass to my third and last point—a little while only, but earnestly, I trust.

III. Will you patiently HEAR THE PREACHER in what he has to say? I know that in this large assembly I am addressing very many who never knew that they were saved. I must put you all into one class—though, indeed, you are not in the same state. For there are some who never *knew* that they were saved, who are saved. They do believe in Jesus. But their

faith is so little that they never know that they are forgiven. I have to put *you* in the class, because you do belong to it for the time being. But there are many of you who never knew that you were saved, because you never cared to know. It has been a matter of concern with you to find out your pedigree. But you never asked, "Is God my Father?" You have made quite sure of the title deeds of your estate. But you never took the trouble to ask whether Heaven was yours or not.

And possibly some of you have imbibed a notion that it is a very easy thing to be saved—that there is no need to trouble your heads about it much—that so long as you do your duty, attend your church or frequent your chapel, it is well and good. You say there is no use making this fuss about being born again and having a new heart and a right spirit. I may never have your ear again, but mark this at the Day of Judgment—I will be free of your blood if you perish in your delusion. This is *the* delusion of England. We have not half so much to dread Popery as we have that nominal Christianity, fostered by a national Church—that nominal Christianity which has no root nor soul within it. Oh, there are millions of Englishmen who think they are Christians because they were sprinkled in infancy with holy drops and because they have come to the Lord's Table, whereas, little do they know that every time they have come there, they did eat and drink damnation to themselves because they did not discern the Lord's body.

This is the curse and plague of England—that we have so much profession and so little possession. There are such multitudes of you who are content to sit under a sleepy ministry where ministers will not tell you the Truth for fear of hurting your feelings. Where they will preach the Truth generally, as if a man should wave a sword, but do not come home personally, as if a man should drive it through your very heart. What we want is more home dealing, more plain speaking, more thrusting of the hand inside your soul to make you tremble and ask yourselves the question whether you are right before God or not.

I speak then, to the whole of you who never knew that you were saved. And first I say to you *how foolish you are!* O Sirs! You are to die soon and you are to go to Heaven or to Hell—to splendors and glories, or to glooms and horrors and yet you do not know which is to be your portion?

O fools! Miserable fools! If some of you should say, "I do not know whether I have a cancer or not," I should say, seek the physician and enquire if there is a fear. But to say, "I do not know whether I am in the bonds of iniquity and the call of bitterness or not," is awful indeed. Why, you make your estates as tight as law can tie them. All the skill of legal language is employed to make the deed secure and yet you are content to have Heaven as a thing of *if* and *but* and *perhaps*? Oh, Fools indeed! How can you be so mad? Sure to die and yet not sure whether you are saved! Sure to appear before the bar of God and yet not know whether you shall

be acquitted or condemned? Oh, if there is wisdom left within you, if your brain is not turned to perfect madness I conjure you by the living God to make sure work of it and never be content till you *know* that you are saved.

But again—I must not only call you foolish, but miserable. Miserable, I say. Do you look at me and say, “We are comfortable, we are easy, we are content”? Yes, Sirs, so madmen talk. If I saw a man lying down upon the brink of the crater of a volcano and I knew that very soon the lava would come streaming up and then rolling down, I could not call him happy, though he were toying with Nature’s fairest flowers, or sucking her most delicious sweets. And you—you are in such a state as this! Upon a puff of wind, a bubble, hangs your eternal state. If life depended on a hair, it were indeed precarious. But here is your soul depending on your life, which depends on something frailer than a dream.

O Sirs! You may drop dead in this house. Such things are not extraordinary. Men have come into the house of God bodies and they have gone out corpses. And while I think that any one of you may die and you are uncertain whether you shall be lost or saved I could sooner call you kings than call you happy—but the only correct title I can give to you is, O miserable men! Miserable men! Uncertain as to your future state.

Once more—and let this last thought ring in your ears. Ah, you may go away, perhaps to your parties, to your rounds of merriment, to your midnight balls, to your varnished harlotries—but let this ring in your ears, “Oh, the danger—the danger of not knowing whether you shall be saved or lost!” You will die—I suppose you will not dispute with me about that. You do not claim to be immortal. You expect to die. You die—and what? Sirs—what? Madam—what if your fears should be true? Your companions are laughing no longer. They are the damned spirits of Hell—your occupations are frivolous no more. They are solemn and serious now—as solemn as death and as serious as eternity.

Where now the music which once regaled your dainty ears? Your only symphonies are sighs, dirges and howling. Where now the soft couch on which you took your rest and pleasure? You have made your bed in Hell. And what a change for some of you—from the scarlet of Dives to the flames of Hell—from the feasts so sumptuous to the fiends so terrible! Where are you now, you church-goers, you chapel-goers? You have no profession of religion there. No hymn-books there—no minister of mercy—no voice of holy song. In Hell there are no ring of Sabbath bells—no tearful eyes—no tender hearts—no lips which tremble while they speak to you and only speak of terror because they love you and would save you if they could.

O my Hearers, if you are not sure of being saved, what if you are sure of being damned? And you are either—mark this—not to your own apprehension perhaps, but in fact. You are sure of one or the other. Which is it? Which must it be? I know, when I preach these terrible things, men will

not listen to me. But God is my witness, I would not speak about them if I *dare* be silent about them. But if you perish, Sirs, it shall not be for want of pleading with, or praying for, or weeping over. Sinner! I beseech you turn! By Him that died and lives and has sent me to plead with you, I beseech you, seek, if you have never sought and if you have sought, seek again and if you have found, find yet more fully, till you can say, "He is mine and I am His."

Put your downy pillow under your head tonight, you sluggards—but sleep not—for you may never wake in this world. Sit to your luxurious meal tomorrow—let the dainties be sweet, leave them untasted, for you may one day be denied a drop of water. O Sirs! Be not happy till you have made your happiness sure. Oh, have no peace, till your peace is everlasting, substantial peace. Talk not of being blessed, till God has blessed you. Think not that you are blessed, while "God is angry with the wicked every day," and has said, "Cursed is he that is under the Law."

But do you wish to be saved? Does the Spirit of God whisper to you, "Escape! Escape!" There is forgiveness still. There is forgiveness *now*. There is forgiveness for *you*. Trust Christ, Sinner and you shall be saved—saved this moment. Believe in Him now with all your guilt and sin about you. May the Holy Spirit now lead you to trust my Lord and Master. And you may go home assured that *He* has forever put away your sin and you are accepted and blessed in Him. May God bless you, each one of you, now and forever. Amen.

***"Surrounded by a host of foes,
Stormed by a host of foes within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single against Hell, earth and sin;
Single, yet undismayed, I am;
I dare believe in Jesus' name.
What though a thousand hosts engage.
A thousand worlds my soul to shakes
I have a shield shall quell their rage,
And drive the alien armies back;
Portrayed it bears a bleeding Lamb;
I dare believe in Jesus' name."***

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EXPOSITION OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE NO. 385

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1861,

THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON TOOK THE CHAIR AT 3 O'CLOCK.

The proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st Hymn—

*Saved from the damning power of sin,
The Law's tremendous curse,
We'll now the sacred song begin
Where God began with us.
We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace
Which, from the days of old,
Did all His chosen sons embrace,
As sheep within His fold.
The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy's frame sustain;
Earth, Hell, or sin, the same to move
Shall all conspire in vain.
Sing, O you sinners bought with blood
Hail the Great Three in One;
Tell how secure the covenant stood
Ere time its race begun.
Ne'er had you felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enrolled to life above.
O what a sweet exalted song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the Top Stone rise.*

The Rev. GEORGE WYARD, of Deptford, offered prayer.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON in opening the proceedings said—We have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those Truths in which consists the peculiarity of this Church. Last evening we endeavored to show to the world that we heartily recognized the essential union of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intention, through the lips of our Brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us and especially those great points which have been so often attacked but which are still upheld and maintained—Truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and Truth.

My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the Brethren who shall address you and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system at theology. Between the Protestant and the Papist there is a controversy of such a character that he who is saved on the one side by faith in Jesus, dares not agree that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a Church either stands or falls.

The controversy, again, between the Believer in Christ and the Socinian, is one which affects a vital point. If the Socinian is right, we are most frightfully in error. We are, in fact, idolaters and how dwells eternal life in us? And if we are right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter Heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But I think we are all free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism and on the other hand, George Whitfield with equal fervor fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other.

We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the gross mistakes of our opponents and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men if we could admit that they are right in all things and ourselves right, too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that “yes” and “no” can both subsist at the same hour and both be true. I cannot say, “It is,” and my Brother point blank say, “It is not,” and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit—in fact we dare not do otherwise—that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future or even the present state of any man.

But still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views we advance with all courage and fervency of spirit believing that we are doing God’s work and upholding most important Truths. It may happen this afternoon that the term “Calvinism” may be frequently used. Let it not be misunderstood—we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin. We believe that it sprang from the great Founder of all Truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul and Paul received them of the Holy Spirit, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation.

We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin’s having taught these doctrines. We would be just as will-

ing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic Churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system.

There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist Churches who, in most points perfectly agree with us and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology. For instance, Mr. Wesley's hymn-book, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it some topics of higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself.

I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace—far more so than the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians—

HYMN 131, VERSES 1, 2, 3.

*“Lord, I despair myself to heal—
I see my sin, but cannot feel;
I cannot, till Your Spirit blow,
And bid the obedient waters flow.
‘Tis Yours a heart of flesh to give;
Your gifts I only can receive—
Here, then, to You I all resign;
To draw, redeem and seal—is Yours.
With simple faith on You I call,
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all—
I wait the moving of the pool;
I wait the Word that speaks me whole.”*

HYMN 133, VERSE 4.

*“Your golden scepter from above
Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow,
Say to my soul, ‘You are My love;
My chosen ‘midst ten thousand, You.”*

This is very like election.

HYMN 136, VERSES 8, 9, 10.

*“I cannot rest, till in Your blood
I full redemption have—
But You, through whom I come to God,
Can to the utmost save.
From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,
You will redeem my soul—
Lord, I believe and not in vain;*

My faith shall make me whole.

***I too, with You, shall walk in white;
With all Your saints shall prove,
What is the length and breadth and height,
And depth of perfect love.”***

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? And what is meant by the next quotation, if the people of God can perish after all?

HYMN 138, VERSES 6, 7.

***“Who, who shall in Your presence stand
And match Omnipotence?
Ungrasp the hold of Your right hand,
Or pluck the sinner thence?
Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;
Nearer to save You are—
Stronger than all the powers of Hell,
And greater than my heart.”***

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression “force.” I give it in full—

HYMN 158.

***“O my God, what must I do?
You alone the way can show;
You can save me in this hour;
I have neither will nor power—
God, if over all You are,
Greater than my sinful heart,
All Your power on me be shown,
Take away the heart of stone.
Take away my darling sin,
Make me willing to be clean;
Have me willing to receive
All Your goodness waits to give.
Force me, Lord, with all to part;
Tear these idols from my heart;
Now Your love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.
Jesus, mighty to renew,
Work in me to will and do;
Turn my nature’s rapid tide,
Stem the torrent of my pride;
Stop the whirlwind of my will;
Speak and bid the sun stand still;
Now Your love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.
Arm of God, Your strength put on;
Bow the heavens and come down;
All my unbelief overthrow;
Lay the aspiring mountain low—
Conquer Your worst foe in me,
Get yourself the victory;
Save the vilest of the race;
Force me to be saved by grace.”***

HYMN 206, VERSES 1, 2.

***“What am I, O You glorious God!
And what my father’s house to You,
That You such mercies have bestowed
On me, the vilest reptile, me
I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at Your boundless love.
Me in my blood Your love passed by,
And stop’s, my ruin to retrieve;
Wept o’er my soul Your pitying eye;
Your heart yearned and sounded, ‘Live!’
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,
And pardon in Your mercy found.”***

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound and they constrain me to say that in attacking Arminianism we have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue. And to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw—call that thing John Calvin and then shoot all their arrows at it.

We are not come here to defend your man of straw—shoot at it or burn it as you will and, if it suits your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down?

Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in Hell, but I have never met with him nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture says but very little and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically.

But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions and those unknown to me, when I say we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be

made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," does daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown and then snatched away to Heaven.

Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point and one of them runs thus—

***"Millions of infant souls compose
The family above."***

Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," says he, "on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in Glory. That in the decree of predestination to life, God has included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy and that the decree of reprobation has nothing to do with them." No, he proceeds farther and asks with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants?

It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in Heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee), also a Calvinist, maintains the same views. And when it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of Heaven.

A more common charge brought by more decent people—for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons—a more common charge is that we hold clear *fatalism*. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the Providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of His foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might with equal force be laid against that of Divine foreknowledge. We believe that God has predestinated all things from the beginning but there is a difference between the predestinations of an intelligent, all-wise all-bounteous God and that blind fatalism which simply says, "It is because it is to be."

Between the *predestination* of Scripture and the *fate* of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be but that the Father, God, whose name is Love, ordained it? Not be-

cause of and necessity in circumstances that such-and-such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of Providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God and next to that the good of His creatures.

But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited reprobation*. “Oh,” say they, “you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned and that they go to Hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.” Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender—let them defend themselves as best they can.

I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man is lost he is lost for sin. And this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” and to all our Confessions, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves.

I am speaking personally—and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my Brethren—I do know that the appointment of God extends to all things. But I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he is lost, damnation is all of man, but, if he is saved, still salvation is all of God. To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian Divine—“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are non-elected.

“Believing this to be a true statement, is it not wonderful that the Methodist stops short and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an Anti-Predestinarian? But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism, that God creates all for His own glory, that He is infinitely righteous and benignant and that where men perish it is only for their sins.”

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come—whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin and sin only. “As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a *righteous* Judge, FOR FORMER SINS, does blind and harden, from them He not only withholds His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and worked upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraws the

gifts which they had and exposes them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin. And gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.”

The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, “God according to His Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extends or withholds favor as He pleases) has passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, *to be for their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of His justice.” Again—“the end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.”

This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it is asked, why sin which destroys is permitted to enter the world—that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he. No the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God—in His righteous character and perfect Providence, are equally under obligation to answer it.

Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God’s Providence extends itself even to the first Fall and other sins of angels and men, etc., “yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”

It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? “*Every soul* departs (at death) to that place *which it has prepared for itself* while in this world.”

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred Truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy and righteous and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an “article of faith”?

A yet further charge against us is that we *dare not preach the Gospel to the unregenerate*—that, in fact our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers

are stored up and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books? Did not Bunyan plead with sinners and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinists? Did not Charnock, Goodwin and Whitfield agonize for souls? And what were they but Calvinists? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters?

The works of our innumerable Divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, Sirs, if I should begin the list, time would fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitfield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his heart move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony. Our hearts are not withdrawn from the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellow men. We can hold all our views firmly and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed.

Again, I must say, I am not defending certain Brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism *proper*, not that which has run to seed and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in thus speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my Brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, Sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was that great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old Truths?

However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical and Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner. But that He foresees, proposes and acts from His eternal

and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will.”

Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Farrel, John Lennox, Wickliffe, Wishart and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of? And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share—but permit me to say that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism.

The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Palagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man’s entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit only? And are not many of Mr. Wesley’s sermons full of that great Truth, that the Holy Spirit is necessary to regeneration?

Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Spirit. And there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement. For instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe, yet the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation.

And then, let me say if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M’Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great Truths which we would propound today, yet God owned their word and multitudes were saved?

And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one’s own work under God, I might say, personally, I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull *this Church* to sleep. But while they have loved to maintain these Truths, they have agonized for the souls of men and the 1600 or more whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old Truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset. I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favor. I attach but little com-

parative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple* and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments.

It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such as Bacon, Leibnitz and Newton—yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant. And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook—but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard.

Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks and full often the Word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do in an age given to slumber and with human hearts so indifferent to the Truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the Truth over and over again and at last the Truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also—it is so *coherent in all its parts*. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other that the more pressure there is applied to remove them the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved and you draw the inference, then, that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with, salvation must come from God alone and if from Him, the offended One, to an offending creature, then He has a right to give or withhold His mercy as He wills.

You are thus forced upon election and when you have gotten that you have all—the others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic, I take it, requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole. The doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you—in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily and carry without fatigue.

A weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break—trenchant and well annealed—a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant. And then, I add—but this is the point my Brethren will take up—it has this excellency, that it is Scriptural and that it is consistent with the experience of Believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right? As they are growing riper for Heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remains for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat and abhors chaff and husks.

And then I add—and, in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged—this glorious Truth has this excellency that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals and say to those who oppose us—you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncannonized by Rome, rank first in the Book of Life. The name of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed and well it might for they loved and lived the Truth.

And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world over and say, “There was something done by a man who believed in God’s decrees! And inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth.”

The better way, however of proving this point is for each of us who hold these Truths, to be more prayerful, more wakeful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A *living* argument is an argument which tells upon every man. We cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life and it shall yet come to pass that our Church and its sentiments, too, shall come forth “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.”

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“Your judgments are a great deep.”
Psalm 36:6.

CONSIDER the word, “judgment,” in whatever light you please, this sentence is true. There is much of mystery connected with the terrible calamities which afflict the earth, devastate nations, destroy cities and sweep away the relics of the past. There is much of mystery about the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life—how they prosper for awhile and are suddenly cut down—how they grow fat like oxen and then are taken away to the shambles. The judgments of God regarding the wicked in the world to come are also “a great deep,” not to be spoken of with levity. A solemn subject is that of the future punishment of the ungodly—“a great deep,” a deep where some, I am afraid, speculate so deeply that the risk they run is imminent—they may drown themselves in Hell.

But I prefer tonight to take the text as it may refer to *God’s dealings with His own people*. He deals with them in judgment, not, I think, penally, vindicating the inflexible justice of the Law by the terrible vengeance He inflicts on the transgressor as He will deal with the wicked at the last dread assize. I mean not that. I rather interpret it of the salutary discipline and painful chastisements of God’s hand which are called “judgments” in Scripture. They do not come by chance, nor upon us at all merely as a matter of sovereignty, but they are sent in wisdom, because God judges them to be necessary. They are weighed out to us with discretion—given to us by prudence. It is a sweet name, I think, for affliction—not that I look upon affliction as a judgment upon me for sin, which I cannot do, now that I have seen sin punished in Christ, but I look at my afflictions as being sent to me according to the all-wise judgment of a kind Father, not at all without consideration, but always according to His Infinite wisdom and prudence, dealt out in measure and at proper times, according to the Infinite judgment and wisdom of God. In a word, they are called, “judgments,” not because they are judicial, but because they are judicious!

Now, these dealings of God with His servants, always wise and prudent, are frequently like great deeps. This evening I shall simply work out three or four thoughts which arise out of that metaphor.

I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE.

We cannot discover the foundation or cause and spring of them. Some of God's servants who are earnestly desirous to provide things honest in the sight of all men, though they are industrious and energetic and use proper prudence, do not find themselves able to prosper in trade. They are thwarted in all their purposes. There seems to be a kind of fatality connected with all their enterprises. If they do but touch a business or a bargain which will turn into gold with the traffic of others, it melts under their hand into dross. Now, it is not always that this can be explained. "Your judgments are a great deep"—a matter to be perceived as a fact, but not to be explained by reasoning.

Sometimes in a family a dear child is born and is a great comfort to its parents. It seems, indeed, to be sent in love, to heal some old wound and to make the house happy! And then just as suddenly as it came, it is removed. Why? Ah, here, again, is another deep which a mother's anxious heart would like to fathom, but which it is not for her to explore. It is a great deep.

Children will be spared to us and just when they are ripening to manhood and womanhood, and we hope to see them settled and established in life, it happens—as it happened to one of our beloved friends in this Church this afternoon—that we have to stand at the open grave, and say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust." Why God takes away the holy and the good, the amiable and the lovely when they appeared to be most useful, we cannot understand. It is a great deep.

Oftentimes, too, it happens that when a man is surrounded by his family and all his household are dependent upon his exertions with a business just beginning to prosper, while he bids fair to live for many years, he is cut down as in a moment—his wife is left a widow—his children are orphans. He seems to be taken away at the very worst time, just when he could least be spared. The anxious wife may say to herself, "Why is this?" but she can only say in return, "I cannot comprehend it, it is a great deep."

I might thus go on recounting instances, but they have transpired before us all in our lifetime. And if they have not occurred to us yet, they certainly will. Trials and troubles will come upon us quite beyond our measuring line. We shall have to do business in deep waters where no plummet can by possibility find a bottom! "Your judgments are a great deep."

But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? I answer, *Because He is the Lord.* Your child must not expect to understand all his father does, because his father is a man of ripened intellect and understanding, and the child is but a child. You, dear Brother, however experienced you may be, are but a child and, compared with the Divine mind, what intelligence have you? How can you expect, therefore, that God shall always act upon a rule which you shall be able to understand? He is God and, therefore, it becomes us oftentimes to be dumb, to sit in silence and feel and know it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so.

God sends us trials of this sort *for the exercise of our Divine Graces*. Now, is there *room for faith*? When you can trace it, you cannot trust it. If you can understand all that He does, there is room, then, for your judgment rather than for your faith and for your reliance on His judgment. But when you cannot understand it, submit yourself to Him! Say, “I know that God is good. Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though I walk in darkness and see no light, yet shall not an unbelieving word cross these lips, for He is good and must be good, become of me what may.” Oh, then it is that faith is faith, indeed—the faith that brings glory to God and strength to your soul! Here is room, too, for *humility*. Knowledge puffs up, but the feeling that everything is beyond our knowledge, that we are nonplussed and cannot understand—the sense of ignorance and incapacity to understand the dealings of God—brings humility to us and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah’s Throne. Beloved, I think there is hardly a Grace which the Christian has which is not much helped by the deeps of God’s judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, “No, I will not ask the reason—I will not *desire* the reason—I do so love Him! Let His will stand for a reason. That shall be enough for me. It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him.” We love not those whom we are always bringing to book and questioning about all they do, but when love comes to perfection it admires all, it believes all to be right and to be perfect. And so, when love comes to perfection with reference to the most perfect God, then it is that everything that is done is endorsed without examination—everything, even though it is shrouded in darkness—is believed in without a question. It must be right, for You, Lord, have done it!

Many other reasons why God calls His people thus to feel His judgments occur to me. One I may give, then I will leave this point. *We have sins which we cannot fathom*, dear Brothers and Sisters, and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom! There are depths of depravity within our heart that call for other deeps, as deep calls unto deep, and there are consequences of sin within us which we are not able yet to reach, consequences that are following us in secret and damaging us in very vital point. It needs that the medicine should be of a searching kind to follow the disease into the recesses of our soul where understanding cannot pry. Some of those deep judgments are like secret, potent, subtle medicines, searching out certain secret devils that have found their way into the caverns of our spirit and hidden there. Perhaps an affliction which I can understand is meant to direct my attention to some known sin—but it may be that the trial which I cannot understand is dealing deadly blows against a mortal ill, which, if not thus destroyed, might have been solemnly prejudicial to my own spirit.

I leave that thought with you—expect that God’s judgments will sometimes be unfathomable. In the next place—if God’s judgments are a great deep—

II. THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING.

Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. Children, perhaps, may fancy that a shallow sea is the safest, but an old sailor knows better. While they are off the Irish coast the captain has to keep a good look out, but while he is crossing the Atlantic he is in far less danger. There he has plenty of room and there is no fear of quicksands or of shoals. When the sailor begins to come up the Thames, then it is that there is first one sandbank and then another, and he is in danger, but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So, mark you, in the judgments of God. When he is dealing out affliction to us, it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. "What?" says one, "trial safe?" Yes, very safe. The safest part of a Christian's life is the time of his trial. "What? When a man is down, do you say he is safe?" "Yes, for then he need fear no fall! When he is low, he need fear no pride. When he is humbled under God's hand, then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. Smooth water on the way to Heaven is always a sign that the soul should keep wide awake, for danger is near! One comes at last to feel a solemn dread creeping over one in times of prosperity. "You shall fear and tremble because of all the good that God shall make to pass before you," fearing not so much lest the good should depart as lest we should make an ill use of it and should have a canker of sloth, or self-confidence, or worldliness growing up in our spirits! We have seen many professed Christians who have made shipwreck—in some few instances it has been attributable to overwhelming sorrow—but in ten cases to the one, it has been attributable to prosperity! Men grow rich and, of course, they do not attend the little Chapel they once went to—they must go somewhere where a fashionable world will worship! Men grow rich and immediately they cannot keep to that road of self-denial which once they so gladly trod. The world has got into their hearts and they need to get more. They have got so much and they must get more! An insatiable ambition has come over them—and they fall—and great is the sorrow which their fall brings to the Church! Great the mischief which it does to the people of God!

But a man in trouble—did you ever notice a real child of God in trial? How he prays! He cannot live without prayer! He has got a burden to carry to his God and he goes to the Mercy Seat again and again. Notice him under depression of spirits. How he reads his Bible! He does not now care for that lighter literature which beguiled him many an hour before. He needs the solid promise, the strong meat of the Kingdom of God! Do you notice now how he hears? That man does not care a fig for your flowers and your fine bits of rhetoric—he needs the Word of God! He needs the naked Doctrine. He needs Christ! He cannot be fed on whims and fancies. He cares a great deal less about theological speculation and ecclesiastical authority—he needs to know something about eternal love, everlasting faithfulness and the dealings of the Lord of Hosts with the souls of His people, of the Covenant and of the suretyship engagements of Christ! Ah, this is the man who, if you notice him, walks tenderly in the world. He walks holding the world with a very loose hand. He expects

to be often in the way, and hopes to be up out of the way, for the world has lost its attraction for him!

I say again, God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing and, under the guidance and Presence of the Holy Spirit, they are not only safe but *they are advantageous*. I greatly question whether we ever grow much in Grace, except when we are in the furnace! We ought to do so. The joys of this life with which God blesses us ought to make us increase in Grace and gratitude, ought to be a sufficient motive for the very highest form of consecration, but, as a rule, we are only driven to Christ by a storm—the most of us, I mean. There are blessed and favored exceptions, but most of us need the rod, must have it and do not seem to learn obedience except through chastening—the chastening of the Lord! Here I leave that second thought. Thirdly, God's judgments are a great deep—

III. BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE.

Down in those great depths, who knows what there may be? Pearls lie deep there—masses of precious things that would make the miser's eyes gleam like a star. There are the wrecks of old Spanish galleons lost these centuries ago and there they lie, huge mines of wealth, but far down deep! And so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness and what David calls, "very tenderness," "for in very tenderness," he says, "have You afflicted me." There is as much wisdom to be seen in some of the deep afflictions of God—if we could but understand them, we would see as much wisdom in them as in the creation of the world! God smites His people artistically. There is never a random blow. There is a marvelous degree of skill in the chastening of the Lord. Hence we are told not to despise it, which, in the strongest meaning of it, means that we are to honor it! We honor the chastisements of our parents, but infinitely more the chastisements of God. "For they verily chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure, but He for our profit," and there is a way of chastening us for profit.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I said there were treasures concealed in the great deeps which we cannot yet reach, and so in the great deeps in which God makes us to do business there are great treasures that we cannot come upon at present. We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive, the present and immediate benefit of some of our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit—the benefit may be for hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The affliction of today may have no reference to the circumstances of today, but to the circumstances of 50 years ahead! I do not know that that blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. There are certain marks that an artist makes upon the block that you cannot see the reason of as yet—and they spoil the apparent likeness of the block and marble to the image which you know he wishes to produce—

but then those lines are to be worked out, by-and-by! They are scratches now, but they will be lines of beauty soon, when he comes to finish them. So, a present trial may even lame us for present service, damage us—I will even go the length of saying—for years to come and make us go groaning and brokenhearted, so as to be of comparatively little service to the Church and of very little joy to ourselves. But then afterwards—afterwards as Paul puts it—it bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those that are exercised thereby. Why will you not let the Lord have time? Why will you be in a hurry? Why will you stand at His elbow and perpetually say, “Explain this today and show me the motive and reason of this in this present hour”? A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night! The mighty God takes mighty time in which to work out His grand results! Therefore, be content to let the treasures lie at the bottom of the deep for awhile. But then faith may see them. Faith can make the deep translucent till it sees the treasure lying there—and it is yours and though you may not at this hour be able to be at it—yet you shall have it, “for all things are yours.” Everything that is stored up in the great deep of the Eternal Purpose, or in the deep of the manifest judgment, everything there belongs to you, O, Believer! Therefore rejoice in it and let it lie there till such a time as God may choose to raise it for your spiritual enrichment. God’s judgments are a great deep—

IV. AND THEY WORK MUCH GOOD.

The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste—a salt and barren wilderness—is one of the greatest blessings to this round world! If, tomorrow, there should be “no more sea,” although that may one day be a blessing, it would not be so today, but the greatest of all curses! It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by-and-by in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the world—I might say the circulating blood of the world! We must have it. It must be in motion. Its tides, like a great pulse, must be felt, or the world’s vitality would cease. There is no waste in the sea—it is all needed. It must be there. There is not a drop of it too much. So with our afflictions which are Your judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul’s health, to our spiritual vigor. “By all these,” said one of old, “do men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit.” Rising up from my trouble is the constant mist which is afterwards transformed into sacred dew, which moistens my life. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” said David. “Amen!” say all the afflicted ones. A thousand sick beds shall bear witness to the blessedness of the trial. A thousand losses and crosses that have been borne by the faithful now help the sweetness of the harmony of everlasting hymns in the land of the blessed. “Oh, blessed cross,” said one, “I fear lest I should come to love you too much! ‘Tis so good to be afflicted!” May God grant to us that at all times, instead of trying to fathom the deep, we may understand that it is useful to us and be content. Lastly, if God’s judgments are a great deep—

V. THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples—that nations were kept asunder by the sea. But lo, the sea is today the great highway of the world! The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they soon flash across the waves. The sea is the world's great canal—a mighty channel of communication. And so, Brothers and Sisters, our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could! They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of His wonders in the deep—but if you are made to put out far to sea, where deep calls unto deep and the noise of God's waterspouts astounds the spiritual mariner, then it is that you shall see God's wonders—wonders of faithfulness, wonders of power, wonders of wisdom, wonders of love! You shall see them and you shall rejoice to see them! These troubles shall be as fiery chariots to bear you up to God. Your afflictions, wave upon wave, shall wash your soul, like a tempest-tossed boat, nearer to the haven. Oh, but this is a blessed thing when God's judgments bring us nearer to Him! Old Quarles has a quaint idea when he represents God as swinging a flail in judgment—he says if you would get away from it, you must get close to His hands, and then you are out of the reach of the swing of the blow. Get close up to God and He will not smite! Get near to God and the trials cease!

You know, trials are sometimes weights to keep men down, but you have seen many a machine in which one weight going down lifts another weight up. And there is a way by faith of adjusting the consecrated pulleys so that the very weights of your affliction may lift you up nearer to God! The bird with a string and a stone to its feet cannot fly and yet there is a way that God has of making His birds fly even when they are tied to the ground! They never mounted till they had something to pull them down! Never ascended till they were compelled to descend! They found the gates of Heaven not up there, but down here! The lower they sank in self-estimation, the nearer they came to the everlasting God who is the foundation of all things!

Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I have brought you to the last thought—may the Holy Spirit bring you to make it your own. May God's deep judgments lead you to deeper communion.

Dear child of God, you that are in trouble tonight, the voice of that trouble is to you—get nearer to God! Get nearer to God. God has favored you, favored you with an extraordinary means of growth in His Grace. To use Rutherford's simile, He has put you down in the wine cellar in the dark. Now begin to try the wines on the lees well-refined. Now get at the choice treasures of darkness! He has brought you on to a sandy desert—now begin to seek the treasures that are hid in the sand. Believe that the

deepest afflictions are neighbors always to the highest joys and that the greatest possible privileges lie close by the darkest trials. If the bitterer your sorrow, the louder your song at the last—there is a reason for that—and that reason faith may discover and experience live upon.

May God bless the tried ones here! But there are some here, perhaps, who are in trial and have no God to go to. Poor souls! Poor souls! Poverty and no God! Sickness and no God! A life of toil, and no Heaven! A slavery of penury on earth and then driven forever away from God's Presence! Oh, how pitiable! How pitiable! Pity yourselves and remember that it need not always be so. You may have a Heaven, you may have present bliss. Here is the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, if you can but trust Him who bled upon the Cross, you shall have comfort for your present trouble! You shall have pardon for your past, present and future sins! The Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 73; 37:1-10.**

TITLE, "A PSALM OF ASAPH." He was a great singer, but he could not always sing. In the first part of the Psalm he felt rather like groaning than singing—and you shall find that those who sing the praises of God the sweetest, sometimes have to hang their harps upon the willows and are silent. The strong temptation through which Asaph passed is one which is very common. You find another account of it in the 37th Psalm. It may help your memory to notice that it is the 37th and the 73rd Psalm (transpose the figures) which are both upon the same subject—the temptation caused to the people of God by the prosperity of the wicked.

Verse 1. *Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* It must be so. Whatever argument my soul may hold about it, I will set that down, to begin with as a certainty—"Truly, God is good to Israel." He cannot be unkind or unfaithful to His own people! It cannot be possible, after all—however things may look—that God is a bad God and a bad Master to His own servants!

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.* Am I, then, one of His people or not? I know He is good to them, but how about myself? Perhaps some here will never question themselves in that way, and if they were led to do so, they would think it was of the devil. I do not think so. I think it is rather of the devil to keep us from questioning ourselves. I remember what Cowper said—

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

Let us delight in full assurance, but let us keep very clear of presumption and that assurance which cannot bear self-examination is presumption, depend upon it! When a man declines to search himself and test himself, there is something doubtful, if not rotten in his estate—and it is time he began to say, "As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well near slipped." This is how it came about—

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* I know that wicked men are fools. Asaph and David had often said that before. Yet says he, “I was a greater fool, still, that I was envious of these fools—when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

4, 5. *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* Many of them keep up a hypocritical profession through a long life and die in a stupefaction—so that conscience never awakens and they pass out of the world loaded with guilt—and yet talk about being accepted before God! How can this be? Where is the justice of it?

6. *Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain.* As kings wear chains of gold, so is their pride to them.

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not ashamed of it. They get to be so bold in sin that they wear it as an outside cloak!

7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.* Superfluities! They never have to ask where a meal will come from. They have more than they need.

8. *They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens.* Such big mouths—such blasphemous words—have they, that they attack God Himself! There is nothing too high for them to drag it down—nothing too pure for them to slander. “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Like the lion seeking its prey, they take long walks in their slander. Nobody is safe from them.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* God’s sorrowing children have to drink of the bitter cup while these proud ones are eating of the fat of the land!

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* When Asaph got into this unbelieving state of mind, it looked as if all his care of his character and all his desire to serve God were wasted, for the wicked prospered, while he was chastened! It is a strong description which he gives of his state. “All the daylong have I been plagued.” Not by the half-hour, but by the whole day—plagued and weeping as soon as he was out of bed—chastened every morning! He almost seemed to be sorry that he was a child of God, to be so roughly handled. He almost, but not quite, wished that he could take the portion of the wicked, that he might enjoy himself as they did and might prosper in the world as they did.

15. *If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have offended against the generation of Your children.* That was very wise of Asaph. He thought, but he did not speak. Some persons say, “You may as well out with it.” You may as well keep it in! No, a great deal better—if you have it in your own heart, it will grieve yourself—but if you speak it out, you will grieve others. If you wear sackcloth, Brothers and Sisters, wear it round

your own loins, but do not wear it as your outside garment. There is enough sackcloth in the world without your flaunting it before everybody else's face! If you must fast, remember your Master's words, "You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." He gave us that precept in order to avoid Pharisaic ostentation, but we may also follow it from another motive, namely, that we may not spread sorrow in the world. There is enough of depression of spirit, enough of despondency, enough of heartbreak without our saying a word to increase it among the sons of men—

***"Bear and forbear, and silent be—
Tell no man your misery,"***

lest you bring another into it, unless, indeed, you meet with a strong man who can help you. Then you may tell your sorrow to get relief. But tell it not to the children.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* "Too painful" to keep it. "Too painful" to speak it out and grieve other people.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood their end.* Asaph went to his God. He got to Christ, whom he foresaw, for the Person of Jesus Christ is the Sanctuary of God! Some people call these buildings sanctuaries. They have no authority for so doing. "God dwells not in temples made with hands." He may have done so under the Old Covenant, but not now. Christ is the Sanctuary of God and when we get to Him and come into fellowship with God in Him, then we begin to learn something! "Then understood I their end."

18. *Surely You did set them in slippery places.* There they are—on a mountain of ice, bright and glittering! Up aloft, where others see, admire and wonder at them. But oh, how dangerous their pathway!

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* They are not left to slip, but a hand overthrows them—flings them down from the heights of their prosperity to the depths of unutterable woe!

19, 20. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* As if God slept today and let these images of prosperity exist as in a dream, but by-and-by He wakes. His time of judgment comes and where are these prosperous men? They have gone. The "baseless fabric of a vision" has melted into thin air and "left not a wreck behind." It is not. It is gone!

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.* I felt a heart-pain. I felt my whole nature go amiss, as if there had been calculi causing the deepest possible misery in my reins.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* I saw no farther than a goose! Like a beast that cannot look into the future, I judged these men by today—by the pastures in which they fed and the fatness which they gathered there. "I was as a beast before You." Now notice the splendid connection of these two verses. I will read them again—the 22nd and the 23rd. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You."

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.* What a strange mixture a man is! And a godly man is the strangest conglomerate of all! He is a beast and yet continually with God. View him from one side—he is ignorant. View him from the other and he has an unction from the Holy One and he knows all things! View him from one point of the compass and he is naked, and poor, and miserable! View him from another quarter and behold he is complete in Christ and “accepted in the Beloved!” They know not man who do not know that every true man is two men!

24. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.* I, the fool that envied fools, yet, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.”

25. *Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he has got out of the temptation! He is not going to seek for prosperity that he may rival the wicked in their wealth. No! He sees that in having God, he has all he needs. Even though he should continually be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, his portion in God is quite enough for him. He will not murmur anymore!

26. *My flesh and my heart fail.* I see what a poor thing I am. I allowed my flesh and my heart to get the mastery over me and I got caught in this trap.

26, 27. *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* A strong word, but none too forcible, for every heart that seeks delight away from God is an unchaste heart. It has got away from true purity even for a moment in pouring out its love upon the creature.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.*

PSALM 37. Verse 1. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.* A common temptation. Many of God’s saints have suffered from it. Learn from their experience. Avoid this danger. There really is no power in it when once the heart has come to rest in God. But it is a sad affliction until the heart does get its rest. “Fret not because of evildoers.”

2-4. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD.* Make Him your delight, and take care that you do really delight. Feel a fullness of joy in Him.

4. *And He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Because when the heart delights in God, then its desires are all such as God can safely grant. He does not say to every man, or even to every praying man, “I will give you the desires of your heart,” but, “Delight yourself in the Lord,” and then He will.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* Give it up to Him to rule it, and to guide you and lead you in every step. “Commit your way unto the Lord.”

5, 6. *Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* It is better to trust our character with God than with the ablest counselor. Scandal may pass over a fair name for a while and cloud it, but God is the avenger of all the righteous! There will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons at the Last Great Day. Only we must commit it to God.

7, 8. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* A fretful spirit soon comes to be an angry spirit—and when we begin to be jealous of evildoers, we are very apt to become evildoers ourselves! Many an honest man has snatched at hasty gain because he was envious of the prosperity of the unrighteous. And then he has pierced himself through with many sorrows in consequence. But “fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.” There is an old proverb that it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. Therefore, when you are in temporal trouble, ask the Lord to fill you with His Grace, for then you will stand upright and, by-and-by, you shall be delivered.

9. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* If there is anything good to be had here, men that wait upon God shall have it! If there is any grain of wheat amidst these heaps of chaff, Believers that are trusting the Lord shall find them!

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.* How transient are their joys! Their wealth which they accumulate, the beauty which they think is upon their estate—all this is but as the painted colors of the bubble, which is scarcely seen before it vanishes. Will you envy this? Will you envy a little child his playthings, which will be broken in an hour? Will you envy a madman the straw crown which he plaits and puts upon his head when he thinks himself a king? Oh, be not so foolish! Your inheritance is eternal and you are immortal! Why should you envy the creature of an hour? “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.”

10. *Yes, you shall diligently consider his place.* His mansion, his house, the grand figure that he cuts in society.

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

THE BEST THING IN THE BEST PLACE

NO. 3002

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1906.

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“The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”
Psalm 37:31.

THIS verse occurs in a Psalm in which the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is drawn in a very vivid fashion. The wicked are depicted as being very frequently rich and prosperous, yet no one who is truly wise would wish to change places with them. The Psalmist so plainly points out the brevity of their prosperity, the certainty of their ultimate fate if they continue unregenerate and the terror of their overthrow, that we are not tempted for a single minute to be envious of them. As for the righteous, David gives us abundant hints that they will be tried, persecuted, hated and so on, but he indulges us with such sweet promises from the mouth of the great Father, Himself, that we feel perfectly satisfied to share the lot of His children, however hard it may sometimes be. If we wish to share the lot of the righteous, we must be as they are and, among other things, this text must be realized in our experience as it is in theirs. The Law of our God must be in our heart that our steps may not slide.

I remember, when I was a lad, hearing a sermon from a text which is almost a parallel to the one before us—“Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” The divisions of that discourse were so excellent and they fixed themselves so firmly upon my memory, that I shall borrow them for my own use on this occasion, for I cannot make any better ones for myself. The preacher said, “Here we have the best thing—‘Your Word.’ In the best place—‘have I hid in my heart.’ For the best of purposes—‘that I might not sin against You.’” Those are to be the divisions of my text, only altered thus—*the best thing*—“the Law of his God.” *In the best place*—“is in his heart.” *With the best result*—“None of his steps shall slide.”

I. So I am first to speak, for a few minutes, about THE BEST THING—“The Law of his God.”

In these Gospel days we must use this expression in a wider sense than may have been originally intended by David and take it to mean *a great deal more than the moral Law*. If we are Christians, we delight in that Law, but we are not under it as a rule of condemnation and of judgment, but we rejoice to obey it. We could not suggest an alteration to it which would be an improvement. The Ten Commandments are very simple, but absolutely perfect for the purpose for which they were

intended. To add another to them, or to take one away from them would be to spoil the whole. We “delight in the Law of God after the inward man.” Whoever may be Antinomians, that is, those who are “against the Law,” we are not to be numbered among them, for we can say with Paul, “The Law is holy and the Commandments holy and just and good.” And though we are carnal, and often feel ourselves “sold under sin,” yet we cannot find any fault with the Law of God. If eternal life could have come by any law, it would have come by that Law—and even though that Law can now do nothing for us but condemn us, yet, as we hear its terrible sentence, we feel that the Law “is holy, and just, and good.” We desire, then, to have even the moral Law in our hearts, and to have it written there, that none of our steps may slide.

But we cannot use David’s expression in that limited sense only! *It must now include the whole Book of God, and all its teachings*, for it is often used in that sense. “The Law of his God is in his heart.” Take this expression as referring to the *whole of Scripture*, and I may truly say that it is the best thing. O my Brothers and Sisters, what can be better for informing the understanding than the Word of God? Would you know God? Would you know yourself? Then search this Book! Would you know time and how to spend it? Would you know eternity and how to be prepared for it? Then, search this Book! Would you know the evil of sin and how to be delivered from it? Would you know the plan of salvation and how you can have a share in it? This is the Book which will instruct you in all these matters! There is nothing which a man needs to know for the affairs of his soul, between here and Heaven, of which this Book will not tell him. Blessed are they that read it both day and night—and especially blessed are they who read it with their eyes opened and illuminated by the Divine Spirit! If you want to be wise unto salvation, select the Word of God, and especially the Spirit of God, as your Teacher. There is nothing else that is equal to the Bible for inflaming, sanctifying and turning in the right direction all the passions of the soul.

Perhaps you are not satisfied with merely knowing. You want something or someone to love. You men and women with large hearts, whose one desire is to have a worthy object for your affections to fix upon, turn to this Word of God, this Law of God, this Gospel of His and you will see there how God Himself becomes the Object of His creatures’ love, and how, in the Person of His Son, you have the loveliest Object upon which human eyes ever gazed! You have, in Him, One who is so lovely that a glance from His eyes is enough to set your soul on fire and to make your heart enamored of Him forever! You who have mighty founts of love welling up in your soul may come and let them flow most freely here, for here is One who is worthy of them all! And when you have loved Christ as much as you can, you have not loved Him half as much as He deserves to be loved! Here your passions may burn and blaze and glow with sacred ardor, without any fear of your being idolaters—and without any risk of your being deceived!

And if you want something more than enlightenment for the understanding and fullness of love to satisfy the heart—if you need

practical directions for your everyday life—this Book will supply you with them. In every part of the sea of life in which a man may be, if this is his chart, he will not miss his way or suffer spiritual shipwreck. If you were a king, you might learn your duty here—and if you are a beggar, or the poorest of the poor, you may find comfort and instruction here! Fathers, you may here learn how to manage your households. Children, you may learn here the duties of your position in your various relationships. Servants, masters, husbands, wives, sick folk, people in robust health, you who are poor and you who are rich—this Book is for you all and when you consult it in the right spirit, it will talk with you all! Into whatever condition you may happen to be cast, this Book will follow you. It is such a wonderful Book that it adapts itself to all sorts and conditions of men and women! It whispers softly by the sick man's bedside and it has often called aloud, as with a trumpet voice, amidst the fury of the storm. It has a message for you while you are yet in the heyday of your youth and a promise for you when you lean upon your staff and totter to your grave! It is *Biblos, The Book*, the everyday book, full of wisdom for every day in the week all year round. And when the circle of life is complete, you will see how the Book was equally adapted to the children and to the aged man whose life is just closing.

Perhaps, dear Friend, you say, "I know the path that I ought to take. I know whom I ought to love and I trust I am instructed as to what I ought to believe—for all this I prize the Bible very highly! But what I really need is the courage of my convictions, the force of character which shall enable me to tread in those ways which I know to be right." Yes, I know what you mean. But where else will you find Truths that have such power as those which glisten in the pages of this blessed Book? Where will you read any records so calculated to fire men with dauntless bravery as those that are contained in this Book? Above all, in Him who is the sum and substance of this Book, to whom all its pages point, you can see an example of disinterested love and perfect consecration to God and man which will suffice if the Holy Spirit shall bless it to you, to give you all the force of character and courageousness of spirit that you can possibly need. If young men would read their Bibles more, they would not be so easily turned aside as they now are. When a young man puts his foot down for the right and says, "I cannot and I will not tell a lie, or commit an act of dishonesty in business, or frequent places of amusement where I cannot go with a clear conscience," I believe that he has cleansed his way by taking heed thereto according to God's Word. I see here the treasure house of holy courage! Commune with God, commune with Christ Jesus, commune with saints, martyrs and Apostles as you read these pages, and you yourself will imbibe something of their determination and resolution, something of their zeal and energy for the right and the true!

It is here that true men are made! As they peruse these pages, the weak grow strong and dwarfs develop into giants. Yes, and if you say, "I often feel unhappy—there is an aching void within my spirit, a something which prevents me from being perfectly satisfied. I have a kind of horse-

leech somewhere within me which cries, 'Give, give,' and I have not yet found the food with which to stop its clamor." It is in this Book that you will find the comfort which your spirit craves! Here every grief may be allayed, every right desire satisfied and all wrong desires and evil lusting be ejected from the spirit. When the Holy Spirit applies this Book to the soul, it is food for man's hunger and medicine for man's disease! It lays its hand upon his fevered brow and cools him down to health. Or, if he is too cold, it warms him into holy energy. In fact, there is no end to the blessings which this Book bestows—

***"This is the field where hidden lies
The pearl of price unknown!
That merchant is divinely wise
Who makes the pearl his own."***

This is the best of books, as Christopher Harvey says—

***"It is the Book of God. What if I should
Say, God of Books?
Let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold—
His thoughts in silence smother
Till he find such another."***

Its every page is a sheet of gold! No, rather let me say that Heaven's banknotes are here, to be cashed by them who have faith enough to bring them to the God that issued them, that He may make their souls rich to all the intents of bliss!

This, then, is the best thing—"The Law of his God."

II. Now, secondly, we have the best thing IN THE BEST PLACE—"The Law of his God is in his heart." What does this mean?

It means, first, that *he loves it*. That which we love is always said to be in our hearts, and the reason why he loves it is given in the text—"The law of his God"—not merely the Law of God, mark you—but, "The law of *his* God." Men do not love the Law of God until they know that He is their God. Blessed, indeed, is this precious possession which God gives us first, in Himself, and then in His Word! Do you not all like to read a book which has been written by a near and dear friend? It must have greater interest for you than the works of strangers ever can say. You may pass over a hundred books on a stall, or in a shop, but if you notice a volume which was written by one who was your play fellow, or perhaps by one who is still nearer and dearer, you take an interest in that book at once! So is it with this blessed Book which was written by our Heavenly Father—this Book which tells us of our elder Brother—this Book into which the Divine Spirit has breathed the breath of Life and upon which He always shines as the great Illuminator—this Book must always be indescribably dear to us! How dear has the Bible been to God's saints in past ages! They have even run the risk of losing their lives rather than part with it—and many of them have actually died as martyrs because they would translate it and pass its messages on to others! And this Book is equally dear to us. Sooner than give up the smallest jot or tittle of its Inspired teaching, I trust that we would be prepared to go to the stake as our brave forefathers did in cruel Queen Mary's day. Precious Bible, you are in our hearts because we love you!

But David meant more than that. The Law of his God was in his heart *to be remembered* as well as to be loved. We soon forget what we only learn in our head, so we tell our children to learn things “by heart.” What is written in the head may be erased, but what is written in the heart abides there. Neither sickness, nor death, nor the devil, himself, can ever take from us what is in our hearts. We have known people in sore sickness suffer from loss of memory, and that is a very serious loss. But we have known them retain their recollections of *spiritual things* unimpaired when they have forgotten their own wives or husbands, so strangely does the mind or heart hold most firmly to that which is most deeply engraved upon it. If you have the Word of God in your hearts, it will not matter who may try to tear it from you. All the Jesuits in or out of Hell could not wrest from a man the Gospel that is written in his heart! They could easily turn some people from their creed because it is only a creed, lying loosely in their brain. But the Truth which has really entered the heart of a man, neither Satan nor all his hosts could ever take from him! See to it, then, that the Law of your God is in your heart so deeply affecting you and so powerfully moving you, that it abides so tenaciously in your memory that you can never give it up!

“The Law of his God is in his heart,” has a third meaning, namely, that *he obeys it*, for the heart is the most influential organ of the body. What is done in the heart affects every part of the man. Disease there means that the man, as a whole, cannot be well. If the heart’s affections are set on God, all is right, for the intent, the motive, sways the man. “As he thinks in his heart, so is he.” If your heart’s eyes are single, your whole body shall be full of light! But if your heart’s eyes are evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If the Law of God is in the heart, then every pulsing of that cerebral organ will affect the entire man. If the man has led an evil life, he will be altogether changed by it. And if, through the restraining Grace of God, he has been somewhat better than others, the Law of his God will operate in his heart and life and do for him all that he could well desire to have done as he yields obedience to it.

To have the Law of God in your heart means, in fact, that *you live by it*—that you have the Gospel as the food of your soul and that you have the Christ of the Gospel as your hope for eternity. The heart is that by which we live, so, if the Law of God is in our heart, we shall live by it and draw our comfort, as well as our sustenance from it. Let each one judge how far this is true concerning himself. We are not perfect, but we wish we were—and this proves that the Law of our God is in our heart. We sin, but we grieve that we sin—and this proves that there is within us a longing for perfect holiness. We say, with the Apostle Paul, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not... When I would do good, evil is present with me.” Yet that *willing* and *woulding* prove that our heart has the Law of God within it! God looks upon you, dear Friends, very much according to what you desire to be. And if there is, in your soul, strong pangs of desire after that which is perfect, He accepts those desires and blesses you through Christ Jesus, His Son. John Bunyan used to put it in one of his simple allegories

something like this. He says, “you want a man to fetch a doctor, and you tell him to be quick. So he mounts his horse, but it is a sorry jade, and very lame, and cannot go fast, yet you see that your man would fly if he could, for he is whipping and spurring the creature with all his might to try to make it go. So,” says Bunyan, “the Lord often sees that the spirit is willing—whipping and spurring, but the flesh is weak—like the lame horse. He sees what His servants would gladly be and accepts them as if they were really so.” It is well for us that we have so gracious a Master who looks so favorably upon our imperfect service! Have the Law of God in your hearts, my Brothers and Sisters, and albeit that you are foolish today, you will conquer some of those follies tomorrow. And you will, by God’s Grace, go on to conquer more and more, until the Law, written on your heart, shall also be written on all your members and you shall be presented spotless and faultless before the Throne of God!

III. Now I must pass on to the last point, namely, THE BEST RESULT—“None of his steps shall slide.”

Here is a man who has God’s Word in his heart and you notice that *he takes pains about his steps*. A step is a very little thing. We must take a good many hundreds of steps to walk a mile, but good men take notice of little things. The man who has the Law of God in his heart is scrupulous and conscientious about thoughts and imaginations, as well as about words and actions. Hence, the promise in the text is suited to him, for it is a promise about little things—“None of his steps shall slide.” I recollect—no, I hope it is so with me still—but I recollect that just after my conversion, I used to be almost afraid to put one foot before the other lest I should put it down in the wrong place. And often have I paused, when I was speaking, for fear I would not say the right word. That holy caution is most commendable in all who have it. I wish that many more had it. What a hop, skip and jump some men’s lives are! Not only do they not look before they leap, but they do not even seem to look *after* they have leaped! They rush on blindly and heedlessly, presuming where they ought to be praying and self-confident where they ought, with deep repentance, to be humbling themselves before God! Our old proverb says, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.” And the same rule applies to our actions. If we are careful about our little actions, the great ones will be pretty sure to be right. Oh, that we were all very guarded about how we act at home! Oh, that we were careful about our speech as we sit around the tea table! Such a little thing as that may do almost infinite mischief. I believe the worst evils in the world arise out of little things. It is said that the seed of mischief is as small as a gnat’s egg, and so it is. Then, look well to those gnat’s eggs, lest they hatch out far greater evils.

I think, too, that *whenever Christians go wrong, it is concerning something about which they thought they were quite safe*, like the children of Israel with the Gibeonites. These people came to Gilgal wearing old garments, old shoes and clouted, and carrying bread that was dry and moldy. What need was there to ask counsel of God? It was as clear as the sun at noonday that they had come from a long distance,

wishing to make a league with the Israelites because of the wonders that God had worked for His people! So even Joshua did not pray about the matter—and he was deceived, for these Gibeonites were near neighbors and had thus tricked the Israelites into a league which was always an impediment to them in their campaign. Always suspect where you have no suspicion and be afraid where you are not afraid—be especially afraid of a man who tells you that you have no need to be afraid of him. There was a man who said to a friend of mine, “I need a loan of so much from you. You know that I am all right. I have been a member of a Christian Church for so many years. I am not like So-and-So, and So-and-So who lately failed. You can trust me, you know you can.” “No,” said my friend, “you are the sort of man I would not trust with a bad half-crown.” And he was right, for those who did trust him lost everything! Be very cautious in such cases as that. If you are dealing with those who are known to be rogues, you hardly need to be put on your guard, but if you are dealing with rogues who pretend to be honest men, you must have all your wits about you or they will certainly take you in. They have covered up their wolf nature with sheepskin, so you had better see what is underneath the skin!

When David says, “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide,” what does he mean by that last clause? He means that *God will guide him*. As he has God’s Law in his heart, he will have God’s guidance for his steps! In the 23rd verse, David says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way.” When a man really carries God’s Law in his heart, God will take care that he does not carry that Law into any evil place, for, as David goes on to say, “the Lord upholds him with His hand.” There will come to every man, whoever or whatever he may be, sudden assaults of temptation—but if the Law of his God is in his heart, he will be forewarned and forearmed against them! There will also come the long sieges of temptation and many a man has fallen by little and little. But if the Law of his God is in his heart, he will be safe against even them. There will come, sometimes, the temptation which results from loneliness, when he will be urged by Satan to do evil. As no human eye is upon him, may he not do wrong? But, with the Law of his God in his heart, he will not do any wrong even though he might never be found out—that Law within his heart is a sufficient check to keep him from evil! Sometimes he will be perplexed. I wonder whether every businessman here is not, at some time or other, puzzled to know what he ought to do? He is most anxious to do the right thing, but he does not know which of two courses is right. Well, that is the time to let the Law of your God, which is in your heart, be like a compass to you—and to plead this promise and say, “O Lord, You have said that as Your Law is within my heart, none of my steps shall slide! Fulfill Your Word unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope.”

For your steps to slide would be for you to bring dishonor upon your character. How many men who have stood firm for a while, either in the Christian Church or in business life, have thus slid! I recollect reading,

some years ago, when there were some sad failures of this sort, that “neither the white cravats of Exeter Hall, nor the drab coats of Lombard Street could prevent some men from being great rascals.” And there has, sometimes, been only too much reason to say that. But the Law of God in the heart is better than a white cravat at the throat or a drab coat on the back, for it does keep men’s steps so that they do not dishonor their God. Trials may come to those who live nearest to God—possibly they will come all the more because these people have lived near to God—but there will not be the stain upon the character, or the casting down from integrity which causes so much sorrow. A true Christian would sooner die than that this should happen! And he may comfort himself with the assurance that if the Law of his God is in his heart, “none of his steps shall slide.”

Nor shall he slide into despair. He may tremble, he may totter, he may be almost down, but as he has the Law of his God in his heart, he shall scramble to his feet again and shall still hold on his way! I hope all of you who have to fight the good fight of faith and to journey as pilgrims to Heaven, will take to yourselves all the comfort you can possibly get out of this text. You have asked to have the Law of your God in your heart and it is there. Well then, you shall be upheld! You are going to live, young man, where there are no other Christians, but your steps shall not slide, for the Law of your God is in your heart. You are going, my Brother, to occupy a position where a large number of people will be under your charge and you hardly know how you will manage them. But with the Law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. You are going, my young Sister, to live with ungodly relatives where you will scarcely get an opportunity for private prayer, yet, with the Law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide! My young Brother, you are about to become the pastor of a large church and you tremble lest you should make some great mistake and bring dishonor upon God. But if His Law is in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. You need not mind about the slipperiness of the way if the Law of your God is in your heart! Many slip when the road is not slippery, and many a man, by God’s Grace, stands fast where it seems a miracle that he stands at all. Men are not in danger in proportion to their position—they are in danger or in safety according to the measure of their Grace! If the Law of your God is in your heart, you might face a world in arms and not be afraid! If God should make you the leader of a thousand squadrons of the armies of Heaven on their white horses, you would be able to command them all if you had His Law in your heart and yielded yourself wholly to Him!

Note also that if you have the Law of your God in your hearts, *this implies that you also have the Lawgiver there*, for you cannot separate the Divine Lawgiver from His Law. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Is His name melodious to your ears? Is it like ointment poured forth, for sweetness, to your spirit? If you love Him who gives you the Law, you must love the Law that He gives. We are under Law—the Law of Grace—to Jesus Christ. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light to those who

trust and love Him. If you trust and love Him, that proves that you have His Law in your hearts.

Again, if you have the Law of your God in your heart, *you also have there the great Teacher of the Law, namely, the Holy Spirit*. You are conscious of His comforts, sometimes of His rebukes and often of His encouragements. How is it with you in this respect? Do you know anything about the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart? Alas, there are many who do not know that there is a Holy Spirit, for they have never felt His power. But the Law of God is never in the heart until the Holy Spirit puts it there—and where He puts that Law, He abides with it, to open our understanding that we may receive the Scriptures and to open the Scriptures that our understanding may receive them. What do you know about God the Son? Is He your Savior?

What do you know about the Holy Spirit? Is He your Quickener and Comforter? If He is, be of good cheer, for none of your steps shall slide. But if He is not, and if you reject this Law of God, remember that solemn text, “Their feet shall slide in due time.” They stand up in their prosperity. They are great, famous, happy, full of mirth—and we are apt to envy them as we see them upon their high places. But watch! They are standing upon an Alp of ice! The pathway which they tread is very narrow and, in a moment, when they do not expect it, their feet shall slide and they shall descend into the abyss which has no bottom! Down they go, lost, *lost*, LOST! The high places they once occupied only increase the depth of their fall. They go from their full wine cups to craving a drop of water to cool their parched tongues. They go from the dainties of Dives’ table to the uttermost woes of Hell! Lazarus once begged for their crumbs and now they would gladly turn beggars and ask a blessing of Lazarus, himself! Their day is changed into night, their glory into shame, their banquets into miseries, their honors into everlasting shame and contempt! Be wise, men and women, and seek your Savior now, lest, as a dream when one awakes, the beauty of your present mortal life should all pass away and there should remain nothing but the ghastly form of a wasted existence to be visited forever with the strokes of Jehovah’s awful wrath—

***“You sinners seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!
So shall that curse remove
By which the Savior bled
And the last awful day shall pour
His blessings on your head.”***

God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37.**

This is one of the Psalms of David which have often cheered the saints of God when they have been perplexed because of the prosperity of the wicked and their own troubles.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.* What if their lot is sweet? Yet consider how short it is. No wise man envies the bull which is being fattened, for he knows that it is being fattened for the slaughter. None will envy the ungodly their pleasures when they remember how transient they must be. Let them have them and I would urge all Christians to do their best to make the ungodly happy. This is the only happy time they can ever have unless they repent and turn to the Lord. So do not make them unhappy, but contribute all you can to the little bliss they will ever know, for it will soon be over. Certainly, if you are a child of God, you have no cause to envy them.

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Here is a duty which is as much a pleasure as it is a duty—no, it is even more a pleasure than a duty—“Delight yourself also in the Lord.” Here is a commandment to be happy in the safest conceivable way. Of all delights, the most delicious is delight in God, and to this we are commanded. But what a privilege is that which is annexed to it—“He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Why is this? Because, when you delight in God, your desires will be such as He can safely grant. Delighting in Him, you will only desire that which is for His Glory and then, without any restrictions, He may promise to you and give to you the desires of your heart.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* Blindly, yet believingly, put your hand into His hand and follow wherever He may lead you.

5-7. *Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD.* Oh, what sweet precepts these are!—easier to read and to hear than they are to practice, yet, if Grace is given to us, we shall find them blessedly easy to practice. Surely, if it is easy to rest anywhere, it must be easy to “rest in the Lord.” There is no such resting place anywhere else like that where Omnipotence and eternal love are sweetly joined together—“Rest in the Lord.”

7-9. *And wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* I believe that in a right sense, the child of God does get the best of both worlds. He may not get, in this world, what ungodly men think the best. And as far as worldly good is concerned, he often gets the worst, but God makes his dinner of herbs to be sweeter to him than the stalled ox is to the wicked. If I knew that I should die like a dog, I would still wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, no world to come and even if my lot, judged after the manner of men, should

be of all men's most miserable, yet to have had God to be my Friend, here, would have turned even that misery into happiness—

**“O God of Love, how blest are they
Who in Your ways delight!
Your Presence guides them all the day
And cheers them all the night!”**

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* How often even the place where he lived—his house—becomes a ruin. The very palace where the tyrant dwelt is burnt down, or destroyed in some other way! Decay seems to delight to work with the teeth of time upon the palaces of despots!

11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* There is a great fulfillment of that prophecy yet to come in the latter days, but it is fulfilled even now. Who does not see that the man who really enjoys life and enjoys the world, is, after all, the meek, humble-minded Christian? That shepherd of Salisbury Plain, of whom we used to read in our childhood, when he was asked what he thought of the weather, said it was good weather, for God sent it—and any sort of weather pleased him if it pleased God. Anybody can see that a man of that kind is in a healthy state and that he inherits the earth and possesses far more of what is worth having—namely, ease and peace of mind—than the owner of broad acres who has no true rest of heart in the Lord.

12-19. *The wicked plot against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* Let me read that 19th verse again, so that any child of God here, who is in great straits, may be able to lay hold upon it—“They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

20-25. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* We have often remarked here that we, also, though we are not old, have never seen the righteous forsaken and we do not think that the oldest man or woman here has ever seen the righteous forsaken. David says that he had not seen the seed of the

righteous begging bread. Well, he was a king, so he was not likely to see very many poor people, but we have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread. It is not a common thing, but we have seen it—and when the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves—when they disgrace their father’s name—they will have to beg bread the same as other people’s children do. They will come to poverty through idleness and drink just as other people do. And it has been my unhappy lot, within these very walls, to have to minister relief to the unworthy and reprobate sons of Christian ministers about whose piety I could entertain no doubt, and some of whom are now in Heaven. These good men’s children have walked contrary to God, so God has walked contrary to them! I have often hoped that the poverty I saw might be the means of bringing them to seek the God of their fathers!

You who fear the Lord may depend upon this—if the Lord helps you to train up your children rightly, He will take care of them. If they are truly the seed of the righteous by being themselves righteous, your children shall not beg bread, for the Lord will provide for them and you will find that God always takes care of the children of those who faithfully serve Him. He seems to say to them, “You mind My business, and I will mind your business. If you look after My children, I will look after yours.” If we serve the Lord with all our hearts, we may fairly reckon that the God of the fathers will be the God of the children.

26-40. *He is ever merciful, and lends and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.*

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
107 (SONG 2), 119 (SONG 2), 652.**

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

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

FACTS AND INFERENCES

NO. 3232

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1863.

*“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree, Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace.
Psalm 37:35-37.*

WE must never judge by appearances, for many things that we see with our eyes and hear with our ears are not really what they appear to us to be. Our senses, like everything else within us, are imperfect, so that it is safer to walk by faith than by sight. Especially is this the case with regard to God's Providential dealings with men. If we were to conclude, for instance, that all those who prosper in this world are peculiarly favored of God, we would make a very great mistake. And if, on the other hand, like Job's friends, we should imagine that all persons who are grievously afflicted and tried are suffering because they have grossly sinned, we would equally err. It is true that there sometime are manifest judgments upon individuals, communities and nation, but every trial or affliction is not a judgment—nor would it be right for us to regard it so. Yet the man who walks through the world with his eyes opened and his understanding enlightened, must notice certain facts about which there can be no question—facts which are so important and so instructive that he will want other people to also notice them and to learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

There are two facts mentioned in our text. And I am going to talk to you concerning them, coupling with them certain inferences and Revelations which must not be separated from them. The first fact is concerning the wicked—we have seen them in great power, spreading themselves like a green bay tree—yet they have passed away and soon been forgotten. The second fact is concerning the righteous—we have not merely once, but many times, seen a godly man die and from our own experience we can confirm the testimony of the Psalmist, “the end of that man is peace.”

I. So let us for a while meditate upon THE FIRST FACT AND THE INFERENCE AND REVELATION CONCERNING IT.

It is a fact that we have seen the wicked in great power and that we have seen them suddenly cut off. Those of you who are much older than I

am can remember the terror that was associated with the name of one who was, for a while, in great power and who spread himself like a green bay tree—the branches whereof cast a baleful shade over most of the nations of Europe. Napoleon Bonaparte aimed at absolute sovereignty in France and won it. And then he aimed at universal sovereignty over all his fellow monarchs and, for a time, it seemed as though there would be no human limit to his great power. You know how he waded through slaughter and snatched crown after crown from other men to put upon his own head. But you also know how he led his vast army into Russia—and left the bulk of his followers to sleep in death beneath the snow, or to be devoured by wolves. And you remember how, afterwards, he met with men who could play the devil's game of war more skillfully than he ever could and, in the end, the imperial eagle that had torn so many others in pieces with its cruel talons, was chained for the rest of its life to the lonely rock of St. Helena! Who that saw Napoleon's empire in the height of its glory could have imagined that it would melt away like a snowman in blazing sunshine? I grant you that its grandeur [Mr. Spurgeon was, of course, referring to the state of affairs in France in 1863. But he lived to see the Second Empire also pass away, and the French republic firmly established in its place.] has been somewhat revived in our day, but the failure of the "great" Napoleon should teach the whole race of mankind that although a wicked man may be in great power and may spread himself like a green bay tree, yet no greatness will permanently endure unless it is founded upon goodness and upon God!

There are some who have had great power because they have had great wealth. Many of us can recollect persons who seemed to have unlimited riches which enabled them to exercise enormous power over their fellow men. Solomon said that "money answers all things," and they certainly made it answer their ends. Everybody was obsequious to them—whole nations yielded up their treasures at the bidding of these multimillionaires. They said to the North, "Give up," and to the South, "Keep not back"—and gold and jewels and works of art came pouring into their palaces and mansions—yet those very men were reduced to beggary before they died and, at the same door where they had repelled poor Lazarus with scorn, they, themselves, were suppliants craving alms! I need not mention names. Many of you can remember such men who were in great power and spread themselves like a green bay tree—yet they have passed away and if you seek them they cannot be found.

I find that the Hebrew has in it the idea of a tree indigenous to the soil, a tree that has never been transplanted. So David means that he had seen the wicked flourish like a tree whose roots had never been disturbed. You may have heard a rich man boastfully say, "My father lived in this house and his father lived here before him. And through a long line of ancestors, these estates have belonged to our family." He had no trouble in his youth and no labor in his manhood—he is the man who, in his prosperity, said, "I shall never be moved." But he *has* been moved—

the ancestral hall of which he was so proud, has a new owner—those estates which he surveyed with such manifest delight have been sold to another family! And if you go to the district today and ask anyone whom you meet, “Where is that rich man who used to own all these broad acres?” you will receive the reply, “Nobody knows.” And you may say with the Psalmist, “I sought him, but he could not be found.”

This has been the case with some who have gained honor among men. The bay tree was highly esteemed among the Greeks and Romans—they crowned their heroes with wreaths made from its leaves—yet neither the wreath nor the honor lasted very long. So, if a man receives honor from his fellows, yet is all the while a wicked man, his honor is like the dissolving-view which appears upon the sheet and quickly fades away—or like the *mirage* of the desert which makes the burning sand look like a lake, but which only mocks all who run to drink from it! Or like the will-o'-the-wisp that frightens timid folk at night, but itself is without any enduring substance. So passes away the glory of this world and so passes away the man who has honor among men, but who is without that Divine Grace which alone brings true honor, glory and immortality! I can say of more than one such man, “he passed away and lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found.” Have you not noticed, dear Friends, how complete has been the disappearance of certain “great men” whose greatness has been founded upon wealth or upon sin? Every trace of them seems to have been destroyed—in the places where they used to live, nobody remembers them—their escutcheons have been broken up by the battle-axe of Time—and all their glory of heraldry has been burned in the fire. Why, as I am speaking of them, you can scarcely recall their names though they used to be as familiar as household words! Their names were written in the sand and Time’s ever-rolling waves have utterly effaced them! If you seek them, you cannot find them.

Some men have appeared to be “great” because their true character had not been discovered. They were playing a very crafty part in the drama of life. Before the curtain, they appeared to be truthful, upright, even religious. But behind it, they were rogues, thieves, liars and everything that was bad. Then, all of a sudden, the curtain was torn in two and they were revealed to all men as they had been all the while, to the all-seeing eyes of God! And the whole world looked on and were amazed. There was a man who always wore a mask when he walked abroad and everyone said, “What a beautiful sight it is to see such a man!” But one day the mask was broken and all could plainly see the signs of leprosy on his brow—the deadly disease was there all the time—it was only hidden from the public gaze by the mask! Discovery has often trod on the heels of sin—the guilty one has been caught red-handed—and swift justice has been meted out to the criminal. But suppose, Sinner, that for years you conceal from your fellows your real character as so many others have done? God knows all about you and His Word still contains the

warning that Moses gave to the Reubenites and Gadites, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Judas stood revealed, at last, as the Son of Perdition—his fellow Apostles did not suspect him even up to the night of the betrayal—but Jesus had known from the first that he had the heart of a traitor, and only awaited a convenient opportunity to sell his Master for 30 pieces of silver! Simon the sorcerer, who had “bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one,” professed to believe in Jesus and was even baptized! Yet Peter afterwards had to say to him, “Your heart is not right in the sight of God. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” And, alas, both Judas and Simon Magus have many representatives even to this day!

Other “great” men have been laid low by some striking disaster. A man seems to climb up one of the tallest cedars of Lebanon to build his nest there and you say to yourself, “How can that man ever be pulled down from such a height as that?” But the Omnipotent hand lays hold of him, scatters his nest upon the ground and before long he and his nest are alike forgotten! Perhaps the man has built himself what he calls an impregnable castle and in his marble halls he fondly hopes that no power can successfully attack him. But God has only to make a slight fissure in the earth’s surface and the man and his castle and all that he has shall disappear even as the earth once before opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and all that appertained to him! God has many ways of putting down the mighty from their seats and exalting them that are of low degree! An Eastern potentate could not sleep on a certain memorable night and hence it came to pass that proud Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai, the Jew—while the despised Mordecai was publicly proclaimed as the man whom the king delighted to honor! Mysterious have been the workings of God’s Providence by which the mightiest monarchs and the most powerful princes have passed away so completely that they have been like the wicked man of whom David says, “I sought him, but he could not be found.”

If in no other way the wicked man is removed from his pinnacle of greatness, he passes away at the call of death. We need not say much about his death, but when he is gone to his final account, he has few, if any, to mourn his loss. He lived for himself and he died for himself—no sorrowing widows, whose poverty he has relieved will keep his grave green with their grateful tears—no mourning children, whose ignorance he has dispelled by his instruction, will remember and revere his name. No sympathetic souls, turned from darkness to light through his instrumentality, will gratefully look up to him as their spiritual father.

I have thus called your attention to the fact that the wicked who have been in great power have passed away and been forgotten. Now, *what is the inference from this fact?* I think a very safe inference is that as these men failed to attain that which was the great end and objective of their lives, they cannot have succeeded in that about which they were not at all concerned, namely, the everlasting interests of their never-dying

souls! It is certainly fair to infer that as they made such a lamentable shipwreck in this life, they made an even worse shipwreck in the world to come. And as they passed away from everything in which they took pleasure, here, it is reasonable to infer that whatever expectation and hope they may have cherished with regard to the next life, they are certain to have been totally and finally disappointed.

This, however, is not a mere matter of inference, *for the teaching of Divine Revelation agrees with it and confirms it.* The wicked man who was in great power here, in due course, dies—and he wakes up in the next world to find himself only a feeble worm exposed to all the fury of Divine Wrath! He had servants and slaves on earth to do his bidding, but there are none to crouch at his feet now! He was held in honor in this world but there are no praises or flatteries for him now. His wealth could at one time buy for him anything that his heart might wish, but he had to leave it all behind him—and even if he still possessed it, he could not purchase even a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. Nothing remains for him, now, but shame and everlasting contempt in that terrible prison where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. Throughout all Heaven and Hell there is nothing that can afford him even a moment's solace—he has made an awful and an eternal failure of his whole life—and his dolorous cry is, “Lost! Lost! LOST!”

But, just in passing, though my text speaks especially of the wicked who are in great power, I must remind you that their doom will be the doom of *all who believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ*—whether they are in the higher or lower walks of life! So, dear Friends, whoever and whatever you are, if you live only for this life, you, too, will pass away and be forgotten here—but you will not be forgotten in the next world! Remember that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Make the only fitting preparation for that judgment by repenting of sin and trusting in Him who died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God.” O Man, play not with shadows! Let not that which is the only real and substantial thing pass by you unheeded! If you must have something to play with, let it not be your immortal soul, for though you can play your soul into Hell, you can never play it out! Nor *pray* it out! Nor *weep* it out, nor *work* it out! Once there, it is there forever! Do you ask, “What is there that is real and substantial? What is there that will abide when all earthly glory has passed away?” Listen. “All flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” So, my dear Hearer, believe that Gospel, lay hold on the hope set before you, trust in that blessed Savior who died in the place of sinners, put your eternal interests into the hands of the one Mediator between God and men and then, with the Apostle Paul, you will not be afraid to look forward even to the great Day of Judgment, but you will be able to confi-

dently say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Man, Woman, Sinner—whoever or whatever you are—give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until you can truthfully say, "Jesus is my Savior. My Beloved is mine and I am His."

II. Now, with great brevity, I pass on to THE SECOND FACT AND THE INFERENCE AND REVELATION CONCERNING IT. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

It is a fact that we have seen the righteous die and that we know that their end is peace. It is a fact that those who are accounted perfect in the sight of God through the blood and righteousness of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and whose lives have been made upright through the effectual working of the ever-blessed Spirit, do end their earthly careers in peace and then enter into that eternal peace which has no end! I am not speaking of dreams and fancies, but of *facts* that have happened in my own experience. Never shall I forget the deathbed of one who had often walked with me many a weary mile to preach the Gospel in country villages. I have told you before how I found him, when he was near his end. His sight had so completely failed that not a ray of light entered his eyes, but when he heard my voice, he sat up in the bed, and said to me, oh, so joyously!—

***"And when you hear my eye-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But Glory in my soul!"***

Verily, the end of that man was peace! There is a beloved Brother behind me on the platform, who went with me to see one of the members of this Church who was dying of consumption. While we talked with her, she told us that her only fear was lest she might live, for she dreaded the temptations of living far more than the pangs of dying! A few hours after we saw her, she passed away from this world of sorrow and sin—and entered the land of everlasting peace—but the rapture with which she anticipated death almost made us exclaim, after the manner of Thomas, "Lord, let us die with her." As we came away, we felt that hers was the happy lot and that she was the one to be envied because she had gone to be "with Christ, which is far better."

Look at the dying Christian—what blessed peace he has! He is at peace even with those who have been his enemies! He says to those around him that if there are any who have done him harm, or said what was false concerning him, he not only freely forgives them, but his most earnest wish for them is that he may meet them all in Heaven! He is at perfect peace concerning the past, for he knows that all his sins have been forgiven him, for Christ's sake, and that they will be remembered against him no more forever. He is full of peace in the present, even though he is near the end of his earthly life. His wife weeps and well may she grieve at the thought of parting with such a godly husband, but he

reminds her of that ancient promise, "Leave your fatherless children. I will preserve them alive, and let your widows trust in Me." And of that Inspired declaration, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge (or advocate) of the widows is God in His holy habitation." He looks at his dear children gathered around his bed and although he would gladly have lived longer for their sake, he knows that it is his Lord's will that he should depart out of this life, so he does not repine! He commits into the hands of God, his household, his business and all that concerns him. He says, "I have nothing more to do with them, I am dead to them all. And now I am only waiting until the messenger arrives to summon me into the Presence of the King." As for the future, he is at peace concerning that, also. He knows that it is a solemn matter to pass through Death's iron gate, but he is confident that Christ will come and meet him there, so he looks forward to the great transition without a tremor and without a murmur! He is fully aware that existence in a disembodied state is something very mysterious and awe-inspiring, but that mystery has no terrors for him, for he has the same assurance that Paul had when he wrote, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He is not in the least troubled because the poor old worn-out tent is being taken down, for he knows that he is going to exchange it for one of the abiding mansions in his Father's house! Indeed, he is so happy in the anticipation of going Home that he begins to sing the very hymn that we afterwards sing at his funeral—

***"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul! How near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eyes,
Your golden gates appear!
Ah, then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above!
'Forever with the Lord!'
Father, if 'tis Your will
The promise of that faithful word
Even here to me fulfill.
So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain!"***

The good man believes in the resurrection of the body, so he says with Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." It is a blessed thing for such a man to die! And the many deaths of that happy kind that I have witnessed have made me also—

***"Long for evening to undress,
That I might rest with God."***

What is the inference from all this? I think it is but fair to infer that if in the pain, agony and weakness of death, the Christian has such perfect peace, surely his peace will be even more profound when he enters that blest world where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” If in this stormy world he has such peace of mind even amid the swellings of Jordan, surely there must be for him, in the life that is to come, stormless seas and cloudless skies—days that have no night and years which winter’s cold can never reach! And truly, *Revelation confirms this inference*. For a Christian to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord! What it must be to be present with the Lord, no mortal tongue can fully tell, but we know that “His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night, there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign forever and ever... And He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” What a change, Beloved, it will be from all the strife and turmoil of this world to the perfect peace of the world to come! Here, you and I have to work, work, work—either with the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the brain—and the latter is not the lighter of the two! But *there*, brain and brow shall both be perfectly at rest! Here we are sometimes perplexed by the prosperity of the wicked—but *there* we shall see that we have no cause to envy them! Here we are often made to grieve over losses and crosses, adversities and afflictions—but *there* we shall always be on the bright side of the hill—our dark night of sorrow and trial shall be forever over and our everlasting morning shall have come! Here we are constantly losing some of our best friends, they pass away as sweet flowers wither and die. But *there*—

“Oh, it will be joyful

When we meet to part no more!”

Here we are plagued and tormented by sin—but *there*, “they are without fault before the Throne of God.” Here the fiery darts of the Wicked One are continually flying all around us—but *there*, they are out of range of the devil’s most deadly artillery! Yet let not one of us sigh and cry for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest. In God’s good time, He will beckon us across the narrow stream of death! And till then let us patiently wait and earnestly work for Him who is all our salvation and all our desire.

Now, my Hearers, I have set before you two men representing two very different classes—those who have their portion in this life, and those whose inheritance is in the heavenly Canaan, the land of perfect peace and perfect bliss. What is the great objective upon which your soul is set? To get on in this world, to make money, to win fame, honor, glory,

power? Oh, that is a poor ambition! And if you could attain it all, your wreath of bay leaves would soon wither—and then what would you have left? “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Profit him? It would be an eternal and irretrievable loss! Oh, seek not such “gain” as that, but “seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”—insofar as God sees that it shall be for His Glory and your own and others’ good for you to have them. May the Lord give you the Grace to make the wise choice this very hour, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37.**

May the Spirit of God graciously apply this Psalm to our hearts, comforting us as no one else can! Is He not the Comforter? And what better cordial has He for our spirits than His own Word?

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* Evil cannot last! It is a feeble plant, like the grass and weeds which the mower’s scythe soon cuts down and leaves to wither in the blazing sunshine.

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* [See Sermon #454, Volume 8—SUNSHINE IN THE HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is a most precious verse—its sweetness who can tell? Do not think first of the desires of your heart, but think first of delighting yourself in your God! If you have accepted Him as your Lord, He is yours, so delight in Him and then He will give you the desires of your heart.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.* Give it over into God’s hands and then confide in Him as completely as a little child confides in its mother. “He shall bring it to pass.” It is quite certain that *you* cannot “bring it to pass,” so you will be wise if you leave it with Him who can do what you cannot!

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* You cannot make the light and the noonday—that is a work that is far beyond your power—but your God can give you both light and noonday. He can clear your character from any slander that may have fouled it and He can crown you with honor and glory in place of the contempt that is now cast upon you.

7. *Rest in the LORD*—[See Sermon #2393, Volume 40—A COMFORTING MESSAGE FOR THE CLOSING YEAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is the sweetest word of all—“Rest.” Go no further! Fret no more. Bear your burdens no longer. Make this day a Sabbath to your soul—“Rest in the Lord”—

7. *And wait patiently for Him!* Do not be in a hurry. The Lord has Infinite leisure, so partake of it as far as you can—“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

7, 8. *Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger.* You cannot do that unless you “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” Angry passions boil upon the fire of fretfulness! Therefore, “cease from anger”—

8, 9. *And forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* Their turn will come in due time. It comes last, but then it comes to last, for there is nothing to come after the last!

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* The house in which he lived, or the place that was called by his name is often destroyed.

11, 12. *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just.* That has been the style of things from the beginning. And the old serpent’s seed will be like the old serpent and he, “was more subtle than any beast of the field.” “The wicked plots against the just”—he plots against the Lord’s people, but “the Lord shall laugh at him”—

13-18. *For he sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the day of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. He gives them an eternal portion by an Everlasting Covenant.*

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* There is nothing that they can get, but God will give them what they cannot get themselves. He will ransack Heaven and earth to find food for His people! “In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

20-23. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lamb: they shall vanish; into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD—Even his “steps”—the little movements of his life—not only his great plans and his ambitious projects, but “the steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah”—*

23. *And He delights in his way.* He loves to see him walk, even as parents delight to watch the first tottering steps of their little children, so that He who “takes not pleasure in the legs of a man,” takes pleasure in the ways of His people!

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down.* For a while it may seem as if he had been finally defeated—things may seem to go altogether wrong with him—but, “though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down”—

24, 25. *For the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* And we can also still speak of the faithfulness of Jehovah. He who took care of His people in David’s day has not changed since then! We have not seen the righteous forsaken.

26. *He is ever merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed.* God has a special regard for the children of Believers. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of Joseph, and the God of Manasseh and Ephraim!

27-29. *Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints. They are preserved forever but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever.* I have frequently remarked to you that although the wolf is very strong and fierce—and the sheep is very weak and timid—yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And the day will come when the last wolf will be dead—and then the sheep shall cover the plains and feed upon the hills. Weak as the righteous often are, they “shall inherit the land” when the wicked shall have been cut off from the earth!

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment.* That which is down in the heart will come up into the mouth—and you may rest assured that men are fairly judged by the common current of their conversation.

31-33. *The Law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.* How dreadful it would be for the godly man if the Lord were to leave him in the hand of the wicked! You remember how David sought to avoid that calamity when he had to choose famine, pestilence, or the sword of his enemies? “Let me fall,” he said, “into the hands of the Lord, for very great are His mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man.” Let us thank God that even if we should get into the hands of the ungodly, the Lord will not leave us there, nor condemn us when we are judged!

34-37. *Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* There is no end to that man, for he is to endure, world

without end! In any sense in which there is an end to him, his end is everlasting peace!

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble.* Have you not proved it so, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ? I know that you have had times of trouble, but has not God been your strength in a very peculiar way in all such times?

40. *And the LORD shall help them*—He is and He shall always be their Helper. “The Lord shall help them”—

40. *And deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.* That is the point—not because of any merit of theirs, nor because of any skill of theirs— but, “He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.” So, Lord, help us to trust in You! Amen.

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

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

A TESTIMONY TO FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE NO. 1953

**A SERMON DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON A THURSDAY EVENING.**

***“But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”
Psalm 37:39.***

SALVATION is a blessing peculiar to the righteous. The ungodly do not, as a rule, believe that they have any need of salvation and, therefore, they do not desire it, or seek after it. The righteous know that they are born in a fallen state; they acknowledge that they have destroyed themselves by personal sin; and they are conscious of a thousand dangers which surround them. Hence they need salvation, seek it and find it. It is to them that salvation has come to make them righteous, for until they are saved, they are unrighteous, even as others. But now that salvation has come to their house, they bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God their Savior.

This may be used as a description of the Believer's life—he lives a life of salvation. He is saved in Christ, who is his life, in whom he has forgiveness of sins and every other Covenant blessing. He is always being delivered, or saved and, from the moment in which he begins as a Believer till that last moment on earth when he shall be about to depart out of the world unto the Father, his whole life is encompassed within the Divine circle of salvation. God is working salvation *for* him, salvation *in* him and salvation *by* him—and is giving him to receive the fullness of salvation which he shall forever enjoy in the world to come—

***“Salvation is forever near
The souls that fear and trust the Lord.
And Grace, descending from on high,
Fresh hopes of Glory shall afford.”***

Beloved Friends, we rejoice in that right royal word, “salvation!” We would let its echo fly over the whole world. To us it is a word of great meaning. It does not signify salvation from the punishment of sin, alone, though it comprehends that blessing and we are glad that it does so, but it means complete and immediate salvation from the *love* of sin, conscious salvation from the *power* of sin, growing salvation from the propensity *to* sin and ultimate salvation from all tendency to sin! When we have gained full salvation, we shall never, never again sin, but shall find ourselves before the Throne of God as pure as that throne, made perfect by the work of the Holy Spirit, who will have sanctified us wholly—spirit, soul and body!

Men of the world think, when we talk of salvation, that we mean escaping from Hell. This is all *they* would fear and so it strikes them as *the* great matter—but we are not of their mind. Being delivered from the pains and penalties of evil is certainly a great blessing, but it is by no means the greatest! It follows in the train of a grander blessing, even as the blaze of the comet follows the central light. The righteous dread *sin* more than Hell and, to them, wrong is more terrible than any punishment which awaits it. The joy of salvation to us is that we are delivered from this present evil world, delivered from the lusts of the flesh, delivered from the old death of natural corruption, delivered from the power of Satan and from the dominion of evil! Our salvation will not be full till we are totally and finally delivered from every trace of sin and are “without fault before the Throne of God.” Sanctification completed is our salvation perfected—purity without spot will be our Paradise Regained!

“The salvation of the righteous” in the broadest sense of the word “is of the Lord” and the more breadth of meaning we give to it, the more completely we shall see that it must be Divine. At the same time, our life is made up of a series of salvations and each of these is of the Lord. We are constantly being saved—saved from this and that form of danger and evil. As each daily trouble threatens to engulf us, we are saved from it. As each temptation, like a dragon, threatens to swallow us up, we are saved from it. Our God is the God of salvations and unto Him belongs the issues from death. We escape from deaths often, yes, and from the very belly of Hell—and still we live to sing, as Jonah sang when he was in the depths of the sea, “Salvation is of the Lord!”

I have said that this glorious salvation, which is of the Lord, is the peculiar heritage of Believers. They alone know their need of it and they alone participate in it. Look at the ungodly man who is pictured in this Psalm. He does not want salvation. He flourishes like the green bay tree—he spreads his branches to overshadow everybody else. Such men need no salvation. “Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.” They want no salvation—their lands are abundant, their house is full of treasure and they leave the rest of their substance to their babes. They put no trust in the name of the Lord. “They call their lands after their own names.” They want no God—they have no sighs after Him. They never cry, “As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God!” They have no trials in their lives and “there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” The rod of God’s children does not fall upon them—“Whom the Lord loves, He chastens”—but often those whom He loves *not*, He leaves to indulge in such pleasure as they can find. He gives His swine good measure of husks, for He would not be unkind even to them! And there they lie and feed without fear—knowing nothing of another world, nor caring for it—

***“Fools never raise their thoughts so high—
Like brutes they live, like brutes they die!
Like grass they flourish, till Your breath***

Blasts them into everlasting death.

See the distinction between the righteous man who fears God and he that fears Him not! Were it not for this word, “salvation,” their ease and prosperity might make us envy the ungodly, but this turns the scale. Because “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,” we would take the worst portion that ever was meted out to them in preference to the best that was ever given to the ungodly! Taking all for all, God’s worst is better than the devil’s best and the portion of God’s saints at the lowest ebb is better than the portion of the wicked, even when their joys are at the flood!

I am going to speak at this time upon our text as a statement by itself. It is complete and self-contained. It is a diamond of the first water. Its words are few, but its sense is precious. “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

I. Our first head is this—THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE. “*The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*” There are several young men here who go forth to preach the Gospel. I hope that they will speak with clear knowledge and attractive speech, but this is far from being the main object of my desire—I want them to really *preach* the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel! I reckon preaching to be *Gospel* preaching and sound preaching, in proportion as it is consistent with this statement—“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” It is not every preacher who proclaims this Truth of God in bold terms and in plain English. More or less, I hope that all who preach Christ Crucified would subscribe to this. But some are a little afraid of it in all its breadth and length. They must bring in man a little. They must have him *something*, or some thing. They are always afraid lest Grace should be misunderstood and should be turned into licentiousness and, truly, I share in their fear, though I would not use their way of preventing the evil which I dread.

I have known some of these timorous ones try to say, “Free Grace,” but they have had a little impediment in their speech and the words have come out, “*free will.*” They have meant that it should be all of Grace, but by some means or other there has been so much hesitancy and such a deal of fencing, that one could hardly tell Grace from works! There will be no hesitancy on my part when I say that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord”—neither will you find me guarding the statement as if I thought it a lump of spiritual dynamite which might do infinite damage!

“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord” *in the planning.* Long before we were in existence, God had planned the way of salvation. Before the Fall He had ordained the Covenant by which the fallen should be restored and that plan shows, in every line of it, that consummate wisdom and infinite love which can be found nowhere but in the Lord. He took counsel with no one and no one instructed Him—He alone fixed the eternal settlements of unchanging love!

“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord” as to the persons who are included in it, for God has chosen from the beginning, His people and,

“whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed unto the image of His Son.” There is a choice, somewhere, and I am persuaded *we have not chosen Him*, but He has chosen us. Did not the Lord Jesus say as much? He is first and foremost in salvation and though we gladly run when He calls, yet His call comes first and His *choice* comes *before* the call! The salvation of the righteous was determined in the council chambers of eternity before the stars began to shine. It is of God and only of God!

And as it is of the Lord in the planning, so it is of the Lord *in the providing*. It was He who gave His Son from His bosom and truly our Lord Jesus Christ is the full purchase -price of our salvation. We do not add a penny to it. The mortgage upon lost humanity was paid off by Christ to the last farthing, without any contribution on our part to eke out the matchless price.

The Spirit of God, who is another great item in the provision of salvation, is of the Lord. God has given us the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes, not according to our mind or will, but according to the gift and purpose of the Lord. Nothing is lacking for the salvation of men. God has provided all. He has not left the garment almost long enough, just needing that we should add a fringe. Nor has He provided a feast almost sufficient for us if we bring at least another loaf. Nor has He built a house of mercy, almost completed, but leaving us to add a few more tiles to the roof. No, the work is finished and, from top to bottom, salvation is of the Lord! All Covenant provisions are already in the Lord Jesus in full and the salvation of the righteous is entirely of the Lord in the providing!

So, dear Friends, it is of the Lord *in the applying*. The first application of the blessings of the Covenant to us is of God. Of course that first application is in *regeneration*, when the soul first begins to live. The first sense of need of mercy springs not from nature, but is a work of Grace. The first desire we have to be right—the first prayer we breathe towards God—all this is the movement of eternal Grace upon our souls which otherwise would have lain as dead as the corpses in their graves! The Lord first deals with us before we have any inclination whatever to deal with Him. We do not see this Truth of God at first. Possibly we discover it months after our conversion, when we come to sit down and look over our experience. Then we cry, “Yes! Had You not sought me, I had never sought You! Had You not drawn me, I had never run to You! Had You never looked on me in love, I had never looked to You in faith! It is Your Free Grace which began with me. I acknowledge that the Alpha of my salvation is of the Lord.” The knowledge of this Truth of God usually comes to us as we advance in knowledge—the full understanding of it is a fruit of the Spirit and belongs to our riper years rather than to our spiritual infancy.

As salvation is of the Lord at the commencement, so it is *as to the continuing of it*. Rest assured, Beloved, there is no true growth in Grace except that which is of the Lord. No, there is no sustaining the position to which you have reached except by the Lord—

“And every virtue we possess,

**And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His and His alone.”**

He has worked all our works in us and if we have produced any fruit to the honor of His name, from Him has our fruit come, for our Lord truly said, “Without me You can do nothing.” We must give Him all the glory, for certainly He has given us all the Grace and as it has been, so will it be. Between here and Heaven there will be nothing of our own in the matter. We shall work *out* our own salvation with fear and trembling because He first works it *in* us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. There is no working *out* our salvation unless the Lord works it *in*! We bring to the surface of our life what He works in the deep foundation of our inward nature, but both within and without the spiritual life is all of Grace. When we put our foot upon the threshold of Glory and pass through the gate of pearl to the golden pavement of the heavenly city, the last step will be as much taken through the Grace of God as was the first step when we turned unto our great Father in our rags and misery! Left by the Grace of God for a single moment, we would perish. We are dependent as much upon Grace for spiritual life as we are upon the air we breathe for this natural life. Take the atmosphere from us—put us under an exhausted receiver—and we die. Take Your Grace from us, O our God, and we perish at once! What else could happen to us?

Brothers, we must always believe this and preach it, for it is the sum of all true doctrine. If you do not make salvation to be wholly of the Lord, depend upon it, you will have to clip salvation down and make it a small matter. I have always desired to preach a great salvation and I do not think that any other is worth preaching. If salvation is of man, then you do not wonder that man falls from Grace. Of course he does! What man begins, man also soon ends in his own way with a failure! When God saves, He saves *eternally*. Someone said to me the other day, “I do not quite know about that doctrine of Final Perseverance, whether it is true or not.” So I said to him, “What kind of life does Jesus Christ give His sheep?” He answered very correctly—“He has said, ‘I give unto My sheep eternal life.’” Very well, does not that settle it? If He has given them *eternal life*, they have eternal life.

“But,” he said, “might they not die?” I answered, “Is it not clear that those who die have not eternal life? If they had *eternal* life, how could they die? Does eternal life mean six months’ life?” “No.” “Does it only mean 600 years’ life?” “No. It must mean nothing less than life which has no end.” Death is out of the question. I must live if I am one of those of whom the Great Shepherd says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” But what is next? If you cannot quite see the Truth of God from that one expression, what follows? Will the sheep of Christ ever perish? Here is His answer. “They shall never perish.” Does not that secure them? What language could better describe their security? But another question is raised—“May it not mean that, if they get away from the Lord Jesus, they shall perish?” Then comes the next sentence—“Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

Does not that answer it? “Oh, but perhaps the Savior might fail!” We think not! But listen again—“My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

There are four great reasons why Believers are and must be saved! Neither can anything shake the force of any one of them. If words mean *anything*, those who are in Christ are safe! The Lord God Almighty has given them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ’s hand and over that first hand of Jesus is the Father’s hand to make assurance doubly sure!

Salvation, then, is of the Lord. This is a doctrine to be believed. If you do not believe it, you are sure to minimize and make small salvation and especially are you likely to deprive it of its certainty and immutability. It is a pity that you should attempt this, for thus you rob Christ of His power, God of His glory and the saints of their comfort! That is the awkward point about a salvation which is of man—it is worth nothing when you get it. We need an eternal salvation. We need a salvation which does really save. We need something which is not made up of, “ifs and ans,” and, “buts,” and, “perhapses,” and, “maybe,” and, “if you do this,” and, “if you do that.” We need sure, immutable, abiding, unchanging salvation—and this is exactly what we get and what we are not ashamed to preach, while we thunder out this Truth of God, “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord!”—

**“All of Grace’—from base to summit,
Grace on every course and stone.
Grace in planning, rearing, crowning,
Sovereign Grace, and Grace alone!”**

II. Secondly, this is not only the essence of sound doctrine, but THIS IS A NECESSARY FACT. “*The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*” Assuredly it must be so, or else they will never be saved. Look for a moment, you that love the Lord, to your own *inward conflicts*. Beloved, we are not all alike, tossed to and fro with the uprising of inbred sin, but there are times with most of God’s saints when they are hard put to it to withstand a certain raging temptation—they have to struggle hard to keep it down. And when they have mastered that evil, another form of sin comes on the sly and attempts to stab them in the back. You were giving all your attention to one insidious foe and at that terrible moment you were set upon by another! And you had to turn round and bend all your strength in the name of God to resist this second adversary. Nor was this all, a *third* evil bent its bow against you and a *fourth* prepared a net for your feet! Thus you were beset behind and before—and had it not been that the Lord was on your side, you would have been quickly swallowed up! Some of us know the truth of this in our experience if the rest of you do not.

Salvation must be of the Lord with me, I know, or else my inward lusts, my proud spirit, my rebellious will and my natural despondency will surely ruin me! Do you not feel it to be so with you? If God does not save you, you are a lost man. You must feel that. I know that those who have no conflicts sing another song and praise *themselves*. Your carpet-knights who wear the regimentals of Christianity, but know nothing of battle with

inbred sin, may talk about salvation by self, but he that is hard put to it to wrestle against all wrong-doing will tell another tale! He who grieves if he even utters a rash word, or allows an impure thought to cross his mind feels that if God does not save him, saved he never can be! And he sees it to be a necessary fact that the salvation of the righteous must be of the Lord.

When you have looked within a sufficient time to convince you, just look at your *outward temptations*. Ah, we little know what many of our Brothers and Sisters have to endure in the form of temptation in their own houses from their own friends. Many have a very hard fight of it. I know some now present who will, I believe, persevere and hold on to the end, but almost every day they endure a martyrdom. Cruel words are spoken and unkind actions are done against them. And a bitter spirit is shown towards them because they are the people of God. Salvation must be of the Lord to these poor persecuted ones, or they will faint under their oppressions! Outside in the world, what temptations abound! You cannot engage in any business without finding that it has its peculiar sins. Many things are done in the trade—many matters established by custom—which the scrupulously upright child of God cannot tolerate. He has to set his face against the general habit and, therefore, he has a battle. Need I go into particulars? Why, Brothers and Sisters, we are surrounded with snares! They are on the table—you may readily sin there. They are in your secret chamber—you are tempted there. They are in the counting-house and on the study table. You cannot sit down to read a book without being in danger. You cannot go among the crowd without risk. Depend upon it, if any man is saved in the midst of this wicked and ungodly generation in which the very air smells of corruption and the common talk is polluting—his salvation will be evidently of the Lord! If any Believer remains steadfast in this day of philosophic doubt, verily, I say unto you, his salvation must be of the Lord. He cannot go through this Vanity Fair. He cannot pass through this horrible slough, this Stygian bog of modern society and be pure in heart, lips and life unless God shall grant him His salvation!

Besides that, our salvation will certainly be of the Lord, because *the world hates us*. It cannot help it. If you are a genuine Christian, the world will not love you. There may be natural traits of kindness and goodness about you which even the outside world may respect, but in proportion as you are definitely and thoroughly a Christian, you will have the dogs at you. Worldlings will see a little flaw in your character and they will report it and magnify it. Some of us cannot do anything but we are misrepresented so that we have become unmindful of what people say about us, so long as we know in our own conscience that we are clear. The act which we have done with the most transparent sincerity has been the very one which they have set upon as though it were a piece of trickery! Blessed be God, the world is crucified to us and we are crucified unto the world! But if we are to escape its venom—especially those who stand in the front of the battle—if we are to hold on to the end with a stainless character, then

we shall have to say and sing, “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

We know, dear Friends, that it must be so. It is a necessary fact, even if we only *look at the contrary view*. What professions some make and how long they keep them up! We have said of such-and-such a man, “If he is not a child of God, who is?” We have even wished that our soul were in his soul’s place when we have heard him pray and marked the impressive devotion of his demeanor. And yet we have lived to see the very person we admired rolling in filth, character gone and hope gone! This happens in the Church sadly too often. Whenever we see it, we may truly feel that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” If ever you see a Christian man, professedly so, suddenly disappear and melt away, you will say to yourself, “Ah, had it not been for Divine Grace, it would have happened just the same to me and my fellow professors, too.” We should have gone out, like the snuff of a candle, if God had not preserved us and kept us alight. The older we grow in the Divine Life and the more earnestly we seek to exhibit the character of a Christian, the more we shall feel that if we had to go to this warfare at our own expense, it would be better for us that we had never been born! The life of many modern professors might be lived without supernatural help, but the life of a *genuine* Christian is a perpetual *miracle* which could be worked by none but the Lord God! True Christian life is produced by God, Himself, working mightily, even as when He made the world, or raised His only-begotten Son from the dead! I say that this is a necessary fact, for there can be no salvation but that which is of the Lord.

III. In the third place, our text being true, that “*the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,*” THIS IS A SWEET CONSOLATION, for if my salvation is of the Lord, then I shall be saved! If it had been of anybody else, I would be lost. Ah, Gabriel, if my salvation had to be accomplished by you and all your fellow angels, I would despair! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, if all of you put together were sent into this world to try and help poor me to Heaven, you would never get me there! I would wear you all out! When it is written, “Salvation is of the Lord,” I am comforted, for I am sure that the Lord will do it. He can, for He is Omnipotent. He will, for He has promised to do it—and He is true and unchangeable! He will go through with what He has begun. If *man* began, he might leave off before he had finished for lack of stores to go on with it, or because he had made a mistake and changed his fickle mind. But when *God* begins, as surely as ever He opens the war, He will push on till He has won the victory. As surely as He lays the first stone, He will not withdraw His right hand till He has brought forth the top stone, with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it!” “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord”—therefore it will be accomplished. Not all the temptations of life, nor all the terrors of death, nor all the furies of Hell shall prevent any soul upon whom God has begun His work of Grace from reaching eternal salvation! What a blessing is this and what a comfort it is!—

“Things future, nor things that are now,

***Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love.”***

This grand fact comforts us partly by leading us to believe in prayer. If the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, then, whenever we get into any great trouble, we go to Him and cry, “O Lord, my salvation is of You! I have come to You for it.” When strong temptation seems to catch us, like birds in a net, and we cannot break loose, then we cry, “O God, salvation is of You alone! Help me. You can. I look to You for it!” When our soul lies dead, as it sometimes does, like this heavy weather—when there is little sun to brighten us, or air to enliven us—we feel inactive and cannot stir. Oh, then it is most blessed in prayer to feel “all my fresh springs are in You, my Lord! You can quicken me! You can give me vigor, force of character and energy to do Your work, or suffer Your will!” In drawing near to God, we are coming to the right place—we are only asking God to do what He undertakes to do, since, “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

This, in addition to increasing our hope in prayer, urges us at all times to look out of ourselves to God. “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” Then I must not be always searching within my own heart to find some good thing within me. I must not be turning over evidences and living upon past experiences, but I must remember that salvation, even of the righteous, is of the Lord. I have often thrown all my evidences overboard—every one of them. I have felt that I would not give a farthing for the whole lot put together and I have gone to Christ Jesus just as I went at first, singing my old ditty—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

We are encouraged to do this by the fact that salvation is of the Lord. Go again to the Cross and read your pardon there. Suppose the devil tells you, or suppose it even to be true, that all your experience is a fiction, all your past profession a lie, all your faith presumption, all your enjoyments delirium, all that you have known and felt a daydream? Well, then, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and He can save you! O my Lord, I can boast nothing whatever of myself, but I come and cast myself on You! You have said, “He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out!” Frequent beginnings are the very safest things. In fact, we should, in a sense, be always beginning, for the spiritual life begins with coming to Jesus and the continuance of that spiritual life is described thus—“To whom *coming* as unto a living stone.” To whom coming, *always* coming—always trusting, always looking out of self, always looking to Christ!

When evidences are bright, you know where you are, but at such a time you could tell that without them. It is easy to tell the time of day by a sundial, but then the sun must be shining. And when I am at home and can see the sun, I know whereabouts the sun is at 12 o’clock and, therefore, I do not need the sundial to tell me the time. Evidences are exceedingly good things when you do not need them, but they are of very little use when you do. Evidences are clear when Christ is present, but when

Christ is present you do not need their help! But when Christ is *not* present, evidences fail to comfort you. It is better to live by a daily faith upon Christ than to live upon *evidences*. They most readily turn moldy and then they are most unwholesome food. Live upon Christ who is the daily manna and you will live well!

You will be driven to such a life by the force of this blessed Truth of God, that the salvation of the righteous, just as much as the salvation of the *wicked*, is of the Lord! A sinner cannot be saved by himself and neither can a righteous man. A sinner must look to the Lord for salvation and so must a righteous man. We are on the same footing here—the rich saint as well as the poor sinner. Christ must be everything to one as well as to the other—and what a blessed thing it is that He is everything to us! Let us hourly make Him so.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, THIS DOCTRINE IS A REASON FOR HUMILITY. “*The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*” Are you saved, my dear Brother or Sister? And do you know it? Then all idea of pride must vanish, for it is clear that you did not save yourself. That regeneration, of which you are a partaker, is the free gift of God to an undeserving one—a work of Grace upon one who could not have worked it upon himself. Pride is excluded! Has the Lord granted you such a salvation that you have remained fast in your integrity all these years? Do not be proud of it, for your salvation from any gross outward sin has been of the Lord! It is none of your doing. Above all, do not begin to censure others! And when you see a poor Brother down—yes, when you see a *child of God* who has erred and grossly sinned, do not begin censuring him in bitterness and giving him over to despair. If you had been in his case, you might have done worse.

Do I speak harshly? Any man who says, “If I had been in that Brother’s place I would have done better,” is a fool! He does not know himself. The probabilities are that he would have done worse. Ah, Sir Pharisee! You—yes, oh yes, you are a wonder! Marvelous is your purity! Splendidly you act! What a paragon you are! If you were to see yourself in God’s light, you would see that You are a mass of corruption, smelling of pride! That is what you are. The man who begins to exult over his fallen brother is the likeliest man to fall, himself. He who points at a tear in his Brother’s garment is in rags himself. If we have stood fast amid temptation, we may bless God that we have done so, but we must not find fault with others as though there was some good thing in ourselves. The salvation of the most righteous man that ever lived is of the Lord! If his sun has not been eclipsed—if his moon has not been turned into darkness—if his stars have not fallen like withered leaves from the tree, it is all owing to the Grace of God and the Grace of God alone! It is necessary to say this to keep us from being lifted up with foolish boasting.

So, dear Friends, we shall have to sing to a grave, sweet melody as long as we are here, whenever we touch a matter that concerns ourselves. When we get to Heaven, we shall see, then, much more than we do tonight that salvation is of the Lord. Mr. Bunyan represents his Pilgrim as going

through the Valley of the Shadow of Death—and even while he was in the darkness and horror of that defile place, he knew that he needed the Lord to help him. He felt that he had a terrible walk of it that night, when there was a bog on this side and a quagmire on that—and hobgoblins and all sorts of horrid creatures all around—he knew that he needed Divine aid. He held on his way, with his sword in his hand and, grasping the weapon of All-Prayer, till at last he left that horrible place. And then he knew better than before how great was his necessity. He looked back when the morning rose and till then he had not fully known what a place he had been traversing—and how great was the power which upheld him in his night march! When we get to Heaven and look back upon our life below, we shall then see the wonders of delivering Grace which at this time we do not fully appreciate—

***“When I stand before the Throne
Dressed in beauty not my own.
When I see You as You are,
Love You with unsinning heart.
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
But not till then—how much I owe.”***

I believe that in the day of our full deliverance we shall lift up, every one of us, such a song of praise as we are not capable of here. We shall sing with all our powers of heart and tongue at the sight of what we have been delivered from. Even then this will be the sum and substance of the song—“Salvation is of the Lord!” He has worked it all and brought us safely through. The hymn of Miriam and of all the children of Israel at the Red Sea, when they had passed through it and all the Egyptians were drowned, was a very exultant song. But what will ours be when the gates of Hell shall have been overthrown, all our enemies destroyed and we shall find ourselves before the Eternal Throne, saved forever? Shall we not exclaim, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously”?

Shall we not, each one, tell out his own experience and bid our fellow Believers sing yet more and more rapturously unto the God of salvation? Will not some of you take up that note which Miriam dwelt upon when she could not see a single Egyptian? Pharaoh’s chariots and horses were all sunk in the sea! His chosen captains were also drowned in the Red Sea and so she struck her timbrel and with all the maidens she danced right joyously as she sang, “The depths have covered them. There is not one, not one, not one of them left.” Thus will we sing in Heaven. “There is not one, not one of them left! Not one of all the sins, all the trials, all the temptations and all the vexations of life—the Lord has removed them all! There is not one of them left! Salvation is of the Lord.”

V. I close with one more remark and it is this—this text GIVES US A COMFORTABLE GROUND OF HOPE. “*The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*” Then I believe He will save me. I trust myself with Him and thus I become righteous by faith and, therefore, He will save me from my trouble and care. Brother, draw the same conclusion. Sister, draw the same conclusion. You are in a terrible condition just now. Everything has been

going wrong. You do not know what to do. But “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” He will bring you through. You are in good hands. The Great Pilot knows the navigation of the river of life better than you do. You cannot see a channel for your boat—there are snags everywhere, or quicksand, or rocks, or shallows. He knows all about them. Rest. Trust. Wait. Commit your way unto the Lord. There is personal comfort in the fact that our salvation is of the Lord.

And there is comfort, next, with regard to all our tried Brothers and Sisters. It is my lot—my happy or unhappy lot—to be continually consulted by Brothers and Sisters in great trouble. They think I can help them, though I cannot. I hardly know what to say to them. I can only take their burden with my own unto the Lord. I often feel great pain in sympathizing with trials which I cannot remove, but then it is cheering to know that the Lord can help where we cannot, for “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” He can help the helpless, the forlorn, the impoverished, the dying. He will bring His people safely through floods and fires. Their straits are very great and their burdens very heavy, but the Lord will put underneath them the everlasting arms. Pray for them; sympathize with them; help them as far as you can and then, when you cast yourself on your Lord, cast them, also!

Next, this ought to give us hope about seekers. I see some Brothers and Sisters before me whose lives are spent in trying to encourage poor erring souls to return unto the Lord. Sometimes you are balked and defeated. Well, “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” Surely, if the salvation of the righteous is to come from the *Lord*, much more must the salvation of poor seekers! Have hope about the vilest and worst of men. If there are any such here, tonight, let them have hope, for if the Lord bids the righteous, in whom there is a measure of His Grace, to look to Him for salvation, assuredly He bids you to do the same, for you have nothing of your own. If those who are righteous before God yet find their salvation in Him, alone, where are you to look? You must look to the Lord, also! Look to Jesus on the Cross and find salvation in Him, for the Lord Jesus redeemed with His precious blood all who trust in Him.

O my dear Hearer, come and cast yourself upon Him! “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” So runs the Word of God. Look to that wondrous death of the Son of God which redeems such as you are and, in your case, too, it shall be found that your salvation is of the Lord! May God bless you and cause you to rejoice in His salvation!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 37*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—242, 238, AND PSALM 37.**

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SUNSHINE IN THE HEART

NO. 454

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Delight yourself also in the Lord. And He shall
give you the desires of your heart.”
Psalm 37:4.*

THERE are two teachings in our text which must be very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness. To sincere Believers these marvels are recognized facts, but to the outside world they will appear very strange. We have here, first of all, the life of a Believer described as a *delight* in God. And thus we are certified of the great Truth of God that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing—to them it is service, duty, or necessity—but never pleasure and delight.

Why should they go up to the House of God? Is it not because of custom—a custom which they would gladly avoid if they dare? Why do they attend to the ordinances of the Church? Is it not either out of Pharisaic hope of merit, or from a superstitious dread? How many view the forms of religion as charms to avert ill, or as lesser evils by which they escape from dreaded judgment? What is their service but drudgery, and their worship but weariness? Ask the worldlings what they think of religion—and even when they practice its outward rites they snuff at it as a dull and dreary thing. “What a weariness it is!”

They love it as much as the ass loves labor, or the horse the whip, or the prisoner the treadmill. They cry for short sermons. Indeed, none at all would suit them better. How cheerfully would they clip the hours of Sunday. Indeed, if Sabbaths only came but once a month, they would prefer it. The heavy necessity of pious customs weighs upon them as tribute upon a conquered province. They pay to religion an observance of the character of a tax, or a toll, which custom demands.

Free will offerings they know not, and loving enjoyment of hallowed fellowship they cannot understand. They serve God as Cain did, who brought his offering, it is true, but brought it late—brought it because it was the family custom and he would not be outdone by his brother. He brought it of the common fruit of the ground and with a sullen, loveless heart. These Cainites bring such as they are forced to bring, and mingle no faith in Jesus’ blood with their offerings. They come with lead heels to the House of God, and they go away as if they had feathers on their feet. They serve God, but it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand farther apart than “holiness,” and “delight.”

Ah, but Believers who know Christ understand that delight and faith are so blessedly married that the gates of Hell cannot prevail to divorce them. They who love God with all their hearts, find that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Such joy, such brimful de-

lights, such overflowing bliss do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving Him from custom, they would follow Him should all the world cast out His name as evil. We fear not God because of any compulsion—our faith is no fetter—our profession is no prison. We are not dragged to holiness, nor driven to duty. No, Sirs, our religion is our recreation. Our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight.

I know it always will be a calumny against Christ's religion that it makes men miserable. But a greater misapprehension, or a baser falsehood never cursed the world. Because we cannot trifle so foolishly, nor sin so boldly, nor brag so lustily as the servants of sin, therefore you think us miserable! Ah, Sirs, it is well written, "A stranger meddles not with our joy." The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and their joy no man takes from them. Let us remind you, however, that still waters run the deepest. The brook which rattles over the stones dries up in the summer. But the deep-flowing river speeds on, come drought or heat, and yet glides silently along the meads.

We do not talk so loudly of our joys as you of your merriments, because we have no need to do so. Ours are known as well in silence as in exciting company. We need not your society to make us glad, much less the varied accompaniments which prop your bliss. We need neither bowl, nor feast, nor viol, nor dance to make us glad—nor even the stalled ox and the bursting wine vat to make us rich. Our happiness lies not on passing creatures but in the eternal, immutable Creator. I know, despite all we shall say, this slander will survive from generation to generation—that God's people are a wretched people.

But, at least, let us clear our conscience of you, and let us make you without excuse if you believe it again. We *do* have joy. We *do* have delights, such that we would not part with one ounce of ours for tons of yours. Not drops of our joy for rivers of your delights. Ours are no tinsel or painted joys, but solid realities. Ours are joys that we can take with us to our bed in the silent dust—joys that shall sleep with us in the tomb and that shall awake with us in eternity—joys that we can look back upon and so live them over again in retrospect—joys that we can anticipate and so know both here and hereafter.

Ours are not bubbles which only glitter to burst. Ours are not apples of Sodom, turning to ashes in our hand. Our delights are substantial, real, true, solid, lasting, everlasting! What more shall I say? Dismiss from your minds this mistake. Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower, as indivisible as truth and certainty. They are, in fact, two precious jewels set side by side in the same socket of gold.

But there is another wonder in our text to worldly men, though it is a wonder well understood by Christians. The text says, "He shall give you the desires of your heart." "Why," the worldly man says, "I thought religion was all self-denial. I never imagined that in loving God we could have our desires. I thought that godliness consisted in killing, destroying, and keeping back our desires." Does not the religion of most men consist in an open abstinence from sins which they secretly love? Negative godliness is very common in this age. It is supposed by most men that our religion consists in things which we must *not* do, rather than in pleasures which we may enjoy.

We must not go to a theater. We must not sing songs, trade on Sundays, use ill words, and so on. We must not do this, and we must not do that. And they suppose us to be a crabbed, miserable race of persons who, no doubt, make up by some private allowance for denying ourselves in public.

Now, it is true that religion is self-denial. It is equally true that it is *not* self-denial. Christian men have two selves. There is the old self and therein they do deny the flesh with its affections and lusts. But there is a new self. There is a new-born spirit, the new man in Christ Jesus. And, Brethren, our religion does not consist in any self-denial of that. No, let it have the full swing of its wishes and desires. For all that it can wish for, all that it can pant after, all that it can long to enjoy—it may most safely obtain.

When I hear persons say, “Well, you know my religion consists in some things that I must do and in some things that I must not do,” I reply, “mine consists in things that I love to do and in avoiding things that I hate and would scorn to do.” I feel no chain in my religion, for I am free and never man more free. He who fears God and is wholly God’s servant, has no chains about him. He may live as he likes, for he likes to live as he ought. He may have his full desires, for his desires are holy, heavenly, Divine. He may take the full range of the utmost capacity of his wishes and desires, and have all he wants and all he wishes—for God has given him the promise and God will give him the fulfillment of it.

But do not go away with the idea that we are always afraid to put one foot before the other because there are some *must not*s in our way. And do not think that we do not go that way to the right, or that way to the left because we dare not. Oh, Sirs, we would not if we might. We would not if the Law were altered—we would not have your pleasures if we might. If we could go to Heaven and live as sinners live, we would not choose their way and conversation. It would be a Hell to us to be compelled to sin, even if sin could go unpunished. If we could have your drunkenness, if we could have your lusts—oh, you ungodly ones—if we could have your mirth and your joy, we would not have them.

We do not deny ourselves when we give these up. We despise your mirth, we abominate it and tread it beneath our feet. “I can’t understand,” once said a bird to a fish, “how it is that you always live in the cold element. I could not live there. It must be a great self-denial to you not to fly up to the trees. See how I can mount aloft.” “Ah,” said the fish, “it is no self-denial to me to live here, it is my element. I never aspire to fly, for it would not suit me. If I were taken out of my element I should die unless I was restored to it very soon and the sooner the better.”

So the Believer feels that God is his native element. He does not escape from his God, or from his Master’s will and service. And if for a time he were taken out of it, the sooner he could get back to it, the better. If he is thrown into bad company he is miserable and wretched until he gets out of it again. Does the dove deny itself when it does not eat carrion? No, verily the dove could not delight in blood, it would not feed on it if it could. When a man sees a company of swine under the oak delighting themselves in their acorns and grunting out their satisfaction—does he deny himself when he passes them by without sharing their feast?

No, verily, he has better bread at home he can eat, and swine's meat is no dainty to him. So it is with the Believer—his religion is a matter of delight, a matter of satisfaction—and that which he avoids and turns from is very little self-denial to him. His tastes are changed, his wishes are altered. He delights himself in his God, and joyously receives the desire of his heart.

This by way of preface. Now to come to our text itself. There are two things in the text very plainly. The first is *a precept written upon sparkling jewels*, "Delight yourself in the Lord." The second is *a promise priceless beyond rubies*, "He shall give you the desires of your heart."

I. The first is a PRECEPT WRITTEN UPON SPARKLING JEWELS. I have added those last words, because the Law of the Ten Commandments was written upon stone—perhaps hard granite—in which men could take but little delight. But this Law of one command, "Delight yourself in the Lord," is no stony Law to be written upon tablets of granite. It contains a precept for sparkling brightness, worthy to be written on amethysts and pearls. "Delight yourself in the Lord." Why, Brethren, when delight becomes a duty, then certainly, duty is a delight!

When it becomes my duty to be happy, when I have an express *command* to be glad, then, indeed, I must be a sinner if I refuse my own joys and turn aside from my own bliss! Oh, what a God we have, who has made it our duty to be happy! What a gracious God, who accounts no obedience to be so worthy of His acceptance as a gladsome obedience rendered by a joyous heart. "Delight yourself in the Lord."

1. Now, first, *What is this delight?* I have been thinking the word, "delight," over, and I cannot explain it. You know it is a word by itself. A delightful word—I cannot use anything but its own self to describe it. If you look at it—it is flashing with *light*. It sparkles like a star. No, like a bright constellation, radiant with sweet influences like the Pleiades. It is joy, yet is it more, it is joy running over. It is rest but such a rest as allows of the utmost activity of every passion of the soul.

Delight! It is mirth without its froth. Delight! It is peace, yet it is more than that—it is peace celebrated with festivity—with all the streamers hanging in the streets, and all the music playing in the soul. Delight! To what shall I compare it? It is a stray word that belongs to the language of Paradise. When the holy words of Eden flew away to Heaven at the Fall, this one, being entangled in the silken meshes of the net of the first promise, was retained on earth to sing in Believers' ears.

Where shall I find metaphors to describe it? Man fails me. Let me turn, then, to the unsinning creatures of God. Go to the seaside when the sea is going down, and in some parts of the coast you will see a little fringe just at the edge of the wave. It looks like a mist but on closer examination you will find there are millions of very small shrimps, leaping up in all manner of postures and forms, out of the receding wave, in exuberance of glee and merriment.

Or look on a summer eve at the gnats as they dance untiringly, scarcely knowing how to enjoy themselves enough! Or see the lambs in the field, how they skip and leap! Hark to the morning song of the birds of the air, and listen again to their delicious notes at eventide! See the fish as they leap from the stream, and hear the insects as they hum in the air—these may give faint glimmerings of the light of delight!

Wing your flight to Heaven if you would know what delight means. See the spirits there, as their fingers sweep the golden strings! Hark to their voices, as with peals of joy unknown to human ears, they sing unto Him that has loved them and washed them from their sins in His blood! Mark them as they keep eternal Sabbath in the great temple of the living God, and gaze upon His Throne and gaze and gaze and gaze again, absorbed in glory, beatified in Jesus, full of Heaven, overflowing with exceeding joy. This is delight!

I fail in the description, I know. You must take the word and spell it over letter by letter. And then you must pray God to put your hearts into a sweet frame of mind, made up of the following ingredients—a perfect rest from all earthly care. A perfect resignation of yourself into God's hands. An intense confidence in His love for you. A Divine love to Him, so that you feel you would be anything or do anything for Him. Then, there must be added to all this, a joy in Him. And when you have these, they must be all set a-boiling—and then, by His Grace, you have delight in the Lord your God. Matthew Henry says, "Desire is love in action, like a bird on the wing. Delight is love in rest, like a bird on its nest." Such is the meaning of the word and such the duty prescribed. "Delight yourself also in the Lord."

2. Secondly, *from where comes this delight?* The text tells us, "Delight yourself in the Lord." Delight yourself *in Jehovah*, in His very *existence*. That there is a God is enough to make the most wretched man happy if he believes. The nations crash, dynasties fall, kingdoms reel, what does it matter? There is God. The father has gone to the tomb, the mother sleeps in the dust, the wife has fallen from our side, the children are removed—but there is God. This, alone, is enough to be a wellspring of joy forever and ever to all true Believers.

Delight also in His *dominion*. "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." Jehovah is King! Come what may of it, *He* sits upon His Throne and rules all things well. The Lord has prepared His Throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all. Standing in the chariot of Providence, He holds the reins and guides the dashing coursers according to His own will. God is exalted above the mountains and above the hills—He has sway in all things, both the magnificent and the minute. Be glad, O daughter of Zion, for the Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Every *attribute* of God should become a fresh ray in this sunlight of delight. That He is wise should make us glad who know our folly. That He is mighty should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting should always be a theme for our music, when we know that *we* are grass, and wither as the green herb. That He is unchanging should always give us a song, since we change every hour and are never long the same. That He is full of Grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this Divine Grace in the Covenant He has given to us—that it is ours, ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to Heaven—all this should tend to make us delight ourselves in *Him*.

Oh, Believers, you stand today by a deep river. You, perhaps, have waded into it up to your ankles, and you know something of its clear, sweet, heavenly streams—but onward the depth is greater and the current more delightful still. Come, take a plunge! Now, plunge into the Godhead's

deepest sea! Lose yourself in His immensity. Let His attributes cover up all your weakness and all your folly and everything else that can make you groan and fill you with despondency. Rejoice in *Him*, though you cannot rejoice in yourselves! Triumph in the God of Israel, though in yourselves you have cause enough for despair.

The Christian also feels that he may delight himself in all that God has done in the past. Those Psalms which end with, "His mercy endures forever"—where we find such divisions as these—"Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever." "Sihon, king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever"—all these show us that God's people in olden times were likely to think much of God's actions. They did not throw them in a lump into one verse, but divided them, to have a song about *each* of them. So let God's people rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts. Let them sing, "Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces Your enemy."

"The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name." "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." Let them continue to rehearse His deeds, till they come to the deeds of Grace in their own hearts. And here let them sing more sweetly than ever. Nor let them cease to sing, for as new mercies flow unto them each day, let day unto day utter His praise, and night unto night testify of His Grace. "Delight yourself in the Lord."

If these that I have already mentioned were not enough, we might delight ourselves in all that God is to do—in all the splendid triumphs He has yet to achieve. In all the glories of the latter days. In all the splendors of His Throne, when all the hosts of God shall meet at last. In His triumph over Death, and Hell, and in His ultimate victory over sin, when He shall make the whole earth to become filled with His praise.

Oh, Brethren, time would fail us, eternity might fail us, indeed, to catalog all the different points of holy delight which Believers, when they are in a spiritual frame of mind, may find in the Lord their God! You should delight yourselves in God the Father, in His eternal love to you when there was nothing in you to love. In His election of your soul, in His justification of you in Christ, in the giving up of His only begotten Son to redeem you from Hell. You should delight yourselves in Jesus, you should—

***"Tell what His arm has done,
What spoils from death He won.
Sing His dear name alone,
Worthy the Lamb!"***

You should delight yourselves in God the Holy Spirit, in His quickening operations, in His illuminations, in His consolations, in the strength which He gives you, in the wisdom which He imparts to you, in the faithfulness with which He attends to you, and in the certainty that He will ultimately perfect you, that you may be met to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And here we might branch out into a thousand themes. Delight yourselves in God as your Father, as your Friend, as your Helper. Delight yourselves in Jesus Christ as your Brother, as your Bridegroom, as your Shepherd, as your All in All.

Delight yourselves in Christ in all His offices, as Prophet, Priest and King. Triumph in Him, in all His garments, for they all smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. Delight yourselves in Christ, in His glory and in His humiliation, in His Cross and in His crown, in His manger and in His eternal

triumph, wherein He led captivity captive. Delight yourselves in the Holy Spirit, in all His various dealings with men's minds. Delight in Pentecost and in Pentecosts that are yet to come. And—but we close. What more should we say? Surely we might talk on forever! Delight yourself in Jehovah, that great, that boundless, that joyful theme—and delight yourself in Him forevermore.

3. Now another question suggests itself. *When is this delight to be practiced?* “Delight yourself in the Lord.” Precepts without limit as to time are for perpetual observance. My text does not say, “Delight yourself in the Lord occasionally. Or now and then.” But at all times. There are two occasions when it is hard to delight in God, and therefore I will mention these. It is hard to delight in God when everything goes well with us. “Oh,” I hear you say, “I cannot understand that. That is the time when I *do* delight in God most.”

Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid it is the time when you delight *in God* least. “Well but when my comforts are round about me, when Providence smiles upon me, then I can delight in God.” Stop! Are you sure of that? Is it not likely that often you are delighting in His mercies rather than in *Him*? Delighting in the creature, rather than in the Creator? I fear, Brethren, it is our sunshiny days that are the greatest times of temptation. Well may we pray, “In all times of our wealth deliver us.” We are somewhat like a foolish wife who, when her husband gives her jewels and rings, grows apt to love the jewels, rather than her husband.

Many Believers we have known who have had Divine Grace and mercies and have had great privileges—come to pride themselves more in the mercies and the privileges than in their God. It is hard when the wine vat is full, to love God more than the vineyard. It is hard when there is a fine harvest to think more of God than of the sheaves. It is hard when you are growing rich, still to say, “this is not *my* treasure.” The treasures of earth will besmear our garments unless we see well to our hearts—our soul cleaves to the dust and dust is no aid to devotion. Oh, take heed, rich Believer, that you delight yourself in God! Not in your parks and your lawns, your gardens and your houses, your lands and your estates. For if you delight in these, your gold and your silver are cankered, the moth is in your garment, and the blight will soon be on your heritage. Say, “These are not my portion.” “*God is my portion says my soul.*”

Another time when it is hard to delight in God—not so hard as in this first one—is when everything goes ill with us. Then we are apt to say with old Jacob, “All these things are against me.” What a noble opportunity Job lost, when servant after servant came to tell him that everything was gone, when he sat on the dunghill and did scrape himself with a potsherd. If he could have stood upright and have said, “Now will I rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of my salvation,” what a triumph of faith would he have achieved!

If he could have thus played the man for God, Job would have been the most splendid character that we have in Holy Scripture. He did go far when he said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” There spoke a man whom God had made mighty. But if he could have delighted still more in God—when the sores were on him and they were bursting—that would have been all but superhuman. I think I may say it would have been as much as ever Grace itself could work in a man. Yet how often

have I noticed that Believers do rejoice in God much more readily in their afflictions than they do in their prosperity.

I have seen the hyssop growing upon Lebanon and I have seen the cedar growing on the wall. I have seen great saints where there was little mercy. And I have seen driveling saints where there were great Providential blessings. God's birds sing best in cages, and the praise of God comes better out of the mouth of the furnace of affliction than even from the top of the mountain of communion. We are so constituted, it seems to me, that unless God screws the strings of our heart up by pain and affliction, we never give forth much sweet music to Him.

Yet it is difficult, very difficult, for a man, when every earthly prop gives way, to say—"the fig tree does not blossom, the calves perish from the stall, the harvest has been mildewed, the cankerworm eats up all the produce, but still my delight is in God and my triumph is in the God of my salvation." Yet, by Divine Grace, at all times we are to delight in God. But I hear a voice say, "But when is the Christian to be miserable?" Never, Brother, never! "But not at times?" No. Not if he does his duty. "But ought not a Believer sometimes be cast down?" Saints are cast down but they ought not to be.

"Well but many of God's saints are full of doubts and fears." I know they are, and the more's the pity. "But some of the Lord's children go mourning all their days." It is their own fault, their Lord has not bid them do so. The Scriptures teaches us, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again," says the Apostle, "I say, rejoice." "But are there not times when we may indulge the melancholy vein and cultivate sorrow?" Well, if you do, you will soon find it grow. God often serves His children as I have known parents do theirs. If His children pray for afflictions they shall have them until they shall begin to pray ten times more earnestly to have them taken away.

If God's people cry for nothing, they shall soon have something to cry for. If they will make themselves miserable they will soon have miseries added to their miseries. But so far as the *promise* is concerned, and the *precept* is concerned, it is the daily, constant, hourly duty and business of the true Believer to delight himself in the Lord his God.

4. Before I leave this point, I answer one other question. *Why is this delighting in God so rare?* Why do you see so many desponding Christians? So many doubting Christians? Why do you see so many whose religion seems to them to be a yoke, a very heavy yoke, too? It is, I fear, because there is so little on the one hand of genuine religion, and so little, on the other, of deep-toned religion where the little that there is, is genuine. Why, the man who has a religion that is not of his heart, I do not wonder that he is wretched! You have seen sometimes a man with a dog of a breed that does not like the water, and he throws it in—how quickly it gets out again!

But there are some of a different breed, that will swim by the hour, and delight in it. So, now, there are some professors who are known to be hypocrites by the fact that their religion is against their will. You have put them into it, and they would soon get out. But the true Christian takes to his religion by Divine Grace with ardor and delight. He loves it, he delights in it. This is one of the best tests to discern between a hypocrite and a true Christian. Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in God?" No—the hypocrite will pull a long face. The hypocrite will look wretched.

The hypocrite will make himself as miserable as ever man can be when the time has come for it. He never *did*, and he never *can*, and he never *will* delight himself in God as a rule.

He may have some joy in the outward means, for even Herod heard John gladly. But that is only a spasm. Only the true Believer can have a constant and an abiding satisfaction and delight in the service and love of God. This is an evidence so sure and infallible, that if any among you delight in God, I conclude, without hesitation, that you are a saved soul. But if any of you, on the other hand, never have any delight in God of any kind, I question whether you ever knew God at all—for if you have known Him you must in your degree have found delight in Him.

“But what is the good of this delight?” asks one. “Why should Christians be such a happy people?” Why, it is good in all ways. It is good for our God. It gives Him honor among the sons of men when we are glad. It is good for us. It makes us strong. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” It is good for the ungodly. For when they see Christians glad, they long to be Believers themselves. It is good for our fellow Christians. It comforts them and tends to cheer them. Whereas, if we look gloomy, we shall spread the disease and others will be wretched and gloomy, too. For all these reasons and for many more that can be given, it is a good and pleasant thing that a Believer should delight himself in God.

II. I now turn to the second point of the subject, briefly. “He shall give you the desires of your heart.” **HERE IS A PROMISE PRICELESS BEYOND RUBIES.** What connection is there between the first part of the text and the second—“Delight yourself in the Lord,” and, “He shall give you the desires of your heart.” There is this connection—they who delight in God are qualified to have the promise fulfilled. They are qualified, in the first place, as to the desires. It would not be a safe thing for God to give to everyone of you here the desire of your heart—it would be your ruin.

One of the best things that the Lord does for some men is to check them and thwart them. There is many a man that has gone to Heaven through not having had his desires, who would have gone to Hell if he had had them. Ungodly men have desires that would lead them to the pit, and when God refuses to give them their desires, it is as though He had put chains and posts and barriers in the road to keep them from going post haste to their own destruction. The ungodly man is not qualified to have the promise, because he would desire something that would neither glorify God nor profit himself. But when a man’s delight is in God, then his desires are of such a sort that God may be glorified in the granting of them, and the man, himself, profited by the receiving of them.

Again, delighting in God qualifies the Believer not only for desiring aright but for spending aright. Some men, if they had their heart’s desire, even if it were a good desire, would, nevertheless, make a wrong use of it. And so it would happen to them as it did to Israel of old, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God would come upon them. But he that delights in God, whatever he gets, knows how to use it well. People say *use* is a second nature. Brethren, *abuse* is the first nature. To abuse mercies is much more the nature of man than to properly use them. But when the Believer delights in God, whatever he has from God he spends aright—he makes it not a sacrifice to himself—much less a god before whom he will bow down and worship.

But, by God's Grace, he makes it a means of serving God better and delighting himself more in the Master. The rivers of worldly men run *away* from the sea. But the rivers that Christian men have, run *into* the sea. If a worldly man sails along the stream of his mercies, he gets further and further from God and becomes more and more an idolater. But when the Christian gets mercies, he sails nearer and nearer to his God. And so his mercies become highways to the Throne of God Himself.

"Still," asks one, "what are those desires which we are sure to receive?" Now, Brethren, we must single out those who delight themselves in God, and I believe the range of their desires will be found in a very short compass. If I had my desire of my God this morning, it is not much for me to say I have no earthly thing that I would desire, "for I have all things and abound." But if the Apostle Paul were here, who had nothing, who was often naked, and poor, and miserable, I am persuaded if he had his wish, he would say, "I have nothing to wish for, nothing upon earth, for I have learned in whatever state I am therewith to be content."

But if I must have a wish, Brethren, I know what I would wish for. I would wish to be perfect, to be free from every sin, from every imperfection, from all self, from all temptation, from all love of the world, from all care for everything or anything that is contrary to God's Word. Is not that your wish, you that delight in God? Would you not, now, if an angel were to stand before you at the pew door, would you not say, "If I may, let me be perfectly set free from the very name and nature, guilt and power of sin."

You shall have your desire—the Lord shall give unto you the desire of your heart. But I hear another say, "If I might have my desire it would be that I might live nearer to Christ. That I might have constant communion with Him till I knew Him and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death." Brother, I join you in that desire. I am sure if you had ten kingdoms offered in the one hand, and this fellowship with Christ in the other, do not I speak the desire of your heart when I you say would choose to have communion with Christ rather than these kingdoms? Well, the Lord shall give you the desire of your heart. Only delight yourself in the Lord.

"Well," says another, "if I might have my desire I would have all these things but I would desire to be useful always." Ah, to be useful! How many men live like Belzoni's toad in the pyramids of Egypt, which had been there two thousand years? And what had it done, but sometimes sleep and sometimes wake the whole time through. And so some men live and do nothing. "But if I had my desire," I think I hear many of you say, "I should like to be useful. To win crowns for Christ, to save souls for Him, to bring in His lost sheep." Brothers and Sisters, delight yourself in the Lord, you shall have your desire. Perhaps not exactly as you would like to word it. You may not be useful in the sphere you aspire to, but you shall be useful as God would have you useful in His own way and in His own measure.

I must say one thing, though. I have a desire, which if now I might offer it, knowing that it should be granted me, it would be this—I desire to see you all converted. Mothers and Fathers, can you not say, "My heart's desire is that my children might be saved, for I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the Truth of God"? And I as a minister say, my

earnest desire, the highest desire I know, that which my soul feels most when it pants the most, and aspires the most, after some big and great thing, is that I may present every man of you perfect before God at the last. That I may not only be clear of your blood which is a great thing, but that I may have you with me when I shall say, "Here am I, Lord, and the children You have given me for Christ."

Oh, you who are members of this Church, will you pray that your minister may delight himself in God, that he may have this desire of his heart? And will you, yourselves also delight in God, so that when you come to God in prayer and pray for this congregation, you may be sure He will give you the desire of your heart, because you have delighted yourselves in Him? They said of Martin Luther as he walked the streets, "There comes a man that can have anything of God he likes." You ask the reason of it. Because Luther delighted himself in his God. Give us some such men in this congregation, and in this Church—who love the Lord and rejoice in Him—what an effect their prayers will have!

These are the men who have the keys of Heaven, and of death, and of Hell. These are the men that can open Heaven or shut it up, make it rain or rain not. The Church of Rome pretends that she has the keys. But the Church of Christ has the keys without pretending to have them, and these keys swing at the girdles of the men who delight in God! You can, by your prayers, bring down such showers of the Spirit upon the Christian Church, that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. And if you cease to delight in God you can shut up Heaven itself, so that no rain descends and the whole Church becomes barren and unfruitful once again.

Now to wind up. Mark this—this is the only thing that a man can delight in and get his desires. There is a man that delights in money, but he does not get his desire. He gets his money, but he never gets the satisfaction he expected. We read in the papers but the other day of one who had a singular success in his profession, but who lately attempted suicide under the notion that he should lose his all through the American war. We remember in this great city one of the largest merchants who died worth more than three millions of money—for at that amount I think his property was sworn—who during the latter part of his life was accustomed to be paid the same wages as his gardener and believed that he should certainly die in a workhouse.

He had got his broad and wide estates, and money that could not be counted—but he did not get the desire of his heart. He had delighted in his gold, and he had not the desire of his heart. So have we known men that have delighted themselves in fame, and when they have got it, they would have been only too glad to get rid of it. They have been great statesmen, or mighty warriors, and they have been greatly renowned. But when they have gained all the fame and stood on the very top of the pinnacle, there was not that in it that they expected and they have said, "Would that I had lived in obscurity, for then I might have known some satisfaction."

And look at many of you. When you were apprentices, the desire of your heart was to be journeymen. Well, when you became journeymen, what then? You wanted to be masters, and set up in trade for yourselves. Well, you have set up in trade and got on pretty well. Have you the desire of your heart? Oh, no! That has gone on a little further. Now, you are wait-

ing till you have brought up this large family of yours, and *then* when you have your children started in life, you are looking out for a villa in the suburbs where you can retire and spend the rest of your days.

And some of you have the villa in the country and have wound up your business affairs. Have you the desire of your heart yet? Well, not quite yet. There is still something else that you want. Ah, yes—getting the desire of a man's heart is like chasing a phantom. It is here, there, and everywhere—now on the hill, now down in the valley. You leap down on it and it is away again on the next hill—and then on the next—and you find your chase is fruitless. Satisfaction in this world is like the diamond which the fool sees lying at the foot of the rainbow. So he runs after it, and as he runs the rainbow is ever in the distance, and he can never find what he expected. If you would have the desire of your heart, delight in your God. Give Him your love. Give Him your heart. Plunge deep into this stream and you shall have all that you can wish for. The desire of your heart to the full extent shall be granted.

Are there not in this house today those who cannot delight in God?—Cannot—cannot—cannot? “How,” you say, “can I delight in God? He is angry with me.” You are right, you cannot. How can he *delight* in God whose sins are unforgiven, upon whom the wrath of God abides always? Can a man delight in a roaring lion, or in a bear robbed of her whelps? Can a man delight in a consuming fire? Can a man delight in a naked sword that seeks to reach his very heart? God is such to you so long as you are out of His Grace. How then can you delight in God?

There is one step that is necessary—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and then you shall delight in the Lord. That is, trust yourself to be saved by Christ. Go and put yourself into Christ's hands to have all your sins put away. And when you have trusted Christ you shall know that your sins are forgiven, that you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. And you may go your way and delight yourself in God, for the promise is this—your desire shall be granted you.

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**“REST IN THE LORD”
NO. 1333**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Rest in the Lord.”
Psalm 37:7.***

THE occurrence of our text in the Psalm before us is an instance of the great rule that the Lord does nothing by halves. In this priceless Psalm, the Lord found His servant, in the first verse, liable to fretfulness and envy—and He exhorted him to cease from fretting. Then, in verse three, He taught him to trust. In verse four He led him on to delight. In verses five and six He conducted him into a peaceful committing of his way unto God and He did not stay the operation of His Grace till He had perfected that which concerned him and brought him up to the elevated point of our text, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” God does not merely cure the evil in us, but He confers unspeakable good! He takes away the disfiguring wound, but He imparts, also, comeliness and beauty.

If any of you, this morning, are in a low state of Grace, so that you have even fallen into fretfulness at the prosperity of the ungodly, do not cast away all hope, for the Grace of God abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence, and He will restore your soul! Remember how David said, in the 73rd Psalm—“I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” “So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: you have held me by my right hand.”

The Lord knows how to bring His people, again, from Bashan, yes, and to lift them up like Jonah from the depths of the sea! And He can bring you, this day, by the operation of His Grace, upward from doubt to assurance, from fretfulness to rest! Rest is a blessing which properly belongs to the people of God, although they do not enjoy it one tenth as much as they might. Under the Old Testament dispensation there was considerable provision made for rest. Typically the chosen nation was shown that one great end of the visitation of the Lord was to give His people rest, for on the seventh day they rested and did no manner of work.

Yes more, in the seventh year they rested according to the Divine precept. “Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: you shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard.” When they were obedient to the Lord’s commands, they thus enjoyed a whole year of rest, and were no losers by it, for, no doubt, the seventh fallow year so benefited the land that it brought forth all the more fruit during the other six, so that there was none the less store in their barns.

Over and above this, once in 50 years, when the seventh year came round, they carried out, still further, the Sabbatic idea and the Jubilee

Year was a time of peculiar and emphatic rest and festival. For thus had the Lord commanded. "A Jubilee shall that 50th year be unto you: you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of your vine undressed. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: you shall eat the increase thereof out of the field." So very prominently, even in that somewhat servile and yoke-bearing dispensation, there was brought before the mind of the Israelite the privilege of rest. And those who possessed the inner sight, as Moses did, realized the promise, "My Spirit shall go with you and I will give you rest."

Indeed, Canaan, itself, was intended to be the type of rest—the land that flows with milk and honey, the land of brooks and valleys, the land that the Lord Your God thinks about, the land upon which the eyes of the Lord rest from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year, was meant to be a place where every man should rest under his own vine and fig tree, and look for a yet deeper rest in God. Had they known it, in giving them Canaan, Joshua had given them a fair picture of rest. They did not see through the type so fully as to understand its significance, but, nevertheless, there it was.

O Christian men and women, you, also, miss much of your rest! You have too much of fretfulness, too much of care, too much that is servile. The land does not keep her Sabbaths as she should, neither does your soul rest as it might! And as for jubilees, how very scarce they are! If Christians lived near to God and enjoyed the peace which Jesus gives, they might keep Jubilee every year and Sabbath every day! The Lord grant that we may have power to enjoy His rest and that it may never be said of us, "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord, as if to show us that He would have us rest, has been pleased to speak of resting, Himself! It is inconceivable that He should be fatigued! It were profanity to suppose that He who faints not, neither is weary, and of whose understanding there is no searching, can ever be in a condition to *need* rest! And yet He did rest, for when He had finished all the works of His hands in the six days of creation, the Lord, "rested on the seventh day and sanctified it." When afterwards that rest was broken because His works were marred, we find Him further on smelling a "sweet savor of rest" in the sacrifice which was offered unto Him by Noah, whose very name was rest.

These two facts are highly instructive and teach us that God rests in a perfect work and that when that work is marred the Lord rests in a perfect Sacrifice, even in the Lord Jesus Christ! He has a rest there and He speaks of our "entering His rest" as it is written, "they shall not enter into My rest." There is a rest of God, then, and there remains a rest unto the people of God. And of that rest, not in its highest development in Heaven, but in its *present* enjoyment on earth, we are about to speak. "Rest in the Lord."

First, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us consider the steps to this royal chamber of repose. Secondly, let us meditate upon the rest which is enjoyed in that quiet chamber. And then, thirdly, let us look at that sumptuous chamber, itself. As the result and issue of it all, may the Holy Spirit

sweetly lead us into quietness and peace, even as of old it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest."

I. First, then, let us consider certain STEPS TO THIS ROYAL CHAMBER OF REST. How are we to reach this place of sacred repose? The steps are in the Psalm before us. The first is, "Fret not yourself." You are out in the fields among the wild beasts—cease hunting them. You are among those who toil in bondage, suffering all the brunt of ill weathers and hard seasons—get away from them. Come within doors, into your Father's house. By the help of the Divine Spirit leave the green bay trees which have cast their shadow upon you and enter into the sanctuary. No longer be as the carnal who envy one another.

So long as you are out there among those who lust after evil things and fret against the Lord's Providence, you cannot rest. While you are agitating yourself to gain what other men lust after and to enjoy what other men take pleasure in, you are missing the peculiar privileges of the children of God! While your spirit is running with worldlings in the race and wrestling with them in the battle, you cannot enjoy the peace which Jesus left as a legacy to His disciples. Get away from them, then, for the first step to rest is, "fret not yourself." The griefs which make the ungodly pine are not for you, for the objects which they seek are not your objects! The losses which make them despond must not make you disconsolate, for their treasure is not your treasure.

Get away from them and stop admiring their transient felicity and lamenting your present distress. Have you been envying transgressors? Count yourself to have been foolish and ignorant in so doing, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb! Rise above the things which are *seen*, for they are temporal! Spurn the things which make the flesh smart, for this light affliction is but for a moment. Let not the world weigh you down, for you are bound, as an heir of Heaven, to tread the world beneath your feet—and all its honors you are called upon to despise! And in order that your soul should not lust after its dainties, come away unto your God and no longer fret yourself.

When you have thus come out of the field and have arrived at the palace of Love, the first staircase is described as *trust and do*. Read the third verse, "Trust in the Lord and do good." You believe in the Lord's love? Prove your confidence by committing yourself to the keeping of Him who loves you. You believe in the Atonement of Jesus? Fly for cleansing to the blood which was shed for you! You believe in the Glory of your risen Lord? Commit all your future to Him with whom you are one day to sit upon the Throne!

As for all your trials, come, now, and believe in God concerning them. Do not let anything make you mistrust or distrust your God. Know that He is God and "His mercy endures forever," and trust in Him forever! But let this faith be practical—"Trust in the Lord and do good." A dead faith will bring you but poor comfort. Yours must be a faith which can *do* as well as *receive*. It is through the *exercise* of faith that comfort comes to the heart, even as the exercise of our limbs warms our bodily frame. Do good even if you suffer for it and you shall partake in the joy of your Lord—

“Commit your way to God,

***The weight which makes you faint.
World’s are to Him no load.
To Him breathe your complaint.
He who for winds and clouds
Makes a pathway free,
Through wastes, or hostile crowds
Will make a way for thee.”***

When you have learned to trust and to do, you will have ascended a noble staircase of the royal Palace—and where does it land you? It lands you in the king’s dining room, where it is written—“Verily you shall be fed.” Observe the promise—if you have a living, active faith you shall be provided for! Your bodily needs, as they come, shall be relieved. Your mental needs, also, shall be satisfied. And as for the vast demands of your spirit, God All-Sufficient shall supply them all—“So shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” It will be a happy circumstance, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you can come up the first staircase this morning, leaving the fields, leaving the elder brother who complains concerning the many years of service in which his Father has never given him a kid, that he might make merry with his friends—if you, I say, can come up rejoicing to do the will of the Lord out of motives of love!

Leave the sinner and the grumbler alone, and go up those stairs of active faith! Then sit down where a feast is spread, even a feast of fat things full of marrow and of wines on the lees well-refined! We must ascend somewhat higher and climb the next staircase which is marked, Delight and Desire. “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Think what a good God you have, yes, what a blessed God He is! Remember how good He has been to you in the past. Think of the richness of His Word, the sureness of His promises, the tenderness of His love and the power of His arm till your soul shall say, “Whatever I have not, I have my God! Whatever is unsatisfactory, He satisfies me! And whatever grieves me to think it is so unfit for me, nothing grieves me in my God. I would not have Him changed, nor have Him change in any respect. He is a sea of blessedness in which my soul does swim.”

When you have delighted, begin to desire. Open your mouth wide and the Lord will fill it! Enlarge your petitions and He will grant them to you. Desire more Grace, more holiness, more love, more knowledge of Christ, more Heaven below and all these shall come at your call. Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you! See, now, we have ascended beyond the dining room and mounted to the royal treasury! We have entered the king’s armory! Yes, we have come into the king’s withdrawing room where He listens to the desires of His suitors and enters into fellowship with them and bids them delight in Him.

Here He bids you open your heart and pour forth your secret longings, for He will lavish upon you the gifts of His love and fill you with all His fullness! It will be a great joy for you, today, if you have now climbed from the low marshy lands of fretting into the upper chamber of delighting in the Lord! But you are not up to the royal chamber of rest yet! You must

now climb another stair, marked, Commit your way and Trust. "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him." Concerning that part of your way which you understand and have under your control, labor to walk according to the Lord's mind.

But all that portion of your way which you understand not, and have no power over, leave entirely to the absolute will of God! What have you to do in ordering your own way? "All the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." If you must have the arrangement of your own march through the wilderness—if you will advance without the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire—who is to provide for you and where will you go? Your fallible judgment and feeble strength will soon fail you! Leave to your Lord's will to ordain every step which you shall take and ask only to know so much of His mind as to be able to follow His guidance. Do not wish to pry into the secrets of the future, but "commit your way unto the Lord."

Do not worry about the troubles or the present, but leave your way where you have left your soul. Say unto the Lord, "My Father, since this road is all too rough for my infant feet, be pleased to carry me, even as You did Your people all the days of old." And His strong hands shall lift you up! And in His bosom you shall ride over the miry places of the earth, rejoicing in almighty love! Commit and trust! Now this brings us into the undressing room which stands side by side with the royal bedchamber. Take off the dusty garments of your cares and commit them to the Lord. Strip yourself of one anxiety after another! Unrobe yourself of all that reminds you of this miry, weary pilgrimage and leave your worn and travel-stained raiment.

Then you need a candle to light so you can see your way to your bed—here it is for you in verse six, "He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." You feel convinced that what is left with God is safe. You have an assured confidence that if you commit a matter to Him you have left it in the hands of a faithful Creator—these gracious confidences will light you to your couch of rest! Like Paul, you will be at peace as to the future whether it bring you life or death, for you will say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." There is your candle! Enter the quiet chamber and take your rest. "Rest in the Lord."

These are the steps which I have tried, briefly, to describe. There is a coming out from the fretfulness generated by the world and its cares and troubles—a pulling off the shoes, as it were—before you enter the Palace, saying to your soul, "Fret not because of evildoers." Then there is a sitting down to a feast of love by a simple but active faith. Next there is, after the feast, the sweet dessert of communion with Christ—a leaning of the head upon the bosom of the Lord as John did at the supper—delighting oneself in the Lord and getting the desires of your inmost soul.

After this comes a disrobing of everything like care—and the laying aside of all that is earth-born and gross which tends to distract us. And, last of all, there is the resigning of the soul to the peace which the Holy Spirit brings—which is comparable to reclining upon a soft couch, pro-

vided by Him who says to us, "My child, you are very weary; rest in the Lord."—

***"Long did I toil and knew no earthly rest!
Far did I roam and found no certain home!
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast
Who spreads His arms and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest Divine!
And I, since then, am His and He is mine."***

II. Now, let us try and form some idea of THE REST, ITSELF, WHICH IS BESTOWED UPON US IN THIS ROYAL CHAMBER. First, it is a rest of mind of which the prominent ingredient is a sense of security and calm—a fixed belief in the teachings of the Divine Spirit and in the Gospel which we have received. It is a sense of having grasped the blessings which that Gospel holds out to us and, therefore,, a sense of the certainty of our acceptance with God and of our eternal security in Christ Jesus.

Beloved, if you are of the school which shifts its creed every week. If you belong to the modern-culture gentlemen who cannot tell us what they believe because they do not know, themselves—who are so eminently receptive that it appears to me that they are mainly occupied in turning out what lumber they have warehoused in order to be able to stow away more—then you will never know any rest! This hallowed state of mind cannot come to the unsettled doubter. The sacred, dove-like Spirit quits the regions of uncertainty and dwells with those who know whom they have believed! Where He dwells there is rest, but nowhere else!

Look at John—the blessed, loving John—how, all through his three Epistles, he continually uses that word, "know." He is a terrible Dogmatist! He is sure of everything! He dogmatizes gloriously and he rests! There is no rest till you are sure. A little, "if," is like a stone in your shoe—you cannot travel comfortably—it blisters the foot and prevents restful progress. "Ah, but," says one, "I do not know how to interpret such-and-such a text." Well, then, Brother, cease from interpreting it and *believe it* as it stands! It is infinitely better to believe God's Word than to interpret it! In fact, much that passes for interpretation, nowadays, is simply the drying of all sap and soul out of the Inspired Words and making them retain only a very dry and husky sense.

Be more earnest to believe than to interpret! Ask, "What does the text say?" Believe that and if you do not comprehend all its meaning, do not be any the less believing. How shall God be comprehensible by finite creatures, or His glorious Truths be seen in all points by such poor mortals as we are? Believe so you shall be established. And then, being established in the Truth of God, grasp the blessings which that Truth brings to you and rejoice! You believe in justification by faith—be sure that you are justified! You believe in the election of God—make your calling and election sure! You believe in the final perseverance of the saints—persevere even to the end!

Grip the blessings and then understand that having believed that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God! Having put your trust in Him, there is, therefore, no condemnation to you, for you are in Christ Jesus! As you realize these doctrines and the positive security—the indisputable security—

which comes to every Believer who is relying upon Jesus, you will feel that perfect rest which is indescribable in sweetness! The rest “which only he that feels it knows.” Our rest is a sense of security.

Next, this rest is, in another aspect, contentment—perfect satisfaction with our earthly lot. Ambition spoils rest. The constant greed of avarice puts rest out of the question. The worry, the fret, the fume of accumulating, of desiring more, of impatiently coveting more than God is pleased to give—all this ruins rest. Oh, to say, “The Lord’s will be done! Having food and clothing, I am content.” “I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content,” and to let ambition, lofty desires, fretfulness and complaining all go and just say, “God has appointed my portion and ordained all my ways. So let it be.” This is rest! Put this together with security as to the eternal future and you have gained two very sweet ingredients with which to compose a rest worthy of the sons of God—

***“Rest, weary heart,
From all your silent griefs and secret pain,
Your profitless regrets and longings vain.
Wisdom and love have ordered all the past,
All shall be blessedness and light at last!
Cast off the cares that have so long oppressed.
Rest sweetly, rest!”***

Next, there is in this rest the idea of immovable confidence—perfect confidence in God so that when severe trial comes, the soul says, “It is right—I am sure it is right. I cannot see the reason, but I know that the trial is sent in love. I am certain of that.” When another trial befalls, child-like confidence in God still says, “It could not be better if God sends two troubles, they are better than one. And if He sends six, they are six times better than one, though they seem six times worse.” That confidence says, also, “He will bring me out of it. He never sent me out, yet, upon the sea of tribulation but what He brought me home again! He never sent me to a battle at my own charges yet. He never bade me do a work but what He gave me strength for it! He never called me to suffer but what He sustained me under the pain.”

Oh, but this is a blessed thing, to be quite confident that God cannot err, cannot forsake, cannot change, cannot cease to love and that, therefore, everything that comes from Him comes in the right way, at the right time, in the right measure—and that all is well and will end well! Though all the tempests come forth from their caverns to howl at once across the tremendous seas. Though every cyclone and hurricane that ever blew should come back, again, and my poor ship should be almost a wreck by reason of their fury—it is well, it is well! If only on a board or a broken piece of the ship I shall come safely to land, for so has God decreed, so glory be to His name! I will leave all to Him. This is rest—thorough rest, security, contentment, confidence!

Then, perhaps, mainly, according to the Hebrew, this rest consists in *submission*, for the Hebrew is, “Be silent to God.” That is the word. One of the old versions reads it, “Hold you still before God.” This holy silence is illustrated by what we read of Aaron, when his sons died. Before the Lord—“Aaron held his peace.” Let your tongue be quiet. Do not murmur.

Do not argue—leave all to God and bow in silence. "My soul is even as a weaned child," said David. He would no longer cry after the warm breasts of comfort—he was weaned at last!

Now, O Lord, Your will is my will. It has been a sharp lesson, but You have taught it to me at last! Before I struggled, but now I acquiesce. Once I quarreled, but now sweetly yield. Let it be as You please. Your will is mine. This, also, is rest—

***"This is a holier, sweeter rest,
Than the lulling rest from pain,
And a deeper calm than that which sleep
Sheds over heart and brain.
It is the soul's surrendered choice,
The settling of the will,
Lying down gently at the Cross,
God's purpose to fulfill."***

There comes, next, the rest of patient waiting, for that is in the text. What does it say? "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This is to have desires, but to feel that you can waive them and tarry at the Lord's leisure. This is to have wishes, but always to keep them tethered so that they do not go too far. This is to have a will only in subserviency to the wiser and kinder will which rules above, always saying, "Lord, that is what I think I should wish for, but I do not know, for sure, whether it would be good for me or not. Therefore I ask You to deny me if my wishes are wrong. Do not hear my most earnest prayers, my Father, if they should not please You, for I would ask You rather not to hear me than to hear me if I ask amiss.

"I have wishes and a will, Lord which You have permitted me to have, for You have said You will grant me the desires of my heart. But Lord, if my heart should not be delighting herself in You when she feels her desires, they shall not be my desires, I will disown them! My most supreme will shall be not to will anything except Your will—and if I do will it, I repent of so willing and discard the evil will and the undesirable desire. I will turn all willfulness out of doors, by Your Grace, that You may have Your will." This is a blessed spirit, dear Friends, and he that has attained it has entered the royal bedchamber where he shall rest in peace, for, "so He gives His Beloved sleep."

This rest means, also, peace—peace of soul with yourself, with your fellow men, with God. It takes two to make an enemy and if you will not be one of the two, you will not have an enemy seriously to distress you. Men may dislike you, but they shall be held in check, for, "when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." "He makes the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder does He restrain." At any rate, the assured Believer possesses that peace which Christ had, who, when His foes gathered round about Him and sought to catch Him in His words, baffled them all by His calm self-possession.

This rest means quiet happiness, inward calm. The soul has mounted where it desires to be and does not intend to move from its position. Noah's dove has been round the earth and seen nothing but waste of waters. But at last she has flown home—she is in Noah's hand and she

means to stay in the ark until better times shall come and the waters are endurable. Oh, if any of you have wandered and lost the peace which Christ gives, even that which He gives not to the world—if you are troubled and fretful, envious and weary—commune with your own heart this morning and say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Say to your heart as I have said to mine, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." "Rest in the Lord."

To close our description of rest, I think we must add one other term to it. It is the rest of expectation, especially in regard to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest fret that some of us ever have concerns the *cause of God*. Personal troubles and domestic troubles sit very lightly on some of us, but *Church trouble* perplexes us. Not in my case, because none of you who love the Lord ever intentionally cause me distress of mind. But there are some who walk, of whom we would tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ—and yet they have entered into the Church to her dishonor and injury!

And outside this Church, outside in the great Church of Christ, you can see, everywhere, looming heavily over us, the black clouds of Romanism! And amidst the gloom, the specters of skepticism are fitting to and fro. Everything in these times seems to be loose and out of joint! The men of "thought" have pulled up the old landmarks. They have broken down the hedges and laid the Lord's enclosures common to all that pass by the way. Behold, they go about to break down the carved work of the sanctuary with their axes! They defile the temple of the Lord! Nothing is sacred for these wise men of modern times! No Truth of God that was taught by their sires can be taught by them.

The Doctrines of Grace to these men are platitudes and the doctrine of the Cross, itself, is denied! Or, when not denied, so obscured that we know not what it is! Scarcely do they, themselves, know what it is they affirm! They are great at questions and negations. Novelties of doctrine are poured out upon the earth in countless numbers as the frogs which came up in the apocalyptic vision! And what shall the end be? "Go your way," says God to His beloved, "for you shall rest and stand in your lot in the end of the days." Christ will take care of His own Church! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Leave all this to Him who sees the end as well as the beginning and to whom the victory shall surely come! Your strength is to sit still. Rest in the Lord with expectation that He will overrule the evil and will, Himself, surely come to end it all and reign gloriously among His ancients.

III. Lastly, and here I needed time, but with my usual improvidence I have squandered it—our third point is, let us enter and examine THE ROYAL CHAMBER ITSELF. "Rest in the Lord." Now the text does not say rest in anything *about* the Lord, but rest in the Lord Himself! Oh that the Spirit might bring us into such union and communion with God that we might, to the fullest, know the meaning of this text! "Rest in the Lord!" The Lord has revealed Himself to us in these days in the Person of His only-

begotten Son! Jesus, akin to us by nature! Jesus, our Substitute and Surety! Jesus, our All in All!

Now, Beloved, come near to Jesus by a living faith! Hide yourselves in Jesus! Enter into His wounds! Feel your safety in Him, your union to Him! Live *to* Him, live *with* Him, live *for* Him, live *in* Him and as you do, so you must rest! Only in the Lord is there any rest for you! Only as you are a man in Christ Jesus and lose yourself in Him, your life, being hidden with Christ in God, in that way, in that way only, shall you find perfect rest! What a resting place do saints find in the finished work of Jesus! Let but the Holy Spirit lead them to see the Glory of His atoning blood and they are sure to rest!

Let me tenderly entreat the tempted Believer to tell Jesus all his case and look to Him for that rest which He Himself promised when He said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls."—

***"Rest, weary soul!
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid,
For all your sins full satisfaction made!
Strive not to do yourself what Christ has done,
Claim the free gift and make the joy your own.
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distress,
Rest, sweetly rest!"***

Although this is obviously the main meaning, we may add that, "Rest in the Lord," means rest in Him as your Covenant God. You have not to deal with an abstract Deity who stands afar off as your offended Creator. Behold, Beloved, if you believe in Jesus, the Lord has entered into an everlasting Covenant with you, ordered in all things and sure! He has said concerning *you*, "I will not turn away from you to do you good." He has promised to keep you and preserve you and bring you into His eternal Glory by a Covenant signed and sealed with the precious blood of Christ!

"Rest in the Lord." He will keep His Covenant even to its jots and tittles, therefore be not disquieted. The eternal shalls and wills shall never fail! "This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you." Glory be unto our Covenant God! Come and rest in Him, Beloved!

Then rest in all the relationships into which the Lord has been pleased to bring Himself. Know that this God of yours is your shield and your exceedingly great reward! He is your rock, your dwelling place! He is your Shepherd and your Preserver. Best of all, He is your Father! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, one cannot talk about this! One needs to drink it in by quiet meditation! It is a bliss too great for words to be, indeed, a child of the heavenly Father! Jehovah is Creator of Heaven and earth, Maker and Destroyer! And yet I am His child! And as surely as a child may trust its parent and rest in its mother's bosom, so surely and safely may I trust my Father and rest in Him!

Do you not know, too, that to set forth the nearness and tenderness of His relationship to us, the Lord is pleased to describe Himself as the Husband of our souls? For, "Your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." "I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." Shall not the spouse trust her husband? I hope we will, each of us, say to Him this morning, "Lord, I trust You, for I love You since You have made me one with You in blessed union. And I say to You, today, as the Church did of old, 'Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?'" Rest in your Friend, your Savior, your All in All! I leave the full list of Divine relationships for you to think of at your leisure. They are all full of rest.

Rest, next, in each one of the attributes of God. Are you conscious of sin? Come and rest in the *mercy* which blots it out! Poor Sinner, I would gladly invite you with the burden of your guilt upon you, to remember that He delights in mercy! It is God's joy to pass by transgression! You will never escape from the bondage of your sin except as you come to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, His Son. Rest in boundless mercy! Beloved child of God, are you troubled about inward sin?—then rest in His power to break the neck of corruption! Perhaps your affliction concerns your worldly affairs—then rest in the power of God to help you! He is great at a dead lift and when none can help us but God, then is God most ready to come to the rescue.

Rest, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, in God's *wisdom*. You cannot see your way, but He can—leave it to Him, for there is no possibility of error in His counsels. Rest, also, in His *immutability*—that sure anchor amid the troubled sea of life. You have changes every day—He never changes! Come back to Him whose constancy of love is a mountain of strength! He has set His mind upon saving you and He is of one mind—who shall turn Him? This is His mind—that He that believes and is baptized shall be saved—and He will perform that salvation! Not death nor Hell shall thwart the sacred purpose of an unchanging God! He will carry out His gracious work and glorify Himself!

Rest, also, in His *faithfulness*. What He has promised He will perform. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Has He said and shall He not do it? Take His promise and believe it to be as good as fulfilled, for so it is. Rest also in His *Word* which He has written for your consolation. The Holy Spirit has, in a thousand ways, declared the Divine goodwill towards you—meditate upon what He has dictated. As full as the skies are of stars so full are the Scriptures with promises! Take these precious promises, one by one. Believe them and pray to the Lord, saying, "Fulfill this Word unto Your servant whereon You have caused me to hope. O Lord, do as You have said."

Then sweetly rest in the eternal *truthfulness*, for the Lord will keep every one of His promises to you. What a subject I have before me! I seem to be like those bold explorers in the northern seas, before whom a passage opens up to the left and then another channel on the right. They sail

into the center of a great bay and then further on enter upon another sea and know not how wide the ocean may yet become still further on! My text is an ocean to which I see no boundary! It is full of wondrous Grace but I have neither time nor ability to sail over its shoreless surface! I must leave you to spread the sails of meditation! And favored by the gales of the Spirit's influences, I trust you will be borne along—not to an ocean of primeval ice—but to the condition of unbroken rest in the Lord!

Next, let us rest in the will of God. It is a high point to arrive at to feel that my Father's will is such that I can entirely rest in it, be it whatever it may. Yet it would not be so difficult if we were not so depraved. O for conquering Grace to crush down self! I would be as a grain of dust blown in the summer's gale without power to change my course, carried on by the Irresistible Spirit of the Lord—forever made willingly unwilling to will anything but the will of my Lord! I would be as a tiny straw borne along by the Gulf Stream, carried wherever the warm love of God shall bear me, delighting to lie low and see the Lord, alone, exalted!

The Buddhists talk about being absorbed into Buddha and ceasing to be. And they make it their heaven to be, at last, swallowed up in their god. I know the falsehood of this teaching, but I know that there is a truth which is very like it in outward aspect. Oh, to be *nothing*! To be *less* than nothing! To have no will and no desire about life or death, about sickness or health, about poverty or wealth—no will about *anything*—and yet to have a strong resolved will to deny self and say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” This is to rest in the Lord!

Beloved, may the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, grant you abundantly, from this day forward, to enter into this which is man's first, man's last, man's sweetest, truest rest—the rest of the sinner coming to Christ—the rest of the saint abiding in Heaven! This is the only real rest that can be found on earth or Heaven—rest in the Lord! God grant it to us by faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A COMFORTING MESSAGE FOR THE CLOSING YEAR NO. 2393

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
DECEMBER 30, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1863.**

***"Rest in the Lord."
Psalm 37:7.***

IT is certain, Christian, that you have nowhere else to rest. Of the whole of this time-state it was well said, "This is not your rest," and of all the comfort that you find in earthly friendships and relationships, in the good things of this life, or in any hopes short of Heaven, we may truly say, "This is not your rest." The other day, at Highgate, I passed some fine old trees that were marked with a white cross, to indicate, no doubt, that they were to be cut down. So, everything we have here is marked with the woodman's cross and the axe must fell all our joys. You birds of paradise, build not your nests on trees that are marked to fall! This earth is not your rest! You shall fly the wide world over till your wings are weary, but, you doves of Christ, you shall find no rest till you come back to the hand of your Noah and nestle in His ark of Covenant Grace. "Rest in the Lord," says the text, and in saying so it does, as it were, condemn all other pretended rests and fancied refuges! May everyone of you who have wandered hear the voice of Wisdom and may your hearts say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!"

But though there is no rest to be found in earthly things, yet we may have rest even while here—rest which drops from above. Just as the wilderness yielded no bread to the children of Israel, yet there was bread for them in the wilderness, for it fell from Heaven! The arid sands could give no streams of cooling water, yet there was water even there, for the Apostle Paul tells us that "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Because I tell you that this world is a wilderness and you find it true, do not think that you are never to have any rest in it. Behold, your rest is sent to you from on high! Behold, your refreshment comes from the Rock of Ages! In Jesus you have rest, even though you are pilgrims, and even though you are troubled, for we who have believed in Him, even now have entered into rest! True Christians, when they are in a healthy state of mind and heart, rest in the Lord and, as I hope this Tabernacle is not a leper house, but a place where the war-

riors of Christ have come to feast at the table of their great Captain, I desire for each of you, and for myself, also, that all of us who are in Christ may this night have perfect “rest in the Lord.”

What is this rest that is mentioned in our text?

I. The rest which Believers enjoy is, first of all, REST FROM WANDERING.

You know that God promised to give rest to His ancient people. They had none in the wilderness, for, often, they had no sooner pitched their tents than they had to strike them again. As quickly as the fiery-cloudy pillar moved, so had they, though weary and footsore, to follow. Joshua said to the Reubenites and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, whose inheritance was to be on the further side of Jordan “You shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them until the Lord has given your brethren rest.” The Promised Land was always looked forward to by the weary and wandering tribes as a place where they would rest.

Well, Beloved, you and I no longer wander—we have come to our rest. O my Heart, how you did wander, like a weary pilgrim, through the Egypt of your bondage! You did wander to Sinai, where you did hear the Law of God that made you tremble! You did wander across the wilderness of Sin, where your good works vexed and tired you, and your evil works, like fiery serpents, bit you! But that is all over now. My Soul, you have crossed the Jordan and, having found Christ, you have no inclination to wander anymore. My Brothers and Sisters, remember how our minds used to wander after 50 pretended comforts and we found no joy in any of them? One day we thought this, the next day we thought that. One day we dreamed that peace was to be found here, the next day, we fancied it was to be obtained yonder, the bubble mocked us as we pursued it and it continually fled from our grasp! We thought full sure that we had secured something solid, but the apple of Sodom was crushed when we laid hold upon it—it turned to ashes in our hand!

We used to be always wandering—none could tell where we would rest on the morrow—but now we rest in the Lord! We have no inclination to wander to anyone else. “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.” Every now and then people discover a new gospel and they want us to believe it, but we say to them, “No, we are perfectly content with what we have received.” Sometimes a new form of religion is invented, but it has no attractions for us! We have left off being pilgrims—we are settled down and cannot, by God’s Grace, be moved! We say of all these inventions—

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

I do not usually find it worth my while, nowadays, when anybody tells me, at the beginning of a book, that he is going to disprove all that I believe, to read the book at all! If a cook informs me that a joint of meat is

bad and, on tasting the first mouthful, I find that it is so, there is no need that I should eat it all in order to prove that it is not good wholesome food! So, you had better leave these tainted doctrines alone! When you have your principles firmly fixed, especially when you have come to rest at the very feet of the unchanging Jesus and have learned the meaning of that text, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” you have reached perfection’s own self and you may well grow conservative and never go a step beyond! Paul could say to the Galatians, “If any man preaches any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed,” for he could also say, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”—

***“Now rest, my long-divided Heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest,***

never more to go gadding abroad, to seek after other loves and other trusts! In that sense, dear Friends, “rest in the Lord.” Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine, but abide fast by Christ, whom you have received by faith.

II. We have also another rest, and that is, REST FROM ALL OUR FOES.

Scripture, speaking of the victories of the children of Israel under Joshua and Caleb, says, “The land had rest from war.” When Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor, was converted, we read, “Then had the churches rest.” Now, dear Friends, the people of God are always being molested by enemies—there are multitudes of foes on the right hand and on the left. Yet was David right when he penned that verse, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” The moment we begin to think of the prevalence of Christ’s plea, the merit of Christ’s blood, the power of Christ’s arm, the faithfulness of Christ’s heart—what are all our sins within us, or all our foes without us? Do they not melt away like the host of Midian before the sword of the Lord and of Gideon? Does some stout sin, like Goliath of Gath, come out and challenge you to fight? Take the name of the Lord as your sling and stone, and you shall yet be able to cut off the giant’s head! Do your foes come out against you with multitudes of chariots? Let your faith open its eyes and you shall see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you! Put your trust in God and you shall soon learn that more are they that are for you than all that can be against you. “War, war, war!” the voices of enemies constantly cry around the walls of Zion, but what is that sweet sound within the city? It is the music of the harp and the song of them that make merry!—

***“There is a stream whose gentle flow
Supplies the city of our God
Life, love, and joy, still gliding through,
And watering our Divine abode.”***

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, notwithstanding that Hell is against us, and that devilish trinity, the world, the flesh, and Satan—yet, when we come to our Lord Jesus Christ and sit under the shadow of His great Atone-

ment and remember His glorious Resurrection and Ascension—we feel at once that we can “rest in the Lord.”

III. Further, we have REST IN THE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE.

In this meaning of the word, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we do really, “rest in the Lord.” We are not Christians if we do not, for the first mark of a Believer is that he rests in Christ for everything, depending on the blood and righteousness of Christ as the Alpha and the Omega of his salvation. Now, as Believers rest in Christ for the first things, so ought they to rest in Christ for *all* things. Whatever need you have, rest on the bare arm of God to supply it. Though you should require infinity, it is at your beck and call. Only rest in God, for Omniscience is watching for your good and Omnipotence is prepared to aid you!

Beloved, I fear that we often place our confidence in ourselves, or get resting on an arm of flesh, depending first on this friend and then on that, relying first upon this scheme and then upon that plan. Happy is the man who has learned to cast off Saul’s armor, saying, “I cannot go with these.” The man who can cry, as David did to the giant, “You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” “Rest in the Lord,” Christian, whatever it is that you require to bring you safely to His dwelling place above, and let your confidence exercise itself upon your Lord’s faithfulness, almightiness and truth.

IV. Now, though we have used the word, “rest,” in three senses, we have not as yet come to the sweetest part of our subject. Believers have REST IN THE SENSE OF SAFETY.

A Hebrew, pursued by the manslayer, never rested till he reached the City of Refuge. Lot must not rest until he gets into the little city of Zoar. So, we must never think of resting till we are *saved*. You who are afraid you are not saved have no rest. There are some of you who never say more than this, “Well, I *hope* I am saved,” or, “I trust I may be saved.” You do not have real rest, dear Friends—you may have something like rest, but you do not know the perfect peace of one who has fled for refuge to Christ—one who has given up every resting place except the finished work of Jesus! Such a person, having taken refuge in Christ, feels *positively* sure that nothing can harm him. What if I should venture to make my boast in my God tonight? What if I should say—

**“In my Surety I am free
His dear wounds avail for me.”**

What if I should glory in sin completely pardoned and in a robe of righteousness, woven from the top throughout, in which I stand arrayed before the Lord? If I said all this, I should say no more than *you* ought to say, you who are trusting in the Lord!

You are saved, you are saved *now*! You are safe for all the days and all the nights you may live. You are safe in life and in death, in time and through eternity! Since Christ endured your condemnation, it cannot rest

on you! God acquits you—therefore no accusation can lie against you. God absolves you. Christ pleads on your behalf—it is not possible that all your past sin can ruin you, for it was laid upon the Scapegoat’s head of old—nothing in the present can daunt you, for Jesus says, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Nothing in the future shall cast you down, for even to the end does the Lord keep His people! He gives unto them *eternal life* and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.

I recollect when I first heard the glorious doctrine of the Believer’s eternal safety—the good old man preached it very plainly, indeed, but its effect on me—I was then an unconverted but anxious soul—its effect on me was that it set my mouth a-watering. “Oh,” I thought, “what would I not give to be saved?” I never had any relish for that tinkering gospel which is preached by Arminians—it is a very fine thing to look at, but it does not bear the wear and tear of life! I never cared for that sham gospel which may save today, but may damn tomorrow. I never admired that gospel chariot which has no bottom to it, or has wheels with rotten spokes, and that breaks down in the miry places of the way. I never had a taste for that sort of teaching, even before I was converted.

But that Gospel which says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and makes no, “ifs,” and, “ands,” about it—that Gospel which promises *eternal life* and says that Believers shall never perish—oh it set my heart a-longing! How ardently I desired to get hold of it! And when I learned that I might have it, that I, the vilest of the vile, might have it, have it on these terms—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”—oh, it seemed worthy of God’s giving and worthy of man’s accepting, worthy of the Spirit’s work, worthy of Christ’s procuring, worthy, indeed, of the man it blesses and of the God who is glorified in blessing him! O dear Friends, let us, if we are not safe in Christ, long to be so, and may the Lord bring us to Him, even at this very hour!

“Rest in the Lord,” then, Christians, for in Him is every Believer perfectly safe—

***“Munitions of stupendous rock
His dwelling place shall be.
There might his soul without a shock,
The wreck of nature see.”***

V. But the word, “rest,” has a further meaning. God gives to His people PERFECT REST FROM WEARINESS.

Man sometimes wipes his brow, and asks, “When will the shadows come? When shall I have fulfilled as a hireling my day of toil? “ To think of being saved by our *feelings* and *works* brings much weariness to the spirit and, indeed, even to a Believer, this world’s cares and strifes may often make him fling himself down upon his couch, and say, “Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers!” But, dear Friends, when we really rest in Christ—when we sit down under His shadow with great delight—all our weariness goes away at once! Do you not know what it is to spring up with elastic footsteps and go forth to some new duty, or to

some fresh suffering, at the mere mention of your Lord's name, when, just before, you were bowed down with sorrow and thought that surely your end must soon come, and that you must speedily fall by the hand of the enemy? Every now and then, you know, our bodily strength needs to be renewed in sleep—constantly must this experience recur, or else we must die. Now, Jesus, “gives His beloved sleep,” and all the calm that sleep can infuse into the body, does faith in Christ give to the soul! The jaded mind is calm when He is near. The distracted heart, when Christ has breathed upon it, is like a mountain lake on a summer's day.

Absence from Christ produces weariness, but the Presence of Jesus always brings a sense of perfect ease. Have I not seen a man go staggering along beneath a little load of trouble because he had not gone to God with his burden? Yet I have seen another carry three times the weight and stand like a Hercules, unmoved, with his feet firmly set, because God was in him, and his confidence was in the Most High. I have seen you, Friend, groaning and repining because you had a trifling loss, or a slight sickness. And I have seen another, close to the verge of death, who has suffered the loss of all things, who has, nevertheless, rejoiced in the Lord and sung aloud in his Redeemer's name. All the difference is here—if we rest in the Lord, we rest, and nothing can make us weary—but if we go not to Him, we know no rest, and the slightest fatigue bows us down.

I would, dear Friends, that all the members of this Church had more of this resting in the Lord. Sometimes I wish that some of you had more weariness—you will never work yourselves to death serving Christ—you are a great deal more likely to weary yourselves by serving the world. How men will moil and toil, and run here and there, to get a little of this world's goods—and then they put it into a bag that is full of holes! They neglect the means of Grace and, as to the week-night service—dear, dear, dear, there is that shop that must be attended to! And some of you can scarcely give yourselves time to pray because you must rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. I wish that you would sometimes grow weary in that kind of labor, and take to another Master, and work for Him as you have worked for the world, till you grew weary in *His* cause, for then would you know the sweet rest with which He makes the weary to rest when they have wearied themselves for Him in preaching, in teaching, in spreading His truth!

We read in Isaiah's prophecy, “This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest,” and I know there are some weary ones here. You are not weary of God's work, but you are weary of bearing Christ's Cross. You have had so much shame and so much sorrow—well, well, Brothers and Sisters—“rest in the Lord.” You may come to Him and since He carried His Cross, and that Cross was yours as well as His, you may put *your cross* upon His shoulder, and then you will find it easy work to carry the cross, yourselves! This, then, is one of the rests which every Christian may have—rest from weariness.

VI. There is also a rest called THE REST OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Was it not said of Boaz, by the mother-in-law of Ruth, “The man will not be in rest until he has finished the thing this day”? Some Christians never have any rest, or they have but very little, because they do not understand the doctrine of a finished salvation. If you and I are only half-saved, why, of course, we can never be *really* restful till the work is finished. No, if we are only three-quarters saved, we shall never have any true rest till the other quarter of the work is done! If there is one stone for us to lay in order to complete the edifice, we must not give sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till it is fixed in its place.

But here is the joy, here is the peace of Christians, that our salvation is a finished one! We have not a farthing to pay to complete the ransom of our souls. We have not a stitch to set to finish the robe of our salvation. We have not an act to perform, a prayer to offer, a tear to weep, a thought to think in order to finish the work of our redemption! I know that all these things shall be worked in us and, that by the Spirit of God we shall be made to do them—but all that shall not be with any view to the completion of our salvation—that was finished in the Person of the bleeding Lamb of Calvary!

There are a great many people who imagine that they will be saved because they regularly go to Church—they might go to Church as long as Methuselah lived, but not get an inch nearer to Heaven by doing so! Others of you may suppose that you will go to Glory through constantly coming *here*. We will soon drive that delusion out of your minds if you are indulging any such notion! Still, there it is—you think that if you are kind, moral, upright, if you do good to your neighbors, if you bring up your families well—in some way Jesus Christ will mysteriously come in to make up your deficiencies and then when you get to Glory, of course, you intend to have a song all to yourself! You will say, “Praise and glory and honor be to myself! I did my part and Christ’s assistance made the matter all right.” The man who thinks that the work of salvation is partly his own does not understand the finished work of Christ! Either Christ completed all that was necessary for your salvation, or He did not! If He did finish it, then rest in Him and be glad, and say, “I am secure forever because my salvation is finished. I have nothing to do but to live to the honor of Him who has completely saved me by His Grace, His blood, His righteousness.”

But if Christ did not finish the work, you cannot complete it! If He has left a stitch unsewn or a stone unlaied, you cannot supply the deficiency. What? The human and the Divine joined together as equals? What? Yoke your little, insignificant, insect-like power with the Omnipotent strength of the Divine Redeemer? God forbid! What? Shall the dross and scum of human merit come and be reckoned with the pure gold of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice? No! That can never be! Grace reigns, and Grace, alone, reigns! It reigns in this, that there is a finished work! Therefore, Christian, rest—“rest in the Lord,” for the work is done! Be of good cheer, take your ease in Christ. Eat of Him, drink of Him and be merry, for you have

much goods laid up for many years. Your feasting will never bring to you the censure of being a fool, but you will be as foolish as a thousand fools if you do not rest in Jesus!

VII. Once again, we have, as Christians, enjoyed and we do *now* enjoy, **THE REST OF COMPLETE SATISFACTION.** There are very few persons in this world who are perfectly contented, but true Believers, when they are in a right state of mind, are always so. I do not believe that I have a wish in all this world except to know more of my Master and to win more souls for Him. Besides that, I cannot see anything to long for and I can truly sing—

***“I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”***

Rich sinners think poor saints are great fools. You, young man, over there, you own a fine horse and you have a splendid house and garden, or you have a flourishing business and very bright prospects. But I could pick out some old woman here—and, thank God, there are many such who regularly come to the Tabernacle, poor souls who have little else but the Grace of God to comfort them—I could bring this old women up for you to see. Her clothes are darned in a hundred places, or else she would be in rags. She works very hard to earn the little that keeps her out of the workhouse. She has not many comforts, yet sometimes, when we get a shake of her hand, we find she has some comforts, though they are of a sort that this young man does not understand.

Well now, come here, my good Sister! Do you see that young man over there? He never has rheumatism in his bones. He never has to sit shivering in winter because there is no fire in the grate. He never has to say to his landlord, “I do not know where I shall get the week’s rent.” He never has to pinch himself and live on nothing but a small piece of bread-and-butter for a couple of days—no, never! I ask her, “Will you change places with this young gentleman?” “Well,” she says, “I should like to know, first, whether he has an interest in Christ.” When I tell her that he has not, I am sure her answer would be, “Change places with *him*? No, never! I’d sooner starve and have Christ as my Savior, than own all the wealth and comforts of this world, and be without Christ.” So say we, Brothers and Sisters, and in the language of Watts we sing—

***“Go now, and boast of all your stores
And tell how bright you shine!
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
And my Redeemer’s mine.”***

Having Christ, we feel perfect satisfaction and need nothing more! If we go up or down, to the right or to the left, we can find nothing beyond our Lord! Having Him, we possess all things, and our soul is satisfied! You remember that Naomi spoke of Ruth finding rest in the house of her husband. That is to say, she would have all she needed. Her husband would be all things to her. She did not need another husband, she did

not need to find another house, nor broader fields, nor larger wealth. Boaz was all in all to her and what he gave her was enough for all her needs. So is it with the Christian—Christ is All in All to him—whatever He may give, or whatever He may deny, the Christian is perfectly content!

VIII. I close, dear Friends, by noticing that all these forms of rest should bring to the Believer THE REST OF CONSCIOUS ENJOYMENT.

Going down to Windsor to preach some time ago, my friend, John Anderson, was with me. And about twelve o'clock, as we were near Datchet, under the broad trees of a park we saw a number of sheep lying down peacefully. My friend quoted that passage in the Canticles, "Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon." It was the very picture of content and restful enjoyment! And as I came along tonight, I was thinking that I should like to see the same picture in this Church when we meet presently around the Communion Table. May you all have the rest of enjoyment! You have Christ to feed upon. You have heard about Him, again, this evening. You know He is yours. Then kiss Him with the kisses of your mouth. You have not a doubt, I hope, of your interest in Him—if you have, come to Him, again, just as you came at first, as poor sinners resting on Him alone!

And if He is, indeed, yours, treat Him as you would treat a loaf of bread if you were hungry—do not merely look at Him, but eat of Him and eat abundantly, O Beloved! Leave all your cares behind. You remember what Pharaoh said to Joseph's brethren, "Also regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." Now, do not regard that household of yours, tonight, leave that stock-in-trade behind, let all that lumber lie where it is, for the good of Christ and of all the land of Heaven is yours! Come now, and be satisfied with all the goodness of God's Grace. "Ah," you say, "it is not quite so easy to leave all these things. There are such attractions in the world." Attractions, Brothers and Sisters? Rather, call them *distractions*! But I say that the attractions of Christ are greater than the distractions of the world! Fix your souls steadily on this fact, that you have Christ, that Christ is All in All to them that trust Him, and so come, now, and take your full rest in the Lord your God!

Oh, that some might be set a-longing, tonight, and say, "That is what we want to do!" Well, if you long for Christ, then Christ longs for you! If you want Christ, then Christ wants you! If you penitently return to the Lord now, He will hasten towards you while you are yet a great way off! He will run to meet you, even as the father ran to meet his prodigal son. If you begin to confess with the prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in Your sight, and am no more worthy to be called Your son," the Lord will say to His servants, as the father in the parable said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let

us eat and be merry: for this, My son, was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found.”

Remember that verse of Joseph Hart’s which we have often sung, and as I repeat it, trust the Savior of whom He sings—

**“Trust Him; He will not deceive us,
Though we hardly of Him deem:
He will never, never leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave Him.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 123, 124. 125.**

We shall read, this evening, three short Psalms—the 123rd , 124th and 125th . May the Holy Spirit, who Inspired the writers of them, strengthen our faith while we read these songs of joyous confidence!

Psalm 123:1. *Unto You lift I up my eyes.* Instead of looking downward in despair, or looking to the right hand or to the left to human confidence, or looking within in pride, “Unto You lift I up my eyes.”—

1. *O You that dwells in the heavens.* It is always delightful to the Christian to remember what the title of his God is—“Our Father, which are in Heaven.” It is the place of prospect from which God looks down and sees all men, and understands all their ways. And it is also the place of His Power and His Glory. Lord, I look up to You! You dwell in Glory, therefore all power is in Your hands, and You know how to use that power on the behalf of Your people!

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.* The servant looks to his master’s hand for direction and for support. If he has a work to do that is too heavy for him, he looks to his master to send him help. And he also looks to his master’s hand for his reward when his work is done. So, dear Friends, are we, day by day, walking as in our Master’s light?

3. *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* The best thing that the best of men can ask for is God’s mercy! And that mercy is so great, even to the heavens, that, under the weariness of trials and troubles, it is a sufficient help for them. When we are not only in contempt, but even filled with contempt and, as the text puts it, “exceedingly filled with contempt,” so that we have lost our good name among men, still may we turn to our God and seek His mercy.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.* This was the lot of God’s people in David’s day. It is the same with Believers, now, and I suppose that, so long as the earth stands, the saints of the Lord will have to cry to Him concerning their adversaries. Let them remember always to use the same remedy that the godly ones of old used and not plead in earthly courts of

law, but take the case to the great Court of King's Bench in Heaven! Let not any of the Lord's children ever be concerned about defending their own characters, but let them always go at once to Him whose bare arm is quite sufficient to right all wrongs and to deliver the oppressed.

Psalm 124:1. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say.* There is a break here, the sentence is not finished, so finish it for yourselves. If the Lord had not been on your side, what then? You would have been condemned on account of sin! If the Lord had not been on your side as the Redeemer, you would have been left to perish through the natural depravity of your own heart! If He who is "mighty to save" had not been your Helper, just think, Christians, you who are today filled with joy, whose feet are treading Mount Tabor—think what you would have been if the Lord had *not* been on your side—and then praise and magnify that Grace to which you owe so much!

2, 3. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.* The word, "quick," here means, "living." Before we were dead, they would have swallowed us up, for the anger of men against God's people is always exceedingly great. They called the Master of the house, "Beelzebub," so they are not likely to be very warmly affected towards His disciples! Suppose that we had been given up to the devices of wicked men, where would we have been?

My brethren, a man may live so circumspectly that, outwardly, he may be without fault, yet he may wake up, come morning, and find his character blasted! And it may remain so for years, for the tongue of slander is full of all manner of villainy and, often, the more pure the alabaster of a man's character may be, the more black are the filthy spots which the world makes upon it! Be not too much cast down, O you children of the living God, when you are dishonored among men, for so was it with the Lord God, Himself, who was slandered in the garden of Eden! Expect not, therefore, that you will escape the serpent's venom!

4, 5. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* Here, in this life, we may have troubles, not only from our own evil hearts, but also from Satan and from the world. Truly, if it had not been for the Lord, the proud waters had gone right over our souls! It is a wonder that we are alive, Brothers and Sisters! We can sing with Watts—

***"Our life contains a thousand springs
And dies if one is gone!
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"***

But it is a ten thousand times greater miracle that we are spiritually alive when there are so many in this world seeking to destroy us! This is a marvel of marvels and the whole world, itself, contains no greater wonders than are to be found in that one little world of Mansoul!

6. *Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth.* We were almost in their teeth, like David's lamb, but David's Son plucked

us out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear! Now the Psalmist uses another figure. First he spoke of the proud waters, then of the wild beasts—now he mentions the fowlers.

7, 8. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made Heaven and earth.* What a blessed conclusion is it to our experience when we can sing of what the Lord has done and so are encouraged by the all of what He will yet do! Let us write this text upon our banners and lift them up in the face of every adversary, “Our help is in the name of the Lord.” As John Wesley said, “The best of all is, God is with us,” that is the best of all to the Christian, so good an, “all,” that he is blessed with that even if he has nothing besides!

Psalm 125:1-3. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* By, “the rod,” is here meant, “the scepter.” The wicked shall not *permanently* rule over the righteous—they may have a temporary dominion and sovereignty but, in due season, their rod shall be broken and their power shall be scattered to the winds.

4, 5. *Do good O Lord, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.* May we have faith to lay hold upon that last blood promise and so enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding! Amen!

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END OF VOLUME 40.

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

THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED

NO. 3347

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1913.

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

“A Psalm of David to bring to remembrance.”
Psalm 38:(Title).

THESE words form the title to the Psalm before us, which we read just now in your hearing. Let us note, for a short time, the subjects which David thought it necessary to bring to remembrance. We must all have noticed that our memories much more readily retain evil than good. The snatch of a profane song heard in childhood will remain with us to our graves—while many a holy thought leaves scarcely an impression upon the tablets of memory. We heard it—it is gone—it would be difficult to recall it. The draft that flows down the rivers of Sodom, one retentively collects, but the goodly cedars of Lebanon that are floated down the stream pass by unheeded. We may well say, “Forget not all His benefits,” for, alas, while the multitude of God’s benefits is forgotten, if there is anything to murmur at, it is pretty sure to be treasured up as though it were a priceless relic to be carefully preserved! May the Lord mend our memories. As He makes us new men and women in Christ Jesus, may the Holy Spirit give to our memories the power to grip the right and the true—and with a loose hand to let slip that which is evil and contrary to His rule. The Psalm is “to bring to remembrance.” This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest, at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. I have read the Psalm to you and I think you will all agree with me that among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were—

I. HIS PAST TRIALS AND HIS PAST DELIVERANCES.

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let me stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Let me remind you of your past battles and victories, of your troubles and conflicts and your sweet cheer and safe preservation. It will do you good to remember them—*such a remembrance will prevent your imagining that you have come into the land of ease and perfect rest.* We may have our time of prosperity and say with David, “I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor, You have made my mountain to stand strong.” But soon adversity surprises us, as it suddenly overtook him and changed his note, “You did hide Your face and I was troubled.” This is not the place for us to have peace and rest! We are as yet at sea—the vessel has not reached the port. We are as yet in the wilderness—we have

not come to the goodly land, even to Canaan. We are not yet out of gunshot of the devil. We are not yet beyond afflictions and trials and if, for awhile, the weather has been calm and the sun has been bright—and we poor pilgrims have been trudging on along green pastures and by the side of still waters—let us remember the giants with whom we fought in days long gone! Let us remember the hills of difficulty, the valleys of humiliation, the conflicts with Apollyon—for as it was at the first, so shall it always be till we come to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Oh, you who are making for yourself a downy nest and building up a castle in the air, remember you do this without the permission of your God! No, you do it in the teeth of His warnings, for has not Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation”? And is it not written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”? Bring to remembrance, then, your former struggles lest you begin to settle upon your lees and fancy that there is no more trial for you!

Remember them, too, *because they will refresh your memories with regard to the mercy of God and so will stir you up to gratitude.* Oh, we thought when we were in trouble that if the Lord would guarantee us deliverance, He would never hear the last of it! We said to ourselves, “I will praise Him while I have any being if He brings me out of this strait and sets my feet, once again, in a large room.” But our song was not quite as long as we expected and, after having praised God a little, the novelty of the mercy departed and our gratitude subsided. But, oh, my Brothers and Sisters, have we not much cause to bless God? Have we not cause to bless Him that we have been delivered from the burden of guilt—a burden that once bowed us to the earth—that we have been saved in dire afflictions when it seemed as if we must be crushed, that tribulations have been averted which threatened us, or that we have been sustained under those which have actually come upon us? Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song! And weave that new song out of the remembrances of His past mercies when He appeared for His servants in the times of trouble and worked amazingly for them according to the counsels of His love! Blessed be the name of the Lord at this time as we bring to remembrance trials past, and mercies that have been received!

Such a remembrance will be of great service to you, my Brothers and Sisters, *if you are at this time enduring the like exercises.* What God was, that He is. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever,” is His people’s trust and glory. Having begun to deliver you, He will not afterwards forsake you! He has not brought you this far to put you to shame. What is the trouble of today? You have passed through another quite as great. What is the doubt that assails you? You have already met a doubt quite as gloomy and by faith you have overcome it! What is the fear which now gathers like a heavy cloud? The time before, it burst with mercies upon your head—and it shall do the same again! Draw courage from the recollections of the past and go forward to the fears of the future—and they shall vanish as you advance confident in your God. The great point, however, in David’s Psalm is—

II. TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE THE DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE.

There is, perhaps, no Psalm which more fully than this one describes human nature as seen in the light which God, the Holy Spirit, casts upon it in the time when He convicts us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body. It is very much like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers. The fact is, it is a *spiritual* leprosy—it is an inward disease which is here described—and David paints it to the very life and he would have us remember this. Child of God, let me bring to your remembrance, tonight, the fact that you are by nature no better than the vilest of the vile! “Children of wrath even as others,” are we. Even you who are favored by Divine Grace to enter into rich fellowship with Christ are no better, naturally, than the lost spirits in Hell! There was no difference at birth and no intrinsic essential difference of moral constitution between Peter and Judas, between Paul and Demas, between the brightest Apostle and the bloodiest persecutor! We have grown in Grace—had we been left to ourselves, we would have rotted in sin! We have gone from strength to strength in the way of holiness, but if it had not been for Divine Grace that interposed most sovereignly, we would have gone from depth to depth in the way of crime!

Just turn that over for a minute. By nature not one whit better than the rest of mankind, see what Grace has done for you in making such a difference! Why are you not tonight upon the drunkard’s bench? Why fill you not the seat of the scorner? Perhaps you have been there already, and if Divine Grace had not prevented, you would have continued there! I think it does us a world of good, when Grace has made the difference, to still take the place which the publican did. I never feel so well in spiritual health as when I cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Somehow there is a safeness about it, when a sense of sin makes one cling to the sinner’s Savior. Growth in Grace and high frames in spirituality are very pleasant, but it does us so much good, every now and then, to come right on the ground again, flat on our face before the Lord, crying out, “What am I that You have brought me to this? God forgive me, and accept me through the precious blood, for in myself I am loathsome, vile and abhorred—and in me there dwells no good thing.” The best mode of living is to live upon Christ every day as you did the first day of your conversion—always to stand at the foot of the Cross with—

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

A saint, I hope, by Grace, but a sinner certainly by nature. Still, still dependent upon the same merit of the Substitute, still accepted through the continual plea of the Divine Intercessor who has espoused my cause and is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him. “Heirs of wrath even as others”—this is what we were! Sinners saved by Grace—this is what we are! It is well to bring to the remembrance of the

child of God that although his past sin is all blotted out, and he is justified by faith which is in Jesus Christ, yet there still remains in him the old body of this death. Sin, the force of sin, still dwells in him! Now, Brothers and Sisters, there are times when everything goes very smoothly with us. Everybody treats us kindly. We are much in religious exercises. We go from Prayer Meetings to lectures, from lectures to sermons, and from sermons to our room and to our Bibles. We do not get vexed or troubled and we begin to think, "Now I really am somewhat of a superior being. I think I am not what I used to be—I never could be roused to that old anger which once flamed out so furiously, nor could I now be led into such fretfulness as once was known to overcome me." I have noticed—take my experience for what it is worth—that the most dangerous time in the Christian's life is when he has been nearest to God in devotion. You meet the devil and not expecting him, he is too much for you. It is just when you have been most spiritual that the temptation which you had almost thought would never come again, trips you up, and ah, how soon you find that if when upon the mountain, your face glowed, down in the valley, again, unless your Master holds you up, your foot will slip and your face will be covered with the filthiness of the valley! Remember, child of God, let others say what they will to you, that the dictates of experience and the teachings of God's Word lead you to the remembrance that there is still in you a spirit that lusts after all manner of evil, a nature which, if it were not curbed and confined by the Grace of God, would make you again to be what you were, yes, and would bring into your house seven devils worse than the first! Never conceive that any one of the evils of your nature is so dead that it cannot have a resurrection. Strive against every form of sin, every *thought* of sin, every carnal tendency, every evil passion—and when you have striven most, never count your victory to be complete until your feet are within the pearly gate! Never reckon that you may take off your helmet and lay aside your sword and say, "The battle is fairly won," until you have crossed the River of Death and go waving the banner of love in the streets of the New Jerusalem!

David brings this to remembrance and that, too, in the most forcible words. Some of the children of God can use very terrible words about what they feel in their own nature, so that ungodly men say of them, "How bad these Christians must be!" It is not that they are worse than others, but that they have the sense to see the evil. A man in a black coat may have a hundred spots and blots upon it, but nobody will see them—but let him wear a coat of white and if there is only a little a speck of mire, it is immediately perceived! The holier the Christian becomes, the more readily he perceives his imperfections and the wickedness of his sins—and sin, instead of becoming more bearable to a Christian, becomes growingly more and more intolerable! A man in the water may bear much—in fact, much of it might roll over his head and he would not feel the weight of it—but let him come out on the dry land and put but a small quantity of water in a bucket and how heavy it is when he carries it

upon his head! When he is in the water, he does not feel the weight, for it presses him on all sides—but get him out of the water and then he begins to feel its gravity. So, a sinner in his sin is like a man in the deep—he does not feel the weight of his sin. But get him out of it, bring him into a new element, and then immediately sin becomes exceedingly sinful! Oh, if we could but be perfect! If it were possible to be rid of this evil nature! So we sigh and so we cry, waiting for the adoption, for the coming of the Lord, for the perfecting of our nature as it shall be, by-and-by, when the furnace work of Providence and the refining work of Divine Grace shall all be done!

It is a gloomy thing to bring to your remembrance, my dear Friends, but it is often brought to mine, and I know it is good for me—what you were by nature, and what you still are, unless the Grace of God prevents it. Remember old John Bradford's remark whenever he saw a man go by his window to Tyburn to be hanged—and he lived at that time where he saw them all—"Ah," he said, "there goes John Bradford if the Grace of God had not prevented." It is said that a Scotchman once went to see Rowland Hill and, sitting down, he looked at the lines in his face. He looked a long while, till Rowland smilingly said, "And what are you looking at, my Friend?" "I am looking at the lines in your face, Mr. Hill." "And what," said he, "do you make of them?" "Why, that if the Grace of God had not saved you, you would have been a great rogue." "Ah," said Rowland, "and you have hit the mark!" It is even so, and even worse than that! If the Grace of God had not come into our hearts and made new creatures of us, we had been equal to the devil, or, at any rate, it would not have been our fault if we had not excelled even Apollyon, himself, in rebellion and enmity to God! A third thing the Psalm brings to our remembrance is—

III. OUR MANY ENEMIES.

David says that his enemies laid snares for him, sought his hurt, spoke mischievous things and devised and imagined deceits all day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or, perhaps, morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him not because he was wicked, but, as he says in this very Psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good. Now, you must not suppose that because you seek to live in all peaceableness and righteousness, that, therefore, everybody will be peaceable towards you. Far from it! Our Lord put us upon the right tack when He said, "I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword." The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere—but the first result is to cause strife. When the Light of God comes, it must contend with the darkness. When the Truth of God comes, it must first combat error. And when the Gospel comes, it must meet with enemies—and the man who receives the Gospel will find that his foes shall be they of his own household. You shall not be helped by an ungodly father, nor be cheered onward by an

un-Christian mother. One would think that even nature, itself, might lead parents to admire that which should make their children virtuous, preserve them in this life and bless them in the life to come. But such is the enmity of the human heart against Christ and His Gospel, that hundreds of parents have been monsters to their children when those children have been obedient subjects to Christ! Why those stakes, those dungeons and those racks? Why the snows of Piedmont dyed scarlet with human gore? Why the glens of Scotland marked with the lurking places of the saints? Because this world hates the people of God! “You are not of the world,” says Christ, “even as I am not of the world, and therefore the world hates you.” It is good to be reminded of this, that we may not be astonished at the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened to us! It is the part and lot of the follower of the true to have to contend with deadly odds.

And remember, Christian, you have enemies who seek to turn you aside and do you mischief. You are not now traveling along a road that is safe for your feet, in which there is no enemy whatever, but behind every hedge there lurks a foe. Whether you are in high or low estate, temptation will assail you. It is not possible for you to shut the door so quickly as to shut out temptations to sin! Snares assail you in your bed and at your table—snares will be about your feet at home and abroad, with your fellow workmen and in the bosom of your family. Be always on the alert then. Travel with a naked sword—never sheath it. “Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation,” and until you have come out of the enemy’s country, into the land that flows with milk and honey, always hear your Captain say, “What I say unto you I say unto all—watch.” Watch—especially watch against those who come to you with words softer than butter which inwardly are drawn swords! Watch against temptations that appeal to your pleasure. You need not be so much afraid of that which grieves you as of that which charms you. Watch against the fair siren whose fascinating song will attract you from the billowy deep with the hope of rest to where, alas, you will find shipwreck and ruin! Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moves itself aright. Let the charm of the temptation be the warning to you. Let the pleasure be the very beacon which shall make you turn aside from it, feeling that there must be evil lurking there. Christian, be always on your guard! Never be taken by surprise. Once more—

IV. THE PSALM REMINDS US OF OUR GRACIOUS GOD.

Anything which drives us to God is a blessing and anything which weans us from leaning on an arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a blessing to us! Think awhile how much you owe to the Grace of God who has preserved you until now. The man who carries a bombshell within his heart, and has to walk through the midst of sparks, may wonder that he has not been blown to pieces—

***“Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give.”***

With such a heart as mine, if You, O Lord, had not held me fast, I had long ago declined and turned back to the world! Praise the Grace that

has held you till now! Keep in remembrance the patience of God in enduring with you, the power of God in restraining you, the love of God in instructing you and the goodness of God in keeping you to this day.

Nor ought we ever to forget with regard to our inward depravity and the Grace of God, that mighty work which the Holy Spirit has undertaken. I was trying the other day in my own mind to weigh in the scales the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—and the only conclusion I could come to was this—that I did not know which in its execution was the more difficult, or which in its results was the more precious. For Christ to take the guilt of sin and suffer was certainly a marvelous thing, but for the Holy Spirit to condescend to *dwell* in our hearts and to combat day by day with our sin until He should eradicate the very principle of selfishness and make us to be holy even as God is holy—this is a work worthy of God! And if the former work, that of Christ, was Divine, certainly this is no less so! Oh, let us never depreciate the Holy Spirit's work, but looking forward to what we are to be, as well as backwards upon what we were, let us magnify the Holy Spirit with our heart, soul and strength who has worked all our works in us and by whom we shall be presented faultless before the Presence of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!

“My God, I thank You for reminding me of Yourself, of Your Son by whom I am cleansed, of Your Holy Spirit by whom I am sanctified, of Yourself by whom I am daily succored. Oh, bind me to Yourself with tenfold cords and as your Providence brings me where I have to encounter new sins, and new trials, and to experience new deliverances and new mercies, may You be brought more closely to my soul and may everything bring You to remembrance.” We never walk so safely as when we walk with God. We are never so rich as when we are poor in everything without Him, and never so strong as when we are weakness, itself, except for such strength as we get from our invisible Helper. Lean heavily there, Christian. Lean heavily! You can never make that arm weak. Bear with all your weight—He can never tire. Cast all your burden upon Him. You may even be glad to have a burden to cast there, so that you may have opportunities of knowing and proving the power and faithfulness of your God. Tonight, as your troubles have been brought to remembrance, let those bring your weakness to remembrance—let that bring your God to remembrance and so do you go up the rungs of the ladder from the bottom of the horrible pit and of the miry clay, to the very heights of joy and gladness! And as you go say, “My God, You are mine—mine, despite my sin—mine to deliver me from it all and to make me like Yourself, to dwell with You forever.”

Brothers and Sisters, the mercy is that all the badness that we see in ourselves does not at all affect our standing before God, or our belief in our own personal safety! Though I see within myself all that is foul and corrupt, everything that is villainous and even devilish, by nature, yet do I know that I am saved and rejoice that neither death nor Hell shall divide me from my Master's bosom, for our standing rests not in ourselves,

but wholly in what Christ has done! His perfect work presents to us a foundation upon which we can build securely—and though we grieve daily over indwelling sin and have come to God with many a bitter accusation against ourselves, yet glory be to His name, Christ changes not and our acceptance in the Beloved does not wax and wane like the moon, but abides in one sacred, high, eternal noonday never to go down! Glory be to God, and let our souls exult in such mercy as this!

I would to God as I bring these things to your remembrance, that you would remember how many have forgotten these things all their lives. How many of your own companions live as if there were no God and no hereafter? I bring them to your remembrance. Pray for them and do what you can to lead them to Jesus!

I wish I could bring to *their* remembrance that they must die and that after death there comes the judgment—and that the judgment for an unpardoned soul means eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord! Oh you who have much remembrance for the things of this world that are not worth remembering, for awhile use that faculty for nobler ends. Scrape not up the mire of the streets, but begin to gather a little of the pure gold that God puts before you! Think upon your latter end! Think upon the Gospel which now is preached to you. Think upon the time when it shall be preached to you no more! Think of the hour when you shall be called to account for having rejected the Gospel's invitation. Whoever trusts Jesus shall be saved. Rely upon what Jesus has done and, guilty as you are, your sins shall be forgiven!

God grant that it may be so with you, for His love's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 6.

Verse 1 *What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound?* The 5th Chapter ends up in this way, that “*where sin abounded, etc... Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Then he goes on to say, “*What shall we say, then?*” What inference shall we draw from the fact that where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound? Shall we be base enough to draw a wicked inference from a gracious statement? Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? It is a horrible suggestion and yet it is one which has come into the minds of many men, for some men are bad enough for anything—they will curdle the sweet milk of love into the most sour argument for sin! “*Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? God forbid!*” With all the vehemence of his nature, he says—

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The Grace of God makes us dead to sin. This is the Grace of God which delivers us from the power of evil—and if this is so, how can we live any longer therein?

3. *Know you not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* If we are in Christ at all, we are partakers of His death and as His was a death *for* sin and a death *to* sin, we are

made partakers of it—we are really dead because Christ died and we are in Him. Therefore we are dead to the old life, to the old way of sin. We signify that by our baptism.

4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Our Baptism, solemn as it was, was a great acted lie, a living pretense unless we are dead to our former way of living and have come to live unto God in a new life altogether, by virtue of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead!

5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection.* If we have partaken of His death, we partake also of His rising power. We live because He lives and we live as He lives, not after the old manner, but in newness of life.

6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* We are to regard ourselves as persons that have been dead. We are ourselves, it is true, and yet in another sense we are not ourselves. We are not to look upon ourselves as though we owed any kind of service to the power which we obeyed before we knew the Lord. We are new people—we have a new life and have entered upon a new existence—the old man is crucified with Him

7, 8. *For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.* There was no getting free from the power of sin except by dying to it but, being dead to it, we are free from it and, now being dead that way, we have entered into a new life that we might live as Christ lives!

9. *Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.* So we, being raised from our former death, shall die no more—death has no more dominion over us. That is to say, sin cannot reign in us again—we are dead to it, we are brought into a new life that can never end, even as our Lord Jesus Christ is. There is a parallel between us and Christ, even as there is a union between us.

10. *For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.* And so do we! We have died unto sin once, but now that we live, we live unto God.

11, 12. *Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.* It is in the body that it tries to reign. These poor things, these mortal frames of ours, have so many passions, so many desires, so many weaknesses, all of which are apt to bring us under the dominion of sin unless we watch with great care.

13. *Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* “Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto

sin”—neither eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet—neither suffer any of these to become the tools of sin, “but yield yourselves unto God.” He is ready to use you! Lay all the powers of your nature out as tools for Him to use. “Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.” He is not the God of the dead—He cannot use the dead, but He is the God of the living—and as you profess to have received a new life in Christ, yield up all the faculties of this new life unto the living God, “and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.* When you were under the Law, sin did get dominion over you! That Law which was ordained to life, worked towards death. The evil concupiscence of your nature revolted against the command and led you astray. But *now*, Beloved, it is of love and Grace, and now sin cannot get in—stronger motives shall hold you to holiness than ever held you before, and the Grace of God, itself, like a wall of fire, shall guard you from the dominion of sin!

15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under Grace? God forbid!* That must not be! Again the evil spirit crops up, trying to turn the Grace of God into licentiousness, and to make us feel free to sin because of God’s love—that must not be!

16. *Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* It is a wonderful heart-searching text, is this! Let us put ourselves under its power. Whatever you obey, that is your master! And if you obey the suggestions of sin, you are the slave of sin! And it is only as you are obedient to God that you are truly the servants of God. So that, after all, our outward walk and conversation are the best test of our true condition. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, nor can he have any reason to believe that he belongs to God.

17. *But God be thanked that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* Or into which you were delivered. God has taken you, melted you down, and poured you into a new mold! God be thanked for that—you are not what you used to be. Although you are not what you hope to be, yet you have reason to bless God you are not what once you were—you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you were delivered.

18. *Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.* The fetters are struck off, the lusts of the flesh do not hold us any longer. We are the Lord’s free men and women—and out of gratitude for this glorious freedom, we become the willing servants of the righteous God!

19. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.* It needs no explanation. In the days of our sin, we sinned with all our power. There was not one part of us but what became the willing servant of sin and we went from iniquity into iniquity!

But now the Cross has made us entirely new and we have been melted down, poured out into a fresh mold. Now, let us yield every member of our body, soul and spirit to righteousness, even unto holiness, till the whole of us, in the wholeness and consequently the holiness of our *nature*, shall be given unto God.

20. *For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.* You did not care about righteousness then. When you served sin, you felt it was utterly indifferent to you what the claims of righteousness might be. Well, now that you have become the servant of righteousness, be free from sin! Let sin have no more dominion over you, now, than righteousness used to have when you were the slaves of sin! "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" What profit did they ever bring you? There was a temporary delight, like the blossom on the tree in spring, but what fruit did you find? Did it ever come to anything? Is there anything to look back upon with pleasure in a life of sin? Oh no, those things whereof we are now ashamed were fruitless to us, "for the end of those things is death."

22, 23. *But now being made free from sin, and being servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ISAIAH 53.

This is a Chapter which you have read hundreds of times, perhaps. I am sure it is one that needs no comment from me. I shall read it through with scarcely a sentence of comment.

Verses 1-9. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He has done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. A strange reason for making His grave with the wicked, and yet remember,*

if it had not been that He had done no violence, He would not have been fit to be a Substitute for sinners! And so He was numbered with transgressors to redeem men.

10, 11, 12. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief; when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong because He has poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* How clearly you have before you, here, our blessed Redeemer, and how strong are the expressions used by Isaiah to set forth His Substitution. If he intended to teach us the Doctrine that Christ suffered in the place of His people, he could not have used more expressive words. And if he did not intend to teach us that Truth of God, it is marvelous that he should have adopted a phraseology so likely to mislead. Yes, we believe and hold it fast, that Christ did take the sins of His people verily and truly upon Himself and did, in proper Person make a complete expiation for the guilt of all His chosen! And in this we find our hearts' best confidence—

***Our soul can on this Doctrine live,
Can on this Doctrine die!***

Have you and I an interest in this Atonement, or must the complaint be made concerning us—"Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" While I was reading just now, could you say by faith, "Yes, surely He has borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows"? Have you an appropriating faith which takes the sufferings of Christ to be its own? Do you now humbly, but yet confidently, look to Jesus Christ, the great Burden-Bearer on yonder tree, and know that your guilt was there? If so, rejoice and walk worthily of your calling! If not, Soul, you do not know the first letters of the alphabet of religion! May the Lord teach you, for His name's sake.

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

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

“CASES OF CONSCIENCE”

NO. 2911

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1862.**

***“For my iniquities are gone over my head: as a
heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”
Psalm 38:4.***

I HAVE a special purpose before me this evening. I shall endeavor to describe the state of the sinner’s heart when it has been awakened, when conscience is set at work, when sin and the judgment of God upon it occupy the mind’s attention—that period which John Bunyan describes in his, *“Pilgrim’s Progress,”* as being spent between the City of Destruction and the Wicket Gate—that state of mind in which a man is found when he flees from his former sin and desires to escape from the wrath to come, but has not yet found out the way of salvation so as to realize his own pardon and forgiveness through the great Atonement made upon the Cross.

In fulfilling this intention, I propose, first, *to speak of the terrors which frequently accompany conviction of sin.* Secondly, *to describe the cases of some who, while really convicted of sin, are, nevertheless, strangers to those terrors.* And then *to address a few words of advice both to those who are sorely broken by cruel fears and those, on the other hand, who are more gently brought to Christ.*

I. There is A GREAT AND APPALLING TERROR OF MIND WHICH FREQUENTLY ACCOMPANIES CONVICTION OF SIN. The experience which I shall try to describe has not been that of all those who are brought to Christ. I must make, as it were, a broad outline—an open sketch without filling it up—a picture in which many, though certainly not all, may be able to read the story of their own passage through the Slough of Despond.

Usually, when Divine Grace comes into the heart, one of the first things that attends it is *a sort of indefinable fear.* The man does not know how or why it is that he has such a fear. He felt safe enough before, but

now the very ground under his feet seems to be rotten. He played with sin, thinking it was only a trifle, but, suddenly, he is made to tremble at it. He finds that the serpent has a sting and he is afraid of it. Sometimes, by night, he will be scared with visions in his dreams and, by day, something more vivid than visions will appear before him. He now begins to believe that there is a Hell, that there is a just God, that sin must be punished, that he has sinned and that, therefore, he must die! He does not know that he is to do, but he feels that something must be done, either by himself or by somebody else, for his soul is truly afraid. To a greater or less extent, he has first the fear of punishment which afterwards, through the Grace of God, grows into a fear of sin!

Then, as this fear increases, *a kind of disquietude and unrest* lays hold of the man. David tells us his own experience and his prayer when he was in such a state as I am trying to describe. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure. For Your arrows stick fast in me, and your hand presses me sorely. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger. Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." That is the case with a man under conviction of sin—he is restless and ill at ease. Those things which he once counted as pleasures now seem to him to be exceedingly wearisome. If he still seeks the amusements which once charmed him, they only sicken him now—he cannot bear to look at them. He has such a sad heart within him that he does not want to have songs sung to him, for they seem to be out of place to such a man as he feels himself to be. The Psalmist's words describe him just now. "Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death."

The companions of such a man cannot understand what is the matter with him! They think that he is suffering from a fit of melancholy. So, indeed, he is, but I pray that it may not be a mere fitful spasm, but that it may continue and that it may be increased and intensified until he is "dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The man's melancholy will then give place to "unspeakable joy and full of glory." He then begins to be a quiet stay-at-home. He tries to find rest there but, somehow, even his own family does not afford him the peace it once did. His wife thinks that something strange has come over him and if she is not herself converted, it must be quite incomprehensible to her. But if she should ever be led forth on the same pilgrimage, she would understand that this is a part of the footsteps of the flock—one of the first of the footsteps of the straying sheep when the Shepherd comes to fetch them back.

This disquietude and unrest of spirit will grow, by-and-by, into a *burdensomeness of heart*, just as Bunyan describes Christian with a burden on his back which made him sigh and groan. You remember how he pictures the pilgrim—“I saw a man clothed with rags standing in a certain place, a book in his hand and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book, and read therein. And as he read, he wept and trembled and, not being able to contain it any longer, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, ‘What shall I do?’” The man of whom I am speaking comes to just such state as this. He has no visible burden upon his shoulders, yet he has upon his heart a load so heavy that it threatens to crush him to the very dust and to drive him to utter despair! It may be that through the persuasion of his former companions, he is led to indulge in sin as he was known to do, but if so, in the sin he is wretched and after the sin he is far more miserable than he was before! He may sing, but even while he is singing, he will be like the man who could amuse others with his funny sayings while his own heart was heavy within him. And this becomes the man’s constant state of mind—not only can he find no rest, night nor day, but all the while he has to carry his heavy burden wherever he may be! And he cries to the Lord with David, “Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.”

With some men this state of mind will continue until they come, at last, to *utterly loathe themselves*. They might even adopt the language of David in the Psalm from which I have taken my text. “I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease and there is no soundness in my flesh.” There was one who said that he wished he had been a frog or a toad—anything rather than a man—when he realized how sinful he had been! So detestable did he appear in his own sight for having sinned and wantonly sinned against such light, against such love, against such long-suffering—for having rejected Christ, grieved the Holy Spirit and despised the precious blood which alone can cleanse from sin! All these things come up before the man’s mind and he thinks that no doom is too bad for him. “No,” he says, “I once thought that it was an unjust thing for a man to be cast away to all eternity, but now I feel that whatever You do with me, O God, it will be impossible for You to be too severe! I deserve all that Your Infinite Justice can bring upon me. I will be quite willing to sign my own death warrant and to set my seal to my own condemnation and say that it is just.”

Loathing thus himself and his life, his sin and his pleasures—and loathing even his very existence—the man, if left to himself, will often

undergo such terror of conscience that *even his body will begin to feel it*. His mortal frame, sympathizing with his immortal spirit, will grow sick. There have been some with whom I have myself had to deal, who have had sore sickness through conviction of sin and, for a little season, it did seem as if the only hope for them to be able to live at all was for them to find immediate pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ. There have been some, I doubt not, who have almost been bereft of their senses when they have seen sin in its true colors. Thank God, dear Friends, if you have never come to this! But if you have, thank God for it. There are thousands who have passed through that experience and yet, through the thickest darkness, have come into the brightest Light of God!

The man who is the subject of this conviction will also have *a perpetual consciousness of feebleness* as David says in the eighth verse of this Psalm, “I am feeble and sorely broken.” The strong man suddenly becomes weak as a little child. The very wise man, the keen critic, the severe judge of others suddenly becomes gentle, tender-hearted, soft in spirit. He does not now sit in judgment upon any other man, for he has enough to do in standing before the bar of his own conscience—and he dreads lest he should soon be judged and condemned by his God! He used to talk, in days gone by, a great deal about the dignity and might of man but now he knows more about human depravity and weakness. At one time he used to say, “I can believe in Christ whenever I like. I can be saved whenever I please!” Salvation seemed to him a very easy matter in those days but now it seems to him to be the hardest thing in the world to believe in Christ! His cry now is—

**“But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”**

He does not find fault with sermons as he used to do. If they do but reach his heart and bring to him even a little comfort, he is pleased and thankful. He is glad enough, now, to eat his food off the poorest platter if he can but get food for his soul. He feels that if the Lord would but send him His pardon, even if it came by a limping messenger, he would not trouble about the messenger, but he would prize the pardon that he brought! He is brought very low—the high-soaring spirit lies in the dust and out of the dust cries—“Lord, save me, or I perish!”

Beside and beyond all this, his soul gets to be in a terrible agony of desire. It has come to this with him—that he must have mercy, that he must be saved! He feels as if he could not take a denial—that it were better for him to die than to continue to live in such a state as that in which he finds himself. He can use the words of our hymn—

“Wealth and honor I disdain,

***Earthly comforts all are vain—
These can never satisfy—
Give me Christ, or else I die!***

He has the same sort of look that you may have seen on the faces of starving people when, at last, a roast is set before them. It is bread they need—bread! So this spiritually starving man feels that he must have provision for his soul or he will expire. There is something terribly startling in the cry of, “Fire!” at the dead of night. But the cry of, “Bread! Bread!” seems to come from the very vitals of humanity and to reach the very center of our hearts. So will it be with this man’s prayer at last. It is not a matter of, “maybe,” with him—he cannot bear to look upon salvation in the light of a *perhaps* or a *maybe*—he feels that he *must* have it, that he cannot take a denial! He agonizes, groans and cries to God, “Lord, save me! Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner!”

We have known some who have gone even further than this until, at last, *their prayer has been mingled with despair rather than with faith*. They have prayed to God for deliverance. They have, in some sense, looked to Christ upon the Cross. Yet they have not seemed able to believe that there could be power in Him to save them. Some of us have known what it was to have the great Judge of All put on the black cap and pronounce sentence of death upon us. We have gone into the condemned cell and waited there—really expecting to be led out to execution—and to hear the Lord say to us, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” I cannot tell you what is the intense delight of a heart that has been prostrate in the dust when it receives full remission, free forgiveness! It mounts as high, then, as it was known to descend into the depths!

I will mention only one more characteristic of this man under conviction of sin—*he probably feels himself a solitary person*. David says in this Psalm, “My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague and my kinsmen stand afar off.” The man under conviction of sin feels that he is quite alone, that he has no one in the world to help him. I have frequently noticed that young people in this condition have been afraid to mention to their own parents, or to their minister, what they feel. If we try to probe them a little, to find out what is the matter, they are very reluctant to tell us because it seems to them that they are the only persons who ever felt as they do. I believe that almost all those who come to Christ think that they are very singular people—very odd people. I know I thought that there never could be any other sinner as bad as I was—and that none could ever have felt the horror of great darkness that I felt! Little did I think that the path I was then treading, instead of being trodden

by one solitary pilgrim, was the beaten track of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims!

II. Now, secondly, I shall endeavor to show you that IT SHOULD NOT BE A CAUSE OF DISQUIET TO ANY OF YOU IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN SPIRITUALLY EXERCISED TO THE SAME EXTENT AS OTHERS.

Dear Friends, all the distress that is felt by the mind when under conviction of sin is not the work of the Spirit of God, though some of it is. I cannot draw the line and say exactly how far it is the Spirit's work but, certainly, there is a portion of this horror and distress which does *not* come from God. Therefore, learn this lesson—that it is not necessary for you to traverse the whole ground of every other sinner's experience in passing from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son!

No doubt *part of the horror I have been describing comes from Satan.* He does not want to lose those who have been his subjects. He sees that one who was once a very contented slave begins to feel his chain irksome and longs to escape from the cruel servitude and, therefore, Satan brings out his great whip to frighten him, tells him that he must not attempt to escape, or he will flog him for his past sins. So the poor wretch crouches down at his feet and Satan says, “Now is my only chance to prevent him from escaping. Servants of the infernal powers attack him, vex him, torment him, insinuate every doubt and every fear and every blasphemy that you can! This is our only opportunity! He will be out of gunshot soon—it is now or never with us. Let us leave no stone unturned to break his heart and ruin him before he gets peace through Christ.” No doubt that evil spirit who “worries whom he can't devour,” has very often tried to trouble poor sinners because he knew that they were about to escape from his domain. It is not necessary, Brothers and Sisters, and it is not desirable that you and I should know all this horror! That which comes from Satan we should think ourselves happy to escape.

Another part of this agony, no doubt, *arises from ignorance.* If some of those poor weeping souls knew more, they would sorrow less and suffer less. In John Bunyan's, “*Grace Abounding*,” you can trace very clearly that very much of the conflict that he had to endure was the result of his utter ignorance. He knew very little about spiritual things. At first he had but one book, “*The Poor Man's Pathway to Heaven.*” He does not appear to have attended much on the ministry in his early days, so he had not learned much about the Kingdom of Heaven and he was in a state of great darkness when he found his way to Christ. But I do not think that you and I, Beloved, who have been from our youth up instructed in the things of God—if we know the plan of salvation, if we know that simple

faith in the precious blood will save us—should desire to pass through these extraordinary agonies and racking of conscience and heart.

Besides, a part of this experience may also come *from constitutional tendencies*. There are some who seem to have been born on the darkest nights of the whole year and, on every possible occasion, they look rather at the spots on the sun than at the sun itself. Their observations are rather directed to the whirlpools and the barren deserts than to the gently-flowing rivers and green pastures! They have a very keen apprehension of the snakes and other reptiles, but not of the flowers and the birds. They were born in gloom and they seem to carry the gloom of their nativity to their graves—and it seems very natural and very likely, since the Spirit of God does not change our physical constitutions, though He does change our moral nature—that there should be in such people, coupled with that conviction which is the work of the Spirit, a tendency to certain fears and trembling which spring only from the flesh and are not the work of the Spirit of God.

These few remarks may help to put some here who have been praying to experience these terrors, upon the right track. They will not, I hope, pray for such a thing anymore! Am I addressing any who think they are not saved because they have not known such terrors as some others have experienced? Let me remind you, dear Friends, that there are many of the true children of God who have never known these horrors! I suppose there are many in this church, over which I am overseer, who have not experimentally known these terrors. They know what repentance of sin is, but the horror of great darkness they have not known. Certainly, in Scripture, we have not many of such cases recorded. I do not think that Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, ever went through such an experience as David did in this matter. It may be that the Apostle Paul did, for he had scales upon his eyes—and it may be that the blindness of his body was but a picture of the darkness of his mind. But I do not think that Peter, James and John and those other disciples whom Christ called while they were fishing, or engaged in other occupations, knew much about this kind of experience. They knew what repentance of sin was—mark that—and that is the Spirit’s work beyond any doubt. But they do not appear to have known that terror which springs from the flesh, or rises from the pit of Hell.

Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, since many of the children of God have not felt these horrors, do not look upon those who have felt them as models for your imitation! And do not condemn yourself because you have not gone through an experience similar to theirs. While it is quite certain that some good people have known these terrors, you must

remember that there may have been special demons in their case, why it was so with them. What a blessing it has been to others that John Bunyan, who seems to be my chief illustration tonight, passed through such an experience, for, if he had not done so, he could not have written his, "*Grace Abounding*" and "*Pilgrim's Progress*." But you and I do not expect to write a "*Pilgrim's Progress*." We have not that special work to do! But Bunyan had and, therefore, we do not need the peculiar training through which he had to pass.

Certain metals that will have to endure an extraordinary strain have to pass through an annealing process. But other substances which are not put to so severe a test need not be prepared in the same stern fashion. The Apostle Paul traces many of his deep troubles and holy triumphs to the qualifications with which he was fitted for ministering to the saints. "Whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Beyond a doubt there are some servants of God who have a great work to do in deep waters. In the course of their lifetime they are to contend with Satan in a very special fashion—so the Lord gives them a special training that they may become good soldiers of Jesus Christ from the very commencement of their career. None of you may have to do the work of Luther or Calvin—you will not all have to go forth to address multitudes, as Whitefield did—and you do not, therefore, need the peculiar training which was necessary for them.

But I again remind you that you must have that which is the work of the Spirit! Repentance and abhorrence of sin you must have! But that which is beyond this, which God employs as a disciplinary training for some of His servants, is not necessary for all of you to have. If you had felt such horrors as others have experienced, you might not have been in your right senses now. The Lord, who tempers the wind to the shorn sheep, has tempered the Spirit's convictions to you. Possibly you are of a feeble constitution and you could not safely pass through what some strong men have endured. Your spirit may be so tender, your mind may be so susceptible, that it would have been broken if it had been subjected to the rough handling that others have had. You know that a physician, when he seeks to cure a number of patients, treats them in various ways. He gives a good dose of medicine to a strong soldier and lets it work its way. But if he has to deal with a feeble girl, he gives her only a small dose, lest the larger quantity should kill her. So our Lord, when He is curing us of the evil disease of sin, acts differently in different cases and, with some of us, He works very gently.

It is not necessary for me to say any more upon this point except to remind you that *these horrors and terrors are not essential to salvation, or else they would have been commanded*. Faith and repentance, the essentials to salvation, are commanded—“Repent and be baptized, every one of you.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The things that are essential to salvation are put very plainly in the Scriptures. I do not read anywhere in the Word of God, “Be tempted of the devil and you shall be saved.” I do not read, “Feel a horror of great darkness and you shall be saved.” I do not find the Lord commanding you to despair in order that you may be saved. So far from these things being essential to salvation, they are often stumbling blocks in the way of sinners seeking the Savior—and devices of the devil from which may God deliver us!

To doubt, for instance, whether Christ can save me is a heinous sin! To think that my case is so bad that God cannot blot out my sin is to doubt His Omnipotence and to do Him grievous dishonor. For me to despair of receiving the mercy of Christ is to do despite to that generous and self-sacrificing Savior who bled to death on Calvary’s Cross! To think that He is either unable or unwilling to forgive us is to add to our former offenses—and that which is, in itself, sinful cannot be a help to salvation! That which is, in itself, the very climax and culminating point of human guilt—to doubt the love, kindness and mercy of God—cannot, in any sense, be a desirable thing in any child of God! To repent is one thing, but to despair is quite another matter. To dread sin and to loathe it is one thing—but to doubt the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin is quite another.

III. Now, having handled these two points, let me close with WORDS OF ADVICE TO BOTH THESE CLASSES OF PERSONS WHOM I HAVE BEEN DESCRIBING.

Dear Friends, you who are frightened and alarmed, vexed and troubled, I know what you are saying, “Oh, that we could escape from this misery!” There is another friend, over yonder, who has never had these fears and he is saying, “I wish I had them, for, if I had them, there would be some hope for me.” If you do not have them, you want them—and if you do have them, you want to get rid of them! There is no pleasing you either way. But good physicians do not seek to please their patients, but to cure them! It is not their aim to make the medicine palatable, but to make it efficacious. So, the Lord does not study our wishes, but gives us what is best for us—and we are very foolish to wish to have it otherwise.

Let me remind you who are in terror because of sin that the only way to escape from that terror aright is to flee at once to Jesus! As a good old woman, who had long been accustomed to reading "*The Pilgrim's Progress*," wisely said, "No doubt Mr. Bunyan described what he went through before he found Christ, but he did not picture the way of salvation as he might have done. Evangelist ought to have said to the pilgrim, 'Do you see that Cross yonder? And do you see Jesus, the Son of God made flesh, and bleeding and dying there? Look to Him and you shall be saved! Trust Him and your sins shall all be put away at once.' That is the true Gospel which gives peace to troubled hearts." So I say to you, poor troubled Friend, and to you who are not troubled, flee to Christ! Trust the Son of God to save you and He will save you! Trust Him to put away all your past guilt and He will do it. Trust Him to keep you in the future and He will vouchsafe you His promised aid. Trust Him with the enormous load of your sin and He will take it upon His shoulders and roll it into the Red Sea of His atoning blood! Trust Him with the foul disease of your evil habits—and with the touch of His healing finger you will be made whole! Say not, "I am too miserable to rest on Him," but rest on Him, however miserable you may be. Say not, "I am not in a fit state to come to Christ," for whatever state you are in, you are fit to come to Christ. He needs no fitness in you except that, just as you are, you trust in "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so! I will not argue with you about your doubts and fears, your, "ifs," and your, "buts." This is God's commandment to you, poor Sinner—"Trust in Christ." So, do not dare to disobey it, but may the Holy Spirit compel you to obey it, for then shall you go on your way rejoicing because your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you!

To you who have not felt such terrors as I have been describing, what shall I say? Do not displease the Lord by seeking for them. Do not begin fretting and complaining because you have not been tried as others have been. If a child cries because he has not been whipped, he ought to have full satisfaction! If a young man should go to a physician and complain that he was afraid he would not continue to live because he had not had the measles, or whooping cough, or scarlet fever, what would the physician say to him? The most likely reply would be, "Be thankful, Sir, that you have not had those maladies." If you cry because you have not had to smart under the Lord's rod, it may be that you will have your desire granted to your cost! The Lord may say, "That sinner might have gone straight to the Cross, but he would not. He wanted to go through the Slough of Despond, so he shall go through it—and he shall flounder about in it with the frogs croaking in his ears and the filth rolling into his

mouth for many a day—until he knows better than to dictate to his Heavenly Father.” If you have not gone to Sinai with Mr. Worldly Wiseman to hear its thunder and to see its lightning, be thankful that you have not! Flee from all these things to Christ, without asking Him for a preparatory training in the terrors and horrors which some have had to experience! Trust in Christ and you shall find salvation at once!

I was reading, the other day, the preface to the hymn of a very excellent writer. There is a passage in the memoir in which the author says that “he stuck by a *feeling* religion, and a feeling religion stuck by him.” Well, dear Friends, I am afraid that many of you find that “a feeling religion” does stick by you—but I believe that is one of the worst kinds of religion in the whole world! It is a *believing* religion that saves the soul! And those who are so dependent upon feelings are in the seventh Heaven of delight one day and in the depths of despair the next! They go up and down so quickly because they are built upon the sandy shifting foundation of their own emotions! Be not so foolish, Beloved! Build on what Christ did, on what Christ was, on what He is and what He suffered! Building so, you shall find Him “the same yesterday, and today, and forever”—and your hope, faith and comfort shall abide with you—since they are founded upon the immovable Rock of Ages!

I have tried to preach the Gospel simply tonight. Remember, Souls, that the Word is not preached in vain. We are either, “a savor of life unto life,” or, “of death unto death” to our hearers. Which is it to you, dear Friends? Is it a savor of death unto death to you, O impenitent Sinner? And is it to you, O penitent Soul, a savor of life unto life? By this test shall you tell which it is—if you now, from your heart, trust Christ, in obedience to the Lord’s command, then has the Gospel saved you and you may go in peace. “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” “Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.” Go your way, for the Lord has had mercy on you! Glorify Him in the family and tell others, wherever you can, what great things the Lord has done for you!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 38; ISAIAH 53.**

I am going to read two portions of Scripture. In the first—the 38th Psalm—we shall hear a suffering servant of Jehovah crying out to his God.

Psalm 38:1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure.* “If You do rebuke me, do it gently, O my Lord! If

You do chasten me, let not Your displeasure wax hot against Your servant.”

2. *For Your arrows stick fast in me, and Your hand presses me down.* God may aim His arrows even at His own children and He may lay His hand very heavily upon those whom He deeply loves.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* David was under the afflicting hand of God even with regard to his bodily disease. He could have borne the pain if it had been merely physical—but there was a sense of sin mixed with it which made it sting him in his very soul.

4, 5. *For my iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.* David had some painful old sores. I mean old sins and they seem to have broken out again and again. And when he wrote this Psalm, he was groaning in his spirit at the remembrance of them. His faith was at a low ebb and his feelings were of the most bitter and sorrowful kind.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.* Yet he was a true child of God all the while, for this is, according to its title, “A Psalm of David,” concerning whom the Lord said, “I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will.” God’s flowers do not have sunlight 24 hours in the day. They have their night seasons when it is not only dark, but it may also be heavy with the cold dew, or trying with a sharp frost.

7, 8. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the turmoil of my heart.* That is an expressive word that David uses—“I have roared.” He felt as if his prayers were more like the agonized cries of a wounded beast than the intelligent supplications of a human being—least of all, of a man of God. And sometimes, when the spirit is greatly bowed down, it cannot express itself in words, but has to be content with groans, cries, sobs and tears.

9. *LORD, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You.* What a sweet, sweet Truth that is! Happy is that man who, in the time of deepest darkness, can still grasp that Truth of God and hold it fast. “Lord, my groaning is not hid from You! I could only roar out my complaint, or groan it out, but You could hear it just as well as if I had ordered my words aright before You.”

10, 11. *My heart pants, my strength fails me: as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague; and my kinsmen stand afar off.* “Relatives and friends

alike all get away from me as far as they can, for they cannot bear to be in such sorrowful company.”

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth.* Although David was a tried man, he was, at least at that time, a wise man. God did not leave His servant to act or to speak foolishly and, Beloved, when men are unjustly rebuking and reproaching you, there is nothing more wise than to act as if you did not hear them! It is the very acme of wisdom if you can keep quite quiet and not answer them—refusing to make any apologies or extenuations—or even showing any sign that you have so much as heard what they have said!

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in You, O LORD, do I hope.* What sublime faith there is here! It is easy to have faith in sunshiny weather—to have faith when you have the least need of it. There are plenty of people who fancy they are believing in God when everything is going well with them. It is one thing to believe when you are lying at anchor in a peaceful harbor—it is quite another matter to believe when you are at sea in a storm. David hoped in God when trouble had come upon him wave upon wave—“For in You, O Lord, do I hope.”

15. *You will hear, O LORD my God.* “Even if I do not hear You, You will hear me and if no man shall hear me, You will hear my prayer and answer my supplication.”

16-20. *For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity. I will be sorry for my sin. But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow what is good.* We need never be afraid of any man’s opposition when the reason for his being our adversary is that we “follow what is good,” as our translators quaintly express it.

21, 22. *Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my Salvation.* Now we shall see, as we read that wondrous 53rd chapter of Isaiah, not a man of God in trouble, but the Son of God in trouble! And we shall see Him, also, as a deaf man that hears not, “and as a dumb man that opens not His mouth.”

Isaiah 53:1-9. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness and*

when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone to His own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Those wicked men were His enemies because He did “follow what is good.” They that rewarded Him evil for good were His adversaries even as they are ours.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him.* We might say the same of that tried child of God whose utterances we read just now—“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.”

10, 11. *He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* What gracious Gospel words these are, even though they were recorded under the old dispensation! Oh, how you who are full of iniquity ought to catch at these Inspired declarations which so clearly set forth the substitutionary work of Christ on behalf of the guilty! If you realize your need of such a Savior as He is, how these words ought to gladden Your heart!

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.*

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

DESIRES TOWARDS GOD— A SERMON FOR THE WEAK NO. 1564

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Lord, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You.”
Psalm 38:9.***

IT is our earnest desire that all who are in Christ may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. I would earnestly wish to see such spiritual life among us that every man had reached the very height of holy manhood and was in possession of the utmost possible degree of spiritual vigor. It is a great calamity when there is a very large proportion of sick folks in any Christian community, for these must draw off the care and strength of the Church from aggressive movements. How favored would we be if it could be said of us as of Israel when they came out of Egypt, “There was not one feeble person in all their tribes.” Oh that the day would come when the Word of God shall be fulfilled which says—“He that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them.”

Let no man suppose that there is a necessity that he should always be weak in faith, always walk under a cloud, or that he should forever be a Mr. Feeble-Mind or Mr. Ready-to-Halt. Miracles of Grace are for saints as well as sinners! Feeble minds can be strengthened and crutches thrown away. We ought to grow out of the feebleness of our spiritual childhood. We should cry to God for Grace that we may get up “into the hill country” of holy confidence and there, like Mary, sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Oh that we might all attain to assurance, yes, to the *full* assurance of understanding, so that we should know why we are thus assured and so become rooted, grounded and settled in the faith—for then nothing would, by any means, remove us *from* the Truth of God or even move us *in* the Truth. May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

I would to God that you might each realize that promise of the 25th Psalm, “What man is he that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth.” At the same time, we are most painfully conscious that all of God’s people are *not* in a vigorous condition and we know that there is a large mixture in every Church of those who are sickly, desponding and faint. These we are bound to care for. Common humanity demands it, our sacred office binds us to it and the example of the good Shepherd constrains us. We must feed the lambs. We must “lift up the hands that hang

down and confirm the feeble knees.” The voice of God is heard in our heart saying, “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” which voice we dare not disregard!

Indeed, the sympathies awakened within us by a similar experience prompt us to be forward in compassion for the weak and the tried. Therefore, at this time I would seek out the weary and wounded and feeble—not with a view of trying to multiply their number—but with the hope of diminishing their number by cheering them till they grow out of their low condition. We would not pamper weakness till we seem to offer a premium to unbelief, but yet we would feed the feeble in the king’s meadows till they become strong in the Lord! I shall now look after those who cannot get beyond desires and groans and let none blame me for this service. If the shepherd spends much of his time among the weakly sheep—if he gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom—if he seems, even, to neglect the stronger sheep because they do not so urgently call for his care, no one should, therefore, infer that he delights in feebleness.

Far from it! He is trying to remove it by his tenderness! You do not blame the humane for caring for the sick. If great efforts are put forth to build or endow a hospital, you do not say, “Sickness is a desirable thing, for all this money is spent upon comforting and helping those who feel it.” Your feelings are quite the contrary—though these sick folk become the object of care, it is not as a reward to them—but an act of compassion towards them. Let none, therefore, say that the preacher encourages a low state of Divine Grace—he encourages it no more than the physician encourages disease when he tries, by his care and skill, to heal the sick! Whatever your judgments may be, I always mean to look after the downcast and the struggling! Nor shall the babes be forgotten of my soul while I am able to be a nursing father to them.

In a large family where there are little children there must always be arrangements for their feeding. Spoon victuals and milk must always be in the house, for if the cupboard contained nothing but meat and biscuits, the tender ones would starve. If it should ever come to pass that a ministry consisted entirely of the higher doctrines and the deeper experiences, it would leave many unsupplied and it certainly would not be like the ministry of Christ which had in it as much of simplicity as of mystery! A true steward cares for *all* the household and provides milk for babies as well as meat for men. If he forgets anything, he had better forget the meat than the milk, for though babies could not live on strong meat, men can live upon pure milk. To tell the truth, I have known the strong men come into such a condition at times that the milk for babies was all that they could take.

Burly Samsons who can carry Gaza’s gates may yet be so reduced that they can digest nothing but a milk diet. Those whose confidence is at its very height, today, may be brought so low that they will prize beyond gold the smallest marks and evidences of Grace and will be delighted to take hold upon those elementary Truths of God which belong to new-born Believers! Even fathers in Christ are glad, at times, to seize upon those simple promises which they left, before, to the most trembling of the saints, or

perhaps to desponding sinners. If, therefore, at this present time I speak to the very lowest form of Christian life—if I try to meet the weakest case—I shall not admit that I am neglecting the strong. My giant Brother over yonder can have a drink of milk if he likes—it will not hurt him.

Come and try it, my worthy Friend! Receive, again, the simple doctrine by which little children live and you will find wholesome fare! Delight yourself, by all means, in such grand old doctrine as we were singing just now in Toplady's noble hymn, but do not disdain the plain Truths of God which must always remain the staple food of the household of faith! Come we, then, to the text, "All my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You." May the Holy Spirit be our Instructor and we shall learn aright!

I. Our first point is DESIRES TOWARDS GOD SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO HIM. You, it may be, my dear Friend, cannot see any Grace in yourself at all—all that you perceive is a *desire* to *have* Grace. You know that you desire to repent of sin, desire to be delivered from it, desire to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, desire to be perfectly reconciled to God—but you fear that you have come no farther. Now, it is true that many desires are of no use whatever. "The sluggard desires and has nothing." Mere wishes are sorry things. But the desires of our text are earnest desires—the movements of the heart—for they are accompanied by "groaning." The Psalm evidently speaks of desires after *God*, not after temporal things—desires which are mainly expressed in the first verse of the Psalm, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

It is of intense, earnest, agonizing desires toward God for spiritual things that I am about to speak. Such desires ought to be made known unto God. It may be said that God knows our desires and that is what the text asserts. I do not doubt the Omniscience of God! But He bids us confess everything to Him quite as carefully as if He did *not* know it until we informed Him. We are to declare our cases for ourselves, just as David did, for it was not until after he had told out his sad story in the eight previous verses that he said, "All my desire is before You." We may expect the Lord to treat us as if He did not know our desires if we are negligent in declaring them. Does not the Apostle say, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be *made known* unto God"?

Mark the language—"Let them be *made known*." The Lord waits to be gracious, but He tarries till His people have pleaded for the blessing! He knows, but frequently He does not act upon the knowledge till we have laid bare our case before Him. Make known, then, your requests and do so, first, because our whole life ought to be transparent before God. What is the use of endeavoring to *hide* anything? "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The life of every man should be unveiled before the eye of Heaven—but as for those who are believers in Christ, even in the humblest degree they desire no concealment—rather do they cry, "Search me, O God." We do not wish to hide anything! Our hope lies in our heavenly Father's knowing all.

There should be no wish to hide, even, a stray desire, or to conceal the most doleful groan. All should be open and aboveboard between a sinner

and His Savior. What secrets can there be between a soul convinced of sin and a pardoning God? It would have an ill look if we still sewed fig leaves together, or hid among the trees of the garden. No, let us stand forth and let our covering be such only as the Lord, Himself, provides. Take care, then, in prayer, to set forth the secrets of your soul before God. Tell Him your sin and spread it out in all its sorrowful detail. Tell Him your fears for the past, your anxieties for the present and your dreads for the future. Tell Him your suspicions of yourself and your trembling lest you should be deceived. Tell Him what salvation you wish for and what work of Grace it is that your soul desires—make all your heart known unto God and keep back nothing, for much benefit will come to you from being honest with your best Friend.

Do this, next, because it is *commanded* of God that we should make our desires known to Him. Prayer, which is a constant duty and privilege, is, practically, “desire.” It is desire with its garments on. It is desire booted and saddled for traveling the heavenly road. Prayer without desire is dead—its soul has fled, it is but the carcass of prayer. When desire is burning in the soul, it sends up the flame of prayer, or the sparks of sighs and groans. Prayer is the fiery chariot and desires are its horses of fire! Since, then, we are commanded to “pray without ceasing,” we are really commanded to make known our desires continually. Give utterance to your desire in the best form you can, however difficult may be the task. I pray you do this, for God would have you confess all to Him. He says that “men ought always to pray and not to faint.” And again, “In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God.” Jesus said, “Watch and pray,” and His Apostle said, “I will that men pray everywhere.”

And what is this but to make your desires known to God? It is a great benefit to a man to be able to express his desires and this is an argument for making them known to God! You know your own desires better by trying to express them. They are indistinct till prayer sketches their likeness and fixes their image. Even should you fail to express your desires, their inexpressible character will better make known to you their greatness and their intensity. Sometimes a desire that is in the heart would at once be extinguished if you were to attempt to express it, for you would not dare to allow it to exist after you once saw its true nature. A glance at some desires would seal their doom, for we should feel them to be unworthy to be presented before the Lord. But when it is a holy and pure desire, tell it, for it will relieve your heart! It will heighten your estimate of the blessing sought! It will bring you to think over the promises made to such desires and it will, thereby, strengthen your hope that your desire will be fulfilled and enable you, by faith, to obtain it.

The prayerful expression of one desire will often quicken further desires and make a thousand of them where there was but one. If you will make known your desire before your God it will gather strength and soon obtain fulfillment. Desire should not be like a bird shut in within the ark—it should be sent out as Noah sent forth his dove. There! Let it fly towards Heaven! It will come home bearing the olive-leaf in its mouth. The return of prayer brings peace, therefore send it on its profitable errand and never at-

tempt to hold it in the cage of silence! Though it has lain among the pots and is grimed with groans, let it mount towards Heaven and soon its wings will be covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold! By prayer shoot out the arrows of desire from the quiver of your heart, for every one of them shall smite your enemies.

Perhaps you feel that you cannot pray because you are under so dense a gloom—but that is the time to double your desires and your pleading! I am told that the flower, of which the ancients used to say so much because it always turns toward the sun, is said to follow the great lord of day just as much in cloudy weather as when his bright beams gladden all things. What? Though the sun is not visible, yet he is still in his sphere and the nature of the flower seems to tell it in what direction to turn! Be it ever so with our soul in gloomy hours! When we cannot see the Lord's face, may we still look towards Him with strong desire. O Soul, pray even when God does not appear to hear! When your eyes are blinded with tears, turn your mournful face towards the Mercy Seat and look towards His holy hill!

Remember where He was known to manifest Himself to you. If He meets you not today at Zion's gates, yet remember Him from the Hermonites and the hill Mizar, where He revealed Himself, before, and let your desires follow hard after Him until you find Him again! Let nothing stop you from desiring and pouring out your complaint, for herein is the way of health to your soul. A gracious expression of desire before God will often be to you a proof that those desires are right. A desire that you dare tell to God is sure to be of a godly sort. If I can say, "O Lord, all my desire is before You and I wish it to be before You—I court Your inspection because I hope You will fulfill the desire," then my wish is such as conscience approves and is right and good! Is there not comfort in this for those of you who think you have nothing more than desires? If you have desires which you wish the Lord to know of, they must be right—you would not dare to bring them before God if they were not good desires!

When you are in God's House and with God's people, or reading God's Word, or when you are drawing near to God in contemplation, then these desires are strongest. Now, if they were bad desires, they would not flourish in the best of atmospheres—they would not be watered and nourished by the best of influences—for such influences would tend to kill ill weeds of strange desire. So, then, there is some good thing in you towards the Lord God of Israel after all! You would not have these heavings of your soul, these strivings of your heart, this panting, hungering and thirsting if it were not that there is somewhat in you of the Spirit's working! God has dealt graciously with you in giving you these good desires! Sparks of everlasting life are alive within your spirit so long as you have spiritual hunger and thirst, your desire must be a good thing or you would not dare to make it known to God and, seeing that it is a good thing, take care you nurture it well and cause it to grow by expressing it with your whole heart before God.

II. This leads up to my second head which is this—DESIRES TOWARDS GOD ARE GRACIOUS THINGS. Intense groaning desires towards God are, in themselves, works of Grace. For certainly, first, they are associated with

other Graces. When a man can say, "All my desire is toward God and my heart groans after Him and yet I find little in myself but these desires," I think we can point him to some other good things which are in his heart. Surely *humility* is apparent! You take a right view of yourself, O man of desires! A lowly esteem have you of yourself and this is well. I would to God that some who are full of bragging and boasts about their holiness could only be as safe as you are with your desires and groans, for there is in you that broken and contrite heart which the Lord will not despise.

God has given you this jewel among the rest—a meek and lowly spirit. Yes, and there is faith in you, for no man heartily desires to believe unless he does, in some measure, *already* believe. There is a measure of believing in every true desire after believing. If you say, "I desire to trust Christ," why, Soul, you trust Him, already, in some degree, since you believe that He is the kind of Person whom it would be right to trust! Your *desire* to cast yourself wholly upon Christ has in it the beginning of saving faith! You have the grain of mustard seed within you which will grow into a great tree. I can tell the mustard by its taste—the strength of your desire, its pungency and heat—betray the genuine seed. And you have love, too. I am sure of it! Did ever a man desire to love that which he did not love already? You have already some affection toward the Lord Jesus, some drawings of your heart Christward, or else you would not sigh and cry to be more filled with it.

He who loves most is the very man who most passionately desires to love more. Love and desire keep pace in Christians so that the more love, the more desire to love—and so I gather that this desire of yours to love Jesus is a sure evidence that you love Him already! Your desire is the smoke which proves that there is fire in your soul. A living flame lingers among the embers and, with a little fanning, it will reveal itself! Your desire to serve God is obedience! Your desire to pray is prayer! Your desire to praise is praise! I am sure, also, that you have some hope, for a man does not continue to groan out before his God and to make his desire known unless he has some hope that his desire will be satisfied and that his grief will be relieved. David lets out the secret of his own hope, for he says in the 15th verse, "In You, O Lord, do I hope." You, my downcast Brother, do not hope anywhere else, do you? You know that every other door is shut; every other road is blocked up except that which leads from your soul to God. I know you have some hope and, therefore, if you have no hope anywhere else I am persuaded that you have a hope in God!

That thought of God which makes you cry, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him," has the seeds of hope and the beginning of comfort within it. I might go over many of the Graces, but these will suffice—as a man is known by his company, so may our desires be known by their attendants—and as holy desires after God keep company with humility and faith and love and hope, I am persuaded they are of like character and are gracious themselves. Another proof that they are gracious is that they come from God. Desires after God must come from some source or other. If you desire to be holy, where did that desire come from? From your own corrupt nature? Impossible! Certain believers in free will may think so, but we are not

agreed with them. We believe that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, neither can thorns bring forth figs. If there is a desiring and a groaning of the heart after God in your bosom, depend upon it, human nature never originated it!

Can *sin* desire holiness, or *death* pant for life? Holy desires are plants which are by no means native to the soil of human nature—their seed comes from a far country. Do you think the devil worked these holy desires? Listen, Brother—does the devil make you thirst after God? Does he make you sigh and cry after the light of your Father's Countenance? Does he make you pray to be delivered from temptation? Does he make you sigh to be conformed to the image of Christ? Then the devil has very greatly altered since I met him, last, and since he was described in Holy Writ, or seen in the conflicts of good men! Who, then, has kindled these heavenly flames of desire? I earnestly acknowledge my belief that *every* pure desire is as much the work of God as the Grace which it desires! He who sincerely longs to be right with God has already somewhat of a work of Divine Grace within his soul creating those aspirations. Now, as God can say of all that He creates, "It is very good," I come to the conclusion that these groaning desires after God are very good. They are not great, nor strong, but they are gracious. There is water in a drop as well as in the sea. There is life in a gnat as well as in an elephant. There is light in a beam as well as in the sun and so is there Grace in a desire as truly as in complete sanctification!

Thirdly, holy desires are a great test of character—a test of eminent value. You ask, "Can you judge a man's character by his desires?" I answer, yes. I will give you the other side of the question that you may see our side all the more clearly. You may certainly judge a bad man by *his* desires. Here is a man who desires to be a thief. Well, he is a thief in heart and spirit. Who would trust him in his house, now that he knows that he groans to rob and steal? Here is a man who desires to be an adulterer—is he not, in God's sight, already such? Did not Jesus tell us so? Here is a man who *desires* to be a Sabbath-breaker but he is compelled by his situation to attend the House of God—he is already, in God's sight, a Sabbath-breaker because he would follow his own works on God's holy day if he had the opportunity. The desire to commit a fraud and especially the *earnest* desire to do it, would prove a man to be a villain at heart. If a man were to say, "I want to cut my enemy's throat. I am full of revenge. I am groaning to murder him." Is he not a murderer, already, before God?

Let us, then, measure out justice in our own case by the rule which we allow towards others. Let me help you to apply the principle. If you have a desire, an earnest, agonizing desire towards that which is right, even though, through the infirmity of the flesh and the corruption of your nature, you do not reach to the height of your desire, yet that *desire* is a test of your character. The main set of the current determines its direction—the main bent of the desire is the test of the life. It is well with you even though you have to cry with Paul, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not." If you earnestly desire to love God, you *do* love Him! If you desire to be purified. If with a strong, continual, agonizing

desire you pine for it—already the work of purification has begun, for your desire has been purified—your wish, your will, your heart have already been purified! Is there not proof enough that there is a measure of graciousness about true desires after God?

Note, further, that our desires are a test very much superior to several other favorite modes of self-judging. For instance, many people judge their religion by the regularity of their attention to its outward duties. “I was never absent on a Sunday morning, nor even from an evening service. I attend communion at least once a month. I go to the Prayer Meetings, I read a chapter or half a chapter every day. I bow my knees at my bedside every morning and evening—I have never omitted any part of my duty for many years.” I am very glad to hear it, respected Friend, but if you have no desires towards God, all your regularity of attendance does but liken you to the Church clock which is quite as punctual, or to the pulpit Bible, which never leaves its place. You may be a capital Pharisee, but you are not a true Christian unless your soul is full of living desires!

If you cry out, “I am thirsting for God, the living God. My spirit groans after holiness. When I have bowed my knee, I groan before God because I cannot live as I would, or even pray as I desire to pray. I have come to the House of God longing to be fed with spiritual meat. I have always been a hungry soul towards Divine things.” Then I quote my Master’s words, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Living desires are better than dead duties—as a living dog is better than a dead lion. The most regular outward performance of pious duties may be the revolution of heartless machinery, but *desires* mean life and *life* is necessary if we would please the living God! Desires are a better test than the self-congratulation I have sometimes met with about the possession of gracious things. I say not better than the possession of Graces, but better than the supposed possession of them.

Did you say, “I have faith. I can move mountains”? I had sooner hear you say, “Lord, increase our faith.” Did you boast, “I have love so that I shall never backslide or deny Christ”? I had rather you should say, “Hold me up and I shall be safe.” Do you say, “I have experience and shall never be misled. I can hear heresy and be none the worse”? Ah, yes, I have heard that kind of talk, but I feel safer about a man who says, “Preserve me, O Lord, for in You do I put my trust.” Remember that the chief of the Apostles said—“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

We feel surer as to the Grace in a man’s heart who groans after more Grace than we do of him who boasts—“I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing.” A man may be full and dead! But he who hungers is alive. Brothers and Sisters, if your soul is desiring and crying and groaning after God, do not condemn yourself because you cannot speak quite so positively as others as to your safety or your sanctity! Desire on and groan on, but at the same time get nearer to the Cross! Trust more

completely! Look out of self and rest more fully in the Covenant promises of God. Your state is not one to cause trouble—it is painful but it is not perilous. I am sure that there is a graciousness about holy desires because they have been very prominent in the very best of men. Look at David! See how his soul longs, yes, even faints! Hear how he pants, like a hart for the water brook, that he may draw near to God!

His Psalms are very largely made up of desires—they abound with such passages as, “One thing have I *desired* of the Lord, that will I seek after.” “Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” “My soul thirsts for God.” All his desires went heavenward, for he said, “Whom have I in Heaven but You?” And in his last hours he exclaimed concerning the Covenant of Grace, “This is all my salvation and all my desire.” Nor must we forget Daniel. In the passage in which Daniel is spoken of as a “man greatly beloved,” which is a very sweet translation—the words may be read, “a man of desires”—I suppose that he obtained that name of the Lord because he much abounded in holy longing and was accustomed to rise from one desire to another. There is a remarkable expression in the second of Daniel at the 18th verse.

When the king had dreamed and none could interpret the dream, the Word of God said—“Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret.” In other books we would have found it stated that he asked his friends to pray, but Daniel went to the very soul of things and begged them to *desire*. His prayers thrice a day were not formal—they were deeply and intensely sincere and, therefore, they were full of desire which is the motive force, the life-blood of prayer! Daniel, then, was a man of great desires and hence a desirable man with God—a man greatly beloved. As for Nehemiah, that faithful servant of God, he began his work by praying for a blessing on those who “*desired*” to fear God’s name.

If you turn to the New Testament, what a man of desires Paul was! He was always desiring this and desiring that for other people, until he desired for himself that he might depart and be with Christ! A part of the inheritance of Israel of old lay on this side of the Jordan, but the major portion was on the further shore—and so the major part of a Believer’s portion for the present lies in desires for things not yet attained. A man of devotion is always a man of desires. Among your acquaintances you will find the best people are full of longing to be better. They know that God has blessed them—they rejoice in every particle of Grace they have ever received from Him—but they are always wanting more. They are, in spiritual things, as hard to satisfy as the king whom Du Chaillu met with in the center of Africa. He gave him a huge present of goods and his gracious majesty was overjoyed and held a great feast over the treasure.

But before the week was over his black kingship said to Du Chaillu, “Truly, goods and money are like hunger; you are filled today, but tomorrow you are hungry again.” In one sense he who has obtained Grace never hungers, that is to say, he needs nothing beyond his God. But in another sense he always hungers more and more, the more he obtains. Covetousness of

goods is a crime, but covetousness of *good* is a virtue. “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” He who has little Grace can be content with little. He that has more Grace longs for more and he who has most is insatiable to a still larger degree. He has the greatest esteem for the heavenly treasure who has had the most acquaintance with it and, therefore, he longs to possess all that can be possessed!

Time warns me to leave this point, only repeating the fact that desires towards God are gracious things.

III. Thirdly, DESIRES TOWARD GOD ARE CAREFULLY OBSERVED BY HIM. Was not that the first head? No, it was not. The first head was that we ought to *make our desires known* to God—the third head is that they *are known*. It is wonderful condescension that the Lord should observe so poor a creature as a sinful, mournful mortal. You heard me read the whole Psalm just now. Is it not a terrible description of a horrible sickness? I wonder how many of you would like to go and visit a man who was in the condition which David pictures and watch over him and nurse him? Here was a man who had no soundness in his flesh and no rest in his bones, but was eaten up with a loathsome disease and covered with wounds which corrupted till they stank.

The Lord cannot look upon iniquity. He hates and loathes it infinitely and yet He looks upon His poor servant when sin has worked in him all this mischief. Oh, poor, broken-down Believer, your God still looks upon you! Oh you whose wounds gangrene; you who seem, already, to be rotting into the sepulcher of apostasy, still if there is any life and desire in you, your God is watching you! With tender, loving eyes He sees you in your misery and filthiness! The best thought of all is that He sees the good points in us for, while David does not say, “Lord, all my *wounds* are before You; Lord, all this stench and corruption are before You,” he does say, “Lord, all my *desire* is before You.” God has a quick eye to spy out anything that is good in His people—if there is but one speck of soundness; if there is a single mark of Grace; if there is any remaining token of spiritual life—though it is only a faint desire; though it is only a dolorous groan, the Father sees it and records it, casting the evil behind His back and refusing to behold it.

Oh, is it not a blessed matter of fact that my desire is before God? Even when I cannot speak it, it is all before Him! I cannot explain it, but it is known to Him! It puzzles me to state my case, but it will not puzzle Him to solve it and to deal with it and to deliver me out of the evil of it. “All my desire is before You,” as if David had said, “There it is, Lord, I have not kept back anything. As far as I know I have put it all in Your view. But, inasmuch as I do not know it all nor I cannot express it all, this is still my comfort, that Your eyes miss no point, Your heart leaves nothing unperceived! You know all about me and You will deal wisely with me!”

IV. The last head is that EARNEST DESIRES TOWARDS GOD WILL BE FULFILLED. How do we know this? If men are sighing and crying to God they will be heard—how do we know that? Why, first, because these desires are of God’s creation and you cannot imagine, at least I hope you cannot imagine, that God would create desires in us which He will not satisfy! Why,

look even in Nature—if He gives the beast hunger and thirst, He provides the grass upon the mountains and the streams that flow among the valleys for it! There is not a fish in the sea nor an insect in the air but what God has made provision for gratifying its instincts and its desires. If, then, He has put in you a desire after Himself, He will give you Himself!

If He has made you long after pardon, He will give you pardon! If He has made you sigh after purity, after eternal salvation, He means to give you these. Do you think that God would act towards us wantonly and torment us with the torments of Tantalus needlessly? Has He made His mercy flow all around you and has He given you thirst and will He never let you drink? If He did not mean that you should drink, why has He created the longing within you? You do not thirst after God by nature and if He had let you alone you never would have so thirsted! You did not pine after His love until He made you pine for it—why, then, this creation of a wish if it is not to be gratified? Has He made you long after faith and yet, do you think, He will deny it to you? Has He given you a groaning after His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and will not Jesus yet be yours? Soul, He *is* yours!

I have seen some treat children very unkindly when, to make sport for themselves, they have exhibited fruit or toys to the children which have excited great desire and they have acted as if they were going to give them to the children and then they have gone away and given them nothing and laughed at them. They thought there was wit in such conduct, but it seemed to me meanness, itself! God has no such cruel ways with men—if He has taught them to desire His Grace, He will fulfill their desire because He is always a merciful and gracious God. Remember, O desiring man, that you already have a blessing! When our Divine Master was on the mountain-side, the benedictions which He pronounced were no word blessings, but they were full of weight and meaning and among the best of them is this—“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Blessed while they hunger, blessed while they thirst! Yes, they are *already* blessed and there is this at the back of it, “for they shall be filled.” Thank God that you hunger!

Oh, my Friends, if we could make this city of London to be full of souls that hungered after Christ, we might pray day and night for so blessed a consummation! If we could cause the multitudes of men who go up and down these streets, careless of God and of eternity, to thirst and sigh and cry after God, what a blessing that would be! Time was, perhaps, when you, too, were stony-hearted and had no such desires—the change is a thing to be grateful for. Bless God for your grief, your agony, your anguish—for anything that is like a *spiritual* feeling—it is better than to be left altogether alone. Here is something comforting for your distressed heart—a blessing is already pronounced upon you. And we may be sure, dear Friends, that God will hear the desires which He has, Himself, created, because He loves to gratify right desires.

It is said of Him in Nature, “You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Does God care for sparrows in the bush, for minnows in the brook, for midges in the air, for tiny things in a drop of stagnant wa-

ter and will He fail to satisfy the longings of His own *children*? Nothing gives us more pleasure, perhaps, as parents, than to gratify the proper desires of a dear child. We like to see the pleasure that beams upon the little face when the desire is fulfilled. Do you not know that God loves to give *us* pleasure? It is His joy to do it! It is one of the joys of the great Father's heart to make His children glad. Be assured, my dear Friend, it is no joy to God to see you with that dreary countenance. God delights in the delight of His people! He has made a promise to the happy which well fits in with my text—"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

He would have us rejoice in Him, for He rejoices over us! If you need proof, note well the names He gives us—"You shall be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married." If God delights to fulfill our desires, let us not be slack in desiring! If you need a sure proof that He will grant gracious desires, let me remind you of His promises. Sometimes one promise may stick in the memory and be better than quoting fifty. Here is the 19th verse of the 145th Psalm—take it home with you—"He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry and will save them." If there is a holy awe of God in your soul, so that you fear Him, He will yet fulfill your desire and your cry shall bring you salvation!

The Lord will keep His promise—you can be you sure of that. Has He said and shall He not do it? What a joy it will be when you get your desire satisfied and how you will praise the Lord! It may not be long before your soul's longing is before you. This prophecy I venture to make concerning you, that when the Lord has given you the desire of your heart, you will hardly know how to extol Him sufficiently! How you will bless and magnify His dear name! And what is more, others will begin to praise Him, too. In the 21st Psalm, when the king had obtained a blessing from God, his subjects began to bless God for him. Read the second verse—"You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips." Now, I should not wonder but what, before long, others will say the same of you—"The Lord has done great things for him."

His wife, who lamented his deep dejection, will bless God and say, "Lord, I thank You that You have given him the desire of his heart and that You have not withheld the request of his lips." Godly friends will hear of his deliverance and rejoice, saying, "He who has long been cast down has found the light of God's Countenance," and they will also say, "You have given him the desire of his heart." As you spread your new joy and perfume the atmosphere with gladness, the saints will bless God that He has given you the desire of your heart! I am persuaded that you will obtain your desire since it will glorify God for you to have it. "Whoever offers praise, glorifies God" and you will praise Him and thus glorify Him. Go your way and seek the Lord with confidence through Jesus Christ and He will bless you evermore. Amen.

STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS

NO. 3234

A SERMON
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“For I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.”
Psalm 39:12.

If you read the whole verse, you will see that David used these words as an argument in prayer—“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” It is a grand thing to be able to argue with God in prayer! Faith grips the Angel of the Covenant, but it is by well-grounded arguments that we will wrestle with Him until we prevail. Expectancy puts in the wedge, but it is solid argument that drives it home. When we want to obtain any mercy from the Lord, we must support our plea by reasons drawn from His Nature, His promises and the experiences of His children as recorded in His Word. Martin Luther was a great master of this holy art of arguing with God in prayer, as was the Apostle Paul and, therefore, their supplications were not presented in vain. Let it be so with you, also, Beloved—besiege the Throne of Grace with the most powerful arguments you can find in the heavenly armory! Lay hold upon the arm of Omnipotence and say to the Lord, as wrestling Jacob did, “I will not let You go, unless You bless me.”

I. It is, however, the argument that David used, rather than the prayer that he presented, upon which I want to talk to you at this time. So first, I ask you to notice that DAVID WAS A STRANGER AND A SOJOURNER, AS ALL HIS FATHERS HAD BEEN BEFORE HIM. A stranger is a person who is away from his home. And a sojourner is one who only stays in a certain place for a short time and then must be up and away. Such is a true Christian. In what respects is he a stranger?

First, he is a stranger *in his position*. He is not in his native land—he is a freeman of the New Jerusalem. He sings—

*“I’m but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home!
Earth is a desert dreary,
Heaven is my home!
Dangers and sorrows stand
Round me on every hand—
Heaven is my fatherland,*

Heaven is my home!

While we are here in the body, we are absent from our nearest and dearest relatives. You know how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." Our Elder Brother has gone Home before us to prepare the many mansions in His Father's house for our eternal abiding place. Many of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ have already joined the general assembly and Church of the First-Born which are written in Heaven. 'Tis true that we have many very dear relatives *here*, but they, also, are strangers here even as we are—pilgrims to the Celestial City that lies beyond the river! Our true possessions are not here. We own no property in this world. We have had certain things lent to us for use while we are here, and we have to give an account of how we use them, but we must leave them all behind us when we go Home. We brought nothing into this world and we can carry nothing out of it. Our inheritance is above—an inheritance which is undefiled, and that fades not away—which we are to share with Christ, for we are joint-heirs of it with Him! Our treasure is where our heart is and both are now before the Throne of God on high in the keeping of Christ—unto whom we have committed them until that day when we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory! "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." I know that there are tender associations connected with our earthly homes and loved ones, yet how often are the ashes of our family hearth quenched by the tears of grief while the black pall of mourning hangs over those who have been taken from us? Ah, no, this is not our home! Our native land, our true country is in the heavenly highlands where Jesus dwells! And we long for the time when He shall say to us, "Come up here." Then, but not till then, shall we be at Home with the Lord!

Next, we are strangers, not only in position, but in character. When an Englishman crosses over to France, he is quickly recognized as a stranger and a foreigner. And a true Christian is not in any place long before it is discovered that he is of a different nationality from them by whom he is surrounded! His pedigree is not the same as that of worldlings—they are of their father, the devil, and they do his works—but he has been "born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." God is now his Father, for He has "begotten him again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." His manners, too, as well as his pedigree, are not like those of worldlings. If an Englishman goes to the Continent and tries to pass himself off as a German or a Frenchman, he is soon detected. And, in a similar fashion, a true Christian reveals the fact that he is an alien in this world—his ways and manners and customs are not those of the men of the world who have their portion in this life. He has obeyed that great Apostolic command, "Be not conformed to this world: but be you

transformed by the renewing of your mind.” There is also something in a Christian’s speech which shows that he is a stranger in this world. He has a peculiar accent which the worldling cannot imitate. Even when a Christian speaks wrongly, he is speedily detected. Peter denied with an oath that he even *knew* Jesus of Nazareth, but those that stood by were not deceived by his swearing, for they said to him, “Surely you, also, are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”

The reason of all this is because there is an essential difference between the *nature* of a Christian and the *nature* of a worldling—the worldling is of the earth, earthy. But the Christian is no longer a mere natural man, for he has had a higher and spiritual Nature imparted to him! Indeed, he has been made a partaker of the Divine Nature! The worldling seeks the things of the world, but the spiritual man seeks the things of the Spirit. That which came down from Heaven returns back to Heaven and, just as fire seeks the sun, the great central source of light and heat, so the new spirit within the Christian seeks God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and things eternal, heavenly, and Divine! I say again that there is an essential difference between the nature of a Christian and the nature of a worldling—you cannot make a true Christian into a worldling and you cannot make a worldling into a Christian! A natural man must be born-again before he can become a Christian—and then he will not be the same man that he was before, but a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Further, being strangers in this world, *we must expect to be treated as strangers by the world*. Worldlings cannot understand us, just as the people in a foreign country cannot understand an Englishman who can only speak his native language. He is a stranger in a strange land and so is a Christian in this world. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon this earth, the great mass of the people could not comprehend Him—He was a stranger in the very world which He had made! And the world knows us not because it knew Him not—and the more we are like He, the less will the world be able to comprehend us. The carnal mind knows not the things of the Spirit “because they are spiritually discerned.” We must not marvel, therefore, Beloved, if our motives are misconstrued and our words wrested and twisted—and we are slandered and abused. We are like the pilgrims passing through Vanity Fair—and if we did not receive such treatment as they received, we might begin to suspect that we had become like the citizens of that country and were no longer pilgrims bound to Zion!

Further, *we are in our hearts, strangers to the world*. Wherever a true Englishman wanders, his heart always turns towards his native land and he says—

“England, with all your faults, I love you still”—

and when once again he sees the hoary cliffs of old Albion, his heart leaps within him, for he is glad to be back in the dear homeland! I have traveled through many lands and I can appreciate their beauties, but, after all, “there’s no place like home!” So is it with the Christian. He has various interests and occupations here and he seeks to be a blessing in the land where he is for a while, a sojourner, but his heart is with Christ in Heaven—and he can never be fully satisfied until he is there, too! An Englishman abroad is often hard to please. He, thinks, sometimes very foolishly, that there is nothing as good as what he has in his fair island home! But a Christian *knows* that heavenly things are infinitely preferable to the things of earth! He has long since learned that there is nothing here to satisfy his immortal spirit and his heart is always anticipating the time when he shall be at Home with his Lord and find in Him all that his capacious soul can wish.

Certainly, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *we ought to be strangers to the world in our conversation*. When we are in a foreign country, we are very cautious where we go, for we do not feel as safe as when we are in our own land where we can ask our way and easily understand the directions given to us. When we try to bargain with the foreigners, we are not certain whether they are cheating us and, certainly, the Christian in this world has many who are attempting to cheat him—not merely for time, but for eternity, too! That arch-roogue, Satan, is plotting against him every day and all Satan’s legions are constantly seeking to rob him of his holiness or of his peace of mind—or in some way or other to lead him astray. So be on your guard, Christian, as you journey through this foreign land! You are in an enemy’s country, a foe may be lurking behind every hedge, a fiery dart may be shot at you from every bush! Keep your sword unsheathed, ever have ready for use that two-edged “sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God,” and hold as with a death-grip the great “shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The great adversary of your soul will attack you just at the moment when you think yourself most secure, so “be sober, be vigilant”—always obey your Master’s command—“What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Strangers in a foreign land should have their wits on the alert and Christians in this world should have their graces in active exercise! If they do not, they will bitterly regret their folly and sin.

Yet further, *we are strangers as to our supplies*. When we go on the Continent, we do not expect the people living there—the hotel-keepers, shop-keepers, and so on, to pay the cost of our travels, board and lodging, and to buy for us anything that takes our fancy! No, we take with us as much money as we think we shall need, or drafts that we can cash at a foreign bank. And if we find that we have not sufficient funds, we send to England for more, for we are absolutely dependent upon our home supplies. Just so is it in spiritual matters with the Christian—he knows

that he must not look for a single lump of coal from earth's mines to keep alight the fire of his piety—he must depend upon God for everything. Like the Israelites, he is in a howling wilderness that can yield him no supplies of corn—and his bread must drop from Heaven day by day, or he will starve. He is in an desert not watered by any river where he can quench his thirst—all he has to drink must flow from the struck Rock, Christ Jesus. Everything he has must come directly from his God! His eyes must always be lifted up to the hills, from where comes his help—his help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth!

And, to close this part of the subject, *the Christian is a stranger as to the short duration of his sojourn in this world.* Thank God we are not to be here long. Though the days of our pilgrimage should be seventy, or eighty, or even 90 years, how swiftly they come to an end! No weaver's shuttle flies so fast as does the life of man—and the Christian who dies the soonest is all the earlier in Heaven! The worker for Christ who gets his service finished first, receives his reward the sooner. [It is remarkable that this Sermon, taken in the regular order of the unpublished manuscripts, should be first available for reading on the last Sabbath in January, just 19 years after Mr. Spurgeon's Home-going at Mentone, a little before midnight on January 31st, 1892, at the age of fifty-seven! The Sermon intended for reading that day, #2241, Volume 38—A STANZA OF DELIVERANCE, was the second of only two which the beloved preacher had been able to revise during his last long illness. The other one was #2237, Volume 38—GRATITUDE FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE GRAVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Instead of dreading Death, and bidding him depart from us, we might rather beckon him to come for us! Come quickly, blessed messenger, to summon us to the Presence of the King! Come, chariot of fire and horses of fire, and take the servant of the Lord to be forever with his gracious Master and Savior! Of course, I am saying all this in complete subservience to the will of God. He knows the best time and way to end our earthly service and, after all, it matters not when and how we go Home to Heaven! And if we “are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,” we “shall not prevent (or have any preference over) them which are asleep. For the Lord, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

II. Now, secondly, notice that DAVID WAS A STRANGER WITH GOD—and so is the true Christian. The worldling is a stranger *to* God, but the true Believer in Jesus is a stranger *with* God—and there is an eternal difference between the two!

What is the meaning of the sentence, “I am a stranger with You”? I think it means, first, that *although we are strangers in the world, we are constantly under God's eyes and care.* “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry.” Beloved, you are always

under *God's discerning eyes*. He searches you, tries you and sees if there is any wicked way in you—and leads you in the way everlasting. You are all constantly under *God's protecting eyes*. You know what He said of old concerning His vineyard—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Further, you are continually under *God's directing eyes*—"I will guide you with My eyes." You are also always under *God's pitying eyes*. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." You, too, are never absent from *God's providing eyes*. One of the Lord's most precious names is Jehovah-Jireh, which means, "The Lord will see, or provide." And you are perpetually under *God's delighting eyes*. He says to you, "You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land, Beulah, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married."

Further, that sentence means that *although we are strangers in the world, we enjoy peculiar fellowship with God*. The Apostle John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." We are not strangers to God, for, like Enoch, we walk with God in hallowed and intimate union and communion. He has told us some of His greatest secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant." He has given us the high privilege of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty! He has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love. And we have had such rapturous fellowship with Him that we understand what Paul meant when he said that he was "caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The sentence "I am a stranger with You," also means that, *although we are strangers in the world, God, too, is a stranger*. It is passing strange, yet is it strangely true that God is a stranger in His own world! Here is His handiwork all around us, most fair and beautiful, yet the fool says in his heart, "There is no God," and proves himself to be a fool by saying it! Here are signs on every hand of the working of God's gracious Providence—mysterious but wondrously wise—yet worldlings cannot see any traces of the finger or mind or heart of God, for He is a stranger to them! And as God is a stranger here, we need not marvel that we, who are His children, are also strangers on the earth—

***"Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!
'Tis no surprising thing
That we should be unknown—
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

I think I see my gracious Lord and Master wandering through this world as a Stranger, “despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief—spit upon, scourged, hounded out from among men and, at last crucified “outside the gate.” Then, when we “go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach,” we are strangers with Him and what higher honor than that can any of us ever desire? “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.”

There is another thought that I must not leave out. It is this. *Though we are strangers in the world, we are with Christ all the while.* Where is the true Christian’s life? Paul answers the question in writing to the Colossians—“If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead and your life is His with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory.” Christ is the Christian’s All-in-All, so what can there be belonging to the Christian that is left here on earth? Why, nothing at all that need trouble us for a moment for, “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved) and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Representatively, *we are in Heaven even now*—and where our Head is, there will all the members of His mystical body be gathered in due time.

III. Now, lastly, IF WE ARE STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS HERE, WHAT THEN?

First, *it is clear that we must have a home somewhere.* “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests,” and shall the immortal spirit of man have no home? God forbid! We could not be called strangers and sojourners unless we had a native land somewhere! A man who is an alien in one country, is a citizen of another, so we who are strangers and sojourners here, are citizens of a better country, even a heavenly!—

***“There is a happy land,
Far, far away”—***

which is my true Home and there, in God’s good time, I know that I shall be—

***“No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home!”***

Do you think God would make us so dissatisfied with this world if He did not mean to satisfy us with another and a better one? Surely not! The very fact that we are strangers and sojourners upon the earth proves that we have a country of our own that is very different from this wilderness-world through which we are passing!

This being the case, *it is not surprising that we sometimes long to get Home.* We ought not to long for Heaven from any lazy motives. A good workman may be so tired with heavy toil that he eagerly looks forward to Saturday night so that he may enjoy his Sabbath rest and renew his strength for fresh service on the morrow. And you and I, Beloved, though we are not tired *of* our Master's work, are often tired *in* it, and we shall be glad when our rest day comes. Thank God, it is not to be six days' work, and then one day's rest, but it is to be a rest that shall know no end—a rest in untiring service! "There remains therefore a rest (a *Sabbatismos*, an eternal keeping of Sabbath) to the people of God." I said that it is not surprising that we sometimes long to get Home. You would not think that a boy loved his home if he never longed for the holidays to come. I recollect that when I was at boarding-school, I made an Almanac with a square for every day and I blotted out each one as it went by—and sometimes I blotted it out the night before so that I might seem to have fewer days at school! And, Christian, you, also, may rejoice as the days of your school training here pass, for, as each one flits by, you are "a day's march nearer Home."—

***"Though in a foreign land,
We are not far from home.
And nearer to our Home above
We every moment come."***

Do you not also think, dear Friends, that *the fact that we are strangers here should make us treat one another well?* And surely, if the worldling knew Christians better, he would treat them better. They are strangers to you, Man, but they are God's strangers! They are royal personages *incognito*, princes of the blood imperial travelling through this world to their wondrous palaces above! But let us who are fellow pilgrims and strangers help one another all we can. If you are in Switzerland, or up the Rhine, and have got into some difficulty or trouble, if you see an Englishman coming, you feel pretty sure that your fellow countryman will do what he can to help you. It should be so with Christians! We are strangers in this world, so let us aid one another all we can. We are soldiers in an enemy's country, so back to back and shoulder to shoulder let us face the foes that are all around us! Though we are strangers to the world, we are not strangers to God, so let us not be strangers to one another, but let us be of one heart and mind, walking in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

Then, next, *surely we ought never to envy the lot of sinners.* I never grudge horses their corn or the swine their husks and hog-wash. Then why should I envy sinners? I remember David's words, "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." When a friend once gave Martin Luther a large sum of mon-

ey, he stood at the Church door and gave it all away to the poor because, he said, he had made up his mind to have his portion in the next world—and not in this. There is nothing in the sinner’s lot, either here or hereafter, that you and I have any cause to envy!

And *let us never murmur at our own lot—*

“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long!

So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”

There are you, my poor Brother or Sister, fretting about what you will do in six months’ time, worrying about the rent, the fire, food, the clothing and I know not what! Yet it may be that before even this year ends, your head may be wearing the crown and your fingers sweeping the golden harp strings, and you yourself—

“Far from this world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in!”

And if you are still here for a while, the Lord will provide for you—so cast all your care upon Him who cares for you!

So, lastly, *what an easy thing it should be for a Christian to die!* He is a stranger with God even here, but he will be with God, and not as a stranger up there! He has been with God in life, and God will be with him in death—

“Strangers into life we come,

And dying is but going Home.”

And going Home is not hard work. Going Home is not a thing to be dreaded—rather should we sing in joyous anticipation of it, as so many of our dear Brothers and Sisters have done when they have actually reached the hour of their Home-going!

Yet, alas, there are some here who may well dread their Home-going, for they are strangers to God, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” O Soul, if that is your condition, do not remain a stranger to God a moment longer! Repent of your sin and trust God to forgive it for Jesus sake! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” And then, though you will be a stranger, here, you will not be stranger up there where He is! God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 39.

This Psalm gives a description of David’s experience and conduct when stretched upon a sickbed. He appears to have felt impatience working within him, which I am sorry to say is a very common disease with most of us when God’s hand is heavy upon us. Yet David struggled against his impatience. Though he felt it, he would not know it, lest he should thereby open the mouths of his enemies and cause them to speak

evil of his God. Let us imitate his restraint if we resemble him in the temptation to impatience.

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.* This government of the tongue is a most important part of our ways. It is a very essential part of holy discipline, yet we have heard of one saint who said that he had lived for 70 years and had tried to control his tongue, but that he had only begun to understand the art when he died. David said, “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.”

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me.* They have such quick ears and they are so ready to misinterpret and misrepresent our words—and if they can find one word awry, they will straightway preach a long sermon over it! So let us muzzle our mouths while they are near. The ill words of Christians often make texts for sinners, and thus God is blasphemed out of the mouths of His own beloved children! Let it not be so with any of you, Beloved.

2. *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.* We all know that unless our grief can find expression, it swells and grows till our heart is ready to break. We have heard of a wise physician who bade a man in great trouble weep as much as he could. “Do not restrain your grief,” he said, “but let it all out.” He felt that only in that way would the poor sufferer’s heart be kept from breaking. David determined that before the wicked, he would have nothing at all to say, and though his griefs were surging within him, yet for a time he kept them from bursting out.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned: then spoke I with my tongue.* He could not hold his peace any longer—it would have been well if he had done so, for he uttered an unwise prayer when he spoke with his tongue—

4. *LORD, make me to know my end.* That is what you and I are apt to say when we get into a little trouble—we want to die and get away from it all! We say that we long to be with Christ, but I am afraid that it is often only a lazy wish to share the spoils of victory without fighting the battle—to receive the saints’ wages without doing the saints’ work and to enter into Heaven without the toils and dangers of the pilgrims’ way! Perhaps this has been the case with us, sometimes, when we have thought that our aspirations were of the best and holiest kind. When David prayed, “Lord, make me to know my end,” his prayer was not a very wise one, but the next sentences were not quite as foolish—

4. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* Oh, that we could all know how frail we are! But we reckon upon living for years when we have scarcely any more minutes left! We think our life’s hour-glass is full when the sands have almost run out. And although the hand of God’s great clock may be upon the striking-point, we think our brief hour has but just begun!

5. *Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth.* This is a very common measure, the breadth of the human hand—and David says that this span is the measure of his life. Some here must surely have spent a great part of that handbreadth—let them and all of us be prepared to meet our God when that short span’s limit is reached!

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* It is an incalculably tiny speck when compared with the immeasurable age of the Eternal! “My age is as nothing before You.” When Alcibiades boasted of his great estates, the philosopher brought him a map of the world and said to him, “Can you find your estates on this map?” Even Athens, itself, was but as a pin’s point! Where, then, were the estates of Alcibiades? Nowhere to be seen! So when we see the great map of eternity spread out before us, where is the whole of this world’s history? It is but a speck! And where, then, are your life and mine? They are as nothing before God!

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.* Then what must he be at his worst state?

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain.* [See Sermon #2346, Volume 40—EARTH’S VANITIES AND HEAVEN’S VERITIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They fret, and fume, and flurry, and worry—and all about what? About nothing! We sometimes say, “It will be all the same a hundred years hence.” Ah, but it will be all the same much sooner than that when the six feet of earth shall be all our heritage!

6. *He heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them.* “Do you think,” says an old writer, “every time you lock up your money in a box, how soon death shall lock you up in your coffin?” Some men seem to be like our children’s money-boxes into which money is put, but they must be broken before any can come out! To some men, how sad must be the thought that they have been accumulating wealth all their days, and they know not for whom they have been gathering it! A stranger may, perhaps, inherit it—or if their own kith and kin shall get it, they may squander it just as thoroughly as the misers hoarded it!

7. *And now, Lord—*If all earthly things are nothing but emptiness—

7. *What do I wait for?* “I wait for nothing here, for there is nothing here to wait for.”

7. *My hope is in You.* Ah, this hope makes life worth living! Now that we hope in God. Now that we know that there remains another and a better world than this world of shadows, life is invested with true solemnity!

8, 9. *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it.* It is always a blessed reason for resignation when we can say of any bereavement or affliction, “The Lord has done it.” Shall He not do as He

wills with His own? Then let us say with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

10-12. *Remove Your stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When you with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, you make his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears.* Tears have always had great prevalence with God. Christ used these sacred weapons when, “with strong crying and tears,” He prayed to His Father in Gethsemane, “and we heard in that He feared.” Sinner, there is such potency in a penitent’s tears that you may prevail with God if you will come to Him weeping over your sin and pleading the precious blood of Christ! Your tears cannot merit Heaven or wash away your sins, but if you do penitently grieve over them, and trust in the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, your tearful prayers shall have a gracious answer of peace! Mr. Bunyan describes the City of Mansoul as sending Mr. Wet-Eyes as one of her ambassadors to the Prince Emanuel—and he is still a most acceptable ambassador to the King of kings! He who knows how to weep his heart out at the foot of the Cross shall not be long without finding mercy. Tears are diamonds that God loves to behold!

12. *For I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* “I am not a stranger to You, O my God! Blessed be Your holy name, I know You well, but ‘I am a stranger *with* You.’ You are a stranger in Your own world, and so am I. The world knows You not, and the world knows me not. And when I act as You act, the world hates me even as it hates You.”

13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.*

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

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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“While I was musing the fire burned.”
Psalm 39:3.

OUR subject this evening will not stand in need of much preface. The Psalm may teach us that there are times when solitude is better than society and silence is wiser than speech. The company of sinners was a grief to David’s soul and because their converse was profane he chose, rather, to fly away from their midst—or if they must still continue in his presence, he determined that he would resolutely seal his lips. Touchingly he says, “I was dumb with silence (that is, utterly dumb), I held my peace, even from good.” This painful necessity soon proved to him a pleasing occasion. While he yielded himself up to the thoughts, the reveries and the pensive workings of his own heart, a sacred fire of devotion was kindled in his breast.

And, Brethren, whatever the circumstances of the Psalmist, you will all see that the exercise was profitable. And however peculiar the advantages of meditation at particular seasons, it may not be amiss for us to make it a common habit. Inverting a popular proverb, “What was one man’s medicine may be food for others,” there is much that is light and frothy in our ordinary communion. And our communications, one with another, soon grow frothy and insipid when we have no definite matter in hand. Whether, therefore, to free ourselves from the stress of business, or to escape from the temptations of idleness, let it be thought worthy of note that “musing” has sweet charms and calm reflection is capable of kindling a bright fire.

Our remarks will now run in two directions. First, we shall say something in praise of musing. And then, secondly, we shall supply you with some fuel to burn on the altar of your hearts.

I. First, then, LET US SAY SOMETHING IN PRAISE OF MUSING. We do not muse much in these days of ours. We are too busy. We are hurrying here and there, doing much and talking much, but thinking very little and spending but very little time, indeed, in the modesty of retirement—

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,”

are things which we know very little about. We would be better men if we were more alone. And I suppose that we should do more good, after all, if with even less of active effort we spent more time in waiting upon God and gathering spiritual strength for labor in His service. Where lives there upon earth, in these days, a man who spends hour after hour of the day

in meditation upon God? There may be such and if there is I wish that I had their acquaintance.

Where will you find giants such as those who lived in the Puritanical times, whose lips dropped pearls because they themselves had dived down deep in the fathomless ocean of mercy by the sweet aid of meditation? There may be such and I wish that it were our lot to sit under their ministry. But I fear that the most of us are so little in retirement—so seldom in communion with God in private and even when there, the communion is for so short a time—that we are but tiny dwarfs, and can never, while we live thus, attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

The world has put a little letter before the word “musing,” and these are the days, not for musing, but for *amusing*. People will go anywhere for amusement. To muse is a strange thing to them and they think it dull and wearisome. Our good sires loved the quiet hour and loved it so well that they cherished those times which they could spend in musing as the most happy because they were the most peaceful seasons of their life. We drag such time off to execution in a moment and only ask men to tell us how we may kill it.

Now there is much virtue in musing, especially if we muse upon the best, the highest and the noblest of subjects. If we muse upon the things of which we hear and read in sacred Scripture, we shall do wisely. It is well to muse upon the things of God because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. A man who hears many sermons is not necessarily well-instructed in the faith. We may read so many religious books that we overload our brains and they may be unable to work under the weight of the great mass of paper and of printer’s ink. The man who reads but one book and that book his Bible, and then muses much upon it, will be a better scholar in Christ’s school than he who merely reads hundreds of books and muses not at all.

And he, too, who gets but one sermon in a day, though it is an ill habit to stay away from half our Sunday engagements and only go out once, yet, he who hears but *one* sermon in a day, if he meditates much upon it, will get far more out of it than he who hears two or three but meditates not! The Truth of God is something like the cluster of the vine—if you would have wine from it, you must bruise it—you must press and squeeze it many times. The bruisers’ feet must come down joyfully upon the bunches or else the juice will not flow. And they must leap and leap and leap again, and well tread the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted.

You must, by the feet of meditation, tread the clusters of Truth if you would get the wine of consolation from them. Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth—the process which really supplies the muscle and the nerve and the sinew and the bone is the process of digestion. It is by *digestion* that the outward food becomes assimilated with inner life. And so is it with our souls. They are not nourished merely by what we hear by going here and there and listening awhile to this and then to that and then to the other.

Hearing, leading, marking and learning all require inward digesting. And the inward digesting of the Truth of God lies in the meditating upon it. Ruminating creatures chew the cud and these have always been considered clean animals. And so it is a mark of a true child of God that he understands how to chew the cud of meditation. Why is it that some people are always in a place of worship and yet they are not holy though they make some slight advances in the Divine life? It is because they neglect their closets. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it. They would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it.

The fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it. The water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. They are either too idle, or too busy—I will not say which—but often to be busy is to be idle. And when some men think us idle, we are then best at work. You who know anything of the Divine life know very well what I mean by that. Meditation is not idleness and retirement is not forsaking the good of the world. I suppose that Moses did as much for Israel on the mountain's summit with uplifted hands as ever Joshua did in the valley with his drawn sword. And Elijah upon the top of Carmel, yes, even by the brook Cherith, or in the house of the widow of Zarephath was as much serving Israel as when he smote the priests of Baal and hewed them in pieces before the Lord. I commend meditation to you, then, for fetching the nutriment out of the Truth of God.

Another note in the praise of this most blessed, but much-neglected duty is that it fixes the Truth upon the memory. You complain of short memories—you say that what you have heard you can scarcely remember to another day. If your paint is thin and you can not make your picture stand out in glowing colors, lay on many coats of your paint and so will you do what you want. If your memory will not retain the Truth the first time, then think it over and over and over again and so, by having these several coats of paint, as it were, the whole matter shall abide.

When the fly fisherman goes out to fish, it may be that in mid-stream he sees a great fish and having cast his fly, the hook is soon fairly in the fish's jaws. But what now? Why, he must let him run out the line and then he must drag him back again! And after all that he never thinks his fish safely his own till he gets him into the net. Well, now, hearing sermons is, as it were, getting the hook into the fish's mouth and *meditation* is the landing-net—it is this which gets the thing to shore!

And what if I say that after that the same meditation becomes a fire of coals upon which the fish is broiled and prepared for our spiritual food? If you cannot hold a thing well, try and get many hooks to hold it with and meditation will supply you, as it were, with a hundred hands—every one of which you may grasp the Truth of God. I am sure, dear Friends, that we give not earnest heed enough to these things, or else we should not let them slip. There are many photographers who can take a street view more rapidly than I can speak of it. They have but just to lift up the cover and put it down again and the whole thing is done.

But the same photographer, if he wishes for many things which are to endure and last, he likes, if he has time, to have the object long before the camera. And there it stands and fairly fixes itself upon the plate. And surely, there may be some few men who can just hear a sermon and retain the impression of it all their days. There are some who are quick of understanding in the things of God and as with a flash they get the Truth and never lose it. But the most of us need more than this. If we would have the Truth photographed upon our *hearts* we must keep it long before the spiritual lens or else it never will fix itself there.

Complain not, then, of your memory! Complain of yourself if you are not given to meditation. If your memory is frail let your closet rebuke you because you have not been there more often. Whereas another man may do with less meditation, if you say your memory is weak, the more reason why you should be a longer time and more often with your God in secret. All need this, but you need it more than others. See to it, then, that you neglect not this duty. For getting the nourishment out of Truth and moreover, for preserving, for salting down the Truth for future use, employ much meditation. Meditation clips the wings of thoughts which otherwise would fly away at the first clapping of the world's hands. You shall thus keep your prey, as it were, surrounded and entangled in a net or else it might escape you. Your meditation shall hold it fast until you need it.

Yet further, meditation is of great value in opening up the Truth of God and leading us into its secrets. There is some gold to be found on the surface of this land of Ophir, the Book of God. There are some precious jewels which may be discovered even by the wayfaring man—but the mass of the gold is hidden in the heart of the earth. And he who would be rich in these treasures must dig into Scripture as one who seeks for choice pearls. You must go down into its depths and you must rummage there until you get at last at the treasure.

Truth is sometimes like a flint, which, when it is struck the first time yields not, and you may even strike it yet again and still it yields not. But at last, one happy blow of the hammer shall make it fly to shivers. Meditation may be compared for its potency to the great battering ram which Sir Christopher Wren used when he built the present St. Paul's Cathedral. Old St. Paul's, you remember, had been destroyed by fire, but its walls were so extremely thick that it was found very difficult to take the old walls away.

And they were so lofty that there was also great danger to the workmen. Sir Christopher therefore invented a ram composed of a large piece of timber and intended to be used in the same way as the Romans used their rams of old. A number of men were set to work with this ram and of course, being a new instrument to them, they did not like it and they did not believe in it, either.

After hammering away some five or six hours and the wall showing no sign, whatever, of anything like an impression, they complained to Sir Christopher that he had given them a useless work to do. He set them at it again and the ram fell heavily but not a stone seemed to stir. One whole

day they kept on thus, battering away at the walls. The architect knew full well that although it might not be palpable to the laborers, there must have been a degree of oscillation given to the whole structure. And so it proved, for the next morning when they began the work again, all of a sudden down tumbled the whole mass! Thus at length the men were convinced that the work of the day before had not been lost—it really had been telling when they could not chalk down the progress.

You will find it the same with Gospel doctrine that you want to understand but cannot. There is some difficulty you cannot surmount. Meditation comes and gives one stroke after another with all the weight of prayer and of thoughtfulness, but it stirs not. But at last our diligence is rewarded and we see the whole mass of masonry which reason had piled together of fabulous traditions comes tumbling down. The foundation is discovered and the Truth of God made clear to our apprehension in a moment.

What? Do you think that the great thoughts of masterminds come in a minute? People say, “Oh, what a genius!” Nonsense! The man had been hard at work over that for years and years, and years—though perhaps the thing came at last to him suddenly. It was not a whit less a result of *study*—the success which crowns the patient brainwork of a meditative mind. Never despair, dear Friends, of understanding the Truth. If you will, in the name of Jesus, give your souls to the study and come resolved to sit at Christ’s feet as Mary did—to believe just what He tells you, as He tells it to you though He may reveal dark things and speak of them to you in parables—you shall be able to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and you shall yet know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Be not weary of well-thinking! Use much diligence in musing! Yield up your heart to sacred meditation. Turn the matter over and over and over again in your minds. You remember the story of the great philosopher who had been attempting to discover how much alloy there was in the king’s crown but who could find no way of doing it. By day and by night he pondered it. No, at night when he slept, his daydreams did but come to him again! But all of a sudden, when he was in bed, he sprang up and wrapped his garments about him and ran through the street, crying out, “Inveni, Inveni,” I have found it! I have found it!”

And one of these days, Christian, when you are puzzling over some doctrine which you feel must be true but which you cannot grasp, you will spring upon your feet when God the Holy Spirit has revealed the Truth to you and you will cry, “I have found it! I have found it!” And great will be your joy at the discovery! Cultivate much, then, the habit of retirement and meditation because of the way in which it opens up the Truth of God. Here, almost unwittingly, I have touched upon another suggestion. This musing is a charmed exercise, for, mark you, the *joy* which it brings.

There is a text in Scripture which speaks of the sinner as rolling sin under his tongue as a sweet morsel, an allusion to the habit of the man, who, when he gets a dainty thing, swallows it not at once but rolls it un-

der his tongue, trying to draw out more and more of its sweetness. Well, now, this is what the Christian should do with doctrinal Truth—he should roll it under his tongue! You will have far more enjoyment while it is in your mouth than you will afterwards, so keep it there! Meditate much upon it—roll it under your tongue again and again and again—until you get more to find its savor.

Scripture is often like a bone, but meditation is the hammer which cracks it and then the soul gets the marrow and the fatness. The beauties of Christ are not to be seen by the passerby who merely glances at Him. There is something to arrest attention at a glance, it is true, but he who would see the beauties of Jesus must look and look and look again until his whole soul is enamored of the Savior. And as he looks and is transformed into the Savior's image, he shall have such enjoyment that this side of Heaven there is none other like it! Communion comes after musing. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet," said the Psalmist, and so truly it is.

When I can walk with Him, as the old philosophers walked with Plato in the groves of the Academe, then am I indeed made wise unto salvation! And then, too, is my heart made glad. There is no riding in the chariots of Amminadib except by being much with Christ. The spouse does not say, "I stood under His shadow," no, but, "I *sat* under His shadow with great delight." Sitting down is the posture of waiting in which we ungird the loins of the mind and indulge the repose of meditation. Let us sit down, then, beneath His shadow and we shall have great delight in musing upon Christ.

But perhaps, after all, the best reason—at least the best to clench all the other reasons I have given, why we should spend much time in musing—is because musing, then, becomes easier to us. I never did light an oven fire in my life, but I have heard that sometimes when a baker goes to light a coal oven, if his fuel is a little damp, he gets no blaze. But when the fire is once up then he may throw in what he will and everything is speedily consumed by the vehement heat. So sometimes you and I feel our hearts to be like cold ovens. And we try to put some fresh Truth in but it will not burn. But, ah, when the heart gets hot and the fire is roaring, then even such damp material as I am able to give you on Sundays will burn right well and the feeble words of a poor servant of God will make your hearts hot within you!

We can meditate better after we have addicted ourselves to a meditative frame. When we have mused a little, then the fire begins to burn. And you will perceive that as the fire burns meditation gets easier and then the heart gets warm. And oh, what holy affections, what blessed excitements those have who are much alone with Christ! Such a man never has a cold heart or a slack hand who is much in meditation with his Lord Jesus. His heart comes to be like a mass of molten lard and before long he verifies the experience of the Psalmist and can make my text his own!

"Then spoke I with my tongue." He cannot help it, for this lava will soon be running over in burning hot words. And if this man should be a

preacher, he will preach with holy power! His heart being hot, his words will burn their way into his hearers' hearts. Nor will it end there—this hot heart will soon make a hot hand and the man who once has his soul full of Christ will not have his hand empty for Christ. Now he will work! Now he will preach for Christ! Now he will pray! Now he will plead with sinners! Now he will be in earnest! Now he will weep! Now he will agonize! Now he will wrestle with the angel and now he will prevail!

As the fire burns his whole being gets into a glow. And the man, like a pillar of fire, warms those who are round about him—burns his way to the glory of success and gives his Master fresh renown! Commend me, then, for all these reasons which we have given this blessed art of holy musing.

II. And now we have to spend the few minutes which remain in **PUTTING SOME FUEL ON THE FIRE OF MEDITATION.** The man who says that he has nothing to think about can surely have no brains. And that professing Christian who says he has nothing to muse upon must be a laughingstock for devils. A Christian man without a subject for contemplation? Impossible! Only give us the time and the opportunity and there are a thousand topics which at once present themselves for our consideration.

Let me just suggest a few of these to the Christian. Your heart will surely burn like an oven, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, if you think, first, upon eternal love! What a topic to muse upon!—

***“Sing we, then, eternal love,
Such as did the Father move,
When He saw the world undone,
Loved the world and gave His SON.”***

Think of that love without beginning and which, blessed be God, shall never, never cease! Give the wings of your imagination full play and go back to the time before all time—when there was no day but the Ancient of Days—when ages had not begun to be, but God dwelt alone!

Remember, if you are one of His people, the Father loved you even then and He continues still to love you and will love you when, like a bubble, this earth has melted and like a gypsy's tent the universe has been rolled up and put away! Why, as you think of this, surely you will say with our songster—

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

If you want meditation, dear Friends, here is an ocean to swim in! That one doctrine of election, that precious Truth of predestinating love and all the consequences which flow from it—why, here is a well—an overflowing well which you can never drink dry. Take deep draughts of it, then, and while you are musing you shall find that your heart is warmed.

Then, next, there is *dying* love to think of. Oh, think of the Savior descending from the starry heights of Glory and coming down to the Virgin's womb, and then descending from that lowly manger of Bethlehem even to the Cross and to the grave for you! He counted it not robbery to be equal

with God and yet for your sake He took upon Himself the form of a servant and made Himself of no reputation, but became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!

Many of the ancient saints were accustomed to spend hours in meditating upon the wounds of Christ, and many of the martyrs were for days engaged in solemn meditation upon those wounded hands and feet and that pierced side. Oh, of all the volumes which were ever written, this volume, printed in crimson upon the pure, lily-like flesh of Christ, is the best to read! Talk you of pictures? Was there ever such a picture as that which God drew with the pencil of eternal love, dipped into the color of Almighty wrath on Calvary's summit?

Angels desired to see it, but there was a veil before the picture until Jesus came and drew it up—then the spectacle was revealed—to be gazed upon throughout eternity by adoring spirits, with fresh wonder and admiration forevermore! You cannot exhaust this subject, but, O, let me beseech you to give it the first and chief place in your meditation. "I have set the Lord always before me," would be a good motto for the Believer and well would it be for him to have the Cross painted upon his very eyeballs so that everywhere he should be reminded of Christ Crucified and so should be led always to say, "For me to live is Christ." That topic never can be exhausted and there are kindred ones connected with it—your justification, the work of the Spirit—and so on.

Let me now hint at one or two other matters which I wish you should solemnly brood over. You will do well, Christian, to meditate much upon death. What? Man, did I see you turn away? A Christian afraid of death? No, verily, for death is our Lord's doorkeeper. Life keeps the key and says to us, "You shall not enter into your Father's mansions." But Death comes and with his bony hand snatches the key out of the grasp of the tyrant, Life, and puts it into the lock and opens the gate and lets us in! Why, we say sometimes, "the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death," but if he is "the last enemy," he is not altogether the less a friend, for he is a friend, too, now that Christ has transformed him.

It is to be greatly wise, Christian, to think sometimes of the grave, the mattock, and the shroud. The catacomb is no ill place for musing, and a little cemetery, with its green knolls and its white memorial stones will be a good place in which to study for the man who wishes to muse upon life and immortality in the midst of death. The old naturalists, who tell us a good many things which are not true, as well as some which are, say that the birds of Norway always fly more swiftly than any others because the summer days are so short and therefore they have so much to do in such a little time.

I do not know anything about the birds of Norway, but this I do know, that Christ's birds would surely fly more swiftly if they would only meditate upon the fact that the day is so short and that the night is so near at hand. Surely they would fly more swiftly and work more earnestly if they only thought more of the nearness of eternity! And then, Christian, if that does not make your heart burn, let me persuade you to think of Heaven!

O, carry your thoughts from this poor dunghill world up to the golden streets and to the music-begetting harps! Up yonder, I say, let your souls soar and dwell where your treasure is—with Christ upon His Throne.

Listen how they sing tonight the eternal hallelujah louder than the voice of many waters and yet sweet as harpers harping with their harps! Listen how the music swells in a sea of Glory round about the Throne of the eternal God! And you and I shall soon be there—leaving behind the sweat of toil, the rags of poverty, the shame of persecution, the pangs of sickness and the groans of death—of the death of sin. We shall soon be immortal, celestial, immaculate, glorified with the Glory which Christ had with His Father before the world was. Oh, your hearts will surely glow if you can muse thus upon Heaven, if you can sing with me tonight—

***“My soul amid this stormy world
Is like some fluttered dove,
And fain would be as swift of wing
To flee to Him I love.
My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay,
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up and come away!
I would, my Lord and Savior, know
That which no measure knows,
Would search the mystery of Your love,
The depth of all Your woes.
I fain would strike my harp divine
Before the Father’s Throne,
There cast my crown of righteousness,
And sing what Grace has done.
Ah, leave me not in this base world,
A stranger still to roam,
Come, Lord and take me to Yourself,
Come, Jesus, quickly come!”***

Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why does He tarry? Come quickly, come, Lord Jesus, come! Lash the white horse and bid him come as soon as may be, that Death may meet me and that I may meet my God!

And if that stirs you not, Christians, there is one other subject necessary for you to muse upon. Sometimes, Christians, think of Hell. No, start not, I pray you, for you will never have to feel it and therefore you need not shrink from thinking of it. Think of that Hell from which you have escaped and it will surely fire you with gratitude. Think of that place of doom into which multitudes are going every day and if this brings not the tears to your eyes and makes not your heart palpitate with zeal, I know not what will!

Consider that now, while I have been speaking, a soul has passed into eternity and oh, since we have been here how many spirits have taken the last dreadful plunge into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone—lost, lost—lost beyond my call and beyond your prayers! No sermons can save them now! No tears can bring them to repentance now! They are gone, gone! Yes, and there are others who are going—who walk the streets

of this great London! What multitudes do we meet who will forever have to magnify the awful justice of that God whom they have slighted, and of that Savior whom they have rejected!

And will not this make you bestir yourselves? O my Brethren, if we can think of Hell and yet be idle. If we can meditate upon the wrath to come and yet be prayerless, then surely feeling has been given to beasts and we are turned to stone. What? Believe in judgment and in eternal wrath and yet not weep for sinners? Believe in Hell and yet not weep for sinners? Surely, we may expect to be turned, like Lot's wife, into pillars of salt if we thus show signs of looking back with careless and wicked eyes on burning Sodom, instead of fleeing from it and urging others to escape from the wrath to come!

Christians, I have given you topics enough to meditate upon. May I fondly hope that some of you will try during the next week to scrape up some fragments of time to be alone? I should not have a cold-hearted congregation—I should not have need to stir you up to liberality in giving, or in earnestness, or in service, if you would but muse much—for well am I persuaded that while you are musing the fire will burn.

But I address myself now—stealing a minute of your time which might, perhaps, be worse spent than here—though I go beyond the allotted hour, I address myself to those who are not yet converted to God. I could have hope for you, my dear Hearer, I could have good hope for you if I knew that you were given to musing. And if you are so given, may I suggest a few topics which are most likely to be useful to you? Muse, I pray you, unregenerate man and woman, upon your present state. “Dead in trespasses and sins,” as you now are, the wrath of God abides on you! Heirs of wrath even as others, afar off, without God, without hope and without Christ in the world, I pray you remind yourselves of the hole of the pit where you now are and out of which you have never yet been dug.

Perhaps I have thought more about your soul than *you* have ever thought about it in your life! I pray you now let your own thoughtfulness begin to exercise itself—examine yourself—see what your state is. And when you have thought that over, I pray you consider what your end must be if you continue what you are. If you are resolved to perish, at least look your doom in the face. If you mean to make your bed in Hell, I pray you look at it and see the dreadful coverlet of flame in which you shall be wrapped forever! If you have made a league with Hell, I pray you see where that league will take you!

Count the cost, I beseech you, for every wise man should do it. Can you dwell with the devouring flames? Can you? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? I know you cannot—for while I do but even use the word—my bones seem to tremble and rottenness takes hold upon my heart. And how will you endure it when God comes forth to tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver? Oh, what will you do in that day of your visitation? What will you do when the sharp and furbished sword is drawn from its scabbard—when God comes forth dressed as a man of war—to take vengeance upon your iniquities?

I pray you, then, muse upon these things and perhaps the fire may burn, perhaps the heart may melt, perhaps tears of penitence may come streaming down from both your eyes in rivers. But if you will not think of this, at least let me give you a better and a sweeter topic to muse upon. Think of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ—

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

I pray you sit down at the foot of His Cross and answer these questions. Did He die for you, or not? Remember, my Hearers, Christ did not die for everyone. Some of you will have no lot and no part in His blood. If you die without faith in Him, that blood will never cleanse you—that precious blood is not an Atonement for *your* sins.

Do not suppose that Christ came into the world to save damned souls. No, those whom He came to save He will save and every vessel of mercy bought with His blood shall glitter upon the tables of Heaven—not one of His precious sheep shall be cast out. The question is—Is that blood shed for *you*? And you may know whether it is or not by this—Are you willing to trust Him? If you trust Him, this is the mark of redemption, this is the blood mark upon the purchased sheep. Can you, as you sit there, think upon this—that He died for sinners, the Just for the unjust—that He might bring them to God and that He died for those who hated Him?

I think I see Him now. There on the Cross He hangs and suffers for those who cursed Him. He bleeds for those who hounded Him through the streets. He bows His head upon His bosom in an extremity of anguish for the very men who put the vinegar and the gall into His mouth. “Of whom I am chief,” says Paul, when he spoke of sinners for whom Jesus died. Sinner, you can not have sinned so foully as Paul did and if you rest on the blood of Christ you shall be saved! Some men tell me that they do not know how to get faith. Faith is the gift of God, but then faith usually comes by meditating much upon Christ. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” As it comes in this way, hearing begets meditation. And while we are meditating upon the great and marvelous story of the condescension and the suffering of Jesus, something seems to say within us, “Yes, it is true, I will believe it,” and faith is thus worked in us before we are aware of it and we cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ.

And then, Sinner, if this topic will not suit you, let me remind you that there shall come a day when you will have to muse without any hope. Abraham said to Dives, “Son, remember.” Son, remember, you may forget today. You have, perhaps, forgotten until now and you will forget when you leave this Tabernacle what I have said to you, or what God has said—but you will never be able to forget when once you have come into Hell-fire. Then it will be, “Son, remember,” and you will remember your mother’s tears and your father’s prayers! You will remember your privileges. The invitations and the wooings of love which you had will all rise up before you anew and you will see how guilty you have been.

“Son, remember,” and then all your sins will rise again before you—the nights, the days, the words, the thoughts, the deeds—will all start up and

people Hell with multitudes of worse than Fiends to plague and torment you forever. “Son, remember,” and then you will remember the Christ who was preached to you, the stirrings of conscience which you once had and how you sinned against it all and choked the good seed. “Son, remember,” and then you will be made to remember all that is yet to come! You will remember God’s threats concerning the wrath which never can be appeased, the fire which never shall be quenched, and the worm which shall never die. O I pray you, instead of remembering *then*, remember *now*! O that I could plead with you!

I stand here so far away from you—would that I could come and take you by the hand and say, “Why will you perish? Men and women, why will you die?” O you who are strangers to my Lord and Master, do you find any pleasure in your sins? Are the ways of the world, after all, so fair and so pleasant as you once thought them to be? Is there not an emptiness? Do you not find “an aching void” in all your pleasures? Tell me now, will you be able to die quietly as you now are? Can you put your head down upon your death pillow softly and in peace? Can you think of meeting God and hearing the thunders of the last tremendous day and beholding the wonders of the resurrection—can you think of these things with anything like composure? You cannot! I know you cannot!

O, then—

***“Come, trembling souls and flee away
To Christ and heal your wounds!
This is the glorious Gospel day
In which free Grace abounds!”***

May the Spirit of God now sweetly bring you to the Savior. Poor Dove, poor Dove, the hawk is after you and you can not fight him, nor can you escape him. Harken to One who loves you! There is a cleft in yonder Rock to hide yourself in and then the hawk would lose his prey. Soul, the wounds of Jesus are the clefts in the Rock! Flee there and the fowler, Satan, shall seek, but shall never be able to reach you, for there is salvation in Him who died that we might live. Save us now, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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“BRIEF LIFE IS HERE OUR PORTION”

NO. 3414

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1914.**

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

***“LORD make me to know my end and the measure of my days,
what it is, that I may know how frail I am.”
Psalm 39:4.***

ACCORDING to the judgment of Calvin, and some of the ablest commentators, there is a kind of pettishness in this verse. The context appears to imply that David had grown impatient under the chastening hand of God. Job, under similar circumstances, longed to accomplish as a hireling, his day, and sought the repose of the grave. And so the Psalmist inquires how much longer he has to bear the ills and griefs of life, or when the goal shall be reached. But I am sure it is not for any of us to upbraid the Psalmist, for what is his impatience compared with ours? When I read of Elijah casting himself under the juniper tree, saying, “Let me die, I am no better than my fathers!”—should I wonder at the weakness of so great a man—it is only because he is great! No doubt that kind of weakness has seized us all. We have, every now and then, expressed a longing to depart—not so much, I fear, because of our eagerness to be with Christ, as because we have grown weary with the trials, the services and the sufferings of this poor wilderness. Well, if we are the subjects of the same infirmity as these godly men of old, we must flee where they fled for strength to grapple with these infirmities and overcome them! We must look to the Strong for strength and pray God to work in us that ripe fruit of patience so rare and yet so precious, for it greatly glorifies God wherever it is brought forth!

David here asks the Lord to be his Teacher. Observe the words, “Make me to *know*.” That is to say, “Instruct me, let me be the scholar, and You condescend to my ignorance and weakness, and teach me.” What? But did not David know his end? Did he not know the measure of his days? Was his frailty a secret that he could not discover? We may be sure that he knew it in part—knew it, perhaps, in that superficial manner in which many of us assent to moral and spiritual truths, with little understanding and no appreciation. But he wanted to know it after a more perfect way—he would apprehend it with that spiritual enlightenment which God alone can communicate. Upon the dishes at the china factories you have, perhaps, seen an impression produced—the inscription is to be there in the future—that is, like common knowledge. Have you afterwards seen that piece of china when it has passed through the oven, has been

baked, and comes forth with what you saw there, superficially baked into its very substance? Such should be our prayer, that what we know as upon the surface may be burned into our innermost consciences, may become indelibly a part of our own selves. Lord, not only make me to know, but make me to know by Your own Divine art—burn it into me—make me to know my end and the measure of my days. Observe the condescension of God, that we are allowed to ask Him to teach us such a lesson as our frailty! And mark the proof of our own ignorance and our own forgetfulness that we cannot even learn this lesson unless God teaches us! And must He make us know? We need that our minds should be renewed, as it were, by a creative or a regenerating process, else we shall fail to discern the very simplest Truths of God. Confessing our ignorance, let us go to God with the prayer of the Psalmist and He *will* answer us.

There are, then, three things which the Psalmist wishes to know—*his end, the measure of his days* and growing out of these, *a just estimate of his own frailty*. May the Lord teach us to profit while we meditate upon them!

I. “LORD, MAKE ME TO KNOW MY END.”

Do we know this already? If you do, let your pure minds be stirred up *by way of remembrance*. The certainty of your end—try to know that by grasping the fact and letting the truth of it affect your souls. Yes, I must die unless the Lord should come and I should be caught up together with the saints in the air. I must reach the terminus of this mortal life as other men, on the couch of weakness and the bed of death. I must die. There is no discharge in this war. There is no possibility of your having an everlasting life *here*. You don't desire it if you are Christians! Neither could you have it if you did desire it—a time will come when you must depart. Think, then, dear Brothers and Sisters—common places will be useful to you. Let it pass over your soul, that for you the funeral bell must toll, for you the grave be dug, for you the winding-sheet and the cerements of the tomb, for you, “earth to earth, and dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,” as sure as you are a man. Being born mortal, you must die. The Lord make you to know this! *You* must die, not another for you! You must gather up your feet into the bed and, like old Jacob, pass across the stream, the narrow stream of death. You, though now in the prime of life, or in the gaiety of childhood. You who have escaped so many accidents and are now ripe and mellow in the quietude of old age—the dearest friend and companion cannot be a sponsor for you. When the call shall come, your pitcher must be broken at the fountain, your wheel at the cistern and you, in your own proper flesh and blood, must pass away—and your disembodied spirit must stand before God. Forget not, then, the certainty, or the personality of it!

It shall be conclusive, “Make me to know my end.” It shall not be a halt, but a *finale*. Not a starting on the road, but a termination of the great journey of life. “My end,” my end for all things beneath the sun, the

end of my sin as far as this world is concerned and the end of my service of Almighty God! The end of all my opportunities of doing good, of my occasions of getting good. My end so that whatever after is done under the sun, I shall have no share nor interest in it. The living know that they must die, but the dead know not anything! Other saints walk over their graves, nations rise and fall, convulsions shake the most solid empires, all things change—but there, beneath the sod, they slumber on. Their memory and their love are lost alike—“unknowing and unknown.” Certainly we shall come to an end. Certainly I, myself, shall come to that end, and when my death comes, it will, for this life and this mortal state, be a veritable end which I cannot pass.

While musing on our end, the accompaniments of *our end may well excite passing reflection*. In all probability, Brothers and Sisters, though we know not what may come to us, our departure out of this life will be attended with the same languor and prostration we have witnessed in the case of others. We may expect the sick bed, the days of pain and the sleepless nights which are the premonitions of decease. We may imagine for ourselves what we have so often seen among our kinsfolk and acquaintances—the family gathered in silent watchfulness and the weeping children summoned to give the parting kiss—while the hot tears fall on the blanched cheeks of the departing. We can picture it all to our minds. It may be well we should, and make a rehearsal of it, too, for it is probable enough that so it may come. We are not sure that we shall take so deliberate a leave of the world. It may happen to us in the crowded streets. Our end may come to us as we go by the way. That, however, rather strikes us as the course of Nature, when there is the taking down of the tent, the folding up of the canvas, the putting away of each pin and pin-hole, and so we shall be removed as a shepherd’s tent. Then will come a leaving of all earthly things—your shutters will be put up by somebody else—your books will be no more kept by you—you will have struck the balance for the last time. Some other hand must go out to earn the children’s bread, now that the father is gone. Some other woman’s tender care must watch over the little ones, now that the mother is no more. And the time must come when the rich man shall bid farewell to his parks and lawns, when he must bid farewell to his mortgages, to his bonds, his deeds and his estates. And the poor man, who may, perhaps, find it as hard, must bid farewell to the cottage and the hearth, and all that made life dear to him. There will be a parting time for each of us, and we pray the Lord make us to anticipate it! In connection with this, it is probable there will be many regrets to all of us. I hope when we come to die it will be no question as to whether we are saved or not. But even to a saved man, there arises this thought, “Oh, that I had glorified God more! Oh, that I had devoted of my substance, and of my time, and of my talents, more to my Master’s service! I can no more feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or teach the ignorant. Oh, that those golden op-

portunities had been seized more eagerly, and employed more industriously by me! But now my time for service here is over, and I am mourning the scantiness of my life-work—and I cannot amend that which is faulty, or supply that which is lacking.” Our end, Beloved, will be the end of all our Christian labor here below. No going to your Sunday school class any more. No coming, again, of the preacher to his rostrum. No standing here to admonish or to console. No more will the corner of the street listen to your voice, my Brother, in your earnest evangelizing. No longer can your hand be outstretched to distribute the Word which tells of the great Savior and the good Shepherd—our Lord Jesus Christ. On that bed you will be taking leave of all your Christian service and if anything has been left undone, there will then be no opportunity to complete it. Depend upon it—and it is wise to look forward to the event—our end will be no child’s play. We may often smile and sing about death and long for evening to approach, that we may rest with God, but it is, at the same time, a most solemn thing. The best way to deal with it is to die daily, to go down to Jordan’s brink and bathe every morning in that death stream, till death shall be as familiar as life, till you shall come to think of it with daily expectation! Yet at times we almost wonder that we are lingering here, for we are expecting to be called away to dwell in the land of the living, where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor sighing.

Then, again, it will be well for us to be made *to know our end in all its results*. Although it is called our end, yet surely it is, strictly speaking, a great beginning! A more true beginning, I was about to say, even than our first birth. The moment a man dies, he then enters upon the most solemn part of his existence. Make me, Lord, to know what it will be after this, my departure. What will then happen to me? Come, let me reflect. My soul must wing her way without the body up to the Throne of God, and there, at once, receive the preliminary sentence, the forecast of the sentence of the Last Tremendous Day. “Committed for trial,” to lie in durance vile without the body till the Resurrection trumpet, or be admitted into Glory, such as that Glory can be without the body, until the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from Heaven with a shout, and the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God! Which will it be with me? Ask this, dear Hearers, and ask your God to make you to know which it shall be—your spirit rejoicing in the Presence of Christ, your Savior, far from the world of grief and sin, eternally shut in with God—or shall it be your spirit mocking among kindred condemned in the Pit that has no bottom, where the iron key is turned and through the door of which there can be no escape? Which shall it be with you? When you think of your end, remember one of these must be your portion—Heaven or Hell! Then comes the Day of Judgment and of the Resurrection. The clarion, clear and shrill, shall be such as wakens man, not for battle, nor sleepers for the fray—it shall wake the long-buried from their silent graves and they shall rise from sea and land an exceedingly great multitude! Then shall the Great White Throne be set and the books be opened! This is the end God

will have you to know. Oh, seek to know it! When that book is opened, and Christ shall read with eyes of fire, and with a voice of thunder, what shall the Lord award you? Will He turn to the page and say, “Blotted out with My blood are all the transgressions that were once recorded here and, therefore, there is nothing now to read except that which is the award of My chosen. I was hungry, and you gave Me meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; sick and imprisoned, and you ministered unto Me! Come, you blessed!” Or will it be to see the page turned over and to hear the voice declare, “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; thirsty and you gave Me no drink”? Will it be a record all of sin, and not of virtue, with the accompanying sentence, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire”? “Lord make me to know my end,” and let not my end be to be banished forever with the wicked! Gather not my life with sinners, nor my soul with bloody men! Cast me not away from Your Presence! Banish me not from Your mercy! Shut me not up in the lowest Pit! Condemn me not to eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord! “Make me to know my end,” and let this be the end—to be with Christ where He is, to behold His Glory, the Glory which You gave Him from before the foundation of the world!

It seems to me that when David prayed that he might be made to know his end, he well knew these were the accompaniments. But the way in which he wished to be made to know them was that he might be made to believe in them firmly, so as to realize them vividly, look upon them not as fictions, myths and traditions, but as realities—that he might be made to know them, so as to meditate upon them, to have his mind exercised constantly about them—that he might be made to know them so as to be prepared for them and to set his house in order, because he must die, and not live, preparing to meet his God. And, above all, that he might know his end by having a full assurance of being saved in Christ Jesus, so that his end should be everlasting peace! “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” Oh, that we might, while mentioning such men, become such men ourselves—and know that our end shall be peace through Jesus Christ! Now, in the second part of the prayer, David says—

II. “MAKE ME TO KNOW THE MEASURE OF MY DAYS.”

It is a very humbling thing to recollect that our days have a measure. In the Latin there is a proverb, “As poor men count their sheep.” And it is only because we are so poor in life that we are able to measure our days. God’s days are not to be counted. “Your generations, who can tell, or count the number of Your years? From everlasting to everlasting You are God.” “The measure of our days.” Ask in prayer that you may be made to know this. I will just give some outlines, like a drawing-master’s sketch on the blackboard. *How insignificant the measure of my days*—what a very little time I have to live after all. If 70 years is my term, of what small account they are! Perhaps you have sometimes stood by a sand-

cliff, as I did the other day, looking at alternate layers of shells, one above another. I should think at least one hundred feet thick of shells of a modern sort succeeded by thin layers of sand! Now, this must undoubtedly have been formed by the gradual deposit of some ancient sea, but how long must it have taken to have composed a rock of one hundred feet thick of white shells and sand? Well, but that is only a comparatively small layer of this earth. We go a little deeper and we find sandstone and limestone which must have taken, if the laws of Nature have been at all in other times as they are now, not thousands, but even millions of years to form by the gradual deposit of the ocean! You go deeper, still, and at last you come to rocks made by fire, and the geologist is most reasonably led to the conclusion that this world, as it now stands, must have existed several millions of years, because it has taken so long a time to collect these various deposits. I know as I stood poking my stick into this sand and shells, I felt as if I had shriveled into a little ant and less even than a tiny animalcule which had scarcely come into this world when it was driven away and there were these rocks looking at me, and saying, Where were you when we were formed? When the waving ocean was washing up these shells, where were you? But now take your mind away from this world and recollect that some beings dear to us are older than this world, for when this world was made, the morning stars sang and shouted for joy! Oh, you angels—what infants we must seem in comparison with your age! Where were you when Gabriel first flew upon his errand, swift as lightning? Where were you when sin made Lucifer, Sun of the Morning, descend swift beneath the wrath of God into the shades of darkness which are reserved for him forever? What is your life when once compared with the period of life which cherubim and seraphim have seen? Oh, but what are cherubim and seraphim compared with God? When, in this great world, sun, moon and stars had not begun, God was as great and glorious as He is now! And when the whole of this Creation shall be rolled up like a worn out scroll, He will be the same—no older in a myriad myriad years than He is now, for with Him there is no time—

***“He fills His own eternal Now,
And sees our ages pass.”***

All things are present to Him! We are carried away as with a flood, but He sits serene, neither age nor time change Him! “Lord, make me to know the measure of my days.” Help me to fall down in my utter insignificance before Your Throne, adoring Your eternal majesty—

***“Great God, how infinite are Thee,
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee.”***

While seeking to know the measure of our days, let the great importance that attaches to them stand out distinctly before us, for *on this link our everlasting destiny is hung*. It is this life which, as far as we are concerned, decides the next. In this life a Believer, then a life of Glory, happiness, and immortality! In this life an unbeliever, then in the next life, in

the world to come, everlasting punishment from the hand of God! This thought makes even this little life swell to wondrously great proportions! Here is a man next door to a worm and yet next door to God—born but yesterday and yet his existence will go on perpetually with God, for man shall not die! So momentous, and yet so insignificant! So magnificent, and yet so minute is the measure of my days!

“Lord, make me to know the measure of my days”—the certainty of that measure. God has appointed that you shall not die before the time—you shall certainly not live beyond it. That thread shall be cut off in its due season—

***“Plagues and death around me fly,
Till He wills, I cannot die.”***

While I admonish you to remember the certainty, let me urge you to reflect upon the uncertainty of it, as far as you are concerned. You may live another twenty, thirty, or forty years—or you may not live as many seconds! You may be spared for the next 50 years, and still taking part in life’s battle. Or it may be that before the clock has ticked again, you may be like a warrior taking his rest. Certain to God, but uncertain to you! It is well, in thinking of our days, to remember they will be quite long enough for us if God helps us to use them well. Life is very short, but *a great deal may be done*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in three years, saved the world! Some of His followers in three years have been the means of saving many and many a soul. It was a short life that Luther had to do his great work in. If I remember rightly, he was hard upon 50 before he began to preach the Truth of God at all! This is a hopeful sign for some of you who have wasted your young days! There have been men of 60 that have yet achieved a life’s work before they had slept and gone their way. After all, time is long or short as you like to make it so. One man lives a 100 years and dies a worldling. And yet another man, through God’s Grace, puts forth as much energy in two or three years as if he were a thunderbolt launched from the hands of God! And he leaves his name among imperishable memorials. Your life will be long enough to achieve great things if God will help you to remember, in measuring your days, that they will be quite short enough for the enterprise you have in hand. You will only have finished the picture when the master palsies the arm and makes you drop the pencil. And you will only have completed the day’s work when the shadow shall have fallen and you shall go Home to your rest. Work with all your might, but don’t work despondingly—there is time enough for your soul to glorify God! Do your piece of the great work, though it be but a hair’s breadth you are allowed to perform, and though it is as nothing in the presence of Him whose mighty deeds are shown through all generations. Shall I need to say anything more about measuring our days, except that it may be a painful recollection for us to remember that if they are not longer days, it is the prevalence of sin that made it necessary to shorten them! We might have lived to the age of Methuselah but the Antediluvian fathers so filled the earth with violence

that God sent a flood and swept them all away! It is great mercy that men don't live too long. Where were progress if the old men of 200 years ago were here to obstruct it? Where the chance for reform if the vested interests of avarice were permitted to accumulate without any check? Now, however, the old blood is constantly superseded by fresh blood and the stream of life is kept purer by the passing away of the old conservative element, which when here, was exceedingly good in its season, but must give place to the influx of a spring tide more adapted to the growth of the times. Thank God, the great infidels don't live forever—who would have wished to have a Voltaire forever stalking about this world! What a mercy that his was but a short life! What would you think if you had a Tom Paine blustering against Almighty God 500 years at a stretch? A mercy it is that even good men don't live here forever, because their temptations would so accumulate in the recollection of years of service, that self-righteousness would become inveterate, hero worship an established idolatry and dogmatism a nuisance without abatement! I grant you experience might come in to modify some of the evils, for so the Grace of God can do anything—but there would be at least a natural tendency to perpetuate corruptions. We don't measure, I am afraid, our own years, in some respects, as we are known to do those of others. Some have to thank themselves that their lives are short—sins of their youth lie in their bones! And as we remember our days, we may provoke very painful recollections as to past sin, be checked as to all future folly and desire henceforth to walk in holiness and fear in the service of God until our days are ended. To number our days seems to me to mean, “*not let them run away and be wasted.*” Hours ought to be counted—we sleep too much, some of us—we spend too much time at the table, too much in idle talk. Lord, help us to measure out our days, count them as they fly, and even the odd five minutes—those little pieces of time which we think we may idle away—much may be accomplished with them if we really set our minds as in the sight of eternity to employ the scraps for God. “Lord teach me to know the measure of my days.” But my time has failed and, therefore, I must have but one or two words about the third point. David prays that he might know his frailty—

III. LORD, HE SAID, “MAKE ME TO KNOW THAT I HAVE AN END, THAT I MAY KNOW MY FRAILTY.”

I must come to that end soon. I am coming to it now. Lord, make me to know that I am so frail that I may die at any time—early morning, noon, night, midnight, cockcrow. I may die in any place. If I am in the house of sin, I may die there. If I am in the place of worship, I may die there. I may die in the street. I may die while undressing tonight. I may die in my sleep. I may die before I get to my work tomorrow morning. I may die in any occupation. But God, grant I may never die a blasphemer! I may die with the cup of Communion at my lips. I may die preaching. I may die singing. In all, grant I may die as I wish to die—doing Your service for the love of Christ and by the power of Your Spirit. Perhaps, as I

stand here and readily speak, the arrow is on its way—soon may the hand be stretched and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain! Oh, may it never intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me wrapped in meditation and hymning my great Creator, or serving my fellow man with love to God, or in some way so laboring that it shall not come to me as a thief in the night, but shall find me watching, ready for His Advent! And this is what David meant, “Make me to know my end.” It may come at any time, but let me always be ready for it. Make me to know the measure of my days with the same object. My days are measured. These days may be few—they may be very few—I may have come to the last one. The pilgrimage of life is a very solemn one. It reminds me of a caravan proceeding forward in a track—some know it, some of the travelers have forgotten it—but on the road which they are pursuing, there is a deep gulf or chasm, and some in the front part of the caravan have already fallen into the gulf. Others are proceeding. In some cases they can hear the shrieks and cries of those who have fallen into the chasm on ahead. But here in the darkness, in the rear of the caravan, there may be many others indulging in such sparks of fire as they have kindled. They are sounding the tabret and the cymbal, and still making merry—though everyone of them is going onwards towards the same precipice over which their comrades, who led the way, have already fallen! There they go—onward, onward, onward in the darkness, till they come to that fatal step which will plunge them into the world unknown! God has led you to this tabernacle well in health and strong, but your next step may be into eternity! Beware, then, that you lay hold on the hand which was once crucified lest, when you slip, there be none to hold you up! And, when you fall, there be none to rescue you, and you fall through the black and cheerless darkness forever and ever, lost, lost, lost, beyond hope of rescue! God forbid this for His mercy’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90.**

“A prayer of Moses, the man of God.” It is well to know the author because it helps you to an understanding of the Psalm. Remember that Moses lived in the midst of a pilgrim people who were dwelling in tents, journeying towards Canaan. He lived in the midst of a people doomed to die in the wilderness. Only two of them—Moses, himself, not one of them—only two of those that came out of Egypt were to be permitted to enter into the promised land. You may expect, therefore, to find much that is somber about this Psalm—and yet there is much that is very restful and trustful about it. If it is the prayer of Moses, it is the prayer of a man of God.

Verse 1. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* Your chosen people have dwelt in You. You are their rest, their refuge, their comfort, their home. It is just the same, now, as in the days of Moses. God’s people have no dwelling place for their souls, but their God. They are happy when they get to Him. In Him they dwell at ease.

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth*—Before they were born like infants, gigantic as they are.

2. *Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* Everything else changes. You do not. We lose our comforts. We dwell, as it were, in tents which are taken down and removed, but there is no change in You. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you know this Truth of God, but do you enjoy it? I think there is no sweeter food for the soul than the Doctrine of the Immutability of the eternal existence of God—God who cannot die and cannot change—that is, and always is, God. Oh, He is our confidence and joy! As for men, what are they?

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, return, you children of men.* He has only to speak—no need to take the scythe and mow us down. He does but say, “Return, you children of men,” and we go back to the dust!

4. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* A thousand years is a very long period in human history. If you fly back and try, in your knowledge of history, to recollect what the world was a thousand years ago, it seems a long, long time ago. But to God, who always lives, all the age of the world must seem but as the twinkling of an eye! What are a thousand years to You, You glorious One, before whom the past is present, and the future is as now?

5. *You carry them away as with a flood.* Men stand, as they think, firmly, but as the best built buildings are swept away by a torrent—trees, cattle, everything dispersed before the impetuous outburst—so, great God, do You carry men away as with a flood!

5, 6. *They are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.* Have you ever watched a field of grass when in full bloom? There is, perhaps, no more beautiful sight! What variety of colors in the flowers which are the glory of the grass! And then you come by and the mower has done his work—and there it all lies. It has been withered by the sun’s heat. Just such are we. Our generations fall before the scythe of death as falls the grass. And it is done at once. “In the morning it flourishes; in the evening it is cut down.”

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.* Whenever God’s anger breaks forth against a people, it must consume them! Oh, what a blessing it is if you and I know that His anger is turned away and He comforts us. Then we are not troubled by it any longer. Do not apply these words to yourselves. They belong to the Israelites in the wilderness who were dying, consumed by God’s anger and

troubled by His wrath. But as for us who believe in Jesus Christ, we have love instead of anger—and the sure mercies of David instead of wrath—and in this we may rejoice.

8. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.* And what was the result of that but that they all had to die? Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Oh, if you are a Believer in Jesus Christ, this text is not true to you—does not belong to you. Here is another that *does* belong to you—“You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” He has not set them in the light of His Countenance, but He has cast them into the depths of the sea and, Beloved, you stand acquitted, justified! And yet there may be some here who feel their sins, tonight, and know that God is looking at their sin. Do you know, dear Friend, there is no hope for you but one? And that is written in the Book of Exodus—“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” If you do but put your trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, God will turn away His eyes from your sins and look upon the blood of Jesus Christ! Yes, the blood of Jesus shall blot out your sins and you shall rejoice!

9, 10. *For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength, labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.* It is well to have such a sense of our mortality upon us as this Psalm suggests. And yet, it is better still to recollect that we are immortal—that when we die after the flesh, we shall not die, but live in Christ, world without end! Life is cut off and it is like a string that holds a bird by the leg—we fly away. Which way? If we are God’s own, we fly away above yon clouds. We reach the eternal fields where we shall sing forever and ever!

11. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* Dreadful is God’s anger, indeed. Who knows it? None of us do. The lost in Hell begin to know it, but it will need eternity for them to learn it all! Oh, I charge everyone here who is unpardoned never to attempt to learn what God’s anger means! It will be an awful lesson, the power of that anger! Why, when it is let loose against a man, even in this life, in a measure it crushes him. But what the power of that anger must be, who can tell?

12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Count how many days have gone. Will not the time past suffice us to have worked the will of the flesh? You cannot tell how few remain, but still, if you live to the longest period of life—taking that for granted which you may not take for granted—how little remains! Oh, that we might, by the shortness of life, be led to apply our hearts unto wisdom, so as to live wisely! And what is the best way of living wisely, but to live in Christ and live to God?

13. *Return, O LORD, how long?* It is an earnest prayer, full of grief. The Prophet of Israel, Moses, was attending one continual funeral. Whenever

the tribes halted, they formed a cemetery and buried another legion of their dead. I do not wonder that he prays, “Return, O Lord, how long?”

13, 14. *And have compassion on Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy: that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* If they are but few, help us to live happily in them. Grant us the art of Your Grace of knowing Yourself, the source of happiness, that we may drink of bliss to the fullest.

15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* Give us measure for measure—sweets in bounty, according to the bitterness. Surely God has done more than this to some of us! We can bless His name because His love has abounded and He has made our cup to run over with His goodness!

16. *Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children.* We will do the work and the next generation shall have the glory. We will be content to wait, plodding on. Jesus will come, by-and-by. “Let Your work appear to us—Your Glory to our children.”

17. *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us.* That if we must go, we may do something that will live, that we may not have lived in vain. “Establish the work of our hands upon us.”

17. *Yes, the work of our hands establish.* It is my daily prayer. My heart often goes up to Heaven that the work that is done in this place may never pass away, but that God would make it such a work of true and real Grace, that it may abide until the Lord, Himself, shall come! We may expect it if we seek it at His hands. “Yes, the work of our hands, establish.”

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

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

EARTH'S VANITIES AND HEAVEN'S VERITIES

NO. 2346

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING NOVEMBER 7, 1889.**

*“Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted
in vain: he heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You. Deliver me
from all my transgressions: make me not the
reproach of the foolish.”
Psalm 39:6-8.*

These are solemn words. Sometimes we have a more joyful theme than this, but I believe that, spiritually, as well as naturally, it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. A meditation of a quiet kind, on things not as they are in fiction, but as they prove to be in fact, is always salutary. There is a great mass of sorrow in the world and all of us meet with something, every now and then, to calm our spirit and cool our blood. So, tonight, if we think a little of the fleeting character of *this* world, and of the *real* world where certainty, alone, is to be found—and if we school ourselves to learn facts and realities, by the blessing of God's Spirit—we may go away even more lastingly refreshed than if our hearts were made to leap for joy by meditation upon some transporting theme.

I will have no further preface. There is too much in the text, itself, to allow time for a lengthy introduction. Therefore, notice, first, that *David records his view of human life*—“Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.” Then, next, *David expresses his own emotions in contemplation of these things*—“And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You.” And, then, in the third place, *David offers an appropriate and necessary prayer*, for he cries, “Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.”

I. First, then, let us notice that in our text DAVID RECORDS HIS VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE.

You will notice that he puts, “surely,” twice over in this verse, and with the, “verily,” of the fifth verse, which has the same meaning, but might have been translated, “surely,” he has uttered the same word three times, “surely, surely, surely,” or, if you please, “verily, verily, verily.” He half reminds us of his greater Son, the Son of David, whose speech was often emphasized with that sacred assuring word, “Verily, verily, I say unto

you.” David here seems to tell us that there is nothing sure except that nothing is sure. “Surely,” he says, “nothing on earth is sure. Verily there is not verity, or happiness, anywhere here below.” There is a land of verities. There is a home of “surelies”—some of us are on the way there and already have the earnest of our inheritance. But as for you who have your portion in *this* life, you have vanity, not verity—change is written on everything earthly.

Having thus given us the keynote of certainty—for the Psalmist did not write haphazardly, but he wrote what he *knew*. He wrote what he had *experienced* and he wrote under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God—we should the more carefully look at what he has written. If it is so, surely, let us be sure to know what it is.

And, first, he seems to me to speak of life as a walk. And of that he says, “Surely every man walks in a vain show.” Then he speaks of life as a worry. And of that he says, “Surely they are disquieted in vain.” And then he speaks of life as a success, as men call it. And of that he says, “He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.”

David first speaks of *life as a walk*. He seems to have had in his mind the idea of a great procession—“Surely every man walks in a vain show.” If you choose to go to the Lord Mayor’s show next Saturday, you may see a vain show, and may know precisely what David meant. Such things were more common in Oriental countries than they are with us, but whether it is the Lord Mayor’s show or any other, it is a picture of what this mortal life is! The procession, if you see it, or if you do not see it, but only read and hear of it, may remind you of what life is—what you see of it is all show. There are kings in the show, princes in the show and heroes of old time in the show. But there are neither kings, nor princes, nor heroes there in reality! It is all show and such is this mortal life to a large extent.

Among some classes of society, show is everything—they must “keep up appearances.” Just so and, all the world over, that is about all there is—“appearances”—a vain show! If you want reality, you cannot see it—only the *unseen* is real. If you want shadow, you *can* see it—“the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” I wish we could get a hold of that idea as a practical thing—that everything we can see is shadow, but what we cannot see is the real substance. When we talk about faith, men call us “visionary.” Well, well, you may call us that if you like, for we have a vision of a very high order. But we beg to return the word to you in its ordinary meaning, for if you make your treasure of what you can see and handle, *you* are the visionaries—for this is but a vain show in which you rejoice and that which you see with your eyes is but a vision—a dream that vanishes when one awakens! Earthly life is only a show.

Oh, Friends, I wish we really thought this! We would not be so hot-brained as we are if we said to ourselves, “These are only shadows.” We would not be so vexed and worried as we are if we often said to ourselves, “These are shadows. I could not see them if they were not. If they were real, they would not be perceptible to my senses—they would only be perceptible by the higher faculty of faith.” “Surely every man walks in a vain show.” It is a show and nothing more.

But it is a passing show, for David does not say, "Surely every man sits down in a vain show and remains in the same place," but, "every man *walks* in a vain show." It is with life as with a procession which passes before your eyes. It comes—listen to the shouts of the people! It is here in a few minutes. There are the people crowding the streets! But presently it has vanished and is gone. Does not life strike you as being just that? I remember, oh, I remember so many figures in the procession! I have seemed to stand as at a window, though that, itself, has been but seeming, for I also have been in the procession. I remember the great hearty men of my boyhood, whom I used to hear pray—they are now singing up yonder! Then, when I think of you, dear Friends, I remember a long procession of saintly men and godly women who have all passed before me and have gone into Glory. What a host of friends we have in the unseen world, "gone over to the majority!" As we get older, they really are the majority, and our friends on earth are outnumbered by our friends in Heaven! Some of you will fondly remember dear ones who have passed away in the procession, but please remember that you, also, are in the procession. Though they seem to have passed before you, you have been passing along with them and you may reach the vanishing point before long! And then there will be this talk among the brotherhood you love, "he, too, has gone," or, "she has fallen asleep," for we are all walking as in a procession and passing away to the land of substance and reality!

A show which is passing away is, in itself, if it is measured by this mortal life, vain—"a vain show." To a man who has no hope hereafter, it is all, "vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Within the narrow compass of this poor globe there is nothing that is worth a man's opening his mouth to ask for or to receive. Take the broader, larger circle of the heavens and there, within that boundless circumference, there is something to be found that is worth finding! Dwell in God and you have something substantial! Dwell out of God and you make "much ado about nothing." Life is a vain show when it is lived apart from God.

If you will only consider, for a minute, you will see that it is so. Think of the armies of Babylon and Assyria, the palaces their kings built, the mighty cities that they built—where are they now? Think of the Medes and Persians, with all their pomp and power—where are their glories now? And Greece—her palaces and her temples are a desolation. Listen to the tramp of Roman armies up the *Via Sacra*—listen to the acclamations of the people as they climb the very chimney-tops to see the conquerors come home—where have they all gone? Fame did but blow one blast upon her bronze trumpet and the echoes sounded, for a while, and then there was silence. "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Get the idea of a procession and you have caught the thought which David would convey to you. Such, too often, is the whole of a man's life—just the passing of a pageant—and nothing more.

The Psalmist then speaks of *life as a worry*, and he says, "Surely they are disquieted." So they are. How few people are so free from the spirit of the things of this world as to pass through this life quietly? If we could once live in the eternities, we would be calm, still and restful. But we live by the moment and the day and we are all on the worry, the fidget, the

fret, the fume and we know no real rest. The work of this world, if carried on only as for this world, is well described here—"Surely they are disquieted in vain." See how they begin life, eager for its joys, its honors, its wealth. Note how they plod, toil and labor. How much of brain-work is done by the light of the midnight oil! Many a man agitates his mind and wearies his spirit till his life is lost in finding a livelihood. They are trying to live and lo, life is gone! And they wake up and wonder how it is that they have let it go and have not really lived at all. Some are all for getting, never for enjoying in any measure. When such men get wealth, it is not sufficient for them. When they get twice that, they are still eager for more and live on in a perpetual worry.

Then one has more than another and envy comes in—of all passions, one of the most wearing—and when a man has, at last, all he thought he would ever need, then he is afraid of losing it! Now he is anxious about this and worried about that, and fretting about the other. Believe me, there are no people who take the fret of life so much as those who ought to have sense enough not to—"having food and raiment" they are not "therewith content"—and having taken all that is good for them to carry, they are like a traveler who, having one good substantial staff to help him in his walking, must carry a bundle of sticks with him, and so loads himself unnecessarily. Is it not so?

Did you ever stand in the Bourse at Paris, or did you ever, by any chance, hear the noise of our own Stock Exchange? The latter place is more difficult to see than the former, but when I have stood upstairs in the Bourse in Paris, and have looked down upon the raving multitude below, I have wondered whether if bedlam had been emptied out, there would be more noise, more uproar, more calling out, more pushing and rushing, first this way, and then that way! I could not understand what they were doing! Perhaps that made the scene appear the more maddening. Every man seemed all alive and as though he would eat up every other man in the place!

And I believe that the Bourse is but a picture of mercantile life *everywhere*—competition, competition, everybody buying cheaply and grinding down everybody that works, and then complaining that, in his turn, he is ground, too—his own measure being measured back to him! Ah me, what a life it is! Had David penned this Psalm, today, he might have written in capital letters, "SURELY THEY ARE DISQUIETED IN VAIN!" Oh, for a little quiet! Oh, for time to think! Oh, for opportunities to get near to God and unload all your thoughts and all your cares before Him—and then to go away feeling patience mingled with joy, and joy with the expectation of unutterable bliss, helping us to really live, instead of being disquieted in vain!

Well, next, David passes on to speak of *life as a success*, and he mentions those who were supposed to have been successful in life, though, mark you, it is not success in life, after all, to accumulate riches. When you read in *The Illustrated London News* that somebody died, "worth" such and such, do not believe it! A man is not worth what he has when he dies! A man may not be worth two-pence—although he may possess a million, he, himself, is worth nothing—poor grabber of everything! But you say

such and such a man died and left £200,000. Yes, there are several of us who, when we die, will leave much more than that. I shall leave all the world behind me and there are many others here who will do the same—and leave all the millions that there are, all the estates that ever were and all the treasures of the world! And I suppose that every one of us, when he dies, will leave everything behind him, for shrouds have no pockets and men carry nothing with them into their graves.

But even when a man is successful in heaping up riches, see how David describes it—“He heaps up riches.” That is all—he does not partake of them. He does not use them, he merely heaps them up. He accumulates without enjoyment. When a man has food and raiment, and has what he needs for comfort, all that he has beyond, if counted by thousands, might as well be a thousand pins as a thousand pounds, so far as any good it is to him! But the bigger heap will not give more comfort, for there is the additional anxiety of taking care of it. When riches are consecrated to God’s Glory, they assume quite another character, but I am now talking about this world and the mere possession of its treasures. David calls it the heaping up of riches and that is all that it is, getting a big heap, like children do at the seaside—one gets a bigger heap of sand than another has, but what is the good of that?

The Psalmist also says that when the man heaps up riches, he, “knows not who shall gather them.” He hoards without security. This is probably an allusion to the husbandman who has cut down his corn and put the sheaves together. And then at night, before he can gather them into the garner, much less before he can thresh out the grain and grind it, some marauder comes and runs off with it all. The miser heaps up his gold, but he does not know who may gather it. Have we not seen the fruit of many years toil vanish in an hour? The reaping of a lifetime has disappeared by a panic in a moment.

“He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.” He leaves his wealth without pleasure. The Psalmist alludes to the fact that men cannot tell what will become of their possessions when they die. I am sure that there is many a man who would turn in his grave if he knew what was being done with his hard-earned wealth! To live wholly to enrich somebody about whose character you know so little seems a poor objective in life. And yet it is the only objective which many are pursuing. Without chick or child, it may be, still men will go on scraping together riches for some unknown heir who, if they knew him, would be, perhaps, beneath their contempt—yet they go on working like slaves for one who will never be grateful to them when they are dead!

Now does not the whole of this put together make up a very sorry picture? Yet it is true of the worldling, of the man who has no hope hereafter—of the man who has never projected his soul, by Grace, into the spiritual and the heavenly realm!

II. And now, glad to get away from this part of our subject, we notice how DAVID EXPRESSES HIS OWN EMOTIONS IN CONTEMPLATION OF THESE THINGS.

And first, *he has come to a decision.* Having turned these matters over, he begins the expression of his own feelings, thus, “And now, Lord.” I like

that mode of speech. It is a great thing to come to God with a, "now." You know how the Lord comes to us. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." I like a man, sometimes, to come close up to God and sit down, and seem to say, "Now, Lord, You see that I have realized the vanity of this world. I may well let it all go, for it melts away in my hands—it is a mere shadow which is not worth living for—and I have to live in eternity with You. I have to live in Heaven or in Hell. O my God, bring me to my bearings! Bring me close up to You and let us reason together, and have the question out. And now, Lord." Every moment is solemn if we would but make it so, but there are certain turning points in life when a man has had his eyes opened to see the fallacy of his former pursuits, when, stopping where the roads meet, he looks up to the signpost and says, "And now, Lord, guide me. Help me to take the right turn, to avoid the shadow and to seek after that which is substantial. Now, Lord."

I also like this expression of David's emotions because he *consults with God*. "Every man walks in a vain show, but," he says, "and now, Lord, there is no vanity with You, no deception, no delusion with You, behold, I turn away from this mirage, which just now deluded me, to You, my God, the Rock of my salvation, and I look to You. And now, Lord." I would to God that somebody here would say, "I have to spend eternity *somewhere*. I will not waste this present time and live as if this world were all, but I will lift up my prayer, tonight, and say, Now, Lord. Now that I have passed my childhood and am a young man. Now that I have reached my 21st birthday. Now that I am 30, forty, fifty—now that my hair is turning gray it is time for me to be wise if ever. Now, Lord." And if I am so unhappy as to have a person here who has advanced to the very end of his lease and has become 70 and yet is still living for a world that is slipping away from him, I would to God that the Holy Spirit would make him say, tonight, "And now, Lord. Now I seek You, now I turn to You."

You can see at once that David *feels that he is out of place*, for he says, "Lord, what wait I for?" He says, "What wait I for? I can see what these *fools* are waiting for—they are waiting to take their place in the show. They put on their masquerading garments and go out there to take part in the pageant. But I will not go there. I do not belong to any of the classes that make up that show. What wait I for, then? I see the men worried in vain, but, Lord, I have learned to trust in You. Then, what wait I for? And, O my God, I see how others clutch the treasure which they cannot keep, which is not worth the having, for they are soon to leave it, or it quickly leaves them. By Your Grace I am not after that kind of thing. Now, Lord, what wait I for?" He is like a fish out of water, he is a man out of his native country, evidently a stranger and an exile, who is turning to his God. He is a fellow-stranger with his God and he says to Him, "Now, Lord, what wait I for?"—a question only God, Himself, can fully answer!

You observe, also, that *he has his eye on the future*. He is a man who is waiting for something. Faith is a high virtue. And waiting upon God is a flower that grows out of it. "What wait I for? I have not found it yet. I am waiting for it, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Our treasure is not here—it is away there upon the eternal hills,

where Christ sits at the right hand of God! The man described in our text is a waiting man whose chief delight is now in a world that is to come.

And you observe, lastly, on this point, that he is a man whose hope is in God. “My hope is in You.” I have no earthly expectations, but I say, “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” “Hopes of ever finding anything here which can fill me, or content me, I have long ago abandoned. And now, Lord, my hope is in You. It is only You, my God, that I desire, and if I get You, if I am filled with You, if You abide in me, if You transform me into Your image. If You deign to use me for Your Glory. If You will take me Home to dwell with You where Jesus is, this is what I wait for, and I wait for nothing else.” We are expectant of good things to come. We are not inhabitants of this country, we are citizens of the New Jerusalem which is above! We are only shipwrecked, here, for a while, and exiled from Home until the boat shall come to ferry us across the stream to the land where our true possessions lie and where our best Beloved is! Life, light, love and everything to us is He who has gone as our Forerunner to the place which He has prepared for them that love Him.

III. Now I close by noticing that DAVID OFFERS AN APPROPRIATE AND NECESSARY PRAYER. “Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.” After all, we *are* here, Brothers and Sisters. We do not know how long we may have to stay here and there are things which we need while we are here. Well, what are they? Send in your requests! What do you need?

David puts down what he needs. “He needs, first, to be delivered from trouble,” says somebody. No, he does not say anything about *that*. He prays, “Deliver me from all my transgressions.” “He needs to be delivered from that headache, that heartache, that pain in the limbs, that depression of spirit.” Nothing of the sort! The prayer of this godly man is, “Deliver me from all my transgressions.”

That is, first, *he prayed for deliverance from sins committed*. “Lord, put all my sin away, so that I may be clean every whit from every sin that I have ever committed.” Can that be? Oh, yes, it is so with many of us! We are washed in the blood of the lamb and that washing is *perfect* washing—it leaves no stain behind it! If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He has taken your sin upon Himself—He has put your sin away by the great blood shedding! It is not on you any longer. It has even ceased to *be*, according to that wonderful text, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” What a blessed thing it is to live with no cloud, whatever, between your soul and your God—to know that every sin is blotted out by the Atonement of Christ and that your heavenly Father looks upon you with delight and favor—even as a child of God and does not chide you! O happy, happy, happy man who walks in the Light of God, as God is in the Light, and so has fellowship with God while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses him from all sin! David’s first prayer is for deliverance from sins committed. If you get it answered in your case, you will not walk in any vain show and you will not be worried at all, much less, “disquieted in vain.”

Next, *he prays to be delivered from the assaults of sin*. Who is there, here, that is not tempted? If anyone says, "I am above temptation, or beyond temptation," well, that person must have gone far in pride and carnal security—he is eaten up with the leprosy of self-deceit! We are all tempted and every day we need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." "Deliver me from all my transgressions. Lord, do not let me sin; let me not in heart, or thought, or word, or deed, offend You." Oh, if we could but be perfect, so that we could never manifest an ugly temper, never speak a wry word, never have an evil thought! Oh, if we could but be perfect! Ah, Sirs, this is the riches we covet, to be perfectly free from every tendency to sin! If we could but get to *that*, then we should have got to Heaven, for that *is* Heaven—to be perfectly delivered from sin! Well, well, we shall have that perfection! God will give it to us, but let us make this the subject of our daily prayer, "Deliver me from all my transgressions."

David also *prayed for deliverance from peculiarly dangerous sins*. Allow me to put an emphasis on one little word in my text, "Deliver me from *all* my transgressions." I am afraid that we all have some special sin that is our sin more than it is anybody else's—some tendency, hereditary—perhaps some liability to a particular form of sin. I believe that if some Brothers and Sisters were ever tempted to hilarity, they would not transgress in *that* direction, for they were born in November, and they have a fog in their very soul! There are some others, who, if they were tempted to great depression, would not transgress in *that* way, for they have sunlight in their souls and their eyes always twinkle with a natural merriment! Some men are not tempted to be misers—it would be a mercy if they *were*, for they are such dreadful spendthrifts! Some men are never tempted to be lavish—I half wish that the devil or someone better would tempt them, that way, for they are so mean and it is so hard to get even a three penny piece from them to help the best of causes! Satan is pretty well acquainted with us—he sees the joints in our harness, he knows to what sins we are specially inclined—and if it is so in sinners, it is also so in saints! We all have need to pray, "Deliver me from all my transgressions, especially from the sins to which I am most liable. Lord, save me from them." I invite you, dear Friends, to pray this prayer of David.

And then, also pray the other—"Make me not the reproach of the foolish. If I am to be reproached, let me be reproached by wise men. Make me not the reproach of the foolish."

Thus, David *prayed for deliverance from deserved dishonor*. Oh, may God grant that none of you, whom He has called to a higher and better life, and made to long for Glory and eternity, may ever make the enemy to blaspheme, or give them real reason for despising you! God keep us from falling! O Christian men, women, Christ has been more wounded by His friends than by His foes! We do not mind what the infidel has to say. At least we would not mind it if we did not, at times, help him to say sad things by our inconsistency. We feel the point of the arrow and the smart of the wound is acute, but far keener is it to feel that our own wrong-doing feathered the arrow which the enemy shot from his bow! God keep us

from that evil! May we never lend a feather from our wings with which to furnish an arrow against Christ or His cause!

David also *prayed to be preserved from undeserved defamation*. "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." If you live the life of an angel, foolish persons will soon spread an evil story against you. Unless the Lord holds their tongues, *they* will not hold them. Pray, then, that you may be preserved from slander. If it comes, may it be *real* slander, with no truth in it, but may God preserve you even from that, for it is a cruel thing and cuts to the quick!

Again, David *prayed for deliverance from spiritual disappointment*. And may we also be preserved from all disappointments concerning our trust in God! If we trusted in God and He did not deliver us, we would be, indeed, the reproach of the foolish. We come out boldly for the Truth of God and stand alone—and yet that Truth never vindicates us! Why, then, we shall be the reproach of the foolish! We pray that we may not be put to shame and that God's bare arm may defend His own cause and we believe it will be so.

And last of all, in his prayer, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish," *David pleads for deliverance from dreadful taunts at the last*. May I never be lost and then forever have to bear this reproach! You know, the thought has sometimes come to me that if I am not true, and if at the Last Great Day the Master should say, "I never knew you, depart, you cursed" how will those who have to depart with me turn round, and say, "And *you*, and *you*? You talked to us! You preached to us! And yet you, yourself, are here?" This would be to suffer shame as did the king of Babylon when he went down to the Pit and the kings whom he had slain began to say to him, "Have you become like one of us?" How they gloried over their conqueror, himself, shut up in Hell, conquered by the Almighty God! Professors, I beseech you to pray this prayer, tonight, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." Be sincere, true men, lest on the last day you not only have the wrath of God to bear, but the shame and the *everlasting* contempt which your fellow sinners will heap upon you while you lie there, after all your profession, a castaway!

The Lord grant His blessing to those who are to be baptized tonight! May they be faithful to the end and may others of us, who have confessed Christ years ago, be kept from sin! May we all trust Christ tonight! If we never trusted Jesus before, let us begin at once, each one saying, "Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You." May we all come to Jesus and find eternal life in Him! Amen, and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 39

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

David dedicated some Psalms to Asaph and one or two to Jeduthun. Some of this chief musician's family appear to have remained singers as late as the time of Nehemiah. It is a great honor to be a singer in the House of God. Ungodly men have no right to lead the Psalmody—only redeemed lives can sing aright the song of redemption. I reckon that it is

almost as wrong to have an unconverted person to lead the singing as it would be to have an unconverted man to preach the Gospel. David was in a great heat of spirit, and much tried, when he wrote this Psalm. There is little that is cheerful in it, yet there is much that may cheer us. Sometimes, when we are unusually thoughtful, we are more likely to be blessed than at other times. Specific gravity is better than specific levity—there are some who have a great deal of the latter quality.

Verse 1. *I said.* “I thought it, and at last I said it. I resolved. I determined upon it and I registered the vow.”

1. *I will take heed to my ways.* Men never go right by accident—he who is heedless is graceless. A holy life is a life that comes of taking heed.

1. *That I sin not with my tongue.* He who keeps his tongue can keep all the rest of his body. The tongue is the helm of the ship and if that is well managed, the ship will be steered aright. How many sins of the tongue there are—proud words, false words, trifling words, unclean words! I cannot mention the whole list. The tongue is the best thing in the world or the worst thing, according to how it is used.

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* “I may feel free when I am with God’s people. Then I may wear my heart upon my sleeve, for there are no claws to scratch at it. But when I am with the wicked, I must not cast my pearls before swine. I must be careful what I say, for they will be sure to misunderstand and misrepresent me.”

2. *I was dumb with silence.* Ah, me! How often we do wrong even when we try to do right! He tried not to sin with his tongue, so he was silent, but silence, itself, may be a sin of the tongue! God forgive our idle silence and silence our idle words! I do not think we often sin this way, but silence may sometimes be more wicked than speech even though at other times, speech is silver and silence is golden. If silence is sometimes better than speech, it may also be worse. So poor David, like a pendulum, swings first, this way, and then the other way. Yet he went too far in the silent direction.

2. *I held my peace, even from good.* Which he should not have done. A dumb sorrow is a heavy sorrow.

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.* Or “troubled.” Water, while it is quiet, may look clear, the sediment lies still at the bottom. But if you stir it, you see all there is in it. So is it with sorrow—when it is stirred, you find its bitterness.

3. *My heart was hot within me.* The fire was kept in his heart—it was not allowed space to break forth—so his heart was hot as an oven.

3. *While I was musing, the fire burned.* He grew so hot with grief that he was compelled to speak.

3. *Then spoke I with my tongue.* I am not sure that he did not sin then. We sin if we are silent and we sin if we speak, for we are such sinful creatures. It would have been better, perhaps, if David had said, “Lord, help me to take heed to my ways and rule, You, over my tongue,” for as it was, you see, he could not manage his tongue. He was either too fast or too slow. However, this time he spoke well, for he spoke *to God*. More talk to God and less chat to men—and we would be wiser and better!

4. *LORD, make me to know my end.* It is greatly wise for us to be familiar with our last hours. There is much to be discovered in the shroud, the mattock and the spade.

4. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* A bubble is more substantial than I am—a little handful of dust, easily blown in the wind—rather an appearance than a reality! Ah, me, little do we know, any of us, how frail we are!

5. *Behold You have made my days as an handbreadth.* How short is our life! It is just a span and no more,

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* What multitudes of generations of men have come and gone! An angel might have cried, long before, “Man is but a thing of yesterday compared with the eternal God.” God created the first star that twinkled out of the primeval darkness. “The everlasting hills,” as we call them, are but infants of a day compared to Him. Therefore, man may truly say, “My age is as nothing before You.”

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* The best man is only man at the best and when he is at his best, he is nothing but vanity. It is strange that he should get vain of his best state, when his best is only vanity!

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show.* He is a shadow walking among shadows.

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* They fret and fume about nothing.

6. *He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.* He is busy with a rake, but another will be busy with a fork. What the miser gathers the spendthrift scatters.

7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for.* “Do I wait to gather riches for another to squander? Do I wait to worry myself? Do I wait here to walk as a vanity in the midst of vanities? No, Lord, I am waiting for something better than that!”

7. *My hope is in You.* Here the Psalmist steps off the sand and puts his foot on the Rock. Happy is the man who can say to the Lord, “My hope is in You.”

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* When he gets near to God, he sees himself to be a sinner.

8, 9. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.* That is fine silence when a man will not complain because his affliction comes from the hand of God! There is something better, even, than that—when a man breaks the silence and begins to praise God under the rod! A mute Christian smarting under the rod is a wonder of Grace, but a *singing* Christian under a cutting stroke is a still greater miracle of mercy! Such ought all Christians to be.

10. *Remove Your stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.* When God smites, He never plays at chastisement and there are times when His blows are very heavy, and then the smitten one cries out, “Remove Your stroke away from me. I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.”

11. *When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Stout, he is reduced to a shadow. Comely and beautiful, he is wrinkled and looks like a skeleton. Joyful and

blithe, he ends his day in mourning. Ah, dear Friends, we who have joy, calm and peace ought to be very grateful! Praise God while you can, for it may be that a dark night will follow the bright day. Oh, for Grace to praise God even then! That is the best of music that comes from God's nightingales! Music by night is music, indeed. But when God corrects men, how soon He takes them down!

11, 12. *Surely every man is vanity. Selah. Hear my prayer, O LORD.* "If I cannot do anything else, I can pray, and I will pray." That is the best relief that mourners have—"Hear my prayer, O Lord."

12. *And give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears.* "Do not see me weeping and yet refuse me comfort and relief. Do not, I pray You, hear my cry, and yet turn Your back upon me."

12. *For I am a stranger with You.* Notice, not a stranger to You, but, "a stranger with You. You are a stranger in Your own world and I, also, am a stranger here." Men will not entertain the King, for they know Him not, therefore—

***"Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown:
The Jewish world knew not their King
God's everlasting Son."***

"I am a stranger with You." There is a sweet familiarity about this expression, as if the Psalmist said, "Lord, I am not at home. I am a stranger here and You, too, are a stranger. Men will not acknowledge You. Therefore, Lord, sympathize with me. Hold not Your peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with You."

12. *And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "You are my Host. I am Your guest. You entertain me. Lord, look at my tears! When the good man entertains a stranger, he is kind—he pours oil and wine into his wounds. Lord, do so with me! You are the Good Samaritan and I am a stranger with You—a sojourner, a temporary guest with You in this world—as all my fathers were."

13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* There is much sweet comfort, here, though the Psalm reads like a dirge, rather than a hymn. God give us, if we are obliged to sing such words as these, to sing them with a full belief that the Lord will hear us, will bless our trials to us and make them work our lasting good!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—39, 657, 823.

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BROUGHT UP FROM THE HORRIBLE PIT NO. 1674

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 13, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I waited patiently for the Lord: and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my going. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”
Psalm 40:1-3.

This passage has been used with great frequency as the expression of the experience of the people of God and I think it has been very rightly so used. It is a very accurate picture of the way in which sinners are raised up from despair to hope and salvation—and of the way in which saints are brought out of deep troubles and made to sing of Divine love and power. Yet I am not certain that the first verse could be truthfully uttered by all of us. I question, indeed, whether any of us could thus speak. Could we say—“I waited patiently for the Lord.” Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that it might rather read—“I waited *impatiently* for the Lord,” in the case of most of us? All the rest may stand true, but this would need to be modified.

We could hardly speak in our own commendation if we considered our conduct in the matter of patience, for that is, alas, still a scarce virtue upon the face of the earth! If we read the Psalm through, we shall see that it was *not* written to describe the experience of God's people, exclusively. Secondarily we may regard it as *David's* language, but in the first instance a greater than David is here. The first Person who uttered these words was the Messiah and that is quite clear if you read the Psalm through, for we fall upon such language as this—“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.”

We need not say with the Ethiopian, “Of whom speaks the Prophet? Of himself or of some other?” For we are led at once by the plainest indications to see that he is not speaking of himself, but of our Lord. And if we needed confirmation of this we get it in Hebrews 10, where Paul expressly quotes this passage as referring to the Lord Jesus. To Him, indeed, alone, of all men can it, with accuracy, be applied! So this morning I shall have to show that this text of ours is most fit to be the language of the Lord, our Representative and Covenant Head. When I have shown this, you will then see how we can use the same expressions, because we are in Him.

Each Believer becomes a mirror in which is reflected the experience of our Lord, but it would be ill for us to be so taken up with the mere reflection as to forget the express Image by which this experience is formed in us. I shall ask you, then, at this time, to observe our Divine Lord when in

His greatest trouble. Notice, first, our Lord's behavior—"I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto Me, and heard My cry." Then consider, secondly, our Lord's deliverance, expressed by the phrase, "He brought Me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay," and so forth. Then let us think, thirdly, of the Lord's reward for it—"Many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord"—that is His great end and objective—and in it He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

We shall close, fourthly, by perceiving the Lord's likeness in all His saved ones, for they, also, are brought up from the Pit of destruction, and a new song is put into their mouths. He is not ashamed to call them Brethren, since in each one of them His own experience is repeated, though upon a smaller scale.

I. First, let us think of our Lord's behavior. "I waited patiently for the Lord." Here, we greatly need the teaching of the Holy Spirit—may it be given us abundantly. First, our Lord's conduct when He was under the smarting rod was that of waiting. He waited upon the Lord all His life and this waiting became more conspicuous in His passion and death. He went down into Gethsemane and there He prayed earnestly, but with sweet submission, for He said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Complete submission was the essential spirit of His prayer. He rose up from prayer all crimson with His bloody sweat and He went to meet His foes, delivering Himself up voluntarily to be led as a sheep to the slaughter.

He did not unsheathe the sword as Peter did, much less did He flee, like His disciples, but He waited upon the will of the Most High, enduring all things till the Father should give Him deliverance. When they took Him before Annas and Caiaphas, and Pilate and Herod, hurrying Him from bar to bar, how patiently He kept silence, though false witnesses appeared against Him. Like a sheep before her shearers He was dumb, submitting Himself without a struggle. In the Omnipotence of patience, He held His peace even from good, because it was so written of Him. When they led Him away to crucifixion through the streets of Jerusalem, He did not even encourage the lamentations of the sympathizing women who surrounded Him, but in His wondrous patience He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me."

He did not refuse to bear His Cross, or to let the Cross bear Him. He did not complain of contempt and contumely, since these were appointed Him. When they nailed Him to the tree and there He hung in the burning sun, tortured, fevered, agonizing—the words that escaped Him were not those of murmuring and repining, but those of pity, pain, patience and submission. Till He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He bowed His whole being to His Father's will, waiting His time and pleasure. He steadily took a long draft of the appointed cup and drained it to the bitter end. His eyes were unto the Lord as the eyes of servants are to the hands of their masters. He waited in service, in hope, in resignation and in confidence. He knew that God would help Him and deliver Him.

He knew that His head would be raised on high above the sons of men, but still He waited for the Father's time and, meanwhile, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant—and as a Servant yielded all His strength to the work which was given Him to do. He

was willing, in the hour of His passion, to be treated as the scum and scorn of all mankind! Nor did He hurry the hour when all the shame and scorn should blossom into Glory and honor. He went down in His waiting, even, to the utmost of self-denial and truly proved that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Never man served and waited like this Man!

Our text adds to this word, “waited,” the word, “patiently.” “I waited patiently.” If you would see patience, look not at Job on the dunghill, but look at Jesus on the Cross! Job, the most patient of men, was assuredly impatient at the same time, but this blessed Lord of ours gave Himself up completely and showed not the slightest sign of repining. Not a speck of impatience can be detected in the crystal stream of our Lord’s submission! His soul was all melted and it all flowed into the mold of the Father’s will—no dross was in or about Him—nothing refused to melt and to run into the mold. One would have supposed that He would have spoken an angry word to Judas, who betrayed Him. Instead of which He gently asked of him, “Friend, why are you here?”

It would not have seemed out of place if He had upbraided the Jews who so falsely accused Him, or the rulers who so unjustly treated Him. But here is the patience of the Saintly One—He was perfect master of His own Spirit. His answer to His murderers was the prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” So meek and lowly in heart was He that to men He gave no sharp replies. His answers were all steeped in gentleness. Take, for example, His word to the High Priest—“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you smite Me?” They sat down around the Cross and mocked Him, jeered at Him, insulted Him and made mirth even of His cries and prayers! But He did not utter a single word of rebuke, much less did He leap from the Cross to dash His mockers to pieces and prove by their destruction that He was, indeed, the mighty Son of God.

“I waited patiently,” He says. No thought or word or deed of impatience can be charged upon Him! Waiting, He waited and waited more. We are in such a hurry when we are in trouble—we hasten to escape from it at once—every minute seems an hour and every day an age. “Help me speedily, O my God!” is the natural cry of the child of God under the rod! But our Savior was in no ill haste to get from the chastisement which came upon Him for our sakes—He was at leisure in His woe. So thoroughly was He resolved to do His Father’s will that even on the morning of His Resurrection He arose with deliberation and quit the grave in order, folding His grave clothes and laying the napkin by itself. He steadily persevered in all His work of holiness and sorrow of Sacrifice, never accepting deliverance till His work was done. Patiently He endured to have His ear bored to the doorpost, to have His head encircled with thorns, His cheeks disdained with spit, His back furrowed with the lash, His hands and feet nailed to the wood and His heart pierced with the spear! In His body on the tree, patience was written out in crimson characters.

Now, this was necessary for the completeness of His Atonement. No expiation could have been made by an impatient Savior. Only a perfect obedience could satisfy the Law of God. Only an unblemished Sacrifice could put away our sins. There must not, therefore, be about our Substitute a

trace of resistance to the Father's will, nor as a Sacrifice must He struggle against the cords, or turn His head away from the sacrificial knife. In truth, His was willing—patiently doing and suffering the Divine Will. “He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting.” “I waited patiently for the Lord,” He says, and you know, Brothers and Sisters, how true was the declaration.

But while the Savior thus waited, and waited patiently, we must not forget that He waited *prayerfully*, for the text speaks of a cry which He lifted up, and of God's inclining Himself to it. That patience which does not pray is obstinacy! A soul silent to God is apt to be sullen rather than submissive. A stoical patience hardens itself against grief and asks no deliverance—but that is not the patience which God loves—it is *not* the patience of Christ. He used strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. Let Gethsemane tell of that wrestling which infinitely excelled the wrestling of Jacob—Jabbok is outdone by Kedron! His was a wrestling, not to sweat, alone, but unto sweat of blood! He sweats who works for bread, the staff of life, but He sweats *blood* who works for life, itself.

What prayers those must have been under such a fearful physical, mental and spiritual agony which were so fervent that they brought an angel from the Throne of God, and yet, so submissive that they are the model of resignation! He agonized as earnestly as if He sought His own will and yet He wholly resigned Himself to the Father, saying, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God.” Our Lord was always praying—there never was a moment in His life in which He was not in full communion with God, unless we except the period when He cried, “Why have You forsaken Me?” He did often go aside to pray a more special prayer, but yet, even when He spoke to the people; even when He faced His foes, His soul was still in constant fellowship with His Father. But ah, when He came between the upper and the nether millstones—when this good Olive was ground in the olive press and all the oil of His life was extracted from Him—then it was that His strong crying and tears came up before the Lord, His God, and He was heard in that He feared!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, look at your Pattern and see how far short you have come of it! At least, I will remember with regret how far short *I* have come of it! Have we waited? Have we not been in too great a hurry? Has it not been too much our desire that the Lord might make His will like *our* will rather than make our will like *His*? Have you not had a will of your own, sometimes, and a strong will, too? Have you not been as the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke? Have you not kicked against the pricks? You have not waited, but you have worried! Can we say that we waited patiently? Oh, patience! Every man thinks he has it until he needs it! But only let his tender point be touched and you will see how little patience he possesses. It is the fire which tires our supposed resignation and under that process much of our palace of patience burns like wood, hay and stubble! Old crosses fit the shoulder, but let a new cross be laid upon us and we writhe under it. Suffering is the vocation of a Christian, but most of us come short of our high calling. Our Lord Jesus has joined to-

gether reigning *and* suffering, for we read of “the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” He was the royal example of patience, but what are we?

Remember, again, that Jesus prayed importunately while He waited—“being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly.” Have we not, at time, *restrained* prayer? Have we not pleaded as an excuse for our feeble petitions the very facts which ought to have been a spur to our earnestness? “I felt too ill to pray.” Could you not pray for health with all the more fervency? “I felt too burdened to pray.” Should you not pray for help to bear your burden? Can we ever safely say to ourselves, “I may be excused from supplication, now, for my sorrow is great.” Talk not so! Here is your balm and benediction, your comfort and your cordial! Here is your strength and succor, your constancy and confidence! Even in the midnight of the soul let us arise and pour out our hearts like water before the Lord. O tried Believer, get to your knees and from above the Mercy Seat the Glory of the Lord shall shine forth upon you! Pray even as Jesus did and as all His saints have done and so shall you, in patience, possess your soul.

In due time the Lord inclined to the afflicted Suppliant, listening to His moaning from the bottom of the pit—of this it is high time for us to speak. Yet let us not leave this first point till we learn from the example of our Lord that patience is seen in waiting as well as in suffering. To bear a great weight for an hour or two is nothing compared with carrying a load for many a day. Patience knows its letters, but waiting reads the page and praying rehearses it in the ears of God! Let us add to our patience waiting—and to waiting—prayer.

II. We come, secondly, to consider our Lord’s deliverance. In due time, when Patience had had her perfect work and prayer had, at last, prevailed, our suffering Lord was brought up, again, from the deeps of sorrow. His deliverance is set forth under two images. First, it is represented as a bringing up out of a horrible pit. It is a terribly suggestive metaphor. I have been in the dungeon in Rome in which, according to tradition, Peter and Paul were confined (though, probably, they were never there at all).

It was, indeed, a horrible pit, for originally it had no entrance, but a round hole in the rock above. And when that round hole at the top was blocked with a stone, not a ray of light nor a particle of fresh air could possibly enter. The prisoners were let down into the cavern and they were left there. When once the opening was closed, they were cut off from all communication with their fellow men. No being has ever been so cruel to man as man! Man is the worst of monsters to his kind and his cruel inventions are many. He has not been content to leave his fellows their natural liberty, but he built prisons and dug pits in which to shut up his victims!

At first they would place a man in a dry well merely for custody and confinement, or they would drop him into some hollow cavern in the earth in which corn or treasure had been concealed. But afterwards, with greater ingenuity of malice, they covered over the top of these pits so that the prisoners could not be partakers of God’s bountiful air, or the merciful light of the sun, or the silver sheen of the moon. Covered all over and shut in, the captives were buried alive. Even in modern times we have seen what they call oubliettes, or dungeons in which prisoners were immured, to be forgotten as dead men out of mind, buried so as never to come forth,

again. Such unfortunates as were doomed to enter these tombs of living men bade farewell to hope. They were inhabitants of oblivion, dwellers in the land of death-shade, to remain apart from their kind, cut off from memory.

These worst of dungeons may illustrate our text—"He brought Me up also out of a horrible pit." In the original, we get the idea of a crash, as when some mailed warrior in the midst of the battle stumbles into a pit and there he lies, bruised and broken. And there is the thought of the fall of waters rushing strangely, furiously, mysteriously. The Hebrew has it, "The pit of noises," or as some render it, "the pit of destruction." Such was the condition of our dear Redeemer when He was bearing our sin and suffering in our place. Just notice, first, that our Lord was like a man put into a pit and so made to be quite alone. Imagine yourself now confined in one of those caverns with a big stone rolled over the mouth of it. There would be neither hearing nor answering.

Now you will know the dread solemnity of silence! You may speak, but no gentle whisper of sympathy will reach your ears in return! You may cry again and again and make the dungeon's dome echo to your voice—but you are speaking as to brass—no man cares for your soul. You are alone—alone in a fearful solitude. Thus it happened to our Savior. All His disciples forsook Him and fled. And what was infinitely worse, His God forsook Him, too. He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Can any man tell me all that was meant by that infinite lament? Of course, a prisoner in such a pit as that was in total darkness. He could not see the walls which enclosed him, nor so much as his own hand. No beam of sunlight ever wandered into that stagnant air—the captive would have to grope for the pitcher of water and the morsel of bread which a cruel mercy would allot to him.

Our Lord was in the dark. Midnight brooded over His spirit. He said—"Now is My soul troubled." "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." His was a pit of gloom, the region of the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness, itself! When a man is shut up in a pit he is, of course, full of distress. If you were, any of you, to go into one of the solitary cells of our own jails, I guarantee you a short sojourn in it would be quite enough! These cells, some years ago, were thought to be wonderful cures for all sort of evil dispositions in men, but probably they have more often destroyed reason than conquered depravity. Go in, if you dare!

Ask the warden to shut the door and leave you in the dark, all alone, that you may try the solitary system for yourself. No, I would not advise you to try it even for five minutes, for you might, even in that short time, inflict such an injury upon your nervous system as you would never recover. I believe that many of the gentler ones, here, would be quite unable to bear total darkness and solitude even for the shortest time. In the grim gloom, the soul is haunted with phantom fears, while horror peoples the place which is empty of human beings! The heart is worried with evil imaginations and pierced with arrows of distress. Grief takes hold of the spirit and alarm conquers hope.

In our Lord's case, the grief and sorrow which He felt can never be described, nor need it be conceived. It was something tantamount to the miseries of damned souls. The holy Jesus could not feel the exact misery

which takes hold on abandoned rebels, but He did suffer what was tantamount to that at the Judgment Seat of God. He gave a quid pro quo, a something which, in God's esteem, reckoning the dignity of His mighty Person, stood instead of the sinner's eternal suffering. He felt woe upon woe, night blackening night! Do not try to realize His agony—He wills that you should not—for He has trod the winepress alone and of the people there were none with Him—as if to show that none could understand His sorrows and that we can do no more than speak of His “unknown sufferings.”

But I must add, to complete the figure, that shut up in such a pit there might be a great tumult above, like to the tramping of armed hosts. Or there might be a rush of waters underneath the captive deep in earth's bowels. He could not tell what the noise was, nor from where it came and, therefore, he would often be in terrible fear while he sat alone in the thick darkness. Our Lord had His fears, for we read that He was heard in that He feared. Torrents of sin rushed near Him! Floods of wrath were heard around Him and cataracts of grief fell upon Him. Besides, there was a mystery about this anguish which intensified it—a mystery not to be written or explained. Our Redeemer's spirit was cast down within Him far beyond anything that is common to men. In that horrible pit, that pit of destruction, He lay with none to pity or sustain.

But, oh, change the strain, and sing unto the Lord, awhile, as we read the verse, “He brought Me up out of a horrible pit.” The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up from all sorrow of spirit at that moment when He said so bravely, “It is finished,” and though He died, yet was He lifted up from death, as it is written, “You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” His Spirit ascended to God and, by-and-by, when the third day had blushed with morning light, His body rose from the tomb, to ascend, in due time, to Glory! He came up out of the pit of the grave, delivered from all fear of corruption, pain, or defeat! Now His sorrow is ended and His brow is clear from care. His visage is marred no more! He bears the scars which do but illumine His hands and feet with splendor, but—

***“No more the bloody spear,
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell, itself, shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore.”***

Sing you unto the Lord, you saints of His, as you behold your Master brought up again from among the sorrowful, the despised, the deserted, the dead!

A second figure is, however, used here to express our Lord's grief and deliverance from it—“Out of the miry clay.” Travelers tell us that wherever pits are still used as dungeons, they are damp, foul and utterly loathsome, for they are never cleansed, however long the prisoner may have been there, or however great the number of victims shut up within them. You know what the prisons of Europe were in Howard's days—they were even worse in the East in periods further back. The imprisoned wretch often found himself sinking in the mire! He found no rest, no hope of comfort and when extricated, he needed a hand to drag him out of the thick clay.

Our blessed Lord and Master found Himself, when He was suffering for us, where everything appeared to give way beneath Him. His spirits sank, His friends failed Him and His heart melted like wax. Every comfort was taken from Him. His blessed Manhood found nothing upon this earth upon which it could stay itself, for He had been made sin for us, made a curse for us—and so every foundation of comfort departed from Him. He was deprived of visible support and reduced to a sad condition. As a man who has fallen into a slough cannot stir so as to recover himself, so was it with our Redeemer, who says in the Psalms—“I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.” Some morasses are so destructive that if a man should once fall into them, he might give up his life for lost unless someone came that way to drag him out.

So did the Savior sink in the miry clay of our sin and misery until the Lord Almighty lifted Him out! The clay of sorrow clung to Him. It held to Him while He was performing the great work of our redemption. But the Lord brought Him up out of it. There is no mire upon His garments now! His feet no longer sink! He is not held by the bands of death! He slides not into the grave, again! He was dragged down, as it were, by bearing our sin, but that is over and He has ascended on high—He has led captivity captive and received gifts from men! All honor be unto Him and to His Father who delivered Him!

As we read our text, we pursue this story of our Master’s deliverance and we are told that He was brought up out of the lowest deeps. Say the words or sing them as you choose—“He brought Me up.” God raised up His obedient Son from the depths into which He had descended on our account. He was brought up, like Jonah who went to the bottom of the mountains and yet was landed safely on the shore. He was brought up like Joseph, who rose from a pit to a palace; like David, who was led up from the sheepfold to the kingdom. “The king shall joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For You have made him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance.”

Then we are told He was set on a rock, and oh, the Glory of our blessed Lord in this matter, for now He stands on a firm foundation in all that He does for us! Judgment and truth confirm His ways and the Judge of all the earth approves His doings. Christ has no sandy foundation for His work of mercy or His words of comfort. When He saves, He has a right to save—when He puts away sin—He does it on indisputable grounds! When He helps and delivers His people, He does it according to Law, according to the will of the Highest. As Justifier, Preserver and Perfecter of His people, He stands upon a rock! This day I delight to think of my Lord as settling His Church with Himself upon the immutable foundations of the Covenant, on the decree of God, on the purpose of the Father, on His own work and on the promise of God that He would reward Him in that work!

Well may we say that His feet are upon a rock, for He is Himself, by another figure, the Rock of Ages, the Rock of our salvation! And now the goings of our glorious Christ are established. When He goes out to save a sinner, He knows that He can do it and has a right to do it! When He goes up to His Father’s Throne to make intercession for sinners, His goings are

established and the desire of His heart is given Him! When He comes in among His Church, or marches forth with His people to the ends of the earth, His goings are established. “For the King trusts in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High He shall not be moved.” He shall surely come a second time without sin unto salvation, for so has the Father decreed—His glorious goings are as surely established as were those of His labor and suffering.

We shall never be without a Savior! We shall never have a fallen or a vanquished Savior, for His goings are established for continuance, certainty and victory! Such honor have all His saints, for, “the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” And again, “None of his steps shall slide.” Best of all, there is a new song in the mouth of our Well-Beloved. It is grand to think of Jesus singing! Read the 22nd Psalm and you will find Him doing it, as also in the Hebrews—“In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You.” Toward the end of His earthly career, you hear Him bursting into song. Was not that a grand occasion just before His passion, when He was going out to die? We read that “after supper they sang a hymn.”

If we had been bound to die that night, as He was, we should rather have wept or prayed, than sang! Not so our Lord. I do not know what Psalm they sang—probably a part of the great Hallel, usually sung after the Passover—which consists of those Psalms at the end of the book which are so full of praise. I believe the Savior, Himself, pitched the tune and led the strain. Think of Him singing when near His hour of agony! Going to scorn and mockery, singing! Going to the crown of thorns and the scourge, singing! Going to death, even the death of the Cross, singing! For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame! But now, what must that new song be which He leads in Heaven? “They sang, as it were, a new song before the throne.” But it is He that leads the heavenly orchestra!

How greatly He excels Miriam, the sister of Moses, when she took her timbrel and led forth the women in their dances, saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and His rider has He thrown into the sea.” This is called, “the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb,” so I gather that the Lamb’s new song is after the same triumphant fashion—it is the substance of that which Moses’ song foreshadowed! In Christ Jesus, the Lord our God has led captivity captive. Let us praise Him on the high sounding cymbals! Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The powers of darkness are destroyed! Sin, death and Hell are drowned in the atoning blood—the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left. Oh, “sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!” “Ascribe you greatness unto our God.”

III. Such is the exalted condition of our Lord at this hour. Let us turn and look upon the Lord’s reward. The Lord’s reward for having gone down into the horrible pit and having sunk in the miry clay for us, is this—that “many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord. “Many!” Not *all* mankind, but, “many” shall look to Jesus and live. Alas! Vast numbers continue in unbelief, but “many” shall believe and live! And the Lord’s “many” means very many. As I was thinking over my text, I thought, “I hope there will be some at the Tabernacle this morning that belong to the ‘many’ who shall

see and fear and trust in the Lord.” “Many shall,” for the Lord has promised it.

But, Lord, they will not. “But they shall,” says God. Oh, but many refuse. “But they shall,” says God and He has the key of men’s hearts and power over their judgments and their wills. “Many shall.” Do you, oh you unbelievers, think that Jesus shall die in vain? Oh, Sinners, if you will not have Christ, others will! You may despise Him, but He will be none the less glorious! You may reject His salvation but He shall be none the less mighty to save! He is a King and you cannot pluck a single jewel from His crown! If you are so foolish as to provoke His iron rod so that He shall break you in shivers with it, yet He will be glorious in the sight of God and He will save His own! Notwithstanding your hardness of heart, be this known unto you, oh House of Israel, that, “many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord.”

What shall the many do? They shall “see.” Their eyes shall be opened and they shall see their Lord in the horrible pit and in the miry clay—and as they look, they shall see that He was there for them! What joy this will create in their spirits! If they do not see the Lord Jesus as their Substitute, they shall, at any rate, be made to see the exceedingly sinfulness of sin. If, when Jesus only takes *imputed* sin and has no sin of His own, yet He must be cast into the horrible pit and sink in the miry clay—then what will become of men who have their *own* sins about them, provoking the fierce anger of the Lord? If God thus smites His Well-Beloved, oh Sinner, how will He smite you! Beware, you that forget Him, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you!

By the suffering Surety, all covered with His own gore, I do beseech you, provoke not God, for if His Only-Begotten must suffer so, you must suffer yet more if you break His Law and next reject His Gospel! “Many shall see.” Do you wonder that it is added, “and shall fear?” It makes men fear to see a bleeding Christ and to know that they crucified Him! It makes men fear, however, with a sweet filial fear that is akin to hope when they see that Jesus died for sinners, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God. Oh, when they see the Lord of Love acting as a scape-goat and bearing their sins away into the wilderness of forgetfulness, they begin to hate their evil ways and to have a reverent fear of God, for so says the Scripture, “there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared.”

But best of all—and this is the chief point—they come to “trust in the Lord.” They build their hope of salvation upon the righteousness of God as manifested in Christ Jesus. Oh, I would to God that some of you would trust Him at once! Beloved Friends, are you trying to be saved by your own works? That is a delusion! Are you hoping to be saved by your own feelings? That is a lie! But you *can* be saved, you *shall* be saved if you will trust yourself with that Blessed One who was alone in the dark pit of noises for the sake of sinners—and slipped in the miry clay for the ungodly! You shall assuredly be saved from wrath through Him! Trust Him and as surely as He lives, you shall be saved, for He that trusts in Him cannot perish! God’s truthfulness were gone if the Believer could be lost. Has He not said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”? The Throne of God must rock and reel before the Cross of Christ shall lose its power to save those that believe!

IV. Fourthly, let us see the Lord's likeness in His people. This whole passage, as I said in the beginning, has often been used by individual Believers as a description of their own deliverance. It is a true picture, because we are made like unto our Head and all the Brethren are partakers of that which the Head has endured. Do I speak to any of my Master's servants in sore trouble? Dear Friends, are you made to wait, though your trial is sharp and severe? Is it so that your prayer has not yet been answered? Then remember the waiter's place was once occupied by the Lord Jesus, for He says, "I waited patiently." If the Lord keeps you waiting for a certain blessing, year after year, do not despair. He will give it, at length, if it is truly for your good, for He has said, "no good thing will I withhold from those that walk uprightly." He kept His Son waiting and He may very well keep you in the same posture, for how long did you delay and cause the Lord of Grace to wait on you! "Blessed are they that wait for Him." I have seen people very uppish when they have called on a public man and have had to wait a little. They feel that they ought not to be kept in the lobby. But suppose some young man said to them, "I am his own son and yet I have been waiting an hour"? Then they are more patient! So when God keeps you waiting, do not be proud, and say, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" But remember, "It is good for a man both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God." Jesus waited—"waited patiently." Seek to be like He and in patience possess your soul.

"I cannot see how I am to be delivered." Wait. "Ah, this is such a heavy burden." Wait. "But I am ready to die under this terrible load." Wait! Wait on! Though He tarry, wait for Him—He is worth waiting for. "Wait" is a short word, but it takes a deal of Grace to spell out its full meaning—and still more Grace to put it in practice. Wait: wait! "Oh, but I have been unfortunate." Wait. "But I have believed a promise and it has not been fulfilled." Wait, for you wait in blessed company—you may hear Jesus saying, "I waited patiently." Blessed be His name, He is teaching us to do the same by His gracious Spirit!

Next, the Lord may send you, His dear child, a very heavy sorrow. You may fall into the horrible pit and see no light, no comfort and no one may be able to cheer you or help you. Some that have a touch of despondency in their nature have been brought so low as almost to despair of life. They have sat in darkness and seen no light—they have felt the walls of their prison and have not discovered a crack or cranny through which escape was possible—they have looked up and even then they have seen nothing to console them. Ah, well, here is a word I commend to you—the Savior says it—"He brought Me up."

The Lord God can and will bring up His troubled ones. You will have to write in your diary, one of these days, "He brought me up." I was in the dark, I was in the dungeon, but, "He brought me up." I can personally say this with gladsome gratitude, for, "He has brought me up," again and again! My heart is glad as I reflect upon my past deliverances. I have often wondered why I am so often shut up in prison and bound as with fetters of steel. But I cease to wonder when I think of the many among you who are called to wear the same bonds. This is my portion, that I may be a witness-bearer for my God! And that I may be able to speak to the experiences of God's tempted people and tell how graciously the Lord delivers

His servants who trust in Him. Faith shall never be shamed or confounded, world without end! God can and will hasten to the rescue of the faithful.

I set to my seal, also, that, “He brought me up,” and, beloved Brothers and Sisters in tribulation, He will bring you up. Only rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. “Ah,” you say, “But I do not know how to stand, for I sink as in miry clay, through faintness of heart. I cannot find the slightest foothold for my hope.” No, you are sinking in the miry clay like your Master, but, in answer to prayer, the Lord will bring you up out of your hopeless state and He will set your feet upon a rock and establish your goings, give you joy, peace and delight. Therefore see and fear, and trust in God and give Glory to His blessed name!

Lastly, do I address any seeking one who finds no rest for the soles of his feet? Dear Friend, are you sinking in the deep mire of your guilt? The Lord can pardon you, for, “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Are you shut up by conscience in prison under a just sense of deserved wrath? Jesus will give you immediate rest if you come to Him! Do you feel as if you cannot kneel to pray, for your very knees slip in the mire of doubt? Remember, Jesus makes intercession for the transgressors! Do you seem as if, every time you move, you are burying your hope and slipping deeper and deeper into ruin? The Lord has plenteous redemption! Do not despair! You cannot deliver yourself, but God can deliver you—you cannot stand of yourself, but God can make you stand! You cannot go to Him nor go abroad among your fellow men with comfort, but the Lord can make you to run in His ways.

You shall yet go forth with joy and be led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Only see Christ, and fear and trust your God, and you, too, shall sing unto Jehovah your Deliverer, and this shall be your song—

***“He raised me from a horrid pit,
Where mourning long I lay,
And from my bonds released my feet,
Deep bonds of miry clay.
Firm on a rock He made me stand,
And taught my cheerful tongue
To praise the wonders of His hand
In a new thankful song.”***

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“OUT OF THE DEPTHS”

NO. 2353

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MARCH 25, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1888.**

*“For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities
have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up;
they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my
heart fails me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:
O LORD make haste to help me.”
Psalm 40:12, 13.*

You remember that these were the words of a man of God, a man after God’s own heart, a man undoubtedly the possessor of the Grace of God. They were the words, also, of a preacher, one who could say, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation...I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and your Truth from the great congregation.”

This teaches us that however eminent for Grace a man of God may be, it may happen to him, sometimes, that the thought of his sin may be paramount over his faith. There are times when the Lord seems to give His servants a new start. It is not a second conversion, but it is something very like it. They are made to see, once more, the deformity of their character, the defilement of their nature, the inward sinfulness of their hearts—that they may prize more than ever that they have experienced the cleansing Fountain of atoning blood and the wonderful power of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. I mention this fact so that, if any of you are in trouble like that described in the text, you may be comforted by knowing that there are the footprints of a fellow Believer in this dark part of the way you have to travel. Others have been here before you! Others who were undoubtedly the people of God, others who were saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

You have had to write bitter things against yourself—so have other people. Have you ever felt as though you were surrounded by sin so that you could not look up? You are not the first man who has been in such a plight and you are not likely to be the last. This part of the road has been frequented by full many of the pilgrims bound to Zion’s city. All the people of God have not taken this route—there are different ways of traveling along the road to Heaven. But some of the true saints of God have gone by this rough path and I mention this fact in order that no troubled heart may fall into despair because of the painful experience through which it is passing at the present time.

I. In trying to describe a soul in the condition mentioned in our text, let me say, first, that we have evidently before us A SOUL BESET—“For

innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head.”

The text describes a man who is, first, made to see *the countless number of his sins*. He did not know so much about them, before. He said that he was a sinner and he meant it, but then he wrote the words in very small letters. Now, a further enlightenment has been granted to him—the Spirit of judgment and of burning has come to deal with him—and now he writes the sentence, “I AM A SINNER,” in capitals so large that he needs the whole sky and all the sea, as well, to make the page on which to emblazon the terrible words. With an emphasis of which he used to know nothing, he now calls himself a sinner, for sins that he had forgotten come up before his memory. Now he sees that there is a great number of sins in any one sin, like so many Chinese boxes shut up, one inside another.

Moreover, things which he formerly did not recognize as sins, he now perceives to be among the deadliest of transgressions. He realizes that the imagination of evil is sin, that sin is any lack of conformity to the perfection of God. Now he seems as if he swarms with sins and yet, a short while ago he thought himself clean and pure in the sight of God! It is amazing what a ray of light will do—the sun suddenly shines into a room and the whole air seems full of innumerable specks of dust dancing up and down in the sunbeam! The *light* does not make the room full of dust—it only shows you what was always there—but which you did not see until the sun shone in. And if a beam of God’s true Light were to shine into some of your hearts, you would think very differently of yourselves from what you have ever done. I question whether any one among us could bear to see himself as God sees him.

I think it is highly probable that if any man were to see his own heart as it really is, he would go mad! It would be a sight too dreadful for an awakened conscience and a sensitive reason to endure. And when the Lord comes to any of His servants and reveals sin in its true character, unless there is a corresponding revelation of the cleansing blood, it puts a man into a very dreadful condition of mind. He says that his sins are more than the hairs of his head. He feels that that is a very poor comparison, so he says they are innumerable, they cannot be counted! In the process of trying to count them, we would have sinned, again, I know not how many times—sinned in our judgments about our sins—our thoughts about our sins would only increase the number of them!

Now, this is no morbid feeling of a perverted brain! It is a true and strictly accurate statement of a sad fact. It is not possible for any of us to think too badly of ourselves as we really are in the sight of God. Comfort does not come by trying to lessen our sense of sin—it comes in a much better and more effectual way—as I will presently try to show you.

This man, then, is troubled by the number of his sins. He also seems to be greatly perplexed by *a sort of Omnipresence of sin*, for he says, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about.” He looks that way and says, “Surely there is a gap, there, I have not sinned in that direction.” But no,

there are sins in that quarter. He turns sharply round and he looks this way and says, “Perhaps I shall find a lane, there, through which I may escape. I hope I have not sinned in that way.” But when he steadily looks, he finds that he *has* sinned there, too. These innumerable evils have compassed him about. David said of his enemies, “They compassed me about like bees.” They were all around him. When a swarm of bees gets about a man, they are above, beneath, around, everywhere stinging, each one stinging—until he seems to be stung in every part of his body!

So, when conscience wakes up the whole hive of our sins, we find ourselves compassed about with innumerable evils—sins at the board and sins on the bed, sins at the task and sins in the pew, sins in the street and sins in the shop, sins on land and sins at sea, sins of body, soul, spirit, sins of the eyes, of the lips, of the hands, of the feet—sins everywhere, everywhere sins! It is a horrible discovery when it seems to a man as if sin had become well-near as Omnipresent with him as God is! It cannot be actually so, for sin cannot be everywhere as God is, but it is hard to say where sin is *not* when once conscience is awake to see it. Our whole life, from our first responsible moment, even until now, appears defiled. There are sins even in our holy things! Only half the heart is laid upon God’s altar and the sacramental bread, itself, is defiled as it passes into our mouth. Oh, it is dreadful when the heart is awakened to see that it is even so! “Innumerable evils have compassed me about.”

But that is not all. This man is so beset with sin that *it seems to hold him in a terrible grip*. Read this—“My iniquities have taken hold upon me,” as though they were so many griffins, or other monsters of the old fables. They come and fix their claws into him—they have taken hold upon him. Did any of you ever feel the grip of a single sin? I hope that you have, for you have never been rightly delivered from it if you have never felt its grasp. I once knew a young man who had not a true sense of sin. He believed himself to be a sinner, but he never had a real conviction of sin. He was a working-man, steady and upright, and he prided himself upon his sobriety and industry. One day, in some little frolic, he upset an oil can and, when his employer came in, and asked, “Who did that?” he said that he did not. No one ever found out who upset that oil can, but he knew that he did it. Knocking over that can was not, in itself, an act of criminality, but he felt mean and despicable because he had told a lie—and that lie fixed itself upon his heart, clawed at it and tore away at it so that he could not get away from its cruel clutches!

He came to the House of Prayer on the Lord’s-Day to try to get rid of this iniquity that had taken hold upon him, but it kept its hold month after month, hissing in his ear, “You have been a liar.” Nobody knew of it but himself, yet that one sin was quite enough to take hold upon him and to fix him with an awful grip. It was in this House of God that he was delivered from that sin through the precious blood of Christ and I said within myself, when I heard the whole story, “Well, I am glad that sin took hold of that young man, for there were many sins beside which he afterwards thought of and acknowledged with tears before his God—but

they had all passed by unnoticed, they had never laid hold on him as that one lie had!

Let me tell you, Friend, if you have a number of sins which have once taken hold on you, you will be something like a stag when the whole pack of hounds has seized him and his neck and his flanks and every bone in him seem to feel the hounds’ teeth gnawing at them. I speak what I know—I have felt these dogs upon me—and I have had to cry to God for deliverance! And perhaps I am speaking to some soul that is in that condition tonight. It is no child’s play when this is the case. Here we have to deal with stern facts and it is only God, by some great act of Grace, who can set free a poor soul that is once beset in this way!

Thus, you see, he realizes the countless number of his sins, he recognizes the almost Omnipresence of his sins and he feels the terrible grip of his sins tearing at his conscience—judging him, condemning him, breathing curses into him! Oh, if you know this experience, you can follow me when I take you a little further along this dark, dreary road!

II. Here is, secondly, A SOUL BEWILDERED—“My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.” Do you hear that, “not able to look up”? That is the only hope that a man has when he is under a sense of sin—his *one* way of escape is by looking up! But the Psalmist says, “I am not able to look up.”

Does it not mean, first, that *he did not dare to look his sins in the face?* He felt so guilty, so self-condemned, that, as the judge, when he pronounces the death sentence, covers his head by putting on the black cap, so this culprit felt that he must hide his own face! He wants to have a handkerchief tied over his eyes, for he is shocked at the sight that meets his gaze. He dares not look up—that is, he cannot face his sin.

It means, also, that *he is unable to excuse himself.* He used to be as big a braggart as anybody. At one time, he could talk as glibly as anyone about there being no God and no Hell. But that kind of speech is all gone out of him now. The Lord can soon knock such folly as that out of a man! Just one prick of the conscience and the boaster is brought to his knees—and he does not try to look up for a single moment to justify or excuse himself. All he can do is to hang his head and murmur, “Guilty, guilty, guilty.” He knows, then, the meaning of Dr. Watts’ lines—

**“Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must confess You just in death.
And, if my Soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well.”**

Now, I may talk to you, thus, and you may not feel the force of what I am saying. But if God deals with you, it will be a different matter! You will then be brought into such a state of bewilderment that you will not be able to face your sin, or excuse yourself, or even dare to *think* of it, the mere thought of it will be too horrible for you!

A man in this state of bewilderment *dares not look up to read God’s promises.* I come to him and I say, “Friend, do you not know that there is a Bible full of promises for such as you are? This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” I put my hand on his shoulder and I say,

“Now, look at that promise.” He cannot look up. We read, in the 107th Psalm, of some who were so ill that when the most dainty food was brought to them, they shook their heads, for they could not touch it—“Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.”

Well, that is the condition of this man. “But,” you say, “my dear Fellow, look at *this* passage, ‘All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ ‘Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy.’” “Ah,” he says, “it is too late for me, it does not apply to me.” Now, this is all a mistake, you know—the Lord is willing to receive you, my dear Hearer, however horrible your offenses may have been! If you are up to your neck in blasphemy and iniquity, Christ can make you clean in a moment! He has such sovereign power that, with a word, He can forgive you. Yes, and with a word, He can change your nature and make a saint out of a sinner, an angel out of a very human devil—such power does Christ possess to save the vilest of the vile! So we say to the poor man, “Dear Friend, look up! Look up at God’s promises.”

Perhaps we try what effect *the testimony of others* will have upon him. We stand in front of him and we say, “Look at us for a moment.” There was a dear Brother who prayed at the Prayer Meeting before the service—no doubt he is here somewhere—“Lord, save the big sinners, for,” he said, “Lord, since you have saved me, I believe that you can save anybody.” Now, that was good pleading, and I can say the same. There are many here who would say to you, “We looked unto Christ and were lightened. We came with all our sin heavy upon us and we did but look to Jesus, and we found peace, rest, new hearts and changed lives! What He has done for us, He can do for you, for He has shown forth in some of us, as he did in Paul, all long-suffering for a pattern to all others who will believe in Him unto life everlasting.”

Still, the man cannot look up. His sins have so bewildered him, his sense of guilt has so muddled his poor thoughts that he dares not look up—and yet he ought to! If I were suffering from a certain disease and a number of persons came to me and said, “We were afflicted exactly as you now are, but we went to Dr. So-and-So, and he cured us almost at once,” I think that I would go to that doctor and I would try the medicine that had healed others! Oh, I wish that some of you would try my Savior! You young people—would God that you would try Him in your youth! You older ones, I pray that you may be led to Jesus, now, though your sin rises like a mountain, for He is able to forgive and to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!

But this poor soul cannot yet look up, so we put our hand upon him, again, and we say, “But, dear Heart, if you will not look to the promises in the Bible and you will not look to us who are specimens of what Divine Grace can do, yet do *look to Jesus on the Cross*. Have you ever heard the story of how He lived and how He died? Do you not know the meaning of those blessed wounds of His? He was the Son of God and He suffered all this for sinful men. He was pure, holy and innocent, yet He died, ‘the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.’ Must there not be great merit in

the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Look up! Look to Him! Look up to Jesus on the Cross.”—

**“There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, sinner—look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”**

But it is no use for us to talk to him—his sins have taken hold upon him so that he cannot look up.

So we try again and we bid him *look up to Jesus on the Throne*. We say, “Do you not know that Jesus has risen from the dead? He has gone up into Heaven and He is at the right hand of God, making intercession for the transgressors. The business of Christ in Heaven is to plead for sinners. Oh, how I wish that you would look up to Him! Do it!” Thus we plead, but our pleading is not sufficient. Spirit of God, break these poor creatures away from their infatuation and help them, now, to just look up to the living Savior who is seated at the right hand of God, pleading for the guilty, for such as they are! Dear Hearers, look to Jesus! Only trust Him! A look will do it. Look, look now! In God’s name, I command you to look! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I do not merely *advise*, but, speaking by His authority, I bid you look and live! May He set His seal to that command, as He did when Ezekiel bade the dry bones live and they did! But yet I know that, apart from the Eternal Spirit, the poor soul will not look up, though looking up is the only way to safety.

III. Follow me for just a few minutes more while I notice, in the third place, that here is A SOUL FAINTING—“My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.”

Why, that is the man who used to come in here as big as anybody, and now he cries, “My heart fails me.” You used to sing above all the rest, did you not? And you despised those poor weeping ones. But now your lament is, “My heart fails me.” When a man’s heart fails him, it is as when the standard-bearer of an army faints—everything gets in disarray.

“My heart fails me.” You have come to a fainting condition and when the heart fails, *death is approaching*. You feel as if you must die, you are so utterly faint. You dare not hope. You have no energy—what can you do? “To will,” you say, “is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.” You are the man who used to think that you could believe whenever you liked and jump into Sovereign Grace whenever you pleased! You do not find it so easy, now, do you?

“My heart fails me.” This is the language of one in whom *fear is working*. Why, there is poor Mercy! Poor Mercy! You, as a young girl, said, “I will *not* come to Jesus yet. I can come to Him whenever I like.” And now you are fainting outside the gate because the big dog barks at you and your heart fails you! Oh, lie not there to die, dear swooning one! Jesus Christ will come to you in all your faintness. Is it not written, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”? “When we were yet without strength.” Now you see what there is in yourself, do you not? Nothing at all! Your very heart fails you and if Sovereign Grace does not interpose, you are lost, you know you are!

“Yes,” you say, “that is quite true, *I am lost.*” I am so glad that you confess this, for your confession *proves* that you are the one whom God has chosen unto eternal life from before the foundation of the world! You are the sort for whom Jesus died when He poured out His heart’s blood. You are already called, by His Grace, to come to Him, for He said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You are the very character whom He describes as being the objects of His love! Come to Him, just as you are, and cast yourselves upon Him. Fainting Heart, do not wait till you are revived, but faint on the bosom of Jesus! Failing Heart, do not wait till you grow strong again, but come and confess your failure, your spiritual bankruptcy at Christ’s feet! Remember, there are none who are declared to be clear of all obligations but those who are bankrupts before the Lord, even as Joseph Hart sings—

**“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”**

“But I have no good feelings,” says one. I am glad of it! Come to Christ for them. “But I cannot repent as I would, or believe as I would.” Then listen to Hart again—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

He needs nothing from you but that you will agree to let Him be everything to you! “Free Grace and dying love”—I delight to ring those charming bells! Oh, that every ear would welcome their blessed music! Poor fainting Heart, hear the gladsome tidings of Free Grace and dying love, and catch at the message and rejoice in Christ tonight! The Lord grant that it may be so!

IV. I finish, as the time has nearly gone, by introducing this man to you once more. We have had a soul beset, a soul bewildered and a soul fainting. But here is A SOUL PLEADING—“My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up...My heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.”

“Oh!” says one, “I would plead with God, but I do not know how to go to Him.” Do you not? Did you ever teach your girl how to come to you when she needed anything? She comes and she says, “Father, I need so-and-so.” You do not send her to school, do you, and pay so much a week to teach her that art? No, she knows it *naturally*. If there is anything to be got out of a father, trust a boy or a girl for knowing how to do it! You smile. Let that smile go a little deeper. Smile again, if you like, that it may go right down deep. It is in this way that *you* should deal with *God*—just as your children, being evil, know how to ask good gifts of their father, so you should know how to ask good gifts of *your Father* who is in Heaven! And the more childlike you can be in your praying, the better.

If your boy were to come in, tomorrow morning, and take out a prayer book and proceed to read the collect for the day in the same kind of tone that you can hear it read in certain churches, and then say in the same

tone, “Father, I know that you are generous and noble-hearted—be pleased to give me the valuable present of five shillings,” you would cry out, “Boy, hold your tongue, I cannot stand such nonsense!” But if he says, respectfully but earnestly, “Father, I shall be very grateful if you will give me five shillings, for there is such and such a thing that I want to buy,” you say at once, “Yes, my boy, certainly. Here is the money.” That is to say, if you have it and consider it wise. I do not think that God is to be approached in a dignified, stupid way, with intoned prayers and what Africans call, “palaver.”

Come to God in the simplest way possible and tell Him all that is in your heart. Pour out your desires before Him, expecting that He will hear you and answer you—and go your way rejoicing that you have such a God to go to! The easiest thing in the world to a child of God should be to talk to his Father. He should not feel as if he had to put his best coat on in order to approach the Lord. Let him stand out in the yard, in his shirtsleeves, and pray! Why not? Wherever you are, if you should wake up in the middle of the night, begin to pray! You would not think of going to see a person in your shirtsleeves, but your boy may come to you like that whenever he pleases.

A person said to me, some time ago, “Would you mind telling me what to say when I pray?” “I answered, Say what you feel. Ask God for what you desire.” “But,” she said, “I am such a poor ignorant woman that I would like you to tell me the words to say.” Then I thought of the passage in Hosea, “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” Thus, the very words were put into the suppliants’ mouths and, in our text, David does, as it were, make a prayer that is suitable for many of you. May the Lord put it into your mouths and hearts!

I will only briefly call attention to the drift of the prayer and, first, it is *a prayer distinctly to God*. This poor bewildered heart does not look to itself, or to a priest, or to a sacrament—it turns to God and to God, alone, and says, “Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me! O Jehovah, make haste to help me.” Your only hope is in your God! Salvation must come from God alone. You know how I pictured this matter some little time ago, about the baby picked up in the street. There is somebody who is going to tell us what that baby needs. He needs some milk and he needs to be washed. And he needs some clothes. He also needs nursing and he needs soothing to sleep. He needs—well, we can go on for a week and hardly tell all that he needs. But I will put in one word what the baby needs, and that is, his *mother*. And you, poor Soul, you need—you need—you need—you need so many, many things that I will not stay to mention them! I will put them into one word—you need your God! Nobody but He who made you can ever new-make you! Therefore, as you need remaking, re-creating, you need your God! Oh, poor Prodigal, I know you need a new pair of boots and a new pair of trousers, and a good dinner and a great many other things—but most of all, you need to go home to your Father! And if you go home to your Father, then you will get all the other things

that you need! Cry unto God, then, you who have never prayed before! May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you cry to your God in Christ Jesus!

And then, do you notice the style of the prayer in our text? “Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me.” It is *an appeal to the good pleasure of God*. There is no arguing of *merit*, there is no plea but that of God’s good pleasure! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy—and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion! Divine Sovereignty is not to be denied! No man has any right to God’s Grace—if it is given to anyone, it is by the free favor of God—as He pleases and to *whom* He pleases! Shall He not do as He wills with His own? But you, as a suppliant, must take this lowly ground—“Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me, for Your mercy’s sake, for Your goodness’ sake! Universal Ruler as You are and able to save whom You will, for the rights of life and death are in the hands of the King of Kings, be pleased, O Lord, to deliver *me!*” That is the way to plead with God.

And then you may, if you like, use that last sentence—“Make haste, O Jehovah, to deliver me!” You may *plead urgency*—you may say, “Lord, if You do not help me, soon, I shall die. I am driven to such distress by my sin that if You do not hear me, soon, it will be too late! Innumerable evils have compassed me about, so that I am not able to look up. I am driven to such dire distress that my case is urgent; O Lord, help me now!” Oh, how I wish that such a prayer as that might go up from many and many a heart in this audience! You are not truly awakened to a sense of your lost condition if you want to be saved tomorrow. If you are really convicted of sin, your prayer will be, “Make haste, O Lord, to deliver me.” I pray that you may be brought to that point, tonight, so that you may not dare to go to bed till you have found your God, or, if you must go to bed, may not be able to sleep till you have found your Savior and put your trust in Him!

Dear Friends, may God save every one of you! Oh, how I would pour out my very soul in pleading with you if I thought that longer talk would lead you to Christ! But words are only air and wind. Eternal Spirit, Master of all hearts, come and deal with men and lead them to Jesus, now! And unto the Triune Jehovah shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 40.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

If I were to read this Psalm all through as referring to Christ and to Christ, only, I would be correct in so doing, but still, there is such a unity between Christ and those who compose His mystical body that what is true of the Head is true of the members. What is true of the Vine is true of the branches. What is true of Christ is true of those who are in Him. Therefore, this Psalm relates to David as well as to “great David’s greater Son,” and it also concerns everyone who is of the royal seed, every true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Psalm begins—

1. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* “I waited.” “Do not beggars wait long at a fellow creature’s door for some pitiful alms, and should not I be content to linger at Mercy’s gate for such great gifts as I am craving? “I waited patiently.” Well may we tarry in patience till Jehovah’s time to help since we know that, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” And if He is full of pity, we can well afford to be patient. “I waited patiently for Jehovah.” Those who have been most mighty in prayer have sometimes had to wait for the answers to their supplications. Do not expect the Lord to hear you today or tomorrow. He may hear you before you speak, according to His promise, “Before they call, I will answer,” but He may, for the trial of your faith, make you wait. Are you able to wait? Then you are certain to receive a great blessing! “I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me,” bowed down out of Heaven, inclined unto me, stooped to me, thought well of me and also of my prayer, “and heard my cry.”

2. *He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* This is a wonderful song, full of rapturous joy. You know how Orientals were accustomed to cast their prisoners into pits—and these pits were often horribly deep, dark and damp—and the mud at the bottom would be such that a man would sink in it. David sings of the Lord, “He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.” What a wonderful bringing up was this and, as God never does anything by halves, He did not let His servant slip back, again, for David added, “and set my feet upon a rock.” “He set my feet.” When God sets a man’s feet, those feet are well set! There is no sliding, no slipping! The Lord set David’s feet upon a rock and, more than that, established his goings—made them firm, so that when he stirred he did not stumble.

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.* Sing, then, Believer! You groaned often enough in the pit! Sing, now that you are on the rock! You were desolate enough in the dungeon. Sound aloud your grateful thanksgivings, now that your goings are established!

3. *Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.* There you have a picture of a sinner’s conversion and its effects. The man sees the Lord’s goodness to the child of God in distress. He fears—that is, he stands in awe of the great God—and then he, also, believes! He trusts in the Lord. One saint makes many! One child of God brought up out of the horrible pit leads to the bringing up of a great many others in the same way.

4. *Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* If you trust in God, you will have no reverence for the proud, nor for those who turn aside from God’s Word and teach falsehood. If you really fear God, you will have no fear of men.

5. *Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more*

than can be numbered. The child of God, reviewing the Lord’s great goodness, feels that he can never count the mercies of God to Him and, as to telling them out, that can never be! It will be, perhaps, a part of our eternal employment to tell angels, principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the story of the loving kindness of the Lord which we have experienced here below. If we had no troubles, we would have nothing to tell, but now that we are led in a strange way, and into very difficult places, we can write another page in our diary which will be worth reading in those days when fictions shall all have been consumed in the fire, but the great facts in the lives of the Lord’s people shall make God to be admired in His saints forever and ever!

6-8. *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Your will, O my God: yes, Your Law is within my heart.* Spoke I not truly when I said that the Christ of God is here? To whom is this passage one hundredth part so applicable as to the Lord Jesus, Himself? Does not Paul dwell upon this passage as teaching the putting aside of the old Covenant Law and the bringing in of something better, even the *obedience of Christ*, our Savior? However, this evening, I wish to read the Scripture in reference to the saints—the Lord’s own people. I trust that many of us, seeing that God does not delight in ritualistic performances, or in the externals of religion as much as He does in the obedience of the heart, can come to Him and declare with David, “I delight to do Your will, O my God.” Beloved Friends, you are not what you ought to be! You are not what you need to be. You are not what you shall be, but, tell me, are you ever happier than when you are consciously doing the will of God? Do you not find misery in sin and delight in holiness? If you can say that it is so with you, then you are bound for the Kingdom—you are on the way to complete victory over sin! Be of good cheer, He who has worked in you this same thing, to delight to do the will of God, will grant you Grace to do it! He will shortly bruise Satan under your feet and your inbred corruptions shall yet be uprooted by the Spirit of His Grace.

9. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, You know.* This is what Jesus can say. He was the Prince of open-air preachers—the Great Itinerant, the President of the College of all preachers of the Gospel—and I trust that many of us here can also say that, according to our ability and opportunity, we have tried to tell of Christ to those round about us.

10. *I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* If any of you have done so. If there has been a sinful reticence about the things of God. If, called to preach, you have not preached the full Gospel of God’s Grace, the Lord forgive you and bring you out into a clear manifestation of what He has written within your hearts! We cannot tell what we do not know and we ought not to try to do so—but what was engraved in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are bound to tell to others. This gas was lighted

that it might shine and you received the Divine Fire that you might shine to the Glory of God. It may be that, in some dark hour, it shall afford you at least a little comfort to be able to say, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation.” You may be able to use it as an argument in prayer, as the Psalmist does—“I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation, therefore,”—

11. *Withhold not You Your tender mercies from me, O LORD: let Your loving kindness and Your truth continually preserve me.* Depend upon it, God will take care of us if we take care of His Truth. If we, from cowardly reasons, keep back any part of the Gospel, God may leave us to defend ourselves. But if we conceal nothing that He has revealed to us. If we are faithful to the Truth committed to our charge—that Truth will, itself, preserve us—and we shall know more and more of the loving kindness of the Lord. But what a sad verse is the next one if it describes the experience of any of you who have known the Lord!

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* If that is the condition of any whom I am addressing, be comforted by the remembrance that another has been along that dark road where you are now found! Follow his example in praying to the Lord to deliver You—

13. *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.* Thus did David cry unto the Lord “out of the depths.” Imitate his example if you are in similar circumstances. Say with good John Ryland—

**“Out of the depths of doubt and fear,
Depths of despair and grief,
I cry; my voice, O Jesus, hear,
And come to my relief!”**

14-16. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You.* Here is comfort for all poor trembling seekers—they are only seekers, but let us thank God that they are seekers, and let us say with the Psalmist, “Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You.” All true Christians, those who have found Christ, are still seekers, for, after finding Christ, they inflame their souls to seek Him more and more! So that our prayer, also, is, “Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You”

16, 17. *Let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me: You are my Help and my Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.* The Lord bless to us the reading of this precious portion of His Word, for His name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—733, 587, 607.

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THE HAPPY BEGGAR

NO. 3040

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“But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me.”
Psalm 40:17.

THERE is no crime and there is no credit in being poor. Everything depends upon the occasion of the poverty. Some men are poor and are greatly to be pitied, for their poverty has come upon them without any fault of their own. God has been pleased to lay this burden upon them and, therefore, they may expect to experience Divine help and ought to be tenderly considered by their Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Occasionally poverty has been the result of integrity or religion—and here the poor man is to be admired and honored. At the same time, it will be observed by all who watch with an impartial eye that very much of the poverty about us is the direct result of idleness, intemperance, improvidence and sin. There would probably not be one-tenth of the poverty there now is upon the face of the earth if the drinking shops were less frequented, if debauchery were less common, if idleness were banished and extravagance abandoned. Lovers of pleasure, (alas, that such a word should be so degraded), are great impoverishers of themselves. It is clear that there is not, of necessity, either vice or virtue in being poor and a man's poverty cannot be judged of by itself—its causes and circumstances must be taken into consideration.

The poverty, however, to which the text relates is a poverty which I desire to cultivate in my own heart! And it is one upon which our Divine Lord has pronounced a blessing. When He sat down upon the mountain and poured forth His famous series of beatitudes, He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” The poor in pocket may be blessed, or may not be blessed, as the case may be, but the *poor in spirit* are always blessed and we have Christ's authority for so saying! Theirs is a poverty which is better than wealth! In fact, it is a poverty which indicates the possession of the truest of all riches.

It was mainly in this sense that David said, “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me.” Certainly, in any other sense, there are vast multitudes who are “poor and needy,” but who neither think upon God, nor rejoice that God thinks upon them. Those who are *spiritually* “poor and needy”—the sacred beggars at Mercy's gate, the elect mendicants of Heaven—these are the people who may say, with humble confidence, as David did, “Yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

Two things are noteworthy in the text. First, here, is a *frank acknowledgment*—"I am poor and needy." But, secondly, here is a *comfortable confidence*—"yet the Lord thinks upon me."

I. First, here is A FRANK ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Some men do not object to confess that they are poor in worldly goods. In fact, they are rather fond of pleading poverty when there is a collection coming, or a subscription list in dangerous proximity. Men have even gloried in history in the name of, "The Beggars." And, "silver and gold have I none," has been exalted into a boast! But *spiritually*, it is little less than a miracle to bring men to feel, first, and then to confess their poverty, for naked, and poor, and miserable as we are by nature, we are all apt enough to say, "I am rich and increased with goods." We cannot dig and to beg we are ashamed. If we did not inherit a penny of virtue from father Adam, we certainly inherited plenty of pride! Poor and proud we all are. We will not, if we can help it, take our seat in the lowest room, though that is our proper place. Grace alone can bring us to see ourselves in the glass of truth. To have nothing is natural to us, but to *confess* that we have nothing is more than we will come to until the Holy Spirit has worked self-abasement in us. The emptiers must come up upon us for, though naturally as empty as Hagar's bottle, yet we boast ourselves to be as full as a fountain! The Spirit of God must take from us our goodly Babylonian garment, or we shall never consent to be dressed in the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints. What Paul flung away as dross and dung, we poor rag-collectors prize and hoard up as long as ever we can!

"I am poor and needy," is a confession which only He who is the Truth of God can teach us to offer. If you are saying it, my Brother, you need not be afraid that you are under a desponding delusion. But, true as it is, and plain to every Grace-taught child of God, yet only Grace will make a man confess the obnoxious fact. It is not in public that we can or should confess our soul-poverty as we do in the chamber when we bow our knees secretly before God. But many of us, in secret, have been compelled, with many tears and sighs, to feel as well as to say, "I am poor and needy." We have searched through and through, looked from the top to the bottom of our humanity and we could not find a single piece of good money in the house, so greatly reduced were we. We had not a shekel of merit, nor a penny of hope in ourselves! And we were constrained to fall flat on our face before God and confess our inability to meet His claims. And we found no comfort till, by faith, we learned to present our Lord Jesus as the Surety for His servants for good. We could not pay even the poorest composition and, therefore, cast ourselves upon the forbearance of God.

The Psalmist is doubly humble, for first he says *he is poor*, and then adds that *he is needy*—and there is a difference between these two things.

He acknowledges that *he is poor*, and you and I, if taught of God, will say the same. We may well be poor, *for we came of a poor father*. Our father Adam had at first a great estate, but he soon lost it. He violated

the trust on which he held his property and he was cast out of the inheritance and turned adrift into the world to earn his bread as a day-laborer by tilling the ground from which he was taken. His eldest son was a vagabond. The first-born of our race was a convict on parole. If any suppose that we have inherited some good thing by natural descent, they go very contrary to what David tells us when he declares, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our first parents were utter bankrupts. They left us nothing but a heritage of old debts and a propensity to accumulate yet more personal obligations. Well may we be poor who come into this world heirs of wrath with a decayed estate and tainted blood!

Moreover, *since the time when we came into the world, we have followed a very miserable trade.* I recollect when I was a spinner and weaver of the poorest sort. I dreamed that I would be able, by my own spinning, to make a garment to cover myself with. This was the trade of father Adam and mother Eve when they first lost their innocence—they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. It is a very laborious business and has worn out the lives of many with bitter bondage. But its worst feature is that the Lord has declared concerning all who followed this self-righteous craft, "their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." Even those who have best attired themselves and have, for awhile gloried in their fair apparel, have had to feel the Truth of the Lord's words by Isaiah, "I will take away the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles...and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils... and instead of a girdle there shall be a rent; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth." Vain is it to spend our labor on that which profits not, yet to this business are we early put apprentice and we work at it with mighty pains!

We are miserably poor, *for we have become bankrupt even in our wretched trade.* Some of us had, once, a comfortable competence laid by in the Bank of Self-Righteousness, and we meant to draw it out when we came to die—and thought we should even have a little spending money for our old age out of the interest which was paid us in the coin of Self-Conceit. But the Bank failed long ago and now we have not so much as a farthing of our own merits left us, no, nor a chance of ever having any! And, what is worse, we are deeply in debt and we have "nothing to pay." Instead of having anything like a balance on our account, we are insolvent debtors to the Justice of God, without a single farthing of assets! And unless we are freely forgiven, we must be cast into prison and lie there forever. Job described us well when he said, "for want and famine they are solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste. They have no covering in the cold...and embrace the rock for want of a shelter."

See, then, what poverty-stricken creatures we are—of a poor stock, following a starving trade and made bankrupts even in that!

What is still worse, *poor human nature has no power left to retrieve itself.* As long as a man has a stout pair of arms, he is not without a hope

of rising from the dunghill. We once thought that we were equal to any task, but now Paul's description suits us well—"without strength." Our Lord's words, too, are deeply true, "Without Me you can do nothing." Unable so much as to *think* a good thought, or to lift our hearts heavenward of ourselves—this is poverty, indeed! We are wrecked and the whole vessel has gone to pieces. We have destroyed ourselves. Ah, my fellow man, may God make you feel this! Many know nothing about it and would be very angry if we were to say that this is their condition—and yet this is the condition of every man born into the world until the Spirit of God brings him into communion with Christ and endows him with the riches of the Covenant of Grace!

"I am poor," this is my confession! Is it yours? Is it a confession extorted from you by a clear perception that it is really so? I will recommend you, if it is so, to take to a trade which is the best trade in the world to live by—not for the body, but for the soul—and that is the profession of a beggar, certainly a suitable one for you and me! I took to it long ago and began to beg for mercy from God. I have been constrained to continue begging every day of the same kind Benefactor and I hope to die begging! Many of the saints have grown rich upon this holy mendicancy—they have indeed spoken of being daily loaded with benefits! The noblest of the peers of Heaven were here below daily pensioners upon God's love—they were fed, and clothed, and housed by the charity of the Lord—and they delighted to have it so. How clear is it from all this that none of us can have anything of which to glory! Boasting is excluded, for, let the beggar get what he may, he is but a beggar still—and the child of God, notwithstanding the bounty of his Heavenly Father, is still in himself a penniless vagrant!

The Psalmist also said, "I am *needy*." There are poor people who are not needy. Diogenes was very poor, but he was not needy. He had made up his mind that he would not need anything, so he lived in a tub. He had but one drinking vessel and when he saw a boy drinking out of his hand, he broke his vessel, for he said he would not possess anything superfluous. He was poor enough, but he was not needy, for when Alexander said, "What can I do for you?" he answered, "Stand out of my sunshine." So it is clear that a man may be very poor and yet he may not be burdened with need. But David was conscious of extreme need—and in this many of us can join him.

Brothers and Sisters, we confess that we need ten thousand things, in fact, *we need everything*. By nature, the sinner needs healing, for he is sick unto death. He needs washing, for he is foul with sin. He needs clothing, for he is naked before God. He needs preserving after he is saved, he needs the Bread of Heaven, he needs the water out of the Rock. He is all needs and nothing but needs. Not one thing that his soul needs can he, of himself, supply. He needs to be kept from even the most common sins. He needs to be instructed as to even the first elements of the faith. He needs to be taught to walk in the ways of God's most plain commandments. Our needs are so great that they comprise the whole

range of Covenant supplies and all the fullness treasured up in Christ Jesus.

We are needy *in every condition*. We are soldiers and we need that Grace should find us both shield and sword. We are pilgrims and we need that love should give us both a staff and a Guide. We are sailing over the sea of life and we need that the wind of the Spirit shall fill our sails and that Christ shall be our Pilot. There is no figure under which the Christian life can be represented in which our need is not a very conspicuous part of the image! In all aspects we are poor and needy.

We are needy *in every exercise*. If we are called to preach, we have to cry, "Lord, open You my lips." If we pray, we are needy at the Mercy Seat, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. If we go out into the world to wrestle with temptation, we need supernatural help lest we fall before the enemy! If we are alone in meditation, we need the Holy Spirit to quicken our devotion. We are needy in suffering and laboring, in watching and in fighting. Every spiritual engagement does but discover another phase of our need!

And, Brothers and Sisters, we are needy *at all times*. We never wake up in the morning but we need strength for the day—and we never go to bed at night without needing Grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life. When we begin with Christ, in our young days, we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth. In middle age our needs are still greater, lest the cares of this world should eat as does a canker. And in old age we are still needy and need Preserving Grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die, we need our last bed to be made for us by Mercy and our last hour to be cheered by Grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity, we would have no place to dwell! We are as full of needs as the sea is full of water! We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door and we must go out a-begging again! Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment and dog our heels in every place. We must take the two adjectives and keep them close together in our confession—"I am poor and needy."

II. The second part of the subject is much more cheering. It is A COMFORTABLE CONFIDENCE—"yet the Lord thinks upon me."

A poor man is always pleased to remember that he has a rich relative, especially if that rich relative is very thoughtful towards him, finds out his distress and cheerfully and abundantly relieves his needs!

Observe that *the Christian does not find comfort in himself*. "I am poor and needy." That is the top and bottom of my case. I have searched myself through and through and have found in my flesh no good thing. Notwithstanding the Grace which the Believer possesses and the hope which he cherishes, he still sees a sentence of death written upon the creature and he cries, "I am poor and needy." His joy is found in Another! He looks away from self to the consolations which the eternal purpose has prepared for him.

Note well *who it is that gives the comfort*—“*The Lord thinks upon me.*” By the term, “the Lord,” we are accustomed to understand the glorious Trinity. “The Lord thinks upon me,” *i.e.*, Jehovah, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. O beloved Believer in Christ, if you have rested in Jesus, then *the Father* thinks upon you! Your person was in His thoughts—

***“Long before the sun’s refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove.”***

He regarded you with thoughts of boundless love before He had fashioned the world, or wrapped it up in swaddling bands of ocean and of clouds. Eternal thoughts of love went forth of old towards all the chosen—and these have never changed. Not for a single instant has the Father ever ceased to love His people! As our Lord said to His disciples, “The Father Himself loves you.” Never has He grown cold in His affections towards you, O poor and needy one! He has seen you in His Son. He has loved you in the Beloved. He has seen you—

***“Not as you stood in Adam’s fall,
When sin and ruin covered all,
But as you’ll stand another day,
Brighter than sun’s meridian ray.”***

He saw you in the glass of His eternal purpose, saw you as united to His dear Son and, therefore, looked upon you with eyes of complacency. He thought upon you and He still thinks upon you. When the Father thinks of His children, He thinks of you. When the great Judge of All thinks of the justified ones, He thinks of you. O Christian, can you grasp the thought? The Eternal Father thinks of *you!* You are so inconsiderable that if the mind of God were not Infinite, it would not be possible that He should remember your existence! Yet *He thinks upon you!* How precious ought His thoughts be to you! The sum of them is great, let your gratitude for them be great, too!

Forget not that *the great Son of God*, to whom you owe your hope, also thinks of you. It was for you that He entered into suretyship engagements before the earth was. It was for you, O heir of Heaven, that He took upon Himself a mortal body and was born of the virgin! It was for you that He lived those 30 years of immaculate purity that He might weave for you a robe of spotless righteousness! For you poured down His bloody sweat in the garden! He thought of you, He prayed for you in Gethsemane. For you were the flagellations in Pilate’s Hall, the mockeries before Herod and the blasphemous accusations at the judgment seat of Caiaphas! For you the nails, the spear, the vinegar and the, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*” Jesus thought of you and died for you with as direct an aim for your salvation as though there had not been another soul to be redeemed by His blood! And now, though He reigns exalted high, and you are “poor and needy,” yet He still thinks upon you! The Glory of His present condition does not distract His thoughts from His Beloved. He is lovingly thoughtful of you. When He stands up to intercede, your name glitters on His priestly breastplate with the names of the rest of the chosen. He thinks of you when He prepares mansions for those whom His Father has blessed. He looks forward to the time when He shall

gather together in one all things in Heaven and in earth that are in Him—and He counts you among them. Christian, will not this Truth of God comfort you—that the Son of God is constantly thinking upon you?

We must not forgot the love of *the Spirit*, to whom we are so wondrously indebted. He cannot do otherwise than think upon us, for He dwells in us and shall be with us. As He dwells in us, He cannot be unmindful of us. It is His office to be the Comforter, to help our infirmities, to make intercession for us according to the will of God. So let us take the three thoughts and bind them together. “I am poor and needy, but I have a part in the thoughts of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” What fuller cause for comfort could we conceive?

We have answered the question “*who?*” Let us now turn to “*what?*” “The Lord *thinks upon me.*” He does not say, “The Lord will uphold me, provide for me, defend me.” The declaration that He “thinks upon me” is quite enough. “Your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things,” says our Lord, as if it was quite clear that for our Heavenly Father to know, is for Him to act. We poor short-sighted and short-armed creatures often know the needs of others and would help if we could, but we are quite unable—it is never so with God—His thoughts always ripen into deeds. Perhaps, O tried Believer, you have been thinking a great deal about yourself of late—about your many trials—so that you lie awake nights, mourning over your heavy cares! “Alas,” you think, “I have no one to advise me and sympathize with me.” Let this text come to you as a whisper and you paraphrase it into a soliloquy, “I am poor and needy, this is true, and I cannot plan a method for supplying my needs, but a mightier mind than mine is thinking of me—the Infinite Jehovah thinks of me! He sees my circumstances, He knows the bitterness of my heart, He knows me altogether and His consideration of me is wise, tender and gracious. His thoughts are wisdom itself! When *I* think, it is a poor, little, weak, empty head that is thinking! But when *God* thinks, the gigantic mind which framed the universe is thinking of me!”

Have you ever attained to the idea of what the thoughts of God must be? That pure Spirit who cannot make mistakes, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind, thinks upon us! He does not act without deliberation, does not come to our help in inconsiderate haste, does not do as we do with a poor man when we throw him a penny to be rid of him, but He thoughtfully deals with us. “Blessed is he that considers the poor,” says the Psalmist. Those who take up the case of the poor, weigh it and remember it, are blessed! That is what the Lord does for us—“yet the Lord thinks upon me.” He considers my case, judges when, and how, and after what sort it will be most fitting to grant me relief. “The Lord thinks upon me.” Beloved, the shadow of this thought seems to me like the wells of Elim, full of refreshment, with the seventy palm trees yielding their ripe fruit! You may sit down here and drink to your full—and then go on your way rejoicing! However poor and needy you may be, the Lord thinks at the present moment upon you.

We have spoken upon who and what—now we will answer the inquiry, *How do we know that the Lord thinks upon us?* “Oh,” say the ungodly,

“how do you know?” They are very apt to put posing questions to us. We talk of what we know experimentally and again they cry, “How do you know?” I will tell you how we know that God thinks upon us. We knew it, first of all, when we had a view of the Redeemer by faith, when we saw the Lord Jesus Christ hanging upon a tree for us, and made a curse for us. We saw that He so exactly suited and fitted our case that we were clear that the Lord must have thought and well considered it. If a man were to send you a sum of money tomorrow, exactly the amount you owe, you would be sure that someone had been thinking of you. And when we see the Savior, we are compelled to cry out, “O Lord, You have given me the very Savior I needed! This is the hope which my despairing soul required and this the anchorage which my tempest-tossed boat was seeking!” The Lord must have thought upon us, or He would not have provided so suitable a salvation for us.

We learn anew that the Lord thinks upon us when we go up to the House of God. I have heard many of you say, “We listen to the preacher and he seems to know what we have been saying on the road. The Word comes so home to our case that surely God has been hearing our very thoughts and putting into the mind of the preacher a word in season for us.” Does not this show how the preacher’s Master has been thinking of you? Then sit down and open the Bible, and you will frequently feel the words to be as much adapted to your case as if the Lord had written them for you alone! If, instead of the Bible having been penned many hundreds of years ago, it were actually written piecemeal to suit the circumstances of the Lord’s people as they occur, it could not have been written more to the point! Our eyes have filled with tears when we have read such words as these, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”—“Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord.”—“He shall deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you.”—“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” And such like which we could quote by the hundreds! We feel that the Lord must have thought about us, or He would not have sent us such promises.

Best of all, when we sit quietly at the feet of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit of God, in solemn silence of the mind, then we know that the Lord thinks upon us, for thoughts come bubbling up, one after another, delightful thoughts, such as only the Holy Spirit could inspire. Then the things of Christ are sweetly taken by the Spirit and laid home to our hearts. We become calm and still, though before we were distracted. A sweet savor fills our heart like ointment poured forth—it diffuses its fragrance through every secret corner of our spirit. Sometimes our soul has seemed as though it were a peal of bells and every power and passion has been set a-ringing with holy joy because the Lord was there! Our whole nature has been as a harp well-tuned, and the Spirit has laid His fingers among the strings and filled our entire manhood with music. When we have been the subjects of these marvelous influences and gracious operations, if any had said to us that the Lord did not think of us, we would have told them that they lied, even to their face, for the

Lord had not only thought of us, but spoken to us and enabled us, by His Grace, to receive His thoughts and to speak again to Him!

The Lord not think of us? Why, we have proof upon proof that He does! He has very remarkably thought upon us in Providence. Should some of us relate the memorable interpositions of Providence on our behalf, they would not be believed—but they are facts for all that. William Huntington wrote a book called, “The Bank of Faith,” which contains in it a great many very strange things, no doubt. But I believe hundreds and thousands of God’s tried people could write “Banks of Faith” too, if it came to that, for God has often appeared for His saints in such a way that if the mercy sent had been stamped with the seal of God, visible to their eyes, they could not have been more sure of its coming from Him than they were when they received it! Yes, answered prayers, applied promises, sweet communing and blessed deliverances in Providence all go to make us feel safe in saying, “yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

We will close our meditation upon this text when we have remarked that *those who are not poor and needy may well envy in their hearts those who are*. You who have abounding riches, who feel yourselves to be wealthy in goodness. You who feel as if you could afford to look down upon most people in the world. You who are so respectable, decorous and deserving, I beseech you to note well that the text does not say a word about you! You are not poor, and you are not needy, and you do not think upon the Lord—and the Lord does not think upon you. Why should He? “The whole have no need of a physician.” Christ did not come to call you. He said He came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Shall I tell you that it is your worst calamity that you have such an elevated idea of your own goodness? Whereas you say, “We see,” you are blindest of all! And whereas you boast that you are righteous, there is in that self-righteousness of yours the very worst form of sin, for there is no sin that can be greater than that of setting up your own works in competition with the righteousness of Christ! I bear you witness that you have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for you, being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, go about to establish your own righteousness—and your efforts will end in terrible disappointment!

I pray you to cast away all reliance upon your own works. Tear up, once and for all, all that you have been spinning for these many years—your tears, your prayers, your church attendance, your chapel attendance, your confirmation, your baptism, your sacraments—have done with the whole rotten mass as a ground of confidence! It is all quicksand which will swallow you up if you rest upon it. The only rock upon which you must build, whoever you may be, is the rock of the finished work of Jesus! Come, now, and rest upon God’s appointed Savior, the Son of God, even though you may not have felt your own poverty and need. If you mourn that you do not mourn as you should, you are one of the poor and needy, and are bidden to turn your eyes to the Lamb of God and live!

I would to God that all of us were poor and needy in ourselves and that we were rich in faith in Christ Jesus! Oh, that we had done both

with sin and with self-righteousness, that we had laid both those traitors with their heads on the block for execution! Come, you penniless sinners, come and receive the bounty of Heaven! Come, you who mourn your need of penitence, come and receive repentance and every other heavenly gift from Him who is the sinner's Friend, exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins! But you must come empty-handed and sue, as the lawyers say, *in forma pauperis*, for in no other form will the Lord give ear to you! "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."—

***"Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small—
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all!"***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 40.**

If our hearts are in trouble, as his was who wrote this Psalm, may we be able to act as wisely and as well as he did, and so obtain a like deliverance!

Verses 1, 2. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* God does nothing by halves. If He brings people up out of their sorrow, or their sin, He takes care that their feet shall not slip back again into the mire. David says, "He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." What a blessing that last little sentence contains! God does not set our feet upon a rock, that we may afterwards slip off and finally fall, but He establishes our goings, He makes our footing firm, so that we do not ever perish!

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth.* Such a song as I never sang before, for I had never been in such trouble before and, therefore, had never experienced such a deliverance as the Lord has now granted to me. "He has put a new song in my mouth." With that sweet songstress, Ann Letitia Waring, I can say—

***"My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing.
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing.
And 'a new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set—
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet."***

3, 4. *Even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust, and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* You know that this

Book of Psalms has many benedictions in it. It begins with a blessing upon “the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.” But here it has a blessing for the Believer—“Blessed is that man that makes Jehovah his trust.” As for the proud and the false, may God preserve us from ever paying any regard to them for, if not, they will lead us into some such mischief as that into which they have themselves fallen.

5. *Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done.* “Your works in creation, in Providence and in Redemption.”

5. *And Your thoughts which are to us-ward.* God is always thinking of His people, and His thoughts are wise, and kind, and practical, for when He thinks of doing anything for us, He speedily performs it.

5. *They cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* Think of that! You cannot count God’s thoughts of you. If He were only to think of us once, in tender mercy, that one thought would run on throughout eternity, for He does not retract either a thought that He thinks or a word that He utters! Instead thereof, one gracious thought is followed by another, swiftly as the beams of light flash from the sun, so that it is impossible for us to number them. Thus thinking and writing concerning God’s work, the Psalmist is carried away, as it were, into a vision in which he sees Christ and speaks in the name of Christ.

6. *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire.* The blood of all the bullocks, and rams, and lambs offered in sacrifice had possessed no real efficacy in putting away sin. They had no virtue except as types, symbols and prophecies of the one great Sacrifice that was to come!

6. *My ears have You opened.* Probably alluding to the ceremony of boring to the doorpost the ears of those who determined to remain as slaves to their masters when they might have gone free. So Christ was ready to be the Servant of His Father, and the Savior of sinners. He voluntarily undertook to bear all that this would involve.

6-8. *Burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.* He was the Perfect One, coming to do God’s will for us and offering Himself as the truest Sacrifice that could ever be presented to God. So we may rightly picture our great Lord and Master uttering these words when He came to die.

9, 10. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips. O LORD, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* With what indefatigable earnestness, with what indomitable courage, with what sacred faithfulness, with what holy tears did Christ preach the Truth of God while He was upon earth! He was always the Prince of Preachers, so, when He was dying, He could plead this fact with His Father.

11, 12. *Withhold not You Your tender mercies from Me, O LORD: let Your loving kindness and Your truth continually preserve Me. For*

innumerable evils have compassed Me about. Was it not so with Christ? The evils of sinners seemed to compass Him about and, like wild beasts, to hunt Him to the death! And the saints of God, in their measure, may often use similar language to that which the Psalmist here prophetically used concerning Christ.

12. *My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* We could not apply this language to the Savior except as we spoke of the sins of ourselves and others which were laid upon Him, but we may apply this language, and ought to apply it to ourselves when we are sorely beset by sin. Have not even you, who are the dear children of God, sometimes felt as if you could not look up and dared not look up? You were so desponding, so downcast that there seemed no help for you, even in God. Your sins, your cruel sins, your fierce tormentors were and, therefore, your heart failed you.

13-15. *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.* So will it surely be, for the enemies of God's people are God's enemies—and Satan and all his host who seek to destroy the souls of the Lord's chosen shall be driven backward and covered with eternal shame!

16. *Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You: let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.* Are you content to bear your present trial, dear Friend, so that God may be magnified? Are you willing to be reduced by infirmities and weaknesses to a condition of absolute nothingness, so long as God is exalted? If you are, then you will be saying continually, "Let God be magnified in my weakness, let His majestic love be seen amid all my sorrows."

17. *But I am poor and needy.* A double expression for a poverty that is doubly felt—perhaps poor in temporals—certainly poor in spirituals! Poor and full of needs, yet with nothing to supply those needs. "I am poor and needy."

17. *Yet.* That is a blessed, "yet."

17. *The Lord thinks upon me.* That is enough for me! If He thinks of me, His thoughts are so kind, generous, wise and practical that He will help me!

17. *You are my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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SUNLIGHT FOR CLOUDY DAYS

NO. 3345

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT MENTONE.**

***“But I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.”
Psalm 40:17.***

IT is not everybody who would like to apply to himself the first part of the text. Perhaps we, most of us, accept it because it happens to be Scriptural language—and yet we might not spontaneously say of ourselves, “I am poor and needy.” Some would even wish us to believe the very opposite, for if I read their hearts aright, they say, “I am not poor, nor needy.” They have enough of this world’s goods and as for spiritual matters, they are strong and self-reliant. All this comes of vainglory and, in the long run will end in vanity and vexation of spirit—for if a man can do without God, it is certain that God can do without him—and the day will come when God *will* do without him, according to His Word, “I will ease Me of My adversaries.” He who has tried throughout life to do without God will inherit remorse forever and ever. It is well to begin, continue and end in this life with God’s favor, that we may enjoy it world without end! I therefore trust that none among you would wish to say, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” for that would be tantamount to a proud resolve to do without God—and it will end in your eternal ruin!

There are some who cry, “I am poor and needy, woe is me that I should be so! But the Lord does not think of me. I have looked up to Heaven, but no eye of pity looks down upon me in the depth of my misery.” Many a wretched mind, many a bereaved spirit, many a downcast heart has cried, “The Lord has forgotten me! He counts the number of the stars and calls them by their names, but as for me, I am too little, too insignificant, too obscure—I cannot believe that God thinks upon me.” Dear Friend, I hope you will be converted from this unbelief! I pray that you may not only be able to join in one half of my text by saying, “I am poor and needy,” but that you may humbly unite in the second declaration, “Yet the Lord thinks upon me.” Despite your insignificance and unworthiness, you may yet learn that the Lord has thoughts of love towards you and is causing all things to work together for your external, internal and eternal good!

Do not let it surprise you that one of old should say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me,” for God has often thought of poor and needy persons. Look at Joseph when he was in prison and the iron entered into his soul—his reputation was gone, he was reproached and

even punished unjustly—yet we read that the Lord was with Joseph and, in due time He brought him out and set him on the throne of Egypt! Ruth, the Moabitess, came penniless to Israel's land and she went to glean among the sheaves as a poor and needy peasant woman. But the Lord was thinking upon her and so provided for her that she rose to an honorable estate and her name is written among the progenitors of our Lord Jesus! To give you a more modern instance—the Apostles were poor fishermen with their little boats and well-worn nets, upon the Lake of Galilee—yet the Lord looked upon them—unlearned and ignorant men as they were, and made them to be the pioneers of His Kingdom! Never mind how poor and needy you are, you may yet be heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

“Alas,” you say, “my trouble is not a poverty of gold and silver, but I am poor as to anything like goodness in the sight of God. I feel so guilty and so far from being what I ought to be.” Yet the Lord has oftentimes thought of such people as you! Look at the blessed Master sitting on the well at Sychar, talking with that wanton woman who had had five husbands and he whom she then had was not her husband—she was a woman whom none would honor—but the blessed Savior thought upon her! Remember, too, the thief dying upon the cross next to the Redeemer—with all his sins red upon him, for he had been a robber and probably a murderer, too—his prayer, “Lord, remember me,” touched the heart of Jesus and, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise” was the gracious response! The Lord thought on him and yet there was never one more poor and needy than he! There, too, was Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, breathing out threats and slaughter against the Church of God! But the Merciful One in Heaven, who saw his sin, thought on him with love and said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Poverty of all merit and need of all Grace do not prevent the Lord from thinking upon men! Is not this fact as clear as the sun in the heavens? However spiritually poor you may be, you may yet partake of the riches of His Grace and so become rich in faith—indeed, none but consciously needy ones ever obtain the privilege of saying, “Yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

I was troubled, when I was asking the Lord, with the notion that I was so utterly insignificant that the Lord would never notice *me*. There is no reason for such fear, since the Lord has thought upon very obscure people. Think of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter. What was her name? Do you know what sort of a girl she was? Can you tell her after-history? She is quite unknown to fame, yet the Lord thought upon her and healed her. That little daughter of Jairus, a child of 12 years of age, what could she do? Did she become a distinguished woman? What life-work did she perform? She makes no figure in history, yet the Lord thought upon her and even restored her from the dead! The widow's son, who was being carried out of the city of Nain, what did he achieve? What post of honor did he occupy? What lofty path did he pursue? We know nothing of him except that the Lord thought upon him! The most of the persons whom the Lord Jesus thought upon in the days of His flesh were

unknown to fame and, for my part, I judge that the happiest persons are those who pass through life unknown of men, but known of God! During the French Revolution, a man of great influence escaped the guillotine and when asked how it was, he replied, "I made myself of no reputation and kept silent." Those who are content to follow the cool sequestered vale of life are often happier than those who climb the high places of the earth. Do not, therefore, think that your being in the background is any hindrance to the Lord's thinking upon you! He cares nothing about the blare of trumpets, or the blaze of fame—the Lord looks upon the meek and lowly and finds out the men that are of a broken heart and of a contrite spirit, and that tremble at His Word—and with these He deigns to dwell. May we be found among them!

At this time my desire is to do four things upon each of which I would speak briefly. By the words of the text I desire, first, *to help your faith* to remember that if you are poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon you. Then I long *to enlarge your hope*. Thirdly, *to inflame your love* and fourthly, *to direct your life*. May God the Holy Spirit perform all these things for us! First, let me—

I. HELP YOUR FAITH. You say to yourself, "I cannot understand why God should think of me." Why not? "Because I am so little." Let me ask you if there is anything in the world which is not little to God? You say, "There is the world, itself," and I answer that the earth which we think so large, is no more to God than a single grain of dust! The solar system and all the other systems that make up the Creation of God are as nothing to the Infinite Jehovah! So great is the universe that the most elevated conception of the most enlarged mind has never compassed more than a fragment of it—yet God is infinitely beyond the inconceivable whole of created existence! A man must always be really greater than his own works and certainly God must be infinitely greater than all that He has ever made. Now, if you think it difficult that God should think upon the little, what else should God think upon? You reply that you expect Him to think of the great ones of the earth. Alas, the most of them think very little of Him—the Lord has had the least worthy treatment from those who are ranked as rich and honorable. When we reach Heaven, we shall find few kings and princes, few of the learned and lauded—"God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith"—so says the Inspired Apostle.

Again, if it should seem difficult to you for God to think upon the poor and needy, I invite you to answer the question, "Who need God's thoughts most?" On the field of battle, after the fight, if a surgeon should be there to attend to the wounded, where will he go first? Of course he will go to those whose gaping wounds have almost opened the gates of death for them! And the slightly wounded he will leave till he has more time. The Lord will not look upon us according to what we deserve, for if He did, He would destroy us all! He will look upon us in proportion to our needs. Our urgent needs move His mercy and He will go first to those who require Him most. Do you need His Grace more than anyone else?

Then He will hasten at once to you! If I see a physician's carriage hurrying down the street, I feel morally certain that he is not driving to my door, for I am not dangerously ill. But if I know of one who has fallen in a fit, or has been badly injured by an accident, I conclude that he is going to him. When the Angel of Mercy is made to fly very swiftly, you can be sure that he is speeding to one who is in urgent need of Divine Grace.

Remember, too, that *God has always dealt with men from that point of view*. When God made His *election* of men before the earth was, He chose them as fallen and undeserving, that He might lift them up to the praise of the glory of His Grace. His choice of men was never guided by anything good that He saw in them! As says the Apostle Paul, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls." The decree still stands, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion." The Lord of Grace asks in His Sovereignty, "Shall I not do as I will with My own?" God views all men as guilty and, finding them guilty, He yet chooses unto Himself a people in whom His Grace shall be resplendent! Therefore do not conclude that He will pass you by because you are poor and needy.

Moreover, the *redemption* of Christ obviously views us as fallen and guilty. Did He lay down His life to redeem those who were not captives? Did He pour out His blood to cleanse those who were already clean? If we had not needed a great salvation, would the Darling of Heaven have stooped to the death of the Cross that we might be saved? They who think that sinners cannot be saved, or that men can be saved by any other means than by true faith in Jesus, make a superfluity of the death of Christ—and this is a blasphemy atrocious to the last degree! "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save"—*the righteous?*—oh no, but, "to save sinners, even the chief." Stagger not at the Grace of God to your own hurt but say, "Though I am spiritually poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me."

Furthermore, the *gift of God the Holy Spirit* proves that God regards us as poor and needy. If we were strong and full of all spiritual forces, we would not have needed the Spirit of God to quicken and regenerate us! And we would not have needed that Spirit to abide in us as our Teacher and Helper. Why, Brothers and Sisters, you cannot even pray without the Spirit of God! The Spirit is given to help your infirmity in prayer because that infirmity most surely exists. The gift of the Spirit of God to men is a proof that God looks upon them as being poor and needy in spiritual things. Now, if you feel that you cannot pray, that you cannot repent, that you cannot believe, that you cannot do anything that is good in your own strength, fret not about it, but fly to the Strong for strength! Say, "I am poor and needy, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is an evidence that the Lord thinks upon me."

Let me further say, to help your faith, that though you say you are very poor and spiritually needy, you are not alone in this, for *so are all God's saints*—and the brighter the saints the more they feel their own poverty and need! Certain boasters talk “exceedingly proud” about their religious attainments. But the more they glory, the more vain is their glory. True saints are humble. In a company where certain people were displaying their spiritual attainments, it was noticed that one devout person remained silent. Finally a talkative man turned to him and asked, “Have you no sanctification?” He replied, “I never had any to boast of, and I hope I never shall have.” The more high in Grace, the more low in self-esteem! Ask the man who has the most holiness what he thinks of himself and he will be the first to lament that he has not yet reached the point which he desires. We are like those old-fashioned wine glasses which had no foot to them, so that they could not stand upon the table, but must be held in the hand. When Jesus has us in His hand, we can be filled with the Water of Life—but out of His hand we cannot hold a drop, nor even stand! We are nothing at all without our All-in-All! “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me,” said one. “Without Me you can do nothing,” is the true word of Christ to every branch of the living Vine. Now, if all God's saints say that they are nobodies, do not despair because you are a nobody! If they all confess that they can do nothing without Christ, do not despond because you, also, can do nothing without Him!

Do you reply, “I wish I had a greater sense of spiritual riches”? If you had more faith in Christ, it would be well, but to have any confidence in your own experience would do you mischief!

Let me here relate a story which may cheer those who feel themselves to be so guilty that the Lord will not think upon them. The Lord looks upon those who feel their guilt. A Savior is on the lookout for sinners quite as much as sinners are on the lookout for a Savior. I have heard that a great English prince on one occasion went to visit a famous king of Spain. The prince was taken down to the galleys, to see the men who were chained to the oars and doomed to be slaves for life. The king of Spain promised, in honor of the prince's visit, that he would set free any one of these men that the prince might choose. So the prince went to one prisoner and said, “My poor fellow, I am sorry to see you in this plight, how came you here?” “Ah, Sire,” he answered, “false witnesses gave evidence against me. I am suffering wrongfully.” “Indeed!” said the prince, and passed on to the next man. “My poor fellow, I am sorry to see you here, how did it happen?” “Sire, I certainly did wrong, but not to any great extent. I ought not to be here.” “Indeed!” said the prince, and he went on to others who told him similar tales. At last he came to one prisoner who said, “Sire, I am often thankful that I am here, for I am sorry to admit that if I had received my due, I would have been executed. I am certainly guilty of all that was laid to my charge—and my severest punishment is just.” The prince replied wittily to him, “It is a pity that such a guilty wretch as you are should be chained among these innocent men

and, therefore, I will set you free.” You smile, and well you may. How you will smile if Jesus does the same for you! Assuredly this is the manner of Him—He passes by those who think highly of themselves and looks upon those who are self-condemned and plead guilty before God. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! When we have nothing to pay, He frankly forgives the debt! He thinks upon the poor and needy.

I ask you to look at the text again, by way of—

II. ENLARGEMENT OF YOUR HOPE. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” It is a great thing that God should think upon us. Is it true that the great heart of God is thinking upon *me*, an inconsiderable atom of existence? What then? It is enough to make the bells of our hearts ring for joy! Let us listen again to the silver note of the text, “The Lord thinks upon me.” The Lord thinks as much of one of His people as if there were nobody else for Him to think upon! Poor needy one, the Lord thinks upon you as intensely as if you were the only being now existing! The Lord is able to concentrate His whole mind upon any one point without dividing that mind—He has such an infinite capacity that each one of us may be the center of God’s thoughts—and yet He will not be forgetting any other beloved one! God is a Being whose center is everywhere, but His circumference is nowhere! “The Lord thinks upon me.” Is it not beautiful to notice how God thought of the first man whom He placed on this earth? He did not make man till He had prepared everything for his happiness! The Lord would not rest until He had finished His work, until He had lighted up the heavens and created all manner of comforts and conveniences for His child. Not till He had even prepared the birds to sing to him and the flowers to breathe their perfume upon him, did God create man. Why did God rest on the seventh day? Because He had thought of all that man needed and had made all things good for Him. Our Lord Jesus never rested till He had finished the work that His Father gave Him to do, which work was all for us—and the great Providence of God will never rest till all the chosen of God are brought safely home to Heaven! Thus you see how God thinks upon us.

Remember, also, that God’s thoughts are not dumb thoughts. They break out into words and this precious Bible contains the expression of those thoughts of love. This priceless Book is a love letter from our Father who is in Heaven. Read each line as if it were freshly written and it will make you say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me, and here are His thoughts.”

Nor does the Lord rest in words. I have heard of a waiter who said to a guest, “I hope you will remember me, Sir.” “Yes,” replied the other, “I shall never forget your bad behavior.” It would be well for us if our fellow men would not think of us when we have done them wrong, but God’s thoughts of us are always kind and forgiving. His thoughts are practical and produce deeds of kindness. He thinks to give and forgive, to save and succor, to cheer and cherish. The Lord is thinking what He will give you, what He will make of you and what mansion in Heaven He will appoint for you! If He has thought upon you, He always will think upon you, for

the Lord never changes! Our God, in whom we trust, is not fickle. He is not thoughtful of us today and forgetful of us tomorrow. If you should live to be as old as Methuselah, the promises of God will never wear out—and if all the troubles that ever fell upon humanity should pounce upon you—God’s strength will be put forth to sustain you and to bear you to a triumphant close!

Oh, the joy of knowing that God thinks upon us! It is better to have God thinking upon us than to have all the kings of earth and all the angels of Heaven thinking upon us. Thirdly, and very briefly—

III. LET THIS INFLAME YOUR LOVE. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” Dear Friends, think much of God since He thinks much of you. Let your hearts go out towards Him on whose heart your name is written. It ought to be impossible for a Christian to wander among these olive groves without saying, “Beneath such trees as these my Savior sweat great drops of blood.” We ought not to sit on the beach without thinking, “The Lord has cast my sins into the depths of the sea.” As the palm tree lifts itself to Heaven, without an earthward branch, so send all your thoughts upward! As the vine, though sharply pruned, yields its cluster, so bear fruit unto your Lord. Upon yonder sea the Apostle of the Gentiles was tossed and wrecked for love of Jesus—yield to that same Lord, your whole hearts as you think upon His thoughts of you! Everything about this place should make us think of our Lord, for in many respects it is the counterpart of “Your land, O Immanuel!” This day God is thinking upon you! This day think upon God! Christ in Heaven is preparing Heaven for us—let us be preparing a place on earth for Him. I have often wondered what is meant by our Lord’s preparing a place for us, since Heaven is prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. I suppose Heaven was not fully fit for us till Jesus went there and the very going there of our Well-Beloved has prepared Heaven for redeemed men and women to live in it in His own sweet society! Jesus is watching in Heaven for the time when we shall come Home and He is praying for that Homecoming—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.”

Do you not receive frequent tokens that the Lord Jesus is thinking upon you? Special mercies in answer to prayer, sweet visits of love—do not these cheer your heart? Our sacred joys, which come from Jesus, are like those boxes of flowers that we send to our friends who are freezing in the cold at this time in England. They know that we remember them as they look upon every rosebud, violet and anemone that comes to them through the post. Our heavenly Father sends us many such tokens of His loving remembrance while we are hearing the Gospel, or enjoying the Lord’s Supper, or occupied in our private prayers and meditations. “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!” To close, let me use this text to—

IV. DIRECT YOUR CONDUCT. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” The whole of what I say shall go into this one thought—if God thinks upon you, leave off all anxious and carking care

about yourself! I do not suppose there is any place in the world that has more care and anxiety in it than this little town which nestles beneath the mountains and suns itself by the sea.

Many of you come here with dear ones who are pining away before your eyes, or you are alarmed about your own health. Do not unduly trouble yourselves, for if you do so, you cannot remove sickness, thereby, but you may even increase it. If I could do any good by worrying, I would worry away to my heart's content! But as it is useless, I find it best to let it alone. They tell me that if a man were to fall into the sea, he would float if he would remain quiet, but because he struggles, he sinks. I am sure it is so when we are in affliction. Fretfulness results in weakening us, in hiding from us wise methods of relief and, in general, in doubling our pains. It is folly to kick against the pricks! It is wisdom to kiss the rod. Trust more and fear less. If you have trusted your soul with Christ, can you not trust Him with everything else? Can you not trust Him with your sick child, or your sick husband? With your wealth, with your business, with your life? "Oh," says one, "I hardly like to do that. It is almost presumption to take our minor cares to the great Lord." But in so doing you will prove the truthfulness of your faith! I heard of a man who was walking along the high road with a pack on his back. He was growing weary and was, therefore, glad when a gentleman came along in a chaise and asked him to take a seat with him. The gentleman noticed that he kept his pack strapped to his shoulders, and so he said, "Why do you not put your pack down?" "Why, Sir," said the traveler, "I did not venture to impose. It was very kind of you to take *me* up, and I could not expect you to carry my pack as well." "Why," said his friend, "do you not see that whether your pack is on your back, or off your back, I have to carry it?"

My Hearer, it is so with your trouble. Whether you care, or do not care, it is the Lord who must care for you! "But my daily trouble seems too mean a thing to bring before the Lord in prayer." Then I fear you forgot my text, or fail to see the spirit which dictated it—God thinks upon the poor and needy—and all the concerns of the poor and needy are, like themselves, poor affairs. Why do you weary yourself with care when God cares for you? If I were afraid of burglars and kept a watchman to guard my house at night, I certainly would not sit up all night, myself! The Lord is your Keeper, why are you fearful? It is infinitely better that you should be able to say, "The Lord thinks upon me," than that you should have all power, wisdom and wealth in your own hands! I charge you, then, to rest in the Lord and fret no longer!

First, trust your Lord with your souls, and then trust Him with everything else! First, surrender yourself to His love, to be saved by His infinite compassion—and then bring all your burdens, cares and troubles—and lay them down at His dear feet and go and live a happy, joyful life, saying, as I will say, and close—

***"All that remains for me,
Is but to love and sing!
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to my King."***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-31.**

Verse 1. *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* To my mind one of the sweetest words of that verse is that little word *now*. “There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation—at this very moment! Walking under the power of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus, there is, therefore, now no condemnation to Believers! It is a logical conclusion, too, from something that went before. You and I are not absolved from sin apart from the Truth of God, but there is a great truth at the back of it which necessitates it. “There is, *therefore*, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2. *For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death.* Sin and death cannot govern me—cannot condemn me—cannot destroy me. Another Law has come in. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has brought me into another kingdom wherein I cannot be affected, so as to condemn me, by the Law of sin and death.

3, 4. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* The Law of God was a good Law, a just and holy Law. It was weak, not in itself, for, verily, if righteousness could have been by any Law, it would have been by the Law of God! But it was weak through our flesh. We could not keep it. We could not fulfill the conditions of life laid down under it. Therefore, what the Law could not do, God has now done for us! He has found a way of making us righteous through the righteousness of His own dear Son, whom He has sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. He has found out a way of condemning sin, without condemning us! He condemned sin in the flesh, but we escaped. And He has found a way of making us practically righteous, too, through the abundance of His Grace, enabling us to walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Blessed be God for this, for when we had broken His Law, He might justly have left us to take the consequences, but He has stepped aside—He has gone beyond all that might have been expected of Him—and brought in a Law by which a remedy is applied to all our ills. Glory be to His name!

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* They live to eat and drink. They live for self-aggrandizement. They live for the world and its pleasures. It is according to their nature. Everything acts according to its nature. The wolf devours—the sheep patiently feeds. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* God has given us, then, the Spirit to dwell in us and now I trust we can say that we desire holiness, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, for these things are the things of the Spirit!

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* It is so deeply vitiated, so thoroughly depraved, that so long as the fleshly mind exists, it will be in rebellion against God. “You must be born-again,” for that which is born of the flesh is flesh—and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Unless we are renewed, then, by the Spirit of God, we never shall be subject to the Law of God—neither, indeed, can we be.

8, 9. *So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* Christ does not acknowledge any that are not indwelt by His Spirit. They may wear the Christian name. They may perform some acts which look like Christian acts—but all this means nothing. You must have the Spirit of God within you, or else you are none of His! And what a thing it is to be “none of His.” “Verily,” says Christ, “I never knew you.” “But, Lord, we ate and drank with You! You preached in our streets.” But He says, “I never knew you.” They are none of His. Oh, dear Friends, the highest point to which human nature can reach of itself falls short of being in Christ! There must be the Spirit of God dwelling in us or else we are none of His!

10. *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.* Therefore, it suffers disease and pain, for the soul is regenerated, but not the body. If I may so speak, the Regeneration of the body happens at the Resurrection. It is then that it will receive its full share of the blessed work of Christ! “The body is dead because of sin.”

10, 11. *But the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* So there is a complete deliverance provided for body, soul and spirit! As Moses said to Pharaoh when he agreed to let the people of Israel go, but said that they must leave behind their flocks, “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” so no particle of our real manhood shall be left under the thralldom of sin and death! The soul is already emancipated and the body shall be—by the Spirit which dwells in you!

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* For we owe the flesh nothing by way of gratitude or service. The flesh has dragged us down. The flesh has ruined us. We owe it nothing except mastery of it. We are not debtors to it, to live after it.

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* It will die and so will you who make it your master!

13. *But if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.* “Mortify,” kill, put to death.

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* There may be a great many weaknesses and infirmities about them, but if they follow the Divine Leadership of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God!

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* Is this true of you? “You have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Dear Friends, hearing these words, can you respond to them? Are they true of you?

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* Many of you make a profession of being the children of God. Can your own spirit say that it is true? And is there, in addition to this, the witness of the Spirit within you that it is true? If not, unless there is a witness to our testimony, it avails nothing. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.” And if He chooses to put Himself on a level, as it were, with the rest of humanity in that respect, we cannot expect that our witness will stand for anything if it stands alone! No, there must be the Spirit, Himself, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God!

17. *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Oh that *if*—“*if* children.” There are some that get over all that. They believe in a universal fatherhood—which is not worth the words in which they describe it. This is a different fatherhood altogether!

17. *If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* Oh, this blessed co-partnership—this fellowship! Joint-heirs with Christ! Taking part in the whole heritage—as well the heritage of suffering as the heritage of glory. “It shall bruise Your heel, but You shall bruise his head.” There is to be the heel-bruising for the Christ, as well as for us, but there is to be the head-crushing of sin and Satan for Him and for us, too!

18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Glory in us? Only think of that! You know the Revelation that is in the Book—but how grand will be the revelation that is in the man! “The glory which shall be revealed in us.” We shall be full of glory! And a part of God’s Glory, which otherwise must have lain concealed, will be revealed in His people to His own praise forever and ever—but also to our own eternal joy.

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* There is something that the whole creation is waiting for and it cannot come till God’s children are manifested—till the glory is revealed in them!

20, 22. *For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* “The whole creation.” It is the same word all through—so I have used the same word. The whole world is in its pangs and birth throes, and there can never come its complete deliverance into the new heavens and the new earth, except there shall also be the manifestation of the children of God and their deliver-

ance from all that now hampers and hinders the Divine Life that is within them!

23. *And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* This is what we are looking for! Our manhood is not all soul—it is body, too! And here, as yet, this poor body seems to lie outside the gate, like Lazarus, while the soul rejoices in God. But its time of glorifying is coming! The trumpet of the archangel shall proclaim it!

24. *For we are saved by hope.* As yet we are saved by hope.

24-26. *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* That is a grand thing! We have got the first fruits of the Spirit to be the pledge of all the glorious harvest. The very fact that the Spirit dwells in us is the conclusive proof that our bodies shall be raised from the dead! Meanwhile, the Spirit of God is helping us, as we groan and labor, towards the complete perfection. “The Spirit helps our infirmities.”

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* Nor is it only the Holy Spirit who is thus helping us onward towards the grand finale!

28, 29. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.* And you know that He is the First-Born in this sense—not only as the greatest, but that as the First-Begotten from among the dead, He has risen from the dead! He has risen from the dead and in this He leads the way for us all. “That he might be the first-born among many brethren.”

30. *Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* No slips, no gaps or chasms by the way. The foreknown are predestinated. The predestinated are the called. The called are justified. The justified are glorified!

31. *What shall we say, then, to these things?* Shall we succumb under the sufferings of the body? Shall we yield to doubt because of all our heavy feelings and the dullness that comes of the flesh? By no means!

31. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* We can get through all these difficulties if God is with us!

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

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THE NEW SONG ON EARTH

NO. 2424

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 4, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 17, 1887.**

***“He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:
many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”
Psalm 40:3.***

THIS man who talks about his song and seems to be very much struck with the fact that he has become a singer, was formerly a man of prayer. I doubt not that he was still praying while he was praising, but he began to pray before he began to praise. It is not good to go in the choir, first—we must begin our spiritual experience at the “penitent form.” He who sings without having wept may have to weep, by-and-by, where he can never sing!

Listen to what this man's experience had been—“I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” That is where God gets His singers—out of the place of praying and weeping! Where they learn to pray they begin to sing. Oh, yes, even in Heaven, itself, the sweetest voices that praise God and the Lamb belong to those who came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Therefore are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple. Do not try to get the joy of Christ without first having sorrow for sin—

***“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

This man, who says that God has put a new song in his mouth, began with a new prayer in his *heart*—“I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

Further, this man, who sings so well that he cannot help talking about it, was once in a very deplorable state where there was no singing for him, but God brought him up out of it! Hear what he says, “He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” Nowadays people do not seem to know much about that horrible pit. I wish they did. There are more gentle, quiet conversions—and I care little how men are converted so long as they are really converted—but, after all, the old-fashioned sort of conversions wear best. Men who know *from what* they are saved—men who have felt the iron rod of the Law and have been crushed and broken beneath the millstones of conviction—these are they who appreciate “Free Grace and dying love” to the fullest and speak of it, and sing of it! I do not find so much of this singing, now, and the reason is because there

has been so little of the deep experience of which our good old fathers used to speak.

The Psalmist says, “He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings and, therefore, it is that this new song is in my mouth.”—

***“Firm on rock He made me stand,
And taught my cheerful tongue
To praise the wonders of His hand
In a new thankful song.”***

I. First, notice that we have HERE A MAN AMAZED TO FIND HIMSELF SINGING for the text is evidently a declaration that God had put a new song into his mouth and that it was a marvel, even to himself. Here is, then, a man amazed to find himself singing, and it would not be difficult to find one like he, here.

What makes you so amazed, my Friend? Other people sing—why is it at all amazing that *you* should? He answers, “It is amazing that I should sing *because I have been so used to sighing*. Had you seen me, Sir, when the arrows of God stuck fast in me, you would have heard many sighs, but never a song! If you had followed me home, you would have found my pillow wet with tears. But I was no nightingale, I could not sing in the dark. I woke in the morning almost sorry to think that I had to face the world, again, and that I had my burden still to bear! And I chanted no morning hymn and I went about the world still burdened till night came on again. Those around me talked of vesper hymns, but I had no such hymns. I had my evening moans and groans, for sin was heavy upon me, and an angry God seemed to make the darkness about me a darkness that might be felt! Had you seen me then, you would not think it strange that I should be amazed that I now sing!” Oh, yes, dear Hearers, if you have ever known the depths of sorrow for sin, you will be amazed to think that you can be as happy as you are because Christ has loosened the burden from your shoulder and made you free, saying, “Go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.”

Well, my Friend, I can see why you are astonished at your singing. Is there any other reason? “Yes,” he answers, “if you had known me a little farther back, before I came under the hand of God and was awakened to a sense of sin, you would have known a fellow that could sing, but *the wonder, now, is that I can sing ‘a new song.’* I am glad, Sir that you did not hear me sing in those days, for my songs would have done you no good. They were very light and trifling, sometimes lewd and sometimes profane. Oh, how I set my companions in a roar with my jests! And when I had a little drink in me, how I liked to thunder out some loose verses and bid the others take up the chorus! And ‘jolly good fellows’ were all of us said to be when those hymns of the devil were upon our tongues.” Oh, you are *that* man, are you? Yet I heard you sing, just now, and I think you sang it from your heart—

***“My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing!
My heart is at the secret Source
Of every precious thing!
And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,***

**To long-loved music set!
 Glory to You for all the Grace
 I have not tasted yet.
 I have a heritage of joy
 That yet I must not see.
 The hand that bled to make it mine
 Is keeping it for me!"**

Ah, now I am amazed, too, that such a man as you once were should be singing such a song as that! O Brothers and Sisters, there are some of us here who are amazed at ourselves when we think of what we used to be! Some of you forget the dunghills where you grew, but if you have any honesty in you, you cannot but feel the tear starting up between your eyelids at the recollection of how God has changed you. What a miracle of mercy you are! Surely it took almighty power to make a saint of such a sinner as you were! The utmost bound of infinite love must have been reached in the case of some who are in this House of Prayer praising redeeming love and wishing that they had a thousand tongues with which to shout the Savior's praise! Yes, Friend, I can see why it is that you are amazed that a new song is put into your mouth! The time past well suffices us to have sung the songs of Belial—now let us sing unto the Lord with all our strength, and tell all around what great things His Grace has done for us!

Still, my Friend, you who are so much amazed at yourself, you tell me that you marvel to find yourself singing because you so lately were sighing and, farther back, were singing such a different tune. Is there any other wonder in it? "Well, yes, Sir, my greatest wonder is because I am singing a new song. *It is a totally new song*—it is new to me, for I knew nothing of it, once. I ridiculed what I did not understand! I cast scorn on what I had not the candor to wish to know. I said that religion was all cant and that religious people were all hypocrites. I did not know this for a fact, but I said it, all the same. I did not want to know anything about Christ Crucified and the Gospel of His Grace. I said that these were only terms that were used by fanatical people and had no meaning in them. And as to the songs of Zion, why, Sir, I sometimes spoofed them to give a little zest to my profane merriment. But, as to singing them, myself, I felt that could never be the case."

Yes, Beloved, there are some who are now singing of Free Grace and dying love who, years ago, would not have believed it possible even if a Prophet of God had told them it would be so! They would have spat at any man who would have said, "And you, too, will take up the cross, and follow the Nazarene." Yet tonight they are singing a song altogether new to them! These low notes of penitence, the deep bass of confession are all new to them—and these highest notes, the jubilates that rise even to the skies—are all new to them. None of this score did they ever read in their days of sin! They never tuned their harps to such Psalms as this in the time of their unregeneracy. It is all new to you. Do I not remember when it was all new to *me*? Yet I heard it when I was a child. I was never away from the hearing of it, but when I came to know it, it was just as new to me, nursed on the lap of piety, as it was to you who lived in the midst of

a wicked world, for I was blind in the light as you were blind in the dark! I was deaf in the midst of music and you were only deaf in the midst of discord. There was but a slight difference between us, after all, and truly are we amazed to think that we should be singing a new song!

It is not only called a new song because it is new to us, but because it is so uncommon. Rich and rare things are often called new in the Bible. There is a New Covenant, there is a new Commandment. I will not quote the many things in Scripture that are called new because they are so rare. And, oh, the praises of God are, indeed, rich and rare! If an angel, fresh from Heaven, were asked his judgment of the various kinds of music played or sung below, I know what he would say. Your finest operas and your noblest lyrics concerning things of time and sense would be but doggerel in his ears and discord to his heart! But the hymns in which we praise our dying, yet risen Lord—the Psalms in which we exalt the God of Heaven and earth—these would be music, indeed, to him, and he would write these down as truly sweet! Yes, and so it is to us! Dull is the song that does not praise our Lord! But the burst of united Psalmody from a vast congregation that exalts Him brings tears to our eyes, as Augustine says it did to his—when he heard the singing at Milan. When first he entered the church, there, to hear the many simple folk praise God, touched his soul. But if it is not so—if the music is not to the praise of the Lord—there is no thing rich and rare in it for us. Oh, believe us, we have learned a rare song now that we have learned to praise the Lord our God!

And, truth to tell, there is a wonder about our new song because it is always new. Do you ever tire—you who love your Lord—do you ever tire of Him? You who praise Him, do you ever weary of singing His praises? You may very well weary of *me*, poor creature that I am—I who have addressed you so many hundreds of times—but you never weary of my subject when I talk of Jesus! You may very well weary of the monotony of any human voice, but you can never be tired of the many-stringed harp which is to be found in that one name, the name of Jesus! His name, fresh? Oh, I think it is newer to me, now, than when I first heard it! It may seem a paradox, but the Gospel is, to me, fresher, the longer I know it! Did not my heart leap at the sound of Christ's name nearly 40 years ago? Yes, but not as it does *now*! The music of His name will refresh our soul in death with a new depth of sweetness! It is all new as you go on in Jesus!

You seem, sometimes, to fancy that you are coming to an end, but there is no end to this music! Did you ever sail up or down the Rhine? If so, standing in the steamboat you thought you were in a lake rather than in a river—and you wondered how you could proceed any farther. You turned a corner and the river opened up before you with a fresh stretch of beauty and where it seemed to end, again, the end was all a delusion, for it still went on and on! So is it with the song which the Lord has taught us—it is always fresh and always new! We may make it say, as the poet made his brook to sing—

***“Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on forever”***

and so does the sweet melody of Jesus' precious name! It is a new song, a new song altogether!

Yet, again, if you wonder that we call it new, let me remind you that it is new because it seems to have awakened us into a newness of life. I have seen men excited—look at them whenever there is an election—but there is a far better kind of excitement than that which is produced by politics! When a man comes to know Christ and to love Him, it wakes him up from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. We steady-going people, you know, try to be very serene and quiet, and our worship is apt to get terribly stiff and dull—but if we could let our souls have their liberty, if we could speak and sing as we feel—what a noise we would make sometimes! There would be hallelujahs and hosannas, indeed, and it is amazing that we can restrain them, for the Gospel of Christ somehow brings out of a man new faculties which he does not know of himself till a glorious breeze of Everlasting Life has blown through him! Then odors which otherwise had lain asleep, odors such as God delights in, are poured forth on every side! This is, indeed, a new song, for it makes us new! God grant, dear Friends, that many of you may so continually sing it that you may know what I mean—and a great deal more than I can say! That is a wonderful thing, then—a new man singing a new song!

There is yet a further wonder. My Friend, you have been telling us that you marvel that you have a new song. What is it that makes you so surprised? You have told us much—tell us a little more. And he answers, "Well, Sir, I wonder at my new song because it is raised unto our God—'even praise unto our God.'" It should not be, but still it is, a marvel when a man praises his God. We are by nature so averse to this sweet exercise that when we come to do it, and to do it heartily, it is a marvelous thing! Look. We praise God's Grace; we sing—

***"Grace! 'Tis a charming sound!
Harmonious to the ear!"***

And each saved man among us feels it to be so in his case. We praise God's power! What power He has put forth in bringing us up out of our graves of sin and turning us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God by that same mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. Yes, every man whom God has saved praises His Grace and His power.

The pith of the song is this—"praise unto our God." You cannot praise another man's God. At least there is no sweetness in such a song. But there is a blessed melody when it is "praise unto our God"—our Covenant God, the God who belongs to us, the God who by a perpetual Covenant has given Himself up to us to be our possession forever—"praise unto our God." I like to have it put in the plural. My soul can praise my God, but the highest note is reached when many of us, together, can praise "*our* God"—yours and mine! We who are Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We who know each other and love each other find a peculiar sweetness in our new song when it is "praise unto our God." If you all knew the sweetness of bringing others to Christ, more of you would live for it and be prepared to even die for it.

I have had some very happy days in my life, but my happiest times have been such as I had one day last week when I shook hands with somewhere about a hundred persons who called me their spiritual father. It seemed to them to be quite a grand day to touch my hand, while to me, the tears standing in my eyes as I saw each one of them—it was as the days of Heaven upon earth, for I had never seen all those people before! Perhaps some of them had been in this House of Prayer, now and then, but I did not know them. They had read the sermons and as I went from village to village, and found them standing at their doors, begging me to stop just to hear how such a sermon was “blessed to me,” and, “my old father read your sermons and died in peace after reading them”—there, I could have died of joy, for this is the truest happiness we can have on earth! Seek sinners, my Brothers and Sisters, seek their conversion with all your heart and soul! If you would be happy men and women, and would sing the sweetest song that could be sung on earth, let it be, “praise unto our God”—not yours alone, but the God, also, of those whom Infinite Mercy shall permit you to bring to the same dear Savior’s feet!

There is one more wonder about this song and then I shall have finished what I have to say about this friend of ours. You tell us that you sing and that you sing a new song—what is the greatest wonder about that song? “Why, Sir, to tell you the truth, I do not know which is the greatest marvel. There is a world of wonders in my singing this new song, but there is one point I have not told you, and that is this—‘*He has put a new song in my mouth.*’” Oh, I see, then—you did not learn it from anybody? You did not make it up yourself? “No, no, no. A thousand times, no! It was God that put it into my mouth.” Well now, when God puts a song into a man’s mouth, that is a grand thing, for the devil, himself, cannot get it out! If God puts a new song into a man’s mouth, he has a right to sing it and he *ought* to sing it—and he *must* sing it—therefore, let him sing it!

Magnify the Lord if He has done this great thing to you, if He has put this new song into your mouth! All that we ever do for ourselves never has the sweetness in it of that which God does for us. You may labor and toil and tug, and all the wage you get you may hold in the hollow of your hand—and it shall melt in the morning sun! But if God shall give it to you of His free, rich, Sovereign Grace, it shall be within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life! And neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come shall ever take it away from you! If God has put this new song in your mouth, that is the best thing you can tell us about it!

And so, my good Friend, I will ask you no more questions. Sing away, sing away, as long as ever you like! Sing praise unto our God—

**“Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Would gladly stop the joyful song!
Sing and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue.”**

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, we have here, dear Friends, A MAN WHO IS RESOLVED TO KEEP ON SINGING, for, you notice, he says, “He

has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” So that this man means to keep on singing. I must have you back, again, old Friend, and ask you why it is that you mean to keep on singing?

He answers, first, “*Because I cannot help it.*” When God sets a man singing, he must sing! Good Rowland Hill once had, sitting on the pulpit stairs, a person who sang with such a cracked, squeaking voice that it put the dear man out of heart. And this person with the cracked voice, of course, sang more loudly than anybody else! So Mr. Hill said to him, while the hymn was being sung, “Be quiet, my good man. You make such a dreadful noise that you put us all out.” “Oh,” said the man, “I am singing from my heart, Mr. Hill!” “I beg your pardon, my Friend,” said the preacher, “go on, go on, go on with your singing if it comes from your heart!”

So we would not stop any man, whatever his voice is, if he sings from his heart! But, what is more, we not only say that we would not stop him, but we *could not* stop him if we wanted to. If, as men say, “murder wills out,” I am sure that Grace will! You cannot put salvation into a bottle and put the cork in! It will burst the bottle, for it must come out! If God has put a song into your mouth, you must sing it. Therefore, again I say, sing away!

But, my Friend over yonder, do not sing before everybody—perhaps it would be casting pearls before swine. “Oh,” he says, “but I must! *I mean to sing before many.*” Why? “Well, I used to sing before many in my evil days. I was not ashamed to sing for the devil—when I ought to have been ashamed, I was not. And now that I ought not to be ashamed, I will not be ashamed and I will sing! Besides, why should I be so tender and considerate of their nerves? They are not thoughtful about mine.” The ungodly sometimes complain of us for preaching outdoors. They say that it disturbs them. Bless their dear delicacy! What a noise they make at night, sometimes, when they keep us from sleeping while they noisily declare that they, “won’t go home till morning”! Surely, we may sing as loudly as they do! And when we sing songs of Zion, we can well reply to them that when they are quiet, and will suspend their music, we may consider when we will suspend ours!

Still, my Friend, do you think that it is worth while to sing at this rate? “Yes,” he says, “I do, for *I believe that it is good for them to hear it.*” Do you? What good can it do them? And he answers me thus. “Look at your text, Sir, and you will not need to ask me that question! What does your text say?” “Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” It is good to preach the Gospel, but it is better to preach and sing the Gospel! I mean, dear Friends, that if you and I, in our daily lives, were to sing the Gospel more—especially by a holy *cheerfulness of character*—we would bring the Truth of God home to a great many who now turn aside from it, and do not feel its power! Sing of Christ your Lord! Proclaim His love to you! Proclaim how you were converted! Tell how He brought you up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay—and as you do it, others will long to experience the same deliverance and so will be drawn to the

Savior by your sweet testimony to His Grace. There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by the gracious tidings of His love than ever will be driven to Him by all the threats of His Law. I do not know a better soul-trap than a happy Christian experience! This will catch them—therefore be sure to use it. Sing, sing, sing unto the Lord a new song! Sing His praise unto the ends of the earth, for many will see it, and fear, and put their trust in the Lord!

If I had come here, tonight, knowing that there were persons here that were ailing, and were to say, “Now, listen. I will tell you how I suffered from your same illness,” you would be sure to attend to me. And if I then mentioned a certain remedy, and said, “I took it and I have experienced a very remarkable cure,” you would listen with both ears and you would ask, “Where is that remedy to be purchased?” You would begin thinking whether you could get some of it to-morrow morning, especially if you were very ill, yourselves, as I had been, and you would go away thankful to think that you had met with someone who, through his own experience, could guide you to a perfect cure!

Well now, that is exactly what I want you to do with regard to yourselves, you who are sick of sin, and care, and fear, and grief. I, too, as a youth, was sick of sin and I was made to feel it—and to endure great grief on account of it. I sought to be delivered from it. I gave up many things in which I had indulged and I hoped, by self-denial, that I would come to peace. But I did not, I was as far off as before I began! I said that I would very diligently attend the means of Grace and I did so. Thrice on the Sabbath I was found somewhere or other hearing the Word of God. But mere sermon-hearing brings no peace. Then I said that I would read good books. How I remember reading *Alleine’s Alarm* and *Doddridge’s Rise and Progress*, and *Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted*. And how they plowed me, and brought tears into my eyes—but I found no rest to my soul by all the godly books I read—the best that could be read. Whatever was proposed to me that looked likely to bring me rest, I was eager to try. I was willing, I am sure, to become a monk, or anything else beneath the sun that would promise peace to my spirit, for I wanted to be right and longed to be at peace with God.

At last, I found rest. The preacher pictured Christ upon the Cross, bleeding for sinners. And he said, in his Lord’s own words, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” And I looked! It was all I could do—it was all I was asked to do—I looked! It was but a look, yet in that moment all my fears were ended, my doubts were solved, my burden was removed, and I, too, could say, “He has put a new song in my mouth. He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.”

Now, after trying and testing this salvation for a good many years—well near on to forty—I have only this to say of it. It is a simple salvation, but it is as sound as it is simple! It is fitted for the poorest of us, but it is as enriching as it is suitable to our poverty! The weakest may look to Jesus, but by looking he shall soon be ranked among the strongest! He who

is at death's door may look to Jesus Crucified, but the life that look brings is life everlasting which shall never die! There is the remedy and I have tried it! That is all I can say to you except that I beg you to try it yourselves. Try it yourselves! Look to Christ. Look to Christ! Trust Jesus, that is all—trust, simply trust! It seems as if this could not be all, but it is. You with the broken heart, trust! You with the heart that will not break, trust to have it broken! You that are deeply penitent, trust—not in your repentance, however—but in Christ! And you that can not repent, but wish to repent, look to Christ for repentance!

Trust! Trust! Trust as the drowning man trusts to the life buoy, as the shipwrecked mariners trust to the lifeboat. Trust! Trust in God Almighty, Incarnate in the bleeding Man of Sorrows, for it is God that hangs on the Cross in the body of the Nazarene. Trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary—and as surely as He lives, as surely as God lives, you shall live and live forever! Heaven and earth may pass away, but that Word shall never pass away, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” May you have it tonight! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 33; 1 JOHN 1.**

Verse 1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.* False gods were worshipped with dolorous sounds, accompanied by cutting with knives and with lances, but our God is the happy God and He would have His people happy. “Rejoice in Jehovah, O you righteous.” The praises of God are very beautiful when they are sung by holy people, “for praise is comely for the upright.” But the praises of God on the lips of godless men are altogether out of place. I wonder how Christians can allow those to lead their praises in the sanctuary who never can, from their hearts, praise God? They who sing to the worldling all the week should not be employed to sing to the God of the holy on the Sabbath! Surely, “Praise is comely for the upright.” Hymns and Psalms sung by the ungodly are but as sweet spices laid upon a dunghill—but—“praise is comely for the upright.”

2, 3. *Praise the LORD with harps: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.* Under a dispensation of types and shadows, the use of musical instruments seemed to be necessary and suitable, but in the early Christian Church, in her purest ages, these things were discarded as tending towards Judaism. And at this day, the sweetest singing in the world is heard in the assembly which utterly renounces the use of every musical instrument! Yet I believe that there is Christian liberty about these things and, for my part, I like to think of Luther with his lute and of George Herbert with his harp. If they were helped to praise God the better, let them have the music! Yet the singing is never sweeter than when it is all song—and there is no better music than that which comes from hearts and tongues that are alive—and that know what sounds they make and why they make them. Anyhow, let us sing unto Jehovah! Hang

not your harps on the willows, suspend not your music! Praise God somehow, praise Him anyway, but praise Him!

4. *For the Word of the LORD is right.* Praise Him for His Word, then. It is truth, it is righteousness. If we had nothing else but the Bible for which to praise God, there would be reason enough for giving Him endless praise for bestowing upon us such a priceless treasure!

4. *And all His works are done in truth.* Praise Him for His Providence. There is never a mistake in what He does—“All His works are done in truth.”

5. *He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.* Therefore praise Him. So good a God should not be without your gratitude.

6. *By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.* Praise your Creator, then, the Maker of the universe!

7-9. *He gathers the waters of the sea together as an heap: He lays up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.* These are simple but grand words! The work of creation was very wonderful and it was all worked by the Word of the Lord. There were no angelic agencies. “He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.”

10. *The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing.* They plot and they contrive, but He baffles them! Men may think and scheme as they will, but God has His way, after all!

10, 11. *He makes the devices of the people of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.* His decrees stand fast. Jehovah still reigns and still He must reign forever and ever.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.* There is the reason why they are blessed—it is all owing to God’s electing love! “The people whom He has chosen.” If God has chosen them, they are blessed people, indeed! Whom He determines to bless none can effectually curse.

13. *The LORD looks from Heaven; He beholds all the sons of men.* As we look out of a window and see the people passing in the street below, “He beholds all the sons of men,” whether at the pole or at the equator! None are hidden from His Omniscient eyes.

14, 13. *From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike.* Not that their hearts are alike, but it means that He only fashions all their hearts—they were all made by Him. There is no understanding so great but He made it and there is no mind so feeble but still He made it—

“He fashions their hearts.”

13, 16. *He considers all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* See what vast companies of soldiers Darius gathered together, yet Alexander smote them—and Napoleon led into Russia more than half a million of men, yet they melted away like snow!

16. *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.* Sooner or later, he dies, however strong he is.

17. *A horse is a vain thing for safety.* It throws its rider, or falls upon him, or is killed with him.

17, 18. *Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.* Beautiful expression! I always like that mixture of fear and hope. An old fisherman used to compare it to his net. “Fear,” he said, “is the weight that sinks it, and hope is the cork that floats it.” To make a perfect character, there must be both fear and hope! The man that never fears may begin to fear, but he that is all fear is a miserable creature. God help him to begin to hope!

19. *To deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.* When others die of want, the Lord will take care of them that fear Him. I remember a story of the siege of Rochelle, when the city was in such straits that the people had to eat cats, dogs, rats and all manner of filthiness. There was one Christian woman, who, having some stores, fed the poor therewith, whereat her friends said she was a fool, for she would soon be starving. They asked, “Who is to take care of you when all is gone?” She answered, “The Lord will provide for me.” At last her stores were exhausted. She went to beg from her friends, but they refused her. She was nearly famished when, strange to tell (as we put it), someone, unknown to her, shot down a sack full of wheat at her door! She never knew who it was, and then she said to her friends, “God has provided for me,” and, while others died, she lived, for she had practiced holy charity. She had feared God and given to her neighbors—she had not selfishly hoarded what she had—and the Lord rewarded her. Let me read these two verses again. “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.”

20. *Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield.* Notice the three, “ours.” Personal possession is the very soul of piety—all else is mere verbiage. Not, “What do you hear?” but, “What do you have?” Not, “What do you talk about?” but, “What do you possess?” That is the thing—“Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.”

21. *For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name.* If you do but trust in His holy name, you shall, one day, rejoice in Him. Trust Him in the dark and you shall see the Light of God! Trust Him in famine and you shall surely be fed.

22. *Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You.* Let us each one pray that prayer now—“Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You.” Amen. Now turn to the First Chapter of the First Epistle of John, that you may see what an Apostle had to say concerning joy.

1 John 1:1. *That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.* You know who that is, who it is

that John had heard, seen, looked upon and handled even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

2, 3. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us), that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.* The Father delights in His risen Son, no more to suffer and to die, having accomplished all His work. And I am sure that we have fellowship with the Father in that rejoicing! Then think what is the joy of Christ, who has passed through the shades of death, and risen from all the gloom of the sepulcher no more to die! I trust, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we have fellowship with Him, for we, also, have risen with Him unto newness of life!

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* “There,” the Apostle seems to say, “if you have doubts, they will kill your joy. Doubt is a great joy-killer, but we have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have handled Him who is the Fountain of all true joy! Let no doubts come into your hearts, for these are well-attested facts of which we speak. “We live still,” says John—though, perhaps, when he wrote, he may have been the last survivor of the eleven—“we live still, by our testimony concerning Christ, to confirm your faith, that your joy may be full.”

5-7. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not say the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* That is, if we walk in the brightest light we can ever know, and if our fellowship with God is the highest that can be enjoyed this side Heaven, we shall still need the cleansing blood of Jesus and, blessed be God, we shall still have it and we shall still find that it “cleanses us from all sin!”

8. *If we say that we have no sin., we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* We are walking in darkness when we thus talk of light. It is easy for a blind man to talk of light though he cannot see it and there are some who boast of very superior light who, nevertheless, are so much in the dark that they cannot even see their own sin.

9, 10. *If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.* The Lord bless to us the reading of his Word! Amen.

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

UNBELIEF CONDEMNED AND FAITH COMMENDED NO. 1784

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith."
Deuteronomy 32:20.*

*"Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust."
Psalm 40:4.*

THESE two texts will serve to show the different estimate which God has of unbelief and of faith. He says of unbelievers, in my text taken from Deuteronomy, "They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith"—as much as to say that the absence of faith proves them to be froward, presumptuous, willful, disobedient—a people at cross-purposes with God. He says not only that they are perverse and froward, but He adds an emphatic word—"they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." The second text most clearly shows us that God has a high approbation for faith, for He, Himself, by the Holy Spirit, says, "Blessed is that man that makes the Lord His trust." Here, then, we have set before us a great evil to which we are sadly inclined—and a great Grace which we greatly need. May God the Holy Spirit work faith in us by His own gracious power! Alas, it is still true that "all men have not faith." Even when an Apostle preached, we read of the congregation, that some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. There is that division among you at this time. Oh, that unbelievers may become Believers before this service ends!

I will tell you what I shall be driving at this morning—I have a special character in view and I long to be made useful to persons of that sort. Outspoken and naked unbelief the most of you abhor. Should unbelief display itself in its real hideousness, you who have been brought up religiously would be startled at its approach, would close the door immediately and bolt it fast lest such a demon of the deep should gain an entry into your souls! Consequently, unbelief, when it attacks the regular hearer of the Gospel, takes care to disguise itself. It pretends to be something other than it is. It does not walk abroad in all its natural deformity, but it approaches us as the Gibeonites came near to Israel when "they did work wilyly and went and made as if they had been ambassadors."

There are those here who do not doubt, for a moment, the existence or goodness of God—neither have they any question about the Inspiration and Infallible Truth of Holy Scripture—and yet they are entertaining within their hearts an unbelief which eats as does a canker! A deadening

unbelief is upon them so that they abide in darkness and take no pains to come into the Light of God. Yet they do not condemn themselves, but rather look for pity as though it were their *infirmity* and not their fault. To them, unbelief acts like Jezebel when she tired her hair and painted her face. Oh, that my words could strip off the disguise of this evil thing! Of this most deceitful form of unbelief I would say, as Jehu said of Jezebel, "Throw her down." And then I would cry—Go see, now, this cursed thing and bury it, for it is a horrible evil. That which prevents men from finding salvation by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is an enemy so hateful and malicious that no quarter must be given to it! No excuse must be made for it—it must be utterly destroyed from under Heaven!

Dear Friend, you tell me that you are by no means an infidel or a skeptic, and yet you do not believe so as to find peace with God! You tell me that you cannot believe, which is a confession that you are so false at heart that you cannot believe the Truth of God! It is well that you should admit this gross depravity, but I have reason to fear that you are hardly conscious of the horrible nature of the crime which you acknowledge! I beg you to lay to heart this fact—that unless you have faith in Jesus you will perish just as surely as if you were an open denier of the Word of God and a reviler of His Son! There are, doubtless, degrees in the terribleness of the *punishment*, but there are no degrees in the certainty of the fact that every unbeliever will be shut out from the blessing of the Gospel of Christ! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."

I want you to remove every flattering unction from your souls and to know for sure that, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Dream not that because you do not happen to be an avowed atheist, or deist, or agnostic, that, therefore, your own form of unbelief is harmless! We read of Israel in the wilderness that, "they could not enter in because of unbelief"—yet they were *not* atheists! A passive unbelief will ruin a man as surely as an active infidelity! Suppose that an enemy is on this side of a river, destroying everybody? To find safety, the river has to be crossed, and there is but one bridge. Yonder man declares that he will never go over such a bridge—he does not *believe* in it! He asserts that it is a rotten old thing which would break down under his weight. He hates the structure. He will not even call it a bridge at all! He ridicules all who venture upon it. It is clear that he will stay on this side of the river and die by the pursuer's sword. He is the type of the avowed *skeptic*!

But where are you? You say with unfeigned distress, "I am horrified to hear that man talk so of that excellent bridge. I believe that it is well constructed and that it has carried hundreds of thousands over it. I cannot bear to hear a word said against it, for my dear father and mother found refuge by crossing it and they are now in the land of peace." Yet you do not escape by that bridge, yourself, though well aware of your danger! Do you answer, "Well, I do not feel worthy to go over it." Why, that is nonsense! It is as if you should say, I cannot swim and, therefore, will cross over the river by means of the bridge. Your unworthiness cannot be a *reason* for refusing to accept a free salvation! On the contrary, it is a reason

why you *should* accept it at once. However, it matters little what your excuse may be—you will perish forever if you do not believe in Jesus!

Take another illustration. A fatal disease is abroad and a remedy has been discovered of the most effectual kind. One man denounces the medicine, the physician who invented it and the apothecaries who distribute it—he can hardly find words enough in the dictionary with which to express his contempt for what he calls a monstrous quackery. He will evidently receive no benefit from the medicine. That is not *your* case—you are of quite another mind. You esteem the medicine, reverence the physician and even feel an affection for the apothecaries who distribute it! No question about the matter has ever crossed your mind—on the contrary, you are an advocate for the great remedy and believe firmly that it has healed multitudes of persons. *Why do you not take the wholesome medicine yourself?* You tell me that you are trying to get better and that you do not quite see how the medicine can heal you.

This shows that you mistrust the power of the medicine to heal you just as you are. You will derive no more benefit from it than the other man who rails at it! It is quite impossible that any man should receive the blessing which comes through the atoning blood of Christ unless he has *faith*—and whether he goes to the length of an utter contempt of the great Sacrifice, or stands off from it because he does not feel as he could desire—he will surely die without forgiveness. Out of Christ, the doom of eternal wrath will fall on you whether near to the Kingdom of God or far off from it.

I want to talk with those unbelieving people who are not avowedly skeptical. Some of these I have seen and I know that they are a numerous class. They are very sincere and are really seeking after salvation, but the one thing which they refuse to do is to believe in the Lord Jesus. They will not trust their God! They will not believe in the promise which He has made to us in Christ Jesus! They would suffer any *penance*. They would *give* anything they possess. They would cut off their right arm—they would consent to lose their eyes—if they might but be saved! But this *one matter of trust* in God and accepting *His way* of salvation is the point in which they quarrel with the Most High. Upon this matter, in which the Lord will assuredly never yield to them, they stand out very obstinately, and so prove that they are “a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” If they would obtain the Lord’s blessing, the only way to it is faith. Oh, that they would hold out no longer, for, “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust.”

I. To begin, then—our first statement is UNBELIEF IS FROWARDNESS—“they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” One very frequent disguise of unbelief is that of humility. “I feel myself such a great sinner. I feel so much evil to be in my heart, I dare not believe in Jesus!” If you judged by appearances you might think this unbelief very modest, but, indeed, it is not so. It imitates the *tone* of humility, but it cannot catch the accent. This deceptive vice dares to hint that the sinner’s unworthiness is a reason why Jesus should not be trusted! What? Would any man tell me that his own wickedness is a reason why he should distrust *me*? That would be too absurd! Because you are such a

sinner, is God, therefore, a *deceiver* and not to be trusted? This is not humility, but audacity!

Our fearing to trust the promise of God because we are evil is a most perverse piece of wickedness. Surely, God is true, even if we are liars! *Our* falsehood does not make Him false, or deprive Him of His right to be believed! Do we dare to tell Him that He cannot save when He assuredly promises to save us if we trust Him? Do we deny His willingness to save when He sends us gracious invitations and entreats us to turn to Him? This is insolence—not penitence! However great a sinner you may be, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, for, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Do not deny this. Do not be so profanely bold as to call Jesus a liar!

Unbelief also claims to be timid. It cries, “I am afraid to come to Christ, afraid to trust Him with my soul.” This is not true fear, but an evil pride! The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau! The sound is that of an amiable timorousness, but the spirit is that of frowardness. Friends, if you truly feared God, you would tremble at the idea of distrusting Him. It is a very daring act of impiety to question any promise of the Most High—it is the height of rebellion to deny the power of the death of His dear Son! That kind of timidity and humility is to be shunned and to be abhorred which dares to make God’s love a dream and His mercy a fiction! Since the Lord’s mercy endures forever; since Jesus has never yet cast out a soul that has come to Him, it is folly to talk of being afraid to come to Him! Dread doubting and fear not to trust your God!

Unbelief is a very froward thing. We repeat the statement and go on to prove it because, in the first place, *it calls God a liar*. Can anything be worse than this? God says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” and the unbeliever replies, “I cannot believe that Jesus will save me.” That is to say, translating it into plain English—You do not think that God speaks the Truth! You do not believe that God is able to make His promises good to you. You do, in effect, imagine that He has said a great deal more than He means, or promised more than He is able to perform! At any rate, you think it unsafe to trust Him with your soul. I beseech you, if you must transgress, do not select a sin so presumptuous and so provoking as the sin of denying the Truth of the Most High! “He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.”

Oh, you poor, timorous soul, as some would call you, I will not flatter you, or excuse you, for I am afraid you must be very proud or you would not look the great Father in the face, and say, “You will not receive me if I come back to You like the prodigal child”—when, again and again, He invites you to return and promises to receive you. O Soul, can you dare to look up to the Cross of Jesus and say, “There is no life in a look at the Crucified One for me”? Can you even *think* of the Holy Spirit and then say that He has no power to change a heart so black and hard as yours? Oh that this miserable slander of God and of His Christ might be stopped!

Again, unbelief is great frowardness because *it refuses God’s way of salvation*. No man can read the Scriptures without seeing God’s way of

salvation is not by works nor by feelings, but by *trusting in the Son of God* who has offered a full atonement for sin. Now the sinner says, "Lord, I would do or suffer *anything* if I might, thereby, be saved." God's answer is, "Trust in My Son"—and this is put into a great many shapes to make it plain! Jesus says, "This is the work of God"—the highest and noblest work—"that you believe on Him whom He has sent." But the soul wriggles away from this believing in Jesus. It cries, "Surely I must *feel* this, that, and the other!" Oh foolish heart! Stop all these vain observations and *listen* to this one thing—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!" If you will make the Lord your trust, you shall be blessed—but if you will not, you are assuredly accursed—seeing you have rejected the blood of the Eternal Sacrifice, refused the way of mercy which Infinite Love has appointed and done despite to the Spirit of God. To what a pitch of madness you have reached! You will sooner destroy your own soul than treat your God as you would treat an honest man! You can trust your wife, your husband, your father, or your friend—but you will not trust your Maker! You will sooner go to Hell than trust yourself with Christ! Ah me! Ah me!

Unbelief is a very froward thing, again, because *it very often makes unreasonable demands of God*. When Thomas said, "Unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he was speaking very frowardly. I have heard the sinner say, "Oh, Sir, if I could have a dream! If I could be broken down with anguish, or if I could enjoy some remarkable revelation—THEN I would believe God!" This, also, is frowardness. And so you dare look the Eternal in the face and say, "You shall be a liar to me unless You will gratify my whims and wishes, and do this or that to prove what I admit to be true." Will you say to your fellow man, "Sir, you have offered to help me in this time of need. I am quite willing to depend upon you for that help, provided you will do it in *my* way—the way which you propose for my assistance I utterly reject"? You will probably turn your friend against you if you talk so!

Beggars must not be choosers—certainly not with God! If I mistrust a friend who has been good to me all my life, it is an unjust thing. And if I tell him that I cannot believe him unless he will do what I choose to demand of him, I am insulting him. This towards *man* is evil—but what is it towards *God*? What? Must God do according to *our* mind and play the lackey to *us* or else He shall be under this penalty—that we will not believe His Word nor accept His gracious forgiveness? Shame on unbelief, that it should be so insulting to the God of Heaven before whom angels bow with veiled countenances! Surely, the devil, himself, cannot go further than unbelief—nor so far—for he *believes and trembles!*

Unbelief is very froward, next, because *it indulges hard thoughts of God*. Why do you not trust your God to save you by the blood of Jesus? Do you say that, "Salvation by faith is too good to be true"? Is *anything* too good to come from God, who is infinitely good? Is He not Love? Do you say, "If I were to come to Him, He would not receive me"? How dare you say *that* when it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out"! "Oh, I have so offended that if I were to cry, 'Father, I have sinned,' I could not expect Him to forgive my offense." This is a base slandering of the

heavenly Father! What penitent has He ever repelled? You know not how good He is—He is inconceivably gracious, He delights in mercy! It is His joy to pass by transgression, iniquity and sin. Have you never heard that, “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts”? Has He not declared that He will abundantly pardon? Has He not said, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool”? Why will you so cruelly defame the Ever-Merciful One? Turn from this wickedness or you will destroy your own soul!

And yet again, unbelief is a very froward thing because *it disparages the Lord Jesus*. It tramples upon the blood of the Son of God! The unbelieving sinner virtually asserts that he has discovered the limit of the Savior’s power to save and that he stands just over the margin to which His Grace extends, for he thinks that Jesus may save anyone except himself! O Soul, do you doubt the infinite virtue of the Divine Sacrifice? Do you question the power of the intercession of the risen Lord? Is it not true, as He has said it, that He is, “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them”? “Oh, but I am such a singular person.” And are you so singular that you have a right to limit the Holy One of Israel? Oh, if you did but know my Lord and Master, you would not talk so, for He, with a word, can cast out devils, heal the sick and raise the dead! He has but to say “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” and they are forgiven! He has but to look on you, poor sinner, and you shall live! Yes, be assured that if *you* will look on *Him*, you shall live! Has He not said, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? Has He not also said, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”? If you believe, you shall see the Glory of God! Trust Him, trust Him! He deserves your trust, for He is a great Savior for the greatest of sinners.

And do you not think it is another instance of great frowardness that unbelief *casts reflections upon the Holy Spirit*? It seems to say, “I feel sorely afraid and, therefore, there is no peace for me. I am too hardened and foolish for the Holy Spirit to lead me to faith in Jesus and, therefore, I will not trust.” “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Change *you*, man? Why, He has turned *millions* from darkness to the Light of God! Look upward—see what hosts surround the Throne of Glory and “day without night” magnify His saving Grace! Not save *you*? Who are you that you should stand out against the witness of the Spirit of Truth? Will you refuse the three-fold witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood? Who are *you* that you should set yourself up as a kind of vanquisher of Grace, conquering Grace by your sins and saying to the ocean of God’s love, “This far shall you come, but no further”? Your unbelief is a very froward thing—nothing can be said for it—it dishonors Father, Son and Holy Spirit! It denies the Inspired Scripture and keeps your soul in cruel bondage.

This vile unbelief *has in it a tendency to destroy the Gospel itself*. If it could but have its own way, it would undermine the whole fabric of salvation. When a man says that God cannot save him, he suggests that there maybe others in the same case. Where, then, is Christ’s wisdom in bid-

ding us preach the Gospel to every creature? If it would be vain for one man to believe, each one of us would be afraid that it would be vain for us, also, and where, then, would be the Gospel promise? If it could be proven that any one man, if he believed in Jesus, would not be saved, then the Gospel itself would be disproved! Who among us would have any ground for believing in Christ if we knew it were possible to believe in Him and yet to be cast away? What is this but to rob us all of hope? Why, man, you are scuttling the ship! I mean that such is the tendency of your unbelieving talk.

If Jesus is not worthy to be trusted and you seem to say so by your own refusal to trust Him, then all of us who are resting upon Him for salvation are under a delusion! Do you mean to say this? If you, as a sinner, cannot be saved upon believing in Christ, then the whole Gospel is called into question—you have broken the whole staff of bread for the souls of men! Oh, wicked unbelief! God-dishonoring, soul-killing unbelief! Dear Hearer, be warned against it, for it will shut you out of Heaven unless you shut it out of your heart!

II. And now, secondly, we turn to the better side of our subject and remark that FAITH HAS THE DIVINE APPROVAL. “Blessed,” says God, “is that man that makes the Lord his trust.” *We are sure that it so.* Wherever there is faith, God is pleased with it, for faith is the sure mark of God’s elect. We can only know them by their believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. God would never have set that of which He disapproved to be the mark of His eternal choice, but, as He makes faith in Jesus to be the token of His covenanted ones, He must approve of it. Remember that God has been pleased, in His great love, to make this the main requirement of the Gospel. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

The Lord puts faith into the very forefront because He delights in it. I find not that the Lord has promised salvation to love, or to patience, or to courage—admirable as these Graces are—He has put this crown upon the head of *faith*. “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” The Lord must certainly approve of that which He makes to be the grand necessity of salvation! Do you not know that God has made faith to be the one thing necessary in the matter of prayer? If you come before Him in prayer, He will not ask you to bring your hands laden with gifts, nor to drop from your tongue choice words of eloquence! But you “must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” or else you can have nothing at His hands. If, then, God has made the efficacy of prayer to turn upon faith, He must have a high estimate of it! He has made faith to be the master key by which all the chambers of His treasury may be unlocked and, therefore, *depend upon it*, He will never cast it out as unwarranted and presumptuous. “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord His trust,” whoever that man may be!

Beside that, He has been pleased to make faith to be the mode and manner of the spiritual life. “The just shall live”—how? By *works*? No—“the just shall live by *faith*.” There is no living except by faith. Let any child of God try to live by sense or reason, even for a day, and see how miserable he will be! It comes to this with me—I must believe my God or

else I perish. I can walk the waves by faith—but, beginning to doubt—I sink. It is only as I trust that my soul can bear her daily burden and perform her daily duty. If, then, God has made faith to be the way of His people, rest assured it can never be wrong for a soul to exercise faith in Him. Why, Brothers and Sisters, look what God has done to make us believe! He cannot object to our trusting in Him, seeing He works to that end! For this purpose the Scriptures are in our hands. John says, “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31). The Lord multiplies His exceedingly great and precious promises that we might have strong consolation and find it easy to put our trust in Him!

His Holy Spirit comes on purpose to work faith in the soul and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Word, and in the hearts of His people, is intended to create and nourish faith in God. The Lord rewards faith even in this life! Read the 11th Chapter of Hebrews—see what men gained, what they enjoyed, what they did by faith! Unbelief does nothing, gets nothing, rejoices in nothing! But faith wins the blessing. The Covenant was made with Abraham, who “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” Who are Abraham’s seed? Why, they that trust as Abraham trusted, that exhibit a whole-hearted confidence in God, feeling that what He has promised, He is able, also, to perform! Oh Souls, you cannot have too much faith in God! You need never say, “May I believe?” It is altogether another question—How dare you doubt your God? “But is it true,” asks one, “that faith means trusting in God?” That is it. God bids you trust Jesus and you shall be saved. Will you accept His testimony and trust Jesus? That is the whole of it.

In common life we exhibit faith in *man* and no one blames us for a legitimate trust. A man says that he has received a thousand pounds. How is that? He has nothing in his hand but a bank-note and that is merely a bit of paper. Yet he is quite confident that he has the thousand pounds because he has faith in the Bank of England and in its promises. That is my own mind as to God’s promise—it is to me the thing which it promises, even as the note for £1,000 is a thousand pounds. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” If you believe God as you believe your friend, you are saved—for faith has brought you into the state of salvation. But this is what men will *not* come to. They will stop and mutter and sputter, and spin all kinds of cobwebs—and invent all sorts of theories in order to evade the sweet necessity of trusting in the Lord! Simply and wholly to hang upon the bare arm of God and trust the merit of His Son—this is what they will *not* come to—for they are “a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.”

Furthermore, it is not unreasonable, but *it is highly reasonable that God should take pleasure in faith*. Beloved, look at yourselves. Judge of the Lord from yourselves in this matter—for the Lord Jesus permits you so to judge of the Father’s mind. You who are fathers, what would you say of your child if he did not believe your promise? If he said that he could not trust you, what would you think of him? If your boy had offended, but refused to ask pardon because he could not believe that you would forgive him, what would be your judgment of his character? Would you be pleased with him if he would not confess that he was wrong, but took to

sulking because he thinks you are unwilling to forgive? Would you take pleasure in such a child as that? No, but one of the beautiful things about your little children is just this—that they have not a thought or a care—but trust you implicitly! They never question where Monday's dinner will come from—father has always found food—father will always do so.

If you make them a promise of a treat on Saturday, look how they will jump for joy! Though there is still a week to come before that promise is to be fulfilled, yet they begin to live on the prospect of it and they enjoy the pleasure a hundred times over by the expectation of it! They will ask you tomorrow whether it is not already Saturday. You are pleased that your children should trust you—it would be most unpleasant for you if they did not. When children have lost confidence in their parents, farewell to domestic peace! If you, being evil, love to be trusted, must it not be so with God? If you, a poor sinner, come and say, "Lord, I have greatly sinned, but I believe You are such a greatly loving Father that you can blot it all out for Jesus' sake," do you not think that He will be pleased to hear your confidence? But He cannot be pleased with you when you say, "Lord, I know all about Your Gospel and its blessings, but I really cannot trust You!" Oh, naughty words! Vile words! How can they look for favors who thus throw dirt into the face of God? How shall He bestow His Grace on men who will not even believe Him?

God will accept our faith, for it is in conformity with our position towards Him. What position ought the creature to occupy to its Creator? Should it not constantly depend upon Him? What position should a sinner occupy towards His Savior? Should He not rely upon Him most heartily? What position should a child of God occupy towards the Divine Father but one of loving confidence? Brothers and Sisters, God loves faith because faith supplies the missing link between us and Himself! If we cannot keep His Law perfectly, as, indeed, we cannot, for we have already broken it—yet if we trust Him, our heart is right before Him! The complete confidence of the heart is the essence of obedience and the fountain of it. A servant who thinks evil of his master cannot be an acceptable servant to any man—he will be looking out for his own interests and, whenever they come crosswise with those of his master, we know what will happen! But if, after having acted very crookedly, the man should have proof of his master's affection for him, and should come to the belief that his master is a model of goodness, then you have laid the foundation of another kind of service, such as no wages can purchase! From a loving trust there will proceed patience, diligence, zeal, fidelity, obedience and everything which is suitable in a servant towards a good master.

So, when a soul comes to make the Lord its trust, it has set out upon the right track, and though it is but at the head of the way, yet it will make advances and arrive at no mean degree of rightness with God. "Oh," says one, "it seems such a small matter to simply trust." It may seem so, but within the compass of that little thing there lies a force whose power it would be difficult to measure. Every Grace in embryo lies within true faith! It is a virtue which contains within it seed enough to sow all the acreage of life with holiness! O my Hearer, God blesses faith, therefore, I

pray you, render it to Him! God has put His *curse* on unbelief—oh, may His Spirit help you to shake yourself free of it this day!

III. My time has failed me and, therefore, I must close by noticing, in the last place, this fact—that FAITH IS BLESSEDNESS. “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust.” To believe in God is to be blessed by God. “Oh, but,” says one, “I believe in God and I am in great trouble.” Just so, and within that trouble there dwells a measureless blessing! Your trial is the veil which covers the face of a loving God. Faith will make you sing with the author of this Psalm, “I waited patiently for the Lord.” Faith says, “I am in deep trial, but all things work together for my good. It is, therefore, a great gain to me to be as I am. All these griefs and woes are but a heavenly surgery to cure me of the malady of inbred sin.” This enables the Believer to receive correction with patience. He knows that all is right and, therefore, the child of God frets not and does not kick against the pricks. As in the old days of surgery, a brave man laid himself down and gave himself up to the knife, so does the Believer resign himself to sharp affliction because he knows that it is necessary for his spiritual life and will tend to his perfection in Grace. Thus faith distils a potent medicine from poisonous plants and extracts light out of darkness. Is not this enough to make a man blessed?

Faith, again, releases the afflicted out of trouble. Turn to the Psalm, again, and read—“I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my month, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” If you are shut in by affliction, like a man in a deep pit and, if instead of rising out of it by your exertions, you only sink lower, like one who struggles to rise out of miry clay. If you see no way of escape, whatever, do not despair or resort to desperate means, or think bad of God, but just pray and trust—and soon, like David, you shall bear witness to the blessedness of trusting! “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous when they cannot guess how He will do it! Jehovah is not limited in ways and means. Is the Lord’s arm waxed short? Trust in the Lord in the dark and He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Thousands of saints who have tried and proved the faithfulness of the Lord unite in chorus to declare that He has delivered His people and will deliver them!

The man that makes the Lord his trust is blessed because his faith creates in him a deep peace. It is responsibility which causes the wear and tear of life—at least it is so in my case. Now, he who trusts a matter with the Lord sees that the fulfillment of the promise lies with God and not with him. When we trust in the Lord, we cease to worry because it is the Lord’s business to answer to our faith—

“Tis mine to obey, ‘tis His to provide.”

He who takes the Lord for his Guide no longer worries about the way. He who takes Him for his Watchman rests in perfect peace. He who accepts Him as a Savior looks for sure salvation at His hands. There is a wonderful calm in the heart when we can commit our way unto the Lord—then we delight ourselves in the Lord—and He gives us the desires of our heart.

That blessed act of casting every burden upon the Lord is faith's masterpiece and it gives a sweet quietus to all care. To rest in perfect peace of mind is the best blessedness beneath the stars—and we have it, for we hear the Spirit say concerning all the people of God, "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him."

Now, suppose you and I were laboring to reach Heaven by our own merits? Then we might bid farewell to peace, for all the way we would be terribly afraid that we had not done enough, or suffered enough, or prayed enough, or repented enough. There is no rest upon *that* bed, for it is shorter than a man may stretch himself. But, "we who have believed, enter into rest." Jesus is our Rest—in Him we have peace with God. If I could make the Lord Jesus my trust and yet be lost I should be a great loser, but I should not lose so much as God would! How is that? I should lose my salvation, but the Lord would lose His Glory, His truthfulness, His goodness! His Gospel would be dishonored and His Son robbed of His reward. That cannot be! When a man trusts his money with a firmly established bank, he does not sit up all night to protect his cashbox and iron safe. No, his money is out of his own keeping and he feels at ease about it. Thus we commit our body, soul and spirit into the pierced hands of Jesus who has redeemed us, and we know and are confident that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him until that day. None can know perfect rest of heart but those whose minds are stayed on God by a sincere trust in Him.

Faith, in addition to bringing peace, creates a holy elevation of character, and that is blessedness. The man who lives by sight and walks according to the judgment of the flesh is confined within a range too narrow for blessedness. He is not much above the brute that perishes! His provender and stall are the main dependence of his joy! But the man that lives by faith ranges among eternal things and drinks from celestial fountains! His is a high, sublime, mysterious life. Is it not the life of God in man? I have compared the ascent of faith to climbing a succession of lofty stairways. Up from the depths we have already risen by no other means than faith in the Invisible! Not a single step before us can we see. Beneath and around, clouds and darkness roll in enormous masses—the mist hangs thick over our pathway. Like the world, which the Lord hangs upon nothing, so our life has no visible dependence! We put down our foot on what seems thin as air and behold—it is firm as a rock beneath us! Rising, ever rising, we tread from stair to stair and are safe as the Throne of the Eternal—but we never see more than one step at a time and at times scarcely so much as that. Sight brings us no comfort, but Faith fills us with delight, for above her head shines out as clear as the sun, the Words of the Immutable Jehovah!

"Ah," cries one, "I could not live with nothing to depend upon!" Oh, my Brother, is God nothing? Elijah had nothing to depend upon, for Cherith dried up and the ravens came no more with bread and meat. And the widow woman had only flour enough for one more meal—yet the little meal in the barrel wasted not and the cruse of oil never failed! Isaiah had nothing to depend upon but God, you know—that is to say, he had only

everything. The Believer has nothing to depend upon except his God, but what more does he need? What more could he *have*? Mark how yon heavens stand without a pillar! See how the round world floats in space without a stay! What more does the universe require than the power of the Eternal? O Believer, get out into these deep waters where there is sea room for faith and no weak creatures to interfere with unmingled reliance upon God—for blessed is that man whose life is rendered sublime by an undivided confidence in the living God!

Lastly, blessed is the believing man when he thinks of dying, for he is sure and certain that he cannot truly die. Faith has so linked him with the one living God that he feels immortality pulsing through his entire nature! When he comes to lie on the bed of sickness and gradually decays, he has no fear of his departure! On the contrary, he looks forward with expectation to be delivered from the bondage and sinfulness of this mortal life and to be admitted into the liberty and perfection of the life eternal! Look at him as he quits the shores of earth—he is not torn away by violence, forced unwillingly into an unknown hereafter—no, he undresses for his last rest solemnly but expectantly! A song is on his lips and glory is in his heart! He has finished his work; he has been washed from his sin; he has embraced the promise and now he falls asleep upon the breast of his Redeemer—assured that he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord! “Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.”

Oh, Souls, if you will believe, you shall have both Heaven on earth and Heaven in Heaven! But if you will *not* believe your God—your Savior—many sorrows shall be to you and, in the end, you will destroy yourselves forever! It matters not what excuses you make about this, or that, or the other—if you will not trust your God, He will have nothing to do with you! If you cannot believe Him. If you will make His Son to be false. He must say at the last, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” It cannot be otherwise! This shall make the great division between you and the righteous—that you believe not in Him—while they have made the Lord their trust. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be numbered with His chosen! And all His promises shall be fulfilled to you, for with you has He made an everlasting covenant which shall stand fast forever and ever when all visible things have melted away! May God uplift you from the miry clay of unbelief to the rock of confidence in Him, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 40*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—192, 738, 685.**

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“LO, I COME”—EXPOSITION

NO. 2202

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING. APRIL 26, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, My ears have You opened:
burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I,
Lo, I have come—in the volume of the Book it is written of Me—I
delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.”
Psalm 40:6-8.*

Explained to us by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:5-7—

*“Therefore when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice
and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared
for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.
Then I said, Lo, I come—in the volume of the Book
it is written of Me—To do your will, O God.”*

WE have, in the use made of the passage by the inspired Apostle, sufficient authority for applying the quotation from the 40th Psalm to our Divine Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With such a commentary, we are sure of our way and our whereabouts. We might have been perplexed as to its meaning had it not have been for this, although I think, even without the guidance of the New Testament passage, those who are familiar with Holy Writ would have felt that the words could not be fulfilled in David, but must belong to a greater than he, even to the Divine Messiah, who, in the fullness of time, would come into the world. We rejoice that the Lord Jesus, Himself, here speaks of Himself. Who but He can declare His own generation? Here He is both the subject of the Words and the Speaker. The Word is from Himself and of Himself and so we have double reason for devout attention. He tells us what He said long ago. He declares, “Then I said, Lo, I come.” Because He has come to us, we gladly come to Him, and now we reverently wait upon Him to hear what our Lord shall speak, for, doubtless, He will speak peace to us, and will cause us to learn, through His Spirit, the meaning of His Words. O Savior, say to each of our hearts, “Lo, I come”!

I. Without further preface, I call upon you to notice, first, THE SWEEPING AWAY OF THE SHADOW. “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire.. . burnt offering and sin offering have You not required.”

When the Son of God is born into the world, there is an end of all types by which He was formerly prefigured. The symbols end when the Truth, itself, is made fully manifest. The sacrifices of the Law had their times and place, their teaching and their influence. Blessed were those in Israel

whose spiritual minds saw beneath the outward sign and discerned the inward Truth of God! To them the sacrifices of the holy place were a standing means of fellowship with God. Day after day they saw the Great Propitiation as they beheld the morning and the evening lamb—so often as they looked upon a sacrifice, they beheld the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world! In the Paschal supper they were instructed, by the slaying of the unblemished victim, the roasting with fire, the sprinkling of the blood upon the door outside and the feasting upon the sacrifice within.

Spiritual men could have found in the rites and ceremonies of the old Law a very library of Gospel literature! But, alas, the people were carnal, sensual and unbelieving and, therefore, they often forgot, even, to celebrate the appointed sacrifices. The Passover, itself, ceased for long periods and when the festivals were maintained, there was no life or reality in them. After they had been chastened for their neglect and made to wander in exile because of the wandering of their hearts after their idols, they were restored from captivity and were led to keep the Ceremonial Law, but they did it as a heartless, meaningless formality—and thus missed all *spiritual* benefit—with the unlighted candle in their hand they blindly groped in the dark. They slew the sacrifices and presented their peace offerings, but the soul had gone out of the service and, at last, their God grew weary of their formal worship and said, “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me.”

We read, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?” When once the life is gone out of the best symbolism, the Lord abhors the carcass and even a Divinely-ordained ritual becomes a species of idolatry! When the heart is gone out of the externals of worship, they are as shells without the kernel. Habitations without living tenants soon become desolations—and so do forms and ceremonies without their spiritual meaning. Toward the time of our Lord’s coming, the outward worship of Judaism became more and more dead—it was time that it was buried. It had decayed and waxed old and was ready to vanish away—and vanish away it did—for our Lord set aside the first, or old, that He might establish the second, or new. The stars were no longer seen with their twinkling, for the sun had risen!

The removal of these things was wholesale. We have four sorts of sacrifice mentioned here, but I need not go into details. Sacrifices in which blood was shed were abolished when the Son of God offered Himself without spot unto God. Bloodless offerings, such as fine flour, wine, oil, sweet cane bought with money and precious incense—which were tokens of gratitude and consecration—these, also, were no longer laid upon the altar. Both sacrifice and offering were not desired. And burnt offerings, which signified the delight of God in the great Sacrifice, were ended by the Lord’s actual acceptance of that Sacrifice, itself! Even the sin offering, which was burned outside the camp as a thing accursed, ceased altogether. It

represented sin laid upon the victim and the victim's being made a curse on that account. It might have seemed always useful as a reminder, for they were always sinning and always needing a sin offering, but even this was not required.

Nothing of the old Ceremonial Law was spared. Now we have no Ark of the Covenant, with its Shekinah light between the wings of the cherubim. Now we have no bronze laver, no table of showbread, no bronze altar and no sacred veil—the Holy of Holies, itself, is gone! Tabernacle and Temple are both removed. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father.” But the time is come when “they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” A clean sweep has been made of all the ancient rites, from circumcision up to the garment with its fringe of blue. These were for the childhood of the Church, the pictures of her first schoolbooks! But we are no longer minors and we have Divine Grace given us to read with opened eyes that everlasting classic of “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Now has the brightness of the former dispensation been quite eclipsed by the Glory which excels.

As these outward things vanish, they go away with God's mark of non-esteem upon them—*they are such things as He did not desire*. “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire.” The Lord God had no desire for matters so trivial and unsatisfactory. They were good for the people, to instruct them—if they had been willing to learn—but they fulfilled no desire of the heart of God. He says, “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” By the Prophet Micah, He asks, “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil.” These furnish no delight for the Great Spirit and give no pleasure to the thrice holy Jehovah! The formal worshipper supposed that his offerings were, in and of themselves, pleasing to God and, therefore, brought his “burnt offerings, with calves of a year old.” So far as they believingly understood the meaning of a sacrifice and presented it in faith, their offerings were acceptable, but in themselves considered, these were far from being what the Lord desired.

He that fills Heaven and earth says, “I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he-goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.” The spiritual, the infinite, the almighty Jehovah could not desire merely outward ritual, however it might appear glorious to men! The sweetest music is not for His ears, nor the most splendid roses of priests for His eyes. He desired something infinitely more precious than these—and He puts them away with this note of dissatisfaction.

And more, these sacrifices passed away with the mark upon them that *they were not what God required*. “Burnt offering and sin offering have You not required.” What did God require of man? Obedience. He said by Samuel, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” He says in another place, “He has showed you, O man, what is

good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” The requirement of the Law was love to God and love to men. This has always been God’s great requirement. He seeks spiritual worship, obedient thought, holy living, grateful praise, devout prayer—these are the requirements of the Creator and Benefactor of men. Ritualistic matters were so far required as they might minister to the good of the people and, while they stood, they could not neglect them without loss. But they were not the grand requirement of a just and holy God and, therefore, men might fulfill these without stint or omission, and yet God would not have of them what He required. “Yes,” He asks, “who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?” To see His Law magnified, His justice vindicated, His sovereignty acknowledged and His holiness imitated, is more to His mind! Absolute conformity to the standard of moral and spiritual rectitude which He has set up is His demand—and He can be content with nothing less. These things are not found in sacrifice and offering, neither do they always go therewith and, therefore, the outward sacrifice was not what God required.

They were so to be put away as never to be followed by the same kind of things. Shadows are not replaced by other shadows! The ceremonials of Aaron are not to be followed by another set of carnal ordinances! There are some who seem to think that they are to be so. Instead of Aaron, whom God ordained, we have a so-called priesthood among us at this day, claiming an Apostolic succession, which is impossible if they are priests, since no Apostle was a priest! Instead of rites which God has ordained, we have rites of man’s invention! The blessed ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, have been prostituted from their instructive and memorial intent into a kind of witchcraft, so that by what is called, “baptism,” children are said to be born again and made members of Christ and children of God! While in the second, or what they call, “Holy Communion,” the sacrifice of Christ is profanely said to be repeated or continued, even in the unbloody sacrifice of the “mass.”

Ah, Friends! Our Lord did not put away that grand, magnificent system of Mosaic rites to introduce the masquerade in which Rome delights, which certain Anglicans would set up among us! No, no! We have done with the symbolic system and have now but the two outward ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which are meant only for Believers who know what it is to be buried with Christ and to feed on Him. You have no right to bring in your own forms and ceremonies and place them in the Church of Christ. Beyond what God has ordained, we may not dare to go—and even in those things we may not rest as though there were anything in them of their own operation apart from their sacred teaching! These are instructive to you if you have a mind to be instructed—and if you know the Truths of God which they set forth. But do not imagine that men have come under another kind of ceremonialism, another system of ritual and rubric, for it is not so. The rites appropriate to priests are abolished with the Aaronic priesthood and can never be restored—“He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.” When He comes into the world, these carnal ordinances must go out of the world! Sacrifice and

offering, burnt offering and sin offering and all other patterns of heavenly things are swept away when the heavenly things, themselves, appear!

II. Thus much upon the shadows being swept away. And now, secondly, let us view THE REVELATION OF THE SUBSTANCE. We find the Son of God, Himself, appearing. We read here and we hear Him say—“My ears have you opened.” The Lord Himself comes, even He who is all that these things foreshadowed!

When He comes, He has a prepared ear. The margin has it, “My ears have you digged.” Our ears often need digging, for they are blocked up by sin. The passage to the heart seems to be sealed in the case of fallen man. But when the Savior came, His ears were not as ours, but were attentive to the Divine voice. He says, “He wakens My ears to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious.” Our Lord was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord. He knew what the will of the Lord was and He could say, “I do always the thing that pleases Him.” As Man, He had a Divine instinct of holiness which made Him to know and love the Father’s will—and caused Him always to translate that will into His own life.

You see He came with opened ears and some think that we have here an allusion to the boring of the ear in the case of the servant who had a right to liberty, but refused to quit his servitude because he loved his master and wished to remain with him forever. It is not certain that there is any such reference, but it is certain that our Lord was bound forever to the service which He had undertaken for His Father—and that He would not go back from it. He pledged Himself to redeem us and He set His face like a flint to do it. He loved His Father and He loved His chosen so much that He vowed to execute the Father’s work, even to what I might call, “the bitter end,” if I did not know that it was a sweet and blessed end to Him. His ears were prepared for His service!

But *our Lord came also with a prepared body.* Therefore the Apostle Paul, when He quoted this passage, probably taking the words from the Septuagint translation, writes, “A body have You prepared Me.” You will wonder how, in one passage, it should speak of the ears and the next should speak of the body, and yet there is small difference in the sense. We do not think of an ear without a body—that would be a sorry business. The reading in the Hebrews is involved in the text as it stands in the Psalm. If the ear is there, a body is there—you cannot even dream of an ear hearing if separate from the rest of the body! The Apostle gives us the sense of the text rather than the words and, at the same time, dealing as He was with Jews by whom the Septuagint was prized, He quoted from the version which they would be sure to acknowledge—and very properly and wisely so—because that version was perfectly accurate as to the meaning of the Hebrew. Regardless, he was inspired to read it—“A body have You prepared Me.” There was fashioned by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the blessed Virgin, a body fit to embody the Son of God. Worked mysteriously, by means into which we must not inquire—for what God has veiled must remain covered—that body was suited to set forth the great mystery, “God manifest in the flesh.”

The whole body of Christ was prepared for Him and for His great work. To begin with, it was a sinless body, without taint of original sin, otherwise God could not have dwelt in it. It was a body made highly vital and sensitive, probably far beyond what ours are, for sin has a blunting and hardening effect even upon flesh, and His flesh, though it was in the “likeness of sinful flesh,” was not sinful flesh, but flesh which yielded prompt obedience to His spirit, even as His whole human Nature was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. His body was capable of great endurance, so as to know the griefs and agonies and unspeakable sorrows of a delicate, holy and tender kind which it was necessary for Him to bear. “A body have You prepared Me.” In the fullness of time He came into that body, which was admirably adapted to enshrine the Godhead. Wondrous mystery, that the Infant of Bethlehem should be linked with the Infinite! And that the weary Man by the shores of Galilee should be very God of very God, revealed in a body prepared for Him! “A body have You prepared Me”—He had prepared ears and a prepared body.

He who assumed that body was existent before that body was prepared. He says, “A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come.” He from old eternity dwelt with God—the Word was in the beginning with God—and the Word was God. We could not, any one of us, have said that a body was prepared for us and, therefore, we would come to it, for we had had no existence before our bodies were fashioned! From everlasting to everlasting our Lord is God and He comes out of eternity into time—the Father bringing Him into the world. He was before all worlds and was before He came into the world to dwell in His prepared body!

Beloved, *the human Nature of Christ was taken on Him in order that He might be able to do for us that which God desired and required.* God desired to see an obedient man, a man who would keep His Law to the fullest—and He sees Him in Christ. God desired to see One who would vindicate the eternal justice and show that sin is no trifle. And, behold, our Lord, the eternal Son of God, entering into that prepared body, was ready to do all this mighty work by rendering to the Law a full recompense for our dishonor of it! An absolutely perfect righteousness He renders unto God—as the second Adam, He presents it for all whom He represents. He bows His head, a victim beneath Jehovah’s sword, that the Truth, justice and honor of God might suffer no detriment. His body was prepared to this end. Incarnation is a means to Atonement. Only a man could vindicate the Law and, therefore, the Son of God became a Man. This is a wonderful Being, this God in our nature. “Emmanuel” is a glorious word! Surely, for the Incarnation and the Atonement, the world was made from the first!

Was this the reason why the morning stars sang together when they saw the cornerstone of the world, because they had an inkling that here, God would be manifest as nowhere else, and the Creator would be wedded to the creature? That God might be manifested in the Christ, it may even be that sin was permitted. Assuredly, there could have been no Sacrifice on Calvary if there had not, first of all, been sin in Eden. The whole scheme—the whole of God’s decrees and acts—worked up to an atoning

Savior! Of the pyramid of creation and of Providence, Christ is the apex—He is the flower of all that God has made! His Divine Nature in strange union with humanity constitutes a peerless Person, such as never was before, and can never be again! God in our nature, one Being, and yet wearing two Natures, is altogether unique. He says, “A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come.” Think of this—it is a Truth of God more fit for meditation than for sermonizing. The Lord give us to know it well by faith!

III. But now, thirdly, I call your attention to THE DECLARATION OF THE CHRIST made in the text—“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. Then said I, Lo, I come.” Observe *when* He says this. *It is in the time of failure.* All the sacrifices had failed. The candle flickered and was dying out. And then the great Light of God arose, even the Eternal Light and, like a trumpet, the words rung out, “Lo, I come.” All this has been of no avail; now I come. It is in the time of failure that Christ always appears. The last of man is the first of God and when we have come to the end of all our power and hope, then the Eternal Power and Godhead appears with its, “Lo, I come.”

When our Lord comes, *it is with the view of filling up the vacuum* which had now been sorrowfully seen. God does not desire these things. God does not require these things, but He does desire and He does require something better, and lo, the Christ has come to bring that something! That awful gap which was seen in human hope when Moses had passed away and the Aaronic priesthood and all the ordinances of it were gone, Christ was born to fill! It looked as if the light of ages had been quenched, and God’s glorious revelation had been forever withdrawn. And then, in the dark hour, Jesus cries, “Lo, I come!” He fills the blank abyss! He gives to man in reality what he had lost in the shadow!

When He appears, it is as the personal Lord. Lay the stress upon the pronoun, “Lo, I come.” The infinite *Ego* appears. “Lo, I come.” No mere man could talk thus, and be sane! No servant or Prophet of God would ever say, “Lo, I come.” Saintly men talk not so. God’s Prophets and Apostles have a modest sense of their true position—they never magnify themselves, though they magnify their office. It is for God to say, “Lo, I come.” He who says it takes the body prepared for Him and comes in His own proper personality as the I AM. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” He comes forth from the ivory palaces to inhabit the tents of manhood! He takes upon Himself the body prepared for Him of the Lord God and He stands forth in His matchless personality ready to do the will of God! “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” Everything is stored up in His blessed Person and we are complete in Him.

Observe the joyful avowal that He makes—“Lo, I come.” This is no dirge—I think I hear a silver trumpet ring out—“Lo, I come.” Here is a joyful alacrity and intense eagerness! The coming of the Savior was to Him a thing of exceeding willingness. “For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.”

He comes with a word calling attention to it, for He is not ashamed to be made partaker of our flesh. “Lo,” He says, “I come. Behold, behold, I come.” This is no clandestine union. He bids Heaven behold Him come in-

to our Nature! Earth is bid to gaze upon it. O you sinners, listen to this inviting, “Lo!” Others have cried to you, “Lo, here!” And, “Lo, there.” But Jesus looks on you and cries, “Lo, I come.” Look here—turn all your thoughts this way and behold your God in your Nature ready to save you! Verily, the Incarnate God is a subject meet for the loftiest thoughts of sages and for the lowliest thoughts of children. Blessed are the children of Grace who can sit at the feet of the Incarnate God and look up, forgetting all the wisdom of the Greeks and all the sign-seeking of the Jews in the satisfaction which they find in Jesus!

I think, too, *I hear in this declaration of the coming One, a note of finality.* He takes away the sacrifice from Aaron’s altar, but He says, “Lo, I come.” There is the end of it. “Lo, I come.” Is there anything after this? Can anything supersede this—“Lo, I come”? “Lo, I come” has been the perpetual music of the ages! Read it, “Lo, I am come”—for it is in the present tense and how sweet the sound! Christ is come and joy with Him! Read it, as well, in the future, if you will, “Lo, I come,” for He comes “the second time without sin unto salvation”—here is our chief hope! “Lo, I come.” He, Himself, is the last Word of God. “In the beginning was the Word” and so He was God’s first Word. But He is the end as well as the beginning—God’s last Word to man—Christ is God’s ultimatum! Look for no new Revelation—“Lo, I am come,” shines on forever. Do not ask, “Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?” He has come! Look for no other! Behold, He came to give what God desires, what God requires—what more would you have? Let Him be all your salvation and all your desire. Let Him be “the desire of all nations.” He is the fulfillment of all the requirements of the human race as well as the full amount of what God requires.

IV. Next, I beg you to note THE REFERENCE TO PRECEDING WRITINGS. He says, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” If I preached from the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, I might fairly declare that in *the whole volume of Holy Scripture* much is written of our Lord and prescribed for Him as Messiah. The pages of Inspiration are fragrant with the name of Jesus. He is the top line of the entire volume and in the Greek Word I see a half allusion to this. He is the headline of contents to every chapter of Scripture. He is, of all Scripture, the Sum. “In the beginning was the Word.” Everything speaks of Him. The Pentateuch and the books of the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospels and the Epistles all speak of Him. “In the volume of the Book it is written of Me.”

Preaching as I am from the Psalms, I cannot take so long a range. I must look back and find what was written in David’s day and *certainly within the Pentateuch.* And where do I find it written concerning His coming? The Pentateuch drips with prophecies of Christ as a honeycomb overflowing with its honey. Chiefly is He to be found in the head and front of the book—as early as the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve had sinned and we were lost—behold, He is spoken of in the volume of the Book in these terms. “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” So, early was it written that the Redeemer would be born in our nature to vanquish our foe.

But I confess I do not feel shut out from another interpretation. I conceive that our Lord, here, refers to another Book, *the Book of the Divine purposes*, the volume of the Eternal Covenant. There was a time before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days—when all that existed was the Lord, who is All in All—then the sacred Three entered into Covenant, in mutual agreement, for a sublime end. Man sinning, the Son of God shall be the Surety. Christ shall bear the result of man’s offense. He shall vindicate the Law of God and make Jehovah’s name more glorious than ever it has been! The Second Person of the Divine Unity was pledged to come and take up the nature of men, and so become the First-Born among many Brothers and Sisters to lift up a fallen race, and to save a number that no man can number, elect of God the Father, and given to the Son to be His heritage, His portion, His bride.

Then did the Well-Beloved strike hands with the Eternal God and enter into Covenant engagements on our behalf— “In the volume of the Book it is written.” That sealed Book, upon whose secrets no angel’s eyes have looked, a Book written by the finger of God long before He wrote the Book of the Law upon tables of stone! That Book of God may be spoken of in the Psalm, “And in Your Book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” Our Lord came to carry out all His suretyship engagements—His work is the exact fulfillment of His engagements recorded in the Everlasting Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure.” He acts out every mysterious line and syllable, even to the fullest. Then He said, “A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” It is always a pleasing study to see our Lord, both in the written Word, and in the Everlasting Covenant of Grace.

V. I must close with the fifth point, THE DELIGHT OF HIM THAT COMES. He said, “Lo, I come.” As I have already told you, there is wonderful delight in that exclamation—“Lo, I come.” But lest we should mistake our Lord, He adds, “I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.” There can be no denial of His joy in His service!

Note well that *He came in compete subservience to His Father, God.* “I delight to do”—what? “Your will.” His own will was absorbed in the Divine will! His pleasure it was to say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. Though He was Lord and God, He became a lowly servant for our sakes! Though high as the highest, He stooped low as the lowest! The King of Kings was the Servant of Servants, that He might save His people! He took upon Him the form of a Servant, girded Himself and stood obediently at His Father’s call.

He had a prospective delight as to His work. Before He came, He delighted in the thought of His Incarnation. The Supreme Wisdom says, “My delights were with the sons of men.” Happy in His Father’s courts, He yet looked forward to an access of happiness in becoming Man. “Can that be?” asks one. Could the Son of God be happier than He was? As God, He was infinitely blessed, but He knew nothing by experience of the life of man—and into that sphere He desired to enter. To the Godhead there can

be no enlargement, for it is infinite, but still, there can be an addition—our Lord was to add the nature of man to that of God! He would live as Man, suffer as Man, and triumph as Man—and yet remain God! And to this He looked forward with a strange delight, inexplicable except upon the knowledge of the great love He bore to us. He had given His heart so entirely to His dear bride, whom He saw in the glass of predestination, that for her He would endure all things—

**“Yes, says the Lord, for her I’ll go
Through all the depths of care and woe,
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.”**

It was wondrous love! Our Lord’s love surpasses all language and even thought. I am talking prodigies and miracles at every word I utter. It was delightful to our Lord to come here!

“What did He delight in?” asks one. Evidently He delighted in God’s *Law*. “Your Law is within My heart.” He resolved that the beauties of the Law of the Lord should be displayed by being embodied in His own life and that its claims should be vindicated by His own death. To achieve this, He delighted to come and keep it and honor it by an obedience both active and passive. He also delighted in God’s will and that is somewhat more, for law is the expression of will and this may be altered. But the will of the great King never changes. Our Lord delighted to carry out all the purposes and desires of the Most High God. He so delighted in the will of God that He came to do it and to bear it, “by which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

He delighted also in *God*. He took an intense delight in glorifying the Father. He came to reveal the Father and make Him to be beloved of men. He did all things to please God. Moreover, He took a delight in *us* and here, though the object of His love is less, the love, itself, is heightened by the conspicuous condescension. The Lord Jesus took a deep delight in His people, whose names were written on His heart and engraved on the palms of His hands. His heart was fixed on their redemption and, therefore, He would present Himself as a Sacrifice on their behalf. The people whom the Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world lay on His very soul—for them He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened till it was accomplished. He gave Himself no rest till He had left both joy and rest to ransom His own.

May I go a step further and say that *He had an actual delight in His coming among men?* “I delight to do Your will, O My God”—not merely to *think* of doing it. When our Lord was here, He was the most blessed of men! Are you amazed? Do you remind me that He was “a Man of Sorrows”? I grant you that none was more afflicted, but I still stand to it, that within Him dwelt a joy of the highest order. To Him it was joy to be in sorrow—and honor to be put to shame. Do you think that lightens our estimate of His self-denial and disinterestedness? No, it adds weight to it! Some people fancy that there is no credit in doing a thing unless you are miserable in doing it. No, Brothers and Sisters, that is the very reverse! Obedience which is unwillingly offered and causes no joy in the soul is not acceptable. We must serve God with our *heart*, or we do not serve Him.

Obedience rendered without delight in rendering it is only half obedience! You shall say what you will about the greatness of my Lord’s agonies. You shall never go too far in your estimate of His unfathomable grief, but going with you to the fullest in it all, I shall still take liberty to say that He had within Himself a fountain of joy which enabled Him to endure the Cross and even to despise the shame! Blessed among men was He, even when He was made a curse for us! With delight He gave Himself for us and made a cheerful surrender of Himself, that He might be the Ransom for many. The text is express upon that fact.

And all this because *our Lord came with such intense heartiness*. He says, “Yes, Your Law is within My heart.” Our Lord is most thorough in all that He does. His work is never slovenly, nor in a half-hearted way. He does not even sit on the well and talk to a poor woman, but what His heart is there. He does not go into a fisherman’s hut, but what His heart is there and He heals the sick one. He does not sit down to supper with His followers, but what His heart is there and He reveals His love. I wish we were always at home when the Lord calls for us! Sometimes we are all abroad and our heart is away from the service of our Father—but He loved the Lord with all His heart, mind and strength. For us He gave His whole being, rejoicing to redeem us! He was always intense. Whether He preached or practiced, Jesus was all there and always there. Hence His delight, for what a man does with his heart he delights to do. These two sentences are melodious of joy to my ears! “I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.”

Hear this one other word. It is all done *now*. Jesus has fulfilled the Father’s will in the salvation in the midst of His ransomed ones. And shall I tell you, *need* I tell you, what must be the delight, *the heavenly Joy of our Lord, now that the work is finished?* He is now the focus, the center, the source of bliss! What must be His own delight? We often say of the angels that they rejoice over one sinner that repents. I doubt not that they do, but the Bible does not say so. The Bible says, “There is joy in the *presence* of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” What does it mean, “the presence of the angels”? Why, that the angels *see the joy of Christ* when sinners repent! Hear them say to one another, “Behold the Father’s face! How He rejoices! Gaze on the Countenance of the Son! What a Heaven of delight shines in those eyes of His! Jesus wept for these sinners, but now He rejoices over them! How resplendent are the nail-prints today, for the redeemed of the Lord’s death are believing and repenting! That blessed Countenance which is always as a sun, shines in the fullness of its strength now that He sees of the travail of His soul.” He who suffered feels a joy unsearchable—

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

Oh, the joy of triumphant love! The joy of the Crucified, whose prepared body is the body of His Glory as once it was the body of His humiliation! In that Manhood He still rejoices and delights to do the will of the Father.

My time has fled and yet I am expected to say something about missions. What shall I say? My Brothers, Sisters—all of you—do you know anything about the Truths of God I have spoken? Then go and tell the heathen that the Lord is come! Here is a message worth the telling! Mary Magdalene and the other Marys hasten to tell the disciples that the Lord had risen—will you not go and tell them that He has come down to save? “Lo, I come,” He says. Will you not take up His Words and go to the people who have never heard of Him and say, “Lo, He has come”? Tell the Ethiopians, the Chinese, the Hindus and all the islands of the sea, that God has come here to save men and has taken a prepared body, that He might give to God all He required and all that He desired, that sinful men might be accepted in the Beloved, with whom God the Father is well pleased!

Go, and take to the heathen this sacred Book. “In the volume of the Book it is written of Him.” Do not begin to doubt the Book, yourself. Why should you send missionaries to teach them about a Book in which you do not, yourself, believe? Tell the nations that, “In the volume of the Book it is written of Him.” Believe this Book and spread it! Help Bible Societies and all such efforts. And aid Missionary Societies which carry the Book and proclaim the Savior! The men of the Book of God are the men of God such as the world needs. Bid such men go and open the Book of God and teach the nations its blessed news!

Go, dear Friends, and assure the heathen that there is happiness in obedience to God. So the Savior found it. He delighted in God’s will, even to the death! And they will also know delight, as in their measures they bow before the authority of the Word and the will of the one living and true God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Jehovah, the I AM, must be worshipped, for beside Him there is none else. Give glory unto God, whom our Lord Jesus has come to glorify. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 40.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—383, 271, 229.**

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

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

“LO, I COME”—APPLICATION NO. 2203

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then said I, Lo, I come.”
Psalm 40:7.***

To my great sorrow, last Sunday night I was unable to preach. I had prepared a sermon upon this text with much hope of its usefulness, for I intended it to be a supplement to the morning sermon [Sermon #2202, “*Lo, I Come*”—*Exposition*”] which was a doctrinal exposition. The evening sermon was intended to be practical and to commend the whole subject to the attention of enquiring sinners. I came here feeling quite fit to preach, but an overpowering nervousness oppressed me and I lost all self-control—and left the pulpit in anguish. I come here this morning with the same subject. I have been turning it over and wondering why it was so. Perhaps this sermon was not to be preached on that occasion because God would teach the preacher more of his own feebleness and cast him more fully upon the Divine Strength. That has certainly been the effect upon my own heart.

Perhaps, also, there are some here, this morning, who were not here last Lord’s-Day evening, whom God intends to bless by the sermon. The people were not here, perhaps, for whom the eternal decree of God had designed the message and they may be here now. You that are new to this place should consider the strange circumstance—which never happened to me before in the 40 years of my ministry—and you may be led to enquire whether my bow was then unstrung that the arrow might find its ordained target in your heart! The two sermons will now go forth together from the press and, perhaps, going *together*, they may prove to be like two hands of love with which to embrace lost souls and draw them to the Savior, who herein says, “Lo, I come.” God grant it may be so!

The times when our Lord says, “Lo, I come,” have all a family likeness. There are certain crystals which assume a regular shape and, if you break them, each fragment will show the same conformation. If you were to dash them to shivers, every particle of the crystal would still be of the same form. Now, the goings forth of Christ which were of old, His coming at Calvary and that great Advent when He shall come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness—all these have a likeness, the one to the other. But there is a coming of what I may call a lesser sort, when Jesus cries, “Lo, I come,” to each individual sinner and brings a revelation of pardon and salvation—and this has about it much which is similar to the great

ones. My one desire this morning is to set forth the Lord Jesus as saying to you, as once He did to me, “Lo, I come.”

He still cries to the weak, destitute, forlorn, hopeless sinner, “Lo, I come.” I shall talk about that coming and hope that you will experience it, now, and thus be able to follow me in what I say. I speak mainly to the unconverted, but while I do so, I shall hope to be refreshing the grateful memories of those already saved—but this will all depend upon the working of the Spirit of God. To Him, then, lift up your hearts in prayer.

I. I will commence with this observation—THE LORD CHRIST HAS TIMES OF HIS FIRST COMINGS TO MEN—“*Then said I, Lo, I come.*”

What are these times? Maybe some here present have reached this season and this very day is the time of blessing when the text shall be fulfilled—“*Then said I, Lo, I come.*” Go with me to the first record in the volume of the Book, when it was said that He should come. You will find it in the early chapters of Genesis.

Jesus said, “Lo, I come,” *when man’s probation was a failure.* Man in the Garden of Eden had every advantage for obedience and life. He had a perfect nature, created without bias towards evil and he was surrounded with every inducement to continue loyal to his Maker. He was placed under no burdensome law. The precept was simple and plain—“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.” Only one tree was reserved—all the rest were given up to be freely enjoyed. In a very short time—some think it was on the first day, but that we do not know—our mother Eve ate of the fruit and father Adam followed her, and thus human probation ended in total failure. They were weighed in the balances and found wanting—“Adam, being in honor, continued not.” At that point we read in the volume of the Book that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. *Then* our Redeemer said, “Lo, I come.”

Listen to me, my Friend—you, also, have had your probation, as you have thought it to be. You left your father’s roof with every hope. Your mother judged you to be of a most amiable character and your friends expected to see in you one whose life would honor the family. You thought so yourself. Your probation has reversed that hope—you have turned out far different than you should have and, looking back upon the whole of your life to this moment, you ought to be ashamed! It has been a terrible breaking down for you and for all who know you—and you are sitting in this place feeling, “Yes, it is so. The tests have proven me to be as a broken reed. I am under condemnation by reason of my transgressions against God.” How rejoiced I am to tell you that, at such a time when you are conscious that you are a dead failure, Jesus says, “Lo, I come!” If you had *not* been a failure, you would not have needed Him and He never comes as a superfluity. But now, in your complete breakdown, you must have Him or perish—and in infinite pity he cries, “Lo, I come!” Is not this good news for you? Believe it and live!

That also was *a time when man’s clever dealings with the devil had turned out a great failure.* The serpent came and said, “God knows that in

the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” How craftily he put it! How cunningly he insinuated that God was jealous of what man might become and was keeping him back from a nobler destiny! He even dared to say, “You shall not surely die,” thus giving the Lord the lie direct! He seemed to say—“His threat is a mere bugbear, a thing to scare you from a great advance in knowledge and position! You shall not surely die.” Eve, in her supposed wisdom, was not able to cope with the serpent’s subtlety. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” The devil had played his cards so well that man was left bankrupt of virtue, bankrupt of happiness, bankrupt of hope! *Then*, in the volume of the Book, it was written, “I said, Lo, I come.” Yes, in the exact hour when hellish falsehood had robbed man of everything!

No man has yet dealt with the devil without being a loser. The arch-deceiver promises very fairly, but he lies from beginning to end. I know he promised you pleasure unbounded and liberty unrestrained. Now the pleasure is burnt out and the ashes of that which once blazed and crackled are terrible to look upon! As for liberty, where is it? You have become the bond-slave of sin. You were to enjoy life and lo, you are plunged in death! It may be there are in this house persons who bear in their bodies the marks, not of the Lord Jesus, but of the devil’s temptations. He has made you to sin so that your bones are filled with the sins of your youth—and you know it. He needs a long spoon who eats out of the same dish as the devil and your spoon has not been long enough! Sin has overreached and betrayed you. And you stand trembling before God as the result of having listened to the falsehoods of Hell and having rejected the commands of Heaven

Supposing such a person to be present—and I feel sure he is—I pray that he may hear my text as from the Lord Jesus, Himself. “Then said I, Lo, I come.” The devil has trod you down, but Jesus comes to raise you up! Your paradise is lost, but by Him it is to be restored! Jesus has come to give repentance and remission of sins. That crafty head which deceived you—the Lord Jesus has broken—He came for this purpose. If you had not been betrayed, you would not have needed a Deliverer, but your misery has made room for His mercy. Not while Adam is perfect in Paradise is there any news of the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent’s head. But after the serpent has done his deceitful work and has ruined the race, then we hear that ancient Gospel of God and see the only hope of fallen man! Here is good cheer for you who look with shame upon your foolish yielding to Satan’s deceits! You are caught as silly birds in a snare! You have been as foolish as the fish of the sea which are taken in a net, but when you are captives, Christ comes to be your Liberator and God commends His love towards you in that while you are yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly!

Further than this, when we find the first promise of our Lord’s coming, “in the volume of the Book,” *we find that man’s covering was a failure.* The

guilty pair had gathered the leaves of the fig tree and had made themselves aprons, for they knew that they were naked. This was the first fruit of that boasted Tree of Knowledge and it is the principal one to this day! Their scant coverlet contented them for a little while, but when the voice of the Lord God was heard in the Garden, they confessed that their aprons were good for nothing, for Adam acknowledged that he was afraid because he was naked and, therefore, he had hidden himself in the thick groves of the Garden. It is easy to make a covering which pleases us for a season, but self-righteousness, presumption, pretended fidelity and fancied natural excellence—all those things are like green fig leaves which shrivel up before long, lose their freshness—and are rather an exposure than a covering.

It may be that my hearer has found his imaginary virtues failing him. It was when our first parents knew that they were naked that the Savior said, “Lo, I come.” My downcast Hearer, if you are no longer in your own esteem, as good as you used to be. If you can no longer hide the fact that you have broken God’s Law and deserve His wrath. If you no longer believe the devil’s lie that you shall suffer no penalty, but may even be the better for sin, then our Lord, the Savior, says to you, “Lo, I come.” To you, O naked Sinner, shivering in your own shame, blushing scarlet with conviction—to you He comes! When you have nothing left of your own, He comes to be your robe of righteousness wherein you may stand accepted with God!

That first news of the coming Champion came at a time *when all man’s pleas were failures*. Adam had thrown the blame on Eve—“The woman whom You gave to be with me, *she* gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Eve had also thrown the blame on the serpent, but the Lord God had silenced all such excuses and driven them from their refuges. He had made them feel their guilt and had pronounced upon them the inevitable sentence—and then it was that He spoke of the “Seed of the woman.” Here was man’s first and last—and best hope! So too, my Friend, when you dare no longer plead your innocence, nor mention extenuations and excuses, then Jesus comes in! If conscience oppresses you so sorely that you cannot escape from it. If it is so that all you can say is “Guilty! Willfully Guilty,” then Jesus comes! If you neither blame your surroundings, nor your companions, nor the Providence of God, nor your physical weakness, nor anything else, but just take all the blame to yourself because you cannot help doing so—then Jesus comes in! Verily you have sinned against God, against your parents, against your fellow men, against the Light of God, against knowledge, against conscience and against the Holy Spirit! No wonder, therefore, that you stand speechless, unable to offer any plea by way of self-justification! It is in that moment of shame and confusion that the Savior says, “Lo, I come,” for such as you are He is an Advocate! When a sinner cannot plead for himself, Christ pleads for him! When his excuses have come to an end, then will the Lord put away his sin through His own great Sacrifice. Is not this a precious Gospel Word?

When our Lord did actually arrive, fulfilling the text by being born of a woman, it was *when man’s religion had proven a failure*. Sacrifices and of-

ferings had ceased to be of any value—God had put them away as a weariness to Him. The scribes and the Pharisees, with all their phylacteries and wide-bordered garments, were a mere sham. There seemed to be no true religion left upon the earth. Then said Christ, “Lo, I come!” There was never a darker 30 years than when Herod slew the innocents and the chief priests and scribes pursued the Son of God and, at last, nailed Him to the tree. It was *then* that Jesus came to us to redeem us by His death! Do I speak to any man here whose religion has broken down? You have observed a host of rites and ceremonies—you were christened in your infancy, you were duly confirmed, you have taken what you call, “the blessed sacrament.” Or it may be you have always sat in the most plain of Meeting Houses and listened to the most orthodox of preachers—and you have been among the most religious of religious people—but now, at last, the Spirit of God has shown you that all these performances and attendances are worthless cobwebs which avail you nothing! You now see that—

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

You are just now driven to despair because the palace of your imaginary excellence has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision. If I had told you that your religiousness was of no value, you would have been very angry with me and, perhaps, you would have said, “That is a bigoted remark and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for making it!” But now the Spirit of God has told you the same and you feel its force—He is great at convincing of sin! When the Spirit of Truth comes to deal with the religiousness of the flesh, He withers it in a moment! All religion which is not spiritual is worthless. All religion which is not the supernatural product of the Holy Spirit is a fiction. One breath from the Spirit of God withers all the beauty of our pride and destroys the comeliness of our conceit and *then*, when our own religion is dashed to shivers, the Lord Jesus comes in, saying, “Lo, I come.” He delights to come in His glorious Personality when the Pharisee can no longer say, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men” and when the once bold fisherman is crying, “Lord, save, or I perish.” If you feel that you need something infinitely better than Churchianity, or Dissenterism, or Methodism—in fact, that you need Christ, Himself, to be formed in you—then to you, even to you, Jesus says, “Lo, I come.” When man is at his worst, Christ is seen at His best. The Lord walks to us on the sea in the middle watch of the night. He draws near to those souls which draw near to death. When you part with self, you meet with Christ. When no shred of hope remains, then Jesus says, “Lo, I come.”

Once more. The Lord Jesus is to come a second time and when will He come? He will come *when man’s hope is a failure*. He will come when iniquity abounds and the love of many has waxed cold. He will come when dreams of a golden age shall be turned into the dread reality of abounding evil. Do not *dream* that the world will go on improving and improving—and that the improvement will naturally culminate in the millennium. No such thing! It may grow better for a while—better under certain aspects—

but, afterwards, the power of the better element will ebb out like the sea, even though each wave should look like an advance. That day shall not come except there is a falling away first. Even the *wise* virgins will sleep and the men of the world will be, as in the days of Noah, eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage.

And then, all of a sudden, the Lord will come as a thief in the night! The deluge of fire will find men as unprepared as did the deluge of water! He will come taking vengeance on His adversaries. When things wax worse and worse we see the tokens of His speedy coming. He will shortly appear, for the sky is darkening. When every hope will seem blotted out and nothing but grim ages of anarchy and ungodliness are to be expected, then our Deliverer will come! When the count of bricks was doubled in Egypt, Moses came. And when the world attains to its utmost unbelief and iniquity, Jesus will come. So at this moment my Hearer may be saying, “I cannot be worse than I am; if I am not actually already in Hell, yet I feel a fire within which tortures my soul! The sword of vengeance hangs over my head suspended by a single hair! I tremble to live and I fear to die. Lost! Lost! Lost! I am past hope!” This is the time for my text—“*Then said I, Lo, I come.*” He who is able to save to the uttermost appears to the soul when every other hope disappears. In your deep distress, I see a token for good! You are now reduced to spiritual death and now, I trust, the Eternal Life will visit you!

Now all this I put before you in simple language, believing what I say, and trusting that if I describe your case, you will know that I mean it for you. I have heard of a preacher who was so fearful lest he should be thought personal, that he said to his congregation, “Lest any of you should think that what I have said was meant for you, I would observe that the sermon I am preaching was prepared for a congregation in Massachusetts.” I can plead nothing of the sort! I refer to you, my Hearer, in the most pointed manner! I will attend to Massachusetts, if ever the Lord sends me there, but just now, *I mean YOU*. Oh, that you may have Grace to take home these thoughts to yourselves, for if you do, they will, by the Spirit’s power, bring the light of hope into your souls!

II. Secondly, I would remark that CHRIST COMES TO SINNERS IN THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON—“*Then said I, Lo, I come.*” Note that glorious, I! Have you not seen people engaged in urgent work who did not understand their business? Apprentices and other unskilled people are muddling time away. They are making bad, worse, and running great risk. Perhaps a great calamity will occur if the work is not done well and quickly. A first-rate worker is sent for. See, the man has come who *understands* the business. He cries, “Let me come! Stand out of my way! You are on the wrong tack—let me do it myself!” You have not blamed him for egotism, for the thing needed to be done and he could do it—and the others could not. Everybody recognized the master workman and gave place to him. The announcement of his coming was the end of the muddle and the signal of hope! Even so, Jesus comes to you sinners and His Presence is your salvation! He says, “Lo, I come.” What does He mean?

He means, *the setting of all else on one side*. There is the priest—he has not helped you much. He may go, for Jesus says, “Lo, I come.” There are your own efforts and doings. There are your feelings and thoughts. There are your ceremonies and austerities. There are your prayers and tears. There are your hearings and readings—all these must be laid aside as grounds of confidence—and Jesus, alone, must be your trust. He can do for you what none of these can. You are trying to work yourself up to repentance and faith, but you cannot succeed. Let Him come and He will bring every good thing with Him. It is glorious to see our Lord throwing down all our bowing walls and tottering fences and to hear Him cry, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation.” Everything else vanishes before His perfect salvation!

Before Him there is *a setting aside of self*. You have been your own confidence. What you could feel, or do, or think, or resolve, had become the ground of your confidence, but now Jesus puts self down and He is, Himself, exalted. By working yourself to death, you cannot effect our own salvation. Lo, Jesus comes to save you! You cannot weave yourself a garment. Lo, He comes to clothe you from head to foot with His own seamless robe of righteousness! He annihilates self that He may fill all things.

Here is a glorious *setting of Himself at our side and in our place*. Mr. Moody tells a story which I would gladly hope may be true, for one would like to hear something good about a Czar of Russia, and especially about our once enemy, the Emperor Nicholas. The story concerns a soldier in the barracks who was much distressed by his heavy debts. He was in despair, for he owed a great deal of money and could not tell where to get it. He took a piece of paper and made a list of his debts and underneath the list he wrote, “Who will pay these debts?” He then lay down on his bunk and fell asleep, with the paper before him. The Emperor of Russia passed by and, taking up the paper, read it, and being in a gracious mood, signed at the bottom, “Nicholas.” Was not that a splendid answer to the question? When the soldier woke up and read it, he could scarcely believe his own eyes. “Who will pay these debts?” was the despairing question. “Nicholas,” was the all-sufficient answer! So are we answered! Who will bear our sins? The grand reply is, “JESUS.” He puts His own name to our liabilities and, in effect, that He may meet them, He says, “Lo, I come.”

Your debt of sin is discharged when you believe in Christ Jesus. “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” but the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin! You are not now to bear your own sins. Behold the Scapegoat, who carries them away into the wilderness! Yes, Jesus says, “Lo, I come!” He takes our sins upon Himself. He bears their penalty and we go free! Blessed words—“Lo, I come”—I come to take your weight of sin, your burden of punishment! I come to be made a curse for you, that you may be made the righteousness of God in Me. Sinner, stand out of the way and let Jesus appear for you and fill your place! He sets you on one side and then He sets Himself where you have been! Jesus is now the one Pillar on which to lean, the one Foundation on which to build, the one and only Rest for our weary souls!

He sets Himself where we can see Him, for He cries, "Lo, I come." That is to say, "See Me come." He comes openly, that we may see Him clearly. How I wish the Lord would reveal Himself at this moment to each one of those who are weary of earth, of self, of sin and, possibly, even weary of life, itself! Oh, if you could but see Jesus standing in your place, you would have faith to stand in His place and so become, "accepted in the Beloved"! O Lord, hear my prayer, and cause poor hearts to see You descending from the skies, to uplift sinners from the dark abyss! Holy Spirit, touch that young man's eyes with heavenly salve, that he may see where salvation lies. Deal with that poor woman's dim eyes, also, that she may perceive the Lord Christ and find peace in Him. Jesus cries, "Lo, I come! Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!

There is life at this moment for thee.

Then look, sinner—look unto Him and be saved—

Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

Should you even lie in all the despair and desolation which I described, I would persuade you to believe in Jesus! Trust Him and you shall find Him all that you need!

Our lord sets Himself to be permanently our All in All. When He came on earth, He did not leave His work till He had finished it. Even when He rose to Glory, He continued His service for His chosen, living to intercede for them. Jesus was a Savior 1,900 years ago and He is still a Savior—and He will be a Savior until all the chosen race shall have been gathered Home. He tells us, "I said, Lo, I come," but He does not say, "I said, I will go away, and quit the work." Our Lord's ear is bored and He goes out no more from the service of salvation. It is not written of any penitent souls, "You shall seek Me, but shall not find Me." But it is written, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." O my Hearer, you are now in the place where the Gospel is preached to you—yes, to *you*, for we are sent to preach the Gospel to every creature! And though you should be the worst, most benighted and most guilty of all the creatures out of Hell, yet you *are* a creature, and we preach Christ to you!

O poor Heart, may the Lord Jesus say to you "Lo, I come!" for He comes to stay—to stay until He has worked salvation *in* you as He has worked out salvation *for* you. He will not leave a Believer till He has presented him spotless before the Throne of God with exceeding joy. I wish I could make all this most clear and plain. You are altogether ruined by your own fault and you cannot undo the evil. You have done all you can and it has come to nothing. You are steeped in sin up to your throat—yes, the filth has gone over your head—you are as one drowned in black waters. Despairing one, cast not your eyes around to seek for a friend, for you will look in vain to men! No arm can rescue you, save one, and that is the arm of Jesus who now cries, "Lo, I come!" Set everything else on one side and trust yourself with the Savior, Christ the Lord!

III. Oh, that many may be comforted while I dwell on the third head! CHRIST IN HIS COMING IS HIS OWN INTRODUCTION. *Here our Lord is His own herald*, "Lo, I come." He does not wait for an eloquent preacher to act as master of ceremonies for Him—He introduces Himself. Therefore

even I, the simplest talker on earth, may prove quite sufficient for my Lord’s purpose if He will graciously condescend to bless these plain words of mine. It is not I that say that Jesus comes, but in the text our Lord, Himself, declares, “Then said I, Lo, I come.” You need not do anything to draw Christ’s attention to you—it is Christ who draws your attention to Himself! Do you see this? You are the blind bat and He is all eyes towards you and bids you look on Him. I hear you cry, “Lord, remember me,” and I hear Him answer, “Soul, remember Me.” He bids you look on Him when you beseech Him to look on you!

He comes when quite unsought, or sought for in a wrong way. To many men and women, Christ has come though they had not even desired Him. Yes, He has come even to those who hated Him. Saul of Tarsus was on His way to worry the saints at Damascus, but Jesus said, “Lo, I come”—and when He looked out of Heaven, He turned Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the Apostle! The promise is fulfilled, “I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me.” Herein is the glorious sovereignty of His love fully exercised and Grace reigning supreme. “Lo, I come,” is the announcement of majestic Grace which waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men.

Our Lord Jesus is the way to Himself. Did you ever notice that? He Himself comes to us and so He is the way by which we meet Him. He is our rest and the way to our rest. He says, “I am the way.” You want to know how to get to Christ? You have *not* to get to Christ, for He has come to you! It is well for you to come to Christ, but that is only possible because Christ has come to you! Jesus is near you—near you *now*. Backslider, He comes to you! Wandering Soul, roving to the very brink of perdition, the good Shepherd cries, “Lo, I come.” He is the way to Himself!

Remember, also, that *He is the blessing which He brings.* Jesus not only gives life and resurrection, but He says, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” Christ *is* Salvation and everything necessary to salvation is in Him. If He comes, all good comes *with* Him, or rather, *in* Him. An enquirer once said to a minister, “The next step for me is to get a deeper conviction of sin.” The minister said, “No such thing, my Friend—the next step is to trust in Jesus, for He says, Come unto Me.” To come to Jesus, or rather to receive Jesus who has come to us, is the one essential step into eternal salvation. Though our Lord says, “Come unto Me,” He has preceded it with this other word, “Lo, I come.” Poor cripple, if you cannot come to Jesus, ask Him to come to you and He will! Here you lie and you have been for years in this case—you have no man to put you into the pool and it would do you no good if he did—but Jesus can make you whole and He is here! You cannot stir hand or foot because of spiritual paralysis, but your case is not hopeless. Listen to my Lord in the text, “Then said I, Lo, I come.” *He* has no paralysis! He can come, leaping over the mountains of division! I know my Lord came to me, or I should never have come to Him—why should He not come to you? I came to Him because He came to me—

***“He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”***

Why should He not draw you, also? Is He not doing so? Yield to the pressure of His love!

“Then said I, Lo, I come.” You see *our Lord is His own spokesman*. He says to me, “Go and tell those people about My coming”—and I gladly do so—but you will forget my words and refuse to accept the Coming One. Your consciences will be unawakened, your hearts unmoved—I fear it will be so. But if this text is fulfilled concerning our Lord this day—“Then said I, Lo, I come”—you will hear HIM! If He speaks, He is, Himself, the Almighty Word, and His voice will reach your hearts and accomplish His purpose! Dear Christian people, join with me in this prayer—Lord, speak to Your chosen ones that lie here in their death-like despair, far off from You, and say to each one of them, “Lo, I come.” O downcast Soul, this is your morning—this is the set time to favor you—this day is salvation come to your house and to your heart! Make haste and come down from the tree of your frivolity or your self-righteousness! Receive the Lord Jesus, for today He must abide in your house and in your heart—the hour for the imperial “*must*” of the eternal purpose has arrived! God grant it may be so! May this be an hour of which Jesus shall declare—“Then said I, Lo, I come!”

IV. Our next point is this—CHRIST, TO CHEER US, REVEALS HIS REASONS FOR COMING. Only a few words on this. Note the rest of the verse—“Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” When we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly because it was the due time *according to Covenant purposes*. Christ comes to a guilty sinner just as He once came to a manger and a stable, because so it was appointed. There is nothing for Him to get, but everything for Him to *give*. He comes because so it is written in the volume of the Divine Decrees—

**“Thus the eternal counsel ran—
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!”**

Therefore in love the Savior appears to the sinner and, by Divine Grace, arrests him in his mad career.

It is His Father’s will. Christ’s coming to save a soul is with His Father’s full consent and aid. The Father wills that you who believe in Him, lost though you are, should now be saved—and Jesus comes to do the will of the Father.

He comes because His heart is set on you. He loves you and so He hastens to your rescue. Your salvation is His delight. Though your soul is sunk in a sea of need and you are in despair because of that need, Jesus loves you, and comes to meet your case. The best of all is that Jesus loves you. One asked an old man of 90, “Do you love Jesus?” and the old man answered with a smile, “I do, indeed. But I can tell you something better than that.” His friend asked, “Something better than loving Jesus! What is that?” The old disciple replied, “*He loves me.*” O Soul, I wish you could see this fact which is, indeed, better than your love to Jesus, namely, His love to you! Because He loved His redeemed from before the foundation of the world, therefore, in due time, He says, “Lo, I come.”

The fact is, *you have need and He has love—and so He comes.* There is no hope for you unless He comes and that is why He comes! If you had a

penny of *your own*, He would not give you His purse. If you had a rag of *your own*, He would not give you His robe. If you had a breath of *your own*, He would not give you His life! But now that you are naked, poor, miserable, lost and dead, Jesus reveals Himself and you read concerning Him, "Then said I, Lo, I come." He gives you His reasons—reasons not in yourself, but all in *His Grace*. There is no good in you—there is no reason in you why the Lord should save you—but because of His free, spontaneous, rich, sovereign, almighty Grace, He leaps out of Heaven, He descends to earth, He plunges into the grave to pluck His Beloved from destruction!

V. Here is my last word—CHRIST'S COMING IS THE BEST PLEA FOR OUR RECEIVING HIM—and receiving Him now! O Sirs, remember you have not to raise the question whether He will come or not. He is come! You have not to say, How can I come to Him? He comes to you! You need a Mediator between your soul and God, but you do *not* need any mediator between *yourself and Jesus*, for He says, "Lo, I come." To you in all your filthiness, in all your condemnation, in all your hopelessness, He comes! Wait not for anybody to introduce you to Him, or Him to you—He has introduced Himself and here is His card—"Then said I, Lo, I come." No pleas are needed to persuade Him to come to you, for He says, "Lo, I come." Though you cannot think of a single argument why He should appear to you in mercy, He does so! It is written, "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God." O Words of wondrous Grace! Our gracious Lord does not wait for our entreaties; but of His own accord He says, "Lo, I come." Without asking you and without your asking Him, He puts in an appearance in the sovereignty of His Grace.

No search is needed to find the Lord, for He comes in manifested Grace and calls upon us to see Him. "I have long been searching for Christ" murmurs one. What? Seeking for the sun at noonday? Jesus is not lost! It is *you* that are lost and He is searching for you! He says, "Lo, I come"—it is *you* that will not come. Still one declares that he has been seeking the Lord Jesus for many a day. This is sadly strange, for Jesus is near. "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart, that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved! Searching after Christ? No, verily He says, "Lo, I come."

Moreover, no waiting is needed and no preparation is to be made by you. Why do you wait? HE does not wait, but cries, "Lo, I come!" "I will get ready for Christ," you say, but it is too late to talk so, when He cries, "Lo, I am come." Receive Him! If you are, in yourself, sadly unready, yet He, Himself, will make everything ready for Himself. Only open wide the door and let Him in. Do you say, "But I am ashamed"? Be ashamed! He bids you be ashamed and be confounded, while He declares, "I do not this for your sakes." Yet be not so ashamed as to commit another shameful deed

by shutting the door in your Redeemer’s face! Shut not out your own mercy!

A pastor in Edinburgh, in going round his district, knocked at the door of a poor woman for whom he had brought some needed help, but he received no answer. When next he met her, he said to her, “I called on Tuesday at your house.” She asked, “At what time?” “About eleven o’clock. I knocked, and you did not answer. I was disappointed, for I called to give you help.” “Ah, Sir!” she said, “I am very sorry. I thought it was the man coming for the rent and I could not pay it and, therefore, I did not dare to go to the door.” Many a troubled soul thinks that Jesus is One who comes to ask of us what we cannot give, but, indeed, He comes to *give us all things*. His errand is not to condemn, but to forgive. Miss not the charity of God through unbelief! Run to the door and say to your loving Redeemer, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, but as You have come to me, I welcome You with all my heart.”

No assistance is needed by Christ on your part. He does not come with half a salvation and look to you to complete it. He does not come to bring you a robe, half woven, which you are to finish. How could you finish it? Could the best saint in the world add anything to Christ’s righteousness? No good man would even *dream* of adding his home-spun to that raiment which is of worked gold! What? Are *you* to make up the deficient ransom price? Is it deficient? Would you bring your clods of mud into the royal treasury and lay them down, side by side with sapphires? Would you help Christ? Go, yoke a mouse with an elephant! Go harness a fly side by side with an archangel! But dream not of yoking yourself with Christ. He says, “Lo, I come,” and I trust you will reply, “My Lord, if You are come, all is come, and I am complete in You”—

**“You, O Christ are all I need,
More than all in You I find.”**

Receive Him—receive Him at once! Dear children of God and sinners that have begun to feel after Him, say with one accord, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” If He says, “Lo, I come,” and the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and he that hears says, Come, and he that is thirsty comes, and whoever will is bidden to come and take the Water of Life freely—then let us join the chorus of comes, and come to Christ ourselves! “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!” You who most of all need Him, be among the first and most glad, as you hear Him say, “Lo, I come!”

All that I have said will be good for nothing as to saving results unless the Holy Spirit shall apply it with power to your hearts. Join with me in prayer that many may see Jesus, just now, and may at once behold and accept the present salvation which is in Him.

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THE MASTER'S PROFESSION— THE DISCIPLES' PURSUIT NO. 977

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 21, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
In aid of the Baptist Young Men's Missionary Association.**

***"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo,
I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not
hid your righteousness within my heart,
I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have
not concealed Your loving kindness and Your
Truth from the great congregation."
Psalm 40:9, 10.***

WHO is the speaker that gives utterance to these marvelous words? In the first instance they must be understood to proceed from our Lord Jesus Christ. By the Spirit of prophecy in the Old Testament they were spoken of Him, and by the Spirit of interpretation in the New Testament they have been applied to Him. Mark, then, how vehemently He here declares that He has fully discharged the work which He was sent to accomplish. When, in the days of His flesh, He was crying to His Father for preservation in a season of dire distress, He might well ask that He should then be helped, since all the previous strength He possessed had been laid out in His Father's service.

But because this profession *emphatically* belongs to our Savior we need not suppose that it *exclusively* belongs to Him. On the other hand, Christ, being our forerunner and our example, we are encouraged to emulate the high calling and the dutiful obedience He so perfectly exhibited.

I. UNDOUBTEDLY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS WE READ HIS HISTORY IN THE FOUR EVANGELISTS, MOST GLORIOUSLY FULFILLED HIS LIFE-MISSION. He was constantly testifying to the Gospel of God, the Gospel of His righteousness and of His Grace. From the first moment when He, being full of the Holy Spirit, began to preach the Gospel, until the day when He was taken up into Heaven, while He blessed His disciples, He was instant in season and out of season.

There were no wasted moments of time, no neglected opportunities, no talents held in reserve. "I must work," was His motto. The zeal of God's House consumed Him. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. A marvelous study is this life of Christ on earth. And as one looks at it thought begets thought, for—

***"Kindred objects kindred thoughts inspire,
As summer clouds flash forth electric fire."***

Mark you not how He concentrated *every attribute of His Nature, every faculty of His mind, and every power of His body* in the one work He had undertaken—to do His Father's will? He seems all His life through to have challenged the enquiry, "Don't you know that I must be about My Father's business?"

He was continually preaching the Gospel. "Never man spoke as this Man," may apply to the quantity as well as the quality of His utterances. All places seemed to be alike suitable to His ministry. Your gowns and your pulpits, your chancels and naves, your aisles and architecture were of no account with Him. He wanted no toga or rostrum, nor did He need a prior arrangement of the assembly to lend Grace to His discourses when He made known the Word of God to the people and astonished them with His doctrine.

He could speak anywhere—even along the crowded thoroughfare, where the multitudes thronged Him. He went down the lowest streets, and from the poorest beggars He didn't turn aside. He was not thwarted by the sneers, and sarcasms, and subtle questioning of the Pharisees and Sadducees. One thought possessed Him—and He persistently worked it out. His life-sermon was so thorough that nothing of earthly splendor could allure or distract Him, or break the thread. He was always and everywhere either pleading with God *for* men, or else pleading with *men* for God.

The reiterated expressions of these two verses are emphatically the Truth of God—the asseverations are vehement, yet the effect is a noble vindication of integrity. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness, and your Truth from the great congregation."

He was the great Witness for God, the great Testifier, who went proclaiming everywhere the kingdom of God, and the good tidings of salvation to man. Do not these words likewise suggest to you the thought that *Christ testified frequently to the greatest crowds?* "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. . . I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation."

On the hilltop, where His disciples came unto Him and He began with His benediction of, "Blessed," the multitude that gathered together, when He sat down and taught them, was doubtless imposing. The people sometimes thronged to hear Him in such numbers that the historian describes them as innumerable, and tells us that they trod one upon another. From the statement given us, that there were at one time five thousand and at another time four thousand men, besides women and children, collected together in the desert place and the wilderness, when He fed them, we might reasonably infer that in populous places the crowds assembled on a yet vaster scale.

Of course, the whole population off Judea, scattered all over the land, was scarcely equal to the population of this city, and therefore greater crowds may be collected in London than could have been gathered in Jerusalem. Yet the concourse there must at times have been exceedingly great and the spectacle unusually grand, especially when at the great feast our Lord stood up before the people, and rang out, in words clear and distinct—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

Why, for years afterwards, the very tones of His voice must have haunted the memories of those who stood and listened to Him, if they had rejected the message. It is not easy to stand up before a crowded assembly. Let those who think so come and try. Oftentimes it tests a man's valor. It brings many trials to his spirit to be prepared for the work. But

our Lord Jesus Christ was fully equipped for His blessed ministry. He was a great Preacher, with a great Message, full of a great love, with a great Father by whom He was commissioned, sustained, cheered. All the qualities of His Character and conduct were congruous.

With a great assembly He was at home. For His sympathy was mighty in its aggregate and minute in its detail. At the same time, Christ did not *need* a great congregation to enable Him to preach. The first verse of our text, if I catch the heart of its meaning, seems to me to intimate that He could speak personally to one or to two—"Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know." From the court of human conscience to the court of Divine Omniscience the appeal is carried.

Fame has not heard of this private fidelity. Howbeit He that dwells in the heavens takes cognizance of it? "O Lord, You know, and can bear witness to it. When there was but one woman at the well's brink, I refrained not My lips." When there were but two—His disciples, as He was going to Emmaus—He opened His mouth. Whether they were those whom He had made, or would make His disciples, He had a word for all at all times and at all seasons. In this we ought to imitate the Master. Be ready to tell of Christ not only when your heart is prepared for it at a set time, but at all times, whether you have prepared for it or not.

Your spirit should be always on the alert. You should always be on the watch for souls. Gladly would I be like the eagle that is on its way to the nest, and looks for it long before it comes in sight, and no sooner discerns it than, like a lightning flash, it darts off and alights upon it. O for a heart that is set on winning souls, that is set on glorifying God, that is set on coming nearer to the Model and being more conformed in this matter unto Christ our Head! Our Lord could truly assert that He had not kept back the Gospel.

He had preached it publicly to the crowds, and He had declared it privately, as opportunity allowed. That He never did seal His lips or stifle His testimony, He could call God to witness. Does not the tenth verse, in its first clause, *intimate that Christ's preaching was never heartless preaching?* "I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart." As if He had said, "It is in My heart, but I have never concealed it there. What I have received of You, O My Father, I have made known unto the people—indeed, Your will—which I have observed in Heaven, and engaged to fulfill on earth.

"Your righteousness, as it appears in the Justice of Your Throne and the benevolence of Your Laws. Your faithfulness, as it is verified in the stability of Your Covenant and the perpetuity of Your ordinances. Your salvation, as it was prepared in Your counsels of old, and is displayed when You makes bare Your right hand and Your holy arm. Your loving kindness which flows in one perpetual stream of mercy. And your Truth, which sets the final seal to Your Testimonies—all these have I treasured in My heart, not to hide them from the children of men, but to manifest them for the Glory of Your name and the welfare of Your people."

Is it so? Then this solemn statement before God is of vital interest to us. From now on every Word, every Statute, every Precept of the Gospel comes to us distilled through the heart of Christ. I like the idea of pouring our sermons out of our own hearts. They must come from our hearts, or they will not go to our hearers' hearts. But, oh, how full of gracious se-

crets our hearts ought to be, priceless secrets, which though hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes! Jesus, we thank You for this, that You have not concealed Your Father's loving kindness and Truth from us.

See, too, our Master kept always to vital matters. We notice here how He uses words which show that His teaching had a distinct reference to God. "I have not hid *Your* righteousness. I have declared *Your* faithfulness and *Your* salvation. I have not concealed *Your* loving kindness and *Your* Truth from the great congregation." Our Lord, in His teaching, never seems to have diverged from the great central Truth. We are too apt to be taken up with the mere externals, and if we do not become mere sectarians, it is just possible that points of our creed of the least importance occupy the most prominent place in our thought and conversation.

Our Lord, with eagle eyes, descries what is most important for men to know, and upon that He dwells. Sinners must know of God's righteousness. They will never know their sinfulness otherwise, or knowing it they will think it to be a little thing. The righteousness of God comes like a stream of light into the soul, and reveals its corruption. God's salvation, again, must be shown in its true colors. It does not owe its origin, its accomplishment, or its application to our works or our merits, but it proceeds from God's Grace, and redounds to His Glory.

I hold that this should be the cherished motive of the Gospel preacher, to glorify God! While it should be the chief end and aim of Christians ordinarily, it is to be the chief end and aim of the preacher extraordinarily. Beyond everyone else, he is concerned with that which, beyond everything else, brings Glory to Him who is first, last, midst, and without end. Jesus Christ preached God's righteousness, and showed God's righteousness even in salvation. And then He preached that salvation fully.

Nor, dear Friends, did He withhold His testimony of the other attributes of God. Think for an instant of God's faithfulness. Oh, what a delightful theme! As immutability is a Glory that belongs to all His attributes, so faithfulness pertains to all His purposes and promises. Well may His people everywhere rely upon His fidelity. Well may we tell that we serve no mutable God. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Moreover He will rest in His love, "for the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake."

He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His promises and His threats abide steadfast. Side by side with the faithfulness of God there is witness of His loving kindness. Oh, what a glorious Revelation! The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of pity and of pardon, the God of love. Not of love as with us, in a mere effeminate sense, as though it were only an impulse of human admiration that would wink at iniquities. He is Love, love in the essence, love essentially Divine—love consistent with holiness, that hums like flames of fire.

In Justice deep and terrible is God. In Majesty He does ride on the wings of the wind. This God of Tempest, is the God of God, and this is the God whom Jesus preached! And while He did not conceal the sterner attributes of the Almighty, yet He did not forget to depict the heart of mercy

and the hand that is ready to help. The God whom He preached is full of gentleness and tenderness.

May we learn to believe in the God and Father whom His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, delighted to make known, and if called to testify of Him may we testify fully and heartily as Jesus did. To sum up all, we may say that our Lord's three years' ministry was matchless in its perfection, such as He could look back upon without a single regret, but with unsullied complacency. It was matchless as to its doctrines, and as to its completeness it was unsurpassed. More might be said of His manner, which was full of tenderness to the men among whom He walked, and of His majestic oratory, which we may admire and seek to imitate, but which we can reach only at a distance, for it is peerless beyond all competition, it stands alone.

"Never yet man spoke like this Man," shall be true of Him to the world's end. All His life long there is no flaw, there is no excess. "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do," He could truly say, as He laid down His earthly ministry, and ascended to exercise His ministrations before the Throne. In the retrospect of His labors there was no occasion for self-reproach, no cause for a fault to be found, even by the Accuser of the Brethren. All was to be joy and rejoicing when He had completed His life-work.

Thus much concerning our Lord. I have only opened the door for you to enter. I wonder whether it will ever be given to us to be able to say, as Christians, in our humbler measure, what He said, as the very Christ in such exalted strains?

II. Let us now use the text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. It ought to be the ambition of every Believer here, in a sense more or less extensive, to be able to say, "I have preached righteousness. I have not refrained my lips. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed your loving kindness and your Truth."

It is quite certain that many careless Christians will never be able to lay this unction to their heart. In all our Churches there is a very large proportion of idle people. I hope they are saved. The Lord knows whether they are or not, but whatever else they are saved from, certainly they are not saved from laziness. We have in the visible Church a large proportion of flesh that is not living, or if it is alive it gives very little indication of life.

Now, I do like, as pastor, to be in fellowship with a *living* Church, all alive, and everybody active. Though it may be our happy lot to have a goodly preponderance in this Church of living men and women, I know there is a considerable portion of added flesh about it. Albeit, there are some portions of the body which may be said to be ornamental, but it is equally true that they also have some distinct service. There is not one of them put there to do *nothing*.

Some Christians seem to think themselves "a thing of beauty and a joy forever" to the Church, and that they have nothing to do in it for the common good. They *must* imagine that they are ornaments, for certainly they are of no use, so far as any good offices are concerned. It used to be almost thought that the whole duty of man consisted in taking your sitting, paying your quarter's rent, filling up your place, and listening with more or less attention to the sermons that were preached.

As to the idea of everybody doing something for Christ, and the exhortation to them as good soldiers of the Cross not to shirk their duty, these people said that it was sheer madness. To do or dare, to labor or suffer in the cause of the Captain of our salvation was no article of their creed. Sleepy souls, they presently become victims of their own infatuation. As men who habituate themselves to take opium, they grow soporific. Then their Christianity becomes like a dream. It may be they are filled with flattering illusions, but in full many a case they are scared with strange specters that issue in the short sighs, weak cries, and dismal groans of doubt and fear.

Alas for them! They will not be able to say, "I have preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth." No, no! When their conscience is awakened, they shall have poignant regrets that they have neglected so many glorious opportunities of bringing crowns to Christ. Nor will *cowardly* people be able to make this statement.

Many Christians are of a retiring disposition, and their retiring disposition is exemplified somewhat in the same way as that of the soldier who felt himself unworthy to stand in the front ranks. He felt that it would be too presumptuous a thing for him to be in front, where the cannon balls were mowing down men on the right hand and on the left, and therefore he would rather be in the rear-guard. I always look upon those very retiring and modest people as arrant cowards, and I shall venture to call them so.

I ask not every man and woman to rush into the front ranks of service, but I do ask every converted man and woman to take some place in the ranks, and to be prepared to make some sacrifice in that position they choose or think themselves fit to occupy. But ah, there are some who shrink back from *any* post that demands toil or vigilance! When they were young their ardor was never kindled, the spirit of enterprise was never stirred within them. Had they shown any mettle then, they might have been lion-hearted now.

Had they done nothing then, their career of usefulness might have been in full vigor now. But alas for the man upon whom there is the rust of wasted years! He waits, he doubts, he parleys still, and shelters himself under a fictitious humility. Would God I had more courage myself, but I will tell you one thing, I dare not fold my arms, nor dare I hold my tongue. It seems to me so awful a thing not to be doing good, and it seems to me so dastardly a thing to shrink back when opportunities lie in one's path.

I do wish that some of you would learn to imitate the character of the godly man—

***"Who holds no parley with unmanly fears;
Where duty bids, he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all."***

The cowards will not be able to say, "I have preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth."

Nor, again, will *spasmodic people* be able to adopt this language. There are some people who, if there is a revival, are so marvelously zealous and earnest that we are ready to clap our hands—but all of a sudden they stop. That Sunday school class they were just getting into right order, but before there was an opportunity to reap the fruit they felt it was not precisely what they were called to. That Young Men's Bible Class—yes, that was a happy thought, the pastor was delighted. But, unfortunately, some little difficulty occurred that you had not foreseen, and that, also has fallen through.

So it has been in other cases. Know, therefore, that those who cannot, like the Master, look back upon a continuous and persevering testimony, will not be able to speak with a clear conscience as He did. But although so many classes of those who profess and call themselves Christians will not be able to take a happy retrospect of their lives, yet there are not wanting those who could do so.

I have known men of one talent who without any self-righteousness could say, "I have preached righteousness. I have not regained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth." Dear good men in many a country village whose names will never be known to fame have gathered just a few people together and have preached on, on, on for years! And when they come to die in the Lord and rest from their labors, their works will follow them, and their life-service will be as acceptable as the services of many men with ten times the talents and ten times the scope for their exercise.

Perhaps the Master will say to them, "Well done!" With a stronger emphasis than to some who were better known. That poor girl whose only work she could do for Christ was to teach those two little children who were entrusted to her, and that nursery maid with but one gift, and one only, may be able to say, "I have preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips: I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth."

You one-talent servants, you have this within your reach. And those, too, *with an extremely narrowed sphere* may be able to say this. It is not, perhaps, the man who can stand and talk to thousands, but it may be you in the family—the housewife, the kitchen maid, the serving-man, or the woman who has been bedridden for years, whose only audience will be a few poor neighbors, or perhaps, now and then, a generous friend. By God's Grace it is you within these narrow spheres who may yet be able to say, "I have preached righteousness: I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth." I have sat by a bedside where I have envied the poor woman despite the agonies and pains of body she suffered, because she could yet praise and magnify the loving kindness revealed to her there.

But, Brethren, we may be able to quote these words, some of us, to whom greater talents have been committed. Though we may feel that we have not preached as earnestly as we could have wished. That we have not done our utmost towards those whom we have taught. That in our house-to-house visitation we have not been so earnest with poor souls as

we might have been in this respect, for alas, alas, we are all unprofitable servants! Yet we can say, "I have preached righteousness. I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth."

Fervently do I hope that *those of you with the largest opportunities* may yet be privileged to make this good profession with all sincerity. I am not afraid for those friends who have but narrow spheres—sometimes I wish that mine were such. I am not afraid for those in humbler fields, but oh, if with such spheres, and such Churches as God here and there allots to some of His servants, if they can thus give account of their stewardship, it will be Grace, indeed! And to Grace alone will the honor be due.

Yet let us hope that we, too, may be able to say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation."

III. It is with an overwhelming sense of the importance, as well as the moral grandeur of this profession, that I repeat it to you again and again. For when we are able to feel this, and to say it humbly and confidently, with good faith and without guile, IT CASTS MUCH COMFORTABLE LIGHT ON MANY SOLEMN SUBJECTS. How awful to remember that *every hour there are hundreds of men and women who are dying without Christ.*

Turn to the obituaries of this one city. Be our sentiments ever so charitable, let us judge with the utmost liberality. The dreadful fact fills our mind, and every knell speaks it to our heart, "They go out of this world unforgiven. They go before their Maker's bar without a hope!" I think our hearts would break with the dread recollection of this if we could not say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation."

And how many deaths there always are among our hearers! What comfort can any Christian who knows you, have, if you die unsaved, unless he is able to appeal to God, and say, "My Father, I did all I could to teach that soul the way of salvation. I did all I could to persuade him to accept the Christ of God"? Dear Friends, whenever you see any of your neighbors, your relatives, your acquaintance die, can you forbear to ask yourselves, shall their blood be required at my hands? Are your garments stained? Are there no blood drops there?

Come, look them down, and say if you can ponder with a clear conscience the fact of a sinner dying in a Christless state without your being able to say, "I have done all I could to bring that soul to Christ." And as for that dreadful outlook—*the hereafter of the lost*—would that we could believe the softer theories which some so eagerly embrace! We would, but dare not. We believe that those who die in their sins when they pass from this life into the next, shall find that second death to be no extinction of existence, but an eternity of sin and of misery,

Ah, how can any of us bear to think of this if we feel that we are morally responsible for any one soul that is damned? Yet we are so—I speak

but the bare Truth—until we have delivered ourselves from that responsibility by faithful earnestness. Is there a Cain here who says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I shall not appeal to your most sympathetic soul, but leave you to your Judge. But to the Christian I say, "No man lives to himself."

When you think of a spirit in despair, cast out forever from the Presence of his God and from the Glory of His power, may you, Friends, be able to say, "Great God, though I understand not Your ways, for Your judgments are a great deep, yet I warned the sinner, I admonished him to lay hold on Christ, and if he perished it was not for want of preaching to or for praying over. My warnings and tears were never spared. I did what was in me to prevent his ruin." Put in that light, we may look at least with some degree of serenity upon the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty.

I must confess that the Sovereignty of God is a great mountain whose top we cannot scale. I often marvel at the coldness with which some men talk of the Sovereignty of God, as though it were of small concern whether men were lost or saved. They seem to take these things as easily as if they were only talking of blocks of wood, or fields filled with tares. I do not think that we can equitably plead the Divine Sovereignty as a counterpart to our futile efforts, till we can say, "I have done all that was possible to bring that soul to God. I have prayed over him and wept over him, and now if he perishes I must believe that this man willfully rejected Christ, that his iniquities are upon his own head, and that in him, as a vessel of wrath, God will get Glory as well as in vessels of mercy.

The doom of the heathen is a subject in like manner of which it were too painful for any of us to speak unless we can say, "I have, as far as lies in me, sought to do something for them." This is a thing about which we ought not to think with any ease, unless we feel that we would gladly save them, and give them the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And to carry out this, our cherished purpose, we will do the best we can. *The uprisings of error* often cause us dismay. Every now and then we see some old form of error spring up that was stamped out, as we supposed, in the days of our ancestors.

Not infrequently a foul old heresy is brought out as a brand new discovery, and all the world admires it, and wonders from where it came. Now, whenever these old heresies crop up, and are brought out as new, and lead men astray, it is a great comfort when you and I are able to say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation."

Let men propagate whatever errors they choose. If we have no share in misleading the people, and are continually engaged in instructing them, we may wrap ourselves in our integrity and lay the matter before our God to vindicate our righteous cause. The apathy of the Church, which has lasted so long, is truly disheartening. With many a deep-drawn sigh do we bewail it. O that we could get the Church to wake up! You might sound the trump of the archangel before you could rouse full many to the appalling destitution by reason of which the people perish for lack of knowledge.

Even the cries of lost souls, and the shrieks of the sinners in this metropolis, rushing headlong to the pit that is bottomless, do not startle some of us. Yes, but if we can say, "I have preached righteousness. I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation," then we may take courage to work nobly and to persevere under terrible difficulties.

Though for awhile we should see no conversions. And though for a season the plowshare should break against the rock, or against even the very adamant itself, yet still if we can say, "I have preached righteousness, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth"—we are exonerated from blame. No, more, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in the testimony we have delivered.

Yes, Brethren, I apprehend that among the sweetest deathbed recollections, and among the minor comforts, in taking our farewell of the world as it is, not the least will be that of having been constant and faithful all our lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Give me a few minutes longer while I turn this sermon into the special direction which it was intended to take. I do not know that there are many more "*young men*" present tonight than there are usually at our week-day lecture. I generally find when I preach a sermon for any of our societies it so happens that everybody connected with the society seems to stay away. They would be willing enough to come if it were for the Primitive Methodist, or any other denomination.

They are in love with everybody else except their own relations. I do not say this by way of censure, but surely if there is a people under Heaven without a grain of clannishness it is that denomination to which we belong. If it had been a sermon for Jews or Turks the building would have been crowded. But as it is for ourselves it does not matter. However, if they are not present for whom it was intended, they may probably read the sermon—so I will add a few words expressly for them.

Young man, it may be that you are one of those who ought to become a missionary. It may be that you ought to dedicate your life to some work for God either at home or abroad. Well, if it is so, do not mistake your path in life. We do not urge you to rush into the ministry, much less into the *foreign* ministry, unless you are *called* to it, for that is the very last place for a man to be in who is not called to the work. Act as a Christian young man for once in your life by asking whether it may not be your vocation to bear the Cross of Christ into lands where as yet it is unknown.

Surely, whatever answer you may feel called upon to give, you will be ready for it. You will at least be willing to give yourself up to the very hardest form of service to which you may be called. I should like you, then, to be sure about this on the outset lest you should in the turn of the road miss the path and so not be able to say at the last—"I have preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation."

I should not like you, if meant by the gifts of God for a great missionary, to die a millionaire. I should not like it, were you fitted to be a mis-

sionary, that you should drivel down into a king. For what are all your kings, what are all your nobles, what are all your stars, what are all your garters, what are all your diadems and your tiaras, when you put them all together, compared with the dignity of winning souls for Christ? And more—with the special honor of building for Christ, not on another man's foundation, but preaching Christ's Gospel in regions yet far beyond? I reckon him to be a man honored of men who can do a foreign work for Christ!

But he who shall go farthest in self-annihilation and in the furtherance of the Glory of Christ, he shall be a king among men, though he wear no crown that carnal eyes can see. Ask yourselves the question then, young Christian men, whether that is your vocation. Should it happen that you feel convinced this is *not* your calling, remember you may still, in your daily business, be able to say these words.

Some of my friends here never will be able to say them. They have been Church members for twenty years, and during all those twenty years they have not preached righteousness. They have refrained their lips, they have *hidden* His righteousness. They have not declared His faithfulness and His salvation. They have concealed His loving kindness and His Truth. You, young men and women, have an opportunity of doing what is gone from them. Though they might publish Christ abroad from now till they die, there are twenty years they must forever regret and look back upon as wasteland for which they will have to give an account at the last.

You have, it may be, those twenty years before you. And it is a noble thing to begin working young, and so long as ever you live to go on building on that work. I have heard it said that you should not put young converts to work for which they are not qualified. Ah, say I, put the youngsters in! They will never learn to swim if they are not put in at once. Why should you, young men and women, be received as Church members at all unless you are prepared to do something for Christ? Work becomes you as well as worship.

I mean, of course, if not disqualified by sickness, and even then there is a sphere for *testimony*. You can make a sick bed a pulpit to preach Christ, while by patience and resignation you show forth His praise. No one should join a Church without seeking out something to do for the glory of Jesus Christ. Do start your lives, young men, with high purpose, that you may close them with holy cheer. In order to do this, you will need much more zeal than you are likely to possess by making resolutions, and much more Divine Grace than you will ordinarily get without much self-denial and devout consecration.

You have need to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and in fire. I do like those converts who are *thoroughly* purged from the corruptions of the world, and *thoroughly* converted to God—every faculty of the mind and every member of the body being surrendered to Christ—all of them as instruments of righteousness. We seem to get some people who are not half converted. I hope their hearts are converted, but the effect is not to drain their pockets or to set their hands to work. You need, dear Friends, to go much to Jesus Christ, to live much in communion with Him, for this life-service has many expenses, and you have no ready money.

You must go to the great exchequer of the King of kings and draw from its inexhaustible treasury. Do so. Do resolve to live lavishly in the service

of Christ, and the Divine storehouse will supply all that you need, be your ambition as large as it may. There are habits, it is true, to be acquired which must be the result of growth, for they cannot be matured without the manifold experience of sunshine and shower, summer and winter, heat and cold. To all of these you will be exposed.

But when once you have yielded yourselves to those Divine influences which foster life, you will prove that by all these things men live. To this I can bear you witness. Drudgery ceases to be irksome when the ruling passion of laboring for the Lord has begun to ferment in your breasts, and the sweet assurance that your labor is not in vain in the Lord has quickened a sacred enthusiasm in your spirit. It may be that in your apprenticeship you have to encounter many hardships, but it shall be that in the full discharge of your vocation you will reap a harvest of joy.

God help you never to refrain from preaching the Truth of God, never to withhold any part of it. May you be clear in all these matters as before the living God. Oh, yours will be cheerful dying if you familiarize yourselves with such noble living as this! You will have a welcome entrance into Heaven if such has been your life on earth. The pastor, when he can preach the Gospel no more, will say, "I preached when there was time, and now I will sing when sermons are all over."

You Sunday school teachers cannot teach any longer, but your Sunday recreations below will prove the sweet prelude to your Sabbatical felicities above. Tract distributors—now that all your work is over, you will say, "I did but distribute the leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the people, but now I feed myself on all its luscious fruits."

I do not say that rewards are given as mere rewards of merit, but this I do assuredly know—there are rewards given in respect of service through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I pray you seek the prize. So run that you may obtain it. May you be able to say, "While I was down below where service could be done for my Master—

***'In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels cannot do,'***

with all my might I labored to excel, and now I enter into the bliss of Him who helped and strengthened me, who revealed His Grace in me, and counted me worthy to put me into some part of the ministry of His Church."

God bless you, dear Friends, and make you earnest to tell others those things He has made known unto you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 40.

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A SERMON
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THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MR. SPURGEON'S
FIRST SERMON IN THE TABERNACLE!

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation. Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."
Psalm 40:9-11.

SOMETIMES, dear Friends, we should take a review of life. There are occasions when men feel bound to do so and the retrospect may be full of profit to themselves. I find that many look back in hours of trouble. A dark cloud brings them to a pause. In prosperity they might have run on with very little thought, but sorrow calls them to a halt. They are driven to God in prayer and at such times it is not unusual for them, if God has been gracious to them in the past, to recollect His great goodness and to mention it while they are pleading at the Mercy Seat. They say, "He has dealt well with His servants. The Lord has helped us up to now." They look back and see the Ebenezers which they have raised in past years and then they cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?"—

*"And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"*

Thus they drive their griefs away and the remembrance of past mercy helps them to snatch firewood from the altars of the bygone years, with which to kindle the sacrifice of the present moment.

Men are also accustomed to review their lives when they are brought near to the grave. It is helpful, when we fear that life is about to end, to begin to add it up, to see what the sum total reaches. If God should say to us, "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live," the best way to do it is to remember the past—looking at what we have done and what God has done—and then to set one against the other, that we may repent of the sin and may hope because of the mercy. Now, albeit that we may not, ourselves, be brought so near to death's door as that, yet during the past month or so we have, as a people, been continually going to the sepulcher. I think that there were seven notable Brothers and Sisters who fell asleep last week, so constantly have death's arrows been flying among us. Therefore, as we are come to the bank of the river and

are reminded that we must, ourselves, shortly put off this tabernacle, let us look back a little and remember all the ways the Lord our God has led us.

There are, however, other occasions apart from those of great sorrow or of apprehended departure when wise men are fully warranted in considering the period as peculiarly noteworthy. I have come to such a time today. Twenty-five years have passed over our heads since I preached my first sermon in this house. The sanctuary was opened with songs of joy—many who were with us then are now in Glory—and many of you who are with us today were not even born then. To those who were at the opening of the Tabernacle, it must seem almost an old building now! I hear people talk of “the dear old Tabernacle” and well they may, for a quarter of a century is no mean period in the history of a building or of a Church. There has been a great deal done in those 25 years and we have both personally and as a Church enjoyed abounding mercy. I did not think it right to let the occasion pass over without offering devout thanksgiving to the Lord for all His loving-kindness to us, and endeavoring to say some words that shall perhaps make us feel more our indebtedness to God and cause us to determine to be more than ever consecrated to His service.

This text, though it belongs, first of all, in the most Divine and fullest sense to our gracious Master, also belongs to David—and through David to those whom God has called to bear testimony to the Gospel of His Grace. We can say and we do say, humbly but most earnestly—and I know that there are many Brothers here who can join us, each in his own ministry, and many Brothers and Sisters who, though not in the ministry, can say, in any event in the spirit of the words after their measure—“I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.”

I. Coming, then, to our text, here is, first, A CONTINUAL TESTIMONY. Many of you have borne testimony for God in your homes as well as in your lives. Some of you have borne the testimony in your classes in the Sunday school. Some in the streets, some in cottage meetings—some in larger assemblies. We especially who are called to the public ministry of the Word, have borne this testimony in “the great congregation.” But all of us who are the Lord’s servants have, I hope, borne our testimony according to our opportunities and abilities.

It has been imperfect, but it has been sincere. In looking back upon our testimony for God, we could almost wish to obliterate it because of its imperfections, but we can truthfully say that it has been sincerely borne up to the measure of the capacity given to us. It has been borne without a doubt, without any mental reservation, with intensity of spirit—borne because it could not be silenced. I have preached the Gospel to you, my Brothers and Sisters, because I have believed it—and if what I have preached to you is not true, I am a lost man! For me there is no joy in life and no hope in death except in that Gospel which I have continually expounded here. It is not to me a theory. I would scarcely stop at saying

that it is a belief. It has become matter of absolute fact to me! It is interwoven with my consciousness. It is part of my being. Every day makes it dearer to me—my joys bind me to it, my griefs drive me to it! All that is behind me, all that is before me, all that is above me, all that is beneath me—everything compels me to say that my testimony has been borne with my heart, mind, soul and strength—and I am grateful to God that I can say this, putting it as the text puts it, “O Lord, You know.” If others do not know the truth of the matter, I rejoice that my Master knows my heart.

I feel grateful to God that I can say this because of *the subjects of the testimony*. The first subject of the Psalmist’s testimony had been God’s “righteousness.” That is the main point to be noticed in all testimony for God—God’s positive righteousness in Himself, God’s way of righteousness by which He justifies the ungodly and God’s method of spreading righteousness in the world by the power and energy of His Holy Spirit. I, for one, believe in a God who punishes sin. I have never flattered you with the idea that sin is a trifle and that in some future age it may expiate itself. No, the righteousness of God has seemed to me to be a dark background upon which to draw the bright lines of His everlasting love in Christ Jesus. In the Expiation of Christ, the righteousness of God is vindicated to the fullest. He is “just, and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus.” I ask for no pardon to be given to me unrighteously. My conscience could not be satisfied with a forgiveness that came to me unjustly, for the Glory of God would be dishonored thereby. There would be a blot upon the Heavenly statute-book if sin were pardoned without atonement. But we have preached the righteousness of God and we feel that, in doing so, we lay a sure foundation upon which to build the comfort and hope of the Believer in Christ Jesus!

In addition to the righteousness of God, the Psalmist had preached His “faithfulness.” The Lord keeps all His promises. He is the Faithful Promiser—what He promises He performs. There is no lie in Him, nor change, nor shadow of a turning. “Has He said and shall He not do?” Which of His promises ever failed? Has He drawn back even in the least degree from His Covenant, or altered the word which has gone forth out of His lips? Our testimony has not been borne to a fickle God and a feeble salvation which saves for a time and after all, does not really save, but allows saints to fall away and perish everlastingly. No, we have given unfaltering utterance to that declaration of our Lord, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” We believe in everlasting love, in an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure and, therefore, righteousness and faithfulness have been the two foundations of our ministry—upon which we have tried to build a Gospel worth our preaching and worth your having.

Then the Psalmist says that he had borne testimony to two things in conjunction with each other: “Your loving-kindness and Your truth.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a theme is here! “Your loving-kindness!” God’s generous mercy, His overflowing love, His “kinnedness,” His

kindness to His chosen whom He has made to be a people near unto Himself, to whom He manifests His very soul. That word, “loving,” added to the word, “kindness,” makes it a gem doubly precious! Where is there among words any other equal to this—“loving-kindness”? I have exulted to preach to you the loving-kindness of the Lord. I needed not to be driven to this happy task. I have almost needed, sometimes, to be stopped when I have passed the hour and my theme has carried me away! Oh, the loving-kindness of the Lord to those who put their trust under the shadow of His wings! That is a subject on which one might preach forever and yet not exhaust its treasures!

And then His “truth”—God’s Truth—the truth of His Word. The truth of His Son! The truth of the great Doctrines which are given to us in the Gospel. I have not preached to you any sort of speculation. I have never sought to invent new forms of truth. It shall be seen one day whose thoughts shall stand—God’s thoughts or man’s. And it shall be seen which is the true ministry—that which takes up God’s Word and echoes it—or that which boils it down until the very life is extracted from it. I have no sympathy with the preaching which degrades the Truth of God into a hobbyhorse for its own thought and only looks upon Scripture as a kind of pulpit from which it may thunder out its own opinions! No, if I have gone beyond what that Book has taught, may God blot out everything that I have said! I beseech you, never believe me if I go an atom beyond what is plainly taught there. I am content to live and to die as the mere repeater of Scriptural teaching—as a person who has thought out nothing and invented nothing—as one who never thought invention to be any part of his calling, but who concluded that he was to take the message from the lips of God to the best of his ability and simply to be a mouth for God to the people—mourning much that anything of his own should come between—but never thinking that he was somehow to refine the message or to adapt it to the brilliance of this wonderful century and then to hand it out as being so much his own that he might take some share of the glory of it. No, no! We have aimed at nothing of the kind! “I have declared *Your* faithfulness and *Your* salvation: I have not concealed *Your* loving-kindness and *Your* truth from the great congregation.” Nothing have we preached as our own. If there has been anything of our own, we do bitterly take back those words and eat them—and repent that we should have ever been guilty of the sin and folly of uttering them! The things which we have learned of God our Father and of His Son Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, we have sought to speak unto you.

Now, dear Friends, let me say, next, that this text describes *a work which has been done under great difficulties*. It may seem a very easy thing to simply have a message and to tell it. Yes, it appears so. But it is not as easy as it looks at first sight. I do not suppose that you always find your servants deliver your messages accurately. Did you ever sit around a table and tell one person a story, and ask him to tell it to his neighbor? Let each one whisper it and by the time it gets to the end of the table, you will scarcely recognize your tale, it will have been altered so much! There is a tendency in the minds of all of us to alter what we tell—it is a struggle to keep to the exact truth. Besides, this is an age

which likes pretty things—something fresh and new—and it is not always easy to swim upstream, or to go against the tendency of the time and the spirit of the age. We have no particular desire to be thought fools anymore than anybody else—and we know where all the wisdom is—at least we ought to know, for we hear often enough about it. Ask the brethren of the “modern thought” school if they have not all the wisdom that is to be had nowadays! If they do not say that they have, many of them act as if they thought they had! No, Friends, it is not so easy, after all, to keep to the plain Truth of God. There is a Brother who has struck out something wonderfully fresh. We read his book—shall we not at least go with him a little way? You will find, Brothers, that if you determine to hold fast the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, you will have a battle to fight in which you will be beaten unless you rely upon God for strength! If you are willing to let the Truth of God go, you have but to seek to please man and it is soon done! And only then will you be greeted with, “Hail fellow! Well met!” But if you mean to declare God’s Truth, you will need the help of the Most High in the struggle.

But, although this testimony has been borne under difficulties, *it has been attended with unutterable pleasure*. Oh, the delight of preaching the Gospel! I often say to young men who apply for admission to the College, “Do not become a minister if you can help it.” But if you cannot help it, if a Divine destiny drives you on, thank God that it is so! You are a happier man if you are able to preach the Gospel than if you had been elected to a throne! There is no business like it under Heaven! I have heard some say that our professional study of the Word of God may be a hindrance to our growth in the Divine life. I know what they mean and there is some truth in their words—but to me, the preaching of the Gospel has been a continual means of Grace and I can say with the Apostle Paul, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *Grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unreachable riches of Christ.” It really is a Grace to be permitted to preach the Gospel—it brings Grace with it. Brothers in the ministry, have you not read the Bible much more because you have had to preach the blessed Truths revealed in it? Have you not been driven to your knees much more because you have had to deal with anxious souls and to lead the people of God? I am sure that it is so and I thank God for giving me a calling which does not take me away from the Mercy Seat, but drives me to it! I am grateful that I have a message which I am glad to tell, glad to tell *anywhere*—a message which never needs to be concealed, but which brings joy to me in telling it and salvation to our hearers in listening to it! Blessed be God that we have such a story to proclaim!

I could say much more about this first point, but I must not, for our time is so short. This must suffice upon the subject of our continual testimony.

II. Now, secondly, the text mentions A REMARKABLE AUDIENCE. The Psalmist says, twice over, “I have preached righteousness in *the great congregation*.” And yet again, “I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from *the great congregation*.”

It is *astonishing to the preacher* that there should be a great congregation to hear the Gospel! I do not know how you think of it, but if anybody had been set here to speak so many times a week upon politics, I wonder whether he would have had a crowded congregation at the end of 25 years? My friend Mr. Varley speaks right mightily, but if he had been preaching upon total abstinence for 25 years, I am sure that some would have totally abstained from coming to hear him! If I had to preach here upon—well, what topic shall I say?—the object that the Liberation Society has in view, for instance, I am afraid that I should have liberated many of you from attendance long before this. All other subjects are exhaustible, but give us that Book and give us the Holy Spirit—and we may preach on forever! We shall never get to the end of it!

I have heard of two infidels, one of whom said to his fellow, “If you had to go to jail for 12 months and you could only have one book, what book would you choose?” He was very surprised when his companion said, “Oh, I would take the Bible!” The first one said, “But you do not believe in it—I wonder that you should choose that.” “Oh, but,” rejoined his friend, “it is no end of a book.” His record is true—it is “no end of a book.” Jerome used to say, “I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture.” And well he might. I would like you to look at my Bible at home which is marked with all the texts I have preached from. There are thirty-one completed volumes of my sermons and a thirty-second is in the making.

[This sermon begins the 51st volume of Spurgeon’s Sermons. How little the preacher thought, when he praised God for 25 years’ ministry in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, that he would continue to declare God’s faithfulness and salvation week by week to the great company of Sermon readers for so many years after he had put off the tabernacle of the body. The supply of manuscripts is not yet nearly exhausted.]

Of course, in addition to the 32 volumes in the regular weekly series, there are many more volumes printed and I have all the texts marked from which I have preached. I sometimes make the outline of a sermon and then, when I turn to my Bible, I find that I have preached from that text and the sermon has been published—and I say, “That will not do for a Sunday morning.” I do not want to have the same subject again more often than I can help. Sometimes, however, I find that the same text may be taken and a new sermon readily enough made from it, for there is a springing well in Holy Scripture, never exhausted, and the great congregation needs continually to come to hear repetitions of the same great Truths of God, though it is always the preacher’s duty to seek for acceptable words in presenting it. Young man just beginning to preach—do not be afraid to stick to your texts—that is the best way to get variety in your discourses. Saturate your sermons with Bibline, the essence of Bible Truth, and you will always have something new to say!

But when I think of the great congregation, *how encouraging it is!* It is always good fishing where there are plenty of fish. We are bound to go and angle for a single soul, wherever there is one to be found, and some do great service for the Master who take the fish one by one. But what a delight it is to have the great seine net of the Gospel and throw it into such a lake as this, God guiding the hand of the fisherman all the while! Surely he should be a happy man!

But then, dear Friends, when we think of this great congregation, *what solemn thoughts come over our mind!* I come down to this platform, sometimes, and when I get another look at this great congregation, I am staggered. Time after time I have felt as if I could run away sooner than face this tremendous throng again and speak to them once more. O Sirs, to think of all these being dying men and dying women—and to think that this Gospel that I preach is needed by them all and may be refused by many with awful consequences—and may be accepted by some (it will be, thank God) with consequences of unutterable joy! To think that we shall have to give an account of how we have preached and how you have heard! To think that we shall all meet again at the Judgment Seat to give an account of every Sunday and every Thursday service! If Xerxes could not restrain a tear at the thought of his myriads of men passing away, who can look at a congregation like this without being moved with compassion? Yes, yes—it is not easy to preach to a great congregation so as to be able to say at the last, “I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

The sight of this great congregation gathered tonight *suggests many memories*. I recollect some dear ones that used to sit here, and there, and there, and there. I can almost see them now—some dear old saints with gray heads that used to be our glory—who are now with God. Some young and ardent spirits that were taken away before they reached their prime. You sit where sat some who loved your Master well—and served Him faithfully. Worthily occupy their places, beloved Friends!

But excuse me if I say no more upon this topic. My brain seems in a whirl as dissolving views pass before my memory in quick succession. If you want to see life and death, stand here. I feel like the captain of a vessel on the bridge. I am looking down on you who are the passengers and crew but yet, from another point of view, I seem to be looking at great waves that sweep by and more come, and others follow—a succession of changes, nothing abiding. How long shall we remain? How soon shall we, too, also go? Well, it is something to have preached Christ to this great congregation! It is something to believe that those who have not received Him are without excuse. It is much better to believe that many *have* received Him and that we shall meet them in Heaven, rejoicing in that glorious Sacrifice by which they have been cleansed from sin—in that dear Savior by whose life and death they have been quickened and made heirs of eternal glory! Oh, that this faith may be in us all and that we may all at last join in the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven!

III. I have only a few minutes left in which to expound upon the last of the points, THE SUGGESTED PRAYER. May I just give you an outline of what I would have said if we could have had more time? The prayer of the Psalmist is—“Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth”—the things which he had preached—“continually preserve me.”

This prayer is *suitable for the preacher* and he prays it now. Taking David’s words and making them my own, I pray to the Lord at this

moment—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

The prayer is also *suitable for every Christian here*. Let me read it and let every Christian pray it now—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

With a little alteration, *this prayer may suit you who are not yet saved*, but who desire to be—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord." Are you praying it? Is not this a good time in which to pray that prayer? The signs are all propitious. There is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." There are tokens for good abroad. There is dew about tonight. Now, therefore, pray this prayer if you have never prayed before—and God help you to claim the answer by appropriating faith!

It seems to me that this prayer was suggested to the Psalmist by at least three things.

First, it was suggested by *the great congregation*. David seems to say, "O Lord, there are so many others who need Your care. Let me not be lost in the crowd—withhold not Your tender mercies from me."—

***"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
You are scattering, full and free.
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing—
Let some drops fall on me, Even me."***

Next, *the subject suggested it*. "Your truth, Your loving-kindness, O Lord. Let these preserve me. I hear of Your goodness—I cannot bear to miss it. I hear of Your truth—I would not be a stranger to it. Lord, bless me, even me!"

Then, again, *the future suggested, it*. The Psalmist expected to suffer great trials and serious afflictions and, therefore, he prayed, "Let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

Now, as a congregation we have completed 25 years in this building, but we must not reckon that we have reached the end of our struggles, or even the end of our sins! O Brothers and Sisters, this is only a part of the way to Heaven. I think that I told you, once before, that some friends, when they raise an Ebenezer, sit down on the top of it and say, "Here we are going to stop." When this Tabernacle was opened, I remember that that night I put a sharp iron spike on the top of "the stone of help," that nobody might sit upon it—and I do the same again on the Ebenezer stone I now raise in remembrance of God's goodness! Let none of us sit down at the end of this 25th year and say, "We have come this far and here we are going to stay." Long nights of darkness lie ahead—there are giants to be fought, mountains to be climbed, rivers to be crossed! Who dreams of ease while he is here in the enemy's country? Out with your sword, man! You have not done with the battle. Awake, you that sleep! You have not come yet to the place of resting! This is the place for watching, praying, wrestling and struggling. Therefore do we cry, "Withhold not Your tender mercies from me." We are getting older! We are getting weaker! We are, perhaps, getting less wise! Who knows that all our years will bring us good news? They may bring us evil if we trust to our past experience. We need God with us now as much as we ever did! Therefore let us cry to Him, "From this night bless us more and more."

The poor Psalmist was in great trouble when he prayed this prayer. He says, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." Therefore he says, "Withhold not Your tender mercies from me."

He adds, "My iniquities have taken hold upon me." If there is one here whose conscience is accusing him and who is guilty before his God, let him pray this prayer because of his iniquities.

He goes on to say, "I am not able to look up." If that is your case—if you cannot, look up—pray the Lord to look down and cry to Him never to take His mercy from you!

David further says, concerning his iniquities, "They are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me." Well, when our heart does fail us, let us recollect the mercy which has helped us so long—and let us cast ourselves again upon that mercy for all that lies before us.

I am not going to venture upon any prophecy. I attended, on Wednesday, the funeral of our beloved Brother, Dr. Stanford. You may attend mine before this year is over—or I may attend yours. If you could draw up the curtain that hides the future, you would not wish to do it, would you? Trust the Lord so that if you live, you are prepared to live—but if you die, you are prepared to die! I think that the best thing you can do is to do the next thing that comes to you and to do it thoroughly well. I was here last Monday. I had no rest from spiritual work from three in the afternoon till half-past nine at night. And about the middle of it I felt, "Well, I do not know how I shall get through this long long afternoon of seeing enquirers and candidates for Church fellowship." So I said to a Brother, "How am I to do it all?" However, there was a cup of tea in front of me and I said, "I think I will drink that tea—that is the next thing to be done."

Oftentimes that will be your best course, just do the next thing you can do when you are saying to yourself, "How shall I do if I live to be old?" When you go home tonight, eat your supper and go to bed to the glory of God. And when you get up in the morning, do not think about what you are going to do at night. Do what comes to you when you begin the day's work and keep right straight on. If you can see a step at a time, that is about as far as you need to see. Do not begin prying into the future, but just go straight on from day to day, depending on God for the mercy and Grace and strength of the day. That is the way to live and I am persuaded that is the way to die! Mr. Wesley said, "If I knew that I was to die tonight and I had an engagement to attend a class meeting, I would go to it. If I had promised to call and see old Betty So-and-So on the way back, I would call in to see her. I have then to go home and have family prayer. I would do that. Then I would take my boots off and I would go to bed, just as I would do if I were *not* going to die." Oh, do not let death be a sort of addition to the program which was not calculated upon—but so live that whenever it comes you will be ready for it—even if it comes while we are sitting here tonight! Then yours will be a happy life, a joyful life, a useful life.

Secularism teaches us that we ought to look to this *world*. Christianity teaches us that the best way to prepare for this world is to be fully prepared for the next. It elevates and glorifies the secular duties which

otherwise would trail in the mire if our conversation, our citizenship is in Heaven, even while we are on the earth! God bless you, Beloved! Let us praise His name for all the mercies of the past quarter of a century and trust His Grace for all the future.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 40.**

These are the words of David—they are the words of all God’s tried and believing people, but above all they are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. So complete is the union between Christ and the Believer that it is possible to describe them both at the same time. The experience of a child of God, sin alone excepted, is very much like the experience of the great First-Born. But Christ is always above us, so you will find words in this Psalm which belong to nobody but Jesus in all their fullness. Yet the title of it is, “A Psalm of David.”

Verse 1. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* You and I can say that and so could our Divine Master. Oh the wondrous patience of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer! In that agony in the Garden when the bloody sweat showed how great was the wrestling of His spirit, He could say, “I waited patiently for Jehovah, and He inclined unto Me and heard My cry.”

2. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* We can say that, too. We remember when we were deep down in the mire, when we found it impossible to rise, for the more we struggled, the more we sank. It was clay under us—miry clay—we could not hope for a rescue, but the arm of Jehovah lifted us out of the deep and set us on a rock and there we stood to sing His praises. Jesus Christ could say the same. He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” And He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” What a very different frame of mind He was in a few minutes afterwards when He said, “Father, unto Your hands I commend My spirit” and shouted, “It is finished!” All His travail was over. It is a great thing for us to have fellowship with Christ in His suffering which we could not have had if we had not, ourselves, also been brought up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.* Well, God has done that for you and for me. He has put a new song into our mouths which Satan cannot take out of it—and we are singing it today—and others who hear it shall be encouraged to trust in God. But is this true of Christ? Listen to those words at the end of the 22nd Psalm where, beyond all doubt, it is the Savior who speaks—“My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay My vows before them that fear Him.” So the Savior is the chief Leader of the holy song which goes up to God on account of redemption! He sings because God has delivered Him and delivered us. Both the Surety and the sinner are now free and the song goes up from both of them! Again you see what sympathy, what fellowship, we have with Christ.

4. *Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust, and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* Jesus knew the blessedness of faith. Remember how Paul quotes it, “I will put my trust in Him,” as the language of the Redeemer, Himself. As Man, He had His fears. As Man there was worked in Him a wondrous faith in God. Oh that you and I might have the same trust and have no respect to the proud nor such as turn aside to lies!

5. *Many O LORD, my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* We are not dealing with a God who never deals with us. Faith in God is no fiction. We have already had from God the most wonderful displays of power—we have been the recipients of great mercy springing from His thoughts of love toward us. It ought to be an easy thing for experienced saints to trust in God and I hope it has become so with us.

6-8. *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.* Now we undoubtedly get the words of Christ. Our Lord said these words and, therefore, He came to fulfill the Father’s will and present on our behalf an acceptable Sacrifice with blood better than that of bulls or of goats. You and I have to say this in a very humble measure. We do not now bring to God any sacrifice of bulls or goats, but we do bring our whole heart to Him, trusting to be accepted, for He has written on those hearts His own Law and it is our delight to now do the will of God. This is the kind of sacrifice that God accepts—true, fervent, obedient hearts! God grant us always to present it.

9, 10. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* What a preacher Christ was! How He told out what He had learned of the Father! How fully, how constantly was He the Witness for God to men! Some of us following far behind, with unequal footsteps, nevertheless can say, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.” It is a great comfort in feeling, if you are called to present the Gospel, that as far as you know, you have preached it and have kept back nothing that God has taught you. It will be a thousand mercies if any of God’s servants shall be found clear at the last. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have only done what it was our duty to do. But there is still a sweet peace about fidelity when in the integrity of one’s heart we can say that we have not refrained our lips as God knows. Then comes the prayer—

11. *Withhold not Your tender mercies from Me, O LORD: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve Me.* If you have dealt honestly with God’s Word, you may expect that God will deal graciously with you. Surely He would not send us to proclaim a message of mercy

and then deny mercy to us! That cannot be. But Brothers, when we have done our best for God and before God, yet we cannot boast—we still need mercy and we fall back upon the loving-kindness of God just as the sinner must do when he first of all comes to God. May we always be in that true and humble frame of mind which looks for nothing but mercy.

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* Now here is a passage in which the Master is not to be seen but only the servant! This is the man that said that God had put a new song into his mouth. He is a true child of God to whom God had had respect and whose prayer God had heard, yet see what a plight he has come to! Dear Friends, you and I may have to undergo this trial. Happy shall we be if we have such faith in God that even when innumerable evils compass us about, we shall remember the innumerable mercies of God, such mercies as the Psalmist had spoken of in the fifth verse. When our iniquities take hold upon us, what a mercy it is to think that Christ has taken hold upon us, too, and will never let us go! When our sins seem more than the hairs of our head and our heart is failing us, it is very sweet to feel that the depths of eternal love and of atoning merit have drowned even our innumerable sins—they are cast upon the head of Him that said “Lo, I come to do Your will.” They are carried away and they have ceased to be through Him whose precious blood and glorious righteousness have made us accepted before God!

13. *Be pleased O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.* You may pray like that and yet be a true Believer. The man that is not in haste to be saved does not need to be saved at all. He that can put it off till tomorrow knows nothing about it! A true Believer, when he is crying for mercy, cries, “My case is urgent! Help me now, make haste to help me.”

14-17. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, “Aha, aha. Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You: let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinks upon me: You are my Help and my Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God. “But I am poor and needy, yet”—oh blessed, “yet”—“Yet the Lord thinks upon me.” He does not throw me a penny and pass on as we often do to the poor and needy! But He stops and thinks. Yet He makes no tarrying. He answers the cry of His people and comes in haste to deliver them!*

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

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

A SINGULAR PLEA IN PRAYER

NO. 2535

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1897.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1884.**

***"I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul;
for I have sinned against You."
Psalm 41:4.***

THIS was one of David's sayings—"I said." It was a saying that was worth saying and it is worth re-saying—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." How often he said it, we do not know. The more often, the better. There is no day too bright for saying it and there is no night too dark for saying it. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." Every one of David's sayings was not worth repeating, for he said some things that he had to retract. "I said in my haste," he said, on one occasion and, possibly, what he said in his haste he repented of at his leisure. But this saying in our text needs no retracting! It only needs repeating and, until we enter Heaven, we may keep on saying it—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." I have never heard of Christ rebuking anybody for speaking thus. He who said, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," received no commendation from the Lord Jesus Christ. But he who said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," went down to his house justified rather than the other! This is a good saying, a true saying, a humble saying and a gracious saying. And I say again, the more often it is repeated, the better. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me."

Observe that this is a saying to the Lord—"I said, LORD, be merciful unto me." You hear people say, when they are talking and gossiping, "I said to her and she said to me," or, "He said to me and I said to him"—so-and-so and so-and-so. Well, what does it matter what you said or what they said? Very likely it is not worth repeating, nor the answer that was made to it! Much of what is said may be summed up in the Dunottar Castle motto—

***"THEY SAY.
WHAT DO THEY SAY?
LET THEM SAY."***

It all comes to nothing! It is only breath vainly spent, which would be far more wisely expended if it were, as the poet Cowper said—

"To Heaven in supplication sent."

How much better it would be if each one of the parties concerned said, "Lord, be merciful unto me!" If we would speak twice to God and only once to men, or if we even reached so happy a proportion as at least to say *as much* to God as we say to our fellow men, how much healthier, happier, stronger, more heavenly and more holy would we become! You need not try to remember all that you have said to your fellow men—

probably much of that is best forgotten—but it is good to remember what you have said to your God, if it is anything like this saying of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, “I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.”

Let this be one of our sayings as well as David’s. As he said, “Lord, be merciful unto me,” I am sure I ought to say it, and I think, dear Friends, you ought to say it, too. If there is anybody here who thinks that he has grown so good that he does not need to pray, “Lord, be merciful unto me,” I am very thankful, for once, that I am not as that man is, for he must be eaten up with pride! He cannot be right in his heart who will not pray for mercy and, surely, he has received no mercy who does not feel his need of more mercy. God can scarcely have begun to work in that man who thinks that he needs no longer make confession of sin, or seek mercy from God. David tells us, “I said, Lord, be merciful unto me,” and I advise you to make this one of your sayings, also. People sometimes say, “It is an old saying,” and that is supposed to be its commendation. Well, this, also, is an old saying. A young man says, “My father used to say so-and-so,” and I have no doubt that, if you had a godly father, he used to say much that was worth remembering and worth repeating—and you cannot do better than use your father’s words, especially if they were like David’s on this occasion. Let it be reported of you in your biography, if it is ever written, “This was one of his sayings. He often said, ‘Lord, be merciful unto me.’”

Notice, also, that this was the saying of a sick man and of a sick saint. “I said, Lord, Be merciful unto me.” It is not written, “I said, Lord, You are unmerciful to me in chastening me; you deal too severely with me in placing me upon this sickbed and causing me to lie here till the bed grows hard as a rock beneath me.” No, there is no complaining, here, though there is petitioning! There is no murmuring, though there is supplication. “I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.” When you get well, again, after an illness, it will be a great comfort if you can look back and feel, “I did not complain, but the chief cry from my sickbed was, ‘Lord, be merciful unto me.’”

I have thus briefly introduced to you one of the sayings of a sick saint—a sick king—and that king was David, the man after God’s own heart. And I believe that this saying of his was after God’s own heart and that this prayer was pleasing in the ears of the Most High. “I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.” So now I will try to show you that our text contains, first, *a prayer*—“Lord, be merciful unto me.” Next, *a confession*—“I have sinned against You.” And then, thirdly, *a plea*, and a very singular plea it is—“I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You.”

I. First, here is, A PRAYER—“Lord, me merciful unto me.” It may mean—and I daresay it *did* mean, at least in part—“*Mitigate my pains.*” O Beloved, when you feel your heart throbbing and palpitating, or when the swollen limb seems as if it were laid upon an anvil and beaten with red-hot hammers. When the pain goes through you again and again, till even the strong man is ready to cry out in his agony and the tears start unwillingly to the eyes, this is a good prayer to present to God, “Lord, be merciful unto me.” I have sometimes found that where medicine has

failed and sleep has been chased away, and pain has become unbearable, it has been good to appeal to God directly, and to say, "O Lord, I am Your child! Will You allow Your child to be thus tortured with pain? Is it not written, 'Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him'?" Lord, be merciful unto me."

I can solemnly assert that I have found immediate respite from convulsions of extreme pain in answer to a simple appeal to the Fatherhood of God and a casting myself upon His mercy. And I do not doubt that I am also describing the experience of many others of God's afflicted children. When grieved with sore physical pain, you will find, dear Friends, that the quiet resignation, the holy patience and the childlike submissiveness which enable you to just pray, "Lord, be merciful unto me," will often bring a better relief to you than anything that the most skilled physician can prescribe for you. You are permitted and encouraged to act thus—when the rod falls heavily upon you, look up into your Father's face and say, "Lord, be merciful unto me."

But that is not all that David meant, I am quite sure, for, next, he must have meant, "*Forgive my sins.*" You can see by his prayer that his sins were the heaviest affliction from which he was suffering—"Be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You." And, believe me, there is no pain in the world that at all approximates to a sense of sin. I said to a dear friend who is greatly depressed at this time, "I should like you to have a little rheumatic gout, just to take your thoughts off your mental anxiety." "Oh," she said, "it would be a great pleasure to me to have that form of suffering rather than my present depression of spirit!" And I am sure that it is so—and if that depression of spirit is mingled with the thought of sinfulness and you are afraid—although, perhaps, in your case there may be no ground for fear because you really are God's child—but if you get afraid that you are not pardoned and forgiven, that fear will cut into you worse than a wound from a sword! It will make your blood boil more than would the poison of a cobra in your veins, for there is nothing so venomous as sin. So David meant, "I said, when I felt my sin—I said, when my spirit sank within me—Lord, be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me."

Sinners' prayers suit depressed saints! The prayer of the publican is, after all, my everyday prayer. I have what I may call a Sunday prayer, a prayer for high days and holiday, but my everyday prayer, the one that I can use all through the week, the one that I can pick up when I cannot pick up anything else, is the publican's prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That prayer is "the baby's prayer," such as you would teach a child to pray. It is the prayer of the poor harlot, the prayer of the dying thief, "O God, be merciful to me!" It is a blessed, blessed prayer and I charge you never to cease from using it in the sense that our Lord taught it to His disciples, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

But that is not all that there is in this prayer. I think that David, when he said, "Lord, be merciful unto me," also meant, "*Fulfill Your promises.*" "You have said of the man who considers the poor, 'The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.' Lord, be merciful unto me and deliver me in the

time of my trouble. You have said, 'The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive.' Lord, be merciful unto me, preserve me and keep me alive. You have said that you will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. Lord, be merciful unto me, and guard me from my foes. You will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. Lord, be merciful unto me, and strengthen me. You will make all his bed in his sickness. Lord, make my bed." It is a very difficult thing to make a sick man's bed easy and I should think that it was still harder to make the kind of bed that David was accustomed to lie upon. We often have a soft bed with plenty of feathers in it, yet, after we have been lying upon it for a month, it gets very hard. No matter if it is a bed of down, it seems as if it were made of stones and one is apt to think that it is made very badly when it is really made exceedingly well. But I should think that the mattresses they used in the East must have been so hard that it needed God, Himself, to make soft beds for sick people, so the Lord comes in with this gracious promise, "I will make all his bed"—bolster, pillow, covering and all—"I will make all his bed in his sickness. I will help him. I will comfort him. I will make him patient. I will enable him to bear all My will."

Now, then, you dear saints of God who are in trouble, here is a prayer that is suitable for every one of you, "Lord, be merciful unto me." Should you get very badly off, then plead the promise, "You have said, 'Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' Lord, be merciful unto me." Are you going down in the world? Remember that it is written, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," and cry, "Lord, be merciful unto me." This prayer comes in appropriately at the back of every promise!

I know that I am addressing some who are not yet saved, but I wish that this prayer might get into each one of their hearts—"Lord, be merciful unto me." Keep on praying it until you obtain the mercy! Every five minutes in the day, wherever you are, let your heart go beating—beat, beat, beat, beat—to this tune, "Lord, be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me." You cannot have a prayer that will better fit your lips!

So far I have spoken of only half the Psalmist's prayer. The other half of it is, "Heal my soul." David does not pray, "Heal my eyes; heal my feet; heal my heart; heal me, whatever my disease may be," but he goes at once to the root of the whole matter and prays, "Heal my soul." O you sick ones, be more anxious to have your soul healed than to have your body cured! What does David mean by this portion of his prayer?

He means, I think, first, "*Heal me, Lord, of the distress of my soul!* My soul is afflicted with an appalling disease and is brought very low—"Lord, heal my soul." I am so sad, so sorely frightened, such terrors pass before my eyes, my soul is morbid, melancholic, despondent—"Lord, heal my soul." The Lord is the great Soul-healer, therefore go to Him with this prayer, "Lord, heal me of the distress of my soul."

But also add this meaning to the petition—"Lord, heal my soul of the effect of sin." Every sin brings on another sin. And the continuance in sin makes the tendency to sin, stronger. "Heal my soul, Lord." If I was once a drunk and I have given up the evil thing, yet the thirst will come—heal

my soul of it. If I have been a man of the world and have made unrighteous gains, the tendency to do so again will be strong upon me when the opportunity occurs—‘Heal my soul, Lord.’ That I may forget the wanton songs I used to sing, the wanton sights I once delighted in, the wanton lusts that once ate up my life, ‘Heal my soul, Lord.’” It is one thing to be forgiven, it is another thing to be delivered from the result of a long life of sin! Yet God can do even that, so pray, “Lord, be merciful unto me and pardon me. Heal my soul and sanctify me.”

I think that David also meant by this prayer, “*Heal me of my tendency to sin.*” He seemed to say, “Lord, I shall sin again if I am not healed. I have an evil tendency in me and an old nature which is inclined to sin. If You do not heal me of this disease, there will be another eruption upon the skin of my life and I shall sin again.” When a man sins outwardly, it is because he has sin inwardly. If there were no sin in us, no sin would come out of us. But there it lies, sometimes concealed. I do not think it is ever a good thing to sin—that cannot be—but I have known a man to be tempted and to fall into sin who has discovered by his fall how much of sin there always was in him. It is something like the breaking out of a disease in the skin—it would not have broken out if it had not been there before. And the outbreak, however grievous it is, may be useful by driving the sufferer to seek a cure and so he becomes thoroughly healed. This is the meaning of David’s prayer, “Heal my soul, for I have sinned. Heal me, that I may not sin again.”

II. The second part of our subject is A CONFESSION. “I have sinned against You.” I do not want to simply have these words in my mouth, to tell them to you. I wish that I could put them into your mouths, O you unconverted ones, that you might say them to God! Let us briefly consider what is meant by this confession, “I have sinned against You.”

First, it is a confession *without an excuse*. David does not say, “I have sinned against You, but I could not help it,” or, “I was sorely tempted,” or, “I was in trying circumstances.” No, as long as a man can make an excuse for his sin, he will be a lost man. But when he dares not and cannot frame an excuse, there is hope for him. “I have sinned against You,” is a confession without an excuse.

Further, it is a confession *without any qualification*. He does not say, “Lord, I have sinned to a certain extent, but, still, I have partly balanced my sins by my virtues and I hope to wipe out my faults with my tears.” No. He says, “I have sinned against You,” as if that were a full description of his whole life. He bows his knees and just confesses unto God, “Lord, I give up everything in the way of self-defense or self-justification. ‘I have sinned against You.’”

But notice, also, that this confession is *without affectation*. When some people say, “We have sinned,” you can tell by their manner that they think they are, by their confession, complimenting God. You talk with them and they say, “Oh, yes, Sir, we are all sinners!” Yes, they are all sinners like the monk who said that he had broken all the commandments, and was the most wicked man in the world. So one of his companions asked him if he had broken the First Commandment. Another asked about the Second, then the Third, the Fourth, the Fifth and all the

rest. And to each one he kept saying, "No, I never broken that in my life." They inquired about the whole ten and he declared that he had never broken one of them—yet this was the man who had confessed that he had broken all ten! And there are men who say that they are sinners, yet they do not mean it. And a sham sinner will only have a sham savior—that is to say, a man who only pretends to be a sinner and does not realize his guilt in the sight of God, *will not have a Savior*. Christ died for nobody but real sinners, those who feel that their sin is truly sin—

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

and if I am happy enough to meet with a man who puts himself down with real sinners, I bid him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and expect that, by so doing, he will find a real Savior who will cleanse him from sin by His precious blood!

I wanted you to notice that there was no affectation about David's confession of sin, for, in the next verse he says, "My enemies speak evil of me." He was not going to confess sin which he had not committed—and when men spoke against him, he said, "They speak evil of me." Well, but, David, how can they speak evil of you when you confess that you are so bad? "Yes," he says, "but I have not done that with which they charge me. I confess that I have sinned against God, but I have not sinned against Him in the way they say I have. So far as their charges are concerned, I am innocent and pure. What I confess is that I have sinned against God." I like a man, when he makes a confession of sin, not to be carried away into the use of proud expressions without meaning, but to speak with judgment and to acknowledge and confess only what is true. This is the excellence of David's confession, that he acknowledges to what no sinner will ever admit till the Grace of God makes him do it—"I have sinned *against You*."

Hear him again in the 51st Psalm—"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Hear the prodigal—"Father, I have sinned *against Heaven*, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." The essence of sin is that it is sin against *God*. It is wrong to do any harm to your neighbor, but, after all, you and he are only two subjects of the great King and Lord of All. It is high treason to sin against God and often that sin, of which men think the least, God thinks the most. That spiritual sin of which some say, "Oh, that is a mere trifle!"—that forgetting of the Creator, that ignoring of the only Redeemer—this is the sin of sins, the damning sin which kindles the flames of Hell! And it is a good thing and a right thing, when a man's confession of sin has David's confession as the very core of it, "Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You."

III. Now I close by noticing A PLEA and a very singular plea it is. The Psalmist's prayer is followed by a confession and, strangely enough, the confession is the argument of the prayer. Listen to the text again—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul." Why? "*For I have sinned against You*."

That is a very startling and remarkable way of pleading, but it is the only right one. It is *such a plea as no self righteous man would urge*. The

Pharisee keeps to this strain, "Lord, be merciful unto me, for I have been obedient, I have kept Your Law." O foolish, self-righteous man! Do you not see that you are shutting the door in your own face? You say, in effect, "Be merciful unto me, for I do not need any mercy." That is what it practically comes to and, therefore, you are contradicting your own prayer! If you have kept the Law from your youth up and you have been so good and so obedient, you do not need any mercy from God! Why, therefore, do you ask for it? No man who thinks himself better than his neighbors, strictly upright, honorable and worthy of reward, will ever bow his knees and cry to God, "Have mercy upon me, for I have sinned against You." He pleads, on the contrary, "Have mercy upon me, for I am a most respectable man. I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. I have brought up my family most admirably. Have mercy upon me." I say again, he asks for charity and then says, "I do not need it. Give me of Your charity, O God, but I am not one of the poor beggars that crawl about the street—I am as well-to-do as anybody." None but the poor will value the charity of men and none but the guilty will value the charity of God. If you are not a sinner, Christ as a Savior has nothing to do with you. He came into the world to save sinners—and as for you who count yourselves righteous, this is what He says about you, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As Mary sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." Let them feed themselves if they have such an abundance as they say. This, then, is the sort of plea that a self-righteous man would not urge.

This is, further, *such a plea as a carnal reasoner could not urge*, for he could not spy out any reason or argument in it. "Am I to appeal to my God for mercy and for soul-healing on the ground that I have sinned? Why," he says, "there is no plea in *that*." But he who has been to Christ's School and learned the logic of the Cross, will know that there is no argument equal in force to this—"Lord, I have sinned, I need mercy. Give it to me, Lord. I have sinned and, therefore, I have no right whatever to expect anything of You—therefore glorify Yourself by the freeness and spontaneity of Your abounding Grace! Lord, I have sinned and this sinning has destroyed me! Have pity upon me. This sinning is like a deadly disease within my soul. Therefore, Great Physician, come and heal me! This sinning has killed me. Make me alive. This sinning has damned me. Come and save me!"

That is the best pleading in all the world and, after all, it is the common pleading that men make use of with their fellow men. When one comes begging of me, what does he say? In nine cases out of ten, he tells me what is not true! That I can vouch for, but I always notice that he never pleads thus—"Now, Sir, I want you to give me help because I do not need it very much. I am not at all badly off—I already have about as much as I need—but I thought that I would take to begging because it is a genteel kind of occupation." You never hear him talk like that! I remember giving a man, who came begging of me with bare feet, a pair of patent leather boots. They were nearly done with, but I thought that he might make some use of them. He put them on, but he was not so foolish as to go begging in them! At the first gateway he came to, he pulled them

off and I met him, ten minutes afterwards, without the boots, except that he had them slung over his back, ready to sell to the first likely customer! He knew that rags are the best clothes for a beggar—if he would succeed in his calling, the fouler and the more ragged he looked, the better for him—for so he appeals to our sense of pity. At any rate, that is the way to beg of God. Do not go and smarten yourself up and say, “Lord, I am pretty decent as I am. Be merciful unto me.” No, but go in your rags—go just as you are, in all your sin, filthiness, weakness, poverty and insignificance—and so appeal to the pity and the mercy of God.

This is sound common sense that I am talking. Suppose there had been a battle and I were a soldier who had been wounded and lay upon the plain? And suppose the surgeon and the men with the ambulance were going round to see who needed their help? If they came to me, I do not think I should say, “Well, Doctor, I have got a bullet in here somewhere, but it has not gone in very far. I daresay it will be all right—you can leave me here.” Oh, no! I would say, “I am afraid, Doctor, that this bullet is very near my heart. You had better let your men pick me up and attend to me quickly, or I may be very soon dead.” I certainly would not try to make myself out to be better than I was! And I would be glad to be attended to at once. And what folly it is when a man tries to comfort himself, as a sinner, by looking up all his filthy rags of self-righteousness and saying, “Lord, I do not think there is very much the matter with me.” O Soul, if you did but know it, your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint—from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet you are covered with wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! There is but a step between you and death—between you and Hell—if you have never been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ! Therefore, do not set up your lying pretences! Do not paint yourself up, like Jezebel, for you cannot, in that way, make yourself beautiful in the sight of God! You must go to Him with all your wrinkles, all your foulness and everything else that is hideous, and say, “Lord, I have no beauty, I have no merit, nothing to plead, nothing to urge but my guilt. ‘Heal my soul; for I have sinned against You.’” Then you shall be saved!

When a man cannot pay to God a penny in the pound of all his debts, then he will be frankly forgiven all. But as long as he promises that he will make a composition and do his best to pay what he owes to Divine Justice in the hope that Jesus Christ will make up the rest, there is no hope for him! The Lord Jesus Christ will not be a mere make weight for you! Do you think that you are to get into the scale with your beautiful righteousness and that you are to be accounted somebody of great importance—and that Christ is to do the little that you cannot do—that it is to be “Christ & Co.,” or rather, “Self & Co.”? And that you are to be the head of the firm and Christ to be a kind of silent partner? He will not do it! It would be a disgrace to Christ to yoke you with Him in such a fashion. You might as soon yoke a gnat with an archangel as think of your going in to help Christ to save you! To join a filthy rag from off a dunghill with the golden garments of a king or a queen cannot be permitted! Christ will be everything, or else He will be nothing—you must be saved wholly by mercy, or else not at all! There must not be even a trace of the

fingers of self-righteousness upon the acts and documents of Divine Grace. It must be all of Grace—"And if by Grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise Grace is no more Grace."

There can be no more mingling of the two together as the ground of hope than oil will mix with water, or fire will burn beneath the sea. You cannot be saved by your own merits! Oh, then, I implore you, breathe this prayer to God, "Lord, be merciful unto me; pardon me, for You have mercy upon sinners, and here is one! You heal the sick, and here is one! Lord, by Your Grace I trust You! I lay my sins on Jesus, I lay my soul-sickness at his dear feet. Lord, save me." It is all done if you trust Jesus—you are saved!

Just before I came in to this service, I saw a young Brother whom I mean to propose to the Church and who last Sunday came to me, after the morning sermon, and said, "Sir, I am saved, and I know I am." And as I spoke to him, I thought that I knew it, too. Why should there not be many others in the same blessed condition? What is the use of preaching—what is the use of this vast crowd coming together and going away again—unless men and women believe in Christ? Look unto Jesus and be saved! If you look, you shall be saved now! The Lord lead you to look at this very moment, and unto Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 41, 42.**

You will see, dear Friends, from these holy songs, that the saints of God in those olden days were not screened from trials and troubles, but were tempted in all points like as we are. If we happen to be in similar trying circumstances, let us take comfort from their experiences. The footsteps of the flock that has gone before should make the sheep feel that it is not lost.

Psalm 41 To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.* David delivered others and God will deliver him. When he is poor and needy, God will think upon him, even as David considered the poor and the needy when they cried to him.

2, 3. *The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and You will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: You will make all his bed in his sickness.* God will be condescendingly gentle to such as are kind and gentle to the poor. If we love God, first, and then exhibit the result of that love in our care for the poor and the needy, we shall certainly be recompensed, for he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will pay him back—sometimes in his own coin, but more often in a coin of heavenly currency. Let us take note of this and let us never harden our heart against the poor and the needy in the time of their extremity.

4. *I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.* David had been very kind to the poor at all times, but when he gets into trouble, he does not plead that,

he just mentions it. The main stress of his pleading is quite in another direction, namely, for mercy—"I said, Lord be merciful unto me."

4, 5. *Heal my soul; for I have sinned against You. My enemies speak evil of me. When will he die, and his name perish?* But good men do not die to please wicked men. But sometimes, when the good men have been dead, buried and their memory has been insulted by the wicked, they have risen up, again, in their posthumous influence! Good men live too long for the wicked, but they live as long as God wills that they should—they are immortal till their work is done. The story of Wycliffe is but a typical case of what has often happened. When the monks gathered round his bed and expected that their opponent would soon be gone, he said, "I shall not die, but live," and so he did. And even after he had died, he continued to be a living power in the land. Indeed, we know not how much of the blessings we enjoy is the result of the light that was shed upon England by "the Morning Star of the Reformation."

6. *And if he comes to see me, he speaks vanity: his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes abroad, he tells it.* Those are bad visitors to the sick who, when they speak, talk only nonsense or that which galls the sufferer. And then, when they go out, begin to tell an idle tale against him to his injury.

7-9. *All who hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaves fast unto him: and now that he lies, he shall rise up no more. Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.* Many a child of God has had his character whispered down by slanderers. Many a man has had a hard time of it through the evil speaking of men of the world. Yes, even the Lord of saints and the King of pilgrims knew what it was to find a traitor in His most familiar friend and to receive the basest ingratitude from one who had eaten of His bread. Do not be carried away with too much sorrow if you are slandered or betrayed—better men than you have suffered through this fearful evil! Take the trouble to your Lord and bear it with such patience as He will give you.

10, 11. *But You, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that You favor me, because my enemy does not triumph over me.* "He may think that he shall triumph over me. He may even begin, in his mind, to divide the spoil. But he shall never really get it—'My enemy does not triumph over me.'"

12, 13. *And as for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*

That is the sick man's praise—it is full of fervor and full of life. Let us never rob God of the revenue of His praises! Let us not have such a cupboard love for Him that we only praise Him when He gives us good things. Let us bless His name just as much when He takes away, when He afflicts, when He chastises! That is true praise which comes from the bed of affliction and from a heart that is sorely broken with sorrow.

Now in the next Psalm we find the good man in trouble again.

Psalm 42:1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* "As the hart pants" or "brays." And if such is your

soul's panting after God, you shall have what you pant for. Sooner or later God will manifest Himself in Grace to the man who cries after Him in this fashion!

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.* "My soul, my very soul, thirsts for God, the living God."

2, 3. *When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* That is another of the taunts of the ungodly. Just now, they said, "When shall he die and his name perish?" Now they cry, "Where is your God? You said that He would help you. You were sure that He would comfort you. You were confident that He would draw near to you—and now you are crying and panting after Him and have not got what you want—'Where is your God?'"

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.* That is not a good thing to do. If you pour your soul out, do not pour it into *yourself!* There is little gain when you merely empty your grief *out* of yourself *into* yourself. I have known many a man lay his burden down and then take it up, again, directly. That is poor economy! The way to get rid of the sorrow is to pour out your hearts before God! There is no wisdom in doing what the Psalmist says he did—"I pour out my soul in me."

4, 5. *For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me?* You see, the Psalmist, here, talks to himself. Every man is two men—we are duplicates, if not triplicates—and it is well, sometimes, to hold a dialogue with one's self. "Why are you cast down, O my Soul?" I always notice that as long as I can argue with myself about my depressions, I can get out of them. But when both the men within me go down at once, it is a downfall, indeed! When there is one foot on the solid rock, the other comes up to it pretty soon.

5. *Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.* "I know I shall. He will yet look at me. I shall not always be in the dark. Therefore, let me begin at once to praise Him." It is well, sometimes, to snatch a light from the altars of the future and with it to kindle the sacrifices of the present. "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance."

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* From the little hill I will think of all Your former love—all the sacred spots where You have met with me, all the lonely places where You have been my Comfort, and all the joyful regions where You have been my glory. I will think of these, and take comfort from them, for You are an unchanging God, and what You did for me before, You will do for me again and yet again.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts: all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* Here is a great storm. Here is a man, not merely on the sea, but in the sea with not only some waves beating upon him, but with all of them going over him. And those not common waves, but God's waves. That is a Hebraism for the biggest

waves, Atlantic billows—all these have gone right over him, yet see how he swims! Hope in God always crests the stormiest billow.

8, 9. *Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life will say unto God, my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* See what liberties saints take with God—how they reason with Him, how they argue with Him—and God loves them to do so. Are you not pleased with your child when he urges reasons why you should do this or that for him? You are glad to see that he has mind enough to think of these things and confidence enough in you to expect you to be affected by his pleading. And the Lord loves His people to commune with Him. “Put Me in remembrance,” He says. “Let us plead together.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord.” If we reasoned more with God, we should reason less with ourselves. There is a good reason for reasoning with God, but it is often unreasonable to reason with yourself.

10, 11. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God. for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* It is curious to see the duplicate man here. He talks to himself as, “you,” and yet he says, “I.” “Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance.” First, he said, “I shall yet praise Him, for the help of His countenance.” Now it is, “the *health of my countenance.*” When God helps us with His countenance, then our own countenance soon grows bright and healthy! “Who is the health of my countenance,” says the Psalmist, and then he comes to the sweetest note of all, “and my God.”—

***“For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is he.”***

Oh, sweet word, that! May each of us be able to reach it! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—537, 594, 607.

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

THE PANTING DEER

NO. 822

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As the deer pants after the water brooks,
so pants my soul after You, O God.”
Psalm 42:1.*

THERE is something to be lamented in this state of mind, for if the Psalmist had maintained unbroken communion with his God, he would not have been so much panting after Him as *enjoying* Him. It is deeply to be deplored that we, who sometimes bask in the sunshine of God's Countenance, cannot live so as always to enjoy it. Why do we wander? Why do we grieve His Holy Spirit? Why do we turn aside from God, our exceeding joy? Why do we provoke Him to jealousy and cause Him to make us grope in darkness, and sigh out of a lonely and desolate heart? There is much of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

If, therefore, we can join in the language of the text, we must not too much congratulate ourselves, for though it is a sign of Divine Grace to pant after God as the deer pants for the water brooks, yet it is an equally certain sign of a need of more Grace, and the loss of a privilege which we should strive always to possess. We are yet but poor in spiritual things when we might be rich. We are thirsting when we might put flagons to our lips. At the same time there is very much which is commendable in the desire expressed in the text—the insatiable desire which burned in the Psalmist's heart is a heavenly flame enkindled from above.

If I have not my Lord in near and dear communion, it is at least the next best thing to be unutterably wretched until I find Him. If I do not sit at His banquets, yet blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness. If my Beloved is not in my embrace, yet so long as I am not contented without Him—so long as I sigh, and cry, and follow hard after Him—I may be assured that I am in the possession of His love and that before long I shall find Him to the joy of my soul. Our text, then, has a warp and a woof of differing colors—sin and Grace are mingled—the wine is mixed with water, yet it is wine. There is some alloy in the silver, yet silver it assuredly is.

David sighs as none but a Believer can do, and yet if he had not been a sinner, too, such sighs had not been necessary. Brothers and Sisters, such good and such evil are in you—search and look—and pray the great Spirit to remove the ill and nourish the good.

I. Coming straight to the text, we shall notice, in the first place, THE OBJECT OF THE DESIRE which the Psalmist here describes. The deer pants after the water brooks and David pants after his God, the living God. I do not find him expressing a single word of regret as to his absence from his throne. Probably he wrote this Psalm when he had been expelled from his country by his ungrateful son, Absalom. But he does not say, “My soul pants after my royalties and the splendor of the kingdom of

Judah.” No, not a word of it. He lets the baubles go. He gives up these uneasy pomps, content to let all go forever if he may but find his God.

Well may we let the chaff go if we retain the wheat. I do not find him even mentioning his home, and yet he was a man of a loving spirit who delighted to bless his household. But here I read not a word concerning his palace, his gardens, or his treasuries—not even for his children can he spare a sigh! Let him be banished from his own house and it will not displease him if he is not banished from the House of God, also. To him his dwelling place was the Lord, and dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, his joys were all complete.

Nor is there even a word about his much loved country. David was a very prince of patriots, yet he sighs not for Jerusalem. He pines not for the well of Bethlehem—neither the roses of Sharon nor the lilies of the valley command his lamentations—for the excellency of Carmel or the glory of Lebanon he utters no cry of desire. His one sigh is for his God, the God of his life, his exceeding joy! When shall he come and appear before God? When shall he join in the assembly and keep the Sabbath?

This one grief, like a huge torrent, swept away all minor streams, absorbing themselves into its own rush and volume. Like an avalanche which binds the snow masses to itself as it descends, so his one desire concentrated all the vehemence and force of his nature. His God, his God—he cannot live without his God! He cries for Him as a lost child for its father. As a bleating lamb he will not be content till he finds his parent. David pined for permission to enjoy, again, the means of Divine Grace. He longed to go up to the Tabernacle once again. He desired to see the priests offering the sacrifices, and himself go unto the altar of God.

But observe, Beloved, that he does not dwell upon the *outward* worship, nor dilate upon its symbolic pomp and sacred splendor—he passes right through them all, as the priest of old passed through the outer court! Only the *innermost* court will satisfy him. He penetrates within the shell and desires the inward kernel. The carnal ordinance cannot content him—he must have the *spiritual* life and substance. He does not so much pine for the sacrifices as for his God—neither for the priest, nor for the altar, nor for the tabernacle does he cry—but for his God! He had learned what modern professors have not learned—that the outward is nothing, and the inward is everything!

“The kingdom of God is within you.” It is not meat, nor drink, nor outward worship. And the God whom you adore is not pleased with your words and your genuflections. He is not pleased with your outward forms of speech and observance. He is only pleased when you press through all this and come to HIM—come into fellowship with Him and speak to Him as a spirit speaking with a Spirit—as one possessing a secret life speaking in the power of that life to the invisible and ever-living God.

This is what David longed after, then. Not his throne, nor his house, nor his country, nor even the outward means of Grace by themselves, but his *God* he panted after, his God alone! And this was his cry, “When shall I come and appear before God?” I suppose the longing of the Psalmist to have consisted of the following particulars. He longed to appear before his God, that is to say, heartily to unite in the worship of the assembled crowd. He could have worshipped alone, but sympathy has great power

over the human mind—and to join with our Brethren of one faith is very helpful to our devotion. Besides, in that age of types there was one spot sacred above all others, and every devout Israelite was bound to go up to the sacred shrine.

David remembered when the great shout went up at the tabernacle gate to Him—“whose mercy endures forever.” In his loneliness his fancy brought to his ears the song of the multitude as they chanted the glorious hallelujah, and he pined to be there to swell the strain. Not, however, because the merely *being there* would satisfy him, but because he felt if he could join the throng, he was in such a state of soul that he could throw his whole heart into the worship. And, O my Brothers and Sisters, you and I, when we lose, for awhile, the freshness of our spirituality, how we desire to get it back again that we may once more, in vitality of godliness, worship God with His people!

Oh, it is blessed to be here when we can stand and sing unto our Well-Beloved a song! When we can kneel with the congregation and join in the common supplication, ourselves getting a grip of the Angel and holding Him fast, and not letting Him go until He blesses us! Is it not delightful to listen to the Word preached in the great congregation, when the morsel is dipped in the honey for you in particular? What joy when I can glean among the sheaves for myself and gather the handfuls that are let fall on purpose for me, and can carry home my part of the day’s provision with humble gratitude!

Is it not so, Beloved? And if you have fallen into such a state of mind that you do not, now, enjoy the services of God’s House as you once did, I would persuade you to ask the Lord to give you the strong desire of David—that you may, again, in spirit in very truth appear before God—for, I beseech you, never let the mere coming together content you! But let your panting be like that of the stag—after the water brook and nothing else—for GOD, for GOD, for GOD Himself, and nothing short of Him!

It is right to pine for the outward services when we feel that they are profitable to us. Or when we have been banished from the Church of God for awhile, or have been confined by sickness, or have been compelled to sit under an unprofitable ministry. We may, then, well sigh for the very *walls* which enclose the people whom we love, then. Often in France, and Switzerland, and Italy, have I felt the power of this text—

***“As the heart pants after the water brooks,
So pants my soul after You, O God,”***

and I have sung—

***“Might I enjoy the meanest place
Within Your House, O God of Grace!
Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,
Should tempt my feet to leave Your door.”***

Further than this, David’s desire comprehended a longing after a restored confidence as to his interest in the love of God. He knew that God loved him. Three or four times over in his Psalm he speaks like a man whose faith holds its own. “For I shall yet praise Him,” he says, “who is the health of my countenance and my God.” A man may know his interest in Christ, and yet it may be a matter of some dispute with him—he may derive but little present comfort from it. But oh, how delightful it is when

we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him!

When the Lord's everlasting, unbounded, unchangeable love to us is no more a matter of question than our own existence—when we can say, "My Father, God," with an unfaltering tongue—this is the cream of life! And as the deer pants after the water brooks, so ought we to pant after this—that we may always know by the Infallible witness of the Holy Spirit that assuredly we are in the love of God—that our name is written in the Book of Life. That we ourselves are forever dear to the eternal Father, and registered in the rolls of the family that He has begotten! Oh, happy they who possess this! Dear Friend, if you do not at this hour enjoy it, *seek* it, seek it ravenously, beyond all bounds of intensity! Seek it until you find it in sweet dependence upon Jesus.

But David wanted more than this. Not merely, as we have said, to worship God heartily and to have a confidence in the Divine love, but he longed to have that love shed abroad in his heart. You know, Beloved, what this means, this outpouring of Divine love, when it is not merely a *belief* with you that God loves you, but you even *feel* that love of God shed abroad within you by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you. Oh, what joy this is! When it is at its full it is ravishing! So that whether in the body or out of the body we can sometimes scarcely tell! The love of God often overpowers the Believer with its delight—he is faint with glory, sick of love!

Have you ever felt as if you were dwelling in the suburbs of Heaven, standing in the border land between the Glory-life and the life that now is, tasting the clusters of Eshcol and drinking from the crystal cups of the marriage supper? Beloved, under these rolling skies there is no bliss like the earnest of the Spirit, that foretaste of celestial feasts, that pledge of joys to come. Oh, yes, Beloved, when we have actual fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, our joy is Divinely crowned with a coronet of loving kindness! There is a floodtide of the River of Life in our spirit—every thought is active, every power is inspired, every passion is elevated—and the whole man is filled with all the fullness of God—

***"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in its immensity."***

Now, abiding fellowship with God ought to be our daily life. The enjoyment of God's love ought not to be a thing of yesterday, nor of today, but of *all* days—forevermore should we walk with God as Enoch did. And if for awhile this holy joy is broken or withdrawn from us, then ought we with incessant importunity to take up the language of the text, and declare that, "as the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants our soul after You, O God." Beloved, it may be this morning that I am speaking to some of you who, at one time, were very lively and active Christians, making great advances in the Divine life. But, alas, at the present moment you feel yourselves to be very dull and heavy, and you are uneasy that it should be so.

I thank God for that uneasiness! May these waves rise higher within you until they drive you back to your first moorings and drift you to the place where once you had so much joy and peace. I think I know what your experience is—I know it, alas, too well, by having experienced it myself!—

"What peaceful hours we once enjoyed!"

***How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.”***

We had just found Jesus, and we did not know how to think enough of Him, or speak well enough of His dear name. Now, alas, day will pass after day and we scarcely say a word to His honor, or try to bring one poor heart to be enamored of Him. *Then* the services of God’s House were inexpressibly delightful. We wished that Sundays were never over, and when they ended we looked forward to the next occasion when we should meet with the saints of God. But now we come and we go like the door on the hinges. We find no water in the well of ordinances. Time was when we worked much for our Lord, and in all we did, we did it with all our might, throwing heart and soul into every labor. We felt His sweet Presence in all our service, and indeed, at all times.

If we walked by the way, we walked with Him. If we awoke in the night, our soul was still with Him. If we were busy during the day, yet prayers were darted up in the little intervals between our business. But now, alas, it is not so as once it was. We can go day after day—not without prayer, thank God—not without praise, not without the assembling of ourselves together at ordinary times—but, alas, without the *life*, without the *energy*, without the *joy*, without the *peace*, without the holy *anointing* which we then knew.

Oh, then, Beloved, let us not settle upon our lees! Let us tremble, for chastisement is near! The rod will surely come upon us! God will not leave His children unchastened when they thus decline from His love. Gray hairs are coming upon us here and there, and now that we are made to see them, let us return unto Him from whom we have backslidden! He, gently, this morning says to us by a Brother’s voice, “Return, you backsliding children.” Let it be our business to return! Meanwhile let our spirits be filled with the earnest desire of the text, for it will give us wings with which to return. “As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.”

II. We will now change the subject by considering THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DESIRE which we have tried to describe. These characteristics are brought out by a metaphor. David compares himself to a stag when tormented with thirst. The comparison brings out, in the first place, as the characteristic of this desire, directness. The deer pants—what for? You need not repeat the question or pause for a reply. Everybody can see, by its smoking flanks, uplifted head, its palpitating heart, its rolling eyes, its thrust-out tongue—that it is panting for the water brooks.

So with David—he is ill at ease, but it is no question with him what he needs to give him rest of heart—“So pants my soul after You, O God,” he says, and so he goes at once to the point. He knew where he was—there is no beating about the bush, no tacking to and fro—he directs his arrow straight at the center of the target. “My soul thirsts for God—for the living God.” Beloved, it is a great mercy when you and I know what we need, for ungodly men do not know. They thirst, but like petulant children, they know not what they are crying for. They long, and they pant, and their question is, “Who will show us any good?”

But you and I know that our great need is the light of God’s Countenance! And we have come to this. And we will stand to this. And we will

hold to this, that we will never cease pleading till we really see that face which makes the Heaven of angels, and is all the Heaven we desire. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, is your desire as distinct and direct towards God as was the desire of David in the text? If not, chide yourself. Chide yourself that you should be hovering in circles where the straight line is so much better. Bring out in plain words your soul's desire. Let it well up from the lowest depths of your spirit, "I need—I need my God. I do not languish for that which others are fascinated with. I do not crave what others are ambitious for—but my God, my God—let me serve You, and enjoy You forevermore! Why have You forsaken me? Return unto me now! Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation! Say unto my soul, I am your salvation! Reveal Your Son in me, and be Yourself my ever-present Friend."

Notice next in the text the unity of the saint's desire. The deer longs after nothing else but water brooks. There may have been other times when the poor stag had other natural desires—he may have desired the grassy plains or the shady woods—but now, hunted, wearied, steaming, panting, it must drink or die. It has but one thought—the water brooks, the cool rippling rills, the refreshing pools.

Now, Beloved Brother or Sister, if you are about to get a blessing from the Lord, you will have but one desire—your God, your God! You will have gathered up all your affections into *one* affection and they will all be ascending towards your Lord! You will make no conditions, no stipulations with Him. If He will but come, even though He brings a rod with Him, you will be contented if He will but come. If you may but have His company, you will accept poverty, or the weary bed of sickness, or bereavement, or anything and everything which He may allot to you—if you may but have fellowship with Jesus!

Let others ask for the bursting wine vat, or the barn that is filled with corn. For you it will be enough if you find your Beloved and may but hold Him and not let Him go, for this is the one and only all-absorbing longing of your hungering and thirsting spirit—that you may find your God—and be comforted with His eternal consolation. Have you ever seen a little child that has lost its way crying in the streets for "Mother"? Now, you shall give that child what you will, but it will not stop its crying for "Mother." It has lost her, and cannot be content.

Take the little wanderer into your house. Show it many toys. Give it many sweets, but all are of no avail, it wants "Mother," and its little heart will burst unless it finds her. Now just show the little one its mother, let it fly into her bosom, and what more does it want? How perfectly content it is to be there! So have I felt that if I might but sob myself to sleep on the bosom of my dear God—if I must have all else taken away from me, if so it should please Him, if I could but be with Him—no other desire or longing could ever cross my soul. I know it is so with all the family of the Lord our God. Their love to Him makes His Presence their All in All.

See that dove just taken from the cage to be set free. Tempt it to remain with you! Cast down the seeds it loves to feed upon. No, it will not dwell with you. It mounts, it makes a few circles in the air, and then having turned its eye to the dear familiar dovecote, it is all wing for home. What can stop its flight? Call to it, allure it as you will! Straight as an arrow

from a bow it flies to its own beloved home and rests not its weary wings till it rests in the house of its love. Even so is it with the Believer's soul. Let him but go free and have his desire. Unbind him of his corruptions. Strip him of his cares. Liberate him from his unbelief. Let him have his freedom and he will fly at once to his Lord Jesus! And nothing can tempt him to linger or find solace save in that blessed bosom of infinite love! A saint must have Christ to abide with him as the one thing necessary to him, for this, like Mary, he leaves all Martha's cares to sit at Jesus' feet.

Observe next the intensity of this desire. "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You." The panting of a thirsty deer is something terrible to see. It appears to thirst all over—every pore of its body is thirsting. It is not alone that heated tongue, those snorting nostrils, those glaring eyes—but the creature in every part, in every hair thirsts and pants. And so with the Believer when he is without his God! If his soul is in a right state he longs with all the force of his being to get back into his former happy condition. There is no stopping him, there is no making him pause. Surely the Psalmist chose thirst for this reason—because it is a longing not to be appeased.

Men have gone for days without food, but they could not, during the same length of time, abstain from drink. In a long and weary march soldiers have been able to endure much absence of solids, but we find in cases like the marches of Alexander, that soldiers have died by hundreds from lack of drink. It has been said hunger you can palliate for awhile, but thirst is awful. You cannot reason with it. Thirst has no ears. You cannot forget it—the more thirsty the man becomes the more does the need thrust itself before him. O my God, painful as is such a spiritual thirst, yet would I desire to be always in this state when I am not in immediate fellowship with You! I would be so thirsty as to never to find a moment's peace, nor ease, nor comfort, except when I am near to You.

"Tears have been my meat," says David, "day and night." As though he could get nothing from himself by way of comfort, for his soul flowed over at his eyes in briny tears which made him thirstier still. Still his cry went up at morn and midnight, "My God, my God, I must behold You, I must approach You, I must enjoy Your love. Shut me not up in this dungeon. Cast me not from Your presence, take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Bring me to Yourself again, for I long, I groan, I faint, I die for You. O come to me and manifest Your favor." Such is the strong desire of the text—such let ours be.

Further, we ought to say that the text manifests, as one characteristic of this longing, a vitality. As we have already said, thirst is connected with the very springs of life. Men must drink or die. So the Christian comes to feel that it is not a luxury to walk with God—a luxury with which he may perhaps dispense—but it is an absolute *necessity* for his spirit. Consider, my Brothers and Sisters, what danger we are in when we live at a distance from God! What danger of backsliding further and further! What danger of being tempted to gross sin! Consider how we are grieving the Holy Spirit! Consider what comforts and mercies we are losing! Consider what dishonor we are likely to bring upon the holy name we profess! Consider how unkind we are to the Husband of our souls—to that dear heavenly Lover who did not spare His heart's blood that He might buy us for Himself—

that He might have all our heart's love! Consider all this, and we shall make it a vital point to return unto our God. It will not seem to us as though it *might* be or might not be, but we shall feel that it *must* be. We cannot be content without the light of Jehovah's Countenance! O God, as the deer must die without water, so must my soul die without a sense of Your love again restored to me!

It would not appear in our version, but it appears in the Scotch Psalter, and it appears in the margin of our old Bibles, that the text describes an expressive desire. Note the Scotch version—

***“Like as the deer for water brooks
In thirst does pant and bray.”***

In the margin of your Bibles you have, “As the deer brays after the water brooks.” It lifts up its voice. It is usually so silent, so all but dumb—but it now begins to bray in awful agony after the water brooks. So the Believer has a desire which forces itself into expression. That expression may often be inarticulate. He may have groans which cannot be uttered, and they are all the deeper for being unutterable. They are all the more sincere and deep because language may not be able to describe them.

In the Psalm before us, you find that David expressed his desire in prayers, and then, if these did not suffice, in tears, and then he turned to prayers again. The child of God will so continue to cry, and pray, and seek, and weep—nor will he be satisfied till by all manner of ways he has expressed before his God the insatiable longing of his thirsty spirit. I do therefore, dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, speak to you now, this morning, and say if you have lost the Presence of God. If the light of Jehovah's Countenance has been withdrawn from you, and you are desiring to return—cultivate that desire and bring it to the highest pitch of fervor. If it is but like one live coal, put another to it! Pile your desires together till they glow like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat.

Pray God the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with all-consuming flames till your heart is hot within you with longings after God. Take care that you express your growing desires day by day and hour by hour—in perpetual solicitations that Jesus would come to you and manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. It is a blessed thing not to need thus to plead because you already rejoice in the smile of the blessed Lover of your souls! But the next best thing is to sigh and cry until your head is once again on your Master's bosom, and the kisses of His lips are yours. Do you know there is a sweetness about this bitter longing? When the desire is strong the veil is thin, and the longing soul feels some gleams of love even while panting for it.

Oh, it is sweet to pant and hunger after Jesus! It is a sort of Heaven to pine after Jesus! The sweet smell which He leaves behind Him makes it sweet to follow Him. To meditate on Him is precious! To admire Him at a distance is delightful, but oh, to HAVE Him! Angels cannot describe this joy! Yes, Beloved in the Lord, it is a blessed thing to pine after Jesus! And even if the mountains of Bether rise between, it is precious to wait, till, like a roe or a young deer, He comes leaping over the hills to reveal Himself to His languishing ones!

III. We will now, in the third place, turn to another point, THE EXCITING CAUSES of this desire after God. These exciting causes are, first,

something *inward*. When a man pants after God, it is a secret life within which makes him do it—he would not long after God by nature. No man thirsts after God while he is left in his carnal state. The unrenewed man pants after *anything* sooner than God—he longs to escape from the Presence of the Lord, for to him it is a dreadful thought that there should be a God at all!

He would be glad enough if someone could prove beyond a doubt that there was no God. It proves a renewed nature when you long after God! It is a work of Divine Grace in your soul, and you may be thankful for it. It proves, however, that this renewed nature is not an independent thing which can live on its own resources. A camel does not pant after water brooks because it carries its own water within it. But the deer does because it has no inward resources. After being hunted on a hot day, it has no inward supplies. It is drained of its moisture. So are we. We do not carry a store of Grace within, of our own, upon which we can rely. We need to come again, and again, and again to the Divine fountain and drink again from the eternal spring. Therefore it is because we have a *new life* and that life is dependent upon God and has all its fresh springs in Him, that we pant and thirst after Him.

O Christian, if you had a sacred life which could be maintained by its own energies within, you might do without your God! But since you are naked, and poor, and miserable apart from Him, you must come and drink day by day of the living springs or else you faint and die. But the causes of the thirst were also *outward*. The stag pants for the water brooks not only from within, but because of the heat of the sun or of the distance it has traveled. It also pants because of the dogs that have hunted it so far.

So the Believer—so David in the text. Enemies said to him, “Where is your God?” They were barking at his heels. His troubles had been multiplied—“All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me.” And this made him turn to his God. I believe a man’s enemies are often his best friends. To be pierced with sharp troubles, now and then, will serve for our enlivening if Divine Grace so sanctifies the pain. Any outward affliction which drives us nearer to our God is a God-send for which we should be devoutly grateful.

Moreover, the source of David’s longings lay partly in the past. The deer pants after the water brooks because it has a recollection of the coolness of the streams from which it has drunk before, and therefore it longs to drink again. So David said, “I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar.” He remembered when he went with the assembly to the House of God, with the multitude who kept the Sabbath. So do we long after God because we have a cheerful recollection of the comforts we have had in years gone by when we have been in His fellowship. Did you ever have such delightful seasons as when you have lived near to God? Were you ever so happy and so blessed as when the Holy Spirit, like a sacred dove, brooded over your spirit? You know that these were the best days of your life! Then, I pray you, remembering these sweet things, pant after them again, and so let the past quicken your desires!

Further, the desire which David had, sprung from the present as well as the past. He was at that present moment in a position of eminent distress. "All Your waves and Your billows," says he, "have gone over me." And this, also, should make us fly to God, for what distress is there which He cannot alleviate? What wound is there which the Presence of God cannot heal? Our God is the cordial of our care, the balm of our woe—He is our All in All. Do but get to God and you are like the mariner who has reached his port—the storms are over, now, for him—he cares little how the winds howl, or the waves roar. Believer, rest in your God, and you have obtained all your capacious powers can wish—and your troubles, and your wants, and your needs will be forgotten in your overflowing joy!

Moreover, there was a fourth spring, namely, the future. "Hope in God," he says, "for I shall yet praise Him." He panted after his God because he had a keen perception that peaceful times would yet return to him. When a man is despairing and fancies that the sun will never rise, it is hard to cheer him. But once indoctrinate him with the belief that there are happier seasons yet in store—predestinated periods when the light of God's Countenance shall shine full in his face—and the man plucks up courage! O Beloved, no child of God has any reason to despair! God will appear to His people! He cannot forsake them!

"Can a woman forsake her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will *I never forget you.*" It is not possible that He who counts the stars, and calls them all by names, should pass over one of His elect, His called, His adopted people! Be of good cheer, then, you shipwrecked one! Though each billow should be angrier than the former and drown you deeper in distress, yet the arm of God is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear! Look forward to better times, and looking forward, let your panting and your longings increase! May God give you a hunger because there is a banquet. May He give you a thirst because there are flagons of which you may drink. May He give you great desires, for if you open your mouth ever so wide He will certainly fill it.

I have thus tried to unveil the springs, the inward and outward, the future, the present, and the past from which our desires come. And now, before I conclude, I would ask every deserted Believer whether he does at this time feel such vehement panting? If not, I do think it is a subject for most solemn anxiety. We ought to bestir ourselves lest we sleep ourselves into death. There are certain conditions of the human frame in which sleep becomes absolutely deadly—the poor patient must be kept in motion, must be wounded with needles, roughly treated lest he should sleep. And there are times when, if we are permitted to sleep *spiritually*, it must end in our eternal ruin. At such times, when we feel the slumbering tendency coming over us, we ought to be alarmed lest we should turn out to be as others who sleep themselves into Hell!

May God awaken us, though it be by thunderbolts! May He shake us, even though it is with His roughest hand and break us with His fiercest tempest sooner than suffer us quietly and calmly to glide down the stream of indifference until we are dashed over the precipice of apostasy and are lost. Of course, the *true* child of God cannot be cast away. But now, if I should have been a *deceiver*, even after having preached to others, or

united in church fellowship with others, I could come to be, myself, a castaway.

O that such thoughts may possess our minds till we are racked by them and driven with the insatiable desire of the text to long after the Presence of our God!

IV. Lastly, these words suggest, in concluding, a few COMFORTABLE ENCOURAGEMENTS. I do not like, myself, to be in the condition of merely *longing* after God—I trust I can say I have walked with God and enjoyed the sense of His love for many a day. But ah, there is no thirst like the thirst of the man who has once known what the sweetness of the wine of Heaven is! He that has never eaten manna may be satisfied with the gritty brown bread of earth, but heavenly manna is a hunger-making thing!

If you once get the flavor in your mouth, you will never be content unless you have it always there. It would be an awful thing for a man who has once known spiritual life if he could be eternally cast away, because in Hell no others would have known the joy which he has known and consequently they could not know the misery which he feels in having lost it. Among all the miserable poor in this world, none are so wretched as those who once were rich, because they have acquired habits which make poverty unendurable. A poor king must be poor, indeed. And what would it be for a child of God, if he once had been able to roll under his tongue the sweet morsel, and once had leaned on Jesus' bosom, if he could, after all, be tormented in the flames of Tophet?

It would be awful, indeed, if, after having drunk of the wines on the lees well-refined, he should be doomed to cry for a drop of water, like Dives! And after having eaten of fat things full of marrow, he should be cast into the land of drought and famine! Thank God it cannot be—it shall not be while God lives, for the strong hands of Christ and of the Father will protect the chosen people! This shall not be, but still to lose a sense of the Lord's love, even for an hour, is dreadful enough.

Yet there are one or two comforts which arise out of a longing and panting for the Lord. They are these—in the first place, if you have a longing after your God, where does it come from? Certainly it is not rooted in the dunghill of human nature! This is too fair a flower to have been blown here by the winds of chance, or to have sprung up naturally from your own corruptions. The Eternal Spirit gave you that desire! Thank Him for it! He has not quite given you up! This *desire* is a *gift* from God—accept it gratefully and see the Father's love reflected from the jewel. Secondly, if God has given me this desire, will He not fulfill it? Is it after the manner of men to excite a desire and not fulfill it? And if we, being evil, could not be so unkind, much less shall our God!

He will not tantalize His child, He will not make him hungry and refuse to feed him. Oh, no! My God, if You have made me thus to thirst and pant, I may rest assured You will give me the water brooks to drink from, and I shall be refreshed with Your love! Let me remember, in the next place, that if I have wandered from my God, He is very willing to forgive. Oh, how ready is our Father to receive His wandering children! It is a part of the consequences of our sin that we think harshly of Him whom we have grieved. We offend our loving Husband, the Lord Jesus, and then we think He will not take us back again into those dear arms.

But He will—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them." He tells us that if our brother offend us 70 times seven, we are yet to forgive him—and will not He forgive us? Recollect how often He forgave His people in the wilderness. Remember, to come closer home, how often He has borne with us! How often when He might have swept us away with the besom of destruction, He has said, "They are My children," and He has again been a Father to us. Nevertheless, He has saved us for His name's sake. When we have been foolish and ignorant, and have been as beasts before Him, nevertheless we have been continually with Him and He has held us with His right hand.

Let us return to Him, then, since He is so ready and so willing to forgive. Let us return to Him this morning and let us remember that when we return out of the sadness and sorrow of our present estate, we shall very soon be uplifted into the light! It does not take the Lord long to make summer time in a wintry heart. One glance of His love turns the darkness of the soul's night into the brightest day! Come to Him, Christian, and before you are aware of it, your soul shall be like the chariots of Amminadab—He will strike down Dagon in the temple of your heart and set up the Ark of the Covenant in his place. He will turn your captivity as the streams in the south—you who were bound with chains shall be emancipated—you who were clothed with sackcloth shall wear fine linen and beauteous apparel! You shall anoint your faces with fresh oil and you shall go forth in the dance with them that make merry in the Lord.

Remember, time is not a thing to be taken into consideration with God. In an instant He wills it and it is done! He commands and it stands fast. To the dark earth He said, "Let there be light," and light flashed forth at once. And this very afternoon you may become among the very happiest of His people though you came here this morning heavily burdened. I have been crying today, "Lord, You know what a dry, parched-up plant my soul is, like yonder poor brown grass which has only a little root left, and no more, for it is all burnt up. Lord, there seems to be no dew nor rain these months for my soul, and therefore, O Lord, Your poor, pining plant is ready to die! Have You forgotten it? Will Your loving mercy never return?"

Beloved, the rain will come upon us! Perhaps even during this sermon the dew has fallen and you who were like the heath in the desert are beginning to blossom and bring forth fruit unto His name. O may it be so, and may you who thought that the Lord had forgotten you find that He remembers you in the fullness of His loving kindness and in the plenitude of His Grace. So may God do to each one of us, for His name's sake. Amen.

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THE SECRET OF HEALTH

NO. 1226

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"I shall yet praise Him who is the health of
my countenance and my God."
Psalm 42:11.*

ANOTHER verse in this Psalm so attracts me that, though it is not my text, I cannot pass it by without a moment's notice. In the 5th verse the Psalmist says, "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance," and then follows the expression of the text, "who is the health of my countenance and my God." God's Countenance is our help and He, Himself is the health of *our* countenance! The best help a man can have in time of trouble is the Countenance of God! If he feels that he enjoys the Divine Love and that he is acceptable with the Lord, he becomes, at once, strong to bear, or dare, or do. Ask the Presence of God to be with you, child of God, and you may then descend into a lion's den, traverse a fiery furnace, or pass through the iron gates of death! A look from the Lord is life and strength to His people!

So much for the 5th verse. Now let us weave our text with it. This help of God's Countenance usually comes to Believers by their obtaining health for their countenances. It may not please God to lessen the burden, but it comes to the same thing if He strengthens the back. He may not recall the soldier from the battle, but if He gives him a greater stomach for the fight, and increased strength for its toils, it may be better, still, for him. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Give a man health in his countenance and he laughs at that which would have crushed him had he been in another mood.

There are times when the grasshopper becomes a burden and there are other seasons, when, with undaunted spirit we can say, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." Everything depends upon the man's personal condition. For the diseased eyes, beauty does not exist. For the disordered palate, sweetness is no longer to be found. And to a deaf ear, harmony is silent. Our happiness depends more upon our own personal condition than upon our surroundings. The great thing to be desired by all of us is that we may, in spirit, soul and body, be whole, that is, to be holy, for *holiness* is, in very truth, wholeness of our entire manhood!

Sin is disease. Righteousness is health. We all need to be healed, that being healed, we may be healthy—that receiving the Divine restoration, our nature may arrive at perfect soundness. Through the Fall and our own sins we have become the prey of manifold maladies and need the exercise of Divine power to bring us back into that sacred sanity of nature in which God first created man—when He made him in His own image and

saw, concerning him and the world in which He had placed him—that it was very good.

Of our complete manhood's health I shall speak this morning. And while I speak of it may the Lord be pleased to make all of us see that *He* is the health of our countenance and our God.

I. Our first remark is one which naturally grows out of the text, though it may seem a very trite one, namely, that PERFECT HEALTH IS A GREAT BLESSING. Do not misunderstand me by narrowing my words in their application. I am not speaking of the health of the body, *alone*, for to say that bodily health is a blessing were but to assert what no one disputes. Man, however, is something more than a body. He is also a living soul. Yes, more—there is in the *regenerate* man, a *triple* nature, consisting of body, soul and spirit.

Even in you, who are unregenerate, there is a *double* nature of body and soul. I would hope you have been born again and have reached the triple nature, and possessed that higher principle which is born of God, but even *you* are not all comprised in mere flesh. And when I speak of your *health*, I mean the health of your entire being. Perfect health lies in the right condition of spirit, soul and body. Complete health in Heaven will be ours when our body has been raised from the dead, incorruptible—our soul has been cleansed from all defilement, our new-born spirit has come to its full development—our entire manhood shall be glorified!

This universal health of our manhood is invaluable, *for it was that which made our first Paradise*. Man was not happy in Eden merely because the fruits were luscious and delicious as were the odors of the flowers which grew in the garden of delights, but because no disease of sin had tainted any part of his nature. His bodily appetites had not gained predominance over his mental faculties, neither had he suffered any of his mental powers to override the rest, or permitted the pride of knowledge to stay the childlike spirit which adored the great Father. His being was well balanced and all its powers were in a perfect condition.

Adam was in all respects such as God would have man to be, for he was such as God had actually made him. As in a perfect machine which comes fresh from the maker's hand, every wheel acts upon its fellow and the whole is obedient to the central mainspring—and so was Adam's nature in complete order. Alas for us that it ever became otherwise! As perfect health was our first happiness, so it will be our last and eternal happiness, for Heaven is not merely streets of gold and harps of melodious music and winged creatures strangely bright—it is perfection realized! The slough of depravity cast off, the soul shall be herself again, and of manhood it shall be said, "his flesh is fresher than a child's, and he has returned to the days of his youth."

Spiritual health, then, was the first Paradise and we can never reach the second except by its recovery. No forgiveness of sin, no imputation of righteousness, no justification by faith, if such could be apart from an *inward* change—could make a man happy so long as his soul is sick of. Health must reign *within*, or a throne in Heaven would be a mockery! *Today, a measure of health is essential to our happiness*. If any man here

burns with the fever of lust he cannot be a happy man. In the fierce heat of passion he may *think* himself blessed, but he dares not deny that in those intervals of chill remorse which alternate with the heat of passion, woe and anguish are his portion! Anger, envy, revenge, covetousness, discontent, pride and self-will are all diseases fatal to happiness.

Perhaps some man before me is utterly given up to worldliness and lethargy has seized upon him. And in the deadness of that lethargy he complains of no pain whatever, but finds a happiness in the numbness of spiritual death. May God deliver you from this hideous peace, this horrible stupefaction, for it is not true happiness but the herald of eternal death! Absolute happiness, that which will bear close examination—real joy, peace, felicity—can never come to a man while one part of his nature jars with the other! He must be right with himself. The little universe of our nature cannot sing in harmony till its central sun of faith, its planetary affections and even those imaginations which are comparable to the comets, are each and all in their fit spheres and orbits. Then, as they all, like the heavens, declare the Glory of God, all will be well. We must be spiritually healthy or we cannot be happy.

The need of this health is the cause of a thousand ills. This world we complain of full often, but it were no longer the prison of sorrow if it ceased to be the theater of sin. If man were man as God made him, the earth would soon regain her excellency and her deserts would blossom as the rose. If men were not *sinner*s, neither would they be *sufferers*. Thorns and thistles would be no longer a curse, but would be counted among flowers, if men had not thorns within their bosoms and thistles in their hearts. On the way of holiness no lion or ravenous beast could go up, for of the perfect man it is written, "You shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be in peace with you." Cast out sin and you have cast out the serpent whose slime has made this world so foul. Cut down this upas tree and numberless griefs and torments will no more drip upon mankind.

We may judge of the value of health when we remember that *it cannot be purchased*. You cannot buy deliverance from bodily disease. What would we not give if we could? We would seek out, at any expense, the physician whose fee is highest, and we would not refuse to fill his hands with gold could he but give us ease. But no, when God chastens, the rod will not be quiet. As for the health of the soul and spirit, the miser's bags, if they were emptied out, could not purchase it for a moment! No, the very fact that he hoped so to win it would be, in itself, a disease, for what are trust in riches and reliance upon self-righteousness but forms of pride, which is one of the most deadly of our sicknesses?

You cannot buy health for your nature! Your tears cannot procure it! Your works, your repentances, your prayers cannot find it apart from God! He is the health of your countenance. Bless Him that He is so. Were it not for this, your whole head would continue sick, and your whole heart faint. There is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there. God, alone, is the Healer of the Soul and freely does He bestow what India, with its gems, and California, with its gold, cannot procure. If we are without this

health, *nothing can compensate us for the loss of it*. You who have been sick know that nothing can make up for the agony of pain or the misery of inability to move your limbs. Those weary nights and long days of anguish can not be recompensed by gold and silver.

So, unless you become right in soul and spirit with your God, nothing can help you. You may put on the garb of religion. You may learn the tones and mannerisms of Christians. You may sing the songs of saints. You may think that you could play the music of angels, but, "you must be born again!" You must be recovered from sin's mortal malady! You must be purged from the foul leprosy of evil, for you are polluted, and until you are recovered you cannot come into the tabernacles of the Lord, nor stand in His holy place. Without holiness, which is another word for wholeness or health, no man can see the Lord.

If this health of ours is not found, let us be warned that it will be eternal Hell, for what is Hell? Is it not consummated sin? What are the fetters of the condemned but their own tyrant passions? The fires that burn and yet do not consume, will they not be ungratified desires? The worm that never dies, will it not be a tormenting conscience? The man, himself, is his own Hell! True, there may be, over and above this, penalties from the hand of the Lord, for what are we that we should pretend to know the secrets of the dreadful prison? There may be positive inflictions from the Divine hand, but without these there is misery enough in despair and torment abundant in remorse.

If a man were taken up to Heaven, itself, and were surrounded with all the circumstances which assist the blessed to express their joy, yet there he would burn and there he would gnash his teeth, and there he would weep and wail, if still his breast was cankered with enmity to God and his heart palpitated with fierce and strong passions. Within ourselves must ever be the essential Heaven, or the actual Hell.

There lies the main business, Sir. You are sick and must be cured, or you are damned, for your sickness is incipient damnation. Sir, you were born with a cancer in your bosom which will one day flood your whole nature with its horrible loathsomeness! And then will come the time of your misery! You must be cured, or else a doom awaits you which language cannot describe. Assuredly I have said enough to show that manhood's perfect health is the greatest of blessings, and I proceed to the next point.

II. Our text joyfully asserts, secondly, that **GOD IS OUR HEALTH**. "Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." God is our health! He is so in these senses, that, first of all, He is *the originator of health* which once was enjoyed by man. There was, in the primeval days, one perfect man, no, there was one perfect *pair*, upon the face of the earth. And these possessed a total sanity because God, who is, Himself, holy, had made them whole or holy, and they were perfect in their ways from the day they were created till iniquity was found in them. They were made a little lower than the angels, but they wore a glory and honor about them which made all the lower creatures obedient to their command. That beauty of holiness was the work of God who made man upright and caused his countenance to beam with

health. He who made the first man pure must make *us* pure, or we shall never be pure.

But again, God is the health of our countenance because *our relation to Him is the test of our health*. Just what you are to God, *that* you really are. It is good to stand well with your fellow men. To love your neighbor as yourself is right and just. But He who made us has the first claim upon us. Our Creator should, first of all, have the love and loyalty of our hearts. If He is not the chief Object of our thoughts, depend upon it, we are wrong. Whatever we may be in our relation to others, we are sadly wrong if we are disarranged towards God. If you do not love God, you do not love Him who is the holiest, the purest and the best. If you do not love God, it is certain that you do not love essential goodness, truth, justice, and purity.

You complain that the Character of God is so much above you—then how low must you be? You assert that you cannot think of Him as your Father—but we would have you remember that when a child cannot think of its father as its father, its heart must be alienated, indeed. Do you ever judge yourselves in relation to God? Men seldom do, and when they use expressions which concern this relationship they generally misuse them. I have noted in this place, before, that if we call a man, a *sinner*, he is not offended with us, for that only means that he disobeys the Law of God. But if we call him a *criminal*, he is indignant, because that means that he has broken the laws of *man*. Alas, that our relation to man should seem to be so much more important than our connection with God!

To set man before God is unrighteous and shows the essential injustice of unrenewed hearts, for when their hearts are set right, men feel that they would sooner a thousand times offend their fellow men than *once* offend their God. So that you may judge of your spiritual health by your relation to God. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Do you speak with Him? Do you pray to Him? Is He your Friend? Is He your delight? Is His will your will? Do you take pleasure in that which pleases Him? Does your life run parallel with the life of God? It is well with you if things are so—it is on the way to being well with you if you *desire* to have them so. But if, on the contrary, God's will draws one way and you the other, the Lord cannot be wrong and you are clearly proven to be in an ill case. The Lord is holy. "Holy, holy, holy," say the angels, and if you are not like He is, you are *unholy*—that is you are not whole, you are not spiritually in health—your nature is diseased. God is our health, then, because our relation to Him is the test of it.

Remember again, that *the Lord is the very model of health*. All perfections meet in Him. In God's Nature no single attribute ever intrudes upon another. You cannot find in God's Character any one point of which you can say—"He is this, alone, to the exclusion or overshadowing of other excellencies." God is Love, but God is also a consuming fire. God is Merciful, but God is true. God is great, but God is good. All excellencies are in Him in perfection. See whether you are like God then, for if you are not, you are not like the model of health. If the symptoms of your condition differ

from the characteristics of God, you are unhealthy, for God is the standard of perfect holiness.

The text intends to teach us that *God must be to each one of us the Restorer of our spiritual health*. If ever we recover soundness, He must restore us. The Sun of Righteousness must bring us healing, the heavenly wind of the Holy Spirit must drive away the pestilence of sin. The Water of Life must work our cure, the plant of renown must yield us balm. Man's malady demands a Divine Physician. Only Omnipotent Wisdom can make a man healthy, or keep him so. This body of ours is so complex and contains so many bones, cells, muscles, nerves, tissues and blood vessels that, perhaps, it is the greatest miracle on the face of the earth that we live, or if there is a greater, it must be that we live at all in health. Dr. Watts well said—

**“Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long.”**

But when I think of the *soul*, it is so much more mysterious than the body, that to put a soul into proper conformity to God, and keep it right, would appear to be a greater wonder than anything which can be discovered by the physiologist in the anatomy of the body! O God, You alone made man, and You alone can deliver him from the evils which have unmade him, and bring him back to be what You would have him be. No hand but Yours must venture upon the task. They do but blunder who boast of regenerating with water. Blunder? No, they lie! God, alone, can regenerate a soul, and His Spirit must do it by that same mighty power which raised the Redeemer from the dead! Nothing short of Omnipotence at its full can raise us from our natural sickness to spiritual health.

Spiritual health is produced by God's coming to us, for the only medicine for a sick soul is not something *out of* God, but God Himself! He could not cure us till He gave us His Son and His Son could not heal us till He gave us Himself. Today the food of spiritual health is the flesh and blood of Jesus, and nothing keeps us from relapsing into sin but the in-dwelling of the eternal Spirit! Our health is our God, our God Incarnate, our God dwelling in us, our God looking down from the Throne of Glory, and saying, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people.” Jehovah Rophi, The Lord That Heals You, this is Your name, O Lord, and by it we adore You!

III. But I must pass on to the third matter, namely, that THIS HEALTH HAS VISIBLE SIGNS. “He is the health *of my countenance*.” The health of a man is mainly judged of by his face. Truly, you can tell something of it by his gait, and every limb of the body, more or less, evidences his condition—but the *countenance* is the window of the soul—the mirror which reflects the nature. True sanity towards God, or at any rate, the beginning of it in the work of Grace, can be *seen*. It is not a close secret hidden from observation—it displays itself!

A notion is abroad that perhaps a man may be saved and not know it. He may be alive unto God *unconsciously*. He may be washed in the blood of Jesus without knowing it, so that he may live without discovering his own salvation and only find it out by the help of a priest as he is dying.

There is nothing like that in the Word of God! Nothing of the kind! That may be the version of the Vatican, but it is not the version of the New Jerusalem. Read the Scriptures and you find men talk about, “us who are saved.” You find them declaring that being justified by faith they have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the Lord Jesus Christ takes a man in hand to heal him, He makes a difference in his countenance, by which, of course, I do not mean the countenance of the *body* merely, but that countenance which David meant, that part of our nature which is visible to others. The Lord gives outward evidences of His inward work! And what sort of signs are those? He takes away from the countenance of our manhood the blotches of sin. I look into a man’s spiritual face and I discover that he is a drunk, that he is a man of lust, that he is a man of anger, that he is a hard, cruel man, a mean, miserly man—these are so many blotches. And when the Grace of God enters the heart it takes away these disfigurements and beautifies the character!

When the Lord Jesus begins to heal us, He removes from our countenance the blankness of despair. Did you ever see it? I have seen it in the actual bodily visage and a dreadful sight it is! But oh, when those charming bells are heard to ring, the bells of “free Grace and dying Love,” and the man knows that his sin is forgiven and that he is accepted in Christ Jesus, then despair flies away! The shadow of the dragon’s wing is taken from the face and the dove of peace passes by and casts a brightness as of silver upon the countenance! When the Great Physician heals men, He removes the paleness of fear, for men are pale when they dread the wrath to come! And they tremble with fear, lest they die in their sins.

Once pardoned that pallor is gone and the ruddiness of confidence comes back to the cheeks! The gloom of sorrow also goes from the man whom Christ makes whole—

***“Why should I sorrow more?
I trust a Savior slain,
And safe beneath His sheltering Cross,
Unmoved I shall remain.”***

And when the Lord goes on working the cures of Grace, it is wonderful how He removes from the countenance the lines and furrows of need. The lantern jaws of hunger are seen in many who are pining after Christ and Grace, and cannot find either. But when Christ comes, He satiates the soul and makes fat the bones—and the countenance of the heart is glad.

Let me tell you, though, I am afraid some Christians do not prove it, that the Lord Jesus smoothes out the wrinkles of care from the foreheads of His patients. When Christians are under the influence of Divine Grace, they know no care. They cast their care on Him who cares for them! They do the little they can do and leave the rest with their Lord, and all goes well, and their life is peace. O happy man who has been thus healed. “Well,” says one, “I trust I am healed of sin, but I am not so healed as *that*.” Brother, the Good Physician is proceeding with His operations, and if you have not yet all the cure, it is your fault and not His, for it is in His power, if you trust Him, to take away sorrow, fear, despair, doubt and even care—so that you shall say as our hymn puts it—

“All that remains for me

***Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King.”***

It will not be long before they will come if you are in that condition! Only bad farmers leave their wheat out in the field too long, but my Lord never did so yet. Whenever His sheaves are ready for the garner, He is sure to reap them. A perfect man is on the threshold of Heaven. When you are spiritually healthy and have undergone your spiritual quarantine, and there is no more sickness in you, do you think your Lord will keep you out of Heaven? Not He, He is too desirous to have you with Him where He is!

The health which our Lord Jesus works in us is seen in the spiritual countenance in many ways. First, it makes the *eyes bright*. A man full of doubts and fears, or vexed with ambition or love of the world, has no bright transporting hopes. But the man who believes in Jesus has a hope that when days and years are past he shall be in Heaven where Jesus is. I must confess that sometimes, when I try to realize that hope, my physical eyes grow dim because the tears begin to flow and almost blind me. Shall I, shall I *ever* see His face and cast a crown at His feet? I shall, I know I shall! But oh, it does seem too good to be true! While the physical eyes are thus dimmed, how bright the *spiritual* eyes become with such a hope to cheer them!

Spiritual health imparts a beauty to the entire visage. Think how the spouse describes her beauty. She says, “I am black”—she could not help saying that, for she was sunburned with exposure to the world—but she adds, “I am comely.” Her Lord looked at her in such a way that she felt He could see her comeliness though she could not—

***“Though in ourselves denied we are,
And black as Kedar’s tents appear,
Yet, when we put Your beauty on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon.”***

There is no more beautiful object in the world to Christ than His own Church! What a passage that is in the Song, where the king exclaims, “You are all fair, My Love, there is no spot in you.” He sees with eyes of love, indeed, who sees such beauty. Yet fair beyond conception will Grace make the Christian! Altogether lovely will Glory make the Christian! We shall bear neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but be without fault before the Throne of God.

What a difference Grace makes to the spiritual *forehead* when it works with power. By nature our forehead is as brass—hard, bold, presumptuous—but see what Grace makes it. “Your temples are like a piece of pomegranate within your locks.” Now, the pomegranate, when you open it, is red and white, and the Christian’s brow is full of the blushes of a sacred shamefacedness. “Within your locks,” says the Song, as though concealed with holy fear, but what you did see of her brow was red and white with blushing with bashfulness and holy love in the Presence of her Lord. I pray that all of you who are converted in these days may know what holy shamefacedness means.

Confidence in Christ is admirable, but not effrontery and self-confidence. I am afraid of those people who are so very sure, so very confident all of a sudden, and yet have never felt the burden of sin. Be ashamed and be confounded while you lay hold on Christ, for the more He does for you the less you must think of yourself. You may very accurately measure the reality of your Grace by the reality of your self-loathing. The Bridegroom also describes *the lips* of His Beloved, "Your lips are like a thread of scarlet and your speech is comely." Before her health returned, her lips were livid. Before she had received comfort, they were white with fear. But now they wear a healthy redness and are lovely to her Lord.

How about your lips, beloved Friends? Are they praying lips, singing lips, confessing lips? Do you speak well of the Redeemer and rejoice whenever you tell what His love has done for you? Well is it with us when to our Lord our "*cheeks* are comely with rows of jewels, and our neck with chains of gold," while our whole countenance shines with holiness. When God is our health, our whole countenance becomes bright. According to the words of the Song, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

The Believer's countenance becomes bright with clearness, as far as he, himself, is concerned—he is saved and he knows it! It becomes fair, as far as others are concerned, for they see the excellence of his character and wonder at it. And then it becomes dazzling to his adversaries, as the sun vanquishes rash gazers by its effulgence. Holiness is to opposers "terrible as an army with banners." I desire that those of you who have been under the Great Physician's hand of late may shine forth and proclaim the power of Jesus. Your Beloved cries, "Let Me see your face, for sweet is your face, and your countenance is comely."

If Christ has cured you, why do you conceal His work? I feel inclined to do with you as the watchmen did with the spouse in the Song—"They smote me and took away my veil from me." I would not smite you, severely, but I would gladly remove the veil from some of you—that you might be seen, that the Church may see you—and the saints may rejoice in what the Savior has done for you. David says, "He is the health of my countenance." He does not say, "the health of my heart, merely"—"the health of my inward parts," though that is true, but, "of my countenance." Therefore, if the Lord has done great things for you, proclaim it abroad, and make the streets of Jerusalem ring with grateful song!

IV. The last observation is this. THIS PASSAGE ENTITLES THE MOST SICK SOULS AMONG US TO HOPE. "Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Look at the Source of spiritual health. If David had said, "I shall yet recover, for I have a splendid constitution. My stamina is such that it will throw off this sickness." Such boasting would not encourage you, would it? Because in your case the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, how could it? You have no stamina except for evil. The disease has smitten you to the very core and your heart has melted like wax. Then bless God that your healing does not depend on any constitutional strength in yourself!

Next, notice David does not expect healing from anything he can do. He not say, "Certain actions of mine will yet recover me of my disease." Not at all. If it were so, you, my Friend, would be in despair, for you cannot do anything! What good work can you do? Why, you have smutty fingers, and if you were to try and produce a piece of fair white linen you would blacken it in the weaving of it! You cannot achieve your own salvation, nor need you do it. The health of David's countenance lay where yours must lie, not in *your* works or merit, but in the salvation of God!

And mark, he does not speak of undergoing a long process. "I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Here is nothing about waiting, tarrying, lingering and loitering, as some preachers seem to make out. No, David understood, as I trust we understand, the doctrine of, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ receives, by that look of faith, the principle of health which will begin at once to work—and will ultimately cast out all spiritual disease. Blessed is it to know that our hope lies in God and not in ourselves! I want you, just for a moment, especially you who wish to be healed, to think who He is, and what there is in Him which you have to look to as your spiritual health.

Sin is your disease and here is *mercy without limit* to meet it. You have done evil in all ways and what is worse, your very nature is evil! But here is God who delights to forgive, infinitely gracious, finding a happiness in passing by transgression and sin—look to Him, then! Here shall all your sins be drowned, for God's love in Christ Jesus is a sea without a bottom, and without a shore. Here is assured healing for your sickness, for Infinite Mercy cannot be baffled in its design. Again here is *Infinite Atonement*, also. God is not only willing to pardon, but He can do it consistently with justice, for His own dear Son has bled and died.

When I turn my eyes to the Son of God bleeding upon the Cross, so glorious is His Sacrifice in my eyes that I conclude that if there were ten thousand, thousand worlds full of sinners there must be merit enough in the death of Christ to save them all if God had so willed it! We cannot conceive any boundary to the merit of the dying Son of God. Incarnate Deity smarts beneath the lash of Justice, is pierced to the heart, is slain, is laid for three days in the grave! Why, there must be a splendor of power about that majestic Sacrifice, illimitable, inconceivable! Come, Soul, if this is your healing, no disease can stand against it! Infinite Mercy armed with an Infinite Atonement can accomplish all things! O God, You are, indeed, the health of my countenance! By You I am brought back from my death in sin.

Then remember that *Divine energy* is ready to work our healing, and Omnipotence works all things. "Can these dry bones live?" said one of old, but live they did! The dead have been raised and even at this hour things impossible with men are possible with God! The Eternal Spirit waits to work His miracles of love even now. No propensity of depraved nature is too strong for the Almighty. Man, have you a lion of anger within you? This Samson can tear that lion as though it were a kid! Have you a host of evil passions within you, and fears strong like the Midianites of old? Be-

hold, this sacred torrent of Divine Love, mightier than Kishon of old, can sweep them all away!

Has Satan, himself, entered you and brought a legion of devils with him? Has Hell vomited forth all its spawn to hold a horrid carnival in your nature? There was one out of whom Jesus cast seven devils—no, another out of whom He drove a legion! Come to Jesus, Man, for devils *still* tremble at His power! Jesus can chase away the enemy from you. All God's energy waits to heal you. "Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the earth; the Lord is His name," for nothing can stand against the mighty arm of His Irresistible Grace.

To complete this I must add there is, in God, who is the health of our countenance, *Immutable Love*. If God begins to heal you, He will never give up the work till He has achieved it. There is not recorded in the life of Christ a solitary half cure. I read of none into whom the devils returned after Jesus drove them out, nor of any lepers who had the leprosy again. I have not to preach to you a salvation that can be lost and dependent upon your good behavior! Lo, I preach a pardon never to be reversed, acceptance in the Beloved never to be cancelled, adoption which makes you sons forever! Give yourselves up to Jesus and He will give you garments of mercy that will never wear out, treasures of love which neither moth nor rust shall consume and health which will introduce you into a city in which the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick," for the people that dwell therein have been forgiven their iniquity.

Healing by God, Himself, presents a ground of hope to the worst among us and, blessed be God, many of us have realized it as David did! Now if we, as honest men, tell you that God in Christ Jesus is the health of our countenance, we trust you will believe us and that you will seek the Lord for yourselves. The healing which God gives in Jesus Christ is available to every sin-sick soul. Whoever you may be, if you are sick, today, God is able and willing to heal you through Jesus Christ His Son! I pray you, linger not through any fear of His ability or His willingness, but come and welcome, come and welcome! Come right now!

It is of no use my preaching about healing to those who are not sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. But to those who are sick this will be a gladsome message! I would like to put it in such an unmistakable shape that they *must* comprehend it, the Holy Spirit instructing them. You have a deadly disease in your nature, every one of you. In some of you, it has taken a very hideous form, but the disease is at the heart of every one of you ladies and gentlemen, even the same which festers in the bosom of the harlot and the thief. True, it has come out differently in them. Circumstances have helped to bring it out. Perhaps if you had been in their circumstances it might have been as foully developed as in them.

Now, if today you feel the terrible ravages of this disease, I am glad of it, for it is a hopeful sign. When the high priest examined men who were suspected of being lepers, I can suppose that one would say, "I have a very bad spot on my forehead, but there is just near my breast a piece of

clean flesh where there are no white scales. I am right at heart, though bad elsewhere.” “Ah!” the priest would say, “You are unclean and I must put you away.” Another would say, “It is true I have a whiteness on my lips, but if you examine me, you will find half my body quite free from the disease,” “Ah, I must shut you out of the camp,” said the priest. But last of all, there came one who said tremblingly to the priest, “I am leprous altogether, I cannot point to a spot as big as a pin’s head that is clean. I am a leper from the soles of my feet to the crown of my head.”

The priest would put his hands on that man and say, “you are clean.” How astonished he must have been! Be you also astonished, O despairing Soul! If you are a sinner and nothing but a sinner, condemned, lost, ruined—and you will admit it and look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation—you are clean every whit! Whenever we are brought to perfect soul poverty and absolute bankruptcy of spirit so that we turn our purses inside out, and cannot find one rusty farthing left, then Christ and all the treasures of His Grace are ours! Oh to be brought down to the lowest depth of self-despair, for that is the door of hope!

While your cup is half full, Christ will not pour His wine into it. Now bring your cups and say, “Lord, there is a little good at the bottom, does not that recommend me?” No, no, no! He will never pour in the new wine of the kingdom until you are turned bottom upwards and wiped out as a man wipes a dish! But when you are quite emptied, then He will pour in the stream of His love until it brims the vessel of your nature! The Lord make you to feel sick, even unto death, and then you will find Jesus to be the Resurrection and the Life.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 42 and Jeremiah 30:4-17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—908, 715, 103.**

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SWEET STIMULANTS FOR THE FAINTING SOUL NO. 2798

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE WINTER OF 1860.

*“O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You
from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar.”
Psalm 42:6.*

HERE is a common complaint of God's people and here are two remedies which David, wisely guided of God, administers with discretion. Let us direct our meditation in this order—first, *let us talk of the complaint.* And then, secondly, *let us look into the Divine medicine chest and use the remedies provided there.*

I. LET US TALK OF THE COMPLAINT “O my God, my soul is cast down within me.”

We do not know what was the precise reason why David's soul was cast down. Perhaps it was because he had been driven out of the royal city by his own son—the son whom he had petted and pampered and, thereby, made a rod for his own back. We are pretty sure that he was now denied the privilege of going up to the House of God—he could not now join with the multitude that kept holy day. These two things probably worked together to cast down his spirit—his absence from the tabernacle and the cause of that absence.

I am not sure, however, that these two things combined would have been enough to cast down David's spirit if it had not been for a more bitter ingredient in his cup of sadness. There have been good men in circumstances similar to David's at that time who, even then, could gird up the loins of their mind and hope to the end. When bitten by that which is sharper than a serpent's tooth—an ungrateful child—and debarred from the House of God, they have, even then, been able to stay themselves upon the Lord and to rejoice in the Most High God. The real reason of the Psalmist's distress was, no doubt, that God had, at least to some degree, hidden His face from him and, therefore, the flowers of David's graces all drooped and his joy, which formerly sparkled in the sunlight of God's Countenance, was now dim and dark. Troubles may distress the outward man, but they cannot distress the soul of the child of God while he feels the Lord Jehovah to be his everlasting strength. Yes, it sometimes happens that the very pressure which weighs down the scale of his earthly hopes tends to lift up the opposite scale of his spiritual peace! As long as

God is with him, trials are nothing, for he casts them upon Jehovah. But once let God withdraw from him for a while and he is troubled—that mountain which seemed to stand fast begins to rock and shake—and to prove the instability and insufficiency of all mortal grounds of confidence.

The causes of our being cast down are very numerous. Sometimes it is pain of body—perhaps a wearing pain which tries the nerves, prevents sleep, distracts our attention, drives away comfort and hides contentment from our eyes. Often, too, has it been debility of body—some secret disease has been sapping and undermining the very strength of our life and we knew not that it was there while we have been drawing insensibly near to the gates of death. We have wondered that we were low in spirits, whereas it would have been a thousand wonders if we had not been depressed! We have marveled that we have been cast down, whereas a physician would tell us that this was but one of many symptoms which proved that we were not right as to our bodily health.

Not infrequently has some crushing calamity been the cause of depression of spirit. Trial has succeeded trial. All your hopes have been blasted, your very means of sustenance have been suddenly snatched from you. While all your needs have remained, the supplies have been withdrawn from you. At other times, it has been bereavement that has brought you down very low. The axe has been at work in the forest of your domestic joys. Tree after tree has fallen—those from whom you plucked the ripest fruits of sweet society and kindred fellowship have been cut down by the ruthless woodsman—you have seen them taken away from you forever so far as this world is concerned. Or else it may be that you have been slandered. Your good has been evilly spoken of, your holiest motives have been misinterpreted, your most Divine aspirations have been misrepresented and you have gone about as with a sword in your bones while the malicious have taunted you, saying, “Where is your God now?” The cases of depression of spirit are so various that it must be, indeed, a rare panacea, a marvelous remedy, which would suit them all! Yet, when we come to speak of the remedies mentioned in our text, we shall find them suitable to most of these cases, if not to all—and to all in a degree, if not to the fullest extent.

Let us pass now, from the most obvious, to *the more subtle causes of soul-dejection*. This complaint is very common among God’s people. When the young Believer has first to suffer from it, he thinks that he cannot be a child of God, “For,” he says, “if I were a child of God, would I be like this?” What fine dreams some of us have when we are just converted! We fancy that we are going to sail straight away to Heaven and to have a prosperous voyage all the way! The wind is always to blow fairly for us, there is never to be a rough wave, no storm-cloud is to hover over the ship all the day long—and if there are any nights, the stars will be so brilliant that it will be as bright as day! Or, possibly, we imagine that we have come into a country where everybody will be kind to us, where all circumstances will be propitious to us, where everything will tend to nurture our piety and our own hearts—indeed, will forever get rid of legal terrors and perilous alarms! Oh, silly creatures that we are if we dream

thus foolishly! We know not what we are born to in our second birth, for, as a man is born to trouble by his first birth—when he is born a second time, he is born to a double share of trouble! Then, he was born to physical and mental trouble, but now that he is born-again, he is born to spiritual trouble and as he shall have new joys, so shall he also have a long list of new sorrows.

All that, however, is unknown to us at the first. And when it comes upon us, it surprises us. Am I now addressing one who is ready to exclaim, “I give up all hope. I am sure I cannot be a child of God because I am so cast down”? O you simple soul, the most advanced saints suffer in just the same way! Men who have been for forty, fifty, 60 years followers of Christ complain that, sometimes, it is a question with them whether they have ever known Christ at all! There are seasons with them when they would, if they could, creep into any mouse hole and hide their heads rather than be seen among God’s people because they fear that they are hypocrites—and that the root of the matter is not in them. Why, I tell you, young Christians, that the most experienced Believers, the men who have great doctrinal knowledge and much experimental wisdom, the men who have lived very near to God and have had the most rapt and intimate fellowship with their Lord and Savior are the very men who have their ebbs, their winters and their times when it is a moot point with them whether they really love the Lord or not! Even the Apostle Paul was not exempt from doubts and fears, for he wrote, “We were troubled on every side; without were fights, within were fears.” And, on another occasion, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” The man after God’s own heart, even David, a man of experience so deep that none of us can fully decipher, much less rival it—a man of love so fervent that few of us can do more than aspire to catch the hallowed flame—nevertheless, had to cry aloud, and that very often, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me!”

“But,” says one, “this death-like faintness comes upon me so often that, certainly I cannot be a child of God.” Yes, but let me tell you that, possibly, it will come even more! Or, should it come more seldom, if you shall have weeks of pleasure, or even months of enjoyment, it is possible that your doubts will then be doubled in intensity and your soul will yet have greater trials to experience! So great a Savior is provided for our deliverance that we must expect to have great castings down from which we need to be delivered. Why, Believer, what are one half of the promises worth if we are not the subjects of doubts and fears? Why has Jehovah given us so many *shalls and wills* but because He knew that we should have so many accursed *ifs and perhapses*? He would never have given us such a well-filled storehouse of comfort if He had not foreseen that we would have a full measure of sorrow. God never makes greater provision than will be needed, so, as there is an abundance of consolations, we may rest assured that there will also be an abundance of tribulations! There will be much fear and casting down to each of us before we see the

face of God in Heaven! This disease of soul-dejection is common to all the saints—there are none of God’s people who altogether escape it.

Let me go a step further and say that *the disease mentioned in our text, although it is exceedingly painful, is not at all dangerous*. When a man has a toothache, it is often very distressing, but it does not kill him. There have been some who have foolishly and peevishly wished to die to escape from the pain, but nobody does die of it. The bills of mortality are not swelled by its victims. And, in like manner, God’s children are much vexed with their doubts and fears, but they are never killed by them. They are a great trouble, but they are not like a mortal disease. They are sorely vexatious, but they are not destructive. Why, it is possible for you to have real faith and yet to have the most grievous unbelief! “Oh,” you say, “how can faith and unbelief live together?” They cannot live together in peace, but they may dwell together in the same heart. Remember what our Lord Jesus said to Peter “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” He did not say, “O you of no faith,” but, “of *little* faith.” Thus there was *some* faith, though there was also much doubt. So, in the Psalmist, there was some faith—there was, indeed, a great deal of faith—for he said, “O my God,” and it takes great faith to truly say, “my God.” Yet is there not also great unbelief here? Otherwise, would his soul have been cast down at all? But, meanwhile, had he not the yearnings of lively hope in God? If not, would he have dared to say, “Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar?”

The fact is, we are the strangest mixture of contradictions that ever was known. We shall never be able to understand ourselves. God knows us altogether, but we shall never, at least in this life, completely comprehend ourselves. You remember that verse about the holy women at the sepulcher of Christ? After they had heard the angel’s message, “they departed quickly from the sepulcher *with fear and great joy*.” What a strange mixture! On the one hand, we have the golden fruit of joy—and on the other hand, the black fruit of fear. So it makes a kind of checker-work—there are blacks and whites, joys and sorrows, bliss and mourning mingled together! The highest joy and the deepest sorrow may be found in the Christian and the truest faith and yet the most grievous doubts may meet together in the child of God. Of course, they only meet there to make his heart a battlefield—but there they may meet—and his faith may be real while his doubts are grievous.

I would remark, yet further, that it is not only possible for a man to thus be cast down and yet to have true faith all the while, but *he may actually be growing in Grace while he is cast down!* Yes, and he may really be standing higher when he is cast down than he did when he stood upright. Strange riddle! But we who have passed through this experience know that it is true. When we are flat on our faces, we are generally the nearest to Heaven. When we sink the lowest in our own esteem, we rise the highest in fellowship with Christ and in knowledge of Him. Someone said, “The way to Heaven is not upward, but downward.” There is some truth in the saying, though it is upward in Christ, it is downward in self. As Dr. Watts sings—

***“The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”***

The inverse is equally true—

***“The humbler I lie at my Savior’s feet,
The more His glories strike my eyes.”***

This very casting down into the dust sometimes enables the Christian to bear a blessing from God which he could not have carried if he had been standing upright. There is such a thing as being crushed with a load of Grace—bowed down with a tremendous weight of benedictions—having such blessings from God that if our soul were not cast down by them, they would be the ruin of us. It is a good thing for us, sometimes, when fears frighten us and prosperity distresses us. Some of you may not understand what I am saying. You will not until you have this experience of which I have been speaking, but it does so happen that bitters often cleanse and sweeten the spiritual palate of God’s children, while there are sweets which make their mouth full of bitters! I know that I have had songs in the night after I have had groaning during the day and, often, a salutary blow from God’s loving hand, though it has made me smart, has cured me of some other far more baneful smart. Where kisses wounded, blows have healed.

The Christian life is a riddle and most surely are God’s people familiar with that riddle in their experience. They must work it out before they can understand it. So I say again that this casting down is consistent with the most elevated degree of piety. Depression of spirit is no index of declining Grace—the very loss of joy and the absence of assurance may be accompanied by the greatest advancement in the spiritual life. Mark you, if it continues month after month, and even year after year, then it is a sign of great weakness of faith—but if it comes only occasionally, as clouds pass over our sky, it is well. We do not want rain all the days of the week and all the weeks of the year, but if the rain comes sometimes, it makes the fields fertile and fills the brooks—and after the shower has fallen and the sun shines again, it puts a new brightness upon the face of Nature and makes the birds clear their throats and sing a new song! The earth never looks so beautiful as when she rises up like one that has washed his face in the brook and, in the shining water, shows the freshness of her verdure and tells of the wondrous skill with which God has been pleased to adorn her. Even so is it with the Christian when he comes forth from great and sore troubles with his harp returned, his psaltery vocal with praise and his lips gratefully confessing to his God, “You have increased my greatness and comforted me on every side.”

Painful as is this disease of soul—dejection—it is often very helpful to our spirit when we are obliged to cry, with David, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me.” To be cast down is often the best thing that could happen to us. Do you ask, “Why?” Because, when we are cast down, it checks our pride. We are very apt to grow too big. It is a good thing for us to be taken down a notch or two. We sometimes rise so high, in our own estimation, that unless the Lord took away some of our joy, we would be utterly destroyed by pride. Were it not for this thorn in the flesh, we would be exalted beyond measure.

Besides, when this downcasting comes, it gets us to work at self-examination. That religion which has begun to be a matter of form and ritual to us, becomes a thing to be considered in deeper earnest. We look at it as a real thing because of our real doubts. Often, I am sure, when your house has been made to shake, it has caused you to see whether it was founded upon a rock. While your ship had nothing but fine weather, you sailed along too presumptuously. But when the storm threatened, then it was that you reefed your sails and turned to your chart to find your latitude and longitude, fearing that there might be danger ahead. So you get good to your soul by being made to examine yourself. A great loss in business has sometimes helped a man to become rich, for he has been more careful in his dealings afterwards. He has begun to change a system of trade which, perhaps, might have brought him to insolvency—and thus his business has been put upon a firmer footing than before. Even so, this downcasting of spirit, by leading us to search ourselves, may help, in the end, to make us all the richer in Divine Grace. When our soul is cast down within us we begin to have closer dealings with Christ than we had before. A long continuance of calm induces listlessness. There is a way of being wanton towards Christ. We begin to think that we can do without Him—we imagine that we have such a store of ready money that we can trade on our own account. But when gloomy doubts arise, we go back to the place where our spiritual life commenced and we sing again—

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

There is such a tendency in all the branches of the living and true Vine to try to bring forth fruit without deriving nourishment from the stem, so the Lord, every now and then, takes away the visible flowing of Divine consolation in order that we may consciously realize our entire dependence upon Him. When you and I were little and we were out at eventide walking with our father, we sometimes used to run on a long way ahead, but, by-and-by, there was a big dog loose on the road and it is astonishing how closely we then clung to our father! You remember how John Bunyan depicts that trait in the character of the children who went on pilgrimage with their mother, Christiana. “When they were come up to the place where the lions were, the boys that went before were glad to cringe behind, for they were afraid of the lions and so they stepped back and went behind. At this their guide smiled and said, ‘How now, my boys, do you love to go before when no danger does approach, and love to come behind as soon as the lions appear?’” Just so is it with our doubts and fears. We run so far ahead that we lose sight of Christ—frightful things alarm us—and then we flee back again to the shadow of His Cross! This experience is good and healthful for us.

One other benefit that we derive from being cast down is *that it qualifies us to sympathize with others*. If we had never been in trouble we would be very poor comforters of others. It would do most physicians good if they were required, occasionally, to drink some of their own medicine. It would be no disadvantage to a surgeon if he once knew what it

was to have a broken bone. You may depend upon it that his touch would be more tender afterwards! He would not be so rough with his patients as he might have been if he had never felt such pain himself.

Show me a man who has never had a trial and I will show you a man who has no heart. Above all things, save me from the man who has never had any trouble all his life—let me not go into his house, or be near him anywhere else. If I am sick, let him not even pass by my window lest his shadow should fall upon me and make me worse, for he must be a cold-hearted, unsympathetic man if he has never known a trial and has never had to pass through the furnace of affliction!

I know that whenever God chooses a man for the ministry and means to make him useful, if that man hopes to have an easy life of it, he will be the most disappointed mortal in the world! From the day when God calls him to be one of His captains and says to him, “See, I have made you to be a leader of the hosts of Israel,” he must accept all that his commission includes—even if that involves a sevenfold measure of abuse, misrepresentation and slander. We need greater soul-exercise than any of our flock, or else we shall not keep ahead of them. We shall not be able to teach others unless God thus teaches us. We must have fellowship with Christ in suffering as well a fellowship in faith. Still, with all its drawbacks, it is a blessed service and we would not retire from it. Did we not accept all this with our commission? Then we would be cowards and deserters if we were to turn back! These castings down of the spirit are part of our calling! If you are to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you must endure hardness. You will have to lie in the trenches, sometimes, with a bullet lodged here or there, with a saber cut on your forehead, or an arm or a leg shot away—where there is war, there must be wounds—and there must be war where there is to be victory!

II. I shall not say more about our being cast down. I have probably said enough about the disease, so now let us open the great medicine chest, and examine THE TWO REMEDIES here mentioned. “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the Hill Mizar.”

The first remedy for soul-dejection is, *a reference of ourselves to God*, as David says, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You.” If you have a trouble to bear, the best thing for you to do is not to try to bear it at all, but to cast it upon the shoulders of the Eternal! If you have anything that perplexes you, the simplest plan for you will be not to try to solve the difficulty, but to seek direction from Heaven concerning it. If you have, at this moment, some doubt that is troubling you, your wisest plan will be not to combat the doubt, but to come to Christ just as you are and to refer the doubt to Him. Remember how men act when they are concerned in a lawsuit—if they are wise, they do not undertake the case themselves. They know our familiar proverb, “He who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client.” So they take their case to someone who is able to deal with it and leave it with him. Well, now, if men have not sufficient skill to deal with matters that come before our courts of law, do you think that you have skill enough to plead

in the court of Heaven against such a cunning old attorney as the devil who has earned the name of “the accuser of the brethren,” and well deserves the title? Never try to plead against him, but put your case into the hands of our great Advocate, for, “if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” So, refer your case to Him—He will plead for you and win the day! If you should attempt to plead for yourself, it will cause you a vast amount of trouble and then you will lose the day after all.

Often, when I call to see a troubled Christian, do you know what he is almost sure to say? “Oh, Sir, I do not feel this—and I do fear that—and I cannot help thinking the other!” That great “I” is the root of all our sorrows—what I feel, or what I do not feel—that is enough to make anyone miserable! It is a wise plan to say to such an one, “Oh, yes! I know that all you say about yourself is only too true, but, now, let me hear what you have to say about Christ. For the next 24 hours at least, leave off thinking about yourself and think only of Christ.” O my dear Friends, what a change would come over our spirits if we were all to act thus! For when we have done with self and cast all our cares upon Christ, there remains no reason for us to care, or trouble, or fret! That saying of Jack the Huckster, which I have often repeated—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All”—***

describes the highest experience, though it is also the lowest. It is so simple and yet so safe, to live day by day by faith upon the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me—to be a little child—not a strong man, but a little child who cannot fight his own battles, but who gets Jesus to fight them for him! To be a little weak one who cannot run alone, but who must be carried in the arms of the Good Shepherd. We are never so strong as when we are weak, as Paul wrote, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And we are never so weak as when we are strong, never so foolish as when we are wise in our own conceit and never so dark as when we think we are full of the Light of God. We are generally best when we think we are worst! When we are empty, we are full—when we are full, we are empty. When we have nothing, we have all things, but when we fancy that we are “rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” we are like the Laodiceans and know not that we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Oh, for Grace to solve these riddles and so to live, day by day, *out of self and upon the Lord Jesus Christ!*

Let me give you an illustration. It is the easily-imagined case of a poor old woman who has no money of her own, but who has a rich friend who says to her, “Come to my house every Saturday and I will give you so much for a regular allowance. And if there is anything else that you need, I will pay for it—all your needs shall be supplied.” He does not give her a large sum of money to keep, for she might not know how to spend it wisely, or she might be robbed of it—he gives it to her week by week. One Saturday morning the old lady is full of fear and alarm. If you happen to call upon her just then, you will hear her complaining, “I have not a

farthing in the world! I have just spent my last sixpence. I have no money in the bank, no houses from which I can collect rent! I have nothing but these few things that you see here—how am I to live with only this?” If you did not know anything more about the woman, you would sit down and pity her, would you not?

As it gets to be nearly twelve o'clock, she says, “I must be going.” You ask, “Where?” She replies, “I am going to my friend who tells me to go to him every Saturday and he will give me all I need.” “Why,” you exclaim, “you silly old soul, you have been telling me all this tale of need and exciting my pity, when you are really a rich woman! Just because you do not happen to have it in hand, you have been telling me this pitiful story which is really not true.” In like manner, when I see an heir of Heaven sitting down and mourning and weeping because he has not got this, and he has not got that—and when I turn to the Scriptures, and read, “All things are yours; and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” And I find promises like this, “All things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” Or this, “The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” If I do not say this to the one who is murmuring without cause, I say it to myself, for I have often been as foolish as the old woman of whom I spoke just now, “O you foolish self, how slow of heart you are to believe! How foolish you are to be thus sitting down and bemoaning your own emptiness when Christ is yours, with all His boundless fullness, when the Father’s love and the Spirit’s power and the Savior’s Grace are all engaged to bring you safely through your trials, to rid you of your troubles and to land you triumphantly in Heaven!”

Be of good cheer, then, tried and depressed Believer, and apply this sacred remedy to yourself! Remember the Lord! Refer your case to Him and look to Him for all that you need!

David’s other remedy for his soul, when it was cast down within him, was *the grateful remembrance of the past when, by the Lord’s tender mercies, it was lifted up*—“therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar.” Look up your old diary—many of you have gray hair—so your notebooks go back a long way. Let us read one or two of the entries. Why, here is a bright page! Though the one preceding it is black and full of sorrow, this page is bright with joy and jubilant with song! What do I read? I see written here—

***“I will praise You every day!
Now Your anger’s turned away,
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice.”***

You wrote that verse in your diary just after you had found the Savior and your sins had been forgiven you for His sake. Well, then, although your harp is now unstrung and you are not praising your Lord today, I pray you to remember that hour when first you knew His love and to say, “If I had never received more than that one mercy from Him, I must bless Him for it in time and bless Him for it throughout eternity!” Here is another page in your diary. I see that you had been enduring some temporal trouble and that your earthly friends had forsaken you. But, in the

middle of your trouble, just where I might have expected to find these words, "I am utterly cast down, for God has forsaken me," I find written here—

***"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, oh, how good!"***

Do you think that He is not standing by your side now? If there is a loud thundering and if there is a thick darkness, will He leave you? Surely these reflections upon what you have experienced in the past should lead you to trust in Christ for the present! And, as you think of all His dealings with your soul, You may well say—

***"Can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"***

God forbid that we should ever think that He was so cruel as to enlighten, comfort, cheer and help us so long and then leave us, at last, to sink and perish!

In this diary of yours, I also find one sweet record which is a great contrast to your present sad and gloomy state. You must have had a vision of Christ Crucified, for you have written—

***"Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood.
Precious drops! My soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.
Truly blessed is this station,
Low before His Cross to lie—
While I see Divine compassion
Floating in His languid eyes."***

Yet you, who have been at the foot of the Cross, are afraid that you will be cast away at the last! You have known the sweetness of Jesus' love, yet you are cast down! He has kissed you with the kisses of His lips—His left hand has been under your head and His right hand has embraced you—yet you think He will leave you to sink, at last, in your trouble! You have been in His banqueting house and you have had such food as angels never tasted, yet you dream that you shall be cast into Hell! Shame on you! Pluck off those robes of mourning! Lay aside that sackcloth and those ashes! Snatch your harps down from the willows and let us together sing praises unto Him whose love, power, faithfulness and goodness shall always be the same!

If there are any here who are strangers to all these things, I can only wish that they might even know our sorrows, in order that they might have an experience of our joys to treasure up in remembrance. Believers in Jesus are not a miserable crew—they have songs to sing and they have good reason to sing them! They have enough to make them blessed on earth and to make them blessed forever and ever!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:17-28.**

Verse 17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your word.* O Lord, I am Your servant, yet, I pray You, do not pay me wages according to my deserts, but according to the greatness of Your mercy! “Deal bountifully with Your servant.” Little mercy will not be enough for such great sins and such great needs as mine. Deal very generously with Your poor servant who is so full of necessities, “that I may live,” for, if You will only let me live, it will be of Your bounty since I deserve not even that gift. Only to have my life still spared shall be regarded by me as a great favor from You. I want not to live to please myself, for that would not be living at all, but “that I may live, and keep Your word.” A holy life is the only true life, the only life that is really worth having—and he that has it has been dealt bountifully with by his God. I commend this verse to each servant of the Lord as a prayer that may be continually presented to Him.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.* This is one of the first parts of God’s bountiful dealings with us. There is no mercy that is so great as mercy to one’s own person, to one’s own eyes, for instance, which are such essential parts of ourselves. Lord, when You are dealing bountifully with me, I do not ask for riches, but I do ask that my eyes may be opened. I do not ask You to give me more than You have given in Your Word, but I do ask for opened eyes with which I may perceive what You have put there, otherwise the beauties of Your Word may be useless to me by reason of my blindness. This blessed Book teems with marvels—it is a world of wonders. It records many miracles, but every page of it is itself a miracle and a mass of miracles—yet we must have them revealed to us or we shall not discover them. Revelation, itself, must be revealed to every person individually by the Spirit of God, or else he will never see it.

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* Humane men deal kindly with exiles. God has commanded us to be generous to strangers and He will certainly be so Himself. Lord, because of Your love, I find myself like an exile among the sons of men. But be not a stranger to me. What should I do, in this world, without You, and without Your Word? “Hide not Your commandments from me.”

20, 21. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times. You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* God cannot stand the proud—it is very seldom that they can stand one another! And if proud men loathe pride as they see it in others, you may rest assured that the good and great God will not endure it. How sternly He rebuked it in the angels that kept not their first estate. How He rebuked it in Pharaoh! All through history it may be seen how God has been continually abasing the proud and giving Grace to the humble.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Your testimonies.* He had lived honestly and uprightly and yet men slandered him. Was there ever a man upon earth who was good and true, who was not slandered? God Himself was slandered in Paradise by the old serpent—and the Lord Jesus was constantly being slandered by wicked men—so

can any of us hope to escape the envenomed tongue of the slanderer? Yet it is very painful and we may well pray to be delivered from it, especially if we can add, with the Psalmist, “for I have kept Your testimonies.”

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.* Sometimes men can bear what the commonality say, but to have the great ones of the earth speaking against them is thought by some to be very hard. The Psalmist says, “Princes also did sit and speak against me.” What did he do under such circumstances? Did he rise up in anger and answer them? Or did he sit down and consider how he could defend himself against them? Far from it—“Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.” He seems to say, “I did not think it was worth my while to leave the Scriptures, even for a moment, so as to speak to them, but I went on studying Your Word and left them to say what they pleased.” We shall be wise if we do likewise.

24. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.* While these princes were taking counsel against the Psalmist, he also went and took Counsel’s advice against them! But that Counsel’s advice was the advice of the Word of God. He stuck to the Scriptures! Little as he had of them, yet that little he greatly prized. The Pentateuch furnished him with five Inspired Counselors to whom he resorted in his time of need. Let us imitate his example, especially as we have the complete Canon of revelation to advise and counsel us!

25-28. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word. I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works. My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen You me according unto Your word.* The Word of the Lord is available for quickening, teaching and strengthening. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” May that gracious Spirit, who Inspired it, always teach us its inner meaning!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34, 634, 622.

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

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

DEEP CALLS UNTO DEEP

NO. 865

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Deep calls unto deep.”
Psalm 42:7.

IN the grandeur of Nature there are awful harmonies. When the storm agitates the ocean below, the heavens above hear the tumult and answer to the clamor. Down comes a deluge of sonorous hail or swift-descending rain, attended with peals of thunder and flashes of flame. Frequently the waterspout, of which David speaks in the next sentence, evidences the sympathy of the two great waters above and beneath the firmament—the great deep above stretches out its hands to the great deep below and in voice of thunder their old relationship is recognized. It is almost as if the twin seas remembered how once they lay together in the same cradle of confusion till the decree of the Eternal appointed each his bounds and place.

“Deep calls unto deep”—one splendor of creation holds fellowship with another. Amazed and overwhelmed by the spectacle of some tremendous tempest upon land, you have yet been able to observe how the clouds appear to be emptying themselves each into each and the successive volleys of Heaven’s artillery are answered by rival clamors, the whole chorus of sublimities lifting up their voices. It has seemed to me that a strange wild joy was moving all the elements and that the angels of wind and tempest were clapping their awful hands in glorious glee. Among the Alps, in the day of tempest, the solemnly silent peaks break through their sacred quiet and speak to each other in that dread language which is echoing the voice of God—

*“Far along,
From peak to peak the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder!
Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now has found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud.”*

Height calls unto height even as “deep calls unto deep.” David, perceiving these solemn harmonies, uses the metaphor to describe his own unhappy experience. I suppose that when he wrote this Psalm he was an exile from his throne and country, driven out by the rebellion of his favorite son. He crossed the brook Jabbok in fear and hastened by night over Jordan and withdrew to a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. He was saddened, most of all, at the remembrance of the sacred shrine to which he had so often gone with the multitude that kept holy day, be-

cause he was now unable to join with that hallowed throng in worship so refreshing to his soul.

Everything around the Psalmist was like an ocean tossed with tempest—his outlook was unmingled trouble. His sorrows were like Job's messengers followed on one another's heels. His griefs came wave upon wave. There was no intermission to his woe. At the same time his heart sank within him. The deep outside called to the deep within. Conscience, as with a lightning flash, lit up the abyss of the sufferer's inward depravity and made him see the darkness of the sin into which he had fallen with the wife of Uriah in days gone by and filled him with despondency and sad forebodings.

While outside everything was comfortless, within him there was nothing to cheer him. Bitterly did he enquire, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Why are you disquieted within me?" Externally and internally, rest was removed far from him. Outside were fights, within were fears. Deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts—all the waves and billows of God's Providence had gone over him.

But now, no longer confining so grand a thought to the mere manner in which David employed it, namely, to the double trouble of many of God's saints when two seas meet and when internal and external sorrows combine, I purpose to use the general principle in other directions and to show that everywhere where there is one deep it calls to another and that especially in the moral and spiritual world every vast and sublime truth has its correspondent, which, like another deep, calls to it responsively.

I. First, we shall consider this fact in connection with THE ETERNAL PURPOSES OF GOD AND THEIR FULFILMENT IN FACT. The eternal purpose—what a deep! He who pretends to understand predestination, misunderstands himself! We have no unit for measurement when we strive to fathom the decrees of God. We are like the astronomers in attempting to measure the distances of those stars which are as remote from the ordinary fixed stars as the fixed stars are from us—they fail from lack of a measuring-line which may serve as a unit—scarcely does the diameter of the earth's orbit suffice for a basis of numeration. They have no unit by which to estimate.

What do you and I know of infinity, Omnipresence, and self-existence? We are far beyond our depth when we come to the ocean of Divine purposes. We may gaze into the mystery with awe, but to profess to comprehend it is vanity itself. What a depth! What an inscrutable mystery, that the infinitely pure and holy God should have determined to allow the intrusion of sin into His universe! That He should allow evil to drag down an angel and debase him into a devil! That the adoring hosts of Heaven should be thinned by sinful desertion from a loyalty so well deserved! How came it that moral evil was suffered to come into this fair world, to spoil Eden, to pollute mankind, to fill the grave and populate Hell?

Why was it that after sin had broken out in the universe, it was permitted to remain in existence? Why not shut up the first devil as in a plague ward, build a jail in Tophet—surround it with walls of flame and never let

the demon wander forth? Why should the Evil One be permitted, like a roaring lion, to roam abroad seeking whom he may devour? When sin infected the race of men, why not destroy them all and stamp out the disease, as we did lately when the disease came among our cattle? Why not purge it with fire till the last speck of the leprosy was burned out? What mattered the destruction of a race if sin were destroyed with them?

Strange decree that sin should be tolerated—permitted first, to enter—and then allowed afterwards to *spread* its mischievous poison. What a depth, my Brethren, is revealed in the Divine decree of election, that there should be vessels unto honor, fitted for the Master's use—men chosen to show forth the riches of His Grace, not for any good thing in them—but because the Lord will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion! And what a more solemn depth, still, is revealed in those whom He passed by—that there should be vessels of wrath fitted to destruction—men permitted to continue in sin and to harden themselves against the Gospel and so to illustrate the awful wrath of God throughout eternity!

Brothers and Sisters, I cannot contemplate the doctrines connected with predestination, true as they are, without a shudder of reverential awe! Read that ninth chapter of Romans and while you are silenced by the voice of Paul, “No, but O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?” Yet a thrill of awe passes through your souls and you whisper—

**“Great God, how infinite are You,
What worthless worms are we!”**

If we could turn over those awful pages in which every event has been recorded. If it were permitted to us to see that book of fate chained to the Throne of God, in which every angel's form and size is drawn by the eternal pen. In which everything is written down—from the falling of a sere leaf from an oak to the tumbling of an avalanche from its Alp—in which God has as much arranged the course of yonder dust blown in the wind as of the planet which He steers in its mighty orbit. If we could see it all, we should exclaim, “O wondrous depth, how can I measure you? My plummet utterly fails. I will adore, for I cannot comprehend.”

Beloved Friends, we need not allow ourselves to be depressed by the mystery of the doctrine of Eternal Decrees, for even if these decrees were not in existence, there would still remain the other deep, the mystery of *fact*. It is a fact that sin is in the world. It is a fact that sorrow is here. It is a fact that death is here—and how can you understand these things? Shut your eyes to the depth above the firmament if you will, but here is depth nearer home which will still amaze you! Remember that all men are *not* saved. It is a dreadful Truth of God that multitudes tread the broad road and reach eternal destruction! Why is this when God is good and Omnipotent? Can *you* understand Providence?

Is not Providence, as we see it, quite as mysterious as predestination? Are not the mysteries rather in the facts, themselves, than in the purposes which ordained them? Are they not, both the facts and the decrees, mys-

teries and equal mysteries? But what a wonderful harmony there is between the two depths! And to this it is I call your attention. Observe how deep has called unto deep! Whatever God ordained has been accomplished! His will has been done! You will tell me that this is nothing amazing, since God is Omnipotent. I reply, yes, but you will remember that He was pleased to create beings who should be *free* agents and to that extent actors *independent* of Himself.

Therefore, it is not to the solitary attribute of Omnipotence that you can refer the fact that Providence coincides with predestination. Here were angels free in their will and yet they sinned. Here are men upon this stage of action willful and resolute and yet fulfilling the unknown foreordination. Herein lies the marvel—that with voluntary agents, who do as they will—yet the eternal purpose in every jot and tittle has to this moment been fulfilled! And as the impression answers to the die, so has the history of the universe answered to the eternal purpose and to the solemn decree of the Most High.

My Brothers and Sisters, listen in solemn awe to the voices of these twin depths as they call to one another. Famine, plague, pestilence, devastated nations, fallen empires, wars and bloodsheds—who shall understand why these are permitted? How shall we reconcile our souls to them at all, until we look up to the great Father sitting on the Throne of Wisdom and Love, and say, “You know what the end will be. You have ordained all things and from the seeming evil You will bring forth good and from the good a something better and from the better a something better still, in infinite progression, to the praise and glory of Your name?” “Deep calls unto deep.” The deep of Predestination answers to the deep of Providence and both together magnify the name of God!

II. We now come to another case somewhat akin to this, more nearly concerning ourselves and perhaps more practical. Brethren, **SOME OF YOU ARE ENDURING DEEP AFFLICTION**. All are not tried alike. God has not been pleased to deal out the wormwood and the gall to all in a cup of the same fashion and the same measure. There are some whose pathway to the skies is comparatively smooth. Others go through fire and through water—men ride over their heads.

My Brethren who have done business in the great waters, I speak to you. Yours has been a stormy and tried life. Well, I can sympathize with you, for with all the mercy of God, the preacher has not been free from many and severe trials and, oh, they are deep, indeed—when a depressed spirit unites with our outward afflictions—when Church troubles, family troubles, personal troubles and the world’s troubles, all aided and abetted by Satanic temptation and by an evil heart of unbelief. Do not, however, think yourselves harshly dealt with, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in being singled out as a special target for the arrows of grief.

Do not wish that you could be the obscurest of all the saints, to find some quiet nook in which you might be left alone to rest in forgetfulness! Rather let me remind you that if in your experience there is a deep of extraordinary trial, there is most surely another deep answering to it. Open

now your ears and your hearts to hear the calling of this deep unto its brother deep. Harken while I translate the echoes of the Truth of God. Inasmuch as you have many trials, remember the depth of the Divine faithfulness. You have not been able to comprehend the reason for your trials, but I beseech you believe in the firmness and stability of the Divine affection towards you.

In proportion to your tribulations shall be your consolations! If you have shallow sorrows, you shall receive but shallow Graces. But if you have deep afflictions, you shall obtain the deeper proofs of the faithfulness of God! I could gladly lay down and die when I think of the trials of this life, but I recover myself and laugh at them all, even as the daughter of Zion shook her head and laughed at her foes, when I remember that the mighty God of Jacob is our refuge and that He will not fail us, nor take away His hand till He has effected His purpose concerning us! Great deeps of trial bring with them great deeps of promise!

For you much afflicted ones, there are words, great and mighty, which are not meant for other saints of easier experience. You shall drink from deep golden goblets reserved for those giants who can drink great potions of wormwood and are men of capacity enough to quaff deep draughts of the wines on the lees well refined. Trials are mighty enlargers of the soul! We are contracted, narrowed, pent up and we rightly pray, "Lord, enlarge my heart." Yes, but the opening of capacious reservoirs within us can only be effected by the spade of daily tribulation, and then, being dug out by pain and trouble, there becomes room for the overflowing promise!

A great adversity will, to the Believer, bring with it great Grace. Whenever the Lord sets His servants to do extraordinary work He always gives them extraordinary strength. Or if He puts them to unusual suffering He will give them unusual patience. When we enter upon war with some petty New Zealand chief, our troops expect to have their charges defrayed and accordingly we pay them gold by the thousands, as their expenses may require. But when an army marches against a grim monarch in an unknown country who has insulted the British flag, we pay, as we know to our cost, not by thousands but by millions!

There is a difference in the payment of an attack upon petty chieftains and a war against an emperor. And so, my Brethren, if God calls you to common and ordinary trials, He will pay the charges of your warfare by thousands, but if He commands you to an unusual struggle with some tremendous foe, He will discharge the liabilities of your war by millions—according to the riches of His Grace in which He has abounded towards us through Christ Jesus! I would not, then, in my better mind, if I could, escape great labors or great trials since they involve great Graces! If one deep calls to the other deep, let the Lord lay on the strokes and let Him add to the burden! If as my days so shall my strength be, then let the days be long and dark, for so the strength shall be mighty and God shall be glorified and His servants shall be blessed!

I would earnestly urge every tried Christian to dwell upon this Truth, for it may be of great comfort to you. You may, perhaps, have had a com-

paratively easy life until just lately, but you have reached a turning point where disaster has befallen you. You are fallen into poverty, or else that time for the break-up of your family has lately come upon you. Your father is gone. Your mother is on the verge of the grave. Your friends have one by one been taken from you. Yes, feel the loneliness of life! Here is a dreadful deep for you to sail on and a tempestuous deep much to be feared, for your little boat may easily be wrecked.

But don't forget that there is *another* deep, whose remembrance will remove from you the bitterness of your present sorrow—there is love in Heaven towards you which will never grow cold—immortal and unchanging love! And besides, there is a royal oath which never can be broken, a Covenant ratified with blood that never can be dishonored! You must be helped through—you cannot be left. God might sooner cease to *be* than cease to be faithful! You must be borne up amid the billows and safely landed. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart this day!

III. We have not time to linger. We must pass on to a third point. "Deep calls unto deep." HUMAN WRETCHEDNESS IS PARALLELED BY DIVINE GRACE. Brothers and Sisters, into what an awful state our race fell! We were tainted with high treason through the sin of our father, Adam. The dignity and honor of our race were forfeited. We were, each one of us, born in sin and shaped in iniquity—with a natural tendency towards evil we came into this world—and since we have been in this world, we have wickedly and willfully rebelled against God.

We have rendered ourselves obnoxious to the Divine justice. We deserve to be driven from the Glory of His Presence by the power of His wrath! And beside all this, we are desperately set upon rejecting any offers of mercy on the part of God. Our will has become stubborn, our heart is hard. There are no known *human* means which can bring a soul to God. Man is such an enemy to God that he will not be reconciled to Him. Human eloquence and human sympathy are, alike, powerless against human depravity.

This leviathan laughs at our sword and spear. Oh, sad, sad, sad case is that of fallen man! Sinner, sad, sad is your case—lost, utterly, hopelessly, everlastingly lost are you by nature! As in yourselves considered, there is no remedy for the disease which rages within you! There is no escape from that eternal fire which must consume you! I would never, for a moment, attempt to make out the abyss of the Fall to be less deep than it is—it is bottomless! The miseries of mankind cannot be exaggerated. Could our tears forever flow—could we be turned each one into a Jeremiah—yet could we never weep enough for the slain of the daughter of our people. Human misery is deep beyond expression.

But what shall I say? How shall I speak? Where shall I find words to express the delight of my soul that I have such a Truth to tell you? There is a deep which *answers* to the deep of human ruin and it is the deep of Divine Grace. There can be no evil in man which the infinite mercy of God cannot overcome! Behold, God Himself, Incarnate in the Person of the Nazarene! Behold the Son of God spending on earth a life of service and of

condescension! Behold Him dying a death of ignominy and pain! The Atonement of Christ is such a Red Sea that all the Egyptians of a Believer's sins shall be drowned in it! There is such virtue in the redemption offered up by Christ, that it meets the full extent of the guilt which any sinner who seeks Him may have incurred!

Moreover, to meet the obstinacy and depravity of our hearts, behold how deep calls unto deep! God's Eternal Spirit has deigned to dwell in these hearts of ours! He quickens death into life! He fills the thirsty soul with rivers of Divine Grace! He turns the stone to flesh and makes the adamant palpitate with tenderness. Blessed be His name, He has done wonders in our souls! He has brought Christ home to our hearts and made us willing to rejoice in Christ and to be saved by Him! Myriads of spirits now before the Throne attest to the fact that the Grace of God is deeper than the depths of our sin, higher than the heights of our rebellion, broader and longer than the breadths and lengths of our depravity! Oh, the exceeding riches of the Grace of God!

"Oh, the depth," says the Apostle, and we may well say the same. My Hearer, ought not this to encourage you? Are you a burdened, conscience-stricken sinner, brought so low as to be all but a *damned* sinner? You are only just this side of Hell! You almost smoke like a brand in the fire, yet is there mercy enough to rescue you and to give you a place among them that are glorified at the right hand of God! The deep of your misery calls to the deep of sacred mercy and faith shall hear a favorable answer.

IV. Fourthly and with brevity, THE DEPTH OF DIVINE LOVE TO THE SAINTS CALLS FOR A DEEP OF CONSECRATION IN EVERY BELIEVING HEART. Study, my dear Brothers and Sisters, quietly, the depth of the love of God to you, His people. He loved you without a cause—

***"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you ever must sing,
For so it seemed good in Your sight.' "***

He loved you without beginning. Before years and centuries and millenniums began to be counted, your name was on His heart. Eternal thoughts of love have been in God's bosom towards *you*! He has loved you without a pause—there never was a minute in which He did not love you. Your name, once engraved upon His hands has never been erased, nor has He ever blotted it out of the Book of Life.

Since you have been in this world He has loved you most patiently. You have often provoked Him. You have rebelled against Him times without number, yet He has never stopped the outflow of His heart towards you. And, blessed be His name, He never will! You are His and you always shall be His. Jesus says, "Because I live, you shall live also." God's love to you is without boundary. He could not love you more, for He loves you like a God—and He never will love you less. All His heart belongs to you. "As the Father has loved Me," says Jesus, "even so have I loved you."

Contemplate for a moment what you have received as the result of this love. You have received, first of all, the gift of the only begotten Son. He

left the Throne of honor for the Cross of shame, the brightness of Glory for the darkness of the tomb. Oh, the depths of the love which is revealed in Calvary! You will never, never be able to fathom the depth of the love of God towards you in the gift of His dear Son to be your Redeemer! Think, now—the Holy Spirit brought Jesus Christ to you! And what were you then? It is a shame to speak of some of the things which you then loved, but you are washed, you are cleansed and sanctified. Oh, that blessed bath filled with blood!

Oh, the depth of love there is in the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His Grace! What a work of Divine Grace was that which changed your nature to make you love what once you hated! And what a work it has been to keep the helm of your vessel right—oftentimes the current would have drifted you back again to the old rock and wrecked you—but a strong hand has kept the head of the vessel heavenward. A blessed wind has filled the sail. And though you have made but slow progress, you are still on the way to the fair haven. The love of God which has been manifested in you is a very Heaven of love.

I cannot measure the love which God has shown towards me, poor me, though I am only one of His family. I feel as if it were deeper than Hell and higher than Heaven—as long as eternity and wide as immensity. I cannot understand it. But what does this love say to me and to you but this—it calls to another deep! Oh, how I ought to love my God who has so loved me! Oh, how I ought to hate the sin which made my Savior bleed! Deeps of the Savior's grief, you call to deeps of spiritual repentance. The agonies of Christ call us to the slaughter of our sins. Brethren, if God so loved us, it calls to another deep—we ought also so to love one another! If God forgave us, behold another deep of obligation to forgive all those who have offended us!

How can I love the saints of God enough who are the Brethren of Him who loved me even to the death? As for poor sinners, if God saved me, how I ought to lay out my life to try and save them! If I have, indeed, found peace with God through the blood of the Cross, how I ought to seek the lost sheep, still lost and wandering, as I also once was! If Jesus has so loved me, how I ought to love Him! Brethren, I dare not, at this hour, say a word against other Christian people, though I might fairly do so. But I will accuse *myself* and admit that I have hardly caught so much as an *idea* of what a consecrated man ought to be.

I have read the lives of those of God's servants whose enthusiasm has been fervent and whose consecration has been complete and I have felt that they were like a huge Colossus and I a dwarf walking under their huge legs. Oh, but to serve Christ as He ought to be served does not mean giving Him a trifle, now and then, out of our estate and never knowing that we have given it! It means pinching ourselves right cheerfully to serve His cause. It does not mean saying a good word, sometimes, for Him when it would be shameful to be silent! It means making our whole *life* a testimony to His dear love. It does not mean giving Him the candle ends and cheese parings of our soul, stingingly doling out to Him what we would

give a beggar at the door. It means the rendering up of body, soul and spirit—the surrender of our entire nature to be offered in sacrifice!

As the bullock was brought to the altar—bound to the horns thereof, killed and offered up—with the fat and the inwards, so must we be entirely given up to our Lord! O for more real consecration! Jesus has done so much for us—let us endeavor to do more for Him! And this morning let the deeps of Divine Love call to the deeps within our grateful souls and let those deeps cry to the deeps of the Eternal Spirit as we ask to be perfectly given up to the cause and honor of our Lord!

V. Time fails me, therefore I must notice another deep. There is a depth in this world, A DEPTH OF DIVINE FORBEARANCE towards impenitent and graceless men. And depend upon it, it answers to another deep, A DEEP OF IMMEASURABLE AND NEVER-ENDING WRATH IN THE WORLD TO COME. It is a very solemn subject and I desire to speak most solemnly. Therefore I entreat you to hear most earnestly, especially you unconverted ones.

It is a very great mystery that God permits the ungodly to go on as they do. Walk down some of our streets at night, if you dare, and mark what you see. You inwardly exclaim, “I wonder why God permits it! Here is a reeking Sodom in the heart of a so-called Christian city.” Step into some of the dens of infamy and you will feel, “God could, if He would, suppress this in a minute—why doesn’t He?” Harken for a moment to the talk of blasphemers—what atrocious insults they perpetrate upon the Majesty of Heaven. They go out of their way to imprecate curses upon themselves, their limbs, their eyes, their souls. What are they doing? If they will not obey God, could they not at least let Him alone and not insult Him to His face?

We have heard in these days a blasphemer stand upon a public platform and say, “There is no God and if there is a God,” taking out his watch, “let him strike me dead in five minutes.” When he still found himself alive, he argued that there was no God. The fact was, God was much too great to be put out of patience by such an insignificant wretch as he! Had God been less than God He would have struck him dead, but being God He passed him by with sublime indifference, as a hero would pass by the chirping of a grasshopper. Yet the Divine forbearance is certainly very wonderful, very marvelous.

I have heard say that when Mr. John Ryland was present at a certain meeting when the slave-trade question was first agitated, a story was told in that meeting of atrocities perpetrated in the middle passage between Africa and the States. And those atrocities were so enormous that John Ryland, in the exuberance of his wrath, knelt down and said to God, “Lift up Your thunderbolt and damn these wretches, O righteous God.” I know that in sight of oppression and cruelty I have felt a longing for speedy vengeance on the tyrant and have been very thankful to think that I had not the handling of the thunderbolts. But God has looked on, *calmly* looked on, and suffered infamies which were nothing less than infernal to be perpetrated, again and again! He appears to wink at men’s sins.

Ah, my Brethren, can you think for a minute what you and I would do if some cruel wretches should take our children and torture them and burn them alive? How would our wrath be up and how would we strike in their defense! But remember that from the days of Christ until now the dear children of God, dearer to Him than our children are to us, have been shut up in prison to rot. They have been sawn asunder. They have wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins. They have been burned at Smithfield and a thousand other places and have crimsoned the snows of the Alps with their blood. And yet God, in the great deeps of His forbearance, has been still.

There has been, it is true, a vengeance in Providence in the long run—the reader of history knows how God has avenged every persecution. Still, the recompense was *slow*. There were no fiery arrows to pierce Bishop Bonner when he condemned Anne Askew. There were no immediate lightning flashes to wither Domitian or Nero when they insultingly put the people of God to death. No, the Lord bears long with them and His long-suffering is a deep—a great deep! In this house, to come back to ourselves, what deeps of forbearance have been shown in the cases of some of you! You have often heard of Jesus Christ, my dear Hearers, but you have not received Him. You have known the way of salvation, but you have not run in it.

I have pleaded with you—I hope with all honesty and earnestness—and you have been awakened, too, and aroused, but you have stifled your convictions! You have deliberately chosen your sins and you have presumptuously turned away from the blood of Christ. O my unconverted Hearers, those of you, especially, who still continue regularly to come to these seats until I almost wonder to see you here—I cannot imagine what pleasure you can derive from having your consciences continually whipped up! I beg you to consider that men, and women, too, among you have chosen the lusts of the flesh and ungodly gain, or drunkenness, when you know better, know much better! Some of you have had a degree of Divine light shed across your souls and yet you have deliberately chosen to rebel against God! I fear you have, some of you, done so to the hardening of your hearts even to final impenitence!

Listen, now, I pray you! As surely as God has shown towards you a great deep of forbearance, He will show an equal depth of justice. He may pay slowly, but He will pay in full! God's mill grinds slowly, but it grinds most surely and thoroughly, even to powder. The feet of the avenging angels are shod with wool, but they never turn aside from their path. According to this Book there is a Hell into which those who reject Christ will be cast, the misery of which is dimly to be guessed at, but can never be fully described—a misery of which it is said, "Their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched"—a misery which will last as long as the *enjoyments* of Heaven shall last! For while the saints shall go away into everlasting joy, the punishment of the ungodly has, according to the testimony of Jesus, the same eternal duration.

Do not deceive yourselves by any dream of *annihilation*! Do not imagine there shall come an end to your woe! If there were the shadow of a ground for that statement, Hell would cease to be Hell, for hopelessness is of the *essence* of Hell. O, by the boundless love treasured up in Christ Jesus, remember there is equal terror in His wrath! The hand that is mighty to save is equally mighty to destroy! All Omnipotence has been put out to save, but this rejected, an equal Omnipotence shall be put out to crush. Tempt not the Lord! The deeps of your sin are already challenging the deeps of His justice. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?"

Awaken not the fury which you cannot endure, overcome, or avoid! Kindle not the fire which, like flames among stubble, will burn furiously and cannot be stopped! O dash not your souls upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler! Cast not yourselves upon the point of His glittering spear! God grant of His eternal mercy that you may not tempt those deeps.

VI. Now to close with a more cheerful theme. There is, Brethren, A BLESSED DEEP OF HOLY HAPPINESS AND BLISS FOR THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN, AND TODAY IT CALLS TO THE DEEP OF JOY AND THANKFULNESS WITHIN SAINTLY HEARTS who are lingering here below. Yes, the day is coming and all the wings of time are bringing it nearer, when we shall be emancipated from the body of this death! We are not forever to be sickly, sinful and sorrowing. We shall soon be set free from everything that encumbers us.

If Christ come not in our lifetime to take us to Himself, we shall go to Him to dwell with Him where He is. And what are the delights of being in Heaven! To be with Christ! The spouse forever with the Bridegroom! The child forever in His Father's bosom! What must it be to dwell above! Forever pure! Forever beyond the danger of temptation! Safe and blessed! Shielded from all fear! Enriched with all blessedness! Christian, you shall soon be like Jesus as well as with Him. You shall be crowned as He is and blessed as He is. Oh, how satisfied shall you be when you wake up in His likeness!

I cannot go further, for though I were to talk of the harps of gold, of the streets that shine with unearthly light, of gates of pearl, of the never-ending song and of the gentle flowing river of the Water of Life amidst the trees that yield their 12 manner of fruits, yet all would be less than what I have said already. You shall be with Christ and you shall be like He is! Indeed, Heaven is a great deep! The glorious history of the Church of God in years to come is a great deep, too. That reigning of Christ on the earth. That judging of the angels. That being caught up together with the Lord in the air. That resurrection of the body in the likeness of His glorious body. That being forever with the Lord—why, these are things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard! Heaven is a blessed deep.

I see it as a sea of glass mingled with fire and almost hear the harpers who stand forever harping on that glassy sea. O let the thought of it awaken the deeps of your souls! Heaven is yours, for He has said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be

also.” “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands.” I blush to think that I should ever be downcast! I am ashamed to think that I should dare to be sad! Oh, it is blessed work to anticipate that joy, yet it makes one ashamed of the depression which our present light afflictions so easily cause to our feeble minds!

O you mourning saints, you have been putting on your sackcloth today, and you arranged it so carefully, for there is a kind of foppery about grief that makes it strew its ashes with deliberation. O Sirs, could you not have spent some of your time at another wardrobe and in putting on another dress? Come, you afflicted one, array yourself, for a minute, with the robe of whiteness, without spot or blemish! How well it will become you! How soon you will wear it! Now, put that unfading crown upon your head. You are a poor servant or a working man, and, ah, that head has often ached with weariness and woe—but put on the crown now! How royally it adorns your brow! It would not fit any other head, it was made for *you*—and you will soon have it! In a few days, or a few months, you will go by the way of the sepulcher, or else by the way of the second coming up to your throne and your kingdom!

Now hold that palm branch in your hand! How delightful it looks! How your eyes gleam at the thought of the victory which it betokens! Arise, I say, and put the silver sandals upon those weary feet! Bedeck yourself with the jewels and ornaments prepared for your wedding. Take down the harp and try your fingers among its celestial strings. “Wake up, my glory! Wake, psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early.” Blessed be the Lord who has prepared for His people rivers of pleasure at His right hand forevermore!

Our souls anticipate the day of enjoyment! And at this hour, by faith, we eat the fruit of the trees of life and drink from the living fountains of waters. O clap your hands, you righteous! Sound the cymbals, even the high-sounding cymbals, and give praise unto your God even forever, who has prepared for you the rest that knows no end!

Thus “deep calls unto deep.” May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with you forever. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 77.

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THE STORY OF GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS

NO. 263

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 17, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers
have told us, what work
you did in their days, in the times of old.”
Psalm 44:1.*

PERHAPS there are no stories that stick by us so long as those which we hear in our childhood, those tales which are told us by our fathers and in our nurseries. It is a sad reflection that too many of these stories are idle and vain, so that our minds in early infancy are tinctured with fables and inoculated with strange and lying narratives. Now, among the early Christians and the old Believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now, and the stories with which their children were amused were of a far different class from those which fascinated us in the days of our babyhood.

No doubt Abraham would talk to young children about the flood and tell them how the waters overspread the earth and how Noah, alone, was saved in the ark. The ancient Israelites, when they dwelt in their own land, would all of them tell their children about the Red Sea and the plagues which God worked in Egypt when He brought His people out of the house of bondage. Among the early Christians we know that it was the custom of parents to recount to their children everything concerning the life of Christ, the acts of the Apostles and the like interesting narratives. No, among our Puritan ancestors such were the stories that regaled their childhood. Sitting down by the fireside, before those old Dutch tiles with the quaint eccentric drawings upon them of the history of Christ, mothers would teach their children about Jesus walking on the water, or of His multiplying the loaves of bread, or of His marvelous transfiguration, or of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Oh, how I would that the tales of the present age were like the stories of our childhood—the stories of Christ and that we would, each of us, believe that, after all, there can be nothing as interesting as that which is true—and nothing more striking than those stories which are written in Sacred Writ—nothing that can more truly move the heart of a child than the marvelous works of God which He did in the olden times. It seems that the Psalmist who wrote this most musical ode had heard from his father, handed to him by tradition, the stories of the wondrous things which God had done in his day. And afterwards, this sweet singer in Israel taught it to his children and so was one generation after another led to call God blessed, remembering His mighty acts.

Now, my dear Friends, this morning I intend to recall to your minds some of the wondrous things which God has done in the olden times. My aim and object will be to excite your minds to seek after the like. That looking back upon what God has done, you may be induced to look forward with the eyes of expectation, hoping that He will again stretch forth His potent hand and His holy arm and repeat those mighty acts He performed in ancient days.

First, I shall speak of the marvelous stories which our fathers have told us and which we have heard of the olden times. Secondly, I shall mention some disadvantages under which these old stories labor with regard to the effect upon our minds. And, then, I shall draw the proper inferences from those marvelous things which we have heard, that the Lord did in the days of yore.

I. To begin then, with THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS.

We have heard that God has at times done very mighty acts. The plain everyday course of the world has been disturbed with wonders at which men have been exceedingly amazed. God has not always permitted His Church to go on climbing by slow degrees to victory, but He has been pleased at times to smite one terrible blow and lay His enemies down upon the earth and bid His children march over their prostrate bodies. Turn back, then, to ancient records and remember what God has done. Will you not remember what He did at the Red Sea, how He smote Egypt and all its chivalry and covered Pharaoh's chariot and horse in the Red Sea? Have you not heard tell how God smote Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, because they withstood the progress of His people? Have you not learned how He proved that His mercy endures forever, when He slew those great kings and cast the mighty ones down from their thrones?

Have you not read, too, how God smote the children of Canaan and drove out the inhabitants thereof and gave the land to His people, to be a possession by lot forever? Have you not heard how, when the hosts of Jabin came against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera—the river of Kishon swept them away, “that ancient river, the river Kishon,” and there was none of them left. Has it not been told you, too, how by the hand of David, God smote the Philistines and how by His right hand He smote the children of Ammon? Have you not heard how Midian was put to confusion and the myriads of Arabia were scattered by Asa in the day of his faith? And have you not heard, too, how the Lord sent a blast upon the hosts of Sennacherib, so that in the morning they were all dead men? Tell—tell you of these, His wonders! Speak of them in your streets! Teach them to your children. Let them not be forgotten, for the right hand of the Lord has done marvelous things—His name is known in all the earth.

The wonders, however, which most concern us, are those of the Christian era. And surely these are not second to those under the Old Testament. Have you never read how God won to himself great renown on the

day of Pentecost? Turn to this book of the record of the wonders of the Lord and read. Peter the fisherman stood up and preached in the name of the Lord his God. A multitude assembled and the Spirit of God fell upon them—and it came to pass that three thousand in one day were pricked in their hearts by the hand of God and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And know you not how the twelve Apostles with the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word and the idols fell from their thrones? The cities opened wide their gates and the messengers of Christ walked through the streets and preached.

It is true that at first they were driven here and there and hunted like partridges upon the mountains—but do you not remember how the Lord did get unto Himself a victory, so that in a hundred years after the nailing of Christ to the Cross, the Gospel had been preached in every nation and the isles of the sea had heard the sound thereof? And have you forgotten how the heathen were baptized, thousands at a time, in every river? What stream is there in Europe that cannot testify to the majesty of the Gospel? What city is there in the land that cannot tell how God's Truth has triumphed and how the heathen has forsaken his false gods and bowed his knee to Jesus the Crucified? The first spread of the Gospel is a miracle never to be eclipsed. Whatever God may have done at the Red Sea, He has done still more within a hundred years after the time when Christ first came into the world. It seemed as if a fire from Heaven ran along the ground. Nothing could resist its force. The lightning shaft of Truth shivered every pinnacle of the idol temple and Jesus was worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

This is one of the things we have heard of the olden times. And have you never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Has it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed—how, whenever he preached, the Church was thronged with attentive hearers? And there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spoke with a majesty unparalleled, the Word of God in truth and righteousness. The people listening, hanging forward to catch every word and now and then breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet. Then silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator, and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands and shouting for joy again? Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved.

And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards, when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth—when Popery sat upon her throne and stretched her iron rod across the nations and shut the windows of Heaven and quenched the very stars of God and made thick darkness cover the people? Have you never heard how Martin Luther arose and preached the Gospel of the Grace of God and how the nations trembled and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingli among the Swiss and of

Calvin in the city of Geneva and of the mighty works that God did by them?

No, as Britons, have you forgotten the mighty preacher of the Truth of God—have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers that Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the Gospel of God? Oh, does not history tell us that these men were like fire-brands in the midst of the dry stubble? That their voice was as the roaring of a lion and their going forth like the springing of a young lion. Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock. They did push the nation before them and as for the enemies, they said, “Destroy them.” None could stand before them, for the Lord, their God, had girded them with might.

To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The Churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley—men whose hearts the Lord had touched—and they dared to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings and the Church said—“Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” They come! They come! Numberless as the birds of Heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood.

Within a few years, from the preaching of there two men, England was permeated with evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated—even in those days of the slow coach. Today, while business runs on steam, religion often creeps along with its belly of the earth. We are astonished at these tales and we think them wonders. Yet let us believe them. They come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by His grace He will yet do again. He that is mighty has done great things and holy is His name.

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden times. They derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our Churches believe that things must grow gently, by degrees. We must go step by step onward. Concentrated action and continued labor, they say, will ultimately bring success. But the marvel is, all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand. They were converted at once and baptized that very day. They were that hour turned to God and become as truly disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years.

So was it in the day of Martin Luther—it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle and the candle burned and there was the light in an instant—God works sud-

denly. If anyone could have stood in Württemberg and have said—"Can Popery be made to quail, can the Vatican be made to shake?" The answer would have been—"No. It will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process." "Not so," however, did God say. He smote the dragon sorely and the nations went free. He cut the gates of brass and broke in sunder the bars of iron and the people were delivered in an hour. Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant.

The people that walked in darkness saw a great light and upon them that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, did the light shine. So was it in Whitefield's day. The rebuking of a slumbering Church was not the work of ages. It was done at once. Have you never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Camslang. He was preaching in the Church yard to a great congregation, that could not get into any edifice. And while preaching, the power of God came upon the people and one after another fell down as if they were smitten. And it was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin.

He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges and then comforting like Barnabas and the work spread and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was equal to it. So has it been in all revivals—God's work has been done suddenly. As with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high. Not slowly, but on cherubim right royally does He ride—on the wings of the mighty wind does He fly. Sudden has been the work. Men could scarce believe it true, it was done in so short a space of time. Witness the great revival which is going on in and around Belfast. After carefully looking at the matter and after seeing some trusty and well-beloved Brothers who lived in that neighborhood, I am convinced, notwithstanding what enemies may say, that it is a genuine work of Grace and that God is doing wonders there. A friend who called to see me yesterday tells me that the lowest and vilest men, the most depraved females in Belfast, have been visited with this extraordinary epilepsy, as the world calls it. But with this strange rushing of the Spirit, as we have it.

Men who have been drunkards have suddenly felt an impulse compelling them to pray. They have resisted. They have sought their cups in order to put it out. But when they have been swearing, seeking to quench the Spirit by their blasphemy, God has at last brought them on their knees and they have been compelled to cry for mercy with piercing shrieks and to agonize in prayer. And then after a time, the Evil One seems to have been cast out of them and in a quiet, holy, happy frame of mind, they have made a profession of their faith in Christ and have walked in His fear and love. Roman Catholics have been converted. I thought that an extraordinary thing. But they have been converted very frequently, indeed, in Ballymena and in Belfast. In fact, I am told the priests are now

selling small bottles of holy water for people to take, in order that they may be preserved from this desperate contagion of the Holy Spirit.

This holy water is said to have such efficacy, that those who do not attend any of the meetings are not likely to be meddled with by the Holy Spirit—so the priests tell them. But if they go to the meetings, even this holy water cannot preserve them—they are as liable to fall prey to the Divine influence. I think they are just as likely to do so without as with it. All this has been brought about suddenly and although we may expect to find some portion of natural excitement, yet I am persuaded it is in the main a real, spiritual and abiding work. There is a little froth on the surface, but there is a deep running current that is not to be resisted, sweeping underneath and carrying everything before it.

At least there is something to awaken our interest, when we understand that in the small town of Ballymena on market day, the publicans have always taken one hundred pounds for whiskey and now they cannot take a sovereign all day long in all the public houses. Men who were once drunkards now meet for prayer and people, after hearing one sermon, will not go until the minister has preached another and sometimes a third. And at last he is obliged to say—"You must go, I am exhausted." Then they will break up into groups in their streets and in their houses, crying out to God to let this mighty work spread, that sinners may be converted unto Him. "Well," says one, "we cannot believe it." Very likely you cannot, but some of us can, for we have heard it with our ears and our fathers have told us the mighty works that God did in *their* days and we are prepared to believe that God can do the same works now.

I must here remark again, in all these old stories there is one very plain feature. Whenever God has done a mighty work it has been by some very insignificant instrument. When He slew Goliath it was by little David, who was but a ruddy youth. Lay not up the sword of Goliath—I always thought that a mistake of David—lay up, not Goliath's sword, but lay up the stone and treasure up the sling in God's armory forever. When God would slay Sisera, it was a woman that must do it with a hammer and a nail. God has done His mightiest works by the meanest instruments—that is a fact most true of all God's works—Peter the fisherman at Pentecost, Luther the humble monk at the Reformation, Whitefield the potboy of the Old Bell Inn at Gloucester in the time of the last century's revival.

And so it must be to the end. God works not by Pharaoh's horses or chariot, but He works by Moses' rod. He does not His wonders with the whirlwind and the storm. He does them by the still small voice, that the glory may be His and the honor all His own. Does not this open a field of encouragement to you and to me? Why may not *we* be employed in doing some mighty work for God here? Moreover, we have noticed in all these stories of God's mighty works in the olden times, that wherever He has done any great thing it has been by someone who has had very great faith. I do verily believe at this moment that, if God willed it, every soul in this hall would be converted now. If God chose to put forth the operations of His own mighty Spirit, not the most obdurate heart would be able to stand

against it. "He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy." He will do as He pleases—none can stay His hand.

"Well," says one, "but I do not expect to see any great things." Then, my dear Friend, you will not be disappointed, for you will not see them. But those that expect them shall see them. Men of great faith do great things. It was Elijah's faith that slew the priests of Baal. If he had the little heart that some of you have, Baal's priests had still ruled over the people and would never have been smitten with the sword. It was Elijah's faith that bade him say—"If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." And again—"Choose one bullock for yourselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood and put no fire under, call you on the name of your gods and I will call on the name of Jehovah." It was his noble faith that bade him say—"Take the Prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape." And he brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there—a holocaust to God. The reason why God's name was so magnified was because Elijah's faith in God was so mighty and heroic.

When the Pope sent his bull to Luther, Luther burned it. Standing up in the midst of the crowd with the blazing paper in his hand he said—"See here, this is the Pope's bull." What cared he for all the Popes that were ever in or out of Hell? And when he went to Worms to meet the grand Diet, his followers said—"You are in danger, stand back." "No," said Luther, "if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would not fear. I will go"—and into Worms he went, confident in the Lord his God. It was the same with Whitefield. He believed and he expected that God would do great things. When he went into his pulpit he believed that God would bless the people and God did do so. Little faith may do little things, but great faith shall be greatly honored. O God! Our fathers have told us this, that whenever they had great faith You have always honored it by doing mighty works!

I will detain you no longer on this point, except to make one observation. All the mighty works of God have been attended with great *prayer*, as well as with great faith. Have you ever heard of the commencement of the great American revival? A man unknown and obscure, laid it up in his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After praying and wrestling and making the soul-stirring enquiry—"Lord, what will You have me to do? Lord, what will You have me to do?" he hired a room and put up an announcement that there would be a Prayer Meeting held there at such-and-such an hour of the day. He went at the proper hour and there was not a single person there. He began to pray and prayed for half an hour alone. One came in at the end of the half-hour and then two more and I think he closed with six.

The next week came around and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times. At last the Prayer Meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start Prayer Meetings. At last there was scarcely a street in New York that was without a Prayer Meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The Prayer Meetings became daily ones, lasting for about an hour. Petitions and requests were sent up—these were simply asked and offered before God—and the answers came. And many were the happy hearts that stood up and testified that the prayer offered last week

had been already fulfilled. Then it was when they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell upon the people and it was rumored that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching in thorough earnest and there had been hundreds converted in a week.

The matter spread into and through the Northern States—these revivals of religion became universal and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million people were converted to God through the short space of two or three months. Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast by the same means. The Brother thought that it lay at his heart to pray and he did. Then he held a regular Prayer Meeting—day after day they met together to entreat the blessing and fire descended and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos but by hundreds and thousands and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of His Gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Make each of you your own estimate of them if you please.

II. Agreeable to my division,, I have now to make a few observations upon THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOR. When people hear about what God *used* to do, one of the things they say is—"Oh, that was a very long while ago." They imagine that times have altered since then. Says one—"I can believe anything about the Reformation—the largest accounts that can possibly be given, I can take in." "And so could I concerning Whitefield and Wesley," says another, "all that is quite true, they did labor vigorously and successfully—but that was many years ago. Things were in a different state then from what they are now." Granted. But I want to know what the things have to do with it. I thought it was God that did it. Has God changed? Is He not an immutable God, the same yesterday, today and forever?

Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time He can do at another? No, I think I may push it a little further and say what He has done once, is a prophecy of what He intends to do again—that the mighty works which have been accomplished in the olden times shall all be repeated and the Lord's song shall be sung again in Zion and He shall again be greatly glorified. Others among you say, "Oh, well I look upon these things as great prodigies—miracles. We are not to expect them every day." That is the very reason why we do not get them. If we had learned to expect them, we should no doubt obtain them—but we put them up on the shelf, as being out of the common order of our moderate religion—as being mere curiosities of Scripture history. We imagine such things, however true, to be prodigies of Providence. We cannot imagine them to be according to the ordinary working of his mighty power. I beseech you, my Friends, abjure that idea, put it out of your mind.

Whatever God has done in the way of converting sinners is to be looked upon as a precedent, for "His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear." If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in ourselves. Let us with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy His grace as in the days of old. Yet there is yet another disadvantage under which these old stories labor. The fact is, we have not seen them. Why, I may talk to you ever so

long about revivals, but you won't believe them half as much, nor half as truly, as if one were to occur in your very midst. If you saw it with your own eyes, then you would see the power of it. If you had lived in Whitefield's day, or had heard Grimshaw preach, you would believe anything.

Grimshaw would preach twenty-four times a week—he would preach many times in the course of a sultry day, going from place on horseback. That man did preach. It seemed as if Heaven would come down to earth to listen to him. He spoke with a real earnestness, with all the fire of zeal that ever burned in mortal breast and the people trembled while they listened to him and said, "Certainly this is the voice of God." It was the same with Whitefield. The people would seem to move to and fro while he spoke, even as the harvest field is moved with the wind. So mighty was the energy of God that after hearing such a sermon the hardest-hearted men would go away and say—"There must be something in it, I never heard the like." Can you not realize these as literal facts? Do they stand up in all their brightness before your eyes? Then I think the stories you have heard with your ears should have a true and proper effect upon your lives.

III. This brings me, in the third place, to the PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD'S MIGHTY DEEDS. I would that I could speak with the fire of some of those men whose names I have mentioned. Pray for me, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me, that I may plead with you for a little time with all my might—seeking to exhort and stir you up—that you may get a like revival in your midst.

My dear Friends, the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about today?—Then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing to our well-beloved a song concerning what He is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows and sing an *old* song and bless and praise His holy name for the things which He did to His ancient Church, for the wonders which He worked in Egypt and in all the lands wherein He led His people and from which He brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm.

When we have thus begun to praise God for what He has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other great duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer that He would repeat the like signs and wonders among us. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion—men whose faith is large enough and love fiery enough to lead them from this moment to exercise unceasing intercessions that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations? Why, look here in this present assembly—what objects there are for our compassion. Glancing round, I observe one and another whose history I may happen to know, but how many are there still unconverted—men who trembled and who know they have, but have shaken off their fears and once more are daring their destiny, determined to be suicides to their own souls and to put away from them that Grace which once seemed as if it were striving in their hearts. They are turning away from the gates of

Heaven and running post-haste to the doors of Hell. And will not you stretch out your hands to God to stop them in this desperate resolve?

If in this congregation there were but one unconverted man and I could point him out and say—"There he sits, one soul that has never felt the love of God and never has been moved to repentance," with what anxious curiosity would every eye regard him? I think out of thousands of Christians here, there is not one who would refuse to go home and pray for that solitary unconverted individual. But, oh, My Brethren, it is not one that is in danger of Hell fire—here are hundreds and thousands of our fellow creatures!

Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? Up to now all other means have been used without effect. God is my witness how often I have strived in this pulpit to be the means of the conversion of men. I have preached my very heart out. I could say no more than I have said and I hope the secrecy of my chamber is a witness to the fact that I do not cease to feel when I cease to speak. I have a heart to pray for those of you who are never affected, or who, if affected, still quench the Spirit of God. I have done my utmost. Will not you come to the help of the Lord against the lost? Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Here they are. I commend them to you. Men and women whose hearts refuse to melt, whose stubborn knees will not bend. I give them up to you and ask you to pray for them. Carry their cases on your knees before God. Wife! Never cease to pray for your unconverted husband. Husband! Never stop your supplication till you see your wife converted.

And, O fathers and mothers! Have you no unconverted children? Have you not brought them here many and many a Sunday and they remain just as they have been? You have sent them first to one Chapel and then to another and they are just what they were. The wrath of God abides on them. Die they must. And should they die now, to a certainty you are aware that the flames of Hell must engulf them. And do you refuse to pray for them? Hard hearts, brutish souls—knowing Christ yourself—you still will not pray for those who come of your own loins—your own children according to the flesh?

Dear Friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we but pray for a blessing. Look at the movement we have already seen. We have witnessed Exeter Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, crammed to the doors—but we have seen no effect as yet of all these mighty gatherings. Have we not tried to preach without trying to pray? Is it not likely that the Church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its *praying* hand? O dear Friends! Let us agonize in prayer and it shall come to pass that this Music Hall shall witness the sighs and groans of the penitent and the songs of the converted. It shall yet happen that this vast host shall not come and go as now it does—men shall go out of this hall, praising God and saying—"It was good to be there. It was none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven." Thus much to stir you up to prayer.

Another inference we should draw is that all the stories we have heard should correct any self-dependence which may have crept into our treacherous hearts. Perhaps we as a congregation have begun to depend upon our numbers and so forth. We may have thought—"Surely God must bless us through the ministry." Now let the stories which our fathers have told us re-

mind you and remind me that God saves not by many nor by few. That it is not in us to do this but God must do it all. It may be that some hidden preacher, whose name has never been known, will yet start up in this city of London and preach the Lord with greater power than bishops or ministers have ever know before. I will welcome him—God be with him! Let him come from where he may—only let God speed him and let the work be done. Perhaps, however, God intends to bless the agency used in this place for your good and for your conversion. If so, I am thrice happy to think such should be the case. But place no dependence upon the instrument.

No, when men laughed at us and mocked us most, God blessed us most. And now it is not a disreputable thing to attend the Music Hall. We are not so much despised as we once were, but I question whether we have so great a blessing as once we had. We would be willing to endure another pelting in the pillory, to go through another ordeal with every newspaper against us and with every man hissing and abusing us, if God so pleases, if He will but give us a blessing. Only let Him cast out of us any idea that our own bow and sword will get us victory. We shall never get a revival here unless we believe that it is the Lord and the Lord alone, that can do it.

Having made this statement, I will endeavor to stir you up with confidence that the result may be obtained that I have pictured, and that the stories we have heard of the olden times, may become true in our day. Why should not everyone of my Hearers be converted? Is there any limitation in the Spirit of God? Why should not the feeblest minister become the means of salvation to thousands? Is God's arm shortened? My Brethren, when I bid you pray that God would make the ministry quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword, for the salvation of sinners, I am not setting you a hard, much less an impossible, task. We have but to ask and to get. Before we call, God will answer. And while we are yet speaking He will hear. God alone can know what may come of this morning's sermon, if He chooses to bless it.

From this moment you may pray more. From this moment God may bless the ministry more. From this hour other pulpits may become more full of life and vigor than before. From this same moment the Word of God may flow and run and rush and get to itself an amazing and boundless victory. Only wrestle in prayer—meet together in your houses, go to your closets, be instant, be earnest in season and out of season—agonize for souls and all that you have heard shall be forgotten in what you shall see. And all that others have told you shall be as nothing compared with what you shall hear with your ears and behold with your eyes in your own midst.

Oh you, to whom all this is as an idle tale, who love not God, neither serve Him, I beseech you stop and think for a moment. Oh, Spirit of God, rest on Your servant while a few sentences are uttered and make them mighty. God has strived with some of you. You have had your times of conviction. You are trying now, perhaps, to be infidels. You are trying to say now—"There is no Hell—there is no hereafter." It will not do. You know there is a Hell and all the laughter of those who seek to ruin your souls cannot make you believe that there is not. You sometimes try to think so, but you know that God is true. I do not argue with you now. Conscience tells you that God will punish you for sin. Depend upon it—you will find no happiness in trying to stifle

God's Spirit. This is not the path to bliss—to quench those thoughts which would lead you to Christ.

I beseech you, take your hands off of God's arm—resist not His Spirit. Bow the knee and lay hold of Christ and believe on Him. It will come to this yet—God the Holy Spirit will have you. I do trust that in answer to many prayers He intends to save you, yet. Give way now, but oh, remember, if you are successful in quenching the Spirit, your success will be the most awful disaster that can ever occur to you—for if the Spirit forsakes you—you are lost. It may be that this is the last warning you will ever have. The conviction you are now trying to put down and stifle may be the last you will have and the angel standing with the black seal and the wax may be now about to drop it upon your destiny and say, “Let him alone. He chooses drunkenness—he chooses lust—let him have them. And let him reap the wages in the everlasting fires of Hell.”

Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus—repent and be converted, every one of you. I am bold to say what Peter did. Breaking through every bond of every kind that could bind my lip, I exhort you in God's name—Repent and escape from damnation! A few more months and years and you shall know what damnation means, except you repent. Oh, fly to Christ while yet the lamp holds out and burns and mercy is still preached to you. Grace is still presented—accept Christ—resist Him no longer. Come to Him now! The gates of mercy are wide open today. Come now, poor Sinner, and have your sins forgiven.

When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that the black flag was put up and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up today—perhaps tomorrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the Law. And then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world or in that which is to come.

An old eastern conqueror, when he came to a city used to light a brazier of coals and, setting it high upon a pole, he would, with sound of trumpet, proclaim that if they surrendered while the lamp held out and burned he would have mercy upon them—but that when the coals were out he would storm the city, pull it stone from stone, sow it with salt—and put men, women and children to a bloody death.

Today the thunders of God bid you to take the same warning. There is your light, the lamp, the brazier of hot coals. Year after year the fire is dying out, nevertheless there is coal left. Even now the wind of death is trying to blow out the last live coal. Oh, Sinner, turn while the lamp continues to blaze. Turn now, for when the last coal is dead your repentance cannot help you. Your everlasting yelling in torment will not move the heart of God. Your groans and briny tears will not move Him to pity you. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Oh, today lay hold on Christ, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

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A SERMON
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"I will be your King."
Hosea 13:10.

"You are my King, O God."
Psalms 44:4.

THOSE of you who were present, this morning, will remember that I preached upon the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and that I earnestly entreated my hearers to submit themselves to His Kingly authority. [Sermon #1375, Volume 23—"NOW THEN, DO IT"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I hope that many who were with us felt that an Almighty force was operating upon them, making them willing to surrender themselves to the control of the great King of kings. I dwelt, then, mainly upon the need of decision for Christ and upon our duty to yield ourselves up wholly to Him. That is the human side of the question and is, by no means, to be kept in the background, but, on this occasion I want to speak to you upon the *privilege* of having Christ for our King and upon the graciousness of Christ in allowing Himself to be our King and permitting us to become His subjects. My purpose, at this time, is rather to set forth what God does for us in this matter than what He demands of us. To me it seems inexpressibly beautiful that while we are, in one place, bid to "kiss the Son" and accept Him as our King, we have, in another portion of Scripture, such a delightful declaration as this, "I will be your King." It is always interesting to trace great rivers to their sources. You usually find that their springs lie far up among the mountains and, if you trace back to their springs certain practical subjects that you find in the Word of God, you get to the eternal hills of Everlasting Love!

I am going, first, to run away from my text and to take another. If you look in the 10th verse of the 13th Chapter of Hosea, which contains our text, you will see these words near the end of the verse—"Give me a King." So, our first head is *the need of nature*. Then, in the second part of my discourse, I shall keep strictly to my first text—"I will be your King." That is *the answer of Grace*. And then, thirdly, we shall go back to the 44th Psalm, and at the 4th verse we shall find *the acknowledgment of faith*—"You are my King, O God." That is our program—may we be helped by the Spirit to carry it out and may we be able, in our hearts, to go from step to step all through!

I. First, then, we are to consider THE NEED OF NATURE—"Give me a king."

Man was once happy in Eden, for God was his King. But when he cast off his allegiance to God and became a rebel and a traitor, then he lost both his Paradise and his peace. Ever since then, man has, morally and spiritually, needed a king—and the deep groaning of the natural man is, "Give me a king."

Now, first, *this is the cry of weakness*. Man finds himself to be a poor puny creature and he feels that he needs to look up to someone greater, stronger, wiser, more enduring than himself. There are some plants that cannot grow much unless they can get something stronger than themselves to which they can cling and around which they can twine. You may, perhaps, have seen them when they have been away from a wall or a tree, stretching out their tendrils and seeking for something to climb upon. And if they do not find it, they fall to the ground till, in the damp weather, their leaves grow wet and rot—and the plant is in a sickly state in which it can barely exist. Such is human nature. It is a trailing thing and it gladly would be a climbing thing, and a clinging thing. In some persons, this trait is very conspicuous. They are always needing somebody to whom they can cling—and this tendency is the source of the greatest possible danger and sorrow to them. They select wrong objects for their love and trust and, consequently, they are betrayed, they are disappointed and they sadly learn the meaning of that text, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." That is the result when this clinging tendency is wrongly used, but many people have this tendency. Man is weak and he knows that he is weak and, therefore, he cries, "Give me a king"—someone who will guide me, direct me, govern me, rule me, take care of me."

Besides being the cry of weakness, it is also, oftentimes, *the sigh of distress*. In the 9th verse of this Chapter, we read, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help." Then follows my first text, "I will be your King." Do you see the connection of the two passages? A King is promised to them because they had destroyed themselves. When a man feels that he has destroyed himself, brought himself down to destruction by his sin and folly, then he, too, cries, "Give me a king." He needs help that he may be brought up out of his sad condition. When a soul is really convinced of its sin and made to see that it is brought under the sentence of God's righteous Law, it naturally cries out for something, or someone, that can give it the help which it does not find in itself. And this craving is often the cause of our being duped—for a so-called "priest" comes in and he says, "I can help you. I am ordained of God to rescue you from destruction." Many people are willing to trust in anything that has certain robes upon it, but, for my part, I will trust neither in chasubles, nor albs, nor stoles, nor any decorations or dresses, whether they are on linen-horses or on men-milliners!

What can there be in man, or in his clothes, that can be of help to his fellow man in such a case as this? Besides, God has not entrusted such a ministry as that to any man! God has bid His servants preach the Gospel—and that Gospel conveys help, light and power to all who believe it—but as for forms and ceremonies, musical performances, ornate ritual, masses and the like, they are sheer deceptions through and through! Trust not the weight of a feather to them—much less your souls! But again I remind you that there is in man a craving which makes him long for someone who can rescue him from destruction—and the mercy is that God meets that craving by setting before us His dear Son, who is Prophet, Priest and King! Prophet to reveal to us the mind of God. Priest to cleanse us by His own blood and to make us acceptable to His Father. And King to rule and control us and bring us into conformity to His own will. I know that cry right well and for years I sent it up from the very depths of my soul, “Give me a king,’ one who is wise enough, strong enough and willing enough to help my soul in its greatest extremity.”

Further, dear Friends, if sinners were wise, this would also be *the prayer of thoughtfulness*. I will suppose that I am addressing a young man to whom God has given a wise and understanding heart. He has passed his majority and is just about to leave his father’s roof. And he now feels that everything must depend upon himself and his own character. He cannot depend upon others as he has done in the past. Now, if he is a wise young man, he will say to God, “Give me a King,” for he will know from observation, I hope, rather than from experience, that anarchy in the soul is a truly terrible thing. There have been men of great talents, who, it seems to me, in the Providence of God, have been permitted to live on purpose to show what a man is when there is no King in his soul—when every passion that rules him, leads the mob of his faculties to tumult and revolt. If his thirst said, “Drink,” the man drank till he was drunk! If his natural appetite and taste said to him, “Gratify us,” he gratified them even though, thereby, he plunged into all manner of licentiousness and excess!

There have been men, I say again, of great talents, who have blazed in the moral firmament like meteors and have astonished many with the brilliance, yet luridness, of their light—yet their influence has been baleful to the nation and mischievous to all men except those who learned from them not to try to govern their own passions in their own strength. To let all the powers within us be without a supreme Ruler is the most terrible thing that can happen to any man! Young man, never believe that it can be for your good to follow the leading of your own evil passions. No, it is in restraining yourself that your welfare and your happiness will lie, not in throwing the reins upon the neck of carnal desires, but in reining in these fiery steeds and keeping them well in hand. And, to do that, you need to pray, “Give me a King.”

It is a dreadful thing to lead an aimless life. I know no person, in the whole world, who is more wretched than a man who has no true objective in life. His father, perhaps, left him all the wealth that he could desire

and now the sole occupation of his being is to kill time—and to dig its grave and his own, also—as quickly as he can! He does not live to benefit others, he has no high and noble objective as his guiding star—he simply squanders his time till it is all gone. Now that is the most miserable man I know. A man who is toiling hard to bring up a large family may be, and very often is, among the happiest of men. A man who has an objective in life, especially if it is an unselfish one and who strains all his faculties in order that he may attain it, is sure to be happy! Possibly happier while he is pursuing that goal, than after he has attained it. Trying to win a race warms a man and produces in him joy, the joy of activity, the joy of competition and, often, the joy of success. But there are some young men who start out in life intending to do nothing and they do it very thoroughly—they are great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such-like things, but, beyond that, I know not what is to be said about them! Such poor, aimless beings are always unhappy. They pretend to be merry and they make a great noise which is supposed to imply joy, but it is only like “the crackling of thorns under a pot.” They know nothing of what substantial pleasure means. I would as gladly never have been born as live without an objective and, long ago, I said, “‘Give me a King.’ Give me something to live for, something to die for, something that commands all my faculties and wakens up all my powers, something that stirs my spirit and makes a man of me. ‘Give me a King.’ I must have a King, or else what is life worth to me?”

Any thoughtful man will also have noticed that selfishness, if it controls our life, is a mean thing. Look over there! Do not tell me that So-and-So is a man—tell me that he is one of a herd of swine greedily devouring all that he can grasp. He simply lives that he may be rich, that he may be famous, that he may be called respectable—he lives only for himself. His soul is so small that it is trooped up within his own ribs. His heart, if he has one, is so cramped that it never goes out on behalf of others, but only beats one tune and that is, “Take care of Number One.” That is a wretched kind of life and any thoughtful young man must say, “I don’t want to live like that, ‘Give me a King.’ Let me keep clear of all selfishness. I do not want to be under the sway of the tyrant, Self. Let me have something that will rule and govern me. Give me a constitutional monarchy. Give me someone who is worthy to have the control of my whole life.”

I recollect that the thoughts which passed through my mind, when I was starting in life, were something like these. I distrusted self-guidance, for I saw how unsafe it was. I have told you before that I knew one who was at school with me, who used to be held up as a pattern and example to me, such a good boy, such an excellent young man. He came to London and within a few weeks, London was too much for him—I saw him come home in disgrace, his employer would not have such a fellow in his house! I then said to myself, “That may be my experience if I trust to myself. I should not like to begin life, away from home, in disgrace, to continue it in dishonor and to die with everybody feeling that it was a relief

to the world when I was gone.” So I said to myself, “By what means can I ensure my character? Can I get a guarantee that I shall be kept?” And when I turned to this blessed Book and found that the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to keep those who committed themselves unto Him, I accepted Him upon this ground, as well as upon others, that He was able to keep that which I had committed unto Him until the Great Day of His appearing. In that sense, my prayer was, “‘Give me a King,’ somebody who will take charge of me, care for me and protect me.” And I believe that such a cry as that is a very wise one for any young man to utter—and also for anyone else who has not yet acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

Once more concerning this cry of nature, *it often comes up as the result of experience*. Ah, how little do we learn except as we go to the school of Dame Experience, who raps us on the knuckles very hard! When a man discovers, to his surprise, that he has played the fool—as soon as he becomes wiser, he says, “Give me a King.” How many a man, who has made shipwreck of his life and has only discovered it when he has been upon the rocks, has at last cried, “Oh, that some strength greater than my own had saved me from this ruin!” I have known men, when they have been under a sense of danger, when they have seen death approaching, begin to cry, “‘Give me a King’—one who can fight the last enemy for me, one who can ensure my safety when I pass through the Valley of Death Shade.”

This experience, too, sometimes makes a man feel *the weight of responsibility*. He says, “How can I bear it?” And he wants someone who is his superior, someone who will tell him what to do so that, when he does it, the responsibility will no longer be with himself. Have not many of you who are without Christ felt a desire to have somebody with whom you could leave your responsibilities? Well, this is just what the Christian finds in Christ—that he can bring all the difficulties in his life to his great Lord and King, and leave them there—and find in his King, when he obeys Him, the promise that in obedience shall be the path of safety. It is a blessed thing to have such a King! When we have once yielded ourselves to Him, our care is ended and we are at peace.

So much about the need of nature.

II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, I have to speak upon THE ANSWER OF GRACE—“I will be your King.” Listen to this short sentence, you who are longing for a Master-Spirit to rule your spirits—“I will be your King.”

Notice *the condescension of this promise*. Here is a ruined Kingdom—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King.” Who will care to wear the battered crown of a desolate kingdom, whose metropolis is destroyed and whose land is sown with salt? The great Lord and King of Mercy says, “I will. Lost and ruined as you are, I will accept the monarchy of your soul. I will be your King. You have had many lords who have had dominion over you, yet I will be your King. And I know those pretenders are yet alive and seek to set up their old claims over you and to get the mastery over you again. It is an uneasy

throne, yet I will occupy it. I will be your King. Besides this, you are very unruly subjects. In this Kingdom there are many thoughts, forgings and lusting that are in rebellion against Me, yet I will be your King. Many disloyal subjects are there within My town of Mansoul, yet I will be the Prince of it and drive out all the followers of Diabolus. Enemies are threatening on the right hand and on the left, and whoever becomes king must carry on a long and serious war, yet I will take this crown of thorns and wear it—I will be your King.” Is not this wonderful condescension on God’s part? Do not you, Beloved, feel ready to spring up and say, “Blessed Lord, if You will be our King, we will gladly be Your subjects, rejoicing that we may have such a King as You”?

Notice next, *how suitable and satisfactory such a King as this is to be!* If a man must have a king and yet can have his choice as to which king shall be his, it is well for him to have the One whom Wisdom, itself, would select, for there is none to equal Him! He is a King who is able to subdue the whole territory of our nature through His Almighty power by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. O blessed King, we are glad to have You to rule over us and to have our stubborn and rebellious passions brought under the power of Your Grace! This gracious King is in every way worthy to rule over us. Think, Beloved, what your God is, what your Savior is. Ought He not to be King over you? Yes, verily, then let us set Him up on a glorious high throne and let us rejoice that we can bow down before One whom it is an honor to obey! What wisdom He has to govern us aright! Fools should not be kings, but Infinite Wisdom is fully qualified to rule us altogether! Then, what perfect goodness there is in the Lord Jesus Christ! What unspeakable goodness in the Divine Father and in the ever-blessed Spirit! Happy are the people whose King is the Lord of Hosts! Besides, think what love He has shown to His subjects! Behold His head, His hands, His feet! Look upon the spear-mark in His side, for it was by those wounds that He bought us! Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to be crowned as our King and to receive the loyal homage of our hearts—

***“Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death.
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is Your exalted name!
The glories of Your heavenly state
Let the whole earth proclaim.”***

So, it is a proof of Infinite Condescension, on God’s part, for Him to say, “I will be your King,” and we realize what a suitable King He is for us and how satisfactory it is for us to have such a blessed Master and Lord!

Then, Brothers and Sisters, how *unspeakably consoling* it is that the Lord should be our King! I say, “consoling,” for who could feel unsafe or uneasy when Jehovah becomes his King? If the Eternal and Invincible God becomes our King, what foe can harm us? His shield can protect us from all the arrows that fly by night or by day! How consolatory it is for

us to submit to such a God—no longer to stand up in opposition to Him, but to lie down at His feet as His loyal subjects—no longer to have a will and a way of our own, but to submit unreservedly to the will of God, to lie passive in His hands and let Him be our King! Have you ever experienced this kind of consolation in a time of deep affliction or bereavement? You have lost the delight of your heart, the joy of your eyes, the dearest one you ever had—and you have somewhat rebelled. In that rebellion has been the very bitterness of your grief, but you have said, “The Lord has done it. He is my King, so He has the right to do with me just as He wills.” That is the great source of your consolation—you never get relief from the anguish of your spirit till you see Jesus as your crowned King and only Lord and lay your hand upon your mouth and, in the silence of your soul say, ‘It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.’”

And, oftentimes, this same precious Truth has consoled you when you have been in great difficulties and embarrassments. I often sing to my Lord those lines by F. T. Faber—

***“When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.
And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And patiently waits on Thee.”***

I do not know a stronger force in all the world than utter helplessness—for that is the end of all care. Many and many a time I have tried till my head has ached, to work out a problem in Church government, but have not discovered the solution—I could not see any way out of it. So I have just done as a schoolboy would who shuts up the two parts of his slate and puts it on the shelf. I have said to myself, “I will never have anything more to do with the matter, but will leave it for the Lord to solve.” And I have found that the proposition has been worked out for me in due time.

So, dear Friends, your strength is to sit still and to feel that you have a King who can settle all your difficulties! When the servant at the door is puzzled by the many questions that are put to her, she says, if she is wise, “I cannot answer you, but I will go and ask my master.” And when she has received the message from her master, she has no further trouble about the matter—she simply says, “I have told you what my master says. If you do not like it, I cannot help that, for I am only his messenger.” That is the way to end all controversy! A young man, or anyone else who has a number of questions put to him by various persons, will be wise if he says, “Well, I have searched my Bible and found what the King says about these points. If that does not satisfy you, I am sure I cannot. Your quarrel is no longer with me, but with my Master—you must settle the matter with Him.” This is a blessed consolation! It gives joy to the spirit to have God for your King. No man is so free, no man is

so happy as he who loyally bows before the King of kings—to serve God is to reign! He who has God for his King, is, himself, a king!

Further, think *how gloriously inspiring it is to have God as our King*. I should not like to be a soldier in the armies of certain kings whom I might mention. If I were in their service, I would try to run away as soon as I could, for I would feel ashamed to have anything to do with them. If you were a soldier in the army of some little, mean, beggarly tyrant, I think that you would be glad to leave your regimentals at home whenever you could. It is strange that any man could be found to fight for some of the miserable miscreants who have been found in the ranks of kings. But, with Alexander as leader, every Greek became a hero! He was so great a warrior that each man in his army felt that he was, himself, great. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ becomes our King, it is most inspiring to us, for He leads us on to fight with sin, to fight with selfishness, to overcome evil by love and to conquer hate by kindness! It is a grand thing to serve the King whose fights are all of that sort and to have Him for a King who never shirked a battle, but who was always to the front, the bravest of the brave!

It is grand, even, to unloose the laces of His shoes. To be trodden on by Him would be a high honor. To do anything, however little, in His cause, makes us feel ourselves elevated! My dear young Friend, if you have God in Christ Jesus to be your King, your life will be sublime! With Him for your Example, with His Grace to lead you on, you shall continually rise higher and yet still higher until even your common life shall be made sublime! Oh, blessed, blessed, blessed, thrice blessed, is everyone to whom Jesus Christ is King and Lord! If we are linked with Him, we are ready either to live or to die!

III. Now turn with me to my second text, which you will find in the 44th Psalm, and the 4th verse—“You are my King, O God.” That is THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FAITH.

Let me just pause a moment and ask each one of you here, “Can you say that?” Can you say that, my Brother? Can you say that, my Sister? At the close of this morning’s service, we sang—

**“Tis done, the real transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine,”**

and it was noticed by careful observers that there were some persons in the congregation who did not sing that verse. They shut their mouths quite firmly while others around them were singing. I was glad that they were honest enough to do so and that they would not sing what they could not truthfully sing. At the same time, I was very sorry that their honesty compelled them to make such a silent confession of their lack of subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not your King, then? He is your Creator, but not your King? He is your Preserver, but not your King? He will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, yet He is not your King? He is the one and only Savior of the lost, yet He is not your King? Sadly, sorrowfully, let this thought eat into your spirit, “Then, I am a rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ.” For He is, lawfully and rightly, your

King—and you are a traitor, for your heart plots against Him! Remember, also, that if you die without accepting Him as your King, there is a text which I scarcely dare to quote, yet I must—and, as I do so, let it fall like fiery hail upon your spirit—“But those My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me.” God grant that none of you may ever know what that terrible verse means!

But now, having given you that word of warning, I ask you to think of the blessedness of having the Lord to be your King. If you look at this 44th Psalm, you will see that *when God is our King, we may confidently expect to enter upon our inheritance in the skies*—“You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them.” That is to say, each one of the tribes that entered Canaan under Joshua, obtained its proper portion in the Covenant-given land of promise. And we who are under the leadership of King Jesus, the true Joshua, the one and only Savior, shall win the heritage above—and each one of us shall stand in his lot at the end of the days, blessed forever and ever in our portion in the heavenly Canaan!

Notice, next, that, if the Lord is our King, *we may expect help in the time of trouble*. Read the whole of verse four—“You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” If ever you are in poverty. If ever you are in sickness. If ever you are under slander and reproach, if ever your spirit is depressed—if ever family trials affect you, if ever the clouds in your sky are heavy and the days are dark—you may go to your King and tell Him all and expect Him to “command deliverances” for you, for, if He is your King, He will see you through, bear you up and make what appears to be evil to work for your good and cause your troubles to prove to be the best of blessings to you! Who would not have such a King as this?

Next, notice that if the Lord is our King, *we should repose entirely in Him*, as the Psalmist says, “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” What a mercy it is to be able to put up your weapons away—to feel that there is Another who fights for you—to have done with care, worry, distress and just to feel that you have left everything with Jesus your King! If He cannot do it, then it must be left undone. Oh, it is blessed to feel that you have put the affairs of your soul into your King’s hands and that you have left the whole of them with Him, in the utmost confidence! Who would not have a King upon whom it is perfectly safe to rely?

More than this, he who has God for his King *knows that he is saved*. Read the 7th verse—“But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us.” He who acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Master knows that he is saved. His salvation is not a thing that is to be accomplished tomorrow—it is done now. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only in the last few moments of our life, but it is to be enjoyed now, for our King has covered us with the garments of salvation! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” even now. Our salvation is finished! Our great Messiah said so on the Cross and He spoke the Truth. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

And, last of all, he who takes Christ to be his King *has cause for great joy and rejoicing*. In the 8th verse, the Psalmist says, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever.” He who has Christ for his King need never be ashamed of his Monarch, or of his Monarch’s livery, or of his Monarch’s laws, or of his Monarch’s friends. He may, rather, adopt the high strain of boasting in his God and triumphing in Him all the day long.

So I end by repeating the question I asked earlier in my discourse—can each of you say, “You are my King, O God”? If not, what is your position with regard to Him? If you do not acknowledge Him as your King, you are a rebel! Yet, if you are ready to acknowledge that fact, you come under the act of amnesty which is available for regicides—for you rebels are just that, and even Deicides in having conspired to put the King of Glory to death by your sin—and you shall have even this high crime of God-killing blotted out from the King’s records! You shall be just as though you had never sinned at all if you are willing to take Christ to be your King and Savior! “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Will you have Him? I mean, the Son of God, who was also the Son of Mary. I mean the Man of Nazareth, who is also very God of very God. Trust to the Atonement which flowed from His wounds! Accept the power which God has given to Him, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to Him! God has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Only trust Him! Cast your souls upon Him! Yield yourselves to His sway! Repent of your sin! If you lay hold upon His perfect righteousness at once, the guilt of the past is gone and you shall be admitted into the full privileges appertaining to citizens of the heavenly Kingdom and subjects of the great King of kings! I trust that even before this service closes, some of you will say. “By the Grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I yield myself to Jesus, my Lord and King, to be His loyal subject and faithful servant forever and ever.” God grant it, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 44:1-8; PSALM 45.**

Psalm 44:1. *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old.* Now Israel was restored to Canaan and the Canaanite and Perizzite were driven out, that God’s chosen people might occupy their appointed place.

2, 3. *How You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them: how You did afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your Countenance, because You did favor them.* They did use their own arm and sword but, for all that, it was God who won the victory for them. It was His

might that made them brave and a consciousness of His gracious purpose that made them strong, so that they routed all their foes until, from Dan to Beersheba, the land was all their own.

4-6. *You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through You will we push down our enemies: through Your name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* See how the lesson from ancient history was turned to practical account in the Psalmist's own experience? "As our forefathers were delivered, not by their own bow or sword, but by the right hand of the Most High, so I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Brothers and Sisters, let us always labor to reproduce in ourselves, by God's Grace, the best experiences of His saints. Wherever we see the hand of the Lord displayed in others of His people, let us pray that the same hand may be manifested to us and in us.

7, 8. *But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah.*

Psalm 45:1. *My heart is overflowing with a good thing: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* You know what King is referred to here, it is He of whom the Psalmist said, in the 4th verse of the previous Psalm, "You are my King, O God." "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."

1, 2. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men.* The Psalmist writes as if he had been actually looking upon Him. Faith has a wonderful realizing power—and when the soul is deeply meditative, it seems to be full of eyes—"You are fairer than the children of men.' Though You are one of them, yet You are fairer than all the rest of them. There is a beauty about You, O Lord, that is not to be perceived in the brightest and best of the sons of Adam!"

2-5. *Grace is poured into Your lips: therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty, with Your Glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You.* There is no other conqueror who is equal to Christ, whether He smites with His sword, His foes who are near at hand, or shoots His arrows from His bow at those who are far away. Whether the Gospel is preached to us who have long heard it, or is proclaimed to the heathen in distant lands, it has the same Almighty Power in it to work the glorious purposes of God's Grace.

6, 7. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.* Note the connection here between God and Man—the very same Person who is addressed as God, is also spoken of as anointed by God above His fellows. God and yet Man are You, O blessed Jesus Christ!

You are very God of very God, yet just as truly Man, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and man!

8-10. *All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. King's daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider.* Listen, each one of you who are a part of this matchless bride of Christ, you who are part of her whom Christ has looked upon with infinite and eternal love—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider,"

10. *And incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house.* God's message to His people in the world, today, is just what it was when the Spirit bade Paul write to the Corinthians, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord almighty."

11. *So shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for He is your lord; and worship Him.* Our Savior is our King and He must be both loved and adored—"He is your Lord; and worship Him."

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.* When Christ's Church really has her Lord in the midst of her, and when she is strong in the power of His might, there will never be any lack of wealth for the carrying on of His cause—"Even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor."

13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within.* Other daughters are often far too glorious without, but that is the best beauty which is inward. "The King's daughter is all glorious within."

13-16. *Her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto You. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children.* We often see the hoary head laid low, and the ripe saint taken home to Heaven—but the ranks of Christ's retinue are not thereby thinned, for the sons shall stand in the place of their fathers. God be thanked for this cheering promise! "Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children,"

16, 17. *Whom You may make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever.*

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

*“Instead of your fathers shall be your children,
whom you may make princes in all the earth.”
Psalm 45:16.*

WERE you ever perplexed by being drawn with almost equal force in two directions? I have been so. There is a bond which reaches from the cemetery which holds me very fast and, therefore, I desired again, this morning, to have made use of the solemn visitation which so suddenly removed one of our friends from us. But this is the beginning of the week set apart for prayer for the young, and I have felt duty bound to take a part in the celebration and to assist to stir up Sunday school teachers and the members of the Church in general to pray for the blessing of God upon the rising generation.

Now these mourning friends expect a consoling word from me—and these children demand that I plead for them, also! I realized the scene in my study. What was I to do? Between two subjects I might arrive at none and that was not a desirable conclusion. I watched, looked and prayed, and at last I resolved to yield myself to *both* influences, and I have as nearly as possible done so by selecting this text—“Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.”

The text begins with, “*Instead.*” It is a sad word. I do not enjoy the sound of it. “*In stead*”—well, then, we must expect to lose some if others are to come in their stead. Alas, these funerals will be repeated, new graves must be dug! New friends will arise, but we dread the exchange. Would it not be more pleasant to keep the old workers? Would it not be safer to have the same comrades in the day of battle? What a grand Old Guard the veterans would make! “*Instead!*” It is a prophecy that some must go that others may come! That some must decay, that others may flourish! That some must die that others may succeed them!

Our trembling faith hardly likes the change here hinted at, for we are apt to think that those who are to stand “*instead*” will be very slow in coming. Where are we to find men to fill the vacant places? By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? Indeed, there are some saints so eminently blessed of God that we ask ourselves the question, “Who can stand in their stead?” Moses! May Moses live forever, for who but he can rule and guide so great a multitude and, with mingled meekness and authority, conduct so great an army through the wilderness? Who but he can have such power with God as to stand between Israel and the Divine anger?

We hear a whisper of Joshua as his successor, but good as Joshua may be, we can hardly endure to see the leadership change hands. And Elijah, too, that bold iron Prophet, that man of fire and thunder. “I, only,” said

he, “am left.” Shall we lose him? From where shall there come another? No, if it pleases the Lord, we would rather keep Elijah. We do not like that word, “instead,” even though we hear that there is an Elisha to follow Elijah. Too frequent is the fear that the one who comes *instead* will be a poor substitute and succeed only in name! After high hills come deep valleys, the second crop seldom equals the first and so great Grace and ability seldom continue long either in a family or in an office.

We know that Solomon died and was succeeded by Rehoboam—a wise man by a fool! We know, also, that Eli, good man and true priest of God, had most ungodly Phineas to succeed him. We would, therefore, keep Eli, if possible, and see Solomon forever on the throne. But it cannot be so and, therefore, it is of no use sitting down idly to fret over the future and lament the past! All our sorrow over changes caused by the mortality of our race will not alter it, for God has ordained that one must depart and another come in his place.

But, listen, I think that the word *instead*, if we listen to it with another ear, will sound out a note of gladness! If one falls, there is another to fill up the gap in our ranks. Comrades, is not this good news? If one laborer is taken from the vineyard, there is still a man in reserve to supply his place—does not this cheer you? We are encouraged by the belief that when the Lord supplants one set of servants by others He does not, after all, diminish the display of His love and Grace and power! No, rather He shows His independence of any one company of men and His power to use whom He pleases! After all, He puts the same spirit upon the newcomers and the power remains the same though the weapon wielded differs.

Sometimes the change is manifestly for good. Eli was followed by Samuel, a great improvement upon Eli, after all. We remember, too, that Moses, albeit there was never a man born of woman greater than he, was yet followed by a hero more fitted for the new phase of Israel’s history than Moses would have been. I can hardly conceive of Moses, sword in hand, slaying Canaanites at his advanced age! That was fitter work for Joshua and though, in some respects, Joshua was an inferior man to Moses, yet he was more suitable for his times and more adapted for the peculiar work which the armies of the living God had to do.

Courage, my Brothers and Sisters, our sons may be superior to ourselves! There is room for them and let us hope they will be. Our sons, at any rate, may be fitter for the work which they will have to do than we should be if our lives could be extended into another age. I doubt not we may say without personal vanity that we have been better men for *this* age than our grandchildren would have been had their lives been protracted into this present time—and so shall our children and grandchildren go beyond us, if the Lord enable them—in fulfilling the growing demands of the ripening ages. God knows best and when He puts one man instead of another, I have no doubt that His infinite wisdom perceives that there is abundant cause for the change.

For life to display fresh developments instead of the old is the law both of nature and of Grace—whether we are glad or sad, it must be so. Therefore let us accept the Divine arrangement and act accordingly. To help us

in this matter, let us consider the promise before us—“Instead of your fathers shall be your children.” This may be viewed in a light which will reveal *its gracious recompense*. Secondly, we shall regard *its eminent fulfillment*. Thirdly, we shall look at *its happy encouragement*, for it has a very bright side. And fourthly, we shall remember *its practical requirements*. Into this last we shall throw our strength, in the hope that, by the Divine blessing, holy effort for the coming generation may be awakened.

I. First, in the promise of our text let us observe ITS GRACIOUS RECOMPENSE. I read you the Psalm just now. Now, in this sweet song you noticed that the bride is commanded to forget her own people and her father’s house. Very naturally this would be painful to her and, therefore, the rest of the Psalm is occupied with cheering her by a sight of the recompenses which she may expect. Instead of your fathers, whom you, O bride of Christ are to forget and to forsake, shall be your children, equally dear to you, who shall occupy that place in your heart which has been left empty by your forgetting your father’s house.

Do you not see that her husband’s heart is so full of love to her that while he takes her right away from old connections and makes it a condition of his desiring her beauty, that all these shall be forgotten? Yet he assures her that new associations shall be formed which shall yield more than equal solace to her. “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.” The practical lesson is this—many Christians, when they are converted to God, are members of irreligious families—and from the moment of their conversion they cease to have any real heart-fellowship with their relatives, who in many cases treat them unkindly and give them the cold shoulder or worse.

Dwelling with them after the flesh, they have to come out from among them after the Spirit and be separate, and no longer touch the unclean thing. However kindly disposed they may be, and Grace will make them more so, and induce in them a double affection to their kin, yet they feel that the possession of Grace by them and the non-possession of it by their friends, sets a great gulf between them. Let them not lament nor sigh, though their foes should be the men of their own household, for there are abundant recompenses available. You are to be introduced, my Friend, into another household and you are there to form other acquaintances and other intimate connections, for to you shall be fulfilled the promise of the Savior, “No man has left father or mother or children that shall not receive in this life a hundredfold, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

Do not look back to those evil companionships and ensnaring loves! Forget the fleshpots of Egypt and the associations of Goshen. Let them go, they will do you no good! And now throw yourself into the work of Christ. In the converts whom you shall lead to Jesus, in the desponding saints whom you shall cheer, in the disciples whom you shall instruct and in the brotherhood of which you shall become a member—you will find ample room for all the affections of your soul, till you shall be able to say of the Church of God—

***“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains,***

***There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

The law of recompense works, also, in another quarter and comes in to compensate for the separations caused by death. As the fathers die, one after another, those of like years feel that they are left almost alone. To them, then, shall it be true, “instead of your fathers shall be your children.” Do not give way to idle regrets and say, “All who joined the Church with me are gone, all those who were the companions of my manhood are now taken away. I am left alone and the cause is weakened.” No, my Brothers and Sisters, keep your hearts young and make yourselves indispensable to the young people around you! The old soldier must let his heart go out towards the recruits and he must make friends of the young warriors. Instead of lamenting that you are lonely, as I have known some do, and looking down upon everything that is of the present time as though it could not possibly be so good as in your own days, throw yourself into the present, project yourself into the future and love the children for the fathers’ sake!

I know when I was much younger than I am now, I used to think the men in office were such marvelous saints, but then I did not mix with them, I only looked up to them from a distance. At Prayer Meetings and communions I thought there never were such excellent people in the world as those pillars of the Church. Somebody said to me the other day that he did not meet with such good old men now as we used to know in our youth, and I told him that the men were quite as good, but we were in among them and, therefore, had less of the superstitious awe of our youth. And I added that I was, myself, surprised to find them as good as they now are since our view of them is so much nearer and so much more daring.

No Prophet has honor in his own country, nor among men of his own age! Distance lends enchantment in many cases. We have as good men among us now as ever lived, but we know more about them than of those who have departed, and we criticize them more severely. We are, none of us, able to fully compare the past generations with this present one, because we were not in those generations as we are in this. Men at a great distance may appear to be absolutely perfect, but when we get close to them, spots are manifest and our judgement changes. Never let us fall into that silly state of mind in which we say, “the dear good men are all gone. The faithful are all dead.” There are dear good men still alive and there are more coming!

Do not let us fear that the Almighty will run short of servants! Let us not dream that He with whom is the residue of the Spirit will allow His cause to droop for lack of qualified ministers, elders, deacons, or other workers. On the contrary, let us say, “Bless the Lord, whose mercy endures forever!” We have learned that instead of the fathers shall be the children. And we will take as much delight in the young saints who are growing up as in former years we took in those mature, judicious, well-instructed saints whom the Lord, our heavenly Father, has taken Home. Let this suffice to show that the text promises a recompense!

II. Secondly, let us view our text historically in ITS EMINENT FULFILLMENT. Brothers and Sisters, as long as God has had a people in the world there have been changes. In God's garden as in ours, plants of this year have been succeeded by those of the next. "As the days of a tree are the days of My people, says the Lord." As soon as the leaf is formed in the spring, if you watch it, there is a new leaf beneath it for the next spring. This year's leaf opened gradually, grew, came to perfection and then it began to decay. And there is now on the branch a new leaf-bud which is pushing it off and that is what our sons are doing with us. We must drop off from the tree of mortal existence and it is right we should—and we need not complain—for God has provided some better things for us.

It has been the law in the world and the law in the Church that one set of laborers should follow the other—and they have done so without fail. It is with the Church as with the sea—each wave dies, but there is another wave behind it. Sometimes the wave appears to retreat rather than advance, but frequently the next wave rolls up gloriously. So must it always be and we must not despair that the waves die, for the sea does not die and the tide is still advancing. You may, perhaps, have seen an olive tree in growth. I have studied it carefully, for it has the charm of Gethsemane about it. It looks like an embodiment of sorrow and fruitfulness.

An olive is twisted like a thousand snakes. It seems as if in an agony, yet it has a cheerfulness about it, too, for when the tree grows old the young shoots spring up from its roots, keeping it always young. I have no doubt it is to this that the Psalmist refers when he says, "Your children round your table like olive plants." The shoots spring up around the old olive and so it lives again! And when these die, fresh shoots appear and the tree still brings forth fruit in old age! The Church of God never dies, for when one, after another, we finish our course, others spring out of the ever-living root and so the blessed succession of Grace is kept up in the world.

Now, look back a moment. That was a grand age when Patriarchs walked through the earth, when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob towered above the sons of men. They died and the Church was in captivity in Egypt, downtrodden and afflicted, yet were there among them those who sighed and cried unto the Lord and, therefore, He looked down upon the tribes with pitying eyes. Then there came great rulers like Moses and Joshua to deliver the chosen Seed—and when these departed the Judges were raised up! Time would fail us to tell of Gideon, Barak and Samson, who each one, in his turn, delivered Israel.

When the judges passed away, God exalted the man after his own heart to lead His people and the kings ruled in righteousness. When these turned aside, the light of Israel was not quenched, for the Prophets bore witness and when the lamp of Prophecy burned dim, there were confessors who, all through the period between the Old and the New Testament, still remained faithful to the commands of God. Then blazed forth the light of our Lord Jesus and His Apostles! And before the last Apostle had been taken away, the martyr flames lit up the world. When persecution had ceased and heathenism had conquered Christianity by debasing her doc-

trines, the Reformers shone out with their gracious brilliance and these have been succeeded constantly by Evangelists, one after the other, who have moved the people and maintained, through the Divine Spirit, the Gospel testimony to this day.

Brethren, I believe that the history of the Church in modern times is like that of olden times. The Apostles were our Patriarchs, the Reformers were our Moses and Joshua and the great preachers since have been as judges! And now we look for the King, Himself, even He that shall sit upon the throne of David and shall reign forever and ever! View history as you will, there is a continuity in it. In the darkest times there has shone forth some bright, particular star, yes, and in secret places, in holy hearts and gracious families there has remained more of the Divine life and light than the pages of historians have recorded.

There has always been a remnant according to the election of Grace. When the Church moaned and said, "God has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me. The fathers, where are they?" God had not forsaken her—He had kept for Himself His thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. And there has arisen a leader just in the nick of time to seize the banner and to rally the wavering host, for as God lives and the Spirit still abides in the Church, and Jesus is with us always, even to the world's end, the succession of Grace shall never cease! Glory be to the name of the Most High!

III. Thirdly, having seen, concerning our text, its eminent fulfillment, let us for a second or so view it in ITS HAPPY ENCOURAGEMENT. Brothers and Sisters, God's promise is the ultimate hope of the Christian and of the Church at large, and here we have it—"Instead of your fathers *shall be* your children." Lean on the Divine *shall*, for it is as sure as the Everlasting Covenant. As you have to leave the Ark of the Lord behind you and you can no longer carry it upon your shoulder, God will provide successors. "Jehovahjireh, the Lord Will Provide."

You have believed that word in reference to your family and your own livelihood—believe it in reference to God's family and His cause. God has provided, already, for Himself a Lamb for His Passover—you may depend upon it He will provide what is a vastly smaller thing—a line of men who shall ever keep that Passover Lamb before the eyes of His people! We are sure, O Lord, that You will do as You have said—

***"Fathers to sons shall teach Your name,
And children learn Your ways;
Ages to come Your truth proclaim,
And nations sound Your praise."***

Do not give way to distrust about the present or the future, for Jesus lives and walks among the golden candlesticks, trimming all the lamps and shining through them! The stars are in His right hand, by Him kindled and by Him renewed with immortal flame. You have the Spirit of God still dwelling in the Church to call whomever Jesus wills and to anoint them with holy oil that they may go forth in the Master's name.

My Brethren, to have doubt about this would be unpardonable because we are coming towards an epoch where all the promises declare a victory. Do they not all travail with a glorious day of Grace? We are bound to exert

ourselves for the spread of the Gospel, for we know that Christ must have the pre-eminence everywhere. "As truly as I live, says the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the Glory of the Lord." We have received the Word from God's mouth, "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." We are not taking a leap into the dark! We are not "shooting Niagara"—we are marching into light—the day has broken, the shadows are fleeing, the brightness is increasing, the noontide is at hand and, perhaps, before this century ends, we may have passed into the supreme brilliance of that millennial period in which Christ Jesus shall reign gloriously among His ancients!

If He bids us wait and wait we may, we would cheerfully march on, for our faces are to the sunrise and every hour brings Glory nearer. At any rate, in such an hour as we think not, behold, the Bridegroom comes! And when He comes our victory has come with Him. Let us not yield to despondency. If the line of battle wavers, or our ranks are broken by the enemy, remember the reserves, the grand reserves which our Captain is holding back! And remember the King, Himself, is coming who never fights but to conquer! He, whose Presence means triumph, is on His way! Mark the signal and "Hold the fort, for He is coming," whose coming shall close your warfare and commence your triumph!

IV. I must now come to view the text, as to ITS PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS. "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." Well then, *if we stand instead of our fathers, what manner of persons ought we to be?* I will not call to mind your immediate sires, though it were no dishonor to many of you if I did so. I will not recount the family ancestry with which God has blessed us. No imperial blood is in our veins nor blue blood of nobility. Descended from the King of kings, each saint possesses a nobler pedigree than earthly princes! To be the child of godly parents is one of the greatest honors in the world.

But I ask you to look back to your *spiritual* ancestry, your fathers after the spirit, your predecessors in the faith of the Lord Jesus. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what manner of people ought we to be, who as Christian men and women have succeeded the heritage of martyrs? Who have taken up a cause pleaded by Apostolic lips? Who have followed upon men of whom the world was not worthy? Our ancestors were made what they were by the Grace of God and the Church of God may well glorify God in them! Their sufferings and heroic fortitude, their labors and their dauntless courage have left us under solemn obligations. Shall we be coward sons of heroic sires? Shall we be sluggards and slovenly in a work which they carried out so well?

They built with gold, silver and precious stones—shall we degrade their work by heaping thereon wood, hay and stubble? I charge you, Brethren, take good heed unto your ways by the remembrance of where you came. Thus would I speak to all Believers, for the Church is one and indivisible. Each tribe of the one Seed has its own history and I leave my Brethren of various denominations to speak to their own. I will now address myself specially to those who are known as Baptists. As for us, the baptized followers of Christ, our ancestry as a body of Christian men is not to be de-

spised. Albeit that the name of Anabaptist has been made the football of reproach because it was wrongfully associated with fanatical opinions, we may rest assured that the more history is understood, the more apparent will it be that those who were the most humiliated were thus treated because they were before their times. They bore the brunt of battle because they led the way!

God forbid that I should induce you to glory in them and so to wear borrowed laurels! Of all pride, I think that to be the most idle which hides its own nakedness beneath the tattered banners of ancestry. I do but dwell for a moment upon our past history to excite you to yet more earnest deeds! Prove yourselves to be these men's sons by doing their deeds! Otherwise you are bastards and not sons. In every effort for civil and religious liberty, our fathers were at the front! In the utterance of those Divine Truths of God which have made tyrants and priests quake for fear, they have been among the boldest! Our fathers, for holding to Baptism as the Lord ordained it, suffered at the hands of men who knew no mercy. Their beliefs were misrepresented and themselves regarded as monsters rather than men.

In this country they were, in the matter of time, both first and last at the stake! On this very spot where you now sit, long before there were any Lutherans or Calvinists, we read that, "three Anabaptists were burnt at the Butts at Newington." Our sires were Protestants before the Protestants! They were part of a long line of men who stood firm when the mass of the Church turned this way and that! They were, in fact, the most bold and thoroughgoing of all the adherents of the Apostolic and Scriptural Church and, therefore, they were persecuted by prelates and abhorred by priests. When I hear Ritualists talking of their ancient Church, I blush to think that Englishmen should claim kinship with the Roman Antichrist, whose yoke our fathers tore from off their necks!

The pedigree of every Anglican priest must, of necessity, have flowed through the Dead Sea of Popery. Our limpid streamlet runs not through that slough of filthiness, but comes down pure from earliest ages! Our doctrines and ordinances remain as they were delivered unto us by our Lord! Neither have we desired to add the traditions of men to them. "Hold fast, therefore, your confidence which has great recompense of reward." Do not give up your principles, my Brothers and Sisters, for the Church and the world will need them. Nobody can fight the battle against Sacramentarianism like the man who puts the ordinances in their Scriptural position as belonging to Believers and to Believers only. As long as Baptism is given to those who are unregenerate, the figment of baptismal regeneration will find a foothold!

We must unflinchingly keep to our testimony that religion is a *personal* thing and that only those who have faith in Jesus can partake in the privileges of His House. Birthright membership and vows of sponsors must, alike, be the subjects of our protest. By your sires who were drowned by the hundreds for refusing homage to a superstitious rite, men who neither feared Luther nor the Pope, and were hated of all men and even by Reformers because they occupied a standpoint still bolder, clearer, and more

advanced than all others, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, hold fast your Christian liberty and never cease to testify to all the Truth which God has taught you!

May our Brothers and Sisters who differ from us, come to us in this matter, for we cannot go to them—we are spellbound by the plain teaching of Scripture and dare not move so much as a hair's breadth. May the Lord yet give to all His saints to know the "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." If we are instead of our fathers, let us endeavor to continue their testimony undiminished in force and untarnished in clearness. Our Brethren of other denominations must bear their testimony to what truth they know and we are the last to deny them this liberty or to despise their cooperation. But, after all, our own duty is that which we must look to—that we may be found faithful "in that day."

The next practical point is this—*if others are to come instead of us, what are we doing for them?* Looking at ourselves as occupying the *present* time, how far are we good links between the present and the future? Others are to come instead of us—are we taking care as much as lies in us that those who come in the place of us shall be fit men to maintain the interests of God's Truth? Oh, Brethren, let us, as a Church, love the young! Let us labor, by God's Grace, to gather in a multitude of young converts! Let us pray God to bless our schools of every sort and the teaching among the rising youth, as far as that teaching is according to His mind and will! A Church which does not believe in the conversion of children, a Church that, in fact, scarcely believes in the conversion of *anybody*, is likely to die out! But a Church that lives for converts, even as parents live for their children, will be the joyous mother of a numerous progeny and become stronger and stronger.

I would to God we were all stirred up, not merely the teachers in the school, but all of us, to seek the conversion of the young and to aim by every means in our power to set God's Truth before them and lead them in His way. The Church ought to look to the tuition, the training and the culture of her children. All those who are brought to Christ in youth should be peculiarly watched over by us. It is said that Alexander gathered together his valiant army principally through training children from their very birth to the pursuits of war. He took little children as soon as they could run alone and placed them in a camp where their playthings were swords and their amusements were found among armor, spears and shields.

These born soldiers grew up knowing of nothing and caring for nothing but for Alexander, Macedon and fighting. Thus would we, by God's Grace, train our sons to live alone for Christ, His Truth and the souls whom He has redeemed. O that our sons might be men of war from their youth for Jesus! We need workers who have been in the vineyard from the first hour of the day—these are the backbone of successful Christian husbandry. There is necessity for far more attention to training and Christian edification than has, until this time, been usual—and the sooner this is felt, the better. We need men whose earliest feats of mental strength are shown in the gymnasium of the Church, young athletes trained for war, ready for

exploits and waiting to take their place in the Lord's battles at their fathers' side! We shall have a grand era when the Church learns to train her youth in holy enterprises and to employ them early for the Lord.

We know, too, that if we are to have good successors, our young friends must acquire a noble carriage from their childhood. That is a great word—"whom you may make princes in all the earth," and we must not be content to come short of it. What? Make our young converts princes? Yes, so says the text—and it is to be done, by God's Grace, if they are imbued with heavenly principles by the Holy Spirit—and if we set before them the example of our princely Savior and if each one of us shall try to make his own life right royal in dignity of purpose and aim.

The nobility of the text is of a rare sort—"princes in all the earth." Why, a man may be a prince in his own country, and have no power out of it—but a man of high Christian character is a prince in all the earth and we would have all our children such! That ancient schoolmaster, Jacob Treboniue, whenever he went into his school, was accustomed to take off his hat to his boys. When asked why he did so, he replied, "Because, Sir, I do not know what learned doctors and great men I may be teaching." He was quite right, for Martin Luther was one of the boys in his school and I would have taken off my hat to Martin Luther if I had been his schoolmaster! I, perhaps, would have chastised him as well, but taken off my hat, at any rate, out of respect to the man concealed in such a boy!

Who knows but among those whom we teach for Jesus, right royal spirits may be concealed? And it is ours to try, by the Grace of God, to train those choice spirits that they may be yet more noble. I have read a story which shows how poor, ragged children may be nobles. A minister was once called in to examine a school. The master said to him, "Question the boys all through the Catechism, for they know it thoroughly." "But," he said, "do you think they *understand* it?" The schoolmaster smiled and bowed his head in assent. "Try them, Sir." The minister asked one of the shoeless little boys to repeat the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," and he did so promptly. "Do you understand it, my lad?" said the minister.

"Yes, Sir, I think I do." "What does it mean?" "Well, Sir, last week I went over the mountain with some gentlemen to show them the way and I had no shoes. And the stones were so sharp that they made my feet bleed and the gentlemen gave me some money to buy a pair of shoes. When I went home I recollected that mother needed shoes, too, and so I gave her the money to buy a pair for herself." That lad was surely one of the princes in all the earth! And if children, by the Grace of God, are taught to do the same and if we, ourselves, shall each one cultivate a noble spirit of disinterested love, we shall give proof that the Holy Spirit has made us princes in all the earth!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, when I think of what the Church of God can do for her young converts when God helps her, I am amazed and full of delight! She is a mother whose sons are, each one, born in king's palaces and each one joint heirs with the Prince Emanuel! All her children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be their peace. To make a man a

prince you ought to give him not only a noble carriage but a rich endowment. ~~He will be a prince in his own right, and he will exercise the liberality which dwells in his heart. If I were addressing the young man who has lately been converted, I would say, "My Son, take this Bible in your hands. It is the best treasure and you will be a prince if you will make it your own by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Here is an endowment for you which shall make you richer than Croesus of old!~~

"Give to your children the Gospel, the glorious Doctrines of Grace. Give to them the Precepts of Christ and the blessed inspiring example which He has left behind Him. Give them a hallowed example in your own life and you have done infinitely more for them than if you had left them an annual income to be measured by millions. You shall make them princes in all the earth if, by God's Grace, you lead them to Jesus and He endows them with the Spirit of all Grace, so that they are rich in faith and zealous for good works."

I was so glad last Monday that I do not know whenever I have been as glad—there were two young sisters and two young brothers of this Church, two of them connected with this Sunday school, who were going abroad as missionaries! The Prince of Wales set out on his journey on Monday and so did two princes and two princesses out of this Church! I felt more confidence in sending my princes out, I am bound to say, than the Royal mother did in sending her son! Perhaps in the last day of account India will have more to say of our princes than even of our future king. It is a grand thing for a Church to have missionaries bred and born in her! We aspire to it and already the blessing is coming! Young men, young women in the Tabernacle, we are looking for more of you to be our princes in all the earth!

We have some in India, we have some in Spain, we have some in other lands who are preaching Christ, but we want to have princes in all the earth! I shall never be completely satisfied till, looking over a map, I shall recollect, "Brother So-and-So is *there*. Sister So-and-So is *there* turning the heathen to Christ and conquering the land for Jesus!" To the utmost bounds of the habitable globe may a princely offspring go forth from all the Churches of the living God! And may we take our full share of the blessed privilege!

The last word is this—looking to my young friends who may be present this morning, as I have already looked back to our sires and down upon ourselves, I say to them, *are you prepared to take your fathers' places?* It was with great joy that, at the cemetery last Friday, when I buried my beloved Brother, Henry Olney, I saw so many of our young men present. The hope of the Church—honorable men, too—I believe worthy to succeed their sires. I thanked God and I took courage as I came out of the cemetery gate as I saw many of them walking together in Christian brotherhood. Younger Brothers and Sisters, I trust you will be worthy of your sires, even if you do not excel them. I beseech you, since you are the Church's hope, do not disappoint us!

Young men and young women, consecrate yourselves early to God and let it be thorough, out-and-out consecration—you will never regret it.

There sits behind me a Brother who could tell you, if he were well enough, how his early days were happy in his Master's service and how, now, when he speaks with somewhat trembling accents, his heart rejoices in the Lord whom he has loved so long. Young men, follow in his footsteps! Young women, be you, also, fully devoted to Christ! By way of warning, I must add, let none of you suppose that because you come of pious parents you will be saved. Remember Abraham had for his son an Ishmael.

The line does not run according to blood and natural descent, but according to the will of God. Alas, there are some, too—I met one the other day, I feel the arrow in my heart at this moment—there are some who utterly forsake the Lord God of their fathers and turn aside to skepticism and sin. When a young man glories in infidelity and chooses for his companions loose fellows of the baser sort, his descent from saintly fathers will bring upon him sevenfold guilt. It were better for him that he had never been born, than leave an ancestry which God has blessed, to turn aside to be an enemy of the Cross of Christ!

Perhaps someone may say, "Ah, but Ishmael had not a good mother—she was Hagar, the bondwoman." My solemn answer is—Esau had the same mother as Jacob and was born at the same birth—yet Esau shared not in spiritual privileges as Jacob did. Trust not in your descent! Rely not upon a mother's tears or a father's piety. Seek the Lord, my sons, my daughters, or you will not taste His love. "My son, give Me your heart," says Jesus—not your *father's* heart, but *your own*! Yield yourselves as living sacrifices unto God and then, instead of the fathers, shall be the children! I stand among you like an officer in the midst of his regiment and, as one and another falls, I entreat you to close up your ranks!

My Brothers and Sisters, my Children! Do not permit the good cause at the Tabernacle to fail! You will not, I am sure. I am persuaded better things of you though I thus speak. Whoever dies, stand ready, you younger men, to take their places! As you get older, ask for more Grace to qualify you, not merely to be private members, but to be *leaders* among us, that to this Church may be fulfilled forevermore the promise of the text, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." God bless you, my beloved companions in the army of the Lord, young and old, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 45*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45, 422, 145.**

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THE TRUE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

NO. 424

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

***“Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children, whom You may
make princes in all the earth.”
Psalm 45:16.***

THE overwhelming national calamity announced to the citizens of London at midnight by the solemn tolling of the great bell of St. Paul's was unknown to most of us until we entered this sanctuary. It was, therefore, impossible to drape the building with the tokens of our sorrow. Nor can the preacher adapt his discourse to this most melancholy occasion. We have already prayed most earnestly for our beloved Sovereign, the widowed Queen of England—may the God of all consolation cheer her lonely heart with that Divine comfort which He alone can give.

With reverent sympathy we all mourn in her mourning and weep in her weeping. We are all bereaved in her bereavement. And we wish that by some means she could really know how intense and how universal is the grief of her loyal and loving subjects who view her in this hour more as their mother than as their Queen. To God again, we commend the Royal Widow and household. O Lord, be You a present help in this their time of need.

Excuse me, Brethren, if I find it imperative to address you from my selected text and to turn your mind to subjects of another kind. My text was suggested by certain events which have transpired in our own Church—the Lord having removed from us during the past week a valued elder of the Church. And having, at the same time given us a singular increase from the families of the Church, I thought the two events together were a notable exposition of this verse, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.”

The forty-fifth Psalm is a sort of marriage song, proclaiming the glories of Christ, the Husband and the beauties—the God-given beauties of the Church, His bride. The bride is described as attired in her garments of needlework and clothing of worked gold, attended by her royal maidens. While the King Himself is portrayed as being doubly fair, “fairer than the children of men,” having grace poured into His lips. According to the Eastern custom, at the marriage ceremony there were many good wishes expressed and the benediction was also pronounced upon the newly married pair—that they might become as fruitful as Isaac and Rebecca—hence the blessing of children in our text.

It was the custom with great kings, when they had many sons, to allot to them different parts of their dominions. The young princes were made *satraps* over certain provinces, hence the blessing pronounced, “whom you may make princes in all the earth.” A continuous One is promised and perennial honor is secured. Christ is to be the spiritual parent of many sons—“He shall see His seed”—these sons are to be illustrious and partake in the kingdom of their Divine Lord, for “He shall bring many sons unto glory.”

I shall try this morning, first of all, to expound the text in *its different import in different periods of the Church history*. Then endeavor to *interpret it by our present experience*. And then, thirdly, *make an inquiry as to how far in our midst we have seen it proved*, that “instead of Your fathers shall be Your children.”

I. First of all then, we are to interpret the text in the light of THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PAST. And we think we can bring out different shades of meaning while interpreting the promise by its fulfillment. For we may rest assured that is the safest way of reading promise and prophecy in the light of actual events.

First, let us take our stand at the end of Old Testament history just where the New Testament begins. The Church stands with her records in her hands. She turns to the first page and reads of the proto-martyr Abel. In following years she views the glittering names of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. Onward to Moses and Aaron. Farther on still to the time of her judges, her kings, her Prophets until she sees the roll closed by the failing hand of Malachi.

She drops a tear and she cries, “Alas, the book is closed! The fathers, where are they? The Elijahs have mounted in their fiery chariots to Heaven and the Elishas have gone down to their tombs.” “Not so,” says Christ, her Husband, “no, not so, Beloved. Your roll of children has not ended. The glories of your descendants have not yet come to their close.” “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.”

John the Baptist rises up instead of Elijah and even excels him, for among them that had been born of women there was not a greater than John the Baptist. Then came her Husband Himself, even Jesus, who was better than many sons since He gathered up in His own Person all the perfections of those mighty men who had been His types before. But it seemed as if the Lord would supply in New Testament history the vacuum which was caused by the departure of Old Testament saints. Have we in the Old Testament a far-seeing Ezekiel who can read the rolls of the future by the river Chebar? Ah, then we shall have a John, who in the gloomy Isle of Patmos shall behold bright revelations of God.

Have we a clear outspoken practical Daniel who loves Truth and righteousness? We shall have a James who shall expound the Law of faith which works, which proves its truthfulness by holiness. Have we an elo-

quent Elijah, who pours forth from his lips streams of evangelical doctrine, speaking more of Christ than all the rest? Lo, Paul the Apostle, “not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles,” takes his place. Have we in the Old Testament a young Josiah who purged the temple and had his heart perfect towards God? So have we in our history a young Timothy whose heart is right before his God.

Have we a bold and dashing Haggai, who in rough strains reproves the people for their sins? So have we a Peter, who, nothing daunted, lays to the charge of an immense multitude the murder of Jesus, the Son of David. No, even in women we have no failure. For if under the Old Testament dispensation, they sang of Sarah, the mother of the faithful, what shall we say of Mary? “Blessed among women shall she be; from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed.” If they had their Rahab, as a trophy of grace Divine, we have that woman which was a sinner.

And if they had their Deborahs, mothers in Israel, we have Lydia and Dorcas and Priscilla and of honorable women not a few. Stephen is not inferior to Abel nor is Philip less in honor than Nathan. The glorious company of the Apostles is not a whit behind the goodly fellowship of the Apostles. We say that our New Testament host of heroes is superior to that of the past and that most manifestly God did make the children of His Church princes in all the earth. Right royally in faith did they divide the nations and sway the specters of kingdoms though in the world’s eye they were like their Master, “despised and rejected of men.” So, it seems to me, we may read this text.

We proceed a little further in history to the time when, after Christ had ascended on high, His disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. And as they went they sought out, first of all, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But both Providence and grace conspired to compel them to preach the Word to the Gentiles also that they might be saved. More than this, the Jews, moved with anger, opposed the Truth. And on a certain memorable occasion one of the Apostles said to them, “Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles”—a blessed turning for you and for me!

Now I think I see the Church weeping again and again. “Alas,” she says, “the fathers have rejected me. The Pharisees in their self-righteousness, the Sadducees in their licentiousness, the Herodians in their worldliness, the mass of the people in their superstition have despised and rejected the Truth of Christ my Lord. Alas,” says she, “that the olive has been despoiled of her boughs! What shall I do? The natural branches have been lopped away till the stem stands bare and leafless.” Her Master appears to her and comfortably repeats His assurance, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.”

“Lo,” says He, “I have given you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” I think I see her tender and triumphant Husband pointing with joyous finger to the differ-

ent countries that should afterwards receive the Truth—glancing over Alpine ranges to the valleys of Switzerland and beyond the pillars of Hercules to these Isles of the Sea in which His name has so long been honored—and then expanding His hands as though He would enclasp the whole, saying to her, “They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Me. My enemies shall lick the dust. All kings shall bow down before Me. All generations shall call Me blessed. Have I taken from you Palestine? Lo, I have given you all the nations of men that are upon the face of the earth.

“Shall the Hebrews discard Me? Lo, I have given you ten thousand times ten thousand—so many as the stars of Heaven for number—who shall be the spiritual seed of Abraham who was the father of the faithful.” Verily Christ has fulfilled this promise to His Church and is fulfilling it at this very day. Ethiopia stretches out her hands in prayer. Europe rejoices in His name. Asia yields her converts and America adores His name. We are hoping that the Jew will be ingathered with the fullness of the Gentile. But, meanwhile, the children are taking the place of the fathers and we who were the children of the desolate and of the barren woman are now far more in number than those who were the children of “the married wife.”

I shall beg you to run your eye through history a little further to the time when the Apostles, one by one, yielded up their ministry and their immediate successors followed them to their tombs. It must have been a day of great lamentation to the Church of Christ, when at last, John, the last of the twelve stars, gave forth no more light on earth but was translated to God in another firmament—in Heaven above. We think we hear the news, as it spreads through all the churches that were scattered about Asia, Bithynia and Cappadocia, Africa, Spain, Italy, Gaul and perhaps Britain itself—“John is dead!”

The last spark of the Apostolic fire has died out. The last of the live coals that glowed with the miraculous flame of Apostolic fire has been taken with the golden tongs from off the altar of earth and removed by seraphic wings to blaze upon the golden altar in Heaven. Then there followed grievous martyrdoms and Polycarp and Ignatius and men of that order who had been the companions of the Apostles. And some of whom may even have seen our Lord departed from among the sons of men.

The lions’ jaws were busy grinding the bones of the confessors. The dungeons were swollen with the captive martyrs of Christ. The blood of the Church flowed in one perpetual stream of crimson and the Church might have wept and said “Alas, alas! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! You have barked my fig tree. You have cut down my cedar. You have laid desolate my vineyards and broken down my hedges. You have taken away the heroes from the battle and the standard-bearers from the strife. My young men have fallen by the sword and their fathers have gone into captivity. What shall the Church do?”

She was like Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they were not. She said as she saw her new converts, call them Benoni. Even those that were born of her in what she thought to be her expiring pangs she named, "Sons of sorrow." But her Lord said concerning who were born unto her, "Call them Benjamin, the sons of My right hand." For in the place of the fathers that have perished, the children shall rise up. And they did so. And there was a long succession of men as bold to dare, as clear to testify and as holy to live as those who had departed to their God.

We do not believe in that fiction of Apostolic succession by the laying on of hands of men. But we do believe in that glorious Truth of Apostolic succession—the laying on of the hands of *God*, when He Himself calls out one by one from the midst of mankind—men who shall grasp the standard when the standard-bearer falls—men who shall bear the great two-edged sword and fight God's battles when those who fought them before have gone down to their graves triumphant. The Lord supplied the lack of His Church at every hour. To use that sentence which has been worn long but is never threadbare—the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. And so, instead of your fathers, your children arise to praise their God.

Further down in history there came the time of the Church's most awful dearth. She had sinned. Led by the princely hand of Constantine to the altar of infamous adultery, she prostituted herself to a connection with the State and committed fornication with the kings of the earth. From that day forth the Spirit of God forsook her and in the brightness of His splendor He shone not upon her. Her vigor died when the imperial hand was laid upon her. Whatever a royal hand may do to diseased men—it always brings the king's evil upon the Church.

No ills of poverty or persecution can equal the injurious effects of State alliance upon the Church of God. Her freedom is evaporated, her discipline becomes a pretense, her faults cannot be remedied, her progress in reformation is prohibited, her glory is departed. The Christian Church when linked with the Roman power, soon declined till Truth became dim and holiness was stained. Then the much fine gold was changed. Then the light of her sun was as the light of eventide, if not as the darkness of midnight itself. And she stood—clouds and darkness being round about her—and sorrow her portion.

By the lapse of years the good died and only the evil lived. The curse of the State had engendered priestcraft, popedom—and what if I say Hell-dom?—in all lands. The Church stood and wept and she said, "Chrysostom, where is he? His golden mouth is silent. Augustine, where is he? We can no more tell of the Gospel of the Grace of God. The angelic doctor has departed. Athanasius, where is he?—that rock in the midst of the billows?" And she wept, for she seemed to have no men left—no eye pitied and no arm helped her.

But lo, her God spoke and said, “instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.” And two imperial spirits, chief among the sons of men, sprung up—Luther and Calvin—worthy to stand side-by-side with any fathers that even the Old Testament or Apostolic times could produce. They had their bright compeers who stood firmly with them and shone like a divine constellation in the midst of the dark night of popery. God seemed to say to the Church, “I will give you back Apostles. I will give you back your Prophets. I will send to you a new host of warriors. There shall be giants in those days and you shall make them princes in all the earth.”

Then, to come later and end our historical review—there came a period when the Church had again, a second time, sold herself to the State—when she who should be the Lord’s chaste virgin became once more the mistress and harlot of kings. She wore her bondage readily enough until, happily for her, the princes made her yoke heavy and her life bitter. Then came a sifting season when the chaff and the wheat could no more abide together, when the lovers of God and His Truth must break their alliance with death and their covenant with Hell.

There rose up in the midst of the Church a company of men who would not endure to have the Word of God altered and fashioned by princes—who saw that God’s Truth was not to be molded like a nose of wax by committee-men, or bishops, or judges. They came forth from the mass to join those few who like the few in Sardis had not defiled their garments. The Church wept and mourned, for she said, “Wycliffe has departed. The mighty Lollards, those shakers of the nation, have gone their way. The fathers have departed.” But God said to her, “instead of your fathers shall be your children.”

And up rose such men as Bunyan, Charnock, Howe, Goodwin, Owen, Manton, Caryl and multitudes more of like gigantic mind. That mighty host whose names are two thousand who left the harlot church and came out from her impurities were the children who worthily made up for the apostasy of the fathers. These mighty two thousand men are heroes, whose names are fit to match with Martin Luther and with Calvin, yes, and I dare to say it, with any of the martyrs who have gone before. They stood alone.

And now it seems to me at this day, when any say to us, “You, as a denomination, what great names can you mention? What fathers can you speak of?” We may reply, “More than any other under Heaven, for we are the old Apostolic Church that has never bowed to the yoke of princes yet. We, known among men in all ages by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards and Anabaptists have always contended for the purity of the Church and her distinctness and separation from human government.

“Our fathers were men accustomed to hardships and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the Apostles—not through the filth of Rome, not by the manipulations of Prelates—but by the Divine life, the Spirit’s anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering and of the Father in Truth.” But where shall I wander? I go upon a needless errand—for what are our fathers to us unless we prove ourselves their worthy sons? Let us forego our pedigree and see if we have present grace by which to prove the succession of which we boast.

Neander has said “There is a future for you Baptists.” Let us not be slow to ensure it! I say, let us instead of doing as many will do during the next year, instead of boasting descent from the two thousand who came out on Bartholomew’s Day, let us pray that we may be able to glory more in our children than in our fathers. Let us say, “No, we will not think of the past to be proud of it. But we will think of the present to labor for it that we may show to the world that the old life is not extinct. That ours is not a roll of wonders which have all been completed and finished—but it contains the prophecy of wonders yet to come—wherein God shall show forth His mighty acts unto the sons of men.”

May it be so in all the Churches of Christ! May it be abundantly so in our own Church and denomination to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. We have to interpret our text, secondly, in its APPLICATION TO OUR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE PRESENT TIME. “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.”

It seems clear enough from the text, as well as from observation, that *the fathers must be taken from us*. Yes, it is the delight of a pastor to look upon the reverend heads of those who have served the Church—some of them for more than half a century with integrity, with uprightness and with success. But they must leave us. The hands of affection cannot retain them among us, however firmly they may make the grasp. Our earnest prayers cannot immortalize them in the land of mortality and our greatest kindness cannot preserve their bodies from moldering back to their native dust in the land of decay.

The fathers *must* go—as we look upon their snow-white heads, often the painful reflection crosses our mind—“We cannot expect to have them with us long. David must sleep with his fathers. Hezekiah, though his life is lengthened for awhile, must at last yield to the inexorable decree, for ‘there is no discharge in this war.’ ”

Now, the loss of the fathers must be to the Church always painful for we lose *the maturity of their judgment*. When, having passed through many difficulties they begin to see their way through the ordinary trials of life. When, having tested and proved many things they have come to hold fast that which is good and have become meet to be instructors of babes and

guides of those that wander—just then, the eye that sees so clearly is filmed, the hand which could point so plainly is paralyzed and the foot which so firmly in the way of wisdom totters—and the man falls to his last home.

We lose besides the maturity of their judgment, their blessed *living testimony* just when they had begun to tell us that for threescore years and ten they had found God's Word to be faithful and true. Just when they could give their *viva voce* testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of an immutable God, their lips are silenced. They bequeath to us the legacy of their living example and their dying witness—but we have them not alive among us as pillars in the house of our God and witnesses for the faith.

And just, too, when we thought that their *holy efforts* were almost necessary to the Church's success, it usually happens that then they are taken away. Hushed is the voice which could instruct. Still is the heart that was always anxiously beating with a desire for Zion's prosperity. They are gone and they leave a gap in our defenses. They pull down a tower from our battlements. The shields of the mighty are taken away and the chariots are burned in the fire. They are removed from us, too, when their prayers were more than usually valuable, when the mellowness of their piety gave a blessed fragrance to their supplications.

They are taken from us when their hoary heads added dignity in our eyes to their supplications and when their righteous lives seemed to prevail with God for the fulfillment of His Word that the effectual fervent prayer of righteous man should avail much. Yes, as I look around, as a young pastor upon my Brethren in arms—those who have stood by me these eight years in all our conflicts and our struggles—who have been with me in the wilderness of my temptation, by the bed of my sickness—my helpers in council, my assistants in labor, my comforters in trial, my ready friends in the Church and my protectors in the midst of the rioting crowd—those who for these many years have borne the burden and heat of the day—I cannot refrain from emotions of the deepest grief at the thought that the fathers must not live forever but that one by one, as the stars set beneath the horizon line, so must they set on earth, to go in another and better sphere—not lost, thank God, but gone before.

We have this week lost one who was, I think, the first person I received into Church fellowship here—he having been for many years a useful member of other Baptist Churches. He served his Master well—as well as continual weakness and increasing feebleness of health would permit him. And now he is gone—who next shall follow God only knows. But one by one, the young *may* go, but the old *must*. The young are as in a siege where the bullet may cut them down. But the old are as in the breach, where the attack is being made and death is storming the ramparts. The fathers must depart.

We dwell no longer on that lest we indulge in dreary apprehensions as to our Church's future—though that were folly and sin—for in looking back on the past we have seen such a marvelous succession in the ministry and also in all the offices of the Church, that we cannot but thank God that He does walk still among the golden candlesticks and trims the lamps!

But let us turn to the pleasing reflection, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." When the fathers die, God shall find other men who, trained while their fathers yet lived, shall be ready and ripe to take their places. Very often we hear the question, "If such-and-such a minister should die, who could occupy his pulpit? What would be the use of such-and-such a building, if So-and-So were taken to his rest?" Ah, you know not what you ask, nor what you say—"Instead of the fathers shall be the children." Men of faith are followed by men of faith.

They who trust God, when they die shall be succeeded by others who shall walk in the same Divine life and shall see the same promises fulfilled. The love which burned in the heart of one, when quenched there by death, shall burn in the breast of another. The hope that gleamed from one joyous eye shall soon gleam from the eyes of another whom God has raised up to be his successor. The work shall not stop for want of a workman—supplication shall not cease for want of righteous men to pray. The offering of praise shall not be stayed from the absence of grateful hearts to offer joyous songs. God shall be pleased to raise up one after another, according as it is written, "Moses My servant is dead, but behold, Joshua shall go before you."

What a blessed thing it is, that in this Church we have seen the promise fulfilled in olden times. And we can look round upon our denomination and other Churches can do the same and remember families that have been connected with our struggles and our strifes from the very earliest periods of history. If you look down the hand-book of Baptist ministers you will see there names which have appeared for these last three or four centuries. And if you could turn to the Church-rolls of some of our different Churches you would see that there are certain family-names which constantly recur—not written now and then—but in one direct line, as though the God of Abraham were the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and the God of all the families, even to the last generation.

I pray that such a succession as this may fall upon many families here and that as you have known the Lord, so your house may never lack a man to stand and to do service in the temple before the Lord God of Israel!

III. But I come to the last point, which is the most important—that is, TO MAKE AN INQUIRY AS TO THE MATTER OF FACT HOW FAR THIS TEXT HAS BEEN TRUE IN OUR EXPERIENCE AS A CHURCH.

We will put this matter in the form of questions. How many are there here today of the usual worshippers in our midst whose parents were in

Christ and who are themselves in Christ, too? When I was thinking over this subject in my study, my eye in vision glanced over the pews and I thought of the different families. I could remember one or two, perhaps, where there are children arrived at years of maturity, who were yet unconverted. But for the most part, I think, there is hardly an exception to the rule in this place—that where there are parents who serve God, there are some children who serve Him also.

If it were right, we might glance our eye to the right hand and to the left and we might say, “There is a household yonder, where one, two, three, four, five, six, seven fear the Lord. The father and the mother are walking in the faith and their children going on pilgrimage with them.” We might turn to another family and say, “There are two who have arrived at years of maturity, who have made a profession of their faith in Christ and are walking in their parents’ footsteps. And their parents hope that as the others grow up it will be to ask the Redeemer blessed.”

I might look down below and look with joy, too, upon many families! With some of you God has dealt very graciously, for He has brought all your children in. With others He has begun to do His gracious work. He has brought one or two of your household. And though there are some few solemn and sad exceptions, yet, blessed be God, these are few, very few indeed. Here we have seen that “the promise is to us and to our descendants, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Here we have had the words of Paul and Silas richly and abundantly fulfilled—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house.”

Besides this, to go a little further, how many are there in this Church who have been raised up by God to fill similar positions in the Church to those which their forefathers had? I hope there will always be a succession unto God in the eldership and in the deaconship. And what if I were egotistical enough to say so, in the ministry, too? I would to God there might be in every single position in this Church, as soon as one dies, another allied and descended from the departed to take his place! That, too, has been fulfilled in several instances in our midst. In the Church of God at large it is really surprising to see how constantly the mantle of Elijah falls upon Elisha.

If you read through the list of our ministers you will see certain names like Angus, Pearce and Fuller which run right on. Some of us can look back to four or five generations in which our parents have always been preachers of the Word. It is the happiness of one here present to know that while he himself and his beloved brother preach the Word, his father and his grandfather, too, are uttering the selfsame Gospel that is preached here today. And so has it been with many a household. We are not solitary instances.

There are very many such, where there has been a succession, a positive succession—not grace running in the blood—but grace running *side-*

by-side with the blood, so that instead of the fathers the children have been raised up who have been illustrious in the Church and distinguished in the world as kings and priests unto our God.

We have asked two questions and some of us have had great pleasure in answering them, but a pang has rent the heart of some others. We must enlarge upon that—not to increase the pang—but that God may graciously remove it. Are there not sons and daughters here, descended from holy men and women who today are careless? Your mother's God is *not* your God. She dropped her holy tears upon your infant forehead and devoted you from the very breast to God. She prayed for you. She is now a saint of God in Heaven and you are on your way to being an heir of wrath in Hell.

Perhaps you are remembering now some hymn which was a favorite with her, which you saw this very morning in the hymn-book. And the Psalm that was read, you remember its solemn reading at her grave and you have remembered *her*—but you have not remembered your God. She is not the mother of saints, in your case, but the mother of a careless soul who knows the Truth and cares not for it. Who hears the invitation of the Gospel and wantonly and wickedly rejects it. Young men and women! Would you bring down your parents gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? You can do it speedily by open iniquities. You can do it gradually by a silent careless rejection of Christ Jesus.

Some of you have yourselves grown old—still your parents are to you traditions of the past. They have long since moldered in the grave. But you are ungodly. You took not up the standard when your father's arm failed to hold it—not you. You stood not in the ranks of God's mighties when your parent fell—not you. You are today a hearer only and not a doer of the Word—listening to the outward sound but not receiving the inward sense. O Soul! what will you do when you shall leave your body and stand before your God? What will you do when, looking upward from the awful gulf, you see your mother, your father, glorified?

Oh, there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the Judgment Seat of Christ! There will be sorrow beyond all sorrow in that valley of decision, when the multitude shall be gathered together, to be sent in two forever. Oh, it will be doleful, it will be doleful when we part to meet no more! No more the kiss of affection, or even the tie of relationship. Shut up in Heaven shall they be, yon beatified spirits. Shut up in Hell shall *you* be, you Impenitent, if you come to the Judgment Seat of God. This is the more sorrowful because it relates to some of you—you that are here this morning—some of you who are always sitting in these seats. You come as God's people come and hear as they hear, but are not blessed as they are.

Lastly, it may be I speak to some who have strayed in here this morning accidentally who are even worse than this. And so, Man, you have lived to curse your God! What was that oath this morning before you did leave

your house—an oath in which your mother’s Savior was blasphemed? And you have grown up and you ill-use your wife for desiring to worship your father’s God! You were baptized of old in your father’s prayers and immersed in your mother’s affectionate yearnings. When she brought you forth and first looked upon your infant form, she blessed God that she was the mother of a man-child, in the hope that he might be devoted unto God from his youth up.

Alas, poor mother! It were better for him that he had never been born. When your father heard the tidings of your birth, he said, “Let him serve his God and my heart is glad.” He had no thoughts of begetting you to be a fiend in Hell, or a slave of the devil. And yet, Stranger, would it be too hard to say that is what you are this morning? “No,” you say, “not *quite* a blasphemer.” Well, an infidel. And what is an infidel but a blasphemer who has not courage to say out what he thinks in his heart? And so you doubt the Deity of that precious Savior on whom your mother’s soul reposed? And so you despise that religion which was her comfort in her last expiring hour?

And so, I say, you are an enemy to that God in whose eternal bosom your own sire rests forever. Well, shall it always be so? Angel of destiny! Shall it always be so? Shall the wax of human life cool and shall the doom be sealed forever? No, angel of mercy! Intervene and now, oh, NOW reverse the man’s condition! Turn his heart to flesh! Melt the adamant in the precious blood of Jesus and make it soft! “There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared.” Come unto Him! Come unto Him! He will receive you still. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord.”

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” May the Spirit of God find you out this morning! May He prick you in the heart! May He make you feel and tremble!—more than that—may He make you fly to Christ, the City of our Refuge! May He constrain you to put your trust in the Atonement which He made for many! May you now find in Him a Savior, “able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through Him!” Let every parent say, “Amen!”

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THE GRACIOUS LIPS OF JESUS

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***“Grace is poured into Your lips.”
Psalm 45:2.***

WHAT a never-ending theme there is in the name and Person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The poets of Scripture never mention His Person but they fall into rhapsodies at once! They never sing of His name, or of His glories, but at once they seem to be so enchanted by the spirit of poetry that they soar up with ecstasies of joy and their love scarcely knows how to find language to express itself. Love sometimes leaps over language among sensitive men—and so it does more palpably in Sacred Scripture. Take, for instance, the Canticles. There, love has strained language to the uttermost in order to embody its vehement passion. Yes, so strained it, that some of us, not so filled with love to God, can scarcely appreciate its glowing utterance. Here, too, you see, the Psalmist, with harp in hand, no sooner begins to meditate on the Person of the Messiah, than he cries, “My heart bubbles up with a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men: Grace is poured into Your lips.”

We shall have no time for a preface, but must proceed at once to the discussion of our text. Grace is poured into the lips of Christ. Let us consider, first, *the plenitude of this Grace*. Secondly, *the nature of this Grace*. And thirdly, endeavor to show you *in what offices Jesus Christ proves that Grace is poured into His lips*.

I. We commence with the word, “POURED,” as suggesting THE PLENITUDE OF GRACE. “Grace is poured into Your lips.”

Others among the children of men have had “Grace.” Poets have spoken gracious words and Prophets of old have uttered wondrous sayings which were Divinely Inspired. So that it might be said that their doctrine “dropped” as the rain, and their speech “distilled” like the dew. Such imagery, however, is too faint to describe our Lord Jesus! Not merely did He speak as the dew, nor did His message simply drop as the small rain, it “POURED” from His lips! Whenever He spoke, a copious stream of gracious words flowed from Him like a very cataract of eloquence. Jesus Christ had not a little Grace, but it was “poured into” Him. Not a vial of oil on His head, but He had a cruse and a horn of oil emptied upon Him. Grace was poured into His lips!

I notice that Calvin translates this passage thus, “Grace is shed from Your lips.” Not only did God give to His Son Grace on His lips, but the

Son, whenever He speaks, whether He addresses the people in Doctrine and exhortation, or whether He pleads with His Father on their behalf—whenever His lips are open to speak to God for men, or from God to men, He always has “Grace shed from His lips.” And when I turn to the Septuagint translation of this passage, I find that it has the idea of the very exhaustion of Grace, “Grace is poured from Your lips,” as though emptied out till there is none left. Jesus Christ had Grace exhausted in His Person. In Him “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” All Grace was given to Him. The very exhaustion of the inexhaustible store, as much as to say that God could give no more and that Jesus Christ, Himself, could not receive or possess more Grace. It was all poured into His Person—and when He speaks, He seems to exhaust Grace itself! Imagination’s utmost stretch cannot conceive of anything more gracious—and the contemplation of the most devoted Christian cannot think of any words more majestic in goodness, more tender in sympathy, more full of honey and more luscious in their sweetness than the gracious words that proceeded out of the lips of Jesus Christ!

“Grace is poured into Your lips.” Ah, Christian, you may have some Grace on your lips, but you have not got it “poured” into them! You may have some Grace in your heart, but it is dropped there like small rain from Heaven—you have not got it “poured” there! You may be ever so full of Grace, but Christ is more full than you are—and when you are ever so *reduced* in Grace, it is a consolation that with Him is plenteous Grace, plenty that knows no lack, for Grace is poured into His lips! Be not afraid to go to Him in every time of need, nor think that He will fail to comfort you. His comforts are not like water spilled on the earth that cannot be gathered up—they yield perpetual streams, for Grace is poured into His lips! He has no stinted supply, no short allowance to give you, but ask what you will, you shall have as much as your faith can desire and your heart can hold, for Grace is poured into His lips in the richest plenitude!

II. Not to speak further on this, let us pass on to consider THE KIND OF GRACE THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS WHICH IS THUS POURED INTO HIS LIPS AND SHED FORTH FROM HIS LIPS.

It is important to remark that Jesus Christ has what none of the sons of men ever had—He has *inherent Grace*. Adam, when he was created by God, had some inherent Grace which God gave him, yet not so much of God’s Grace as to preserve the uprightness of his character. He had but the Grace of purity, as it could be displayed in the innocence of his intelligent nature. There must have been much Grace in the constitution of the man, seeing he was originally created in the likeness of God, yet there could not have been perfect Grace in him, for he did not keep his first estate. But Jesus Christ had all the Grace that Adam had and all the Grace that any innocent man could have had, in the most sublime perfection! And that Divine Grace was always in Him. You and I have none of that intelligent Grace. We have heard men say that children are not born in sin, nor shaped in iniquity, but that they have inherent Grace—but we have never yet met with the man who has found so wonderful a child! At any rate, the children have been mightily spoiled in

growing to maturity, for they have not given much proof of Grace afterwards. No, Beloved, we are naturally graceless, a seed of evil-doers—all our inherent Grace was spoiled by Adam. However full the pitcher might have been originally, it has been emptied out by the Fall. Adam broke the earthen vessel and spilt every drop of its contents—and we have none left. But in Jesus there was no sin—He had inherent Grace in Himself.

And next, *He had Grace which He derived from the constitution of His Person, being God as well as Man.* The Manhood of Christ derived Grace from the Godhead of Christ. I do not doubt that His two Natures were united in such wonderful union that what the Man did, the God confirmed, and what the God willed, that the Man did. Nor did the Man Christ Jesus ever act without the God Christ Jesus. Nor did He ever speak without the God—the God within Him—the God whom He is as truly as He is Man. *We speak but as men, save when the Spirit of God speaks through us.* The greatest and mightiest of all Prophets have but spoken as Inspired men—but Jesus spoke as Man and God conjoined. “Grace”—this unutterably Divine Grace—His own Grace of Godhead was poured into His lips and shed forth from His lips.

But more. I conceive that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He spoke, had also, as well as His ministers, *the assistance of God the Holy Spirit.* In fact, we are told that God gave not the Spirit unto Him by measure. It is a most remarkable fact and I believe it is put in Scripture on purpose to make us honor the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ as a Preacher—so far as we can judge from the Word of God—was not so successful in conversion as some of His followers have been. If you turn to the life of Paul, you will notice how many thousands were brought through His preaching to know the Lord. And if you read the account of Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, you will see that three thousand were converted on that one day. You never hear of such an instance in the life of Christ. When He died, He left only about 500 disciples behind Him. The reason was this—Jesus said, “I will honor the Holy Spirit. I will let the world know that it is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord. And though I speak as never man spoke, and have more eloquence than mortal ever again can attain, yet I will, in My Sovereignty, restrain Myself from the exercise of that Spirit. The people’s eyes shall be dull and they shall slumber—their hearts shall wax fat and they shall be gross. Then, in later years I will speak more through a humble fisherman than I did Myself. I will honor more the weakest instrument than I have done even Myself as a Preacher.”

Yet Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, for every sentence of His was instinct with Divine energy. “The words,” said Jesus, “that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life.” Thus, you see, His words are not merely *of* the Spirit, but they *are* Spirit. It seems to me that *as* he that has seen Christ has seen the Father, so he that has heard Christ, has heard the Holy Spirit. Still, the fruits of His ministry, like the homage due to His Person, lay beyond the brief term of His

sojourn on earth. He was rejected of His generation but afterwards “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” In like manner, His words, though not seemingly productive at the time, were so full of the Spirit’s quickening power that they were afterwards the means of conversion to millions of millions beyond the capacity of mortals to count! All conversions under Peter, Paul and the other Apostles were by Jesus Christ. The words that He spoke in secret, they published far and wide. All conversions *now* are in His name and by His Word! “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” If an Apostle spoke of himself, his words fell to the ground, but what his Master told him to say was abundantly successful! Jesus Christ has the Spirit without measure and herein is another kind of Grace, of which it can be said, “Grace is poured into Your lips.

III. We have very hastily passed over these two divisions, that we may dilate on the third. We are now to consider THE VARIOUS OFFICES IN WHICH WE MAY DISCERN “GRACE” AS BEING “POURED INTO THE LIPS” OF CHRIST AND SHED AGAIN FROM HIS LIPS.

First, let us regard our Savior as *the eternal Surety of the Covenant* and we shall see that Grace was poured into His lips. When God the Father originally made the Covenant, it stood somewhat in this form, “My Son, You desire, and I also agree with You, to save a multitude that no man can number, whom I have elected in You. But, in order to their salvation, that I may be just, and yet the Justifier of them that believe, it is necessary that someone should be their Representative, to stand responsible for their obedience to My Laws, and their Substitute to suffer whatever penalties they incur. If You, My Son, will agree to bear their punishment and endure the penalty of their crimes, I on My part will agree that You shall see Your seed, shall prolong Your days, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Your hands. If You are prepared to promise that You will bear the punishment of all the people whom You would save, I on my part am prepared to swear by Myself, because I can swear by no greater, that all for whom You shall atone shall Infallibly be delivered from death and Hell, and that all for whom You bear the punishment shall hence go free, nor shall My wrath rise against them, however great may be their sins.” Jesus spoke the word and He said, “My Father! Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God.”

Now, that was spoken in eternity, farther back than faith on eagle wings can soar and such Grace was poured into the lips of Christ when He made that simple declaration, that tens of thousands of saints entered Heaven simply on the ground of His solemn pledge! Such Grace was shed from the lips of Jesus that, from the days of Adam, when one transgression involved the race in ruin, down to the times when the Second Adam made reconciliation for iniquity, the saints all entered Heaven upon the faith of Christ’s promise alone! Not one drop of blood had been shed, not one agony suffered—the contract was not performed, the stipulation not yet fulfilled, but the Surety’s oath was quite enough—

in the Father's ears there needed no other confirmation. His heart was satisfied. Yes, more—in that same moment when Jesus spoke that word in His Father's ear, all the saints were in Him justified and rendered complete—their salvation was secure! As soon as ever Jesus Christ said, "My Father, I will pay the penalty, they shall have My righteousness and I will have their sin," their acceptance was an eternal fact! He would never go back from His agreement, nor ever turn aside from His Covenant. This is the first aspect in which we behold Grace shed forth from Christ's lips.

Secondly, Grace is poured into His lips *as the greatest of all Prophets and Teachers*. The Law was given by Moses and there was some Grace on his lips, for Moses, even when he preached the Law, preached the Gospel, privileged as he was to look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished. When he taught the offering of the lamb, the bullock and the turtledove, there was Gospel couched in the Law itself, in the Law of Levitical ceremonies. But the beams that shone on the face of Moses were but *beams* of Grace, they were not "the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." And when other Prophets rose at different periods of the first dispensation of the Law, they each had some measure of Grace. Whether we consider the heroic Elijah, or the plaintive Jeremiah, or Isaiah, that seraphic Seer who spoke more of Christ than all the rest, we find that each and all had some Grace in their lips. What they preached was gracious Doctrine and well worthy to be received, but who ever taught such Doctrines as those of Jesus? Where, among the writings of the Prophets and sages of antiquity, can we find such words as those which Jesus uttered? Who taught the people that they should love all men? Who taught the people such wondrous Doctrines as those which you find in all His sermons? Who could have been so great a Teacher? Who could so blessedly have prophesied to His people but Jesus Christ Himself? My Soul, contemplate Jesus as the only Rabbi of the Church! View Him as the only Lord and Master! Take your Doctrines and articles of faith from His lips, and His lips alone! Study His Word and make that alone your guide! Interpret all the rest by His light. When you have done so, you will say, "O Prophet of my salvation, You Teacher of Israel, verily Grace is poured into Your lips! No books afford me such instruction as Yours, no ministers address me in such words as my Shepherd speaks. No learning has in it such depths of wisdom as the wisdom of Christ!" More to be desired are His words than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Grace was poured into His lips as the greatest of all Prophets!

Thirdly, Christ had Grace poured into His lips *as the most eloquent of all preachers*. One of the joys I anticipate in Heaven is to hear Christ speak to His people. I conceive that there was such a majesty about Jesus Christ when He spoke on earth, as not Demosthenes, Cicero, nor Pericles—nor all the orators of ancient or modern times could ever approach! He had a voice, I suppose, more sweet than even the music which came from the harps of angels! He had eyes expressive of

sympathy with those whom He addressed. He had a heart which animated every feature of His Countenance. His was pathos which could break the stony heart. His was sublimity which could elevate the sensual mind. Each word of His was a pearl, each sentence was of pure gold. "Never man spoke like this Man." No poet, in his most rapt ecstasy, could have grasped such sublime thoughts as those the Savior delivered to His hearers and when, stooping from His flights, He condescends to speak in plain and simple words to His fellows, there is naked, ungarnished simplicity in the familiar discourse of Christ to which man cannot in the least approach! Jesus Christ was the greatest and the plainest of all preachers. We could put aside every other in comparison with Him. We have known men who could curb the restless multitude and hold them spellbound. Some of us have listened to some mighty man of God who chained our ears, held us fast, and constrained our attention all the while he spoke. Justice, sin, righteousness and judgment to come have absorbed us while they enlisted our sympathies. But had you heard the Savior, you would have heard more wondrous things than any mere man ever could have spoken!

I think if the wild winds could have heard Him, they would have ceased their blustering. If the waves could have listened to Him they would have hushed their tumult and the rough back of the ocean would have been smoothed! If the stars could have heard Him, they would have stopped their hurried march. If the sun and moon had heard Him whose voice is more potent than that of Joshua, they would have stood still. If Creation could have heard Him, then charmed, it would have stopped its ceaseless motions and the wheels of the universe would have stood still, that all ears might listen, that all hearts might beat and that all eyes might glisten! And that so souls might be elevated while Jesus Christ spoke. It was fabled of Hercules that he had golden chains in his mouth with which he chained the ears of men. It is true of Jesus that He had golden chains in His mouth that chained men's ears and hearts too! He had no need to ask attention, for Grace was poured into His lips. Happy day! Happy day when I shall sit down at the feet of Jesus Christ and hear Him preach! O Beloved, what we shall then think of our poor preaching, I cannot tell! It is a mercy that Jesus Christ does not preach here now, for, after hearing Him, none of us would preach again, so ashamed would we be of ourselves. Sometimes, when we try to preach, and afterwards hear a more able minister, we feel so outdone that our preaching seems nothing—we hardly dare try again. It is a mercy there is a veil between us and Christ. We cannot hear Him preach, or else we should all vacate our pulpits! But in Heaven I hope to sit enchanted at His feet. And if He will speak for a million years, I would ask Him to speak yet another million! And if He will still speak, even then, for the sweet redundance of that Grace which is poured into His lips, my raptured soul would sit and love, and smile itself away in ecstasies of joy to hear my Savior speak!

Fourthly, Grace was poured into the lips of Christ *as the faithful Promiser*. I look upon all the promises of God's Word as being the promises of Jesus as well as the promises of the Father and of the Holy

Spirit. All the promises of God, we are told, are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, unto the Glory of God by us. And as the promises are all made *in* Him, so they are all spoken *by* Him. Now, will you not concur with me when I say that, verily, Grace is poured into His lips as the faithful Promiser? We have sometimes read His promises. We have heard them with our ears, and oh, what Grace there is in them! Take, for instance, that great honeycomb promise—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." Turn to another—"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." "Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Listen to such sweet words as these—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." Beloved, you do not need that I tell you how precious these promises are! The best way to preach of the faithful Promiser is to tell you some of His promises. I will not tell you what treasures there are in Christ's cabinet—I will break the door open and let you look at some more of the treasures for yourselves. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you." "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Is He not indeed full of Grace as the faithful Promiser? You, poor Souls, who have been drinking from the wells of promise, well know His faithfulness and the Grace therein! You have come sick and weary oftentimes to this well and your strength has been renewed till you were like giants refreshed with new wine! Your spirits have been depressed and your souls have been melancholy, but when you have come here, you have tasted that wine which makes glad the heart of man! Oh, did ever man speak like this Man when He speaks as the faithful Promiser?

Fifthly, Grace is poured into His lips *as the Wooer and the Winner of His people's hearts*. O Beloved, Christ has hard work to win His people's love! He prepares His feast, the fatlings are killed, but those that are bidden will not come, so He says to His messengers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." [See Sermon #227, Volume 5—COMPEL THEM TO COME IN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Yet what a hard matter it is to bring poor souls to be in love with Jesus! In vain does the minister dilate upon His charms! In vain does he try to paint His features as well as he can. We are poor daubers and we mar the beauty which we attempt to portray! Sinners say, "Is that Jesus? Then there is no beauty in Him that

we should desire Him.” And they turn away and hide their faces from Him. With tears streaming from our eyes, we seek “to find out acceptable words,” and we use the best language our hearts can dictate, but we cannot win your souls! Sometimes we address you in rough words that we have borrowed from some ancient Boanerges. At other times, with smooth words such as a Chrysostom might approve—yet they are alike in vain. But oh, when Jesus pleads His own cause, how sweetly does He plead it! Have you never watched the heart when Jesus Christ begins to woo it, when He opens the ear and says, “Poor soul, I love you and because I love you, I will tell you what you are. You are cast out into the open field, you are lying in your blood; you are dead in trespasses and sins; yet I love you, will you not love Me?” “No,” says the heart, “I will not.” “But,” says Jesus, “My love is deep as Hell, it is insatiable as the grave. I will be yours and you shall be Mine.” And have you noted how soon the stubborn soul begins to yield and the hard rock begins to flow like Niobe’s tears till, at last the heart says, “O Jesus! Love you? Yes I do, because You did first love me!”

Why is it that some here have not given their hearts to Jesus? Perhaps it is because Jesus has not revealed Himself to them in Person. But when He does, they cannot deny Him! I challenge any man or woman to hold his heart back when Jesus comes for it. When He displays Himself, when He takes the veil off our eyes and lets us look at His lovely face. When He shows us His wounded hands and His bleeding side, I think there is no heart but must be drawn forth to Him. Ah, Christian! Do you not remember the hour when He pleaded with you? He knocked at the door and you would not let Him in. But how sweetly did He tell you of your sinnership and with the next word made known to you your redemption! Then He told you of your death—and with the next word made you alive! Then He told you that you were powerless, and with the next word made you strong! Then He told you of your unbelief and with the next sentence gave you faith! Oh, is He not filled with Grace as He wins the hearts and affections of His people?!

Sixthly, Jesus Christ has His lips filled with Grace *as the great consolation of Israel, the comfort of all His people*. There is no comfort except that which comes from the Lord Jesus. At no brook can you slake the thirst of the soul but at that stream of Grace which flows from Christ and can never run dry. Let us rehearse His mighty acts. Let us go back over our life and see the various Ebenezers we have raised to His Sovereign Grace and Mercy. Do you not remember how He appeared to you in the solitude of the wilderness and said to you, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”? Do you not remember when, torn with the thorns and briars of this world, you were despairing and ready to die, how He came and touched you and said to you, “Live,” when He bade you turn your eye upwards to Him—and you could then say, “Since Jesus is mine, I will fear nothing”? O you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, go again to the banqueting house where the Savior comforted you with flagons and fed you with apples, where He gave you the sweet fruits of the Kingdom of God and took of the clusters of Eshcol and

squeezed them into your mouth! Do you not remember when He gave you something better than angels' food at the Lord's Table, or how He manifested Himself to you in the use of the means while you were waiting upon Him? And will you not say, "O Jesus, verily Grace was poured into Your lips"? Desponding soul, if Jesus speaks to you today, you will not be desponding any longer! There is such potency in the word, "Jesus," that I think it ought to be sung in all hospitals to charm away diseases! Wherever there are diseased hearts and troubled spirits, I would always go and sing, "Jesus!" When He draws near to comfort His people, midnight becomes noon and the thickest darkness becomes a blaze of meridian splendor, for Grace is poured into His lips!

Seventhly, Grace is poured into Christ's lips *as the great Intercessor for His people before the Throne of God*. Before Jesus ascended up on high and led captivity captive, as Toplady says, "With cries and tears He offered up His humble suit below." But now that Jesus Christ has gone up on high, "with authority," He pleads before His Father. It must have been wonderful to hear the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, but oh, if we might see our blessed Lord this morning pleading in Heaven! He stands before His Father's Throne, points to His pierced side and shows His wounded hands. When our prayers rise to Heaven, they are broken prayers, but Jesus knows how to mend them. There are things in them that should not be there, so He corrects them and then He takes the amended edition of our prayers and says, "My Father, another petition I have come to lay before You." Says the Father, "From whom is it?" "From one of My people." And then Jesus Christ says, "Father, I will it must be done. Look, here is the price!" And He holds up His hands and shows His side. And then the Father says "My Son, it shall be done. Whatever You ask in prayer, for Your sake it shall be bestowed."

Do you see yonder poor man? His name is Peter. At no great distance is Satan, who wants to destroy his soul. He has a large sieve in which he desires to sift Peter. Can you imagine Satan presenting himself before the Lord, as in days of yore? He says, "O Lord, let me have Peter in my sieve, that I may sift him as wheat!" Down goes Jesus before the Throne and says, "My Father, I beseech You let not this grain of wheat fall to the ground." Satan goes and catches Peter and begins to sift him. The first time, he is a little frightened. The second time, he says, "Man, I know not what you say!" The third time, he says, "I know not the Man." And he begins to curse and swear. How terrible is that sifting! But Christ looks at him and out goes Peter—the prayer of Jesus availed for him, the look of Jesus prevailed with him! "He went out and wept bitterly" and his soul was saved. Oh, the mighty power of intercession! I do not think our prayers would ever be heard in Heaven if it were not for Jesus Christ. He is the great Mediator by whom our prayers must be presented.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ has Grace poured into His lips *as the Counselor for His people*. You may have seen a special pleader rise with a brief in his hand. He shows the case against the prisoner to be a very bad one.

Then witnesses are called. Afterwards another advocate gets up to plead the prisoner's cause—to rebut, if possible, the accusation, or to set forth extenuating circumstances in mitigation of punishment. Now, when we stand before the judgment bar of God, Satan will rise up—that old accuser of the brethren—and will gather together the evidences of our guilt and the reasons why we should be condemned. I think I hear him say that we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity and, therefore, we deserve to be lost! That we have a corrupt nature, that we had the sin of Adam laid to us. And then, with malicious spleen, he will allege that we transgressed at such-and-such a time when we were young—following up our career from youth to manhood and even down to hoar hairs—clenching all his arguments by an appeal to our unbelief, declaring that though we have professed to believe, we have doubted the promises and could not, therefore, be children of God! Well might we, as transgressors, tremble when, with a bad case, the grounds of judgment against us are so maliciously stated!

But there stands forth on our behalf The Wonderful, The Counselor! And He takes His brief in His hand and begins to plead. Hark what He says and see how all opinion is turned at once! “I confess,” says He, “that every word is true that the accuser has uttered. My client pleads guilty to every charge, but I have a full pardon signed by God's own hand, purchased by My own blood.” And stripping Himself, He shows His wounds and says “These people were given to Me of My Father before the foundation of the world! I bore their sins in My own body on the tree.” And then, mounting to the highest point, He reaches the climax of Grace as He exclaims, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Can You, O God? Have You not justified them? I cannot, for I died for them.” Then He sits down in triumph, saying, “Whom He justified, them He also glorified. Nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God.”

And now, lastly, Grace is poured into the lips of Jesus *as the great Judge of all at last*. That will be a gracious judgment which Jesus Christ shall dispense. It will be gracious because it will be at once merciful and just. Sinners, ungodly men and women, now in this House of Prayer, you have never heard the voice of Jesus and you have never known what it is to confess that Grace was poured into His lips. But let me tell you, the time will come when you will be made to confess that Grace is poured into His lips. You will stand there and hear Him say to His own people, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” When you hear it, you will think within yourselves, “Never did such music break on our ears before. Oh what precious words!” Yes, but you will fall down and ask rocks to hide you, and mountains to cover you because the words were not spoken to you! You will tremble as, one by one, the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ come before Him. He will say to one, “Verily, you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” To another He will say, “You have fought a good fight, you have kept the faith, receive the crown laid up for you from the foundation of the world.” You will then say, “Oh, what Grace was poured into His lips! How graciously He

speaks!” And you, all the while, will feel that He is not speaking to you. You will stand there and know that your turn will never come when He shall speak gracious words to you. You will stand fixed to the spot petrified as you listen while you hear those matchless syllables. You laugh at the saints now—you will envy them then! You despise them now, but you will be ready to kiss the dust of their feet if you might but get into Heaven! You would not ask to sit on a Throne with them, but to lie at their feet would be enough for you if you might but hear Christ say to you, “Come, you blessed.”

But, in a moment, instead of gracious words, my Hearers—I am not telling you a dream, but a reality—in a moment—O believe me, for God speaks it! Instead of words of Grace, there shall come words of terror and there shall be found no blessed place for you. These are the words—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” You would not wish to hear those gracious lips utter such a sentence as that to you. I am sure you are, none of you, anxious to make your bed in Hell and find your abode in damnation! But, my Hearers, I must warn you faithfully. There are some of you who, if you die as you are, will never go to Heaven. There are many of you, my regular attendants, and some of you who have just strayed in here this morning, who know and your heart confesses it, that you are “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Christians, weep for them! Let your tears flow in rivers! It were sad if they were sick, but this is worse, for they are sick unto the second death! It were painful if they were condemned to die by the Law, but they are “condemned already.” My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you now—start not—there are some sitting side by side with you in the pews who are condemned criminals! How would you feel this morning if, as you sat in your pew, there was a man beside you who was to be hanged tomorrow? You would say, “Oh, that God might bless the Word to that poor creature’s soul! Oh, that God might send it into his heart, for he is a condemned man!” Do you not know that it is so? There is a saint of God and sitting by his side is a child of Hell! Here is an heir of Glory and immortality—and the neighbor who touched his arm this morning is dead in sins and condemned to die! What? Will you not weep and feel for them? Will your hearts be like stone and steel? Will you let them perish without a sigh, without a prayer, without a tear? No! We will pray for them, that God in His mercy may yet give them Grace to save them from the wrath to come!

Poor Sinners, do not despise my blessed Master, I beseech you! If you knew Him, you would love Him, I know! O poor wicked Sinner, you who feel self-condemned, conscience-stricken—have you no love to Jesus? Ah, if you did but know how much Jesus Christ loves you, you would love Him at once! I know a man who said he never was so struck by anything in all his life as when he heard that line—

“Jesus, Lover of my soul!”

“Oh,” he said, “I did not recollect anything of the sermon, but only those words at the beginning of a hymn—

“Jesus, Lover of my soul!”

He went to a friend of mine and he said, “Do you think Jesus Christ is the ‘Lover of *my* soul?’ If I thought He was, I think I could love Him at once.” The friend said, “Ah, well, if you feel like that, Jesus *is* the Lover of your soul.” O Beloved, what would you give if you might but call Jesus Christ your Lover and your Friend? If you could but know that He loved you? Do you sigh for an interest in His love? Ah, then He does love you, for you would not have wanted Him to love you if He had not set His heart upon you! Have you a desire for Jesus? Then Jesus has a thousand times as much desire for you! I tell you Christ is more pleased to save poor sinners than poor sinners are to be saved. The Shepherd is more ready to reclaim the lost sheep than the sheep is to be reclaimed. So let me tell you, poor Soul, that Jesus has no pleasure in the death of him that dies—but He has a pleasure deep as the sea, high as Heaven, wide as the East is from the West, and as unsearchable as His own Divinity, in saving souls! Only believe in His name, Sinner! To you I preach, you actual, *bona fide* sinner! You real sinner, to you I preach! Jesus Christ says, “Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Do you Believe this? Will you put your trust in Him? Will you drop into His arms and let Him carry you? Will you fall flat upon the Rock of Ages and let that sustain you? If you do it now, this moment, you shall become in this happy moment a changed man or woman! You shall be no longer an heir of wrath, but a child of Grace! And your salvation shall become as inevitably secure as if you were even now among the glorified!

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

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

THE ALMIGHTY WARRIOR

NO. 3292

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18, 1866.**

***“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty One, with Your Glory and Your Majesty. And in Your Majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness: and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under You.”
Psalm 45:3-5.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verse five, is #3039, Volume 53—THE KING’S SHARP ARROWS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

THIS Psalm has been thought by some to be a marriage song for Solomon on the occasion of his wedding with the daughter of Pharaoh. It may be so, though I should be very loath to believe it. But even if that should be true, we will find in the Psalm a distinct reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to His marriage union with His Church. Under the Mosaic dispensation, when a man had married a wife, he was not to go out to war for a year, but when the Lord Jesus Christ entered into a marriage union with His people, that very union made it necessary that He should wage war on their behalf. He had to meet all their spiritual foes in terrible conflict—the Prince of Darkness and all the powers of evil set themselves in array against Him—and we know how He fought with them, overcame them and trampled them beneath His feet as the treader of grapes crushes the purple clusters in the winepress. And now, even though in Heaven, He is in a state of rest. Yet here, as the Head of the Church Militant, His mystical body, He is still warring against sin, struggling most strenuously to drive sin out of the world and to make the earth His own dominion wherein He shall reign in righteousness and peace.

The prayer of the Psalmist, as we have it in our text, is also a most suitable petition for us to present. We desire to stir up our almighty Champion to go forth to the war against evil. How gloriously He went forth with His first disciples in the brave days of old! They rode forth to battle and to death under His leadership, but it was to victory, too, in those glorious times of conflict and conquest. But we seem to have fallen upon days of peace—that false peace which arises from stagnation, lethargy and death. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have need to cry mightily to the great Captain of our salvation to gird His sword upon His

thigh, to order His great war chariot to be brought to the front, again—that He may again ride forth to battle with all His attendant hosts—that His enemies may know that His power is as great as ever it was in the ages that are gone! While I am speaking upon the text, I trust that all Believers here will turn it into a prayer and that while you are praying, God will give you the answer and bless the message to the salvation of sinners—which will be a true victory for Christ!

I am going to invite your attention, first, to *the armed Warrior*. Secondly, to *His filled chariot*. And thirdly, to *His victory won*.

I. So, first, I ask you to think of THE ARMED WARRIOR—“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty One, with Your Glory and Your Majesty.”

Then *Christ has a sword*. What is it? Certainly not the sword of which soldiers and princes are proud, for it was concerning that kind of sword that Jesus said to Peter, “Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” It was concerning that sort of weapon that Jesus said to Pilate, “My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight.” Christ could truly say that the weapons of His warfare were not carnal, but that they were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. His was not the kind of fighting that needs sword and spear and shield and buckler such as the world’s warriors use. His wrestling was “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wilderness in high places.” The main weapon which Christ wielded was “the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

The Psalmist prayed, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh.” But in the Book of the Revelation we read concerning Christ, “out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” You know how constantly Jesus quoted the Scriptures in resisting Satan’s temptations or the assaults of His human adversaries. “It is written,” was His unanswerable argument at all times. This sword, which Christ wields, is not made of steel to cut heads, or arms, or legs—it is the sword of the Truth of God to pierce the hearts and consciousness of sinners. It is said to be sharp—“sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” No other sword wounds as the Sword of the Spirit does! It wounds so that none but God can heal. You may bring it down upon a heart that is harder than a millstone, but its edge will never be turned and it will cut the stone in two. It is a sharp, wounding sword—and it is a killing sword. Wherever it goes, it kills sin, cuts iniquity in pieces, slays self-righteousness and destroys the infirmities of the flesh! This sword is also “two-edged.” A sword with only one edge to it has a blunt back, but there is no blunt back to the Sword of the Spirit—it has a front stroke and a back stroke—in fact, it cuts all ways and every part of it is keen as a razor’s edge! Promises, precepts, Doctrines, threats are

all sharp and penetrating—there is no part of the Word of God that is ineffective to produce the result for which it was given.

Notice that the Psalmist prays, “Gird *Your sword* upon *Your thigh*.” The Bible is not your Bible or mine, alone. It is God’s Bible, it is Christ’s Bible, it is the Holy Spirit’s Bible. Truth is no monopoly—it is not the priest’s truth—it is the people’s truth! It is everybody’s truth, but it is most of all Christ’s truth. Why is it that the Word of God is Christ’s sword? Surely it is because that Word tells us about Him—He is the text of which the Bible is the sermon! The Bible is like a script pointing to Him and saying, “This is the way to Jesus Christ.” Holy Scripture gives you a wardrobe full of choice garments and they all smell of myrrh and aloe and cassia because Christ has worn them! The Word of God is especially Christ’s because He has used it and still uses it. My use of the Word or any other preacher’s use of it will have very little effect unless Christ uses us as the instruments by which He shows what He can do with it. Someone looked at the sword of a famous conqueror and, after examining it closely, said, I do not see anything particular about it.” “No,” was the answer, “perhaps not, but if you could see the brawny arm that wielded it, you would understand why it is so notable.” So is it with the Sword of the Spirit—this Divinely-Inspired Book—it may not seem to you as though it could work such wonders as it is continually doing, but if you could see the hand of Christ that wields that sword, then you would understand where the Glory and the Majesty of the Truth of God are found—and where it derives its power to convince and convert the sons of men!

The Psalmist’s petition is, “*Gird Your sword upon Your thigh*, O Most Mighty One.” When a soldier intends to use his sword, he puts it where he can easily get at it. He hangs it by his side so that he can readily draw it from its scabbard when he needs it either for attack or defense. So the prayer of our text means, “Lord, use Your Word! Put power and energy into the Truth as it is proclaimed.” The preaching of a sermon may be like the drawing of a sword from its scabbard, yet it will not be really effective until Christ puts His hand to the work! The soldier’s sword kills nobody until he grasps its hilt with a firm grip and deals the deadly blow with it. Here is the Sword of the Spirit, like some ancient weapon hanging on the wall of an old castle, but O You blessed King of kings, will You not take it in Your almighty hand and prove again what You can do with it? Right and left will You not cut and thrust with it and so get to Yourself a glorious victory over all the powers of evil? Ah, Sinner, if Christ shall send His Word home to Your heart, you will soon perceive that is a very different thing from what it is when we poor mortals only preach it in your ears! When we blow the Gospel trumpet at Ear-Gate, you take no notice. But if the Prince Emmanuel shall bring the great battering ram of His Cross up to Heart-Castle and smite it, blow after blow, the posts will rock, the bars will snap, the gate will fall and the Prince will ride in and

reign forever over the soul that He has won by His Grace—as long ago He bought it with His blood! Oh, that He would do it this very night!

Notice the title that the Psalmist gives to the Almighty Warrior—“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O *Most Mighty One*.” Christ is not only mighty, but He is *most* mighty. There have been mighty men in prayer, but He is the most mighty Advocate with His Father on His people’s behalf. There have been mighty preachers of the Word, but “never man spoke like this Man.” There have been many friends of sinners, but there has never been such a Friend of sinners as Jesus is! Your sins are mighty to destroy, but He is more mighty to save. I will grant you that your passions are mighty—that is positive! I will grant you that they are more mighty than you are—that is comparative! But Jesus is most mighty to overcome them and that is superlative! The superlative might of the love of Christ as exhibited in His death upon the Cross is infinitely greater than the positive and comparative might of our actual sin—and the depravity of our nature. May He prove Himself most mighty in winning many of you unto Himself!

The Psalmist not only prays to the Lord to gird His sword upon His thigh, but he also adds, “*with Your Glory and Your Majesty*.” Did you ever see Christ in His Glory *and* His Majesty? I know that you have never seen Him thus unless you have first seen yourself in your degradation and shame. There, where the poor broken-hearted sinner lies prostrate in the dust, feeling himself to be less than nothing, the great Conqueror comes in His Glory and Majesty, and says to him, “I am Your salvation. I have loved you with an everlasting love and laid down My life that I might save you.” You remember how John Bunyan pictures Prince Emmanuel’s entry into Mansoul after He had captured it from Diabolus?—“This was the manner of going up there. He was clad in His golden armor. He rode in His royal chariot, the trumpets sounded about Him, the colors were displayed, His ten thousands went up at His feet and the elders of Mansoul danced before Him.” They might well rejoice at His coming in Glory and Majesty to take up His abode in their midst, and to prove to them how fully He had forgiven their rebellion now that they had repented of their sin and accepted Him as their rightful Lord and Savior! So will it be with all here who welcome Christ into their hearts and no longer yield allegiance to the Prince of Darkness!

II. Having thus shown you the armed Warrior, I am now going to bid you look upon THE FILLED CHARIOT—“And in Your Majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness.”

The Eastern monarch stood erect in his war chariot and rode forth in great splendor in the midst of his troops. To my mind, the preaching of the Gospel is the chariot of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel itself is His sword and the preaching of the Gospel, the distribution of the Word, by which Christ is made known to the sons of men, may be likened to His chariot of salvation! This chariot appears to have four wheels or, if you like, you can call them the four milk-white steeds that draw the

Gospel chariot. Their names, according to our text, are Majesty, Truth, Meekness and Righteousness. These are the four supports of the Gospel, or the four motive powers by which the Gospel of Christ is brought into the hearts of sinners!

The power of the Gospel lies first, then, in the Majesty of Christ. Sinner, Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, is also the Son of God, who could truly say, "I and My Father are One." He who died on Calvary's Cross is the King of kings and Lord of lords! That very Man who cried in agony, "I thirst," is the Almighty God who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand! Does not this move you to trust Him? The Majesty of Christ ought to win not only your admiration, but also your affection. He whose face was more marred than that of any other man, was the One of whom Isaiah said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Oh, does not this fact melt your heart and woo and win you to Him, that He, against whom you have sinned, should have suffered for your sins and borne the curse and penalty that were due to you? Surely the Majesty of Christ should lead you to trust Him!

Then, the next wheel of the chariot, or the second of the noble steeds drawing it, is *Truth*. Sinner, the Gospel which is preached to you is true! Whatever there is in the world that is false, this certainly is a positive fact—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is also true that He will receive you if you come to Him—come and trust Him and see if He will not welcome you! It is true that He can forgive the blackest offenses and that He does forgive all who sincerely repent of their sin and trust in His atoning Sacrifice. It is true that He can uproot sin from the heart, make the unholy holy, and cause the disobedient to become obedient to God's commands! This is not a matter of conjecture on our part—it is no guesswork, no dream of an excited imagination—many of us have proved the sanctifying power of the Doctrines of the Cross and we, therefore, urge you to prove this for yourselves so that the Truth of the Gospel may commend itself to you.

The next wheel or steed of the chariot is *Meekness*. Jesus said, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." It is no proud Savior who invites you to come to Him! Let me remind you working men that Jesus Christ belonged to your rank in life and probably toiled at the carpenter's bench with Joseph, the husband of His mother, Mary. He was no domineering aristocrat, looking down with contempt upon men and women in a lower stratum of society. The Lord says concerning Him, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is the people's Christ. [See Sermon #11, Volume 1—THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is a condescending Savior who took little children up in His arms and blessed them, and said, "Allow the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God." Notwithstanding all His Glory and Majesty, He disdains not the poor and needy, and His ears are always open to the cry of the hum-

ble and contrite! He takes pity upon the prisoner, He hearkens to the wail of the sorrowful, He has respect unto the broken in heart and is always tender and compassionate to any who seek His aid. Surely this meekness of the Savior must commend the Gospel to you!

Then the fourth wheel—or the fourth steed if you prefer that metaphor—is *Righteousness*. O Brothers and Sisters, what a righteous Savior Jesus is and what a righteous Gospel His Gospel is! A man might well fall in love with the Gospel for this reason, if for no other—that it sets forth so clearly the Majesty of Divine Justice. God determined to save sinners, yet He would not save them at the expense of justice. He delights in mercy, but He would not indulge even His darling attribute to the detriment of His righteous Law! Christ gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. He yielded up His hands and His feet to the cruel nails, His body to indescribable pangs and His soul to agonies so terrible that He cried, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” He bore—

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

in order that He might fully vindicate the justice of God. Righteousness well completed the number of the wheels of the chariot of salvation, or the steeds that draw that chariot wherever God wills it to go! May they, by His Grace, draw it just where you are, poor Sinner, and may that same Grace compel you to enter that chariot, that you may ride in it to everlasting Glory!

But dear Friends, a Gospel without Christ is like a chariot without a rider in it—and of what use is an empty chariot? In the front of the chariot of the Gospel stands Jesus Christ in all His Glory and His Majesty! I wish that all preachers would always remember this. Some of them seem to me to preach the Doctrines of the Gospel, and others of them proclaim its precepts—and in that way they bring out the chariot, but there is no rider in it! They have left out the Christ who is its Chief—indeed, its only Glory! But whatever else the preacher may forget, he should never forget his Master, but always give Him His rightful place. He should say to his Lord as the Psalmist said to Jerusalem, “If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth.” What is there for any man to preach about if he leaves Jesus Christ out of his sermon? A discourse without Christ in it is delusion and a sham—a mere playing with immortal souls, a mockery both of God and man! Jesus Christ and Him Crucified should be the Alpha and the Omega of every sermon! Even if the preacher is not preaching Christ directly, he ought to be preaching Him indirectly, proclaiming the Truths of God in such a way that it shall either *draw* the sinner or else *drive* him to the heart of Christ! In the chariot of our ministry I hope that we all, without hesitation, say that Jesus Christ rides in His Glory and in His Majesty.

But, although Christ may thus ride in the chariot of our teaching, He must always be there in His Omnipotent might and in the power of the ever-blessed Spirit. So I want you who love Him to pray the Psalmist's prayer, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty One, with Your Glory and Your Majesty. And in Your Majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness." There is a fine old Welsh hymn which I wish I could turn into English without spoiling it—it runs somewhat to this effect—"O Jesus, come forth! Leave the ivory palaces! Your chariot waits for You, Come forth, come forth! Hell trembles before You, all Heaven adores You, earth owns Your sway, men's hearts cannot resist You. Come forth, come forth! Bars of brass You break, gates of iron give way before You; come forth, come forth, O Jesus for Your chariot awaits You now!"

III. Now we are to close with our third head, THE VICTORY WON. "Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You."

Many representations of Eastern monarchs picture them not only as wearing a sword upon the thigh when riding in the great war chariot, but also as bearing a battle bow. And the artists, wishing to flatter their royal masters, represented the king's arrows as going right through the hearts of the king's enemies! Our Almighty Warrior has a sure aim—He never misses the heart at which He shoots His arrows! That same Gospel which is like a two-edged sword is, in another aspect, like sharp arrows shot from the bow of a mighty archer. Arrows, you know, can do nothing until they are shot. The arrow is useless without the bow—and the bow, itself, is useless without the hand and arm of the man who bends it and speeds the arrow to the mark he wants to hit! It used to be said of William the Conqueror that no man in England except himself could bend his bow—and so is it with the bow that belongs to our Great Conqueror—no one but He can bend it. When He fits the arrows to the string and draws the bow with His Almighty hand, the missile flies with irresistible force and buries itself in the heart at which the King took such unerring aim!

I take it that these arrows are not so much intended to represent the whole Bible as certain texts out of the Bible—*sharp arrow from the quiver of Revelation*. Sometimes one arrow will be shot and sometimes another, but they are all sharp. Have you, my Hearers, ever felt the pang that goes through the heart when one of these sharp arrows strikes it? So long as it lasts, there is no pain as keen as that produced by conviction of sin! And there is no cure for that pain except from that very hand which shot the arrow that caused it!

These arrows are spoken of in the plural because while there are arrows of conviction, arrows of justice, arrows of terror, there are also arrows of mercy, arrows of consolation. While there are arrows that kill sin, there are also arrows that kill despair, which also is a sin—and as there are arrows that smite and slay our carnal hopes, so there are other ar-

rows that effectually destroy our sinful fears. And all these arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies—there is not a blunt one in the whole quiver.

Notice that *all these arrows belong to the King*. It is to the “Most Mighty” that the Psalmist says, “Your arrows.” The Truth of God never comes home to our heart and conscience until the Holy Spirit convinces us that it is God's Truth. There are some Doctrines in the Scriptures which many are unwilling to accept as Divine although they are very clearly revealed in the Word and they are Truths which God has over and over again blessed to the salvation of souls. People have often said that the Doctrine of Election ought not to be preached lest it should prove to be a stumbling block in the way of sinners coming to Christ, yet I can testify that we have had scores of souls brought to the Savior and added to this Church through sermons upon Election, Predestination and those other great Truths of God in which many of us believe and rejoice! They are certainly among the sharp arrows of our King!

Observe, too, *where the King's arrows go*. They all pierce the heart. “Your arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies.” Some of you have been struck by an arrow in your head. Well, that would kill you if it were literally an arrow—but the King's arrows, when they metaphorically strike the head, that is, when there is a merely intellectual assent to the Truth of the Gospel, are not effective as they are when they enter the heart. Some of you have been struck by these arrows in your legs—that is to say you have gone limping upstairs to pray for a little while, yet there has been no such killing work as there is when the King's arrows pierce the heart. When they strike the sinner there, they inflict a mortal wound, for out of the heart are the issues of life. O Lord, smite the sinners heart! Kill his old life and give him a new life! Slay him as Your enemy, but cause him to live as Your friend! Shoot Your arrows right through the heart that loves sin and hates You, the heart that loves drunkenness, that loves lust, that loves Sabbath-breaking, that loves evil in any form! Kill that heart, O Lord, and then give a new heart and a right spirit!

Let me remind you that there is a time coming when Christ will go forth to war with all His armor on—that is the time of which we read in the Revelation, “out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it, He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron. . . In righteousness He does judge and make war.” It will be a terrible thing for all who are the enemies of the King in that day! His arrows will indeed be swift and sharp to slay them. Do not long for that day to come, you unconverted ones, for to you it will be a day of darkness and not of light! It will be a dreadful day for those of you who have despised and rejected the Christ of God when He shall fit His sharp arrows to the string, draw the bow and pierce you to the heart. Where will you flee from the glance of His all-seeing eyes? Up to the loftiest mountains His shafts shall fly after you! In the trackless deserts, in the densest forests, far out upon the

mighty ocean His arrows shall find you out! Try not to flee *from* Him, but flee *to* Him! If a man wanted to shoot me with a bow and arrow, I would try to clasp him in my arms and hold him to my heart, for how could he shoot me then? Close in with Christ in this fashion! Run not from Him, but run to Him and clasp Him to your heart and never let Him go!

If you yield to Christ, you will find that He will no longer be angry with you. He is loving and gracious and He delights to welcome penitents to His heart. Oh that He might receive you this very hour! He will if you only trust Him and then you will see Him riding in His chariot in quite another fashion. Perhaps at first you will be afraid of Him and ask, "Lord, what have You come here to do?" And He will reply, "I have come to kill your sins with My sharp arrows." One after another He will fit them to His bow and shoot at all He means to slay. He will kill your profanity. He will kill your self-righteousness. He will kill your self-trust. All of those will be pierced through and through by His unerring darts! Then He will shoot at your pride and kill it, outright, and make you humble as a little child. He will shoot at your love of the world. He will shoot at all your pleasures which are not holy pleasures. He will shoot at every lust and every evil propensity within you—and down they will fall—everyone slain by His sharp arrows and blessed will it be for you when they are all slain! Who would wish to spare any one of these King's enemies? Rather rise up and help the King to slay them! Surely you will give no quarter to those that are your foes as well as His!

Finally, Sinner, trust the Savior. He died for sinners, bearing their sins in His own body on the tree. He died for all who trust Him—and they who trust Him shall find Him faithful and true! And He shall bring them Home to His Father's House to dwell with Him forever! Oh, that all of us might be in that blessed company! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 103.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul*—Come, my Soul, wake up, bestir yourself, for you have a great work to do! Such work as angels do forever before the Throne of God on high!

1. *And all that is within in me, bless His holy name.* [See Sermons #1078, Volume 18—THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD and #2121, Volume 36—THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this blessed service! Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart—all that is in me is to be stirred up by His holy name to magnify and bless. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being—it must be myself, my inmost self that praises God!

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* This shall be the first note of our grateful song, "We love Him because He first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise—they are all

around us at home. “Forget not all His benefits” to you, my Soul! His overwhelming, His innumerable benefits, which have to be summed up in the gross as “all His benefits,” forget them not!

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Come, my Soul, can you not praise God for forgiven sin? This is the sweetest note in our song of praise—“Who forgives *all* your iniquities,” not merely some of them! The blessed Scapegoat has carried the whole mass into that “No man’s land” where they shall never be found!

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He is the Physician who can heal you, my Soul. Your diseases are the worst diseases of all, for they would drag you down to Hell if they remained unhealed! But He “heals all your diseases.”

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* O my Soul, praise God for redemption! If you cannot sing about anything else, sing of “free Grace and dying love.” Keep on ringing “those charming bells.”

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* What? Can you wear such a crown as this, which is made up of loving kindness and tender mercies, and yet not bless Him who put it upon your head? Oh, let it not be so, but let us, each one, break forth in spirit in Mary’s song, “My soul does magnify the Lord.”

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* This is heavenly feasting on heavenly fare! There is Divine satisfaction to be derived from the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! O my Soul, pray to God to give you this satisfying food so that your youth may be renewed, so that your wing feathers may grow again, that you may mount as eagles do! Surely, dear Friends, this little list of mercies, though such a short one, comprises an immensity of mercy far beyond utmost comprehension! Let us bless the Lord for it all.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor and the down-trodden praise the Lord who so graciously takes care of them! He is the Executor of the needy, and He is the Executioner of those that oppress them!

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Therefore let us bless the God of Revelation who does not hide Himself from His creatures, but who makes known both His ways and His acts unto His chosen people. An unknown God is not a praised God, but when He reveals Himself to His people, they cannot refrain from blessing His holy name!

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Praise Him for all this! At every mention of any one of His Divine attributes let your hearts beat to the music of praise.

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Therefore let the afflicted praise Him, let the downcast and the despondent sing praises unto His holy name! If they cannot sing because of anything else, let them bless the name of the Lord that He will not keep His anger forever!

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Let us all thank God that we are not in Hell and that we are yet on praying ground and on pleading terms with Him—and some of us can praise Him that we shall never come into Hell, for He has saved us with an everlasting salvation! Truly, if we did not bless Him, every timber in this building and every iron column that supports this roof would burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude!

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Look up to the blue sky. Try to imagine what is beyond the stars and then say to yourself, “So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him”—and try to praise Him as He deserves to be praised.

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Let us therefore praise Him for such boundless loving kindness and tender mercy!

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* [See Sermons #941, Volume 16—THE TENDER PITY OF THE LORD; #1650, Volume 28—GOD’S FATHERLY PITY and #2639, Volume 45—OUR HEAVENLY FATHER’S PITY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He has an infinitely tender heart. He never strikes without regret, but His love always flows most freely. No earthly father or mother is half as full of pity as God is to His children.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Our bodies are just animated dust and our souls are so weak and feeble that even they might be compared to dust in His sight—not iron or granite, but simply dust. What men call “the laws of Nature” are so stern that it is a wonder that men live as long as they do, for earthquakes and tornadoes and volcanoes are found that no man can bind! And when so many men are constantly crossing the sea it is a wonder that so many of them ever come to land again.

15. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.* You are like the primrose by the river’s brink, or the buttercup and the daisy in the meadow that is mown with the scythe. That is all we mortals are—not mighty cedars, not solid rocks, but just flowers of the field or as so much grass!

16. *For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* The hot winds of the East blow over a meadow and it is immediately burned up. Even in the South of France, when the Si-rocco has blown across from Africa I have seen the fairest flowers look in a short time as if they had been burned with hot iron—and such are we when pestilence, as we call it, comes. It is but a breath of poisonous wind and we are soon gone.

17. *But*—This is a blessed, “but”—

17. *The mercy of the LORD*—That is not a fading flower, that is not a withering wind! “But the mercy of the Lord”—

17. *Is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children*—Here are innumerable mercies all enclosed in the one mercy of the Lord! Everlasting mercy, Covenant mercy. If we do not praise God whenever we think of the Covenant of Grace, what are we doing? We must be possessed by a dumb devil if we do not praise Him whose mercy “is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.”

18, 19. *To such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His commandment, to do them. The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.* Now, children of the King, will you go mourning all your days? You who dwell in the light of His Throne, will you not be glad? Rejoice, O Believer, for your King lives and reigns forever!

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* “Bless the Lord, you His angels.” We cannot do it well enough, yet, so help us, you angels, “that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” Your actions are our praises, O you mighty angels of God! Oh, that we had learned to do His commandments as you do them! We are praying for this, “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.”

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All living things and all the forces and powers of Nature are calling upon men to praise the Lord! And we cry to all the hosts of God, the ministers of His, that do His pleasure, “Bless you the Lord.”

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all place of dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* While all these glorious anthems are ascending to Heaven, I must not be silent! But I, too, must praise the Lord with my whole heart—“Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

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

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

THE KING'S SHARP ARROWS

NO. 3039

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 16, 1870.

*"Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;
whereby the people fall under You."
Psalm 45:5.*

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ is represented as a King, we delight to think of Him as the Prince of Peace whose dominion shall put an end to all war and make it unnecessary for the nations of the earth to learn the arts of war any longer. Meanwhile, however, in this present state, evil is in the world, sin is all around us and thus sin is the curse of mankind. Christ, therefore, for our good, is a fighting King, combating evil and contending against sin in every shape and form and, in that aspect, we regard Him as standing in His glorious war chariot, riding through the world in the power of His Gospel, smiting right and left with the great sword of the Spirit and, at the same time, shooting His sharp arrows of Gospel Truth to the very ends of the earth! The Truth of God is the weapon that Christ uses. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal any more than are ours. The Truth of God is His sword and the Truth of God is His arrow!

There are some Truths which Jesus Christ proclaims in the Gospel and which He bids us also proclaim, which are like sharp arrows—wounding, piercing, killing—and of these I am about to speak, hoping and trusting that those arrows may, in all their sharpness, pierce all hearts that have not felt them yet! And that where they go, they may kill sin and that He may then come in to heal who has wounded them and to give life to those whom He has slain.

First, we shall ask and answer the question, *what are those Truths which are like sharp arrows?* Secondly, *why are they arrows?* And thirdly, *how come they stick fast in human hearts?*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THOSE TRUTHS WHICH ARE SHARP AS ARROWS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?

There are many of them, but I shall only mention such as are most usually felt when men are convinced of sin. One arrow that is always sharp is this—the *spirituality and holiness of the Law of God*. Many men read the Law of the Ten Commandments, or hear it read in their churches on the Sabbath, but they do not know that that Law means a great deal more than the mere words seem to convey. For instance, it is written, "You shall not commit adultery," but Christ tells us that even though no act of unchastity is committed, the very *thought* of it is condemned and he who indulges an unclean look has already broken the

command. The Law of God not only deals with the overt acts, but also with *desires*—and even with those *imaginings* which scarcely amount to desires, in which a man pictures the sin and feels a pleasure in the picture, though he has not actually committed the sin. Now, when a man comes to understand in his heart, as well as to hear with his ears that God looks thus at his thoughts, imaginings, desires and words as well as at his actions, then he stands in awe and amazement of the Law and says, “I cannot keep this Law of God, for I am already condemned by it—and being condemned, what way of escape is there for me? How can I get my sins forgiven? By what means can I be reconciled to God?”

This Truth of God is, indeed, a sharp arrow, and well do I remember when first it pierced my heart and conscience. I felt that I could not stand the test of such a Law for a single moment and that if called to stand before God's bar to be tried on such grounds, I would not require a trial, but must plead guilty at once, or stand there in silence to hear His righteous sentence of condemnation—

***“How long beneath the Law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toiled the precepts to obey,
But toiled without success.
Then, to abstain from outward sin,
Was more than I could do.
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.”***

Another of the Truths connected with Christ's Gospel that is like a sharp arrow is this—*the utter impossibility of self-justification*. This is one of the Truths of the Gospel that we must never fail to proclaim—“By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” Having offended against God, you cannot expiate the past by any actions of yours. If you should henceforth keep the Law without a single breach or slip, the fact remains that the sentence of condemnation has already gone forth against you! It is often said that this life is a life of probation, but that is not true. We have passed our probation! We have been proved guilty and we are already condemned! And we shall abide under that sentence of condemnation unless we have help outside of ourselves to rescue us from it. Lost, lost, lost—utterly lost is the entire human race apart from the Divine and supreme power which has been put forth in the Person of Jesus Christ! Well do I remember when I first learned that no works of mine—no repentance, no prayers, and no tears could deliver me from the horrible pit into which I was cast through sin! Then was I pierced, indeed, as with a barbed shaft that went right through my soul to the killing of all my proud hopes and boasts! May such an arrow from the King now pierce to the heart anyone here who still cherishes any hope of self-justification!

A third shaft from the King's bow is this—*the certainty of the judgment*. If there is any one Truth that Christ proclaimed more often than another, it seems to me to be this—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. And that the actions of this life will be reviewed in another life, and that rewards and punishments will be meted out by the Great Judge who cannot err. Kind and gracious as the

mighty Prophet of Nazareth was, who has described in more graphic words than He did, the separation of the sheep from the goats—and the blessing of those on the right hand and the cursing of those on the left? What words could there be more terrible than His when He spoke of the worm that dies not and of the fire that never shall be quenched? O Sinner, your sin is immortal! And there is only One who can kill it and put it away—even Christ Jesus! You shall live again, Sir! It shall not be the end of you when you are carried to your grave and green grass grows above you. You shall live again and your thoughts, words and actions shall also live! Let them now live in your conscience. Let the recollection of them alarm you even before they arise and accuse you before Him who shall sit on the Great White Throne at the last tremendous Judgment Day! I know this—let a man be thoroughly convinced that he has sinned against God, that he cannot deliver himself from his sin and that as surely as he lives, there is a Day of Judgment awaiting him—he has an arrow sticking fast in his heart which he will be compelled to say is sharp as long as he is one of the King's enemies!

Another sharp arrow is *the sense of the need of an entire renewal of our nature if we are not to be condemned at that Judgment—*

***“Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven!
The Sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace—
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.”***

Christ's words are clear and positive, “You must be born-again.” Some perhaps ask, “But Master, may we not reform and amend?” Yes, you may as far as you can, but that will not suffice. “But, Master, may we not observe certain ceremonies which You have ordained, may we not attend to Your precepts and so modify our present nature, and make ourselves fit for Heaven?” Jesus says to them, as He said to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born from above,” (for so stands the original), “he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The Holy Spirit must come upon you and create in you new hearts and right spirits. There must be as total a change in you as though you actually became new creatures! Otherwise from Hell you can never escape and into Heaven you can never enter—and this is true not only of the debauched, the dissolute and the depraved, but also of the most moral, amiable and honorable of the whole human race! “You must be born-again,” or you cannot enter into Heaven. I remember how this sharp arrow stuck in my heart and how I wandered to and fro, hoping that I might yet be born-again—and sighing and crying in my soul because I lacked the one thing necessary—which I could not give to myself, but for which I must look up to that great God whom I had offended and who, I feared, would never deign to grant so great a gift to so unworthy a rebel! May that sharp arrow pierce other hearts just now!

Another arrow from the bow of King Jesus is *the Sovereignty of God*. God has the right to bestow His mercy where He wills, or to withhold it if

He so pleases. His Grace is in no sense the discharge of a debt which He owes to us. If He had determined to destroy the whole race of men, we must admit that they had deserved such a doom. As He has chosen to save some, it is His Grace that has done it, so let Him be forever adored for it! The Apostle Paul, writing under Inspiration, quotes God's words to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," and adds, "So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." What humbling words are these! They make the sinner lie all broken and helpless at the feet of the God whom he has offended. They tell him that he cannot save himself, and that now his only hope lies absolutely in the Sovereign will of that God who can destroy him in a moment if He so wills! Men do not like this sharp arrow and will do anything to get rid of it. They will try to deny the truth of it if they can, but let the Lord once drive this arrow right home through the heart and conscience and I do not know any shaft out of the Divine quiver that is more killing to human pride and more deadly to self-righteousness than this eternal Truth of God which has already brought many to Christ and will bring many more, God blessing it—

***"Praise the God of all creation,
Praise the Father's boundless love!
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,
Priest and King enthroned above!
Praise the Fountain of salvation,
Him by whom our spirits live—
Undivided adoration
To the one Jehovah give."***

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ often drives the arrow of conviction home in this form—the *aggravation of the sin of men when they sin against light and against love*. It is no little evil to break God's Law at all, but to do it knowingly is far worse than to do it ignorantly. To do it after many admonitions to the contrary, to continue to offend God after being frequently rebuked, to refuse all the invitations of His mercy, to resist the strivings of His Spirit, to be resolved to be lost, to be resolute upon damnation—this is the very worst form of sin! There are some of you in whose hearts this arrow might well find a place, for you were brought up by godly parents, you were dandled upon the knees of piety, you heard the name of Jesus among the first sounds that saluted your infant ears. You were carried to the House of God before you were old enough to walk there—and your mother's tears have fallen upon your infant brow as she has wept out her prayers to God that the soul of her child might be precious in His sight.

Some of you remember when the Word used to prick your conscience as you heard it preached—you would go home and shut your bedroom door and kneel down and pray—and there was a time when, for weeks or months together, you could not sin as you used to, but felt obliged to give up one evil and another. Yet you resisted the conviction that was then upon you. You struggled against it, you overcame it and you went back into sin. You have never had so severe a contest with Grace since then—still, you have had some struggles and by dint of awful

perseverance—oh, that we had half the perseverance to be saved that some have to be lost! By dint, I say, of awful perseverance, you have managed to remain a servant of Satan until now! Nor can we bring you to accept the Gospel of Christ. If you remain as you are, the Lord Jesus tells you, as He told the people of Capernaum and Bethsaida of old, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the Day of Judgment than for you! It would have been better for you if you had never been born. It would have been better for you, Sir, if, when you were yet a babe, unconscious of right and wrong, a millstone had been hung about your neck and you had been cast into the depths of the sea! O man, I pray that this sharp arrow may strike you, now, and wound you and that God may bless it to you! If you and I should be lost after having such mothers and fathers as we had. If you and I should perish after such Christian training as we have had—when we meet each other in the lowest depths of Hell, our miserable salutation would surely be something of this kind, “What fools we were, with so much light to prefer the darkness, with so much love from God to resolve to hate Him! Knowing so well as we did our duty, what arrant fools we were to have neglected it! Knowing that sin was folly, how could we choose it? And knowing that holiness was happiness, for we saw it reflected in the faces of our dearest relatives and friends, how was it that we did not seek it for ourselves?” How we shall wring our hands in unutterable anguish if this should ever be our portion! The Lord prevent it, by His Grace!

The last sharp arrow that I shall mention is one which Christ Himself has often shot, it is this—*that condemnation for sin is a matter of this present time*. Dear Hearers, if you have never heard this Truth of God before, hear it now and tremble at it! You have not to wait until you rise from the dead to receive your condemnation—“He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” And as “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” so we may solemnly say, “There is, therefore, now a most weighty condemnation upon you who are not in Christ Jesus, who are walking not after the Spirit, but after the flesh.” Your sentence is already passed, like that of the poor wretch who is now lying in the condemned cell, tomorrow to suffer the extreme penalty of the law! Such is your lot—“condemned already.”

All these Truths of God are the sharp arrows from the bow of King Jesus!

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire, WHY ARE THEY CALLED ARROWS?

First, they are called arrows *because they are far-reaching*. Some people who have never heard the Gospel have, nevertheless, unexpectedly found one or other of these arrows rankling in their hearts. We have known men who have been at their ordinary work when one of these arrows has suddenly struck them. Where the voice of the minister could not go, there the arrow of Christ could find its mark! Never give up hope for the world, even in its darkest days. The world was once in a very midnight and there was a monk, named Luther, on his knees, going up the so-called staircase of Pilate at Rome—and repeating a prayer on every

step in order to try to win his way to Heaven. And there came to him, while on those very stairs, an arrow from the King that pierced him right to his heart! The arrow bore this inscription, "The just shall live by faith"—a sentence which had previously been discovered by Luther in a Bible in the monastery at Erfurt. He was attempting to justify himself by works like that of climbing the so-called holy stairs. But he found that it was of no use and, through faith in Jesus, he became the great leader of the Reformers of his day! Perhaps at this very moment, while we are assembled here worshipping God, there may be men, similarly deluded, in places where an idolatrous system has usurped the name and place of Christianity, yet the Gospel may reach them even amidst the mummeries of the "mass"! Yes, and at the ale-bench, and in still worse places, if God so wills it, the arrow from the Prince's bow may find its target and reach the human heart! Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that the King may be profuse with His sharp arrows, so that many may fall under His power!

They are called arrows, again, *because they are penetrating*. These Truths of God enter a man's heart whether he likes them or not. There are some of these arrows that are aimed at a man, but he seems to be clad in steel and they cannot gain an entrance for a time. But, by-and-by, they pierce him to the heart and cut him to the very quick. We have known some sinners to be very angry when this has been the case with them. That is of very little consequence so long as they do but get wounded by the arrows of King Jesus! Because these Truths wound people, penetrating their hearts, they are rightly called arrows.

They are also called arrows *because if they once get in, they rankle, and you cannot get them out*. Often have I heard something like this said by those who have come here to make a profession of their faith in Christ, "I was utterly godless and never went to any place of worship. But one evening I stole in here and listened to a sermon. I was angry to the last degree at what I heard—I could have cursed the preacher to his face! Yet, I do not know how it was, I soon found myself in this place again, wanting to know more about this religion that I detested all the time." I have often heard a man say, "I could not help thinking of it, Sir. It haunted my dreams. It stayed with me at my work. I loathed it, yet there it was always near me! Certain questions arose within me that I could not answer and difficulties came up which I could not solve. So I was obliged to let this strange new influence which had got hold of me, still rankle within my heart." I have sometimes likened an unconverted man to a wild giraffe in an African forest—and Christ's Gospel, like a mighty lion, leaps upon him from the thicket, fastens its powerful fangs in his flesh and begins to tear away his very life. He strives and struggles, dashes here and there, and tries to rid himself of the awful load that he bears upon his back, but all his efforts are in vain. The poor giraffe in the grip of the lion is distracted—and the man under conviction of sin cannot imagine what is to become of him. He thinks that he is lost and that he must feel the full force of Divine Wrath against sin—yet this is the way of Mercy—it is thus that men are saved! At last the man falls down and then He who seemed to be his enemy stoops down and nobly gives back the life that appeared to have gone from him. Or, rather, gives him an

infinitely nobler life and so the forgiven sinner lives forever! Oh, that the power of the Gospel may thus be exerted upon some wild, untamable spirit that may be here just now!

The Gospel message is especially called an arrow *because it kills*. What does it kill? It kills many things. Gospel preaching, when applied by the Holy Spirit, kills carnal ease in men. A man, when he first hears the Gospel, may perhaps say, "What is the need to bother oneself about that? It will all come right, I have no doubt." Ah, but let one of these Truths that I have mentioned—that Truth of God, for instance, about the Judgment to come—get into his heart and rankle there—the man will not talk any longer about not bothering himself! He must care. "Why," he says, "tomorrow I may be before God's Judgment Throne and I am unprepared to meet Him! My brother died only last week and my sister was taken away only a fortnight ago—and I may be called away at any moment. I cannot bear the thought of being in Hell forever! I must begin to think. I must begin to care about my soul." Carnal ease is one of the first things that is killed by the arrows of Christ!

I will tell you another thing that is killed by these sharp arrows, and that is the foolish skepticism which some people think we ought to nurse and cuddle up in our places of worship. I do not believe that the skepticism of this age has so much to do with people's heads as with their hearts. If they were not wicked, they would not doubt, but because they will not be holy, they will not believe. To answer many of their questions would be as foolish as to do what a boy did, according to a fable which I read in an old book the other day. A boy, in a scavenger's cart, was so badly disposed that he said he would throw dirt in the face of the moon. And another boy, who, I suppose, was a great deal better, but certainly not any wiser, fetched a basin of water and a piece of sponge to wash the moon's face. When I read that story, I thought of those who are always finding out some reason to doubt the authenticity of the Bible, or who throw dirt in the face of the Gospel in some other way. And then there is some well-meaning but foolish Divine who leaves off preaching the Truth of God and runs with his sponge and his basin of water to wash the face of the blessed Gospel which is as clean as the sun or the moon and needs none of his washing, for it is not defiled with the dirt that any fool may choose to fling at it! I believe that at the bottom of your hearts, you do not really doubt, for you know that God will bring you before His Judgment bar to give an account of your actions! And when the King's sharp arrows pierce your hearts, all your whimsies die, your idle fancies flee away and your cry is, "Do I not believe? Indeed I do! Oh, that I could but doubt in order to get a little rest to my troubled spirit, or, rather, Blessed Spirit, come and teach me if there is not something to be believed by which a lost and condemned spirit may find peace with God!"

The arrows of Christ, wherever they come, always kill self-righteousness. There was never a shaft shot from Christ's bow that was not fatal to all trust in our own goodness! Christ abhors that abomination and kills it wherever He finds it. Hardness of heart, lack of

feeling—this is also slain wherever Christ's sharp arrows come. So also is procrastination, that great ruiner of the souls of men. Oh, that some sharp arrow might fly from Christ's bow into the heart of any sinner here who is saying, "There is time enough yet!" Instead of talking like that, he would say, "I want to be forgiven tonight! I cannot bear this terrible burden of guilt any longer. If there were no future, my present agony is so great that I long for immediate deliverance from it." Jesus, You blessed Divine Archer, shoot forth Your arrows now into men's hearts, that all these ills that they have—unbelief, hardness of heart, love of sin and delay, may fall down slain at Your glorious feet. And then come and save the sinners, by Your Grace, and Your head shall wear the crown forever and ever!

How gladly would I, if I could, say anything that might encourage any of you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I know that my feeble voice is not sufficient to help you. It is the almighty Spirit who alone can do this—and I earnestly pray that He may. My grief is not so much concerning you who are seeking the Savior, as concerning you who are not seeking Him. You may think that it is a trifling matter to preach the Gospel, or to listen to preaching. But the hour comes—and every moment brings it nearer—when you will know that the Truths of which I have been speaking are the only real things this side of Heaven and Hell! When you lie dying and are brought face to face with the mysteries of the next world, you will count all your money, your amusements and all else to be but foolery. Oh, do not trifle any longer with your eternal interests! If any of you must play the fool, do it with your money, or your estates, or your bodies, but do not do it with your immortal souls, for these, if once lost, can never be recovered! Once let the Divine sentence go forth, "Depart, you cursed," and it can never be reversed and changed into a benediction! Once let the iron bar that shuts up lost spirits in Hell be driven home by the hand of Infinite Justice, and there is no hand in Heaven, or earth, or Hell, that can ever slide that iron bar back! Once done, 'tis done forever! So, Sirs, I beseech you, escape to the Cross while you may! Look to Him who died upon it! Trust yourselves wholly to Him. Forsake your sins, walk in His ways and live as His followers should—for then, but not till then will you be safe!

III. And now, to conclude, having examined the King's sharp arrows and seen why they are called by that name, let us inquire, HOW DO THEY GET INTO MEN'S HEARTS?

Many are the times that I have handled these arrows of the King. And many are the times that from this, my watch-tower, I have shot them from my bow. And the Lord knows with what intense desire I have longed that they might enter the hearts of those at whom I have aimed them! I could, with my finger—but I shall not—indicate some of the targets at which I have aimed. I will mention no names—there is no need for me to do that—you know very well to whom these personal messages have been addressed. I suppose I cannot have been a good shot, for, with many of you, I have not yet found the joint in your harness through which I could reach your heart. Oh, that I might speedily be able to do so!

But, according to my text, the arrows which are there spoken of and which are shot by the King, do get right into the hearts of His enemies—and I suppose this is for two reasons—first, *because the Lord Jesus Christ always takes good aim*. We cannot do this except as He puts His hands on our hands, for then the aim will be His rather than ours, like the shots of certain eminent people in great public occasions who have the sighting done for them by experts. It is only when the Lord Jesus Christ does this for us that the arrow of the Truth of God goes home to the heart and conscience of the hearer! Christ's aim is always true. If the Truth of God should come home to any of you, believe that it was meant for you! Do not be vexed, or think that there has been a mistake. It was meant for you and although it may pain you, bless God for the pain! It will be better for you thus to be pained and afterwards be fitted to enter into Heaven, than to be left to get a seared and hardened conscience—and to be cast into Hell.

The other reason why these arrows of the King get into the hearts of his enemies is that together with the good aim, *there is always almighty strength at the back of the bow*. It is said that the bow of William the Conqueror was so strong that no man in England, except himself, could bend it. And the great bow of King Jesus is such as none of us can bend! It has the power of the Holy Spirit in it—it is the Holy Spirit, Himself, who gives force and power to the Word so that it pierces through all the sinner's armor, the most vital part of his being and smites him even in the heart. Bearing this last thought in mind, I say to you who love the Lord, do you not see how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit? There lie the arrows, but they will kill nobody till the Holy Spirit gets them into the hearts of sinners! There is much precious Truth in this blessed Book, but there it will lie till the Holy Spirit takes it and shoots it right into the hearts of men. So, what is our duty as Christian men and women? Why, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us never grieve the Holy Spirit! You know that we can do it by neglecting to honor Him, by falling out among ourselves, by cherishing unlovely dispositions, by being unholy. As church members, we can easily drive the Holy Spirit away from us, but, instead of grieving Him, let us honor Him and let us entreat Him to work with us.

Brothers and Sisters, pray for us. I believe I am the constant subject of the prayers of the different members of this Church—to whom I feel the deepest gratitude. But I also beg you to pray for all the ministers of Christ and for one another, and for all work that is being done for Christ. Remember the Sunday school teachers. Think of those good men who, all week, are doing the hard work of City Missionaries—and those good women who are working as Bible women—pray for all such laborers and for all who are doing anything for Christ—ask that the Holy Spirit may be with them to make their labors a means of blessing to the people. Whenever you seek to do anything for Christ—as you begin and as you go on, and when you conclude—let it all be done in real dependence upon the Holy Spirit! Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit is not far away from us, nor is He hard to find, for He dwells within the true Church of Christ.

We are not to think of Him as if He were some mysterious Being, very far distant from us and not easily to be brought to us, to whom we need to cry as Baal's priests cried to their idol god, "O Baal, hear us!" The Holy Spirit is always at work in the Church and it is a wonder that He does so much while the Church often does so little. Oh, if we were but all awake, all alive, all full of zeal, all full of love, all full of self-sacrifice, then, depending upon Him, we might expect to see the King's sharp arrows flying from His bow to the right and to the left, behind and in the front, while tens of thousands would fall down before Him! And London, and Great Britain, and the world at large would behold the King riding in triumph in His glorious chariot of salvation!

The Lord send it! The Lord send it! I know your hearts say, "Amen!" But you must work for it and watch for it and pray for it—and then it will come! And unto Christ shall be the Glory forever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 45.**

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, (or, upon the lilies), for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of Loves. We may look upon the 45th Psalm as being a sort of compendium of the Song of Solomon. It is written, too, upon the same subject. And that is *not* the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter—only the strangest and most whimsical fancy could ever have found Pharaoh's daughter either in this Psalm or in the Book of the Canticles! It is a description of Christ and His Church! A song of love between that pair forever affianced and soon to sit down together at the marriage supper in Glory!

Verse 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter.* Or, as the margin has it, "My heart boils or bubbles up with good matter." It is said of Origen, one of the ancient fathers of the Church, that whenever he preached, he preached with great earnestness and fervor—but that when he spoke of Christ, he seemed to be all on fire. So, whenever our hearts speak of the good matter which concerns Christ, our souls should be all on fire—we should be boiling over with love to Him!

1. *I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* A man can never speak so well of the things which he has learned, or heard, as of the things which he has made, that is, the things which he has *experienced*. Indeed, this is your life-work and mine, Beloved, to tell others the things which we have made our own touching the King!

1. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.* A ready writer writes what he has thought of beforehand, what he has well meditated upon and digested. So the Psalmist declares that this rapturous song is as certainly true as the *verba scripta* of a thoughtful accomplished penman.

2. *You are fairer than the children of men.* The Hebrew word here is doubled, as much as to say, "You are doubly fair. You are fair, fair. Twice fairer than the children of men." Both in outward appearance—although His visage was so sadly marred while He was here—and in personal Character, our Lord Jesus Christ is "fairer than the children of men."

2. *Grace is poured into Your lips.* Grace has, in the most copious manner, been poured upon Christ and now there pours from His lips a very cataract of Grace—floods of love, tenderness and holy eloquence stream from His lips.

2, 3. *Therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty.* Put Your sword where it will be ready for use. Come forth and let us see You appear in Your strength, O most Mighty! For this is one of the names of Christ—"I have laid help upon One That Is Mighty—I have exalted One Chosen Out of the people."

4, 5. *And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under You.* You may see, on some of the ancient slabs, representations of Oriental monarchs riding in their chariots, perhaps engaged in hunting, or pursuing their enemies with their bow and arrow in their hands and their sword upon their thigh. So is our Savior thus graphically described. His Word is His sword, and the testimony of His ministers He makes to be like sharp arrows sticking in the hearts of His enemies. May it be so this day and every day. May Christ thus ride prosperously!

6. *Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter.* This could not have been said of Solomon, for he was never called God. It refers to none other than Christ the King, whose Throne is forever and ever!

7-9. *You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. Kings' daughters were among Your honorable women.* Your maids of honor, for all those who truly wait on Christ become at once the King's daughters. It is more noble to serve God than to sit as king upon a throne. The day shall come when all the honor of earthly kings' daughters will have passed away, but the glory of those who are in Christ's court as honorable women shall abide forever.

9. *At Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.* In the best and purest gold. Every member of the Church of Christ may well say, with Dr. Watts—

***"Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed
By the great Sacred Three!"***

10, 11. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and worship you Him.* Though the Church has been brought up in the world, she is to be separated from it. The more distinction there can be between Christians and worldlings, the better will it be for both. Christ greatly admires the beauty of His Church when she is separated from the world—and it is nothing but an adulterous alliance when the Church becomes united to the State. We never can expect any great and permanent blessing to any church which thus degrades and dishonors itself. If a church cannot stand without the

support of the civil power, let it fall! But happy is that Church which relies alone upon the King, Himself, and is content with the dowry which He gives her.

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.* The day is coming when the Church of Christ shall be honored by all men. The merchant princes, who now esteem her as a thing of naught, shall come with their tribute to her—and those who once despised her shall entreat her favor.

13, 14. *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto You.* Happy was John the Baptist to be “the friend of the Bridegroom” to Christ, and happy are the hearts of those who are the bridesmaids to His Church—“the virgins her companions that follow her”—you, whose pure hearts are set upon the Lord alone, and who follow wherever He leads. You, too, “shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework” with His Church.

15, 16. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children, whom You may make princes in all the earth.* There is such a thing as an Apostolic succession, though not the fiction which usually goes by that name. The Lord is constantly raising up fresh disciples, fresh preachers and fresh teachers whom He makes to be princes in His earthly courts, and who shall be princes in His heavenly courts forever and ever.

17. *I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever—*

***“Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does its successive journeys run.
His Kingdom stretches from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”***

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

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

THE OIL OF GLADNESS

NO. 1273

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 16, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God,
has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.”
Psalm 45:7.***

WE know that the anointing received by our Lord Jesus Christ was the resting of the Spirit of God upon Him without measure. We are not left to any guesswork about this, for in Isaiah 61:1 we are told, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me.” Our Lord appropriated these very words to Himself when He went into the synagogue at Nazareth and opened the book at the place wherein these words are written and said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” The Apostle Peter, also, in Acts 10:38, speaks of, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,” so that we know, both on Old and New Testament authority, that the anointing which rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ was the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, by the “oil of gladness” which we have before us in the text, it is intended the Holy Spirit, Himself, or one of the gracious results of His sacred Presence. The Divine Spirit has many attributes and His benign influences operate in different ways, bestowing upon us benefits of various kinds, too numerous for us to attempt to catalog them! Among these is His comforting and cheering influence. “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” In Acts 13:52, we read, “The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” Wherever He comes as an Anointing, whether upon the Lord or upon His people—upon the Christ or the Christians, upon the Anointed or upon those whom He anoints—in every case the ultimate result is joy and peace.

On the head of our great High Priest, He is joy, and this oil of gladness flows down to the skirts of His garments. To the Comforter, therefore, we ascribe “the oil of gladness.” From this great Truth we learn another, namely, the perfect co-operation of the three Persons of the blessed Trinity in the work of our redemption. The Father sends the Son, the Son, with eagerness comes to redeem us, and the Spirit of God is in Him, so that Father, Son and Spirit have each a part in the saving work—and the one God of Heaven and earth is the God of salvation!

A very interesting subject is the work of the Spirit upon the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the Holy Spirit mysteriously operating in the formation and birth of the holy Child, Jesus, for by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit was He born of a woman. This work of the Holy Spirit was manifested to all believing eyes when the Lord Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan after His Baptism and the Holy Spirit descended, like a dove, and rested upon Him. Before, He was said to “wax strong in

spirit,” but afterwards He is described as, “full of the Holy Spirit.” Then was He led of the Spirit and inspired by His Divine energy.

And this was shown throughout the whole of His life, for the Spirit was with Him in innumerable miracles and in the demonstration and power which followed His Words, so that He spoke as One having authority and not as the Scribes. In Him was abundantly fulfilled the prophecy which said, “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.”

The Holy Spirit had, also, a peculiar interest in His Resurrection, for He was, “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.” He was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” That same Spirit worked even more fully when the Lord ascended up on high and led captivity captive. Then, succeeding His Ascension, the gifts of the cloven tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind were witnessed by His disciples, for the Spirit of God was given abundantly to the Church in connection with the Ascension of the Redeemer.

Oh, how sweetly does the Spirit co-operate with Christ at this very day, for it is He that takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us! He is the abiding Witness in the Church to the truth of the Gospel and the Worker of all our gifts and Graces. Jesus gives repentance, but the Spirit works it! Faith fixes upon Christ, but the Spirit of God first *creates* faith and opens the eye which looks to Jesus! The whole of this dispensation, through it, is the peculiar office of the Spirit of God to be revealing Christ to His people, Christ *in* His people and Christ in the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation for a testimony against them. Blessed be the name of the Holy Spirit, that He is the Divine Anointing and so proves His hearty assent to the great plan of redemption.

We now come, however, more closely to the text. The Spirit of God is here considered in one of His influences or operations as, “the oil of gladness.” We shall speak of this in the following way. First, *the Savior’s anointing with gladness*. Secondly, *the reason for the bestowal of this oil of joy upon Him*. And, thirdly, *the manner of the operation of this sacred anointing upon ourselves*.

I. Let us carefully consider THE SAVIOR’S ANOINTING WITH GLADNESS. We are, perhaps, surprised to read of our Lord in connection with gladness. Truly He was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet this sorrowful aspect was that which He presented to the superficial outside observer. Those who look within the veil of His flesh know well that a mystic Glory shone within His soul. Did not David say of Him as the King of Israel—“He is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For You have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance”?

I fully believe that there was never on the face of the earth a Man who knew so profound and true a gladness as our blessed Lord. Did He not desire that His joy might be in His people, that their joy might be full? Does not benevolence beget joy—and who so kind as He? Is it not a great joy to suffer self-sacrifice for beloved ones? And who so disinterested as He? Is there not sure to be happiness in the heart where the noblest motives are paramount and the sweetest Graces bear sway? And was not this preeminently the case with our Lord?

Let us see. The gladness of our Lord Jesus may be viewed, first, as the gladness which He had *in His work*. The Son of God delighted in the work which His Father had given Him to do. This delight He declared as God in the old eternity! “Lo I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God.” This delight He had shown as Man even before His great public anointing, for when He was yet a child He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” Evidently, even while yet a youth, He anticipated with delight the great business which He had to do for His Father and, commencing, in a measure, to do it among the doctors in the temple at Jerusalem.

But the day came in which He had reached the appointed age and He at once went forth to John to be baptized by Him in the Jordan, being eager to fulfill all righteousness. Then the Spirit of God came down upon Him and He was openly and visibly anointed—and you see from that moment He began to stand before the public eye and with what eagerness He pursued His lifework. We find Him fasting, but He has been speaking to a woman by the well’s brink—and the joy which He has felt, while blessing her, has made Him quite forget the necessity for food, for He tells His disciples, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.”

He felt great gladness in that woman’s joy as she believed in Him and in the expectation of yet more numerous converts from those who were flocking from Samaria, of whom He said, “Lift up, now, your eyes, for behold the fields are white already unto the harvest.” That joy in His work made Him abhor all idea of turning from its awful consummation and led Him to say to Peter’s suggestion, “Get you behind Me, Satan.” We see it, also, in such expressions as this, “I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished.” We read that when the time came that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

His frequent allusions to His own decease by a shameful death all showed that He viewed with intense satisfaction the great objective after which He was reaching. Once, indeed, His joy flowed over so that others could see it, when He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” “At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” Let it never be forgotten that we must not expect to see, in the life of Christ, great outpourings of manifest exultation. Remember, He was sent on purpose to bear our sicknesses and to be “stricken of God and afflicted.” His deep joy was concealed by His many griefs, even as the inner

Glory of the Tabernacle of old was hidden beneath coverings of badgers' skins. He was the Sun under a cloud, but He was still the Sun.

If you have a small burden to carry, you may have an excess of strength which you can display in leaping or running. But if you have an enormous load to sustain, your steady bearing of it may be an equally sure proof of your strength. So also, if your trials are light, your joyous spirits may vent themselves in smiles and songs, but if you are severely afflicted it will need all your joyfulness to keep you from sinking. Our blessed Lord had a load upon Him infinitely transcending any weight of sorrow ever borne by the most burdened of His people. And it needed the wonderful joy which I feel sure we are justified in ascribing to Him to balance the marvelous grief which He had to endure. The uplifting influence of this joy sufficed to bring Him into a condition of calm, quiet, serene majesty of spirit. Nothing strikes you more in the Savior than the quiet peacefulness with which He pursues the even tenor of His way.

Now, if He had not possessed great stores of secret joy, His spirit would have been famished for need of sustenance. You would have found Him constantly sighing and weeping. His words and tones would have become a terror to those around Him and His whole appearance would have appeared melancholy and depressing to the last degree, whereas His manner was cheerful and attractive—let the little children who thronged around Him bear witness to that. He was the Man of Sorrows, but He was not a *preacher* of sorrows, neither do his life or his discourses leave an unhappy impression upon the mind. The fact probably is that He was both the greatest rejoicer and the greatest mourner that ever lived—and between these two there was an equilibrium of mind kept up so that wherever you meet Him, with the exception of His agony in the Garden—He is peaceful and serene.

You neither see Him dancing like David before the Ark, nor yet like David bewailing the loss of one he loved with a, "Would God I had died for you." He does not, like Elijah, run before the king's chariot, nor lie down under the juniper to die. He neither strives nor cries, nor causes His voice to be heard in the streets. His peace is like a river and His heart abides in the Sabbath of God. We see, then, that *in* His work our great High Priest was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but we also note that those who are His fellows do, in their degree, partake in this oil of gladness and are enabled to feel joy in the work which is appointed them of the Lord.

While our King is anointed with the oil of gladness it is also written of the virgin souls who wait upon His Church, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought, they shall enter into the King's palace." If any professing Christian man here is engaged in a work which he does not feel glad to do, I question if he is in his right place. Occasional fits of depression there may be, but these are not because we do not love the work, but because we cannot do it so well as we would desire. We are tired in the work, but not tired of it. The Lord loves to employ willing workmen. His army is not made up of pressed men, but of those whom Grace has made volunteers. "Serve the Lord with gladness."

Our Lord does not set us task work and treat us like prisoners in jail, or slaves under the lash. I sometimes hear our lifework called a *task*. Well, the expression may be tolerated, but I confess I do not like it to be applied to *Christian* men. It is no task to me, at any rate, to preach my Master's Gospel or to serve Him in any way. I thank God every day that, "to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." You teachers in the school, I hope your labor of love is not a bondage to you! An unwilling teacher will soon make unwilling scholars.

Yes, I know that those of you who serve the Lord find a reward in the work itself and gladly pursue it. I am sure you will not prosper in it if it is not so. If you follow your work unwillingly and regret that you ever undertook it and feel encumbered by it, you will do no good. No man wins a race who has no heart in the running. In this respect, the joy of the Lord is your strength—and as your Master was anointed with the oil of gladness in His work—so must you be. Yet, beloved fellow laborer, you will never be so glad in your work as He was in His, nor will you ever be able to prove that gladness by such self-denials, by such agonies and such a death! He has proved how glad He was to save sinners because, "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." Blessed Emanuel, You are justly anointed with the oil of gladness above Your fellows!

We further note that our Lord had this oil of gladness *from His work*. Even while He was engaged in it, He derived some joy from it, though it was but as the gleanings of the vintage compared with the results. He did reap in joy as well as sow in tears, for many became His disciples and over each one of these He rejoiced. It was impossible that the Good Shepherd should have saved so many sheep as He did without rejoicing when He threw them on His shoulders to bear them to the fold. Assuredly He rejoiced that He had found the sheep which He had lost. But the *fullness* of His joy was left till after He had ascended on high. Then, indeed, was He anointed with the oil of gladness and the voice was heard, "Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

My Brothers and Sisters, the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ, now that He knows His beloved are securely His and no longer the slaves of sin and heirs of wrath, is too great to be measured! He has redeemed unto Himself a people in whom His soul delights! For them the price is fully paid! For them the penalty has been completely endured! For them all chains are broken and for them the prison is razed to its foundation! For them has He bruised the serpent's head! For them has He, by death, destroyed Death and led captive him that had the power of death, even the devil—

***"All his work and warfare done,
He into His Heaven is gone,
And before His Father's Throne
Now is pleading for His own."***

He now continues to receive into His joy the multitudes whom the Spirit brings to Him, for whom of old He shed His precious blood. You cannot

estimate the gladness of Christ. If you have ever brought one soul to Christ you have had a *drop* of it, but His gladness lies not only in *receiving* them, but in actually being the Author of salvation to every one of them.

The Savior looks upon the redeemed with an unspeakable delight. He thinks of what they used to be—He thinks of what they would have been but for His interposition—He thinks of what they now are. He thinks of what He means to make them in that great day when they shall rise from the dead and as His heart is full of love to them, He joys in their joy and exults in their exultation! Their heavens swell their Mediator's Heaven and their myriad embodiments of bliss, each one, reflects His own felicity! And so, (speaking after the manner of men), increases it, for He lives thousands of lives by living in them and joys unnumbered joys in their joys. I speak with humblest fear lest in any word I should speak amiss, for He is God as well as Man, but this is certain, that there is a joy of our Lord into which He will give His faithful ones to enter—a joy which He has won by passing through the shame and grief by which He has redeemed mankind. The oil of gladness is abundantly poured on that head which once was crowned with thorns!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, you, also, can be partakers in this joy! When He makes you, in your little measure, to be instrumentally, saviors of others, then you, also, partake of His gladness. But as I have said before, you cannot know its fullness, for He is, in this respect, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. I have trodden the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Me." Returning from the battle and the spoil He has a joy with which none can intermeddle, for His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten unto Him the victory.

Again, our Lord Jesus has the oil of gladness poured upon Him in another sense, namely, because *His Person and His work are the cause of ineffable gladness in others*. Oh, I wish I had a week in which to talk upon this point—a week?—one could scarcely enter upon the theme in that time! We sang just now—

***"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."***

The oil of gladness upon Him is so sweet that we have only to *think* upon it and it fills us with delight! There is gladness in His very name—

***"Exult all hearts with gladness
At sound of Jesus' name;
What other has such sweetness,
Or such delight can claim?"***

What gladness He created when here below! His birth set the skies ringing with heavenly music and made the hearts of expectant saints leap for joy! In later days a touch of the hem of His garment made a woman's heart glad when she felt the issue of her blood staunches! And a word from His lips made the tongue of the dumb to sing! For Him to lay His hand upon the sick was to raise them from their beds of sickness and deliver them

from pain and disease! His touch was gladness, then, and a spiritual touch is the same now.

Today to preach of Him is gladness! To sing of Him is gladness! To trust Him is gladness! To work for Him is gladness! To have communion with Him is gladness! To come to His table and there to feast with Him is gladness! To see His image in the eyes of His saints is gladness! To see that image only as yet begun to form in the heart of a young convert is gladness! EVERYTHING about Him is gladness! All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia. Nothing comes within a mile of Him but what it makes you glad to think that He has been so near it. The very print of His feet has comfort in it and the wounds in His hands are windows of hope!

I have known some who have had to carry a cross for His dear sake and they have kissed and hugged that cross and gloried in their tribulations because they were borne for Him. Fellowship with Him has turned the bitterest potion into generous wine. Beloved, if these distant glimpses are so precious, what must it be to see Him face to face? I have tried to conceive it and I declare that even in *attempting* the conception, my spirit seems to swoon at the prospect of such supreme delight! Only to hear the music of His footsteps on the other side the partition wall raises longings in my heart too strong, too eager to be long endured!

What? Death, are you all that divides me from seeing my Lord? I would gladly die a million deaths to see Him as He is and to be like He! What? A slumber in the grave for this poor body! Is that all I have to dread? Then let it slumber and let the worms consume it, for, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh, what will it be to see Him!? To see HIM that loved us so! To mark the wounds with which He purchased our redemption! To behold His Glory! To listen to that dear voice of His and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." To lie in His bosom forever—truly neither eye has seen, nor ear heard the likes of this bliss!

More than the bride longs for the marriage day do we expect the bridal feast of Heaven, but of all the dainties on that royal table there will not be one that will be equal to Himself, for to see *Him* will be all the Heaven we desire! He is better than Heaven's harps or angels and the cause of greater gladness than streets of gold or walls of jasper! Brothers and Sisters, can we share this power to distribute joy? Assuredly we can! If the Lord Jesus is with us, we can *give* joy to others. I know some whose very presence comforts their fellows! Their words are so full of consolation and their hearts so overflowing with sympathy that they make gladness wherever they go!

Yes, but the best of you, you sons of consolation, are not anointed with the oil of gladness to the same extent as He was. Above His fellows, even above Barnabas, the son of consolation—above the best and the most tender sympathizers is He thus anointed. And from Him there pours forth a continuous stream of effectual consolation which becomes the oil of joy to those who wear the garments of heaviness. Thus much upon the first point, the Savior's anointing of gladness.

II. Let us now consider THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWAL OF THIS ANOINTING UPON HIM. It is given in the text. He is anointed above His fellows, because it is said of Him, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness.” The perfect righteousness of Christ has brought to Him this gladness, because there must be perfect holiness before there can be perfect happiness. Sin is the enemy of joy. Let the sinner say what he likes, sin can no more dwell with real joy than the lion will lie down with the lamb. To be perfectly glad you must be perfectly cleansed from sin, for until you are so cleansed you cannot possess the oil of gladness to the measure that Christ possessed it. As the Believer is delivered from the power of sin he is brought into a condition in which the joy of the Lord can more and more abide in him.

Now, in every way Jesus loved righteousness intensely and hated wickedness intensely. He died that He might establish righteousness and that He might destroy wickedness from off the face of the earth. Therefore it is that He has greater gladness, because He had greater holiness. Moreover, you know that in any holy enterprise, if the business succeeds, the joy of the worker is proportionate to the trial it has cost him. In the great battle of righteousness, our Lord has led the van. In the great fight against wickedness, our Savior has borne the brunt of the battle, therefore, because He to the death loved righteousness and to the agony and bloody sweat strove against sin, the accomplished conquest brings Him the greatest joy. He has done the most for the good cause and, therefore, He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Now, note there is another reason why He is anointed and there is another view of the anointing. He is anointed above His fellows which shows that those who are in fellowship with Him are anointed, too. You observed in our reading that the high priest had the oil poured on his head, but the sons of Aaron who were minor priests were sprinkled with this same oil mixed with the blood of the sacrifice. On Christ this anointing is poured above His fellows and then upon His fellows in communion with Himself, there comes the sprinkling of the oil. We have our measure—He has it without measure. Now, beloved, Christ is anointed above His fellows that His fellows may be anointed with Him. Even as He ascended above all things that He might fill all things, so is He anointed above His fellows that He may anoint His fellows—and through the power of the anointing we are told that His people come into the same condition of righteousness as Himself.

Turn to Isaiah 61:3, which passage we have already had before us, and you find as follows—“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that”—mark this!—“*that they might be called trees of righteousness.*” Now, observe, that we first read, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God has anointed You with the oil of gladness,” and then we meet with the parallel with reference to ourselves, “The oil of joy for mourning, that they may be called trees of righteousness.” He is anointed because He is righteous! We are anointed

that we may be righteous, and thus in Christ we come into the condition in which it is safe for us to be glad and possible for joy to dwell in us!

To the unrighteous the oil of gladness does not come, but to the righteous there arises light even in darkness. "There is no peace, said my God, unto the wicked." The holy oil was forbidden to be placed upon a stranger to God's holy house and upon man's flesh it could not be poured, because man's flesh is a corrupt, polluted thing. This oil of gladness comes only on those who are born into God's Israel by regeneration and are delivered from walking after the flesh. These the Lord makes to be as "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

See, then, the two reasons why Christ has received the anointing—first because He is righteous, Himself. And secondly, that He may make others righteous. Therefore is the Spirit of the Lord God upon Him that He may give the oil of joy to His own chosen and make them righteous, even as He is righteous, glad as He is glad!

III. We will now meditate upon THE MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THIS OIL OF GLADNESS UPON US. Jesus is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Now, we have to show that His fellows are anointed with the oil of gladness, too. Did not David say, "You anointed my head with oil; my cup runs over"? So that we can say of ourselves what we say of our Lord, we are anointed, for He was anointed. Now, in what respects does the anointing of the Holy Spirit give us gladness? I shall notice eight things, and touch but very briefly on each.

First, we, too, through Jesus Christ, are *anointed to an office*, "for He has made us"—whisper it to one another in the joy of delight—"He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever." When the oil went on Aaron's head, you know how it ran down his beard, even Aaron's beard, unto the skirts of his garments and now, this day, this anointing oil, which made the king and the priest, has fallen upon us, too! Blessed be His name, shall we not be glad? It is very inconsistent with our position if we are not. Are you a king and do you not rejoice?—

***"Why should the children of our King
Go mourning all their days?
Sweet Comforter, descend and bring
Some unction of your Grace."***

May the gladness now come to you. You are priests to God. Shall the anointed priests serve their Lord with gloomy countenances? No! Rejoice in the Lord always, all you priests of His that are anointed to this blessed work. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron." We, too, are *consecrated to the Lord*, for the oil poured upon the priest was the oil of consecration. From that time forward he was a dedicated man. He could not serve anyone but God. He, above all the rest of the congregation, was the man of God forever as long as ever he lived. So, Beloved, we have been consecrated—the Spirit of God has sanctified us and set us apart unto the Lord, as it is written, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price."

Our Lord said in His matchless prayer, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Sanctify them," said He, "by Your truth, Your Word is truth." Yes, blessed be God, we are consecrated men and

women—we belong to the Lord and are vessels for the Master's use—hallowed from all other uses to be the Lord's. "For I will be to them a God, they shall be to Me a people." Does not this make you glad? Are you really set apart to be the Lord's own sons and daughters, and hallowed to be used by Him in His service both here and hereafter, and do you not rejoice? O my Soul, do you not feel the trickling of the consecrating oil down your brow even now, and does it not make your face shine and make your heart happy because you are now the Lord's?

Thirdly, by this oil we are also *qualified for our office*. You see, the Spirit descended upon Christ that He might have the Spirit of wisdom and power and so be strengthened and qualified to discharge His sacred work. Now, the Spirit of God is upon every Believer in this sense. Remember how in his first Epistle, second chapter, and 20th verse, John says, "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things," or "You are able to *discern* all things." And further on, in that same chapter, he says, "This anointing teaches you all things." Well, if we are to serve the Lord, a main gift is knowledge, for how can we instruct the ignorant, or guide the perplexed, unless we know, ourselves? And it is this anointing which teaches us and makes us fit for the service to which the Master has called us.

Oh, does the Holy Spirit, then, lead us into all truth and give us knowledge, and shall we not rejoice? Ignorance means sorrow, but the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ means joy! O Brothers and Sisters, will you not bless God, today, for what the Spirit of God has taught you? If you do not, what must you be made of, for He has taught you such wonderful lessons so full of joy? Even if He has never taught you more than this, that whereas you were once blind now you see, He has taught you enough to make your heart rejoice as long as you live! Is He not the oil of gladness?

Fourthly, the Spirit of God *heals us of our diseases*. The Eastern mode of medicine was generally the application of oil, and I should not wonder if, in the course of years, it should be discovered that the modern pharmacy, with all its drugs, is not worth so much as the old-fashioned method. Certainly, when the Holy Spirit spoke concerning sick men and advised that medicines should be used, and prayer for their restoration, He prescribed anointing with oil. I suppose that anointing with oil was mentioned because it was the current medicine of the times, but it could not have been injurious or altogether absurd, or the Holy Spirit would not, in any measure, have sanctioned it.

I will not raise the question, however. But a frequent medicine of the olden time was, undoubtedly, anointing with oil and it is well known that olive oil does possess very remarkable healing qualities. I have read in books of one or two instances of the bites of serpents having the venom effectually removed by the use of olive oil. It is more commonly used in countries where it grows than here, and it is, in many ways, a very useful medicine. Certainly the Holy Spirit is that to us! What wounds and bruises have been healed with this oil! Before the Spirit came, they were putrefying—they had not been bound up nor mollified with ointment—but

now this ointment, mixed after the art of the apothecary, with the costliest spices, has effectually healed us and what remains of the old sores and wounds it continues, still, to heal!

And so wonderful is its power, it will ultimately take out every scar and we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing through its healing power. Shall we not, therefore, be glad and rejoice in the Lord, for if restoration to health makes us happy, surely the renewal of our *spiritual* health should make our hearts jump for joy? Thus, also, we are *made flexible and softened*. Oil applied to the body softens and, believe me, Brothers and Sisters, nothing is more akin to joy than softness and tenderness of heart.

If ever you meet with a hard-hearted, proud man, he is not a happy man. And if he should *seem* to be happy in his pride it is a dangerous and deadly happiness—the sooner it is taken away the better. Where God dwells is Heaven and where does He dwell? With the humble and the contrite heart! That is a beautiful expression of David's, I have drunk joy out of it, "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which you have broken may rejoice." Oh, there is never a bone in manhood's system that knows how to rejoice till God has broken it! And when it is broken, then comes the mighty Physician and applies the oil and restores the bone to infinitely more than its former strength—and then the bones which had been broken become, each one, so many new arguments for gratitude—and all our healed wounds become mouths of praise unto the Most High. We are thus softened and gladdened.

By the oil of the Holy Spirit we are also strengthened. Oil well rubbed into the system was anciently assumed to be a great strengthener and I suppose it was. Certainly the Holy Spirit is the strength of Christians and where He is the strength there is sure to be joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Oil, too, is a beautifier. The Easterns did not think themselves fit for their banquets till they had washed their face and anointed themselves with perfumed oil. They were very fond of locks dripping with oil and faces shining with oil. Certainly there is a beauty which the Spirit gives to men which they can never obtain in any other way.

Oh, the excellence of the character that is formed by the hand of the Spirit of God! It is a beautiful thing which even God, Himself, delights to look upon! It is a thing of beauty and in the most emphatic sense, a joy forever. He that is made comely with the comeliness which the Holy Spirit gives must be a happy man! Other beauty may bring sorrow, but the beauty of holiness makes us akin to angels! Once more, it becomes a perfume. When oil was poured on a man, his presence scented the air around him, and when the Spirit of God is given to us it is perceived by other spiritual minds. Cannot you detect, in a Brother's prayer, that he has been with Jesus? Do you not know, by the lives of some of Christ's dear saints, that He is very familiar with them? Do you not perceive that they have had a special anointing?

The ungodly world cannot tell it, but saints discern it. The nostril of the wicked is only pleased by the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt, but the believing nostril has been sanctified—it perceives the delicate

myrrh, cinnamon and sweet calamus and cassia which make up the anointing oil. The rare combination of sacred qualities which make up a holy character will be seen in the Believer in whom the Holy Spirit displays His power and, as a consequence, he will be glad at heart.

Furthermore, I have many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now, for the time is spent. Therefore I will only say, I pray, Brothers and Sisters, that the anointing may be ours in all the various senses I have mentioned. I should like all of you to go away happy. You children of God, be as glad as ever you can be! I would to God that a sacred gladness rang through this house like a marriage peal! Yet, for all that, do not forget that Jesus has joy above you all. You may be very glad, but *He* is gladder, still! You may sing His praises, but He leads the sacred orchestra of Heaven. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise You," He said. Rejoice in His joy!

I have often thought it did not matter any more what became of me so long as *He* is victorious. A soldier in battle, sorely wounded, lies bleeding in a ditch, but he hears the sound of the trumpets and they tell him the commander is coming along, the King for whom his loyal heart is willing to bleed, and he enquires, "Have they won the day?" "Oh, yes," they say, "he has won the day, and the enemy are fleeing before him." The soldier exclaims, "Thank God, I can die." It is the soldier's joy to die with victory ringing in his ears! Our Lord is glad, and therefore we are glad—

***"Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death,
And be His honor sounded high
By all things that have breath."***

If it is so, we will be content to say, like David, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." We have no more to pray for. We have done with the world, done with wishing, done with everything if Christ reigns and all things are under His feet. May this joy be yours. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Exodus 30:22-33; 29:5-7, 21; Psalm 45:1-8; Isaiah 61:1-3.
(The reader is earnestly requested to read these passages).***

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—Psalm 45: (VERS. I), 438, 786.

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THE GLADNESS OF THE MAN OF SORROWS

NO. 498

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. All Your garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad.”
Psalm 45:7, 8.

DURING the last few Sundays we have been considering the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. We followed Him through the agony of the garden, the sorrows of the betrayal, the weariness and slander of His various trials, the shame and mockery of the soldiery, and the sorrows of His Cross-bearing progress along the streets of the city. It seems fit this morning to make a pause, that we may take a breath in this, our pilgrimage of sorrow, and be comforted by a view of the land of Glory to which the thorny pathway leads.

A festive occasion like the present may have unfitted your minds for deep contemplations upon the Passion, and it may be more congenial with our present mood of gladness, to meditate upon the Glory which followed the shame. The same Person will be before our eyes, but we shall view Him in a brighter light. We shall see the silver lining of the black cloud of anguish, the rich pearls hidden in the stormy deep of His sufferings, and the days of Heaven which were conceived in the womb of the black night of His agony. The Man of Sorrows is the Fountain of all joy to others, and is the possessor of all the joys of Heaven and earth by virtue of His triumphs.

He has experienced joys in proportion to His sorrows. As He once waded through deep waters of grief, He has now climbed to the highest mountains of happiness. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. And now, having sat down at his Father's right hand, He enjoys pleasures forevermore. We have seen our David crossing the brook Kedron weeping as He went. Shall we not gaze upon Him as He dances for joy before the ark? We saw Him crowned with thorns—shall we not go forth to meet Him, and behold Him with the crown which His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart?

Oh that while we muse upon these things, our heavenly Father may hear the prayer of our great Advocate who once cried on our behalf—“And now I come to you. And these things I speak in the world, that they might have *My joy* fulfilled in themselves.”

Our text describes the joy poured forth upon our glorious King in a twofold manner. Our Lord is first made joyous by His Father—“You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.” But there is another joy, which He gets not from one person, but from many. Read the

next verse—"All Your garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby *they* have made You glad."

Here both saints and angels unite to swell the ever-deepening and widening river of the Savior's gladness. When we shall have walked by these still waters and trod these green pastures, perhaps we shall be prepared to say with the Apostle, "And not only so, but *we also* joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." And we shall be qualified to sing with the spouse, "We will rejoice and be glad in You. You will remember Your love more than wine. The upright love You."

I. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us ponder that part of OUR SAVIOR'S JOY WHICH IS GIVEN HIM BY HIS FATHER.

To a degree the Redeemer possessed this joy *even while He was here on earth*. We are not sure that the early life of the Savior was full of sorrow. As He grew in wisdom and in stature, He also grew in favor both with God and man. And favor with God and man would probably give the youthful Jesus an unusual degree of holy happiness. When He entered upon His public ministry, sorrows in troops beset Him, so that the countenance once fairer than the children of men, became more marred than that of any man. At the age of thirty-two or thirty-three He was taken to be near fifty, from the effect of labor, hardship and woe.

Yet, even in the days of His affliction, the Great Mourner was not utterly wretched. Even amid the wormwood and the gall there were drops of joy. When, in His Baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended, did that Divine Dove bring no peace, no comfort upon His wings? When the Father bore witness, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," did those approving words from the opening heavens afford no satisfaction to the mind of the obedient Son?

Brethren, the perfect nature of our Redeemer could not but rejoice exceedingly in the smile of the Father, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. When in the wilderness, after the forty days of fasting and of temptation, the angels ministered unto Him—did they bring Him no celestial joys, no consolations of God? Did He know no secret joys upon the mountaintops, where He communed with God at midnight? Was it no delight to Him to utter sweet invitations and loving words of mercy? Surely those lips were blessed which poured forth benedictions, and there must have been some comfort in the hands which bound up the broken-hearted and opened the prisons of the captives.

We read that Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "Father, I thank You, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The doctrine of electing love stirred the deeps of His great soul, and made the floods clap their hands. "The King shall joy in Your strength, O Lord. And in Your salvation how greatly shall He rejoice." Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, our Savior lived in this world, *doing so much good*, without receiving some joy in His acts of mercy? To teach, to labor, and to make men holy, must give joy to a benevolent mind. It could not be otherwise than pleasant to a good man to do good.

If God delights in mercy, surely His express image must do the same. To restore the dead to their sorrowing relations, was this no satisfaction? Did the widow's grateful eyes in the gates of Nain kindle no flashes of joy

in His heart? Did the thankfulness of Mary, and Martha inspire no comfort in the Life giver? Do you think that it was not gladsome work to feed the famishing multitudes? Who could look upon the feasting thousands without rejoicing? To heal the leper, to restore the lame, to give eyes to the blind, and ears to the deaf—who could do all this, and not be happy in distributing the gifts?

Surely, Brothers and Sisters, there were some hosannas in Jesus' ears, and though He could always hear the cry of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" yet He must have felt the wondrous joy of doing good, which is one of the delights entailed on all self-sacrificing lovers of others.

Think, Beloved, of His Character, and surely He must have known the *joy of being good*. For there is a deep gladness in holiness, a blessed peacefulness in righteousness. The holiness of angels is their happiness, and although to a large degree the Savior laid His peace aside, yet there is a rest of soul from which virtue cannot separate. Distractions of conscience He never knew. Disturbances of mind on account of sin He did not feel on His own account, although as our Substitute He was made sin for us. He suffered.

Mark, I am not for a moment detracting from His sufferings—high mountains of grief I see. The eagle's wing cannot reach their summit, nor foot of angel climb their brows. But lo, I see leaping streams of pleasure running down the rugged steeps, and amid the hollows of the desolate hills I gaze upon deep lakes of joy unfathomable by mortals.

Brethren, we have every reason to believe that our Savior permanently found a solace while on earth, in the consideration *that He was doing His Father's will*. He said, "It is My meat and my drink to do the will of Him that sent me." "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" On several occasions the Voice from Heaven proclaimed the Father's good pleasure in His only Begotten—once the Glory of Heaven enwraps Him on the holy mount. And during His whole life He had the Presence of God until the moment of necessary desertion, when we find Him, for the first and only time, crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?!"

To do a work which He had contemplated from all eternity. To engage in an occupation which had always been most delightful in prospect, could not have been altogether, and only, sorrowful. It was a Passover with many bitter herbs, but with desire had He desired to eat of it. It was a Baptism, and a Baptism of blood, but He was straitened until it was accomplished. Of old, in expectation, His delights were with the sons of men. Were there none in the *work*? Brethren, let your Lord speak for Himself—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your law is within My heart."

In the glorious prospect which this great work opened to Him, when it should be completed, I am absolutely sure our Savior found comfort. Think not I speak too strongly. I have Scriptural warrant. Turn to the twenty-second Psalm, which is the soliloquy of Christ upon the Cross, and you find Him, after He bemoaned His desolate condition, comforting Himself thus, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord—and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You. All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship—all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him—and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve Him. It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this.”

He saw with prescient eyes through the thick darkness which enveloped the Cross, the rising of the bright sun of Heaven’s eternal noon. He saw, when He hung upon the Cross, not only the mocking eyes of multitudes of enemies, but the loving eyes of millions of souls whom He should redeem from Hell. He heard not only the shouts of the ribald mob, but the songs of blood-redeemed spirits. When He saw the lions and heard them roar, was it not a comfort to the Shepherd that He had kept the sheep, and none of them had perished? Indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, there is more than enough evidence to prove that a rich anointing of gladness rested on the head of the Man of Sorrows.

Still, dear Friends, this may be viewed by some as a moot point. We allow that there is room for differences of opinion, but not so as to the great joy which Christ obtained *after He had endured the Cross, despising the shame*. Let us enter into the secret joys of our Beloved. Consider, my Brothers and Sisters, the work accomplished. Christ has borne the wrath of God. God is reconciled to His people. Death has been destroyed—Christ is risen from the dead. The dragon’s head has been broken, the powers of sin have been subdued.

Our Lord ascends to Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel. The glorified spirits accord Him a triumphal entry. “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” He sits down upon His Throne at His Father’s right hand, and then it is that He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

I should not have failed to remark that, as God, our Redeemer always possessed fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. We are speaking of Him in His complex Person as Man and God, and in His official role as Mediator—it is His delight in this capacity which we now consider. The joy of the risen Mediator laid, first of all, in this—*that He had now accomplished a work which He had meditated upon from all eternity*.

Before the daystar marked the dawn, before the calm of space had ever been stirred by wings of angels, or the solemnity of silence had been startled with song of seraph, Christ had purposed to redeem His people. It was in the eternal purpose of the great Second Person in the Divine Unity, from before all worlds, to redeem unto Himself a people by price. What joy must it give Him now that He can say, “I have finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.”

His heart had not only meditated, *but had been mightily set upon His work*. He had bound His people’s names upon His breast. He had engraved them upon the palms of His hands. His ears were bored, for He intended to serve even until death. What if I say that, from before all worlds, He thirsted and panted that He might do His Father’s will, and redeem His people from their ruin? Now, Brothers and Sisters, that desire which had been in Him like coals of juniper, unquenchable, is now fulfilled to the uttermost—how can He be otherwise than anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, since none other ever purposed so firmly or succeeded so perfectly?

Consider, too, *how great the pains which He endured, and we must believe the joy to be commensurate with the pain* in the accomplishing of His

great life-purpose. He descended to the Cross of deepest woe. Have I not tried to paint in my poor way the mysterious agonies of our blessed Savior? But I feel that I have failed. Now when all this had been suffered, what joy to look back upon it! Never day so bright as that which follows black darkness. Never calm so sweet as that which succeeds hurricane and tempest. Never native place so delightful as to the long exiled pilgrim. So deep the sorrow, so high the joy—so unspeakable the grief, so unutterable the bliss!

Remember, beloved Brothers and Sisters, *the enemies He had overcome*, and you will not marvel that His joy was matchless. Had He not defeated Death—grim tyrant—vanquisher of all mankind? Had He not broken the head of the old serpent, who in his crushing coils had bound and pressed a universe of souls? Did He not defeat in battle all the fiends in Hell? Was not evil forever dethroned? Did not goodness sit upon a glorious high throne? Was not virtue exalted to the highest Heaven, and sin cast down to the lowest Hell in that day of the judgment of this world, when the Prince of Darkness was cast out?

“Behold,” He might have said, “I see Satan falling like lightning from Heaven. The dragon bound with a great chain. Lo, Hell’s gates are shut upon the saints, the grave is rifled of its spoils, Heaven is crowded with the saved, and earth purified from sin.” O Jesus, You mighty conqueror! Your glorious victories must surely give to You, as they do to us, a blessed anointing with the oil of gladness!

Our Lord possesses in Heaven, now, as perfect Man, the joy of looking back upon a life without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He has the satisfaction of seeing this perfect obedience covering all His people, till they stand lovely in His loveliness. He has the equal delight of observing the efficacy of His blood to wash the foulest, and make them whiter than snow—while His intercession scatters mercy in one everlasting shower upon the sons of men. Since His heart was love, His joy must be in deeds of love. And as He has become a fountain always welling up with loving gifts towards the chosen sons of men, His delight must be unchanging like His nature, and unbounded like His Divinity. “God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.”

We pause a moment, having tried to dwell upon the joy, to notice the cause of it. “You love righteousness, and hate wickedness, therefore God has anointed You.” It seems, then, that the first cause why Jesus Christ has received fullness of joy lies in *His having loved righteousness*. This He did necessarily because of the spotless purity of His Nature. This He did practically in *the hallowed sincerity and integrity of His life*. Of whom could it be said so truly as of our Lord, that the Law of God was in His heart? How abundantly did He prove His love to righteousness, by vindicating it in His death, fulfilling in His own Person all the sentence of Divine wrath, and taking upon Himself all the curses which fell upon offenders!

You cannot suppose righteousness to be more clearly manifested than in the living works of Jesus, nor more completely avenged than in His dying throes. How sovereign is that righteousness to which even the Son of God bowed His head and gave up the ghost? The world deluged with water, the plains of Sodom smoking with brimstone, the land of Egypt vexed with plagues—all these terrible things in righteousness manifest the jus-

tice of God—but none of them so solemnly as the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus. Our Beloved loved righteousness, indeed, when He emptied out all His heart that He might make us righteous.

Moreover, as in His life and death we see that He loved righteousness, we discern it, too, in *the constant effect of His work*. His Gospel makes men righteous. Does it not give them a legal righteousness by imputation, a real righteousness by infusion, a righteousness which covers them with fine linen without, and makes them all glorious within? The spirit of the Gospel which we preach is to magnify that which is pure, and lovely, and of good repute. Wherever the Lord Jesus displays His gracious power, sins yield the throne, purity wins the scepter, Divine Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through the perfect Sacrifice—the living power of Jesus.

The text adds, “*You hate wickedness.*” A man’s character is not complete without a perfect hatred of sin. “Be you angry and sin not.” There can hardly be goodness in a man if he is not angry at sin. He who loves the Truth of God must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed Him in different forms, but always it was, “Get behind Me, Satan.” How He hated it when He saw it in others—none the less fervently because He showed His hate more often in tears of pity, than in words of rebuke. Yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer.”

He hated wickedness so much that He bled that He might wound it to the heart. He died that it might die—He was buried that He might bury it in His tomb. And He rose that He might forever trample it beneath His feet. Christ is in the Gospel, my Brothers and Sisters, and you all know how utterly that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. No matter how wickedness may array itself in fair garments, and imitate the language of holiness—the precepts of Jesus, like His famous scourge of small cords—chase wickedness out of the Temple, and will not let it have peaceful lodging in the Church.

So too, in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial! And when our Redeemer shall come to be our Judge, in those thundering words, “Depart, you cursed,” which are, indeed, but a prolongation of His life-teaching concerning sin, then shall it be seen, I say, that He hated wickedness. As warm as is His love to sinners, so hot is His hatred of sin. As perfect as is the righteousness which He completed, so perfect shall be the destruction of every form of wickedness. Oh You glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause has God, even Your God, anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows!

But, Beloved, we must dwell for one moment upon another thought supplied by the text, the *character of this joy* is hinted at by way of comparison—“God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.” And who are His fellows? Suppose His fellows to be the kings and princes of this world, for the Psalm is descriptive of Christ in His royalty? Well, is He not anointed with gladness above them all? Kings rejoice in their dominions, their extent and population—our King

looks from shore to shore, and from the river even to the ends of the earth—and of His dominion there is no end.

Princes delight in the fame and honor which their office and deeds may bring them. But before the Lord Jesus Christ, the fame of monarchs dwindles into nothing. His name shall endure forever—throughout all generations the people shall praise Him. Monarchs delight in the riches and treasure which their dominions yield. Christ receives a wealth of love and homage from His people, before which the riches of Croesus become poverty itself. “The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift. Even the rich among the people shall entreat Your favor.” Kings are accustomed to rejoice in the victories they have achieved. He that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, has more joy than they.

They boast the sureness of their throne, but, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” The inward thought of some kings may be that they are invincible in power, and that their will is law. But at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and His enemies shall become as the fat of rams. Into smoke shall they consume, yes, into smoke shall they consume away. Good kings rejoice in the beneficence of their rule, and the happiness of their subjects. Our King may surely glory in the favors which He has scattered from His scepter. But time would fail us if we were to complete the contrast here. Kings of the earth, you may take off your crowns and remain uncrowned in the presence of King Jesus, for on His head are many crowns. O you lords and mighty men, you may lay down your dignities and honors, for you are unhonored and undignified in the presence of Him who is above His fellows!

My Brothers and Sisters, where shall His fellows be found? Search among the wise, and who shall match the gladness of incarnate wisdom, for man’s wisdom brings sorrow. Go and travel among the famous, and who shall be compared with His illustrious name? Where else is there a name so full of joy? Search out the mighty, who has an arm like His? Go and search among the good and excellent, who have blessed their kind by philanthropy—who among them is so anointed as the Man of Nazareth?

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. Standing as high above all the rest of men as the heavens are above the earth! He is, indeed, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. I find that some interpreters read it—“The oil of gladness *for* His fellows.” The rendering is probably incorrect, but it bears a very truthful, sweet, and comfortable thought in it. If the saints are His fellows and He is not ashamed to call them Brothers and Sisters, then the oil of gladness was first poured on His head that it might descend even to the skirts of His garments, and that all the saints might be made partakers of His joy.

We have said enough, we think, on this first point—here is the material for much meditation. Search, my Brothers and Sisters, and learn how the Lord, even our God, has glorified His Son Jesus.

II. Now we turn to THE GLADNESS AFFORDED BY THE CHURCH. “All Your garments smell of myrrh and cassia and aloes, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad.” His garments have been saturated with very precious and fragrant odors. This is the work of His Church in the phrase, “ivory palaces,” the allusion is to certain costly structures which some Oriental kings erected, plated within and without

with ivory. We read of Ahab that he built an ivory house. And it was a solemn threat from the lips of Amos, “the houses of ivory shall perish.”

These ivory houses relate, I suppose, either to the courts of glory, or, more consistently with our interpretation this morning, to the hearts of Believers. Or, better still, to the Churches, which are like palaces of ivory, both for glory, and majesty—for richness, and for purity. The saints’ Graces—their love, their praise, their prayers, their faith—are like myrrh, cassia and aloes. The Savior’s garments are so perfumed, that when He rides in His triumphal chariot, He scatters sweet odors all around. It is a great and certain Truth of God, that Christ finds an intense satisfaction in His Church. “He will rejoice over You with joy. He will rest in His love. He will joy over You with singing.”

In His people, *as the objects of His choice*, He finds satisfaction. It is true there is nothing in them naturally. They are by nature heirs of wrath, even as others. But having set His love upon them, having determined to make them His people, He takes a delight in the objects of His choice because of that choice. Nothing in us could have been the origin of the Savior’s first delight in us. Now, doubtless, that we are His workmanship, He takes a delight in the works of His own hands. But when we were like broken potsherds, thrown away upon the dunghill of the Fall, if He saw anything in us it must have been in His own eyes.

But, dear Friends, as men always take a deep interest in that which has *cost them dearly*, so since that triumphant day when Jesus stretched out His hands upon the tree, and paid the price for His people, He has found an infinite solace and delight in them. He sees in every Believer’s face a memento of His groans. He looks into the eyes of every penitent and sees His own tears there. He hears the cry of every mourner, and there hears His own groans over again. He beholds the reward of His soul’s travail in every regenerate heart, and therefore, as the purchase of His blood, we make Him glad.

Again, *as His workmanship*, as He sees us day by day more conformed to His image, He rejoices in us. Just as you see the sculptor with his chisel etching out the statue which lies hidden in the block of marble, taking off a corner here, and a chip there, and a piece here—see how he smiles when he brings out the features of the form Divine—so our Savior, as He proceeds with His engraving tool, working through the operation of the Spirit, and making us like unto Himself, finds much delight in us.

The painter makes rough drafts at first, and lays on the colors roughly. Some do not understand what he is doing, and for three or four sittings the portrait is much unlike the man it aims at representing. But the painter can discern the features in the canvass—he sees it looming through that mist and haze of color—he knows that beauty will yet beam forth from yonder daubs and blotches. So Jesus, though we are yet but mere outlines of His image, can discover His own perfection in us where no eyes but His own, as the Mighty Artist, can perceive it. Dear Friends, it is for this reason—because we are the work of His hands—that He takes delight in us.

Don’t you know that we are His brothers and sisters? And brothers should delight in brothers. No, we are His spouse—and where should the husband find his comfort but in his bride? We are His body—shall not the head be content with the members? We are one with Him, vitally, person-

ally, everlastingly one. And it is little marvel, therefore, if we have a mutual joy in each other, so that His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces of His Church, wherein He has been made glad.

Let us think *how we can make Him glad*. Brethren, *our love* to Christ—oh, we think it so cold, so little, and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be—but it is very sweet to Christ. We can never compare our love to Christ with His love to us, and yet He does not despise it. Hear His own eulogy of His Church in the Song, “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse. You have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck. How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointments than all spices!” “You are beautiful, O My love, as Tirza, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.”

See, see, my Brothers and Sisters! His delight is in you! When you lean your head on His bosom, you not only receive, but you give Him joy. When you gaze with love upon His beauteous face, you not only receive comfort, but give delight. Our *praise*, too, gives Him joy, when from our hearts we sing His name, and when gratefully, though silently, we breathe a song up to His Throne. As princes are delighted with incense, so is Christ delighted with the praise of His people. And our *gifts*, too, delight Him.

As the son of our good Queen accepts rich tokens of kindness from the people of his land, so our Lord Jesus is charmed with the offerings of His people. He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon His altar—not for the value of what we give—but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. He takes far more delight in what we do for Him than our Queen’s son could take in splendid arches, or in the glorious pageantry of yesterday. To Christ the shouts of His people are better than the cheers of the most enthusiastic populace, and to Him the lowly offerings of His saints are more acceptable than thousands of gold and silver.

Forgive your enemy and you make Christ glad! Distribute of your substance to the poor, and He rejoices! Be the means of saving souls, and you give Him to see of the travail of His soul. Preach His Gospel, and you are a sweet savor unto Him. Go among the ignorant, and among the hopeless, and try to lift them up, for His sake, and you have given Him satisfaction. I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, it is in your power this very day to break the alabaster box and pour the precious ointment on His head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth. *You can* anoint Him above all His fellows with the oil of gladness.

I think I see a great procession. It is Jesus Christ riding alone through the tens of thousands of souls whom He has redeemed with His own blood. I think I see Him looking to the right and to the left as He rides along the centuries. See how every window of every age is crowded! Glorified spirits look down from the housetops of Heaven—the Church militant looks up from the streets of earth—multitudes upon multitudes of souls that love Him and call Him King, salute Him as their Redeemer. I notice that, as He goes along in this great procession, His eyes are bright with joy.

We liked to see the Prince and Princess happy yesterday, but their joy could be nothing compared with that of Christ as He rides along in triumph. How the multitudes delight Him. The ten thousand times ten thousand—who shall tell how many Christ has redeemed? Their number is beyond all human count. So many are they that, as they clap their hands, and shout to His name, I hear a voice like many waters, or like great thunders, while they cry, “Hallelujah, Sweet Prince! Ride on triumphantly! And reign forever and ever!”

There is one thing Christ feels as He looks upon the crowd around Him, which our Prince could not feel yesterday. He knows that every one of these would lay down their lives for Him. Of all those whom Jesus bought with blood—among those who are renewed in heart—there is not one who would not bleed for Him. To the stake they would walk, and sing amidst the flames. To the dungeon they would go, and praise Him while they rot in darkness. They would be dragged at the heels of horses, they would be stoned, they would be sawn in sunder, they would wander about in sheepskins and in goatskins, and they would glory in all these things that they may show their love to Christ.

Every eye in the vast throng which gathers about the triumphal chariot of Christ beams with intense love for Him. And when they shout, each one shouts louder than his fellow! Each one in the whole throng feels he owes more to the great King than anyone else. There is something special about each face the King looks on, and as He remembers the special circumstances, He perceives the reason for that special love. Either it is much forgiven, or else it is much trial averted, or much strength conferred by which to perform labor. I am sure that when you and I are in that throng looking upon Him, we may truly say—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

You did well to applaud your Prince yesterday, but what had he ever done for you? What debt did you owe to him? Owed he not far more to you? But our King, as He rides along in the midst of the joyful hosts of the blood-bought, has this upon his mind—“I bought all these souls with My blood.” He recollects, as He looks upon them, where they would have been but for His Grace, and the very pangs of Hell must add joy to His soul when He remembers that He saved them from passing into the pit. He recollects, too, what they once were—how full of sin, what enemies to God—how they crucified Him, how they trampled on His precious blood.

And now He sees them bowing before Him, too glad to catch but a glimpse of Him as He rides by. They are more than happy to be as the dust of His feet if He will but honor them by treading upon them—that He might be lifted the higher! O my Brothers and Sisters, we love the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts give Him a reception such as never was accorded to an earthly Prince. Pile the arches! Pile the arches! Let hearts pour forth their life-blood, if in no other way the banners can be dyed red! Strew the streets! Strip off your garments if in no other way the pageant can be made illustrious! Bring forth the royal diadem, and let every saint renounce wealth, and comfort, if by no other means Jesus can be crowned!

Empty Heaven, if by no other way Jesus can be attended with guards of honor. Come, all you sons and daughters of His great family, and offer yourselves a living sacrifice, if there can be no other incense! We are all prepared—I speak for the sacramental host of God’s elect—we are all prepared, by His Grace, to follow Him through floods and through flames! We are prepared to give Him all the honor that heart can conceive. We are prepared to kiss His feet as well as to crown His head. Bring forth the royal diadem today and crown Him Lord of All! And each day as He rides along, till He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, let Him be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. Now for another text, but not another sermon. It is in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon—“WE WILL BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN YOU.”

God has made the King glad, and His saints make Him glad. Let us be glad, too. But let us take care that our gladness is of the right sort. “We will rejoice and be glad in *You*.” That man is glad in his farm. That other in his merchandise. That one yonder in his wealth—that woman in her jewels. That other in her beauty. “*We* will rejoice and be glad in *You*.” But in what? We will rejoice, more especially, in *His love to us*. You remember Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these?” Interpreters read that two ways. Some think he meant, “Do you love me more than you love these nets, and this fishery, and your earthly calling, and these friends?”

I think I hear Jesus Christ speaking this morning, and He says, “My people, I love you more than these.” He points to spirits that once stood around His Throne, angels that have sinned—they fell like lightning from Heaven, and there they lie in flames. And Christ says, “I love you more than these. I let these perish, but I saved you.” Pointing to the kings and princes of this world, the great, the mighty, and the learned men—and to all the nations that sit in darkness—He says, “I love you more than these. I gave Ethiopia and Seba for you.” Then taking a higher range He points to Heaven.

There sit the angels before the Throne, and He says, “I love you more than these. I left their company for yours.” He bids you listen to their harps, and to their songs, and He says, “I love you more than these. I left all these melodies that I might be able to meet your groans.” Yes, He points to His own Throne, so bright with glory that mortal eyes scarcely dare to rest upon it, and He says, “I love you more than these, for I left the glory of My Throne that I might redeem you with My blood.” Saint, will you not join with me? Shall we not both say, “Savior, blessed be Your unexampled love! We will rejoice and be glad in You”?

But some interpreters read the text—“Do you love Me more than these?”—“Do you love me more than these others love Me?” Jesus speaks today to us, “I have loved you more than these. Your mother loved you. Strong were her pangs when you were born, and anxious her cares when she nursed you at her bosom. But I have loved you more than these, and more than your brothers and sisters loved you—born of the same parents, they watched over you with delight, and they have been ready to help you in your time of need. But I have loved you more than these. And more than your husband loved you, loved you as his own soul. He has cher-

ished you, and has been ready to lay down his life to give you back health when you have been sick—I have loved you more than he.

“Your children, too, have loved you. They have climbed your knee, and smiled upon you for all your kindness to them, and they have strengthened your old age, and you have leaned upon them, as upon a staff, when you have been tottering with weakness. But I have loved you more than these. And you have had a joyous companion, a dear friend who has been with you from your youth up, and has never lifted his heel against you. And you have had your confidantes and your Brethren who went up to the House of God with you and talked cheerfully by the way, but I have loved you more than these.”

I think I hear Him say to me—“There are some in this congregation who would pluck out their own eyes to give them to you. They love you, for you are their spiritual father—but I have loved you more than these.” And He points to all the good men that have ever tried to teach you, to all the comforters who have given you joy, to all the helpers that have aided you on the road to immortality. And He says, “I have loved you more than these.” Well, if His love is matchless like this, we will rejoice and be glad in *Him*. The Lord knows I have nothing else to rejoice in. I cannot rejoice in myself—there are so many sins and so many doubts—but I will rejoice, and be glad in *Him* if He loves me like this.

He has finished the work for me, given me a perfect righteousness, washed me in His blood, taken off His robe to clothe me, given His life that He may make me live. He has entered the grave to bring me out of it, and said that I shall shortly be enthroned with Him above the sky. I will rejoice and be glad in Him. When King Solomon was crowned, all the people rejoiced. And shall we be mourners when Christ sits upon His Throne? Let the heaviest heart begin to leap! And if you have to bear your burdens tomorrow, yet throw them off today. “We will rejoice and be glad in You.” I should not like one Christian to go down these aisles this morning without some light of Heaven’s brightness on his cheek—without some note of Heaven’s music in his ears.

“Oh,” says the Christian, “Yes. I will. The Cross is heavy, but I will hope *beneath* it. The furnace is hot, but I will sing *in* it. The way is rough, but I will tread it with light footsteps, for I will rejoice and be glad in Him who has loved me, and given Himself for me.” Well, you see, there is a glad Christ in Heaven, and here is a glad Church on earth! There is Christ anointed by His Father, here are His people sharing that anointing! Here is Christ giving you joy, and you giving Christ joy! Belt the world with happiness—fire zodiac with joy! Lift up the ladder of your songs! While the bottom rests on earth, let the top reach to Heaven!

And you angels of God, hold fellowship today with God, and with us through the joy and peace which God the Father gives us, while we rejoice and are glad in Him! I would you all understood this subject, but some of you are strangers to it altogether! Remember, there is no joy anywhere but in Christ. It is all poor mockery which you get elsewhere. Jesus Christ is to be had, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. The Lord give you His benediction, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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EARTHQUAKE BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE

NO. 1950

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
though its waters roar and be troubled, though the
mountains shake with its swelling.”
Psalm 46:1-3.*

THIS Psalm is a song for all Israel—for all who are truly the chosen of God, called to be His own people—should exhibit a fearless courage. The peace of God which passes all understanding should keep the hearts and minds of all who rest in God. If, indeed, the Lord is our refuge and strength, we are entitled to seek after a spirit which shall bear us above the dreads of common men. It is not every man that can sing this Psalm—he must belong to the believing company, he must have God to be his God—and he must, like Israel, have learned the art of prevailing prayer, or else he cannot sing the song of peace amid commotion and calamity. No man can truly sing this Psalm but those who are redeemed from the earth.

While this is a Psalm for all Israel, it is specially marked as committed to the charge of the sons of Korah. Korah, Dathan and Abiram perished because of their presumption—they went down alive into the pit—and the earth closed upon them. They and all that appertained unto them were swallowed up. But we are astonished to read, “Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not.” I attribute their singular escape to the Sovereign Grace of God who spared them when their kinsmen were destroyed. They were made singers in the courts of the Lord and surely they would sing with peculiar emphasis these words, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed.” They saw the earth open her mouth and swallow up the offenders of their household while they were preserved by Sovereign Grace. Surely the tears must have stood in their eyes when they sang this verse and thought of the opening gulf at their feet. The circumstance under which a man is saved will influence the rest of his life. To be saved of God from between the teeth of judgment is a rescue so special and vivid that the subject of it learns to sing aloud unto the preserving Lord! Delivered from so great a death, Believers learn to trust that the Lord will yet deliver them. When conversion is especially remarkable, the music of gratitude is pitched in a high key and the converts reach notes which are impossible to others. It is for sons of Korah to sing, “Therefore we will not fear.”

It is significant, also, that this Psalm was to be sung “upon Alamo,” which, in all probability, means that it was to be set to music suitable for virgin voices. The hallelujah at the Red Sea was chiefly in the hands of Miriam and the maidens of Israel—she took her timbrel and the daughters of Israel followed after her, singing unto the Lord. This is a Psalm of the same sort. You virgin souls, arise and sing unto God, your refuge and strength! Awake, you hearts that follow the Lord fully in the fervor of your first love, and lift your voices to the Lord! Come, you that have been kept pure and undefiled in your words and ways, you whose hearts are chaste to the love of Jesus Christ—you are called upon above all others to sing, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

It was because Luther’s heart was chaste towards God and his whole mind virgin towards Divine Truth that he delighted to sing this Psalm. In the days of the most furious opposition he was known to say to Melancthon, “Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm and let the devil do his worst.” So, too, when Luther was dead, Melancthon heard a girl singing this Psalm and he said to her, “Sing on, dear daughter, mine, you know not what comfort you bring to my heart.” We read of the armies of Gustavus Adolphus singing this Psalm before their victory at Leipsic. So, you see, the young, the simple, the guileless may sing that which nerves warriors for the battle—

**“God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid.”**

This morning, as I shall be enabled, I shall say a little, first, upon *the confidence of the saints*—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Then I will speak upon *the courage which grows out of it*—“Therefore we will not fear.” We shall close with a brief survey of *the conflicts to which that courage will be sure to be exposed*—“Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.”

I. First, then, let us carefully consider THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SAINTS.

God’s people have a sure confidence. Other men build as best they may, but true Believers rest upon the Rock of Ages. *Their confidence is altogether beyond themselves.* In this song there is nothing about their own virtue, valor, or wisdom. The heathen moralist boasted that if the globe, itself, should break, his integrity would make him stand fearless amid the wreck. But the Believer has a humbler, though a truer reliance. Though the earth is removed, he is undismayed. And this does not arise from his own personal self-sufficiency, but from God, who is his refuge and strength. He is fearless, not because of his original stoutness of heart and natural firmness of will, but because he has a God to shelter and uphold him. If he does not fear calamity, it is because he fears God and God, alone.

Our Psalm begins with God, and with God it ends—"The God of Jacob is our refuge." We may be as timid by nature as the conies, but God is our refuge. We are as weak by nature as bruised reeds, but God is our strength. We never know what strength is till our own weakness drives us to trust Omnipotence. We never understand how safe our refuge is till all other refuges fail us. When the earth is removed and the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, being driven both from land and sea, we hide ourselves in God. You who are strong in yourselves imagine strength where only weakness can be found—you seek the living among the dead and substantial confidences amid the "vanity of vanities." If we look to ourselves for courage, we shall fail in the hour of trial. When the earth is removed, the mightiest men are the first to shudder! The greatest boasters become the worst cowards. For confidence and peace we must say unto the Lord, "All my fresh springs are in You."

This confidence is gained by an appropriating faith. Peace comes to me not only by what God is, but by what God is *to me*. "God is our refuge and strength." "This God is *our* God." You never enjoy the goodness and greatness of God if you view them in an abstract manner. You must grasp them as your own. It seems a daring act for a man to appropriate God, but the Lord invites us to do it! He says, "Let him take hold of My strength."

Why hesitate to make the appropriation? Look at the men of the world—they would appropriate the whole earth if they could—continents are not too wide! It is no fault of theirs if they do not hedge in the stars and monopolize the sun. And shall not the Christian appropriate those heavenly things of which he is made the heir—an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Let us join with the Prophet Jeremiah in his comfortable soliloquy—"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." As with Thomas, we behold the print of the nails! Let us say with him, unto our blessed Redeemer—"My Lord and my God." The deep peace which is our right and privilege will not be ours unless, with assured faith, we take the Lord to be ours in all the fullness of His love. Come, let us now say—"God is our refuge and strength."

This confidence will be greatly sustained by a clear knowledge of God. "Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you." If we were greater students of God, how much happier we would be! Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man." It is a deplorably barren subject! Say, rather, "The proper study of mankind is *God*." When men of God make God their study, then they discover in Him those things which make Him a refuge for their hours of danger; a strength for days of labor and a help for emergencies of every kind. We ought to be able to say more of God today than we could a few years ago. Our general notion should now branch out into instructive particulars. We ought to now see the varied blessings which come to us from God and to speak of Him under a threefold description as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

We notice under the Old Testament dispensation that certain sacrifices, like the doves and pigeons which were brought by poor Israelites, were

simply cut in two and were laid on the altar. But other offerings which were brought by richer Israelites were more carefully divided. Take the offering of the rich to represent, as a type, the ideas of those who are well taught in knowledge and have a greater experience of the things of God and then you see how matters of detail were mentioned. When bullocks were presented we read of the fat, the head, the legs and the inwards—so here we read of refuge, strength and help. The more we know the Lord, the more shall we perceive that He is full of blessings to us. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” You shall be *saved* by the little knowledge which trusts God—but your *peace* shall be far fuller and deeper if you know the deep things of God and understand His secrets, for then you shall not be afraid of evil tidings since your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

If you are, as yet, a timid Believer, seek to grow in the knowledge of God, for thus shall you learn to say, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed.” Half our fears are the result of ignorance. Truth as yet unknown would greatly encourage us if we did but perceive it. If we knew more of God we would be bold as lions. Therefore I exhort all true Believers here to dwell much in the Presence of God and ask to be instructed in the Nature, the Character, the attributes of God—yes, the purpose, the promise and the Providence of the Covenant God of Israel. To know Him is eternal life! Solid peace which no calamity can destroy *must come from God*—from God appropriated and from God growingly known.

All this will be certified to us by our experience. This Psalm is best sung by men and women who know what they are singing because they have felt the preserving and delivering Grace of God. I shall put it to you this morning, you that know the Lord, can you not say by experience, “God is our refuge”? You have fled to Him—have you not found a shelter in Him? There have been times of trial so severe that you could not endure its force, but were compelled to flee from it. You fled to God—was His door closed against you? Did He bid you go elsewhere? Did He upbraid you for your presumption? And when you have hidden yourself in God, let me ask you, has He not afforded you a very blessed retreat? When you have entered into your chamber, shut your door and hidden yourself with God, have you not been at perfect peace? Yes, you have been as safe and as happy as Noah when the Lord shut him in!

Look at the little chicks yonder, under the hen! See how they bury their little heads in the feathers of her warm bosom! Hear their little chirps of perfect happiness as they nestle beneath the mother’s wings! “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust—His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” Have you not found it so? My happiest hours have not been in the days of my mirth, but in the nights of my sorrow! When all waters are bitter, the cup of Divine Consolation is all the sweeter. For brightness, give me not the sunlight, but that superior Glory with which the Lord lights up the darkness of affliction! It is not necessary for happiness that a man should be prosperous in business, or applauded by mankind—it is only necessary that the Lord should smile on him! It is not essential to happiness that he should be in good health, or

even that he should be naturally of cheerful spirit—God gives us the truest health in sickness and the most tender joy amid depression. Brothers and Sisters, “God is our refuge.” It is many a day since first we went to Him and we have been many times since, but He has never failed us once. I appeal to the aged and the experienced here—and I know that the older they are and the more tried they have been, the more steadfast will they bear their witness that “God is a refuge for us.”

We can also say that God has been our strength. When we have not been afflicted, but have had arduous labor to perform for God, we have been made to feel and mourn our weakness—and then the Lord has made us to glory in infirmity because His power has rested on us. What multi-form shapes that strength has taken! Many of you have had strength for the daily battle of business life, others for domestic life. Under fierce temptations you remain unconquered; under stern duties you remain unwearied; you have had strength for exhausting service or crushing suffering. Had you been left to your own wit and wisdom, they alone could never have sufficed you—strength of mind has been given from above. See the widow, left penniless, who has brought up a family of children! Can she tell how she did it? See the girl placed amid coarse and brutal men of licentious character—she remains pure—but can she tell you how? God is our strength in ways unknown to ourselves. Our trials are all different. No two of us have proved the Lord in exactly the same way, but yet our testimony is uniform—the Lord has been all-sufficient, His strength is perfect! Thus far we find that promise good, “Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be.”

We have also proved another thing, namely, that God is “a very present help in trouble.” We have had helpers after the flesh who have not been present when we needed them—perhaps they have studiously kept out of the way—at any rate, just at the pinch when we have said, “Oh, that so-and-so were here,” our friend has been at the end of the earth. But it has never been so with God. Has He not said, “Before they call I will answer them and while they are yet speaking I will hear”? Just there where the burden pressed, God has been immediately present to lighten the load! He is not only present, but *very* present. More present than our nearest friend when most present. God’s Presence permeates us. He is not only by our side, but He is *within* us, in the heart of our thoughts, at the springs of our life. Beloved, you have sometimes complained that God was absent from you. Because of your sin He has hidden His face from you. But let me ask you, did you ever find the Lord absent in your hour of trial? In the burning furnace, if ever anywhere, you shall see “one like unto the Son of God.” He has said, “When you pass through the waters I will be with you.” Wherever else He may supposed to be absent, He will be sure to be present in trouble.

Now, this is matter of experience and because we have experienced it, therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed. Having already tried and tested God, we are not going to doubt Him, now! We feel something of the mind of Sir Francis Drake, who, after he had sailed round the world, was buffeted with a storm in the Thames. “What?” he asked, “have

we sailed round the world safely and shall we be drowned in a ditch?" So do we say at this day! Helped so long and helped so often! God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, why should we fear? How *dare* we fear?

Once more, dear Friends, in order to realize the fearlessness of which this text so sweetly sings, we must not only have a past experience at our back, but *an immediate enjoyment of the Divine help*. If you can truly sing in your soul, "God is my refuge and my strength," then it will be impossible for you to be afraid. A sense of the nearness and graciousness of God will be an antidote to fear. I know that it is so in alarms and distresses which come under *my* observation. I have often stood at the bedsides of dear Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, when they have come to die, and I have, without exception, always found them perfectly restful and free from fear. It is a sorrow to see friends full of pain and to know that they are dying, but the various interviews that I have had with the departing have left no impression of gloom on my mind, but the very reverse!

I came this week out of a quiet bedchamber where I saw a Sunday school teacher passing away. It was a little sanctuary. Everything so quiet, peaceful, happy. Death cast no shadow over the sweet face. Heaven lighted the features. It seemed more like a marriage day than a death day. Why are these dying beds so happy? Because these people have any goodness of their own? Far from it! Without exception they disown it. Because they are strong and self-contained? No! I might speak of young and old Believers, greatly emaciated by long sickness, and yet as greatly strong in faith. What brings this peace? Truly, the Lord was there! His realized Presence makes death a small matter. Do we not sing—

***"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed"?***

The Presence of God with the soul of a Believer swallows up death in victory! Anything else that is terrible in time or in eternity loses its terror in the Presence of the mighty God of Jacob. Thus have I shown you where the confidence of the Christian really lies.

II. I come, secondly, to notice THE COURAGE WHICH GROWS OUT OF IT.

This courage is very full and complete. "Therefore we will not fear." It does not say, "Therefore we will not run away," but, "therefore we will not fear." It does not even say, "Therefore we will not faint and swoon in dread," but, "Therefore we will not fear." The Presence of God does so stay the soul and quiet the heart, that fear, which has torment, is driven away. Nature fears, it could not be otherwise. But through Grace, the Heaven-born spirit triumphs over nature and its fear. God does not take away from us those natural fears which lead us to seek the preservation of life, but He masters them by a serene security of heart produced by His Presence. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We see the position to be full of danger and yet we know that we are in no danger, the Lord being near. "Therefore we will not fear." It is a most delightful thing when the heart is

placid because we believe in God and in His Christ. This peace is the peace of God which passes all understanding—no *pretence* of peace—but a Divine *reality* which the world can neither create nor destroy!

Then, further, *this courage is logically justifiable*. It is not the courage of nature, which may be a mere brute virtue, such as dogs and bulls possess. Neither does it grow out of lack of feeling. The courage of the Christian is not the hardness of the stoic. The stoic boasts that he does not feel. The Christian *does* feel—feels as keenly as anybody and much more than most. And yet, for all that, the conscious love of God lifts him above fear! The Believer's fearlessness is founded upon argument and so the Psalmist words it, "*Therefore we will not fear.*" Because God is present as the refuge of His people, it is unreasonable for them to fear.

Observe, then, dear Friends, that whatever happens to the man who has God to be his God, he need not fear because none of these things will affect the ground of his confidence. No calamity will change God's love to us. Suppose we should witness an earthquake, a tempest, a famine, pestilence, a war—none of these would separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! These temporal calamities do not touch the vital matter—such things have no influence upon the unchangeable love of God except to make it more clear!

Suppose, again, that the most awful things were to occur. Would they not occur according to God's decree? We believe in a God who has arranged *all things* according to the counsel of His will. Do you believe that anything is left to chance? Is any event outside the circle of the Divine Predestination? No, my Brothers and Sisters—with God there are no contingencies! The mighty Charioteer of Providence has gathered up all the reins of all the horses and He guides them all according to His infallible wisdom! There is a foreknowledge and predestination which concerns *all things*—from the motion of a grain of dust on the threshing floor to that of the flaming comet which blazes across the sky. *Nothing* can happen but what God ordains and, therefore, why should we fear?

Again, nothing happens without the Divine Power being in it. The Lord says, "Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire. I have created the waster to destroy." The most violent and wicked men could not move a finger if strength were not lent them by the Lord. As for the catastrophes of Nature, is not the Lord distinctly in them? Who shakes the earth? Is it not God that looks on it and it trembles? When the mountains vomit fire, is it not because He touches the hills and they smoke? Our Father works all things—therefore should His children be afraid?

Furthermore, do not you and I believe that God overrules everything—that even that which naturally might be called evil is turned to good account? The Lord's goodness extracts the viper's tooth and supplies an antidote to the poison. It was evil, but God transmuted it into good by the alchemy of His Divine wisdom. Who is he that can harm you? "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Furthermore, we know that nothing that can happen, however tremendous it may be, can shake the Kingdom of God. Our chief possession lies in that Kingdom and if that is secure, all is safe. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against that Kingdom and, therefore, whatever is imperiled, our highest, best and most vital interests are safe beyond the shadow of harm. Suppose an accident should take away our lives? I smile as I think that the worst thing that could happen would be the best thing that could happen! If we should die, we should but the sooner be “forever with the Lord.” If in the quiver of God’s Providence there should lie an arrow which shall bring us death today, it would also bring us Glory! So, if the very worst that can befall us is the best that can come, why should we fear? I think this is good reasoning, is it not? If you are, indeed, a Believer, and if God is your refuge and your strength, there is a logical reason why you should not yield to alarm.

Now, *this fearlessness is exceedingly profitable*. If a man is able to contain himself and possess his soul in patience through the Presence of God, he will not do that which is foolish. Men, when they are frightened, are in hot haste and hurry themselves into folly. As if they were turned to children, men in their alarm will act without reason! In fact, terror is a kind of madness. Many absurd actions have been performed under the influence of panic. In times of danger the man who is calm is the most ready to use the proper means of escape. Presence of mind is invaluable and the best way to secure presence of mind is to believe in the Presence of God! In cases of sickness, the patient who does not fret is the most likely to be cured. We have had among us, just now, instances of dear friends in this Church who have been called to undergo most serious operations. And it has been a wonderful help to them that they have known no dread, but have been passive in the Lord’s hands.

Our Lord Jesus was always sweetly serene and this was one element of the wisdom of His behavior. In the struggle of life, a cheerful fearlessness is a grand assistance. Here is a man on the Exchange and things are going heavily against him. Prices are falling and all that he can do appears to make bad worse. If that man gives way to fear, he may plunge into utter ruin. But if he can step aside a minute or two and breathe a prayer to God, he will pull himself together, and when he comes back he will coolly survey the situation and act with discretion. Lose your head and you lose the battle! Lose your heart and you have lost all. To him who knows no fear there *is* no fear, provided that his forgetfulness of fear arises out of his memory of God! For the prudent government of life as well as for its enjoyment, the overcoming of fear is a great help.

Fearlessness also assists in keeping us from doing wrong. The man who can trust God with consequences will not do wrong in order to escape from losses. The man who yields to the fear of man is apt to conceal his convictions and if he does not deny the faith, he is apt to attempt a compromise—and that is the most dangerous operation which a Christian man can enter! If faith in God lifts us up above the fear of losses and sufferings, we shall say to every form of temptation, “Get you behind me, Satan.”

One thing more I desire to say about this fearlessness, namely, that *it brings great glory to God*. If you are enabled to rise above fear in times of alarm, then those who see you will say, "This is a man of God, and this is God's work upon his soul." I knew a youth, [Brother Spurgeon is speaking of himself] near 40 years ago, who was staying with relations when a thunderstorm of unusual violence came on at nightfall. A stack was struck by lightning and set on fire within sight of the door. The grown-up people in the house, both men and women, were utterly overcome with fright. The strong men seemed even more afraid than the women. All the inmates of the house sat huddled together. Only this youth was quietly happy. There was a little child upstairs in bed and the mother was anxious about it, but even her love could not give her courage enough to pass the staircase windows to bring that child down.

The babe cried, and this youth, whom I knew right well, who was then but newly converted, went upstairs alone, took the child and, without hurry or alarm, brought it down to its mother. He needed no candle, for the lightning was so continuous that he could see his way right well. He felt that the Lord was wonderfully near that night and so no fear was possible to his heart. He sat down and read a Psalm aloud to his trembling relatives who looked on the lad with loving wonder. That night he was master of the situation and those in the house believed that there was something in the religion which he had so lately professed. I believe that if all of us can, by God's Grace, get such a sense of God's nearness to us in times of danger and trouble, that we will remain calm and we shall bring much honor to the cause of God and the name of Jesus. Holy confidence sings Psalms by its spirit and acts. It is well to sing in the language of David, "God is our refuge and strength." But it is better, still, so to act that all can see that we do not fear though the earth is removed!

III. Time has fled and I must ask your patience while I now dwell for a little while upon the third point, THE CONFLICTS TO WHICH THIS FEARLESSNESS WILL BE EXPOSED. If you become fearless through the Presence of God, that courage will be tested.

It will be tried in ways *novel and unusual*. "Though the earth be removed." This is a terrible novelty. Those who have been in earthquakes tell me that the feeling is most singular. It does not seem like a common shake, but as if everything had given way at once. You do not know what to do—the very foundations of everything have slipped from under you. Suppose that the Lord is about to try us in new and unheard of ways? Yet, having the Lord to be our refuge, strength and present help, we will not fear. New trials will bring new Graces and prove the value of old promises.

Certain trials are very *mysterious and threatening*. It would be a great mystery if we were to see "the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." There they have stood for ages and should they take a leap, we should be at our wits' end to account for their motion! If some giant force plucked them up by their roots and hurled them into the center of the ocean, we would be amazed. But some afflictions are of that order—you cannot understand them. The sting of sorrow often lies in the unseen.

What we cannot comprehend astounds and appalls us. Yet, my Brethren, we need not fear if God is with us, though the mountains were hurled into the midst of the sea! The Lord could put them back into their places again. If all the devils in Hell had a hand in your trouble, you need not, therefore, be alarmed, for one God is greater than millions of demons! If all the legions of the pit rushed forth in hosts innumerable as flying locusts, all armed to the teeth and eager for your blood, yet the Lord of Hosts being with you, you would march through them as a man goes through a field of grass! One lion does not fear a flock of sheep and one man who trusts in God is master of armies of adversaries. Therefore, we will not fear, "though hills amid the seas be cast." Our God is mightier than all mysterious forces whatever.

Some trials also seem to be *utterly ungovernable*—"Though its waters roar and be troubled." You cannot do anything with the sea when it rages. It hurls itself aloft in great masses! It yawns in fathomless abysses! It rushes, it whirls, it sinks. As for its noise, it drowns your thoughts. The water is here, there, everywhere when the deep once begins to break loose! And certain troubles seem to be of like nature—they rush upon you all of a sudden, they multiply like swelling waves, they drive furiously, they carry all before them—and yet, even then, we need not fear! If God is with us, He is mightier than the noise of many waters, yes, than the mighty waves of the sea! There is no reason to fear noise and none, even, to fear the sea, for, "the Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever." Let the sea roar and let its waters be troubled—our faith shall never yield to fear.

Sometimes we get afraid through *sympathy with the fear of others*. Observe, "Though the mountains shake with its swelling," as though when the sea had taken to roaring and trembling, the mountains followed it in sympathy! So, when we see the strongest people giving way and panic seizing upon them, we are apt to yield. But if God is with us and we can hold firm to the Truth that He is our refuge and our strength, we shall not fear.

"Well," says one, "what is the practical run of all this?" Why, just this. There may come to you and to me great and unexpected trouble—and it will then be well to rise out of the reach of fear. War may soon burst upon us. The political atmosphere is charged with war and we may be surrounded by it before the year grows old. We have enjoyed, as a nation, so much of rest within our own island that we have grown somewhat secure—but even if war were at our gates—those who have made the Most High their refuge need not fear.

Something worse than war is threatening. Anarchy seeks to make havoc in the streets. There are plenty of signs and tokens that a breakup of social order is desired by not a few. Fierce spirits are eager to repeat among us the horrors of the French Revolution. To break down, divide, destroy, disintegrate is the policy of many. The earthquake of society is more to be dreaded than the quaking of the globe and we are within measurable distance of such a catastrophe. Shall we lie down and die? No, verily, we will not fear, though the earth is removed. If God is our con-

fidence we need not be afraid, though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing. The unloosing of the bond of society is a thing to be dreaded more than an incursion of wild beasts, but the Lord reigns and, therefore, right will prevail.

Perhaps some of you feel this sad depression of trade weighing upon your spirits. "I do not know what is coming of it," says one. "I do not think I shall long be able to provide for my family." Yes, but if God is your refuge and strength, I beseech you, do not lose heart. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." This depression is to you what the earthquake has been to the Riviera—but yet you must not be buried in despair. Hope on, hope always.

"Ah," says one, "but I fear the return of persecution. Popery is making rapid strides and may come into power again." I am not quite so much alarmed about *that* as some are, but even if it were so, we must not show the white feather. Do not be afraid! He that helps His people is stronger than their adversaries. He can deliver from the jaws of the lion and He will deliver without fail.

As for myself, I am often sadly tossed about because of the heresies and false doctrines of this present age. It grieves me to the heart to see the lack of spirituality among ministers and of holiness among professing Christians. It cuts me to the quick to see the utter rubbish and poison which is preached instead of Christianity. At times it looks as if all things were going wrong! The men to whom one looked as pillars, forsake the faith, and the staunchest give way for the sake of peace. We are apt to cry, "What will become of us?" But if God is our refuge and strength, we need not be afraid, even amid general apostasy! While God lives, Truth is in the ascendant. I remember years ago meeting with that blessed servant of God, the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was at Mentone with a dying daughter and he happened, that day, to be very much downcast, as, indeed, I have frequently seen him and as, I am sorry to confess, he has also frequently seen me.

That day he was particularly cast down about the general state of society. He thought that the powers of darkness in this country were having it all their own way and that, before long, the worst elements of society would gain power and trample out all virtue. Looking up into his face, I said to him, "And is God dead? Do you believe that while God lives the devil will conquer Him?" He smiled and we walked along by the Mediterranean communing together in a far more hopeful tone. The Lord lives and blessed be my Rock! As long as the Lord lives, our hope also lives! Gospel Truth will yet prevail! We shall live to see the old faith to the front again! The Church, like Noah's dove, will come back to her rest and bring something with her which shall prophesy eternal peace.

Now, my beloved Friend, think about yourself a minute and all the trials which may yet beset you. If you are to be afflicted with incurable sickness and gradually to pine away amid multiplied pains, yet you need not fear! If you are to be an invalid from this time forth to the end of your days, yet be not greatly depressed in spirit, for the Lord's Presence will sustain you. If heart and flesh both fail, God will be the strength of your

heart and your portion forever! By-and-by you and I will have to die unless the Lord should suddenly come. What then? Then will the earth be removed, so far as *we* are concerned! And then, as far as our experience goes, our mountain will be carried into the midst of the sea! But since God is our refuge and strength we ought not to dread the day.

Look into the Book of Revelation and you will see that tremendous events are foretold. All things shall be shaken; all the glories of earth shall melt away. Confusion, like the first chaos, shall cover all things; the earth shall rock and reel and the stars shall fall from Heaven. But even then we will not fear, since God will be our very present help. Some people dine on horrors. They are not content unless a future is set before them spiced with dread. I confess that I am not of their mind. The Lord Jesus has made an end of horrors for me. Whether we live or die, we shall be “forever with the Lord.” And to be where He is, is to be far away from fear! There will come a day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise—but we fear not resurrection! There shall be a day of days for which all other days were made, with its Great White Throne, pomp of angels and judgment of the quick and the dead, but, Beloved, though that day shall burn as an oven, we will not fear because we are secure in Christ Jesus! Therefore let us stand at the window and look out at the storm—and see the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds without a trace of fear!

I thought, as I read my text, what an awful case the ungodly must be in, for the very things which men most dread, namely, the falling of mountains and the gaping open of the earth, will become the *desire* of terrified sinners at the last! How great must be that horror which will altogether eclipse the horror which sends myriads flying in panic from their homes! When sinners shall see the face of Christ in His Glory, they will beg the mountains to fall upon them and the rocks to cover them, to hide them from the dreadful vision! The face of Love is terrible to those who have rejected it! Oh Sinners, what will be your anguish when you shall seek death and not find it?! What will be your dismay when even a tottering mountain, reeling with earthquake, shall be regarded as a friend?! Oh, that you would escape from the wrath to come! Oh, that you would, by faith, take Jesus to be your refuge and your strength!—

***“You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 46, 47, 48.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46 (VERS I), 673, 686.**

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THE DESOLATIONS OF THE LORD, THE CONSOLATION OF HIS SAINTS

NO. 190

A SERMON DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS,
ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, He burns the chariot in the fire.”
Psalm 46:8, 9.

IT seems that everything Christ-like must have a history like that of Christ. His beginnings were small—the manger and the stable. So with the beginnings of that society which we love and which we believe to be the very incarnation of the Spirit of Christ. Its beginnings also were small. But its latter end shall doubtless greatly increase—for, has not the end of Christ become exceedingly glorious? He has ascended up on high. He sits at the right hand of God, our Father. And doubtless this agency which God now employs for the conversion of the world shall have its ascension and God shall greatly magnify it.

But as Christ was called to suffer, so must everything Christ-like suffer with Him. The Christian who is the most like his Master will understand the most of the meaning of that term, “fellowship with Him in His sufferings.” And inasmuch as the Missionary Society is like Christ and has Christ’s heart and Christ’s aim, it also must suffer like Jesus. This year we have been made to sip of that cup. The blood of our martyrs has been shed. Our confessors have witnessed to the faith of the Lord Jesus. At the hands of bloodthirsty and cruel men they have met their fate and again the seed of the Church has been sown in the blood of the martyred saint.

I felt that in addressing you this day it would be far from me to offer you any advice or counsel when I am but the youngest among you all. But, by God’s grace, I pray I might be permitted, as sometimes the child does comfort its parents, to utter some few words of consolation which might cheer you in the present distress and nerve your arm for future combat with the great enemy of souls. And upon what subject could I address you which could be more full of consolation than the present? *“Come, behold the works of the Lord.”* Turn from man’s bloodshed and behold your God at work. And from the desolations of rebellion and carnage and anarchy, turn your eyes here to the *desolations which the Lord has made in the earth.* You see how, though the battle bow still does twang

with the arrow and though the spear is still imbrued in the heart's blood of men, yet He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder and burns the chariot in the fire.

We shall regard this text this morning, first, *as a declaration of what has happened*, and secondly, *as a promise of what shall be achieved*.

I. First of all, we shall look upon it AS A DECLARATION OF WHAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He *has* made in the earth."

1. And now let us commence the discussion of this part of our subject by inviting you to the sad spectacle of the desolations which God in His Providence has in different ages brought upon many nations. As it is said of man, that he is full of trouble, so it is with nations. They also are full of sorrows and some of them exceedingly bitter. Wars have devastated countries. Plagues have thinned our populations. All kinds of evil have swept from side to side across the most potent empires and many of them have been compelled, at last, to yield to the destroying angel and they slumber with the mighty dead.

Doubtless there has a wail gone up from the face of the earth when the invasions of barbarians have put an end to the promise of civilization—when cities, renowned for the culture of the arts and sciences, have suddenly become sacked and burned—when nations that had made great advances in knowledge have been carried away captive and the sun has been made to go back many a degree on the dial of the earth's history.

I beg you now turn your eyes and read the page of history and mark the various catastrophes which have happened to this world. And I appeal to you, as persons who have understanding, and who can trace the Lord's hand in these matters—have not all these things worked together for good? And so far have not the revolutions, the destructions of empires and the falls of dynasties been eminent helps to the progress of the Gospel? Far be it from us to lay the blood of men at God's door. Let us not for one moment be guilty of any thought that the *sin* and the iniquity which have brought war into the world is of God—but, at the same time, as firm believers in the doctrine of predestination and as firmly holding the great Truth of a Divine Providence, we must hold that God is the Author of the darkness as well as of the light—that He creates the providential evil as well as the good—that while He sends the shower from on high, He also is the Father of the devastating storm.

Oh, I say, then, come and see the Lord's hand in "Aceldama, the field of blood." Come and behold the Lord's hand in every shake of the pillars of the constitutions of the monarchies of earth. See the Lord's hand in the crumbling of every tower and the tumbling down of every pinnacle which had aspired to Heaven. For He has done it—He has done it! God is present everywhere.

And now, I again ask—can you not see in all these things a gracious as well as a terrible God? Can you not feel that everything that has yet happened to the world has really been for its good? Wars, contusions and tumults are but the rough physic wherewith God will purge the diseased body of this earth from its innumerable ills. They are but a terrible tornado with which God shall sweep away the pestilence and fever that lurk in the moral atmosphere. They are but the great hammers with which He breaks in pieces the gates of brass to make a way for His people. They are but the threshing wagons with which He does thresh the mountains and beat them small and make the hills as chaff—that Israel may rejoice in the Lord and that the sons of Jacob may triumph in their God. As it has been in the beginning, so it shall be even unto the end. The noise and the tumult of war in India shall produce good.

The blood of our sisters shall be avenged, not by the sword, but by the Gospel. On India's blood red gods, the arm of the Lord shall yet be felt. The might of Him that sits upon the Throne shall be acknowledged by the very men, who, first in the fray, have blasphemed the God of Israel. Let us not fear, let us not tremble. The end of all things comes at last and that end shall certainly be the desired one and all the wrath of man shall not frustrate the designs of God. The past troubles assure us for the present and console us for the future. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation He has made in the earth."

2. But now, turning from this somewhat dreary subject, I must invite you next to look at some desolations which will ever be *fair* in the eye of the follower of Jesus—the desolations of false worship. What a pleasant theme! O that we had but power truly to enlarge upon it! Will you turn your minds back to the origin of idolatry and tell me, if you can, what were the names of the first gods whom men profanely worshipped? Are they known? Are not their names blotted out from history? Or, if any of them are mentioned, are they not a byword, a hissing and a reproach?

What shall we say of idolatries which are of later date—those which have been noted in Holy Scripture and therefore handed down to infamy? Who is he that now bows before the god of Egypt? Has the sacred Ibis now a worshipper? Do any prostrate themselves before the Nile and drink her sweet waters and think her a deity? Has not that idolatry passed away? And are not the temple and the obelisk still standing—"the desolations which the Lord has made in the earth"? Talk we of the gods of Philistia? Do we mention Baal and Dagon? Where are they?

We hear their names—they are but the records of the past. But who is he that does them homage? Who does now kiss his hands to the queen of Heaven? Who bows himself in the grove of Ashtaroth, or who worships the hosts of Heaven and the chariots of the sun? They are gone! They are gone! Jehovah still stands, "the same yesterday, today and forever." One

generation of idols has passed away and another comes and the desolations stand—memorials of the might of God.

Turn now your eyes to Assyria, that mighty empire. Did she not sit alone? She said she should see no sorrow. Remember Babylon, too, who boasted with her. But where are they and where are now their gods? With ropes about their necks they have been dragged in triumph by our discoverers. And now in the halls of our land they stand as memorials of the ignorance of a race that is long since extinct.

And then, turn to the fairer idolatries of Greece and Rome. Fine poetic conceptions were their gods! Theirs was a grand idolatry, one that never shall be forgotten. Despite all its vice and lust, there was such a high mixture of the purest poetry in it that the mind of man, though it will ever recollect it with sorrow, will still think of it with respect. But where are their gods? Where are the *names* of their gods? Are not the stars the last memorials of Jupiter, Saturn and Venus? As if God would make His universe the monument of His destroyed enemy! Where else are their names to be found? Where shall we find a worshipper who adores their false deity? They are past, they are gone! To the moles and to the bats are their images cast—while many an unroofed temple, many a dilapidated shrine stand as memorials of that which was, but is not—and is passed away forever.

I suppose there is scarcely a kingdom of the world where you do not see God's handiwork in crushing His enemies. It is to the shame of the idolater that he worships a god that his fathers knew not. Although there are some hoary systems of iniquity, in most cases the system is still new—new compared with the giant mountains, the firstborn of nature—new compared with these old idolatries that have long since died away in the clouds of forgetfulness. It seems to me to be a very pleasing theme for us to speak of these desolations that God has made. For mark this—again we say it—as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be.

The false gods shall yet yield their sway. The temples shall yet be unroofed. Their houses shall be burned with fire and their names shall be left for a reproach. Their dignity shall not be honored, neither shall homage be given unto their name. O you that fear for the ark of the Lord. You that tremble at the firmness with which falsehood keeps its throne—look on these desolations and be of good cheer—God has done mighty things and He will do them again.

One can never pass, even in our own country, a ruined abbey, or a destroyed priory, or an old broken down cathedral, without a sweet satisfaction. They are fair ruins, all the fairer because they are ruined, because their inhabitants are forgotten, because the monk no longer prowls our streets. Because the nun, though she is here and there to be found, yet is no more honored. Because the apostate Church to which they belong has ceased to have power among us, as once it had. We will, therefore, seek to

honor God and in all our journeys we will think of this text—"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth."

3. And now, in the next place, let me ask you to remember what desolations God has made with false philosophies. As for stones and timbers, they are things that must decay in the common course of nature. One might be apt to think that some of the desolate temples we behold were rather the trophies of the tooth of time, than of the hand of God—but *thought* is a lasting thing. A bold philosophy that shapes into words the wandering thoughts which have taken possession of the hearts of men is an enduring thing. And how have some philosophers believed that they were writing books which would be read for ages!

They believed that their philosophy most certainly was *eternal* and that to the last day their disciples would be had in reverence. Let any classical student remember how many systems of philosophy have passed away before the progress of the kingdom of Christ. The mighty Stagyrate, once the great master of all minds, who even held in sway many a Christian spirit, at last lost his empire before a purer Truth.

But I forbear to mention these things. I would rather allude to the passing away of false systems of philosophy in modern times. For there are some of our fathers here whose hairs have but just turned gray, who can remember the rise and fall of some seven or eight theories of infidelity. You can look back and you can remember when it was a cursing obscenity with Tom Paine, having just also been the leering, scowling thing that Voltaire made it. You remember how it was the soaring, airy, speculating, scheming thing of Robert Owen. And then you recollect how it became the base, groveling thing called Secularism.

Men have trembled at that and have thought it will last. I believe I shall live to see the last Secularist buried and that at the funeral there will be attending the leader of some new system of infidelity, who, despite his hatred of God, will have to say over the tomb, out of very spite against the one who precedes him, "Here lies a fool, except a Secularist." You need not be afraid of these things. They live each a very little while. A near moon brings a new phase of the system.

The thing that they have fashioned with the utmost diligence and which they deliver with the most earnest declamation, which they think they have proved with the sureness of logic, which they have built, as they think, upon a rock, against which the gates of Heaven shall not prevail—how soon it is crumbled to dust and not a vestige of it is left—scarce a remembrance of it—but all is past away and gone. And even so shall it be. As it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be. "Every tongue that rises against You in judgment You shall condemn." The words of the wise are like the leaves of the tree of life and they fade not. But the words of the wicked are like the autumn leaves, all withered, soon to become skeletons and be blown away by the blast, to be heard of no more.

Planted by the rivers of water, the tree of the Church still grows, like a young cedar, fresh and green. But these things are like the desert bush—they see not when good comes. From earth itself they fail to draw their nourishment and Heaven denies to the cursed thing its genial shower and therefore soon it dies and without a memorial it passes away. Be of good cheer, Beloved! It matters not where the enemy attacks our entrenchments, they have been and they shall be routed. We tell the enemies of Christ to look to the thousand defeats that they have suffered beforehand. We warn them of their folly in attacking us again.

Woe unto you! Woe unto you! Though you quit yourselves like men, you Philistines, you must, you shall be servants unto Israel. Woe unto you, for the voice of a king is in our midst! Your fathers felt our might. Remember who it was that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. Your sires have trembled before us. Our fathers put ten thousand of your sires to flight and we will do the same with you. And when we have done it we will say of you, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” And will make you a byword with our children and a proverb with our menials forever.

4. But my text has a special reference to war—the desolation of war. Have you not noticed how magnificently peace wins its reprisals at the hand of war? Look through this country. Methinks if the angel of peace should go with us, as we journey through it and stop at the various ancient towns where there are dismantled castles and high mounds from which every vestige of a building has long been swept, the angel would look us in the face and say, “I have done all this—war scattered my peaceful subjects, burned down my cottages, ravaged my temples and laid my mansions with the dust. But I have attacked War in his own strongholds and I have routed him. Walk through his halls. Can you hear now the tramp of the warrior? Where now the sound of the clarion and the drum?”

The sheep is feeding from the cannon’s mouth and the bird builds his nest where once the warrior did hang his helmet. As rare curiosities we dig up the swords and spears of our forefathers and little do we reckon that in this we are doing tribute to Peace. For Peace is the conqueror. It has been a long duel and much blood has been shed, but Peace has been the victor. War, after all, has but spasmodic triumphs. And again it sinks—it dies, but Peace ever reigns. If she be driven from one part of the earth, yet she dwells in another. And while War, with busy hand, is piling up here a wall and there a rampart and there a tower—Peace with her gentle finger is covering over the castle with the moss and the ivy and eating the stone from the top and letting it lie level with the earth.

I think this is a fine thought for the lover of peace. And who among us is not? Who among us ought not to be? Is not the Gospel all peace? And do we not believe that when the Gospel is fully preached and has its day, wars *must* cease to the end of the earth? I therefore say, beloved Brothers and Sisters, may we not console ourselves under all the recent outbreaks

of a most bloodthirsty and cruel massacre, in the fact that God *has* made desolations, even in war? He has made desolations in the earth and, as it has been, so shall it be even unto the end. There is not now a rampart which shall not be sealed by peace. O you hoary bastions, you shall yet be destroyed—not by the cannon ball—but by something mightier still.

Charged with love, this day we shoot against you the great guns of the Gospel of Christ, and we believe that they shall move and shake you to your deep foundations and you shall crumble. Or if you stand, you shall be uninhabited, except by the owl and the bittern. I have a fond belief that the day is coming when Nelson, on the top of his monument, shall be upset and Mr. Whitfield set there, or the Apostle Paul. I believe that Napier, who stands in the square there, will lose his station. We shall say about these men, “They were very respectable men in the days of our forefathers, who did not know better than to kill one another. But we do not care for them now!”

Up goes John Wesley where stood Napier! Away goes someone else, who was an earnest preacher of the Gospel, to occupy the place high over the gate where another warrior rides upon his horse. All these things, the trickery of an ignorant age, the gewgaws of a people who loved bloodshed despite their profession of religion must yet be broken up for old iron and old brass. Every statue that stands in London shall yet be sold and the price thereof cast at the Apostles’ feet that they may make distribution as every man has need. Wars must cease and every place where war reigns and has now its glory must yet pass away and fade and wither.

We give all honor to these men now, for these are the days of *our* ignorance and God in some degree winks at us. But when the Gospel spreads we shall then find that when every heart is full of it, it will be impossible for us to tolerate the very *name* of war. For when God has broken the bow and burned the chariot we shall break the image and dash the sculpture into a thousand atoms. We shall think, when the trade is done, the men that did it may well be forgotten.

II. I think there is enough to cheer our hearts and nerve us all for the great battle of Christ. The desolations of the past should lead us to hope that there shall be the like and greater in the future. And now I am to look upon my text and very briefly, AS A PROPHECY WHICH IS TO BE FULFILLED.

I should only needlessly occupy your time, if I were to go over all my heads again, because really, every person will be quite as competent as I am to discern how what has been shall be in a yet higher sense. But we must observe once more, in noticing this as a prophecy, the figure of our text. It was usual, after a great battle and especially if peace was then firmly established, for the conquerors to gather up the arms of the vanquished into one great heap and then setting fire to it all, as Israel did to the spoils of Jericho, everything was consumed.

One of these days, when Christ shall come in His glory, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—not to say anything which would look like proclaiming the second coming here today—although I most firmly believe it and am sorry that we should ever have allowed in any of our missionary meetings any discussion upon a point which involves the faith of a great proportion of us. There are those of us who hold this to be as dear and precious a doctrine as any other in the Word of God and we therefore think it unfair that we should at any time have anything said against it.

When we meet together in the common bond of union for the spread of the Gospel of Christ, we think it a sore thing that we should be attacked. However, leaving all that, whether it be by a spiritual or by a personal coming—we believe that one of these days we shall be roused from our beds by one who shall say to us, “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth.” And when we arrive at the spot appointed, it may be, as the old Ephesians brought out all their books and burned them in the street, we shall see our soldiers marching rank and file and lay down their arms and all that they have of murderous implements, piling them into one heap. And happy is that mother’s child who shall be there to see it! But see it someone shall, when it shall be truly said, as the fire is kindled over all these things, “He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire.”

Happy the day, when every warhorse shall be hobbled, when every spear shall become a pruning-hook and every sword shall be made to till the soil which once it stained with blood. It is of that my text prophecies and my text naturally brings me to that as the great climax of the Gospel. This will be the last triumph of Christ, before death itself shall be dead. Death’s great jackal, War, must die also and then shall there be peace on earth and the angel shall say, “I have gone up and down through the earth and the earth sits still and is at rest. I heard no tumult of war, nor noise of battle.” This is what we hope for. Let us fight on with diligence and earnestness.

And now, having thus enlarged upon my text, you will permit me to offer a few remarks on a more practical subject. The question naturally arises, “Why has not this Promise been more abundantly fulfilled in our own times?” Many say, “This is Divine sovereignty.” Well, we believe Divine sovereignty with all our hearts. It is a doctrine which we delight to dwell upon and ever to acknowledge. But we cannot make Divine sovereignty the great sepulcher for our sins.

We cannot have it that everything is to be laid at the door of Divine sovereignty. We believe there is a sovereignty that ever overrules the sins of the Church, as well as of the world. We hold that in the highest and purest sense—but we think it is a very gross mistake for us always to be saving, if we are defeated, “It is Divine sovereignty.” Israel of old did not say

so. They looked for the accursed thing that was in the camp. They did not say, "Divine sovereignty," when they were beaten by Benjamin. But they enquired of the Lord. They were not content to say it was sovereignty. It *was* sovereignty, no doubt, but they desired to find another reason which, when discovered, might help them to remove the difficulty and enable them to conquer.

And now, Beloved, there are many reasons, I think, why we do not prosper as we would desire in the missionary field. And permit me very briefly to hint at one or two. I shall mean no offense to any.

One reason is because we have not a thorough and entire unanimity with regard to the matter. Now, I know something of the Baptist denomination. I have wandered through every county of England, pretty well, and been to a great number of the Churches and I grieve to see that there are many of our Churches still standing totally aloof from the missionary field. If they stood aloof from our particular Society, I might not so much regret, if they chose to have one of their own. But they have not one of their own either.

There is this great thing for which I would blame them. That they should have some objection to unite with those whom they think to be different from them in doctrinal opinions would not only be excusable, but possibly there might be occasions when it would be praiseworthy. That any of us who hold strongly the doctrines of the Grace of God and who, perhaps, give greater prominence than others to the truth as it was taught by Calvin and, as we believe, taught by Christ—should therefore have no missionary society—is a great and crying sin.

And I really think that a defection of a large part of our body, however it may be caused, may be one reason why we have not had such an abundant blessing from God. For, look here! You say you can do without them. Very well—so said the people to Joshua, when he led his troops to attack Ai. They said, "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai. And make not all the people to labor there. For they are but few." They thought it would be unnecessary and Joshua left behind him a large part and only took with him his strong, able-bodied men. But, together with "the accursed thing" that Achan had concealed, I believe that the want of all the army of Israel was a part-cause of the defeat at Ai. So it is with us.

Ah, if there is a means whereby we can get every Brother who calls himself a Baptist to unite himself with this Society, if there is any method of love, if there is any way of making concessions, if there is any mode or any means whereby we all could be bound together in the holy brotherhood as a denomination—I think we are each of us bound to make it. As far as I am concerned, I may say that there is not to be found upon the surface of the world one more strongly attached to the old faith, as I be-

lieve it to be—the old, strong, doctrinal faith—coupled with the earnest preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

Yet I find myself not out of place in preaching for a Baptist Mission, nor out of place in helping it and throwing my whole heart into it. It seems to me it was founded by ourselves—the very men who held these truths were the first leaders in it. And it seems to me the most strange and marvelous thing that any Brother should, from his love to sound doctrine, stand aloof from missions. I am sure it is a stab against our prosperity as Churches at home if we do not come forward to help the missions at large.

I am saying this because it may reach the ears of many of the Brethren who are possibly not present today. I trust they will think the matter over. We do not ask them to come with us—we will be very glad if they will—but let them at the very least have a society of their own. Let them be doing something and do not let it be said that there is a Baptist existing who does not love to send the Gospel to the utmost ends of the earth. That nonsense about God doing His own work and our sitting still and doing nothing ought to have been buried long ago.

I know not how to characterize it—it has done us immense damage. We know that God has accomplished His own work. But He always has worked and always will work with *means*. The men who do not approve of working by means and stand by and say, “I do not sympathize with it,” I do not wonder that God does not work with them—they do not deserve to be worked with. Let us cast away that and let us say, “If we can agree with these Brethren who associate in missions we will do so. If we cannot agree with those who associate in one society, we will do it somewhere else. But do it we will, for it is our anxious wish that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.”

But again, it is not all that, my Brethren. It is a want of real love to missions in all our Churches—and if this should sound critical and if any should say, “It is not so of the Church of which I am a member,” let it be so. I do not mean, when I speak generally, to include each individual. It is, I believe, one reason of our want of success, or of that measure of want of success that we have, that there is not a true love of missions in the Churches that really help them. Many love missions. They love the cause of Christ. But they do not love Zion better than their own households.

But as far as I can judge there are many whose attention to the mission field is confined to that one day in the year when the sermon is preached. Some of them confine that day very closely, too. For the very smallest three penny piece that can be discovered is appropriated to the collection on that occasion. They love the mission, yes, they do—but their love is that old sort—of which it is said, “She never told her love.” They never tell it by any contribution. They keep it very still in their hearts. We cannot think but that they do desire that the Gospel should fly abroad, for they sing it with lusty lungs and with voices vociferous.

But when there is anything to be done, they pinch and screw—the purse string is made half the ordinary circumference and it cannot be loosed. There is little to be given for Christ. Christ must take the dregs, the sweepings of their wealth. Ah, if our Churches loved missions, if we had more of the true Spirit in our midst, we should find scores of our young men rising up to go out and preach the Gospel to the heathen. And then the Church, taking an interest in the young men who sprang from its own heart, would think it its duty to maintain its missionary and send him forth preaching the Gospel to every creature.

I remember Edward Irving once preached a sermon to a vast congregation, upon missions. I think he preached for four hours. And the object of the sermon was to prove that we were all wrong—that we ought to send out our missionaries without purse or scrip, giving them nothing! Edward never volunteered to go himself! If he had done so at the end of the sermon, we might have endorsed his philosophy. But he stayed at home and did not go.

Now, we are no believers in that. We think that if a man *cannot* have help, it is his business to go without it. If a man loves the ministry, if he can only preach Christ's Gospel in poverty, God bless him in his poverty. But as a Church we cannot have that. "No, no," we say, "Brother, if you are going to a foreign land and you give your life and health and if you renounce the comforts of your family, we cannot let you go without anything. The least we can do is to provide for your needs." And one says, "There, though you go without purse or scrip, you cannot get across the sea except you have a ship, I will pay your passage-money."

Another says, "You cannot preach to these people without learning the language. And while you are learning the language you must eat and drink. It is quite impossible that you can live by faith, unless you have something that you can nourish your body with. Here is the fund to support you, that you may give all your time to the preaching of the Word."

Ah, if we did but love Christ better, my Brothers and Sisters—if we lived nearer to the Cross, if we knew more of the value of His blood. If we wept like He did over Jerusalem, if we felt more what it was for souls to perish and what it was for men to be saved. If we did but rejoice with Christ in the prospect of His seeing the travail of His soul and being abundantly satisfied. If we did but delight more in the Divine decree that the kingdoms of this world *shall* be given to Christ, I am sure we should all of us find more ways and more means for the sending forth the Gospel of Christ.

But to conclude. Perhaps, I may say and some of you may with tears confess it is true, it is a want of a revived godliness in our Church at home which prevents our hoping for any great success abroad. Ah, Brethren, we must till our own vineyards better or else God will not make us successful in driving the plow across the broad acres of the continents. We want to

have our Brethren more earnest in prayer. Look at our Prayer Meetings—a miserable handful of people, compared with the congregation. We want to have them more earnest in labor. Look at many of our agencies dying for want of effective laborers—when they are to be found—but they are not willing to come forth.

Where is the zeal of olden times? We are not among those that say, “The former times were better than now.” In some respects they were, in others not so good. But if they were better, it is not ours to bemoan, but ours to labor to make them better still. We want—gathering up all things into one—we want the outpouring of the Divine Spirit in our Churches at home. Just as the anointing oil was first poured on Aaron’s head and then went to the skirts of the garment, so must the Holy Spirit be poured on England and then shall it go to the utmost borders of the habitable earth. We want to have Pentecost at home and then, Hedes and Parthians and Elamites shall hear the Word.

“Begin at Jerusalem,” is Christ’s ordinance and it is Christ’s method. We must begin there. And as we begin there, in circles wider and wider and wider, the Gospel shall spread, till, “like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole.”

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, in repairing to our homes this morning, let us carry away at least one thought. Let us believe firmly that God’s purpose shall be accomplished. Let us hope joyously that we may be the instruments of its accomplishment. And then let us labor prayerfully, that our wishes may be consummated. What is there that you can do today for Christ?

Oh, if you love Christ, do not let this day pass till you have done something for Him. Speak for Him. Give to Him. But let each day be spent as a mission day and be each day a missionary for Christ. Begin at home. Enlarge your charity. But begin first at home. Let your own houses be cared for and then your own synagogues. And then, after that, you may send your missionaries to every part of the earth. I beg for a good collection today. It is the first time we have met together in this place and there is a large number of us. If we do not give a right good collection today, we shall not save our own credit. That is a poor way of putting it. It will be a disgrace to us if we do not give well today. But besides that, if we save our own credit, we shall not approve our love to Jesus. Give as God has given to you.

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A WISE DESIRE

NO. 33

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 8, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.**

***“He shall choose our inheritance for us.”
Psalm 47:4.***

The Christian is always pleased and delighted when he can see Christ in the Scriptures. If he can but detect the footstep of his Lord and discover that the sacred writers are making some reference to Him, however indistinct or dark, he will rejoice—for all the Scriptures are nothing except as we find Christ in them. St. Austin says, “The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the Man-Child, Christ Jesus, and were all intended to be hallowed garments in which to wrap Him.” So they are. And it is our pleasant duty to lift the veil, or remove the garment of Jesus and so behold Him in His Person, in His nature, or His offices. Now this text is concerning Jesus Christ—He it is who is to “choose our inheritance for us.” He in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is the great Being who is selected as the Head of predestination—to choose our lot and our portion and fix our destiny. Verily, Beloved, you and I can rejoice in this great fact, that our Savior chooses for us. For were we all to be assembled together in some great plain, as Israel was of old, to elect for ourselves a king, we would not propose a second candidate. There would be one who stands like Saul, the son of Kish, head and shoulders taller than all the rest, whom we would at once select to be our King and Ruler of Providence for us. We would not ask for some prudent sage or deeply taught philosopher. We would not choose the most experienced senior. Without a single moment’s hesitation, directly we saw Jesus Christ, in the majesty of His Person, we would say, in the words of the Psalmist, He who redeemed us, He who ransomed us, He who loved us—“*He shall choose our inheritance for us.*”

I remember once going to a Chapel where this happened to be the text and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, “This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance. It has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny—for,” he said, “we do not need Christ to choose for us in the matter of Heaven or Hell. It is so plain and easy that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose Heaven. And any person would know better than to choose Hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater Being to choose Heaven or Hell for us. It is left to our own free will,” he said, “and we have enough wisdom given

us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves,” and therefore, as he very logically inferred, “there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance.” Ah, but my good Brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we should need something more than common sense before we *would* choose aright! For you must remember that it is not simply the choosing of Heaven or Hell—it is the choosing of pleasure on earth, of pain, of honor or of persecution. And very often the man is bewildered. If it were just simply Hell that a man had to choose, none would prefer it. But since it is *sin* which engenders Hell and the *lust* which brings him on to punishment—*there* comes the difficulty. For by nature we are all inclined to follow the way which leads downwards. We are naturally willing to walk the road which leads to the pit of Hell—we do not seek the pit, itself, but the road that leads to it—and were it not for Sovereign Grace, none of us would ever have followed the path to Heaven! I am daily more and more convinced that the difference between one man and another is not the difference between his use of his will, but the difference of Divine Grace that has been bestowed upon him. So that if one man has his “inheritance in Heaven,” it will be because Christ chose his inheritance for him. And if another man has his place in Hell, it will be because he chose his inheritance himself. We *do* need someone to choose for us in that matter. We need our Father to fix our eternal destiny and write our names in the Book of Life. Otherwise, if left to ourselves, the road to Hell would be as naturally our choice as for a piece of inanimate matter to roll downwards, instead of assisting itself upwards.

However, to come at once to our text and leave every other person’s observations alone, “He shall choose our inheritance for us.” First, I shall speak of the text as being a *glorious fact*—“He *shall* choose our inheritance for us.” And, secondly, I will speak of it as being a *very just and wise prayer*—“He shall choose our inheritance for us.”

I. First, then, I shall speak of this as being A GLORIOUS FACT. It is a great Truth that God does choose the inheritance for His people. It is a very high honor conferred upon God’s servants, that it is said of them, “He shall choose their inheritance.” As for the worldling, God gives him anything, but for the Christian, God selects the best portion and chooses his inheritance for him. Says a good Divine, “It is one of the greatest glories of the Church of Christ, that our mighty Maker and our Friend always chooses our inheritance for us.” He gives the worldling husks. But he stops to find out the sweet fruits for His people. He gathers out the fruits from among the leaves, that His people might have the best food and enjoy the richest pleasures. Oh, It is the satisfaction of God’s people to believe in this exalting Truth that He chooses their inheritance for them. But since there are many who dispute it, allow me just to stir up your minds by way of remembrance by mentioning certain facts which

will lead you to see clearly that, verily, God does choose our lot and ap-
portions for us our inheritance.

And, first, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an overruling Provi-
dence and the appointment of Jehovah's hands as to the means whereby
we came into this world? These men who think that afterwards we are
left to our own free will by choosing this or the other to direct our steps,
must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but
that God, there, had His hand upon us. What circumstances were those
in our power which led us to elect a certain person to be our parent? Had
we anything to do with it? Did not God, Himself, appoint our parents, na-
tive place and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the
skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse
me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as
easily as to have given me a pious mother who, each morning and night
bends her knees in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had
pleased, have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from
whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy and obscene language?
Might He not have placed me where I would have had a drunken father,
who would have confined me in a very dungeon of ignorance and brought
me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's Providence that I had so
happy a lot that both my parents were His children and endeavored to
train me up in the fear of the Lord? To whom do any of you owe your pa-
rentage—be it good, or be it bad? Is it not to be traced to the decree of
God? Did not His predestination put you where you were? Was it not the
Lord who appointed the place of your birth and the hour thereof?

Look again at your bodies, do you not see the doings of God there?
How many children are born into the world deformed? How many come
into it deficient in some one or other of their faculties? But look at your-
self. You are, perhaps, comely in person, or if not, you have all your
limbs. Your bones are well set and you are strong—must you not trace
this up to God? Do you not see that He arranged the commencement of
your life for you? You might have opened your career there, or there, or
there. But He placed you there in that particular spot, without asking
your leave. Did He turn to you and say, O clay! in what shape shall I fa-
shion you? Or, did He who begat you ask you what you would be? No—
He made you what He pleased and if you have now the possession of
your faculties and limbs, you must acknowledge and confess that there
was the decree of God in it. And, still further, how much of the finger of
God must we discern in our temper and constitution? I suppose no one
will be foolish enough to say that we are all born with the same natural
temperament and constitution. I am sure there are some persons who
differ a great deal from others, at least I should like to differ a little from
them—some of those with whom you could not sit a single moment with-
out feeling that you would rather stand in a shower of rain and get drip-
ping wet than sit on a sofa by their side. Some persons are so exceeding-

ly warm in their tempers that they actually burn a hole in their manners and conversation—they cannot speak without being cross, testy and angry. Now, although such persons often indulge their temper, we must allow that, in some measure, they are excusable. Perhaps they can trace it to the nature which their mother gave them, (as the worldly poet would say), or that temperament with which they were born. And there are others here who are naturally amiable—who have a kind, loving spirit—who are not so easily moved to wrath and passion—in whom there is not so much of that absurd pride which makes man exalt himself above his fellows. Who has formed them aright or fashioned them so well? Has not God done it and proved Himself a Sovereign? And must we not see in this that God, in some way or other, has fixed our destiny from the very fact that the opening bud of life is entirely in His hands? It does seem rational that since God appointed the commencement of our existence, there should be some evidence of His control in the future parts of it!

But now a second observation. I will ask any sensible man, above all, any serious Christian, here, whether there have not been certain times in his life when he could most distinctly see that, indeed, God did “choose his inheritance for him”? You are a young man—you are asked what will be your pursuit—you choose such-and-such a thing. You are about to be apprenticed to that peculiar trade—a misfortune happens—it cannot be done. Without your consent, or will, you are placed in another position. Your will was scarcely consulted. Your parents exercised some authority, while the hand of Providence seemed to say to you, “it must be so”—and you could not help yourself. Take another case—you had established a house of business—suddenly there came a crushing misfortune which you no more could avoid than an ant could stop an avalanche. You were driven from your business and now you occupy your present position because there was nothing else to which you could betake yourself. Was not that the hand of God? You cannot trace it to yourself. You were positively compelled to change your plan. You were driven to it. Perhaps you once had friends on whom you depended. You had no thought of launching out into the world and being independent of the assistance of others. Suddenly, by a stroke of Providence, one friend dies. Then another. Then another. And, without your own volition, you were placed in such circumstances that like a leaf in the whirlpool, you were whirled round and round and the employment you now follow, or the engagement that now occupies you, is not of your own choosing, but is that of God.

I do not know whether all of you can go with me here, but I think you must in some instance or other be forced to see that God has, indeed, ordained your inheritance for you. If you cannot, I can. I can see a thousand chances—as men would call them—all working together like wheels in a great piece of machinery, to fix me just where I am. And I can look back to a hundred places where, if one of those little wheels had run awry—if one of those little atoms in the great whirlpool of my existence

had started aside—I might have been anywhere but here, occupying a very different position. If you cannot say this, I know I can with emphasis. I can trace God’s hand back to the period of my birth through every step I have taken! I can feel that, indeed, God has allotted my inheritance for me. Some of you are so willfully beclouded that you will not see the hand of God in your being and will insist that all has been done by *your* will without Providence. That you have been left to steer your own course across the ocean of existence. That you are where you are because your own hands guided the tiller and your own arms directed the rudder. All I can say is, my own experience belies the fact. And the experience of many now in this place would rise in testimony against you and say, “Verily, it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” “Man proposes, but God disposes,” and the God of Heaven is not unoccupied, but is engaged in overruling, ordering, altering, working all things according to the good pleasure of His will!

A third fact let me mention. If you turn to the pages of Inspiration and read the lives of some of the most eminent saints, I think you will be obliged to see the marks of God’s Providence in their histories too plainly to be mistaken. Take, for instance, the life of *Joseph*. There is a young man who from early life serves God. Read that life till its latest period when he gave commandment concerning his bones and you cannot help marveling at the wondrous dealings of Providence. Did Joseph choose to be hated by his brothers? But yet, was not their envy a material circumstance in his destiny? Did he choose to be put into the pit? But was not the putting into the pit as necessary to his being made a king in Egypt as Pharaoh’s dream? Did Joseph desire to be tempted by his mistress? He chose to reject the temptation, by God’s Grace, but did he choose the trial? No, God sent it! Did he choose to be put into the dungeon? No. And had he anything to do with the baker’s dream, or with Pharaoh’s? Can you not see, all the way through, from first to last—even in the forgetfulness of the butler, who forgot to speak of Joseph till the appointed time came, when Pharaoh would need an interpreter—that there was, verily, the hand of God? Joseph’s brothers did just as they liked when they put him into the pit. Potiphar’s wife followed the dictates of her own abandoned lust in tempting him. And yet, notwithstanding all the freedom of their will, it was ordained of God and worked together for one great end—to place Joseph on the throne of Egypt! For as he said, himself, “you meant it for evil, but God intended it for good, that He might save your souls alive!” There was the ordinance of God’s Providence in it as clearly as there is light in the sun! Or take again the life of such a man as *Moses*. I suppose no one will deny that there was a Providence in his being placed in the ark, just in the particular spot where Pharaoh’s daughter came to wash. And who will deny that it was Providence that she would say, “Go and fetch me a woman to nurse this child,” and his mother, *Jochabed*, should come to nurse him? I imagine that no one would consider

that there was an absence of Providence in the fact that the child was comely, that he grew in all the wisdom of Egypt, and that he had a mind capacious enough to receive knowledge. Nor will you deny the Providence that led him to the side of Horeb's mountain, or to Jethro's daughter. Nor can you for an instant deny that there was Providence which afterwards brought him before King Pharaoh and helped him all his way through. The man was God's man. God seems to be stamped upon his brow in all his acts. In all the three forties of his life, whether the forty spent in the palace, the forty in the wilderness, or the forty that he was king in Jeshurun—in all this there seems to be so manifestly God overruling the man's acts, that you cannot help saying, "Here is the Almighty! Here is the hand of God in everything the man does!" And you turn from the history of Moses and say, "Truly God was in this place though I knew it not."

I might refer you to the life of *Daniel*, fraught with interest as it were, and in that book you would see how his steps were first of all sadly guided to Babylon by being carried captive. And yet from the degradation of his banishment, there arises the grandeur of Daniel's visions and Daniel's character is displayed in all its clearness! You must see that a wise hand was dealing with him and developing his virtues and his excellencies. More I shall not say, here, because I like you to refer to the Scripture yourselves. Scripture is the best book of Providence we have ever read. If anyone should ask me for a book of anecdotes illustrative of Providence, I would refer him to the Bible.

There he might find the marvelous story of the woman who went out into a distant country and during her absence lost her inheritance. On a certain day she went to the king to ask him for it and just as she came there, Gehazi was telling the king concerning a woman whose son Elijah had raised to life—and he said, "O, my Lord! This is the woman and this is the son!" There were Gehazi and the king talking on the subject and the woman came in just at the moment. And yet there are some fools who call that a "chance." Why, Sirs, it is an *appointment* as clearly as anything could be! And that is just one out of myriads of instances you could find in Scripture—where you can see God present in the affairs of man!

But as the Bible, after all, is the best proof of any Doctrine we can advance, I beg to refer you to one or two texts. First, let me ask you to direct your attention to a passage in Isaiah 45:6, 7—"I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." Now here is a most direct assertion of the power of God in everything—that He makes peace and that He makes evil—that he creates light and that he creates darkness. We may ask as the Prophet did of old, "Is there evil in the city and the Lord has not done it?" Even Providential evil is to be ascribed to God. And in some marvelous sense which we understand not and cannot compre-

hend, the ordinance of God has even reference to the sins of men—"He has made even the wicked for the day of His wrath." "The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, even these shall show forth His praise." Good and evil in your condition you must ever regard as the work of God. Whatever your circumstances are this morning—are you sick, are you in poverty or are you much troubled—the evil as well as the good is the work of God! And shall a man receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall he not in equal patience receive evil? Will you not take everything from God which He is pleased to give, seeing that He, Himself, asserts, "I create light, I create darkness. I make good and I make evil." Turn now to a passage in Job 14:5—"his days are determined, the number of his months are with You. You have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." What a solemn thought! God has "appointed our bounds." One of the Prophets says, "You have hedged up my way with thorns and made a wall so that I cannot find my paths." And that is first the Truth in regard to man's life. The "bounds" of it are "appointed!" Man only walks within these "bounds." Out of these limits he cannot get. If this does not imply the hand of God in everything, I do not know what does. Turn now to a Proverb from the wise man—Proverbs 16:33—"The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." And if the disposal of the lot is the Lord's, whose is the arrangement of our whole life? You know when Achan had committed a great sin, the tribes were assembled and the lot fell upon Achan. When Jonah was in the ship, they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. And when Jonathan had tasted the honey, they cast lots and Jonathan was taken. When they cast lots for an Apostle who should succeed the fallen Judas, the lot fell upon Matthias and he was separated to the work. The lot is directed of God. And if the simple casting of a lot is guided by Him, how much more the events of our entire life—especially when we are told by our blessed Savior—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father." If it is so. If these hairs are counted. If an inventory is written of each one of them. And if the existence of each of these hairs is marked and mapped, how much more precious in the sight of the Lord shall our lives be? Take one more passage in Jeremiah 10:23—"O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps." Jeremiah said, "I know" and he was an Inspired man and that satisfies us. "I know."

I have sometimes, when quoting a passage out of the Apostle Paul, been met by somebody replying that they really did not think Paul so great an authority as other Scripture writers. I was astonished at hearing of the following dialogue between two young persons. One remarked, "Mr. Spurgeon is too high in Doctrine." Said her friend—"He is not higher than St. Paul." "No" she said, "But St. Paul was not quite right according to my opinion." I was very glad to sink in the same boat as Paul, for if Paul was not right in the view of poor pitiful creatures, verily Spurgeon

should not care! I would rather be wrong with Paul than right with anybody else because Paul was Inspired! But will they cut out some of the Old Testament, too? Will they dare to accuse Jeremiah of mistake? Jeremiah says, "I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps."

I may not have proved my point to any person who is an antagonist to this Doctrine—but to you who believe, I do not doubt that I have somewhat confirmed it. Let me say one word. Perhaps some who hear me will say, "Then, Sir, in the case of Christians, you make God the author of sin if you believe that their lives were ordained of Him!" I *never said so!* Prove that I said it and then I will come before your bar and try to excuse myself. But until you hear these lips say that God is the author of sin, go your way and prove, first of all, what it means to speak the Truth. I have not asserted any such vile Doctrine! But I will tell you who does say that God is the author of sin—and that is the man who does not believe in natural depravity—that man makes God the author of sin. I remember the case of a minister who most fearfully split on this rock. When a child had been doing something that was far from right, a friend said, "See there Brother, there is original sin in the child. For at its early age see how it sins." "No" he said, "it is only certain powers God has placed in the child developing themselves. It is the nature which God has given it originally. It is one of God's perfect creatures."

These gentlemen make God the author of sin because they throw the nature upon God, whereas had we not fallen, everyone of us would have been born with a perfect nature. But since we have fallen, anything good in us is the gift of God and that which is evil springs naturally from our parents, by carnal descent from Adam. I never said God was the author of sin! I thank you, Sir—take the accusation yourself!

II. And now having thus spoken upon the Doctrine, we shall have a few minutes concerning this as A PRAYER. "He shall choose our inheritance for us." Dry Doctrine, my Friends, is of little use. It is not the Doctrine which helps us, it is our *assent* to the Doctrine. And now I have been preaching, this morning, concerning God's ordaining our lives. Some do not like it. To them the Truth of God will be of no service. But there are some of you, who if it were not the Truth, would say you wish to have it so. You would say in your prayers, "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

First, "You shall choose my *mercies* for me." You and I, Beloved, often get to choosing our own mercies. God in His wisdom, may have made one man rich. "Ah," says he at night, "would God I had not all this wealth to tease my mind and worry me. I believe any peasant who toils for me has far more rest than I have." Another who is a poor man wipes the hot sweat from his brow and says, "O my Father, I have asked You to give me neither poverty nor riches. But here am I so poor that I am obliged to toil incessantly for my bread. Would God I could have my mercies there

among the rich.” One has been born with abilities. He has improved them by education and this improvement of his natural powers has entailed upon him fearful responsibilities so that he has to exercise his thoughts and his brain from morning till night. Sometimes he sits down and says, “Now if I am not the most hard-worked of all mortals. Those who keep a shop can shut it up. But I am open at all times and I am always under this responsibility. What shall I do and how shall I rest myself?” Another who has to toil with his hands is thinking, “Oh, if I could lead such a gentlemanly life as that minister. He never has to work hard. He only has to think and read—of course that is not hard work. He has, perhaps, to sit up till twelve o’clock at night to prepare his sermon, that is not work, of course. I wish I had his situation.” So we all cry out about our mercies and want to choose our allotments. “Oh,” says one, “I have health, but I think I could do without that if I had wealth.” Another says, “I have wealth, but I could give all my gold to have a good constitution.” One says, “Here am I stowed away in this dirty London. I would give anything if I could go and live in the country.” Another, who resides in the country, says, “There is no convenience here, you have to go so many miles for the doctor and one thing and the other. I wish I dwelt in London.” So that we are, none of us, satisfied with our mercies! But the true Christian says, or ought to say, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.” High or low, rich or poor, town or country, wealth or poverty, ability or ignorance, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

Again—we must leave to God the choice of our *employment*. “Oh,” says the preacher—and I have been wicked enough to say so myself—“how would I like to have all my employment in the week that I might sit in the pew on the Sabbath and hear a sermon and be refreshed.” I am sure I would be glad to hear a sermon. It is a long time since I heard one. But when I do attend one, it always tires me—I want to be improving on it. How would I like to sit down and have a little of the feast in God’s House, myself, instead of always being the serving man in God’s household. Thank God! I can steal a crumb for myself sometimes. But then we fancy, O that I were not in that employment! O that like Jonah we might flee to Tarshish, to avoid going to that great Nineveh. Another is a Sunday school teacher. He says, “I would rather visit the sick than sit with those troublesome boys and girls. And then the teachers do not seem to be so friendly with me as they should be.” The Sunday school teacher thinks he can do anything better than teach. But there is his friend who visits the sick coming down the stairs and he says, “I could teach little children, or preach a little but really I cannot visit the sick. There is nothing so hard and that requires so much self-denial.” Another says, “I am a tract distributor. It is not easy work to have your tracts refused at this door and then at another. And persons looking at you as if you came to rob them. I could stand up before the congregation and speak, but I cannot do this.” And so we get to selecting our employments. Ah, but we

ought to say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me," and leave our employment to God! "If there were two angels in Heaven," said a good man, "supposing there were two works to be done and one work was to rule a city and the other to sweep a street crossing—the angels would not stop a moment to say which they would do. They would do whichever God told them to do. "Gabriel would shoulder his broom and sweep the crossing cheerfully and Michael would not be a bit prouder in taking the scepter to govern the city." So with a Christian.

But there is nothing that we more often want to choose than our crosses. None of us like crosses at all. But all of us think everybody else's trials lighter than our own. Crosses we must have. But we often want to be choosing them. "Oh," says one, "my trouble is in my family. It is the worst cross in the world—my business is successful—but if I might have a cross in my business and get rid of this cross in my family, I should not mind." Then, my beloved Hearers, in reference to your mercies, your employments and your afflictions, say—"Lord, You shall choose my inheritance for me! I have been a silly child. I have often tried to meddle with my lot. Now I leave it. I cast myself on the stream of Providence, hoping to float along. I give myself up to the influence of Your will." He that kicks and struggles in the water, they say, will be sure to sink. But he who lies still will, float—so with Providence. He that struggles against it, goes down. But he who resigns everything to it, will float along quietly, calmly and happily.

Having thus spoken upon the extent of the surrender very briefly, I might hint at *the wisdom of it* and show you it is not only good for you to offer this prayer, but it is better for you than to control yourself. I might tell you that it is good for you to give yourself up to God's hands because He understands your needs. He knows your case and He will so pity your necessities that He will give you the best supplies. It is better for you than if you trusted in yourself, for if you had the choosing of your troubles or your employments, you would always have this bitter thought, "Now, I chose it, myself, and, therefore, I must blame my own folly."

But now another thought. *What was the cause of the Psalmist saying this?* How came he to be able to feel it? There are few Christians who can really affirm it and stand to it—"You shall choose my inheritance for me." I think the cause is to be found in this—that he had a true experience of God's wisdom. Poor David could, indeed, thank God for having chosen his inheritance for him for He had given him a very goodly one. He had put him in a king's mansion. He had made him conqueror over Goliath and had raised him to be ruler over a great people. David, by a practical experience, could say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me." Some of you cannot say it, can you? What is the reason? Because you have never witnessed Divine guidance. You have never looked to see the hand that

supplies your mercies. Some of us who have seen that hand in a few instances are obliged to say from the very force of circumstances—

“Here I raise my Ebenezer.”

Then, again—

“Here by Your help I’ve come.”

I hope and trust in that same good pleasure which has guided me up to now, that it will bring me safely home.

Again—it was a *true faith* that made the Psalmist say he relied upon God. He knew Him to be worthy of his trust, so he said, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.” And, again, it was *true love*, for love can trust—affection can put confidence in the one it loves. And since David loved his God, he took the unwritten roll of his life and he said, “Write what You will, my Lord.” “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

I might finish, if I had time, by telling you the good effects that this produced upon the Psalmist’s mind and what it would produce upon yours. How it would bring a holy calm continually if you were always to pray this prayer. And how it would so relieve your mind from anxiety that you would be better able to walk as a Christian should. For when a man is anxious he cannot pray. When he is troubled about the world he cannot serve his Master—he is serving himself. If you could “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Beloved, “all things would then be added to you.” What a noble Christian you would be—how much more honorable you would be to Christ’s religion! And how much better you could serve Him.

And now you who have been meddling with Christ’s business, I have been preaching this to you. You know you sometimes sing—

“Tis mine to obey, ‘tis His to provide,”

but you have been meddling with Christ’s business, you have been leaving your own. You have been trying the “providing” part and leaving the “obeying” to somebody else. Now take the obeying part and let Christ manage the providing. Come then, Brothers and Sisters, doubting and fearful ones, come and see your Father’s storehouse and ask whether He will let you starve while He has stored away such plenty in His garner! Come and look at His heart of mercy and see if that will ever fail! Come and look at His inscrutable wisdom and see if that will ever go amiss. Above all, look up there to Jesus Christ, your Intercessor, and ask yourself, “while He pleads, can my Father forget me?” And if He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of the least of His poor children? “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you.” “He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

This I have preached to God’s children—and now one word to the other portion of this crowded assembly. The other day there was a very singular scene in the House of Commons. There is a certain enclosure there set apart for the members. Into this place a gentleman ignorantly strayed. By-and-by someone raised the cry, “A stranger in the House!”

The sergeant of the House went up to him, took him by the shoulder and reminded him that he had no business there—not being a member—not one of the elect—not having been elected by the country. The man, of course, looked very foolish. But, as he had made a mistake, he was let go. Had he willfully strayed within the enclosure and taken a seat he might not have gotten off so easily. When I saw that, I thought, “A stranger in the House!” This morning is there not a stranger in the house? There are some here who are strangers to the subject we have been discussing—strangers to God—strangers to true religion. “There’s a stranger in the house.” It led me to think of that great “assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven.” And I thought of the people who, last Sabbath night, sat down at the Lord’s Table to partake of the Sacrament. And the idea struck me, “There’s a stranger in the house.” Now, in the House of Commons, a stranger cannot sit five minutes without being detected, for all eyes are so soon fixed upon him. But in Christ’s Church—in this Church—a stranger can sit in the house without being found out. Ah, there are strangers sitting here, looking as religious as other people—some that are not children, some that are not chosen—some that are not heirs of God. They are “strangers in the house.” Shall I tell you what will happen, by-and-by? Though I cannot detect you under the cloak of your profession. Though God’s people may not find you out, the grim “sergeant of the house” is coming. Death is coming—and *he* will discover you! What will be the penalty of your intrusion, as a professor, into Christ’s Church? What will be your lot if you have been a stranger in His House, below, when you find that, though you may have sat for a little while in this House of Commons below, you cannot sit in the House of Lords above? What will be your lot when it shall be said, “Depart you accused”? And you may exclaim, “Lord! Lord! Have we not eaten and drunk in Your Presence and taught in Your streets?” And yet He will say, “Verily, I never knew you!” “You are a stranger in the house!”—“Depart, accursed one!”

How can I tell who is a stranger in these pews and who are strangers upstairs? Some of us are not strangers! “We are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.” To such of you as *are* strangers, I pray you think of it and go to Christ’s Throne and beg Him that yet you may be His children and numbered with His people. Then, after that, I will talk with you about my text, but not now. Now I bid you pray to God, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

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

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

BEHOLDING GOD'S CHURCH

NO. 3423

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.”
Psalm 48:12-14.***

THE proper study of the Christian is Christ. Next to that subject is the Church. And though I would by no means ever urge you to think of the Church as, for a moment, to put her in comparison with her Lord, yet think of her in relation to Him. You will not dishonor the sun by remembering that there is a moon! You will not lessen the glory of “the King in His beauty” by remembering that the Queen, His Spouse, is “all glorious within.” You will not think any less of Christ for thinking much of His Church. So tonight I shall invite you to a consideration of the honor, and glory, and dignity of the Church of God as set forth in these verses. And our first point will be *the survey which should be taken of the Church*—“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider well her palaces.” Secondly, *here is the objective of this survey*—“That you may tell it to the generation following.” And here is, thirdly, a very excellent reason given for our seeking to accomplish this objective—“For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” So, then, let us think awhile of—

I. THE SURVEY WHICH WE SHOULD TAKE if we would become practically useful to coming generations—the survey we ought to take of the Church of God.

And let us begin by saying it *should be complete*. “Walk about Zion, and go round about her”—go completely round the wall. The Church is set forth as a walled city. The description calls to my mind the city of Chester. There you have the old wall standing, with here and there a most picturesque tower or turret. Now Jerusalem stood in that way, and the Church of God is likened to Jerusalem. “Go round about her”—make a complete circuit of all her walls, try to be acquainted with all of Church history, with that which concerns Apostolic times, and that which had to do with the ages of the first Christian persecution. With the Reformation, with the sufferings of our fathers and covenanting sires. And then on to the present day. Let your survey of the Church, as far as possible, in-

clude all portions of it. Remember that your denomination is not the whole of Zion—that although you do well to look carefully to the quarter in which your house is situated, yet there are other houses of God's servants in other parts of the city—and you should take a survey of those regions as well as those in which you immediately dwell. See how your Brothers and Sisters in Christ fare and take their pledge and report. Let it never be a joy to a Baptist if he hears that some Congregational Church does not prosper. Let it always be a joy to a Presbyterian when he hears that a Wesleyan is doing good. Let it be a great joy to us if any part of the Church of God prospers! And if in any place there is decay or decline, let us bear in our prayers that particular portion of the Church of God, and pray Him to strengthen that part of the city wall against the foe. Let your survey of the Church be as complete as you can make it. "Go round about her."

Let it also be frequent. I am afraid that some persons think very little, indeed, of the Church of God. I mean that while they know how the shop, and the State, and the world generally are getting on, they could scarcely tell how many members were added to the one Church to which they belong. Certainly they know little about other sections of the Church and, perhaps, care as little as they know! It should not be so with the citizens of Zion! The time to favor Zion will come when God's servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof—when the very least thing that concerns the Church of God shall be important to the citizens of Zion! Frequently, my dear Friends, look not only on your own things, but also on the things of others. Does not the text say, first, "Walk about Zion"? Then it adds, "Go round about her," as if, after having done it once, you were to do it again, and yet again, and again—always caring for the Church and constantly making an earnest, enthusiastic inspection as to the prosperity of the great cause of Christ in the land.

And *let your inspection and survey be deliberate.* "Count the towers thereof." Look at the detail, count the towers, bring your careful pondering into the business. Do not give a mere glance, hurrying round and then saying, "I saw the city, but really do not know how many towers there were." Study the details of the Church of which you are a member. Try to look after the individual interests of your Brothers and Sisters. There may be a backslider to recover and rejoice over. There may be a mourner to comfort, a seeker to direct, or a faint heart to encourage. Mark well the towers! "Set your heart towards them," says the Hebrew—do not regard the interests of the Church of God as secondary to anything! If the Church prospers and Christ is glorified, all things else are little—but if there is defeat to the armies of Israel, nothing can console the Christian!

And *let your inspection of the Church of God be always earnest.* "Consider her palaces"—not a mere superficial look at the Church—reading the weekly paper—the weekly religious paper—which recounts the little events in your Zion, but consider well. I would to God we had many who

in secret would so consider as to sigh and groan over the lack of love and earnestness that there is just now. The wave of revival seems, now, to have passed over us—and we are now like the shore when the sea retreats from it with the fullness of its strength. There needs to be some men of wisdom to discern the times and, “to know what Israel ought to do.” Each one of us who loves the Lord, and has a stake in the city as citizens, should seek to consider well its interests and endeavor to promote them earnestly and strenuously—seeking first to know thoroughly what they are—that we may render our share towards their serving. Although this exhortation may seem to some to be very tame and tritely commonplace, yet how much I wish we were all obedient to it—and surely, then, great practical results would follow! There are some who manifest a keen interest in all that happens in the Church. If there is a missionary going abroad, their prayers go with him. If there is a new voice lifted up for Christ, they are much more pleased than if they found a bag of gold! These same persons are often mourners in Zion when the Gospel is not fully preached, when Prayer Meetings are thinly attended, when no conversions are made, when worldliness sweeps over the Church. And the more we have of such men, the better—they are sure to be the very pick and cream of the Church, those who walk round Jerusalem, who go round about her—who mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces!

But now let us be obedient to one of our own rules, namely, to take a matter in detail. So, taking the text in detail, we have, first, to walk about Zion, which I take to mean let us inspect the Church herself—let it often be a theme with us—a theme of study. What is the Church of God? On what is it founded? It is built upon a Rock and “the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” The Church of God stands fast in the Immutable Love of God according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. *The Church of God was designed by Infinite Wisdom.* It is not a corporation of men that come together according to their own agreement and will, and so at haphazard. It is not an organization framed by the shrewd wit and wisdom of man. God designed the true Church in Eternity! He is the Architect and Builder of the Temple in which He is, Himself, to dwell. Not only the great outline of that plan did He mark and settle, but every line of it! Yes, and every stone of it—and when that stone shall be quarried and how it shall be quarried—and where it shall be placed, and when it shall be placed in the appointed spot! The Divine Will of God and the Eternal purpose may be seen running through the whole of the Church, and it is well for us to look often to her foundations and look to the Designer, the great Artifice, who builds all things! This Church of God, as far as it is already built, has been built by Divine Power alone. Instruments have been used but all the power is of God! There have been builders and wise master-builders, but still, these have been the servants employed by the great Builder of all! He that built all things is God. That is especially true in the Church of

God. If there are any other buildings which have been put up by human might, they will assuredly crumble from their place. Only that which God built will endure. All men's work will pass away and, perhaps, the sooner the better, for wood, and hay, and stubble would but destroy the beauty and the completeness of that building whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose walls shall glisten with gems in that day when the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, "Grace, Grace unto it!" The Church is a wonderful piece of architecture and well worth our walking round because, unlike any other, her strength is not merely material. The Church is built up of living stones. Life flows through the whole. We have seen marvelous buildings. As I have looked at the cathedral at Milan, I could hardly help thinking that it looked as if it had sprung up from the earth, watered by some miraculous shower! It seemed a thing of such beauty, but every stone was, after all, a stone. But the Church of God has grown under a Divine, miraculous hand, and every stone, from the foundation to the pinnacle glows with life! Wondrous Temple for a living God to dwell in! How should He dwell in temples made with hands, and pillars of iron, dust and ashes—things that were created but for baser uses? But He can live where hearts glow with emotion—where intelligence brightens with instruction, where holiness, peace and joy are the polished stones—the glory with which they glitter! It is a Temple of living stones—you may well go round about it!

The Temple has a *glorious history*, too. Strange histories have been connected with buildings. What would the stones of Stonehenge tell us if they could speak? What secrets might not the Pyramids reveal if for once they could break their solitary and solemn silence? Those far away temples of Carnac and Baalbec—what have they beheld? What armies have marched by them? What nations and generations have perished and passed beneath their shade? But this Zion, this habitation of the living God—her history how grand! When does it begin? In old Eternity God has ordained her. Along the whole page of human history you trace her most distinctly. How gloriously does she shine forth at the Red Sea, when God works plagues on Zoan and breaks the dragon in the midst of the sea! How brightly does the Church shine when you mention such names as David and all his victories, or Sennacherib and his hosts slain by the avenging angel! The history of the Church of God is an aggregation of histories, all of them miraculous, for the Christian Church is a miracle so far as its life is concerned—it is life in the midst of death—not only life in the sepulcher, but life in the very midst of death itself. Spiritual life in these poor bodies is just such, but oh, Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid that we are too silent about the history of the Church! We hear continually of patriots singing of the brave days of old when their fathers fought the foe. We ought to sing more often the songs of Moses and the Lamb—that the Lord God has gotten to Himself the victory, and given to His people rest and conquest. The Church is worth going round, for her history is so bright.

But best of all, the Church should be surveyed by us, *because of Him who dwells within*. It shall be said of no other place, "Here Jehovah specially and radiantly resides." I know men think of their ridged roofs and of their lofty pillars in their cathedrals, and think these ensure the Divine indwelling, but He is no more inside that building than outside! God is to be found on the loftiest mountain, as well as in the valley—and where the preacher stands upon a log of wood upon the village green, the place is just as consecrated as though a thousand years it had heard nothing but the song of praise and the voice of prayer! There are no holy places now—these are done with! They are the beggarly elements of the Law—in the living Church, built up of men and women who have been born unto God by His Spirit—there, Jehovah peculiarly dwells—in Heaven and in the little Heaven below in the midst of His elect people, whom He has ordained according to His purpose! There might be whole hours spent in talking about the Church, but enough of that first word, "Walk about Zion."

Brothers and Sisters, I shall invite you next, in your survey of Zion, to *observe her conspicuous towers*. "Count the towers thereof." Shall I be counted fanciful if I say that these towers may guard the Doctrines of the Gospel which stand prominently round the Church of God, for the protection and succor of the citizens? I shall not, certainly. The enemy have always looked upon these as towers, for attacks have been made one after another upon the different parts of our most holy faith. For a long time our Reformers stood like a wall round the tower of Justification by Faith, and the whole battle seemed to be waged around that particular portion. After a while the conflict shifted—and it continues to do so from year to year and day to day. Sometimes we have had to contend for the true Deity of our blessed Lord. Sometimes for the full and Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture. There is not a tower in the whole compass of the walls that guard the Church, but what has had to maintain siege after siege, and bear upon it the brunt of the attack! And what is better, the shields of the mighty have been vilely cast away when Zion's troops have put the enemy to rout!

May not these towers also represent *the place of observation of the Church*? "Count the towers thereof." Where do God's watchmen go to observe the times, and to see what is coming? Do they not go to the chamber of communion, to the place of prayer, to the teaching of Holy Scripture and get near to God? Then are they not able to see afar off and to mark where the foe will make his next assault? Surely I shall not be wrong if I say that in our times the pulpit has to become the tower of the watchmen. While that is well and faithfully maintained, no assaults of the foe shall prevail! As the Roman Catholic priests once said to Krummacher, "Unless you take the pulpit out of the way, we shall never be able to put you down." Let the Christian, then, go and count the towers of the Church! Let him watch the doctrines! Let him learn them! Let him understand them! Let him know how to defend them! Let every Christian

pray for the minister of the Gospel! Brothers and Sisters, pray for him! Count the towers and if you see one that seems to be badly manned with watchmen, ask that God's Grace would raise up other and mightier men for the defense of Holy Zion! And if there is anything else, if there is any place that may not have a tower, think of it—think of it prayerfully—and carefully regard it in your prayers before God as an object of your solicitude!

But I must conduct you on, for our time flies. You are invited to *an inspection of the ramparts of defense*. "Mark you well her bulwarks." The bulwarks go entirely around the city—they are lines of ridges, ditches, trenches and fortifications. Now mark well the fortifications of the Church of God. God the eternal Father has thrown up a line of ramparts—the Eternal Purpose—who shall frustrate it? The Everlasting Covenant—who shall make it void? The promise and the oath, the two Immutable things by which it is impossible for God to lie—who shall storm these two? Who shall break upon these two? We are safely defended behind them! The Power of God—who shall defeat it? The Wisdom of God—who shall outwit it? The Presence of God—who shall deprive us of it? The Love of God—who shall separate us from it? All these are the entrenchments of our Zion. When our foes have once looked upon them, they may well turn back with dismay. God, the Blessed One, has been pleased to make lines of fortifications, too. He has offered His precious Sacrifice—and between the Church and destruction there is the full stream of His atoning blood! Who, by any means, shall make the Atonement void, or the Cross of no effect? Between the Church and the foe stands the brass wall of the righteousness of Jesus Christ! God is not unfaithful, to forget the work of His dear Son. Stronger than iron is the intercession of Jesus Christ! For Zion's sake He will never cease or hold His peace, but will plead day and night for His people when they are tempted, that their faith fail not. And there is the mediatorial work of Christ, like a wall of fire about them. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." Who shall break through, upon the Church, through *all* power? Surely these—

***"Munitions of stupendous rock,
Our dwelling place shall be!"***

And then there is the Kingdom of Christ in the latter day promised to come—the promise of God to come with power and take His people to Himself. That is a sure guarantee of the security of the Church until the day of manifestation and the appearing of the Son of God!

Around the Church of God, too, the Holy Spirit has thrown up His rampart. He was pleased, first of all, to create the Church, and since that day He has preserved it safely. It is His to provide spiritual teaching. It is His to take of the things of Christ and show them unto it. It is His to comfort. It is His to sanctify. It is His to perfect. And all His gracious influences and operations are so many protections against the attacks off the foe. Aha! Aha, you enemy of Zion! If you had to do with poor puny

men like us, you might soon put us to the rout! Your sophistries and worldly wisdom might soon bring us to the non-plus, but the Holy Spirit is with us and is in us—and we shall answer you with a wisdom that you shall not be able to counter!

“The best of all is,” said John Wesley, “that *God* is with us.” “God with us! God with us” is the shout of our victorious host! “Emmanuel”—in this name we conquer—by this name we overcome! So you see, Brothers and Sisters, you may mark well her bulwarks—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have securely garrisoned and bulwarked the Church of the living God! You are called to notice, in the fourth place, *her palaces*. On which, but a word. Of course, the houses of Zion were inside the walls, and so the dwelling places, the meeting places of Believers are inside the line of defense. What kind of dwelling places are these that belong to the citizens of Zion? Are they cottages? Is it, “Mark you well her cottages”? No, not so. Is it, “Consider her alms houses”? No! It is, “Consider her *palaces*.” Palaces are the abodes of those of the greatest wealth, of those having rank and dignity in life. Then am I to understand that the people of God are rich? They are not in earth's wealth very often—not in perishable gold and silver—but in what is infinitely better! They are rich in faith, rich in favor, rich in the loving kindness of the Lord. Then am I to understand that the people of God are honorable? They are not with worldly honor, but God has said, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.” And am I to remember that the people of God are royal? They are kings and priests! They are the true blood-royal of the universe. The blood-imperial is not in the veins of those who claim it, but in the veins of the descendants of the King of Kings! Their ancestry is the highest under Heaven! They are God's aristocracy. Consider, then, her palaces. Where are the palaces and what are they? Consider then, my Brothers and Sisters, the place where the saints worship, for where the saints meet together for prayer and praise, *there* are the palaces! Consider them and mark them well, to love them and say, “How amiable are Your tabernacles, oh, Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.” Consider the palaces of Christian fellowship, for if it is in a barn—when Christians meet together, they make a palace of it! Consider the palace of fellowship with Christ. Wherever we meet with Him, we are at once in a palace! Consider the palaces of the promises—that it is better than a promise which is spoken of in that word, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.” These will be our dwelling places in all ages, and it is infinitely better than any earthly palace can possibly be!

“Consider her palaces.” Thus I have gone into detail round the walls of Zion. Now, the second thing, very briefly, is—

II. THE OBJECTIVE TO BE ATTAINED BY OUR MAKING OURSELVES THUS ACQUAINTED WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD.

It is this—"That you may tell it to the generation following." The Church of God should take care that what God has done for one generation is told to the next. How much have you and I been helped by what our fathers told us? Those wonderful deeds that are kept on record—what God did in the days of old—have ministered great consolation to us in this present age. Let us take care that we hand down to our sons and daughters a record of what God has done. The pith of the matter is just this—each Christian ought to take a deep interest in the work of God in his time, that he may know how to teach his children, and especially to teach those who are born unto the family of God. Teach the young Christian what God *has* done, *is* doing and *will* yet do for His Church! I am very thankful that I have around me a number of Christian people who take a deep interest in the Cross of Jesus Christ. I believe that you are the people who will be sure to be succeeded by a generation who will take an equal interest in the same work. But if you were not, yourselves, interested, I could not suppose that it would be any concern to you to hand down the sacred traditions of your experience to the next generation. But now I trust that you will take care that there shall be kept alive in the world the record, the experimental record, of God's mighty acts towards His people in our day, even as in olden times! They speak of what the Lord did. Go you, each of you, and tell others what God has told you! Never hide the precious things that God reveals to you. What He speaks to you in the closet, proclaim upon housetops! Of course, it is well to learn first—do not try to teach before you have learned—but when you have learned, it is well to teach it immediately. Always mark well—"consider," says the text—"that you may tell it to others." May we train up in all our Churches studious Christians, intelligent Christians, well-versed in all that concerns the Church of the living God! I believe that in proportion as Christian people are well-instructed, the attacks of the adversary will be repelled and defeated. But if we only gather together undisciplined bodies of men and women who merely come to hear preaching, but receive little or no instruction, they will become like flocks of sheep—the prey of the wolf whenever he shall come. Mark well, then the bulwarks of Zion, that when your turn comes to defend them, you may be at home in the battle—not come into the Church like a stranger, knowing nothing of what it is to do for Christ, or what Christ is doing for it. And now, lastly—

III. THERE IS A REASON GIVEN WHY WE SHOULD SEEK TO TRANSMIT THE RECORDS OF THE CHURCH TO OTHER GENERATIONS.

The story of God's love to His Church is to be told from one generation to another, and the reason is this—because "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." Observe, if Israel could change their God, it could as well forget what had occurred, but as she will have the same God forever and ever, let her remember what God did for her of old! And as that God will be the same to us, let each of us trea-

sure up memories of what He has worked for us—for these are instructive as to what we may hope for in the future! He that helped you in years past will not fail you now. He that proved Himself faithful 20 years ago is faithful today. Is God All-Sufficient in your childhood? Is God All-Sufficient in your old age? With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Remember, then, the past mercies are as forge ashes, from which you may gather the spark that may light the fire of today, and that even the future may be indebted to the same blaze!

Besides, we may well recollect what God has done, for if we tell it to others, we shall never have to retract, for God will continue to do the same as He always did. I am afraid that the Church has grown very faint-hearted as to the dealings of the Lord with her. We hardly expect to see such things done, as in the first age of the Church. "That was the heroic period," it is said, "but now we are in our decline." It is not so with this God of the Apostles! This God of the martyrs! This God of the Reformers! This God of Wesley and of Whitfield—this God is our God not for time only, but forever and ever—and I dare not give you any restricted sense of "forever and ever." There are some people who expect the Lord will want to turn us out of Heaven at the end of a certain time, or they must think, so to carry out their belief, that "forever and ever" may mean only for a limited time! That is one of the modern heresies of these boasted times. But for my part I believe, "forever," means forever and ever! And this God is our God, not for ages and ages, but forever and ever, world without end—beyond any possibility of coming to a conclusion! And He will be the same God right through the ages, onward. "And He will be our guide even unto death." Now, the text is not altogether correct in the translation of the Hebrew, for, "unto death," might very well be rendered "out of—*beyond*—death." He will be our guide to the River Jordan, and He will be our guide through it! He will be our guide into Canaan, where we shall rest forever, and never more be driven out! Well, then, may we talk of what He has done, because He will always go on to do the same! We may keep on talking even to Eternity, about what the Lord has done, for no period in Eternity (if periods there can be) can ever witness any change in the Most High! He will still be the same just God to the ungodly, and the same gracious God to His own people forever and forever!

Oh, talk you, then, of His mighty acts! Study them, and learn them! And then speak of them with the tongue, like the pen of a ready writer, or if you go stammering, let the tongue of the dumb sing with you! Oh, to speak of the everlasting mercy of our God! On such a theme as this, they who have been heretofore silent may grow into orators, for the history of the Church of God and the story of God's love might well unloose our stammering tongues and make us tell of His immense, unsearchable love! Would to God that all the Church were orators for Him! Would that you who belong to this Church were! Many, I know, belong to divers sections of it, but alas, some are, perhaps, members of this Church, yet not

members of the Church of God! And some of you are not even professedly members of God's Church. May you be converted! May you listen to the Gospel, whose message you doubt! It is a message even to you—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This is the Gospel that He has sent us to preach, saying these words, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be condemned." God bless and save you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 58:1-12, JEREMIAH 30.**

Verses 1, 2. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching God.* And what a strange thing this is, that there are some people who take delight in the ordinances of God and yet they are living in the most shameful sin. I must confess this remains a mystery to me. But I hear of some who will attend Prayer Meetings and seem to enjoy them—who are to be found in the House of God whenever the doors are opened, and yet, their characters will not bear the Light of God. One would think that they would not wish to be told of their sins, and to come under a faithful ministry—and yet they do—and the more faithful that ministry is, the more they seem to like it, and yet go on in their sins! Oh, what strange blindness is this which loves the Light and yet will not see by it—men that take to themselves niter and much soap, and yet will not wash—that heap up the bread about them as if they built a house with bread, and yet do not eat of it! Oh, infatuation most strange, to apparently love the Gospel and yet not to receive it into the heart so as to be changed by it. See how God talks to this religious people.

3. *Why have we fasted, say they, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.* They fasted and then they said, "Why did not God accept our fasting?" Why, because they made their poor servants work up to the very last all that they could do! They never gave them any rest. They exacted all their labors and they, themselves, while they pretended to faint, were taking their pleasure!

4. *Behold you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day so make your voice to be heard on high.* They were fond of getting into religious disputes. And when they had a fast day they fell to loggerheads about different doctrines, and they got angry with one another, till they began to smite with the fist of wickedness! And they thought that a day spent in that manner would be acceptable to God? What kind of a God would He be?

5, 6. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loosen the bands of wickedness.* That is, if by any dishonesty you have got a man in your power, set him free—if you have oppressed him, give him his rights. This in God's kind of fasting!

6. *To undo the heavy burden.* Not to exact from a man what you have no right to have, but what, perhaps, the law may allow you to get out of him. This is God's fasting—"to undo the heavy burdens."

6, 7. *And to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke. Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry?* It is God's kind of fasting to give what you would have eaten yourselves to the other's feast. "To deal your bread to the hungry."

7. *And that you bring the poor that are cast out of your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him: and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?* When you know that there are poor persons, perhaps of your own kith and kin—and, in one respect, we are all of one flesh—when we know that there are such, and yet refuse to help them, it is idle to talk about fasting! But if we would see to this, then comes this promise.

8, 9. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the Glory of the LORD shall be your reward. Then shall you call, and the LORD shall answer: you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger.* That is, the scorning the poor man.

9-11. *And speaking vanity. And if you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon day. And the LORD shall guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones.* You see, by giving comes getting! According to the philosophy of God, it is by watering others that we get watered ourselves! God feeds the man that feeds others. He made fat the bones of the hungry. Now God says He will make fat his bones. He satisfied the souls of those that were in drought as best he could, and now God will satisfy his soul in drought and make him—

11, 12. *And you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: you shall raise up the foundations of many generations and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.* God help us to obey His precept that we may partake in His promise!

JEREMIAH 30.

12. *For thus says the LORD, Your bruise is incurable and your wound is grievous.* See here is the bass again. We have got down into the sorrowful notes—all to make us sick of self and ready to receive the Grace of God.

13, 14. *There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you. Out of sight, out of mind. They have forgotten you. Oh, when God wounds, it is a wound, indeed! When He breaks the heart, who can comfort? If He does but speak, the earth trembles. He touches the hills and they smoke—*

***“When He shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?”***

14, 15. *They seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased. Why cry you for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity.* “These are dark words,” says one. If they are incurable, what more need be said? Ah, the things incurable with men are curable with God! Sin is the malady that none can cure but God alone.

15, 16. *Because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you. Therefore—*Now I read this, this morning, and I could not help dwelling upon this, “therefore.” It looks like a *non sequitur*, but there is a real argument in it. Therefore, because you have now come to the worst, because you cannot help yourself, because you are ruined and undone—

16, 17. *All they that devour you shall be devoured: and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto you.* Oh, the Sovereignty of Divine Grace! How it comes in when every hope is gone! Man's extremity is God's opportunity! An incurable sinner and, therefore, God comes to cure him! If you are brought so low that you cannot go any lower, God will put His everlasting arms underneath you. I speak to some, tonight, who are about to enter into peace, joy and rest. “I will restore health unto you; I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord.”

17. *And I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD; because they called you an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.* They said, “There is no hope for that man, there is no relief for that woman. Therefore God means to give up all relief.” Nothing pleases Him better than to undertake a desperate case! God is great at a dead lift. When all the world is palsied, then is God Omnipotent.

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

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

“AS WE HAVE HEARD, SO HAVE WE SEEN”

NO. 2014

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts,
in the city of our God: God will establish it forever.”
Psalm 48:8.***

“As we have heard, so have we seen”—this is seldom true. In many places we see what we have not heard and what we have heard we do not see. Time was when many simpletons believed that the streets of London were paved with gold. I am sure I do not know any part of London in which a single lump of that metal can be found in the footway. Ten thousand idle tales there are in every country of mines where fortunes may be dug out of the earth and plains where wealth forces itself on the immigrant. But how seldom do we hear the good news, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

But when you come into the “City of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God,” the reports about it are true and the truth exceeds the report. For, like the Queen of Sheba, we cry, “The half was not told me.” When we speak of the privileges of the Church of God on earth it is impossible to exaggerate. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” Behold, what blessings, what riches, what royalties the Lord Jesus bestows upon His chosen! How cleansed they are by His blood! How quickened by His life! How honored by His glorious enthronement at the right hand of the Father!

You cannot speak of Zion and her prosperity in too exulting a style. Happy are you, O Israel! And if we speak of the city of God as it shines in full splendor above, words fail us to set it forth. I doubt not when we arrive at its blessed abodes and tread its golden streets and wear our crowns of immortality, we shall not only say, “As we have heard, so have we seen,” but we shall be lost in wonder and surprise at the overwhelming revelations of Divine love.

It is always true of the things of God and of the Church of God—“As we have heard, so have we seen.” What His Word promises His work performs. This thought will be the clue of my sermon and my line of discourse will be guided by the text. May the Holy Spirit make it useful to us all!

I. Our first observation upon the text is this—IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE LISTEN TO TRUE WITNESSES. Otherwise we shall not be able to say, “As we have heard, so have we seen.” If we listen to false witnesses, the more we believe them the worse for us—it will not be *faith* but credulity and in due time there will be a sad awakening from idle dreams. It is

of the first importance to you all that you should hear the Word of God and receive the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. So that both in the throng of life, and when you stand upon the borders of death and in the changeless state of eternity, you may be able to say, “We thank God for the Gospel which we heard. For what we heard with our ears has been verified in our lives.”

The Israelites who sang this forty-eighth Psalm had heard of Jerusalem and its Temple, of Jehovah and of His sure defense of His chosen city—how had they heard of it? They had heard of it by reading for themselves, or listening to the reading of the Word of God. They had five books of Moses and other writings. In these books they read marvelous stories of what Jehovah had done for His people. They would remember well how the Lord worked for His chosen in Egypt and how He brought them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They would read the record of God’s merciful provision for the tribes in the wilderness, of His victories over their enemies, such as Og, king of Bashan and Sihon, king of the Amorites.

They would read with wonder the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and the overthrow of tyrants by Gideon and Barak and Jephthah. They would see what the Lord worked by His servant, David, and by others who trusted Him in the old times. All this would raise high their confidence in Jehovah—and now it had come to pass that while Jehoshaphat was king, the holy city had been beleaguered by confederate Moabites and Edomites and Ammonites. And once more the Lord had made bare His holy arm and given a glorious triumph to Judah—without it being necessary for His people to strike a single blow. The adversaries, moved with mutual jealousy, had fallen upon one another and become their own executioners. When the men of Judah saw this, they cried, “The old Book is true. Jehovah has worked wonders before our eyes. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts.”

My Brethren, attend carefully to what this Book records and reveals. It is now enlarged for your greater edification. Let this record be the report which you hear concerning the Lord our God and His ways of Divine Grace. Let us give earnest heed to Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists who wrote in the name of the Lord. For in that case we shall hear the Truths of God which shall be so verified by experience as to make us joyfully exclaim, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

These good people had also *listened* to the ministers of God. The priests, when they were not engaged in actual attendance at the Temple, were expected to teach the people. It is said of the tribe of Levi, “They shall teach Jacob Your judgments and Israel Your Law.” Prophets also went through the land declaring the mind of God and when the people heard these messengers whom the Lord had sent to speak in His name, they heard that which the Lord fulfilled. For none of the words of His servants were suffered to fall to the ground. How necessary it is that you should hear the Truth of God spoken by those that are *sent of God*.

Many false Prophets have gone forth into the world. That which a man fetches out of his own mind may or may not be true. In any case you have a right to criticize and discuss it. But he that speaks with, “Thus says the Lord,” at the back of his words stands on another platform. God’s Word demands our reverent faith and he that speaks it faithfully speaks with authority and not as the scribes. Conscience within the breast of man echoes to the voice of Divine Truth and owns its power, even when the will refuses to obey. Oh, that you may not, because of itching ears, heap to yourselves teachers. But may you hear the faithful messenger of God so that you may say at the end, “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God”!

No doubt, also, these good people had listened to their fathers. In these days the proud notion is abroad that our fathers cannot have been so wise as their highly cultured sons. Yet in the long run, these same youths will alter their opinions as their years increase. Wisdom is neither in age nor in youth but in God alone. I love to hear what gray-headed men have to say who are further advanced in the journey of life than I am. For there is weight in their testimony. They may not speak with all the brilliance and fire of youth, but their speech has salt in it, derived from the certainty of actual experience. I love to think of those things which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us. Even the wondrous things which the Lord did in *their* day and in the old time before them.

The singers of our Psalm had listened to their gracious fathers and when they saw the adversary round about the City of God and afterwards marched forth to that strange battle in which there was no clash of arms but only a joyful division of the spoil—then, I say they knew that what their fathers had told them was really true and they cried out in wonder, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”—

***“In Zion God is known,
A refuge in distress.
How bright has His salvation shone
Through all her palaces!
Often have our fathers told,
Our eyes have often seen,
How well our God secures the fold
Where His own sheep have been.”***

Those who were not actually in Jerusalem would hear the descriptions of those who had been there. They had heard of the Temple which was so “exceedingly magnificent.” They had heard of Jachin and Boaz, the two famous pillars—of the great altar and the smoking sacrifices of the morning and the evening lamb, and the priests in their white attire ministering at the altar. They had heard of the high priest himself, when he came forth in his garments of glory and of beauty and of the blessing which he blessed the assembled people. In the cottage homes on the far-off hills they had heard of all these things and heard a truthful report, so that when they came to the holy city and their feet stood within the gates of Jerusalem, their hearts beat high and they said within themselves, “We

have not listened to cunningly devised fables. But as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts.”

It is well, dear Friends, for us to form our associations with a view to lasting benefit. Let the friends of God be your friends. Speak to those who speak well of God and of His holy name. Cultivate the acquaintance of those who, by experience, are able to inform you whether these things are so. “He that walks with wise men shall be wise.” He that talks much with experienced Christians will acquire much assurance in the things of God. It is most important for us that we receive the recorded witness of ancient saints and the hearty testimony of living worthies—that afterwards we may be able to say—“As we have heard, so have we seen.”

Some, nowadays, are inclined to hear everything, bad, good and indifferent. I believe that hearing everything will end in hearing nothing. That text is often quoted and misunderstood, which says, “Prove all things.” If men really mean what they say and are going to prove all things, I would persuade them to begin with their bodies and not at first to run great risks with their souls. Gentlemen, I invite you to begin with more common things than the Gospel. For instance—commence with proving all the patent medicines and next prove all the drugs of the chemist. If you survive the process, it will then be time to go round and prove all the ministers and all the different doctrines of this wretched period.

If you survive the drugs and poisons, you will not survive the false doctrines. False doctrines cannot be proved and you need not make the attempt. It is only the Truth of God which is capable of proof. The text does not mean “experiment upon everything”—but receive nothing until it has been proved to be true and good. The most of us are not appointed to the office of Universal Taster—we are not commissioned to taste all deadly things that we may know their precise effect—we are far better employed in holding fast that which is good. The truths which we have already proved to be the Truths of God, we hold as with a death grip. And, as we hold them fast, we also hold them forth.

That which we accept for ourselves we commend to others—this is a far safer and healthier exercise than imitating the Athenians in their desire to be forever hearing some new thing. Take heed what you hear, lest you be not able to say, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

II. Secondly, GOOD HEARING LEADS ON TO SEEING—“As we have heard, so have we seen.” You cannot all use those words. Some of you have heard and heard but have never yet seen. The man who is content with one inlet to his mind, namely, his ears—but never uses his eyes, must imagine that God has made a mistake and has given him more senses than he needs. Surely this argues a want of sense. Dear Friends, you are not only invited to hear the Gospel, but the Lord Jesus says to you, as He said to His first disciples, “Come and see.” “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” You are invited to *see* for yourselves whether these things are so. You will ask how can a hearer of the Gospel become a seer of it?

Note first, that he can do this by examining the facts which he hears stated, and judging whether they are really so. The Scripture tells you that your heart is deceitful—see whether it is not so. It tells you that there is a natural inclination in man towards evil—study yourself and see whether this is not the case. It tells you that there is in human nature an impotence towards that which is truly good and an aversion to God. Seriously consider whether your own life, as a natural man, does not prove the truth of these charges. There are some things about yourself, while as yet you are unconverted, which you have heard of in the Scriptures and I would urge you to see whether they are not true in your own case. It will be a great help to you if you will examine these things in reference to your own self. The subject for consideration is near at hand and it will be, in many ways, useful to yourself to know whether Holy Scripture gives a true description of human nature, as you find it in yourself.

We further see what we hear when we obey the commands and receive the blessings promised upon obedience. For instance, you are bid to confess your sins. Now see whether this is true—“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”—not only hear the precept but see whether the promise is true. Here is another test—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” You have heard it hundreds of times—come and see for yourself whether such a rest is given. Obey the precept so that you may receive the promise which hangs upon the precept.

We also turn hearing into sight when, receiving the blessings which are promised to faith, we enter into a new life. Some of us can bear witness that we have entered into a new world. That things which are now everything to us were nothing to us a little while ago. As to a deaf man there is no sound, as to a blind man there is no light, so to us a few years ago there were no spiritual things. We were devoid of those spiritual faculties by which spiritual things are discerned. But now that we have believed in Jesus we have passed into another universe. And we now possess a life as much above the life of our former state as the mental life is above that of the brute which perishes. We know that there is a heavenly life, for we possess it. And in the power of it we see a thousand things not dreamed of in the common man’s philosophy. We heartily wish that all of you who hear the Gospel would see its Truths, so that you might say with the singers in this Psalm, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

The promises of God are of little service to a man if he merely hears them or reads them and has no further dealing with them. They are like a check which is kept for months and years in a drawer and never presented at the bank. The promises of God must be presented by prayerful faith to the Lord Himself. The sacred promises, though in themselves most sure and precious, are of no avail for the comfort and sustenance of the soul unless you grasp them by *faith*, plead them in *prayer*, expect them by *hope* and receive them with *gratitude*. Oh, that you might say of every promise of God, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

The best hearing is that which leads to seeing. When a man says, “The Word of God tells me so and I will test it for myself”—that man is in a very hopeful state. To this we invite our hearers. The banquet is spread and rich are the provisions. But do not so trust our testimony as to stay away. Come and see for yourselves. We tell you that there is a great atonement made by the blood of Jesus which will at once wash out the most scarlet sins. Believe our message so far as to come and try it for yourselves and you will soon exclaim, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

III. I beg your attention to the third point, which is this—that SEEING WONDERFULLY CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF WHAT WE HEAR. We are bound to believe God, even when we cannot see. That the Lord has said it would be quite enough for us if we revered Him as we ought. But it does help us very much when, having implicitly believed in God’s testimony, He grants us grace to see that what we have believed is most surely true. Let me show how the experience of a believing man confirms the truth of what he has heard.

To go back to where I was just now, all that Holy Scripture says about our ruin may be seen to be true. Many of us have not only heard but we have felt the evil result of sin upon our minds and hearts. We know that sin dwells in us and strives for the mastery. We can never doubt that our natural tendencies are faulty and that our best desires are imperfect. Since the Holy Spirit convinced us of sin the existence of a foul fountain within our nature is a fact which we cannot doubt. Sin’s infinite demerit is, also, a Truth of God to which our conscience gives solemn assent. I remember when I learned this lesson, with the Law as my schoolmaster. If anyone had asked me whether I deserved to be sent to the lowest Hell my tears would have owned that no punishment could be too severe for sin like mine.

Whenever I read a terrible threat in Scripture, I gave an inward assent to it in my quickened conscience—yes—and I do so now. Apart from my Lord on the Cross, a deep damnation would be mine. It does not matter what modern deceivers preach—you may depend upon it—that men when they come to die, if their consciences are at all awake, are persuaded that the threats of Holy Scripture are true. Sentiment kicks against eternal punishment. But conscience cries, “Amen” to the righteous sentence of the Law. When the Spirit of God awakens conscience, it ceases to trifle with sin and no longer denies that an awful penalty must surely be its consequence.

I am sure I can appeal to those of you who have seen the Lord in His glory, so as to abhor yourselves in dust and ashes and to those of you who have seen yourselves, so that you have been ashamed and confounded at your own ways. I say I can appeal to you to confirm the most solemn statements of Holy Scripture. However much its denunciations may make you shudder, your inmost soul consents to the truth of them. When the Holy Spirit opens up before us the bottomless pit of our natural depravity, we admit that, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” We believe in the Fall, for we are fallen. We are sure we

are not as the Lord made us. We believe in the hereditary taint of natural depravity—for we mourn it in ourselves. We believe in the impotence of fallen humanity—for we are ourselves without strength.

We believe in our personal desert of the wrath of God, for we are sure it is so and our only comfort is that the sentence of death has been fulfilled in us in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Substitute. All that the Holy Scripture says about sin and its results we do from our heart of hearts confirm, for, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

Brighter things, however, have we heard and seen. Brethren, we heard that there is a calling of God whereby He separates His chosen from the rest of mankind. And we know that there is such an effectual calling by the Spirit of God for we have been so called. We heard the general call by which men were invited to come to Christ. But we refused *that* call. We learned that there was a special effectual call of the Holy Spirit by which men are sweetly drawn to Jesus and we found this report to be true for we have been so drawn. The Spirit of God did not drag us to Christ by our ears but He drew us with bands of love. We came to Jesus with the full consent of our renewed wills and yet against our old wills. Without violating one single delicate Law of our mind, the Lord constrained us to run in the way of salvation. As we have heard concerning the effectual calling of the Spirit of God so have we seen and we cannot but bear witness of it this day.

We heard, too, that if we came to Jesus as we were, He would receive us—and He did receive us. We heard that He would graciously forgive. And He did forgive. We heard that in forgiveness He would give us peace and we have found it so. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We heard that poor sinners, justified by faith, received a joy unspeakable and we have received that joy. We bear our testimony that, “This Man receives sinners”—we bear witness that He casts out none that come to Him. We declare to you that in the fullness of His grace He puts rebels in the children’s place. Yes, “As we have heard, so have we seen.” The bravest preacher of the Gospel has never preached more Gospel than is true. The boldest testifier to the free grace of God has never said more for the freedom and fullness of Divine Grace than he ought to have said. Exaggeration is impossible. When you would describe Divine Grace you may lay the reins upon the neck of thought.

Then we heard that there was such a thing as regeneration. We used to hear with wonder that declaration, “You must be born again.” We were told that we must pass from death unto life—that old things must pass away and all things must become new. We heard it attentively and believingly. But now we have gone further—we have *seen* it. Many of you know the great and radical change because you have experienced it. You can say, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” We have passed out of a dead world into a living world. Having been buried with Christ we have also risen with Him and our life dwells and flourishes in a new world. We are conscious that a new heart beats within us. A new life

looks out of our eyes and moves in our members. The new birth is a fact—“As we have heard, so have we seen.”

We used to hear of the Holy Spirit and it seemed to us when we heard it that His operations and indwelling were mysteries incomprehensible. How could God the Holy Spirit dwell *in* men and make their *bodies* His temples? We marveled as we heard of His convincing men of sin, withering their self-righteousness, enkindling hope in their bosoms, leading them to Jesus, renewing them, comforting them, sanctifying them, illuminating them, preserving them. We used to hear of all this. But now with delight we can stand before you and say, “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God.”

The Holy Spirit has convinced us of sin. What a “spirit of bondage” He was to us for a time! He seemed to fetter hand and foot and shut us up under the Law! Then He broke our chains asunder and taught us that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. What a liberty it is! How joyfully did we leap when we were set free from the tyranny of sin. Since then the blessed Spirit has continually quickened, guided and strengthened us. Speak, sons and daughters of mourning, and tell how the Comforter has graciously consoled you! He has also taught us and led us into all Truth. He has been in us life and light and fire. He has moved upon our minds and He has ever given us in the same hour what we should speak!

What a permeating influence is that of the Holy Spirit! How He makes us mourn for sin! How He constrains us to follow after holiness! How He uplifts and elevates the heart, causing our conversation to be in Heaven while our body is still on earth. “As we have heard, so have we seen.” And we have never heard more of the glorious power of the Holy Spirit than is absolutely true—our own joyful experience leads us to believe that He can work all gracious things in us.

Further, to show you how experience supports the Word of God, we were told many times over that God hears prayer. We were reminded of the Savior’s words, “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Brothers and Sisters, how have you found it? Has prayer been a mere pious amusement? Have you found it to be a reality? Have you not prayed yourselves out of the dark into the sunlight? Prayed yourselves out of the low dungeon of despondency to the mountaintop of communion? Prayed yourselves out of the depths of despair up to the Throne of God? “Out of the belly of Hell, cried I,” said one, “and You heard my voice.” Oh, the omnipotence of prayer! The facts which prove the prevalence of prayer would convince anybody unless he is determined not to be convinced.

There are numbers of persons here whom any lawyer would be glad to put in the witness box on any matter of fact. For their statements would be questioned by nobody, since they are well known for integrity and truth. These persons are prepared to bear solemn witness, as in the Presence of God, that many a time God has as distinctly heard their prayers as if He had thrust His hand through yonder skies. As we have heard

about prayer, so have we seen. And none can drive this faith out of us since it is confirmed by what we have seen over and over again in actual experience. So long as reason holds her seat we must, and will, believe in prayer.

Yes, let me remind you, also, that we heard with our ears, that there is a God of Providence who rules and overrules all things. We were glad to sing, “The Lord will provide.” We used joyfully to hear the congregation say—

***“Though cisterns are broken and creatures all fail,
The Word He has spoken will surely prevail.”***

We believe in a gracious Providence and we have also seen it! Time does not suffice this morning for us to narrate personal incidents but assuredly my own experience teems with them. In times of need the Lord has showed Himself quite as able and willing to supply the needs of His servant in these days as He was to feed the nation in the wilderness when He rained manna from Heaven for them daily.

All things have worked together for good to them that love God, even until now. We can look back upon experiences which, at the time, were especially bewildering and perplexing. And of those very experiences we can now say, “Blessed be God for them!” If I were to ask those to stand up who have seen undoubted proofs of Providential care, I believe thousands of you would rise from your seats and bear witness that the hand of the Lord still works wisely and powerfully for those who trust in Him. We heard that it was so and we have seen that the report was true to the letter. Even as to temporal things, the Lord is gracious. And as to eternal things, He is beyond conception kind.

One thing more I will notice and have done with these verifications which sight gives to hearing. We have often heard that those who believe in God have hope in their deaths. We have been told over and over again, that—

***“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows.”***

Now, we have not seen this for ourselves, for we have not yet forded the last river. But we have seen it in others. I suppose that the most of you have distinctly seen that the end of the righteous man is peace. I, from my calling, have many scores of times seen saints in their last hours. This is the witness I put on record—the very happiest persons I have ever met with have been departing Believers.

I have not met at weddings, nor at jubilee feasts, nor in moments of singular prosperity such joyful persons as I have seen amid weakness and pain upon their dying beds. The only sons of men for whom I have felt any envy have been dying members of this very Church whose hands I have grasped in their passing away. Almost without any exception I have seen in them holy delight and triumph. And in the exceptions to this exceeding joy I have seen deep peace exhibited in a calm and deliberate readiness to enter into the presence of their God. They have been as ready for the eternal world as they would have been to rise from their beds and return to

their daily callings on the Monday morning. “The peace of God, which passes all understanding” has kept their hearts and minds even when the joy of the Lord has not lifted them into transports or ecstasies.

Saintly deathbeds are grand evidences of Christianity. It is something to say in our last hours, “As we have heard, so have we seen.” I can truly say that up to now my own experience and observation have confirmed the teachings of the Word of God. I have not yet met with anything which could shake my confidence in the Divine Revelation. I trust I am neither an absolute fool nor a blind bigot who would shut his eyes to reason—I would not ignore a certified fact, either in science, or history, or in the world of mental life. And yet I know of no fact which can disprove so much as one of the solemn declarations of God—nor even cast a shadow of suspicion upon a doctrine of Holy Scripture. I have heard much but I have seen nothing of the science which disproves the Scriptures—there is no such science—it is an impostor which has stolen the name.

Our knowing is far better than our theorizing. And whatever our theorizing may have done, our actual knowledge has never been on the side of the baptized infidelity of the advanced school. All our experience makes us say, “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts.” On this point I have spent the strength of my discourse. The remaining two heads shall be treated briefly, although they are of great practical value.

IV. WHEN HEARING TURNS TO SEEING AND IS CONFIRMED BY IT, THEN IT LEADS TO WITNESSING.

The text, you see, is itself a testimony—“As we have heard, so have we seen.” In these days every man that can witness for the Truth of God ought to do so—even if he stammers, he must not be silent. So many are decrying the Truth of God that, if in your heart and conscience you have proved it true, you are bound to give to the Lord the testimony of even a stammerer. I suppose Moses could do no more than that for he was a man slow in speech. But when he would have preferred to be quiet the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth?” Your mouth is as God made it—use it as best you can, and speak up for His name and cause.

Such testimony as that of our text is sometimes involuntary and is none the less precious on that account. When these good people had seen the Moabites and Ammonites and Edomites marching round Jerusalem in their pride and a few days afterwards had beheld them cold in death, they could not help crying, “As we have heard, so have we seen.” You could not have kept them quiet in the presence of such a marvel. You could not have muzzled them into silence. They were so taken aback, so astounded at what God had done, that they cried aloud, “As we have heard, so have we seen.” So when you have tasted and handled of the good things of God, I am sure you will have to tell others of your glorious discoveries! Your mouth will be filled with laughter and your tongue with singing till those who are round about you will be compelled to say, “The Lord has done great things for them,” and you will answer, “Yes, the Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

Jesus said, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength,” when the children were shouting in the Temple. Young converts, if they have newly tasted that the Lord is gracious, must sound out their joys. Who would stop them? If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out. But your involuntary witnessing must lead up to constant voluntary witnessing for your Lord and His holy cause. O you who are on the Lord’s side, awake, arise, or be condemned as traitors!

Our testimony should be very frequent. Believers would do a thousand times more good if they were not so particularly careful to avoid offending men of the world. If Christ Jesus offends people, they ought to be offended. For he is sure to be a “stumbling stone and rock of offense” to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient. We have heard of a great warrior who was more at home on the field of battle than amid the ceremonies of courts. His sword nearly tripped him up when walking backwards from the throne and his majesty remarked that his sword seemed very much in the way. “Yes,” said the brave man, “and your majesty’s enemies find it so.”

If we give offense by the Gospel to those who take no active part in holy warfare, let us not be put out of countenance—we are soldiers of the Cross and we do not regret that our religion does trouble certain people, for they ought to be troubled. The man who has never offended anybody by his religion has none worth having—rest assured of that. There are times and places when it must be seen that we are the friends of God and, consequently, cannot be in league with His enemies. Silence when the Truth of God is questioned will prove us to be recreant to Christ and false to our profession. Let us speak when it may bring upon us sneers and slanders. Why, what matters if they sneer? We shall survive that. We do not live on the breath of other men’s nostrils. We ask not leave of mortal man to be true to our convictions. But we will often and far more often than we have done, bear witness that, “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

This we should be sure to do more earnestly if we were more thoughtful. Read the ninth verse—“We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your temple.” As a true man thinks in his heart, he will speak with his lips. That which lies in the well of your thought, will come up in the bucket of your speech. Think much of what the Lord has done for you and then you will bear witness for Him. This needs to be done on a far larger scale than at present. Read the rest of the Psalm and see how the Psalmist puts it—“According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise unto the ends of the earth.” Oh, for more of the missionary spirit, more telling out to the ends of the earth of what the Lord has done! What were the stars if they did not shine? What were the sun if it did not make our day? What were the rivers if they did not water the lands? What were the sea itself if it did not act as the pulsing heart of the world?

What are Christians, if they do not shine as lights? Piety bottled up is dead. Religion put into a tin and hermetically sealed is useless. Why not go to Heaven at once if you do no good on earth? No, but would they have

you among the angels? He that is of no use in the world is not fit for Heaven. He who does not glorify God on earth would not glorify Him in Heaven. Where shall we put useless people? What shall be done with salt that has lost its savor? I know not where it can be put, for Jesus says it is not fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill. And, if men cast it out, what will God do with it? If even men cannot use dead religionists, what will God do with them? If a vine does not bear fruit it is good for nothing—you cannot boil a pot with it nor even make out of its wood a hook by which to hang the pot over the fire.

Without fruitfulness the vine becomes the most worthless of all trees. And without testimony for the Truth of God, the professing Christian is of no use whatever. Creation’s blot, creation’s blank, is the best description of a dead professor. Think what you will of yourselves, O you savorless Professors—your religion is mere emptiness, a vain pretense. O children of God, stand up and bear your witness—

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus!”

in this day of blasphemy and rebuke.

V. AND LASTLY, HEARING, SEEING, WITNESSING—GOD WILL GIVE YOU A FULLER ASSURANCE THAN YOU HAVE AS YET. Permit me to read the text again—“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever.” That is the conclusion which the saint comes to when he has tried the Truth of God for himself and borne witness to the result of his trial. God will never leave His Church. God will never forfeit His Word. God will never desert His Gospel. He is Jehovah of Hosts and changes not and has all power at His disposal. He is our Lord, our God in Covenant. He cannot desert the work of His own hands, nor leave the people of His love.

Because His honor is bound up in the whole enterprise that Christ undertook, He must go through with it and He must arrive at a glorious conclusion. God will establish it forever. Come, my Brethren, let us cast aside all doubts about what the future is to be. The battle rages, the foe is as furious as he is subtle—while we are weak as water and can do nothing by ourselves. But let us not despair. If the Gospel is God’s Gospel, He will take care of it. If the Church is Christ’s Church, the gates of Hell cannot prevail against her. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s—in His name let us set up our banners and cry with full confidence of victory, “The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.” Hallelujah, hallelujah. Amen.

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*“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the
Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God.”
Psalm 48:8.*

“As we have heard, so have we seen.” This is not always the case, but frequently it is the very reverse. Things are exaggerated. The imagination is largely drawn upon and we hear great things, but when we come to look at them, or try to practically enjoy them, the great things have become very small! It is so in the world generally. We have heard and were told in our youthful days by those who have been before us, that the paths of sin are pleasant, that there are great enjoyments to be found in the indulgences of evil passions, and that if we will give ourselves up to the general run and current, we shall find ourselves very smoothly floating along on a stream of happiness! Ah, how many who have sown their wild oats and looked for a happy harvest, have discovered that nothing but mischief comes of this! Jaded by the satiety of their lusts, and at last utterly destroyed by their own wickedness, they have sat down and wrung their hands in despair at finding out that things are not what they heard they were. As they have heard, so do they not see, but the very opposite—for pleasure, pain, for happiness, misery—even here, remorse—and afterwards an anguish that shall know no end!

Nor is it any better with the teachers of false doctrine. As we have heard, so have we not seen. We have sometimes been told that philosophy will civilize a nation—that the spread of education will most certainly cure the human heart and that the bias and propensity to sin will be put down by an increase of mental light. But as we have heard, so have we not seen, for philosophy has thrown many burdens upon men—but it has not touched those burdens to remove them with so much as its little finger! We hear a great deal of what is to be done for society by this scheme and by that, but nothing is done! Theories are propounded—windbags are blown out and brought forth—bubbles are blown, but we do not see much that is solid and valuable, produced! One after another of these eminent theorizers have arisen who were about to revolutionize and reconstruct society! Instead of making the causes of evil in the world to increase, they were to uproot them and turn the desert into the Garden of the Lord! But so it has not been—our eyes have never seen it. Ra-

ther has the bad been made worse and the good has been impeded by those who were so pretentious and loud in their professed benevolence! Take any of the false doctrines which are often affiliated to our holy faith and you will find that when you come to examine them and put them to the test, they do not hold water!

How often have we heard about “the dignity of human nature.” How congenial the heart of man is to that which is noble, and to that which is Christ-like! We are told that we have only to hold up Christ and there is such a beauty in Him that all the world will be sure to love Him! But as we have heard, so have we not seen, but we have seen men to be as God saw them—corrupt! There is none that does good, no, not one, and in the perfect light of Calvary, we have seen that even the perfections of Jesus will not be seen by a blind world, nor will they attract a corrupt world. “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” will be the verdict of humanity even upon the perfections of the Incarnate God. We have heard a great deal about the power of free will. We have heard sometimes that men come to Christ by themselves. That there is no power of Irresistible Grace which turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Ah, we have heard this, but we have never seen it! To this moment, though we have mingled with all classes of Christians, we did never yet meet with a single Believer who declared that his conversion was the result of his own efforts and that his coming to Christ was entirely through the power of his own free will! We have been told, too, that God forsakes His people, that real saints, after all, turn back and perish! But we bless God that, though we have often heard this, we have never, never seen it—

***“If ever it should come to pass,
One of His sheep should fall away!
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!”***

But being kept in safety by another and greater power than our own, and preserved in the midst of appalling temptations, we still hold to it that He does keep His people! We have heard it, and we have seen it, but the other doctrine we have heard, but, thank God, we have never seen! And so there are many other things that pass current in certain sections of Christendom as being true, which, if they were brought to a practical test, might be seen not to be so. We have heard them—heard them delivered with a glowing eloquence that might have convinced us, if we were to be convinced, but we have referred to the Old Book—and the Old Book has been more to us than all the siren-songs that sweetest oratory could raise! We have nailed our colors to the mast and could not take them down! We have found all here in this blessed Bible to be true, but man’s word, when it has come into conflict or even competition with God’s Word, we have found to be light as chaff and as easily consumed as the fat of rams upon the altar’s fire!

Now, just for a little time I thought we would *illustrate this general Truth of God that in the things of God, and in the Church of God,* "as we have heard, so have we seen." Now, mark—

I. IT HAS BEEN SO ALL DOWN THE LINE OF REVELATION.

Could a man have lived a sevenfold Methuselah life and have stood at the gates of Paradise, and listened to the first promise that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. If he could have beheld Noah shut in in the ark and marked the Covenant rainbow when for the first time it spanned the clouds. If he could have lived in Abraham's day and have seen the father of that seed in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Could he have marked all the types and ceremonies which Israel saw in the wilderness, all pointing onwards to a coming Savior. If he could have listened to the prophetic utterances of David in some of those matchless Psalms which are full of the Messiah. Could he have heard the notes of Isaiah when he spoke of Him who was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yes, could he have heard every prophecy and beheld every symbol, and listened to every sacred portent—when he came to behold the Person of Christ, to see Him living, dying, rising, ascending and to mark the Pentecost, and to see the history of the Church right down until now—such a grave and revered man—revered and venerable above all other men through the long lapse of years that had passed over his snowy head, would say, "As I heard during the first portion of my life, so have I seen in the latter days thereof—God has always kept His promise—as was the shadow, so was the substance! As the type, so was the antitype! As the word that flowed from prophetic lips, so was the Christ who, in the fullness of time, came into this world to bless and redeem mankind!"

This is not merely a great general Truth of God, but, mark you, it is true in every jot and tittle! We do not expect men, when they speak frequently, so to speak that every particle of what they say may be correct. We admit them to be fallible—we always make some allowance for some slips of the tongue. But all through these thousands of years in which God spoke of Christ and of the Gospel Kingdom, there never was a single trifling word that was not fulfilled!

There have been no slips of the tongue, no drops that blot the page. Everything has been accurately, minutely, precisely—what if I say, *microscopically*—fulfilled in Christ! As the casket key exactly fits the wards of the lock, so the life of Christ and the history of the Church exactly fits all the types and all the prophecies! Sometimes it has been said that if anybody doubts the Inspiration of the four Gospels, it would be a very pretty puzzle for him to try to write a fifth gospel which should have in it some new details that would be congruous to the rest and that would fit in with the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. That is a task we give to those wits who seem to need something to do in these days, since they are impugning everything that is held sacred by us! Let them

attempt that. If this problem could have been put to the wise in all ages—here is the Old Testament and, whether it is true or not, construct the life of a Man who shall fit all that. Use your poetic powers, or whatever other abilities you choose to employ. Imagine a Man that shall fit the lamb, the scapegoat, the Passover, Noah's ark, the Psalms of David, the prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel—why the puzzle would have been given up in despair! It would not have been possible for the united abilities of men and angels to have discovered an ideal Messiah that would have exactly met all this! But our Lord did in every jot and in every tittle, so that as we read some parts of the Old Testament, we often say to ourselves, "This looks as if it were written after the event." We read the 22nd Psalm and if we did not know that it had been composed many, many years before our Lord came, we would look at it as history, rather than as prophecy! One can only comprehend this by admitting Inspiration, and by rejoicing in the wondrous truthfulness of God! Even such little points as the casting of lots for the vesture of Christ—things which seem insignificant—God took care should be fulfilled. And though our Lord died, and as yet He had not been pierced as to His heart, at any rate, yet after death there must be a piercing of Him that they "may look on Him whom they have pierced," and weep and wail because of Him. "As we have heard, so have we seen." The life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, certainly carry out the prophecies which God had uttered before concerning Him! But now, we shall go on to speak of—

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD—CHRISTWARD AND GODWARD—AS TO OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.

Some of you have thoughts of Christ—but as dead or as far away. We have come to deal with Him as a living Savior. Now the question is, whether in so dealing with Him, we have found all true that we were told concerning Him?

Now, when we first enlisted in the Christian army, we were told from Christ's own Word that *we must count the cost and we would have to suffer* a degree of persecution. We were warned not to take upon ourselves, hastily, to carry out that for which we should have no power unless we sought it from above. We were warned, "In the world you shall have tribulation." Have we found it so? "Oh," says one, "that has been abundantly true to me! From those of my own household I first met with opposition! The Gospel has set those against me that were once my fondest friends." Just so, but now that it has come to pass, you will see how sincerely He dealt with you, that He would not entrap you into His service as though it would be altogether a thing of pleasure, but He warned you that it was a conflict, that it was a pilgrimage. You have found it so and now that it has come to pass, let this help you to trust Him for the future!

But you were also told that if you trusted Him, you who were burdened with many sins, you would have them all forgiven and that this forgiveness would bring about a solid peace of mind. Have you found it

so? Can you not stand up and add your name to the long roll of witnesses who say, “We looked unto Him and were lightened, and our faces were not ashamed! This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears”? I bless the Lord I can say that the joy of the pardoned sinner is a sweeter and a better thing than I ever dreamed it to be. And the peace of conscience, which reflection upon the Atonement always brings, is better and more enduring than one could have fancied have fallen to the lot of so unworthy an one as he whom Christ had called!

Our Lord Jesus told us, too, that if we came and trusted Him, *He would give us the victory over our sins*. Now, has He done that? I know you will sometimes confess that you have not conquered your sins as you would desire.

The battle is still raging—there is still a need for yonder watchtower. But, Brothers and Sisters, if a sin has not been conquered, has that ever been Christ’s fault? Has it not been ours? “They overcame through the blood of the Lamb,” is true of all the saints with regard to their struggles with sin. There is no sin that we cannot pray down and weep down if we live at the foot of the Cross. The worst temper that ever a soul was plagued with is to be controlled and softened if one looks to the griefs of Christ and becomes like He in temper. It matters not how constitutional the sin may be, though you may say, “It is my easily-besetting sin”—you may be delivered from it! Christ Jesus, when He comes into the island of our nature, can drive out all the cruel and deadly reptiles that are there. Or if they remain there, He can give us abundant Grace so that they can make no headway and we shall be kept as “holiness unto the Lord.”

Now, you and I have read and heard from the saints of God that *our Lord Jesus, when He is really known and understood, is inexpressible sweetness itself*. They have told us, some of them—writing like Rutherford of his wonderful Master—that the joy of Heaven is to be possessed, in a measure, even here below! That in contemplation on and communion with Christ, the heart can be made to dance with eternal joy and full of glory! Now, Brothers and Sisters, have we found it so? Oh, some of us can set to our seal that in this thing the saints of God have been true! He has ravished our souls with His Presence and made our hearts to melt while He spoke into our ears the marvelous story of His love! Perhaps in our unbelief we think that this is fancy, or fanaticism, or some high-strained sentimentalism, but it is not so! It is a sober fact that when a man gets to lean upon the arm of Christ, he laughs at trouble, defies persecution—he passes through temptation all unhurt. He walks here below, but his conversation is in Heaven! He sits down with the sons of men and yet he is “raised up and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” I would say to you saints who have not proceeded far in the College of Christ, who have only just begun to study His precious Character and the Divine Virtues that flow out of Him, never be content until you

have! As you have heard from the song of the Canticles. As you have heard from the saints who out of their experience have told you of Christ's love, so will you find it! Do not harbor the idea that the further you go, the less will you have of enjoyment in religion. Oh, no! It has deep draughts of great bliss! The shallow draughts will sustain, but oh, it is sacred intoxication with the love of Christ which brings the highest joy and the most Divine mirth!

To go in up to the ankles in the sea of Christ's love is well, but oh, to pass up to the loins and to get still further until you find it "a river to swim in"—this is to know the true delights of godliness!

As you have heard of these things, though they seem to be too high for you and you tremble at them, yet if you will but ask for more Grace that you may press forward, so you shall! There are no exceptions about Christ! He offers nothing in the market that has been proffered to catch the eye, but is not worth the purchase. His diamonds are never trashy paste. His gold is not mere gilt. You may buy bread from Him and put it in the scales and find it ounce for ounce. The water that He gives turns neither stale nor sour—it is always fresh and cool—the further you shall go in the enjoyment of it, the more shall you prize the well of water springing up in your souls unto everlasting life!

Now, I might just turn this same point around in another form and say that, *as we have heard of Christ in His life upon earth, so have we found it in dealing with Him.* When Christ was here on earth, He was all tenderness and love—and so we have found Him. We went to Him covered with the leprosy of our sin and ready to die of our iniquities. But one touch of His hand was freely given and that touch healed us! When He was on earth He was holiness, itself, and so He is now, for He will not walk with us if we fall in love with sin. He is quick to see our faults and He gently chides us till conscience awakens us and we turn from the evil with abhorrence. Christ was in this world as a very faithful friend. Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end. And we have found Him just such until now. There was never an hour in which He left us naked to our enemies. When we have been tempted, His intercession has always been like a bronze wall around us to keep us from being devoured by the foe. When we have been bewildered, He has, like a good shepherd, led us by ways that we knew not, but that He well understood. In the days of famine we have been fed. In the times of need we have been satisfied. We can speak well of His name. If any of His saints have anything to say of Him that is high and comely, that will exalt Him and set Him on high, and we, after our measure, can endorse it all! So far as our experience has gone, He is a better Christ than we thought Him to be! Oh, He is altogether precious, altogether lovely! Up to this day we have never discovered a spot in Him. We have tried Him—oh how, sadly, and our sins have tried Him—oh, how heavily! But He is always true—the same yesterday, today, and forever! We can only bless Him and praise Him, for "as we have heard, so have we seen."

How my heart desires that some of you who are here would just now, at this very moment, come to my Lord and try Him! Oh, I so remember when I first came to Him. They told me He was ready to pardon and that a *look* at Him would move the crushing burden from my weary heart. I could not think it true, but—

***“I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad.”***

And did He disappoint me? Ah, no! I can happily join in with the rest of that verse—

***“I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad!”***

If any of you think that Christ will cast you out when you come, I wish you would come and try Him. It would be the beginning of a new method with Him—the turning over of a new black leaf. “Him that comes unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” He never did find it in His heart to do so to any sinner that has sought His mercy! And I will not believe it, though all the angels in Heaven swear it, that He ever cast away a soul! I’d call them liars! It cannot be! It never shall be! While the heavens are above the earth and God is true, and Christ is God, no sinner that comes and puts His trust in Him, shall find Him unable or unwilling to save Him! Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! And as you have heard, so shall you see! Now, in the next place, I think—

III. THIS ALL STANDS GOOD WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCH OF GOD ITSELF.

Some have been apt to find fault with the Church and some Christians seem to act on the principle of getting to Heaven, one by one. “Sheep,” God’s people are called, and I suppose one reason is because sheep are gregarious and go in flocks. But there are Christian professors who seem to like the one by one principle. Well now, speaking of the Church of God as we have seen her, she has many faults—many faults—but Jesus Christ loves her and she is His Bride. And I dare not find fault with her! If she is the Princess Royal, if she is His Imperial Highness’s own betrothed one, I would rather see her with His eyes than with my own! And while it may be very striking to rail about ministers and their defects, to sneer at Church members and all sorts of other things—and there may be sometimes good reason for it—yet we may say much on the other side, too. “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

When we first joined the Christian Church, we were told very plainly in the Scripture *that there would be tares among the wheat*. That there would be some among us who would go out from us, because they were not of us. Christ taught us that among His 12 disciples, there was one Judas, and if some hypocrites intrude among us, it need not astonish us! We knew it would be so. He forewarned us and admonished us of it. We have heard it and so have we seen—and if the seeing of it has been painful—we can at least say that God was truthful and frank in warning us that so it would be.

Well, *there were good things spoken of the Church of God* and we have found them true, too. I expected to find in the Christian Church some holy, prayerful, devout Christian men and women—and I have found them. And I have rejoiced to be among them, to mingle with them, and to be of their company, joining with them in holy worship, the washing in the blood that has washed them! I can truly say that I have found a Peter—many a bold earnest Brother like Peter. Many a loving John! Many a busy Martha and some communing Marys. The Church of God always seems to me, as I have seen it, to be a vast deal too good for me to be a member of it, if I did but judge myself. And, instead of finding fault, I would join with David and say, “You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.” I know the world will often find fault and rail and tell us there are no such things as ancient Christians. I have seen as glorious Christianity as even the Apostles saw, and as good works of the Holy Spirit in members of this Church as ever gladdened the eyes of those Apostles! I have seen suffering endured with an astonishing patience, labor done with a perseverance that was most commendable, liberality evinced with a freedom that showed that the love of Christ constrained, prayer kept up with a fervency that marked the indwelling Spirit and souls cared for, sought after and won, too, with an indefatigable love that only the love of Christ could inspire! I know we always think we live in the worst times, but we do not!

There were worse times than these and there will be again. These may not be the best, but they are a long way off from being the worst. I think it was when Dr. Newton died that the good divine who preached the funeral sermon took some such text as this, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,” and he deplored that now this eminent saint was gone, they had no great divines left like the great preachers of the olden time. That went on very prettily for some time, but it was too much—for an old Methodist woman, who stood in the aisle cried out—“Glory to God, that’s a lie!” And oftentimes when I hear people crying down the times and saying there are no good people left, and that Christianity is at a low ebb, and that there remains no true zeal, I can say from what I, myself, see in the people among whom I dwell, “Glory be to God, that is a lie! It is a slander upon the Church of God!” For as we have heard, so have we seen—we have seen the gracious, fair fruits of the Spirit—and we honor God by testifying to that fact!

I would, however, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we were always conscientiously concerned never to give the lie in any degree to statements made in Scripture concerning the holy living of the saints. Alas, there are some professors who, if you could track them to their business, are so much given to loose trading that as we have heard—so can we *cannot* see! If you go into their houses—their maidservants, their children and their wives are obliged to say, “We have heard what Christian fathers, and mothers, and masters ought to be, but as we have heard so, we do

not see.” It all ends in talk, in profession. Now, while I stand up for it that there are many that do adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior in all things and so prove that they are God’s true people, yet do we sorrowfully confess that many walk “of whom” we would say with the Apostle, “We have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.” Though they are professed members of the Church of Christ, their lips honor God, but their inconsistent lives degrade the Church and bring upon it much loss of spiritual power. “As we have heard, so have we seen.”

I think some of us can say that we have heard of *the Church’s glorious assemblies*. We have heard that they said they were glad when they went up to the House of the Lord. We have heard that the people of God are happy in their assemblies and that they long for the place where God’s honor dwells. Well, and so have we seen, for our Sabbaths have been our happiest days and we have often said—

***“My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
And sit, and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”***

It has been so.

We have heard that the preaching of *the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and the great means of comfort and edification to the saints*. And “as we have heard, so have we seen,” for oftentimes when the Truth of God has been preached in our hearing, it has been as marrow and fatness—and other times a rebuke has come just as we needed it to quicken us from our spiritual sloth!

We have heard that *the ordinances of God’s House have a blessing connected with them*. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—that in the keeping of His commandments there is great reward—and as we have heard, so have we seen. I am sure that the blessed Supper of the Lord, though many of His people come to the Table every week, never seems to grow stale.

There is always a freshness in it. Oh, that blessed ordinance! Some, I know, make a god of it and an idolatrous mystery of it, but because they misuse it, we dare not depreciate it! It is to us none other than the very gate of Heaven full often. “As we have heard, so have we seen.” Let us press on in our Church fellowship and increase in our love and earnestness—and then as we have heard of the Zion that travails and becomes like the mother of children—so shall we see! As we have heard that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy—so shall we see! As we have heard that there is great pleasure connected with the winning of souls for Christ—so shall we see. In a word, all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion, we shall have fulfilled to ourselves!

Brothers and Sisters, before I close, I want to say that there is a dreadful side to this Truth of God. As we have heard, so have we seen. There are some of you here who are not saved. You have hitherto loved

your sins and have not repented. You have heard of Christ, but you have put off all thoughts of Him. Now you have heard oftentimes that He that believes not shall be condemned—and from this Book you have heard that condemnation is something terrible and overwhelming, for there are words like these, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” And these, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” And these, “Where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” Now as you have heard, so will you see! Depend upon it, you shall not find the pit of Hell to be less awful than this Book describes! God sets up no bugbear to frighten souls! They are all realities of which He speaks—and that they *are* realities, many dying sinners have been made to know before they have been dead, for their horror, their alarms their fears have been premonitions of that wrath to which they were drawing near! I have seen some death scenes which I dare not try to picture before you—and the memory of which would unman me if I were to continue to contemplate them—hearers of the Gospel who had neglected Christ and who died conscious of their sins, unable, however, to seek mercy. And while we prayed with them, telling us that our prayers would never be heard, for they were given over and now they were cursing God, even while they were feeling the anguish of lost souls! Yes, and though there are some that become the advocates for evil by trying to make out the punishment of sin to be little—settle it in your souls that as it took the blood of the dying Son of God to wash out the sin of those who were pardoned—it will take an anguish such as no heart can conceive before the sinner shall have suffered for his sin what God will certainly pour upon him! Think not lightly of the doom of the lost, lest you think lightly of sin, and lightly of Christ, for as you have heard and infinitely more than you have heard, shall you see, oh, unhappy spirit, unless you will turn to Christ and believe on Him and live! Oh, that you may do so tonight, for another night may never come to you—but one long, endless night may be your portion.

But there is a bright side to it, too. The saints in Heaven might all say, “As we have heard, so have we seen,” only that I think they would make a great improvement in our text! ‘Tis true, you heard that Heaven was full of joy and mercy and so have you seen. You heard of its pearly gates and its streets of shining gold. You heard of its foundations of jasper and its walls of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones. You heard of its eternal rest and of the Presence of God and the glory of the overflowing bliss—and all you heard you have seen! But I say they would make an improvement upon this, for, like the Queen of Sheba, I think their glorified spirits would say, “The half has not been told.” Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we have heard things, but, “what must it be to be there”—to be there?! The enjoyments transcend description and though the words of Scripture portray the bliss that remains, we, alas, are dull of understanding and cannot find out all the meaning of the golden sentences! But we shall soon be there and once there we shall, as I have said before,

declare, “As we have heard, so have we seen, only that the half was not told us of the splendor and the glory of the court of our heavenly Solomon.” May we be there to find all true and join in the everlasting song of, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 45:1-9.**

The Lily Psalm—a Psalm of loves. Oh, that our hearts might be full of love, tonight, and while we read, may our hearts be singing to the praise of the Well-Beloved!

Verse 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.* Sometimes the heart could speak if it could move the tongue, but it is a blessed time with us when, first of all, the heart is fully warmed with love and then the fire within burns the strings that tie the tongue—and the tongue begins to move right joyously in expressing the heart’s love! May it be so with us tonight who have to preach! May it be so with all our Brothers who have, in public, either to preach or to pray!

2. *You are fairer than the children of men: Grace is poured into Your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever.* No sooner does he begin to write about Christ than he sees Him! A warm heart soon kindles the imagination. The eye of faith is soon opened when once the heart is right. We feel the Presence of Christ. We begin to speak of Him and to Him. “You are fairer than the children of men.” Oh, I would, tonight, that Christ would but lift the corner of His veil and show you but one of His eyes! Your hearts would be ravished with His infinite beauty! “You are fairer than the children of men.” Would God He would but speak half a word into our weary ear, and we should say, “Grace is poured into Your lips.” Oh, for some sense and sight of Him! Do not our hearts hunger after this tonight?

3, 4. *Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.* The heart never glows with love to Christ unless, in consequence, there is a longing that His Kingdom may be extended. It is an instinct of a loving heart, that it desires the honor of its object. We long for Christ to rule and reign simply because we love Him. Oh, that He would lay His right hand to His work in these slow times! How little is being done comparatively! Oh, for an hour of the right arm of Jesus! If He would but come Himself to the battle, and the shout of a King were heard in our camps, what victories would be won! Cry unto Him, O you that love Him. He will come to your call!

5. *Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under You.* Christ has not only power near at hand with his right hand, but far off He darts the arrows of His bow and heathens are made to feel that the Gospel is mighty! Would God it were so now! Cry for it!

6. *Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter.* And this we know to be spoken concerning Jesus Christ for this was quoted by the Apostle, "Your Throne, O God." Let those who will, deny His Deity. It shall be the joy of our heart to worship Him and, in express terms, to address Him who is our Brother as "very God of very God." "Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter."

7. *You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.* Fellow with us and yet equal with God! Man anointed, the Christ, yet still the reigning God! Glory be to His name!

8. *All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad.* Not only is Christ precious, but everything that touches Him! There is not a garment that hangs upon His shoulder but becomes sweet by contact with Him. "All Your garments smell of myrrh." There is myrrh about the priestly robe that falls down to His feet, and about the golden belt of His faithfulness that is girt about His waist. There are myrrh, and aloes, and cassia about His crown, though it is of thorns! About every garment that He puts on, there is a sweet perfume.

9. *King's daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.* Blessed queen of Christ—His Church. Let us never think little of her. There are some that are always crying up "the church," "the church," "the church"—but that is not the true Church, that tries to take the place of Christ. It is anti-Christ! The true Church has her place, however, and that is at her Husband's own right hand, where she sits in the best of the best—in gold—and that the gold of Ophir, for He spares nothing for her beauty and her glory.

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

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

A WORTHY THEME FOR THOUGHT NO. 2783

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 15, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 5, 1878.*

*“We have thought of Your loving kindness,
O God, in the midst of Your Temple.”
Psalm 48:9.*

WHO were these people who declared to the Lord that they had thought of His loving kindness in the midst of His Temple? According to the title of the Psalm, they were the sons of Korah. And who were the sons of Korah? They were the singers in the house of the Lord, those who took the principal part in sounding forth the praises of Jehovah. I think it is suggestive that they did not say, “We have sung of Your loving kindness.” They had done that and it was their constant employment, but they said, “We have *thought*.” And there are some singers who have *not* done that, for they have sung solemn words thoughtlessly, caring only for the music and not for the meaning. One who is not a skilled musician, or trained vocalist, can tell when his ear is pleased with what he hears and I think that such a person will say that the very sweetest music he has ever heard has come from sincere hearts, even if the voices have not been in complete harmony.

If you hear Christians sing when they are in the spirit and sing what they really feel, their singing may not be artistic and it may not be accurate, but, if your own heart is right with God, it will have such an effect upon you as no other music can have. Singing from the heart is the noblest form of praise to God! Some people would not shout so loudly where the words should be uttered softly, or sing so harshly where pathos is required, if they were thinking while they were singing. But it is quite possible for us to be uttering sweet sounds without our mind and heart being really occupied in the exercise. Let it not be so with us, dear Friends, but, whenever we sing, may we so praise God in our spirit that at the close of every Psalm and hymn we may be able to say, with these sons of Korah, “We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.”

But why did they write this? For, according to the title, it is “A Psalm of (or for) the sons of Korah.” It was, probably, written by them because this fact was so refreshing to their memory. Possibly, at the time the Psalm was written, they were not in the House of the Lord, nor able to go

there to sing, so they recorded their past experience to cheer them under their present trial—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God. There have been, in days gone by, happy times when we have rejoiced in Your great love to us and although we are now debarred the privilege of sounding forth Your praise in the midst of Your Temple, our memory recalls the glad seasons of the past and our soul is, for a while, content to sup upon these cold meats and to look forward to the day when once more we shall be banqueted in the House of the Lord."

Sometimes, dear Friends, when you get into the wilderness, it is sweet to remember that you were once an inhabitant of Zion—especially when you feel such an inward longing to get back, again, that you can say with the Psalmist, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!" In this very House of Prayer, have not our hearts burned within us, many a time, as we have praised our great and gracious God? Have not our souls then been ready to dance with ecstasy? If so, we may well pray to the Lord and say, "Renew Your former mercies to us. Quicken us again, we pray You. O restore unto us the joy of Your salvation and cause our hearts, again, to shout aloud with grateful thanksgiving for all Your loving kindness towards us!"

To help us to receive an answer to the prayer which I have just uttered on your behalf, as well as for myself, let us look at our text very carefully and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in explaining it. Doing so, I think we shall learn, first, that *the occupation of these sons of Korah was gracious*—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." Then, secondly, *the place was appropriate*. Where better could they be to think of the loving kindness of the Lord than in His Temple? When I have spoken on these two points, I will try to show you, thirdly, *that the result was beneficial*. The Psalm itself shows us how much they were profited by thinking upon the loving kindness of the Lord—and it also reveals to us the blessing which came to others through them.

I. So, first, we learn that THEIR OCCUPATION WAS GRACIOUS—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God."

Thought is a noble faculty. The power to exercise it distinguishes men from the brute beasts. We grovel when we are under necessity to perform the acts that relate only to the body. We rise as we are able to perform the functions of the mind and heart. To really think is an ennobling employment, yet it is not everybody who cares to think. There are many who regard themselves as religious people, who like to pay somebody else to do their thinking for them, so it is theirs only second-hand. They are not like the noble Bereans who, "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"—thus going to the fountainhead, instead of drinking of the streams which have, probably, been polluted in their course. You may rest assured of this that you do not really know anything until you have thoroughly thought it out. You say, perhaps, "I believe such-and-such a creed," yet you hardly know what is stated in that creed and you certainly do not

know what the words mean—and, therefore, you do not really believe it in the right fashion. If you would truly know it, you must study and labor to understand it. In fact, you must think it over.

But the amazing thing is that many people will do almost anything except think. A pretty service to which the flowers from Covent Garden lend the chief attraction, or in which the millinery makes the greatest show, pleases a great many! And to have the ears charmed with the melodious sounds of vocal or instrumental music producing a sensuous feeling which they suppose to be true devotion—but is not—how many there are who will give almost anything for this! But as for *thinking*, they cannot do that. Such work is too hard for their mental constitution. They do not think and they cannot think. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, no man can be a strong Christian unless he is able to say, in the words of our text, “We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God.” What is needed is that we should believingly think in harmony with the great thoughts of God, thinking them over again after Him, as it were—not endeavoring to think anything contrary to what is revealed, or seeking to be inventors of truth—which we can never be—but reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting what we find recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. This is the kind of thought that we must exercise if we are to grow in Grace and to make advances in the Divine life.

Not only, however, is thought a noble faculty, *but God’s loving kindness is a theme that is especially worthy of thought.* If there is any subject that may be neglected in our meditations, this must never be. The most common ties of gratitude bind us to at least *think* about the great goodness of God to us. It is an amazing thing that He should ever have so highly favored such unworthy persons as we are—and favored us so long, so tenderly and so perseveringly. Truly, the mercies He has bestowed upon us should never be—

***“Forgotten in unthankfulness
And without praises die.”***

Besides, if we do not at least think about God’s loving kindness to us, we may well tremble lest He should no more think upon us for good and find more grateful recipients of His loving kindness. Not think of His loving kindness? Why, there are some of us who cannot help doing so, for it continues to be manifested to us every day! We cannot forget the past mercies, for the present ones are so abundant. Fresh oil to anoint us is always flowing from the good olive tree which is one of the symbols of our Savior. How can we forget what the Lord has done for us? I might slightly alter that striking expression of captive Israel and say, “If I forget you, O loving kindness of the Lord, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” The beam out of the wall and the stones on which we rest our feet might well cry out against us if we did not think of the loving kindness of the Lord! If we cannot tell all about it. If we cannot properly weigh and value it. If we cannot give any adequate return for it, yet let us at least think of it! Let everyone of us think of it now, so that we may be able to say at the

close of the service, or even before, “We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.”

Further, *such thought as our test describes is essential to all true worship*. Be not startled if I say that it is very much in proportion to our thought that we really worship and, without thought, there is no true worship. Suppose we sing the praises of God without thinking what we are doing—is that praising Him? No, no more than if we could have taught a parrot to make the same set of sounds! Suppose we preach without thought—of what value is such preaching? I am afraid there is much of that sort of preaching to be heard. One minister said, some time ago, that he could preach two sermons a day, six days in the week and think nothing of it. And somebody who knew his style of speech said that he was quite right in thinking nothing of it, for there was nothing in it to think of! If the preacher shall talk, and talk, and talk, but does not, himself, *think*, his words will not be acceptable even to his hearers—much less can he hope that they will be accepted by God! If you say that you worship God without thought, I answer that you worship not God at all, and that you rather mock Him than worship Him. If you kneel down to pray before you retire to rest, and when you rise up, you say to yourself, “I never thought of what I was saying,” then, Sir, you did not really pray! There was no true prayer in the act—it was all a mockery and a sham. We must make the whole of our devotion an exercise of the inward spirit—not so much an act of the vocal organs as of the thoughtful part of our being—so that we may truly be able to say, “We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.”

Now, this task of thinking of God’s loving kindness ought to be a very easy one, for *there is abundance of material to think of in God’s loving kindness*.” Well did Joseph Addison sing—

**“When all Your mercies, O my God
My rising soul surveys—
Transported with the view, I’m lost
In wonder, love and praise.”**

Each one of us who has been the subject of saving Grace may say to the Lord, “I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in Your eternal counsels, before the earth was, and of Your loving kindness to me long before the members of my body were curiously worked by Your mysterious power.” Some of us can say to the Lord, “I have thought of Your loving kindness in having committed me to the care of a godly mother and a Christian father. I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in my infant days when I could not protect myself. I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in my wayward youth when I ran into divers follies, knowing not myself or You. And I have thought of Your loving kindness to me when I grew up to manhood and, alas, my folly ripened into sin. I have thought of Your pitying, restraining, forgiving loving kindness that watched over me in all my wanderings, always tracking the lost sheep that the Good Shepherd might always know where it was and, in due time, bring it home. I have thought of that loving kindness which, at last,

lovingly grasped me, laid me upon Your shoulders and bore me home rejoicing! Your loving kindness, O my God, where shall I end the story of it? Surely it shall last, not only as long as my existence here, but it shall be continued throughout eternity! Since the new birth of Your servant, how great have been Your loving kindnesses in instruction, in deliverance, in forgiveness, in comforting, in strengthening, in guiding, in answering prayer, in removing temptation, in conquering infirmity, in leading on from strength to strength!”

Oh, if we had to write the complete record, the roll would need to be written within and without to hold the list of all the Lord’s loving kindnesses—and it would need to be long enough to belt the whole Heaven as with a zodiac of light—for His loving kindness is without end and altogether untellable! No man can truly say, “I have thought that subject dry. I have worked it threadbare.” Oh, no! We have thought and we will still think of God’s loving kindness to us! That is a theme not only worthy of thought, but beyond all thought. If any of you, Brothers and Sisters, think there is likely to be any lack of material for thought, I beg you to consider the various acts of Divine Grace, all of which are full of the loving kindness of the Lord—the Everlasting Covenant, personal election, redemption, effectual calling, adoption, sanctification, final perseverance. Touch on any point you please and you may think with joy and gratitude of God’s marvelous loving kindness!

Then, each one of you turn to your own personal experience. I need not again remind you how gracious God has been to you. I have already given you a sort of outline sketch of it. But, oh, there are some of you who could tell—no, you would not like to tell—but you *know* some wonderful things about the Lord’s loving kindness to you! As for myself, I know that my Master has done for me that which, if I were to tell it, would never be believed and, therefore, I shall keep the story of it till I get where doubt and incredulity will never be admitted. The loving kindness of the Lord is amazing! Oh, what blessed secrets there have been between Him and some of His most highly favored people! When they have been locked up in the darkest dungeons of the prison, then they have discovered that they were in the King’s wine cellar and He has said to them, “Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” When they have been shut out from all natural light, they have found that they did not need the sunlight, for their Lord’s Presence has given them all the brightness they have needed! I guarantee you that the Covenanters and our Puritan forefathers knew more of the loving kindness of the Lord than many of us do, though some of us know so much of it that we shall need all eternity to tell the wondrous story! Oh, He is a good and gracious God! If you do not think so, it is because you do not know Him. Perhaps you have not yet seen Him in the right light. Possibly, you have been living under the Law—if you were living under Grace, you would understand Him better.

Or perhaps you have been trying to live with just a little Grace, whereas, if you had more Grace, you would know the Lord better and then you would adore Him more. It is never with Him as it is with certain

earthly masters—the less they are known, the better they are liked—and the shorter the service under them is, the sweeter is it considered. Oh, no, our blessed Lord is better loved the better He is known! And the longer we serve Him, the easier does His yoke prove to be to our shoulders. Personally, I can testify that I find it an ever-increasing joy to be His servant and it is to me the source of pardonable pride that my two sons are in the service of the same Master—and I could not say that if I had found Him to be a bad Master. I know what some of you say, “I have such a hard taskmaster that I will never bring my boy to him, to be apprenticed—not I.” But when you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do but know Him as He really is, you will wish to have all whom you love to be beloved of Him—and it will be your heart’s delight to see them all earnestly engaged in His blessed service!

Talking thus of the Lord’s loving kindness to any one of you personally, we might, in time, get to the end of the story. But, Beloved, there are thousands of you here, who, unless you have grossly deceived yourselves, have a similar story to tell! The loving kindness of the Lord to any one of His children is a theme of wonder, but, to hundreds, to thousands, to millions, to a multitude that no man can number, O my blessed Lord, Your loving kindnesses are like the sand upon the seashore, or like the innumerable stars of Heaven! None but Yourself can fully understand Yourself—

“God only knows the love of God.”

It is beyond all the bounds of human thought, or speech, or calculation, or imagination!

I think, dear Friends, that I have now shown you that there is plenty of room for thought upon the subject of the Lord’s loving kindness. So now let me go on to say that *this is a kind of worship in which all of you who are God’s people may engage*. When I go home, after this service, I shall be able to say, “I have preached Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.” You will not all be able to say that, for, if we were all preachers, where would be the hearers? But I hope you will be able to say, “I have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.” Perhaps your singing does not count for much, like mine—more of a growl than a song, our musical friends say. Never mind if it is so—if you cannot sing, you can say to the Lord, “I have *thought* of Your loving kindness” and that, after all, being the very essence and soul of worship, will be more profitable to you than if, without thought, you had spoken with the greatest eloquence, or sung only with your lips the sweetest notes of music!

Ah, my dear sick Sister over yonder, hardly fit to be out of your room, I hope you will be able to say, “I have thought of Your loving kindness, O God.” My poor old friend up there in the gallery, who cannot even read the Scriptures, you, also, can join with us, my Brother, in saying, “We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God.” Yes, my Friend, though you have not the talent of communicating anything to others, for you feel so bashful and are almost hiding your head even now while I am speak-

ing—and although you scarcely think yourself worthy to come to the Communion Table with the Lord's people, yet you know that you can chime in with us when we say, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." I delight in any form of worship in which *everybody* can join—and this is such that no one who really loves the Lord need keep himself out of the happy united assembly!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, *this practice of thinking of God's loving kindness is not universally followed*. I am afraid that in all congregations there are many people who do not think at all—and many others who do think, but they think about almost anything except the loving kindness of the Lord! You missed your ring from your finger! You say to yourself, "Where did I leave those keys?" You are wondering how that sick child is! You are thinking about that pair of horses to be sold tomorrow! Oh, yes, under the most faithful ministries, these odds and ends of daily life will force their way in if they can. But they must be rigidly excluded when they take the place of that one theme that is really worthy of our thought. When the birds came down to eat the sacrifice that Abraham was offering, he drove them away. Try, dear Friends, to do the same with all that is carnal, frivolous, worldly—that your sacrifices unto the Lord may be well pleasing in His sight, and that you may be able to join with the sons of Korah in saying, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that *the place was appropriate*—"in the midst of Your Temple."

The Temple at Jerusalem no longer stands. It is gone, but are there not temples of God now? Yes, a good many. Of what are they composed? They are composed of *living men and women*—there are no other temples of God! The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" But those handsome buildings with spires and towers, and those barn-looking structures called Non-conformist places of worship, are they not temples? No. Or if they are called temples, then to them Stephen's words may be applied, "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." So let us cast aside the superstition which regards any particular place, or any set of bricks, mortar, stones and iron, as being in any sense or degree, holy! Holiness is not an attribute attaching to material substances. God says, "Heaven is My Throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? Or what is the place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?"

But there is still a Temple of the living God and that Temple is made up of the aggregate of all the temples—the temples are the bodies of His people—and the whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is the Temple of God. By the term, the Church, I mean the whole body of Believers throughout the world and in Heaven, too, for they together form the one "general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven." This is the Temple of the living God and I hope that many of us can say that we are in the midst of it. If we are numbered among

God's people—the tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands all over the world who love the Lord—we are surely in the most appropriate place to think of the loving kindness of the Lord!

And first, if we are in the midst of God's spiritual Temple, His true Church, we may *well think of His loving kindness in permitting us to be there*. "What," says one, "am I really one of the Lord's chosen people? Dare I hope that I have a part and a lot with His saints? Who would have thought that such a thing was possible? Who would have dreamed that it could ever be so?" Ah, Beloved, of all the wonders you will ever see in the Church of God, if you really know yourself, the greatest wonder of all will be to find yourself there! I am never tired of singing, with good Dr. Watts—

***"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in—
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."***

Cannot many of you say the same thing? Some of your old companions are not here—perhaps they even ridicule the idea of coming to such a place as this. Possibly some of your former associates are now where hope and mercy can never reach them. Why was it not your lot to reject Christ and to perish in your sin? What but the Sovereign Grace of God has made the difference between you and them? So well may you say, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple; we have thought of Your loving kindness in putting us into Your Temple, and even making some of us to be pillars in that Temple."

Standing in the midst of that Temple, which is the true Church of God, we cannot help thinking of the loving kindness of the Lord, *for every stone in that Temple testifies to His loving kindness*. These are the living stones that are "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy Temple in the Lord." And, Brothers and Sisters, the very quarrying of every stone out of the pit of nature, and the squaring of every stone so as to make it fit to be built into God's Temple is such a work of loving kindness that as we look upon our Brothers and Sisters—the living stones that lie in the same course with ourselves, we may well think of God's loving kindness!

We may also think of the loving kindness of the Lord in the midst of His Temple *because everything in that Temple reminds us of His loving kindness*. There was, for instance, the altar of burnt offering. And we can say, "Thank God for the loving kindness which has provided for us the one great atoning Sacrifice by which our sin is forever put away." There stood, too, the golden altar of incense and every thoughtful Believer says, "Thank God for the loving kindness which has given us Christ to be our Intercessor before the Throne of God on high, where His prevailing pray-

ers are continually ascending on our behalf.” There also stood the show-bread upon the sacred table and we say, “Thank God for Him who, as the Bread of Life, is the ever-present and ever-satisfying food for His people.” There, too, was the golden candlestick, or lamp stand, and we can say, “Thank God for His loving kindness in having provided the all-sufficient Light of God for His people.”

There was nothing on which the intelligent, thoughtful eyes of a Believer could rest, in the tabernacle or the Temple, that would not remind him of the loving kindness of the Lord. And I think I may say the same concerning the Church of Christ to which we belong. Look where you will, everything speaks of the loving kindness of the Lord. There is, first of all, the great Head of the Church, your Lord and Savior, and mine. Oh, what loving kindness there is in Him! His Incarnation, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession, His promised Second Advent—all these are full of loving kindness! Then look at the feet of that same mystical body, for the very poorest of the saints will also tell you of the loving kindness of the Lord. See how, in our Baptism, the Lord shows us His loving kindness by teaching us that the way to life lies through death and burial. Then see how, in that sacred Supper which we are about to celebrate, the Lord further shows His loving kindness by teaching us how the Divine life that He has imparted to us is to be nourished by the very body and blood of Christ received into us in a spiritual sense. It is loving kindness everywhere, Brothers and Sisters, in the Temple of the Lord! Turn which way you will, it is all loving kindness and nothing else!

Will you kindly pick that long word to pieces for a minute? It is a most expressive and instructive word—loving kindness. Not only kindness or kinnedness—God acting towards us as if He were near akin to us—but, loving kindness—the kindness of a brother to his brothers and sisters, the love of a father towards his children—no, these are poor things compared with the loving kindness of the Lord! Sing of it! Tell of it! And, as the sons of Korah did, *think* of it in the midst of the Temple of the Lord!

III. The third thing I was to prove to you was that *the result was beneficial*—“We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple.” Having done so, what was the result?

First, according to the context, *they were made joyous*—“Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your judgments.” You know how you may think over a subject until you can produce within yourself the state of mind which naturally grows out of it. You may take your troubles and pore over them again, and again, and again, and again, until you make yourself as thoroughly miserable as a human being can be! I recollect someone writing to me to say that he had attended the Tabernacle, on one occasion, but that he would never do such a thing again, for he was certain that the tried and afflicted people of God did not meet there. He said, “As I looked around and saw the happy faces of the congregation, I said to myself, ‘These are not the tried people of God.’” Then he went on to inform me that he had found a

brother, under whose preaching he could profit, for there were only eight people gathered to listen to him and they all looked so wretched—and the preacher unfolded such a deep and sorrowful experience, that the brother felt himself quite at home. I was glad that he did, for I like everybody to be where he feels at home. And if anyone is most happy when he is most miserable, I hope he will enjoy himself all he can! That state of mind would not suit me, yet there are persons of that sort who never are content till they are dissatisfied—who never are pleased with anything unless they can grumble and growl at it—and who never seem able to sing—

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

—until they feel that they cannot stay in it any longer!

But, Brothers and Sisters, I trust we are not “cut on the cross” after that fashion. We delight in being joyful in our God and we wish that our countenances could always shine as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount. So, Beloved, think of the loving kindness of the Lord to you and see if that does not make melody in your heart unto Him and cause the big bells in your soul to ring carillons of praise so full of jubilant gladness that your very body shall seem as if it could hardly bear the joy! I have sometimes seen an old church steeple rock and reel when a marriage peal has been rung out from the ancient belfry and, in like manner, at times, one has felt so happy that the poor physical frame seemed as if it could scarcely endure such excess of bliss as the soul was delighting in the loving kindness of the Lord!

Now, my dear Sister, you have talked about that rheumatism of yours to at least 50 people who have been to see you. Suppose you tell your next visitor about the loving kindness of the Lord to you? Yes, my dear Brother, we all know that trade is bad, for you have told us so, every day, for I do not know how many years! And you have always been losing money, though you had no capital when you started, yet, somehow or other, you have managed to have something left even now. Well, we know that old story—could you not change your note just a little and talk about the loving kindness of the Lord? Yes, my Friend, I know that many professing Christian people are not all that they profess to be. I have heard you say so ever so many times! You also say, “There is no love in the church.” Well, so far as we can see, you are not overstocked with it. You say, “There is no zeal among the members,” but have you any to give away to those who need it? Now, henceforward, instead of always harping on the faults and failing of God’s people—which, certainly, are numerous enough, but have not become any fewer since you talked so much about them—would it not be better to *think* and *talk* of the loving kindness of the Lord?

I would like to have this for my theme until I die. If there could be such a sentence as this passed upon me now, “You are never to preach again except upon the loving kindness of the Lord,” my soul would be delighted to have such a commission! I am sure that I would never exhaust

the subject, though I would try my hardest to do so. When I had gone as far as I could, I would call on some of you to tell what God had done for *you* and so I would start a fresh band of preachers, for each one of you would have a new story to tell of the loving kindness of the Lord—and the telling of that story would make your souls glad!

I have partly anticipated what I was going to say upon the next point, which is that thinking upon the loving kindness of the Lord *would unloose our tongues*. Notice what it says in the 12th and 13th verses—“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following.” If you have really tasted of God’s loving kindness, you must tell others about it! You cannot keep the love of God to you a secret. The first instinct of a new-born soul is to tell its joy to somebody else. Think over this theme and you will find a tongue that you thought you had not. “While I was musing,” said David, “the fire burned: then spoke I with my tongue.” My Sister, you will yet take a Sunday school class if you will only think upon God’s loving kindness to you! My dear Brother, you *can* talk to those few poor people in that hamlet where you live. You have been afraid to try to speak to them and so you have let them remain uninstructed. But you will not be able to be silent if you think upon God’s loving kindness to you! There is a string that ties your tongue—get your heart so red-hot that it will burn that string and then, off you will go! And when once your tongue is unloosed by such a process as that, it will be said of you as it was of Naphtali, the hind let loose, “He gives goodly words.” Tell to all around you that the Lord is good and that His mercy endures forever!

Does someone ask, “Is there any need to tell that?” Yes, there is, for it has got abroad that our Master is strict and hard to His servants. I should not wonder if there are some young people, even here, who imagine that religion is a very dull, dreary, miserable thing—and who say that they do not want to be Christians, for they would rather see a little life. They would not mind being converted afterwards, but they would like to have a little happiness first. Well, young people, it is a very good resolution—only let me tell you that it is a pity to look for life in the outskirts of death, for there is none there! It is advisable to have a little happiness and more advisable to have a good deal of it! And it is most of all advisable to have the greatest happiness possible. I, for one, will speak of the loving kindness of the Lord and I do not think any Believer here will contradict me. And I can say that I never knew what real happiness meant till I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have had plenty of trouble since then, and much pain of body and depression of spirit, but I can testify that my Master’s service is the grandest possible service on earth and His love to me, and His tenderness and gentleness to me make me feel that if I had even to die for Him, I would rejoice to do it! And if I had to live as long as Methuselah did, I would only pray that during every hour and minute of the time, I might consecrate every faculty I had entirely to His praise! We must tell to the generation following the

Truth of God about the loving kindness of the Lord that they may not be deceived by the great enemy of souls and be made to think that Christ's service is a bondage to the soul.

Last of all, as we think of God's loving kindness, *we shall be confirmed in our loyalty to Him*. How does the Psalm finish? "For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." There are some here who have known my Master for 50 years. I have preached Him to you for nearly 25 years and I knew Him a good while before that. Do I want to change my Master for a better one? Yes, if you can find a better one for me, but that you never will be able to do! Christian, do you believe that you will ever have a better Master than Christ, and a better service than His? No. I know what you will say, "I only want to know Him more, and to serve Him better. He has bored my ear to His door-post and I shall never go away from His service, for He is mine and I am His, forever and forever." "This God is our God." He was our father's God and our mother's God, and the God of the dear ones whom He took from us to be with Him in Heaven. And "this God is our God." He is the God to whom we looked in the day of our soul's distress, when we saw Him in Christ Jesus, reconciled unto us through the death of His Son. "This God is our God forever and ever." He is the God who wiped our tears away and filled our hearts with gladness, and started us on our pilgrimage to Heaven with new life in our souls and new songs on our lips! "This God is our God."

He is the God who has heard our prayers, the God who has been with us in our direst extremity, the God who spoke to us words of healing, words of peace and words of salvation when we lay on the verge of death and looked into eternity. He is the God on whom we have cast our unworthy selves, trusting Him with our souls and our all, for this world and the world to come, "this God is our God forever and ever." Place your hand on the altar's horn, my Brothers and Sisters, and say, "I am His forever and forever; never to draw back, never to backslide, never to apostatize, never, His Grace enabling me to be steadfast, to dishonor His sacred name, or to do despite to the precious blood of His Son, or to the purity of the indwelling Spirit. Your loving kindness, O God, has bound the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." So let it be, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

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

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High:
and call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and
you shall glorify Me.”*
Psalm 50:14, 15.

EVEN in the Christian Church we have great diversities of opinion as to what is the true form of worship. One stoutly cries, “Lo here,” and another as earnestly says, “Lo there!” There are some who think that the more simple and plain the outward worship can be, the better. Others think the more gorgeous and resplendent it can be, the better. Some are for the quietude of the Friends’ meeting house—some are for the stormy music of the cathedral. Some will have it that God is best praised in silence—others that He is best honored with flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and I know not what kinds of music! Is it so difficult, then, to know what kind of worship God will accept? It is very difficult if it is left to the guesses of men, but it is not at all difficult if we turn to *the Word of God*. There we shall find, I think, great room for diversities of mode, but we shall find ourselves shut up by a consecrated intolerance to a few matters of spirit. We shall there be told what is not essential, but we shall certainly be assured of what *is* essential to the true worship of God. And I suppose it will be enough for any of us who are sincerely anxious to worship God, ourselves, if we find out for ourselves, by the teaching of God’s Spirit, the way to do it. And we shall be content to let others, also, find out the way for themselves, satisfied if we, ourselves, are approved of God—for we have very little to do with sitting on the throne of judgment and either condemning or approving others. Now, on turning to this Psalm we shall find out what worship *is not* acceptable with God. And we shall find out what *is*. And these will make the main points of our sermon this evening. In reading this Psalm to you, you must all have noticed—

I. WHAT SORT OF OFFERINGS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

You noticed with me, I dare say, that first, those are not accepted in which men place *the reliance upon the form, itself*, and are contented when they have gone through the form, though their hearts have had no communion with God. And they have brought to the Most High no spiritual sacrifice whatever. Lay it down, then, beyond all question, that for-

mal worship which is not attended with the *heart*—which is not the worship of the spirit—can never be acceptable with the Most High!

And here we will remind ourselves, too, that *even when the form is actually prescribed of God*, yet without the *heart*, it is not a worship of God at all in the true sense of language. With what indignation of eloquence does God here speak to the Israelite people who imagined that when they had brought their bulls and their goats—when they had kept their holy days, consecrated their priests, presented their offerings, been obedient to the ritual—then that all this was enough. He puts it to them—He inquires of them whether they can be so foolish as to think that there is anything in sacrifices of bulls and rams that could content the mind of the Most High! If He wanted bullocks and rams, He says, He has enough of them—all living creatures are His—and He has infinite power to make as many more as He would! Do they fancy that if He wanted bulls and goats, He would come to them for them? That the Creator would crave and turn beggar to His own creatures and ask for bullocks out of *their* houses and goats out of *their* field? He puts it to them, do they really think that He, the Infinite God, who made the heavens and the earth, the great I AM, actually eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of goats? And yet their idea was that the mere outward sacrifice contented Him! Was God as gross as that? And what was involved in that? Now I shall put it to you, you who profess to be Christians and yet in your worship, whatever it may be, rest in it. Do you really believe that God is honored by your eating a piece of bread and drinking a few drops of wine? The thousands of creatures that He has in the world eat more bread and drink more wine. Do you really believe that your sitting at a table brings any satisfaction to Him who is in the company of angels, and who has choicer spirits than you are to enter into fellowship with Him? No, Sirs, if you rest in the outward form, what you do can bring no amount of entertainment to Him! He might say to those priests who think that they offer unto God a sacrifice in the “Mass,” “Do I eat bread that is made by the baker, leavened or unleavened? Do you think that I drink wine pressed from the grape?” Fancy you, you that find satisfaction in these things—oh, fools, and slow of heart—that the Infinite Jehovah takes any delight in these matters? And if you come to Baptism as God, Himself, commands it—if you trust in that, might He not say to you, “Do you think that I am pleased with water, when the rivers, the lakes, the seas, and the deeps that lie beneath are all My own? Does that immersion in water bring any satisfaction to Me, in itself considered? What can there be in it that can delight My infinite mind or satisfy My soul? If we rest in any outward form, though God prescribes it, we must have a very gross and carnal idea of God, indeed, if we conceive that He is served or glorified thereby! It cannot be so. If men were not idiotic, they would shake off from themselves all idea of sacramental efficacy and everything that is akin to it! They would see that what God wants is the *heart*, the *soul*, the *love*, the *trust*, the *confidence* of rational, intelligent beings—not the going

through of certain forms! The forms are useful enough when they teach us the Truth of God of which they are the emblems. The forms are precious and, as ordained of God, to be reverently used by those who can see what they mean and who are helped by the emblem to see the inner meaning, but by none besides. The mere outward thing is but the shell, the husk—useless unless there is within it the living kernel, the embryo which the shell protects! The mere form of outward worship is nothing—it is not acceptable with God!

Now if this is true—and we know it is—of even ordinances ordained of God, *how much more must it be true of ceremonies that are not of God's ordaining?* I am not about to judge, but I will say of all ceremonies and absence of ceremony, if there is no Divine prescription, we feel certain that there cannot be a Divine acceptance! And even if that could be supposed, yet if the heart were not there, and there were reliance in these outward things of man's devising, it were utter folly to suppose that God accepts them! For instance, there are certain people who think that God is glorified by banners, by processions, by acolytes, by persons in white, in blue, in scarlet—I know not what colors—by golden crucifixes, or brass, or ivory—by very sweet music, by painting, by incense. Now what an idea they must have of God! What a thought they must have of Him! I remember standing on Monte Cenis one afternoon on a very broiling summer's day, in a cool place where I could look all over the wide plains of Italy and see the blue sky—such a blue as we never see, and the innumerable flowers, and all the land fair as a dream—and then I Looked to my right and there stood a shrine—a shrine to which there came a worshipper. There was a doll. They called it “the Blessed Virgin.” It was adorned with all sorts of trinkets—just such things as I have seen sold at a country fair for children. It had little sprigs of faded artificial flowers—little bits of paint. And I said to myself, “The God that made this glorious landscape in which everything is true and real—do they fancy that He is honored by this kind of thing—these baubles? What an idea they must have of God.” Sirs, if He wanted banners, He would deck His escutcheon with the stars! If He wanted incense, ten thousand thousand flowers would shed their sweet perfume upon the air! If He wants music, the wind shall sound it, the woods shall clap their hands, every forest tree shall give out its note and angelic harpers standing on the glassy sea shall give such music as your ears and mine have never conceived! If He wants an alb, behold the snow! If He wants your many-colored raiments, see how He decks the meadows with flowers and strews, with both His hands, rainbow hues on every side! If He wanted garments, He would bind the sky's azure round Him with a belt of rainbows and come forth in His Glory! But your dolls and your boys and men, and all their millinery—Sirs, do you know what you are doing? Have you got souls? If you worshipped a calf, calves, like you, might well worship him in such in style, but the great I AM that built Heaven and earth dwells not in tem-

ples made with hands! That is to say, in these buildings—and He is not worshipped by such trumpery as this. All this, of men's inventing, can never be acceptable to the Most High. Common sense tells us so—much more the Revelation of God!

But, mark you, my censure does not count alone against them. Suppose a man should say, "Well, I am far enough from that. On the morning of the first day of the week I resort to a meeting house—whitewashed, a few forms, a raised desk at the end of it—and I sit down there. I have not any minister—nobody to speak unless he believes the Spirit moves him. We all sit still. Many times we sit still the whole morning. *We worship God.*" Do you believe you have? If your heart was there—if your soul was there—I am the last man to complain of the absence of form. I love your simplicity, I admire it. But if you trust it, I believe *your simplicity will as certainly ruin you as the gorgeousness that goes to the opposite extreme*, for if there is any reliance in that sitting still—if there is any reliance in that waiting—(take our own case) if there is any reliance in your coming up to these pews and listening to me—do you think you have served God merely by coming here to sing hymns, and cover your faces during prayer, and so on? I tell you, you have not worshipped God! You are mistaken if you suppose the mere act counts for anything! You know not what you think—you know not what your mind is drifting to. It is the *heart* that gets to God—it is the eye that pours out penitential tears—it is the soul that loves and blesses and praises—this is the sacrifice! But all the outward, whether God, Himself, ordained it, or man devised it—or whether it is a matter of mere convenience—it cannot be received by the Most High!

So let me add, beloved Friends, a matter which may touch some of you. *The mere repetition of holy words can never be acceptable sacrifices to God.* There are some who from their childhood have been taught to say a form of prayer. I shall neither commend nor censure, but I will say this—you may repeat that form of prayer for twenty, forty, 50 years, and yet never have prayed a single word in all your life! I am not judging the words. They may be the best you could possibly put together. They may be the words of Inspiration, but the mere saying of words is not prayer, neither does God receive it as such! You might just as well say the Lord's Prayer backwards as forwards for the matter of its acceptance with God, except you say it with your heart! I believe some people fancy that the reading of prayers in the family, and especially that the reading of prayers at the bedside of the sick, has a kind of charm—that it somehow or other has a mysterious influence and helps to prepare men for life or for death. Believe me, no grosser error could exist! When the soul talks with God, it matters not what language it uses. If it finds a convenient form and it uses it with its heart, let it use it if so it wills. But if, on the other hand, the words come bubbling up and come ever so strangely and irregularly, yet if the *heart* speaks, God accepts the prayer—and that is worship! So, too, in singing. If we have the sweetest hymn that ever was writ-

ten—yes, though it were an Inspired hymn, and if we sang it to the noblest tune that ever composer wrote, yet we do not praise God by the mere repetition of the words and the production of those sounds! Ah, no—the whole of it lies in the soul after all! “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” Let there be good music, by all means, and noble words, for these are congruous to noble thoughts—but oh, let the thoughts be there! Let the song be there! Let the flames of love burn on the altar of the heart! Be the outward expression what it may, let the praise be winged by the ardent affections of the soul—otherwise far from you be the thought that you have worshipped God when you have used solemn words with thoughtless hearts! Does not this touch some of you? You have never prayed in all your lives! You have said a prayer, but never talked with God. You have been to the House of God, perhaps, from your infancy, but never worshipped God! Though oftentimes the preacher said, “Let us worship God,” yet you have never done so. O Sirs! What? All these formalities, all these routines, all these outward forms and yet no heart, no soul?—nothing acceptable with God? Alas for you! And will you go on so forever? You will, so long as you rest contented with the outward! I pray that God may put in you a sacred discontent with the merely outward worship and make you long and cry that you may offer unto Him the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart through Jesus Christ the Savior, by the power of the Eternal Spirit—for that will the Lord accept!

Thus I have mentioned one form of sacrifice that God does not accept, namely, that of formalists. Now this Psalm shows us that—

II. THERE ARE OTHER SACRIFICES WHICH GOD REJECTS, namely, *those offered by persons who continue their wicked lives*. Now some will preach and yet live in an ungodly manner. Some can lead prayers in the Prayer Meeting and yet can lie and steal. There are those who, for a pretense, make long prayers. Their minds are occupied upon the widow’s house, and how they shall devour it, while their lips are uttering consecrated words! Now observe *no man’s praying is accepted with God who is a hater of instruction*. Turn to the 17th verse of the Psalm—“Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My Words behind your back.” Let me look a man in the face who never reads the Bible—who does not want to know what is in it—who has no care about what God’s Word is—I see there a man that cannot worship God! If he says, “Oh, I am sincere in my own way”—Sir, your “own way”—but that way is sure to be the way of rebellion! A servant does not have his own way, but his master’s way! You are not a servant of God while you think that your will and your fancy are to settle what God would have you do. “To the Law and to the Testimony.” Every devout mind should say, “I will search and see what God would have me do.” What does He say to me? Does He tell me that I am, by nature, lost and ruined? Lord, help me to feel it! Does He tell me that only

by faith in a crucified Savior can I be saved? Lord, work that faith in me! Does He tell me that they who are justified must also be sanctified and made pure in life? Lord, sanctify me by Your Spirit and work in me purity of life! The really accepted man desires to know the Divine Will and to that man there is not one part of Scripture that he would wish not to know, nor one part of God's teaching that he would wish to be ignorant of! The Lord does not expect you, Beloved, while you are in this world at, any rate, to know everything, but He does expect that you who call yourselves His people should also be as little children, who are quite willing to learn! Oh, it is an ill sign with us when there are some Chapters that we would like to see pasted over—when there are some passages of Scripture that grate on our ears—when we do not want to be too wise in what is written—do not want to know too well what the Lord's will is! If you willfully shut your ear to God's instruction and will not listen to His will, neither will He listen to your prayer, nor can you expect that your sacrifice will be received by the Most High! Such things are not acceptable, and yet, how large a proportion of Christendom has never recognized the duty of learning the will of God from God's own Spirit! They take it from their party leaders—one borrows from this body of divinity, another from his Prayer Book! One borrows from his parents and must be what his father was—and another borrows from his friend, or thinks that the National Church must necessarily be the right one! But the genuine spirit says, "Lord, I would have that which is Your mind—not mine, nor man's. Oh, teach me!" And though he judges not others, he desires always to be judged of God, Himself—to stand before the Most High and say, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my way, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the right way everlasting."

The Psalm goes on to say that *God does not accept the sacrifices of dishonest men*. "When you saw the thief, you consented with him." When a man's common trade is dishonesty—when frequently he excuses himself, as some servants do, in little pilfering—as some masters do in false markings of their goods. When the man knows he is not walking uprightly before his fellow men, he comes to the altar of God and brings a sacrifice which he pollutes with every touch of his hand! No, Sir! No! Say not that you have fellowship with God when your fellowship is with a thief! Do you think you can have God on one side, and the thief on the other? Surely you know not who He is! If we are not perfect, yet at least let us be sincere! And if there are sins into which we fall through inadvertence and surprise, yet at least uprightness before our fellow men is one thing that must not be lacking—cannot be lacking in a gracious soul—in a true child of God whom God accepts.

So next, *the sin of impurity prevents our worshipping God*. You come and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!" Or you say, "We praise You, O God. We acknowledge You to be the Lord." Or you stand up here and sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," and you have come from lascivious talking—perhaps from worse than talking!

You have even, now, upon your mind some scheme of what is called, “pleasure,” and you think that “life” means what in this assembly and in the assembly of God’s people it were best not to mention, for you count it no shame to do what Believers count it shame even to think of! Polluted hands! Polluted hands! How can they be lifted up before God? Use what forms you may, your praises are an abomination! Your prayers, while you continue as you are, are a loathing and a stench in the nostrils of God! Turn! Repent! Seek washing in the Savior’s blood—and then you may offer acceptable praises, but not till then!

The Psalmist goes on to say that *so it is with slanderers*. Slanderers cannot be accepted with God—those (and oh, how many there are) who count it sport to ruin other people’s characters—who seem to take a joy and a delight in finding fault with the people of God! How can you expect that God will bless you when you are cursing your fellow men! And while your mouth is full of bitterness, how can it also be full of praise? Now these are not things that will cheer and comfort the people of God. I trust it is a main point in my own ministry to comfort God’s people, but the axe also must be laid to the root of the tree! And let it be known to all who come into these courts that if they come here with defilement in their spirits and with lust or unrighteousness in their daily practice, and love to have it so, from this pulpit they shall find no apologies and gather no comfort! And from God’s Word, too, they shall have denunciation, but not consolation! They shall have threats and judgment, but not the promised blessing! Now we must have a few minutes on the next part of our subject, on which I hope to enlarge on another occasion, which is—

III. WHAT SACRIFICES ARE ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD?

The text tells us, first, thanksgiving. “Offer unto God thanksgiving.” Let us come and worship, then, Brothers and Sisters—let us come and worship! We were lost, but Jesus came to seek the lost. Blessed be His name! We were foul and filthy, but His mercy brought us to the fountain filled with blood. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might.” Since that very day in which He washed us, He has given us all things richly in His Covenant. “He makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters.” “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Now if that is your spirit. If you can keep up that spirit even when the husband sickens, when the child dies, when the property melts away—if you can say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord”—what if there is no hymn from your lips? What if there is no bull on the altar? Yet these are the calves of your lips—the offering of your heart—and they are a sacrifice of a sweet smell if they are presented through Jesus Christ, the great atoning High Priest! This is a sacrifice that God accepts, and I dare say it is often offered to Him in an attic—often presented to Him in a cellar—often, I hope, by you when your hands are grimy at your work and, per-

haps, even when your cheeks are scalding with tears! You can yet say, “I am His child. I have innumerable mercies. When He smites me, yet it is in tenderness. Glory be to His name! Blessed be His name!” That is the sacrifice for a spiritual God! That is spiritual worship! Have you ever offered it, dear Hearer, or have you been living on God’s favor and yet never thanked Him? Have you had your life preserved and your daily food constantly given, and yet have you never blessed God for it? Oh, then you have never worshipped Him! I do not care though you are a good singer—although you put on a vestment, or whatever else you have done—if you have not thanked Him from your soul, devoutly and intensely, you know not what the worship of Jehovah is!

Next the text tells us that *performance of our vows is worship*. “Pay your vows unto the Most High.” Now I shall interpret that not after the Jewish form, but adapt it to our own. You, Beloved, profess to be a Christian. Live as a Christian! Say, “The vows of the Lord are upon me. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? I am a servant of Jesus. I am not my own—I am bought with a price. What can I do to praise Him today? How can I win another soul for Him who bought me with His precious blood? I declared myself, when I joined His Church, to be one of His and, therefore, a cross-bearer. Let me take up my cross, today, whatever it is, though I may be ridiculed, separated and laughed at. Let me do it—bear it cheerfully for His truth! And let me say—

**“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I’ll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You will remember me.”**

Let me do everything as in His sight. I was in outward form buried in Baptism—I profess, then, to be dead to the world. Oh, let me try to be so! Let not its pleasures cheat me! Let not its gains enchant me! I even profess to be risen with Christ. Oh, God, help me to lead a risen life—the life of one who is risen from the dead with Jesus Christ and quickened with His spirit! Now if that is your thought, that is true worship! That is real sacrifice to the Most High—when a soul desires to walk before the Lord in conformity with its vows and gracious obligations, not with a view of merit—for it lays all its hope upon Jesus and finds all its merit there, and simply cries, “I am His, and I wish to live as one that bears a blood-bought name.”

We are told, too, in the text—and that is a very sweet part of it—(I wish I had an hour or two to talk of it)—that *prayer in time of trouble is also a very sweet form of worship*. Men are looking for rubrics, and they are contending whether the rubric is “so-and-so according to the use of Sarum.” Now here is a rubric according to the use of the whole Church of God bought with Jesus’ blood—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” You are in great distress of mind—now you have an opportunity of worshipping God! Trust Him with your distress! Call to Him as a child calls to its mother! Show how you honor

Him—how you love Him—how you trust Him! You shall honor Him even in that—but when you get the answer to your prayer, which will be a sure proof that God has accepted your offering—then you will honor Him again a second time by devoutly thanking Him that He has heard your prayer! O Sinner, this is a way in which you can worship God! Does your sin lie heavy upon your conscience? Call upon God in the day of trouble, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” That is true worship! Have you brought yourself to poverty for your sin? Say, “Lord, help me.” That is prayer! Worship, then, can never go up from all the pealing organs in the world if men’s hearts go not with them! Are you a Christian just now under a cloud? Have you lost the light of Jesus’ face? Call upon Him now in the day of trouble. Believe that He will appear for you. Say, “I shall praise Him. His Countenance is my aid,” and you will be bringing better sacrifice than if you brought he-goats, bullocks and rams! This is what the Lord loves—the trust, the child-like confidence, the loving seeking after sympathy which is in His children’s hearts. Oh, bring Him this!

Then he adds—if you will turn to the last part of the Psalm, which I must incorporate in the text—“Whoever offers praise, glorifies Him.” *True praise glorifies God.* I must confess that I do not particularly like to hear voices that are off-key in the singing, but I should not like to stop one voice, certainly not if it stopped one heart! I think it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill, that an old lady once sat upon his pulpit stairs who sang so very badly—she had a voice that the good gentleman really could not feel that he could worship while he heard her voice in his ears—and he said, “Do be quiet, my good Soul.” She answered, “I sing from my heart, Mr. Hill.” “Sing away!” he said, “and I beg your pardon. I will not stop you.” And I think I would beg the pardon of the most cracked voice I ever heard if it is really accompanied with a real loving, grateful heart! God gets some of His richest praise amidst dying groans—and He gets delightful music from His people’s triumphant cries. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” To praise God—to sing an *excelsis in extremis*—to give Him the highest praise when we are in the deepest waters—this is acceptable with Him! The best worship comes from the Christian that is most tried—at least in this case. When the soul is most bowed down with trouble, if he can say, “I will praise Him: I will praise Him in the fire: I will praise Him in the jaws of Death, itself”—ah, these are sacrifices better than hecatombs of bulls, and better than the blood of fed beasts! Not your architecture, not your music, not your costumes, not your ordinations or your forms, but your prostrate hearts, your souls with veiled faces, worshipping the mysterious, the unseen but everywhere present—the great I AM—this is worship! Through Jesus Christ, it is accepted. It is of the Spirit’s own creation. It only comes from truly spiritual, regenerate men and women, boys and girls—and wherever it comes, it reaches the Majesty on high—and God smiles and accepts it!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I send you home with this reflection. Some of you have never worshipped God. Then think of that, and God help you to begin! Others of us who have worshipped Him ought to consider how large a proportion of our worship is good for nothing. Oh, how often you come and hear now on Thursday night! Why, have not you sometimes built a ship in the pew—mended a plow—darned your husband's stockings—seen to the sick child—done all sorts of things when you should be worshipping God? Now these distracting thoughts mar worship! And I do pray God that you, as a people, may never get to think that coming here is of any use if you do not bring your hearts with you! Thomas Manton said that if we sent on the Sabbath a man stuffed with straw to sit in our pews for us, and thought that was worshipping God, it would be very absurd! But not one whit more than when we bring ourselves stuffed with evil thoughts or dead, cold thoughts that cannot rise to God! I cannot always get to God, I know, but I at least hope I may groan until I do. Oh, it does seem an awful thought that some of us may have no more feelings than the pews we sit on—no more worship of God than those iron columns and those lamps! Oh, may you never be that sort of slumbering congregation with whom it is all form! We have read a strange poem of one who has pictured a ship manned by all dead men. Dead men pulled the sails. A dead man steered and a skeleton eye kept a look-out. I am afraid there are congregations like that—where all is dead and all is form. Oh, may it not be so with you or me, but may we all realize, through Jesus Christ, who stands at the Throne of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we “have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ,” and that evermore to God's glory! Amen.

I speak on this theme but very feebly, but I do feel it from my very heart. I do pray that we may all be accepted worshippers because the heart is found in us. It was always a bad sign—by the Roman seers it was pretended to be the worst sign—when they found no heart in the victim. It is a dreadful sign when in all our worship there is no heart. God forbid that it may be so! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50:1-10.
A Psalm of Asaph.**

Whether this means that Asaph wrote it, or that it was committed to him to sing, we do not know. Certainly Asaph did write some Psalms. There are 12 ascribed to him in the Book of Psalms. He wrote some and it is equally certain that some others were dedicated to him. He had the leadership of the choir who sang the Psalms in the Temple. This is a very marvelous Psalm. If we only consider the poetry of it, it is one of the chief of the Psalms, but its matter is very deep—august. It should be read with great reverence of spirit. The Psalm begins with a prologue in which the scene is introduced. God is represented as coming forth out of Zion to

judge those who profess to be His people—to discern between the precious and the vile—to separate between mere professors and pretenders. The first six verses represent God as coming.

Verse 1. *The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.* The Hebrew has it, “El Elohim, Jehovah has spoken”—three names of God—great and mysterious—the strong God, the only God, the self-existent God. He speaks—calls upon the whole earth from the east to the west to listen to His voice.

2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.* There He dwelt. Now in this scene He is represented as shining forth from it. As he had described the earth as being lighted by the sun from the east to the west, so now God, Himself, who at first speaks and demands a hearing, now shines forth with beams of Glory which altogether eclipse the brightness of the sun. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.”

3. *Our God shall come and shall not keep silent: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.* The voice was heard saying that God would come and then the beams of Glory which warned men that He was coming—and here His people stand attentive, expecting Him to come. “They expect Him to speak.” Fire and rushing wind are usually used in Scripture as attendants of the Throne of God—fire representing justice in action, and the tempest representing His power when it is displayed. Think of God’s coming thus. The poet here pictures it, but it will be so in very deed. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon you that know not God.” He will even come after this manner, “for our God is a consuming fire.”

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.* Do you catch the thought? There comes the great Judge with the fire burning before Him. He rides upon a cherub—yes, rides upon the wings of the wind, and then He calls Heaven, with all the angels and glorified spirits—and He calls to earth, with all its inhabitants, to stand and witness what He does while He judges His people.

5. *Gather My saints together unto Me: those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.* God has a separated and chosen people. It will be a part of the proceedings at the Last Great Day to gather these together unto God. There will be a day when He will make up His jewels—a time when He will gather His wheat into His garner. And as this Psalm stands, this is a large gathering. It refers to a picture of all professing saints being brought before the Throne of God—true saints that made a covenant with God by sacrifice. They see Jesus Christ, who ratifies the Covenant of Grace by blood, and they have laid their hands on Christ, and the covenant made between them and God. But there were others in the Psalmist’s day who had offered sacrifice and pretended to have made a cove-

nant with God—and there are their representatives in these days. They are now to be gathered before the Throne of Judgment, for God has come to judge them.

6. *And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge, Himself. Selah.* The very heavens, as they look down upon the august assize where God, Himself, not by deputy, but in the Person of His dear Son, shall sit and judge—the heavens shall declare His righteousness. Now I doubt not the heavens often wonder how it is that God permits the ungodly to be mixed with the righteous in His Church. But ah, when the fan shall be in His hand and He shall thoroughly purge His floor—when He shall lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet—the angels shall wonder at the exactness and accuracy of the Divine Judgment! “Selah.” Pause, rest, consider, admire, adore, humble yourself, pray. It is good to have a pause when such a scene as this is before us. Now from the 5th verse down to the 15th verse you have God’s dealing with His people. The Judge is sitting on the Throne. He begins to speak thus—

7. *Hear, O My people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God.* It is with His nominal people, the Jews. It is with His visible Church, God is now dealing. He Himself has seen the ways of His professing people—He need not, therefore, call any witnesses. He who cannot err will testify against us! And He declares, Himself, here not only as God, but under that name, “Your God.” It was thus the Law began. “I am the Lord Your God that brought you up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.” It is thus the judgment and rebuke begin—“I am God, even Your God.”

8. *I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me.* He is going to deal with weightier matters than that! Whether they have, or have not, offered abundant sacrifices, that is not the thing which God looks at. “I will not reprove you for your sacrifices. No, I have done with your sacrifices.”

9. *I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds.* “Do you think that these things in themselves are of any value to Me, O you formalists? I will not even take them.”

10. *For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.* Though men call them theirs, yet they are your God’s.

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

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

PRAYER TO GOD IN TROUBLE AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE NO. 1505

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 9, 1879
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,
and you shall glorify Me.”
Psalm 50:15.*

THE Lord God in this Psalm is described as having a controversy with His people. He summons Heaven and earth to hear Him while He utters His reproof. This indictment will show us what it is that the Lord sets the greatest store by, for His complaint will evidently touch upon that point. We are informed most plainly that the Lord had no controversy with His people concerning the *externals* of His worship. He does not reprove them for their sacrifices and burnt offerings. He even speaks of these symbolic sacrifices and says—“I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds.” His complaint was not concerning *visible* ceremony and outward ritual and this shows that He does not attach so much importance to outward things as most men suppose Him to do.

His complaint was concerning inner worship, soul worship, spiritual worship! His reproof was that His people did not offer thanksgiving and prayer and that their conduct was so inconsistent with their professions that, clearly, their hearts went not with their outward formalities. This was the essence of the charge against them. They were faulty, not in visible religiousness, but in the *internal* and vital part of godliness—they had no true communion with God though they kept up the appearance of it. We see, then, that *heart* worship is the most precious thing in the sight of the Lord. We learn what is that priceless jewel which must be set in the gold ring of religion if the Lord is to accept it.

Nor is it hard to see why it is so, for it is plain that if a man had kept the ritual of the old Law to the very fullest, he still might not be, in sincerity, a worshipper of God at all. He might drive whole flocks of his sheep to the Temple door for sacrifice and yet he might feel no spiritual reverence for the Most High. It has been proven times without number that the most careful and zealous attention to external ceremonies is quite consistent with the absolute absence of any true apprehension of God and hearty love for Him. Habit may keep a man outwardly religious long after his mind has forgotten the Lord! Yes, the conscious lack of inward and vital Grace may drive a man to a more intense zeal in formalities in order to conceal his defect.

It is written, “Israel has forsaken his Maker and builds temples.” You would think if he built temples he must recognize his God, but it was not so. Within those buildings he hid himself from Him who dwells not in temples made with hands. Beneath the folds of vestments, men smother

up their hearts so that they come not to God. Fine music drowns the cry of the contrite soul and the smoke of incense becomes a cloud which conceals the face of the Most High! Great sacrifices might often be an offering made to a rich man's personal pride. No doubt certain kings that gave great contributions to the house of God did it to show their wealth or to display their generosity, somewhat in the spirit of Jehu, who said to Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord."

A great sacrifice might be nothing more than a bid for popularity and so an offering to selfishness and vanity. With such sacrifices God would not be well pleased. Alas, how easy it is to defile the worship of God and nullify its quality till, like milk which is soured, it may be utterly rejected. I am sure you know right well that it may be so in the simplest form of public worship such as our own. Bare as is our mode of service, there is room for self. Singers may lift up their sweet voices that others may hear how charmingly they sing. Ministers may preach with graceful eloquence that they may be admired as men who are models of exquisite speech. Believers may even pray devoutly that their fellow Christians may see how gracious they are.

Alas, this blight of self may come into any and every part of outward service and turn the worship of God into an occasion for self-glorification! Thus does Belshazzar drink out of the vessels of the sanctuary while the buyers and sellers turn the temple into a den of thieves. Wonder not, therefore, that God looks with but scant complacency—I was about to say with bare tolerance—upon the abundance of outward worship because He sees how easy it is for it not to be His worship at all, but a mere exhibition of man's carnal glorying. Many, too, have performed outward worship with a view to merit somewhat of the Lord—they have supposed that God would be their *debtor* if they were zealous in furnishing His altars and frequenting His courts. If they have not put it in that coarse form, it has certainly come to that, that they hoped to be held worthy of particular regard if they were zealous above others.

Some have superstitiously dreamed of obtaining prosperity in this world by observing holy days and seasons. And many more have hoped to have it set to their account at the Last Great Day that they have heaped up the offertory, or given a painted window, or built an almshouse, or attended daily service year by year! Now, what is this but an offering to selfishness? The man performs pious and charitable deeds for his own good and this motive flavors the whole of his life so that the taint of self is in every particle of it! The Jew might offer bullocks or sheep for his own salvation and what would this be but the manifest worship of *self*? It brought no glory to God and did not mean His praise. Wonder not, therefore, if the Lord speaks thus slightly of it all.

What the Lord missed in His people was not temple rites and offerings, for in those they abounded. He missed the fruit of the lips giving glory to His name! He missed, first, their thankfulness, for He says unto them, "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High." And next He missed in them that holy, trustful confidence which would lead them to resort to Him in the hour of their need—therefore He says,

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” Brothers and Sisters, have you failed in these two precious things? Do you fail in thankfulness? The Lord multiplies His favors to many of us—do we multiply our thanks? The earth gives back a flower for every dewdrop—are we, alike, responsive to plenteous mercy? Do the bounties of His Providence and the favors of His Grace teach us how to sing Psalms unto the Ever-Merciful?

Do we not too often permit Divine mercies to come and go in silence as if they were not worthy of a thankful word? Have we a time and season for God’s praise? Is it not too often huddled into a corner? We have a closet for our prayers, but no chamber for our praises! Do we make it a point in life that whatever is neglected, the praises of God shall have full expression? Do you, my Brothers and Sisters, give thanks in everything? Do you carry out to the fullest this sentence—“From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised”? May I also venture to ask whether you pay your vows to Him? In times of sickness and sorrow you say, “Gracious Lord, if I am recovered, or if I am brought out of this condition, I will be more believing, I will be more consecrated. I will devote myself only to You, O my Savior, if You will now restore me.”

Are you mindful of these vows? It is a delicate question, but I put it pointedly because a vow unredeemed is a wound in the heart. If you have failed in your grateful acknowledgments, remember that these are the things which God looks for more than for any ceremonial observance or religious service. He would have you bring your daily thankfulness and your faithful vows to Him, for He is worthy to be praised and it is meet that unto Him should the vow be performed. It is not to thankfulness, however, that I am going to ask attention, this morning, as much as to the other sacrifice—namely, *prayer* in the day of trouble.

Let me say at the outset that I am struck with wonder that God should regard it as being one of the most acceptable forms of worship—that we should call upon Him in the day of trouble! Such prayers seem to be all for ourselves and are forced from us by our necessities—and yet such is His condescending love that He puts them down as being choice sacrifices and places them side by side with the thankful paying of our vows. He tells us that our call for His help in the hour of distress will be more acceptable to Him than the oblations which His own Law ordained—more pleasing than all the bullocks and rams which liberal princes could present at His altars! Be not backward then, Beloved, to cry to Him in your hour of need! If it pleases Him and profits you, you ought not to need a single word from me to excite you to do what seems so natural, so comforting, so beneficial!

Are our cries of anguish and our appeals of hope acceptable to God? Then let us cry mightily to Him! Are any of you in the black waters? Call upon Him! Are you in the hungry desert? Call upon Him! Are you in the lions’ dens and among the mountains of the leopards? Call upon Him! Whether you are in peril as to your souls or your bodies, do not hesitate to pray at once, but say to yourself, “Why should I linger? Let me tell the Lord of my grief right speedily, for if He counts my call a worthy sacrifice,

assuredly I will present it with my whole heart!" Let us look to this matter and see the value of this form of adoration.

Our first head shall be that *calling upon God in the day of trouble brings honor to God in the very act*. Secondly, it brings honor to God *in His answer*, for there is coupled with such a prayer the blessed assurance, "I will deliver you." And thirdly, it brings honor to God *in our later conduct*, for it is written, "You shall glorify Me."

I. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, enable us to see that CALLING UPON GOD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE BRINGS GLORY TO HIM IN ITSELF. I beg you to notice the time that is specially mentioned. Calling upon God at any time honors Him, but calling upon Him in the *day of trouble* has a special mark set against it as peculiarly pleasing to the Lord because it yields peculiar Glory to His name. Note then, first, that when a man calls upon God, sincerely, in the day of trouble, *it is a truthful recognition of God*.

Outward devotions suppose a God, but prayer in the day of trouble proves that God is a *fact* to the supplicant. The tried pleader has no doubt that there is a God, for he is calling upon Him when mere form can yield no comfort. He wants practical matter-of-fact help and he so realizes God that he treats Him as real and appeals to Him to be his Helper. God is not a mere name or a superstition to him—he is sure that there is a God, for he is calling upon Him in an hour when a farce would be a tragedy and an imposture would be a bitter mockery. The afflicted supplicant perceives that God is near him, for he would not call upon one who was not within hearing. He has a perception of God's Omnipotence by which He *can* help and of God's goodness which will lead Him *to* help.

You can see that he believes in God's hearing prayer, for a man does not call upon one whom he judges to be a deaf Deity, or upon one whose palsied hand is never outstretched to help. The man who calls upon God in the day of trouble evidently possesses a real and sincere belief in the existence of God, in His personality, in His power, in His condescension and in His continual active interposition in the affairs of men. Otherwise he would not call upon Him! Many of your beliefs in God are a sort of religious parade and not the actual walk of faith. Many have a holiday faith which enables them to repeat the creed and say with the congregation, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," but in very deed they have no such belief.

Do you, my Hearer, believe in God, the Father Almighty, when you are in trouble? Do you go to the great Father at such times and expect help from Him? This is real work and not hypocritical play! There is solid metal about the faith which follows the Lord in the dark, cries to Him when the rod is in His hand and looks to Him, not for sentimental comforts in prosperity, but for substantial help in bitter adversities! What we need are facts—and trial is the test of fact. Sharp furnace work does away with mere pretense and this is one of its great uses, for that Grace which, like the salamander, lives in the fire, is Grace, indeed. I say again, that very many publicly declared creed faiths are mere shams which, like the leaves of autumn's trees, would wither and fall if one sharp winter's frost should pass over them.

It is not so when a man, in the dire hour of his distress, casts himself upon God and believes He is able to succor and to help him. Then there is *evidence* of true reliance and real confidence in a real God, whom the mind's eye sees and rejoices in. It is this actuality, this making God real to the soul which makes our calling upon God in the day of trouble so acceptable to Him. There is more here, however, than this first good thing. When a man calls upon God in the day of trouble it is because he seeks and, in some measure, enjoys *a spiritual communion with God*.

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble.” That call is heart language addressed to God! It is the soul really speaking to the great Father beyond all question! How easy it is to say a prayer without coming into any contact with God! Year after year the tongue repeats pious language, just as a barrel organ grinds out the old tunes—but there may be no more converse with the Lord than if the man had muttered to the ghosts of the slain! Many prayers might as well be said backwards as forwards, for there would be as much in them one way as the other. The abracadabra of the magician has quite as much virtue in it as any other set of mere words. The Lord's Prayer, if it is merely rehearsed as a form, may be a solemn mockery. But prayer in the day of trouble is honest speech with God, or at least a sincere desire in that direction.

Many are the words which pass between the Lord and the afflicted saint. He cries, “Make haste to help me, O Lord, my Salvation. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. Hide not Your face from me, for I am in trouble. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer!” With multiplied entreaties does the heart thus hold converse with the Lord and the Lord takes pleasure in it. He loves to have His people draw near to Him in spirit and in truth. And, because calling upon Him in the day of trouble is an undoubted form of fellowship, therefore He regards it with complacency. Now, as I have already said, in the sacrifice of bullocks there was no communion with God in the case of a great many—and in external devotion, whether it is performed in a cathedral or in a humble barn—there is frequently no coming near to God.

But when we believingly call upon God in the day of trouble, then there is no mistake in the matter—we are holding converse with God—“the righteous cry and the Lord hears.” Union with the unseen, spiritual Father, is genuine, indeed, when it is carried on against wind and tide, under pressure of sorrow and weight of distress. May the Lord give us Divine Grace to carry it on whatever may happen to us! Yet is there more than this, for the soul not only comes into God's Presence, but in calling upon God in the day of trouble it is *filled with a manifest hope in God*. It hopes in God for His goodness, for it is a belief in that goodness which is the reason why it feels able to pray at all. The soul hopes in His mercy, or it would dwell in silence and never lift up another cry to Heaven.

Amid a sense of deserved wrath, the heart has a trust in infinite Grace and therefore its call. A soul calling upon God honors His condescension. The troubled one says within himself, “I am less than the least of all His creatures, yet He will regard *me*. When I consider the heavens, the work of His fingers, I am amazed that He should visit man, but I believe that He will do so and that He will condescend to look upon the contrite and

humble and deliver them out of their distresses.” There is a hope, then, in such a prayer which honors God’s goodness and condescension and equally pays tribute to His faithfulness and His all-sufficiency. He has promised to help those that call upon Him, therefore do we call upon Him! And He has all power to keep His promise, therefore do we come to Him and spread our case before Him.

Little as the act of calling upon God in the day of trouble seems to be, it puts crowns upon all the attributes of God in proportion to the spiritual knowledge of the supplicant. I venture to say that if the greatest king of Israel had presented before God, on some solemn day, 10,000 of the fattest of fed beasts and poured out rivers of oil, it might be highly possible that God would not be so well pleased with all that royal zeal as with the cry of a poor humble woman whose husband was dead and whose two sons were about to be taken for slaves—who had nothing in the house except a little oil and then in her extremity cried—“O God, the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow, out of the depths deliver me!”

There may be more honoring of the Lord in a plowboy’s tears than in a princely endowment! More homage to the Lord in the humble hope of a dying pauper than in the pealing anthems of the cathedral or the great shout of our own mighty congregation! The publican’s confession and his hope in the mercy of God had more worship in it than the blast of the silver trumpets and the ringing out of the golden harps! And the songs of the white-robed choristers who stood in the courts of the Lord’s house and led the far-sounding hallelujahs of Israel could not match the publican’s prayer! This calling upon God in the day of trouble, again, pleases the Lord because it exhibits *a clinging affection to Him*. When an ungodly man professes religion, as such men often do, he is all very well with God as long as God pleases him.

Sunshiny weather makes such a man bless the sun. If God smiles upon him, he says that God is good. Yes, but a true child of God loves a *chastening* God. He does not turn his back when the Lord seems angry with him—it is then that he falls prostrate in humble supplication and cries, “Show me why You contend with me! I will not believe You to have any real spite against me. If You smite me there must be some wise and good cause for it, therefore show me, I beseech You.” It is very sweet, Brothers and Sisters, when God sends you a great deal of trouble, to love Him all the more for it. This is a sure way of proving that ours is not a hireling love which abides while it gets its price and disappears when wages fail.

God forbid that we should have Balaam’s love of reward and Judas’s treacherous greed! A dog will follow a man as long as he throws him a bone, but that is a man’s own dog which will follow him when he strikes him with the whip and will even wag its tail when he speaks roughly to him! Such Christians ought we to be who will keep close to God when He is robed in thunder. It is ours to will that God shall do what He wills and ours to call upon Him in the day of trouble and not to call out against Him when times are hard.

I would trust my God as unreservedly as Alexander trusted his friend who was also his physician. The physician had mixed a medicine for Alexander, who was sick, and the potion stood by Alexander’s bed for him to

drink. Just before he was to drink, a letter was delivered to him in which he was warned that his physician had been bribed to poison him and had mingled poison with the medicine. Alexander read the letter and summoned the physician into his presence. When he came in, Alexander at once drank up the cup of medicine and then handed his friend the letter. What grand confidence was this! To risk his life upon his friend's fidelity! Such a man might well have friends! He would not let the accused know of the libel till he had proved beyond all disputes that he did not believe a word of it!

Is not our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus worthy of even a grander faith? Shall I always mistrust Him? The devil tells me, O Master, that this affliction which I am suffering will work me ill. I do not believe it! Not for a moment do I believe it and to prove that I have no suspicion, I accept it joyfully at Your hands. I joy and rejoice in it because You have ordained it and I call upon You to make it work to my lasting good. I will take bitter at Your hand as well as sweet and the gall shall be honey to me! If we act thus we shall be imitating the patience of Job. When his wife told him to curse God and die, what did he say? "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" It seems to me we cannot glorify God better than by thus calling upon Him in the day of trouble and thus showing that we do not believe ill of Him, or suspect Him of error or unkindness. We go further and are assured that Infallible Wisdom and Infinite Love are at the bottom of every trial which afflicts our spirit—thus we glorify the Lord.

There is in connection with this clinging affection a most *steadfast confidence*. They who call upon God in the day of trouble become quiet, unshaken and abide in full assurance as to the Lord on whom they rely. O troubled one, do not be agitated! Do not run away to others, but call upon God in calm faith! Do not sit down in silent despair and fretfulness, but call upon God! Do not be soured into a morose state of mind, nor go into the sulks, but call upon the Lord as one who cannot be driven to curse or to be in a passion, but gives himself to prayer. It is a blessed thing when we can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" and can feel that whatever happens to us, we never will start aside from our firm conviction that the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever.

It was a brave speech of Zwingli when, amid furious persecutions, he said, "Had I not perceived that the Lord was preserving the vessel, I should long ago have abandoned the helm. I behold Him through the tempest strengthening the cordage, adjusting the yards, spreading the sails and commanding the very winds. Should I not, then, be a coward and unworthy the name of a man, were I to abandon my post? I commit myself wholly to His sovereign goodness. Let Him govern. Let Him hasten or delay. Let Him plunge us into the bottom of the abyss—we will fear nothing." Those are the words which I admire—"Let Him plunge us into the bottom of the abyss—we will fear nothing." This is the bravery of a child who knows no dread because he is in his father's hands and his trust in his father cannot admit a fear.

Calling upon God enables men to face trouble and play the man since they doubt not of a blessed outcome from all things, however contrary

they may seem to be. Our business is to be as confident in God at one time as at another since He is the same evermore and mere changes in circumstances are matters unworthy to be taken into the estimate. What are circumstances while Almighty God has the rule of them? In fine, this it is which God accepts as honoring Him, that in the day of trouble we should take all our troubles to Him, pour out our hearts before Him and then leave the whole case in His hands! The childlike uncovering of the heart to God, alone, is very precious to Him.

There are times when it is wise to advise a troubled heart to be quiet before men—

***“Bear and forbear and silent be,
Tell no man your misery.”***

But it is always wise to bare the bosom to the Lord’s eyes. Is the slander too vile to be communicated even to a single friend? Then follow the example of Hezekiah and spread Rabshakeh’s letter before the Lord! Is the trial too severe, inasmuch as others are obliged to suffer with you and are, therefore, turned to speak bitterly against you? Then imitate David at Ziklag and encourage yourself in the Lord your God! Hide nothing! Reserve nothing! Tell it all and then trust about it all. When you have once put the burden before the Lord, leave it with Him. Do all that lies in you, that prudence can dictate, or common sense suggest, or industry effect—but still make the Lord your mainstay, your buckler, your shield, your fortress and high tower. Say to yourself, “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.”

If you can do this, not once and again, but throughout your whole life, you will glorify the Lord greatly and in your holy confidence and childlike faith the Lord will take as much delight as in the golden harps which ring out His perfect praises before His eternal Throne! If we could reproduce Job and Enoch in one person, the patient saint continually walking with God, we should, indeed, show forth the Glory of our heavenly Father. And why not? Blessed Spirit of God, You can work us to this thing! A critic may sneeringly say, “It is a very natural thing for a man to cry out to God in the day of trouble. And certainly a selfish thing to run to the Lord because you need His help.” “Besides,” says another, “it must be a very distracted prayer that such a person offers. And anyway, faith under troublous circumstances is a very elementary virtue.”

But, my good Sirs, listen! Surely the Lord knows best what pleases Him and if He declares His delight in our calling upon Him in the day of trouble, why should we dispute Him? It is so, for He has said it! As for us who dare not raise such quibbles, let us not be moved by them, but continue to call upon Him in the day of trouble and we shall certainly glorify His name.

II. When we call upon God in the day of trouble IT BRINGS HONOR TO GOD THROUGH THE ANSWER which the prayer obtains. “I will deliver you.” I ask you, troubled saints, to follow me while I repeat the text with variations, for that is about all I shall attempt. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble”—there is the prayer commanded. “I will deliver you”—there is the answer promised. In these words we have a *practical answer*. It is not merely, “I will think about you, I will hear you, I will propose plans for you

and somewhat aid you in working them out.” No, it is, “I will deliver you. You shall have solid, substantial aid. Either I will keep you out of the trouble of which you are afraid—you shall be delivered by never having to endure it—the Egyptians that you see today you shall see no more forever. You dread the stone at the mouth of the sepulcher, but you shall find it rolled away.

“Or else, if you must come into the trouble, I will deliver you while you are in it. Like Noah, you shall be surrounded by the deluge, but the floods shall not overflow you. Like the three holy children, you shall be in the furnace, but the fire shall not burn you. You shall go through the trouble triumphantly, as Israel went through the Red Sea on foot. You shall have such sustaining Grace that you shall glory in tribulation and rejoice in affliction. I will also bring you out of it altogether—for these things have an appointed end. Like Joseph, you shall come forth out of prison to sit upon the throne. Like David, you shall leave the caves and the rocks of the wild goats and I will set your feet in a large room. Like Daniel, you shall be taken from among lions and set among princes.” The promise may be kept in several forms, but in one shape or another it must be carried out, for He who cannot lie has said, “I will deliver you.”

Dear Friend, grips those words and never let them go! You troubled ones, the Lord says, “Call upon Me.” Have you already been in much supplication? Now, then, take to yourselves what the Lord Himself gives you—“I will deliver you.” Somehow or other a way of escape must be made, for God’s Word never fails and He has said, “I will deliver you.” Notice, next, that it is *a positive answer*. It is not, “I may, perhaps, deliver you,” but, “I will.” It is not, “I will endeavor to do it,” but, “I will deliver you.” Did unbelief say, “But how?” Friend, leave the “how” with God! Ways and means are with Him! He says, “I will deliver you.” To turn round and ask, “How?” is to forget that He is God All Sufficient!—

**“Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.”**

Unbelief is very ready with its questions and too often it enquires, “When?” Friend, leave the “when” with God! He does not tell us when, but the deliverance must come at the right time because if He were not to deliver us till after we had perished, it would be no deliverance at all! If deliverance came too late, it would be a mere mockery. The promise comprehends within itself the implied condition that it shall be a timely deliverance, for otherwise how should the delivered one live to glorify the name of the Lord? Again I would say to you, dear Friend, get a grip of this promise, “I will deliver you.” Do not let my Master’s promise be blown away like the sere leaves from the trees, but hold it fast as for life! Wave this before you and your foes will flee as from a two-edged sword! Quote the Divine words, “I will deliver you,” and legions of devils will flee before you! Remember how Paul put it—“Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver: in whom we trust; that He will yet deliver us.”

Notice next, that the promise *is personal*. “I will deliver you.” It is not said, “My angels shall do it,” but, “*I* will deliver you.” The Lord God Himself undertakes to rescue His people. “I will be a wall of fire round about them.” “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it,

I will keep it night and day.” Then, too, it is personal to its object—it is the same man who calls upon God in trouble who shall be a partaker of the blessing! “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver *you*.” It is personal, personal *to you*! Therefore, dear Friend, personally believe in this personal promise of your God!

Remember, also, that it is permanent. You pleaded this promise, some of you, 50 years ago—it is as sure today as it was then. If you have a banknote and take it to the bank and get the cash, it is done with. But my Master’s banknotes are self-renewing. You can plead His promise hundreds of times over, for His Word abides forever. It is fulfilled only to be fulfilled again! Like a springing well, which is always full and flowing, so my Lord’s Grace-words abide and continue in all their wealth of blessing. God’s promise made 2,000 years ago is as valid as if it had been uttered this morning and never yet expended upon a single soul. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you” is a word for this very hour.

Where are you at this moment, you troubled, downcast one? You said just now, “I shall never be happy any more.” Recall those words. Eat them with bitter herbs of repentance—“Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” You said, “That blow has crushed me. I could have borne anything else, but this trial I cannot bear.” Tush! Do you know what you can bear? What did the Apostle say? “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” Only have faith in God and obey and believe the text—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you.”

Can you not take God at His Word? If you can, you shall find His promise true and God will be glorified in delivering you. What praise will come to His name if He lifts you up out of the low dungeon! If He snaps your fetters! If He tears away your entanglements! If He makes plain your intricate path! If He brings you through difficulties which now seem to be impossibilities and gives you to rejoice in Him through them all! Why, then, His name will be glorified far more than by the offering of 10,000 bullocks and rivers of oil!

III. Lastly, if you trust your God in your distress and are, therefore, delivered, **THE LORD WILL BE GLORIFIED IN YOUR CONDUCT AFTERWARDS.** When a man prays to God in the hour of trouble and gets deliverance, as he is sure to get it, then he honors his great Helper by admiring the way in which the promise has been kept and by *adoring and blessing the loving Lord for such a gracious interposition.* I know some of you have seen enough of the hand of the Lord in your own cases to make you wonder and admire forever and ever.

Next, you will honor Him by *the gratitude of your heart* in which the memory of His goodness will forever be recorded. This devout gratitude of yours will lead you, in due season, to bear *testimony to His faithfulness.* You will be indignant at unbelief and will war against it by personal witnessing. You will be very tender towards those who are now in trouble, as you once were, and you will long to tell them of the blessed rescue which God is prepared to perform for them as He did for you. Your mouth will be open; your witness will be enlarged; you will speak as a man who has

tasted and handled these things for himself. Others will be impressed as you tell the story of what the Lord has done for your soul.

At the same time, you will *personally grow in faith* by the experience of your heavenly Father's love and power. And in days to come you will glorify Him by *increased patience and confidence*. You will say, "He has been with me in six troubles and He will be with me in the seventh. I have tried and proven my God and I dare not doubt Him." Your serenity of mind will be more deep and lasting and you will be able to defy the power of Satan to drive you out of your joy in God. I know, also, that you will try to *live more to His praise*. As you see Him bring you out of one difficulty and then another you will feel bound to His service by fresh bonds. You will become a more consecrated man than you ever have been. You will jealously protect your remaining days from being wasted by sloth or desecrated by sin.

And let me tell you that even when you die and come up the banks of Jordan on the other side, you will long to glorify your God! When the angels meet you, I should not wonder but what one of the first things you will do will be to say, "Bright spirits, I long to tell you what the Lord has done for me!" Even as you are going up towards the celestial gates, as Bunyan pictures, I should not wonder if you began to say to your guide, "Help me to sing! I cannot be silent. I feel I must—

***"Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving kindness in the skies."***

Should the bright spirit remind you that you are climbing to the choirs where all the singers meet, you may answer, "Yes, but I am a special case! I came through such deep waters! I was greatly afflicted. If one in Heaven can praise Him more than another, I am just that one." The angel will smile and say, "I have escorted many a score up to Glory who said just the same thing."

We each one owe most to God's Grace and hope to praise Him best. Some of you may think that you are love's deepest debtors, but I know better. I am not going to quarrel with you, but I know one who is so undeserving and yet receives such mercy that he claims to take the lowest place and most humbly to reverence boundless Grace. Yes, I myself, less than the least of all saints, claim to have received most at His hands! I would gladly love Him most, for towards me He has shown the utmost love in treating me as He has done.

Am I not saying for myself that which you each would say for yourself? I know it is so and, therefore, it is that God is glorified by the reverence and love of those whom He delivers in answer to prayer. I want you to notice with care the persons mentioned in the first clause of the text. You do not see yourself—you only *hear* of yourself. It is "Call upon Me." God is there. There is no direct mention of you—you are hidden. You are such a poor, broken, dispirited creature that all you can do is to utter a cry and lie in the dust! There stands the mighty God and you call upon Him! Now, look at the next clause, "*I will deliver you.*"

Here are two persons! The Lord stands first, the Ever Glorious and Blessed "I." And way down there are you. "*I will deliver you,*" poor, humble, but grateful "you." Thus we see the Lord unites with His poor servant and the link is deliverance. When you come to the third clause, do you see

where you are? You are placed first, for the Lord now calls you into action—"You shall glorify Me." What a wonderful thing it is! For God to put glory upon *us* is easy enough, but for *us* to put glory upon *Him*? This is a miracle of condescension on the part of our God! "You shall glorify Me." "But," says one in this place, "I love the Lord, but *I* cannot glorify *Him*. I wish I could preach, I wish I could write sweet hymns, I wish I had a clear voice with which to sing out the Redeemer's praises—but I have no gifts or talents and, therefore, *I* shall never be able to glorify Him."

Listen! You will be cast into trouble one of these days and when you are in trouble you will find out how to glorify Him! Your extremity will be your opportunity! Like a lamp which shines not by day, you will blaze up in the dark! When the day of trouble is come you will cry, "Lord, I could not do anything for You, but You can do everything for me. I am nothing, but Lord, in my nothingness, I, poor I, do trust You and fling myself upon You." *Then* you shall find that you *have* glorified Him by your faith! I think you might almost be content to have the trouble, might you not? It seems as if you could not glorify Him any other way and to glorify Him is the main object of your existence.

Some Christians would scarcely have brought any glory to God if they had not been led by paths of sorrow and made to wade through seas of grief. God gets very little glory out of many professors and He would have still less if they had been allowed to rust their souls away in comfort. The brightest of the saints owe much of their clearness to the fire and the file. It is by the sharp needle of sorrow that we are embroidered with the praises of the Lord. We must be tried that the Lord may be glorified! We cannot call upon Him in the day of trouble if we have no such day—and He cannot deliver us if we have no trouble to be delivered from! And we cannot glorify Him if we are not made to see the danger and the need in which He displays His love.

I leave the blessed subject of the text with you, as a souvenir, till we meet again. The Lord be with you till the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Pray, also, that He may abide with me and with all my Brothers in the ministry. And may we all, in yonder world of rest, glorify Him who will then have delivered us completely from all evil, to whom be glory forever! Amen.

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ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TEXT

NO. 1876

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 27, 1885.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON AUGUST 30, 1885.**

***“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver
you and you shall glorify Me.”
Psalm 50:15.***

ONE book charmed us all in the days of our youth. Is there a boy alive who has not read it? “Robinson Crusoe” was a wealth of wonders to me—I could have read it over a dozen times and never have wearied. I am not ashamed to confess that I can read it, even now, with fresh delight. Robinson and his man, Friday, though mere inventions of fiction, are wonderfully real to the most of us. But why am I running on in this way on a Sabbath evening? Is not this talk altogether out of order? I hope not. A passage in that book comes vividly before my remembrance tonight as I read my text and, in it I find something more than an excuse. Robinson Crusoe has been wrecked. He is left on the desert island all alone. His case is a very pitiable one. He goes to his bed and he is smitten with fever. This fever lasts upon him long and he has no one to wait upon him—none even to bring him a drink of cold water. He is ready to perish. He had been accustomed to sin and had all the vices of a sailor, but his hard case brought him to think. He opens a Bible which he finds in his chest and he lights upon this passage, “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.*” That night he prayed for the first time in his life and there was in him, always after, a hope in God which marked the birth of the heavenly life!

De Foe, who composed the story, was, as you know, a Presbyterian minister. And though not overdone with spirituality, he knew enough of religion to be able to describe very vividly the experience of a man who is in despair and who finds peace by casting himself upon his God. As a novelist, he had a keen eye for the probable, and he could think of no passage more likely to impress a poor broken spirit than this. Instinctively he perceived the mine of comfort which lies within these words.

Now I have everybody's attention and this is one reason why I thus commenced my discourse. But I have a further purpose, for although Robinson Crusoe is not here, nor his man, Friday, either, yet there may be somebody here very like he—a person who has suffered shipwreck in life and who has now become a drifting, solitary creature. He remembers bet-

ter days, but by his sins he has become a castaway whom no man seeks after. He is here, tonight, washed up on shore without a friend, suffering in body, broken in estate and crushed in spirit. In the midst of a city full of people, he has not a friend, nor one who would wish to admit that he has ever known him. He has now come to the bare bones of existence. Nothing lies before him but poverty, misery and death.

Thus says the Lord unto you, my Friend, this night, "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.*" You have come here half hoping that there might be a word from God to your soul—"half hoping," I said—for you are as much under the influence of dread as of hope. You are filled with despair. To you it seems that God has forgotten to be gracious and that He has, in anger, shut up the heart of His compassion. The lying fiend has persuaded you that there is no hope on purpose, so that he may bind you with the fetters of despair and hold you as a captive to work in the mill of ungodliness as you live. You write bitter things against yourself, but they are as false as they are bitter. The Lord's mercies fail not. His mercy endures forever and thus in mercy does He speak to you, poor troubled spirit, even to *you*—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me."

I have the feeling upon me that I shall, at this time, speak home, God helping me, to some poor burdened spirit. In such a congregation as this, it is not everybody that can receive a blessing by the Word that is spoken, but certain minds are prepared for it by the Lord. *He* prepares the Seed to be sown and the ground to receive it! He gives a sense of need and this is the best preparation for the promise. Of what use is comfort to those who are not in distress? The Word of God, tonight, will be of no use and have but little interest in it to those who have no distress of heart. But, however badly I may speak, those hearts will dance for joy which need the cheering assurance of a gracious God and are *enabled to receive it* as it shines forth in this golden text, "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.*" It is a text which I would have written in stars across the sky, or sounded forth with trumpet at noon from the top of every tower, or printed on every sheet of paper which shines through the post! It should be known and read by all of mankind!

Four things suggest themselves to me. May the Holy Spirit bless what I am able to say upon them!

I. The first observation is not so much in my text, alone, as in this text and the context. REALISM IS PREFERRED TO RITUALISM. If you will carefully read the rest of the Psalm, you will see that the Lord is speaking of the rites and ceremonies of Israel and is showing that He has little care about formalities of worship when the heart is absent from them. I think we must read the whole passage—"I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness

thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High: and call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." Thus praise and prayer are accepted in preference to every form of offering which it was possible for the Jew to present before the Lord. Why is this?

First of all I would answer, real prayer is far better than mere ritual because *there a meaning in it*—and when Grace is absent, there is no meaning in ritual—it is as senseless as an idiot's game.

Did you ever stand in some Romish cathedral and see the daily service, especially if it happened to be upon a high day? What with the boys in white and the men in violet, or pink, or red, or black, there were performers enough to stock a decent village! What with those who carried candlesticks and those who carried crosses, and those who carried pots and pans, and cushions and books, and those who rang bells, and those who made a smoke, and those who sprinkled water, and those who bobbed their heads and those who bowed their knees, the whole concern was very amazing to look at—very amazing, very amusing, very childish! One wonders, when he sees it, what it is all about and what kind of people those must be who are really made better by it! One marvels, also, what an idea pious Romanists must have of God if they imagine that He is pleased with such performances! Do you not wonder how the good Lord endures it? What must His glorious mind think of it all?

Albeit that the incense is sweet, the flowers are pretty, the ornaments are fine and everything is according to ancient rubric—what is there in it? To what purpose that procession? To what end that decorated priest?—that gorgeous altar? Do these things mean *anything*? Are they not a senseless show?

The glorious God cares nothing for pomp and show! But when you call upon Him in the day of trouble and ask Him to deliver you, there is meaning in your groan of anguish. This is no empty form—there is heart in it, is there not? There is meaning in the appeal of sorrow and, therefore, God prefers the prayer of a broken heart to the finest service that ever was performed by priests and choirs! There is meaning in the soul's bitter cry, but there is *no meaning* in the pompous ceremony. In the poor man's prayer there are mind, heart and soul and, therefore, it is *real* to the Lord. Here is a living soul seeking contact with the living God in reality and in truth! Here is a breaking heart crying out to the compassionate Spirit!

Ah, You may bid the organ peal forth its sweetest and its loudest notes, but what is the meaning of mere wind passing through pipes? A child cries and there is meaning in *that*. A man standing up in yonder corner groans out, "O God, my heart will break!" There is more force in his moan than in a thousand of the biggest trumpets, drums, cymbals, tambourines or any other instruments of music with which men seek to please God nowadays! What madness to think that God cares for musical sounds, or ordered marching, or variegated garments! In a tear, or a sob, or a cry, there is meaning, but in mere sound there is no sense and God cares not for the meaningless! He cares for that which has thought and feeling in it.

Why does God prefer realism to Ritualism? It is for this reason, also, that *there is something spiritual in the cry of a troubled heart* and “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Suppose I were to repeat, tonight, the finest creed for accuracy that was ever composed by learned and orthodox men? Yet, if I had no faith in it and you had none, what were the use of the repetition of the words? There is nothing *spiritual* in mere orthodox statements if we have no real belief in them—we might as well repeat the alphabet and call it devotion! And if we were to burst forth, tonight, in the grandest hallelujah that ever pealed from mortal lips—and we did not mean it—there would be nothing spiritual in it and it would be nothing to God!

But when a poor soul gets away into its chamber and bows its knee and cries, “God, be merciful to me! God save me! God help me in this day of trouble!” there is spiritual life in such a cry and, therefore, God approves it and answers it! Spiritual worship is that what He wants and He will have it, or He will have nothing! “They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” He has abolished the Ceremonial Law, destroyed the one altar at Jerusalem, burned the Temple, abolished the Aaronic priesthood and ended, forever, all *ritualistic performance*—for He seeks only true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Further, the Lord loves the cry of the broken heart because *it distinctly recognizes Him as the living God*, in very deed, sought after in prayer. From much of outward devotion God is absent. But how we mock God when we do not discern Him as present and do not come near unto Him! When the heart, the mind and the soul breaks through itself to get to its God, then it is that God is glorified, but not by any bodily exercises in which He is forgotten! Oh, how real God is to a man who is perishing and feels that only God can save him! He believes that God is, or else he would not make so piteous a prayer to him. He said his prayers before and little cared whether God heard or not, but he prays now and God's hearing is his chief anxiety!

Besides, dear Friends, God takes great delight in our crying to Him in the day of trouble because *there is sincerity in it*. I am afraid that in the hour of our mirth and the day of our prosperity many of our prayers and our thanksgivings are hypocrisy. Too many of us are like boys' tops that cease to spin unless they are whipped. Certainly we pray with a deep intensity when we get into great trouble! A man is very poor. He is out of a job. He has worn his shoes out in trying to find work. He does not know where the next meal is coming from for his children and, if he prays now, it is likely to be a very sincere prayer, for he is in real earnest on account of real trouble. I have sometimes wished for some very gentlemanly Christian people, who seem to treat religion as if it were all kid gloves, that they could have just a little time of the “roughing” of it and really come into actual difficulties. A life of ease breeds hosts of falsehoods and pretences which would soon vanish in the presence of matter-of-fact trials!

Many a man has been converted to God in the bush of Australia by hunger, weariness and loneliness, who, when he was a wealthy man, sur-

rounded by many flatterers, never thought of God at all! Many a man on board ship on yon Atlantic has learned to pray in the cold chill of an iceberg, or in the horrors of the trough of the wave out of which the vessel could not rise. When the mast has gone by the board, every timber has been strained and the ship has seemed doomed, *then* have hearts begun to pray in sincerity! And God loves sincerity. When we *mean* it—when the soul melts in prayer—when it is, “I must have it, or be lost.” When it is no sham, no vain performance, but a real heart-breaking, agonizing cry, then God accepts it. And therefore, He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble.” Such a cry is the kind of worship that He cares for because there is sincerity in it—and this is acceptable with the God of Truth.

Again, in the cry of the troubled one *there is humility*. We may go through a highly brilliant performance of religion after the rites of some gaudy church, or we may go through our own rites which are as simple as they can be—and we may be, all the while saying to ourselves, “This is very nicely done.” The preacher may be thinking, “Am I not preaching well?” The Brother at the Prayer Meeting may feel within himself, “How delightfully fluent I am!” Whenever there is that spirit in us, God cannot accept our worship! Worship is not acceptable if it is devoid of humility. Now, when in the day of trouble a man goes to God and says, “Lord, help me! I cannot help myself, but interpose for me,” there is humility in that confession and cry and, therefore, the Lord takes delight in it.

You, poor woman over here, deserted by your husband and ready to wish that you could die, I exhort you to call upon God in the day of trouble, for I know that you will pray a humble prayer. You, poor trembler over yonder, you have done very wrong and are likely to be found out and disgraced for it, but I charge you to cry to God in prayer, for I am sure there will be no pride about your petition! You will be broken in spirit and humble before God—and “a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Once more, the Lord loves such pleadings because *there is a measure of faith in them*. When the man in trouble cries, “Lord deliver me!” he is looking away from himself. You see, he is driven out of himself because of the famine that is in the land. He cannot find hope or help on earth and, therefore, he looks towards Heaven. Perhaps he has been to friends and they have failed him and, therefore, in sheer despair, he seeks his truest Friend. At last he comes to God and, though he cannot say that he believes in God's goodness as he ought, yet he has some dim and shadowy faith in it, or else he would not be coming to God in this, his time of extremity. God loves to discover even the *shadow* of faith in His unbelieving creature! When faith does, as it were, only cross over the field of the camera, so that across the photograph there is a dim trace of its having been there, God can spy it out and He can and will accept prayer for the sake of that little faith. Oh, dear Heart, where are you? Are you torn with anguish? Are you sorely distressed? Are you lonely? Are you cast away? Then cry to God! No one else can help you—now are you shut up to Him. Blessed shutting up! Cry to Him, for He can help you and, I tell you, in

that cry of yours there will be a pure and true worship such as God desires far more than the slaughter of 10,000 bullocks, or the pouring out of rivers of oil! It is true, assuredly, from Scripture, that the groan of a burdened spirit is among the sweetest sounds that are ever heard by the ear of the Most High. Plaintive cries are anthems with Him, to whom all mere arrangements of sound must be as child's play!

See then, poor, weeping and distracted ones, that it is not Ritualism! It is not the performance of pompous ceremonies! It is not bowing and scraping! It is not using sacred words! No! It is crying to God in the hour of your trouble which is the most acceptable sacrifice your spirit can bring before the Throne of God.

II. We now come to our second observation. May God impress it upon us all! In our text we have ADVERSITY TURNED TO ADVANTAGE. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you."

We say it with all reverence, but God Himself cannot deliver a man who is not in trouble and, therefore, it is some advantage to be in distress because God can then deliver you. Even Jesus Christ, the Healer of men, cannot heal a man who is not sick, so that it turns to our advantage to be sick in order that Christ may heal us. Thus, my Hearer, your adversity may prove your advantage by offering occasion and opportunity for the display of Divine Grace. It is great wisdom to learn the art of making honey out of gall and the text teaches us how to do that. It shows how trouble can become gain. When you are in adversity, call upon God and you shall experience a deliverance which will be a richer and sweeter experience for your soul than if you had never known trouble. Here is the art and science of making gains out of losses and advantages out of adversities.

Now let me suppose that there is some person here in trouble. Perhaps another deserted Robinson Crusoe is among us. I am not idly *supposing* that a tried individual is here, he *is* so. Well now, when you pray—and oh, I wish you would pray now—do you not see what a plea you have? You have, first, a plea from *the time*—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble." You can plead, "Lord, this is a day of trouble! I am in great affliction and my case is urgent at this hour." Then state what your trouble is—that sick wife, that dying child, that sinking business, that failing health, that employment which you have lost—that poverty which stares you in the face. Say unto the Lord of Mercy, "My Lord, if ever a man was in a day of trouble, I am that man and, therefore, I take leave and license to pray to You, now, because You have said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' This is the hour which You have appointed for appealing to You, this dark, this stormy day. If ever there was a man that had a right given Him to pray by Your own Word, I am that man, for I am in trouble and, therefore, I will make use of the very time as a plea with You. Do, I beseech You, hear Your servant's cry in this midnight hour."

Next, you can not only make use of the time as a plea, but you may *urge the trouble, itself*. You may argue thus, "You have said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' O Lord, You see how great my trouble is. It is a very

heavy one. I cannot bear it, or get rid of it. It follows me to bed; it will not let me sleep. When I rise up it is still with me, I cannot shake it off. Lord, my trouble is an unusual one—few are afflicted as I am, therefore give me extraordinary succor! Lord, my trouble is a crushing one! If You do not help me, I shall soon be broken up by it!” That is good reasoning and prevalent pleading.

Further, turn your adversity to advantage by pleading *the command*. You can go to the Lord now, at this precise instant, and say, “Lord, hear me, for You have commanded me to pray! I, though I am evil, would not tell a man to ask a thing of me if I intended to deny him. I would not urge him to ask help if I meant to refuse it.” Do you not know, Brothers and Sisters, that we often impute to the good Lord conduct which we would be ashamed of in ourselves? This must not be! If you said to a poor man, “You are in very sad circumstances. Write to me tomorrow and I will see to your affairs for you”—and if he did write to you, you would not treat his letter with contempt. You would be bound to consider his case. When you told him to write, you meant that you would help him if you could. And when God tells you to call upon Him, He does not mock you! He means that He will deal kindly with you. You are not urged to pray in the hour of trouble, that you may experience all the deeper disappointment. God knows that you have trouble enough without the new one of unanswered prayer. The Lord will not unnecessarily add even a quarter of an ounce to your burden. If He bids you call upon Him, you may call upon Him without fear of failure. I do not know who you are. You may be Robinson Crusoe, for all I know, but you may call on the Lord, for He bids you call and, if you do call upon Him, you can put this argument into your prayer—

**“Lord, You have bid me seek Your face
And shall I seek in vain?
And shall the ear of Sovereign Grace
Be deaf when I complain?”**

So plead the time, plead the trouble and plead the command—and then plead with God *His own Character*. Speak with Him reverently, but believingly, in this fashion, “Lord, it is You Yourself to whom I appeal. You have said, ‘Call upon Me.’ If my neighbor had bid me do so, I might have feared that perhaps he would not hear me, but would change his mind. But You are too great and good to change! Lord, by Your truth and by Your faithfulness, by Your Immutability and by Your love, I, a poor sinner, heart-broken and crushed, call upon You in the day of trouble! Oh, help me and help me soon or else I die!” Surely you that are in trouble have many and mighty pleas. You are on firm ground with the Angel of the Covenant and may bravely seize the blessing!

I do not feel, tonight, as if the text encouraged me one-half as much as it must encourage others of you, for I am not in trouble just now and you are. I thank God I am full of joy and rest, but I am half inclined to see if I cannot patch up a little bit of trouble for myself—surely if I were in trouble and sitting in those pews, I would open my mouth and drink in this text and pray like David, or Elijah, or Daniel, in the power of this promise,

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.”

O, you troubled ones, leap up at the sound of this Word of God! Believe it! Let it go down into your souls! “The Lord looses the prisoners.” He has come to loose you! I can see my Master arrayed in His silken garments. His countenance is joyous as Heaven, His face is bright as morning without clouds and in His hand He bears a silver key. “Where are You going, my Master, with that silver key of Yours?” “I go,” He says, “to open the door to the captive and to loosen everyone that is bound.” Blessed Master, fulfill Your errand and pass not these prisoners of hope! We will not hinder You for a moment, but do not forget these mourners! Go up these galleries and down these aisles and set free the prisoners of Giant Despair—and make their hearts to sing for joy because they have called upon You in the day of trouble and You have delivered them—and they shall glorify You!

III. My third head is clearly in the text. Here we have FREE GRACE LAID UNDER BONDS.

Nothing in Heaven or earth can be freer than Grace, but here is Grace putting itself under bonds of promise and covenant. Listen! “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: *I will deliver you.*” If a person has once said to you, “I will,” you have him—he has placed himself at the command of his own declaration. If he is a true man and has plainly said, “I will,” you have him in your hands! He is not free after giving a promise as he was before it. He has set himself a certain way and he must keep to it. Is it not so? I say so with the deepest reverence towards my Lord and Master—He has bound Himself in the text with cords that He cannot break! He must now hear and help those who call upon Him in the day of trouble. He has solemnly promised and He will fully perform.

Notice that this text is *unconditional as to the persons*. It contains the gist of that other promise—“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The people who are specially addressed in the text had mocked God. They had presented their sacrifices without a true heart, but yet the Lord said to each of them, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you.” Therefore I gather that He excludes none from the promise. You atheist, you blasphemer, you unchaste and impure one—if you call upon the Lord, now, in this, the day of your trouble, He will deliver you! Come and try Him! “If there is a God,” you say? But there *is* a God, say I! Come, put Him to the test and see. He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you.” Will you not prove Him now? Come here, you shackled ones, and see if He does not free you! Come to Christ, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest! In temporals and in spirituals, but specially in spiritual things, call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver you! He is bound by this great unrestricted Word of His, about which He has put neither ditch nor hedge—whoever will call upon Him in the day of trouble shall be delivered!

Moreover, notice that this “I will” *includes all necessary power which may be required for deliverance*. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will

deliver you." "But how can this be?" cries one! Ah, that I cannot tell you and I do not feel bound to tell you—it rests with the Lord to find suitable ways and means. God says, "I will." Let *Him* do it in His own way. If He says, "I will," depend upon it, He will keep His Word! If it is necessary to shake Heaven and earth, He will do it, for He cannot lack power and He certainly does not lack honesty—and an honest man will keep his word at all costs and so will a faithful God! Hear Him say, "I will deliver you," and ask no more questions. I do not suppose that Daniel knew how God would deliver him out of the den of lions. I do not suppose that Joseph knew how he would be delivered out of the prison when his mistress had slandered his character so shamefully. I do not suppose that these ancient Believers dreamed of the way of the Lord's deliverance—but they left themselves in God's hands. They rested upon God and He delivered them in the best possible manner. He will do the same for you—only call upon Him and then stand still—and see the salvation of God!

Notice, *the text does not say exactly when*. "I will deliver you" is plain enough, but whether it shall be tomorrow, or next week, or next year, is not so clear. You are in a great hurry, but the Lord is not. Your trial may not yet have worked all the good to you that it was sent to do and, therefore, it must last longer. When the gold is cast into the refining pot, it might cry to the goldsmith, "Let me out." "No," he says, "you have not yet lost your dross. You must tarry in the fire till I have purified you." God may, therefore, subject us to many trials and yet, if He says, "I will deliver you," depend upon it, He will keep His Word! The Lord's promise is like a good bill from a substantial firm. A bill may be dated three months ahead, but anybody will discount it if it bears a trusted name. When you get God's, "I will," you may always cash it by faith and no discount need be taken from it, for it is current money of the merchant even when it is only, "I will." God's promise for the future is good *bona fide* stuff for the present, if you have but faith to use it! "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you," is tantamount to deliverance already received! It means, "If I do not deliver you now, I will deliver you at a time that is better than now, when, if you were as wise as I am, you would *prefer* to be delivered rather than now."

But promptness is implied, for otherwise deliverance would not be worked. "Ah!" says one, "I am in such a trouble that if I do not get deliverance soon, I shall die." Rest assured that you shall not die. You shall be delivered and, therefore, you shall be delivered before you quite die of despair. He will deliver you in the best possible time. The Lord is always punctual. You never were kept waiting by Him. You have kept Him waiting long enough, but He is prompt to the instant. He never keeps His servants waiting one single tick of the clock beyond His own appointed, fitting, wise and proper moment. "I will deliver you," implies that His delays will not be too protracted, lest the spirit of man should fail because of hope deferred. The Lord rides on the wings of the wind when He comes to the rescue of those who seek Him. Therefore, be of good courage!

Oh, this is a blessed text! And yet, what can I do with it? I cannot carry it home to those of you who need it most. Spirit of the living God, come and apply these rich consolations to those hearts which are bleeding and ready to die!

Do notice this text once again. Let me repeat it, putting the emphasis in a different way—"Call upon *Me* in the day of trouble, and *I* will deliver *you*." Pick up the threads of those two words. "*I* will deliver *you*; men will not; angels cannot; but *I* will." God Himself will set about the rescue of the man that calls upon Him! It is yours to call and it is God's to answer. Poor trembler, you begin to try to answer your own prayers! Why did you pray to God, then? When you have prayed, leave it to God to fulfill His own promise. He says, "Call upon Me and *I* will deliver you."

Now take up that other word: "*I* will deliver *you*." I know what you are thinking, Mr. John. You murmur, "God will deliver everybody, I believe, but *not me*." But the text says, "*I* will deliver *you*." It is the man that calls that shall get the answer. Mary, where are you? If you call upon God, He will answer *you*. He will give *you* the blessing even to your own heart and spirit, in your own personal experience. "Call upon Me," He says, "in the day of trouble: *I* will deliver *you*." Oh, for Grace to take that personal pronoun home to one's soul and to make sure of it as though you could see it with your own eyes! The Apostle tells us, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God." Assuredly I know that the worlds were made by God. I am sure of it and yet I did not see Him making them! I did not see Him when the light came because He said, "Let there be light."

I did not see Him divide the light from the darkness and the waters that are beneath the firmament from the waters that are above the firmament, but I am quite sure that He did all this. All the evolution gentlemen in the world cannot shake my conviction that creation was worked by God—though I was not there to see Him make even a bird or a flower. Why should I not have just the same kind of faith, tonight, about God's answer to my prayer if I am in trouble? If I cannot see how He will deliver me, why should I wish to see? He created the world well enough without my knowing how He was to do it and He will deliver me without my having a finger in it! It is no business of mine to see how He works. My business is to trust in my God and glorify Him by believing that what He has promised He is able to perform.

IV. Thus we have had three sweet things to remember and we close with a fourth, which is this—here are GOD AND THE PRAYING MAN TAKING TURNS.

That is an odd word to close with, but I want you to notice it. Here are the shares. First, it is your turn—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble." Secondly, it is God's turn—"I will deliver you." Again, it is your turn—for you shall be delivered. And then, again, it is the Lord's turn—"you shall glorify Me." Here is a compact, a Covenant that God enters into with you who pray to Him and whom He helps. He says, "You shall have the deliverance, but I must have the Glory. You shall pray; I will bless and then

you shall honor My holy name." Here is a delightful partnership—we obtain that which we so greatly need and all that God gets is the Glory which is due unto His name!

Poor troubled heart! I am sure you do not object to these terms, "Sinners," says the Lord, "I will give you pardon, but you must give Me the honor of it." Our only answer is, "Yes, Lord, that we will, forever and ever."—

***"Who is a pardoning God like You?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

"Come, souls," He says, "I will justify you, but I must have the Glory for it." And our answer is, "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded! By the Law of works? No, but by the Law of faith." God must have the Glory if we are justified by Christ. "Come," He says, "I will put you into My family, but My Grace must have the Glory for it." And we say, "Yes, that it shall, good Lord! Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

"Now," He says, "I will sanctify you, and make you holy, but I must have the Glory for it." And our answer is, "Yes, we will sing forever—We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore will we serve Him day and night in His Temple, giving Him all praise."

"I will take you home to Heaven," says God. "I will deliver you from sin and death and Hell; but I must have the Glory for it." "Truly," we say, "You shall be magnified! Forever and forever we will sing, 'Blessing and honor, and Glory and power be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.'"

Stop, you thief, there! What are you doing? Running away with a portion of God's Glory? What a villain he must be! Here is a man that was lately a drunk and God has loved him and made him sober—and he is wonderfully proud because he is sober. What folly! Stop it, Sir! Stop it! Give God the Glory of your deliverance from the degrading vice, or else you are still degraded by ingratitude! Here is another man. He used to swear, but he has been praying now. He even delivered a sermon the other night, or at least an open-air address. He has been as proud about this as any peacock! O bird of pride, when you look at your fine feathers, remember your black feet and your hideous voice! O reclaimed sinner, remember your former character and be ashamed! Give God the Glory if you have ceased to be profane. Give God the Glory for every part of your salvation!

Alas, even some divines will give man a little of the Glory. He has a free will, has he not? Oh, that Dagon of free will! How men will worship it! The man did something towards his salvation, by virtue of which he ought to receive some measure of honor! Do you really think so? Then say as you think. But we will have it from this pulpit and we will declare it to the whole world, that when a man reaches Heaven, there shall not be a particle of the Glory due to himself! He shall in no wise ascribe honor to his own feeble efforts, but unto God, alone, shall be the Glory! "Give unto the

Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord, Glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the Glory due unto His name.”

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you”—that is your part. But, “you shall glorify Me”—that is God’s part. He must have all the honor from first to last!

Go out therefore, you saved ones, and tell all what the Lord has done for you! An aged woman once said that if the Lord Jesus Christ really did save her, He should never hear the last of it. Join with her in that resolve! Truly, my soul vows that my delivering Lord shall never hear the last of my salvation—

***“I’ll praise Him in life, and praise Him in death,
And praise Him as long as He lends me breath!
And I’ll say, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”***

Come, poor Soul, you that came in here tonight in the deepest of trouble, God means to glorify Himself by you! The day shall yet come when you shall comfort other mourners by the rehearsal of your happy experience. The day may yet come when you that were a castaway shall preach the Gospel to castaways! The day shall yet come, poor fallen woman, when you shall lead other sinners to the Savior’s feet where now you stand weeping! You abandoned of the devil, whom even Satan is tired of, whom the world rejects because you are worn out and stale—the day shall yet come when, renewed in heart and washed in the blood of the Lamb, you shall shine like a star in the firmament to the praise of the Glory of His Grace who has made you to be accepted in the Beloved! O desponding Sinner, come to Jesus! Do call upon Him, I entreat you! Be persuaded to call upon your God and Father. If you can do no more than groan, groan unto God! Drop a tear, heave a sigh and let your heart say to the Lord, “O God, deliver me, for Christ’s sake! Save me from my sin and the consequences of it.” As surely as you thus pray, He will hear you and say, “Your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.” So may it be. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 50.

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END OF VOLUME 31

MISTAKES CONCERNING GOD

NO. 3119

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1908.**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“You thought that I was altogether like you.”
Psalm 50:21.

GOD is here speaking to a bad man who had been committing all sorts of evil deeds. Even while professing to declare God's statutes, he had been casting God's Words behind him. He had been the accomplice of thieves and had been uttering falsehood and slander, yet all the while God did not interfere with him, but allowed him to run on in his wicked way. And the man gathered from that noninterference that God did not mind what he was doing and that, in fact, He was like he! But if we begin to think in a right manner about God and ourselves, it will strike us at once that there must always have been an Infinite disparity between the eternal God and the very noblest of His creatures! It is true that man was made in the image of God and that when he was in his perfect state, he could have learned more from what he then was as to what God might be than he could learn from all the rest of creation. His moral qualities, before sin had tainted his nature, rendered him akin to the Most High. Yet even then, although man was in the image of God, it must have been a very tiny miniature of the Infinite One. Manhood is not a mirror broad enough or long enough to reflect the majesty of the Eternal. We are like God as a spark of fire is like the sun, or as a tiny raindrop may be like the sea, but the resemblance cannot go any farther than that—and perhaps not as far! We are but creatures of a day, and He is the Everlasting. Even if we had still remained as pure as the holy angels that adore the thrice Holy One, we would have felt ourselves to be less than nothing in His eyes. But now that man has fallen from his first estate, how unlike God he is! Man fallen is only the image of God so far as a miniature dashed to pieces could be said to be a likeness at all. But there are touches of the Divine about man even in his lost estate. Manhood is a palace, but it is like a palace after a siege, or a conflagration, or long decay—a ruin, like some ancient palace or temple that is now the haunt of serpents and owls—with just enough to show us what it once was, but much more to show us how changed it has become! And if fallen man is unlike God, man further debased by gross sin becomes not merely unlike

God, but the very opposite of God, so that you may sooner learn, from a man who has degraded himself by vice, what God is *not* than what God is! And it becomes a monstrous mistake, and far worse than a mistake, when such a man as that looks at himself and says, “God is like me.” “You thought”—and it was a most blasphemous thought—“you thought that I was altogether like you.”

It is my sorrowful task to have to show you that this great sin is very common among three classes of persons. First, *it is very common for the ungodly to fall into this error.* Secondly, *returning sinners often make the same mistake.* And thirdly, *even the children of God are not always free from this error.*

I. First, then, IT IS A COMMON THING FOR THE UNGODLY TO FALL INTO THIS ERROR—“You thought that I was altogether like you.”

God is very long-suffering to men—this is not the place of judgment. Sinners are not, as a general rule, punished here. Their sentence is reserved until the Day of Judgment. Some people regard every accident as a judgment, but we do not agree with them at all, otherwise we would have to very frequently condemn the innocent. Our Lord has very expressly told us that those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were not greater sinners than the rest of those who dwelt in Jerusalem at that time. And that the Galileans whom Pilate slew and whose blood he mingled with their sacrifices, were no worse than the other Galileans who went up to the Temple and came away unharmed. [See Sermon #408, Volume 7—ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS, a copy of which Dr. Livingstone carried during his African travels, and on which he wrote, “Very good. – D. L.”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God does sometimes startle the world with His judgments, but not often. This is not the time of judgment—judgment is yet to come. The objective of God in thus keeping His sword sheathed when, oftentimes, we are inclined to think that it might fairly be drawn and used, is to lead those who are thus spared to repentance and salvation. “I will spare them yet a little while longer,” says the long-suffering Lord. And so the trees that only cumber the ground are not hewn down—and the inference that wicked men draw is not that God wishes them to repent and turn to Him—but that He is like themselves.

Wicked men imagine that God is like themselves in the following ways. First, *in an insensibility to moral emotion.* They do not care whether a thing is right or wrong. To have done right gives them no joy. To have done wrong gives their hardened hearts no pain. Some of them can curse and blaspheme—the words that make a child of God shudder with horror seem to be their usual language. In fact, you cannot now stand in our streets, where there are two or three working men, without hearing such filthy language, much of it utterly unmeaning, that you wonder how their companions can endure it! Yet none of them seem to mind it and they will commit deeds which it would be wrong for me to mention, but when

they have committed them, they seem to forget all about them. And they suppose because God does not strike them dead, or punish them immediately for their transgressions, that He is just as impervious to moral emotion as they are—that He never grows angry at sin and that He takes no delight whatever in excellence! How grossly do they mistake God in this supposition! He feels sin most sensitively. To Him it is “exceedingly sinful.” It touches the very apple of His eye. It grieves Him at the heart. It vexes His Holy Spirit. Yet the ungodly think not so.

They also are *utterly careless about how they perform their own duties in relation to God* and they suppose that God is equally careless as to the discharge of the office which He sustains. If these ungodly men were made judges, they would neither fear God nor regard man—and they suppose that God, the Judge of All, has no respect for His own moral government, no care for the vindication of His Law—that He lets things go just as they please and will not interfere with men, but will let them act as they like. If they are servants, they are only eye-servants and are not careful to do that which is right. If they are masters, they seek only to do the best they can for themselves. The mass of mankind seldom look round to see the general bearings of a question—they only enquire, “How will this affect me?” Each man joins that party in politics, or that particular club, or goes in for the defense of that particular Act of Parliament which he regards as most likely to advance his own interests. As to the general equity of the whole concern, only a few eclectic spirits will be found who will consider that! And that God should always be a God of equity, that He should look into the motives of men’s actions and especially that He should punish every sinful action, word, thought and act with the utmost scrupulousness as a Judge—all this ungodly men do not understand! They think that God is as loose and lax as they are, that He plays battledore and shuttlecock with moralities and will let men do just as they like, never calling them to account. At least they seem to think that if there should be any account to be rendered to God at the last, it will be a very small matter which will soon be over—and that there is for them no everlasting punishment, no dreadful terrors of the wrath to come!

They think that God is altogether like as they are and *they themselves are indifferent to the condition of others*. If they hear that a man has become a drunk, it does not greatly concern them. If they hear that a man has been committing an act of uncleanness, very likely they make fun of it, but it never troubles them. If they were informed that hundreds had passed into Hell within the last few days, they would regard it as no matter of concern to them—they suppose that God is just as indifferent as they are. O Sirs, why will you so defame your Maker as to think it possible that He can be like yourselves? God is concerned about the character of the poorest man and woman living on the face of the earth!

The honesty of that poor work-girl, or the chastity of that young man whose name will never be published before the world is a matter of intense interest to Him. The right that is done, or the wrong that is perpetrated in every place beneath the sun is a matter of the deepest concern to Him. He knows it all, writes it all down in His Book of Remembrance and feels glad or sad concerning it all. He is not a God of stone or of wood! He is a God—I know not how to speak of Him with due honor, for He is altogether beyond the range of human imagination or description—but I know that He is a God of wondrous sensitiveness with regard to sin! He cannot bear even to look upon iniquity—His whole Being loathes it! We know that He is not indifferent to sin because the Inspired Psalmist tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready.”

Ungodly men also seem to imagine that God, like themselves, is *easily deceived by appearances*. They go to church or to chapel and they seem to think that by doing so, they have wiped off all their old scores. What if they have broken God’s Law in different ways for many years? Have they not been to hear a sermon? Have they not even been to a Prayer Meeting? Have they not repeated, night and morning, a prayer that their mother taught them when they were children? As for sin, they regard that as a small matter. When they are about to die, they can send for some good man to pray with them and so everything can easily be made all right. That is their notion. Ah, but God is not deceived by outward appearances—He looks at the heart and requires that there should be in the heart, purity, a love for the right and a hatred for the wrong, and these beings are never in the heart apart from the new birth which is always accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ!

We have known some go to the length of thinking, or pretending to think, that *God was an accomplice in their sins*. Because He sat still and did not at once interfere and smite them, they have said, after the commission of a certain sinful action, that Providence seemed to have put them in circumstances where it was necessary for them to do wrong! We have constantly heard men try to make excuse for their sins by reason of the peculiar position or the very remarkable circumstances in which they were placed. Even a murderer has pleaded his necessities as a reason why he felt that he might steal and even kill to supply his needs! Men will actually say that God has put them where they cannot help doing wrong and that “fate” decreed it and God ordained it! And so they seek to shift the blame from themselves. This is indeed thinking and saying that God is like themselves—and it is the height of impudent blasphemy when a man reaches that point! O You pure and holy God who utterly abhors everything that is evil, how far has the sinner gone in

sin when, instead of confessing his iniquity with shamefacedness and humiliation, he dares to speak as if You were as sinful as he is!

This condition of heart in which men think that God is like themselves prevents their feeling any reverence for Him. Hence, many of them render to Him no kind of worship, set apart no day especially as His and even ridicule the idea of there being any Lord's-Day in the week! They have a League of their own for the special purpose of desecrating the day that most of His people regard as His beyond all the other days of the week. This takes away from them all desire to pray to God. They say, "If we pray to Him, what profit shall it be to us?" His Inspired Word is to them no more than any other book—indeed, they even venture to criticize it with a severity which they do not show towards the works of their own poets or historians! They utterly reject both God and His salvation.

This mistaken notion concerning God also keeps sinners from repentance. As long as a man thinks that God is as bad as he is, he will never repent of his sin. It is often the holiness of God that breaks men down under a sense of their own guilt. This mistaken idea of the Character of God also prevents the exercise of faith, for a man cannot have faith in one whose character he does not respect! And if I am wicked enough to drag God down to my level in my estimation of Him, of course I cannot trust Him, for I have enough sense left to enable me to feel that I could not trust Him if He is like myself! If He is, indeed, such as my depraved imagination pictures Him, faith in Him becomes an absurdity and well may the man who thinks this of God say that it is not possible for him to believe in Him! Of course he could not believe in such a god as he sets up in his own imagination! But O, You ever-blessed Jehovah, when we know how holy, pure, good, true and perfect You are—and see how opposite to You we are in every respect, we do, like Job—abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes and we find it easy to put our trust in You! When Your blessed Spirit has opened our eyes to see You, how can we keep from trusting You? When we know You, we must rely upon You! When we see the beauties of everlasting love gleaming in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, every power of our being seems to say, "I must trust in Him and rest in Him alone." May God bless these words to any ungodly ones who have been thinking that He is like themselves!

II. Now, secondly, I am going to speak of the same sin from another point of view and show you that RETURNING SINNERS OFTEN MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE CONCERNING GOD.

Numbers of persons are kept from peace of mind through mistaken ideas of God. They think that He is like themselves and so they do not receive the Gospel. For instance, *it is not the easiest thing in the world to forgive those who have trespassed against us.* There are some people who find this duty to be one of the hardest that they have to perform. Consequently, when a man with such a disposition as that is conscious

of having offended God, he thinks it is quite as hard for God to forgive him as it is for him to forgive his fellow man! And judging God by himself, he says, "Surely He cannot forgive me." Looking at his innumerable provocations, thinking of the twenty, or perhaps forty, fifty, or 60 years or more in which he has hardened his heart against God, he says to himself, "I could not forgive a man who had held out so long against me, so how is it possible for God to forgive me?" Well might the Lord answer him out of the excellent Glory, "You think that I am like you, but as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." I have never found a text which says, "Who is a *man* like unto you, that pardons iniquity and passes by transgression?" for that is not characteristic of man! But I do find this text, "Who is a *God* like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Yes, the Lord loves to forgive! He delights to pardon. His Justice has been fully vindicated by the death of His Son, the Substitute for sinners. That was necessary, for He could not tarnish His Justice even for the sake of His mercy! But now that the righteous Judge sees that the foundations of His moral government will not be shaken by His forgiveness of repenting sinners, He can freely dispense the mercy in which He delights. His mercy endures forever and whoever confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy! It is not difficult for God to forgive though it may be difficult for us to do so.

The awakened sinner often imagines that *since he would not bestow favors upon the undeserving, therefore God will not*. He hears of the great blessings that are promised in the Word of God to those who believe in Jesus and he says, "This news is too good to be true." Contrasting his own deserving with the fullness of this Divine promise, he says, "How can I believe this promise? That one surpasses all credence. How can I accept that other one as true?" The best reply is that given by God in our text, "You thought that I was altogether like you." What if the gift seems so be too great for you to receive? Is it also too great for God to give? What if it seems to be too lavish to be given by one man to another? It is not too lavish to be given by Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords! Like as a king gives—no, like as a *God* gives, does He give unto you! The greatness of the Divine promises, instead of staggering our faith, ought to be the evidence of their truthfulness! Is it reasonable to suppose that God would promise to do only little things for those who trust Him? Oh, judge not so! He "does great things past finding out; yes, and wonders without number." His mercies are high as Heaven, and wide as the East is from the West!

The convinced sinner is also often troubled with the thought that *God cannot mean what He says*. "What?" he asks, "can I be pardoned in a moment, be justified in a moment, be saved from Hell and made an heir

of Heaven all in a moment?" He thinks it cannot really be so and he thinks so because he often says what he does not mean and he, therefore, thinks that God speaks in the same style. But, Sir, I pray you not to measure God's corn by your bushel! If *you* play with words, Jehovah never does! Has He spoken, and will He not do as He has said? Has He promised and shall it not come to pass?

The sinner next thinks that *surely God cannot mean to give him all this mercy freely*. He says to himself, "If a man had offended me, I would expect him to make some reparation before I forgave him. I would look for something at his hands—and is God's mercy to be given to the undeserving and nothing to be asked of him before it is given? How can that be?" He thinks that God cannot mean it and that the Scriptural declaration concerning the freeness of salvation cannot be meant to be taken literally as it stands. When this invitation sounds in a man's ears, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool," he says, "They are beautiful words, but they cannot apply to me, just as I am, without anything to recommend me." So he practically thinks that God talks as he does, himself, without meaning what He says. But, verily it is not so, for every promise of God is true and shall be fulfilled to the letter!

This poor convinced sinner next says, "*But, surely, you do not mean to say that God will give me all this mercy now.*" Yes I do, for He says, "I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Yet, because this sinner has himself been dilly-dallying, and procrastinating and postponing, he thinks that God will act in the same manner and will say to him, "You must wait now—you have waited for your own pleasure, now you may wait for Mine." But there is nothing in Scripture to warrant such an idea as this! It is only our trying to drag God down to the level of our narrowness and littleness that makes us think so. It is *immediate* salvation, *instantaneous* pardon that God delights to give! He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. There stands the sinner in his rags, filthy from head to foot, degraded and debased—but the command comes from the excellent Glory, "Take away his filthy garments from him," and they are gone in a moment. "Wash him from his defilement," and he is at once clean. "Array him in white garments," and he is so arrayed! "Set a fair miter upon his brow," and the miter is there! What the Lord does requires no time. We need weeks, months, years, to do what we have so do, but when Christ had even to raise the dead, He did it in a moment! He simply said, "Lazarus, come forth," and there was Lazarus! He touched the bier on which the dead young man lay—and the young man at once sat up and began to speak! He said to the little maiden, "Talitha cumi," and she

opened her eyes at once and rose from her bed ready to eat the refreshment which the Savior commanded her parents to bring her! O poor Sinners, I pray you do not doubt that the great mercy, the free mercy of Jesus Christ is to be given even now, if your hand is but stretched out to receive it!

I have known some get into their heads the notion that simply to trust in Christ cannot be the right thing for them to do. They say, "Surely, there is a great deal more to do besides that." Yes, there is much more to do *after* you have believed, but the Gospel command says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." One says, "I will go home and pray." Another says, "I will read the Scriptures." And there are some who, in their despair of finding peace, resolve to do nothing at all! Some time ago, a young man who had been greatly concerned about his soul, came to the conclusion that he must be lost—and he determined not to read the Bible, nor to attend a place of worship for 12 months. But this very resolve made him still more wretched and, one day, a Christian woman, to whom he told his feelings, was much grieved at his decision and she said to him, "What a pity it is that you cannot take Jesus Christ!" As he walked home, that remark stuck in his mind, "What a pity it is that you cannot *take Jesus Christ!*" Is that all we have to do—to take Jesus Christ? Yes, that is all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," comprehends the whole case—and where faith is exercised by us, we are saved. But we think that there must be something behind the promise because we ourselves often keep something behind in *our* promises, so again the test is true, "You thought that I was altogether like you," but it is not so. If you come just as you are, with all your sin and hardness of heart—and just rest your guilty soul upon the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, resolved that, if you perish, you will perish trusting alone in Him—your heavenly Father will give you a kiss of acceptance, lift the burden from your weary shoulders and send you home in peace! "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," is no lie, no exaggeration, no straining of the truth! Put it to the test, Sinner! God help you to do so and He shall have all the praise!

III. Before I close, I must have a few words with you who love the Lord, for THERE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO MAKE THIS SAME MISTAKE. They begin thinking that God is such an one as themselves. Now I am going to find some of you out—I know where you are for I have been that way myself, I am sorry to say.

Sometimes, *we are afraid that God will overlook us because we are so insignificant.* If we walk through a forest, possibly we say, "What a lonely place this is—there is nobody here!" Yet, just at our feet, perhaps, there are fifty thousand little ants. "Oh, but we do not count them!" Why not? They are living creatures and God counts them and He takes care to

supply their needs as well as the needs of the people in that great city over there! And those birds in the trees, yes, and the tiny insects that hide under the bark that those woodpeckers are seeking after, or those little gnats that dance up and down in the air around you—God takes notice of them all and provides for them all—even as He provides for you! You think, because *you* ignore the insects, that God also ignores them, but He does not! If the Queen were to come down Newington Butts, it would soon be reported in all the papers. But if there is a poor beggar going past our gates just now, with no shoes or stockings on, that will not be noted in “The Times” tomorrow morning. But *God* takes notice of beggars as well as of queens! You do not know that poor man who is just going into the casual ward at the workhouse—he is of no consequence to you, is he? But he is of consequence to *God*, for there is not a human being who is beneath God’s notice, nor an animal nor an insect! If you take the tiniest insect in the world and put it under a microscope and examine it carefully, you will see that there are upon it marks of Divine skill and forethought—and if you are able to learn all about that little creature which will only live a single day, you will find that the arrangements concerning it are truly amazing! Yes, God thinks of little things, so you, little one, may believe that God thinks of you! And whenever you harbor the notion that you are too poor and too obscure for God to care about you, say to yourself, “Ah, that is because I am thinking that God is like myself. I step on a beetle and think nothing of it—yet, though I might be far more insignificant in comparison with the great God than a beetle can be in comparison with me—God will not crush me. No, He loves me and He is continually thinking of me!”

We also are *apt to grow weary of the sad and the sorrowful*. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot bear to talk to Mr. So-and-So! He has such a gloomy countenance and he speaks in such dolorous tones.” Another says, “Really, my poor sister quite wears me out. I used to nurse her with a great deal more pleasure than I do now, for I think she has less patience than she used to have.” We get weary of those who cannot cheer us, those whose lives are full of sadness and then we think that God gets as weary of us, but He never does! No, O sad ones, the Lord comforts the mourners and cheers those who are cast down. You especially who are sad on account of sin may rest assured that your sadness and dependency will never weary your God—your friends may get tired of you but your God never will!

We also sometimes *forget our promises*. In the multiplicity of things that some of us have to do, it is possible that we occasionally fail to keep our promise and we are very grieved when, quite unintentionally, it so happens. But God never forgets any one of His promises, so let no one of us ever say, “My God has forgotten me.” It cannot be! There never was

such a thing as a slip of memory with God. Every promise of His will be kept to the second when it comes due.

We also sometimes find ourselves *loath to give to those who ask of us*. After we have given to several, we feel that we really cannot give to everybody who asks us for help. But it is never so with God. If we have gone to Him a hundred times, let us be all the bolder to go to Him again! And if we know that He has been helping a thousand other poor saints like ourselves, or poor sinners, too, let us go to Him again and go right boldly, for His bounty of mercy is not exhausted, nor His store of Grace diminished!

We know, too, dear Friends, that *we are often unwise*. What man is there on the face of the earth who does not make mistakes? The pope, who is called “infallible,” makes more mistakes than anyone else! We all make mistakes and, therefore, we imagine that God does the same. When we get into a little trouble, we begin to suspect that there is some mistake in the arrangements of Divine Providence. We do not say as much as that—we would be ashamed to say it, especially if anybody heard it—but that is what we think. It seems to us that God has brought us into a difficulty out of which it will not be possible for Him to extricate us. We do not say as much as that, except in our hearts, but, Beloved, when we even think anything like that, we are really imagining that God is such an one as ourselves!

We know also that we are sometimes *harsh in our judgments* and that we expect more of people than we ought to and do not make allowances for their infirmities. And we fancy that God is like we are. But to His dear children He is always generous and kind, even as Jesus made allowance for His sleeping disciples when He said, “The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.” I think that we sometimes represent God as being even worse than we ourselves are. When I was ill, some little time ago, I found that I could not keep my thoughts fixed upon any subject as I wanted to. When I tried to meditate upon holy themes, my mind rambled because the pain I was suffering quite distracted me. I said to a friend who came to visit me that I wished I could concentrate my thoughts and that I felt as a Christian, I ought to do so. He said, “Well now, if your boy was as ill as you are and he said to you, ‘Father, I cannot think as much about you as I would like to do, my pain is so great,’ you would say, ‘My dear son, I do not expect you to do anything of the kind.’ You would sit down by his bedside and try to comfort him. And you would tell him that while his poor body was so racked with pain, you would not be so unreasonable as to expect him to act in any other way.” I saw at once that my friend was right and then he said to me, “Do you think that you are kinder to your son than God is to us?” If our opinion of God is that He is harsher and sterner to us than we are to our children, it is a very erroneous notion. Some Christian people seem to be afraid to rejoice, yet

we love to see our children full of joy, so we may be sure that our heavenly Father loves so see His children happy.

Further, we know that *we ourselves are weak* and, therefore, we dream that God is also weak. When the furnace of affliction is very hot and we feel that we cannot endure its heat, we foolishly think that God cannot uphold us under the fiery trial. If our labor is very hard and we feel that we cannot accomplish it, we are very unwise to dream that God cannot give us all the strength we need for our task. How can we be so foolish as to estimate the Omnipotence of Jehovah by our weakness, for I will not venture to call it strength?

We also know that *we constantly change*. We are as fickle as the weather—fair today and foul tomorrow—and, therefore, we fancy that God changes as often as we do. Some talk about His loving His children today and hating them tomorrow, but that is not true. Listen to these texts, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of burning.” Judge not the Lord, then by your fickleness as if He were such an one as yourselves!

The mischief of this mistake on the part of Christians is that *we narrow the possibility of our attainments*. We think that we cannot overcome sin. We think that we cannot walk in the light as God is in the light. We think that we cannot enjoy abiding fellowship with our Lord. We think that we cannot be holy. And all this is because we only think of what we can do, not of what God can do for us and in us! Now, as far as the poles are asunder should be our estimate of ourselves and our estimate of God. Christ not only says to us, “Without Me you can do nothing,” but also, “All things are possible to him that believes,” to him who thus links himself with the Omnipotence of God.

And I believe, Brothers and Sisters, by thinking that God is like ourselves, *we also limit the probabilities of success in His work*. If we could have the management of the affairs of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, and the power to convert a hundred thousand sinners tomorrow would be put into our hands, we would be wise if we asked God to take back that power, for I am quite certain that God will save a hundred thousand sinners in a day when things are ripe for it—yes, and He will save a nation in a day when the right time comes! But if there were to be a thousand persons saved under one sermon, or three thousand, as on the day of Pentecost, in any place in London, there is not a Church on the face of the earth that would believe in the reality of the work—and the result would be that those who were converted would *not* be added to the Church as the three thousand were on the day of Pentecost. Even professing Christians would say, “This is wildfire that

will do more harm than good! We do not believe in it.” If they were told that one person, or perhaps two, had been saved, they might believe that—possibly not the two, though they might half believe in the one! But if there were three thousand who professed to be saved, they would say, “Oh, that could not be!” The reason for this unbelief is that members and ministers alike have the mistaken notion that God is like we are. Many ministers feel very happy if they have a dozen conversions in a year and some are quite content if there is one conversion in a dozen years. A brother minister said to me, the other day, “We have had a Baptism at our chapel this year, bless the Lord.” “Oh,” I said, “how many have you baptized?” “There were two,” he replied, “and one of them was my own son.” I said, “Yes, bless the Lord for those two, but what are we to say about those in your congregation who are not converted to God?”

When we judge the Lord by what we ourselves are, our belief is like that which prevented the Master from doing many mighty works in His own city of Nazareth! May the Lord be pleased to give us a far higher conception of what He really is, for that will enable us to do much more for Him! It is because of this mistaken notion of ours concerning God that we limit our desires, slacken our endeavors, are satisfied to have everything on the pigmy scale when it might be gigantic. We are content with pence when we might have pounds of Grace. We are satisfied with the very imperfect cultivation of a tiny plot of land when the broad acres of God’s bounty lie before us. We win an inch or two of the enemy’s territory and we throw up our caps, and cry, “What mighty conquerors we are!” while whole provinces lie unconquered and whole nations remain ignorant of the Gospel! Then we keep on straitening ourselves more and more, contracting our conceptions and our ideas, the older we grow, till the zealous youth gets to be a “prudent” old man, whose “prudence” consists in chilling everybody he meets, carrying wet blankets to cover up everyone who has a little life in him, snuffing everybody’s candle and generally managing to snuff all the candles out.

We are, most of us, conscious of this chilling process. I seem to myself to be continually feeling it. I think I am not altogether destitute of earnestness even now, but I wish I could keep at blood heat always, for blood heat is the heat of health, the heat of true life! May God keep us up to that mark and it will help to keep us so if we have true notions of what God can do, and will do—and forever give up thinking that He is like ourselves! May God’s blessing rest upon you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

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

THE TWO GATHERINGS

NO. 3216

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*“Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have
made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”
Psalm 50:5.*

JUST a few sentences must suffice concerning the first meaning of the text. I think there can be little doubt that we have here a prophecy of our Lord's Second Advent and of the gathering together in one assembly of all the chosen people of God—both those who shall then be in Heaven and those who shall then be alive and remaining upon the earth. Having made a Covenant with Christ by sacrifice, these shall all be gathered together unto Him, to be partakers of His Glory when He reigns at the latter day in all the splendor of His millennial Kingdom here below.

The text, however, seems to me to have two other meanings. I believe that it relates, first, to *the gathering together of all God's chosen people by the preaching of the Word and by other means*. And that, secondly, it also has a bearing upon *the great gathering of all the chosen around the Throne of Christ in everlasting Glory*.

I. So, first, I have to speak concerning THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF ALL GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE BY THE PREACHING OF THE WORD AND BY OTHER MEANS. The text appears to me to be a message to God's people from the living lips of Him who redeemed us by His blood. He speaks to the *heavens* as though He would make all the Providences of God to be His servants for this great work, and to the *earth* as though the willing hearts of His people, there, would gladly obey the summons, “Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

My first question will be, who are to be gathered? I think we must understand the text as relating to all the chosen people of God, including those who, as yet, have not been called and quickened and have not, in the strict sense of the term, made a personal covenant with God by faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divinely-appointed Representative of all the elect—whatever He did, He did as their Covenant Head, their Sponsor, Surety and Substitute. When He made a Covenant with God on behalf of His people, they virtually made that Covenant, too. As Adam's covenant concerned us all, and was practically our covenant with God, so Christ's Covenant concerns all who are in Him and is reckoned as the Covenant that they, also, have made with His Father. And I believe that the mis-

sion of the Gospel is to gather out from among the rest of mankind all those whose names are written on the roll of the Everlasting Covenant—those who were given to Christ by His Father before the foundation of the world!

I know, of course, that the Gospel is to be proclaimed to all. And you know that I have not shunned to declare it in all its freeness and fullness. When we are giving the invitations of the Gospel that we find in the Scriptures, we never think of limiting them! Though we believe the special purpose of Christ's Atonement was the redemption of His Church, yet we know that His Sacrifice was Infinite in value and, therefore, we set the wicket gate as wide open as we can and we repeat Christ's own invitation, "Whoever will, let him take the wafer of life freely." Yet we do not flinch from the solemn Truth of God that none will ever be saved but those whom God foreknew and predestinated, whom in due time He calls, justifies and glorifies—and the great objective of the Gospel, whatever other ends it may have, is to gather together unto Christ these chosen ones who are to be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. I come into this pulpit and I trust that you, dear Friends, go forth to your various spheres of service with the comforting thought that we are not laboring in vain, or spending our strength for nothing—because there are some who must be saved, or, to use the expressive words of Paul concerning the rest which so many missed, "it remains that some *must* enter therein." We read concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, "He must go through Samaria," because there was one poor sinning woman there who was ordained unto eternal life, as well as many others who, through her instrumentality, were to be brought to Christ and to believe on Him! We also must preach, or teach, or serve the Lord in other ways because it is written concerning Christ, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." The Gospel is to be preached to every creature in order that Christ's chosen ones may be gathered unto Him. We cast the net into the sea, for we do not know where the fish are, but God knows and He guides into the net those He means us to catch for Him. You know that a magnet will attract steel to itself—well, the Gospel attracts souls that have an affinity to itself—and thus Christ draws His chosen ones unto Himself with the cords of a man, and bands of love!

My next enquiry is, *Who is to do this work of gathering Christ's chosen ones unto Himself?* Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you know that every true child of God is to be employed in this blessed service! Some seem to think that this work devolves upon only ministers, or upon them and their Brothers in office—their deacons and elders—and that it is to extend no further. We hear much about, "lay agency" nowadays, but we know nothing of any distinction between "clergy" and "laity" in this matter! All God's people are God's *kleros*—God's clergy—or if there is any laity, any common people, *all God's people are the laity*, "a, peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nothing has been more disastrous to the cause of Christianity than the leaving of the service of Christ to comparatively few of His professed followers! We shall never see the world turned upside

down, as it was in Apostolic times until we get back to the Apostolic practice and all the saints are filled with the Holy Spirit and speak for Christ as the Spirit gives them utterance! My dear Brother, surely you will not say, "I pray you have me excused from serving Christ." Remember your Lord's own words, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let *him that hears say, Come.*" Everyone who has heard and heeded the Gospel invitation is under a solemn obligation to repeat that invitation to others! Every Christian, whatever his talents, or abilities, or circumstances, or opportunities may be, should realize that he has a commission to help in gathering together Christ's saints unto Him. All are not required to do the same work, but each Believer is bound to do some work for the Master who has done so much for him. And everyone should enquire, "Lord, what will You have me to do."

Some of you can distribute tracts, and there are some tracts that are worth distributing. I met with two, this afternoon, which will help me in my sermon. And if you get such tracts and give them away discreetly, they may be read and may benefit the readers. Some tracts are never likely to be read, but good, pithy, striking narratives—tracts with much of Christ and the Gospel in them—may be distributed with the prayerful confidence that a blessing will rest upon their perusal. There are some people who have special qualifications for this kind of work for Christ. While travelling last week, I was delighted to see at every station where the train stopped, a gentleman moving from carriage to carriage and offering a tract with the air of a man who was a practiced hand at the business! At a junction where some of us had to change, there were no less than four trains, and he was as busy as he could be giving his tracts to passengers in each train. I watched an American gentleman get out on to the platform and go up to the tract-distributor and begin to talk about the war and other topics—but very soon, the earnest servant of Christ had brought the conversation round to the subject of personal godliness. By-and-by, he came to me. He was glad to see a minister of the Gospel and I was glad to see him—and I hope that I might be as faithful in my sphere of service as that good man was in his!

But some of you can go a little beyond tract-distributing. You can stand up at the corner of the street and preach the Gospel in a simple but earnest style. I thank God every time I remember the scores of young men we have here whose mouths have been opened to speak for Christ. Go, on, my brave sons, bearing your testimony for the Master! Even if the police should sometimes move you off, be content to be moved and go and blow the Gospel trumpet somewhere else! But take care to proclaim the good tidings of salvation, for you have your Lord's commission to do so! When a man receives a commission from the Queen, he is not a little proud of it. But you have a commission from the King of kings empowering you to gather together unto Him all who are included in the Covenant of His Grace!

Those of you who are not able to preach may find opportunities of talking to individuals one by one. There is great power in “button-holing” people and speaking to them personally about their souls. Some of you can visit the sick and read and pray with them. Or you can look out for those in distress—the brokenhearted and hopeless ones who need to be directed to Him who alone can deliver and heal them. Try to say something for your Master wherever you go, remembering that He has sent even the humblest and feeblest of you to gather together unto Himself those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

My third question is, Where are they to be gathered? The Lord says, “Gather My saints together unto Me.” We are not told to gather them into the Baptist denomination, or into the Presbyterian kirk, or into the Episcopal establishment, or into any particular church! Our Lord’s command is, “Gather My saints together unto Me.” I have never been ashamed of being called a Baptist since I became one. And if I did not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ordained the immersion of Believers on profession of their faith, I would not preach and practice it. But, dear as Christ’s own ordinances ought always to be to all Christians, our main business is not to bring men and women to Baptism, but to bring them to Christ! Our principal objective is not even to bring people into Church membership, or to communion at the Lord’s Table, but to bring them, by faith, to Calvary where the one great Sacrifice for sin was offered, where the precious blood of Jesus was shed, where His perfect righteousness was forever completed, where the tearful eyes may see the suffering Savior and where the broken heart may find healing and salvation in His grievous wounds! Labor, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in all that you do or say, in your personal dealings with sinners, in your tracts, in your preaching, in your teaching, to set forth the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ—for so will you best obey your Lord’s command, “Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

Perhaps someone asks, “*Where are the chosen ones that are to be gathered unto Christ?*” Where are they? Why, some of them may be sitting in the same pew where you now are! If you really want to gather Christ’s saints together unto Him, begin with those who are close beside you now. If you want to bring Christ’s chosen ones to Him, you can find some of them just outside this Tabernacle. You can find some of them as you are walking to your homes. You can find some of them in the streets, the courts and alleys all around us! You can find some of them in Whitechapel and others of them in the West End. I verily believe that missionaries of the Cross are just as much needed in Belgravia as in Shoreditch. And perhaps some who live in the biggest houses in the wealthiest parts of London are less likely to have the message of salvation carried to them than are multitudes of the poorer citizens of this great city! Then there are the people in our suburban towns and villages where so many neglect the ordinances of God’s House, or have not the religious privileges which abound in this metropolis. And beyond them are great masses in

the country for whom few or none are caring. And the almost innumerable hosts of heathens, Muslims and others in distant lands who have never yet even *heard* the name of Jesus and know nothing of the glorious Gospel which He commanded His servants to preach to them in His name! So dear Friends, wherever you may be, seek to gather some to Christ! Begin with those who are in this congregation now, or with those who are in your own household and then cease not from this blessed work as long as you live! As long as there is another jewel to be found to adorn Christ's crown—as long as there is another wandering sheep to be brought back to the Good Shepherd who bought it with His own blood—keep on at this blessed work in obedience to your Lord's command, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that the text has a bearing upon THE GREAT GATHERING OF ALL THE CHOSEN AROUND THE THRONE OF CHRIST IN GLORY. In His intercessory prayer before He suffered, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory which You have given Me." And in the text Christ says to His servants in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

I ask again, as I asked in the previous part of my discourse, *Who are to be gathered?* They are those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, and here I take the text to mean those who have made a personal covenant with God in Christ Jesus—those who, by an act of faith, have accepted the Covenant which Christ made with His Father on their behalf. This Covenant has been made by Sacrifice and through the mediation of the crucified Savior they have joined hands with the reconciled God. By His one offering, Christ "has perfected forever them that are sanctified," those who are set apart unto Him to be His sanctified ones, or, as the text calls them, His "saints." All of us who have been thus sanctified may boldly "enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

Dear Friend, have you entered into this personal Covenant with God in Christ Jesus? Have you, by faith, made a personal appropriation of what Christ did upon the Cross when He suffered and died as the Substitute and Surety of all who trust in Him? If you are one of Christ's chosen ones, you will accept Him as your Savior. As long as you are content with your own doings and trust in them, you cannot be numbered among His saints. So—

***"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet!
Stand in Him, in Him alone
Gloriously complete!"***

"He that believes on Him is not condemned." Do you believe on Him? If you do, you are not condemned and, therefore, you are justified and you

shall, in due time, be glorified and so you shall be among those who shall be gathered together unto Christ at the last. But the Lord expressly says, "Gather My saints together unto Me." Those who have repented of their sin and turned from it. Those who have been constrained by His Grace to live holy lives and who have entered into a covenant with Him to hate the sin that cost Him so much to redeem them from it!

Now I repeat another question that I asked before, *Where are these chosen ones to be gathered?* Let me beg you again to look at that little, all-important word, "Me," in the text, "Gather My saints together unto Me." The Lord does not say, "Gather My saints together unto Heaven, to the general assembly and Church of the First-Born." They are to be gathered there, but He does not say so here. He says, "Gather My saints together unto Me." Is it not the very joy of Heaven, the quintessence of its bliss, that we are to be gathered unto Christ? It is very delightful to think of Heaven as the place of the perfect communion of saints, as the place of perfect worship, as the place of perfect rest and at the same time of constant unwearied activity—but, after all, though it may be a great comfort to us to think of Heaven under any of these aspects, yet it is a far sweeter thought to us to remember that Heaven is the place where Jesus is—and where His saints are to be gathered together unto Him! So with delight we sing—

***"There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin!
There from the rivers of His Grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."***

The very glory of Heaven is that we shall see Him—that same Christ who once died upon Calvary's Cross—that we shall fall down and worship at His feet! No, more—that He shall kiss us with the kisses of His mouth and welcome us to dwell with Him forever! There are ineffable delights in the very name of Jesus! It is indeed like ointment poured forth! Then what unspeakable delights must there be in His Presence in Glory! If all His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, what must Christ, Himself, be? For one glimpse of Him, I would give a life of broken bones, fever and every conceivable pang! No, more—I think I may even venture to say with Rutherford that if there were seven Hells between my soul and Christ—and He should bid me dash through them all, I would count the distance all too short if I might but get to Him at the last, to behold His face, and to dwell with Him forever! I do not know whether there are any degrees in Glory and I do not trouble about whether there are or are not—but this I do know, that all the saints shall be gathered together unto Christ—and that degree is high enough for any of them!

How are these chosen ones to be gathered? The verse before our text tells us that the Lord shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth beneath, so we may be sure that the work which He commands shall be accomplished! We sometimes say of a man, when he is very determined to do a certain thing, "He will move Heaven and earth to do it." And Christ will move Heaven and earth to accomplish His great purpose

of gathering together unto Himself all those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice! Heaven shall have a part in this great work. The angels are intensely interested in the saints who are to be their companions in Glory forever, for, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” God gives the holy angels charge over His saints to keep them in all their ways, and to bear them up in their hands lest they should dash their feet against the stones. And they act at last as a spiritual convoy escorting them to Heaven even as Lazarus “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Even Satan, himself, and all his hosts are under the supreme control of Christ. And He can use them as He pleases in the accomplishment of His purposes concerning His saints. At all events, they shall not be able to frustrate those purposes, but they shall most certainly be fulfilled. Earth, too, shall have its share in gathering Christ’s chosen ones unto Him. Every wind that blows will speed them to their goal. Every wave shall wash them towards their desired haven. Everything that happens shall be overruled to the same end—the gathering of Christ’s saints together unto Him in Glory!

Sometimes you and I lament when Christ’s saints are gathered unto Him by death, but is not this wrong? They must go Home to Christ at some time or other, so why not go when God pleases and as God pleases? I do not know that I would pray for sudden death, though sudden death is, to a Believer in Christ, sudden Glory—but I certainly would not pray that I might not be called home suddenly. So far as I am personally concerned, I would like to have a similar experience to that of good Dr. Beaumont who was preaching the Word on earth, and just as he finished uttering a sentence of his sermon, was singing the praises of God in Heaven! Or an experience like that of another minister, Brother Flood, whom I knew. He had just given out that verse—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode.
I’d leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, My God”—***

when he fell back—for his desire was granted and he had gone from the earthly courts of the Lord’s House up to the seat of God on high! Still, it does not matter how or when the saints are gathered unto Christ—whether by plague, or fever, or long lingering affliction, whether by accident on land or on the sea, or in any other way—they shall all be gathered together unto Him in due time! And when the muster-roll is called at the last, not one will be missing of all those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice!. The great question for all of us is shall we be among them? In order to answer that question, we must ask a few others. Have we entered into personal covenant relationship with God through relying upon Christ’s Sacrifice upon the Cross? Have we repented of sin and trusted in Christ as our own personal Savior? Does He count us among His saints, those who are seeking, by His Grace, to live in righteousness and holiness before Him all our days? If so, then we

may rest assured that we, too, shall be gathered unto Him with all those whom He has redeemed with His most precious blood!

But what am I to say to those who cannot answer these questions satisfactorily? Possibly the tracts I mentioned in the earlier part of my discourse will help to give me a message to them. There may be some people here who have no hope, no good hope, concerning the hereafter. Perhaps you do not even believe in any hereafter! If so, just listen to this little narrative. "Some time ago, there lived in a certain market town a watchmaker, an honest, sober and industrious man, but he was an infidel. He did not believe in the Bible. He said that it was a book that was only fit for old women. As for what some said concerning the terrors of Hell, they never alarmed him—and as for what they said concerning the glories of Heaven, he reckoned they were only fancies or dreams. Suddenly, in the midst of life, he was stricken down and it was soon manifest that he was dying, and dying rapidly. On the day of his death, early in the morning, he began to say, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where!' And then, as rapidly as he could speak, he continued, for the space of twelve or thirteen hours, to say the same words over and over and over again, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where! I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where.' As his strength failed him, his voice became more weak and tremulous, but still his utterance was just the same, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where.' And, at last, he died with those words upon his lips, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where!'"

O My dear Hearers, I do pray that this may not be the dying cry of any one of you, for if it is, the dreadful sequel is given in our Lord's declaration concerning the rich man, "in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." I cannot imagine anything in the whole work of the ministry that is more painful than trying to talk to those who have neglected Christ until the last hours of their lives and who, even then, feel no sorrow for sin, but pass out of this world into the next without the least ray of hope! There is, in my memory, a scene of this character which comes to me very vividly at this moment. Many years ago, when the cholera was raging in London, I was summoned, at three o'clock one morning, to go to a house near London Bridge where a man was very ill. He had been attacked by the cholera and knew that he must die. But although he was a godless, blasphemous man, he could think of no one but me whom he would like to see. So I had to be sent for in hot haste. I went to him, but he could do little more than express his horror at what was before him and his utter despair of any hope of escape. He asked me to pray, and I did so. But before I had finished, he was unconscious and soon he was in the pangs of death. I left him a corpse. I remember that for long afterwards I felt sad and grieved concerning the state of that man's soul. Yet, by nature, we were the children of wrath even as that man was—and but for Divine Grace, we might have spent our last day on earth as he did, in Sabbath-breaking—and our last hour of life in despair. God grant that we may always feel devoutly thankful for the Sovereign Grace that has made

us to differ from others whom once we resembled, at least as far as this—that we were all, alike, the children of wrath!

In the other tract I read about a working man who was passing by an infidel lecture hall. He stepped in, although he was a Christian and, as he entered, someone on the platform, who had the appearance of a gentleman, was saying that it was all nonsense for anyone to say that infidels died a miserable death. He had just been to see one of their number and he could assure them, on the word of a gentleman, that he had died very happily. When the speech was over, the working man asked whether he might be allowed to say something. “Yes,” said the chairman, “certainly you may.” So he rose and said, “I have just heard something that has greatly surprised me—I have heard of an infidel who has died happily. I have never before heard of such a thing as that happening, but as the speaker assured us, on the word of a gentleman, that it is true, I must not question the statement. I am, therefore, under the necessity of admitting that one infidel has died happily, but I feel sure that he must have lived a very miserable life, or else he could not have died so happily. Now I have a dear, loving wife, who makes my home right and cheerful. And when I come back from work, she always receives me with a smiling face and with my meals tastefully prepared. So I am sure that if I had to die and leave her—and to go I know not where—I could not die happily. I have four children—as smiling and happy children as you ever saw—and I love to hear their musical voices and their pretty prattle. But if I had to die and leave them—and to go I know not where—I could not die happily. So the only supposition that I can draw from the life of the man of whom this gentleman has told us is that he and his wife lived a cat-and-dog life, so that he was glad to be free from her at any cost. And that his children must have been so wicked or tiresome that he was glad to get away from them even though he did not know where he was going. My wife and children make me so happy that I do not want to leave them—and the only thing which makes me look forward to death without sorrow is the thought that I am going to a better world than this where there is One who loves me even more than my wife and children do, and where I hope one day to meet my dear ones again, to be parted from them no more forever.”

When I read that tract, I thought that the working man’s reasoning was perfectly sound. And I wish that all of you, dear Friends, had just as good cause as he had to live happily and to die happily! You will have that if you will only trust in the same Savior in whom he trusted! May God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so now! This is the way of salvation. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” He saves all who put their trust in Him! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” All who believe on Him are His chosen ones—His *saints*, as our text calls them—and those who truly trust Him are known by the holiness and graciousness of their lives! They are gathered unto Him, here, as they are, by His

Grace, called out from the mass of mankind and, in God's good time, they shall all be gathered unto Him in that great general assembly and Church of the First-Born which are written in Heaven! May God grant that everyone of us may be there, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50.**

A Psalm of Asaph.

It is mentioned, in the life of Hezekiah, that "the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph, the Seer," so that very likely this Psalm was sung in the Temple after it had been cleansed and reopened for worship. The first part of the Psalm contains a majestic prophecy of the Second Advent.

Verses 1-3. *The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Our God shall come and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.* He came once under the old legal dispensation and then, "there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount...Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon in it fire." And when Christ shall come, in the latter days, with equal splendor, there shall be fire and tempest to swell the pomp of His court.

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.* Heaven shall yield up the blessed who are already there, and earth shall give up those that are alive and remain until Christ's coming. And so "the whole company of the redeemed shall stand in the Presence of their great Lord and Savior when Christ shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe." This is the summons that is to ring out to the heavens above and the earth beneath—

5, 6. *Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge, Himself. Selah.* Now the subject of the Psalm changes, but let not the Doctrine of the Second Advent pass from our thoughts. Christ will surely come again, but are we all prepared to meet Him? Shall we behold that glorious Appearance with joy or with sorrow? When He reigns gloriously with His ancients, shall we share in the splendors of that reign? Lord, call us to Yourself now! Help us to suffer with You now! Help us to bear reproach for You among men, now, and then, though—

***"It does not yet appear
How great we must be made"—***

yet we know that—

***"When we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."***

Now the Lord addresses His own people—

7. *Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God.* Note, then, that with all the faults which Christ can find in His people, He is still their God! All the sins of the saints cannot separate them from Christ. They may blot the indenture, but it is only a copy of the Covenant made by Christ on their behalf—the real title-deeds are in Heaven beyond all risk of loss. Sinner though you are, O child of Israel, yet God is still your God—and all your imperfections, follies and backslidings can never rob you of your eternal interest in Him!

8-13. *I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* The Lord puts a slur upon the Levitical sacrifices in comparison with evangelical offerings. He sets prayer and praise before the blood of bulls or the sacrifices of goats! Yet we are not to understand that God despises the gifts of His people. If you give to God as though He needed your help, He will have none of it! But our gracious God is so condescending that although He needs nothing, He permits His people to bring their thank-offerings and to lay them at His feet. My God, will You accept a gift from *me*? Then I will not be slow to give it to You! Let everyone of us feel in his heart that though God needs nothing from us, yet we need the privilege of giving to Him.

14, 15. *Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the most High; and call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.* [See Sermons #1505, Volume 25—PRAYER TO GOD IN TROUBLE AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE and #1876, Volume 31—ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TEXT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See the three ways of praising God? One is by giving Him your grateful thanksgiving. Banish your murmurings. Sweep away your mistrusts and let your mouth be filled with His praise all the daylong! Then the next way of praising God is by paying your vows unto Him—let your constant prayers and offerings to God prove the gratitude of your heart. And the last and sweetest way of praising God is to call upon Him in the day of trouble. There are many of you who are in trouble at this moment, therefore call upon God! Perhaps you say, "That will benefit me, but how will it glorify Him?" Why, God gets much honor out of hearts that dare to trust Him! If you can cast your burden upon the Lord, you will as much honor Him as angels do when, with veiled faces, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His Glory." We adore His wisdom, His faithfulness, His love, His Grace, His Truth, His power when we believe that in the darkest night He can bring us sudden daylight and that in the ebb tide of our affairs He can bring the floods back again. Christian, honor your God by calling upon Him! With all your difficulties, doubts and

fears, call upon God and He will deliver you, and you shall glorify Him! Now comes another change—

16. *But unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?* Unconverted preachers, unsaved Sunday school teachers—what answer can you give to this question of the Most High?

17-20. *Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My Words behind you. When you saw a thief, then you consented with him and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.* Slander, you see, is put side by side with adultery and theft and, indeed, I do not know whether it is not the worst of the three! You might almost as well cut a man's throat as slander his character. You had better steal his purse than steal his good name. "What shall be given unto you? Or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." There are no coals hot enough to burn slanderous tongues! There are no punishments severe enough for those who slander their own mother's son.

21. *These things have you done and I kept silent.* An amazing thing is that silence of God, that long-suffering with sinners! And another amazing thing is the impudent interpretation which the sinner gives to that silence!

21. *You thought that I was altogether such an One as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.* "I will do what I have not yet done. If you think Me in arrears, I will clear myself with you soon. I will ease Me of My adversaries." When God arises in judgment, He may make it to be a slow work, but He will make it to be a sure work.

22, 23. *Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me: and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.* How blessed, then, is it to praise the Lord both with your lips and with your life!

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

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

GRACIOUS RENEWAL

NO. 490

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 25, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10.***

WE had a joyful meeting last Wednesday evening. As a Church we all met together as a loving family, and it was a sight of the most encouraging kind to see a great host, like the host of God, of Brothers and Sisters, all dwelling together in unity. That solemnly joyful sight suggested to my heart the propriety of addressing you today upon the subject of the renewal of your consecration to Christ. I thought that the season, the annual season when we *all* meet together, would be but a fit and proper opportunity for our giving ourselves over again to Him whose we are, and whom we serve.

In an honored sanctuary in the neighborhood, it is the custom at the early part of the year to have a solemn form of covenant read at communion, when the Church members all give their verbal assent with a solemn “Amen.” There must be something very solemn, and at the same time something very delightful, in the uttered consent of a multitude of persons to the will and law of Christ. Days of annual celebration should be days of solemn dedication.

Dear Friends, there are other occasions when you might very rightly, I think, renew your Covenant with God. *After recovery from sickness*, when, like Hezekiah, you have had a new term of years added to your life, and have risen from the bed of languishing to tread the greensward, and breathe the fresh air. Then should you sing—

***“My life which You have made Your care,
Lord, I devote to You.”***

After any extraordinary deliverance, when your troubles have a pause, when your joys bud forth anew, when after a season of deep depression of spirit you can once again lift up your brow, and bathe it in the light of God—then, again, should you visit the foot of the Cross of Christ—and by the blood that is sprinkled there renew your consecration to your Lord.

Especially will it be incumbent upon you to do this *after any sin*, after any such sin, I mean, as may have grieved the Holy Spirit, or brought dishonor upon the cause of God. Then, like David, repair to your chamber, and, with bitter tears of penitence, look to the hyssop, and the blood which can make you whiter than snow—and again offer yourself unto the Lord Most High as a teacher of sinners—or a singer of His praise. I think, Brothers and Sisters, we should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God, but *our prosperity* should do the same.

If we should ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called, in Oliver Cromwell’s words, “crowning mercies,” then, surely, if He has crowned *us*, we ought also to crown our God. If He has been pleased to

give you a wreath of loving kindnesses and of tender mercies, then bring forth anew all the jewels of the Divine regalia that have been stored in the jewel closet of your heart. And let your God sit upon the throne of your love, arrayed in royal apparel. If we would get good out of our prosperity, we should not need so much adversity.

If we would gather from a kiss all the good it might confer upon us, we should not so often smart under the rod. If we will not gather wisdom from vines and fig trees, we must be taught it with briars and thorns. Our folly makes rods for its own back. Do any of you come here today with hearts leaping for joy? Have you received a valued favor which you little expected? Has the Lord put your feet in a large room? Oh, can you sing of mercies multiplied? Then this is the day to put your hand upon the horns of the altar and say, "Bind me here, my God. Bind me here with cords, even forever."

I may also suggest that there are *certain seasons in life* when this fresh espousal is very comely—in arriving at manhood, at the birth of children, at the death of friends, in passing the anniversaries of our birth, in advancing from strength to gray hairs—we may read anew the memorials of our love. Inasmuch as we need the fulfillment of new promises *from* God, let us give fresh promises *to* God, or, rather, let us offer renewed prayers that the old ones may not be dishonored.

I have known persons who have religiously set apart a certain day in the month, or year, when they would look anew over their obligations, survey their state before God, and determine to be the Lord's forever. Let us commend their zeal, if we do not imitate their precision. Well, Beloved, I suggest—and I am sure such a joyous act as this will never be out of season—I suggest that this morning, if God shall enable us, we renew our vows unto Him.

These were the thoughts which possessed my heart. But there was another which overrode them all, and prevented my following out my desire. You see, my text deals not with *renewing* our vows before God, nor with our proclaiming anew in the courts of the Lord's house our surrender to Him—no, it goes deeper than all this—"Renew a right spirit within me." Surely, if the Lord will do this, then our consecration will be renewed. If the fountain is filled, then the streams must flow. If the sun is made to shine, then the plants must bud. If the sap within the tree flows vigorously, then the fruit without will be plentiful.

Perhaps we have done well to lay the axe at the root of the tree by going to the very soul and core of this matter. We have our hand upon the lever now—it is a dead weight when a man tries to renew his own vows—but now we have the lever under it. If we cry to God in prayer, "Renew a right spirit within me," we shall accomplish our end none the less certainly, even though we do not so much preach upon the subject of consecration, as upon the power of God the Holy Spirit to renew our spirit and bring us afresh to Himself.

Come then, Beloved. I want, not so much to preach, as to lead you now to the footstool of Divine mercy in humble, earnest entreaty—that the Lord may renew within you a constant spirit and invigorate the life of your piety. For this there are several reasons, which we will give at once.

I. And, first, a cogent motive of desiring the renewal of our graces is to be found in THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR IT, IF WE WOULD PERSEVERE. That we need renewal is very clearly seen when we reflect that *all created things need it*. Nothing that God has made is self-existent. Self-existence belongs exclusively to the, "I AM THAT I AM." Even the tall archangel, who stands nearest the eternal Throne, can only claim a borrowed existence which is immortal only in the immortality of God.

The very mountains crumble, rocks dissolve, and marble wears away. Those old rivers that have even been adored by idolaters for their antiquity, still need to be refreshed with the melted snows from the mountain's brow. It is rumored of our mother earth herself, that her soil is losing its former fruitfulness. Certain it is that the most fertile fields yield no perpetual harvests unless the labor of man fertilizes the soil. All things on earth need, perpetually, to be renewed.

"You renew the face of the year," said the Psalmist, for in winter earth sleeps like a wearied giant, as if gray with the decay of age, the snow covers its slumbering head. In winter the world shows none of her youthful verdure. All her beauty lies buried beneath the sod. Are not all things hushed and quiet in winter's bedchamber of life? But spring comes leaping on. The song of birds arouses the slumbering earth and she awakes refreshed.

But were it not for the renewing of delicious spring, would not earth become everywhere as intolerable as at her frozen poles? Nor here, alone, is refreshing needed, for doubtless the upper spheres require fresh fuel for their ardent flames. The orb of day shines in radiance lent him by the great Father of Lights, albeit that he is, in Milton's noble phrase, "of this great world both eye and soul." That eye must soon grow dim with age, and that soul must lose its overflowing life, if the all-filling God refuses His ever-flowing aid.

No created thing stands by itself. It is only an infernal conceit that anything can be without the great Creator's perpetual Presence. And will you lend your soul to this blasphemy of Hell? If your piety can live without God, it is not of Divine creating. It lives not but in your imagination. It is but a dream—for if God has begotten it, it would wait upon Him as the flowers wait for the dew.

Moreover, this Truth of God is especially applicable to those creatures of God *which are endowed with life*. Those without life need preserving—but the truth is not so clearly seen in their case as in living objects. But life, if God would sustain it, must often, no, constantly, receive renewal. What animal can live without the refreshment of sleep and food? Job's war horse, whose neck is clothed with thunder, must humble himself to his stall and to his provender.

The wild asses of the wilderness, whose bands the Lord has loosed, have the range of the mountains for their pasture. The unicorn abides not by the crib, neither will he harrow the valleys for the farmer—yet he grows weary and lies down to rest. Behemoth, whose bones are as bars of iron, eats grass as an ox, and leviathan, which makes the deep to boil like a pot, whose eyes are like the eyelids of the morning, receives the breath in his nostrils each hour from his Maker.

Even the trees, those motionless things, which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their fires with labor—these must drink of the rain of Heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap fresh drawn from the earth. You and I, having life, cannot expect that it should be sustained without renewal from God. Our natural life needs constantly its bread and water. The strongest man that ever lived must soon yield to the weakness of death, unless he were reinvigorated by nourishment.

Sampson himself must have a cleft opened in the rock that he may drink, for though he has slain the Philistines, yet will he perish unless his thirst is quenched. Assuredly it must be so in spiritual life, or else all the analogies of nature must be reversed. You must drink again of the Living Water. You must feed anew upon the Living Bread. What mean those texts in Scripture that speak of waiting upon the Lord, and renewing our strength? What can be the meaning of, “renewing our strength like the eagle’s”? And what could be David’s meaning when, in his matchless pastoral, he sings, “You restore my soul,” if we do not need full often the times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord?

But I need not travel so far to fetch my arguments in *your own inner consciousness*. My Brothers and Sisters, you are aware that your piety requires constant renovation. What downward tendencies the thoughtful must perceive in themselves. We could travel downhill to Hell how easily, but upwards to Heaven with what difficulty! Downward, without a hand to help. But upward, no hand less than the Omnipotent must speed our course. Do you not find, Christians, that as we men must eat, so we must pray? Is there not a vacuum in your heart and a pang within it, if you have neglected supplication?

Do you not discover that as men must breathe, so you must exercise faith in Christ, for if your faith is suspended for a moment, there is a suffocation of all your hope, your joy, your love? No—of your very life! Have you not found that, as it is necessary to repair the waste of the body by the frequent meal, so you must repair the waste of the soul by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances? I will not give a farthing for your experience—it cannot be the experience of a child of God—unless you discover a hungering and a thirsting in your inner man.

And what are these but proofs that renewal is wanted—signs by which your new nature sets forth to you a secret necessity which moves it to these outward longings? Oh, how dull our love becomes if we go for a little time without a sight of Christ! How our faith flickers if we are for a little season absent from the Cross! How depressed are our graces when means are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are who live without the diligent use of the Word of God and secret prayer! You *know* you want renewal! You *feel* you do. Need I say more?

Moreover, if you do not perceive this very apparent Truth of God, let me remind you that *you may be made to see it, and that terribly, by some surprising sin*. Just as this prayer was forced out of David by his adultery with Bathsheba, and his bloody murder of Uriah, so you—yes, *you*, my

Brothers and Sisters, saints before the Lord—yes, you, Preacher—you may be made to know it, by being suddenly overtaken in a fault, to your own shame forever. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

There are north winds in the hand of the Almighty which He has not yet permitted to come forth upon men. But when the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe, woe to the tree that has not sucked up fresh sap and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. There are tempests yet to come forth from the secret treasuries of God. If they come, woe, woe to the mariners that have not yet strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven.

Without perpetual restoration, I say, we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of Hell, or the stern afflictions of Heaven, nor even for the strife within us. If you suffer the good to grow weaker, the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over you. And so may you have a sad downfall, a painful desolation—and a lamentable disgrace may follow from your neglect of the renewing of your spirit before God.

Once more, here, and though this reason may not seem so forcible as the last, the wise man will understand it, and see that there is yet mighty power therein, “*That unconscious backsliding from God, which is, perhaps, even more dangerous, though not so disgraceful as open sin. That unconscious apostasy from God, I say, will certainly be upon you, unless you have seasons of renewal. Does not Hosea speak of Ephraim as having gray hairs here and there upon him, but he knew it not?*”

Oh, Beloved, I do proclaim—I speak not in any severity against God’s saints—but I do believe that this is *the sin in the Church of God at the present moment—that the most of us have gray hairs here and there and know it not.* We walk so carelessly before God. we do not make such heart-work of religion as we should. Indifference, I find, to be my own temptation. I do not know that I am assaulted with certain other sins which prevail over other men, but this indifference I find to be harder to meet than even a temptation to lust or covetousness.

I do believe that the Church, to a great extent, is just now where Bunyan’s Pilgrim was when he went through the Enchanted Ground and the air was heavy, and the Pilgrim had much ado to keep himself from sleeping. The Church has rest nowadays. These are times of quietness. And therefore we are in danger of being given to slumber. Perhaps it is a “ruthless legend that the holidays of Capua ruined the veterans of Hannibal,” but if it is a legend in his case, it is a fact in ours.

The peace and quietness of the Church in these calm times bring on an idleness, a dullness, an indifference, a lethargy as deadly and as damnable as outrageous sin itself. And unless the Holy Spirit arouses us and constrains us to come back again to the simple earnestness of our first love, we shall slip and slide and discover not how low we have fallen till out of the depths we have to cry in agony, “Renew a right spirit within me.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, for these reasons, I do persuade you, and therein I do persuade myself—let us take with us words. Let us turn unto the Lord. Let us beg Him to heal our backslidings, and to receive us graciously. Let us entreat Him to be as the dew unto our souls that we may

grow as the lily and cast out our roots as Lebanon. In the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations let us pray, “Turn You us unto You, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old.”

If the crown is fallen from our head because we have sinned, let us seek the Lord with deep humiliation of soul. If the joy of our heart has ceased, if our dance is turned into mourning, let us return unto Him from whom we have erred, and renew our marriage covenant. “Thus says the Lord, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals.” My Brothers and Sisters, if thus He remembers *us*, let us remember *Him*, and offer this supplication, “Renew a right spirit within me.” This brings me now to a second method of reasoning with you.

II. Secondly, let us pray the brief but very forcible prayer of the text because of our OWN POWERLESSNESS TO RENEW OUR OWN SPIRITS. It is a doctrine acknowledged by all orthodox Christians, and confessed in some form or other by all Believers, that without the Spirit of God we are unable to do anything aright. Nevertheless, I question if any of us have given our full consent to the doctrine of human inability in its fullest bearings. “Without Me you can do nothing,” is a text upon which our life is the sermon—but until its very close it is probable we shall not fully fathom the depth of our own weakness.

Brethren, when a ship is in sailing order and in good condition, she still cannot speed on her journey of herself! Even though the sails are spread, there is no hope of her making port unless the wind shall blow. If that is so, how much more is it true that if that ship leaks, if the worm has begun to eat her timbers, or if by grazing upon a rock she has done serious damage to her bottom, it is impossible that she should repair her own damage! If her sails are tattered, how shall she mend them? If her masts are strained, if any injury whatever is done to her tackling, how shall she be able to recover herself?

Brethren, you can see the analogy. If the child of God, even when in a healthy state, needs to cry for the Divine Spirit, how much more when he has fallen under spiritual decays, or has grievously backslidden, does he need the Divine hand of the Mighty Carpenter to set him right! As for ungodly men, the analogy might be pushed still farther if that were in the subject of this morning. If the ship built and manned cannot sail without the wind, how much less could the trees of the forest hew themselves, convey themselves to the shipwright’s yard, fashion themselves into timbers, keel, beam, and mast—and then arrange themselves into a ship and launch themselves upon the sea!

Yet even this were less a miracle than for an unconverted man to regenerate himself. But we must return to our point, that the Christian, when his heart is out of order, has no power to put himself right again without the blessed Spirit. The disease of the living must be cured by the same Voice which removes the sleep of the dead. He who said, “Lazarus come forth!” is needed to say, “Take up your bed and walk!” Indeed, if you will think for a moment, you will find the work of renewal to be a stern work. It is called in Scripture—*conversion*.

Now, in conversion the same power is exercised that was put forth in raising Jesus Christ from the dead. What power, then, must be required

in the renewal of a soul! Besides, to renew a soul *is to go directly opposite to nature*. What power is necessary to make water leap uphill, to suspend the waterfall in midair, to compel a flame to blaze in the midst of the depths of the sea? Yet such a power as this is absolutely needed to reverse the efforts of the flesh, and to make our old carnal corruptions, which had begun to get the mastery, resign it once more.

The strong man armed keeps the house till a stronger than he binds him. And sin, when it once prevails in a Believer, would continue to prevail unless the Mighty One who first broke our chains shall come to set us free. Do you not know, Beloved, that in the renewal of our spirits *every Divine Grace is needed that was nestled for our first conversion?* We needed *repentance* in order to our first salvation—we certainly need it now, that we may be renewed. We wanted *faith* that we might come to Christ at first—only the like Grace can bring us to Jesus now.

We wanted a word from the Most High, a word from the lips of the Loving One, to end our fears then—we shall soon discover, when under a sense of present sin, that we need it now. No man can be renewed, I say, without as real and true an exercise of the Holy Spirit's energy as he felt at first, because the work is as great. The same Graces are needed, and flesh and blood are as much in the way now as ever they were. Let your powerlessness, O Christian, be an argument to make you pray earnestly to your God.

Remember, David, when he felt himself powerless, did not fold his arms or close his lips, but he hastened to the Mercy Seat with, "Renew a right spirit within me." Let not the doctrine that you, unaided can do nothing, make you sleep. Rather let it be a goad in your side to drive you with an awful earnestness to the great Fountain from which all streams must flow to satisfy your wants and plead it, plead it as though you pleaded for your very life—as though you pleaded for your only son—"Lord, renew a right spirit within me."

Nor pray this falsely. Prove that you mean it by going forth to use the means. Continue much in prayer. Live much upon the Word of God. Attend constantly a soul-satisfying Ministry. Kill the lusts that have driven your Lord from you. Be careful to watch over the future uprisings of sin—otherwise your prayers cannot be sincere. The man who prays to God to do a thing must use the means through which God works. He is a hypocrite who asks the Lord to visit him, and then nails up his door, or asks for life, and then refuses to eat.

The Lord has his own appointed ways, and sitting by the wayside you will be ready when He passes by. Oh, continue, then, in all those blessed ordinances which will foster and nourish your dying Graces. And strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. Knowing that all the power must be from Him, cease not to cry, "Renew a right spirit within me."

III. But we change our note and come to a third point. I would the Holy Spirit might honor the word this morning, and I should look upon it as no mean privilege if I might stir up any of you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, truly today to come afresh to the Fountain filled with Blood, and to renew again your entire surrender and resignation of yourselves to

your Lord. The argument I use shall be found in THE BLESSED RESULTS WHICH ARE SURE TO FOLLOW, if the Lord shall renew your spirit.

Think *what joy you will experience!* There are some things, Beloved, that perhaps may need to be renewed, but they would bring no joy. The physician may require you to receive a new bottle of medicine. It may be possible that an operation once performed may have lost its potency. Painful though it is, it may be required to be performed again. But that of which I speak has no pain to the child of God. It is in itself so sweet that it ought to tempt you to perform it.

What is it, my Brothers and Sisters? Is it not the renewal of a *brotherly* covenant, just as when Jonathan and David went into the woods and renewed their covenant? I do not believe it was a sorrowful hour to Jonathan. I can imagine that David shed tears when he parted from his beloved friend, tears of deep affection, perhaps, but oh, with what joy did they clasp each other in the woods! With what true love did they make a covenant when Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

The prince stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David. And he even gave his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And surely you will not object to renew your embrace of your David today! Can it be a hard matter to you, once more, to go without the camp bearing His reproach, to clasp the Man, once again who is better to you than all the treasures of Egypt? Besides, there is a sweeter figure. The Covenant we have with Christ is a *marriage* Covenant.

I believe in Sweden it is common when a happy pair have been wedded for five-and-twenty years to have what they call, "A silver wedding." And if they should be spared to old age, until their children's children are round about them, on the fiftieth year, they have, "A golden wedding." Who would not wish to have a repetition of the happy day! Let us celebrate today, dear Friends, a silver wedding with the Christ whom we married years ago. And oh, we will wait awhile longer and anticipate our golden wedding, in the year of jubilee, when we shall see Him as He is and be like He is.

What? Will you not give Him the kiss that is the token of continued affection? Do you refuse to give Him fresh pledges of *your* love, which is the fruit of *His* everlasting love to you? Why, the thing is so joyous that I cannot refrain from crying, "Let the marriage bells be rung again! Bring forth the wedding dainties once more, and let us sit at the table of the marriage festival!" Jesus, we do embrace You! We are Yours, it is happiness, it is Heaven, it is bliss superlative to renew our vows to You and to receive fresh tokens of Your regard to us.

Do you remember, Beloved, that in our early days, besides having an abundance of joy, how full of heavenly light our Graces were, and how real everything appeared to our faith at the first? Now if we can have our spirit renewed, and made it as it was at first, why, then we shall have back the same satisfactory reality in our emotions. I speak for one. I know that when my eyes first looked to Christ, He was a very real Christ to me. And when my burden of sin rolled from off my back, it was a real pardon, and

a real release from sin to me. And when that day I said for the first time, "Jesus Christ is mine," it was a real possession of Christ to me.

When I went up to the sanctuary then in that early dawn of youthful piety, every song was really a Psalm, and when there was a prayer, oh, how I followed every word! It was prayer, indeed! And so was it, too, in silent quietude, when I drew near to God. Oh it was no mockery, no routine, no matter of mere duty. It was a real talking with my Father who is in Heaven. And oh, how I loved my Savior Christ then! I can talk about loving Him now, and methinks if He said to me as He did to Simon Peter—"Do you love me?" I would dare to answer, "You know all things, You know that I love You."

But still, my consciousness of loving Christ is not always as vivid, now, as it once was. Why, then I was quite sure I loved Him, I know I could have burned for Him, or suffered anything for His dear sake. Was it not so with you? Well, Beloved, if we will come now, and put our hand within His hands afresh, which will be the effect of His renewing our spirit, then we shall have back again all the fullness and reality that distinguished our early, new-born piety. Oh, how blessed this will be!

Moreover, at that time *how active all our Graces were!* Do you not remember? Why, you had no doubts then, your faith was so strong. You had no lukewarmness then, your zeal was so burning. You remember, some of you, when first the Lord met with you? Perhaps it was in this house, or in the Surrey Music Hall. You would stand in the crowd till you were almost ready to drop, but there were no sleepy eyes, no dull, lethargic spirits. Oh, how you used to drink in the Word of God! It was marrow and fatness to you when you fed upon it.

If anybody would have bribed you to stay away from a Prayer Meeting or from a weeknight lecture, they might have offered the world, but it would have been a bribe too low. But now, too often, if there is a little discomfort in getting in the gate, if you happen not to get the very seat you want, or if you happen to be seated uncomfortably, or in a cramped position—you cannot worship as once you did. I know it may be the fault of the minister—perhaps he does not preach as he did in your younger days—when you were first converted. That is possible, I suppose. Still, I think it is more likely that you have lost the ears you once had, or that your ears are become dull of hearing.

I think it is more likely that your eyes have lost their quickness of sight, or that your hearts may be less tender and sensitive. Certainly your Graces are not in such active exercise as they were. Well now, if we come back to our Master, we shall have our youthful force and vigor renewed. To my mind it is always a pleasant sight to see lambs skipping in the meadows, because it shows they have more strength than they well know what to do with—and so they do a great many things that are improper for sheep to do. What odd, fantastic gestures they have!

It is even so with young Christians. They will often do many rash things just because they have an excess of liveliness. They have such a full tide of love and zeal that they do not know how to put it into action. Young life demands exercise. O that some of you who are old in years, and others of you upon whose Graces there are signs of decay, could but recover some

of this juvenile effervescence! Ah, and you can have it. In the answer to this prayer you will find it, "Renew a right spirit within me."

A subject like this grows upon me while speaking of it. I cannot doubt that you will find it equally enlarge upon you in thinking it over. But on no account let us forget the practical ends that ought to be kept in view. Dear Friends, *your usefulness to others* will be increased if the Lord should graciously visit you with times of refreshing. You want the renewal of your own spirit in your Sunday school class, in the district where you distribute tracts, in the little room where you preach—or in your family, with your own children. You want to have more Divine Grace in your own hearts that you may have power with them. Well, you must get this by coming anew to your Lord.

Ah, and some of you came up here this morning *complaining of the world and its trials*. The world is very hard with you, and troubles are multiplied. How little weight the sorrows of this life will have in the scale, if balanced against the joy of your heart when the Lord renews your spirit. What did you care when you were first converted, whether you were rich or poor? It seemed no matter to you. Like Peter, you left the net, and the fishes, that you might get at your Lord. Like the woman at the well, you left the water pot that you might go and tell others that you had seen a Man who told you all things that ever you did.

Well, now, if your former piety comes back, if the zeal of your young days shall be restored to you, the world will be just as much a trifle to you, and you will tread it beneath your feet with just as much heroic contempt as you did when first you received the Gospel, not in word only, but in power. Since all these blessed results will follow, let me therefore beseech you—by your love to your own souls, by your care to grow in Divine Grace, by your anxiety to prosper in the Lord's way, and by your interest in the welfare of others—pray with me this prayer, "Renew a right spirit within me."

And You, O Lord, hear it in Heaven, Your dwelling place. Let Your eyes be open unto the supplication of Your servants, to hearken unto us in all that we call for unto You.

IV. One other argument only, where many might be given. Do not GOSPEL OBLIGATIONS irresistibly constrain us by the means of this, our prayer, to renew our Covenant with God?

Legal motives I would disdain to urge you with. But Gospel motives I may, and must. Did you do right in giving your soul to Christ at first? Was it a mistake? Was it the effect of a juvenile excitement, misled by some fanatical speech? No, you cannot say that. You believe it was the best thing you ever did in your life. You have often regretted you never did it before. There are a thousand things you repent of, but this one thing, that you gave yourself to God, is a subject of perpetual congratulations with you.

Very well, then, *if it was well to do it then, do it now*. If you would not make out yourself to have been a fool, and your faith to have been a lie. If you would not before the eyes of men and of angels declare that the whole thing is a farce—this day, even this day—let us go into Gilgal, and there let us renew the kingdom before the Lord. Oh, once again do what you did at the first—if it were a wise, if it were a good thing.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, *remember how often Jesus renewed His Covenant with His people*. It was not enough to have spoken it in the ear of Adam, and whispered it to the heart of Eve. Enoch must testify of it. Abraham must understand it on the plains of Mamre, as Noah adores the time, when floating securely in the ark. There must be a renewed revelation to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and to Joshua. Symbols of the renewed Covenant must be seen in the tabernacle, and in the temple. Each day, each week, each month, each year, each jubilee must give some fresh form of Christ setting His seal anew to the love which He bore to His people and His purpose to redeem His Church by blood.

Does Christ do this, and will you blush to do it? Oh, do as Jesus did to you—as you would that “the Man” should do to you, do you also unto Him. And moreover, *He has renewed His Covenant with you*. Come, I want you to look back at your old diaries. You have not burned your pocket-books, in which you set down in some mysterious marks that others could not read, some mementoes of your Tabors, your Mizars and the hills of the Hermonites. I want you to look back. Has not Christ renewed His Covenant with some of us many times?

My soul looks back and sees some joyous seasons, some days marked with the red Dominical letter among the days of my history, when He said to me afresh, “You are Mine. I have redeemed you by blood.” It may be it was on a bed of sickness. Perhaps it was when you were walking in the streets. It may be it was in a season of holy retirement, or it may be in a moment when you were brought down to the earth. Oh, He has renewed His Covenant with us many and many a time with such sweet reassuring words that our soul, which was tired of this world, has been willing to stay her three-score years and ten, because her Husband had visited her.

You have stayed me with flagons. You have comforted me with apples. You have made me sick with love. Your left hand has been under my head, and Your right hand did embrace me. Therefore will I renew my vows unto You even as You did unto me!

Yet farther, dear Friends, and I shall not stay longer than this, though it is a very wide field. Let us be moved today to renew our Covenant with Christ, or rather to ask Him to renew our spirit, because *every Covenant transaction binds us to it*. You believe in the doctrine of election. We do not blush to preach it, and you love to hear it. What does election mean? It means that God has chosen you. Very well, if it is so, then you will acknowledge it anew today, by choosing His way and Word. You believe in a special and efficacious redemption, that you were redeemed from among men. Very well, then, you are not your own, you are bought with a price.

You believe in effectual calling. You know that you were called out. If it is so, recognize your distinction and separateness as a sacred people set apart by God. You believe that this distinction in you is perpetual, for you will persevere to the end—if you are to be God’s forever, be His today. And are you not looking for a Heaven from which selfishness shall be banished? Are you not expecting a Heaven where Glory shall consist in being wholly absorbed in Christ? Well then, this day, by all that is coming, as well by all that is cast, let your soul be bound as with cords that cannot be snapped to the altar of your God.

Backsliders, you that have gone astray, pray this prayer today. He bids you pray it, and He will, therefore, answer it. The text in the margin reads “renew a constant spirit within me.” You have been obstinate, wayward, unstable, fickle. Poor Backslider, He has put this prayer here for you—“Renew a constant spirit within me.” My Brothers and Sisters, the Church has had to cast you out, but if still there is a desire in your soul toward God, return! Return! Return! Your Father waits to meet you. The Church, your mother, longs for you. Your Brothers and Sisters desire to see your face again.

Say it, and we will say it with you, “Renew a right spirit within me,” and it shall be done. And you, Christians, that have not backslidden, you, my Brothers and Sisters, whose heads are covered with the gray honors of long service, offer today this prayer, for you need to pray it as well as the youngest of us, “Renew a right spirit within me.” Ask the Master who has kept you in your youth to preserve you till, in life’s latest hour, YOU bow, “and bless in death a bond so dear.”

You strong men and fathers, who are struggling with the world, battling day by day with business and its cares, forget not your God through being mindful of many things. Today, in this little pause in the noise and turmoil and strife of the world’s bustle, come now and renew your vows. You young men and maidens, you little ones in God’s Israel, whose portion it is to be the lambs carried in His bosom, you, also, say, “Renew You, O God, a right spirit within me.”

Come, renew the dedication so lately made. You that are brought, like Samuels, to God’s house, that you may wear the vestments of prophets before you wear the garments of manhood—give yourselves anew to the Lord. Let your youthful voices, so full of sweet music, unbroken as yet to the deeper bass which the world’s care is sure to give them by-and-by, sing unto the Lord, and let this be your cry—“Lord, I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaiden, You have loosed my bonds!”

May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, so dwell in us that each of us may renew our vows, through His renewing a right spirit within us. Amen.

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

A MOST NEEDFUL PRAYER CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 954

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not
Your Holy Spirit from me.”
Psalm 51:11.***

THIS Psalm is beyond all others a photograph of penitent David. You have probably seen that interesting slab of stone which bears on its surface indications of the fall of raindrops in a primeval shower—this Psalm preserves the marks of David's teardrops for the inspection and instruction of succeeding generations. Or what if I change the figure and borrow another from an Oriental fable? They said of old that pearls were formed by drops of spring rain falling into shells upon the shores of the sea. So here, the drops of David's repentance are preserved in inspired Scripture as precious, priceless pearls.

This Psalm is as full of meaning as of tenderness. I know not how large a literature has gathered around it, but certainly writers of all creeds and ages have used their pens to illustrate it—and there is room for as many more. It is a perfectly inexhaustible Psalm. Its deep shaft of sorrowful humiliation leads to veins of golden ore. The stones of it are the place of sapphires.

We shall confine ourselves, this morning, to this one verse—not with any prospect of being able to bring out all its meaning, but rather hoping to make use of it—and to find produced in ourselves a measure of the feeling which it so solemnly expresses. If we should be made to drink into its spirit, and then to pour out our hearts at the feet of our Redeemer, it will be an unspeakable blessing. We shall use the text, first, in its evident sense as the utterance of a penitent saint. Secondly, we shall employ it, as I think it may be used, as the cry of an anxious Church. And then, thirdly, but in a very modified sense, we shall put it into the mouths of awakened, but as yet unsaved souls.

I. First, then, in its largest, widest, and primitive sense, we must regard this verse as THE CRY OF A PENITENT CHILD OF GOD. “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” This will certainly be fit language for any child of God here who has fallen into gross sin. I trust, my Brothers and Sisters, this may not be your case, but if it should be, hesitate not when you have fallen into David's sin, if you feel David's repentance, to offer David's prayer, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

Backsliding Christian, you may yet return—there are pardons for sins of deepest dye. The Lord will heal your broken bones, and restore unto you the joy of His salvation. But probably far more of us will have an equal necessity to utter this supplication on account of gradual inward backsliding from the former closeness of our walk with God. One great sin, when committed, startles the soul into repentance.

But a continuation of sin will be found to be even more dangerous. Though no one of the company of our transgressions may be a peculiarly striking iniquity, yet the whole together may produce an equally lamentable result upon the soul. White ants will devour a carcass as surely and as speedily as a lion. Many threads of silk twisted together may hold a man as fast as one band of iron.

Come, let us consider. Many of us have been saved by Divine Grace, and not barely saved, but we have been made to walk in the light of God's Countenance. We have been somewhat like Daniel, men greatly beloved and highly favored. Now, have we acted in conformity with such distinguishing mercy? Have we manifested a holy jealousy such as Divine love ought to produce in us? Must not some here confess that their love has by degrees grown cold, or at least lukewarm? Must not many of us acknowledge that we have been very carnal, so as to have been overjoyed with worldly prosperity, or overly dampened with worldly adversity?

Must we not acknowledge, many of us, that we have been slothful in the Master's service? Are there not some among you who for the last few months have done little or nothing for the Church and Truth of Christ? You were once diligent in your Master's business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But that has gone—your former zeal and fidelity have departed from you—unstable as water, you do not now excel. With this there has crept over some hearts a listlessness in prayer, a want of enjoyment in reading the Word, a deadness towards spiritual things, a carelessness of walk, a carnal security of spirit. Dr. Watts' verse might suit some of you sadly well—

***“In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise.
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”***

Now, in such a case, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are conscious of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. If you are obliged to confess that the former days were better than now, and to admit that the consolations of the Lord are small with you—I do, in deep and anxious sympathy with your condition—exhort you to use from your heart the language of the Psalmist, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

You will perceive that a soul which can really pray thus has life—true spiritual life—still struggling within. An ungodly man does not ask that he may abide in nearness to God. Rather, he would say, “Where shall I flee from Your Presence?” He does not seek for God's Spirit. He is quite con-

tent that the evil spirit should rule him, and that the spirit of this world should be predominant in him.

But here is life, struggling, panting, crushed, painful life—but life for all that. The higher spiritual life which sighs after God. I have seen in the corner of the garden a little fire covered up with many damp autumn leaves. I have watched its feeble smoke, and known thereby that the fire still lived and was fighting with the damp which almost smothered it. So, here, these desires and sighs and cries are as so much smoke, indicating the Divine fire within. “Cast me not away from Your Presence,” shows a soul that loves God’s Presence. “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me,” reveals a heart that desires to be under the dominion of that Spirit yet more completely.

Here are signs of life, though they may appear to be as indistinct and doleful as hollow groans far underground—such as have been heard from men buried alive—voices from the sepulcher, choked and ghostly, but telling of life in the charnel house, grappling with death, and crying out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Let us look at these words closely, since I have shown you how applicable they are to us, and how they indicate spiritual life. I think when David used them, he may have looked back in his mind to that portion of sacred history with which he was conversant.

He remembered when Adam and Eve, having rebelled against their Maker, were driven out from God’s Presence, when the cherubim with flaming sword blocked the gate of Eden’s blighted garden. “My God,” he seems to say, “I, too, have offended. Your Presence is my Paradise, my Eden, all else is wilderness to me—barren, thorn-bearing wilderness. O drive me not out! Cast me not away from Your Presence! Let me but know You love me and I shall be in Eden. Let me but know that I am still Your child, Your favored one, and I will find in that sweet assurance my Paradise, my all. Let me be a courtier in Your palace, or even a doorkeeper in Your house, and I will be content. “But from Your Presence banish me not, else do You wither all my joys.”

Did he think of Cain, too, and was his mind so distressed that he was half afraid lest he should become like that marked man who went out from the Presence of the Lord to be a wanderer and a vagabond, and find from then on no rest for the sole of his feet? Did he feel that if he were exiled from God’s Presence he would be just as wretched as the accursed Cain, himself? Did the thought of that first manslayer put an emphasis into the prayer, “Cast me not away from Your Presence”?

Do you think he remembered Pharaoh, too, in that memorable night when the cloud that imaged the Presence of Jehovah came down between Israel and Egypt, and the dark side of it was towards Pharaoh? For God indignantly turned His back upon the haughty king, while His face shone lovingly upon His chosen, but afflicted people. Did he mean by our text to say, “Lord, turn not Your back on *me*. Cause not such trouble and confusion in my soul as ensued in Egypt’s hosts when the night of Your wrath fell on it. O cast me not away from Your Presence”?

Is it possible that the penitent monarch, while penning this Psalm, thought of Samson, too, and therefore uttered the latter part of the verse, “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me”? Did he remember the strongman who could tear a lion as though it were a kid when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, or smite the Philistines hip and thigh till he piled them up in heaps when God was with him—but who, when his locks had been shorn, and the Spirit was gone—was ignominiously bound, and with blinded eyes was made to do a mill horse’s work?

Did he think of the hero of Gaza and say, “My God, take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Leave me not to be the sport of my enemies. Cast me not off as one whom You can no longer employ for high and honorable service. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me”? Or is it not very likely that if he thought of all these, yet his eyes were peculiarly fixed upon one between whom and himself there had been a very close relation? I mean Saul, his predecessor on the throne. That man had been chosen to rule God’s people Israel, but he proved rebellious, and he was cast away from God’s Presence, so that God would not hear him in the hour of distress.

No Urim and Thummim would give him a Divine response. No Prophet would regard him. No priest could present for him acceptable sacrifices. He was cast away from God’s Presence, and the Spirit was finally gone from him. Even that ordinary measure of the Spirit which he had once enjoyed was gone. Saul was once among the Prophets, but we find him by-and-by among the witches. Saul had lost all prudence in the council chamber, all success in the battlefield. The voice of Him by whom kings reign had gone forth against him, and broken his scepter.

“Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.” All this David remembered with a shudder, and his heart said to him, “What? Shall the son of Jesse be like the son of Kish? Shall the second anointed of Samuel be like the first, of whom the Lord said, ‘It repents Me that I have set up Saul to be king’”? He became overwhelmed with dreadful apprehension and turned to the Lord with a bitter cry, “Oh, can it be, my God? Shall I also be cast away from Your Presence, and Your Spirit taken from me?” He bows himself in agonizing prayer with this as his petition, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

Give me your patient attention, you who love the Lord, while I try to give you many reasons why such a prayer as this should arise out of the depths of *your* hearts, and leap from *your* lips. As for the first petition of the text, “Cast me not away from Your Presence,” my Brethren, we have need to present it, for God’s Presence is to us our comfort amid affliction. He is “a very present help in trouble.” It is our greatest delight—of all our true joys it is the source and sum. We call Him by that name, “God our exceeding joy.”

The Lord’s Presence is our strength. God with us is our banner of victory. When He is not with us we are weaker than water, but in His might we are Omnipotent. His Presence is our sanctification. By beholding the Glory of the Lord we become like He. Communion with God has a trans-

forming power upon us. This, too, is our highest glory—angels have no brighter honor. And this shall be our Heaven hereafter—to dwell in the immediate and unveiled Presence of the Lord in His own Palace forever.

I cannot, however, dwell at length on this first part of the text, and therefore I have summarized the reasons for its use. But the second I shall ask your attention to in greater detail. “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” Remember, my Brethren, it was the Holy Spirit who first of all regenerated us. If we have, indeed, been born again from above, our new birth was by the Holy Spirit. “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” are we made this day spiritual men. If, therefore, we have not the Spirit, or it is possible that the Spirit is taken from us, the very essence of our spiritual life is gone. We are utterly dead, we are no longer numbered with the living people of the living God.

The Holy Spirit is not to us a luxury, but a *necessity*. We must have the Spirit of God or we live not at all in a spiritual sense. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. Without the supernatural work of this Divine Person upon our nature we are not numbered with the family of God at all. Remember, my dear Friends, that into the Holy Spirit you and I, when we professed our faith in Jesus, were baptized. We were immersed “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And this day, without the Holy Spirit, you and I are fraudulent professors, baptized deceivers, and arrant hypocrites.

If we were not, indeed, baptized into the Holy Spirit, how dare we be baptized into the outward symbol? As he who, if an unworthy communicant, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, even so does the unworthy participant in Baptism. This day we are bearing a false profession, we wear a fictitious name, we are as those who said they were Jews and were not, but did lie. We number ourselves with the people of God, but if we have not the Spirit we shall at last be numbered with the castaways. See to this, I pray you, and O may the preacher see to this himself!

Remember, too, that the Spirit of God is to each one of us the Spirit of adoption. “You have not received,” says the Apostle, “the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Without the Spirit of God, then, we have no Spirit of adoption. We have lost that best of all blessings, the sonship, which places us in possession of all the treasures of Heaven as joint-heirs with Christ.

In the wilderness it was the sonship of our Lord which Satan assaulted when he tempted the Savior. “If You are the Son of God,” said he. Christ the Lord, however, stood fast upon this point and was not moved—and therefore He conquered. Let anything come between us and the distinct recognition of our sonship towards God and we are undone. Lord, if it so pleases You, suffer Satan to rob me of all my goods, as Job was deprived of all his treasures. And let the desire of my eyes be taken from me, and my eyes, themselves, no more behold the sweet light of day.

But “take not Your Holy Spirit from me,” for then my very relation to You would vanish from my heart. While I can say, “My God, my Father,” I

have enough, though all else is gone. But if You are no Father to me, or I have no Spirit of adoption towards You, then I am undone, indeed. "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," is a necessary prayer, for to do so would be to end our spiritual life, to cast us out as mere pretenders, to treat us as trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

Further, let us not forget that it is by the Holy Spirit that we have access to God. "We have access by one Spirit unto the Father," says the Apostle. Now, access to God is among the richest of our privileges. Let a man be able to take his burdens to God and it little matters how heavy they may be. Let him be able to tell his needs to his Father, and it little signifies how great those needs may be, for God will supply them all according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. But take away the Mercy Seat, or block up the road by which the Believer reaches it. Withdraw his power in prayer, and his faith in the promise—and all this you do if you take away the Holy Spirit from him—then is the Believer ruined, indeed.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is the only true praying. O may we never cease from it! "He helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Without His teaching, then, what stammering prayers, what wandering prayers, what prayers that are not prayers at all we should offer! We must have the Spirit or else our great resource and remedy of prayer becomes unavailable. On your knees, then, you that have wandered and deserve to be forsaken and deserted of the Holy Spirit! I beseech you cry mightily, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," and let your plea be in the name and merit of Christ Jesus the Savior.

Moreover, Brethren, the Holy Spirit is our great Instructor. In these times, when errorists of all kinds are anxious to mislead us, some from the side of credulity, and others from the side of skepticism, we have need to pray every day, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." One says, "Lo, here!" Another, with equal vehemence, cries, "Lo, there!" We have not only, "another gospel," but we have *fifty* other gospels now preached. Though there is but one foundation and one salvation, yet there are those among us who proclaim with earnestness this, and that, and other doctrines as fundamental, though their teaching is of the flesh, and not of God.

The young and unwary must often have cause, in great bewilderment, to enquire, "How shall I know the Truth? By what means shall I discern the way?" Now, the Spirit of God is given to "lead us into all Truth," and reverently sought, He will be given to all who lack wisdom—to teach them the things of Christ, by taking those precious things and revealing them unto their hearts.

But oh, without the Holy Spirit our patient and Infallible Teacher, we should be like a child in the woods when the sun has gone down, wandering here and there, torn with briars and fearful of the wolf, crying in the dark for its father. Or like a traveler lost on one of our southern downs, surrounded by a clinging mist, not knowing which way he goes, and in constant danger of falling from some lofty cliff into the sea. "Take not Your

Holy Spirit from me.” You puzzled and bewildered children of God, here is a prayer for you—and God fulfill it to you according to His infinite mercy.

Again, I pray that I may be helped to magnify the Holy Spirit in your esteem, making you to love Him and worship Him more than ever. Dear Brethren, we want the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. This is one of His names, the Paraclete, the Comforter. He has come on purpose to appease the griefs of His children, and bring peace into their minds. Now, whatever our troubles may be, if we have such a Comforter, we can afford to welcome them.

Our adversities may be innumerable, but with the Holy Spirit’s Presence, we rise above them all. But, O my God, if the Comforter is gone, then my brain reels, my spirit sinks, I give up the conflict, I cannot endure to the end—for only by His consolations shall I in patience possess my soul.

Though I might enlarge, I must not, for time reproves me. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, and when we feel sin raging within, how can we hope to conquer without His aid? If He should leave us, if He who began the work does not keep His hand to it, how will it ever be complete? Holiness is too Divine a work to be worked in us by any inferior hand. He who made the first rough draft must put in the perfecting stroke, or all will remain incomplete.

And He, also, is our power for practical service—the “power from on high” for which Apostles tarried of old. If the Holy Spirit is not with the preacher, vain are his pleadings with men. If He is not with the teacher in his class, with any worker for God—what is their labor but beating the air, or reasoning with the waves? If no other person can pray this prayer from his inmost soul, at least the preacher can.

It rises up, as the Lord knows, from the very center of my heart. I dread beyond all things the Spirit’s withdrawal. Death has not half the terror of that thought. I would sooner die a thousand times than lose the helpful Presence of the Holy Spirit. I will just one moment allude to a controversy which has raged around this text, and then pass on. Some have said, “Then a true saint may be cast away, lose the Spirit of God, and perish.” The argument being that there is no need for a man to pray for that which God is sure to give, or pray against an evil which God will never inflict.

The answer is briefly this—I should not dare to pray, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me,” if I had not the promise that He will *not* cast me away from His Presence, nor take His Holy Spirit from me. Instead of it not being right to pray for what God will give, I venture to say it is not right to pray for what God will not give. The promise is not a reason for *not* praying, but the very best reason in all the world for praying. Because I earnestly believe that no real child of God will ever be cast away from God’s Presence, therefore I pray that I may not be.

And because I am well persuaded that from no really regenerated soul will God ever utterly take His Spirit, therefore, for that reason above all others do I pray that He may never take His Spirit from me. I say, again, it is absurd to argue that a thing which God promises to give is not to be

asked for, for has He not Himself said, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them"? The fact that the continuance of the Holy Spirit is the subject of an inspired prayer rather strengthens, than weakens the certainty of the promised blessing.

Moreover, be it remembered, that God may partially take away His Presence and His Spirit, and yet, after all, never remove His everlasting and eternal love from that person. For He may only withdraw for a season, for wise reasons, to return again afterwards with fullness of Grace. Against this partial desertion we are, however, allowed and encouraged to pray. Once again, remember that when a man has sinned, as David did, and is bowed down as David was, he cannot always pray in language which would be precisely suitable for a well-assured saint.

He has doubts as to whether he is saved, and therefore he does well to pray on the lowest ground as though he were not surely a saint, but might prove an apostate after all. It is most natural for a backslider to use expressions implying the very worst, expressions rather of fear than confidence, rather of distress than repose. David cries like Jonah out of the belly of Hell, "Cast me not away from Your Presence."

The lower down we get, the better. I frequently find that I cannot pray as a minister. I find that I cannot sometimes pray as an assured Christian, but I bless God I can pray as a *sinner*. I begin again with, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and by degrees rise up again to faith, and onward to assurance. When assurance is gone, and faith is weak, it is a great comfort that we may pray a sinner's prayer—the words of which may be inaccurate as to our actual condition, but correctly describe our doubts and fears, and supposed condition.

II. But now I shall pass on to take these words and use them as THE VOICE OF AN ANXIOUS CHURCH. The true Church of God may well pray, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Brethren, I shall speak pointedly to this Church, over which the Holy Spirit has made me an overseer. Let us, my dear Brethren, remember that there have been Churches of old which God has cast away from His Presence.

Where are the Churches of Asia that were once like golden candlesticks? Where are Sardis, Thyatira and Laodicea? Can you find so much as a relic of them? Are not their places empty, void and waste? Look at the Church of Rome, once a martyr Church, valiant for the Truth of God, and strong in the Lord—now the very personification of Antichrist, and utterly gone aside to the worship of images and all manner of idolatries—an apostate and defiled thing, and no more a Church of Christ at all.

Now, what has happened to other Churches may happen to this Church and we ought to be very earnestly on our guard lest so it should be. In your own time you yourselves have seen Churches flourishing, multiplying, walking in peace and love. But for some reason not known to us but perceived by the Watcher who jealously surveys the Churches of God, a root of bitterness has sprung up, divisions have devoured them, heresy

has poisoned them, and the place that once gloried in them scarcely knows them now.

Existing they may be, but little more—dwindling in numbers, barren of Divine Grace—they are rather an encumbrance than power for good. Remember, then, Beloved, that the power of any Church for good depends on the Presence of God, and that sin in the Church may grieve the Lord so that He may no more frequent her courts, or go forth with her armies. It is a dire calamity for a Church when the Lord refuses any longer to bless her work, or reveal Himself in her ordinances.

Then is she driven of the wind here and there like a boat derelict and castaway. The Lord may, because of sin, take away His Holy Spirit from a Church. The spirit of love may depart, the spirit of prayer may cease, the spirit of zeal and earnestness may be removed, and the Spirit which converts the souls of men may display His power elsewhere, but not in the once-favored congregation. Let me impress upon you that all this may readily happen if we grieve the Holy Spirit as some Churches have done.

My Beloved, let me refresh your memories with the recollection that the great power of the Church does not lie in the power of her *organizations*. You may have good schemes for work wisely arranged and managed, but they will be a failure without the Divine energy. Too often excellent methods are rigidly adhered to, and confidently relied upon, and yet, without the Holy Spirit they are sheer folly.

We are told that in unhappy Paris, when first the mails were stopped, the drivers of the mail carts took their seats upon their boxes and sat there, though no horses were forthcoming. Red tape commands as much reverence as the magic cord of the Brahmins. Formal routine satisfies many. Preachers, deacons, and teachers sit on the boxes of their mail coaches for the appointed time, but the power which moves the whole is too much forgotten, and in some cases ignored.

Souls are not saved by *systems*, but by the Spirit. Organizations without the Holy Spirit are windmills without wind. Methods and arrangements without Divine Grace are pipes from a dry conduit, lamps without oil. Even the most Scriptural forms of Church government and effort are null and void without the “power from on High.”

Remember, too, that the power of the Church does not lie in her *gifts*. You might, every one of you, have all wisdom and be able to understand all mysteries. We might all speak with tongues and be numbered among the eloquent of the earth—but our Church might not flourish for all this. Gifts glitter, but are not always gold. Gifts may puff up, but they cannot *build up* if the Holy Spirit is not there.

Strife and divisions, emulations and jealousies are, through the evil of our nature, the very frequent consequences of the possession of great talents by a Church—and these things are unmingled evils. Nor does the power of the Church consist in her *wealth*. When the Spirit is with her, sufficient treasure is laid at her feet, and the “daughter of Tyre is there with a gift.” But if the Spirit of God is gone, we might say of all the money

that was ever poured into ecclesiastical coffers by those who sought to strengthen her, "Your money perish with you!"

Gold avails nothing to a Church devoid of Divine Grace, it does but increase the evil which is corrupting within. O you vainglorious Churches—you may gild your domes, you may make your pillars of alabaster, and cover your altars with precious stones—you may clothe your priests in scarlet and in fair white linen, you may make your ceremonies imposing, your processions gorgeous, and your music enchanting—but all this avails nothing if the Spirit of God is gone! All that remains for you is as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

Nor, and here let me press this upon you, does the strength of a Church lie merely in her *doctrines*. I know not that Laodicea held false doctrines, yet was she nauseous to the Lord. Orthodox Churches may become lifeless corpses. Truth may be held in unrighteousness. Creeds most accurate may be but the cerements in which a dead Church is wrapped to be carried to her burial. Men have had sound views of the Truth of God, and yet have been unsound in *life*, and sound in nothing else but in the sleep of carelessness.

Nor does the strength of a Church lie in her *numbers*. Congratulate yourselves that your membership is counted by thousands, but if you become a mob and not an army, or an army without a Divine Leader, and without the enthusiasm which only the present Spirit of God can give—what are your numbers but the source of difficulty, corruption, and failure? You are like so many grains of sand that cannot unite. You are altogether broken, and poured out like water if the Spirit is gone.

What availed the number of the Scribes and priests of old when God had left them to their own blindness? What can the largest flock of sheep do without a shepherd? What is a large Church without the Lord's Presence but a mass of chaff to be scattered with a whirlwind, or to rot on the threshing floor? So, too, is it with the past history and the prestige of a Church. It is vain to depend on these. There is far too great an attitude among us to fall back on what our fathers did, or what we ourselves achieved ten or twenty years ago. My word to you, my dearly Beloved Church, is, "Hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown."

Our crown as a Church has been this—we have been a soul-winning Church. We have had nothing else whereof to boast, but this is our claim—we have sought the souls of men, and God has given them to us. To Him be all the glory. Shall we lose that crown through slackness and lukewarmness? It must be so unless we cry again and again, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from us." The Holy Spirit we want to abide with us in all the excellency of His glorious power. And if we have Him not, woe is the day. Our Shiloh shall become a desolation, and this beautiful house of our assembling shall become a hissing and a reproach.

Brethren, I will use an image which will come home to your minds at once. Any Church of God from which the Spirit has departed becomes very much like that great empire with whose military glory the world was dazzled, and whose strength made the nations tremble. France, mistress

of arms, queen of beauty, arbiter of politics—how soon has she fallen! I have heard many reasons given for her sudden overthrow, but I scarcely believe any of them to be sufficient to account for such a fall.

In an hour, like a lily broken at the stalk, she has withered. On a sudden, as though the hand of God had gone out against her, her glory has departed. Why was it? I do not believe that it was any lack of courage in her soldiery, nor do I even think that there was more than usual deficiency of skill in her commanders. Her hour had come, she was weighed in the balances and found wanting, and her prowess failed her as in a moment. The nation once so great now lies bleeding at her victor's feet, pitied of us all, none the less, because her folly continues the useless fight.

Just so have we seen it in Churches. May we never so see it here. Everybody may be saying, "How wondrously that Church flourishes! What power! What influence! What numbers!" And on a sudden some radical evil which had been eating out the very soul of the Church may come to its issue—and then, as in a moment, all the apparent prosperity will subside—and the Philistines will rejoice. May it not be so! May our prayer be, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from us."

Travelers in Egypt point to spots where once grew luxurious vegetation when the soil was constantly irrigated by the rich stream of the Nile. But now the irrigation, having ceased, the sand of the Libyan desert has conquered the fertile ground and annexed it to the wilderness. After this sort, Churches irrigated by the Spirit once produced rich harvests of souls—left of the Spirit the sand of the world has covered them—and where once all was green and beautiful there is nothing but the former howling wilderness.

It awakens melancholy reflections when we hear of the bodies of old Egyptian kings, proud lords of millions of men, dragged by our discoverers out of their secret chambers in the pyramids and exposed to every vulgar eye. The great sarcophagus has had its lid uplifted, and the monarch who once ruled the world has been taken out and his corpse unrolled for the sake of a little old linen, and an ounce or two of the embalming gum. Poor mummy! Once a Pharaoh whose voice could shake a nation and devastate continents—now used to heat an Arab's kettle or to furnish an object for a museum.

So with a Church—alive by the Divine indwelling—God gives it royalty and makes it a king and priest unto Himself among the sons of men. Its influence is felt further than it dreams. The world trembles at it, for it is fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. But when the Spirit of God is departed, all that remains is its old records, ancient creeds, title-deeds, traditions, histories and memories!

It is in fact a mummy of a Church rather than a Church of God, and it is better fitted to be looked at by antiquarians than to be treated as an existent agency. May we never come to this! May the Tabernacle abide in prosperity till the Temple of God shall be among men. Let our whole

Church lift up the prayer, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

III. But time outruns me, and therefore I must close by regarding this as THE CRY OF AN AWAKENED SINNER. Not properly, nor accurately, but still instructively I may use it. O unconverted Man, if you are, indeed, anxious about your soul, pray this prayer, “Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” Say you thus to the Lord, “O You most merciful God, pronounce not yet that word, ‘Depart, you cursed.’ My God, cast me not away as reprobate.

“Let Your longsuffering spare me a little longer, till Your Grace has saved me. Let me still stand on praying ground and pleading terms with You! ‘Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.’ It is true I have not Your Spirit as I gladly would have it, but still I hear Your Word. O let me not be denied the hearing of Your Gospel which by Your Grace may bless my soul. Still have I Your Holy Book, and Your Spirit’s voice is heard there—may it lead me to Jesus. O take not away Your Book from me! Shut me not up in Hell, where I shall feel the threats, but never know the promises of Your Word.

“Sometimes Your Spirit touches my conscience—hard as my heart is—it sometimes trembles. Sometimes I feel myself inclined to love You if I could. I feel some sighing and yearning after You. Take not these beginnings of Grace from me. O God, I wait upon You in the hearing of Your Word, and sometimes I hope Your power, Your life, will come to me, and I, even I, the chief of sinners, shall yet be saved. O take not away that hope utterly and forever. Swear not in Your anger that I shall never enter into Your rest, but rather turn Your pitying eyes on me and break my heart this day, and bind it up with the dear Savior’s love. Save me, O save me, with Your great salvation, for the sake of Jesus, Your Son.”

Have you prayed that prayer, dear Hearer? It shall be heard. But hear what God speaks to *you*—it is this—“Believe you now this day, and trust in Jesus and you shall be saved.” Come now and put yourself before the Cross. Trust yourself for time and for eternity in His dear hands, who there poured out His soul unto death for sinners. Then shall you know without a doubt that He will never cast you away from His Presence!

“Him that comes to Me,” says Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out.” Then shall you know that the Spirit shall not be taken from you, for He is with them that believe, and He shall abide in them forever. God bless you, every one of you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT BUSINESS

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.”
Psalm 51:12-13.***

BELOVED Brothers and Sisters, sinners are all around us living in their sins. Tens of thousands in our great cities and our country towns and villages are abiding in the densest spiritual darkness. They do not know their right hand from their left as to eternal things. And an equally numerous class who *do* know something of the letter of the Gospel are yet as men who see but perceive not, who hear but understand not. Some of these wandering ones are in great misery everyday, as the result of their sins, and if we knew what they suffered we would greatly pity them. It would be impossible for us to remain indifferent if we heard their secret groans. And all these sinners, whether they are suffering or not, are living to the dishonor of God, robbing God of the Glory which is due Him as Creator, and more or less dishonoring the Lord Jesus who receives no reward from them as Redeemer. If we were in a right state of heart we could not live where we are without feeling daily anguish on account of abounding sin.

Meanwhile, all around us there are potent agencies at work to hold these sinners in their present condition and prevent their escape into a better life. We may be idle, but the powers of darkness and their agents are busy—busy in working mischief, leading men into one form of error or another, or casting one or other of the nets of infidelity around them. Hell from beneath is stirred at this moment! If there is no revival in the Church of God, there is certainly a revival among her enemies! They are compassing sea and land to make proselytes, though, when they make them, they will be tenfold more the children of Hell than they were before. The activity of the hosts of the Evil One should act as the sound of the alarm to awake the slumbering army of the living God! What are you doing, O sleepers? Arise, for the Philistines are at your gates!

Meanwhile, the case is still graver. Sinners are dying! Every hour hurries a company of them into eternity. They are carried away as with a flood! They fall like grass before the mower's scythe! And where do they go? Alas, we know, but how little do we consider! They are driven from the Presence of God and from all hope of restoration. Their woe is such as cannot be described in language, though in the Book of God the Holy Spirit has employed terms of extreme expressions, whose meaning it

would be hardly possible to exaggerate. I might say, eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the doom which awaits all those who perish in impenitence!

Beloved, the thought of souls sinking into everlasting woes stirs me with the desire to awake you. I feel that if my heart is cold I may share the responsibility of any lack of zeal in you, but if I shall be helped to be earnest, I shall hope that the sacred contagion will spread and that Believers in Christ all around will be deeply concerned for the souls of others. Our topic, then, is the life business of the Christian—to teach transgressors God's ways—that sinners may be converted unto Him.

We shall handle our subject thus—first, we shall show *who* are to teach others. Secondly, what they are to aim at in their teaching. Thirdly, why they should thus seek the conversion of others. And, fourthly, how they can do this, for there may be some who will need a little practical guidance as to what they shall attempt.

I. First, dear Brethren, WHO ARE TO TEACH TRANSGRESSORS THAT THEY MAY BE CONVERTED UNTO GOD? The reply is easy. The text is found in a Psalm which is deeply penitential all through, but ends in the joy of forgiven sin. The words before us relate to joy restored by a sense of pardon—therefore the men who should teach others the ways of God are those who *have, themselves, been pardoned*. Who else can tell of the guilt of sin but men upon whom the burden of sin has pressed, who have felt the arrows of conviction in their own soul, who have been bowed into the dust because they have felt that the wrath of God rested upon them?

They can speak with authority concerning what they have personally felt. When such men speak of pardoning love and of the blood which cleanses, how sweetly do they tell of that blessed moment when their transgressions were forgiven and their sins were covered! These are not the men to descant upon the dignity of human nature, the excellencies of virtue and the merit of moral reformation. Their story is of quite another kind. They cry, “We have destroyed ourselves and all our help is found in Jesus! We are condemned and have no means of self-justification! But there is a precious blood that speaks better things than that of Abel, which pleads for us!”

Pardoned Sinners, go and publish the story of what God's Grace has done for you! You are the men, and none others in the world, who can tell it to advantage. Tell it with the hope that your fellow men will hear it and live. While, however, all pardoned sinners ought to do this, we should remember that we are most fit for the doing of it when we are full of the joy of God's salvation. Notice the prayer—“Restore unto me the *joy* of Your salvation. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” If you are doubtful as to whether you are saved or not. If the sword of the Spirit is rusted in your hand, or hidden in a scabbard, you cannot wield the weapons of your holy war with any force while your arm is trembling with doubt. You must *know* in yourself that you are forgiven and that you have proved the

power of the precious blood, before you can speak to others with the hope that they will believe your message.

When Luther lay sick and sorrowing, before he had found peace with God, a truly gracious monk came to his bedside and said, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Luther looked at him, for he had often repeated those words in the creed, but had never felt their power before. The man of God said, "You believe in the forgiveness of David. You believe in the forgiveness of Peter. Believe you in the like forgiveness of your own sins through the precious blood of Jesus." And Luther *did* believe it—and from that time he spoke like a man whom God had sent—speaking mightily because he believed confidently. In preaching justification by faith he roared like a lion in the glory of his strength, for the joy of the Lord in his own soul had become his strength to bear testimony to others!

I wonder not that some men doubt, and waver, and vacillate in their doctrinal sentiments and teachings, and talk about views and opinions. O Sirs, if they had once felt a broken heart and the terrors of a broken Law—if they had once known the power of the blood to bind up the wounds of the heart—they would speak of certainties and soon would come to be accused, as some of us are, of being positive and dogmatic! Who can help being dogmatic about a thing which is his very life and is as sure to him as his existence itself? While we believe in the joy of the Lord we shall not come to sinners with, "ifs" and "buts," but with a faith which will, by God's Grace, help them, also, to believe! To prepare us to win souls, we must have the Holy Spirit resting upon us, for the text says, "Uphold me with Your free Spirit."

The Spirit of God in the Church is the standing miracle which proves that she is of God. Were the Spirit of God gone from her, it would be impossible for the Church to hold her ground. But the Holy Spirit abiding in the Church is the testimony of God to His Church and the strength of her testimony for her God. Beloved, if the Holy Spirit shall come upon you and rest on you continually, you will sweetly tell of your Lord's Grace and of His dying love. The right words will come, for it shall be often given you in the same hour what you shall speak! The right emotions will attend the words, for the Spirit of God creates tenderness and pity! The ice will melt in your spirit, the hard frosts of your long backsliding winter will yield to the returning Sun of Righteousness—the season of cold and death shall be over and gone—and the time of the singing of birds shall have come to your soul. Then will you be able to teach transgressors God's ways. O Brothers and Sisters, pray for a revival in your own souls! Beseech the Holy Spirit to come upon you! Entreat the Lord to send the Breath from the four winds, not only upon the dry bones, but also upon the men who have to prophesy in the valley of the dead!

Note, also, that if we would bear good testimony for God to the conversion of souls, we must, by the Spirit of God, be upheld in consistency of life, "Uphold me with Your free Spirit." Brethren, if you are inconsistent in your own daily lives, how can you hope to be useful to others? The old

proverb is a true one, "Actions speak louder than words." If we speak to men upon the evil of sin and yet indulge in it, what can they infer from our conduct? If we tell them of the wrath of God against evil and yet find pleasure in it ourselves, will they believe us? If we speak of a Savior's dying love and yet are, ourselves, unloving, how will they believe us to be Christ's disciples? Vain must it be for us to converse upon the power of Grace when it never appears in our own conduct! Inconsistency will mar the most eloquent testimony and make it no better than silence.

If we are unholy we shall pull down with our right hand dexterously what we in a clumsy manner attempt to build up with our left. We must be consistent and our prayer must be—"Uphold me with Your free Spirit," or we cannot teach transgressors. Then, Brethren, we shall not say, "Stand by, for I am holier than you!" But feeling that we owe our preservation entirely to Divine Grace, we shall not reckon it any condescension on our part to come down to teach even the most guilty transgressors God's ways so that the most notorious sinners may be converted unto God. Brethren, the text plainly shows us that pardoned sinners, possessed of the Holy Spirit, rejoicing in salvation and upheld in consistency of life, are the chosen instruments of God for the conversion of their fellow men. Let us note this and act accordingly.

I see nothing in the text and, indeed, nothing in the Scriptures, about a certain class of officials being set apart to convert sinners to the exclusion of others. One of the most deadly injuries ever inflicted upon the Church of God was the invention of the distinction of clergy and laity—there really is no such distinction in the Word of God. On the contrary, the Apostle says to the saints, "You are God's *cleros*"—*you* are God's *clergy*—*you* are God's heritage, all of you! And another Apostle tells you that the Lord Jesus has made you kings and priests unto God, not some of you, but *all* His people. God forbid that we should ever arrogate any superiority over our fellows! The ministry is not ours, alone—you, also, are all to minister according as you have gifts and Grace.

All the members of Christ's body have a ministry to discharge—not the tongue alone, but the hand and the feet. Even those parts of the body which are least observable and even less comely, are all necessary for the health of the entire system and therefore should occupy themselves in their own peculiar service. Do not excuse yourselves, therefore, by saying, "We will pray for you, that you may teach transgressors, and sinners may be converted unto God." *Do* it, my Brothers and Sisters, for greatly do I need your prayers, but do *not*, when you have prayed for me, forget that you, also, are bought with the blood of Christ! And therefore use all your strength to His service. Neither does the text suggest that persons of superior abilities are the only persons who should addict themselves to teaching transgressors. The least in ability—the man of one talent—should as diligently serve his Lord as the servant whose talents are more numerous.

Neither does it appear that men, because of the pressure of business, are to think themselves excused, for David was a king and kings have much to do. In any kingdom much thought and activity must be required and David might, therefore, have claimed exemption from *spiritual* work. But he knew that he had been a sinner and he knew that he had been saved—therefore he was ready to help others. Have you been saved? Then, dear Brother, though you are up to your throat in business cares, still, nevertheless, say, “I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You.” For, Beloved, if the saved ones do not communicate the Gospel to the unconverted, who will?

Will the devil try to save them? Will the devil's servants try to save them? Will the men who are, themselves, in error or in unbelief try to convert others to Jesus? You know they will not! Who else ought to do so? “Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes.” Nobody ought to teach the things of God but the *regenerate*—and these are bound by a thousand ties to give themselves to the service. My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ—if there are no bonds laid upon us to seek the wandering souls of men, upon whom can the labor be laid? Who else can do it? Shall the blind lead the blind? Shall the dead prophesy to the dead? What other heart but that which has, itself, been renewed, can tell of regeneration and the Spirit's quickening power?

Remember, if the tongues of the saints speak not for Jesus, then the testimony for Jesus has ceased from among men. If the saints do not preach the Gospel, the angels cannot, for no such ministry has been assigned to them—therefore sinners must perish for lack of knowledge! O Church of God, to you is this commission given! Be not faithless in it, but be clear of the blood of all men!

II. We will consider WHAT THE BELIEVER OUGHT TO AIM AT IN HIS WORK WITH SOULS. Brethren, our great aim is conversion—the conversion of transgressors. “I will teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” We are to aim at the *conversion* of all men—of whatever sort they may be—for Christ has a people redeemed by blood in all ranks of society. We should seek for the conversion of our children and of those who sit constantly with us under the shadow of the means of Grace. Still, lest it should be forgotten, I will mainly dwell upon this point—that if there are any in the world who peculiarly and above all others are transgressors, these are the persons whom our own sense of love to Christ should induce us to teach God's ways—for if there is glory brought to God by one person more than another when he is converted, it is by one who was a notorious sinner.

The forgiveness of great sin, the reclaiming of a man from gross habits of vice, the deliverance of a woman who has fallen—these are the things which make the Grace of God illustrious. The Church of God should remember that the light is most needed where the darkness is darkest—that the physician is most required where disease is most rife. Therefore should she spend her utmost strength against the most fully developed

sin. The point to aim at is the *conversion* of sinners, not merely their reformation. It is a good thing to improve a man by reforming him—he is all the better for being sober, honest, and industrious. It was a good thing that the beasts, when they were in Noah's ark, were so tame. But they came out as they went in—lions were lions and vipers were still vipers.

The work we long to see accomplished is far greater than mere restraint or education, it is a thorough transformation. We pray that the lions may become lambs and the serpents become doves. Less than this it is not worthwhile for the Christian to live for, for there are philanthropic minds abroad apart from the Church who will look after moral *reformation* and sufficiently discharge the service. Let us help them if we can, but it is a side issue—our business is a more radical one—the one of the axe to the root of the tree by the change of the *nature*. Our object is more lasting. We have to do with immortal souls and their eternal future. Beloved, we must keep to this and be content with nothing short of the conversion of men. But it must be their conversion to *God*—"Sinners shall be converted unto You."

I am very glad to convert a Brother to Scriptural views upon Baptism, Church government and the higher doctrines. It is always desirable to see Brethren learn the Truth—but what will be the use of it if the individual is not, first, converted to God? The main object of all Christian work should be that sinners may be converted unto God—that they may love the God whom they have forgotten. That they may adore the Christ whom they have despised. That they may feel the power of the Holy Spirit whom they have grieved. This is what we desire, O Sinners! It is not your outward washing to make you *appear* as Christians—it is your inward renewing—it is your possession of a new heart and right spirit that we desire. "You must be born again." It will not do for us to mince matters with you—our prayer is that you may be turned to God, as the prodigal son was when he said—"I have sinned against Heaven and before you." May such a blessed turning as this come to you, for this, and only this, can fit you for Glory. Except you are converted and become as little children, you can in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven.

This work is to be accomplished by *teaching*. "Then will I *teach* transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted." It cannot be done by processions, pictures, incense and performances after the manner of the Romanist and the Anglican. And it cannot be accomplished by excitement, bawling, stamping and shouting, after the manner of certain brethren of our acquaintance, who cry, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" but who do not tell the people what they are to believe, nor instruct them in the faith. *Teaching* is needed. All the earnestness possible should go with the teaching, but there must be sound doctrine, real instruction, solemn Truths of God made known. It is by such means that sinners will be converted to God.

The most important teaching is that which dwells upon the Lord's ways—God's way of punishing sin, God's way of forgiving sin, God's way of mercy through a Sacrifice. God's way of pardon through faith in Jesus.

God's ways of wounding, of healing, of killing, of making alive. God's ways of sending forth the Eternal Spirit and working as He wills among the sons of men, neither waiting for man nor tarrying for the sons of men. The more of God's ways we proclaim, the more likely is it that sinners will be converted unto God! You see, then, Brothers and Sisters, what you are to aim at and you are not to be satisfied without it. Did we not, at the beginning of this year, propose the one to the other—that we would, each one, seek for the conversion of at least one soul? Brethren, we have now passed into September! Has your desire been fulfilled? Has your labor of love been blessed?

I know that some of you have been the means of bringing several to Jesus. I could point, at this moment, if I chose, to one who would blush to have his name known—who during the last few months has led several to Jesus and *that* by inducing them to attend here, lending them his seat, and taking care that they were comfortably accommodated. He has also a kind, encouraging word for them and he looks after them with much anxiety—and therefore he has had the joy of bringing them to Jesus! God be thanked for this! May this be the joy of you all! Brothers and Sisters, are you doing something of that sort, or striving for Jesus in some other way? If not, God grant that in the few weeks of the year we have left you may yet accomplish something for the Lord, by the power of His Spirit.

III. And now, thirdly, gathering up all my strength for it, let me try to show you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, WHY WE SHOULD SEEK THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS. And it should be done first—and I will begin with the lowest motive—because it will save us from many ills. I believe that the *not* seeking to win souls brings many spiritual maladies upon Christian men. The lepers outside the gates of Samaria found that the Syrians had fled. They went from tent to tent and feasted and at last they said, “We do not well. Let us go and tell this to the king's household, lest some mischief befall us.” They felt that if they did not reveal the good news some evil might happen to them. And I tell you solemnly, God, in discipline, often brings sorrow upon His own people because of their unholy silence as to gracious things.

An eminent surgeon, who was also an eminent Christian, visited a lady who was a professed Believer in Christ, but who, like some ladies I have heard of, was frequently troubled with imaginary diseases. The good doctor was frequently called in, until at last he said to her, “Madam, I will give you a prescription which I am certain will make a healthy woman of you, if you will follow it.” “Sir,” she said, “I shall be so glad to have good health that I will be sure to follow it.” “Madam, I will send you the prescription this evening.” When it arrived it consisted of these words, “Do good to somebody.” She roused herself to relieve a poor neighbor and then sought out others who needed her help, and the Christian woman, who had been so constantly desponding, nervous and fanciful, became a healthy, cheerful woman, for she had an objective to live for and found joy in doing good to others!

I can recommend that medicine to many whose lives are subject to bondage, for I know Brothers and Sisters who are never a day free from pain who are, nevertheless, full of happiness because they live to serve the Lord with their substance. Some of you might do great good with articles which you might very readily spare. You have ornaments which Christian men and women are better without, which, if broken up or sold, would aid the good cause. I wish many would follow the example of Oliver Cromwell when he went into Exeter Cathedral and saw 12 massive images of the Apostles in silver. "Oh, oh," he said, "why are these gentlemen here?" "They are the 12 Apostles," was the reply. "Very well," he said, "melt them down and send them about doing good." I wish Christians would do that with some of their gold and silver jewelry. Anyway, for our own sakes, lest the canker get into our gold and the rust into our silver, use it for doing good. Yes, by all means, seek the souls of men for God. Some evil will befall you if you keep the Gospel to yourselves.

Secondly, it will greatly add to your joy. Who does not like to be the bearer of good news? The pleasant tale of redeeming Grace and dying love. The pleasant story of a Savior who came from Heaven to earth to lift us up from earth to Heaven. The story of our own conversion, the story of God's goodness since our conversion—why, it must be delightful to tell it! And when you have spoken for Jesus, if you succeed in converting a sinner to God, then comes the pleasure! Great is the mother's joy when she looks upon her first-born child. She remembers no more her travail for joy that a man is born into the world! I am sure, however, there is more pleasure looking upon a new-born *child of God* and remembering no more your anguish over that soul—and your care in seeking to bring it to Jesus—because you have such bliss in knowing that there is one soul the more to decorate the Redeemer's crown!

Happy are our lives who can win souls! I am very apt to be cast down and distressed in soul, but, next to fellowship with my Lord, my greatest consolation is found in receiving glad tidings of souls saved. Here comes a letter of loving thanks from Ceylon and another from the north of Norway, saying, "Blessed be God that I read your sermons and found a Savior." From America I hear of an eminent Jewish Rabbi who has become a Baptist minister through reading one of my discourses. And recently I received a letter from Havana from a sailor who had just left the hospital. He told me how the man who died in the next bed told him that he had a treasure which he would give him if he would take care of it. And he then handed him a number of my sermons stitched together. "They have saved my soul," he said, "and I hope they will save yours." The sailor who writes blesses God in a warm-hearted way that it is so and the sermons have led him to Jesus!

Is this not joy? Would you not like to share it? From almost every quarter of the globe the good news comes to me—comes like manna, almost every day, and my heart is glad within me! I want *you* to know the same gladness, all of you in your measure. This honey is so sweet that I would

have your mouths filled with it! You are, each one, helping me in the work of the College which aims at helping our young Brothers to preach and, therefore, I do not speak as if I found fault, but still, dear Brothers and Sisters, you may personally be engaged in the Master's work and so, in a larger degree, have a share in the joy of seeing transgressors converted unto God. I have, however, better reasons than these. We will get out of these selfish motives into something higher. Unless you tell abroad the Gospel, how will you prove the sincerity of your prayers? You bow your knees and say, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." How can it be if you never try to speak a word for Jesus and never seek to bring new subjects into His kingdom?

Your prayers—what can they be but hypocritical if they are not supported by your *actions*? Again, what proof is there of the sincerity of your love to Christ? You say you love Him and I believe you do. I believe there are thousands here to whom Christ is dearer than all besides. Show, then, a proof of your love! Do you ask, "How?" Out of your Master's mouth shall you receive the answer, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Do you answer, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You"? Here, then, is the proof which He demands—"Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs. Distribute unto others the heavenly food which you receive from Me. What I tell you, speak upon the housetops!" Abundantly yield to your Lord this proof of your affection!

Indeed, Beloved, is there any proof of the sincerity of any man's religion who does not try to spread it? You have found this good thing—if it is, indeed, good—you will wish others to have it. What a disgrace it is that Christians should be so indifferent to the spread of the Truth of God in these days! There has been, lately, a revival among Muslims. We had all thought that the crescent was waning and that Muslims would never endeavor to make converts again. Instead, there appears to have been, in many parts of the world, a singular awakening of the old enthusiasm which marked the early days of Islam. What? And shall the false prophet command the zeal of his followers and shall not the Son of God possess the souls of His people? Let it not be said Christians are cold! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice over us! Can lies and falsehoods lead men to martyrdom, as popery has done full many a time—does it lead men and women to seclude themselves and give all their lives to the service of Antichrist—and is there no zeal left among the Believers in Jesus? Followers of God, is there no zeal left among you? The Lord help us to answer this question, as we shall wish to have answered it when the Judge sits upon His Throne!

I will go further and say that if we do not try to bring sinners to Christ, let alone our religion, where is our humanity? If I believed that sinners could be annihilated I should have no particular reason for preaching to them. In fact, I should have a very urgent reason for never doing anything of the kind! Certain heretics teach that if men do not hear the Gospel at all they will be annihilated at death—but if they do hear it and reject it—

they will live and be punished for a time. Then, I say, let them die, they will be better without hearing the Gospel—and he is a traitor who preaches it to them and makes them run so great a risk! But we, Beloved, who believe the solemn Truth of God which has often made us tremble from head to foot—that the wrath of God abides upon the ungodly *forever*—if we do not attempt their salvation, we are demons!

That was a harsh word, but I will not change it. I leave it where it stands. I care not what pretensions you are making to Christianity—if you are doing nothing in any way for the souls of men—you act like demons! If there is a wreck at sea and a mariner refuses to aid in saving when he is strong and able, men cry shame of him. A man is dying for need of bread at your door. If you have plenty, but refuse to give him a crust and let him die on your doorstep, the whole neighborhood will censure you! But a *soul* perishing, a *soul* perishing for lack of knowledge! For lack of the Bread of Life and you have it and do not hand it to him—O Sirs, how dwells the love of God in you? Is there a spark left? You are without Grace, for you have fallen below the humanity of Nature! In vain your years of profession, your long prayers and loud professions, if neither your substance nor your tongue is consecrated to God!

Beloved, there is one argument which ought to touch us all, and it is this. Can any of us refuse to teach the sons of men if he has really seen and known the Savior? There, stand a minute and look at Him upon the Cross. Do you see His wounds and the blood distilling from them? Do you mark the traces of agony in that dear face, so lovely and yet so marred? Have you caught a glimpse of your Master's shoulders, where the plowers made deep furrows with their scourges? Can you gaze through His body into His heart and see the deeps unknown of anguish which He endured for sinners—guilty, lost, and ruined sinners—and have you no love for them? Does He come to you this morning and put His pierced hand upon you, and say, “I laid down My life for you—and as My Father has sent Me into the world, even so, I send you”—and can you look into His face and say—“My Master, I have never done anything for poor sinners, and I never shall”?

I think you will say, “My Lord, forgive the past and help me in years to come.” The seraphic Summerfield, just before he died, said to those around him, “I have been looking into eternity and if ever I should rise from this bed I shall preach very differently from what I have done.” And yet he had preached most fervently the Gospel of Christ! Some of us might well say, “I have looked at Jesus. I have seen His disinterested love. I have marked His agonies and groans and I must preach differently. I must live differently. I must teach differently from anything I have ever done before.” O, Holy Spirit, make it so and Yours shall be the praise!

IV. And now we have to close with the last point, which is to be most practical. The question will arise—HOW, THEN, ARE WE TO TEACH TRANSGRESSORS GOD'S WAYS that sinners may be converted unto God? I would say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, “wait upon the Lord

for direction.” But one of the directions you need not wait for is this, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Some of you who could not speak, at least not to many, can assist those who do. If your own tongue will not serve your heart, get other men’s tongues to help you—in connection with our College there are always needs—and by helping others into the ministry you may have a tongue to speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself.

Still, at your own house talk about the Savior or write about Him, or in some other directly personal way try to serve your Lord. To all Believers far and near, be it known at this time, that almost all our Missionary Societies are in need, not so much of money, as of *men*. The Baptist Missionary Society has sent out a circular requesting the prayers of the Churches that God will raise up men who will go abroad. Our older Missionaries are dying off. Many are coming home through sickness—and very few come forward to fill their places. Surely some brave young men whose hearts God has touched, who have been doing work at home, will cheerfully surrender all they are and all they have to go and proclaim among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ! I would be a recruiting sergeant this morning and I pray the Lord that some of the right kind may join the noble army of Missionaries.

At home we greatly need Evangelists to travel throughout the land. I do not see where funds will come from for their maintenance, but if men of some small property who can preach would retire from business and go from town to town preaching the Gospel it would be the grandest work they could undertake! If we had 100 such men in our own denomination, who would go from place to place like the Apostles—the missing link in the Church would be supplied—and we would see many sinners converted to God. When any of you move into the country, as you do when you increase in wealth, should you not feel that you ought to seek the good of the people? And if there is no Church of your own faith and order near, should you not commence one? Rest not till you see the Gospel preached in the neighborhood—and that fully—that sinners may be converted to God!

Ministers also are needed, and especially ministers who can support themselves. How much good might be done if the many merchants in London, men of education, would, on Sunday, go into the villages and preach the Gospel, bearing their own expenses and helping to find their own preaching room! It is impossible, in a poor community like the Baptist denomination, that we can ever cover the country with the Gospel if all ministers must be supported. We need a body of men who do not need support—who can do without it—who would think it their highest honor, like Paul the Apostle, to be no burden to the Churches. I feel that if I were a business man I should like to make money for Jesus. And with a prosperous business, such as some of you have, it would be delightful to me to be the father of a Church in some destitute locality where it would be a pleasure to give rather than to take.

Whereas by our present mode of action a poor little Church must need be presided over by a Brother who is pretty nearly starved and does not obtain a stipend equal to the average wages of a common artisan—therefore the cause of God is spoken of evilly. The fault does not always lie with the Church, which may be too poor to do better, but with rich Brethren who ought to be preaching the Gospel, themselves, instead of hearing it. Many here, I daresay, among my own hearers, possess latent talent which only needs to be dug out of the earth and delivered from the napkin. Lord, stir them up and set their tongues on fire! If the Lord hears that prayer and touches your lips with a live coal from off His altar, you will say, “Here am I! Send me!”

Then there is our own Sunday school. Do you know that because I am constantly urging our friends to go out and teach *anywhere*, the result has been that a large number of the Sunday schools in our neighborhood are well supplied by our people and our own schools are often short of teachers? I do not desire to narrow your spirit which prompts you to work in the schools of other Churches, but do not forget your own home work! Thanks be to God for the zeal of our young people, but the best women in the Church, and the best men ought to be in the Sunday school, teaching there what they experimentally know! I pray you see to it that our Sunday schools are well sustained—there are enough of you to do this.

Then, again, time was when we had in our Evangelist Society, for preaching in the streets, many young men and some, probably, who had better have learned a little more before they began. Now we have not so much of that. Is zeal for preaching the Gospel diminishing among us? Brothers, it ought not to be! That Society needs many more who will proclaim the Gospel of Jesus by the wayside, or in the lodging houses. Let me say to every man who can speak for Jesus, do not let that excellent work flag, no, not for a moment! And the Visiting Societies, and the Tract Societies—all these need helpers. Are there not some here who will come to their rescue?

I love to see our Brothers and Sisters opening little Prayer Meetings in back streets, in places where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or among people who do not go to hear it. Try to start fresh places of worship in regions remote from others. For all this kind of service Christ needs you, Brothers and Sisters. Shall He call in vain? We wish those we love to show their love to us. Do, therefore, by the love of Jesus—by the blood of Jesus—if there is any love in you towards Him and any gratitude for what He has done for you, go forth from this day forward and teach transgressors His ways, that sinners may be converted unto Him!

The Lord seal this address with His blessing. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 5.

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SOUL MURDER—WHO IS GUILTY?

NO. 713

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.”
Psalm 51:14.***

DAVID had been grossly guilty towards his faithful and veteran friend Uriah. He had given instructions that Uriah should be led into the hottest part of the fight and then suddenly deserted so that he might be struck by the sword of the Syrians, and might appear to have died in the natural order of battle. Whereas, of course, his death was a cowardly murder, planned and devised by the very man who ought to have been his protector.

It is pleasing to observe in David's penitence that he plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter. He does not speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name, bloodshed. It is true he did not actually slay the husband of Bathsheba—it was by another hand that Uriah died. But still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord the murderer of Uriah. He calls a spade a spade, and names his crime as bloodshed.

Let us learn in our confessions to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins. Call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that *you* must labor to feel them to be, and with all openness of heart acknowledge their true character. Observe, too, that David not only gives it the right name, but is evidently oppressed with a sense of the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to *feel* their meaning. He prays like one who is consciously guilty. The blood of Uriah was now not on his hands, alone, but on his *conscience*. The bloody hand was before him continually and the impossibility to purge away the stain, except by the sacrificial hyssop, made David's heart lay low in the dust.

The fifty-first Psalm is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Oh, let us seek after the like brokenness of heart, for however excellent our words may be, yet if the heart is not conscious of the blackness and Hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find mercy with the Judge of all the earth! Possibly, my Brethren, you will think that I ought not to use such a text as this in addressing you, for there are no murderers here. “A sermon from this text to someone who had strangled another, or fired the deadly shot through his enemy's heart might be well enough, but are there any here,” says one, “that are guilty of bloodshed?”

Yes, Friend. The *preacher* is guilty, at any rate, if no one else is! And he believes that there is not a person here who will be able to go out of this house unconvicted of sin in this respect, if God the Holy Spirit is but here, first, to enable the preacher to lay the charge clearly, and secondly, to enable your conscience honestly to take that home which really belongs to you. There are other ways of being guilty of bloodshed besides stabbing with a knife, or poisoning with a deadly drug. There is another kind of murder far less detested, but equally black in God's sight—not the destruction of the body—but the destruction of the soul! Not the destruction of the mere shell, the outward man, but the murder of the real man, the inward self, the inner spirit, the soul murder which cries for vengeance before high Heaven, concerning which we have need to offer the prayer of David, "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation."

Before I proceed to the heavy work of this morning, which is to bring home sin to our consciences, I would like to put in a word by way of caution. I shall have to speak of some who "destroy with their meat those for whom Christ died," and of others who, "crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame." And when I do so, there will be some who will not dare to take exception to the Scriptural phraseology, because everyone yields to that, but they will fight hard against the supposed meaning of the very expressions which they are forced to put up with. They will say to me, "It is impossible that any should be destroyed for whom Christ died."

And I may add it is equally impossible that Christ should be crucified afresh. I shall quite agree with them in this, but if they, therefore, gather that it is *impossible* for anyone to be guilty of the two *sins* mentioned, I shall *not* agree with them, because such offenses would not have been mentioned in Scripture as having been committed if they could not be committed.

Do you not know, dear Friends, that a man may be guilty of a sin which he never could actually commit, but which he committed in his *heart*? For instance, in very deed and act, I can never destroy a man for whom Christ died. It is not in my power nor in the power of even devils to destroy such souls! But if I commit an action which in the ordinary nature of things would destroy such a soul. If I utter teachings, or if I present an example which, if God did not prevent, would destroy such a soul, then I am guilty because I should have destroyed that soul if it had not been for God's interposing. His interposition does not take away my guilt though it prevented its *effects*.

Though I cannot crucify the Lord afresh, that is to say, He is so exalted in Heaven that all Hell could not drag Him down to the Cross—yet if I do an action which would crucify Him again, if it could be done—an action which has a tendency to put Him to an open shame, though I may not be able to complete the thing in act, yet, since its natural influence would lead to such a result, I am guilty of it. This is easily illustrated. Suppose that a man who had the management of certain points on a railway

should willfully turn the points in such a way that two trains must come into collision and the passengers must be killed.

Imagine that an angel should descend from Heaven and stand between those two trains and prevent the collision. Where would be the difference between the man's guilt whether the people were killed or not killed? The guilt is the same, because the thing would have happened if it were not for a miraculous interposition. So by bad teaching, and by unholy living, those for whom Christ died would be made to perish if it were not for a Divine interposition. And by inconsistency of conduct Christ could be nailed again to the tree if it were not prevented by Divine power. But that prevention does not at all alter my *sin*. I am just as guilty as if the natural effect had followed. If you should fire at a man and the bullet were unexpectedly turned aside, you would be as truly guilty as if your victim had died!

Human law might not call you a *murderer*, because human law is obliged very much to judge a sin by the *effect*, but the Lord looks at the heart and weighs the *motive*, the *desire* and the *design*. Please understand, then, that when I shall be speaking this morning about your destroying souls, I do not mean that you will in the end defeat the Divine purpose of Divine Grace, but you will be as guilty as if you could. Jesus Christ will not lose a soul whom He has determined to save, or be thwarted in any of His designs of mercy—but this will not extenuate your guilt, or mine. I put this in by way of caution, lest any should think me dubious of the great doctrines of Sovereign Grace which are every day dearer than ever to me.

I. The first business this morning is to awaken and bring home to the conscience of this assembled multitude A STARTLING CRIME. There are many ways of being guilty of bloodshed. Every man is guilty of it in one respect, namely, concerning the death of our Lord. I will not say that we are all guilty of His actual murder upon the tree, for we were not then born. Yet, as it was the common sin of mankind which rendered it necessary that He should suffer, we cannot escape from a share in His death.

This I can see very clearly, that those who reject, despise or neglect the claims of the Lord Jesus, and refuse to bow before Him, do, in effect mock Him, scourge Him, and put Him to death. In speaking against His Gospel, in deriding His servants, in neglecting His Book, in denying His Deity, and in refusing to believe in Him, men are virtually guilty of crucifying the Lord of Glory—for they thus do that which proves that if they had been in a like condition with the Roman soldiers and with the Jewish priests—they would have nailed Him to the Cross. We have committed actions tantamount to the crucifying of the Savior, and therein His blood comes upon us to our condemnation—unless by faith it comes upon us to our acceptance and forgiveness.

Oh, Sinner, let this be forever a subject of trembling to you, that you have necessarily something to do with the Cross! That having heard of it, it shall be unto you either a savor of death unto death, or of life unto life!

Either the blood of Jesus shall fall upon your heart to cleanse you from all guilt, or it shall fall upon your head to condemn you. You have said, "I know Him not. I will not obey Him. I will not yield to Him. I will, as far as lies in me, put out His light and quench His dominion in the midst of mankind." What is this but aiming at the very life of Christ, and being guilty of His blood?

Another form of bloodshed, and I am only hinting at these two, is that of anger without a cause. We are told on Inspired authority that he that is angry with his brother is a murderer. Unless there is good and sufficient cause for anger, in which case a man may be angry and sin not, anger is murder! When I have a hasty thought against a man and wish him out of the world, I have killed him in thought, and even though I may disguise the wish under the expression of wishing him in *Heaven*, there is guilt in the desire! Oh the hard, cruel, black thoughts which men have towards one another when they are angry! Why, they kill and slay a thousand times over! These hasty sins are soon forgotten by us, but they are not soon forgotten by God. Let us weep over our hot tempers, for the fire of Hell burns in them!

And let us be forever free from that lingering malice which harbors resentment and will not be brought to forgive, for this, especially, is before God a form of bloodshed, and concerning it we have need to pray, "Deliver me, O God, from malice, and evil temper, and envy, and all uncharitableness, lest the guilt of bloodshed should be at my door." Having hinted at these, I now come to what I am driving at, namely, those sins against men's souls by means of which blood may be at our door.

Let me call to your remembrance, some of you, your early days and your first youthful transgressions. It is taken for granted in the world that young persons ought to be allowed to sow their "wild oats." And then it is hoped that afterwards they will settle down. But these wild oats are more easily sown than reaped, and many men might weep tears of blood to think of what a harvest has sprung from them. We sinned very carelessly and joyously, and led others into sin without a thought of the future. And now that we are converted to God we have to look back, and wish in vain that others could be turned from the dangerous paths into which we led them! I do not want to bring any needless bitterness into the heart of any person who is saved and pardoned, but I should like to cast a dash of gall into men's hearts who have never sought the Savior and who are growing gray.

I would make them seriously reflect upon the mischief of their early days. Alas, you cannot undo the evils of your sins! Your children, trained amiss with a bad example before them, are not *now* to be tutored for God. Your acquaintances who have copied your habits are not *now* to be reclaimed. Perhaps some of you have had companions with whom you used to drink and feast who are now in Hell and brought there very much through you. How sad should be those depraved men who have been partners in the sin of guilty women, or women who have lured giddy

young men into the paths of vice. I feel sure that even when such persons repent and find forgiveness the thought of the past cuts like a knife.

I can hear one of them sighing. "Alas, I cannot undo my deeds! Those with whom I sinned are gone, gone where I cannot reach them even with a prayer. And although others linger upon earth, they are gone, now, to such extremes of sin that it is almost hopeless to think that they shall be reclaimed, and all this is due to my youthful follies. Oh that I could wipe them out, even with my blood!" "Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of our salvation."

Many unconverted persons here will perhaps feel, I trust they may, the point of the next observation, namely, that *false teaching* involves the guilt of bloodshed. Some, who afterwards have become ministers of Christ, were at one time ministers of Arianism, Socinianism, Deism, or infidelity. Now the man who leads the young mind astray from the Truth of God and guides youth into doubt and skepticism must not think that he shall go unscathed. Those who err from the Truth perish, but their blood shall be laid at the door of the teachers who first sowed the seeds of evil thought within them.

There was a despot in Italy who was wont to shoot poisoned adders at passersby in the street, and there are men who delight to shoot sharp, stinging doubts into young minds. They will not deny any one grand Truth of God, but they will insinuate covert doubts which assail the whole Gospel system. Pity, Brethren, heartily pity those false teachers who have been able to attain to eminence by the fatal gift of unsanctified talent. What must be at their door who have denied the Deity of Christ, who have despised and spoken slightingly of God's Atonement? To have beguiled the minds of men till they have looked upon you as their oracle, and then to have taught them false doctrine—what is more horrible? With what solemnity is the teacher's office invested when we remember that God will require at our hands the blood of souls!

You who are now converted, but were once infidels, or miscalled Unitarians, I pray you go not to your bed tonight till you breathe this prayer, "Deliver me, O God, from the blood of souls! Let none go down to the pit cursing me because I taught them error and led them away from the fountain of life. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation." It is a dastardly thing to poison the wells of a city, but what is it to poison the well of the Truth of God and make soul-thirst the medium of soul-ruin?

It was an accursed thing, in the old story, for a man to pour poison into his sleeping brother's ear, and yet hundreds have done the same! Sometimes by word of mouth, and still more often by infamous literature. Who knows the evil caused by evil books scattered broadcast over the land, which, like the ashes that Moses hurled into the sky, have brought a grievous plague wherever they have fallen? O you authors and editors of newspapers who teach ungodly principles and sneer at Divine Truth—take heed lest the blood of souls cry out against you—as the blood of Abel did against the first manslayer!

Our text has a voice in another direction. Some men actually trade in luring others into sin. By this craft they get their wealth. Pandering to the drunken and vicious habits of the multitude, they literally fatten on the ruin of those whose evil tastes they gratify and excite. Satan has many soul-hunters in his pay who hunt for the precious life. It is an amusement to some to decoy others into the snares and meshes of the Evil One. I have known beings of this class. I will paint one whom I knew who is gone to his last account. He was an old drunkard, hoary with years of infamy. His language—profanity. His life—abomination. I should blush to mention the sins of which he would speak with a delighted leer.

Never came there a young man within his range but what he tempted him to the tavern and to places still worse. If one saw any youth of the congregation walking with that man, you knew that he would soon be missing from the House of Prayer. It was impossible for a person to be five minutes with that old wretch without being infected by the contagion of his filthiness. His whole heart went with his foul tongue in the work of depraving the youthful mind! It was a sight to see the man's lips as he spoke lusciously of a dainty sin, and to see the contempt that was in his countenance as the minister of righteousness looked sorrowfully at the destroyer and his victim. His joy was greatest when he had been the means of casting down a professor of religion, or could see young Hopeful become as vile as himself!

When he saw those die—whom he had led into sin and educated in profanity till they became as bad as himself—no twitch of conscience ever came over him! When he died and was buried, one almost thanked God for his removal, for he was a most fearful hindrance to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Oh, should I address some such who delight to sing lascivious songs, and to talk loosely, God forgive you! You are a great sinner, and may He take that black heart out of you, and give you a new heart and a right spirit, for, if He does not, double damnation must be your portion, since as he that, by God's Grace, turns many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever, so shall you who have turned many to unrighteousness be plunged in the blackness of darkness forever!

This, I dare say, comes home to but very few—indeed, I trust to none of you here—but the next point may touch us all in some respects. Bad example is a way by which the blood of souls may come upon us. If a man should live in a densely populous neighborhood, and should carry on a trade which sent forth deadly fumes into the air so that everybody who breathed them would be infected with disease and die, who could acquit him of murder? Granted that he clearly knows that the fumes which he makes are deadly—if he, for any hope of gain—causes such ruin, he deserves to die himself.

But what is bad example? Is not that in the family and in the social circle just such a deadly vapor? I spoke just now of bad teaching, but bad example is even more dangerous, because its range is wider. Bad example reaches those who would not have listened to false doctrine, but who receive the poison through their eyes. How do you know, Mother, but that

the girl who breaks your heart learns her first sin from you? Father, can you be so angry with your child when you are not quite sure but what he has imitated you?

Master, you, the other day, spoke very severely about a certain servant who forfeited your trust—are you sure there was not some irregularity in your conduct which misled him? Every man, especially in a great city like this, is responsible not only for himself but for his neighbors, and there are some of us who are like the church clock—other people set their watches by us. It becomes such of us as are religious teachers to be particularly careful. There are some things which I feel I might do, as far as I am concerned, which I believe I might do without suffering any personal hurt. But I do not do them for *your* sakes, and which I dare not do for the sake of many who would take license from my example to do a great deal more than I would do, and would make me the horse on which they would put the saddle of their sin.

Christian parents, you must not always say, “I can do this.” Yes, but would you like everybody else to do it? Because, if it is unsafe for one, it seems to me you have no business to touch it. “If meat offends my brother, I will eat no meat while the world stands,” is a grand old Christian saying of one who was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles. We must be careful even of things indifferent. But when it comes to those things which are positively evil, the bad example of a Christian is ten times worse than that of one who is *not* a Christian. If I see a sinner commit sin, his example is poison, but it is labeled. The inconsistent life of a professor is unlabeled poison, and I am very likely to be injured by it. Inconsistent Christians, false professors, you that have a name to live and are dead, take care lest bloodshed be at your door, and much of it, too!

But these are things of which the ungodly have their share, and therefore I come, now, to talk a few quiet words to the Christian only. I want to single out those Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, and who are saved from the wrath to come through Him. I want to ask you, Do you not think that you and I may have been guilty of the blood of souls, though we are set by God to be, instrumentally, their salvation? Though we are the lights of the world and the salt of the earth, yet may we not have been darkness, and salt that has lost its savor? Answer, I pray, such questions as these! May we not have bloodshed laid to us from neglect of family duties? I fear that this is one of the sins of this age.

The Puritans were noted for the care in which they brought up their children—they never fell into the fault of sparing the rod, and their children were catechized every Sunday. They were prayed for and wept over, and the Puritan household was a very Heaven upon earth. But oh, if some of us see our children running into sin, and growing up to be thoughtless, careless, and giddy—what can we say—who shall we blame? Are there none here, like Eli, who have only said to their children, when they have done wrong, “My sons, why do you do this?” but have let them go unchastised? Remember the character of Hophni and Phinehas, and the message of Samuel concerning them—“Thus says the Lord, I will do a

thing at which both the ears of everyone that hears shall tingle: I will judge the house of Eli because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

Let us take heed, lest God bring the like on us! Oh, Sirs, it is no small charge to be a parent, and to neglect that charge brings no small guilt upon us! When I see so many children of Christians turn out worse than others. When I find some of the sons of ministers among the ringleaders in sin—what can I do but pray that I may sooner die than have such a curse fall upon myself? If any of us have neglected home duties, let us beware lest we have the blood of our children laid at our door!

Have we not often neglected the souls of seekers in distress who would become very glad of our attention? At our meeting for prayer and fasting last Tuesday, a Brother who was, I think, the best man among us, made a confession of cowardice and we all looked at him and could not understand how he could be a coward. A bolder man I do not know! He told us that there was a man in his congregation who was a wealthy man. If he had been a poor man he would have spoken to him about his soul. But, being a wealthy man, he thought it would be taking too much liberty. At last, one of the members happened to say to him, “Mr. So-and-So, have you found a Savior?” and bursting into tears, the man said, “Thank you for speaking to me! I have been in distress for months, and thought the minister might have spoken to me. Oh, I wish he had. I might have found peace.”

I am afraid that often you good people have sinners convicted of sin sitting beside you in your place of worship, and when the sermon is over you ought to get a word with them—you might be the means of their comfort—but you forget it, and you go your way. Now, is this a thing to be forgotten, as if it were no great offense? Let me give you a picture which may set it forth. See yonder poor wretches whose ship has gone down at sea? They have constructed a poor tottering raft and have been floating on it for days. Their supply of bread and water is exhausted and they are famishing. They have bound a handkerchief to a pole and hoisted it, and a vessel is within sight. The captain of the ship takes his telescope, looks at the object, and knows that it is a shipwrecked crew.

“Oh!” he says to his men, “we are in a hurry with our cargo, we cannot stop to look after an unknown object. It may be somebody perishing, and it may not be, but, it is not our business,” and he keeps on his course. His neglect has murdered those who died on the raft! Yours is much the same case, only it is *worse* because you deal with immortal *souls*! And he only deals with bodies which he allows to die. Oh, my Brother, I do implore you before the Lord, never let this sin lay at your door again! If there is one who is impressed, and needs a word of comfort, fly on the wings of Mercy to such a soul and help cheer him as God enables you!

May we not be guilty, in the next place, of neglecting to warn many that are *not* impressed? If I saw a man go reeling on towards a precipice, and knew, as he went staggering forward, that in a few minutes he would go over the edge and be plunged into eternity—if I did not shout out and

warn him to draw back—I should feel that when he fell I had a share in his death. When you hear a funeral bell toll for a neighbor, can you say, “If that soul is gone to its last account, I did at least tell him of the way of mercy”? No, I fear there are many now slumbering in the sepulcher whom you can never warn now, but whom you ought to have warned—your brothers, your sisters, your own children, your next door neighbors—they are gone, gone from where they never can return. And among the things they will have to say at the Day of Judgment will be this, that they can bear witness against you that you never warned them to flee from the wrath to come.

O God, we are all guilty here! “Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of our salvation.” Further, have we not been guilty of the blood of souls by exposing them to danger? When a father puts his boy apprentice, if he only cares about his worldly gain and not about his soul’s interest, I cannot acquit him, nor will God acquit him. Parents have sometimes put their girls to school and their boys to trade where if they had obtained any good it would have been a miracle, and where if they met with mischief it was only what they might expect.

Now it is according to law that if I expose my child to the cold and it perishes through my negligence I am punished. Surely it must be so with *sin*. So with our servants, our neighbors, and work people—if we expect them to do for us what we would not do for ourselves we are guilty of their sins. Some here may possibly be carrying on unnecessary trades which require working men to toil all Sunday (works of necessity, of course, I speak not of), but there are systems of trading which for no justifiable reason involve the keeping away of the men employed from a place of worship. Now when these men are lost, I ask at whose door will their blood lie? Who had the profits of their labor? Who fattened on their gains? Who sucked the very blood of their souls to coin it into wealth for himself? If there is such an one, let him cease from the sin, and pray, “Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation.”

Christian, do you not think that sometimes you may have been guilty from unholy silence? When I hear God’s name profaned and offer no rebuke, but take it quietly, is there no sin there? When I see my neighbor going into sin, and have an opportunity of speaking and do not, is that silence *without blame*? When I go up and down the street and meet people in many ordinary avocations to whom I might speak of Christ and never do—when they perish, shall I be clear? Oh the thousands that some of us come in contact with, and yet leave them as if we had no care about their eternal state! Shall we be clear, Brothers and Sisters, shall we be clear?

May not another sin also be charged upon some of you? Some have a way, not only of doing no good, but doing a deal of mischief by their harsh conversation to young beginners. I have known elderly professors who, instead of encouraging the young, would seem as though they would snap the child’s head off if it spoke of Divine things! They doubt the possibility of the conversion of little ones and will ask knotty questions, and raise difficult points to perplex those who have but lately found Christ. They

delight to insinuate that the convert's joy is nothing but mere *excitement*, and they do all they can to thrust seeking souls into despair.

Unlike the Master, who never broke the bruised reed, they break all they can! And, unlike He who never quenched the smoking flax, they would, if they could, quench even those that have begun to blaze! Is there no guilt here? Are there none such in this House? I know there are! May they have Divine Grace to feel the sin and to plead for mercy! Unhallowed levity about Divine things is another home-born sin. Do we ever trifle about God's Word? Are we not tempted to joke and utter a silly jest when it would have been prudent to have urged a warning? I fear, Brethren, and fear sorrowfully, that many of us who ought to know better are verily guilty here. To trifle with eternal things is no small crime.

But here is a point upon which I would speak more earnestly, still—how often have we withheld *prayer* concerning others? We know they are perishing, but we do not pray for them! We are conscious that their state will be one of woe, but yet no tears flow from our inhuman eyes, and our spirits are not affected. Neglected closets shall call upon them to speak against us. I shall leave our lack of prayer in private to be a matter of personal confession, but I am afraid that after having thought it over we shall feel we have been guilty of bloodshed.

Then there is a general need of earnestness especially chargeable upon us who are ministers. That I should ever have preached to you as I have sometimes done ought to break my heart. And that some of you should teach in Sunday school as you teach ought to cause you deep regret! And that you should go even about tract distributing in so cold a manner as you sometimes do should make you smite upon your breasts. Oh if we were half as earnest to serve God as others are to win gold, what success we might expect! And we have not had it because of our want of earnestness! Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God!

II. In the second place, let us make AN EARNEST CONFESSION. Let us not deny our responsibility or we shall be like Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Shun a Cainish spirit. Let us not try to shift the responsibility to God's shoulders by saying, "God's decree will be fulfilled." That is true, but Divine sovereignty is no excuse for human negligence. Let us feel, "We are guilty here," and do not let us murmur, "Well, we have a right to do as we like. It is a voluntary work."

It is so, but, Brethren, we are debtors unto the Jew and Gentile. Loved with such mercy as that which we have received, we ought to have done more for souls and we are guilty because we have not done it. Let us not soothe ourselves with, "Well, we will do better in the future." Look to the past—how can you undo that? And the souls that have gone, past recall, down the cataract of death—what can you do for them? Bestir yourself! Bestir yourself for the future! For there you can do much. But for the past, what is to be done but weep! Let us make a clean breast of it when we are alone, and solemnly confess that we have been guilty of the blood of souls.

III. In the third place, our text has in it AN EARNEST PRAYER which I commend to you. You observe it is addressed to God. It is not a resolution made in his own strength, but it is addressed to God. “Deliver me, O God.” You observe that it is addressed to the God of salvation. Thanks be to His name, He can save us! He is the God of salvation. It is His prerogative to forgive. It is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Let us go to the God of salvation!

Better still, the text calls Him the God of *my* salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, guilty as I am I am saved! Though the blood of others once lay at my door—and my sin humbles me—yet through Jesus’ precious blood I can rejoice in the God of *my* salvation! Then look at the word, “Deliver.” It has two meanings. “Deliver me from the guilt of the *past*—whatever I may have been in the years gone by forgive it. But Lord, deliver me from the *power* of it for the *future*.” If I am a minister, Lord, make me more *prayerful*. If I am a Sunday school teacher, help me to teach the children as though they would be dead before we met again. If I am a father or a mother, help me to instruct my dear children as though their salvation rested upon me.

If I am a neighbor, let me not neglect the street, or court, or lane where I live. If I am a citizen, let me not neglect the claims of those who live in the same city with me. If I am a Christian, do not let me be a dark lantern, do not suffer me to be unsavory salt. Some of you professors are of no use to anybody. I know some professing Christians who hoard their money just as if they did not owe Christ anything. They never give to the cause of God and their gold and their silver are red with blood—the blood of those who might have had the Gospel preached to them if there had been the means of sending it. I know others who come in and out and occupy seats and sing and pray as others do, but take no part in the work of the Church. They are useless idlers, like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel.

If such are present now, the Lord send the darts of conviction through them! If you are His people, I hope you have the Grace to receive the rebuke in the spirit in which it is sent to you and profit by it. If you have been bought with blood, live as one who is not his own! If you are a mere worldling, why do you come here and make a profession of Christianity? But if you have been saved, ask to be delivered from the great sin of bloodshed!

IV. The psalmist ends with A COMMENDABLE VOW. It is about the only vow that I can advise any of you to make. He says, first of all, if God will deliver him, he will sing. And I vow I will. If I am only able to say as George Fox said, when he was dying—honest Quaker as he was—“I am clear”—oh if I can say, “I am clear,” I will sing, indeed! It is enough to make any man sing if he can be minister to such a congregation as this and be clear.

Sometimes when I have gone down out of the pulpit, and somebody has said, “There are six or seven thousand people without excuse because they have heard the Gospel,” I have said, “Yes, it is so,” but I have

thought, “Have I preached it as earnestly as I ought?” And many a time it has made me toss on my bed to think of the responsibility of this mass of human beings, and the twenty thousand or more who regularly read the sermons as they come from the press. Who is sufficient for these things? Truly a saved minister will be an everlasting wonder!

Then it is said, “My tongue shall sing aloud.” Oh yes, indeed! Who can sing in any other style if such a mercy as this is afforded us? If, indeed, we are found faithful, we will not sing in a whisper! If we have discharged our conscience, and no man can say, “You have been unfaithful to me,” our tongue shall sing aloud! But note the subject, note the subject! It does not say my tongue shall sing aloud of *my* faithfulness, of *my* integrity, or of *my* earnestness. Oh no! When I have done my best. When I am delivered from all guilt of bloodshed, and my tongue begins to sing—it shall not sing of anything but *Your* righteousness, **YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, O Jesus!**

We cannot sing of *ourselves*. We must sing of the finished work of a precious Savior. “Ah,” said one to a dying saint, “you have fought a good fight!” “Ah,” said he, “do not tell me that. I am thinking of how Jesus Christ said, ‘It is finished.’ ” *This* is solid comfort for our souls. We must come as sinners, still! I would like to have some such verse sung over my dead body as was sung over dear Rowland Hill when they buried him under his pulpit at Surrey Chapel. He had asked them to sing the hymn—

**“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress”**

and that verse was sung slowly and solemnly—

**“When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,
‘Jesus has lived and died for me.’”**

Yes, we shall sing and sing aloud, too, but we shall not sing of goodness, but of the righteousness of our dear Redeemer!

Now, poor Sinner, what do you say of Christ’s righteousness? Do you not see that you are guilty of many sins? Oh that you may have Divine Grace to confess them! Remember the righteousness of Christ can wash away all sin, and however black and foul we may have been, we have but to come to the fountain filled with blood, and if we wash *there*, we shall be white as snow! The Lord give us such a washing, and we will sing aloud of His righteousness!

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REPENTANCE AFTER CONVERSION

NO. 2419

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 30, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 12, 1887.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”
Psalm 51:17.

THE French have a phrase which signifies in English, “assisting at a service.” A person who has been present at some grand function of the church speaks of himself as having “assisted” at the service. I want that many of us should literally carry out that expression just now. I do not want so much to preach as to lead you in the offering of sacrifices. Somebody says, perhaps, “But I have no bullock, no lamb.” No, but you have a *heart*—and it is a *broken and a contrite heart* that I propose that we should present to God! I will not invite those of you to do so who have never experienced the working of Divine Grace within your souls. I trust that you will be led to do so by the Spirit of God, but I cannot, just now, invite you to offer that sacrifice, for my appeal is to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to those who have been restored from spiritual death, to those who are debtors to Free Grace and dying love. It is to them I speak and I invite and entreat them to accompany us while we present to God the sacrifices which He will not despise—the sacrifices of a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

I would have you specially notice that in this Psalm David puts the sacrifice in its right position—and I would put it in the same position. You observe that he has, first of all, sought pardon for his sin and he has found it. He has prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” His sin, then, is forgiven. He has, next, asked for a restoration of purity—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” That, also, has been done. I will suppose it, my dear Friend, to have been done in *your* case, also—that you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind by the Grace of God.

Then, next, *joy* has also been restored to David, for he says, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation,” so that it is not a question with him as to whether he is saved or not—he is a man who is saved and living in the assurance of salvation! Sin is pardoned and the impurity engendered by grievous transgression has become put away. He has peace with God—he is the man who brings the sacrifice. He is the man who presents to God a broken heart and a contrite spirit. More than that, he has be-

come a preacher—his gratitude to God has led him to be useful to others, as he says in the 13th verse, “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” And even more than that, he has gone from the pulpit to the *choir*—he has become a singer and he sings a sweet song of thankfulness to the great God who has saved him! Now, this is the man whose lips the Lord has opened and whose mouth is showing forth God’s praise! This is the man who says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Perhaps you have the notion that repentance is a thing that happens at the commencement of the spiritual life and has to be gotten through as one undergoes a certain operation—and that is an end of it. If so, you are greatly mistaken! Repentance lives as long as faith. Towards faith I might almost call it a Siamese twin. We shall need to believe and to repent as long as we live! Perhaps, also, you have the idea that repentance is a bitter thing. It *is* sometimes bitter—“They shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn,” but that is not the kind of repentance that I am talking of, now. Surely that bitterness is past, it was all over long ago. But this is a sweet bitterness which attends faith as long as we live—and becomes a source of tender joy!

I do not know whether I shall quite convey my meaning to you, but I can assure you that the greatest joy I have ever known has not been when I have laughed, but when I have cried. The most intense happiness I have ever felt has not been when I have been exhilarated and full of spirits, but when I have leaned very low on the bosom of God and felt it so sweet to be so low that one could scarcely be lower and yet did not wish to be any higher! I quite agree with Mr. Rowland Hill, who said he supposed that there could be no tears of repentance in Heaven and that would be the only thing that he could almost regret, for sweet Sister Repentance is such charming company that we shall regret to part with her even at the gates of pearl. As we may have to part with her, there, I want us to keep her company all the time this service lasts! And my objective at this time is to ask you to bring to God, while we are here in this House of Prayer, the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite spirit. I want you to indulge yourselves in this most rare and exquisite delight of sorrow at the feet of Jesus—not sorrow for *unpardoned* sin, but sorrow for *pardoned* sin, sorrow for that which is done with, sorrow for that which is forgiven, sorrow for that which will never condemn you—for it was laid on Christ long ago and is put away forever! It is this sweet sorrow that I want you to indulge. Up with the sluices, then, Brothers and Sisters, and let these sacred streams of sorrow flow forth!

I. And, first, LET US CONSIDER WHAT THIS SACRIFICE IS. It is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.

If you and I have a broken spirit, *all idea of our own importance is gone*. What is the use of a broken heart? Why, much the same as the use of a broken pot, or a broken jug, or a broken bottle! Men throw it on the dunghill! Hence David says, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You

will not despise,” as if he felt that everybody else would despise it. Now, do you feel that you are of no importance? Though you know that you are a child of God, do you feel that you would not give a penny for yourself? You would not wish to claim the first place. The rear rank suits you best and you wonder that you are in the Lord’s army in any rank at all.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I believe that the more God uses us, the less we shall think of ourselves, and the more He fills us with His Spirit, the more will our own spirit sink within us in utter amazement that He should ever make use of such broken vessels as we are! Well now, indulge that feeling of nothingness and unimportance! Not only indulge it as a feeling, but go and act upon it! And be you in the midst of your Brothers and Sisters less than the least—humble yourselves in wonder that God should permit your name to stand on the roll of His elect at all. Admire the Grace of God to you and marvel at it in deep humiliation of spirit. That is part of the sacrifice that God will not despise!

Next, if you and I have a broken and a contrite heart, it means that *frivolity and trifling have gone from us*. There are some who are always trifling with spiritual things, but he who gets a broken heart has done with that sort of spirit. A broken heart is serious, solemn and in earnest. A broken heart never tries to play any tricks with God and never shuffles texts as though even Scripture, itself, were meant only to be an opportunity for testing our wit. A broken spirit is tender, serious, weighed down with solemn considerations. Indulge that spirit, now—be solemn before God, grasp eternal things, let slip these shadows—what are they worth? But set your soul on things Divine and everlasting. Pursue that vein of thought and so bring before God a broken and a contrite spirit!

Further, a broken spirit is one out of which *hypocrisy has gone*. That vessel, whole and sealed up, may contain the most precious oil of roses, or it may contain the foulest filth—I know not what is in it. But break it and you will soon see! There is no hypocrisy about a broken heart. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be before men what you are before God! Seem to be what you really are. Make no pretences. I am afraid that we are all hypocrites in a measure—we both pray and preach above our own actual experience full often—and we, perhaps, think that we have more faith than we actually have and more love than we have ever known. The Lord make us to have a broken heart that is revealed by being broken! You know, now, what was in that pot, for there it lies, broken to shivers. Its contents are no longer concealed, they have all run out. Now, pour out your hearts before God as you sit there in your pews, and let Him see what He really does see—all that is in your soul—for in your hidden parts He would have you to know wisdom. Reveal yourselves unto yourselves and so reveal yourselves unto your God!

Once more, a broken spirit signifies that *all the secrets and essences of the spirit have flowed out*. You remember what happened when that holy woman broke the alabaster box? We read that “the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.” A broken heart cannot keep secrets! Now is all revealed. Now its essence goes forth. Far too much of our praying

and of our worship is like closed-up boxes—you cannot tell what is in them. But it is not so with broken hearts! When broken hearts sing, they sing! When broken hearts groan, they groan! Broken hearts never play at repenting, nor play at believing. There is much of religion, nowadays, that is very superficial, it is all on the surface. A very small quantity of Gospel paint, with just a little varnish of profession, will go a very long way, and look very bright. But broken hearts are not like that—with broken hearts the hymn is a *real* hymn, the prayer is a *real* prayer, the hearing of sermons is earnest work—and the preaching of them is the hardest work of all!

Oh, what a mercy it would be if some of you were broken all to pieces! There are many flowers that will never yield their perfume till they are bruised. Even the generous grape lets not its juice flow forth till it is trodden under foot of men. Breaking and bruising are fit treatment for the nature of men, especially for the new nature. When God has put sweetness into our hearts, it is then that breaking develops the sweetness. Oh, to worship God in spirit and in truth! One has well said, “No one ever worshipped God with his whole heart unless he worshipped him with a broken heart. And there never was a heart that was truly broken that did not, thereby, become a whole heart.” The divided heart is not broken, but the broken heart is never divided. I know that I am talking in riddles, but the wise will understand me. To get unity of spirit, there must be contrition and brokenness of heart.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US OFFER THE SACRIFICE.

I have told you a little of what the sacrifice means, now we will try, as God shall help us, to bear our brokenness of heart before the Lord. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us mourn for awhile on account of our past sin. We will do so from several points of view.

First, let us deeply regret that *we have sinned against so good a God*. While I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle. But when I knew Him to be my Father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against Him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin. But when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could have rebelled against One who loved me so and sought my good. Will you not now think of the goodness of God, Brothers and Sisters, and shall it not lead you to repentance? Shall we not feel within our hearts a burning indignation against sin because it is committed against so holy, so good, so glorious a Being as the infinitely blessed God?

Let me help you, again, and may the arrow pierce your very hearts this time! Let us mourn to think that *we have offended against so excellent and admirable a Law*. If the Law of God were like the laws of men, it might sometimes be a virtue to break it! But where a Law is so balanced, so perfect, oh, how could we have run contrary to it? Brothers and Sisters, the Law of God, when it says to us, “You shall not,” only sets up a danger signal to tell us where it is injurious to go. And when the Law says, “You shall,” it does but lift up a kindly hand to point out to us the

best and safest path. There is nothing in the Law of God that will rob you of happiness—it only denies you that which would cost you sorrow! We know that it is so and, therefore, we stand here and bow our head, and mourn that we should have been so foolish as to transgress, so willful and suicidally wicked as to do that evil thing which God hates and which so grievously injures us! We have nursed vipers when we have nursed sins! We have hatched the cockatrice's egg when we have thought upon iniquity! Therefore let us be truly sorry for our sin and for our folly.

You remember that I am talking to those of you who are saved, to those of you whose sins are forgiven. In my heart, I think that I can hear some others say, "Will you not let us join with you in repenting though we are not pardoned?" Bless your hearts, yes! God help you to join with us and if you do, you will find pardon, too, for pardon comes in this way! A broken heart can never long be divided from the broken Savior. You shall have peace with Him when you are at war with sin. But now I am especially inviting the people of God to sweetly grieve in this House of Prayer and offer the sacrifice of a contrite heart while they remember that they have sinned against God's perfect Law.

More than that—and this is a very tender point—let us grieve that *we have sinned against a Savior's love*. I like that verse we sang just now—

***"Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!"***

The greatest crime that was ever committed against high Heaven was that crime of deicide when men nailed the Son of God to the Cross and put Him to death as a criminal! Where are the wretches that did this awful deed? They are *here*—I will not say that they are before us, for each of us harbors one of them within his bosom. "Tis I"—"Tis I have thus ungrateful been." How can I speak to you thus? Well, perhaps, all the better, because from my very heart I ask that we may stand together at the foot of the Cross and count the purple drops and say, "These have washed away my sins, yet I helped to spill them. Those hands, those feet, have saved me, yet I nailed them there. That opened side is the refuge of my guilty spirit, yet I made that fearful gash by my sin. It was my sin that slew my Savior!"

O sin, you thrice accursed thing, away with you! Away with you! Come, let us be filled with mournful joy, with pleasurable sorrow, while we sit beneath the bloody tree and see what sin has done—and yet see how sin, itself, has been *undone* by Him who died upon the Cross on Calvary! Beloved, the more you love your Lord, the more you will hate sin. If you often sit at the table with Him and dip your hand into His dish. If you lean your head upon His bosom with the blessed John. If you are favored and indulged with the choicest brotherliness towards the Well-Beloved, I know that you will often find occasion to seek a quiet place where you may shed tears of bitter regret that you should ever have sinned against such a Savior as Jesus!

Let me help you, again, however, while I remind you, Beloved, *of our sins against the holy Spirit*. Oh, what do we not owe to the Holy Spirit? I speak to you who know Him. It is the Holy Spirit who quickened you, the Holy Spirit who convinced you of sin, the Holy Spirit who comforted you! And oh, how sweetly does that Divine Comforter still comfort! Yet we resisted Him and grieved Him. Do you not remember, in your youthful days, how you strangled your convictions, how you held down conscience and would not let it reprove you? That blessed Spirit, whom we vexed and spurned, might have left us and gone His way, never to strive with us again, but He loved us so that He came and took up His abode with us and now He dwells in us! Within the narrow cell of our poor heart He has condescended to find a temple for His perpetual indwelling. O my Soul, how could you ever grieve Him? How could you ever have resisted that best and most tender Friend? I do not ask you to torture yourselves, but I do invite you, Beloved, to now indulge the joyful grief of sweet heavenly penitence as you remember the love of the Spirit.

Let us go a step further and *set our sin in the light of God's Countenance*. I speak to you, Beloved, who are God's elect. He loved you from before the foundation of the world and yet you have sinned against Him. He chose you from among men, of His own Sovereign Grace, and ordained you to belong to Christ, and gave you to Jesus to be His forever! Alas, you knew it not, and you continued to sin against this distinguishing and discriminating Grace! Oh, that even the elect of God could have done this! See that you crucify the sin that suffered you to act so shamefully. Then in due time you were redeemed. For you, Beloved, Jesus shed His precious blood! He shed it not for all men, but with a special view to the redemption of His elect. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed us from among men! We have been the object of that special and peculiar redemption and yet against that dear Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, we rebelled and transgressed! Ordained to be of the blood royal of Heaven, and yet a rebel! Ordained on earth to have the love of God within our spirit and, in Heaven, to behold His face forever—ordained by Divine decree to this high destiny—and yet for many a year a rebel, a willful rebel against such wondrous love as this! I do not know what to say to myself! I despise myself, I loathe myself, that I should thus have acted against such extraordinary love!

Then remember, also, that you are God's child, adopted into His family, His twice-born, Divinely regenerated. You are an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ. And yet—and yet you have acted so sinfully! O God, You have forgiven Your servants but we have never forgiven ourselves! And we never mean to—we shall always mourn, even in our joy for pardoned guilt, that we, the favorites of Heaven, should have so grieved the Lord!

Go a little further. I want you to *set sin in the light of your marvelous experiences*. Oh, there are some of us who, without boasting, can tell of answered prayer when we have come back from the top of Carmel and we have cried, "I have won the day!" And yet to us who have been privileged,

thus, to have power with God, it was not always so. Perhaps the very lips that now prevail in prayer were once habituated to blasphemy. Oh, mourn, my Brother, if it were so! Can you ever stop mourning? When John Newton wrote the *Cardiphonia*, or, *Voice of the Heart*—when he left us that choice treasure—I am sure that he must often and often have smitten upon his breast and grieved over the thought that he was once, in Africa, a blasphemer and everything that was foul and bad!

Oh yes, wonders of Grace have been ours! Wonders of Grace! Wonders of Grace! We have tasted the wines on the lees well refined—yet once we drank of the wine of the clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah! What has Grace not done for us, Brothers and Sisters? You and I have been in the King's banqueting house and His banner of love has waved over us! And our Beloved has caught us away, "from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards," and manifested His love to us in the secret places where no eye saw except our own and His. There did He reveal to us His great love! Yet we were the very ones who once despised Him, broke His Sabbaths, refused to read His Word, neglected prayer, perhaps ridiculed holy things! We were proud, covetous, unholy—but we are washed, we are sanctified. Oh, let us sit here and sweetly repent, and present to our God the sacrifices of a broken and contrite spirit!

Besides, dear Friends, think of *the injury you have done to others by your example*. What a powerful preacher a mother is to her boy! What an influential preacher is a father to his son! What a mighty preacher one workman may be to another, especially if he is a man of stronger mind than his fellows! Whatever any of us do, we are sure to have some who will copy us—it cannot be avoided. You are all writing copies every day, even though you are not schoolmasters and there are some who will learn either bad or good writing from you, for they will copy your handwriting. I mean, that they will imitate what they *see in you*. In years to come, when you have forgotten what you did, some may be following your former example. I would urge young men—and I am glad to see a great many of them present—to pray that they may begin life in such a way that they may not have much back reckoning.

Suppose a man to be converted after his children are born. If those children have seen the father do wrong, they will, perhaps, remember the evil better than the good example of their converted father. When your children have once left your roof, what opportunities of influencing them aright you have lost! Though you may, yourselves, be saved by faith in Christ, yet you cannot call back the boys and the girls from those sinful ways into which you led them in the days of your ungodliness! This thought has a sharp sting in it for any who, by word or by example, have taught others to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. If this is your case, Beloved, while you praise God that He has forgiven your sin, yet mourn that you ever led any astray by your wrongdoing!

If that is not enough, I want to lead you a little further and bid you think of all *the opportunities that we lose whenever we fall into sin*. I re-

pent of sin unfeignedly because it has hindered my progress. I am now speaking only to the people of God, mark you. If any of you sinners want to creep in among them, you may, but I am especially addressing them. There is one here who, not long ago, was a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City and he went part of the way up the Hill Difficulty, climbing splendidly on his hands and knees. He made the best of his way up, but it came to pass that when he had gone about half-way up the hill, he found a little arbor by the roadside. It was built there by the Lord of the Way that he might rest himself a little in it, and then go on his way. But this Brother sat down in the arbor and he sat on till he went to sleep. And he slept there, I do not know how long. Just lately he has been awakened and he has gone on his way, again, climbing up, but he has discovered that he has lost the roll that he used to carry in his bosom.

It was a roll that he had when first he started at the head of the Way and he meant to present it to the Lord of the Celestial City when he came to his journey's end. But he has lost his roll. You know what Mr. Bunyan says of this matter. It was getting late, but Christian had lost his roll, so he had to go back, and he wisely went back to the place where he had fallen asleep—all the way moaning and sighing and crying to himself, "I have lost my evidences, I have lost my roll. Where shall I find it?" He was so glad when he looked under the bench, to see the roll there. I guarantee you that he quickly picked it up, put it in his bosom! But then, you see, he had to go over that part of the road *three* times. If he had not lost his roll and had to go back, he might, by that time, have been much further on the road. There were lions in that region and that was ugly for him. If he had got into the House Beautiful earlier in the day, he would not have suffered the fears he now had. So he went along in a very sad state of mind and all because of that careless sleeping in the arbor. Oh, what some of you might have been if it had not been for your sins since conversion! What a preacher I might have been! What workers in the Sunday school you might have been! Oh, what winners of souls you might have become by this time! But you have been asleep and had to go back, perhaps, and so you have missed many opportunities of serving Christ.

Let us sit and think this matter over and begin to say, "Lord, we present to You a broken and contrite heart, mourning and lamenting, for if we are straitened, we are straitened in ourselves, not in You. If we are mourning in darkness, we, ourselves, made the darkness. If we are desponding, we have, in a large measure, created the despondency. Lord, we grieve and sorrow for all this." Since I have been in this house, tonight, I have heard of a dear Brother, whose prayers I remember among the first I heard when I came to be pastor of this Church. He passed away, today, and has gone to his reward, an old man and full of years. That Brother is where you and I will be very soon! Do not talk about *years*—they go so quickly and our friends pass away quickly, too.

Just the other day a man of God sat at his table writing. He had dipped his pen in the ink, but he never laid it on the paper, for he fell

asleep, then and there, and he was gone Home. We, too, shall soon pass away. “Perhaps in a few days I shall be among the angels”—say that to yourself, my Brother. Perhaps in a few weeks I shall behold the face of Him I love”—say that, my Sister. It will come true! Perhaps in a few years—no, drop the, “perhaps,” and say—“Certainly, within a few years, I shall behold the Beatific Vision.”—

**“Father I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode.”**

I see myself walking over that street of gold that shines like glass! Earthly gold is dull, you cannot see into it. If you could, you would see the tears of the oppressed and, sometimes, the blood of crushed men in it. But the gold of Heaven is good and you can see into it, as you could into a sea of glass. I think I am walking there. I hardly know myself and there I meet one and another of you whom I knew, here, and we go together down that golden street and look in at the many mansions, from which come out many to welcome us, and we thread our way into the center. There is no temple there, no tabernacle of worship there, but we get into the center and we stand upon the glassy sea into which all the streets seem to run. And as we look around, we see angels and elders bowing there before the Throne of the Infinite Majesty, and we are there and we bow with them. And when we lift up our eyes to that Light, we sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!”

Now I want you to *think of your sins in the light of that Glory*. Oh, how could those who are predestinated to these heavenly seats ever have wandered into sin? What? Was it so that we, who were born to behold the face of God, ever loved the theater and all its abominations? What? Did we, who were ordained to be peers with cherubim and seraphim, ever love the racetrack and all its gambling? What? Were we, whom God has made to be conformed to the image of His firstborn Son, ever seen to be drunk and staggering through the streets, defiled with unchastity, or polluted with gluttony, or guilty of covetousness, or cursed with pride? What? We whom the Lord has loved with an everlasting love and without whom Christ, Himself, will not be content to reign in Heaven, groveling in iniquity?

Oh, I think these questions must have helped to make sin seem contemptible and loathsome! I point at it the finger of scorn! O dear children of God, scorn your sins, lament your sins, weep over your sins! Indulge that feeling and God will accept it when it is mixed with faith in His dear Son, for “the sacrifices of God,” that is, all sorts of sacrifices put together—sin-offerings, burnt offerings, peace-offerings, scapegoats and all together—“the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” One broken spirit is worth them all! “A broken and a contrite heart”—though there is but one such—“O God, You will not despise.”

God bless you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.**

This is a portion of Scripture which can never be read too often. If any among us have never found mercy, let them use this Psalm as their own personal *prayer*—while those who *have* found mercy can read between the lines and read the sweetness of pardon into the bitterness of sorrow for sin! This Psalm was written by David when Nathan came to him after his great sin with Bathsheba. He needed Nathan to come to him to rebuke him. If David had not been in a very sad state of heart, he would not have fallen into the sin. It was that state of heart which left him so hardened, so obdurate, that he needed Nathan pointedly to say to him, “You are the man.” After that, he wrote and prayed this truly penitential Psalm.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness.* He used to talk about being God’s servant, but he says nothing about that, now. He used to speak of God’s great love to him, but he cannot realize that, now. Yet he appeals to God for mercy—“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness.”

1. *According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.* “There they are, they stare me in the face; nobody but You can blot them out; do it, Lord, for Your sweet mercy’s sake. Blot them out of existence and out of memory. And when You have blotted them from Your Book of Remembrance, then blot them from me, too.”

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* “If washing will not do, use fire, use blood, use anything, but cleanse me from my sin.”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me.* “Lord, help me. Here is my sin—I cannot shut my eyes to it. I dare not deny it, or excuse it. I make a clean breast of it. I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me.”

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.* “I have sinned against others, but this is the foulness of the blot, the venom of the sting, that I have sinned against my God.”

4, 5. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.* “Behold, for this is a wonder, and I look at it and I mourn over it. Behold, before I had a shape, I was out of shape! Before I saw anything, still there was sin antecedent to my very existence.”

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* “But, alas, Lord, what You desire is not there. In my inward part I find falsehood! In my hidden part, I find folly! Lord, what You desire, You must also bestow, or else I shall never have it! Oh, hear Your servant’s supplication!”

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* This is delightful pleading on David’s part. He had seen the priest take the sprigs of hyssop, dip them in the blood and then

sprinkle the leper. So his prayer is, “Lord, give me purification through the Atonement. ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.’” It requires strong faith, when under a deep sense of sin, to be quite sure that God can put the sin away. It is a grand thing to be able to say, “Wash me, foul as I am, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* “Lord, I have heard nothing but groans, lately, and I have made no sound but sighs—‘Make me to hear joy and gladness.’”

8. *That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* When God makes us feel the weight of sin, it is a bone-breaking operation. He seems to strike as though He would kill—and only He that thus strikes can afterwards heal. Then He makes each fragment of the bone to sing and praise Him!

9. *Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.* You see that the Psalmist has many names for sin, for evil, like a great rogue, has many aliases. So it is sometimes sin. Sometimes it is transgression, passing over the line of right. And sometimes it is inequity, or a departure from perfect equity. “Call it by whatever name it may be called, Lord, let me be rid of it. ‘Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.’”

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* “My Creator, I am spoiled. Come and make me over again. My heart has grown foul. You who did make me, clean me.” The watchmaker best cleans the watch that he made. “Create in me a clean heart, O my Creator, and renew a right spirit within me.”

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence.* “I have acted as if You were not present, but, oh, do not fling me away! Do not take Your Presence away from me.”

11, 12. *And take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.* “Once I was so happy. Oh, give me back my joy!”

12. *And uphold me with Your free Spirit.* “I have fallen foully; let me not fall again. Henceforth, I cannot trust myself; You uphold me. I have been free to sin. Lord, send me a freer spirit, that I may be free to follow after righteousness.”

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.* He would turn preacher if God would but bless him! He would tell others what great things God had done for him.

13. *And sinners shall be converted unto You.* He felt sure that if he once told his tale of love, others would be melted and would turn to God—and no doubt it was the case.

14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* “Once cleanse me from my sin and I will sing Your praises forever! And I will sing earnestly, too—‘My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.’”

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He felt as if he was going too fast when he promised to speak and to sing, so he prayed, “O Lord, open You my lips”—

15. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.* When good men have had a fall, they walk very tenderly afterwards. Once put them on their legs and they are very careful how they move. They are afraid to speak except as God opens their lips.

16. *For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it.* David remembered that under the Law there was no sacrifice appointed for the expiation of *adultery*. There were some sins that were left out of the catalog, and this was one of them.

16, 17. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* Even for the man who has committed the most atrocious crimes, there is still acceptance if he brings God the sacrifice of a broken spirit!

17, 18. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build, You, the walls of Jerusalem.* Now that he feels himself forgiven, he begins to pray for the good estate of the Church of God and the Lord's people everywhere! We cannot do that when sin is breaking our bones—but when we get peace and rest, then the first instinct of the newborn life is to pray for God's Kingdom—"Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build, You, the walls of Jerusalem."

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.*

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UNIMPEACHABLE JUSTICE

NO. 86

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 15, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Against You, You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak and be clear when You judge.”
Psalm 51:4.***

YESTERDAY was to me a day of deep solemnity. A pressure rested on my mind throughout the whole of it which I could not, by any possibility, remove. At every hour I remembered that during that day one of the most fallen of my fellow creatures was launched into an unknown world and made to stand before his Maker. Some might have witnessed his execution without tears. I think I could not even have *thought* of it for long without weeping at the terrible idea of a man so guilty, about to commence that endless period of unmingled misery which is the horrible doom of the impenitent which God has prepared for sinners. Yesterday morning the sun saw a sight which sickened it—the sight of a man launched, by a judicial process—into eternity, for guilt which has rendered him infamous and which will stamp his name with disgrace as long as it shall be remembered.

There is now agitating the public mind, something which I thought I might improve this day and turn to a very excellent purpose. There are only two things concerning which the public have any suspicion. The verdict of the jury was the verdict of the whole of England—we were unanimous as to the high probability, the well-near absolute certainty of his guilt. But there were two doubts in our minds—one of them but small, we grant you, but if both could have been resolved, we would have felt more easy than we do now. The one was concerning the criminal's guilt and the other was concerning his punishment. At least some few of our fellow countrymen have been afraid lest we may not have been justified when we spoke against him and quite clear when he was judged. Two things were needed—we would have liked to have had his own confession—and certainly we would have preferred something more than circumstantial evidence. We desired to have had the testimony of an eyewitness who could swear to the deed of murder done. But moreover, there is also a strong feeling in the mind of many that the severity of the punishment is questionable. There are some who pronounce authoritatively that the murderer's blood must be shed for murder. But there are some who think the Christian dispensation has ameliorated the law and

that now it is no longer, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” Many persons in England have shuddered at the thought of executing a penalty so fearful on any man, however great his crime, seeing that it puts him beyond the pale of hope. I shall not enter into the question of the rightness of capital punishment. I have my opinion upon it, but this is not exactly the place to state it—I only wish to use these facts as an illustration of the text. David says, “O Lord, hear my own confession—‘against You, You only, have I sinned,’ and by my own confession You would ‘be justified when You speak and clear when You judge.’ And, Lord, there is something else besides my own confession. You, Yourself, were eyewitness of my deed. ‘Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.’ And now you are, indeed, ‘justified when you speak and clear when you judge.’ And as to the severity of my punishment, there can be no doubt of that.” There may be doubt of the severity when man executes punishment for a crime against man, but there can be no doubt when God, Himself, executes vengeance for a crime that is committed against Himself. “You are justified when You speak, You are clear when You judge.”

Our subject this morning, then, will be that both in the condemnation and in the punishment of every sinner, God will be justified—and He will be made most openly clear from the two facts of the sinner’s own confession and God, Himself, having been an eyewitness of the deed. And as for the severity of it, there shall be no doubt upon the mind of any man who shall receive it, for God shall prove to him in his own soul that damnation is nothing more nor less than the legitimate reward of sin.

There are two kinds of condemnation—*the one is the condemnation of the Elect*. This takes place in their hearts and consciences when they have the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves—a condemnation which is invariably followed by peace with God. After that there is no further condemnation, for they are then in Christ Jesus and they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The second condemnation is that of the *finally impenitent*, who, when they die, are most righteously and justly condemned by God for the sins they have committed—a condemnation not followed by pardon, as in the present case, but followed by inevitable damnation from the Presence of God. On both these condemnations we will discourse this morning. God is clear when He speaks and He is just when He condemns, whether it is the condemnation which He passes on Christian hearts, or the condemnation which He pronounces from His Throne, when the wicked are dragged before Him to receive their final doom.

I. In the first place, CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN, when he feels himself condemned by conscience and by God’s Holy Spirit—and when he hears the thunders of God’s Law proclaiming against him a sentence which, if it had not been already executed on his Savior, would have been fulfilled on him—the man has no grounds whatever, at that time, to

plead any excuse! But he will say, in the words of the Psalmist, "You are justified when You speak and clear when You judge." Let me show you how.

1. In the first place, *there is a confession*. With regard to the man who was executed yesterday, there was no confession. We could not have expected it—such crimes could not have been committed by a man capable of confessing them. The fact that he died hardened in his guilt is well-near conclusive proof that he was guilty, for had he betrayed any emotion, or had he bowed his knees and cried for mercy, we might, then, have suspected that he had not been guilty of so dark a deed of blood. But from the very fact that he hardened his heart, we infer that he was capable of committing crimes, the infamy of which point them out as the offspring of a seared and torpid conscience! The Christian, when he is condemned by the Holy Law, makes a confession—a full and free confession. He feels, when God records the sentence against him, that the execution of it would be just, for his now honest heart compels him to confess the whole story of his guilt. Allow me to make some remarks on the confession which is followed by pardon.

First, such a confession is *a sincere one*. It is not the prattling confession used by the mere formalist when he bends his knees and exclaims that he is a sinner. It is a confession which is undoubtedly sincere because it is attended by awful agonies of mind and usually by tears, sighs and groans. There is something about the penitent's demeanor which puts it beyond the possibility of a fear that he is a deceiver when he is confessing his sin. There is an outward emotion, manifesting the inward anguish of the spirit. He stands before God and does not merely turn King's evidence against himself, as the means of saving himself, but with tears in his eyes he cries, "O God, I am guilty." And then he begins to recount the circumstances of his crime, even as if God had never seen him. He tells God what God already knows—and then the Gracious One proves the Truth of the promise—"he that confesses his sin shall find mercy."

In the next place, that confession is *always abundantly sufficient* for our own condemnation. The Christian feels that if he had only half the sin to confess that he is obliged to tell God, it would be enough to damn his soul forever—that if he had only *one crime* to acknowledge, it would be like a millstone round his neck to sink him forever in the bottomless pit of Hell! He feels that his confession is superabundantly enough to condemn him—that it is almost a work of supererogation to confess all, for there is enough in one tenth of it to send his soul to Hell and make it abide there forever! Have you ever confessed your sins like this? If not, as God lives, you have never known what it is to make a true confession of your sin! You have never had the sentence of condemnation passed on you in that way which is succeeded by mercy. But you are yet awaiting

that terrible sentence which shall be succeeded by no words of love, but by the execution of the sentence of infinite indignation and displeasure!

This confession is attended with *no apology on account of sin*. We have heard of men who have confessed their guilt and afterwards tried to extenuate their crime and show some reasons why they were not so guilty as apparently they would seem to be. But when the Christian confesses his guilt, you never hear a word of extenuation or apology from him. He says, "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." And in saying this, he makes God just when He condemns him, and clear when He sentences him forever. Have you ever made such a confession? Have you ever thus bowed yourselves before God? Or have you tried to palliate your guilt and call your sins by little names and speak of your crimes as if they were but light offenses? If you have not, then you have not felt the sentence of death in yourselves. You are still waiting till the solemn death-knell shall toll the hour of your doom and you shall be dragged out, amidst the universal hiss of the execration of the world, to be condemned forever to flames which shall never know abatement!

Again—after the Christian confesses his sin, *he offers no promise that he will, of himself, behave better*. Some, when they make confessions to God, say, "Lord, if you forgive me I will not sin again." But God's penitents never say that. When they come before Him they say, "Lord, once I promised, once I made resolves, but I dare not make them now, for they would be so soon broken! They would but increase my guilt and my promises would be so soon violated that they would but sink my soul deeper in Hell. I can only say if You will create in me a clean heart, I will be thankful for it and will sing to Your praise forever. But I cannot promise that I will live without sin, or work out a righteousness of my own. I dare not promise, my Father, that I will never go astray again—

***'Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline
And prove like they at last.'***

"Lord, if You do damn me, I cannot murmur. If You cast me into Hell, I cannot complain. But have mercy upon me, a sinner, for Jesus Christ's sake." In that case, you see, God is justified when He condemns and He is clear when He judges, even clearer than any earthly judge can be, because it is seldom that such a confession as that is ever made before the bar.

2. Again—when the Christian is condemned by the Law in his conscience, there is something else which makes God just in condemning him, beside his confession, and that is the fact that God, *Himself*, the Judge, comes forward as a Witness to the crime. The convinced sinner feels in his own soul that his sins were committed in the face of God, in the teeth of His mercy and that God was an exact and minute Observer

of every part and particle of the crime for which he is now to be condemned, and the sin which has brought him to the bar. "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in *Your sight*—that You may be found just when You speak and be clear when You judge."

The convinced sinner who has just become a Christian feels at that time that God was a Witness and that he was a most *veracious* Witness—that He saw and saw most clearly. And when God, by His Law, says to him, "Sinner, you did such-and-such a thing and such-and-such a thing," the awakened conscience says, "Lord, that is true. It is true in every circumstance." And when God goes on to say, "Your motives were vile, your objectives were sinful," conscience says, "Yes, Lord, that is true. I know that You did see it and that You are a sure Observer. You are no false witness but all that You say in Your Law about me is true." When God says, "The poison of asps is under your lips, your throat is an open sepulcher, you flatter with your tongue," conscience says, "It is all true." And when He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," conscience says, "It is all true." And the sinner has this awful thought, that every sin he ever sinned is written in Heaven and God records it there! He feels, therefore, that God is just when He condemns and clear when He judges.

And, moreover, God is not simply a veracious witness, but the testimony God gives is *an abundant one*. You know that in some cases which are brought before our courts, the witness swears that he saw the man do such-and-such. But then he may be mistaken as to the identity of the person. Perhaps he did not see the whole transaction. And then he has not pried into the man's heart to see what were the man's reasons, which may make the crime lighter or greater, as the case may be. But here we have a Witness who can say, "I saw all the crime. I saw the lust when it was conceived. I saw the sin when it was brought forth. I saw the sin when it was finished, bringing forth death. I saw the motive. I beheld the first imagination. I saw the sin when, as a black rivulet, it started on its way—when it suddenly began to increase by contributions of evil. And I saw it when it became, at last, a broad ocean of unfathomable depth—an ocean of guilt which human feet could not pass and over, which the ship of Mercy could not have sailed unless some mighty Pilot had steered it by shedding His own blood." Then the Christian feels that God, having seen it all, is justified when He speaks and clear when He condemns. I would feel a solemn responsibility, if I were a judge, in putting on the black cap to condemn a man to death—because, however carefully I may have weighed the evidence and however clear the guilt of the prisoner may have seemed—there is a possibility of a mistake. And it seems a solemn thing to have consigned a fellow creature's soul to a future world, even with a possibility of an error in that judgment! But if I had, myself, beheld the bloody act, with what ease of mind might I then put on the black

cap and condemn the man as being guilty, for I should know and the world would know, that having been a witness, I would be just when I spoke and clear when I condemned! Now, that is just what the Christian feels when God condemns him in his conscience—he puts his hand upon his mouth and yields without a word to the justness of the sentence! Conscience tells him he was guilty, because God, Himself, was a Witness.

3. The other question which I hinted at as being on the public mind, is *the severity of the punishment*. In the case of a Believer, when he is condemned, there is no doubt about the justice of the punishment. When God, the Holy Spirit, in the soul, passes sentence on the old man and condemns it for its sins, there is felt most solemnly in the heart the great Truth of God that Hell, itself, is but a rightful punishment for sin. I have heard some men dispute whether the torments of Hell were not too great for the sins which men can commit. We have heard men say that Hell was not a right place to send such sinners to as they were! But we have always found that such men found fault with Hell because they knew right well they were going there! As every man finds fault with the gallows who is going to be hung, so do many men find fault with Hell because they fear that they are in danger of it. The opinion of a man about to be executed must not be taken with regard to the propriety of capital punishment, nor must we take the opinion of a man who is, himself, marching to Hell concerning the justice of Hell, for he is not an impartial judge. But the convinced sinner is a fair witness—God has made him so—for he feels in his soul that there will be pardon given to him and that God, by Divine Grace, will never condemn him there. But at the same time, he feels that he deserves it and he confesses that Hell is not too great a punishment nor the eternity of it is not too long a duration of punishment for the sin which he has committed. I appeal to you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters—you may have had doubts as to the propriety of your being sent to Hell before you knew your sins—but I ask you, when you were convinced of God, did you not solemnly feel that He would be unjust if He did *not* damn your soul forever? Did you not say in your prayer, “Lord, if You should now command the earth to open and swallow me up, I could not lift up my finger to murmur against You. And if You were now to roll over my head the billows of eternal fire, I could not, in the midst of my howling in misery, utter one single word of complaint about Your justice”? And did you not feel that if you were to be one thousand, thousand years in Hell, you would not have been there long enough? You felt you deserved it all! And if you had been asked what was the right punishment for sin, you would have dared not, even if your own soul had been at stake, written anything except that sentence, “everlasting fire.” You would have been obliged to have written that, for you felt it was but deserved doom. Now, was not God just, then, when He condemned, and clear when He judged? And did He not come off clear from

the Judgment Seat, because you, yourself, said the sentence would not have been one whit too severe if it had been fulfilled, instead of being simply recorded and then you, yourself, set at liberty?

Ah, my dear Friends, there may be some who rail at God's Justice, but no convinced sinner ever will! He sees God's Law in all its glorious holiness and he strikes his hand upon his breast and he says, "O sinner that I am, that I ever could have sinned against such a reasonable Law and such perfect Commandments!" He sees God's love towards him and that cuts him to the very quick. He says, "Oh, that I should ever have spit on the face of Christ who died for me! Wretch that I am, that I could ever have crowned that bleeding head with the thorns of my sins, which gave itself to slumber in the grave for my redemption!" Nothing cuts the sinner to the quick more than the fact that he has sinned against a great amount of mercy. This, indeed, makes him weep. And he says, "O Lord, seeing as I have been so ungrateful, the doom You can ever sentence me to, or the fiercest punishment You can ever execute upon my head would not be too heavy for the sins I have committed against You!" And then the Christian feels, too, what a deal of mischief he has done in the world by sin. Ah, if he has been spared to middle age before he is converted, he looks back and says, "Ah, I cannot tell how many have been damned by my sins. I cannot tell how many have been sent down to Hell by words which I have used, or deeds which I have committed." I confess before you all, that one of the greatest sorrows I had, when first I knew the Lord, was to think about certain persons with whom I knew right well that I had held ungodly conversations and sundry others that I had tempted to sin. And one of the prayers that I always offered, when I prayed for myself, was that such an one might not be damned through sins to which I had tempted him. And I dare say this will be the case with some of you when you look back. Your dear child has been a sad reprobate. And you think, "Did not I teach him very much that was wrong?" And you hear your neighbors swear and you think, "I cannot tell how many I taught to blaspheme."

Then you will recollect your companions, those you used to play cards or dance with and you will think, "Ah, poor souls, I have damned them!" And then you will say, "Lord, You are just if You damn me." When you reflect what a deal of mischief you have done by yourself, you will then say, "Lord, You are clear when You judge. You are justified when You condemn." I warn you who are going on in your sins, that one of the most fearful things you have to expect is to meet those in another world who perished through being led astray by you! Think of it, O man! You who have been an universal tempter! There is a man, now in Hell, who was taught to drink his first glass through you. There lies a soul on his deathbed and he says, "Ah, John, I had not been here, as I now am, if you had not led me into evil courses which have weakened my body and

brought me to death's door." Oh, what a horrible fate will yours be, when, as you walk into the mouth of Hell, you will see eyes staring at you and hear voices saying, "Here he comes! Here comes the man that helped to damn my soul!" And what must be your fate when you must lie forever tossed on the bed of pain with that man whom you were the means of damning? As those who are saved will make jewels in the crowns of glory to the righteous, surely those whom you helped to damn will forge fresh fetters for you and furnish fearful fire wood to increase the flames of torment which shall blaze around your spirit! Mark that and be warned. The Christian feels this terrible fact when he is convinced of sin and that makes him feel that God would be clear if He judged him and would be justified if He condemned him. So much concerning this first condemnation.

II. But now a little concerning THE SECOND CONDEMNATION, which is the more fearful of the two. Some of you have never been condemned by God's Law in your conscience. Now, as I stated at first that every man must be condemned once, so I beg to repeat it. You must either have the sentence of condemnation passed on you by Law in your conscience and then find mercy in Christ Jesus, or else you must be condemned in another world, when you shall stand with all the human race before God's Throne! The first condemnation to the Christian, though exceedingly merciful, is terrible to bear. It is a wounded spirit which none can endure! But, as for the second condemnation, if I could preach with sighs and tears, I could not tell you how horrible that must be! Ah, my Friends, could some sheeted ghost start from its tomb and be reunited to the spirit which has been for years in Hell, possibly such a man might preach to you and let you know what a fearful thing it will be to be condemned at last! But as for my poor words, they are but air. For I have not heard the *misery* of the condemned, nor have I listened to the sighs and groans and moans of lost spirits! If I had ever been permitted to gaze within the sheet of fire which walls the Gulf of Despair—if I had ever been allowed to walk for one moment over that burning mixture whereon is built the dreadful dungeon of eternal vengeance—then I might tell you somewhat of its misery. But I cannot, now, for I have not seen those doleful sights which might frighten our eyes from their sockets and make each individual's hair stand upon our heads! I have not seen such things—but, though I have not seen them, nor you either—we know enough of them to understand that God will be just when He condemns and that He will be clear when He judges. And, now, I must go over the three points again. But I must be very brief about them.

1. God will be clear when He condemns a sinner from this fact—that the sinner, when he stands before God's bar—will either have made a confession, or else such will be his terror that he will scarcely be able to brazen it out before the Almighty. Look at Judas. When he comes before

God's bar, will not God be clear in condemning him? For he, himself, confessed, "I have sinned against innocent blood," and he threw the money down in the Temple. And few men are so hardened as to restrain themselves from acknowledging their guilt. How many of you, when you thought you were dying, made a confession upon your deathbeds to your God! And mark you, there will be many of you, who, when you come to die, though you have never confessed, yet will lie there and confess before God in your moments of wakefulness during the night, the sins of your youth and your former transgressions. And it may be that when you are laying there, God's vengeance will be heavy on your conscience. Then you will be obliged to tell those who stand about your bed that you have been guilty of notorious sins. Ah, will not God be just when you shall go straight from your deathbed to His bar and He shall say, "Sinner, you are condemned on your own confession. There is no need for Me to open the book, no need for Me to pronounce the sentence. You have, yourself, pronounced your own guilt. Before you died, you stamped yourself with condemnation—'depart you cursed!'"

And though there will be many die who never made a confession in this world and, perhaps, there will be some professors so brazen-faced that they will even stand before God's Throne and say, "When did we see You hungry and gave You nothing to eat? When did we see You naked and clothed You not?" Yet I cannot believe that most of them will be able to plead any excuse. I find Christ saying of one, that he stood speechless when he was asked how he got in, not having on a wedding garment. And so it may be with you, Sirs. You may brazen it out when here—you may scorn the Law and despise the thunders of Sinai—but it will be different with you, *then*. You may sit up in your bed and rail against Christ even when death is staring you in the face—but you will not do it, *then*. Those bones of yours which you thought were of iron will suddenly be melted. That heart of yours, which was like steel or the nether millstone, will be dissolved like wax in the your midst! You will begin to cry before God and weep and howl—you will testify to your own guilt when you say, "Rocks! Hide me! Mountains! Fall on me." For you would need no mountains and no rocks to fall upon you if you were not guilty! You will be justly condemned, for you will make your own confession when you stand before God's bar. Ah, if you could see the criminal, then, what a difference there is in him! Where, now, are those eyes that stared so impiously at the Bible? Where, now, are those lips which said, "I curse God and die!" Where, now, is that heart which was once so stout, that spirit once so valiant as to laugh at Hell and talk familiarly with death? Ah, where is it? Is that the same creature—he whose knees are knocking together, whose hair is standing up on end? Whose blanched cheek displays the terror of his soul? Is that the same man who just now was burning with impudent rage against his Maker? Yes, it is he—hear what he has to say, "O God, I

hate You. I confess it. I was unjust in the world that has gone by and I am unjust now. Wreak your vengeance on me. I dare ask no mercy and no pardon, for still fixed is my heart to rebel against You. Indissoluble are the bonds of my guilt—I am dammed, I am damned and I ought to be!” Such will be the confession of every man when he shall stand before his God at last, if he is out of Christ and unwashed in the Savior’s blood. Sinners! Can you hear that and not tremble? Then I have a wonder before me this day—a wonder of conscience, a wonder of hardness of heart, a wonder of impenitency!

2. But in the second place, God will be just because *there will be witnesses there to prove it*. There will be none of you, my dear Friends, if you are ever condemned, who will be condemned on circumstantial evidence—there will be no necessity for the deliberation of a jury. There will be no conflicting evidence concerning your crimes. There will be no doubts to testify in your favor. In fact, if God, Himself, should ask for witnesses in your case, all the witnesses would be against you! But there will be no need of witnesses. God, Himself, will open His Book and how astonished will you be when all your crimes are announced—with every individual circumstance connected with them—all the minuteness of your motives and an exact description of your designs! Suppose I would be allowed to open one of the books of God and read that description. How astonished you would be! But what will be your astonishment when God shall open His great book and say, “Sinner, here is your case,” and begin to read! Ah, mark how the tears run down the sinner’s cheeks. The sweat of blood comes from every pore. And the loud thundering voice still reads on, while the righteous execrate the man who could commit such acts as are recorded in that book. There may be no murder staining the page, but there may be the filthy imagination—and God reads what a man imagines, for to imagine sin is vile, though to do it is viler still! I know I would not like to have my thoughts read over for a single day. Oh, when you stand before God’s bar and hear all this, will you not say, “Lord, You will condemn me, but I cannot help saying You are just when You condemn and clear when You judge.” There will be eyewitnesses there.

3. But lastly, in the sinner’s heart there will be no doubt as to the *righteousness of his punishment*. The sinner may in this world think that he can never, by his sins, by any possibility deserve Hell. But he will not indulge that thought when he gets there. One of the miseries of Hell will be that the sinner will feel that he deserves it all. Tossed on a wave of fire, he will see written in every spark that emanates from there, “You knew your duty and you did it not.” Tossed back, again, by another wave of flames, he hears a voice saying, “Remember, you were warned!” He is hurled upon a rock and while he is being wrecked there, a voice says, “I told you it would be better for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment

than for you.” Again he plunges under another wave of brimstone and a voice says, “He that believes not shall be damned—you did not believe—and you are here.” And when again he is hurled up and down on some wave of torture, each wave shall bear to him some dreadful sentence which he read in God’s Word, in a tract, or in a sermon. Yes, it may be, my Friends, that I shall be one of your tormentors in Hell, if you should be damned. I trust in God that I, myself, shall be in Heaven. And perhaps, if you are lost, one of the most powerful things that shall tend to increase your misery will be the fact that I have always tried to warn you and warn you as earnestly as possible! And when you lift up your eyes to Heaven, you will shriek and say, “O God! There is my minister looking down reprovingly on me and saying, ‘Sinner, I warned you.’” If you are lost, it is not for lack of preaching! If you are damned, it is not because I did not tell you how you might be saved! If you are in Hell, it is not because I did not weep over you and urge you to flee from the wrath to come, for I did warn you—and that will be the terror of your doom—that you have despised warnings and invitations and have destroyed yourself! God is not accountable for your damnation and man is not accountable for it. But you, yourself, have done it. And you will say, “O Lord, it is true. I am now tossed in fire but I lit the flame. It is true that I am tormented but I forged the irons which now confine my limbs. I burned the brick that has built my dungeon. I brought myself here! I walked to Hell even as a fool goes to the stocks, or an ox to the slaughter! I sharpened the knife which is now cutting my vitals! I nursed the viper which is now devouring my heart! I sinned, which is the same as saying that I damned myself, for to sin is to damn myself—the two words are synonymous.” Sin is damnation’s sire, it is the root, and damnation is the horrible flower which must inevitably spring from it! Yes, my dear Friends, I tell you yet again there will be nothing more patent before the Throne of God than the fact that God will be just when He sends you to Hell! You will feel that, then, even though you do not feel it now!

I thought within myself just this minute, that I heard the whisper of someone saying, “Well, Sir, I feel that such men as Palmer, a murderer, will feel that God is just in damning them, but I have not sinned as they have done.” It is true, but if your sins are less, remember that your conscience is more tender, for according to the amount of guilt, men’s consciences generally begin to get harder. And because your conscience is more tender, your little sin is a great sin, because it is committed against greater light and greater tenderness of heart. And I tell you—a little sin against great light may be greater than a great sin against little light! You must measure your sins not by their apparent heinousness, but by the light against which you sinned. No crime could be much worse than the crime of Sodom. But even Sodom, filthy Sodom, shall not have so hot a place as a moral young lady who has fed the poor and clothed the naked

and done all she could—but never loved Christ! What do you say to that? Is it unjust? No, if I am a less sinner than another, I all the more deserve to be damned if I do not come to Christ for mercy!

Oh, my dear Hearers, my beloved Hearers, *I* cannot bring you to Christ! Christ has brought some of you, Himself, but *I* cannot bring you to Christ! How often have I tried to do it! I have tried to preach my Savior's love and this day I have preached my Father's wrath—but I feel I cannot bring you to Christ! I may preach God's Law, but that will not frighten you unless *God* sends it home to your heart! I may preach my Savior's love, but that will not woo you unless my Father draws you! I am sometimes tempted to wish that I could draw you myself—that I could save you. Surely, if I could, you would soon be saved! But ah, remember, your minister can do but little—he can do nothing else but preach to you. Do pray that God would bless me a little, I beseech you, you who can pray. If I could do more, I would do it. But it is very little I can do for a sinner's salvation. Do, I beseech you, my dear people, pray to God to bless the feeble means that I use. It is His work and His salvation. But He can do it. O poor trembling Sinner, do you now weep? Then come to Christ! O poor haggard Sinner, haggard in your soul! Come to Christ! O poor sin-bitten Sinner! Look to Christ! O poor worthless Sinner! Come to Christ! O poor trembling, fearing, hungering, thirsting Sinner, come to Christ! "Everyone that thirsts, come to the waters. And he that has no money, come, buy wine and milk. Come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Come! Come! Come! God help you to come! For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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

GOD'S DESIRE FOR US, AND HIS WORK IN US NO. 3486

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON AUGUST 11, 1870.

“Behold You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.”
Psalm 51:6.

WHAT a contrast is here and I think intended to be here! In the verse before this one, David describes human nature as it is in its original. He was shaped in iniquity and in sin did his mother conceive him. So that throughout his entire nature from the very first there was iniquity and sin. But God desires the very opposite, so that he felt that he was the very opposite of what God would have him to be. God desires truth and his heart had been false to God. God would have him to be wise and he was, from his very birth, as foolish as a wild donkey's colt. Observe, then, that wide as the Poles are asunder is human nature—and what God would have human nature to be! It would be right to tell you that the older translators and commentators have been accustomed to read this verse somewhat differently from our own version, though I believe our own version to be correct. Calvin and others that preceded him thought that David here said, “You desire truth in the inward part, and in the hidden part you *have made me to know wisdom,*” putting it in the past tense. They thought that David said this to show how very inexcusable was his sin—“I am not an untaught one—an uninstructed person. I have not been left without knowledge of Your Law, of what sin is and of what holiness is. You have made me to know wisdom. I have felt Your power within my heart. I have been taught in my most secret places to know You, and yet for all that, I have revolted and gone aside, and committed this foul sin of adultery and murder.” If so—if that is the correct translation (and there is no reason why that should not be correct, as well as the one we have here), it teaches us that it is a great aggravation to sin when sin is committed by a Christian. Never say that because a man is a Believer his sin is less! No, but if it is the same sin as in another, it is far worse in him than it would be in another! A stranger may say of me what my child must not say without being guilty of great ingratitude and much unkindness. It was you, a man, my friend, my acquaintance—this made the treachery of Judas to become so cutting to the Savior. The nearer a man is to God's heart, the more detestable is the sin in him! You cannot bear to see an evil in one you love. If one you love has a toothache, you think more of the pain of that beloved one than of some far greater sickness of one in whom you take no concern. So sin is a disease which,

when God sees in His own beloved child, He perceives it with sorrow and He is quick to remove it and to heal it. Never trifle with sin because you are a Christian! Rather be the more careful to watch against it—

***“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake, my Soul, when sin is near
And keep it still awake.”***

But now we will go to the text as it stands in our own most admirable and never equaled, and I think never to be excelled, version of Holy Scripture. We have here two things. First, we have *God's desire*. And secondly, we have *God's work*. “You desire truth in the inward parts.” Then next, “In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.” Let us consider first—

I. THE LORD'S DESIRE FOR US.

That which is desirable to God must be exceedingly and essentially desirable. All wise men will desire that which the Infinitely wise God may desire! We are quite certain that there must be something exceedingly precious in that which God thinks fit to be an object for His Infinite desires.

Now observe what this desire is. And the first remark shall be, *it has to do with inward things*. “You desire truth in the inward parts.” God had made man not only outward, but man inward—not merely these outward members, but the conscious, thoughtful, commanding spirit that rules these members of flesh and blood. God looks, therefore, in all that is done by us that we should do it with our spiritual nature, and He estimates all our actions not merely by what they apparently are, but by what they spring from—He measures them by the motive, by the spirit, by the ruling desire in them. Having made our inward parts, He keeps His eyes fixed upon the complicated spiritual machinery within us, understanding it all, knowing when any cog of any wheel is out of order, when any of the machinery is disarranged. Nothing is hid from His Presence and knowledge! He searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men. And His desire, as here expressed, is not so much anything with regard to the outward act or the tongue, or to any ceremonial performances, whatever, but, first of all, it has to do with the inward parts.

Dear Hearer, learn from this that there is nothing in religion that is so desirable as the inward part of it. Your first and chief business with your God has to do with your innermost self—your real self. You shall come to keep your outward rightly enough if you will begin to cleanse the inside of the platter first. The outside of the house shall be whitewashed and cleansed afterward—but your first work must be to look into the secret chamber of your spirit and discover what is there. True religion does not begin outside, and then go within, but it begins within and then works outside. The candle is not outside the lantern, but it is first inside the lantern—and then it sheds light all around. Let your inward part be, then, the first part of your care! The mass of even religious mankind do not think so. Do they not go to their place of worship on Sunday? Do they not occasionally read their Bibles? Have they not a form of prayer at

the very tip of their tongue? Have they not given up swearing? Are they not strictly sober? Are they not honest? There are all outward and external things—and sometimes a few ceremonies are added to complete them, such as Baptism and the Eucharist, and many more things—and the man thinks himself perfectly complete, whereas he has not even begun yet, for all this is but a thing of nothing unless the *heart* has, first of all, been purged and made right inside by God! Dear Hearer, whatever you shall omit, see to it that you look to your heart! “My son, give Me your heart”—see to it that you love your God with heart and soul, and that your religion is a thing that has to do with your vital, your inward, your very essential self, for God’s desire is here—let your anxiety be in the same direction!

Next, I observe in the text that *God cares for truth*—He looks for truth—by which, I think, we are to understand here, truth as opposed to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy in the heart is a mortal disease. If your religion is only a pretense. If your heart is black, though your face is bright. If you have filthiness in the well, though in the bucket there may be a little clean water, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! The pure, truthful, holy God abhors hypocrisy! There can hardly be conceived anything more detestable in the sight of the Most High than to mock Him with words of seeming while our hearts and the reality of our nature are at enmity to Him. God desires truth *in opposition to mere semblance*. There are some who have no intention to be hypocrites, but still, all the Grace they have is but sham grace! All the knowledge of God they have is but theoretical. All the experience they have ever had is fanciful—all the communion with God they have ever had is mere delusion! The whole thing is but a bubble. Fair are its colors, but it will soon vanish—it is not stable and substantial—it is a mere outward shadow and there is no substance in it. God desires “truth in the inward parts,” real repentance, real faith, vital godliness, real communion with God! Everything there must be what it professes to be, for God desires truth—that is, substance—in the inward parts.

Does not this yet mean a third thing, that God desires *truth as opposed to falsehood or lies*? Some persons very sincerely hold lies in their inward hearts. I do not doubt but what there is many a man who believes a false religion and is as sincere in it as any man is in a true one! But his being sincere in believing a lie does not transform the lie into a truth! And if he follows a wrong way, that wrong way will lead to a wrong end—however sincerely it may be followed! God desires that there may be truth in your heart, not error. Even if it is your heart that holds the error, that shall make no difference! He desires truth to be there—truth about Himself, truth about His Son, truth about His Spirit, truth about yourself, your sin, the way of your salvation—truth about what He has revealed. He desires truth—“truth in the inward parts.”

Now put the two things together—God desires truth and He desires truth in the inward parts. Now does not this mean that *He desires truth to affect all the powers of our mind*, and all the powers of our mind to be

conformable to Divine Truth? This is what I mean— we know we have knowledge—God would have us *truly* know. There is much knowledge that is not true knowledge. A man knows Christ, it may be, by what he has heard, what he has seen of others, but he does not truly know Christ in his own soul! Beware of the letter only! Beware of mere theoretical knowledge! God desires that what you know about His Son should be true, real knowledge. There is a great danger when we live with Christian people to pick up a second-hand experience. They have their sorrows—we hear them speak of them. We, perhaps, think we know something about those sorrows. We talk as they do. We hear of their joy and oh, it is so easy to dream that we have enjoyed the same! We use their language. This is how cant comes into the world—and it has not quite gone yet—it is all too common. But a borrowed experience and the language that comes of it—these are very loathsome to true minds, and very loathsome to God! God would not have your brains stuffed with mere words, nor would He have you seduce yourself into confidence with mere doctrines! He would have you know in your heart the guilt of sin by bitterly lamenting it—know in your heart the power of the precious blood by receiving the cleansing which it brings—knowing the sorrows and the joys of being a Christian by being a Christian yourself! He desires truth in the inward parts, wherein our knowledge is stored up.

So would the Lord have *truth in our desires*. We desire to be saved, all of us, I suppose, but oh, how many of these desires have no truth in them! “Yes,” says a man. “I would gladly be saved,” but then he will not give up his sin. He would gladly be saved and he commences to pray, but his goodness soon vanishes. Prayer is irksome to him—he has not learned prayer. He desires, he says, to be taught of God, but he does not give a willing ear. He desires to be resigned to God’s will, he says, and he continues to kick and rebel against it! It is vain to say, “My desire is this” and, “that,” when my course of action is clean contrary to it. I certainly do not desire to go North if I voluntarily steer towards the South. God would have our desires to be all true. Oh, delude not yourselves with the thought that you have holy desires unless you truly have them! Do not think your desires are true towards God unless they are really so—He desires truth in our desires.

So would the Lord have *truth in all our affections*. We think we love God, but I venture to ask the question of myself—I would raise it and I would have you raise it with yourselves—do you really love the Lord? Do you really love Him? Were He here and your soul spoke the honest truth, and it were put, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” what would the answer be? And, indeed, it will be put to you tonight—when you get home it will probably be put to you in some new shape. You will be tried in your patience. If you love Him, keep His commandments, then, and be patient towards all men. You may be tried tonight by some loss or cross—if you love Him, you will take up *His Cross* and cheerfully follow Him. See how your love may be! “Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith—prove your own selves.” Where are your affections? Are they where the moth and rust corrupt, or are they yonder where eternity shall

never see corrosion or robbery to deprive you of your possessions? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also." God desires not that you should say, "I love," if you do not, or that you should say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace, and give a traitorous kiss. He desires truth in your affection! Is your heart right? Ah, this question is easy to ask, but to answer it is not so easy—but it may be easy to answer it if it is hurried without consideration—and probably untruthfully! But if you would be grounded on the Rock, truly bottomed on a sure foundation, you will say, "Search me, O God! And try me, and know my ways: and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Help me to keep my heart with all diligence, for I know that out of it are the issues of life." May there be truth in the inward parts of my affections.

So the Lord would have *truth in our emotions*. The emotion of fear, for instance, should not be excited as it is in some by foolish, frivolous things. This is a false fear which ought not to come across the Christian's mind. There are some, too, who say they have a fear of God. Others who say they have a joy of God! Some that speak of sweet peace in God. Others that talk of holy delight in God. But it is one thing to talk about these things, and another to possess them! He desires that all your emotions, when you are in His Presence (and you are always there), should be truthful! Too often we say in prayer, I fear, more than our heart says, and perhaps the preacher, in talking to you tonight, may say more than he, himself, knows. We are apt to do this. We have, therefore, good need to be very, very watchful, for all that there is within us that is untruthful is unaccepted. Only that which is of the truth, that comes of the truth that is in Christ Jesus, who is *The Truth*—only that can be pleasing to the Lord our God! Thus might I mention *the understanding*. God would have us have truth there, and not put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. I might mention *the will*. The will should truly be surrendered to God and cheerfully obedient to Him. He desires truth there. But whatever there may be within man, whatever faculty, power, or talent he possesses, the whole should be truthfully laid at His feet, and the whole experience of the little world within us should be conformed to the truth as it is in Jesus! To live with truthfulness within is a great thing, for we often talk lies in our hearts. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." We may tell lies in our own hearts—we may thief, rob, steal and murder in our own hearts. Yes, our own hearts may be a shamble in which we may murder all the world, though we never laid a finger on any man! And in our hearts we may destroy the very Throne of Deity, yes, and God, Himself, for we do that in our heart when we wish there were no God. I know not what there may be in our heart—a very pandemonium, a little Hell—a great Hell in a little heart! Oh God, look You on us and put out all false things, and let truth be in our inward parts!

Now mark, before I turn from this first head of the subject, that when we say that the great desire of God is that we should have truth in our inward parts, we are not to suppose that, therefore, He is indifferent to

our outward actions—our words and so on! On the contrary, it is because He is a lover of holiness and purity that He thinks most of our hearts, because a true-hearted man must be a truth-speaking man and a truth-loving man! You have made the fountain clean—well then, there cannot be foul water come out of it! If once you have been made all clean within by Sovereign Grace, then the outcome must be from what there is within. You may have the devil within and hang out the angel outside, but you cannot have the angel within and the devil outside—it cannot be so. Where Jesus Christ reigns in the interior, the Glory of His Presence will glow in the exterior, too! You may be to your neighbors and friends an upright man, towards your enemies, a forgiving and gentle man, towards your God a manifestly devout man if in all things you are upright within, and devout within! May God grant, then, that we may be what He would have us be—that we may have truth in the inward parts. Now for the second part of the text.

II. GOD'S WORK IN US.

I am very thankful that the second sentence comes after the first, for surely we might all tremble if it were not so. "Behold You desire truth in the inward parts." "Yes," we might say, "but, Lord, how shall we ever get it there? How shall we who are unclean be purged? You may say, 'You shall be clean,' but, Lord, we cannot bring it to You! How shall we who are polluted cleanse ourselves?" Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? But now comes this, joined on with an, "and"—a blessed rivet that can never be driven out—"and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." Now let us go over this blessed word of encouragement—"and in the hidden part"—the secret part—"You shall make me to know wisdom." Observe that *where there is all fallen within us*, there will God work! He does not disdain to begin even with us, though all is out of order, though all is stained and all polluted! When He made the world, truly there was nothing to help Him, but there was nothing to oppose Him. Darkness was on the face of the deep, and disorder ruled—but those were rather negative than positive and they disappeared at once at His bidding. But in the fallen heart there is much to oppose, and to oppose vigorously! With a fierce determination to ruin himself, man resists the Grace of God, and were it not that He who created the world puts His hand a second time to the work, to create in us a new heart, we would continue in our destruction, in our guilt and enmity to the Most High! Now what a comfort it is that God will deal with our secret part—our hidden part! He does not disdain to come and touch the wheel and the machinery within, though it is all polluted. If we were to think of touching a running sore, or to put our hand upon a leper, we would shudder at it—but what must it be for a holy God to come and deal with an unholy heart, with corrupt affections—with a depraved will? We think of some poor men that are, for their livelihood, compelled to work in loathsomeness in our common sewers, but oh, what is all that compared with the heart! Yet the Infinite Mercy, condescension and Omnipotent Grace of God stooped down to deal with our inward parts! Ad-

mire the condescension of God and have hope for yourself, poor lost one, because God will deal with your inward parts!

But now notice that in my inward part, "*You will make me to know wisdom.*" See the grandeur of that word! No one else can make a man really wise—spiritually, internally and eternally wise—but God Himself. Here, again, I must remark upon the condescension of God. In one verse I find Him asked to be a washer, in another place I find Him asked to heal us, and here I find Him asked to come and teach us! Shall He be schoolmaster to us? Shall He take such as we are in hand, and our inward parts in hand, to teach our inward parts His Wisdom? Yes, He will do it! Means are used, I know—His ministers, His Word, His Providence—but we never learn by these till He teaches us to profit. These are school books, the apparatus of the school house. The Master must come and explain them and bring His Truth home, or else we learn not. It is His prerogative, His sole prerogative, to speak to the heart so as to make us foolish ones wise! The Holy Spirit will do it. "In the inward parts You will make me to know wisdom." Oh, blessed Spirit, You will show me of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come—You will take of the things of Christ and reveal them to me—You will not disdain me, poor scholar as I am. You will make me to know wisdom! And great Son of God—so will You also teach—You will condescend by Your example, by Your Sacrifice and by Your precept, to make me to know wisdom! And You, great Father, even You shall not disdain to deal with us as with sons—and by Your chastening still to teach us until we know wisdom. See, then, how God deals with the inward parts and, remember, it is God who does it!

Well, next, "In the hidden part You shall make *me* to know wisdom"—*me*! It is David who speaks, but he speaks, I trust, for you. "Make *me* to know wisdom." Now who was he that used those words? *It was David, a great sinner*—to put it plainly, an adulterer and a murderer—but, "You will make me," he says, "to know wisdom." This is a bad scholar to begin with—a rough block for the great Sculptor to carve, but David says, "You will make me to know wisdom." A sinner, I said, but he was a sinner publicly disgraced. Men knew of his sin—he was the song of the drunkard and the mark of the blasphemer! His character for a while was gone—men spoke of David's sin. Ah, but You will make me—the biggest fool in Israel (for I doubt not he felt he was)—You will make me to know wisdom—*me*, from my disgrace and dishonor, You will yet lift me up! He that said this, mark you, was a penitent, bitterly penitent for what he had done. How can you know wisdom till you have hated sin? God has not introduced you to the school, yet, until He has made you smart under His rod on account of sin. This is the very beginning of wisdom, to know the bitterness and mischief of sin, and to turn from it!

He that spoke this was *a praying man*. The whole Psalm is a prayer. God will teach the praying one. He who teaches you to pray will teach you everything else! This is one of the early lessons of the Christian, to learn to pray. "Behold, he prays," was said of Saul of Tarsus. You shall learn to sing as angels do if you begin with these bass notes of prayer. He

that said this was *a believing man*. He was a great sinner, but he was a great Believer! It was a great faith, as we said in the exposition, that made him say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Now, Sinner, disgraced Sinner, but penitent, prayerful, believing Sinner, God will yet make you wise—make *you* wise! Man, do you see this, that *He* desires it? He will give you that, but He will give you more! He will give you wisdom—that is more than truth! You know that truth is one thing, but wisdom is better than knowledge, for wisdom is the right way of using knowledge! Many a *knowing* man is a fool. A wise man is a "knowing" man, although "a knowing man" is not always wise. He desires you to have truth, and wherever truth is, he that follows her is wise. He will put truth within you—that is *the doctrine*. You shall have wisdom, *that is the practice*. Truth shall be the gem, but wisdom shall be the flashing rays which come from it, the brilliance thereof. He will make you to know wisdom.

Let me say very briefly, and in two or three sentences, what it is to know wisdom. Suppose you know *the truth about sin*. Well, if you know it truthfully, then your wisdom will be to hate that sin! If you know the reality of sin, your wisdom will be to lay it upon Christ by faith where God has laid it in the Old Covenant and in the Covenant of Grace—and then having had your sin forgiven, if you know sin aright, and will be wise concerning it—you will watch against it, knowing its damnable character and how apt you are to fall into it! And so, knowing the truth in your heart about sin, in your heart you will be wise towards sin, lamenting it, confessing it, carrying it to Christ—watching against it, abhorring it, protesting against it all your days!

So taking another subject, a blessed subject, *the Savior*, if you have truth in your inward parts about the Savior, you know Him to be the one and only Savior, but an all-sufficient and perfect one! Well then, your wisdom is to live upon Him! To live with Him, to live like He and the God that desires you to have the truth about Christ in your heart will teach you how to act wisely concerning Christ! In your heart and in your life you will worship Him, you will adore Him so as to spend yourself for Him—for this is wisdom towards the truth as it is in Jesus!

So take but one other subject. If you have learned *the truth about service*, and God would have that truth in your heart, for you are His servant bought with His blood, why, then, *He will teach you wisdom in service*. He will show you how to deny yourself, how to consecrate yourself, how to pour out your whole strength at His feet, how to meet your enemies, how to surmount your difficulties, how to fight His battles, how to win the crown! He desires you to have truth in your heart about this matter and He *will give you wisdom in your heart concerning it all*. So observe that what God requires of us in one place, God gives us in another! He deals with sinners very honestly—He tells them what He wants. He then deals with them very generously, for He gives them what they need! He does not lower the Law, or diminish its spirituality to suit the sinner—He tells him the truth, that He desires that he should have truth in his inward parts—but when He has set out the Law, He sets out an

equally broad Gospel. He works in the sinner what His gracious Law demands! There are the tablets of stone—God does not take one out of the Ten Commands away—He puts the Mercy Seat on the top of the whole—covers the whole—and so He does not diminish from the Christian anything of what should be in him, or tell him to rest content with inferior holiness, or with a second-rate obedience! He tells him that He desires truth, even in his inward parts! He comes to him and He says, “That which I expect from you *I will give you*: that which I require *I will bestow upon you*.”

“In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.” Now turn my text into a prayer. “O God! I confess my inward part is not what it should be, nor can I make it so. You might well sweep me away because my heart is depraved, but oh, take me—wash me in the Savior’s blood! Send Your Spirit to create me new and make me in my inward part to know wisdom,” for Your mercy’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-34.**

The words we are about to read follow a passage in which the Apostle describes the conflict of his soul. It is rather singular that it should be so. To catch the contrast, let us begin at the end of the 7th Chapter, 22nd verse.

Romans 7:22-25 *For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Some simpletons have said that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote the closing verses of that 7th Chapter. I venture to assert that nobody but an advanced Christian, enjoying the highest degree of sanctification could ever have written it! It is not a man that is dead in sin that calls himself, “wretched,” because he finds sin within him—it is a man made pure by the Grace of God, who, because of that very purity, feels more the comparatively lesser force of sin than he would have done when he had less Grace and more sin. I believe that the nearer we get to absolute perfection, the more fit to enter the gates of Heaven—the more detestable will sin become to us, and the more conflict will there be in our souls to tread out the last spark of sin. Bless God, Beloved, if you feel a conflict. Bless Him and ask Him who it may rage more terrible, still, for that shall be one evidence to you that you are, indeed, out of all condemnation because you are struggling against the evil!

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* I am not the bond-slave of it—I am the enemy of

it. I am free from it, fighting against it, struggling like a free man against one who would bring him into captivity, but even though I sometime feel as if I were a captive, I know I am not, I am free!

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not in the flesh, but after the Spirit.* This is our victory, that let the flesh lust as it may, we do not walk after it—we are kept by God's Grace! We are preserved so that the bent and tenor of our life is after the rule of the Spirit of God.

5, 6. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Oh, what a death it is to us if ever the flesh gets the mastery! And if it had the mastery in us, we should know that we were still in death, but oh, what a joy, what life, what peace it is to have the Spirit ruling in us so that we are spiritually minded. God give us this to the fullest!

7, 8. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* We must be born-again, then. It is no use improving the flesh. The taking away of the filth of the flesh was the old law but the burying of the flesh, that is the new. The plunging of it into the death of Christ is the very sign of the New Covenant. Oh, to know the full the power of the life of God for the death of the flesh!

9, 10. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* That is why we have aches and pains, and infirmities—because the body is dead—that is, doomed to die, must die. It must see corruption unless the Lord comes and even in that case it must undergo a wondrous change—so we regard our body as dead. No wonder, then, that all those aches and pains and troubles of body come upon us. The day shall come however, when even it shall be delivered from the power of death! Meanwhile, blessed be God, “the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

11. *But if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* The blessing of life is to come to the body, too—it shall be immortal, by-and-by, delivered from all the infirmities and sorrows which sin and death have brought upon it.

12, 13. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.* It is a live thing and a quickening thing, for you shall live.

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* God has not a dead child—never had one. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* First, love, and then sonship. He rises in his strain.

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* It is first a quickening Spirit, and then a witnessing Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. Now up again.

17. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if we suffer with Him.* Up again—

17. *That we may be also glorified together.* Oh, what a rise is this from groaning under, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—up to this point—“That we may be also glorified together”!

18, 19. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* It is not merely that the Spirit will bless the body, but that spiritual men will bless the whole creation! Materialism, which is like the body inhabited by the spirits of saints, is to share in the bliss which Christ has come to bring.

20-22. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* Just as our body is, so to speak, the world, the earth in which our spirit dwells, so this big earth is the body in which the Church dwells. And this body has its pains, so this creation has its pains, but as this body is to rise again, so this creation, also, though it “groans and travails,” is to be brought into the “glorious liberty of the children of God.” And what a world it will be when the curse that fell on it through the sin of Eden shall be removed by the glorious Atonement of Calvary! And when the blood of Christ which fell to the ground, which you will remember has never gone away from the earth, but is still somewhere, shall have fully redeemed the world, the whole world shall be a trophy of the Redeemer’s power!

23. *And not only they, but we also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Of course we groan within ourselves! Who said we didn’t? And those brethren who say they never groan, I wish they would learn better. It is one of the signs of Grace and marks of a child of God that he is not perfect and does not think he is, but groans after it, cries after it. “We groan without ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” For this poor body still lies, in measure, under a curse, still with its pains, still with its carnal appetites and fleshly tendencies to hamper and to trouble it! But this we groan after—that this flesh of ours, and the whole creation in which we dwell, shall yet have a joyous deliverance!

24-30. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. He speaks as if it were all done, because the major part of it is done in the saints, and it will only be a wink of the eye and it will all be done in everyone of us who are Believers! Let us look at it as quite fully done, even now, by hope that we are already glorified together.*

31, 32. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? What, indeed, what can we say? We are lost in wonder, love and praise! Thus much, however, we can say, for it concerns our struggles while we are here below. Paul has got that shadow still over him—of struggling against the flesh. What shall we say in the view of these blessed things concerning that struggle? Why, this: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

33, 34. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Equally impossible—and if neither God nor Christ will condemn, what judge have we to fear? The Judge of all the earth, and the Judge of the quick and the dead—if neither of these condemn, condemn away who likes!*

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

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

A MINGLED STRAIN

NO. 1937

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

*“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me,
and I shall be whiter than snow.”*
Psalm 51:7.

IN what state of heart should we come to the Communion Table? It is no light matter—in what manner shall we come before the Lord in so sacred an ordinance? By the very nature of the sacred supper we are taught that there should be a mixture of emotions. The bitter and the sweet, the joyful and the sorrowful are here intermingled. The Sacrifice of Christ for sin—is it more a subject of sorrow or of joy? Can we look to the Cross without mourning for sin? Can we look at it without rejoicing in pardon bought with blood? Is not the most suitable state of heart for coming to the Communion Table just this—mourning for our transgression and joy because of the great salvation? There is a double character about this holy rite. It is a festival of life and yet it is a memorial of death. Here is a cup—it is filled with wine. This surely betokens gladness. Listen to me! That wine is the symbol of *blood*! This, surely, betokens *sorrow*! In my hand is bread—bread to be eaten, bread which strengthens man’s heart—shall we not eat bread with thankfulness? But that bread is *broken*, to represent a body afflicted with pain and anguish—there must be *mourning* on account of that agony! At the Paschal Supper, the lamb of the Lord’s Passover had a special sweetness in it—yet the commandment expressly ran—“with bitter herbs they shall eat it.” So is it at this table. Here we, with joy, commemorate the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world—but with deep sorrow we recall the sin which, though taken away, causes us, in the recollection of it, to repent with great bitterness of heart.

Our text is the expression of one who is deeply conscious of sin and yet is absolutely certain that God can put away that sin. Thus it holds, in one sentence, a double thread of meaning. Here is a depth of sorrow and a still greater deep of hopeful joy—“deep calls unto deep.” I thought that this expression of mixed feeling might guide us as to our emotions at this holy festival.

I. I shall handle the text by making three observations. The first will be this—THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE LANGUAGE OF A SINNER IS MOST SUITABLE TO A CHILD OF GOD. There are seasons when it is about the only language that he can use, when he seems shut up to it and he uses it without the slightest suspicion that it is out of place upon his lips and,

indeed, it is *not* out of place at all. I suppose that everybody will agree that the language of David in this Psalm was most suitable to his condition. When he prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," he prayed a proper prayer, did he not? Surely no one is going to quibble with David over this petition and yet I cannot be sure. The modern way of handling the Bible is to correct it here and amend it there—tear it to pieces—give a bit to the Jews, a bit to the Gentiles, a bit to the Church and a bit to everybody—and then make it out that sometimes the old servants of God made great blunders!

We, in modern times, are supposed to be more spiritual and to know a great deal better than the Inspired saints of the Old and New Testaments. But still, I should not think that anybody would say that David was wrong, but if he did, I would reply, "This is an Inspired Psalm and there is not half a hint given that there is any incorrectness in the language of it, or that David used language under an exaggerated state of feeling which was not truly applicable to a child of God." I think that nobody will doubt that David was a child of God and that, even when he had defiled himself, he was still dear to the great Father's heart. I gather, therefore—I feel sure of it—that he was quite right in praying the language of this 51st Psalm and saying, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions; wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!"

Yet this is precisely the way in which an unconverted man ought to pray, just the way in which *every soul that comes to God may pray*. It is only an enlargement of the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" This language, so suitable to the sinner, was not out of place in the mouth of one who was not only a Believer, but an advanced Believer, an experienced Believer, yes, an *Inspired* Believer and a teacher of others, who, with all his faults, was such a one as we shall rarely see the likes of again! Yes, among the highest of saints there was a time with one of them, at least, when the lowliest language was appropriate to his condition! There is a spirit abroad which tells us that children of God ought not to ask for pardon of their sins, for they have been pardoned, that they need not use such language as this, which is appropriate for sinners, for they stand in a totally different position. What I want to know is this—where are we to draw the line? If, on account of a certain sin, David was perfectly justified in appealing to God in the same style as a poor, unforgiven sinner would have done, am *I* never justified in doing so? Is it only a certain form of evil which puts a man under the necessities of humiliation?

It may be that the man has never fallen into adultery, or any other gross sin, but is there a certain extent of sin to which a man may go, before, as a child of God, he is to pray like this? And is all that falls below that high-water mark of sin a something so inconsiderable that he need not go and ask any particular forgiveness for it, or pray like a sinner at all about it? May I, under most sins, speak very confidently as a child of God, who has already been forgiven, to whom it is a somewhat remarkable cir-

cumstance that he should have done wrong, but still, by no means, a serious disaster? I defy anybody to draw the line! And if they do draw it, I will strike it out, for they have no right to draw it! There is no hint in the Word of God that for a certain amount of sin there is to be one style of praying and for a certain lower amount of sin another style of praying!

I venture to say this, Brothers and Sisters, going farther, that, as this language is certainly appropriate in David's mouth and as it would be impossible to draw any line at which it would cease to be appropriate, the safest and best plan for you and for me is this—seeing that we are sinners, if we have not been permitted to backslide as much as David, yet we had better come in the same way—we had better take the lowest place, urge the lowliest plea and so make sure work of our salvation! It is safest to assume the greatest supposable need. Let us put ourselves into the humblest position before the Throne of the heavenly Grace and cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions!"

But is not a man of God forgiven? Yes, that he is! Is he not justified? Yes, that he is! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Let that all stand true in the highest sense that you can give to it but, for all that, the sinner's cry is not thereby hushed into silence! True children of God cry and let me tell you they cry after a stronger fashion than other children! They have their confessions of sin and these are deeper and more intense than those of others. Whatever our confidence may be, our Lord Jesus Christ never told us to pray, "Lord, I thank You that I am forgiven and, therefore, have no sin to confess. I thank You that I need not come to You as a sinner!" But He put into the mouth of His disciples such words as these—"Our Father, which are in Heaven, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." I reckon that the Lord's Prayer is never out of date! I expect to be able to pray it when I am on the brink of Heaven and, if I should ever be sanctified to the fullest extent, I shall *never* turn round to the Savior and say, "Now, my Lord, I have got beyond Your prayer! Now, Savior, I can no more address my Father who is in Heaven in this language, for I have outgrown Your prayer!"

Brothers and Sisters, the notion sounds to me like blasphemy! Never shall I say to my Savior, "I have no necessity, now, to come to Your precious blood, or to say to You, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'" Listen, Brethren—"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another," and what then? Why, even then, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanses us from all sin.*" We still need the blood when walking in the light, as God Himself is in the light!

While we are here below, we shall need to use just such language as David did. Appropriate as our text is to the sinner, it is equally appropriate to the saint and we may continue to use it till we get to Heaven! Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that when our hearts cannot honestly use such language, we may think that we are raised up by faith, but it is possible that we may be blown up by presumption! When we do not bow into the very dust and kiss the Savior's feet and wash them with our tears, we

may think that it is because we are growing in Grace, but it is far more likely that we are swelling with self-esteem! The more holy a man is, the more humble he is. The more really sanctified he is, the more does he cry about his sin, whatever it may be—"Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

When you get the clearest possible view of God, what will be the result? Why, the deepest downcasting in your own spirit! Look at Job. He can answer his wretched accusers, but when he sees God—ah, then he abhors himself in dust and ashes! Was Job wrong in heart? I question whether any of us are half as good as Job! I am sure few of us could have played the man as he did under his sorrows. With all the failure of his patience, the Holy Spirit does not call it a failure, for He says, "You have heard of the patience of Job." He says not, "of his *impatience*," but, "of his *patience*." And yet this blessed, patient man—patient even by God's own testimony—when he saw God, abhorred himself! Look at Isaiah, again. Was there ever a tongue more eloquent, more consecrated, more pure? Were there ever lips more circumcised to God than those of that mighty evangelical Prophet? And yet, when he beheld the Glory of the Lord, the train of the Lord filling the Temple, he said, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

Those of you that can do so, may come to my Master's table, tonight, as saints—I shall come as a sinner. You that feel that you can come there glorying in your growth in Grace may so come if you like—I shall come feeling that I am nothing, less than nothing! I shall endeavor to come to the Cross just as I came at first, for I find that if I get beyond the position of a believing *sinner*, I get into a dangerous condition. Safety lies in conformity to the Truth of God and the Truth of God will not allow any of us to glory before God! The more I know the Lord and the more I live in communion with Him, the more do I feel happy in lying at His feet and looking up to Him to be my All in All. I would be nothing, and let Christ be everything. Take this from one who has been a preacher of the Gospel for more than 35 years—and a soul-winner who needs not to be ashamed—I am as entirely dependent upon the free mercy of the Lord this day as ever I was—and I look to be saved in the same manner as the thief upon the Cross.

II. Secondly, let me make another observation. It shall be this—AN EXTRAORDINARY SENSE OF GUILT IS QUITE CONSISTENT WITH THE STRONGEST FAITH. It is a blessed thing when the two go together. David was under an extraordinary sense of sin and right well he might be, for he had committed an extravagant transgression. He had done a very grievous wrong to man and committed great lewdness before the Lord—and when the Spirit of God, at last, awakened his conscience through the rebuke of Nathan, it is not at all amazing that he should have bowed down under a deeply humiliating sense of his own guilt. He was guilty, deeply guilty—more guilty than even he, himself, knew.

You and I, perhaps, may also be, by God's Grace, favored with a deep sense of sin. But I hear some people say, "Did I understand you rightly,

Sin, or did my ears deceive me? *Favored with a deep sense of sin?* “Yes, I said that, for while sin is horrible, a thorough *sense* of it, bitter as it is, is one of the greatest favors with which God blesses His chosen! I am sure that there are some of God’s children whose experience is shallow and superficial, for they do not know the heights and depths of redeeming love—neither are they established in the Doctrines of Grace—and all because they were never deeply plowed with a sharp sense of sin! These know nothing of subsoil plowing, so as to turn their very hearts up under the keen plow of the Law. But that man who knows what sin means and has had it burned with a hot iron into the core of his spirit—he is the man who knows what Grace means—and is likely to understand its freeness and fullness! He who knows the evil of sin is likely to know the value of the precious blood! I could scarcely ask for any of you a better thing than that you should fully know, in your own spirit, the horribleness of sin as far as your mind is capable of bearing the strain.

David was so conscious of his guilt that he compares himself to a leper. The language of the text refers, I believe, to the cleansing of lepers. Hyssop was dipped in blood and then the sacrificial blood was sprinkled upon the polluted individuals to make them clean. David felt that he had become a leprous man. He felt like one who had contracted the horrible, the polluting, the incurable disease of leprosy! He felt that he was not fit to come near to God, nor even to associate with his fellow man. He confessed that his guilt was such that he ought to be put away, shut out from the assembly of the people. His guilt had polluted a whole nation, of whom *he* was the representative and to whom *he* was the example. Did you ever feel like that? I tell you that you do not know all the pollution of sin unless you have been made to feel yourself to be a polluted thing! If you had 50 leprosy, they would not pollute you like sin, for a poor leper is not really polluted—he may bear a grand and noble soul within that rotting body!

Sin, alone, is real pollution, hellish pollution, abominable pollution! There is nothing in Hell that is worse than sin—even the devil is only a devil because sin made him a devil—so that sin is the most horrible and intolerable evil that can fall upon the spirit of man. David felt that dreadful Truth of God. But yet, mark you, though he felt the horror of the disease of sin, his faith was strong enough to make him use the confident language of the text, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” “Black as my sin is, filthy as it is, if You do but purge me, O my God, I shall be clean!”

Yes, David is sure that God can cleanse him. He pleads as one who has no question upon the matter towards God. His prayer is—“You purge me, and I shall be clean! Apply the precious blood of the great Sacrifice to me, O God, and I shall be whiter than snow!” There is about the Hebrew a sense which I could hardly give you, unless I were to put it thus—“You will un-sin me.” As though God would take his sin right away and leave him without a speck of sin, without a single grain of it upon him! God could make him as if he had never sinned at all! Such is the power of the cleansing work of God upon the heart that He can restore innocence to us

and make us as if we had never been stained with transgression at all! Do you believe this? Do you believe this? Oh, you are a happy man, if, under the deepest conceivable sense of sin, you can still say, “Yes, I believe that He can wash me and make me whiter than snow!”

But will you follow me while I go a step farther? The words of our text are, in the Hebrew, in the *future* tense and they might be read, “You *shall* purge me and I *shall* be clean,” so that David was not only certain about the power of God to cleanse him, but about the fact that God *would* do it—“You shall purge me.” He cast himself, confessing his sin, at the feet of his God and he said, “My God, I believe that, through the great Atonement, You will make me clean!” Have you faith like that of David? Do you believe this? Beloved, some of us can boldly say, “Yes, that we do! We believe not only that God can pardon us, but that He *will*. Yes, that He has pardoned us and we come to Him, now, and plead that He would renew in us the cleansing work of the precious blood and of the water which flowed from the side of Christ—and so make us perfectly clean! Yes, we believe that He will do it! We are sure that He will and we believe that He will continue to cleanse us till we shall need no more cleansing!”

Hart’s hymn sings concerning the *precious blood*—

**“If guilt removed, returns and remains,
Its power may be proved again and again.”**

This witness is true and we set our seal to it.

The Psalmist David believed that although his sin was what it was, yet God could make a rapid cleansing of it. He speaks of the matter as worked promptly and speedily. It took seven days to cleanse a leper, but David does not follow the type when the *reality* excels it! He says, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” It is done directly, done at once—washed and whiter than snow! It will not take seven days to wipe out the crimes of seven years! No, if a man had lived 70 years in sin—if he did but come to his God with humble confession and if the precious blood of Jesus were applied to him—his sins would vanish in the twinkling of an eye! The two facts come together. “Purge me—I shall be clean. Wash me—I shall be whiter than snow.” It is done at once! Note the rapidity of the cleansing.

Mark the effectual character of the purgation. “Purge me, and I shall be clean.” Not, “I shall *think* that I am,” but “I shall be. I shall be like a man perfectly healed of leprosy.” Such a man was not purged in theory, but in reality, so that he could go up to the court of the Lord’s house and offer his sacrifice among the rest of Israel. So, if you wash me, Lord, I shall be really clean! I shall have access to You and I shall have fellowship with all Your saints.

Once more—David believed that God could give him internal cleansing. “In the hidden parts,” he says, “You shall make me to know wisdom.” I like that about the text. It is, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” Where?—Hands? Yes. Feet? Yes. Head? Yes. All this is good, but what about the *heart*? There is the part that you and I cannot cleanse, but God can! Imagination, conscience, memory—every inward faculty—the Lord can purge us in all these! “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” This includes the whole man. And this declaration falls from the lips of a

man who knew himself to be as defiled as he could be, a very leper, only fit to be put away into his own house and shut up there for fear of contaminating the rest of mankind! He boldly says, "If the Lord washes me, I shall be clean, I am certain of it! I shall be perfectly clean and fit to have communion with Him."

Notice one more remark on this point, namely, that David, while thus conscious of his sins, is so full of faith towards God that *he appropriates all the cleansing power of God to Him*—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." There are four personal words in one verse. It is easy to believe that God can forgive sin in general, but that He can forgive mine in *particular*—that is the point! Yes, it is easy to believe that He can forgive man, but to believe that He will forgive such a poor specimen of the race as I am is quite another matter! To take personal hold upon Divine blessings is a most blessed faculty. Let us exercise it. Can you do it? Brothers and Sisters, can you do it? You that cannot call yourselves Brothers and Sisters, you far-away ones, can you come to Christ, all black and defiled as you are and just believe in Him that you shall be made whole? You will not be believing too much of the Great Sinners' Friend! According to your faith be it unto you.

III. This brings us to our third and last point, upon which I will speak with great brevity. Notice that A DEEP SENSE OF SIN AND A CONFIDENT FAITH IN GOD MAKE THE LORD'S NAME AND GLORY PRE-EMINENTLY CONSPICUOUS. God is the great Actor in the text before us. He purges and He washes—and none but He. The sins and the cleansing are, both of them, too great to allow of any inferior handling.

"*Purge me.*" He makes it all God's work. He does not say anything about the Aaronic priest. What a poor miserable creature the priest is when a soul is under a sense of sin! Have you ever met with a person who has been really broken in heart who has gone to a priest? If so, he has been made ashamed of his looking to man, for he has found him to be a broken cistern that can hold no water! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, if we had this platform full of popes and one poor soul under a sense of sin to be comforted—the whole lot of them could not touch the sinner's wound, nor do anything to stanch the bleeding of his heart! No, no, the words of the best of men fall short of our need! As the dying monk said, "*Tua vulnera, Jesu!*"—"Your wounds, Jesus!" These can heal, but nothing else can! God must, Himself, wash us! Nothing short of His personal interposition will suffice.

Now, notice the next word, "*Purge me with hyssop.*" We must have faith, which is represented by hyssop. How little David makes of faith! He thinks of it only as the poor "hyssop." Many questions have been raised as to what hyssop was. I do not think that anybody knows. Whatever it may have been, it was a plant that had many little shoots and leaves, because its particular fitness was that the blood would cling to its many branches. Its use was that it stored the blood and held it there in ruby drops upon each one of its sprays—and that is the particular suitability of faith for its peculiar office. It is an excellent thing in itself, but the particular virtue of

faith lies in this—that it holds the blood so as to apply it. Scarlet wool was used in the ceremony of cleansing and the scarlet wool was useful because it soaked in the blood and held it within itself. But the hyssop was still more useful because while it held the blood, it held it ready to drop. That is how faith holds the great Sacrifice—it holds the atoning blood upon every spray, ready to drop upon the tortured conscience! Faith is the sprinkling hyssop—it is nothing in itself, but it applies to the soul that which is our cleansing and our life!

David, moreover, seems to me to say, “Lord, if You will purge me with the blood of the great Sacrifice, it does not matter how it is done! Do it with the little hyssop from off the wall. However tiny and insignificant the plant may be, yet it will hold the precious drops and bring them to my heart and I shall be whiter than snow.” It is God, you see—it is God all the way through.

“*And I*”—there is just that mention of himself. But what of himself? Why, “I shall be the receiver. I shall be clean.” “I.” What about that intensive, “I”? “I shall be whiter than snow”—I shall be the material on which You work—the guilty pardoned—the polluted made clean—the leper made whole and permitted to come up to Your House.

That is all I ask of my Lord tonight—that He will let me come to His table and be the *receiver*, the *eater*, the *drinker*, the *cleansed one*, the *debtor*, the *bankrupt debtor*, plunged head over heels in debt to the heavenly Creditor! Oh, to be nothing! To lie at His feet! Oh, to be nothing but washed—washed in the blood! How sweet it is no longer to ride on horses, but to have God for your All in All—no longer to go forth, sword in hand, boasting our strength and glorying in what we can do—but to sit down at Jesus’ feet and sing the victory which He, alone, has won!

Come, let us pray from our very hearts, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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END VOLUME 32

THE GUILT AND THE CLEANSING

NO. 3056

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1865.**

***“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”
Psalm 51:7.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1937, Volume 32—A MINGLED STRAIN—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

You know how David had sinned. To the sin of adultery he had added that of murder. David felt like one who was shut out from God and was unworthy to approach Him. He could not be content to remain in such a condition. He longed to be reconciled to God and he remembered that he had sometimes seen a man who had the leprosy put out of the city as an unclean person, or he had seen one who had defiled himself by touching a corpse shut out for a time from all communion with those who drew near to worship God. “Ah,” he thought, “that is just as I am—I am unworthy to appear before God, for I am spiritually unclean.”

But David had also seen the priest take a basin full of blood and dip hyssop in it—and when the bunch of hyssop had soaked up the blood, he had seen the priest sprinkle the unclean person therewith and then say to him, “You are clean. You have admittance now to the worship of God. You can mingle with the great congregation—I pronounce you clean through the sprinkled blood.” And David’s faith, acting upon the telescopic principle, looked far down the ages and he saw the great atoning Sacrifice offered upon Calvary. And as he saw the Son of God bleeding for sins which were not His own, he desired that the blood of Christ might be applied to his conscience, feeling that it would take away his defilement and admit him into the courts of God’s House and into the love of God’s heart. And so he prayed this prayer, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.”

He felt, too, that sin was a very great defilement—that he was black and filthy—but he knew how he had often, when hunted like a wild goat among the mountains, stooped down to a cooling brook and washed away the dust and stain of travel in the running water and his face and hands had been clean again. And so, bowing down before God he sees, in the Sacrifice of Christ, a cleansing flood and his desire is expressed in these words, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” The words do not require any exposition—they require *application*. They do not need to be explained—they need to be offered up to God in prayer by broken-hearted suppliants!

There are two things I shall try to talk about, as God shall help me. The one is *that sin is a very foul thing*—David says, “Purge me.” “Wash me.” The other is *that the cleansing must be very great*—this process of sprinkling hyssop and of washing must be very potent, for he says, “I shall be clean.” “I shall be whiter than snow.”

I. First, then, a little about THE DEFILEMENT.

Sometimes it has been asked by unconverted men, “Why do you talk so much about Atonement? Why could not God be generous and forgive sin outright? Why should He require the shedding of blood and the endurance of great suffering?” Sinner, if you had a right sense of sin you would never ask such a question! In asking that question you speak upon the supposition that God is such an One as yourself. But He hates sin. He sees in sin such loathsomeness as you have never dreamed of! There is, to Him, such horrible abomination, such a heinousness, such a detestableness and uncleanness about sin that He could not pass it by. If He did, He would bring upon His own Character the suspicion that He was not holy. Had God passed by human sin without a substitutionary Sacrifice, the seraphim would have Suspended their song, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.” The judge who winks at sin is the abettor of sin. If the supreme Ruler does not punish sin, He becomes Himself the patron of all guilt and sin may take its rest beneath the shadow of His wings! But it is not so and, Sinner, God would have you know, and have angels know—and have devils know that however lightly any of His creatures may think of sin—and however foolishly simple man may toy with it—He knows what a vile thing it is and He will have no patience with it! “He will by no means spare the guilty.”

I have heard it said by persons looking at the subject from another point of view, that the preaching of full forgiveness through the Savior’s blood, to the very chief of sinners, is apt to make men think lightly of sin—that, when we tell them—

**“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment”—**

for every soul that looks at Christ, we do, in effect, find a plaster for men’s wounded consciences which, when thus healed, will only aid and abet them in going to sin again. How untrue this is! A moment’s reflection will show you. We tell the sinner that God never does gratuitously pass by a single sin and that pardon never could have come to one man of Adam’s race had it not been procured by the tremendous griefs of the Savior who stood in men’s place. Our own belief is that all the proclamations of the Law of God and all the threats of judgment that were ever thundered forth by the most Boanerges-like of ministers, never did show man so much the vileness of sin as the preaching of this one great Truth of God—“The Lord has caused to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” That is the great condemnation of sin—the Savior’s death! Never

is God dressed in such resplendent robes of glorious holiness as when He is smiting sin as it is laid upon His only-begotten Son! Having lifted it from sinners and laid it upon Christ, He does not spare it because of the worthiness of the Person to whom it is imputed. He smites and crushes it with His full force and fury till the oppressed Victim cries out, "Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me when Jehovah has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger."

Let us now turn this subject over a little—the *guilt* of sin. We think that the Atonement sets forth that guilt most thoroughly—let this Truth of God reach the ears of every unpardoned man and woman here. It appears that there is nothing but blood that will ever wash your sin away—the blood of Christ, the blood of God's dear Son—this cleanses us from all sin, but nothing ease can. The blackness of your sin will appear, then, if you recollect that *all the creatures in the universe could not have taken one of your sins away*. If all the holy angels in Heaven had performed the best service that they could render, they could not have taken away even one of your sins! If the great archangel had left his station near the Throne of God's Glory and had been led into a deep abyss of suffering, all that he could have done would not have been a drop in the bucket compared with what would be required to take away one single sin, for sin is such an enormous evil that no created being could remove it! And even if all the saints on earth could have ceased to sin and could unceasingly have praised God day and night, yet there is not merit enough in all their songs to blot out one single offense of one single sinner! No, let me go further. Could your tears and the tears of all created intelligences, "no respite know." Could the briny drops—

"Forever flow—

All for sin could not atone."

No, I will go a step lower. The pains of the damned in Hell are no atonement for sin! They suffer in *consequence* of sin, but no atonement has been made by them, for all they have suffered has not lessened what they have to suffer. And when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled over their poor accursed heads, they will be just as far off having satisfied Divine Justice as they are now, for sin is such a dreadful thing that even Tophet cannot burn it up, though "the pile thereof is fire and much wood," and though "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." Sin is cast into its flames and men suffer there—but all the burnings of Gehenna never did consume a single sin—and never could! Think of that! Earth, Heaven and Hell could never take away a single sin from a single soul!

None but Christ could do it and even Christ Himself could not do it unless He became a Man. It was absolutely necessary that the Substitute for human sin should be of the same nature as the offender. Christ must therefore be born of Mary that He might become Man. Man must suffer, for man had sinned. As in Adam all died, so in another Adam must all be made alive if they were ever to be made alive at all. They fell by one man, so they must rise by another Man, or else never rise. *But even the Man Christ Jesus, in association with the Godhead, could not have taken away*

your sins unless He had died. I never read in Scripture that all that He did in His life could take away sin. The Savior's life is the robe of righteousness with which His people are covered, but that is not the bath in which they are washed. The whole life of Christ—all His preaching upon the mountains, all His fasting in the wilderness, all His travail in birth for souls, yes, all His bloody sweat, all His scourging, all the shame and the spitting that He endured could not have saved your soul, or take away one sin, for it is written, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin. Think of this, Sinner! To take out that one sin of yours, if you had only one sin, the Infinite must become an Infant and the Immortal must yoke Himself with mortality! And then, in that position, and in that condition, He must become "obedient unto death," or else not one sin on your part could ever be removed from your soul!

But I want you to go with me further than this. Christ Himself, in His death, could not have taken away one sin if it had not been for *the peculiar form of death which He endured.* He had to be crucified and then Paul could write, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. Christ must, therefore, hang upon a tree that He might be cursed—and there is no man who ever lived who can tell what is meant by that expression—that Christ was cursed. If all the mighty orators who have moved the Christian Church at once to tears and to joy, could stand here, I would defy them to weigh this burden of the Lord, or estimate its tremendous meaning, "Christ was made a curse for us." Christ a curse! Jehovah-Tsidkenu a curse! Jesus, the darling of the Father, made a curse! He, who "counted it not robbery to be equal with God," a curse! O angels, you may well marvel at this mystery, for its astounding depths you cannot fathom! Yet so it is. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And this leads me to mention what I think is surely the climax here, that although Christ died the death of the Cross, even then *He could not have taken any sin away unless it had been expressly ordained and settled that He therein did Himself take our sin as well as our curse—and did therein stand before God, though in Himself personally innocent—as if He had been a sinner and there suffer, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."* There is that black, that hideous, that damning, that everlasting soul-destroying thing called sin! Jehovah-Jesus sees it on His people. He knows that they can never be with Him where He is while that sin rests on them and He also knows that there is no way by which they can be freed from it except by His taking it. Can you picture the scene? He takes that terrible, that cursed, that Hell-kindling, that Hell-feeding thing—that fuel of the eternal Pit, that object of eternal Wrath—He takes that sin upon Himself and now what does sin seem to say? It is imputed to Christ and it seems to hide itself behind Christ—and it says to God, "O God, You hate me, but You cannot reach me here. Here I am! I am Your enemy, but there is between us an impassable barrier." Now, what will become of sin? Hear this, you sinners who still

have your sins resting upon you! What will become of sin? God says, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd." And the sword did smite Him, so that Christ cried out, "All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me." And He uttered that dreadful shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" in unutterable depths of anguish because God had turned away His face and smitten Him in His fierce anger, pounded Him as in a mortar, trampled on Him as in the wine-press, crushed Him as in the olive-press, broke Him between the upper and the nether millstones of His awful wrath made Him to drink the whole cup dry and caused Him to suffer—

***"All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."***

So you see that before even one sin can be pardoned, Christ must suffer what that sin deserves, or something tantamount thereunto by which Divine Holiness shall be cleared of all stain. Then what an awfully evil thing sin must be! Yet you will see her standing at the corner of the street, with a smiling face, trying to allure you. But shake your head at her and say, "No, no! The Savior bled because of you!" And you will see sin sparkling in the wine-cup, but look not on it when it is red, and moves itself aright, but say unto it, "O Sin, I loathe you, for you did open my Savior's veins and cause His precious blood to flow!" It is easy to get black by sin, but remember that it is so hard to get clean that only God's Omnipotence, in the Person of Christ, could provide a Cleanser for your sins!

And now, Sinner, I say this word to you, yet some will go and mock it. I cannot make you see the filthiness of sin. You think it a mere trifling thing. God Almighty, you say, is very merciful, forgetting how tremendously just He is. But though I cannot make you see sin, yet I can leave this Truth with you—you will one day feel what sin means unless you repent of it, for He that spared not His own Son will not spare you! If the Judge upon the Throne of God smote Christ, who had no sin of His own—smote Him so sternly for other men's sins—what will He do with you? If He spared not His Beloved Son, what will He do with His enemies? If the fire burned up Christ, how will it burn up you? O you who are out of Christ—without God and without hope—what will you do? What will you do when God shall put on His robe of thunder and come forth to deal with you in His wrath? Beware, beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

I want you to take this prayer now. I have tried to bring out the meaning of it. You are thus black, so pray to God, "Purge me with blood: apply it by Your Holy Spirit, as the priest applied to the leper the blood upon the bunch of hyssop. 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'"

II. And now we shall have a few words upon THE POWER OF THE CLEANSING.

Whom can it cleanse? That is the first question. David answers it, for he says, "It can cleanse *me*." He meant himself. I would not exaggerate David's sin, but it was a very frightful one. What could be more dreadful than for a man so highly-favored, who had so much of the Light of God, so much communion with God and who stood so high as a light in the midst of the nation to commit two crimes so accursed as those which we must lay at his door—adultery and murder? While my blood runs chill at the very thought of his having committed them, yet in my soul I am glad that the Holy Spirit ever permitted such a black case to stand on record! What an encouragement to seek pardon it has been to many who have sinned as foully as David did! If you can bend your knees and pray David's prayer, you shall get David's answer! "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." What if you have even defiled your neighbor's wife? What if you have even struck your neighbor to his heart and left him dead upon the earth? These two crimes will damn you to all eternity unless you shall find pardon for them through the blood of Jesus—and there is pardon for them there! If you look up to where that blood is streaming from the hands and feet and side of Jesus. If you trust your broken spirit in His hands, there is pardon for your crimson sins to be had right now! Is there a harlot here? O poor fallen woman, I pray that Christ may so forgive you that you will wash His feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head! Is there a thief here? Men say that you will never be reclaimed, but I pray the same Eternal Mercy which saved the dying thief to save the living thief! Have I any here who have cursed God to His face a thousand times? Return unto your God, for He comes to meet you! Say to Him, "Father, I have sinned." Bury your head in His bosom! Receive His kiss of forgiveness, for God delights to pardon and to blot out transgression. Now that He has smitten Christ, He will not smite any sinner who comes to Him through Christ. His wrath is gone and He can now say, "Fury is not in Me." Here, then, is a great wonder—that Christ's precious blood can cleanse the vilest of the vile and you may now pray the prayer of the text, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

From what can it cleanse? I dare not mention every kind of sin, but there is no sin from which it cannot cleanse. What a precious Truth of God that is, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." During this last week I have been with Brother Offord conducting Prayer Meetings. And he told, one evening, a tale which I made him tell every evening afterwards, for I thought it so good. He said there was a poor man living in Dartmoor who had been employed during the summer in looking after horses, cows and so on, that were turned out on the moor. He was a perfect heathen and never went to a place of worship, perhaps, since he was a child. For him there was no Sabbath. After a time, he grew very ill. He was over 60 years of age and, having nothing to live upon, he went into the workhouse. While he was there, it pleased the mysterious Spirit to make him uneasy as to his soul. He felt that he must die and the old man had just enough Light of God to let him see that if he *did* die, all was wrong with regard to a future state. He had a

little grandchild who lived in a neighboring town—Plymouth, I think it was—and he asked leave for his grandchild to come in to see him every day. As he was very ill and near death, that was allowed. She came in and he said to her, “Read the Bible to me, Dear.” She complied and the more she read, the more wretched the old man grew. “Read again,” he said. The more she read, the more dark his mind seemed to be with a sense of guilt.

At last, one day, she came to that passage in the first Epistle of John—you know it—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” “Is that there?” he asked. “Yes, Grandfather,” replied the little girl, “that is there.” “Is that there?” “Oh, yes, Grandfather, it is there.” “Then read it again! Read it again!” She again read, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” “My Dear, are you sure it is just like that?” “Yes, Grandfather.” “Then read it again, Dear.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” “Then,” he said, “take my finger and put it on that verse. Is it on that text, Child?—is my finger on that blessed text?” “Yes, Grandfather.” “Then,” he said, “tell them,” (alluding to his friends) “that I die in the faith of that!”—and he closed his eyes and doubtless entered into eternal rest. And *I* will die in the faith of that Truth of God, by the Grace of God—and so will you, I trust, Brothers and Sisters, die with your finger on that text, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses *us* from *all* sin.” Oh, it is sweet living and it is sweet dying if you can rest there! Now we see, then, that whatever your sins may have been, they are all included in those little words, “*all sin*”—therefore be of good comfort, poor Sinner—if you believe in Jesus Christ, you are born of God and His blood cleanses you from all sin!

Another question is, *When will it cleanse?* It will cleanse *now*. It will cleanse at this moment! You remember that it is in the present tense, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, *cleanses*”—that is to say, just at this particular moment, some three or four minutes to eight o’clock—there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse *now*. You need not stop till you get home to pray. He who trusts Christ is saved the moment that he trusts! His sin is blotted out the instant that he accepts Christ as his Substitute and justifies God in smiting sin in the Person of the Savior. There is efficacy in the blood now! Perhaps there has strayed in here one who says, “It is too late.” Who told you that? Sir, it was the devil—and he was a liar from the beginning! “Ah,” says another, “but you do not know that I have sinned against the Light of God and knowledge.” My dear Friend, I do not know how much you have sinned, but I do know that it is written, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” And I know that you have not gone beyond the uttermost, so I conclude that He is able to save *you*—right now, just as you are, standing in yonder crowd, or sitting here in these pews!

Once more—*In what way is Christ able thus to cleanse?* I answer—In a perfect and complete way! David says, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” We do not see snow very often, now, but when we did see it

last time, what a dazzling whiteness there was upon it! You took a sheet of paper and laid it upon the snow and you were perfectly surprised to see the clean, white paper turned yellow or brown in comparison with the snow's dazzling whiteness! But David says, "I shall be whiter than snow." You see, snow is only earthly whiteness, only *created* whiteness, but the whiteness which Christ gives us when He washes us in His blood, is Divine whiteness! The whiteness is the righteousness of God Himself! Besides, snow soon melts and then where is the whiteness? The snow and the whiteness run away together, but there is no power in temptation, no power in sin which is able to stain the whiteness which God gives to a pardoned sinner! And then snow, especially here in this, our smoky city, soon gets brown or black—but this righteousness never will—

***"No age can change its glorious hue—
The robe of Christ is always new!"***

"And is this perfect whiteness for *me*?" asks one. Yes, for you, if you believe in Jesus! If you were as black as the devil himself, if you did but believe in Jesus, you should be as white as an angel in a moment because, by believing, you accept God's way of saving souls—and to do this is the greatest thing that can be done! The Pharisees came to Christ and they said, making a great fuss about their zeal, "Here is our money. Here is our talent. Here is our time—'what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?'" They opened their ears for His answer and they thought He would say, "Give tithing of mint, anise and cummin. Be careful to wash your hands every time you eat. Give your money to the poor. Endow a row of almshouses. Become monks. Lacerate your backs. Tear your flesh," and so on. But Jesus said nothing of the kind! They wondered, I have no doubt, what He was going to say and they seemed to be all on tiptoes. "Now He is going to tell us the greatest work that a creature can do." "What shall we do that we might work the works of God." He answers them thus—"This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Ah, then they went away, directly, for no such simple thing, no such humbling thing as this would they do! Perhaps there are some of you who say, "Why don't you preach morality?" "Talk of morality!" Says Cowper—

***"O You bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love of You"—***

and so, indeed, it is! If I were to tell you that I was commissioned by God to say that if you walked from here to John o'Groat's House in the cold and wet, bare-footed and ate nothing on the way but dry bread and drank nothing but water, you would inherit eternal life, you would all be on the road tomorrow morning, if not tonight! But when I say just this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," what do you do, then? Are you such a fool as to be damned because the way to be saved is too simple? My anger waxes hot against you, that you should play the fool with your own soul and be damned because it is too easy! Think of a man who has a disease that is killing him and he will not take the medicine because it is too simple. He will not apply to the physician because his terms are too cheap. He will not apply such-and-such a

remedy because it is too simple! Then when that man dies, who can pity him? Did he not reject the remedy from the worst and emptiest of all motives?

“Oh!” says one, “but, simple as it is, it seems too hard for me—I cannot believe!” Sinner, what can you not believe? Can you not believe that if Jesus Christ took human sin and was punished for it, God can be just in forgiving it? Why, you *can* surely believe *that*! You say that you cannot believe, that is, you cannot *trust* Christ! Why, poor Soul, I should find it the hardest work in the world if I were to try *not* to trust Him, for He is such a precious Savior, such a mighty Savior that I can say with John Hyatt that I would not only trust Him with my one soul, but with a million souls if I had them! Yet it may be that you do not understand what believing is. It is not *doing* anything! It is leaving off doing. It is just believing that Christ did it all—

**“Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, Sinner, no—
Jesus did it, did it all
Long, long ago!”**

Christ is worthy of being trusted. Rely upon Him! God give you the Grace to do so and you are saved! Remember what we said the other night—there is all the difference in the world between the religion that is made up of, “Do, do,” and that other religion that is spelt “D-o-n-e, done.” He who has the religion of, “It is all done,” loves God out of *gratitude* and serves Him because he is saved. But he who has the religion of “Do” is always a slave, never gets salvation, but perishes in his doings—as they deserve to do who will look to themselves instead of looking to Christ! May the Lord now command His own blessing for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51.

May God graciously grant to all of us the Grace which shall enable us to enter into the penitential spirit which is so remarkable in this Psalm!

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* David breaks the silence at last and he does so by crying to God for mercy! Before he says anything else, he appeals to this attribute of mercy which is so glorious a trait in the Character of Jehovah. And he casts himself, all guilty as he is, upon the absolute mercy of God. “Have mercy upon me, O God.”

1. *According to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* David talks as if the Lord had said to him, “What is the measure of the mercy that you need?” And he knows of nothing by which he can measure it except the boundless and infinite loving kindness of the Lord. “O God!” he seems to say, “deal out mercy to me according to the measure of Your own boundless Nature. Let Your mercy be the only judge of the mercy that I need.”

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.* The forgiveness of sin is not enough for the true penitent. He needs the defilement which he has incurred through sin to also be removed. If washing will not suffice, he

asks the Lord to try any other method that will accomplish the desired end.

2. *And cleanse me from my sin.* “If fire is needed to purify me, use fire, O Lord, only ‘cleanse me from my sin.’”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* David felt that there was a multitude of transgressions recorded against him in God’s unerring register, yet he especially realized the guilt of that one sin which Master Trapp calls the devil’s nest-egg, to which so many other sins were added. That first sin was a peculiarly foul one, but he added lying, deception and murder to it in order to try to cover it—and thus he made it even greater than it was at first. It was well that he confessed that great sin which was *always* before him.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge.* “The essence, the virus, the climax of my sin consists in its assault upon You, my God. Therefore, O God, if You condemn me, You will be just! There is nothing that can be said against the severest verdict of Your Infallible Justice. Yet, O God, I still appeal to Your mercy and pray You to forgive me and to put away all my sin!”

5. *Behold.* David is full of astonishment and amazement! His one great sin has opened his eyes to see the sinfulness of his whole nature.

5. *I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* “I was ‘shaped in iniquity’ when I was shaped, and conceived in sin when I was conceived.” He sees that the sin is in *himself* and that it does not happen to him as an accident, but flows from him as naturally as foul water runs from a polluted spring!

6. *Behold.* Here are more wonders.

6. *You desire truth in the inward parts.* First he wondered when he saw how sinful he was. Now he wonders as he sees the purity which God demands—“You desire truth in the inward parts.”

6, 7. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop.* “O Lord, You have ordained means by which leprous sinners may be cleansed. The outward sign is the bunch of hyssop dipped in sacrificial blood. O Lord, give me in very deed what that sign means! Give me the cleansing influence of the blood of the great Sacrifice. ‘Purge me with hyssop.’”

7. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* I cannot help once more remarking, though I have often before made the same observation, that we have here the evidence of wonderful faith on David’s part. He has a very real consciousness of the blackness of his sin, yet he also has a triumphant conviction that God can put that sin away and can make even his defiled nature to become clean and pure—“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* How late in the Psalm that prayer comes! He writes seven verses before he dares to pray for joy and gladness. And those seven verses are all either confessions of sin or petitions for deliverance from sin and, my sinful Friend, you must not first seek to get rid of your sorrow, but rather be thankful for your sorrow

for sin and pray that you may never lose that sorrow until you lose the sin that causes it. “Make me to hear joy and gladness.”

8. *That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* If God’s children fall into sin, the Lord does not wink at their sin—He chastises them so severely that He sometimes even breaks their bones! But God’s pardoning mercy can set those bones and make each broken and mended bone to become a mouth for holy song—“that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* “Do not look at them, O Lord! Even take pains to put them out of Your sight.”

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* “Obliterate them as though they had been written upon tablets of wax and You did, with a hot iron, put the whole record of them away—‘blot out all my iniquities.’”

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* He feels that he needs his Creator to again perform His great creating work. David knows that he needs a clean heart, but he does not ask the Lord to make his heart clean—he knows better than to present that request. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” so David’s cry to God is, “‘Create in me a clean heart’—let it be a *new creation*—give me a new heart and a clean heart.”

10. *And renew a right spirit within me.* There was once a right spirit in man, but through sin, it has lost its beauty, its tenderness, its delicacy, its sensitiveness, its holiness. So each one of us needs to pray, “O God, renew a right spirit within me!”

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence.* “I cannot bear to be away from Your Presence. I must see Your face or I cannot live.”

11-13. *And take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* One of our proverbs says, “A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.” And he who knows by bitter experience what sin is, talks tenderly and sympathetically to his fellow sinners—and God is sure to bless such earnest personal testimony—and so sinners will be constrained to turn unto Him.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation.* He called his sin by its right name. He knew that he had really been the murderer of Uriah, so he confesses his guilt in all its hideousness. “Deliver me from bloods (see marginal reading), O God, You God of my salvation.” It is remarkable that when David confesses his sin in the strongest language that he can use, he at the same time lays hold upon God with the boldest faith that he can exercise. So, the deeper the sense of sin in us is, the stronger can the Grace of God make our faith to be!

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* Should not David have said, “My tongue shall sing aloud of Your *mercy*”? That would have been quite right, yet David knew that God had a way of bestowing His mercy in complete consistency with His righteousness—and this being the more amazing part of Divine forgiveness, the most astonishing

wonder of all, he selects that and says, “My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.”

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* In the eighth verse, he had prayed, “Make me to hear,” and now he does as good as say, “Make me to speak.” Sin puts all the organs of the human body out of order and Grace is needed to put them all right again. “O Lord, open You my lips.”

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice.* The offering of bulls, lambs and rams amid the pomp of priestly ritual. “You desire not sacrifice.”

16, 17. *Else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* This is all sacrifices put into one and the man who brings a bleeding heart to God is accepted when the one who brings a bleeding bull is rejected! But he who brings a bleeding Savior brings the best Sacrifice of all!

17, 18. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion.* David seems to say, “Whatever You do with me, O God, do bless Your people!”

18. *Build You the walls of Jerusalem.* “My sin has helped to pull them down and so has done great mischief, but, O Lord, will You not undo the mischief that I have done and build again the walls of Your Zion?”

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar.* Never do men give so freely to the cause of God as when they are rejoicing over pardoned sin! Keep a deep sense of your indebtedness to God alive in your soul and you will feel that you can never do enough for Him who has forgiven you so much!

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

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

THE WORDLESS BOOK

NO. 3278

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”
Psalm 51:7.

I DARESAY you have, most of you, heard of a little book which an old Divine used constantly to study. And when his friends wondered what there was in the book, he told them that he hoped they would all know and understand it, but that there was not a single word in it. When they looked at it, they found that it consisted of only three leaves—the first was black, the second was red and the third was pure white. The old minister used to gaze upon the black leaf to remind himself of his sinful state by nature, upon the red leaf to call to his remembrance the precious blood of Christ, and upon the white leaf to picture to him the perfect righteousness which God has given to Believers through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son.

I want you, dear Friends, to read this book this evening, and I desire to read it myself. May God’s Holy Spirit graciously help us to do so to our profit!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE BLACK LEAF. There is something about this in the text, for the person who used this prayer said, “Wash me,” so he was black and needed to be washed. And the blackness was of such a peculiar kind that a miracle was needed to cleanse it away—so that the one who had been black should become white, and so white that he would be “whiter than snow.”

If we consider *David’s case when he wrote this Psalm*, we shall see that he was very black. He had committed the horrible sin of adultery, which is so shameful a sin that we can only allude to it with bated breath. It is a sin which involves much unhappiness to others besides the ones who commit it. And it is a sin which—although the guilty ones may repent—cannot be undone. It is altogether a most foul and outrageous crime against God and man—and they who have committed it do indeed need to be washed!

But David’s sin was all the greater because of the circumstances in which he was placed. He was like the owner of a great flock, who had no

need to take his neighbor's one ewe lamb when he had so many of his own. The sin in his case was wholly inexcusable, for he well knew what a great evil it was. He was a man who had taken delight in God's Law, meditating in it day and night. He was, therefore, familiar with the commandment which expressly forbade that sin, so that when he sinned in this way, he sinned as one does who takes a draft of poison, not by mistake, but well knowing what will be the consequences of drinking it! It was willful wickedness on David's part for which there cannot be the slightest palliation.

No, more! Not only did he know the nature of the sin, but he also knew the sweetness of communion with God and must have had a clear sense of what it must have meant for him to lose it. His fellowship with the Most High had been so close that he was called "the man after God's own heart." How sweetly has he sung of his delight in the Lord. You know that in your happiest moments, when you want to praise the Lord with your whole heart, you cannot find any better expression than David has left you in his Psalms. How horrible it is that the man who had been in the third Heaven of fellowship with God could have sinned in this foul fashion!

Besides, David had received many Providential mercies at the Lord's hands. He was but a shepherd lad, but God took him from feeding his father's flock and made him king over Israel! The Lord also delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, enabled him to overthrow and slay giant Goliath and to escape the malice of Saul when he hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains. The Lord preserved him from many perils and at last firmly established him upon the throne—yet, after all these deliverances and mercies, this man, so highly favored by God—fell into this gross sin.

Then, also, it was a further aggravation of David's sin that it was committed against Uriah. If you read through the list of David's mighty men, you will find at the end, the name of Uriah the Hittite—he had been with David when he was outlawed by Saul. He had accompanied his leader in his wanderings. He had shared his perils and privations, so it was a shameful return on the part of the king when he stole the wife of his faithful follower who was at that very time fighting against the king's enemies! Searching through the whole of Scripture, or at least through the Old Testament, I do not know where we have the record of a worse sin committed by one who yet was a true child of God! So David had good reason to pray to the Lord, "Wash me," for he was indeed black with a special and peculiar blackness.

But now, turning from David, let us consider *our own blackness in the sight of God*. Is there not, my dear Friend, some peculiar blackness about your case as a sinner before God? I cannot picture it, but I ask you to call it to your remembrance, that your soul may be humbled on account

of it. Perhaps you are the child of Christian parents, or you were the subject of early religious impressions, or it may be that you have been in other ways specially favored by God—yet you have sinned against Him, sinned against light and knowledge, sinned against a mother’s tears, a father’s prayers, and a pastor’s admonitions and warnings! You were very ill once and thought you were going to die, but the Lord spared your life and restored you to health and strength—yet you went back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit, or the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Possibly a sudden sense of guilt alarmed you, so that you could not enjoy your sins, yet you could not break away from them. You spent your money for that which was not bread, and your labor for that which did not satisfy you, yet you went on wasting your substance with riotous living until you came to beggary—but even that did not wean you from your sin. In the House of God you had many solemn warnings and you went home again and again resolving to repent, yet your resolves soon melted away like the morning cloud and the early dew—leaving you more hardened than ever! I remember John B. Gough, at Exeter Hall, describing himself in his drinking days as seated upon a wild horse which was hurrying him to his destruction until a stronger hand than his own seized the reins, pulled the horse down upon its haunches and rescued the reckless rider. It was a terrible picture, yet it was a faithful representation of the conversion of some of us. How we drove the spurs into that wild horse and urged it to yet greater speed in its mad career until it seemed as if we would even ride over the gracious Being who was determined to save us! That was sin, indeed, not merely against the dictates of an enlightened conscience and against the warnings which were being continually given to us, but it was what the Apostle calls treading underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace!

Let me, Beloved, before I turn away from this black leaf, urge you to study it diligently and to try to comprehend the blackness of your hearts and the depravity of your lives. That false peace which results from light thoughts of sin is the work of Satan—get rid of it at once if he has worked it in you! Do not be afraid to look at your sins! Do not shut your eyes to them for you to hide your face from them may be your ruin—but for God to hide His face from them will be your salvation! Look at your sins and meditate upon them until they even drive you to despair. “What?” says one, “until they drive me to despair?” Yes. I do not mean that despair which arises from unbelief, but that self-despair which is so near akin to confidence in Christ. The more God enables you to see your emptiness, the more eager will you be to avail yourself of Christ’s fullness. I have always found that as my trust in self went up, my trust in Christ went down—and as my trust in self went down—my trust in Christ went up. So I urge you to take an honest view of your own blackness

of heart and life, for that will cause you to pray with David, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Weigh yourselves in the scales of the sanctuary, for they never err in the slightest degree. You need not exaggerate a single item of your guilt, for just as you are you will find far too much sin within you if the Holy Spirit will enable you to see yourselves as you really are.

II. But now we must turn to the second leaf, THE BLOOD-RED LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK which brings to our remembrance the precious blood of Christ.

When the sinner cries, “Wash me,” there must be some doubt of cleansing where he can be washed “whiter than snow.” So there is, for there is nothing but the crimson blood of Jesus that can wash out the crimson stain of sin! What is there about Jesus Christ that makes Him able to save all whom come unto God by Him? This is a matter upon which Christians ought to meditate much and often. Try to understand, dear Friends, the greatness of the Atonement. Live much under the shadow of the Cross. Learn to—

***“View the flowing
Of the Savior’s precious blood,
By Divine Assurance knowing
He has made your peace with God.”***

Feel that Christ’s blood was shed for you, even for you! Never be satisfied till you have leaned the mystery of the five wounds. Never be content till you are “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

The power of Jesus Christ to cleanse from sin must lie, first, in the greatness of His Person. It is not conceivable that the sufferings of a mere man, however holy or great he might have been, could have made atonement for the sins of the whole multitude of the Lord’s chosen people! It was because Jesus Christ was one of the Persons in the Divine Trinity. It was because the Son of Mary was none other than the Son of God. It was because He who lived, and labored, and suffered, and died was the Great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made, that His blood has such efficacy that it can wash the blackest sinners so clean that they are “whiter than snow!” The death of the best man who ever lived could not make an atonement even for his *own* sins, much less could it atone for the guilt of others. But when God, Himself, “took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men” and, “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,” no limit can be set to the value of the Atonement that He made! We hold most firmly the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, that Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. But we do not hold the doctrine of the limited value of His precious blood! There can be no limit to Deity—there must be infinite value in the Atonement which

was offered by Him who is Divine. The only limit of the Atonement is in its design, and that design was that Christ should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him—but in itself the Atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world—and if the entire race of mankind could be brought to believe in Jesus, there is enough efficacy in His precious blood to cleanse everyone born of woman from every sin that all of them have ever committed!

But the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus must also lie in the intense sufferings which He endured in making Atonement for His people. Never was there another case like that of our precious Savior. In His merely physical sufferings there may have been some who have endured as much as He did, for the human body is only capable of a certain amount of pain and agony—and others beside our Lord have reached that limit. But there was an element in His sufferings that was never present in any other case. The fact of His dying in the place of His people—the one great Sacrifice for the whole of His redeemed—makes His death altogether unique, so that not even the noblest of the noble army of martyrs share the Glory with Him. His mental suffering also constituted a very vital part of the Atonement—the sufferings of His soul were the very soul of His sufferings. If you can comprehend the bitterness of His betrayal by one who had been His follower and friend, His desertion by all His disciples, His arraignment for sedition and blasphemy before creatures whom *He had Himself made*—if you can realize what it was for Him, who did no sin, to be made sin for us, and to have laid upon Him the iniquity of us all—if you can picture to yourself how He loathed sin and shrank from it, you can form some slight idea of what His pure Nature must have suffered for our sakes! We do not shrink from sin as Christ did because we are accustomed to it—it was once the element in which we lived, moved and had our being! But His holy Nature shrank from evil as a sensitive plant recoils from the touch. But the worst of His sufferings must have been when His Father's wrath was poured out upon Him as He bore what His people deserved to bear—but which now they will never have to bear—

***“The waves of swelling grief
Did over His bosom roll
And mountains of almighty wrath
Lay heavy on His soul.”***

For His Father to have to hide His face from Him so that He cried in His agony, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” must have been a veritable Hell to Him! This was the tremendous draft of wrath which our Savior drank for us to its last dregs so that our cup might not have one drop of wrath in it forever! It must have been a great Atonement that was purchased at so great a price!

We may think of the greatness of Christ's Atonement in another way. It must have been a great Atonement which has safely landed such multitudes of sinners in Heaven, which has saved so many great sinners and translated them into such bright souls. It must be a great Atonement which is yet to bring innumerable myriads into the unity of the faith and into the Glory of the Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven. It is so great an Atonement, Sinner, that if you will trust to it, you shall be saved by it however many and great your sins may have been. Are you afraid that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to cleanse you? Do you fear that His Atonement cannot bear the weight of such a sinner as you are? I heard, the other day, of a foolish woman at Plymouth who, for a long while, would not go over the Saltash Bridge because she did not think it was safe. When, at length, after seeing the enormous traffic that passed safely over the bridge, she was induced to trust herself to it, she trembled greatly all the time and was not easy in her mind until she was off it. Of course, everybody laughed at her for thinking that such a ponderous structure could not bear her little weight. There may be some sinner in this building who is afraid that the great bridge which Eternal Mercy has constructed, at infinite cost, across the gulf which separates us from God, is not strong enough to bear his weight. If so, let me assure him that across that bridge of Christ's atoning Sacrifice, millions of sinners as vile and foul as he is, have safely passed, and the bridge has not even trembled beneath their weight nor has any single part of it ever been strained or displaced. My poor fearful Friend, your anxiety lest the great bridge of Mercy should not be able to bear your weight reminds me of the fable of the gnat than settled on the bull's ear and then was concerned lest the powerful beast should be troubled by his enormous weight! It is well that you should have a vivid realization of the weight of your sins, but at the same time you should also realize that Jesus Christ, by virtue of His great Atonement, is not only able to bear the weight of your sins, but He can also carry—indeed, He has already carried upon His shoulders the sins of all who shall believe in Him right to the end of time—and He has borne them away into the land of forgetfulness where they shall not be remembered or recovered forever! So efficacious is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant that even you, black as you are, may pray with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

III. This brings me to THE WHITE LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which is just as full of instruction as either the black leaf or the red one—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

What a beautiful sight it was, this morning, when we looked out and saw the ground all covered with snow! The trees were all robed in silver, yet it is almost an insult to the snow to compare it to silver, for silver at its brightest is not worthy to be compared with the marvelous splendor

that was to be seen wherever the trees appeared adorned with beautiful festoons above the earth which was robed in its pure white mantle. If we had taken a piece of what we call white paper, and laid it down upon the surface of newly-fallen snow, it would have seemed quite dirty in comparison with the spotless snow. This morning's scene at once called the text to my mind—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You, O black Sinner, if you believe in Jesus, shall not only be washed in His precious blood until you become tolerably clean, but you shall be made white, yes, you shall be "whiter than snow"! When we have gazed upon the pure whiteness of the snow before it has become defiled, it has seemed as though there could be nothing whiter. I know that when I have been among the Alps and have, for hours looked upon the dazzling whiteness of the snow, I have been almost blinded by it. If the snow were to lie long upon the ground and if the whole earth were to be covered with it, we should soon all be blind. The eyes of man have suffered with his soul through sin, and just as our soul would be unable to bear a sight of the unveiled purity of God, our eyes cannot endure to look upon the wondrous purity of the snow. Yet the sinner, black through sin, when brought under the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, becomes "whiter than snow."

Now, how can a sinner be made "whiter than snow"? Well, first of all, *there is a permanence about the whiteness of a blood-washed sinner which there is not about the snow.* The snow that fell this morning was, much of it, anything but white this afternoon! Where the thaw had begun to work, it looked yellow even where no foot of man had trod upon it. And as for the snows in the streets of London, you know how soon its whiteness disappears. But there is no fear that the whiteness which God gives to a sinner will ever depart from him—the robe of Christ's Righteousness which is cast around him is permanently white—

***"This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years.
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is always new."***

It is always "whiter than snow." Some of you have to live in smoky, grimy London, but the smoke and the grime cannot discolor the spotless robe of Christ's Righteousness! In yourselves, you are stained with sin, but when you stand before God, clothed in the Righteousness of Christ, the stains of sins are all gone. David in himself was black and foul when he prayed the prayer of our text, but clothed in the Righteousness of Christ, he was white and clean. The Believer in Christ is as pure in God's sight at one time as he is at another. He does not look upon the varying purity of our sanctification as our ground of acceptance with Him—He looks upon the matchless and Immutable Purity of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and He accepts us in Christ—not because of what we

are in ourselves! Hence, when we are once “accepted in the Beloved,” we are permanently accepted! And being accepted in Him, we are “whiter than snow.”

Further, *the whiteness of snow is, after all, only created whiteness*. It is something which God has made, yet it has not the purity which appertains to God, Himself. But the Righteousness which God gives to the Believer is a Divine Righteousness! As Paul says, “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him.” And remember that this is true of the very sinner who before was so black that he had to cry to God, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” There may be one who came into this building black as night through sin, but if he is enabled now, by Grace, to trust in Jesus, His precious blood shall at once cleanse him so completely that he shall be “whiter than snow!” Justification is not a work of degrees—it does not progress from one stage to another—but it is the work of a moment and it is instantly complete! God’s great gift of Eternal Life is bestowed in a moment and you may not be able to discern the exact moment when it is bestowed. Yet you may know even that, for as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God, you have passed from death unto life, you are saved, and saved to all eternity! The act of faith is a very simple thing, but it is the most God-glorifying act that a man can perform. Though there is no merit in faith, yet faith is a most ennobling Grace, and Christ puts a high honor upon it when He says, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Christ puts the crown of salvation upon the head of Faith, yet Faith will never wear it herself, but lays it at the feet of Jesus and gives Him all the honor and Glory!

There may be one in this place who is afraid to think that Christ will save him. My dear Friend, do my Master the honor to believe that there are no depths of sin into which you may have gone which are beyond His reach! Believe that there is no sin that is too black to be washed away by the precious blood of Christ, for He has said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And “all manner of sin” must include yours! It is the very greatness of God’s mercy that sometimes staggers a sinner! Let me use a homely simile to illustrate my meaning. Suppose you are sitting at your table, carving the meat for dinner, and suppose your dog is under the table, hoping to get a bone or a piece of gristle for his portion? Now, if you were to set the dish with the whole roast on it down on the floor, your dog would probably be afraid to touch it lest he should get a cut of the whip! He would know that a dog does not deserve such a dinner as that—and that is just your difficulty, poor Sinner! You know that you do not deserve such Grace as God delights to give. But the fact that it is of Grace shuts out the question of merit altogether! “By Grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” God’s gifts are like Himself—immeasurably great!

Perhaps some of you think you would be content with crumbs or bones from God's table. Well, if He were to give me a few crumbs or a little broken meat, I would be grateful for even that, but it would not satisfy me! But when He says to me, "You are My son, I have adopted you into My family, and you shall go no more out forever," I do not agree with you that it is too good to be true! It may be too good for *you*, but it is not too good for *God*—He gives as only He can give! If I were in great need and obtained access to the Queen, and after laying my case before her, she said to me, "I feel a very deep interest in your case, here is a penny for you," I would be quite sure that I had not seen the Queen, but that some lady's maid or servant had been making a fool of me! Oh, no—the Queen gives as Queen, and God gives as God—so that the greatness of His gift, instead of staggering us, should only assure us that it is genuine and that it comes from God! Richard Baxter wisely said, "O Lord, it must be great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy is of no use to me!"

So, Sinner, go to the great God with your great sin, and ask for great Grace that you may be washed in the great fountain filled with the blood of the great Sacrifice—and you shall have the great salvation which Christ has procured! And for it you shall ascribe great praise forever and ever to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51.

It is a Psalm and, therefore, it is to be sung. It is dedicated to the Chief Musician and there is music in it, but it needs a trained ear to catch the harmony. The sinner with a broken heart will understand the language and also perceive the sweetness of it—but as for the proud and the self-righteous, they will say, "It is a melancholy dirge," and turn away from it in disgust. There are times, to one under a sense of sin, when there is no music in the world like that of the 51st Psalm! But it is music for the chief Musician, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." And this is the Psalm of penitence—there is joy in it—and it makes joy even to the Chief Musician, himself!

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Here is a man of God, a man of God deeply conscious of his sin, crying for mercy, crying with all his heart and soul, and yet with his tear-dimmed eyes looking up to God and spying out the gracious attributes of Deity—loving kindness, and tender mercies, multitudes of them! There is no eye that is quicker to see the mercy of God than an eye that is washed with the tears of repentance! When we dare not look upon Divine Justice—when that burning attribute seems as if it would smite

us with blindness—we can turn to that glorious rainbow of Grace round about the Throne of God and rejoice in the loving kindness and the tender mercies of our God!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* “If washing will not remove it, burn it out, O Lord, but do cleanse me from it! Not only from the guilt of it and the consequent punishment, but from the sin itself. Make me clean through and through. ‘Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.’”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* “As if the record of it were painted on my eyeballs, I cannot look anywhere without seeing it! I seem to taste it in my meat and drink. And when I fall asleep, I dream of it, for Your wrath has come upon me, and now my transgression haunts me wherever I go.”

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* This is the sting of sin to a truly penitent man—that he has sinned against God. The carnal mind sees nothing in that. If ever it does repent, it repents of doing wrong to man. It only takes the manward side of the transgression, but God’s child, though grieved at having wronged man, feels that the deluge of his guilt—that which drowns everything else—is that he has sinned against his God! It is the very token and type and mark of an acceptable repentance that it has an eye to sin as committed against God. Now observe that the Psalmist, having thus sinned, and being thus conscience of his guilt, is now made to see that if the evil came out of him, it must have been in him at first—he would not have sinned as he had done had there not been an unclean fountain within him!

5, 6. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts—*Then it is not sufficient for me to be washed outside—being outwardly moral is not enough. “You desire truth in the inward parts”—

6. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* In that part which is even hidden from myself, where sin might lurk without my knowing it, *there* would You spy it out. I pray You, Lord, eject all sin from me, rid me of the most subtle form of iniquity that may be concealed within me.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* This is a grand declaration of faith! I know not of such faith as this anywhere else. The faith of Abraham is more amazing, but to my mind, this faith of poor broken-hearted David, when he saw himself to be black with sin and crimson with grime, and yet could say, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” is grand faith! It seems to me that a poor, trembling, broken-down sinner who casts himself upon the Infinite Mercy of God, brings more Glory to God than all the angels that went not astray are ever able to bring to Him!

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we cannot sin with impunity! Worldlings may do so as far as this life is concerned, but a child of God will find that, to him, sin and smart, if they do not go together, will follow very closely upon one another's heels. Yes, and our Father in Heaven chastens His people very sorely, even to the breaking of their bones—and it is only when He applies the promises to our hearts by the gracious operation of His Holy Spirit and makes the chambers of our soul to echo with the voice of His loving kindness, that we “hear joy and gladness again.” It is only then that our broken bones are bound up and we begin to rejoice once more.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* David could not bear that God should look upon them. [See Sermon #86, Volume 2—UNIMPEACHABLE JUSTICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* “Put them right out of sight. Turn Your gaze away from them and then put them out of everybody's sight.”

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* “Make me over again. Let the image of God in man be renewed in me. No, not the image, only, but renew the very Spirit of God within me.”

11, 12. *Cast me not away from Your Presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.* “Lift me up, and then keep me up. Let me never sin against You again.”

12, 13. *And uphold me with Your free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your way.* There are no such teachers of righteousness as those who have smarted under their own personal sin—they can, indeed, tell others what the ways of God are! What are those ways? His ways of chastisement—how He will smite the wandering. His ways of mercy—how he will restore and forgive the penitent!

13. *And sinners shall be converted unto You.* He felt sure that they would be converted and if anything can be the means of converting sinners, it is the loving faithful testimony of one who has, himself, tasted that the Lord is gracious. If God has been merciful to you, my Brother or my Sister, do not hold your tongue about it, but tell to others what He has done for you! Let the world know what a gracious God He is!

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* I like that confession and that prayer of David. He does not mince matters, for he had guiltily caused the blood of Uriah to be shed, and here he admits it, with great shame, but with equal honesty and truthfulness. As long as you and I call our sin by pretty names, they will not be forgiven. The Lord knows exactly what your sin is, therefore do not try to use polite terms about it. Tell Him what it is, that He may know that you know what it is. “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation.”

“But surely,” says someone, “there is nobody here who needs to pray *that* prayer!” Well, there is one in the pulpit, at least, who often feels that he has need to pray it, for what will happen if I preach not the Gospel or if I preach it not with all my heart? It may be that the blood of souls shall be required at my hands! And, my Brothers and Sisters, if anything in your example should lead others into sin, or if the neglect of any opportunities that are presented to you should lead others to continue in their sin till they perish, will not the sin of bloodguiltiness be possible to you? I think you had better, each one, pray David’s prayer, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation.” “And then, O Lord, if I once get clear of that, ‘my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.’”

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He is afraid to open them himself lest he should say something amiss. Pardoned sinners are always afraid lest they should err again. [See Sermons #1130, Volume19—THE CHRISTIAN’S GREAT BUSINESS and #713, Volume 12—SOUL-MURDER—WHO IS GUILTY?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire no sacrifice; else would I give it.* “Whatever there is in the whole world that You desire, I would gladly give it to You, my God.”

16-18. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion.* You see that the Psalmist loves the chosen people of God. With all his faults, his heart is right towards the kingdom under his charge. He feels that he has helped to break down Zion, and to do mischief to Jerusalem, so he prays, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion.”

18, 19. *Build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Once get your sin forgiven and then God will accept your sacrifices. Then bring what you will with all your heart, for an accepted sinner makes an accepted sacrifice through Jesus Christ!

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

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

BROKEN BONES

NO. 861

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones
which You have broken may rejoice.”
Psalm 51:8.*

BACKSLIDING is a most common evil, far more common than some of us suppose. We may ourselves be guilty of it and yet may delude our hearts with the idea that we are making progress in spiritual life. As the cunning hunter always makes the passage into his pits most easy and attractive, but always renders it most difficult for his victim to escape, so Satan makes the way of apostasy to be very seductive to our nature, but alas, the path of return from backsliding is very hard to tread and were it not for Divine Grace, no human feet would ever be able to make progress in it.

If I should be successful, this morning, in calling attention to decline in the spiritual life, especially in calling the attention of those to the matter whom it most concerns—I mean those who are themselves declining—I shall feel happy, indeed. At the same time, if I should so speak that those who have backslidden may be encouraged to hope for restoration and to seek, with earnestness and eagerness, that they may even now be *restored*, a second good result will have followed and unto God shall be double praise!

Dear Friends, we make little enough *advance* in the spiritual life, as it is—it were a thousand follies in one to be going *back*. When I look at my own standing on the road to Heaven, I am so dissatisfied with that to which I have attained, that to give up an inch of what I have gained would be excess of madness! A rich man may lose a thousand pounds or more and not feel it—but he whose purse is scant cannot afford to lose a shilling. Those who abound much in Divine Grace, might, perhaps, be able to bear some spiritual losses—but you and I cannot afford it! We are too near bankruptcy as it is and so poverty-stricken in many respects that it well behooves us to look to every one of the pennies of Grace—to watch our little drains and expenditures and to neglect no means by which even a little might be gained in the spiritual life.

May God grant to us, now, that while we are listening to His Word we may derive a blessing. There are three things to which I shall call your attention this morning. The first is, *the plight in which David was*—he speaks of his bones as having been broken. Secondly, *the remedy which he sought*, “Make me to hear joy and gladness.” And then, thirdly, *the ex-*

pectation which he entertained, namely, that the bones which had once been broken would yet be able to rejoice.

I. In commencing, let us notice THE PLIGHT IN WHICH DAVID WAS. His bones had been broken. We hear persons speak very flippantly of David's sin—boldly offering it as an accusation against godliness and as an excuse for their own inconsistent conversation. I wish they would look, also, at David's *repentance*, for if his sin was shameful, his sorrow for it was of the most bitter kind. And if the crime was glaring, certainly the afflictions which chastised him were equally remarkable.

From that day forward, the man whose ways had been ways of pleasantness and whose paths had been paths of peace, limped like a cripple along a thorny road and traversed a pilgrimage of afflictions almost unparalleled. Children of God cannot sin cheaply! Sinners may sin and in this life they may prosper, yes, and sometimes prosper by their *sins*. But those whom God loves will always find the way of transgression to be hard. Their follies will cost them their peace of mind. It will cost them their present comfort and even cost them all but their souls, so that they are saved, but so as by fire. David had sinned and for awhile the sin was pleasurable—all the attendant circumstances appeared to be favorable to his escape from punishment.

He had managed to conceal his crime from the injured Uriah and then he had, with horrible craftiness, effected the death of the injured husband. Every circumstance in Providence seemed to favor the concealment of the monarch's sin. His conscience slept. His passions rioted. But his heart was estranged and his Grace was at its lowest ebb. Perhaps he even persuaded himself that his adultery, which might have been a great sin in others, was excusable in himself because of his position as a despotic sovereign, who, according to Oriental notions, had almost absolute power over the persons of his subjects. It is so easy to persuade ourselves that what custom concedes to us, it is right to take.

But because David was a man after God's own heart, his ease in sin could not long continue—the Lord would not allow such a disease to destroy His servant. David's rest was abruptly broken. The stern Prophet, Nathan, delivers to him a parable with a personal application. The sense of right in the king is awakened. Conviction of sin, like a lightning flash, destroys the towers of his joy and lays his peace prostrate in ruins! He trembles before God, whom in his heart he loved, but whom he had, for awhile, forgotten.

The king goes into his chamber mourning and lamenting before the Lord, followed by the chastising rod which drives the word home upon his conscience! The Holy Spirit becomes the spirit of bondage to him and makes him again to fear. By the rough north wind of conviction all his joys are withered and his delights cut off. He becomes one of the most wretched of mortals. His sighs and groans resound through his palace, and where once his harp had poured forth melodies of pleasant praise, nothing is heard but dolorous notes of plaintive penitence! Alas, for you, O conscience-stricken monarch! Your couch is watered with your tears and

your bread made bitter with your grief. Well do you compare your sorrow to the pain of broken bones!

Brothers and Sisters, let us open up that poetical metaphor before us. We may gather from this that David's plight was *very painful*. "His bones," he says, "were broken." A flesh wound is painful—and who would not wish to escape from it? But here was a more serious injury, for the bone was reached and completely crushed. No punishment was probably more cruel than that of breaking poor wretches, alive, upon the wheel when a heavy bar of iron smashed the great bones of the arms and of the legs—the pain must have been excruciating to the last degree! And David declares that the mental anguish which he endured was comparable to such extreme agony.

You are on your way home today and in affecting a passage across one of our most perilous roads, you are startled by a fearful cry, for some poor unwary passenger has been dashed down by a huge and impetuous vehicle! You rush to the rescue, but it is too late—the unhappy victim is pale and death-like—and the word sounds terribly on your compassionate ears when you are informed that his bones are broken. We think comparatively little of wounds which only tear the curtains of flesh—but when the solid pillars of the house of manhood are snapped in two and the supports of the body are broken—then every man confesses that the pain is great, indeed.

David declares that such was his pain of mind. His soul was racked and tortured, anguished and tormented. The pain of a broken bone is as constant as it is excruciating. It prevents sleep by night and ease by day. The mind cannot be diverted from it. Men cannot shake off the remembrance that this, their frame, is so seriously injured. O beware, you Believers who are just now tempted by the sweets of sin and remember the wormwood and gall which will be found in the dregs afterwards! You who feel the soft blandishments of sin to be so pleasing to your flesh and are ready to yield to its gentle fascinations, remember that when it reveals itself, the softness of its touch will all be gone and it will be towards you as a huge hammer, or like the crushing wheels of the chariot of Juggernaut, crushing your spirit with anguish! The velvet paw of the tiger of sin conceals a lacerating claw!

The metaphor also signifies that the result of his sin and of his repentance was exceedingly *serious*. A trifling thing is superficial. That which is merely on the surface is not a matter which may cause us deep anxiety—but a broken bone is not a thing to laugh at! Such an injury compels a man to change his lightheartedness for apprehension. Had it been but a skin wound, he might have wrapped his handkerchief about it and have gone his way and have said, "It will heal in due time." But in the case of a broken bone he anxiously sends for the surgeon and knows that he must lie by awhile—he feels the accident is no mere trifle.

Believe me, dear Friends, genuine sorrow for sin is not as some suppose it—mere sentimentalism. Under sorrow for sin I have seen men driven almost out of their senses—until it seemed as if their minds would

fail them under their apprehensions of guilt and its heinousness. Yes, some of us have personally felt it, and we bear witness that if all forms of bodily pain could be heaped upon us at once, we had sooner bear them all than the burden of sin! O believe me, as I am sure you will who have felt the same—guilt upon the conscience is worse than the body on the rack. Even the flames of the stake may be cheerfully endured—but the burnings of a conscience tormented of God are beyond all measure unendurable. Many have felt this soul-anguish and have endured this month after month, but have at last found rest, so that there is comfort in this misery, for it ends well and profitably. May you who now feel your bones to be broken, now plead, as David did, “Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”

The plight into which David fell was more than serious and painful—it was *complicated*. The setting of one broken bone may puzzle the surgeon, but what is his task when many bones are broken? In one bone a compound fracture will involve great difficulty in bringing the divided pieces together, in the hope that yet new bone may be formed and so the member may be spared. But if it should come to a broken arm, *and* leg, *and* rib—if in many places the poor human frame has become injured—how exceedingly careful must the surgeon be! Often the very treatment which may be useful to one member may be injurious to the other—disease in one limb may act upon another. The cure of the whole, where all the bones are broken, must be a miracle! If a mass of misery—a man full of broken bones—shall yet become healthy and strong, great credit must be given to the surgeon’s skill. Brothers and Sisters, you see the case of a man, then, who has sinned against God by backsliding from his ways and who is heavily struck by his conscience and by the Holy Spirit! It is a complicated sorrow which he endures.

The metaphor of broken bones also seems to indicate that *the greater powers* of the soul are grieved and afflicted. The bones are the more important part of the structure of the body. In our spirits there are certain Graces which are, so to speak, the bones of the spiritual man—to these David refers. Our heavenly Father is pleased, sometimes, when we have sinned, to allow our faith to become weak like a broken bone. We cannot grasp the promises we once delighted in. We cannot voice the encouraging Word as we did in happier days. Our faith brings us pain rather than rest. He suffers our hope to lose its joy-creating power, and like a broken bone, our very hope for a better land where rest remains, becomes a pining disquietude at our present forlorn condition.

Even love, that notable limb of strength which makes the soul to run so nimbly, is full of weakness and anguish and makes us cry, “Do I love my Lord at all, and if so, how could I have offended Him so greatly? When I have backslidden so far, surely for me to talk about love to God would be to take a holy word upon polluted lips!” At that time the great master Graces within our spirit seem, each of them, to minister to our woe. And though they are there—as the broken bone is still in the man’s body—they

are so injured and weakened, and all but powerless that their only vitality is the sad vitality of pain!

Our faith in the Scriptures leads us to tremble at their threats. Our hope shocks us because, though we have hope for others, we cannot rejoice for ourselves. And our very love to God, yet alive within us, makes us hate and despise ourselves to think we should have acted thus towards One so good and kind. O Brethren, you who are lingering on the brink of sin and are beginning to slip with your feet, may the thought of these broken bones awaken you from your dangerous lethargy as with a thunder-clap! And may you fly at once to the Cross and to the fountain filled from Jesus' blood and begin your spiritual career anew with more earnestness and watchfulness than you have ever shown before! The case was painful, serious and complicated.

In the fourth place, it was extremely *dangerous*, for when several bones are broken, every surgeon perceives how very likely it is that the case will end fatally. Around each shattered bone there lingers the danger of gangrene and if that grievous ill should intervene, the healing is in vain. When a heart is broken with repentance, the gangrene of remorse is most urgent to enter it. When the spirit is humbled, the gangrene of unbelief covets the opportunity to take possession of the man. When the heart is really emptied and made to feel its own nothingness, then the demon, Despair, beholds a dark cavern in which to fix his horrible abode. It is a dreadful thing to have faith broken, hope broken and love broken—and the entire man, as it were—reduced to a palpitating mass of pain. It is a dreadfully dangerous condition to be in, for, alas, my Brothers and Sisters, when men have sinned and have been made to suffer afterwards, how often have they turned to their sins again with greater hardness of heart than ever!

With many, the more they are struck the more they revolt. When the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint and they seem to be nothing but “wounds and bruises and putrefying sores” through the afflictions they have suffered—yet they still return to their idols—and the more they are chastened the more they revolt! Think, I pray you, how many professors have backslidden and have been chastened but have continued in their backsliding until they have gone down to Hell! I did not say *children of God*—I said *professors*—and how do you know but what *you* may be a mere professor yourself?

Ah, my Friend, if you are living in known sin at this time and are happy in it, you have great cause to tremble! If you can go on from day to day and from week to week in neglected prayer and neglected reading of the Word. If you can live without the means of Grace in the week days. If you are cold and indifferent towards our Lord and Master. If you are altogether becoming worldly and covetous and vain—fond of levity and the things of this world and yet are at ease—you have grave cause to suspect that you are a *bastard* in the family and not one of the true children of the living God! I use that hard expression, remembering how the poet puts it—

“Bastards may escape the rod,

***Plunged in sensual, vain delight.
But the trueborn child of God,
Must not, would not, if he might"***

Ah, indeed, he would not if he might! Great God, never let us sin without a smart! Never suffer us to turn to the right or to the left without receiving at once a reproof for it, that we may be driven back into the strait and narrow path and may so walk all our lives with You! The danger is, when the bones get broken, the gangrene of despair, or the mortification of indifference may set in and the man becomes a castaway. How this ought to keep any of you who know the Lord from indulging in the beginnings of declension! How jealous should you be lest you run these frightful risks!

Yet again, David's case was most *damaging*. Supposing the danger to be over, yet a broken bone is never a gain, but must always a loss. Poor man! While his bone is broken he is quite unable to help himself, much less to help others! His being unable to help himself makes a draft upon the strength of the Church of God. Power which might otherwise be employed has to be turned into the channel of succoring *him*, so that there is a clear demand upon the Christian power of the Church which ought to be expended mainly in seeking after lost souls—there is a damage to the whole Church in the declension of *one* backsliding Believer.

Moreover, while the man is in this state he can do no good to others. Of what service can he be who does not know his own salvation? How can he point others to a Savior when he cannot see the Cross himself? How shall he comfort another man's faith while his own faith can scarcely touch the hem of your garment? By what energy and power shall he help the weak when he, himself, is the weakest of all? Yes, and let me say even after God, in His mercy, has healed every broken bone, it is a sad detriment to a man to have had his bones broken at all! Somehow or other there is never the freedom of action and degree of energy in the healed arm that there is in the one that was never broken. It is a great blessing for the cripple to be helped to walk with a crutch—but it is a greater blessing never to have been a cripple.

It is an unspeakable blessing to have been able always to run without weariness and walk without fainting. When a man's bone has been broken in his boyhood, if it is ever so well set, yet, I have heard say, it will feel the changes of the weather and will feel starts and shocks unknown before—unpleasant reminders that it was once broken. So it is with us—if we have fallen into a sin, even though we have recovered from it—there is a weakness left and a tendency to pain. We never are the men, after backsliding, that we were before. And we never make, altogether, a recovery from great *spiritual* decline, so as to be, all things considered, quite what we were before.

I grant that in some points we may become superior, as, for instance, in knowledge of self and in experience of the spiritual life. We may have made an advance, but still, in holy agility, in sacred vivacity, in consecrated exultation, we are not what we were. I will defy David to dance before the Ark of God with all his might after the sin with Bathsheba had

crippled him. Yes, and there is no giant killing. There is no slaying his ten thousands. There is very little of high and mighty exploit in Israel's cause after the sin, even though succeeded by a gracious recovery. I grant you, David exhibited virtues of another class and excellences of another kind—but even these are not such as to tempt us to risk the experiment for ourselves!

God grant that our bones may not be broken, lest our soul be damaged for life. May we never be like a ship which has been all but wrecked and just escaped the rocks—tugged into harbor with extreme difficulty, her hull all but waterlogged, her cargo spoiled, her masts gone by the board, her streamers gone, her crew and passengers all wet and saved as by the skin of their teeth—a mere hulk dragged into haven by infinite mercy! God grant, instead of that, that we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sails all filled, with a goodly cargo on board to the praise of the glory of His Grace who has made us accepted in the Beloved!

One more reflection on this point and that is, although David's case was very painful, very serious, very complicated, very dangerous and very damaging, yet it was still *hopeful*. The saving clause lies here—"The bones which *You* have broken." What? Did *God* break those bones? Then the breaking was not done by *accident*, but by design! Did God, in chastisement, deal with David's spirit and bring him into this killing sorrow? Then He who wounds can bind up! Infinite power rests in God, and if He has, in wisdom, been pleased to break, He will, in mercy, be pleased to reset the bones. O you wounded spirits, far be it from Me to wound you yet more! Far rather would I help to bind on the splints and the strapping. Let this, then, be your consolation, like a piece of heavenly plaster may this be to you—"The Lord kills *and* makes alive. The Lord wounds *and* He makes whole."

None but He can do it! If your sorrow is a hatred for sin, depend upon it, the devil did not give you that sorrow and your own nature did not breed it—it is a Heaven-given sorrow! Those bones of yours shall yet be healed! Yes, and they shall yet rejoice! The lesson for this first part of the subject, then, is, let as many as are now possessing any spiritual health and enjoyment be careful that they do not lose it. Let such as have lost their nearness to God be anxious to regain it before worse evils shall come. Let those who are almost in despair take heart, for they cannot be in a worse plight than David was and the God who rescued David can rescue them! Let them not sit down in despair, but, with the Psalmist, let them rise up with humble hope and address themselves, as we do now, in the second place, to the remedy.

II. THE REMEDY WHICH THE PSALMIST RESORTED TO. Observe, negatively, he did not lie down sullenly or in despondency—he turned to his chastening God in prayer! He did not offer sacrifices, nor attempt good works of his own. He turned not to *himself* in any measure, but to God alone. He did not cast away his confidence in God. He believed, still, that there was power in Heaven to save him and therefore, by humble faith, he

lifted up the voice of his cry to the Most High in these words—"Make me to hear joy and gladness."

Now notice, Brothers and Sisters, in this, first of all, *David believed that there was joy and gladness even for such as he was*. Notice the verse which comes before this text, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Yes, *there* is the key to his meaning. He believed that there was *pardon* and that pardon would restore his joy and gladness to him! He was confident that God could pardon—that He could pardon completely—that He had already provided the means of pardon. David alludes to that in the hyssop—that God could thoroughly pardon even *him*, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

Now, beloved Mourner, I pray you believe the same precious fact. There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared! Great as your sin may be, whether as a sinner or as a fallen Christian, yet still it cannot exceed the boundless extent of Jehovah's compassion! He is able to forgive the greatest sins through the blood of His dear Son. There cannot be so much enormity in your sin as there is merit in the Savior's Atonement. What? Though you should have sinned against light and knowledge and so far as you could do so, have crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame, yet, without injury to His justice or taint upon His holiness, God can stretch out the silver scepter and forgive you, even you! And He can do that at this instant! Believe that! Believe that, now, for it is most certainly true!

In the next place, *David knew that this joy and gladness must come to him by hearing*. Observe, "Make me to *hear* joy and gladness." He did not expect it by *doing*—he did not look for it merely by praying—he certainly did not expect it by feeling! He expected it by *hearing*. Oh, those fops and fools, what good is it, in all they *do*, who attempt to preach the Gospel, as they say (which gospel is no Gospel), through the *eyes*—by their vestments and pantomimes! Why, the gate of mercy is the ear! Salvation comes to no man through what he *sees*, but through what he *hears*! As says the Scripture, "Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live."

As it was well observed this week by an eminent Brother in Christ, there are some who despise sermons and imagine that public prayer is everything. But these should remember that nowhere in the New Testament did Jesus commission special men to go forth and celebrate public prayer! Nowhere did He give even a hint of a ritual! Nowhere did He prescribe a liturgy. He did not ordain morning prayer and vespers, or so much as a formal prayer for the day! But He did say to His disciples—"Go you into all the world and *preach* the Gospel." Far are we from undervaluing the assembling of ourselves together for public prayer! But yet it is suggested that so little should be said of that which we call public worship in the New Testament—while the same Book teems with references to the preaching of the Word—and plainly declares that, by the foolishness of *preaching* God will save them that believe!

Our Lord Himself was, throughout His whole life, a Preacher—and among the greatest signs of His Messiahship He mentioned that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them! The fact is, the sermon reverently heard and earnestly delivered, is the highest act of worship! And the preaching of the Gospel is, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the greatest instrumentality for the salvation of men! Though all the liturgies that were ever said or sung had remained unwritten. Though all the notes of pealing organs had been silent. Though every morning celebration and evening chant had been unknown. Though every “performing of service” had been foresworn—the world might have been all the better for the loss!

The Gospel faithfully proclaimed is God’s gate of mercy—the preaching of His Word by earnest lips, touched with the consecrating fire—is the power of God unto salvation! The hearing of the Word is the great horror alike of papists and infidels—but it is the greatest of all means of Divine Grace! Let those who are disconsolate and cast down remember the Master’s precept and be diligent in listening to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus. God asks no *sacraments* of you—“You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it.” David turned away from ceremonies and his truly evangelical prayer was, “Make me to *hear*,” for *there* is the point of *healing*.

Notice that the hearing which David intended was an inward and *spiritual* hearing with his whole soul. One is struck with the expression, “Make me to *hear*.” What? David, have you no ears? Does he mean, “Lord, send me a Prophet”? No, there was Nathan, there was Gad—Israel was not without her Prophets in those days. He does not ask for a preacher. What, then, did he seek? What? Had the man’s ear become deaf? *Spiritually* that was the case. He heard the Word of comfort, but he did not hear it aright. He was distracted. His soul was tempest-tossed. His conscience tormented him. The threats of the Law thundered in his ears, so that when the good Word came, “The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die,” he did not hear it as being his own. He took it with him into his prayer closet and he remembered the words, but he could not feel the inward sense to be true to himself.

Therefore does he ask for the hearing ear. “Lord,” he seems to say, “Cleanse these ears of mine! O give my poor heart the power to grasp these absolving words lest I should be like those who, having ears, hear not. And having eyes, see not, and do not understand.” Believe me, I can make some of you hear well enough with your outward ear—but one of my most earnest prayers is that God would make you all hear *within*—and especially those who are desponding—and those who refuse to be comforted. I suggest this prayer to mourners, today, to take home with them and I beg God’s people to join in supplication for them. “Make me to hear! Make me to hear that precious Gospel! Make me to hear and to receive Your own true Word! It has comforted so many, Lord, let it comfort me!

“I know Your blood has pardoned others, O help Your poor broken-hearted servant to get pardon as well as they! I do not doubt Your power or Your willingness to save others, but, Lord, there are such obstacles and difficulties about *my* case! I beseech You, roll away the stone from the

sepulcher of my poor dead hopes and make me to live in Your sight. It is really a making, Lord—a creation, a work of Omnipotence—a work in which the attributes of Your power and Your Grace will be resplendent. *Make me to hear!* You who have made the ear at first can make it new. *O make me to hear joy and gladness!*”

Do you catch the meaning of the Psalmist? He knows that the comfort must come by *hearing*, but he knows it must be a *spiritual* hearing and therefore he asks for it of the Lord.

III. And now, as time fails us, though we might have enlarged here, we shall turn in the last place to THE HOPE WHICH THE PSALMIST ENTER-TAINED. What was it? “That the bones which You have broken may *re-joyce*.” Notice—not, “that the bones which You have broken may grow quiet and be calm and at rest”—that was not enough. Not, “that the bones which You have broken may become callous, indifferent, painless.” No, no! *That* he would have vehemently disapproved—but, “that the bones which You have broken may *re-joyce*.” He dares to ask for great mercy! Yes, the greatest mercy!

When a great sinner comes to a great God, if he pleads at all, he will do well to plead for great things. For since he deserves *nothing* at all, all that comes to him must come of Grace and, therefore, the same mercy which freely gives the little may as well give the much! Therefore, seeking Sinners, make bold to open your mouths wide, for He will fill them! Let us look at these words more closely—“that the bones which You have broken may *re-joyce*.” He means, then, that if he is enabled by faith to look to Christ, whose blood is sprinkled by the hyssop upon the soul. If he receives perfect pardon through the atoning Sacrifice which makes sinners white as snow, then he will possess a deeper and truer joy than before.

In times past his tongue rejoiced, but now his *bones* will rejoice! Before, his flesh rejoiced, now his *bones* and *marrow* will rejoice! The deep pain which he had felt within the inmost depths of his nature would now be exchanged for an equally deep content, which, like an artesian well, gushes up from the very heart of the earth all clear and fresh! It would rise in continual flood from the heart of his nature, all fresh with holy exultation! He would now know what sin meant as he never knew before! He would know what chastisement for sin was as he could not have dreamed before! He would know what *mercy* meant as he had not before understood! And therefore his inmost nature shall praise and bless God in a way in which he had never done until that hour!

That deeply experimental, painful, and yet blessed experience of his weakness and of God’s power to save, taught him a heart-music which only broken bones could learn. You know, Brothers and Sisters, there is a great deal of flash about many of our spiritual joys. They are, in the grosser parts, very near akin to carnal excitement—and especially with young beginners the gladness is too apt to trail in the mire of mere mental pleasure. Our gladness is frequently far from being deep as we could wish—but after the bone-breaking everything is solid—after the bone-healing everything is true! What our joy lacks in vividness it makes up in

stability and depth. So David means, “the innermost core of my nature. The very essentials of my spiritual being shall sing and rejoice.”

Note again, he means that his joy would be more than ever *a matter of his whole soul*. “My bones which were broken shall *all* of them,” in the *plural*, “rejoice.” He had been a mass of misery—mercy shall make him a mass of music! It is not easy to get the whole man to praise God. You can bless God, sometimes, in His House with your heart and with your voice, too, but your thoughts will wander after the sick child, or after the bad debt. Some faculty or other is unstrung—the 10 strings are not all in tune. But when the bone-breaking process has been suffered. When the man feels himself thoroughly crushed before God—*all* his thoughts are concentrated, then, upon his *misery*—and when he obtains relief, then all his thoughts are concentrated upon the *mercy*. And he blesses God with a unanimity of all his powers never before reached!

The bones which God has broken, without discord, every one of them praise Him! That rejoicing expected was peculiar to the brokenness which would be apparent in it. Every broken bone would then become a mouth with which to bless God! But there would always be a humility, gentleness, softness and tenderness in such praise. I must confess I like to listen to the high sounding cymbals and I can shout as loudly as any, “Praise the Lord with the harp. Blow upon the trumpet in the new moon.” I can cry with ardor, “O for a shout, a sacred shout, to God, the Sovereign King.” But the dulcimer’s soft notes often have the most music in them to *my* weary ears. Trumpet notes of triumph may be too much like the noise of those who go forth to the battles of earth or make merry in the feast.

But the soft music of broken bones is peculiarly sacred and reminds one of the Master’s sacred joy—the soft and solemn music of His soul when He said, “My praise shall be of You in the great congregation. I will pay My vows before them that fear Him,” when He blessed God on the Cross, that a seed should serve Him—that it should be unto the Lord for a generation, His joy was true and deep. “Still waters run deep.” The brokenness of heart has not in it the roaring as when the sea roars and the fullness thereof, but it has the gentle flow of that silver river, “the streams which make glad the city of God.”

Once again, the joy which the Psalmist expected would have *much of God in it*, for you observe that the Lord appears in this verse twice—“He breaks the bones and He makes the ear to hear joy and gladness.” God is appealed to as the Breaker and the Healer. After having been sorely struck and having at last found comfort, we always think more of our Lord Jesus than we did before. If I have grown in anything since I have known the Lord, I think it is in this one thing—in having more frequent and realizing thoughts of God the Father, Son and Spirit personally considered. There was a day when I thought *doctrine* the first thing and all-important. And there was a time when I conceived inward *experience* to be most exceedingly worthy of my regard.

I think the same now, but over and above all that my soul possesses a deep sense of God and a longing to be in daily *personal* fellowship with the

Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Surely this being filled with God is a more excellent way, for doctrine may be but food untasted and experience may turn out to be but fancy. To live upon God by faith and to serve Christ with the heart—and to feel the Holy Spirit's indwelling—this is reality and truth! When a man has had such dealings with God as David had and received such mercy from Him, then his joy will be fuller of God than it ever was before.

You will notice in the verse, too, that David *sets no end* whatever to his joy. "The bones which You have broken may rejoice," but how long? Ok, as long as ever they please! Once let the bone be set, the ground of joy is constant and continuous! A pardoned sinner never needs to pause in his sacred gratitude! Let the Lord visit the most broken-hearted among His people and light their candle and the devil cannot blow it out. And Death itself, that last of foes, shall not quench the sacred flame! O see, my Brethren, how blessed a remedy Christ has provided for all the evils of your backsliding! See how to get at it, by an earnest prayer to God through Christ! Go to your chambers and breathe out a prayer, you daughters of sorrow, and you sons of woe, for—

***"The Mercy Seat is open still—
There let your souls retreat."***

God waits to be gracious! He comes today in the Gospel to meet His poor prodigal and to receive him with arms of love! Christ, this morning, by our ministry, is sweeping the house to search for His lost piece of money! The Good Shepherd is seeking His wandering sheep! O be joyful and thankful that you are in the land of mercy, in the place where the heart of God yearns over His dear wandering ones! Come to Jesus now! O come, now, by faith and let your prayer be the words of the text, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice."

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A GOOD MAN IN AN EVIL CASE

NO. 2830

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 10, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1886.

*“Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you:
He shall never allow the righteous to be moved.”*
Psalm 55:22.

Those of you who were here last Thursday evening will recollect that the sermon was concerning those sons of Gershon who were burden-bearers in connection with the tabernacle in the wilderness. [Sermon #2829, Volume 49—LOWLY SERVICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>.] They were not appointed to preach. They were not ordained to fight—their service consisted in bearing burdens. There were some here, on that occasion, whom I had never known before who had been, by the space of 30 years, great sufferers. They were carried into this place last Thursday evening—I did not know of their presence until afterwards, when they told me that the sermon seemed to have been made for them and that it had given them great comfort.

I thought I would follow up that sermon about burden-bearers by a discourse upon another text which shows us that there are some burdens which we need *not* carry. Burdens of service, or burdens of which come through our consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ—these we will never lay down so long as we live. It shall be our joy to daily take up our cross and follow Jesus, but there are certain burdens of care and sorrow, of which the text speaks—especially the burdens which come from the slander, reproach and oppression of ungodly men—which we need not carry. David says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

Beloved Friends, the very best men in the world may be slandered! And if you should hear them evilly spoken of, be you not among those who straightway condemn them. There are some who say, “Where there is smoke, there is sure to be fire.” And although it is well known that “common fame is a common liar,” yet there are some who are so fond of hearing or telling lies that they are sure to believe such a lie as this, especially if it is spoken concerning a servant of God. Be you not, therefore, ready to believe all the reports that you hear against any Christian people. The best of men, as I have already reminded you, have been

worst spoken of and there are some who turn upon them directly, like lions scenting their prey.

I may be just now addressing some who are the victims of the malice of ungodly men or women. I am sorry, dear Friends, that this should be your lot, for it is among the most bitter of human afflictions. But at the same time I would remind you that nothing unusual has happened to you. You remember the three brave men who were cast alive into Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace when it was heated seven times more than it was known to be heated? You are scarcely enduring such a fiery trial as *that* and, certainly, you are not suffering as did your Master, the Lord of all pilgrims who have made their way to Heaven! But if, in any degree, it should happen that you are bearing a burden of this kind, the text will have a special message for you.

In speaking upon this passage, I want to keep it in context with the whole Psalm. I do not think it is dealing properly with the Bible to pick out one verse here, and another there, without looking to see what the context of the passage is. If men's books were treated as God's Book is often treated, we should make many a grand and noble literary work to appear to be an insane production! It is true that God's Book can endure even such treatment as that. It is such a wonderful Book that even a sentence torn out of it will convey a most precious Truth of God, but it is not fair to the Book, and it is not fair to yourself, to treat the Bible so. A text of Scripture should always be viewed in the setting in which God has placed it, for there is often as much that is admirable in the gold which forms the setting of the jewel as there is in the jewel itself.

I. So, looking at our text in that light, I shall begin by saying that **WHEN WE ARE MUCH TRIED AND BURDENED, THERE IS SOMETHING THAT WE ARE TEMPTED TO DO.** The text does not mention it, but the Psalm does. And the text is an antidote to the malady which the Psalm describes or implies. "Cast your burden upon the Lord," is an injunction concerning that which we are to put in the *place of something else* which more naturally suggests itself to our poor foolish minds.

And, first, when we are in very severe trouble, *we are tempted to complain.* The Psalmist says, in the second verse, "I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise." I am not sure that our version is quite fair to David in this instance, but it suits my present purpose admirably. As the children of God, we ought to avoid even the semblance of a complaint against our Heavenly Father. But when our faith is sorely tried, when some sharp reproach is stinging our spirit, we are all too apt to begin thinking and saying that God is dealing harshly with us. You know Job, that most patient of men, became very impatient when his so-called "friends" poured vinegar instead of oil into his wounds. Smarting under their cruel treatment, he said some things which he had far better have left unsaid. O Brothers and Sisters, pray that whenever the Lord lays His rod heavily upon you, your tears may have no rebellion in them! Whatever His providential dealings with you may be, may you be enabled to say, with the Patriarch,

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” May you even join Job in his triumphant declaration, “Through He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” It is grand faith that enables a Believer to say, “Though I should die at God’s altar, I will die like the lamb that is brought to the slaughter, or be like the sheep that is dumb before her shearers and makes no complaint.”

The next natural temptation is that of *giving up altogether and lying down in despair*. You get that in the fourth and fifth verses—“My heart is sorely pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me.” Have not some of you been sometimes tempted to say, “There, I can do more. I must give up—that last cruel blow has utterly broken me in pieces and I feel that I can only lay down and die in the bitterness of my spirit”? Brothers and Sisters, this is a temptation against which you must strive most earnestly! As no living man should complain, so no living man should despair—and especially no child of God! Up with you, poor Heart! You have not yet come to the end of God’s delivering mercy, even though you have come to the end of your poor puny strength. The Lord shall light your candle, now that your night is so dark. You shall yet sing for very joy of heart, though now you can only, like David, mourn in your mourning. He will bring you again from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea if you have sunk as low as that. Therefore, talk not of dying before your time. Yet, if you do so, you will not be the first who has talked like that, for there was one who never died, who said, “O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” That was Elijah, the Prophet of Fire! Yet, just then he seemed as if he were only cold ashes rather than a vehement flame—another proof that the best of men are but men at the best!

The next very common temptation is *to want to flee from our present trials*. You get that in verses six to eight—“I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.” Possibly you are the pastor of a church and things do not prosper as you could wish. I wonder where they do? But, in your case, you think there is such little prosperity that you must give up your position and run away. Young gunners, before they have become accustomed to the smell of gunpowder and the noise of cannons, have often been known to desert their guns. And even old soldiers have sometimes felt what the “trembles” are! But, my Brother, if this is your case, I beseech you not to run away. If you did flee, where would you go? You think you will run away, as Jonah did, do you? I guarantee you that Jonah was very sorry that he had run away when he found himself in the whale’s belly at the very bottom of the mountains in the depths of the sea! And you and I will be sure to get into greater trouble in we run away from the path of duty.

Fight it out, Man! Stand your ground in the name of God and in the strength of God! It may be that there are better days just now coming and that Satan is seeking to drive you away just as you are on the brink of success! Dr. Watts has a good paraphrase of this Psalm and also writes wisely concerning the temptation to flee the post of duty. He says—

***“Oh, were I like a feathered dove,
And innocence had wings!
I’d fly, and make a long remove
From all these restless things.
Let me to some wild desert go,
And find a peaceful home;
Where storms of malice never blow,
Temptations never come.
Vain hopes and vain inventions all,
To escape the rage of Hell!
The mighty God, on whom I call,
Can save me here as well.
God shall preserve my soul from fear,
Or shield me when afraid;
Ten thousand angels must appear,
If HE commands their aid.”***

Possibly the special case in point is not that of a minister. It is some Mary, weeping at home because her brother Lazarus is dead. Martha is not a very congenial sister to her, so she does not even go with her when she goes to meet the Lord. Yet, strangely enough, each of the sisters says the same words to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.” In due time the Master sends for Mary and soon she has the joy of welcoming Lazarus back from the grave. Some of us get strange ideas into our head at times—we resolve that we will go, we know not where, and do, we know not what! Ah, my dear Friends, he whose great trouble lies in his own heart cannot run away from it, for he bears it about with him wherever he goes! The old man of the mountain who sits upon your shoulder and clings so tightly to you, if he is yourself, is not to be shaken off by your running away! Far wiser will it be for you to do as the text says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord.” Then you will need no wings like a dove, nor will you wish to fly away to the wilderness, but you will be willing to stay in the very midst of the battle and even there you will be in perfect peace—

***“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory.”***

I have often enjoyed the greatest solitude amid the crowds in Cheap-side and I believe that there is many a Christian who has experienced the deepest peace in the midst of the wildest turmoil. Some of us know what Madame Guyon meant when she wrote—

***“While place we seek or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none!
But with a God to guide our way,
‘Tis equal joy to go or stay.”***

Trust in Him! Cast your burden on Him, for so you will escape from this temptation of wanting to flee away from the place where He would have you be!

There is one other temptation that this Psalm suggests to me, and that is *the temptation to wish ill to those who are causing us ill*. Perhaps mistaking the meaning of the passage, we are apt to pray the prayer in the ninth verse, “‘Destroy, O Lord!’ Our foes have slandered us, they have spoken evil of us and we wish that they were dead, or that some great judgment might overtake them.” It will never do, dear Friends, to indulge such a feeling as that! We shall be injured if we desire that others should be injured. Slander has, indeed, stung you when you harbor the wish to sting another! Someone said, in my hearing, attempting to justify revenge or retaliation, “But if you tread on a worm, it will turn,” and I answered, “Is a poor worm that only turns because of its agony through man’s cruelty, the pattern for a Christian man to follow? Will you look down to the dust of the earth to find the example that you are to imitate?” Wicked men trod upon Christ—who even compared Himself to a worm—yet He did not turn upon them, except to cry, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Let that be the only kind of turning that you ever practice towards your enemies! Do not be driven, by their evil speaking or their cruel deeds, into harshness of speech or even harshness of thought! I have known some persons, under sore trouble, who have at last become quite soured and bitter of spirit—that is all wrong and very sad—and no good can ever come of such a state of heart as that. The bruising of the sycamore fig results in its growing sweeter—let your bruising produce a similar effect upon you. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus in His wondrous Sermon on the Mount, “I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.” If you do not act thus—which is the right thing for you to do—you will almost certainly do the wrong thing in some shape or other. Therefore, God help you to do what is right! Child, is your father rough on you? Then, love him until he becomes tender and gentle. Wife, is your husband unkind to you? Then, win him back by your sweet smiles. Servant, is your mistress harsh to you? Even good women have sometimes dealt as harshly with their servants as Sarah dealt with Hagar. Well, if that is your case, be not like Hagar who despised her mistress. Submit to her, for so shall you yet win her, as many a Christian slave of old, far worse treated than you have been, won his master or his mistress to Christ in those earliest and happiest days of Christianity. What is there for a Christian to do but love his enemies? This is the most powerful weapon that we have in our armory! We shall be wise as serpents if God teaches us wisdom. And we shall also be harmless as doves if the Holy Spirit, like a dove, rests upon us and

makes us, also, to abound in gentleness. By this sign we shall conquer, for it is love that always wins the day!

Thus I have shown you what we are tempted to do when we are like this good man who was in such an evil case.

II. Now I am going to show you, from the text, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, **WHAT WE ARE COMMANDED TO DO.** That is, “Cast your burden upon the Lord.” You have a burden upon your back. It is too heavy for you to bear? Cast it upon the Lord!

“How shall I do that?” someone asks. Well, if you are a child of God, I invite you, first of all, *to trace your burden back to God.* “But it comes from the treachery of Ahithophel, or from the rebellion of Absalom!” I grant you that it does, but those are only the second causes, or the agents—trace the matter back to the Great First Cause. If you do that, you will come, by a mystery which I will not attempt to explain, to the hand of Divine Providence and you will say of every burden, “This, also, comes from the Lord.” You have probably seen a dog, when he has been struck with a stick, turn round and bite the staff that struck him. If he were a wise dog, he would bite the man who held the stick that dealt the blow. When God uses His rod upon one of His children, even a godly man will sometimes snap at the rod. “But, Sir, surely you would not have me turn upon my God?” Oh, no! I know you will not do *that*, for you are His child. And when you see that God is holding the rod in His hand, you will cease to be rebellious and you will say, with the Psalmist, “I was dumb with silence.’ I was going to speak, but I opened not my mouth because I saw that it was in Your hand that the rod of chastisement was held.” It is always well to trace our trials directly to God and say, “It may be Judas Iscariot who has betrayed me, but, still, it was planned in God’s eternal purpose that I should be betrayed, so I will forget the second cause, except to pray God to forgive the malice of the betrayer—and, by His Grace, I will look to the Lord who permitted the trial to come upon me for His own Glory and for my good.”

The next thing you have to do is this. Seeing that the burden is from God, *patiently wait His time for its removal.* There are some people, who, if they had a task set to them by some great one whom they respected and revered, would cheerfully perform it. If, in the middle of the night, you were called up by a Queen’s messenger and bid to do something for Her Majesty, you would be glad to rise and dress, even though it might be a cold night and you might have far to go to fulfill your commission. And if you feel that your burden is from the Lord—if the King’s arms are stamped upon the affliction or trial that comes to you—straightway you will say, “As the Lord wills it, I will bear it without complaining. When it is His time to deliver me, I shall be delivered. And as long as it is His time for me to suffer, I will, by His Grace, suffer patiently.”

I wish that all Christians could be like that good old woman who was asked whether, as she was so very ill, she would prefer to live or to die. She said that she had no preference whatever, she only wished that the

will of the Lord might be done. “But, still, if the Lord said to you, ‘which will you have?’ which would you choose?” She said, “I would not even *then* choose, but I would ask the Lord to choose for me.” You see, whenever anything comes to us from God, we have not the responsibility of it—but if it came through our own choice, then we might say to ourselves, “What fools we were to choose this particular trial!” You say that you do not like the cross God has sent you. Well but, at any rate, it is not by your own choice that you have to carry that particular cross. It is God who chose it for you, whereas if *you* had selected it, you might well say, “Oh, dear me, what a mistake I made when I chose this burden!” Now you cannot say that and I pray that you may have Divine Grace to see that “the whole disposing” of your lot is, as Solomon says, “Of the Lord.”

The Hebrew of our text would bear such a rendering as this, “Cast on the Lord what the Lord gives you. Cast on Him what He casts on you. See the marks of His hands on your burden and you will be reconciled to your load. Know that God sends it to you and patiently wait till He takes it away.” F. W. Faber very sweetly writes—

***“I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Yours.
I live in triumph, too, for You
Have made Your triumphs mine.
And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free—
Hope find its strength in helplessness,
And patiently waits on Thee.
Lead on, lead on, triumphantly,
O blessed Lord, lead on!
Faith’s pilgrim-sons behind You seek
The road that You have gone.”***

One blessed way of casting our burden upon the Lord is to *tell the Lord all about it*. It is a high privilege to get away, alone, and talk to God as a man talks with his friend. But I know what you often do, my Brothers and Sisters, when you get into a predicament and cannot tell what to do—then you begin to pray. Why do you not, every morning, tell the Lord about all your difficulties *before* they come? What? Will you only run to Him when you get into trouble? No, go to Him *before* you get into trouble. Half our burdens come from what we have not prayed over! If a man would take the ordinary concerns of life distinctly to God, one by one, it is marvelous how easily the chariot of life would roll along! Things over which we have not prayed are like undigested food that breeds mischief in the body—they breed mischief in the soul. Digest your daily bread by first praying, “God give it to me and then God bless me in the use of it. And then God bless me afterwards in the spending of the strength derived from it to Your praise and Glory.” Salt all your life with prayer, lest corruption should come to that part of your life which you have not thus salted. Tell the Lord, then, your griefs, just as, when a child, you told your troubles to your mother!

“I cannot find words,” says one. Oh, they will come! They come fast enough when you complain to man and they will sweetly come if you get into the blessed habit of talking to God about everything. A friend said to me, not long ago, “I was on the Exchange and I saw that I had made a mistake in a certain transaction. I had lost money by it and if I had gone on dealing in the same fashion, I would have been ruined. I just stepped aside for a minute or two into a quiet corner of my office. I stood still and breathed a prayer to God for guidance. Then I went back, and felt, ‘Now I am ready for anyone of you.’” “So I was,” he said, “I was not confused and worried, as I would otherwise have been, and so liable to make mistakes, but I had waited upon God and I was therefore calm and collected.” There is much wisdom in thus praying about everything, although, possibly, some of you may think it trivial. I believe that the very soul of Christianity lies in the sanctifying of what is called secular—the bringing of all things under the cognizance of our God by intense, constant, importunate, believing prayer.

When you have told the Lord everything, the next thing for you to do, in order to cast your burden upon Him, is to *believe that all will work together for your good*. Swallow the bitter as readily as you do the sweet and believe that, somehow, the strange mixture will do you great good. Do not look out your window, judging this, and that, and the other, in detail, but, if God sent it to you, open the door and take it all in, for all that has come from Him will be to His Glory and to your profit. Believe that if you shall lose certain things, you will really be a gainer by your losses. Even if your dearest one is taken from you, all shall be well if you have but faith to trust God in it all. If you are stricken with mortal sickness, it will still be well with you and if you do steadfastly trust in the Lord, you shall know that it is so. “We know,” says the Apostle Paul—he does not say, “We think, we suppose, we judge,” but—“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” If you know this, my Brother, or my Sister, it shall help you to “cast your burden upon the Lord.”

When you have done this, then *leave your burden with the Lord*. In the process of trusting God with your burden, get to the point that you have done with it. If I cast my burden upon the Lord, what business have I to carry it myself? How can I truthfully say that I have cast it upon Him if I am still burdened with it? Throughout my life, which has not been free from many grave cares, there have been many things which I have been able to see my own way through and, using my best judgment, they have passed off well. But in so large a church as this, there sometimes occur things that altogether stagger me. I do not know what to do in such a case as that and I have been in the habit, after doing all I can, of putting such things up on the shelf and saying, “There, I will never take them down again, come what may. I have done with them, for I have left them wholly with God.” And I wish to bear my testimony that somehow or other the thing which I could not unravel, has unraveled itself! When Peter

and the angel “came unto the iron gate,” it “opened to them of its own accord.” And the same thing has happened to me many a time. “Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the sepulcher?” asked the holy women when they came to the tomb of their Lord? “And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.” Learn to say, “My God has made this difficulty and there is some good result to come of it. I have done the little I can do, so now I will leave it all with Him.”

Ah, but I know what some of you do—you say that you have left it all with God and then you lie awake all night fretting about it! Is that casting your burden upon the Lord? Oh, for a blessed literalism about the promises of God and our faith in them, so that we take them to mean just what they say and act upon them accordingly! Now, if some poor woman here were sadly in debt for her rent and she met with a Christian Brother who said to her, “Do not fret, my good Sister, I will see it all paid tomorrow,” do you think she would go running about, and saying, “O dear, I shall lose my things, my rent will not be paid”? No, she would say, “Mr. So-and-So, whom I know and trust, said that he would pay it for me, and I feel perfectly at peace about it.” Now, do you so with your God if you know Him! David said, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” If you truly love the Lord, it will be a proof of your love to repose your care upon Him without questioning. And when you have cast your burden upon Him, it will prove the truth of your having done so if you are unburdened and your heart is at rest. If He bears my burden, why should I also bear it? If He cares for me, what have I to do to vex myself with fretful, anxious cares?

I have thus done my best to show you what we are commanded to do—“Cast your burden upon the Lord.”

III. And now thirdly, and very briefly, WHAT WE SHOULD ENDEAVOR TO DO.

If I read the text aright, we here have David talking to himself. And what we are to endeavor to do is *to talk to ourselves, just as David talked to himself*. He says of his enemy, “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart” and so on. And then he seems to say, “Come, David, do not fret yourself like this, but cast your burden upon the Lord.” Have you not noticed how often David seems as if he were two Davids—and one David talks to the other David? It was so when he said to himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul; and why are you disquieted within me?” And I want you, dear Friend, to chide yourself and say, “Come, fretful Heart, what are you doing? Cast your burden upon the Lord. What are you doing? Has God forsaken you? Has God refused to help you? Be gone, Unbelief! Come, Faith, and dwell in my soul and reign over my spirit, swaying your gracious scepter of peace.”

And when you have thus been chiding yourself, *argue with yourself about the matter*. Say to yourself, “See how the text puts it—‘Cast your burden upon the Lord.’ Well, if it is your burden and God meant it for

you, then do not quarrel with it. And as it is your burden, so is God your God, the covenant-keeping God, your Father and your Friend. Come, my Soul, cast your burden upon your God! Where else should you put your burden when He bids you cast it upon Him? You cannot sustain yourself under such a load, but God will sustain you and your burden, too." Think of the righteousness of God and say, "It is impossible that the righteous God should leave the righteous to perish. If they are slandered, that is a further reason why God should take up their cause. He is their Advocate and their Defender. Come, my Heart, it shall never be truly said of the Judge of all the earth that He leaves His people to perish, especially when their good name is assailed because of their fidelity to Him!"

I want you, dear Friends, to talk thus with yourselves, especially those of you who are rather apt to give way to despondency. There are some such here, I know. You come to me, sometimes, with your griefs, and I do the best I can to cheer you. But I have often said to myself, "That dear Sister had a father who was a member with us. He used to come to me in just the same way as she does. This despondency seems to run in their blood." Some of you must have been born in December and you never seem to get out of that month—it is always winter with you. But now I want you just to take the language of the text and say to yourself, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." And, possibly, God will bless your own sermon to yourself more than He would bless my sermon to you! At any rate, try it.

IV. Lastly—and here I need the time for a whole sermon, let us think of WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE FULFILL THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT—"Cast your burden upon the Lord."

There are two grand things in the text—sustenance and sufferance. The old Puritans would have made a book about those two words and we might preach a dozen sermons upon them and still not exhaust their meaning! What does the Lord do with His people when they cast their burdens upon Him? *He gives them sustenance.* "He shall sustain you." The word, "sustain," is the same that is used when God told Elijah to go to Zarephath, saying, "Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you," that is, "to feed you," "to nourish you." Perhaps that would have been a better rendering of the original. "Cast your burden upon the Lord," and what will He do? Deliver you out of your trouble? No, but He will feed you till you can carry it, and that will be an even better thing than relieving you of the burden.

Here is a dear child that has but a little load to carry, yet he staggers under it. It would be a kind thing for his father to pick up the child and his load, too, and carry both him and his burden. But the wise father says, "I will so provide for that child that he shall grow in strength and, at last, shall be able to carry his load." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." That is, "He shall feed you. He shall nourish you." I believe that when Paul was attacked by that viper that came out

of the sticks, it was a very ugly thing, indeed, but Paul just shook it off into the fire. Why do you think that snake came? Why, it came to feed them all! “No,” you say, “that serpent did not do that!” It did, for the islanders said that this man was a god and straightway they began to gather around him and his companions and to provide for their needs with all the greater alacrity because of the reverence that they felt for the Apostle! So you shall often find that what looks like a horrible thing will be the best way in which God could bless you.

“Cast your burden upon the Lord.” “It will crush me.” No, it will not—you shall grow under it and then grow out of it! And you shall prove the truth of those precious lines—

**“From all their afflictions My Glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”**

Only by faith leave your trouble with your God and He will nurture you. Even out of the very rock of trouble will He feed you and give you oil out of the flinty rock of your afflictions.

Then, the other point is *sufferance*. I am obliged to hurry over these Truths of God and leave you to meditate upon them afterwards. “He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Learn, from this declaration, that nothing will happen to you but what God permits. There are some things which are very grievous, which God does allow to happen to His people. But there are other things which He will not allow. He will never allow them to be moved. “No,” He says, “My child who has walked uprightly before Me, My righteous one, the man who spoke the Truth, the man who did the right thing, I will not suffer that man to be moved. He may be moved as the boughs of a tree sway to and fro in the breeze, but not as the roots of a tree are torn up by a storm. He may be moved a little, like a ship riding at anchor, which just swings with the tide, but he shall not be driven out to sea, or drift onto the rocks to his destruction.”

“He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Do you catch the Psalmist’s idea? It is as if God interposed and said, “No, I will not permit that.” A father may see his child somewhat put upon, yet at first he may not interfere. But, at last, a cruel blow is struck and he says, “No, I will not stand that! While I have an arm to defend my child, he shall not be treated in that fashion.” Well, then, leave everything with your Heavenly Father, for He will not allow you to be moved! If you are really righteous, trusting in the Righteous One, justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and are doing what is right in His sight, He will not allow you to be moved. The next time you are sorely vexed by the tongue of slander, go and tell your Father, just as the little boys tell their big brothers. Go and tell your Father all about it and do not fret over it. If somebody has done you a great wrong, you may say to him, “I shall be obliged to refer you to my solicitor.” But after you have done that, I hope you do not go writing letters to him on your own. Refer everything to God and leave all with Him, for, so, a blessed peace will bedew your spirit, making your life on earth like the beginning of life in Heaven!

In closing my discourse, I must say that I do feel, in my inmost soul, the deepest pity for those of you who have no God to go to when you are in trouble. You have a burden to bear, but you cannot cast it on the Lord. He *will* allow you to be moved, for you do not cry unto Him to help you. I feel that I would rather be a dog than be a man without a God. I think I could make myself happy if I were only a mouse in its hole, but if I were a prince in a palace, without God, I should be utterly miserable! O poor Hearts, if you really want Him, He is to be had! If you are longing for Him, His door is open to receive you. If you will come to Him, He will come and meet you much more than half way! Yes, all the way will He come to everyone who wills to come to Him. As soon as you say, "I will arise," He has already arisen and is on His way to meet you! Practically, there is no distance for you to go, for He is there, waiting to welcome you. Believe in His dear Son and live! First cast your great burden of sin upon the Lord and then cast upon Him all other burdens that He is willing to take from you and, soon, He will put a new song into your mouth and establish your going. The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—35 (SONG 1), 70, 688.

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FAITH HAND IN HAND WITH FEAR

NO. 3253

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1911.**

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

***“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”
Psalm 56:3.***

IT must be a very difficult thing to be the first traveler through an unknown country, but it is a much more simple matter to travel where others have preceded us. However difficult may be the road, we discover our path by certain marks which they have left for us, and as we turn to the record of their journey, we say, “Yes, they said that here they came to a forest, and here is the forest. Here they spoke of a broad river and here they forded it. Here is exactly the spot which is marked—we are on the right road, for we are following in the tracks of those who have gone before.” Now God in His Providence has placed us in “the ends of the world” as to time—a long caravan of pilgrims has preceded us, and they have left us marks on the way and records of their journey.

A notable one among the pilgrims to the skies was David, for his pilgrimage was so singularly varied. Some travel to Heaven amid sunshine almost all the way there. And some, on the other hand, seem to have storms from beginning to end. But David’s case differed from these, for he had both the storms and the sunshine! No man had fairer weather than the King of Jerusalem, yet no man ever plowed his way through soil that was more deep with mire, nor through an atmosphere more loaded with tempest than did this man of many tribulations! He has been a kind of pioneer for us. I remember seeing, some years ago, the French army going through Paris and noticing some of the big, tall fellows—old men who had been in the wars of the first Napoleon. These went in front and they seemed to be worth all the rest that were behind. They were the pioneers that cleared the way for the others. Now David, and such as he, of whom we read in the Scriptures, are the grand old soldiers that bear the standard and lead the way—and we are the raw recruits that follow on behind them! Let us be thankful that we have some veterans to lead the vanguard!

Our text is rather an extraordinary one, yet it represents the experience of many of us, and we are comforted by the thought that our feelings and David’s have very much agreed—“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

You notice in the text, first, *a complex condition*—here is a man afraid and yet he is trusting. Then we will look at *the natural side of this condition*—“I am afraid.” And then we will look at *the gracious side*—“I will trust in You.”

I. Notice, first, then, that here is David in A COMPLEX CONDITION. He says, “I am afraid,” yet with the same breath he says, “I will trust in You.” Is not this a contradiction? It looks like a paradox. Paradox it may be, but contradiction it is not! What strange creatures we are! I suppose every man is a trinity, certainly every Christian is—spirit, soul and body—and we may be in three states at once. And we may not know which of the three is our real state! The whole three may be so mixed up that we become a puzzle to ourselves. Though certain mental philosophers would say that I flagrantly err in asserting that such a thing can be, yet nevertheless I am quite certain that it is a very common experience of the child of God!

It is even quite possible for us to find two minds and two wills—two sets of facilities within ourselves clashing and jarring and warring and contending with one another. In a record of some very notable experiences of doctors who attend upon the insane, there is a very singular case described of a man who was always sane regularly one day, as clear in the intellect and intelligent in judgment as any man—but the next day he was always insane. On the day on which he was sane, he used to talk about how the doctor ought to treat him on the morrow, and to express his surprise that he entered into such a state, reasoning in the most practical manner. He seemed to be two men! There is a record of another case, even more remarkable, of a man who would act and speak and think as an intelligent full-grown person, but after sleeping two or three days he would wake up a child, to learn like a child, to walk like a child, to speak like a child, and to all intents and purposes, to lead the life of a child. Then he would fall asleep, again, and wake up as an adult person. To us it seems a most marvelous thing that this should happen—but perhaps it is even more marvelous to find ourselves perfectly sane, with no mental malady upon us, and yet at the same moment the subject of two opposite sets of feelings—afraid, and yet trusting!

I am sure that every Christian here will follow me while, for a moment, I speak upon this singular duplex condition of *Christian experience*. You remember how the women returned from the sepulcher. They had seen a vision of angels—they had also seen the Lord—and it is said they departed quickly “with fear and great joy”—very fearful, trembling at what they had seen, but very joyful—never so fearful and yet never so joyful before! And you remember that the disciples, when the Lord Jesus stood in their midst, “believed not for joy.” Extraordinary thing! They did believe, or they could not have had the joy! And yet the joy seemed, when it

grew out of the belief, to cut away its own roots and “they believed not for joy”—strange, marvelous state of mind, yet common to the Christian!

The same thing is true as to *our attitude to sin*. Have you not found yourself, Beloved Believer in Jesus Christ, drawn towards an evil thing for a moment, fascinated by it, finding a tendency in the carnal corruption of your nature to go after evil and yet, at the very same time, you hated yourself that you should give way even for a moment to a *thought* so vile? You have felt the desire to go after sin, but yet another self, as it were, struggled with greater force not to go after it. One faculty seems to say, “How sweet that sin would be,” yet you have said, “It is gall and bitterness itself.” The flesh has loved it, but the spirit has said, “I abominate it, I loathe it,” and has cried out to God to prevent the possibility of our being allowed to indulge ourselves in it! Thus warring and contending with us, the Prince of the power of the air, uniting with our own evil nature, has endeavored to drag us down, while the Holy Spirit, co-working with the incorruptible Seed which He has imparted in us, has sought to draw us upwards towards holiness, purity and perfection! It is a wondrous warfare which only the elect of God can understand.

So, too, you have been the subject of another phase of the same phenomenon *in reference to faith*. You have seen a precious promise or a glorious Doctrine and you have believed it because you have found it in God’s Word. You have believed it so as to grasp it and feel it to be your own, yet, perhaps, almost at the same time certain rationalistic thoughts have come into your mind and you have been vexed with doubts as to whether the promise is true. You remember, perhaps, the insinuations of others, or something rises up out of your own carnal reason that renders it difficult for you to believe, while at the same time you are believing! You battle with yourself—one self seems to say, “Is it so?” and yet your inner self seems to say, “I could die for it, I know it is so!” You are tormented because you cannot answer arguments against it, but yet at the same time you feel that you have answered them, and that they are no arguments at all! Your heart repels all attacks upon the Truth of God, and yet, somehow or other, for a while, you are staggered by the assault which Satan has made upon you!

I might go on to mention many other ways in which these two states of mind will come. I have found it frequently so *in prayer* when I have sought to draw near to God. An idle worldly spirit will bring ten thousand distracting thoughts to bear upon the soul and the heart will seem to say, “I cannot pray just now, I have other things to do. I must think of *them*.” What is worse, the mind will persist in thinking of these things and they will come crowding in—some work that you have to do, perhaps some friend that you have to call upon, something you have forgotten—those things will come pouring in upon you as if in your own heart you said, “I do not want to pray.” Yet at that very same time you have felt a

holy craving, an insatiable longing to draw near to God in prayer and you have said, "I must pray, I cannot live without it. I must now have a period of fellowship with God, cost me what it may." These two things will be here—the praying and the not praying, the faithless and the believing struggling, one with another, and your poor spirit will be like ground that is trampled upon by two armies that are fiercely contending as to which shall get the mastery! You see that in David's case, when in the text he says, "I am afraid," yet adds, "I will trust in You."

II. Now, secondly, let us look at THE NATURAL SIDE OF THIS CONDITION.

David says, "I am afraid." Admire his honesty in making this confession. Some men would never have admitted that they were afraid. They would have blustered and said they cared for nothing! Generally there is no greater coward in this world than the man who never will acknowledge that he is afraid. But this hero of a thousand conflicts, this brave scion of the sons of men, honestly says, "I am afraid." Why was he afraid?

First, *because he was but a man*, and we men cannot rule the elements, we cannot overcome those who are mightier than ourselves. "They are many that fight against me, O Most High," he cries! And then he adds, "I am afraid." We cannot expect, therefore, that we should be free of fear when powers greater than our own are set in array against us. We are afraid because at the very best, we are but weak and feeble men!

He was afraid, again, *because he was a sinful man*. It is *this* that makes cowards of us more than anything else. We know that we deserve the rod of our Father and though, by faith, we feel assured that He will never use the sword of Justice against us, yet we are often afraid that the correcting rod will be brought out and that we shall be sorely chastened. Well, then, while we are men, and sinful men, it is no wonder that we should be afraid!

Besides, David was something more than that—he was afraid *because he was an intelligent man*. He knew his position and could rightly estimate its risks. Now, with some persons, bravery arises from utter ignorance. They do not know the danger to which they are exposed and, therefore, do not fear it. The unsaved sinner, if he did but know in what peril he is, would not be as quiet as he is. Unconverted men and women, if they did but know who and what and where they are—if they did but remember that "God is angry with the wicked every day"—would be very ill at ease! They would be full of alarm and terror. But the Christian knows his position. He is not blind, his eyes have been opened, he has been brought to the Light of God, he does not shut his eyes to the strength of his spiritual adversaries, nor to his own internal weakness, nor to the awful guilt of sin. He sees all these and, therefore, it is not to be won-

dered at, that with so much intelligence, a Christian should have some misgivings. "I am afraid," says he.

And then he is afraid, again, *because he is no stoic*. The heathen tried as far as they could to turn their flesh into iron and harden their hearts into steel, but such is never the process through which the Christian passes. The Christian, when his sinews are most braced and he is most heroic for his Master, is still as tender and as sensitive as a little child. The Grace of God does not take away from us feminine tenderness, though it gives to us masculine courage. In fact, it blends the two in a perfect man, putting strength and sympathy together, and making us like Christ who, with all the force of the majesty of holy determination and courage, had all the tenderness and gentleness that the fondest love could bring. Therefore we are afraid because we do not boast of insensibility, but we still strive to be gentle and tender-hearted—the Grace of God keeps us so.

But when is it that the saint should expect to be most afraid? Is it not when enemies around him are many? The Psalmist, therefore, is afraid *because he is compassed by foes*. The Christian does not like having enemies. If he could help it, he would not have a single one. He never willingly makes an enemy and if he could destroy his enemies by turning them into friends, he would be delighted to achieve so great a victory. When, therefore, he sees that he has many enemies and they are very cruel and very determined—the is afraid.

We are afraid, sometimes, when we think of the old enemy, our spiritual enemy, for we know his cunning. He has been so long tempting the saints that he knows his business well. We know what poor, foolish birds we are when he is the fowler—how soon we are taken in his net and, therefore, at the prospect of being tempted again by him, we bow our knee to our great Father and we cry—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." We are afraid at the thought of having to fight Satan! Who has read John Bunyan's description of Christian fighting Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation but will not be fearful at the prospect of such a fight as that?

The man of God may be afraid, too, *because he sees need surrounding him*. The Christian must eat and drink, and though he is not to make this the great question of his life, yet he cannot look upon his little ones and think that he will not have sufficient bread to fill their mouths without being somewhat afraid. The natural side of the question must come up. He is not so hardened that he does not feel it—and when he sees need staring him in the face, for his own sake and for the sake of those about him, he is afraid.

If, in addition to all this, there comes upon him the remembrance of past sin, and with especial vividness some transgression into which he has lately fallen, he is afraid *because of the memory of the past*. Though

he may look to Jesus—and he will do so. Though he may see his sin laid on Christ, yet, even while he is looking, he will often be amazed with a sore amazement and an agony of soul will come over him—not so much the fear of being finally cast away if, indeed, he is a child of God, but a fear lest, after all, he should turn out not to be what he hoped he was! If you are never afraid about the condition of your soul, I am afraid for you! If you never had a fear about your state, I think I may remind you of Cowper’s lines—

**“He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”**

Under a sense of sin, it is but natural, no, I will add, it is but *right* that a trembling should come over the soul and that we should fall down in the Presence of God humbled before Him!

The same is the case, too, with the man who is afraid *because of the thought of approaching death*. We have seen some, when they have actually come to die, rejoicing with unspeakable joy and it has strengthened our faith when we have heard their bold declarations as they have felt the Master’s Presence in their final hour. But if, as a rule, you and I can think of death without any kind of fear, if no tremor ever crosses our minds, well then, we must have marvelously strong faith, and I can only pray we may be retained in that strength of faith! For the most part there is such a thing as terror in prospect of death—the fear is often greater in prospect than in reality! In fact, it is always so in the case of the Christian. But yet, when we give ourselves up to fear for a time, we are grievously afraid.

This, then, is the natural side of the question. A man may be a true Believer, he may be a very David—and yet be afraid.

III. Now take THE GRACIOUS SIDE OF IT—“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

“I will trust in You.” How glorious is this confession of faith! It is not the expression of nature—it is a *sign of Divine Grace*. No man trusts in God unless there has first been a Divine work upon his soul! At least no man who is afraid can trust in God unless the Lord has taught his timorous spirit to fly like a dove to the sure dovecot cleft by Divine Grace in the Rock of Ages. Happy soul that has been taught the sacred art and mystery of believing in Jesus! It is the highest and noblest of all the practical sciences! God grant us Grace, what time we are afraid, to exercise ourselves in it!

It is a sure sign of Grace when a man can trust in his God, for the natural man, when afraid, falls back on some human trust, or he thinks that he will be able to laugh at the occasion of fear. He gives himself up to jollity and forgetfulness, or perhaps he braces himself up with a natural resolution—

“To take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them.”

He goes anywhere but to his God. Only the gracious spirit—only the soul renewed by the Holy Spirit, will say, “What time I am afraid, my one and only resort shall be this, ‘I will trust in You.’” The thoughtless, as I have said, try to laugh off their fear. The naturally thoughtful try to invent some scheme by which they may pass through the difficulty, but he who is truly believing leaves schemes and frivolities, and applies to his God with the burden of his care—and finds from Him an instantaneous and effectual relief!

And, after all, *is it not the most reasonable thing in the world* that a soul that is afraid should trust in God? Where can there be a firmer ground of reliance than in Him whose power never can be defeated, whose wisdom is never at a nonplus? If I have God’s promise that He will help me, to whom or where should I go, but unto the God who has so promised? If, in addition, He has given me His oath, “that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,” I might have strong consolation, where shall my timid spirit go but to the shadow of the wings of the God of the Covenant who, by promise and by oath, has guaranteed my safety? What are my circumstances? Has He not given me a promise suitable to them, a special promise for each special time? So I need never be afraid because of my circumstances. Has He not, indeed, given me one text which covers them all with its broad expanse? “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” With a God who is almighty and eternally faithful. With a God who promises and seals the promise with His oath—that He will help me when I call upon Him—what can be more reasonable than that when I am afraid, I should come and put my trust in Him?

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, and as it is reasonable, *it certainly proves itself to be most effectual*, for he who trembles from head to foot does but begin to trust in God and, behold, he grows calm at once! Have we not seen minds so distracted as to be almost bereft of reason grow quiet and peaceful when they have learned to do the work they could do and then left the rest to God? Oh, it is sweet waiting at the posts of Jehovah’s door! It is well to tarry till His promise becomes ripe and then in all its sweetness drops into our hands. “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” so has He declared. My Soul, lay hold upon that, and the next time you are afraid, seek a safe shelter beneath that promise! “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” When I am afraid lest I should be in need, I will come and go beneath that promise. If it is a good thing, God has bound Himself by His Word to give it to me. “Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” My God, when at another time I am full of alarm

and dismay, I will come to You, for You are bound to strengthen and help and uphold Your servants who place their confidence in You!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let me exhort you—and may God’s Holy Spirit back up the exhortation—to the exercise of a holy trust in God, not only when you are happy but when you are afraid! *Faith in God is a seasonable thing* as well as a reasonable thing. Fruit is always best in its season, and the time for faith is the time of trial. Faith is never so full-flavored as when it is produced beneath cloudy skies. Other fruits need the sun to ripen them, but this is one of the precious fruits put forth by the moon. You shall, when your experience is most trying, honor God the most if you can then trust Him! Surely it needs little faith to believe in Providence when the purse is full. What sort of faith is it that believes in the merits of the precious blood of Jesus when it feels its own sanctification to be complete, if such can ever be the case? What kind of faith is that which leans on the Beloved when it can stand alone? But that is true faith which, when it cannot stand by itself, which sees death written upon all its own power, which sees almost all its hopes withered and blasted with the East wind, yet cries, “My God, it is enough! My soul waits only upon You. My expectation is from You.” This is, indeed, the way to honor God!

Observe the graduation there often is in Christian experience. You will sometimes find Believers in so low a state that their heart is full of fear. By-and-by they are enabled to exercise the faith that God has given them, but it is mingled fear and trust. But they do not stop there, they get a little further—as David did in this Psalm, as you can see if you will read a word or two further on—there it gets to be trust and no fear. “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.” May you climb the steps of that gracious ladder! May you, if you have fear, also have faith with your fear, and then afterwards have your faith without any fear! When faith gets strong enough, fears are expelled!

Let me, however, return to my point that when you are afraid, then is the time to trust the Lord. When you are very poor, then is the time to believe the Doctrine of Divine Providence. When you feel the guilt of your sins, then is the time to lay hold on Jesus Christ and to wash in the fountain filled with His blood. Who cares to wash when he is clean? The time to wash is when the filth is felt! Then fly to the all-cleansing blood. You say, “I feel so dead and cold, I have not the spiritual vivacity and warmth and life that I used to possess. I used to come up to the Tabernacle and feel such joy and rejoicing in worshipping on God’s Holy Day, but now I feel flat and dull.” Oh, but do not be tempted to get away from Christ because of this! Who runs away from the fire because he is cold? Who, in summer, runs away from the cooling brook because he is hot? Should not my deadness be the reason why I should *come* to Jesus Christ? Now is the time for Him to show His power! Now my Master, if indeed

You are a Friend that sticks closer than a brother and, blessed be Your name, You are such a Friend, behold, here is one of Your friends! Prove that You can forgive and still stick to him—cause him to trust in You and let him find You better than all his fears!

I have done when I have made an application of my text to those of you who have not believed in Jesus and yet desire to do so. I know your fears, your doubts, your trembling. Let me whisper in your ear this word—“Now that you are afraid, put your trust in Jesus. Christ came to save sinners such as you are with all your fear. Now, while your fears toss you to and fro, go to Jesus—

***“While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.”***

Hang all your weight upon the Lover of Souls now! Do not wait till you get rid of your fears and then go to Him—go now!

A lady was once walking in a field and a bird flew right into her bosom. She wondered why the little lark came nestling there, but looking up, she saw a hawk in the air. It had pursued the little bird, which, though it would have been quite afraid at any other time to find a shelter where it did find it, had by the greater fear of its enemy been driven out of the lesser fear. She to whom it fled for refuge cared for it, cherished it and set it free. So be it with you. Let your great fears of Hell overcome that fear that you have sometimes had that perhaps Jesus may reject you. Fly into His bosom. “Oh, but I fear that He will reject me.” Well, then, I trust that your other fears will get so great as to overcome this fear. John Bunyan says that his fear of Hell at last became so terrible that if Jesus Christ had stood with a naked sword in His hand, or if He had held a pike to him, he would have run on the point of the pike and would always rather go to an angry Christ than be cast into Hell! But, believe me, Christ is not angry. He holds no pike and no sword in His hand. This is His word of promise, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Aged Sinner, you who have been a great transgressor, whoever you may be, if you come and simply cast yourself upon the blessed Savior who on the Cross offered up Himself for human guilt, you shall be saved!

“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” I dare to say these ancient words tonight from the depths of my soul! I am afraid of my sins! I am afraid of my unworthiness! I never live a day but what I see reason to be afraid! If I had to stand all by myself, I would be afraid to stand before God! If I had never done anything in my life but preach this one sermon, there have been so many imperfections and faults in it that I am afraid to place any reliance upon it! But my Lord Jesus, *You* are my soul’s only hope. I trust entirely in You!

Beloved, have this same faith. May God work it in you and then your fear shall only drive you closer to your Lord! And so the fear and the faith shall go on hand in hand together for a while, till at last perfect love shall

come in and take the place of fear—and then faith and love shall go hand in hand to Heaven!

May the Lord bless every one of you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:1-21.**

Verses 1, 2. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. Many of them curiosity-mongers wanting to see more wonders worked. Others of them sick, themselves, and anxious to be healed. Wherever Jesus went, a throng went with Him.*

3. *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.* That was His frequent posture when His disciples were gathered around Him. He sat at His ease and talked to His hearers. He was not very demonstrative in His oratory, but spoke calmly and quietly, and left the Truths of God to find its own way into the minds and hearts of men.

4, 5. *And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* They were in a lonely place out in the wilderness where the people had no means of obtaining food. And Jesus knew that they would soon be faint with hunger, so He consulted with Philip as to what was to be done. It is great kindness and condescension on our Lord's part to consult with His followers. He often did it, not that He needed their advice or help, but because they needed to be taught how to think and how to act for the good of others.

6. *And this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.* Observe the complex Character of Christ—as Man, He consulted with Philip—as God, He knew beforehand what He would do.

7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them, may take a little.* Two hundred pennyworth must have seemed an enormous amount to poor Philip, for all Christ's disciples had made themselves poor by following Him. The bag that Judas carried probably scarcely ever had as much as that in it. If it were all spent, it would not go far towards feeding five thousand men, beside the women and children!

8, 9. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?* These small fishes were commonly cured and dried by that lake—little fish very much resembling sardines or anchovies—and they were eaten dry as a relish with bread. This lad had five barley cakes and a couple of these little fish, that was all.

10. *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down—*Jesus would have everything done decently and in order. The people obeyed Christ's command and sat down. We are told by Mark, "in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties." "There was much grass in the place." Our Lord has a carpet in His banqueting hall, such a carpet as Solomon in all his glory could not have made! "There was much grass in the place. So the men sat down"—

10, 11. *In number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks—*[See Sermon #2216, Volume 37—THE LAD'S LOAVES IN THE LORD'S HANDS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Among the Jews, it is always the master of the house who gives thanks. They do not call upon a child to say Grace, but the father of the family, like a priest in his own house, stands up and pronounces a blessing upon the food. It is a beautiful thought that Christ thus made Himself, as it were, the Father of that large family, the Head and Provider for those many thousands of people!

11. *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. "As much as they would."* That is Christ's measure for those who gather at His table—it is only your own will that limits the amount of Divine Grace that you may have.

12, 13. *When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* I am sorry to say that it is a mark of very poor people that they are often very wasteful people. These beggars who had come only to be fed, were not satisfied to eat till they were satisfied, but they threw down pieces of bread just as I frequently see, in the streets of London, great pieces of bread thrown away. It should not be so, for bread is the staff of life. Among the Egyptians, they are always peculiarly careful that never a portion of bread should be wasted, nor should it ever be as in a city like this where there are so many persons who are starving for lack of bread. But while I see the carelessness and wastefulness of the crowd, I also notice the carefulness and economy of Christ. He who could make food enough to feed the thousands at His will, yet would not waste a crust! I think a large-hearted liberality should always be consistent with a strict economy. I have heard of one who called at a rich man's door to ask for a subscription and he heard him scolding the servant for wasting a match. "Ah," He thought, "I shall get nothing out of him!" Yet he received from that very man a larger subscription than from anybody else upon whom he called during that day! Christ would give anything but He wasted nothing—let us imitate His example!

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. But the faith that comes by the way of the stomach is not worth much. If people are converted by loaves and fishes, bigger loaves and bigger fishes will make them go the other way—converts made thus are of small worth!*

15-17. *When Jesus, therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain alone. And when evening was now come, His disciples went down to the sea, and entered a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.* [See Sermon #2945, Volume 51—NIGHT—AND JESUS NOT THERE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Then it was very dark. Ah, my dear Friends, perhaps you know what it is to be in trouble and to mourn an absent Lord! This is a direful description of an especially dark night for the disciples—“It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.”*

18, 19. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near unto the ship: and they were afraid.* Do you wonder that they were filled with fear? It seemed so strange a sight—a man walking on the waves of the sea!

20. *But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid.* Then they must have felt at ease at once as soon as they knew that it was Jesus who was walking towards them upon the water. Lord, if it is You, fear would be foolish on our part! We are only too glad to have Your company.

21. *Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they were going.* No sooner was Jesus with them than they were where they wanted to be! The Presence of Christ works wonders for us. We are soon at our haven when the Lord of Heaven comes to us!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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FEARING AND TRUSTING— TRUSTING AND NOT FEARING NO. 3362

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 10, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1867.**

*“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”
Psalm 56:3.*

*“I will trust, and not be afraid.”
Isaiah 12:2.*

I INTEND this evening to have two texts, though I shall not therefore have two sermons and so keep you a double length of time! Our first text, which will suffice to begin with, is in the 56th Psalm, at the 3rd verse—*“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”*

David was one of the boldest of men. From his youth up, he was noted for his courage. As a youth he went, in simple confidence in God, and attacked the giant Goliath. Throughout life there was no man who seemed to be more at home in wars and battles—and less likely to be afraid. But yet this hero, this courageous man, says that he *was* sometimes afraid. And I suppose that there are none of us but must plead guilty to the impeachment that sometimes the brave spirit gives way and that we tremble and are afraid. It is a disease for which the cure is here mentioned, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”* When my soul suffers from the palsy of fear, I will lay hold upon the Strong One and get strength from Him—and so my fears shall all be cast out.”

To be afraid is, in some cases, *a very childish thing*. We sometimes expect to see our little children frightened and that they will not bear to be alone in the dark, but we are surely not afraid to be there! The more we are afraid, the more childish we become. Courage is manly, but to be afraid is to be like a child. It is not always so, however, for there are some great and sore dangers which may well make the very boldest man tremble.

To be afraid is always *a distressing thing*. The heart beats quickly and the whole system seems to be thrown out of order. There have been known cases of men who have had to endure severe terror for several hours—and their hair has all turned gray in a single night. No doubt, too, there have been diseases which have brought men to their graves

which have been caused by fright. Fear is always distressing and whether it is the fear of outward danger, or fear of inward sin, it is always a terrible thing to have to go mourning because of being afraid.

And to be afraid, too, is always *a weakening thing*. The man who can keep calm in the midst of difficulty is better able to meet it. If he is at sea in a storm, if his mind is quiet, he is likely to steer his vessel safely through the danger. But if he is perturbed and cast down with agitated alarm, we can have but little confidence in him, for we know not where he may steer the boat! A man who is afraid often runs into worse dangers than those from which he seeks to escape. He plunges himself into the sea to escape from the river—and it is as though he fled from a lion—and a bear met him.

To be afraid, then, is generally a very mischievous thing. And though sometimes exceedingly excusable, yet full often it is also exceedingly dangerous. David, however, here gives us the cure for fear, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

I shall not have time this evening to take all the fears and amazements which distress humanity, but there are four or five which we will mention and which may comprehend the others—

I. SOMETIMES WE ARE AFRAID OF TEMPORAL TROUBLES.

If some of you have such a smooth path in life that you are untried in this respect, yet the great proportion of mankind have a hard fight to find bread to eat and garments with which they shall be clothed. And in the lives of the poor, especially, there must often be sad times when they are afraid lest they should not be able to provide things necessary and should be brought to absolute starvation. Such a fear must very often afflict those who are in extreme poverty. And you, too, who are in business, in this age of competition, you are, no doubt, frequently afraid lest, by a failure in this direction or in that, you should not be able to meet your engagements—and the good ship of your business should drive upon the rocks.

Such fears, I suppose, fall to the lot of all young tradesmen when they are starting in business but, perhaps, there are a few older ones who have done longer and rougher work and are quite free from such times of anxious fear.

And, Brothers and Sisters, even if we have none of these troubles about what we shall eat and what we shall drink, yet we have our domestic troubles that make us to be much alarmed. It is no small thing to see a child sick, or, still worse, to see your life’s partner gradually fading away and to know, as some do, that the case is beyond all medical skill—and that she, who is so dear, must be taken away.

And you wives, perhaps, are, some of you, dreading the hour when you may become widows and your little children may be fatherless. You have often been afraid as you have looked ahead to the calamity which seemed to overshadow you. God has not made this world to be a nest for us—and if we try to make it such for ourselves—He plants thorns in it so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give!

Now, whenever we are tried with these temporal affairs, David tells us we are to trust in God. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in You." I will just do this—after having done my best to earn my daily bread and to fight the battle of life, if I find I cannot do all I would, I will throw myself upon the promise of God, wherein He has said, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." I will believe that my Heavenly Father, who feeds the ravens, will feed me, and that if He does not allow even the gnats that dance in the sunbeam to perish for lack of sustenance, He will not allow a soul that rests upon Him to perish for lack of daily bread. Oh, it is a sweet thing, though, perhaps, you may, some of you, think it a hard thing—it is a sweet thing when God enables you to leave tomorrow with Him and to depend upon your Father who is in Heaven!

I speak to the tradesman and all who often have to do business in great waters, who seem to go from waterspout to waterspout and over whom all God's waves and billows seem to go—I believe you will find yourselves much stronger to do battle against these difficulties if it is your constant habit to commit all your cares to Him who cares for you. It will all go wrong with us, even in smooth waters, if we do not have God to be the Pilot. And as to rough weather, we shall soon be a wreck if we forget Him! I know of nothing more delightful to the Believer than every morning to commit the day's troubles to God and then go down into the world feeling, "Well, my Father knows it all." And then at night to commit the troubles of the day again into the great Father's hands and to feel that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It is sweet sleeping when you can have a promise for the pillow at your head! You know, perhaps, the good old story which is told of the woman on board ship who was greatly afraid in a storm, but she saw her husband perfectly at peace and she could not understand it. Her husband said he would tell her the reason, so, snatching up a sword, he pointed it at her heart. She looked at it, but did not tremble. "Well," he said, "are you not afraid? The sword is sharp and I could kill you in a moment." "No," she said, "because it is in your hands!" "Ah," he replied, "and that is why I am not

afraid—because the storm is in my Father’s hands and He loves me more than I love you!”

A little child was at play in a lower room and as he played away by himself, amusing himself, about every ten minutes he ran to the foot of the stairs and called out, “Mother, are you there?” and his mother answered, “Yes, I am here,” and the little lad went back to his sport and fun—and was as happy as happy could be—and until again it crossed his mind that his mother might have gone. So he ran to the stairs again and called, “Mother, are you there?” “All right,” she said, and as soon as he heard her voice again, back he went once more to his play. It is just so with us. In times of temporal trouble we go to the Mercy Seat in prayer and we say, “Father, are You there? Is it Your hand that is troubling me? Is it Your Providence that has sent me this difficulty?” And as soon as you hear the voice which says, “It is I,” you are no longer afraid! Oh, happy are they who, when they are afraid in this way, trust in the Lord!

A second great fear, through which some of you have never passed, but through which all must pass who enter into Heaven, is a—

II. FEAR CONCERNING THE GUILT OF PAST SIN.

Do not tell me with regard to temporal troubles that they are sharp and bitter! Believe me, that trouble for sin is far more bitter and keen. Do you remember when God was pleased to awaken you from your long sleep—when you looked within and saw that you were all defiled, full of pollution and all manner of evil? Do you recollect how the thoughts pierced you like poisoned arrows—“God requires that which is pure.” “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the Day of Judgment”? Do you recollect how it seemed as though Hell flared up right before you where you stood and it seemed as though there was only a step between you and death! The terrors of the Lord got hold upon you, and the very marrow of your bones seemed to freeze as you thought about an angry God and of how you, in your sins, without any preparation, could meet Him! Oh, it is not so long ago with some of us but what we recollect being startled in our sleep under a sense of sin! And all day long the common joys of men were no joys to us, and though before we had been sprightly and cheerful like others—yet our mirth was now turned into mourning and all our laughter into lamentation!

Perhaps some of you are passing through this state of mind now. You are now conscious of your old sins. The sins of your youth are coming up before your remembrance. Now, if so, listen to what David says, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Beloved, if you would ever get rid of the fear of your past sins, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came in-

to the world to suffer for the sins of all who will trust Him. All the sins of all His people were reckoned as upon Him and all that they should have suffered on account of those sins, Jesus Christ suffered in their place! The mighty debt, too huge for us to calculate, was all laid upon Him and He paid it to the last farthing! He was sued and summoned at the court of the Eternal Justice, for the sins of His people were reckoned as upon Him—and all that they should have rendered with hands and feet, and brow and side, He discharged—the whole tremendous debt that was due to God, the debt caused by the sins of all His people were paid by Him!

Now, it is a blessed thing when sin burdens us to fly away to Christ and stand in spirit beneath the Cross—and feel that under that crimson canopy, no flash of Divine penalty shall ever fall upon us! “Smite me? Great God, You cannot, for have You not smitten the redeeming Christ on my account? Is it not recorded that for those who trust Him, Your Son is both Surety and Substitute? How, then, can You first sue the Substitute and then afterwards sue the person for whom the Substitute stood?” Faith thus clings to the Cross and feels, no—*knows*—that all is safe! I would God that some of you who are lamenting over the burden of your sins and are pressed down by it, would look to the Son of God pouring out His life and would trust Him, for then your sins would be gone in a moment! Only look on Jesus and though you had committed all the sins that are committable by mortal man, yet Jesus Christ can put them all away! If every form of iniquity were heaped upon you till you were dyed through and through with it, like the scarlet that has been lying long a-soak in the dye, yet let the crimson blood of Jesus come into contact with your crimson sins and they—

**“Shall vanish all away,
Though foul as Hell before!
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more!”**

Now, I know it is very easy when we do not feel our sins to trust in Christ, but the business of faith is to trust in Christ when you *do* feel your sins! Brothers and Sisters, it would be cheap faith to take Christ as the saints’ Savior, but it is the faith of God’s elect to take Him as the *sinner’s* Savior. When I can see marks of Grace in myself, to trust Christ is easy—but when I see no marks of anything good, but every mark of everything that is evil and then come and cast myself upon Him and believe that He can save me, even me, and rest myself upon Him—this is the faith which honors Christ and which will save us! May you have it and such time as you are afraid of sin, may you trust in Christ! A third fear, which is remarkably common, is a—

III. FEAR LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED.

Among the best and most careful of Believers this fear intrudes itself, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest, after having been united to the Church, I should prove to be a dead member and so be cut out of the living vine. All these fears have I met with. One has said, “I fear I was never chosen of God.” Another has said, “I fear I never was effectually called.” And yet a third has said, “I fear I never possessed the repentance that needs not to be repented of.” Still others have confessed, “I am afraid my faith is not the faith of God’s elect.” Very frequently have I heard this, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” which is one of the oddest fears in all the world, for nobody that is a hypocrite was ever afraid of it! It is the hypocrite who goes on peacefully, without fear, confident where there is no ground for confidence. But these fears abound and, in some respects, they are healthy. Better to go to Heaven doubting, than to Hell presuming! Better to enter into life crippled and maimed, than having two eyes and hands, and feet, to be cast into the destroying fire! We cannot say too much in praise of assurance—and we cannot speak too much against presumption. Dread that! Shun it with all your might!

But when you and I are besieged by these doubts and fears—and I very often am—as to whether we are the children of God or not, what is the best thing for us to do? “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” This is the shortcut with the devil! This is the way to cut off his head more readily than anyway else. Go straight to Christ! Do not stop to argue with Satan. He is a crafty old liar and he will be sure to defeat you if it comes to argument between you. Say to him, “Satan, if I am deceived, if all I have ever known up till now has been only head knowledge, if I am nothing but a mere hypocrite, yet now—

***“Black, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”***

It is a blessed thing to begin again—to be always beginning and yet always going on—for no man ever goes on to perfection who forgets his first love, his first faith and forgets to walk in Christ Jesus as he walked in Him at the first!

Beloved, whatever may be the doubt that comes to you tonight, I beseech you remember it is still, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you have been a backslider, weep over it. If you have been a great sinner, be sorry for it, but still remember, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And, “Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound.” The Gospel’s voice is still, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” “Come,

now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Come, come, come, you doubting ones, trembling and broken to pieces! Come again—a guilty, weak and helpless worm—and cast yourself into Jesus’ arms!

But we cannot tarry upon that. A fourth fear, which is frequent enough to cause Christians much distress, is—

IV. A FEAR THAT WE SHALL NOT HOLD ON AND HOLD OUT TO THE END.

Many thousands of God’s saints are quite unnecessarily troubled with this. Remember that where God begins to work, He does not ask *us* to finish. He always completes His own work. If you have begun the work of salvation, you will have to carry it on, but if God has begun the good work in you, He will carry it on and bring it to its perfection of completeness in “the day of Christ.” Yet there are thousands who say, “Should I be tempted, I might fall! Working as I do with so many others, none of whom fear God, but who sneer and ridicule at Divine things, I might, perhaps, turn aside and prove like one of them.” It is very proper that you should have that fear, very proper that you should be distressed at it—

***“What anguish has that question stirred,
If I should also go!”***

But, dearly Beloved, what time you are afraid, do not say, “I shall be able to hold out”—do not trust in yourselves, or you will trust a broken reed—but what time you are afraid, renew your trust in Christ! Go with the temptation which you now experience and which you expect to return tomorrow, to the Lord and He will, with the temptation, show the way of escape out of it. I remember a miner who had been a sad, drunken man, and a great blasphemer, but he was converted among the Methodists—and a right earnest man he was! But he seemed to have been a man of strong passions and, on one occasion when he was praying, he prayed that sooner than that he might ever go back to his old sins, if God foresaw that he would not be able to bear up under the temptation, He would take him to Heaven at once! And while he was praying the prayer in the Prayer Meeting, he fell dead! God had answered him. Now, if you are to be tried in the order of Providence in a way that you cannot bear and there is no other way of escape for you, God will take you clean away to where no temptation shall ever come near you! What time you are afraid, put your trust in Him and all will be well!

The last fear I have to mention, and then I shall have done with my first text, is this—

V. THE FEAR OF DEATH.

There are some “who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But Christ came to deliver such—and where Christ works, He delivers us from that fear! Beloved, do you ever get afraid of death? You do, perhaps, when you feel very sick or when you are very ill and low spirited. You begin to look ahead and you say, “I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with the rider on the pale horse? My trials have been so great that I have scarcely found faith enough to bear them! What shall I do in the last great trial of the swellings of Jordan?” Now, what ought you to do at the time you are afraid of dying, but to say with David, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You”? Oh, fear not to die! If you are in Christ, death is nothing! “But the pain, the dying struggle,” you say. Oh, there is no pain in death! It is the life that is full of pain. Death? What is it? Well, it is but a pin’s prick and then it is over. “Many lie a-dying for weeks or months together,” say some. No! Say they *live*, for ‘tis living that makes them full of pain and anguish, but death ends all that! Death is just the passing through the narrow stream that is the entrance in the fields where—

***“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”***

To be afraid to die must be because we do not understand it, for if Believers know that to die is but to enter into the arms of Jesus Christ, surely they will be able to sing bravely with one good old saint—

***“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay!
To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory, through death, led the way!”***

What time you are afraid of dying, trust in the living Savior, for in Him are life and immortality! Remember—

***“Jesus can make our dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out softly there.”***

He will keep you where you shall sing—

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

You shall fear no fear and know no evil because He shall be with you! And you shall find that His rod and His staff do comfort you!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have taken you far, like a guide conducting a number of travelers up the first road on a mountain. And I think we

have gathered something even there, but now I want you to go up still higher. I feel as if, in handling this text, we have been travelling third class to Heaven, but now I want you to get into the first class! Hitherto we have been going in a sort of parliamentary train, which will get to Heaven safe enough, but I want you now to take the express.

My second text will let you know what I mean. It is in the 12th Chapter of Isaiah and the 2nd verse—“*I will trust and not be afraid.*”

This is several stages beyond the first text. David says, “What, time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Isaiah says, “I will trust and not be afraid,” which is far better! When David is afraid, He trusts in God, but Isaiah trusts in God, first, and then he is not afraid at all! I told you in the first case that there was disease and that faith was the remedy, but you know prevention is always better than cure. I have heard of a man who had serious chills and he was thankful to have a medicine which helped him through it. But his neighbor said he should not be very thankful for that, for he had a remedy which prevented him from ever having the malady! So with you who are doubting and fearing—it is a good thing that faith can bear you through it—but how much better it will be if you get a faith that does not have these doubts, that lives above these fears and troubles!

Look! There are two vessels yonder, and a storm is coming on. I see a great hurrying and scurrying on the deck of one. What are they doing? They have a great anchor and they are throwing it out! The storm is coming and they want to get a good hold, for fear lest they should be driven on the shore.

But on the deck of the other vessel, I see no bustle at all. There is the watch pacing up and down as leisurely as possible. Why are they not in a panic? “Ahoy there! Ahoy! What makes you so calm and assured? Have you got out your anchor? Look! Your comrades in the other vessel, how busy they are!” “Oh,” says the watch, “but we had our anchor out a long while ago, before the storm came on and, therefore, we have no need to trouble, now, and hurry to throw it out.”

Now, you who are full of doubts, fears and troubles, you know the way to be safe is to throw out the anchor of faith! But it would be better if you had the anchor of faith already out so that you could trust in God and not be afraid at all!

Let us take the fears which we have already mentioned over again. Faith saves from—

I. THE FEAR OF TEMPORAL TROUBLE.

The man who fully trusts in God is not afraid of temporal trouble. You have read, perhaps, the life of Bernard Palissy, the famous potter. He

was confined for many years on account of his religion and he was only permitted to live at all because he was such a skillful workman that they did not want to put him to death. King Henry the Third of France said to him, one day, “Bernard, I shall be obliged to give you up to your enemies to be burned unless you change your religion.” Bernard replied, “Your Majesty, I have often heard you say you pity me, but believe me I greatly pity you, though I am no king but only a poor humble potter. There is no man living that could compel me to do what I believe to be wrong—and yet you say you will be compelled—those are kingly words for you to utter!” And he could say this to the king, in whose hands his life was! Bernard was a very poor man. As I have told you, he used to earn his bread by making pottery. And he used to say, in his poverty, that he was a very rich man, for he had two things—he had Heaven and earth. And then he would take up a handful of the clay by which he earned his living. Happy man! Though often brought to the depths of poverty, he could say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

Take as another example. Martin Luther. They came to Martin one day and they said, “Martin, it is all over with the Reformation cause, now, for the Emperor of Germany has sworn a solemn oath to help the pope.” “I do not care a snap of my finger for both of them,” he said, “nor for all the devils in Hell! This is God’s work, and God’s work can stand against both emperors and popes!” Luther was a man who trusted—really, intensely—and because of this he was not afraid. Is not that much better than being afraid, and then having to trust to banish the fear? Now, God is with me, and come what may—

***“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall—
I shall in safety reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All.”***

Oh, if we can all get to this brave assurance of faith, happy shall we be in the midst of the worst trouble! Faith also saves from the—

II. FEAR CONCERNING PAST SIN.

He is in a blessed state who is delivered from such fear because he who is not is not afraid. One of you knows a man, perhaps, who has got into debt and who owed a great deal. But some little time ago a friend paid all his debts for him—and he has the receipt! Now, when he walks the streets, is this man afraid of the sheriff’s officer? Does he fear that he shall be arrested? Why, no! He knows he shall not, because he carries

the receipt with him! Every man who trusts Christ perceives his own sin, but he also perceives that Christ paid for all his sin. He that believes has the witness of his pardon in himself which he carries with him as a receipt and which eases his conscience and prevents his fears. Oh, if you can but know that Christ died for you! If you can but rest alone in Him so as to know that He is yours, then all the sins that you have ever committed, though you lament them, shall never cause you a moment's uneasiness, for they are drowned beneath the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and, therefore, you may say, "I will trust and not be afraid." As to that third fear which I mentioned—the fear lest we should be hypocrites, or—

III. LEST THE WORK OF GRACE SHOULD NOT BE RIPENED IN OUR HEARTS—

There is one way of getting rid of that fear entirely! If you take a sovereign across the counter, you may not know whether it is a good one—you may have some doubts about it. But if you get it straight from the Mint, I do not suppose you will have any suspicion of it at all! So when a man asks, "Is my faith right? Is my religion right?" If he can say, "I got it straight from the Throne of God by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ"—then he will know that he received it from Headquarters—and there can be no mistake about it! A Christian has no right to be always saying—

"Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

He may be compelled to say it, sometimes, but it is far better for him to come just as he is and throw himself at the foot of the Cross and say, "Savior, You have promised to save those that believe! I believe, therefore You have saved me!" I know some think this is presumption, but surely it is worse than presumption not to believe God! And it is true humility to take God at His word and to believe Him.

I think I once illustrated this Truth of God in this place in this way. A good mother has two children. Christmas is drawing near and she says to one of them, "Now, John, I shall take you out on Christmas Day to such a place and give you a great treat." She promises the same to William. Now, Master John says to himself, "Well, I do not know. I do not know whether my mother can afford it. Or perhaps I do not deserve it. I hardly think she will take me—it will be presumption in me to believe that she will."

But as for little Master William, he is no sooner told that he is to go out on Christmas Day than he claps his hands and begins to skip—and tomorrow tells all his playmates that his mother is going to take him out

on Christmas Day! He is quite sure of it. They begin to ask him, “How do you know?” “Why,” he says, “Mother said so.” Perhaps they mention some things that make it look rather unlikely. “Oh, but,” he says, “my mother never tells lies and she told me she would take me, and I know she will!” Now, which of those children, do you think, is most to be commended—the bigger boy, who raised difficulties and suspected his mother’s word? Why, he is a proud little fellow who deserves to go without the pleasure! But as for his little brother, William, who takes his mother at her word—I do not call him proud. I consider him truly humble—and he is the child who really deserves the mother’s fondest love! Now, deal with God as you would have your children deal with you! If He says He will save you if you trust Him, then if you trust Him, why, He will save you! If He is a true God, He cannot destroy the soul that trusts in Christ! Unless this Bible is one great lie from beginning to end, the soul that trusts in Christ must be saved! If God is true, every soul that trusts in Jesus must be safe at the last. Whatever he may be and whoever he may be, if he trusts his soul with Christ and with Christ, alone, He cannot be cast away unless the promise of God can be of no effect! “I will trust and not be afraid.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, it will be with other fears—time fails us to mention them—whatever they may be. May you get into such a blessed state of confidence in the love of God, in the love of Christ’s heart, in the power of Christ’s arm, in the prevalence of Christ’s plea, that at all times you may trust in Him and in nothing, whatever, be afraid!

God bring us all up to this second platform and give us Divine Grace to stay there—and happy shall you be and have a foretaste of Heaven upon earth! Amen.

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

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

THREE TEXTS, BUT ONE SUBJECT— FAITH NO. 2335

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1889.

*“In the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge.”
Psalm 57:1.*

*“Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain you.”
Psalm 55:22.*

*“Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”
Isaiah 50:10.*

IT is the preacher's business to endeavor to make plain to the people the meaning of the word, FAITH. Inasmuch as salvation comes by believing, it is most important that men should know what believing is—and though we have to preach upon many topics and take the whole range of the Word of God—yet it often behooves the minister of Christ to dwell especially upon the way whereby men are saved and to explain what is that step by which they enter into eternal life. You may think that it is very easy to explain faith and so it is, but it is still easier to confuse people with your explanation. There is nothing simpler in the world than to believe in Christ Jesus, yet probably there is nothing more difficult than to explain to a man what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus—not that the thing, itself, is difficult, but the *explaining* of it is not so easy.

You remember the story, perhaps, of Mr. Thomas Scott, a very excellent commentator, who brought out an edition of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, to which he had written very excellent and, I think that I must add, very dull notes. On going round his parish, he called on an aged person and found her studying the book. “Well, my good woman,” said he, “I see that you are reading Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.” “Yes, Sir,” she replied, “I always enjoy that book.” “And, pray, do you understand it?” “Yes, Sir, I understand it very well and I think that, by the Grace of God, I shall one day understand your explanation of it”—which was not very complimentary to Mr. Scott! So, I have no doubt that there are many who better understand what faith is without our explanations. It is so easy to darken counsel by words without knowledge and to give illustrations which, themselves, need to be illustrated, and definitions which need to be defined. I am afraid of doing that, tonight—I see my difficulty and I cry to God to help me to put faith very plainly before every sinner here—that you may all know what it is and may at once exercise it.

I have met with a large number of persons who have believed in Christ who were accustomed to hear the Gospel preached and to have faith explained to them, but in almost every case they have told me that they did not know what faith was till they, themselves, believed and, although they were told a hundred times over that it was simply trusting in Christ, they still did not get a hold of the right idea—they still entertained the thought that there was something to be *felt*, something to be *done*, something to be *endured*, *something* or other more than the simple casting of themselves upon Christ for eternal salvation! I have also noticed how, when I have tried to use illustrations, the friend to whom I have spoken has not been affected by them and has not understood my illustrations.

Speaking to a young man, once, I quoted to him that verse of Dr. Watts which begins—

**“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.”**

“But,” he said, “I cannot fall.” “Oh, my dear Friend,” I replied, you do not catch the idea at all, because it is not a thing that a man can *do*. He falls because he cannot help it—there is no effort in falling, it is cessation from effort.” Still, though I put it, as I thought, so that he ought to understand it, he did not comprehend it. It was sometime later when the Holy Spirit revealed it to him, that he came to understand what faith was. Perhaps you ask, “Are we such dolts that we do not even understand plain Saxon language when it has to do with spiritual things?” Ah, my Hearers, sin has made fools of us! Sin has so befooled us that even God’s Word, itself, does not convey God’s meaning to our stupid minds until the Spirit of God comes and teaches our reason, *reason*—and takes the film from our eyes and helps us to see what is, in itself, plain as a pikestaff—but is not plain to us by reason of our sinful and corrupt nature! Before I try, then, to preach about what faith is, may I ask you to pray the Holy Spirit to come and open men’s eyes, that they may see what faith is? For truly, as we know not what we should *pray for* as we ought, we know not how to *believe* as we ought! And we make mistakes on this simplest of all subjects until the Holy Spirit sets us right. Divine Spirit, we believe in You, but we do not believe in ourselves! We see, in some measure, how stupid, how ignorant we are. Come, we pray You, and teach us even the first lesson of the Doctrines of Christ, teach us to *believe* in Jesus!

If you want to cut a diamond, you must cut it with a diamond—so, if you want to explain Scripture, you must explain it with Scripture. I thought, therefore, that I would take three expressions from the Old Testament which may help to set forth what faith really is.

I. The first expression you will find in the 57th Psalm, and the first verse. It shows that faith is HIDING IN God—“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge.”

See then, *trusting in God*, that is, faith, is the same thing as hiding under the shadow of God’s wings by way of refuge. Let me explain that figure, first, *as relating to birds beneath their mother’s wings*. There is a

hawk in the sky, the hen sees it, she begins to give her warning "cluck." The little chickens hardly know what the danger is, but they understand the mother's call and they see her crouching down on the ground. Have you ever seen her close to the earth, with her wings outspread and calling and calling again till every one of her chicks comes and hides beneath her wings? They are out of sight of the bird of prey—if that hawk comes down at all, it will have to attack the hen and kill her before it can reach her chicks. The pecks of its bill, the tearing of its talons will have to be, first, upon the mother bird, for her little ones are all hidden beneath the cover of her wings.

Now, that hiding is an illustration of faith. Here is Christ, the Savior, and I hide myself under Him. The justice of God must strike the sinner, or One who is able and willing to suffer in the sinner's place. It is imperative, as a first Law of the universe, that sin cannot go unpunished. As Justice approaches, with drawn sword, I find Christ coming and interposing between me and the sentence of the Law—and if the avenger seeks me, I hide away under Christ and all the blows must be dealt upon Him. You know how He was wounded, beaten, torn, that you and I, hiding beneath Him, might escape. It sometimes happens, on the sides of the Alps, that a mountain goat or a wild gazelle may be feeding there and an eagle spies out a kid close by its mother—and the powerful bird thinks to devour that kid and down it flies! But the little creature crouches as low as it can at its mother's side and there stands the mother with horns ready to meet the eagle, and to fight against it for the life of her beloved little one. So the little kid is hidden away behind its mother and she valorously contends for it. In that way we must hide behind the Savior. We sang just now—

***"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"***

I put myself behind my Savior. I say to God, Deal not with me—deal with my dying Savior! My God, I interpose between Your wrath and my guilty head, the Sacrifice which He presented on the Cross, when He bowed His head and said, 'It is finished!'"

The act of the chickens hiding away beneath the hen's wings is a very good description of the act of faith.

It may be further illustrated by *travelers hiding beneath a rock*. Journeying through hot countries, they find towards noon that the air is very sultry and that the sandy soil beneath them reflects the heat of the sun. They seem to be traveling in a hot bath and they feel faint and weary. But yonder there is a great rock cropping out of the soil and under its shadow the heat is not felt. I have often been struck with the singular coolness that there is just by the side of a great rock. I have, myself, sometimes stood out in the sunshine in the South of France and it has been so hot that I have felt ready to faint—and I have just stepped back within the shadow of a rock and found it almost as chilly as a vault! Refreshing, indeed, has it been to get into the cooler atmosphere!

Well, now, Christ is the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land—and if you and I come to Him, and let His shadow come between us and the

burning heat of the sun of Divine Justice, the heat will fall on the Rock—not on us. We shall be safe and refreshed and the Rock will screen us from all evil. Come and put Christ between you and God! He is the Interposer between God and man and that is true faith which gets to the side of the Rock, Christ, and hides away beneath His sheltering shade!

Take another Biblical metaphor, that of *the manslayer hiding in the City of Refuge*. That was a part of the Law, you remember. If one had killed a man inadvertently and not of malice, the next of kin of the man killed could seek revenge and he followed up the manslayer—and the poor man's only hope of life was to hurry away as quickly as ever he could to a refuge city belonging to the priests. If he could once pass through the gate of a City of Refuge, he was sure of a fair trial and could not be put to death by the avenger of blood. Oh, how he hurried! How his feet seemed to fly over the soil, especially if he saw the avenger at some little distance following him with hot feet! But once let the city gate be shut, he breathed freely within the sacred streets—he was safe! Come, guilty souls, and fly away to Christ, as the manslayer fled away to the City of Refuge and, once safe in Him, with Jesus as the great Gate between you and the avenger of blood, you are perfectly safe! Do you comprehend and catch the thought? It is hiding away in Christ, from the pursuit of vengeance, from the righteous wrath of God, that brings safety.

Another illustration comes in here, *it is that of the conies hiding in the rocks*—"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." A coney was not exactly like a rabbit—a rabbit hardly dwells among rocks—but this creature was always found in holes and crannies of the rocks. Poor little coney, a dog is after it and the sportsman seeks to destroy it. But there is an opening in the rock and he slips in there and is perfectly safe. The dog barks and the coney's little heart beats fast, but *barking* will not kill conies! The sportsman looks up and down, but he cannot see the coney—he can see the rock, but he cannot see the coney within the rock. The coney has hidden right away from the keenest sight of the man who would destroy him.

Now, just hide in that way in Christ, who died for guilty men! Trust Him. Believe Him. Believe that He will save you. Hide yourself in the Rock of Ages and then, though you may feel some fears, you will have no need of any. Once safe in Christ, all is well with you! You know that when a ship has been driven by a storm and the winds are out, the mariners hasten to the harbor. When they got into port, down goes the anchor! The rattle of the chains is one of the most pleasant sounds ever heard when one is seasick and worn out with a tempest-tossed voyage. Down goes the anchor—well, but when the motion of the ship still keeps on, she rocks to and fro—yes, but the anchor is down, the fear is all over! No matter how the vessel rocks, the winds cannot drive her out of the harbor. She is safe in port and the anchor is down—all is well with her. Oh, if tonight you can let the anchor go right down into the deeps and trust Christ—get a grip on Christ and hold on to Christ—you may have some fears and there may be some tossing for you yet to endure, but all is well! As the ship hides itself

in the harbor, so do you hide away in Christ, saying with David, "In the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge." This is faith.

I cannot preach as I would. I have been learning to preach for ever so many years, but I cannot do it as I want to. But I wish that, instead of my preaching to you, you would practice what I bid you and hide away under the shadow of Christ's wings—

***"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds!
This is the welcome Gospel-Day,
Wherein Free Grace abounds."***

I remember when I first hid away in that Rock. I have been tempted many times to come out, but I never will. I cannot fight the hawk, I cannot kill the eagle, but I can squeeze myself further back into my Rock and hide away there and even—

***"When my eye-strings break in death,
When I soar through tracks unknown,"***

and see Christ on His Judgement Throne, I hope, still, to shelter in the Rock of Ages! Do the same, dear Sister! Do the same, dear Brother! May the Holy Spirit lead you to do it now! Remember that you have to believe for yourself—the Holy Spirit will not believe for you—He cannot believe for you. How can He? He has nothing to believe. It is you who have to believe and though He works in you to will and to do, He works, but you believe. It is only *personal* faith that saves—it could not be the faith of the Holy Spirit—it must be the sinner's own faith though it is worked in him by the Spirit of God. Therefore, believe and live unto God!

II. Having dwelt on that illustration long enough, I ask you, now, to notice another expression in Psalm 55, verse 22—"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you." This passage sets forth faith as ROLLING OUR BURDEN UPON GOD.

I believe that this text might be rendered, "Roll your burden upon the Lord." The similar passage in Psalm 37, verse five, "Commit your way unto the Lord," is, in the margin, "Roll your way upon the Lord."

Faith, then, is *the leaving of our burdens with God*. When a man believes in Christ, he shifts his burden from his own shoulders onto the shoulders of Christ—

***"My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."***

There you are, stooping down beneath a crushing load, heavy as that which Atlas was supposed to bear when the whole world was on his back—and Christ comes in and says, "Roll your burden from off your shoulders on to Mine. Let Me bear it for you."

Well, then, if the burden is laid upon Christ, then *we have not to bear it ourselves*. Notice that. Some will say, "We trust Christ, but yet we are not at ease." How is that? If you have trusted Christ, you have rolled your burden upon Him—it is no longer upon you. I do not know whether there are still, near Ludgate Hill, as there used to be, certain rests for burden

bearers. You might have seen the porter come toiling up to that spot and, as he shifted his burden onto the rest, he was, himself, relieved of the load. I have often looked at one of those rests at Mentone and seen the women come along the road with huge baskets of lemons or oranges on their heads and, as soon as they have reached this kind of table, they have put their burden on it, sat down and rested a while.

Now, when they put their basket of oranges there, it is not on their head, is it? There is the beauty of rolling your burden upon Christ! When He takes it, it is not on you any longer. A thing cannot be in two places at one time! And when, by faith, I lay my burden down at Jesus' feet, I do not have it anymore! If my sin is laid on Him, it does not any longer lie on me! Come, poor Soul, here is the act of faith—to take the mighty burden that will crush you lower than the lowest Hell—and lay it on Christ, your Savior!

When the burden is on Him, and not on us, *the burden is not ours to take up again*. I have heard that some of our rests in London were done away with because porters were known to come and put their loads on them, and sit down a while and, afterwards, get up and go home without them. You would hardly believe they could be so forgetful, but people do strange things. However, that is a mistake that I *want you to make* with regard to Christ, for there is no mistake in it! Lay your sin on Him by an act of faith, but do not take it up again! I never can believe, as some do, in God forgiving our sin and afterwards laying it to our account. I believe that in the day when our sin was laid on Christ, it was *all* laid there, and taken away from His people, never to be charged against them again! “As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” How far is the East from the West? If you could travel, like a ray of light, as far eastward as you pleased—while another went as far westward as he could desire—you might go on forever and forever, and yet not meet. The distance, so far as created things can be, is infinite—and so far has the Lord removed our transgressions from us. If we, by faith, lay our sins upon Christ, God Himself forgets them and casts them behind His back, so that He says that if they are searched for, they shall not be found anymore forever.

And here is one of the greatest mercies of all, that *the burden is not even on Christ now*. Roll your burden upon Him and, if you do, that burden is not on Him now. He died on the Cross and they laid Him in the sepulcher. Your sin rolls into His sepulcher and it is buried. Christ has left it as a dead and buried thing and He has risen from among the dead. He took your debt upon Himself, but when He paid that debt, it was not anymore due from Him, neither was it due from you! Therefore, we rightly sing—

“Now both the Surety and sinner are free.”

The atoning Sacrifice of Christ is so complete a satisfaction to the Lord that even the sin that was laid on the Lamb of God is gone forever! It has ceased, even, to be, so that a Believer in Christ may, indeed, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Now then, roll your burden upon the Lord. I really think that if a number of friends all stood here, tonight, groaning under a great load, and I said, "Just roll your burdens off," they would understand me. What a lot of rolling off would be done very soon! That is all that is required with your sin. Jesus is willing to take it! Jesus is willing to obliterate all the black record against you! Let it go to Him. Tell the devil that you have been answering him long enough and you are not going to talk to him any longer, for you have an Advocate in whose hands you are going to leave your case. When a man has an advocate, he does not go and do his legal business, himself—he refers everybody to his advocate. "Go and settle with him," he says. And tonight, when the devil says, "You are a sinner," I reply, "I know I am and so are you." "Ah," says he, "but you deserve death." "Yes," I answer, "but there is One who stood in my place—go and settle my account with Him. He undertook my business and He said that He would see me through with it if I would but trust Him, and I do trust Him! I must refer you to my Advocate, He can settle with you, I cannot."

Do that, I pray you! Roll your burden upon the Lord. Trust in Him—to roll your burden upon Him is to trust Him! I do not know a better figure by which to set faith forth. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may use it, tonight, to the unburdening of many poor souls!

III. I said that we would have three of these Old Testament diamonds—the third is found in the 50th chapter of Isaiah, and the 10th verse, where faith is likened to STAYING UPON GOD. I read it to you just now, but we will read the verse again—"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and" (here is the same thing as trusting in the name of the Lord, the explanation of it) "stay upon his God."

The word, "stay," means, "lean." If I cannot stand, if I feel giddy, I naturally put out my hand. And if I feel faint, I lean upon some support and, the more faint I am, the more I lean. At this moment, I lean my whole weight upon this platform rail, just so. If this rail gives way, I must go down. I am leaning, staying myself wholly here. Now that is what you have to do with Christ—lean on Him with all your weight of sin and sorrow—lean on Jesus Christ and lean hard! Do not try to hold yourself up, now—throw yourself right on Him, lean on Him, rest on Him, let Him bear the whole of your weight. Stay yourself upon Him.

In order to do that, *you must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to bear you up.* Do you not believe it? He is God as well as Man. He has offered an all-sufficient Atonement to God. He is well-pleasing to the Father. He is the Lord, strong and mighty—a Savior—and a great One! Lean on Him and lean hard. Did anyone say, "I am afraid to trust Christ lest He may not be able to bear me up"? Oh, dear Friend, do not talk so! It seems so absurd. I remember a good old lady who would never go over the Saltash bridge at Plymouth. She looked up at it and said that she did not believe that it would ever bear her weight. There were great luggage trains that went rolling over it, but, still, she always said that it would not bear

her. You smile, do you? Now, just think that you are that old woman—you are doing a more foolish thing than she did if you cannot trust Christ with your weight! Christ who is Omnipotent to save! How foolish you must be! He is able to save you. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! Therefore stay yourself upon Him.

Then, *lean all your weight on Him*. If you do that, you no longer have to support yourself. The sinner says, "I do not think that I could ever get to Heaven." Lean upon Christ to get there. "Oh, but if I were to leave my sins, I am afraid that I would go back to them!" Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back. "Oh, but if I lived here many years, I would be tempted and I might fall!" Lean upon Christ to preserve you from falling. "Ah, but you do not know what a temper I have!" Lean upon Christ to conquer your temper. "But, Sir, I have gone back so many times." Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back anymore—stay yourself upon Him! I cannot possibly mention all your weaknesses, all your doubts and all your fears, but whatever they are, lean upon Christ, lean hard on Him, like one of our female missionaries, when sustained by one of her converts in the hour of death. The convert said, "Lean on me, Missionary. Lean on me, Sister," and as she thought that the missionary had a delicacy in resting all her weight, she said, "If you love me, lean hard, for the harder you lean, the more I shall feel that you love me." And Christ says to you, "Sinner, if you love Me, lean hard." Lean hard on Him and He will bear you up. You do not need strength for leaning on Christ—

"True belief and true repentance,"

perseverance, and every Grace that you need to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, Christ will give it all to you! Depend upon Him for it all! You will never have ease of mind, you will never know what full salvation means till you just give yourself up, as though you were dead, that He might be your life. Resign yourself to Christ, as a wandering sheep has to do to the shepherd when he takes it by the legs and throws it on his shoulders and carries it home, rejoicing. Christ can save—He *will* save—therefore, stay yourself upon Him!

If you do, *you shall have perfect peace*. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You." I should like to begin preaching, again, with that for my text, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You." If you have not perfect peace, it is because you are not staying yourself on God as you ought to do. There is no other way of coming to a perfect rest but by a perfect leaning upon Christ. Will you do that tonight? If a man were to get one foot on a rock, he might stand very well. Suppose that he puts the other foot on the sand? The sea comes up, the sand is treacherous and his foot begins to sink. I should recommend him to get wholly on that bit of rock and to stand there. Do so, then—stay yourself wholly upon Christ. Have no confidence in yourself, in Baptism, in sacraments, in prayers, in good works, in anything but the finished work of Christ—and when you get there, you are on a foundation that can never be moved!

I would like to say, as I finish, that I have now served the Lord Jesus Christ for about 40 years and I have preached His Gospel, I can say, with all my heart. Neither have I cared for anything but to win souls to my Lord Jesus, but when I came to Him at first, I had no hope but in His blood and merits and I have no more hope, now, apart from His blood and merits, than I had at the beginning! I stand on the same foundation as I stood upon then. I have heard of a good man who said, as he was dying, that he was sorting over his life, putting his good works in one bundle and his bad ones in the other. At last he said to his wife, "It is no use sorting them out, for the good ones are so bad that I think that I will fling them all away and cling to Christ, alone."

There was a famous cardinal, in Luther's day, who fought tremendously against the Reformer, but he said, in the course of the discussion, that, seeing that there is much in our good works that is faulty, and no man can be quite sure that he has done enough good works to save him—upon the whole it is better to trust only to the merits of Christ. Well, the best of everything always suits me and if that is the best, I will let other people have the second best and I will just trust in Christ, and trust in Christ, alone. Oh, that you would all do so tonight! Have done with yourself! Have done with your good works! Have done with your bad ones—have done with any reliance upon self, whatever—and just come as you are and trust Christ who died for the guilty and undeserving!

O bankrupt Sinner! O Sinner without a hope, come and just stay yourself upon the immovable foundation of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ and you shall find eternal life tonight! Yes, even tonight! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 50.

Verse 1. *Thus says the LORD.* There is always something weighty coming when you have this preface. If God speaks, we ought to hear with reverence, with attention.

1. *Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?* God is here addressing His ancient people. They had been given up, as it were, left, forsaken. They compared themselves to a wife who had been divorced by her husband, or to children who had been sold by their father because of his extreme poverty. The Lord says, "Now, tell Me, have I really put away My chosen people as a man in a pet puts away his wife? Have I really sold you to profit by you? What benefit is it to Me that you are carried away captive and that you are left without comfort?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.* It was not God's changeableness, but their own sinfulness that had brought upon them all their sufferings. The Jews might have remained a nation in possession of their own land to this day if they had not turned aside unto idols. It was not that God cast

away His people whom He did foreknow, but they cast Him off, they sold themselves. Now, if any child of God has fallen into trouble of heart and has lost his comfort, let him not blame God—his sorrow is caused by his own acts and deeds. And if any man or woman here should be in deep trouble brought on by sin, let them not set it down to their destiny, let them not call God unkind, but let them take the blame to themselves—“For your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.”

2. *Therefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?* It is Christ who is speaking here by the mouth of the Prophet. When He came, there was “no man.” He could not find in all the nation any faithful one to help Him in His great redemptive work. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” He preached repentance and faith throughout the land, but they cried, “Crucify, Him! Crucify Him!” They loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

2. *Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?* If you are in the worst plight in which you can be, God can still help you. Despair of yourself, but do not despair of Him! If you have come to the very bottom of all things and the last ray of hope is quenched in midnight darkness, God is still the same! Hear what He says to you, “Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” Can He not break the bonds of drunkenness? Can He not deliver the unchaste from their vile passions? Can He not pick up from the dunghill the outcast and the offcasts? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is the salvation of the greatest sinners impossible for Him to accomplish? That can never be, for He is “mighty to save.”

2. *Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I Make the rivers a wilderness, their fish stink because there is no water, and they die of thirst.* God divided the Red Sea, He parted the Jordan asunder and made a way for His people to pass over. He who has done this can do anything! When God takes up the case, impossibility is not in the dictionary. However great your sorrow, however deep your misfortune, or however grievous your sin, if God comes to deal with it, He will make short work of all your troubles and all your despair.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.* This is Christ speaking again. When He came here, though He found no man able to help Him, none to come and join Him in the redemption of His people, yet He gave Himself up to the tremendous task. He became instructed of the Father. He was taught to speak a word to weary ones. “Never man spoke like this Man.” There is no gospel like His Gospel, no doctrine like His Doctrine. He went to God in private “morning by morning.” He received His message from His Father and He came and delivered it to the people. Oh, what a glorious Christ we have!

5. *The Lord GOD has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.* He had His ear bored as slaves had when they would not go out free, but meant to remain with their master. Christ had a bored ear, an opened ear. He never rebelled against God's will. He was obedient to the Father, even unto death. If you want to know how obedient He was, hear me read the next verse—

6. *I gave My back to the smiters, and My checks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.* Now let me go back a little and read, again, the third verse—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." "I gave My back to the smiters, and My checks to them that plucked off the hair." It is the same Divine Person who musters the hosts of Heaven till the very skies are blackened with the artillery of God, who here says, "I gave My back to the smiters, bowing down to the brutal Roman scourge, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." You remember the scene that I pictured last Sunday night, the whole band of soldiers mocking Christ and even spitting upon Him? [Sermon #2333, Volume 39—*The Whole Band Against Christ*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] That was the fulfillment of these words, "I hid not My face front shame and spitting." That same Christ, without whom was not anything made that was made, whose face is the sun of Heaven, whose Glory is matchless and unsearchable, says, "I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Do not say, then, that God has no love to you! Do not say that He has cast you away as a husband divorces his wife. Talk no more as if there were no help for you, no means of your deliverance. Behold how low your Savior stooped, how gracious He was to suffer so much for guilty men—and be encouraged to trust Him. He who gave His back to the smiters says to you, "The chastisement of your peace was upon Me, and with My stripes you are healed."

7. *For the Lord GOD will help Me.* This is Christ still speaking. Though God, Himself, yet as the God-Man, looking to His Father for help in the dread struggle through which He went to save us, He declared, "The Lord God will help Me."

7. *Therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.* And He was not—He went through with all that He had undertaken. He drank our bitter cup till none of the dregs remained. He bore the terrible wrath of God, which otherwise would have rested on us forever! God helped Him and He bore it all.

8, 9. *He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me? Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help Me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.* Will any now come to battle against Christ and hope to conquer Him? Voltaire used to say, "Crush the Wretch!" but where is Voltaire now? And those who agreed with Voltaire, where are *they* now? But Jesus always lives and reigns and God is with Him! He who shall once come to battle with our glorious Lord

shall soon know the power of Christ's weakness and the Omnipotence of His death!

10. *Who is among you*—Here is a very blessed question. Christ, having passed through all the trouble that could be passed through, and having come out of it triumphant, now looks round on all His followers, on all the children of God, and He says, "Who is among you"—

10. *That fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.* Do you see the drift of it? Our Savior trusted and He was not confounded. He stayed Himself upon God even when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and He came off a conqueror! Trust in God and you, also, will be victorious! Let your strength be drawn from that strong and mighty One who is pledged to help all who trust Him and you shall triumph even as Jesus did! Do you refuse to trust God? Then listen to this—

11. *Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled.* If you think to make yourselves happy in sin, go and do it! If you fancy that your own righteousness will save you, go and try it!

11. *This shall you have of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.* Your fire shall not warm you! Your sparks shall not enlighten you! You will have to lie down to die and you shall lie down in sorrow. O my dear Hearers, the time will come when each one of us must put off this body and lie down to die! God grant that we may, none of us, have to lie down in sorrow, but instead thereof, having trusted in God, may He light our candle for us in the last moment, that we may fall asleep in Jesus and wake up in His likeness in the everlasting Glory! May God bless to us the reading of His Word! Amen.

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STRONG FAITH IN A FAITHFUL GOD

NO. 3445

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

“I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performs all things for me.”
Psalm 57:2.

DAVID was in the Cave Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe, and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this Psalm he rings the alarm bell—and very loud is the sound of it. “Be merciful unto me,” and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. “Be merciful unto me.” He utters his Miserere again and again. “My soul trusts in You; yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.” Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is always an active Grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. “I will cry,” he says, “unto God Most High.” You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Among the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save His servant’s life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah! And he says, “I will cry unto God Most High, unto God that performs all things for me.” It is delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so does it seem as if the child of God brings forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. “Unto God who performs all things for me.” First, there is *Infinite Providence*. As it stands, the words, “all things,” you perceive, have been added by the translators. Not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, “God that performs for me,” allows them to supply the omission without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is *inviolable faithfulness*, as we know that David here referred to God’s working out the fulfillment of the promises He had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of His Grace as the

performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this verse. Thirdly, there is a *certainty of ultimate completeness*. The original has for its root the word, “finishing,” and now working it out, it means a God that performs or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in His promise or Covenant that I may need, He will perfect for me. To begin with—

I. THE MARVELOUS PROVIDENCE.

The text, as it stands, speaks of a service—“I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performs all things for me.” “All things,” that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in His hands—it is God who does it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God’s help. No, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work and to leave the care of it with the God who cares for him. Any work in which he cannot ask Divine co-operation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, “God performs all things for me,” there is sin somewhere and evil lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on His Providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask Him to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself! Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life and apply the text to it. Should we not, each morning, cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach. Though we are not going up to the assembly for worship. Though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing! Opportunities for God’s service should be sought in our common avocations—we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer—to continue all through the day in the same spirit and to close the day by commending whatever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it is real success, is of God who gives it to us! “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it,” is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life! It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so He gives His Beloved sleep. If there is any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed,” it must come from the God of Heaven—it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God! Say continually, “I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performs all things for me.”

Perhaps at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume un-

der a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much arise from our forgetting that God performs all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutiae in life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon His blessing? Know you not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the diseases of cattle, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblest—if unattended with the Divine Favor, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God, then! And little blessings, as you think, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God, then, for the little. Put the little into His hands—it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to Him! There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the Infinite Mind of our glorious God. Cast all on Him who numbers the hairs of your head, and allows not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His decree! Unto God cry about the little things, for He performs all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my Brother, my Sister, without much careful waiting upon God. But if you be persuaded that the change is one that has the Master's approval, fear not, for He performs all things for you. At this moment you have many perplexities. You may vex yourself with anxiety, and make yourself foolish with shilly-shallying if you sport with fancy, vexing up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie which were better cut with the sword of faith! We should end our difficulties by leaving them with Him who knows the end from the beginning!

Up to this moment you have been rightly led—you have the same Guide. To this hour, He who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious ways of the wilderness—follow, still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If you keep close to Him, He performs all things for you. Take your guidance from His Word and, waiting upon Him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, perhaps, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry unto God Most High, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show Himself, again, to you a God all-sufficient to His people in their times of need? He is always near! I do not know that He has said, “When you walk through the green pastures, I will be with you, and when your way lies hard by the river of the Water of Life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen you.” I believe He will do so, but I do not remember such a promise. But, “When you go through the rivers, I will be with you,” is a well-known promise of His. If ever He is present, it shall be in trial—if He can be absent, it will certainly not be when His servants most need His aid! Rest in Him, then. But you say, “I can do so little in this time of difficulty.” Do what you can, and leave the rest to Him! If you see no way of escape, does it follow that there is none? If you see no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Your Lord and Savior found no friend among the whole family of man, “Yet,” said He, “could I not presently pray to My Father, and He would send me

twelve legions of angels?” Were it necessary for your help, the squadrons of Heaven would leave the Glory Land to come to your rescue—the least and poorest of the children of God as you may be! He will perform for you—be you, therefore, obedient, trustful, patient. ‘Tis yours to obey, ‘tis His to command, ‘tis yours to perceive, ‘tis His to perform. He will perform all things for you!

Very likely among this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigor shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Of all self-torture, that of importing in sure trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane! Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds! On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious Word of promise and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith! Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry. He rules and He overrules! He will make all things work together for good! He will surely bring you through! Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever! He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh, strange infatuation! You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all! This is no business of yours. Leave it in His hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you. Be of good confidence and rest in peace!

So shall it be even at life’s close. He performs all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the prospective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp and yield my soul to Him who gave it. Well, fear not! He helped me to live—He will help me to die! He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task, yes, He has performed it for me—giving me His Grace and working His Providence with me. Shall I fear that He will desert me at the last? He performs not some things, but *all* things, and He cannot omit this most important thing which often makes me tremble. No, that must be included, for all things are mine—death as well as life! I leave my dying hour, then, with Him, and never boding ill of it, I cry unto God Most High, unto God that performs all things for me! I want, dear Brothers and Sisters, to leave this impression in your minds, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly—if anything is done right, or successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give Him the Glory! I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by Him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of His Grace through

you by Himself, to His own honor and praise, world without end! The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of—

II. INVIOABLE FAITHFULNESS.

“Unto God that performs all things for me.” The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfill them. It is God who is the actual Worker of all that He declared in the Covenant of Grace should be worked in and for His people!

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer’s merits. “Unto God that performs all things for me.” Meritoriously our Savior-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away—He bore it all—every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete—He has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God’s infinite, unflinching Justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight—my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins—as a Believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me! Don’t forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you! Do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you! There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The Temple He has built needs not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom He has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done! O Soul, if Christ has completely redeemed you and saved you, rest on Him and cry to Him! And if sin rebels within you at this present moment, fly—though your spirit is shut up as in the Cave Adullam—fly to Him by faith—to Him who has done all things for you as your Representative and Substitute! After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been worked there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has worked every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from His Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they come—no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit! It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work. He led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the Cross. He helped us when we followed Him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed, were opened by Him! Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit! We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from Him—He performed all for us.

As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Savior, I am wonderfully struck with the way in which God performed everything for me. For if He had not, I do remember well when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of His Grace! Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose

strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's Law. He did not allow the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on Him if He had not taught me to believe! To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate, still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the Cross, itself, and it appeared impossible to believe! But the Spirit worked faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony, only, but the testimony of all my Brothers and Sisters—in that hour of sore trouble it was God who performed all things for us! Since then and up to this moment, my Brothers and Sisters, if there has been any virtue, if there has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or can you attribute it? Must you not say, "Of Him all my fruit was found"? You could not have done without Him! If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you *think* you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from Him! There is no wealth for us but that which is dug in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One Himself. "You who perform all things for me," must be our cry up to this hour!

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What He was yesterday, He is today. What we find Him today, we shall find Him forever! Are you struggling against sin? Don't struggle in your own strength—it is God who performs all things for you! Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of Divine Grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the gray hairs to appear here and there—but it is worse, still, for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we have really what we think we have—no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, worked in us from God—yes, every good spiritual thing from Him who performs all things for us and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunderclouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed! In spiritual things it is God who performs all things for you. Rest in Him, then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul—Christ is the Savior. If He cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself and never look in that direction again! But if the preservation is of God, where is the cause for anxiety with you? In Him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on Him who

performs all things for you! Lastly, this text in its moral, literal acceptance refers to—

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN.

It really means, “I will cry unto God Most High—unto God who perfects all things concerning me.” David’s career was charged with a great work. It was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, “I have provided Me a king among the sons of Jesse.” And Samuel had taken “the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers.” He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of bandits, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country’s enemies, the Philistines, being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the Son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel’s anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while He is making of him a houseless wanderer, He is perfecting that which concerns him and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that He who promises that I shall be with Him where He is, that I may behold His Glory—He who gives the certainty to every Believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness—can I believe tonight that He is perfecting that for me—that the way by which He is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to Heaven? That He is, tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O Faith! Here is something for you to do and if you can perform it, you shall bring glory to God! The pith of it is this—that if God has the keeping of us, He will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ! All His people are in the hands of Jesus, and in those hands they shall be forever and ever! “None shall pluck them out of My hands,” He says. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification. Every child of God is set apart by Christ and in Christ—and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin and abolish the very roots of corruption—and this work shall be perfected! No, is being perfected at this very moment! The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The Seed of the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent’s head and shall clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul.

He is perfecting us in all things for Himself! He has promised to bring us to Glory. We have the earnest of that great Glory in us now. The new life is there—all the elements of Heaven are within us. Now He will perfect all these. He will not allow one good thing that He has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the

saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking in us no one trait of loveliness that is necessary for the courtiers of the skies—no one virtue that is necessary to mark us as of the Divine Race, but shall be given, no, perfected in us! What a marvelous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to Hell; how close to Heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God—and He performs all things for us! God, give us Grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves and to depend entirely upon Him!

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try—the thing is simple—try. Look to Him. He performs all things for you! Everything that is needed to save your soul, your Heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Savior, has worked out all the sinner's needs. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," you say. You need not—there is One who performs all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the Fall," says one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought. There is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! It is not what *you* can do, but what God can do—what Christ *has* done—that must be the ground of your hope! Give yourself up unto God, Most High—unto God, who performs all things for you, and you shall be blessed, indeed! God send you away with His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34:1-20.**

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* "Others may do what they please, and murmur, and complain, and be filled with dread and apprehension of the future, but I will bless the Lord at all times. I can always see something for which I ought to bless Him. I can always see some good which will come out of blessing Him. Therefore will I bless Him at all times. And this." says the Psalmist, "I will not only do in my heart, but I will do with my tongue." His praise shall continually be in my mouth, that others may hear it, that others may begin to praise Him, too, for murmuring is contagious, and so, thank God, is praise! And one man may learn from another—take the catchword and the keyword out of another man's mouth—and then begin to praise God with him. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth." What a blessed mouthful! If some people had God's praises in their mouths, they would not so often find fault with their fellow men. "If half the breath thus vainly spent" in finding fault with our fellow Christians were spent in prayer and praise, how much happier, how much richer we would be spiritually! "His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear, thereof, and be glad.* Boasting is generally annoying. Even those who

boast cannot endure that other people should boast! But there is one kind of boasting that even the humble can bear to hear—no, they are glad to hear it! “The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” That must be boasting in God—a holy glorying and extolling the Most High with words sought out with care that might magnify His blessed name! You will never exaggerate when you speak good things of God. It is not possible to do so. Try, dear Brothers and Sisters, and even boast in the Lord. There are many poor, trembling, doubting, humble souls that can hardly tell whether they are the Lord’s people or not—and are half afraid whether they shall be delivered in the hour of trouble—who will become comforted when they hear you boasting. “The humble shall hear, thereof, and be glad.” “Why,” says the humble soul, “God that helped that man can help me! He that brought him up through the deep waters and landed him safely, can also take me through the river and through the sea, and give me final deliverance. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord!” “The humble shall hear, *thereof*, and be glad.”

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* He cannot do enough of it himself. He wants others to come in and help him! First, he charges his own heart with the weighty and blessed business of praising God, and then he invites all around to unite with him in the sacred effort. “Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together.”

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* That was David’s testimony. That is mine. Brother, that is yours, is it not? Sister, is not that yours, too? Well, if you have such a blessed testimony, be sure to proclaim it! Often do you whisper it in the mourner’s ear, “I sought the Lord and He heard me.” Tell it in the scoffer’s ear. When he says, “There is no God,” and that prayer is useless, say to him, “I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” It is a pity that such a sweet encouraging profitable testimony should be kept back. Be sure at all proper times to make it known! But it is not merely ourselves. There are others who can speak well of God.

5. *They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. And who were they?* Why, all the people of God—the whole company of the saints in Heaven and the saints on earth! It can be said of them all, “They looked to Him and were lightened.” As there is life in a look, so is there light in a look! Oh, you that looked to Christ and lived at first, look to Him again if it is dark with you tonight—and speedily it shall be light round about you! “They looked unto Him and were lightened.”

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* Who was he? He was a poor man—*any* poor man—nothing very particular about him, but he was poor—a poor man. What did he do? He cried. That was the style of praying he adopted—as a child cries—the natural expression of pain. Poor man, he did not know how to pray a fine prayer and he could not have preached you a sermon if you had given him a bishop’s salary for it! But he cried. He could do that. You do not need to go to the Board School to learn how to cry. Any living child can cry. This poor man cried. What came of it? “The Lord heard

him.” I do not suppose anybody else did, or if they did, they laughed at it. But it did not matter to him. The Lord heard him. And what came of that? He “saved him out of all his troubles.” Oh, is there a poor man here tonight in trouble? Had he not better copy the example of this other poor man? Let him cry to the Lord about it! Let him come and bring his burdens before the Great One who hears poor men’s prayers! And, no doubt, that poor man lived to tell the same tale as he who wrote this verse. “This poor man cried and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles.”

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them.* It is no wonder, then, that they are delivered, for the angels are always handy. They are waiting round about God’s people. Lo, they are not at a distance to fly swiftly and come for our rescue, but God has set a camp of angels round about all His people! Are we not royally attended? What a portion is ours! Many are they that are against us, but glorious are they that are for us, both in their number and their strength. But the text does not intend so much the angels, as one blessed, glorious, Covenant Angel—the Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of God. He it is that holds His camp hard by His people and sends His messengers for their rescue in all times of difficulty.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* That is the language of experience. Some of us have lived by trusting God for many years and, instead of growing weary of it, we would invite others to do the same! Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! You cannot know His goodness without tasting it. But there was never a soul yet that did taste of the goodness of the Lord but what could bear cheerful testimony that it was even so. “Oh, taste and see.” Partake of it! Become practically acquainted with it! Trust God, yourselves, and none of you shall ever have to complain of God. To your last hour you will have to find fault with yourselves, but never once will you have to accuse Him of changeableness, or of unfaithfulness, or even of forgetfulness! “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good, for blessed is the man that trusts in Him.”

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* They are very strong, those young lions. They are fierce. They are rapacious. They are cunning. And yet they lack and suffer hunger. And there are many men in this world who are very clever, strong in body and active in mind. They say that they can take care of themselves and, perhaps, they do appear to prosper, but we know that often you who are the most prosperous apparently are the most miserable of men! They are young lions, but they lack and suffer hunger. But when a man’s soul lives upon God, he may have very little of this world, but he will be perfectly content. He has learned the secret of true happiness. He does not need any good thing, for the things that he does not have, he does not wish to have. He brings his mind down to his estate, if he cannot bring his estate to his mind. He is thankful to have a little spending money on the road, for his treasure is above.

He likes to have his best things last, and so he is well content if he has food and raiment, to urge on his way to the rest which remains for the people of God! “The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

11. *Come, you children.* You that are beginning life—you that want to know where true happiness is found.

11. *Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* It is that which you need to know, beyond everything else!

12, 13. *What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* He that can rule his tongue can rule his whole body. Alas, that unruly member destroys peace and happiness in thousands of cases! The tongue can no man tame, but the Grace of God can tame it! And that man begins life with a prospect of happiness whose tongue has been tamed by Divine Grace.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* True happiness is found in true holiness. “Depart from evil.” That is, do not go after it. But it is much more than that. Get away from it. Give it a wide berth. “Depart from evil.” But be not satisfied with the negatives. It is not enough to say, “I do not do any evil,” but do good! The only way to keep out the evil is to fill the soul full of good. We must be active in the cause of God, or Satan will soon lead us into sin. “Depart from evil and do good.”

“Seek peace.” Be of a quiet turn of mind. Be always ready to forgive. “Seek peace and pursue it.” That is, when it runs away, run after it! Make up your mind that you will have it. There are some that seek quarrels. There are some that seek revenge. As for you, seek peace and pursue it.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.* God is all eyes and all ears, and all His eyes and all His ears are for His people. Are you distressed in heart? God sees your distress. Are you crying in secret in the bitterness of your soul? God hears your cry. You are not alone. O lonely spirit, broken spirit, be not dismayed—be not given to despair—God is with you! If He sees nothing else, He will see you. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.” And if He hears no one else in the world, He will hear you—“His ears are open to their cry.”

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* You know what we sometimes say—“I set my face against such a thing as that.” Now God sets His face against them that do evil. You will come to an end, my Friend. Your happiness, like a bubble painted with rainbow colors, may be the object of foolish desires, but in a little while it will burst and be gone, as the bubble is, and there will be nothing left of you! Even your remembrance will be wiped out from the face of the earth! What numbers of books have been written against God of which you could not get a copy, now, except you went to a museum? What numbers of men have lived that have been scoffers—and they who had great names among the circles of unbeliev-

ers? They are quite forgotten, now! But the Christian Church treasures up names of poor, simple-hearted Christian men and women—treasures them up like jewels, and their fame is fresh after hundreds of years!

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* That is how we live, if you want to know. God makes us righteous and then we cry. We often praise Him. We desire to have our mouth full of praise for Him. But we cry as well, and whenever we cry, God *hears*, and our troubles are removed.

18. *The LORD is near unto them who are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* Are you here, tonight, poor weeping Mary? Are you here, brokenhearted, troubled Sinner? Are you here? Are you seeking the Lord? Do not seek Him any longer! You have got Him! Read the text, “The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart.” He is with you now! Speak to Him! Cry to Him! Trust Him. You shall find deliverance this night!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* You should hear some of them talk, and you would soon know that, for I know some of the righteous that seldom talk of anything else! “Oh, the badness of trade!” They have been losing money—oh, ever since I knew them! They had not any when they started, but they have gone on losing money every year—and I believe they always will! And they always have pains of body. The weather is so bad. And they always have ungrateful friends. And the church they belong to is not up to the mark. Indeed, there is nothing around them that is right. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Well now, dear Brothers and Sisters, as that is recorded in God’s Word, and most of us have a pretty good acquaintance with that subject, I do not think that it is necessary for all of us to insist upon it every day! Should not we go on to the next part of the verse? “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” but—but—

19. *But the LORD delivers him out of them all.* Not out of some of them, but out of all of them, however numerous they may be!

20. *He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken.* He sustains no real injury. He gets flesh-wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.

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

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

AMONG LIONS

NO. 1496

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“My soul is among lions.”
Psalm 57:4.***

SOME of you cannot say this and you ought to be very thankful that you are not obliged to do so. Happy are you young people who have godly parents and who dwell in Christian families. You ought to grow like the flowers in a conservatory, where killing frosts and biting blasts are unknown. You live under very favorable circumstances. Your soul, I might almost say, is among *angels*, for you dwell where God is worshipped, where family prayer is not forgotten, where you can have a kindly guidance in the hour of difficulty and comfort in the time of trial. You dwell where angels come and go and God, Himself, deigns to dwell! Happy should young people be in such circumstances! How grateful and how holy you ought to be!

I want all who dwell where everything helps them, to remember the many gracious ones who dwell where everything *hinders* them. You who live near the Beautiful Gate of the temple must not forget the many who are sighing in the tents of Kedar. If your soul is not among lions, praise God for it—and then let your sympathies go out towards those who mournfully complain—

***“My soul with him that hates peace
Has long a dweller been.
I am for peace, but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.”***

It is a Christian duty to “remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.” And whenever our own favored circumstances lead us to forget those who are persecuted and tried, our very mercies are working mischief in us. “We are all members, one of another.” If one member suffers, all the rest should suffer with him and, therefore, we will turn our thoughts towards our persecuted Brothers and Sisters tonight, that our united supplications may sustain them under their difficulties and, if the Lord is so pleased, may even deliver them.

When may a Christian truly say, “My soul is among lions”? Such is the case when, either from our being members of ungodly families, or from having to gain our livelihood among unconverted and graceless people, we are subjected to reproach and rebuke and to jest and jeer for Jesus Christ’s sake. Then we can say, “My soul is among lions.” I know that many in this congregation are the only ones in their family whom God has called. I bless His name that He is often taking one of a household and a lone one of a family and bringing such to Jesus. Some quite un-Christian person who thinks not of God drops in here out of curiosity and God

meets with him and he becomes the first of his kith and kin to say “I am the Lord’s.”

Frequently when converts come to cast in their lot with us, they will say, “I do not know one in all my family who makes any profession of godliness. They are, all of them, opposed to me.” In such a case the soul is among lions and it is very hard and trying to be in such a position. Well may we pity a godly wife bound to an ungodly husband! Alas, full often a she is married to a drunk whose opposition amounts to brutality. A tender, loving spirit that ought to have been cherished like a tender flower is bruised and trod under foot—and made to suffer till her heart cries out in grief, “My soul is among lions!” We little know what life-long martyrdom’s many pious women endure.

Children also have to bear the same when they are singled out by Divine Grace from depraved and wicked families. Only the other day there came under my notice one who loves the Lord. I thought that if she had been a daughter of mine I should have rejoiced beyond all things in her sweet and gentle piety, but her parents said, “You must leave our house if you attend such-and-such a place of worship. We do not believe in these things and we cannot have you about us if you do.” I saw the grief which that state of things was causing and though I could not alter it, I mourned over it. Woe unto those who tyrannize over my Lord’s little ones!

Nobody knows what godly working men have to put up with from those among whom they labor. There are some shops where there is religious liberty, but frequently the working men of this city are great tyrants in matters of religion. I tell them that to their faces—if a man will drink with them and swear with them, they will make him their companion—but when a man comes out to fear God, they make it very hard for him. And pray, dear Sir, has not a man as much right to pray as you have to swear? And has he not as much right to believe in God as you have to disbelieve? It is a wonderfully free country, this wonderfully free country! Almost as free as America in the olden times when every man was free to beat his own slave, for now the working man claims freedom to laugh and swear at every other working man who chooses to be sober and religious!

There are large factories all over London where a Christian man has to run the gauntlet of sneers from morning to night which never ought to come upon the face of honest men and which never *would* come if Britons were as fond of freedom as they profess to be! They declare that they never will be slaves, but they *are* slaves—slaves to their own ungodliness and drunkenness—the great mass of them! And only where Divine Grace comes in and snaps the chain do men become free at all. If one serious man sets his face steadfastly to serve God, the baser sort seem as if they must get him under their feet and treat him with every indignity that malice can devise. It may be all in sport, but the victim does not think so.

Do not tell me that persecution ceased when the last martyr burned! There are martyrs who have to burn by the slow fire of cruel mockery day after day. But I bless God that the old grit is still among us and that the old spirit still survives, so that men defy sneers and slander and hold on their way! I could tell stories which would both shock you and delight you

of what is said and done by the common order of English working men against those who profess religion—and how courageously the righteous and the true bear it all and, in the long run, conquer, too—they oftentimes win their mates to confess the same faith!

They call us all cants and hypocrites and the like, but they know better! And if they had a grain of manliness, they would cease from such lying. A true Briton gives that liberty to others which he claims for himself and if he does not choose to be religious himself, he stands up like a man to defend the rights of others to be so if they choose! Now, then, you British workmen, when shall we see you doing this? The text speaks of a soul among lions. Why did the Psalmist call them lions? “Dogs” is about as good a name as they deserve! Why call them *lions*? Because at times the Christian man is exposed to enemies who are very strong—perhaps strong in the jaw—very strong in biting, tearing and rending.

Sometimes the Christian man is exposed to those who loudly roar out their infidelities and their blasphemies against Christ—and it is an awful thing to be among such lions as those. The lion is not only strong but also cruel. And it is real cruelty, which subjects well-meaning men to reproach and misrepresentation. The enemies of Christ and His people are often as cruel as lions and would *slay* us if the law permitted them to. The lion is a creature of great craftiness—creeping along stealthily and then making a sudden leap—and so will the ungodly creep up to the Christian and, if possible, spring upon him when they can catch him in an unguarded moment. If they think they spy a fault in him, they come down upon him with all their weight!

The ungodly watch the righteous and if they can catch them in their speech, or if they can make them angry and cause them to speak an unguarded word, how eagerly they pounce upon him! They magnify his fault, put it under a microscope of 10,000 power and make a great thing of it. “Report it! Report it!” they say. “So would we have it!” Anything against a true-born child of God is a sweet nut for them! Such as are daily watched, daily carped at, daily abused, daily hindered in everything that is good and gracious—go with your tears before the God you serve and cry to Him, “My soul is among lions.”

Now, it is to such that I am going to speak tonight. A little, at first, by *way of comfort*. And then a little *by way of advice*.

I. First, BY WAY OF COMFORT. You are among lions, my dear young Friend, then *you will have fellowship with your Lord and with His Church*. Every Lord’s Day and every time we meet, this benediction is pronounced upon you, that you may enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit brings you into fellowship with Jesus and this involves your being conformed to His sufferings. Now, your Lord was among lions. The men of His day had not a good word to say of Him. They called the Master of the house, Beelzebub—they will never call you a worse name than that. They said that He was a drunk and a winebibber—possibly they may say much the same as that of you and it will be equally false.

You need not be ashamed to be pelted with the same dirt that was thrown at your Master! And if it should ever come to this, that you should

be stripped of everything and false witnesses should rise up against you—and you should even be condemned as a felon and taken out to be executed—your lot will still not be worse than His. Remember that you are the followers of a *Crucified* Lord and cannot expect to be the world's darlings! If you are Christians, the Inspired description of the Christian life is the taking up of the cross! Do you expect to be dandled on the knees of that same ungodly world which hung your Master upon the Cross?

No. You know that he who is the friend of this world is the enemy of God. This Truth of God is unchangeable. It is just as certain, today, as it was in years gone by that, “the evil hates the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him.” You may pick up a fashionable religion and get through the world with it very comfortably, but if you have the *true* faith, you will have to fight for it. If you are of the world, the world will love its own. But if you are *not* of the world because the Lord has chosen you out of the world, the world will hate you! When a villager goes up the little street the dogs do not bark at him, for they know him well. But when a stranger rides along, they set up a howl. By this shall you know whether you are a citizen of the world or a pilgrim towards the better land.

Nor was your Master alone. Remember the long line of Prophets that went before Christ? Which of them was it that was received with honor? Did they not stone one and slay another with the sword? Did they not cut one in pieces with a saw and put others to death with stones? You know that the march of the faithful may be tracked by their blood. And after our Lord had gone to Heaven, how did the world treat the Church? In the streets of Rome and all large cities, the fierce cry was often heard, “Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions!”

At the dead of night men cry, “Fire!” when a house is blazing. A mob will cry, “Bread!” when they are starving. But the cry of old Rome that was dearest to the Roman heart and most expressive of their horrible enmity to goodness was, “Christians to the lions!” Of all the gallant shows the Roman Empire ever saw that excited the populace beyond all things else was to see a family—a man and his wife, perhaps, and a grown daughter and son and three or four children—all marched into the arena, the big door thrown open and lions rushing out to spring upon them and tear them to pieces!

What harm had the Christians done? They had forgiven their enemies! That was one of their great sins! They would not worship the gods of wood and stone. They would not blaspheme the name of Jesus whom they loved, for He had taught them to love one another and to love all mankind. For such things as this, men raised the cry, “Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions!” All along, this has been the cry of the world against all who have faithfully followed in the steps of Jesus Christ. Just now the merciful hand of Providence prevents open persecution, but only let that hand be taken away and the old spirit will rage again! The seed of the serpent still hates the Seed of the woman—and if the old dragon were not chained, he would devour the man-child as he has often tried to do. Do not deceive yourselves—in one form or other the old howl of, “Chris-

tians to the lions!” would soon be heard in London if almighty power did not sit upon the Throne and restrain the wrath of man.

You who have to suffer a measure of persecution for Christ’s sake ought to be very glad of it, for you are counted worthy not only to be Christians, but to suffer for Christ’s sake. Do not, I pray you, be unworthy of your high calling, but endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ should. In these afflictions you are having fellowship with your Head and with His mystical body, therefore be not ashamed. Here is another thought. If you are among lions *you should thereby be driven nearer to your God*. When you had a great many friends, you could rejoice in them. But now that these turn against you and the Truth of God has come home to you that, “A man’s foes shall be they of his own household,” what ought you to do? Why, get closer to God than you ever were before!

Jesus Christ so loved His Church that He said, as He looked at His poor disciples, “*These* are my mother, and sister, and brother.” You should do what your Master did—make His Church your father and mother and sister and brother! No, better still, make Christ all these to you and *more*! Take the Lord Jesus to be everything that all the dearest of mortals could be and far more. Sing that charming verse, which is a great favorite of mine, for it was very precious to me in days gone by—

**“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach should be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”**

Be sure that you live near to God. All Christians ought to do so, but you especially should be driven by every false accusation, by every caustic remark, by every cutting sentence nearer to your Father’s bosom. The more they rebuke you the more constantly should you abide under the cover of His sacred wings and find your joy in the Lord!

And, getting close to Christ, let me say to you, now, by way of advice and by way of comfort, too, *endeavor to be very calm and happy*. Do not mind it. Take as little notice of the scoffer as you can. It is a grand thing to have one deaf ear! Mind that you keep yourself very deaf to slander and reproach as the Psalmist did when he said, “I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.” One blind eye towards the folly of enemies is often of more use to a man than two that are always looking about with suspicion. Do not see everything; do not hear everything. When there is a hard word spoken, do not notice it, or, if you must hear it, forget it as quickly as you can.

Love others all the more, the less they love you—repay their enmity with love. Heap coals of fire upon them by making no return to a hard speech except by another deed of kindness. Very seldom defend yourself—it is a waste of breath and casting pearls before swine. Bear and bear again! Remember that our Lord has sent us forth as sheep among wolves and sheep cannot defend themselves. The wolf can eat all the sheep up if it likes, but, do you not see, there are more sheep in the world, now, than there are wolves, 10,000 to one? Though the wolves have had all the eating and though there never yet was a sheep that devoured a wolf, yet the

sheep are here and the wolves have gone! The sheep have won that victory and so will Christ's little flock.

The anvil is struck by the hammer and the anvil never strikes in return and yet the anvil wears the hammer out! Patience baffles fury and vanquishes malice. The non-resistance principle involves a resistance which is irresistible. The steady patience that cannot be provoked, but which, like Jesus, when reviled reviles not, is certain of conquest. This is what you persecuted ones need to learn, to get more near your God when you are among the lions in order to be the more calm and patient as men rage against you.

A third piece of comfort is this. Please remember that although your soul is among lions, *the lions are chained*. When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, the lions were hungry and would soon have devoured him, but you know why it was that they could not touch him. Ah, the angel came. Just as the fierce lions were about to seize Daniel, down he came swift from Heaven and stood in front of them. "Hush!" he said—and they lay as still as a stone. So says the text—"My God has sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths." They had fine teeth, but their mouths were shut! If the Lord can easily shut a lion's mouth, He can as easily quite the mouth of an ungodly man! He can take all trouble off of you, if He wills it, in an instant!

And He can give you a smooth path to Heaven when it pleases Him. Only remember that if everything on the road to Heaven were smooth, Heaven would not be so sweet at the end and we should not have an opportunity of displaying those Christian Graces which are brought out and educated by the opposition of the world. God will not quench the fire of persecution, for it consumes our dross—but He will moderate its power so that not a grain of pure metal shall be lost. The lions are chained, dear Friend! They can go no farther than God permits. In this country the most they can do, as a rule, is to howl—they cannot bite—and howling does not break bones, so why, then, be afraid?

The man who is afraid of being laughed at is not half a man, but almost deserves the scorn he receives. Never mind what is said. Talking will not hurt you. Harden your spirit against it and bear it gallantly. Go and tell your Lord of it if your heart fails you and then go forward, calm, as your Master did, fearing nothing, for God will bear you through. The lions can roar, but they cannot tear—fear them not.

Another fact for your comfort is this—*when your soul is among lions, there is another lion there* as well as the lions that you can see. Have you never heard of Him? He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah! How quietly He lies! How patiently He waits by the side of His servants! The jest, the jeer, the noise continues and He lies still. If He only would—if He thought it wise—if it were not for His superlative patience He has only to rouse Himself for one moment and all our enemies would be destroyed! Our great Lord and King could have had 20 legions of angels when He was in the garden for the lifting of His finger, but He continued alone, a suffering Man.

If He willed it at this day, He could sweep the ungodly away as chaff before the wind! His longsuffering is for their salvation, if haply they may turn and repent. If your faith is as it should be, it will be a great joy to you to know that He is always with you; that He is always near you. If He is ever absent from others of His servants, He is never away from His *persecuted* servants. Ask the Covenanters among the mosses and the hills and they will tell you that they never had such Sabbaths in Scotland as when they met among the crags and set their scouts to warn them against Claverhouse's dragoons. When Cargill or Cameron thundered out the Word of God, with what power was it attended! How sweetly was the blessed Bridegroom with His persecuted Church among the hills!

There is never such a time for seeing the Son of God as when the world heats the furnace seven times hotter. There is the flaming furnace—go and stand at the mouth of it and look in. They threw three bound men in their clothes and in their hats into it and the flame was so strong that it killed the soldiers who threw them in! But look! Can you see them? Nebuchadnezzar himself comes to look. See how greatly he is astonished! He calls to those around him and he demands, "Did not we cast *three* men bound into the furnace? Look! There are four! A strange, mysterious form is that fourth! They are walking the coals as if they walked in a garden of flowers. They seem full of delight! They are walking as calmly as men do when they converse in their gardens in the cool of the day! And that fourth, that mysterious fourth is like the Son of God!"

Ah, Nebuchadnezzar, you have seen a sight that has often been seen elsewhere. When God's people are in the furnace, God's Son is in the furnace, also! He will not leave those who will not leave Him. If we can cling to Him, rest assured that He will cling to us, even to the end! Fear not the lions, then. Our Samson would turn upon them and tear them in a moment if their hour were come—

**"Jesus' tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight!
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb,
A Lion is in fight.
By all Hell's host withstood,
We all Hell's host overthrow.
And conquering them, through
Jesus' blood
We still to conquer go."**

Again, I want to comfort you with this word—you whose souls are among lions should remember that *you will come out of the lions' den unharmed*. Daniel was cast into the den. Darius could not sleep that night and when he went in the morning he did not expect to find a bone of Daniel left and so he began crying out to him. How surprised he must have been when Daniel replied that his God had preserved him! How thankful he was to fetch him out of the den! You, too, dear child of God, will come out of the den all right. There will be a resurrection of God's people's bodies at last and there will be a resurrection for their reputations, too!

The slanderer may belie the character of a true man, but no true man's character will ever be buried long enough to rot. Your righteousness shall come forth as light and your judgment as the noonday. You need not be afraid but, as Daniel rose from the den to dignity, so will every man who suffers for Christ receive honor and glory and immortality "in that day." Remember that if you are now among the lions, the day is hurrying on with speed when you shall be among the angels! Our Lord and Master, after being in the wilderness with the wild beasts, found that "angels came and ministered to Him." Such a visitation awaits all the faithful.

What a change those martyrs enjoyed who took a fiery breakfast on earth, but supped with Christ that very day after riding to Glory in a chariot of fire! If you have to suffer now, even all that can possibly be wreaked of vengeance upon you for Christ's sake, you will think nothing of it when you have been five seconds in Heaven! Indeed, it will be a subject of congratulation that you were permitted, in your humble measure, to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake! Therefore be comforted, you young people, and march on with heroic step. I see a soldier or two here tonight and I am right glad that we have generally a block of red coats in the congregation. I know that often in the barracks it is hard for a Christian man to bear witness for Jesus Christ.

Many and many a soldier has found his path as a Christian to be extremely difficult. He has had to sail very carefully, like a ship among torpedoes, and only Divine Grace has kept him safe. Some of you who reside in large establishments, where you sleep in rooms with great many others, find it difficult, even, to kneel down to pray. Mind that you do it, though. Do it at first right bravely and keep it up! Never be ashamed of your colors. Begin as you mean to go on—and go on as you begin! If you begin parleying, you will soon lose all their respect and make it worse for yourself. In the name of Jesus Christ let me beseech you to be firm and steadfast even unto death!

Be comforted, for there has no new thing happened to you. It is no novelty for the followers of Jesus to be ridiculed and despised. He came to send fire on the earth and it has been kindled well near 2,000 years. The fiery path is the old road of the Church militant—therefore tread it and be glad that you are permitted to follow the heroes of Heaven in their sacred way!

II. Now, a few words BY WAY OF ADVICE. Of course this does not deal with all of you who are now present. I hope that many of you dwell among the godly. Still there are some whose soul is among lions and to them I give this counsel. First, if you dwell among lions, *do not irritate them*. If I happened to be among lions, I would not tease them. I would take good care that if they were cruel and fierce I did not make them so. I have known some who I hope were Christians, who have acted very unwisely and have made matters worse for themselves.

There is such a thing as ramming religion down people's throats, or trying to do so. You can put on a very long face and try to scold people into religion. This will not do. Never yet was anybody bullied to Christ and there never will be. Some are very stern and make no allowances for other

people—these may be good, but they are not wise. What is a rule to you and to me may not be a rule to everybody else. We said, the other Sunday, that we should not think of eating what we give to swine, but we do not, therefore, say, “These swine must not have their slop.” No, no! It is good enough for them. Let them have it.

And as to worldly people and their amusements, let them have them, poor things. They have nothing else, let them have their mirth. I would not touch their joys, nor would you, for they would be no pleasure to you. But do not, as a new-born man, go and set yourself up as the standard of what the ordinary sinner, dead in sin, is to be! He cannot come up to our standard. Do not be perpetually finding fault! That is pulling the lions’ whiskers and the creatures are very likely to growl at you. If your soul is among lions, be gentle, be kind, be prudent, be tender—sometimes be *silent*. A good word is on your tongue, but there are times when you must not say it—for the life of you, you must not say it—for it would rouse the lions and make more sin than needs be.

Sometimes a Truth of God needs defending, but, my inexperienced and untaught Brother, do not try to defend it, for you have not the strength. The champion of infidelity will challenge one who is weak and uninstructed and he overthrows him—and he who came forth valorously is beaten in argument. He was not up to the mark in knowledge and so he was vanquished! And then, what do the adversaries say? Why, they boast that the Truth is disproved and that Christ is beaten. Nothing of the kind! The British empire was not defeated when a regiment of our soldiers were slain at Isandula—and the Truth and cause of Christ is not defeated when some weak champion full of zeal rushes to the front when he ought to have kept in the rear.

I do not say much on this point because we have not much rash zeal, nowadays, and it would be a pity to check what honest zeal there is. But still, there is such a text as, “Be you wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Put your finger on your lips when you are irritated. You cannot speak to the purpose when you are perturbed and are likely to be angry. Be quiet and bide your time. Many a man would do more good for the cause of God if he would not irritate ungodly people. Leave them alone—seek their salvation lovingly and tenderly—but when your efforts to do them good only provoke them to sin, try another way. Do not go on with that which angers them—invent another method. I believe that some Christians make half the opposition which they get from the world by their own ill tempers and stupidity. They challenge conflict. Their actions seem to say, “Who will fight me?” and then, of course, somebody takes up the challenge. Do not act foolishly! If your soul is among lions and they are inclined to be quiet, do not needlessly excite them.

Secondly, if your soul is among lions, *do not roar, yourself*, for that is very easy to be done. We have known some who we hope were Christians who have met railing with railing, hard words with hard words, bitter speeches with bitter speeches. The ungodly are lions, but you are not—do not try to meet them in their own line. You will never roar as well as they do! If you are a Christian, you have not the knack of roaring. Leave *them*

do it. Your way of meeting them is not by losing your temper and abusing your antagonists and so becoming a lion, yourself—you must conquer them with gentleness, patience, kindness and love!

I pray you, dear Brothers and Sisters who have to bear a good deal for Christ's sake, do not get soured in spirit. There is a tendency in a martyr age to become obstinate and pugnacious. You must not be so. Love, love, love! And the more you are provoked, love the more! Overcome evil with good. I think it necessary to mention these cautions because I know many require them. Again, if your soul is among lions, *do not be cowardly*. Have you never heard that a lion is afraid of a man if he looks him steadily in the face? I am not sure about that piece of natural history, but I am quite certain that it is true with regard to the ungodly world.

If a man will bear himself calmly. If he will be unmoved, determined, resolute and steadfast, he will overcome the adversary. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." If you give way a little, you will have to give way a great deal. If you give the world an inch, you will have to give it a mile as sure as you are alive. If you will not yield an inch, no, nor yet a barleycorn, but stand steadfast, God will help you. Courage is what is needed. The world, after a while, says of any man, "It is of no use laughing at him—he does not mind it. It is of no use calling him hard names—he only smiles at you. It is useless to be his enemy, for he will not be yours. He will only be your friend."

Then the world whispers, "Well, after all, he is not so bad a fellow as we thought he was. We must let him have his own way." There is a big human heart somewhere down in men if you can but get at it and, after a while, when truth and righteousness have suffered and been denounced, men turn round and are almost ready to carry on their shoulders with hosannas the same person whom, a little while before, they longed to crucify. Do not be a coward! Do not be a coward!—

***"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The fight will not be long.
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song."***

Even if the fight were long, for such a Master as Jesus it were worth while to endure 10,000 years of scorn and, moreover, the reward at the end will repay us a thousand-fold!

If your soul is among lions, then do not go out among them alone. "Then whom shall I take with me?" asks one, "there is not a Christian in the shop." Take your Lord with you! Be absolutely sure that you do that. Now, my dear Friend, I know what they said yesterday and how they bantered you and you were tart and short with them because you were not in prayer in the morning as you ought to have been. If your mind had been more calm and gentle as the result of prayer, you would not have minded it one-half so much. Take your Master with you and whenever you have to speak, remember that He is standing at your side and try to say what you would like Him to hear. And then, when you have made your defense, you will be able to say, "Good Master, I think I have not dishonored You, for I have spoken Your words."

Oh, live near to Christ if you live among lions! Those of you who endure opposition make the best Christians. Many that have been distinguished for Christ in later life have had to rough it a little at first. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." If I could bring a garden-roller and roll the grass for you all the way from here to Heaven, do you think that I would do it? Certainly not! A rough place or two is *good* for you—it tries and strengthens pilgrim feet! A child will never become a man if he is carried about, all his life, like a baby. You must run alone. You must learn the arts of holy warfare or else you will not be fit to be a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb! May His good Spirit help you to keep in fellowship with Christ that He may guard and protect you from every temptation and persecution.

Further, let me say to you that if your soul is among lions and you feel very weak about it, you are permitted to *pray the Lord to move you in His Providence to quieter quarters*. A Christian man is not bound to endure persecution if he can help it—"When they persecute you in one city flee to another." You are quite warranted in seeking another situation. There may be reasons why you should remain under the trial and, if so, take care that you do not overlook them. Prudence may make you avoid persecution, but cowardice must not mingle with the prudence! That prayer which says, "Lead us not into temptation," gives us, as it were, a permit to move from places where we are much tempted and sometimes it is the duty of the Christian to seek some other sphere of labor, if he possibly can, where he will not be so much tried.

One thought more—*the braver thing is to ask for Grace to stay with the lions and tame them*. "My soul is among lions." Well, if the Lord makes you a lion tamer, that is the very place where you ought to be! In some of our districts in London as soon as ever a man is converted he feels that he cannot live there any longer and this makes the district hopeless. My dear Friend, Mr. Orsman, working in Golden Lane, as it used to be, told me that his was an endless task because as soon as ever the people were converted they would say, "Would you have me live here any longer, in such a horrible place as this?" They naturally felt that as they had grown sober, decent and respectable, they should move into a different locality and they did so—and the result is that the old spot does not improve.

Sometimes the Christian man should say, "No, God has made me strong in Grace and I will stop here and fight it out. These are lions, but I will tame them. I believe that God has put me here on purpose to bring my fellow workmen to the Savior and, by His Grace, I will do it." Now, if I were a lamp, I daresay that if I had my choice of where I should burn, I should choose to blaze away in a respectable street. I should like to scatter my light in front of the Tabernacle! But surely if I were a really sensible lamp I should say to myself—"If there are only a few lamps and all the streets have to be lit, there is more necessity to light up a back slum or a blind alley than to adorn a main street. Therefore let me shine in the dismal courts. In a lonely, dark place where murder may be done—there let me act as guardian of the night and detective of the villain."

A wise lamp would say, "I came into the world to give light and I should like to give light where light is most needed. Hang me up in Mint Street, or in St. Giles's, or away there by the back of Kent Street where I may be most useful." And now, Christian people, is there not sense about this advice? Is there not reason in it? Would not your Master have you go where you are most needed and should you not, therefore, if your soul is among lions, say, "Thank God it is so. These people are not going to conquer me, but I am going to conquer them"?

What a beautiful spectacle was that which was exhibited by the Moravian Brethren in their grand times! They could not land on one of the West Indies to preach the Gospel to the Negroes, for the planters would not have anybody there but slaves. So two Brothers sold themselves for slaves and lived and died in bondage that they might teach the poor Negroes of Christ! It is said that there was a place in Africa where persons were shut up whose limbs were rotting away through leprosy and other diseases. Two of these Brethren climbed up a wall and saw these poor creatures—some with no legs and others with no arms. They asked to be allowed to go in to win souls for Christ and the answer was, "If you enter you can never come out again because you would bring contagion. You go in there to die, to rot away as the lepers do."

These brave men went in and died that they might bring the lepers to Christ! I hope that we have some drops of that grand Christian blood still in our veins! And if we have, we shall feel that we could go to the gates of Hell to win a sinner! You are not like your Master unless you would die to save men from Hell. You will bear jests and jeers and count them nothing if you can but win souls. So stop where you are, my stronger Brothers and Sisters—if your souls are among lions, tarry and tame the lions!

It will be a grand thing for you to come, one day, to the Church meeting with two or three of your neighbors whom you have been the means of converting to Christ. I like to see a man march, if he can do it, with a tame lion on each side! When a man has, by God's Grace, brought some of those that were drunks and swearers to the feet of Jesus, oh, it is a grand triumph! It has been my business for many years to be a lion tamer and I delight in it! If there is any lion of the sort here, I wish the Master would tame him and make him lie down and crouch at His feet. There is the place for us poor sinners—at the feet of Christ.

But do not be afraid of sinners, dear Friends, for how can you tame them if you tremble at them? Go forth to win them in the strength of the living God and you shall yet see the lion lie down with the lamb—and a little child shall lead them. Amen and amen!

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THE ALARUM

NO. 996

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

“I myself will awake early.”
Psalm 57:8.

THE proper subject to treat upon with such a text as this would be the propriety and excellence of early rising, especially when we are desirous of praising or serving God. The dew of dawn should be consecrated to devotion. The text is a very remarkable expression, and might fitly be made the early-riser's motto. It is, in the original, a highly poetical phrase, and Milton and others have borrowed or imitated it. “I will awaken the morning.” So early would the Psalmist arise for the praise of God, that he would call up the day, bid the sun arise from the chambers of the east, and proceed upon his journey. “I will awaken the morning.”

Early rising has the example of Old Testament saints to recommend it, and many modern saints having conscientiously practiced it and have been loud in its praise. It is an economy of time, and an assistance to health. Thus it doubly lengthens life. Late rising is too often the token of indolence and the cause of disorder throughout the whole day. Be assured that the best hours are the first.

Our city habits are to be deplored, because by late hours of retirement at night we find early rising difficult if not impossible. If we are able to escape the shackles of custom and secure for devotion and contemplation the hour when the dew is on the grass, we may count ourselves thrice happy. If we cannot do all we would in this matter, at least let us do all we *can*. That is not, however, the topic upon which I now desire to speak to you. I come at this time not so much to plead for the *early* as for the *awakening*. The hour we may speak of at another time—the *fact* is our subject now.

It is bad to awake late, but what shall be said of those who never awake at all? Better late than never—but with many it is to be feared it will be never. I would take down the trumpet and give a blast, or ring the alarm bell till all the faculties of the sluggard's manhood are made to bestir themselves and he cries with new-born determination, “I myself will awake.” “*Will awake.*”

This is a world in which most men, nowadays, are alive to their temporal interests. If in these pushing times any man goes to his business in a sleepy, listless fashion, he very soon finds himself on an ebb-tide and all his affairs aground. The wide-awake man seizes opportunities or makes them—and thus those who are widest awake usually come to the front. Years ago affairs moved like the broad-wheel wagon, very sleepily, with sober pause and leisurely progression—and then the son of the snail had a chance. But now, when we almost fly, if a man would succeed in trade he must be all alive, and all awake.

If it is so in temporals, it is equally so in spirituals—for the world, the flesh, and the devil are all awake to compete with us. And there is no resolution that I would more earnestly commend to each one of the people of God than this one—"I will awake. I will awake at once. I will awake early. And I will pray to God that I may be kept awake—that my Christian existence may not be dreamy—that I may be to the fullest degree useful in my Master's service." If this were the resolve of each, what a change would come over the Christian Church!

I long to see the diligence of the shop exceeded by the closet, and the zeal of the market excelled by the Church. Each Christian is alive—but is he also awake? He has eyes, but are they open? He has lofty possibilities of blessing his fellow men, but does he exercise them? My heart's desire is that none of us may feel the dreamy influence of this age, which is comparable to the enchanted ground—but that each of us may be watchful, wakeful, vigorous, intense, fervent. Trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless our meditations to our spiritual quickening, we shall briefly turn our thoughts to the consideration of two or three things.

I. Our text is connected with the duty of praise, and therefore our first point shall be—IT IS MOST NECESSARY THAT OUR MINDS SHOULD BE IN A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS WHEN WE ARE PRAISING GOD. Therefore, as we ought to be always praising Him, our mind ought *always* to be wakeful. It is a shame to pray with the mind half asleep—it is an equal shame to attempt to praise God till all the powers of the mind are thoroughly aroused. David is herein a most fit example, for he sings, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early."

We should be fully awake when engaged in *private* thanksgiving. The song of our solitude should be full of living joy. I am afraid there is very little *private singing* nowadays. We often hear discourse concerning private prayer, but very seldom of private *praise*—and yet ought there not to be as much private praise as private prayer? I fear from the seldomness of its being mentioned that private thanksgiving has grown to be a sleepy affair. Then as to *public* worship, how earnest ought it to be! Yet how seldom is it hearty and real! How often do we hear half-awake singing! Sometimes a sort of musical-box, consisting of pipes, keys, and bellows is set to do all the adoration.

The heathens of Tibet turn the wind to account religiously, by making it turn their windmills and pray for them. And our Brethren in England, by an ingenious adjustment of pipes, make the same motive power perform their praise. Where this machinery is not adopted, still the Lord is robbed of His praise by other methods. Sometimes half a dozen skilled voices of persons who would be equally as much at home at the opera or the theater as in the House of God, are formed into a choir to perform the psalmody.

And it is supposed that God accepts their formal notes as the praise of the *entire* assembly! How far different is the *genuine* song of gracious men who lift up their voices to the Lord because their hearts adore Him! Oh, I love to hear every voice pouring out its note, especially if I can but hope that with every voice there is going forth a fervent *heart*. This warm-hearted, joyful singing—why, it makes the congregation on earth to be like

the assembly of the skies! It causes the meeting place of the saints to be a faint type of the gathering of the angels and glorified spirits before the Throne of God.

To drone or to whisper in such a delightful exercise is criminal. If ever we should exhibit the angels' wakefulness, it should be when we are emulating their employment. Our praise ought to be performed with a fully awakened mind—first, *that we may remember what we are praising God for*. We should have a vivid sense of the mercies we have received, or we cannot bless God aright for them. You who have not yet received spiritual blessings should not be forgetful of His temporal mercies! It is surely sufficient cause for lively thanksgiving that you are not upon a bed of sickness—that you are not in the lunatic asylum. That you are not in the workhouse. That you are not on the borders of the grave. That you are not in Hell. That you still have food and raiment, and that you are where the Gospel is graciously presented to you.

Should not all this be thought of? Should not this be fuel for the flame of gratitude? As for us who have tasted spiritual blessings, if our minds were awake, we should think of eternal love and its goings forth from eternity. Of redeeming love, and the streams that flow from the fountain of Calvary. Of God's immutable love, and His patience with our ill-manners in the wilderness. Of Covenant mercy, of mercies yet to come, of Heaven, and the bliss hereafter. Such recollections should call up our whole man to praise the Lord.

If the innumerable benefits which we receive were thought of and dwelt upon, the contemplation would put a force, a volume, a *body* into our song—and make it far more the flaming ethereal thing which it ought to be. We want our souls awakened, next, *so that we may remember to Whom our praise is offered*. Before no mean king do we bow the knee of homage. To praise God is to stand in the immediate Presence of the blessed and only Potentate. Do not even seraphs veil their faces in that august Presence?

With what lowliness ought we bow! With what earnestness of spirit should we praise! "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Courtiers are not expected to nod with drowsiness in the presence of their king. And as they came to present thanksgiving, it would seem strange if they were to yawn as men half asleep. Surely it would be hypocritical congratulation and insulting behavior if they should be detected in a sleepy condition! If we come together to praise God, let us really do it. If we cannot praise Him, let us know and mourn that we cannot do it, and let us be sure that the spirit is willing, even if the flesh is weak.

Let all sleepiness be put away in the Presence of the ever-wakeful Jehovah, before whose eyes all things are naked and open. He never slumbers nor sleeps so as to make a pause in His mercy to us—let not our slumbering spirits cause an omission of our grateful song. We need that we should be awake in praise, *that our whole hearts may be thoroughly warm in the exercise*.

Under Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the acceptableness of our praise depends very much upon the warmth of it. As cold prayers virtually ask God to deny them, so cold praises ask God to reject them. Cold

praises are a sort of semi-blasphemy—they say, as it were, “You are not worthy to be ardently praised. O God, we bring You these poor thanksgivings—they are good enough for You.” Surely if we treated our heavenly Father as we should, every sacred passion would glow in our hearts like a furnace—our whole heart would catch fire, and as Elijah went up to Heaven with horses of fire and chariots of fire, so, too, our soul, as we thought upon the goodness and the graciousness of God, would ascend to Heaven in vehement joy of adoration.

Our praises would not be like the incense in the censer—sweet but cold. But coals of fire would be put in with the incense, and then, like a holy cloud of smoke, our gratitude would ascend to Heaven! Mark with what exhilaration the Psalmist rendered praise unto God, and imitate him. See him dancing before the ark, and hear him cry aloud, “Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.” Brethren, we have need to wake up our souls in praise, *or else we shall at times fail altogether in the duty.*

Only the wakeful are praiseful. Sleeping birds sing not. The very best praises God receives from earth are from His troubled saints. But then they are awake. The strokes of the rod have aroused them. When the three holy children sang in the fire, their song was sweet, indeed. Yet had they not been thoroughly in earnest, they had poured forth no holy hymn. When martyrs have magnified God standing on the burning ingot, they have given God better praise than even the angels can.

It was the old fable that the nightingale was made to sing by the thorn that pricked her breast—and many a child of God has poured forth his sweetest music when the thorn of affliction has pierced his heart. Wake up your souls—you that are desponding, you that are depressed, you that have a dead child at home, you that are expecting soon to go to the grave with those you love, you that have been losing your property, you that are pinched with poverty—wake up your souls to praise God still, for unless well awake you will forget to extol Him!

Remember what Job did when he sat on the dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of broken pot, yet he praised God, and said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It was grand of you, O Patriarch of Uz, to be able thus to extol your Lord—then was your soul fully awake. Beloved Friends, may our inmost souls be so energetic with the power of Divine Grace that we may spontaneously and earnestly bless the Lord at all times and under all circumstances.

Do you believe, my Brethren, that among all the throng of those who see Jehovah face to face, there is one dull, cold, careless worshipper? Look through the seraphim and cherubim—they are all flaming ones—burning with intense desire and fervent adoration. Look through the hosts of angels—they are all His ministers that do His pleasure and bless Him while they do it. Search through all those sanctified and glorified bands of spirits and you shall not find one with half-closed eyes wearily praising his Maker. Heaven consists in *joyful* praise!

Look at the very birds on earth—how they shame us! Dear little creatures, if you watch them when they are singing you will sometimes wonder how so much sound can come out of such diminutive bodies. How they throw their whole selves into the music and seem to melt themselves

away in song! How the wing vibrates, the throat pulsates, and every part of their body rejoices to assist the strain! This is the way in which *we* ought to praise God. If birds that are sold at three for two farthings yet render God such praise, how much more heartily ought we to sing before Him?

Let it be a resolution with us at this hour that we will praise God more. That we will sing to Him more at home, about our business and in all proper places. And that whenever we do sing we will do it heartily, waking up our tongue and all the powers of our mind and body to bless and praise the name of God.

II. Now, secondly, we shall notice that WAKEFULNESS IS A GREAT NEED IN THE ENTIRE SPIRITUAL LIFE. I believe it to be one of the great wants of the Church. I question whether most of us are awake spiritually. I question whether I am. I wish to be awakened far more to a sensibility of the power of the world to come, and a tenderness in regard to spiritual Truth.

Slumber is so natural to us. "Well," says one, "but we talk about the things of God." Yes, but people talk when they are asleep, and a good deal of Christian conversation is very much like the talk of sleepers. There is not the *force* in it—the *life* in it that there would be in conversation if we were really awakened to feel the power of the Truths of God. "Yet," says one, "I hope we *act* consistently." I trust you do, but there are many people who walk in their sleep, and, alas, I know some Christian professors who appear to be trying very hazardous feats of sleep-walking just now.

Some sleepwalkers have been able to walk on places where, had they been awake, they never would have been able to endure the dizzy height. And I see some Christians, if indeed they are Christians, running awful risks which I think they would never venture upon unless they had fallen into the deep sleep of carnal security. Speak of a man slumbering at the masthead!—it is nothing to a professor of religion at ease while covetousness is his master—or worldly company his delight.

If professors were awake, they would see their danger and avoid sinful amusements and ungodly associations, as men fly from fierce tigers or deadly cobras. "Well, but we are doing much good and useful work," says one—"teaching in Sunday schools, distributing religious tracts, or laboring in some other form of service, we are spending our time in commendable engagements." I am glad to hear it—but people can do a great deal in their sleep. We have heard many strange instances of how habit, at last, has enabled persons to pursue their callings, to answer signals, and keep up all the appearance of industry—and yet they have been at the time asleep.

Oh, it is a very shocking thing that so many of our churches in England are in a deep sleep! Dissenting churches I know best about, and there are many where the minister preaches in his sleep, where the people sing in their sleep, where prayer is offered in sleep, and even the communion is celebrated amid a profound spiritual slumber. Have you ever been at a Prayer Meeting where half, if not all—both of those who prayed vocally and those who listened—were in a lethargy as rigid as death?

Talk of sleeping women who have been in a swoon by the month together! The wonder may be a lying one in the natural world, but in the

spiritual world it is as common as daisies in the meadows. Adam slept soundly when the taking away of his rib did not wake him, but what shall we say of those who startle not though they are losing all the strength and glory of their souls? Alas, for some congregations it is long since they had a revival—they have lost the very idea of vigorous piety and vital energy. All the week round they are all asleep, and if a real, earnest, living, stirring sermon were preached among them, it would be almost as if the King of Prussia's Krupp guns had dropped a live shell into their midst.

I wish a spiritual live shell could fall into some congregations and burst among them, killing their conventionality, and wounding their self-satisfaction with a deadly wound. Men may attend to outward worship with unimpeachable decorum and correctness—and yet there may be no wakefulness in it—and consequently no acceptableness with God Most High. Come, Brothers and Sisters, we must wake up! Even if we have been asleep, ourselves, we must do so because *we are in the enemy's country*. It will not do to sleep here! This side of Heaven we are in every place and at all hours surrounded by foes. What did the Master say? "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!"

Be like sentries at your post, for otherwise the enemy will soon betray you. Will you not grieve the Holy Spirit if you are lethargic? Will you not dishonor your Master if you fall asleep? Remember, also, that the devil seeks your destruction, and can never do you so much mischief as he can if he finds you sleeping. Let the growling of the old lion arouse you. If nothing else will bestir you, remember the fiery darts of the Wicked One. Saul would not have lain so quiet if he had known that Abishai was holding the spear over him, and longing to pin him to the earth—yet this is the condition of professors who are given to slumber.

Samson would have scarcely slept on Delilah's lap if he had foreseen that his hair would be cut, and his eyes put out by the Philistines. Up, then, you drowsy professors, for the Philistines are upon you! Moreover, Brethren, *slumber impoverishes us*. The sluggard, the thistle and the thorn always go together, and rags and poverty follow close behind. You may miss, by your sleep, great spiritual profit. You cannot expect sleepy Christians to grow in Grace. They will miss many instructive things in God's Word, many precious promises meant only for the wakeful.

They will lose high enjoyments and spiritual banqueting, for the king's entertainments are not for those who fold their arms and toss upon the bed of indolence. Wealth lies in the field of the wakeful, but the lover of ease shall have want come upon him as an armed man. I blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, for it is high time to awake out of sleep!

Awaken too, my Brother, for you are *losing opportunities for usefulness*. While you sleep men are dying. See how the cemeteries are becoming crowded, how the area of them has to be enlarged. Day by day you see, wending through the streets the funeral procession—men gone beyond the reach of your instructions and your warnings are carried to their long homes. Awake then, awake, for death is busy everywhere! Meanwhile, those who do not die before you may be removed beyond the sphere of your usefulness. They go where at least you cannot reach them, where

perhaps no one ever will, and their blood may lie upon your head, and that forever.

Awake, for perhaps while you are asleep another heart that is now accessible to the Gospel may become finally hardened. Conscience will soon become seared and then there is nothing for zeal and earnestness to work upon. It will be too late for you to put the seal upon the wax when once it is cool. Quick, Sir! While the wax is soft put the seal down! How many opportunities for good we all miss! But those who are asleep lose all their opportunities, and they will be surely required of them when the Master comes.

Awake, I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, because *you will insensibly lose the power, the joy of your spiritual life*. Communion with God will become more and more scarce with you as you become more sleepy. Awake, lest you backslide, lest you fail by little and little—lest after all you become apostate—and prove yourself not to be a child of God. Awake, for your power with others will certainly depart from you as your wakefulness departs.

A sleepy preacher never wins the souls of men. A dull, formal servant of God is of little or no use in the Church of God. I think I said years ago, "Give me half a dozen thorough red-hot Christians, and I will do more, by God's Grace, with them, than with half a dozen hundred of ordinary professors." I am sure it is so. Crowds of professors are past all cure. I would as soon hunt with dead dogs, as try to work with them. They cannot be trained into heroes—they are dolts both by nature and by practice—much slothfulness has drained out their soul's life. The most you can hope for them is that they will remain decently Christianized, so as not altogether to disgrace us.

But, O for thoroughly wide-awake men, men who feel the life of God in their souls, and are, therefore, more than ordinarily earnest. Band together half a dozen such, and the Holy Spirit being with them, they will make all London feel their presence before long. O may God awaken all of us, for our spiritual life absolutely requires it.

III. Thirdly, I am going to mention CERTAIN WAYS OF KEEPING YOURSELVES AWAKE. "How can I be kept awake?" asks one. Answer, first, *make it a matter of prayer* with the Lord to awaken you. No one can give you spiritual power and watchfulness but the Spirit of God. "All my fresh springs are in You." Where life first comes from, there more life must be obtained. Christ has come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. He who first called us from the dead must also arouse us from among the slumbering. He who brought us from the grave of our depravity must bring us from the couch of our indolence. Pray about the matter. Make it a point with God—ask Him to arouse you. On your knees is the posture in which to conquer sloth.

Next, *means are to be used*. We are not to leave the matter with God and think there is nothing to be done by ourselves. Act towards yourselves about your spiritual wakefulness as you would with natural wakefulness. Set your inventive faculties to work and devise means for chasing away the sleep dragon. What would you do if you required to be awakened early? Perhaps you would set an alarum—a good thing, no doubt. Take care you set a *spiritual* alarum. Every Christian ought to keep one, and it

should be so well set as to keep exact time, and so powerful as to arouse the most slumbering.

A tender conscience, quick as the apple of the eye, is a precious preservative against sinful sleep. But it must never be tampered with or its usefulness will soon end. When once the hour has come, off goes the alarum—the man starts up all at once, and says, “It is time to rise.” So should my conscience be so well regulated that when a temptation is near, or a sinner is near me whom I ought to warn, my soul should at once take the alarm, and say, “Here is work to do—a sin to be conquered, or a soul to be instructed—now, therefore, perform the doing of it with all your might! I hear the alarum, and I must bestir myself!”

May we always maintain and retain such a special wakefulness that we may be at our post of duty or in our place of conflict with a punctuality which none can question. O for the alarum of a tender conscience! Many of our friends who, have to be up early in the morning ask the policeman to call them at the appointed hour. I may not compare the Christian minister with a policeman in some respects. But yet he is one of God’s officers, and it is part of his business to stir up drowsy professors. It is well to attend an earnest Gospel ministry where the minister’s voice, under God’s blessing, will be likely to wake you up.

Faithful preachers are among God’s best gifts. Cherish them, and be obedient to their admonitions. I have known persons become offended when a minister is “too personal.” But wise men always prize a ministry in proportion as it is personal to themselves. He who never tells me of my faults, nor makes me feel uneasy is not likely to be the means of good to my soul. What is the use of a dog that never barks? Why have a doctor, and grow angry with him if he points out the source of your disease?

Did God send us, as His messengers, to pander to your tastes or flatter your vanity? We seek not your approval if it is not founded on right. I have often felt pleased when I have heard people confess, after their conversion, “I came to the Tabernacle and at the first I could not endure the preaching. I hated the preacher, and raged at his doctrine, but I could not help coming again.” Just so. Conscience makes men respect the Gospel, even when their depravity makes them loathe it. They are held fast by the cords which they gladly would cast from them.

May it often be so, O my unregenerate Believers, that while my plain dealing excites your anger, it may, nevertheless, have a power over you! And may every man and woman here, whether saved or unsaved, feel that the preaching is the Truth of God to his or her soul. And, whether liked or not liked, may it become the permanent means of arousing from sleep, and ultimately bringing to Christ every one of you to whom these words shall come. Be sure and attend an arousing ministry, and pray God to make the ministry which you now listen to more and more an arousing ministry to your own soul.

Pray for the preacher, for he is in the same danger as yourselves! He, too, is compassed with infirmity. The minister soon goes to sleep unless God wakens him. And what is more sad than to see the professed messenger of God become a traitor both to his Master and to men’s souls by a lack of zealous affection? It is ill for the sheep if the shepherd, himself, is asleep. Woe to the camp where the sentry is given to slumber! May God

deliver our country from being overrun with preachers whose souls are insensible concerning their grand work—and who love the bread of their office better than the glory of God or the good of their hearers!

I have known some persons adopt a plan for awaking in the morning which I can recommend spiritually, at any rate. They have drawn up the blinds in the direction of the morning sun, that the sun might shine on their face and wake them. I know of no better way of waking your soul than letting the Light, and the Life, and the Love of God shine full into your face. When the Sun of Righteousness arises He brings healing beneath His wings, and He brings awakening, too. A man cannot think much of Christ and love Christ much, and walk much in Christ's fellowship, and yet be asleep. The two who went to Emmaus in Immanuel's company, were their hearts cold?

No, do not think so. "Did not our heart burn within us?" Yes, and your hearts will burn, too, and your whole spiritual system will flame and glow if you walk in the company of Jesus. I can recommend constant fellowship with God as one of the best remedies for spiritual sloth, the surest provocative of holy zeal. Many times people are awakened in the morning by the noise of the street in which they live. "I cannot sleep after such an hour," says one, "for I hear the tramp of those who are going into the city and the grind of the street traffic."

At a certain time you hear the hammer of the blacksmith, the scream of an engine, or the heaving of machinery and after that sleep is gone. The activities of the world ought to awaken Christians. Are worldlings so active? How active ought we to be! Do they labor and spend their sweat for earthly wages? How much more ought I to put forth my entire strength to serve so good a Master, whose reward of Grace is everlasting bliss? The world is all astir today—let the Church be all awake, too.

We ought to be stimulated to supreme efforts by the activity of our fellow Christians. I find it does me much service to read the biographies of eminent servants of Christ, such as martyrs, missionaries, and reformers. I rise from reading their memorials feeling ashamed to be of so dwarfish a stature compared with these spiritual giants. What a humbling effect such a reflection ought to have on the do-nothings who swarm in the Churches! But alas, these are not soon moved to judge themselves. With this one word we leave them—think of what some are doing and be ashamed that you are doing so little in proportion to what they accomplish.

There are many ways of waking, but here is one with which I will close my observations on this point. Hear the trumpet of the second coming. "Behold, the Bridegroom comes. Go you out to meet Him," was the cry that awakened the virgins when they all slumbered and slept—may it have the like arousing power at this moment. We know not when Christ will come, nor is it for us to utter prophecies about it—the times and seasons are hidden from us. "Of that day and that hour knows no man." Whether it will be before the Millennium or after the Millennium, let those judge who can. I have no judgment upon it.

I think, as you carefully read the Scriptures, you will feel more and more convinced that only this is clearly and certainly revealed—that the Lord will personally come in such an hour as we look not for Him. Let that fact awaken us! Let it keep us always watchful, with loins girt and lamps

trimmed, proving our faithful love to our blessed Master! These are, it is clear, very many ways by which Christians may be awakened. God grant they may be effective to each and all.

I think it was Sydney Smith who was once preaching a sermon about sleeping in Church, and when he had done, he said, "Now, what good have I done? All those who sleep have been asleep through my sermon, and only those who are wakeful have heard me, and they did not need my rebukes and advice." I often feel that this is very much the preacher's case. Earnest people, when the congregation is exhorted to earnestness, take it home to themselves—but those persons who do nothing and are most indolent—are the very ones who say, "I do not see the need of it. I do not want to be disturbed."

Of course not! It is not only the mark of the sluggard to sleep, but it is another characteristic of him that he is angry with those who would compel him to rise. "A little more sleep," says he, "a little more slumber." He turns his heavy head upon the pillow once again and wishes no blessings upon those who knock at his door so heavily. You sleepy professors are likely to do the same, but I will not refrain from knocking till you refrain from dozing. I pray God that there may be very few in this Church of the incorrigible order, whose life is one long dream—a dream of self-aggrandizement, meanness, and littleness.

May you and I, and all of us, be thoroughly earnest in the service of our Master! And if we cannot arouse others by our precept, at least let us not fail to try the force of our example.

IV. I must close with a word upon the fourth point, which is this—THE GREAT AND URGENT NEED THAT THE UNCONVERTED SINNER SHOULD AWAKE. Up to now I have spoken to the converted man—now let me address myself to the ungodly—and may the voice which shall call the dead to judgment now awaken him. You, you unconverted Man, are asleep! A deep and horrible sleep holds you fast. If it were not so, you would perceive your danger, and you would be alarmed. You have broken God's Law. The fact is certain and solemn, though you treat it lightly.

Punishment must follow every breach of that Law, for God will not be mocked nor suffer His government to be treated with contempt. For every transgression there is an appointed recompense of reward. The retribution which is your lawful due will not long be withheld—it is on its road towards you. The feet of Justice are shod with wool—you do not hear its coming, but it is as sure as it is silent. Its steps are swift and its stroke overwhelming. Awaken, O Man, and listen to this text—"God is angry with the wicked every day. If He turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow, and made it ready."

No peril of plague, battle, shipwreck, or poison can equal the hazard of an unpardoned soul. Beware, you that forget God—for His terrors are past conception—and His wrath burns as an oven. If you were awakened, O sin-stricken Transgressor, you would also perceive that there is a remedy for your disease—a rescue from your present danger. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And, "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ has everlasting life." Forgiveness of sin is *guaranteed* to everyone that rests in the work of Jesus, and all other necessary blessings are secured to him.

If you were awake, you would not remain an unconverted sinner another hour, but you would turn unto God with full purpose of heart! If God would awaken you, you would tremble at the jaws of Hell which are open to receive you! You would turn to Christ, and say, "Jesus, save me! Save me now!" You are asleep, Sinner—you are asleep, or you would not take matters so coolly. I am afraid for you, and bowed down with amazement and dread. The mercy is that you may be awakened—you are not yet among the slain that go down into the pit. O that that almighty Grace would awaken you at this present moment, before your doom is sealed and your damnation executed!

I offer here my fervent prayers for you, believing that He, to whom I pray, is able to bring to holy sensibility the most stolid of mankind. Strange ways God has of awakening His elect ones from their deadly slumbers. Awake them He will, and He will shake Heaven and earth sooner than let any one of them perish in unfeeling security. He will strike them down as He did Paul, or send an earthquake to shake them as He did to the jailer at Philippi. In His own way and time He will make them come to themselves and then to Christ.

Remember the story of Augustine. To the grief of his dear mother, Monica, he had been leading a wicked life. But God's time had come, and as Augustine walked in the garden he heard a little child say, "Take! Read! Take! Read!" This induced him to take the Bible and read it. He no sooner read than a passage came before his eyes which awakened him, and he sought a Savior, and found Him. Perhaps it will be a death in your house that will wake you—sad means—but often most effectual.

A mother's deathbed has been a soul-saving sermon to many a family. Some sleepers need a thunderclap to arouse them. Pray, you dear people of God that are awake, that the sinner may be awakened, for there is this awful danger—that he may sleep himself into Hell! Spiritual sleep deepens—the slumberer becomes more heavy still—the stupor more dense till the conscience grows seared and the soul is unimpressible. The flesh is turned into stone, the heart is harder than steel. It may be that some of those who hear these words of warning may never wake to think about their souls till in Hell they life up their eyes. What an awful lifting up of the eyes will that be!

O you who are now peaceful and secure, what a change awaits you! Hurlled from vainglorious security to blank despair in a moment! You took it all so easily—you said, "Let me alone! Do not worry me! There's time enough. The preacher ought not to frighten us with these bugbears. We have a great deal else to do besides listening to horrible stories of Hell and damnation." And so you wrapped it up. And so you smoothed it over—but the end—who shall describe?

Have you ever heard of the Indian in his boat upon one of the great rivers of America? Somehow his moorings had broken, and his canoe was in the power of the current. He was asleep while his canoe was being borne rapidly along by the stream. He was sound asleep—and yet had good need to have been awake—for there was a tremendous waterfall not far ahead. Persons on shore saw the canoe—saw that there was a man in it asleep. But their vigilance was of no use to the sleeper—it needed that he himself should be aware of his peril.

The canoe quickened its pace, for the waters of the river grew more rapid as they approached the waterfall. Persons on shore began to cry out, and raise alarm on all sides! At last the Indian was aroused. He started up and began to use his paddle, but his strength was altogether insufficient for the struggle with the gigantic force of the waters around him. He was seen to spring upright in the boat and disappear—himself and the boat—in the fall. He had perished, for he woke too late!

Some persons on their dying beds just wake up in time to see their danger, but not to escape from it—they are carried right over the waterfall of judgment and wrath. They are gone, forever gone, where Mercy is succeeded by Justice, and Hope forbidden to enter. Let much prayer go up from believing hearts that God would awaken sinners now, and begin with those who come to the place of worship, and remain at ease in Zion. Ask for the arm of God to be revealed while the heavenly message is delivered. For this is our message—“Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

There is a man before me now asleep in his sins whom God means to make a minister of Christ—he knows not the Divine purpose—but there are lines of love in it for him. Arise, O Slumberer, for Jesus calls you! Awake, you Saul of Tarsus! You are a chosen vessel unto the Lord! Turn from your sins—seek your Savior! There is one here who has been a great sinner. But the Lord intends to wash him in the cleansing fountain, and clothe him in the righteousness of Christ. Come, you guilty One, awake! For mercy waits for you.

There is a poor weeping woman here who has gone far into sin. But Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.” Sister, awake! Come and receive the mercy which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you! God give you *waking* Grace, and *saving* Grace. May you and I, beloved Brethren in Christ, awake to the most earnest and intense form of life in Christ and life for Christ. At once let us bestir ourselves—we may think it early, but it will be none too early! May we awake now, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 108; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.**

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A SINGULAR TITLE AND A SPECIAL FAVOR NO. 1182

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 12, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The God of my mercy shall prevent me."
Psalm 59:10.*

A LIFE without trouble would be very uninteresting. Our opportunities for greatness would be narrowed down if trials were gone. I watched a glorious sunset, marveling at the beauty of the evening skies all ablaze and adoring Him who gave them their matchless coloring. On the next evening I resorted to the same spot, hoping to be, again, enraptured with the gorgeous pomp of the ending day, but there were no clouds and, therefore, no glories. True, the canopy of sapphire was there, but no magnificent array of clouds to form golden masses with edges of burning crimson, or islands of loveliest hue set in a sea of emerald. There were no great conflagrations of splendor or flaming peaks of mountains of fire. The sun was as bright as before, but for lack of dark clouds on which to pour out his luster, his magnificence was unrevealed.

A man who should live and die without trials would be like a setting sun without clouds—he would have scant opportunity for the display of those virtues with which the Divine Grace of God had endowed him. In the case of David we have much cause for thankfulness that he did not lead a life of unbroken tranquility. It is well for us that his was not a flowery path of continuous prosperity. Over him the waves and billows dashed full often—both within and without he was assailed daily, so that he became the epitome of all the temptations and the aspirations, the Graces and the weaknesses, the joys and the sorrows of our humanity—and therefore his life was so wondrously instructive. David owed much to the Philistines, to the tracks of the wild goats, to the cave of Dallah and to persecuting Saul!

His tried life and a thousand trying circumstances trained him for a grand life and made him, for us, a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected in all our varying moods and passions. None of us can know what we are till we are tried, nor will the good within us increase to any degree of bitterness unless it is exercised. The arm unused loses muscular force—put it to stern labor and it gathers strength. Soldiers are made by war and mariners by storms. The scholar may think it difficult to be severely examined, but he becomes the wiser by the searching test. Our trials and troubles, while they test and develop us, also, by Divine Grace, strengthen and improve us—and we always have great cause to bless God for them when Grace sanctifies them to our highest good.

Had not David been a man of many afflictions he would never have penned such a verse as our text, a confident utterance of unstaggering faith, full of meaning, rich with consolation—the very cream of assured hope in God. There are three things in the text—the first is David's *looking to his God*, for God is the theme of the verse. Secondly, David's *appropriat-*

ing Divine mercy—"the God of my mercy." And then, thirdly, David's *confidence in merciful help from God*—"The God of my mercy will prevent me."

I. First, then, let us think for awhile of David's LOOKING TO HIS GOD. "The God of my mercy," he says. Note that this Psalm was composed by him upon the occasion of his being shut up in the house of Michal, Saul's daughter, and surrounded by his adversaries. The messengers of the bloodthirsty king watched the house all night long, to kill him, and when they had not effected their purpose, Saul demanded that he should be brought, on his bed, into his presence, that he might slay him. It was not easy for a man, when his enemies were watching the house, to escape out of their hands. David, however, does not appear to have been at all disturbed, but with perfect confidence in God, he expected that a way of escape would be made for him.

He could not hope that Saul would relent, nor could he expect his friends to come to the rescue. Neither did he rely upon his own cunning for the means of escape, but calmly prayed, "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those that rise up against me." He rested quietly, feeling sure that God had his enemies in derision, and could as readily break the line of watchers as a man can drive off a pack of prowling dogs, to whom, indeed, he compares his foes. Now, Brothers and Sisters, this looking above, this having our eyes upon the Lord, is a practice which should be habitual with all Believers, and needs to be learned by us all. *David looked to God on this occasion because he had, before this, habitually waited upon Him.* His faith had realized the existence of God and his soul had felt the power of that realized truth.

This is a thing unknown to the unconverted—and unfelt to any high degree by large numbers of those who profess to know the Lord. That there is a God is a doctrine which we all receive, but that God *really* exists is not grasped by us as it should be. Other existences are more real to us, whereas God's being should be the most real of all. We look upon His existence as a mystery, a light and airy thing, proper to be believed, but not a matter of everyday fact which can influence our lives to any great extent. This unreal view of God arises from a secret deep-seated *unbelief*. We dare not say that God is a fiction, but we act as if He were. The faith which David had, and which I trust *we* have, in our measure, makes God a fact to the mind and heart—intensely and superlatively real! An eye anointed with faith looks upon men and women as if they were shadows, for they are soon to dissolve and cease to be. But it views the Lord as the only real substantial existence—and all that concerns Him as being alone, sure, and vitally important.

God is unseen, but none the less present and energetic in our lives. He is unheard by the ear but none the less perceived by the heart. He is certainly at work accomplishing His purposes, although our coarse and earth-bound senses cannot discover Him. Faith has a far greater perceptive power than the senses, it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While carnal men say, "seeing is believing," we assure them that to us, "believing is seeing." We turn their saying upside down—our faith is eye and ear—and taste and touch to us! It is so mighty in us that we do not only *know* that there is a God, but we regard

Him as the great motive force of the universe and daily calculate upon His mighty aid.

Therefore it is the Christian's habit to fall back upon God in all time of faintness, to cry to God in all time of danger—he does not pray because he thinks it a pious, though useless, exercise, but because he believes it to be an effectual transaction—the potent pleading of a child with its Parent, rewarded with loving grants of blessing. The Believer does not look up to Heaven because it is a natural instinct to hope for better days and to cheer one's self with a pious fiction about Providence! He looks up to Heaven because God is actually there, truly observant, tenderly sympathetic and ready with a mighty arm to come to the rescue of His people! So, then, because it is our desire to wait upon the Lord, we go to Him in troublous days as a matter of course.

We do not make him an *occasional* resort to be used only when we cannot help it, but we dwell *in* Him and, morning by morning pour out our hearts before Him. And so, when adversity comes, we fly to God as naturally as the dove to its dovecote, or the coney to the rock, or the weary child to its mother's bosom. The nautilus, when disturbed, folds up its sails and sinks into the depths. And even so, in every hour of storm we descend into the depths of Divine Love. Blessed is that man whose spirit looks to God, alone, at all times! Let us, each one, ask his own heart—is this my case? And if we can answer aright, let us sing with Madame Guyon—

***“Ah then! To His embrace repair,
My Soul, you are no stranger there!
There Love Divine shall be your guard,
And peace and safety your reward.”***

On this special occasion *David was driven more closely to his God by the peculiar trouble with which surrounded him.* To no other helper could he look, he was shut up to his God. Michel, Saul's daughter, proved faithful to him, but he could not have been sure that she would dare to incur her father's displeasure for his sake. Outside the house there might be friendly hearts, but they were far away—and the watchful followers of the tyrant shut up every avenue. But lo, there was a broad highway upwards to the Throne of the Most High! And the *believing* prayers of David traversed the shining road and brought him assurances of deliverance. To whom could he look but unto God? Every other door was closed, save that door which is opened in Heaven. See, then, how the bow of trouble shot him like an arrow towards God! It is a blessed thing when the waves of affliction wash us upon the rock of confidence in God, alone—when darkness below gives us an eye to the light above.

The Psalmist says in the verse preceding the text, “Because of his strength”—that is, the strength of the foe—“will I wait upon You, for God is my defense.” Because the enemy is too strong for me, therefore will I turn to my God and invoke His Omnipotence as my defense. Are any of you, this morning, in trouble so deep that you know you must sink in it, so far as material help is concerned? That is a glorious position to be in if your faith proves equal to the occasion and leads you to cast yourself upon God and swim to shore! It is nothing for a man to walk down here upon the ground, but to walk aloft upon yonder slender thread, which the

eye can scarcely see, is a feat of skill at which men gaze with admiration—and to walk on what the eye cannot see at all, or the foot feel, needs a yet higher art—such is the walk of faith!

To lean upon God's invisible arm, which the carnal mind knows not, and accounts as little worth, is grand work! If you can walk where there is no visible pathway, you belong to the race of the immortals, a God-given faith proves your lineage to be Divine! Perhaps you have a task set before you which is much too heavy for you. Well, Brother, Sister, you have the honor of being placed where you can, to the fullest, display your trust in God! What you can do you *must* do, but what you *cannot* do and yet *must* do, you may confidently expect the Lord to enable you to perform! He will elevate your weakness into a platform for His power. To come to the end of yourself is to get to the beginning of your God. Blessed is that extremity which is God's opportunity! Such was David's case.

As soon as David had looked, alone, to his God, his trials grew small. In his own esteem they grew to be nothing, for he says, "You, O Lord, shall laugh at them, You shall have all the heathen in derision." And I think something of the laughter of God penetrated David's spirit—and in that house where he was enclosed as a prisoner—he smiled, in his heart, at the disappointment which awaited his foes. You may look at your troubles till your spirits sink within you. You may watch the adversaries of God till your soul within you is heavy, even, to despair. But if you then lift up your eye to Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will—across whose brow no cloud can ever pass, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, who bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven and, unaided, wheels the ponderous orbs along their trackless courses—then difficulties vanish, impossibilities end and perils and dangers cease to be!

To get away from man and nestle beneath the wings of God is to exchange doubt for certainty, and fear for confidence. Faith laughs at that which fear weeps over! It leaps over mountains at whose feet mere mortal strength lies down to die. Reliance upon God, dear Friends, is a virtue to which I would urge every Believer—may the Holy Spirit work it in you. We have fallen upon evil times—this is the age of little men and cowards—but where does our littleness lie? From where comes our cowardice? I believe that both are caused by our faith. If the Son of Man should come at this hour, would He find faith on the earth? If anyone could find it, He could, for He is the Author of it, and wherever there is any faith His eyes quickly discern it. But yet, if He were to come, would He find it?

Alas, it is sadly rare! Yet, my Brethren, faith is the bread on which heroes feed—the air which gives breath to great souls. Believe in God and all things are possible for you. Whenever there has been a revival of faith in the saints of God, they have been potent against all adverse forces. Why, even a *wrong* faith is mighty when thoroughly received. Have you not been astonished to hear of late that Mohammedanism has made great headway in the world, that in India, especially, Muslim proselytes have been vastly more numerous than Christian converts? What has been the reason? Why, because you never saw or heard of a Muslim teacher who did not believe every word of the Koran! The teachers of the book believe in the book

and believe in their prophet, hence their success, false, though their faith is!

On the other hand, nowadays it is easy to find a Christian teacher who believes next to nothing of the very things that he is set to teach—and who, in his secret heart, does not reverence the doctrine which he officially declares! The worm of unbelief, the cursed dry rot of infidelity and skepticism among professional teachers is eating out the heart and force of Christianity! He can never be strong for God who does not believe, yes, and believe with all his heart, soul and strength—in the very marrow of his being. Christianity can never be strong till her disciples have strong convictions, till those who believe in the revealed Truth of God believe in it as assuredly as they believe in their own existence! As it is on the large scale, so it is with each one of us—we can bear any burden when we believe in God—but we are crushed like moths when unbelief betrays us.

We can attempt any labor and make any sacrifice when we have confidence in the Lord. But if we doubt whether we are His children and whether His Gospel is, indeed, the victorious Gospel of the olden times, our strength evaporates and we are like Samson when his hair was lost. We must possess strong faith in God, or we shall be unstable as water. O Brothers and Sisters, we need in this Church men and women who habitually live as seeing Him who is invisible. We need those who will never rely upon mere *opinion*—either their own or that of others! We need Brothers and Sisters who ascribe to the Word of God sovereign authority and accept it as infallibly true, knowing it to be Divine!

If we have among us men of principle because men of experience, men of forceful lives because those lives have struck their roots into eternal verities—if we have men and women who take trials, difficulties, *everything*, in fact, to the one only God and trust only upon Him—we shall have heroes among us again! They will be pillars in the Church which cannot be moved! They will be bulwarks for our Israel against which the assaults of the enemy shall never avail! God make each one of us such! I long, in my own soul, to get right away from everything but the Lord, and to do His will and preach His Truth as in His sight only. Policy? Let it be abhorred! The pleasing of men? Let it be scouted! The attempt to gratify the tendencies of the age? Let it be loathed! All aiming at our own personal interests, may God deliver us from it!

But for the Truth as it is in Jesus may we live, and if need be, die! For God's honor may we feel that we could sacrifice everything! And in His strength may we be sure that the battle is not doubtful, but the triumph must come to God and to the right. "My soul, wait you upon God." That is our first point—would God we had learned its lesson!

II. The second part of the text is to notice DAVID'S APPROPRIATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY. "The God of my mercy." This is quite a unique expression—it occurs only in this Psalm. God is the God of mercy and is frequently called so. He is also styled, "The God of all Grace," but you will find none but David calling Him, "The God of *my* mercy." Notice that the pith of the title lies in the appropriating word, "my." Luther used to say that the very soul of divinity lay in the possessive pronouns. Another Divine said that all the stir there ever has been in the world has been

caused by *meum* and *tuum*, mine and yours. "It is mine," says one man. "It is mine," cries another man, and then comes a conflict. "It is mine," says one king. "No," says another, "it is not yours," and then fierce war begins. Nothing influences a man so much as that which he calls his own. "The God of *my* mercy."

Now it is clear that *David appropriated to himself a portion of Divine mercy as being peculiarly his* and we shall never advance in the Divine life unless we do the same, for the mercy which is common to all men, of what use is it to any man? But the mercy which any one man by faith grasps for *himself*, this is the mercy which will bless him and which he will prize above all things. When Gideon's men went out to fight they had not a whole row of pitchers between them, but every man held a pitcher in his own hand, and a trumpet, too, and so the Midianites were routed. Solomon represents his armed men as having, each man, his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. A thousand swords hung up in the armory of David had been of little value—they only availed when each man had his *own* sword ready to his hand.

In heavenly things it is always so—we may *pray* in the plural—but we must *believe* in the singular. Notice how the Lord's prayer runs—"Our Father which are in Heaven," but if we would repeat the Apostles' Creed, we must not say "we believe in God the Father," but, "*I believe.*" *Believing* must be in the first person singular! Praying should have a width and compass about it to embrace all the saints, but *believing* must be by each one for himself—"The God of *my* mercy." What do you know about this, my dear Hearers? Is a portion of the Divine mercy really yours, so that another cannot seize it? Is there a lot in which you must stand in the end of the days, even as by faith you stand in it now, and call it all your own?

Happy David, to be able to make this appropriation! Happy Christian, if God's Grace has taught you to do the same! I think he meant, too, that *there was a portion of mercy which he had already received*, which was, therefore, altogether his own. The "God of *my* mercy"—he meant the God of the mercy he had already *experienced*. Look at this for a minute. Well may it bring the tears into your eyes to think of it. The mercy which nursed you in your infancy, when you were upon the knee of kindness. The mercy which watched over you in your youth and kept you when you were apt to stray. The mercy which restrained you from many a deadly sin. The mercy which guided you into that road where happy and holy teachings were waiting for you. The mercy which influenced you for the right. The mercy, above all, which decided you for Christ and cleansed you in His blood! The mercy which has followed you to this day and still follows you. Oh, bless the Lord that it has all come from Himself and think of Him as the God of *your* mercy!

Too little do we prize our mercies till they are removed from us. I have heard of a person who at 50 years of age was murmuring that he had suffered two long years of sickness. But someone reminded him that he had enjoyed 48 years of perfect health in which he had never spent a single hour in bed through illness. Then he said to himself, "I will bless God, who might have given me 48 years of sickness and only two of health—that He has been pleased to reverse that allotment. My mercies have been

very great—far larger is the number of His favors than the time of my sufferings.” Bless, then, the Lord this moment, Beloved, and take Him to yourselves under that sweet name, “The God of *my* mercy.” And, remember, that all the mercy you have had is little compared with *the mercy you have yet to receive*. There is a portion of mercy laid up and labeled for you.

As the rich father thinks, “This will I give to my eldest son, and that to the second, and that to the third,” and so he puts by a portion for each of his children, so has God mapped out and allotted for each one of us some choice and special mercy fitted for our peculiar case—which no one can receive but ourselves—but which we must and shall obtain. Is not our hymn delightfully suggestive where it sings—

**“And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set.
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see—
The hand that bled to make it mine,
Is keeping it for me.”**

Blessed be God for His reserves of mercy, for the blessing yet to be revealed—which is as sure as if we had it—is kept in a better hand than ours! It is preserved by Him who bought it, till the time appointed shall arrive. “The God of *my* mercy,” that is, of the mercy I have had, and also of that which is treasured up for me in the Covenant purpose and decree, among the sure mercies of David.

But I think David made a larger grasp than this, for when he said, “The God of my mercy,” he felt as if all the mercy in the heart of God belonged to him! Let me utter a great saying, worth your treasuring up—if any one saint should have all the needs of all the saints in the world put upon him. And if his necessities should be so great that nothing would supply them but the whole of the infinite mercy which fills the heart of God, that child of God should have all the mercy which the Lord Himself can dispense. Great as your necessities may be, my dear Brethren, all the mercy that is in God belongs to *you* and is engaged to meet your case! Let me put it in another light. If there were no other person in the world but you, and God loved you infinitely and alone, would He not be able to do as much for you as if all His Omnipotence was devoted to *your* good, and if all the thoughts of His Divine Grace centered upon *you* and you were the focus of all His wise and loving purposes?

“Oh, yes,” you say, “I should be favored, indeed.” You are just as favored as that! For the multiplicity of the objects of Divine Love necessitates no diminution to anyone. God can love a million and love each one as intensely as if there were but one to be favored! Our little minds are distracted with many objects. We cannot concentrate upon many—we are, therefore, straitened. But the full concentrated love of the eternal God is set upon each one of His dear children. God is entirely yours—not half of God! The Savior is yours—not a part of the Savior! God is All and that All belongs to you in Jesus Christ! Is there not comfort here? “The God of my mercy.”

One other word about it, and it is this—when God is called “the God of my mercy,” we may understand it as being the *Guarantor of mercy* to me.

If we say such a person is the guardian of a child, that child is then particularly under his care. If God is the God of my mercy, then He stands in a particular relationship to my mercy and binds Himself to secure it to me. The constable of the Tower of London stands in relationship to it and is concerned for its preservation. Now the Lord is not only the Keeper and Guarantor of my mercy, but the *God* of it, and therefore He is peculiarly interested in my mercy and will see that it comes to me—and is by no means allowed to fail. He is more than the Trustee of it, the Security *for* it, the Guarantee of it, the Giver of it, the Source of it, the Security *of* it—He is the God of my mercy!

What condescension is this! He is the God of Heaven! Is not that His grand title? Yes, but He is, “the God of my mercy,” as surely as He is the God of Heaven and earth. He is the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth, the God of angels and, “God over all, blessed forever.” He is all this, but He is also, with equal truth, “the God of my mercy.” There is a command which says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” and if He would not have us take it in vain, we may rest assured He will not *make* it vain, Himself! And if He calls Himself, as He does here, “the God of my mercy,” He cannot allow it to be an empty title—He will surely make it good. What is an offense in the creature will not be performed by the Creator. He will not make vain any one of those august titles which He has been pleased to take to Himself. Your mercy is sure, O Christian, for God is the God of your mercy.

Now I want you all to pause a moment and ask whether you really have appropriated, by faith, the mercy of God and the God of mercy. Why did not that unhappy *artiste* fly the other day? Why did he fall to the ground a mangled mass? Because his wings were not his own or a part of himself! The smallest bat which ventures out in the evening twilight can fly because it has its own wings. The tiniest hummingbird which dives into a flower bell can fly because its wings belong to it. But this man had only a borrowed contrivance, a mechanical invention which he could not appropriate to his own being! Another might use it as well as he, if, indeed, it could be used at all! If you wish to fly, you must have wings of your own.

Many religious professors have a mechanical religion. They have the baptism of babyhood and the priestly efficacy of sacraments—a mere flying machine! It will not serve their turn—they must have faith and Grace of their own. They must have a personal faith in a personal God. Those who have such appropriating faith shall mount up with wings as eagles, but no others can. Wings which are not your own wings will be of no use to you, but ensure your destruction. If you are the most humble, weak and obscure of all God’s children, if you have a real faith of your own, so that you can say, “My God, my Savior!” and can cry, “Abba, Father!” you shall mount aloft to His abode and make your nest forever by the Throne of Love! God grant us power to appropriate His precious things and call Him—“the God of my mercy.”

III. The last and practical point is, we see in the text, thirdly, David CONFIDING IN GOD. “The God of my mercy shall prevent me.” Prevent is an old English word and it has shifted from its original meaning, so that the uninstructed reader is apt to be misled by it. Its old meaning is “to go

before,” and that is, indeed, the root meaning of the word. Here it means to anticipate, to be before, to go before as a guide, to make an easy way, to be beforehand. “The God of my mercy will prevent me,” or anticipate me by His mercy. Now, it so happens that the Hebrew word may be read in all three tenses. And some have said it should be understood, “The God of my mercy *has* prevented me.” Others “*does* prevent me.” And a third party, like our translators, read it, “*shall* prevent me.” Whichever tense you choose is true, and the whole three put together may be viewed as the full meaning of the passage. “The Lord *has* prevented me.”

Brethren, this is one of the grand doctrines of the Gospel, the doctrine of eternal love, spontaneous, self-generated, having no cause but itself. God loved us before we loved Him—He went before us with love. Before His people were born, God had elected and redeemed them, and prepared the Gospel by which, in due time, they are called. He is before us in all good things. Loving before our first parent had broken the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace had been “ordered in all things and sure.” In the eternal purpose the Lamb was slain from before the foundations of the world—the provision for Atonement was made before sin actually existed! Before there was any defilement, there was an arrangement for cleansing us from all iniquity!

In the volume of the Book it had been written that Christ would come and do the Father’s will, by which will we are sanctified. Sin is a thing of time, but mercy is from everlasting! Transgression is but of yesterday, but mercy was ever of old. Before you and I sought the Lord, the Lord sought us. The first thought of reconciliation was not with *man*, but with his *God*. Some theologians dream that the sinner takes the first step, but I never met with a child of God who would say that he, himself, did so. They all, speaking from experience, declare, “we loved Him because He first loved us.” The Grace of God is preventing Grace—unsought, undesired, unmerited—preceding all good impressions and emotions, and coming to us when we are yet ungodly and dead in trespasses and in sins.

Before we thirsted the Living Water gushed from the smitten Rock! Before we were hungry, the oxen and the fatlings were killed. Before we were wounded, the oil and wine were ready to be poured into the gashes. Our Father knew that we should have need of these things and He prevented us with the blessings of goodness by laying them up in store for us from of old. O Lord, You have the first hand with Your people! They seek You early, but You are up before them! You have distanced them in the race of affection! You are Alpha, indeed! The Lord has prevented us, but the meaning of the passage is that *He does still prevent us*. Is He not daily doing so? You have many needs, but they are anticipated. Before you can feel the pinch of need, the mercy is given! God goes before you, day by day, and His paths drop fatness.

You have often been fretting about what is to happen in a month’s time when you expect to be in distress. When the month has come there has been no distress because the supply has been provided. You have gone to the sepulcher, saying, “Who will roll away the stone for us?” But when you have come to the spot, the stone has already been removed. Your troubles have been ended before they began! So, also, has the Lord prevented your

sins. How often, when you have sinned, has the pardon for the sin and the deliverance from its consequences come upon you then and there, and restored you at once? While even yet more frequently the blessed God of your mercy has forestalled the temptation and prevented the sin altogether!

Look at David with his angry heart and his naked sword in his hand, attended by his furious followers—"I will go," he says, "and slay this fellow, Nabal, and leave not a man of his house by the morning light. How dare he say there are many servants that run away from their masters nowadays? I will let him know that if a man cannot be generous to David he shall at least be civil, or his head shall answer for it!" David marches in hot passion, but at the moment when David puts his foot outside his tent God leads forth from Nabal's house a wise and gentle woman to be an angel of mercy to him. Abigail meets him half-way and turns him back from his design by telling him that if he would restrain his wrath, in later days it would be no grief to him that he had not avenged himself.

Truly, David might say, "The God of my mercy has prevented me. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent you this day to meet me." Even in the common acceptation of the word, "prevent," God has often so gone before us that He has prevented us from the commission of many sins into which, otherwise, we should have fallen to our sorrow and damage. Again, how often has He gone before our prayers? Before we have asked we have had! While we were yet calling, we have received! I have asked the Lord, sometimes, for blessings which have been on the road while I was asking—and I did not know it—but they have come almost before the words escaped my lips! Have you not known it so? "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The desire of the righteous is granted, oftentimes, as soon as it takes shape and before it is expressed. Brethren, it will always be so. *God will prevent us.*

A good captain, when he is marching an army through a country, takes care to make provision for every emergency. It is time for the soldiers to camp and they need tents. Bring up the baggage wagons! Here are the tents which you ask for! The men must have their rations. Here they are! Serve them! The meat needs cooking. See, there are the portable kitchens and the fuel! The army comes to a river, by-and-by, how will they pass it? Why, the engineers are ready and are very soon thrown across. It is wonderful how the well-skilled commander foresees every possible emergency and has everything ready just in the nick of time.

Much more is it so with our God. If any child of God is placed in a position where never a child of God was before, he shall get new light upon another part of God's Character and the world and the Church shall be the wiser because of the man's peculiar difficulties. "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." March on, child of God, for God goes before you. Be assured of this, His angels fly around you and you may hear the rustling of their wings if you have but faith enough! Since the eternal God, Himself, leads the van, march where He clears the course and your path shall be one of happiness and peace. The Lord will prevent us if we seek more Grace and higher attainments. Let us go from strength to strength, for at

each halting place our table shall be spread. Let us climb the hill, for Grace, sufficient for the day, awaits us at each stage of progress.

Let us rise into spiritual manhood, for the blessings peculiar to that state are waiting for us! Let us endeavor to do more for Jesus than we have ever done! Let us put forth greater effort, for God's Spirit will go before us to prepare the way! There is a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees at the very time when we begin to bestir ourselves. When we preach, Jesus is with us, according to His promise. If we lift our hands in holy service, a hand unseen but Omnipotent is lifted at the same instant! Strike, then, feeble ones, for God strikes, too! Advance, for God is with you, and will give you the victory! We shall arrive at old age before long and, perhaps, with old age will come decrepitude or sickness—but the God of mercy will go before us to prepare the land Beulah in which we shall rest till He shall call us across the stream.

As to death, when that shall come, I know, Beloved, that the Lord will prevent you, for Jesus has gone before for the very purpose of preparing a place for you. When we expect friends, we set open the gate, that when they come they may know that they are welcome. Christ has set Heaven's gate open for us and none can shut it. He awaits the coming of His people and when they enter Heaven they shall not be unexpected guests, but shall find, each one, his mansion furnished and ready for him. Our Fore-runner is where we soon shall be! We shall cause no bustle of preparation when we arrive, but we shall be welcomed home as our children are when, on a set day, they return to us. The God of my mercy will, through the trackless ether, precede me, and into the Glory He will beckon me! And up to His Throne He will conduct me.

So let us close with these three practical reflections. If He prevents us with mercy, let us not hesitate to come to Him. Loiter not, O Soul, if you would have the mercy of God! Is God so quick? Will you be slow? Does He go first and will you not follow? If any man or woman, or child in this place, this morning, desires salvation and eternal life, let him not hesitate to believe in Jesus, for the God of mercy has gone before him. Come, and welcome! All things are ready, come to the Gospel supper! The next reflection is, is God so quick in mercy? Let us, who are His people, be very quick in service. Do not let us wait to have suggested to us by others what we should do. That is true love to Christ which does not need reminding, forcing, or editing.

When a man says to himself, "God has given me these unasked mercies, what shall I render to Him? I will not turn to the Law and say, 'This is what I ought to do,' neither will I require some good and earnest Brother to stir me up to an unwilling duty, but I am eager to serve God—what can I do? What will He permit me to bring?" Some saints have thought of one offering, and some of another—and the Lord has been pleased with each one. Imitate the readiness of love which shone in the woman who had but one costly possession in the world, an alabaster box of very precious ointment. Nobody expected or advised her to take it and pour its contents upon the head of Jesus. Indeed, there were those who reckoned such a gift an idle waste!

But her own love bade her do it and so she consulted not with flesh and blood—she brought it out and broke it—and filled the house with perfume, while she poured the sacred nard upon the head of Him she loved so well. Does no special act of consecration occur to you? Have you not some sacrifice to present? Can you not think of some design which shall be a memorial of your gratitude? Say in your heart, “My God, since You do prevent me, I cannot hope to keep pace with Your mercy, but at any rate I will not lag further behind You than I must. When I have done all I can for You, how little it is, but that little shall be done.”

George Herbert once described a good man as resolved, “to build a hospital, or mend common ways,” and in his day these were acts of charity which piety delighted in. Other good deeds are more fitting for these days. Houses for worship are needed in many a populous district. Orphan children need to be fed. He who can buy no sweet cane with money, can bring time and zeal and effort—and these are precious. What then, my Brothers and Sisters, will you do?

And now finally, Believer, cast yourself into your Lord’s arms! Have done with fretting! Have done with anxiety and doubt! If you came in here this morning burdened, go out happy as the birds of the air! Mount like the lark to your God and sing as you mount! Shower down your song among the groveling sons of men while your eyes are upon your Father’s home and your wings of faith bear you heavenward! God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 62.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—63, 690, 46.

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GOD'S MERCY GOING BEFORE

NO. 3413

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1914.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10, 1870.**

***“The God of my mercy shall prevent [go before] me.”
Psalm 59:10.***

IF you read this Psalm, you will find that David was in a very grievous plight. He was surrounded by the most cruel and the most false of men. They were ravening like wolves over carrion and endeavoring to destroy his character—and even to take his life. David knew where his resort was. As the conies make their dwellings in the rocks, and as the swallows have built a nest for themselves at God's altar, so David resorted to his God, and to his God alone.

All the skin bottles may be dry, but there is water in the well. And all creature comforts may fail but there is an all-sufficiency in an unfailing God. If all is false to you, God will be true! And if all hate you, God is Love—and if you are in Him, He cannot be angry with you, nor rebuke you—love towards you, and love only, shall rule the day!

Let me persuade every child of God here in the hour of his trouble to resort to the comfort which David found so availing. Away, as a bird to the mountain—away, away to your God! If you have Rabshekeh's letter about you, go and spread it before the Lord. If you have, today, an inward sorrow that you cannot tell into any other ear, go, like Hannah, and stand before God, and there let your soul pour out its bitterness. You shall find that in consulting human sympathy, there is some gain—often very little—but in seeking the sympathy of your great High Priest above, there is much gain and there never can be failure. When David returned to Ziklag, he found it burned and his wives carried away captive. He and his men had lost all their property and all their families. His men spoke of stoning him, but it is written, “David encouraged himself in his God.”

Now, if you have come to something like the same plight. If your affairs are at the lowest ebb and there is the sharpest winter passing over all your prospects, now turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope! Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Be of good courage, for He shall strengthen your heart. If we learn only that lesson—and do but put it into practice throughout our life—we shall have a good reward for coming up to the assembly of God's people tonight.

But now, a few words upon this text of David's. He declares that the God of his mercy would go before him, or forestall him. The word “pre-

vent,” when it was used by our translators, did not mean at all what it does now. It means here that God would provide, would forestall, would be beforehand in loving kindness with him—and the two points we will speak of tonight are these—*it has been so. It shall be so.* First—

I. IT HAS BEEN SO.

The God of our mercy has gone before us and outrun us. It has been so *in the salvation of all His people*. Long before time had begun, God had foreknown His chosen, and foreordained them unto eternal life. They had not chosen Him, for they were not in existence! He chose them as He saw them in the glass of His decrees. It must always be that God goes before or outruns His people, since from before the foundation of the world He had loved them—loved them with an everlasting love. There can be nothing before this. We know of nothing that can stand side by side with it, so far as we are concerned, for we had no being, except in the purpose of God. But even then He loved us. He loved us when we were dead in sins, when we had not a heart with which to love Him, when we were rejecting Him altogether and did evil even as we could—yet He loved us notwithstanding all. It must always be true if we think of the Doctrine of Election that He went before us with His mercy!

It was so also, *with redemption*. Where were we when Christ redeemed us? My Brothers and Sisters, our sins were laid on Christ, but they were not then committed. Our transgressions were then taken by Him, but we had not even perpetrated them then! We were not yet living and yet a Savior was provided for us before we were, by any actual sin, personally lost. A fountain filled with blood was provided for us before we had, by any actual guilt, become defiled. Oh, here was Divine forethought—here was a precious going before, of God's goodness! How He must have loved us, that knowing what our needs would be, foreseeing the abundance of our sins, He laid by in store the Divine Atonement, the sacred Propitiation by which all our sins should be put away. This was another going before of His mercy!

Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, if you think of it, the *whole Gospel* is a going before of us. There was that Book written exactly to meet your case and mine, when as yet our case was not in existence. Here was a Covenant “ordered in all things and sure” and made for us in the Person of Christ. We were not parties to it, for as yet had not any being. Here was mercy laid by in the Covenant, everything that our necessities could require! Grace for Grace supplies for all the needs of our nature, treasured up for the poor mendicants before we ever became beggars, or knew that we were in need!

Think of the fullness that there is in Jesus Christ, and all these 1,800 years ago in matter of fact, and there from the foundation of the world in the Divine Purpose for every elect soul, though many of them would not come into being until remote centuries had flown by! All this forestalled, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, too, by which the saints are now called unto repentance, and unto a new life and all the operations and influ-

ences of the Holy Spirit which are all provided for in the Covenant of Grace—all bestowed upon the saints as one by one, they come into life, but all provided for long before they were born! My God, your goings forth were of old, from everlasting, and all your goings forth were full of love to me, and to all them that love You! How marvelous are You in Your condescending Grace! Where shall I find words with which to adore You? How shall I sufficiently give you the gratitude of my heart in outward expression for this, Your ancient, Your everlasting love towards those whom you have chosen? Bless His name, oh, you His people! Live to His praise and love Him all day long!

But this Truth of God met with a further illustration in our experience *at the time of our conversion and before it*. Observe the preventing goodness or God with many of us before conversion. We might have committed the unpardonable sin, but we were always kept from that—how, we may not know, and probably never shall until we are in Heaven. We might have put ourselves into positions where instrumentalities which were blessed to us might never have reached us. We have sometimes been on the verge of committing sins which might have led us in a downward career of vice, farther and farther, and might even have led us to destroy ourselves! Speaking after the manner of men, our soul has run innumerable risks, each one of which could have led to eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord, had it not been that going before mercy was beforehand with us and would not let us commit the fatal act which would have consigned us to everlasting perdition! Many and many a time has He held back His servants when they were just on the edge of the fatal precipice, when they were about to take the deadly poison which would have eternally destroyed their souls! His mercy, in some Providence which they did not understand, has interposed. And you who are here tonight, you have been sick lately. Well, that sickness has kept you out of a sin into which you were beginning to slide. You have lately been overtaken with a very terrible loss. Yes, but your soul was getting eaten up with covetousness, and if it had not been for that loss, you had not been here tonight—you would have been still seeking after the world with both your hands—and you would not have had an ear for anything like a message from the Throne of God! It may be a part of the joy of Heaven to be permitted to see the manifold wisdom of God in His dealing with us even before we were quickened by His Spirit. There are marvelous preparations, I do not doubt, which are going on in human hearts for the more effectual work of Grace, for there are many who are not converted, but whose case is very hopeful. They are like what our Lord called “honest and good ground,” ready for the living Seed. Holy teachings at home, Godly examples, works within the mind that have tended to elevate the taste and purify the morals—and a thousand other things may come in as a sort of preparation for the true work of Divine Grace—and in looking back, while we must, first of all, see the preventing Grace of God in keep-

ing us back from sin, we can next see it in gently leading us, though we knew Him not, as He did Israel of old, taking us by the arms and teaching us to go, sweetly inclining us, gently drawing us until the time should come when He should pass by us and say unto us, "Live." All the history of an elect child of God, even before conversion, will be found to be full of traces of the going before goodness of the Lord.

But probably we noticed this most *at the time of our conversion*. Some of us recollect when we first began to sigh and cry after a Savior, but oh, how He then went before us with His mercy! The sermon that we heard seemed exactly to suit our case, though the minister knew nothing of us. And when we turned to the Word of God, there were texts there, some of them very terrible ones, and they did for us just exactly what ought to have been done—they helped in the cutting and tearing process that was necessary before the pierced hands should come and bind up our wounds! God's mercy in going before us helped us to the tenderness of heart that we were seeking after, helped us to the repentance that we longed to feel, helped us to the contrition which we desired to experience. It helped us, in fact, to have done with self, and to begin with Him! It helped us to see the depravity of our hearts as soon as ever we began to desire to see it and to be humbled on account of it.

But do you not remember *when those desires began to assume the form of prayer*—when you got some light as to the way of salvation and desired how to close in with Christ and to trust Him? How swiftly did the Divine Father then run to meet His prodigal child! Oh, happy day when He fell upon our neck and kissed us, when He took off our rags and put on the raiment of joy, and bade the music and dancing go on in the house because the lost one was found! Oh, at that time, in gracious answer to prayer almost as soon as we began to pray, perhaps, we had an instance of how He goes before us with the blessings of His goodness! We were not fit to receive His mercy—so we thought—but His mercy came. We were not ready for Christ, but Christ came to us. We felt ourselves so hardened, but He came and softened us. We could not squeeze out a tear, but He accepted the dry bottles that would have had tears in them if they could. We felt as if we were just nothing—but Christ knew that our nothingness made room for Him to be everything—so He came and took us at our worst and gave Himself to be ours forever and ever! Oh, if He had waited until we had washed that foul face, and taken away every stain with floods of tears—oh, if He had waited until we had cleansed those filthy hands and washed them snowy white, until we had found a wedding dress in which we should have been fit to come—ah, Savior, You would have waited even till now and even forever, for we never could have been fit for You! But no sooner did we long to come, no sooner did we feel that we would gladly come if we dared, but felt that we were all unfit to come, than Your swift feet of mercy brought You to Your children, and the Grace was given for which we scarcely dared to hope! That

is my experience, Brothers and Sisters, and I know that it is yours—God in the matter of conversion going before us with His mercy!

And how has it been since then? Take another illustration *from your life*. Have you not oftentimes been prevented by the God of your mercy—by directions given when you were just about to take a wrong step? I remember well, and never can forget, how the whole turn of my life was made by the Providence of God in what we would call an accident.

I certainly, in all probability, had not been here tonight if it had not been that an engagement made to meet a certain gentleman at a certain time was punctually kept by us both, but a servant showed him into one room on one side of the passage, and showed me into another on the other side—and we sat there two hours waiting for one another, but missed each other—and so the whole current of my life flowed in another direction! I recollect a course of action which I would have adopted, but from which I was altogether turned by hearing, as I thought, as I walked alone and sought direction, such a voice as this, “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” That text guided me in what I believe was a right, prudent and certainly has been a happy way! Had it not been for that, I might have gone astray, unwittingly, but still unwisely, into all sorts of paths! Have you not found it so? Just when you did not know which way to go you had the direction when you sought it. If you applied to God, He gave you guidance by some means, just as surely as the Jew had it when he resorted to the priest who wore the Urim and the Thummim. Take care that you always recollect this in the future, if it has been so in the past. God has gone before you, and marked out your path for you—and given you a plain map of the way. Has it not been so?

Moreover, He not only tells us the way, and so prevents us, but *He clears the way for us*. Great difficulties have frequently run in our way in Providence and in Grace, and we have been like the women who went to the sepulcher. We have said, one to another, “Who shall roll away the stone for us?” But when we have come there, behold, “the stone was rolled away for it was very great.” God had made a road where we could not see any and could not make any. What? Have you never gone through the Red Sea? Have the waters never stood upright as a heap on either side while you, as God's chosen, went through? I know you have had an experience analogous to that! Then treasure up the memory of it. Do not be ashamed now, in your talks with your fellow Christians, to tell that the Lord has gone before you with His goodness, in clearing the way for you!

How frequently, too, has He gone before us with His goodness, *by supplying our needs*! Like the Israelites, who, however early they rose in the morning, found the manna from Heaven awaiting them, so has it been with you, with all who trust God! Your needs have not come as quickly as the supplies. In fact, some of us have only known our needs by finding the supplies sent! And we have said, “Then I must have needed this, or it

would not have come.” And we have blessed the Lord as we have seen our soul’s necessities in the light of the Grace that has come to supply them! Oh, it has been so with you—you know it has! You have had to move, perhaps, from place to place, and God has prepared the place for you. It may be that your life has consisted much of wandering to and fro, and tossing about, yet, though you seemed like a football, you have never been tossed anywhere but what you have fallen on your feet, and fallen into the place, too, that God had provided and prepared for you! So it has been up to the present, has it not? Has He not thus gone before you with His goodness?

And once again, how often, dear Friends, *when we have begun to pray for a mercy, we have had the mercy while we have yet been calling*—while we have been speaking He has heard us! How frequently have we desired to return from our backslidings, and while we have been desiring to return, He has appeared and melted us down in penitence and gratitude. We have desired sanctification, and we have had the rod sent to our house directly, which was probably the very speediest way to ensure our growth in that respect. Whatever we have actually needed of the Lord, our God, He has not withheld it from us in its season, so that we will join in saying that until now it has been so, it has been so. The God of our mercy has gone before us. Now, in the second place—

II. IT SHALL BE SO.

It shall be so with you *who are seeking Christ tonight*. God’s rule for the future is His action and conduct in the past. He never changes. You must not imagine that Jesus Christ will be sterner with you than He has been with others like you. If it has been His custom to reject those who have come, He will reject you. But if it has never been so, it never shall be so, for, “Him that comes to Me, I will in nowise cast out.” Harken, then, to Jesus now! God will go before you with the blessings of His goodness. Now, you have been thinking lately—

***“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives.”***

And you have thought to yourself, “Before I can come, I must feel my need aright.” Now, you think you do not feel your need and you have been troubled a great deal lately because you have not that tenderness of heart that you ought to have. Now, if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come to Christ *for* a broken heart! He is ready to give it to you. The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord in this respect. Come and tell Him that you need a broken heart. One of the best prayers you can pray is, “Lord, create a right spirit within me.” You say, perhaps, “Sir, I need more than a broken heart—I need even to learn to pray.” Well, I remember what Mr. Fuller once said to a young man who was trying to pray and could not. He whispered to Mr. Fuller, who was kneeling by his side, “I cannot pray.” “Tell the Lord so,” said Mr. Fuller. So, Brothers and Sisters, when you say, “I cannot pray as I would. I cannot express myself as I desire,” go and tell the Lord that you are a poor, igno-

rant soul, and that you do not know how to pray, and say, "Lord, teach me." "Oh, but I do not feel the desire I need to feel." I have often found that those who have most of desire think they have not any. Well, go and tell the Lord about that, and ask Him to give you the desire which shall be necessary to make earnest prayer, that you may begin to pray, that you may have a broken heart. Wherever you like to go back to, I will go back with you, but I will tell you that Jesus Christ was there before you, and that He will meet you there with just what your souls need! He is there ready with it. He will go before you with the blessings of His goodness. The God of my mercy shall go before! "Well," says one, "but I think that I ought to have some sort of preparation for God. I do not mean *merit*, but still, there must be the cleansing of the hands and the reformation of the heart." Yes, I know there must, and I know what is more—that there *will* be all that if you come to Christ for it—but if you try to work this in yourselves, *before* you come to Him, you will certainly fail!

Now, instead of going roundabout to find preparations for Christ by way of reformation, come to Him as you are, for He will give you all the fitness that you think you ought to bring. He has got it all. Christ did not come to save the righteous, but sinners, just as a physician does not present himself to heal those who are whole, but to heal those who are sick. "But I do not feel my sickness." That is part of your sickness that you do not feel your sickness. Come and have that cured as well as all the rest! Do not think that you are to patch up a part of the cure and then to come to Him! But oh, stand to one side and let Him go before you with the blessings of His goodness, of His love, His blood and His Holy Spirit. He will meet you just where you are.

"But I am desirous to be saved," says one "and I do not think that Christ is willing to have me." Ah, but remember the verse we sometimes sing—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—

Your Grace is most Sovereign, most rich, and most free."

If you have a heart-felt desire after Christ, I know where you obtained it. It never grew in your garden. The dust heap of your heart would never yield so sweet a flower as that! It is the Grace of God that has made you desire Christ and for every spark of desire that you have to Christ, Christ has a volcano full of desire after you! Oh, if you have but a farthing's worth of desire for Him, He has ten thousand pounds worth of desire towards you! You cannot outrun Christ, I am sure. "I would gladly be at peace with God," says one. "I throw down the weapons of my rebellion tonight! I will say, 'Lord, accept me.'" And do you think that He is unwilling to be at peace with you? Why, there never was any unwillingness on His part! He wills not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he would turn unto Him and live. Oh, do not imagine, do not imagine, any of you, that if there is any distance between you and God, God makes the distance! No, it is your own heart, your own unbelief, your love of sin—something sinful on your side—it is no lack of Grace on His side! I do not

say that God will meet you half-way—I do not believe He will—but I believe He will meet you all the way, every inch of it, that He will meet you just where you are! Like the poor man that was left between Jerusalem and Jericho, of whom it is said that the good Samaritan came “where he was,” so Jesus will come and pour in the oil and the wine to heal and quicken. Only cry unto Him! If you cannot frame words, groan out your prayer! Let your aching heart but cry, “My God, have mercy on me! For Jesus’ sake, forgive me!” and He will outrun you, Sinner! He will outrun you! He will anticipate the prayer and grant the blessing! Why are you afraid to come? You know not what God is, or you would come right willingly and tell Him all your case. He can meet it! He understands it! He knows it now! Oh, come! Seek the secrecy of your chamber. Tell out as best you can, your sins, your fears, your weaknesses and unbelief—and trust in that Son of God, who became Man that He might lift men up to God—and as surely as you trust Him, you shall be saved!

But now, it *shall be so, to you who are the people of God*. He will go before you with the blessings of His goodness in the future, as He has done in the past. Now, you are, perhaps, going across the sea to America or Australia. Well, He will be there before you. All is well! He has arranged it for you before you get there, and you shall have reason to say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord, He has come where His servant should come and has prepared a place for him, and made him a sphere of labor.” Or it may be, my dear Friend, that you do not know just where you are going. Well, I do not know that you need fret yourself about it, for if you walk by faith in the living God, you are going just where He knows it is best for you to go—and He will go before you. As surely as ever His glorious marching was through the wilderness with the hosts of Israel, so will there be glorious marching at your head to lead you in a right way and to bring you to a city to dwell therein. Trust in Him with full confidence and go onward, for He shall be your Guide and lead the van.

I speak now especially to the members of this Church. It is a blessed thing to reflect upon, that *in all Christian service, God will go before us*. When our missionaries have gone to foreign lands, it has often happened that before the missionary has arrived, there has been a tradition in the minds of the people that there would be white men who would come to teach them some new thing—and thus they have been prepared for it and frequently whole tribes have speedily given ear to the Gospel of Christ, because for many years God had been leading them to expect His Gospel! Now, what has happened in heathen countries is happening every day in our own country! I believe that God prepares the minds of the people for the preacher as much as ever He does prepare the preacher for the people! I ask the Lord to give me preparation for the pulpit, but I often think that the other side of it—the preparation of the people for the pulpit—is equally important, and that the Lord will give it in answer to prayer! Now, how often, dear Friends, when you try to do good, you will discover that the person you are anxious about has been prepared by

God on purpose for you? For instance, a man has been sick and ill. Ah, you see he had been thoughtless, before, and God has just been plowing the soil by making the man thoughtful and careful, in order that he may now listen to the Gospel. There are a thousand different sorrows that Cross over men's minds. A working man, for instance, may during the day feel depressed, and he does not know why. Some recollections of his early childhood may come across him, but he cannot tell why, and you, perhaps, meet him ten minutes after that. If you would but speak to Him of Christ, you would be surprised to find that you had come just in the very nick of time, when God had made the man ready for you and then sent you as a messenger from Him! Believe it, that whenever you feel an extraordinary anxiety after a soul, you may take it as an indication that that soul is as much needing you as you are needing it! There is a something that will attract that person to you, as well as you to that person. Or if you should seem to be repelled, God has still a design there, and you must try again, and labor again—for a blessing will certainly come. God is preparing the man even while that man repulses you—preparing him for the time when at last he shall cheerfully accept that Savior whom you propose to him!

My Brothers, as God's servants, we are very much in the position of Joshua with the Israelites when they came up to Canaan. They were to conquer Canaan, but do you know Canaan had been conquered long before? For if you conquer a man's heart, it is merely a matter of detail to go and conquer his body, and God had sent before a rumor of what He would do, and Rahab told them that she knew that the hearts of the Canaanites were melted in them for fear. Moreover, God sent diseases and sent the hornet so that these people were dying, and those who were living were weakened by disease and stung by hornets, so that the Jewish hosts had an easy work. They had but to take what God had made ready for them! Go up, go up, O hosts of the Lord, for God has conquered the land beforehand for you! All these sorrows and griefs, all the calamities of wars, all the miseries of nations are but convincing them, as they shall be convinced, that their idols cannot help them! And even as to the Anti-christ of Rome, all the kings that have committed fornication with her shall hate her, and shall burn her flesh as with fire! God is working secretly, God is working mysteriously and mightily! Only be encouraged, O Church of God, to go up and take the prey, for Jericho shall fall before your shouts, as God, even the Lord, your God, shall be exalted, as you win the last great victory! Think of all this through this month when you will be hard at work and just go in to win a soul. Go in for God has gone before you! You, dear Teacher, be earnest with that child, for God is intending to bless it and is getting that child ready! Your instrumentality shall fit to that heart as a key does to the wards of the lock. God is preparing you and preparing it, and good will come of it!

And now, lastly, Brothers and Sisters. We shall soon expect to have done with laboring for Christ and to have done with pilgrimage and all its cares, except that *we shall have the last river to pass over*. But then, “the God of my mercy shall go before me.” There shall be the delightful Presence of Jesus and the shining company of angels, and the visions of Glory yet to be revealed—and we shall forget the pangs of earth in the joys of the heavenly land! Like one drop of bitterness that is drowned in the flood of sweetness, death shall be swallowed up in victory, and when we come to Heaven, itself, we shall discover that our God has gone before us there. “Behold,” says the Redeemer, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Oh, how delightful it is to think of going to Heaven where there will be nothing to get ready, but where all will be just as we need it—all that can be required to give to us the highest conceivable happiness, all ready, and all made ready by Christ! Rejoice, then, Believer! He will go before you through this earth and before you into Heaven, where He has already gone, bless His name! Live happily! Live happily! Live to serve Him out of gratitude for what He has done, and the Lord bless you evermore. Amen and Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116:1-6; ROMANS 5:10-21.**

Verse 1. *I love the LORD because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* You cannot help loving God if He has heard your prayers. Have you tried Him? If you have, you can join with David and thousands of others in confessing that He is a prayer-hearing God and, therefore, you love Him. I find the verse might be read, “I love the Lord because He hears.” He is always hearing. I am always speaking to Him and He is always hearing me. Therefore I love Him. Can you imagine a better reason for love?

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* “He has inclined His ear”—stooped down, as it were, as you do to a sick person to catch his faintest word. “He has inclined His ear.” He has heard my prayer when I could hardly hear it myself! When it was such a broken prayer, such a feeble prayer, that I was afraid I had not prayed, yet He heard me! He inclined His ear and, “therefore, will I call upon Him as long as I live.” That is, I will never leave off praying and I will never leave off praising. This is the best gratitude we can show to God. Now, if a beggar were to say to us, “If you will help me today, I will beg of you as long as I live,” we would not be very thankful! But when we say this to God, He is glad, for He wants us to be thus continually calling upon Him.

3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD—O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* He felt as if he had been hunted. As in hunting, they sometimes surround the stag with dogs

as with a cordon, so he says, “the sorrows of death compassed me. There was no getting away. I was in a circle of sorrow.” Worse than that, his pains of conscience and heart were so great that he says, “The pains of Hell get hold upon me”—got the grip of him, as though he were arrested by them—as though those dogs had come so close as to seize and grasp him. “Then,” he says, “I called.” At the worst extremity he prayed. There is no time too bad to pray! When it is all over with you, still pray. Often the end of yourself is the beginning of your God. He means to get you away from every other confidence, that you may fling yourself upon Him. “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.”

And what was the prayer? A very short one—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” God does not measure prayers by the yard. It is not by the length, but by the weight. If there is life, earnestness, heart in your prayer, it is all the better for being short. Read the Bible through and you will scarcely find a long prayer. Prayers that come from the soul are often like arrows shot from the bow—quick, short, sharp! And God hears such prayers as these—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.”

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous.* Wonderful combination—gracious and yet righteous! And if you want to know how this can be, look at Calvary, where Jesus dies that we may live! “Oh, the sweet wonders of that Cross, where God the Savior loved and died”—where there was the Justice of God to the fullest and the mercy of God without bound. “Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.”

5, 6. *Yes, our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple.* Those that have such a deal of wit may take care of themselves, but, “the Lord preserves the simple,” the straightforward, the plain-minded—those who believe His Word without raising questions. “The Lord preserves the simple.”

6. *I was brought low and He helped me.* Oh, many of you can say this, I trust, and if you cannot, I hope you will before long—“I was brought low and He helped me.”

ROMANS 5:10-21.

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* This is a grand argument for the safety of all Believers, having a three-fold edge to it! If He reconciled His enemies, will He not save His friends? If He reconciled us, will He not save us? If He reconciled us by the death, will He not save us by the life of His Son?

11. *And not only so*—The blessings of the Covenant of Grace rise tier upon tier, mountain upon mountain, Alp on Alp. When you climb to what seems the utmost summit, there is a height yet beyond you. “And not only so”—

11. *But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* Then he begins to explain the great plan of our salvation.

12. *Therefore as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* In that one man.

13, 14. *For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come.* Children died who had not actually sinned, themselves, but died because of Adam's sin.

15-17. *But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one, many are dead, much more the Grace of God and the gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one, to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense—By Adams' sin.*

17, 18. *Death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* All who are in Christ are justified by Christ, just as all who were in Adam were lost and condemned in Adam. The "alls" are not equal in extent—equal as far as the person goes in whom the "alls" were found. And this is our hope—that we, being in Christ, are justified because of His righteousness.

19, 20. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. Moreover the Law entered—The law of Moses.*

20. *That the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.* It makes us see sin where we never saw it. It comes on purpose to drive us to despair of being saved by works. It bids us look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink and tremble with despair.

21. *That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

OUR BANNER

NO. 2979

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

*“You have given a banner to those who fear You,
that it may be displayed because of the truth.”
Psalm 60:4.*

MOST writers upon this Psalm, after having referred the banner to the Kingdom of David, say that there is here a reference to the Messiah. We believe there is. Nor is that reference an obscure allusion. In the Lord Jesus we find the clue to the history and the solution of the prophecy. He is the banner—He is the ensign that is lifted up before the people. He is Jehovah-Nissi, “the Lord My Banner,” whom it is our joy to follow and around whom it is our delight to rally. We shall not stay to prove—though we might readily do so—that the banner here intended is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ in the majesty of His Person—in the efficacy of His merit—in the completeness of His righteousness—in the success of His triumph—in the glory of His advent. If you read it with an eye to Him, you have the meaning at once—“You has given Christ as a banner to those who fear You, to be displayed because of the truth.” So let us consider our Lord Jesus Christ, first, *as He is compared to a banner*. Secondly, *by whom He is given*. Thirdly, *to whom He is given*. And fourthly, *for what purpose*.

I. Let us consider OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS HE IS COMPARED TO A BANNER.

The banner was far more useful, I suppose, in ancient, than it is in modern warfare. Times have changed and we are changed by them. Yet we still speak with reverence of the old flag. There is much meaning in the phrase, “the flag that’s braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze.” The soldier still waves the flag of his country and the sailor still looks with patriotic pride to the flag that has so long floated at England’s masthead. Our metaphor, perhaps, rather points to ancient than present use.

We should notice, first of all, *that the banner was lifted up and displayed as the point of union*. When a leader was about to gather troops for a war, he hoisted his banner and then every man rallied to the standard. The coming to the standard, the rallying round the banner, was the joining with the prince, the espousing of his cause. In the day of battle, when there was always a likelihood that the host would be put to flight, the valiant men all fought around the banner. Its defense was of the first and chief consequence. They might leave the baggage for a while—they might forsake the smaller flags of the divisions—but the

great blood-red banner that with prayer had been consecrated—they must all gather round it, and there, if necessary, shed their heart's blood.

Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, is the point of union for all the soldiers of the Cross! I know of no other place where all Christians can meet. We cannot all meet—I am sorry that we cannot—at the baptismal stream. There are some who will not be baptized—they still persist in the sin of putting drops of water in the place of the ordained flood and bringing infants where faith is required. We cannot all meet even around the table of the Eucharist—there are some who thrust aside their brethren because they do not see eye to eye with them. And even the Communion Table has sometimes become a field of battle. But all Christians can meet in the Person of Christ! All true hearts can meet in the work of Christ! This is a banner that we all love, if we are Christians, and far from it are those who are not. Here to Your Cross, O Jesus, do we come! The Churchman laden with his many forms and vestments. The Presbyterian with his stern Covenant, and his love of those who stained the heather with their blood. The Independent with his passion for liberty and the separateness of the free churches. The Methodist with his intricate forms of Church Government, sometimes forms of bondage, but still forms of power. The Baptist, remembering his ancient pedigree and the days in which his fathers were hounded even by Christians, themselves, and counted not worthy of that name—they all come to Christ! Various opinions divide them. They do not see eye to eye on many matters. Here and there they will have a skirmish for the old landmarks and rightly so, for we ought to be jealous, as Josiah was, to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, and neither decline to the right hand nor to the left. But we rally to the Cross of Christ! And there all weapons of national warfare being cast aside, we meet as Brothers, fellow comrades in a blessed Evangelical Alliance who are prepared to suffer and to die for His dear sake! Forward then, Christians, to the point of union! In the crusade against the powers of darkness, with the salvation of sinners for my one undivided aim, little care I for anything but the lifting up of my Master's Gospel and the proclamation of the Word of mercy through His flowing blood!

Again, the banner, *in time of war, was the great guide-star*; it was the direction to the soldier. You remember what special care they took, in the day of battle, that in case the standard-bearer should fall, there might still be some means of guiding the warriors.

So, to this day, Christ is the great Guide of the Christian in the day of battle. There is no fear that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, will ever fail. Fix your eyes upon Him, Christian, and if you would know the best way to fight, fight in His footsteps, imitate His every action, let your life be a copy of His life! You need never stop to ask for directions—the life of Christ is the Christian's model. You need not turn to your fellow Believer and ask, "Comrade, what are we to do now? The smoke of battle gathers and the cries are various. Which way shall I go?" The Apostle Paul has given us our directions—"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the

Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.” Press forward, in Christ’s footsteps, saying, “God has given You, my Savior, to be to me a banner because of the truth.”

In these two respects, as the central point for rallying, and as the direction to the warrior, Christ is our banner!

And the *banner*, let it be remembered, *is always the chief object of attack*. The moment the adversary sees it, his objective is to strike there. If it is not the most vulnerable point, it will be at least the point where the adversary’s power is most felt. Did they not of old aim their shots at the flagstaff so as to cut down the banner? Whenever the old Knights of the Red Cross fought the Saracens, they always endeavored to make their steel ring upon the helmet of the man whose hand held the standard of Mohammed! The fight was always fiercest around the standard. Sometimes, when the battle was over, the field would be strewn with legs, and arms, and mangled bodies, but, in one place there would be a heap where they were piled one upon another—a great mountain of flesh and armor, broken bones and smashed skulls—and one would ask, “What does this means? How came all this carnage is here? Why are they so trampled, one upon another, and in pools of human blood?” The answer would be, “Twas there the standard-bearer stood, and first the adversary made a dash, and stole the banner, and then 50 knights vowed to redeem it, and they dashed against their foes and took it by storm. And then again, hand to hand, they fought with the banner between them, first in one hand and then in another, changing ownership each hour.”

So, dear Friends, Christ Jesus has always been the object of attack! You remember that when Divine Justice came forth against Christ on Calvary, it made five tears in the great Banner, and those five wounds, all glorious, are still in that Banner! Since that day, many a shot has sought to riddle it, but not one has been able to touch it! Borne aloft, first by one hand and then by another, the mighty God of Jacob being the strength of the standard-bearers, that Banner has bidden defiance to the leaguered hosts of the world, the flesh and the devil! And never has it been trailed in the mire, and never once carried in jeering triumph by the adversary! Blessed are the tears in the Banner, for they are the symbol of our victory! Those five wounds in the Person of the Savior are the gates of Heaven to us! But, thank God, there are no more wounds to be endured—the Person of our Lord is safe forever. “A bone of Him shall not be broken.” His Gospel, too, is an unwounded Gospel and His mystical body is uninjured. Yes, the Gospel is unharmed after all the strife of ages. The infidel threatens to rend the Gospel to pieces, but it is as glorious as ever! Modern skepticism has sought to pull it thread from thread, but has not been able so much as to rend a fragment of it! Every now and then, fresh adversaries have found out some new methods of induction or declamation, attempting to prove the Gospel to be a lie, and Christ an impostor. Have they succeeded? No, verily, they have all had to fly from the field. The good old Banner of the Lord Omnipotent, even Christ Jesus, still stands exact above them all!

And why should the banner be the object of attack but for this very reason, that *it is the symbol of defiance*? As soon as ever the banner is lifted up, it is, as it were, flaunted in the face of the foe. It seems to say to him, “Do your worst, come on! We are not afraid of you—we defy you!” So, when Christ is preached, there is a defiance given to the enemies of the Lord. Every time a sermon is preached in the power of the Spirit, it is as though the shrill clarion woke up the fiends of Hell for such a sermon to say to them, “Christ is come forth again to deliver His lawful captives out of your power! The King of kings has come to take away your dominions, to wrest from you your stolen treasures, and to proclaim Himself your Master.” There is a stern joy which the minister sometimes feels when he thinks of himself as the antagonist of the powers of Hell. Martin Luther seems to have felt it when he said, “Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm and let the devil do his worst!” That was lifting up the standard of the Cross! If you want to defy the devil, don’t go about preaching philosophy! Don’t sit down and write out fine sermons with long sentences, three quarters of a mile in length! Don’t try and cull fine, smooth phrases that will sound sweetly in people’s ears. The devil doesn’t care a bit for this! But talk about Christ! Preach about the suffering of the Savior! Tell sinners that there is life in a look at Him and straightway the devil takes great offense.

Look at many of the ministers in London! They preach in their pulpits from the first of January to the last of December—and nobody finds fault with them because they prophesy such smooth things. But let a man preach Christ! Let him exclaim about the power of Jesus to save and press home Gospel Truths with simplicity and boldness—straightaway the fiends of darkness will be against him and, if they cannot bite, they will show that they can howl and bark! There is a symbol of defiance in the banner of the Cross—it is God’s symbol of defiance, His gauntlet thrown down to the confederated powers of Darkness—a gauntlet which they dare not take up, for they know what tremendous power for good there is in the uplifting of the Cross of Christ! Wave, then, your banner, O you soldiers of the Cross! Each in your place and rank keep watch, but still wave your banner, for though the adversary shall be full of wrath, it is because he knows that his time is short when once the Cross of Christ is lifted up!

We have not quite exhausted the metaphor yet. *The banner was always a source of consolation to the wounded.* There he lies, the good knight. Right well has he fought without fear and without reproach, but a chance arrow pierced the joints of his harness and his life is oozing out from the ghastly wound. There is no one there to unbuckle his helmet, or give him a draught of cool water. His frame is locked up in that hard case of steel and though he feels the pain, he cannot gain relief. He hears the mingled cries, the hoarse shouts of men that rush in fury against their fellows and he opens his eyes—as yet he has not fainted from his bleeding. Where, do you think, does he look? He turns himself round. What is he looking for? For friend? For comrades? No. Should they come to him, he would say, “Just lift me up and let me sit against that tree, but you go to the fight.” Where is that restless eye searching and what is

the object for which it is looking? Yes, he has it! And the face of the dying man is brightened. He sees the banner still waving and with his last breath he cries, "On! On! On!" and falls asleep content because the banner is safe. It has not been cast down. Though he has fallen, yet the banner is secure!

Even so, every true soldier of the Cross rejoices in its triumph! We fall, but Christ does not! We die, but the cause prospers! As I have told you before, when my heart was most sad—as it never was before nor since—that sweet text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name," quite cheered my soul and set me again in peace and comfort. Is Jesus safe? Then it never matters what becomes of me! Is the banner all right? Does it wave on high? Then the adversary has not won the day! He has felled one and another, but he, himself, shall be broken in pieces, for the banner still shine in the sun!

And, lastly, the banner is the emblem of victory. When the fighting is over and the soldier comes home, what does he bring? His blood-stained flag. And what is borne highest in the procession as it winds through the streets? It is the flag. They hang it in the church—high up there on the roof, where the incense smokes, and where the song of praise ascends—there hangs the banner, honored and esteemed, borne in conflict and in danger. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ shall be our Banner in the last day and when all our foes shall be under our feet! A little while and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. A little while, and we shall see—

***"Jehovah's banner furled,
Sheathed His sword; He speaks! 'Tis done,
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son."***

And then Jesus, high above us all, shall be exalted! And through the streets of the holy city, the acclamations shall ring, "Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

II. Let us turn to our second point for a few moments. It is this—Who gave us this Banner? BY WHOM WAS CHRIST GIVEN TO US?

Soldiers often esteem the colors for the sake of the person who first bestowed them. You and I ought greatly to esteem our precious Christ for the sake of God who gave Him to us—"You have given a Banner to those who fear You." God gave us this Banner in old eternity. Christ was given by the eternal Father, from everlasting, before the earth was, to His elect people, to be the Messiah of God, the Savior of the world! He was given in the manger, when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He was given upon the Cross when the Father bestowed every drop of His Son's blood, and every nerve of His body, and every power of His soul to bleed and die, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "You have given a banner."

That Banner was given to each one of us in the day of our conversion. Christ became, from that time forth, our glory and our boast. And He is given to some of us, especially, when we are called to the ministry, or when the Holy Spirit's guidance puts us upon any extraordinary work for Christ. Then is the banner, in a direct and especial manner, committed

to our care. There are some here who have had this Banner given to them to carry in the midst of the Sunday school. A dear Sister here has it. A beloved Brother has it to bear in the midst of many of this congregation. The young men of our College, of our Evening Classes, and many others of you, workers for Christ, have that Banner, that you may bear it in the streets, that you may lift up the name of Jesus in the causeways, and in the places of assembly. And, in a certain measure, all of you who love the Lord, have that Banner given to you, that in your various spheres of service you may talk of Jesus and lift up His holy name!

Now, inasmuch as God Himself gives us this Banner, with what reverence should we look upon it, with what ardor should we cluster round it, with what zeal should we defend it, with what enthusiasm should we follow it, with what faith and confidence should we rush even into death, itself, for its defense!

III. Thirdly, TO WHOM IS THIS BANNER GIVEN? The text says, "You have given a banner to those who fear You." Not to all men. God has a chosen people. These chosen people are known, in due time, by their outward character. That outward Divine Grace-worked character is this—they fear God, *and they that fear God are the only persons who ought to carry this banner.* Shall the banner be put into a drunkard's hands? Shall the great Truth of Christ be left to those who live in sin? Oh, it is a wretched thing when men come into the pulpit to preach who have never known and felt the power of the Gospel! Time was—but times are changed somewhat—when, in multitudes of our parish pulpits, men whose characters were unhallowed, preached to others what they never practiced themselves! To such, the banner ought not to be given! Men must fear God, or else they are not worthy to bear it.

Moreover, *none but these can bear it.* What others bear is not the banner—it is but an imitation of it. It is not Christ they preach—it is a diluted thing that is not the Gospel of Jesus. They cannot proclaim it to others till they know it themselves! It is given to them that fear God because they will have courage to bear it. Fear is often the mother of courage. To fear God makes a man brave. To fear man is cowardly, I grant, but to fear God with humble awe and holy reverence is such a noble passion that I would we were more and more full thereof, blending, as it were, the fear of Isaac with the faith of Abraham! To fear God will make the weakest of us play the man, and the most cowardly of us become heroes for the Lord our God!

Now, inasmuch as this banner is given to those that fear God, *if you fear God, it is given to you.* I do not know in what capacity you are to bear it, but I do know there is somewhere or other where you have to carry it. Mother, let the banner wave in your household! Merchant, let the banner be fixed upon your house of business. Let it be unfurled and fly at your masthead, O sailor! Bear the banner, O soldier, in your regiment! Yours is a stern duty, for, alas, the Christian soldier has a path of briar that few men have trod. God make you faithful and may you be honored as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! Some of you are poor and work hard in the midst of many artisans who fear not God. Take your banner with you

and never be ashamed of your colors. You cannot be long in a workshop before your companions will pull their colors out. They will soon begin talking to you about their sinful pleasures, their amusements, perhaps their infidel principles. Take your banner out likewise. Tell them that it is a game two can play at—never allow a man to show his banner without also showing yours! Do not do it ostentatiously—do it humbly—but do it earnestly and sincerely. Remember that your banner is one that you never need be ashamed of—the best of men have fought under it! No, He who was God as well as Man has His own name written on it! Surely, then, you need not be ashamed to wave it anywhere and everywhere. You can think bravely—now be great in action as you have been in thought—

**“Presence of mind and courage in distress
Are more than armies to procure success.”**

IV. This is our last question, FOR WHAT PURPOSE WAS THIS BANNER GIVEN TO US?

Our text is very explicit upon that point—it was given to us to be “*displayed because of the truth.*” It is to be *displayed*. In order to display a banner, you must take it out of its case. Members of this congregation, Brothers and Sisters in the Church, I pray you study the Scriptures much. I would not have men attempt to preach unless they have some power. To go forth without some study would be like a man attempting to do execution with a gun that had much powder in it and no shot. Young men, save your spare hours to study the Bible. Steal them from your sleep if you cannot get them any other way. Sunday school teachers, be diligent in your preparations for your classes. Let your banner out of the case. It is of little service lifting it up in the midst of the ranks without its being unfurled. See that you know the holy art of unfurling it. Practice it! Study it! Be well acquainted with Him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God!

And, *after the flag is unfurled, it needs to be lifted up.* So, in order to display Christ, you must lift Him up. Lift Him up with a clear voice, as one who has something to say which he would have men hear. Speak of Him boldly, as one who is not ashamed of His message. Speak affectionately, speak passionately, speak with your whole soul—let your whole heart be in every word you say, for this is to lift up the banner!

But, besides lifting up the banner, *you must carry it*, for it is the business of the standard-bearer, not merely to hold it in one place, but to bear it here and there if the plan of battle shall change. So, bear Christ to the poor lodging houses, to the workhouses, to the prisons, if you can get admittance, to the back streets, to the dark slums, to the cellars, to the solitary attic, to the crowded rooms, to the highways and the byways! And you especially who are private Christians and not preachers, bear it from house to house! We had a complaint, the other day, that some of you had been going from house to house to try and talk to others about their souls. You had entrenched upon the parochial bounds of the authored gamekeeper! I pray you to entrench again! What is *my* parish? The whole world is my parish! Let the whole world be your parish likewise! What does it matter to us if the world is parceled out among men who probably do little or nothing? Let us do all we can! No man has

any right to say to me, "Visit in such-and-such a district, not here—this is my ground." Who gave it to you? Who gave him lordship of the world, or any portion of it? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." The earth is your field and no matter upon whose district, territory, or parish! Let me encourage you who love the Savior, you who have the pure Gospel, to go and spread it! Let nothing confine you, or limit your labors, except your strength and your time!

Still, after all, if we carry the Gospel and lift up the banner, *it will never be displayed unless there is wind to blow it*. A banner would only hang like a dead flag upon the staff if there were no wind. We cannot produce the wind to expand the banner, but we can invoke heavenly aid. Prayer becomes a prophecy when we say, "Awake, O heavenly wind, and blow, and let this banner be displayed." The Holy Spirit is that gracious wind who shall make the Truth of God apparent in the hearts of those who hear it. Display the banner, talk of Christ, live Christ, proclaim Christ everywhere! He is given to you for this very purpose. Therefore, let not your light be hid under a bushel. "You are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men." Let the old flag be held up by firm hands. Go forth in new times, with new resolves, and may you have constant renewing as new opportunities open before you!

Oh, but are there not some of you who could not bear this banner? Let me invite such to come and take shelter under it. My Master's banner, wherever it goes, gives liberty! Under the banner of old England, there never breathes a slave. They tread our country, they breathe our air and their shackles fall! Beneath the banner of Christ, no slave can live. Do but look up to Jesus, relying upon His suffering in your place, and bearing your sins in your place and forthwith you shall have acceptance in the Beloved! And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. So may God enlist you beneath the banner, to His Glory! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 32; PSALM 119:33-40.**

Genesis 32:1. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.* What an encouragement the visit of these angels must have been to Jacob after the strife which he had had with Laban! But, dear Friends, angels often come to meet us, though we know it not. As in the old classic story, the poor man said, "This is a plain hut, but God has been here," so we may say of every Christian's cottage, "Though it is poor, an angel has come here," for David says, "The Angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." As the angels of God met Jacob, I trust that if you have come here after some stern battle, trial and difficulty, you may find the angels of God meeting you here. They do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly "because of the angels," that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.

2. *And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. He gave it a name to commemorate God's having sent the angels and called it, "two camps" or, "two hosts."*

3. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He is out of one trouble with Laban—now he is into another with Esau. Well did John Bunyan say—*

***"A Christian man is seldom long at ease;
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize."***

4, 5. *And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau, Your servant Jacob says thus, I have adjourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight. This is very respectful language, and rather submissive, too. But when a man knows that he has done wrong to another, he ought to be prepared to humble himself to the injured individual and, though it happened long ago, yet Jacob really had injured his brother Esau. So it was but right that in meeting him again, he should put himself into a humble position before him. There are some proud people who, when they know that they have done wrong, yet will not admit it. And it is very hard to end a quarrel when one will not yield and the other feels that he will not, either. But there is good hope of things going right when Jacob, who is the better of the two brothers, is also the humbler of the two.*

6, 7. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We went to your brother Esau, and also he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. And well he might be, for an angry brother, with four hundred fierce followers, must mean mischief!*

7, 8. *And he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau comes to the one company, and smites it, then the other company which is left shall escape. This is characteristic of Jacob. He was a man of plans and arrangements, a man of considerable craftiness which some people, nowadays, call, "prudence." He used means and he sometimes used them a little too much. Perhaps he did so in this case, but, at the same time, he was a man of faith and, therefore, he betook himself to prayer.*

9-12. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over the Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the seas which cannot be numbered for multitude. A prayer most humble, most direct in its petitions, and also full of faith. That was a grand argument for him to use—"You said, I will surely do you good." This is one of the mightiest pleas that we can urge*

in praying to God—“Do as You have said. Remember Your word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” O Brothers and Sisters, if you can remind God of His own promise, you will win the day, for promised mercies are sure mercies—

**“As well might He His being quit,
As break His promise, or forget.”**

“Has He said, and shall He not do it?” Only for this will He be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and we must take care that we call His promise to mind and plead it at the Mercy Seat.

13-21. *And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewe, and twenty rams, thirty milch camel with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, ‘Whose are you? And where are you going? And whose are these before you? Then you shall say, They are your servant Jacob’s; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau, when you find him. And say we moreover, Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.* If Jacob had been true to his faith in God, he would have dispensed with these very prudent preparations, for, after all, the faithfulness of God was Jacob’s best defense! It was from God that his safety came—not from his own plotting, planning and scheming. There are some of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have minds that are naturally given to inventions, devices, plans and plots—and I believe that where this is the case, you have more to battle against than those have who are of an ample mind and who cast themselves more entirely upon the Lord. It is a blessed thing to be such a fool that you do not know anyone to trust in except your God. It is a sweet thing to be so weaned from your wisdom that you fall into the arms of God.

Yet, if you do feel that it is right to make such plans as Jacob made, take care that you do what Jacob also did. Pray as well as plan and if your plans are numerous, let your prayers be all the more fervent, lest the natural tendency of your constitution should degenerate into reliance upon the arm of flesh and dependence upon your own wisdom, instead of absolute reliance upon God.

22-24. *And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. It was the Man Christ Jesus putting on the form of Manhood before the time when He would actually be Incarnate! And*

the wrestling seems to have been more on His side than on Jacob's, for it is not said that *Jacob* wrestled, but that "there wrestled a Man with him." There was something that needed to be taken out of Jacob—his strength and his craftiness—and this Angel came to get it out of him. But, on the other hand, Jacob spied his opportunity and, finding the Angel wrestling with him, he in his turn began to wrestle with the angel.

25. *And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him.* So that he was made painfully to realize his own weakness while he was putting forth all his strength!

26. *And He said, let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.* Bravely said, O Jacob! And you sons of Jacob, learn to say the same! You may have what you will if you can speak thus to the Covenant Angel, "I will not let You go, except You bless me."

27, 28. *And He said unto him, what is your name? And he said Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob. "The supplanter."*

28. *But Israel. "A prince of God."*

28, 29. *For as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name.* That has often been the request of God's people—they have wanted to know God's wondrous name. The Jews superstitiously believe that we have lost the sound of the name of Jehovah—that the name is altogether unpronounceable. We think not so, but certainly, no man knows the *Nature* of God, and understands Him but he to whom the Son shall reveal Him. Perhaps Jacob's request had somewhat of curiosity in it, so the Angel would not grant it.

29. *And He said, why is it that you ask after My name. And He blessed him there.* He did not give him what he asked for, but He gave him something better and, in like manner, if the Lord does not open up a dark doctrine to you, but gives you a bright privilege, that will be better for you!

30-32. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew which shrank.*

Psalms 119:33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes.* The Psalmist is constantly talking about "the way." We have that expression in the 27th verse, then in the 29th, the 30th and the 32nd—and now again we have it here—"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes."

33, 34. *And I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your Law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* That is not true or right understanding which permits us to go into sin. Those who are really wise in heart hate evil and love righteousness.

35. *Make me to go in the path. Or, way—*

35. *Of Your commandment; for therein do I delight.* “Make me to go.” Not only show me the way, but make me to go, like a nurse does with a child when she puts her hands under its arms and strengthens its tottering footsteps. This is a very beautiful expression—“Make me to go.” Lord, we are very weak. We are like little children. Make us to go in the path of Your commandments, for therein do we delight.

36. *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.* The heart must love something—it will either love that which is good, or that which is evil. “O Lord,” the Psalmist seems to pray, “incline my heart in the right direction. Make it lean towards that which is good. Cause me to count Your Grace better than all the riches of the world.”

37. *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.* “Do not let me even look at it, for one may look at an ugly thing until the sense of its deformity gradually disappears and it becomes attractive. Lord, never let me so fix my eyes upon sin that, at last, I come to reckon it a desirable thing.”

37. *And quicken You me in Your way.* “A man who travels quickly has not time to stop and look at the things in the road. Lord, let me go so fast to Heaven that when the devil hangs his baubles in his shop window, I may not have time even to stop and look at them! Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity and quicken You me in Your way.”

38. *Establish Your word unto Your servant, who is devoted to Your fear.* That is, “Make Your word to me real and true. Put away my natural skepticism, my proneness to question, my tendency to doubt.” “Establish Your word.” “Make me to know how firm, how true, how real it is, for I would love it more and more. I do believe it, for I am devoted to Your fear, but I long to be still further established in the faith.”

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear.* Are any of you fearing reproach? If so, you may well fear it, for you deserve it. Yet, even then, you may ask the Lord to turn it away from you.

39, 40. *For Your judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.* Some people whom I know long after the promises, and others long after the doctrines. I hope that they will all get an equal longing for the precepts, for true Believers love the precepts as much as they love the promises or the doctrines. “Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.”

40. *Quicken me in Your righteousness.*

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

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

MOAB IS MY WASH POT

NO. 983

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

***“Moab is My wash pot.”
Psalm 60:8.***

MOAB, which had threatened Israel, was to be so completely subdued, and become so utterly contemptible as to be likened to a wash pot or basin in which men wash their feet. More than this, however, may have been intended—no, we feel sure was intended by the expression. Let us explain exactly what the language literally means. In the East the general mode of washing the hands and the feet is with a basin and ewer. Water is poured upon the hands or feet from the ewer, and it falls into the basin.

No Oriental, if he can help it, will wash in standing water. He prefers to have it clear and running. He puts his feet into the wash pot, into the bath, into the basin, and then the clear, cool liquid is poured upon his feet. The wash pot's sole purpose is to hold the dirty water which has already passed over the man's flesh. Wearing no completely covering shoes, as we do, but only sandals, the feet of an Eastern traveler in a long journey become very much defiled. The water, therefore, when it runs off from them, is far from clean, and the wash pot is thus put to a very contemptible use by being only the receptacle of dirty water.

When Moab thus became a wash pot, it was far other than when it was said, “Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” “We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceedingly proud), his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.” What does Moab represent to you and to me?

We are the children of Israel by faith in Christ, and in Him we have obtained by Covenant a promised land. Our faith may cry, “I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.” All things are ours in Christ Jesus. “Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine.” Now Moab was outside of Canaan. It was not given to Israel as a possession, but in course of time it was subdued in warfare and became tributary to the Jewish king. Even thus our faith overcomes the world, and enables us to say, “this world is ours”—ours for a useful, necessary purpose. We set but small store by it. It is nothing but our wash pot. But we are content to use it as far as we may make it subserve a holy end.

The best possessions we have outside of the spiritual heritage we put under our feet, desiring to keep them in their proper inferior position. They are not the crown of our head, nor the comfort of our heart, nor the girdle of our loins, nor the staff of our support. They are put to far baser uses. They yield us some comfort, for which we are grateful to God, but it is only for our feet or lower nature. Our head and heart find nobler joys.

The whole world put together, with all its wealth, is but a mess of potage for Esau and nothing more.

God's Jacob has a better portion, for he has the birthright. Our worst is better than the world's best, for the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt—

***“We tread the world beneath our feet,
With all that earth calls good or great.”***

“Moab is my wash pot,” nothing more—a thing contemptible and despicable as compared with the eternal realities of Covenant blessings. Yet, for all that, there was a use for Moab, a use to be rightly understood. A wash pot has its necessary function. And even this base world may be made, by faith, in the hands of God to be the means of aiding the purity of the saints.

Its afflictions and troubles may work for our present and lasting good. The world and its trials can never be compared to the water which cleanses our feet. For that purifying stream we look to a far higher source. But it may be likened to the basin in which our feet are placed while they are being washed. If we regard Moab as representative of the unregenerate people among whom we dwell, we do well, like the children of Israel, on their march to Canaan, to let them alone, for their heritage is not our heritage—neither are their joys our joys.

The less communion we have with them the better. If we ask of them, as Israel did of Moab, simply to be allowed to go on our way in peace, it is all we need. Moses sent his messenger, who said, “Let me pass through your land: I will go along by the highway. I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. You shall sell me meat for money, that I may eat. And give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet, until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the Lord our God gives us.”

Like the pilgrims in Vanity Fair, we only ask a clear passage through the place, for we have no inheritance in it, no, not so much as we can set our foot upon. Yet, inasmuch as we cannot altogether separate ourselves from the sinful—for then must we go out of the world—we are compelled to feel the influence of their conduct. And it will become our wisdom to watch that this become not injurious to us, but be made under God rather to be of service to us than a hindrance.

My object will be to show that, contrary to the ordinary course of nature, but not contrary to faith—even this ungodly world may be made to assist our advance in holiness. As of old the men of Israel went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his axe and his courtier, so may we derive some sharpening from our enemies. We may gather honey from the lion, take a jewel from the toad's head, and borrow a star from the brow of night. Moab may become our wash pot.

While this is contrary to nature, it is also unusual in history. In the Book of Numbers we read that Balak, son of Zippor, desired to vanquish Israel, and therefore he sent for Balaam, the son of Beor, saying, “Curse Israel for me, and perhaps I shall prevail against them.” Balaam was not able to curse Israel by word of mouth, but he cursed them in very deed when he counseled the king to make them unclean in God's sight by sending the daughters of Moab among them, who not only led them into

lasciviousness, but invited them to the sacrifices of their gods. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and the plague would have devoured them, had not the holy zeal of Phinehas turned away the Divine anger.

Thus it is clear that Moab of old was foremost in polluting and defiling Israel. It is a great feat of faith when the thing which naturally defiles is turned into a wash pot. Behold the transformations of Grace! This ungodly world outside the Church—the world of wicked men—would naturally pollute us, but faith turns them into a wash pot, and finds in them motives for watchfulness and holiness. We sigh, in the words of the old Psalm—

***“Woe is me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long.
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.”***

As we cannot sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, so neither can we very readily keep our garments unspotted in a land deluged with uncleanness. With difficulty do we save ourselves from this untoward generation. And yet faith learns the secret of overcoming the ordinary tendency of things, and of making that which might injure us subsidiary to our advantage, fulfilling that ancient promise, “And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.” The defiling world may be made helpful to us in the following ways—

I. First of all, ungodly men, if we are in a gracious spirit, may be of solemn service to us because **WE SEE IN THEM WHAT SIN IS**. They are beacons upon the rocks to keep us from danger. The lives of many men are recorded in Scripture, not as excuses for our sins, much less as examples, but the very reverse. Like murderers in the olden times hung in chains, they are meant to be *warnings*.

Their lives and deaths are danger signals, bidding those who are pursuing a career of sin to come to a pause, and reverse the engine at once. They are our wash pot in that respect, that they warn us of pollution, and so help to prevent our falling into it. When we learn that pride turned angels into devils, we have a lesson in humility read to us from Heaven and Hell. When we read of profane Esau, obstinate Pharaoh, disobedient Saul, apostate Judas, or vacillating Pilate, we are taught by their examples to shun the rocks upon which they made eternal shipwreck.

Transgressors of our own race are peculiarly suitable to act as warnings to us, for we ought ever to remember when we see the sins of ungodly men, that *“such were some of us.”* Whenever you see a drunkard, if you were once such, it will bring the tears to your eyes to remember when you, too, were a slave to the ensnaring cup, and you will thank God that his Grace has changed you. Not as the Pharisee will you *pretend* to thank God, while you are flattering your own self, but with deep humiliation you will confess what Grace has done.

When we read in the newspaper a sad case of lasciviousness, or any other breach of the laws of God and man, if we were once guilty of the like and have now been renewed in heart, it will make us blush. It will humble us, and cause us to admire the power and Sovereignty of Divine Grace.

Now the blush of repentance, the shamefacedness of humility, and the tear of gratitude are three helpful things—and all tend, under God's Grace to set us purging out the old leaven. Remember, O Believer, that there is no wretch upon earth so bad, but what you were once his equal in alienation from God and death in sin!

In untoward acts there may have been much difference, but in the inner man how little! The seed of all the sin which you see in him lies in your corrupt nature and needs only a fit season to bring forth and bud. You were once in that fire of sin in which he is consumed by his passions! You have been plucked as a brand from the burning, or else had you still been there. Yonder is a prodigal, all bespattered from head to foot—but we, also once were plunged into the ditch until our own clothes abhorred us—and we should be sinking in the mire even now if the mighty hand of Grace had not lifted us up from the horrible pit, and washed us in the Savior's blood.

We were "heirs of wrath *even as others.*" "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." Our sins are different, but we were all, without exception, shaped in iniquity—and as in water, face answers unto face—so the heart of man to man. When you see the wickedness of an ungodly man, make him your wash pot by remembering that *you also, though you are regenerate, are encompassed with "the body of this death."*

Remember the words of the Apostle—"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me. But how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find, then, a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

The old nature so remains in us, that, if we were to be deserted by God, we should even yet become such as the ungodly are. Need I quote to you the speech of John Bradford, one of the godliest of men? When he saw a wretch taken out to Tyburn to be hanged, the tears were in his eyes, and when they asked him why, he said, "There goes John Bradford, but for the Grace of God." Ah, and when we see a prodigal plunging into excess of riot, there goes the best among us, if we are not preserved in Christ Jesus. Yes, and when the damned go down to Hell, there must I go, unless the same Grace which restrains me now from sin, shall uphold me to my last day. And keep me from falling.

Brother Christian, you carry much combustible matter in your nature! Be warned when you see your neighbor's house on fire. When one man falls, the next should look to his steps. You are a man of like passions. Remember yourself lest you also be tempted. In these days of epidemics, if we knew that a certain house was tainted with disease, and if we saw a person who had come from it with the marks of the disease on his face—what should we feel? Should we not take it as a warning to keep clear, both of the house and of him? We ourselves are as likely to take the disease as he was!

So when we see a sinner transgressing we should say to ourselves, "I, also, am a man, and a fallen man. Let me abhor every evil way, and guard myself jealously, lest I also fall into sin." In this way Moab may be a wash pot. By remembering what we are and what we were, we may, by taking warning from the evil courses of others, avoid the like condemnation. There are certain sins which we readily detect in others which should *serve as loud calls to us to correct the same things in ourselves.*

When a man sees the faults of others and congratulates himself that he is far superior to such, he evidently knows not how to extract good from evil. He is proud, and knows nothing. But when we perceive errors in others and immediately set a diligent watch against falling into the like, then Moab is rightly used and becomes our wash pot. For instance, as to the matter of bodily indulgence. The sinner is a man who puts his body before his soul, and his head where his feet should be. He is therefore a monster in nature.

Instead of the world being under his feet, as it is with every good man, he inverts himself and places his head and his heart in the dust. He lives for the body which is to die, and forgets the soul which lives forever. When, therefore, you see a drunkard, or an unchaste person, say to yourself, "I must mortify my members, and give my spiritual nature the predominance. For this I must cry mightily to God, the Eternal Spirit, lest the body of this death prevail over me. I must keep under my body, as the Apostle says, and bring it into subjection, lest I, too, become a prey to the same animal passions which lead sinners captives."

I see the ungodly man putting this poor fleeting world before the eternal world to come—he is a fool. But let me take heed that I, in no measure, imitate him. Let me never in my business live as though only to make money. Let me not fall into his error, but ever seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and believe that other things shall be added to me. The ungodly man disregards God. God is not in all his thoughts. He says in his heart, "No God." Now when I know that the ungodly man does that, it should be a warning to me not to forget the Lord, or depart from Him in any measure.

Alas, we are all of us more or less atheistic. How little of our life is given to God! You who love and fear Him are not always near to Him, though He is always near to you. Do you ever enter upon your enterprises without Him? When you begin your business with Him, are you not apt to forget Him in the middle passage of it? Or when you have gone on to the very center of a work with Him, are you not liable to leave Him before you close? Is not this to learn the way of the wicked and to be like them in wandering away from the living God? To have God always with us, to lean hourly upon Him, and to feel each moment that He is All in All to us—this is the true condition in which our minds ought to be continually.

The atheism of the outside world should warn us against the inward godlessness of our naturally atheistic hearts. We select these sins as specimens of the general principle, but it is applicable to all forms of evil. Did you ever meet with a vain man who boasted loudly and evermore talked about his own beloved self? Was not that a lesson for you? Surely it will help to preserve you from acting so ridiculous a part! Did not I hear

you, the other night, laughing at the boaster for his folly? Let us hope, then, you will never set others laughing at yourself. You know another person who is morose, he always speaks sharply and makes enemies. Be you of another spirit!

Be courteous, cultivate the Grace of cheerfulness and good temper as a Christian. The moroseness of the churl should enforce upon you the duty of godly gentleness. Moab will be your wash pot. You know a certain person whose hands appear to be paralyzed if they are required to bestow a contribution. How unlovely his meanness makes him! Will not the miserable exhibition of stinginess which he represents lead you to avoid all covetousness? Another person of your acquaintance is very soon irritated. You can hardly say a word to displease him but he makes a crime of it immediately, and falls into the temporary insanity of anger.

Well, then, learn yourself to be slow to wrath. Seek that charity which is not easily provoked and thinks no evil. Maybe your friend's blood is warmer than yours, and there is some excuse for him. But since you see how unwise and wicked it is in him, seek much Grace to overcome the propensity in your own case. If a man should fall into a pit through walking unwarily along a dangerous path, his fall should be my safety—his experience should be my instruction—there can be no need for me to roll over the same precipice in order to know experimentally how dangerous it is!

How sad a fact it is that very few of us ever learn by the experience of other people! Dame Experience must take each one of us into her school and make us personally smart under her rod—otherwise we will not learn. Warnings are neglected by the foolish. The young sluggard sees the huge thorns and thistles in the older sluggard's garden and yet he follows the same lazy habits. One step follows another into the shambles.

Flies see their brethren perishing in the sugared trap, and yet rush into it themselves. The Lord make us wise and prudent, and from the errors of others may we learn to steer our own course aright. Then may we truly say, "Moab is my wash pot."

II. Another illustration of this practical principle lies in the fact that WE SEE IN THE UNGODLY THE PRESENT EVIL RESULTS OF SIN. We frequently have the opportunity of beholding in them, not only sin, but some of its bitter fruits. And this should still further help us to shun it, by God's Grace. Evil is now no longer an unknown seed of doubtful character. We have seen it *planted*, and have beheld sinners reaping the first sheaves of its awful harvest. This poison is no longer an uncertain drug, for its deadly effects are apparent in those around us. If we sin, it is no longer through the want of knowing what sin will lead to, for its mischief is daily before our eyes.

First, are you not very certain, those of you who watch unconverted and ungodly people, *that they are not solidly happy*? What roaring boys they are sometimes! How vociferous are their songs! How merry their dances! How hilarious their laughter! You would think that there were no happier people to be found under the sun. But as on many a face beauty is produced by art rather than by nature, and a little paint creates a tran-

sient comeliness, so often the mirth of this world is a painted thing, a base imitation—not so deep even as the skin.

Ungodly men know nothing of heart-laughing. They are strangers to the deep, serene happiness which is the portion of Believers. Their joy comes and goes with the hour. See them when the feast is over—“Who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. The men of strength to mingle strong drink.” Mark them when alone—they are ready to die with dullness. They want to kill time as if they had an overplus of it and would be glad to dispose of the superfluity.

A man’s face must be very ugly when he never cares to look at it. And a man’s state must be very bad, indeed, when he is ashamed to know what it is. And yet in the case of tens of thousands of people who say they are very happy, there is a worm inside the apple. The very foundation stone has been removed from the edifice. And you may be sure it is so, for they dare not examine into matters. Ungodly men at bottom are unhappy men. “The way of transgressors is hard.” “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” Their Marah is never dry, but flows with perennial waters of bitterness.

What says their great poet Byron—

**“Count over the joys your hours have seen,
Count over the days from anguish free.
And know whatever you have been,
‘Tis something better not to be.”**

Now then, if things are really so—if sin brings, after all, an unsatisfactory result to the mind. If a man is not rendered happy by an evil course—then let me choose another path, and, by God’s Grace, keep to Wisdom’s ways of pleasantness and paths of peace into which my Lord, by His love, has drawn me and by His Grace has led me. I am happy in His bosom, I drink living waters out of His fountain. Why should I go to those broken cisterns, which I clearly see can hold no water? Why should I wish to wander over the dreary waste of waters?

Noah’s hand is warm, and the peaceful ark is near—“Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” When I read of aching hearts and hear that great worldling, who had all the world could give him, sum it all up with this sentence, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” does not my heart say at once, “Oh, empty world, you tempt me in vain, for I see through the cheat” ?

Madam Bubble we have seen with her mask off, and are not to be fascinated by so ugly a witch. We follow not after yonder green meads and flowing brooks because they are not real, and are only a mirage mocking the traveler. Why should we pursue a bubble or chase the wind? We spend our money no more for that which is not bread. Moab is our wash pot. If others have found earthly things to be unsatisfactory, we wash our hands of their disappointing pursuits. Dear Savior, we would follow You wherever You go, till we come to dwell with You forever.

But it is not merely that ungodly men are not happy. There *are times when they are positively wretched through their sins*. Sometimes fear comes upon them as a whirlwind and they have no refuge or way of escape. I have been, now and then, called to witness the utter anguish of a

man who has lost his gods. His great idols have been broken, and he has been in despair.

His darling child is dead, or his wife is a corpse and he knows not how to endure life. Did you ever see a godless man when he had lost all his money in a speculation which once promised fair? Did you mark his woe? Did you ever see the countenance of a gambler who had staked his last and lost his all? See him in an agony which can find no alleviation. He rises from the table, he rushes to cover his hands in his own blood. Poor soul, he has lost his all!

That never happens to a Christian—never! If all he had on earth were gone, it would be only like losing a little of his spending money—his permanent capital would be safe in the Imperial treasury—where Omnipotence, itself, stands guard. Even when no very great calamity puts out the candle of the worldling, yet, as years revolve, a gathering cloud darkens his day. Hear again the world's master songster. The confession will suit many—

***“My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone.
The worm, the canker, and the grief—
Are mine alone.
The fire that in my bosom plays
Alone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.”***

This is the world's treatment of its old servants—it dishonors them in old age. But it is not so with aged Believers—“they shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright.” When all our wealth on earth is gone, our treasure is still safe in Heaven where moth corrupts not, and thieves break not through nor steal. When we think of the despair of men—of blasted hopes—Moab may become our wash pot, and may keep us from setting our affection upon their fleeting joys.

Here and there, in the Moab of sin, you meet with men who are in their garments, their trembling limbs, their penury, and their shame living monitors and standing proof that the way of transgressors is hard. There are sins whose judgment hastens as a whirlwind—sins of the flesh which eat into the bones and poison the blood. Sins of appetite that degrade and destroy the frame. If young men knew the price of sin, even in this life, they would not be so keen to purchase pleasurable moments at the price of painful years.

Who would coin his life into iniquity to have it returned to him in this life red-hot from the mint of torment? Mark well the spendthrift, void of understanding! I have seen him at my door. I knew his relatives—people of reputable character and good estate. I have seen him in rags which scarcely covered him, piteously weeping for a piece of bread. Yet a few short years ago he inherited a portion which most men would have thought wealth. In a mad riot, into which he could not crowd enough of debauchery, he spent all that he had.

He was soon penniless, and then loathsome and sorely sick. He was pitied by his friends, but pity has been lost on him, and now none of his kith or kin dare own him. I, too, fed him, clothed him, and found him a

place of labor. The garments which charity had supplied him, within the next few hours, were sold for drink and he was wallowing in drunkenness. The work was deserted almost as soon as attempted. He will die of starvation, if he is not already dead, for he has abandoned himself to every vicious excess and already trembles from head to foot, and looks to be on the borders of the grave.

Nothing keeps him sober but want of another penny to buy a drink. Not even that can restrain him from uncleanness. Hunger, cold, and nakedness he knows full well—and prefers to endure them rather than earn honest bread and abandon his licentiousness. Tears have been wept over him in vain, and many must have been his own tears of misery when he has been in want. The workhouse is his best shelter and its pauper clothing his noble livery. Away from that retreat he is a mass of rags and indescribable filth!

Young Christian professor, if you are tempted by the strange woman, or by the wine which moves itself aright in the cup, look on the victims of these destroyers before you dally with them! See the consequences of sin even in this life, and avoid it! Don't even pass by it! Look not on it, but flee youthful lusts which war against the soul. Thus make filthy Moab to become your wash pot from this time forth.

The unconverted, when they go not thus far, may yet be beacons to us. Observe, for instance, the procrastinating hearer of the Gospel. How certainly he becomes hardened to all rebukes. Early sensibility gives way to indifference. Let us also beware lest we, by trifling with convictions and holy impulses, lose tenderness of conscience. They advance in evil, and at last commit with impunity sins which, years ago, would have struck them with unaffected horror. Let us be cautious lest a similarly blunting process should be carried on upon *our* hearts.

But time would fail me to show you in detail how readily the evil results of sin in others may preserve us from falling into the like—how, in a word, Moab may be our wash pot.

III. A third point suggests itself. Men of this world are made useful to us since they DISCOVER IN US OUR WEAK PLACES. Their opposition, slander, and persecution are a rough pumice stone to remove some of our spots. When young men come to college one of the chief benefits they obtain is the severe criticism to which they are subjected from their tutors and fellow students. Sharp ears hear their slips of speech and they are made conscious of them.

Now in a certain sense the outside world often becomes a college to the Christian. When we are with our dear Christian Brethren, they do not look for our faults—at least they should not—neither do they irritate us and so bring our infirmities to the surface. They treat us so lovingly and gently that we do not know our weak side. Young Christians would be like plants under glass cases in a conservatory and become tender and feeble. But the rough world tries them, and is overruled by God to their strengthening and general benefit.

Men's lynx eyes see our shortcomings, and their merciless tongues inform us of them. And, for my part, I see much advantage brought out of this maliciousness of theirs. They are our monitors and help to keep us

humble, and make us careful. If we cannot bear a little shake from *men*, how shall we bear the shaking of Heaven and earth at the Last Day? The world often tries us as with fire, and the things which we reckoned to be gold and silver perish in the ordeal if they are but counterfeit—and we are gainers by such a loss.

In the world our temper is tried, and too often we become irritated. What then? Why just this. If sanctification has regulated our emotions, patience will have her perfect work and charity will suffer long. But if we are soon angry and find it hard to forgive, let us not so much find fault with those who try us as with *ourselves*, because we cannot bear the ordeal. Our pride must go down! We must become slow to wrath, we must be content to be as our Lord—the meek and lowly Savior. These irritations show us how far we are from the Model, and should excite in us a desire for progress towards His complete Image.

Perhaps you had fondly said in your heart, “I could bear a great deal. I could act the Christian under the worst abuse.” But now you sing another song and find how great your weakness is. Moab thus becomes your wash pot, for now you will go to God in prayer and ask to be subdued to His will. Do not worldly men in some cases frighten professors out of their testimony for Christ? I mean, has it ever happened that our cheek has blanched, and our tongue failed us in the presence of cavilers, blasphemers, and skeptics? And have we not been silent when we ought to have avowed our Lord?

That also shows how cowardly we are at heart, and how cold is our love. We are to blame for not having more courage. If we were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, as we ought to be, we should be ready to go with Christ to prison and to death, and never think of shunning His service. Do you not find that ungodly men, when you are obliged to be in their company in business, will occasionally utter remarks which shake your faith about Truths of God which you imagined you firmly believed?

Too many are content with a superficial creed. Their faith is not rooted deep in their hearts, and therefore a little wind rocks the tree to and fro. And before long the very motion of the tree tends to root it, and it becomes all the more firm. God overrules, for good, the evilness of men against the Truth. Besides, do not ungodly men drive us from loving the world? We might think of finding our rest here below, but when we hear their tongues cruelly and unkindly slandering us, then we are sick of their company—

***“My soul distracted mourn and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troubles vex no more.”***

An extreme case of the way in which evil treatment may tend to our sanctification may be found in the life of one of the old ministers in the north of Scotland. “A cold, unfeeling, bold, unheeding, worldly woman was the wife of Mr. Fraser, one of the ministers of Ross Shire,” writes my beloved friend, Mr. John Kennedy, in his interesting book entitled, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross Shire*. “Never did her godly husband sit down to a comfortable meal in his own home, and often would he have fainted but

for the considerate kindness of some of his parishioners. She was too unfeeling to try to hide her treatment of him, and well was it for him, on one account, that she was.

“His friends thus knew of his ill-treatment, and were moved to do what they could for his comfort. A godly acquaintance arranged with him to leave a supply of food in a certain place, beside his usual walk, of which he might avail himself when starved at home. Even light and fire in his study were denied to him on the long, cold winter evenings. And as his study was his only place of refuge from the cruel scourge of his wife’s tongue and temper, there, shivering and in the dark, he used to spend his winter evenings at home.

“Compelled to walk in order to keep himself warm, and accustomed to do so when preparing for the pulpit, he always kept his hands before him as feelers in the dark, to warn him of his approaching the wall at either side of the room. In this way he actually wore a hole through the plaster at each end of his accustomed beat, on which some eyes have looked that glistened with light from other fire than that of love, at the remembrance of his cruel wife. But the godly husband had learned to thank the Lord for the discipline of this trial.

“Being once at a Presbytery dinner, alone, amidst a group of moderates, one of them proposed, as a toast, the health of their wives, and turning to Mr. Fraser, said, as he winked at his companions, ‘You, of course, will cordially join in drinking to this toast.’ ‘So I will, and so I ought,’ Mr. Fraser said, ‘for mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you.’ ‘How so?’ they all exclaimed. ‘She has sent me,’ was his reply, ‘seven times a day to my knees, when I would not otherwise have gone, and that is more than any of you can say of yours.’”

Ah, this is the way to make Moab our wash pot! That is to say, to make those who grieve us most act but as rough waves to hurry us on to the Rock. If the birds of Paradise will keep to the nest, their ungodly relatives or neighbors shall be a thorn to make them mount into their native element—the Heaven of God. The attacks of the ungodly upon the Church have been overruled by God to make His people leave the camp and forsake ungodly associations so as to be separate.

I know a Beloved Sister in Christ who was baptized. She had moved in high circles, but they told me that after her Baptism she received the cold shoulder. When I heard it, I said, “Thank God for it,” for half her temptations are gone. If the world has turned its back upon her she will be all the more sure to turn her back on the world and live near to her Lord. The friendship of the world is enmity to God—why should we seek it? “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

If any man will follow Christ he must expect persecution, and one of the cardinal precepts of the Christian faith runs thus—“Come you out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters.” “Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.”

IV. Lastly, IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD TO COME, the terrible doom of the ungodly is a most solemn warning to us. My heart fails me to speak concerning the destiny of the ungodly in another world. Dying with-

out hope, without a Savior—they go before the Throne unclean, unforgiven, to hear that awful sentence—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Pursue them for a moment, in your thoughts, down to the deeps of wrath where God’s Judgment shall pursue them. My Lord, I pray You of Your Grace, save me from the sin which brings such a result at the end of it. If the wages of sin are such a death as this, Lord save me from so accursed a service. Will not the sight of their destruction drive us to watchfulness and cause us to make our calling and election sure? Will it not make us anxious lest we also come into this place of torment? O the wrath to come! The wrath to come which this Book speaks in so many terrible tones and dreadful images!

Remember Lot’s wife! “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

In this way Moab becomes our wash pot, by showing us what sin grows to when it has developed itself. This consideration will surely cause us more heartily to love the Savior who can deliver us from it. Dear Friends, if you are not in Christ, much of what I have said bears upon YOU! Think! And pray to escape from the wrath to come. I would not have you be made a mere wash pot to be used and broken as a potter’s vessel. Neither should you wish to be a vessel without honor, a thing of no esteem.

But may you have faith in Jesus—life in Him—and then you shall be a royal diadem, a crown of Glory in the hand of our God. May you have a heritage among those who fear the Lord and are reconciled to Him by faith in the total Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Psalm 60.

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

THE HIGH ROCK

NO. 2728

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 26, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1859.**

*“From the end of the earth will I cry unto You, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”
Psalm 61:2.*

IT is supposed by many that David wrote this Psalm at the time when he fled from his son Absalom. That trial was one of the most grievous of all the afflictions of David's greatly-checked life. It was but a little thing for him to be hunted by Saul like a partridge upon the mountains. It was a small matter for him to have to take refuge with Achish, and to sojourn among the Philistines, an alien from his mother's children. No, all the afflictions of his preceding life were but light trials compared with the revolt of Absalom. He was his father's favorite son, one in whom his soul delighted, for he was a comely personage in his outward appearance and he had a lordly and kingly bearing—he was David's darling, although, in his moral character, utterly unworthy of this distinction. This child of his, who was the nearest to his heart, had the greatest opportunity to cut him to the quick. Those things which we allow to take the chief place in our bosoms have the most power to give us grief.

Absalom, first of all, kills his brother, and then, by dint of courtesy and such pretended generosity, as demagogues always know how to use, won the affections of David's people from their rightful monarch. And then he blew the trumpet and set himself up as king in opposition to his father. No, more than this, he sought his father's life! It was not sufficient for him to seize the crown, but he longed to murder the head that should have worn it. His father was driven from his house and was made to cross, with a few attendants, over the brook Kedron and to go away from the sanctuary of God. He had to dwell in the midst of a forest and sleep among his armed men and, at other times, to camp out upon the open plain. Who can tell the grief of this monarch? Wave after wave had rolled over him. He had often said that he desired to be like the sparrow and the swallow, dwelling beneath the eaves of God's sanctuary—and now his great trouble is that he is driven far away from God's House to what he calls “the end of the earth.”

As he thought of the cause of his exile, how grieved must he have been! For his son, his darling son, the son of his heart, the son whom he

had pardoned, the son whom he had honored, the son whom he had recalled from the banishment he richly deserved—this son had struck him. We know that old quotation from Shakespeare, which is repeated many and many a time, and is always true—

***“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child!”***

Yet here was one who was not only unthankful, but who drove his father into exile and sought his life! David always clung to this child of his even in the time of his greatest iniquity. When at last he was compelled to send out his army against the rebel, you remember how he commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.” And when he was killed, you know how David lamented over him, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” Now, from the very fact that David loved this young man so much, his sorrows must have been peculiarly poignant. If a man can bring his mind to thrust out from his bosom one who has proved ungrateful, then half the battle is over. If love can cut the link—can say, “I have done with you, I will reckon you now no more my child”—then the heart steels itself against its deepest sorrow, and the arrow rattles only against the harness. But it was not so with David—he still opened wide his breast to his unworthy son.

Let us who stand in the relation of children to our parents, remember that it is in our power to give them the greatest possible grief—and yet would we not, each of us, sooner die than that those who brought us forth should have to lament on account of us? Yet, haply, there are some of you who are bringing your parents’ gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. O you who are cursing your father’s God—who are desecrating the day that your parents reckon to be holy—you who despise the Gospel which your father and mother love, remember that you are not only grieving God, but you are grieving your parents also! Push them not into the tomb before their time, lest their ashes testify against you and lest, in the hour of *your* trouble, when *your* children treat you in like manner, you should have to learn the bitterness of rearing in your own bosom the serpent that shall sting you with the deadliest venom! Let each of us take heed that we deal gently with our parents and always treat kindly those who have tenderly fostered us.

With this preface, let us now turn to our text, and I think we shall understand it all the better from this little reference to David’s history. There are three Truths of God here. The first is, that *prayer is always available*—“From the end of the earth will I cry unto You, when my heart is overwhelmed.” The second Truth is, that *sometimes even the Believer cannot get to Christ as he could wish*, but that then there is a way provided for leading him to Christ—“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” Then, in the third place, we shall consider *Christ under the aspect of a Rock that is higher than we are*.

I. In the first place, let us remember that PRAYER IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE—in every place and in every condition of our spirit—“From the end of the earth will I cry unto You.”

Suppose it is possible for us to be banished to the uttermost verge of the green earth, to “rivers unknown to song”? Suppose us to be hastened far away where dwindling daylight dies out and where the sun’s bleak ray scarcely scatters light on the world—where vegetation, dwarfing and declining, at last dies out? Suppose us to be banished into exile, without a friend and without a helper? Even there, from the end of the earth, we would find that prayer to God was still available! In fact, if there is a place nearer than another to God’s Throne, it is the end of the earth, for the end of the earth is the beginning of Heaven! When our strength ends, there God’s Omnipotence begins. Nature’s extremity is God’s opportunity. If wicked monarchs should banish all God’s people, their banishment would be an object of contempt, for how can they banish those who are strangers wherever they may be? Is not my Father’s House a large one? Yon dome, the blue sky, its roof? The rolling seas, the swelling floods, the green meads, the huge mountains—are not these the floors of His House? And where can I be driven out of the dominions of my God and beyond the reach of His love? Banishment may seem a trouble to the Christian, but if he looks up and sees his Father’s House—and beholds the smile of his God—he will know that such a thing as banishment is to him an impossibility! But supposing us to be exiled from everything that is dear to us? Even then we should not be shut out from access to God’s Throne!

I think David meant, by the expression, “the end of the earth,” a place where he should be far away from his friends, far away from human help and far away from God’s sanctuary.

God’s people are sometimes brought into such a condition that they are *far away from friends*. Such an one walks the streets of London and thinks, “Oh, if I could only tell my sorrow to a friend, then I might find some relief! But amidst all the myriad faces that hurry like a stream along the road, I see not one that tempts me to tell my tale. I look around and find myself a stranger amidst multitudes of my countrymen.” Perhaps you know what it is to have a trouble which you are compelled to bear yourself, which you could not describe even to those in your own house, though your friends would have been ready to help you if they had known—yet it was such that, with all their readiness, they would not have had ability to assist you in it, the biggest words could not have told it, and the bitterest tears could not have spelled it out! You were far away from friends in reality, though they were all round you. Now this is what David meant by “the end of the earth”—far away from friends—yet even then, when friend and helper and lover failed, did he cry unto his God.

Again, he meant by, “the end of the earth,” *far away from human help*. There are difficulties into which the true Believer is brought that no human hand can remove. His spiritual affairs are weights too heavy for human strength to lift. Though all the giants of earth should come and

strain their backs until their shoulders should give way, and their limbs should totter beneath the enormous load, yet the spiritual necessities of the Christian could not be carried by them—they are an intolerable burden for human shoulders—none but God can sustain them. There are times when we are sighing after spiritual mercies, when we are groaning under the withdrawal of God's Countenance, when our sins are hunting us like packs of wolves, when afflictions are rolling over us like huge billows—when faith is little and fear is great, when hope is dim, and doubt becomes terrible and dark—then we are far away from human help. But, blessed be God, even then we may cry unto Him—

***“When anxious cares disturb the breast,
When threatening foes are nigh,
To Him we pour our deep complaint,
To Him for succor fly.”***

No, more, even in *temporal* affairs there are times when the Christian gets into such a place that no earthly friend can help him. He has made some mistake—perhaps in the ardency of his zeal to do right, he has done wrong—in the attempt to run in the ways of God, he overshot the road and got into another place, and found himself in the path of evil when he hoped to be in the way of right. Such things have happened. Business men, with all their carefulness, have made miscalculations and have found themselves plunged into difficulties from which they see no way of escape. In vain do others offer help. Wealth would not avail, for character is at stake. Yet even then, “from the end of the earth,” when human help has failed them, they have cried unto God and if they have cried in faith, they have never found that God has ceased to hear as long as they have continued to cry to Him!

By “the end of the earth,” I think, too, David means *at a distance from the means of Grace*. Sometimes, by sickness, either personal or the sickness of our relatives, we are detained from the House of God. At other times, in journeying by land or upon the sea, we are unable to be in God's sanctuary and to use the means of Grace. This is a great deprivation to God's people. You will find that a true Christian had rather miss a meal than lose his daily portion of Scripture, or his frequent resort to the House of Prayer. That man is no child of God who does not value the means of Grace. I tremble for that man's piety who professes himself able to maintain the vital spark of Grace within him when the means of Grace are at hand and he lives in neglect of them! Some people, if they go to a watering-place, or a little way out of town, say, “Well, there is nobody here who preaches my sentiments, so I shall not go anywhere.” I would remind them that the Apostle Paul said, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” If there is no place of worship especially dedicated to God, we bless Him that—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground”***—

but if there is a building that is open for the worship of God, even if I could not enjoy the preaching of the minister, I would go there to join in

the singing of Christ's praises and to offer my prayer with the multitude that keep holy-day.

Still, there must be in our lives different times when we are away from the sanctuary of God and, to the Christian, that will be like being at the end of the earth. But then, thanks be to God, we may still cry unto Him. When no Sabbath bell shall summon us to the House of Prayer, when no servant of the Lord shall proclaim, with happy voice, the promise of pardoning mercy, when there shall not be seen the multitude on bended knees and when the sacred shout of praise is unheard—and we are far away from the gatherings of God's House—yet we are not far away from Him and we may still say to Him, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto You."

It seems, however, that the Psalmist was in a worse plight than this, for a man might be at the end of the earth and still be happy, for it is not the *place* that makes the man, but the man that makes the place! A man might be in paradise even in Hell, itself, if his heart were right with God. Let a man have his heart full of peace and joy and happiness, and it is impossible to make that man miserable. I have often thought that when people find fault with their station in life, they are making a great mistake—they should find fault with themselves. Many a man is miserable whose head wears a crown, and many are happy whose heads have no place of repose. Some who are in rags have rich hearts, while many who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously everyday, have starving spirits, for, after all, it is the *mind* that is the standard of the man, and if the mind is happy, the place where the man is does not matter at all.

But, alas for poor David! He had been wrong without and wrong within, too, so that he had to cry, "My heart is overwhelmed." I find, in Calvin's notes on this text a most extraordinary translation and, as he says, a very harsh one—"While my heart is turned about," that is, tossed here and there, or agitated. There is an expression of a similar character where John Bunyan says that he was exceedingly tumbled up and down in his mind. It does seem that one meaning of this text may be, "When my spirit is tumbled about"—when it is out of order, when it is brought into a kind of chaos and confusion—when, to use another word which expresses closely the idea of the Hebrew, "My spirit is wrapped over and over"—when it is covered as a man covers his face in the day of grief because his sorrow is so great that he shuns the sun and would not have his fellow creature's eyes behold the anguish of his soul—"even then," says he, "when my spirit is overwhelmed, will I cry unto You."

Turn the heart upside down and then you will get the idea of its being overwhelmed. Even then, what does the Psalmist say? "You people, pour out your heart before Him." If your heart is turned over, let it be emptied before the Lord! David says, in another Psalm, "I pour out my soul in me." How foolish that was! It did him no good—it was the wrong place for his soul to be poured out! He was much wiser when he said, "Pour out your heart before Him." It is a happy way to pray, when the heart is

turned upside down, to spill all its contents at the foot of the Throne of Grace. Perhaps, sometimes, the overwhelming of our heart is only meant to empty all its dregs out of it, that the last particle of self-righteousness, self-reliance and self-confidence may be drained out at the Mercy Seat, that there may be room for an overflowing abundance of Divine Grace.

Imagine a vessel at sea and you can get an idea of the meaning of our text. It has been laboring in a storm, sometimes lifted up to Heaven, as though its masts would sweep the stars. Then again descending until its keel seemed dragging on the ocean bed—first staggering this way, and then that way, reeling to and fro, now rushing forward and now starting back—like a drunken man, or like a madman who has lost his way! At last a huge sea comes rolling on, its white crest of foam can be seen in the distance and the sailors give up all for lost. On comes the wave, gathering up all its strength till it dashes against the ship and—down the vessel goes, it is overwhelmed! The decks are swept, the masts are gone, the timbers are creaking, the ship descends and is sucked down as in a whirlpool—all is lost. “Now,” says David, “that is the case with my heart. It is overwhelmed, drawn into a vortex of trouble, borne down by a tremendous sea of difficulty, crushed and broken! The ribs of my soul seem to have given way. Every timber of my vessel is cracked and gone out of its place. My heart is overwhelmed within me.” Can you now get an idea of the extreme sorrow of the Psalmist’s spirit? “Yet,” he says, “even then, will I cry unto You.” Oh, noble faith that can cry amidst the shrieking of the tempest and the howling of the storm! Oh, glorious faith that from the bottom of the sea can shoot its arrows to the heights of Heaven! Oh, masterpiece of faith that from a broken spirit can present prevailing prayer! Oh, glorious triumph that from the end of the earth can send a prayer which can reach all the way to Heaven!

And now, Christian, may God help you to make up your mind to this, that wherever you are, you will never leave off praying, whatever the devil says to you. If he should urge you to forsake the Mercy Seat, say to him, “Get behind me, Satan.” If he should say that you have sinned too much to pray, tell him his argument proves the reverse—the more you have sinned, the more you should pray. If he tells you that your difficulties are tremendous, tell him that the very greatness of the difficulties in which you are involved should bear you nearer to God. Never cease to cry while you have breath! And when you have no breath, still cry. As long as you can speak, cry unto Him—and when you cannot speak—let groans that cannot be uttered still go up before God’s Throne. Cease not to pray in every difficulty and in every strait betake yourself to your closet, for there you shall find God even if you cannot find Him anywhere else.

Let me also say this word to anyone who has begun to pray, but who has not yet found peace with God, although he is overwhelmed by a sense of his guilt. My dear Friend, if God has overwhelmed you with a sense of sin and if you feel as if you were far away from mercy—at the very end of the earth—yet, I beseech you, cry unto Him! Mark, our text says, “Cry.” Oh, what power there is in that simple act of crying! As I

rode here, this evening, I saw a boy sitting on the pavement crying with all his might about something or other he had broken. And I observed a lady, who was going by, stop a moment, for the poor fellow's face was so much awry, and the tears were flowing so plentifully that she seemed as if she must give him something. And, indeed, I felt inclined, if I had not been in a hurry to come here, to stop and ask him what he was crying for, for one cannot bear to see a fellow creature weeping.

All beggars who want to deceive, take to crying, for they know that has an effect upon susceptible ladies who are passing by—there is great power in tears and these people know it. The best style of prayer is that which cannot be called anything else but a cry. Now, if you cannot pray as many do—if you cannot stand up in a Prayer Meeting and pray fluently and eloquently like others do—as long as the Lord enables you to cry, I beseech you, do not leave off crying! Cry, “Lord, have mercy on me!” “Lord, save, or I perish!” “Lord, appear unto me.” “I am the chief of sinners, Lord, manifest Yourself to me.” Cry, cry, cry, poor Sinner! And He that hears the young ravens when they cry will hear you! Do not think that the voice of your crying shall be lost. The voice of boasting dies away unheard, but the voice of crying penetrates the ears of God, reaches His heart and moves His hands to give a plenitude of blessings. Above all things, Sinner, if you feel your need of a Savior, keep on crying—Satan can never harm you while God helps you to cry. So long as you have a word of prayer on your lips, the Law of God has not a word of condemnation to utter against you. If you can cry at God's Mercy Seat, then that is a proof that Christ is crying on your behalf at His Father's Glory Seat. Be you instant in prayer and you shall be successful in it. When your heart is overwhelmed, even from the end of the earth, cry unto God!

II. I must speak very briefly upon the second point, which is this. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN EVEN A BELIEVER CANNOT GET TO CHRIST AS HE DESIRES.

Then, thank God there is the prayer of our text—“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” Some people make out faith to be a marvelously easy thing—and so it is in theory—but it is the hardest thing in the world in practice. If men are to be saved on the condition of their repenting and believing, they can be no more saved than on the condition of their being perfect, unless there is added to this condition the promise that the God who *requires* faith will *give* faith and work repentance in them! I have been astonished to find, in this age, that there are great preachers and men who, I have no doubt, gather many around them, who tell the people that the condition and the ground of the sinner's justification are his faith, his repentance and his obedience. Why, the ground of our justification is *the righteousness of Christ!* And as to conditions, there is no condition at all, for God gives justification freely! And He gives faith and He gives repentance, too—it is all His gift. There never was a man saved by faith or repentance which he performed as a matter of duty. Albeit that the Word of God demands of every man that he should submit himself to God by repentance, and lay hold of Christ by faith, yet no man *ever will*

or ever can do this of himself—it is only the Sovereign will of God and the Sovereign Grace of God that give repentance and faith.

Sometimes God, in His Sovereignty, is pleased to show a man his sin, but not to show him his Savior for a season. He strips the sinner—perhaps he leaves him to shiver in the cold before He clothes him, just to let him know what a gift that robe of Christ's righteousness is! He kills him, pierces him through and through with the Law, and there lets him lie in utter inability, for a season, before He quickens him and makes him spiritually alive. The fact is, God acts as He chooses with those whom He saves. He sometimes gives repentance and faith at the same time, just as the thunder sometimes follows the lightning at once. At other times, He gives repentance and then He makes us tarry for many a day before He gives us full assurance of our interest in Christ—but they are sure to follow one another, sooner or later. God never gave conviction without at last giving faith! He never led a man out of himself without at last leading him to Christ! If He brought him down to despair, He afterwards lifted him up to hope. But, still, there may be a gap between the two and during such a period it is our business to use this blessed prayer, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. Oh, help me to believe! Lord, enable me to see the need of Your Son. Give me the power to look unto Him who was pierced, and, as You have given me eyes to weep, so give me eyes to look on Him and Grace to rejoice in Him as mine." So, you see, if we cannot believe, if doubts so overwhelm us that we cannot get to Christ to our own satisfaction, remember that it is the Holy Spirit's office to draw us to Christ and we may, therefore, pray to Him, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

III. We are now coming to that part of the text which most of all delights my soul, the thought of JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN WE ARE.

We have all various standards for measuring things and, after all, men must measure by themselves. If you hear a man praising another, you will generally find that the reason he praises that other is because he sees in him something very much like what he possesses himself. "There," he says, "I love a man who is honest and outspoken." He means, all the while, that he thinks himself a remarkably honest and outspoken man and, therefore, he loves to see himself reproduced in another! After all, we generally measure with our own measuring-rods. We take ourselves to be the standard for other people. A few nights ago I proved this in my own case. Going along Bermondsey, I looked in at the shop windows to see what time it was. One clock said ten minutes to seven, another said seven o'clock, and another said ten minutes past. Then I began to think what a pity it was I had not my own watch with me—what was that but a belief that my own watch was infallible and that all the clocks were probably wrong? There is a great deal of trying ourselves on the touchstones of our own infallible selves and even the Christian is not altogether free from this practice till he gets to Heaven! So the Lord gra-

ciously adapts His Word to our poor littleness and speaks of Jesus as the Rock higher than we are.

Come here, Beloved, and let us measure the Rock Christ Jesus as far as we can by comparison. Here is a man who is a great sinner. "Ah," he says, "I am, indeed, a great sinner. My iniquities reach so high that they have ascended above the very stars! They have gone before me to the Judgment Seat of God and they are clamoring for my destruction." Well, Sinner, come here and measure this Rock. You are very high, it is true, but this Rock is higher than you are. Estimate yourself at the greatest you possibly can. Set your sins down at some inconceivable height! If you have thought yourself to be a very Goliath in sin. If you say, "I am as big a sinner as Saul of Tarsus was," put your sin, pile on pile, tier on tier, no, borrow your neighbor's sins and take them all, and then remember that—

***"If all the sins that men have done
In will, in word, in thought and deed
Since worlds were made and time begun,
Were laid on one poor sinner's head—
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
Could for this mass of sin atone,
And sweep it all away."***

However high your sin may be, there is the cover of a Rock in a weary land higher than you are, and under this you may shelter yourself!

Here comes another forward. He is not a man full of doubts and fears, but he is a man of hopeful spirit. "Oh," he says, "I have many sins, but I hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will take them all away. I have many needs, but I hope that He will supply them. I shall have many temptations, but I hope that He will ward them off. I shall have many difficulties, but I hope He will carry me through them." Ah, Man, I like to see you have a good long measuring rod when it is made of hope! Hope is a tall companion—he wades right through the sea and is not drowned—you cannot kill him, do what you may! Hope is one of the last blessings God gives us and one that abides at the last with us. If a man is foodless and without covering, still he hopes to see better days, by-and-by. Now, Sinner, your hopes, I would have you to see, are very tall and very high—but remember, this Rock is higher than any of your hopes! Hope whatever you please. Let your hope expand itself—let it climb the highest mountain and stand on it—let it lift up itself higher and yet higher, but this Rock is higher still! Christ is a better Christ than you can hope for—He has more mercy than you hope for! He has more power to save than you hope to receive, more love than you can hope to have! He has a better Heaven for you than you could hope to enjoy!

But here comes another, and he says, "Ah, my hope has grown strong, I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is a precious Christ. I can speak well of Him, for He has been my sure defense in every time of war, my refuge in every time of distress, my granary in every hour of famine, my light in every night of darkness. I can speak well of Him and, in consequence of what I know of Him, I can believe that He is able

to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. I believe Him to be all that He says He is. I believe in His Word. I rejoice in Him—my faith scarcely knows a bound when I begin to think what He is, and what He has done for me.” Yes, but He is a Rock higher than your faith! I love to see your faith mounting up very high, but Christ is better than your faith and higher than your faith. Why, Man, if your faith were twice as great as it is, Christ would be a warrant for it all! No, if your faith could be multiplied a thousand times more, so that you could believe more of Him, and better things of Him, and higher things of Him, still He would be higher than your faith could ever climb!

I do hope to grow in faith, and get more and more of that celestial virtue. I think I believe my Master better, now, than I did once, though sometimes I think my faith fails me. Yet I am sure that I do enjoy a quieter conscience than I did, and a more peaceful calm than at one time I experienced. And I hope to believe in Him still more. I pray that my faith may continually increase so that, being rooted and grounded in Him, I may grow up to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus. But this I know, though you or I should grow till our faith should be greater than that of Paul, till it should be such a faith that it should say to the fig tree, “Be you plucked up by the roots,” or to the mountain, “Be you cast into the sea,” and it should be done—still, even then—*Christ would be higher than our faith*. We might believe a great deal about Him, but would faith grasp all, even then? It has long arms, but not long enough to encompass Christ—He is greater than faith itself could conceive Him to be!

Here comes another. He says, “Ah, blessed be God, I have a golden measuring rod here—not that of hope, or fear, or faith, but, better still, the measuring rod of enjoyment.” “Ah,” says one, “how high have I been in enjoyment of Christ! He has taken me to Calvary and there I have seen the flowing of His precious blood—

***‘With Divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God.’***

Not content with that, he has taken me to Tabor! There I have seen my Lord transfigured and have beheld His Glory, as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth. No, more, He has taken me to the top of Pisgah and He has bid me ‘view the landscape o’er.’ I have seen the joys which He has reserved for them that love Him. But,” says the Believer, “Christ has said to me, ‘Friend, come up higher.’ When I first went to the feast, I sat in the lower room of Repentance. He came in and said, ‘Friend, come up higher,’ and He took me into another chamber called Faith. And then He came in again, and said, ‘Friend, come up higher.’ And He took me to the upper room of Assurance. Then He saw me again, and He said, ‘Friend, come up higher,’ and He took me to the upper room of Communion. And sometimes he seems to me to say, ‘Friend, come up higher, into the ecstatic bliss which the highest degrees of constant fellowship can give.’ And I am now waiting only till He should say, ‘Come up higher,’ and take me to His own bosom, to tarry with Him forever!”

Ah, well, I am glad to hear you talk thus. I wish I had many of those whose pastures are in these high places, many who could say that they had grown tall in these delightful things! But, remember, this Rock is higher than you are! All you have ever enjoyed of Christ is but as the beginning of a topless mountain. When I have been in Scotland, I have gone up some of the hills there and I have thought, "This is a very high place, indeed! What a fine view there is, what a height I have reached!" "Ah," someone has said, "but if you were to see the Alps, this hill would only seem like the beginning—you would only have got to the foot when you had climbed as high as this!" And so it is with you. By your experience, your sweet enjoyment, you think you have reached the top of the mountain—but Christ comes and whispers to you, "Look yonder, far above those clouds—you have only begun to go up! This hill of communion is only one step. As yet you have only taken a child's leap—you have farther to go, far higher than you could imagine or conceive." Ah, this is, indeed, a Rock higher than you are, the highest in communion—and the next to the Throne of God!

"Well," cries another, "from what I have heard, and what I have read in God's Word, I am expecting very great things of Christ when I shall see Him as He is. Oh, Sir, if He is better than the communion of His saints can make Him. If He is sweeter than all His most eloquent preachers can speak of Him. If He is so delightful that those who know Him best cannot tell His beauties, what a precious—what a glorious—what an inconceivable Christ He must be!" Ah, Friend, I am glad you are measuring Christ by your expectation! But let me tell you—high as your expectations are, He is higher than you are! Expect what you may, but when you see Him, you will say with the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me." You may sit down and think of Christ's glories and splendors, of the happiness that He has provided for His people, till you lose yourself in a very sea of delightful meditation! The promise dropped into your heart may go on widening in circles till you have grasped a whole universe of pleasure and delight in contemplating the name of Christ—but, remember, when you have conceived the most, Christ the Rock is still far above what you have conceived and imagined!

Let us pause here and ask—What shall we do with a hill that is higher than we are? Shall we lie forever at its base and not attempt to climb it? God forbid! Shall we pretend that we have climbed it? That were presumption! So let us press forward, evermore ascending it, ever crying when we get at the greatest height, "Lord, still lead me up, still lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am; lead me on, O Lord, till I come to Heaven, and even then, still lead me beside the living fountains of water, still lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am! O Lord, always help me to be climbing, pressing forward, looking not on that which is behind, but on that which is before, pressing forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

Now, as some of you will be exercised with troubles, remember that the Rock is higher than you are. And when your troubles reach you, if

you are not high enough to escape them, climb up to the Rock Christ, for there is no trouble that can reach you when you get there! Satan will be howling at you and, perhaps he will be nibbling at your heel, barking and biting at you—so climb into the Rock Christ and he will not be able to reach you, and you will scarcely hear his howling—he will be low down in the valley when you are in the Rock higher than he is! Fears will arise and doubts will come in like a flood—there is no place so safe in the time of a flood as a high rock, so climb to the Rock Christ—and then, though the waves of the sea roar and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, you will be secure if you are on the Rock that is higher than you are! And oh, while the world is dragging you down, forever seek to be climbing up! If the devil says, “Come down, again, and be worldly! Come down and be selfish,” always cry, “Lord, lead me up, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am. My country is in the skies. Help me to be climbing upwards—never permit me to descend, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am.”

And as for you who are still under a sense of sin, who have not yet found the Savior, let this be your prayer, “Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am.” Do not get to measuring Christ by yourselves. As high as Heaven is above the earth, so high are His thoughts above your thoughts, and His ways above your ways. O Beloved, you should measure God’s Grace by the immeasurable—not by your nothingness, but by His infinity! Remember, God’s mercy is beyond all bounds, for it swells above the flood of our sins. If our sins are as mountains, Christ’s mercy, like the stars, shines as much above the mountains as above the valleys! Cry out, Sinner, when Satan is dragging you down to the pit, “Lord, save me from the devouring flames and lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” And then, thank God, Christ is a Rock—not a mound that is raised by man! And that Rock shall stand forever! And if I get on it, there is no fear that the Rock will shake. I may shake on it, but it will never shake under me—and if my enemies try to attack me, I can hide myself in the clefts of the Rock where they cannot reach me! And though ten thousand ages roll away, and many a stone is moved from its place, this Rock shall still abide—

“When rolling years shall cease to move.”

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

GOD ALONE THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE NO. 80

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 18, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”
Psalm 62:2.***

How noble a title. So sublime, suggestive and overpowering. “MY ROCK.” It is a figure so Divine, that to God, alone, shall it ever be applied. Look on yon rocks and wonder at their antiquity, for from their summits a thousand ages look down upon us. When this gigantic city was as yet unfounded, they were gray with age. When our humanity had not yet breathed the air, ‘tis said that these were ancient things. They are the children of departed ages. With awe we look upon these aged rocks for they are among nature’s first-born. You discover embedded in them the remnants of unknown worlds, of which, the wise may *guess*, but which, nevertheless, they must fail to *know* unless God, Himself, should teach them what has been before them. You regard the rock with reverence, for you remember what stories it might tell if it had a voice, of how through igneous and aqueous agency it has been tortured into the shape it now assumes. Even so is our God pre-eminently ancient. His head and His hair are white like wool, as white as snow, for He is “the Ancient of Days,” and we are always taught in Scripture to remember that He is “without beginning of years.” Long before Creation was begotten, “from everlasting to everlasting,” He was God!

“My Rock!” What a history the rock might give you of the storms to which it has been exposed. Of the tempests which have raged in the ocean at its base and of the thunders which have disturbed the skies above its head—while it, itself, has stood unscathed by tempests and unmoved by the buffeting of storms. So with our God! How firm has He stood—how steadfast has He been—though the nations have reviled Him and “the kings of the earth have taken counsel together!” By merely standing still, He has broken the ranks of the enemy without even stretching forth His hand! With motionless grandeur like a rock, He has broken the waves and scattered the armies of His enemies, driving them back in confusion. Look at the rock, again—see how firm and unmoved it stands! It does not stray from place to place but it abides fast forever. Other things have changed, islands have been drowned beneath the sea and continents have been shaken, but see, the rock stands as steadfast

as if it were the very foundation of the whole world and could not move till the wreck of Creation, or the loosening of the bands of Nature. So with God—how faithful He is in His promises! How unalterable in His decrees! How unswerving! How unchanging!

The rock is immutable, nothing has been worn from it. Yon old granite peak has gleamed in the sun, or worn the white veil of winter snow—it has sometimes worshipped God with bare uncovered head and at other times the clouds furnished it with veiling wings, that like a cherub, it might adore its Maker. But yet it, itself, has stood unchanged. The frosts of winter have not destroyed it, nor have the heats of summer melted it. It is the same with God. Lo, He is my Rock! He is the same and His Kingdom shall have no end. Unchangeable He is in His Being, firm in His own sufficiency. He keeps Himself Immutably the same. And “therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The ten thousand uses of the rock, moreover, are full of ideas as to what God is. You see the fortress standing on a high rock, up which the clouds, themselves, can scarcely climb and up whose precipices the assault cannot be carried. The armed cannot travel, for the besieged laugh at them from their eminence. So is our God a sure defense and we shall not be moved if He has “set our feet upon a rock and established our goings.” Many a giant rock is a source of admiration from its elevation—on its summit we can see the world spread out below, like some small map. We mark the river or broadly spreading stream as if they were a vein of silver inlaid in emerald! We discover the nations beneath our feet, “like drops in a bucket,” and the islands are “very little things” in the distance, while the sea, itself, seems but a basin of water, held in the hand of a mighty giant. The mighty God is such a Rock! We stand on Him and look down on the world, counting it to be a little thing. We have climbed to Pisgah’s top, from the summit of which we can race across this world of storms and troubles to the bright land of spirits—that world unknown to ear or eye, but which God’s Truth is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. This mighty Rock is our refuge and our high observatory from which we see the unseen and have the evidence of things which as yet we have not enjoyed. I need not, however, stop to tell you all about a rock—we might preach for a week upon it—but we give you that for your meditation during the week. “*He is my Rock.*” How glorious a thought! How safe am I and how secure—and how may I rejoice in the fact that when I wade through Jordan’s stream, He will be my Rock! I shall not walk upon a slippery foundation, but I shall tread on Him who cannot betray my feet. And I may sing, when I am dying, “He is my Rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

We now leave the thought of the rock and proceed to the subject of our discourse, which is this—that God, alone, is the salvation of His people—

“He ONLY is my Rock and my Salvation.”

We shall notice, first, *the great Doctrine, that God only is our salvation.* Secondly, *the great experience, to know and to learn that, "He only is my Rock and my salvation.* And, thirdly, *the great duty, which you may guess is to give all the glory and all the honor and place all our faith on Him "who only is our Rock and our Salvation."*

I. The first thing is THE GREAT DOCTRINE—that God “only is our Rock and our Salvation.” If anyone should ask us what we would choose for our motto, as preachers of the Gospel, we think we would reply, “God only is our Salvation.” The late lamented Mr. Denham has put at the foot of his portrait a most admirable text, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Now that is just an epitome of Calvinism—it is the sum and the substance of it. If anyone should ask you what you mean by a Calvinist, you may reply, “he is one who says, *salvation is of the Lord.*” I cannot find in Scripture any other Doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.” Tell me anything that departs from this and it will be a heresy. Tell me a heresy and I shall find its essence here—that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rocky Truth of God—“God is my Rock and my Salvation.” What is the heresy of Rome but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ—the bringing in of the works of the flesh to assist in our justification? And what is that heresy of Arminianism but the secret addition of something to the complete work of the Redeemer? You will find that every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here—it departs from this—“He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

Let us now explain this Doctrine fully. By the term, “salvation,” I understand not simply regeneration and conversion, but something more. I do not reckon that is, “salvation,” which regenerates me and then puts me in such a position that I may fall out of the Covenant and be lost! I cannot call that a, “bridge,” which only goes half-way over the stream. I cannot call that, “salvation,” which does not carry me all the way to Heaven, wash me perfectly clean and put me among the glorified who sing constant hosannas around the Throne! By, “salvation,” then, if I may divide it into parts, I understand deliverance, preservation continually through life, sustenance and the gathering up of the whole in the perfecting of the saints in the Person of Jesus Christ at last.

1. By, salvation, I understand *deliverance* from the house of bondage, wherein by nature I am born and being brought out into the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, together with a putting “on a rock and establishing my goings.” This I understand to be wholly of God. And I think I am right in that conclusion because I find in Scripture that man is dead. And how can a dead man assist in his own resurrection? I find that man is utterly depraved and hates the Divine change. How can a man, then, work that change which he hates? I find man to be ignorant of what it is to be born-again and, like Nicodemus, asking the foolish ques-

tion, “How can a man enter again into his mother’s womb and be born?” I cannot conceive that a man can do that which he does not understand—and if he does not know what it is to be born-again, he cannot make himself to be born-again! No, I believe man to be utterly powerless in the first work of his salvation. He cannot break his chains, for though they are not chains of iron, they are chains of his own flesh and blood. He must first break his own heart before he can break the fetters that bind him. And how shall man break his own heart? What hammer is that which I can use upon my own soul to break it, or what fire can I kindle which can dissolve it? No, deliverance is of God alone! The Doctrine is affirmed continually in Scripture. And he who does not believe it, does not receive God’s Truth. Deliverance is of God, alone—“Salvation is of the Lord.”

2. And if we are delivered and made alive in Christ, *preservation* is still of the Lord, alone. If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful—if I have Graces, God gives me Graces. If I have fruits, God gives me fruits. If I hold on in a consistent life, God holds me on in a consistent life. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation except what God Himself first does in me! Whatever I have—all my goodness is of the Lord, alone! But when I sin, *that* is my own, but wherein I act rightly, that is of God, wholly and completely! If I have repulsed an enemy, His strength nerved my arm. Did I strike a foe to the ground? God’s strength sharpened my sword and gave me courage to strike the blow! Do I preach His Word? It is not I, but Divine Grace that is in me. Do I live to God a holy life? It is not I, but Christ who lives in me. Am I sanctified? I did not sanctify myself—God’s Holy Spirit sanctifies me! Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by God’s chastisements. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor teaches me! I find in God all I need, and I find in myself, nothing. “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

3. And again—*sustenance* also is absolutely requisite. We need sustenance in Providence for our bodies and sustenance in Grace for our souls. Providential mercies are wholly from the Lord. It is true the rain falls from Heaven and waters the earth and “makes it bring forth and bud that there may be seed for the sower and bread for the eater.” But out of whose hand comes the rain and from whose fingers do the dew drops distil? It is true, the sun shines and makes the plants grow and bud and bring forth the blossom and its heat ripens the fruit upon the tree. But who gives the sun its light and who scatters the genial heat from it? It is true, I work and toil, this brow sweats. These hands are weary. I cast myself upon my bed and there I rest, but I do not ascribe my preservation to my own might. Who makes these sinews strong? Who makes these lungs like iron and who makes these nerves of steel? “God only is the Rock of my Salvation.” He only is the salvation of my body and the salvation of my soul! Do I feed on the Word? That Word would be no

food for me unless the Lord made it food for my soul and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from Heaven? What is that manna, but Jesus Christ, Himself, Incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink? Am I continually receiving fresh increase of might? Where do I gather my might? My salvation is of Him—without Him I can do nothing! As a branch cannot bring forth fruit unless it abides in the vine, no more can I, unless I abide in Him!

4. Then if we gather the three thoughts in one. The *perfection* we shall soon have when we shall stand yonder, near God's Throne, will be wholly of the Lord! That bright crown which shall sparkle on our brow like a constellation of brilliant stars shall have been fashioned only by our God! I go to a land, but it is a land which the plow of earth has never turned up—though it is greener than earth's best pastures. And though it is richer than all her harvests ever saw, I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man has built! It is not of mortal architecture. It is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." All I shall know in Heaven will be given by the Lord. And I shall say when, at last I appear before Him—

***"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days!
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."***

II. And now, Beloved, we come to THE GREAT EXPERIENCE. The greatest of all experiences, I take it, is to know that, "He only is our Rock and our Salvation." We have been insisting upon a Doctrine. But Doctrine is nothing unless proved in our experience. Most of God's Doctrines are only to be learned by practice—by taking them out into the world and letting them bear the wear and tear of life. If I ask any Christian in this place whether this Doctrine is true, if he has had any deep experience, he will reply, "True I say, that it is. Not one Word in God's Bible is more true than that, for, indeed, salvation is of God alone." "He only is my Rock and my Salvation." But, Beloved, it is very hard to have such an experimental knowledge of the Doctrine that we never depart from it. It is very hard to believe that "salvation is of the Lord." There are times when we put our confidence in something other than God—and we sin by linking hand-in-hand with God something besides Him! Let me now dwell a little upon the experience which will bring us to know that salvation is of God alone.

The true Christian will confess that salvation is of God alone *effectively*, that is, that "He works in him to will and to do of His own pleasure." Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God—of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun gave me light. I did not commence my spiritual life—no, I rather kicked and struggled against the things of the Spirit. When He drew me,

for a time I did not run after Him. There was a natural hatred in my soul for everything holy and good. Woosings were lost upon me—warnings were cast to the wind—thunders were despised. And as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity! But sure I am, I can say, now, speaking on behalf of myself and of all who know the Lord, “He only is my Salvation and your Salvation, too.” It was He who turned your heart and brought you down on your knees. You can say in very deed, then—

***“Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes overflow.”***

And coming to this moment, you can say—

***“’Tis Grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”***

I remember when I was coming to the Lord. I thought I was doing it all myself and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. One day when I was sitting in the House of God I was not thinking much about the man’s sermon for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, “*How did you come to be a Christian?*” I sought the Lord. “*But how did you come to seek the Lord?*” The thought flashed across my mind in a moment—I would not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him! I am sure you will not be many weeks a Christian, certainly not many months, before you will say, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.” I desire to make this my constant confession. I know there are some who preach one Gospel in the morning and another at night—who preach a good sound Gospel in the morning because they are preaching to saints—but preach lies in the evening because they are preaching to sinners. But there is no necessity to preach Truth at one time and lies at another—“The Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” There is no need to put anything else in it, in order to bring sinners to the Savior! But, my Brothers and Sisters, you must confess that “Salvation is of the Lord.” When you turn back to the past, you must say, “My Lord, whatever I have, You gave it to me. Have I the wings of faith? I was a wingless creature once. Have I the eyes of faith? I was a blind creature once. I was dead till You made me alive, blind, till You opened my eyes. My heart was a loathsome dunghill but You put pearls there, if pearls there are, for pearls are not the product of dunghills—You have given me all I have.”

And so, if you look at the present, if your experience is that of a child of God, you will trace all to Him. Not only all you have had in the past, but all you have now! Here you are, sitting in your pew this morning. I just want you to review where you stand. Beloved, do you think you would be where you are now if it were not for Divine Grace? Only think what a strong temptation you had yesterday. They did “consult to cast

you down from your excellency.” Perhaps you were served like I am, sometimes. The devil sometimes seems to drag me right to the edge of a precipice of sin by a kind of enchantment, making me forget the danger by the sweetness which surrounds it. And just when he would push me down, I see the yawning gulf beneath me and some strong hand put out and I hear a Voice, saying, “I will preserve him from going down into the pit. I have found a Ransom.” Do you not feel that before this sun goes down you will be damned if Grace does not keep you? Have you anything good in your heart that Grace did not give you? If I thought I had a Grace that did not come from God, I would trample it beneath my feet, as not being a godly virtue! I would guess it to be but a counterfeit, for it could not be right if it did not come from the Mint of Glory! It may look ever so much like the right thing, but it is certainly bad unless it came from God! Christian, can you say, of all things past and present, “He only is my Rock and my Salvation”?

And now look forward to the future. Brothers and Sisters, think how many enemies you have. How many rivers you have to cross, how many mountains to climb, how many dragons to fight, how many lions’ teeth to escape, how many fires to pass through, how many floods to wade. What do you think? Can your salvation be of anything except of God? Oh, if I had not that everlasting arm to lean upon, I would cry, “Death! Hurl me anywhere! Anywhere out of the world.” If I had not that one hope, that one trust, bury me ten thousand fathoms deep beneath the ground where my being might be forgotten! Oh, put me far away, for I am miserable if I have not God to help me all through my journey. Are you strong enough to fight with one of your enemies without your God? I think not. A little silly maid may cast a Peter down and cast you down, too, if God does not keep you! I beseech you remember this. I hope you know it by experience in the past but try to remember it in the future—wherever you go, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Do not get to looking at your heart—do not get to examining to see whether you have anything to recommend you—just remember, “Salvation is of the Lord.” “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

Effectively, it all comes of God and, I am sure we must add, *meritoriously*. We have experienced that salvation is wholly of Him. What merits have I? If I were to scrape together all I ever had and then come to you and beg all you have got, I should not collect the value of a farthing among you all! We have heard of some Catholic who said that there was a balance struck in his favor between his good works and his bad ones and therefore he felt he deserved Heaven. But there is nothing of the sort here! I have seen many people, many kinds of Christians and many odd Christians, but I never yet met with one who said he had any merits of his own when he came to close quarters. We have heard of perfect men and we have heard of men perfectly foolish—and we have thought the

characters perfectly alike! Have we any merits of our own? I am sure we have not if we have been taught of God! Once we thought we had, but there came a man called, Conviction, into our house one night and took away our glorying. Ah, we are still vile! I don't know whether Cowper said quite right, when he said—

***“Since the dear hour that brought me to Your foot
And cut up all my follies by the root
I never trusted in an arm but Thine—
Nor hoped but in Your righteousness Divine!”***

I think he made a mistake, for most Christians get to trusting in self at times, but we are forced to acknowledge that “salvation is of the Lord,” if we consider it meritoriously.

My dear Friends, have you experienced this in your own hearts? Can you say, “amen,” to that, as it goes round? Can you say, “I know that God is my helper?” I dare say you can, most of you. But you will not say it so well as you will, by-and-by, if God teaches you. We *believe* it when we commence the Christian life, we *know* it afterwards. And the longer we live, the more we find it to be the truth—“Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, but blessed is he who trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is.” In fact, the crown of Christian experience is to be delivered from all trust in self or man and to be brought to rely wholly and simply on Jesus Christ! I say, Christian, your highest and noblest experience is not to be groaning about your corruption, is not to be crying about your wanderings, but is to say—

***“With all my sin and care and woe,
His Spirit will not let me go!”***

“Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.” I like what Luther says, “I would run into Christ's arms if He had a drawn sword in His hands.” That is called venturesome believing, but as an old Divine says, there is no such thing as venturesome believing—we cannot venture on Christ—it is no venture at all, there is no chance involved in the least degree. It is a holy and heavenly experience when we can go to Christ, amid the storm and say, “Oh, Jesus, I believe I am covered by Your blood,” when we can feel ourselves to be all over rags and yet can say, “Lord, I believe that through Christ Jesus, ragged though I am, I am fully absolved.” A saint's faith is little faith when he believes as a saint—but a sinner's faith is true faith when he believes as a sinner. The faith, not of a sinless being but the faith of a sinful creature—that is the faith which delights God! Go, then, Christian! Ask that this may be your experience, to learn each day, “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

III. And now, in the third place, we speak of THE GREAT DUTY. We have had the great experience, now we must have the great duty.

The great duty is—if God only is our Rock and we know it, are we not bound to put all our trust in God, to give all our love to God, to set all our hope *upon* God, to spend all our life *for* God and to devote our whole

being to God? If God is all I have, surely all I have shall be God's! If God, alone, is my hope, surely I will put all my hope upon God. If the love of God is alone that which saves, surely He shall have my love alone! Come, let me talk to you, Christian, for a little while. I need to warn you not to have two Gods, two Christs, two friends, two husbands, two great fathers. Do not have two fountains, two rivers, two suns, or two heavens, but have only one! I need to bid you, now, as God has put all salvation in Himself, to bring all yourself to God. Come, let me talk to you!

In the first place, Christian, *never join anything with Christ*. Would you stitch your old rags into the new garment He gives? Would you put new wine into old bottles? Would you put Christ and self together? You might as well yoke an elephant and an ant! They could never plow together. What? Would you put an archangel in the same harness with a worm and hope that they would drag you through the sky! *How inconsistent!* How foolish! What? Yourself and Christ? Surely, Christ would smile—No, Christ would *weep* to think of such a thing! Christ and man together? CHRIST AND COMPANY? No, it never shall be—He will have nothing of the sort! He must be all. Note how inconsistent it would be to put anything else with Him. And note, again, *how wrong* it would be. Christ will never bear to have anything else placed with Him. He calls them adulterers and fornicators who love anything else but He. He will have your whole heart to trust in Him, your whole soul to love Him and your whole life to honor Him! He will not come into your house till you put all the keys at His feet! He will not come till you give Him attic, parlor, drawing-room and cellar, too. He will make you sing—

***“Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all.”***

Mark you, Christian, it is a sin to keep anything from God!

Remember, *Christ is very grieved* if you do it. Assuredly you do not desire to grieve Him who shed His blood for you? Surely there is not one child of God here who would like to vex his blessed elder Brother? There cannot be one soul redeemed by blood who would like to see those sweet blessed eyes of our best Beloved bedewed with tears. I know you will not grieve your Lord, will you? But I tell you, you will vex His noble spirit if you love anything but He. He is so fond of you that He is jealous of your love. It is said, concerning His Father, that He is “a jealous God” and He is a jealous Christ you have to deal with! Therefore, put not your trust in chariots, stay not yourselves in horses, but say, “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

I beg you, mark, also, one reason why you should not look at anything else—and that is if you look at anything else, you *cannot see Christ as well*. “Oh,” you say, “I can see Christ in His mercies.” But you cannot see

Him as well, there, as if you viewed His Person! No man can look at two objects at the same time and see both distinctly. You may afford a wink for the world and a wink for Christ. But you cannot give Christ a whole look and a whole eye and the world half an eye, too! I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, do not try it. If you look on the world, it will be a speck in your eye. If you trust in anything but Christ, between two stools you will come to the ground and a fearful fall you will have. Therefore, Christian, look only on Him. "He only is my Rock and my Salvation."

Mark you, again, Christian—I would bid you never put anything else with Christ. For as sure as ever you do, *you will have the whip for it*. There never was a child of God who harbored one of the Lord's traitors in his heart but he always had a charge laid against him. God has sent out a search warrant against all of us—and do you know what He has told His officers to search for? He has told them to search for all our lovers, all our treasures and all our helpers. God cares less about our sins, as sins, than He does about our sins, or even our virtues, as usurpers of His Throne! I tell you, there is nothing in the world you set your heart upon that shall not be hung upon a gallows higher than Haman's! If you love anything but Christ, He will make you regret it. If you love your house better than Christ, He will make it a prison for you. If you love your child better than Christ, He will make it an adder in your breast to sting you. If you love your daily provisions better than Christ, He will make your drink bitter and your food like gravel in your mouth. Till you come to live wholly on Him, there is nothing which you have which He cannot turn into a rod if you love it better than He!

And, mark once again—if you look at anything except God, *you will soon fall into sin*. There was never a man who kept his eyes on anything but Christ who did not go wrong. If the mariner will steer by the polestar, he shall go to the north. But if he steers sometimes by the polestar and sometimes by another constellation, he knows not where he shall go. If you do not keep your eyes wholly on Christ you will soon be wrong. If you ever do give up the secret of your strength, namely, your trust in Christ—if you ever dally with the Delilah of the world and love yourself more than Christ—the Philistines will be upon you and shear your locks and take you out to grind at the mill! And you will surely grind till your God gives you deliverance by means of your hair growing once more and bringing you to trust wholly in the Savior. Keep your eyes, then, fixed on Jesus. For if you do turn away from Him, how ill will you fare! I bid you, Christian, beware of your Graces. Beware of your virtues. Beware of your experience, beware of your prayers. Beware of your hope. Beware of your humility. There is not one of your Graces which may not damn you if they are left alone to themselves. Old Brooks says when a woman has a husband and that husband gives her some choice rings, she puts them on her fingers. And if she should be so foolish as to love the rings better

than her husband—if she should care only for the jewels and forget him who gave them—how angry would the husband be and how foolish she would be, herself! Christian! I warn you, beware, even, of your Graces, for they may prove more dangerous to you than your sins! I warn you of everything in this world. For everything has this tendency, especially a high estate. If we have a comfortable maintenance, we are most likely not to look so much to God. Ah, Christian, with an independent fortune, take care of your money, beware of your gold and silver. It will curse you if it comes between you and your God. Always keep your eyes out to the cloud and not to the rain—to the river and not to the ship that floats on its bosom. Look you not to the sunbeam, but to the sun. Trace your mercies to God and say perpetually, “He only is my Rock and my Salvation.”

Lastly, I bid you once more to keep your eyes wholly on God and on nothing in yourself, *because what are you now and what were you ever, but a poor damned sinner if you were out of Christ?* I had been preaching, the other day, all the former part of the sermon as a minister. Presently I thought I was a poor sinner and then how differently I began to speak! The best sermons I ever preach are those I preach not in my ministerial capacity, but as a *poor sinner preaching to sinners*. I find there is nothing like a minister remembering that he is nothing but a poor sinner, after all. It is said of the peacock that although he has fine feathers, he is ashamed of his black feet—I am sure that we ought to be ashamed of ours. However bright our feathers may appear at times, we ought to think of what we would be if Divine Grace did not help us. Oh, Christian, keep your eyes on Christ, for out of Him you are no better than the damned in Hell! There is not a demon in the pit of Hell but might put you to the blush if you are out of Christ. Oh that you would be humble! Remember what an evil heart you have within you, even when Grace is there. You have Grace—God loves you, but remember, you still have a foul cancer in your heart! God has removed much of your sin, but the corruption still remains. We feel that though the old man is somewhat choked and the fire somewhat dampened by the sweet waters of the Holy Spirit’s influence, yet it would blaze up worse than before if God did not keep it under control! Let us not glory in ourselves, then. The slave need not be proud of his descent—he has the brand upon his hand. Out with pride! Away with it! Let us rest wholly and solely upon Jesus Christ!

Now, just one word to the ungodly—you who do not know Christ. You have heard what I have told you, that salvation is of Christ, alone. Is not that a good Doctrine for you? For you have not got anything, have you? You are a poor, lost, ruined sinner. Hear this, then, Sinner—you have nothing and you do not need anything, for Christ has all. “Oh,” you say, “I am a bond slave.” Ah, but He has got the redemption. “No,” you say, “I am black with sin.” Yes, but He has got the bath that can wash you white. You say, “I am leprous!” Yes, but the good Physician can take your

leprosy away. You say, "I am condemned." Yes, but He has got the acquittal warrant signed and sealed, if you believe in Him. You say, "But I am dead!" Yes, but Christ has life and He can give you life! You need nothing of your own—nothing to rely on but Christ! And if there is a man, woman, or child here who is prepared to say solemnly after me, with his or her heart, "I take Christ to be my Savior, with no powers and no merits of my own to trust in. I see my sins, but I see that Christ is higher than my sins. I see my guilt, but I believe that Christ is mightier than my guilt"—I say, if any of you can say that, you may go away and rejoice, for you are heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven!

I must tell you a singular story which was related at our Church Meeting, because there may be some very poor people here who may understand the way of salvation by it. One of the friends had been to see a person who was about to join the Church. And he said to him, "Can you tell me what you would say to a poor sinner who came to ask you the way of salvation?" "Well," he said, "I do not know—I think I can hardly tell you. But it so happened that a case of this sort did occur yesterday. A poor woman came into my shop and I told her the way. But it was in such a homely manner that I don't like to repeat it." "Oh, tell me! I should like to hear it." "Well, she is a poor woman who is always pawning her things and, by-and-by, she redeems them again. I did not know how to tell her better than this. I said to her—'Look here. Your soul is in pawn to the devil—Christ has paid the redemption money. You take faith for your ticket and so you will get your soul out of pawn.'"

Now, that was the most simple, but the most excellent way of imparting a knowledge of salvation to this woman! It is true, our souls were pawned to Almighty vengeance. We were poor and could not pay the redemption money. But Christ came and paid it all and faith is the ticket which we use to get our souls out of pawn. We need not take a single penny with us. We have only to say, "Here, Lord, I believe in Jesus Christ. I have brought no money to pay for my soul, for here is the ticket, the money has been paid long ago. This is written in Your Word—'The blood of Christ cleans from all sin.'" If you take that ticket you will get your soul out of pawn. And you will then say, "I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm a miracle of Grace." May God bless you, my Friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

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

WAITING ONLY UPON GOD

NO. 144

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 2, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“My soul, wait you only upon God.”
Psalm 62:5.*

CALVIN translates this verse, “My soul, be you silent before God.” Rest calm and undisturbed. Your enemies are round about you and have sore beset you. Your troubles do surround you like strong bulls of Bashan. But rest, my soul, in God. Your enemies are mighty but HE is Almighty. Your troubles are grievous but He is greater than your troubles and He shall deliver you from them. Let not your soul be agitated. The *wicked* are like the troubled sea that cannot rest—be not like they are. Be calm—let not a wave ruffle your untroubled spirit.

“Cast your burden on the Lord,” and then sleep on His bosom. Commit your way unto Jehovah and then rest in sure and certain confidence, for—

*“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might.
His every act is pure blessing,
His path unsullied light.”*

Oh, that we had grace to carry out the text in that sense of it! It is a hard matter to be calm in the day of trouble. But it is a high exercise of Divine Grace when we can stand unmoved in the day of adversity and feel that—

*“Should the earth’s old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steadfast souls should hear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

That is to be a Christian, indeed. Nothing is so sweet as to—

*“Lie passive in God’s hand,
And know no will but His.”*

I shall, however, this morning stand to the authorized version. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” Here is, first, an *exhortation* and secondly, an *expectation*.

I. We begin with the EXHORTATION. The Psalmist was a *preacher* and it was quite right that he should sometimes make himself his congregation. The preacher who neglects to preach to himself has forgotten a very important part of his audience. He who never in his privacy speaks a word to his own soul does not know where to begin his preaching. We must first

address our own soul. If we can move *that* by the words we may utter, we may hope to have some power with the souls of others.

And note where David begins his exhortation—“*My soul, wait you upon God.*” He addresses the very center of his being. “My soul, I preach to you. For if you go wrong, all is amiss. If you are amiss, my eyes follow after vanity, my lips utter leasing, my feet become swift to shed blood and my hands meddle with mischief. My soul, I will preach to you. My face, I will not preach to you. Some men preach to their faces and try to put on their countenances emotions which they never feel. No, countenance, I will leave you alone—you will be right enough if the soul is so. I will preach to you, O my soul and address my sermon to you. You are my only auditor—hear what I say.” “*My soul, wait you only upon God.*” Let us, then, explain the exhortation.

1. First, the Psalmist means by this—*My soul make God your only object in life.* “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Make Him the summit of your desires and the object of your exertions. Oh, how many men have made a fearful shipwreck of their entire existence by choosing an object inferior to this high and noble object of existence, the serving of God. I could put my finger upon a thousand biographies of men who after having lived in this world and done great things, have nevertheless died unhappily because they did not first seek God and His righteousness.

Perhaps there never was a mind more gigantic than the mind of Sir Walter Scott—a man whose soul was as fertile as the newly broken soil of the land of gold. That man was a good man I believe, a Christian. But he made a mistake in the object of his life. His object was to be a lord, to found a family, to plant the root of an ancestral tree the fruit of which should be heard of in ages to come. Magnificent in his hospitality, generous in his nature, laborious in his continual strife to win the object of his life, yet after all he died a disappointed and unsuccessful man. He reared his palace, he accumulated his wealth and one sad day saw it scattered to the wind and he had lost that for which he had lived.

Had he fixed his eye upon some better object than the pleasing of the public, or the accumulation of wealth, or the founding of a family, he might have got the others and he would not have lost the first. Oh, had he said “Now I will serve my God. This potent pen of mine, dedicated to the Most High shall weave into my marvelous stories things that shall enlighten, convict and lead to Jesus,” he might have died penniless but he would have died having achieved the object of his wishes and not a disappointed man. Oh if we could make God our only Object we should rest quite secure and whatever happened it never could be said of us, “He died without having had what he wished for.”

How many of you that are here today are making the same mistake on a smaller scale? You are living for business. You will be disappointed, then. You are living for fame. As certain as you are alive you will die disappointed, grieved and sad at heart. You are living to maintain respectability—perhaps that is the utmost of your desire. Poor aim that is! You shall be disappointed. Or even if you gain it, it shall be a bubble not worth the chase. Make God your one Object in life and all these things shall be added to you, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

There is no loss in being a Christian and making God the first object. But make anything else your goal and with all your running, should you run ever so well, you shall fall short of the mark. Or if you gain it, you shall fall uncrowned, unhonored to the earth. “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Say, “I love to serve Him. I love to spread His kingdom, to advance His interests, to tell the story of His Gospel, to increase the number of His converted ones—that shall be my only object. And when that is sufficiently attained, ‘Lord, let Your servant depart in peace.’”

2. But the Psalmist meant other things beside this, when he said, “My soul wait you only upon God.” He meant, *My soul, have no care but to please God.* Perhaps the most miserable people in the world are the very careful ones. You that are so anxious about what shall happen on the morrow that you cannot enjoy the pleasures of today. You who have such a peculiar cast of mind that you suspect every star to be a comet and imagine that there must be a volcano in every grassy meadow. You that are more attracted by the spots in the sun than by the sun itself and more amazed by one sear leaf upon the tree than by all the verdure of the woods. You that make more of your troubles than you could do of your joys—I say—I think you belong to the most miserable of men.

David says to his soul, “My soul, be you careful for nothing except God. Cast all your cares on Him. He cares for you and make this your great concern, to love and serve Him. And then you need care for nothing else at all.” Oh, there are many of you people that go picking your way through this world—you are afraid to put one foot down before another—because you fear you will be in danger. If you had grace just to turn your eye to God, you might walk straight on in confidence and say, “Though I should tread on Hell itself at the next step, yet if God bade me tread there it would be Heaven to me.”

There is nothing like the faith that can leave care with God and have no thought but how to please Him. “Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your Heavenly Father feeds them.” “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin—and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Say not, “What shall we eat? or,

What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.”

Oh, happy is the man who says, “I am a gentleman commoner upon the bounties of Providence. Let God send me little, it will be enough. Let Him send me much, it will not be too much, for I will divide my wealth with those who have less. I will trust to Him. He has said, ‘Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure.’ Then let famine come, I shall not starve. Let the brook dry up, He will open the bottles of Heaven and give me drink. Whatever shall happen to this world, yet shall I be secure against all ills.” Some people talk about being independent gentlemen. I know an independent gentleman that lives on three shillings and sixpence a week. He has nothing but parish allowance and the charity of friends.

But he says in sickness and in weariness, Jehovah will provide. If my Father knows I need more He will send me more. And if you hint to him that his parish allowance will be taken away, he will just smile and say, “If it does not come one way it will come another. For God is the Chancellor of my treasury and He will never let my funds run too low. I shall have it for God has said it—‘They that wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing.’ ” That is the right kind of independence—the independence of the man who knows no dependence except upon God. My soul, let this be your care, to serve God and wait only upon Him.

3. Again, David meant this—*My soul, make God your only dependence, and never trust in anything else.* It is marvelous how God’s creation illustrates my text—David bids his soul take God for its only pillar. Have you ever noticed how the world displays the power of God in its want of any apparent support? Behold the unpillared arch of Heaven—see how it stretches its gigantic span. And yet it falls not, though it is unpropped and unbuttressed. “He hangs the world upon nothing.” What chain is it that binds up the stars and keeps them from falling? Lo, they float in ether, upheld by His omnipotent arm, who has laid the foundations of the universe.

A Christian should be a second exhibition of God’s universe—his faith should be an unpillared confidence—resting on the past and on the eternity to come as the sure groundwork of its arch. His faith should be like the world. It should hang on nothing but the promise of God and have no other support but that. And he himself, like the stars, should float in the ether of confidence—needing nothing to uphold him but the right hand of the Majesty on high. But, fools that we are, we will be always getting other confidences. The merchant has a man who so understands his business that he thinks the whole establishment depends upon that one man. And

if he should die or give up his situation, what would become of the business?

Ah, merchant, if you are a godly man, you have forgotten where your confidence ought to be—not in your man but in your God. The wife often says, “I love the Lord but if my husband died, where would be my dependence?” What? Have you buttressed the Almighty even with a husband’s love? Trust in Him and make Him your only consolation. He will supply your needs out of the riches of His fullness. Oh, we would not have half the trouble we have if we learned to live wholly upon God. But we are so dependent upon *creatures*. We get to leaning one on another. And our dear friend, into whose ear we have told our tale of misery seems to be quite necessary to our existence.

Take heed, then—take heed—you are trying to prop that which requires no prop when you lean upon your friend. You are dishonoring Christ, when you make him your joy and confidence. And when in some grievous day, your friend shall be smitten from the earth—then you will begin to feel it would have been better for you if you had leaned upon your Heavenly Friend and made no one your strength and your support but God.

This would be a good lesson for some who occupy the pulpit. There is so much time-serving everywhere. The Dissenting minister must make his prop out of his deacons. And the Clergyman will too much make his prop out of some high officials in Church or State who are likely to promote him. We shall never get an outspoken Gospel until we get a set of men who say, “I don’t care for the whole earth. If there is no one else right and I conceive myself to be so, I will battle the whole earth. And I ask no man’s wish, or will, or assent. ‘Let God be true and every man a liar.’” Oh, we want a few of those gigantic spirits who need no approvers—who can of themselves sweep their acre of men and slay them with their strong broad sword of confidence. And when we get these care-for-nothings, who care only for God, then shall the earth shake again beneath the tramp of angels and God shall visit our land, even as He did of old.

4. Again, Beloved, “My soul wait you only upon God,” that is to say, *make God your only guide and confidence*. When we get into trouble the first thing we do is to knock at our neighbor’s door. “Have you heard about my trouble? Come and give me your advice.” If your neighbor were prudent he would say, “My Brother, have you gone to God first? I will give you no advice till God has given you His counsel.” It is laughed at as an enthusiastic idea that men should ever take counsel of God. “Oh,” say some, “it is superstitious to imagine that God will ever give to His people guidance in their temporal affairs.”

It would be superstitious to you perhaps. But it is not to a David and it is not to any other child of God. He says, “My soul wait you only upon

God.” Christian, if you would know the path of duty take God for your compass. If you would know the way to steer your ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the hand of the Almighty. Many a rock might be escaped if we would let God take the helm. Many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid if we would leave to His sovereign will to choose and to command. The old Puritans said, “As sure as ever a Christian carves for himself he’ll cut his own fingers.” And that is a great truth.

Said another old Divine, “He that goes before the cloud of God’s Providence goes on a fool’s errand.” And so he does. We must mark God’s Providence leading us. And then let us go. But he that goes before Providence will be very glad to run back again. Take your trouble, whatever it is, to the Throne of the Most High and on your knees put up the prayer, “Lord, direct me.” You will not go wrong. But do not do as some do. Many a person comes to me and says, “I want your advice, Sir. As my minister, perhaps you could tell me what I ought to do.” Sometimes it is about their getting married. Why, they have made up their minds before they ask me, they know that.

And then they come to ask my advice. “Do you think that such-and-such a thing would be prudent, Sir? Do you think I should change my position in life?” and so on. Now, first of all, I like to know, “Have you made your mind up?” In most cases they have—and I fear you serve God the same. We make up our mind what we are going to do and often we go down on our knees and say, “Lord, show me what I ought to do.” And then we follow out *our* intention and say, “I asked God’s direction.” My dear Friend, you did ask it but you did not follow it, you followed your own. You like God’s direction so long as it points you the way you wish to go. But if God’s direction leads the contrary to what you considered your own interest, it might have been a very long while before you had carried it out. But if we in truth and verity do confide in God to guide us, we shall not go far wrong, I know.

5. Once again—My soul, wait you only upon God, *for protection in times of danger*. A Naval officer tells the following singular story concerning the siege of Copenhagen, under Lord Nelson. An officer in the fleet says, “I was particularly impressed with an object which I saw three or four days after the terrific bombardment of that place. For several nights before the surrender, the darkness was ushered in with a tremendous roar of guns and mortars, accompanied by the whizzing of those destructive and burning engines of warfare, Congreve’s rockets.

“The dreadful effects were soon visible in the brilliant lights through the city. The blazing houses of the rich and the burning cottages of the poor illuminated the Heavens. And the wide-spreading flames, reflecting on the water, showed a forest of ships assembled round the city for its destruc-

tion. This work of conflagration went on for several nights and the Danes at last surrendered. And on walking some days after among the ruins, consisting of the cottages of the poor, houses of the rich, factories, lofty steeples and humble meeting houses, I spotted, amid this barren field of desolation, a solitary house, unharmed.

“All around it a burnt mass but this alone untouched by the fire, a monument of mercy. ‘Whose house is that?’ I asked. ‘That,’ said the interpreter, ‘belongs to a Quaker. He would neither fight nor leave his house but remained in prayer with his family during the whole bombardment.’ Surely, thought I, it is well with the righteous. God *has* been a shield to you in battle, a wall of fire round about you, a very present help in time of need.”

It might seem to be an invention of mine, only that it happens to be as authentic a piece of history as any that can be found. There is another story told, somewhat similar of that Danish war. Soon after the surrender of Copenhagen to the English, in the year 1807, detachments of soldiers were, for a time, stationed in the surrounding villages. It happened one day that three soldiers, belonging to a Highland regiment, were set to forage among the neighboring farm houses. They went to several but found them stripped and deserted. At length they came to a large garden, or orchard, full of apple trees, bending under the weight of fruit.

They entered by a gate and followed a path which brought them to a neat farm house. Everything without bespoke quietness and security. But as they entered by the front door, the mistress of the house and her children ran screaming out the back. The interior of the house presented an appearance of order and comfort superior to what might be expected from people in that station and from the habits of the country. A watch hung by the side of the fireplace and a neat bookcase, well filled, attracted the attention of the elder soldier. He took down a book—it was written in a language unknown to him but the name of Jesus Christ was legible on every page.

At this moment, the master of the house entered by the door through which his wife and children had just fled. One of the soldiers, by threat signs demanded provisions. The man stood firm and undaunted, but shook his head. The soldier who held the book approached him and pointing to the name of Jesus Christ, laid his hand upon his heart and looked up to Heaven. Instantly the farmer grasped his hand, shook it vehemently and then ran out of the room. He soon returned with his wife and children laden with milk, eggs, bacon, etc., which were freely tendered. When money was offered in return, it was at first refused but as two of the soldiers were pious men, they, much to the chagrin of their companion, insisted upon paying for all they received.

When taking leave, the pious soldiers intimated to the farmer that it would be well for him to hide his watch. By the most significant signs he gave them to understand that he feared no evil, for his trust was in God. And that though his neighbors, on the right hand and on the left, had fled from their habitations and by foraging parties had lost what they could not remove, not a hair of his head had been injured, nor had he even lost an apple from his trees." The man knew that, "He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." so he just tried the non-resistant principle. And God, in whom he put implicit confidence, would not let him be injured.

It was a remarkable thing that in the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, a long time ago, there were thousands of Quakers in the country and only two of them were killed. And those two had not faith in their own principles—one of them ran away and hid himself in a fastness and the other kept arms in his house. But the others, unarmed, walked amidst infuriated soldiers, both Roman Catholics and Protestants and were never touched, because they were strong in the strength of Israel's God and put up their sword into its scabbard, knowing that to war against another cannot be right, since Christ has said, "Resist not evil. If any man smite you on one cheek, turn to him the other also."

"Be kind, not only to the thankful but to the unthankful and to the evil." "Forgive your enemies." "Bless them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you." But we are ashamed to do that. We do not like it. We are afraid to trust God. And until we do it we shall not know the majesty of faith, nor prove the power of God for our protection. "My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him."

And now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I cannot single out all your cases, but doubtless I have many cases here to which the text will apply. There is a poor Christian there. He does not know much more than where his next meal will come from. My Brother, He that feeds the ravens will not let you starve. Instead of looking to find friends to console you, tell your story into the ears of God. As sure as the Bible is true He will not leave you. Shall a father leave his children to die? No, the granaries of earth have no key but the Almighty's will, "The cattle on a thousand hills are His." If He were hungry He would not tell us. Shall He not supply your needs out of the riches of His goodness?—

***"All things living He does feed
His full hand supplies their need."***

Shall He forget you, when He clothes the grass of the field and when He makes the valleys rejoice with food? But is your anxiety about your character? Has someone been slandering you? And are you troubled and grieved, lest you should lose your good name? If a man has called you

every name in the world, do not go to Law with him. “Wait only upon God.” If you have been reviled in every newspaper and falsely charged in every sheet, never answer—leave it alone. “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord.” Practice non-resistance in words, as well as in deeds. Just bow yourself and let the missiles fly over your head. Stand not up to resist. To resist slander is to make it worse. The only way to blunt the edge of calumny is to be silent—it can do no hurt when we are still. Where no wood is the fire goes out. And if you will not refute nor answer, the fire will die out of itself. Let it alone. “Wait you only upon God.”

And now, what else is your danger? What else is your trouble? Are you afraid of losing your dearest child? Is your husband sick? Does your wife lie upon the bed of languishing? These are hard troubles. They cut us to the very quick—to see our dear ones sick and we incapable of helping them is a trouble, indeed. Then the strong man’s eye does weep and his heart beats heavily, because those he loves are sick. But “wait you only upon God.” Go to your chamber. Tell the Lord your dear one is ill. Pour out your heart before Him, and say to Him, “My Lord, spare me this trouble, if it is Your will. Take not my friends away. But this know, O God, though You slay me yet will I trust in You. Yes—

**“Should You take them all away,
Yet would I not repine.
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Yours.
There! Let it go—one look from You
Shall more than make amends.”**

Oh, it is a happy way of smoothing sorrow, when we can say, “We will wait only upon God.” Oh, you agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a brow of care. Come, cast your burden upon the Lord. I see you staggering beneath a weight which He would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to Him but as the small dust of the balance. See, the Almighty bends His shoulders and He says, “Here, put your troubles here. What? Will you bear yourself what the everlasting shoulders are ready to carry?” No—

**“Give to the winds your fears
Hope and be undismayed.
God hears your sighs and counts your tears,
He shall lift up your head.”**

No finer exhibition of the power of religion than the confidence of a Christian in the time of distress. May God vouchsafe such a carriage and bearing unto us through Jesus Christ!

II. And now I close with the EXPECTATION. And upon that I shall be very brief. The Psalmist charges his soul to wait only upon God because he had no expectation anywhere else but there.

I know very well what some of you are after. You have got an old grandfather, or an old grandmother, or an old great aunt and you are most fiercely kind to them—you are most provokingly loving! You almost run to the extreme of teasing them by the frequency of your affectionate embraces. If your aunt does not know what you do it for, if she wants to know, let her write to me, I can tell her. She has a few thousand pounds. I do not say that you have any *affection* for them but I should not wonder if you have some *expectation* of them and that is just the reason why you are always waiting upon her.

You will take care of her because you well know which way the wind blows. And you trust that one day, if you put your sails in the right position there may be a valuable cargo brought to your haven—of course not at all through your design. You will go into deep mourning and lament the old lady's death but at the same time you will feel it to be a magnificent consolation to you, almost greater than the suffering and affliction incurred, that you have become the possessor of her wealth. Now, worldly wise people always wait where their expectations are. David says, "My soul, do not imitate the worldly in this—wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

That is where I expect to get all I shall have and therefore I will wait at that door which I expect will be opened with the hand of munificent grace. What is there in the world that you are expecting, except from God? You will not get it, or if you get it, it will be a curse to you. That is only a proper expectation which looks to God and to God only. "My expectation is from Him." Well you expect to have bread to eat and raiment to put on till you die, don't you? Where do you expect to get it? The interest of that £600, or £1200 of yours in the funds? Well, if that is your expectation and not God, He will put some bitters in that little income of yours and you shall find it, if sufficient for your sustenance, not sufficient for your comfort.

But you will be provided for, because you have a large business! Well, the mill may be burned down. The trade may break. The stream of prosperity may run into another's lap and you may find yourself yet a beggar in the street, notwithstanding all you have, if that is your trust. No. If you are expecting to get anything from the world it is a poor expectation. I expect to be provided for till I die. But I expect that I shall have to draw from the bank of faith till I die and get all I need out of the riches of God's loving kindness. And this I know, I had rather have God for my banker than any man that has ever lived. Surely, he never fails to honor His promises. And when we bring them to His Throne He never sends them back unanswered.

You must hope in God, even for temporal supplies. And after all, what a little thing the temporal supplies are! We have heard of a king who once went into a stable and heard a stable boy singing. Said he to him, "And now, John, what do you get for your work?" "If you please Sir," he said, "I get my clothes and my food." "That is all I get" said the King, "for my work." And that is all everybody gets. All else that you have got besides is not yours, except to look at. And other people can do the same. When a man gets a large park I can ride through it as much as he and I have not the trouble of keeping it in order—he takes care of it and I am much obliged to him for doing so.

I can do as the poor Chinaman did, when he bowed before the mandarin. The mandarin was covered with jewels and the Chinaman said, "I thank you for your jewels." The mandarin was surprised—the next day he was again saluted by the man, who said as before, "I thank you for your jewels." "Why," said the mandarin, "what do you thank me for?" Said the Chinaman, "I always look at them every day and that is as much as you do—only that you are the pack horse that has to carry them and you have the trouble at night of taking care of them, while I can enjoy them just as much as you."

And so, dear Friends, if we are not rich, contentment can make us so. Contentment gives the poor man broad acres. Contentment gives him great riches upon earth and adds great enjoyment to the comparatively little that he has. And we have better expectations than that. We shall die soon. And then "my expectation is from Him." Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness He will send troops of angels to carry us to His bosom? We are believing that when the pulse is faint and few and the heart heaves heavily, that then some spirit, brighter than the noonday sun shall draw the curtains of our bed and look with loving eyes upon us and whisper, "Sister spirit, come away!"

And do we not expect that then a chariot shall be brought, a triumphal chariot, such as earth's conquerors have not seen? And in it we shall be placed and drawn by coursers of light up the eternal hills! In majesty and triumph we shall ride to yonder bright gates of pearl. Then shall the gates wide open swing and He shall say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." We are expecting wreaths of amaranth and harps of gold and crowns of glory. We are thinking when we have done with this poor clay, the poor terrestrial stuff this body's made of, we shall be made white, like spirits who now shine as stars before the Throne of the Majesty on High and that we shall share those splendors and enjoy their happiness—forever blessed with them—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in.

Now, “My soul, wait you only upon God” if these are your expectations. And if your expectation is based upon God, my soul, *live* for God—live with only this care, to bless Him—live, looking for a better world but believing this world to be good enough, if we have God in it. You know what Luther said the little bird said to him? He sat upon the spray of the tree and he sang—

***“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow.
God provides for the morrow.”***

And it chirped and picked up its little grain and sang again. And yet it had no granary. It had not a handful of wheat stored up anywhere. But it still kept on with its chirping—

***“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow.
God provides for the morrow.”***

Oh, you that are not Christians, it were worthwhile to be Christians if it were only for the peace and happiness that religion gives! If we had to die like dogs, yet this religion were worth having to make us live here like angels. Oh if the grave were what it seems to be—the goal of all existence. If the black nails in the coffin were not bright with stars, if death were the end and our lamps were quenched in darkness—when it was said, “Dust to dust and earth to earth”—it would be worthwhile to be a child of God, only to live here—

***“‘Tis religion that can give sweetest pleasures while we live;
‘Tis religion must supply solid comforts when we die.”***

Remember, he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized shall be saved. And you, as well as any other, if these two things are given you, shall be saved. He that trusts in Christ alone for salvation and then (to translate the word “baptized” the right way and it can only be rightly translated one way) “is *immersed*, shall be saved.” So stands the praise—believing first, Baptism afterwards. Believing, the great thing, Baptism the *sign* of it. Believing the great means of grace, immersion the outward and visible sign of the washing of the flesh and of the dedication unto God.

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” May God give you grace to obey both commands and so enter into eternal life! But remember, “He that believes not shall be damned.” He that neglects the great essential shall perish. May God grant that none of you may know the terrible meaning of that word!

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A WILDERNESS CRY

NO. 1427

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; to see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.”
Psalm 63:1, 2.***

CHRYSOSTOM tells us that among the primitive Christians it was decreed and ordained that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm and, certainly, if we do not follow the ancient custom and actually sing the words every day, it is not because they are unsuitable or because their spirit has died out among us. This Psalm may be said or sung all the year round. Have we joyous days? Let us sing of the loving kindness which is better than love! Do the clouds return after the rain? Let us sound forth His praise whose right hand upholds us! Is it summertime with our souls? Then we may express the full assurance of our faith by joyfully crying, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You!” Have we fallen upon the drought of autumn? Do the long hot days parch our spirits? Then may we chant the desire of our longing heart, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.”

Is it winter with our spirit and does everything tend to chill us? Nevertheless let us not be silenced or rendered sluggish by the cold, but let us say, “I will bless You while I live, I will lift up my hands in Your name.” Has the spring returned with all its wealth of fresh flowers and opening sweets? Then shall our glad voices sing aloud, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.” Is the day ended and has the darkness of night settled down upon our mind? Then in the language of the Psalm we will remember God upon our bed and meditate upon Him in the night watches! And because He has been our help, therefore, in the shadow of His wings we will rejoice!

We may sing this Psalm in the days of battle, when those round about us seek our soul to destroy it, for, “they shall fall by the sword, they shall be a portion for foxes.” And we may chant it with equal appropriateness in the time of victory, when we return from the conflict with banners gleaming in the sunlight of triumph, for, “the king shall rejoice in God: everyone that swears by Him shall glory.” I know of no time and no season in which this Psalm would sound unsuitably from a believing tongue! Let us cultivate its earnestness! Let us endeavor to be baptized into its spirit! Let us live, while we live, after the fashion of holy men like David, the Psalmist, whose assurance of heart even *sorrow* could not shake—whose fertility of mind the desert could not wither—whose joy of spirit solitude could not destroy!

This Psalm, however, especially belongs to any who, by their circumstances or by their state of heart, feel themselves to dwell in a desert land. There is a stage of Christian experience in which we are in Egypt and we are brought up out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This symbolizes conviction, regeneration and conversion. Then we know the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood—our enemies drowned in the sea and the new song put into our mouth. Happy are they who have come thus far on their life journey!

Then comes the stage of spiritual history which may be well described as wilderness experience wherein we have little rest, much temptation and consequent proving of heart and discovery of inward weakness. Many remain in this condition far longer than is necessary—what might be soon ended is drawn out into 40 years by unbelief! Then comes that blessed stage of experience in which faith begets peace and joy—then we have crossed the Jordan and entered into rest in Christ Jesus, “in whom, also, we have obtained an inheritance.” In the Man who is our peace we obtain an earnest of Heaven and begin to divide the land of promise, “for He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places.”

Each man claims his lot in Covenant provisions and sits under his own vine and fig tree, nothing scaring him. Yet even after we have been raised up together with Jesus and have obtained citizenship in Zion, we may find ourselves in the wilderness. As David, though king in Israel, had to flee across the Jordan to escape from Absalom, so may the most assured and the most sanctified of God’s people be driven, for a while, into the dry and thirsty land where there is no water—and there hide himself from the offspring of his own flesh. There are songs for the Lord’s banished ones to sing in a strange land, Psalms with which to arouse the silent land, sonnets to charm the howling wilderness into a fruitful garden and hymns to make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose!

I purpose to address myself, this morning, to any of my Brothers and Sisters who feel themselves to be just now in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. It may be the Lord will give them deliverance by His Word this morning—or if not delivered out of temporal trouble, they shall at least be made glad by His Holy Spirit and be led to magnify His name while yet in the land of drought!

I. Our first head, this morning, shall be this—TRUE SAINTS ARE SOMETIMES IN A DRY AND THIRSTY LAND WHERE THERE IS NO WATER. Children of God are not always in the same happy state of mind. To hear some people talk, who know but little of religious experience, you would fancy that the Christian’s life is all feasting and dancing. Children think that all there is in hunting is wearing a red coat and blowing a horn—they know nothing of the rough riding. We do, it is true, linger delightfully in the sweet Valley of Humiliation where men have found pearls and met with angels. We know that spot of which the Pilgrim’s guide has said, “Behold, how green this valley is, also how beautiful with lilies.”

But we can never forget that in this quiet meadow Christian met Apollyon and was hard put to it in the fight and, but a little farther in his journey, he came to the Valley of the Shadow of Death where there are deep ditches and quagmires—and a narrow pathway which runs hard by

the mouth of Hell! Sweet rest is to be had in the Palace Beautiful, but there is also a Hill Difficulty to be climbed. Let not the young be deceived by fluttering words, for they may be sure of this—there are bitters as well as sweets in the pilgrim life—and he who would be a Christian must not count upon unbroken joy. All things are changeable. We live in a world which hourly varies. What do our thermometers and barometers mean? Are they not measures of perpetual *change*?

The things which live change even more than inanimate objects and the more of life usually the more of sensitiveness—and the more of sensitiveness so much the more of change! Your man of marble may appear to sweat through the condensation of the vapor around him, but he cannot possibly know anything of that dew of *toil* which covers the laboring limb. The cast in plaster is ignorant of the joy and the sorrow which flash through the man of flesh and blood! Your painted picture, hanging on the wall, represents a smiling ancestor who smiles on although his estates may have been alienated and his family disgraced! But not so the living parent who anxiously regards each turn in the affairs of his children! For him there are tears as well as smiles.

A man of stone changes not, but a man of flesh feels the movement of the years—the plow of time gradually furrows his forehead and the crow's feet of age appear in the corners of his eyes. Living men must mourn and suffer as well as laugh and rejoice, for minds and hearts must change. Wonder not, therefore, that the glad-hearted sons of Zion are not always in the temple, but sometimes are driven into exile and sigh in a desert land! But beyond the fact of liability to change there are other reasons why God's people, at times, are wanderers in the wilderness. In some senses, to a Christian, this world must *always* be a dry and thirsty land.

The new life which Divine Grace has implanted in us finds nothing here below upon which it can feed. The things which are seen are too gross, material, carnal and defiled to sustain life which comes by the Holy Spirit from the great Father. We are not carrion crows, else we might float upon the carcasses which abound in the waters around our ark! We are *doves* and when we leave the hand of our Noah, we find nothing to rest upon and we must go back to Him if we are to find food and rest for our souls. I am not speaking, now, of the world under its *sorrowful* aspect, only, but of the *world* at its best! It is a dry land for saints even when its rains are falling.

When the world dresses itself in scarlet and puts on its silks and satins, it is still a poor world for us. She may paint her face and tier her head, but she is a Jezebel for all that! The world, should she come to us as she came to Solomon, would still be a deceiver! If she would indulge us with all her riches and give us all her power and all her fame, she would still be a mere mocker to the heart which is born from above! If you could stand on a high mountain and see all the kingdoms of the world before you—and the glory thereof and hear a voice saying, "All this will I give you"—yet might you turn round to Satan and say, "And all this is nothing to me, a sop for a dog, but not food for a child of God!"

And then you might lift your eyes to the great Father above and say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire

beside You!” You shall take prosperity at its flood. You shall have health and strength. You shall have all that heart can wish. But, after all, if there is a spark of Divine Life within you, your heart will compute the sum total of all earth’s joys and say, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!” To a citizen of Heaven, this world is “a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water.”

If it is so at its best, what is it at its *worst*? If its pillows of down cannot rest us, what shall we say of its thorns and briars? If its flood tide cannot bear us up, what shall we say of its neap tide and its ebb, when mire and dirt succeed a glassy sea? Ah, truly, best or worst, it is well for us to look above the world and to fix our heart where our treasure is preserved, even in Heaven! But, dear Brethren, we could bear up with this present state and be well satisfied with it if that were our only difficulty—far more grievous is the fact that we carry an evil *within us* which would cause drought in Paradise, itself, if it could go there!

The Christian gets into a land of drought because his own nature is dry! He finds a barren soil without because he has a barren heart within. Verily there is no doctrine more true to experience than this—corruption remains even in the hearts of the regenerate—and that when we would do good, evil is present with us! Within us there is still a carnal mind which is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be! And, as long as we have this about us, if it is permitted, for a moment, to get the upper hand (and who among us is so watchful that this will never happen?) it is no wonder that the joys of Divine Grace seem to disappear and we find ourselves in a spiritual wilderness! We carry about with us enough evil to make another Hell, if the infernal pit were filled and its fires extinguished!

“Oh, wretched man that I am,” said the Apostle Paul, “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He said this not because He was not a *saint*, but because he was so far advanced in the way of holiness! The more saintly a saint becomes, the more will he loathe and mourn over the remains of indwelling sin which he finds in his nature! This will set him longing and thirsting after more Grace. When our old unbelief begins to wither our faith; when our natural indifference commences to dry up our life; when our doubts parch the pastures of our hope and our sins drain the wells of our consolation, it is little wonder if we come into a dry and thirsty land where there is no water!

We may, dear Friends, have been so unwatchful as to have brought ourselves into this condition by actual faults of life and conduct. I would make it a matter of personal enquiry among you by asking thoughtful answers to a few questions. Have you restrained prayer? Do you wonder that the land grows dry? Has the Word of God been neglected? Have you left off its study through pressure of other concerns? Do you wonder if you have left the streams for which your soul thirsts? Have you been overly engaged in seeking temporal gain and has the hot desert wind of worldliness parched your heart? Has there been anything about your spiritual life that has grieved the Holy Spirit?

Have you been idle as a Christian? Have you been content to eat the fat and drink the sweet, but to do nothing to win souls? Or have you, while you have fed upon the Word of God, taken the sweet things of the Gospel as a matter of course and not blessed the Lord for them? Has there been a

lack of humility or a deficiency of gratitude? If so, how can you wonder that you are in a dry and thirsty land? Have you been careless in your walk? In domestic life has sin been permitted in the family? Have you been winking at evil in your children? Have you permitted it in yourself? If so, remember, it is written, "He turns rivers into a wilderness and water springs into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

You may have fallen into a parched condition of spirit because you have forgotten Him of whom in happier days you sang, "All my fresh springs are in You." Because you have walked contrary to God, God is walking contrary to you—and it is your *duty* to *repent* and return at once to your Lord—only by doing so will peace return to you! If these various things do not account for the Believer being in a dry and thirsty land, there are still some other reasons which I will briefly mention. Sometimes Christians become very hungry and thirsty when they are banished from the means of Grace. Poor as our ministry may be, yet there are many of God's children who would miss it more than their daily food if it were taken from them!

God's servants whom He calls to the work of the ministry are bound to think little of themselves and yet the loaves and fishes which they distribute to the multitude are by no means to be lightly esteemed—the people would faint by the way if they did not have them. It is a severe trial to some saints to be kept away from sanctuary privileges. I know that when you travel for pleasure or roam by the seaside for health—if you go to a place of worship on the Sabbath and find no spiritual bread, you fall into a miserable state of mind and sigh to spend your Sabbaths where the children's portion is dealt out liberally and all the servants have bread enough to spare! David loved the very *doors* of the Lord's House! He thirsted and pined because he was shut out from sanctuary privileges—and it was especially for that reason that he speaks of himself as being in a "dry and thirsty land, where there is no water."

The same may happen when we are denied the sweets of Christian communion. David had poor company when he was in the wilderness in the days of Saul. His friends were not much better than freeloaders and runaways whom he would never have selected as friends had not the necessities of his own condition and of the political situation rendered it necessary that he should become a captain over them. They were a strange band of men! They were made up chiefly of those who were in debt and discontented—the rebellious against Saul's wretched administration—men of broken fortunes and suspected loyalty.

Few of them were fit friends for the man after God's own heart. I do not wonder that he looked, even, at the sons of Zeruah who loved him best and were his own kinsmen—and felt that as for holy communion his soul was in a dry and thirsty land where there was no water! Believers are to keep out of worldly company and yet it sometimes happens that Providence throws the child of God among the ungodly, like Obadiah in the family of Ahab; Nehemiah in the palace of Artaxerxes and Daniel in the court of Darius. Your lot is hard if you are called to dwell among worldlings, for they have power to *injure* your piety but they cannot help you.

You look around upon a score of hard faces all eager after the almighty dollar and none of them caring for the almighty God—and I do not wonder that you feel yourself to be in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water!

We owe much more to Christian friends than we think—and especially the younger folk among us do well to value Christian associations and to be much in the company of them that fear the Lord and that think upon His name. If they are denied this refreshment, they will find life to be a dry land where there is no water. Yes, but the same may happen from other causes as well. Sometimes a believing man may be treated with gross injustice and endure much hardship as the result. David was blameless and yet Saul hunted him as a traitor! He was upright, yet his people revolted from him. It tends to make a good man sour in spirit to be misrepresented and treated as guilty when he knows that he is innocent—and this bitterness is very apt to put away from us many sources of comfort and leave us uncomfortable. Then many a spring becomes dry and the heart shrivels as under a burning sun.

Sometimes, too, domestic conditions may be so changed that we cannot feel as we would wish. I do not know how you feel, but I think many must acknowledge that when they get away from their own room and from their regular habits, they are not always able to commune with God as usual. One likes to read from the very same Bible and to kneel at the very same chair. When the time comes for meeting with God, you are, perhaps, roaming up and down amid the choicest scenery and though you are reverent and adoring, yet you find it hard to reach the sweetness of fellowship with God which you have been accustomed to enjoy at home. Everything may be very lovely around you while you are tourists—everything may be attractive and delightful and yet, I should not wonder but what you will find it to be a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

I can well conceive that your hearts long for an hour of your accustomed quietude and familiarity with God. You would give anything to be back in the little room, looking out upon the hills, or to have an hour in that secluded little garden where you have been accustomed to take your pocket Testament and sit down and hear the Voice of Jesus speaking to your soul and to speak to Him in return. Even hours and places have much to do with our heart's condition. I know not how it is, but such strange creatures are we that in one place we cannot worship as we would like to do in another and, therefore, the soul finds its condition to be that of a wanderer in a dry and thirsty land!

Then, too, much depends upon health and physical conditions. In some forms of sickness the soul is apt to be grievously depressed and cast out of its proper condition. Some of you may remember the venerable Watts Wilkinson, the Golden Lecturer. I was reading his life the other day and he tells us that after many years of health he suffered a season of sickness. And he learned by experience that sickness is not the best time, as he had formerly thought it was, for drawing near to God. The effects of sickness are often very beneficial under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, but they are seldom so at the time.

It is “afterwards” that these things work the fruits of righteousness—but at the time it is often with us as it was with Wilkinson who says that he never in his life felt so dull in prayer and so heavy in reading the Scriptures as during his illness. I believe that often the condition of the body operates upon the condition of the mind and that our being in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water may be occasioned by a feverishness or a feebleness of the flesh. Lack of faith may sometimes be little other than a need of natural cheerfulness and we may mistake infirmity for iniquity. We have our times of natural sadness. We have, too, our times of depression when we cannot do otherwise than hang our heads.

Seasons of lethargy will also befall us from changes in our natural frame, or from weariness, or the rebound of over excitement. The trees are not always green—the sap sleeps in them in the winter—and we have winters, too. Life cannot always be at flood tide—the fullness of the blessing is not upon the most gracious at all times. We may always burn, but we cannot always flame! We may always grow, but we cannot always flower. And if we always bear fruit, yet the fruit is not always ripe, nor does the ripeness always wear the same delicate bloom. Till we are perfected we shall not be always at our highest point, otherwise earth would be turned to Heaven and time would have forgotten itself and merged its variable-ness in the immutability of eternity!

So you see there are many reasons why the best of saints are sometimes in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

II. The second head is a very short but very comforting one, that GOD IS STILL OUR GOD—“O God, You are my God.” Yes, He is just as much our God in the dry land as if we sat by Siloa’s softly flowing brook which glides by the oracle of God. O God, You are my God when I see the fountain leaping from the rock in a cascade of cool refreshment and You are just as much my God if every river bed is turned to a heap of stones and the burning sand on all sides mock my searching eyes! The Lord belongs to us by an eternal charter which will never lose its force, for the Scripture says, “This God is our God forever and ever.” This is a very sweet and precious Truth of God and should be remembered always!

Of course, when a man falls into a dull dry state of soul, he may very well question his condition before God and he ought not to rest till the question is satisfactorily answered. But where there is living faith the fact is certain and all question may be dismissed. God is your God still, my dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever condition you are in, if you can now come and grasp Him by faith and call Him yours with the voice of love. Can you join me in words like these? Lord, I have lost my comforts; I have lost my assurances; I have lost my delights, but I still trust in You. I have no God but You, neither will I worship any other, nor repose my confidence elsewhere. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You. The wounds of Jesus for my sin are still my soul’s one hope—the precious blood of Your dear Son is my sole confidence!

If such is your language, you have not lost your God! All the other things you speak of may have gone for a while, but as long as you can still say, “O God, You are my God, early will I seek You,” you are still among the living in Zion and your time to rejoice shall soon come! Just think a

minute—it is not possible that *God's* love to His people should change with *their* condition—such a theology would represent God as very variable in His love! Yes, it would do worse than that, for it would make the Gospel into a Law and turn all evangelical Truth into legality!

Does God love me because I love Him? Does God love me because I am bright and happy? Does God love me because my faith is strong and because I can leap like a hart in His ways? Why, then, He must have loved me because of something good in me—and that is not according to the Gospel! The Gospel represents the Lord as loving the unworthy and justifying the ungodly and, therefore, I must cast out of my mind the idea that Divine Love depends on *human* conditions! Can it be true that God only loves His children when they are in good spiritual health? Is it so with me? Do I love my child when he is strong and hate him when he is sick? When I see the spots of disease upon him do I put him away and say that he is no son of mine?

If his poor eyes should fail him and he should become blind, should I cast him off? If his feet should fail him and he became a helpless cripple, should I disown him? If he lost his hearing and could not listen to my voice, would I discard him? Fathers, mothers, I speak to you! Come what may to your offspring, are they not still yours? And would you not still love them? Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? The Lord has said, “They may forget, yet will He not forget His people.” Be cheered, then, for into whatever state of unhappiness we may have wandered, the love of God does not depend upon our condition! It knows no ups nor downs, nor winters nor summers, nor ebbs nor flows, but abides forever sure!

Even though the Lord should hide His face from us, He is still our God, for the Lord has taught us to cry, “My God, my God,” even when we have to add, “why have You forsaken me?” When the Lord first loved us we were in a worse state than we are in now, for though we feel dry and sapless we are not utterly dead as we were then. Remember “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” We were *enemies* and yet He reconciled us! And we are not enemies now, though we fear we are poor, cold-hearted friends. We are sadly sick, perhaps, but we are not actually under condemnation as we were when first of all His Sovereign Grace came forth to do the deed of redemption and deliver us from the wrath to come. And if the Lord loved us then, why should He not love us now? We have not fallen into any state which takes the Lord by surprise, for He knew well enough what we should be.

However we may blame ourselves and I hope we *do* blame ourselves severely for every evil within our hearts, yet He foreknew what we should be and is by no means disappointed in us. There has nothing happened which our God did not foreknow and if He chose us knowing all this, can it be possible that when it comes to pass He should turn from His purpose and change His mind? No, never! Brethren, we have had great experiences, some of us, of God's love in the past and this makes us feel that He can help us and *will* help us in the present! In the sanctuary we have seen His power and His Glory. Oh the delight, the heavenly joys which we have known at times in His service!

At Prayer Meetings I know we have had our hearts warmed within us and felt that we could scarcely be happier in Heaven! Sometimes, under a sermon, we have been fired as with new life and we have felt that we could begin again with double strength! If this has happened to us in former times, when we were heavy and depressed, why can it not happen again? Does not the Lord delight to revive the spirits of the faint and weary? Angels' visits may be few and far between, but not the visitations of the Spirit of God, for He *dwells with us and in us forever!* Before we are aware, He can make us like the chariots of Amminadib, for He has done it and what He has done He is certainly able to do again! Why not comfort yourselves with these thoughts?

Besides, if we are in the wilderness, is not God the God of the wilderness? Were not His greatest marvels worked when He led His people about through the howling wilderness and fed them with manna and revealed Himself in a fiery, cloudy pillar? Where did Hagar look to Him who saw her but in the wilderness? Where did Moses see the Lord in the bush but at the backside of the desert? Where did Elijah hear a voice speaking to Him but away there in the wilderness? And where did David, the Psalmist, meet with his God but in the lone, solitary land where there is no water? O my Soul, if you are in the desert now, expect your God to meet with you! Open your eyes and *expect* to see Him display His Grace now that you are as the dry ground! He will pour floods upon you now that you are empty! He will fill you with His Divine fullness! Your poverty prepares you to apprehend His riches! Your inward death prepares you to receive His everlasting life! Therefore, have hope and rise from your depression and fear!

III. Thus much upon the second subject, by which we are led briefly to the third, namely, WHEN WE ARE IN A DRY AND THIRSTY LAND OUR WISEST COURSE IS TO CRY TO HIM AT ONCE. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I want to speak very practically to you, as I do to myself, for many of us are deeply and personally concerned in this matter. Very likely the warmth of the atmosphere on this warm summer morning may make you feel all the duller in devotion. You may not be enjoying the things of God because the air is heavy and makes you sleepy. Let us, then, bestir ourselves and break asunder the bonds of sleep!

We can only do this by crying at once to God Himself. Let us go straight away to Jesus, our Friend and Physician, and let us cry, "O God, You are my God, early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You." Observe that David does not first pray for deliverance from the dry and thirsty land and then say, "There, I will now go and seek God!" But no, in the desert, itself, he cries, "My soul thirsts for You." Learn from this and do not say, "I will get into communion with God when I feel better," but long for communion *now!* It is one of the temptations of the devil to tell you not to pray when you do not feel like praying. Pray twice as much, then! When you feel least like praying, then pray the more, for you need it the more!

And when you feel very little like coming near to God, then cry, "My God, I must be in a terrible state, or else I should have a greater longing after You. Therefore will I not rest till I find You and come to You." Do not,

any of you, practice the sinner's folly—he declares that he will tarry till he is better—and then he never comes at all. No, children of God must not say, “We will seek the Lord when we are better,” but you must seek Him at once! Practice the Gospel principle of, “Just as I am,” and come to Jesus just as you are! Lethargic, half asleep, almost dead in spirit, yet nevertheless come to Jesus! Make a plunge for it. Say, “I must have a sense of His love and I must have it now! I must not lose this blessed Sabbath morning! I must enter into fellowship with God.” Make a dash for it and you shall have it! Do not wait till you are delivered, but in the dry and thirsty land sigh after God!

Neither, dear Friends, pray so much for ordinances as for the Lord, Himself. David does not say, “O God, You are my God, I will seek the sanctuary. My soul thirsts for a Prayer Meeting, my flesh longs for a sermon.” No, he sighs for God! He thirsts only for God! I believe that our Lord sometimes strikes all ordinances dry to make us feel that they are nothing without Himself. The means of Grace are blessed breasts at which the soul may suck when God is in them, but they are emptiness, itself, when He is not there. The preacher who has best fed you will only disappoint you if his Lord is not with him, or if you are not prepared to look beyond the man to the Master! The Lord loves to famish His people of all earthly bread and water—to bring them to wait upon only Himself.

I charge you, Beloved, this morning, that whatever your state may be, make a direct appeal to the Lord that He would immediately give you Himself by Christ Jesus! Nothing less than this can meet your needs and this will meet your case, though all outward ordinances should be denied. What if no point of the sermon should impress or quicken you? Yet the silent power of the Spirit of God can glide into your heart and become life to your soul! Seek it, then, and seek it believing that it may be had and had at once! The child of God may rise at once from slumber into earnestness and may leap from lethargy into zeal!

It is wonderful how speedily the Spirit of God works! He needs not hours and days and weeks in which to make us young again! He works with amazing mastery over the lapse of time and perfects in an instant His good work. It was all darkness, primeval darkness, thick and black as ebony itself and Jehovah said, “Light be!” Then flashed the day and all was brightness! So may it be black as Hell with you at this moment and an infernal night may brood over every faculty of your being—yet if the enlightening Spirit comes forth—day shall dawn, a day that shall surprise you, a day above the brightness of that which comes of the sun! Do not be afraid, dear children of God, you that have fallen into a mournful state! Do not be afraid to cry out to God, this morning, in the language of the Psalmist!

I know we sometimes feel as if we must not and dare not pray. We have become so dull, so lifeless, so unworthy that we do not expect to be heard and feel as if it would be presumption to cry. But our heavenly Father loves to hear His children cry all day long! Rutherford says, “The child in Christ's house that is most troublesome is the most welcome! He that makes the most noise for his meat is the best child that Christ has.” You may not quite agree with that as to your own children, but it is certainly so with our Lord! Rutherford says, “It is a good child that is always whin-

ing each hour of the day for a piece and a drink.” He speaks of a hungry *soul* hanging around Christ’s pantry door and commends him for so doing. Assuredly the Lord wishes His children to have strong desires after Himself! Desire, then, and let those desires be vehement!

If you can cry out to Jesus, He will joyfully hear you! If you will give Him no rest, He will give you all the rest you need! The Lord finds music in His children’s cries. “Oh,” you say, “I would cry, but mine is such a discordant and foolish cry.” You are the very man to cry, for your sorrow will put an emphasis into your voice! Of all the cries your children utter, the one that comes closest home to you arises out of their pain and deep distress! A dying moan from a little one will pierce a mother’s heart! Look, she presses the baby to her bosom! She cries, “My dear dying child,” and weeps over it! You, too, shall be pressed to the bosom of Everlasting Love if you can only groan, or sob, or sigh! Only be careful that you are not *happy* in a dry and thirsty land! Be careful that you are not *content* away from God—for if you will not rest till you get at Him, you shall soon have Him! If you will groan after Him you shall find Him! A sigh will fetch Him!

May there be much longing, panting and pleading among us at this hour! Do not let anyone here be satisfied to remain in a dull state. Do not say, “Well, but he says a child of God may experience dullness.” Yes, I know I did, but I did not bid you fall into it! Above all, I did not tell you to *live* in it! One of your children may fall and cut his knees, but I should not recommend all his brothers to try a tumble, nor should I exhort him to lie on the ground. The dry and thirsty land is really a dry and thirsty land to the Believer, but if you can be satisfied to dwell there, it is not a dry and thirsty land to you!

Now, child of God, if you have fallen into a dull state, I beseech you to labor to rise out of it. And I do this, first, because you are not a fit person to be in such a state. Yours is the land that flows with milk and honey! You are like David, driven out of Canaan for a time, but you must never be satisfied till you get back to Jerusalem! Oh, cry unto the Lord to bring you back that you may see the King’s face and sit at the King’s table and delight yourself with the marrow and the fatness which you ought to feed upon every day! You are a king and a priest unto God—will you go about in sordid beggar’s rags and forget your dignity and sit on a dunghill with the paupers of this miserable world? No! Come away! Come away—the dry and thirsty land is not for you—yours is the land of plenty and of joy!

Think of your obligations to your Savior. You have been bought with His precious blood! Your sins are forgiven you! You are a joint-heir with Him! Are you going to be cold and careless towards the Well-Beloved of your soul? I was about to say three-fourths of all the Christian people in this world live in such a way as rather to disgrace the Redeemer than to honor Him. I have not said that, but if I had chanced to make the statement I would not retract it, for I am afraid it is true. I am afraid that many of us are no credit to Christ. If worldlings look at us, they say, “Is *that* a Christian?” If my Lord were to send some of His sheep to a show, they would be far enough from winning a prize. If the prize were for joyous piety some would utterly fail! If the prize were for consistent courage and strength of heart, how few of us would be “highly commended.”

Many of His sheep are no credit to their Feeder and reflect no honor upon their Shepherd. Out of your dumps, my Brothers and Sisters! Why should you be sitting in darkness any longer with such Grace to be had and such a Savior to give it? Just think—you are losing a world of joy! You are sitting like an owl in a haunted ruin, blinking your eyes, when you might be flying like an eagle straight up to the Sun of Righteousness, in full communion with the great Lord! Why are you down there, down in the dens and caves of the earth, howling away among the dragons—when you might be up there among the cherubim and seraphim magnifying the Lord, for, “He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”? I said you were children of God and, therefore, I am not condemning you, but I would brush you up if I could and bestir you to walk somewhat more worthily of the obligations imposed upon you by the Grace of God!

Think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you and I all get into a dull, sleepy state—what is to become of this poor world? You have to go to your class this afternoon—are you going there half awake and half asleep? Are you going to dream among your children all the afternoon? “Oh,” you say, “we do not do that.” Don’t you? Why, many a preacher is not above half awake when he delivers his sermon—he rather snores it than preaches it! Few of us ever were awake all through. We are awake half way! Oh that we were thoroughly awake, thoroughly alive, thoroughly in earnest! No wonder sinners are given to slumber when saints sleep as they do! No wonder that the unconverted think Hell a fiction when we live as if it were so! No wonder that they imagine Heaven to be a romance when we act as if it were so little a reality!

Oh Lord, awaken us, even if it be by thunder claps! Oh God, for Jesus Christ’s sake, bring us out of the dry and thirsty land! Have You not said that if we drink of the river of the Water of Life, out of our belly shall flow rivers of living water so that we shall neither complain of thirst, ourselves, nor shall there remain a desert around us? Help us, then, to drink abundantly!

I have thus spoken to as many as believe in Jesus Christ, but to you that are unbelievers, much of this may equally well apply, for you, too, are in a land still *more* dry and thirsty. Do not go about to sacraments and sermons, much less to priests, but go straight to God in Christ Jesus! Cry to HIM! O Sinner, cry to Him, “O God, though You are not my God, yet still early will I seek You! My heart longs for You! Come to me and save me!” Jesus will come to you and save you, even you, to the praise of the glory of His Grace. Amen.

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EXPERIENCE AND ASSURANCE

NO. 2166

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow
of Your wings will I rejoice.”
Psalm 63:7.*

In their time of trouble the children of God return to their Father. It is according to their newborn nature to seek Him from whom it came. The believing heart is like the needle in the compass—you may turn it round with your finger east and west—but when you withdraw the pressure, it will, beyond all doubt, tremble backward towards its pole. With God, the regenerate heart is in its proper position. A mystic something draws the new life towards the Source from where it came. We may, alas, by the force of temptation, or by the demands of business, or by an overpowering lethargy become indifferent to our highest love—but this cannot long continue—we can never rest except in God! The winds of trouble blow the dove of our soul back to the ark. Our heart repents of its wanderings when they bring it into a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. Then we long after Divine refreshments and cannot be quiet till we have them. Then we cry, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You”!

The soul, in coming back to God, will be greatly helped by meditation. Hence the Psalmist says, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips: when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.” The soul feasts when it *meditates*! I am afraid these eager days leave little space for meditation, yet there is no exercise more nourishing to faith, love and all the Graces. David says, “I remember You; I meditate on You.” A transient thought of God may bless us largely, even as a touch of the hem of the Savior’s garment healed a woman of her plague. But to *meditate* upon Him is, as it were, to lean our head upon His bosom and enjoy full fellowship in His love. Oh, for more meditation! It would mean more Grace, more joy!

The photographer can take an instantaneous photograph and so can we, by ejaculatory prayer and vehement desire, obtain immediate help from Heaven. But in a certain state of the atmosphere the object needs longer exposure—needs, in fact, that its image should rest longer upon the sensitive plate before it will completely imprint itself. *Meditation* does, as it were, set the Lord long before the soul so that it receives His image more completely. Happy is he who can say, “I have set the Lord always before me”! Thoughts of God are as when a man climbs a hill, looks upon a landscape and cries out exultingly, “How beautiful is this scenery!”

But if you would have a figure of meditation, you must see that man standing on the hilltop for a long space of time and marking the features

of the landscape. Look, yonder is the spire of a village church! Mark the cottages nestling around it! There flows a river and, hard by, a broad sheet of water, like a looking glass, reflects the sun. Mark the distant range of hills and the woods and wilds which lie between. Note well the valley bronzed with a thousand fields of corn divided like a garden by hedgerows. Such a view as this is instructive and abides in the memory. He understands the country best who has seen most of it—and we know the Lord, by His Spirit—far better by quiet meditation than by any other means.

We not only remember our God once, but we remember, and remember, and remember, and remember again till memory flowers into meditation. Thoughts of God crop the herbage, but meditation chews the cud—and it is the chewing of the cud which yields nourishment. Oh, that you and I may often cheer our sleepless hours by heavenly meditations, for thus shall the pure in heart see their God and thus shall they enter into the closest fellowship with Him! *Among our subjects for meditation should be God's gracious dealings with us.* David meditated upon his whole life in the light of its connection with God. He read his diary through and specially dwelt upon the points where he had come into contact with the Invisible and the Infinite. He remembered the help he had received from Omnipotence. He knew God best by special times of gracious aid.

After all, it is not what we read in the Bible, but what we feel in the heart which actually gives us our best acquaintance with God. A hundred biographies of other men will not make so much impression upon us as the knowing of God in our own personal experience. If we can say of Him, "You have been my help," we shall meditate upon Him to good purpose.

Once more—*when the heart comes back to God*, riding in the golden chariot of meditation, *the natural instinct is to speak to Him.* Hence my text is not only the Word of God, but a word *with* God! The Psalmist does not direct the words of the text to us, but to God Himself—"Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." Beloved, it is a delightful thing to converse with God! Do you indulge this habit? If the Lord is your Father, should you not, as a child, speak with Him every day? If you are married to Christ, should not the spouse speak with her Well-Beloved? It were very strange if she did not! Private devotion ought to be a dialogue between the soul and God—by the Scripture the Lord speaks to us—and by prayer we speak to Him.

Sometimes, you know, in conversation with a friend, you have not much to say. Very well. You listen while your friend speaks. When prayer is not urgent, read your Bible and hear what God, the Lord, shall speak. And when you have heard His voice you will usually find it in your heart to pray to Him. If the prayer is soon over, because you have expressed all your thoughts, then let the Lord speak again and you listen diligently. But do speak to the Lord! Realize His Presence and then speak to Him as a man speaks with his friend. God has no dumb children, but He has some who hold their tongues to a fault when they are with Him. I fear that these same people use their tongues to a fault when they are away from Him.

O Brothers and Sisters, speak with God! This is the noblest use of speech. If half our talk with men were silenced and our talks with God were multiplied 10 times, it would be well. May I ask a question of every professing Christian? Have you spoken with God this morning? Do you allow a day to pass without conversation with God? Can it be right for us to treat the Lord with mute indifference? No! Let us often turn our hearts and our lips heavenward and say, "Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name." Does not our Lord love to hear us speak? Listen to His loving appeal in the sacred Canticle—"O My doves, that are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely."

With this as a preface, I now invite you to the text itself, which is a stanza of David's song unto the Lord. "Because You have been my help"—This is *experience*. "Therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice"—this is *expectation*, or, viewing it in a still brighter light, "I will rejoice"—this is *assurance*. Here are three subjects to dwell upon. God help us to climb these three rounds of the ladder of light—experience, expectation, full assurance! If we stop at the top when we get there it may not be amiss. But if we have to begin again, let us rehearse matters in the same order—more experience, clearer expectation and fuller assurance.

I. First, then, EXPERIENCE—"You have been my help." Experience is the child of faith and, strange to say, experience is the nurse of faith. No man can expect to experience the fulfillment of the promise till he believes the promise. But they believe the promise best who have had most experience of God's faithfulness. *David had experienced Divine help*. He distinctly traced many of his deliverances to Divine help. He says, "You have been my help." David did not ascribe his success in life to a powerful patron for he had none. I have heard men sigh for the bondage of patronage. One has cried, "If I were taken up by some great man, I should succeed in life."

David had no patronage—on the contrary, he encountered strong opposition. His brothers pushed him into the rear and even his father kept him minding the sheep. In later life Jonathan was his friend, but he was not his patron for that generous prince always felt that David was his superior. If you have God for your Friend, you need not cringe before great men, for you shall joyfully say unto the Lord, "You have been my help." Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. But blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord. Neither does David ascribe his success in life to *himself*. There is no doubt that he was a man of genius, cast in a poetic mold and it is also clear that he was a valiant man, born for deeds of daring and high enterprise. He was also a man of judgment and counsel and as apt for government in peace as in war.

With all his faults, there is no more royal character upon the pages of Scripture than David, King of Israel. But he does not sacrifice to his own sword, or magnify his own bow. We read no word of his about his being a self-made man. No, rather, he sings, "It is God that subdues the people under me." Brethren, have there not been instances in your lives in which

the Lord has evidently interposed to help you? I can see His hand clearly in places wherein no other help would have been sufficient. If anyone had to sketch my life, he could not do it fully unless I were, from my own secret thoughts, to supply certain gaps. Without God the Believer's life is inexplicable. The Romans used to speak of *Deus ex machinis*, God appearing in an unexpected manner in the midst of a history to rescue the hero and change the scene. This is no figure of speech in the life of faith.

Every now and then we have witnessed a distinct interposition—a stretching out of the Divine hand—an inroad of the supernatural. To us has it been true, “He bowed the heavens also, and came down.” Others might think our experience fanatical if we were to tell it as we see it, but this we cannot help. To us it has been a real manifestation of the Divine thoughtfulness on our behalf. Looking back upon our lives we cannot help saying deliberately and as cool a statement of fact—the Lord has been our help. There, and there, and there we mark certain turning points in our life which cannot be accounted for to our own minds on any other theory than that here the Creator came into contact with His creature—the Redeemer stooped over His redeemed and the Comforter worked upon the soul which He indwelt. Yes, “O triune Jehovah, You have been my help!”

David felt it was so and he avowed it without hesitation. Furthermore, these words imply that *David had often experienced this help*. He does not make this statement in reference to one solitary incident in his life, or he would have said, “You were once my help.” He sees a continuity in the loving kindness of the Lord his God. He means, “You have all along been my help.” When he was a youth and kept his father's flock, there came a lion and took a lamb out of his flock—and he, with dauntless courage—rushed upon the monster and saved the lamb from between his jaws. Another day a bear pounced on one of his helpless charge and the brave youth killed it. God helped him in those days of solitude in the wilderness.

None saw his daring deeds, but he communed with God and worked bravely, so as to prepare himself to be the shepherd and deliverer of the Lord's own flock. In his early youth the Lord was his strength and his song. Soon he was taken away from solitude and introduced into public life and the Lord was his help. He had a strange introduction to the world. I might almost say that he was slung out into public life like a stone from his own sling. A gigantic Philistine stalked before the hosts of Israel, defying the servants of God to single conflict. Young David undertook to answer the champion's defiance and then was fulfilled his brave words to King Saul, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.” He ran to him in the name of the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom he had defied and presently he returned to Saul bearing the braggart's gory head. “Because You have been my help,” was David's way of accounting for his slaying the lion, the bear and the giant.

In later life David had to attend in the court of envious Saul and he behaved himself wisely. He would confess to the Lord the reason for his wise behavior in these words, “Because You have been my help.” Put upon difficult enterprises, he achieved them. Jealously envied by the king, he gave

him no ground for a charge, for God was his help. Driven at length into exile, to become the leader of a band of men hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, his life was still preserved—the Lord was his help. While yet a wanderer, he met with a great heart-breaking trouble. While he had been away from Ziklag, where his men were in residence, a band of marauders came upon the city, took the women and children captive and burned the city with fire.

When he and his band came back to the place, each man had to grieve over his ruined home, stolen substance and wife and family carried off. The rough men spoke of stoning David, for their hearts were bitter with a great sorrow. Then we read that, “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God,” and very soon his mourning was turned into dancing—the captives were recovered, the spoil was reclaimed and the men-at-arms were glad. Truly David could say, “You have been my help.” I cannot go through all the life of David, but I hope you are familiar with it. In doing his duty as patriot and king, God was his help and enabled him to walk uprightly in his government. In his sufferings the Lord was his help and enabled him to be calm and brave. In the time of danger God was his help and kept him from the hand of the enemy.

And now, in this Psalm, though David is in the wilderness of Judah and probably hunted by his own son, yet he sings unto the Lord, “You have been my help.” Beloved Friends, I do not want you to stop with David any longer. I beg you, now, to come nearer home and review your *own* lives. I cannot, of course, give a sketch of the histories of all here assembled, but many of them will run on this wise—as a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, your life was a hard fight in the beginning and many a time you were ready to perish. Perhaps you began very low down in the scale and when you were about to rise, misfortune dragged you down. Many things were against you, but the Lord was your help.

In your own person you have suffered sickness, but when you have tossed upon the bed, in great anguish, God has been your help. You have experienced trial in your family. There are graves in the cemetery which you will never forget. Half your heart lies buried beneath the sod. Yet the Lord has been your help. When you hoped, by industry, to succeed, the times suddenly turned and swept away your gains. It seemed as if you could not prosper. You can say today, “I was brought low and the Lord helped me.” You are not in the workhouse. You have not been through the bankruptcy court. You still find that promise true, “Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure.” You joyfully say this day, “O Lord, You have been my help.”

As for me, the very spot on which I stand bears witness to the loving kindnesses of the Lord. On this platform I have endured deep distress of mind while preaching to you and I have feared lest I should not be able to speak aright in the name of the Lord. But now, concerning these 37 years of my ministry, I joyfully say, “You have been my help.” Most of you, in your various walks of life, will have had occasion, again and again, to bless the Lord who has been your help.

These helps rendered to David had been very choice ones. He had often been helped in special ways. God had taken great care of him. He was the favorite of Providence and the darling of Heaven. Has it not been so with some of you? Have you not enjoyed choice morsels of experience? Are there not incidents in your life which you could scarcely tell lest the hearer should smile at your credulity and you should be found casting pearls before swine? To some of us, most special mercies have been vouchsafed and we have treasured them as choice things. I was rather astonished to learn that in the Hebrew the help is expressed by much the same word which is used in Genesis to describe the position of woman to man. God made Eve to be a helpmeet for Adam and here the Almighty God has been to us as suitable a help as the helpmeet He made for man!

Some of us have a dear one who has been our best earthly help and that in the best and happiest manner conceivable—a help exactly answering to our heart's needs. David had found in his God a help of the kind which he needed—a help tenderly, wisely, Divinely suited for his every need. The Lord had answered to His servant's needs and desires and had been his very present help, yielding wisdom for his folly and power for his weakness—and comfort for his sorrow. Wonder of wonders, that God the Omnipotent and Almighty should become a help in all things meet for man! Is not this a joyous thing? Have we not found it so? Confess this tender fact to your God and rejoice every day in the quiet of your own soul, saying, "You have been my help."

God has been to us a very timely help. Has He not appeared in the very nick of time? Had there been another moment's delay, it had been all over with us. But in our extremity the Lord found His opportunity. How speedily He came—

***"On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode
And on the wings of mighty wind
Came flying all abroad.
And so delivered He my soul:
Who is a Rock but He?
He lives—
Blessed be my Rock!
My God exalted be!"***

Just when our own life ebbed out, the Divine life flowed in. Just when joy died within us, hope was born and our spirit revived.

God's help has also been continuous to us. Though at the present moment there may seem to be a break and we are in the wilderness of Judah where the Lord is rather thirsted for than seen, yet this is only an apparent break. Beloved, up to now there has been no pause in the goodness of God to us! In the time of our darkness we could not see the link but, looking back, we can see it now. Life has been to us a continuous chain of love with every link well forged upon the anvil of power by the hammer of Wisdom. The Lord has never failed us. Did He not say, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? and has it not been so? Up hill and down dale, in the dark and in the light, in summer and in winter the constancy of God's

help has been proved. His faithfulness is a fountain of delight to us. The Lord has always been our help!

Observe, also, that *the Lord has granted us educative mercy*. David says, "Because You have been my *help*." He says not that He has worked everything for us, but He has set us working, also. You see, if you do a thing for a man, it is well. But if you help him to do it, it may be better for him, for thus he learns the way. It is true that in many deeds of Divine Grace, the Lord does not help—He does all the work Himself. He chose us before we chose Him and without our choice of Him He quickened us. We could not help in our own quickening. He renewed us—we could not help in our own renewal. He, by His own power, made us new creatures and changed our hearts and gave us His Holy Spirit—we could not help in this, for this must be God's own unaided work.

God made the grass, the grass did not help in its own creation—but God helps the grass to grow—and the grass grows by the Divine power. In the same manner, after we have come to spiritual life, then God helps us. Donne says, "God has not left me to myself. He has come to my succor. He has been my help—but then, God has not left out myself—He has been my help, but He has left something for me to do with Him and by His help." We work because He makes us work and helps us in it. We bring forth fruit as branches of the vine, but He supplies the sap, so that He says, "From Me is your fruit found."

Lord, You have been my help—I began with stammering a few sentences for You—but You have opened my mouth to show forth Your praise. Did you not begin with a faint confession of Christ? And now you dare to stand in the front of the battle! The Lord has so helped you that you have been trained for the conflict—"He teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Help not only promotes the work, but it blesses the man, himself, by stimulating his powers and developing them! Blessed be the name of the Lord! He has not carried us like babes, but He has taught us to walk with Him as men and we are the stronger because we can say, "You have been my help."

I close this first head when I have noticed *the personal experience* of the text—"Because you have been *my* help." Oh, I like that word *my*! *My* help." If David had said, "Because you were Abraham's help," there would have been good argument in it, for the experience of another man ought to encourage our faith. Suppose he had said, "Because You were Jacob's help," or "Moses' help"? It would have been good reasoning. But, oh, it strikes more surely and comes more closely home to a man's heart when he can say, "Because You have been *my* help." An infidel once sneered at a poor woman and said, "How do you know the Bible is true?" She answered, "I have experienced the truth of it." He replied, "Your experience! That is nothing to me."

"No," she said, "that is very likely. But it is everything to me." And so it is. My experience may not convince another man, but my experience has rooted, grounded and settled myself. "But," says one, "Surely, you are open to conviction?" Yes, I am always open to conviction. But there are some things upon which no man, nor angel, nor devil will ever alter my

convictions already formed. There are a few things which we know—I mean things which we have *experienced*. If we have experienced the truth of them, then we are past all argument to the contrary—we are sure and certain, fixed and rooted. It seems to me that there are two books which a Christian man ought to study—the one is this big Book, the inspired Word of God. The other is the little book of his own life. If the Believer lives long enough he will write into that little book all that there is in the great Book, only he will change the tense.

When the great Book says, “I will do this, and I will do that,” we shall find in the little book, “God has done so-and-so. In my own case the promise has been fulfilled.” The little book will be the echo of the Inspired volume, the record of the fact that the Lord has done according to His Word of promise! Thus experience becomes a stay and a strength to the child of God in times of darkness or controversy. God grant that you may go on writing up your personal memoirs and thus confirming the witness of the Spirit! Are not our lives the proof of God’s faithfulness? Is not this the sum and substance of them, “You have been my help”?

II. And now, secondly, EXPECTATION. David naturally expected that as God *had* been his help, so He *would be* his help. I like a text which has a, “because,” in it followed up with a, “therefore.” The text becomes a syllogism, an argument, a sure statement—*because* such-and-such a thing is fact, *therefore* such another thing must be fact. God, who *has* helped us, *will* help us. Experience becomes argument and the argument carries conviction with it. *What we have experienced of God’s goodness is a revelation of Himself*—God’s actions are Himself in motion! If, then, we have experienced God’s power, He is powerful and we know that anything is possible to Him. If I have experienced His acts of faithfulness, I conclude that He is always faithful and that He will keep His promise and His Covenant and will be true to all those who trust in Him.

Suppose I have watched His ways for 40 years and have found Him to be the same yesterday and today? Then I conclude that He is Immutable—the same in my age as in my youth—the same in my adversity as in my prosperity. I infer from the fact that God has been good to me that He will be the same to me all my days. Very well, then. As I am the same person, at least as far as my weakness and my necessity are concerned, I will go to God in the same way. The Lord is the same God in every respect—my need is the same as ever it was—His supplies are the same as ever they were! His will to bless me is still the same and His promise to bless me is the same, for it stands guaranteed in His blessed Word. Therefore I will have the same faith and the same hope in God. Looking back and making sure that the Lord has been my help up to now, I draw the conclusion that He will be my help to the end of the chapter.

This reasoning is good, since *you have to deal with an unchanging God*. You could not reason in that way in reference to man. No. You say, “I cannot go to my friend, Brown, for help, for I have been to him already.” You do not argue that you may freely go again because you have been already. Far from it. You say, “I have received as much from him as I could reasonably expect and I must not become a burden to him.” Or else it

happens that your friend grows weary of you and answers you coldly—and so you feel that you can go no more to him. Earthly friends can be drawn upon so much that their generosity is exhausted and they feel that you are unreasonable in your requests. If, therefore, you have changeable man to deal with, there will be no logic in your reasoning.

But when you think of Jehovah who changes not, then you may infer great things and the most severe logic will support you. He *was* my help, He *is* my help and therefore He *will be* my help, even to the end. *This kind of argument is very sure to a man's own self* and he is the person most concerned. We know whom we have believed and we are persuaded that He will not fail us. We know what we do know and if we cannot tell it to others, we are none the less sure of it ourselves. The Lord has been our help in very remarkable ways which put His graciousness beyond a doubt. And so our expectation is large and unquestioning—we look for endless, perfect, prompt and final deliverance from all evil. There is a force about personal experience which, to the man himself, is irresistible and the conclusion that comes from it is to him as certain as the existence of God. The hammer of Thor, which would have broken the globe, is not more mighty than the argument of *personal* experience before which all difficulties of faith are dashed in pieces.

It is clear that *this is an accumulating argument*. The young man who has known the Lord 12 months and experienced a great deliverance, is sure that the Lord is to be trusted. But when he has passed 20, 30, or 40 years of the same experience, his assurance will be doubly sure! To a believer in Christ every day teems with Providences and mercies. This tree bears its fruit every month and the fruit feeds faith wondrously. Every year is crowned with the loving kindness of the Lord and so, in old age, the faithfulness of God is a fact which is no more argued, but enjoyed! When the Believer dies he has nothing to do but to die. He is assured by an argument which has grown out of 40 years' observation. He knows that God will help him, for He *has* helped him!

I stood by the side of a dear old friend and fellow helper yesterday. He is in his 92nd year and has taken to his bed through weakness. Instead of seeking sympathy or speaking to me in a doleful style, he pleasantly observed, "You see I am higher in the world than when you came last time, for I have left the parlor and come upstairs. Very soon I shall not be higher in the world, but higher *than* the world." He said this with that same twinkle of the eye which I have noticed in him in the days of his strength when he was equally full of Grace and wit. There was no fear of death to daunt or dampen his spirit! He knew nothing of such a feeling. "Ah," he said, "Isaiah was right when he described our experience in the passage, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.'"

"He begins flying, then goes to running and then to walking. But the Prophet calls this *renewing* his strength. It looks like *losing* strength and speed, does it not? Ah, but (he said) you know flying is not a suitable thing for daily life—it is all very well for young people, but it does not suit

everyday life. Running is for another period, but it is not a practical pace for a continuance. Quietly walking with God is a safe, lasting, everyday pace. You can keep on at that as Enoch did, till you walk away with God. I have now got to my walking days,” said the grand old man. Then he went on to expound the Scripture by other Scriptures. “John says, ‘I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you.’ That makes them mount up with eagles’ wings above the guilt of sin!

“To the young men he says, ‘I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One.’ In that case there has been struggling and exertion, like the running without weariness. But when he gets to the fathers, he says, ‘I write unto you, fathers,’ not concerning a high joy, or a successful struggle, but ‘because you have known Him that is from the beginning.’ That is a walking, quiet, solid knowledge and it is the best of all.”

What a happy talk we had! We were two merry men sitting on the brink of Jordan communing together with happy hearts—he of 92 talking to me concerning all the way whereby the Lord had led us both since we knew each other these 34 years and more! Oh, yes, it is a blessed, blessed thing to grow in Grace as we grow in years and to increase our argument for faith as we increase our experience!

That argument will remain unchanged in death. When the earth shall rock, the stars shall fall and the heavens shall be rolled up by the hand of God like a worn-out vesture. When the Great White Throne shall be seen and the sentence of the righteous Judge shall be heard, our confidence will still be the same—“You have been my help, and nothing shall separate me from Your love”!

III. Lastly, and somewhat briefly, ASSURANCE. Here comes the richest cluster which grows out of our subject. The Psalmist says, “Therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” Here is, first, *contented assurance*. David does not say, “I am in trouble and I must get out of it somehow and therefore I must sin rather than fall under the hand of the enemy.” No, he is quiet and patient. He does not make haste and demand immediate deliverance—he quietly waits the Lord’s time and rests under the all-covering wings. You hear no loud outcries from him—as of one struggling against fate.

The children of God, like sheep, are dumb before their shearers. David, grateful for past help, holds himself still and happily awaits the purpose of the Lord. He manifests no fear, no fret, no hurry, no worry. Neither does he cast his eyes towards man. “*You have been my help,*” he says—and he looks that way. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” But where is Joab? Where are the three mighties? Where are all the royal bodyguard? The enemy is cruel and thirsting for blood—does David piteously beseech his watchmen to keep well their ward? No, he is calm and peaceful and sweetly says, “You have been my help; therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.”

David exhibited a very *patient assurance*. He likened himself to a young eagle beneath the mighty wings of its mother—“In the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” You thought he would have said, “You will drive Your

mighty talons into my adversaries and tear them to pieces.” Or, “You will strike them as an eagle destroys its prey.” No, he is not eager for the Lord to act—he is biding his time—no, waiting on the Lord’s time. He is quite content to be under His wings. What the great eagle may do, he leaves to the future while he nestles down in perfect quietness. May God give us patience always to possess our souls in Him! It is not ours to hasten the Divine vengeance, nor to wish for a personal triumph. It is ours to feel the bliss of safety in nearness to God.

Note, next, that it is *the assurance of faith*. “Because You have been my help, therefore”—what? “In the light of Your countenance I will rejoice”? No—he had, then, but little light—he was “in the shadow.” The wilderness cut him off from beholding God in the sanctuary. If you cannot see the face of God, His shadow may give you peace. Lord, I will pray to You to lift up the light of Your countenance upon me, but if You continue to hide Yourself, I will still trust You and be sure that You are the same God of Grace. Knowing that Your shadow is full of defense for me, I will rejoice therein. Notice also, it is *continued assurance*. We read not, in the shadow of Your wings have I rejoiced but, “I *will* rejoice.” He is rejoicing and means to go on rejoicing! His joy no man takes from him. He will rejoice so long as he has a God to rejoice in.

The best of all is this *is rejoicing assurance*. The text does not say, “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I trust,” but, “in the shadow of your wings *will I rejoice*.” That is going further than silent submission or humble trust. David is in the dark, but, like the nightingale, he sings in it! When the Lord seems to hide Himself, the soul remembers what the Lord was and resolves to be glad in Him as He was seen before. David lamented for Absalom, but he rejoiced in God! He rejoiced that the wings of the Lord safely preserved him and though they cast a shadow over him he would rejoice in the shadow as the evidence that the wings were really there!

O child of God, rejoice in the Lord in the dark! There is no honor to you in rejoicing when everything goes well with you—your faith wins credit if it leads you to rejoice in God when everything runs counter to your comfort. I may be speaking to some dear Brother who, in his business, finds things going very cross and the current of his affairs sets strongly in the wrong direction. Now is the time to show the difference between the joy of the spiritual life and that which merely comes of the natural life. Rejoice in God and prove that your joy flows from the upper springs. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.”

In conclusion, let me remark it is little wonder that so many do not understand trusting in God, for they have never tried it. Answers to prayer and fulfillment of Divine promises seem to them as idle tales. If we were to tell them what God has done for us, they would not believe us. There is William Huntington’s, “Bank of Faith”—well, I would not endorse every word of it, but I see no reason why it should not be accepted as a truthful narrative. When anybody calls it a “Bank of Nonsense,” as I have heard them do, I have answered, “It is because you do not know any better. Many other Believers could write books equally marvelous.”

Still, unbelievers will be sure to mock, for it is out of their line altogether. Years ago, a Red Indian went down to Washington and when he returned to his tribe he began telling them the wonders he had seen among the pale faces. At last he told them that he saw a canoe fastened to a great ball rise up into the sky. One of his brother Indians shot him dead with his rifle—and leaping into the middle of the ring declared that such a liar was not fit to live another minute—and therefore he had killed him. The statement was quite true, but as it was outside of Indian knowledge, the man was shot. So the experience of a Christian is so far removed from the worldling's line of things that he ridicules it—but it is true for all that.

Thousands of us can bear testimony to the Truth of the Gospel and we wish, above all things, that you would try it yourself! When you hear that those who trust in the Lord are delivered, I wonder some of you do not want to know our Savior. Yesterday a poor person called on a brother minister and asked for a ticket to go to the gentleman who was curing rheumatism. My friend knew nothing about the gentleman. “Oh,” she said, “he is at Croydon and he has been curing people who have been ill for years.” The preacher knew nothing of any tickets, but the person said that her father had failed to see the gentleman and he would try again.

Just so—from every quarter people will come where there is hope of being healed. How strange that men will seek help for their bodies and not for their souls. There is One who can help in every case of soul-sickness, why not go to Him? We have been healed. Why do you doubt? He will be a faithful helper to all those who put their trust in Him. Why do you not seek Him? We are honest people who bear witness of His helping us—why do you not believe us, so far as to try the Lord Jesus for yourselves? If you will not believe us, believe in God's own Book and say, “I will look to Jesus for help.”

Oh, that you would trust the precious Jesus and His precious promises and His precious blood by that precious faith whose very trials are more precious than gold! Then shall you find every help you need between this spot and Glory's gate. The Lord bring you to Jesus at once for His name's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalms* 63.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—916, 34 (VER. I), 734.**

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PRAISES AND VOWS ACCEPTED IN ZION

NO. 1023

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

***“Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion: and unto You shall the vow be performed.
O You that hear prayer, unto You shall all flesh come.”
Psalm 65:1, 2.***

UPON Zion there was erected an altar dedicated to God for the offering of sacrifices. Except when Prophets were commanded by God to break through the rule, burnt offering was only to be offered there. The worship of God upon the high places was contrary to the Divine command—“Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place that you see: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.”

Hence the tribes on the other side of Jordan, when they erected a memorial altar, disclaimed all intention of using it for the purpose of sacrifice, and said most plainly, “God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the Lord our God that is before His tabernacle.” In fulfillment of this ancient type, we also “have an altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.”

Into our spiritual worship, no observers of materialistic ritualism may intrude. They have no right to eat at our spiritual altar, and there is no other at which they can eat and live for ever. There is but one Altar, Jesus Christ our Lord. All other altars are impostures and idolatrous inventions. Whether of stone, or wood, or brass, they are the toys with which those amuse themselves who have returned to the beggarly elements of Judaism, or else the apparatus with which clerical jugglers dupe the sons and daughters of men.

Holy places made with hands are now abolished. They were once the figures of the true, but now that the Substance has come, the type is done away with. The all-glorious Person of the Redeemer, God and Man, is the great Center of Zion’s temple, and the only real Altar of sacrifice. He is the Church’s Head, the Church’s Heart, the Church’s Altar, Priest, and All in All. “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Around Him we all congregate even as the tribes around the tabernacle of the Lord in the wilderness.

When the Church is gathered together, we may liken it to the assemblies upon Mount Zion, where the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel. There the *song* went up, not so much from each separate worshipper as from all combined. There the praise as it rose to Heaven was not only the praise of each one, but the praise of all. So where Christ is the Center, where His one Sacrifice is the Altar whereon

all offerings are laid, and where the Church unites around that common Center, and rejoices in that one Sacrifice, there is the true Zion.

If we this evening—gathering in Christ’s name, around His one finished Sacrifice, present our prayers and praises entirely to the Lord through Jesus Christ, we are “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven.” This is Zion, even this House in the far-off islands of the Gentiles, and we can say, indeed, and of a truth, “Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion: and unto You shall the vow be performed.”

We shall, with devout attention, notice two things—the first *is our holy worship, which we desire to render*. And then the encouragement, *the stimulating encouragement, which God provides for us*—“O You that hear prayer, unto You shall all flesh come.”

I. First, let us consider the HOLY OFFERING OF WORSHIP WHICH WE DESIRE TO PRESENT TO GOD. It is twofold—there is praise, and there is also a vow—a praise that waits, and a vow of which performance is promised. Let us think, first of all, of *the praise*. This is the chief ingredient of the adoration of Heaven. And what is thought to be worthy of the world of Heaven, ought to be the main portion of the worship of earth. Although we shall never cease to pray as long as we live here below, and are surrounded by so many wants, yet we should never so pray as to forget to praise.

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is Heaven,” must never be left out because we are pressed with want, and therefore hasten to cry, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It will be a sad hour when the worship of the Church shall be only a solemn wail. Notes of exultant *thanksgiving* should ever ascend from her solemn gatherings. “Praise the Lord O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion.” “Praise you the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

Let it abide as a perpetual ordinance, while sun and moon endure, “Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion.” Never think little of praise, since holy angels and saints, made perfect, count it their life-long joy, and even the Lord Himself says, “Whoso offers praise, glorifies Me.” The tendency, I fear, among us has been to undervalue praise as a part of public worship, whereas it should be second to nothing. We frequently hear of Prayer Meetings, but seldom of Praise Meetings. We acknowledge the duty of prayer by setting apart certain times for it. We do not always so acknowledge the duty of praise. I hear of “family prayer.” Do I ever hear of “family praise”?

I know you cultivate private prayer—are you as diligent also in private thanksgiving and secret adoration of the Lord? In everything we are to give thanks. It is as much an Apostolic precept as that other, “In everything, by prayer and supplication, make your requests known unto God.” I have often said to you, dear Brethren, that prayer and praise are like the breathing in and out of air, and make up that spiritual respiration by which the inner life is instrumentally supported.

We take in an inspiration of heavenly air as we pray—we breathe it out again in praise unto God, from whom it came. If, then, we would be healthy in spirit, let us be abundant in thanksgiving. Prayer, like the root of a tree, seeks for and finds nutriment. Praise, like the fruit, renders a revenue to the owner of the vineyard. Prayer is for ourselves, praise is for God. Let us never be so selfish as to abound in the one and fail in the other. Praise is a slender return for the boundless favors we enjoy. Let us not be slack in rendering it in our best music, the music of a devout soul. “Praise the Lord. For the Lord is good: sing *praises* unto His name. For it is pleasant.”

Let us notice the praise which is mentioned in our text is to be a large matter of concern to the Zion of God whenever the saints are met together. You will observe, first, that it is praise *exclusively rendered to God*. “Praise waits for *You, O God*, in Zion.” “Praise for *You*, and *all* the praise for *You*,” and no praise for man or for any other who may be thought to be, or may pretend to be, worthy of praise. Have I not sometimes gone into places called Houses of God where the praise has waited for a woman—for the Virgin? Where praise has waited for the saints, where incense has smoked to Heaven, and songs and prayers have been sent up to deceased martyrs and confessors who are supposed to have power with God?

In Rome it is so, but in Zion it is not so. Praise waits for you, O *Mary*, in Babylon. But praise waits for You, O *God*, in Zion. Unto God, and unto God alone, the praise of His true Church must ascend. If Protestants are free from this deadly error, I fear they are guilty of another—for in our worship we too often minister unto ourselves. We do so when we make the tune and manner of the song to be more important than the matter of it. I am afraid that where organs, choirs, and singing men and singing women are left to do the praise of the congregation, men’s minds are more occupied with the due performance of the music, than with the Lord, who alone is to be praised.

God’s House is meant to be sacred unto Himself, but too often it is made an opera house, and Christians form an *audience*, not an adoring assembly. The same thing may, unless great care is taken, happen amid the simplest worship, even though everything which does not savor of Gospel plainness is excluded, for in that case we may drowsily drawl out the words and notes, with no heart whatever. To sing with the *soul*, this, only, is to offer acceptable song! We come not together to amuse ourselves, to display our powers of melody or our aptness in creating harmony—we come to pay our adoration at the footstool of the Great King—to whom alone be glory forever and ever.

True praise is for God—for God alone. Brethren, you must take heed lest the minister, who would, above all, disclaim a share of praise, should be set up as a demi-god among you. Refute practically the old slander that *presbyter* is only *priest* written large. Look higher than the pulpit, or you will be disappointed. Look far above an arm of flesh, or it will utterly fail you. We may say of the best preacher upon the earth, “Give God the praise, for we know that this man is a sinner.” If we thought that you paid superstitious reverence to us, we would, like Paul and Silas at Lystra, rend our clothes, and cry, “Sirs, why do you do these things? We also are

men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.”

It is not to any man, to any priest, to any order of men, to any being in Heaven or earth besides God, that we should burn the incense of worship. We would as soon worship cats with the Egyptians, as popes with the Romanists—we see no difference between the people whose gods grew in their gardens and the sect whose deity is made by their baker. Such vile idolatry is to be loathed! To God alone shall all the praise of Zion ascend. It is to be feared that some of our praise ascends nowhere at all, but it is as though it were scattered to the winds. We do not always realize God.

Now, “he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” This is as true of praise as of prayer. “God is a Spirit,” and they that praise Him must praise Him “in spirit and in Truth,” for, “the Father seeks such” to praise Him, and only such. And if we do not lift our eyes and our hearts to Him, we are but misusing words and wasting time. Our praise is not as it should be if it is not reverently and earnestly directed to the Lord of Hosts. Vain is it to shoot arrows without a target—we must aim at God’s Glory in our holy songs, and that exclusively.

Note, next, that *it should be continual*. “Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion.” Some translators conceive that the main idea is that of continuance. It remains. It abides. For Zion does not break up when the assembly is gone. We do not leave the holiness in the material house, for it never was in the stone and the timber, but only in the living spirits of the faithful—

**“Jesus, wherever Your people meet,
There they behold your Mercy Seat.
Wherever they seek You, You are found,
And every place is hallowed ground,
For You within no walls confined,
Inhabit the humble mind.
Such ever bring You where they come,
And going, take You to their home.”**

The people of God, as they never cease to be a Church, should maintain the Lord’s praise perpetually as a community. Their assemblies should begin with praise and end with praise, and ever be conducted in a spirit of praise. There should be in all our solemn assemblies a spiritual incense altar, always smoking with “the pure incense of sweet spices, mingled according to the art of the apothecary”—the thanksgiving which is made up of humility, gratitude, love, consecration, and holy joy in the Lord. It should be for the Lord alone, and it should never go out day nor night. “His mercy endures forever”—let our praises endure forever!

He makes the outgoings of the morning to rejoice—let us celebrate the rising of the sun with holy Psalms and hymns. He makes the closing in of the evening to be glad—let Him have our vesper praise. “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” Could His mercy cease, there might be some excuse for stopping our praises—but even should it seem to be so, men who love the Lord would say with Job—“Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we

not also receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. And blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Let our praise abide, continue, remain, and be perpetual. It was a good idea of Bishop Farrar, that in his own house he would keep up continual praise to God. And as with a large family and household, he numbered twenty-four, he set apart each one for an hour in the day to be engaged specially in prayer and praise, that he might girdle the day with a circle of worship. We could not do that. To attempt it might on our part be superstition. But to fall asleep blessing God, to rise in the night to meditate on Him, and when we wake in the morning to feel our hearts leap in the prospect of His Presence during the day—this is attainable, and we ought to reach it.

It is much to be desired that all day long, in every avocation, and every recreation the soul should spontaneously pour forth praise even as birds sing, and flowers perfume the air, and sunbeams cheer the earth. We would be incarnate psalmody, praise enshrined in flesh and blood. From this delightful duty we would desire no cessation, and ask no pause. “Praise *waits* for You, O God, in Zion.” Your praise may come and go from the outside world, where all things ebb and flow, for it lies beneath the moon and there is no stability in it. But amidst Your people, who dwell in You, and who possess eternal life—in them Your praise perpetually abides.

A third point, however, is clear upon the surface of the words. “Praise *waits* for you”—as though praise must always be humble. The servants “wait” in the king’s palace. There the messengers stand ready for any mission. The servitors wait, prepared to obey. And the courtiers surround the throne, all eager to receive the royal smile and to fulfill the high command. Our praises ought to stand, like ranks of messengers, waiting to hear what God’s will is. For this is to praise Him. Furthermore, true praise lies in the actual doing of the Divine will, even this—to pause in sacred reverence until God the Lord shall speak—whatever that will may be.

It is true praise to wait subserviently on Him. Praises may be looked upon as servants who delight to obey their master’s bidding. There is such a thing as an unholy familiarity with God. This age is not so likely to fall into it as some ages have been, for there is little familiarity with God of any sort now. Public worship becomes more formal, and stately, and distant. The intense nearness to God which Luther enjoyed—how seldom do we meet with it! But, however near we come to God, still He *is God*, and we are His creatures. He is, it is true, “our Father,” but be it ever remembered that He is “our Father which art in Heaven.” “Our *Father*”—therefore near and intimate—“our Father *in Heaven*,” therefore we humbly, solemnly bow in His Presence.

There is a familiarity that runs into presumption—there is another familiarity so sweetly tempered with humility that it does not intrude. “Praise *waits* for You” with a servant’s livery on, a servant’s ear to hear, and a servant’s heart to obey. Praise bows at Your footstool, feeling that it is still an unprofitable servant. But, perhaps you are aware, dear Friends, that there are other translations of this verse. “Praise *waits* for You,” may be read, “Praise is silent unto You”—“is silent before You.”

One of the oldest Latin commentators reads it, "Praise and silence belong unto You." And Dr. Gill tells us that in the King of Spain's Bible, it runs, "The praise of angels is only silence before You, O Jehovah," so that when we do our best, our highest praise is but silence before God, and we must praise Him with confession of shortcomings. Oh, that we too, as our poet puts it, might—

***"Loud as His thunders speak His praise,
And sound it lofty as His Throne!"***

But we cannot do that, and when our notes are most uplifted, and our hearts most joyous, we have not spoken all His praise. Compared to what His Nature and Glory deserve, our most earnest praise has been little more than silence.

Oh, Brethren, have you not often felt it to be so? Those who are satisfied with formal worship think that they have done well when the music has been correctly sung. But those who worship God in spirit feel that they cannot magnify Him enough. They blush over the hymns they sing and retire from the assembly of the saints mourning that they have fallen far short of His Glory. O for an enlarged mind, rightly to conceive the Divine Majesty. Next for the gift of utterance to clothe the thought in fitting language.

And then for a voice like many waters, to sound forth the noble strain! Alas, as yet we are humbled at our failures to praise the Lord as we would—

***"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
And His compassions are Divine."***

How, then, shall we proclaim to men God's Glory? When we have done our best, our praise is but silence before the merit of His goodness, and the grandeur of His greatness. Yet it may be well to observe here that the praise which God accepts, presents itself *under a variety of forms*. There is praise for God in Zion, and it is often spoken. But there is often praise for God in Zion, and it is silence. There are some who cannot sing vocally, but perhaps before God they sing best.

There are some, I know, who sing very harshly and inharmoniously—that is to say, to *our ears*. And yet God may accept them rather than the noise of stringed instruments carefully touched. There is a story told of Rowland Hill's being much troubled by a good old lady who would sit near him and sing with a most horrible voice, and very loudly—as those people generally do who sing badly—and he at last begged her not to sing so loudly. But when she said, "It comes from my heart," the honest man of God retracted his rebuke, and said, "Sing away, I should be sorry to stop you."

When praise comes from the heart, who would wish to restrain it? Even the shouts of the old Methodists, their "hallelujahs" and "glorys," when uttered in fervor, were not to be forbidden. For if these should hold their peace, even the stones would cry out! But there are times when those who sing, and sing well, have too much praise in their soul for it to enclose itself in words. Like some strong liquors which cannot use a little vent, but foam and swell until they burst each hoop that binds the barrel, so sometimes we want a larger channel for our soul than that of mouth and

tongue, and we long to have all our nerves and sinews made into harp strings, and all the pores of our body made mouths of thankfulness.

Oh, that we could praise with our whole nature, not one single hair of our heads, or drop of blood in our veins, keeping back from adoring the Most High! When this desire for praise is most vehement, we fall back upon silence and quiver with the adoration which we cannot speak. Silence becomes our praise—

***“A sacred reverence checks our songs,
And praise sits silent on our tongues.”***

It would be well, perhaps, in our public service, if we had more often the sweet relief of silence. I am persuaded that silence, yes, frequent silence, is most beneficial. And the occasional unanimous silence of all the saints when they bow before God would, perhaps, better express and more fully promote devout feeling than any hymns which have been composed or songs that could be sung.

To make silence a part of worship habitually might be affectation and formalism. But to introduce it occasionally, and even frequently into the service would be advantageous and profitable. Let us, then, by our silence praise God and let us always confess that our praise, compared with God’s deserving, is but silence. I would add that there is in the text the idea that praise waits for God *expectantly*. When we praise God, we expect to see more of Him by-and-by, and therefore wait for Him. We bless the King, but we desire to draw nearer to Him. We magnify Him for what we have seen, and we expect to see more.

We praise Him in His outer courts, for we shall soon be with Him in the heavenly mansions. We glorify Him for the revelation of Himself in Jesus, for we expect to be like Christ and to be with Him where He is. When I cannot praise God for what I am, I will praise Him for what I *shall* be. When I feel dull and dead about the present, I will take the words of our delightful hymn and say—

***“And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set.
Glory to You for all the
Grace I have not tasted yet.”***

My praise shall not only be the psalmody of the past, which is but discharging a debt of gratitude, but my faith shall anticipate the future and wait upon God to fulfill His purposes. And I will begin to pay my praise even before the mercy comes.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us for a moment present our praise to God, each one of us on his own account. We have our common mercies. We call them common, but, oh, how priceless they are! Health to be able to come here and not to be stretched on a bed of sickness—I count this better than bags of gold! To have our reason, and not to be confined in yonder asylum. To have our children still about us and dear relatives spared still to us—to have bread to eat and raiment to put on—to have been kept from defiling our character—to have been preserved today from the snares of the enemy!

These are God-like mercies, and for all these our praises shall wait upon God. But oh, take up the thoughts suggested by the Psalm itself in the next verse, and you will doubly praise God. “Iniquities prevail against

me. As for our transgressions, You shall purge them away.” Infinite love has made us clean every whit!—though we were black and filthy! We are washed—washed in priceless blood! Praise Him for this! Go on with the passage, “Blessed is the man whom You choose and cause to approach unto You.”

Is not the blessing of *access to God* an exceedingly choice one? Is it a light thing to feel that, though once far off, we are made near through the blood of Christ? And this because of electing love! “Blessed is the man whom You choose.” You subjects of eternal choice, can you be silent? Has God favored you above others, and can your lips refuse to sing? No, you will magnify the Lord exceedingly, because He has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure. Let us read on, and praise God that we have an abiding place among His people—“That he may dwell in Your courts.”

Blessed be God! We are not to be cast forth and driven out after a while, but we have an entailed inheritance among the sons of God! We praise Him that we have the satisfaction of dwelling in His house as children. “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple.” But I close the Psalm, and simply say to you there are ten thousand reasons for taking down the harp from the willows. And I know no reason for permitting it to hang there idle.

There are ten thousand times ten thousand reasons for speaking well of “Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.” “The Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad.” I remember hearing in a Prayer Meeting this delightful verse mutilated in prayer, “The Lord has done great things for us, whereof *we desire to be glad.*” Oh, Brethren, I dislike mauling, and mangling, and adding to a text of Scripture. If we are to have the Scriptures revised, let it be by scholars, and not by every ignoramus. “*Desire to be glad,*” indeed! This is fine gratitude to God when He has done great things for us! If these great things have been done, our souls *must* be glad, and cannot help it. They must overflow with gratitude to God for all His goodness.

2. So much on the first part of our holy sacrifice. Attentively let us consider the second, namely, *the vow*. “Unto You shall the vow be performed.” We are not given to vow-making in these days. Time was when it was far oftener done. It may be that had we been better men we should have made more vows. It may possibly be that had we been more foolish men we should have done the same. The practice was so abused by superstition that devotion has grown half-ashamed of it.

But we have, at any rate, most of us, bound ourselves with occasional vows. I do confess, today, I have not kept a vow as I should desire. The vow made on my first conversion. I surrendered myself, body, soul, and spirit, to Him that bought me with a price, and the vow was not made by way of excess devotion or supererogation, it was but my reasonable service. *You* have done that. Do you remember the love of your espousals, the time when Jesus was very precious, and you had just entered into the marriage bond with Him? You gave yourselves up to Him, to be His forever and forever.

O Brothers and Sisters, it is a part of worship to perform that vow! Renew it tonight, make another surrender of yourselves to Him whose you are and whom you serve. Say tonight, as I will, with you, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." Oh, for another thong to strap the victim to the altar horn! Does the flesh struggle? Then let it be more tightly bound, never to escape from the Altar of God.

Beloved, many of us did, in effect, make a most solemn vow at the time of our *Baptism*. We were buried with Christ in Baptism unto death, and, unless we were greatly dissembling, we avowed that we were dead in Christ and buried with Him, and also, we professed that we were risen with Him. Now, shall the world live in those who are dead to it, and shall Christ's life be absent from those who are risen with Him? We gave ourselves up then and there, in that solemn act of mystic burial.

Recall that scene, I pray you. And as you do it blush, and ask God that your vow may yet be performed, as Doddridge well expresses it—

***"Baptized into Your Savior's death
Your souls to sin must die.
With Christ Your Lord you live anew,
With Christ ascend on high."***

Some such vow we made, too, when we *united ourselves to the Church of God*. There was an understood compact between us and the Church, that we would serve it. That we would seek to honor Christ by holy living. Increase the Church by propagating the faith. Seek its unity and its comfort by our own love and sympathy with the members. We had no right to join with the Church if we did not mean to give ourselves up to it, under Christ, to aid in its prosperity and increase. There was a stipulation made, and a covenant understood, when we entered into communion and league with our Brethren in Christ. What about that? Can we say that, as unto God and in His sight, the vow has been performed?

Yes, we have been true to our covenant in a measure, Brethren. Oh, that it were more fully so! Some of us made another vow, when we gave ourselves, as I trust, under Divine call, altogether to the work of the *Christian ministry*. And though we have taken no orders, and received no earthly ordination, for we are no Believers in man-made priests, yet tacitly it is understood that the man who becomes a minister of the Church of God is to give his whole time to his work—that body, soul, and spirit should be thrown into the cause of Christ.

Oh, that this vow were more fully performed by pastors of the Church! You, my Brethren elders and deacons, when you accepted office, you knew what the Church meant. She expected holiness and zeal of you. The Holy Spirit made you overseers that you might feed the flock of God. Your office proves your obligation. You are practically under a vow. Has that vow been performed? Have you performed it in Zion unto the Lord? Besides that, it has been the habit of godly men to make *vows* occasionally, in times of pain, and losses, and affliction. Did not the Psalm we just now sang prove it so?—

***"Among the saints that fill Your house,
My offerings shall be paid.
There shall my zeal perform the vows
My soul in anguish made.
Now I am Yours, forever Yours,***

Nor shall my purpose move!

**Your hand has loosed my bands of pain,
And bound me with Your love.
Here in Your courts I leave my vow,
And Your rich Grace record.
Witness, you saints, who hear me now,
If I forsake the Lord."**

You said, "If I am ever raised up, and my life is prolonged, it shall be better spent." You said, also, "If I am delivered out of this great trouble, I hope to consecrate my substance more to God." Another time you said, "If the Lord will return to me the light of His countenance, and bring me out of this depressed state of mind, I will praise Him more than ever before." Have you remembered all this? Coming here myself so lately from a sick bed, I at this time preach to myself. I only wish I had a better hearer. I would preach to myself in this respect, and say, "I charge you, my Heart, to perform your vow."

Some of us, dear Friends, have made vows in time of joy—the season of the birth of the first-born child, the recovery of the wife from sickness. The merciful restoration that we have ourselves received—times of increasing goods, or seasons when the splendor of God's face has been unveiled before our wondering eye. Have we not made vows, like Jacob when he woke up from his wondrous dream, and took the stone which had been his pillow, and poured oil on its top, and made a vow unto the Most High? We have all had our Bethels. Let us remember that God has heard us, and let us perform unto Him our vow which our soul made in her time of joy.

But I will not try to open the secret pages of your private notebooks. You have had tender passages which you would not desire me to read aloud—the tears start at their memory. If your life were written, you would say, "Let these not be told. They were only between God and my soul"—some chaste and blessed love passages between you and Christ which must not be revealed to men. Have you forgotten how you then said, "I am my Beloved's, and He is mine," and what you promised when you saw all His goodness made to pass before you?

I have now to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance and bid you present unto the Lord tonight the double offering of your heart's praise and of your performed vow. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."

II. And now, time will fail me, but I must have a few words upon THE BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT afforded us in the text for the presentation of these offerings unto God. Here it is—"O You that hear prayer, unto You shall all flesh come." Observe, here, that *God hears prayer*. It is, in some aspects, the lowest form of worship, and yet He accepts it. It is not the worship of Heaven, and it is, in a measure, selfish. Praise is superior worship, for it is elevating. It is the utterance of a soul that has received good from God, and is returning its love to Him in acknowledgment. Praise has a sublime aspect. Now observe, if prayers are heard, then praise will be heard, too. If the lower form, on weaker wings as it were, reaches the Throne of the majesty on high, how much more shall the seraphic wing of praise bear itself into the Divine Presence?

Prayer is heard of God—therefore our praises and vows will be. And this is a very great encouragement, because it seems terrible to pray when you are not heard, and discouraging to praise God if He will not accept it. What would be the use of it? But if prayer and even more, praise is most surely heard, ah, Brethren, then let us continue and abide in thanksgiving. “Whoso offers praise glorifies Me, says the Lord.” Observe, too, according to the text, that *all* prayer, if it is true prayer, is heard of God, for so it is put—“Unto you shall *all flesh* come.” Oh, how glad I am at that Word!

My poor prayer—shall God reject it? Yes, I might have feared so if He had said, “Unto you shall all *spirits* come.” Behold, my Brethren, He takes the grosser part, as it were, and looks at prayer in His infinite compassion, perceiving it to be what it is—a feeble thing—a cry coming from poor fallen flesh, and yet He puts it, “Unto you shall all *flesh* come.” My broken prayer, my groaning prayer shall get to You! Though it seems to me a thing of flesh, it is nevertheless worked in me by Your Spirit. And, O my God—my song, though my voice is hoarse and oftentimes my notes most feeble, shall reach You! Though I groan because it is so imperfect, yet even that shall come to *you*. Prayer, if true, shall be received of God, notwithstanding all its faults, through Jesus Christ. Then so it will be with our praises and our vows.

Again, prayer is always and habitually received of God. “O You that *hear* prayer.” Not that *did* hear it or on a certain occasion *may* have heard it, but You that *always* hear prayer! If He always hears prayer, then He always hears praise. Is not this delightful—to think that my praise, though it is but that of a child or a poor unworthy sinner—God hears it, accepts it—in spite of its imperfections, He accepts it *always*? Oh, I will have another hymn tomorrow, I will sing a new song tomorrow. I will forget my pain, I will forget for a moment all my cares, and if I cannot sing aloud by reason of those that are with me, yet will I set the bells of my heart ringing!

I will make my whole soul full of praise. If I cannot let it out of my mouth, I will praise Him in my soul, because He always hears me. You know it is hard to do things for one who never accepts what you do. Many a wife has said, “Oh, it is hard. My husband never seems pleased. I have done all I can, but he takes no notice of little deeds of kindness.” But how easy it is to serve a person who, when you have done any little thing, says, “How kind it was of you” and thinks much of it.

Ah, poor child of God, the Lord thinks much of your praises, much of your vows, much of your prayers. Therefore, be not slack to praise and magnify Him unceasingly. And this all the more, because we have not quite done with that word, “Unto you shall *all flesh* come.” All flesh shall come because the Lord hears prayer. Then all my praises will be heard and all the praises of all sorts of men, if sincere, that come unto God. The great ones of the earth shall present praise, and the poorest of the poor, also, for You shall not reject them. And, Lord, will You put it so—“Unto You shall all flesh come”—and will You say, “but not such a one”? Will You exclude *me*?

Brothers and Sisters, fear not that God will reject you. I remind you of what I told you the other night concerning a good, earnest believing woman, who in prayer said, "Lord, I am content to be the second You shall forsake, but I cannot be the first." The Lord says all flesh shall come to Him, and it is implied that He will receive them when they come—all sorts of men, all classes and conditions of men. Then He cannot reject me if I go, nor my prayers if I pray, nor my praise if I praise Him, nor my vows if I perform them!

Come then, let us praise the Lord! Let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker, for we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. I have done when I have said this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, there may be difficulties in your way. Iniquities may hinder you, or infirmities. But there is the promise, "you shall purge them away." Infirmities may check you, but note the word of Divine help, "Blessed is the man whom You cause to approach unto You." He will come to your aid, and lead you to Himself. Infirmities, therefore, are overcome by Divine Grace.

Perhaps your emptiness hinders you—"He shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house." It is not *your* goodness that is to satisfy either God or you, but *God's* goodness is to satisfy. Come, then, with your iniquity! Come with your infirmity! Come with your emptiness! Come, dear Brethren, if you have never come to God before. Come and confess your sin to God, and ask for mercy. You can do no less than ask. Come and trust His mercy, which endures forever. It has no limit. Think not harshly of Him, but come and lay yourself down at His feet.

If you perish, perish there. Come and tell your grief! Pour out your hearts before Him. Turn the vessel of your nature bottom upwards, and drain out the last dreg and pray to be filled with the fullness of His Grace. Come unto Jesus. He invites you! He enables you! A cry from that pew will reach the sacred ear. "You have not prayed before," you say. Everything must have a beginning! Oh that that beginning might come now!

It is not because you pray well that you are to come, but because the Lord hears prayer graciously. Therefore, all flesh shall come. You are welcome! None can tell you no. Come! It is mercy's welcome hour. May the Lord's bands of love be cast about you! May you be drawn now to Him! Come by way of the Cross! Come resting in the precious atoning sacrifice, believing in Jesus. And He has said, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." The Grace of our Lord be with you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 65.

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SPRING IN THE HEART

NO. 675

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 11, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***You water the ridges abundantly: You settle the furrows:
You make it soft with showers: You bless its growth.”
Psalm 65:10.***

THOUGH other seasons excel in fullness, spring must always bear the palm for freshness and beauty. We thank God when the harvest hours draw near and the golden grain invites the sickle, but we ought equally to thank Him for the rougher days of spring, for these prepare the harvest. April showers are mothers of the sweet May flowers, and the wet and cold of winter are the parents of the splendor of summer. God blesses its growth, or else it could not be said, “You crown the year with Your goodness.” There is as much necessity for Divine benediction in spring as for heavenly bounty in summer, and therefore we should praise God all the year round.

Spiritual spring is a very blessed season in a Church. Then we see youthful piety developed and on every hand we hear the joyful cry of those who say, “We have found the Lord.” Our sons are springing up as the grass and as willows by the watercourses. We hold up our hands in glad astonishment and cry, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?” In the revival days of a Church, when God is blessing her with many conversions, she has great cause to rejoice in God and sing, “You bless its growth.”

I intend to take the text in reference to individual cases. There is a time of growth of Divine Grace when it is just in its bud, just breaking through the dull cold earth of unregenerate nature. I desire to talk a little about that and concerning the blessing which the Lord grants to the green blade of new-born godliness—to those who are beginning to hope in the Lord.

I. First, I shall have a little to say about THE WORK PREVIOUS TO THE GROWTH. It appears from the text that there is work for God, alone, to do before the growth comes. And we know that there is work for God to do through us as well. There is work for us to do. Before there can be growth in the soul there must be plowing, harrowing, and sowing. There must be a plowing and we do not expect that as soon as ever we plow we shall reap the sheaves. Blessed be God, in many cases the reaper overtakes the plowman! But we must not always expect it.

In some hearts God is long in preparing the soul by conviction—the Law with its ten black horses drags the plowshare of conviction up and down the soul till there is not one part of it left unfurrowed. Conviction goes deeper than any plow to the very core and center of the spirit till the spirit is wounded. The plowers make deep furrows, indeed, when God puts His hand to the work! The soil of the heart is broken in pieces in the Presence of the Most High. Then comes the sowing.

Before there can be a growth it is certain that there must be something put into the ground so that after the preacher has used the plow of the Law, he applies to his Master for the seed basket of the Gospel. Gospel promises, Gospel doctrines—especially a clear exposition of free Grace and the Atonement—these are the handfuls of corn which we scatter broadcast. Some of the grain falls on the highway and is lost. But other handfuls fall where the plow has been and there they abide. Then comes the harrowing work. We do not expect to sow seed and then leave it—the Gospel has to be prayed over. The prayer of the preacher and the prayer of the Church make up God's harrow to rake in the seed after it is scattered. And so it is covered up within the clods of the soul and is hidden in the heart of the hearer.

Now there is a reason why I dwell upon this, namely, that I may exhort my dear Brethren who have not seen success to not give up the work but to hope that they have been doing the plowing, and sowing, and harrowing work, and that the harvest is to come. I mention this for yet another reason—and that is by way of warning to those who expect to have a harvest without this preparatory work. I do not believe that much good will come from attempts at sudden revivals made without previous prayerful labor.

A revival to be permanent must be a matter of growth and the result of much holy effort, longing, pleading, and watching. The servant of God is to preach the Gospel whether men are prepared for it or not—but in order to large success, depend upon it—there is a preparedness necessary among the hearers. Upon some hearts, warm earnest preaching drops like an unusual thing which startles but does not convict. In other congregations, where good Gospel preaching has long been the rule, and much prayer has been offered, the words fall into the hearers' souls and bring forth speedy fruit.

We must not expect to have results without work. There is no hope of a Church having an extensive revival in its midst unless there is continued and importunate waiting upon God together with earnest laboring, intense anxiety, and hopeful expectation. But there is also a work to be done which is beyond our power. After plowing, sowing, and harrowing, there must come the shower from Heaven. "You visit the earth and water it,"

says the Psalmist. In vain are all our efforts unless God shall bless us with the rain of His Holy Spirit's influence.

O Holy Spirit! You, and You alone work wonders in the human heart, and You come from the Father and the Son to do the Father's purposes and to glorify the Son! Three effects are spoken of. First, we are told He waters the ridges. As the ridges of the field become well saturated through and through with the abundant rain, so God sends His Holy Spirit till the whole heart of man is moved and influenced by His Divine operations. The understanding is enlightened, the conscience is quickened, the will is controlled, the affections are inflamed—all these powers, which I may call the ridges of the heart—come under the Divine working.

It is ours to deal with men as men, bring to bear upon them Gospel truth, and to set before them motives that are suitable to move rational creatures. But, after all, it is the rain from on high which alone can water the ridges! There is no hope of the heart being savingly affected except by Divine operations. Next it is added, "You settle the furrows," by which some think it is meant that the furrows are drenched with water. Others think there is an allusion here to the beating down of the earth by heavy rain till the ridges become flat—and by the soaking of the water—are settled into a more compact mass.

Certain it is that the influences of God's Spirit have a humbling and settling effect upon a man. He was unsettled once like the earth that is dry and crumbly, and blown about and carried away with every wind of doctrine. But as the earth, when soaked with wet, is compacted and knit together, so the heart becomes solid and serious under the power of the Spirit. As the high parts of the ridge are beaten down into the furrows, so the lofty ideas, the grand schemes, and carnal boastings of the heart begin to level down when the Holy Spirit comes to work upon the soul. Genuine humility is a very gracious fruit of the Spirit. To be broken in heart is the best means of preparing the soul for Jesus. "A broken and a contrite hear, O God, You will not despise." Brethren, always be thankful when you see high thoughts of man brought down! This settling the furrows is a very gracious preparatory work of Divine Grace.

Yet again, it is added, "You make it soft with showers." Man's heart is naturally hardened against the Gospel. Like the Eastern soil it is hard as iron if there is no gracious rain. How sweetly and effectively does the Spirit of God soften the man through and through! He is no longer towards the Word what he used to be—he feels everything, whereas once he felt nothing. The rock flows with water. The heart is dissolved in tenderness. The eyes are melted into tears. All this is God's work!

I have said already that God works through us, but still it is God's immediate work to send down the rain of His Grace from on high. Perhaps He is at work upon some of you though as yet there is no growth of spiri-

tual life in your souls. Though your condition is still a sad one, we will hope for you that before long there shall be seen the living seed of Divine Grace sending up its tender green shoot above the soil—and may the Lord bless its growth!

II. In the second place, let us deliver A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GROWTH. After the operations of the Holy Spirit have been quietly going on for a certain season as pleases the great Master and Husbandman, then there are signs of Grace. Remember the Apostle's words, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Some of our friends are greatly disturbed because they cannot see the full corn in the ear in themselves. They suppose that if they were the subjects of a Divine work they would be precisely like certain advanced Christians with whom it is their privilege to commune, or of whom they may have read in biographies.

Beloved, this is a very great mistake! When Grace first enters the heart it is not a great tree covering with its shadow whole acres—but it is the least of all seeds—like a grain of mustard seed. When it first rises upon the soul, it is not the sun shining at high noon—it is the first dim ray of dawn. Are you so simple as to expect the harvest before you have passed through the growing season? I shall hope that by a very brief description of the earliest stage of Christian experience you may be led to say, "I have gone as far as that," and then I hope you may be able to take the comfort of the text to yourselves: "You bless its growth."

What, then, is the growth of piety in the heart? We think it is first seen in sincerely earnest desires after salvation. The man is not saved, in his own apprehension, but he longs to be. That which was once a matter of indifference is now a subject of intense concern. Once he despised Christians and thought them needlessly earnest. He thought religion a mere trifle and he looked upon the things of time and sense as the only substantial matters. But now how changed he is! He envies the meanest Christian and would change places with the poorest Believer if he might but be able to read his title clear to mansions in the skies!

Now worldly things have lost dominion over him and spiritual things are uppermost. Once with the unthinking many he cried, "Who will show us any good?" But now he cries, "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon me." Once it was the corn and the wine to which he looked for comfort, but now he looks to God alone. His rock of refuge must be God, for he finds no comfort elsewhere. His holy desires, which he had years ago, were like smoke from the chimney, soon blown away. But now his longings are permanent, though not always operative to the same degree. At times these desires amount to a hunger and a thirsting after righteousness, and yet he is not satisfied with these desires, he wishes for a still more anxious longing after heavenly things.

These desires are among the first growth of Divine life in the soul. "The growth" shows itself next in prayer. It is now real prayer. Once it was the mocking of God with holy sounds unattended by the heart—but now, though the prayer is such that he would not like a human ear to hear him, yet God approves it—for it is the talking of a spirit to a Spirit, and not the muttering of lips to an unknown God. His prayers, perhaps, are not very long—they do not amount to more than this—"Oh!" "Ah!" "Would to God!" "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner!" and such-like short ejaculations, but, then, by God's Grace, they are prayers.

"Behold he prays," does not refer to a long prayer. It is quite as sure a proof of spiritual life within if it only refers to a sigh or to a tear. These "groans that cannot be uttered," are among "the growth." There will also be manifest a hearty love for the means of Grace, and the House of God. The Bible, long unread, which was thought to be of little more use than an old almanac, is now treated with great consideration. And though the reader finds little in it that comforts him just now, and much that alarms him, yet he feels that it is the book for him and he turns to its pages with hope.

When he goes up to God's House he listens eagerly, hoping that there may be a message for him. Before, he attended worship as a sort of pious necessity incumbent upon all respectable people. But now he goes up to God's House that he may find the Savior. Once there was no more religion in him than in the door which turns upon its hinges. But now he enters praying, "Lord, meet with my soul." And if he gets no blessing, he goes away sighing, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat."

This is one of the blessed signs of "its growth." Yet more cheering is another, namely, that the soul in this state has faith in Jesus Christ, at least in some degree! It is not a faith which brings great joy and peace, but still it is a faith which keeps the heart from despair and prevents its sinking under a sense of sin. I have known the time when I do not believe any man living could see faith in me, and when I could scarcely perceive any in myself, and yet I was bold to say, with Peter, "Lord, You know all thing, You know that I love You."

What man cannot see, Christ can see. Many people have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but they are so much engaged in looking at it that they do not see it. If they would look to Christ and not to their own faith, they would not only see Christ but see their own faith, too. But they try to *measure* their faith and it seems so little when they contrast it with the faith of full-grown Christians that they fear it is not faith at all. Oh, little one, if you have faith enough to receive Christ, remember the promise, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Poor simple, weak-hearted, and troubled ones, look to Jesus and answer, Can such a Savior suffer in vain? Can such an Atonement be offered in vain? Can you trust Him and yet be cast away? It cannot be! It never was in the Savior's heart to shake off one that did cling to His arm. However feeble the faith, He blesses "its growth." The difficulty arises partly from misapprehension and partly from lack of confidence in God.

I say misapprehension—now if like some Londoners you have never seen corn when it is green, you would cry out, "What? Do you say that yonder green stuff is wheat?" "Yes," the farmer says, "that is wheat." You look at it again and you reply, "Why, man alive, that is nothing but grass! You do not mean to tell me that this grassy stuff will ever produce a loaf of bread such as I see in the baker's window—I cannot conceive it." No, you could not conceive it, but when you get accustomed to it, it is not at all amazing to see the wheat go through certain stages. First the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear.

Some of you have never seen growing Grace and do not know anything about it. When you are newly converted you meet with Christians who are like ripe golden ears, and you say, "I am not like they are." True, you are no more like they than that grassy stuff in the furrows is like full-grown wheat! But you will grow to be like they are one of these days. You must expect to go through the blade period before you get to the ear period! And in the ear period you will have doubts whether you will ever come to the full corn in the ear—but you will arrive at perfection in due time. Thank God that you are in Christ at all!

Whether I have much faith or little faith. Whether I can do much for Christ or little for Christ is not the first question. I am saved, not on account of what I am, but on account of what Jesus Christ is! And if I am trusting Him, however little in Israel I may be, I am as safe as the brightest of the saints.

I have said, however, that mixed with misapprehension there is a great deal of unbelief. I cannot put it all down to an ignorance that may be forgiven, for there is sinful unbelief, too. O Sinner, why do you not trust Jesus Christ? Poor quickened, awakened Conscience—God gives you His word that He who trusts in Christ is not condemned—and yet you are afraid that you *are* condemned! This is to call God a liar! Be ashamed and confounded that you should ever have been guilty of doubting the veracity of God!

All your other sins do not grieve Christ so much as the sin of thinking that He is unwilling to forgive you, or the sin of suspecting that if you trust Him He will cast you away! Do not slander His gracious Character. Do not cast a slur upon the generosity of His tender heart. He said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come in the faith of His

promise and He will receive you right now! I have thus given some description of “its growth.”

III. Thirdly, according to the text, THERE IS ONE WHO SEES THIS GROWTH. You, Lord—You bless its growth. I wish that some of us had quicker eyes to see the beginning of Grace in the souls of men. For lack of this we let slip many opportunities of helping the weaklings. If a woman had the charge of a number of children that were not her own, I do not suppose she would notice all the incipient stages of disease. But when a mother nurses her own dear children, as soon as ever upon the cheek or in the eye there is a token of approaching sickness, she perceives it at once.

I wish we had just as quick an eye, just as tender a heart towards precious souls. I do not doubt that many young people are weeks and even months in distress, who need not be, if you who know the Lord were a little more watchful to help them in the time of their sorrow. Shepherds are up all night at lambing time to catch up the lambs, as soon as they are born, and take them in and nurse them. And we, who ought to be shepherds for God, should be looking out for all the lambs, especially at seasons when there are many born into God’s great fold—for tender nursing is wanted in the first stages of the new life.

God, however, when His servants do not see “its growth,” sees it all. Now, you silent, retired spirits who dare not speak to father or mother, or brother or sister—this text ought to be a sweet morsel to you. “You bless its growth,” which proves that God sees you and your newborn Grace. The Lord sees the first sign of penitence. Though you only say to yourself, “I will arise, and go to my Father,” your Father hears you. Though it is nothing but a desire, your Father registers it. “You put my tears into Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?” He is watching your return. He runs to meet you and puts His arms about you, and kisses you with the kisses of His accepting love!

O Soul, be encouraged with that thought that up in the chamber or down by the hedge, or wherever it is that you have sought secrecy, God is there! Dwell on the thought, “You, God, see me.” That is a precious text—“All my desire is before You.” And here is another sweet one, “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy.” He can see you when you only *hope* in His mercy, and He takes pleasure in you if you have only *begun* to fear Him!

Here is a third choice word, “You will perfect that which concerns me.” Have you a concern about these things? Is it a matter of soul-concern with you to be reconciled to God and to have an interest in Jesus’ precious blood? It is only “its growth,” but He blesses it! It is written, “A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench, till He brings forth judgment unto victory.” There shall be victory for you,

even before the Judgment Seat of God, though as yet you are only like the flax that smokes and gives no light, or like the reed that is broken and yields no music! God sees the first growth of Grace.

IV. A few words upon a fourth point: WHAT A MISERY IT WOULD BE IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO HAVE THIS GROWTH WITHOUT GOD'S BLESSING! The text says, "You bless its growth." We must, just a moment, by way of contrast, think of how the growth would have been *without* the blessing. Suppose we were to see a revival among us without God's blessing? It is my conviction that there are revivals which are not of God at all, but are produced by excitement.

If there is no blessing from the Lord it will be all a delusion, a bubble blown up into the air for a moment and then gone to nothing. We shall only see the people stirred to become the more dull and dead afterwards. And this is a great mischief to the Church. In the individual heart, if there should be growth without God's blessing, there would be no good in it. Suppose you have good desires, but no blessing on these desires? They will only tantalize and worry you, and then, after a time, they will be gone and you will be more impervious than you were before to religious convictions. If religious desires are not of God's sending, but are caused by excitement, they will probably prevent your giving a serious hearing to the Word of God in times to come.

If convictions do not soften they will certainly harden. To what extremities have some been driven who have had growth of a certain sort which has *not* led them to Christ! Some have been crushed by despair. They tell us that religion crowds the madhouse—it is not true—but there is no doubt whatever that religiousness of a certain kind has driven many a man out of his mind. The poor souls have felt their wound but have not seen the balm. They have not known Jesus. They have had a sense of sin and nothing more. They have not fled for refuge to the hope which God has set before them.

Marvel not if men go mad when they refuse the Savior! It may come as a judicial visitation of God upon those men who, when in great distress of mind, will not fly to Christ. I believe it is like this with some—you must either fly to Jesus or else your burden will become heavier and heavier until your spirit will utterly fail. This is not the fault of *religion*—it is the fault of those who will not accept the remedy which religion presents. A growth of desires without God's blessing would be an awful thing, but we thank Him that we are not left in such a case.

V. And now I have to dwell upon THE COMFORTING THOUGHT THAT GOD DOES BLESS "THE GROWTH." I wish to deal with you who are tender and troubled. I want to show that God does bless your growth. He does it in many ways. Frequently He does it by the cordials which He brings. You have a few very sweet moments, but you cannot say that you

are Christ's. At times the bells of your heart ring very sweetly at the mention of His name.

The means of Grace are very precious to you. When you gather to the Lord's worship you feel a holy calm and you go away from the service wishing that there were seven Sundays in the week instead of one. By the blessing of God the Word has just suited your case as if the Lord had sent His servants on purpose to you. You lay aside your crutches for awhile and you begin to run. Though these things have been sadly transient, they are tokens for good.

On the other hand, if you have had none of these comforts, or few of them, and the means of Grace have not been consolations to you, I want you to look upon that as a blessing! It may be the greatest blessing that God can give us to take away all comforts on the road, in order to quicken our running towards the end. When a man is flying to the City of Refuge to be protected from the man-slayer, it may be an act of great consideration to stop him for a moment that he may quench his thirst and run more swiftly afterwards. But perhaps, in a case of imminent peril, it may be the kindest thing neither to give him anything to eat or to drink, nor invite him to stop for a moment—in order that he may fly with undiminished speed to the place of safety.

The Lord may be blessing you in the uneasiness which you feel. Inasmuch as you cannot say that you are in Christ, it may be the greatest blessing which Heaven can give to take away every other blessing from you in order that you may be *compelled* to fly to the Lord. You, perhaps, have a little of your self-righteousness left, and while it is so you cannot get joy and comfort. The royal robe which Jesus gives will never shine brilliantly upon us till every rag of our own goodness is gone. Perhaps you are not empty enough, and God will never fill you with Christ till you are. Fear often drives men to faith.

Have you ever heard of a person walking in the fields into whose bosom a bird has flown because pursued by the hawk? Poor timid thing, it would not have ventured there had not a *greater* fear compelled it! All this may be so with you. Your fears may be sent to drive you more swiftly and more closely to the Savior, and if so, I see in these present sorrows the signs that God is blessing "its growth." In looking back upon my own "growth" I sometimes think God blessed me *then* in a lovelier way than *now*. Though I would not willingly return to that early stage of my spiritual life, yet there were many joys about it. An apple tree when loaded with apples is a very comely sight. But give me, for beauty, the apple tree in *bloom*. The whole world does not present a more lovely sight than an apple blossom!

Now, a full-grown Christian laden with fruit is a comely sight, but still there is a peculiar loveliness about the young Christian. Let me tell you what that blessedness is. You now probably have a greater horror of sin

than professors who have known the Lord for years! They might wish that they felt your tenderness of conscience. You have now a graver sense of duty and a more solemn fear of the neglect of it than some who are further advanced. You have also a greater zeal than many—you are now doing your first works for God, and burning with your first love—nothing is too hot or too heavy for you! I pray that you may never decline, but always advance!

And now to close. I think there are three lessons for us to learn. First, let older saints be very gentle and kind to young Believers. God blesses their growth—mind that you do the same. Do not throw cold water upon young desires. Do not snuff out young Believers with hard questions. While they are babes and need the milk of the Word, do not be choking them with your strong meat—they will eat strong meat by-and-bye, but not just yet. Remember, Jacob would not overdrive the lambs. Be equally prudent. Teach and instruct them, but let it be with gentleness and tenderness—not as their superiors, but as nursing fathers for Christ's sake. God, you see, blesses their growth—may He bless it through you!

The next thing I have to say is, fulfill the duty of gratitude. Beloved, if God blesses its growth we ought to be grateful for a little Grace. If you have only seen the first shoot peeping up through the mold, be thankful. And as you see the green blade waving in the breeze, be thankful for the ankle-deep verdure and you shall soon see the commencement of the ear! Be thankful for the first green ears and you shall see the flowering of the wheat, and by-and-by its ripening, and the joyous harvest.

The last lesson is one of encouragement. If God blesses “its growth,” dear Beginners, what will He not do for you in after days? If He gives you such a meal when you break your fast, what dainties will be on your table when He says to you, “Come and dine”? And what a banquet will He furnish at the supper of the Lamb! O troubled One! Let the storms which howl, and the snows which fall, and the wintry blasts that nip your growth all be forgotten in this one consoling thought—God blesses your growth, and whom God blesses none can curse! Over your head, dear, desiring, pleading, languishing Soul, the Lord of Heaven and earth pronounces the blessing of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Take that blessing and rejoice in it evermore. Amen.

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CROWNING BLESSINGS ASCRIBED TO GOD NO. 1475

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(The second Sermon in commemoration of the completion of 25
years of his Ministry
in the midst of the Church assembling in the Tabernacle).

*“You crown the year with Your goodness.”
Psalm 65:11.*

GODLY men in olden times felt God to be very near them and they attributed everything they saw in Nature to the direct operation of His hand. They were not accustomed to speak of “the laws of matter,” “the operation of natural forces” and “the outcome of different causes.” They thought more of the First Cause, the foundation and pillar of all existence—and they saw Him at work on all sides. Hear how the Psalmist sings, “You make the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. You visit the earth and water it. You prepare them corn when you have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly; you settle the furrows thereof: you make it soft with showers; you bless the springing thereof. You crown the year with Your goodness.”

God was very near in those days. As Herbert says—

*“One might have sought and found You presently
At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well.”*

If the result of our philosophy has been to put God farther off from the consciousness of His creatures, God save us from such philosophy and let us get back, again, into the simple state in which we were children at home and God, our great Father, worked all things for us! Let us note the distinct mention of God throughout the Psalm, for it is well worthy of notice. And let our speech be more after the olden sort—with less of our supposed knowledge in it and a good deal more concerning the Presence and the goodness of God.

I am not about to use our text in reference to the outside world and to the husbandry of man, but we shall see how true it is within the Church, which is the husbandry of God. The language was meant to describe the field of Nature. but it is equally true of the garden of the Church. I am going to use the text in this way because of the peculiar circumstances under which we meet, celebrating, as we do, the 25th year of our happy union together as pastor and flock—a period which has, to the fullest extent been crowned with the goodness of the Lord! If I use the text for spiritual purposes I shall not err, for there is always a most striking analogy between the world of Grace and the world of Nature so that it would be hard to find anything said by Inspiration concerning the visible world which might not be correctly spoken with regard to the spiritual world.

But I do not depend upon that fact for my justification—I refer you to the Psalm itself. It is clear that it was written to praise God, not alone for His works in the harvest field and abroad upon the sea, but for His wonderful goodness towards His people, for thus the Psalm begins, “Praise waits for You, O God, in Sion.” It is Zion’s hymn which lies before us and, therefore, the Church which Zion represented may well appropriate the language and use it for herself! She may well say, concerning all the Lord’s mercy to her in her plowing, her sowing, her watching and the glad harvest of her spiritual husbandry, “You crown the year with Your goodness.”

The spirit of the text is joyful gratitude and my soul is so filled with it that I do not need so much to preach to you as to lead you in holy adoration of God for the great mercies with which He has surrounded us as a Church and congregation from the first day even until now!

I. And so our first head is DIVINE GOODNESS ADORED. “You crown the year with Your goodness.” Whatever of acceptable service we have rendered and whatever of real success we have achieved has come from the Lord of Hosts who has worked all our works in us! Whatever holy results may have followed from earnest efforts and whatever honor has redounded unto God from them is the Lord’s doings and it is marvelous in our eyes! “Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory for Your mercy and for Your Truth’s sake.” Your goodness, not ours, has crowned the work! Your goodness, indeed, makes every good work good and gives to every good its crown. From its first conception, even to its ultimate conclusion, all virtue is of You. From blade to full corn all the harvest is of You, O Lord, and to You let it be ascribed! Let us, therefore, praise the Lord with all our hearts for 25 years of prayer and effort, of planning and working, of believing and rejoicing which He has crowned with His goodness!

We will try to follow the run of the Psalm and our first note shall be this—*praise must be for God alone*. “Praise waits for You, O God, in Sion.” Not for men, nor for priests, nor for pastors, presbyters, bishops, ministers, or whatever you choose to call them—“Praise waits for YOU, O God, in Sion.” Whoever shall have done well in the midst of the Church, let him have the love of his Brethren, but let all the praise be unto You, O Most High! Far be it for the axe to exalt itself and forget him that fells therewith, or for the sword to deprive the conqueror of his glory. Praise is silent while the best of men are passing by—it lays its finger on its lips till the Lord approaches and then bursts forth in gladsome song because *He* appears!

Whatever else you do, my Brothers and Sisters, be sure that your soul magnifies the Lord and abhors the very idea of self-glorification. If the Lord has blessed you, shake off, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand, any idea of ascribing praise to yourself! We are mere vanity and to us belong shame and confusion of face—these are, so to speak, our belongings—the only dowry our fathers have left to us. What are we that the Lord should bless us? Did you bring a soul to Christ the other day? Bless the Holy Spirit who helped you, by His power, to do so Divine a deed! Did you bear bold testimony for the Truth of God but yesterday? Bless Him who is the faithful and true Witness, that at *His* feet you learned how to

be true—and by His Spirit were enabled to be brave! “Not unto us! Not unto us!” With vehemence we deprecate the idea of honoring ourselves!

Again and again we put away the usurper’s crown which Satan proffers us. How can we endure the base proposal? Shall we rob God of His Glory? Even He from whom we derive our very existence? Perish, O pride, abhorred of God and man! O Lord, keep me from the approach of that shameful evil! Brothers and Sisters, if you have any esteem among men, cast your crown at Jehovah’s feet and there let it be for the honor of God only! *In this spirit every action of the Christian Church ought to be done*, for what says the second clause of the Psalm? “Unto You shall the vow be performed.” Brothers and Sisters, we ought to praise God in all that we do by doing it to His praise! There must be no motive of this kind—“I must give because others give. I must attend such-and-such a meeting because otherwise I should be missed.” Cast away from you, I pray you, the service of any master but your Lord in Heaven, for you cannot serve two masters!

Honor the Lord in all that you do. Whether you teach the classes of the school, or preach at the corner of the street, or hand a tract to a passerby, or preach to the multitude, let the vow be performed as unto the Lord. It is wonderful how sweet it is to do service when it is expressly done *for Him*. I do not marvel that the woman broke the alabaster box *over Him*. Breaking precious boxes and spilling priceless nard may be hard work of itself to selfish flesh and blood, but it becomes a self-gratifying luxury to do it *unto Him*. When our whole life shall be doing service unto the Well-Beloved whom to serve is honor and delight and for whom to die were an unspeakable bliss—then shall we have learned how to live! Lord, You crown the year with Your goodness and, therefore, we would do all things as unto You, expecting Your Grace to assist our service; Your love to accept it; Your pity to forgive it and Your power to make it effectual to Your own Glory! Oh, that I had but power—and God the Holy Spirit has that power—first to take away from each of us all thought of self-glorification! And then to consecrate our entire being, even to our pulse and breath, to His praise whose love has made us what we are!

Further, Brothers and Sisters, in praising God we may be helped to do so and to see how He crowns the year with His goodness when we *remember our answered prayers as a Church*. What says the second verse? “O You that hears prayer, unto You shall all flesh come.” I say it and there is no boasting in the saying of it, but there is a glorying in God that prayers have been heard which have been put up by this Church in ways and manners which have not been less than marvelous! Such of you as have been with us from the beginning will remember times when, in our weakness and in our poverty, we cried to the Lord for help because of our need—and He heard us! Especially was this the case concerning the building of the house in which we are now assembled. Ah, how speedily He helped us! How liberally! How like a God!

When we have needed means to feed the children of our Orphanage, the Prayer Meeting on Monday night has been followed by a response before the week has gone round! When two or three of us have met together, unknown to all the rest, to lay special siege to Heaven upon the appearance of troubles which we did not wish to tell to others, we have seen the

arm of God made bare among us and we could no more doubt it than we could doubt our own existence! Oh, you that have had your prayers answered, praise the Lord who crowns your supplications with His acceptance! Remember that it is because of prayer that, as a Church, we have continued to advance from strength to strength—and shall not our praises balance our prayers? If the Lord gives goodness, shall not we give gratitude? Our prayers confessed our dependence—we felt that our years could never be crowned unless the Lord drowned them—and now that the blessing has come, let our praises prove our thankfulness while we cry, “You crown the years with your goodness.”

And, beloved Friends, it may greatly increase our praise of God for all His goodness if we *think of our many sins*. Have we tried to serve Him? Alas, how often have we failed! The iniquities of our holy things might long ago have provoked the Lord to wrath. Among us has there not been much that His pure and holy eyes must have grieved over? The watchers of the Church have sometimes come together in sore dismay over this and that which they have seen among the brotherhood and they have cried to God that He would put away the evil thing from among us, or help us to overcome the Evil One and reclaim the wandering. Nobody knows but God all the cares and anxieties which surround those that watch over such a flock as this! Who is sufficient for these things? Have we been made sufficient? Then infinite Grace has done the deed!

The best of us, whoever they may be, will be the first to bow before the Lord. And those among us who have exhibited a Christly character and have served the cause of Christ heartily will the most deeply feel that if the Lord had taken the candlestick out of its place and left us in the darkness, we had well deserved it. Eternally blessed be the name of the Ever Merciful! When we have sinned, we have always had an Advocate before the Throne of God and the blood of sprinkling has ever been upon us to make us clean in the sight of the Lord! Blessed be His name! Though iniquities prevail against us, yet, as for our transgressions, He has purged them away and still does His Church lift up her face and live in the smile of His love, rejoicing and triumphant! Beloved, this ought to make us praise God with all our hearts and the Psalmist manifested the wisdom of Inspiration in reminding us of it.

And once more, the *sacred privileges which infinite mercy has bestowed* upon us should compel us with glad alacrity to magnify the name of God! See how the Psalm proceeds—“Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach unto You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple.” Many now present first learned in this house their election of God, for here they were called by almighty Grace and enabled to approach their heavenly Father! Blessed be the choosing and calling Lord who now gives us access to Himself and nearness to His Person! Do you remember when you first drew near to Him with weeping eyes and melting hearts because His love had broken down your rebellious wills? Oh, it was a sorrowful coming, but it was a *true* coming, for God was calling you!

And do you remember, afterwards, when you came to Him with glad hearts and rejoicing eyes, for the Lord had put away your sin and you

stood “accepted in the Beloved”? Oh, that glad day! Last Sunday we sang—“Happy day, happy day.” And we may sing it every day and every morning and evening of our lives and not sing it too often! The Lord who chose us and called us and made us to approach Him has not, since that day, become our enemy, for He has allowed us ever since to dwell in His house! We are His children! We have not called upon Him like strangers, but we have dwelt in His house as sons and daughters! He has been abiding with us and we have been made to abide in Him! Shall we not praise Him for this? This very house of prayer has been, to some of you, a quiet resting place. You have been more at home here than when you have been at home.

I am bound to say that you remember more happy times you have had here than anywhere else—and these have put out of your memory the sad records of your hard battling in the world even for a livelihood! I know that many of you live by your Sabbaths. You step over the intervening space from Lord’s-Day to Lord’s-Day as if the Lord had made a ladder of Sabbaths for you to climb to Heaven! And you have been *fed* in the Lord’s house as well as rested. I know you have, for he who deals out the meat has been fed himself and when he is fed, he knows that others have like appetites and need like food and know when they get it! You have clapped your hands for very joy when redeeming Grace and dying love have been the theme and infinite, sovereign, changeless mercy has been the subject of the discourse!

You have been blessed every happy Sabbath you have had, my Brothers and Sisters—every holy Monday evening’s Prayer Meeting—every occasion on which God has met with you in any of the rooms of this building when a few of you, at early morning or late in the evening have met together for prayer! Every time, the visits of Jesus’ love have charmed your soul up to Heaven’s gate! By all of these bless and magnify His name who has crowned the years with His goodness! There had been no food for us if the Lord had not given us manna from Heaven! There had been no comfortable rest for us if He had not breathed peace upon us! There had been no coming in of new converts, nor going out with rapturous joy of the perfected ones up to the seats above if the Lord had not been with us and, therefore, to Him be all the praise!

I do not suppose that any stranger here will understand this matter. It may even be that such will judge that we are indulging in self-acclamation under a thin disguise—but this evil we must endure for once! You, my Brothers and Sisters, who have been together these many years, know what is meant and you know that it is not within the compass of an angel’s tongue to express the gratitude which many of us feel who, for these 25 years, have been banded together in closest and heartiest Christian brotherhood in the service of our Lord and Master! Strangers cannot guess how happy has been our fellowship, or how true our love! Only eternity shall reveal the multitude of mercies with which God has visited us by means of our association in this Church! It is to some of us friend, nurse, mother, home all in one!

If we sing more heartily about ourselves as recipients of Divine Mercy than some might think comely, we can only say that we cannot help it. If

you drop in at a marriage and there is much said at the wedding feast about the family and its history, you need not go and put it in the papers, nor even criticize the family greetings too closely. Very likely they do seem to look too exclusively at home affairs, but pardon them for once. Well, whether men forgive me or not, I must and will speak! But all I have to say is to ascribe every good thing unto the Lord, alone, even to the God of Abraham, “the God of the whole earth shall He be called.”

II. Now we will turn to a second point. In the second place, THE ENCIRCLING BLESSING OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS IS TO BE CONFESSED. The Psalmist sings—“You crown the year with Your goodness.” As though God circled the year and put a coronet about its head—a gem for every month, a pearl for every day—a matchless crown of unceasing goodness which surrounds the whole year! Now I venture to say that the period of 25 years, or a whole quarter of a century, wears its royal crown even more conspicuously than any single year! From the first day even until now God has enclosed the whole time with His goodness. I make no exceptions! We had a dark day, once, when we were scattered with sorrow, but as I read the fifth verse of the Psalm, it is easy to work it into our praise—“By terrible things in righteousness will you answer us, O God of our salvation.”

Standing happily among you, addressing you in this calm and quiet manner, recall that night in which the multitude seemed to be taken with sudden panic and to rush madly from the house—and then we heard of dead and wounded in our congregation—and the preacher’s heart was broken till he felt it would be well to die! Yet out of that calamity, with all its unspeakable grief, there sprang a blessing, the fruit of which we still continue to reap. Yes, I make no exception to anything! Sick and ill, oftentimes, has the preacher been, but valued lessons have thus been taught to him and through him taught to the people. Sickness has fallen here and there and sometimes affliction and poverty—but you have, all of you, learned something under the rod and you have blessed God for His fatherly discipline filled with eternal benefits! Yes, Lord, it is true in our case, “You crown the year with Your goodness.”

Now, let us just look at this all-encircling goodness of the Lord which we have seen from the first day till now. I saw it, first of all, in inspiring the few Brethren that met together as a Church with confidence in God at the very outset. Our first meeting for prayer was, I think, more largely attended than our first sermon. The Church was diminished and brought low, but the Brethren prayed with great reliance upon God and showed no sign of distrust. They did not say, “Die.” They did not believe in becoming extinct, but every man seemed resolved to set his face like a flint to win prosperity at the hands of God—and for this I thank *Him!* Is He not said in our Psalm to be the confidence of the ends of the earth? This confidence was the beginning of an endless chain of goodness!

Then the Lord was pleased in infinite mercy to prepare men’s hearts to hear the Gospel. It was not possible, they said, that great places could be filled with crowds to hear the old-fashioned Gospel! The pulpit had lost its power, so unbelievers told us, and yet no sooner did we begin to preach in simple strains, the Gospel of Christ, than the people flew as a cloud and

as doves to their windows! And what listening there was at Park Street, where we scarcely had air enough to breathe! And when we got into the larger place, what attention was manifest! What power seemed to go with every word that was spoken! I say it, though I was the preacher, it was not I, but the Grace of God which was with me! There were stricken down among us some of the most unlikely ones! There were brought into the Church and added to God's people some of those that had wandered far away from the path of Truth and Righteousness—and these, by their penitent love, quickened our life and increased our zeal!

The Lord gave the people, more and more, a willingness to hear and there was no pause in the flowing stream of hearers, nor in the incoming of converts. The Holy Spirit came down like showers which saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking! And then it was not long before we heard on the right and on the left the cry, "What must we do to be saved?" We were busy enough in those days in seeing converts and thank God we have been ever since! We had some among us who gave themselves up to watch for the souls of men and we have a goodly number of such helpers now, perhaps more than we ever had and, thank God, these found and still find many souls to watch over! Still the arrows fly and still the smitten cry out for help and ask that they may be guided to the great healing Lord. Blessed be God's name for this! He went with us all those early days and gave us sheaves even at the first sowing, so that we began with mercy and He has been with us even until now—till our life has become one long harvest-home!

I am bound to acknowledge with deep thankfulness that during these 25 years the Word has been given me to speak when the time has come for preaching. It may look to you a small thing that I should be able to come before you in due time, but it will not seem so to my Brothers in the ministry who remember that for 25 years my sermons have been printed as they have been delivered. It must be an easy thing to go and buy discourses at sixpence or a shilling—each ready lithographed—and read them off as hirelings do. But to speak your heart out every time and yet to have something fresh for 25 years is no child's play! Who shall do it unless he cries to God for help? I read but the other day a newspaper criticism of myself in which the writer wondered that a man should keep on, year after year, with so few themes and such a narrow groove to travel in!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, it is not so! Our themes are infinite for number and fullness! Every text of Scripture is boundless in its meaning! We could preach from the Bible throughout eternity and not exhaust it! A narrow groove? The thoughts of *God* narrow? The *Divine Word* narrow? They know it not, for His commandments are exceedingly broad. Had we to speak of politics or philosophy, we had run dry long ago—but when we have to preach the Savior's everlasting love—the theme is always fresh, always new! The Incarnate God, the atoning blood, the risen Lord, the coming Glory—these are subjects which defy exhaustion! Yet we bless the Eternal Spirit who gives both seed to the sower and bread to the eater, that we have had spiritual food for our people as often as the season has come round! I must render my special praise and if at any time you have

been blessed by the Word of God I have spoken, you must render your tribute, too.

All these years He has crowned us with His goodness by giving us the good Word to preach in His name. But, dear Brothers and Sisters, I am most happy to thank God for crowning the years with His goodness by helping us in the reaping and gathering in of souls. I say, "us," advisedly. Here we have had a Church which from the first began to seek the souls of men. If any of you do not work for Christ, I should think you have a hard time of it among *us*, for one or another is pretty sure to use the ox-goad upon you! Both by example and by precept and by the general spirit of the brotherhood, idlers stand rebuked! Our Brothers and Sisters from the first began working for the good of men as best they could. Not in a fine, artistic manner—I do not think we ever tried that—we did it in a very bland manner, but we went at it with all our hearts.

Our young Brothers tried their hands at teaching and preaching—very likely it was intellectually very poor preaching—but it was full of heart and it did good in spite of its many imperfections. The teaching and the looking after converts; the trying to form new churches; the opening of Prayer Meetings and all sorts of holy works were not done after any set fashion—but somehow they were done and often done with a desperate valor and a simple faith which surprised and cheered me! Often and often have I brushed the tears from my eyes when I have received from some here present offerings for the Master's work which utterly surpassed all my ideas of giving. The consecration of your substance by some among you has been Apostolic! I have known those who have so given from their poverty that they have sometimes given all that they had—and when I have even hinted at their exceeding the bounds of prudence, they have seemed hurt and pressed the gift, again, for some other work of the Master whom they love.

The Lord knows every one of your hearts—where you have come short He knows and may His Grace forgive—but where, as I most honestly bear witness, many here have gone up to the measure of their ability and even beyond it, He knows and will reward! For your zeal, industry and consecration I must bless the Lord who crowns the years with His goodness! There are few among you, I should think, who have worked for the Master who have not seen most encouraging results in the conversions of those for whom you have cared. Certainly there are many among you between whom and myself there might pass a telegraphic glance awakening glad memories. You have brought to me one after another souls that you have won. You wanted me to speak to them personally because you have an idea that I might be more tender than anybody else. I am afraid you think too highly of me in this respect. Still I have been right glad to see those you brought to me because they were your children.

How glad I have been that, inasmuch as I brought *you* to Christ through His Grace, when you have brought others to Christ I have seemed to be a sort of grandfather in your midst, rejoicing in your joy, triumphing in your success! And I mean it sincerely when I say that I look upon many of you with an intense love and satisfaction because God has made you great winners of souls. You have not sat here to listen to me and to enjoy

your Sundays, but you have been sowers of the good Seed. You have many times denied yourselves the privileges of God's house that you might go and look after others—and the Lord has given you your wages! How many you have brought back whose feet had almost gone! How many you have helped by sweet encouragement when they have been depressed! I know not all your labors of love, but God knows!

This much I *do* know, that the pastorate of this Church is practically carried out by the Church itself! Beloved elders labor with a diligence which I cannot commend too highly, still it were impossible with 5,000 persons to care for, that a few men should fulfill the service. You watch over one another in the Lord and for this I bless Him, to whom must be rendered all the praise. I feel the more free to speak about what He has worked by you and in you because you will not take any glory to yourselves but lay it at His feet. Lord, You have blessed us exceedingly beyond what we asked or even thought—and in return we bless You!

When I remember how, as a boy, I stood among you, Brothers and Sisters, and feebly began to preach of Jesus Christ and how these 25 years without dissension, yes, without the *dream* of dissension, in perfect love compacted as one man, you have gone on from one work of God to another and have never halted, hesitated or drawn back, I must and will bless and magnify Him who has crowned these years with His goodness!

III. Now I come to my closing point. It is this—THE CROWNING BLESSING IS CONFESSED TO BE OF God—not only the encircling blessing but the crowning blessing. What is the crown of a Church? Well, some Churches have one crown and some another. I have heard of a church whose crown was its organ—the biggest organ, the finest organ ever played—and the choir the most wonderful choir that ever was. Everybody in the district said, “Now, if you want to go to a place where you will have fine music, that is the spot.” Our musical friends may wear that crown if they please. I will never pluck at it or decry it—I feel no temptation in that direction!

I have heard of others whose crown has been their intellect. There are very few hearers. Indeed, not as many people by one-tenth as there are seats, but then they are such a select people, the *elite*, the thoughtful and intelligent! The ministry is such that only one in a hundred can possibly understand what is said and the one in the hundred who does understand it is, therefore, a most remarkable person! That is *their* crown! Again I say I will not envy it. Whatever there may be that is desirable about it, the Brother who wears it shall wear it all his days for me. I have heard of other crowns—among the rest, that of being “a most respectable church.” All the people are respectable. The minister, of course, is respectable. I believe he is, “Reverend,” or, “Very Reverend,” and everybody and thing about him is, to the last degree, “respectable.”

Fustian jackets and cotton gowns are warned off by the surpassing dignity of everything in and around the place. As for a working man, such a creature is never seen on the premises and could not be supposed to be—if he were to come he would say—“The preacher preaches double Dutch or Greek, or something of the sort.” He would not hear language

which he could understand! This is not a very brilliant crown, this crown of respectability—it certainly never flashed ambition into *my* soul.

Our crown under God has been this—the poor have the Gospel preached to them, souls are saved and Christ is glorified! O my beloved Church, hold fast what you have, that no man take this crown away from you! As for me, by God's help, the first and last thing that I long for is to bring men to Christ! I care nothing about fine language, or about the pretty speculations of prophecy, or a hundred dainty things! I desire only to break the heart and bind it up—to lay hold of a sheep of Christ and bring it back into the fold is the one thing I live for! You, also, are of the same mind, are you not? Well, we have had this crowning blessing that, as nearly as I can estimate, more than 9,000 persons have joined this Church. If they were all alive now, or all with us now, what a company they would be! Some have fallen asleep and many are members with other churches, working for the Master where they are probably more influential than they could have been at home. Some of our members we were glad to lose because our loss was the gain of the universal Church. We sent them out to colonize and so to increase the Master's kingdom. For these 9,000 and more let God be praised! It is a crown in which we must and will rejoice.

But another crown to any Church, I think, is when its members are maintained in their profession. If many are added and then they are scattered again—if they do but come to go, if they are found and then straightway lost—what is the benefit of it? But this has been our crown of rejoicing, that we have seen the young converts matured in Divine Grace. The blade has become the ear and the ear has become the full corn in the ear for which God is thanked! And there has been this about it, that as we built together as living stones, so we have remained together! I have a great many faults and I often wonder how it is you put up with me, but we have not thought of parting—the mortar which holds us together in the building is very binding. I am not so much surprised that I put up with *you*, for it is my duty and office to bear with all and none of you have caused me grief except such as have walked unworthy and grieved the Spirit of God. We have gone on well together, under God's blessings, these many years and have no hesitation about continuing in the same loving unity.

During these 25 years I have had to attend to the quarrels and differences of scores of little Churches where their weakness should have been the strongest argument for union. Men usually divide when they are already too few for the work and this is a most grievous evil under the sun. Churches torn apart with contention have laid the wretched differences before me and I have had many a heavy burden to carry while trying to set things right. But I have not had to spend one five minutes in seeking to heal a breach in this Church or maintain its unity! The Lord has given us brotherly love and unto His name be praise! Brothers and Sisters who have been members of other Churches where you have seen trouble, you know what a comfort it is to be connected with a Church where we endeavor to walk in love to one another and where the noise of war has not disturbed our gates.

Truly I must say and I do say it, "O Lord, You give peace in our borders and You fill us with the finest of the wheat. You crown the years with Your goodness." But is this all? We ought to bless God for the fruit-bearing ones that have been among us. Workers of all sorts are found for the different agencies of the Church as they are required and God has given us some whom He has honored exceedingly who are our strength for home work. But, besides that, this Church has, this day, an army of above 400 ministers trained at her side who are now scattered all over the globe preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while as a militia we have some 80 or more disseminating godly books! Best of all, we have a growing band of missionaries! My heart leaped within me on Monday night when I heard the young people and saw how one and another of our Brothers were devoting themselves to mission work. This I reckon to be the brightest crown of all! If the Lord will but infuse the missionary spirit into us and force out many to go abroad to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ our cup will run over and we shall again have to say, "Praise waits for You, O God, in Sion, for You crown the years with your goodness."

Last of all, and never to be forgotten, during these 25 years there have gone from us to the upper realms about 800 who had named the name of Jesus. Professing their faith in Christ, living in His fear, dying in the faith they gave us no cause to doubt their sincerity and, therefore, we may not question their eternal safety. Many of them gave us in life and in death all the tokens we could ask for of their being in Christ and, therefore, we sorrow not as those that are without hope. Why, when I think of them, many of them my sons and daughters now before the Throne of God, they fill me with solemn exultation! Do you not see them in their white robes? Eight hundred souls redeemed by blood! These are only what we know of and had enrolled. How many there may have been converted here who never joined our earthly fellowship, but, nevertheless, have gone Home, I cannot tell.

There probably have been more than those whose names we know, if we consider the wide area over which the printed sermons circulate. They are gathering Home, one by one, one by one, but they make a goodly company! Our name is Gad, for "a troop comes." Happy shall we be to overtake those who have marched out ahead of us and entered into the Promised Land! Let us remember them and by faith join our hands with them. Flash a thought to unite the broken family, for we are not far from them, nor are they far from us, since we are one in Christ! This, too, is our crown.

And now I want one thing more. There is such a thing as a greed that is never satisfied and I have a great greed upon me now. I frankly confess my covetousness. Whenever the Lord gives us any great spiritual gift we want more, nor are we blamed for this, but bid to covet earnestly the best gifts! This, then, is my further desire. I should be rejoiced beyond measure if, on this night and during the next two or three days in which we keep holy day and bless the Lord for His goodness, some Brothers and Sisters were moved by the Holy Spirit to undertake some new work for Christ which they had not thought of before. Come, my Brother, may the Lord crown this year this day with His goodness by putting it into your heart to

break up new soil and sow a fresh field for Jesus! Have you been an idler? Buckle up! Today join the laborers and leave the loiterers! Get to the Master's work!

Have you already been diligent? I have more hope in appealing to you! Brother, Sister, try something more—something more tonight! Roll over in your mind what there is that is left undone in the branch of holy service for which you are fitted, or for which you might get to be fitted and engage in it at once! Come now! Consecrate yourself to the Lord anew tonight and pray Him to lift you to a higher platform and into a nobler state of consecration! That would be a blessed crowning of the years with His goodness! And what if some young men here were to say, "We shall prosper in business, no doubt, for we feel up to the mark for it. God has given us brain and skill and a fair opening, but inasmuch as we have capacity we will consecrate it"?

I hear the sorrows of China borne on the wailing of the wind and the sighing of the sea! Millions upon millions are perishing for lack of knowledge—will no one pity them? The need of India's teeming population cries to us in voices which pierce the heart—will no one listen and help? A voice comes forth from the excellent Glory, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" It were a crown to end the year with if there came from this and that set of useful, earnest Christian men the reply of individual hearts, "Here am I! Here am I! Send me!" The Lord give us this crown!

One thing more. Oh, if some hearts would yield themselves to the Savior tonight! If some were converted tonight, what a crown that would be to finish up these years with! Testimonial, Sirs? No testimonial can ever be given to the preacher which can equal a soul converted! These are the seals of our ministry and the wages of our hire! Socrates, on his birthday, had a present given him by each of his students. Some brought less and some brought more. Among the rest there was one who had nothing in the world to bring and so he came to Socrates and said, "Master, I give you myself. I love you with all my heart." The sage judged this to be the most precious of all the tributes.

Will not some of you cry, "I do not know that I could be a missionary, or that I have any gifts, or talents, or substance that I could contribute, but, Lord, I give my heart to You to be renewed by Grace"? God bring you, poor sinner, to Jesus' feet to surrender your whole nature to His sway that He may wash it in His blood, fill it with His Spirit and use it for His Glory! He says, "My son, give me your heart," and when the heart is yielded, He accepts the gift! May the Eternal Spirit lead many to give themselves thus to Jesus this night and it will be the crowning joy of all the years! Amen and amen!

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THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

NO. 532

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You crown the year with Your goodness. And your paths drop fatness.”
Psalm 65:11.***

POSSIBLY objections might have been raised to a day of thanksgiving for the abundant harvest if it had been ordered or suggested by Government. Certain Brothers and Sisters are so exceedingly tender in their consciences upon the point of connection between Church and State that they would have thought it almost a reason for *not* being thankful at all if the Government had recommended them to celebrate a day of public thanksgiving.

Although I have no love to the unscriptural union of Church and State, I should on this occasion have hailed an official request for a national recognition of the special goodness of God. However, none of us can feel any objection arising in our minds if it is now agreed that *today* we will praise our ever-bounteous Lord and as an assembly record our gratitude to the God of the harvest. We are probably the largest assembly of Christian people in the world and it is well that we should set the example to the smaller Churches.

Doubtless many other Believers will follow in our footsteps, and so a public thanksgiving will become general throughout the country. I hope to see every congregation in the land raising a special offering unto the Lord, to be devoted either to His Church, to the poor, to missions, or some other holy end. Yes, I would have every Christian offer willingly unto the Lord as a token of his gratitude to the God of Providence.

I had almost forgotten that today we have to ask your contributions for the support of two ministers of our own body laboring in Germany. It is well that it so happens, because it furnishes an object for the practical expression of the thanks which we feel to Almighty God. While as the sum required for this object will at once be raised, our beloved college will be a worthy object for friends at a distance to assist with their free will offerings.

Without any preface, we will divide our text as it divides itself. Here we have *crowning mercies calling for crowning gratitude*. And in the same verse, *paths of fatness, which should be to us ways of delight*. When we have talked upon these two points, we may meditate for a few moments upon the whole subject and endeavor, as God shall help us, to see what duties it suggests.

I. First of all, we have here CROWNING MERCIES, SUGGESTING SPECIAL AND CROWNING THANKSGIVING. All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us—both when we sleep and when we wake His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease to cheer His children with His love. Like a river His loving kindness is always flowing with a fullness inexhaustible as His own Nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creatures—in it, as in their element—they live and move and have their being.

Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than before, so is it with the mercy of God—it has its golden hours, its days of overflow when the Lord magnifies His Grace and lifts high His love before the sons of men.

If we begin with the blessings of the nether springs, we must not forget that for the race of man *the joyous days of harvest* are a special season of excessive favor. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of Providence are then abundantly bestowed. It is the mellow season of *realization*, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of Heaven. The Psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year.

What if I compare the opening spring to the proclamation of a new prince, the latest born of Father Time? With the musical voices of birds and the joyful lowing of herds, a new era of fertility is ushered in. Every verdant meadow and every leaping brook hears the joyful proclamation and feels a new life within. The little hills rejoice on every side. They shout for joy. They also sing. Throughout the warm months of summer the royal year is dressing itself in beauty and adorning itself in sumptuous array.

What with the plates of ivory, yielded by the lilies, the rubies of the rose, the emeralds of the meads and all manner of fair colors from the many flowers, we may well say that, “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” No studs of silver or rows of jewels can vie with the ornaments of the year. No garments of needlework of divers colors can match the glorious vesture of Time’s reigning son. But the moment of the coronation, when earth feels most the sway of the year, is in the fullness of autumn. Then it is when the fields are covered with a dose of gold, and fruits are glowing with the rich hues of ripeness, and the leaves are bur-nished with inimitable perfection of tint and shade.

Then it is with a coronal of Divine goodness, amidst the glad shouts of toiling lads and the songs of rejoicing maidens, the year is crowned! Upon a throne of golden corn, with the peaceful sickle for his scepter, sits the

crowned year bearing the goodness of the Lord as a coronet upon his placid brow. Or, what if we compare the year to a conqueror, striving at first with stern winter, wrestling hard against all his boisterous attacks, and at last joyfully conquering in the fair days of spring? He rides in triumph throughout the summer along a pathway strewn with flowers, and at last, mounting the throne amidst the festivities of harvest, while the Lord in loving kindness puts a diadem of beauty and goodness upon his head—

***“Cheerfulness and holy pleasure
Well become our happy isle,
When our God in copious measure
Deigns to bless us with His smile;
Joyful, then, all people come,
Celebrate the harvest home.”***

We may forget the harvest, living as we do, so far from rural labors, but those who have to watch the corn as it springs up and track it through all its numberless dangers until the blade becomes the full corn in the ear, cannot, surely, forget the wonderful goodness and mercy of God when they see the harvest safely stored. My Brothers and Sisters, if we require any considerations to excite us to gratitude, let us think for a moment of the effect upon our country of *a total failure* of the crops.

What if today it were reported that as yet the corn was not carried, that the continued showers had made it sprout and grow till there was no hope of its being of any further use and that it might as well be left in the fields? What dismay would that message carry into every cottage? Who among us could contemplate the future without dismay? All faces would gather blackness. All classes would sorrow and even the throne itself might fitly be covered with sackcloth at the news.

At this day the kingdom of Egypt sits trembling. The rejoicing and abounding land trembles for her sons. The Nile has swollen beyond its proper limit, the waters continue still to rise, and a few more days must see the fields covered with devastating floods. If it is so, alas for that land, in other years so favored as to have given us the Proverb of “Corn in Egypt.” My Brothers and Sisters, should we not rejoice that this is *not* our case and that our happy land rejoices in plenty? If the plant had utterly failed and the seed had rotted under the clods, we should have been quick enough to murmur—how is it that we are so slow to praise?

Take a lower view of the matter—suppose even *a partial scarcity*—at this juncture, when one arm of our industry is paralyzed, how serious would have been this calamity! With a staple commodity withdrawn from us, with the daily peril of war at our gates, it would have been a fearful trial to have suffered scarcity of bread. Shall we not bless and praise our Covenant God who permits not the appointed weeks of harvest to fail? Sing together all you to whom bread is the staff of life and rejoice before Him who loads you with benefits!

We have none of us any adequate idea of *the amount of happiness* conferred upon a nation by a luxuriant crop. Every man in the land is the richer for it. To the poor man the difference is of the utmost importance. His three shillings are now worth four. There is more bread for the children, or more money for clothes. Millions are benefited by God's once opening His liberal hand. When the Hebrews went through the desert there were but some two or three millions of them, and yet they sang sweetly of Him who fed His chosen people.

In our own land alone we have ten times the number. Have we no hallowed music for the God of the whole earth? Reflect upon the amazing population of our enormous city—consider the immense mount of poverty—think how greatly at one stroke that poverty has been relieved! A generous contribution, equal to that made for the Lancashire distress, would be but as the drop of a bucket to the relief afforded by a fall in the price of bread. Let us not despise the bounty of God because this great benefit comes in a natural way. If every morning when we awoke we saw fresh loaves of bread put into our cupboard, or the morning's meal set out upon the table, we should think it a miracle.

But if our God blesses our own exertions and prospers our own toil to the same end, is it not equally as much a ground for praising and blessing His name? I would I had this morning the tongue of the eloquent, or even my own usual strength to excite you to gratitude, by the spectacle of the multitudes of beings whom God has made happy by the fruit of the field. My sickness today makes my thoughts wander and unfits me for so noble a theme, yet my soul pants to set your hearts on fire. O for Heaven's own fire to kindle your hearts! O come, let us worship and bow down, let us exalt the Lord our God and come into His Presence with the voice of joy and thanksgiving!

But how shall we give crowning thanksgiving for this crowning mercy of the year? We can do it, dear Friends, by the *inward emotions of gratitude*. Let our hearts be warmed. Let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Meditation upon this mercy may tend to nourish in you the most tender feelings of affection, and your souls will be knit to the Father of spirits, who pities His children. Again, *praise Him with your lips*. Let Psalms and hymns employ your tongues today—and tomorrow, when we meet together at the Prayer Meeting, let us turn it rather into a Praise Meeting and let us laud and magnify His name from whose bounty all this goodness flows.

But I think, also, we should thank Him by *our gifts*. The Jews of old never tasted the fruit either of the barley or of the wheat harvest till they had sanctified it to the Lord by the feast of ingatherings. There was, early in the season, the barley harvest. One sheaf of this barley was taken and waved before the Lord with special sacrifices, and then afterward the people feasted. Fifty days afterward came the wheat harvest, when two loaves,

made of the new flour, were offered before the Lord in sacrifice, together with burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings and abundant sacrifices of thanksgivings to show that the people's thankfulness was not stinted or mean.

No man ate either of the ears, or grain, or corn ground and made into bread, until first of all he had sanctified his substance by the dedication of some unto the Lord. And shall we do less than the Jew? Shall he, for types and shadows, express his gratitude in a solid manner and shall not we? Did he offer unto the Lord whom he scarcely knew and bow before that Most High God who hid His face amidst the smoke of burning rams and bullocks? And shall not we, who see the Glory of the Lord in the face of Christ Jesus come unto Him and bring to Him our offerings?

The Old Testament ordinance was, "You shall not come before the Lord empty." And let that be the ordinance of today. Let us come into His Presence, each man bearing his offering of thanksgiving unto the Lord. But enough concerning this particular harvest. It has been a crowning mercy this year, so that the other version of our text might aptly be applied as a description of 1863, "You crown the year with Your goodness."

Furthermore, Beloved, we have heard of heavenly harvests, the outflowing of the upper springs, which, in days of yore, awakened the Church of God to loudest praise. There was the harvest of Pentecost. Christ having been sown in the ground like a grain of wheat, sprang up from it and in His resurrection and ascension was like the waved sheaf before the Lord. Let us never forget that resurrection which crowned the year of God's redeemed with goodness. It was a terrible year, indeed. It began in the howling tempests of Christ's poverty, want, shame, suffering, and death. It seemed to have no spring and no summer, but yet it was crowned with an abundant harvest when Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Fifty days after the resurrection came the Pentecost. The barley harvest had been passed wherein the wave-sheaf was offered. Then came the days of wheat harvest. Peter and the eleven that were with him became the reapers and three thousand souls fell beneath the Gospel sickle. There was great joy in the city of Jerusalem that day—all the saints who heard were glad, and Heaven itself, catching the Divine enthusiasm, rang with harvest joy! It is recorded that the saints ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. Pentecost was a crowning mercy, and it was remembered by the saints with crowning thanks.

May I not say that we have had the like crowning mercy shown to this our highly-favored land, in *the revivals* which a few years ago were so plentiful among us and which even now hover over our heads? The Spirit of the Lord suddenly fell upon many a city and village—where the Gospel had been preached with dull and heavy tones, suddenly the minister began to glow—the cords which bound his tongue were snapped, and like a seraph full of heavenly fire he began to tell of the love of Jesus. Souls were

moved as the trees of the woods are moved in the wind—spirits long dead in sin's tremendous sepulcher woke up at the quickening breath!

They stood upon their feet as a great army—they praised the Lord. Other towns and other villages received the like Pentecostal shower and we had hoped—O that our hopes had been realized—that all England would have been filled with the same Divine enthusiasm and that the effects would have continued among us. To a great extent the revival has departed and many of our Churches are more stolid and cold than ever. And our denomination—never too zealous, seldom guilty of excessive heat, seems to have now, I think, as little earnest life as it ever had. Back to their old beds of slumber—back again to their old dens of routine—downward again to Laodicean lukewarmness have they stolen. Their goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away. O that the Lord would once again crown the year with His goodness and send us revivals from the right hand of the Most High!

Here it is, O well-beloved flock of my care and love, that I ask your gratitude, mainly and chiefly. My Brothers and Sisters, how the Lord has cheered and comforted our hearts while He has crowned our years with His goodness! Here these ten years have I, as He has enabled me, preached the Gospel among you. We have seen no excitement, no stirrings of an unwarranted fanaticism—no wildfires have been kindled—and yet see how the multitude have listened to the Gospel with unceasing attention. And the surging crowds at yonder doors prove that, as in the days of John the Baptist, so it is now—the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and every man presses into it.

As for conversions, has not the Lord been pleased to give them to us as constantly as the sun rises in his place? Scarcely a sermon without the benediction of the Most High—many of them preached in weakness, which none of you have known but the speaker—preached at times with throbs of heart and partings of anguish, which have made the preacher go home mourning that he ever preached at all. And yet success has come and souls have been saved! And the preacher's heart has been made to sing for joy, for the seed rots not, the furrows are good, the field has been well prepared and where the seed falls it brings forth a hundredfold, to the praise and honor of the Most High.

Brethren, we must not forget this! We might have preached for nothing. We might have plowed the thankless rock and gathered no sheaves. Why then does He bless us? Is it our worthiness? Ah, no. Is it for anything in the preacher or in the hearers? God forbid that we should think such a thing! It has been the Sovereign Mercy of God which has prospered His own Truth among us and shall we not, for this, praise and bless His name?

If we, as a Church, do not continue to be as prayerful and as earnest as we have been, the Lord may justly make us like Shiloh, which He de-

sented, until it became a desolation where not one stone was left upon another. No, I venture to say if we do not progress in earnestness, if you, my Hearers, do not become more than ever devoted to the Lord's cause. If there is not more and more of an earnest missionary spirit stirred up and nurtured among us, we may expect the Lord to turn away from us and find another people who shall more worthily repay His favors.

Who knows but you may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Perhaps the Lord intends, by some of you to save multitudes of souls, to stir up His Churches and to awaken the slumbering spirit of religion. Will you prove unworthy? Will you say, "I pray you have me excused." Will you not rather, in looking back upon the plentiful harvest of souls reaped in this place, consider that you are in debt to God and therefore give to Him the fullest consecration that Believers can offer, because of the crowning mercies which we as a Church receive? "You crown the year with your goodness."

Beloved, one more remark here. We are looking forward to a time when this world's year shall be crowned with God's goodness in the highest and most boundless sense. Centuries are flying and yet the darkness lingers—time grows old and yet the idols sit upon their thrones. Christ does not yet reign. His unsuffering kingdom has not come. The scepters are still in the hands of despots and slaves still fret in iron bonds in vain. In vain, O earth, have you expected brighter days, for still the thick and heavy night rests over your sons. But the day *shall* come—and the signs of its coming are increasing in their brightness—the day *shall* come when the harvest of the world shall be reaped. Christ has not died in vain. He redeemed the world with His blood and the whole world He will have.

From eastern coast to western, Christ must reign. Yet will the Seed of the woman chase the powers of darkness back to their evil habitations. Yet shall He pierce the crooked serpent and cut leviathan that is in the depths of the sea. Yet shall the trumpet ring and the multitudes represented in Him when He rose as the great wave-sheaf rise from the dead from land and sea. And yet, in the day of His appearing, shall the kings of the earth yield up their sovereignty, and all nations shall call Him blessed. Tarry awhile, Beloved, wait yet a little season and when you shall hear the shout, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns," then shall you know that He crowns the year with His goodness.

II. But we must leave this point and turn to the next. PATHS OF FATNESS SHOULD BE WAYS OF DUTY. "And your paths drop fatness." When the conqueror journeys through the nations, his paths drop blood—fire and vapor of smoke are in his tracks and tears and groans and sighs attend him. But where the Lord journeys, His "paths drop fatness." When the kings of old made progress through their dominions, they caused a famine wherever they tarried. For the greedy courtiers who swarmed in their camp devoured all things like locusts and were as greedily ravenous

as palmer-worms and caterpillars. But where the great King of kings journeys, He enriches the land—His “paths drop fatness.”

By a bold Hebrew metaphor—and the Hebrew poetry certainly seems to be the most sublime in its conceptions—the clouds are represented as the chariots of God—“He makes the clouds His chariot.” And as the Lord Jehovah rides upon the heavens in the greatness of His strength and in His excellency on the sky, the rains drop down upon the lands and so the wheel tracks of Jehovah are marked by the fatness which makes glad the earth. Happy, happy are the people who worship such a God, whose coming is ever a coming of goodness and of Divine Grace to His creatures!

We see, then, dear Friends, that in *Providence*, wherever the Lord comes, His “paths drop fatness.” He may sometimes seem to pinch His people and bring them into want, but if there is not a fatness of outward good there will be a fatness of inward mercy. Even the trials which the Lord scatters like coals of fire in His path, do but burn up the weeds and warm the heart of the soil. Do but trust the Lord and appeal to Him in all your straits and difficulties and you shall find that when He comes forth out of His hiding place for your help, His paths shall drop fatness. Your poverty shall be removed and your dejection of spirit shall be cheered.

Beloved, we believe that our text has a fullness of meaning if it is viewed in a spiritual sense—“His paths drop fatness.” *In the use of the means*, the sinner will find God’s paths drop with fatness. Are you hungry and thirsty? Does your soul faint within you? Are you longing to be satisfied with favor? Then, Sinner, wait upon the Lord and hearken diligently unto the message of His Gospel. Be constantly searching the Scriptures, or listening to His Truth as it is proclaimed in your ears. Especially, Sinner, remember that the ways of the Lord are to be seen in the Person of Christ. Go to those hands which are the ways of Divine justice. Go to those feet which are the pathways of infinite love. Explore that side where deep affection dwells, and you shall find fatness of mercy dropping there.

No sinner ever did come to God and was sent away empty. You may attend the means, I grant you, and yet find no comfort, for means are not always God’s paths. But you cannot come to Christ, you cannot rest in Him and be disappointed. Trust in Him at all times and however deep your poverty, it shall have a superabundant supply. “His paths drop fatness.”

You also who are His people, I know that sometimes your souls grow faint. Weary with the wilderness, worn with its cares, torn with its briars, you come up to the House of God and oh, if you come there to see your Master and not merely to join in the routine of service. If you come there seeking after Him and panting for Him as the hart pants for the water brooks, you will find that the most common services—poor though the minister is, and plain the place and simple the people—though the music may have but little charm for the ear of taste and the words of the speaker

may have none of the trappings of oratory, yet sweet to you shall be the worship of God's House, and you shall find that "His paths drop fatness."

So, too, in the use of those precious ordinances—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. You that know the Truth and are made free by it, shall find that those paths drop fatness. I believe many of you are lean and starved because you are not obedient to your Lord's command in Baptism. You know what He bids you do, but you stand back from it. You comprehend your duty and perhaps you say you are Baptists in principle, forgetting that this very principle of yours is that which will condemn you unless you carry it out. In keeping that commandment there is a great reward. And many besides the Ethiopian noble of queen Candace's empire, have gone on their way rejoicing from the baptismal stream.

It is peculiarly so at the Lord's Table. I would not give up the Lord's Supper as a means of Divine Grace for anything that could be devised. To the godless it must ever be a condemnation. But to the saint of God who comes there, desiring to be fed with the flesh of Christ, it becomes a feast, indeed. I do trust, dear Friends, that in a very short time we shall celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. I am convicted that a *weekly* celebration is Scriptural and I see more and more the need of it. I think it is an ordinance to which we ought not to prescribe our own times and our own seasons, where the Word of God is so very express and so plain.

Such was Apostolic custom—search for yourselves and see, indeed, if there were no Apostolic precedent. Methinks the sweetness of the service and the delightful nature of the ordinance might suggest to Christians that it was well to have it frequently. We cannot be satisfied once a month with communion with Christ and methinks we hardly ought to be satisfied with the sign itself so seldom. God's paths drop fatness—happy are they who diligently walk in them.

Beloved, the Lord has other paths besides those of the open means of Grace and these, too, drop fatness. Especially let me mention to you the *path of prayer*. No Believer ever says, "My leanness, my leanness! Woe unto me," who is much in the closet. Starving souls generally live at a distance from the Mercy Seat. Close access to God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the Believer strong—if not happy. The nearest place to the gate of Heaven is the Throne of the heavenly Grace. Much alone and you will have much assurance—little alone with God, your religion will be very shallow. You shall have many doubts and fears and but little of the joy of the Lord.

Let us see to it, Beloved, that since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint. Since no high attainments are required. Since you are not bid to come because you are an advanced saint, but freely invited if you are a saint at all, let us see to it, I say, that we be often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

The like, certainly, I may say of the secret path of *communion*. Oh, the delights which are to be had by that man who has fellowship with Christ! Earth has no words which can set forth the holy mirth of the soul that leans on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it. They live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo. They live outside. They come not into the holy place. They take not up the privilege of priesthood. At a distance they see the sacrifice, but they sit not down with the priest to eat their portion and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. Brother, Sister, sit always under the shadow of Jesus! Come up to that palm tree and take hold of the branches. Let your Beloved be unto you as the apple tree among the trees of the woods, and you shall find a never-failing fruit which shall ever be sweet unto your taste.

I must not forget that the path of *faith*, too, is a path that drops fatness. It is a strange path—few walk in it, even of professors. But they who in temporals and in spirituals have learned to lean on God alone, shall find it a path of fatness. As we spoke the other morning concerning the cedars up there upon that stormy ridge, unwatered by a single river, and yet always green, so shall the Christian be who lives alone upon his God. Wait only upon God. Let your expectation be from Him. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but you shall not want any good thing, for the paths of the Lord shall drop fatness for you.

O my dear Hearers, I would to God the Lord would come into the midst of our Churches and congregations by *His Spirit*—then would His path drop fatness. We have a multitude of complaints at different times of the dullness and lethargy of the Churches. What we need is more of the Presence of the Holy Spirit—more of the holy baptism of His sacred influences. In a very quaint sermon by Matthew Wilkes I remember he said that ministers were like pens—some of them were common goose quills, writing very heavily and often requiring sharpening. Others of them, he said—the college men—were like steel pens and while they could make good fine up strokes, they could not make such heavy down strokes as some of the quills could.

But, he said, neither the one pen nor the other could do anything without ink. And therefore, he said, our ministers want more ink. The ink is the Holy Spirit—"written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." And so Mr. Wilkes suggested that people, instead of finding fault with the minister, would do well to pray, "Lord, give him more ink—give him more ink!" There was much in that prayer, for we need often to be dipped in that ink, or else we cannot make a mark on your hearts. However experienced we may be in saved service, you and I cannot serve God effectually, nor see any power resting on our ministry, except as we get more of the Spirit of the living God.

I would that the Churches laid to heart more and more the real need of the times. We have been building hosts of Chapels lately and raising

thousands of pounds. And because there were revivals and we hear of them every now and then, we have been thinking that we are in a good state. Now I venture to say that all our denominations are in a *bad* state. There is one which I mention with profound respect, whose statistics cause me sincere sorrow. I believe that in that large, wealthy and most earnest body of Christians, the Wesleyans, the clear increase of all the Wesleyan Chapels in the whole metropolis, including a wide district around London, for the whole of this year, is far from equal to the annual increase of this one Church.

If I am not mistaken, the increase throughout the whole of the United Kingdom is about four thousand five hundred, being scarcely two per cent upon the whole body. If our Baptist denomination could have as good and clear statistics, I exceedingly much question whether we should be found, taking the whole of us together, to be in a much better state. The fact is, denominations, when they are poor and despised and live upon God and are all earnest, always increase and have many conversions. But we are getting, all of us, so respectable, building fine Chapels and looking after schools and all sorts of things that the Spirit of God is departing from us—we are losing the Divine anointing and the blessed unction—we are congratulating ourselves upon an enlightenment which does not exist and upon an advancement that is all moonshine.

Look at the journals for last week and see with horror a picture of superstition worthy of the dark ages exhibited in a country village, where, to my knowledge, there is both an Independent and Baptist Chapel and yet the people believe in witchcraft still! Is this, is this the effect of religion? Why, our places of worship do not operate as they should upon the people. They are, in most places, mere clubs where good people spend their Sundays, but the outlying mass is not touched. To a great extent we have lost the old fire, the Divine enthusiasm, the Pentecostal furor, that sacred flame of the first Apostles! We need all these, by God's Grace, if ever we are to startle a dying world.

And in this place, where God has favored us with much of His Presence, we are getting into very much the same condition. How many of you who once were earnest are now as cold as slabs of ice! Some of you do hardly anything for my Lord and Master. Converted, I trust, you are—but where is your first love? Where is the love of your espousals which made some of you talk of Jesus by day and dream of Him by night? O for a return to God's paths—O for a revival once again in the midst of the Churches. Ten years ago we could speak honestly that the Churches were almost dead, but I think they are worse now, because they have cherished the idea that they are not so dead as they were!

We are as bad as ever—with a name to live—whereas we are dead. O that some trumpet voice could wake our sleeping Churches once again! Can you live without souls saved? If you can, I cannot. Can you live with-

out London being enlightened with the light of God? If you can so live, I pray my Master let me die. Can you bear to fight and win no victories? To sow and reap no harvests? Brethren, if you are right, you cannot endure it, but you must endure it till the Lord comes forth. Let us pray, therefore, with might and main, with a holy violence which will take no denial! Let us pray the Lord to come forth out of His hiding place, for His “paths drop fatness,” and there is fatness to be found nowhere else besides.

III. And now I close. The whole subject seems to give us one or two suggestions as to matters of duty. “You crown the year with Your goodness.” One suggestion is this—some of you in this house are strangers to God, you have been living as His enemies and you will probably die so. But what a blessing it would be if a part of the crown of this year should be your conversion! “The harvest is past and the summer is ended and you are not saved.” But oh, what a joy, if this very day you should turn unto God and live! Remember, the way of salvation was freely proclaimed last Sunday morning, it runs in this style—“This is the Commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.”

Soul, if this day you trust in Christ, it shall be your spiritual birthday, it shall be unto you the beginning of day! Emancipated from your chains, delivered from the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, you shall be the Lord’s free man. What do you say? O that the Spirit of God would bring you this day to turn unto Him with full purpose of heart!

Another suggestion. Would not the Lord crown this year with His goodness if He would move some of you to do more for Him than you have ever done before? Cannot you think of some new thing that you have forgotten, but which is in the power of your hands? Can you not do it for Christ today?—some fresh soul you have never conversed with—some fresh means of usefulness you have never attempted?

And lastly, would not it be well for us if the Lord would crown this year with His goodness by making us begin from this day to be more prayerful? Let our Prayer Meetings have more at them and let everyone in his closet pray more for the preacher, pray more for the Church. Let us, everyone of us, give our hearts anew to Christ. What do you say today, to renew your consecration vow? Let us say to Him, “Here, Lord, I give myself away to You once more. You have bought me with Your blood, accept me again. From this good hour I will begin a new life for a second time if Your Spirit is with me. Help me, Lord, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” Amen.

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GOD IN HEAVEN, AND MEN ON THE SEA

NO. 3321

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation; who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.”
Psalm 65:5.***

PLEASE read the 65th Psalm through. May it do you good, whether as landsmen you read of the Lord's settling the furrows, or as sailors you hear of His stilling the noise of the seas. Notice the first two verses—“Praise waits for You,” “O You that hear prayer.” *Holy men of old were accustomed to mix praise and prayer together*—this is a happy mixture! We are not tied to one thing. We spread the sails of prayer and fly the flag of praise. To praise God without praying to Him would be impossible. To pray to God without praising Him would be ungrateful. Praise takes in a cargo of gold for the King of kings—and prayer stokes the fires to make the good ship steam towards the royal city! Brothers, keep to this throughout all the watches—*pray and praise*—and when you need a change, *praise and pray!* Keep the boat of the soul going with these two oars—praise and prayer.

Notice, also, in this Psalm, that when the saints of the olden time offered prayer and praise, *they addressed themselves at once to God—not to saints and angels*. David is not satisfied with talking about God, but he talks to Him, as in our text—“You will answer us, O God of our salvation.” There's nothing like straight sailing—let us go directly to God. We ought not to think of what our fellow men will say of our praises. If they are not musical in the ears of men, it matters little, so long as they are sweet to the Lord our God! When we engage in *public* prayer, it is a pity to be thinking about how our words will sound in the opinion of our Brothers—let us only think of the Lord to whom we are speaking. We can't steer two ways at once. If we make for the Mercy Seat, we need not consider the pews. Let us fix our eyes on the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbor and leave the church on the hill, and the windmill over yonder, for other people to look at. Brothers, look to your Captain and let your mates think what they like! Let us know our port and steer for it—and let

the twin-ship of prayer and praise never take any course but that which carries our whole heart straight to Heaven!

I. First, then, dear Friends, let us consider WHAT THE LORD IS TO US. He is the “God of our salvation.”

It is clear from this that *we all need salvation*. If it were not clear in this text, we could not doubt it, for the evidence surrounds us on every side. We have, sadly, sufficient proof of our lost estate. Human nature is waterlogged and ready to sink—and in God, alone, is our hope.

The text tells us where salvation is, namely, in God. God is the God of our salvation. You have neither right ideas of yourself, nor right ideas of God unless you see that by nature you have need of being saved from sin—saved by nothing less than a Divine hand! The greatest saint on earth is still a sinner. Let him have safely sailed on the sea of life for 60 years, he will be on the rocks before the morning watch unless the Lord saves him. The most intelligent man and the man of longest experience, still needs saving. The oldness of a ship does not increase its seaworthiness. Ask at Lloyd’s if a ship is any safer because it has been afloat more than 60 years. No man that lives is safe from rocks, quicksands and tempests, or even from foundering at sea unless the Lord God shall be always the God of his salvation! We have all need to ask for salvation from the *guilt* of sin, the *power* of sin and the *curse* of sin. And it should be our great joy that the Lord graciously condescends to provide all this for us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior!

It is this salvation which brings God to us and us to God. I do not think that very many find God by what they see in Nature. Men see the works of God, but they do not see God in His works. There is such a thing, I suppose, as going “from Nature up to Nature’s God,” but it is a hard climb for cripples, like the most of us! To lift your foot even from the top of the highest mountain to the lowest step of the Throne of God is a tremendous effort. Human nature does not care for such an upward climb. The ready way to God, by which tens of thousands have come to Him, is by Jesus Christ our Savior. No man ever comes to God except by Jesus, who is the way of salvation. There may be other channels, but this is the only navigable one. Our boats draw too much water to get to God along the shallow straits of human learning. We shall be wise to keep to the deep waters of redeeming love, for by this channel God came to us. The glorious God came here to earth in the Person of His Son, that He might reconcile us to Himself and so save us. Where there is depth enough for God to come to man, there is a fair sea-way for man to come to God! Remember that the Lord Jesus came for our salvation. “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” Salvation brought God to us and salvation must bring us to God, or else we shall be castaways. Blessed forever be our

gracious and glorious God, for in every man that is saved, He is the God of his salvation in Christ Jesus!

The salvation that we get is entirely from God. If you ever hear of salvation that does not come from God, depend upon it, it is not seaworthy, but will turn out to be one of those worm-eaten coffin ships! I would not trust a dog on board of it. If I were to preach a merely human salvation to you, it would not be worth your while to listen to me. “Salvation is of the Lord” is the saying of Jonah, from the depths of the sea! This salvation began in God’s everlasting purpose, in His sacred Covenant, in His Divine choice of His people. It is carried out by the life and death of our Savior. It is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, by whom we are quickened, illuminated, converted and brought to faith in Jesus. Salvation is of the Lord, from stem to stern, from truck to keel. There is not a bit of rope on board, nor even a spar up aloft which is of man’s merit or working. Christ is the A, and He is the Z of the salvation alphabet! He is not only the helper of our salvation, but the God of it, the Maker of it, the All-in-All of it! Have any of you a salvation which you have manufactured for yourselves? Then drop it overboard and row away from it, as fast as you can, lest it should be a torpedo to work your ruin. The only salvation that can redeem from Hell is a salvation which comes from Heaven! Eternal salvation must come from an eternal God. Salvation that makes you a new creature must be the work of Him who sits upon the Throne of God and makes all things new!

It is a remarkable thing that *in this salvation there is a strange mixture of the terrible and the gracious.* “By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation.” In the death of our Lord Jesus we see the salvation of God—in this the Lord is terrible against sin, but most tender to the sinner. God did not put up the sword of His Justice, for He was bound to use it. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” To do right He must punish sin. And, oh, how terrible it is to view our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, bowing His head to death in the sinner’s place and bearing in His own innocent Person the wrath of God an account of sin! Our children’s hymn puts the Truth of God exactly—

***“He saw how wicked men had been,
And knew that God must punish sin
So, out of pity, Jesus said
He’d bear the punishment instead.”***

In that verse, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, the Lord has perfected praise! It was indeed a display of terrible things in righteousness when the perfect Son of God was made to sweat great drops of blood and to be in an agony in Gethsemane. Terrible things in righteousness were manifest when He was scourged, spit upon and nailed to a tree and made to die without the comfort of His Father’s Presence, crying in anguish, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Ah, Friends, when

the Father's best Beloved bore those unknown sufferings by which the honor of the Divine Government was maintained, it was a very terrible day! Not even the pains of the lost are more terrible for a tender and devout mind to think upon, than our Lord's being made a curse for us when He was hanged upon the tree. We seek salvation—the Lord Jehovah answers us and bids us behold it in the blood of His Only-Begotten Son—"By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God."

So, also, when God came to deal with us by His Spirit, He mixed the terror with the Grace. If you have been praying to God to save you, then if He has answered you, you have had a vision of terrible things. To see your guilt, your present ruin and your future doom, is to be made to tremble terribly. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to our vessel, walking on the sea, He finds us in an awful storm. The sails are torn to ribbons, and every timber groans. We see ourselves wrecked by Nature before we see ourselves saved by Grace! Conviction of sin does not come to every sinner with the same degree of force, but to some of us, when we were under the bondage of the Law, neither sun nor moon appeared, the sea worked and was tempestuous and all hope that we should be saved was taken away from us! We reeled to and fro and staggered like drunken men. We were at our wits' ends—we did not know then that the God of our salvation has His way in the whirlwind! The Lord comes to us with a drawn sword before He comes with a silver scepter! He designs to make us give up self-righteousness and self-confidence—and come and lay hold on Christ, to be our All-in-All. Men won't take to the lifeboat of salvation while they think their own craft can be kept afloat. But when their vessel is settling down at the head, they are glad to see the lifeboat near!

The God of our salvation has revealed Himself to many of us, not as One who winks at sin, but as a consuming fire. In these days a God is preached who is not in the Bible, nor yet on the sea. Our God is not the new god of proud philosophers, but the God of the olden times! We know that the true God is just, as well as gracious, and will by no means allow His Laws to be despised. You that go down to the sea in ships, you know that the God of the Sea is terrible upon the roaring billows, when the sea runs mountains high! He is tender, kind and loving, but oh, how terrible when He puts on His dark robes of tempest!

He sets the heavens on a blaze and His terrible voice is heard above the roaring of the sea. The elements are in confusion. Deep calls unto deep, the heavens clasp hands with the ocean and the largest vessel seems like a cockle-shell, soon to sink and no more to be seen! He is a dreadful God, this God of ours! There is none like He in power and justice. Well may the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" This makes us feel that He can smite with iron hands when once He comes forth to deal with sin. Behold the Red Sea! See how the adversaries of Jehovah sank to the bottom as a stone! He is terrible out of His

holy places. He is the God of Heaven, but a pit is dug for the wicked. The Lord makes His saved ones to know Him as He is—not as He is made out to be by those who would seem to be wiser than the Scriptures!

I trust that many of you can say of the Lord, “He is the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is my hope and my joy.” He is glorious in holiness and terrible in righteousness—and I love Him all the more because He hates iniquity and will not endure evil!

The difficulty with most men is that they will not have God to be their Savior—they want to save themselves. Every man thinks he can be his own pilot to the port of Glory. But what can we do? What merit, what wisdom? What strength have we? We are proud fools and deceive ourselves! I have heard a story of a man on board a vessel which was coming home from the other side of the world. He was very conceited and interfered with everything. Every now and then a captain does get such a man on board. He was always grumbling and making trouble. The ship met with rough weather and this meddlesome gentleman picked up the notion that things were in a very bad way and the ship might go down. He was getting into everybody’s way and so the captain, calling him to one side, told him that it was highly important that he should keep very quiet for the next hour or two and that he should hold fast a certain rope to which he pointed out to him. Nobody could tell what might depend on his holding on to that rope and saying nothing to anybody! Our noisy friend felt himself to be a person of consequence, put his feet down, set his teeth together and in a very determined manner stuck to his rope! If anybody came along, instead of talking, as he was used to do, he held his tongue. Just as you must not speak to the man at the wheel, so he felt that no one was allowed to speak to him. Did not the safety of the ship depend upon his being quiet and holding tightly to that rope? He kept his post with due gravity till the wind dropped—and then he did not say much—for his sense of merit made him modest. He waited patiently for the passengers to present him with a piece of plate for having saved the ship. He felt, at any rate, that deep gratitude was due to him for his wonderful exertions. It was about the most difficult thing he had ever done in his life, for he had held his tongue for hours and thus made a martyr of himself to save them all! As nobody thanked him, he began to hint at the importance of the service he had rendered. But they did not seem to see it, for, you know, people will not always see a thing that is very plain. At last he stated his case more fully and became so exacting that the captain had to tell him that he had only given him that bit of rope to hold just to keep him quiet and that, really, he had not contributed, in the least degree, to the safety of the vessel! That is just what I feel inclined to do with certain vastly important persons who think they can do wonders in the things of God! If you will keep from boasting and

stand out of the Lord's way, that is as much as I hope for from you. And if the Lord leads you to trust yourself in Jesus' hands, then all will be safe enough! With God to save us, what is there for us to do but to trust and not to be afraid?

II. I have set forth what God is to us. Now let us see WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US. Don't doubt it, the Lord has an open ear to hear His people's prayers.

He will answer us. This shows that *we must all pray*. Every believing man in the world must pray! And we shall never get into such a state of Grace that we have no need to pray.

But what do we pray for? Well, according to the text, one of the most important things is to *pray against sin*. "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, You shall purge them away." Do we not need to pray daily for cleansing? This must be the prayer of the man who is seeking the Lord for the first time. Does the leak of sin gain upon you? Are the pirates of temptation all around you so that you cannot get away from them? Are you compelled to say, "Iniquities prevail against me"? Cry to the Lord Jesus to come to the rescue! A word from Him will stop the leak and drive the demons back when they are boarding you. Pray to Him at once!

Do I address a backslider? Did you once acknowledge the name of Christ? Have you taken down the old flag? Are you now trading under other colors? Are you sorry it is so? Do iniquities prevail against you? Ah, then come to the Lord again! Ask Him to come and take possession of you. The pirates are coming board, now, and you cannot get rid of them, but as for your iniquities, He can purge them away." He can sweep the deck of them!

If you have long been a Christian and have not backslidden, you will have, as you grow in Grace, more and more a sense of the sin that dwells in you. You will be crying out every day, "Lord, keep me, for I shall perish utterly, even now, after all my experience, unless You preserve me from my inbred sin and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil." Cry to God tonight in that fashion. Ask to be steered clear of all evil and to be presented faultless. When we are close in shore we need a pilot more than ever. We shall be wrecked in the river's mouth unless the Lord preserves us! Iniquities will prevail unless Omnipotent Grace prevails. In this direction we shall always need to cry mightily unto the Preserver of men.

We also pray *for nearer fellowship with God*. Just let me read you the next words. "Blessed is the man whom You choose and cause to approach unto You." Lord, help me to approach You, so as to know Your love and love You in return. Let us go on reading the record—"That He may dwell in your courts." Lord, help me to be one of Your court and always to live in Your Presence.

“We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy Temple.” Do you not long for that satisfaction? Is there not in your hearts, my beloved Brothers, a great desire to get nearer to God and to abide in His house?

Oh, to have a continual enjoyment of the favor of God! May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! Blessed be the name of the Lord our God! He will hear and answer that prayer! As He will help you to conquer sin, so will He also help you to grow in Divine Grace. There is no reason why we should not be far happier and far holier than we are. If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. It is not that there is no wind, but we do not spread enough sail. If you do not enter into the deep things of God with understanding, and if you do not enjoy them with delight, you must blame yourselves. You have not, because you ask not, or because you ask amiss. If a man will not take the tide while it flows, it will be his own fault if the ebb bears him away from the harbor. If we pray, God will answer.

But, remember, if we pray to be delivered from sin, and to be brought nearer to the Lord, *He may answer us by terrible things in righteousness.* I would like to whisper these words in the ears of all praying men. Often you know not what you ask and, perhaps, if you really knew how God would answer you, you would not pray as you now do! You were praying the other day that God would sanctify you—and now you see more of the workings of evil in your nature than ever before! Crosses and losses have come upon you thick and threefold! Temptations and evil thoughts have beset you more fiercely than ever and you are saying, “Lord, is this the answer to my prayer?” Yes, by terrible things in righteousness He is answering you! The sheep desires to be brought near to the shepherd and the shepherd sends his black dog to fetch it home. Our trials and troubles, afflictions and adversities, are among the best medicines of our Great Physician. A trial has been love’s reply to earnest desire. God’s wisdom often chooses to give us a head wind to prevent our rushing upon sunken rocks.

Dear Friends, *God will answer you surely, though He answers you strangely!* He answers roughly, but rightly. The help of no other can suffice you, but if you cry to God you shall find His strength to be all-sufficient, both for crushing sin and for growth in Grace. See what the Lord has been doing for the earth during the last few weeks of spring! Only a few weeks ago we went out of doors and saw nothing but the earth wrapped in a winding-sheet of snow, or, perhaps, the dull, black ground soaking in rain. Where were the myriads of leaves that now clothe the trees? And where the kingcups and daisies which bedeck the meadows and make them bright as cloth of gold? Where was all this wealth of flowers? Where all this music of song birds? God came! He

breathed in pity on the frozen brooks and loosed the waters from their icy chains. He unbound the iron bonds of winter. He made the world look up and laugh with flowers. Brothers, He will do the same with us! Though this may be the winter of our soul's grief and it may be necessary that we should endure it for a little while longer, yet He will answer us—and after an interval of terrible storm He will bless us with rest and joy!

III. The third point is this—WHAT THE LORD IS TO “THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.” He is “the confidence of the ends of the earth.” All men have a confidence and they are wise who place all their confidence in God!

Who are “the ends of the earth”? They may be those who live in the extremes of climate—the dwellers at the poles and at the equator. These are so tried by cold and by heat that one would think they would hardly live in such regions if they did not confide in God. Those who live at the ends of the earth *are farthest off*. God is worthy to be the confidence of those who are farthest off from His Church, from His Gospel, from hope, from anything that is good and from God, Himself. This sermon may, one of these days, reach somebody who will say to himself, “I think that I am the farthest off from God of anybody that ever lived. I have been guilty of cursing and swearing and I have committed all manner of vice and so I have gone as far away from God and the very name of religion as it is possible for a man to go.” Friend, our God is worthy to be *your* confidence, even yours! You are permitted to put your trust in Him and find salvation in Him, even in His Son, Jesus Christ, who cries “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

The ends of the earth may mean, also, *those that are least known*. Are there not men scattered abroad of whom nobody knows anything? They do not, themselves, know who their father and mother were and nobody cares to acknowledge them. Nobody calls them brother, or knows where they came from. They wish to be forgotten. They would not like to have their stories told. Their character is such that they can get on better without it than with it. Well but, Jesus Christ is worthy to be the confidence of those who are least known. They are known to Him! He knows their past and their present! Oh, that sinners who are far off in that way, and least known, would come and put their trust in Him!

The ends of the earth *are the parts that are least thought of*. We dart a thought towards France with its Exhibition. We think of Germany and its vast army. We think of the United States and the many there of our kith and kin. These lie within the pale of our thought and consideration, but who cares for Dahomey or Nova, Zembla? Of the ends of the earth no one thinks! Do I speak to one who has been saying, “No man cares for my soul”? Do they quite pass you by? Are you like a man on a raft who has seen many a vessel go by, but cannot manage to make anyone see him and come to his rescue? Put your trust in the Lord, you who are derelict

and drifting fast to destruction, for, “He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth.” Looking to God when you have no one else to look to, you will find in Him a true helper!

The ends of the earth may also mean *the most tried*. Where the cold is most severe, or where the dog-star burns most furiously, there we have the ends of the earth. And you who are most poor or most sick, or who have least of ability and talent—you are those who should make God your confidence, for He delights to be the strength of the weak, the fullness of the empty! God’s Grace is the hospital for sick souls—come and enter it! He lifts the poor from the dunghill to set him among princes. Driven to your wits’ end, brought down to life’s dregs, take the Lord for your confidence and it shall be well with you!

“The ends of the earth.” Well, they are *the hardest to reach*. We have around us men and women who are as hard to get at as the North Pole. We do not know how to speak to them so that they will understand us, for they are so ignorant. We would, if we could, do them good, but they are so depraved that we are half afraid that they will do us harm! It may be they are so proud and conceited that we can hardly get a good word in edge ways with them. Sailors, you must have met with fellows to whom you give a wide berth. You never felt inclined to take them on board. These ships are too far gone to be towed into harbor and you clear out, lest when they sink you should be sucked down with them! Yet the Lord is ready to help even these! Those whom no man can pity and no man can help, God can love and save! A mortal arm is too short to reach these shipwrecked souls. Cast away on an iron-bound coast, there is no hope for them but in the Lord of Salvation—but in Him they may trust, for, “He is the confidence of the ends of the earth.” Ho, my comrades, when you are at your worst, God is still at His best! When you are all misery, He is all mercy! When you are at “the ends of the earth,” you may be at the beginnings of Heaven!

IV. I shall not weary you, I trust, for I have come to the last point, which is this—WHAT IS GOD TO SEAFARING MEN? What should He be to sailors? He is the confidence of all them that are “afar off upon the sea.”

In the life of a seafaring man we have a picture of *the voyage of faith*. Hundreds of years ago, when men went to sea at all, their boats kept always within sight of shore. Your Greek or Roman mariner might be quite a master of his galley, but he could not bear to lose sight of a headland which he knew, for he had no compass and knew little or nothing of astronomical observations. Here and there a lighthouse might be placed, but it would be regarded as a wonder. But at this day a ship may not sight land for a month and yet its position on the chart will be as certain as your position in the pew! The vessel will be steered entirely by observations of the heavenly bodies and by chart and compass—and yet at the

end of thirty days it will reach a point which was never within sight and reach it as accurately as if it had been running on a tram rail instead of sailing over the pathless ocean! Its way is as certain as if it had traversed a railway from port to port! Such is the life of a Christian—the life of faith. We see not spiritual things, but yet we steer for them with absolute certainty! We ought not to wish to see, for, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” We take our bearings by the things in the heavens. We are guided by the Word of God, which is our chart, and by the witness of the blessed Spirit within, which is our compass! We see Him who is invisible and we seek a Heaven full of “things not seen as yet.” Glory be to God, we shall reach the harbor as sure as a bullet goes to the mark! We are making direct tracks for the Kingdom of God! We fly to Heaven by a bee line even when we cannot see our way! Don’t shift a point, Brothers. As the Captain of your salvation has set the helm, so let it remain. Trusting in God, we shall come to our desired haven in due time and shall not miss our way! We need not fear shipwreck, for He that taught us to sail the spiritual sea will guide us safely till we come to the Glory Land!

Those that are “afar off upon the sea” are *on an unstable element*, but God is their confidence. They are never quiet, the boat is always rocking or rolling from side to side. On the sea they have no continuing city. Is it not so with us? We also dwell upon an unstable element. We talk of the solid earth, but it is only so in contrast with the waves. All things beneath the moon are changing. When I went to my annual resting place in Mentone, after the earthquake, I felt a delight in realizing that everything around me was unsubstantial. I looked at the churches and the houses which had tumbled down, and I said to myself, “Now I feel how unstable the earth is.” I went up and down stairs, wondering that the house did not move—regarding it all as likely to give way. Some such impression would be good for us all to carry daily about with us. We live in a world which passes away! This life is made up of shadows—substance lies elsewhere! The things which are seen are temporal. You have dreamed yourselves into the belief that you live in a solid, substantial world, but it is only a dream, for the world passes away! The elements which make up our life are no more to be depended upon than the waters of the sea! What is our life but a vapor? What does it depend upon, but air?—the breath of our nostrils! Remember, you may die at any moment. Death may board you before the next watch. Oh, to live like a man at sea! He has loosed his hold from all things and feels himself committed to an unstable element upon whose calm condition he cannot depend, for at any moment a storm may bear him away. The godly sailor’s confidence is in God. In God he has a foundation that cannot be moved! God is the mariner’s *terra firma* and He is ours! All else is fickle, but God is Immutable!

Next, they that are upon the sea are *liable to great dangers*. They cannot tell at any time that there may not come up from the North a howling

blast, or from the South a tremendous cyclone. When above them all is clear blue, save “a cloud the size of a man’s hand,” they know that within an hour the Heaven may gather blackness and the sea, which now sleeps in calm, may rage in fury. A sailor’s life makes him see the dangers which surround him, but you and I know that we also live in a world where tempests of trial may be upon us in a moment. When I go home after a time of spiritual enjoyment and feel supremely happy, I say to myself, “I may expect trying news. I cannot be long at ease.” In fact, one gets in this world to be afraid of too profound a calm, lest at the back of it should lurk a terrible tempest. Our sign is “The Checkers,” and close to the white square lies the black. At sea we may reckon upon all sorts of weathers—we must, therefore, keep the boat trim and never neglect to set the helm and keep the watch wide awake. The sailor must keep his eyes open, for rocks and quicksands lies below, and hurricanes and cyclones lurk above. If he is a Christian, his confidence is in his God and his watchfulness is towards the world. O true Believer, let your confidence be in God, whether on sea, or shore! Say, “O God, my heart is fixed; my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise.” What if there should be the devil, himself, let loose upon us, as upon Job of old? Let us still trust in the Lord! When God gives the devil rope enough, he will soon be down upon us, but Brothers, we need not fear him, for Christ is the Master of the devil and He can pull him up short when he comes rushing out to attack us! Let us not be afraid. He that is the Confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea shall be our Confidence in a world of storms!

But the men on the sea also *are familiar with trouble*. It is not only liability to storm, but the storm does break over them. I speak to many who have weathered no end of tempests. In your voyages across the mighty deep, you have found it no child’s play to be tossed up and down like a ball in the hand of the storm. You have even been floating on the angry waves, clinging to a hen-coop, or lashed to the rigging. I do not envy you your trying experience but, spiritually, we drink from the same cup, for we, too, have had our rough passages and have been well-near cast away!

You do not want to see any more of such nights as you can remember, when sea and sky were blended in dread confusion—neither do I wish to see those months in which to me, also, the winds were contrary—what a mercy in such seasons to have confidence in God! What is to be done if this fails us? But while God is with us it does not matter whether we live or die. We shall be with the Lord if we die, and if we live, the Lord will be with us!

Beloved Friends, those that go down to the sea in ships *soon find out their own weakness*. A man looks like a man when he is on shore, or in command of a fine boat sailing along merrily before the wind, but in a great storm what a poor creature a man is! There he goes—yonder wave

has swept him from the deck as if he were a spar. You hear one plaintive cry and it is all over with him. The hungry deep thinks nothing of so small a mouthful! The wind still howls and the waves dance with a horrid glee. If not thus drowned, the strong man is often rendered useless as to helping others. He cannot stir, for he could not keep his footing. He needs to be lashed to the rigging or he will be washed away. The bravest, the wisest, the strongest man is just nothing at all in the day of storm. Then the man almost envies the seabird that is tossed “up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billow’s crown” because it is always safe and comes up from the spray as fresh as ever! Dear Friends, you and I are often brought into conditions in which we fear that we are not worth half as much as the sea-swallows. We have no strength left at all—we are less than nothing and vanity. Oh, then, let God be our Confidence!

I exhort all Believers here to have more confidence in God than in all besides. Believe in the Lord a thousand fathoms deep. You will never believe too much nor too well of God. If friends forsake, if all means of comfort fail, let your confidence be so thoroughly in God that such things make no difference to you! It is a grand thing to get off the stocks and really float on the main sea. It is glorious to have an anchor in the skies and to hold to that, alone, when everything else is dragging and the earth itself is dissolved! A sailor is often brought to where, if God does not help him, he will be swallowed up—and you and I are always in the same condition. God is our All and we rest in Him, but apart from Him we are eternally wrecked!

God bless you, my shipmates! We are not yet come to the Pacific Seas—we are still rounding the Cape of Storms, but another name for it is the Cape of Good Hope! With God for our confidence we are not afraid. We shall all meet around the flagship of our Great Captain in the Fair Havens above. We are lying in these roads tonight very near each other, but may never cross each other’s track again on this life’s voyage. Meet me in the Islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter, where the sun shall go no more down forever! The Lord Jesus steer you there! Amen.

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

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

THE CHURCH'S PROBATION

NO. 2967

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1905.

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“You, O God, have tested us.”
Psalm 66:10.

THE Psalmist, who spoke these words in his song, told forth the experience of the godly in all generations. In the Patriarchal age, when Abraham was called to leave his kindred and go forth from Ur of the Chaldees, he was constrained to sojourn as a stranger among a people that he knew not, told to wait with patience for a son whom God would give him in his old age and, at length, commanded to take that son to the top of a mountain and offer him as a sacrifice! He might well say, “You, O God, have tested us.” Isaac could say the same when he tabernacled in the Land of Promise, having not so much as a foot of it that he could call his own except his father’s sepulcher. Jacob learned the same stanza when he was tested in Laban’s household, when he wrestled with God in Peniel and triumphed over the Angel at Jabbok! This he knew when he went down into Egypt and, dying, blessed the sons of Joseph. All the Patriarchs, as they fell asleep, could say, “You, O God, have tested us.” And this was the song of the Church during her sojourn in Egypt when she was lying among the pots—and during her wanderings in the wilderness when she passed through a desert land by a way which she had not traversed before. And this, too, was the voice of the Church under the conduct of Joshua when Israel came through Jordan and began to defy the hosts of the Canaanites—when they drew the sword against mighty adversaries who dwelt in cities fenced with high walls, gates and bars and came forth to battle in chariots that had scythes of iron—“You, O God, have tested us.” With such a word as this in their mouths, the judges fell asleep after they had avenged Israel and done mighty deeds for the Lord of Hosts! This David could well say, for he had seen affliction. This the kings who walked in his steps and this the Prophets who spoke in God’s name might all have said, “You, O God, have tested us.”

And God’s dear Son, the Captain of our salvation, was, Himself, tested and tested in all things, too! He was thrust into the hottest part of the glowing coals and tested as you and I have never been tested—tested to such an extent as our heart has not conceived! And among the professed followers of Jesus, all the sons of God are witnesses to this Truth, “You, O God, have tested us”—whether they were tested in dungeons where

they lay victims of damp and mildew, or on racks where every bone was dislocated and every muscle snapped—or at the stake where they mounted in chariots of fire to Heaven, or on the rocks where they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—in all these temptations and trials God tested them! And even to this day, though by less severe methods, yet by other tests, as I shall have to show, the Church has still the same song to sing and each dying saint must still subscribe his name to the long list. Yes, and every bright spirit around the Throne of God, in looking back upon his experience on earth, will have to swell the great chorus, “You, O God, have tested us.” There is not an ingot of silver in Heaven’s treasury that has not been in the furnace on earth and been purified seven times! There is not a gem of purest serene ray which that Divine Jeweler has not exposed to every sort of test! There is not an atom of gold in the Redeemer’s crown which has not been molten among the hottest coals so as to rid it of its alloy! It is universal to every child of God—if you are a servant of the Lord, you must be tested—you shall never enter Heaven unproved! You must be tested in the fire—the test, the assaying must take place upon every one of us. Nor do I think we ought to shun it. Perhaps it may happen that in the feeble words I speak tonight, some reason may be given which shall reconcile your hearts to the sternness of the test and even make you kiss the hand of the Refiner when He puts you into the fire!

I. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU, O GOD, HAVE TESTED IN YOUR PEOPLE?

I think we may answer, *He has tested everything*. If we have anything that has not been tested, it either is to be tested or else it is so bad that it is not worth testing. Everything we have that God has given us will have to be tested. There is not a grain of Grace that will escape the probation—He is sure, in some way or other, to test and exercise it. We have no manna to lay in the cupboard to breed worms—the manna is given us to eat. The Rock that follows us with its refreshing streams flows that we may drink—when we shall cease to thirst, the river will cease to flow—we only have Grace given to us that it may be tested.

I think we can say, looking back upon our lives, those of us who are in Christ Jesus, that *the Lord has tested our sincerity*. Ah, how many put on the harness when we first put it on—and where are they now? In our little Gospel experience, how many have we seen who have turned their backs in the day of battle? Yes, the young knights went out gaily enough to the field—but say nothing about their return! “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,” how their shields were broken, their lances splintered and their plumes trailed in the mire! When any turn from Zion’s way, our best method of using their apostasy is as Cowper used it, for self-examination—

***“When any turn from Zion’s way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
‘Will you forsake Me too?’”***

But, up to this time, one way in which God has tested our sincerity has been to keep our leaf green and, through Divine Grace, that sincerity has kept its hold, while some who, in the first flush of religious excitement, promised well for Heaven, afterwards withered and faded. While many who were like the fair blossoms of the spring upon the trees were blown down by the East wind, or fell with a shower on the ground, we have been left, by Divine Grace, to bring forth some little fruit, though not as much as we could desire! O Brothers and Sisters, it is a great mercy when God tests our sincerity, if, notwithstanding the defection of man and the fickleness and instability of our own hearts, we are able to say, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

It is a privilege to have our sincerity tested, but it is one which must be purchased at a sharp cost, for we cannot know our sincerity for God without being put where we are much tempted and troubled. I believe many young people think they have the Grace of God in their hearts, who, if they were really put in temptation's way, would soon discover that it is only a sort of hereditary profession and not the true Grace of God they possess. I have a great suspicion about buying hothouse flowers in the street. All summer long you see people with their barrows with the finest flowers you ever saw, but most of them have been forced to bloom. And if you take them home and put them in your garden, on the first cold day they look pale and begin to droop, for they cannot bear the change of climate because they are forced. So I cannot doubt that there are many who join Christian Churches who have been forced—they have been in the hothouse of godliness in association with the saints—and when they are put away from Christian association, where is their piety? Where is their religion? Some of you, I know, have had to suffer this chilling trial. You have been shut up among blasphemers. You have been made to live among the ungodly and profane, or you have had temptations from the polite and the godless—yet, thanks be to God, you have been enabled to retain your hold on Christ! You can say, with the Psalmist, "You, O God, have tested us." And if you are sincere, mark you, as surely as ever you have true godliness, it must and will be put to the test!

And God has also tested *our vows of fidelity*. Perhaps the fewer vows we make, the better, but when we do make them, how jealous should we be to keep them! What a mass of vows we once made when our blood was hot with the novelty of our new discovery of the beauty of religion! We think we will do we know not what! Our love laughs at impossibilities! We could leap like Curtius into the chasm and sacrifice ourselves for Jesus! Would to God that we were always in that frame of mind! But then we get to promising what we will do if we are put in certain positions—and our promissory notes are not written on stamped paper—they are only written on some common stuff of our own. And we put our signature, but still we dishonor the note when it comes due! We never pay our vows. God did not prompt us to the vow, but our own self-confidence and, therefore, it gets broken. When I look back upon what you and I

promised we would do when we first began the Heavenly warfare, and how little we have really done, I think we can mournfully say, "O Lord, You have tested us." Some people talk about the older Christians as being so dull and so lifeless, but let me put it to yourselves, how much better are you? And I, sometimes, in the early days of my preaching, was known to speak of the cool, freezing lips of some ministers and of the dilatory way in which they discharged their duties—but I have had, in looking at my text, to say of myself, "Lord, You have tested me." And some of these vows that I made—to wit, how I would be the pillar of fire in His cause, and lead the souls of men, and win them to the foot of the Cross—how signally have they been broken, for, "You, O Lord, have tested us." All those fine visions, like potters' vessels when smitten with a rod of iron, have been broken into vile potsherds!

And how the Lord has been pleased, dear Friends, to test *our professions and pretensions to eminence!* Do you recollect—with some of you, it will not be very difficult to look back, certainly not with me—do you remember how you thought, when first you knew the Lord, how different you would be from that nervous Mrs. Much-Afraid? You went to see her when you were first converted and sat down and talked with her. And as you came away, you said, "That woman is a bag of nerves! If ever I live to her age, you will not find me so desponding." You have been tested since then and how has it been with you? Do you remember how, when you came one evening from a Prayer Meeting, when some friend had prayed so long and so drearily, you said, "Please God, if ever I have the privilege of praying aloud at a Prayer Meeting, there shall always be life and earnestness in my prayer"? How has it been with you, Brother? I question whether any man ever attained to the eminence in piety that he once marked out for himself and whether we have not all had occasion to eat our words. Have I not said many things about what I would do if I was in somebody else's place—and what I am sure I would do if I had that man's ability and that man's opportunity? We used to brag about the lofty heights which we would climb and the mighty summits on which we would stand—and here we are, still creeping along in the valley! Do not make this confession to lull your conscience, or to comfort yourselves for being in the lowlands. We ought to be on the mountains—we ought to be all we hoped to have been—it is wrong in us not to have gained what we longed for. We must cleanse ourselves for this. Oh, how it ought to humble us to think how God has tested us and brought us down!

My pastoral experience, which, if you call it short, has, nevertheless, been very, very broad and bears witness to this. Whenever I have seen a Christian talking large things about his loftiness in Grace and his attainments, I have always seen him, sooner or later, brought as low as the dust. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have said that they never had a doubt of their acceptance—and I have thanked God for them and have hoped they never might—but I have seen some of them in such a condition as I pray I never may be in. I believe there are such

things in the world, to this day, as those bullocks that pushed with side and with shoulder, and that fouled the waters with their feet where the trembling ones came to drink. Such professors as those will find that the Lord will bring them down before long. Those big saints will one day be glad enough to creep into a mouse hole and feel themselves thrice happy if they are permitted to be numbered among the meanest of the Lord's people. As surely as we ever make these high pretensions to great things, we shall be brought down and we shall have to cry, "O Lord, we did exalt ourselves, we did promise high and great things, but you, O Lord, have tested us. And when it came to the test *results*, what insignificant, what worthless, what despicable worms we turned out to be!"

But, Beloved, we have not only been tested in our sincerity, and in our vows, and in our lofty pretensions, but *have we not also been tested in our strength?* How strong we are sometimes! As my friend, Will Richardson, who, though he is a poor laboring man, is a Divine I like to quote just as some people would quote St. Augustine, said to me one day, "Brother Spurgeon, if you and I ever get one inch above the ground, we get that one inch too high and the Lord will bring us down again." How true that is! And the old man said, "O Sir, you know, in winter time, I feel as if I could do such a deal of mowing, and as if I could reap the fields at such a rate! But when the hot summer comes on, poor old Will wipes the sweat from his brow and he thinks it is hard work, reaping, after all, and he will be very glad when he can get home and lie down, for he is getting to be an old man. O Sir," he said, "If I could reap in the summer as I think I can in the winter, then I should do all right."

And is not that the way with us? When there is no trial to bear, we can do all things, or can bear all sufferings! When there are no duties to be performed, then our strength runs over and we have too much and some to give to our neighbors! But when we get into the work and the struggle, and begin to reap and to mow, the sweat of weariness is such that we long to be away from it! Our strength, when tested, is found to be less than nothing and vanity! "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You"—the man who can sing with the Psalmist, "All my springs are in You."

You know, dear Friends, many streams that run in winter become dry in summer, but they tell us that those wells that sap the mainsprings *never* get dry. How happy is the Believer who has sapped the mainspring, who has got deep enough down in his faith and confidence in God not to be dependent on the land springs and the upper waters, but has got down to the mainspring, for then weeks of drought may be followed up by months without rain, but still his soul shall go on bubbling up and his fountain shall always flow!

Moreover, *the Lord has tested our faith as well as our strength.* Our faith is indeed our real strength because our faith is that by which we lay hold upon God's arm. Has not your faith been tested, Brother? An untried faith is no faith. At least, I mean if a man has had faith for some considerable length of time and that faith has not been tested, I question whether it ever came from God. I may truly say of faith what the old

naturalists used to falsely say of the salamander—that it lives in the fire. The natural element of faith is fire—it never gets on well unless it has some fire to try it. What do you think faith is given us for unless it is to be tested? Did you ever know a man build a house—and then shut it up and let no one live in it? Houses are built to be inhabited! So God does not give anything without a design. Do you know a man who keeps his wheat year after year and never puts it through the mill? Let me tell you that my God puts all His wheat through the mill—and you must all go between the big stones and you must have your crushing! You will never come out fit to be offered unto the Lord unless you have been between the stones—there must be “the trial of your faith.” We know that our friends in Australia, when they are panning gold, stand up to their waists in water, shaking the earth to and fro to get the golden grains out of it. And you and I, like spades full of earth, must be shaken to and fro that the earth may run away and that the pure gold may remain. Your faith is much more precious than gold, so it also must be tested in the fire. You, Mr. Greatheart, must prepare for a great many battles. And you, “Valiant-for-Truth,” depend upon it, you will have to fight until your arm bleeds and your sword grows to your hand, cemented with your own blood! “Father Honest,” there is warfare for you before you enter Heaven. You “Little-Faiths” and “Despondencies” and “Much-Afraids” may go on with but comparatively few trials, for God does not sail His small ships on the sea, but puts them in the shallow waters. But the great ships must cross the Atlantic and big waves may sometimes dash over you, to let the angels in Heaven see how well God can build His saints so that they can stand every storm that earth, or Hell, or Heaven, itself, can send against them! Your faith must be tested!

To sum up all in one, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, depend upon it there is nothing that you have that is good for anything which will not be tested. *Your religious principles will be tested.* Why should they not be?

There is a certain sort of Christian—I do not know whether I shall think them Christians soon—who profess to be better than anybody else. They are non-sectarians. They have left all sects to make a snug little party to go comfortably to Heaven by themselves. And instead of seeking the conversion of sinners, they seduce the members of our churches and compass sea and land to make one proselyte! And the more useful our church members are, the more do they seek to pervert them to their disorders—and the more industrious they are in every way to show their perfect hatred of the Church of the living God! I sometimes meet with persons who are afraid of them. They say, “What shall we do?” I can only say, if they are right, God prosper them! And if they are wrong, we are not afraid to meet them! We are not afraid that God’s cause will suffer by their attacks. I had hoped—there was a time when I was fool enough to hope so—that these were men who really meant what they said. But now they show themselves in their true colors—as the destroyers of every order in the Church and as special enemies of God’s ordained servants!

Of course we can only bid them the defiance that they bid to us and, in God's name, stand upon our bastions and our bulwarks, as our forefathers did aforetime, fearful of nothing they may do because our cause is God's—and He has delivered us out of the hands of many a confederacy before and He will do so even unto the end!

Never fear, my Brothers and Sisters, any attacks from nominal Christians, or proud, conceited persons who think themselves too good to join with other churches who, in truth, are Babylon! They are the men of wisdom and say, "Stand by, for we are holier than you." But what of the Pharisees of modern times from the South of England? What shall we say of them? Let them do their best and their worst, and fight as they will. If our course is right, we can bear to have it tested. I like to see breezes spring up—those fresh blasts that every now and then beat upon the good old ship. If she is all right, she will outlast them—and whether it is from disorders within or quarrels without, she will come out of the trouble!

If we have an ordinance, it ought to be tested—may Baptism be tested! Let the Lord's Supper be tested! The Church can never be reformed except by these trials. I always court the trials if they are sent by a Brother in friendliness of spirit. It is only the bitterness with which they come that sometimes makes my blood boil about it. But I must look to the God that sends it and not to the man who may happen to be the second cause! Whether as individuals, or as a Church, or as a denomination, we shall have to say at last, "O Lord, *You* have tested us. Blessed be Your name that You have, for—

***"Our silver bears the glowing coals
The metal to refine."***

II. And now let us turn to the second question, HOW HAS GOD TESTED US?

Dear Friends, the Lord has tested us in a thousand ways. Many men think that the only test that God gives to His servants is that of trial. He often tests them by trials, by bereavements, by temporal losses, by sickness in body, by personal infirmity, by slander, by persecution—all these are, therefore, tests to a Christian. And a man who can go through all these and find his faith still keeping its hold and that he is able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord"—such a man may thank God for the test! And, after all, dear Friends, the only Grace that is worth having is that which shall be with us when we go through fire and through water, and when men ride over our heads. Do not tell me of your sunshiny religion! Do not tell me of your summer-day godliness! You may sometimes see, on the Mediterranean, when the waters are calm and still, a little fleet with fair and beautiful sails floating gaily there—it is the nautilus coming up in the sunshine to float. But there is a black cloud yonder and at the first breath of wind that comes whistling across the waveless sea where is that fleet? Where is the nautilus? Every little creature has drawn itself into its shell and fallen to the bottom of the sea! Oh, there are too many

of this kind, too many Christians who are with us when everything goes well—but where are they when the times have changed? To use John Bunyan's expressive metaphor—they walk with Religion when she goes in her silver slippers. But when she is barefoot and men laugh at her through the streets, then where are they? Affliction does try men!

But mark you, Believers, there are many others trials! Let me mention some of them that I often think severe. *There is a very sharp trial which some Christians have to bear when they have fresh light given them and they shut their eyes against it.* There are plenty of things that we never dreamt of in our philosophy that, after all, are true. Am I like a man who, whereunto he has attained, walks by the same rule but is still ready to advance further if the rule is more fully revealed? Hold on to the old and tested truth of the Grace of God which brings salvation, as with a death-grip, but still, you are not yet perfect—there is a height beyond. Sometimes when you are reading a passage of Scripture, you say, “Ah, yes, yes; it must mean that!” You pray over it. “Yes, it must mean that! But if it means that, what about that text our minister preached from last Sunday week, what about that?” And you are apt to say, “Well, now, I won't believe that, for it does not fit in with my system of theology.”

Is there not many a good “Hyper” Brother who has a full knowledge of the Doctrines of Grace, but one day when he is reading the Bible and he finds a text that looks rather wide and general, he says, “This cannot mean what it says! I must trim it down and make it fit into Dr. Gill's Commentary”? That is the way many a Brother does. But is not this the right thing to say? “Now, this does mean what it says. The Lord knows better how to write than I do. There may be faults in my reading, but there cannot be any faults in His writing. Then, if such-and-such a thing is true, I will not doubt it. And if that other thing is true, I will not doubt it. And if they seem to contradict one another, I will believe them both. But I can never entertain a thought that they really do contradict one another—I believe that there is some fault in me—not in the Truth of God.”

You sometimes go to the stationer's and you ask for a picture of such-and-such a church. “Yes, Sir,” he says, and brings you out a picture. And you say, “There are two pictures here.” “Oh, no, Sir,” he says, “that is only one.” “But,” you say, “there are two and this one takes the view a little further to the right and that, apparently, a little more to the left. I do not understand your giving me two pictures.” “O Sir,” he says, “that is only one! And if you look at it correctly, you will find that the two will melt into one and stand out very clearly and beautifully—much better than in an ordinary print.” You look and look again, and say, “There seem to be two, as far as I can see—and I cannot make them to be one.” “Stop,” he says. He opens his drawer and fetches out a stereoscope. “Now,” he says, “just put your eyes there.” “Oh, yes,” you say, “I see it is only one now! The two pictures *have* melted into one!”

I believe there are many Truths in Scripture that are just like two pictures on a stereoscopic slide—they are really one—only you and I have

not the stereoscope! When we get to Heaven, we shall get a stereoscope and then they will appear to be one. And we shall see that conflicting Truths of God, such as free-agency and Divine Sovereignty, were only different views, after all, of the same Truth taken from a little different angle. And we shall see how God gave us both the Truths and how foolish we were to go against them.

Now that man, I take it, is tested to be right who, when he is thus tested with superior light, says, "Well, yes, I have been wrong in many of my thoughts and reasoning. The more I learn of God's Revelation, the more I will open my heart to receive it." I like a Brother or Sister who is ready to advance. I think, as a Church, we ought to always be advancing. It strikes me, for instance, that the breaking of bread should be every Lord's-Day. The more I read the Scripture, the more I feel that it is an ordinance that should be commemorated every Sabbath. "Well," says somebody, "but it has been usually observed once a month and anyway, what does it matter?" If it is *Scriptural* to have it *four times* in the month, be it so, and let us get the benefit of the alteration and do it, saying, "If ever a Truth of God starts up, and fresh light comes, I will follow. Whatever You have to say to me, speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." This is by no means a very small trial to a Christian man, to be tested by fresh Light of God!

Don't you think it is a very sharp trial to be tested by other loves? You have an only child. How fond you are of that girl! How your heart is knit to that boy! You have a dear husband—properly enough you love him, but ah, improperly enough you idolize him! Or, alas, it is a brother, or sister, or some other Christian, and your heart is set on that object. Do you know what Jesus says to you? He has said, "There is a disciple who loves Me—he says he does. I will see if he does—I will give him that child and I will see which he loves the better. I will give him that wife, I will give her that husband—I will see, now, whether I really am King in that heart or not." And in how many ways have we mournfully to suspect that Jesus Christ was not King? O dear Friends, it is sad to think of how it would be if some of us were tested by that test—"If any man loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." If some are tested in that way, what a trial it must be to them! And there are many who fail here. And many more Christians would fail, perhaps, only that God, on a sudden, comes like a great iconoclast and breaks their images in pieces and utterly spoils their false gods—and then they are compelled to go to Christ and say, "Yes, we do love You." But perhaps that was hardly true while the idol was in the way. It is a hard trial to have these fair things put in competition with Jesus—happy are you if you have been tested and yet have stood the trial!

I believe that *God often tests His servants by opening up to them fresh fields of labor*. It has been my lot, when I have been busy about my Master's service, here and there to come to a certain corner and see before me what I had never seen before—a great field ripe for the harvest! And perhaps flesh and blood have said, "Well, you have enough to do

here—this is your lot.” I believe, then, God is trying the man to see whether he is willing to begin that new work which is opening to him. Perhaps it is a work in which nobody else has ever engaged. And when you begin it, some excellent friend shrugs his shoulder and says, “O dear Brother, how imprudent you are!” I think there is no word in the English language that deserves more of my esteem and yet for which I have a greater and more insufferable contempt from the misuse of it than the word, “prudence.” Oh, the many times I have it whistled in my ears, “Prudence!” And this is the meaning of the word, “prudence,” according to the translation I have given of it by these Brothers and Sisters—never act upon faith. If you can see your way clearly, that is to say if you are strong enough to do it yourself, do it, but never go beyond your own strength! Do not attempt anything in which other people would differ from you in opinion! Along the cool sequestered vale of life keep the tenor of your way even.

If there is a giant Goliath, go to bed and let giant Goliath defy the hosts of Israel as he likes. If there are nations that need help—Macedonians that cry, “Come over and help us”—tell somebody else what the Macedonians said and say, “What a pity it is that nobody will go!” If Jesus calls, and duty, too, just mind that you are so far off that you cannot hear the call! Like some militiamen I have heard of, who always say, when the bugle sounds for them to come to drill, that they never heard it because they take wonderfully good care to be always so far away that the sound cannot reach them! And there are many such Christians as that—who always get out of the sound of the bugle! “Oh, yes, of course, Lord Shaftesbury presided at the meeting and the Bishop of London, and this member of the privy council, and that member of Parliament were present! And it must be the right thing to do, therefore I will go and do what I can to help, but I do not desire new work.

Some woman who has discovered the missing link, or somebody or other, is going to try some absurd, Quixotic scheme for the conversion of the people, but I could not think of giving a shilling for *that*, because, you see, that is a work of prayer and faith! But the other has a committee, treasurer, vice-presidents and innumerable patrons—almost as many as the lords, governors and counselors that came to Nebuchadnezzar at the door of the burning fiery furnace.”

Most people like those things in which there are plenty of great armies. But there *are* chosen men who always stand where there is nothing to rest upon but the bare arm of God. This seems to be the test of the Christian when he can dare to say, “This is the field of usefulness which God has put in my way. Though my strength is not sufficient, I have faith. Here I am, and I will do it.” “Who are you, O great mountain! Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” “Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.” “Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem! Loosen yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!” For your God is in the midst of you and if you will but

do and dare for Him, when tested in the day of trial, you shall have His blessing upon you—and that right early and abundantly!

III. Multitudes of other tests suggest themselves, but our time flies. Let us come, therefore, to the closing question—WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF ALL THOSE TESTS THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE PASSED?

Well, I think, dear Friends, *we have lost a good deal by our tests*. We have gained much, but we have likewise had our heavy losses. “What,” says one, “lost anything by God’s testing me?” Yes, Brother, I will tell you one or two of the things you have lost. I think you have lost that habit of putting your trust so much in earthly things. So many trees have been cut down that you had built on, that you begin to wish to build somewhere beyond the stars—you find that this world is not your rest. If you have lost that, you have lost something. Have you not also lost that habit of talking so positively about what you mean to do? A good thing if you have! You do not glitter so much, but there is more gold in you. You do not flash and sparkle, and make as much noise, but the waters run stiller because they are deeper. You have lost that habit of boasting in an arm of flesh!

As the result of your being tested, you have lost that disposition to invite trial. I know a Christian woman—I think she is here this evening—who had not any trouble, for some time, and she was very troubled about having no trouble. She prayed to God to send her some—she will never pray that prayer again! She was like a child whom I heard crying in the street and his mother opened the window and asked him what he cried for. And when he said, “Nothing.” She said he should have something to cry for before long. There are many children of that sort—they think they cannot be children of God because they are not always living in hot water. But when they get the trial, they never think that again—never! Those are some of the things we have lost. We go through the Red Sea of trial—some few things we leave in the Red Sea along with the Egyptians—may they never be washed up again!

One has learned, by being tested, to lose that habit of treading quite so hard on the ground as we used to do. Sometimes we used to tread on other people. By being tested, we tread more gently. We used to push and say, “If the man is in my way, I cannot help it.” Now we walk a little more carefully. We do not wish to touch other people’s sore places because we know our own. I heard a dear Brother say, the other night, that I comforted the doubters a great deal too much. I thought if that dear Brother had to go through some of the deep waters we have known in connection with this Church, he would find the doubters need a great deal more comforting than he thinks, for when one has been in the dungeon and has not been able to read his own title clear—and when there have been times when sin and Satan have so prevailed over Grace that one could only say, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” then we have needed something very sweet and very comforting. I do not think that a Christian knows much of doing business on the great waters if he does not feel, sometimes, as if he

would give all he has to have as good a hope as the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold has. And, dear Friends, we lose that habit of being so hard and speaking so loftily—and these are blessed losses. Lord, send us many such losses!

Then, *we also gain much by being tested*. I cannot tell all that we gain. I never read a list of the earrings and the bracelets that the Israelite women gained from the Egyptians. And I cannot, therefore, give you a category of all the golden jewels, all silver bracelets and the rich ruby tiaras that Christians get from the depths of their tribulation. We get all sorts of choice things. Was it not Rutherford who said that he drank many sorts of God's wine, but the wine which was the sourest of all was the sweetest when it was down? And so it assuredly is. There are many sorts of bread that we eat that are very delightful—many breads of Heaven. But that which is baked on the coals, just as the bread which Elijah ate was baked—that is the meal that makes us go in the strength thereof for 40 days! All bread that comes from God is good, but that which the black ravens with their hoarse throats bring to us—that is the bread which is most fit for God's prophets. All our passages through the fiery furnace make us like swords when they are well annealed—they are ready to cut right through the bone—it makes us true Jerusalem blades thus to be put through the fire again and again. Well, Brothers and Sisters, you and I will not cease from being tested until we get to Heaven and then it will be all over. And we shall sing and this shall be the sweet note of it, "You have tested us, O God, and blessed be Your name for it! Before we were afflicted, we went astray, but now have we kept Your Word."

There are many here who, I fear, if they were tested, would be found to be dross. Let such remember that God, by His Grace, can transmute the vile metal into the purest gold. One touch of the Cross of Christ, one drop of His precious blood can turn a sinner into a saint! "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And however great and vile your sins may be, "there is life in a look at the Crucified One." One glance at the bleeding Savior and your sins are forgiven. A simple act of trust in Jesus, and you are saved and then, from that time forth, though you will have trials, you shall bless God for them! And we shall meet in Heaven to praise the name of the Most High, world without end! Amen.

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

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

END OF VOLUME 51.

THE MINSTRELSY OF HOPE

NO. 819

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 5, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us.”
Psalm 67:6, 7.

“GOD, even our own God.” What an exceedingly sweet title! What a loveliness and liveliness of heart must have been in the man who first applied that endearing name to the God of Jacob! Though it is thousands of years ago since the sweet singer of Israel thus spoke of the Lord of Hosts, the name has a freshness and even a novelty about it to believing ears, “God, even our own God.” I cannot resist touching that string again, the note is so enchanting to my soul! That word, “own,” or “our own,” seems always to throw an atmosphere of delicious fragrance about anything with which it is connected. If it is our country—

***“Lives there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
‘This is my own, my native land?’”***

Whether it is a land of brown heath and shaggy wood, or a far extended plain, all men love their own fatherland and in exile they are smitten with homesickness for their own country. It is so with regard to the house in which we were reared. That old roof tree, that ancient homestead—it may have been covered with thatch and have been one of a group of poor cottages, but still it was our own home and a thousand kindly thoughts gather around the fireside where we, in childhood, nestled beneath a parent’s wing. “Our own!” Why, all our relatives are endeared to us by the fact that they are our own!

“Father” is a silver word at all times. But, “*our father*,” “*our own father*”—how the name grows richer and turns to a golden word! “*Our own child*.” “*Our own brother*.” “*Our own husband*.” “*Our own wife*”—the words are most melodious. We even feel the Bible to be all the dearer to us because we can speak of it as “*our own old English Bible*.” As the Jew’s book, coming from God in *Hebrew*. As a book for the Greek, coming in its latter half to the Gentile in the *Greek* tongue, it was a priceless treasure. But translated into our own familiar Saxon tongue, and, on the whole, translated so well, our own English Bible is doubly dear to us.

The sweetness of the words, “our own” led me to call the hymn-book from which you sing, “*Our Own Hymn-Book*,” hoping that, perchance, the very name might help to weave your affections round about it. But what shall I say of “our own God”? Words fail to express the depth of joy and delight which is contained within these three monosyllables, “*Our own*

God.” “Our own” by the Everlasting Covenant in which He gave Himself to us with all His attributes, with all that He is and has, to be our portion forever and ever!

“The Lord is my portion, says my soul.” “Our own God,” by our own choice of Him, a choice most free, but *guided* by His Holy Spirit so that we who should have chosen our own ruin were sweetly led to make our election of the Lord, because He had made His election of us. “Our own God”—ours to trust, ours to love, ours to fly to in every dark and troublous night—ours to commune with in every bright and balmy day, ours to be our Guide in life, our Help in death, and our Glory in immortality! “Our own God,” affording us His wisdom to guide our path, His power to sustain our steps, His love to comfort our lives, His every attribute to enrich with more than royal wealth!

The man who can truthfully, out of a pure heart, look up to the Throne of the infinite Jehovah, and call Him, “My own God,” has said a more eloquent thing than ever flowed from the lips of Demosthenes, or fell from the tongue of Cicero! You are favored beyond all men, you to whom this is a household word, “our own God.”—

**“Our God! How pleasant is the sound!
How charming to repeat!
Well may those hearts with pleasure bound,
Who thus their Lord can greet!”**

I think the Psalmist used this expression in this sublime ode as a kind of argument and assurance of the blessing which he foretold. “God shall bless us”—that is true, it is to be believed, but, “our *own* God shall bless us”—that sentence flashes conviction upon the most timorous! It wears assurance as a frontlet between his eyes! It bears upon its surface its own evidence! If the Lord has been gracious enough to make Himself our own God, He did not do this for nothing—there is a loving intention in it. If in the tenderness of His compassion He has said, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people,” it must be with a design to bless us with unspeakable blessings in Christ Jesus!

Covertly, there is a powerful reason urged in the delightful title and the more we think upon it the more we shall see it. This morning I intend simply to keep to the words, “God shall bless us. God shall bless us.” They have been sounding in my ears like far-off bells, ringing their way with a march of music into the deeps of my soul. May the same angelic melody charm the ears of all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. “God shall bless us. God shall bless us.”

Three personified passions I shall introduce into the pulpit this morning, and we shall discourse with them a little, or let them speak with us.

I. The first is FEAR. Pale-faced Fear will be found everywhere. She meddles with every matter, intruding into the bedchamber of Faith, and disturbing the banquets of Hope. Fear lodges with some as an abiding guest and is entertained as though she were a dear, familiar friend. What does Fear say to us, this morning, in reply to our cheering text?

Fear enquires, “Will God, indeed, bless *us*—for of late He has withheld His hand? There have been many hopeful signs, but they have disappointed us. We have expected the blessing for a long time. We have thought we have seen the signs of it, but it has not come. We have heard of revivals and rumors of revivals—men have risen up who have preached the Word with power, and in some districts there have been many conversions, but still, to a great extent, we have not received the blessing. God has not visited us as of old. We have seen the early cloud and expected rain. We have watched the morning dew and hoped for moisture, but all these have vanished and we are still left without the blessing. A thousand past disappointments lead us to fear that the blessing may not come.”

Listen, O Fear, and be comforted! What if you, too hasty and rash, have misjudged the will of the Lord? Is this any reason why He should forget His promise and refuse to hear the voice of prayer? Clouds have passed over the sky every day these many weeks and we have said full often, “Surely it must rain, and the thirsty fields must be refreshed,” but not a drop as yet has fallen. Yet rain it must before long!

Even so is it with God’s mercy. It may not come today, and tomorrow we may not see it, but still God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. He has His own appointed time and He will be punctual, for while He never is before it, He never is behind it! In due season—in answer to the entreaties of His people—He will give them a shower of liberality. All manner of gracious blessings shall descend from His right hand! He will rend the heavens and in majesty come down—for, “God shall bless us.”

“Yes,” says Fear, “But we have seen so many counterfeits of the blessing. We have seen revivals in which intense excitement has seemed, for a season, to produce great results. But the excitement has subsided and the results have disappeared. Have we not, again and again, heard the sound of trumpets, and the loud boastings of men, but glory was not the sum of it?” This is most sorrowfully true. There is no doubt that much of revivalism has been a sham—that there has been a windbag-filling—a bladder-blowing in the Christian Church which has been terribly mischievous. The very name, “revival,” has been made to stink in some places by reason of the mischiefs associated with it!

But this is no reason why there should not yet come a glorious and *real* revival from the Presence of the Lord! And such, my Brethren, I earnestly hope for and vehemently pray for! Remember the revival which passed over New England in the days of Jonathan Edwards? No one could call *that* spurious—it was as true and real as any work of God on the face of the earth could be! Nor could anyone describe the work of Whitfield, and of Wesley, as a mere spasm or a thing of transient existence—it was God’s right hand made bare and put to the work of Divine Grace in a marvelous manner! And it was a work done which exists in England to this day and shall remain even to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We may expect, then, since it has been already given at other times, that God will bless His people with real and substantial advances—and will yet come to the front and make His enemies see that there is an irresistible power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! O Fear, remember, if you will, the delusions of the past and be counseled by them—do not recall them as reasons for being dispirited and cast down, for God, even *our own* God, shall bless us!

But Fear replies, “See how much there is in the present which is unlike a blessing, and which, instead of prophesying good, pretends evil! How few there are,” says Fear, “who are proclaiming the Gospel boldly and simply! And how many, on the other hand, oppose the Gospel with their philosophies or with their superstitions.” But listen, O Fear, “God shall bless us,” few though we are, for He saves not by many nor by few! Remember His servant, Gideon, and how he went up to fight against the Midianites, not with the thousands, for they were too many for the Lord of Hosts, but with the few hundred men that lapped! And with these—with no other weapons than their broken pitchers, and uncovered lamps, and sounding trumpets—with these did he put to rout the multitudes of Midian!

Say not that Omnipotence can be short of instruments! He could quicken the very sand by the seashore into preachers of the Gospel if He pleased! And if He wanted tongues to tell of His love, He could make each stone a preacher, or each twinkling leaf upon the trees a witness for Jesus! It is not *instrumentality* that is necessary first and foremost—we need *most* the power which moves the instrumentality, which makes the weakest strong—and without which even the strongest are but weak!

We heard it said, the other day, that the religion of Jesus Christ could not be expected to prosper in some places unless it had a fair start. Did that remark come from an infidel, or from a bishop? If I were asked and knew not, I know what my answer would be! A fair start, indeed! Put the religion of Jesus Christ into *any* arena and it asks but liberty to use its weapons—and even where that is denied it, it triumphs still! It only needs its own innate strength to be developed, and to be let alone by the kings and princes of this world, and it will work its own way. To be let alone, I said—let them oppose it if they like—yet still our faith will overcome the regal opposition! Only let them withdraw their patronage—that deadly thing which paralyzes all spiritual life—and the unshackled Truth of God will most surely prevail!

We do not tremble, then! We must not, because the servants of God may be poor, or may not be gifted, or may be but few. God shall, even *our own* God, shall bless us! And if we are as few as the 12 fishermen, and as unlettered as they, yet as the 12 fishermen made old Rome’s empire shake from end to end, and laid colossal systems of idolatry even with the ground—even so will the Christianity of today! If God does but return in

power unto her, in the midst of her weakness she will wax valiant in fight and turn to flight the armies of the aliens!

But Fear always finds room for murmuring, and therefore she says, "The future, the black and gloomy future! What have we to expect from this wicked generation, this perverse people, but that we shall be given up, once more, to be devoured by the jaws of Antichrist, or to be lost in the mists of infidelity? Our prospects are, indeed, appalling," so Fear says, though I confess, not using *her* telescope I discern no such signs of the times. Yet Fear says so, and there may be reason in it. Yet whatever that reason may be, it is counterbalanced in our mind by the belief that God, even *our own* God, will bless us!

Why should He change? He has helped His Church before, why not now? Is she undeserving? She was always so! Does she backslide? She has done so oftentimes before, yet has He visited her, and restored her—and why not now? Instead of forebodings and fears, there seems to me cause for the brightest expectations if we can only fall back upon the Divine promise and believe that God, even *our own* God, shall yet, in this very age, bless us as He did in days of old!

Remember the ship tossed with tempest on the Galilean lake? There was, indeed, a dreary outlook for the steersman of the boat! She must, before long, be driven on the rocky headland and she and her cargo must sink beneath the waves. Not so, not so, for can't you see, walking upon the billows which congeal to glass beneath His feet, the Man who loves the company within the vessel and will not let them die? It is Jesus walking on the waves of the sea! He comes into the vessel and immediately the calm is as profound as if waves had not lifted their head, nor wind had blown!

So in the darkest times of His Church's history Jesus has always, in due time, appeared walking upon the waves of her troubles—and then her rest has been glorious! Let us not, therefore, be afraid—but casting fear away let us rejoice with glad expectation! What can there be to fear? "God is with us." Is not that the battle cry before which devils fly, and all the hosts of evil turn their backs? "Immanuel, God with us!"

Who dares to stand against that? Who will defy the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Ah, bring your might and come to push or pike, you mighty ones, but if God is for us, who can be against us, or if against us, who can stand? God is our own God—will He let His own Church be trampled in the mire? Shall the bride of Christ be led into captivity? Shall His Beloved, whom He bought with His blood, be delivered into the hands of her enemies? God forbid! Because He is *God*. Because He is for *us*. Because He is *our own* God, therefore we set up our banners and each man among us cheerily sings—

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

II. We shall change the strain altogether when we introduce a second character, namely, DESIRE. Quick of step, bright of eye, warm of heart, Desire says, “Ah, God shall bless us, but O that we had the blessing! We hunger and we thirst after it. We are covetous for it as the miser after gold.” Therefore Desire says, “But what blessing will come, and after what fashion shall our own God bless us?” The reply to Desire is this—when God comes to bless His people, He brings *all* Grace with Him, for in the treasures of the Covenant there are not *some* things, but *all* things—not a few supplies for some of the Church’s necessities—but a redundant store from which all her needs shall be replenished!

When the Lord shall bless His Church, He will give to all her members the Divine Grace of revival! They will begin to live after a higher, nobler, happier sort than they have done before. To bestir the Church and make it active is one of the highest gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this is greatly needed. I believe it is needed among *us*. Some of the most earnest Christians out of Heaven are members of this Church—but some are a very long way off from that and need to be brought into a sounder spiritual state.

What is true of this one Church is true of all the Churches of Jesus Christ. They are too much like the virgins who slept because the bridegroom came not—too much apathy, too little love to God, too little consecration to His cause, too little pining and panting after the souls of men. When the Lord shall visit His Church, the first effect will be the quickening of the life of His own Beloved. Then will the blessing come in the next shape, namely, *conversions* in her borders, and *additions* to her membership. I hope that we shall never think that God is blessing us unless we see sinners saved. It is a very solemn delusion when ministers think they are prospering and yet do not hear of conversions.

We, I trust, will be most uneasy if conversions should slacken in number among us. If God returns to us, and to all His Churches, the cry will be heard on the right hand and on the left, “What must we do to be saved?” The astonished Church will see such a multitude of children born to her that she will cry in amazement, “Who has begotten these? Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” When these two blessings come—a quickened Church and souls converted—then will the Word of the Lord be fulfilled, “The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

Then the Church will be strong. She will have wherewithal to refute her adversaries by pointing to her converts. She will become bold because she sees the result of her work. She will cease to doubt, for faith will be replenished with evidences. Then peace will reign. The young converts shall bring in a flood of new joy. Their fresh blood shall make the old blood of the Church to leap in its veins, and old and young, rejoicing together, shall rejoice in the abundance of peace! Brethren, I would if I had time this morning, paint you a picture of a Church blessed of God! But we

must not—you know what it is—many of you have been members of such a Church. May the blessing continue. May it be increased—and may all the Churches throughout Christendom receive the benediction from the God of Israel such as shall make them rejoice with joy unspeakable!

But Desire says, “I see what the blessing is, but in what degree will God give it, and in what measure may we expect it?” We say to Desire, “O you large-hearted one, God will give you according to the measure of your confidence in Him.” We are all too soon satisfied when the blessing begins to drop from above. We stop, like the king of old, when we have shot but one or two arrows, and deserve to be rebuked in the language of the Prophet, “You should have smitten five or six times, then had you smitten Syria till you had consumed it.” We are content with *drops* when we might have the cup full to the brim! We are childishly satisfied with a mere trace of water when we might have flagons, barrels, rivers, oceans if we had but faith enough to receive them!

If there should be half-a-dozen persons converted today in this house, we should all be jubilant with thanksgiving—but ought we not to be *sorry* if there are not half-a-dozen *hundred*? Who are we that, by our narrow expectations, we limit the Holy One of Israel? Can we draw a line around Omnipotence and say, “To here shall You go, but no further”? Were it not wiser to *extend* our desires, and expand our hopes since we have to deal with One who knows neither limit nor boundary? Why not look for years of plenty, eclipsing the famous seven of Egypt? Why not expect clusters excelling those of Eshcol? Why are we so mean, so dwarfed, so straitened in our expectancies? Let us grasp at *greater* things—for it is *reasonable*, with the Lord to trust in—to look for greater things!

I reckon upon days in which every sermon shall shake the house with its power, in which the hearers shall be converted to God by thousands as in the day of Pentecost! Was that to be the greatest trophy of God’s power, the Pentecost? Is the first sheaf to be greater than the harvest? How can it be? We believe that if God will again visit His Church, and I trust He is going to do so, we shall see nations born in a day, and the Gospel of Jesus, which has painfully limped like a wounded hind, will suddenly take to itself wings as of a mighty angel and fly throughout the midst of Heaven, proclaiming Jesus Christ both Lord and God!

Why not? Who can justify the absence of the liveliest hope, since He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think? I hear Desire say, “Yes, I understand what the blessing is, and that it can be had in any measure, but how is it to be obtained and when will it come?” Follow me in a very brief review of the Psalm before us, because that will help us to answer the question. *When* is it that, “God, even our own God, shall bless us?” The Psalm begins with “God be merciful unto us.” That is the voice of a *penitent* people confessing their past misdeeds. God will bless His Church when she acknowledges her faults and hum-

bles herself. When, with an evangelical *repentance*, she stands before the Mercy Seat, and cries, “God be merciful unto us!”

We must never expect that the Lord will bless a proud and conceited Church—a hard-hearted and indifferent Church. When humbled and laid in the dust under a sense of her own shortcomings, *then* shall God be pleased to look upon her in mercy. I gather from the tenor of the first verse that God blesses His people when they begin to *pray* as well as when they confess their sins. The prayer is urgent, humble and believing, and therefore it must speed. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us.” These agonizing desires are a part of the wailing of a Church conscious of having somewhat lost the blessing, and ill at ease until it is restored.

We are sure to receive the benediction from God when the entire Church is instant and constant in intercession. Prayer is the best resort of an earnest people. Are we not witnesses of it? We have had Prayer Meetings in this house in which we have all been stirred as the trees of the woods are moved in the wind—and then we have always had the Presence of God afterwards in the conversion of souls. Our best praying times have always been followed by joyful *harvest homes*. The Churches everywhere must be prayerful—intensely so—or else they cannot expect that the sound of abundance of rain should be heard throughout their land.

Awake to confess sin, O Zion, awake to soul-travail for the souls of men and then shall God, your Lord, visit you from on high! Come, Holy Spirit, and arouse Your slumbering people! Bestir Your sluggard host, for when Your power is felt, then has the bright day of triumph dawned upon us! As the Psalm runs, it speaks not so much of prayer as of praise, “Let the people praise You, O God. Let all the people praise You. Then shall the earth yield her increase.” The Church of God needs to get into a better state with regard to her praising her God. When mercy is received, if we accept it silently and without gratitude, we cannot expect to have more. But when every drop of favor makes us bless the Lord who gives to such undeserving ones, we shall soon have more, and yet more, and more!

The praise ought to be universal. “Let all the people praise You.” It ought to be joyful and hearty, each man rejoicing in the exercise and casting all his strength into it. When shall we all wake up to this? When shall all the Lord’s elect magnify His glorious name as they should? When shall we sing at our work, sing in our households, sing *everywhere* the praises of God? If prayer and praise are sacredly blended and the Church becomes thoroughly anxious for the Divine blessing, then God, even our God, will bless us!

If I were asked, now, to give some indications as to when a blessing may be expected, I should have to run somewhat in the same vein as we did last Thursday evening, and that I cannot avoid. I believe that when a great visitation of mercy is coming upon the Church there are certain signs which are given to the more spiritual, which assure them that it is

coming. Elijah could hear “a sound of abundance of rain” before a single drop had fallen—and many a saint of God has had the conviction that a time of refreshing is coming long before it has come. Some souls are especially sensitive to Divine workings, just as some men’s bodies are peculiarly sensitive to changes of weather before they arrive.

As Columbus was sure that he was coming to land because he saw strange land birds and floating pieces of seaweed and broken wood, so oftentimes the Christian minister feels sure that he is drawing near to a time of amazing blessing. He can scarcely tell another why he feels so sure, and yet the indications to him are sure. There are doves that come flying into our hands that tell us that the waters of indifference and worldliness are receding. They bring us olive branches of hopeful Graces flourishing among our people which let us know that the time to favor Zion is surely coming.

Have you ever seen the ancient seer arise, take his harp down from the wall and begin to tune it? He puts every string in order. He lays his fingers among the unaccustomed strings and commences to sweep the strings with unusual energy of delight. Have you not enquired of him, “Gray Harper, minstrel consecrated to the Lord, why do you strike your song so full of cheer?” He replies, “Because I see afar the silken banners of a triumphant host returning victorious from the fray. It is the Church, made more than conqueror through Him who loved her! I hear the moving of the wings of angels. They are rejoicing over penitents and the Church is glad, for her glory returns seeing that her sons are many.”

Men enlightened with the light of Heaven feel the shadow of the coming mercy and hear the far-off wheels of the chariot of mercy! These tokens, of course, will only be appreciable by the few, but there are others, tokens which are instructive to the many. It is a very certain sign that the Lord will bless His people when they feel in themselves an unusual and insatiable craving for the Divine visitation—when they feel as if the Church could not go on longer as she now is doing—when they begin to fret, and pant, and sigh, and hunger and thirst after something better.

I would to God that all the members of this Church were gloriously dissatisfied without more conversions! And when this dissatisfaction arises in the Christian mind, it is pretty generally a sure indication that God is enlarging the hearts of His people that they may receive a larger blessing! Then there will come into prepared minds a sacred heaving of intense excitement and throes of awful purpose—mysterious longings to which they were strangers before! These will gravitate into impulses which they will be unable to resist! Men who had been dumb before will suddenly find a tongue! Others will become mighty in prayer who never were known as master suppliants up to that moment! There will be tears in eyes long dry before! We shall find professors talking to sinners and winning converts who kept in the rear in days now past and were never zealous until now!

These stirrings of God's hand—these sacred and mysterious motions of His ever blessed Spirit—are signs that He intends to bless His Church and that to a large degree. And, Brothers and Sisters, when every man begins to search himself, to see whether there is any obstacle in him to the blessing—when every single member of the Church exposes his heart to the search of God and cries, “Take away from me everything that hinders Your work! Fit me for greater usefulness! Put me where You will win glory by me, for I am consecrated to You,” *then* we shall hear the sound as of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, as David of old!

Then shall we see the flowers spring up and we shall know that the time of the singing of birds is drawing near, and that spring and summer are close at hand! May God send us more and more of these gracious signs! I think I see them even now. Perhaps my wish is father to my thought, but I think I see comfortable signs that God intends to visit His Zion even now! And if we will but *believe* it, will but *accept* it and *work* in accordance with such expectation, unitedly praying and praising, and laboring and striving—rest assured this year, 1868, will not come to its close without such a display of the Divine power as shall make it an *annus mirabilis*, a year of our Lord, a year of Divine Grace, a year whose days shall be as the days of Heaven upon the earth!

III. Lastly, I introduce to you a far fairer being than either of the other two—the sweet bright-eyed maiden HOPE. Have you ever heard the story of her matchless song? She learned in her youth a song which she sings evermore to the accompaniment of a well-tuned harp. Here are the words of her enchanting lay: “God will bless us. God will bless us.” She has often been heard singing this in the night, and, lo! stars have suddenly shone out of the black sky. “God will bless us.” She has been known to sing this in the midst of tempests and calms have followed the soothing song.

Once upon a time certain strong laborers were sent forth by the great king to level a primeval forest—to plow it, to sow it—and to bring the harvest to him. They were stout-hearted and strong, and willing enough for labor, and well they needed all their strength and more. One stalwart laborer was named Industry—consecrated work was his! His brother Patience, with muscles of steel, went with him and tired not in the longest days, under the heaviest labors. To help them they had Zeal, clothed with ardent and indomitable energy. Side by side, there stood his kinsman Self-Denial, and his friend, Importunity.

These went forth to their labor and they took with them, to cheer their toils, their well-beloved sister, Hope—and well it was they did, for the forest trees were huge and needed many sturdy blows of the axe before they would fall prone upon the ground. One by one they yielded, but the labor was immense and incessant. At night when they went to their rest, the day's work always seemed so light, for as they crossed the threshold, Patience, wiping the sweat from his brow, would be encouraged and Self-

denial would be strengthened, for they heard a sweet voice within sing, "God will bless us. God, even our own God, will bless us."

They felled the giant trees to the music of that strain! They cleared the acres one by one. They tore from their sockets the huge roots. They leveled the soil. They sowed the corn and waited for the harvest—often much discouraged, but still in silver chains and golden fetters by the sweet sound of the voice which chanted so constantly—"God, even our own God, will bless us." They never could refrain from service for she never could refrain from song! They were ashamed to be discouraged! They were shocked to be despairing, for still the voice rang clearly out at morn and eventide, "God will bless us. God, even our own God, will bless us."

You know the parable, you recognize the voice—may you hear it in your souls today! God will bless us! We are few, too few for this great work, but God will bless us and therefore we are enough! We are feeble and little taught—with little experience and slender wisdom—but God will bless us, and we shall be wise enough and strong enough! We are undeserving, full of sin, fickle and frail—but God will bless us and our undeservingness shall be a foil in which to set the precious diamond of His mercy! God will bless us—there are glorious promises which guarantee the blessing! They must be kept, for they are yes and amen in Christ Jesus!

The nations must bow down before Messiah! Ethiopia must stretch out her arms to receive her King. God will bless us! He *has* blessed His people. Let Egypt tell how God overthrew His Israel's enemies. Let Canaan witness how He slew kings and overthrew mighty kings, and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto His people. God will bless us! He has given us His Son—how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? He has given us His Holy Spirit to abide with us forever! How can He deny us any necessary aid or requisite benediction? Here is a song for each Christian man and woman engaged in holy work!

Here is a song for your Sunday school classes this afternoon, you diligent teachers of our youth! If you have seen no good come of your work and you grow somewhat dispirited, here is a Psalm to raise your sinking spirits, "God will bless us." Go on and teach the Gospel to the youngsters with redoubled zeal! Here is a sweet note for the minister who has been plowing a thankless soil and seen no harvest. "God will bless us." Cease not from your energetic labors! Go back to your work, for you have such a blessing yet to come that you may well rejoice even in the prospect of its coming! Let each worker go forth to that form of Christian service which his Master has appointed him, hearing this bird of paradise warbling in his ears, "God will bless us."

Like David's minstrelsy before Saul, it charms away despair! Like the silver trumpets of the priests, it proclaims a jubilee! O that like the rams' horns of Israel it may level Jericho! Why, if just once this morning I could address with the eloquence of Peter the Hermit, when preaching the Crusade—when he made his hearers shout aloud, "Deus vult!" I, too, would

stir your blood with the war-note of my text! I think this, "God will bless us," might just as much stir you, and move you, and make you dash along like a mighty host of warriors as did the, "God wills it," of the Hermit! God is with us! He will bless us!

Why do you hesitate? Why do you grow weary? Why do you look to a *human* arm for strength? Why do you fear your enemies? Why do you seek slothful ease? Why do you get to your beds of rest? God will bless us! Up, you men-at-arms, and snatch the victory! Grasp your sickles, you farmers, and gather in the harvest! Hoist your sails, you mariners, for the favoring winds are coming! "God will bless us!" O for fire from off the altar to touch our lips! And what can be a better instrument with which to carry the flaming coal than the golden tongs of the text, "God will bless us"?

One word of warning and we have done. Suppose the Lord should bless "us" in the plural, and not "you," dear Hearer, in the singular! What if there should be showers of mercy and they should not drop on *you*? What if He should bestow a token for good upon His people but *you* should be left out? It may be so, for it has *been* so—and if such is the dreary fact, it will make you worse instead of better—for none is so dry as the fleece which remains dry when the floor is wet! None is so lost as those who are lost where others are saved. Tremble lest that should be your case!

Yet it need not be so! Oh, blessed be God, I hope I can say it *shall not* be so! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near." He has abundant pardons to bestow and He will give them freely to all who ask! All He asks of you is that you trust His Son and this faith His Holy Spirit *gives*. Do trust Him! Rest upon the merit of His precious blood and you will not be left out when He dispenses His favors, but you shall sing as cheerfully as all the rest, "God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us."

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OUR LORD'S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION

NO. 2142

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 11, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

INTENDED FOR READING
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1890.

***“You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive:
You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious, also,
that the Lord God might dwell among them.”
Psalm 68:18.***

The hill of Zion had been taken out of the hand of the Jebusites. They had held it long after the rest of the country had been subdued, but David, at last, had taken it from them. This was the mountain ordained of Jehovah of old to be the place of the Temple. David, therefore, with songs and shouts of rejoicing, brought up the Ark from the house of Obed-edom to the place where it should remain. That is the literal fact upon which the figure of the text is based. We are at no loss for the *spiritual* interpretation, for we turn to Ephesians 4:8 where, quoting rather the *sense* of the passage than the exact words, Paul says, “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

The same sense is found in Colossians 2:15: “And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Not misled by the will-o'-the-wisp of fancy, but guided by the clear light of the Infallible Word, we see our way to expound our text. In the words of David we have an address to our Lord Jesus Christ concerning His ascent to His Glory. “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”

Our Savior *descended* when He came to the manger of Bethlehem, a Babe—and further descended when He became “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He descended lower, still, when He was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross—and further yet when His dead body was laid in the grave. “Well,” says our Apostle, “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” Long and dark was the descent—there were no depths of humiliation, temptation or affliction which He did not fathom. Seeing He stood in their place, He went as low as Justice required that sinners should go who had dared to violate the Law of God.

The utmost abyss of desertion heard Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Low in the grave He lay, but He had His face upward, for He could not see corruption. On the third day He left the couch of the dead and rose to the light of the living! He had commenced His glo-

rious ascent! To prove how real was His Resurrection, He stayed on earth some 40 days and showed Himself to many witnesses. Magdalene and Peter saw Him alone—the 11 beheld Him in their midst. The two on the road conversed with Him. Five hundred Brethren at once beheld Him! He gave Infallible proofs that He was really risen from the dead and these remain with us unto this day as *historic facts*.

He ate a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb to prove that He was no phantom. He said to the Apostles, "Handle Me, and see that it is I, Myself, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." One laid his finger in the print of the nails and even thrust his hand into His side! Their very doubts were used to make the evidence clearer. The fact that Jesus died was put beyond question by the thrust of the spear—and the fact that He was alive, in a material form, was equally well established by the touch of Thomas.

Beyond a doubt, Christ Jesus has risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. This being settled beyond question, the time came for our Lord to continue His homeward, upward journey and return unto the Glory from which He had come down. From "the mount called Olivet," while His disciples surrounded Him, "He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." The rest of His upward progress we cannot describe. Imagination and faith step in and conceive of Him as rising beyond all regions known to us—far above all imaginable height. He draws near to the suburbs of Heaven and surely the poet is not wrong when he says of the angels—

**"They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His Throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."**

"Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." How high He ascended after He passed the pearly portal Paul cannot tell us, save that he says, "He ascended up far above all heavens," and describes Him as, "set at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." He describes our Master as, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." The Man Christ Jesus has gone back to the place from where His Godhead came! You are the King of Glory, O Christ! You are the eternal Son of the Father! You sit forever in the highest Heaven, enthroned with all Glory, clothed with all power, King of kings and Lord of lords! Unto Your name we humbly present our hallelujahs, both now and forever.

I. Now, concerning the text itself, which speaks of the ascent of our ever blessed Lord, we shall say, first, that OUR LORD'S TRIUMPH WAS SET FORTH BY HIS ASCENSION. He came here to fight the foes of God and man. It was a tremendous battle—not against flesh and blood—but against *spiritual* wickedness and evil powers. Our Lord fought against sin, death, Hell, hate of God and love of falsehood. He came to earth to be our Champion. For you and for me, Beloved, He entered the battle and wres-

tled till He sweat great drops of blood—yes, “He poured out His soul unto death.”

When He had ended the struggle He declared His victory by ascending to the Father's Throne. *Now His descent is ended.* There was no need for Him to remain amid the men who despised Him. The shame, suffering, blasphemy and rebuke are far beneath Him now. The sun has risen and the darkness of night has fled. He has gone up beyond the reach of sneering Sadducees and accusing Pharisees. The traitor cannot again kiss Him. Pilate cannot scourge Him. Herod cannot mock Him. He is far above the reach of priestly taunt and vulgar jest—

**“No more the cruel spear,
The Cross and nails no more;
For Hell itself shakes at His frown,
And all the heavens adore.”**

Now, also, our Lord's work is done. We are sure that the purpose of His love is secure or He would not have returned to His rest. The love that brought Him here would have kept Him here if all things necessary for our salvation had not been finished. Our Lord Jesus is no sudden enthusiast who rashly commences an enterprise of which He wearies before it is accomplished. He does not give up a work which He has once undertaken. Because He said, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do,” and then ascended to the Father, I feel safe in asserting that all that was required of the Lord Christ for the overthrow of the powers of darkness is performed and endured—all that is needed for the salvation of His redeemed is fully done!

Whatever was the design of Christ's death, it will be accomplished to the fullest for had He not secured its accomplishment He would not have gone back. I do not believe in a defeated and disappointed Savior, nor in a Divine Sacrifice which fails to effect its purpose. I do not believe in an atonement which is admirably wide but fatally ineffectual. I rejoice to hear my Lord say, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Whatever was the purpose of the Christ of God in the great transaction of the Cross, it must be fully effected—to conceive a failure, even of a *partial* kind—is scarcely reverent.

Jesus has seen to it that in no point shall His work be frustrated. Nothing is left undone of all His covenanted engagements. “It is finished” is a description of every item of the Divine labor and, therefore, has He ascended on high. There are no dropped stitches in the robe of Christ! I say again, the love that brought our Lord here would have kept Him here if He had not been absolutely sure that all His work and warfare for our salvation had been accomplished to the fullest.

Further, as we see here the ending of our Lord's descent and the accomplishment of His work, remember that *His ascent to the Father is representative.* Every Believer rose with Him and grasped the inheritance. When He rose up, ascending high, He taught our feet the way. At the last His people shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air and so shall they be forever with the Lord. He has made a stairway for His saints

to climb to their bliss and He has traveled it Himself to assure us that the new and living way is available for us. In His Ascension He bore all His people with Him.

As Levi was in the loins of Abraham, when Melchisedec met him, so were all the saints in the loins of Christ when He ascended up on high. Not one of the number shall fail to come where the Head has entered, else were Jesus the Head of an imperfect and mutilated body! Though you have no other means of getting to Glory but faith in Jesus, that way will bring you there without fail! Not only will He not be in Glory and leave us behind, but He cannot be so since we are one with Him—and where He is His people must be. We are in the highest Glory in Jesus as our Representative and by faith we are raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies, even in Him.

Our Lord's ascent is to the highest Heaven. I have noted this already but let me remind you of it again, lest you miss an essential point. Our Lord Jesus is in no inferior place in the Glory land. He was a servant here, but He is not so there. I know that He intercedes and thus carries on a form of service on our behalf—but no striving, vying and tears are mingled with His present pleading. With authority He pleads. He is a Priest upon His Throne, blending with His plea the authority of His personal merit. He says, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth” and, therefore, He is glorious in His prayers for us!

He is Lord of every place and of everything—He guides the wheels of Providence and directs the flight of angels—His kingdom rules over all. He is exalted above every name that is named and all things are put under Him. Oh, what a Christ we have to trust in and to love! And on this account *we are called upon in the text to think much of His blessed Person.* When we speak of what Christ has done, we must think much of the doing, but still more of the Doer. We must not forget the Benefactor in the benefits which come to us through Him. Note well how David puts it. To him the Lord is first and most prominent. He sees Him. He speaks to Him. “*You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts for men.*”

Three times he addresses Him by that personal pronoun, “You.” Dwell on the fact that He, the Son of David, who for our sakes came down on earth and lay in the manger—and hung upon a woman's breast—has gone up on high into Glory! He that trod the weary ways of Palestine now reigns as a King in His palace. He that sighed, hungered, wept, bled and died is now above all heavens! Behold your Lord upon the Cross—mark the five ghastly wounds and all the shameful scourging and spitting which men have worked upon Him! See how that blessed body, prepared of the Holy Spirit for the indwelling of the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, was evilly treated! But there is an end to all this. “*You have ascended on high.*” He that was earth's scorn is now Heaven's wonder!

I saw You laid in the tomb, wrapped about with cerements and embalmed in spices—but You have ascended on high where death cannot touch You! The Christ that was buried here is now upon the Throne! The

heart which was broken here is palpitating in His bosom this minute, as full of love and condescension as when He dwelt among men! He has not forgotten us, for He has not forgotten Himself and we are part and parcel of Himself! He is still mindful of Calvary and Gethsemane. Even when you are dazzled by the superlative splendor of His exalted state, still believe that He is a Brother born for adversity.

Let us rejoice in the ascent of Christ as being the ensign of His victory and the symbol of it! He has accomplished His work. If You had not led captivity captive, O Christ, You had never ascended on high. And if You had not won gifts of salvation for the sins of men, You had been here still suffering! You would never have relinquished Your chosen task if You had not perfected it. You are so set on the salvation of men that for the joy that was set before You, You did endure the Cross, despising the shame—and we know that all must have been achieved or You would still be working out Your gracious enterprise. The voice of the ascension is—**CONSUMMATUM EST**—“It is finished.”

II. Having led your thoughts that way, I would, secondly, remind you that **THE LORD'S TRIUMPHAL ASCENT DEMONSTRATED THE DEFEAT OF ALL OUR FOES.** “You have led captivity captive” is as certain as, “You have ascended on high.” Brethren, *we were once captives*—captives to tyrants who worked us woe and would soon have worked us death. We were captives to sin. We were captives to Satan and therefore captives under spiritual death. We were captives under many lusts and imaginations of our own hearts—we were captives to error, captives to deceit. But the Lord Jesus Christ has led captivity captive! *There is our comfort!*

Forget not that we were hopeless captives to all these—they were too strong for us and we could not escape from their cruel bondage. *The Lord Jesus, by His glorious victory here below, has subdued all our adversaries* and in His going up on high He has triumphed over them all, exhibiting them as trophies. The imagery may be illustrated by the triumph of Roman conquerors. They were known to pass along the Via Sacra and climb up to the Capitol, dragging at their chariot wheels the vanquished princes with their hands bound behind their backs.

All those powers which held you captive have been vanquished by Christ. Whatever form your spiritual slavery took, you are fully delivered from it, for the Lord Christ has made captives those whose captives you were. “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Concerning Satan, our Lord has bruised his head beneath His heel. Death also is overcome and his sting is taken away. Death is no more the King of Dread—“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Whatever there was or is which can oppress our soul and hold it in bondage, the Lord Jesus has subdued and made it captive to Himself.

What then? Why, *from now on the power of all our adversaries is broken.* Courage, Christians! You can fight your way to Heaven for the foes who dispute your passage have been already beaten in the field! They bear upon them the proofs of the valor of your Leader. True, the flock of the

Lord is too feeble to force its way—but listen—“The Breaker is come up before them and the King at the head of them.” Easily may the sheep follow where the Shepherd leads the way! We have but to follow those heavenly feet which once were pierced and none of our steps shall slide! Move on, O soldiers of Jesus, for your Captain cries, “Follow Me!”

Would He lead you into evil? Has He not said, “You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.” Your Lord has set His foot on the necks of your enemies—you wage war with vanquished foes! What encouragement this glorious ascension of Christ should give to every tried Believer! Remember, again, that *the victory of our Lord Christ is the victory of all who are in Him*. “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Now, the Seed of the woman is, first of all, the Lord Jesus—but also it is all who are in union with Him. There are still two seeds in the world—the seed of the serpent which cannot enter into this rest—and the Seed of the woman who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

In these last is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. Jesus, our Lord, represents them in all that He does—they died in Him, were buried in Him, are raised in Him and in the day when He triumphed they led captivity captive in Him. Looking at the great battle now raging in the world, I gaze with joyful confidence. We are fighting now with Popery, with Mohammedanism, with idolatry in the foulest forms—but the battle is, in effect, won! We are struggling with the terrible infidelity which has fixed itself like a cancer upon the Church of God and our spirit sinks as we survey the horrors of this almost civil war. How often we groan because the battle does not go as we would desire it!

Yet there is no reason for dismay. God is in no hurry as we are. He dwells in the leisure of *eternity* and is not the prey of fear as we are. We read concerning the multitude, when they needed to be fed, that Jesus asked Philip a question—but yet it is added, “However Jesus knew what He would do.” So today the Lord may put many questions to His valiant ones and, “for the divisions of Reuben there may be great searchings of heart,” but He knows what He is going to do and we may lay our heads upon His bosom and rest quietly. If He does not tell us how He will effect His purpose, yet assuredly He will not fail. His cause is sure to win the victory—how can the *Lord* be defeated? A vanquished Christ?! We have not yet learned to blaspheme and so we put the notion far from us! No, Brothers and Sisters, by those bleeding hands and feet He has secured the struggle. By that side opened down to His heart we feel that His heart is fixed in our cause.

Especially by His Resurrection and by His climbing to the Throne of God, He has made the victory of His Truth, the victory of His Church—the victory of Himself—most sure and certain!

III. Let us notice, thirdly, that OUR LORD'S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION WAS CELEBRATED BY GIFTS. The custom of bestowing gifts after victory was practiced among the Easterns, according to the song of Deborah. Those to whom a triumph was decreed in old Rome scattered money

among the populace. Sometimes it seemed as if every man in the city was made rich by his share of the spoils of vanquished princes.

Thus our Lord, when He ascended on high, received gifts for men and scattered largess all around. The Psalm says: "You have *received* gifts for men." The Hebrew has it, "You have received gifts in Adam"—that is, in human nature. Our Lord Christ had everything as Lord—but as the Man, the Mediator—He has received gifts from the Father. "The King eternal, immortal, invisible," has bestowed upon His triumphant General a portion with the great and He has ordained that He shall divide the spoil with the strong. This our Lord values, for He speaks of all that the Father has given Him with the resolve that He will possess it.

When Paul quotes the passage, he says, "He *gave* gifts to men." Did Paul quote incorrectly? I think not. He quoted, no doubt, from the Greek version. Is the Greek version, therefore, compatible with the Hebrew? Assuredly! Dr. Owen says that the word rendered "received" may be read "gave." And if not, for Christ to *receive* for men is the same thing as to *give* to men for He never receives for Himself, but at once gives it to those who are *in* Him. Paul looks to the central meaning of the passage and gives us the heart and soul of its sense. He is not intending to quote it verbatim, but to give in brief its innermost teaching.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has *nothing* which He does not give to His Church. He gave *Himself* for us and He continues, still, to give Himself to us. He receives the gifts, but He only acts as the conduit through which the Grace of God flows to us. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell—and of His fullness have we all received. What are these great ascension gifts? I answer that *the sum of them is the Holy Spirit*. I invite your adoring attention to the sacred Trinity manifested to us here. How delightful it is to see the Trinity working out in unity the salvation of men!

"You have ascended on high"—there is Christ Jesus. "You have received gifts for men"—there is the Father, bestowing those gifts. The Gift itself is the Holy Spirit. This is the great generosity of Christ's Ascension which He bestowed on His Church at Pentecost. Thus you have Father, Son and Holy Spirit blessedly co-working for the benediction of men, the conquest of evil, the establishment of righteousness. O my Soul, delight yourself in Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

One of the sins of modern theology is keeping these divine Persons in the background so that they are scarcely mentioned in their several workings and offices. The theology which can feed your souls must be full of Godhead and yield to Father, Son and Holy Spirit perpetual praise. Beloved, the gifts here spoken of are those brought by the Holy Spirit. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." He said again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." We read that He, "spoke of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him should receive." "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" To con-

quer the world for Christ we need nothing but the Holy Spirit and in the hour of His personal victory He secured us this Gift. If the Holy Spirit is but given we have in Him all the weapons of our holy war.

But observe, according to Paul, these gifts which our Lord gave are *embodied in men*, for the Holy Spirit comes upon men whom He has chosen and works through them according to His good pleasure. Therefore He gave some Apostles, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. No one may be judged to be given of God to the Church in any of these offices unless the Spirit dwells upon him. All are given of God upon whom the Holy Spirit rests, whatever their office may be. It is ours to accept with great joy the men who are chosen and anointed to speak in the name of the Lord, be they what they may.

Paul, Apollos, Cephas—they are all the *gifts* of the risen Christ to His redeemed ones for their edifying and perfecting! The Holy Spirit, in proportion as He abides in these servants of God, makes them to be precious blessings of Heaven to His people and they become the champions by whom the world is subdued to the Lord Jesus Christ. These gifts, given in the form of men, *are given for men*. Churches do not exist for preachers, but preachers for Churches. We have sometimes feared that certain Brothers thought that the assemblies of Believers were formed to provide situations for clerical persons—but, indeed, it is not so.

My Brothers and Sisters in the Church, we who are your pastors are your *servants* for Christ's sake. Our rule is not that of lordship, but of love. Every God-sent minister, if he discharges his duty aright, waits upon the bride of Christ with loving diligence and delights greatly to hear the Bridegroom's voice. I wish that you who talk of my Lord's servants as if they were rival performers would cease, thus, to profane the gifts of the ascended King. The varying abilities of those by whom the Lord builds up His Church are all arranged by infinite wisdom and it should be ours to make the most we can of them.

Comparing and contrasting the Lord's gifts is unprofitable work. It is better to drink of the well of Elim than to grow hot and feverish in disputing as to whether it is better or worse than Beersheba or Sychar. One minister may be better for you than another, but another may be better for somebody else than the one you prefer. The least gifted may be essential to a certain class of mind—therefore despise no one. When God gives gifts, shall you turn them away contemptuously and say, "I like this one but the other I do not"? Did the Father bestow these gifts upon His Son and has the Holy Spirit put them into different earthen vessels that the excellency of the power might be of God—and will you begin judging them?

No, Beloved, the Lord has sent me to preach His Gospel and I rejoice to feel that I am sent for your sake. I entreat you to profit as much as you can by me by frequent hearing, by abounding faith, by practical obedience to the Word. Use all God's servants as you are able to profit by them. Hear them prayerfully—not for the indulgence of your curiosity, nor for the pleasing of your ear with rhetoric—but that you, through the Word of God,

may feel His Spirit working in our hearts all the purpose of His will. Our conversion, sanctification, comfort, instruction and usefulness all come to us by the Holy Spirit—and that Spirit sends His powerful message by the men whom He has given to be His mouths to men.

See how wonderful, then, was that ascension of our Lord in which He scattered down mercies so rich and appropriate among the sons of men! From His glorious elevation above all heavens He sends forth pastors, preachers and evangelists, through whom the Holy Spirit works mightily in them that believe. By them He gathers the redeemed together and builds them up as a Church to His glory!

IV. I want the attention, now, of all who are unconverted for I have glorious tidings for them. To them I speak under my fourth head, OUR LORD'S TRIUMPH HAS A VERY SPECIAL BEARING. "You have received gifts *for men*"—not for angels, not for devils, but for *men*—poor fallen men. I read not that it is said, "for bishops or ministers," but, "for men." And yet there is a special character mentioned. Does the text particularly mention, "saints," or those that have not defiled their garments? No, I do not read of them here.

What a strange sovereignty there is about the Grace of God! Truly He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, for in this instance He selects for special mention those that you and I would have passed over without a word! "Yes, *for the rebellious*, also." I must pause to brush my tears away! Where are you, you rebels? Where are those who have lived in rebellion against God all their lives? Alas, you have been in open revolt against Him—you have raged against Him in your hearts and spoken against Him with your tongues!

Some have sinned as drunkards. Others have broken the laws of purity, truth, honesty. Many rebel against the light, violate conscience and disobey the Word—these, also, are among the rebellious. So are the proud, the wrathful, the slothful, the profane, the unbelieving, the unjust. Hear, all of you, these words and carry them home! And if they do not break your hearts with tender gratitude, you are hard, indeed. "Yes, *for the rebellious also*." When our Lord rode Home in triumph He had a pitying heart towards the rebellious! When He entered the highest place to which He could ascend He was still the *sinner's* Friend! When all His pains and griefs were being rewarded with endless horror He turned His eyes upon those who had crucified Him and bestowed gifts upon them! This description includes those who have rebelled against God, though once they professed to be His loyal subjects.

Perhaps I am addressing some who have so far backslidden that they have thrown up all religion and have gone back into the world and its sins—these are apostates from the profession which once they made. To these I would give a word of encouragement if they will turn to the Lord. Once upon a time John Bunyan was under great temptation from the devil. This trial he records in his, "Grace Abounding." He thought that God had given him up and that he was cast away forever and yet he found hope in this text. I have copied out a little bit which refers to it—"I feared,

also, that this was the mark that the Lord set on Cain, even continual fear and trembling under the heavy load of guilt that He had charged him for the blood of his brother Abel.

“Then did I wind and twine and shrink under the burden that was upon me, which burden did also so oppress me that I could neither stand, nor go, nor lie, either at rest or quiet. Yet that saying would sometimes come into my mind, ‘He has received gifts for the rebellious.’ Rebellious, thought I, why surely they are such as once were under subjection to their Prince, even those who, after they had sworn subjection to His government, have taken up arms against Him; and this, thought I, is *my* very condition! Once I loved Him, feared Him, served Him—but now I am a rebel and I have sold Him. I said, let Him go if He will, but yet He has gifts for rebels; *and then why not for me?*”

Oh, that I could cause every despairing heart to reason in this way! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would put this argument into every troubled mind at this moment—“*And then why not for me?*” Come home, dear Brothers and Sisters, come home, for there are gifts for the rebellious—and *why not for you?* I know you deserted the Lord’s Table, but the Lord of the Table has not deserted you! I know you have, as far as you could, forsworn the name of Christ and even wished you could be unbaptized—but that cannot be, nor can the Lord leave you to perish! I know you have eagerly done evil with both hands and perhaps now you are living in a known sin—and when you go home today you will see it before your eyes.

Nevertheless, I charge you, Return unto the Lord at once! Come to your Lord and Savior who still prays, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Behold how in His Glory He “has received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also.” O my Soul, I charge you, on your own account, hang on to this most precious declaration, for you, too, have been a rebel! Would God that all my Brothers and Sisters would be cheered by this dear Word and take it home to themselves with a believing repentance and a holy hatred of sin! I would print the words in stars across the brow of night—“*Yes, for the rebellious, also.*”

V. I have done when I have handled the fifth point, which is this—OUR LORD’S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION SECURES THE CONSUMMATION OF HIS WHOLE WORK. What does it say? “That the Lord God might dwell among them.” When our Lord Christ came here at the first He was willing enough to “dwell” among us, but it could not be. “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” like a Bedouin in his tent, but not as a dweller at home. He could not “dwell” here on that occasion. He was but a *Visitor* and badly treated at that.

“There was no room for Him in the inn,” where everybody else was freely welcome. “He came unto His own”—surely they will lodge Him—“but His own received Him not.” There was no room for Him in the Temple—there He had to use the scourge. There was no room for Him in the open streets for they took up stones to stone Him. Out of the synagogue they hurried him, to cast him down headlong from the brow of the hill. “Away with Him! Away with Him!” was the cry of the ribald crowd. This dear Visi-

tor who came here all unarmed, without sword or bow—they treated as though He had been a spy or an assassin who had stolen among them to do them ill.

And so they ran upon Him with a spear and He, quitting these inhospitable realms which knew Him not, took Home with Him the marks of man's discourtesy. O Earth, Earth! How could you drive away your dearest Friend and compel Him to be as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night? No, worse—as a man astonished who meets with wounding in the house of his friends? After He had risen again He went Home—that from His Throne He might direct a work by which earth should become a place where God could abide. Again is the Temple of God to be with men and He shall dwell among them.

This world of ours has been sprinkled with the precious blood of the Lamb of God and it is no longer as an unclean thing. Jesus is the Lamb of God who so takes away the sin of the world that God can treat with men on terms of Divine Grace and publish free salvation. The Lord God Himself had long been a stranger in the land! Did not the holy man of old say, "I am a stranger with you and a sojourner, as all my fathers were"? But Jesus, the Ascended One, is pouring down such gifts upon this sin-polluted world that it will yet become a new earth wherein dwells righteousness and the God of Righteousness! This promise is partly fulfilled before your own eyes this day for the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and He has never returned.

Jesus said, "He shall abide with you forever." The Holy Dove has often been greatly grieved but He has never spread His wings to depart. This is still the dispensation of the Spirit. You hardly need to pray to have the Spirit poured out for that has been done. What you need is a *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*—namely, to go down *personally* into that glorious flood which has been poured forth. Oh, to be immersed into the Holy Spirit and into fire—covered with His holy influence—"plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea and lost in His immensity!" Here is our life and power, for thus the Lord God does dwell among us!

Ever since the Ascension, the Holy Spirit has remained among men though He has not been, at all seasons, equally active. All through the night of Romanism and the schoolmen He still tarried—there were humble hearts which rejoiced to be His temples even in those doleful days. Today He is still with His regenerated ones. In spite of impudent striving against the Divine Inspiration of His Holy Scripture and, notwithstanding the follies of ecclesiastical amusements, He is with His chosen. Lord, what is man that Your Spirit should dwell with him? But so it is and this is why our Lord went up to Heaven and received Divine gifts that by Him the Lord God might dwell among us.

But there comes a day when this shall be carried out to the letter. I think I hear the angels say, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." Now, "in like manner," must mean in Person. In *Person* our Lord

was taken up into Heaven and in *Person* He will come again! And when He comes the Lord God will, indeed, dwell among us! Oh, that the day would come! We wait and watch for His glorious appearing—for then will He dwell among men in a perfect fashion. What happy days shall we have when Jesus is here!

What a millennium His Presence will bring—there can be no such auspicious era without it—any more than there can be summer without the sun! He must come, first, and then will the golden age begin! The central glory of that period shall be that the Lord is here. “The Lord God shall dwell among them.” Then shall be heard the song which will never end—earth’s homage to the Lord who renewed the heavens and the earth—and has taken up His dwelling in them. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them.”

Up till now this work has been going on and as yet it is incomplete. “Every prospect pleases and only man is vile,” is still most sadly true. The rankness of sin destroys the sweet odors of this world so that the pure and holy God cannot abide in it. But since the Lord Jesus has sweetened it with His sacred merits and the Spirit is purifying it by His residence in men, the Lord smells a savor of rest and He will not give up this poor fallen planet. Even now His angels come and go in heavenly traffic with the chosen.

Soon the little boat of this globe shall be drawn nearer to the great ship and earth shall lie alongside Heaven. Then shall men praise God day and night in His Temple. Heaven shall find her choristers among the ransomed from among men. The whole world shall be as a censer filled with incense for the Lord of Hosts. All this will be because of those gifts received and bestowed by our Lord Jesus in the day when He returned to His Glory, leading captivity captive! O Lord, hasten Your coming! We are sure that Your abiding Presence and glorious reign will come in due season. Your coming down secured Your going up—Your going up secures Your coming down again. Therefore we bless and magnify You, O ascended Lord, with all our hearts and rise after You as You draw us upward from groveling things. So be it! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Psalm 68; Ephesians 4:1-13.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—322, 317, 449.

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DAILY BLESSINGS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

NO. 3493

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE., NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1871.

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”
Psalm 68:19, 20.

WE observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm and to master it means much labor. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it comes to practical duties and to those Doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture—wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital Truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew! With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Savior hung upon the tree, the darkness is past and the true light shines there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the Gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses and remark that *they remind us first, of the mercies of life*. “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits.” They then *assure us of the mercies of death*. “He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” And then the two verses tell us of *the common occupation of both life and death*, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of His benefits, or whether He opens for me the gates of the grave.

Let us begin, then, and contemplate for a few moments—

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text says, “He daily loads us with benefits.” Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that He gives us? Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language—*benevolence*. You know that means good wishing, *bene volens*. He may be

a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any, but God's goodness to us is not merely bene volens, in which He wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing! His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He does to us that which is good. He does not only wish us well and speak to us well, and direct us well, but He does well unto us. He does not only say, "I pity your last estate," but He delivers the lost out of their ruin. He does not say, as the churl does, "Be you warmed and be you filled," and does no more, but, wishing us well, He does well unto us—He warms our hearts with His love, fills them with His mercy and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks well to us. What more could He say to us than He has said in His blessed Word? It is true He wishes us well. "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live." But the essence of His goodness lies in this—that He goes beyond wishes and words into acts

Begin, Brothers and Sisters, with the greatest of His acts. "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." In that gift He has already given us all things. And from that blessed pledge He has never gone back, but He has given us all that we need for this life and for the life to come—for you have Divine Grace and glory, and have abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the lower springs. If Christ is our perpetual Bread and Wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayers, is given us according to His assurance, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear Brother, dear Sister? Turn them over in your mind—the benefits that you have actually yourself received—not only read of, and heard of, and had promises of, but that *you have received*. Oh, the benefits of early education! The being restrained from sin! Oh, the benefits of conviction! Of being enlightened and made to see the guilt of sin. Oh, the sweet benefit of being led to the Savior! Made to stand at the foot of the Cross, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh, the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness which covers us and justifies us in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God—of preservation from falling into final, vital sin—of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of! Some of them come in at the front door of the house—some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. You shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the sand upon beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of His benefits!

Leave that word, then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that He *loads* us with them—loads us with benefits!

He does not put a little upon us of His goodness, but much—very much—until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it! I have desired to praise Him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the Psalmist and say, “Praise is silent for You, O God, in Zion.” It seemed as if “words were but air, and tongues but clay, and His compassion’s so Divine,” that it was impossible to speak of them! His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as thick and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heaving of the lungs, pulsing of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God’s continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. “Plagues and death around us fly.” God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts—where might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walks both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so numerous and each one so weighty that we cannot say less than this, “That He daily *loads* us with His benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to His mercy.” “He loads us with benefits.”

Oh, are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals harshly with you? Well, you are what you are by His Grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be—few admire that residence. In the prison you might be—God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be—better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave’s mouth you might be—on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God’s holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In Hell you might be among the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because Your Grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, “You have loaded us with benefits.”

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God’s children. You are joint-heirs with Christ. “All things are yours.” Yes, and “things to come,” you have guaranteed, too—preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end! The “many mansions” are for you. The palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be! In all the gifts of His Ascension you have a part. In the gifts that come to us through His session at the right hand of God, you have your share. And in the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake! See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, He loads you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door and you shall give to him all he needs for food, and cover him and give him something to make his heart glad. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again tomorrow? You might find it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon you seven days in the week? I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time! If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach. Don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah, this is man! But look at God. He *daily* loads us with benefits! How many days has He done that with some of us? Thirty years? "Ah," says one, "I can talk of 60 years"—yes, and some of you of 70 and 80 years! Well, He has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, as far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King's table and receive a portion from Him. And yet you murmur! You have been unbelieving, proud, idle—all sorts of ill-temperers have you shown. Yet has He daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God's love, but up to this hour His love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon His bank, but that bank has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won't do for today. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh! When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam! And when He shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He "daily loads us with benefits"—every day. And He loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick and tossing to and fro upon the bed, He still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sometimes sends His choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of Heaven come to us and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith's eyes have seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How He loads us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear Brother who is almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of some such exclamation as this, "Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one! It is blest seven times over!" And, indeed, so it is. He loads us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies, too—and right on to the close of Saturday night, the Lord continues to heap on His mercies, one after another, that He may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking Him than He will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness!

There is one other word—a very little one, but a sweet one, too—“Blessed is the Lord, who daily loads *us* with benefits.” “*Us*.” Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul and herein lies the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvelous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that He should load *me* with benefits! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I do not feel your imperfections and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the Sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you. But I know some of my own shortcomings, and they seem to me to be greater than those of others and, therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that He should load *me* with benefits—

***“Why do I meet to hear His voice,
And enter where there’s room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that—I am compelled to feel that if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord’s mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of His Infinite Grace! Let us bless the Lord at this hour because He loads us with benefits when He might have passed us by! He might have allowed us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then He might have made us reap forever that which we had sown! Instead of this, He has made us—many of us—however unlikely persons—to be His chosen ones and He has loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal—indeed, is not the meaning of the passage. Those of you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words, “*who*,” and, “*with benefits*,” are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense. But some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, “Blessed is the Lord, who daily bears our burdens.” And I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that He loads us, as that He lifts our load for us and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, “He daily bears our burden,” and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this Tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them! “Cast all your care on Him, for He cares for you.” A man who has a burden-bearer, certainly need not bear the burden himself! Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay her burden. She has a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God! But unbelief, with a far less load than Faith easily carries, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever your burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God! You have done your little all—now leave it. Your

fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change the night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born—it will when you are dead. Leave the helm. Whenever you have been foremost, you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers, but when God has been foremost and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake, then! And when God has been your Shepherd, you have been compelled to say, “I shall not want.” Oh, then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens.”

And then the text adds that He is “the God of our salvation.” In this life we ought to praise Him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection—that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of His salvation! It is true I am poor, but I am saved! It is true I am sick, but I am saved! It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved! The salvation of God sweetens all! Then is it added to that, it is “our” salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, “This is mine,” is rich to all the intents of bliss and has his daily life gilded with joy!

And then it is added beyond that, “*our* God.” God is ours! He that is our God is the God of salvation. His Omnipotence and Omniscience, His Immutability and His Faithfulness—all His attributes are ours! The Father is ours, the Son is ours and the Spirit is ours. The God of Election is ours! The God of Redemption is ours! The God of Sanctification is ours. Oh, with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine? We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord! Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate on—

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

“Unto God belong the issues from death.” This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belongs *escapes from death*. Oh, blessed be His name, we may come very near the grave and the jaws of Death may be open to receive us—but the Pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come—

***“Plagues of death around me fly—
Till He please, I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit,
Until the God of Love sees fit.
What though a thousand at your side,
At your right hand ten thousand, died?
Our God, His chosen people saves,
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves”***

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty—it is better to die in service than live in idleness—better to glorify God and depart, than rot

above ground in neglecting what He would have us to do! Unto God belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong *the issues that lead actually down to death*. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the belief that Christ will come and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ—in actually passing through the grave and rising again—than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. “To” die is “gain”—and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will be at God's bidding. No one has the key of death but the Lord of Life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in Hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ's flock! Till God says, “Return,” our spirit shall not leave the body and we may be well content to depart when God says the time is come. Oh, how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends. The Master took them Home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly nor by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the Infinite Love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death—that is, *the coming up from death again*. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered, for His Word says if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, “so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Savior! Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulcher He shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, Beloved! What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants and, in due time, feed animals, and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet He that made us can re-make us! And the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. “Unto God belong the issues from death.” In this we are comforted—to fall asleep—because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp *all that comes after death*. The spirit issues from death—indeed, never touched by it. Leaving the body behind a while, the soul enters into a Glory, waiting for the fullness. Then when Christ descends and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the First Resurrection, then shall the reunited manhood enter into the fullness of the Glory with a manifested

Savior. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to His people. He shall give them to them for whom He has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom He has made worthy by His Grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to Him—not to us by merit, but they are His gifts by Covenant and by Grace. Oh, then, how sweet it is to think, “The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all His—all His own. And when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulcher, I shall be in my Father’s territory.” Jesus Christ is Lord of the sickbed. He makes the bed of His people in their affliction. Even down to the borders of the grave—to the edge of Jordan’s river—it is all Immanuel’s land and He often makes it the land of Beulah! And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master’s country! I am not out of the Presence of the Lord of Life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is still the Master’s river and, on the other side, it is my Lord’s own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jeweled “city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God,” I shall be always at home, always in my Father’s country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which He has no power! “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for He is with me. His rod and His staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me.” Be of good cheer, Beloved, “Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life,” and life being ended, you shall “dwell in the house of your God forever.” In life and in death you shall prove the tokens of His special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is—

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

***“I will praise You in life,
I will praise You in death—
I will praise You as long
As You lend me breath.”***

“I will praise you forever and ever.” The one occupation of a Christian is to praise His God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain, by God’s Grace, a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind. And we must endeavor to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning’s work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening’s work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God! Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with His praise—and also during the day! We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. “Oh,” says one, “even in trouble?” Yes, in every bitter trouble, too, for Job could say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” “But are we never to be sorrowful?” Yes, yet always rejoicing. “How can that be?” Ah, may the Lord teach you! It is a work of Grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of His Countenance upon us, even when heart

and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God! Do as much as you can. When your heart is glad, try to praise Him with your lips. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps if you work in company, you cannot—but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them—at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not need to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord who loads you with benefits in life and in death! Therefore, habitually praise Him. And, Brothers and Sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to the praise of Him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when He stops having mercy upon you—not till then! And as there is always a new mercy coming to your doors, let new praise be going up out of your hearts. “But how can I praise God by my actions?” asks one. “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.” I have tried to praise God by my preaching tonight. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades! Any work, any lawful calling may be to the Christian priest—(and all Christians are priests)—the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment! You can make your meal a sacrament. You can make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar—the bells upon the horses shall be “holiness unto the Lord.”

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, to close, let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise Him, too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist, here, who says for himself, “Blessed be the Lord,” is the writer of the 67th Psalm! You know how he says there, “Let the people praise You—yes, let all the people praise You! Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!” Then he says again, “Let the people praise You, O God; yes, let all the people praise You!” Do your utmost to be the means, in God's hands, of bringing others to praise Him! Tell them what He has done for you. Tell them of His saving Grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be—

***“All your business here below
To say, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”***

and in this way you will be setting other tongues to praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labor for this, Beloved, everyone of you. Labor for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Savior! I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, “It is enough for me if I am saved and if those who go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough.” No, Master, Your Throne is not to be set up in some little meeting in a back street, and there, alone. You are not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there, alone. You are not to take

this island of Great Britain, and reign in it, alone—nor in Europe—only in one quarter of the earth, alone. Let the whole earth be filled with His praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, “Amen and amen”? God grant it may be so! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 3; 4:1-6.**

These may be called very properly morning and evening Psalms. Psalm 3 is the morning Psalm.

PSALM 3.

A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son.

A dark hour, that, for David, preceded by the shadows of his own sin—and now deepened by the horrible hatred of his own favorite child who conspired to take his kingdom and his life!

Verse 1. *LORD how are they increased that trouble me!* As if he could not measure his troubles. He stands amazed. He makes his appeal to God.

2, 3. *Many are they that rise up against me. Many there are who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.* That is the worst of all, when they begin to ridicule his religion! He was a man who had said much of his faith in God—and in former days he had done great marvels by trusting in the living God—but now one and another dared to say openly that God had cast him off.

3. *But You, O LORD, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.* The word in the Hebrew is a bigger word than the word, *shield*. It is a buckler—a kind of guard above, around, beneath—an all-surrounding defense. “You, Lord, are a shield for me. They cannot harm me. They cannot kill me. I am still guarded by God and, what is more, You are my glory. Though my glory is taken away, yet I glory in You! Whatever else I have not, I have a God, a God that I dare glory in, too, for there is no such God as He is. You are the lifter up of my head.” My head is still above water. I do not yet sink, and my head shall rise again. Though I bow it down like a bulrush, now, I shall one day praise Him. I know that I shall, for He is the health of my countenance.

4. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Selah.* He means that he loved to pray alone, but to use his voice in prayer. I have heard many Christians say that they can pray better when they can hear their own voices—they are better able to collect their thoughts. *The voice is not necessary to prayer.* It is the mere body of prayer. Still, a right healthy body may help the soul and, sometimes, the use of the voice may help the spirit. David says that he cried to God—and then it happened to him, as it always happens to us—“He heard me out of His holy hill.”

5. *I laid down and slept.* Far from the palace and from the place of worship where he loved to meet with God.

5. *I awakened, for the LORD sustained me.* I was kept through the night watches—through restless anxiety I slept. Now God sustains our hearts, even when we are asleep, or else we would not sleep. We would be restless and wakeful. But God gives us a peace before we fall asleep, which abides with us as a blessed balm of rest—and so we sleep.

6, 7. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God, for You have smitten all my enemies upon the cheek bone. You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.* They were like fierce lions threatening to devour him! They had already torn him in malice. God came and smote them on the jaw, so that they lost their strength to injure him.

8. *Salvation belongs unto the LORD: Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.* That is a sweet morning hymn! Sound Calvinistic Doctrine, that. "Salvation belongs unto the Lord." It is He who saves man. It is He who delivers those who are saved. And here is the specialty and peculiarity of His Grace—"Your blessing is upon Your people." Oh, to be remembered with them! Then, even if an Absalom should persecute us, the blessing is not withdrawn, for this is entailed upon the children of God. "Your blessing is upon Your people." Now for the evening hymn.

PSALM 4.

Verse 1. *Hear me, when I call, O God of my righteousness: You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.* Past experience is a sweet solace in the hour of trouble. "You have enlarged me when I was in distress." Think of what God has been to you, you tried ones, for He will always be the same! And can He have taught you to trust in His name and thus far have brought you, to put you to shame? Is this God's way—to be gracious to His people and then to turn against them? God forbid! Pray, then, with the grateful memory of all His loving kindness. "You have enlarged me when I was in distress. Have mercy upon me and hear my prayer."

2. *O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity and seek after lies? Selah.* How long will you take to lies? How long will you abuse a character which deserves not your censure? How long will you pour contempt upon God, whom you ought to serve?

3. *But know*—He talks to them as if they did not know—while they thought themselves the most knowing people in the world!

3. *That the LORD has set apart him that is godly for Himself.* He has marked him out to be His own peculiar treasure. "The Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Now if God has marked out His people to be His own, He will defend them! He will guard them against every adversary. They shall not be destroyed.

3. *The LORD will hear when I call unto Him.* The sweet assurance that prayer will prevail is one of the best comforts in the cloudy and dark day!

4. *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still. Selah.* Tremble and sin not! Unhappily, there are many who *sin and tremble not*. They reverse the text. A trembling saint is often all the more saint because he trembles. Tremble and sin not. If there is not a mixture of prayer with our hope and our confidence, it is like meat without salt on it. It is apt to grow corrupt in prosperous sunny weather. Oh, for the fear of God in our hearts! Stand in awe and sin not. Commune with your own heart. A man ought to be the best of company to himself. It is one reason why we should be well acquainted with the Word of God—that if ever we are left alone, we may be good companions to ourselves. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Hush that babel! Let God speak. Get to your bed, away from the noise of the streets and the roll of the traffic. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Some men cannot bear stillness. The quiet of their own hearts disturbs them. There must be something very rotten in the state of the man's life who loves not some seasons of solitude. Some of us are less alone when we are alone, and most at home even when others count themselves abroad. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.* Bring your prayers, your praises. Present to God your hearts, your love, your trust.

5, 6. *And put your trust in the LORD.* *There are many who say, Who will show us any good?* Gaping about for some good thing! Thirsting—they know not what they are thirsting for! “Who will show us any good?” Come from the east, or the west, or the north, or the south—only bring us something that promises pleasure—and we are your men. There are many who say, “Who will show us any good?” But we say not so. Our saying is another sort.

6. *LORD, lift You up the light of Your Countenance upon us.* Is not that what many of you are saying tonight? You know what you want. You know that there is nothing else that will satisfy you. “Lord, lift you up the light of Your Countenance upon us.” We are not well. Lord, we ask You that it may be well between our souls and You.

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

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

THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE

NO. 1523

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord
belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the
head of His enemies and the hairy scalp of such
an one as goes on still in his trespasses.”
Psalm 68:20, 21.***

WHATEVER may be said of the Old Testament dispensation, however dimly it may have revealed certain Truths of God, there was one matter about which it was clear as the sun. Under the Old Testament economy the Lord God of Israel is always most conspicuous. God is in all and over all—and from the pages of the Prophets, as well as from the lips of the temple choirs, we hear loudly sounding forth the note—“The Lord shall reign forever, even your God, O Zion, unto all generations. Hallelujah!” By priest and Prophet, saint and Seer, the one testimony is borne, “The Lord reigns.” You cannot read the Book of Job without trembling in the majestic Presence of the Almighty. Nor can you turn to the Psalms without being filled with solemn awe as you see David and Asaph and Heman adoring the Lord who made Heaven and earth and the sea.

Everywhere, from Abraham to Malachi, man is of small account and God is All in All. Very little consideration is given to any fancied rights and claims of man and wonder is expressed that the Creator should be mindful of him. We read no discourse upon the dignity of human nature, or upon the beauty of human character, but rather God, alone, is holy and when He looks from Heaven He sees none that does good, no, not one! Man is rolled in the dust from which he sprang and to which he must return. All his pride is cut down and his comeliness withered and over all is seen one God and none beside Him.

It will be a great offense if, coming into the brighter light of the New Testament, we are less vivid in our conceptions of the Glory of God. If God should be less clearly seen in the Person of our Lord Jesus than He was under the symbols of the Law, it will be the fault of our blinded hearts. It will be ill for us to turn day into night and, like owls, see less because the light is increased! Let it not be so among us, but let it be in our Churches as in Israel of old, of which it was said, “in Judah is God known. His name is great in Israel.” “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has, in these last days spoken unto us by His Son,” and by Him, as the Incarnate Word, He has revealed Himself with a sevenfold splendor and, therefore, it should be our soul’s great delight to perceive God in all things—to rejoice in His Presence and to magnify Him in all things as King of kings and Lord of lords!

The Psalmist, in this particular case, ascribes to the Lord universal action and power over us, for he ascribes to Him the mercies of life and the

issues of death. He says, “Blessed is the Lord who daily loads us with benefits.” The Lord heaps up His favors till their number loads the memory and their value burdens the shoulders of gratitude. He gives us so many mercies that the mind is burdened in endeavoring to calculate their worth! We are overwhelmed with a sense of His goodness and the consciousness that we cannot return any adequate thanks for such abundance of daily Grace. Such is our God in life and what will He be in death? Shall we be without Him there?

No, blessed be His name, “Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” His kingdom includes the land of death-shade and all the borders thereof. We shall not die without His permission, nor without His Presence! Though temporal mercies will find their end when life ends, yet there are *eternal* mercies which throughout eternal life shall manifest the goodness of the Most High. And meanwhile, by rescues, recoveries and escapes, we shall be preserved from prematurely descending to the tomb. If any of you, dear Friends, have been brought near to the gates of death; if you have been laid low by wearisome sickness; if your heart has sunk within you in a sort of mental death, you will, in coming back to health and strength, most heartily bless the Lord who finds for us a way of return from the suburbs of the sepulcher!

He is not only the God of life but the God of death. He keeps us in life and makes life happy. He keeps us from death and from the fierce agencies which wait to drag us to the grave. There are issues out of the dark border-land of sickness and peril and despair—and the Lord leads us by His own right hand to cause us to escape. Does He not say, “I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea”? We must and we will praise Him for this with a new song! I gather from our text that death is in the hand of God; that escapes from death are manifestations of His Divine power and that He is to be praised for them.

The outline of this morning’s discourse, as indicated by the text, is just this—first, the sovereign prerogative of God, “To God the Lord belong the issues from death.” Secondly, the Character of the Sovereign with whom this prerogative is lodged, “He that is our God is the God of salvation.” And then, thirdly, the solemn warning which this great Sovereign gives in reference to the exercise of His prerogative. Weighty are the words! May the Holy Spirit cause us to feel their power—“God shall wound the head of His enemies and the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses.”

I. First, then, with deep reverence, let us speak upon THE SOVEREIGN PREROGATIVE OF GOD—“Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” Kings have been accustomed to keep the power of life and death in their own hands. The great King of kings, the Sovereign Ruler and absolute Lord of all worlds reserves this to Himself—that He shall permit men to die, or shall give them an issue or escape from death at His own good will and pleasure. He can alike create and destroy. He sends forth His Spirit and they are created and at His own pleasure He says, “Return, you children of men,” and lo, they fall before Him like autumn’s faded leaves!

The prerogative of life or death belongs to God in a wide range of senses. First of all, as to natural life we are all dependent upon His good pleasure. We shall not die until the time which He appoints, for the time of our death, like all our time, is in His hands. Our skirts may brush against the portals of the sepulcher and yet we shall pass the iron gate unharmed if the Lord is our Guard. The wolves of disease will hunt us in vain until God shall permit them to overtake us. The most desperate enemies may waylay us, but no bullet shall find its billet in any heart unless the Lord allows it. Our life does not even depend upon the care of angels, nor can our death be compassed by the malice of devils. We are immortal till our work is done! We are immortal till the immortal King shall call us Home to the land where we shall be immortal in a still higher sense.

When we are most sick and most ready to faint into the grave, we need not despair of recovery, since the issues from death are in Almighty hands. "The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down to the grave and brings up." When we have passed beyond the skill of the physician, we have not passed beyond the succor of our God, to whom belong the escapes from death. Spiritually, too, this prerogative is with God. We are by nature under the condemnation of the Law on account of our sins and we are like criminals tried, convicted, sentenced and left for death. It is for God, as the great Judge, to see the sentence executed, or to issue a free pardon, according as He pleases! And He will have us know that it is upon His supreme pleasure that this matter depends.

Over the head of a universe of sinners I hear this sentence thundering, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Shut up for death, as men are by reason of their sins, it rests with God to pardon whom He wills—none have any claim to His favor and it must be exercised upon mere prerogative because He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious and He delights to pass by transgression and sin. So, too, does the Lord deliver His own believing people from those "deaths often" which make up their experience. Though we are delivered in Christ Jesus from death as a penalty, yet we often feel an *inward* death caused by the old nature which exercises a deadening influence within us. We feel the sentence of death in ourselves that we may not trust in ourselves, but in Jesus, in whom our life is hid.

It may be that for a season our joys are dampened, our spiritual vigor is drained away and we hardly know whether we have any spiritual life left within us. We become like the trees in winter whose substance is in them but the sap ceases to flow and there is neither fruit nor leaf to betray the secret life within. We scarcely feel a spiritual emotion in these sad times and dare not write ourselves among the living in Zion! At such times the Lord can give us back the fullness of life! Only He can restore our soul from the pit of corruption and cause us not only to have life but to have it more abundantly. The escapes from death are with the quickening Spirit and when our soul cleaves to the dust He can revive us, again, till we rejoice with unspeakable joy!

As the climax of all, when we shall actually come to die and these bodies of ours shall descend into the remorseless grave, as probably they will—in the hands of our Redeeming Lord are the escapes from death! The

archangel is even now waiting for the signal—one blast of his trumpet shall suffice to gather the chosen from all lands—from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north! Then Death, itself, shall die away and the righteous shall arise—

***“From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day.”***

“I am the Resurrection and the Life,” says Christ, and He is both of these to all His people. Is He not Life, for He says, “Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”? Is He not Resurrection, for He says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”? That bright illustrious day in which the saints shall rise with their Lord will show how unto God, the Lord, belong the escapes from death!

Our translation is a very happy one, because it bears so many renderings and includes not only escape from death, deliverance from condemnation, revival from spiritual death and uplifting from deadly mental depression, but recovery from death’s direct havoc by our being raised again from the tomb! In all these respects the Lord Jesus has the key of death—He opens and no man shuts—He shuts and no man opens. Concerning this prerogative we may say, first, that to God belongs the right to exercise it. This right springs, first, from His being our Creator. He says, “all souls are Mine.” He has an absolute right to do with us as He pleases, seeing He has made us and not we ourselves. Men forget what they are and boast great things, but truly, they are but as clay on the potter’s wheel and He can fashion them or can break them as He pleases. They don’t think so, but He knows their thoughts that they are vain.

Oh the dignity of man! What a theme for a sarcastic discourse! As the frog in the fable swelled itself till it burst asunder, so does man, in his pride and envy against his Maker, who, nevertheless, sits upon the circle of the heavens and reckons men as though they were grasshoppers and regards whole nations of them as the small dust of the balance! The Lord’s prerogative of creation is manifestly widened morally by our forfeiture of any consideration which might have arisen out of obedience and rectitude if we had possessed them. Our fault has involved forfeiture of the creature’s claims, whatever they may have been. We are all guilty of high treason and we have, each one, been guilty of personal rebellion and, therefore, we have not the rights of citizens, but lie under sentence of condemnation.

What says the Infallible Voice of God? “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” We have come under this curse—Justice has pronounced us guilty and by nature we abide under condemnation. If, then, the Lord shall be pleased to deliver us from death, it rests with Him to do so, but we have no right to any such deliverance, nor can we urge any argument which would avail in the courts of justice for reversal of sentence or stay of execution! Before the bar of justice our case must go hard if we set up any plea of not-guilty. We shall be driven away with the disdain of the impartial Judge if we urge our suit upon that line! Our wisest course is to appeal to His mercy and to His Sovereign Grace, for there, alone, is our hope.

Understand me clearly—if the Lord shall suffer us *all* to perish, we shall only receive our just deserts and we have not, one of us, a shade of claim

upon His mercy—we are, therefore, absolutely in His hands and to Him belong the escapes from death. This right of God to save is further made manifest by the redemption of His people. It might have been said that God had no right to save if, by saving, He would abridge His justice. But now that He has laid help upon One that is mighty and His only-begotten Son has become a Victim in our place—to magnify the Law and make it honorable—the Lord God has an unquestionable right to deliver from death His own redeemed for whom the Substitute has died! Our God saves His people in consistency with justice—no one can question His doing right even when He justifies the ungodly. His right and power over the escapes from death are, in the case of His own blood-bought ones, clear as the sun at noon and who shall dispute with Him?

Our text, however, puts the prerogative upon the one sole ground of lordship and we prefer to come back to that. “Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” It is a doctrine which is very unpalatable in these days, but one, nevertheless, which is to be held and taught—that God is an absolute Sovereign and does as He wills. The words of Paul may not be suffered to sleep—“No, but O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus?” The Lord cannot do wrong. His perfect Nature is a law unto itself! In His case Rex is Lex—the King is *the* Law! He is the Source and Fountain of all right, truth, rule and order. Being absolutely perfect within Himself and comprehending all things, it is not possible for Him to do otherwise than right. He is Goodness, Truth and Righteousness itself and, therefore, the prerogatives of His Throne are not bound and to the Lord of Heaven and earth belong the issues from death!

Enough with regard to that matter of right. I go on to notice that the Lord has the *power* of this prerogative. With Him is the ability to deliver men from natural death. Jehovah Rophi is a Physician who is never baffled. Medicines may fail, but not the great Maker of all plants and herbs and useful drugs! Study and experience may be at a nonplus, but He who fashioned the human frame knows its most intricate parts and can soon correct its disorders! God can restore when a hundred diseases are upon us all at once. Take courage, you fainting ones and look up! Certainly, as to the soul, there is no case of man so far gone that God cannot find an issue out of its death. He can cast out seven devils and a legion of diabolical sins! To God, the Lord, belong the issues from death, however foul the sin and however forlorn the condition caused by transgression. He who raised Lazarus from the grave after four days can raise the most corrupt from the grave of their iniquities. O that awakened sinners would believe this!

I remember reading of an aged minister who had, for some years, fallen into deep despondency. He gave up his pulpit and kept himself very much alone, always writing bitter things against himself. At last, when he was on his sick bed, a servant of God was sent to him who dealt wisely with him. This good man said to the despairing one, “Brother, do you believe that passage, ‘He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him?’” “I believe it,” he said, “with all my heart, but I am convinced”—here the other stopped him. “I do not ask what your convic-

tions may be, nor what your feelings may be, but I come to say to you that the man who trusts that promise lives." This plain declaration of the Gospel was made, by the Divine Comforter, the means of supreme consolation to the despairing one!

May it be equally useful to all those who hear it. He who can hang his soul's hope upon the infinite ability of Christ to save, is a saved man! He that believes on Him has everlasting life! What a blessing this is! The devil may tell me that I can never escape out of deserved death and that I am shut up forever under the just results of my trespasses. My own conscience, knowing my undeservingness, may also condemn me a thousand times over! But unto God, the Lord, belong the escapes from death and *He* can and will pluck me from between the jaws of death since I believe in Him! He is able to bring up those whom He ordains to save even from the utmost depths of despair!

The absolute right of God is supported by almighty power and thus His prerogative is made a matter of fact. Nor is this all—the Lord has actually exercised this prerogative in abundant cases. As to those issues from death which are seen in restoration from sickness, I need not remind you that these are plentiful enough. At times these have come in a miraculous form, as when Hezekiah had his life lengthened in answer to prayer and when many others were healed by the Savior and His Apostles. Life has been preserved in a lion's den and in the belly of a fish; in a fiery furnace and in the heart of the sea. Death has no arrow in his quiver which can hurt the man whom God ordains to live! Out of imminent peril the Lord still delivers in the ordinary course of Providence and there are persons present, this morning, who are proofs of His interposing power. He has raised some of us from prostration of body and depression of spirit. He has rescued others from shipwreck and fire in very singular ways and here we are, living to praise God, as we do this day!

God has exercised this prerogative spiritually. In what a myriad of cases has He delivered souls from death! Ask yon white-robed hosts in Heaven, "Has not God displayed in you His sovereign power to save?" Ask many here below who have tasted that He is gracious and they will tell you, "He saved me." According to His mercy He has issued a free pardon, signed by His royal hand, saying, "Deliver him from going down into the Pit, for I have found a Ransom." Why His sovereignty has interposed to rescue us from death we cannot tell. We often ask, "Why was I made to hear His voice? How was it that I was chosen to live?" But we are silent with grateful wonder and invent no answer! Divine will, backed by Divine power, worked out the sovereign purpose of love and here we are, saved from so great a death by love invincible. Yes, indeed, to God the Lord belong the escapes from death!

Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, let Him have all the glory for it! If you are alive after a long sickness, bless the Lord, who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases! If you are saved from condemnation this morning and know it, bless the Lord who accepts us in the Beloved! If you feel, at this moment, that the death of sin has no dominion over you, for the life of Grace reigns within, then bless the Lord who has quickened you into newness of life! Glorify His name this day, who, in love to your

soul, has delivered you from the pit of corruption and cast all your sins behind His back! Once more, if you have a glorious hope of a blessed resurrection and feel that you can smile on death because God smiles on you, then bless the Lord who will raise you up at the last day! Your Redeemer lives and you shall live because He lives! Therefore clap your hands with holy glee! Bless the all-glorious name of Him to whom belong the issues or escapes from death!

II. Thus have I set forth the prerogative. And now, secondly, follow me with your thoughts while I show THE CHARACTER OF THE SOVEREIGN in whom that prerogative is vested. We cannot, upon this earth, exhibit much love to human princes who claim absolute dominion. Imperialism is not to our mind. Among the worst curses that have ever fallen upon mankind have been absolute monarchs—nowadays men shake them off as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. The Lord grant we may see the last of all despotic dynasties and that the nations may be free. We cannot endure a tyrant and yet if we could have absolutely perfect despots, it might be the best possible form of government.

Assuredly, the great and eternal God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, is absolutely perfect and we may be well content to leave all prerogatives and vest all powers in His hands. He has never trampled on the rights of the meanest, nor forgotten the weakest. His foot does not needlessly crush a worm, nor does He beat down a fly in wantonness. He has never done a wrong, nor worked an injustice. We oppress each other, but the Judge of all oppresses none! The Lord is holy in all His ways and His mercy endures forever and the amplest prerogatives are safely lodged in such hands.

Our text yet further tells us who it is in whose hands the issues of life and death are left—"He that is our God is the God of salvation." Sinner, your *salvation* rests with God, but do not, therefore, be discouraged, for that God with whom the matter rests is the God of salvation, or of, "salvations," for so the Hebrew has it. What do we mean by this? The Scripture signifies, first, that salvation is the most glorious of all God's designs. Since this world was made, the working out of salvation has run through its story like a silver thread. The Lord made the world and lit up moon and stars and set Heaven, earth and sea in order with His eyes upon salvation in the whole arrangement. He has ruled all things by His supreme government with the same end.

The great wheels of His Providence have been revolving these 6,000 years before the eyes of men and among them. And at their back a hand has been always passing to conduct every movement to the ultimate issue which is the *salvation* of the covenanted ones! This is the object which is dearest to Jehovah's heart. He loves best to save! God was pleased with Creation, but not as He is with Redemption. When He made the heavens and the earth it was everyday work to Him. He merely spoke and said, "It is good." But when He gave His Son to die to redeem His people and His elect were being saved, He did not speak with the prosaic brevity of creation—He sang! Is it not written, "He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over you with singing"?

Redemption is a matter which Jehovah sings about! Are you able to imagine what it must be for God to sing? For Father, Son and Holy Spirit to burst forth into a joyous hymn over the work of salvation? This is because salvation is dearest to God's heart and in it His whole Nature is most intensely engaged. Judgment is His strange work, but He delights in mercy! He has put forth many attributes in the accomplishment of other works, but in this He has laid out all His Being. He is seen in this as mighty to save. Herein He has bared His arm. For this He has taken His Son out of His bosom. For this He has caused His Only-Begotten to be bruised and put to grief. Salvation is the eternal purpose of the inmost heart of God and by it His highest Glory is revealed! This, then, is the God to whom belong the issues from death—the God whose grandest design is salvation! Sing unto His name and exult that the Lord reigns, even the Lord who is my strength and my song, who also has become my salvation.

If you ask, again, what this means—"He that is our God is the God of salvation"—we remind you that the most delightful works which the Lord has performed have been works of salvation. To save our first parents at Eden's gate and give them a promise of victory over the serpent was joy to God. To house Noah in the ark was also His pleasure. The drowning of a guilty world was necessary, but the saving of Noah was pleasant to the Lord our God. He destroyed the earth with His left hand, but with His right hand He shut in the only righteous ones He found. To save His people is always His joy—He goes about it eagerly! He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did *fly* upon the wings of the wind when He came to deliver His chosen! What noise He makes about His saving work at the Red Sea! The whole Scripture is full of allusions to the great salvation out of Egyptian bondage and even in Heaven they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.

The Old Testament seems to ring with the note, "Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." The Lord did greatly rejoice to make a way through the wilderness and a path through the deeps for His own people that He might work salvation for them in the midst of the earth. Afterwards, in the Old Testament, how well they keep the records of salvations! They tell us of the kings that oppressed the people, but how lovingly they linger over the way in which God redeemed Israel from her adversaries. What a note of joy there is about Goliath slain and the son of Jesse bearing his gory head and Israel delivered from Philistia's vaunts! Well did they say, "He that is our God is the God of salvation." He takes delight in deeds of Grace—these are His enjoyments. These are His recreations. He comes out in His royal robes and puts on His crown jewels when He rises to save His people and, therefore, His servants cry aloud, "O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard; which holds our soul in life and suffers not our feet to be moved."

This, then, is the God in whom is vested all sovereignty over the issues from death. He takes pleasure, not in the destruction, but in the *salvation* of the sons of men! Where could the prerogative be better laid up? "He that is our God is the God of salvation," also means that at this present time the God who is preached to us is the God of salvation. We live, at this

moment, under the dispensation of mercy. The sword is sheathed, the scales of justice are put away. Those scales are not destroyed and that sword is not broken, nor even blunted, but, for a while, it slumbers in its scabbard. Today over all our heads is held out the silver scepter of eternal love. The angelic carol, first heard by shepherds at Bethlehem, lingers, still, in the upper air, if you have ears to hear it—"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The mediatorial reign of Christ is that of multiplied salvations. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" is the saving proclamation of the reigning God! The God of the Christian age is the God of salvation. He is set forth before us as coming to seek and to save the lost! He dwells among us by His abiding Spirit, not as a Judge punishing criminals, but as a Father receiving His wandering children to His bosom and rejoicing over them as once dead but now alive! God in Christ Jesus, our God and Savior Jesus Christ, is He who quickens whom He will and is ordained to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. Where else could all power be more safely laid up?

Once more, "He that is our God is the God of salvation" means this, that to His covenanted ones, to those who can call Him, "our God," He is specially and emphatically the God of salvation. There is no destruction for those who call Him, "our God," for, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Jesus came not to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. "This God is our God forever and ever. He will be"—our destroyer? No, "He will be our Guide even unto death." This God is our Sun and Shield and He will give Grace and glory. Now, mark well this fact—we who believingly call the Lord, "our God," this morning will tell you that we are saved entirely through the Sovereign Grace of God and not through any natural betterness of our own, nor through anything that we have done to deserve His favor.

It was because He looked upon us with pity and kindly regard when we were dead in sin that, therefore, we live! When we were lying in our blood and in our filthiness, He passed by in the time of love and He said to us, "Live." If He had passed by and left us to die, He would have been infinitely just in doing so, but His heart was otherwise inclined. He looked on us and said, "Live," and we lived and we bless His name that we are *still* living and praising His eternal and infinite mercy! He who says, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal," is He who has quickened us, though we were dead in trespasses and sins! Surely, He who has exercised His prerogative so kindly towards us may be trusted to exercise it towards all who come to Him according to His gracious invitation! If there is any man who says, "I rejoice in the election of God, because, although He has saved me, He has left others to perish," I desire to have no sympathy with his spirit.

My joy is of a far different kind, for I argue that He who saved such an unworthy one as I am will cast out none that come to Him by faith! His election is not narrow, for it comprehends a number that no man can number, yes, all that will believe in Jesus! He waits to be gracious and he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. The wedding feast needs

countless guests and every seat must be filled. We wish that all the human race would come and accept the provisions of infinite Love and we are anxious to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in! We rejoice to know that if any man is shut out from Christ and hope, he shuts himself out, though at the same time we feel that if any man is shut in, he did *not* shut himself in, but undeserved Grace worked out his salvation. Justice rules in condemnation, but Grace reigns in salvation!

In salvation we must ascribe all to Grace, absolutely and unreservedly. There must be no stammering over this Truth of God! Some begin to say Grace, but they do not come out with the word—they stutter it into, “free will.” This will never do! This is not according to the teaching of Holy Scripture, nor is it in accordance with fact. If there is any man here who thinks that he has been saved as the result of his own will, apart from the powerful Grace of God, let him throw his hat up and magnify himself forever. “Glory be to my own good disposition!” But as for me, I will fall at the foot of the Throne of God and say, “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Had You, O God, left me to my own free will, I had continued, still, to despise Your love and to reject Your mercy.”

Surely, all the people of God agree that this is the fact in their own case, however they may differ theoretically from the general statement. Yes, the prerogative of life and death is in good hands—it is in the hands of Him who is the God of our salvation and I beseech everyone here present who is not saved to be encouraged to bow before the Throne of the great King and sue for mercy of Him who is so ready to save! Go home and try to merit salvation and you will waste your efforts! Go about to fit yourself for mercy and to fashion some good that may attract the notice of God and you will fool yourselves and insult the majesty of Heaven!

But come just as you are, all guilty, empty, meritless and fall before the great King whom you have so often provoked and beseech Him, of His infinite mercy, to blot out your transgressions, to change your nature and to make you His own and see if He will cast you away! Is it not written, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared”? And again, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” His Throne is a Throne of Grace! Mercy is built up forever before Him! He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy! Did ever a penitent sue for pardon at His sovereign feet to be rejected? Never! Nor shall such a case happen while the earth remains.

If you try to purchase His favor, you shall be refused. If you claim it as a right, you shall be rejected. But if you will come and accept salvation of the Divine charity and receive it through the Atonement of Christ Jesus, the Lord will find for you an escape from death! Hear the witness of Jeremiah and be encouraged to cast yourself before the Lord—“I called upon Your name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. You have heard my voice. Hide not Your ear at my breathing, at my cry. You drew near in the day that I called upon You—You said, fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

III. Our last duty is to hear THE SOLEMN WARNING OF OUR SOVEREIGN LORD. A new god has been lately set up among men, the god of modern Christianity, the god of modern thought, a god made of honey or

sugar. He is all leniency, gentleness, mildness and indifferent in the matter of sin. Justice is not in him and as for the punishment of sin, he knows it not. The Old Testament, as you are no doubt made aware by the wise men of this world, takes a very harsh view of God and, therefore, modern wisdom sets it on one side. Indeed, one half the Word of God is out of date and turned to waste paper!

Although our Lord Jesus did not come “to destroy the Law or the Prophets,” but to fulfill them, yet the advanced thinkers of these enlightened times tell us that the idea of God in the Old Testament is a false one. We are to believe in a new god who does not care whether we do right or wrong! By his arrangement all will come to the same end in the long run. There may be a little twisting about for awhile for some who are rather incorrigible, but it will all come right at last. Live as you like! Go and swear and drink. Go and oppress the nations and make bloody wars and act as you will. By jingo, you will be all right at last! This is roughly the modern creed which poisons all our literature.

But let me say by Jehovah—this shall not be as men dream! Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth, must do right. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob is the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—the God of the whole earth shall He be called. He has not changed one whit in the stern integrity of His Nature and He will, by no means, spare the guilty! Read, then, the last verse of our text and believe that it is as true today as when it was first written and that if Jesus Himself were here, the meek and lowly One would say it in tones of tearful solemnity, but He would utter it, none the less—“God shall wound the head of His enemies and the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses.”

It is clear from these words that God is not indifferent to human character. Our God knows His enemies. He does not mistake them for friends, nor treat them as such. He regards iniquity as a trespass and, therefore, He has not broken down the boundaries of Law, nor the hedges of right—there are still trespasses and God perceives them and notes them down and such as go on in their trespasses are trying His longsuffering and provoking His justice! God sleeps not, neither does He wink at human sin, but calls upon all men everywhere to repent! And it is clear, too, that God has the power to smite those who rebel against Him.

Dream not of natural laws which will screen the wicked—“He shall wound the head of His enemies.” They may lift up those heads as high as they please, but they cannot be beyond the reach of His hands! He will not merely bruise their heels, or wound them on the back with blows which may be healed—but at their *heads* He will aim fatal blows and lay them in the dust. He can do it and He will! They may be very strong and their scalp covered with hair may indicate unabated strength, but they cannot resist Omnipotence! There may be no sign, as yet, of the baldness which comes of weakness, or of the scantiness of hair which is a token of old age—but vain are they who boast of vigor, for in their prime He can cause them to wither as the grass of the field!

The proud may vaunt themselves of their beauty—their hairy scalp, like that of Absalom, may be their boast—but as the Lord made the hair of Absalom to be the instrument of his doom, so can He make the glory of man

to be his ruin. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. No man is out of the reach of God and no nation, either! The great ones stand on high upon their lofty places and they talk about the “vulgar crowd,” and despise the godly of the land. As for foreign races, how lightly are they esteemed, though one God has made them all! Populations and nations, what are they? Mere food for powder when a proud nation is set upon its own aggrandizement. Overturn their kingdoms, slaughter their patriotic defenders, redden the earth with blood, burn their houses, starve their women and children. Does God know and is there judgment in the Most High?

We are a great people, and have the men, the ships and the money. Who shall call us to account? Yet let the still small voice be heard! Thus said the Lord to a great nation of old, “You have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None sees me. You have said in your heart, I am and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from where it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know.” From such chastisements, good Lord, deliver us! When the Lord puts His hands to the work of vengeance, His smiting will be terrible, even an utter overthrow, for it will be a smiting upon the head!

If He does not smite His enemies until the hour of death, what a blow will they then receive! They boasted of their self-righteousness, or of their greatness but, oh, what terror will seize them when, at the last moment, while they dream of Heaven, they are thrown down into the unfathomable deep where woe shall be the everlasting reward of their daring rebellion against their King! Warriors of old times would, when they went to battle, often shave off all their hair except those locks which are on the back part of the scalp. Yet when they turned to flee it frequently happened they were grasped by their pursuers by their flowing hair! God does not often take the wicked by the forelock, for He has great patience and bears with them. In special cases, as when young men through dissipated habits hasten on their doom, He takes them in front—but as a rule He waits in mercy. And yet He suffers them not to go unpunished, for at the last, He seizes their hairy scalp. If for fourscore years infinite Patience should permit a man to continue in his rebellion, yet if he goes on in his trespasses, at the very last God shall thrust His hand into his hairy scalp and grasp him to his destruction!

Turn you, yes, you that know not God! Turn you at His rebuke this morning, for the rebuke is meant in love! And if I have used hard words, it is because my heart is honestly anxious that you would repent and escape to Him who has in His power the escapes from death! I am not like yon flatterers who tell you that there is a little hell and a little god, from which they naturally infer that you may live as you like. Both you and they will perish everlastingly if you believe them! There is a dreadful Hell, for there is a righteous God!

Turn you to Him, I entreat you, while yet, in Christ Jesus, He sets mercy before you! He is the God of salvation and entreats you to come and accept of His great Grace in Christ Jesus. The Lord bless this word according to His own mind and unto Him be praise forever and ever. Amen.

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SOME MARKS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

NO. 2662

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1882.

***“Your God has commanded your strength: Strengthen,
O God, what You have done for us.”***
Psalm 68:28.

DEAR Friends, at this time there is a special stir among the people. I know, from what I have seen and heard, that many are beginning to seek the Lord and others, who are not yet actually turning unto the Lord, are at least resolved to break off certain grosser sins and seek after something better. Well, there is something to be thankful for even in the waves of hunger pains which the prodigal feels before he says, “I will arise and go to my Father.” I value even the pains he has to endure when he would gladly fill his belly with the husks that the swine eat. Before we can pronounce anyone's experience to be proof of the working of God's Grace, we are glad if we see any signs of what usually comes when Grace enters the heart. So I am thankful when an ungodly man says, “It is time I changed my course,” for I trust that this is the first chipping upon the marble block—and that the great Sculptor, who fashions us in His own glorious image, will carry on the work and complete it to His own praise!

Just now, when I see these signs of a stir among the people, I think it is my business to repeat the exhortation I have often given, “Make sure work of the change you are contemplating—make sure work for eternity! Do not put up with anything that will fail you at the last. If you are looking for something better than you already possess, mind that you get the best that is to be had.” No, more, I would bid you give heed to our Lord's own words, “I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.” Mind that you buy all these things of *Christ*, for the terms on which you may have them are “without money and without price”—and you cannot get them anywhere else! I hope I am now addressing some who are saying, “We shall be glad and grateful if you will help us to judge as to our true condition and aid us to see whether we are Christians or not.” That is what I am going to try to do tonight.

The verse before my text describes God's ancient people when they were assembled in the order of their tribes. “There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.” They belonged to various tribes of the

children of Israel, but they were all numbered among the Lord's people. And it is said of the whole of them, as if they were but one, "Your God has commanded your strength." These words apply to all the armies of Israel, so you and I, dear Friends, had better consider and see whether we belong to His armies or not.

I. From our text, I learn that the first mark of the people of God is that **THE LORD IS THEIR GOD.**

Notice, the first two words—"Your God." This proves that they have a God. We cannot be God's people unless we know His name and know that He is the living and true God—and that all the rest of the so-called gods are but fictions or idols of the heathen! There is one God who made Heaven and earth, the sea and all that is therein. There is one God who has made us and from whom the breath in our nostrils has come. There is one God who has ruled in all past history and who is still the God of Providence, the Preserver and Director of His chosen people—the one God who, in the fullness of time, sent His only-begotten Son, who was equal with Himself, but who lived and died that the guilty sons of men might have their sins pardoned and their wandering feet directed back to the great Father's house. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death."

First, *God's people believe in this God.* If any do not believe in Him, they may call themselves what they please, but they are *not* the people of the living God! They may be the people of philosophy. They may be the people of the many dreams which men dream, nowadays, instead of believing in God, but they are not His people. I hope, Beloved, that we have no question about this matter and that we can say, without the slightest hesitation, "Yes, Jehovah, He is the God; Jehovah, He is the God."

He becomes our God, then, first, by our belief in Him, and next, by our reliance upon Him. This God is not merely an influence! Certainly, He is not a fiction. He is a real Person with whom we may speak and who will hear us and answer us according to His wisdom and goodness. The Apostle truly wrote, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son." And He is still speaking to us, through Him, words of Grace, love and kindness. And He becomes our God, I repeat, when, believing in Him, we come and rely upon Him—implicitly trusting Him that, seeing we are sinful, He may cleanse us. That, seeing we are ignorant, He may teach us. That, seeing we are feeble, we may lay hold upon His strength and may thereby be preserved unto everlasting life!

Let me ask all of you whom I am addressing—Are you trusting the living God? You know what it is, as a child, to trust your parents. As a friend, to trust a friend. Are you dealing just in that way with God? Then, are you relying upon Him, depending upon Him—especially relying upon Him as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son, the sin-atoning Savior? If you are, you are His people! If you are not—whatever you may do, or be,

or say, or think—you are not numbered among the people of God! *Faith is the distinguishing mark of His elect.* Where it is present, there is Grace and Truth. Where it is absent, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins.

How does God yet further become my God? *By my love to Him.* As the result of having trusted Him, I find myself peaceful, happy, restful. I receive at His hands, pardon, and I know it is mine. I get love from Him and I feel it—and I love Him in return. This is another of the marks of the Lord's people. The true child of God loves God! There are many men who are, to a certain extent, religious because they feel bound to be so by a law which they cannot resist. Ah, but we are not under law—we are under Grace—and we obey the commands of God because we love to do so! No man, who takes pleasure in sin, is a child of God, for the *new nature* hates sin! And though, alas, through the influence of the *old nature* which still remains within us, we are imperfect and often transgress the Law of the Lord, yet it is not our delight and we grieve that it should ever be the case with us. If a child of God falls into sin, he is like a sheep in the mud—up again, directly! But he who is still ungodly is like the sow that falls in the mud and wallows in it, for he is in his element—and he delights in it.

There is a very important thing to be observed in connection with this point. That is that our love to God is one of the chief qualifications for serving Him acceptably. He who serves God out of love to Him, is the one who really and truly serves Him. The Lord of Love, the great King eternal, immortal, invisible, needs no slaves to grace His Throne! He wants those to do His bidding who serve Him with delight and pleasure. There is such a thing as self-denial ceasing to be self-denial when a man takes such pleasure in denying himself, for Christ's sake, that the self-denial is a greater source of joy to him than the indulgence would have been—and that is just what true service for God is! Have I come here, tonight, because I am paid to do it? Or do I preach the Gospel with regret and loathing? Ah, no! The Gospel is as much my element as the sea is the element of the fish. What else could I preach? Silent be this tongue forever, sooner than I should have anything to teach concerning the way of salvation except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and His mighty mercy received by faith! Do not, many of you, Beloved, feel just the same as I do? We know that we are children of God and that He is our God because we love Him—and that love has put a new mainspring within us which moves our hands and all the wheels of our nature as they ought to be moved.

How, next, does He become our God still more clearly? *By our acknowledgement of Him* when we come forward and say, "Let others do what they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And when we say, "God has set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of sinners, we accept Him as our Savior and with our mouth we confess that we have done so. Let men hear it, let angels hear it, let devils hear it—it matters not to us how many hear our confession that we are set apart for God and for His Christ!" Our Christian profession is not a profession of perfection. No, no! It is not a profession that we are, in and of

ourselves, any better than other people. But it does mean that we have believed in Jesus Christ unto the renewal of our nature and the salvation of our souls. He who has had that great work of Grace done in him and for him ought to say—and say at once—“This God is my God forever and ever; He shall be my Guide even unto death.” Let us be branded with the name of God! Let, us, Beloved, who have believed in Jesus, be God's people and God's, alone! And on all suitable occasions let us confess the blessed fact that we are not our own, for we are “bought with a price”—that price being more than we can ever calculate, even the precious blood of Jesus, God's dear Son!

Genuine people of God, then, have the Lord to be their God according to the first two words of our text, “Your God.” And, oh, Beloved, I have scarcely time to tell you in what a sweet way we get *personal possession of God*. After having trusted Him, relied upon Him, loved Him and confessed that we belong to Him, we get to be as conscious of His Presence as we are of the air we breathe! We are freely able to converse with Him and feel within our spirit that He is listening to what we say to Him—and that He is speaking back to us. “Oh,” says someone, “I do not believe that is possible!” Friend, you may do as you like about believing what I say, but, at any rate, if you have never enjoyed this experience, that does not prove that there is no such thing! We are as honest as you are and we have as much right to be believed as you have. If we were before a jury, we would be as good witnesses as you would be! We are not liars and we do solemnly declare that God's Presence is so consciously realized by us that we are certain that in Him “we live, move, and have our being.” And we believe that spiritual communications—communications from the Holy Spirit—are frequent with us, checking us when we might fall into sin, stimulating us when we would be laggard, enlightening us when we are in difficulty and, sometimes, bearing us upward, as on eagles' wings, till we seem to get into the very vestibule of Heaven, and could scarcely be happier than we are, or else, I think, we must die! Oh, yes, there is a God! We who believe in Jesus have this God as ours and we will rejoice in Him!

That, then, is the first mark of the Lord's people—the Lord is their God.

II. A second mark of the Lord's people is given in our text. Read the whole of the first sentence and you will see that he who feels that God has called upon him, to serve him with all his strength, is one of the Lord's servants—“Your God has commanded your strength.” That is to say, ALL THE STRENGTH OF A CHRISTIAN—physically, mentally, morally, spiritually—IS AT GOD'S DISPOSAL.

A true Christian acknowledges that all he has, and the best of all that he has, should always be consecrated and dedicated to his Lord. First, *we are heartily to obey God's commands*. There is no part of our strength that we may reserve for ourselves—it all belongs to our Lord. We are to be like a soldier who, when he goes to war, thinks of nothing but how he shall discharge his duties so as to please his commanding officer.

Now, my dear Hearer, is that the case with you? Has God commanded your strengths. "Well, Sir, I go to church. I go to chapel. I profess to be a Christian." Yes, yes, yes, but there may be nothing in all that—has *God* the absolute and sole command of you? Is He your Commander-in-Chief? Has he come and taken possession of that strong will of yours and made it subject to His will? And if He has made you to be a man strong in faith, fervent in love, brave in holy daring and great in patience, do you desire to have all those forces used for His Glory, and His Glory alone? If not, you are not one of God's people! But, if you do hold all your powers at His disposal, that is one of the marks of His people—and the more clear it is, the better! Beloved, God is to be served by us with all our heart and with all our mind—and with all our soul and all our strength.

After this fashion, also, *we should fervently pray to Him*. Oh, what poor prayers some people pray, when they bow their heads for a moment as they come into the House of God! Often, there is no prayer at all in it and it is the same when they kneel down by their bedside, nearly asleep, or when they get up in the morning rather late and the bell is ringing for breakfast and they hurry down—yet they call that prayer! Listen to the text, my Friends—"Your God has commanded your strength." Take the pick of the day for prayer if you can! If you are half asleep at other things, be wide awake then! It is the best time for trading that you ever have—see that you make good use of it. This is the most noble exercise, except one, in which you can be engaged—get all the good that you can out of it! When you go up to the mountain, like Elijah on the top of Carmel, bring all the powers of your heart, mind and soul to bear upon this privileged occupation, and cry mightily unto God! Half-hearted prayers ask for a denial and usually get it. Pray as if you meant to be heard! Pray as he, who is starving, asks for bread, or for a drink of water if he is dying of thirst! Plead as he does who pleads for his life, for this is the way to prevail with God! Effectual fervent prayers bombard the gates of pearl and the Kingdom of Heaven is carried by the violence of that importunity which will not take a denial! "Your God has commanded your strength." Oh, for more of this kind of prayer!

And the same strength ought to go out *when we praise God*. Never ought our heart to be more energetic than when we say, "Blessed be His holy name!" And when we are singing in company with others, then we should also praise the Lord with joyous heartiness. I love to hear the bright, gladsome songs of people who really sing with their souls as well as with their voices. I have been in some congregations where, during the hymns, I have thought I needed a microphone to enable me to hear what they were singing, for they sang so very softly. Pull out the stops of your organ and let the music fly abroad, for, "your God has commanded your strength."

In a similar fashion, we should *earnestly labor for the Lord*. In the great warfare which we have now to wage against the world, the flesh and the devil, let us give to God the whole of our strength! Some people are said to work so hard for Christ that they wear themselves out. What a blessed consummation that must be! To wear ourselves away in our

Master's service—to let the zeal of God's House eat us up—is the very best thing that can happen to us! I am sorry to say that I do not meet with many people who are too zealous. Some *are* so because they have not much brain, and what little they have easily catches fire. Very well, my Brother, if that is your case, burn away! There are some, however, who have more brains, but they seem to keep them very damp, so they never get thoroughly alight. But he who serves God aright should burn if he does not blaze, though it is better to be a burning and a shining light, as John the Baptist was. There should be a red, ruby-like heat in the very center of our soul. If there are no sparks and flames, yet should our heart be on fire for God. God never meant us to do His work half-heartedly—He wishes each of His people to feel and say, “My God has commanded my strength, and He shall have it.”

And, lastly under this head, let us give God our strength by *living wholly to Him in our ordinary life*. It is a great mistake to make a division between what is “sacred” and what is “secular” in a Christian's life. You are not only to serve God when you worship Him in this Tabernacle or in any other House of Prayer, you are to equally serve Him tomorrow morning when you take the shutters down from your shop windows! Pray to God, as you do so, “O Lord, take my shutters down and enlighten my darkness! I know that this day I cannot prosper without Your blessing. I mean to work hard at my business, but it is vain to rise early and to sit up late, unless You bless my effort. Lord, be with Your servant all the day long!” Here comes the first customer. Now pray the Lord that you may not say anything to him but what is right, and ask God to give you an opportunity of saying a good word to him about the Lord Jesus Christ! Here come half a dozen customers all at once! Now, you young men, pray the Lord to enable you to attend to your business as you ought to do it so as really to serve those who employ you—“not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” even while you are serving your earthly employer!

All day long there are opportunities for glorifying God if man really wishes to do it. If the Spirit of God is with you all day, you will feel and say to yourself, “I will give to God all my strength. These things down here—this measuring out, either by yards or by bushels—this buying and this selling—must be done by somebody and I must, by some means, earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, or the sweat of my brain. And as this is what God has given me to do, I will do it thoroughly, with a single eye to His Glory, so that no one shall ever be able to truthfully say that Christianity makes me, in any respect, a worse man than I was before I knew the Lord.” “Your God has commanded your strength,” so live unto God in everything! Let your meals be sacraments! Let your garments be vestments! Let your common utterances be a part of a great life-Psalm! And let your whole being be as a burnt-offering ascending unto the Most High, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ! Oh, for the power of the Spirit of God to help you to do this!

III. The next part of the verse will show you, dear Friends, that God's people are known by this sign—THEY ASCRIBE TO HIM ALL THAT IS

GOOD IN THEM AND IN THEIR FELLOW MEN. Let me read you the latter part of the text, "Strengthen, O God, what You have worked in us."

This applies, first, to *the steps which lead to conversion*—"That which You have worked for us." There is no prayer, here, about what *we* have worked for ourselves, for that is all mischief and evil which needs to be forgiven and undone. The sooner all that nature spins is unraveled, the better. What God works is worth having worked for us and in us! There are some people who have very crude and false ideas about what the work of God is in the soul. I heard one say that the sinner is to take the first step towards salvation and then good will do the rest. But I have often said and now say it, again, that the first step is the one point of difficulty! You know the French story about Saint Denis, whose head was cut off, and then it was said that he picked it up and carried it in his hands for a thousand miles? That was what the priests of the Church of Rome declared, but one of Voltaire's followers very wittily remarked that, as for the thousand miles, there was no difficulty in that—it was only the first step that had any difficulty in it—if the saint could manage that part, the rest would be easy enough! And it is just so in the matter of salvation! If the dead man can pick his own head up—if the dead sinner can make himself alive—why, then he can do very well without God the rest of the way to Heaven! But that can never be, for Jesus Christ is Alpha as well as Omega—the first as well as the last in the sinner's salvation. And we may constantly say to Him—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee!

Grace is most sovereign, most rich and most free."

No, further. Not only does God begin it, but *it is He who carries it on*. If ever the work of Grace were to stop at a certain point and the rest of it were to be the work of nature, that linsey-woolsey garment would be unfit for a child of God to wear! Yes, and what is more, the work which God has begun, *He must finish, too*. If He has left anything to our unaided strength, we shall fall in that particular point—and all of it will become faulty and useless. The true people of God are resting, for the whole of their salvation, upon the Triune Jehovah—upon the Father's love, upon the Son's redemption and upon the Spirit's effectual work upon the heart and conscience. It must be all of God and all of Grace, from the first even to the last—and they are the true people of God who feel and know this.

Let me speak to some of you who have been taking the pledge lately. That is a very right thing to do. I wish that all did it, but that will not save you. The salvation of the soul is God's work and you must come to Him for it. "But, supposing I abstain for the future, will not all be right?" Certainly not! What about the times when you *have been* drunk? "Oh, well, of course, the pledge will not wipe out that sin." No, it will not. If you are a thief, would you tell the magistrates that they must not punish you because you are not going to steal again? "No," they would say, "we must punish you for what you have *done*." There are all your past sins and only the Lord Jesus Christ can blot them out.

Perhaps a man says, "But, if I abstain from sin *in the future*, will not that do?" No, it will not. You owe your grocer a long bill, do you not? Call upon him and tell him that you cannot pay a halfpenny of the debt, but

that you are not going to get into any more debt. "Oh," says he, "*but* that will not do for me! There is a County Court somewhere and I shall get a summons for you to appear there." So, if you go to God and say, "I am not going to sin in this way any more," He will not believe you, but if He did, He would say, "What about the past?" "God requires what is past." There is the stain of your past sin upon you—how can that be removed? Not by your tears. If you could shed an Atlantic full of tears, yet might the red spot of your sin turn every wave to carmine and the fatal spot would still be upon you. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash you clean and none are God's people but those who know that—and who come to Him for salvation, cleansing and everything else—and who commit themselves, body, soul and spirit, unto Him.

IV. Now, lastly, the fourth mark of God's people is that **THEY PRAY TO HIM FOR THEIR STABILITY.** "Strengthen, O God, what You have done for us."

What is a man's strength? Some think that their strength lies in their resolution. "Now," says one, "I have said it, and I will keep to it. You know, I am not a man who is easily turned from his purpose. I have made up my mind and I will do it." Yes, I have known several who have made up their mind, but it did not come to much when they had made it up. And I have known a great many persons promise and, having done that half a dozen times before and broken their promise every time, it did not come to much when that was done! "Oh," says one, "do not think that I shall act like that! I pledge myself to act differently." Yes, yes, and when a man has not a halfpenny in his pocket and he pledges himself that he will be a millionaire, I think to myself, "All right, but he had better not begin spending any of it yet."

A soldier puts on his armor to go out to fight—he has his helmet on his head and leg armor of brass on his legs, a breastplate and all the rest of the armor. "Am I not a brave fellow?" he asks. When you come back, you may be, but not just yet. Remember Ahab's message to Benhadad, "Let not him that girds on his armor, boast himself as he that takes it off." I believe in you, my dear Friend. You have made a promise and I believe that you will keep your promise. That is to say, I believe as much in you as I do in the majority of people. "How much is that?" you ask. Well, not too much, for I have seen too many men place much reliance upon them. I have not yet been 50 years among them, but there are several of them whom I would only trust as far as I could throw them—and there are some whom I would not trust as far as that. But there are others whom I thought I might trust out of my sight, and I have done so—and I have been bitten by them! I believe myself bound to give as much credence and confidence to your resolution as your resolution is worth, so please let me see how much it is worth by observing how you go on.

"Oh," says one, "but there is an addition to my resolution! There is my past experience. I am an experienced person. I am not like your young kids who are apt to be easily led astray again. A burnt child dreads the fire. My experience has made me very careful, steady and reliable." Yes, I know. You are the man whom I would not trust with a bad farthing, be-

cause the very people who have demanded my trust on the ground that they could not be led astray, I have generally found were the men who had already gone far astray! I knew an old friend who used to attend here who was a very curious sort of man, but he had a great deal of common sense. A deacon of a church met him in Smithfield, one morning, and asked him for a loan of 50 pounds. He was going to say, "Yes," for he knew and trusted him, but the deacon said to him, "Robert, you know you can safely lend that amount to me. I shall be sure to let you have it on the day that I promise. At my time of life, I am quite past temptation." My old friend stopped and said, "I was going to let you have that 50 pounds but, as you have arrived at that point, I shall not lend you a halfpenny, for I am quite certain I should never see it again." At that very moment the man knew that he was utterly bankrupt, and he failed, shortly after, for a very large sum, too, yet he said, "You may safely lend it to me, for I am quite past temptation."

"Well," asks one, "then you would not have us believe in one another?" No, unless you want to believe a lie. David said, "Verily every man at his best is altogether vanity." "You are not very complementary." No. If you want compliments, do not come here, for I do not deal in them and I do not intend to. God's Word is what I have to preach and that contains something better than compliments. Brothers and Sisters, your best resolutions and your best experience are as strong as a broken reed! They only need to be touched in a certain way and they will break again! You have already failed again and again—it is no use for you to start again as you started, then, for you will fail again! The same causes under the same circumstances will produce the same results!

Now stop, my Friend, while I get a grip of your hand and say, "Come, let us pray together." And this shall be our prayer, "Lord, if You have worked any good in us, however little it is, we dare not trust to it, or trust ourselves with it. But, Lord, do strengthen it. If it is only just a consciousness of sin, Lord, strengthen it till it grows into repentance. If it is only a little trembling desire to be right, Lord, strengthen it into a firm and brave resolve. If it is but a little hope in Christ, Lord, strengthen it until I can say, 'I know whom I have believed.' If I have a little germ of faith, Lord, strengthen it till the mustard seed grows into a tree. O Lord, I have promised to do this and that, but I know that I am as weak as water. I am apt to slip when I feel that I am standing most safely. Lord, help me! Lord, help me! Lend me Your strength!"

Some of you have lately taken the pledge, "I promise, by the help of God, to abstain." That is the thing for you, that, "help of God," is what you need! I entreat any of you who are starting on a fresh life, do not start outside the help of God. Do not attempt to go on outside the help of God. And you, dear Friends, who are far advanced in the Christian life, never be so besotted as to think that you have gone so far by God's aid and now you can traverse the rest of the road without Him! You cannot do anything in that way. Have you never noticed that we make our worst blunders over the plainest things? The children of Israel were commanded to slay all the Canaanites, but a company of Gibeonites dis-

guised themselves in a very clever fashion, and the people said, "Their shoes are old and scarred. And their clothes—well, they must have come a long way, for they are dreadfully worn. These men look like travelers who have come from a very far-distant country." They did not question the Gibeonites, for they said, "These are strangers, that is quite evident, so let us make a covenant with them and let their lives be spared." Yet, all the while, these men were their next-door neighbors, living very close to them! On the plainest point, the Israelites were taken in—and it is often the same with us.

Brothers and Sisters never trust in yourselves, even though your strength seems to be more than adequate for the occasion! Trust in God as much when you have a huge "Woolwich infant" to fire against your enemy as when you have nothing but a sling and a stone. When you are full of knowledge, full of wisdom and full of Grace, yet still be nothing and let the Lord your God be your All-in-All! Oh, what a blessing it would be if everyone of us would get to Heaven! I do not see why we should not, the Lord being our Leader! One thing I know—if we do get there, by-and-by, there is not one of us who will throw up his cap and shout, "Hurrah! Glory be to myself! I did this!" No, no, no! But we will all go together and such crowns as Grace shall give us we will cast at Jesus' feet. And the song, "Non nobis, Domine" shall go up from all of us, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your Truth's sake."

Let us begin to learn that song, now, and let us sing it in life, in death and forever, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 68

This was a Psalm sung at the removing of the Ark when it was taken up to its resting place on Mount Zion. All the tribes were gathered together and, in full pomp, they marched along, bearing the sacred chest. As they marched forward, the trumpets sounded and this Psalm rose up to God.

Verse 1. *Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.* That is the way to move—God first and His people following closely after Him. That is the true order of revival—the Lord in the front, then all His children, quick of step, to follow where He leads. The Psalmist seems to take it for granted that there would be no fighting if God should arise, for all His enemies would be put to flight by His Presence.

2, 3. *As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yes, let them exceedingly rejoice.* The courtiers of God ought to be clad in the silks of joy and to be bright with the jewelry of rejoicing!

4, 5. *Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fa-*

therless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation. In the wilderness the Israelites were like a company of fatherless people. But God was their Protector and in all their trials and dangers He was their Defender.

6. *God sets the solitary in families. He brings out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.* They had been in a sad condition in Egypt, scattered and driven here and there. God promised to bring them all together, in great families, and to richly bless them.

7, 8. *O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You did march through the wilderness; Selah: the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.* If the translators had given us the original words, we would have valued this Psalm much more, for it contains nearly every name of God. This verse would run, "Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel."

9, 10. *You, O God, did send a plentiful rain, whereby You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary. Your congregation has dwelt therein: You, O God, have prepared of Your goodness for the poor.* It rained manna and it rained quail. There are no difficulties about the commissariat of an army when God is the Commander-in-Chief! All those who put their trust in Him shall be provided for!

11. *The Lord—Or, Adonai—*

11. *Gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.* When God speaks, He always has publishers of His message! Our Lord found a woman at the well and sent her back to the men of the city as His messenger. And He will find many others before His work is all done!

12, 13. *Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though you have lain among the pots.* Grimy among the brick kilns, covered with clay and black with smoke—despised, rejected, earthbound. "Though you have lain among the pots."

13. *Yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.* There are good times ahead for God's people! Rich and rare blessings are laid up in store for them that fear Him. Therefore, let us rejoice in Him even now.

14. *When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.* Driven from the bare, bleak mountain-side in gusts like feathers, the snow flies before the wind! And so, when God scatters the mighty, they cannot resist Him—"It was white as snow in Salmon."

15. *The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.* This hill of Zion is not high at all—it is a mere knoll compared with the lofty peaks—yet it was highly favored. So, to carnal eyes, Christ's Kingdom on earth was little in comparison with the kingdoms of this world, yet, in the sight of God, it is greater than all of them!

16. *Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in. Yes, the LORD will dwell in it forever.* There are grander places than Zion, but if God chooses to dwell there, His Presence gives her a glory and a greatness that no other spot can have. The forces at the dis-

posals of Zion's King are boundless—note how the Psalmist enumerates some of them.

17, 18. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.* As the Ark went up the hill of Zion, so has Christ ascended to eternal Glory! He is the true Ark of the Covenant and He is also the true Mercy Seat. Therefore, let our hearts rejoice in our ascended Savior who has “led captivity captive.” “You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also.” “In due time, Christ died for the ungodly.” “He made intercession for the transgressors.” Let rebellious sinners catch at this great Truth of God and, touched by the love and Grace of God, let them cease to rebel any longer.

19, 20. *Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.* All glory be to His thrice-blessed name for all that this verse includes!

21, 22. *But God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea.* Wherever His people may have gone, God will bring them all together again—“from Bashan”—or “from the depths of the sea.”

23-35. *That your foot may be dipped in the blood of your enemies, and the tongue of your dogs in the same. They have seen Your goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after, among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah, and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Your God has commanded your strength: strengthen, O God, what You have worked for us. Because of Your temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto You. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver: scatter the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, you kingdoms of the earth! O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to Him that rides upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, He does send out His voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, You are terrible out of Your holy places: the God of Israel is He that gives strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God.* The Psalm ends with an ascription of praise unto God. So let our reading end—and our worship—and our lives! “Blessed be God.”

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

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

THE TRUTH OF GOD'S SALVATION

NO. 2356

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 15, 1894.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1888.**

***“O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear me,
in the Truth of your salvation.”
Psalm 69:13.***

I WOULD have you admire the educational power of prayer, for prayer is, in itself, an education for a saint. God might have given us every blessing at once without our asking Him for anything, but He says, even of that which He has promised to His people, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,” the reason being that, sometimes, the *prayer* for the blessing is as beneficial to us as the blessing, itself, and thus we are twice blessed—first in asking—and then in receiving! Prayer brings the mercy, but in fetching it for us, prayer, itself, gives us an additional blessing. We are, ourselves, graciously helped of God as we pray, and we grow thereby.

Will you also observe that, usually, when saints plead mightily with God, they draw their arguments from the Lord Himself? In this case, David speaks to God of, “Your mercy,” and, “the Truth of your salvation.” We do not bring pleas to God from abroad—we find them in Him with whom we plead. We say to Him, “You are such a One, therefore, will You not do this for me?” Or, “You have said it, therefore, do as You have said.” Our best pleas lie within the compass of God’s Character and God’s promises.

Now, because of this fact, you will at once see why prayer is so beneficial, for thus it helps us to communion. If we come to God and plead with Him on account of what He, Himself, *is*, we have, in that very pleading, fellowship and communion with Him. We have to think of Him, to consider Him, to endeavor to understand His attributes, and so we come into His Presence intelligently and profitably. This is no small gift, to have our fellowship with the Father fostered by our prayer to Him.

Out of this communion comes edification. Coming near to God, we learn more and more of Him, and we get that kind of knowledge which does not puff us up because it first breeds love, and then builds us up, and we, knowing more of God, are established in Him. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” Thus we grow in faith, love and every Grace, while prayer leads us to search out the Character of God in order to find these pleas that we use in our supplication. So that, praying is communion and praying is edification! I think that you will grow more in half an hour’s prayer than you will in an hour’s sermon-hearing! I am not sure that it will be so in every case, for God may bless a variety of

means to different men and women, but I think that the most of us make our great advances in the Divine Life when we are pleading with God—pleading God's own Character with our God, we are then getting near Him and being built up into Him.

And thus, you see, prayer even becomes a confession of faith. Public prayer may thus furnish a very useful means of instruction. That is not its main purpose, but it incidentally happens that, when we are seeking God, first, then other things are added to us in our public prayer. David, in this Psalm, instructs us concerning the multitude of God's mercy and the Truth of His salvation. It does one good to hear a godly man pray. When he pours out his heart before God, his language may be very simple—as simple as it is fervent—but there is a kind of insensible teaching and a force of latent instruction which gets into our soul, almost unawares, when we are joining in the prayers of devout persons. Prayer may thus be speaking to the souls of others as well as unto God and, may be, for some men, the best testimony and witness to the Gospel which they are able to hear. It was certainly so with David.

But it is not my objective, tonight, to enlarge upon the manifold uses of prayer. I could not leave this point without notice, so I have given it to you by way of preface. Let it suggest to you to think still more how large a blessing has come to you through prayer, especially when prayer has taken the form of arguing with God because of the characteristics of His own Nature, finding pleas with Him in Himself.

In the words before us, David pleads with God the Truth of His salvation—"Hear me in the Truth of your salvation," upon which I shall only make these two remarks—first, *God's salvation is a great reality* and, secondly, *We have proved it to be so.*

I. First, GOD'S SALVATION IS A GREAT REALITY, a great Truth of God—"The Truth of your salvation." There is a substance in it. It is not a shadow, it is not a myth, it is not a mere type or figure of speech. It is a substantial thing, there is the Truth of God in it—"The Truth of your salvation."

And, first, let us view it in reference to the Lord, Himself. *To God, His salvation is, in the highest sense, full of Grace and His Truth.*

If I may venture to speak concerning Him of whom we can know nothing except as He reveals Himself, I may say that the truest and deepest thought of God is for the salvation of His people. This lies in the very center of His heart and the drift of His other thoughts and acts is all towards this point. He has ordained His Son to be the Head of a great family, of which He is to be the First-Born among many brethren, and the planning of the whole of creation was arranged in reference to the saved ones—those who are to be redeemed from among men. At the present time, the whole scheme of God's Providential working has a bearing upon the salvation of those whom He gave to His Son to be the reward of the travail of His soul. God's thoughts are high and not as our thoughts, but they are directed toward this central idea. They rest on this foundation principle—the underlying thought of all His works is the display of the Glory of His Grace in the salvation of the sons of men. This is the white of the target

at which He shoots all His arrows and He fails not to hit it. In the grand gathering of all the redeemed, this shall be the loudest note in their song, "Unto Him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The display of all the characteristics of God in the salvation of His people is the subject of His truest, deepest thought.

This is, also, to Himself, the most solid and lasting of all His works. I speak with bated breath when I talk of the things of God, but let me show you, Brothers and Sisters, what I mean. God creates worlds as He pleases. We speak of them as though they had existed and were to exist forever, but, Brethren, even among the starry worlds that are visible to us, many changes have taken place. New stars appear—they are admired awhile for their brilliance, but soon they are gone from our sight. As for this round world in which we dwell, we talk of its "everlasting hills" and so forth, but it shall be burned up and shall pass away. Yon firmament, which seems like a new piece of azure-tinted cloth, is wearing out and, by-and-by, it shall be folded up like an old garment and put away as a worn-out thing. The things that are seen are, after all, but temporal. Do not suppose that you see anything solid—you only see shadows! Faith, alone, sees substance, but everything that the eye is capable of beholding is, of necessity, a temporal and temporary thing.

Look over the history of the whole world. Empires have arisen, all the thoughts of great men have been concentrated upon forming armies, building up enormous establishments and by State-craft consolidating the power of their realm. A dynasty has been formed, king after king has sat upon the throne and they thought, as they built their palaces, and walked in them, that Assyria and Babylon would never pass away! God's Providence lent itself to the building up of these great monarchies, but they were not substantial—they were only fading things, mere leaves upon the bay tree of existence. They came out and they, in due time, faded and dropped into the soil, again. But there is permanence in God's salvation—it will *never* fade—it is not a temporary work! The salvation of His people shall enlist the wondering gaze of angels throughout eternity and the songs of cherubim, seraphim and the hosts of the redeemed by blood shall go up before the Throne of God forever and forever because of the Truth of His salvation! This great work, which He has accomplished, He has made to last forever. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a wonderful work is that of the salvation of the sons of men in its abiding results!

And, further, I ask you to think, still from the God-ward aspect, of what Truth there is in salvation in this respect—it is that into which God has thrown His whole Self. When He makes a world, He speaks, and it is done! He commands and it stands forever fast. The morning light and all that is seen by it, are produced by His word and, in His Providence, He just nods and dictates the policies of empires. But in the work of salvation, He, Himself, comes! Behold the Cross! God, in the Person of His Son, bleeds and dies to save a soul! He has given Himself to this stupendous work. The Holy Spirit enters into human bodies and reigns and rules over human minds, abiding in them, continuing His gracious, com-

forting, enlightening and sanctifying work—He, Himself, personally dwelling in the saints! God throws His whole Self into the work of salvation!

His little finger can create the stars and light them up or quench them at His will! But even His right arm is not sufficient for the redemption of His people! Both hands must bear the cruel nails! Both feet must be fastened to the accursed tree! The heart of the Son of God must be pierced by the soldier's lance! He, even He, Himself, must come forth from the bosom of the Father and must descend, and still descend, and yet further descend till He goes down to the lowest parts of the earth—there to work out the salvation of His people! Oh, my dear Friends, when we come to the Truth of God's salvation, we have reached the rocks! Now we have left the ever-rolling sea and landed on the Divine *terra firma*. Here shall you see God, indeed! In other things, you see only His reflection in a mirror, but, in salvation, you see the express Image of the Father's Glory! In the work of the redemption of His chosen, you see God unveiling Himself as far as man is ever capable of seeing Him.

I should need all night if I were to dwell upon these points. So let me observe, in the next place, that *God's salvation is a great reality to ourselves as well as to Him*. Do you remember when you first grasped the true idea of God's salvation, when you understood that God had of old thought out the plan of salvation and, in the fullness of time, had worked it out? Do you remember when you first saw that Truth of God and when you felt that it was just the salvation that you needed and that you must have it—that you must have it *then*, or else perish everlastingly? You did not lay hold upon it, in the hour of your distress, as upon a fiction. You did not grasp it as a thing that might be or might not be. Souls that have ever been drowning in the sea of wrath want to clutch at a *real* salvation and you clutched at it as real. That day when I saw Christ as my soul's salvation, the great Sacrifice for sin was, to my soul, the most real thing I had ever seen! Otherwise it had not staunched the gaping wounds of my poor bleeding heart! Otherwise it had never brought balm and peace to my tortured spirit! I was a *real* sinner—I do not know whether you are—but I was. I had *real* pangs of conviction and I saw a *real* Hell before me—and I needed a *real* salvation—and I grasped it as such!

Since then, dear Friends, God's salvation has been wonderfully real to us. Have we not daily found it more and more so? You have had many things that you doted on and trusted in, but, after a while, these poor cobwebs have been unable to bear the weight that you have hung upon them, and they have all disappeared. But have you not found Christ's salvation to be very real to you from that first day, even until now? If you have not, (excuse my putting it very plainly to you), you have missed your way. If you have not found a real Christ, you certainly *need* one! And if you have not found a real salvation and, by personal experience, known its reality, you are under a delusion and that comfort which you enjoy, tonight, is a false comfort! I wish that I could disturb you out of it, that you might find a real comfort. Remember that life is real, sin is real, death is real, judgment *will* be real and the final sentence will carry with it a *real* punishment! You need, therefore, to find in Christ Jesus the

Truth of His salvation, a real salvation which, though you cannot touch it, is yet tangible to your soul, and which, if you cannot see it, is yet to be surely seen by the eyes of your spirit. But I shall be getting to my second head too fast if I dwell upon this point, so I will leave it.

I think that we can say, dear Friends, that it is a real salvation to us in another sense. There is a Truth in God's salvation in the way that it has operated on us. The way it worked in the change of your character, at first—was not that very real? And sometimes, now, when temptation suddenly comes upon you, does not God's salvation pull you up with a very real check? Yes, and when you get somewhat indifferent in duty, does it not urge you on with a very real spur? Have not some of us said, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord," and have we not found His salvation to be in us, in the truth of it, like fire in our bones, so that we could not hold our peace? The most potent force upon a real Christian's mind is the Truth of God's salvation—it touches him in a way that nothing else can. We are like music boxes and the Savior holds the key—and when He winds us up, then every part of us begins to play, but not till then! The spiritual nature of man is like a mystic harp upon which only One can play so as to bring out the fullness of its music! And the hand that can play upon our hearts is the hand that was nailed to the Cross. The Truth of God's salvation operates most powerfully upon our minds and so proves to us that it is real.

Now, beloved Friends, to speak a little in detail of the Truth of this salvation, if we have really laid hold of the Truth of God's salvation, we believe in a real Fall. We do not believe that Adam's Fall is a mere fiction or parable, but we believe it to be a sad and terrible fact, for if there was not a real Fall, then there is no Truth of God in salvation! If we have not fallen from our first estate, we do not *need* picking up! But, alas, we have grievously fallen!

Next, if you have the Truth of God's salvation, you will believe in real sin. There are hosts of sham sinners about. They come into our Chapels and we preach the Gospel to them, but they never get any good out of it. You may relieve sham beggars, but God never does. He relieves those who are really in need. Truly needy persons never come to Him in vain, but your pretended, dressed-up, hypocritical sinners, who say, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," when they are neither miserable nor yet consciously sinful, God never relieves them! If you know the Truth of God's salvation, you must believe in real sin. "Oh!" says one, "I have more than enough of that." Then come and have real salvation! You who have really transgressed—you are the men and women for whom there is Truth in God's salvation—but, if there is no truth in your sinnership, there is, to you, no Truth in Christ's salvation.

Once more, if we get to know the Truth of God's salvation, we believe in a real Atonement. You know the description that is given of the Atonement as it is preached by some gentlemen of supposed "culture." It is this—that Jesus Christ did something or other which, in some way or other, is probably more or less remotely connected with the pardon of sin. Such a salvation as that would not save a mouse! No, no, we must

have a real Atonement—the Substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ for guilty sinners—the bearing of our sin in His own body on the tree! They say that it is unjust that Christ should suffer for us. On the contrary, I venture to affirm that it was in the highest degree *just* that He should die for His people, for He was one with us! His death was not merely substitution for us, but He had *identified* Himself with us. He came here on purpose that He might be one with His people and, being one with them, as the Second Adam, it behooved Him that He should suffer. It was right that, having married His Church, He should go with her for better and for worse, and bear her sins in His own body on the tree. And He did so, blessed be His name! And I believe that He really expunged His people's sins, that He truly took away the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us and nailed it to His Cross that, by His precious death, He might put away all the transgressions of His people once and for all. You have not learned the Truth of God's salvation if you do not believe in a real Atonement.

Next, true faith brings to us a real pardon. If you have received the Truth of God's salvation, you are really forgiven. It was no fictitious document that was presented to you in that day when your Savior said to you, "Go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." It was a real pardon, signed by the King's own hand, and your sins are gone—they shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever. "Do you believe this?"

Now the Holy Spirit is working in you a real sanctification. Have you that sign and token of Grace? Have you given up evil habits? Have you quit your vices? Do you hate the very thought of sin? Are you watchful over all things within you and all things around you? Is "holiness unto the Lord" inscribed upon your whole life? If not, you have *not* a real salvation, and you do not know the Truth of that salvation! But if God has made you truly holy, by the sanctifying power of His Spirit, then listen once more.

One part of the truth of this salvation is that there is a real Heaven for you. The Lord Jesus, Himself, says to you—

***"You shall see My glory soon!
When the work of Grace is done
Partner of My throne you shall be."***

And you shall dwell forever in a true Heaven, with a true Christ, in true Glory and only *then* shall you know to the fullest, the Truth of His Salvation!

Thus have I shown you that God's salvation is a great reality to God, Himself, and also to ourselves.

Further, if you would know the Truth of God's salvation, remember that the term used, here, signifies that *God's salvation is real in its constancy*. It will bear every strain and, therefore, it is that David uses it as a plea in prayer. He comes to God and he says, "Lord, I am in great distress. I beseech You, help me in my extremity by the Truth of Your salvation! Your salvation never fails, but endures every strain. Therefore, I beseech You, deliver me at this moment!" There are some times, when you are on your knees, and you need a master plea, that you can say, "Lord,

if it is thus, then I beseech You, deliver Your servant. If this is a promise of Yours and You have spoken it, now do as You have said." It is no impertinence to plead with God in this way—"If this salvation of Yours is a fiction. If you have never spoken peace to my heart, nor brought me into the new and spiritual life, then, Lord, You may leave me. But if this is, indeed, as I believe it is, Your love to me, Your Grace in me, Your work for me—if I have, indeed, received Your salvation, then I beseech You, help Your servant and deliver me!"

You will find the value of such pleading if you have but faith to know that there is Truth in God's salvation, in the fact of its perpetuity, its constancy, its unfailing power to bear you right through to the end as surely as it has borne you thus far. Oh, may God grant us Grace to feel that the truest and most real thing in earth or Heaven is the salvation of the blessed God! There is no doubt that it is so and that there is substance and endurance in it—and we do well to use this fact as a plea when we need a substantial argument in prayer.

That is my first point, God's salvation is a great reality.

II. Now I shall ask your kind attention while, for a few more minutes, I speak upon the second head. WE HAVE PROVED IT TO BE SO—"The Truth of your salvation."

We have proved it, first, *by our experience of a new life*. Now reach for your diaries. "They are at home," you say. Take out your pocketbooks, then. You have not brought them with you tonight? Use your memories, then. Think what has been the experience of the new life in your soul. If there is Truth in God's salvation, you are not, now, what you once were, and you are now what you once never dreamed of being! There is within you, now, a life as much superior to the ordinary life of man as the life of an angel would be to that of the swine at the trough! Are you aware of that? Has such a life as that come into you? If so, that is one of the proofs of the Truth of God's salvation to you. An ungodly man sitting here may say, "That is no proof to *me*." No, of course it is not! You have not experienced it, so it cannot be evidence to you. Swine that were turned into angels would have, within themselves, a proof of some Divine operation upon them, would they not? Have you ever known what it was to be like the beast that perishes? Perhaps you have, for your thoughts never rose towards God—you were worldly, sensual, animal, perhaps devilish.

I do not know whether you ever sank so low as that, but if the Grace of God has come into your heart and made you feel sorrows and joys that you never knew before, you have a proof of the Truth of God's salvation! When Luther was talking with the pretended prophets who claimed to be Inspired, he said to one of them, "Did you ever have births and deaths within your soul?" The man looked at him in amazement. "You knew nothing of it," said Luther—"You knew nothing of it, for he that knows the Lord has had births and deaths, creations and destructions within his own spirit." It is even so.

My Hearer, do you know anything about this? Ordinary men do not know it—they are soulish, they have the life of a soul, they are far above

the brutes—but Christian men are as far above *them* as *they* are above the brutes, for they have received a third and higher principle of life! The Spirit of God dwells in them! The Spirit of God has become dominant in them and this has elevated them into quite another region. This world that you see is not the world in which Believers live. You see mountains and hills—so do they—but you do not hear them break forth into singing before you, as Believers do. You see the trees of the field, but you never heard them clap their hands, as saints have done. There are many things, I guarantee you, which have not entered into your philosophy unless you have been born again. He who has been regenerated and has burst the shell that held him, like the unhatched bird within it, has emerged into new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness—and that fact is to him the proof of the truth of his salvation.

How else do we prove this? There is one sweet proof which we sometimes have of the Truth of God's salvation and that is, *our sense of sonship*. It is a great thing to be able to say, "Abba, Father," to know that God is our Father, not taking it as an abstract Truth that God is our Father, but feeling the Spirit of adoption witnessing within us, regarding Him not as Father in name only, but in *reality*, so that the thought of Him draws out emotions of love, delight, trust and nearest relationship. Oh, if you have that, you have proved the Truth of God's salvation! By nature you are of your father, the devil, and his works you do. But if you are now of your Father who is in Heaven, and you love Him and you grow like He, that is a grand proof to you of the Truth of His salvation!

Let me tell you one or two other things. Time flies, so I will only mention them. Sometimes, God gives us proofs of the Truth of His salvation by *our ecstatic joy*. This is not a theme that I like to speak of except in very select company, but, believe me, we do have "high days and holidays." We have our hard days, sometimes, and you know about them, but you do not see our joys. Oh, if you did but know them, you would be willing to live a life of sorrow to have one day with us on the holy Mount with the transfigured Christ! I have thought, sometimes, that I never could doubt, again, after an experimental acquaintance with the banqueting house, and a sight of the banner of love waving over my head!

Oh, the joy, the overwhelming joy, of the torrents of Divine Love when they come pouring into the soul! They bear everything away. If a man or a devil were then to come up and say to us, "There is no Truth of God in all this," we would feel as if we could not do him the honor to pour contempt upon him! We are blessedly sure of the Truth of God's salvation when we get a grip of Christ, when, with Mary, we sit at His feet! When, with John, we lie in His bosom! When, like the spouse, we even touch His dear lips and receive the kisses of His mouth! You who have enjoyed this delightful experience know the Truth of God's salvation.

Now let me turn to another leaf of the diary of which I spoke. You know something of the Truth of God's salvation if you have done business in great waters and have had *Divine support in trouble*. Were you ever in this condition, that they said of you, "There is not a second person who justifies his course of action"? "It was proposed to pass a vote of

approval of his conduct, but there was no one to second it." Did you ever open letter after letter and find that this friend will never help you again? That the next is ashamed of you and that the next one blasphemes God and you, also? You go on being stripped of one thing after another till you seem to have come to your last rag and then you say, "Still, I do not falter, I do not mean to budge an inch. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that if all men forsake me, He will help me!" And you find, just then, a flush of joy come over you such as you never felt before, because now you are leaning on God's bare arm and there is nothing between you and the Almighty!

I admire that saying of Luther, when he looked out of the window and exclaimed, "There stands the arch of Heaven, without a single pillar and yet it never falls." That is the way to stand—when all the pillars are knocked away. So many of us are like ships on the stocks—there we lie, in the dock, and we shall never do any good as we are! But if the dog-shores are all knocked away and there is nothing left to support us, we go slipping into the water and so begin our true lifework. God help you, dear Brothers and Sisters, by His own Presence! And if you have once known the Presence of God in the utter absence of every form of comfort or help from mortal man, you will have had a most convincing proof of His salvation! The Lord can help you when you are in a fever—He can help you when you have gone, time after time, to the grave, and now that your last friend is buried. He can help you when that little income is suddenly taken away. He can bear you up when the vilest slander is cast upon your spotless reputation. And you can still, for all that, say, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul and, therefore, will I hope in Him." These are testing times, but it is *then* that you know the Truth of God's salvation!

And then, to turn over another leaf—a bright leaf this time—when all those troubles are ended and you get out of your difficulties—when *God has worked great deliverances for you*—then you know the Truth of His salvation! Then Miriam takes her timbrel! I do not remember hearing of her having a timbrel before. Miriam, where was your timbrel when you came out of Egypt? Why, then, poor Miriam was busy carrying some of her household goods like the rest who had their kneading-troughs upon their shoulders! But she found her timbrel when the Lord had triumphed gloriously and the horse and his rider had been thrown into the sea. Some of us have our timbrels at home. We are beginning to get our fingers ready for playing on them, for the Lord will work for His people, and He will bring forth His chosen, as He has said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people, again, from the depths of the sea." Then it is that we know the Truth of His salvation.

But if you do not have these ups and downs, beloved Friends, you may know the Truth of God's salvation, and you ought to know it by *the sweet realizations of faith*. Where faith is strong, it has the faculty of anticipation, and that is a blessed faculty of the Divine Life, the power of stretching out your hands across the ages and bringing the far-off distance near. Perhaps you and I may not be in Heaven for another 20 years—we

cannot tell, but Faith sits still and sees Heaven all round about her—and sometimes she puts on her crown and takes it off and casts it at her dear Lord's feet. Now and then she gets her heavenly harp and lays her fingers among the strings. I have known her put on all her holy array and walk in her white robes down the golden streets of Paradise—and she has seen and heard things which it were not lawful for her to utter!

Do you ever have these good times? If you do not and you are a child of God, you are losing a great deal. He is both able and willing to give to you! There lies, a little to the right of the road to Heaven, a hill called Mount Clear. Pass it not by in a hurry, but climb to the top of it and stand there. With a clear faith, believe in all that your God has told you—stay there till you can see! They say, "Seeing is believing." That is not true—*believing* is seeing when you "believe" fast enough and steadily enough. I say not that every Believer can see all this at once. If you have good milk—of course you do not all have it pure—but if you have good milk, there is no cream on it at first. But if you stand it for a little while and let it be still, there will come some cream to the top.

So it is with faith. It is good milk, but you must let it stand a while and then you will find the cream of enjoyment, assurance and realization which will make you feel, "I know that God's salvation is true. I am sure of it, for I have as clearly perceived it by faith as if I had seen it with my natural eyes." If the senses, faulty as they are, can convey any sort of conviction to the mind, much more can that higher and truer God-given sense of faith convey to us a conviction that it is even as God has revealed unto us!

I wish any dear friend, here, who is not yet saved, might be led to test the Truth of God's salvation. God, through Jesus Christ, can ease you of your burden at once! It is a cold wintry night. You came in here and you have had a little shelter, and you are going out, again, into the cold, but go not away with your burden—leave it in the pew! Better still, cast your burden upon the Lord! Jesus can give you ease and rest. Go not away with your foulness—Jesus can wash you! Go not outside till you, yourself, are whiter than the snow! The Lord grant you Grace to do so! Your faith will give you God. The longest arm of the greatest giant can never reach to Heaven, but the *finger* of faith can touch the Savior! Believe! Trust, and the work is done and you shall know the Truth of His salvation!

Let us go our way with just this word of prayer. Lord, let us all know the Truth of Your salvation! May we all trust You! May we trust You more, and more, and more, and more, and more! May we trust You implicitly! May we trust You up to the hilt and glorify You thus by our childlike faith, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 37:1-18.***

Let us read, tonight, part of the 37th Psalm. David, here, first of all, dissuades himself and us from falling into a very common evil—that of

envying the wicked because of their prosperity and murmuring against God because we, perhaps, are not so highly favored in our earthly affairs.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of inequity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* No one envies the grass, let it be ever so green. No one envies flowers, let them be ever so fragrant, for we know that grass must be cut and that flowers must wither. Let us look upon the wicked in the same light—their time of perishing shall soon come, their end hastens on—therefore, let all envying be out of the question since they are such short-lived beings.

3. *Trust in the LORD, and do good.* There you have the secret of the active life of the Christian! The root of his activity lies in his faith—“Trust in the Lord.” The outward manifestation of his inner life is in the good that he does and where there is this faith, proven to be living faith by good works, there follows the promise—

3. *So shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.* It does not say, “Young man, verily you shall prosper in business.” It does not say, “O ambitious man, you shall dwell in a palace, or revel in luxuries,” but it *does* say to you, O humble-minded Christian, trusting in God, “Verily, you shall be fed.” You know, when the word, “verily,” is used, there is something upon which God sets His seal as being true—“Verily, you shall be fed.” God’s, “Verilys,” are better than men’s oaths. Believe, then, Christians, and let there be no more fretting about your temporal trials. I know you have come in here, tonight, very anxious and vexed with care and grief—take this, “Verily,” and lay it, like Isaiah’s lump of figs, upon the boil and, “Verily,” you shall soon be healed!

4. *Delight yourself, also, in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Delight is a Christian’s duty. To sorrow, to mourn, to despair—these belong not to the Believer. “Delight yourself in the Lord.” Christians, here is a river to swim in—plunge into it! Here is a bottomless abyss of delights—the Person, the Grace, the works, the attributes of our Covenant God! And here is a promise given to each one of those who carry on this excellent duty, “He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

5. *Commit your way unto the Lord; trust, also, in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.* Put the helm of your ship into the hand of the Almighty Pilot. Leave the guidance of your pilgrimage to Him who has led many caravans across the desert and who has never suffered any to perish! What an easy way this is and yet how difficult do we find it to carry it out! It is to unload ourselves and put our burden on our God. Oh, that we had the sanctified commonsense to make us fulfill this duty!

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* Leave your character with God—it is safe, there. Men may throw mud at it, but it will never stick long on a true Believer—it shall soon come off and you shall be the more glorious for men’s slander.

7-11. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not*

yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. This is now a Gospel blessing, for Christ pronounced it upon the mount among His other benedictions—“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Somehow or other, the only persons who truly enjoy life and get happiness out of this present vale of tears, are the meek spirits, the men who can say—“Mine are the valleys, and the mountains mine; my Father made them all.” Even the possessions of other men make these people glad! They are like the man we have heard of in China who met a mandarin covered with jewels and, bowing to him, said, “Thank you for those jewels.” Doing this many times, at last the mandarin asked the cause of his gratitude. “Well,” said the poor but wise man, “I thank you that you have those jewels, for I have as good a sight of them as you have; but I have not the trouble of wearing them, putting them on in the morning, taking them off at night, and having a watchman keeping guard over them when I am asleep. I thank you for them—they are as much use to me as they are to you.” This meek man can walk along the broad acres of a rich man’s farm! He can see his noble oaks and other forest trees and he can say, “Thank God for them all! I have as much enjoyment from these as the rich man, himself, has, for they are mine to enjoy as truly as they are his.” “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace,” not in the abundance of wealth, but in the abundance of *peace*! To a meek man, peace is his wealth, and holy quietness and calm his true riches!

12-18. *The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the day of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. He knows their dark days and He will be their light—He knows their sunny days and He will be their shelter. He knows their last day and He will be their confidence. He knows their resurrection-day and He will be their glory—“Their inheritance shall be forever.”—*

***“Go, you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine.
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer’s mine.”***

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 210, 191.

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THE BELIEVER SINKING IN THE MIRE NO. 631

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

*“Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.”
Psalm 69:14.*

MANY rivers and especially the Nile have on their banks deep deposits of black mud. And when any person seeks to leap on shore, if he should ignorantly or through misfortune spring upon this soft mud he would, unless speedily pulled out, be sucked under until he was utterly swallowed up and suffocated in the mire. Having no handhold or foothold, the more he labored to extricate himself from the thick adhesive mud the deeper he would descend until he would be choked in the filth, unless someone was near to help him out and save him from destruction. True Believers, Beloved, are sometimes in deep mire and in fear of being swallowed up. This was the state and condition of the Psalmist when he wrote this Psalm. He felt that he was sinking and could not deliver himself and therefore he cries unto God for strength in the words of the text, “Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.”

Mr. Gadsby, in his “Wanderings,” narrates an incident which, with reflections of his own, I shall read to you at the outset. “Being brought to a stand as just mentioned, I hailed the captain to heave to and take me on board. One of the men was, therefore, sent in the small boat but the river near the western side was so shallow that he could not get the boat within some distance of the bank. He consequently, as is usual in such cases, jumped overboard that he might carry me to the boat on his back.

“No sooner, however, had he sprung from the boat than I heard him scream. I turned to see what was the matter and I found him struggling in the mud. He was sinking as though in quicksand. And the more he struggled the faster and deeper he sank. His fellow boatmen were not slack—they quickly saw the dilemma he was in and two of them dashed in and swam to the small boat. I was almost choked with terror and I breathed, or rather gasped with difficulty. ‘Can they reach the poor fellow?’ I said to myself. ‘If not, he must inevitably be swallowed up alive!’ Now they reach the boat! Now they are near him!

“And now, praise the Lord, he grasps firmly hold—O that death-like grasp!—of the side of the boat! But this was not until he had sunk up to his chest. Seeing him safe, I breathed more freely. And I feel that now, though only relating the circumstance, the excitement has caused an increased and painful action of the heart. How I thought of poor David! Had he really witnessed a similar scene to this, literally, when, speaking of the feelings of his soul spiritually, he said, ‘I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me’ (Psa. 69:2)?

“O what an agonizing state to be in! And yet many of my readers, I have no doubt, who never witnessed such a scene literally, know something about it spiritually, as David did, whether he had seen it with his bodily eyes or not. Well might he, in the struggling of his soul, exclaim, ‘Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink! (14). Let me grasp firmly hold of the ark and be pulled safely on board! Well! Just at the right time, just before the poor fellow’s arms (shall I say his arms of faith?) were disabled, swallowed up—deliverance came!”

The prayer of our text leads us to three reflections—first, that the true Believer may be in the mire and very near sinking. Secondly, that the true Believer may be in such a condition that God alone can deliver him. And thirdly, that in whatever condition the Believer may be, prayer is forevermore his safe refuge—if a man finds that his own strength fails, he can look up to Him who is an ever present help in time of trouble and cry unto Him, “Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.”

I. We commence with the statement that THE TRUE BELIEVER MAY BE IN THE MIRE. Let us consider for a moment three things—What kind of mire the Believer may be brought into. Why God suffers him to be brought there, and how we can prove that he is really and truly a Believer although God suffers him to be brought into the mire. The truest Believer in the world may be brought into the deep mire of unbelief. Some of us who have preached the Word for years and have been the means of working faith in others and of establishing them in the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible have, nevertheless, been the subjects of the most fearful and violent doubts as to the Truth of God and the very Gospel we have preached.

Times may have occurred to the best of God’s servants—when they have even doubted the existence of the God whom they have loved to serve—when even the Deity and reality of the Lord Jesus who has rescued them from sin by His precious blood has been a matter of grievous and horrible questioning. Little do people know, who are ignorant of the private history of God’s believing people, what struggles they have with their own base-born, wicked unbelief. It is not only Thomas who has said, “Except I put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

There have been thousands of eminent saints who have been attacked by unbelief and have been in doubt as to things which they once received as certain Truths of God and which still in their heart of hearts they know to be true. They could have died for those Truths one day. They could have established them beyond all doubt and question the next day. And yet upon the third they might be compelled, through strong temptation, to sit down and with tears streaming from their eyes, cry bitterly unto their Helper, “Oh, God, save me from this accursed unbelief which robs me of every comfort and takes the foundations away and lays my glory in the dust! What can I do? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? O settle my soul upon Your Word and establish me in Your Truth, O You God of Truth.”

A man may be a true Believer and yet feel that he is sinking fast into the mire and clay of unbelief as some of us know to our lamentation and dismay. A Believer may be quite settled in his belief of the Gospel and may never doubt the inspiration of Scripture, the Atonement of Christ and all

those precious Truths which are commonly received among us and yet, through sin or temptation, or some other cause, he may not have a full assurance of his own interest in those glorious and vital Truths!

A true Believer in Christ, in fact, may often suspect himself to be a hypocrite when he is most sincere—to be an apostate when he is most diligently following the Lord. And he may set himself down as the chief of sinners when the testimony of men and of God is that he is a perfect and an upright man—“one that fears God and eschews evil.” A Believer may be in a state of high spiritual health and yet may think himself to be sick unto death! He may be clothed in fair white linen and yet reckon himself to be naked, poor and miserable. He may be rich with all the treasures of his heavenly Father’s kingdom and yet may scarcely know where he can find a ready crust with which to supply his present pressing spiritual needs.

There are such things as princes in rags. And there have been such things and probably are now, as princes of the blood-royal peers of God’s own realm sitting on the dunghill. Many a justified and accepted saint has had to moan out under a deep sense of sin, just as the poor publican did, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” I dare say many of you think that God’s ministers never have any question about their interest in Jesus Christ. I wish they never had—Brethren, I wish sincerely *I* never had! It is seldom that I do—very seldom. But there are times when I would change my soul’s place with the poorest Believer out of Heaven—when I should be content to sit behind the door of Heaven—if only I might be numbered among God’s people!

True Believers sometimes droop into this state—whether they are God’s people or not, they cannot tell. Whether their sins are forgiven or not is a matter of solemn enquiry with their souls. Whether they have ever passed from death unto life or not is the great problem which they sit down and earnestly consider. And whether they are God’s people or not is a question they have great difficulty in answering. This is deep mire, indeed, for it is woe with another woe at its heels to lose the assurance of one’s present salvation.

In addition to this, at times the Lord’s chosen are brought into another kind of mire which will never swallow them up, but which may prove a matter of very severe trial to them while they are in it. I mean temporal trouble. When the soul is alarmed about spiritual things and bodily or pecuniary troubles come also, then the sea is boisterous, indeed. It is ill when two seas meet—when Moab and Ammon come against Judah at the same time—when both upper and nether springs appear to be dried up. When God, with both hands, thrusts us into the deep mire.

Certain of my Brethren are frequently in trouble. Their whole life is a floundering out of one slough of despond into another. You have had many losses in business—nothing but losses, perhaps. You have had many crosses, disappointments, bereavements—nothing prospers with you. Well, Brother, there is this consolation—you are one of a very large family—for many of God’s people pass through just such tribulation. It was said by Matthew Henry, I think, that, “Prosperity was the blessing of the Old Covenant, but that adversity is the peculiar blessing of the New.”

I do not know whether that is true or not, but I do know this, that Christ has said, “In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good

cheer; I have overcome the world.” It is no sign, Beloved, that you are not a child of God because you feel the rod—it is rather a token of your being one of the adopted—because you are made to pass under the rod of the Covenant and to utter the prayer of David—“Lord, deliver me out of the deep mire and let me not sink.” You are allowed to plead against the thing you so much fear. You may cry, “Leave me not to become penniless! Leave me not to dishonor my character!” But remember that none of your trials can prove you to be a lost man. Pray, Brother, the prayer of that good man who asked for neither poverty nor riches. Ask that you may have food convenient for you. Pray, “Give me this day my daily bread.” “Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.”

I have not come to the blackest mire yet. God’s own people are, at seasons, suffered to sink in the mire of inward corruption. There are times when Believers have such a sight of the little Hell within their own hearts that they are ready to despair of the possibility of their being completely sanctified and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Our God, at seasons, permits the fountains of the great deep of human depravity to be broken up and then what floods of sin come pouring forth! We little know what lies secreted in our deceitful hearts—envy, blasphemies, murders, lust—there is enough in the heart of any man to make a full-grown devil if restraining Grace did not prevent it.

Today you may have had such enjoyments of the Lord’s Countenance that you have been ready to sing—“You have made my mountain to stand strong. I shall never be moved.” But tomorrow you may have such a sight of self that you may exclaim, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Remember if you have the nature of God in you, you have also the nature of the old Adam. You are one with Christ and, “as is the heavenly, such are they, also, that are heavenly.” But you are also one with Adam and, “as is the earthy, such are they, also, that are earthy.”

You are to *be* immortal, but you are reminded that you *are* mortal. You are one day to be raised in Glory. But you must remember as long as you are here, the time of Glory is not come. You drag about, to your shame, your weakness, your dishonor and your misery—a body of sin and death. The best of God’s children know this. And I think the holier they are, the more likely they are to feel the conflict within. It is the fashion in our country for men to wear black coats. I suppose it is because they do not show the dirt so much as a white garment—and if we wore white garments the filth would reveal itself and we should have to change them very often.

So, my Brethren, the more a Christian is like his Master, the more clearly he sees his own faults. Oh, Lord, grant us Divine Grace to see much of our sins through the tears of repentance and to see much of the Savior through the eyes of faith—for if we see little of Him we shall get into the plight of David when he was in the deep mire and cried, “Lord, deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.”

Beloved, it is painful to reflect that the best of God’s people are allowed to fall into the mire of Satanic temptations. There is no knowing what suggestion Satan may thrust into the ears and into the soul of the greatest Believer that Heaven ever made. God may whisper in your ears one day and Satan the next and yet you may be a child of God on both occa-

sions. Oh, Beloved, I dare scarcely say in the midst of this assembly what I know on this point. If I were only to reveal my own struggles and conflicts with Satan I might stagger some of you! But this I know, that no Christian minister will ever be able to enter into the trials and experiences of God's people unless he has stood foot to foot with the arch Fiend and wrestled with the Prince of Hell.

Martin Luther was right when he said that temptation and adversity were the two best books in his library. He had never written his commentary upon Galatians if he had not been one who was frequently tempted and tossed about by Satan. That fiery, vehement nature of his was like a great coal fire burning up the works of Satan and all that Satan could do only stirred up the flame and caused it to burn more brightly. Satan will suggest not merely little sins, but the worst and foulest of sins to the best of God's chosen people.

He will even venture in his baseness to urge the man of God to destroy himself when under depression of spirits. And although the saint hates the very thought, yet he may be driven to the verge of it by an influence which he feels that all his puny might is unable to resist. It is a fearful thing to fight with Apollyon. We shall sing of it in Heaven as one of the greatest and most marvelous mercies of God, that, "He delivered us out of the mouth of our cruel adversary."

2. Why is it that Believers are allowed to fall into it? The answer is they sometimes get into it through their own sin. It is a chastisement upon them. They were not faithful enough when they walked in the light and, therefore, they are put into the darkness. If they had minded their steps when they were going down the hill they would not have been subject to such afflictions in the valley. Rest assured that a great many of our sorrows are the foul weeds which spring up from the seeds of our own sins.

If you had been a fruitful tree, the pruning knife would not have been so often used. The rod is never taken down from the shelf except when it is absolutely necessary. And we are made to smart bitterly under it because we so greatly require it. God does not punish in a penal sense, but He does chastise. And He generally does it by permitting us to be filled with our own ways. We have to drink the powder of the idol calf which we have, ourselves, set up. We had need to walk with holy jealousy, for we serve a jealous God. O for Grace to serve Him well! Our heavenly Father sends these troubles, or permits them to come, to try our faith. If our faith is worth anything at all it will stand the test.

Superficial brilliance is always afraid of fire, but gold is not—the paste gem dreads to be touched by the diamond—but the true diamond fears no test. People who have a kind of confectionery godliness will wish to be preserved from temptations, for they cannot endure them. But the Christian counts it all joy when he falls into different trials, knowing that "tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope. And hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Spirit which is given unto us."

My dear Friends, if your faith is only a sunshiny faith, get rid of it! For you may not have many bright days between this and Heaven. If your godliness can only walk with Christ when He wears silver slippers you had better give it up, for Christ very often walks barefoot. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health

and the business profitable. That is true faith which holds by the Lord's faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when our spirits are depressed, when we are driven from the enjoyment of assurances into the desert land and cannot see the light of our Father's Countenance.

A faith that can say in the midst of the direst trouble, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"—this is Heaven-born faith, indeed! I believe in my Lord because He is a God that cannot lie. He is faithful and true to His every word and, therefore, let the whole creation go to rack and ruin—my faith shall not waver or give up its confidence. The Lord may also let His servants slip into the deep mire to glorify Himself, for He is never, perhaps, more glorified than in the faith of His own people.

When an architect has erected a bridge of whose enormous strength he is well satisfied, he has no objection that it shall be put to any test. "No," he says, "let the heaviest train pass over it which has ever been dragged by a locomotive. Let the most terrible tempest come that has ever blown from the four winds! I have built my structure in a manner so substantial that the more it is tried and proved, the more you will admire its firmness and completeness. So our gracious God, Beloved, glorifies Himself by permitting His people to be subjected to trials and by enabling them to endure the strain.

We would never know the music of the harp if the strings were left untouched. We would never enjoy the juice of the grape if it were never trod in the winepress. We would never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed and beaten. And we would never know the warmth of fire if the coals were not utterly consumed. The excellence of the Christian is brought out by the fire of trouble. The wisdom of the Great Workman and the glory of His skill and power are discovered by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Again, Beloved, trials are permitted to show the natural weakness of the creature that no flesh may glory in the Presence of God. Men of iron nerve are raised up to face all opposition and confront the powers of darkness. Their testimony never falters, their course is true and bright as the sun in the heavens and men rejoice in their light. With faith undaunted they beard the infernal lion in his den and in the day of battle seek the thickest of the fight. All the devils in Hell cannot frighten them and all the foes upon earth cannot stir them from their Divine purpose. They win souls as many as the sands of the sea and their spiritual children are for number, like gravel.

They revive the flame which lingers in the embers of the Church. They set the world on a blaze with heavenly fire. They comfort many and set free thousands of prisoners and yet, suddenly, and it may be in the last hour, their joy departs, their assurance flees and their confidence departs. May not this be necessary that men may not trace the champion's noble bearing to the strength of his natural constitution, but discern that the eternal God was the support of his faith? We might have dreamed that the successful warrior was something different from other men—but when he is brought low we discern clearly that it was distinguishing *Grace* rather than a distinguished *man* which is to be seen and wondered at. The man was but an earthen vessel in which God had put His precious treasure, and He makes the earthiness of the vessel manifest that all men may see that the excellency of the power is not of us, but of God!

There is, perhaps, another reason why God permits His people to sink for a time into deep depression, and that is to make Heaven sweeter when they enter its pearly gates. There must be some shades in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in Heaven if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Rest, rest, rest! In whose ear does that sound most sweet? Not in the ears of the loiterers who scorn all knowledge of the word "toil," but in the ears of those who are exhausted and fatigued by the labors of the day!

Peace! Is there a man in England who knows the blessedness of that word, "peace"? Yes, there are some. The soldier knows it. He has heard the whiz of the bullet. He has seen the smoke of the battle and the garment stained with blood. And his heart has been stirred by the din, and the shrieks, and the death of the field of fight. To him, peace is a peerless gift. Who will know the peace of Heaven but those who have experienced the warfare of earth and have endured conflicts with sin and the Prince of the power of the air?

Beloved, there must be the foil of sorrow to bring out the bright sparkling of the diamond of Glory. The happiest moments of mere physical pleasure I can remember have been just after a long illness, or some acute pain. When pain is lulled to sleep, how happy one is! I saw a Brother the other day affected by the most painful of all bodily complaints. He was telling me of the sufferings he had endured, and he said, "I am so happy now it is all over." And I suppose, my Beloved, that Heaven will derive some of its excess of delights—its overflowing joy—from the contrast with the pain and misery and conflict and suffering which we have had to pass through here below.

There will be something better to talk about than *troubles* in Heaven, but the recollection of them may afford a flavor to our happiness which it would have lacked without it. We shall, I doubt not, "with transporting joy, recount the labors of our feet."

3. These are some of the reasons why God permits His people to sink, for awhile, in the deep mire where there is no standing. But the question is raised, "Are these men who are thus tossed about by doubts and vexed with the great depravity of their hearts, truly, at that time, God's people?" Certainly they are! If they were not God's people the pain of the temptation which they endure could not have reached them. This spot is the spot of God's children and none others are marked with it.

The man who lives in sin as his element never feels the weight of it. A fish may be deep in the sea with thousands of tons of water rolling over his head, but it does not feel the load. But if a man has only a bucketful of water to carry upon his head, he feels the weight of it and rejoices to lose his burden. The sinner whose element is sin laughs at the weight by which a Believer is borne down. Conflicts and pains such as I have been speaking of are not possible to those destitute of spiritual life. Spiritual *life* is the first requisite for spiritual *grief* and spiritual *contrition*. Depend upon it, Beloved, that those who suffer as I have described are the children of God, for they show it.

They show it by the way in which they bear their trials. In their worst times there is always a clear distinction which marks them as separate from other men. If they cannot shout, "victory!" they bear patiently. If they cannot sing unto God with their mouth, yet their hearts bless Him. There

is a degree of light even in their worst darkness—it never becomes Egyptian darkness—some one star, at least, gilds the gloom. In the blackest night there is still a candle somewhere or other for the Lord's chosen.

If they get into the mire, they do not perish there. They cry for help when their woes surround them and in the very nick of time, when everything appears to be lost, their heavenly Father hastens to their aid. It is well known to the students of Christian biography that the most eminent of God's saints have had to pass through trials similar to those which we have been describing. Luther was a man of the strongest faith—and yet at times of the faintest hope. He was and he was not, a firm Believer. His faith never wavered as to the truth of the cause which he advocated, but his faith as to his own interest in Christ, seldom, if ever, amounted to full assurance.

The force of his faith spent itself in carrying on with fearful vigor the war against antichrist and error of all shapes. He believed the Truth of God and held right manfully justification by faith. But he was at times very doubtful as to whether he, himself, was justified in Christ Jesus. He believed in salvation by the precious blood of Christ. But, especially at the last, it became a very serious matter with him as to whether *he* had ever been washed in that precious blood. Roman Catholic biographers—who, of course, if they can, will slander him—say that he had doubts as to everything which he preached and that at the last he found his faith was not in accordance with truth.

Not so! No man stuck to his testimony with more tenacity than the great Reformer! But yet I marvel not that they should say so. He never doubted the truth of the things which he preached, but he did doubt his own interest in them frequently. And when he came to die, his testimony, though amply sufficient, was nothing like so brilliant as that of many a poor old woman who has died in a humble cottage, resting upon Jesus.

The poor peasant who knew no more than her Bible was true, was utterly unknown to the Vatican and Fame's trumpet will never resound her name—but yet she entered into eternal peace with far louder shouting of joy than Martin Luther, who shook the world with his thundering valor! "Here lies he that never feared the face of man," is a most proper epitaph for John Knox. And yet at the last, for some hours, he passed through fearful temptation. And what do you suppose it was? The temptation of self-righteousness! The devil could not charge him with sin, for Knox's life had been so straightforward and honest that no man could impugn his motives or deny his Christianity.

And, therefore, the devil came to him in another and more crafty way. He whispered, "John Knox, you have deserved well of your Master! You will get to Heaven well enough through your own merits." It was as hard a struggle as the lion-hearted soldier of the Cross had ever encountered—to hold to his simple faith in Jesus Christ in his hour of peril. Now no Christian man denies that Luther and Knox were men of faith. And yet they were men who had to pray, "Deliver me out of the mire."

I know as I look around on this congregation that some of you can heartily sympathize in the Truth before us. But if there are no others here who can, I can, by God's Grace, most thoroughly say, "I know whom I have believed. And I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day." But I know, also, that the Chris-

tian life is one of stern conflict and battle. And though we do rejoice in the Lord always, yet there are times when it is as hard a work as we can possibly do. No, *harder* work than we can accomplish without the help of the Eternal Spirit—to keep our faith alive at all—for our souls are brought almost to death's door.

I wished to enlarge on this matter for the comfort of those who are tossed to and fro by doubts and fears. I have been attempting to describe the case of those who, for the greater part of their lives have lived in the shade and seen but little of the light of God's Countenance. O may the sun shine on them yet with cheering rays!

II. I turn very briefly to the second point—WHEN BELIEVERS ARE IN SUCH A STATE, THEY KNOW EXPERIMENTALLY THAT NO ONE CAN DELIVER THEM BUT THEIR GOD. The Word of God itself, if not laid home by the Divine Spirit, cannot help them. You may possibly be in such a condition that every promise scowls at you as though it were transformed into a threat. When you turn over the pages of the Book once so full of comfort to you it seems withered into a howling wilderness.

Even those promises which you have been accustomed to offer to others in their time of need appear to shut their doors against you. "No admittance here," says one promise. Unbelief puts its burning finger right across another. Past sin accuses you and cries, "You cannot claim this Word, for your transgression has forfeited it." So you may look through the whole Bible and find nothing upon which your souls may rest. You have noticed strong posts by the sides of rivers to which ships may be safely moored. To get the rope fairly round one of the promises of God will yield good enough moorings for a Christian—but there are times when we have great difficulty in getting the rope round so as to hold fast.

The fault is not in the *promise* but in us. At such seasons the preaching of the Gospel is apparently without power. You say to yourselves, "I do not know how it is, but I do not profit by the ministry as I once did. It used to make me leap for joy when I heard of the precious things of God. But I come away un comforted from that table which once furnished me a feast of consolation." It is not the fault of the minister—he still, as a good steward, brings forth things new and old. It is not the fault of the Word—it is still milk for babes and strong meat for full-grown men—but you painfully feel that *you* are changed. You lament in words like these, "I go where others go and find no comfort there."

This is a case in which the Holy Spirit must Himself exercise His comforting office. It is only by the effectual application of the Word to your heart by the Holy Spirit that you can be brought out of this deep mire. At such times other Believers cannot aid you. Those about you can prove to you how foolish it is to be in such a state and you can even see your folly for yourself—yet you lie there helpless to lift hand or foot. They tell you of the faithfulness of God. They remind you of the glorious future and point to the land beyond the skies—but you only sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at rest, for there is no rest for me beneath the sky."

Human sympathy is at a nonplus and all we can do is to weep with you, for we cannot dry your tears. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because you have been living without Him and now He is going to take away everything upon which you have been in the habit of

depending. Another reason may be that He wishes to drive you to Himself. Oh, it is a blessed thing to live in the fountainhead! While our skin bottles are full, we are content like Hagar and Ishmael to go into the wilderness. But when those are dry, nothing will serve us but, "You God see me."

We must then come to the well. We are like the prodigal. We love the swine troughs and forget our father's house. Remember, we can make swine troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion. Do not misunderstand me. They are blessed things, but we may put them in God's place and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God! Even the bronze serpent is to be despised as Nehustan, a mere piece of brass, if I worship *it* instead of *God*.

The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. And, Brothers and Sisters, I think our Lord favors us with a famine in the land that it may make us seek after the Savior more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God's Grace. The best position is still to be where he was at first, "Having nothing and yet possessing all things." Not building a wooden house on the rock, piling it higher and higher with our own wood, and then getting up to the top and saying, "How high I am!" but having no wood at all—just keeping down on the bare, solid rock—this is wisdom!

When the wind comes and the storm blows, we shall see that the structures which we build will give way and fall to our own damage. But if we stand on the Rock which never shakes, we cannot suffer loss. I pray God that you and I may never get beyond the fountain filled with blood. Stand there, Brothers and Sisters, and be happy! Sinners blood-washed, sinners pleading, sinners accepted, we pray to always feel ourselves to be. Never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings—but know that because Christ on Calvary offered a full, free, efficacious Atonement forever—one that believes on Him is, therefore, saved.

We are complete in Him, having nothing of our own to trust, but resting upon the merits of Him whose passion and whose life furnish for us the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to this, then it is that God comes to help us. We are sure in our poverty to turn to Him afresh with new earnestness. Infants, when they are among strangers, are pleased with little toys and amusements. But when they become hungry, nothing will do for them but their mother's breast. So it is with a child of God—he may for a time be satisfied and find pleasure in the things of this world—but he only finds lasting and *sure* happiness in being embraced in his Father's arms.

When the boys walk out with us in fair weather they will run in front of us ever so far, but as soon as they see any danger in the way they quickly return to father's side. So when everything goes well with us we frequently run a long way from God, but as soon as we are overtaken by trouble, or see a lion in the way, we fly to our heavenly Father. I bless God for the mire and for my sinking in it, when it makes me cry out, "Deliver me, oh my God, out of the deep mire and let me not sink."

III. In the last place our text shows us that PRAYER IS THE NEVER-FAILING RESORT OF THE CHRISTIAN in any case and in every plight.

When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp. Your bowstring may be relaxed and your sword may be rusty. Your spear may be bent—but the weapon of all-prayer is never out of order! Men have to sharpen the sword and the spear, but prayer never rusts. There is this blessed thing about prayer—it is a door which none can shut.

Devils may surround you on all sides but there is always one way open, and as long as that road is unobstructed you will not fall into the enemy's hands. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine or storm so long as heavenly succor can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the times of our need. Prayer is never forbidden. Remember, Christian, it is never wrong for you to pray, for the gates of Heaven are open day and night. Your prayer is heard in Heaven in the dead of the night, in the midst of your business, in the heat of noonday, or in the shades of evening. You can be in poverty, sickness, obscurity, slander, doubt, or even sin—but it is still true that your God will welcome your prayer at any time and in every place.

Again, prayer is never futile. True prayer is forevermore true power. You may not always get what you ask for, but you shall always have your real needs supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If you ask for silver will you be angered because He gives you gold? If you seek bodily health, should you complain, if instead, He makes your sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than to have the cross removed? Was not the Apostle more enriched when God suffered him still to endure the thorn in the flesh and yet said to him, "My strength is sufficient for you"? Better to have all-sufficient Grace than to have the thorn taken away.

What is your condition my Brother, my Sister? Let me entreat you not to cease from prayer. There may be spiritual life in you and yet the devil may tempt you to say, "I cannot pray." But you *can* pray! You *do* pray! You *must* pray! If you have spiritual life, although you can scarcely bend your knees and are almost afraid to utter words once dear to you, yet your soul desires, pants, hungers, thirsts—and that is the essential of prayer—that is the very marrow and essence of prayer.

Sobs and looks are prayers. And though you say you cannot pray, you *must* pray. You cannot help praying if you are a Christian. "I cannot breathe"—that might be true in a certain sense—I cannot, perhaps, breathe under an asthmatic affection without great difficulty and much pain. But I must breathe if I live! And so with you. You must breathe if you live. And you do pray, *must* pray if you are truly a child of God. At any rate, I pray by the power of God, the Holy Spirit, you may break through those evils, those nets of the devil which hold you in bondage and begin with your whole soul to pray. Never mind what form your prayer takes, but pray.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, everything depends now upon your prayer. If Satan can stop your prayer, he has stripped you of your last resort, your last hope! He will take you by storm if you leave off praying. Pray! If it costs you your life, pray! Go not to your ease and take not your rest until you have prayed. Give no sleep to your eyes till you have prayed. Slumber not until you have had dealings with God in prayer. Not pray?

Are you willing to be damned? Not pray? Are you willing to make your bed in Hell? Not pray? Shall devils be your companions? Shall Heaven's gate be shut against you?

Not pray? Why, my Brothers and Sisters, you must pray now! Oh, send up the prayer from the very bottom of your heart—"O God, deliver me out of the deep mire and let me not sink. Save me, oh, my God! God be merciful to me a sinner." May God the Holy Spirit sweetly compel you to pray! May He incline, guide, direct and instruct you *how* to pray, that this very night you may offer up a prayer which God in His great goodness will hear and answer!

Pray—"Lord, my soul is besieged. I am shut up by my sins. Oh, God, raise the siege and deliver me from the enemy. Lord, help me with Your almighty arm. Make my extremity Your opportunity. I am a foul beggar sitting on a dunghill. Lord, come and lift me up and put me among the princes and I will praise Your name forever and ever." May the blessed virgin's song be yours. "He has put down the mighty from their seat and has exalted the humble and meek. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty."

And may you find in the goodness, and mercy, and loving kindness of God a speedy deliverance out of the deep mire, that you may not sink! May God give a blessing to these words to your comfort! I know some of you will say, "I am not in such a state." Thank God that you are not! Be grateful for your mercies lest you lose them. Be thankful for your full assurance and your comfortable hope lest those favors should become dim, like dying tapers and waning moons. Rejoice now, oh Christian, as the young man does in his youth and let your heart cheer you in your youthful joy!

But remember, if you are not careful how you walk in these flowery paths. If you become too confident in your own strength or goodness, God will bring you down and make you cry out as sharply and as sorrowfully as David—"Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink."

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GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

NO. 2551

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 9, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You.”
Psalm 69:5.

IT seems, then, that the best of men have a measure of foolishness in them and that, sometimes, that foolishness shows itself. How gentle and tender ought we to be with others who are foolish when we remember how foolish we are, ourselves! How sincerely ought we to rejoice in Christ, as made of God unto us wisdom, when we see the folly that is bound up in our hearts and which too often shows itself in our talk and in our acts! Yet while the best of men have folly in them, it is one of the marks of a good man that he knows it to be folly and that he is willing to confess his sin before God. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” If we stand as the Pharisee stood in the Temple and cry, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” we shall go home, as the Pharisee did, without the justification which comes from God. It is the truly good man who stands afar off with the publican and cries, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” and he, also, shall go to his house “justified rather than the other.”

There is one solemn thought which deeply impresses the man who is right at heart, but who sees his own foolishness and sin and mourns it—and that thought is that *God* sees it—and sees it more perfectly than he sees it, himself. His own sight of it makes him repent and humble himself. And his knowledge of God's sight of it helps him to that repentance and humiliation. God sees everything concerning every man, but the most of men care not about God seeing them. They do not give it so much as a passing thought. It is the gracious man, the child of God who, from a broken heart, cries out, “O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You.” And this it is that makes a Christian man so greatly value the precious blood of Christ and the perfect righteousness which Jesus Christ has worked out, albeit that Omniscience still perceives sin, yet Justice does not perceive it.

God knows we are sinners, but He imputes to all Believers the righteousness of Christ and looks upon them as they are in Him. He cleanses us in the precious blood of Jesus so that we are clean in His sight and,

“accepted in the Beloved.” What a wonderful Atonement is that which hides from God that which cannot be hidden, so that God does not see what, in another sense, He must always see—and forgets what it is impossible for Him, in another sense, ever to forget! In a just and judicial way, God casts our sin behind His back and ceases to see iniquity in His people because they are clean, every whit, through washing in the—

**“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”**

Now, looking at our text, I am going to call attention to the great Truth of the Omniscience of God, desiring that each one of us may say from our heart, “O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You.”

I. First, concerning God’s knowledge of man’s sin, I remark that IT MUST BE SO. I am not going to argue, but just to talk a little to set this Truth of God before you with greater assurance of certainty.

God must know our foolishness, for, first, He is *infinite in knowledge*. We cannot conceive of a God whose knowledge is limited. That condition belongs to the finite, the creature, but not to the Infinite, the Creator, the great First Cause of everything! God knows all the past, all the present and all the future. He knows all the things that might have been and are not. He knows what might have come out of certain germs and what yet may come, which at the present seems to be far remote. All knowable things must be known to the Most High—the very Nature of God implies it and, therefore, He must know *my foolishness*, for I know something of it myself—He must know much more than I know and my sins are not hid from him, for they are not altogether hidden from myself. God must know perfectly what I only perceive in part, though that partial perception is terrible to my own heart. Yes, the infinite knowledge of God is an absolute certainty and, consequently, His knowledge of the folly and sin of every heart is beyond all question.

Moreover, God is *everywhere present*. At all times, He is in every place and, therefore, our foolishness and sin must be known to Him. It is not merely that you committed a folly or a sin and that it was *reported* to God. No, but He was there during the doing of it. What? Though the blinds were drawn and the doors were fast closed? Yet HE was there and all through the sin He stood by you and observed your every thought and every movement! There is no darkness that hides from Him, nor any other form of screen that can be used to shut out the glances of the eyes of the Eternal. He does not see from a distance, but He is on the spot. You cannot conceive of a place where God is not, for He fills all space! There could no more be a boundary to His existence than to His knowledge and, therefore, we are sure that our text is true, “O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You.”

Moreover, God is also *everywhere perceiving*. He is never a blind God, nor a blindfolded God. His knowledge is never, even for a moment, stopped and rendered intermittent, but, as His Presence is on the highest

hill and in the deepest cavern, far away on the wild sea or in the plain where the foot of man has scarcely made a track, so, in that Presence there is a constant sight, an unfailing observation at all times. You would not, I hope, reduce God to the level of One who has eyes and sees not! "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" The fact that eyesight and hearing come from Him proves how abundantly He possesses those faculties, Himself. He sees and He hears in every place and there was never anything done of man without His knowledge. The secret murder, the silent plot where everybody had sworn an oath of secrecy—all was known to God. There was never a thought in a human mind, although the man had not uttered it in words even to himself, but what the Lord perceived it. Does not this make the fact certain that He knows my foolishness and that my sins are not hidden from Him? Infinite in knowledge, everywhere present, and everywhere perceiving everything, He must know my foolishness and my sin. Dr. Watts forcibly expresses this idea in his hymn on God's Omnipresence—

***"In all my vast concerns with You,
In vain my soul would try
To shun Your Presence, Lord, or flee
The notice of Your eyes.
Your all-surrounding sight surveys
My rising and my rest.
My public walks, my private ways,
And secrets of my breast.
If winged with beams of morning light,
I fly beyond the west.
Your hand, which must support my flight,
Would soon betray my rest.
If over my sins I think to draw
The curtains of the night.
Those flaming eyes that guard Your Law
Would turn the shades to light.
The beams of noon, the midnight hour,
Are both alike to Thee—
Oh, may I never provoke that power
From which I cannot flee!"***

Beside that, God is *always reading the heart*. We have heard a good deal about thought-reading. I hope that the most of you will never be gifted in that direction, for such a power would make it very unpleasant for many. One said that he wished that he had a window in his bosom, that everybody might read his thoughts. I think that if he were at all a sensible man, he would need to pull the blind down before long! There is something which, now and again, crosses the purest mind which he would not wish another to perceive—and he who watches his thoughts with an exemplary vigilance will sometimes be off his guard and tolerate an imagination which he would not wish to pollute any other person's mind. But though we cannot read each other's hearts, God can read them. There is no possibility of lying to the Lord so as to deceive Him. He

reads the hypocrite when he puts on his fine vestments and prays his prayer in the most devout style—and even when he gets into his closet and bows before his God only after a formal manner. We may have performed what looked like a holy deed. We may have sung a solemn Psalm. We may have appeared unto our fellow men to be among the excellent of the earth, but if it is not really so, no one can hide himself in secret, or conceal the deceit of his spirit in the dark place from the eyes of the Most High.

Though you should climb to the top of Carmel in the pride of your heart, or go down with Jonah to the bottoms of the mountains in your deceit, yet shall He find you out, strip you, unmask you and set you in the sunlight to be despised of men and all intelligent beings, as they, also, shall see your lies. O Beloved, God must have seen my foolishness! And my sins cannot be hid from Him since He reads the secrets of the heart and the tortuous passages of the soul are easily threaded by His unerring wisdom!

We are sure, also, that He knows our foolishness and our sin because *He knows what is yet to be*. To know what men have already done is a light matter compared with knowing what men will yet do. There are black crimes which are recorded by Moses in Scripture which Moses never could have known if God had not first seen them and then communicated the knowledge of them to him. There are many incidents mentioned in the Pentateuch which could only have come to the knowledge of Moses through the Revelation of the Spirit of God and, therefore, God Himself knew all about those events. But, throughout the prophecies there are intimations of the sins of men that would yet be committed and, more especially, that sin of sins—the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ—that crime of crimes is described in all its dreadful details!

Now, if God saw all that and recorded it by the agency of His servants centuries before it happened, there can be no hope that anything which has ever occurred has escaped the observation of the Most High! You are all books and every page is open to the eyes of the great Reader who reads you from the first letter to the last! There is nothing which any man can possibly conceal from God. Men love what they call, secrets, yet there are no such things in very truth where God is concerned, for He observes everything! It matters not what it may be—minute or majestic, malevolent or benevolent, a curse or a blessing—it all passes before that eye which never wearies or sleeps, or suffers anything to escape its notice! It is so, it must be so if God is God—He knows my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Him.

II. Now let us just turn the current of our thought while I ask, concerning God's knowledge of man's sin, AFTER WHAT FASHION IS IT? If God knows, in what particular way does He know?

The answer is, that *it is complete knowledge*. The Lord knows us altogether. I must confess that I cower down beneath that thought. That the Lord should know my public service is sufficiently awe-striking—but that

He should know my *private* thoughts—ah, this sinks me into the very dust! The Lord knows not only the action, but the *motive of the action*—all the thoughts that went with my action, all the pride and self-seeking that came after it—and spoiled it when it might have been praiseworthy. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord ponders the hearts.” The word, “ponders,” means that He weighs us, He takes the specific gravity of our actions. They may cover a great surface, yet there may be no real substance in them at all—but the Lord weighs them as goldsmiths weigh the metal that is subjected to their test. He takes care not to be deceived by anything that is apparent to our fellow men. “The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold: but the Lord tries the hearts.” There is nothing hidden from God’s eyes—every separate part of us is open to His perpetual inspection! Think of that. God’s knowledge is complete and baffles all evasion.

It is also *the knowledge of a holy Being*. You, perhaps, know some people who see all they can, yet do not see all that can be seen. It is with them as it was with the lady who said to Turner, as she looked upon one of his notable paintings, “Mr. Turner, I have never seen anything like that.” “No,” replied the artist, “I don’t suppose that you have seen it. Don’t you wish that you could?” So, when God looks at a man’s life, He sees infinitely more in it than the man ever saw in it, himself, or than all his fellow creatures have seen. The keen eyes of envy and of malice will detect a fault, if fault there is, but keener is the eye of perfect holiness! The Lord’s eyes are as a flame of fire. Being, Himself, essential Truth, He truly discovers everything that is within us and makes no mistakes. When we are dealing with God, mistakes on His part are quite out of the question. He knows us after the manner of a perfectly holy Being and many a thing that looked white to us, is absolutely black to God! His eyes can see according to the clear white light of Heaven, but you and I can only see in some single ray of faint light—we see not as God sees. We shall, one day, be holy as He is holy, and we shall then look upon the affairs of this life in a strangely different light from that in which we look upon them now. And when once we get to Heaven, we shall realize how foolish we were to form the judgments that we did while we were here. “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as, also, I am known.” Think of this, dear Friends—the eyes that see you are the eyes of a perfectly holy God who, therefore, more readily discovers your shortcomings and your sins than all the eyes of men could do!

Reflect, again, that *God knows us with an abiding knowledge*. It is a great mercy that time brings with it relief of our sorrows by the oblivion in which it steeps us. You lost your mother and you could not have lived a month suffering the pangs that you felt in the moment that you realized your loss. All your losses are the same as they were when they first befell you, but they do not eat into your spirit with that terrible force which was in them at the onset, for time has taken off their edge. It is so

with sin—the first time that the youth told a lie, he could not sleep—but that first time was 40 years ago and he is almost sorry that I have brought it to his recollection! After a while, time covers up the remembrance of sin and we think that God has covered it up, too, but every sin, even of 50 years ago, is present to God's eyes just as if you were committing it at this moment! And your whole life does not stand out to Him as the dim past and the bright present—it is all *present* to Him. As when a man looks on a map and the whole of the country is before him, so does God look down upon our life as it is spread out for His inspection—He sees it all at once. Up from the graves of forgetfulness where you have buried them, your sins perpetually rise and confront the Judgment Seat of God. Think seriously of this matter, for it is after this manner that God knows our foolishness and that our sins are not hid from Him.

The Lord has *an eternal knowledge* of our sins. He will never forget them. If they are not washed away by the blood of Christ, He can never forget or cease to be angry because of them! He has written the record of man's sin in a book—He means it, therefore, to abide. He says, “Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures?” It is as if He had put men's sin by, to be called as a damning witness against them in that Great Day when every action and word and thought shall pass before the Judgment Seat. I do not know how this thought makes you feel, but it makes me tremble while I speak of it!

For, further, all our sins are *known to Him who is to be our Judge*. There will be no need of witnesses in that last dread day, for the Judge knows all about us! There will be no need to call this one and that to bear testimony as to our sin, for the Judge saw it, heard it and He has never forgotten it, nor does His memory fail Him as to any of the details. He will flash that eternal light of His into the conscience of the criminal and write upon the tablet of his heart the revived memory of all that he had forgotten—and there cannot be a more terrible Hell for a man than to be in the grasp of his memory and of his conscience in the Last Great Day. Yet so it will be and I beg each unconverted man, woman and child to recollect that his foolishness and his sin are known to Him to whom he must give an account at the Day of Judgment.

One thought more might, perhaps, tend to impress some who have not yet felt the force of this Truth of God, and that is that *this knowledge will be published*. If God knows about our sin, it is tantamount to everybody knowing about it. “Oh,” says someone, “I trust it will not be so! I hope that nobody knows of that dark deed of mine.” I tell you, Sir, everybody shall know of it, “for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.” There shall come a day, the Day for which all other days were made, when the books shall be opened and every man shall give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil and, further, our Savior said, “That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.” Can we bear to have it all

known? Yet known it shall be, written as across the sky, when those we have deceived and deluded shall discover what we were—and we shall wake up to everlasting shame and contempt unless we find shelter in the atoning Sacrifice and are washed in the precious blood of Christ! If I could speak of these Truths of God as I ought to speak of them, they would move your hearts. I pray God that they may.

III. And now, thirdly, **WHAT THEN?** If God *sees* everything and sees it in the fashion I have tried to describe, what then?

Why, first, *how frivolous must those be who never think about it!* A man is about to commit a crime, but his child is present, so he hesitates, or somebody looks in the window and he cannot do the wrong he intended. How is it that men will tremble under the eyes of a child and almost at the presence of a dog—and yet God's Presence is nothing at all to them? A man, about to steal, had taken his child with him to help him secure the booty. He looked all round and said, "There is nobody here, Boy." But the lad said, "Father, there is one way you did not look—you did not look up—God can see you." Just so. Men do not look up and if you tell them that God sees them, of what account is He to them? This is practical atheism, yet men say that *they* would not have crucified Christ. Sirs, as far as you can, you kill God, for you put Him out of your thoughts! You make nothing of Him and what is that but the Crucifixion of God? You despise Him so much that His Presence has no effect upon you, though the presence of any mortal man would have stopped you from your sin!

Next, dear Brothers and Sisters, *what care this ought to work in us!* How diligently we ought to do our work for God! How earnestly we ought to pray when we know that we always have the great Taskmaster's eyes upon us! Or, better still, that dear eye that looked in pity upon us when we were lost and ruined! The eyes of the Well-Beloved, who gave Himself for us, are always fixed upon us. "Fight, my children," said a Highland chieftain, "fight and conquer, for your chieftain, though he lies here bleeding, has his eyes upon you." And they fought like tigers under their leader's eye and thus should Christians fight against sin when the eyes of the beloved Captain who died for them is always upon them! There must be no sleeping, there must be no "scamping" of our work, as bad workmen do when the master is away. It must be gold, silver and precious stones that we build with—and every stone must be well laid upon the one great Foundation. Everything must be done at the very best because God sees it. You know how the heathen sculptor put it—he was working with his chisel and hammer upon the back part of a statue of which only the front was to be seen. The back part was to be built into the wall, so someone said to him, "Why are you toiling so elaborately at that which will be hidden in the wall?" He answered, "The gods can see inside the wall." The heathen gods could not see, but our God can and, therefore, the secret part of one's life is, perhaps, the most important part of it! That which is never meant for the eyes of man, but wholly for the eyes of God, ought to have a double care exercised in the perfecting

of it, that His eyes may rest upon it with a sacred complacency, according to His abounding Grace and mercy.

And *what holy trembling this ought to put within us!* It is often a joy to think that God knows everything. It was a true comfort to Peter when he could say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." It is a great joy, when you are slandered and misrepresented, to be able to say, "Well, God knows the way that I take. And when He has tried me, He will bring me forth as gold. My true record is on high, so I need not fear what the record below may be." That is a very delightful thought! At the same time, can any among you look forward to that Last Great Day without some trembling? Does it not take all your faith in the atoning blood and in the Divine Substitute to gird up your loins that you may face that Day without fear? Yes, and even that you may now live in the full conviction that your life is all known to God?

Just let us think for a minute or two more about this subject and then I will close. The Lord knows all about us, so that He knows our omissions. I do not know any subject that so much depresses me, humbles me and lays me in the dust as the thought of my omissions. It is not what I have done about which I think so much as of what I have not done. "You have been very useful," says one. "Yes, but might I not have been 10 times more useful?" "You have been very diligent," says another. "Yes, but might I not, somehow, have been more diligent? Might I not have done my work in a better spirit? If I had been better, would not my work have been better? If I had borrowed more of my Master's strength, which I might have had, might I not have accomplished much more?" Do you ever feel satisfied with yourself? If so, I would advise you to fling that satisfaction out of the window, as Jehu said of the painted Jezebel, "Throw her down!" A sense of satisfaction with yourself will be the death of your progress and it will prevent your sanctification. Many a man might have been sanctified if he had not thought that he was already sanctified. By that thought he clutched the shadow and so he lost the substance! Mind that such a thing as that does not happen to you.

Our Lord knows all the faults of our holy things—the coldness of our prayers, the wandering of our thoughts, the scantiness of our alms-giving and the hardness of our hearts—so that they do not go in generous tenderness with the gift we feel bound to bestow. Our sermons, our Bible reading, our Sunday school teaching—the Lord sees the faults of them—while our friends often see the excellences of them. I have had many abusive letters at different periods of my life, but specially in the early part of my career in London I think that I had as much abuse as ever fell to the lot of anybody. But, as I read letter after letter, I said to myself, "O foolish writers, if you knew me better, you could say sharper things than *these*—that would sting me much more—but, happily, you have never been able to lay your hands on the truth. You have had to tell a lie in order to abuse me and that does not hurt me a bit. If you had known me as God does, you might have had something to say which would have

caused me great sorrow.” If men could read the secrets of your soul, sincere though you have tried to be, they would see such failures, slips and errors that you would not dare to set your holiest things in the light of day—yet the Lord knows the sins—even of your holy things.

Then the Lord also knows our lies. That is a very tender point. “We do not lie,” we say, but is there any man among us who is perfectly true? When you prayed, did you not say a little more than you had ever attained in your own experience? Or you were talking about yourself and you wished to be very sincere and truthful, but you put just a touch of color into the picture, did you not? At least you painted yourself with your finger over your scars—there are not many like Oliver Cromwell, who said, “If you make a portrait of me, paint me as I am, warts and all.” You may do that with the warts on your forehead, but I question whether you would like the warts on your *character* to be seen. “I hate flattery,” says one. Why, you are flattering yourself all the while that you are saying that! “But,” says one, “I feel that I am humble.” Do you? Then I guess that you are not really so, for he who is humble still laments his pride and thus shows his humility better than in any other way. But, whatever we are, God sees all our lies and there is nothing hidden from Him.

Lastly, the Lord knows—and this is the best thing that He knows about us—He knows, concerning some of us, that we are clinging to Christ alone! Unless I am utterly deceived, I can truthfully say to the Lord Jesus Christ—

***“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You.”***

Can you say the same, dear Friend? If you can, take heart. Do not be afraid of God knowing all, but rather say, as we read a little while ago, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Pray with David, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Come and cast yourself upon the Omniscience of God, desiring to be cleansed—spirit, soul and body—and made meet to enter where the redeemed and glorified Church adores the Lord forever without fault before His Throne!

God bless this searching message to every one of you for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. G. SPURGEON: PSALM 139.

1. *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me.* God does not need to “search” us, for that implies a lack of knowledge, a knowledge obtained by search. But the meaning of the text is that God knows us as well as if He *had* examined us through and through, just as an excise officer searches a house to find contraband goods. “O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.”

2. *You know my sitting down, and my rising up.* “Such commonplace things as these, my sitting down at home, my rising up to go to my business, You, O Lord, observe and know even such minor matters as these.”

2. *You understand my thoughts afar off.* “Before the thought has entered my mind, You know what it will be. When I run far away from You in my own apprehension, You are still so near to me that You can hear my mind think and You know the meaning of my thoughts when I try to think crookedly.”

3. *You compass my path and my lying down,* “You surround me when I go out, or when I rest at home; when I labor, or when I sleep. You set a fence around about my every action and my non-action, too.”

3. *And are acquainted with all my ways.* “You know all that I do, as One that is most intimate and familiar with me. You, great God, ‘are acquainted with all my ways.’”

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether.* “Not only the words of my tongue, but the words on my tongue, are known to You, O Lord.” As we sang just now—

***“My thoughts, before they are my own,
Are to my God distinctly known!
He knows the words I mean to speak,
Ere from my opening lips they break.”***

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* “I am taken as in an ambush: I am held captive; I cannot get away. ‘You have beset me behind and before’—more than that, You have arrested me, ‘laid Your hand upon me.’”

6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* “You have it, but I cannot reach it. You have it, but, ‘I cannot attain unto it.’”

7, 8. *Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* For so it runs in the Hebrew. The translators put in the word, “are,” as you can see by the italics. “If I ascend up into Heaven, you there”—that is all the Psalmist says.

8. *If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You.* Again it is more emphatic without the words supplied by the translators. “You, O God, are in the depths as well as in the heights, You are everything in every place, You are All in All.”

9, 10. *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me.* “I cannot go anywhere except You enable me to go.”

10, 11. *And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* “There is no escaping that way, for the night shall be transformed into light, and I shall be as clearly perceived in the darkness as in the daylight.”

12. *Yes, the darkness hides not from You.* “It hides from eyes which are but mortal, but You are pure Spirit and You discern not through the impinging of light upon the retina of the eye.”

12. *But the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* Now the Psalmist goes back to the very foundation and origin of his being.

13. *For You have possessed my reins.* “You are within the secret portions of my bodily frame.”

13, 14. *You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Therefore Galen, the oldest and the best-known of the ancient surgeons, was known to say that an undevout anatomist must be mad, as another said that an undevout astronomer was mad, for there is such a marvelous display of skill and wisdom, delicacy and force in the making of a man, that we may, each one, say, “I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

14-16. *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* Still he dwells upon his birth and all that went before it—and he did well to speak of those marvels. We are too apt to forget God's goodness to us in our infant days, but we should remember that we come not into this world without a Creator and in that Creator we find a Friend, the best we have ever had, the best we can ever have! Oh, for Grace never to wish to stray away from Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being!

17. *How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How often God has thought of each one of us! Remember that if you were the only man in all the world, He would not think more of you than He does now that you are only one of myriads of myriads! The infinite mind of God is not divided by the multiplicity of the objects brought before it, but His whole mind goes forth to contemplate each individual. What deep thoughts, what bright thoughts, what faithful thoughts God has had concerning us! “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* “Whether I sleep or wake, You are with me, but, better still, I am with You! Before I fell asleep, I put my soul into Your hands. And when I awoke, I found it there.”

19. *Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.* It cannot be that God, who sees everything, will forever endure the wickedness of men. It cannot be that He will suffer all crime and villainy and blasphemy to escape with impunity! “Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.”

19. *Depart from me therefore, you bloody men.* “I do not want to be with you, or to have you with me, in the day when God metes out vengeance upon the ungodly.”

20-22. *For they speak against You wickedly and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are bound to love our enemies, but we are not bound to love God's enemies. We are to wish them, as enemies, a complete overthrow, but to wish them, as men, a gracious conversion, that they may obtain God's pardon and become His friends, followers and servants.

23. *Search me, O God.* Is it not amazing that what the Psalmist started with as a doctrine, now becomes a prayer? Before, he said, “O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.” Now he cries, “Search me, O God!

23. *And know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.* Every attribute of God works for the good of those who trust Him. If you are a Believer, you may ask for His infinite power to protect you and His infinite knowledge to search you.

24. *And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* May God first make that our prayer and then graciously hear it, for His great name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—182, 190, 139 (SONG I).

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

OUR WATCHWORD

NO. 1013

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Let such as love Your salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.”
Psalm 70:4.***

THESE words occur at least three times in the book of Psalms and therefore we may regard them as especially important. When God speaks once, twice, thrice, He does, as it were, awaken us to peculiar attention, and call for prompt obedience to what He says. Let us not be deaf to the Divine voice, but let each one say, “Speak Lord, for Your servant hears.” You will observe that in this, and in the fortieth Psalm, this holy saying is put in opposition to the ungodly speeches of persecutors. The wicked say, “Aha, aha,” therefore let those who love God’s salvation have a common watchword with which to silence the malicious mockeries of the ungodly—let them say, “LET GOD BE MAGNIFIED.”

The earnestness of the wicked should be a stimulus to the fervency of the righteous. Surely if God’s enemies do not spare blasphemy and profanity—if they are always upon the watch to find reasons for casting reproach upon the name and Church of Christ—we ought to be more than equally vigilant and diligent in spreading abroad the knowledge of the Gospel which magnifies the name of the Lord. Would to God His Church were half as earnest as the synagogue of Satan! Oh that we had, in our holy cause, a tithe of the indefatigable spirit of those Scribes and Pharisees who compass sea and land to make one proselyte!

Even the Archfiend shames us by his preserving industry, for he goes up and down in the earth seeking whom he may destroy! The clause which we have selected for our text also follows immediately after another which may be looked upon as a steppingstone to it. Before we can love God’s salvation, we must be seekers of it. Therefore we read, “Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You.” There is a duty peculiar to seekers, let them see to it. And then there follows a further obligation peculiar to those who have found what they sought for. Let joy and rejoicing be first realized by the seeker through his receiving personally the Grace of God, and then let us go on a stage further.

The fresh convert has his business mainly *within*. It will be well for him if his heart can, in sincerity, be glad in the Lord. When Believers are young and feeble they are not fit for the battle. Therefore, let them tarry at home awhile, and under their vine and fig tree eat the sweet fruits of the Gospel, none making them afraid. We do not send our children to hard service. We wait till their limbs are developed and then appoint them their share in life’s labors. Let the newly called be carried like lambs in the Savior’s bosom, and borne as on eagles’ wings. “Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You.”

But when men have advanced beyond the earliest stage. When they are persuaded that Christ is theirs, and that they have been adopted into the family of God, then let them cheerfully accept active service. Let it not be now the main concern with them to possess a joyous experience on their own account, but let them studiously seek the good of their fellow creatures and the glory of God. Strong men have strength given them that they may bear burdens and perform labors—light is this burden and blessed is this labor. Let them “say continually, Let God be magnified.” I shall, therefore, hope that anything of earnest exhortation which shall be addressed to Believers at this time will come with double power to those of you who are advanced in the Divine life.

The more you know of God’s salvation the more you will love it, and the more you love it the more are you bound to recognize the sacred duty and privilege of saying continually, “Let God be magnified.” May each one of you here be willing to take up the obligation if you have enjoyed the benefit. It may simplify our discourse this morning if we arrange it under three heads. Here is, first, *the character*—“They that love Your salvation.” Here is second, *the saying*—“Let them say continually, Let God be magnified.” And here is, thirdly, *the wish*, the wish of the Psalmist and of the Psalmist’s Master, that all who answer to the character shall use the watchword, and say continually, “Let God be magnified.”

I. We will begin, then, by discriminating THE CHARACTER. The individuals here spoken of are those who love God’s salvation. Then it is implied that they are *persons who are saved*, because it is not according to nature to love a salvation in which we have no part. We may *admire* the salvation which is preached, but we shall only *love* the salvation which is *experienced*. We may hold orthodox views as to salvation though not ourselves saved. But we shall not have earnest affection towards it unless we are ourselves redeemed by it from the wrath to come.

Saved ones, then, are meant here, and we may add that they are so saved as to be assured of it, and consequently to feel the warm glow of ardent, grateful love. They love God’s salvation because they have grasped it. They possess it, they know they possess it, and, therefore, they prize it, and their hearts are wedded to it. Beloved, I hope that the large proportion of this congregation could say before the heart-searching God, “We are saved! We have come all guilty and heavy laden to the foot of the Cross. We have looked up. We have seen the flowing of the Savior’s precious blood. We have trusted in Him as our atoning Sacrifice, and by faith we have received full pardon through His precious blood.”

Happy people who have this blessing and know it! May no doubts ever becloud your sky! May you clearly read your titles to the mansions in the skies, written legibly and indelibly in the precious blood of Jesus Christ your Savior. You are the persons to whom we speak today. You *know*, and therefore love the salvation of God. But, more than this, to sustain and bring to perfection in the renewed heart an ardent affection towards the Divine salvation of a sort that will continue, and become practically fruitful, there must be an intelligent consideration, and *an instructed apprehension as to the character of this salvation*.

It is a great pity that so many professors have only a religion of *feeling*, and are quite unable to explain and justify their faith. They live by pas-

sion rather than by principle. Religion is in them a series of paroxysms, a succession of emotions. They were stirred up at a certain meeting, excited, and carried away. And let us hope they were really and sincerely converted—but they have failed to become to the fullest extent disciples or learners. They do not sit at Jesus' feet. They are not Bereans who search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so—they are content with the mere rudiments, the simple elements—they are still little children and have need to be fed with milk, for they cannot digest the strong meat of the kingdom.

Such persons do not discern as many reasons for admiring and loving the salvation of God as the intelligent enlightened Spirit-taught Believer. I would to God that all of us, after we have received Christ, meditated much upon His blessed Person and the details of His work—and the various streams of blessings which leap forth from the central fountain of Calvary's Sacrifice. All Scripture is profitable, but especially those Scriptures which concern our salvation. Some things lose by observation—they are most wondered at when least understood. But the Gospel gains by *study*—no man is ever wearied in meditating upon it, nor does he find his admiration diminished, but abundantly increased.

Blessed is he who studies the Gospel both day and night, and finds his heart's delight in it. Such a man will have a steadier and more intense affection for it, in proportion as he perceives its excellence and surpassing glory. The man who receives the Gospel superficially and holds it as a matter of impression and little more, is quite unable to give a reason for the hope that is in him. He lacks that which would confirm and intensify his love.

Now, let me show you, Beloved, what it is in salvation that the thoughtful Believer loves. And I may begin by saying that he loves, best of all, *the Savior Himself*. Often our Lord is called Salvation, because He is the great Worker of it. He is the Author and Finisher, the Alpha and the Omega of it. He who has Christ has Salvation. And, as He is the essence of salvation, He is the center of the saved ones' affection. Have you, Beloved, carefully considered that Jesus is Divine? That He counts it not robbery to be equal with God, being our Creator and Preserver, as well as our Redeemer?

Do you fully understand that our Lord is Infinite, Eternal, nothing less than God? And yet for our sakes He took upon Himself our nature, was clothed in that nature with all its infirmities, sin alone excepted, and in that nature agonized, bled, and died—the Just for the unjust—that He might bring us to God! Oh, marvel of marvels, miracle of miracles! The immortal Lord stoops to death! The Prince of Glory bows to be spit upon! Shame and dishonor could not make Him start back from His blessed purpose, but to the death of the Cross He surrendered Himself!

O, you who are saved, do you not love Christ, who is your Salvation? Do you not feel a burning desire to behold Him as He is? Is not His Presence, even now, a nether Heaven to you? Will not a face-to-face view of His glory be all the Heaven that your utmost stretch of imagination can conceive? I know it is so! Your heart is bound to Jesus, His name is set as a seal upon it! Therefore, I charge you to say continually, "Let God be mag-

nified.” Glory be to the Father who gave His Son, to the Son who gave Himself, to the Spirit who revealed all this to us!

Triune God, be You extolled forever and ever! But you love not only the Savior’s Person, for I am sure you delight in the *plan* of salvation. What is that plan? It is summed up in a single word—Substitution—

**“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”**

Sin was not pardoned absolutely, else justice had been dishonored. But sin was *transferred* from the guilty to the Innocent One. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” When our iniquity was found upon the innocent Lamb of God, He was “smitten of God and afflicted,” as if *HE* had been a sinner. He was made to suffer for transgressions not His own, as if they had been His own. And thus Mercy and Justice met together, Righteousness and Grace kissed each other.

Alas, there are many who fight against this plan! But I rejoice that I am surrounded by warm hearts who love it, and would die for it. As for me, I know no other Gospel, and let this tongue be dumb rather than it should ever preach any other. Substitution is the very marrow of the whole Bible, the soul of Salvation, the essence of the Gospel. We ought to saturate all our sermons with it, for it is the lifeblood of a Gospel ministry. We must daily show how God the Judge can be “just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes.”

We must declare that God has made the Redeemer’s soul a sacrifice for sin, making Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Our plain testimony must be that, “He was made a curse for us.” That, “He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” That, “He was once offered to bear the sins of many.” And that, “He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many.” About this we must never speak with bated breath, lest we be found unfaithful to our charge.

And why, Brethren, should we not joyfully proclaim this doctrine? Is it not the grandest, noble, most Divine, under Heaven? The plan so adorns all the attributes of the Godhead, and furnishes such a safe footing for a trembling conscience to rest upon, such a fortress, castle, and high tower for faith to rejoice in, that we cannot do otherwise than love it! The very way and plan of it is dearer to our souls than life itself! Oh, then let us always say, “Let God be magnified,” since He devised, arranged, and carried out this Godlike method of blending justice with mercy.

But, Beloved, we also love God’s salvation when we consider what was the object of it. The object of it towards us was to redeem unto Christ a people who should be zealous for good works. The sinner loves a salvation from Hell. The saint loves a salvation from *sin*. Anybody would desire to be saved from the pit, but it is only a child of God who pants to be saved from every false way. We love the salvation of God because it saves us from selfishness, from pride, from lust, from worldliness, bitterness, malice, sloth, and uncleanness. When that salvation is completed in us we shall be “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” and shall be renewed in holiness after the image of Christ Jesus our Lord.

That its great aim is our perfection in holiness is the main beauty of salvation. We would be content to be poor, but we cannot be content to be

sinful. We could be resigned to sickness, but we could not be satisfied to remain in alienation from God. We long for perfection and nothing short of it will content us, and, because this is guaranteed to the Believer in the Gospel of Christ, we love His salvation, and we would say continually, "Let God be magnified." I might thus enlarge upon every part of this salvation, and say that it endears itself to us under every aspect, and from every point of view.

We love His salvation because of one or two characteristics in it which especially excite our delight. Foremost is *the matchless love displayed in it*. Why should the Lord have loved men, such insignificant creatures as they are, compared with the universe? Why should He set His heart upon such nothings? But more, how could He love *rebellious* men who have wantonly and arrogantly broken His Laws? Why should He love them so much as to give up His Only-Begotten? These are things we freely speak of, but who among us knows what is their weight?

"God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I believe that even in Heaven, with enlarged faculties, it will be a subject of perpetual wonder to us that ever God could love and save us. And shall we not love the salvation which wells up from the deep fountain of the Father's everlasting affection? O Brethren, our hearts must be harder than adamant, and made of Hell-hardened steel if we can at once believe that we are saved and yet not love, intensely love, the salvation which was devised by Jehovah's heart!

We love His salvation, again, because, in addition to the display of wondrous love, it is so safe a salvation, so real, so true—we have not given heed to cunningly devised fables. We have not chanced our souls upon a fiction. We run no risk when we trust the Savior. Though one of our hymns puts it—

***"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude."***

This is only a condescension to the feelings of trembling unbelievers, for there is no *venture* in it. It is sure and certain.

Did God lay on Christ *my* sin? Was it really punished in Him? Then there cannot exist a reason why I should be condemned, but there are ten thousand arguments why I should forever be "accepted in the Beloved." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Substitution is a basis for intelligent confidence. It satisfies both the demand of the Law and the fears of conscience. And gives to Believers a deep, settled, substantial peace, which cannot be broken.

We love this salvation because we feel that it places a foundation of granite beneath our feet instead of the quicksand of human merit. Justice being satisfied is as much our friend as even Mercy herself. In fact, all the attributes unite to guarantee our safety. We love God's salvation, too, because it is *so complete*. Nothing remains unfinished which is necessary to remove sin from the Believer and give him righteousness before God. As far as atonement for sin is concerned, the expiation is most gloriously complete.

Remember that remarkable expression of the Apostle, where he describes the priests as continually standing at the altar, offering sacrifices year by year, and even day by day, because atonement by such means could never be finished? Such sacrifices could never take away sin—therefore must they be perpetually offered, and the priest must always *stand* at the altar. “But,” says the Apostle, “this Man (our great Melchisedec), after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sin forever, *sat down* (for the work was accomplished), sat down at the right hand of God.”

Jesus has performed what the Aaronic priesthood, in long succession, had failed to do. Though streams of blood might flow from bullocks, and from goats like Kishon’s mighty river. And though incense might smoke till the pile was high as Lebanon, with all her goodly cedars—what was there in all this to make propitiation for sin? The work was but shadowed, the real Expiation was not offered. It was a fair picture, but the substance itself was not there.

But when our Divine Lord went up to Calvary, and on the Cross gave up His body, His soul, His spirit—a sacrifice for sin—He finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Herein, my Brethren, we have strong consolation, the immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, His Word and Oath are our immovable security. By the Atonement we are infallibly, effectually, eternally saved, for He has become the “Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”

How we love this salvation! Our inmost heart rejoices in it! I rejoice to preach it, Brethren, and I delight to muse upon it, appropriating it to myself by faith in solitary thought. How it makes the tears stream down one’s cheeks with joy, to think, “He loved me, and gave Himself for *me*—He took *my* sins and He destroyed them. They have ceased to be, they are annihilated, they are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud have they vanished.” Surely, we should have lost sanity, as well as Grace, if we did not love this salvation, beyond the choicest joys of earth

II. Thus I have described the character, and now, secondly, we will meditate on THE SAYING. Every nation has its idiom, every language has its Shibboleth, almost every district has its proverb. Behold the idiom of gracious souls! Listen to their household word, their common proverb—it is this, “Let God be magnified! Let God be magnified!” Let us proceed at once to the consideration of it. I trust it belongs to us—it certainly does if we love His salvation. Observe that this is a saying which is founded upon *truth and justice*. “Let God be magnified,” for it is He that saved us, and not we ourselves.

We trace our salvation, not to our ministers, nor to any pretentious priesthood. None can divide the honors of Grace, for the Lord alone has turned our captivity. He decreed our salvation, planned it, arranged it, executed it, applied it, and secures it. From beginning to end salvation is of the Lord, therefore, let God be magnified! Moreover, the Lord worked salvation that He might be magnified thereby. It was God’s object in salvation to glorify His own name. “Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel.” Truly we desire that the Lord’s end and purpose should be fully accomplished, for it is His well-deserved due. O You who bled upon the Cross, may Your Throne be glorious! O You who were despised and re-

jected of men, be You extolled, and be You very high. You deserve all glory, great and merciful God! Such a gift, such a sacrifice, such a work! You ought, indeed, to be lauded and had in honor by all the intelligent universe.

The saying is settled deep in truth, and established in right. This saying is naturally *suggested by love*. It is because we love His salvation that we say, "The Lord be magnified." You cannot love God without desiring to magnify Him, and I am sure that you cannot know that you are saved without loving Him. For here is a wonder, a central wonder of wonders to many of us—that ever we, in particular, were saved. I do not think I could be so wonder-struck and amazed at the salvation of you all as at my own. I know it to be Infinite Mercy that saved any one of you, or all of you. I say I *know* it, but in my own case I *feel* it is an unspeakable and inconceivably great mercy which has saved me.

And I suppose each Brother here, each Sister here will feel a special love to Christ from the fact of being himself or herself an object of His love. We never sing, I am sure, with warmer hearts any hymn in our hymn-book than that one—

***"What was there in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,
For so it seemed good in Your sight."***

The Lord might have left us as He has left others to carry out their own wills, and willfully to reject the Savior. But since He has made us willing in the day of His power, we are forever beyond measure under obligations to Him. Let us say continually, "The Lord be magnified, which has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants."

Moreover, this saying of our text is *deeply sincere and practical*. I am sure David did not wish to see hypocrites multiplied. But such would be the case if men merely said, "Let God be magnified," and did not mean it. No doubt there is a great deal among professors of mere expression without meaning. It is sadly evident that much godly talk is only talk, but it ought not to be. You know how often charity is assumed, and men say to the naked and hungry, "Be you warmed, and be you filled." But they give nothing to the poor, except vain words, which cannot profit them. So, too, often professors will sing—

***"Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel,
Win and conquer, never cease!
May your lasting wide dominion
Multiply and still increase,"***

and so on. But there it ends. They have said it, but they have done nothing for it.

Now, as he is condemned as a hypocrite who merely utters words of charity without deeds, so is he who shall say, "Let God be magnified," but who does not put forth his hand and throw in all his energies to promote that which he professes to desire. The wish must be, and oh, if we are saved by Grace, it *will be* sincere, intense, and fervent in every believing heart! Moreover, it must not only be sincere, but it must be *paramount*. I take it that there is nothing which a Christian man should say continually, except this, "Let God be magnified."

That which a man may say continually is assuredly the master thought of his mind. Listen to the cherubim and seraphim. They continually cry, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts!" Why cry they thus continually? Is it not because it is their chief business, their highest delight? So should it be with us! Our end and aim should ever be to glorify Him who redeemed us by His most precious blood. You are a citizen, but you are more a Christian. You are a father, but you are more a child of God. You are a laborer, but you are most of all a servant of the Most High. You are wealthy, but yet more enriched by His Covenant. You are poor, but you are most emphatically rich if Christ is yours. The first, chief, leading, lordly, master thought within you must be this, "Let God be magnified."

And, Brethren, the text tells us this must be *continual*. How earnest you feel about the cause of Christ when you have heard an inspiring sermon, but how long does it last? Ah, those old days of mission enterprise, when Exeter Hall used to be crowded because missionaries had interesting stories to tell of what God was doing—what enthusiasm there used to be—where is it now? Where is it now? Echo might well answer "where is it now?" To a great degree it has departed. The zeal of many rises and falls like a barometer. They are hot as fire, and cold as ice, in the shortest space of time. Their fervor is as transient as the flame of thorns, and hence it is very hard to turn it to any practical account.

Oh, for more of the deep-seated principle of intense love to God's salvation, steady and abiding, which shall make a man say continually, "Let God be magnified." We would desire to wake up in the morning with this on our lips. We would begin with the enquiry, "What can I do to magnify God this day?" We would be in business in the middle of the day, and yet never lose the one desire to magnify God. We would return to our family at night, urged by the same impulse, "How can I magnify God in my household?"

If I lie sick, I would feel that I must magnify God by patience. If I rise from that bed, I would feel the sweet obligation to magnify Him by gratitude. If I take a prominent position, I am doubly bound to magnify Him who makes me a leader of His flock, and, if I am unknown and obscure in the Church, I must, with equal zeal, magnify Him by a conscientious discharge of the duties of my position. Oh, to have one end always before us, and to press forward towards it, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left!

As though we were balls shot out of a rifled cannon we would rush on, never hesitating or turning aside, but flying with all speed towards the center of the target. May our spirits be impelled by a Divine energy towards this one only thing, the Lord be magnified! Whether I live or die, may God be glorified in me! According to the text, this saying should be *universal among the saints*. It should be the mark of all those that love God's salvation, pertaining not to a few who shall be chosen to minister in public, but to all those whom Grace has renewed. All of us—women as well as men, illiterate as well as learned, poor as well as rich, silent as well as eloquent—should after our own ability say, "Let God be magnified."

Oh, would to God we were all stirred up to this! Our Churches seem to be half alive. It is a dreadful thing to read of the punishment practiced by ancient tyrants when they tied a living man to a corpse, and he had to go

about with this corpse strapped to him and rotting under his nostrils. And yet that is too often the condition of the living ones in our churches—they are bound by ties of Church union to a portion of the Church which is spiritually dead, though not so manifestly corrupt as to render it possible for us to cut it off. The tares, which we may not root up, hamper and dwarf the wheat. O God, the Holy Spirit, make the Church alive right through, from the crown of its head to the sole of its foot, so that the whole Church may cry continually, “Let God be magnified.”

You will notice that the cry is an *absolute* one. It does not say, let God be magnified by me if He will please to make me successful in business, and happy, and healthy—it leaves it open. Only let God be magnified, and He may do what He wills with me. As a poor soldier in the regiment of Christ, I only care for this—that HE may win the day. And if I see Him riding on His white horse and know that He is conquering though I lie bleeding and wounded in a ditch, I will clap my hands and say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Though I am poor, and despised, and reproached, this shall compensate for all, if I can only hear that “Him has God highly exalted, and given Him a name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

I would close my eyes in death, and say my soul is satisfied with favor and has all she wants if Jesus is exalted. Remember how David put it—when he had said, “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory,” he added, “Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” He desired no more than that. That was the ultimatum of his wishes.

Beloved, I trust it is the same with us. Nor is there any limit as to place or persons. My heart says, “Let God be magnified among the Wesleyans! The Lord be magnified among the Independents! The Lord be magnified among the Episcopalians! The Lord be magnified among the Baptists!” We pray very earnestly, “Let God be magnified in the Tabernacle,” but we would not forget to cry, “Let God be magnified in all parts of London, in all counties of England, and Scotland, and Ireland.” We desire no restriction as to race—let God be magnified both in France and in Prussia. In Turkey and in Italy. In the United States and in Australia—among any and every people! So that God’s name is magnified, what matters it how or where? We know no politics but this, “Let God be magnified.”

All nationalities sink before our relation to our God. Christians are cosmopolitan. We are burgesses of the New Jerusalem—*there* is our citizenship. We are freemen of the entire new creation. What is all else to God’s Glory! So long as the Lord is glorified, let the empires go and the emperors with them. Let nations rise or fall, so long as He comes whose right it is to reign. Let ancient dynasties pass away, if *HIS* Throne is but exalted. We would never dictate to the God of history. Let Him write out as He pleases the stanzas of His own august poem—but let this always be the close of every verse, “The Lord be magnified! The Lord be magnified! The Lord be magnified!” This is the continual saying of all them that love His salvation.

III. We had much to say under our second head, but time will not tarry for us, therefore we must proceed to the last, which is THE WISH. Holy David, and David's perfect Lord both wish that we may say, "Let God be magnified." This wish is promoted by an anxiety for God's Glory. It is a most holy wish, and it ought to be fulfilled. I shall ask your attention only for a minute or two to the reasons of the wish.

Why should it be wished? First, because *it always ought to be said*, "Let God be magnified." It is only right, and according to the fitness of things, that God should be magnified in the world which He Himself created. Such a handiwork deserves admiration from all who behold it. But when He newly made the world, and especially when He laid the foundation of His new palace in the fair colors of Jesus' blood, and adorned it with the sapphires of Grace and Truth, He had a double claim upon our praise!

He gave His Son to redeem us, and for this let His praise be great and endless. Things are out of joint if God, the Redeemer, is not glorified. Surely the wheels of Nature revolve amiss if God, the Loving and Gracious, is not greatly magnified! As every right-hearted man desires to see right and justice done, therefore does he wish that those who love God's salvation may say continually, "Let God be magnified." But, we wish it next, because *it always needs saying*. The world is dull and sleepy, and utterly indifferent to the Glory of God in the work of redemption. We need to tell it over and over and over again, that God is great in the salvation of His people.

There are many who will rise up and deny God's Glory. Revilers of all sorts abound in rage. But over and above their clamor, let the voice of Truth be heard, "Let God be magnified." They cry, "the Bible is worn out." They doubt its Inspiration, they question the Deity of Christ, they set up new gods that have lately come up that our fathers knew not. Let us confront them with the Truth of God, let us oppose them with the Gospel, let us overcome them through the blood of the Lamb, using this one only war cry, "Let God be magnified." Everywhere, in answer to all blasphemy, in direct conflict with profanity, let us lift up this voice with heart and soul, "Let God be magnified."

And, again, we desire this, *because the saying of this continually does good to the sayers*. He who blesses God blesses himself. We cannot serve God with the heart without serving ourselves most practically. Nothing, Brothers and Sisters, is more for your benefit than to spend and be spent for the promotion of the Divine honor. Then, again, this *promotes the welfare of God's creatures*. We ought to desire to spread the knowledge of God because the dark places of the earth will never cease to be the habitation of cruelty till they become the Temple of the Lord of Hosts.

While we are sitting complacently here, myriads are dying—souls are passing into eternity unforgiven. The wrath of God is abiding still upon the sons of men, for they know not Christ! What stronger motive could there be for desiring that God's name should continually be magnified? I have been told, and I believe it is the general impression, that at this particular time there is a great cessation of the zealous spirit which once ruled among Christians. We have passed over the heroic age, the golden period of missions, and we have come to the time in which the Church rests upon her oars, takes matters quietly.

What if I say, regards them *hopelessly*? Very few young men are now coming forward, at least in our denomination, to offer themselves for missionaries. The funds are barely sustained and nothing more. I fear there is among those who conduct the affairs of missions, too little of faith, and too much of bastard prudence, of which the latter had better be banished to the bottomless pit at once, for it has long been the clog upon the chariot wheels of the Gospel. Faith is too much cast into the background, and the work is viewed in a *mercantile* light, as though it were a rule of three sums—so much money and so many men, and then so many conversions—whereas it is not so. God works not according to arithmetical rules and calculations!

There is, I fear, on the whole, a general backsliding from the right state. And what a sad thing it is that it should be so, since at our best we were never too zealous. Few can bring the charge of fanaticism against the English Baptists—we have been too solid, if not stolid, for that. I almost wish it were possible for us to err in that direction, for if an evil, it would, at any rate, be a novelty, if not an improvement. Why is this, and from where does it come? Years ago our fathers compassed this Jericho. They passed round it according to the Master's bidding, and are we about, after having done the same these many years, to relinquish the task, and lose the result? Do we fear that the walls will never fall to the ground?

Brethren, I believe it is the duty of the Christian Church to go on working quite as earnestly and zealously and believingly, if there are no conversions, as if half the world were transformed in a twelve month span. Our business is *not* to create a harvest but to *sow the seed*. If the wheat does not come up—if we have sown it aright—our Master does not hold us responsible. If missions had been an utter failure it would be no sort of reason why we should give them up. There was a great failure when the hosts of Israel, on the first occasion, went round Jericho—a dreadful failure when they marched round the city twice, and the walls shook not.

It was an aggravated failure when they had compassed it four times. It was a most discouraging defeat when they had tramped round it five times. And, on the whole, a breakdown—almost enough to drive them to despair—when they had performed the circuit six times and not a single brick had stirred in the wall. Yes. But then the seventh day made amends, when the people shouted and all the walls fell flat to the ground! Brethren, it is not yet time to shout, but we must continue marching and say, "Let God be magnified." The longer the walls stand, and the longer we wait, the louder will be our shout when they lie prostrate before us, as they shall, for, "Verily, verily, I say unto you there shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be cast down."

Remember the Greeks when they attacked old Troy—you have the record in ancient story. They waited many years till their ships had well near rotted on the seas, but the prowess of Hector and the armed men of Troy kept back the "King of men," and all the hosts of the avengers. Suppose that after nine years had dragged along their weary length, the chiefs of the Greeks had said, "It is of no avail, the city is impregnable! O Pelasgi, back to your fair lands washed by the blue Aegean, you will never subdue the valor of Ileum."

No. They persevered in the weary siege, with feats of strength and schemes of art till at last they saw the city burned and heard the dire lament—"Troy was, but is no more" Let us still continue to attack the adversary. We are few, but strength lies not in numbers. The Eternal One has used the few where He has put aside the many. In our weakness lies part of our adaptation to the Divine work—only let us gather up fresh faith, and renew our courage and industry—and we shall see greater things than these.

"Pshaw," says one, "Protestant Christianity is in a miserable minority, it is ridiculous to suppose it will ever be the dominant religion of the world." We reply that it is ridiculous, no, *blasphemous*, to doubt, when God has sworn with an oath that, "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." God's oath is better evidence than appearances, for, in a moment, if He wills it, He can give such an impetus to the Christian Church, that she shall in her enthusiasm spread the Gospel, and at the same time He can give such a turn to the human mind, that it shall be as ready to accept the Gospel as the Church is to spread it!

Observe how the Church grew during the first few centuries. After the Apostles had died you do not find in the next century the name of any very remarkable man. But all Christians then were earnest, and the good cause advanced. They were mostly poor, they were generally illiterate, but they were all missionaries. They were all seeking to glorify God, and, consequently, before long down went Jupiter! Saturn lost his throne, even Venus was abjured, and the Cross, at least nominally, became supreme throughout all Europe.

It shall be done again. In the name of the Eternal, let us set up our banners! Oh, you that love the Lord and His salvation, vow it in your souls! Determine it in your hearts, and God the Holy Spirit being with you, if you have but faith in Him, it will be no empty boast, no vain vaunting. God shall speak and it shall be done. The Lord of Hosts is with us! The God of Jacob is our refuge! And such being the case, nothing is impossible to us! May the Lord stir us up with these thoughts and fling us like firebrands into the midst of His Church and the world—to set both on a blaze with love through the love that burns in our hearts. "Let God be magnified." Amen and Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 40.

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PLEADING

NO. 1018

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: You are my help
and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.”
Psalm 70:5.***

YOUNG painters were anxious, in the olden times, to study under the great masters. They concluded that they should more easily attain to excellence if they entered the schools of eminent men. At this present time men will pay large premiums that their sons may be apprenticed or articulated to those who best understand their trades or professions. Now, if any of us would learn the sacred art and mystery of *prayer*, it is well for us to study the productions of the greatest masters of that science. I am unable to point out one who understood it better than did the Psalmist David. So well did he know how to praise that his Psalms have become the language of good men in all ages.

And so well did he understand how to *pray*, that if we catch his spirit, and follow his mode of prayer we shall have learned to plead with God after the most prevalent sort. Place before you, first of all, David's Son and David's Lord, that most mighty of all Intercessors, and, next to Him, you shall find David to be one of the most admirable models for your imitation. We shall consider our text, then, as one of the productions of a great master in spiritual matters, and we will study it, praying all the while that God will help us to pray after the like fashion.

In our text we have the soul of a successful pleader under four aspects—we view, first, *the soul confessing*—“I am poor and needy.” You have, next, *the soul pleading*, for he makes a plea out of his poor condition, and adds, “Make haste unto me, O God!” You see, thirdly, *a soul in its urgency*, for he cries, “Make haste,” and he varies the expression but keeps the same idea—“Make no tarrying.” And you have, in the fourth and last view, *a soul grasping God*, for the Psalmist puts it thus—“You are my help and my deliverer.” Thus with both hands he lays hold upon his God, so as not to let Him go till a blessing is obtained.

I. To begin, then, see in this model of supplication, A SOUL CONFESSING. The wrestler strips before he enters the contest, and confession does the like for the man who is about to plead with God. A racer on the plains of prayer cannot hope to win, unless, by confession, repentance, and faith, he lays aside every weight of sin. Now let it be ever remembered that confession is absolutely necessary to the sinner when he first seeks a Savior. It is not possible for you, O Seeker, to obtain peace for your troubled heart till you shall have acknowledged your transgression and your iniquity before the Lord.

You may do what you will, yes, even attempt to believe in Jesus, but you shall find that the faith of God's elect is not in you unless you are willing to make a full confession of your transgression, and lay bare your heart before God. We do not usually think of giving charity to those who do not acknowledge that they need it—the physician does not send his medicine to those who are not sick. There is too much to be done in the world of necessary work for us to undertake works of supererogation. And, surely, to clothe those who are not naked, and to feed those that are not hungry is to attempt superfluous work which will bring us no credit.

God will not do this—you must be empty before you can be filled by Him—and you must confess your emptiness, too, or else assuredly He will not come to fill the full, nor to lift up those who are already high enough in their own esteem. The blind man in the Gospels had to *feel* his blindness, and to sit by the wayside begging. If he had entertained a doubt as to whether he were blind or not, the Lord would have passed him by. He opens the eyes of those who confess their blindness, but of others, he says, "Because you say we see, therefore, your sin remains."

He asks of those who are brought to Him, "What will you that I should do unto you?" in order that their need may be publicly avowed. It must be so with all of us—we must offer the confession, or we cannot gain the benediction. Let me speak especially to you who desire to find peace with God, and salvation through the precious blood—you will do well to make your confession before God very frank, very sincere, very explicit. Surely you have nothing to hide, for there is nothing that you *can* hide.

He knows your guilt already, but He would have *you* know it, and therefore He bids you confess it. Go into the details of your sin in your secret acknowledgments before God—strip yourself of all excuses—make no apologies. Say, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge." Acknowledge the evil of sin. Ask God to make you *feel* it. Do not treat it as a trifle, for it is not.

To redeem the sinner from the effect of sin, Christ Himself must die—and unless you are delivered from it—you must die eternally. Therefore, play not with sin—do not confess it as though it were some venial fault which would not have been noticed unless God had been too severe. But labor to see sin as God sees it, as an offense against all that is good—a rebellion against all that is kind. See it to be treason, to be ingratitude, to be a mean and base thing. Do not think that you can improve your condition before God by painting your case in brighter colors than it should be. Blacken it—if it were possible to blacken it—but it is not possible.

When you feel your sin most, you have not half felt it. When you confess it most fully you do not know a tithe of it. But oh, to the utmost of your ability make a clean breast of it, and say, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before You." Acknowledge the sins of your youth and your manhood, the sins of your body and of your soul, the sins of omission and of commission, sins against the Law and offenses against the Gospel. Acknowledge all, neither for a moment seek to deny one portion of the evil

with which God's Law, your own conscience, and His Holy Spirit justly charge you.

And oh, Soul, if you would get peace and approval with God in prayer, confess the ill desert of your sin. Submit yourself to whatever Divine Justice may sentence you to endure—confess that the deepest Hell is your desert, and confess this not with your lips only, but with your *soul*. Let this be the doleful ditty of your inmost heart—

***“Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce You just in death.
And, if my soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well.”***

If you will condemn yourself, God will acquit you. If you will put the rope about your neck and sentence yourself, then He who otherwise would have sentenced you will say, “I forgive you, through the merit of My Son.”

But never expect that the King of Heaven will pardon a traitor, who will not confess and forsake his treason. Even the most tender father expects that the child should humble himself when he has offended, and he will not withdraw his frown from him till, with tears, he has said, “Father, I have sinned.” Dare you expect God to humble Himself to you, and would it not be so if He did not constrain you to humble yourself to Him? Would you have Him connive at your faults and wink at your transgressions?

He will have mercy, but He must be holy. He is ready to forgive, but not to tolerate sin. And therefore, He cannot let you be forgiven if you hug your sins, or if you presume to say, “I have not sinned.” Hasten, then, O Seeker, hasten, I pray you, to the Mercy Seat with this upon your lips—“I am poor and needy, I am sinful, I am lost. Have pity on me.” With such an acknowledgment you begin your prayer well, and through Jesus you shall prosper in it. Beloved Hearers, the same principle applies to the Church of God.

We are praying for a display of the Holy Spirit's power in this Church, and in order to successful pleading in this matter, it is necessary that we should unanimously make the confession of our text, “I am poor and needy.” We must own that we are powerless in this business. Salvation is of the Lord and we cannot save a single soul. The Spirit of God is treasured up in Christ, and we must seek Him of the great Head of the Church. We cannot command the Spirit, and yet we can do nothing without Him. He blows where He will. We must deeply feel and honestly acknowledge this.

Will you not heartily assent to it, my Brothers and Sisters, at this hour? May I not ask you unanimously to renew the confession of this morning? We must also acknowledge that we are not worthy that the Holy Spirit should condescend to work with us and by us. There is no fitness in us for His purposes, except He shall give us that fitness. Our sins might well provoke Him to leave us—He has strived with us, He has been tender towards us—but He might well go away and say, “I will no more shine upon that Church, and no more bless that ministry.”

Let us feel our unworthiness, it will be a good preparation for earnest prayer—for, mark you, Brethren, God will have His Church, before He blesses it, know that the blessing is altogether from Himself. “Not by

might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” The career of Gideon was a very remarkable one, and it commenced with two most instructive signs. I think our heavenly Father would have all of us learn the very same lesson which He taught Gideon, and when we have mastered that lesson, He will use us for His own purposes.

You remember Gideon laid a fleece upon the barn floor, and in the morning all round was dry and the fleece, alone, was wet. God alone had saturated the fleece so that Gideon could wring it out, and its moisture was not due to its being placed in a favorable situation, for all around was dry. He would have us learn that if the dew of His Grace fills any one of us with its heavenly moisture, it is not because we lie upon the barn floor of a ministry which God usually blesses, or because we are in a Church which the Lord graciously visits.

We must be made to see that the visitations of His Spirit are fruits of the Lord’s Sovereign Grace, and gifts of His infinite love, and not of the will of man, neither *by* man. But then the miracle was reversed, for, as old Thomas Fuller says, “God’s miracles will bear to be turned inside out and look as glorious one way as another.” The next night the fleece was dry and all around was wet. For skeptics might have said, “Yes, but a fleece would naturally attract moisture, and if there were any in the air, it would be likely to be absorbed by the wool.”

But, lo, on this occasion, the dew is not where it might be expected to be, even though it lies thickly all around. Damp is the stone and dry is the fleece. So God will have us know that He does not give us His Grace because of any natural adaptation in us to receive it. And even where He has given a preparedness of heart to receive, He will have us understand that His Grace and His Spirit are most free in action, and Sovereign in operation—and that He is not bound to work after any rule of our making.

If the fleece is wet, He bedews it, and that not because it is a fleece but because He chooses to do so. He will have all the Glory of all His Grace from first to last. Come then, my Brethren, and become disciples to this Truth of God. Consider that from the great Father of Lights every good and perfect gift must come. We are His workmanship, He must work all our works in us. Grace is not to be commanded by our position or condition—the wind blows where it will, the Lord works and no man can hinder. But if He works not, the mightiest and the most zealous labor is but in vain.

It is very significant that before Christ fed the thousands, He made the disciples sum up all their provisions. It was well to let them see how low the commissariat had become—for then, when the crowds were fed—they could not say the basket fed them, nor that the lad had done it. God will make us feel how little are our barley loaves, and how small our fishes, and compel us to enquire, “What are they among so many?”

When the Savior bade His disciples cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they dragged such a mighty catch to land, he did not work the miracle till they had confessed that they had toiled all the night and had taken nothing. They were thus taught that the success of their work was dependent upon the Lord, and that it was not their net, nor their way of

dragging it, nor their skill and art in handling their vessels—but that altogether and entirely their success came from their Lord. We must get down to this, and the sooner we come to it the better.

Before the ancient Jews kept the Passover, observe what they did. The unleavened bread is to be brought in and the paschal lamb to be eaten—but there shall be no unleavened bread, and no paschal lamb—till they have purged out the old leaven. If you have any old strength and self-confidence—if you have anything that is your own, and is, therefore, leavened, it must be swept right out. There must be a bare cupboard before there can come in the heavenly provisions upon which the spiritual Passover can be kept. I thank God when He cleans us out. I bless His name when He brings us to feel our soul-poverty as a Church—for then the blessing will be sure to come.

One other illustration will show this, perhaps, still more distinctly. Behold Elijah with the priests of Baal at Carmel. The test appointed to decide Israel's choice was this—the God that answers by fire let Him be God. Baal's priests invoked the heavenly flame in vain. Elijah is confident that it will come upon his sacrifice, but he is also sternly resolved that the false priests and the fickle people shall not imagine that he, himself, had produced the fire. He determines to make it clear that there is no human contrivance, trickery, or maneuver about the matter.

The flame should be seen to be of the Lord, and of the Lord alone. Remember the stern Prophet's command, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And then he said, Do it a second time. And they did it a second time. And he said, Do it a third time. And they did it a third time. And the water ran round all over the altar. And he filled the trench also with water."

There could be no latent fires there. If there had been any combustibles or chemicals calculated to produce fire after the manner of the cheats of the time, they would all have been dampened and spoiled. When no one could imagine that man could burn the sacrifice, then the Prophet lifted up his eyes to Heaven and began to plead—and down came the fire of the Lord which consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the altar stones and the dust—and even licked up the water that was in the trench!

And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said, "Jehovah is the God! Jehovah is the God." The Lord in this Church, if He means greatly to bless us, may send us the trial of pouring on the water once, and twice, and even three times. He may discourage us, grieve us, and try us, and bring us low till all shall see that it is not of the preacher, it is not of the organization, it is not of man—but altogether of God, the Alpha and the Omega, who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Thus I have shown you that for a successful season of prayer the best beginning is confession that we are poor and needy.

II. Secondly, after the soul has unburdened itself of all weights of merit and self-sufficiency, it proceeds to prayer, and we have before us A SOUL PLEADING. "I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer: O Lord, make no tarrying." The careful reader

will perceive four pleas in this single verse. Upon this topic I would remark that it is the habit of Faith, when she is praying, to use pleas. Mere prayer *sayers*, who do not pray at all, forget to argue with God. But those who would prevail bring forth their reasons and their strong arguments, and they debate the question with the Lord.

They who play at wrestling catch here and there at random, but those who are really wrestling have a certain way of grasping the opponent—a certain mode of throwing, and the like. They work according to order and rule. Faith's art of wrestling is to plead with God, and say with holy boldness, "Let it be thus and thus, for these reasons." Hosea tells us of Jacob at Jabbok, "that there he spoke with us." From which I understand that Jacob instructed us by his example. Now, the two pleas which Jacob used were God's precept and God's promise.

First, he said, "You said unto me, Return unto your country and to your kindred"—as much as if he put it thus—"Lord, I am in difficulty, but I have come here through obedience to You. You did tell me to do this. Now, since You commanded me to come here—into the very teeth of my brother Esau who comes to meet me like a lion—Lord, You can not be so unfaithful as to bring me into danger and then leave me in it." This was sound reasoning, and it prevailed with God.

Then Jacob also urged a promise—"You said, 'I will surely do you good.'" Among men, it is a masterly way of reasoning when you can challenge your opponent with his own words—you may quote other authorities, and he may say, "I deny their force." But, when you quote a man against himself, you foil him completely. When you bring a man's promise to his mind, he must either confess himself to be unfaithful and changeable, or, if he holds to being the same, and being true to his word, you have him—and you have won your will of him.

Oh, Brethren, let us learn thus to plead the precepts, the promises, and whatever else may serve our turn! But let us always have something to plead. Do not reckon you have prayed unless you have *pleaded*, for pleading is the very marrow of prayer. He who pleads well knows the secret of prevailing with God, especially if he pleads the blood of Jesus, for that unlocks the treasury of Heaven. Many keys fit many locks, but the master key is the blood and the name of Him that died but rose again, and ever lives in Heaven to save unto the uttermost.

Faith's pleas are plentiful, and this is well, for Faith is placed in various positions, and needs them all. She has many needs, and having a keen eye she perceives that there are pleas to be urged in every case. I will not, therefore, tell you all faith's pleas, but I will just mention some of them—enough to let you see how abundant they are. Faith will plead all the attributes of God. "You are Just, therefore spare the soul for whom the Savior died. You are Merciful, blot out my transgressions. You are Good, reveal Your bounty to Your servant. You are Immutable—You have done thus and thus to others of Your servants, do thus unto me. You are Faithful, can you break Your promise? Can You turn away from Your Covenant?"

Rightly viewed, all the perfections of Deity become pleas for Faith. Faith will boldly plead all God's gracious relationships. She will say to Him, "Are You not the Creator? Will You forsake the works of Your own hands? Are You not the Redeemer? You have redeemed Your servant, will You cast me away?" Faith usually delights to lay hold upon the fatherhood of God. This is generally one of her master points—when she brings this into the field she wins the day. "You are a Father, and would you chasten us as though You would kill? A Father, and will You not provide? A Father, and have You no sympathy and no heart of compassion? A Father, and can You deny what Your own child asks of You?"

Whenever I am impressed with the Divine majesty, and so, perhaps, a little dispirited in prayer, I find the short and sweet remedy is to remember that although He is a great King, and infinitely glorious, I am His child, and no matter who the father is, the child may always be bold with his father. Yes, Faith can plead any and all of the relationships in which God stands to His chosen!

Faith, too, can ply Heaven with the Divine promises. I need not enlarge here, for this, I trust, you all do so continually. When you can, as it were, bring home the Lord's Word to Himself, it is well. That is the conquering argument, "Do as You have said." "You have spoken it, and You have made Your promise to be yes and amen in Christ Jesus to Your own glory by us. Will You not fulfill it? Will You run back from Your own word? Will You fail to carry out Your own declaration? That is far from You, Lord!"

Brethren, we want to be more businesslike and use common sense with God in pleading promises. If you were to go to one of the banks on Lombard Street and see a man go in and out and lay a piece of paper on the table, and take it up again and nothing more. If he did that several times a day, I think there would soon be orders issued to the porter to keep the man out because he was merely wasting the clerk's time, and doing nothing to purpose. Those city men who come to the bank in earnest present their checks—they wait till they receive their gold and then they go—but not without having transacted real business.

They do not put the paper down, speak about the excellent signature and discuss the correctness of the document! No, they want their money for it, and they are not content without it. These are the people who are always welcome at the bank and not the triflers. Alas, a great many people *play at praying*—it is nothing better. I say they play at praying because they do not *expect* God to give them an answer—and thus they are mere triflers who mock the Lord. He who prays in a businesslike way, meaning what he says, honors the Lord. The Lord does not play at promising. Jesus did not sport at confirming the Word by His blood, and we must not make a jest of prayer by going about it in a listless unexpecting spirit.

The Holy Spirit is in earnest, and we must be in earnest, also. We must go for a blessing, and not be satisfied till we have it—like the hunter who is not satisfied because he has run so many miles—but is never content till he takes his prey. Faith, moreover, pleads the performances of God—she looks back on the past and says, "Lord, You did deliver me on such

and such an occasion. Will You fail me now?" She, moreover, takes her life as a whole, and pleads thus—

***"After so much mercy past,
Will You let me sink at last?"***

"Have You brought me so far that I may be put to shame at the end?"

She knows how to bring the ancient mercies of God, and make them arguments for present favors. But your time would all be gone if I tried to exhibit even a thousandth part of Faith's pleas. Sometimes, however, Faith's pleas are very singular. As in this text, it is by no means according to the proud rule of human nature to plead—"I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God." It is like another prayer of David—"Have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great." It is not the manner of men to plead so—they say, "Lord, have mercy on me, for I am not so bad a sinner as some."

But Faith reads things in a truer light and bases her pleas on Truth. "Lord, because my sin is great, and You are a great God, let Your great mercy be magnified in me." You know the story of the Syrophenician woman. That is a grand instance of the ingenuity of Faith's reasoning. She came to Christ about her daughter, and He answered her not a word. What do you think her heart said? Why, she said in herself, "It is well, for He has not *denied* me. Since He has not spoken at all, He has not refused me."

With this for an encouragement, she began to plead again. Presently Christ spoke to her sharply, and then her brave heart said, "I have gained words from Him at last. I shall have deeds from Him by-and-by." That also cheered her. And then, when He called her a *dog*. "Ah," she reasoned, "but a dog is a part of the *family*, it has some connection with the master of the house. Though it does not eat meat from the table, it gets the crumbs under it, and so I have You now, great Master, dog as I am! The great mercy that I ask of You, great as it is to *me*, is only a crumb to You! Grant it, then, I beseech You."

Could she fail to leave her request? Impossible! When faith has a will, she always finds a way, and she will win the day when all things point to defeat. Faith's pleas are singular, but let me add, faith's pleas are always sound. After all, it is a very telling plea to urge that we are poor and needy. Is not that the main argument with mercy? Necessity is the very best plea with benevolence, either human or Divine. Is not our need the best reason we can urge? If we would have a physician come quickly to a sick man, "Sir," we say, "it is no common case, he is on the point of death, come to him, come quickly!"

If we wanted our city firemen to rush to a fire, we should not say to them, "Make haste, for it is only a small fire." But, on the contrary, we urge that it is an old house, full of combustible materials, and there are rumors of petroleum and gunpowder on the premises. Besides, it is near a timber yard, hosts of wooden cottages are close by, and before long we shall have half the city in a blaze." We put the case as badly as we can. Oh for wisdom to be equally wise in pleading with God—to find arguments everywhere—but especially to find them in our necessities!

They said, two centuries ago, that the trade of beggary was the easiest one to carry on, but it paid the worst. I am not sure about the last at this

time, but certainly the trade of begging with God is a hard one, but undoubtedly it pays the best of anything in the world. It is very noteworthy that beggars with men have usually plenty of pleas on hand. When a man is harshly driven and starving, he can usually find a reason why he should ask aid of every likely person. Suppose it is a person to whom he is already under many obligations, then the poor creature argues, "I may safely ask of him again, for he knows me, and has been always very kind."

If he never asked of the person before, then he says, "I have never worried him before. He cannot say he has already done all he can for me. I will make bold to begin with him." If it is one of his own kin, then he will say, "Surely you will help me in my distress, for you are a relation." And if it is a stranger, he says, "I have often found strangers kinder than my own blood. Help me, I entreat you."

If he asks of the rich, he pleads that they will never miss what they give. And if he begs of the poor, he urges that they know what want means, and he is sure they will sympathize with him in his great distress. Oh that we were half as much on the alert to fill our mouths with arguments when we are before the Lord! How is it that we are not half awake, and do not seem to have our spiritual senses aroused? May God grant that we may learn the art of pleading with the eternal God—for in that shall rest our prevalence with Him—through the merit of Jesus Christ.

III. I must be brief on the next point. It is A SOUL URGENT—"Make haste unto me, O God. O Lord, make no tarrying." We may well be urgent with God, if as yet we are not saved, for our need is urgent. We are in constant peril, and the peril is of the most tremendous kind. O Sinner, within an hour, within a minute, you may be where hope can never visit you! Therefore, cry, "Make haste, O God, to deliver me: make haste to help me, O Lord!" Yours is not a case that can bear lingering—you have not time to procrastinate. Therefore be urgent, for your need is so.

And remember, if you really are under a sense of need, and the Spirit of God is at work with you, you will and must be urgent. An ordinary sinner may be content to wait, but a quickened sinner wants mercy *now*. A dead sinner will lie quiet, but a living sinner cannot rest till pardon is sealed home to his soul. If you are urgent this evening, I am glad of it, because your urgency, I trust, arises from the possession of spiritual life. When you cannot live longer without a Savior, the Savior will come to you, and you shall rejoice in Him.

Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church—as I have said on another point—the same Truth holds good with you. God will come to bless you, and come speedily, when your sense of need becomes deep and urgent. Oh, how great is this Church's need! We shall grow cold, unholy, and worldly. There will be no conversions, there will be no additions to our numbers. There will be diminutions, there will be divisions, there will be mischief of all kinds—Satan will rejoice, and Christ will be dishonored—unless we obtain a larger measure of the Holy Spirit! Our need is urgent, and when we feel that need thoroughly, then we shall get the blessing which we want.

Does any melancholy spirit say, “We are in so bad a state that we cannot expect a large blessing”? I reply, perhaps if we were worse, we should obtain it all the sooner. I do not mean if we were *really* so, but if we *felt* we were worse, we should be nearer the blessing. When we mourn that we are in an ill state, then we cry the more vehemently to God, and the blessing comes. God never refused to go with Gideon because he had not enough valiant men with him, but He paused because the people were *too many*.

He brought them down from thousands to hundreds, and He diminished the hundred before He gave them victory. When you feel that you *must* have God’s Presence, but that you do not *deserve* it—and when your consciousness of this lays you in the dust—THEN shall the blessing be guaranteed! For my part, Brothers and Sisters, I desire to feel a spirit of urgency within my soul as I plead with God for the dew of His Grace to descend upon this Church. I am not bashful in this matter, for I have a license to pray.

Begging is forbidden in the streets, but, before the Lord I am a licensed beggar. Jesus has said, “men ought always to pray and not to faint.” You land on the shores of a foreign country with the greatest confidence when you carry a passport with you, and God has issued passports to His children, by which they come boldly to His Mercy Seat. He has invited you. He has encouraged you. He has bid you come to Him, and He has promised that whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Come, then, come urgently, come importunately, come with this plea, “I am poor and needy: make no tarrying, O my God,” and a blessing shall surely come. It will not tarry. God grant we may see it, and give Him the Glory of it.

IV. I am sorry to have been so brief where I had need to have enlarged, but I must close with the fourth point. Here is another part of the art and mystery of prayer—THE SOUL GRASPING GOD. She has pleaded, and she has been urgent. But now she comes to close quarters. She grasps the Covenant Angel with one hand, “You are my help,” and with the other, “You are my deliverer.” Oh, those blessed “mys,” those potent “mys.” The sweetness of the Bible lies in the possessive pronouns, and he who is taught to use them as the Psalmist did, shall come off a conqueror with the eternal God.

Now Sinner, I pray God you may be helped to say this evening to the blessed Christ of God, “You are my help and my deliverer.” Perhaps you mourn that you cannot get that length, but, poor Soul, have you any other help? If you have, then you cannot hold two helpers with the same hand. “Oh, no,” you say, “I have no help anywhere. I have no hope except in Christ.” Well, then, poor Soul, since your hand is empty, that empty hand was made on purpose to grasp your Lord with—lay hold on Him!

Say to Him, this day, “Lord, I will hang on You as poor lame Jacob did. Now I cannot help myself. I will cleave to You—I will not let You go except You bless me.” “Ah, it would be too bold,” says one. But the Lord loves holy boldness in poor sinners. He would have you be bolder than you think of being! It is an unhallowed bashfulness that dares not trust a crucified Savior. He died on purpose to save such as you are. Let Him have

His way with you, and trust Him. “Oh,” says one, “but I am so unworthy.” He came to seek and save the unworthy. He is not the Savior of the self-righteous—He is the sinners’ Savior—“Friend of Sinners” is His name. Unworthy one, lay hold on Him!

“Oh,” says one, “but I have no right.” Well, but that is the very reason you should grasp Him, for right is for the Court of Justice—not for the Hall of Mercy. I would advise you not to try your rights, for you have no right but to be condemned. But you need no rights when dealing with Jesus. Nothing makes a charitable person refuse his alms like a beggar’s saying, “I have a right.” “No,” says the giver, “If you have rights, go and get them. I will give you nothing.” Since you have no rights, your *need* shall be your claim—it is all the claim you want!

I think I hear one say, “It is too late for me to plead for Grace.” It cannot be—it is impossible! While you live and desire mercy, it is not too late to seek it. Notice the parable of the man who wanted three loaves. I will tell you what crossed my mind when I read it—the man went to his friend at midnight. It was late, was it not? Why, his friend might have said, and, indeed, did, in effect, say to him that it was too late. But yet the pleader gained the bread after all. In the parable the time was late—it could not have been later. For if it had been a little later than midnight, it would have been early the next morning, and so not late at all.

It was midnight, and it could not be later. And so, if it is downright midnight with your soul, yet, be of good cheer! Jesus is an out of season Savior—many of His servants are “born out of due time.” Any season is the right season to call upon the name of Jesus! Therefore, do not let the devil tempt you with the thought that it can be too late. Go to Jesus NOW! Go at once and lay hold on the horns of the altar by a venturesome faith, and say, “Sacrifice for sinners, You are a Sacrifice for me. Intercessor for the graceless, you are an Intercessor for me. You who distributes gifts to the rebellious, distribute gifts to me, for a rebel I have been. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Such am I, good Master—let the power of Your death be seen in me to save my soul.”

Oh, you that are saved and, therefore, love Christ, I want you, dear Brethren, as the saints of God, to practice this last part of my subject. And be sure to lay hold upon God in prayer. “You are my help and my deliverer.” As a Church we throw ourselves upon the strength of God and we can do nothing without Him. But we do not mean to be without Him—we will hold Him fast. “You are my help and my deliverer.” There was a boy at Athens, according to the old story, who used to boast that he ruled all Athens, and when they asked him how, he said, “Why, I rule my mother, my mother rules my father, and my father rules the city.”

He who knows how to be master of prayer will rule the heart of Christ, and Christ can and will do all things for His people, for the Father has committed all things into His hands. You can be Omnipotent if you know how to pray—Omnipotent in all things which glorify God. What does the Word itself say? “Let him lay hold on My strength.” Prayer moves the arm that moves the world. Oh for Grace to grasp Almighty love in this fashion!

We want more holdfast prayer! More tugging, and gripping, and wrestling prayer that says, "I will not let You go."

That picture of Jacob at Jabbok shall suffice for us to close with. The Covenant Angel is there, and Jacob wants a blessing from Him—He seems to put him off, but no put-offs will do for Jacob. Then the Angel endeavors to escape from him, and tugs and strives—so He may, but no efforts shall make Jacob relax his grasp. At last the Angel falls from ordinary wrestling to wounding him in the very seat of his strength. And Jacob will let his thigh go, and all his limbs go—but he will not let the Angel go!

The poor man's strength shrivels under the withering touch, but in his weakness he is still strong—he throws his arms about the mysterious Man, and holds Him as in a death grip. Then the Other says, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." Mark, He did not shake him off, He only said, "Let Me go." The Angel will do nothing to force him to relax his hold, He leaves that to his voluntary will. The valiant Jacob cries, "No, I am set on it, I am resolved to win an answer to my prayer. I will not let You go except You bless me."

Now, when the Church begins to pray, it may be, at first, the Lord will make as though He would have us go further, and we may fear that no answer will be given. Hold on, dear Brethren. Be you steadfast, unmovable, notwithstanding all. By-and-by it may be there will come discouragements where we looked for a flowing success. We shall find Brethren hindering—some will be slumbering—and others sinning. Backsliders and impenitent souls will abound. But let us not be turned aside. Let us be all the more eager. And if it should so happen that we ourselves become distressed and dispirited, and feel we never were so weak as we are now—never mind, Brethren, still hold on—for when the sinew is shrunk the victory is near!

Grasp with a tighter grip than ever. Be this our resolution, "I will not let You go except You bless me." Remember the longer the blessing in coming, the richer it will be when it arrives. That which is gained speedily by a single prayer is sometimes only a second-rate blessing. But that which is gained after many a desperate tug, and many an awful struggle, is a full-weighted and precious blessing. The children of importunity are always fair to look upon. The blessing which costs us the most prayer will be worth the most. Only let us be persevering in supplication, and we shall gain a broad far-reaching benediction for ourselves, the Churches, and the world! I wish it were in my power to stir you all to fervent prayer. But I must leave it with the great Author of all true supplication, namely, the Holy Spirit. May He work in us mightily, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Genesis 32; Luke 11:1-13.**

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MORE AND MORE

NO. 998

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 2, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more.”
Psalm 71:14.***

WHEN sin conquered the realm of manhood, it slew all the minstrels except those of the race of Hope. For humanity, amid all its sorrows and sins, Hope sings on. To believers in Jesus there remains a royal race of bards, for we have a hope of Glory, a lively hope, a hope eternal and Divine. Because our hope abides, our praise continues—“I will hope continually, and will yet praise You.” Because our hopes grow brighter and are every day nearer and nearer to their fulfillment—therefore the volume of our praise increases. “I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more.” A dying hope would bring forth declining songs. As the expectations grew more dim, so would the music become more faint.

But a hope immortal and eternal, flaming forth each day with intense brightness, brings forth a song of praise which, as it shall always continue to arise, so shall it always gather new force. See well, my Brethren, to your faith, and your faith and hope, for otherwise God will be robbed of His praise. It will be in proportion as you hope for the good things which He has promised to your faith, that you will render to Him the praise which is His royal revenue, acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ and abundantly due from you. David had not been slack in praise—indeed, he was a sweet singer in Israel, a very choirmaster unto the Lord—yet he vowed to praise Him more and more.

Those who do much already are usually the people who can do more. He was old. Would he praise God more when he was infirm than he had done when he was young and vigorous? If he could not excel with loudness of voice, yet would he with eagerness of heart. And what his praise might lack in sound, it should gain in solemn earnestness. He was in trouble, too, yet he would not allow the heyday of his prosperity to surpass in its notes of loving adoration the dark hour of his adversity.

For him on no account could there be any going back. He had adored the Lord when he was but a youth and kept his father's flock. Harp in hand, beneath the spreading tree, he had worshipped the Lord, his Shepherd, whose rod and staff were his comfort and delight. When an exile he had made the rocky fastnesses of Adullam and Engedi resound with the name of Jehovah. In after time, when he had become king in Israel, his Psalms had been multiplied, and his harp strings were daily accustomed to the praises of the God of his salvation. How could that zealous songster make an advance in praise?

See him yonder dancing before the Ark of the Lord with all his might—what more of joy and zeal can be manifest? Yet he says—“I will yet praise You more and more.” His troubles had been multiplied of late, and his infirmities, too. Yet for all that, no murmuring escapes him. He resolves that his praise should rise higher and higher till he continued it in better lands forever and ever!

Beloved, it is an intense joy to me to address you this morning after so long and sad an absence. And I pray that the Holy Spirit may make my word stimulating to you all. Our subject is that of our praising God more and more. I do not intend to exhort you to praise God. I shall take it for granted that you are doing so, though I fear it will be a great mistake in the case of many. We must, however, take that fact for granted in those to whom we address ourselves upon our particular topic. For those who do not praise God at all cannot be exhorted to praise Him more and more. To those I direct my speech who now love to praise God. These would I charge to resolve with the Psalmist—“I will yet praise You more and more.”

I. Our first business shall be to URGE OURSELVES TO THIS RESOLUTION. Why should we praise God more and more? Here I am embarrassed with the multitude of arguments which beset me. So many crowd around me that I cannot number them in order, but must seize them somewhat at random. It is humbling to remember that we may very well praise God more than we have done, for *we have praised Him very little as yet*. What we have done, as Believers, in glorifying God is far, far short of His due.

Personally, upon consideration, we shall each admit this. Think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, what the Lord has done for you. Some years ago you were in your sin, and death, and ruin. He called you by His Grace. You were under the burden and curse of sin. He delivered you. Did you not expect, in the first joy of pardon, to have done more for Him—to have loved Him more—to have served Him better? What are the returns which you have made for the gifts which you have received? Are they at all fitting or adequate?

I look at a field loaded with precious grain and ripening for the harvest—I hear that the husbandman has expended so much in rent, so much upon the plowing, so much upon enriching the soil, so much for seed—so much more for necessary weeding. There is the harvest, and it yields a profit—he is contented. But I see another field—it is my own heart. And, my Brother, yours is the same. What has the Husbandman done for it? He has reclaimed it from the wild waste by a power no less than Omnipotent. He has hedged it, plowed it, and cut down the thorns.

He has watered it as no other field was ever watered, for the bloody sweat of Christ has bedewed it to remove the primeval curse. God’s own Son has given His whole self that this barren waste may become a garden. What has been done it were hard to add up—what more could have been done none can say. Yet what is the harvest? Is it adequate to the labor expended? Is the tillage remunerative? I am afraid if we cover our faces, or if a blush shall serve us instead of a veil, it will be the most fit reply to the question. Here and there a withered ear is a poor recompense for the

tillage of infinite love. Let us, therefore, be shamed into a firm resolve and say with resolute spirit—"By the good help of infinite Grace, I, at any rate, having been so great a laggard, will quicken my pace. I will yet praise You more and more."

Another argument which presses upon my mind is this—that where we have praised God up till now, *we have not found the service to be a weariness to ourselves, but it has ever been to us both a profit and a delight.* I would not speak falsely even for God, but I bear my testimony that the happiest moments I have ever spent have been occupied with the worship of God. I have never been so near Heaven as when adoring before the Eternal Throne. I think every Christian will bear like witness. Among all the joys of earth, and I shall not depreciate them, there is no joy comparable to that of praise.

The innocent mirth of the fireside, the chaste happiness of household love—even these are not to be mentioned side by side with the joy of worship—the rapture of drawing near to the Most High. Earth, at her best, yields but water, but this Divine occupation is as the wine of Cana's marriage feast. The purest and most exhilarating joy is the delight of glorifying God and so anticipating the time when we shall enjoy Him forever.

Now, Brethren, if God's praise has been no wilderness to you, return to it with zest and ardor, and say—"I will yet praise You more and more." If any suppose that you grow weary with the service of the Lord, tell them that His praise is such freedom, such recreation, such felicity that you desire never to cease from it. As for me, if men call God's service slavery, I desire to be such a bond slave forever and would gladly be branded with my Master's name indelibly! I would have my ear bored to the doorpost of my Lord's house, and go no more out. My soul joyfully sings—

**"Let Your Grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to You."**

This to me shall be ambition—to be more and more subservient to the Divine honor. This shall be gain—to be *nothing* for Christ's sake. This my All in All—to praise You, my Lord, as long as I have any being.

A third reason readily suggests itself. We ought surely to praise God more today than at any other previous day because *we have received more mercies.* Even of temporal favors we have been large partakers. Begin with these, and then rise higher. Some of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, may well be reminded of the great temporal mercies which have been lavished upon you. You are today in a similar state with Jacob when he said—"with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands."

When you first left your father's house to follow a toilsome occupation, you had a scant enough purse, and but poor prospects. But where are you now as to temporal circumstances and position? How highly God has favored some of you! Joseph has risen from the dungeon to the throne! David has gone up from the sheepfolds to a palace! Look back to what you were and give the Lord His due. He lifts up the poor from the dust and sets them among princes. You were unknown and insignificant, and now

His mercy has placed you in prominence and esteem. Is this nothing? Do you despise the bounty of Heaven? Will you not praise the Lord more and more for this?

Surely, you should do so, and *must* do so, or else feel the withering curse which blasts ingratitude wherever it dwells. Perhaps Divine Providence has not dealt with you exactly in that way but with equal goodness and wisdom has revealed itself to you in another form. You have continued in the same sphere in which you commenced life—but you have been enabled to pursue your work—have been preserved in health and strength. You have been supplied with food and raiment, and what is best, have been blessed with a contented heart and a gleaming eye.

My dear Friend, are you not thankful? Will you not praise your heavenly Father more and more? We ought not to overestimate temporal mercies so as to become worldly. But I am afraid there is a greater likelihood of our underestimating them and becoming ungrateful. We must beware of so underestimating them as to lessen our sense of the debt in which they involve us before God. We speak sometimes of great mercies. Come now, I will ask you a question—Can you count your great mercies?

I cannot count mine. Perhaps you think the numeration easy! I find it endless. I was thinking the other day, and I will venture to confess it publicly, what a great mercy it was to be able to turn over in bed. Some of you smile, perhaps. Yet I do not exaggerate when I say I could almost clap my hands for joy when I found myself able to turn in bed without pain. This day, it is to me a very great mercy to be able to stand upright before you. We carelessly imagine that there are but a score or two of great mercies—such as having our children about us—or enjoying health and so on. But in trying times we see that innumerable minor matters are also great gifts of Divine love and entail great misery when withdrawn. Sing, then, as you draw water at the nether springs, and as the brimming vessels overflow! Praise the Lord yet more and more.

But ought we not to praise God more and more when we think of our *spiritual* mercies? What favors have we received of this higher sort! Ten years ago you were bound to praise God for the Covenant mercies you had even then enjoyed. But now, how many more have been bestowed upon you? How much cheering amid darkness? How many answers to prayer? How many directions in dilemma? How many delights of fellowship? How many helps in service? How many successes in conflict? How many revelations of infinite love?

To adoption there has been added all the blessings of heirship. To justification all the security of acceptance. To conversion, all the energies of indwelling. And, remember, as there was no silver cup in Benjamin's sack but Joseph put it there, so there was no spiritual good in you till the Lord of Mercy *gave* it. Therefore, praise the Lord! Louder and louder yet be the song! Praise Him on the high-sounding cymbals! Since we cannot hope to measure His mercies, let us immeasurably praise our God! "I will yet praise You more and more."

Let us now go on a little farther. We have been *proving through a series of years the faithfulness, immutability, and veracity of our God*—proving these attributes by our sinning against God and their bearing the strain of our misbehavior—proving them by the innumerable benefits which the Lord has bestowed upon us. Shall all this experience end in no result? Shall there be no advance in gratitude where there is such an increase in obligation? God is so good that every moment of His love demands a life of praise. It should never be forgotten that *every Christian, as he grows in Grace, should have a loftier idea of God.*

Our highest conception of God falls infinitely short of His Glory, but an advanced Christian enjoys a far clearer view of what God is than he had at the first. Now, the greatness of God is ever a claim for praise. “Great is the Lord, and”—what follows?—“greatly to be praised.” If, then, God is greater to me than He was, let my praise be greater. If I think of Him now more tenderly as my Father—if I have a clearer view of Him in the terror of His Justice—if I have a clearer view of the splendors of His Wisdom by which He devised the Atonement—if I have larger thoughts of His eternal, immutable love—let every advance in knowledge constrain me to say—“I will yet praise You more and more.”

I heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You—therefore while I abhor myself in dust and ashes, my praise shall rise yet more loftily! Up to Your Throne shall my song ascend! I did but see as it were the skirts of Your garment, but You have hidden me in the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, and made Your Glory pass before me! And now will I praise You even as the seraphs do, and vie with those before the Throne in magnifying Your name! We learn but little in Christ’s school if the practical result of it all is not to make us cry—“I will yet praise You more and more.”

Still culling here and there a thought out of thousands, I would remind you that it is a good reason for praising God more as *we are getting nearer to the place where we hope to praise Him, world without end, after a perfect sort.* Never have we made these walls ring more joyously than when we have united in singing of our Father’s House on high, and the tents pitched—

“A day’s march nearer home.”

Heaven is indeed the only home of our souls, and we shall never feel that we have come to our rest till we have reached its mansions. One reason why we shall be able to rest in Heaven is because we shall there be able perpetually to achieve the object of our creation.

Am I nearer Heaven? Then I will be doing more of the work which I shall do in Heaven. I shall soon use the harp—let me be carefully tuning it—let me rehearse the hymns which I shall sing before the Throne. For if the words in Heaven shall be sweeter and more rich than any that poets can put together here, yet the essential song of Heaven shall be the same as that which we present to Jehovah here below—

**“They praise the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below.”**

The essence of their praise is gratitude that He should bleed—it is the essence of *our* praise, too. They bless Immanuel's name for undeserved favors bestowed upon unworthy ones, and we do the same.

My aged Brethren, I congratulate you—for you are almost Home! Be yet more full of praise than ever! Quicken your footsteps as the Glory Land shines more brightly. You are close to the gates of pearl! Sing on, dear Brothers and Sisters, though infirmities increase, and let the song grow sweeter and louder until it melts into the infinite harmonies. Shall I need give another reason why we should praise God more and more? If I must, I would throw this one into the scale, that surely at this present juncture we ought to be more earnest in the praise of God, because *God's enemies are very earnest in laboring to dishonor Him.*

These are times when scoffers are boundlessly impudent. Did it not make your blood chill when you heard revolutionists in unhappy Paris talk of having “demolished God”? It struck me as almost a sadder thing when I read the proposition of one of their philosophers who would have them become religious again—that they should bring God back again for ten years at least—an audacious recommendation as blasphemously impertinent as the insolence which had proclaimed the triumph of atheism.

But we need not look across the Channel—perhaps they speak more honestly on that side than we do here. For among ourselves we have abounding infidelity which pretends to reverence Scripture while it denies its most plain teachings. And we have what is quite as bad—a superstition which thrusts Christ aside for the human priest—and makes the *sacraments* everything, and simple trust in the great Atonement to be as nothing.

Now, my Brethren, those who hold these views are not sleepers, nor do they relax their efforts. We may be very quiet and lukewarm about religion (alas, that we should be)—but these persons are earnest propagators of their faith, or no faith—they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. As we think of these busy servants of Satan, we ought to chide ourselves and say—“Shall Baal be diligently served, and Jehovah have such a sleepy advocate? Be stirred, my Soul! Awake, my Spirit! Arouse you at once, and praise your God more and more!”

But, indeed, while I give you these few arguments out of many that come to my mind, the thought cheers my spirit that with those of you who know and love God there is little need for me to mention reasons! For your own souls are hungering and thirsting to praise Him. If you are debarred for a little time from the public service of God, you pant for the assemblies of God's House, and envy the swallows that build their nests beneath the eaves. If you are unable to accomplish service which you were accustomed to perform for Christ's Church, the hours drag very wearily along.

As the Master found it His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, so when you are unable to do that will, you are like a person deprived of his meat and drink and an insatiable hunger grows upon you. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, do you not pant to praise God? I am sure you feel now—“O that I could praise Him better!” You are, perhaps,

in a position in which you have work to do for Him, and your heart is saying, "How I wish I could do this work more thoroughly to His praise!"

Or possibly you are in such a condition of life that it is little you *can* do, and you often wish God would make a change for you—not that it should be one more full of comfort—but one in which you could be more serviceable. Above all, I know you wish you were rid of sin and everything which hinders your praising God more and more. Well, then, I need not argue—for your own heart pleads the holy cause. Suffer me to conclude this head with a fact that illustrates the point.

I know one who has been long privileged to lift his voice in the choir of the great King. In that delightful labor there are none more happy than he. The longer he was engaged in the work the more he loved it. Now, it came to pass that on a certain day this songster found himself shut out of the choir—he would have entered to take his part—but he was not permitted. Perhaps the King was angry. Perhaps the songster had sung carelessly. Perhaps he had acted unworthily in some other matter. Or possibly his Master knew that his song would grow more sweet if he were silenced for awhile. How it was I know not, but this I know, that it caused great searching of heart.

Often this chorister begged to be restored, but he was as often repulsed, and somewhat roughly, too. I think it was more than three months that this unhappy songster was kept in enforced silence with fire in his bones and no vent for it. The royal music went on without him. There was no lack of song, and in this he rejoiced, but he longed to take his place again. I cannot tell you how eagerly he longed. At last the happy hour arrived, the king gave his permit—he might sing again. The songster was full of gratitude, and I heard him say—*you shall hear him say it*—"My Lord, since I am again restored, I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more."

II. Now let us turn to another point. Let us in the Spirit's strength DRIVE AWAY THAT WHICH HINDERS US FROM PRAISING GOD MORE AND MORE. One of the deadliest things is *dreaminess* or sleepiness. A Christian readily falls into this state. I notice it even in the public congregation. Very often the whole service is gone through mechanically. That same dreaminess falls upon many professors and abides with them—and instead of praising God more and more, it is as much as ever they can do to keep up the old strain—and barely that. Let us shake ourselves from all such sleep!

Surely if there were any service in which a man should be altogether and wholly awake, it is in praising and magnifying God! A sleepy seraph before the throne of Jehovah, or a cherub nodding during sacred song? It were ridiculous to imagine! And shall such an insult to the majesty of Heaven be seen on earth? No! Let us say to all that is within us, "Awake! Awake!" The next hindrance would be *divided objects*. We cannot, however we may resolve, praise God more and more, if, as we grow older, we allow this world to take up our thoughts.

If I say, "I will praise God more and more," and yet I am striking out right and left with projects of amassing wealth, or I am plunging myself

into greater business cares unnecessarily—my actions belie my resolutions. Not that we would check enterprise. There are periods in life when a man may be enabled to praise God more and more by extending the boundaries of his business. There are persons, however, whom I have known who have praised God right well in a certain condition—but they have not been content to let well enough alone—and they have been for aggrandizing themselves. And they have had to give up their Sunday school class, or the village station, or attendance at the visiting committee, or some other form of Christian service, because their money-getting demanded all their strength.

Beloved, you shall find it small gain if you gain in this world, but lose in praising God. As we grow older, it is wise to concentrate more and more our energies upon the one thing, the only thing worth living for—the praise of God. Another great obstacle to praising God more is, *self-content*. And this, again, is a condition into which we may very easily fall.

Our belief is we must not confess our praise when we may be overheard. We are all very fine fellows, indeed. We may confess when we are praying, and at other times that we are miserable sinners—and I daresay we have some belief that it is so—but for all that, there is within our minds the conviction that we are very respectable people and are doing exceedingly well upon the whole. Why, comparing ourselves with other Christians, it is much to our credit that we are praising God as well as we are. Now I have put this very roughly, but is it not what the heart has said to us at times? Oh, loathsome thought—that a sinner should grow content with himself! Self-satisfaction is the end of progress.

Dear Friend, why compare yourself with the dwarfs around you? If you must compare yourself with your fellow men, look at the giants of other days! Better still, relinquish the evil habit altogether! Paul tells us it is not wise to compare ourselves among ourselves. Look to our Lord and Master who towers so high above us in peerless excellence. No, no, we dare not flatter ourselves, but with humble self-condemnation we resolve to praise the Lord more and more.

To *rest on the past* is another danger as to this matter. We did so much for God when we were young. I occasionally meet with drones in the Christian hive whose boast is that they made a great deal of honey years ago. I see men lying upon their oars today, but they startle me with a description of the impetus they gave to the boat years ago. You should have seen them when they were master-rowers in those former times! What a pity that these Brethren cannot be aroused to do their first works. It would be a gain to the Church, but it would be an equal benefit to themselves.

Suppose God should say, “Rest on the past. I gave you great mercies twenty years ago—live on them.” Suppose the eternal and ever Beloved Spirit should say, “I worked a work in you thirty years ago. I withdraw Myself, and I will do no more.” What would happen to you, then? Yet, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you still have to draw afresh upon the Eternal Fountains, do, I beseech you, praise the ever-blessed Source of

all. May God help us, then, to shake off all those things which would prevent our praising Him!

Possibly there is some afflicted one here, in so low a state, so far pressed by poverty or bodily pain that he is saying—"I cannot praise God more and more—I am ready to despair." Dear Brother, may God give you full resignation to His will, and the greater your troubles the sweeter will be your song. I met in an old Divine a short but sweet story which touched my heart:

A poor widow and her little child were sitting together in great want, both feeling the pinch of hunger and the child looked up into the mother's face, and said—"Mother, God won't starve us, will He?" "No, my child," said the mother, "I do not think He will." "But, Mother," said the child, "if He does, we will still praise Him as long as we live, won't we, Mother?" May those who are gray headed be able to say what the child said, and to carry it out. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have received good at the hands of the Lord—shall we not also receive evil? "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." "I will yet praise You more and more."

III. Very briefly LET US APPLY OURSELVES TO THE PRACTICAL CARRYING OUT OF THIS RESOLUTION. I have given you arguments for it and tried to move away impediments. Now for a little help in the performance of it. How shall I begin to praise God more and more? Earnestness says—"I shall undertake some fresh duty this afternoon." Stop, dear Brothers and Sisters! Just a minute! If you want to praise God, would not it be as well, first, to begin with *yourself*?

The musician said—"I will praise God better." But the pipes of his instrument were foul. He had better look to them first. If the strings have slipped from their proper tension, it will be well to correct them before beginning the tune. If we would praise God more, it is *not* to be done as boys rush into a bath—head first. No—prepare yourself—make your heart ready. You need the Spirit's aid to make your soul fit for praising God. It is not every fool's work. Go, then, to your chamber—confess the sins of the past—and ask the Lord to give you much more Divine Grace that you may begin to praise Him.

If we would praise God more and more, let us improve our private devotions. God is much praised by really devout prayer and adoration. Sermons are not fruits—they are sowings. True song is fruit. I mean this, that the green blade of the wheat may be the sermon, but the wheat ear is the hymn you sing, the prayer in which you unite. The true result of life is praise to God. "The chief end of man," says the Catechism, and I cannot put it better, "is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever."

And when we glorify God in our private devotion we are answering the true end of our being. If we desire to praise God more, we must ask for Divine Grace that our private devotions may rise to a higher standard. I am more and more persuaded, from my own experience, that in proportion to the strength of our private life with God will be the force of our character and the power of our work for God among men. Let us look well to this. Again, however, I hear the zealous young man or woman

saying—"Well, I will attend to what you have said. I will see to private prayer and to heart work, but I mean to begin some work of usefulness."

Quite right. But wait a little. I want to ask you this question—Are you sure that your own personal conduct in what you call your everyday life has as much of the praise of God in it as it might have? It is all a mistake to think that we must come *here* to praise God. You can praise God in your shops, and in your kitchens, and in your bedrooms. It is all a mistake to suppose that Sunday is the *only day* to praise God. Praise him on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, everyday, everywhere. All places are holy to holy people—and all engagements holy to holy men if they do them with holy motives—lifting up their hearts to God.

And whether a man swings the blacksmith's hammer, or lays his hand upon the plow tail—that is true worship which is done as unto the Lord and not unto men. I like the story of the servant maid, who, when she was asked on joining the Church, "Are you converted?" "I hope so, Sir." "What makes you think you are really a child of God?" "Well, Sir, there is a great change in me from what there used to be." "What is that change?" "I don't know, Sir, but there is a change in all things. But there is one thing, *I always sweep under the mats now.*"

Many a time she had hidden the dust under the mat. It was not so now. It is a very excellent reason for believing that there is a change of heart when work is conscientiously done. There is a set of mats in all our houses where we are accustomed to put the dirt away. And when a man gets in his business to sweep from under the mats—you merchants have your mats, you know, when you avoid the evils which custom tolerates but which God condemns—then you have marks of Grace within.

Oh, to have a conduct molded by the example of Christ! If any man lived after a holy sort, though he never preached a sermon or even sung a hymn, he would have praised God. And the more conscientiously he acted, the more thoroughly would he have done so. These inner matters being considered, let us go on to increase our actual and direct service for God. Let us do what we have been doing of Christian teaching, visiting, and so on. But in all let us do *more*, give more, and labor more. Who among us is working at his utmost, or giving at his utmost? Let us quicken our speed.

Or suppose we are already doing so much that all the time we can possibly spare is fully occupied. Let us do what we do *better*. In some Christian Churches they do not want more societies, but they want more *force* put into them. You may trip over the sand of the sea shore and scarcely leave an impression. But if you take heavy steps there is a deep footprint each time. May we, in our service of God, tread heavily and leave deep footprints on the sands of time. Whatever you do, do it heartily! Throw yourselves into it! Do it with all your might.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Oh, to be enabled to serve God after this fashion—this would be to praise Him more and more! Though I do not say that you can always tell how far a man praises God by the quantity of work that he does for God, yet it is not a bad gauge. It was an old

aphorism of Hippocrates, the old physician, that you could judge of a man's heart by his arm. By which he meant that by his pulse he judged of his heart—and as a rule, though there may be exceptions—you shall tell whether a man's heart beats truly to God by the work that he does for God.

You who are doing much, do more! And you who are doing little, multiply that little, I pray you, in God's strength, and so praise Him more and more. We would praise God much more if we threw more of His praise into our common conversation—if we spoke more of Him when we are by the way or when we sit in the house. We should praise Him more and more if we fulfilled our consecration, and obeyed the precept, "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

We would do well if we added to our godly service more singing. The world sings—the millions have their songs. And I must say the taste of the populace is a very remarkable taste just now as to its favorite songs. They are, many of them, so absurd and meaningless as to be unworthy of an idiot. I should insult an idiot if I could suppose that such songs as people sing nowadays would really be agreeable to him. Yet these things will be heard from men, and places will be thronged to listen to hear the stuff.

Now, why should we, with the grand Psalms we have of David, with the noble hymns of Cowper, of Milton, of Watts—why should not we sing as well as they? Let us sing the songs of Zion—they are as cheerful as the songs of Sodom any day. Let us drown the howling nonsense of Gomorrah with the melodies of the New Jerusalem. But to conclude, I would that every Christian here would labor to be impressed with the importance of the subject which I have tried to bring before you. And when I say *every Christian*, I may correct myself and say, *every person* here present. "I will yet praise You more and more."

Why some of you present have never praised God at all! Suppose you were to die today, and soon you must—where will you go? To Heaven? Where would Heaven be to you? There can be no Heaven for you! They praise God in the only Heaven I have ever heard of! The element of Heaven is gratitude, praise, adoration—and you do not know anything of this—therefore it would not be possible for God to make a Heaven for you! God can do all things except make a sinful spirit happy, or violate Truth and Justice. You must either praise God or be wretched forever!

O my Hearer, there *is* a choice for you—you must either worship the God that made you, or else you must be wretched. It is not that He kindles a fire for you, nor that He casts upon it the brimstone of His wrath, though that is true. But your wretchedness will begin within yourself, for to be unable to praise is to be full of Hell. To praise God is Heaven. When completely immersed in adoration, we are completely filled with felicity. But to be totally devoid of gratitude is to be totally devoid of happiness.

O that a change might come over you who have never blessed the Lord, and may it happen this morning! May the work of regeneration take place now! There is power in the Holy Spirit to change your heart of stone in a moment into a heart of flesh—so that instead of being cold and lifeless, it

shall palpitate with gratitude. Can't you see Christ on the Cross dying for sinners? Can you look on that disinterested love and not feel some gratitude for such love as is there exhibited? Oh, if you can look to Jesus and trust Him, you shall feel a flash of life come into your soul! And with it shall come praise and then shall you find it possible to begin the happy life, and it shall be certain to you that as you shall praise God more and more, so shall that happy life be expanded, be perfected in bliss.

But Christians, the last word shall be to you. Are you praising God more and more? If you are not, I am afraid of one thing, and that is that you are probably praising Him less and less. It is a certain truth that if we do not go forward in the Christian life, we go backward. You cannot stand still—there is a drift one way or the other. Now he that praises God less than he did, and goes on to praise Him less tomorrow, and less the next day, and so on—what will he get to? And what is he?

Evidently he is one of those that draw back unto perdition, and there are no persons upon whom a more dreadful sentence is pronounced, often spoken of by Paul, and most terribly by Peter and Jude. Those “Trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” The “wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” It would have been infinitely better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, after a fashion, to have turned aside!

Better never to have put their hand to the plow, than having done so, after a sort, to turn back from it. But, Beloved, I am persuaded better things for you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. I pray that God will lead you on from strength to strength—for that is the path of the just. May you grow in Grace, for life is proven by growth. May you march like pilgrims towards Heaven, singing all the way. The lark may serve us as a final picture, and an example of what we all should be. We should be mounting—our prayer should be, “Nearer, my God, to you.” We should be mounting—our motto might well be, “Higher! Higher! Higher!” As we mount, we should sing, and our song should grow louder, clearer, more full of Heaven. Upward, Brothers and Sisters! Sing as you soar! Upward! Sing till you are dissolved in Glory! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 71.

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GOD'S INNUMERABLE MERCIES

NO. 3022

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1907.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1868.**

***"I know not the numbers thereof."
Psalm 71:15.***

THE writer of this Psalm describes all the dealings of God with him under the head, "righteousness" and, "salvation." That description is perfectly accurate, for all that God does for His people is, first of all, in faithfulness to His promise. As He has spoken, so He does. Never, even in the sharpest trial, can the heir of Heaven accuse God of being unfaithful to what He has promised. He told His disciples that they would have to endure tribulation—and when it came, they proved the truth of His prophecy—and everything that God does to us, whether little or great, whether sharp or kind, will prove to have been done in accordance with His faithful Word.

And then the Psalmist calls the dispensations of God's Providence by the name of salvation. And this term is also the right one, for everything that He does for us who are His people tends to our ultimate salvation. He is working out our deliverance from inbred sin as well as from outward temptation and trial. Very often the darkest days that we have are bright with Divine Mercy, even though we cannot discern the brightness. There is a good reason, a necessity, for all that He sends to us and that reason is to be found in the fact that He intends to present us "faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy." Open your diaries, Beloved, and write across the record of your daily experiences, "All this is being done to us in righteousness and all this is working out our full salvation." Never read the book of your life's history without putting that headline upon every page! Emblazon that motto as an illuminated picture at the beginning of every distinct chapter of your life—and believe that it is all righteousness and all salvation from first to last!

Having thus comprehended all God's mercies under these two heads, the Psalmist adds, "I know not the numbers thereof."

I. In considering these words, let us think, first, of THIS THING WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW, NAMELY, THE NUMBER OF GOD'S MERCIES.

Have you ever tried to count them? Probably you never did that for even any *day* in your life. I would like you to undertake that task and to jot down every mercy you receive from God in a single day—from the moment when the eyelids of the morning are opened till the moment

when the curtains of the night are drawn. If your judgment were sufficiently enlightened to discern all the items, you would find that your arithmetic would fail to tell the total of them. But, Brothers and Sisters, the days of most of us have been many and there are some here who are approaching the longest period of human life. If the mercies of *one day* would surpass their computation, what shall we say of the mercies of all these days in which they have been living as gentlemen-commoners upon the bounty of God, pensioners upon the loving kindness and faithfulness of the Most High? Truly, they may say, in the retrospect of all the loving kindness of the Lord, "We know not the numbers thereof."

Let me now—not by way of attempting to help you to count the mercies of God, but by way of showing you the utter impossibility of even numbering them—just remind you, first, of *the Divine Promises which have been fulfilled to you*. They are very many. As you turn over the pages of Sacred Writ, you see them sparkling like grains of gold in the bed of some African or Australian river. God's Words of promise are there in great abundance, each of them as mighty as those Words of power which built the skies and, in your experience, from first to last, these Words of promise have been fulfilled. It would be a colossal task for you to write out all God's promises that have been fulfilled to you. Take your Bible and put a pencil mark in the margin for each one that has been proved true to you. Your task will be blessed to your memory and will move you to gratitude. And the most of God's promises have been fulfilled to us over, and over, and over again! We have taken these promissory notes into the great Bank of Heaven and we have received what was promised in them. But we have taken them to the bank, again, for, strange to say, after the Lord has fulfilled His promise today, that promise still stands good for tomorrow and right on until the end of time! Reckon up the multitude of God's promises and think of the many times in which those promises have been fulfilled to you and others of His children, for this will help you to realize how innumerable are the mercies of God!

Think of the mercies of God in another form, namely, *the many deliverances which have been vouchsafed to you*. You have had deliverances when you knew nothing of your danger, when the Lord—

***"Watched over your path
When, Satan's blind slave, you sported with death."***

You have had deliverances from sickness when, had death come to you, you would have died unforgiven. You had deliverances, perhaps, in childhood, from many temptations which would have been your lot had you been born under less happy auspices. Then came the great deliverance when your soul was released from the bondage of sin and Satan—and how many deliverances are wrapped up in that one? David says that God delivered him from all his fears—and that day when He delivered us from all our sins, He emancipated us from every yoke of bondage that had rested on us. O happy day of glorious liberty when Christ made us free indeed! Well may, each one of us, sing—

***"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God!"***

***Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.
'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and He is mine—
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear."***

From that day onward, our march through the wilderness has been a series of remarkable deliverances and salvations! You have been delivered, dear Friends, from pride—you have been brought low when you were exalted above measure. You have been delivered from depression of spirits—your eyes have been delivered from weeping and your heart from fainting. You have been delivered in your seasons of bereavement. You have been succored in your times of pain and sickness. You have been delivered during the rush of business and you have been delivered in the time of solitary temptations. You have been delivered from self, from sin, from Satan, from the evil that alarmed you and from the more insidious mischief that sought to fascinate you! Until now the Lord has held you up and you have been kept in safety even while passing by the dens of lions, or fighting with Apollyon down in the Valley of Humiliation. Can you count all your deliverances? I feel sure that you must say with the Psalmist, "I know not the numbers thereof."

Let us think for a minute or two, just to stir up our gratitude to God, of *the innumerable mercies attending our very existence*. Any physician can tell you what a wonderful thing our life is. Dr. Watts truly wrote—

***"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one is gone!
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"***

The operations of Nature are conducted in a most intricate manner. The continuation of our life depends upon the slenderest thread—yes, often, upon particles of matter which are so minute as scarcely to be perceived by the eyes! As the blood circulates through our system, there is a risk of death at every beat of our pulse. As the air is inhaled by us, there is a further risk every time our lungs are inflated. I am not an anatomist, neither is it a part of my duty to dissect the fabric of the human body—but those who have searched into it have told us that life is a continued miracle from the cradle to the grave. We cannot even imagine what innumerable mercies, from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, are concerned in our continuing to still be in the land of the living!

Think, again, of *the numberless mercies connected with happy existence*—any one of which taken away would make life sadder—many of which removed would make life an intolerable torture. Can you ever pass a lunatic asylum without thanking God that your reason has not left her throne? Can you pass by a place where idiots are dwelling without thanking God that your mind has not become lowered till it has

almost ceased to be? Can you go by our great hospitals without blessing God that you are not tossing on a bed that grows hard through unceasing pain? Can you look upon the many diseased folk whom we see in our streets and not thank God for the health you enjoy? I like to feel grateful for every minute that my teeth do not ache, or that my head does not ache, for some of these lesser pains do so distract us that we can scarcely attend to our daily duties! When we have to endure these pains, we think how grateful we should be if they were gone—but when they are gone, we are apt to forget the mercy which has removed them!

Think, dear Friends, of the mercies which have made life happy for you in your domestic circle. “Ah,” say some of you, “but we now have sore sorrows there.” Yes, it may be so, but you ought to think how long you had almost unalloyed happiness! If a man lends you something and after a long while takes it back, you ought not to mourn because he takes it, but to thank him for letting you have it so long! Think of the ten thousand mercies that cluster around a happy fireside. What music there is in that blessed word, “home!” Yes, and with all the troubles that a family may bring, those dear little prattlers bring a world of happiness with them and you ought to be thankful if they are still spared to you—and not only spared, but in robust health, firm of limb, clear in intellect and many of them hopeful and promising in moral and spiritual things! Truly, if I were to attempt to record the mercies that make life happy here below, I would need a vast volume written within and without with thanksgiving! And even then I should have to make the Psalmist’s confession, “I know not the numbers thereof.”

Take another measuring line. Beloved Friends, think of *the preventing Providences of God* and you have quite another vista opened before you. Walking in the street yesterday, you might have fallen and injured yourselves, for another did so. Sitting even in your house, the deadly fever might have entered—it did go in at a neighbor’s door or window. In travelling, you might have been killed as many others have been, or have been mangled and scarcely escaped with life. We talk of Providences when we have hairbreadth escapes—but are they not quite as much Providences when we are preserved from danger? I have told you before what the old Puritan said to his son who had ridden several miles to meet him. “Father,” said the son, “I have had a remarkable Providence! My horse stumbled badly three times, yet did not throw me.” “Ah, my Son,” said the father, “I have had a still more remarkable Providence than that, for my horse did not stumble once.” We do not think, as we should, of the preventing Providences of God which keep off evil from us. It is a mercy that so many of you are not brought to poverty—that when so many others are out of work, you workingmen are not among the unemployed, but are able to provide for your families. We could probably all make a long list of trials from which we have been preserved and, after making out the list, we would still have to say, “We know not the numbers thereof.”

But when I turn to a still wider field, the best arithmetician must find his powers in vain. Think of *the bounties of God’s Grace*. Your sins,

though many, are all forgiven and every forgiveness a mercy—do any of you know the numbers thereof? The evils which sin has worked in you, all remedied by the Great Physician, or to be ultimately removed by His gracious hand—do you know the numbers thereof? Think now, you are the elect of God—trace the streams of His love up to that Eternal Council in which He planned your redemption and then say, with David, “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.” Besides that, you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! Do you know the number of mercies included in that one word, “redeemed”? It includes that mercy of mercies—God descending to take our Human Nature into union with Himself! It includes the whole life of Christ and His death upon the Cross—yes, and His Resurrection, and Ascension, and the Glory of His Second Coming—for all this has to do with your redemption! Truly, you know not the numbers thereof! You have also been called by Grace. You resisted God’s calls, perhaps hundreds of times, yet were the sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit continued until you were at last constrained to yield! And repentance was given to you, faith was worked in you—you were made to pray and your prayers were heard and answered. Do you know the numbers of all these mercies?

Further, the work of sanctification has gone on in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every good thought you have ever had, every right word you have ever spoken, every holy action you have ever done has been a mercy from God to you! He gave these blessings to you, or else you would never have had them—and I challenge you to try to count this great budget of mercies! Besides all that, you are this day an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! You have Heaven in reversion, assured to you by the faithful promise of God who cannot lie! Sit down and take your pen and count your mercies if you can. Even as you count them, your mercies multiply—and every beating pulse increases the innumerable multitude of them so that you must utterly despair of counting them! To what shall I liken them? To the countless odors that rise from the garden when the summer’s sun is smiling on the innumerable beauties that are gathered there? Shall I liken them to the drops of dew that sparkle on ten thousand times ten thousand blades of grass? Shall I liken them to the innumerable birds and insects that fly in the air, or to the fishes without number that swim in the seas, or to the beasts untold that wander on the mountains or range the woods and forests? Shall I liken them to the innumerable leaves of autumn that fall when the frost comes, or to the shells or sands upon the seashore, or to the stars of Heaven which no man can number? I know not whereunto to liken God’s mercies to you, for all comparisons fail me—and I can only wonderingly say with the Psalmist—“I know not the numbers thereof.”

II. Now, turning from that to another point—as we know not the numbers of God’s mercies, we need not be surprised that THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS WHICH ARE ALSO BEYOND OUR KNOWLEDGE.

To know the numbers of certain things would not be so difficult as to know *their value*. My God, I know not the numbers of Your mercies and I do not even know the value of any one of them! If I were to take one of them and try to estimate its worth, I would find that it would exceed all my powers of computation. I have never been able to weigh one of them in the scales and especially Your loving kindness in working by Your Grace in my soul. To have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus—angels, can you tell what a priceless gift this is? Devils, call *you* tell—for you are still covered with sin! Lost spirit in Hell, can you even imagine what it must be to be a forgiven soul? Bright spirits before the Throne of God who have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—do not even you, who have experienced this wonderful bliss, continue to marvel at the greatness of it? Then, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we need not be surprised that we do not know the value of the mercies which our God has so abundantly bestowed upon us!

It is even more to be regretted that *we have never felt due gratitude for the mercies of God to us*. We might be forgiven for not being able to number that which reaches almost to the infinite. That would be an imperfection rather than a sin, but alas, we have been so ungrateful that we have not been thankful to God for the favors which He has so liberally showered upon us. They have been buried in forgetfulness and yes, have gone on, from year to year, as if we owed nothing to the Lord, but had received all His good gifts by mere chance! How many men are like the swine that eat the acorns which fall from the oak, but never thank the tree on which they grew, or the God who made it grow? They receive the benisons of Heaven, but thank not the God of Heaven for them as they should. The mercies of God are uncountable—the ingratitude of man is unaccountable! We, Christian men and women, cannot tell how it is that we can be so stolidly indifferent when we ought to be so devoutly thankful to God for all His goodness to us.

And, Beloved, as our gratitude has never kept pace with God's goodness, I am also sure that *our praises have not*. How many tongues there are that are blistered through their murmuring and complaining because of the hard lot which God has given them? There are some of us who have learned too well how to make discord, yet who know little about harmonious *praise*. Yet our God is a good God. Let us say so and stand to it—and repent that we have not said it more often and proclaimed it more publicly among the sons of men! God has been so gracious to us that we cannot count His mercies! May we be pardoned for our past silence concerning them—and henceforth may our mouth be filled with His praise and with His honor all day.

And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, as we have fallen short in our praise, I am sure that we have fallen much more short of anything like *a proper return for God's goodness in our conduct and conversation*. If we had been His slaves, we could not have served Him worse than we have done though we are His children. If He had been a tyrant to us, we could scarcely have done less for Him than we have done although He is our

Father! I have often felt that I could blot my diary with tears again and again, and again, as I have said to myself—

***“What have I done for Him who died
To save my guilty soul?
How are my follies multiplied
Fast as my minutes roll!
Much of my time has run to waste,
My sins how great their sum!
Lord, give me pardon for the past,
And strength for days to come!”***

Let these practical reflections abide in your memories, dear Friends. You do not know the number, or the value, or the weight of God's mercies. You do not feel the gratitude for them that is due. You do not give to God the praise that is fitting, nor live the life that is consistent with His goodness to you. Here are reasons for deep humiliation and for seeking the Grace that will enable us to mend our ways.

III. Now, lastly, while there are these things which we do not know, THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE DO KNOW, which ought to increase our thankfulness.

First, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you and I know very well *the source from which all these mercies come to us*. We cannot count them, but we know that they all spring from the eternal love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord towards His own people. We can trace every one of these sacred drops of mercy to the Fountain of God's discriminating, distinguishing Love. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. It was according to the greatness of His loving kindness to us, before the earth was, that He chose us to be a people to show forth His praise—a people to be “filled with all the fullness of God.” Let us trace even our common mercies up to this source and let us especially see the love of God in every spiritual gift that we receive, for so shall we be moved to praise and bless Him more than we have ever yet done!

Further, we know *the channel through which every mercy comes to us*. It comes through our blessed Lord and Mediator, Jesus Christ. And—

***“There's never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan.”***

I like to see the mark of my Master's sufferings upon every jewel with which He adorns my spirit—to know that if I am righteous, it is in His righteousness! If I am washed, it is in His blood! If I am saved, He is my Savior! If I am fed, He is my food. If I am glad, He is my crown of joy and if I ever enter Heaven, He will be my bliss forever! All-in-All is He to His people—everything comes to us through Him—so that we have a reason for gratitude in the way in which the mercy comes to us as well as in the mercy itself! We do not know the numbers of God's mercies to us, but we do know that every one of them comes to us by way of the Cross and bears the mark of the Redeemer's blood upon it!

We do not know the number of God's mercies, but we do know *the rule of them*. That is to say, we know that they are always sent in love. If they seem to be stinted, it is love that stints them. And if they are increased, it

is love that increases them. The whole of the day God's Love is shining upon us and when the natural sun has gone to its rest, there is no harmful moon to smite, us, but the same Love of God makes it light within our soul. If the Lord chastens me, it is because He loves me. If He takes away your child, your husband, or yourself, Believer, it is because He loves you! The rule of every mercy is the great rule of our Father's wisdom, our Father's faithfulness, our Father's affection!

We know, also, with regard to all God's mercies, *the design of them*. We know that they are all sent to us to be tokens of His Love and helps in our journey to Heaven. In addition to the mercy and the love that gives it, and the way by which it comes, there is a blessed end that sanctifies it all. The Lord said to Israel, concerning the Angel whom He promised to send with them, "He shall bless your bread and your water." Oh, to have the common mercies of life so blessed that they become spiritual helps to us! It can be so, for it is the design of God—in all that He sends to us—to bring us nearer to Him.

Then, we know, over and above all this, *the grand climax of it all*. I know not the numbers thereof, but I know, my God, that when I shall have received my last mercy on earth, I shall receive my first enjoyment in Heaven! When I shall have had the last blessing of this mortal life, I shall have the first blessing of the life everlasting! When the goodness and the mercy that have followed me to the brink of Jordan shall cease, I shall have angels there to escort me up to the celestial hills, and to admit me to my Savior's Presence where there are pleasures forevermore! It is an endless chain, Beloved! When it has seemed to conclude in one place, it begins in another. David said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And what did he say next?—"And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." Forever to behold the face of their Father, in His House above, is the portion of all the children of God!

After all that I have said, I hope you will all say that a Christian's life is a happy one. It is! It is! We have our cross to carry. We have our daily sorrows, losses and trials—but each one of us can say, with Dr. Watts—

***"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!"***

We enter our Master's service and accept the cross and all He gives us. We take the road to Heaven with all its thorns and briers. Yes, let what will come, He is so good and blessed a God who has made Himself to be His people's portion that if the rod is a part of the Covenant, then blessed be the rod and the hand that wields it—and let the Lord be praised from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, since God is never wearied in giving, let us never be wearied in serving Him! Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord! Since He never stays His hand in bestowing mercies upon us, let us never stay our patient endurance of any of the ills of life that He is pleased to send us. And since His mercy will continue with us as long as we are here, let us never cast away our confidence in Him! Let us stay ourselves upon Him and fall back into His arms when we are weary. If we faint, let us faint on His bosom.

I wish that all of us here, constantly receiving, as we do, so many mercies, had more thought of the hands and heart from which they come. Alas! Alas! With many, “the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but these people do not know God! Feed a dog and he will get to know you. But there are men and women who know not the God who made them and in whose hands their breath is! Let this text abide with you—“The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.” You have not done anything amiss, you say. You do not drink, or swear, or lie, but, “all the nations that forget God” are to have the same portion as “the wicked” will have. Beware, you that forget God! And if you would remember Him, the easier way to do that is to see His love in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ! Think of Jesus bleeding for sinners. Trust yourself to Jesus and so you shall be saved, for, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

May God bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 71.**

This Psalm, written by an old man, is especially suitable for an old man. It is numbered seventy-one and it may suit those who have reached that age—but it is also appropriate to us all in prospect of the days of feebleness that will come to us, sooner or later, if we are spared to grow old.

Verse 1. *In You, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.* “Stand by me, O Lord, for I only stand as You uphold me—and if You should leave me, after I have trusted in You—what could I say or do? Therefore, O Jehovah, since I put my trust in You, ‘let me never be put to confusion.’”

2. *Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape.* “I am like a poor dove taken in a net—I cannot get away. Stretch out Your hand, O Lord, and tear the net and so deliver me, and cause me to escape. I cannot do anything for myself, except pray to You to deliver me.”

2. *Incline Your ear unto me, and save me.* “My prayer is weak. Therefore, O Lord, bend Your ear down to my lips, that You may catch my faintest words. Listen to my lisping, O Lord, and save me.”

3. *Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress.* If David wrote this Psalm after the rebellion of his wicked son, Absalom, I think there is an instructive illustration here. You remember that when the troops went out from Mahanaim to fight with Absalom, David commanded the three captains of the host—Joab, Abishai and Ittai—“Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.” They might slay his followers, but he commanded them to spare him. Alas, David’s command was ineffectual, for Joab slew Absalom! But God’s command was certain to be obeyed, so the Psalmist wrote, “You have given commandment to save me,” with the full assurance that he

would be saved. And all God's people can say to Him, "You have commanded angels and men, 'Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm.'" And each Believer can say to Him, "You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress."

4, 5. *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and cruel man. For You are my hope, O Lord GOD: You are my trust from my youth.* Happy is the man who can truthfully say that, "You are my trust from my youth." God does not cast off His old servants, as men often do. Those who give Him the best of their days will not find that He will desert them when the feebleness of age creeps over them.

6. *By You have I been held up from the womb: You are He that took me out of my mother's womb: my praise shall be continually of You.* We do not think, as often as we should, of what we owe to God for His care over us at the time of our birth. Our mothers returned thanks on their own behalf and ours, but, as we look back, we are bound to return thanks, too, for that kindly care of God in our most extreme weakness—when the little candle of life was scarcely lighted and might have been so easily blown out. Then, as God took care of us in our first infancy, do you not think that He will take care of us when we get into our second childhood? We are never likely to be quite as weak as we were then, but, as the Lord guarded us at that time, will He not guard us in those dark days which are already looming before some of us? Of course He will! Therefore, be of good courage, for He shall strengthen your heart and your praise shall be continually of Him.

7. *I am as a wonder unto many.* A prodigy to some, a monster to others, a marvel, a mystery, a riddle to all, but here is the solution to the problem that puzzles so many.

7. *But You are my strong refuge.* Even the weak are strong when God is their refuge! The most defenseless are safe when God is their defense. Wonder not at the mysterious life of a Christian, for this Truth of God explains the mystery—"You are my strong refuge."

8. *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all day.* What a blessed mouthful, and what a sweet mouthful this is—and what a blessed means of keeping the mouth from saying unkind, slanderous, or murmuring words!

9, 10. *Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together.* When the lion is sick, every cur is bold enough to bark at him. Men were afraid of David when he was strong, but when he grew feeble, they began to howl at him and gather round him like a pack of hounds around a wounded stag. Worst of all, they uttered this monstrous lie, which was most grievous to David's heart.

11. *Saying, God has forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.* If they had possessed even ordinary compassion, they would have said, "Since there is none to deliver him, let us not attack him. If God has forsaken him, he is in misery enough, so let us try to comfort him." But, instead of doing this, they acted after the fashion of

their father, the devil, who has no tenderness and nothing of a compassionate spirit within him.

12. *O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.* Notice the still more intense grip of faith in the second clause. The Psalmist first says, "O God," then He says, "O *my* God." It is grand pleading when we so grasp God with the personal grip of faith that we cry, "O my God, make haste for my help."

13, 14. *Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and still yet praise You more and more.* Hoping and praising are among the very best styles of living. Hoping honors God in secret—and praising honors Him in public. Oh, for more of these two good things!

15. *My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.* When David spoke of those who hated him without a cause, he said that they were more than the hairs of his head. He could not count them, but he went as near to doing so as he could. But when he began to speak of God's mercies as displayed in His righteousness and His salvation, he did not draw any comparison, or attempt to number them. This is a calculation in which we are utterly lost—our system of numeration fails us altogether when we come to deal with the loving kindness of the Lord!

16. *I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.* He did not reckon that any other righteousness was worth mentioning—and certainly not his own. The best of men, those who have been the most noted for their good works, have always been the first to feel that they had no works in which they could put any trust! One godly man, when he was dying, said to a friend, "I have been trying to separate my good works and my evil works from one another, but I have found the task too great for me—so I have thrown them all overboard and now I will float to Heaven upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone."

17. *O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works.* [Mr. Spurgeon delivered a remarkable discourse upon this text, illustrating the theme from his own early experience. See Sermon No. 2318, Volume 39—GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I pray very earnestly for you young people, and I beg you to pray for yourselves, that you may have the great privilege of being able to say with the Psalmist, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." They make good scholars who go to school early and keep at school long—and have such a blessed Schoolmaster as the Psalmist had—"O God, You have taught me." David's mother taught him much that was good, but it was still better for him to have God as his Teacher. Then, after being a scholar, he became a pupil-teacher. He still went on learning, but he also began to teach—"Until now have I declared Your wondrous works." All God's scholars ought to be pupil-teachers, always learning more and more from Him, and then teaching others all that they learn.

18. *Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shown Your strength unto this generation, and Your power to everyone that is to come.* Old men ought to tell younger men what God has done for them. There is great weight in the testimony of a godly man of ripe experience. Full of years, he speaks of what he knows, and testifies of what he has seen, tasted and handled of the Truth of God. We need many a Nestor in the camp of Christ, whose valor in former times and whose experience in days of battling for the right may inspire with valor the younger men to whom he speaks!

19. *Your righteousness, also, O God, is very high, who has done great things: O God, who is like unto You?* The more we know of God, the less we think of all others. We sink ourselves out of sight and all other creatures seem to be as nothing in comparison with our God.

20. *You, which have shown me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth.* This we shall experience in part even in our present lifetime, but we shall much more fully experience it on the Resurrection Morning—

***“When Christ His risen saints shall bring
From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day.”***

21. *You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.* Think of poor old David talking like this when he was driven into exile and many of his former friends had forsaken him—“You shall increase my greatness.’ I shall get good out of this evil. I shall rise by this fall. I shall be a gainer by these losses.”

22. *I will also praise You with the psaltery, even Your Truth, O my God.* “When I have proved Your Truth. When my joyful experience has proved that every promise of Yours is true to Your servant, then I will praise both yourself and Your Truth, O my God.”

22, 23. *Unto You will I sing with the harp, O You Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You.* That is the best kind of praise to God when our very lips are happy in singing—when we do not merely speak the sound, but when the meaning wells up from our heart and our lips are glad to sing it out.

23, 24. *And my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all daylong: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame that seek my hurt.*

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

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention
of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.”
Psalm 71:16.***

This is a Psalm of David's old age and we will carefully notice the characteristic feature of it. It is not addressed to men concerning God, but it is addressed to God Himself, for He was David's dearest Friend. Our Psalms and hymns are not for man's criticism, but for the Lord's acceptance. This is the tenor of the Psalm—David has been with his God and he is now ready for anything. This grand old man, in his later days, is exposed to enemies quite as fierce as those which he had to encounter in his earlier times, but instead of gathering his friends together and conversing with them, and seeking their counsel, he gets quite alone and begins to cry, “In You, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.”

Trusting alone in God makes us grandly independent towards men. The man of God shuts the door—he realizes that the Lord is in the chamber with him and he speaks to Him, saying, “Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: You have given commandments to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress.” He pours out his heart before God and pleads with Him, “Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.” It is a delightful sight! There are two in the room, though you can only see one with the natural eye. The man whom you see, discerns another, a great and glorious One and he talks with Him “as a man talks with his friend.”

Is this a fancy picture to you, my Brother, my Sister? Is this merely a sketch of something which happened ages ago? Have *you* not often been one in that scene? I know that I have been there and I trust that it has been so with you. These are the choicest joys we know—these lone communings with Jehovah, our God! That room where we are alone with God is the nearest to Heaven of any place between here and Paradise! I wish that we more often enjoyed communion with closed doors. We might. Why don't we? Whatever we gain by occupying our time otherwise can, at the best, be only compared to silver—but this is the golden way of spending our hours!

When we are with God, we have the All-in-All for company and He fills our minds better than a thousand finite beings could do. The Lord our God has filled our heart and filled our room—and filled the universe for us—and we are overflowing with blessedness! It is good to come here and

mingle with God's people in public worship. As my well-beloved Brother, Mr. Williams, said in prayer just now—many a Thursday night have the saints of God come in here burdened and they have gone away lightened, for God has met with them! Our Thursday nights are little Sabbaths in the middle of the week—resting places between the Sundays—oases in the desert of our toil.

But there is something closer and less likely to be a mere form—our private meetings with God. I pray you, make many secret appointments with your Lord and keep them! Have many trysting places where you and your Well-Beloved meet. I am certain that it will be imperative upon you to meet Him whenever you are in sore trouble—your sense of need will drive you to it. I do not know that Jacob ever spent a whole night with God till he was about to meet his brother Esau and was in great fear that he would smite the mother with the children. Then it was that he said—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

I guarantee you Jacob was a greater gainer by that fright than if he had never heard a whisper of opposition! It was well for him that he had an Esau, with armed men, to drive him to his God. He could say afterwards, “It was good for me to have been afflicted.” Anything that brings us into close fellowship with God, however evil in itself, works for us the grandest form of good.

Now, if there are any here very much like David. If they are growing old and if, being aged, they are also surrounded by slander, persecution and reproach, let them see what David did. If they are met by great difficulties and even by malicious adversaries, let them go where David went! Go and sit before the Lord and pour out your heart before Him. I think I see David sitting there, naturally full of sorrow—an old man, compassed with infirmities and, at the same time, bowed down with troubles—and there he is *rejoicing* in the faithful God, of whom he says, “O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until this time have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come.”

He has realized the Presence of his God in secret and his troubles are laid before God in prayer. Gradually they subside. He began to speak very hopefully. Now he rises from hope to a joyful confidence. The old man goes on talking there, as some would say, “to himself.” But we know better—he was conversing with his God—and before that hallowed interview is over he has reached such a happy state of mind that he says, “My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You.” His fingers long to join his lips and he is looking for his psaltery and his harp that instrumental music may aid his tongue and that so he may praise God with all his might!

Communion with God is a great maker of music so that he who went into the chamber halting, comes out leaping. He that meets God with tears in his eyes, comes forth from holy solitude with songs in his mouth. May it be so with you! When you are far away from any house of prayer

where you are likely to hear what will comfort and bless you, go to God straightway and tell Him all that is in your heart. Forget minister and congregation and go straight to Him who is far greater than Churches and pastors! Pour out your troubles where they will meet with Divine sympathy. Confess your trust into His ear who is never weary of His people's voice and you shall have found the greatest strength that is to be found this side of Heaven! And you shall sing, "You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

Taking as my text this particular verse in David's talk with God, I want you to notice, first of all, *his resolve*—"I will go." Secondly, *his reliance*—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God." And thirdly, *his message*, which he intends to deliver always—"I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only."

I. Now, here is, first, HIS RESOLVE. "*I will go*," he says. From this it is clear that *he will not sit still*. Look! He has come a long way already and he is getting weary and faint. The flesh suggests to him that he has had enough of it, while the devil hints to him that he has done too much already and that the best thing he can do now is to give up struggling, battling, warring and contending, and just sit down and let things go as they will.

Do you not hear the advice of Unbelief, "Let affairs drift. You cannot help yourself, old man! You have got into a very sad condition. Give up your confidence in Heaven. Perhaps you have been under a delusion all these years and trust in this God of yours is sheer fanaticism. Do not go on with it! Be reasonable, like the many that are round about you who are criticizing and amusing themselves—and while professing everything—are believing nothing. Give up the contest and drop the sword with which you contend for your Master and let things go as they may." So whispers Satan. So murmurs the flesh. So advises the worldly friend.

The brave old man gets up, and cries, "No, I will go! I will not sit still. I will not give it up. I have not finished my lifework. I have more to do. I have further testimony to bear for my Master. I shall not idly quit the field, but still bear the battle's brunt. I shall not quit the pilgrimage—I will go, even now, though it is with tottering footsteps. Bring me my staff. I will go with the rest of the chosen company. I have not been behind in the marches of the past, for I have led the way as a leader of God's people. I have sung unto His name and taught the host to sing that His mercy endures forever. Shall I now turn tail? Shall I now linger in the rear? No," he says, "I will go."

Look! He girds himself once again to follow the Lord and he goes forward as bravely as when he first started on his pilgrim way! That picture is no imaginary sketch. It has occurred to ourselves. It is a likeness taken but a few days ago. Dear Friend, it may be a photograph of *you*. Some of you of very cheerful spirit, always bright and jubilant, do not know what it is to get discouraged. But there are others of another temperament who at times are sorely put to it and they are tempted to abstain from the Lord's

service. Prudence makes the man say, "Really, I have undertaken more than I can accomplish."

As our dear Friend said in prayer, there are many of the Lord's servants who have work to do for which they feel quite unfit and, while they are under such a feeling, the hint comes to them, "Get out of it, or you will come down with a run. You are like a man walking on a tightrope—if you once get to the other end alive, never try it again, or you will regret it. That simple reliance on God—why, it is like standing on the top of a church spire—it needs a very cool head and a miraculous nerve. You will make a slip one of these days and then religion will be laughed at through you." So says Unbelief! But it is a grand thing if, in the moment of discouragement, the child of God can gather himself up again, gird up the loins of his mind and, in holy sobriety, hope to the end and say, in the language of the text, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will not be kept back by the world, the flesh, or the devil."

It is my impression that David meant, "*I will go to war.*" He was a man of war from his youth up and, of course, after many years of fighting, which is by no means pleasant work—and after many serious risks, it might naturally suggest itself to the aged man that he had better quit the tented field. Yet the old man would go. In fact, he went to battle so long that, one day, in the midst of the fight, he fainted and then his people insisted upon it that he should not go any more, for they saw that it would be out of all character to let the old man expose himself to certain death. Did they not say to him, "You are worth 10,000 of us"? If he were to fall, the very Light of Israel would be quenched. But there was "fight" in the old lion till the very last. The same spirit that made him go as a boy to fight with Goliath still burned in him when he became an old man and he still said, "I will go."

When he could not literally go to any physical conflict, you can see that to the end he fought for God and for truth, by his laws, his government, his influence, and his prayers. When he could not do one thing he did another. His enemies that gathered about him to destroy him found that they had a very difficult task before them, for it was not true, though they said it, that the Lord was no longer on his side. They told a lie when they uttered that cruel taunt, "God has forsaken him." And they proposed more than they could carry out when they said, "Persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him." David turned a bold front towards them to the very last, setting his face like a flint, resolving that he would administer justice and maintain the cause of God in Israel as long as he lived.

Well, dear Friends, you are not called to be soldiers in the literal sense—the most of you, at any rate—but you are called to be soldiers of the Cross. These are fighting times and no one must back out of the conflict. Be not cowards! Be not neutrals. Show your colors and fear no opposition. Every day wear the red Cross on your arm, by avowing your faith in the atoning blood. Still have a good word for Christ and the old, old Gospel. Be not ashamed of the doctrines of Grace, nor of those who make a stand for them. Still "contend earnestly for the faith once and for all deliv-

ered to the saints." And still say—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God, to make mention of His righteousness, and of it only."

The text may be used in many senses. "I will go in the strength of the Lord," may mean that *he will go forward and make progress in Divine things*. I will go on studying the Word of God to get a clearer apprehension of its meaning. I will go forward pleading with the Lord to prove more effectually the power of prayer. I will go on subduing evil habits. I will put down, by God's strength, this sin and that. I will go forth conquering and to conquer against the world, the flesh and the devil, where ever I am called to encounter. I will not be content with present attainments. I will not rest in any joy that I have yet known, nor be content with any measure of holiness which God has granted me. As the eagle cries, "Superior," and spreads its wings to meet the sun, so will I rise higher and higher, singing—

***"Nearer, my God, to You,
Nearer to You."***

I know that some think it perilous work to climb into the higher form of spiritual life and to aim even at perfection, but I will not flinch from it. If I do not reach it, yet will I *aspire* to it. I will go. "I will go in the strength of the Lord." Don't you think that large numbers of God's people are content with a very poor form of spiritual life because they do not think it possible to advance further? They have little joy and little strength because they are content with the joy and strength they have and do not aspire to more. We make a great mistake, dear Friends, some of us, as to the whole style of our life! I met with a story, which seemed to me a rather pretty one.

There was a young woman, fair to look upon, who was seen by a very wealthy man who determined to make her his wife. She had been brought up to habits of rigid economy, for the family was straitened in circumstances. Her father was not of the very poorest, certainly, but still poor enough. And on her marriage day he gave her all that he could afford, namely, five pounds, and that was put into the bank. Her husband, on that day, told her that he had placed money in the bank in her name and he handed her a checkbook, that she might draw out whatever money she desired. Well, having been properly brought up, she spent her money very, very carefully.

Five pounds was an enormous sum to her and she felt frightened at running through so vast a sum. She found, however, that in the circle in which she was called to move, her five pounds was at last gone and so she even ventured to draw a check for 10 pounds. In considerable fear she went down in the carriage to the bank to see whether they really would give her 10 pounds all at a time. And when she got it she was surprised and overjoyed. She drew again, until at last she had actually spent 50 pounds! One day her husband said to her, "Don't you know how to manage a checkbook, my dear? I scarcely understand your account at the bank."

She modestly replied, "I hope I have not been extravagant." "You little goose," he said, "I put a thousand pounds in the bank for you and I

thought that you would soon spend it. Most women would. But instead of that, you have only spent 50 pounds. You cannot behave yourself as my wife on such a pittance. Remember, you may be a poor man's daughter, but you are a rich man's wife—so just begin to spend according to my riches and not according to your father's economy." This is our case in reference to our Lord Jesus. We know we are a poor man's children. My original father "broke" long ago. There was nothing left of all the family estate. When father Adam was in business, he became a bankrupt and he left us nothing but a sea of debt.

But then we are married to King Jesus, who is heir of all things and He puts the checkbook of the promises into our hands that we may draw from the riches of Divine Grace! Do not let us live according to our natural quality, but let us live according to our supernatural elevation and begin to spend according to the wealth of our Husband! Very few women need encouragement to spend money—but very many Christian women and Christian men need very great encouragement to draw upon the goodness of God—and to live at that high and noble rate of Divine Grace to which they are entitled by the election of God, by the call of the Holy Spirit and by their heavenly union with the Lord Jesus Christ!

I wish that we could pluck up courage and say, "I will go in for great Grace, eminent holiness and close conformity to Christ. I will draw upon His riches in Glory and spend at a royal rate. Why should I not show forth all that Grace can do? Is there any reason why I should be weak and wavering? I would be as David, yes, as my Lord. Yes, I will rouse myself, the Holy Spirit helping me, and I will seek the highest and best things that a Christian man can know. I will go."

Let us cheerfully use this text *whenever any service is proposed to us*. A young man has been asked to preach at a small cottage meeting. He has been hesitating during the last two or three days whether he shall or not. I want him to feel that if this is a work in which he can glorify God he should say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." There is a Sister, here, who has been invited to take a class of young women. She thinks that she is hardly fitted for the Bible class proposed to her and yet she is the only person available and evidently the finger of God points to her. I want her to say, with David, "I will go in the strength of the Lord."

Have you rendered no service to your Savior? Have I the unhappiness to be addressing some member of a Church who has really done nothing for the Redeemer? Do you understand what the Gospel is? Do you know what its effect upon the heart is? If so, how can you remain idle? I do not understand you or your religion! A man who is saved—who is *saved*—who has no longer to live with a view to his own salvation but is saved—what can he do but feel, "Bought with Your blood, my gracious Lord, I belong to You and now I must spend all my days in serving You"? It is an instinct of the Christian life to wish to be doing something to glorify God and to save the souls of others! If you have not that instinct, I should question whether you are really born of God at all.

Can hard hearts have been renewed? Will the Lord own sluggards as His children? Did the heavenly Husbandman really plant an utterly barren tree? Be it so, that, up to now you have done nothing. May the Holy Spirit at once awaken you and may you say, before you leave this Tabernacle—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Your righteousness"!

We have also before us *a man who will go to suffering with holy resignation*. A sister, just now, sent a letter asking us to pray for her while she undergoes an operation. May the Lord sustain her! It is a prayer we often have to put up in this large congregation for some of the very dearest and best among us. Dear Friends, the text is for you with regard to the suffering you have to encounter—may you go forward to it without fear! Some of us have to take turns at the two forms of appointed exercise—we are sometimes serving, sometimes suffering—and occasionally we carry a pair of baskets and both work and suffer.

The Lord will be with us under every form of trial—He will sustain us under personal pain, or bereavement, or business care, or cruel persecution. Therefore, Believer, do not linger, but say, "I will go, I will go"—

***"If but my fainting heart be blest
With Your sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to You I leave the rest;
'Your will be done!'"***

Grand words were those of our Lord when, the supper being ended and the next thing was the bloody sweat, He said, "Arise, let us go from here"! He does not merely wait for the trial to come, but He advances to take up His Cross and to bear the grief which was laid upon Him by His Father. So let us say tonight, "I do not know how dark the rest of my way may be. I see that it is covered with thorns and briars, but in the Lord's name, solemnly, in syllables spoken each one of them in deep determination, I declare that I will go in the strength of the Lord."

Beloved, may it be so *when we come to die!* In a short time, unless the Lord shall come, you and I will have to go upstairs and gather up our feet in the bed and die to meet our fathers' God. Well, if it should happen to be some disease which gives us warning and opportunity to think beforehand—we will go onward, with death in full view—without any trepidation in the strength of the Lord! Some of us know what it is to lie for days and weeks, looking into eternity, till our eyes have been able to gaze steadily on death and all the future. We have grown so used to the prospect and so peaceful in reference to it that we have almost been sorry to come back again to life and its trials and sins! When we are so prepared and even so jubilant at the prospect of passing into the world of spirits, we almost reluctantly turn our face earthward again.

When the time does actually arrive, our God will give us Grace to say, "I will go. I will go. My Lord has called me over the river and I will go. I hear His sweet and mighty voice saying, 'Arise, My Love, My fair one and come away!' I answer to it gladly, My Master, I will come." I will go in the strength of the Lord God. Perhaps I have said enough upon this point.

May we be ready to march when the trumpet sounds! Without fear or question may we say at once, "Where He leads me I will follow."

II. Now, secondly, notice HIS RELIANCE. He is ready to go, but he tells us how—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God." *He would go glorying in strength already received.* Deep down in the middle of the words (I cannot give you the critical way in which we come at it, but it is so), David means that while others put on their garments and array themselves in beauty, he will put on the strengths of Jehovah (it is in the plural), and they shall make garments for him. It is a wonderful picture to me. While others glory in another strength, he takes God's might as it has been displayed in his past career and he puts it on as his armor.

He would not wear Saul's armor, nor any fabric of carnal wisdom, neither now nor when he went against Goliath. He said to the giant, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts." He put on as a coat of mail the secret strength of God which he had verified and demonstrated in his own past career when he slew the lion and the bear. What a wonderful thing it is for a child of God to stand clothed with those garments of Glory and beauty which are made up of what God has worked *in* him and worked *for* him! How happy is he to be renewed in might by remembering the strength of God which he has up to now experienced! These are a fit marching dress for his soul to wear! He may go forward to his future without fearing—who has such a past to reflect upon!

David means that *he would go relying upon a strength which did not alter.* The Source from which we draw our strength, dear Friends, is as full of Omnipotence as when David drew from it—certainly as full as when we went to it in our younger days! Our own strength is much less as our years increase, but it is not so with the Lord strong and mighty! Where we could have traversed a county, we now weary with a mile. Old men find that they cannot do what they once did, but God can do all things evermore. Our own strength is a cistern soon drained dry, but we need not thirst for we can tap the great "deep that lies under." Our faith knows how to bore an Artesian well when surface water fails. Let us bore deep and then the stream will flow in summer and in winter, never frozen, never parched—and we may be always "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

So David means that he would go in the all-sufficiency and the immutable power of the Most High. He felt that *he would go, also, in a power which sanctified his going.* "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Where will a man go in that strength? To the theater? Verily, it is a sort of constructive blasphemy to imagine a Christian's going there in the strength of the Lord! Will he enter upon a speculation in which he will, in all probability, rob other people if he succeeds and injure others if he is disappointed? No, not in the strength of the Lord God! There are a thousand things that a man could *not* think of doing in the strength of the Lord God and yet professing men venture upon them, to their sin and shame. In the strength of the devil a man might attempt many of the

doubtful enterprises and amusements of modern professors—but in the strength of the Lord God—no. It were profanity to talk of it.

Do you see what a limit this puts upon a Christian's action? And yet it is no limit which in the least restricts his gracious liberty. It is such a boundary as he himself would set up. You are strong to do what you *ought* to do and it is only what you ought to do that you would wish to attempt in the strength of the Lord God. You are weak if you transgress, for the strength is gone from you when you attempt to do what would dishonor God. And is not this as it should be? Is it not just as you wish it to be? Come, Beloved, you see that not only did David get strength, but he obtained holiness, also, from the Lord his God for, if he would go in the holy strength of the most holy God, he could not go amiss.

Again, in this text I notice that *he is confident as to the sufficiency and adaptation of God's strength to every trial or work to which he might be called*. The Hebrew, being plural, hints at this. "I will go in *the strengths* of the Lord God." If I shall require mental vigor, God can give it to me. If I shall need physical strength, He can give it to me. If I shall need spiritual power, He can give it to me. If the particular demand is a clear sight that I may detect and baffle the cunning of the enemy, He can give it to me. If I require courage and quick resolve, He can give them to me. If my special need is firmness of mind in the day of temptation, He can give it to me. If it is a patient temper, He can give it to me. Nothing is needed by a Believer but that which the strength of God supplies when it is needed!

As our days our strength shall be. We shall find the supply always equal to the demand. "Oh," says one, "my way is very strange. I could not tell you the singular difficulty of my case." Dear Friend, I do not wish to know the particulars, but I am sure that however strange the case is to me and to you, it is not new to God! If you go in the strength of the Lord God, you have exactly that which is suited for your perplexing path of pilgrimage. It is one of the miracles of God that to each man He is just such a God as he needs. It is like the Welsh woman that I spoke to you about on Monday night. She would have it that Jesus Christ was not a Jew—she was certain that He was a Welshman!

But how was that? How could the Lord Jesus Christ be a Welshman? She answered, "He always speaks to my heart in Welsh." Truly, good Woman, He always speaks to *my* heart in English and he speaks to the heart of each man in his own mother tongue so that the miracle of Pentecost is repeated in our fellowship with Jesus and every man hears in his own language the wonderful Grace of God! Jesus knows how to adapt His Truth, not only to each nationality, but to each personality and to each peculiarity of that personality. Jehovah is the special God and the special Strength of each individual Christian. He is my God and my father's God, as well as your God—and no other could be so expressly suitable to me as I find the Lord my God to be. It is a wonderful thing and we ought to render personal thanksgiving for it.

Now I will dwell for just a minute practically upon this. This text, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," should rise to the lips of everybody

here who is *engaging in new service*. You are attempting what you have never tried before. Come, now, see to every buckle of your harness and every portion of your armor. You can see to it all at once by saying, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Possibly you are in great weariness tonight. "I cannot do any more," you say. "The fact is, I am beginning to feel that I am an old man." Yes, but perhaps you are feeling this in two ways—there is another old man besides old age—and when you begin to feel weary in well doing, may not the old nature have a finger in it as well as the old body? Now is the time to rouse yourself out of lethargy, shake off sinful sloth and declare with determination, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

Or, possibly, *you have come to a fresh peril*. You have reached a very hard bit of the road where real danger lurks. I remember that, in going over the Grimsel, we came to a place which was called "Hell Place." It was a narrow road by the side of a precipitous gorge. The way was very slippery and the horses began to slip about. We soon dismounted and then we had to walk over a bit of rock which was as smooth as ice. You come to such a place now and then in the road of life and you feel more than half inclined to go back. But you must not go back. Believers may not go back. It is written, "If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." You must, tonight, put down your foot and resolve that you will never turn to the right hand nor to the left, but keep your face forever Zion-ward. Say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

Or perhaps *you are going away from us altogether*, dear Friend. You have come in here for the last time tonight, for you are going to live far away in the country. Or you have already taken your passage to New Zealand, or Australia, or Canada. Very well, go in the strength of the Lord God. That is the way to go to unknown lands! I do not think that a Christian man ought to go downstairs in his own house in any other strength and, certainly, he should not take a journey on which the rest of his life may depend without having sought guidance, or without fixing his reliance upon God! "But," says one, "there is no journey for me. I fear that I am going to suffer a long illness. *I feel that great afflictions are coming upon me.*" Very well, go in the strength of the Lord God. When my deacon behind me here, whom you all know and love so well—my dear Brother Mr. William Olney—had to undergo operation after operation, we prayed for him and it is wonderful how the Lord sustained him by giving him calm faith.

He was not half so troubled about himself as we were. I know that he said in his heart, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," and he was enabled to go on from one operation to another without fear. And here he is among us, still, to serve his Lord and Master! Be you also calm, dear Brothers and Sisters, when your trial hour comes. "Oh, it is not that!" says one, "but mine is a miserable family trouble. There is a lot in it that is wrong—mischief I cannot tell to anybody. I seem to get no help." Well, go in the strength of the Lord God. That is the right way to go. If you have nobody else to help you, go in His strength.

I told you of a good woman who was speaking about Mr. Hudson Taylor years ago. She said, "Poor Mr. Hudson Taylor! I do not think that he can depend upon any of the missionary societies to help him. He has nobody to trust to but God." She said it in that kind of style, too—"nobody to trust to *but God*." And whom do you want to trust to but God? It is a glorious thing to get all the dog shores knocked away so that the ship may be launched from the stocks and may float upon the great ocean! We are apt to be hampered by friends. They stand between us and the Lord. I know I have been so hampered, but I am finding deliverance from these poor creature confidences in a very painful but effective manner. I have lost a great many on whose fidelity I thought I could depend. But since I depend on the Lord all the more, I am a gainer by ungrateful desertions.

"Oh!" you say, "do not talk like that." I speak the words of soberness. It is a mercy to be saved from our friends. I believe that oftentimes our trust in friends makes us live like frequenters of lodging houses who herd together in a miserable old shanty. When our friends are gone and thus the old shanty comes down, what then? Why, we go off to a palace! We live at once in the palace of *assurance* with God, resting in Him along. Oh, it is a poor life—the life that depends upon things! It is a poor life that is buttressed and shored up by this and that— but that is the *best* life which dwells under God's sky and has no fear that the sky-blue arch will fall! As the heavens stand without shores and unsupported, except by the word of God, so stands the man of God!

Remember how Luther realized this? When they said that Duke George would oppose him, he said, "If it rained Duke Georges, I would not care, so long as God is with me!"—

***"Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear.
Make you His service your delight,
He'll make your needs His care."***

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

III. Now I have only a minute to speak upon the last point. I will save that for another time, I think. David informs us as to HIS MESSAGE—"I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only." The only testimony that he was going to bear for the rest of his life would be a testimony to the righteousness of the Lord God. Here was enough work for a lifetime and here was the man who was at home in the work! I cannot go into it. Therefore I say this—Bear your testimony to the righteousness of God in *Providence*. Stand to it that the Lord never does wrong. He is never mistaken, but whatever He ordains is, and must be, unquestionably right.

Bear witness, next, to His righteousness in salvation, that He does not save without an Atonement. That He does not put away sin without being strictly just. That He does by no means spare the guilty, but has laid on Christ that which was due to human sin that He might be "just and the Justifier of him that believes." Go on, then, to tell everybody that the righteousness which saves you is the righteousness of God, not your own righteousness. There is no such thing as human righteousness—the two

words make up a contradiction. Any righteousness that you could gain by your own works would be filthy rags at the best—and filthy rags are not *righteousness*. We have no personal merit. We are justified by *imputed righteousness*. Make mention of the righteousness of Christ which covers you from head to foot—

***“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.
‘Midst flaming worlds, in You arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.”***

Declare the righteousness of God *as to a future state*. Declare that whatever Scripture speaks of the ungodly is true and that God is righteous in it. Never mind the quibbles and the inventions of this present age—God’s Character can never be harmed by these dreamers. Stand by your God and you may rest assured that time shall never change the essential Truth that He is a holy and a righteous God and will justify His ways to men.

But the time has gone, so I have only to say this—there is no other righteousness worth talking about—if you will mention the righteousness of God you will do much good. Make mention of the righteousness of God to convince men of their unrighteousness. Talk of it to win their admiration for the Lord Jesus. Oh, that everybody in this place knew how righteous the Lord Jesus was, not only in life, but in Nature! Talk of the righteousness of God to show men the way of salvation. Tell them how the Lord laid our sins upon Christ and that, while He is infinitely gracious, He is infinitely just. Then go on to point convicted sinners to where righteousness is to be had. He that believes in the Lord Jesus shall find himself made of God’s wisdom and righteousness.

Talk of that perfect righteousness, also, for the comfort of Believers. Nothing will give them greater joy than to see how they are accounted righteous in the righteousness of Christ and, “accepted in the Beloved.”—

***“His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
‘Tis all my business here below
To cry, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”***

Here is a happy vocation for the remainder of our sojourn here below! Forever and only make mention of God’s righteousness. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 71*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136, 681, 674.**

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GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER— AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY NO. 2318

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***“O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until this time
have I declared Your wondrous works.”
Psalm 71:17.***

You notice how much David is at home with God. He talks about Him. He does better, he talks *to* Him. He hears God speaking to him and he keeps up a dialog with God. Where did this holy familiarity come from? It sprang from long acquaintance! David as a boy had known God. He knew Him when he was old and gray-headed and, you know, old friends use language to one another which would not be tolerated in occasional acquaintances. There are certain things which they who have long known the Lord and who abide in Him, may say *to* God and *of* God, which might not be said by others. It might even verge on blasphemy if others were to say the same things. When you read books like Rutherford's Letters, or Madame Guyon's Sonnets, or George Herbert's Poems, you must not think that everybody may speak so. These were the Johns and the Marys, the favorites of Heaven—they had dwelt so long with the King that He permitted to them, no, He *fostered in them*, things that would be impertinences in strangers and might not even be seemly to beginners in the things of God. Oh, may you and I live long enough and well enough to be on very intimate terms with God! May we walk with Him till, one of these days, we walk away with Him, and they say of us, “He was not, for God took him”!

David here tells us, no, he tells God, rather than us, that he had been *God's pupil* all his life—“O God, You have taught me from my youth”—and then he says that he had been *God's pupil-teacher*—“and until this time have I declared Your wondrous works.” When we have listened to David on these two points, the preacher will venture, with some hesitancy, but still under a sort of compulsion, to use the words, himself, and say, “O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until this time have I declared Your wondrous works.” The preacher using the Psalmist's language in the hope that many here will make bold to come into the same lot and take a share in the same heritage, that many here, especially many young people may say in later days, “O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works.”

I. First, then, let us think of DAVID AS A PUPIL. God was his Teacher. "O God, You have taught me from my youth."

This shows that David had a *teachable spirit* and if you had asked him where it came from, he would have said that God gave him a teachable spirit. God is not only the Teacher of our spirit, but he *gives* us a *teachable* spirit. Have we all received that precious gift? The "genius of the age" is against a teachable spirit. You would suppose, now, to hear some men preach that Christ said, "Go you into all the world and make *critics* of every creature, and they shall be saved thereby." But that is not the Gospel! I do not so much blame the age for its errors, as for the fundamental error of not being willing to be taught. Men have cast off authority and wherein authority in religious things is not of God, it is well cast off, but I fear that in casting off the evil, many have gone far towards casting off even Divine Authority. No, you are not to think what you like. You are not to believe as you please. No man may control you, but God has never given liberty to your thought or to your understanding to be free from His government! What He reveals, you are to accept—to take it as Infallibly true, to bow the knee of your intellect before it, to believe that, "He teaches to profit" and to expect the fulfillment of the promise—"All your children shall be taught of the Lord."

A teachable spirit, although it is despised by many, is a happy spirit. It is a growing spirit. It is a restful spirit. It is a heavenly spirit and whoever has it must ascribe the possession of it to the Spirit of God who leads us into all Truths of God and makes us willing to be led therein. Oh, that we may have such a spirit, that we shall count it an honor to say, "O God, You have taught me"! Some would count that as a dishonor. They would say, "O God, even You cannot teach us! There is more in our honest doubt than in all the faith You can give us," which, being interpreted, is a lie! No, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us seek and covet earnestly a teachable spirit, that, like David, we may be taught of God.

In David's acknowledgment, we learn that *God took him very early into His school*. "You have taught me from my youth." What a mercy it is to begin to know God before we begin to know anything else! The first words of the Bible are very significant—"In the beginning, God." The first words of this Book should be the first words of every life-book—"In the beginning, God." Happy shall you be if your first intelligible thoughts shall be of your Maker, your Benefactor, your Friend. Happy shall you be, for, as you shall grow in understanding, you shall also grow in acquaintance with your God! And every ripening faculty shall be sanctified as it opens, so that your first morning shall have no dew but the dew of holiness and of Divine Life resting upon it!

Where was David taught in his youth? I suppose in the pastures of Palestine. When he was keeping his father's flock, he sat down—he thought, he meditated, he prayed. Beneath the stars that looked down on him like so many eyes of Divine Love, he sat at night and spoke with God, and God talked with him. And among the sheep he learned to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," There he learned of God so well that when a lion and a bear came against his flock, and took away a lamb, he fell upon

the monstrous beasts and, in the *strength of God*, tore them asunder—and he remembered to ascribe the glory of his deeds to God and to praise His holy name! He spent his school-days well. He passed the highest standards and he carried the certificates in the skin of the lion and the paw of the bear. Oh, blessed is the young man, who is taught of God as to be equal to the duties of his station and able to find God is his strength in carrying them out!

David's words also mean that *God kept him in His school as a youth*. Generally, boys go to Sunday school till they begin to feel themselves young men. You half insulted one just now when you called him a lad! He is "a young man" and his companion is not a girl, she is "a young woman." She could not go with girls, now that she is a young woman. And these young people think they are too big for the Sunday school! And very often this is the point where the Church of God loses touch with them. It was not so with David. He could say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." He kept on being taught as he grew up to be a young man. He still walked with God and so well did he use his early lessons that, going to the army to meet his brothers, he saw the giant Goliath defying the armies of the living God and he came forward and said to Saul, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." And he puts in practice, as a young man, the lessons of his boyish days. Glorifying God, he slings his stone and lays the giant low. How well did God teach him, by his many struggles, educating his faith and increasing his Divine Graces! When he was at the court of Saul, he continued, as a young man, to still learn by the songs of those who said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," and by the sneers of envious courtiers, yes, and even by the javelin of the jealous king, he kept on learning and being taught of God, so that he behaved himself in a simple way in the sight of Israel, being instructed of the Most High.

When he became a man, even when he became a king, *he still continued to be taught of God*. With a crown on his head, he was still a scholar and disciple of the great God. Swaying a scepter, he was still nothing but a child before a father when he thought of God. It is beautiful to notice, in David's life, how often he says, "Bring here the ephod." He would know the will of God! He would listen to Nathan the Prophet—he would enquire of the Lord's servants that he might learn more of God! David, as a man, was taught of God in his trials, in his crosses, in his comforts, by his friends and by his enemies. He was always being taught of God. Sometimes, alas, he forgot his lesson, or he blotted his book—but he never left the school. He was chastened, but he was never cast out—he still continued as God's pupil. We find him, as a gray-headed man, still penning his Psalms and being taught of God—perhaps in his last days learning most, learning most sorrowfully, staining his book with tears, discovering more of himself and more of the mercy of God, more of the power of temptation and more of the power of the Sacrifice that puts away sin—more of the wanderings of his heart and more of that free Spirit who upholds us and makes us walk in the ways of God. He was always being educated. A Christian has

never finished his education till he stands before the golden Throne of God.

There are many aged men who can say with David, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." They find themselves learners, yet, for they are "unstable, weak, and apt to slide." O young people, you who are just beginning life, I do pray that you will begin learning soon enough to be able to say afterwards, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." There are some here who can never say that. Whatever becomes of them, however much God may bless them, they can never say it, for they have reached the middle of life, and they have not gone to school to the great Teacher. Well, if you cannot say all that you could wish to say, may the Lord take you into His school, now, though you are a ten o'clock scholar, and yet teach you, so that you shall learn enough music to sing among the angels to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made you to be accepted in the Beloved!

Surely, dear Friends, we are so foolish that we need to be taught, and we cannot have a better Teacher than the Omniscient God! Let us, therefore, pray, tonight, that if we are at God's school, we may stay there. And that if we are not there, we may go there at once. May all our names be put down in the roll of scholars of the College of Christ, the University of Grace, this very night, and God shall have the praise!

II. But now I want you, for a minute or two, to notice DAVID AS A PUPIL-TEACHER. While he was a pupil, he was also teaching. He says, "Until this time have I declared Your wondrous works."

Observe, then, that *David taught people what he saw*. He saw God's works all around him. Ah, me, that is a great sight! God is at work everywhere and there are none so blind as those who will not see His works. But the mass of men do not see God. You see the working of machinery. You see the working of the laws of Nature. You see the working of the laws of supply and demand. But many of you cannot see the working of God! May the Lord open your eyes, poor blind bats, for if there is *anything* that stares in the face of the man who is willing to see it, it is God, and God at work in Providence, in Nature, in Grace and in all sorts of ways! I read of one, the other day, of whom somebody said that when he stayed at his house, he noticed that he talked as if he saw God always before him—and truly, that is how every Christian should talk, for we should see God always before us! David said, "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." We do not see God as we should and we shall never teach aright for God until we have a kind of instinctive feeling of the *Presence* of God—till we are conscious that God is in us, round about us and at work for us!

God's work that David saw was very much work *in* himself, work *for* himself and work in other men's hearts. Being taken into the School of God, he was made to observe things—he had object lessons put before him and he learned to read God's work. And as he saw it, *he wondered*. "Until this time," he said, "have I declared Your wondrous works." He who is a stranger to wonder is a stranger to God, for God is wonderful every way, everywhere and always! It is all wonders when you get near to God

and see what God does. And, you know, no man teaches a thing so well as when he is struck with it himself! When it astonishes him, he will then tell it to others with gusto and with emphasis. So David made a fine pupil-teacher, because, seeing God's work, he wondered at it and spoke of it as a wondrous thing.

We find that *David took opportunity to declare God's wondrous work*, sometimes, with his pen, writing his Psalms. Sometimes with his voice, singing those Psalms. Sometimes talking to a few, sometimes speaking to many. Now, dear Friends, what I want you all to do is, if you have seen God's work and have been struck with it, you should declare it—tell it to others! I know that some of you, at any rate, love God and fear Him, but you never speak about Him. Ah, me, have you a dumb devil, or are you possessed with a dumb spirit? The Lord cast it out of you! There is no way of *learning* so good as that of *teaching*! A young man who was going to Cambridge, said, I think it was to Archbishop Whateley, that he was going to get a “coach,” that is, a tutor, to coach him through his studies. “Do not do that,” said the other, “Take a pupil—you will learn better that way.” And I believe that it is so. To teach is a wonderful way of learning! I know that by experience. To read hard all day and then, in the evening, to go and preach what you have read, will stamp it indelibly upon your memory and lead you to a better knowledge of it than any other method that a philosopher could suggest! Therefore, first learn of God and then teach to somebody else what you have learned. You will keep it that way. You will never lose it. If you keep on only learning and learning, and learning, and learning—your hoarding it up will breed mildew and I know not what besides. But if you learn it and then *teach* it, that will keep it sweet and you will never forget it. This is David's pupil-teachership—he is being taught of God—and he is teaching others.

And David had this happiness, that he could say, “You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works.” That is, he kept on teaching and he kept on teaching the same thing. What must the ministries of some of our ministers be like? The first five years are spent in teaching Evangelical Doctrine. The next five years are spent in pulling that all to pieces. The next five years are spent in teaching some new philosophy—no, not *five years*—they are not so long as that over any one thing. I mean, the first five *months* are spent in teaching some new philosophy, then a month in pulling that to pieces, another month in making a new theory and another month in pulling *that* to pieces!

Oh, what kind of a life must it be? “I never saw,” said Poor Richard, “an oft-removed tree, nor yet an oft-removed family, that thrived.” Surely an oft-removed Doctrine, when a man is perpetually shifting the soil around it, can never thrive, or do much good. Here the great-hearted veteran says, “You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works.” All this he ascribed to God—he gave God the glory of his *learning* and of his *teaching*, also. May you and I do the same! So far about David.

III. Now for a few words about myself for the honor and Glory of God. I could not help saying something, tonight, about what Hugh Miller calls, "MY SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS." "O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works."

I went down, last week, to Maidstone in Kent. It is as near as possible to the day, 40 years ago, when I left the school called a, "College," there. I thought that I must go down and look at the spot and specially at a tree which stands by the Medway River. Under that tree I spent many hours and many days, and even many weeks reading all day long. "In school-time?" you ask. Yes, my master thought that I should do better under that tree than in the classroom. And he was a wise man. He gave me my books and left me to myself. And as I stood, last week, under that tree, with the smoothly flowing river at my feet, I could thank God for His mercy to me for all these 40 years and I could say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works." There may be some young people here, tonight, just come back from school. Some young people who are just finishing their school days. I would to God that they would spend some time in holy, quiet thought about their future—about whom they will serve, who shall be their Teacher, for whom they will become teachers—and how the life which has now become more public than before shall be spent.

As I stood there, last week, I could not help praising God that, not long after I left that school, He led me to faith in Christ and to rest in Him. He allowed me to find eternal life and I could not but thank God that I went to that school for 12 months. It was a Church of England school. I had never seen anything of Church of Englandism till that time, but there was a turning in my life, through being *there*, to which I owe my being *here*! The Church of England Catechism has in it, as some of you may remember, this question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" And the answer I was taught to give and did give, was, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin. And faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament." I looked that answer up in the Bible and I found it to be strictly correct as far as repentance and faith are concerned and, of course, when I afterwards became a Christian, I also became a Baptist—and here I am—and it is due to the Church of England Catechism that I am a Baptist! Having been brought up among Congregationalists, I had never looked at the matter in my life. I had thought myself to have been baptized as an infant and so, when I was confronted with the question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" and I found that repentance and faith were required, I said to myself, "Then I have not been baptized! That infant sprinkling of mine was a mistake! And please, God, if ever I have repentance and faith, I will be properly baptized."

I did not know that there was one other person in the world who held the same opinion, for so little do Baptists make any show, or so little *did* they do so, then, that I did not know of their existence! So I feel grateful to the Church school and grateful to the Church Catechism, for what I learned at Maidstone. I do not know that I have any vivid gratitude for any other question in the Catechism, but I am very thankful for that particu-

lar one, for it led me where it was never intended to lead me by those who wrote it. It led me, however, as I believe, to follow the Scriptural teaching that repentance and faith are required before there can be any true Baptism.

Well now, what shall be your schools and schoolmasters? Dear young people, I long that each of you may be able to say, "O Lord, You have taught me from my youth." You must, first of all, be taught by *the Holy Spirit*. He is willing and able to come into your mind and to influence it in a very extraordinary but very effectual way. He can teach your reason, reason! And cause your understanding to understand aright. He can take away from you the bent of prejudice. He can remove from you the depraving influence of sin and He can give you to understand those things which are essential to your peace and eternal salvation. Seek the Spirit of God, then, to begin with.

Then your next school will be the *Inspired Word of God*. Believe in this Bible from the first word of Genesis to the last line of Revelation. It will never mislead you! It has never misled anybody. It will tell you the truth as to your conduct, as to your condition before God, as to what you are to believe and what you are to do. If you search well the Scriptures, if the Law of God instructs you and if the Gospel of God teaches you, then God will be teaching you, for this is the school-book of the family of love and they who will accept it, and believe it, shall be taught of the Spirit of God who indited it!

Have not all of us, who are in the School of Christ, learned much, in the next place, from *the means of Grace*? "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." I have to bear my willing witness to the benefit received in the congregation of God's people. "What?" you ask, "Why, you do not hear any sermons!" No, I hear very few except my own and they are not the best. But preaching them is probably of more service to me than hearing them is to you, for there is a care of the Word of God that is necessary and the searching of it in the preparation of the sermon, and the waiting upon God for help in the service—all these have been, to me, a means of Grace. Paul so regarded it when he said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He found that it was a means of Grace to him to be permitted to *preach*. Certainly, you young people must take care that you do not neglect the public services of God's House. They will teach you from your youth.

Another method of teaching is that of *observation of others*. If we would be taught of God, we must keep our eyes open to see how He deals with others. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright." Watch the hypocrite. Keep your eye on the prosperous sinner. If you do, you will soon find God teaching you wondrous things.

You will also be taught by *conversing with the people of God*. Young Christian, get much with old Christians—I do not mean with *all* of them—some of them will not help you much. But I mean those who live near to God and are real and genuine saints. Speak with them. Tell them your difficulties and ask them how they have got through the same trials. Com-

pare the footsteps of the flock with your own footsteps. Many an old child of God will be a precious mine of instruction to you. The first lessons I ever had in theology were from an old cook in the school where I was an usher. She was a good old soul and used to read *The Gospel Standard*. She liked something very sweet, indeed—good strong Calvinistic Doctrine—but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly. Many a time we have gone over the Covenant of Grace together and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance and what vital godliness meant. And I do believe that I learned more from her than I would have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays! There are some Christian people who taste, and see, and enjoy religion in their own souls—and who get at a deeper knowledge of it than books can ever give them though they should search all their days! Get with such people of God, the experienced people, the tried people, and you will be able to say, “O God, You have taught me from my youth.”

Another schoolmaster is *self-examination*. A very sour, crabbed schoolmaster is this one! Very few like him, especially if you take a lesson every night before you go to sleep and look through the actions of the day. It is not a very pleasant exercise—there are so many faults to find, so many mistakes made, so many good things omitted. But, if you cannot have self-examination every day, at any rate have it sometimes. You will learn better by your mistakes than if you had never made a blunder. Sometimes even a grave fault may save you from 10 grave faults, if it is well observed and avoided in the future—and God teaches you thereby. You learn nothing by self-examination unless the Lord is your Master, but, if He is with you, then your acquaintance with yourself will help you to an acquaintance with Him! There are two prayers always worth praying, “Lord, show me myself” and, “Lord, show me Yourself.” May both be heard and you will be well taught of God!

But there is a schoolhouse to which I have gone and to which I expect to go again. I cannot commend it to you for its pleasant situation, or for the beauty of its architecture. It is called the schoolhouse of *sore affliction*. Whoever does *not* go to that school, every minister whom God blesses to the salvation of souls *will have to go there!* It is an absolute necessity of a true shepherd of God's tried people that he should be tried. There may be exceptions, but I do not think that there are and, dear Friends, you, each one of you, if you are to be taught of God, will have to be afflicted. There are some Truths of God that are never learned. I suppose they may be learned, but they never are, except in the dark. Today, in the middle of the day, we could not see the stars. But if we had gone down a well, we might have seen them. And often the dark hole of affliction reveals stars of promise and glittering Truths of God which otherwise we never could have seen! I will appeal to my experienced Brothers and Sisters here. Have you not learned more in trial than anywhere else? Do you not owe more to the hammer, the file, the anvil and the forge than to all the comforts that you ever received? Here it is that God really fashions us. Till He gets us into the fire and the hammer begins to ring upon us, there seems to be no shaping us after the method of Divine working.

And, dear Friends, once more I come to a place on which I stood in the middle of the sermon. God has taught me, and He has taught many of us, by *setting us to work to bless others*. If any Christians cannot learn quickly, let them get to work for Christ and they will soon learn! “Oh,” says one, “I am so full of doubts and fears.” Get to work for the Lord! “Oh,” says another, “I never have much joy and peace.” Get to work for the Lord! Another cries, “I am afraid that I am not saved! I am often afraid that I am not and yet I do believe in Jesus Christ.” Tell somebody else about Jesus Christ! Do not think so much about *yourself*. That dog-hole of selfishness can never afford you any comfort. While the first and last concern of a man is simply his own feelings, or his own enjoyment, he cannot get any good feelings, or any enjoyment, either. Remember what the farmer does down in the country on a cold winter's day. There stand the boys, with chill blisters on their hands and they want to get near the fire. They cry out, “Oh, Father, it is so cold!” He says, “You go and do a bit of plowing, Johnny. You go and do a little hedging and ditching, William.” And they come in with rosy cheeks and they say, “The weather is beautiful! It is quite bracing and we are all in a glow.” And yet it may be that the thermometer has gone *down* while they have been out, but they have been warmed by their *work*!

I wish I could turn some Christian people out of their pews and get them, at this time of night, out into the lodging-houses, or in some corner, preaching, or going to some sick persons in the hospital to read and pray with them. You may depend upon it, being taught of God is best done, all other things being equal, when, with a teachable mind towards God, we have a teaching mind towards others! When you will to bless your fellow man, you shall get a blessing. “The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed”—for himself? No, I have purposely made a mistake there. It is not so, just look it up —“The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his”—well, it says, “friends,” but, you know, they were a curious kind of friends! Job called them, “miserable comforters,” and so they had been. But when he took to praying for them, then the Lord turned *his* captivity.

Begin to pray for your disagreeable neighbors. Begin to pray for your unconverted friends and the Lord will turn your own captivity while you are doing that! By blessing others, you shall be blessed yourself. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALM 77.**

This Psalm is headed, “To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun.” He was one of the great singers. There is opportunity given in the Psalms for each of the singers to take his turn. It does not do for any of us to be idle in reference to the praise of God. It is called, “A Psalm of Asaph.” His Psalms have usually a dark tinge about them. He was a meditative man, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” but also a man of strong faith and of an exulting spirit. You need to do business in great waters to understand As-

aph—he is one who does not wade, but he gets into “waters to swim in.” Thus he begins—

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* The use of the voice in prayer is not essential, but usually, when men grow earnest, they use the voice as well as the mind. It was because of the intensity of his prayer that the Psalmist felt compelled to cry—not to use stilted, stately language—but the natural cry of pain. “I cried unto God with my voice.” You will find it very helpful in private prayer to use the voice—many of us do. Some have not the opportunity of doing so, but if you can be unheard of men and can use your voice, you will find it helpful. Twice says the Psalmist, “I cried unto God with my voice.”

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* This is the best place to go in the day of your trouble.

2. *My sore ran in the night.* A better rendering would be, “My hand was stretched out in the night.” The Psalmist continued to pray.

2. *And ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.* Rightly so, if the comfort came from man, if the comfort were doubtful and ineffectual. Wrongly so, when right comfort was presented to him, comfort from God. I am afraid that in the time of our trouble, we often increase it by being unwilling to be comforted.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* What? Trouble, even, from remembering God? Then this is trouble, indeed! And yet this has been the experience of the saints of God many a time. “I remembered God”—His holiness, His justice, my offenses against Him—and was troubled.”

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.* Turned over, overwhelmed. Without comfort, or hope of comfort.

3. *Selah.* Tighten the harp strings—they have gone flat through such hard striking. These deep notes have put the strings out of order. The man in his grief cannot sing well and he had need to say, “Selah.” *Sursum corda.* Lift up the heart! Prepare yourself, again, for song.

4. *You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* Yet he was speaking! But it did not seem to him like speaking. It was rather an inarticulate wail than the language of a man.

5. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* A little holy history is good reading for a heavy heart. You will often stumble on a record of God's Providential dealings, or a paragraph concerning His wonderful love, that will cheer your heart. Yet it did not cheer the heart of the Psalmist just then.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* “How I used to sing like the nightingale, with the thorn at my breast. I call that to remembrance.” But we cannot always sing old songs. Old experiences may have but little warmth in their ashes, though often in their ashes live their routine fires.

6. *I commune with my own heart.* A very proper thing to do, but not much comfort generally comes of it. It is like stirring water that is already muddy—the more you stir it, the more muddy it becomes.

6. *And my spirit made diligent search.* When a man can deal with himself like this, his trouble will not last long! God save me from a dumb sor-

row, sorrow that cannot think and cannot judge, and cannot weigh itself! Now listen to the Psalmist's questions. Does doubt question your faith? Then let faith question your doubts. Here is a Catechism for a desponding heart. I commend it to you who are in trouble. Put your soul through its paces—ask these questions.

7. *Will the Lord cast off forever?* Has He ever done so? He may seem to cast off for a little while, but, "*Will the Lord cast off forever?*"

7. *And will He be favorable no more?* It is a long lane that has no turning. The Lord may take down the rod, but will He always use it? Will He always chide?

8. *Is His mercy clean gone forever?* If His favor is gone, yet is His *mercy* gone? Does not the Psalm say, "His mercy endures forever"? If I cannot claim favor as a saint, may I not hope for mercy as a *sinner*? "Is His mercy clean gone forever?"

8. *Does His promise fail forevermore?* Oh, what a question that is! God's promise may tarry, but it never fails, and if it seems to fail for the time being, will it fail forevermore?

9. *Has God forgotten to be gracious?* What hot shots these are for unbelief! I guarantee you that however deep your unbelief may be, tonight, if, by earnest prayer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you ply it with these questions, it will have to yield.

9. *Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?* *Selah.* Can it be so? Was it ever so to any of God's people? Now comes, "*Selah,*" again. Tighten the harp strings once more. We shall have sweeter music from this time on!

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* "But I will remember," is added by the translator. Surely it was to the Psalmist an infirmity to be thus in trouble. He called it Benoni, son of sorrow, but it was not infirmity to God. He called it Benjamin, son of the right hand. There is a sort of parallel between Asaph and the woman who named her child Benoni. Certainly it is a great infirmity—it is a sin—to doubt God, and to be cast down and troubled.

11. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old.* Think of what God has done for His people. How He has delivered them, how He has lifted them from the dunghill and set them among the princes, even among the princes of His people! Think of His wonders of Grace and be no more discouraged.

12. *I will meditate also of all Your work, and talk of Your doings.* Those who talk ought to meditate, otherwise they grind wind. Those who meditate *will* talk, otherwise the miller grinds only for himself.

13. *Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* Or, "in holiness." God's way is always a holy way, a righteous way.

13. *Who is so great a God as our God?* When we think of the greatness of God, if we simply dwell upon His power, we make a mistake. The greatness of God lies mainly in His *moral attributes*, in His completeness, His wholeness, His holiness.

14, 15. *You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people,*

the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. “Selah,” again. In looking back, the Psalmist has remembered the history of the whole nation. He thinks of what God did for His ancient people. Indeed, he is on the verge of a great song! Well may he tune the strings again. He has in thought gone back to the Red Sea. He is standing like Miriam, by the waters that devoured the foes of Israel, and he must sing as she did! In a high poetic strain he writes—

16. *The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.* At the very sight of God the sea began to flee, to lay bare its depths. “The floods stood upright as an heap,” in their fear and dread of the Presence of God, “and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.”

17. *The clouds poured out water.* The floods above answered the floods below and came to the help of the Lord, “to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

17, 18. *The skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the Heavens: the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.* There was a great storm. Thunder and lightning gathered about the sea. When God spoke, the waters rolled back and swallowed up all the warriors of Egypt. Heaven and earth joined in battle against God's foes—not only did the sea flee, but there appears to have also been an earthquake.

19. *Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. Not foreknown.* Who could have foretold that God would lead His people through the sea? His footsteps are not now to be found. God's ways we cannot guess and even when we have seen them, we cannot understand them. Child of God, does the sea roll before you tonight? Are you in extreme distress? Are you crying as the Psalmist did? With your voice do you cry unto God? Then expect deliverance from Him!

20. *You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* Moses and Aaron did not lead them—God led His people, “like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” Here the Psalm breaks off with great abruptness. Had it been a human composition, it would have been rounded off with great discretion, but God knows best where to stop. I sometimes wish Brothers and Sisters would do the same in their prayers—they need not keep on till they have worn us out—they may break off short if they like. So may we in our sermons! Perhaps they would be better remembered if the second half was never spoken.

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GOD, THE CHILDREN'S TEACHER

NO. 3271

A SERMON TO CHILDREN.

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1911—
THE DAY OF SPECIAL PRAYER FOR SUNDAY SCHOOLS
AND OTHER WORK AMONG CHILDREN.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 2, 1869.**

***“O God, You have taught me from my youth.”
Psalm 71:17.***

[SPECIAL NOTE TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, PARENTS, ETC. Mr. Spurgeon seldom preached especially to children—his Sermons are all so simple that boys and girls as well as the common people heard him gladly and understood his words easily. The accompanying discourse is one of the very few delivered to a congregation of young people by the beloved preacher who has been for nearly 20 years at Home with the Lord. It was preached at the Tabernacle during a series of special services in March, 1869—and it is now published in the regular weekly series at the time of special prayer for the children and young people in Sunday schools, Bible classes, Christian Endeavor Societies, etc., in the hope that all who are interested in the spiritual welfare of the young will aid in its widespread circulation among them.]

DAVID was a very great man and at the time he used these words he ruled a kingdom and wore a crown. But he needed to be taught and he tells us that he had been to school and that the wisdom he had was given to him by the great Teacher who taught in that school. You who are at school now must take care that you use well the privilege you have. You will not be wise without learning. Learning does not grow up in our heart like weeds do in the fields, but it must be sown in us—as good wheat and barley must be cast into the ground if there is ever to be a harvest.

David did well in life because he had been well taught in his youth. He was one of those in whom God fulfilled that text, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” You know when boys go to school, their teacher feels very anxious that they should turn out well and be a credit to him. The teacher is very sorry when, after all his trouble, the boy becomes a dunce. But he is very happy when he sees some lad prosper in life because he says, “I trained that boy.” The success of the scholar brings honor and credit to the teacher. So David speaks of God having taught him in order that he may give honor and Glory to God. David feels that he owes so much to his God that he cannot help saying what he does. “Lord,” he seems to say, “if I have learned anything—if I have learned how to fight giant Goliath, if I

have learned how to bear my troubles, if I have learned how to pray, if I have learned how to preach and how to be a king—I got it all from You. I was the scholar, you were the Teacher, and unto Your name be all the praise.” Now, I shall not keep on any longer with the preface to my sermon. It is a cold, damp night and people do not like to be kept outside the doors at such a time. We will just put our finger on the latch and get to the inside of our sermon at once.

I. As soon as we come into it, the first thing we see is THE GREAT TEACHER. Who is the Teacher? David says, “You have taught me from my youth.” Who taught David?

THE CHILDREN: God!

Mr. SPURGEON: Yes, that is right, God was David's Teacher. He says in the text, “O God, You have taught me from my youth.” I have no doubt that David had other teachers, but all the teachers he had would not have been of any practical use to him if he had not also been taught by God.

Now, if God is the Teacher, we shall notice, first, that *God is an effective Teacher*. David had been taught by his good mother. I know he had a godly mother, for he says, “Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid.” He calls his mother, God's handmaid, which shows that she was one of God's servants. I have no doubt that she took David on her knee and taught him God's Word while he was but a child, for he had such a love of it afterwards that he must have had a love of it while he was yet little! After his mother, I have no doubt his father taught him. What was the name of David's father?

THE CHILDREN: Jesse!

Mr. SPURGEON: Quite right. And we believe that Jesse was also one of God's people and that he would have been sure to teach his son wisely and train him up in the way he should go. I think there was another person who taught David, namely, the Prophet Samuel. You recollect that Samuel anointed David while he was yet a youth. He poured oil on his head and told him that he would one day be a king of God's people. I feel sure that Samuel told him what God's will was and tried to train him so that he might, when he became a king, do God's good pleasure rightly. But all these teachers—his mother, his father and the Prophet—could not have taught David if God had not taught him, too. You see, dear Children, your teachers, though they are very good and kind, can only get at your ears—but God gets at the heart—and that is where we most need to be taught. Suppose my watch should get out of order so that it would not run and I could not get it open? All I could do in polishing up the gold outside, or cleaning the glass, would not make it run! I must take it to some watchmaker who could get at the inside and who could touch the mainspring, or clean out the wheels. Now, your teachers cannot get at that which is inside of you as they could wish, unless God helps them. But God can get at the heart, which is like the mainspring of the watch. He can get at our thoughts and feelings, which are like the wheels. I trust that you, my dear Children, may be taught of God from your youth because God is an effectual Teacher!

The next point is that *God is a condescending Teacher*. Have you ever thought of this? The great God made yon blue sky, the sun and the moon, and all those bright stars that we see at night. He piled up the big mountains and poured out the great seas and oceans from the hollow of His hands and He is so great that all the things in this world are just like nothing when compared to Him—and yet He stoops to teach children! He stooped to teach David. David says, “You have taught me from my youth.” Would not some of you girls like to go to school if the Queen would but teach a class? I am sure that nearly all the young ladies and all the little girls in London would be tearing away to the place if the Queen would but teach a class! You would think it such a great honor to be taught by Her Majesty. Oh, but when God teaches, what a wonderful stoop of condescending love that is! He who made the world and bears all things up by His everlasting might, condescends to be a teacher of little children! “You have taught me from my youth.” Perhaps you have heard of that holy man, Mr. John Eliot. He went away from all his home comforts, out among the Red Indians, and spent his life in preaching to them. And when he was sick and near to death, he was lying in a hut upon a hard couch—and what do you think was the last thing he did? He had a New Testament and he was teaching a little Red Indian boy his A B C, and making him spell out some simple text from God's Holy Word. “Oh, but,” one said, “does this great missionary teach that little red-faced, copper-colored boy?” “Yes,” replied Eliot, “I prayed to God that I might never live to be useless. So now I cannot preach, I am trying to teach Jesus Christ to this one little boy.” That was very kind of him, but think of the kindness of the great God who wheels the stars along and calls them all by their names—that He should condescend to teach *us*! Dear Children, do not refuse to be taught by God! But on the contrary, let this be your resolve, “My Father, You shall be the Guide of my youth.” Ask the Lord to teach you, for as surely as He taught David, He is willing to teach you!

My next remark is that *God is a loving Teacher*. I know you boys and girls in the Sunday school classes like to have a smiling-faced teacher. You do not care to have one who is very cross and short-tempered with you and inclined to give you a box on the ear! You like somebody who is very kind. I cannot tell you how kind God is to us, how patient, how compassionate, how tender. A good mother was telling her little girl a lesson over ever so many times—I think it was 19 or 20 times—and someone said, “How can you have the patience to tell the child the same thing 20 times?” “Why,” she replied, “I tell her 20 times because 19 are not sufficient.” Now, our God not only tells us 20 times, but twenty thousand times if necessary! “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” From our very earliest childhood, right on, God keeps teaching us with great patience, and yet some of us are so wicked or so thoughtless that we forget what He teaches us almost as soon as we hear it! And we go on to do the wrong thing which He tells us not to do, and we forget to do the right thing which He bids us do. Yet He does not strike us dead!

He still continues preaching to us, teaching us on the Sabbath and on the weekdays by His Book, and by His Spirit, and by His ministers, and by our teachers, and in a thousand ways! Oh, what a kind and patient Teacher the Lord our God is! But I must not keep you long on any one point.

The next Truth is that *God is a wise Teacher*. Have you ever thought what a wise Teacher God is? I will prove to you that He is very wise, for, do you know He teaches not only men, but He can teach beasts? Did you ever see a beaver? Perhaps you did at the Zoological Gardens. Well, those beavers have flat tails and they know how to use them just like bricklayers use their trowels! And they will go and nibble away at trees, get bits of wood and go down to a river and build a house! Nobody could build such a house, so fit for beavers, as they build! They daub it, and plaster it—you would think that they had been apprenticed to a plasterer, they do the work so well! Who taught the beavers to build a house? Why, God! And how wise He must be to teach even the animals He has created! How wise He must be to teach the beaver to build a house! But God not only teaches beasts, He also teaches fish—and I never heard of any man who could teach a fish as God does! The fishes of the sea know exactly the day of the month when they ought to begin to go round the English coast. And the herring and the mackerel come exactly to the time, though nobody rings the bell to say to them, “It is such a day of the week, and such a month of the year and you ought to swim away.” When the time comes for them to go back again, away they go—and they seem to understand everything that they should do! If God can teach even the fish of the sea, what a wise Teacher He must be!

It is said that many years ago, there was a very wise man who lived at Cambridge and he taught scholars Latin and Greek, and many things that seemed very strange to the people who lived there. And the news flew abroad that there was a wonderful man there who knew everything—a little about the stars and a great deal about all sorts of things! The young men all over Europe began to flock to him and that is how there came to be a University at Cambridge, for the fame of the man's learning drew those who wanted to be taught, to come and be his pupils. Now, when God can teach even the beasts and the fishes, you boys and girls and grownup people, too, ought to say, “Lord, let us be scholars in Your school!” Why, my dear friend over here, Mr. Johnson, is such a good teacher that the boys come and fill the schoolhouse! If he were a bad teacher, he would not have half the number of boys that he has. A good teacher is sure to draw pupils—and God is the best and wisest Teacher. Oh, may His Grace draw you to His school, that you may be able to say with David, “You have taught me from my youth”!

I have only one more point to speak upon under this head, so do not grow weary. *God is a necessary Teacher*. It is really necessary that everyone of us should be taught of God, for if we are not, somebody else will teach us—and that somebody else will so teach us that we shall lose our souls forever! There was a sad sight seen some years ago, I daresay the likes of it have been seen far too often. A minister called at a house and he saw a woman crying, oh, so bitterly, and she refused to be comforted!

The minister said, "My good woman, what is the matter?" She answered, "Oh, my boy, my boy, my boy!" "What, is he ill?" "Oh, no, Sir, worse than that!" "Is he dead?" "Worse than that." "What is the matter?" "Oh, my boy, my boy!" "Where is he?" "Oh, Sir, he is in prison—in prison for stealing—and it is all my fault!" "How is that?" he asked. "Why, I took him to the theater, and if there is any place where children can learn to do wrong, it is there!" And so she began to cry again. "I took him there and that was the first step in his ruin! And now my boy is lost." Ah, if you do not go to God to teach you, the devil will teach you! Do you know the devil has plenty of teachers? I see them on Sunday—I mean bad boys and bad girls who teach other boys and girls to do wrong—the devil can make a Sunday school teacher out of a very small boy! "Come," he says, "I'll teach you." And he teaches that boy to say bad words and to do wrong things—and then away the boy goes and teaches others! A bad boy is like a sheep that comes into the flock with a disease in it and the disease goes from one sheep to another—

***"One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest."***

But if we have God for our Teacher, we shall not be taught to sin, but we shall be taught everything that is good.

II. But now we are going on to the second head and that is, THE LESSONS WHICH THE GREAT TEACHER TAUGHT DAVID.

One of the lessons which God taught David was to *value his soul*. We all need to be taught that lesson. We generally value our bodies and take care of them and, up to a certain point, that is right. Some of us like to look into the mirror, for we think we are rather pretty. But there is danger in that mirror as well as in others. I like to see the boys well-washed and clean, and I am pleased when they keep themselves tidy. And though I do not like to see girls dressed very finely, yet it is very nice to see them neat and trim. But, after all, you know the body is only like the shell of the nut—the inside is the nut itself. It is the soul that is the thing we ought to care about. Some time ago there was a great fire. What a noise there was in the street! Here come the engines! People are gathering together all round the house and there is a woman shouting and crying, "Oh," she says, "come and help me! Do come and help me! I want to save some of my things. She gets a bed downstairs, she brings out a box, she has secured some little trinkets and jewelry and she gets everything that she can out of the fire, and then says to herself, "Dear me, am I not fortunate in having saved so much?" The fire is burning, the house is crackling, everything is being consumed and all of a sudden the woman starts up and says, "Oh, dear! Where's my child?" The neighbors cry, "What? Did you not think of your child first?" "Oh," she replied, "what a foolish woman I've been! I have saved these paltry things and forgotten my child, my precious child!" That is like a person who cares only for his body—what he shall eat, what he shall drink, what he shall put on, and then at last, when he comes to die, he says, "Oh, dear! I have forgotten my soul and now my soul must be cast away forever into the everlasting burning that never shall be quenched." Dear Children, I hope God will teach everyone of you in the Sunday school to look after the welfare of your soul

and to remember that if you were to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul, all the gain would be an eternal loss!

The next lesson that God taught David was to *value the world aright*. David, I am sure, valued the world aright because he says, "There are many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift You up the light of Your Countenance upon us!" And he says again, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." Young people generally think of this world. I will tell you a story and ask you a question. There was a little boy carrying a basket of peaches and he had to cross a railway. Just as he crossed it, the train came up and went right over him and crushed him to atoms. A little girl heard that story, and I do not think you could guess what question she asked, because it was such a silly question that you never would guess it, I think. Her mother said the dear little boy was all crushed to pieces by the train going over him, but the little girl was silly enough to say, "Mother, what became of the peaches?" Was not that a foolish question to ask? Now, when I hear of people dying, and I often do hear of persons who have been living without God and without Christ, and they have been said to be "worth" perhaps £20,000, or £50,000, what silly question do you think I hear people ask? They say, "How much money did he leave?" As if that was of any consequence at all compared with the other question, "What has become of his soul? Where is his immortal spirit?" The little basket of peaches that the child carried was nothing compared with the boy, himself, and all that you can ever gain in this world is nothing compared with your own self, your own real self—your soul! So I hope you will be taught by God's Grace to put the world in its right place and look at it as being *nothing* compared with the saving of your soul!

Another thing that David was taught of God was *to see his sin*. I know that, in your classes, you have read the 51st Psalm. How much David talks about his sin in that Psalm! He says, "My sin is always before me." This is one of the lessons that every boy and every girl here must learn if they would enter Heaven. You must learn that you are a sinner and learn it so that it makes you mourn and cry out before God. I saw, last week, in the West End of London, two soldiers, with bayonets fixed, one walking on one side of a soldier, and the other on the other side of him. And the man who was walking in the middle had a coat over his hands. I knew what that meant—he had handcuffs on his wrists. He had been deserting and he had his hands chained together, but he did not want the people to know it and, therefore, he had asked his comrades to be kind enough just to throw a cloak over his hands so that he might not look as though he was chained. I do not blame him for that. But, you know, the devil—though men are all chained by nature and are, all of them, slaves—puts something over them so that they cannot see their chains and they walk on believing that they are free, whereas they are in the worst possible bondage! One of the best lessons you can learn is to find out that you are a slave and that you need someone to set you free! To find out that your soul is sick and needs to be healed! Oh, may God's Spirit teach you that—and teach it to you in your youth!

But, better still, the next lesson that God taught David was, *where the remedy was for all his sins*. If you read the 51st Psalm, you can hear him say, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." David knew that the blood of Jesus Christ could take away his sin. I have heard, but I do not know whether it is true, that a little creature called the ichneumon, which lives in Egypt, lives by killing and eating snakes. It is a very useful little creature, for it destroys many things that would be deadly to men. But sometimes these snakes bite the ichneumon and he would die, but the story goes that there is a kind of grass growing near the river which heals snakebites—and as soon as ever the ichneumon gets bitten and feels the poison—he runs away to this little herb and nibbles at it, and gets healed directly. Whether it is true or not, you and I have been bitten by the old serpent, Satan, and there is "the Plant of Renown," the Lord Jesus Christ—and if we go and feed upon Him, all the wounds that sins can make will soon be healed!

Well, these were very good lessons to be learned by David. Let me remind you what they were. God taught him to value his soul, to value the world aright, to see his sin and to see the remedy for it. Another thing David learned was to live as in God's sight. How wonderfully David talks, in various parts of the Psalms, about God seeing him! When I was a boy, about the size of many of these boys that I see before me here, my father made me learn that long Psalm, the 139th in which Dr. Watts puts thus the great Truth of God that God is everywhere and can see everyone—

***"If mounted on a morning ray
I fly beyond the Western sea,
Your swifter hand would first arrive,
And there arrest your fugitive.
Or should I try to shun Your sight
Beneath the spreading veil of light,
One glance of time, one piercing ray,
Would kindle darkness into day.
The veil of night is no disguise,
No screen from Your all-searching eyes;
Your hand can seize Your foes as soon
Through midnight shades as blazing noon.
O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Wherever I rove, wherever I rest!
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there."***

One other lesson David learned was this, *he learned to prepare to die*. This is one of the grandest lessons that any man can ever learn for, you know, we must all die. There was a great king who was a great warrior as well as a king. His name was Saladin and when he was very ill in his tent, he said to his generals who gathered round him, "Go and fetch the crescent banner around which my warriors have always rallied in the day of battle." So they brought it in, on a long lance, and they unfurled the colors right before him. And the dying man said, "Take off the colors, and look, there is the shroud that I have had prepared to wrap me in when I am dead. Now, put the shroud on the lance instead of the colors." And they did so. These were the last words he uttered, "Go and take that shroud on the lance, and go through every street of the city and cry

aloud, "This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin! This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin!" And this is what will be said of all of us, "This is all that remains of that fair girl with the beautiful hair!" "This is all that remains of that dear boy who was once so full of mirth and laughter!" "This is all that remains of that gray-headed man, so wise and learned!" "This is all that remains of the merchant with all his wealth!" Or, "This is all that remains of the preacher with all his speech." Oh, to be ready, thoroughly ready, whenever the summons shall come for us to leave this world behind us and go to the better land!

III. Now the third head is about WHEN THE SCHOLAR WENT TO SCHOOL. I hope none of these boys who go to school ever go too late. "Dilly, dilly dollar," don't they say? "Ten o'clock scholar." He is always a bad scholar who comes in late. Those who go to God's school are never very good scholars if they go too late. When did David go to God's school, according to the text?

THE CHILDREN: "In his youth!"

Mr. SPURGEON: That is right—in his youth. He says, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." He went to school in his early days and that is one of the reasons why he turned out so good a scholar, because he went to school early. Why should we go to God's school early? I think we ought to do so, first, because it is such a happy school. Schools used to be very miserable places, but nowadays, I really wish I could go to school again. I went into the Borough Road School the other day, into the Repository where they sell slates, pencils, books and all such things. The person who was there said to me, "Do you want to buy any of these things?" I said, "What are they?" He opened a box, and I said, "Why, they are toys, are they not?" He answered, "No, they are not. They are used for the lessons that are taught in the Kindergarten school." I said, "Why, if I were to take them home, my boys would have a game with them, for they are only toys!" "Just so," he said, "but they are what are used in the Kindergarten school to make learning the same as playing, so that little children should play while they are learning." Why, I thought, if that were so, I would like to go at once! Now, those who go to God's school are made much more happy than any toys can make children! He gives them real pleasure. There is a verse, I don't know how many of you know it. I will say the first line, you say the second, if you can.

Mr. SPURGEON: "Tis religion that can give"

The CHILDREN: "Sweetest pleasures while we live!"

Mr. SPURGEON: "Tis religion must supply

The CHILDREN: "Solid comfort when we die!"

Another reason why boys and girls should try to get to God's school very early is *because they will not have so much to be sorry for afterwards*. Two or three times during the last fortnight I have heard good men pray in the Tabernacle, and each one has said something like this, "O God, save my dear children! Grant that they may never go into sin as I did, that they may never have so much to repent of and to weep over as I had!" That was the father of some boy here, I expect. And oh, I know if he were here tonight, he would say, "Dear Boy, dear Girl, do not go into sins which will afterwards cause you to weep." This story will show you what I

mean. A boy's father once said to him, "Now, John, I will tell you what I am going to do to make you look at yourself a little. Every time you do wrong, I am going to drive a nail into that post—and every time you do right, and are a good boy, I shall draw one out." "Well," John thought, "I will not have any nails in that post if I can help it." But they did get in somehow—boys will be boys and girls will be girls—and there were a lot of nails in the post! And the boy felt very sorry as he saw them, for they seemed to speak to him, and to say, "You disobeyed your father that day. You disobeyed your mother another day," and he thought he would be a good boy. So he tried with all his might and got half the nails out—and after a while, he got every nail out of the post. And what do you think he said, then? His father said to him, "You have got all the nails out, John." "Yes, Father," he said, "but there are the holes still there. There are the holes still there." Now when God's Grace comes to a man who has led a wicked life from his boyhood, it pardons him and takes the nails out. "Ah," he says, "but there are the holes still there! I remember the sins I did and they have done me serious hurt, though God has forgiven me." One good man said, "I never shall forgive myself, to think that I lived so long without serving God." Get then, dear Children, to God's school early, that you may not have the holes in the post, nor have so much to be sorry for in your later life!

Another reason why I would have boys and girls go to God's school early is *because it will make them most useful*. A man cannot be very greatly useful who has only the end of his life to use for God. The tree that has been transplanted very lately cannot be expected to bear much fruit. But a tree that was put into the soil when but a cutting and that has continued to grow there, year after year, is more likely to become a good fruit-bearing tree.

One other reason why I would have you go to God's school soon is that *you will die soon*. Even if you live long, life will be very short. Oh, that God's mercy would take you into God's school now, even tonight, that you may be able to say with David, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." Let this be your cry—

***"Soon as my youthful lips can speak
Their feeble prayer to Thee,
O let my heart Your favor seek;
Good Lord, remember me!"***

IV. Now the last thing and this is the most important of all tonight, and it will not take many minutes to tell you about it. The last thing is this. David said, "God, You have taught me from my youth." But David is now dead. I wonder whether there are some here tonight who can say the same as he did? I hope there are many. So the last head is, THE SCHOLAR—WHERE IS HE? THE SCHOLAR—WHERE IS SHE?

Pass those questions all round the building and I hope there are many who will be able to say, "O God, You have taught me"—Mary, Jane, Thomas, William—"You have taught me from my youth." I do not suppose you could make much of a speech tonight if you were on this platform, but do you know, if I could have my choice between being able to speak as well as Mr. Gladstone, who spoke so grandly last night, or only be able

to say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth"—if I could only have one of the two—I would certainly choose the latter! There is more music in that sentence than in all the eloquence of the greatest orator!

I shall now ask a question or two, and then I shall have done. All the children here believe that when we have gone from this life, we shall go into another world. And you are all hoping, I am sure, that when you die, you will go to that happy land of which we sometimes sing—

***"There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in Glory stand,
Bright, bright as day!
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
Worthy is our Savior King,
Loud let His praises ring,
Praise, praise forever!
Come to this happy land,
Come, come away—
Why will you doubting stand?
Why still delay?
Oh, we shall happy be
When from sin and sorrow free
Lord, we shall live with Thee,
Blest, blest forever!
Bright in that happy land
Beams every eye!
Kept by a Father's hand,
Love cannot die.
On then to Glory run,
Be a crown, and kingdom, won—
And bright above the sun,
Reign, reign forever."***

May we have that crown and kingdom! That is what we are looking for. A little girl came home one Sunday and asked her mother a question. Little boys and girls will sometimes ask questions which cannot be very easily answered. She said, "Mother, do you believe what Teacher told me to-day?" "What's that, dear?" "Why, she said that we are only going to stay in this world for a little while, and that we are going to another world. Do you believe it, Mother?" "Oh, yes, my Dear, of course I do—the Bible says so!" "Then, Mother, you know aunt Eliza is going to Australia?" "Yes, what about that?" "She is getting ready, is she not?" "Yes, she is packing up her trunks and getting ready." "Then, Mother, if you are going into another world, why don't you get ready, too?" A very proper question for a child to put, and a very proper question for me to put to you here! If you are going to another world, dear Children, may God's Holy Spirit help you to get ready to go!

Dear Children, I hope you will be scholars who will learn that *the next world is the one for us to look for.*

This world is but a very poor thing at the best. A great man, a very rich man and a mighty emperor, invited a friend of his youth to come and stay with him. And this friend, when he entered into the palace, was quite dazzled by the marble, ivory, gold, silver and gems on every side, and he said to the great man, "How happy you must be with all this

wealth! I never saw such a palace, nor such servants in livery, nor such gardens!" "Ah," said the other, "I will, one of these evenings, tell you what I think of all I have." So, one evening, a servant brought to this gentleman, on a golden dish, an apple so lovely that it seemed as if such an apple never grew! It was, as we sometimes say, like wax, perfect. He took it off the golden dish but put it back again, and the servant took a knife and cut it down the middle—and inside it was full of black dust and a great worm dropped out of it! The emperor said nothing, but looked at his friend, and his friend knew that he meant, "That is like my life—all outside looks very beautiful, but inside there is a worm." Now, in all the joy that this world ever gives to us there is a worm! The only apples that have no worms grow only in Paradise, and there, dear Children, if God shall teach us, we shall sit and pluck new fruit from the celestial tree. Let us go there and leave this poor world behind, seeking a better rest, where immortal fruits grow!

A gentleman bought a pear tree, and planted it in his garden. The first year it did not have any pears on it, but the second year there was a good show of bloom and after a while there was one little pear. So the gentleman said to his wife, "Now we shall know whether that really is as good a pear tree as the gardener told me it would be." To his children he said, "Now, mind none of you touch that pear, for I am very particular to know about it—to see whether it is worthwhile to keep the tree." One of his little boys was very fond of pears and he watched that pear and saw it grow. It kept on growing and his father said to him, "Now, John, I know you will not touch that pear. You may have any of the other fruit in the garden, but you must not touch that pear." John said, "No, Father." Yet, somehow, as that pear began to swell and get ripe, John's mouth watered after that particular pear and he thought, "Oh, I should like to eat it!" He passed close by it, sometimes, but he did not touch it. At last, one night, a beautiful, bright, moonlight night, as he lay in bed, he looked out of the window and he could see the pear tree down in the garden, and he thought, "Father won't know I took the pear—he'll never think I would go out at night. I'll put on my slippers—it's a nice moonlight night—and I'll slip down and get that pear."

He went downstairs, though he hardly liked being out alone at night and, opening the back door, he went out into the garden and stood underneath the tree. He was getting on his tiptoes to reach the pear, when, between the leaves, a ray of light came right straight into his eyes. It was the gleam of a star and that star seemed to be watching him! And at the same moment that ray of light came through the leaves from that particular star, his heart seemed to say the four words which he said were the best words he ever heard, for they were, all his life long, a blessing to him—"You, God, see me." Down he went on to his feet, no more on his tiptoes, glided upstairs, took off his slippers and went to bed, so thankful to think that the star had looked at him and saved him from doing wrong! It seemed to be like God's light looking right through the trees and the text seemed to be God's Word reminding him how wrongly he was acting!

Now, he who goes to God's school, and has learned to live as in God's sight, has learned one of the best lessons that ever could be taught him. I hope that none of us here, whether men, or women, or boys, or girls, will ever be satisfied till, in everything, we act as in God's sight! Nobody would cheat in the shops, then! Nobody would tell a lie, then, if they knew that God was always looking upon them!

One other thing and I will finish. I think some dear boys and girls ought to be very earnest just now, and ask the Lord to take them into His school because *there are many who are very anxious about them*. There was once a boy of the name of Stoddart, and he was a very bad boy, or rather, he was a very bad young man. One night his pastor met him outside a little Chapel into which several people were going. The young man said, in a joking, saucy, naughty tone, "What are you doing?" And the minister, who was an old man, turned round and said, "Young man, this is what we are doing—your mother asked us to meet tonight and pray for you." Young Stoddart walked away and said, "Then, if these people are praying about me, it's high time I should pray for myself!" And before the meeting was over, in he crept and you cannot tell the joy there was when he came in to say he thanked them for praying for him—and desired to pray for himself! He became a famous preacher in America and brought many souls to Christ—and was the man who preached a sermon at the chapel where afterwards Jonathan Edwards became a minister of Christ, and was the means of a great revival of religion!

Now we are praying for you! And John, and Mary, and William, and James, I want you to say, as this young man did, "Then it is high time we should pray for ourselves." God bless everyone of you, and bless you tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake!

And I must say just this one sentence or so. The way to go to God's school is this—Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, died on the Cross to open the door into that great school. And if any of you, my dear young Friends, will trust in Jesus Christ to save you, because He died for sinners, you are then inside His school and you shall be taught and trained. And as I told you about the little ichneumon that ate the grass and was healed, so shall you have all your sins forgiven and your soul-wounds healed—and you shall go on your way rejoicing!

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

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

THE OLD MAN'S SERMON

NO. 1256

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until this time have I declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed Your strength unto this generation, and Your power to everyone that is to come.”
Psalm 71:17, 18.

I EXPECT, during the present week, to have the pleasure of preaching at Kettering, to celebrate the centenary of the ministry in that place of Mr. Toller and his father. My esteemed friend, Mr. Toller, has for about 55 years proclaimed the Gospel of the Grace of God to the same people, and with the 45 years of his father's previous pastorate the century is completed! Having this very pleasant task before me, I have been led to consider the subject of old age and especially the old age of Believers, and have concluded that *“the reminiscences of an old man”* would furnish us a suitable topic for this morning's discourse. I was the more led to choose the subject because on Sabbath week the children and young people will have a claim upon the preacher, since that day has been selected by the Sunday School Union for special prayer.

To balance accounts, let us give this morning's service to our grave and reverend seniors. David has here spoken as an aged man and what he has said has been echoed by thousands of venerable Believers. His experience of the past, his prayer for the present and his aspiration for the future have all occurred to others who are his equals in years. And those of us who are in middle life will, before long, be glad to say, “Amen” thereto. “O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until this time have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.”

David, in this passage, may be regarded as the model of an aged Believer converted in early life. And we feel quite safe in taking all his expressions and putting them into the mouths of veteran soldiers of the Cross.

I. The first thing we shall dwell upon, this morning, will be HIS SCHOLARSHIP, *or a good beginning*. “O God, You have taught me from my youth.” *The Psalmist was an instructed Believer*. He had not merely been saved, but taught—conversion had led to instruction. I call the attention of all young Christians to this. How desirable it is, not merely that you should be forgiven your sins and justified by faith in Christ Jesus, and that your hearts should be renewed by the operations of the Holy Spirit, but that you should go to Jesus' school and take His yoke upon you and learn of Him.

Do you not know that this is the good part which Mary chose, and which the Lord declared should not be taken away from her? She chose to sit at His feet to learn of Him. Do not suppose that to be saved from Hell is everything! You need, also, to be instructed in righteousness. If you seek to know the Lord more and more, it will save you from a thousand snares, cause you to grow in Divine Grace and enable you to be useful. That will be a *fruitful* old age which was preceded by an *instructed* youth. We ought to know the Truth of God and understand it, for if we do not, we shall always be weak in the faith.

That David was exceedingly well instructed is clear from his Psalms which contain a mine of doctrine and a wealth of experience never surpassed even by other Inspired writings. If one had no other book than the Psalms to study, he might, by the blessing of God's Spirit, become one of the wisest of men. Aim, then, my Brothers and Sisters to be disciples *now*, that in your old age you may look back with joy on the days spent in heavenly learning. *All his instruction the Psalmist traced to his God.* "O God, You have taught me." He had entered Christ's College as a scholar. Most wisely had he chosen to learn of Him who has Infinite Wisdom to impart and Divine skill in communicating it.

The Lord not only endeavors to teach, but He does so. He knows how to make His children learn, for He speaks to the *heart* and teaches us to profit. "O God, You have taught me." What a blessed thing it is when we are fully convinced by the Holy Spirit that to learn anything aright we must be taught of God! Too many appear to fancy that everything they need to know they can discover for themselves. They think they can work it out by their own thoughts, or, at any rate, the profound learning of their favorite authors will carry them through.

My Brother, my Sister, you who have grown gray in your Master's service, I am sure you have learned to mistrust your own understanding and are glad to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child. You know by experience that all you have ever learned apart from God has been a lesson of sorrow or of folly. You have obtained no true light except from the great Father of lights. No heavenly truths are learned aright till by the Holy Spirit they are burnt into the soul. Blessed are those who have gone to school of such a Master—they shall be among the wise who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament!

The Lord had taught David, in part, by His Word, for we find David delighting in the Scriptures and meditating in them both day and night. He taught him also by His ministers. He gathered no little instruction from Samuel and he learned some pointed lessons from Nathan, while Gad, the king's Seer, no doubt, also ministered to his building up. God's children are willing to be taught by God's servants. He had also been instructed by the Holy Spirit—many a precious Truth of God had been communicated to him in the quiet of the sheep walks, or in the solitary caverns of the hills—and even when he had become a king he was awakened in the night watches that he might hear the voice of the Lord, his God.

Moreover, the Lord taught him by Providence. He learned much from his shepherd's crook, much from his sling and stone, much from the ha-

ted of Saul, much from the love of Jonathan. He must have learned much afterwards of his own heart from his own trials, follies and sins. And he must have seen much of man's worthlessness from the ingratitude of Absalom, the treachery of Ahithophel, the brutality of Joab and the blasphemy of Shimei. His whole life was a source of education. Whether he stood on the hill Mizar or traversed the valley of Baca. Whether he exulted in green pastures or sunk in the deeps where all God's waves and billows went over him. Whether he sang a hallelujah or chanted a *Miserere*, everything was training him for a yet nobler existence. Therefore he could say to the most High, "You have taught me."

O beloved Christian Friends, in looking back can you not see how everything has been instructive to you when you have been willing to learn? What a school have some of us passed through—a school of trial and a school of love! We have sat on the hard floor of discipline, we have felt the rod of correction and, on the other hand, our eyes have sparkled with delight as we have studied the illuminated book of fellowship and peered into the secrets of the Lord which is with them that fear Him.

In us has been fulfilled that ancient Covenant promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." *David also had the privilege of beginning early.* "O God, You have taught me *from my youth.*" I was a scholar in Your infant class. I was put to You to learn my letters and when I learned to spell out Your name as my Savior and Father, it was Your Grace which taught it to me. All true learning begins at Christ's feet and it is well to be there in our youth! If you would be a good scholar, you must be a *young* scholar. David felt that he needed to be instructed of God from his youth, for in one of his Psalms he says, "Remember not the sins of my youth, and my former transgressions." So that even pious David had sins of his youth to mourn over and, therefore, needed, as well as others, to learn the way of holiness when young.

The dire necessity which the foolishness of nature has laid upon us from our earliest days is met by early Grace. My aged Brothers and Sisters, I would urge you, at this moment, to bless the Lord for the Grace which in early days saved many of you from falling into grievous sin! The sin which the Psalmist mourned over, he was enabled by Divine teaching to master. He says himself, "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your Word," and so David had done and, therefore, his early life was marked by great purity and simplicity of character, because he had so well been taught of God.

Especially had he been taught to *trust* his God, for in the fifth verse of this Psalm he says, "You are my hope, O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth." And being so taught he had practically proved his faith, for while he was yet in his youth he smote the uncircumcised Philistine! And in the name of God he delivered Israel. Blessed is that young man who practically shows, by daring deeds, that he is a disciple of Jesus! Blessed is that old man who, in looking back, confesses that he needed teaching from his youth up, but also rejoices that he received instruction from the Lord and was led into the way of righteousness.

Further, notice David tells us *he kept to his studies*. He says, "O God, You have taught me *from my youth*," which implies that God had continued to teach him and, so, indeed, He had. The learner had not sought another school, nor had the Master refused His pupil. Some make slight progress because they seem to begin well but afterwards turn aside to folly. They profess to be taught of God at one time, but they grow weary of the plain Gospel of Jesus and resort to heresy-mongers and inventors of strange doctrines. Good is it for the heart to be established in the Truth of God and to yield itself to no teacher but the Lord.

Venerable Brother, I hope you can say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth. I have not bowed my soul to every wind of doctrine and made myself as the bulrush, which yields to every passing breath of air. But I have, by Your Grace, been steadfast, unmovable, holding fast the Word of Truth." It is equally clear that *he was still learning*. The oldest saint still goes to the school of the Lord Jesus. Oh, how little we know when we know most! The wisest saints are those who most readily confess their folly. The man who knows everything is the man who knows nothing. The man who cannot learn any more is the man who has never learned anything aright. To know Christ and the power of His Resurrection creates an insatiable thirst after a still closer acquaintance with Him.

Our eager desire is yet more fully "to know Him." I half wish that I could leave the pulpit and that some venerable Brother could come forward and tell you how God began with him and repeat the first lessons that he learned. I should like to hear him tell how God has had patience with him and has taught him still—how sometimes he has had to smart under the rod before he could be made to learn at all—and yet the Lord has been gentle with him. I should like "such an one as Paul the aged" to tell you how, by everything that has happened, bad and good, bright and dark, his education has been carried on! And I should like him to tell you how glad he is to continue to be a learner, though now so far advanced in life. The best instructed of our elder Brethren are those who most earnestly cry, "What I know not, teach me!" And, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law."

Though my venerable friend has earned unto himself a good degree, he still keeps to his old Bible, and his old Master. Though now able to teach others, also, he is none the less a disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus! Yes, he is all the more teachable because of what he already knows. Thus, Brethren, we have seen that the model of aged Believers is an instructed saint who owes all he knows to Divine teaching, who began to learn early and has persevered in his sacred studies even to this day—

***"'Twas Yours, O Lord, to train and try
My spirit from my youth;
And to this hour I glorify
The wonders of Your Truth."***

II. Secondly, pass on to consider HIS OCCUPATION. His scholarship was a good beginning, his occupation was *a good continuance*—"Until this time have I declared Your wondrous works." This was David's chief employment. It is true he had other work to do, for he was at first a shepherd. He then became a royal harper, afterwards grew into a warrior and

at last climbed to a throne! Still, his life's main bent and objective was to magnify the Lord by declaring His wondrous works. You and I, Brethren, have each one his calling, and if it is a lawful calling, let us abide in it and let us not dream that it would honor God for us to leave our daily occupations upon pretence of serving Him in a more spiritual way by living upon other people.

Still, our earthly vocation is but the shell of our heavenly calling which is the kernel of our life's pursuit. Our temporal business must be subservient to our *spiritual* business and we must declare the Glory of God in some way or other. David magnified the Lord by his Psalms. How sweetly has he therein declared God's ways of mercy and of faithfulness! He glorified God by his life, especially by those heroic deeds which made all Israel know the mighty works which God could do by a feeble but trustful man. He, no doubt, often declared the wondrous works of God in private conversation with Believers and unbelievers by narrating his personal experience of the Lord's mercies.

You and I, if we have been to God's school, must follow the same occupation. Some of us can preach. Let us be diligent in it. Others of you teach in the Sunday school—I beseech you put your whole hearts into that blessed work. All of you can, by written letters or private conversation, and especially by consistent lives, declare the wondrous works of God and make men know the glories of the God of Grace! Let us be eager in this sacred work. Men do not care to know their God, but we must not allow them to be ignorant. Tell them of that love of His against which they daily offend and of His readiness to forgive their provocations.

Publish and proclaim salvation by Grace. It is sweet in old age to remember that you did this. Notice here, dear Friends, that *David had chosen a Divine subject*. "*Until this time have I declared Your wondrous works.*" God's works he had declared, not man's! He had not talked of what *man* could do or had done. Note verse sixteen—"I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only." Neither the virtues of saints, nor the prerogatives of priests, nor the infallibility of pontiffs, nor anything of the sort had degraded the Psalmist's lips! Those lips had reserved themselves for the glory of God, alone! "My tongue, also, shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long." We ought to speak of what God has done in creation, Providence and Grace—and especially should we point out the marvelous nature of those works—for there is a wonder about them all.

Truly, Brothers and Sisters, here is a great subject for us—the wonders of electing love, the wonders of redeeming Grace, the wonders of the Holy Spirit's converting power, the wonders of sanctification, the wonders of sin conquered and of Grace implanted! Such wonders never cease! Wonders of Grace belong to God and it should be your business and mine, in the spirit of holy reverence, to tell others what God has done, that we may set them wondering and adoring, too! David had a blessed subject, a subject of which the main point was the blending of righteousness with salvation. Did you notice the 15th verse, "My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day"? That is the great Christian doc-

trine—*medulla theologiae*, the very pith and marrow of theology—the Atonement in which Grace and Justice unite in the sacrifice of Jesus.

O Beloved, I could wish to have no other subject to speak upon, and to have my tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar to preach of only Substitution! I desire to speak of it first and foremost and beyond all else! I would show forth daily how God is just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus! How He smites for sin and yet smites not the sinner! How He is severe, relaxing none of the penalty, and yet laying none of the penalty upon the guilty because The Guiltless One has borne it all!

Make it, dear Friends, the occupation of your lives is to instruct men in this saving Truth of God. Teach them this if nothing else. If there are some doctrines you cannot understand, yet get a grip of this one. If some are too high for you, yet let this be your daily theme—Christ crucified—at whose Cross righteousness and peace have kissed each other! This was David's occupation. My aged brethren in Christ, this has been your occupation, also, and you do not regret it. You only wish you had been more diligent in it.

Now notice that while David's subject was Divine, it had also been *uniform*. He says, "*Until this time* have I declared Your wondrous works." It is a sad thing when a good man turns aside to error, even if it is but for a little season. Some ministers have preached terribly. I should think they, themselves, do not know what they have taught, for they have gone from one line of thought to another and contradicted themselves over and over again. Beware of being men given to change, ready to catch every new disease! I confess I feel an admiration for a man who can say, "What I taught in my youth, I teach in my old age. That which was my hope and confidence when first the Spirit of God opened my mouth—that and no other—is my hope and confidence still."

As men grow in years they ought to think more deeply, to understand more clearly and to speak with greater confidence. And it is their wisdom to correct many errors of detail which occurred through the immaturity of their early days. But still, it is a great thing to hold fundamental Truths of God from the very first. There are not two Christs nor two Gospels—if there is another Gospel it is not another, but there are some that trouble us. Oh, my Brother, if the Lord has taught you from your youth, abide in that which you have learned—hold to it now that your hair is gray! Let us see that "the Old Guard dies but never surrenders."

Even we, who are younger than you are, have resolved to abide in the grand old Truths of God. Our banner was nailed to the mast long ago! Surely the veterans will say the same. All my salvation and all my desire are centered in the Covenant of Grace and the Gospel of redemption by the blood of Jesus! As for novelties of doctrine, I have one answer for them all—

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

That is good word of permanence—*until this time*—"Until this time have I declared Your wondrous works." Until this time, also, have our aged fa-

thers come, holding, still, the things most surely believed among us. But, dear Friends, notice that *the style which David used was very commendable*. “Until this time have I *declared*,” says he. Now by “declaration” I understand something positive, plain and personal.

David’s teaching about his God had not been with an, “if,” or a, “but,” or a, “perhaps,” but it had been, “Thus and thus, says the Lord.” He had declared the Truth of God openly. His teaching had not been misty and foggy so that his people could make what they liked out of it according to their tastes. Neither had it been mystical, metaphysical, transcendental and philosophic—he had declared it, cleared it, explained it and brought it into prominent notice—so that he who ran might read it. He had also declared it as known to *himself* and certified by his own experience. It is a blessed thing to give a personal tinge to our testimony by saying, “Thus and thus have I experienced and so has the Lord dealt with me.”

Herein will lie much of the interest of our testimony. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you who have attained to a ripe old age, I trust you are able in looking back to say, “Yes, I have spoken honestly for God from my inmost heart and, therefore, I have spoken with decision, proving by my personal experience the truth of the Divine promises. God has always been true to me and though some may think me an egotist I can bear the censure, for I am unable to restrain myself from uttering my grateful acknowledgments! Surely if I did not speak, the stones would cry out! I must proclaim the faithfulness of the living God.”

David’s style had in it very much of holy art and loving devotion, for he says, “Your *wondrous* works,” which shows that he, himself, had wondered while he spoke. I like to hear a good man talk of God’s love, feeling it to be too deep for him, speaking of it with tears, as though it overcame him—telling his tale as though it were more marvelous to him than he could make it appear to his hearers. David had done his work in the spirit of adoring wonder and grateful love, for, my Brethren, he had always before him this one objective—to make God great in men’s thoughts. May I ask you who are getting on in years, are you making this your one occupation? And, if you happen to be teachers or preachers, do you teach the salvation of God with the sole aim of glorifying God?

Oh, it must come to this, for all Divine service which is not rendered with this motive is unacceptable and idle work! If we could preach with the tongues of men and of angels so as to surpass Apollos or if our objective were to shine in the eyes of men, our preaching would be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal! If there is any mixture in the motive, dead flies are in the ointment of the apothecary and it gives forth an ill savor! But if this is our one sole desire, to *glorify God* by making men see what a great and blessed God He is, our labor will be as the incense upon the golden altar! Upon such service we shall be able to look back in our old age with thankfulness.

How is it with you, my Brother, my Sister, in reviewing the past? And how are matters with you who are in the prime of your strength—are you about your Father’s business and living for God in all that you do? Oh, then, happy shall you be when gray hairs shall adorn your heads with a

crown of glory, for the silver light shall not rest on your heads only, but shall cast its sheen of gladness upon your *hearts*, also, as you remember that until this time you have declared His wondrous works!

III. Thus I pass on to the third thing in the text, namely, HIS PRAYER, which was *a good omen*—“*Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.*” What a plaintive prayer it is. It shows you, Brethren, that David was not ashamed of *his former reliance*. He felt that he should not have come so far if God had not led him. He saw his absolute dependence upon God in the past, the necessity which had always existed for his entire reliance on the Divine Omnipotence. I hope that from our youth we have known the necessity of dependence upon God, but I am certain that dependence is a growing feeling.

Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians think themselves *less than nothing!* Good men are like ships—the fuller they are, the lower they sink in the stream. The more Grace a man has, the more he complains of his need of Grace. Grace is not a kind of food which creates a sense of fullness, but as I have heard of some meats that you can eat till you are hungry, so it is with Grace—the more you receive the more you long for. David knew the secret springs from which all his blessings had flowed and he pleads with the Lord never to stop the Divine fountain of all-sufficiency, or he must faint and die.

This proves, dear Friends, that David did not imagine that past Grace could suffice for the present! Past experience is like the old manna, it breeds worms and stinks if it is relied upon. The moment a man begins to pride himself on the Grace he used to have six years ago, you may depend upon it, he has very little now. We need *new* Grace every day! The Presence of God with me yesterday will not suffice for the present moment—I must have Grace now. David acknowledged his *present dependence*, and it was wise to do so. Men always stumble when they try to walk with their eyes turned behind them.

It is very remarkable that all the falls, as far as I remember, recorded in Scripture, are those of old men. This should be a great warning to us who think we are getting wise and experienced. Lot and Judah and Eli and Solomon and Asa were all advanced in years when they were found faulty before the Lord. Cool passions are no guarantees against fiery sins unless Grace has cooled them rather than the decay of nature! There was great need for David to say, “O God, forsake me not,” and his own case proved it. I have heard say by those who drive much, that horses more often fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else. Where the driver thinks he needs not hold them up any longer, down they go!

And thus many men have borne temptation bravely for years—and just when the trial was over and they reckoned that they were safe—they turned aside to crooked ways and grieved the Lord. You are greatly surprised aren't you? You would have believed it of anybody sooner than of them, but so it is. Take this, then, as a caution, lest we spoil a lifelong reputation by one wretched act of sin. My very heart cries, “O God, forsake me not.” The Psalmist saw that many enemies were watching him and, therefore, he pleaded, “Forsake me not.” He had many temptations to

grow weary in his Master's service and he prayed, "Forsake me not." He felt, also, the natural decay of his physical force and he cried, "my strength fails," and therefore he pleaded, "Forsake me not."—

***"With years oppressed, with sorrows worn,
Dejected, harassed, sick, forlorn,
To you, O God, I pray;
To you my withered hands arise,
To you I lift these failing eyes;
Oh, cast me not away!"***

The Psalmist, by this prayer, confessed *his undeservingness*. He felt that for his sins God might well leave him. Hence that prayer in the 51st Psalm, "Cast me not away from Your Presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me." But he humbly resolved not to be deserted. He could not bear it! He held his God with eagerness and cried in agony, "O God, forsake me not." His heart was desperately set upon holding to his one hope and consolation and, so, he pleaded as one who pleads for life, itself. You now have the prayer before you—what do you think, Brethren—will the Lord answer it? You who are feeling your strength fail through old age have been praying, "O God, forsake me not." What do you think, will the Lord answer your prayer?

Yes, that He will! It is not possible for Him to do otherwise. Do you think it is like our Lord to leave a man because he is growing old? Would any of us do it? Son, would you cast off your father because he totters about the house? Brother, would you leave your elder brother because he is now aged and infirm? Do we, any of us, as long as we have human hearts in our bosom, pitilessly desert the aged? Oh no! And God is far better than we are! He will not despise His worn-out servants! The feeble meanings of the most afflicted and infirm are heard by Him, not with weariness, but with pity. Do you think the Lord will turn off His old servants? Would you do so?

Among men it is common, enough, to leave poor old people to shift for themselves. The soldier who has spent the prime of his life in his country's service has been left to beg by the roadside, or to die of starvation. Even the saviors of a nation have been allowed, in their old age, to pine in penury. How often have kings and princes cast off their most faithful servants and left them exposed to their enemies! When time has wrinkled the handsome face and bowed the erect figure, the old man has no longer found a place in the throng of courtiers. But the Lord deals not so! The King of kings casts not off His veteran soldiers, nor His old courtiers! He indulges them with peculiar favors.

We have a proverb that old wine and old friends are best and, truly, we need not look far to see that the oldest saints are frequently the best esteemed by the Lord. He did not forsake Abraham when he was well on in years, nor Isaac when he was blind, nor Jacob when he worshipped upon the top of his staff. Who among us would turn off an old servant? Some skinflints who have no sense of shame might do so, but they are a disgrace to their kind! I know my Lord and Master will never act as they do, for He is Love, and His mercy endures forever! If He has blessed us in youth and middle age, He will not change His ways and desert us in our

declining days. No, blessed be His name, at eventide it will be light and He will show Himself more tender than ever to us, for He has said, "Even to old age I am He, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you."

No, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus will not forget his old Barzillais, nor, though, like Peter, others should gird us and take us where we would not, He will not turn away His face from us, but will love us to the end. Why, Brethren, if the Lord had meant to cast us off, would He not have done so long ago? If He needed occasion for discharging us from His service, has He not had plenty? My Lord has had reason enough to send me packing hundreds of times if He had willed to do so! He has not waited all these years to pick a quarrel with you at the last, I am sure, for He might have justly removed you from His household years ago. If He had meant to destroy you, would He have shown you such things as He has done? If He meant to leave you, would He not have left you in your troubles 20 years ago?

He has spent so much patience and pains and trouble over you that He surely means to go through with it! Why should He not? Has He begun to build and is He not able to finish? Trembling Friend, remember that your vessel has been steered across the ocean of life for 70 years and, surely, you can trust the Lord to pilot you for the few years which remain! Did you say that you are nearly 80 and do you still doubt your God? How long do you expect to live? Another 10 years? Cannot you trust Him for that? Why, you will not be here so long as that, in all probability, and since the Lord has been good to you so long, why do you doubt now? Oh, do not so! It is almost Saturday night, the week's work is nearly done and you will soon enjoy the everlasting Sabbath—can you not rely upon your God till the day breaks and the shadows flee away?

"Ah," you say, "you are only a young man, it is very well for you to talk." I know it. I know it. And yet I believe that when I grow old I shall be able to talk as I do now and even more confidently, for I trust I shall then be able to say, "He who taught me from my youth and kept me to this day, will not, now, let me go." Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, though you cried in prayer, "O God, forsake me not," do not sink so low as to imagine that He can forsake you, for that were to mistrust His royal Word, in which He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

IV. Our last point is this, here is HIS WISH, or *a good ending*. "Forsake me not *until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come.*" He had spent a lifetime in declaring God's Gospel, but he wanted to do it once more. Aged saints are reluctant to cease from active service. Many of them are like old John Newton, who, when he was too feeble to walk up the pulpit stairs of St. Mary Woolnoth Parish, was carried up to his place and preached on! His Friends said, "Really, Mr. Newton, you are so feeble, you ought to quit." And he said, "What? Shall the old African Blasphemer ever leave off preaching the Grace of his Master as long as there is breath in his body? No, never."

It is harder work to leave off than to go on, for the love of Christ constrains us, still, and burns with young flames in an aged heart. So here

the good man pines to show forth, once more, God's strength. I think I hear somebody say to the aged man, "You are very unfit to show forth God's strength, for by reason of years your strength is failing." But such a speech would be foolish, for the very man to show forth the Lord's strength is the man who has none of his own! It is no small thing to be in a condition to need great help, and so to be fitted to receive it, and qualified to illustrate what great things Divine power can accomplish! My aged Friend, your weakness will serve as a foil to set forth the brightness of Divine strength!

The "old man eloquent," feels that if he could bear one more testimony, everybody would know it was not the strength of his natural spirit or his fine juvenile constitution which upheld him! If he spoke up for his Maker, all men would say, "That feeble old man who testified so bravely for his Lord is, himself, the best of all testimonies to the power of Divine Grace, for we see how it strengthens him!" Moreover, he thought that if he witnessed for his Lord the young people would note the strength of Divine Grace which could last out so many years—they would see that many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it! They would see the strength of God's pardoning mercy in blotting out his sins so long and the power of God's faithfulness in remaining true to His servant, even to the end.

Because of all this he eagerly desired to bear one more testimony. And, do you notice the congregation he wished to address? He would testify to the *generation* that was growing up around him! He wished to make known God's power to his immediate neighbors and to their children, so that the light might be handed on to other generations! This should be on the mind of all who are going off the stage of action—they should think of those who are to come after them! They should pray for them and help them. The aged man's thoughts should be fixed upon the *spiritual* legacies which he will leave and, as good old Jacob gathered up his feet in the bed, and *then* divided his blessing among his sons, so should the venerable Believer distribute benedictions.

Your work is almost done, it only remains to leave behind you a monument by which you may be remembered. Marble and brass will perish, but the Truth of God will remain! Set up a memorial of faithful testimony! Not much longer will you mingle with the sons of men. Your seat will be empty and the place which knows you today will know you no more. Hand on, then, the blessed treasure of the Gospel! You die, but the cause of God must not. Speak now, so that when you are gone it may be said of you, "He, being dead, yet speaks." Call your children and your grandchildren together and tell them what a good God you have served! Or, if you have no such dear ones, speak to your neighbors and your friends, or write it down that other eyes may read it when yours are glazed in death.

Reach out your hands to the ages yet to come and present them with the pearl of great price. Pray God to enable you to set your mark upon the coming generation and then set about winning youth to Jesus by a cheerful, bold, unhesitating witness to His love and power! Willing to go, we all

ought to be, but we ought scarcely to desire departure till we have seen the interests of the cause of God secured for coming time! If there is one more soul to be saved, one more heart to be comforted, one more jewel to be gathered for the Redeemer's crown, you will say, dear Friend, I am sure "Let me wait till my full day's work is done."—

***"Happy if with my last breath
I may but lisp your name,
Preach you to all, and say in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"***

With this last practical thought I send away my venerable Brothers and Sisters, asking them to take care that their eventide shall be made to glow with the special light of usefulness by their abundant witnessing. I would urge the Lord's veterans to yet more valorous deeds. If, like David, you have slain the lion and the bear and the Philistine when you were young, up! Do another deed of daring, for the Lord lives, still, and His people have need of you! Though your joints are rather rusty and your limbs can hardly bear you to the battlefield, yet limp to the conflict, for the lame take the prey. He who helped you when you were but a youth and ruddy will help you now though you are old and infirm—and who knows what you may do?

One of the finest paintings I ever saw to move one's soul was the picture of old Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, leading the way in an attack at sea upon the enemies of the Republic. He was far past the usual age of man and blind—yet, when the efforts of others failed to save his country, he became the leader—and was the first to board the ships of the enemy. The young men felt that they could not hold back when they saw the heroic conduct of the blind, gray-bearded man! His brave example seemed to say, "Soldiers of Venice, will you ever turn your backs?" And the response was worthy of the challenge!

Oh, my honored Brethren, deserving reverence for your years, show us your metal! Let the young ones see how victories are won! Quit yourselves like men and let us see how he who is washed in the blood of Jesus would not hesitate to shed his own blood in the Redeemer's cause! Your zeal will stimulate us, your courage nerve us and we, too, will be valiant for the Lord God of Israel! So may God's Spirit work in you and in us. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 71.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—71 (SONG I), 71 (SONG II), 733.***

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GOD OUR CONTINUAL RESORT

NO. 1858

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.”
Psalm 71:3.***

DAVID, in his younger days, had been obliged to hide himself away with his followers in the great caverns and rocks of his native land. In the cave of Adullam, by the rocks of the wild goats, he had dwelt amid the most stern surroundings of Nature. No doubt he had climbed aloft upon the mountain's side and then had penetrated into one cave after another and treated them as chambers of his house of rock. There he had spent both nights and days, looking from on high upon the plains beneath, often seeing his cruel pursuers passing by in eager hunt for him while he was secure in his rocky fastness.

Nothing leaves a clearer impression upon the memory than a residence amidst such scenes. You might live for an age in such a town as this and forget it all. What is there to remember in this labyrinth of bricks and mortar? But when you get into the clear bracing atmosphere of the hills—when you tread their sublime heights, or descend into their mysterious hollows—you cannot forget it! A day of leaping, like the wild goats, from crag to crag, ended by a night amid the dread seclusion of a mountain den makes a clear mark on the surface of life which can never be erased—a man will carry such memories with him to his grave.

This must have been especially the case with a genius so poetic as that of David. I would not hesitate to place the King of Israel among the first masters of song. If you take the whole company of the poets, together, you cannot find one who did more for devotional prose than David. All the altars of God in the world have been set alight by flame from David's lamp. When men worship God in any language, they quote one or other of the Psalms. What better expressions can they borrow or invent? With such a soul as his, and such eyes, and such a tongue, and such a harp, it was no wonder that, in his riper days, when he had known the soft luxury of palaces, he could not refrain from rehearsing the sublime memories of his earlier and more adventurous days—and drawing inspiration from the wild and sublime scenery among which he had been reared. The man, as full of Grace as of genius, as saturated with the Spirit of God as with the spirit of poetry, could not but in his loftiest songs speak of his God in language culled from the cave—“Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.” Or, as some read it, “Be You to me a rock of repose.” The deep quiet of the enormous recesses in the lone rocks was remembered by the Psalmist and worked into his prayer.

I shall want you to carry the thought of those rocks and those caves with you, because it will form a background for our subject and help us to illustrate it.

What a gracious heart David must have had, to speak like this of his God! He desired to be upon the most intimate terms with the Lord, his God. He wished to dwell not merely *with* God, but *in* God. He cries, "Be You my strong habitation." Not merely did he long to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, but he would have the Lord to be his house! He would be surrounded by God and that not as with a dungeon, in which he was forced to be, but as the habitation of his choice, for his pleasure and rest. He would not merely live in God's world, but within God Himself! He would realize the meaning of Moses, when he said, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." What a man of God David must have been, despite his infirmities and sins! None but a mind in harmony with God as to the great principles of truth and purity would ever have desired such constant converse with God as that which is implied in the words, "Whereunto I may continually resort."

The wicked say, "No God," but David sighed for none *but* God! The mere pretender would have God on Sabbaths and high days and in times of trouble. But David would have God all day and every day. The formalist is satisfied with a word with God in the morning and another at night. When he is either hurried or sleepy, he forces from himself the tax of a minute or two in prayer. But he that loves the Lord delights to walk with Him always! Yes, to make his home with God and to abide in Him! Some would like a Sabbath once in the month, but David would make all his days holiness unto the Lord. Many would like to speak with the Lord from a distance, but David would live and move and have his being in his God. By this, the man after God's own heart, proved that his own heart was after God. Judge yourselves, therefore, at the very outset, as to what your own condition of heart is. If you can repeat the words of David from your very soul, bless the Grace of God that has taught you to do so! And if you cannot so pray, breathe a silent prayer to Heaven saying—Lord, teach me to love You and long for You. I would gladly acquaint myself with You and be at peace.

Without inventing any mechanical divisions, I would remark that the text naturally suggests three things. The first is that God was to David, a *delightful repose*—He was his habitation, or home. Secondly, that David found in his God *peaceful security*—"Be You my strong habitation." God was his fortress, his castle, his high tower, his rock of defense. And then, thirdly, David had continual access to his God—"Whereunto I may continually resort." Those five words are as a musical box set to the most charming air—they discourse a quiet harmony to my soul, such as one hears when listening to the brook which warbles as it flows—"Whereunto I may continually resort."

I. Let us dwell on this for a few minutes. David found in his God, DELIGHTFUL REPOSE. "Be You my strong habitation." That is, be my house and home. David was one of those who had made the Most High his habitation and, therefore, did God continually preserve him. He was one of the

avored ones who dwelt in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.

Observe what *wonderful condescension* he had experienced from the Lord! What infinite Grace, that God should allow His servants to think of Him as their *house*! My God, You are the Glory of Heaven and the angels veil their faces in Your Presence and yet I dare to say, "Be You my habitation." My God, You are terrible in righteousness; You are a consuming fire! All things perish at Your Presence when once You are angry, yet You permit me to dwell in You and to find in You, not destruction, but eternal life! Brothers and Sisters, we aspire not merely to be reconciled to God, nor even to draw near unto Him, but to *enter* into Him and to hide ourselves beneath Him! It is one of the sublimities of Christian experience to be in God the Father and in Christ Jesus. Do we understand this? We have never reached the sum of our Grace-given privileges till we are more at home with God than with anyone else in the universe! What a wonder that the eternal God is our refuge! What condescension that the Infinite Jehovah should be the abode of His saints!

David had realized in his God *peculiar love*. In a man's own home, he expects to find love. Pity on the poor wretch who is disappointed there. When we are abroad in the world, my Brothers and Sisters, we reckon to meet with rough handling and to receive scant consideration. But within our own doors we enter the sanctuary of love. If we receive and return love anywhere, it is within the walls of our own habitation. That is how David felt towards the Lord, his God. Abroad he had many enemies and faithless friends not a few, but they were all outside of his real life. When he came to his true life in God, he breathed an atmosphere of love! He dwelt in One who loved him better than he loved himself! Do you know what this means, dear Brothers and Sisters? Is God the center of your repose because in Him is love? Are your affections all set on Him? And do you know that He loves you and takes a Divine delight in you? "He shall rest in His love"—do you rest in it? Oh, that your heart may be filled to the brim with a sweet consciousness that you are the object of infinite affection! May you say of the Lord Jesus, "Who loved me and gave Himself for *me*." And may you hear the Father say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." He that dwells in love dwells in God, for God is Love! Oh blessed experience, to dwell in God as the abode of love!

Moreover, home is the place of *special rest*. At home we are unloaded of the world's huge load. The advocate takes off his gown and says, "Lie there, Mr. Barrister, and let the father come to the front." The tradesman takes off his apron, the warrior his harness, the bearer his yoke, for they are at home. And if a man may rest anywhere on earth, it must surely be in his own habitation! Is not our God our rest? O Beloved, is there, indeed, beneath the sun, any repose for a poor soul except in God? There remains a rest for the people of God and that rest is God, Himself! "Return unto your rest, O my Soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." When we know Jehovah's Truth, His faithfulness, His power, His wisdom, His Grace, then we rest in Him! When we see Him glorified in the majesty

of His love in the Person of the Well-Beloved Savior, who has redeemed us from death and Hell, then we who have believed do enter into rest.

The Lord makes us partakers of His own Sabbath rest! The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Beloved, have you not sweet recollections of times when you had been tossed with tempests and not comforted, but obtained access to God and so entered into a deep calm? When wearied and bewildered, the Presence of the Lord has brought you perfect peace and you have felt yourself at home. Then have you sung—

***“Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall.
My soul has safely reached her home,
Her God, her Heaven, her All.”***

We have not yet read all the meaning that couches beneath this sweet word, “habitation,” or home. Our habitation is the place of *joyful freedom* and hearty naturalness. One is not stiff and starched at home. You are not guarded, there, as to what you say or do, for you are not exposed to criticism and misrepresentation. Some of us cannot open our mouths without seeing a reporter’s pencil twinkling across his prepared paper. Our steps are dogged by those who take notes and print them! We live under the microscope. We can hardly think without being published, with this addition, that what we do *not* think is often imputed to us! Do not wonder if we walk somewhat under constraint. But at home, a man feels, “Well, these dear children and the dear wife of my love, and these kind friends—I am not afraid of them—they will not misjudge me.”

Did you ever feel that with relation to God? Are you yourself when alone with Him? Are you at ease in His Presence? Those firm, stately prayers we sometimes hear, majestic and cold—we find no fault with them except that there is nothing in them to suit rapt devotion or to express the spirit of adoption. Do you pray after a more living, loving fashion? God’s children dare to be familiar with Him. God so knows our hearts that it is of no use to be reserved before Him—therefore let us unlock our hearts and talk with Him as a man talks with his friend. Are there not a thousand things you could not tell to any but your God? Have you not griefs, yes, *sins*, which it were wrong to reveal to any but to Him? O our God, we have not to study our language while with You! Our soul speaks to You without words; her thoughts and emotions rise to You in their pure spirit, without the encumbering embodiment of speech. Our heart leans against Your heart and You know what we mean, even as You have made us to know what You mean, for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant.”

Religious people sometimes start back from the prayers of a true saint and say, “He is too familiar!” Of course a child is too familiar for the imitation of a stranger—but have you ever blamed a child for climbing his father’s knee? And yet you would not think of copying him! Boy, do you know what you are doing? You are playing with a learned judge, before whom prisoners tremble and courts are hushed! Even wise counselors speak to him as, “My lord.” That urchin does not say, “My lord.” Look! He is plucking him by the beard! He is kissing his cheek! What presumption!

No! He is the judge's child—he who is judge to others is, "father," to him! So the saints of God say, "Our Father which are in Heaven," ever reverentially, but yet with sweet familiarity! They are at home with Him. Beloved, may you know what that means by the teachings of the Spirit of sonship, for only *He* can teach us the blessed freedom of being at home with God!

A man's habitation is also the place of his *intimate knowledge*. David knew the Lord even as he knew the caves in which he had sheltered. David could have served as guide to the great hollows of Adullam and these, in their vastness and sublimity, may be likened to the mysteries of God. There is a weird charm to my mind about caves—I like to visit all that are in my way. One is pleased to pass from one subterranean room to another and mark the secrets which are revealed by the glare of the torches. Here there is a spring of water, there a grand stalactite—here is an ascending staircase leading to another hollow—and there you must go down by a ladder to a greater depth. This is a fair allegory of the way in which the Spirit of God leads us into all the Truths of God. In God, even in Christ Jesus, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and, within these hiding places we find our habitations. David was so much at home with God that he entered by earnest trust into one attribute after another and delighted in them all! He knew the Lord. He could say, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." He loved to dwell in the rocky strongholds of eternal Love, unchanging Grace, almighty Wisdom, unspotted Holiness, unerring Purpose and infinite Power. O Brothers and Sisters, seek to have the same clear knowledge of the Lord as David had, till you can say that you are at home with God, who is your habitation!

Home, also, has about it the thought of *tender care*. Where are we so lovingly watched over as at home? Where else are there such soft pillows for our aching heads, such gentle words for our wounded spirits? "Take me home," says the sick child. I had the great sorrow, yesterday, of speaking to a dear Brother whom I had hoped would be spared for great usefulness in a distant land. But he had just received, from the doctor's examination, the solemn information that he was hopelessly diseased. We proposed that he should go to the seaside, but I saw which way his heart went. He thought of his wife and his habitation and he said, "Let me go home. If I must die, let it be in my own house." He spoke as I would have done in like case. At home, one might not have all the skill of the hospital at your command, but one would be sure of a certain priceless tenderness which no nurse can rival. Lord, You have been my dwelling place—I will die in Your arms! When I am sick and weary there is none like You, my God! When my heart breaks, none can bind it up but You, my God! I turn to You when in my mortal sickness, like Hezekiah, I turn my face to the wall—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit." Yes, my unrest is all over when I get to You. The ship is in harbor. The bird is in its nest. My heart has found the bosom on which it loves to recline. I have all things, my Lord, when I have You! You say, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

There is much more in this first part of the verse than I can possibly set before you. I have only opened the windows and I now invite you to look out upon the landscape so full of beauty!

II. Secondly, David had realized in God, PEACEFUL SECURITY. “Be You my strong habitation”—“My rock of habitation.” Now, the child of God, when he enters into the Lord by faith, feels himself perfectly safe. Safe, first, from all risk of the Lord’s changing or failing. God Himself is strong, His Love is immutable, His Power is unfailing. This is the solid ground of our security. When the winds are out in all their fury, those of us whose habitations stand on the top of a hill know the value of stability. There are periods in the rage of the storm when our habitation shakes like a ship which trembles from stem to stern—and though this is very exciting, it does not create a sense of peaceful security! When once we enter into God, we do not shake or know fear. Rise winds, roar waves, blow tempests, howl hurricanes! There is no shaking our sure abode in God! David, in the rocks, had often defied the storm, for he felt that though the earth should be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, he would not fear. Such is the confidence of every child of God! God changes not, God’s arm is not shortened; God is not vanquished; no purpose of God shall be defeated; no decree of His shall fail! Rocks may dissolve, but the eternal God changes not and His people in Him shall have a sure abode!

But David also felt great safety from his enemies. When he climbed the rocks and crept into his cavern, he knew that his enemies could not follow him. Had Saul come with all Israel at his back, David’s band could have kept armies at bay. He must often have felt like the eagle when it has flashed upward to its nest on the craggy rock and from there looks down upon the hunters. He is almost out of sight, but he can see all the movements of the foe. However long the range of the rifle, the noble bird knows no fear, for he is beyond range. I think I see him sitting there quietly, eyeing the enemy, of whom he knows no dread. Thus may a child of God defy the great adversary!

“Let us sing,” said Luther, “the 46th Psalm, and defy the devil.” The devil’s restless nature is fretted by the serenity of the firm Believer in God—and let him be fretted! His utmost rage is insufficient to hurt a single hair of the head of a Believer! No adversary can carry by storm our impregnable stronghold. Tyre stood a siege of 13 years, but our fortress has been beleaguered throughout the ages and never captured! Security, itself, is our portion for time and for eternity when we trust in the Lord. I love to think of the child of God as getting into God and resting secure beyond the evil designs of the malicious hand, the crafty mind and the slanderous tongue. No stone will be left unturned to do us ill and yet no stone of our rocky habitation shall be dislodged! “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn.”

The trials of life shall not harm us. The bereavements of death shall not cause us to despair. Sickness shall help on our sanctification. Poverty shall increase our wealth of experience. When God blesses, nothing curses! If God is for us, who can be against us? Under the shadow of the

Almighty we are out of harm's way. In God we dwell on high and our place of defense is the munitions of rocks. What would be a crushing disaster to us, apart from God, now turns to a benediction with God to overrule it! O child of God, trust in God, for He is worthy of all confidence! In Him you are secure in every sense. He that keeps you does neither slumber nor sleep—who, then, can do you ill? You are secure from the penalty of sin, for Christ has put it away from you, bearing the chastisement of your peace. Hidden beneath His Atonement, you are secure from the wrath of God—your transgression is forgiven, your sin is covered—thus the sting is taken from every evil.

You are secure against final overthrow by your own natural and constitutional weaknesses, for the Lord will cleanse your blood which He has not cleansed. He will purge you thoroughly and cleanse you from all your idols—and write His Law upon your inward parts so that you shall not depart from Him. You are secure against all the trials and troubles of Providence, since these shall work together for your good! The griefs and pangs of death you need not fear, since God is with you and will raise you from the grave! The terrors of eternity are not for you—immeasurable joys are your portion! Once safe in God, what is there to fear? “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect”? Who shall “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?”

A blessed sense of perfect security ought to be enjoyed by every believing man and woman. You ought to be as serene as the glorified, since around you there is a wall of fire and God is with you as a glory and a defense. The enemies may gather together, but they only gather to be scattered! Those that love God and are the called according to His purpose are beloved of the Lord and He will interpose His eternal power and Godhead between them and evil. When God is our Friend, the whole universe is under bond to keep the peace towards us! The beasts of the field are at peace with us and the stones of the field are in league with us! The stars are our lights, the heavens are our curtains, angels are our servitors, the elements are our providers, time is our rehearsal and eternity is our anthem of joy! Be glad and rejoice in God—and say with the Psalmist—“Be You my strong habitation.”

III. We have now reached our last point, upon which we may be somewhat more lengthy than upon the others. David's God was to him a place of CONTINUAL RESORT. “Whereunto I may continually resort.” I was talking, the other day, with a man of God who has very much service and great care upon him. And as we communed, the one with the other, he said to me—“That expression of the Psalmist is very sweet to me, ‘Whereunto I may continually resort.’ It rises frequently before my thoughts.” Indeed, I did not wonder, for it is an exceedingly choice expression. Happy are we that the gate of communion with God is never locked! In our pastoral cares, in our business trials, in our family afflictions, in our personal conflicts there is this saving proviso, that we may always flee unto God for succor! “Whereunto I may continually resort,” said David while the veil was yet untornd—may we not say the same with emphasis, today, now that we have access to the holiest by the blood of Jesus?

There is joy in this thing in itself. Is it not a great bliss to have the entree of Jehovah's palace day and night? Is it not Heaven below to have access without ceasing to Father, Son and Holy Spirit? How blessed to enter the golden gate unchallenged and remain unrebuked in the pavilion of the King of Kings! O Believer, you may come when you will to the Throne of Grace and never fear a repulse! You may come not only into the King's palace, but what is infinitely more, into the King, Himself, for He is your habitation, whereunto you may continually resort! The Persian kings forbade anyone to come near them—and if any ventured into the king's court and the monarch did not stretch out the silver scepter, the guards cut them down at once. Yet there were certain favored courtiers who, by special privilege, had the right to approach the king at all times, guard or no guard. These were the noblest in the king's dominions.

Such honor have all the saints! No cherub with flaming sword guards the way of approach to God against any child of the great Father! You have a privilege that is much greater than any dignity belonging to the mightiest monarchs of earth—the privilege of perpetual converse with God at whatever hour you will! It ought to make your heart leap for joy to think of it! Come in the dewy morning, come at dusky night, come in the midnight's dreariest hour—the Lord is always ready to receive you—and you may speak freely with Him. This is His Word—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find." "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Continual access to the God of all Grace is a perpetual fountain of joy!

There is a great comfort in it as an outlook. "Whereunto I may continually resort." Throughout all future time, I may draw near unto God! The day may come when I shall be sorely sick and be compelled to stay in my bed. And then I may resort unto God! I shall not be able to go up to the House of the Lord, but still, I may resort to God, who is more than house and home! No form of disease shall shut me out from my heavenly Father! I may lie on my bed and sleep—and when I awake I shall still be with Him. Old age steals on apace and, perhaps, my feet will not be able to bear me to the place of the assembly—but even then I may resort to God. When my ears shall grow dull of hearing and I shall not enjoy the preaching of the Word of God—even then I shall hear the still small voice of the Spirit in my heart! When I am so far gone with age that my bed will become the best place for me, I shall still enjoy His Presence and sing His praises! O Brothers and Sisters, fear not the future, for the Lord says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

"Should fate command you to the utmost verge of the green earth, rivers unknown to song," yet may you continually resort to God. If you should be a castaway upon the salt sea, the Lord sits upon the floods and you shall resort to Him there. If you were like Alexander Selkirk, out of humanity's reach, yet you would not be out of reach of Divinity! Oh no, even in the dreariest solitude you may continually resort to Him whose company is better than that of all mankind! In death and in eternity this is the perpetual privilege of every Believer in Christ—he may still draw near unto God.

Now, this continual resorting to God is not only a joy in itself and in its outlook, but *it is a joy which answers so many blessed purposes*. I wish you would read this 71st Psalm quietly at home in the light of my text—then you will see that David found, in coming to God, everything that he needed.

First, he found an escape from present ills—“Deliver me in Your righteousness and cause me to escape.” As the cony does not fight its foe, but hides itself in the rock, so you, in your time of trouble, need not go forth to conflict, but may resort continually to your God. Stop up the rabbit’s burrow and you might soon take him—keep a Believer from his God and you would soon destroy him—but so long as he can reach his hiding place, no enemy can wreak vengeance on him.

David also looked upon God as the place of his prayer, for he says, “Incline Your ear unto me and save me.” We may always pray and when our prayer is too weak to rise to Heaven, we may expect the Lord to bow His ear to hear our groans. Prayer is never out of season—it is a tree which yields its fruit every day! Whenever a trouble drives you to your knees, the Lord waits to be gracious. There are certain hours during which it is difficult to send a telegram to a friend, but we can, at all times, speak with God by the telephone of *prayer*. No grief is too little, no trial too heavy, no hour too early, no moment too late for prayer! “Whereunto I may continually resort.” The Mercy Seat abides in its place, the veil remains torn and whoever has faith in God may come to the Throne of Grace whenever he pleases.

David, by resorting to the Lord, received upholding. “By You have I been held up from the womb...I am as a wonder unto many, but you are my strong Refuge.” He had kept his footing in slippery places by keeping close to God. He had surprised his enemies by the way in which he avoided their snares. When he was tempted, he overcame the temptation by resorting to God. When he did not resort to God, he fell, as others have done.

David also resorted to God for strength. “Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails.” He looked beyond himself to the unfailing power of the Almighty and expected to be strengthened when infirmities crept over him. Do you need more power for service, more patience for suffering? Resort to God. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Go to the Strong for strength! By prayer and faith gird yourself with Omnipotence! When you need renewing, run to Him who sustains all things. Go and draw water from the well of strength! Let down your bucket—drain it dry and let it down again—for to this fountain you may “continually resort.” If you lack strength, you are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in your own heart. Believe in God and be strong according to your faith.

See how David went to God continually in holy praise. Every hour is canonical for a man who is ready to praise God. “Let my mouth,” he says, “be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day.” We may sing unto the Lord even when the voice is cracked and the lungs have failed! We need never be afraid that He will reject our praises on account of age or infirmity! We may sing to Him in any place, from the cellar to the attic!

We may sing at our work and sing in our rest, yes, sing aloud upon our beds!

When we have done singing and wish for matter for instructive conversation, we shall find abundance of it in the Lord. “My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.” We shall always find fresh matter in the Lord. No fear, you preachers, of running dry, if the Lord is your subject! Who can exhaust the Infinite? Who can come to a standstill for lack of themes when the Triune God is the Object of his continual meditation? O you servants of the Lord, fill your seed baskets from this granary, whereunto you may continually resort!

David also continually resorted to God for quickening. Notice how he puts it in the 20th verse—“You, who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me, again, and shall bring me up, again, from the depths of the earth.” Have any of you got down there? Do you want to rise out of them? Those depths of the earth are not pretty places, but we stumble into them, sometimes, by careless walking—would you rise from them into newness of life? Then resort to God and He will bring you up from the lowest deeps! He will raise you from death to life, more fitted for holy service than ever!

The fact is, whatever you need, you have only to go to God for it, and whenever you need it, you may go. Whatever your condition, you may still resort to the Lord. If you cannot come as a saint, you may come as a sinner. If you cannot come boldly, you may come trembling! When you feel most unfit to resort to God, you may still go to Him, for He is your Fitness and your Physician. When you feel that you dare not go, you may still go to Him—“Whereunto I may continually resort.”

There is a blessed positiveness about my text. “I may continually resort.” I may, I am sure I may! Just now, in the courts of law, it is the Long Vacation—nothing can be done in Chancery this month, for the poor lawyers must rest—but there is no Long Vacation in the courts of King’s Bench above! You may plead your suit and urge your case with God every day in the year. The Lord allows, permits, invites, *commands* you to plead with Him! “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.”

I may continually resort to God, that is to say, He prompts me to do so—His Spirit helps my infirmities—He teaches me how to pray. Is not this sweet? What more can you desire? You know the way, for Christ is the Way—that way is always accessible, for Christ is always with us unto the end of the world. Come, tried Believer, ring the night bell and call up the great Physician! You have only to call upon Him and He will be with you in an instant. Yes, *before* you call, He will answer you! Why, then, do you resort to *man* so often and to God so seldom? Why drink so far down the stream, where it is muddy and polluted, when the pure fountainhead may be reached? Men will grow weary of you, but you cannot weary God. You may come to the Lord even though conscious of sin and backsliding. You may come to Him though your soul is sick and faint. He will restore you while you are yet coming! Before you are aware, He can fill you with Divine Love. You have but to turn the helm towards the harbor of His Love

and the wind will turn, too, and you shall be happy in the Lord! Come, then, at once, to God in Christ Jesus, just as you are! In all your backsliding and coldness of heart come to Him for renewal! The Lord has not grown indifferent, nor has He shut His door against petitioners.

You may continually resort to God, for He is never like Baal, on a journey, or asleep—He waits to be gracious—He listens for His people's cry. You may continually resort to Him with confidence that you shall not seek His face in vain, for the Lord is never unable to help His people. Whatever the form of their trial, He is prompt to come to their rescue. One of old exclaimed, "The Lord was ready to save me." All the day long, all the night long and all the year long, in every case, and in every place, the Lord sits at receipt of supplication and holds Himself in readiness to commune with His people!

Listen to a parable—A certain young man traded and in all things he prospered for a while. In all his dealings he was wise and prudent and none were able to overreach him. The cause of his wisdom was that he had a father, a man of amazing knowledge, of great experience, of large wealth and great influence. His son never entered upon a transaction without consulting his father. Whenever he felt himself at all in difficulty, he hastened to ask counsel of his father. Whenever he needed money to meet a sudden demand, he drew upon his father. Their love to each other was more and more manifest as the one trusted and the other helped. Does anybody wonder that the young man grew rich? But, after a while, the son grew cold towards his father and seldom sought his advice. There was no quarrel, but the young man was growing independent of his father and preferred to act upon his own judgement. He failed to ask and to receive substantial help—which would have been freely given—and he fell into great losses which might readily have been avoided. The young man became weak as others! He was the prey of deceivers. He spent labor and thought and substance upon matters which ended in failure. He grew poorer and poorer, till he trembled on the verge of bankruptcy. Do you wonder? Do you pity him? Do you see in him your own portrait? If so, change it all and say of your heavenly Father—He is my Friend and Counselor and, to Him I do continually resort. This will be your wisdom, your strength, your happiness and your spiritual wealth!

Multiply your approaches to God. Let them become incessant, continual! No man ever resorted to God to excess. It might be possible to spend too much time in the posture of devotion, but you can be in the spirit of prayer and praise all day long and yet never run to extravagance. "Pray without ceasing" is the command of our Infallible Lord. Towards men there is a limit of resort, but to God there is none. By your continual coming, you will not weary the Lord. Through your importunity, you will prevail with Him. I had a dear friend whose company I esteemed, but all of a sudden he did not come to see me. He stayed away and, as I knew he had not ceased to love me, I wondered why. At last I found that the good Brother had taken it into his head that he might outrun his welcome—he had read those words of Solomon, "withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house; lest he be weary of you, and so hate you."

I admired my friend's prudence, but I labored hard to make him see that Solomon knew nothing of me and that I was more wearied when he stayed away than when he came! I hope he made me an exception to a very sensible rule. But never get *that* thought into your head concerning your God! Will you weary my God, also? You may weary Him by withdrawing prayer, but never by abounding in supplication! Abide with your God and cry to Him day and night—and let this be the music of your whole life, “whereunto I may continually resort.”

Our immediate practical conclusion is this—If we may continually resort to God, let us go to Him at once. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving and prayer even now! Here are several thousands of us who profess to have come here to worship—let us all draw near unto God, this morning. Let each one hasten to his footstool for himself, individually. Forget the vast congregation! Forget everything but that which is holy and spiritual—and come unto your God who, at this moment, calls you to *His* footstool. “Alas, I have been so worldly all the week!” This is to be confessed and repented of, but it must not, now, keep you from God. “But I feel dull and dead.” I know it and the Lord knows it, too! But you may still approach Him. You remember what our Lord Jesus said of the Laodicean Church? That He would spue it out of His mouth—but what does He say afterwards? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” He says to the same Church, “If any man opens the door, I will enter in”—enter into the same Church which had so disgusted Him—“and will sup with Him”—sup with that Church of which, just now, He was so sick!

Come, then, you lukewarm ones and, in coming to Jesus, you will cease to be disgusting to Him! Come, you whose spiritual state would make Jesus, Himself, sick. He stands at your door and knocks! Open to Him and He will enter in, and He will have no distaste of you, but He will delight in you! You have returned from your health resorts—now come to a still healthier resort! Come, see how graciously Jesus can restore your souls and make you full of His life and joy! He will forget your sins and, instead of His being sick of you, He will make you glad in Him until you shall cry out with the spouse, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love!” Blessed love sickness!

If you never have come to Jesus before, come, you chief of sinners, now! Come, you that have but little spiritual feeling! Come just as you are, since Jesus, from this platform, says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” That God who is the house of His people, sets wide His doors and writes over them in letters of light, “Whoever will, let him come.” Jesus comes to the door! He beckons to you and persuades you to enter, saying, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” The Lord enable you to come, for His dear mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 71.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—71 (SONG 1), 91 (SONG 2), 627.

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THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND

NO. 1037

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

***“For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him who has no helper.”
Psalm 72:12.***

THIS is a royal Psalm. In it you see predictions of Christ, not upon the Cross, but upon the Throne. In reference to His Manhood as well as to His Godhead, He is exalted and extolled and very high. He is the King—the King's Son, truly, with absolute sway, stretching His scepter from sea to sea, and “from the river even unto the ends of the earth.” It is remarkable that in this Psalm which so fully celebrates the extent of His realm and the sovereignty of His government, there is so much attention drawn to the minuteness of His care for the lowly, His personal sympathy with the poor, and the large benefits they are to enjoy from His kingdom. Where Christ is highest and we are lowest, and the two meet, there is “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.”

I might almost raise the question whether this Psalm is more a tribute of homage to the Messiah, or a treasury of comfort for His poor subjects? We will compound the controversy by saying that as Christ, here, is highly exalted, so His poor needy ones are highly blessed. And while it is a blessing to them that He is exalted, it is an exaltation to Him that they are blessed!

Turning to our text without further preface, we shall note in it the special objects of great Grace. “He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper”—then the special blessings which are allotted to them. Here it is said that He shall deliver them, but all through the Psalms there are scattered promises full of instruction and consolation all meant for them. And, lastly, the special season which God has appointed for the dispensing of these favors—“He shall deliver the needy when he cries.” That shall be God's time. When it is our time to cry, it shall be God's time to deliver.

I. First, then, notice THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF GREAT GRACE. There is a three-fold description—they are needy, they are poor, they have no helper. They are needy. In this they are like *all* the sons of men. We begin life in a needy state. We are full of needs and cannot help ourselves in our infancy. We continue throughout life in a needy state. The very breath in our nostrils has to be the gift of God's goodness. In Him we live and move, and have our being. And, as we grow old our needs become even more apparent. The staff on which we lean reveals to us our needs, and our infirmities all tell us what needy creatures we are.

We need temporal things and we need spiritual things. Our body needs, our soul needs, our spirit needs! We need to be kept from evil. We need to be led into the paths of righteousness. We need on the outset that Grace should be implanted. When it is implanted, we need that it be nurtured—when nurtured, we need that it be perfected and made to bring forth fruit. We are never a moment without need. We wake up and our first glance might reveal our needs to us. And when we fall asleep it is upon a poor man's pillow, for we need that God should preserve us through the night. We have needs when we are on our knees, else where would be the energy of our prayers? We have needs when we try to sing, else how should our uncircumcised lips praise Him aright?

We have needs when we are relieving the needs of others, lest we become proud of our almsgiving. We have need in preaching, need in hearing. We have need in working, need in suffering, need in resting. What is our life but one long need? All men are full of needs. But God's peculiar people *feel* this need—they not only confess it is so, but they *know* it experimentally. They are full of needs. Once they thought that they were rich and increased in goods and had need of nothing. But now, through the enlightenment of God's Spirit, they feel themselves to be naked and poor, and miserable. Their needs were great before, but they appear, now, to be incalculable—more in number than the hairs of their heads.

They have need of a covering for the sins of the past. They have need of help against the temptation of the present. They have need of perseverance as to the entire future. If there are any people under Heaven who could claim the title of "needy," above all others, it is *not* the pauper in the workhouse, nor the mendicant who asks alms in the streets—it is the child of God, for he feels himself to be so dependent that the more he gets from his great Benefactor the more he requires—and the more he must have to satisfy the enlarged desires of a heart that begins to know the will of God concerning us. Our needs are great and constant.

The second description given is that he is poor—"the poor also." A man might be needy and be able to supply his own need. As fast as his needs arise, he might have sufficient wealth to be able to procure what he needed. I speak merely of his *temporal* needs. But with regard to us in *spiritual* things, we are not only needy, but we are poor to utter destitution—there is nothing within our reach that we can help ourselves with. We have need of water for our thirst, but Nature's buckets are empty and her cisterns are broken. We have need of bread, but Nature's granary is bare. Like the prodigal son in a far-off country, there is a famine—a mighty famine in that land—and we are in need.

We have need of clothing. We have found that we are naked and we are ashamed—but our fig leaves will not serve us and we are too poor to buy a garment for ourselves. We are so poor that when a need comes, it only shows us how empty the treasury is. And every need, while it draws upon us, meets with no fitting response. There is nothing, nothing, nothing in human nature at its very best that can keep pace with its own needs.

Speak of self-reliance! It is well enough in matters of the world, but self-reliance is absolutely madness in the things of God! We have heard of self-made men, but if any man would enter Heaven he must be a God-made man from first to last—for all that can come out of human nature will still be defiled.

The stream shall never mount higher than the fountainhead, and the fountainhead of human nature is pollution. It cannot rise higher than that, let it do its best. We are very needy and very poor. If there are any poor in all the world who have tasted the bitter ingredients of this cup of sorrow, it is God's people. We are very needy and very poor, though we did not always think so. When the discovery was first made to us, we felt the smart as those do "who have seen better days." Once we fancied ourselves able to do our work and sure to get our wages. We hoped to merit a reward for our good conduct, and we thought it was only for us to add a little piety to our decent morals in order to be well pleasing to God and our own conscience. Ah, Sirs, when we woke from these foolish dreams and faced our own abject poverty, how ashamed we were! How we shunned the light! How we sat alone and avoided company—how fear preyed on our heart—with what anguish we chattered to ourselves, saying, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Poor, indeed, we are, and we know it.

Moreover, it is said they have no helper. Now, until God enlightens us, we seem to have a great many helpers. We fancy—perhaps we once fancied—that a *priest* could save us. If we have a *grain* of Divine Grace we have given up that idea! Perhaps we imagined that our *parents* would help us—that our godly ancestry might stand us in some stead—but we have long ago been brought to the conviction that we must each stand personally before God, for only personal religion is of any value. At one time we placed some dependence upon the ministry we attended and hoped that in some favored hour that ministry might be of use to us. But, if God has awakened us, we look higher than pulpits and preachers now!

Our eyes are up towards the hills where comes our help, and as to all earthly things, we see no help in them. "Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." "He shall be like the heath in the desert—he shall not see when good comes." The Lord grant us all to be reduced to this—that we have no helper, because when we have no helper *here*, He will become our Helper and our Salvation! Put the three words together and you have a very correct description of the awakened people of God—needy, poor, and having no helper. We have felt this, Beloved, very keenly, some of us, just before we looked to Christ. Oh, we can remember, now, when we wanted to have our sins forgiven us! We would have given all we had if we could but have found mercy—we were full of needs.

We turned all our good works over, but they had all become moldy and worm-eaten, and they stank in our nostrils. We tried our prayers. We used to fancy if we began to pray earnestly it would all be well with us, but alas, alas, we found our prayers to be poor comforts—broken reeds! We looked all around us and we could get no consolation. Even Scripture

did not seem to cheer us. The very promises seemed to shut their doors against us. We had no Helper. Oh, do you remember, then, when you cried to God in your troubles and He delivered you? I know you have verified the Truth of the promise in our text, "He shall deliver the needy when he cries."

Since that time we have been equally needy—we have been making fresh proof of our poverty—and getting into straits from which we could by no means extricate ourselves. Indeed, when a Christian is richest in Divine Grace he is poorest in himself. The way to grow rich in Grace is to feel your poverty. Whenever you think you have stored up a little strength, a little comfort, a little provision against a rainy day, you are pretty sure to have the trouble you bargained for and to miss the resources you counted on. Estimate your true wealth before God by your entire dependence on Him! The more you have, the less you have, and the less you have, the more you have. When you have nothing at all in *yourself*, then Christ is All in All to you!

The perpetual condition of every child of God in himself is that of a needy and poor and helpless one. On the high mountains with his Lord, rejoicing in His love, yet is he even there in *himself* less than nothing and vanity—still poor and needy. There have been times when we felt this very powerfully, perhaps very painfully. Has Satan ever beset you, my Brothers and Sisters, with his fierce temptations? No doubt many of you have had to feel the ferocity of his attacks. Perhaps blasphemous thoughts have been injected into your mind—dark forebodings, such as these, "God has forsaken me." Perhaps he has said, "He has sinned himself out of the covenant—he is a castaway," and your poor little faith has tried to hold on to Christ—but it seemed as if she must be driven from her hold.

While others found it, as you thought, easy to get to Heaven, you realized the truth of the text—"The righteous scarcely are saved." You have had to fight for every inch of ground and it seemed to you very often as though you had not a spark of Grace in you, not a ray of hope—and surely not so much as a single grain of the Grace of God within your heart. Ah, and at such times you have been poor and needy and you have had no Helper. And, perhaps, at such seasons, too, temporal trouble may have come in. Whoever may go through the world without trouble, God's people never do—

***"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown."***

"In the world you shall have tribulation" is as sure a promise as that other, "In Me you shall have peace."

The trials of God's servants are sometimes extremely severe. Not a few are *literally* as well as spiritually poor. Hunger, privation and embarrassment haunt their steps. And when you once come to be poor, how often does it happen that you have no helper? In the summer of prosperity your friends and acquaintances are as numerous as the leaves of the forest! But in the winter of your losses and distresses, your friends are few, indeed—your neighbors stand aloof, your old mates desert you—

like the wind, your trials have borne them all away as sere leaves and you cannot find them. But, do not think that the Lord has cast you off because He is thus chastening you with the rod of men! Take it as an exercise of your faith, and go to Him and plead this promise, "He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper."

Thus I have set before you the character of God's special objects of Sovereign Grace. They are poor and needy *spiritually*. Do you ask why is it that God selects these? Our first answer is He gives no account of His matters. He does as He wills. He is Sovereign—who shall say unto Him, "What are You doing?" And, in order that He may make that Sovereignty clear to the sons of men, He is pleased to select those whom naturally *we* might expect Him to pass by. Did not Jesus lift His eyes to Heaven full of gratitude and say, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight"? Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen, but God has chosen the poor of this world—He has chosen the things that are despised, (and as the Apostle puts it)—"Things that are not, has God chosen to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

When the chariot of the Eternal comes from above, He bids it roll far downward from the skies. He passes by the towers of haughty kings. He leaves the palaces of princes and the halls of senates, and down to the hovels of cottagers the chariot of His Divine Grace descends—for there He sees, with joy and delight, the objects of His everlasting love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the word of Divine Sovereignty, and God makes it true by taking the poor and the needy and them that have no helper.

Still, if we may enquire into the reason, we see in the poor and the needy and the helpless, a reason for God's Grace. They are the persons who are most willing to accept it—for they are the persons who most require it. Your generosity will not stand to be dictated to, but, at the same time, you usually prefer to give to those who need the most. Wise mercy seeks out chief misery and God, therefore, delights to give His blessings to those who need them most, not to those who fancy they *deserve* them—they shall have *none* of them—but those who need them, they shall have *all* of them.

When a soul is made to feel its own poverty, it does not set itself up in rivalry with Christ! It does not pretend to be able to help itself. It has no disputing about the terms of the Gospel. A sinner, when he is thoroughly famished, has such an appetite that he eats such things as God's mercy sets before him, and he raises no question. A proud Pharisee will say, "I will not submit to this—to be saved by *faith* alone—I will not have it! To accept mercy as the absolute *gift* of Heaven, irrespective of my character, I cannot endure it!"

The high soul of a Pharisee, I say, kicks at it. But when God has brought a man low, till, like the publican, he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he is glad to be saved in God's way—and no matter how humbling the plan of Grace, nor how the sinner is debased and Christ exalted—the poor sinner loves to have it so! It is a way suitable to his own needs, a way which he accepts for the very reason that God has adapted it to his position. Hence, if there are reasons they lie here—not in man's merit but on the Lord's mercy. The fact that bare misery, when touched and guided by the Spirit of God, makes the soul to open its mouth like the hard chapped soil to drink in the rain as soon as the rain descends from above, is an argument why Grace so commonly flows in this course.

In choosing to bless the poor and needy by His Grace, the Lord finds for Himself warm friends—those who will give Him much praise, contend earnestly for His reign and for His Sovereignty—and endure much abuse for very love to His dear name. Why, if the Lord were to save the Pharisees, they would hardly say, "thank You," they are, themselves, so good. They reckon themselves to be so excellent that if they had salvation they would take it as a matter of course, and, like the nine lepers, they would never return to thank Him that healed them! But when the Lord saves a great sinner—a man that feels there is nothing good in him—oh, how that man talks of it and tells it to others! He cannot take any praise to himself—he knows that he had *nothing* to do with it—that it is all of the Grace of God.

And, oh, see how that man will stand up for the Doctrines of Grace! He is as the valiant men in Solomon's song, "each man with a sword on his thigh because of fear in the night," for the Doctrines of Grace are not to him matters of opinion, but matters of experience! They are dear to him as his own life. "What?" he asks, "is not God the Giver of salvation? Is not salvation all of God, from first to last? I know it is." "Don't tell me. Whatever your arguments, however smooth may be the form and fashion of your theology, it does not tally with what I have tasted and handled and felt—unless it is Grace from first to last, I am a lost man! And, if I am, indeed, a child of God, then will I contend for the Doctrines of Grace, and will do till I die," he says.

I know I felt, myself, last Sunday night, after I had talked to you about the difficulties of salvation, that if ever I got to Heaven I would praise and bless God with all my soul. I felt like that good old woman who said that if the Lord ever saved her He should never hear the last of it, for she would tell it everywhere and publish it abroad throughout all eternity that the Lord had done it—that He was a good and gracious God to have mercy on such a soul as she was. Now, since one object of God in bestowing His mercy is to glorify Himself, He does wisely in bestowing His mercy upon the poor and the needy, and such as have no helper. The Lord give to you, my dear Hearer, to be brought down to this tonight. I know many of you have been brought there and are there now. Let my text encourage and cheer you!

Dear objects of Almighty Love, He finds you on the dunghill but He lifts you from it! He finds you in the dust, but is not this the song of Hannah and the song of Mary, too—"He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent empty away"? It is God's way of dealing with the poor and lost—rejoice at it—it is full of encouragement to you!

But I say to any of you that have never been humbled. You good people who have always been good people. You that have always kept the Law from your youth up and gone to Church regularly, or to Chapel regularly. I say to you people—The Lord have mercy upon you and let you see that your goodness is filthiness! That your righteousness is unrighteousness! And that the best that is in you is bad—and that the bad that is in you that you have never seen as yet will be your ruin—your eternal destruction unless God sets it before your eyes and brings you down to loathe yourself, and feel yourself to be abominable in His sight—and abominable, also, in your own sight, when His Law comes, with power, home to your souls!

Thus I have spoken upon the special objects of Divine Grace.

II. Now, a few words upon THE SPECIAL BLESSING WHICH THE GREAT KING HAS STORED UP FOR THESE PEOPLE. Kindly look at the second verse. "He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice." So that one of the special blessings for God's poor is that they shall be judged with justice. Alas, they are often judged with harshness! Or they are judged in ignorance! Or they are judged by malice—not judged by righteousness, nor by justice! When their enemies see them, they say, "These are a broken-spirited people. They are moping and melancholy, wretched and sad."

Thus hard things are spoken against them and unkind stories are told of them. Sometimes they say they are out of their minds, and then they will insinuate that they are only hypocrites and pretenders. Slander is very busy with the children of God. God had a Son that had no fault but He never had a son that was not found fault with. Yes, God Himself was slandered in Paradise by Satan! Let us not expect, therefore, to escape from the venomous tongue. One blessing, however, that will always come to God's needy ones is this—Christ will right them. He will judge them with justice. Are you harshly spoken of at home? Don't be angry. Don't provoke in return—don't answer railing with railing. "He shall judge His poor with righteousness."

Leave it to Him. Wait, wait, till the judgment sits, for who are these that they should judge *you*? Their opinion, though it is bitter as gall to your spirit, does not really affect your character or your destiny. If you are right before the Lord, through faith in Christ, they cannot make you wrong by anything they say. God judges and God knows. "He searches the heart and tries the reins." You remember how David, among his brothers, was much despised? He had not the appearance and the carriage that his elder brothers had, and even Samuel, the Lord's Prophet, thought the

others to be better than David, and said of them, "Surely the Lord has chosen these."

David was, therefore, despised of his brothers, but what did it matter? The Lord looked not as man looks, for man looked upon the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Bide your time, you that are one of a family and alone. Or, if for Christ's sake you have been despised, have courage tonight and let not your spirit be bowed down. "Rejoice you in this day and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you." The King will speedily come and when He comes, then will this Word be verified. "He shall judge His people with righteousness and His poor with justice." There is one mercy for you—to have your wrongs righted and your character cleared. God's poor and needy ones, you will perceive, if you turn a little further down, shall be saved from oppression.

Fourth verse: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The Lord's people are like sheep among wolves—the wolves treat them injuriously. Christ Himself was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. His people may expect to be oppressed, too. But they have this for their comfort, that Christ will surely deliver them and He will break their oppressors in pieces. Are you, tonight, oppressed by Satan? Have you things laid to your charge by him that you know not of, and does conscience oppress you with the remembrance of sins which have been forgiven?

Have you ever believed, concerning them, in the Atonement of Christ? Well, bow your head meekly, and go to the Mercy Seat once again, pleading the precious blood, and He shall break in pieces the oppressor! There is no answer for Satan like the blood! And there is no answer for conscience *but* the blood! Plead it before God! Plead it in your own soul and you shall find that the great and glorious King in Zion shall, in your hearts, break in pieces the oppressor! There is another special mercy, then—help against the oppressor. The third blessing is that of our text—"He shall deliver the needy." Deliver them! You are brought into great troubles—you shall be delivered out of them! You are just now the subject of many fears—you shall be delivered from your fears!

It seems as though the enemy would soon exult over you and put his foot upon your neck, and make an end of you—you shall be delivered! You are like a bird taken in the fowler's net, and he is ready to wring your neck and take the breath out of you—but you shall be delivered out of the hand of the fowler and brought safely through the perils that threaten you! Oh, that we all had faith! Oh, that we all could exercise faith when in deep waters! It is a fine thing to talk about faith on land, but we need faith to swim with when we are thrown into the flood! May you, tonight, get such a grip of this precious Word that you may take it before the Lord and say, "I am poor and needy and have no Helper. O God, deliver my soul now."

But, we have not exhausted the string of blessings. A little further down in the Psalm, at the 13th verse, you will notice it is said of the King—"He

shall spare the poor and needy." If He apparently lays heavily upon them, yet will He, by-and-by, stay His hand. If He bids one of His rough winds blow, He will stop the other. As He is said to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, so will He certainly temper it to His people—they shall be afflicted, but it shall be in measure—He shall spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him. The rod shall make them smart but shall not make them bleed. They shall be made to suffer, but they shall not be called to die. Perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken! There shall always be a gracious limit put to the blows that come from Jehovah's hand for His own people.

Oh, what a mercy to be among His poor ones and to feel that He will spare us. He spared not His own Son, but He will spare us, the poor and needy! He smote Him with the blows of avenging Justice, but concerning us it is written, "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of My love shall not depart. As I have sworn that the waters shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." He will spare His people! He will bring them safely through, and, meanwhile, He will not let the waters be deep enough to overwhelm them.

There is one other blessing which sums up all the rest. You find it in the 14th verse: "He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence." Redemption belongs to the Lord's poor people. He bought with a price His poor ones, and as the ransom has all been paid, they belong to Christ and none shall take them out of His hands. He that redeemed them by price will redeem them by power. He will, if it is necessary, divide the Red Sea again to redeem His people! And, if by no usual means His servants can be preserved, He will bring unusual means into the field. There are no miracles now, we say, but if they are ever needed for the safety of God's people, there shall be miracles as timely and as plentiful as of yore!

"Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall never pass away." He would sooner shake the heavens, themselves, than suffer one of His children to famish, or utterly to perish, rest assured of that. Oh, what glorious comfort there is in all this! We shall be spared! We shall be redeemed! We shall be delivered! We shall be saved! We shall be revenged and cleared before the judgment-bar of God! And all because the great King has made the poor and needy the special objects of His love. Oh, my soul revels in this! I cannot speak out the thoughts I feel, much less the joy that arises out of them! And what a mercy it really is, that the great King, the King who rules from the river to the ends of the earth is the poor man's Friend!

I am very poor and needy and helpless tonight, but the King has made me His favorite. He counts me one of His courtiers—and it is the same with you, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you, too, are poor and needy! He rules, and He rules on the Throne for us! He is great and has dominion but He uses all His greatness and His dominion for us! As Joseph in Egypt was invested with power for the good of His brethren, or at least such sovereignty as he held of Pharaoh he laid out for the welfare of his

father's house, so Jesus has all power and authority in Heaven and earth—all might, majesty, and dominion for the good of His people. He has the King's signet ring upon His finger, but He uses it for His own beloved ones that He may enrich, and honor, and cheer, and perfect them! His Glory is concerned in every one of us.

If one of the least of His people should perish, His crown would suffer damage. He is the Shepherd and Surety of the flock, and at His hand will the Father require all those who are committed to Him. He cannot, therefore, let us perish, for then He would not be able to say at the last, "Of all that You have given Me I have lost none." He must and will preserve us! We are wrapped up in His honor! His power, I say—His crown, His Glory, His very name as the Christ of God anointed to save sinners—all are wrapped up and intertwined in the salvation of every poor and needy soul that is brought to rest in Him.

III. And, now, our closing word is, THE SPECIAL SEASON WHEN ALL THIS SHALL BE TRUE. He shall deliver the needy when he cries. Ah, while I have been preaching there may have been some poor child of God here who has said, "I am poor and needy. And I am in great distress but I have not been delivered." And there may be some sinner here who has said, "God has taught me my poverty and need, and I know I have no Helper, but I cannot find I have been delivered."

Perhaps, dear Friends, you have been praying for months—praying very bitterly, too, after a sort—and you have been desirous that you might find mercy. God's time—when will it come? Well, it will come when you cry. That is something more, I take it, than a mere ordinary prayer. A child asks you for something and you may perhaps deny it. But you know there is a difference between asking for a thing and *crying* for a thing. Oh, when you get so that you *must* have it. When your heart breaks for it! When your needs are so extreme that you cannot stand up under them! Well, now, when it comes to this, that you must have Christ or perish—"Give me Christ or else I die!" When it seems as if you cannot put your prayer into words any more. When all that you can do is only fall at the foot of the Cross and say—"O God, I cannot pray, but my very soul groans after You to have mercy upon me"—then is the time! Then is the time, but not till then, when God will deliver you!

The Lord loves to hear the prayers of His people and He sometimes keeps them waiting at the posts of His door that they may pray more. It is always a blessing for us to pray as well as to get the answer to prayer. Prayer is, in itself, a blessing. When the Lord hears us knock *faintly* at the door, He does not open. We may knock and knock again—He likes us to knock—it does us good to knock. But when it comes to the point that it is *all* knocking with us, and our very soul and body seem to knock, and our heart and flesh cry after God, the living God—when we shall thus come to appear before God and open our mouth and pant vehemently for the mercy He has promised—then it will come! When you cannot take a denial, you shall not have a denial!

The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. There is none so violent as the man who is in desperate need! There is a person who has been without bread many hours and he asks you for charity in the street. You would pass him by, but he is famished, and he says, "Oh give me bread or I die!" He compels you to it. And such is the prayer that prevails with God. When the soul cannot wait! When it *dares* not wait! When it fears lest it should shut its eyes and open them in Hell—oh, God will not keep such a soul waiting long! I am always glad when I hear of convicted souls saying, "I went up into my chamber with the resolution that I would never come down again till I had found the Savior." I always delight to hear of men and women who say, "I went upon my knees and cried to Him, saying, I will not let You go except You bless me." He will bless you!

But if you will let Him go, He will go. And if you will not let Him go, you shall have your request of Him. "But who am I," says one, "that I should plead thus? I have no right to hold Him thus." 'Tis true, but when a man is hungry, when a man is dying, he does not think of *rights*. He holds you right or wrong. His *need* is his right. Poor Soul, go and plead your need before God! Plead your sin! Tell Him you are wretched and undone without His Sovereign Grace. Use the strange argument which David used, the strangest in all the world—"For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great!"

Plead the very greatness of your sin as a reason for mercy! Plead the damnable character of your sin! Plead the certainty that you will soon be cast into Hell! Plead the fact that He might justly drive you from His Presence forever! Plead all that before Him and say, "Lord, if ever the heights and depths of Your Grace might be seen in saving an undeserving soul, I am just that one! If Your mercy wants to honor itself by saving the most undeserving, ill deserving, Hell-deserving sinner that ever lived, Lord, I am the man! If You want a platform on which to erect a monument of infinite Grace that men shall stand and wonder, and angels shall gaze on it with astonishment—Lord, here I am! If You want emptiness, here is one who is all emptiness! If You, as the Good Physician want a bad case, a glaring case, a desperate case to operate on, You will never have a worse case than mine! O God, turn aside and have pity upon me and show Your mighty power."

This is the way to plead. Not your *merits*—they will never get a hearing—but your misery, your sin, your guiltiness before God—these are the arguments! And then if faith can come in and plead the blood, and say, "Did You not send Your Son to save sinners?" Has He not said He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance? Is it not written that the Son of Man is come to seek and to save not the good, but that which was lost?" Oh, if you can plead the blood in that fashion, you will not fail! His name is the Savior—He came to save His people from their sins! He died for the ungodly! He justifies the ungodly—the unrighteous He makes righteous through His own merits! If you can plead this, oh, then, you shall not wait long, for though God does not deliver till we cry,

yet He does deliver when we cry. "He will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper."

Oh, what a mercy it is when the tide is ebb'd right out and there is nothing left! It will turn now! It will turn now! The streams of Grace will turn now! When you are empty. When you are overwhelmed. When you are like a dish wiped out and there is not anything good left in you—now will God come to you! The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawn of the day. When God has killed you, He will make you live! When He has wounded you through and through, He will come to your healing—

***"Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small.
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our God forgives us all."***

May it be so now, for His name's sake. Amen.

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HOMAGE OFFERED TO THE GREAT KING NO. 3100

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.”
Psalm 72:15.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verse is #717, Volume 12—PRAY FOR JESUS
—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I BELIEVE we must refer the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy to the times of the latter-day Glory when Jesus Christ shall again appear upon the earth. Then “He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” Then “they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust.” It has been a great question as to whether Jesus Christ is to come again in Person or by His Spirit. Many passages of Scripture seem to point to His actual and Personal coming and, somehow or other, it does delight my soul to anticipate that Christ may yet come to the scene of His former battles and make it the scene of His future triumphs. I am rejoiced to think that His head, once crowned with thorns on earth, may on earth itself wear a crown of Glory and that His feet that were once wearied in His pilgrimage here with the flinty stones of Jerusalem may yet “stand on the Mount of Olives,” while He ushers in “the day of the Lord in the valley of decision.” And that His shoulders which once wore the purple robe in mockery may yet be visibly clothed with the royal attire of universal empire when “the Lord shall be King over all the earth.”

I am somewhat confirmed in this conviction by the words of the text, “And He shall live.” It does strike me that such a prophecy as that would not be necessary concerning Jesus Christ, either as God or Man, if it were not that He is again to visit the earth. It is quite certain that, as God, “He shall live,” for God over all, blessed forever, only has in Himself immortality and it is quite impossible that the Godhead should ever expire while, as Man, Jesus Christ must live, for when the just are raised, they die no more, but have life eternal—and when they ascend up into Heaven, as Jesus has done, they have a life that God confers upon them which becomes as immortal as the very life of Deity itself! So that it does appear to me that neither in respect to His Manhood or His Godhead, would it have been necessary to say, “He shall live,” unless we are to understand it in the same sense that we should read it if it was written of His first coming—He shall live as the God-Man. He shall live on earth as other men do. He shall live here below. And I do think that no

exegesis can fully explain the passage unless we interpret it as to His actually living, residing here as very Man upon the earth once more.

Be that as it may, the text, we trust, has a fulfillment in your ears this night and has been, in a certain manner, fulfilled ever since the time when it was written, “to Him,” to Christ Jesus, there is “given of the gold of Sheba.” To Him prayer is also made and to Him praise continually ascends. Here are three things which are, throughout all time, even till the dawning of eternity, always to be bestowed on Christ! The first is *the gift of property*—the gold of Sheba. The second is *the gift of prayer* and the third is *the gift of praise*.

I. To commence with the first, I shall be allowed here to make some remarks with reference to THE PECUNIARY MATTERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH because no man on earth will ever suspect me of making any personal allusion either to my own Church or congregation, or with regard to myself or any institution connected with this place of worship. In nothing have I to find fault with my Church and people! Let it go forth to Christendom at large that in their collections and contributions to the cause of God, they stand second to no Church beneath the blue sky. I have simply to tell them that such-and-such a thing is needed for sacred purposes—and forth comes their money. It is always bestowed at the time it is required and, therefore, it cannot be suspected that in anything I say, there is the least allusion to them, except it be to their honor.

It is written that “to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba.” I think that this ought continually to be impressed upon the minds of all Christians. Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God and their Savior, and has given Himself for them, they are not their own, but are bought with a price. Their possessions as well as themselves are the absolute property of their Redeemer! They have, in fact, nothing whatever in their own private right. They have made over themselves to the Lord Jesus, to have and to hold them through life and even till death and forever and ever. They are not to call their own their purse, their lands, their houses, nor anything that they have—but to give up everything to their Lord. From the moment when He Himself comes to them and unfolds their interest in His Covenant, they are henceforth to consider themselves as His servants, as His children, “having nothing, yet possessing all things,” because they have all things in Christ.

Were this well considered, my Friends, how much greater liberality should we find among Christians, especially in the support of Gospel ministers? When God sends an ambassador into the world, wherever He sends him, the people are bound to receive him in some kind of honor and respect. Jehovah Himself has said that the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn is by no means to be muzzled. But it is the disgrace of our denomination, as well as of many others, that not a few of the best of God’s servants are toiling weekday after weekday and Sabbath after Sabbath upon a miserable pittance scarcely sufficient to maintain the family of a day-laborer! I thought, the other day, when reading Martin

Luther's "Table Talk," that it was rather too bad for him to say what he did, but since then I have myself felt similar indignation when I have thought upon this subject. He said, "If I were God, and the world were to behave so wickedly to me as it does to Him, I would kick it all to atoms." I thought it was a dreadful thing to say, but I have myself been almost inclined to say that had I been the everlasting God and sent ambassadors down from Heaven, and had they been treated as they are now, I would have called every one of them back straightway and would have said, "Is that the way you despise My sent servants? Will you show them no honor? Will you do them despite as you have always done?" Yes, I thought, I would call them back, revoke their charters and say, "Henceforth I will send no more ambassadors." But, Beloved, ambassadors are not thus received by you and they ought not to be anywhere! God's servants should have what they require and it should always be said, "Christ lives, and to Him in the person of His ministers—is always given of the gold of Sheba."

It is a terrible thought to me that although God's Word says, "Owe no man anything," yet that the Church should be more in debt than any corporation in England! I do not think that the debts of all the people put together would equal the debts of professing Christians—debts which they have entered into often on account of religion. I would stand fast by the practice of owing no man anything and if I did not see the means of doing anything for my God, I would stop till I did. "Owe no man anything," is a Christian principle, and one that we are bound most decidedly and continually to observe. Therefore should the Churches be in debt? Why should there not be money to send forth missionaries abroad? It is just this—there is not enough of the love of Christ in the Church and there is not enough of preaching Christ—otherwise there would be more of Christian giving! Where Christ is exalted, there will be a willing, generous people.

I do not believe it is so much the fault of Christians that they have not given more to the cause of God, as it has been the fault of ministers that they have not more fully preached Jesus Christ. They have not extolled His name. They have kept back His Doctrines and put them in the background. This is why God has allowed His Church to become poor and suffered her funds to dwindle down. And it serves her right, for if she does not love her Husband, she ought to be poor! And if she does not extol Jesus, there ought to be no funds! But can you find a Christ-exalting people, among whom the Gospel is preached in all its fullness, whose necessities God does not supply? There may indeed be some cases where it is so, when God tries them for their good. But I believe, as a rule, that once let our pulpits have the clear Gospel sound in them. Once let the good old Doctrines of the Puritans come forth. Once let the Gospel be preached in all its fullness—none of your shams, for we have abundance of them—but the blessed Gospel of Christ! Once let this fidelity prevail and God will provide the funds, God will open the hearts of the people to pour the money into your coffers. The silver and the gold

are His and the cattle on a thousand hills—and it is the fault of the Church herself that she has become poor! When God restores to her the language of Canaan. When Christ is exalted in His people's hearts and they can hear the sweet and savory notes of Jesus Christ preached, then they will say, "Can we refuse to do anything for such a Gospel as this?" Half-hearted preachers beget half-hearted professors! A lukewarm Gospel has made people's hearts lukewarm! We must have a reform—a lasting reform by the help of God's Spirit—otherwise, who knows whereunto this bankruptcy of Christendom shall tend? And who can tell what shall eventually become of the Church? Once let Jesus be preached thoroughly, here, there and everywhere, and then "to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba," and as much as ever His Church shall need shall be continually offered as a willing tribute!

Thus much, then, about money have I felt constrained to say, for I do believe that many of my Brothers are half ashamed to speak out about the temporal claims of religion. For myself, I always deem it one of the noblest things we can do to give to the cause of God. Everyone knows what value we attach even to some little flower given by the hand of a friend, and God loves the little gifts of His people. As one of our old divines says, "It is not the value of the gift so much as the intention of the giver that is prized. For we should keep an old cracked sixpence if given to us by a friend—not because we think much of the sixpence—that, perhaps, we would scarcely have stooped to pick up—but because a friend has given it to us and for his sake we never spend it or give it away." So the little that we give to God is of great esteem in His sight. Every little gift we give to Him is remembered and at last He will take us and say, "My child, on such-and-such a day you gave Me this." "Why, Lord, I scarcely thought of it! I found such a cause requiring help, and I assisted it." "Ah, My child! Here is your gift—I have stored it up here to show to you when you came to Me. Have I forgotten your little acts of affection? No, I have stored them up in the cabinet of My memory—they are tokens of your love to Me, even as you have had numberless tokens of My love to you." But what few memorials of your love some of you will have to look upon when you get there! You only give a trifle now and then—that is all. God grant that you may have the heart to give unto Jesus "of the gold of Sheba" in far greater abundance!

II. Then comes the second offering. The gold first, and THE PRAYER afterwards—not because the gold is the more valuable, but because, in some respects, gold, when it is given with a true heart, is the better test.

"Prayer also shall be made for Him continually." Notice those words again, "Prayer also shall be made *for Him*." Now we all know that prayer is continually made *unto* Jesus Christ. We are accustomed to address the Second Person of the Trinity as God in the form of prayer and, more frequently, prayer is made *through* Him when we address the First Person of the united Godhead through the mediation of the Son. But the Psalmist says, "Prayer also shall be made *for Him*." We can understand how Jesus Christ should pray for us but, at first, it does seem to stagger

us that we should be allowed to pray *for* Him. That He should be our Intercessor, that He should bend His knees on our behalf and point to our names engraved on His breastplate is a Truth of God so frequently mentioned in Scripture that we receive it unhesitatingly. But for us to become intercessors *for* Christ, to bind the breastplate on our breast, to wave the censer on His behalf, to plead for Him, pray for Him and beg for Him—this does somewhat astonish us! And yet our surprise is due rather to the expression than the fact, for it is a thing we are doing every day. Prayer is made for Christ continually.

Let me tell you that you virtually pray for Christ, Beloved, *whenever you pray for one of His people*. Will you understand me if I say that Jesus Christ has gone through a great many editions? Every one of the Lord's people is but another copy of their blessed Master. They are, as it were, particles of Christ beaten out into humanity again—pieces of that mighty wedge of gold beaten out into plate afterwards. They are partakers of Christ's Nature, they are part of His fullness. And whenever we do a kindness to one of them, we do it unto Him. Whenever we pray for one of His servants, we pray for Christ! You prayed for that poor miserable looking penitent who was afraid to call himself a Christian, though he was so in deed and in truth. Do you know that you then prayed for Christ? You interceded for that simple-minded woman who did not know the way to Heaven and who asked you to put up a prayer to God that she might be taught. Do you know that you then prayed for Christ, for she was part of His flesh and blood and was afterwards brought into His family. Do you know that whenever you put up a petition, even for the weakest and most despised of His little ones, you are praying for Him? What a physician does to the remotest member of my body, is done to the entire frame. Whatever is done to any part of my flesh is done to myself. And when we pray for Christ's people, the members of His body, we are really praying for Christ.

We pray for Christ, also, *when we pray for the spread of the Gospel and for the increase of His Kingdom*. When we implore of God, at our Missionary Prayer Meetings, that all His mighty promises may be fulfilled—that the people may fall under Him as willing captives—that the idols may be hurled from their thrones—that the Mother of harlots and abominations may receive her sudden doom and the merchandise of her seven-hilled city cease forever—that Mohammedanism and all false superstitions may be overturned—when we pray in the simple words which our Savior taught us, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, in earth, as it is in Heaven"—then we are praying for Christ in full sympathy with all saints, by whom prayer is made for Him continually! And, best of all, when we bend our knees and cry out for His Second Coming—when we beg of Him to cleave the skies and come to Judgment—or when, with other and more literal expectations, we ask Him to come and reign upon the earth and make His people kings and princes unto Him—when we ask the Ancient of Days to come and reign gloriously on earth with His ancients, then we are praying for Christ!

We ought to do so. Recollect, O Christian, in your prayers, whatever you forget, always to pray for your Redeemer! It is your privilege to have your name written in the list of those for whom He pleads and it is your honor to be allowed to plead for Him. Stop a moment—a worm pleading for God? The finite asking a blessing on the head of the Infinite? Less than nothing begging that the Eternal All may be blessed? Oh, were it not told you in Scripture, it would be blasphemy to attempt it! You may pray to Him with the most dread and solemn awe—and you may prostrate yourself at His feet. But to pray *for* Him, to beg on His behalf, how amazing this seems! For Jesus to take your petition to His Father gives a glory and a dignity to your very poorest prayer—but for you to turn petitioner to the King of kings on behalf of His own Son—do you not admire the condescension that permits that? I think I see you coming, poor, weak, helpless one, and God says, “For whom do you plead?” You say, “I plead for Jesus.” “What? You, a poor beggar? What? You, full of sin, littleness, nothingness—do you plead for My eternal Son? Are you making supplication for Him?” Do you not, yourself, think it amazing that you should be allowed to ask for a blessing on His head? Yes, then never slight this privilege! Never forget it—with your prayer, continually mingle His name.

III. Now comes the last point and here we must be somewhat longer, for we shall have, we hope, more thoughts—“Daily shall He be PRAISED.” Jesus is not only continually to have gold and prayer, but He is to have daily praise ascribed to Him. Let me go over the list of things which prove that Jesus Christ shall daily be praised.

First, I think, *Jesus daily shall be praised as long as there is a Christian ministry.* There have been professed ministers who have never exalted Christ at all. There have been some who took upon themselves the office for a morsel of bread, not being called by God—but has there ever been a time when there have not been faithful men of God? Has there ever been a season when God has not sent His Prophets throughout the land to speak in living words, from burning hearts and fervid souls, the very Word of God? No and there never shall be! If God should now put out those lights that shine in London or elsewhere—if He were now to say to the Churches, “Your candlesticks shall be removed out of their places, I will take those ministers away,” by tomorrow He would send others! And if the enemy should come and cut off the heads of all those who now speak God’s Word, would that be able to stop the perpetual thunders of the Gospel? No, for God would tomorrow find men who should rise up and even in the palaces of kings should yet dare to speak the name of God!

Men have thought they could put down the Gospel. They have used the rack and brought forth the stake, but what have they accomplished? They have but spread it more! All they have ever done to stop that mighty stream and bank it up has failed. It has retarded it a little while till, with overwhelming might, the stream has swept away the rock, dashed down the hillside and carried everything before it! They have attempted to

amalgamate the Gospel with free will, carnal reason, natural philosophy and such-like doctrines of men, which would, if it were possible, frustrate the counsels of God. They have spoken ill of the Gospel, they have given hard names to those who preach it—but have they been able to stop it, or shall they? No, never, while there is a God, He shall have His Calvins and His Luthers! He shall have His Gills and His Scotts, He shall have His devoted servants who are not ashamed or afraid of the Gospel of Christ! There never shall come a day when the Church shall be bereft of mighty champions for the Truth, who shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, but continually, to the latest period of time, men shall be raised up to preach Free Grace in all its Sovereignty, in all its Omnipotence, in all its perseverance, in all its Immutability! Until the sun grows dim with age and the comets cease their mighty revolutions—till all nature does quake and totter with old age and, palsied with disease, does die away—the voice of the ministry must and shall be heard, “and daily shall He be praised.”

Men cannot put out the light of Christianity! The pulpit is still the Thermopylae of Christendom and if there were but two godly ministers, they would stand in the pass and repulse a thousand, yes, ten thousand! All the hosts of mankind shall never vanquish the feeble band of Christ’s followers, while He sends forth His ministers. On this we rely as a sure word of prophecy, “Your teachers shall not be removed into a corner anymore.” And we believe that, by this ministry, Christ shall be praised daily!

But suppose the pulpit were to fail? We still have other means whereby Jesus Christ’s name would still be praised. *The ordinances that He has instituted will always continue to perpetuate His praise.* There are two Scriptural ordinances, in both of which Jesus Christ is very much praised. There is, first, that holy ordinance of Believers’ Baptism in which Jesus Christ is much honored, for it has a special relation to Him. “Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” When you descend into the pool at Baptism, you hear these sacred words pronounced, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And you are especially reminded there that unless you have believed in Jesus with all your heart, you have no right to this sacred avowal of fellowship with Christ, but are sinning against God in so doing. The Scriptures have taught us that whoever dares to administer that ordinance to any but those who believe with their heart and profess with their mouth, dares to touch with sacrilegious hands, God’s own institution, and is guilty of breaking down the hedges of the Church and throwing open to the world that which was never intended but for the Lord’s own family! We solemnly admonish you to have an eye to Jesus Christ in that blessed ordinance! We bid you, before you come, to examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. And when you are

there, we remind you that afterwards you are bound to live unto Christ—you have now passed the Rubicon of life—you have now come on the other side of the flood that divides the world from the Church! You have now, as it were, taken the veil and renounced the world—you are dead with Christ, you have been buried with Him by Baptism into death. By that very ordinance you honor the name of the Savior—and while that ordinance lasts, Jesus Christ shall be praised!

Nor less at the blessed Supper of the Lord shall the name of Jesus be praised. I think the moments we are nearest to Heaven are those we spend at the Lord's Table. I have sometimes looked at your faces, my Brothers and Sisters, at the Lord's Table, and if anyone wanted to see men's faces when they looked as if angels themselves were smiling in their eyes, such have your faces been when I have broken the bread and the wine has been passed to you! When those morsels have been in our lips, simple as the sign was—and when we have drunk the wine, simple and unceremonious as the whole affair was—what a sweet and holy influence it has had upon our hearts and how we did feel that we could praise God! I have thought, sometimes, that I could almost have leaped from the Table and have said, "Oh, let us praise the glorious Redeemer!" When we have seen Him on the Cross and beheld Him as our Substitute, we have felt our hearts were burning hot, that they could scarcely be held within our bodies and we wanted all to rise up and sing—

***"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall—
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All!"***

Even if the pulpit is gone, there still remain these two ordinances in each of which Jesus Christ "shall be praised."

But suppose that these were to cease? Suppose it possible that we could not meet together in our public assemblies to celebrate these sweet memorials, or to hear the Word of God? Yet there is another opportunity for praising God—there is the family of Christians—and *while there is a family on earth where Christ's name is named, it shall be daily praised*. I trust there is no Christian here who has a house without a family altar. If I came into your house and heard that you had no fireplace in the winter time, I would certainly advise you to build one. And if I heard that any of you had not a family altar, I would say, "Go home and lay the first brick tonight—it will be a good thing if you do so, I am sure." We had some beautiful instances, last night, at our Church Meeting, of young persons who, even though their parents were not godly, boldly started family prayer in the house. And we heard, in many cases, that the parents felt that they had no objection, and never wished to have it stopped! After they have once had the incense smoking in their house, they do not want to have it put out. My Brothers and Sisters, I cannot make out how you Christians live who have not family prayer in your houses! When I step into a Christian's house in the morning and we have a passage of Scripture, and a little prayer to God, it seems to put the heart and mouth into play for the whole day—there is nothing like it! And when we sit and

talk of what Jesus said and did, and suffered for us here below, as old Dyer says, it is like locking the heart up by prayer in the morning and bolting the devil out! We cannot get on half as well when we have not had that prayer in the morning.

And then, how do you get through at night? I do not understand at all how you professing Christians can get through the day without prayer and have no family prayer at night. I would feel like the good man who stopped at an inn and when he heard there was no family prayer, said, "Get my horses out! I can't stay in a house where there is no family prayer!" It does seem to me terrible that you should go on without prayer, that there should be no morning and evening sacrifice. I cannot make out how you live without it. I could not. I cannot understand how your piety gets on, nor what it feeds upon. I think wherever there is a Christian family, there should be daily praise in it. And mark this and solemnly hear me tonight—I do not speak unadvisedly with my lips—you will find that where sons and daughters have turned out a curse to their parents, when they have been a shame and disgrace to their parents and those parents have been Christians, it might have been set down to this—that while the parents have been Christians, they were not Christians at home! They had not family prayer, they never reared a family altar. I believe nine out of ten of such cases can be explained in that way without in the least touching the text, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Well, supposing we had no family prayer. Suppose we had no ordinances in the house and the altar did not smoke there? Yet daily should Jesus Christ be praised, for still *there would be our own hearts and we could praise Christ there*. If they put us in prison and we could not speak to one another, we could still praise Him! Or if our tongues were dumb, there is a language of the heart which can be heard in Heaven. With stammering words, or with actions which speak louder than words, our hearts shall always praise Him! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, do you think you will ever have done praising Christ as long as you are alive? I knew a woman who said to me, "Sir, if Jesus Christ does save me, He shall never hear the last of it." I thought it was a good saying. And shall He ever hear the last of it from you, Beloved? The last of it? Never! When we lie dying, the last word we give Him on earth shall be praise—and the first word we begin in Heaven shall be instinct with praise. And while eternity lasts and immortality endures, we will ascribe praise, honor and blessing to Him forever! Can we who are pardoned rebels, liberated slaves—can we whose souls are quickened from the dead by His Spirit, whose sins are washed away by His precious blood—can we ever cease to praise Him? No! Surely the very stones would speak if our lips were silent, or our hearts refused to pay Him grateful homage! Daily, daily, daily, "Daily shall He be praised."—

***"I'll praise Him while He lends me breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers!***

***My days of praise shall never be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.”***

But, then, supposing the innumerable company of His redeemed could perish and their immortality were swallowed up in death, yet even then, Christ would be praised daily! If all of us had departed from the boundless sphere of being, look up yonder and see *the mighty cohorts of cherubs and seraphs*. Let men be gone and they shall praise Him! Let the troops of the glorified cease their notes and let no sweet melodies ever come from the lips of sainted men and women—yet the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, who always chant His praise! There is an orchestra on high, the music of which shall never cease, even were mortals extinct and all the human race swept from existence—

***“Immortal angels, bright and fair,
In countless armies shine!
At His right hand, with golden harps,
They offer songs Divine!”***

Again, if angels were departed, still daily would He be praised, for *are there not worlds on worlds, and systems on systems that could forever sing His praise?* Yes! The ocean—that place of storms—would beat to His Glory! The winds would swell the notes of His praise with their ceaseless gales! The thunders would roll like drums in the march of the God of armies! The illimitable void of ether would become vocal with song and space itself would burst forth into one universal chorus, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” And if these were gone—if creatures ceased to exist, He who always lives and reigns, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelt, would still be praised! Praised in Himself and glorious in Himself the Father would praise the Son and the Spirit would praise Him and, mutually blessing One Another, and rendering each Other beatified, still daily would He be praised!

Now, dear Friends, I am conscious that I have not been able to enter into this mighty subject, but here are three things which we, as Christians, are bound to give to Christ—the gold of Sheba, our prayers and our praises. It is for us to see what we have given to Him. I wish we could keep a little book to see what our gifts to Jesus Christ come to in a year. I am afraid, dearly Beloved, that with some of you it would be a very miserable amount. I would lend you a small piece of paper out of my waistcoat pocket to put it down on—and there would be room enough. But it is not so with some of you, I know. You often pray for Christ, you often praise Him and you are often ready to give Him “of the gold of Sheba.” That is well, but let me tell you this one thing—there are none of you who need be afraid of praising Jesus Christ too much! We do sometimes praise *men* too much—we say so much in their favor, so much in their praise and then, afterwards, we find out they never deserved it. But I will be bondsman for my blessed Master tonight that you will never praise Him more than He deserves! If you like to speak of

Him in the most unmeasured phrases. If you borrow all the tongues of men and angels and talk about Him forever. If you praise Him and call Him God. If you call Him the most perfect of men, if you style Him, The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God—you will never say too much of Him!

So, Christian, begin to praise Jesus Christ now. You need not be afraid that you will be too extravagant in the praise you bestow upon Him, for when your hair begins to be white with the sunlight of Heaven gleaming on it, you will find that you never said enough about Him. Let the hoary-headed patriarch speak. Now he comes near his end. He totters and stoops and lifts his eyes to Heaven, and says, "Praise Christ too much? I thought Him lovely when I first knew Him. I knew Him to be lovely a little afterwards, when He helped me along, and I lived to prove that He was most lovely. But now I have got still further and I can say, 'He is altogether lovely, and there is none to be compared with Him.' I thought at first that each sweet mercy demanded a fresh song and I did, sometimes, feel a glow of devotion to Him. I then thought I must praise Him more and dedicate myself more to His service. But now," he says, "could I give my body to be burned for Jesus, I feel that He deserves it! His love in times past, His manifold helpings, His continual unchangeableness render me devoted to Him forever." And, like the servant of whom we spoke on Monday night, the old Christian feels that he is ready to have his ear bored to the doorpost forever! He never wants to go away.

I have said this because many persons nowadays say, "Ah, So-and-So is young—he'll be sobered down, by-and-by." I am sure, Beloved, it is a great pity if he should be. There are very few people in the present day who need much sobering with regard to religion. There is not so much fear of religious enthusiasm as there is of religious torpor and sleep. I should like to see a few enthusiastic Christians—"not drunk with wine, wherein is excess—but filled with the Spirit." But what do men say? Why, "the man has got no moderation—he is mad!" A person, passing by here the other day, said to another, "You know who preaches there, don't you?" "No, I do not." "Why, everybody knows that fellow! Everybody goes to hear him, but, you know, he's rather touched in the brain." "Yes," said a friend of mine, "and I'll tell you another little thing, by way of a secret—he's rather touched in the heart, too—and that's better still." Well, Beloved, we do not mind what they say about our being "touched in the brain." We believe it is well to be "touched in the heart" too! We may be mad, but it is a sweet madness, it is a blessed delusion, it is a most excellent "touch." And we only pray that the Master may touch us all. "Touched in the brain!" Ah, we have precious need to be in these days, for the brains are wrong enough originally! "Touched in the brain!" Most decidedly we require it, for most men's brains are very far from what they should be. "Touched in the brain!" May God "touch" every man's brain and every man's heart! And the more we are touched of God, whether it

is touched in the brain, or touched in the hand, or touched in the purse, or touched anywhere, it is always good so long as we are touched of God!

You know it was objected against David that he must not go and fight Goliath because his brother said he had come to see the battle in the pride of his heart. He did not stop to give an answer. The best answer he could give was to go and cut Goliath's head off and bring it back in triumph! So, many of you who are young in years and full of zeal, are advised not to do this and that and the other. Do not mind what they say! Go forth in the name of your God and you shall do great exploits. If the great and trained veterans are afraid of the battle, then raw and inexperienced recruits must stand in the forefront. While it is written, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength," let it be known and proclaimed, let it be thundered forth from the skies and let earth re-echo the sound that Christ must and shall be praised! If one class of ministers will not do it, another shall! What the learned will not do, the ignorant must! What the polite and refined cannot do, the rough and untutored must, for, verily, it must and shall be done! If those who stand up with all their boasted prestige among men cannot exalt Christ, He will raise up humble but devoted followers and by the weak things of the world, confound the mighty! Of old He raised up a shepherd to be a king, a herdsman to be a Prophet and a fisherman to be an Apostle! Those who dishonor Him shall be lightly esteemed—but those who honor Him, He will honor! Go, Christian, and exalt Christ! Love Him and exalt Him! Love your Master, talk about your Master, preach of your Master and, by the help of the Spirit, you shall yet come off more glorious than your foes, if not here, yet in that day "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

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

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

PRAY FOR JESUS

NO. 717

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Prayer also shall be made for Him continually.”
Psalm 72:15.***

HAVING on one or two occasions made use of the phrase, “praying for King Jesus,” I have been somewhat surprised to find that it was not understood, and I have been rather astonished at receiving several notes asking for an explanation of what I supposed to be a matter of common knowledge. It seemed to hearers and readers of my sermons as if the phrase must be a mistake, as if it could not really be a correct thing to do—to pray for the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet one moment’s reflection would have shown them that the expression is Scriptural, that you have it here if you have it nowhere else, “prayer also shall be made for Him continually.”

Our Lord is undoubtedly intended, in this passage, for He it is in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, and whose name shall continue as long as the sun. It is quite easy to see how we could pray for Christ if He were still on the earth. I suppose that when He was a Child His parents prayed for Him. They needed not to pray some of the prayers which we offer for *our* offspring, for He was sinless, but I can scarcely imagine that a mother’s love could have been restrained from seeking the richest blessings for her heavenly Child. And when He grew up, and came among men, and His lovely Character began to be known, how could His disciples do otherwise than pray that He might be speeded in His good work?

Can we suppose them to have been loyal to the Master if they did not often join their prayer with His that His kingdom might come? Indeed, what is the prayer which He has taught us, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” but in a certain sense, prayer for Jesus? “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven”—it is Christ’s kingdom, and Christ’s will, as well as the will of the Father, and the kingdom of the Father. That great cry which went up in the streets of Jerusalem when Jesus, in the days of His flesh, rode through them in state was a prayer—“Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” Did not the multitude thus implore blessing upon the head of Him who came in Jehovah’s name?

His disciples might have done well if they had prayed for Him and with Him in Gethsemane, and it was a part of His griefs to find that they could not watch with Him one hour. It was ordained that He should tread the winepress alone. I think we shall all see that the same spirit which made holy women minister to Him of their substance—which made the daughters of Salem weep for Him as He was led to His Crucifixion—must have prompted all His sincere followers to say Amen to this prayer, “Father, glorify Your Son”—and what was this but praying for Him?

But it will be said, “None of these things apply to Him now.” My Brothers and Sisters, think a little, and you will see that we can still pray for Jesus, and you will remember that in our hymns we often do so! As, for instance, when we sing—

**“Let all that dwell above the sky,
And air, and earth, and seas,
Conspire to lift Your glories high,
And speak Your endless praise.”**

For albeit that He is, in one sense, exalted to the utmost height of glory and reigns victorious over His enemies, yet, in another sense He is here in the midst of His chosen host striving with principalities and powers. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” is the blessed assurance that Jesus is our Captain in the great fight of faith, and is still present in the battlefield.

His great cause is here! His enterprise and business are here below! The work which He undertook to accomplish is not yet accomplished in the person of every one of His elect. His blood has been fully shed and His Atonement has been perfected, but those for whom the Atonement was made are not yet all gathered in. Many sheep He has which are not yet of His fold. We are therefore to pray for Him, that the good work which He has undertaken may be prospered, and that one by one those whom His Father gave Him may be brought to reconciliation and to eternal life.

Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as being still persecuted and still suffering. He said to Saul, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” He calls His people Himself! They are His mystical body, and in praying for the Church we pray for Christ! He is the Head of the body, and you cannot pray for the body except you pray for the Head! We must put them all into one prayer. He is still struggling with the hosts of darkness in His Church. He is still striving for the victory over sin in His people, and His people are waiting and longing for His second advent which shall fulfill their brightest hopes.

We must still pray for Him, not *personally*, but *relatively*—for His cause, for His kingdom, for His Gospel, for His people, for His blood-bought ones who as yet are in the ruins of the Fall—for His second coming, and glorious reign. In this sense, I take it, the text is meant that “prayer also shall be made for Him continually.” And now, Brothers and Sisters, I want, keeping to the one thought of the text, to show the light which gleams from it.

I. And, in the first place, if it is so, if we do, indeed, pray for Christ continually, how this thought **ELEVATES THE TONE OF OUR PRAYERS!** Think awhile—there are some prayers which are terribly narrow, selfish, and contracted—the suppliant mentions nothing but his own experience, or, at the widest, the trials of his household. He goes through his own private interests, and rehearses the sorrows of his own little sphere. He repeats them. He never seems to get beyond them.

At family prayer in such a case, “Give us this day our daily bread” seems to be the major petition, and, “Forgive us our debts” is perhaps the only other. The man prays like the blind horse at the mill—he travels round, and round, and round continually the same circle of prayer. Now, if that Brother could but get into his mind once and for all that there were

a great many others to pray for beside himself and beside his family—if he could remember that Paul wills, in the name of the Holy Spirit, that prayer should be made for all ranks and conditions of men—if such a man could hear all the ministers of Christ saying, “Brethren, pray for us,” and could remember that we are to pray for all the household of faith, why that would tend to get the man off his narrow selfishness!

And if he could grasp the still *higher* thought that in coming to the Mercy Seat we may come *for* Christ as well as *by* Christ, and may have a prayer to pray even *for* Him who is the Apostle, and High Priest of our profession, he would surely look upon prayer as being altogether a different thing from what he had conceived it to be! He would get out of that narrow rut and begin to pray something more worthy of a child of God! Full conviction of this thought would save us from selfishness in connection with those prayers which have a wider circumference but have their secret center in *ourselves*.

We do pray for the conversion of sinners, but I have been afraid, sometimes, lest I have been praying for sinners to be converted under my *own* ministry, with the view of being thought a useful preacher. And it is not impossible that some of you, in your classes, seeking to do good, may have desired usefulness with the view of wearing it as a jewel to ornament *yourselves*—or, if you sought not honor for self *exactly*—it may have been for some honored person whom your affection has made to be part of yourselves.

Now I do not think I ought to desire conversions for the sake of my minister, even though his ministry may be very dear to me, nor for the honor of my Christian Sister or Christian Brother, though their work may be exceedingly precious in my sight. I must take care that I supplicate for *souls* to be saved, and the *kingdom* of Christ to be advanced with no sinister aim mingling with the prayer.

Now if I pray it for Christ, if I pray that sinners may be converted for His glory, to show forth the power of His Gospel, to let men see that the pleasure of the Lord is prospering in His hands, *then* I shall ask for the mercies which I need with a better Grace and be less likely to “have not, because” I “have asked amiss.” And do you not see, also, how this would lift us beyond the narrow hounds of sectarianism? I mean just this—there is a possibility of desiring the extension of the Savior’s kingdom only in one direction—namely, in that direction in which we are most interested. It is right for a man to love that body of Christians with which he is most intimately connected, and to love them best because he believes that they are most faithful to the Truth of God—but he should not desire their increase merely for the prevalence of a party name!

He must desire it for the increase of the one great universal Church of Christ, and for the extension of the Truth of God because it is the Truth of God—not because it happens to be a Truth which he has received. I heard a speech the other day by a beloved Wesleyan Brother, and it did me much good to hear it. He said, “If God is pleased to scourge us Wesleyans for our sins, and to withhold a large measure of success, I will then pray that he would bless you Baptists, and make up through you what the Church may lose through us.” When I heard him say it and knew he meant it, I could not but feel my soul knit to such a man—a man who

loves the Church of Christ and loves it for Christ's sake, for the sake of souls—and for the Truth's sake. This is just how all of us ought to feel—that we wish to see all the Churches multiply and increase—and wherever Truth is preached, wish to see that Truth prevail.

Dear Friends, if we adopt the thought that we must pray for conversions for Jesus' sake, we shall be uplifted from the realm of jealous bickering! We shall say, "No, I do not desire conversions because of that Church, or that man, or that body, nor even merely because of the whole Church itself! But I desire the extension of the Truth of God for Christ. I pray for Him." Your minds will be enlarged, your souls will be expanded, and you will have come to the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

Moreover, I have noticed, dear Friends, that when we can ask for any deliverance as for Christ, we may pray very earnestly against an evil without any bitterness mingling with the prayer. It is the duty of every Christian to pray against Antichrist, and as to what Antichrist is. No sane man ought to raise a question. If it is not the Popery in the Church of Rome and in the Church of England, there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name. If there were to be issued a hue and cry for Antichrist, we should certainly take up those two churches on suspicion, and they certainly would not be let loose again, for they so exactly answer the description.

Popery anywhere, whether it be Anglican or Romish, is contrary to Christ's Gospel! And it is the Antichrist, and we ought to pray against it! It should be the daily prayer of every Believer that Antichrist might be hurled like a millstone into the flood and sink to rise no more. If we can pray against error for Christ because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of His glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His Atonement and lifts a piece of bread into the place of the Savior, and a few drops of water into the place of the Holy Spirit, and puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the vicar of Christ on earth—if we pray against it because it is against Him—we shall love the persons though we hate their errors! We shall love their souls though we loathe and detest their dogmas, and so the breath of our prayers will be sweetened because we turn our faces towards Christ when we pray. We are to pray for Him.

Do you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, it seems to me to make prayer so sweet to think that we can pray for Jesus! The Mercy Seat is inestimably precious to us when we can pray there for ourselves. When we can bring the case of a dear child or loving friend it is a blessing for which to be perpetually grateful. Oh the blessedness of prayer! Our hearts might break for lack of a way of expressing our love if we had not this method of telling it out before the Mercy Seat on the behalf of those dear to us. But, Beloved, to think that I may pray for *Christ*—that I may pray for Him who prayed for me, and plead on His behalf who with sighs and tears pleaded on the behalf of poor helpless me—it ought to be a very great comfort to some of you who cannot do much else beside pray for Jesus.

I dare say you have thought, "I wish I could *preach* for Christ." It is a very laudable wish! Covet earnestly the best gifts. But if you feel that you cannot speak to edification and are thus debarred from that honorable exercise, you must seek *another* mode of service. Then you have said, "I wish I could give to Christ's cause. If He would make me His steward. If He

would trust me with money, how willingly would I consecrate it to Him!" But you have no money and you are, perhaps, so poor you cannot do anything in that direction—though you would do very much if you could. Now, what a mercy it is that there is this which you *can* do—you can pray for Christ! You can come to the treasury and drop in your prayers, and if they are all you have, they will be like the widow's two mites which were not precious to Christ because they were mites nor because she was a widow—but because they were *all* her living.

Ah, if your prayers are all you can give God—and all your living—drop them into the Church's treasury, and say, "Well, I cannot do much else, but my daily constant prayer shall go up that the Lord would prosper the Gospel of His dear Son and make Him to rule and govern the wide world over." Dear Friends, here is room for questioning ourselves. Have you and I been neglectful in this form of prayer? If we have, I am persuaded that it will cast a flatness and a staleness over all our devotional exercises. If you have not prayed for Christ, I am afraid, dear Friend, that much of your own prayer will have been displeasing to God. Remember that the same Christ who tells us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," had first given us this petition, "Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

Do not let your prayers be all about your own sins, your own needs, your own imperfections, your own trials! Let them climb the starry ladder and get up to Christ Himself! And then, as you draw near to the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, offer this prayer continually, "Lord, extend the kingdom of Your dear Son." Such a petition, fervently presented, will tend to elevate the spirit and tenor of our prayers.

II. In the second place, praying for Christ will suggest to us MANY THEMES OF PRAYER. To pray for Christ is a very large topic, for it will bring before us something fresh for every day in the week. I must plead for Christ's cause on earth according to its present condition and circumstances. Consequently I shall need to keep my eyes open to see in what plight the kingdom of Christ is. As a general looks along the whole line of battle and sends reinforcements where the line appears to be most weak, so will the true man who prays for Christ look along the line of the Church's work and pray most for that which is in the worst state—offering up his prayers for Christ according as Christ's cause seems to need those prayers.

There are some topics which constantly claim our care—you may always pray for them. One is that Christ may have always enough witnesses for the Truth on earth. Your Lord has said, "Pray you the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." It is a prayer much forgotten, but it needs to be revived in the Church before we shall see much revival. There are many Churches now that cannot find pastors. In some districts, especially in America, there are Churches by the score without ministers, and apparently they must remain so for years to come. There is a general complaint throughout all denominations of a shortage of earnest first-class men who shall devote themselves to the ministry. And this shortage will be and will increase until the Church takes it up and prays that He who ascended up on high and received gifts for men

would be pleased to give her again her Apostles and ministers, her teachers and her evangelists, each according to his proper station.

We must pray for men of God, and you need never be afraid that the prayer will be needless in your lifetime, for if we had ten times as many witnesses for Christ, the world needs them. Look at China with its millions, India with its teeming masses, and even our colonies wide and far spread with a fearful lack of preachers of the Word! There are large companies of men who speak our language and who left our shores, who, for lack of teachers, are almost subsiding into heathendom and will perish for lack of knowledge unless there is a fresh host raised up of preachers of the Cross of Christ!

Pray, then, dear Friends, that God would find out and equip men to be heralds of peace to the people, and help those of us who labor even beyond our strength to aid young men whom God has called to His work to get the knowledge which their office requires. Another prayer may always go with it, namely, pray for those that are already in the field. "Brethren, pray for us," said the Apostle. If you have nothing to pray for, for yourselves, here stands one before you who needs *all* your prayers and feels that he needs them, and humbly with his whole heart begs you to let him live in your private devotions.

Brethren, we are rich when you enrich us with your supplications! We are strong when you strengthen us with your prayers! A few loving tears shed for us in private will be of more value to us than anything else you can possibly bestow upon us. Some of my Brethren are fainting from lack of success—hundreds of them are growing cold because of the coldness of the church members who surround them. Some of them are struggling with poverty—all of us, alas, are too weak for the work we have engaged in! Pray for us! You are praying for Christ, and if we are His servants—if He has truly sent us—you pray for the Master's business when you pray that the servants may do that business well. You pray for the Owner of the vineyard when you ask that the trimmers of the vines may know how to execute their tasks.

And when these two prayers have passed from your hearts to your lips, there is another—pray that God would open doors of utterance to us among the people. Ask that God would send the spirit of *hearing* throughout this city to begin with, and then throughout all England. It is poor gain that you have the preachers unless the people will listen—the trumpet sounds in vain if men stop their ears! God can, in a moment, as we know by past experience, influence people to say, "Come and let us go up to the house of the Lord."

I believe that through the last visitation of the cholera there *is* a spirit of hearing in London such as has not been for many years. Thank God for this! Ask that a desire to hear may be continued and increased. Intercede with the great Lord of All that in every country the hearing ear may be bestowed—that God's faithful servants may be cheerfully received and be enabled to accomplish their errand with a hundred-fold success. But, my Brothers and Sisters, I have only opened the bag. I have only commenced the list of matters for which you could pray if you would really pray for Christ! I would ask you, then, to pray especially for the conversion of many souls. This is Christ's delight, His love, His heart's joy.

You were told last Sunday morning that there was “joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents.” The angels sing, but Christ is the Choirmaster there. He is the chief Musician, for He has the greatest joy! It is His joy, His Heaven to see sinners saved! Pray, pray for Him, then! You *are* praying for the Shepherd when you pray for the lost sheep. You *are* praying for the King when you ask that the lost jewels of His crown may be found and set therein! Oh that we loved souls as Christ loves them! Then we would hunger and thirst after their salvation! Oh for the tender heart of the weeping Savior, that no soul might go down to Hell not sprinkled with our tears!

Brethren, pray for those who are saved, or who make a profession of it, that they may be kept from falling into sin. You are in an eminent degree praying for Christ when you offer such an intercession, for He is crucified afresh when professors fall. If I had an offer now of losing this right arm or having to endure in this Church some such falls as we have had to mourn over, and as the world has seen of late among high professors, I do feel I can say without hypocrisy I would choose to be cut limb from limb sooner than see those whom I have loved and honored fall from the faith. It is a bitter thing to us, who are ministers of Christ—it is our curse and plague—it costs us sleepless nights and miserable days when we hear of those that apparently did run well but turn back to the world!

Pray for professors that they fall not! And as you hope to be kept yourselves, I charge you pray for every tempted soul that his faith fail him not in the trying hour. Forget not to pray for the Church of God that it may be knit together in one. Do not ask that it may be made *uniform*—that is neither desirable nor probable—but pray that all Christians may be one as the Father is one with the Son. That is, one in *spirit*, so that we, divided as we always shall be as to our thoughts upon many points, may be one in the hope that animates us—in the spirit that actuates us. Pray that we may be one in the life of God that pulsates in our souls. Pray that the Churches may be knit together in holy love and may strive together for nothing but the advancement of the faith of Christ.

Nor have I done. When you have thus prayed for Christ, and I am sure it is all for Christ if you so pray, then ask that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Let no ideas of doctrine check you in such a prayer—you are bound to pray it! The example of Prophets and of Apostles urges you forward! Your allegiance to King Jesus should constrain you to it. You believe that He will come, but believe also the Truth of God which is equally certain that He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Though you may not be able to reconcile that universal reign with the other Truth of His coming as a thief in the night, do not try to reconcile it! Believe it because you find it in the Bible and, believing it, pray that you may see it. Do not indulge the thought that Christ is not to reign in China. That He is not to be King where the gods of the heathens rule. My Brothers and Sisters, He is to be so! Do not think He has only suffered upon Calvary to gather out a *few* from among men! The day is coming when He shall gather out a multitude that no man can number—who shall be His in the day of His appearing. Pray for this. Pray for the all-conquering progress of the Gospel of King Jesus!

Do not restrict your thoughts and limit your desires. Be ambitious for Christ. Nothing but universal monarchy ought to content you, as only it will content the Master. The little stone cut out of the mountain without hands must fill the whole earth, and every other image, though it is an image of gold or iron, shall be broken in pieces before the dominion of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ! Pray for it, my Brothers and Sisters! Pray for it day and night, and let the verse of Dr. Watts be true of you—

***“For Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head.”***

Thus I have tried to show you that this doctrine of praying for Christ instructs us in a variety of topics. I should again like to ask the question, whether you really have been up to the mark in this—whether there has not been a good deal of negligence upon many of these points? I am afraid I shall have to confess negligence myself, and perhaps most of you will. But do not let us remain satisfied with confession! Let us ask for Divine Grace that our prayers, from now on, shall be larger, wider, broader, more heavenly, more generous, more like the thoughts of the Infinite Mind, while we chiefly, and above all things, remember the work, and interest, and cause of Christ! As He remembers us, so let us remember Him.

III. Thirdly, it appears to me that if we were to look upon our prayers as being in a great measure prayers for Christ, this would tend to inspire us with PECULIAR EARNESTNESS. I must pray for Christ or else I am not consistent with my profession. I profess to be His servant. What? And not ask for the success of my Master? I avow myself to be His disciple—a disciple, and not anxious that the Truths which I receive from my Teacher should win their way? I call myself His friend. He calls me so in return—a Friend—and not show myself friendly enough to put up a word of prayer for Him? He has said I am His brother—a brother who does not pray for his brother is most unbrotherly! Moreover, He has deigned to call the collective body of His people His spouse—a spouse that does not pray for her husband is most unwifely. We must not so act if we are Christians in deed and in truth.

One of the first marks of Christians was that they met together and sung hymns in the honor of one called Christ. And another mark is that they meet together and pray for the extension of the kingdom of one whom they called Jesus. I have a second reason for so praying, namely, that *gratitude* dictates to me to pray. Oh, what has Jesus done for me! When I am praying for His *Church* I am apt to think of her faults, perhaps of her unkindness to me, and my prayer lacks force. But when I pray for *Christ*, so good, so tender, so self-denying, laying down His life for His sheep. When I think of His bleeding out that life for *me*—for me a sinner and once His enemy—how can I but pray for Him? Pray for You, Jesus? This is but a poor return for all Your groans and bloody sweat and agony for me.

I think I shall love prayer better than I have ever done if I am able to remember that I can speak a word in God’s ear for Him whose blood speaks for me! It will be a delightful satisfaction for me in my times of communion with my Father who is in Heaven to say to Him—“and, my Father, there is One whom You love, who died on my behalf, though I deserved it not, and I pray You glorify Him. Increase His kingdom! Help me

to honor Him. Cause human hearts to feel His power. Give Him dominion over tens of thousands of the sons of men.”

Does it not, dear Friend, quicken the pulse of your prayer? Do you think it possible to pray at a sluggish rate when you pray for Jesus? I have heard some people say, “I could not speak upon any subject but one,” and that one subject has been some kind friend who helped them in time of trouble. “Oh,” they say, “I could speak about him! That is a topic I could always find words upon.” Someone to whom you are grateful holds a key with which to unloose your tongue. And if you cannot pray for anything else, surely you can, you *must*, you *shall* pray for the Lord Jesus! As both our consistency and our gratitude will thus quicken us to prayer if we pray for Christ, surely our love to Him will tend to do the same.

Loved of Christ from before all worlds, we love Him in return. We never pray more fervently, I suppose, than for those whom we love best. He who does not love sinners cannot pray aright for them. When we love sinners, then the prayer is fervent. And when we love Jesus, then will the prayer be earnest. Love is the flaming torch to kindle the pile of our devotions. Brethren, we have something more than love to Christ. We are, if we are true Believers, one with Him—members of His body. All that concerns Him concerns us, not because we are partners merely, but because we are part and parcel of Himself. There is but one Christ, and His Church is one with Him.

We, members of His Church, are each one in living union with Him. No man, says Paul, ever yet hated his own flesh! Now, if I, professing to be a Christian, were to neglect Christ, I should be neglecting *myself* since He takes me into union with Himself. Do I ask that His kingdom may come? It is a kingdom in which I am to reign! Do I ask that His glory may be increased? It is a glory of which I am to be a partaker! Do I crave that His joy may be full? That joy is to be in me! How can I but pray when I am one with the Savior for whom I put up my supplications?

I am afraid I cannot put what I mean into words which carry it home to you. But to my own mind it is like a wafer made with honey which I can roll under my tongue and enjoy in its sweetness, to think that I have the possibility of pleading for Jesus! I feel convinced that it has a tendency to blow up the flame of prayer. I trust that the man who traveled slowly before will all at once put on his speed when he comes to pray for Christ Jesus.

IV. Very briefly, in the fourth place. If I can look at my prayers in the light which has been mentioned, it will tend very much to give me SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT in offering them at the Mercy Seat. He who has to present a petition will go with great confidence when he feels that the person for whom he makes intercession is exceedingly well worthy. Brothers and Sisters, if I pray for a guilty sinner I may have confidence. But when I pray for such a One as the Lord Jesus, my confidence can have no bounds set to it! Observe what He is! He is in constant favor with God. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

From the excellence of His Character and the dignity of His Person, He deserves to be the Beloved of His Father, and He is such. He is God’s well-beloved. It is easy work, then, to plead for Him. Now, if I pray for my minister, for the Church, for the conversion of sinners, I may feel a little diffi-

culty. But when I can make sure that I am praying for these for *Christ's* sake and with a view to *His* honor—and am thus virtually praying for Christ—why then, if enabled by the Holy Spirit, it becomes easy to pray because I know I must succeed when I am asking honor for Him whom the King delights to honor!

Brethren, when I think upon the merits of Christ in the matter of His mediatorial sufferings, how it encourages me to pray! I ask that He may be crowned who was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. Can this be denied? Is not the crown well earned? Can the reward be withheld? I ask that the pierced hand may be filled with the scepter, and that the feet once nailed to the Cross may be planted upon earth's dominions as upon a footstool. Can it be refused? Am I not asking that which His merit deserves? Which His triumph claims and wins? In this case I have something more to plead, I have God's promise. It is written, "He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands."

It is easy work to pray when we are grounded and bottomed, as to our desires, upon God's own promise! How can He that gave the word refuse to keep it? Immutable veracity cannot demean itself by a lie! And eternal faithfulness cannot degrade itself by neglect. God *must* bless His Son—His covenant binds Him to it. That which the Spirit prompts us to ask for Jesus is that which God decrees to give Him! Brothers and Sisters, whenever you are praying for the kingdom of Christ, let your eyes behold the dawning of the blessed day which draws near when the Crucified shall receive His coronation in the place where men rejected Him! The cause of Christ is downtrodden now—it shall not be so forever.

We have been for centuries like soldiers that keep the field against a foe inveterate and mighty. We have been wearily waiting in the trenches. We have been mournfully standing behind the bulwarks. But the day is coming when the Master shall say to us what the Hebrew Prophet said to Israel's tribes at the Red Sea, "Forward, forward!" And then we will be no longer merely keeping the ground but winning province after province for King Jesus! No longer storing our arrows in our quivers that they may be ready for the onslaught—but fitting them to the string and sending them like a mighty shower—we shall march to triumph and to universal victory!

Courage, you that prayerfully work and toil for Christ with success of the very smallest kind! It shall not be so always. Better times are before you. Your eyes cannot see the blissful future! Borrow the telescope of faith. Wipe the misty breath of your doubts from the glass. Look through it and see the coming glory! Messiah's kingdom comes! The trumpet soon shall sound! Peace shall be proclaimed! His saints shall reign in joy! Before long the millennial era shall begin and Jesus shall have His own.

Behold Him reigning upon the throne of His father David. The kings of the Isles bring him presents, Sheba and Seba offer Him their gifts. It must be so, Brethren! Christ has not died merely to win this little island, and a few other nations! He has died to redeem this whole round world as a jewel which He will wear in His crown, and He shall have it! I say the whole round world yet shall shine like a pearl in His diadem! He must, He shall reign over all nations till every enemy is put under foot. The sails that whiten every sea shall bear His messengers to the islands of the

South. The caravans that cross the desert shall convey His ambassadors to proclaim in the far-off oasis or among the wandering Bedouins His sacred name. The gates of brass which deny Him entrance must be broken! The bars of iron that shut out His heralds from any land must be snapped.

Hoary systems of superstition must crumble and the moles and bats shall yet be the sole companions of the gods of heathendom. Rejoice, rejoice! The cause for which you plead is one which Heaven ordains to bless! Everlasting decrees stand like lions to guard the throne of Christ! The mighty arm of the Most High is made bare to avenge His own elect. High shall the banner of the Cross be lifted! Soon shall the shout of victory make Heaven's loftiest arches ring and Hell itself shall tremble at the dreaded sound—for the King immortal, eternal, invisible, must reign and put down all dominion and power—and then shall He give the kingdom to God, even the Father.

V. In closing, the last thought which occurred to me was this—when we put our prayer in such a light that we pray for Christ it DEMANDS CONSISTENT ACTION. I cannot pray for Christ and then rise from my knees and go and sin against the very kingdom which I hope to spread! I ask you what is it but damnable hypocrisy for a man to say, “Your kingdom come,” and then to go out, and by inconsistent conduct, pull down the walls of Zion? What shall I say of that professor whose daily life in ordinary business is a continual splattering the Gospel with mud, and yet he says, “Your kingdom come”? Away with the hypocritical lips which can honor Christ in public, when the hands, the true token of the heart, will afterwards privately pluck down the Cross!

Ah, my Hearers, how many professors do this! How many who even give and contribute liberally will afterwards, in the way in which they get their money, or seek to get it, or in the conduct of their daily business, or in their families, bring infinitely more discredit upon religion than their contributions can ever bring honor to the Cross? If you pray for Christ, live like He lived! If you profess to desire His prosperity, do not, I pray you, cause Him to be wounded in the house of His friends!

But further, this is not enough. If I really pray for Christ I must take care to be on my watch to know what to pray for, so as to make my prayer a sensible prayer—a prayer of the understanding. Some members of the Church do not know what the Church needs at the present moment. They could not plead for Sunday schools, for they never take the trouble to enquire into their present condition. Could some of you pray for our own school as it should be prayed for? You could pray a sort of general hit-or-miss prayer, but you do not know whether the Sunday school is well attended. You do not know whether the teachers are godly young men and women and knit together in love, or whether they are all divided and split into factions.

We ought to know, as Church members, it seems to me, *something* about all the agencies—but *all* about some one agency in which we take particular concern. And we should get to be acquainted with the condition of the Church of which we are members. And also, as far as our means will allow us, we should be acquainted with the condition of the Church of God at large. We should take interest in it, feeling that it is our own con-

cern. And then when we pray we should pray with better spirit, understanding what we are asking for. Then, Friends, if we did this we are not afraid but what the last thing would be well attended to, namely, that we should take care that we add to our prayers our continual personal *service*.

The old fable of the priest who would not give the man a farthing but would give him his prayers, is very like many professors. They pray for the kingdom, but what are they *doing*? Many young men who are quietly at home in England ought to be missionaries abroad! Many others who are following their calling successfully ought to have devoted themselves to the ministry. And there are many Christian men who are making money for themselves who have got enough and ought to shut up shop for themselves and keep shop for Christ—they ought to make money for Christ with as much earnestness as I would preach the Gospel for Christ!

I have no doubt that many would thus serve the Master far more eminently than do half the professed preachers. Oh, if you are not doing *something* for Jesus let your closets chide you! Let your hymns, which you have been singing about His coming and His triumph—let them provoke you! But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, instead of appealing to all these considerations, I shall put it upon this footing—by Him who loved you, if, indeed, He loved you! By Him who died for you, if, indeed, you have a share in His passion! By Him who lives for you, if, indeed, you have been quickened together with Him! By Him who pleads for you this day before the Eternal Throne, if, indeed, your names are on His breastplate—I do charge you—live to Jesus!

Live now to Him! Live while you live! Live with all the possible energy of life! Let the love of Christ be an all-consuming passion with you! Find out some way in which to increase His kingdom. Ah, my Hearers, I bless God for you because the most of you are serving Him. I rejoice in you! You are the jewels of my crown of rejoicing because you *do* serve the Master! Many of you live even Apostolic lives in your eagerness to spread abroad the Truth of God! But alas, some of you I might speak of “even weeping,” because you are indifferent and almost dead to the blessed power of love within the soul!

May God revive us all! May the Holy Spirit constrain us to more consecrated living! I am in hopes that the Prayer Meetings held every morning and evening will be the means of bringing the Church into a warm-hearted, happy, holy, earnest state and that there will not be one left among us whose soul shall have been so dead as never to himself have said, “This is my work. Christ is my King. And now I will *live* for Him and *pray* for Him in the hope that I may at last die and be with Him where He is, and behold His glory—the glory which His Father gave Him—and be one with Him in Heaven forever and ever!”

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JESUS—“ALL BLESSING AND ALL BLESSED” NO. 2187

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 1, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.”
Psalm 72:17.*

THERE are many famous names in human history, but many of them are connected with deeds which have brought no blessing upon mankind. To bless and to *be* blessed is the noblest sort of fame and yet how few have thought it worth the seeking! Full many a name in the roll of fame has been written there with a finger dipped in blood. It would seem as if men loved those most who have *killed* the most of them! They call those greatest who have been the greatest cutthroats! They make their greatest illuminations over massacres of their fellows, calling them victories. To be set aloft upon a column, or represented by a public statue, or to have poets ringing out your name, it seems necessary to grasp the sword and to hack and slay your fellow men! Is it not too sadly true that when men have been cursed by one of their leaders, they, from then on call him great? O misery, that wholesale murder should be the shortest method of becoming illustrious!

There is one name that will last when all others shall have died out—and that name is connected with *blessing*—and *only* with blessing. Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to bless men. Men, as a race, find in Him a blessing wide as the world. While He was here, He blessed and cursed not. All around Him, both by speech, act, glance and thought, He was an Incarnate blessing. All that came to Him, unless they willfully rejected Him, obtained blessings at His hands. The home of His infancy, the friends of His youth, the comrades of His manhood, He blessed unsparingly! He labored to bless men. To bless men, He parted with everything and became poor. To bless men, at last He *died*. Those outstretched hands upon the Cross are spread wide in benediction—and they are fastened there as if they would remain outstretched till the whole world is blessed!

Our Lord's resurrection from the dead brings blessings to mankind. He has won for us redemption from the grave and eternal life. He waited on earth, a while, until He ascended, blessing men as He went up. His last attitude below the skies was that of pronouncing a blessing upon His disciples. He is gone into Glory, but He has not ceased to bless our race. The Holy Spirit came among us soon after the Ascension, because Jesus had

received gifts for men—yes, also for the rebellious. The wonderful blessings which are comprised in the work, Person and offices of the Holy Spirit—all these come to us through Jesus Christ, the ever-blessed and ever-blessing One! He still loves to bless. Standing at the helm of all affairs, He guides the tiller of Providence with a view to the blessing of His chosen. He still spends His time in making intercession for transgressors, that the blessing of God may rest upon them, while His Spirit, who is His Vicegerent here below, is always occupied with blessing the sons of men.

Our Lord Jesus will soon come a second time and in that glorious hour, though His left hand must deal out justice, His right hand will lavish blessing! His chief end and bent in His coming will be that He may largely bless those loving hearts that watch for His appearing. Christ is all blessing. When you have written down His name, you have pointed to the Fountain from which all blessings flow—you have named that Sun of Righteousness to whose beams we owe every good and perfect gift! From the beginning, throughout all eternity, the Lord Jesus blesses men—

***“Over every foe victorious,
He on His Throne shall rest!
From age to age more glorious
All blessing and all blessed.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove,
His name shall stand forever,
That name to us is—Love.”***

I purpose, at this time, if the Lord shall help me, to speak very simply about the fullness of blessing which comes from our Master and Lord. First saying, dear Friends, that *we ourselves are living proofs of the statement that men shall be blessed in Him.* Then, desiring to say, in the second place, that *we have seen it to be true, also, in others.* And, thirdly, expressing our conviction that *it shall be true, on the largest scale, with the nations*—“All nations shall be blessed in Him,” and, therefore, they shall call Him blessed.

I. First, then, WE OURSELVES ARE LIVING WITNESSES THAT MEN ARE BLESSED IN CHRIST. You and I do not pretend to be great sages, famous philosophers, or learned divines. We feel when a pin pricks us, or when a dog bites us. We have sense enough to know when a thing tastes well or bad. We know chalk from cheese, as the proverb has it. We know something about our own needs and we also know when we get those needs supplied. We have not mastered the extraordinary, but in the commonplace we feel at home. A man is none the worse witness in court because he does not know all the technical terms used in science. A judge is never better pleased than when he sees, in the witness box, some plain, blunt, honest fellow who will blunder out the truth. We will speak the Truth of God at this time, so far as we know it, whether we offend or please. Every man is to speak as he finds and we will speak concerning Jesus Christ as we have found Him. I will try, if I can, to be spokesman for all present who are believers in Christ. And I ask a patient hearing.

We bear witness that we have been blessed in Him. How much, how deeply, how long and in how many ways we have been blessed in Him, I will not undertake to say, but this I will say most emphatically—for many

of you now present, whose lives and histories I know almost as I know my own, we have in verity, beyond all question, been blessed in Jesus to the highest degree and of this we are sure! We believe and faith grasps the first blessing—that *we have received a great blessing in Christ by the removal of a curse which otherwise must have rested upon us*. That curse did overshadow us, once, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." We *could* not keep the Law. We *did* not keep it. We gave up all hope of keeping it. Therefore, the dark thunder-cloud of that tremendous sentence hung over us and we heard the voice of justice speaking out of it, like a volley of the dread artillery of God in the day of tempest! The thunder of the curse rolled heavily over our heads and hearts. How some of us cowered down and trembled!

We can never forget the horror of our soul under the near apprehension of Divine wrath! To be cursed of God meant all woes in one. Some of us were brought very low, indeed, by the frown of a guilty conscience. We gave up, even, the *dream* of hope. We thought ourselves effectually, finally and everlastingly condemned and so, indeed, we should have found it, had there not been a Divine Interposer! But now that curse is taken from us and we do not dread its return, for He was made a curse for us, of whose name we are speaking now—even He "who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." No curse now remains—only blessing abides! Hallelujah! If our Lord had done nothing else for us but the rolling away of the curse, He would have blessed us infinitely—and we would have blessed Him forever. If He had accomplished nothing but the bearing away of our sin into the wilderness—as the scapegoat of old bore away the iniquity of Israel—He would have done enough to set our tongues forever praising Him. He has lifted from the world the weight of the eternal curse and, therefore, let all the bells of our cities ring out His honor and all the voices of the villages sing forth His praise! O you stars of light, shine to His Glory, for He is blessed beyond all earthly measure!

The negative being removed, *we have had a positive actual experience of blessing*, for God has blessed us in Christ Jesus and we know that none are more blessed than we are. We are not at all, now, the men that we used to be as to our inward feelings. Some years ago, under the apprehension of Divine wrath, we were so unhappy and troubled that we could find no rest. But now we are blessed in Christ so greatly that we are at perfect peace and our soul has dropped its anchor in the haven of content! Our joy is usually as great as formerly our sorrow used to be. We feared our sorrow would kill us—we sometimes think, now, that our joy is more likely to do so, for it becomes so intense that at times we can scarcely bear it, much less speak of it!

As we could get no rest before, so now, by faith, we feel as if we never lost that rest, for we are so quiet of heart, so calm, so settled, that we sing, "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed!" Not because temporal circumstances are quite as we would wish them, but because we have learned to leave off wishing, we are now more than satisfied! Getting God's

blessing upon everything, we have learned to be content and something more—we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We used to fret, before we knew Him, but His love has ended that. We thought we could do things better than God could and we did not like His way of managing—but He has taught us to be like children, pleased with whatever our Father provides—and, therefore, we joyfully declare, "My soul is even as a weaned child! I have nothing to wish for. I need nothing but what my Father pleases to give me." Having God's sweet love, we would not give a snap of the finger for all that princes call their treasure, or all that great men reckon to be their honor. Unto us who believe, Christ is precious—both treasure and honor in one! In fact, Christ is ALL! It is a delightful calm of mind which the Believer enjoys when He dwells in Christ.

Humble faith puts the soul into the guardian hand of the Redeemer and leaves it there in the restfulness of entire trust. Grace baptizes us into blessedness. It plunges us into that sea of everlasting rest in which we hope, forever, to bathe our weary souls. Yes, blessed be His name, the Lord Jesus has made life worth living! It is no longer, "something better not to be." We *must* speak well of the condition into which He has introduced us since we have known His name. "Well, Jack, old fellow," said one who met a man who had lately joined the Church, "I hear you have given up all your pleasures." "No, no," said Jack, "the fact lies the other way. I have just *found* all my pleasures and I have only given up my follies." Every Christian man and women can confirm that way of putting it! We who have believed in Jesus have lost no real pleasures, but we have gained immensely in that direction. If anything sinful was once a pleasure to us, it is not so now—when we discovered it to be evil, it ceased to be pleasure—and we thrust it away without regret! We have lost nothing by conversion that was worth the keeping, but what we gained by coming to Christ has been an inconceivable recompense to us. Is it not so, Brothers and Sisters? Are we not blessed in Christ?

Now, there are some of us who, if we were asked to tell what blessings we have received from Christ, would scarcely know where to begin—and when we had once begun—we would never leave off unless it were from sheer lack of time or strength. Brethren, *certain of us owe all that we have to the influence of the Lord Jesus*. From our birth and childhood we were indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us now present had the great happiness to spring from godly parents—before we knew the meaning of language, that softly sweet name of Jesus Christ was sung in our ears! The kindness that we received in our earliest days was, very much of it, due to, "Gentle Jesus," of whom our mothers taught us to sing! He found for us the first swaddling bands of love and watched over our first sleep. Ah, those poor children of the back streets—children who are trained in infamy and blasphemy—how sad their start in life! But some of us had great advantages which were granted us of Sovereign Grace by His dear pierced hands! We bless the Lord who saved our parents and, through saving them, sent to our trembling infancy a mine and a mint of blessing.

In our opening childhood we began to understand for ourselves the loving influence of an affectionate and anxious mother. And then golden

showers of Divine Grace fell on us from the love of Jesus. We remember, some of us, those hours on the Sabbath, when Mother would talk with us of heavenly things—with tears in her eyes persuading her boy to give his heart to Jesus, early, and not to let his first days be spent in sin. We remember a wise and prudent father, whose example and instruction all went the same way. The comforts of our home—and they were many—we owed them all to Jesus, for His love made our parents what they were and created a holy, happy atmosphere around us! He might have left our father to frequent the drunkard's haunt and might have suffered our mother to be what many mothers are—unworthy of the name—and then our childhood would have been utter wretchedness and our home the nursery of vice. Education in crime might have been ours—we might have been tutored for the gallows.

Since that, we have had to shift for ourselves and have left the parental roof, but I, for one, have been casting my thoughts back, to see if I could remember any good thing that I have which I do *not* owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know that I have anything that I cannot distinctly trace to Him and His influence! I have many Christian friends—most valuable friends, I find them—but my association with them commenced in the House of God and the friendship between us has been cemented by common service yielded to our blessed Master! Many of you would hardly have had a friend in the world if it had not been that Jesus introduced you to His disciples—and they have been the best friends you have ever had, or ever will have! You used to know certain fine fellows who called themselves your friends and as long as you had a shilling to bless yourself with, they stuck to you to have sixpence of it. You know the style of their friendship and you must now have serious doubts as to its value.

Well, they left you when you became Christians and their departure has been a very gainful loss to you! When they cleared out, altogether, you found that their removal was for your good, if not for their own. But those friends you have made in Christ have been really helpful to you. They have deeply sympathized with you and, as far as they could, they have helped you. Many have been carried through sharp trials by the help of Christian hands. But, whatever you may have to say on the point, I am personally a debtor, over head and ears, to my Savior. What is there—I repeat the question—that I do *not* owe to Jesus? I am again and again thinking, and thinking, and thinking—but if anything which I call my own is worth having, I must trace it to Him. And are you not, dear Friends, many of you, compelled to say the same? Among the best things you have are your Sabbaths—but they are *His* days—His resurrection days. Your Bible, too, is a priceless treasure, but that is *His* Testament—His legacy of love! The Mercy Seat is a storehouse of wealth—but *He* is that Mercy Seat, and His own blood is sprinkled on it! You have *nothing*, dear Friend, that you do not owe to Jesus, the Fountain of salvation. You are blessed in Him!

I might single out another class of persons, who, from quite another point of view, would be compelled to say that they, also, have been blessed in Christ. They started in another way and were upon a road which led to

death, but *they have been rescued*. Some of you started life in the midst of an entirely worldly family. There was kindness—parental kindness, in the home, but it was unwise. Abundance of temporal enjoyment was always supplied, but there was a very scanty recognition of anything like religion and, indeed, no knowledge whatever of personal piety. It is little wonder that young persons who are trained in a godless manner and allowed to do very much as they like, should plunge into this sin, and into that. That some young men are saved is a special miracle, for their circumstances make their ruin almost inevitable. I am addressing some of my Christian Brothers and Sisters who remember what liberty to sin was and how they availed themselves of it. They took large license to destroy themselves under the pretence of seeing the world. They were never content except when they were gratifying their passions and obeying the commands of the devil. In their salvation they have been blessed, indeed!

But you, also, who have gone to no great extent in open sin, you, also, have been signally blessed in Christ *by gracious and unmistakable conversion*. In receiving the Lord Jesus into your soul, what a change has been made! From what a bondage have you been rescued! Into what a new life have you been brought! What new scenes now open up before you! What new hopes, what new joys, what new prospects are all your own! Do I speak to some who plunged into the very grossest sin and yet can say, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified"? Blessed be our dear Master's name for Grace to such individuals! Such, indeed, are blessed in Him. I know that I am addressing those who had, in their earliest days, the very worst example—who have been brought into the House of God from the place where Satan's seat is—who cannot, after years of godliness, get out of their memory the recollection of the bad, depraved old times of their youth. In your salvation Jesus has worked a blessed deed. You could drink as others drank. You could fall into sins of uncleanness as others did.

Let us say very little about these open evils. I do not like to hear men talk about their old sins as if they were adventures—they are a shame and a sorrow to all right-minded persons. We humbly hint at them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, for great Grace it was in the case of some of us. Oh, but the day in which you first knew that dear name! When you first felt repentance melting your hard heart! When you first felt hope springing up in your formerly insensible spirit—then you began to see that there was something nobler and better to live for than merely to gratify sensual passions. Then you began to see that you were an immortal spirit and not meant to fatten like the swine, but were created to be a brother of the angels and to be akin to God, Himself—that was a happy day—a day written in Heaven and made bright with the light of seven days! When Jesus changed your nature, forgave your sins and made you to be like Himself, you were, indeed, blessed in Him!

I want you now, to look back again. I ought not to tire you, even if my talk should seem dull and commonplace, because to remember what God has given and to be grateful concerning it, ought to be a sweet pastime to each one of us. It is not only a duty, but a recreation to be grateful! I do

not know any emotion which can give greater joy than that of thankfulness to the Most High. Dear Friends, the Lord has greatly blessed us in the name of Jesus *in times of very special trouble*. I may not be able to describe your personal trial, but I will take one as a specimen. Depression of spirits comes upon the man. He scarcely knows how or why, but his soul melts because of heaviness. There is, at the back of his sadness, probably some real trial—this he is very apt to magnify and make more of than needs be—and also to expect a dark and terrible calamity to come which will not come. But yet the foreboding is as real a trial as if the catastrophe had actually occurred. The poor despondent creature cannot endure himself and almost grows weary of life. Like the king of Israel, who had all that heart could wish—gardens, palaces, singing men and women—who had all the appurtenances, both of folly and of wisdom, to make him happy, yet he cries, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" Nothing will cheer this child of grief—he is downcast and desolate.

If you have ever gone through that experience, it has been a very great delight to you when you have got alone and thought of your Lord Jesus, whose everlasting love cannot cease towards you, whose fullness of Grace cannot be exhausted, whose power and faithfulness will always stand you in good stead. If, by a sort of desperate resolve, you have cast yourself upon Him, to sink or swim, to find everything in Him, or else to have nothing, you have risen up altogether a new man! You have felt, "I can face the adversary. I can meet the trial, for Jesus is mine!" Despair of spirit has fled when you have leaned hard on the Cross-Bearer. I have been one of the cave dwellers and the dark has shut me in, but Jesus has been my Heaven below. I may have a degree of heaviness about me, but still, I trust in the Lord, and I am not afraid, for the name of Jesus has caused me to be strong! Yes, men shall be "blessed in Him" by the strength which He gives in the hour of need.

You remember the loss of that dear little child. How blessed you were in Jesus when He came and solaced you! You remember your father's death, or the loss of your husband, or the death of the dearest earthly friend. Yes, then in such times you knew how precious Christ could be and how blessed you were in Him! Some of you have passed through the desert of poverty. You have frequently been very hard pressed, but still, though you cannot tell how, you have had just enough. You are yet alive though death seemed certain. You have been "blessed in Him," and so you have survived every storm. Some of you have had little enough of earthly comfort and yet you have not been unhappy. I have sometimes admired a dog for his economical use of comforts. When it has been a long, rainy day and the sun has just peeped out and there has been a gleam of sunlight on the floor—I have seen him get up and wag his tail—and shift his quarters so as to lie down where the bit of sunshine was! It is a fine thing to have just that state of mind—never to go sullenly into the shadow, but always cheerfully to accept the square yard of sunshine and make the most of it! There is something, after all, to be thankful for—something for which to praise the name of God. And if the Lord Jesus Christ had taught us nothing else but that—the practice of lying down wherever there is a trace of

sunshine and, better still, of always finding sunshine in His dear name—I am sure we are bound to say that we have been "blessed in Him."

Well, every year will teach us more and more fully how blessed we are in Jesus, and there will come a day—*the last of our earthly days*—when we shall know on a higher scale how blessed we are in Him! One of the most pleasant scenes that I ever see is the dying bed of a fine old Christian. I saw one but a few days ago, who, since I was at his bedside, has entered into rest. It was very pleasant to talk with him about what the Lord had done. He was ready to speak well of the dear name. There was much self-depreciation, but much more honoring of Christ by testimony concerning support given in the hour of affliction and succor in the time of need. Brothers and Sisters, you think it will be hard to die? You may not find it so. One, when he was dying, said, "Is this dying? Why, it is worthwhile going through all the troubles of life, even for death's own sake, if it is like this, for I have such heavenly enjoyment as I never could have imagined." Some of God's saints are very needlessly anxious about dying. I knew one to whom it was always a burden. He went to bed one night and he never woke up—thus answering his own fears, for he did not even know when he passed away, but died in his sleep! He was gone, gone, gone to Heaven without a pang! When you see how Believers pass away to be with their Lord in Glory, you have a commentary upon the words of my text—"Men shall be blessed in Him."

But do you see them? *Their spirits have ascended unto God, their Father.* How full of bliss they are! Disembodied they are, but they are not destroyed. Their poor earthly frames are still in the grave, yet their liberated spirits are supremely blessed, for they are, "forever with the Lord" and they are blessed in Him. Wait you but a very little while and the trumpet shall ring out from the angel's mouth, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgement!" And then shall men be blessed in Him, if they are, indeed, "in Him." When the righteous, restored to their bodies, shall, in their perfect manhood, behold Him face to face and dwell with Him, world without end, "men shall be blessed in Him."

I do not feel satisfied with the style of my speech at this time, but we who speak the Word are by no means masters of ourselves. I cannot rise to the height of this great argument and I do not think that, if I were to try a hundred times, I could ever satisfy myself when speaking upon this most Divine theme. My Lord is the most blessed Master that ever a servant had and He has blessed me personally so unspeakably that, if I were to bear my witness with the tongues of orators and angels by the space of a century, yet must I cease from the task and humbly confess—"I have not told you the half—nor can I tell you even the tenth of how good my Well-Beloved is to me." I suspect that you are, most of you, of my mind and say, "Neither can we." I sometimes tell you the story of what happened to me when I declared, in a sermon, that in the Heaven of the grateful, I would sing the loudest of them all, because I owed more to the Grace of God than anybody else. I meant it not out of any sense of superiority, but rather of *inferiority*. One good old soul, when I came down the pulpit stairs, remarked to me, "You have made a great mistake in your sermon."

I answered, "No doubt I made a dozen." "No, but," she said, "the great mistake was this—you said that you owed more to God than anybody else, but you do not owe anything like so much as I do. I have had more Grace from Him than you have. I have been a bigger sinner than you ever were. I shall sing the loudest!"

"Well, well," I thought, "I will not quarrel with her; it shall make me the more glad to find myself outdone." I found that all the Christians were much of the same mind. Brothers and Sisters, we will have it out when we get up yonder. But you shall praise God, indeed, if you praise Him more than I will—and you must be double debtors to my Lord if you owe Him more than I do! If you are more unworthy and more undeserving than I am, you must, *indeed*, be unworthy and undeserving! And if His rich, free, Sovereign Grace has exhibited itself more fully in you than it has in unworthy me, it has, indeed, overflowed all its banks! We will leave the loving contest for the present, but when all the birds of Paradise reach their nests above, there shall be a competition of adoring praise—and all of us will do our best to bless the name of the Lord!

II. Our second head was to be a practical one—we can only give a few minutes to it. WE HAVE SEEN OTHER MEN BLESSED IN CHRIST. Our observation confirms our experience. If this were the proper time, I could narrate many instances—which I could also confirm by producing the individuals—in which men have been remarkably blessed in Christ. What *social changes* we have seen in those who have believed in Him! They have not been the same persons—in many respects they are new. I have known persons at whose houses I have visited—well, you could not have believed that the man who lodged in the house, where he was first found, could ever have risen to occupy a room in a house at all like that in which he came to reside! The room in which I conversed with him was a palace, compared to the dog-hole in which he once existed. There was a change in his dwelling. There was a change in his wife. You would hardly know the woman—she is so different from the wretched slut and slave who called him, "husband," with a sigh and a sneer! She is here, now, sitting with him, and they are as happy as angels! I shall not point them out, but they are as good as any of you. We have known the case in which, from rags—absolute rags—the coming of Christ into the soul has lifted a man into competence, respectability and position.

Godliness has a gain about it—an honest, worthy gain for the life which now is. It teaches men habits of thrift, prudence and temperance—and delivers them from the thralldom of drunkenness and other vices—by which the major part of poverty is occasioned. It is worth mentioning even such blessings as these, as the poor little children know. They used to run away when Father came in, for they were afraid of him, but now, instead of that, they are watching for the time when his work is done, to go toddling down the street to meet dear Father, for the luxury of being brought home in his arms! Our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed some men and some women at such a rate that the devil, himself, would not have the impudence to say it was not a blessing! Liar as Satan is, he could not

deny that godliness has brought sunshine where there was none—the blessing has been too distinct and manifest for *any* to deny it!

What a *moral change* have we seen in some! They could not speak without an oath, but the habit of profane swearing ended in a minute and they have never been tempted to it since! Rash, bad-tempered men, who would break up the furniture of the house in their passion, have become as gentle as lambs! Such furies usually become quiet, peaceable and long-suffering—Divine Grace has a marvelous influence upon the temper! Men of hot passions that used to give a word and a blow—but generally the blow, first—now watch themselves and guard against their infirmity! They take a little time to think before they let fly a hard word or give a sharp look. The change that we have seen in some men has been as complete as that which could have been worked by that fabled mill, into which the legend says that they put old men, turned the handle and ground them young again! Truly a far greater renovation is worked in mind and heart where Jesus comes. Men are "blessed in Him"!

Then, as to *mental blessing*. What have we seen? This have I seen—here is one case out of many. A young man who had fallen into sin, came to me in deep despair of mind. He was so desponding that his very face bore witness to his misery. He wore the aspect of one who could not live much longer as he then was. I had tried to set the Gospel clearly before him on the previous Sabbath, but he told me that he could not grasp it, for that by his sin he had reduced his mind to such a state that he felt himself to be little better than an idiot. He was not speaking nonsense, either, for there are vices which destroy the intellect. I told him that Jesus Christ could save idiots—that even if his mind was, in measure, impaired as the result of sin, yet there was quite enough mind left to be made glad with a sense of pardon, seeing there was more than enough to make him heavy with a sense of guilt. I cheered that Brother as best I could, but I could effect nothing by my own efforts. Soon the Lord Jesus Christ came to him—and he is now a happy, earnest, joyful Christian! Not long ago he sent an offering of thanksgiving to God for having lifted him up from the deeps into which he had fallen. I hope there is a long life of real usefulness before him.

We cannot mention one tenth of what we personally know! Eternity will open a great book of record. I call upon the spirits of the just made perfect to witness what the Grace of God did for them! I call upon parents, here, to tell the pleasing story of the conversion of their sons and daughters! And I call upon those who watch for their fellow men to say whether they have not met with many cases in which men have been blessed in Jesus by being snatched from between the jaws of madness, itself, by the sweet, calming influence of the always dear and blessed name of our Redeemer! Yes, indeed, and of a truth, men *are* and *shall be* blessed in Him!

The practical point is, Brothers and Sisters, since we need to do good, let us preach up our Lord Jesus Christ as the Sovereign balm for every sinner's wound! If you want to be philanthropists, be Christians! If you would bless your fellow men with the best of all blessings, convey to them the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Do not believe that there is *anything* you

can do for your children which will be more effectual than teaching them about Jesus! Do not think that anything in the workshop can soften the vulgarities, silence the blasphemies and end the profanities of your fellow workmen, like setting Jesus Christ before them! When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, they tried to tell the Greenlanders about the existence of a God—they spent some months in such preliminary subjects before they came to the Gospel—but they never gained the attention of the people. Discourses upon such necessary subjects as the Godhead, the immortality of the soul and the like, were flavorless to the Greenlanders.

It happened, one day, that one of the missionaries, translating the Gospel according to John, read out these words—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "What is that?" said the Greenlanders. "What is that? We never heard the likes of *that*. Why have you not told us that before?" Nothing had been done till the missionaries came to the Gospel, itself! Then they reached the Greenlander's heart—awakened his dormant intellect and led him to Jesus! Oh, let us keep on with the subject of Christ Crucified! Whatever there is not in our shop window, let us always have Christ as the chief article of our heavenly commerce. Whatever there may lack of Grace and beauty in our speech, and our outward appearance, may there be no lack of Jesus Christ set forth among the sons of men, for, "men shall be blessed in Him" and not without Him! Great schemes of socialism have been tried and found lacking—let us look to regeneration by the Son of God—and we shall not look in vain. Nothing has come of newfangled preaching from the first day till now—but *never* has the old faith of Jesus failed! Men have been blessed in Jesus and they shall be blessed in Him as long as the race shall exist.

III. Lastly, this whole matter is to extend till THE ENTIRE WORLD SHALL BE BLESSED IN CHRIST. Even at this moment the whole world is the better for Christ. But where He is best known and loved, there is He the greatest blessing. What snatched many an island of the southern sea from barbarism and cannibalism? What, but Jesus Christ preached among them? Men have been blessed in Him in Europe, America, Asia and everywhere. Africa and other lands, still plunged in barbarism, shall receive light from no other source but that from which our fathers received it centuries ago—from the great Sun of Righteousness.

Men shall be blessed in Christ because where He comes, oppression cannot live. You may tell me that the governor of such an empire is a despot. Oh, yes, but despots cannot long flourish where there is an open Bible! Tyrannies may last a generation or two, but all the world knows that their time is short. They will go down—they must go down where Christ is lifted up! That Inspired Book is a testimony for human liberty, louder than all others. It is a declaration of the rights of men under King Jesus—despotism must fall before it, sooner or later. We, in this country, owe our liberties, beyond everything, to the Christianity which is the outflow of a present Christ among us. Slavery? What a plague it was upon the fair hands of our sister nation across the Atlantic! The spot is washed away

and it was true religion which forced the washing! There would have been no freeing of the slaves from fetters if it had not been for the Christianity which, after long silence, at last spoke out! And when it spoke, it was as when a lion roars.

The Christianity of England is always pleading for the slave, for the aborigine, for the down-trodden. Leave our politicians alone and we shall soon have all the infamies alive again! Slavery would be tolerated, if not encouraged, if there were not Christian souls upon the watch. What saves us from war at this moment? What influence is it that is always contrary to war and always cries for peace? Why, it is the Christian element among us which counts anything better than bloodshed! Let the Christian element spread and it will be a power to bless mankind! It shall, in proportion as it spreads, put down evil and foster good. Already many a monopoly has been ended and many a liberty has been gained. Much religious intolerance has been subdued by the power of Jesus Christ over His people and I do pray, dear Friends, that we may live to see all nations more manifestly affected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May every nation be ruled by just and righteous laws! May every nation be willing to submit exterior disputes to the arbitration of justice!

It will be so one day. The nations shall be friends and all men shall feel that they are members of one great family. "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you," is the sum of the moral teaching of our Divine Lord—and if that is followed, it will bring about a halcyon era, the likes of which the world has never seen! If His Spirit will come and renew men's hearts—and teach them to love and to obey the Lord their God—then shall all nations call the Redeemer, blessed and, from every corner of the whole earth, the song shall go up, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!" Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 72.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—72 (SONG I), 343, 386.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

The Preacher feels himself restored and would thank his friends for their prayers for his recovery. He now entreats their intercession that he may, on his return, be clothed with new power from above. Errors, which are at once ludicrous and horrible, are rising up among those who would be leaders of religious thought—we shall need Divine strength to be faithful to the one and only Gospel of our Lord Jesus. Wisdom and power can only come from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in working, and in answer to prayer He can supply all that is needed. "Brethren, pray for us!"

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

THE ETERNAL NAME

NO. 27

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 27, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL STRAND.**

***“His name shall endure forever.”
Psalm 72:17.***

No one here requires to be told that this is the name of Jesus Christ which “shall endure forever.” Men have said of many of their works, “they shall endure forever.” But how much have they been disappointed! In the age succeeding the Flood, they made the brick, they gathered the slime and when they had piled old Babel’s tower, they said, “This shall last forever.” But God confounded their language. They finished it not. By His lightening He destroyed it and left it a monument of their folly. Old Pharaoh and the Egyptian monarchs heaped up their pyramids and they said, “They shall stand forever,” and so, indeed, they do stand. But the time is approaching when age shall devour even these. So with all the proudest works of man, whether they have been his temples or his monarchs, he has written “everlasting” on them. But God has ordained their end and they have passed away. The most stable things have been evanescent as shadows and the bubbles of an hour, speedily destroyed at God’s bidding. Where is Nineveh and where is Babylon? Where the cities of Persia? Where are the high places of Edom? Where are Moab and the princes of Ammon? Where are the temples or the heroes of Greece? Where are the millions that passed from the gates of Thebes? Where are the hosts of Xerxes, or the vast armies of the Roman emperors? Have they not passed away? And though in their pride they said, “This monarch is an everlasting one—this queen of the seven hills shall be called the eternal city,” its pride is dimmed—and she who sat alone and said, “I shall be no widow, but a queen forever,” has fallen. She has fallen and in a little while she shall sink like a millstone in the flood, her name being a curse and a byword and her site the habitation of dragons and of owls. Man calls his work eternal—God calls them fleeting. Man conceives that they are built of rock—God says, “No, sand. Or worse than that—they are air.” Man says he erects them for eternity—God blows but for a moment and where are they? Like baseless fabrics of a vision, they are passed and gone forever!

It is pleasant, then, to find that there is one thing which is to last forever. Concerning that one thing we hope to speak tonight, if God will enable me to preach and you to hear—“His name shall endure forever.”

First, *the religion* sanctified by His name shall endure forever. Secondly, *the honor* of His name shall endure forever. And thirdly, *the saving, comforting power* of His name shall endure forever.

I. First, *the religion of the name of Jesus is to endure forever*. When impostors forged their delusions, they had hopes that perhaps they might, in some distant age, carry the world before them. And if they saw a few followers gather around their standard, who offered incense at their shrine, then they smiled and said, "My religion shall outshine the stars and last through eternity." But how mistaken have they been! How many false systems have started up and passed away! Why, some of us have seen, even in our short lifetime, sects that rose like Jonah's gourd in a single night and passed away just as swiftly! We, too, have beheld prophets rise who have had their hour—yes, they have had their day, as dogs all have—but like the dogs, their day has passed away and the impostor, where is he? And the arch-deceiver, where is he? Gone and ceased. Specially might I say this of the various systems of infidelity. Within a hundred and fifty years how has the boasted power of reason changed! It has piled up one thing—and then in another day it has laughed at its own handiwork, demolished its own castle and constructed another—and the next day a third. It has a thousand dresses! Once it came forth like a fool with its bells, heralded by Voltaire. Then it came out a braggart bully, like Tom Paine. Then it changed its course and assumed another shape, till finally we have it in the base, bestial secularism of the present day—which looks for nothing but the earth, keeps its nose upon the ground and like the beast, thinks this world is enough, or looks for another through seeking this! Why, before one hair on this head shall be gray, the last secularist shall have passed away! Before many of us are 50 years of age, a new infidelity shall come and to those who say, "Where will saints be?" we can turn round and say, "Where are you?" And they will answer, "We have altered our names." They will have altered their names, assumed a fresh shape, put on a new form of evil—but still their nature will be the same—opposing Christ and endeavoring to blaspheme His Truths! On all their systems of religion, or non-religion—for that is a system, too—it may be written, "Evanescient—fading as the flower, fleeting as the meteor, frail and unreal as a vapor." But of Christ's religion it shall be said, "His name shall endure forever." Let me now say a few things—not to prove it, for that I do not wish to do—but to give you some hints whereby possibly I may one day prove it to other people, that Jesus Christ's religion must inevitably endure forever.

And first, we ask those who think it shall pass away, *when was there a time when it did not exist?* We ask them whether they can point their finger to a period when the religion of Jesus was an unheard of thing. "Yes," they will reply, "before the days of Christ and His Apostles." But we

answer, "No, Bethlehem was not the birthplace of the Gospel. Though Jesus was born there, there was a Gospel long before the birth of Jesus and a preached one, too, although not preached in all its simplicity and plainness, as we hear it now. There was a Gospel in the wilderness of Sinai. Although it might be confused with the smoke of the incense and only to be seen through slaughtered victims, yet there was a Gospel there." Yes, more, we take them back to the fair trees of Eden, where the fruits perpetually ripened and summer always rested. Amid these groves we tell them there was a Gospel and we let them hear the voice of God, as He spoke to recreant man and said, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And having taken them thus far back, we ask, "Where were false religions born? Where was their cradle?" They point us to Mecca, or they turn their fingers to Rome, or they speak of Confucius, or the dogmas of Buddha. But we say, you only go back to a distant obscurity. We take you to the primeval age. We direct you to the days of purity. We take you back to the time when Adam first trod the earth. And then we ask you whether it is not likely that as the first-born, it will not also be the last to die? And as it was born so early and still exists, while a thousand ephemera have become extinct, whether it does not look most probable that when all others shall have perished like the bubble upon the wave, this one, only, shall swim, like a good ship upon the ocean and still shall bear its myriad souls, not to the land of shades, but across the river of death to the plains of Heaven?

We ask next, supposing Christ's Gospel to become extinct, *what religion is to supplant it?* We enquire of the wise man who says Christianity is soon to die, "Pray, Sir, what religion are we to have in its place? Are we to have the delusions of the heathen, who bow before their gods and worship images of wood and stone? Will you have the orgies of Bacchus, or the obscenities of Venus? Would you see your daughters once more bowing down before Thammuz, or performing obscene rites as of old?" No, you would not endure such things! You would say, "It would not be tolerated by civilized men." "Then what would you have? Would you have Romanism and its superstition?" You will say, "No, God help us, never!" They may do what they please with Britain, but she is too wise to take old Popery back again while Smithfield lasts and there is one of the signs of martyrs there. Yes, while there breathes a man who marks himself a free man and swears by the constitution of Old England, we cannot take Popery back again. She may be rampant with her superstitions and her priestcraft but with one consent my hearers reply, "We will not have Popery." Then what will you choose? Shall it be Mohammedanism? Will you choose that, with all its fables, its wickedness and libidinousness? I will not tell you of it. Nor will I mention the accursed imposture of the West that has lately arisen. We will not allow Polygamy, while there are men to

be found who love the social circle and cannot see it invaded. We would not wish, when God has given to man one wife, that he should drag in twenty, as the companions of that one. We cannot prefer Mormonism. We will not and we shall not! Then what shall we have in the place of Christianity? "Infidelity!" you cry, do you, Sirs? And would you have that? Then what would be the consequence? What do many of them promote? Communist views and the real disruption of all society as at present established. Would you desire reigns of terror here, as they had in France? Do you wish to see all society shattered and men wandering like monster icebergs on the sea, dashing against each other and being at last utterly destroyed? God save us from Infidelity! What can you have, then? Nothing. There is nothing to supplant Christianity. What religion shall overcome it? There is not one to be compared with it. If we tread the globe round and search from Britain to Japan, there shall be no religion found, so just to God, so safe to man.

We ask the enemy once more—suppose a religion were to be found which would be preferable to the one we love—*by what means would you crush ours?* How would you get rid of the religion of Jesus? And how would you extinguish His name? Surely, Sirs, you would never think of the old practice of persecution, would you? Would you once more try the efficacy of stakes and fires, to burn out the name of Jesus? Would you try racks and thumbscrews? Would you give us the boots and instruments of torture? Try it, Sirs and you shall not quench Christianity. Each martyr, dipping his finger in his blood, would write its honors upon the heavens as he died. And the very flame that mounted up to Heaven would emblazon the skies with the name of Jesus. Persecution has been tried. Turn to the Alps. Let the valleys of Piedmont speak. Let Switzerland testify. Let France, with its St. Bartholomew. Let England, with all its massacres, speak. And if you have not crushed it yet, shall you hope to do it? Shall you? No, a thousand are to be found and ten thousand if it were necessary, who are willing to march to the stake tomorrow! And when they are burned, if you could take up their hearts, you would see engraved upon each of them the name of Jesus. "His name shall endure forever," for how can you destroy our love to it? "Ah, but" you say, "we would try gentler means than that." Well, what would you attempt? Would you invent a better religion? We bid you do it and let us hear it. We have not yet so much as believed you capable of such a discovery. What then? Would you wake up one that would deceive us and lead us astray? We bid you do it. For it is not possible to deceive the elect! You may deceive the multitude, but God's elect shall not be led astray. They have tried us. Have they not given us Popery? Have they not assailed us with Puseyism? Are they not tempting us with wholesale Arminianism? And do we therefore renounce God's Truth? No! We have taken this for

our slogan and by it we will stand—"The Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible," is still the religion of Protestants. And the same Truths of God which moved the lips of Chrysostom, the old Doctrine that ravished the heart of Augustine, the old faith which Athanasius declared, the good old doctrine that Calvin preached is our Gospel now—and God helping us—we will stand by it till we die! How will you quench it? If you wish to do it, where can you find the means? It is not in your power. Aha! Aha! Aha! We laugh you to scorn!

But you will quench it, will you? You will try it, do you say? And you hope you will accomplish your purpose? Yes. I know you will, when you have annihilated the sun. When you have quenched the moon with drops of your tears. When you have dried up the sea with your drinking. Then shall you do it. And yet you say you will.

And next, I ask you, *suppose you did, what would become of the world then?* Ah, were I eloquent tonight, I might perhaps tell you. If I could borrow the language of a Robert Hall I might hang the world in mourning. I might make the sea the great chief mourner, with its dirge of howling pain and its wild death march of disordered waves. I might clothe all nature—not in robes of green, but in garments of somber blackness. I would bid hurricanes howl the solemn wailing—that death shriek of a world—for what would become of us, if we should lose the Gospel? As for me, I tell you fairly, I would cry, "Let me be gone!" I would have no wish to be here without my Lord! And if the Gospel is not true, I would bless God to annihilate me this instant for I would not care to live if you could destroy the name of Jesus Christ. But that would not be all—that only one man should be miserable—for there are thousands and thousands who can speak as I do. Again, what would become of civilization if you could take Christianity away? Where would be the hope of a perpetual peace? Where governments? Where your Sunday schools? Where all your societies? Where everything that ameliorates the condition of man, reforms his manners and moralizes his character? Where? Let echo answer, "Where?" "They would be gone and not a scrap of them would be left. And where, O men, would be your hope of Heaven? And where the knowledge of eternity? Where a help across the river Death? Where a Heaven? And where bliss everlasting? All were gone if His name did not endure forever. But we are sure of it, we know it, we affirm it, we declare it. We believe and always will, that "His name shall endure forever"—yes, forever! Let who will, try to stop it!

This is my first point. I shall have to speak with rather bated breath upon the second, although I feel so warm within as well as without, that I would to God I could speak with all my strength as I might do.

II. But, secondly, as His religion, so *the honor of His name is to last forever*. Voltaire said he lived in the twilight of Christianity. He meant a

lie. He spoke the truth. He did live in its twilight. But it was the twilight *before* the morning—not the twilight of the evening, as he meant to say. For the morning comes, when the light of the sun shall break upon us in its truest glory. The scorers have said that we should soon forget to honor Christ and that one day no man would acknowledge Him. Now, we assert again, in the words of my text, “His name shall endure forever,” as to the honor of it. Yes, I will tell you how long it will endure. As long as on this earth there is a sinner who has been reclaimed by Omnipotent Grace, Christ’s name shall endure! As long as there is a Mary ready to wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hair of her head. As long as there breathes a chief of sinners who has washed himself in the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. As long as there exists a Christian who has put his faith in Jesus and found Him his delight, his refuge, his stay, his shield, his song and his joy, there will be no fear that Jesus’ name will cease to be heard! We can never give up that name! We let the Unitarian take his gospel without a Godhead in it. We let him deny Jesus Christ. But as long as Christians—true Christians, live—as long as we taste that the Lord is gracious, have manifestations of His love, sights of His face, whispers of His mercy, assurances of His affection, promises of His Grace, hopes of His blessing—we cannot cease to honor His name! But if all these were gone—if *we* were to cease to sing His praise, would Jesus Christ’s name be forgotten then? No. The stones would sing, the hills would be an orchestra, the mountains would skip like rams and the little hills like lambs. For is He not their Creator? And if the lips of all mortals were dumb at once, there are creatures enough in this wide world besides. Why, the sun would lead the chorus. The moon would play upon her silver harp and sweetly sing to her music. Stars would dance in their measured courses. The shoreless depths of ether would become the home of songs. And the immense void would burst out into one great shout, “You are the glorious Son of God. Great is Your majesty and infinite Your power!” Can Christ’s name be forgotten? No. It is painted on the skies. It is written on the floods. The winds whisper it. The tempests howl it. The seas chant it. The stars shine it. The beasts low it. The thunders proclaim it—earth shouts it—Heaven echoes it!

But if *that* were all gone—if this great universe should all subside in God, just as a moment’s foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—would His name be forgotten then? No. Turn your eyes up yonder. See Heaven’s *terra firma* “who are these that are arrayed in white and from where have they come?” “These are they that came out of great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the Throne of God and praise Him day and night in His temple.” And if these were gone. If the

last harp of the glorified had been touched with the last fingers. If the last praise of the saints had ceased. If the last hallelujah had echoed through the then deserted vaults of Heaven, for they would be gloomy then—if the last immortal had been buried in his grave—if graves there might be for immortals—would His praise cease then? No, by Heaven, no! For yonder stand the angels. They, too, sing His glory. To Him the cherubim and seraphim do cry without ceasing, when they mention His name in that thrice holy chorus, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Armies.” But if even these were perished—if angels had been swept away, if the wing of seraph never flapped the ether. If the voice of the cherub never sung his flaming sonnet. If the living creatures ceased their everlasting chorus, if the measured symphonies of glory were extinct in silence, would His name then be lost? Ah, no. For as God upon the Throne—He sits—the Everlasting One, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And if the universe were all annihilated, still would His name be heard, for the Father would hear it and the Spirit would hear it and deeply engraved on immortal marble in the rocks of ages, it would stand—Jesus the Son of God—co-equal with His Father. “His name shall endure forever.”

III. And so shall the *power of His name*. Do you enquire what this is? Let me tell you. Do you see yonder thief hanging upon the cross? Behold the fiends at the foot thereof, with open mouths. Behold they are charming themselves with the sweet thought that another soul shall give them meat in Hell. Behold the death bird, fluttering his wings over the poor wretch’s head. Vengeance passes by and stamps him for her own. Deep on his breast is written “a condemned sinner.” On his brow is the clammy sweat, expressed from him by agony and death. Look in his heart—it is filthy with the crust of years of sin. The smoke of lust is hanging within, in black festoons of darkness. His whole heart is Hell condensed. Now, look at him. He is dying. One foot seems to be in Hell. The other hangs tottering in life—only kept by a nail. There is a power in Jesus’ eyes. That thief looks—he whispers, “Lord, remember me.” Turn your eye again there. Do you see that thief? Where is the clammy sweat? It is not there. Where is that horrid anguish? Is it not there. Positively there is a smile upon his lips! The fiends of Hell, where are they? There are none—but a bright seraph is present, with his wings outspread and his hands ready to snatch that soul, now a precious jewel and bear it aloft to the palace of the great King! Look within his heart—it is white with purity. Look at his breast—it is no longer written “condemned,” but “justified.” Look in the Book of Life—his name is engraved there. Look on Jesus’ heart—there on one of the precious stones He bears that poor thief’s name. Yes, once more, look! See that bright one amid the glorified, clearer than the sun and fair as the moon? That is the thief! THAT IS THE

POWER OF JESUS! And that power shall endure forever. He who saved the thief can save the last man who shall ever live. For still—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day—
O may I there, tho’ vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.
Dear dying Lamb! That precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

His powerful name shall endure forever.

Nor is that all the power of His name. Let me take you to another scene and you shall witness something else. There on that deathbed lies a saint. No gloom is on his brow, no terror on his face. Weakly but placidly he smiles. He groans, perhaps, but yet he sings. He sighs now and then, but more often he shouts. Stand by him. “My Brother, what makes you look in death’s face with such joy?” “Jesus,” he whispers. What makes you so placid and so calm? “The name of Jesus.” See, he forgets everything! Ask him a question. He cannot answer it—he does not understand you. Still he smiles. His wife comes, enquiring, “Do you know my name?” He answers, “No.” His dearest friend requests him to remember his intimacy. “I know you not,” he says. Whisper in his ear, “Do you know the name of Jesus?” and his eyes flash glory and his face beams Heaven! His lips speak sonnets and his heart bursts with eternity! For he hears the name of Jesus and that name shall endure forever! He who landed one in Heaven will land me there. Come on, Death! I will mention Christ’s name there. O grave! This shall be my glory, the name of Jesus! Hell dog! This shall be your death—for the sting of death is extracted—Christ our Lord. “His name shall endure forever.”

I had a hundred particulars to give you. But my voice fails, so I had better stop. You will not require more of me tonight. You perceive the difficulty I feel in speaking each word. May God send it home to your souls! I am not particularly anxious about my own name, whether that shall endure forever or not, provided it is recorded in my Master’s book. George Whitfield, when asked whether he would found a denomination, said, “No, Brother John Wesley may do as he pleases, but let my name perish. Let Christ’s name last forever.” Amen to that! Let my name perish. But let Christ’s name last forever! I shall be quite content for you to go away and forget me. I dare say I may not see the faces of half of you again. You may never be persuaded to step within the walls of a conventicle. You will think it perhaps not respectable enough to come to a Bapt-

ist meeting. Well, I do not say we are a very respectable people. We don't profess to be. But this one thing we do profess, we love our Bibles! And if it is not respectable to do so, we do not care to be had in esteem. But we do not know that we are so disreputable, after all, for I believe, if I may state my own opinion, that if Protestant Christendom were counted out of that door—not merely every real Christian, but every professor—I believe the Paedo-Baptists would have no very great majority to boast of. We are not, after all, such a very small disreputable sect. Regard us in England we may be. But take America, Jamaica, the West Indies and include those who are Baptists in principle, though not openly so and we surrender to none, not even to the Established Church of this country, in numbers! That, however, we care very little about. For I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last forever! I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. You will say, "Why?" Because when everybody else sees Baptism by immersion, we shall be immersed into all sects and our sect will be gone. Once give us the predominance and we are not a sect any longer. A man may be a Churchman, a Wesleyan, or an Independent and yet be a Baptist. So that I say I hope the Baptist name will soon perish. But let Christ's name last forever. Yes, and yet again, much as I love dear old England, I do not believe she will ever perish. No, Britain! You shall never perish. The flag of old England is nailed to the mast by the prayers of Christians, by the efforts of Sunday schools and her pious men.

But I say let even England's name perish. Let her be merged in one great brotherhood. Let us have no England and no France and no Russia and no Turkey—but let us have Christendom. And I say heartily, from my soul, let nations and national distinctions perish, but let Christ's name last forever. Perhaps there is only one thing on earth that I love better than the last I have mentioned and that is the pure Doctrine of unadulterated Calvinism. But if that is wrong—if there is anything in that which is false—I for one say let that perish, too and let Christ's name last forever. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus—"Crown Him Lord of all!" You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this time. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! "Crown Him Lord of all."

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

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

“BLESSED IN HIM”

NO. 2451

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 9, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1886.**

“Men shall be blessed in Him.”
Psalm 72:17.

I wish that I could speak at my very best concerning the glorious Him who is mentioned in the text, but I have hardly got into full working order after my season of rest. One’s voice becomes rusty, like an unused key, and one does not, at first, feel quite at ease in speaking after a time of comparative quietude. Do not, however, think that my subject is a poor one—if there are defects in my discourse, remember that it will only be the *speaker* who is poverty-stricken—not the great King and Lord of whom he is speaking. “Men shall be blessed in Him.” O Sirs, if one had the tongues of men and of angels, and if one could only, for once, use that speech which it is not lawful for a man to utter—those words which Paul tells us that he heard when he was caught up to the third Heaven—if we could even speak as never man yet spoke, we could not fully set forth all the glories of Him of whom this text speaks!

David’s thoughts, doubtless, rested in part upon Solomon when he said, “Men shall be blessed in him”—and our Lord, Himself, spoke of Solomon in all his glory. But what poor stuff is human glory at the very highest! The, “Him,” mentioned in the text, the higher and the greater Solomon who is truly meant in these words, has a real Glory—not of earthly pomp and fading tinsel, nor of gold and pearls and precious stones, but the more excellent Glory of Character and the true beauty of Holiness. In Him all Divine excellences are blended. I cannot hope to set Him forth as He deserves. I cannot tell you all His virtues and His glories, but, oh, He is very dear to many of us! His name is engraved on the fleshy tablets of our hearts and when we lie upon our last bed and all other things shall be forgotten in the decay of nature, we shall still remember that dear name which is above every name! The contemplation of our Savior’s blessed Person shall then absorb every faculty of our being! “Men shall be blessed in Him,” the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the God Over All, blessed forever, who is also bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh!

As I should fail altogether to speak of Him as He deserves, I will not attempt the impossible task, but will try to speak of men being blessed in Him. That is a note a little lower. If we cannot reach the highest octave, we may attain to a lower one. Yet, while we speak of the blessing that comes from Him, let us still think of Him from whom the blessing comes, and let us remember that as all blessings come from Him, it is because all blessings are laid up in Him—because every conceivable good is stored up in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, “and of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.”

I. My first remark concerning the text is that it makes mention of AN AMAZING CONDITION—“Men shall be blessed in Him.” It is an amazing condition to be blessed, for, *by nature, men are not blessed*. We are born under a curse. Our first father turned aside the blessing when he disobeyed God’s command and, in the early dawn of the day of our race, he darkened our sky once and for all. The curse still abides upon man, that in the sweat of his face he shall eat bread, and upon woman, that in sorrow she shall bring forth children. How much woe lies in the curse that falls upon us in consequence of our own personal sin! “Who slew all these”—these comforts and joys of life? Oftentimes, they have been slain by a man’s own hands through his own sin, or through the sins of those who surround him. The trail of the old serpent is everywhere! You cannot open your eyes without discovering that man is *not* blessed, but oftentimes abides under the curse. Put that Truth of God down before you and then read the text, “Men shall be blessed in Him.”

Apart from Him, they are accursed! They wring their hands and wish they had never been born—and some sigh and sorrow almost without ceasing. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, and it is an amazing thing that any man should be blessed—so amazing, that no man is ever blessed until he comes to be connected with the Lord Jesus Christ—“Men shall be blessed in Him.”

Many people who forget all about the curse, nevertheless *acknowledge that they are unhappy*. Go up and down among the whole race of men and how few you will find really happy! I believe that none are truly happy until they are in Christ, but even if they *were* happy, that is not the word that is used in our text. It does not say, “Men shall be happy in Him.” It gives us a fuller, deeper, richer word than that—“Men shall be *blessed* in Him.” To be more happy may be a thing of time and of this world only. I do not mean that the happiness may not be true and real, but still, compared with all that the word, “blessed,” implies, the word, “happy,” has no eternity, no depth, no fullness, no force in it! So that, even if men were happy, they would not come up to the fullness of the promise in our text. But, alas, the mass of men are unhappy—sighing for this and mourning for that—never blessed, but only hoping to be so. The text, therefore, comes in with its sweet silvery ring, telling that men shall

cease to be unhappy and that they shall rise even above merely being happy—they shall come to be “blessed in Him.”

I regret to say that there is a third class of people who, when they rise above the curse and are not absolutely unhappy, yet nevertheless are *in a state of doubt and hesitation*. We could not positively say that they are cursed, for we hope that some part of the blessing has fallen upon them. We may not call them unhappy, yet we know that they are not eminently happy. They hope that they are saved, or they trust that they shall be safe at the last, but they are not sure that the blessings of salvation are already theirs. Our text does not say that, in Christ, this condition of luminous haze, if I may so call it—this condition of doubt and uncertainty is all that is to be attained. No, but it says, “Men shall be blessed in Him”—and no man can call himself truly blessed till he knows that he *is* blessed, till he is sure of it, till he has passed the period of dubious questioning, till he has come out of the miry and boggy country of hesitation and doubt and stands upon the firm ground of full assurance, so that he can say, “I am God’s child. The Father’s love is fixed upon me; I have a part and portion in the Covenant of Grace—I am saved.”

Now it is to that blessed condition that the text directs our thoughts—it promises that men shall be delivered from the curse, that they shall be lifted up from their natural unhappiness, that they shall be rescued from their doubtful or their hopeful questioning—and shall even come to be blessed! God shall pronounce them blessed. He shall set upon them the broad seal of Divine approbation and call them blessed! And with that seal there shall come streaming into their hearts the sweetness of intense delight which shall give them *experimentally* a blessing to their own conscious enjoyment!

Let me tell you what Christ does for a man who is really in Him and then you will see how he is blessed.

The man who comes to Christ by faith and truly trusts Christ has all *the past rectified*. All his sins, whatever they may have been, are pardoned in a moment as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. His iniquities are blotted out and are as if they had never been committed. As the cloud passes away and is no more to be seen, so the thick clouds of our sins are dispersed by Christ as soon as we believe in Him! Nor will they ever return to darken our sky. The forgiveness which God gives is not temporary, but eternal! Once pardoned, you are pardoned forever—the act of Divine amnesty and oblivion stands fast forever and ever. Is not that man truly blessed, then, who is made free from sin? David says, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” This is the blessedness which Christ gives to those who are in Him, that, as for the past, in its entirety, with all its blackness, with all its aggravated sin, He has taken it upon Himself and borne the penalty due on account of it—He makes a clean

sweep of it and says of the man who trusts in Him, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you; go in peace.” That is one part of the blessedness of those who are in Christ—the past is all forgiven.

At the same time, the man who is in Christ receives *present favor*. As soon as we truly believe in Jesus, there steals over our heart a delicious sense of rest according to His gracious invitation and promise, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And as we go on to serve the Lord and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, we find rest for our souls, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I believe that, oftentimes, a child of God, when he realizes his union to Christ, feels so blessed that he does not know of anything that could make him more blessed than he is! He says, “I am perfectly content with my Lord and with what I am in Him. With myself, I am always dissatisfied and always groaning because I cannot entirely conquer sin, but with my Savior I am always satisfied! I am triumphant in Him and rejoicing in Him, indeed, blessed in Him.”

Some of you know what a blessed thing it is to be a child of God and an heir of Heaven—how blessed it is to have the Throne of Grace where you can take your troubles and to have a Helper who is strong enough to deliver you. I spoke, the other day, with a Christian friend, and I said to him, “My life sometimes seems to be like that of a man walking upon a tight rope. The walk of faith is very mysterious—one false step, or one slip and where would we be?” My friend replied, “Yes, it is so, no doubt. But then, underneath are the everlasting arms.” Ah, that is a blessed addition to the figure—there is no slipping off the rope on which God calls us to walk, but if there were, underneath are the everlasting arms, and all is well! And the Christian, when he knows that and lives as one should live who is in Christ, is, even now, a truly blessed man!

But that is not all, for he who believes in Christ has his *future guaranteed*. He does not know how long he shall live and he does not want to know, for his Father knows. God knows all that you and I may wish to know—and as He knows it, it is better than our knowing it! Whether our life is long or short, He will be with us unto the end. And as our days our strength shall be. He will sanctify to us every trial we meet and nothing shall, by any means, harm us. He will bring us safely to our journey’s end and we shall go through the cold death stream without a fear! We shall rise triumphant on the shore of the hill country on the other side and we shall behold our Savior’s face without a veil between forever and forever! All this is an absolute certainty if we are the children of God, for it is not possible that one of the Divine family should perish—that one bought with the blood of Christ should ever be cast away! He will keep His own and preserve them even to the end. Are they not blessed, then, and is not the text full of sweetness as to this amazing condition, “Men shall be blessed in Him”?

Where are you, you blessed men and women? Where are you? Come and enjoy your blessedness! Do not be ashamed to be happy! I believe that some Christians are a little frightened at themselves when they find that they are full of joy and if, perhaps, they should ever break through the rules of decorum and express their joy, then they turn crimson! It was not thus with the saints of old, for sometimes they spoke and sang so loudly of the joy of their hearts that even their adversaries said, “The Lord has done great things for them,” and they replied, “The Lord has done great things for us; therefore we are glad!” And again they lifted up their hallelujahs. Then were their mouths filled with laughter and their tongues with singing. So let it be with you, for you are, indeed, a blessed people if you are in Christ!

II. Having thus dwelt upon this amazing condition, I now give you another keyword. The text says, “Men shall be blessed in Him.” This is A WIDE STATEMENT.

Oftentimes, the greatest Truths of God lie in the shortest sentences. There is a great mass of Truth within the compass of these few words—“Men shall be blessed in Him.” There are only six words, here, but to make the wide statement true *requires breadth of number*. You could not well say, “Men shall be blessed in Him,” if those to be blessed were a very few. It is not possible that the Election of Grace should consist of a few scores of persons making up an especially favored denomination—otherwise the Psalmist would not speak after this wide fashion, “Men shall be blessed in Him.” The Holy Spirit is not given to exaggeration and He would have put it, “A few men will be blessed in Him.” But here there is nothing of the kind! It is, “Men shall be blessed in Him,” meaning the great mass of the human race, vast multitudes of the sons of Adam! I believe that when this dispensation comes to an end, notwithstanding all the dreary centuries that have passed, Christ shall have the pre-eminence as to numbers as well as in every other respect—and that the multitudes who shall be saved by Him shall far transcend those who have rejected His mercy. The text says, “Men shall be blessed in Him.” That is to say, the most of men, innumerable myriads of men shall get the blessing that Jesus purchased by His death on the Cross.

But when the text says, “Men shall be blessed in Him,” it *implies great width of variety*. “Men”—not merely kings or noblemen, but, “Men shall be blessed in Him.” Men—not working men, or thinking men, or fighting men, or this sort of men, or the other sort of men, but men of *all sorts*—“Men shall be blessed in Him.” It is a delightful thought that Christ is as much fitted to one rank and one class of persons as to another—

***“While Grace is offered to the prince,
The poor may take their share.
No mortal has a just pretense,
To perish in despair.”***

Christ is the Christ of the multitude! His Father says of Him, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people,” but He is equally the Christ of the

most refined and eclectic. He comes with equal Grace to those who stand in the highest or the lowest earthly position. "Men shall be blessed in Him." Of course, the word, "men," includes women and children—it means the human race! "Men shall be blessed in Him." Do not, therefore, let anyone say, "I am a strange, odd person," for the text puts in this little-big word, "men," which takes you in, whoever you may be! If you come to Christ, you are included in this promise, "Men shall be blessed in Him." So that there is a width of variety implied here.

Our text also *indicates length of period*. "Men shall be blessed in Him." Men have been blessed in Him these many centuries, Christ has shone with all the radiance of Omnipotent Love upon this poor fallen world, but His light is as full as ever and, however long this dispensation shall last, "Men shall be blessed in Him." Though some of those men are, perhaps, gray with years and decrepit through age, yet the promise still stands, "Men shall be blessed in Him." And while that verse has the word, "shall," in it, why should not the grayest head receive the Divine blessing? Why should not a man who is on the borders of the grave yet lay hold of this blessed text and say, "I will trust Him in whom men shall be blessed"?

Further, the text suggests *fullness of sufficiency* concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful depth of meaning in this passage when it says, "Men shall be blessed in Him." "Oh," says one, "men shall be blessed by philosophy, or by Christ and philosophy!" Not at all. It is, "Men shall be blessed *in Him*." "But they shall be blessed in Him through trade and commerce and the like." Not so! "Men shall be blessed *in Him*." Have we not, who are half a century old, heard a great number of theories about how the millennium is to be brought about? I remember that at one time free trade was to bring it, but it did not! And nothing will ever make men blessed unless they get into Christ—"Men shall be blessed in Him." The quacks are crying up this remedy and that, nostrums old and new—but there is only one true Physician of souls! It is the Christ of God who alone has the balm that will cure the disease of sin! When He is received, the world shall be blessed. But as long as He is rejected, the curse will still remain upon the sons of men. "Men shall be blessed in Him."

Oh, that our fellow men would receive Him! Oh, that they would bow down before the Crucified and acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior! Oh, that all would look up to His wounds, still visible in His Glory, and put their trust in Him! Then should come that glorious time when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth and every evil shall be put away. His unsuffering Kingdom must yet come! Oh, that it might come speedily! But it can only come through Himself, not by any other means. "Men shall be blessed in Him." Anything short of trusting in Him will end in eternal failure. You have noted, dear Friends, these two things, the amazing or, singular condition, and the wide statement.

III. Now I want to dwell for a minute or two, for the exaltation of our Lord, upon THE FULL ASSURANCE which is expressed in this text—“Men shall be blessed in Him.”

The Prophet speaks here, my Brothers and Sisters, in a very positive manner. There is no quiver in his voice, there is no hesitancy about his speech. I am afraid that at the present moment there are some, even of godly men, who tremble for the Ark of the Lord and the hand of Uzzah is visible here and there! But the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord needs no steadying hand from you or from me—the cause of God is always safe in His own keeping. The cause of the Truth of God is always secure, for God preserves it. Let us not be afraid, neither let us be discouraged. It is a grand thing to get a sentence like this with a, “shall,” in it—“Men *shall be blessed* in Him.” It is not, “perhaps they may be,” but, “Men *shall be blessed* in Him.” Not, “perhaps they may be blessed under certain conditions,” but, “Men *shall be blessed* in Him.”

This means, in the first place, *they shall not try Him and fail*. There never was a man who came to Christ who failed to get a blessing from Him! There never was one who believed in Jesus and yielded himself up to the gracious sway of the Prince of Love who did not get a blessing from Him. I have never met with a Christian yet, who, in life or in death, has said, “I have been disappointed in Christ. He has deceived me. I sought and hoped for blessedness, but I have missed it.” Never can this be truly said! “Men *shall be blessed* in Him.” If they really come to Him, they shall not miss this blessedness.

No, I go further and say that they shall not *desire* Him and be denied. There was never a soul that desired to be blessed in Christ and was willing to yield itself up to Christ, that Christ did ever reject! There is no one in Hell who can truthfully say, “I came to Jesus and He spurned me.” And there never shall be one such, for it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” The foot that was nailed to the Cross never spurned a sinner yet. The hand that was pierced never pushed away a penitent! Christ is all invitation—there is no rejection about Him—He constantly bids sinners come to Him and this text is true for you, whoever you may be, “Men shall be blessed in Him.”

I am glad to go as far as that and to say that none who ever came to Christ failed to get a blessing from Him—and that none who desire to come to Him have ever been denied by Him! But I am going still further. “Men shall be blessed in Him,” that is to say, *they shall come to Christ and get the blessing*. Some, alas, will not come to Him. But, O Sirs, if any of you refuse to come, do not make any mistake about the matter! You think that by refusing His invitation you will thwart Christ and defeat the purposes of God, but that is absurd! The King’s wedding feast shall be furnished with guests—and if you who are bid will not come, there are others who will! He will send His servants out into the highways and hedges to compel others to come in, that His house may be filled! Do not

imagine that the result of the death of Christ depends upon you and that it is in your power to prevent the accomplishment of the Almighty purposes of the Savior’s love! No, no! “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

If you believe not, I must say to you what Christ said to the Jews, “You believe not, because you are not of His sheep.” His sheep hear His voice and He knows them, and they follow Him, and He gives them eternal life, and they shall never perish. “All that the Father gives Me,” He says, “shall come to Me.” Not one of those whom God has given to His Son shall be left to perish! They shall all come to Him and so the text shall be fulfilled, “Men shall be blessed in Him.” Do not imagine that when Jesus hung there on yonder bloody tree and groaned away His life for men, He was dying at a whim! There was at the back of Him the Eternal Purpose and the Covenant that cannot be changed—and the Invincible One who, without violating the will of men, can yet achieve the will of God, making men willing in the day of His power—turning them from darkness to light and from the power of sin and Satan unto God!

Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters—the consequences of redemption are not left in jeopardy! Those results which God has purposed will, to the last jot and tittle, be fulfilled. “Men *shall be* blessed in Him.” It is not to me a question whether Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God—she *shall* do it, though I may not live to see it. It is not to me a question whether the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—they *must* become His! Let us work in this confidence and believe every promise in this blessed book. If we get down-hearted and full of fear, we are unworthy of our Lord. If we served a temporal prince with limited power, we might talk with bated breath, but the banner that gleams on high, above our ranks, is the banner of the Lord God Omnipotent—and the shout that shall be heard at the last, is this—“Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

I ask you—Is it not very natural that He should reign? If He really is Omnipotent, are not all the certainties as well as the probabilities in favor of His universal dominion? Must He not reign? Yes, says the Spirit, “He shall reign forever and ever.” “Men shall be blessed in Him.” There is the tone of full assurance about this blessed prophecy! Therefore, let us rejoice and praise the name of the Lord.

IV. Now, lastly, I want you with all your hearts to think of my text with A PERSONAL APPROPRIATION—“Men shall be blessed in Him.”

Dear Hearers, are *you* blessed in Christ? Will you answer the question *personally*? Do not pass it around and say to yourself, “No doubt there are many who think that they are blessed who are not.” Never mind about them! For the present moment, ask this question of *yourself*, “Am I blessed in Christ?” Some people think that they have Christ as their Savior, but their religion brings them no blessedness. They go to Church or

to Chapel very regularly. They are, apparently, a good sort of people, but a part of their religion consists in being, on the whole, as comfortably miserable as they can! As to anything like blessedness, that does not enter into their minds. Now, if my religion did not make me really happy, I would seriously question whether I was a possessor of the religion of the happy God, for “Men shall be blessed in Him.”

“Oh,” says one, “but we have so many trials and troubles!” Ah, that we have! Do you know a man or woman who does not have any? I should like you to mark all the doors in London where people live who have not any trouble—it will not cost you much for chalk! There is nobody without trouble! If a man could be without trouble he would be without a blessing, for in this world one of the rarest blessings—one of the richest, truest blessings that God ever sends to His children is adversity! He sends more blessings upon the black horse than He ever sends upon the gray one! It is the messenger of sorrow who often brings the choicest jewels to our door. Ah, there is many a woman who has not left her bed these dozen years, or had a fair night of rest all that long time who is truly blessed! There is many a man who is as poor as poverty can make him, shivering in the cold, tonight, and scarcely knowing where to find another bit of coal to keep his little fire alight—yet he is blessed! If it were necessary, I could get some of you to stand up and testify that though you have very little of this world’s joys, and very little of temporal goods, yet you can say, “Yes, I am blessed, I am blessed indeed—

**“I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”**

Well, you have that blessedness, then, enjoy it! What would you think of a man who went thirsty when he had a well in his back yard? What would you think of a person who always went about poverty-stricken though he had millions in the bank? Think of Mr. Vanderbilt standing in the street and asking passers-by for a half-penny! Yet I have seen children of God act like that in *spiritual* things. A little boy came up to me in an Italian town and asked me to give him a *soldo*—he meant a half-penny. He was quite a moneyed man, for he had a farthing in his pocket! He took it out and showed it to me and he seemed delighted with it. But then he said that it was the only one he had in the world. You might think, from the way some persons act, that they had about a farthing’s worth of faith, but that is all they have. Is it not so? O you who have Christ and God, this world and worlds to come and whom God has pronounced blessed—what? Are you going to live the starveling life of the unblest and the unsaved? I pray you, do not! Gentlemen, live according to your quality! Peers of the upper house—for you are such if you are born again—I beseech you, act in accordance with your true nobility. Has not Christ made you princes and kings? And has He not said that you shall reign with Him forever and ever? Look up, then! Lift up your heads

and say, “Yes, He has blessed me, and I am blessed, indeed! My poor spirit dances for joy because of Him!”—

“My heart it does leap at the sound of His name.”

“But,” says one, “I have never enjoyed that.” My dear Friend, if you can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may enjoy it! To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to trust yourself with Him just as you are—to cast your guilty soul on Him. Oh, that you would do it! That one act will mark your passing from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. That one act will be the means of your coming into the glorious liberty of the children of God and your life shall be totally changed from that time forth so that you shall joy in God by Jesus Christ our Lord! “Men shall be blessed in Him.” Are you to be one of those men? God grant that you may be! The Lord add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—72 (SONG I), 436, 438.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 72.

This is a Psalm which relates to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, not as the Man of Sorrows, but as the King of Glory—not as David, struggling to secure the throne—but as Solomon, seated upon it, and reigning in peace.

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king’s Son.* Our Lord Jesus Christ is both a King and the Son of a King. He is King of kings and, therefore, our Sovereign by His own native right. But He is also our Sovereign Prince as the Son of God. Oh, that the Lord would visibly give into His hands power over all the people of the earth! “Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king’s Son.”

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness and Your poor with judgement.* It is the peculiar characteristic of the reigning Christ that He has His eyes chiefly upon the poor. Most princes rule in the interest of the great ones around them, but our King rules for the good of the poor of His people.

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* The reign of Christ is the reign of righteousness, the rule of true uprightness and, consequently, it is the reign of peace, love and joy. Oh that His gentle rule were acknowledged by all the kings of this world!

4. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* This is the King we want to reign over us! Oh, that the day were come for Him to take the crowns from all other heads and to wear them on His own! And to take all scepters from other hands and gather sheaves of them beneath His arms, and to be universally proclaimed, “King of Kings, and Lord of

Lords”! Then would the world’s loud hallelujahs rise as with the sound of mighty thunders. O God, how long shall it be before this glorious King takes to Himself the power that is His by right?

5. *They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* All other kings and princes and rulers pass away. Our King, alone, has an everlasting Kingdom. Where are the dynasties that have ruled over vast empires? They have passed almost out of remembrance, but the promise to our King still abides—“They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.”

6. *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* The reign of Christ, even now, is to the poor dispirited sons of men like rain upon the mown grass! And when He shall come in His Glory, as He will shortly come, His coming shall be as blessed to this world as the gentle showers are to the grass that is newly mown.

7, 8. *In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* This is God’s decree. As surely as He has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, so surely will He make Him to “have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” I do, therefore, expect greater Glory for the Cross of Christ than any that the world has hitherto seen. The crescent shall wane and fade away in eternal night, but the light of the Cross of Christ shall burn brighter and brighter unto endless day!

9, 10. *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.* Commerce with all its wealth shall yet lend its homage to the Savior. And every ship that crosses the sea shall yet bear its cargo of praise unto His glorious name.

10. *The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* Their barbaric splendor shall find a higher glory in being consecrated to the King of Kings!

11. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him that has no helper.* That is what we look for as the true recognition of religion. The true recognition of religion in a State is not the setting up of some favored sect to be indulged above the rest—there is something better than that reserved for the Christ of God! He must have the first place all the world over—“All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.”

12. *For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper.* Again I remind you that this is the distinguishing mark of the Christ of God, that He has a special eye to the poor and needy.

13-15. *He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live.* With all our hearts we cry, “Long live the King!” And our King shall live forever—to

Him alone of all kings may it be truly said, “O King, live forever!” “He shall live”—

15. *And to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.* One of the marks of sovereignty is the king’s visage upon the coinage of the realm, and the use of His name in public prayer. And Christ claims this homage of all His followers—“Prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.”

16. *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* The cause of Christ in the earth may be so reduced as to be only comparable to a handful of corn and that handful of corn may be, as it were, sown on the bleak mountainside; yet it shall grow and increase until it fills the whole earth! His Kingdom is without end!

17-19. *His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen, and Amen.* Is not that double Amen the very mark of the Christ? Often when He preached, He commenced His sermons with, “Amen, Amen.” That is, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” He is God’s great “Amen, the faithful and true Witness.” But interpreting the word in the other sense, do not you and I most heartily say, “Amen,” and again, “Amen,” to this royal prayer? “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory.”

20. *The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.* This is the end of the second great division of the Book of the Psalms. It is. Therefore. most appropriately closed with this verse—“The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” But I think that David, when he had reached this point, felt that he could not ask for anything more than he had already requested in this great petition. If the whole earth should be full of the glory of God, the Psalmist would then have gained the utmost that he could desire! Is it not so with us, also? If the name and the glory of Christ did but cover the whole earth, what more could we wish for? What more could we ask of God? Till that blessed consummation is reached, let us keep on praying, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

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

DAVID'S DYING PRAYER

NO. 129

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 26, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.”
Psalm 72:19.***

THERE was a time when this prayer would have been unnecessary. A period, in fact, when it could not have been offered, seeing the thing to be asked for was already in being. A time there was when the word, *rebellion*, had not been uttered against the great Magistracy of Heaven. There was a day when the slime of sin had never been left by the trail of the serpent, for no serpent then existed and no evil spirit. There was an hour, never to be forgotten, when the seraph might have flapped his wings forever and never have found anything of discord, or anything of rebellion or of anarchy throughout God's universe! There was a day when the mighty angels assembled in the halls of the Most High and without exception did reverence to their liege Lord and paid Him homage due. When the vast Creation revolved around its Center, the great Metropolis—the Throne of God—and paid its daily and hourly homage unto Him. When the harmonies of Creation always came to one spot and found their focus near the Throne of God. There was a time when every star was bright. When all space was filled with loveliness, when holiness, purity and happiness were like a robe which mantled the entire Creation. This world, itself, was once fair and lovely—so fair and lovely that we who live in these erring times can scarcely guess its beauty! It was the house of song and the dwelling place of praise. If it had no pre-eminence among its sister spheres—certainly it was inferior to none of them. Surrounded with beauty, girt with gladness and having in it holy and heavenly inhabitants, it was a house to which the angels themselves loved to resort—where the holy spirits, the morning stars, delighted to sing together over this beautiful and fair earth of ours! But now how changed! How different! Now it is our duty to devoutly bend our knees and pray that the whole earth may yet be filled with His Glory.

In one sense this prayer is still unnecessary, for in a certain sense the whole earth *is* filled with God's Glory. “All your works praise You, O God,” is as true, now, as it was in Paradise! The stars still sing their Maker's praise—no sin has stopped their voices, no discord has made a jarring note among the harmonies of the spheres. The earth, itself, still praises its Maker. The exhalations, as they arise with morning, are still a pure offering, acceptable to their Maker. The lowing of the cattle, the

singing of the birds, the leaping of the fishes and the delights of animal creations are still acceptable as votive offerings to the Most High! The mountains still bring righteousness. On their hoary summits God's holy feet might tread, for they are yet pure and spotless. Still do the green valleys, laughing with their verdure send up their shouts to the Most High. The praise of God is sung by every wind. It is howled forth in dread majesty by the voice of the tempest, the winds resound it and the waves, with their thousand hands, clap, keeping chorus in the great march of God! The whole earth is still a great orchestra for God's praise and His creatures still take up various parts in the eternal song, which, ever swelling and ever increasing, shall, by-and-by, mount to its climax in the consummation of all things. In that sense, therefore, the prayer is still inappropriate. God, who fills all-in-all and fills earth and Heaven needs not to have more Glory, as to the essence of His Glory—for He is still glorified in the whole earth!

But David intended this prayer in another sense. "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen." Not as Creator but as a moral Governor and Ruler. It is as Governor that we have revolted from God and done dishonor to Him. It is as our Master, our Ruler, our Judge, that we have done despite to His Glory and have trampled on His crown. It is, therefore, in this respect that David wished that the whole earth might be filled with God's Glory. He desired that every idol temple might be cast down—that the name of Jehovah might be sung by every lip. That He in His Person might be loved by every heart and be forever adored as "God over all. blessed forever." A foolish wish, you say, for it never can be accomplished. Surely the day will never come when hoary systems of superstition shall die. What? Shall colossal systems of infidelity and of idolatry totter to their fall? They have resisted the battering ram for many a year—and yet shall they pass away and shall God's Kingdom come and His will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven? No, it is no day dream of a boy, it is no wish of the enthusiast! Mark who uttered that prayer and where he was when he uttered it! It was the prayer of a dying king. It was the prayer of a holy man of God whose eyes were just then lighted up with brightness in view of the Celestial City, as he stood on the mighty Pisgah, "and viewed the landscape over." It was the prayer of the dying Psalmist, when on the margin of his life he surveyed the ocean—the prayer of a mighty king when he saw the scroll of prophecy unfolded before him for the last time and was about to be ushered into the Presence of his Maker! He uttered this as his last best wish and desire. And when he had uttered it, he sank back in his bed and said, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended." It was his last prayer—"Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen."

First, this morning, I shall try to *explain the prayer*. Then I shall labor as God shall enable me *to inflame the hearts of all Christians to desire the*

objective of this prayer. Then I will offer *a word or two of counsel as to the pursuit of the objective here spoken of.* And I will conclude by noticing the promise to buoy our hopes up—by-and-by “the earth shall be filled with His Glory.”

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE PRAYER. It is a large prayer—a massive one. A prayer for a city needs a stretch of faith. Yes, there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger our belief, for we can scarcely think that God will hear us for even that one! But how great this prayer is, how comprehensive! “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” It does not exempt one single country, however trod under the foot of superstition! It does not leave out one single nation, however abandoned, for the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for the man who grasps the tomahawk as well as for the man who bends his knee in supplication—this prayer is uttered, “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.”

Let me just very briefly note what I believe the Psalmist meant. *He desired that the true religion of God might be sent into every country.* Looking from that point of view, as we utter this prayer, what a multitude of thoughts rush into our minds! Lo, yonder we see the hoary systems of ancient superstition! We behold multitudes bowing down before Buddha and Brahma and paying their adorations to idols that are not gods—we pray for them—that they may cease to be idolaters and that God's name may be known among them! Yonder we see the crescent, gleaming with a pale and sickly light and we pray that the followers of Mohammed may bow themselves before the Cross, renounce the scimitar and return to Him who loved them, casting away all the uncleanness and filthiness of their former religion. We see yonder the scarlet woman on the seven hills and we include her in our prayer. We pray that God may cast down Rome. That He may overturn her deep, Hell-rooted foundations and may cause her tyranny over the nations to cease, that she may no more be drunk with the blood of the slain and no more with her idolatries and witchcrafts lead the nations astray. We include her in our supplications. We look on nations that are almost too debased to be included in the roll of mankind. We see the Hottentots in his kraal, the Bushman and the Bechuana and we put up our prayer for these—“Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” Let Africa's center, once thought to be barren but now discovered to be glorious in fertility become fertile, also, in works of Grace. Let the regions from where our black Brethren have been driven to slavery become the homes of blessedness and the regions of God's praise. We cast our eye to other regions where the scalp is still at the Indian's belt, where still they wash their hands in blood and delight themselves in murder. We look to that huge empire of China and we see the myriads still lost in infidelity and a partial idolatry which is consuming them and destroying them and we pray, “Let the whole earth

be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” Yes, it is a great prayer, but we mean it. We are praying against Juggernaut and against Buddha and against every form and fashion of false religion. We are crying against anti-Christ and we are praying that the day may come when every temple shall be dismantled, when every shrine shall be left poor as poverty and when there shall be no temple but the Temple of the Lord God of Hosts and no song shall be sung but the song of Hallelujah unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood!

But we mean more than this. We ask not merely the nominal Christianity of any country but *the conversion of every family in every country*. “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” Is that wish too great, too high? Are we too sanguine in our expectations? No! “The knowledge of the Lord” is to “cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea” and that is entirely! We do not wish to see dry places here and there, but as the deep foundations of the depths are covered with the sea, so we wish that every nation may be covered with God’s Truth. And so we pray that every family may receive it. Yes, we pray that every household may have its morning and its evening prayer. We pray that every family may be brought up in the fear of the Lord, that every child may, on its mother’s knees, say, “Our Father,” and that the answer may come to the infant’s prayer, “Your Kingdom come.” Yes, we ask of God that every house may be like the tents of Judah, consecrated to God. We ask that even the kraal of the Hottentot may become a synagogue for God’s praise. Our desire is that man may become so holy that every meal may become an Eucharist and every cup a chalice and every garment a priestly vestment and that all their labors may be consecrated to the Lord! We are bound to expect it, for it is said, “Even the bells upon the horses shall be holiness to the Lord and even the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar.”

But we go further than that. We do not ask merely for household conversion but for *the individual salvation of every existing being*. “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” Should there be one heart that does not beat in God’s praise, or one lip that is dumb in the melody of thanksgiving, then there would be yet a spot left which would not be filled with God’s praise and that one left unconverted would blot and blur the whole great work of filling the earth with God’s Glory. A missionary once said and said truly that if all the people in the world were converted except one man in Siberia, it would be worth while for all the Christians in England to make a pilgrimage to Siberia, if that man’s salvation could not be accomplished in any other way. And so it would! The salvation of one soul is unutterably precious and when we offer this prayer, we exclude none. We pray that the atheist, the blasphemer, the hardened rebel, the profligate may each be filled with God’s Glory. And then we ask for mercy for the whole earth. We leave not out so much as

one but so hope and expect the day when all mankind shall bow at the Savior's feet! When every hand shall bring tribute, every lip a song and every eye shall speak its gladness and its praise! This I believe to be the Psalmist's prayer—that every man, woman and child might be converted and that, in fact, in every heart and conscience God might reign without a rival, Lord paramount over the great wide world!

II. Well, now, I am going, in the second place, to try to STIR YOU UP, my Brothers and Sisters, to desire this great, this wonderful thing for which David prayed! Oh, for the rough and burning eloquence of the hermit of old who stirred the nations of Europe to battle for the Cross! I would to God this morning I could speak as he did when the multitude were gathered together. Or, like that bishop of the Church who followed him who addressed the mighty multitudes with such burning words of fiery eloquence that at last they heaved to and fro with waves of excitement and every man, starting to his feet and grasping his sword cried, "*Deus vult*," "the Lord wills it" and rushed forward to battle and to victory! In a higher and holier sense I preach the crusade today, not as a hermit but as God's preacher. I come forth to stir you up, men and Brethren, to desire and seek after this great and highest wish of the faithful—that the whole earth might be filled with His Glory! And how shall I stir you up except by leading you to one or two contemplations?

First, I beseech you, *contemplate the Majesty of God*. Or rather, since I am unable to help you to do that just now, let me remind you of seasons when you have, in some measure, grasped the thought of His Divinity. Have you ever at night gazed upon the starry orbs with the thought that God was the Maker of them all until your soul was steeped in reverent adoration? And have you then bowed your head with wonder and with praise and said, "Great God! How Infinite You are"? Have you ever, in looking upon God's pure earth, when you have seen the mountains and the clouds and the rivers and the floods, said—

***"These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Yours this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair—Yourself how wondrous then?"***

Oh, I think you must have had some glowing bursts of devotion, somewhat like that burst of Coleridge in his hymn from the valley of Chamounix or like that of Thompson, when he led the Seasons out to sing God's praise! Or like that matchless burst of Milton, when he extolled God, making Adam in the Garden praise his Maker! Yes, there have been moments when we could bow before God, when we felt our own nothingness and knew that He was All-in-All. Ah, if you can get such thoughts as these, my Friends, this morning, I know that the next thought akin to this will be—"Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen." You cannot bow before God, yourself, and adore Him without wishing that all the rest of mankind should do the same! Ah and the thought has gone further. You have wished that even inanimate objects

might praise Him! Oh, you mountains, let the shaggy woods upon your crowns wave in adoration! You that with bald heads lift up yourselves loftier than those minor hills, let the clouds that gird you serve like wings of cherubim to veil your faces! But oh, adore Him, adore Him, for He is worthy of all adoration! Let Him always be extolled! You cannot, I repeat, have great thoughts of God, yourselves, without spontaneously rising up and saying, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen."

But, my Brothers and Sisters, turn your eyes yonder. What do you see there? You see the Son of God stepping from the place of His Glory, casting aside the garments of His Majesty and robing Himself in garments of clay! Do you see Him yonder? He is nailed to a Cross! Oh, can you behold it, as His head hangs meekly on His breast? Can you catch the accents of His lips when He says, "Father, forgive them"? Do you see Him with the crown of thorns still about His brow, with bleeding head and hands and feet? And does not your soul burst with adoration when you see Him giving Himself for your sins? What? Can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling reverence stirred within your bosom—a marvelous adoration that language can never express? No, I am sure you cannot. You see your Savior—you close your eyes that are already filled with tears and as you bend your head upon the Mount of Calvary I hear you say, "Jesus, have mercy upon me." And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience and know that He has blotted out your sins you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory, Amen and Amen." What? Did He bend His awful head down to the shades of death? What? Did He hang upon the Cross and bleed and shall not earth praise Him? O you dumb, surely this might loosen your tongues! O you silent ones, you might begin to speak! And if you do not, surely the very stones will speak and the rocks that once split at His death will again open a wide mouth to let their hallelujahs ascend to Heaven! Ah, the Cross makes us praise Him. Lovers of Jesus, can you love Him without desiring that His Kingdom may come? What? Can you bow before Him and yet not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out with you, if you can pretend to love your Master and yet not desire to see Him the conqueror! I give you not a joy for your piety unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you might reach to others and unless it prompts you to pray this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory, Amen and Amen."

But gaze a moment longer. The Man that died for sinners sleeps within a grave. A little while He sleeps until the angel rolls away the stone and gives Him liberty. Do you behold Him, as He wakes up from His slumber and radiant with majesty and glorious with light frightens His guards and stands a risen Man? Do you see Him as He climbs to Heaven,

as He ascends to the Paradise of God, sitting at the right hand of His Father till His enemies are made His footstool? Do you see Him as principalities and powers bow before Him, as cherubim and seraphim cast their crowns at His feet? Do you hear Him? Do you hear Him intercede and do you also hear the music of the glorified spirits ever chanting perpetual praises before His Throne? And do you not wish that we might—

***“Prepare new honors for His name,
And songs before unknown?”***

Oh, it is impossible to see the glorified Christ with the eyes of faith, without exclaiming afterwards, “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.”

But now one other thought. *Common humanity urges us to pray this prayer.* Did you ever walk through a village full of drunkenness and profanity? Did you ever see at every ale-house poor wretched bloated carcasses that once were men standing or rather leaning against the posts staggering with drunkenness? Have you ever looked into the houses of the people and beheld them as dens of iniquity at which your soul did turn aghast? Have you ever walked through that village and seen the poverty and degradation and misery of the inhabitants and sighed over it? Yes, you have. But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village in later years, when the Gospel has been preached there? It has been mine. Once it was my delight to labor in a village where sin and iniquity had once been rampant and I can say with joy and happiness that almost from one end of the village to the other, at the hour of eventide, you would have heard the voice of song coming from every roof-top, echoing from every heart. Oh, what a pleasant thing to walk through the village when drunkenness has almost ceased, when debauchery is dead and when men and women go forth to labor with joyful hearts, singing as they go the praises of the ever-living God and when, at sunset, the humble cottager calls his children together and reads them some portion from the Book of Truth and then together they bend their knees—oh, happy, happy households! Yes, we have seen some such places and when our hearts have been gladdened by the sight, we have said, “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen.” It has sometimes been our delight to tabernacle among the lowly for a little season. We have had our seat given us in the chimney corner for a while and, by-and-by, as the time to retire drew near, the good man of the house has said to the Prophet's servant, “Now, Sir, will you read for us tonight, as you are here?” And we have noticed the faces of the little group around us, as we have read some portion like this—“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” And then we have said, “No, we will not pray tonight, you must be priest in your own house and pray yourself.” And then the good man has prayed for his children and when we have seen them rise up and kiss their parent for the night, we have thought, “Well, if this is the kind of family that religion makes, let the whole earth

be filled with His Glory! For the blessedness and for the happiness of man, let God's Kingdom come and let His will be done." Contrast that, my Brothers and Sisters, with the murderous rites of the Hindu. Contrast it with the savagery and barbarism of heathen lands!

If I could bring some barbarian to stand before you, this morning, he might himself be a better preacher than I can be. With his almost unintelligible utterances and clicks he would begin to tell you the few ideas he had, which ideas began and ended with himself and with the miserable prey on which he lived. You would say, "What? There is such a miserable race as this?" Let us at once kneel down and utter this prayer and then rise up and labor to fulfill it—"Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory." I feel that I cannot stir you this morning as I wished. (If I were a Welshman I think I could move your hearts—they have such a knack of waking persons up by what they say). Oh, my soul longs for that day, it sighs for that blessed period! Would God that all sighed and longed for it, too, and were prepared to work and labor, watch and pray, until we should indeed sing with truth—

***"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign!
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is All-in-All!"***

May such a day come, as it certainly will!

III. And now I am to give you A FEW COUNSELS IN THE PURSUIT OF THIS OBJECTIVE.

First, *you cannot pray this prayer unless you seek in your own life to remove every impediment to the spread of Christ's Kingdom.* You cannot pray it, Sir, you cannot say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen"—you who yesterday cursed God! How can the same lips that cursed God say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen"? You cannot say it, Sir—you who break His Commandments and violate His Laws and run riot against His government. If you said it, you would be a vile hypocrite! Is there anything in our character and conduct which has a tendency to prevent the spread of the Gospel? Oh, we say it with pain! There are many members of the Churches everywhere whose characters are such that if they remain what they are, Christ's Gospel can never fill the whole earth, for it cannot fill *their* hearts! You know the men. They call themselves God's dear people and they would be dear if they were given away—certainly nobody would buy them at the lowest price in the world. They say that they are His precious ones and they must be very precious, or else He never would have any thoughts of mercy towards such a set as they are. And they will sometimes say, "Ah, we are the Lord's elect," and they live in sin! They say there are very few of their sort and we reply, "What a mercy!" If there were, we would need many of our public buildings to be turned at once into jails to lock up such people! No, we do not believe in

the characters of men who make a profession of religion and yet do not live up to it. Do not tell us about such profession—just be quiet altogether! Do not call yourselves religious and yet act as others do. I prefer a man that is a right down blustering sinner when he is at it! Do not let him go into sin and then mask and cover it all up. There is no use in it. The man is not honest. I think there is some hope for a man who is a down-right thoroughbred sinner, that goes at it and is not ashamed of it. But a rascally, canting hypocrite that comes crawling into our Church and yet lives in sin all the while! Such a man—God Almighty may save him—but it is very seldom that He does save such people. He lets them go on and reap the fruit of their own ways. He lets them find out, after all, that hypocrisy is a sure road to Hell and never can lead to Heaven! We must look well to ourselves, by God's Spirit, or else we must not pray this prayer—"Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen."

And there is my friend, Mr. Save-All. I am sure he cannot pray this prayer, but at least I think I hear him in his soul say, "O Lord, let the whole earth be filled with Your Glory." A contribution is requested to assist the cause in so doing. Oh, no, not at all. Like the old slave woman we have all heard of, who sang, "Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel," and put her eyes up in such a devout frame that her brother slave, who was passing the plate that day, could not get her to pay any attention to him till he jogged her elbow and said, "Yes, Sissy, it is well enough to sing, 'Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel,' if you would give it wings—then it might—but you are just singing this and doing nothing at all." Now, what is the good of a man singing, "Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel," and praying this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory" if he has got six thousand a year coming in for doing nothing at all? It is no use for a man to put on a pair of lawn sleeves and say, "Oh, it is my devout desire that the whole earth may be filled with His Glory" and then leave the world to stare at him and consider what good he is! It is no use for a man simply to have a curacy or something of that sort, buy his manuscripts cheap, come up and read off two sermons twenty minutes long, go home with a good conscience that he has done his duty twice and then say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory." Why, my Friends, there is no chance of it if that is the way it is to be done—not the slightest in the world—to cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory," and then stand still and do nothing at all! Or even merely to do some nominal well-paid work and feel it is all over. We need something in the ministry a little different before even ministers can pray this prayer in sincerity! I am not finding fault with any of my Brothers, but I would recommend them to preach 13 times a week and then they can pray this prayer a little better! Three times a week would not do for me. It would hurt my constitution—preaching 13 times a week is good healthy exercise! But you shut

yourself up in your study, or what is 10 times worse, you do nothing at all but just take it easy all the week till Sunday comes and then borrow a sermon out of an old magazine, or buy one of the helps for ministers, or take down one of Charles Simeon's skeletons and preach it! My good man, you cannot pray in that fashion! The poorest Sunday school teacher has a better right to pray that prayer than you have! You go to a fire that is raging vehemently and say, "Oh, let it be put out!" and stand with your hands in your pockets while a little boy that is standing there and passing the bucket may pray that prayer sincerely, but you cannot!

No, my Brothers, you must be up and doing for your Master, or else you cannot pray this prayer. You say, "I am doing my duty." But my Friend, that is not much use—you must do a little more than that. Doing your duty, as you think, is often doing but a very small part of your duty. What is a man's duty? "Why, as much as he is paid for, Sir." Oh, no, I think not! A man's duty is to do whatever his hand finds to do with all his might. And until he does that, he cannot with any sincerity offer this prayer, "Let the whole world be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen." Ah, there are some here that I could mention, who by their unparalleled philanthropy, by their unique and unrivalled love of their fellow creatures have done much to fill the earth with God's Glory. They have let the world see what Christian men and Christian women are able to do when God's love has touched their hearts! There are to be found some who by devoting themselves to the service of their Master and spending and being spent for Him, have done much to heighten the opinion of the world towards Christianity and make them think better of the Christian Church than they would have done if it had not been for these few rare, mighty heroes in the midst of us! "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen." But it cannot be, speaking after the manner of men, unless we, each of us, labor and endeavor as God shall help us, to extend the Kingdom of our Master.

And now, my Friends, have I been urging you to an impossible toil? Have I been telling Christians to pray for that which never can be granted? Ah, no, blessed be God! We are taught to pray for nothing but that which God has been pleased to give. He has told us to pray that His Kingdom may come and His Kingdom will come and come most assuredly, too! Hark! Hark! Hark! I hear mustering for the battle! Yonder in the dim distance I see the armies gathering. Yes, I can dimly see their ensign and behold the flag that waves before them! Who are these that come? Who are these? These are nobler and better men than we! These are warriors of Christ, as yet, perhaps, unborn. These are the mighty men, the rear-guard. These are the imperial guard of Heaven who have long been fighting. The enemy has sometimes fled, but so far we have achieved but little. The phalanx of the foe still stands fast and firm and we have blunted our blades against the shields of the mighty. As yet the victory is

not complete. The Master stands on the hill with His reserve. Lo! I see them—they are coming, they are coming! Some of us shall live to see them—men whose tongues are made of fire, whose hearts are full of flame, who speak like angels and preach like cherubim! The men are coming and happy shall the man be who marks the triumph! Each tramp of theirs shall be the tramp of victory, each blast of theirs shall level walls of spiritual Jerichos, each blow of their horn shall *clear an acre of valiant foes!* Each stroke from their sword shall cleave a dragon and every blow from their arm shall be mighty to overturn thrones and scepters and kings! They come, they come! And till they come, what shall we do? Why fight on and hold our posts! Let us be cheered with the thought that victory is certain. The hour comes when this mighty band of heroes shall sweep the earth with the banner of victory! And when, in years to come, you and I shall look upon the plain of battle, we shall see there an idol broken, there a colossal system of wickedness dashed in pieces, there a false prophet slain, there a deluder cast away! Oh, glorious shall be that day when victory shall be complete! When the horse and the rider shall be overthrown! When the battle that is without blood and without smoke, without rolling of garments of warriors shall be completed by the shout of victory through Him who has loved us!

Beloved, we will wait a while. We will still continue on this side with our Master, for though we are now fighters, we shall be winners, by-and-by! Yes, Man, Woman, you who are unknown, unnoted but are striving for your Master by prayer and praise and labor—the day is coming when everyone of you shall have a crown of victory! The hour is coming when your heart shall beat high, for you shall share the conquest! Those men who are coming, without whom we cannot be made perfect, shall not have all the honor. We who have borne the brunt of the fight shall have a share of the glory. The victors shall divide the spoil and we shall divide the spoil with them! You, tried, afflicted, forgotten and unknown—you shall soon have the palm branch in your hand and you shall ride in triumph through the streets of earth and Heaven when your Master shall openly make a show of principalities and powers in the day of His victory! Only still continue, only wrestle on and you shall be crowned!

But I have got one word to say and then, Amen. You know in Roman warfare there were special rewards given for special works. There was the mural crown for the man that first scaled the rampart and stood upon the wall. I am looking on this great congregation with a thought in my mind which agitates my spirit. Young men! Young men! Is there not one among you who can win a mural crown? Have I not one true Christian heart here that is set for work and labor? Have not I one man who will devote himself to God and His Truth? Henry Martyn! You are dead. And is your mantle buried with you? Brainerd, you sleep with your fathers. And is your spirit dead, too, and shall there never be another Brainerd?

Knibb, you have ascended to your God. And is there nowhere another Knibb? Williams, your martyred blood still cries from the ground. And is there nowhere another Williams? What? Not among this dense mass of young and burning spirits? Is there not one who can say in his heart, "Here am I, send me"? "Lo, this hour, being saved by God's Grace, I give myself up to Him, to go wherever He shall please to send me, to testify His Gospel in foreign lands"? What? Are there no Pauls? Have we none who will be Apostles for the Lord of Hosts? I think I see one who, putting his lips together, makes this silent resolve—"By God's Grace I this day devote myself to Him. Through trouble and through trial I will be His, if He will help me, for missionary work or for anything else! I give up my all to God and if I may die as Williams did and wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom, I will be proud. And if I may live to serve my Master, like a Brainerd and die at last, worn out, here I am. Do but have me, Master, give me the honor of leading the forlorn. The hope of leading the vanguard of Christianity. Here I am—send me!"

O Lord, accept that young man! Lo, I consecrate him this day in Your name for that service! These outstretched hands this morning give a benediction to you, young hero of the Cross! Your Brother's heart beats with you—go and go to victory! And if it must be mine to stay here to labor in a more easy and pleasant part of the vineyard, which I dare not leave, still I will envy you—that you have the honor of going to far distant lands. And I will pray for you, that your success may be great and that through you the kingdoms of this world may be brought to Christ and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth! But we will all pray this prayer in our houses alone—"Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen and Amen."

You who are enemies to God, beware, beware, beware! It will be a hard thing to be found on the side of the enemy in the great battle of right!

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

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

THE SINNER'S END

NO. 486

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1862,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then understood I their end.
Surely You did set them in slippery places: You cast them
down into destruction.”
Psalm 73:17, 18.*

LACK of understanding has destroyed many. The dark pit of ignorance has engulfed its thousands. Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able seriously to wound. Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord.

My Brethren, if our eyes are dim, and our hearts forgetful as to eternal things, we shall be much vexed and tormented in mind, as David was when he understood not the sinner's end. For, indeed, it is a great mystery to ordinary reason to see the ungodly prospering and pampered while the righteous are chastened and afflicted. Let us, however, receive a clear understanding with regard to the death, judgment and condemnation of the proud sinner. Then at once our sorrows and suspicions are removed and petulance gives place to gratitude. See the ox paraded through the streets covered with garlands—who envies its lot when he remembers the axe and the altar? The child may see nothing but the flowers, but from the man of understanding, no childish ornament can conceal the victim's misery.

The best place in which to be instructed with heavenly wisdom is the sanctuary of God. Until David went there, he was in a mist—but entering its hallowed portals, he stood upon a mountain's summit and the clouds floated far beneath his feet. You ask me what there could have been in the ancient sanctuary which could have enlightened David as to the end of the wicked. It may be, my Brethren, that while he sat before the Lord in prayer, his spirit had such communion with the unseen God, that he looked into unseen things and saw, as in an open vision, the ultimate doom of the graceless.

Or it may be that the hallowed songs of Israel's congregation foretold the overthrow of the enemies of Jehovah, and stirred the royal soul. Perhaps on that holy day the priests read in the scanty pages of the then written work some ancient story, such as refreshed the Psalmist in his happier seasons. It may have been that they rehearsed, in the ears of the people, the years beyond the flood, and the universal death which swept a world of sinners to their eternal prisons with a flood of wrath. Or it may be

that they read concerning Sodom and Gomorrah and the fiery shower which utterly consumed the cities of the plain.

It is not impossible that the theme of meditation led the devout monarch back to the plagues of Egypt, and the day of the Lord's vengeance when He overthrew proud Pharaoh and his hosts in the midst of the Red Sea. The book of the wars of the Lord is full of notable records, all revealing most clearly that the right hand of the Lord has sooner or later dashed in pieces all His enemies. Possibly when David went into the sanctuary of God, *the Law* was read in his ears. He heard the blessings for obedience, the curses for rebellion.

And as he listened to the thundering anathemas of the Law which curses none in vain, it may be that he said, "Now I understand their end." Certainly a due estimate of the Law of God, and the justice which maintains its dignity will clear up all fears concerning the ultimate escape of the wicked. Such a Law and such a Judge allow not the slightest suspicion that sin will always prosper. Moreover, Brethren, David could not well go up to the sanctuary without witnessing a sacrifice, and as he saw the knife uplifted and driven into the throat of the victim, and knew that he, himself, was preserved from destruction by the sufferings of a Substitute, represented by that lamb, he may have learned that the wicked, having no such sacrifice to trust to, must be led as sheep to the slaughter, and as the bullock is felled by the axe, so must they be utterly destroyed.

By some of these means, either by the sight of the sacrifice, or by his own meditations, or by the Word read and the expositions given by Prophets or priests in the sanctuary—it was in God's own house that he understood the end of the wicked. I trust, Beloved, if you lack understanding in any spiritual matters, you will go up to the house of the Lord to inquire in His temple. The Word of God is to us as the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest. Prayer asks counsel at the hand of the Lord, and often the lips of the minister is God's oracle to our hearts.

If you are vexed at any time because Providence seems to deal indulgently with the vile and harshly with you, come to the spot where prayer is likely to be made. And while learning the justice of God and the overthrow which He will surely bring upon the impenitent, you shall go to your houses calmed in mind and disciplined in spirit. May you sing as Dr. Watts puts it—

***"I saw the wicked rise,
And felt my heart repine,
While haughty fools, with scornful eyes
In robes of honor shine.
The tumults of my thought
Held me in dark suspense,
Till to Your house my feet were brought,
To learn Your justice from there.
Your Word with light and power
Did my mistakes amend—
I viewed the sinner's life before,
But here I learned their end."***

This morning we have selected our subject for many ends, but more especially with the anxious desire that we may win souls for Christ. That we

may see a feast of ingathering at the end of the year. That this may be the best of days to many, the birthday of many immortal souls. The burden of the Lord weighs down my soul this morning. My heart is filled even to bursting with an agony of desire that sinners may be saved. O Lord make bare Your arm this day, even this day!

In enlarging upon our solemn subject, first, *let us understand the sinner's end*. Secondly, *let us profit by our understanding of it*. Thirdly, let us, having received this understanding, anxiously and earnestly warn you whose end this must be except they repent.

I. First, then, gathering up all our powers of mind and thought, LET US ENDEAVOR TO UNDERSTAND THE SINNER'S END. Let me rehearse it in your ears. The end of the sinner, like the end of every man in this world, is *death*. When he dies, it may be that he will die gently, for often there are no bands in their death but their strength is firm. A seared conscience gives a quietude of stupidity just as a full forgiveness of sin gives a peacefulness of perfect rest. They talk about another world as though they had no dread. They speak of standing before God as though they had no transgression.

"Like sheep they are laid in the grave," "He fell asleep like a child," say his friends. And others exclaim, "He was so happy, that he must be a saint." Ah, this is but their *apparent* end. God knows that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane. The sun sets in glowing colors, but O, the darkness of the black tempestuous night! The waters flash like silver as the soul descends into their bosom, but who shall tell the tenfold horrors which congregate within their dreadful deeps?

Frequently, on the other hand, the death of the wicked is not thus peaceful. Not always can the hypocrite play out his game to the end. The mask slips off too soon, and conscience tells the truth. Even in this world, with some men, the storm of everlasting wrath begins to beat upon the soul before it leaves the shelter of the body. Ah, then, the cries, the groans! What dread forebodings of the unquiet spirits! What visions of judgment! What anxious peering into the midnight of future banishment and ruin! Ah, then the cravings after a little longer span of life, the clutching at *anything* for the bare chance of hope!

May your ears be spared the dreadful outcry of the spirit when it feels itself seized by the invisible hand and dragged downward to its certain doom. Give me sooner to be shut up in prison for months, and years, than to stand by dying beds such as I have myself witnessed. They have written their memorial on my young heart. The scars of the wounds they gave me are still there. Why, the faces of some men, like mirrors, reflect the flames of Hell while yet they live! All this, however, is but of secondary importance compared with that which follows death. To the ungodly there is awful significance in that verse of the Revelation, "I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was *Death, and Hell followed with him*."

One woe is past but there are other woes to come. If death were all, I were not here this morning. For little matters it in what style a man dies,

if it were not that he shall live again. The sinner's death is *the death of all in which he took delight*. No cups of drunkenness for you again, no violin, no lute, no sound of music, no more the merry dance, no more the loud lascivious song, no jovial company, no high-sounding blasphemies. All these are gone forever. Dives, your purple is plucked from off you, the red flames shall be your mantle. Where now is your fine linen? Why is your nakedness thus revealed to your shame and contempt? Where now are your delicate tables, O, you who did fare sumptuously every day?

Your parched lips shall crave in vain the blessed drop to cool your tongue. Now where are your riches, you rich fool? Your barns are, indeed, pulled down—but you need not build greater—your corn, your wine, your oil have vanished like a dream, and you are poor, indeed, cursed with a depth of penury such as the dog-licked Lazarus never knew. Death removes every delight from the graceless. It takes away from his eyes, his ears, his hands, his heart, everything which might yield him solace. The cruel Moabites of death shall cut down every fair tree of hope, and fill up with huge stones every well of comfort. There shall be nothing left for the spirit but a dreary desert, barren of all joy or hope, which the soul must traverse with weary feet forever and ever!

Nor is this all. Let us understand their end yet farther. No sooner is the sinner dead than *he stands before the bar of God* in his disembodied state. That impure spirit is set before the blazing eye of God! Its deeds are well known to itself. It needs no opening of the great books as yet. A motion of the eternal finger bids it go its way. Where can it go? It dare not climb to Heaven. There is but one road open—it sinks to its appointed place. The expectation of future torment plagues the soul with a self-kindled Hell. Conscience becomes a never-dying, ever-gnawing worm.

Conscience, I say, cries in the souls of men, "Now where are you? You are lost and this your lost estate you have brought upon yourself! You are not yet judged," says conscience, "yet you are lost, for when those books are opened, you know that their records will condemn you." Memory wakes up and confirms the voice of conscience. "It is true," she says, "it is true." Now the soul remembers its thousand faults and crimes. The judgment also shakes off its slumber, holds up its scales, and reminds the man that conscience clamors not amiss. Hope has been smitten down, but all the fears are living and full of vigor—like serpents with a hundred heads, they sting the heart through and through.

The heart bowed down with unnumbered dreads moans within itself—"The awful trumpet will soon sound, my body will rise. I must suffer both in body and in soul for all my sins, there is no hope for me, no hope for me! Would God I had listened when I was warned! Ah, would to God that I had turned at the faithful rebuke, that when Jesus Christ was presented to me in the Gospel I had believed on Him! But no, I despised my own salvation. I chose the fleeting pleasures of time—and for that poor price I have earned eternal ruin! I chose rather to drown my conscience than to let it lead me to Glory. I turned my back upon the right, and now here I am, waiting like a prisoner in a condemned cell till the great assize shall come and I shall stand before the Judge."

Let us go on to consider their end. *The day of days, that dreadful day has come.* The millennial rest is over, the righteous have had their thousand years of glory upon earth. Hark! The dread trumpet, louder than a thousand thunders, startles death and Hell. Its awful sound shakes both earth and Heaven. Every tomb is rent and emptied. From the teeming womb of earth, that fruitful mother of mankind, up stand multitudes upon multitudes of bodies, as though they were new-born. Lo, from Hades come the spirits of the lost ones—and they each enter into the body in which once it sinned, while the righteous sit upon their thrones of glory, their transformed bodies made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus the Lord from Heaven.

The voice of the trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long. The sea has given up her dead. From tongues of fire, from lion's jaws, and from corruption's worm, all mortal flesh has been restored, atom to atom, bone to bone. At the fiat of Omnipotence all bodies are refashioned. And now the Great White Throne is set with pomp of angels. Every eye beholds it. The great books are opened, and all men hear the rustling of their awful leaves. The fingers of the hands that once was crucified turns leaf after leaf and names of men are sounded forth—to Glory, to destruction—"Come you blessed." "Depart you cursed." These are the final arbiters of glory or of ruin.

And now where are *you*, Sinner, for your turn is come? Your sins are read and published! Shame consumes you. Your proud face now mantles with a thousand blushes. You would cover yourself, but you cannot and, most of all, you are afraid of the face of Him who *today* looks on you with eyes of pity, but *then* with glances of fiery wrath—the face of Jesus, the face of the Lamb, the dying Lamb—then enthroned in judgment. Oh how ashamed you will be to think you have despised Him, to think that though He died for sinners, you did scorn and scoff Him, did malign His Followers, and slander His religion!

How piteously will you crave a veil of granite to hide your shameful face from Him. "Rocks hide me! Mountains fall upon me! Hide me from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne." But it must not—it must not be—

***"Where now, oh, where shall sinners seek
For shelter in the general wreck?
Shall falling rocks be over them thrown?
See rocks, like snow, dissolving down."***

O, Sinner, this is but the beginning of the end, for now your sentence is read out, your doom pronounced. Hell opens her wide jaws and you fall to destruction. Where are you now? Body and soul remarried in an everlasting union, having sinned together, must now suffer together, and that forever. I cannot picture it. Imagination's deepest dye paints not this tenfold night. I cannot portray the anguish which both soul and body must endure—each nerve a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on—each mental power a blazing furnace heated seven times hotter with raging flames of misery. Oh, my God, deliver us from ever knowing this in our own persons!

Let us now pause and review the matter. It behooves us to remember concerning the sinner's latter end, that it is absolutely certain. The same

Word which says, "he that believes shall be saved," makes it also equally certain and clear that, "he that believes not shall be damned." If God is true, then sinners must suffer. If sinners suffer not, then saints have no glory, our faith is vain, Christ's death was vain, and we may as well abide comfortably in our sins. Sinner, whatever philosophy may urge with its syllogisms, whatever skepticism may declare with her laughter and sneers, it is absolutely certain that, dying as you are, the wrath of God shall come upon you to the uttermost.

If there were but a thousandth part of a fear that you or I might perish, it were wisdom to fly to Christ. But when it is not a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe," but an absolute certainty that he who rejects Christ must be lost forever, I do plead with you, if you are rational men, see to it and set your houses in order, for God will surely smite, though He tarry ever so long. Though for ninety years you avoid the arrows of His bow, His arrow will in due time find you, and pierce you through—and where are you then?

And as it is certain, so let us remember that to the sinner it is often sudden. In such an hour as he thinks not, to him the Son of Man comes. As pain upon a woman in travail, as the whirlwind on the traveler, as the eagle on his prey, so suddenly comes death. Buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, chambering and full of wantonness, the ungodly man says, "Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." But as the frost often comes when the buds are swelling ready for the spring, and nips them on a sudden, how often does the frost of death nip all the hopeful happiness of ungodly men and it withers once and for all?

Have you a lease on your life? Lives there a man who can insure that you shall breathe another hour? Let but your blood freeze in its channels. Let but your breath stop for a moment, and where are you? A spider's web is a strong cable when compared with the thread on which moral life depends. We have told you a thousand times, till the saying has become so trite that you smile when we repeat it—life is frail, and yet you live O men, as though your bones were brass and your flesh were adamant, and your lives like the years of the Eternal God. As breaks the dream of the sleeper, as flies the cloud before the wind, as melts the foam from the breaker, as dies the meteor from the sky—so suddenly shall the sinner's joys pass forever from him—and who shall measure the greatness of his amazement?

Remember, O sons of men, how terrible is the end of the ungodly. You think it is easy for me to talk of death and damnation, and it is certainly not very difficult for you to hear. But when you and I shall come to die, ah, then every word we have uttered shall have a weightier meaning than this dull hour can gather from it. Imagine the sinner dying. Weeping friends are about him. He tosses to and fro upon yonder weary couch. The strong man is bowed down. The last struggle is come. Friends watch the glazing of the eyes. They wipe the clammy sweat from the brow. At last they say, "He is gone! He is gone!"

Oh, my Brethren, what amazement must seize upon the unsanctified spirit then! Ah, if his spirit could then speak, it would say, "It is all true

that I was likely to hear. I spoke ill of the minister the last Sunday in the year, for trying to frighten us, as I said. But he did not speak half so earnestly as he ought to have done. Oh, I wonder why he did not fall down upon his knees and beg me to repent? But even if he had, I should have rejected his entreaties. Oh, if I had known! If I had known! If I had known all this! If I could have believed it. If I had not been such a fool as to doubt God's Word and think it all a tale to frighten children with. "Oh, if I had known all this! But now I am lost! lost! Lost *forever!*"

I think I hear that spirit's wail of utter dismay, as it exclaims, "Yes, it has come. The thing I was told—it has all come to pass. Fixed is my everlasting state. No offers of mercy now. No blood of sprinkling now. No silver trumpet of the Gospel now—no invitations to a loving Savior's bosom now! His terrors have broken me in pieces, and as a leaf is driven with the whirlwind, so am I driven I know not where. But this I know, I am lost, lost, lost beyond all hope." Horrible is the sinner's end. I shudder while thus briefly I talk of it. O, Believer, take heed that you understand this well.

Do not fail to remember that the horror of the sinner's end will consist very much in the reflection that he will lose Heaven. Is that a little? The harps of angels, the company of the redeemed, the smile of God, the society of Christ. Is this a trifle—to lose the saint's best rest, that heritage for which martyrs wade through rivers of blood? That portion which Jesus thought it worth while to die, that He might purchase? They lose all this, and then they earn in exchange the pains of Hell, which are more desperate than tongue can tell.

Consider a moment! He that indicts the punishment is *God*. What blows must He strike! He did but put out His finger and He cut Rahab and wounded the dragon in the Red Sea. What will it be when stroke after stroke shall fall from His heavy hand? Oh, Omnipotence, Omnipotence, how dreadful are Your blows! Sinner, see and tremble—God Himself comes out in battle against you! Why, the arrows of a man, when they stick in your conscience, are very sharp—but what will the arrows of God be?

How they will drink your blood and infuse poison into your veins! Even now, when you feel a little sickness, you are afraid to die. And when you hear a heart-searching sermon, it makes you melancholy. But what will it be when God dressed in thunder, comes out against you, and His fire consumes you like stubble? Will God punish you? O Sinner, what punishment must that be which He inflicts? I tremble for you. Flee, I pray you, to the Cross of Christ, where shelter is prepared.

Remember, moreover, it will be a God without mercy, who will then dash you in pieces. He is all mercy to you *today*, O Sinner. In the wooing words of the Gospel He bids you live! In His name, I tell you, as God lives, He wills not your death, but would rather you should turn unto Him and live. But if you will not live. If you will be His enemy. If you will run upon the point of His spear, then He will be even with you in the day when mercy reigns in Heaven and Justice holds its solitary court in Hell. O that you were wise and would believe in Jesus to the salvation of your souls!

I would have you know, O you who choose your own destructions, that you shall suffer universally. Now, if our head aches, or if our heart is palpitating, or a member is in pain, there are other parts of the body which are at ease. But then, every power of body and of mind shall suffer at one time. All the chords of man's nature shall vibrate with the discord of desolation. Then shall suffering be unceasing. Here we have a pause in our pain, the fever has its rests, paroxysms of agony have their seasons of quiet. But there in Hell the gnashing of teeth shall be unceasing, the worm's gnawing shall know no cessation! On, on forever—forever a hot race of misery.

Then, worst of all, it shall be without end. When ten thousand years have run their course, you shall be no nearer to the end than at first. When millions have been piled on millions, still the wrath shall be to come—to come, as much as if there had been no wrath at all. Ah, these are dreadful things to talk of, and you who hear or read my sermons know that I am falsely accused when men say that I dwell often upon this dreadful theme, but I feel as if there is no hope for some of you, unless I thunder at you. I know that often God has broken some hearts with an alarming sermon, who might never have been won by an inviting and wooing discourse.

My experience goes to show that the great hammer of God breaks many hearts, and some of my more terrible sermons have been even more useful than those in which I lifted up the Cross and tenderly pleaded with men. Both must be used—sometimes the love which draws—and another the vengeance which drives. Oh, my Hearers, I cannot bear the thought that you should be lost! As I meditate, I have a vision of some of you passing away from this world. And will you curse me? Will you curse me as you go down to the pit? Will you accuse me, “You were not faithful with me, Pastor. You did not warn me! Minister, you did not strive with me”?

No, by the help of my Lord, through whose Divine Grace I am called to the work of this ministry, I must, I will, be clear of your blood. You shall not make your bed in Hell without knowing what an uneasy resting place you choose. You shall hear the warning. It shall ring in your ears. Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings? I do assure you a true love speaks to you in every harsh word I utter—a love that cares too much for you to flatter you. A love which must tell you these things without mitigating them in any degree, lest you perish through my trifling. “He that believes not shall be damned.” “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” Why will you reject His mercies? God help you by His Holy Spirit to understand your latter end and lay hold on Jesus now.

II. This brings us to our second remark—If we have understood the sinner's end, LET US NOW PROFIT BY IT. How can we do this? We can profit by it, first, by never envying the ungodly again. If at any time we feel with the Psalmist that we cannot understand how it is that the enemies of God enjoy the sweets of life, let us cease at once from such questionings, because we remember their latter end. Let David's confession warn us—

“Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I

**To mourn and murmur and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honor shine!
But oh, their end! Their dreadful end!
Your sanctuary taught me so—
On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.
Now let them boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain."**

If the sinner's end is so terrible, *how grateful* ought we to be, if we have been plucked from these devouring names! Brothers and Sisters, what was there in us why God should have mercy on us? Can we ascribe the fact that we have been washed from sin in Jesus' blood, and made to choose the way of righteousness—can we ascribe this to anything but Divine Grace—free, rich, Sovereign Grace? Come then, let us with our tears for others mingle joyous gratitude to God for that eternal love which has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Above all let us prize the sufferings of Christ beyond all cost.

Oh, blessed Cross, which has lifted us up from Hell. Oh, dear wounds, which have become gates of Heaven to us. Can we refuse to love that Son of Man—that Son of God? Will we not today, at the foot of His dear Cross, give ourselves to Him anew, and ask Him to bestow on us more Grace, that we may live more to His honor and spend and be spent in His service? Saved from Hell, I must love You, Jesus. And while life and being last, I must live and be prepared to die for You.

Again, Beloved Friends, how such a subject as this should lead you that profess to be followers of Christ to *make your calling and election sure!* If the end of the impenitent is so dreadful, let nothing content us but certainties with regard to our own escape from this woe. Have you any doubts this morning? Have no peace of mind till those doubts are all solved. Is there any question upon your spirit as to whether you have real faith in the living Savior? If so, rest not, I pray you, till in prayer and humble faith you have renewed your vows and come afresh to Christ. Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith—prove yourselves—build on the Rock—make sure work for eternity, lest it should happen, after all, that you have been deceived. Oh, if it should turn out so, alas, alas! Alas, for you to have been so near to Heaven and yet to be cast down to Hell!

Now this subject should teach Christians to *be in earnest about the salvation of others.* If Heaven were a trifle, we need not be zealous for the salvation of men. If the punishment of sin were some slight pain, we need not exercise ourselves diligently to deliver men from it. But oh, if "eternity" is a solemn word, and if the wrath to come is terrible to bear, how should we be instant in season and out of season, striving to win others from the flames! What have you done this year, some of you? I fear, Brother and Sister Christians, some of you have done very little.

Blessed be God, there are many earnest hearts among you. You are not all asleep. There are some of you who strive with both your hands to do your Master's work—but even you are not as earnest as you should be.

The preacher puts himself here in the list, mournfully confessing that he does not preach as he desires to preach. Oh, had I the tears and cries of Baxter, or the fervent seraphic zeal of Whitfield, my soul were well content. But, alas, we preach coldly upon burning themes, and carelessly upon matters which ought to make our hearts like flames of fire.

But I say, Brethren, are there not men and women here, members of this Church, doing nothing for Christ? No soul saved this year by you? Christ unhonored by you? No gems placed in His crown? What have you been living for, you cumber-ground? Why stand you in the Church, you fruitless trees? God make you—oh, you that do little for Him—to humble yourselves before Him and to begin the next year with this determination—that knowing the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, and labor and strive to bring sinners to the Cross of Christ.

III. But we must leave that point of instruction and come to our last and pleading point, and that is very earnestly, to **WARN THOSE WHOSE END THIS MUST BE UNLESS THEY REPENT.** And who are they? Please remember we are not speaking now of people in the street—of drunkards, and harlots, profane swearers, and such like—we know that their damnation is sure and just—but, alas, I need not look far! If I glance along these seats, and look into faces upon which my eye rests every Sunday, there are some of you, some of you who are unconverted still!

You are not immoral but you are unregenerated. You are not unamiable but you are ungracious. You are not far from the kingdom but you are not *in* the kingdom. It is *your* end I speak of now, *yours*, you sons of godly mothers. *Yours*, you daughters of holy parents—*your* end, unless God gives you repentance. I want you to see where you are standing today. "*Surely you did set them in slippery places.*" If it has ever been your lot to tread the glaciers of the Alps, you will have seen upon that mighty river of ice, huge wave like mountains of crystal and deep fissures of unknown depth, and of an intensely blue color. If condemned to stand on one of these icy eminences with a yawning crevasse at its base, our peril would be extreme. Sinner, it is on such slippery places you stand, only the danger is far greater than my metaphor sets forth.

Your standing is smooth—pleasure attends you. Yours are not the rough ways of penitence and contrition—sin's road is smooth—but ah, how slippery from its very smoothness! O be warned, you must fall sooner or later—stand as firmly as you may. Sinner you may fall *now*, at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you—from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone forever. *Death* makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour. Time makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet.

The *vanities* which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foothold, Sinner! You have no sure hope, no confidence. It is a melting thing you trust. If you are depending on what you mean to do—that is no foothold. If you get

peace from what you have *felt* or from what you have *done*—that is no foothold. It is a slippery place where you stand. I read yesterday of the hunter of the chamois springing from crag to crag after the game he had wounded. The creature leapt down many a frowning precipice but the hunter fearlessly followed as best he could.

At last, in his hot haste, he found himself slipping down a shelving rock. The stone crumbled away as it came in contact with his thickly-nailed shoes, which he tried to dig into the rock to stop his descent. He strove to seize on every little inequality, regardless of the sharp edges. But as his fingers, bent convulsively like talons, scraped the stone, it crumbled off as though it had been baked clay, tearing the skin like ribands from his fingers and cutting into his flesh. Having let go his long pole, he heard it slipping down behind him, its iron point changing as it went. And then it flew over the ledge bounding into the depths below. In a moment he must follow, for with all his endeavors he is unable to stop himself.

His companion looks on in speechless horror. But Heaven intervenes. Just as he expects to go over the brink, one foot is arrested in its descent by a slight inequality. He hardly dares to move lest the motion might break his foothold. But gently turning his head to see how far he is from the brink, he perceives that his foot has stopped not a couple of inches from the edge of the rock—those two inches further—and destruction had been his lot.

Ungodly Man, ungodly Woman, in this mirror see yourself. You are sliding down a slippery place, you have neither foothold, nor handhold. All your hopes crumble beneath your weight. The Lord alone knows how near you are to your eternal ruin. Perhaps this morning you are scarcely two inches from the edge of the precipice. Your drunken companion who died a few days ago has just now gone over the edge. Did you not hear him falling? And you, yourself, are about to perish. Good God! The man is almost gone! Oh that I could stop you in your downward course! The Lord alone can do it, but He works by means.

Turn round and gaze upon your past life. Behold the wrath of God which must come on account of it. You are sliding down the slippery places to a fearful end—but the angel of mercy calls you—and the hand of love can save you. Hear how Jesus pleads with you—“Put your hand in Mine,” He says, “you are lost, Man, but I can save you *now*.” Poor wretch! Will you not do it? Then you are lost. Oh why will you not, when love and tenderness would woo you? Why will you not put your trust in Him? He is able and willing to save you, even now. Believe in Jesus, and though you are now in slippery places, your feet shall soon be set upon a rock of safety.

I know not how it is, the more earnestly I long to speak, and the more passionately I would set forth the danger of ungodly men, the more my tongue refuses. These weighty burdens of the Lord are not to be entrusted, it seems, to the power of oratory. I must stammer and groan them out to you. I must in short sentences tell out my message and leave it with you. I have the solemn conviction, this morning that there are scores, and hundreds of you who are on the road to Hell. You know you are. If con-

science speaks truly to you, you know you have never sought Christ, you have never put your trust in Him, you are still what you always were—ungodly, unconverted.

Is this a trifle? Oh, I ask you—I put it to your own judgments—is this a thing of which you ought to think carelessly? I pray you, let your hearts speak. Is it not time that some of you began to think of these things? Nine years ago we had some hopes for you, those hopes have been disappointed up till now. As each year rolls round you promise yourself that the next shall be different. But there has been no change yet. May we not fear that you will continue entangled in the great net of procrastination until at last you will have eternally to regret that you kept deferring and deferring and deferring, till it was too late?

The way of salvation is not hard to comprehend. It is no great mystery, it is simply “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Trust Christ with your soul, and He will save it. I know you will not do this unless the Holy Spirit constrains you, but this does not remove your responsibility. If you reject this great salvation you deserve to perish. When it is laid so clearly before you, if you refuse it, no eye can pity you among all the thousands in Hell or all the millions in Heaven—

***“How they deserve the deepest Hell
Who slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the cords of love.”***

May I ask all Christian people to join in prayer for the ungodly? When I cannot plead as a preacher, I bless God I can plead as an intercessor. Let us spend, all of us, a little time this afternoon in private intercession. May I ask it of you as a great favor—occupy a little time this afternoon, each child of God, in praying for the unconverted among us. Conversion work does go on. There are many always coming to be united to the Church, but we want more. And we shall have more, if we pray for more.

Make this afternoon a travailing time and if we travail in birth, God will give us the spiritual seed. It is to the Holy Spirit we must look for all true regeneration and conversion. Therefore let us pray for the descent of His influence, and depend upon His omnipotence—and the great work must, and shall be done. Could I address you in the tones of an angel, yet I could not have more to say than this, “Sinner, fly to Christ.” I am glad I am weak, for now the Master's power shall be the better seen. Lord, turn the sinner! Turn and make him feel the danger of his state—and by Your Grace, find in Christ a ransom and a rescue—and to Your name be glory. Amen.

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—END OF VOLUME EIGHT—

FLESH AND SPIRIT—A RIDDLE

NO. 467

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”
Psalm 73:22-25.***

OUR Lord Jesus was tempted in all points like we are. With some reserve we might almost say the same of David. Of all the worthies whose lives are written out at length in Holy Writ, David possesses an experience of the most striking, varied and instructive character. In his history we meet with temptations, and complications of temptations not to be discovered, at least as a connected whole, in other saints of ancient times. Trials which stand out in the lives of other men as isolated hills form whole chains and ranges of mountains in the case of the son of Jesse. David knew the trials of all ranks and conditions of men.

Kings have their troubles and David wore a crown—the peasant has his cares and David handled the shepherd’s crook. The wanderer has many hardships and David abode in the caves of Engedi—the captain has his difficulties and David found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him. The Psalmist of Israel was tried by his friends. His counselor, Ahithophel, forsook him. “He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.” His worst foes were of his own household. His children were his greatest afflictions. Amnon disgraces him, Absalom excites revolt, Adonijah disturbs his dying bed.

The temptations of poverty and wealth, of honor and reproach, of health and sickness, all tried their power upon him. He had tribulations from without. I need not remind you that during his long life they came from every quarter. He had temptations from within, for the man after God’s own heart not only knew what it was to be assailed, but to be carried by storm, by fierce and terrible passions. I may grant, perhaps, that Job’s trial was more severe than any that fell to David. But yet I know not. Possibly the burning of Ziklag—when his wives were carried away captive, and all that he had was consumed, and his men spoke of stoning him—may have been even a severer trial than Job’s when he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd.

And I am not sure, but I think that mournful procession over the brook Kedron in David’s later life, when his own son thirsted for his blood, had in it a Gethsemane bitterness that is hardly to be found in the tribulation which fell to the Patriarch of Uz. Job must fairly yield the palm in one respect, for his was no life-long siege but only one sharp and furious attack. David, however, no sooner escaped from one trial, than he fell into another. He no sooner emerged from one season of despon-

dency and alarm, than he was again brought into the lowest depths and all God's waves and billows rolled over him.

Now, it is from this cause, I take it, that David's Psalms are so universally the delight of experienced Christians. Into whatever frame of mind we may be cast, David seems to have described our emotions, whether they ARE of ecstasy or depression, to the very letter. He was an able master of the human heart, because he had been tutored in that best of all schools, the school of real, heartfelt, personal experience. You will find that as we grow matured in Divine Grace and in years, we love the Psalms more.

Many young Believers are most fond of the doctrinal parts of Scripture, and I admire that holy curiosity which leads them to desire to understand all the revelation of God in the Doctrines of Grace. Practical Christians are often more fond of studying the Evangelists and Proverbs. But I find that the gray-headed veterans, the sorely troubled Christians, those who have done business on great waters—while they love the doctrines, while they delight in the practices set forth in the life of Christ—yet somehow or other the Psalms of the sweet Singer of Israel yield them savory meat such as their soul loves. And they are made in the Psalms to “lie down in green pastures” of tender grass.

Probably the first remark which will be suggested by reading the Psalms will be this—how varied they are. What an extraordinary man David is, what changes there are in the weather of his soul, what bright sunlight days, what dark cloudy nights, what calms as though his life were a sea of glass, what terrible trials as if the glass were mingled with fire. One time we find him crying, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me,” and another he sings, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.” One hour we hear him sigh forth, “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing,” and then we find him exulting, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”

How wondrously he rises to Heaven and how awfully he dives into the deeps. Surely, Brethren, we who have known anything of spiritual and inner life do not marvel at this, for we also change. Alas, what a contrast between the sin that does so easily beset us, and the Divine Grace which gives us to reign in heavenly places. How different the sorrow of an abject distrust which breaks us in pieces as with a strong east wind, and the joy of a holy confidence which bears us on to Heaven as with a propitious gale!

What changes between walking with God today, and falling into the mire tomorrow. Triumphant over sin, death, and Hell yesterday, and today led captive by the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. Verily, we cannot understand ourselves, and a description which would suit us yesterday would be ill-adapted for today, and quite out of place for tomorrow. Scarcely ever are we in the same mind even an hour. Great God, how infinitely glorious are You in Your immutability, when contrasted with Your fickle, frail, unstable creature—man.

It falls to my lot, this morning, to open up in some humble measure, the secrets of inward experience. I can but hope to do it in a very shallow measure, for I am but a youth, and am not worthy to instruct some of

you who have been men of war from your youth up. Yet I may serve the weaklings of the flock, if I inform them of the strife they must expect from the flesh, and comfort their hearts with a foretaste of the certain victory which the Lord has secured to them through the Holy Spirit. We shall *first* listen to the confessions of the Psalmist concerning the flesh. Then, to his expressions with regard to the Spirit. Then, to his soul's exultation when looking to both flesh and Spirit, he cries out, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire besides You."

I. First, we are to listen to THE PSALMIST'S CONFESSION CONCERNING THE FLESH.

Remember, Beloved, this is a saint of God. This is a highly advanced saint—this is the man after God's own heart. This is one of the special favorites of Heaven—one of the men to whom God revealed Himself as He does not unto the world. And yet you hear him telling us his inner life, and he begins by saying, "So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You." The word "*foolish*," when it issues from David's mouth, means more than it signifies in ordinary language. To be called a fool is no great compliment to any man. But when that word means atheist—despiser of that which is good—when it means a forgetter of God, a lover of evil, a destroyer of one's own soul, then to be called a fool is something at which a man may take offense, indeed.

David, in one of the former verses of the Psalm, writes, "I was envious of the *foolish* when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," which shows that the folly he intended had sin in it. Now he puts himself down as being one of these fools, and adds a little word which is to give intensity to the adjective—"SO foolish was I." How foolish he could not tell. It was a sinful folly, a folly which was not to be excused by frailty, but to be condemned because of its perverseness and willful ignorance. What? And do *we* call ourselves wise? Do we, followers of the lowly Savior, profess that we have attained perfection, or have been so chastened that the rod has whipped all our willfulness out of us?

Ah, this were pride, indeed! If David was foolish, what fools should you and I be in our own esteem if we could but see ourselves. Look back, Believer—think of your not trusting God when He has been so faithful to you—think of your foolish outcry of, "Not so, my Father," when He crossed His hands in affliction to give you the larger blessing. Think, I say, of the many times when you have read His Providences in the dark, misinterpreting His dispensations and groaning out, "All these things are against me," when they were all working together for your good!

Think how often you have chosen sin because of its pleasure, when indeed, that pleasure was a root of pain and bitterness to you! How often you have forgotten to honor God when you had noble opportunities of serving Him. I, for one, must take my place at the bar and plead guilty to the indictment of a sinful folly. And I think everyone who knows his own heart, however far advanced in Divine Grace he may be, must do the same. In the present tense I put it sorrowfully, "So foolish am I."

Further, our Psalmist adds, "and ignorant." A man who, after years of such experience as David, to say, "I am ignorant," must either be very humble, or else there must be such a force upon his conscience that he cannot resist the confession. And indeed, if you will read the Psalm, and

see into what a mistake David had fallen—that of envying the present prosperity of the ungodly—you may grant that he was ignorant, indeed, to forget the dreadful end of those who only prosper that they may be fattened like bullocks for the slaughter. But you and I have been quite as ignorant. We said yesterday, “Now I shall never doubt God again. He has helped me through this great trouble, and I know that I shall be able to trust Him, come what may.”

But this very morning you awoke with a distrustful thought. What ignorance is this, to forget the lesson which you learned but yesterday, and which you thought you knew by heart? Here you have been trying for months to resign yourself to God’s will. He took away from you one very dear to you, and you longed to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” And you did say it by an overwhelming effort, but you cannot say it now, for feeling has trod down faith. You are so foolish and so ignorant that you have forgotten what you vowed to learn. And what you meant to say perpetually, you have failed to say in this, perhaps the first great trial in your life.

Some men think when they have learned six or seven doctrines, that now they know everything. And certain other folks I know of, when they pass through a few years of experience, set themselves up for standards. Ah, Beloved, when we think we know best, and fancy that we have grown wise, then we prove our folly. Our impudence is engraved on our foreheads, and FOOL is written there in capital letters, when we think we are wise. Oh, the depths of the wisdom of God! Who can understand the full meaning of the Doctrines of Grace! Oh, the depths of the experience of the Believer who shall dare to profess that he has passed over all the seas, and has crossed all the mountains over which a Believer must climb!

If we could but see ourselves, we should consider our knowledge to be nothing, and our ignorance to be all. We are in the twilight, let us not call it noon. We are in the mists and fogs, let us not suppose that we are in an unclouded atmosphere. When we think we see all wisdom, it is because we are blind. And when we fancy we have discovered everything, it is because we are mocked by the illusions of our pride, and see nothing as yet aright. I know I address some of you who, when you are alone, quietly engaged in meditation, think to yourselves “Well, if ever there was such a stupid saint as I am, I am much mistaken. I seem to have the least understanding of any man. I read the Scriptures, and by God’s Grace I sometimes get a hold of them, but at seasons I cannot for the life of me even believe them to be true. I know the power of prayer, but yet there are times when I could not pray if my soul depended on it, and can only groan. In fact, sometimes, “if anything is felt, it is only pain to find I cannot feel.

“Yet I have been fed under the ministry. I have had many troubles and much communion with Christ, but yet here I am, knowing nothing, just a schoolboy, sitting on the lowest form and trying to spell out his A, B, Cs—such a thorough fool that I often pride myself upon my knowledge and condemn my brother for ignorance, not seeing the beam that is in my own eye, trying to pull the mote from his eye.” Is this the soliloquy of your heart? I know it has often been mine. If it is yours, we have just hit

the meaning of David when he uses this expression—“So foolish was I and ignorant.”

But now comes the crowning word, which you would think too degrading for David—“I was as a *beast* before You.” Indeed, the original has in it no word of comparison. It ought to be rather translated, “I was a very beast before You,” and we are told that the Hebrew word being in the plural number gives it a peculiar emphasis, indicating some monstrous or astonishing beast. It is the word used by Job which is interpreted “Behemoth”—“I was a very monster before You”—not only a beast but one of the most brutish of all beasts, one of the most stubborn and intractable of all beasts.

I think no man can go much lower than this in humble confession. This is a description of human nature, and of the old man in the renewed saint which is not to be excelled. How far does this hold true in your experience and mine? Well, I think first we have often been made to compare ourselves to beasts because of our *worldly-mindedness*. There is the swine grubbing in the earth for its roots. What cares it about the stars? And even the fleet horse as it crosses the meadow, what knows it about the angels and the harps of Heaven? Educate the beast as you may, it has no care beyond its fleshly appetite.

Oh, how much are we like this, even we who are renewed by Divine Grace! The last six days it has been, “Shop, shop, shop,” with you from morning to night. You bowed at the family altar and you tried to pray at eventide but carking care depressed you till it was hard to offer real supplication. A thousand things have bewildered you. The cashbook, the daybook, those losses, those many workmen to be looked after, or the servants in the house have distracted your mind and the world comes in till you feel, “O that I could get rid of these things for a moment! O that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!”

But you cannot, for your soul lies cleaving to the dust. Perhaps there comes a knock at the door just when you *want* to be knocking at God’s door, and someone wants to see *you* when you want to see your God. You cannot rest in Jesus as you would. You are called upon to look after accounts, shillings, five pound notes, creditors and debtors, until you cry, “O God, I am like a beast before You. How can I ever hope to enter Heaven?” You remember that hymn of Dr. Watts, commencing—

“Come holy Spirit, heavenly dove.”

What a sweet beginning, but how dolefully true are the middle verses. Surely they never ought to be sung but to be sighed—

**“Dear Lord and shall we ever live
At this poor dying rate—
Our love so faint, so cold to You,
And Yours to us so great?”**

What is this but the same confession in other words, “I was as a beast before You.”

Let us add another shade of black to the picture. We might often compare ourselves to the beast from *our want of any emotion towards heavenly things*. I am quite sure Rutherford was right when he said, “No devil in the world is so bad as having no devil.” Not to be tempted, is perhaps the worst temptation that can befall a man. There are times—I suppose it

is so with you, it is with me—times when my soul is like a dead calm and these seasons I dread—

***“No stir in the air, no stir in the sea
The ship was as still as a ship could be.”***

What mariner likes these dead calms? I am sure I tremble to encounter more of them. Better the healthy hurricane than the pestilential quiet. You would pray, but you cannot command the earnestness and fervor you desire. You would repent, you *feel* that you would repent, but no tear will flow, for the heart is hard.

You *would* praise God and the lips can utter the words, but the soul cannot join the music. You *would* stir yourself to some lofty emotion but you cannot. The heart *will* not feel, it has grown cold, and a sort of death-sleep has come over you like the sleep which is said to fall upon the wanderer in the snow when he comes near to death. Oh, to be roused from this is a blessing sent from Heaven—to be stirred even though it is by a hurricane of affliction, or a thunderclap of trouble. It is an awful thing to be in this apathetic state. Then it is that the Believer cries, “I am as a beast before You.”

You are dead as the seat you sit on each Sunday. Going to the ordinance itself, eating the bread and drinking the wine, yet feeling no fellowship with Christ. Joining in the song and loving it but singing with no feeling, no heart. Going to Prayer Meetings, feeling you would not stay away for all the world, and yet no life, no power, no thought, no vigor. Does some young Christian look at me and say, “What? Do old Christians feel like that?” I say, “They do, at times.” Sad is it that we should have to confess man to be so vile, but such he is, and such each of us have found ourselves out to be. And let the Believer live but a little while, and he will have to use David’s language and cry, “I was as a beast before You.”

See yet again, how often have we had to complain that we are like the beasts for our *short-sightedness*! The beast cannot look forward to eternity. It cannot cast its eye down the centuries and look to the fulfillment of prophecy in the fullness of time. It has to be content with the things that are near, the things of the hour, and of the day. Even so short-sighted are you and I! We think we see the end when we are only viewing the beginning. We get our telescope out sometimes to look to the future, and we breathe on the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety. And then we think we see clouds and darkness before us if we are in trouble. We see every day new straits, attend and wonder where the scene will end. But we conclude that it must end in our destruction.

“God has forgotten to be gracious,” we think, “He has in anger shut up His heart of compassion.” Oh this short-sightedness! When you and I ought to believe in God—when we ought to look at the Heaven that awaits us and the glory for which these light afflictions are preparing us. When we ought to be looking through the cloud to the Eternal Sun which never knows an eclipse! When we should be resting on the invisible arm of the immortal God, and triumphing in His love, we are mourning and distrusting. God forgive us for this. In these things, verily, we have been as beasts before Him.

I might add again, how often Believers have to complain that the *animal passions* will bestir themselves in them until they feel the beast within them. I shall not go deep into this path of painful experience. I only hint at it that some who may have been surprised at it as though it were a novelty, may know that it is common to man. He that has fellowship with God will sometimes feel the devil within him till he thinks himself a devil, and sometimes, too, (the Lord have mercy upon His servants) when the temptation comes in an unguarded moment they may be betrayed and Satan may triumph. If then, they can look back upon a burst of anger or sin and not say after it, "I was as a beast before You, O God," then I despair of them.

Other men commit these sins. Other men fall into these iniquities, but it remains for the Christian, only, to abhor himself on account of them. To sin is no spot of God's children. But to *hate* sin, humbly to *confess* it, and to lay in the very dust with abasement on account of it—this is one of the choice requirements of the truly begotten sons of Heaven. Oh, I know that many of you, with a groaning that could not be uttered, have been made to feel in your heart that though you are the elect of God, and bought with precious blood, and the Spirit of God dwells in you, yet still you are, when the flesh prevails, as beasts before God.

In deed, my text, as I have said, seems to make us even worse than the beasts, for the comparison which David uses is not to a common and ordinary creature, but to some dread monster, a Behemoth. When we look within, there is nothing lovely. We are all a mass of distorted parts wrongly joined together. There is much of pride, and lust, and anger—and what is there of good? Brethren, our Apostle said in him there dwelt no good thing, and you and I are no better than he. Nothing good but everything that is evil. And all the evil put into the most exaggerated form and shape, until he that has seen himself, has been ready to go mad to think that he should ever be such a being as he is.

O Grace Divine! O sovereign love! Were it not for these we should lie down in despair, when we think of the unseemliness of our nature. More stubborn than Behemoth are we! God can tame the creatures. Man can even put a bit into the mouth of the horse, and he has a bridle for the ass. But we, more intractable than the brutes, are not to be restrained from sin. They are obstinate, but their obstinacy may be quelled and overcome. Sometimes harshness and another, kindness, can subdue the most stubborn brute. But our tongue and heart can no man tame. Evil, only evil, and that continually, still remains in our heart, kicking against the pricks even to the last—remaining even unto death like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.

What shall I say of human nature as the Christian discovers it in himself? I will only say it is impossible to exaggerate its evil. Describe it in the blackest and foulest terms, and you shall find, after all, Believers who will say man is worse than your black portrait, for only David's language will suit us, "So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You."

I shall not dwell longer on this part. I have, indeed, only brought it out because I know there are so many young Christians who are dreadfully alarmed when they discover what they are by nature and who, indeed,

begin on a wrong theory by supposing that the Grace of God comes to make old Adam new—whereas the Grace of God does not change our *old* nature. It gives us a *new* nature, which subdues the old—but the old nature is there, still. Old Adam is old Adam even when the new Adam is in the heart. The flesh is evil, undiluted evil, just as much as before Christ entered the soul. Therefore, Divine Grace struggles with the flesh, good strives with evil, and the life of the Believer becomes a constant and perpetual battle—the one principle striving against the other till Divine Grace, at last, gets the victory and the saint is “afterwards received to Glory.”

II. We shall now turn to the faithful EXPRESSIONS OF THE SPIRIT and God help us while we enlarge upon them. How changed the language now! Nothing of the beast, here, but rather the spirit seems to grow angelic and to borrow Heaven’s harps. Hear its first sweet word like music. “*Nevertheless.*” As if, notwithstanding all, not one atom the less was it true and certain that David was saved, and accepted, and that the blessings he is now about to speak of were his by a perpetual entail—“*Nevertheless I am continually with You.*” Here is *Divine regard*. Fully conscious of his own lost estate, and of the deceitfulness and vileness of his nature, yet, by a glorious burst of faith, he says, “*Nevertheless I am continually with You!*”

I shall not preach on that, but just let you think it over. Let each one soliloquize—“I today, a black and detestable sinner, am nevertheless, if I believe in Jesus, continually with God! Continually upon His *mind*, He is always thinking of me for my good. Continually before His *eyes*. The eyes of the Lord never sleep but perpetually watch out for my good. Continually in His *hands*, so that none shall be able to pluck me from them until Omnipotence itself shall be overcome. Continually on His *heart*, engraved there, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest wore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart forever.

Tried and afflicted Soul, vexed with the tempest within, look at the calm without. “*Nevertheless*”—O say it in your heart and suck the comfort from it, “I am continually with You.” You always think of me, O God. The heart of Your love continually yearn towards *me*. You are always making Providence work for my good. You never pluck me from Your heart. You have set me as a signet upon Your arm. Your love is strong as death—many waters cannot quench it. Your affection is hot as coals of juniper and yet, yet it is true, I am as a beast before You, and when You look at me You can see nothing in me, apart from Christ, but what is debased and beast-like. Surprising Grace, You see me in Christ and though in myself, abhorred, You behold me as wearing Christ’s garments and washed in His blood—

“*With the Savior’s garments on Holy as the Holy One.*”

And I am thus continually in Your favor—“continually with You.” Oh, it is a child’s faith—an infant faith, to be able to say, “I am with God,” when I have the light of His favor shining on me. But oh, when I see the blackness of my heart, still to believe that I am continually with Him—this is a man’s faith, what if I say, Brethren—a *giant’s* faith? It is so easy when you have many graces and many virtues to say, “Christ can save me.” Yes, but when your follies stare you in the face, when your sins re-

buke you, still to say, “Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean,” this is faith, indeed. Blessed faith is that that does not shut its eye to the disease, but seeing it, and knowing all its venom and deadly power, still trusts it to the Balm of Gilead, and believes that it can heal!

But you will notice next that our Psalmist is not content with claiming Divine regard, he goes on to speak of *Divine help and gracious operation*. “You hold me by the right hand”—Here is a recognition of *the past*. I am black and full of sin and treachery, why have I not fallen more? Because Your hand has held me up. O God, if You had not kept Your saints, they had been the vilest of transgressors. Oh, what should any of us have been, though we may be as stars now, if it had not been for God’s right hand? What should we have been but black blots forever, if God had left us?

Look back, Beloved, at the temptations from which you have been delivered, the trials from which you have escaped—to what do you owe all these? Why, to the fact that He has held you by your right hand and is holding you by your right hand now. Let *the present* be a theme for gratitude. At this hour your feet are almost gone, but not quite, for He holds you. At this moment you are ready to say, “The Lord has forgotten me. God will be gracious no more.” But He has as firm a grip of you today as ever He had. Oh, what joy it is to feel that God has a firm hold of us! If we only feel that *we* have a hold of Him, then our hand may fail. But if He has a hold of us, then neither death nor Hell shall ever triumph in casting us down.

And this is true of *the future*. He will hold us with His right hand. If we believe on Christ today, we shall certainly be kept till we see the face of Christ in Glory everlasting. Here am I but a stripling, fresh come to the battle, and there may be many years of wars and fighting for me but, “I know that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Here are some of you whose hair has turned gray with many years of trial in the wilderness. What do you say, has God forgotten you? Veterans in God’s army, has He forsaken you? Has He deserted any of you in the moment of trial? No. Then let us, together, young and old, bless His name, that He holds us with His right hand.

But what next? We must not tarry long on any one sentence. Our Psalmist goes on to speak of *Divine guidance*. “You shall guide me with Your counsel,” says he. “I am foolish, I shall be sure to choose the wrong way. I am ignorant, I do not even know the right way. I am a beast and those beastly instincts of mine will constantly lead me astray. But You shall guide me by Your counsel.” See, Brethren, how he throws himself on his God—he will have nothing to do with himself. “YOU *shall*” is his confidence. He is completely weaned from looking within. He casts himself flat on his God. “You shall guide me *with Your counsel*.” That *counsel* I take it, means first, *God’s decrees*—

**“He that formed in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb.
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.”**

Graciously has He ordained every step of our way from this time till we arrive in Heaven. Graciously has He ordained every temptation and trial—

**“Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.”**

I shall do, after all, what He decrees, have nothing but what He ordains, suffer nothing but what He thinks fit. I shall do nothing without His permission or aid. I *must* prevail, for thus His counsel runs to bring His many sons to Glory—“You shall guide me by Your counsel.” Many people do not like predestination, but I think when they get washed up on a rock in some dark troublous day, they will be glad to cling to this Truth of God.

Brethren, I thank God that I know there is as much in the decrees of God for a grain of dust that pains my eye, as there is in the cloud and tempest. The chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. In the great, and in the little, Jehovah reigns. Standing in the chariot of Providence He holds the reins, and when the horses seem to be wild and to know no bit or bridle, He guides them according to His will. O rest in this, Believer—He shall guide you with His counsel. But this counsel also represents *the written Word*—His decree is *His* counsel, His written Word is *our* counsel, *His* counsel to us.

Happy is the man who has God’s Word always to direct him! What were the mariner without his compass? What were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels from the port of destruction to the haven of salvation mapped and marked by One who has sailed along the sea. Blessed, blessed be You, O God, that we may trust You to guide us now, and guide us even to the end! And all this is to us who are like brutes before Him! O my Soul, have you ever known what it is to be thoroughly cast down till there was no hope left for you, and yet to be carried up till there was no doubt left?

’Twas but yesterday I knew the whole of this experience in my own heart. A more wretched miserable being than I, Hell could scarcely produce, and yet a more happy joyful-hearted creature Heaven could hardly find. How, you say, how was this? When I looked within and marked depravity and death everywhere, my soul was troubled almost unto death. But when I looked to Christ and saw the fullness of the Covenant, and the complete way in which He covered all my sins and blotted out all my iniquity, my spirit was like a bird that had escaped from the fowler and soared singing up to Heaven with joy and gratitude. “You shall guide me with Your counsel.”

Then comes the last, *Divine reception*. “And afterward receive me to Glory.” Oh, how sweet is this—“receive me to Glory.” Catch it, Christian? I do not want you to think of what I say this morning. I want you to think of what you have felt and what your Lord is doing for you. *He* will receive *you*, to Glory—*you!* Why, if it had been said, “He shall damn you to all eternity,” your heart would have said, “Ah, that I richly deserve.” But He says, “I will receive you to Glory.” Slipping, sliding, falling, and yet I will bring you safe at last! Wandering, erring, straying, yet I will receive you to Glory!

Full of sin, even to the last, full of sin, haunted with unbelief even to your dying hour—tempted, perhaps on your deathbed—your very couch a part of the battlefield, and your pillow a castle to be stormed or to be defended—yet I will receive you to Glory. Brethren, that moment when you and I shall be received into Glory—can we conceive it? You are gone, frail body, no more pain. But better still, you are gone, vile flesh—no more temptation, no more *sin*. Old Adam, you shall rot. Let the worms devour you—glad am I to be rid of you—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”***

And this is your portion and my portion, though doubts and fears prevail, and we hardly dare to say that Christ is ours. Yet, resting on Him, on Him only, having nothing of our own, looking to His flowing wounds, covered with His matchless righteousness, saved at last we shall be, and we will sing forever to that matchless Divine Grace which saved us even to the end.

III. To conclude, the Psalmist has been looking at his complex self—at the flesh and groaning over it. And then at his spirit, confident in its God, and he winds up the whole story thus—“WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU?” I have known men lose their property and yet they did not say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You?” I have known a man lose his wife and yet look to earth to find some comfort. I have known him lose child after child, and yet he still thought the world had many charms. I have known him sick, yet he has had pleasure in vanity.

But there is one thing which cannot happen—a man cannot know himself so as to feel his folly and his ignorance, to feel the beast-like character of his nature, without at once turning his eye to Christ. There is nothing that makes one love Christ, I think, so much as a sense of His love balanced with a sense of our unworthiness of it. It is sweet to think that Christ loves us. But oh, to remember that we are black as the tents of Kedar, and yet He loves us! This is a thought which may well wean us from everything else besides. That He should love me when I have some graces and some virtues is not a great marvel. But that He should love me, when in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing?

When I have no charms, no beauties, not one attractive attribute, not one trait of character that is worthy of His regard—that He should love me then—oh, if this does not make me swear a divorce to the world, what can? Methinks, Believer, you will come to Jesus and put your hand in His and say, “You, You alone are mine. No other love can I have but this. I cannot love the world, when I have known such affection as Yours. And when I see how little I deserve it, I must love You.” Then, the spirit flies to Heaven, thinking of all that joy and rapture which is to come, but remembering, as it enters Paradise, that it was on earth but as a beast before God.

It looks all round through Heaven and says to angels, “I cannot think of you, I can only think of Him who could love so base, so vile a creature as I am.” Surely, passing by principalities and powers, forgetting for awhile the blood-washed company, the sacramental host of God’s elect, we shall look for the Throne where Jesus sits, and we shall sing to Him and this shall be the song, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from

our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever.” Contemplate much, Believer, your own sad state, contemplate yet more your own safety and perfection in Christ. And these two things together shall make you despise the world and its joys, make you tread on the world and its trials, and make you feel such a knitting and union of heart to Christ, to Christ Jesus only, that you may say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.”

I thought I saw just now before my eyes a dark and horrible pit and down deep below, where the eyes could not reach, lay a being broken in pieces, whose groans and howling pierced the awful darkness and amazed my ears. I thought I saw a bright one fly from the highest Heaven and in an instant dive into that black darkness till he was lost and buried in it. I waited for a moment and to my mind’s eye I saw two spirits rising from the horrid deep, with arms entwined, as though one was bearing up the other, I saw them emerge from the gloom. I heard the fairest of them say, as He mounted into light, “I have loved you and given Myself for you.”

And I heard the other say, who was that poor broken one just now, “I was foolish and ignorant, I was as a beast before You.” Before I could write the words both spirits had risen into mid air and I heard one of them say “You shall be with Me in Paradise,” and the other whispered, “Nevertheless I am continually with You.” As they mounted higher, I heard One say, “None shall pluck you out of My hand,” and I heard the other say “You hold me by my right hand.” As still they rose they continued the loving dialogue. “I will guide you with My eyes,” said the bright One. The other answered, “You shall guide me with Your counsel.”

They reached the bright clouds that separate earth from Heaven and as they parted to make way for the glorious One, He said, “I will give you to sit upon My Throne even as I have overcome and sit upon My Father’s Throne,” and the other answered, “And You shall afterward receive me to Glory.” Lo the clouds closed their doors and they were gone. I thought again they opened and I saw those two spirits soaring onward beyond stars and sun and moon—right up beyond principalities and powers—on, beyond cherubim and seraphim. Right on beyond every name that is named, until in that ineffable brightness, dark with insufferable light, the awful glory of the Deity whom eye cannot see, both those spirits were lost and there came the sound of joyous hallelujahs from the spirits which are before the Throne of God.

May it be your lot and mine thus to be brought up, for we are thus fallen. May it be ours to be thus caught up to the third Heaven, for we are thus broken and cast down into the lowest Hell by nature. God give us faith in Christ. Faith in Christ—that is the link, the bond, the tie. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.”

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GUIDANCE TO GRACE AND GLORY NO. 2389

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
DECEMBER 2, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1888.

***“You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.”
Psalm 73:24.***

The Psalmist, here, evidently perceives that his Lord is near. He does not so much speak of God as to Him—“You shall guide me with Your counsel.” You know what the French call, *tutoyage*—you-ing and you-ing—there is something of that kind of language in the text, a speaking in tones of hallowed familiarity with God. As if the Lord were close by, the Psalmist says to Him, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory”—not in the way of prayer asking God to *do* so, but in childlike confidence expressing the conviction that it shall *be* so and rejoicing in the blessed assurance of it. “You shall”—I know You will, I am sure of it, I have firm reliance on it, and I bless You for it—“You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.” It is not every man who can talk like that and it is not every believing man who has yet attained confidence enough to dare to speak so. It is well if you can only *pray* that this may be the case with you, but the sweetness lies in grasping this Truth of God with a childlike delight and, with unfaltering faith believing it to be yours. “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.”

The Psalmist had been, to some extent, finding fault with the Providence of God. There had been, in his mind, a quarrel with God's proceedings. He saw the wicked in great power, having all their wishes and desires gratified in every way, while he, himself, was sorely plagued and chastened, and he could not quite understand it. But now, even though he does not comprehend it, he yields to God's superior judgment, he lays aside his own logic and arguments and he says, “No, Lord, I will no longer be a debater, but You shall guide me. I will no longer look for present joy, I will look to that which is to come afterward. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward shall come my brilliant days, my times of joy—afterward You will receive me to Glory.” You see that after drifting about for a while, the Psalmist has come to a good anchorage. He has found a resting place, as the birds do, when, after wandering away, they fly back to their nest and he sings, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Sitting down once

more at the feet of his Lord, he looks up into those dear, tender, loving, watchful eyes and he says, "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. My discussions are all over now. My questions are at an end. I will rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and my soul shall be content with His will, whatever it is." I pray that what the Holy Spirit may lead me to say upon my text may have an effect something like that upon any tempest-tossed spirits here. May they also be brought to rest in the Lord!

First, dear Friends, I will speak concerning *the conviction which led the Psalmist to take a guide*. Secondly, I will say a little upon *the confidence which led him to take God for his Guide*. Thirdly, I will talk to you about *the delightful commerce between the Psalmist and his God* which began when God had become his Guide, and continued throughout his life. And then, the fourth point, which shall be our finis, shall be, *the sure result of this guidance*. "You shall afterward receive me to Glory."

I. First, then, concerning THE CONVICTION WHICH LED THE PSALMIST TO TAKE A GUIDE. Happily for him, that conviction came very early. If I am to have a guide on my journey, I should like to have one at the beginning, for it is the *starting* that has so much to do with all the rest of the way. If I start due south when I ought to have gone north, I shall have to retrace many a weary step! Dear young Friends, if you can have God to be your Guide, now, in the morning of life, how happy you will be! It will influence for good the whole of your future existence, depend upon it! As the river is colored by the glacier from which it flows and never, even when larger and deeper, quite loses the whiteness of its mountain source, so, if you begin with God at the fountainhead and spring of life, there will be a peculiar charm around your pathway as long as you live! Permit me to say that I have found it so myself. I can say to my Lord and *do* often say it, "O God, You have taught me from my youth, and until now have I declared Your wondrous works! Now, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." There is a sweet plea when years multiply upon you, if you can say to the Lord—

***"In early years You were my Guide,
And of my youth the Friend."***

David began to experience Divine guidance while he was a shepherd boy and it was well for him that it was so. But why did he ever feel that he needed a guide? I suppose it was because *of a work of Grace upon his heart*, for, naturally, we do not like being guided. The mother's apron strings grow irksome to the young man when he finds the down coming upon his cheek—he will have his own way—is it not manly to be one's own master? Allow me to say that there is no *worse* master! You had better serve the greatest tyrant than be your own master! But it is often thus with the young—at first they call it liberty to have their own way. And it is only when the Grace of God softens and sobers them, when He gives the young men wisdom, knowledge and discretion, that they begin to dream that they need a guide.

I heard a good old man speak, the other day. He was a doctor of divinity and I introduced him to the children, in a somewhat merry manner, by telling them that he was a doctor of divinity and that doctors of divinity knew everything, and a few things beside. But when he began to speak, he said, "My dear Children, I do not know everything, but I will tell you one thing that I *do* know, I know that I do *not* know much. I have been a long time learning it, but I have, at last, learned that I do not know much." And when he had expatiated upon that, he said, "and, dear Children, I have learned another thing—I know that I am not fit to take care of myself. I wonder," he added, "whether all the boys and girls here have yet come to that conviction, that they are not fit to take care of themselves, and that they need somebody to lead them all the way through life."

It is a fine piece of knowledge when you have learned as much as that! I pray that all who are young may learn it soon and that others who, by painful experience, begin to see that they are not quite as wise as they thought they were, will come to the conclusion that they are not fit to manage themselves, after all—and that they need a higher power, a wiser eye, a keener mind, a mightier hand, a more supreme will to govern them than any that they have of their own.

I suppose that the Psalmist said to the Lord, "You shall guide me," because *he had been convinced of his own folly* and, therefore, felt that it was well to commit himself into wiser hands. And also, perhaps, that *he had obtained some knowledge of the difficulties of the way*. The way of life is a trying one to most people. To many it is very difficult. To those who find it easy, it is probably less so than to those who find it difficult. It is a very unfriendly world to live in if you have to fight with poverty, or if you have to work hard to provide for the day's needs. But I question whether it is not a worse world to the man who has not to work and who has all that heart can wish. The most perilous position for a young man to be placed in is, very early in life, to have a large income with nobody to check him in spending it, and to be permitted to do just whatever he likes.

Oh, those very smooth ways—how many slip therein who might have stood, perhaps, had the road been rougher! But to no one of us is the path of life an easy one if we desire to be pure, clean, upright and accepted with God. He is, indeed, a fool who attempts to walk in *that* way without a guide! Look at yourself, full of folly. Look at the way, full of pitfalls and dangers of every kind. You may well stop and say, "I must have a guide, I dare not go alone a step further on such a perilous path." No doubt the Psalmist had seen others set out without a guide and he had heard of their falls, and of their ruin. You have not lived long, young man, but you have been in the world long enough to have seen or to have heard of many who seemed likely to be great and good who, nevertheless, have come to an evil end. That will be your portion, too, as well as theirs, if you venture to walk in this difficult way without a guide.

The Psalmist's desire to have a guide also showed *his great anxiety to be right*. I wish that all men began life with an earnest desire to act rightly and that each one would say, "I shall never live this life, again. I should like to make it a good one as far as I can." Since you cannot come back to mend it, but, as it is, it will have to be presented before the great Judge of All, seek to do that which is right each day and to obey your God every hour you live. If this were the intense desire of everyone of us, we would be driven at once to this conclusion—"I must have a guide. I want to live a glorious life and if I am to do so, I must be helped in it, for I am incompetent for the task by myself."

I am merely giving you the outline of a sermon. I have not time to fill it up, so now I leave this first point, the conviction which led the Psalmist to take a guide.

II. Secondly, let us think of THE CONFIDENCE WHICH LED HIM TO TAKE GOD AS HIS GUIDE. If we were but in our right senses, we would all do so!

A man, looking about wisely for a guide, will prefer to have *the very best*—and is not God, who is infinitely wise, the best Guide that we can have? Who questions it? Is not the Lord, also, the most loving, the most tender, the most considerate, the most fatherly of all beings who can be chosen as a guide? Wisdom, when attended with discourtesy and unfeeling roughness, may be shunned by us, but Divine Wisdom, dressed in robes of love and tenderness, invites us to run into her arms! Choose God, I pray you, because He so well knows the way and because He has such a tender love for poor trembling humanity.

Choose Him, also, because of *His constant, unceasing, Infallible care*. If I choose a guide who may die on the road, I am likely to be unhappy, but God will never die. If I choose a guide who, being my friend at the start, will not care for me when I have advanced half way on my journey, I am unwise in my choice. But God cannot change, He will always be the same! If I had to ascend the Alps and I selected a guide who could help me over the easy portions of the road, but would be unable to aid me in the more difficult parts of it, I should again be unhappy. The Lord is a Guide who will never fail, never alter and never die. Oh, you are wise, indeed, if you will say to Him, "My God, You shall guide me with Your counsel!"

But will God guide us? Well, it were in vain to choose Him if He would not! But of all beings, God is *most easy of access*. You know how it is with some of us who are very, very, very busy and who scarcely ever have a moment's rest at all from the rising of the sun till far into the night. There is a knock at the door. There is another knock at the door. There is another and, at last, if we are to be prepared for our public duties, we are obliged to say that we cannot be seen—we must have a little time to ourselves. But there is never an hour when God cannot be seen, never a moment when His door will not open to any who come to ask advice of Him! And God is everywhere, so that, wherever *you* are, you can find

Him—not only in the place where you bow the knee in private prayer, but out on the exchange, amid the throng of men, or in the streets, or on the omnibus, or in the ship at sea, or in the train—anywhere and everywhere! A breath, an aspiration will find Him, or—

“The upward glancing of an eye,”

a sigh, an unexpressed desire and you have come to Him at once! And He has servants everywhere to do the bidding of His love when we have sought His help.

The Psalmist was truly wise in saying to the Lord, “You shall guide me with Your counsel.” Dear Friends, are you equally wise in that way? I see young men and women here in considerable numbers—will not each of you say, “Yes, Lord, it is even so. From this 4th day of October, my heart says to You, ‘You shall guide me with Your counsel’”?

III. Now I must pass on to my third point, only skimming the surface of the subject. Think of THE HEAVENLY COMMERCE WHICH NOW BEGINS BETWEEN THE SOUL AND ITS GUIDE.

How does God guide men? Here, let me warn you against the superstitions which some persons use with the idea that God will guide them in that way. Above all, avoid the superstition which some practice by opening the Bible at random in the hope of being guided by the text which comes first to sight! You will often be misled if you act thus. The heathen acted so with Virgil and I think the heathen were, in that respect, better than Christians, because when they played the fool, they did it with Virgil—not with God’s Book. Do not so, I pray you. One of these days you may open at this text, “He went and hanged himself,” and if you are not satisfied with that passage, you may open the Bible at another place, and find it written, “Go, and do you likewise,” but that will not excuse you if you commit suicide! Nothing can be more wicked and absurd than such a practice as that.

How, then, does God guide us? First, by *the general directions of His Word*. You need to know what God would have you to do. Nine times out of ten, look to the Ten Commandments and you will, at least, know what you must *not* do—and knowing what you must *not* do, you will be able to conclude what you *may* do. There are some wonderfully plain directions in God’s Word as to all manner of circumstances and conditions. You may often imitate the saints of old and you may always imitate their Master! And, in imitating Christ, you will know what to do. This is the question that will guide you as to your course of action—What would Jesus Christ have done if He had been in my circumstances? Apart from His Godhead, in which you cannot copy Him, what would the Man, Christ Jesus, have done? Do that—for it is sure to be the wisest thing! So, first, be guided by the general directions given in God’s Word.

The next way of guidance is that there are *great principles infused in every man who takes God for his Guide*. Among the rest, there are principles like this—avoid everything that is evil. That one direction post will often stop you and show you which way you ought *not* to go, because, if

there is anything wrong about the road, however profitable it may seem to be, however easy and pleasant it is and, above all, however customary it is for others to go that way, you must not travel along it! There are many in the broad road, but you must not make one more. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." You keep to the narrow way and you will be in the right road.

The next general principle of our holy religion is that we ought to live for the Glory of God, alone. You could not have a much better guide than such questions as these—"What action would reflect most honor upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Which course would be most creditable to my religious profession? Which would be likely to do most good?" Follow that rule—it is almost equal to the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest if you have these questions to guide you!

You are bid, also, to show love to your fellow men. If you are in a difficulty about two courses of action, do the more loving of the two—that by which you can most *deny yourself* and most benefit your fellow creatures—especially with reference to their salvation. Thus, by infusing principles of self-denial, principles of faith in God, principles of humility and contentment, the Word of God and the Spirit of God supply us with directions on the road we are to travel.

Next to this, God guides His people on the way of life *by giving a certain balance of the faculties*. When we come to God in penitence—when we are born again of the Spirit and live by faith in Christ—then, first of all, fear is banished and faith takes its place. We are then better able to judge which is the right road. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." Many a man has done wrong because he had not the courage to do right, but you who have been born again have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, courage and faith! And you have a sound mind, so that thus you are guided aright. By your faculties being left undisturbed by fear, your mental balance is maintained!

Obstinacy is a shocking thing as a guide in life. Young men have resolved that they will do so and so if they die for it. Yes, but the Grace of God dethrones obstinacy and gives us, in its place, acquiescence in the Divine will. Bowing with submission to the will of God—by that very fact we are furnished with unerring guidance!

Haste, too, is the author of a great deal of mischief in human life. Men are in such a hurry that they make all manner of mistakes, but the habit of praying about everything is, in itself, a great guide. You have to stop a while and the very stopping lets you see more than you would have seen in your hurry. The habit of praying before you leap leads to the habit of looking before you leap—and then, when you perceive that you cannot leap—prayer gives you enough of prudence to resolve that you will go round some other way. Thus you are wisely guided in life.

Above all, the Grace of God guides us very much by the dethroning of self as the traitorous lord of our being and makes us loyal to Christ. When a man acts out of loyalty to Christ, he is pretty sure to act very

wisely and rightly. On this point, alone, I would have liked to have had an hour's talk with you, but I must draw my remarks to a close.

I believe that, over and above this infusion of right principles, and balancing of the faculties, there is *a special illumination of mind which comes from dwelling near God*. Everybody knows how near akin sin is to insanity. Well, now, remember that holiness is as near akin to perfect wisdom as sin is to insanity! When you yield yourself to the holy influences of God's Presence, you shall have given to you what men call "shrewd commonsense," but what is really an illumination of mind which comes from dwelling near God and being made like He!

And, lastly, I believe that at the very worst times, when all these things will fail you as a guide, *you may expect mysterious impulses*, for which you can never account, which will come to you and guide you aright. There are many stories, which I should like to have told, relating to instances in which men of God have been directed, by some strange impulse on their minds, to do things which they had never thought of doing. And what they have done has turned out to be for the saving of life, or for deliverance from great evils. Oh, yes, if you live near God, He will say things to you that He will not tell anybody else! There are monitions of the Spirit which come to men who deal intimately with the Invisible that do not come to everybody—only let not every fool who gets a silly notion into his head run away with the idea that it came from God!

Only this week, a young man said to me, "You believe the Bible, Sir?" "Yes, I believe the Bible, certainly." "Do you believe what God says?" "Certainly I do." "Well," he said, "I had a revelation, the other night and a voice said to me, 'Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it.'" "All right," I said. And he then said to me, "That door leads into your College and you are to take me in." I replied, "So I will when I get a revelation that I am to do so, but, you see, the revelation, whatever it is worth, has only come to *you* and I shall not let you in till I have one to the same effect." I have a notion that I shall never have that revelation, and that he received it, not from God's Word, but through a slight aperture in his cracked brain! There are many persons who get revelations of that kind, to which we pay no sort of attention. The mysterious impulses that I mean come only to those who are really serving God and who, in closely waiting upon Him, find that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

IV. But I must finish my discourse. The *finis* was to be, THE SURE RESULT OF THIS GUIDANCE. "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."

On earth there is no real glory for us unless we are guided by God's counsel. There is no true glory for any man who takes his own course. Glory is for those of you who put your hand into the hand of the great Father and pray Him to forgive all your iniquities for Christ's sake and lead you in the way everlasting. Afterward, He will receive you to Glory.

This is a delightful thought, but I can now only answer this one question. *When we die, who will receive us into Glory?* Well, I do not doubt that the angels will. John Bunyan's description of the shining ones who come down to the brink of the river to help the pilgrims up on the other side of the cold stream—I doubt not is all true, but the text tells us of Somebody *better* than the angels who will come and receive us! Our dying prayer to our Lord will be, "Into Your hands I commend my spirit," and His answer will be, "I receive you to Glory." Our heavenly Father stands watching for the moment when our redeemed spirit shall pass into His hands that He may receive it! Our Savior, who bought us with His precious blood, stands waiting to receive the jewel for which He paid so dear a price! The Spirit of God, who dwells in us, is also waiting to perfect the work which He has carried on so long—and to lift us up into the blessedness of the Eternal City.

Oh, how I wish that every person here who has not yet yielded himself or herself to Christ, would do so now! Breathe silently these words before you leave the pew. I will give you a second or two in which to do it—"You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." Bow your heads and let that prayer be offered.

* * * * *

Lord, You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory! For Jesus' sake, accept this resolve! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalm 39.

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

Jeduthun was one of those who led the sacred song in the House of God in David's day and, long afterwards, we find the son of Jeduthun still engaged in this holy service! What a blessing it is to be succeeded in the work of God by your children from generation to generation! May that be your privilege, my dear Brothers and Sisters! May your families never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to sing His praises! This is called, "A Psalm of David." His life was a very checkered one. Sometimes he was very joyous and then he wrote bright and happy Psalms. But he was a man of strong passions and deep feelings, so at times he was very sad. And then he touched the mournful string. This is a very sorrowful Psalm, but it is full of teaching. How grateful we ought to be that such a man as David ever lived and that he had such wonderful experiences! It may be said of him that he was—

***"A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."***

Well was he made the type of Christ in whose great heart the joys and sorrows of humanity met to the fullest! Thus the Psalmist sings—

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways.* It is not everybody who would like to remember what he has uttered, but David could remember and dwell upon what he had formerly said—“*I said, I will take heed to my ways.*” That is a good thing to do. He that does not take heed to his ways had need do so. Heedless and careless and heedless and graceless are much the same thing. He that does not take heed of what he does will be sure to do wrong.

1. *That I sin not with my tongue.* He that does not sin with his tongue usually has his whole nature under government. The tongue is the rudder of the vessel and if that is managed well, the ship will be rightly steered. “*I said, I resolved, I determined and I uttered my determination—I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.*” Just then David was sinning in his *heart*, for it was in a great state of ferment, but he said, “*I will not sin with my tongue.*” It was with him as it sometimes is with the captain of a vessel—if someone on board is suffering from the yellow fever, the ship master will not send a boat to shore for fear of spreading infection. His vessel will be in quarantine till all danger is past. It was thus with David—while all within him was seething and boiling in feverish impatience, he said, “*I shall not speak for the present, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.*”

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* The marginal reading is, “with a muzzle for my mouth.” David would not speak at all and herein he was *not* right. If he had said, “*I will keep my mouth with a bridle,*” as our translation has it, that would have been perfectly proper. We ought never to leave off bridling our tongue, but David *muzzled* his. He would not speak at all while the wicked were before him. He knew that they would misconstrue his words, that they would make mischief of whatever he said, so he muzzled himself when in their company.

2. *I was dumb with silence.* “*I did not speak, I could not speak—I was dumb with silence.*”

2. *I held my peace, even from good.* David’s conduct proves that even when we are doing something which is right, we are apt to overdo it, and so we stray into a vice while pursuing a virtue! You can run so close to the heels of a virtue that they may knock out your teeth—you may be so ardent for one good thing that you may miss another—“*I held my peace, even from good.*”

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.* Not giving it vent, it boiled and seethed. “*My sorrow was stirred.*” Sometimes a little talk is a great easement to a troubled spirit, but, as David was dumb, his sorrow was not still.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned.* There was an inward friction, his griefs kept revolving till his heart grew hot. This heat generated fire which burned so vehemently that, at last, the Psalmist could not help himself, and he was obliged to speak.

3. *Then spoke I with my tongue.* Whether rightly or wrongly, he must say something! He could not hold himself in any longer—"Then spoke I with my tongue."

4. *LORD.* If you must speak, address your words to the Lord! So David does. He does not speak to the wicked, but he prays to God most holy.

4. *Make me to know my end.* Did he wish to die? Perhaps so. You remember that one of the two men who never died once prayed that he might die. Elijah did so. And David does so, here, I think, if I put a hard construction on his speech—"Lord, make me to know my end." But if I read it more tenderly, I may make it to mean, "Lord, help me to recollect that my sorrows will not last forever!" That thought will tone them down and keep them in check—"Make me to know my end."

4-5. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth.* That is, the breadth of your four fingers—all the length of life is to be measured by a span.

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* All that exists is as nothing before God. What are even the elder-born of angels but the infants of an hour in contrast with the ages of eternity? The world, itself, is only like a bubble blown yesterday! The sun is as a spark struck from the anvil of Omnipotence but a few days ago! And as for *man*, compared with the eternal God, he is "as nothing."

5. *Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* Or, as the Hebrew has it, every Adam is all Abel. Was not Abel the child of Adam, and was he not soon cut off? Every man, even at his best state, is altogether vanity! What poor creatures we are! Our breath is not more airy than we, ourselves, are! Our lives are but as a mist that is blown away by the wind. "Selah." When the Psalmist had come so far, he stopped a while, to tighten up the strings of his harp—such pressure as he had given it had taken away its melodious tones and it needed to be brought, again, up to concert pitch.

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show.* Like players, or actors, all of us are walking in a phantom show which is not really anything, but only seems to be.

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* They make a dreadful noise in the tumult of the battle, the din of the exchange, the hum of the streets, the fret and worry of the counting house, but it is all in vain.

6. *He heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them.* If a man does succeed in amassing wealth, it is a poor success. The muckrake gathers and then comes the fork that scatters. One man hoards it up and another takes as much delight in squandering it! They think that they have entailed their estate and that their name and house will continue as long as the sun, but it all comes to nothing. "Vanity of vanities," said the son of David, "all is vanity," and his father had said so before him!

7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You.* There is no vanity in *that* declaration! Now we are on the Rock, now we have come to

something real. When a man trusts in the unchanging God and hopes in the ever-blessed Savior, he has come out of his state of vanity—"My hope is in You."

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* We had not expected David to offer that prayer. We might have thought that he would say, "Deliver me from all my troubles and from my many vexing thoughts." But no, he lays the axe at the root of the evil—"Deliver me from all my *transgressions*." There is only One who can do that, even the glorious Son of God, who lived and died to save His people from their sins!

8. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* "The wicked will be ready enough to catch me up and pour scorn upon me. Lord, keep me so right with You and so near to Yourself that they may never be able to reproach me!"

9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because You did it.* This verse should read, "I will be dumb, I will not open my mouth because You have done it." That is a better silence than the first, for the Psalmist is getting into a right state. This is the proper silence—the other was brazen—this is golden! God help us to know how and when to practice it! Never speak against God whatever He does—open not your mouth when He chastens because *whatever* He does must be right!

10. *Remove Your stroke away from me.* Having come to complete submission, he ventures to pray for deliverance from his sorrow. You may pray very boldly and very freely when you can truly say, "Your will be done." David had said that he would not open his mouth against his God—and now he begins to plead, "Remove Your stroke away from me."

10. *I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.* When God strikes it is no playing matter—a blow of His hand consumes us!

11. *When You with rebukes correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.* As a moth eats up the fur or the cloth and spoils it, so, when God's corrections come upon us, our beauty is soon gone. Poor beauty it must be that can so soon go! Lord, let *Your* beauty be upon us, for no moth can ever eat into that!

11. *Surely every man is vanity. Selah.* In the fifth verse, you see that when the Psalmist reached that point, he stopped, and said, "Selah," and he does so, again, here. Striking his music with a heavy hand—he has put it out of tune, again, so he pauses and begins to tighten the strings up once more. You and I often need to be tightened up like the strings of a harp, to put us in right order before we go on to praise or to pray.

12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry.* See how David's "prayer" grows into a "cry"? It deepens in intensity—there is more power in a cry than in an ordinary prayer—it shows more earnestness and implies greater urgency! "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry."

12. *Hold not Your peace at my tears.* That is a still more powerful mode of pleading. Tears are the irresistible weapons of weakness. Women, children, beggars and sinners can all conquer by tears—when

they can win by nothing else! If they will take to these pearly drops and especially if they can look through them to the crimson drops of a Savior's blood, they can win what they will of God—"Hold not Your peace at my tears."

12. *For I am a stranger with You.* The Believer is a stranger in this world, just as *God* is! The Lord made the world, but the world does not know its Maker and it does not know His people—

***"Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown!
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

"I am a stranger," not to You, but, "*with You*, a stranger even as You are." There is another very beautiful meaning to this expression. You know how the Orientals exercise hospitality to strangers? When they once take them into their tent, they supply them liberally and treat them honorably. "I am a stranger with You." I am a poor alien who has come into God's House, to tarry for a while with Him, I have eaten of His salt, I have cast myself upon His protection, so He will certainly take care of me—"I am a stranger with You."

12. *And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "They did not remain here. My fathers used this world merely as an inn, at which they stayed for a night. In the morning, they hurried on to the City that has foundations, on the other side of Jordan—

***"To the islands of the Blessed,
To the land of the Hereafter,"***

where the saints dwell forever with their Lord!

13. *O spare me*—"Deal gently with me! Do not break me in pieces! If You must smite me, yet do not altogether crush me. O spare me"—

13. *That I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* "Let me be able to take a little nourishment and to gather my faculties together, yet again, that I may sing to You some sweeter hymn before I cease to be in the land of the living, and go out of this world." So, you see, this is a sweet Psalm, after all! It is a bitter sweet—a sweet bitter—a Psalm that tends towards our spiritual health. Many of us understand what David meant by it. May others, who as yet do not, soon be taught its gracious lessons! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION II), 73 (PART II), 668.

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

“LET US PRAY”

NO. 288

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“But it is good for me to draw near to God.”
Psalm 73:28.***

THERE are many ways by which the true Believer draws near to God. The gates of the king’s palace are many. And through the love of Jesus and the rich grace of his Spirit, it is our delight to enter and approach our heavenly Father. First and foremost among these is communion, that sweet converse which man holds with God, that state of nearness to God, in which our mutual secrets are revealed—our hearts being open unto Him, His heart being manifested to us. Here it is we see the invisible and hear the unutterable.

The outward symbol of fellowship is the sacred Supper of the Lord at which, by means of simple emblems, we are divinely enabled to feed, after a spiritual sort, upon the flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This is a pearly gate of fellowship, a royal road which our feet delight to tread. Moreover, we draw near to God even in our sighs and tears, when our desolate spirits long for His sacred Presence, crying, “Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!” And as often as we read the promise written in the Word and are enabled to receive it and rest upon it as the very words of a Covenant God, we do really “Draw near to Him.”

Nevertheless, prayer is the best used means of drawing near to God. You will excuse me, then, if in considering my text this morning, I confine myself entirely to the subject of prayer. It is in prayer mainly, that we draw near to God. Certainly it can be said emphatically of prayer, that it is good for every man who knows how to practice that heavenly art, in it to draw near unto God. To assist your memories, that the sermon may abide with you in later days, I shall divide my discourse this morning in a somewhat singular manner.

First, I shall look upon my text as being a touchstone, by which we may try our prayers, yes, and try ourselves, too. Then I shall take the text as a whetstone to sharpen our desires, to make us more earnest and more diligent in supplication, because “it is good to draw near to God.” Then I shall have the solemn task in the last place of using it as a tombstone,

with a direful epitaph upon it for those who do not know what it is to draw near to God. For “A prayerless soul is a Christless soul.”

I. First, then, regard my text as A TOUCHSTONE by which you may test your prayers and thus try yourselves.

That is not prayer of which it cannot be said that there was in it a drawing near unto God. Come here then with your supplications. I see one coming forward who says, “I am in the daily habit of using a form of prayer both at morning and at evening. I could not be happy if I went abroad before I had first repeated my morning prayer, nor could I rest at night without again going over the holy sentence appointed for use at eventide. Sir, my form is the very best that could possibly be written. It was compiled by a famous bishop, one who was glorified in martyrdom and ascended to his God in a fiery chariot of flame.”

My Friend, I am glad to hear, if you use a form, that you use the best. If we must have forms at all, let them be of the most excellent kind. So far so good. But let me ask you a question—I am not about to condemn you for any form you may have used—but tell me now and tell me honestly from your inmost soul, have you drawn near to God while you have been repeating those words? For if not, O solemn thought!—all the prayers you have ever uttered have been an idle mockery.

You have said prayers, but you have never prayed in your life. Imagine not that there is any enchantment in any particular set of words. You might as well repeat the alphabet backwards, or the “Abracadabra” of a wizard, as go over the best form in the world, unless there is something more than form in it. Have you drawn near to God? Suppose that one of us should be desirous of presenting a petition to the House of Commons? We wisely ask in what manner the petition should be worded. We procure the exact phrases. And suppose that in the morning we rise and read this form, or repeat it to ourselves and conclude with, “And your petitioners will ever pray,” and the like?

We do the same again at night, the same the next day and for months we continue the practice. One day meeting some member of the House, we accost him and astonish him by saying, “Sir, I wonder I have never had an answer from the House, I have been petitioning these last six months and the form that I used was the most accurate that could be procured.” “But,” says he, “how was your petition presented?” “Presented! I had not thought of that, I have repeated it.” “Yes,” he would say, “and you may repeat it many a long day before any good comes from it! It is not the repeating it, but the presenting of the petition and having it pleaded by some able friend that will get you the boon you desire.”

And so it may be, my Friend, that you have been repeating collects and prayers. And have you ignorantly imagined that you have prayed? Why,

your prayer has never been presented. You have not laid it before the bleeding Lamb of God and have not asked Him to take it for you into the sacred place where God abides and there to present the petition with His own merits before His Father’s Throne. I will not bid you cease from your form. But I do beseech you by the living God, either cease from it, or else beg the Holy Spirit to enable you to draw near to God in it.

Oh, I beseech you, take not what I may say for any censoriousness. I speak now as God’s own messenger in this matter. Your prayer has not been heard and it neither can nor will be answered unless there is in it a true and real desire to draw near to God. “Ah,” says another, “I am pleased to hear these remarks, for I am in the habit of offering extempore prayer every morning and evening and at other times. Besides, I like to hear you speak against the form, Sir.” Mark, I did not speak against the form, that is not my business upon this occasion. One class of sinners is always pleased to hear another class of sinners found fault with.

You say you offer an extempore supplication. I bring your prayer to the same touchstone as the former. What is there in the form that you can extemporize, that it should be so much better than that which was composed by some holy man of God? Possibly your extempore form is not worth a farthing and if it could be written, might be a disgrace to prayer-makers. I bring you at once to the test—have you in your prayer drawn near to God? When you have been on your knees in the morning, have you thought that you were talking to the King of Heaven and earth? Have you breathed your desires, not to the empty winds, but into the ear of the Eternal? Have you desired to come to Him and tell Him your wants and have you sought at His hands the answer to your requests? Remember, you have not prayed successfully or acceptably unless you have in prayer endeavored to draw near to God.

Suppose now, (to take a case) that I should desire some favor of a friend. I shut myself up alone and I commence delivering an oration, pleading earnestly for the boon I need. I repeat this at night and so on month after month. At last I meet my friend and I tell him that I have been asking a favor of him and that he has never heard my prayer. “No,” says he “I have never seen you, you never spoke to me.” “Ah, but you should have heard what I said. If you had but heard it surely it would have moved your heart.” “Ah,” says he, “but then you did not address it to me.

You wrote a letter, you tell me, in moving strains, but did you post the letter? Did you see it was delivered to me?” “No, no,” you say, “I kept the letter after I had written it. I never sent it to you.” Now mark, it is just the same with extempore prayer. You plead. But if you are not pleading with God, to what effect is your pleading? You talk, but if you are not talking to a manifestly present God, to what effect is all your talking? If you do not

seek to come near to Him, what have you done? You have offered sacrifice, maybe, but it has been upon your own high places and the sacrifice has been an abomination. You have not brought it up to God's one altar. You have not come up to the Mercy Seat, where is His own visible presence! You have not drawn near to God and consequently your prayers, though they are multiplied by tens of thousands, are utterly valueless to your soul's benefit. Drawing near to God is an indispensable requisite in accepted prayer.

But, now, lest I should be misunderstood as to this drawing near to God, let me attempt to describe it in degrees, for all men cannot draw near to God with the same nearness of access. When first the life of grace begins in the soul you will draw near to God, but it will be with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position. It is cast to the earth with the grandeur of that God in whose presence it stands. I remember the first time I ever sincerely prayed in my life. But the words I used I remember not. Surely there were few enough words in that petition. I had often repeated a form. I had been in the habit of continually repeating it.

At last I came really to pray. And then I saw myself standing before God, in the immediate presence of the heart-searching Jehovah and I said within myself, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear—but now my eyes see You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” I felt like Esther when she stood before the King, faint and overcome with dread. I was full of penitence of heart, because of His majesty and my sinfulness. I think the only words I could utter were something like these—“Oh, Ah.” And the only complete sentence was, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” The overwhelming splendor of His majesty, the greatness of His power, the severity of his justice, the immaculate Character of His holiness and all His dreadful grandeur—these things overpowered my soul and I fell down in utter prostration of spirit.

But there was in that a true and real drawing near to God. Oh, if some of you when you are in your Churches and Chapels, did but realize that you are in God's Presence, surely you might expect to see scenes more marvelous than any of the convulsions of the Irish revival. If you knew that God was there—that you were speaking to Him, that in His ear you were uttering that oft repeated confession, “We have done the things that we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done”—ah, my Friends, there would be then a deep humility and a solemn abasement of spirit. May God grant to us all, as often as we offer prayer of any sort, that we may truly and really draw near to Him, even if it is only in this sense.

After new life as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position and never will lose that holy awe which must overshadow a gracious man—when he is in the presence of a God, who can create or can destroy—yet that fear has all its terror taken out of it. It becomes a holy reverence and no more a slavish abject dread. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendors of deity and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the Throne. And seeing there a God of love, of goodness and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than His absolute Deity.

He will see in God rather His goodness than His greatness and more of His love than of His majesty. Then will the soul, bowing again as reverently as before, enjoy a sacred liberty of intercession. For while humbled in the presence of the Infinite God, it is yet sustained by the Divine consciousness of being in the presence of mercy and of love in infinite degree. This is a state to which men reach after they have had their sins forgiven, after they have passed from death unto life. Then they come to rejoice in God and draw near to Him with confidence.

There is yet a third and higher stage, which I fear, too few among us ever arrive at. When the child of God, awed by the splendor and delighting in the goodness of God, sees something which is more enchanting to him than either of these, namely, the fact of his relationship to God, he sees on the Throne, not simply goodness, but his Father's goodness, not merely love, but love which has from all eternity been set upon him. Love which has made him its darling, which has written his name upon its breast. Love which for his sake did even deign to die. Then the child of God comes near to the Throne, then he takes hold of his Father's knees and though conscious of the greatness of the God, yet is he still more alive to the loveliness of the Father and he cries, “My Father, hear my prayer and grant me my request, for Jesus' sake.”

In this position it sometimes happens that the child of God may pray in such a way that others cannot understand him at all. If you had heard Martin Luther pray, some of you would have been shocked. Perhaps it would have been presumption if you had prayed as he did, because Martin Luther was God's own son and you, alas, are destitute of sonship. He had a liberty to talk to God as another man had not. If you are not the son of God, if you have no realization of your adoption, the utmost you can do is to come into the King's court as a humble beggar. May God give you grace to get further. May you come there, not simply as a petitioner, but as a follower of the Son of God—a servant.

But happy is the man who has received his full adoption and knows himself to be a son. It were rudeness for anyone to do that to a king which

a king's son may do. A king's own child may talk familiarly to his own parent. There are love-doings and words of high and hallowed familiarity and of close and sacred communing, between God and His own adopted child, that I could not tell you. There are things that are something like what Paul heard in Paradise—it is scarce lawful for a man to utter them in public—though in private he knows their sweetness. Ah, my dear Hearers, some of you, I doubt not, know more about this than I do, but this I know, it is the happiest moment in one's life when we can go up to our Father and our God in Christ Jesus and can know and feel of a surety that His infinite love is set on us and that our love is gone forth to Him.

There is a sweet embrace that is not to be excelled. No chariots of Amminadib the heavenly rapture can describe—even Solomon's Song itself, glowing though its figures be, can scarcely reach the mystery—the length, the breadth, the height of the embracing of God by the creature and the embracing of the creature by its God. Now, I repeat, it is not essential to the success of your prayers that you should come up to this last point. Possibly you never may attain to this eminence of grace. Nor even do I think that it is absolutely necessary that your prayer should come to the second point to be prayer. It should be so and it will, as you grow in grace.

But, mark, you must draw near to God in some one of these three grades either in a lowly sense of his majesty, or in a delightful consciousness of his goodness, or in a ravishing sense of your own relationship to him, or else your prayer is as worthless as the chaff, it is but as whispering to the wind, or the uttering of a cry to the desert air, where no ear can hear nor hand can help. Bring your prayers, then, to this touchstones and God help you to examine them and be honest with yourselves, for your own soul's sake.

II. I have thus concluded the touchstone. I now come to the second head of the discourse, which is THE WHETSTONE—to whet your desires, to make you more anxious to be much in prayer and to be more earnest in it. “It is good for me to draw near to God.”

Now, first and foremost, let us remark that the goodness of prayer does not lie in any merit that there is in prayer itself. There is no merit whatever in prayer. And wherever the idea of the merit of prayer could come from, one is at a loss to know, except that it must have come from a near relative of the Father of Lies, who resides somewhere in Italy. There is no doubt that old Rome was the birthplace of the idea, it is too absurd and wicked to have come from any less abominable place. If a beggar should be always on your door-step, or should be always meeting you in the street, or stopping you on your journeys and asking you to give him

help, I suppose the last thing you would understand would be the merit of his prayers.

You would say, “I can understand their impudence, I can allow their earnestness, I can comprehend their importunity, but as for merit, what merit can there be in a beggar’s cry?” Remember, your prayers at the best are nothing but a beggar’s cry. You still stand as beggars at the gate of mercy, asking for the dole of God’s charity, for the love of Jesus. And He gives freely. But He gives, not because of your prayers, but because of Christ’s blood and Christ’s merit. Your prayers may be the sacred vessel in which He puts the alms of His mercy. But the merit by which the mercy comes is in the veins of Christ and nowhere else. Remember that there can be no merit in a beggar’s cry.

But, now, let us note that it nevertheless is good, practically good for us to pray and draw near to God. And the first thing which would whet our desires in prayer is this—prayer explains mysteries. I utter that first because it is in the Psalm. Poor Asaph had been greatly troubled. He had been trying to untie that Gordian knot concerning the righteousness of a Providence which permits the wicked to flourish and the godly to be tried. And because he could not untie that knot, he tried to cut it and he cut his own fingers in the act and became greatly troubled. He could not understand how it was that God could be just and yet give riches to the wicked while His own people were in poverty. At last Asaph understood it all, for he went into the house of his God and there he understood their end.

And he says—looking back upon his discovery of a clue to this great labyrinth—“It is good for me to draw near to God.” And now, my dear Hearers, if you would understand the Word of God in its knotty points, if you would comprehend the mystery of the Gospel of Christ, remember, Christ’s scholars must study upon their knees. Depend upon it, that the best commentator upon the Word of God is its Author, the Holy Spirit and if you would know the meaning, you must go to Him in prayer. Often when a Psalm has staggered me in reading it and I have not understood it—if I have knelt down and tried to read it over in that position and see if I could realize the meaning in my own heart, some one word in the text has glistened and that one word has been the key to the whole.

John Bunyan says that he never forgot the divinity he taught, because it was burnt into him when he was on his knees. That is the way to learn the Gospel. If you learn it upon your knees you will never unlearn it. That which men teach you, men can unteach you. If I am merely convinced by reason, a better reasoner may deceive me. If I merely hold my doctrinal opinions because they seem to me to be correct, I may be led to think differently another day. But if God has taught them to me—He who is

Himself pure Truth—I have not learned amiss, but I have so learned that I shall never unlearn, nor shall I forget.

Behold, Believer, you are this day in a labyrinth—whenever you come to a turning place, where there is a road to the right or to the left—if you would know which way to go, fall on your knees, then go on. And when you come to the next turning place, on your knees again and so proceed again. The one clue to the whole labyrinth of Providence and of doctrinal opinion and of sacred thought, is to be found in that one hallowed exercise—prayer. Continue much in prayer and neither Satan nor the world shall much deceive you. Behold before you the sacred ark of the Truth of God. But where is the key? It hangs upon the silver nail of prayer—go take it down—unlock the casket and be rich.

A second whetstone for your prayers shall be this—prayer brings deliverance. In an old author I met with the following allegory. As I found it so I tell it to you. Once upon a time, the king of Jerusalem left his city in the custody of an eminent captain, whose name was Zeal. He gave unto Zeal many choice warriors to assist him in the protection of the city. Zeal was a right-hearted man, one who never wearied in the day of battle, but would fight all day and all night, even though his sword did cleave to his hand as the blood ran down his arm. But it happened upon this time that the king of Arabia, getting unto himself exceeding great hosts and armies, surrounded the city and prevented any introduction of food for the soldiers, or of ammunition to support the war.

Driven to the last extremity, Captain Zeal called a council of war and asked of them what course they should take. Many things were proposed, but they all failed to effect the purpose and they came to the sad conclusion that nothing was before them but the surrender of the city, although upon the hardest terms. Zeal took the resolution of the council of war, but when he read it, he could not bear it. His soul abhorred it. “Better,” said he, “to be cut in pieces, than surrender. Better for us to be destroyed while we are faithful, than to give up the keys of this royal city.” In his great distress, he met a friend of his, called Prayer. And Prayer said to him, “Oh, captain, I can deliver this city.”

Now Prayer was not a soldier, at least he did not look as if he was a warrior, for he wore the garments of a priest. In fact he was the king’s chaplain and was the priest of the holy city of Jerusalem. But nevertheless this Prayer was a valiant man and wore armor beneath his robes. “Oh, captain,” said he, “give me three companions and I will deliver this city—their names must be Sincerity, Importunity and Faith.” Now these four brave men went out of the city at the dead of night when the prospects of Jerusalem were the very blackest. They cut their way right through the hosts that surrounded the city. With many wounds and much

smuggling they made their escape and traveled all that night long as quickly as they could across the plain to reach the camp of the king of Jerusalem.

When they flagged a little, Importunity would hasten them on. And when at any time they grew faint, Faith would give them a drink from his bottle and they would recover. They came at last to the palace of the great king, the door was shut, but Importunity knocked long and, at last it was opened. Faith stepped in. Sincerity threw himself on his face before the throne of the great king. And then Prayer began to speak. He told the king of the great straits in which the beloved city was now placed, the dangers that surrounded it and the almost certainty that all the brave warriors would be cut in pieces by the morrow. Importunity repeated again and again the wants of the city. Faith pleaded hard the royal promise and covenant.

At last the king said to Captain Prayer, “Take with you soldiers and go back, lo, I am with you to deliver this city.” At the morning light, just when the day broke—for they had returned more swiftly than could have been expected, for though the journey seemed long in going there, it was very short in coming back, in fact they seemed to have gained time on the road—they arrived early in the morning, fell upon the hosts of the king of Arabia, took him prisoner, slew his army and divided the spoil and then entered the gates of the city of Jerusalem in triumph. Zeal put a crown of gold upon the head of Prayer and decreed that henceforth whenever Zeal went forth to battle, Prayer should be the standard-bearer and should lead the van.

The allegory is full of the Truth of God. Let him that hears understand. If we would have deliverance in the hour, “Let us pray.” Prayer shall soon bring sweet and merciful deliverances from the Throne of our faithful God. This is the second sharpening of your desires upon the whetstone.

And now a third. It was said of Faith, in that mighty chapter of the Hebrews, that Faith stopped the mouth of lions and the like. But one singular thing that Faith did, which is as great a miracle as any of them, was this—Faith obtained promises. Now the like can be said of Prayer. Prayer obtains promises. Therefore “it is good for you to draw near to God.” We read a story in the History of England, whether true or not we cannot tell, that Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex a ring, as a token of her favor. “When you are in disgrace,” she said, “send this ring to me. When I see it I will forgive you and accept you again to favor.”

You know the story of that ill-fated noble, how he sent the ring by a faithless messenger and it was never delivered and therefore he perished at the block. Ah, God has given to each one of His people the sacred ring of promise. And he says, “As often as you are in need, or in sorrow, show

it to Me and I will deliver you.” Take heed then, Believer, that you have a faithful messenger. And what messenger can you employ so excellent as true, real, earnest prayer? But, take heed it is real prayer. For if your messenger miscarries and the promise is not brought to God’s eye, who knows, you may never obtain the blessing. Draw near to God with living, loving prayer. Present the promise and you shall obtain the fulfillment.

Many things might I say of prayer. Our old divines are full of encomiums concerning it. The early fathers speak of it as if they were writing sonnets. Chrysostom preached of it as if he saw it incarnate in some heavenly form. And the choicest metaphors were gathered together to describe in rapturous phrase the power, no, the omnipotence of prayer. Would to God that we loved prayer as our fathers did of old. It is said of James the Less, that he was so much in prayer that his knees had become hard like those of a camel. It was doubtless but a legend, but legends often are based on truths. And certain it is that Hugh Latimer, that blessed saint and martyr of our God, was accustomed to pray so earnestly in his old age when he was in his cell, that he would often pray until he had no strength left to use and the prison attendants had need to lift him from his knees.

Where are the men like these? Oh, angel of the covenant, where can you find them? When the Son of Man comes shall He find prayer on the earth? Ours are not worthy of the name of supplication. Oh that we had learned that saved art, that we could draw near to God and plead His promise. Watts has put several things together in one verse—

“Prayer clears the sky;

“Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw.”

Prayer is a Heaven climber—

“Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw.”

Prayer makes even Satan quake—

“For Satan trembles when he sees,

The weakest saint upon his knees.”

I have thus given you three reasons why we should be diligent in prayer. Let me add yet another, for we must not leave this part of the whetstone until we have thoroughly entered into the reasons why “it is good for us to draw near unto God. Let me remark that prayer has a mighty power to sustain the soul in every season of its distress and sorrow. Whenever the soul becomes weak, use the heavenly strengthening plaster of prayer. It was in prayer the angel appeared unto the Lord and strengthened Him. That angel has appeared to many of us and we have not forgotten the strength we received when on our knees.

You remember in the ancient mythology the story of him who as often as he was thrown down recovered strength because he touched his

mother earth. It is so with the Believer. As often as he is thrown down upon his knees he recovers himself, for he touches the great source of his strength—the Mercy Seat. If you have a burden on your back, remember prayer, for you shall carry it well if you can pray. Once on a time Christian had upon his back a terrible burden that crushed him to the earth, so that he could not carry it. He crept along on his hands and knees. There appeared to him a fair and comely damsel, holding in her hand a wand and she touched the burden. It was there, it was not removed, but strange to say the burden became weightless. It was there in all its outward shape and features, but without weight.

That which had crushed him to the earth, had become now so light that he could leap and carry it. Beloved, do you understand this? Have you gone to God with mountains of troubles on your shoulders, unable to carry them and have you seen them, not removed, but still remaining in the same shape, but of a different weight? They became blessings instead of curses. What you thought was an iron gross suddenly turned out to be a wooden one and you carried it with joy, following your Master.

I will give but one other reason, lest I should weary you and that certainly is not my desire—but to quicken you rather than to weary you. Beloved, there is one reason why we should pray, those of us who are engaged in the Lord’s work in any way—because it is prayer that will ensure success. Two laborers in God’s harvest met each other once upon a time and they sat down to compare notes. One was a man of sorrowful spirit and the other joyous, for God had given him the desire of his heart. The sad Brother said, “Friend, I cannot understand how it is that everything you do is sure to prosper. You scatter seed with both your hands very diligently and it springs up and so rapidly, too, that the reaper treads upon the heels of the sower and the sower himself again upon the heels of the next reaper.

“I have sown,” said he, “as you have done and I think I can say I have been just as diligent. I think, too, the soil has been the same, for we have labored side by side in the same town. I hope the seed has been of the same quality, for I have found mine where you get yours—the common granary. But alas, my seed, Friend, mine never springs up. I sow it. It is as if I sowed upon the waves, I never see a harvest. Here and there a sickly blade of wheat I have discovered with great and diligent search, but I can see but little reward for all my labors.” They talked long together, for the Brother who was successful was one of a tender heart and therefore he sought to comfort this mourning Brother. They compared notes, they looked through all the rules of husbandry and they could not solve the mystery, why one was successful and the other labored in vain.

At last one said to the other, “I must retire.” “Why?” said the other, “Why this is the time” said he “when I must go and steep my seed.” “Steep your seed?” said the other. “Yes, my Brother, I always steep my seed before I sow it. I steep it till it begins to swell and germinate and I can almost see a green blade springing from it and then you know it speedily grows after it is sown.” “Ah,” said the other, “but I understand not what you mean. How do you steep your seed and in what mysterious mixture?” “Brother,” said he, “it is a composition made of one part of the tears of agony for the souls of men and the other part of the tears of a holy agony which wrestles with God in prayer— this mixture if you drop your seed in it, has a transcendent efficacy to make every grain full of life, so that it is not lost.”

The other rose and went on his way and forgot not what he had learned, but he began to steep his seed, too. He spent less time in his study, more time in his closet. He was less abroad, more at home, less with man and more with God. And he went abroad and scattered his seed and he, too, saw a harvest and the Lord was glorified in them both. Brethren, I do feel with regard to myself and therefore, when I speak of others I speak not uncharitably, that the reason of the nonsuccess of the ministry in these years, (for compared with the days of Pentecost, I cannot call our success a success) lies in our want of prayer.

If I were addressing students in the college, I think I should venture to say to them, set prayer first in your labors. Let your subject be well prepared. Think well of your discourse, but best of all, pray it over, study on your knees. And now in speaking to this assembly, containing Sunday-School teachers and others who in their way are laboring for Christ, let me beseech you whatever you do, go not about your work, except you have first entreated that the dew of Heaven may drop on the seed you sow. Steep your seed and it shall spring up. We are demanding in our days more laborers—it is a right prayer. We are seeking that the seed should be of the best sort—it is a right demand.

But let us not forget another which is even more necessary than this, let us ask, let us plead with God, that the seed be steeped, that men may preach agonizing for souls. I like to preach with a burden on my heart—the burden of other men’s sins, the burden of other men’s hard-heartedness, the burden of their unbelief, the burden of their desperate estate, which must before long end in perdition. There is no preaching, I am persuaded, like that—for then we preach as though “We never might preach again as dying men to dying men.” And, oh, may each of you labor after the latter fashion in your own sphere, ever taking care to commit your work to God.

I will tell you here an incident of the revival. It is one I know to be correct. It is told by a good Brother who would not add a word thereunto, I am sure. It happened, not long ago, that in a school which is sustained by the Corporation of the City of London, in the north of Ireland, one of the bigger boys had been converted to God. And one day, in the midst of school, a younger youth was greatly oppressed by a sense of sin and so overwhelmed did he become that the master plainly perceived that he could not work and, therefore, he said to him, “You had better go home and plead with God in prayer in private.” He said, however, to the bigger boy, who was all rejoicing in hope, “Go with him. Take him home and pray with him.”

They started together. On the road they saw an empty house. The two boys went in and there began to pray. The plaintive cry of the young one, after a little time changed into a note of joy, when, suddenly springing up, he said, “I have found rest in Jesus, I have never felt as I do now. My sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” The proposal was to go home. But the younger lad forbade this. No, he must go and tell the master of the school that he had found Christ. So hurrying back, he rushed in and said, “Oh, I have found the Lord Jesus Christ.” All the boys in the school, who had seen him sitting sad and dull upon the form, remarked the joy that flashed from his eye, when he cried “I have Christ.”

The effect was electric. The boys suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. The master knew not where they were gone. But looking over into the playground, he saw by the wall were a number of boys, one by one, in prayer asking for mercy. He said to the elder youth, “Cannot you go and tell these boys the way of salvation—tell them what they must do to be saved?” He did so and the silent prayer was suddenly changed into a loud piercing shriek, the boys in the school understood it and, impelled by the Great Spirit, they all fell on their knees and began to cry aloud for mercy through the blood of Christ. But, this was not all.

There was a girls’ schoolroom in the same building over head. The ear had been well tutored to understand what that cry meant and soon interpreted it and the girls, too, affected by the same Spirit, fell down and began to cry aloud for the forgiveness of their sins. Here was an interruption of the school! Was ever such a thing known before in a schoolroom? Classes are all put aside, books forgotten. Everything cast to the winds, while poor sinners are kneeling at the foot of the Cross seeking for pardon. The cry was heard throughout the various offices attached to this large school and it was heard also across the street and passersby were attracted—men of God, ministers and clergymen of the neighborhood were brought in—the whole day was spent in prayer and they continued until almost midnight. They separated with songs of joy, for that vast

mass of girls and boys, men and women, who had crowded the two schoolrooms, had all found the Savior.

Our good brother, Dr. Arthur, says, that he met with a youth while traveling in Ireland and he said to him, “Do you love the Savior?” And he said, “I trust I do.” “How did you come to love Him?” “Oh,” said he, “I was converted in the big schoolroom that night. My mother heard that there was a revival going on there and she sent me to fetch my little brother away. She did not want him, she said, to get convicted. And I went to fetch my brother and he was on his knees crying, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.’ I stopped and I prayed, too, and the Lord saved us both.”

Now to what are we to attribute this? I know many of the Brethren there—the Presbyterians and others—and I do not think there is any difference or any superiority in their ministry over anything we can see or hear in London. And I think they themselves would subscribe to the truth of what I assert. The difference is this—there has been prayer there—living, hearty prayer has been offered continually, perhaps by some who did not live in Ireland. God alone knows where that revival really begun. Some woman on her bed may have been exorcised in her soul for that district and may have been wrestling with God in prayer. And then the blessing has descended.

And if God will help you and help me to lay near to heart the neighborhood in which we live, the family over which we preside, the congregation we have to address, the class we have to teach, the laborers we employ, or any of these, surely, then, by mighty prayer we shall bring down a great blessing from high. For prayer is never lost. Preaching may be, but prayer never is. Praying breath can never be spent in vain. The Lord send to all the Churches of Great Britain, first of all, the power of prayer and then shall there come conversions of multitudes of souls through the outpoured energy of the Holy One of Israel!

III. I shall have little time to close up the third point, further than to remark that while I have been preaching I do hope there have been some here who have heard for themselves. Ah, my Hearers, religion is more solemn work than some men think. I am often shocked with the brutality of what are called the lower classes of society and with their coarse blasphemies. But there is one thing—and I speak honestly to you now, as fearing no man—there is one thing that is to me more shocking still and that is the frivolous way in which the mass of our higher classes spend all their time.

What are your morning calls but pretenses for wasting your time? What are your amusements but an attempt to kill the time that hangs laboriously on your hands? And what are many of your employments but an industrious idleness, spinning and knitting away of precious hours

which God knows will be few enough when you come to look back upon them from a dying bed. Oh, if you did but know what you are made for and your high destiny, you would not waste your time in the paltry things that occupy your hands and your souls. God Almighty forgive those wasted hours which if you be Christians ought to be employed for the good of others. God forgive those moments of frivolity which ought to have been occupied in prayer.

If such a congregation as this could but be solemnly alive to the interests of this land and the poverty of it, to its miseries, to its wickedness—if but such a host as I have here could solemnly feel this matter, how much good would certainly come to us! This would be the best missionary society—so many hearts of tenderness and affection—all beating high with an anxious desire to see sinners brought to Christ. Ah, we cannot approve of the doctrines of the Romish Church, but still sometimes we have to be abashed at their zeal. Would God that we had sisters of mercy who were merciful indeed. Not dressed in some fanciful garb, but going from house to house to comfort the sick and help the needy!

Would that you all were brothers of the heart of Jesus and all of you sisters of Him, whose mother’s heart was pierced with agony, when He died that we might be saved. Oh, my dear Hearers, this I speak with an earnest anxiety that the words may be prophetic of a better age.

But now, there are some of you here, perhaps, that never prayed in your lives, toying like glittering insects, wasting your little day. You know not that death is near you. And oh, if you have never sought and have never found the Savior—however bright those eyes—if they have never seen the wounds of Christ, if they have never looked to Christ, they shall not simply be sealed in death, but they must behold sights of fearful woe eternally. Oh may God grant you grace to pray. May He lead you home to your houses, to fall on your knees and for the first time to cry, “Lord have mercy upon me!” Remember you have sins to confess and if you think you have not, you are in a sad state of heart—it proves that you are dead in trespasses and sins—dead in them. Go home and ask the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit and may He who dictates the prayer graciously hear.

And may you and I, and all of us, when this life has passed away and time is exchanged for eternity, stand before the Throne of God at last. I have to preach continually to a congregation in which I know there are many drunkards, swearers and the like—with these men I know how to deal and God has given me success. But I sometimes tremble for you amiable, excellent, upright daughters, who make glad your father’s house and

wives that train up your children well. Remember—“Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

And as we must be honest with the poor, so must we be with the rich. And as we must lay the axe to the root of the tree with the drunkard and the swearer, so must we with you. You are as much lost as they are and shall as surely perish as they do, unless you are born again. There is but one road to Heaven for you all alike. As a minister of the Gospel, I know no rich men and no poor men. I know no working classes and no gentlemen. I know simply God’s sinful creatures, bid to come to Christ and find mercy through his atonement.

He will not reject you. Put the black thought away. He is able to save. Doubt Him not. Come to Him. Come, and welcome—God help you to come. God Almighty bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

AN ASSUREDLY GOOD THING

NO. 879

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 4, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“It is good for me to draw near to God.”
Psalm 73:28.*

WHEN a man is sick, everybody knows what is good for him. They recommend remedies by the score—salts from the earth, herbs of the field, drugs from the east, minerals from the rock, extracts, compounds, cordials, concoctions, quintessences and I know not what besides—as many medicines as there are men—all these are cried up as good for our complaint. Amid such a Babel it is well for a man if he knows on his own account what is good for himself.

Certainly in *spiritual* things, whatever others may recommend, it is of the first importance in all our trials to know by personal experience for ourselves what is in the highest sense good for us. One of your friends may commend a course of vigorous action and another may bid you sit still. One may persuade you to contemplate your trial from its darkest side and another may call your attention solely to the brighter lights. But if you know, through having passed through the trial before, what is truly good in such a case, it will be best to take your stand upon *it* and not be led away by every “lo! here,” and “lo! there.”

The Psalmist, although he might have been surrounded by a thousand counselors, puts them all aside, and strong in the confidence which his experience gave him, he declares, “It is good for me to draw near to God.” It may seem good in the worldling’s eyes to go his way to his wine cups, and to make merry in dance. It may seem good to yonder truster in an arm of flesh to seek out his friends and his kinsmen and entrust his case to their discretion. It may seem good to the desponding to retire in melancholy to brood over his sorrows, and to the dissipated to endeavor to drown all care in vanity, but to me, says the Psalmist, it is good, pre-eminently good, that I should draw near unto God.

I. Now, in this statement, the Psalmist, first of all, TACITLY CONDEMNS OTHER COURSES OF ACTION. Take the text in connection with the Psalm of which it is the conclusion and you will see at once that he repents of a certain course of thought to which he had given way and the recoil from his error is the exclamation, “It is good for me to draw near to God.” It is as if he meant to say, “It is not good for me to do what I have done, it is infinitely better for me to draw near to God.”

We learn from this that *it is not a good thing for us to try and fathom the mysteries of Providence.* What have we to do with measuring the great

depths of Providence? Is not this meddling with things too high for us? It should be enough for us to commit our boat to the Great Pilot, trusting all to Him who rules all—being well assured that He will bring His own beloved to their desired haven. We need not be curious to know the exact depth of all the deep places of the earth—it is enough that they are in His hands. Nor need the strength of the hills provoke our anxiety, for it is His, also. Yet such is the tendency of the human heart, that we crave to comprehend all things in the little hollow of our hand. We aspire to calculate the infinite and sum the total of the immeasurable. It is with us as though foolish children should determine to measure the great and wide sea and therefore should push off from the shore in a little boat to drift away, they know not where, in imminent hazard of their lives.

Theories upon predestination, followed up by speculations upon the facts of Providence—these are enough to drive men mad and are certain to drive them into wicked thoughts—unjust towards God and depressing towards themselves. Gotthold in his “Emblems” tells us of the adventures of his child. The father was one day sitting in his study and when he lifted his eyes from a book which had engrossed his attention, he saw standing upon the window ledge his little son. He was troubled and frightened to the last degree, for the child stood there in the utmost peril of falling to the ground and being dashed to pieces. The little one had always been anxious to know what his father was doing so many hours in the day in his study and he had at last, by a ladder, managed to climb with boyish daring till there he stood outside the window, gazing at his father with his little eyes.

“So,” said the father, as he took the child into his chamber and rebuked him for his folly, “So have I often tried to climb into the council chamber of God, to see why He did this and that. And thus have I exposed myself to peril of falling to my destruction.” My God, it is not good for me to pry into Your secrets with curiosity, but it is good for me to draw near unto You in sincerity.

In connection with this Psalm we may also learn that *it is not good for us, under any circumstances, to get very far from God*. The verse that precedes the text runs thus—“They that are far from You shall perish.” Now, the tendency of repeated affliction, is, in the carnal mind, to drive us away from God. “Surely He deals harshly with me,” says the sufferer. “No good has come to me since I began to attend a place of worship and to become religious. Evil after evil has happened to me in connection with my profession of godliness.” Because of this the ungodly man, who was a formalist in his religion, gives it all up. “It were better,” says he, “that I should find what pleasure I can in sin since I can find none in godliness.”

If God treats His hypocritical servants roughly, they soon turn against Him. When the loaves and fishes fail, the admiring multitudes go away. Two or three tosses upon the waves make bad sailors hate the sea and a trial or two will soon drive empty professors into an utter dislike of godli-

ness. This is often the sieve in which God tries His people and discerns between the chaff and the wheat. A dog may follow you as you pass by, if you offer it a bone—but if you give it a stroke from your staff—see if it will follow you, then! Yet, to its own master, the faithful creature will cling with even greater tenderness if it is beaten. If you are God’s own child, affliction will not make you fly from Him but *to* him, saying, “Show me why You contend with me.”

But if you, in mere formality, follow at God’s heels, as the dog pursues the stranger for a bone, then you will readily enough turn against the Lord if He chastens you. By this may we judge ourselves whether we are God’s servants or not. Beloved, it can never be a good thing to take offense at the dealings of the Lord. His ways are the best for us—to forsake them is always evil. Whatever temporary comfort we may gain by following the paths of evil, it will be shallow and short-lived—and soon a consequent and terrible darkness will cover our spirits. To depart from God’s Law is always hazardous traveling. By-Path Meadow is never good for pilgrims. You may seem to gain in this world by walking apart from God in the indulgence of a dishonest practice, but the gain will be loss in the long run.

You may find a temporary deliverance from your pressing sorrow by a sinful step, but you will purchase the deliverance at an awful price, since sorrow will return to you multiplied sevenfold and will find you naked, because your clear conscience, which was once your shield, has been vilely cast away. He that, amidst a thousand troubles, keeps his heart whole by standing firm in his integrity, may battle against all the world and all the hosts of Hell and not be afraid! But he who gives way for the sake of policy shall find that a wounded spirit none can bear and the weakness that shall come upon him, through having turned aside to crooked ways, shall be such as shall cost him a far more dolorous lamentation than all his afflictions could have wrung from him.

Thus, at the outset of this sermon, we are warned that to peer into God’s secrets is not good and to depart from God on account of His dealing severely with us, is the very worst policy that we can follow.

II. Coming more closely to the text, we observe WHAT IS IN THE TEXT PLAINLY COMMENDED—“To draw near to God”—what does this mean? To draw near to God, Brothers and Sisters, implies first that we are *reconciled to Him* by the death of His Son. For a man to attempt to draw near to God while God is angry with him would be a species of insanity. As well might the moth draw near to the candle, or the stubble approach the flame! God is “a consuming fire,” and while our hearts are evil there can nothing come of an approach to God but destruction!

Before any one of us can draw near to God in acceptable prayer and praise, we must wash in the fountain that Christ has filled from His dying veins. Do you believe in the Atonement, my Hearer? Believing in it, have you also *received* it? Do you rest your soul’s salvation upon the accomplished mediatorial work of Jesus Christ? If not, you are such an enemy

to God that you may by no means even *think* yourself capable of drawing near to Him. Your back is towards Him and the faster you walk, the further from God will you journey, and your end will assuredly be to hear from Him the word, "Depart."

You have been departing all your life! You shall go on departing throughout *eternity*—departing from the God whom you have hated and despised and forgotten. Before, then, we can draw near to God, we must have come with repentance and faith to the Cross and have looked up to Him who bled there and we must have accepted Him as our salvation. I ask you whether you can accompany me in the first step? Have you laid hold on eternal life in Christ Jesus?

Next, in order to draw near to God, the soul *must grasp the thought that God is near to it and the soul must have a clear sense of who and what God is*. Ignorance is an effectual barrier to any approach to God, seeing that our drawing near is not *physical* since God is always equally near to our bodies. It is mental and spiritual, and therefore, to such an approach there must be an intelligent knowledge and apprehension of the Lord. We must know Him as good, as great, as just, as holy, as merciful, as true, as faithful. And, knowing Him—understanding something of His Character—we must then grasp the thought that He is even now here, close at hand, nearer to us than any earthly friend could be, for He possesses our heart and compasses us on every side.

As nothing can be nearer to the fish than the water in which it lives, so nothing can be nearer to us than God, in whom we live and move and have our being. The Lord is not round about us merely, but He is *in* our souls, filling their every corner and chamber, entering into the core and center of our physical and mental nature. Now, when our mind is filled with these two thoughts—God near us and reconciled to us—we have become capable of *spiritually* drawing near to Him. As yet I have not succeeded in my description. How shall I tell you what to draw near to God is? It *is* prayer, but it is more than prayer.

I bow my knee and I begin to ask the Lord to help me in my time of trouble. I tell Him what my trial is. I put up my requests, uttering them with such words as His Holy Spirit gives me on the occasion. But this, alone, is not drawing near to God. Prayer is the *modus operandi*, it is the *outward* form of drawing near to God—but there is an *inner* spiritual approach which is scarcely to be described by language. Shall I tell you how I have sometimes drawn near to Him? I have been worn and wearied with a heavy burden, and have resorted to prayer. I have tried to pour out my soul's anguish in words but there was not vent enough by way of speech, and therefore my soul has broken out into sighs and sobs and tears.

Feeling that God was hearing my heart-talk, I have said to Him, "Lord, behold my affliction. You know all about it. Deliver me! If I cannot exactly tell You, there is no need of my words, for You see for Yourself. You searcher of hearts, You read me as I read a book. Will You be pleased to

help Your poor servant? I scarcely know what help it is I need, but You know. I cannot tell You what I desire, but teach me to desire what You will be sure to give. Conform my will to Yours.”

Perhaps at such a time there may be a peculiar bitterness about your trouble, a secret with which no stranger may intermeddle, but you can tell it all to your God. With broken words, sighs, groans and tears, you lay bare the inmost secret of your soul. Taking off the doors of your heart from their hinges, you bid the Lord come in and walk through every chamber and see the whole. I do not know how to tell you what drawing near to God is better than by this rambling talk. It is getting to feel that the Lord is close to you and that you have no secret which you wish to keep back from Him, but have unveiled your most private and sacred desires to Him. The getting right up to Jesus, our Lord. The leaning of your head, when it aches with trouble, upon the heart that always beats with pity. The casting of all care upon Him—believing that He cares for you, pities you and sympathizes with you—this is drawing near to God! It is good for me to draw near to God if this is what drawing near to God is.

Let us make a further attempt at the definition. Drawing near to God *may assume the form of praise*. It were a sad proof of selfishness if we never approached our God except to ask for something. Brethren, I hope we often feel that our heavenly Father has been so bountiful and kind and tender to us, that our cup runs over and our heart pours itself out in the language of some grand old Psalm, or we sing like the Virgin, “My soul does magnify the Lord, my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Thus to draw near to God in song is something, but there is a still further approach. The soul will sometimes climb so near her God in thankfulness that words fail her and she sits down, like David, in the Lord’s Presence, wondering, “Why all this for *me*? What am I and what is my father’s house, that You have brought me here? O Lord, Your mercy overwhelms me! Come, then, expressive silence, speak the Divine praise.”

You have seen a little child when it is greatly pleased with a gift from its mother. It says but little by way of gratitude, but it begins to kiss its mother at a vehement rate, as though it never could be done! Such drawing near in love exists between a regenerate soul and its God. True saints fall to close embraces of gratitude, exhibiting thankfulness inexpressible, real and deep and, therefore, not to be worded—weights of love too heavy to be carried on the backs of such poor staggering bearers as our *words*. This is drawing near to God and it is good for us.

As when on a sultry day the traveler strips off his garments and plunges into the cool refreshing brook and rises from it invigorated to pursue his way, so it is when a spirit has learned, either in prayer or in praise, to really draw near to God! It bathes itself in the brooks of Heaven (streams branching from the river of the Water of Life) and goes on its way refreshed with heavenly strength! Still, I have not fully described drawing near to God. To draw near to God has in it the element of looking *at the*

matter in the Divine light. Our light here below is nothing better than candlelight at its best. Now, by candlelight, there are many things of which we cannot judge. Colors are not truly seen by candlelight. Only by sunlight is the brightness of the tints apparent.

We too often judge our afflictions and the Providential dispensations of God by the candlelight of human reason. Oh, if we could draw near to God and get into His light and begin to look at things in their *eternal* bearings, how good it would be! To take the sacred picture of Providence and, with our eyeglass, look at the canvas inch by inch, is practically to see nothing. But to view the work of the Divine Artist as a whole—with all its lights and shades and all the fair proportions which manifest the matchless skill! That would be to see, indeed! The fault of us all is this—we judge Providence by the *moment* instead of regarding it in its true magnitude, stretched upon the framework of that eternal love which knows neither beginning nor end.

Your dear child dies. Yes, and what calamity could be heavier? But if the death of one shall be the salvation of others and if the child's death is but the child's admission into Paradise, the matter wears another aspect. It is no longer such a subject for tears as it otherwise might have been. Poverty scowls in your house—yes, and a sore ill is poverty—but if this poverty of pounds, shillings and pence should mean the reclaiming of a lost soul! If this trouble should be really needed to get us out of an ill position and to bring us into a holier and happier state—preparatory for Heaven—what would the loss of all earthly riches be compared with the winning of Heaven?

Brothers and Sisters, we do not know how to judge! But if we must indulge our propensity to sit upon the bench, it would be good for us to get so near to God that we should weigh events in His scale and consider matters according to His measurement. Further than this, a man may be enabled not merely to draw so near to God as to see things in God's light, but he may even rise so high as *to be pleased with anything and everything that pleases God.* This is a high attainment when a soul can honestly say, "If I could have my will, it should be my will that God's will should be done. Let Him do wholly as seems good in His sight. If it is for His Glory that I pine in sickness, then I would not wish for health. And if it is for His honor that I should be poor and despised, then I would not wish for comforts or for esteem."

The heart has need to pass through many a furnace before it attains to this, yet, my Brethren, we very soon reach this point with regard to those we love on earth, for we would very cheerfully give up our own wishes to please some dear one. In fact, it is with very many their highest happiness if there is anything that is needed by the object of their affection, to deny themselves anything and everything, if but their dear one's wish may be fulfilled. And shall we thus yield up ourselves at the shrine of a wife, or a

husband, or a darling child—and shall we not rejoice to surrender self for our gracious Lord? Shall we put our idols higher than our God?

Shame upon us if anything in Heaven or earth is hard to do or suffer for our Lord. Let us ask to be able to say, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will. If it pleases You, my God, it pleases me.” No, let the Lord have His way. If we could stand in His place, if we could have our way in opposition to Him, yet should it not be, but we would petition for the privilege of denying ourselves in order that His eternal purpose might be fulfilled. Brothers and Sisters, may we learn to draw near to God in such a sense as this! May the secret of the Lord be with us! May the Spirit of the Lord overshadow our spirits! May His will be our *joy*, His light our delight and Himself our all in all!

We must now leave this point. We can go no further. Words are scarcely the proper medium by which to instruct you in the art of drawing near to God. We must show you our fruit ripened under so Divine a sun! You must know the sweetness of communion for yourselves and knowing it for yourselves, you will subscribe with heart and soul to Asaph’s commendation, “It is good for me to draw near to God.”

III. Thirdly, we shall occupy a little time in enquiring THE GROUNDS FOR SUCH AN UNQUALIFIED COMMENDATION—“It is good for me to draw near to God.” First, it is *good in itself*. How can it be otherwise than good to have access to Him who is the highest good? The courtier counts it a high honor and satisfaction to sun himself in the presence of his monarch. He basks in the royal smile. Shall not the courtiers of Heaven count it an equal good to stand in the favor of the King of kings and to delight themselves with the glory of His majesty?

It is a pleasure to draw near to God. As the enlivening breath of summer awakens the joyous emotions of creation, filling the gardens with beauty and the groves with song, even so the Countenance of the Lord is the source of the highest pleasure to the renewed soul, enlightening it with celestial happiness! Out of Heaven there are no such joys as those discovered in living near to God. Albeit, everything that is pleasant is not, therefore, good—yet for once here is a good thing which is sound as well as sweet, as holy as it is happy, as Divinely excellent as it is humanly desirable. Besides, to draw near to God is elevating. He that draws near to the earth grovels and becomes earthy. He that draws near to the heavenly One is changed from glory to glory into the image of the heavenly.

You shall know a man by his company, for we are all much shaped by our acquaintances. And he that has an acquaintance with God shall be discerned of all men, for his face shall shine and all his life and character shall be transfigured with holiness! Let but Jehovah dwell in a bush in the desert and lowliness is forgotten in glowing glories! And even thus let the Holy Spirit rest upon the earnest of His servants and the fishermen of Galilee shall become royal wonder-workers, whose names shall be as the names of the great ones that are on the earth. Approaching to God is,

therefore, good in itself. For a chosen creature there is nothing better than to draw near to the Creator. It is so elevating, so honorable, so delightful!

Brothers and Sisters, it is good to draw near to God if you consider for a moment *our relations to God*. Remember gratefully that we are His children which have been born into His family—and who shall deny but what it is a good thing for the child to come near to its parents? Where is the babe happier than on its mother's breast? There its cares are at an end, its sorrows cease—it cries itself to sleep upon the warm breast of love, when elsewhere it had been disturbed with rude alarms. It is good for me, my God, like a babe to come nestling into Your bosom. It is always good for the chickens to shelter beneath the wings of the hen. The hawk may be in the air, but they are perfectly safe from cruelty—and when the child of God cowers down beneath the everlasting wings and learns the meaning of David's words, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust," oh, then it is good, indeed!

We are the sheep of His pasture and none shall doubt but what it is good for the sheep to draw near to the Shepherd. In His Presence is fullness of joy and nowhere else but there. He makes His sheep to lie down in green pastures because He is near them. It is His transporting Presence that leads them beside the still waters. It must be good for those who are of the family of Christ to live very near to their elder Brother, through whom all the inheritance comes to them. We are the disciples of our blessed Teacher and Master, and where should a disciple be but near his Lord? He wishes to be taught—let him sit at the Teacher's feet.

The Believer is an imitator of Christ. He that would imitate his copy must keep his copy near him and before his eyes. We are "imitators of God's dear children," and therefore shall find it most helpful in our labor after the heavenly image, to draw very near, study very closely, and habitually dwell near to the Lord. Brethren, it is good for us to draw near to God, again, because *of our pitiable character and condition*. We are weakest of the weak and where should weakness lean but upon Him who delights to put forth His power for the upholding of the feeble? We are exceedingly foolish—even the wisest saints are foolish, apt to be deceived and prone to error. Where, then, can our folly be safer but under the careful guidance of Infallible Wisdom? It must be good for us when we get into dilemmas, to enquire at the Divine Oracle and ask which is the way that we may walk.

Besides, we are many of us so prone to despond that if others of more elastic step could afford to live without their God, certainly we could not. Timorous spirits will find it especially good to cultivate intimate communion with God, for unless they do this, depression of spirit may grow upon them and despondency may degenerate into despair. It is good for such to plume their wings and mount *above* the clouds, if the clouds have such deadly effect upon their joys. I cannot imagine a single quality in the child of God which does not argue for the necessity and benefit of drawing near

to God. Search yourselves through and through and what will you find in your original nature that you can depend upon?

O you who live nearest to God, take care to examine the secrets of your heart and see if there is not within much to disgust and little to content you! See if there is anything in you by nature that you can rejoice in, or that you can lean upon! Now by your weakness, by your folly, by your sinfulness, by your unbelief—by every evil quality that must ruin you unless Divine grace prevents—I urge you to draw near to God! And as each of these evils shall be overcome, you shall find increasingly that it is good to draw near to God.

Dear Friends, the correctness of the commendation in our text might be proven to you in many ways. We must trouble you with a few more arguments. It is good for you to draw near to God because of *the removal of many evils* with which you are constantly surrounded. You business people have to be busy in the world from Monday morning till Saturday night and a man who is called to business ought to be diligent in it. There is no sin in diligence—in fact, it is a virtue. But the tendency of business is, in many cases, to make a man covetous. In others, fretfulness is the great failing and all worldliness is a strong besetment. You are unmindful of your Lord very frequently and too greedy for gain. In fact, unnumbered evils rise from our daily avocations like dust from our dry roads as we make our pilgrimage along them.

In what way can a Christian shake the dust from his garments? How can he wash his face from the grime of his daily labor? Why, only by drawing near to God! Maintain with earnest regularity your morning and evening prayers. Do more than that—demand from time that it shall yield a little space for eternity. Force yourself to be alone. Pray God that your heart may be with Him while your hands are in your daily work. See to it that while you are in the world you are not *of* it, because your aspirations, your thoughts and desires are going *upward*, and your communion is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You will find that business becomes less dangerous. You shall find that the cares of it are less bitter and the joys of it are less intoxicating if you draw near to God.

I do not know what may be the peculiar position which your affairs are in this morning, but I venture upon the remark that from the evil which springs out of your present condition there is no cure like drawing near to God. Are you solitary and alone? Have you much leisure? Great temptations lurk in leisure—draw near to God and they vanish and leisure becomes space in which to serve your God! Are you suffering today under very severe trials? Ah, it will be sweetly good to you to draw near to God, for then you will not become impatient nor will you be permitted to think hard things of your gracious God and Father.

Beyond the evils which drawing near to God will remove, there are many good things which drawing near to God will confer. These I cannot particularly instance, for they comprehend *everything*. There is no bless-

ing in the Covenant of Grace which prayer cannot obtain, which close approaches to God will not ensure. Let me gather them up under these short heads—Are you a worker for God and do you lack strength? Draw near to God and get it. Are you struggling and wrestling against a mighty inward sin or outward error? Then draw near to God and you will learn the way to victory. Like the old fable of the giant whom Hercules would gladly destroy—who rose every time he fell to the ground stronger than before because he touched his mother, earth—so the Christian, every time he is overcome, if he falls upon his God, rises stronger than before!

Take care, O tried Believer, that you get near your God and you shall be strong. Are you a minister? Do you preach the Gospel? It is always good for an ambassador to receive his orders fresh from court—and good for us it is when we come into the pulpit with a message all glowing from the Master's mouth! Oh, I can say, if no one else can, it is good for me to draw near to God! Nothing else could keep my soul standing in the midst of responsibilities so overwhelming and trials that are neither few nor small! I had long since been utterly confounded were it not that I have been taught by experience to draw near to God and breathe the bracing air of Heaven before I come among you to talk of the things of God.

Perhaps, my dear Friend, you are conscious of having fallen into sin and you say, "Do not talk about drawing near to God to me! I am so unworthy." Well, if there is one to whom it is good to draw near to God above another, you are the man! You who have the most sin have most need of Divine Grace. Where will you obtain pardon but by drawing near to God through Jesus Christ? You who are the foulest with inbred corruption—how will you win the victory over your natural depravity but by drawing near to the Strong for strength through the blood of the Atonement and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit? I say to you, Brothers and Sisters, whether it is sin or sorrow, whether it is temptation or depression—whatever may be the evil which assails you this day—it must be in the highest degree good for you to draw near to God!

We have said enough, I think, to prove our point, but this much more must be added. This drawing near to God is a remedy for evil open to every child of God by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. You are poor, yes—but you can draw near to God without a golden bridge! You are ignorant—you can draw near to God without Latin or Greek! You are not gifted with rhetorical powers—you tell me you cannot put six sentences together. Remember our gracious God does not require you to be a Demosthenes or a Cicero! You can draw near to God even though you cannot say a word! A prayer may be crystallized in a tear. A tear is enough water to float a desire to God. Yes, and if you cannot even weep, the very bitterest tears are those that drop *inside* the head—and these the Lord will cherish!

When parching grief will not let the eyes relieve the heart with tears, the Lord can and will deliver. When no other balm will avail, it will be good for you to draw near to God—and you have the Lord's permission to do so.

Yes, in the long hours of the watchful night in the sick chamber you can draw near to God and in the sultry hours of the busy day you have no need to seek your oratory or your closet—you can draw near to God in the field and the shop. Here in this pew, or there in the street! Yonder in your lonely attic, or in your miserable cellar, or in the midst of the ribald talk and the coarse society of wicked workmen with whom you are toiling! Anywhere, even though it were at the gates of Hell, you can draw near to God!

There is never a possibility for Satan to block up this road, nor rob you of this privilege. Thus you bear about with you, O Believer, a charm against every ill—a weapon that will stand you in good stead against every foe. And when the waters of the last black river shall roar in your ears and your blood shall be made to freeze and your heart and your flesh shall fail you—then as you draw near to God by committing your spirit unto Him, you shall find that He is the strength of your life and your portion forever! It shall always be good for you to draw near to God. There is no need that I should say more in conclusion, except to finish by a word of practical advice. If it is, indeed, so good to draw near to God, let us do it at once!

Children of God, have you been living at a distance from your Father? The silver bell rings this morning and invites you to return. An angel voice cries, “Come back! Come back! Come back!” Will you not answer, “I will arise and go to my Father”? Have you had a little prosperity, a thriving time in business and have you ungratefully forgotten the God who gave you this? Oh, now that the prosperity is for awhile removed, out of the darkness let the voice of longsuffering Mercy be heard, for it calls to you, “Return unto Me, backsliding child, return.” It shall be good for you to acquaint yourself with God, now, though you have lost the privilege of communion for awhile. The privilege has not lost its sweetness. It will still bring you countless blessings to approach your God.

Do I address any dear friend here who is very happy and rejoicing? I hope his joy will abide with him and that he will rejoice in the Lord always! But it will be good for him, at this bright hour, to draw near to God. Communion with God will give a deeper and healthier tone to your joy so that it shall not intoxicate you. You shall have all the true mirth that lies in earthly comfort, but the evil element shall be neutralized—your feet shall stand on your high places, but your soul shall not be puffed up with pride. Fellowship with God is good for you! O seek it now! Draw near to God at once!

I would suggest to each Believer the propriety of trying to get between now and the next Lord’s-Day, a special season alone. Strain after a devotional vacation. Surely if you can spare time for holidays and recreations, you can clear a space for special drawing near to God. I believe this Church would be visited with a very great ingathering if all the members of it made it a solemn matter of duty to draw near to God especially and particularly. I feel persuaded the ministry would revive in freshness, con-

verts would be more numerous and the people of God more rejoicing if we did this. We might expect to see a general revival of religion if all the faithful in Christ's Church drew near to Him with greater vehemence of supplication, a higher expectation and a greater boldness of faith. May God give us Divine Grace to attempt this!

Alas, I have been very conscious, while preaching this morning, that my subject has small attractions for a great many present because they never did draw near to God and what I have spoken will seem to them to be an idle tale. Ah, my dear Friends, if you live and die a stranger to God, as you have lived up to now, God, whom you do not know today will not know *you* in another world. No love-knowledge will He have of you. You will ask of His Son for mercy, but He will reply, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you cursed." You will need an interest in Jesus' blood in the next world! You will need to have a part in the love of Christ when He comes in His kingdom.

But as you do not know Him here, He will not know you there. Woe is me that I should have to tell you this! Do you know what becomes of those that forget God? The Scripture is very plain, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God." Shall that be your portion? Will you always be forgotten of God? Oh, it would be good for you to draw near to God! And you may do so, for Jesus welcomes those who desire forgiveness! You have but to ask Him to accept you and He will!

In your pew this morning, the prayer may successfully assault His ear—send it up—"You Son of David, I desire to draw near to God. Introduce me to Your Father's Presence by the merit of Your sacrifice." You shall not seek in vain, dear Heart! Christ will have pity upon you and you shall be saved! O that today, *today*, TODAY you might learn, for the first time, that it is good to draw near to God!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73.

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

THE COVENANT PLEADED

NO. 1451B

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

***“Have respect unto the Covenant.”
Psalm 74:20.***

HE will succeed in prayer who understands the science of pleading with God. “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together,” is a Divine *command*. “Come now, let us reason together” is a sacred invitation. “Bring forth your strong reasons, says the Lord,” is a condescending direction as to the way of becoming victorious in supplication. Pleading is wrestling—arguments are the grips, the feints, the throes, the struggles with which we hold and vanquish the Covenant Angel! The humble statement of our needs is not without its value, but to be able to give *reasons* and *arguments* why God should hear us is to offer potent, prevalent prayer.

Among all the arguments that can be used in pleading with God, perhaps there is none stronger than this—“Have respect unto the Covenant.” Like Goliath’s sword, we may say of it, “There is none like it.” If we have God’s Word for a thing we may well pray, “Do as You have Said,” for as a good man only needs to be reminded of his own words in order to be brought to keep them, even so is it with our faithful God—He only needs that we remind Him of what He has said—to do them for us. If He has given us more than His Word, namely, His Covenant, His solemn Compact, we may, then, with the greatest composure of spirit, cry to Him, “Have respect unto the Covenant,” and then we may both hope and quietly *wait* for His salvation.

I need not tell you, for you are, I trust, well-grounded in that matter, that the Covenant here spoken of is the Covenant of Grace. There is a Covenant which we could *not* plead in prayer, the Covenant of Works, a Covenant which destroys us, for we have broken it. Our first father sinned and the Covenant was broken. We have continued in his perverseness and that Covenant condemns us. By the Covenant of Works none of us is justified, for we still continue to break our portion of it and to bring upon ourselves wrath to the uttermost. The Lord has made a new Covenant with the Second Adam, our federal Head, Jesus Christ our Lord—a Covenant without conditions, except such conditions as Christ has already fulfilled.

It is a Covenant ordered in all things and sure which now consists of promises only—which run after this fashion—“I will be to them a God and

they shall be to Me a people.” “A new heart also will I give them and a right spirit will I put within them.” “From all their transgressions will I cleanse them.” It is a Covenant, I say, which once had conditions in it, all of which our Lord Jesus fulfilled when He finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. And now the Covenant is all of promise and consists of Infallible and eternal *shalls* and *wills* which shall abide the same forever.

We shall talk of the text thus—What is meant by the plea before us, “Have respect unto the Covenant”? Then we will think a little of where it derives its force. Thirdly, we will consider how and when we may plead it. And we will close by noticing what are the practical inferences from it.

I. Let us begin by this—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PLEA, “Have respect unto the Covenant”? It means this, does it not? “Fulfill Your Covenant, O God! Let it not be a dead letter. You have said this and that, now do as You have said. You have been pleased by solemn sanction of oath and blood to make this Covenant with Your people. Now be pleased to keep it. Have You said and will You not do it? We are persuaded of Your faithfulness, let our eyes behold Your Covenant engagements fulfilled.” It means, again, “Fulfill all the promises of Your Covenant,” for indeed all the promises are now *in* the Covenant! They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us!

And I may say without being unscriptural that the Covenant contains within its sacred Charter every gracious Word that has come from the Most High, either by the mouth of Prophets or Apostles, or by the lips of Jesus Christ Himself! The meaning in this case would be—“Lord keep Your promises concerning Your people. We are in need. Now, O Lord, fulfill Your promise that we shall not lack any good thing. Here is another of Your promises—‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.’ We are in rivers of trouble! Be with us now! Redeem Your promises to Your servants. Let them not stand on the book as letters that mock us, but prove that You meant what you wrote and said and let us see that You have power to make every jot and tittle good of all You have spoken. For have You not said, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away?’ Oh, then have respect unto the promises of Your Covenant.”

In the connection of our text there is no doubt that the suppliant meant, “O Lord, prevent anything from turning aside Your promises.” The Church was then in a very terrible state. The Temple was burnt and the assemblage broken up. The worship of God had ceased and idolatrous emblems stood in the Holy Place where once the Glory of God shone forth! The plea is, “Do not suffer the power of the enemy to be so great as to frustrate Your purposes, or to make Your promises void.” So may we

pray—"O Lord, do not suffer me to endure such temptation that I shall fall! Do not suffer such affliction to come upon me that I shall be destroyed, for have You not promised that no temptation shall happen to me but such as I am able to bear and that with the temptation there shall be a way of escape? Now have respect unto Your Covenant and so order your Providence that nothing shall happen to me contrary to that Divine agreement."

And it also means, "So order everything around us that the Covenant may be fulfilled. Is Your Church low? Raise up in her midst, again, men who preach the Gospel with power who shall be the means of lifting her up! Creator of men, Master of human hearts, You who can circumcise human lips to speak Your Word with power, do this and let Your Covenant with Your Church, that You will never leave her, be fulfilled! The kings of the earth are in Your hands. All events are controlled by You! You order all things, from the minute to the immense! Nothing, however small, is too small for Your purposes! Nothing, however great, is too great for Your rule! Manage everything so that in the end each promise of Your Covenant shall be fulfilled to all Your chosen people."

That, I think, is the meaning of the plea, "Have respect unto the Covenant." Keep it and see it kept. Fulfill the promises and prevent Your foes from doing evil to Your children. Precious plea, assuredly!

II. And now let us see FROM WHERE IT DERIVES ITS FORCE. "Have respect unto the Covenant." It derives its force, first, from the veracity of God. If it is a covenant of *man's* making we expect a *man* to keep it—and a man who does not keep *his* covenant is not esteemed among his fellows. If a man has given his word, that word is his bond. If a thing is solemnly signed and sealed, it becomes even more binding and he that would run back from a covenant would be thought to have forfeited his character among men.

God forbid that we should ever think the Most High could be false to His Word! It is not possible! He can do all things except this—He cannot lie—it is not possible that He should ever be untrue. He cannot even *change*—the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His lips. When, then, we come before God in prayer for a Covenant mercy we have His truthfulness to support us. "O God, You *must* do this. You are a Sovereign—You can do as you will, but You have bound Yourself by bonds that hold Your majesty—You have said it and it is not possible that You should go back from Your own Word!" How strong our faith ought to be when we have God's Truth to lean upon! What dishonor we do to our God by our weak faith, for it is virtually a suspicion of the fidelity of our Covenant God!

Next, to support us in using this plea, we have God's sacred jealousy for His honor. He has told us, Himself, that He is a jealous God. His name is Jealousy—He has great respect unto His honor among the sons of men. Hence this was Moses' plea—"What will the enemy say? And what will You do unto Your great name?" Now, if God's Covenant could be trifled with and if it could be proven that He had not kept the promise that He made to His creatures, it would not only be a dreadful thing for *us*, but it would bring grievous dishonor upon His name and that shall never be! God is too pure and holy and He is altogether too honorable ever to run back from the Word that He has given to His servants.

If I feel that my feet have almost gone, I may still be assured that He will not suffer me wholly to perish, else were His honor stained, for He has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." He might give me up to my enemies so far as my deserts are concerned, for I deserve to be destroyed by them—but then His honor is engaged to save the meanest of His people and He has said, "I give unto them *eternal life*." He will not, therefore, for His honor's sake, suffer me to be the prey of the adversary, but will preserve *me*, even me, unto the day of His appearing! Here is a good foothold for faith!

The next reflection that should greatly strengthen us is the venerable character of the Covenant. This Covenant was no transaction of yesterday—before the earth was, this Covenant was made! We may not speak of first or last with God, but speaking after the manner of men, the Covenant of Grace is God's *first* thought. Though we usually put the Covenant of Works first in order of *time* as revealed, yet in very *deed* the Covenant of Grace is the older of the two. God's people were not chosen yesterday, but before the foundations of the world! And the Lamb slain to ratify that Covenant, though slain 1800 years ago, was in the Divine purpose slain from before the foundations of the world. It is an ancient Covenant—there is *nothing* so ancient!

It is to God a Covenant which He holds in high esteem. It is not one of His light thoughts—not one of those thoughts which lead Him to create the morning dew that melts before the day has run its course, or to make the clouds that light up the setting sun with glory which soon have lost their radiance. No, it is one of His great thoughts—yes, it is His *eternal* thought, the thought out of His own inmost soul—this Covenant of Grace. And because it is so ancient and to God a matter so important, when we come to Him with this plea in our mouths we must not think of being staggered by unbelief, but may open our mouths wide, for He will assuredly fill them! Here is *Your* Covenant, O God, which of *Your* own spontaneous Sovereign will You did ordain of old, a Covenant in which Your very heart is laid bare and Your love which is Yourself, is manifested! O God,

have respect unto it and do as You have said and fulfill Your promise to Your people!

Nor is this all. It is but the beginning! In one sermon I should not have time to show you all the reasons that give force to the plea—but here is one. The Covenant has upon it a solemn endorsement. There was the stamp of God's own Word—that is enough! The very Word that created the universe is the Word that spoke the Covenant! But, as if that were not sufficient, seeing we are unbelieving, God has added to it His *oath*! And because He could swear by no greater, He has sworn by Himself! It were *blasphemy* to dream that the Eternal could be perjured and so He has set His oath to His Covenant in order that, by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, He might give to the heirs of Grace strong consolation!

But more, that venerable Covenant thus confirmed by oath was sealed with blood! Jesus *died* to ratify it! His heart's blood bedewed that Magna Charta of the Grace of God to His people. It is a Covenant which God the Just must keep! Jesus has fulfilled our side of it—has executed, to the letter, all the demands of God upon man! Our Surety and our Substitute has at once kept the Law and suffered all that was due by His people on account of their breach of it. And now, shall not the Lord be true and the Everlasting Father be faithful to His own Son? How can He refuse His Son the joy which He set before Him and the reward which He promised Him? "He shall see His seed: He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."

My Soul, the faithfulness of God to His Covenant is not so much a matter between you and God as between Christ and God, for now it so stands—Christ, as our Representative, puts in His claim before the Throne of Infinite Justice for the salvation of every soul for whom He shed His blood—and He must have what He has purchased! Oh what confidence is here! The rights of the Son, blended with the love and the veracity of the Father, makes the Covenant to be ordered in all things and sure! Moreover, remember, and I will not detain you much longer with this, that up till now nothing in the Covenant has ever failed! The Lord has been tried by millions of His people and they have been in trying emergencies and serious difficulties—but it has never been reported in the gates of Zion that the promise has come up short—neither have any said that the Covenant is null and void!

Ask those before you who passed through deeper waters than yourselves. Ask the martyrs who gave their lives for their Master, "Was He with them to the end?" The placid smiles upon their countenances while enduring the most painful death were evident testimonies that God is true! Their joyous songs, the clapping of their hands in the fire and their exul-

tation even on the rack or when rotting in some loathsome dungeon—all these have proven how faithful the Lord has been! And have you not heard with your own ears the testimony of God's dying people? They were in conditions in which they could not have been sustained by mere imagination, nor buoyed up by frenzy and yet they have been as joyful as if their dying day had been their wedding day!

Death is too solemn a matter for a man to play a masquerade. But what did your wife say in death? Or your mother, now with God? Or what of your child who had learned of the Savior's love? Can you not recall their testimonies even now? I think I hear some of them and among the things of earth that are like the joys of Heaven, I think this is one of the foremost—the joy of departed saints when they already hear the voices of angels hovering near and turn round and tell us in broken language of the joys that are bursting in upon them—their sight blinded by the excess of brightness and their hearts ravished with the bliss that floods them! Oh it has been sweet to see the saints depart!

I mention these things, now, not merely to refresh your memories, but to establish your faith in God. He has been true so many times and never false—and shall we *now* experience any difficulty in resting on His Covenant? No, by all these many years in which the faithfulness of God has been put to the test and has never failed, let us be confident that He will still regard us and let us pray boldly—"Have respect unto the Covenant." For, mark you, as it has been in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, world without end! It shall be to the last saint as it was with the first! The testimony of the last soldier of the host shall be, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised."

Only one more reflection here. Our God has taught many of us to trust in His name. We were long in learning the lesson and nothing but Omnipotence could have made us willing to walk by faith and not by sight. With much patience the Lord has brought us, at last, to have no reliance but on Him and now we are depending on His faithfulness and His Truth. Is that your case, Brothers and Sisters? What then? Do you think that God has given you this faith to *mock* you? Do you believe that He has taught you to trust in His name and has brought you this far to put you to shame? Has His Holy Spirit given you confidence in a *lie*? And has He worked in you faith in a fiction? God forbid! Our God is no demon who would delight in the misery which a groundless confidence would be sure to bring to us.

If, then, you have faith, He *gave* it to you and He that gave it to you knows His own gift and will honor it! He was never false yet, even to the feeblest faith—and if your faith is great, you shall find Him greater than your faith, even when your faith is at its greatest! Therefore be of good

cheer. The fact that you believe should encourage you to say, “Now, O Lord, that I have come to rest upon You, by Your Grace, will You fail me? I, a poor worm, know no confidence but Your dear name—will You forsake me? I have no refuge but Your wounds, O Jesus; no hope but in Your atoning Sacrifice; no light but in Your light—will You now cast me off?”

It is not possible that the Lord should cast off one who thus trusts Him! Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can any of us forget our children when they fondly trust us in the days of their weakness? No, the Lord is no monster! He is tender and full of compassion, faithful and true—and Jesus is a Friend which sticks closer than a brother. The very fact that He has given us faith in His Covenant should help us to plead—“Have respect unto the Covenant.”

III. Having thus shown you, dear Friends, the meaning of the plea and where it derives its force, we will now pause a minute and observe HOW AND WHEN THAT COVENANT MAY BE PLEADED. First, it may be pleaded under a sense of *sin*—when the soul feels its guilt. Let me read to you the words of our Apostle, in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, where he is speaking of this Covenant at the 10th verse. “For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My Laws into their minds and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Now, dear Hearer, suppose that you are under a sense of sin? Something has revived in you a recollection of past guilt, or it may be that you have sadly stumbled this very day and Satan whispers, “You will surely be destroyed, for you have sinned.” Now go to the great Father and open this page, putting your finger on that 12th verse and say, “Lord, You have in infinite, boundless, inconceivable mercy entered into Covenant with me, a poor sinner, seeing I believe in the name of Jesus. And now I beseech You have respect unto Your Covenant. You have said, ‘I will be merciful to their unrighteousness’—O God be merciful to mine! You have said, ‘Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more’—Lord, remember no more my sins! Forget forever my iniquity!”

That is the way to use the Covenant! When under a sense of sin, run to that clause which meets your case! But suppose, beloved Brother or Sister, you are laboring to overcome inward corruption with intense desire that holiness should be worked in you? Then read the Covenant, again, as you find it in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah at the 33rd verse. It is the same

Covenant, only we are reading another version of it. “This shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Now, can you not plead that and say, “Lord, Your Commandments upon stone are holy, but I forget them and break them. But, O my God, write them on the fleshy tablets of my heart! Come, now, and make me holy! Transform me! Write Your will upon my very soul that I may live it out, and from the warm impulses of my heart serve You as You would be served. Have respect unto Your Covenant and sanctify Your servant.”

Or suppose you desire to be upheld under strong temptation, lest you should go back and return to your old ways? Take the Covenant as you find it in Jeremiah at the 32nd chapter at the 40th verse. Note these verses and learn them by heart, for they may be a great help to you one of these days. Read the 40th verse of the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah. “And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” Go and say, “O Lord, I am almost gone, and they tell me I shall finally fall, but O, my Lord and Master, there stands Your Word! Put Your fear in my heart and fulfill Your promise that I shall not depart from You.” This is the sure road to final perseverance!

Thus I might take you through all the various needs of God’s people and show that in seeking to have them supplied they may fitly cry, “Have respect unto the Covenant.” For instance, suppose you were in great distress of mind and needed comfort? You could go to Him with that Covenant promise, “As a mother comforts her children, even so will I comfort you—out of Zion will I comfort you.” Go to Him with that and say, “Lord, comfort Your servant.” Or if there should happen to be a trouble upon us, not for yourselves, but for the Church—how sweet it is to go to the Lord and say, “Your Covenant runs thus—‘the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.’ O Lord, it seems as though they would prevail! Interpose Your strength and save Your Church.”

If it ever should happen that you are looking for the conversion of the ungodly and desiring to see sinners saved, but the world seems so dark, look at our text again—the whole verse. “Have respect unto the Covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty”—to which you may add, “But You have said that Your Glory shall cover the earth and that all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” Lord, have respect unto Your Covenant! Help our missionaries, speed Your Gospel, bid the mighty angel fly through the midst of Heaven to preach the everlasting Gospel to every creature! Why, it is a grand missionary prayer, “Have respect unto the Covenant.” Beloved, it is a two-edged sword to be used in

all conditions of strife and it is a holy balm of Gilead that will heal in all conditions of suffering!

IV. And so I close with this last question, WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM ALL THIS? “Have respect unto the Covenant.” Why, that if we ask God to have respect unto it, we ought to have respect unto it ourselves! Have a *grateful* respect for it. Bless the Lord that He even condescended to enter into Covenant with you. What could He see in you to give you a promise, much more to make a Covenant with you? Blessed be His dear name, this is the sweet theme of our hymns on earth and shall be the subject of our songs in Heaven!

Next, have a *believing* respect for it. If it is God’s Covenant, do not dishonor it. It stands sure. Why do you stagger at it through unbelief?—

**“His every work of Grace is strong
As that which built the skies!
The Voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”**

Next, have a *joyful* respect for it. Awake your harps and join in praise with David—“Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant.” Here is enough to make a Heaven in our hearts while yet we are below—the Lord has entered into a Covenant of Grace and peace with us and He will bless us *forever!* Then have a *jealous* respect for it. Never suffer the Covenant of Works to be mixed with it. Hate that preaching—I say not less than that—*hate* that preaching which does not discriminate between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, for it is deadly preaching and damning preaching!

You must always have a straight, clear line, here, between what is of man and what is of God, for cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm! And if you have begun with the Spirit under this Covenant, do not think of being made perfect in the flesh under another Covenant! Be you holy under the precepts of the heavenly Father, but be you not legal under the taskmaster’s lash! Return not to the bondage of the Law, for you are not under Law, but under Grace! Lastly, have a *practical* respect for it. Let all see that the Covenant of Grace, while it is your reliance, is also your delight. Be ready to speak of it to others! Be ready to show that the effect of its Divine Grace upon you is one that is worthy of God, since it has a purifying effect upon your life!

He that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. Have respect unto the Covenant by walking as such people should who can say that God is to them a God and they are to Him a people. The Covenant says, “From all their idols will I cleanse them.” Then don’t love idols. The Covenant says, “I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean.” Then be clean, you covenanted ones, and may the Lord preserve

you and make His Covenant to be your boast on earth and your song forever in Heaven! Oh that the Lord may bring us into the bonds of His Covenant and give us a simple faith in His dear Son—for THAT is the mark of the covenanted ones! Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 74.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK.”—237, 228, 742.

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

THE ARROWS OF THE BOW BROKEN IN ZION NO. 791

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 19 , 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield,
and the sword, and the battle."
Psalm 76:3.*

THE writer of this song of triumph gloried as a patriot in the defeat of his country's foes—he did better, he triumphed as a believer in Jehovah in the victories which were worked by the power of the Lord his God! I have sometimes wished that we English Christians blended in ourselves a little more of the two characters of patriots and Believers. I am persuaded that if our poets had been holy and devout men, and at the same time bold patriots, like David, they would not have lacked subjects for the most glorious national hymns.

The events of English history are no less stirring than the annals of Judah and Israel. What a theme for a master singer would be the defeat of the proud Spanish Armada, or the frustration of Rome's knavish tricks on November the Fifth, or the gallant fights of Oliver and his valiant Ironsides, or the landing of William III and the overthrow of the hopes of the enemies of the Gospel! Our national minstrelsy has never been so devout as it should be and we are poor in holy national songs as compared to the Hebrews. May the taste of coming ages improve in this respect.

Let us, in the events which occur in our own tune, see the hand of God—and if we cannot write psalms and hymns, yet at any rate let us feel the spirit of glowing thanksgiving to that God who has bid the ocean gird our native isle and thus protected her with a better guard than gates of brass or triple steel! Blessed be the Lord our God, Who, till now, has held the shield of Omnipotence over this land and made it the citadel of liberty, the refuge of the oppressed, and the stronghold of the Gospel of Christ.

We will not, however, detain you with such subjects, but invite you to more spiritual considerations. Our Salem is the peaceful Church or God, and our Zion is the abode of Gospel worship where the general assembly of the first-born unite in holy joy. The Psalmists of Israel, when they rehearsed the Lord's mighty acts in the midst of His people, spoke of the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. And we who believe in Jesus can join with the song of Moses the song of the Lamb, while we behold the overthrow of sin, death and Hell by our all-glorious Champion, and cry with all our hearts and voices, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

Israel chanted her paeon of victory over the accursed Canaanites whom Joshua slew with great slaughter. They were firmly established in their own country. They dwelt in cities which were walled up to the heavens and they rushed forth to war, riding in chariots of iron with sharp scythes

upon their axles, and spearmen darting their javelins afar. Their warriors were swift and valiant and their numbers like the sand of the sea. But, behold, their boasted armies dissolved at the advance of Joshua as the hoar frost melts in the sun!

Hittites and Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites fell before the sword of the Lord and Israel magnified Jehovah who “smote great kings, and slew famous kings, and gave their land for an heritage, even an heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.” We also have a better Canaan in prospect and more terrible enemies have been subdued by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation—let us not be slow to praise the name of the Lord! No Jew could forget the victories achieved under the leadership of David over the Philistines. They had giants among them and their ranks were filled with veterans—men of war from their youth up—yet the sling and the stone brought down the champion, and the troops of God were made valiant in battle, turning to flight the armies of the aliens!

Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, for even thus has Jesus vanquished evil and given His servants Grace to conquer through His blood. This Psalm commemorates the grand defeat of Sennacherib. No swords or spears were used—the Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty men of valor, and all the leaders and captains in the camp—so that the proud Assyrian returned with shame to his own land. This victory was the subject of many a holy song in Judah’s happy land. But the everlasting defeat of the accuser of the Brethren by the angel of the Covenant of Grace should waken yet more thrilling music in the choirs of the Church of the living God.

All the wonders recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord are eclipsed in the Gospel annals, for they are but the destruction of men’s bodies, the temporary deliverance of cities and of nations from the oppression of war. But the Gospel tells of *eternal* redemption. As spiritual affairs far exceed material interests, so the spiritual victories of God in the midst of His Church are far more resplendent than His triumphs against His foes on behalf of Israel. May the Holy Spirit quicken us, raise our courage, strengthen our faith and confirm our confidence in Him while we think upon what God has done and is doing in the midst of His Church.

“There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” Right valiantly has the Lord worked *for* us and *in* us, and He will also do great things *by* us.

I. First, he has fought victoriously FOR US. Our God has worked great spiritual victories for us by which all the ingenious weapons of our many adversaries have been snapped. Let me remind you, Beloved, in the first place, of what the Lord our God did in the day of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ. Let us celebrate the triumphs of Cavalry! The Lord of angels descended from Heaven and left the glories of His Father’s Throne to take upon Himself the form of a servant and to be made in the likeness of man. Throughout the whole of His life of humiliation He was attacked by the enemy, but He was victorious at every point.

Hell strived to empty out all its quivers upon Him and the sword of Satanic malice sought with its keenest edge to wound Him, but never was He staggered or so much as scarred. He quenched every fiery dart and re-

pelled every barbed arrow. The prince of this world watched Him with jealous eyes and scanned Him from head to foot but found no place for the entrances of sin—nothing within His soul upon which evil could gain a footing. Jesus was unconquerable to show us that in the power of Divine Grace manhood may overcome the sword of evil and break the arrows of temptation. At last the fullness of time ushered in that dreadful night when all the powers of darkness met and collected all their infernal might for one last tremendous charge—buckler, and sword, and arrow and every weapon of offense and defense were wielded by the leaguered hosts of Hell—but all in vain.

Our Champion was hard put to it. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He was numbered with the transgressors. He was led away like a malefactor, tried and condemned. The Lord Jehovah made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all, but in all, and over all He was more than conqueror! You never can forget, for it is written upon the fleshy tablets of your grateful hearts, how His enemies dragged Him to the Mount of Crucifixion. How they fastened Him to the accursed tree, lifted Him up all bleeding and suffering, exposed Him to the glare of the sun, dashed the Cross into its place dislocating all His bones! How they sat around and stared upon Him and mocked His miseries! But in all this He remained invincible!

These griefs, which were outward and conspicuous to our eyes, were but a small part of His agonies—the inward strife, the internal conflict, the soul-desertion and depression were far heavier. Sin's utmost weight, the fury of vengeance, the curse of the Law, the sword of Justice, the malice of Satan, the bitterness of death—all these He knew and more. And yet, single-handed, He sustained the fight and earned the crown! That glorious cry, "It is finished," was the deathblow of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

I think I see before me the hero of Golgotha using His Cross as an anvil and His woes as a hammer. He is dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned "arrows of the bow." He is trampling on every charge, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty Breaker gives! How the weapons fly to fragments, beaten small as the dust of the threshing floor! Behold, I see Him drawing from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of hellish power! See He snaps it across His knee as a man breaks dry and brittle firewood, and casts it into the fire. Like David, he cries, "He teaches My hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by My arms." "I have pursued My enemies, and destroyed them, and turned not again until I had consumed them. And I have consumed them and wounded them that they could not arise: yes, they are fallen under My feet...Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth; I did stamp them as the mire of the street."

Beloved, no sin of a Believer can now be an arrow to mortally wound him. No condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ. A full atonement has been made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuses? Who now condemns? Christ has died, yes, rather has risen again! Let Hell, if it can, find a single arrow to shoot against the Beloved of the Lord!

They are all broken, not one of them is left. Christ has emptied the quivers of Hell, has quenched every fiery dart and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath! The ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of Hell's warfare—which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance.

Sin has no more dominion over us! Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away forever. O you enemy, destruction has come to a perpetual end! Let us talk of all the wondrous works of the Lord and you who make mention of His name keep not silent. When our Lord, after a short sojourn in the grave, rose again on the third day, His resurrection effectually crushed all the remaining hopes of Hell. So long as He was in the tomb, it might seem as though His people were in jeopardy. But when He “rose again for our justification,” our security was no longer in doubt! In His death He paid the debt. In His resurrection He obtained the receipt, and exhibited the precious writing to Heaven, and earth, and Hell, by nailing the handwriting of ordinances to His Cross.

The rising of Christ from the grave is to us the warrant of our final perseverance. Has He not Himself said, “Because I live, you shall live also”? It is to us the pledge of *our* resurrection, for as the Head has arisen, so all the members of the body must arise. Had Jesus seen corruption, had the grave still held His body in vile durance, our hope would have been but slender. But now that Jesus lives, and death has no more dominion over Him, we rejoice that by *one* sacrifice He has perfected forever them that are set apart. Our risen Lord shines forth in transcendent majesty beside the empty tomb, surrounded by the broken swords and bucklers of His people—

***“Shout, you seraphs! Gabriel, raise
Fame’s eternal trump of praise!
Let the earth’s remotest bound
Hear the joy-inspiring sound
Hallelujah. Lives again our glorious King!
‘Where, O death, is now your sting?’
Once He died our souls to save;
‘Where’s your victory, boasting grave?’ ”***

Yet further, when, after 40 days our Lord ascended from us to take possession of the purchased possession in our name, and to prepare a place for us at the right hand of the Father—in that day He again gave to Hell such a defeat as it shall never be able to recover. Had Jesus Christ remained still upon the earth, it had been thought that Heaven was still shut to Believers and we might have entertained a fear that between us and the celestial gate there would be such hordes of enemies that we should never be able to hew a pathway to our rest. But Jesus has completely cleared the king's highway to Glory for all His saints, and they traverse in safety the road to the celestial gate! As the watchmen fled from the grave's mouth when the living Lord arose, and as the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher, so all the fiends that might have kept us out of Heaven have fled also, and every barrier to our entrance to the celestial reward is effectually removed.

See the Incarnate God returning to His Throne! Your imaginations can conceive the splendor of His triumphal entrance when all the angels hailed Him with glad acclaim and disembodied spirits who had long ago

been redeemed by the foresight of His death met Him with their congratulations and the Paternal Deity said, "Well done" and bade Him take His reward at His right hand. Ah, then He led captivity captive and made a show of His enemies openly! Then He finally broke the "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle," and gave to His people a confirmation of the assurance that it shall never be possible to keep so much as *one* of them out of the eternal rest since their Covenant Head has taken possession on their behalf—to hold it safely for each one until "the adoption to wit the redemption of our body." Nor is the story quite ended yet. Jesus is now exalted far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named.

But the enemy of our souls, though defeated, continues maliciously to attempt our destruction. Satan's head is bruised but still he lives and continues perpetually to assault the saints of God. We seldom stand before the angel without Satan comes forward as our *accuser*. The accuser of the Brethren unceasingly clamors against the saints, but here is our joy—whatever may be the arrows of Satan's bow, whatever sword he may wield against us—there He stands, our great Captain, our Shield and the Lord's Anointed! And as fast as the arrows of accusation are shot, He breaks them! And as often as the sword is drawn, He turns aside its edge!

Courage, Christian! Your foes may be unceasing in their attacks, but Jesus Christ is unfailing in your protection! For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. His intercession comes up perpetually before the eternal Throne—and the constant presentation of His Omnipotent merit evermore preserves the tempted, succors the needy, and upholds those that are ready to fall. Let us be of good cheer, for there, in the New Jerusalem to which our laboring souls aspire, the intercession of Jesus breaks "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Nor does it end there, for here below our exalted Lord is master over all events! Providence is ruled and guided by the Man whose head was surrounded with the crown of thorns—

***"Lo! In His hands the sovereign keys
Of Heaven, and death, and Hell."***

To this hour the adversaries of the Truth of God seek the overthrow of the Church of God. We may be sometimes idle, but *they* are always diligent. "The enemy goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He assails the people of God in successive ages from different points of the compass with cunning and fury, and we should have poor hope—we who are like a few lambs in the midst of wolves—if it were not that our Master is present by His eternal Spirit and rules *all things* by His Providential government! He can make those wheels which are so high that they are terrible, to revolve that the greatest enemies of the Church shall be cut off or shall be converted! And He can raise up from the dung-hill men that shall be princes in the midst of Israel, to be defenders of the Truth and shepherds to His people.

He can cause to be born in a humble cottage in the woods a Luther who shall shake off the fetters from the nations! He can bring forth from the wildest village of France a Calvin whose words shall be as nails fastened by the master of assemblies! And He can raise a flaming Knox and nourish his fiery spirit in Geneva till Scotland needs him—or raise up in the

quiet parsonage of Lutterworth a Wickliffe to shine as the morning star of the Reformation in England. God is never short of men! He never has to worry Himself of means! He knows no difficulties or dilemmas. If His Church needed it, He could, tomorrow, make emperors relent of their sins and doff their crowns to become ministers of the Word, and constrain the most violent persecutors of the Church to crouch at her feet and lick the dust.

Let us be confident in the reigning power of our ever loving Savior! Let us be reassured by the history of the Church in the past, and expect to see Divine interpositions in our own day. Fear not, for still it shall be said of Zion, "There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." For His redeemed ones it is most evident that the Lord Jesus is more than conqueror, not only putting adverse darts aside, but breaking them. He not merely averts the violence of the sword, but He breaks that sword, tearing the buckler from the enemy and leaving him defenseless—stripping him of all his arms, both of offense and defense—that his defeat may be total and irretrievable. "Arms and the man, I sing," said the great Roman poet. A nobler theme, by far, would be, "Arms and the Son of God."

II. May we have help from on high while we now ask you to consider the victories which Jesus Christ has won *in us*. Brethren, we who are members of the Church of Christ have been subdued by Sovereign Grace. Whereas once we were enemies, we are now reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Now, if we could each tell his story of conversion the children of God would be ready to burst out with one simultaneous shout of joy as they perceived that in the midst of His Church, the Lord, in the hearts of His people, has broken the arrows of the bow!

Let me take you back to the time of *your* conversion. Some of us were very stout-hearted. We knew the Truth of God but we did not love it. We *understood* the Gospel and we abhorred it. We were often entreated to consider the welfare of our souls, but we cared for the frivolities of the moment and we let the realities of eternity slip by. We were thundered at by the Law! We were gently wooed by the Gospel. The tears of a mother, united with the earnest warnings of a teacher, and the admonitions of a pastor—all these were powerless upon our slumbering conscience. Some of us went to great lengths of rebellion and hardened ourselves more and more until it seemed impossible for us to do enough against the Lord our God.

When we talk of great and vile sinners it brings tears to our eyes as we remember that such were some of us, but we have been washed. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the bringing in of great sinners is, indeed, a glory to Christ—and the salvation of great moralists is not a secondary victory, for perhaps of the two it is more difficult to subdue the *righteous* self than the sinful self of men. To have made those who have been kept pure outwardly to feel their inward impurity, and to bewail it is a triumph great and masterly! Rejoice when the harlot bows before the Savior with breaking heart! Be glad when Saul of Tarsus yields his persecuting heart to the Savior's scepter! But equally adore the majesty of love when the young man who has kept all these commandments from his youth up seeks the

one thing which he lacks and trusts his heart with Jesus Christ without delay!

When we shall get to Heaven we will astonish the angels with what we shall have to tell—the depths of sin out of which we have been delivered—the fiery lusts from which we have been rescued—the stiff necks that have been made to bow, and the unyielding knees that have been compelled to bend! Glory be unto God! I cannot help saying so again, Glory be to God! As I look around this place and think of some of you in whom God's great and wondrous arm has been revealed in redeeming you from all your iniquities, I dare make it my boast that here the Lord has broken "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle!"

Since conversion, dear Friends, how often has the great Conqueror been obliged to interpose on our behalf to save us from our rebellious lusts? I do not know how you find it, but it strikes me that conflict is the principal feature of the Christian life this side Heaven. We know what communion is. We are no strangers to the banqueting house where the banner of love is waving. But still, to contest every inch of ground on the road to immortality, to wrestle hard with sins, and doubts and fears is our average experience. We do get beyond this sometimes, but not for long. We have soon to come back again, either to fight with the lions, or Apollyon, or to climb the Hill Difficulty, or to traverse the Valley of the Shadow of Death, or to pass through Vanity Fair, or to endure the sleepy influences of the enchanted ground, or to be in Doubting Castle!

It is not an easy path to Heaven—it is warfare from beginning to end. There are times with us when we are so sorely beset with temptations that our feet have almost gone, our steps have well near slipped. We had long before this fallen, to our shame and confusion, if another arm than ours had not held us up. Oh, what strong temptations some of us have endured! Those of us who have passionate, fiery, strong, willful natures have to fight frequently against suggestions which we would scarcely whisper in the ear of those we love the best. We have overcome as yet. We have been upheld till now. But who could have held us up but the Lord Himself?

Our temptations occasionally are plied so craftily and are so exactly fitted to the situation, so precisely adapted to the state of our bodily health, or the condition of our outward business that it is a wonder that we have not yielded. Yes, and we have almost yielded, as we must mournfully acknowledge, and then Apollyon has hissed at us from between his teeth: "You have been unfaithful to your Lord already in your heart. You know you have gone back in your soul and broken your covenant. How can you hope to be accepted at the last? Go back to the world at once, for you are playing the hypocrite, you know you are," says he, "for your heart is deceitful. Go back, therefore, in your outward life."

Though we have been able still to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and have kept the weapon of All Prayer in our hand, yet we have been almost overcome, and have narrowly escaped. We have to bless God that we have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but only escaped as by the skin of our teeth. We have not broken the arrows of the bow. We have not been able to break the sword of the enemy—but Christ has done it, blessed be His name! We have fled to the foot of His Cross. We have looked up and seen the streams of His precious blood.

We have cowered down beneath the shadow of the Atonement and we have come away strong to fight with our corruptions and to overcome our besetting sins.

Further than this, those who know anything of the inner life, if their inward struggles are at all like mine, will frequently have to contend with doubts and fears, suspicions and forebodings. Glory be to God, it is not always so. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." My Brothers and Sisters, we often walk in darkness and see no light. Many of God's people are harassed with questions as to their interest in Christ, or are afflicted with deep depression of spirit. And when it is so, if we try to comfort them, what a task it is! I have tried all the promises of the Bible which I could remember upon some of the sorely troubled ones. I have reminded them of the Person of Christ, and His consequent power. The suffering of Christ and His consequent ability to cleanse from sin.

And frequently I have had this answer, "When God shuts up, who can deliver?" and I have been made to feel, as a pastor, very often, that I could not quench the fiery darts of the enemy for other people—that I could not break the sword of the enemy for others—or even for myself! What a sweet relief it is to be assured that *Jesus* can break the arrows of the bow, subdue our doubts, and cause His people with reviving courage to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall I shall rise again!" I have seen many excellent Believers whose lives have been examples to us all, who, nevertheless, have said, "If you knew what was in my heart, you would not speak to me as a Christian. Oh, how great are my sins! I feel that I live at a great distance from God. I am of little or no service to His Church. When I am in trouble, I do not act like a Believer and cast my burden upon the Lord, but I bear it till my soul is sorely burdened."

Then I have read to them such a Psalm as the one which follows our text, where David says, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" I have always found such souls get relief when they have come to Christ just as they did at first—and if they have said, "I am afraid I never did come," they have soon rejoiced in the light of His countenance when they have been able to add, "But if I never came, I will now"—

***"Just as I am—though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fights within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come."***

To creep to the foot of the Cross feeling as if the earth would open and swallow you up, and yet resolved that if you perish, you will perish with your arms about the Atonement, resting on the expiatory Sacrifice—this is the sure way to comfort. Tried one, you cannot perish beneath the Cross! You must be safe there! Standing there, you shall understand that there *Jesus* breaks "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the

battle.” To leave this subject for a moment, I would notice that all which is yet to come in the inner life is secured by our Lord Jesus Christ. As up till now we have not been mortally wounded, nor have cast away our confidence altogether, so shall it be to the close. No doubt other conflicts will arise—the past seems to warrant our prophesying that the future will not be calm and peaceful—the hours of old age and consequent debility are stealing on apace.

The days of sickness, and all the depression of spirit which sickness usually brings are drawing near. Last of all, and most terrible to some, the solemn article of *death* approaches, and speak of it as we may, death is terrible to a living man. The river of death is cold and chill, and for a man to plunge into it boldly will need more than ordinary courage. But let us not sit down and deplore our future ills, nor petulantly wish to avoid life’s trials—we cannot if we could—let us set our face steadfastly towards Jerusalem and go onward, persuaded that every foe in advance is already defeated! Christ Jesus leads the way! No enemy has been able to stand against Him and none shall stand against us all the days of *His* life!

Death has lost its sting since Jesus died. “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I wish that I had the power to speak of these things as they deserve, but I leave them with you as topics for your thankfulness. O my Brothers and Sisters, how we ought to praise and bless God for what He has worked in us from the first day until now! A dear friend said just before service, “I am very grateful, and what is more, if I am not grateful, I ought to be, for I owe so much.”

Oh, if ever I get to Heaven, I will sing the loudest of any there for I am sure I shall owe more to God than any of you! The responsibilities of my office overwhelm me. When I sit and think of the many, many, many who call me by the name of *pastor*, and the tens of thousands that read the word which I preach every week, I am overwhelmed! If I shall at the close of life be able to say as George Fox, the Quaker, said after his last sermon, “I am clear! I am clear!”—I would give all the world if I had it, to know that I shall be able to say that—for this is my one and sole desire, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but being wrapped about with the fair white linen of His. If safe at last, I shall have to praise Him who has delivered me from a thousand temptations, and kept my feet safe in slippery places.

I know that to each one of you your place seems as peculiar as mine does to me. I do not doubt but what I am as much fitted for mine as you are for yours, and therefore I believe that your condition has its peculiar dangers, and I doubt not you receive peculiar helps and special deliverances. Defraud not my Master of your gratitude! Give Him your hearts. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar, for God is our God which has showed us light! Let what He has done for us bind us to Him, and encourage us to hope in Him. “You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.”

III. And now, lastly, as this has been done *for* us, and *in* us, it will be done *BY* US. The Church of God is God’s battle-ax and weapons of war in fighting His battles for truth and righteousness. And, up till now history shows that none have been able to stand against God in the midst of His

people. If I could give you a brief epitome of Church history, I should be glad to do so, but there is not time this morning, and will not be, I fear, at any of our services today. But it is a fact, that along the whole spiritual battle the victory has been to God's people.

At first the enemy attacked the Church with persecution. Those rough and barbarous weapons of war were used which were to be found in the Coliseum with its wild beasts and cruel men, or in the axe, the stake, and the rack. Men have grown somewhat wiser now, but in those days men and devils sought to destroy the testimony of our God by the *destruction* of the saints. And what was the result? O Persecution, where are your trophies? The virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at you and laughed you to scorn! The Church, like a good ship beaten by the waves, has cut through every billow and has been hastened on her way by the storm. Washed and cleansed and purged by opposition, the more the Church has been opposed the more brightly glorious has she shone forth!

God was in the midst of her and helped her. He helped her and that right early. Our pulse beats fast, and our blood grows hot when we read of the persecutions of old pagan Rome. And when we turn to the story of the Reformation, and see the hunted ones among the Alps, the Huguenots driven out of France—our own Lollards and the Covenanters of Scotland—we feel proud to belong to such a race of men! We glory in their lineage and are amazed that the policy of persecution should so long have been continued by shrewd, sharp-witted men, when it ought to have been clear to them that in every case in which they persecuted the Church of God, it multiplied the more exceedingly! God has, indeed, broken “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle,” by sustaining His people in times of persecution.

The Church has also been assailed with deadly errors. There is scarcely a doctrine of our holy faith which has not been denied. Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so does the stream of infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die—for they are short lived—an ephemeral generation. We have seen the Church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology, ethnology, and anatomy. And then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have issued, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the Church today are blown to the wind tomorrow!

Yes, the Church has been *enriched* by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been strengthened and her bulwarks consolidated. To disprove the Word of God and to overthrow Christianity is still the fond dream of wicked men, and therefore we may expect yet worse attacks. There are looming in the future, even now, fresh clouds of skeptical theory, but as certainly as God has blown away these things like chaff before the wind in times gone by, so will He in the days that are yet to come. It is in the Church itself that the victory is generally won. I am inclined to believe that the writers against different heresies, when they have done their best, have done comparatively little with the masses—and that our learned men, when they assail new forms of skepti-

cism, however successful they may be with the few—do but very little with the many.

The true place of victory is *not* in the scholar's study, nor in the classroom of the university, but in the *Church* itself. If you want to answer the infidel, live a holy life! If you desire to stop the skeptic, let your faith bring forth patience, your patience experience, your experience hope that makes not ashamed. Zeal for the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, earnest prayer for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom and industrious effort for the spread of the Truth will be much more victorious over the insinuations of evil men than the most cogent arguments that reason can devise. There, on the death-bed of the consumptive girl with scarcely strength enough to speak, she bears witness that Christ is precious and His love a sweet savor in her departing moments—THERE our precious Jesus breaks the arrows of the bow!

There, in the working man's cottage which was once the haunt of drunkenness and the den of vice and the abode of misery—but which has now become a little paradise where the children are trained for Heaven, where father and mother are knit together in love—THERE the Grace of God breaks the shield, and the sword, and the battle! There where the weeping sinner finds peace. Where the troubled merchant wins rest to his spirit. Where the tempted young man overcomes the temptation and stands fast in the day of trial—THERE it is where suffering is endured with patience, where labor is performed with perseverance, where the command is obeyed with holiness and sin is resisted with steadfastness! THERE it is that the Gospel of Jesus breaks the "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

My dear Friends, let nothing ever daunt us as a Church. God has given us some signal triumphs in the conversion of remarkable sinners—let nothing, therefore, ever hinder us in seeking the conversion of men. Some of you I know are industrious every day in seeking to turn men to Christ. Do not give up the most hardened cases where you get nothing but a sneer, or even where the door is slammed in your face! Do not be cast down at rebuffs or blasphemies—those who are most opposed frequently yield first. It is harder work to deal with those who say, "Yes, yes, yes," but who forget what we say—it is more hopeless work to deal with them than with those who turn against us and seek to tear us apart.

In God's name push on, you soldiers of the Cross! The darkest alley may be made light! The back courts of London may become the courts of King Jesus! The house that is now a den of infamy may be purged, and be made to have a Church within its walls! Be confident, in the energy of the eternal Spirit, that He can subdue the hardened heart! Be steadfast in the exercise of minister and continue to preach the Gospel, for it is by preaching through the Holy Spirit that men shall be saved! Brothers and Sisters, we anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ! We are looking forward to the time when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and to the bats—when Romanism shall be exploded and the crescent of Mohammed shall never again wave to cast its baleful rays upon nations.

We expect the time when every sail that whitens the deep shall bear the herald of the Cross! When kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace

and all nations shall call their Redeemer blessed! I know that some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel that is breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We are to pluck, they say, the elect from off her, and the world itself is to be destroyed and cast away as an unclean thing. We are of another mind and look for something more glorying to God than this desponding theory.

We know that the world and all that is in it is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for new heavens and for a new earth. But we cannot read our Bibles without the conviction that—

**“Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Both his successive journeys run.”**

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays. We are not disheartened by the period which He allots to the Church in which to strive and struggle with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never suffer this world, which has once seen Christ’s blood shed upon it, to be always the devil’s stronghold. Brethren, Christ came here to take the lion by the beard and to rend him, and to deliver this world entirely and altogether from the detested sway of the powers of darkness. It shall be so, for Jesus cannot lose His reward! We expect to see the mountain of the Lord arise—it has arisen now—it is no mean hill already. But we expect to see it rise higher, and higher, and higher till it shall be exalted upon the top of the hills—above all the highest peaks of earth—and nations shall flow unto it.

The handful of corn upon the top of the mountains shall yet shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. What a shout shall that be when men and angels shall join together to cry, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” What a satisfaction will it be in that day to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord Jesus!

In closing, let me solemnly remark how unhappy are those who are on the side of evil! It is a losing side and it is a side where to lose is to lose *forever*. Be reconciled unto God! This is the Gospel message. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little.” Lastly, how happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him doing their little in His name and by His strength! Thrice happy, my Brothers and Sisters, are we to have the honor of winning souls! Let us seek to get more of such honor! Let us be insatiable to promote Christ’s Gospel! Let us be ambitious to the highest bent of our minds to extend the Redeemer’s kingdom! And God do so to you, and more also, as you shall seek to do unto Him, and unto the sons of men for their good evermore. Amen.

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THE SAINT'S TRIALS AND THE DIVINE DELIVERANCES

NO. 3548

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1917.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 11, 1872.***

***"I cried unto God... You led Your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron."
Psalm 77:1-20.***

THIS Psalm describes the condition of a child of God under deep depression of spirit. He is much tried and bowed, and yet, at the same time, the saint at last gets the victory and, before the Psalm is over, the clouds are all removed from the sky and the heart rejoices in the sunlight of Divine Love. It is known to every Believer that the experience of a Christian is very variable. We are like our own strange weather in this land. South winds blow and all is warm and balmy, but in a few hours the north wind comes, or the cutting east wind—and soon the ground is covered with snow or hard white frost—and yet, perhaps, in another day or two there will be a storm! Some Believers have all spiritual weathers in a week. Being somewhat excitable, perhaps naturally, they readily take to themselves wings and mount aloft, but then as a high soar is often followed by a great fall, these very Believers are soon sighing and crying out of the very depths and half doubt whether they are the people of God at all! Nor must I say that is common to merely excitable people. Some of the very noblest heroes in the Christian army have had a very dark experience to go through. If you read the life of Martin Luther, of whom we may well say that never braver soldier fought beneath the banner of the Cross, you will find him the subject of the most terrible exercises. He was strong in his God, but he was very weak in himself—subject to ferocious temptations—temptations the like of which probably few of us have ever known because we are not men of his gigantic mold, and God does not allow trials to come upon us which were only suitable for him. He often-times seemed to lie at Hell's gates, but then, again, the man seemed as if he had looked Heaven in the face and lived in perpetual communion with his God!

John Bunyan's description of the progress of the pilgrim to Heaven would lead us to expect that there would be changes, for at one time we find the pilgrim safely housed in the Palace Beautiful—all around him is

redolent with the odor of flowers and the song of birds—next day he descends to the Valley of Humiliation. Even there he has a conflict or two, but a little farther on he comes to the Valley of Death Shades and there he has to fight for every step, while darkness surrounds him and the adversary of souls comes forth to meet him! We are uphill and downhill all the way to Heaven! Like the children of Israel, our path to Canaan lies through a wilderness, and though, blessed be God, the Grace of Heaven has made the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as a rose, yet are there fiery serpents in it and it is a wilderness, after all. Notwithstanding all that God does for us while in it, this state in this present world is a state of bondage. “We that are in this body do groan, being burdened”—longing for the time of the home-bringing, when we shall come to our own country and be at rest forever and forever!

Now at this time I shall not attempt to describe all the spiritual conflict with error. If I am not able to describe that—(and who is?)—I can at least speak with a measure of assurance of the spiritual experience of some of God's servants, for I will go no deeper than I have gone, myself, and if I do that, I shall be able to speak with some measure of assurance.

First, then, let us make the remark that *the child of God may undergo great spiritual trials*. But, secondly, we shall ask you to consider *the conduct of the child of God when in the condition*—very different from that of the worldly man. And, thirdly, we shall notice *those springs of comfort which relieve saints* in that spirit, and will relieve us also. First, then—

I. A TRUE CHILD OF GOD MAY UNDERGO VERY DEEP MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

No superficial trials, such as are common to men, but really overwhelming trials seem to come to those who are favorites of Heaven, who lean their heads on Jesus' bosom, and are among the most gracious of the Lord's chosen. Asaph's trial was no light one—it was a great grief that came upon him. From some words in the Psalm, one would think it was a personal disease under which he was suffering. But from other words it would seem to be a deep affliction that had come upon his family and those he loved. This had caused him to be depressed in spirit and heavy in soul to a very solemn degree, for he declared that his sore ran in the night, and ceased not. He complained that his spirit was overwhelmed. Don't, therefore, conclude that you are no child of God because the joys you once had are gone! I am delighted when I have been with young Christians full of their first joy—and I earnestly pray that it will be very long before those joys are dampened, but at the same time, it may be prudent to let them know that should those joys depart, it will be no evidence whatever that God's love is departed, too! We must always beware of living by feeling. It is pleasant in summer, but it is an ill way of living in the winter of the soul. We walk by faith, not by sight, nor yet by feeling, for we remember that our feelings are often of a very mixed character—and what we think to be holy joy may be, some of it, animal excite-

ment—may not be altogether that joy of the Lord which is our strength. Don't, don't, I beseech you, base your evidence of the possession of salvation upon your joy, because if you do, you will be in sad trouble when your joy varies or flies. Build your hope on something better than unsubstantial delights, namely, on the finished work of faith, such as the poor publican had, still crying, even in your best frames, "God be merciful to me a sinner! God be merciful to me a sinner," for between here and the gates of Heaven you will have to go by a weeping cross, perhaps many times—and if the Lord loves you more than others, you will have more trials than others—strange trials shall come to you! Therefore, regard it not as though some strange thing had happened to you. Some of the best of God's people may pass through the deepest trouble.

And remark, next, that *this may not only be very deep, but very frequent*. It appears to have been so with Asaph. He describes himself as being by day and by night vexed with his trouble. It was not a transient cloud—it was a heavy storm that brooded over his spirit. For 40 days and nights the heavens seemed to pour down their torrents and his soul felt no rest. Do not wonder if you sometimes shall come into that condition. I pray you may not, but if you do, I say be upon your guard not to condemn yourself! You remember how holy Job's friends, when they saw him upon a dunghill scraping himself with a potsherd, began to tell him that he must be a hypocrite, or he would not be there? How could he be what he professed to be, and yet be there? Now that is exactly what the devil will tell you! If you are in deep trials and are on a dunghill, too, he will say that—and perhaps some of your Christian friends will say the same. It will be very ungenerous and not like Christ if they do. Worst of all, perhaps you, yourself, will think the same. But let the warning of this evening help to keep you from such a temptation. It is no evidence whatever that God has no love to you if He chastens you, for remember who it was—that it was none other than a great servant of God who said, "All the daylong have I been plagued and chastened every morning." And He who was still greater, even your blessed Lord and Master, was the "Man of Sorrows" and the acquaintance of grief. Do not, then, for your own soul's sake, permit an insinuation as to God's love being shown in your happiness, or His hatred being manifest in your depression of spirit! Do not allow it to cross your mind! Some of the best of God's servants have, moreover, not only been in the deeps, and been there long, but when in such a condition *they have refused to be comforted*. Read the second verse—"My soul refused to be comforted"—as if he had put away everything that could cheer him! A man of God, and a poet, too—a man inspired and who could cheer others, as he has done by the sweet lays which he has left us in the Book of Psalms—yet when these sweet things were brought before him, he said, "Put them away!"

And have you never known, O you advanced Christians—(I know you have)—what it is to say of a promise, “No. It is very precious, but I am afraid I should deceive myself if I were to think, ‘That is mine.’”? You have found the word come very precious home to your soul when you have heard a sermon—and then at night, when you have tossed upon your bed, you have said—“I am afraid it would be nothing better than presumption if I were to suck in all the consolation out of that.” All the while the comfort was yours, and you might have had it—the sweets were meant on purpose for you—and yet you could not take them! Now there *is* something good about that. A holy anxiety is a thing that is desirable, and I would never preach up the full assurance of faith so as for a moment to speak a word against that holy anxiety! My soul has often said, “I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me”—put away the peace that many have spoken and said, “No! No peace shall ever come to my soul except the peace, the Master’s peace—peace from His own lips by His own Spirit. And I believe that is right, but sometimes that anxiety may be carried to an unbelieving extent and state! We set up tests for ourselves that are not warrantable and condemn ourselves when God does not condemn us! And though we are the precious children of God, comparable to fine gold, we reckon ourselves to be as the earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter. It is very easy to write bitter things against yourself when the clouds of darkness are hanging over your soul. This good man did so—he refused to be comforted.

When this occurs, it is not at all remarkable if the grief of soul that is caused in the man *should break his sleep*. Observe how he puts it, “You hold my eyes waking.” The eyelids—those guards of the eyes were made to keep their station. The eyes would still be open. There was no rest for the man. And who can rest when he does not know that he is a saved soul? Let me doubt whether I am God’s child, and dare I rest? I am often astounded at the ease with which some men talk of their doubts and fears. Do not know whether you are saved or not, and yet go to sleep? Perhaps you may wake in death! An enemy to God, or afraid that you may be, and yet find rest? My dear Brothers and Sisters, I will not condemn your doubts, but I must condemn *you* if you can be in ease at all while you are under them, for surely this is a matter of the first importance—“Am I His, or am I not?”

Am I really regenerate, or is it all pretence? Am I made to seem to live, while I am dead? Or am I truly one of these whom God has made to be a new creation in Christ Jesus? Now when a man gets really disturbed about that, and that is the question, and he is afraid lest God’s mercy and God’s promise should not be to him, that he is left to himself to perish—when a man is in that state, he cannot rest—he must then feel that until this quarrel is over and this problem is decided, he can find no rest for the soles of his feet.

Moreover, in such circumstances, it may sometimes occur that *the good man cannot tell his story to anybody else*. So it is here—"I am so troubled that I cannot speak"—dare not tell it to anybody else—too great a grief to be unburdened. He could whisper it low at the Redeemer's feet, "My Lord, have pity on Your servant," but he cannot come and tell others because he does not know that any other has been through the same. He is afraid that his course is singular and so remarkable that if he were to mention it, his Brothers and Sisters would shun him! Besides, perhaps he has begun to mention it to some and they, not understanding him, have given him such a harsh reply that he shrank altogether from them. There are many fat cattle that push and push with horn and shoulder the lean ones of God's flock, and 'tis ill, 'tis ill when we do this." He that is troubled in spirit and cast down is often as a lamb despised by those who are at ease. He may be the best man of the whole company and yet, if he were to tell his experience, they would think him to be the worst. He may be the best in the whole Church and yet such may be the turmoil of his soul, sometimes, that were he to narrate his experience, many who are not to be compared with him for a moment would fight shy of him altogether! He has a grief within him which he cannot tell.

And now comes one other point, and this, perhaps, is the worst phase of the depression through which this man of God may go, namely, that even that *which ought to comfort him, will minister to his yet greater grief*. He says, "I remembered God, and was troubled." Why, Brothers and Sisters, our thoughts of God are refreshing to us, they always should be! Just as good meat ought to nourish the body (only when the body is sick, that good meat turns to mischief), so thoughts of God ought always to delight our soul—and I rejoice that they do for the most part. In our pilgrimage there is nothing yields us such a delightful song as the thought of our God, the Father, the Savior, and the blessed indwelling Spirit! But when the soul is sick, and a gracious soul may get sick in that way, the very thoughts of God become a trouble. See how it is. You will think, "He is very just—how can I stand in His sight?" But He is very gracious. Yes, and how gracious He has been to me, and how unworthily have I made any return for that Grace! He is loving, ah, and very loving. How can I expect that I should taste of that love after the poor return I have made? And shall every attribute of God's will at such times seem to be black against you. His very faithfulness you will feel. "Ah, if He is faithful to His promise, what part and lot shall I have in that promise? It must be, after all, a mere delusion of mine that my name is written in His Book! How can it be that I shall have a share among His chosen?" Whereas, when the soul is right, every attribute of God is cheering, when once it gets in darkness, and gets away from the foot of the Cross—gets away from looking with a poor sinner's tearful eyes to the sinner's Savior, simply and alone, shall every attribute of God's seem to roll with thunder and flash

with lightning on his spirit! I do know what this means. I have stood and seen the storm fly over my head, cloud on cloud, blacker and yet blacker, and my spirit crushed and utterly broken, until not a hope was left! Then have I seen one rift in the midst of the cloud, and a lone star shining there, the Star of Bethlehem and, looking up, all seemed calm beneath my soul, even on that sea! Just then the storm stopped at sight of that star and there I seemed to see the love of God to the very guiltiest of men, to the off-scouring of sinners and the refuse—and resting as a little child, humbly, simply, and alone, upon what the Master did for sinners on the Cross—joy and peace have come back! But many and many, and many a child of God has known what it is to see every hope blasted, all experience gone and all Grace withered—that is, apparently so, for it was not really so—because after all, perhaps we are never richer than when we think we are the poorest of all, never so well clad as when we know we are naked in ourselves, never so near to God as when we feel we are near to Hell if the Grace of God does not interpose!

Thus I have given you but a very brief outline of the mental and spiritual trials through which an heir of Heaven may sometimes pass. Now, secondly—

II. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE CHILD OF GOD WHEN HE GETS INTO THIS DEPRESSION OF SPIRIT?

Well, I will tell you what a man does when he is not a child of God. He cries, with Pliable, “The first time I get out of this, if I get out on the side nearest my house, you may have the brave country to yourself, for I am not going floundering through this bog of mud.” Anybody’s dog will follow me if I feed it, but only my own dog will follow me if I beat it. And any man will be a Christian, or profess to be one, while it is all joy, and silver slippers, and gravel walks—but only the man who really loves God, who says, “All the daylong have I been plagued and chastened every morning”—it is only the man of God who can say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him—if He takes away my comfort, and I have no joy but in Himself, still will I cling to Him.”

Now Asaph did not go off, as many men would, to worldly pleasures to make up his loss. He did not say, “Well, well, I am not as happy as I used to be in my religious profession—I shall go to a theater, or find joyful companions, or stick to business to drown my thoughts.” No, no. He, just as the child which has been chastened by its parent (if it is what it should be) can only find comfort by clinging to the very parent that chastened it, and ask for a loving, forgiving kiss! And even so it is with the chastened child of God—he clings to God the more, the more he is made to smart. So the first thing Asaph did was he prayed. “I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice.” Oh, sweet consolation of prayer! Would not some hearts be utterly broken if they could not pray? This is the sweet vent that we get for our fermented griefs. Our spirits are soon at rest when we can but pray. Let us pray! “Let not your hearts be

troubled. You believe God; believe also in Me.” You see how Asaph puts it twice, “I cried unto God with my voice even unto God with my voice.” He betook himself to prayer!

The next thing he did was, *he betook himself to meditation*. “I remembered God.” (Fifth verse). “I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.” (Sixth verse). “I call to remembrance my song in the night. I commune with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.” He began to meditate more, to meditate on his God—to meditate on what God had done for other saints—to meditate upon his own former joys and helps in times of trouble, and to meditate upon the sweet songs which he had then uttered when he, himself, had been in trial before. Now this was a sweet way of gaining consolation. Does the Lord smite me? Well, then, I will think of the day when He caressed me! Am I in trouble, and has He put me in it? Then I will think of the times when I was in troubles, before, and He brought me out of them! He has been with me in six troubles—will He leave me in the seventh? I have gone through the waters. He was there with me—will He leave me now that He has brought me so far? Can it be that with so long a time of love, He will now desert His child? This gathers force. Aged Christian, you are 60 or seventy. You expect to live another ten years, and God has preserved you for seventy—cannot you trust Him for the other ten? After so much kindness in the past, will He cease now? Oh, it is good to go over these things and then to recollect when, in years gone by, you were in as bad a condition as you are now, and you sang all the while! Ah, dear Friend, you lost one you dearly loved, but you were supported. What? Are you going to sink now? Why, the time was when you could play the man for Christ! Why, you ran the risk of losing all that you had for His name’s sake—and are you going to throw down your weapons now? You are like the old navigator who had been round the world and when he got into the Thames coming home, the wind blew. “Oh,” he said, “Have I been round the world, and am I going to drown in a ditch? Not I!” And so I say to you—have you passed through all these troubles and difficulties and are you going to be lost, after all? Remember your song in the night, and begin to sing again! Let the new song be in your mouth. One who long loved music said, “Glory be to You for all the Grace I have not tasted yet!” If you cannot sing of what you are tasting, think of what you are to taste in the Glory Land that is before you, when you get there! Be of good comfort—*meditation* shall console you!

Then this man of prayer, after using prayer and meditation, *betook himself to these employments*. If you notice, he spent his time in self-examination—“In communion with my own heart and my spirit, I made diligent search.” Show me why You contend with me. Lord if I am chastened, tell me why. If I have lost the light of Your Countenance, why do You hide Yourself from me? For what sin is it that You are rebuking me?

What Grace is it that You would strengthen in me? What idol is it that You would take away from me? What duty have I neglected, of which You would remind me? I commune with my own heart, and look within to see if there is the cause of the distress—and look up to God, my Father, and say, “Why do You leave me? Why have You forsaken me?” And then I repeat to myself, “Why are you cast down O my Soul? Why are you disquieted within me?” “Oh,” says one, “I don’t care much about self-examination. Mark you, I do not think much of your religion.” There are a great many people in the world in trade that do not like looking at their books and when a man does not want to know the position of his trade, I think we can, most of us, make a pretty shrewd guess at where he is! And when a man is afraid of self-examination, when he is afraid of a heart-searching discourse or heart-searching Providence, he may be pretty sure there is something rotten within. God deliver us from being unwilling to know the very worst of our position! May we be always anxious to know the worst, than for a moment to be flattered! Let us, then, if we would get comfort, get to self-examination!

And then, once again, in time of trouble this man of God *took to holy arguments and devout reasoning*. Here is the question, Will the Lord cast off forever? He may put His child aside for a moment, but can He quite forget? Can He quite leave? Can He ever cast off those that are His own beloved? Will He be favorable no more? He has said, “For a small moment have I forsaken you,” but will He make that small moment into *forever*? I know He turns a deaf ear to His people for a moment—but will He never hear prayer again? Has He not said that He is a God that hears prayer? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Oh, it is a grand thing when a man says—“Can it be that God has left off being merciful? Is not His very name, ‘Love’?” That is His very Nature. He delights in mercy—can it be true that God has left off His mercy? It cannot be! Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Another question—Can it be that God won’t keep His Word? Will His promise be broken? I know it may tarry awhile, but can it be that it shall fail, and fail forevermore? And then He puts it again, “Has God forgotten to be gracious—got out of the habit of being gracious? He used to be always gracious to those who sought His face—has He forgotten it? Is it possible? Has He, in anger, shut up His tender mercy? Can it be? Can it be?” Oh, Beloved, if we were sometimes thus to school ourselves and cross-question our own unbelief, the Holy Spirit would give us comfort. “Can the woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will not I forget you. I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” They that trust in the Lord shall not want any good thing. “Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God. I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” Is all this nothing? Are these promises, and ten thousand more, only so many words and so much chaff? O you wicked

unbelief! The virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at you, and laughed, because you have not a foot to stand upon—no argument to defend yourself. Away with you, you lie, you child of Hell! Away with you! I must believe in my God. I will fall back into His arms. I will confide, again, in His eternal faithfulness. Is He a God, and can His love grow weary of saving? He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Yes, He will do it, and to the last jot and tittle shall His Word be fulfilled and His promises shall be kept for they are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the Glory of God by us. God grant us Grace thus to battle with unbelief! And now, in the third place, as we have seen the man in his condition and what he does, let us now consider—

III. SOME OF THOSE COMFORTABLE THINGS WHICH MAY HELP US OUT OF THAT POSITION, or help us not to fall into it! First, observe that the great source of comfort, to the tried Believer—any Believer—is *to be found of God*. All those questions were about his God. “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord. I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work, and talk of Your doings.” If you get to meditating on your own works, you won't get much comfort out of them! And if you get to talking of your own doings, you are brewing for yourself bitter drinks. But when the soul looks at God, at God's Mercy, God's Grace, and Christ the Incarnate God, and the finished work of Christ—at His merits—then it is that the soul is comforted! All that there is in us that may be seen in a time of depression is of man. We must look right away to Him in whom our hope lies. I will not lift up my eyes to anything else. From where comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who has made Heaven and Earth! Child of God, store your mind with His knowledge and His Glory. Seek to know the Lord Jesus! Ask to be instructed in the knowledge of Him, for then in the times of difficulty you will have a store ready to your hand—great reasons for consolation which will be comfortable to your spirit!

But do you notice how *he dwells upon the works of God and the power of God*? “You are the God that does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the people. Lord, You can help me. My case is difficult, but You are strong enough. You are able to help me.” Oh, this is the way to get comfort—to know the power of God, which is past finding out. One thing especially the Psalmist dwelt upon, and that is Redemption—“You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.” When there is no light anywhere else, there is at Calvary! Look there to the Paschal Lamb, and to the going out of Egypt by blood, and to the ransoming of His people. Do you think that Christ bought you with His blood and that you should lie in Hell and perish? Do you believe in redemption of that kind which does not redeem? Have you a Savior who

came to save those whom He never will save? Do you believe in such a Savior? Then I marvel not at your doubts and fears! But if you have reliance upon the mighty God, in whose hands the pleasure of the Lord must prosper, and who shall see His Seed and rejoice in the travail of His soul, then, leaning on Him whose hands were stretched to the nail for you, you have good ground for joy, confidence and peace! Study the Atonement, study the Redemption, study the Cross and you will be readily comforted!

At the close of the Psalm, Asaph, after his usual habit, takes himself away to the Red Sea and suggests as a ground for comfort what God did there. There were His people—slaves, and in bondage—and He brought them out. He will bring you out! Pharaoh was very strong and he said, “I fear not the Lord, neither will I let the people go.” But God was stronger than Pharaoh and He will be stronger than the devil and all your enemies! Then they came out and there was the Red Sea before them, and how could they get through the sea? “The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid.” You have many troubles and many sins—they will fly before the Presence of God! Then they came into the wilderness—how could they ever traverse that? Then the Lord was pleased to send them their bread each morning, and to continually give them their water. Whereas their clothes could not be very speedily replenished, their garments grew not old, so to speak. They had no guide, no one with them that could well conduct them through the wilderness, but the fiery, cloudy pillar went before them! They never went a step awry, for that fiery, cloudy pillar led them all the way. Now your condition is the same as theirs—and you shall have the same supplies. Be not cast down! Rejoice in the Lord and go forward. “He led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”—so the Psalm closes—and He will lead you, and lead you safely! They set out to go to the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came. And if you are resting upon the blood of Christ, and depending upon His eternal merit, He shall surely bring you in and you shall stand in your lot in the end of the days! Therefore comfort one another with these words and be of good cheer!

But as for those who have no Savior, I know of no comfort for them in the time of trouble. Unbeliever, you shall live without consolation. You shall die without consolation, and live forever after—without consolation! May you turn. “Turn you, turn you! Why will you die?” May the Lord bring you to see that in Christ, alone, is your help found. Get Him to be your comfort from this day forth, and forever! Amen, amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 26:1-28.**

Three times we have in Holy Writ a graphic report of the conversion of Paul. This may be accounted for partly from its being one of the most remarkable events of early sacred history, Paul having had a greater ef-

fect upon the Christian Church than any other living man. At the same time I think it teaches us that the Holy Spirit sets especial store by the facts connected with this very remarkable conversion. If He gives it three times in the sacred Volume, we ought to give it a triple attention and see if we cannot learn from it.

Verses 1-3. *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand and answered for himself: I think myself happy, King Agrippa. because I shall answer for myself this day before you touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews. Especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: therefore I beseech you to hear me patiently.* With what courtesy does he speak! Paul is bold, but see how he is all things to all men! And he begins an address for his life with great adroitness and skill—teaching us that we are to use all the courtesies of life to those to whom they belong, and never to cause needless irritation. There is enough offense in the Cross of itself, without our being offensive when uplifting it.

4-7. *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly setting God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* For the Pharisees did hold very firmly the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and Paul often instances this, as being the very thing, though no longer a Pharisee, to which he was glad to give witness.

8-11. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* He had the courage of his convictions. Believing a thing, he did not let it lie idle. He regarded the Christians as a pestilent sect and, therefore, he hunted them down. He abhorred the name of Jesus of Nazareth as that of an imposter and, therefore, he determined that no stone should be left unturned to overthrow His power.

12-14. *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests. At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I*

heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. Not, "It is hard for Me to bear it," but, "It is hard for you," as if, though conscious of being persecuted, our Lord, in that Divine Unselfishness which is so natural to Him, forgot the kicks that were given to Him and only thought of the injury which Saul was doing to himself, when, like an ox that strikes out against the goad, he injured himself.

15-28. *And I said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will yet reveal to you: delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning has made you mad! But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the King knows of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believe you the prophets? I know that you believe. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost you persuade me to be a Christian.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED

NO. 2578

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 10, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 18, 1883.

“My soul refused to be comforted.”
Psalm 77:2.

WHEN you meet with a person in great distress, you feel at once a desire to comfort him. That is to say, if you have an ordinarily tender heart. You cannot bear to see another in trouble without trying to minister to that diseased heart. But supposing that the person refuses to be comforted? Then you are foiled. What can you do? It is as though you met with a hungry man and offered him bread, but he rejected it. You tried to give him daintier food, but he scorned it. You asked him what he could eat, but he altogether refused to accept any form of nourishment. Then what could you do? Your cupboard might be full and the door might be freely opened, but if the man would not eat, you could not remove his hunger. So, if a man in trouble refuses to be comforted, how are you to cheer and solace him? One man can lead a horse to the water, but a thousand cannot make him drink if he will not—and when a man in trouble refuses to be comforted, then lover and friend are put far from him—and his acquaintance into darkness. Indeed, they soon need to be comforted, for disquietude is contagious and, sometimes, those who come to comfort another, go away provoked by his perversity. Many a man, whose heart was full of pity, has, at last, become indignant, and so has increased the sorrow which he intended to comfort—he has grown angry with the man who willfully put aside what was intended to encourage him.

With those few prefatory remarks, let us come to the text. “My soul refused to be comforted.” Note, concerning a man in such a case, first, *possibly he may be right*. Secondly, *he is probably wrong*. Thirdly, *he may one day regret his conduct*, as did Asaph, for, while he tells us that his soul refused to be comforted, he writes it down—not as an example for us to follow, but for our warning!

I. First, then, when a man's soul refuses to be comforted, POSSIBLY HE MAY BE RIGHT.

He may have a great spiritual sorrow and someone who does not at all understand his grief may proffer to him *a consolation which is far too slight*. Not knowing how deep the wound is, this foolish physician may think that it can be healed with any common ointment. I have known men to say to a person in deep distress things which have really aggra-

vated him and his malady, too. "As he that takes away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart." "Oh," they have said, "there is really nothing the matter with you, after all!" When the arrows of God were drinking up your soul, they have said, "you are low-spirited." Who would not be low-spirited when he has to face an angry God? "You are very nervous," says another. "I am afraid you are going off into religious melancholy—you need cheerful society and amusement." That is poor consolation for one who feels that he is ready to die and that his soul chooses strangling rather than life! Reduced as he is to such a point of agony in his spirit, it is no wonder that the man should put away these comforters and say with Job, "Miserable comforters are you all.' Mine is not a sorrow that can be removed by the bowl or by the violin. Mine is not a grief that can be charmed away with your merriment, or laid to sleep by your ridicule. The wound is too deep and too severe for you to cure." The man acts rightly when he puts aside these physicians without skill, of whom it may be said, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, where there is no peace." You may send such comforters away from you, for it is right to refuse to be comforted by them. You will do well to say, with Toplady—

***"If my Lord Himself reveals,
No other good I want,
Only Christ my wounds can heal,
Or silence my complaint.
He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my Physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."***

So, too, it is equally right to refuse to be comforted *when the comfort is untrue*. When a man is under a sense of sin, I have known his friends say to him, "You should not fret; you have not been so very bad. You have been, indeed, a very good sort of fellow." One says, "I can recollect how kind you were to So-and-So and how honestly you behaved under such-and-such a temptation. You have not committed any very terrible sin—God help the world if you are a great sinner! I do not know what will become of the rest of us." Another says, "You have only to pray and go to a place of worship, perhaps be a little more regular in your attention to religion and it will all come right again. You are not so bad as you think you are." Be off with you! Such talk as that is a lie and the man whom God has really awakened to feel his state by nature will refuse to be comforted by such falsehoods as those! However friendship may flatter, the man himself says, "I know that I have broken God's Law and that I deserve His wrath." Conscience will not be quieted by all the soft speeches of officious but ignorant friends! I charge you, before God, if the Spirit of Truth has begun to trouble you, never drink these sweet but poisonous consolations! Never think that you are good, or that you can make yourself good. Refuse to be comforted in any such way. That comfort which does not come from truth and from God's Word, applied by the Holy Spirit, is a comfort to be rejected with scorn!

We have known others who have tried to comfort poor, mourning, repentant sinners *in an unhallowed way*. They have said, “You need to raise your spirits. I can recommend you some fine old wine which will do you a world of good.” Another will say, “You should really mix a little more in society and shake yourself up. You should get with some happy, lively people—they would soon take this melancholy out of you.” Have you ever heard the story which was current in Rowland Hill’s day, and which I believe was true, about a certain comic actor who, at that time, carried all the sway in London and made all laugh who went to see and hear him? The poor man, himself, suffered from depression of spirit to the very worst degree, insomuch that life had become a weariness to him. He went to consult a certain physician who was noted for dealing with hypochondriacs and melancholy persons. The doctor said to him, “Now, my Friend, you are evidently very low in spirits—you should go to the theater. I went the other night, hearing So-and-So, and he made me laugh at such a rate that I am quite sure, if you went and heard him, you would soon get rid of all your melancholy.” The patient took the doctor by the hand and said, “Doctor, I am that man. I have made all London laugh, but my heart is breaking all the while.” What said Solomon? “I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. And, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad. And of mirth, What does it do?” I am sure that a person who is really troubled in spirit will increase his sorrow if he attempts to cure it in that way. It is only putting more fuel on the flame. It seems such a mockery to the spirit, when it is burdened with a sense of sin, to tell it to dance and make merriment! “Can I be merry on the brink of Hell?” cries the sorrowful man. “In danger every moment of death and certain that if death came, I should be lost, can I enjoy mirth? It cannot be!”

There was a certain king of Hungary, a pious, gracious man, who was, at one time, deeply cast down and depressed. He had a brother, a worldly courtier, who rallied him about his despondency and, as far as he dared, mocked the poor broken heart of the king. It was the custom in Hungary that if a man was to be suddenly executed, a trumpeter should stand under his window and sound a blast of a certain kind—and then he was taken away to be put to death. The king sent the trumpeter, at the dead of night, to sound that blast under his brother’s window. The courtier knew what it meant, so he arose at once, but he begged the executioner to first take him to the king—and there he stood, white as a sheet and trembling from head to foot. “Brother,” said the king, “what ails you?” “What ails me?” he said, “why, you sent your trumpeter under my window, and he sounded the death-blast, and I suppose that I am to die!” “Well,” answered the king, “you tremble now, yet it is only because you are to die, whereas I have heard the thunder-blast of God and I stand in fear of everlasting judgment! Now, dear brother,” he added, “perhaps you can sympathize with me. I only sent the trumpeter that you might be enabled to look with a little more compassion upon me when I am in trouble before God.”

Ah, it is not laughter or mirth that will comfort the soul that has heard the voice of God saying, “You have sinned and I must punish you. You

have lived a careless, godless life, and now you must come to judgment. Can you answer for one of a thousand when I shall set your *sins* before My face? When I shall bring forth a plummet to try you and to see how you stand, how will you endure that test?" No, no! Put aside all those hollow, unhallowed, empty comforts, and say, "My soul refuses to be comforted in that way."

In a word, Brothers and Sisters, let me say that if your hearts are troubled on account of sin, refuse every comfort except that which comes through being washed in the precious blood of Christ which can make us whiter than snow! *Refuse every comfort short of being born again and made a new creature in Jesus!* Make this solemn resolve—"I will sooner die in prison than be let out except by His dear pierced hands. I will tremble before the wrath of God rather than I will dare to presume upon His mercy. I will wait till I have looked into the dear face of Him who died for me, and have read my pardon, there, before I will be comforted." If you resolve not to be comforted except in that Scriptural way, you will do well.

II. But now, in the second place, with brevity, I want to show when this refusal is wrong. PROBABLY HE IS WRONG who says, "My soul refused to be comforted."

It is quite wrong *if it is a temporal matter that causes your sorrow*. Why do you refuse to be comforted, my Friend? "I have lost one who was very dear to me—my beloved mother." "I have lost my child," says another. "It is my husband who has been taken away," says a third, while a fourth cries, "I have been bereaved of my dearest friend, and my soul refuses to be comforted." What, then, have you nobody left? "No, nobody." And has God done you a wrong? Did not your mother belong to Him? Was not your child His? He has only taken back what He lent you for a while—and because you have lost this one cistern, will you never drink of the fountain? Because the star is gone, will you never enjoy the sunlight? O dear Friend, I pray you, talk not so!

"Ah," says another, "but I have lost my health! I found out, but a few days ago, that I have a deadly disease which will take me off, before long and, therefore, I refuse to be comforted." What? You will go down to your grave rebelling against God? Why should you not be sick? Better people than you have gone Home by consumption, or cancer, or by some other malady. Would it not be well to make your submission to God about that matter and ask that you may have a Heaven to go to, and a place of joy when death comes? "Ah," cries another, "but all my earthly prospects are blighted. I thought that I should get on in the world, but now I find that I cannot, the door is locked against me. I can never be comforted." Are there no other doors? Are you sure that what you call your prospects would have been blessings to you if you had realized them? Does not God know better than you do and will it not be wise for you to pluck up courage and, as the world's poet says—

***"To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them"?***

Better far is it to act like that than to sit down in sullen gloom, or in fierce wrath against God!

“Ah,” says another, “but mine is a very peculiar trouble. My love has been slighted. One whom I loved very dearly has proven faithless and discarded me.” Yes, and your heart is broken, and well it may be. But, my Friend, will you therefore refuse to love Him who never forsakes those on whom He once sets His affection? Would it not be wiser to turn the current of your heart’s love towards Him who is faithful and true, and who loves even to all eternity? That would be a wiser course of action, surely! Refuse not to be comforted, I pray you—you are only driving the dagger deeper and deeper into your wounds. You are making the bitter waters more bitter. All that you do in this direction is but increasing your sorrow. You are like sailors pumping the seawater into the ship instead of pumping it out! You are heaping on another burden, much heavier than God has put there, by refusing to be comforted. Instead of doing that, think of the mercies that you still have, think of how God can bless your troubles to you, think of the shortness of life, think of the glories of Heaven, think of the sufferings of your Lord who endured much more than you are called to bear—and no longer refuse to be comforted, for, if you do, worse troubles may come to you.

I heard a woman say to her child, as I passed her door, “If you don’t leave off crying, I’ll give you something to cry about.” And I have known that to happen with some of the Lord’s children. They have had very small troubles and they have fretted and rebelled against God until they have had a much greater sorrow—they have had something to cry about! Oh, do not refuse to be comforted, but yield yourself to God! Willingly submit to the discipline of your dear Father’s hand.

But now I will suppose that yours is *a spiritual trouble* and yet you refuse to be comforted. Listen to me, I pray you, for a few minutes, for I am sure that I shall describe some of you. The Gospel is meant for sinners, for guilty sinners, for Hell-deserving sinners. It is meant for persons just like you, yet you put it away from you and refuse to be comforted. It would be such a comfort to you if you accepted it—you would have such joys as you never knew before. But no, you will not touch it, you turn aside from it. There are kind friends who, at one time, encouraged you to cast yourself upon Christ, but now you try to avoid them, you get out of their way if you can. You feel so sad that you do not want to be cheered, you scarcely desire to be encouraged. Perhaps I speak to some who have gone so far astray that they say, “We cannot go back to the House of Prayer now.” It is a horrible thing when people fall into such depths of sorrow that when they most need to come and hear, and be comforted, the devil says to them, “Don’t go there any more—you will hear nothing for your comfort. The preacher will only confirm your condemnation,” and so he tries to keep them away from the means of Grace. “Oh,” says one, “I used to delight in the Prayer Meeting, but I dare not go to it now! I feel that no prayers will ever be any blessing to me. I used to love to hear Pastor’s voice, once, and I have laughed for very joy while hearing it. But now I do not want to listen to it any longer.” No, you are refusing to be comforted.

It is also a terrible thing when Satan leads men to neglect the private means of Grace. They shut up the Bible and do not read it, being afraid

that every Word should turn out to be a curse that will only make their sorrow deeper. Or, if they do read a promise, they say, "That is not for us. It may be true to everybody else, but not to us." As to private prayer, such a man says, "I cannot pray. God would not hear me, anyway, I am such a hypocrite. I have been such a backslider, I am so false, I am so guilty. It is no use for me to try to pray." That which ought to be the channel of sweetest consolation is neglected by those who refuse to be comforted! Some of them will even go so far as to deny the testimony of God. He says that He is merciful—they say that He is not. God declares that there is a propitiation for sin in the blood of Christ—they say that there is none. Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"—they say that He would cast them out if they came to Him. He invites them to come—they say that they cannot come. While He bids them to come near to Him and warns them that there is nothing in their way but their own evil hearts—yet they give God the lie and reject the only Savior!

They also refuse the testimony of those of us who are God's witnesses—though this is but a small matter after refusing God's own testimony! We come and say, "Friend, if you will believe, you shall see the Glory of God. If you will simply cast yourself upon Christ, you shall live." Yet they do not believe us. There are some of you who would not doubt anything that I told you, I am sure that you would not—your esteem and affection would lead you to receive almost anything that I stated as fact—and yet you have put away from you, you have refused and rejected that glorious testimony which it is my life's work to tell to you, namely, that Jesus Christ will receive you and cleanse you from every sin, if you will but come to Him just as you are and put your trust in Him! No, you refuse to be comforted. But how wicked this refusal is! What a wrong you do to our honest love! What a wrong you do to the matchless love of God!

Do you not remember the story of the good man who wanted to teach his little girl what faith was? He went down into the cellar, took away the ladder by which he had descended, and called to his child. "Ruth," he said, "jump into my arms." It was very dark down there, so she said, "Please, father, I can't see you." Then he replied, "you do not need to see me, I can see you—jump down." With a merry laugh she sprang into the dark and was, in an instant, resting on her father's bosom. Now, God bids us do just that! Can you not, by faith, take a leap in the dark, into your Heavenly Father's arms? This is what you will do if you are really His child—but you will not do it unless you can say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

I will tell you why people sometimes refuse to be comforted. One says, "I have been depressed such a long time." Yes, but when the night is long, is that any proof that the morning will not come? It looks to me to be a good argument that the daylight is not very far off. "Oh," says another, "but my depression is so deep! You cannot conceive how miserable I am." Can I not? I think I have been in that dark dungeon where you now are and in the very corner where you are hiding. But even if I could not fully sympathize with you, the depth of your distress is to me an argument for your comfort, for God will first help the most helpless—and

where there is the most misery, there will His mercy most swiftly come. So I look upon you with great hopefulness! If you are so thoroughly broken down, the Lord will surely speak comfort to *you* among the very first. "Ah," says another friend, "but I am under the impression that I shall never be saved." Perhaps you are, but I am under another impression, namely, that you *will* be saved! And I am under another impression, which I know is true—that is, if you will only cast yourself upon Christ by a simple faith, you shall be saved at once! I know that impression is true because here is the seal that made it—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These are the words of Him who cannot lie or change! Do you still refuse to be comforted?

"Oh," says one, "but if you knew me, Sir, you would not talk so, for I have been such a great sinner!" I think that is very likely. "Oh, but I mean it, Sir!" I hope you do. I trust you are not adding lies to your other sins. "But, Sir, I have been *such* a sinner!" Yes, I know what you mean, and I believe it. And I will tell you something about yourself that you probably do not believe—you are a worse sinner than you think you are. "Oh, that cannot be!" you say. But I tell you that it is—you do not know what a sinner you are. Sin is a more horrible thing than imagination, itself, can conceive it to be. "But I deserve the hottest place in Hell," says one. Yes, but suppose that it is so, and that all you say is true? Yet, in the name of God, I tell you that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," for, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." What is your sin? Have you committed falsehood, theft, fornication, murder? Is there any crime which you have committed which I dare not mention—some secret sin which has polluted you and left you a black blot upon the face of God's earth? Yet come along with you, whoever you may be! If you are the sweepings of Helldom, yet come along with you, for Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost—let me say that word again—"He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

Do not refuse to be comforted, for if you do, you will be a spiritual suicide! The man who will not eat and so dies of starvation is as much a suicide as he that puts the pistol to his head and blows out his brains. He that rejects Christ, damns himself as surely as he that gives himself, body and soul, to the devil. He that refuses what God has provided and will not have pardon through the precious blood, dashes himself upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler and fixes himself upon the point of the javelin of Divine Justice! Do not do it, I implore you! Be not among those who refuse to be comforted!

III. But now, lastly, for my time is nearly gone, YOU WILL HAVE TO REPENT OF REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED.

Possibly you will have to repent in a very terrible way. Suppose, now, that you should refuse to be comforted, and so should *willfully go into a yet darker and deeper dungeon of despair*? Suppose that your Christian friends should grow weary of you—I hope they will not—but suppose that godly man, or that godly woman who has so long followed you up, should, at last, despair of you and leave? Where would you be, then? And suppose that because you shut your eyes to the Light of God, God should

take it away? What if you should have to move to a region where nobody will want to comfort you, where no minister will labor and travail for your soul's salvation, where you shall sit under a dry and lifeless ministry, or perhaps under none at all—and you shall be left to go on down, down, down? God prevent it! But if ever that should be your sad lot, I hope there may still remain about you sufficient relics of life to make you say, "Oh, that I had been willing to be comforted when I might have been, and had accepted the testimony of Grace before I had passed beyond the reach of those blessed means of mercy!" But I do not mean to dwell upon that thought, for I have something much more cheerful to say.

I hope that many here present who have refused to be comforted, will yet regret it *when they shall be enjoying the fullness of comfort*. One of the things that I have sometimes said to myself, when I have been alone, has been this, "How foolish you are!" And if anybody had heard me, he would have known that I was upbraiding myself in the spirit of Christian and Hopeful when they were locked up in Giant Despair's castle. You remember how Bunyan tells us that the pilgrims began to pray on Saturday, about midnight, and continued in prayer till almost the break of day, when Christian called out, "What a fool am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." So he pulled it out of his bosom, put it in the lock, opened the door of the dungeon, and they soon were out! When they came to the outer door leading to the castle yard, the key fitted that, and they went through. Then they came to the great iron gate—the lock went horribly hard, but Christian kept working away at it and, at last, the bolt shot back, the big gate was open—and they escaped.

But Giant Despair heard the noise and came down. And he was just about to fall upon his poor prisoners, when he was taken with a shaking fit—I have always been glad that the cruel old giant used to have epilepsy, so he could not catch the two pilgrims—and away they went! I am sure that when they got out, Christian kept saying to himself, "What a fool I have been! What a fool I have been! I have been lying in that dungeon all this while, when I might have been out ever so long ago." If I ever hear you, who have had a similar experience, cry, "What a fool I have been," I shall say, "That is quite right! You have hit the nail on the head this time," for, whenever a man doubts the mercy of God, the best thing that I can say of him is that he is a fool! I could say a far worse thing than that, but when you refuse the sweet mercy, the tender love, the overflowing forgiveness, the generous kindness of the heart of Christ, you certainly act like a fool. And then, when you come to your right mind, I am sure that you will ask yourself, "How could I have refused so long to be comforted?"

Now, finally, *when you and I get to Heaven*, we shall regret that we ever refused to be comforted. "Oh," says a poor sinner over there, "now you are drawing the long bow." Which do you mean—for myself or for you? "Why, Sir, you said, 'When you and I get to Heaven.'" Very well, which is the, "you," and which is the, "I," that you are quibbling about? Do you think that it is such a very great wonder that *I* should get to

Heaven? If you do, I altogether agree with you, for it will be a wonder, indeed! “No,” you say, “I mean that it will be a wonder if *I* get there.” Yes, and I, too, think it will be so. You and I will be about equal wonders if we get there—and when we are there, by the rich mercy of God, by the infinite love of Christ—and we *shall* be, you know, as surely as we are here if we will but believe in Christ—you and I will meet together, one day, in Heaven. Why should we not? I will promise to meet you there! Come, we will make a bargain of it—I am going by Christ, the Way, and if you go by Christ, the Way, we shall get to the same place! And there will be the King in His beauty. I will guarantee you that you will not take much notice of me, or I of you, for the sight of the King will be so ravishing! Oh, what a Countenance! Oh, what a Glory! Oh, that matchless Lover of our souls! And I believe that, then, we shall, each of us, say, “However could I have refused to be comforted by Him when He had loved me with an everlasting love, when He had chosen me from before the foundation of the world, when He had bought me with His precious blood, when He had sought me by His Holy Spirit, when He had clothed me with His righteousness, when He had taken me into the family and made me His brother and a child of God, when He had gone to Heaven on purpose to prepare a place for me and sent His Spirit down to earth to prepare me for the place? Yet there was a time when I refused to be comforted by Him!” I think, if we could weep in Heaven, we would certainly weep glad tears of deep and solemn regret that ever we should have stood out against Him to whom we are married. Oh, on that wondrous wedding day, when He shall consummate His love and ours, He will *not* say, “You were difficult in the wooing. You refused Me many times.” But I do believe that I shall say to myself, “How could I have refused Him? How could I have treated Him so terribly?” And as I look at His dear hands, still scarred, I shall say to Him, “O my Savior, I cost You Your life, Your heart’s blood, and though I long refused You, yet You would have me! Oh, love unutterable! How I will love You throughout eternity!” But what regret we must feel that we ever rejected Him! Do not refuse to be comforted, dear Friend—come along with you and take at once the mercy that Jesus waits to give!

One little illustration, and I have done. I have noticed that when a dog is very hungry, he does not stand upon etiquette. There is a butcher’s shop and no invitation is given to him to enter—but he makes himself very free and in he goes! There is a very nice little bit of meat on the block and the butcher has not the courtesy to offer it to him, though there is no creature that would more welcome it. So what does my friend, the dog, do? Why, he just makes a grab at it, seizes the meat, and then away he goes down the street! Now, if he can only get time to eat it, I will defy the butcher to get it away from him if he has taken it right into himself! I want you, poor Sinner, to be like that dog! There is the mercy of God—you do not believe that you ought to have it. Come and lay hold of it, for let me tell you this—Christ never takes away from the jaws of faith what faith once dares to seize! Take it and you have it! Believe even if you seem to have no right to believe! Commit a heavenly felony upon Divine Mercy! If the devil tells you that it is felony, come and take the mercy all

the same, for he can never steal it from you! If you once get it, you have it forever. Oh, take it, then!—

**“Artful doubts and reasoning be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree.”**

Come and trust Him and He is yours forever! The Lord help you to do it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77.**

This “Psalm of Asaph” has a mournful tone in it. At times the writer is in the deeps, but we may be quite sure that he will end the Psalm cheerfully because he begins it with prayer. No matter what sorrow falls to your lot, if you can pray, you will rise out of it. When Jonah went to the bottoms of the mountains, in the belly of the fish, and took to praying, it was well with him. If you, dear troubled Soul, can but pray, you need not despair.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* You see, he cried, and he cried again—and at his second call the door of mercy was opened to him. God sometimes makes petitioners wait that they may become more earnest and that they may really feel the value of the thing they are seeking. So Asaph says, “I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice.” That is the way to get the blessing! You will often find, dear Friends, that it helps you to pray if you use your voice in prayer—there is no necessity to speak, you can pray without the use of the lips—but it often helps your thoughts if you are able to express them aloud.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.* He could not sleep, so he took to prayer. Which is the greater mercy—prayer or sleep—I cannot say. In the Psalmist’s case, I suppose that prayer, just then, was better than sleep. His trouble so pressed upon him that it gave him no respite whatever—so all through the night he continued to cry unto the Lord.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* God is the fountain of all comfort, yet there are times when even a godly man can find no comfort in God. Asaph, perhaps, remembered the dark side of God’s attributes. Justice seemed to stand over him with a drawn sword. Holiness frowned upon him. Power threatened to crush him. Truth stood up to condemn him. He could not find any comfort, even in his God.

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.* He was covered right up, like a ship that has gone down in deep water. “I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.” Whenever you see this word, “Selah,” it means lift up the notes, retune the strings of the harp, get the mind and heart ready for something in a rather different strain.

4. *You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* You thought that the Psalmist was going to say, “I cannot sleep.” He has given up the attempt to do that, so now he tries to talk, but utterance fails him. Shallow brooks sound as they flow, but deep griefs are still,

and a man may be so troubled in heart that he cannot speak—he can only explain his sorrow by groaning and tears.

5, 6. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night. I commune with my own heart: and my spirit makes diligent search.* He looked back into the records of ancient history to see if God had ever forsaken a praying man. He thought upon his own experience and he remembered how, when it was night with him before, God made him to sing like a nightingale in the darkness. So he asks himself, “Has God changed? Will He give me no songs, now? Will He leave me to perish?” Thus have the best of men, in their sore troubles, had to put to themselves solemn questions, but they have not always been able to answer them.

7-9. *Will the Lord cast me off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah.* If you are a child of God, yet never had to ask these questions, you ought to be very grateful. But if you have to ask them, be very thankful that Asaph asked them before you! And believe that as he had a comfortable answer to them, so shall you. It is always a comfort when you can see the footprints of another man in the mire and the slough, for if that man passed through unharmed, so may you, for his God shall also be your Helper. But only think of this inspired Psalmist, this sweet singer of Israel, being so troubled and broken in spirit that he says, “Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?”

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity.* “This is a trouble appointed to me, I must bear it.” Or, “This is because of the weakness of my faith. God has not changed—it is I who has changed. This is my infirmity.”

10. *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* “I will remember what God has done with that right hand of His. I will remember when I used to sit at His right hand—

**“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”**

It is a good thing to make a record of your experiences when they are sweet. You may need that record, one of these days. I do not believe in always keeping a diary, for one is apt to put down more than may be true, but there are times of special mercy when I would say, “Write that down for a memorial and keep it by you, for the day may come when that record will minister comfort to you.”

11, 12. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work.* “I will not have any more of *my* works—I will meditate on Your work. I will get to You, my God, and think of what You have done; especially of Your works of Grace, how brightly they shine! I will meditate also on all your work.”

12, 13. *And talk of Your doings. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* Or, “is in holiness.” God’s way is sometimes in the sea, but it is always a holy way. God never deals with His people, or with any of His creatures unjustly or unrighteously. “I cannot trace God,” Luther once said, “but I

can trust Him.” And from that saying of his we have coined the phrase, “To trust Him when you cannot trace Him.” When you are unable to see God’s footprints because He rides upon the storm, yet still say, “Your way, O God, is in holiness.”

13, 14. *Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* See how the Psalmist comforts himself with what God had done—and he went right back to the Red Sea for his illustration! Somehow, God’s people in the olden times always liked to sing the Song of Moses. By a kind of instinct, they thought of the Red Sea, as if to remember the redemption that God worked out for His people when He destroyed Pharaoh and all his host. Let us go there, too, and think of the Red Sea of our Savior’s blood where all our sins were drowned!

15-17. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad.* I suppose that there was a storm at the time of the passage of the Red Sea, so that the deep-mouthed thunder spoke to the quaking heart of Pharaoh, while the flashing lightning set the heavens on flame and made Egypt’s chivalry tremble as the horse and his rider went down into the sea.

18, 19. *The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lighted the world: the earth trembled and shook. Your way is in the sea.* Where you cannot see His footprints, “in the sea,” where there seems to be no way at all, there God makes a highway! Are you in such trouble, dear Friend, that you cannot see the possibility of escape? Remember this verse—“Your way is in the sea.”

19, 20. *And Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* There the Psalm stops, just when you thought there was more to be said. The Holy Spirit knows how to leave off—and He closes abruptly with a sublimity seldom equaled. God’s people need to know no more than this, that God is leading them! Asaph does not say that Moses and Aaron led them—“You led Your people.” Moses and Aaron were only the Lord’s servants and under-shepherds—“You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” May He always be our Leader! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—202, 621, 623.

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

A SERMON FOR THE MOST MISERABLE OF MEN

NO. 853

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 31, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“My soul refused to be comforted.”
Psalm 77:2.

In this refusal to be comforted, David is not to be imitated. His experience in this instance is recorded rather as a *warning* than as an example. Here is no justification for those professors who, when they suffer bereavements or temporal losses, repine bitterly and reject every consoling thought. We have known persons who made mourning for departed ones the main business of life years after the beloved relative had entered into rest. Like the heathen, they worship the spirits of the dead. The sufferer has a right to mourn, a right which Jesus Christ has sealed, for, “Jesus wept,” but that right is abused into a wrong when protracted sorrow poisons the springs of the heart and unfits the weeper for the duties of daily life.

There is a “hitherto” beyond which the floods of grief may not lawfully advance. “What?” said the Quaker, to one who wore the weeds of mourning many years after the death of her child and declared that she had suffered a blow from which she should never rally—“What? Friend, have you not forgiven God yet?” Much of unholy rebellion against the Most High will be found as a sediment at the bottom of most tear bottles. Sullen repining and protracted lamentation indicate the existence of *idolatry* in the heart. Surely the beloved object must have been enshrined in that throne of the heart which is the Lord’s alone, or else the taking away of the beloved object, though it caused poignant sorrow, would not have excited such an unsubmitive spirit!

Should it not be the endeavor of God’s children to avoid excessive and continued grief because it verges so closely upon the two deadly sins of rebellion and idolatry? Sorrow deserves sympathy, but when it springs from a lack of resignation, it merits censure! When Believers refuse to be comforted, they act as mere worldlings might do with some excuse, for when unbelievers lose earthly comforts they lose their all. But for the Christian to pine and sigh in inconsolable anguish over the loss of a *creature* good is to belie his profession and degrade his name. He believes of his trial that the Lord has done it—he calls God his Father—he knows that *all* things work together for good. He is persuaded that a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of Glory is being worked out for him. How, then, can he sit down in sullen silence and say, “I will not be comforted!”?

Surely, then, the Truths of God which he professes to believe have never entered into his soul! He *must* be a mere speculative theorizer and not a sincere Believer! Beloved, shame on us, if with such a faith as ours

we do not play the man! If the furnace is hot, let our faith be strong. If the burden is heavy, let our patience be enduring. Let us practically admit that He who lends has a right to reclaim His own—and as we blessed the giving, so let us bless the taking hand. At all times let us praise the Lord our God! Though He slay us, let us trust Him. Much more, let us bless Him when He only uses the rod.

Our text, however, might very fittingly describe individuals who, although free from outward trial or bereavement, are subject to deep depression of spirits. There are times with the brightest-eyed Christians when they can hardly brush the tears away. Strong faith and joyous hope at times subside into a fearfulness which is scarcely able to keep the spark of hope and faith alive in the soul. Yes, I think the more rejoicing a man is at one time, the more sorrowful he will be at others. They who mount highest descend lowest. There are cold-blooded individuals who neither rejoice with joy unspeakable nor groan with anguish unutterable.

But others of a more excitable temperament, capable of lofty delights, are also liable to horrible sinking of heart. Because they have gazed in ecstasy within the gates of pearl, they are too apt to make a descent to the land of death shade and to stand shivering on the brink of Hell. I know this, alas, too well. In the times of our gloom, when the soul is well near overwhelmed, it is our duty to grasp the promise and to rejoice in the Lord. But it is not easy to do. The duty is indisputable, but the fulfillment of it impossible.

In vain is it for us, at such seasons the star of promise and the candle of experience—the darkness which may be felt seems to smother all cheering lights. Barnabas, the son of consolation, would be hard put to it to cheer the victims of depression when their fits are on them. The oil of joy is poured out in vain for those heads upon which the dust and ashes of melancholy are heaped up. Brothers and Sisters, at such times the unhappy should wisely consider whether their disturbed minds ought not to have rest from labor. In these days, when everybody travels by express and works like a steam-engine, the mental wear and tear are terrible and the advice of the Great Master to the disciples to go into the desert and rest awhile is full of wisdom and ought to have our earnest attention.

Rest is the best, if not the only medicine for men occupied in mental pursuits and subject to frequent depression of spirit. Get away, you sons of sadness, from your ordinary avocations for a little season if you possibly can, and enjoy quiet and repose—above all, escape from your cares by casting them upon God. If you bear them yourself, they will distract you so that your soul will refuse to be comforted. But if you will leave them to God and endeavor to serve Him without distraction, you will overcome the drooping tendency of your spirits and you will yet compass the altar of God with songs of gladness.

Let none of us give way to an irritable, complaining, mournful temperament. It is the giving way which is the master mischief, for it is only as we resist this devil that it will flee from us. Let not your heart be troubled. If the troubles outside the soul toss your vessel and drive her to and fro, yet, at least let us strain every nerve to keep the seas outside the boat lest she sink altogether. Cry with David, “Why are you cast down, O my

Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” Never mourn unreasonably. Question yourself about the causes of your tears. Reason about the matter till you come to the same conclusion as the Psalmist, “Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him.”

Depend upon it, if you can believe in God, you have, even in your soul’s midnight, 10 times more cause to rejoice than to sorrow. If you can humbly lie at Jesus’ feet, there are more flowers than thorns ready to spring up in your pathway. Joys lie in ambush for you. You shall be compassed about with songs of deliverance. Therefore, companions in tribulation, give not way to hopeless sorrow! Write no bitter things against yourselves! Salute with thankfulness the angel of hope and say no more, “My soul refused to be comforted.”

My main bent, this morning, to which I have set my whole soul, is to deal with these mourners who are seeking Christ but up till now have sought Him in vain. Convicted of sin, awakened and alarmed—these unhappy ones tarry long outside the gate of Mercy, shivering in the cold, pining to enter into the banquet which invites them—but declining to pass through the gate which stands *wide open* for them. Sullenly—no, I will not use so harsh a word—*tremblingly* they refuse to enter within Mercy’s open door, although infinite Love itself cries to them, “Come and welcome! Enter and be blessed.”

I. Concerning so deplorable a state of heart, alas, still so common, we will remark in the first place that IT IS VERY AMAZING. It is a most surprising thing that there should be in this world persons who have the richest consolation near to hand and persistently refuse to partake of it. It seems so unnatural that if we had not been convinced by abundant observation, we should deem it impossible that any miserable soul should *refuse* to be comforted. Does the ox refuse its fodder? Will the lion turn from his meat? Or the eagle loathe its nest?

The refusal of consolation is the more singular because *the most admirable comfort is within reach*. Sin can be forgiven. Sin *has* been forgiven! Christ has made an atonement for it. God is graciously willing to accept any sinner that comes to Him confessing his transgressions and trusting in the blood of the Lord Jesus. God *waits* to be gracious! He is not hard nor harsh. He is full of mercy. He delights to pardon the penitent and is never more revealed in the Glory of His Godhead than when He is accepting the unworthy through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! There is so much comfort in the Word of God that it were as easy to measure the heavens above, or set the limits of space, as to measure the Divine Grace revealed in it.

You may seek, if you will, to comprehend all the sweetness of Divine love, but you cannot, for it passes knowledge. Like the vast expanse of the ocean is the abounding goodness of God made manifest in Jesus Christ! Amazing is it, then, that men refuse to receive what is so lavishly provided! It is said that some years ago, a vessel sailing on the northern coast of the South American continent was observed to make signals of distress. When hailed by another vessel, they reported themselves as, “Dying for water!” “Dip it up then,” was the response, “you are in the mouth of the Amazon river.” There was fresh water all around them—they had nothing

to do but to dip it up—and yet they were dying of thirst because they thought themselves to be surrounded by the salt sea!

How often are men ignorant of their mercies! How sad that they should perish for lack of knowledge! But suppose after the sailors had received the joyful information, they had still refused to draw up the water which was in boundless plenty all around them? Would it not have been a marvel? Would you not at once conclude that madness had taken hold upon the captain and his crew? Yet, so great, dear Friends, is the madness of many who hear the Gospel and know that there is mercy provided for sinners, that unless the Holy Spirit interferes they will perish! Not through ignorance, but because, for some reason or other, like the Jews of old, they judge themselves, “unworthy of everlasting life,” and exclude themselves from the Gospel, refusing to be comforted!

This is the more remarkable because *the comfort provided is so safe*. Were there suspicions that the comforts of the Gospel would prove delusive—that they would only foster *presumption* and so destroy the soul—men would be wise to start back as from a cup of poison! But many have satisfied themselves at this life-giving stream! Not *one* has been injured, but all who have partaken have been eternally blessed. Why, then, does the thirsty soul hesitate, while the river, clear as crystal, flows at his feet?

Moreover, *the comfort of the Gospel is most suitable*. It is fully adapted to the sinful, the weak and the broken-hearted. It is adapted to those who are crushed by their need of mercy and adapted equally as much to those who are the least sensible of their need of it. The Gospel bears a balm in its hand suited to the sinner in his worst estate—when he has no good thing about him and nothing within which can, by possibility, be a ground of hope. Does not the Gospel declare that Christ died for the ungodly? Is it not a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom, said the Apostle, “I am chief”? Is not the Gospel intended even for those who are dead in sin?

Don’t we read such words as these, “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together in Christ (by grace are you saved)”? Are not the invitations of the Gospel, so far as we can judge, just the kindest, most tender and most attractive that could be penned and addressed at the worst emergency in which a sinner can be placed? “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money; come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

No qualifying adjectives are used to set forth a degree of goodness in the person invited—but the *wicked* are bid to come—and the *unrighteous* are commanded to turn to God! The invitation deals with base, naked, unimproved sinnership! Grace seeks for misery, unworthiness, guilt, helplessness and nothing else. Not because we are good, but because the Lord is *gracious*, we are bid to believe in the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus and so to receive comfort! Strange that where consolation is so plentiful—where comfort is so safe, where the heart-cheer is so suitable—souls

should be found by the thousands who refuse to be comforted! This fact grows the more remarkable because *these persons greatly need comfort and*, from what they say, and I trust also from what they feel, you might infer that comfort was the very thing they would clutch at as a drowning man at a rope!

Why, they scarcely sleep at night by reason of their fears. By day their faces betray the sorrow, which, like a tumultuous sea, rages within. They can scarcely speak a cheerful sentence. They make their household miserable. The infection of their sorrow is caught by others. You would think that the very moment the word, "hope," was whispered in their ears they would leap towards it at once! But it is not so. You may put the Gospel into what shape you please and yet these poor souls who need your pity, though, I fear, they must also have your blame, refuse to be comforted. Though the food is placed before them, their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death. Yes, you may even put the heavenly cordial into their very mouths, but they will not receive the spiritual nutriment! They pine in hunger rather than partake in what Divine love provides.

Need I enlarge on this strange infatuation? It is a monstrosity unparalleled in Nature! When the dove was weary, she remembered the ark and flew into Noah's hand at once. These are weary and they know the ark, but they will not fly to it. When an Israelite had slain, inadvertently, his fellow, he knew the City of Refuge. He feared the avenger of blood and he fled along the road to the place of safety. But these know the Refuge and every Sunday we set up the signposts along the road, but yet they come not to find salvation!

The destitute waifs and strays of the streets of London find out where the night refuges are and ask for shelter! They cluster round our work-house doors like sparrows under the eaves of a building on a rainy day! They piteously crave for lodging and a crust of bread! Yet crowds of poor benighted spirits, when the House of Mercy is lighted up and the invitation is plainly written in bold letters—"Whoever will, let him turn in here"—will not come! They prove the truth of Watts' verse—

**"Thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come."**

'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing!!

II. Secondly, this strange madness has a method in it and MAY BE VARIOUSLY ACCOUNTED FOR. In many, their refusal to be comforted arises from *bodily and mental disease*. It is in vain to ply with Scriptural arguments those who are in more urgent need of healing medicine, or generous diet, or a change of air. There is so close a connection between the sphere of the physician and the Divine, that they do well to hunt in couples when chasing the delusions of morbid humanity. And I am persuaded there are not a few cases in which the minister's presence is of small account until the physician shall, first of all, wisely have discharged his part.

I shall not, this morning, therefore, further allude to characters out of my line of practice, but I shall speak of those whose refusal to accept comfort arises from *moral* rather than physical disease. In some the monstrous refusal is suggested by a *proud dislike to the plan of salvation*. They

would be comforted, yes, that they would, but may they not *do something* to earn eternal life? May they not, at least, contribute a *feeling* or *emotion*? May they not *prepare* themselves for Christ? Must salvation be all gratis? Must they be received into the House of Mercy as paupers? Must they come with no other cry but, "God be merciful to me a *sinner*"?

Must it come to this—to be stripped, to have every rag of one's own righteousness torn away—as well righteousness of feeling as righteousness of doing? Must the whole head be confessedly sick and the whole heart faint and the man lie before Jesus as utterly undone and ruined, to take everything from the hand of the crucified Savior? Ah, then, says flesh and blood, I will not have it! The crest is not easy to cleave in two—the banner of self is upheld by a giant standard-bearer—it floats on high long after the battle has been lost. But what folly! Indeed, for the sake of indulging a foolish dignity we will not be comforted!

O Sir, down with you and your dignity! I beseech you, bow down now before the feet of Jesus and kiss the feet which were nailed for your sins. Roll yourself and your glory in the dust. What are you but an unclean thing? And what are your righteousnesses but filthy rags? O take Christ to be your All-in-All, and you shall have comfort this very morning! Let not pride prompt a fresh refusal, but be wise and submit to Sovereign Grace. In others it is not pride, but *an unholy resolve to retain some favorite sin*. In most cases, when the Christian minister tries to heal a wound that has long been bleeding, he probes and probes again with his lancet, wondering why the wound will not heal. It seems to him that all the circumstances point to a successful healing of the wound. He cannot imagine why it still continues to bleed, but at last he finds out the secret. "Ah, here I have it. Here is an extraneous substance which continually frets and aggravates the wound. It cannot heal while this grit of *sin* lies within it."

In some cases we have found out that the sorrowing person indulged still in a secret vice, or kept the society of the ungodly, or was undutiful to parents, or unforgiving, or slothful, or practiced that hideous sin, secret drunkenness. In any such case, if the man resolves, "I will not give up this sin," do you wonder if he is not comforted? Would not it be an awful thing if he were? When a man carries a corroding substance within his soul, if his wound is filmed over, an internal disease will come of it and prove deadly. I pray God none of you may ever get comfort till you get rid of every known sin and are able to say—

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

There must be a plucking out of the right eye and a cutting off of the right arm if we are to inherit eternal life! Foolish, indeed, is he, who, for the sake of some paltry sin—a sin which he himself despises, a sin which he would not dare to confess into the ears of another—continues to reject Christ. Might I take such a one by the hand and say, "My Brother, my Sister, give it up! Oh, for God's sake, hate the accursed thing and come now with me! Confess to Jesus, who will forgive all your foolishness and accept you this morning, so that no longer you shall refuse to be comforted."

Some refuse to be comforted because of *an obstinate determination only to be comforted in a way of their own selecting*. They have read the life of a certain good man who was saved with a particular kind of experience. "Now," they say, "if I felt like that man, then I shall conclude I am saved." Many have hit upon the experience of Mr. Bunyan, in "Grace Abounding." They have said, "Now, I must be brought just as John Bunyan was, or else I will not believe." Another has said, "I must tread the path which John Newton trod—my feet must be placed in the very marks where his feet went down, or else I cannot believe in Jesus Christ."

But, my dear Friend, what *reason* have you for expecting that God will yield to your self-will? And what justification have you for prescribing to the Great Physician the *methods* of His cure? Oh, if He will but bring me to Heaven, I will bless Him, though He conduct me by the gates of Hell! If I am but brought to see the King in His beauty, in the land which is very far off, it shall make no trouble to my heart by what method of experience He brings me there! Come, lay aside this foolish choosing of yours and say, "Lord, do but have mercy on me. Do but give me to trust Your dear Son and my whims and my fancies shall be given up."

I fear, in a great many, there is another reason for this refusing to be comforted, namely, *a dishonoring unbelief in the love and goodness and truthfulness of God*. They do not believe God to be gracious! They think Him a tyrant, or if not quite that, yet one so stern that a sinner had need plead and beg full many a day before the stern heart of God will be touched. Oh, but you do not know *my* God! What is He? He is LOVE! I tell you He needs no persuading to have mercy any more than the sun needs to be persuaded to shine, or a fountain to pour out its streams! It is the *Nature* of God to be gracious! He is never so Godlike as when He is bestowing mercy.

"Judgment is His strange work." It is His left-handed work. But mercy, the last manifested of His attributes, is His Benjamin, the child of His right hand. He delights to exercise it. Is it not so written, "He delights in mercy"? Alas, Alas, Alas, that God should be slandered by those to whom He speaks so lovingly! "As I live, says the Lord," here He takes an *oath*, and will you not believe Him? "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from his way and live." "Turn, turn! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

He even seems to turn beggar to His own creatures and to plead with them to come to Him. His heart yearns as He cries, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man." O do not, I pray you, be unbelieving any longer, but believe God's Word and Oath and accept the comfort which He freely offers to you this morning in the words of His Gospel!

Some, however, have refused comfort so long that they have grown into *the habit of despair*. Ah, it is a dangerous habit and trembles on the brink of Hell! Every moment in which it is indulged a man grows accustomed to it. It is like the cold of the frigid zone which benumbs the traveler, after

awhile, till he feels nothing and drops into slumber and from that into death. Some have despaired and despaired until they had reason for despair and until despair brought them into Hell. Despair has hardened some men's hearts till they have been ready to commit sins which hope would have rendered impossible to them. Beware of nursing despondency!

Does it creep upon you today through unbelief? O shake it off if possible! Cry to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to loose you from this snare of the fowler! For, depend upon it, doubting God is a net of Satan and blessed is he who escapes its toils. Believing in God strengthens the soul and brings us both holiness and happiness—but distrusting and suspecting and surmising and fearing hardens the heart—and renders us less likely ever to come to God! Beware of despair! And may you, if you have fallen into this evil habit, be snatched from it as the brand from the burning and delivered by the Lord, who looses His prisoner.

III. Thirdly, this remarkable piece of folly ASSUMES VARIOUS FORMS. If I were to give a catalog of the symptoms of this disease which I have met with and have jotted down in my memory, I should need not an *hour*, but a month. For as each man has something peculiar to himself, so each form of this melancholy bears about it a measure of distinctness. I can scarcely put them under various heads and species—they are too many and too mixed. I think they say a sheep has so many diseases that you cannot count them. And I am sure men have a great many more mental maladies than can be counted, too.

You might as well count the sands on the seashore as enumerate the soul's diseases. But certain forms are very common. For instance, one is a *persistent misrepresentation of the Gospel*, as though it claimed some hard thing of us. Persons have been sitting in these seats, now, for years, who have heard us say and who know the truth of it, from God's Word, that all that is asked of the sinner is that he should trust in the work which Jesus Christ has worked out—should trust Christ, in fact. We have in all manner of ways, as numerous and varied as our ingenuity could suggest, sought to show that there is *nothing* for the sinner to do! That he is to *be* nothing, but just get out of the way and let Christ and the Grace of God be everything!

We have tried to show that to trust in Christ, which is the great saving act, is *looking* to Him, Resting on Him. Depending on Him. We have multiplied figures and metaphors to make this plain. And yet, as soon as ever we begin to talk to some of these who refuse to be comforted, they say, "But I am afraid, Sir, that I have never been sufficiently made to feel the evil of sin." Now, did we ever say that *feeling of sin* was the great saving Grace? Does not the Word of God put it over and over again that *believing* saves the soul, not *feeling*? Yet these people virtually deny the Gospel and set up another Gospel—a Gospel of *feeling* in the place of a Gospel of *trusting*!

"Oh, but," they will then say, "I have had these desires so many times before and they have all gone and I cannot expect that I should be accepted now." This is another denial of the Gospel! They make it out that God will only accept those who have experienced good desires but never repressed them. They reduce the Gospel into this kind of thing—"You who

never have repressed good desires, you may come.” But the Gospel says, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I could not give you all the shapes and ways in which they will evade and mystify the Gospel, but assuredly they use as much ingenuity to make themselves *unhappy*, as the most ardent spirit that ever lived ever used to discover a country or to win a crown!

Another shape of this malady is this—*many continually and persistently underestimate the power of the precious blood of Jesus*. Not, if you brought them to look, that they would dare affirm that Jesus could not save, or that His blood could not pardon sin, but, virtually, it comes to that. “Oh, I am such a sinner!” And what if you are? Did not Christ come to save sinners, even the very chief? What has the greatness of *your* sinnership to do with it? Is not Christ a greater Savior than you are a sinner? Towering high, the mountain of His mercy is far above the hills of your guiltiness! Yes, but you do not think so. Yes and herein you limit the efficacy of an Infinite Atonement and so dishonor the blood of Jesus Christ!

There are some who will then say, “But I have sinned such-and-such a sin.” What? And cannot the blood of Jesus wash that away? “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” There is no sin which you can by any possibility have committed, which Jesus cannot pardon if you will come to Him and trust Him, for, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Why, believe me, Sinner, though your sin is such that, of itself, it will damn you to all eternity, beyond all hope—though it is such, that could your tears forever flow, not a particle of it could ever be washed out—yet in a *moment* it shall vanish if you do but now trust in that bleeding Savior.

There is nothing in your sin that can now obstruct the power of the bleeding Savior. God will at once forgive you. But I know that you will still slander my Lord Jesus and refuse His comfort. I pray Him, therefore to forgive you this wrong and bring you, by His Holy Spirit, into a saner mind, to believe that He is able and willing and to doubt no more. Many cast their doubts into the shape of *foolish inferences drawn from the doctrine of predestination*. I do not find that the doctrine of predestination impresses people in the way of sadness in any way except that of religion!

Everybody believes that there is a predestination about the casting of lots, and yet the spirit of gambling is rife everywhere and men in crowds subscribe to the public lotteries, which to our shame, are still tolerated. They know that only two or three can win a large prize, yet away goes the money and nobody stands at the office door and says, “I shall not invest my money because if I am to get a prize I shall get a prize and if I am not to win a prize I shall not do so.” Men are not such fools when they come to things of common life as they are when they deal with religion! This predestination sticks in the way of many as a huge stumbling block when they come to the things of God.

The fact is, there is nothing in predestination to stumble a man. The evil lies in what he chooses to make of it. When a man wants to beat a dog, they say he can always find a stick to do it with. And when a man wants to find excuses for not believing in Christ, he can always discover one, somewhere or other. For this cause so many run to this predestina-

tion doctrine, because it happens to be a handy place of resort. Now God has a people whom He will save, a chosen and special people, redeemed by the blood of Christ. But there is no more in that doctrine to deny the other grand Truth that whoever believes in Jesus Christ is not condemned, than there is in the fact that Abyssinia is in Africa, to contradict the doctrine that Hindustan is in Asia!

They are two Truths of God which stand together and though it may not always be easy for us to reconcile them, it would be more difficult to make them disagree. There never seems to me to be any need to reconcile the two Truths, nor, indeed, any practical difficulty in the matter. The difficulty is metaphysical and what have lost sinners to do with metaphysics? Fixed is everything, from the motion of a grain of dust in the summer's wind to the revolution of a planet in its orbit—and yet man is as free as if there were no God—as independent an actor as if everything were left to chance! I see indelible marks both of predestination and free agency everywhere in God's universe! Then why do you ask questions about your election when God says, "whoever will"? It is foolish to stand and ask whether you are ordained to come when the invitation bids you come! Come, and you are ordained to come! Stay away, and you deserve to perish!

Yonder is the gate of the hospital for sick souls and over it is written, "Whoever will, let him come," and you stand outside that house of mercy and say, "I do not know whether I am ordained to enter." There is the invitation, man! Why are you so mad? Would you talk like that at Guy's or at Bartholomew's Hospital? Would you say to the kind persons who picked you up in the street and carried you to the hospital, "Oh, for goodness sake, do not take me in, I do not know whether I am ordained to go in or not"? You know the hospital was built for such as are sick and wounded and when you are taken in you perceive that it was built for you. I do not know how you are to find whether you were ordained to enter the hospital or not, except by going in, and I do not know how you are to find out your election to salvation, except by trusting Jesus Christ, who bids you trust, and promises that if you do so you shall be saved!

You may smile, but these things which to some of us are like spiders' nets through which we break, are like nets of iron to those desponding ones whose soul refuses to be comforted. I have known others and here I shall close this list, who have tried to find a hole in which to hide their eyes from the comforting light in the thought of *the unpardonable sin*. The greatest divines who have written on this subject have never been able to prove anything about it except that all the other divines are wrong! I have never yet read a book upon the subject which did not, one-half of it, consist in proving that all who had written before knew nothing at all on the subject. And I have come to the conclusion, when I have finished each treatise, that the writer was about as right as his predecessors and no more.

Whatever the unpardonable sin may be, and perhaps it is different in every person—perhaps it is a point of sin in each one, a filling up of his measure beyond which there is no more hope of mercy—whatever it is, there is one thing that is sure, that no man who feels his need of Christ

and sincerely desires to be saved can have committed that sin at all. If you had committed that sin, it would be to you *death*. “There is a sin which is unto death.” Now, death puts an end to *feeling*. You would be given up to hardness and to incorrigible impenitence. The reason why you could not be saved would be because your will would become fast set against all good and you never would will to be saved.

There is no difficulty in salvation when the will is made right—and if you have a will and God has made you willing to come to Christ and to be saved, you have no more committed the unpardonable sin than has the angel Gabriel who stands at God’s right hand! If your heart palpitates still with fear. If your soul still trembles before the Law of God and dreads His wrath, then still are you within the bounds of mercy! And the silver trumpet sounds this morning sweet and shrill, “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

IV. We will not continue that dreary catalog, but turn to a fourth consideration, namely, that this refusal to be comforted INVOLVES MUCH OF WRONG. Much of it we can readily forgive, still we must mention it. When you hear the Gospel and refuse to be comforted by it, there is a wrong done to the minister of God. He sympathizes with you. He desires to comfort you and it troubles him when he puts before you the cup of salvation and you refuse to take it.

Now, I do not say that we, in our private persons, claim any great respect from you. But I do say that to reject God’s ambassador may not be a light sin. And to cause the man whom God sends to speak words of mercy to you to go, with a heavy heart, again and again to his knees, may be such a sin as will rankle in your soul in years to come if it is not repented of. But worse than that, you wrong God’s Gospel. Every time you refuse to be comforted, you do as good as say, “The Gospel is of no use to me. I do not esteem it. I will not have it.” You put it away as though it were a thing of nothing.

You wrong this precious Bible. It is full of consoling promises and you read it and you seem to say, “It is all chaff.” You act as if you had winnowed it and found no food in it. It is a barren wilderness to you. Oh, but the Bible does not deserve to have such a slur cast upon it! You do wrong to the dear friends who try to comfort you. Why should they so often bring you with loving hands the Words of comfort and you put them away? Above all, you do wrong to your God, to Jesus and to His Holy Spirit. The Crucifixion of Christ is repeated by your rejection of Christ. That unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive, crucifies Him afresh. Grieve not the Holy Spirit—

***“He’s waited long, is waiting still—
You use no other friend so ill.”***

He is the Spirit of consolation and when you refuse the consolation, you virtually reject Him—reject Him to your shame! Think, dear Friends, wherever you may be this morning—your refusing to be comforted is very wrong because it is depriving the Church of what you might do for it. Oh, if you became a cheerful Christian, what another in Israel you might be! I think I hear you sing as the virgin did of old, “He has remembered the low estate of His handmaiden.” How would you rejoice with Hannah that, “He

raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes.” How would your exultant Psalm go up to Heaven, “He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty.”

The world—what a wrong you are doing to it! Why, that part of the world which comes under your influence is led to say, “Religion makes that woman miserable. It is *religion* which makes that man so sad.” You know it is not so! But they put it down to it—they say, “Religion drives people mad.” I would sooner lose this right hand and this right eye, too, than have such a thing said of my religion! I cannot bear, when I do anything wrong that men should say, “That’s your Christianity.” If they lay the blame on *me*, who so well deserved it, then let me bear it! But to lay it on the Cross of Christ—oh, this makes a man shudder!

V. I will close with this remark—that SUCH A REFUSAL SHOULD NOT BE PERSISTED IN. It is unreasonable to be sad when you might rejoice. It is *unreasonable* to be wretched when Mercy provides every cause for making you happy. Why are you sad and why is your countenance fallen? If there were no Savior, no Holy Spirit, no Father willing to forgive, you might go your way and put an end to your existence in despair. But while all this Divine Grace is ready for you, why not take it?

One would think you were like Tantalus, placed up to his neck in water, which, when he tried to drink, receded from his lips—but you are in no such condition. Instead of the water flowing *away* from you, it is rippling up to your lips! It is inviting you but to open your mouth and receive it! While it is unreasonable to continue such a persistence, it is also *most weakening* to you. Every hour that you continue sad you spoil the possibilities of your getting out of that sadness. You are dissolving the strength even of your bodily frame. And, as for your *soul*, the pillars are being shaken. And, mark you, it is most dangerous, too, for maybe—oh, I pray God it may not be!—it may be that God, who gives you light when He sees you shut your eyes again, will say, “Let his sun be darkened and his moon be turned into blood. The creature which I made for light rejects it and no light shall ever come to it, even forever.”

The king who kills the fatlings and makes ready the feast and brings you to the table, if He sees you still refuse to partake, may swear in His wrath that you shall not eat of His supper. I have known parents, when their children cried for nothing, take care to give them something to cry for. And, maybe, if you are miserable when there is no cause for it, you may have cause for it—cause that will never end. Oh, by the blood and wounds of Jesus! By the overflowing heart of God! By the eternal promises of Divine Grace! By the Covenant which God has made with sinners in the Person of His Son! By the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, put not from you the consolation which God provides! Say no longer, “My soul refuses to be comforted,” but cast yourself at Jesus’ feet and trust in Him, and you are saved!

God bless you and grant this prayer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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A QUESTION FOR A QUESTIONER

NO. 1843

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 31, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Has God forgotten to be gracious?”
Psalm 77:9.***

ASAPH was very grievously troubled in spirit. The deep waters were not only around his boat, but they had come in, even, into his soul. When the spirit of a man is wounded, then is he wounded, indeed, and such was the case with this man of God. In the time of his trouble he was attacked with doubts and fears, so that he was made to question the very foundations of things. Had he not taken to continual prayer, he would have perished in his affliction. But he cried unto God with his voice and the Lord listened to him. Nor did he only pray, but he used the fittest means for escaping from his despondency. Very wisely this good man argued with *himself* and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homeopathically, treating like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief. “Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?” If questions are raised at all, let us go through with them—and as the Savior answered one question of His opponents by another—so may we, also, silence the questions of unbelief by further questions which shall strip our doubt of all disguises.

The question which makes our text is meant to end other questions. You may carry truth as far as you like and it will always be truth. Truth is like those crystals which, when split up into the smallest possible fragments, still retain their natural form. You may break the Truth of God in pieces; you may do what you like with it and it is still the Truth of God throughout—but error is diverse within itself and always bears its own death within itself. You can see its falsehood even in its own light. Bring it forward, strip it of its disguises, behold it in its naked form and its deformity at once appears! Carry unbelief to its proper consequences and you will revolt from it and be driven by the Grace of God to *faith*. Sometimes our doubts assume appearances which are not their own and are hard to deal with, but if we make them take their own natural shapes, we shall easily destroy them.

The question before us is what the logician would call a *reductio ad absurdum*—it reduces doubt to an absurdity. It puts into plain and truthful words the thought of an unbelieving mind and at once it is seen to be a horrible notion. “Is His mercy clean gone forever?” One might smile while reading a suggestion so absurd and yet there is grave cause for trembling in the profanity of such a question. “Has God forgotten?” We stumble at the first word. How can God forget? “Has God forgotten to be?” We snap the question at that point and it is blasphemous. It is no better when we give it as a whole—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” The bare idea is both ridiculous and blasphemous! Again, I say, it is wise, when we are vexed with evil questioning, to put down the questions in black and white and expose them to the daylight. Drive the wretched things out of their holes! Hunt them in the open and they will soon be destroyed. Let the Light of God into the dark cellar of your despondency and you will soon quit the den in sheer disgust at your own folly. Make a thought appear to be absurd and you have gone a long way towards conquering it.

The question now before us is one of very wide application. I shall not attempt to suggest all the ways in which it may be employed, but I am going to turn it to three uses this morning. The first is for *the man of God in distress*. Let him take this question and put it to his own reason and common sense—and especially to his own faith—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” When we have handled the question in that way, we will pass it over to *the seeking sinner who is despondent* and we will ask *him* whether he really believes that God has forgotten to be gracious. When this is done, we may have a moment or two left for *the Christian worker who is dispirited*—who cannot do his work as he would wish to do and who mourns over the little result coming from it. “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Will you be allowed to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed—and will you never come rejoicing again, bringing your sheaves with you? We shall have quite enough matter to fill up our time and many fragments remaining when the feast is over. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. TO THE MAN OF GOD IN DISTRESS, this question is commended, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

What kind of distress is that which suggests such a question? Where had Asaph been? In what darkness had he wandered? In what tangled wood had he lost himself? How came he to get such a thought into his mind?

I answer, first, this good man had been troubled by unanswered prayers. “In the day of my trouble,” he says—“In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.” And he seems to say that though he sought the Lord, his griefs were not removed. He was burdened and he cried unto God beneath the burden, but the burden was not lightened. He was in darkness and he craved for light but not a star shone forth. Nothing is more grievous to the sincere pleader than to feel that his petitions are not heeded by his God. It is a sad business to have gone up, like Elijah’s servant, seven

times, and yet to have seen no cloud upon the sky in answer to your importunity. It tries a man to spend all night in wrestling and to have won no blessing from the Covenant Angel. To ask and not to receive; to seek and not to find; to knock and to see no open door—these are serious trials to the heart and tend to extort the question—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Unanswered prayer is very staggering, even to strong faith, but the weak faith of a tried Believer is hard put to it by long delays and threatened denials. When the Mercy Seat, itself, ceases to yield us aid, what can we do? You will not wonder, then, considering your own tendency to doubt, that this man of God, when his prayers did not bring him deliverance, cried out, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Besides that, he was enduring continued suffering. Our text says, “My sore ran in the night.” His wound was always bleeding—there was no cessation to his pain. At night he woke up and wished it were morning. And when the daylight came, he wished for night again, if, perhaps, he might obtain relief. But none came. Pain of body, when it is continuous and severe, is exceedingly trying to our feeble spirits. But agony of *soul* is still worse. Give me the rack sooner than despair! Do you know what it is to have a keen thought working like an auger into your brain? Has Satan seemed to pierce and drill your mind with a sharp, cutting thought that would not be put aside? It is torment, indeed, to have a worm gnawing at your heart, a fire consuming your spirit—yet a true child of God may be thus tormented. When Asaph had prayed for relief and the relief did not come, the temptation came to him to ask, “Am I always to suffer? Will the Lord never relieve me? It is written, ‘He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds’—has He ceased from that sacred surgery? Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

In addition to this, the man of God was in a state of mind in which his depression had become inveterate. He says, “My soul refused to be comforted.” Many plasters were at hand, but he could not lay them upon the wound. Many cordials offered themselves, but he could not receive them—his throat seemed closed. The meadows were green, but the gate was nailed up and the sheep could not get in! The brooks flowed softly, but he could not reach them to lie down and drink. Asaph was lying at the pool of Bethesda and he saw others step in to be healed, but he had no man to put him into the pool when the waters were troubled. His mind had become confirmed in its despondency and his soul refused to be comforted.

More than that, there seemed to be a failure of the means of Grace for him. “I remembered God and was troubled.” Some of God’s people go up to the House of the Lord where they were accustomed to unite in worship with delight, but they now have no delight. They even go to the Communion Table and eat the bread and drink the wine, but they do not receive the body and blood of Christ to the joy of their faith. Soon they get to their chambers, open their Bibles and bow to their knees and remember God—

but every verse seems to condemn them—their prayers accuse them and God, Himself, seems turned to be their enemy. And then it is little wonder that unbelief exclaims, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

At the back of all this there was another trouble for Asaph, namely, that he could not sleep. He says, “You hold my eyes waking.” It seemed as if the Lord, Himself, held up his eyelids and would not let them close in sleep. Others on their beds were refreshed with “kind nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep.” But when Asaph sought his couch, he was more un-restful there than when he was engaged in the business of the day! We may speak of sleeplessness very lightly, but among afflictions, it is one of the worst that can happen to men. When the chamber of repose becomes a furnace of anguish, it goes hard with a man. When the Psalmist could not find even a transient respite in sleep, his weakness and misery drove him to say, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Moreover, there was one thing more—he lost the faculty of telling out his grief—“I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” There are some people to whom we would not tell our trouble, for we know they could not understand it, for they have never been in deep waters, themselves. There are others to whom we could not tell our trouble, though they might help us, because we feel ashamed to do so. To be compelled to silence is a terrible increase to anguish—the torrent is swollen when its free course is prevented. A dumb sorrow is sorrow, indeed! The grief that can talk will soon pass away. That misery which is wordless is endless. The brook that ripples and prattles as it flows is shallow, but deep waters are silent in their flow. When a man falls under the power of a dumb spirit, it needs Christ, Himself, to come and cast the devil out of him, for he is brought into a very grievous captivity. We who know what a poor thing human nature is when it is brought into affliction are not surprised that the man of God said in such a case, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Having thus, you see, put the doubt in the most apologetic style and mentioned the excuses which might mitigate the sin of the question, I am now going to expose its unreasonableness and sinfulness by considering *what answers we may give to such a question?* I shall endeavor to answer it by making it answer itself—

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Answer—Has God forgotten *anything*? If He could forget, could He be God? Is it not absurd to speak of Him as short of memory, of whose understanding there is no searching? Shall we speak of Him as forgetting, when to His mind all things are present and the past and the future are always before Him as in a map which lies open before the beholder’s eyes? Oh child of God, why do you talk thus? Oh troubled heart, will you insult your God? Will you narrow the infinity of His mind? Can God forget? *You* are forgetful! Perhaps you can scarcely remember, from hour to hour, your own words and your own promises—but is the Lord such an one as you are? Not even the least thing is passed over by Him! He has not forgotten the young ravens in

their nests, but He hears when they cry. He has not forgotten a single blade of grass, but gives to each its own drop of dew. He has not forgotten the sea-monsters down deep in the caverns of the ocean. He has not forgotten a worm that hides itself away beneath the sod! Therefore banish the thought, once and for all, that your God has forgotten anything, much less that He has forgotten to be gracious!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Then He has forgotten an old, long, ancient, yes—*eternal* habit of His heart! Have you not heard that His mercy endures *forever*? Did He not light up the lamps of Heaven because of His mercy? Do we not sing, “To Him that made great lights: for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever”? Since the creation has He not, in Providence, always been gracious? Is it not His rule to open His hands and supply the need of every living thing? Did He not give His Son to redeem mankind? Has He not sent His Spirit to turn men from darkness to light? After having been gracious all these myriads of ages. After having manifested His love and His Grace at such a costly rate, has He forgotten it? You, O man, take up a practice and you lay it down—you do a thing now and then—and then you cease from your way. But shall the eternal God who has always been gracious forget to be gracious? Oh, Lord, forgive the thought!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Why, then, He must have forgotten His purpose! Have you not heard that before the earth was, He purposed to redeem unto Himself a people who should be His own chosen, His children, His peculiar treasure, a people near unto Him? Before He made the heavens and the earth, had He not planned in His own mind that He would manifest the fullness of His Grace toward His people in Christ Jesus? And do you think that He has turned from His eternal purpose, torn up His Divine decrees, burned the Book of Life and changed the whole course of His operations among the sons of men? Do you know what you are saying to talk so? Does He not say, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? Has He said and will He not do it? Has He purposed and shall it not come to pass? Banish, then, the thought of His forgetting to be gracious!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Then He must have forgotten His own *Covenant*, for what was the purport of His Covenant with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, on the behalf of His people? Is it not called a Covenant of Grace? Is not *Grace* the spirit and tenor and object of it? Of old He said, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” And in His Covenant He ordains to show this Grace to as many as are in Christ Jesus. Now, if a *man’s* covenant is confirmed, it stands fast. Nothing that occurs after a covenant has been made can alter it—and God, having once made a Covenant, turns not from His promise and His oath! The Law, which was 430 years after the Covenant made with Abraham, could not change the promises which

the Lord had made to the believing seed, neither can any accident or unforeseen circumstance make the Covenant of Grace null and void! Indeed, there are no *accidents* with God, nor any unforeseen circumstances with Him! He has lifted His hand to Heaven and has sworn! He has declared, "If My Covenant is not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob." The Lord has not forgotten His Covenant with day and night, neither will He cast off His believing people! He cannot, therefore, forget to be gracious.

More than that, when you say, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" do you not forget that in such a case He must have forgotten *His own Glory*, for the main of His Glory lies in His Grace. In that which He does out of free favor and love to undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving men, He displays the meridian splendor of His Glory! His power, His wisdom and His Immutability praise Him, but in the forefront of all shines out His Grace. This is His darling attribute—by this He is illustrious on earth and in Heaven above! Has God forgotten His own Glory? Does a man forget his honor? Does a man turn aside from his own name and fame? He may do so in a moment of madness, but the thrice holy God has not forgotten the Glory of His name, nor forgotten to be gracious!

Listen, and let unbelief stand rebuked. If God has forgotten to be gracious, then He must have forgotten His own Son! He must have forgotten Calvary and the expiatory Sacrifice offered there! He must have forgotten Him that is always with Him at His right hand, making intercession for transgressors! He must have forgotten His pledge to Him that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied! Can you conceive that? It is verging upon blasphemy to suppose such a thing! Yet it must be that He has forgotten His own Son if He has forgotten to be gracious!

Once more, if this were the case, the Lord must have forgotten *His own Self*, for Grace is of the essence of His Nature, since God is Love. We forget ourselves and disgrace ourselves, but God cannot do so. Oh Beloved, it is part and parcel of God's own Nature that He should show mercy to the guilty and be gracious to those who trust in Him. Have you forgotten, as a father, your children? Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? These things are barely possible, but it is utterly *impossible* that the great Father should forget Himself by forgetting His children! That the great Lord who has taken us to be His peculiar heritage and His jewels should cease to value us and forget to be gracious to us is an impossibility!

I think I hear someone say, "I do not think God has forgotten to be gracious *except to me*." Does God make any exceptions? Does He not speak universally when He addresses His children? Remember, if God forgot to be gracious to one of His believing people, He might forget to be gracious to them all! If there were one instance found in which His love failed, then the foundations would be removed and what could the righteous do? The Good Shepherd does not preserve *some* of His sheep, but *all* of them! And

it is not concerning the strong ones of His flock that He says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish"—He has said it of *all* the sheep, yes, and of the smallest lamb of all the flock, of the most scabbed and wounded, of all that He has purchased with His blood! The Lord has not forgotten Himself in any one instance—but He is faithful to all Believers.

Now, let us attend to *the amendment of the question*. Shall I tell you, Friend, you who have put this question, what the true question is which you ought to ask yourself? It is not, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" but, "Have *you* forgotten to be *grateful?*" Why, you enjoy many mercies even now! It is Grace which allows you to *live* after having asked such a vile question! Grace is all around you, if you will but open your eyes, or your ears. You had not been spared after so much sin if God had forgotten to be gracious!

Listen—Have you not forgotten to be believing? God's Word is true, why do you doubt it? Is He a liar? Has He ever played you false? Which promise of His has failed? Time was when you did trust Him—then you knew He was gracious—but you are now doubting without just cause! You are permitting an evil heart of unbelief to draw you aside from the living God! Know this and repent of it—and trust your best Friend.

Have you not also forgotten to be reverent? Otherwise how could you ask such a question? Should a man say of God that He has forgotten to be gracious? Should he imagine such a thing? Should the keenest grief drive to such profanity? Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall anyone of us begin to doubt that Divine Grace which has kept us out of the bottomless pit and spared us to this hour? Oh, heir of Glory, favored as you have been to bathe your forehead in the sunlight of Heaven full often and then to lean your head on the Savior's bosom—is it out of your mouth that this question comes—"Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Call it back and bow your head unto the dust and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon Your servant, that he has even *thought* thus for an instant."

"Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, surely you have forgotten, yourself, or you would not talk so! You have forgotten that you owe everything to your Lord and are indebted to Him even for the breath in your nostrils! You have forgotten the precious blood of Jesus! You have forgotten the Mercy Seat. You have forgotten Providence. You have forgotten the Holy Spirit! You have forgotten all that the Lord has done for you. Surely, you have forgotten all good things, or you would not speak thus! Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and leave the dunghill of your despair and sing, "His mercy endures forever." Say in your soul—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Thus much to the child of God. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply it to every troubled heart.

II. Furthermore, I desire to talk a little with THE SEEKING SINNER IN DESPONDENCY. You have not yet found joy and peace through believing

and, therefore, I will first describe your case and what it is that has made you say, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?"

You labor under a sense of guilt. You know that you have transgressed against God and you feel that this is a terrible thing, involving wrath to the utmost. The arrows of God are sticking in your soul and rankling there. You cannot trifle with sin as you once did—it burns like a fiery poison in your veins! You have been praying to get rid of that sense of sin, but it deepens. The case I am stating is very clear to every child of God, but it is not at all clear to the man who is enduring it. He cries, "The more I pray; the more I go to hear the Word; the more I read the Bible, the blacker sinner I seem to be. 'Has God forgotten to be gracious?'"

Moreover, a sense of weakness is increasing upon you. You thought that you could pray, but now you cannot pray. You thought it the easiest thing in the world to believe, but now the grappling-irons will not lay hold upon the promises and you find no rest. You cannot, now, perform those holy acts which you once thought to be so easy. Your power is dried up, your glory is withered. Now you groan out, "I would but I can't repent, then all would be easy. Alas, I have no hope, no strength. I am reduced to utter weakness." We understand all this, but you do not—and we do not wonder at your crying—"Has God forgotten to be gracious."

"Oh, but Sir, I have been crying to God that He would be pleased to deliver me from sin, but the more I try to be holy the more I am tempted! I never knew such horrible thoughts before, nor discovered such filthiness in my nature before. When I get up in the morning I resolve that I will go straight all the day, but before long I am more crooked than ever. I feel worse, rather than better. The world tempts me, the devil tempts me, the flesh tempts me, everything is wrong with me. 'Has God forgotten to be gracious?' I have prayed the Lord to give me peace and He promises to give rest, but I am more uneasy than ever and cannot rest like I used to. I used to be very happy when I was at Chapel on Sunday. I thought I was doing well to be at public worship. But now I fear that I only go as a formalist and, therefore, I mock God and make matters worse. I rested once in being a teetotaler, in being a hard-working, honest, sober man—but now I see that I must be born again! I used to rest, once, in the idea that I was becoming quite religious, but now it seems to me that my betterness is a hollow sham and all my old nests are pulled down."

My Friend, I perfectly understand your case and think well of it, for the same has happened to many of us. You must be divorced from *self* before you can be married to Christ—and that divorce must be made most clear and plain—or Jesus will never make a match with you. You must come clear away from self-righteousness, self-trust, self-hope, or else, one of these days, when Jesus has saved you, there might be a doubt as to whether He is to have all the Glory, or to go halves with self! He makes you nothing that He may be All in All to you. He grinds you to the dust

that He may lift you out of it forever. Meanwhile, I do not wonder that the question crosses your mind, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?"

Let me *show how wrong the question is*. "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" If He has, He has forgotten what He used to know right well. David was foul with his adultery—remember that 51st Psalm—but how sweet was the Prophet's message to the penitent king—"The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die!" "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," was a prayer most graciously answered in that royal sinner's case. Remember Jonah and how he went down to the bottom of the mountains in the whale's belly and was brought even to Hell's door. Yet he lived to sing, "Salvation is of the Lord," and was brought out of the depths of the sea. Remember Manasseh, who shed very much innocent blood and yet the Grace of God brought him among thorns and made him a humble servant of the Lord. Remember Peter, how he denied his Master, but his Master forgave him and bade him feed His sheep.

Forget not the dying thief and how, in the extremity of death, filled with all the agonies of crucifixion, he looked to the Lord and the Lord looked on him—and that day he was with the King in Paradise! Think, also, of Saul of Tarsus, that chief of sinners, who breathed out threats against the people of God—and he was struck down and, before long was, in mercy, raised up, again, and ordained to be a chosen vessel to bear the Gospel among the heathen! If God has forgotten to be gracious, He has forgotten a line of things in which He has worked great wonders and in which His heart delighted from of old. It cannot be that He will turn away from that which is so dear to Him.

"Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Then why are all the old arrangements for Grace still standing? There is the Mercy Seat—surely that would have been taken away if God had forgotten to be gracious! The Gospel is preached to you and this is its assurance, "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned." If the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, He would not have mocked you with empty words.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is still living and still stands as a Priest to make intercession for transgressors. Would that be the case if God had forgotten to be gracious? The Holy Spirit is still at work convincing and converting—would that be so if God had forgotten to be gracious? Oh Brothers and Sisters, while Calvary is still a fact and the Christ has gone into Glory bearing His wounds with Him, there is a fountain still filled with blood where the guilty may wash! While there is an atoning Sacrifice, there must be Grace for sinners! I cannot enlarge on these points, for time flies so rapidly, but the continuance of the Divine arrangements, the continuance of the Son of God as living and pleading and the mission of the Holy Spirit as striving, regenerating, comforting—all this proves that God has not forgotten to be gracious!

Remember that God, Himself, must, according to nature, be always gracious so long as men will put their trust in the great Sacrifice. He has

promised to be gracious to all who confess their sins and forsake them—and look to Christ—and He cannot forget that Word without a change which we dare not impute to Him! God might sooner forget to be than forget to be gracious to those to whom He has promised His Grace. He has promised to every poor, guilty, confessing soul that will come and put His trust in Christ that He will be gracious in pardoning sin—and so it must be!

I shall come to close quarters with you. I know your despair has driven you to the question, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” and I would silence it by putting other questions to you. Is it not *you* that have forgotten to believe in Christ? “I have been praying,” says one. That is all very well, but the Gospel is, “He that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved,” not, “He that prays.” “I have been trying to come to Christ.” I know that, but I read nothing about this *trying* in Holy Scripture and I fear your *trying* is that which keeps you from Jesus. You are told to believe in Christ, not to *try to believe*! A minister in America, some time ago, was going up the aisle of his Church during a revival, when a young man earnestly cried to him, “Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?” “No,” was the answer, very deliberately given. “I cannot tell you the way to Christ.” The young man answered, “I beg pardon. I thought you were a minister of the Gospel.” “So I am,” was the reply. “How is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?” “My Friend,” said the minister, “there is no way to Christ. He is, Himself, the Way. All that believe in Him are justified from all things. There is no way to Christ; Christ is here.”

O my Hearer! Christ Himself is the Way of salvation and that way comes right down to your feet and then leads right up to Heaven! You have not to make a way to the Way, but at once to run in the way which lies before you. The way begins where you now are—*enter it*. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, and you are saved! And then you will no more ask the question, “Is His mercy clean gone forever?”

“Oh,” says one, “but I have been looking to reform myself and grow better. And I have done a good deal in that way.” That is not the Gospel! It is all very right and proper, but the Gospel is, “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” The other day I saw my bees swarming—they hung on a branch of a tree in a living mass! The difficulty was to get them into a hive. My man went with his veil over his face and began to put them into the skep and I noticed that he was particularly anxious to get the queen bee into it, for if he once had her in the hive, the rest would be sure to follow and remain with her. Now, faith is the queen bee. You may get temperance, love, hope and all those other bees into the hive, but the main thing is to get simple faith in Christ—and all the rest will come afterwards. Get the queen bee of faith and all the other virtues will attend her!

“Alas!” cries one, “I have been listening to the Gospel for years.” That is quite right, for “faith comes by hearing.” But remember, we are not saved by mere *listening*, nor even by *knowing*, unless we advance to *believing*.

The letter of the word is not life—it is the spirit of it that saves. When tea was first introduced into this country, a person favored a friend with a pound of it. It was exceedingly expensive and when he met his friend next, he enquired, “Have you tried the tea?” “Yes, but I did not like it at all.” “How was that? Everybody else is enraptured with it.” “Why,” said the other, “we boiled it in a saucepan, threw away the water and brought the leaves to the table, but they were very hard and nobody cared for them.” Thus many people keep the leaves of form and throw away the *spiritual* meaning. They listen to our doctrines, but fail to come to Christ. They throw away the true essence of the Gospel, which is faith in Jesus! I pray you, do not act thus with what I preach! Do not bury yourself in my words or even in the Words of Scripture, but pass onward to the life and soul of their meaning, which is Christ Jesus, the sinner’s hope!

All the aroma of the Gospel is in Christ! All the essence of the Gospel is in Christ and you have only to trust Him to enjoy eternal life! You guilty, worthless sinners—you at the gates of Hell, you who have nothing to recommend you, you who have no good works or good feelings—simply trust the merits of Christ and accept the Atonement made by His death and you shall be saved—your sin shall be forgiven, your nature shall be changed, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus—and you shall never say again, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

III. The time has gone and, therefore, THE DISAPPOINTED WORKER must be content with a few crumbs. You have been working for Christ, dear Brother, and have fallen into a very low state of heart, so that you cry, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” I know what state you are in. You say, “I do not feel as if I could preach; the matter does not flow. I do not feel as if I could teach; I search for instruction and the more I pull, the more I cannot get it.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Can He not fill your empty vessel again? Can He not give you stores of thought, emotion and language? He has used you—can He not do so again?

“Ah, but my friends have gone; I am in a village from which the people remove to London and I lose my best helpers.” Or, perhaps you say, “I work in a back street and everybody is moving out into the suburbs.” You have lost your friends and they have forgotten you—but, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” You can succeed so long as the Lord is with you. Be of good courage, your best Friend is left. He who made a speech in the Academy found that all his hearers had gone except Plato—but as Plato remained, the orator finished his address. They asked him how he could continue under the circumstances and he replied that Plato was enough for an audience. So, if God is pleased with you, go on, the Divine pleasure is more than sufficient! “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Did not Wesley say, when he was dying, “The best of all is, God is with us”? Therefore fear not the failure of friends.

“But, Sir, the sinners I have to deal with are such tough ones. They reject my testimony, they grow worse instead of better. I do not think I can

ever preach to them again.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” You cannot save them, but *He* can. “But I work in such a depraved neighborhood. The people are sunk in poverty and drunkenness.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Does not He know the way to save drunks? Does not He know how to rescue the harlot and the whoremonger and make them clean and chaste?

“Ah, but the Church in which I labor is in a wretched state. The members are worldly, lukewarm and divided. I have no Brethren around me to pray for me, as you have. They are always squabbling and finding fault with one another.” That is a horrible business, but, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Cannot God put you right and your Church right? If He begins with *you* by strengthening your faith, may you not be the means of healing all these divisions and bringing these poor people into a better state of mind—and then converting the sinners round about you? “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

“Ah, well,” says one, “I am ready to give it all up.” I hope you will not do so. If you have made up your mind to speak no more in the name of the Lord, I hope that Word will be like fire in your bones, for if God has not forgotten to be gracious, provoked as He has been, how can you forget to be patient? Is it possible, while God’s sun shines on you, that you will refuse to shine on the fallen? If God continues to be gracious, you ought not to grow weary in well-doing.

Perhaps I speak to some dear Brother who is very old and infirm. He can hardly hear and scarcely see, so that he reads his Bible with difficulty. He gets to the service, now, but he knows that soon he will be confined to his chamber and then to his bed. His mind is sadly failing him. He is quite a wreck. Take this home with you, my aged Brother, and keep it for your comfort if you never come out again—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Oh, no! The Lord has said, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Having loved His own which were in the world, the Lord Jesus loved them unto the end! And He will love you to the end. When the last scene comes and you close your eyes in death, blessed be His name, you shall know that He has not forgotten you!

“I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” is the Lord’s promise and His people’s sheet-anchor. Therefore, let us not fear when our frail tabernacles are taken down, but let us rejoice that God has not forgotten to be gracious. Though our bodies will sink into the dust, they will, before long, rise again, and we shall be in Heaven forever with the Lord. Blessed be His name. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 77*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 77, 502.**

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LIMITING GOD

NO. 272

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“They limited the Holy One of Israel.”
Psalm 78:41.***

MAN is always altering what God has ordained. Although God’s order is ever the best, yet man will never agree with it. When God gave forth the Law it was engraved upon two stones. The first table contained the commandments concerning man and God, the second dealt with man and man. Sins against God are sins against the first table—sins against man are offenses against the second table. Man, to prove constantly his perversity, will put the second table before the first, no, *upon* the first, so as to cover and conceal it. There are few men who will not allow the enormity of adultery, fewer still who will dispute the wickedness of murder. Men are willing enough to acknowledge that there is sin in an offense against man.

That which endangers the human commonwealth, that which would disturb the order of earthly governments—all this is wrong enough even in man’s esteem, but when you come to deal with the first table it is hard, indeed, to extort a confession from mankind. They will scarce acknowledge that there is any such thing as an offense against God, or if they do acknowledge it, yet they think it but a light matter. What man is there among you that has not in his heart often lamented sins against man, rather than sins against God? And which of you has not felt a greater compunction for sins against your neighbor, or against the nation, than for sins committed against God and done in His sight?

I say that such is the perversity of man, that he will think more of the less than the greater. An offense against the Majesty of Heaven is thought to be far more venial than an offense against his fellow creature. There are many transgressions of the first table of which we think so little that we scarcely ever confess them at all—or if we acknowledge them, it is only because the Grace of God has taught us to estimate them aright. One offense against the first table which seldom agitates the mind of an unconvicted sinner is that of unbelief and with it, I may put the want of love to God.

The sinner does not believe in God, does not trust in Him, does not love Him. He gives his heart to the things of earth and denies it to his Creator. Of this high treason and rebellion he thinks nothing. If you could take him in the act of theft, a blush would mantle his cheek. But you detect him in the daily omission of love to God and faith in His Son Jesus Christ and you cannot make him feel that he is guilty of any evil in this. Oh, strange contortion of human judgment! Oh, blindness of mortal con-

science, that this greatest of iniquities—a want of love to the All-Lovely and a want of faith in Him who is deserving of the highest trust—should be thought to be as nothing and reckoned among the things that need not to be repented of!

Among such sins of the first table is that described in our text. It is consequently one of the masterpieces of iniquity and we shall do well to purge ourselves of it. It is full of evil to ourselves and is calculated to dishonor both God and man, therefore let us be in earnest to cut it up both root and branch. I think we have all been guilty of this in our measure. And we are not free from it even to this day. Whether we are saints or sinners, we may stand here and make our humble confession that we have all “tempted the Lord our God and have limited the Holy One of Israel.”

What then, is meant by *limiting* the Holy One of Israel? Three words will set forth the meaning. We limit the Holy One of Israel sometimes by dictation to him, at other times by distrust of Him and some push this sin to its farthest extreme by an utter and entire disregard of His goodness and His mercy. These three classes all in their degree limit the Holy One of Israel.

I. In the first place, I say we limit the Holy One of Israel by DICTATING TO HIM. Shall mortal dare to dictate to his Creator? Shall it be possible that man shall lay down his commands and expect the King of Heaven to pay homage to his arrogance? Will a mortal impiously say, “Not Your will but mine be done”? Is it conceivable that a handful of dust, a creature of a day that knows nothing, should set its judgment in comparison with the wisdom of the Only Wise? Can it be possible that we should have the impertinence to map out the path of boundless wisdom, or should decree the footsteps which Infinite Grace should take and dictate the designs which Omnipotence shall attempt?

Startle! Startle at your own sin! Let each of us be amazed at our own iniquity. We have had the impudence to do this in our thoughts. We have climbed to the throne of the Highest. We have sought to take Him from His Throne that we might sit there. We have grasped His scepter and His rod. We have weighed His judgments in the balances and tried His ways in the scales. We have been impious enough to exalt ourselves above all that is called God.

I will first address myself to the saint and with the candle of the Lord attempt to show to Israel her secret iniquity and to Jerusalem her grievous sin.

Oh heir of Heaven, be ashamed and be confounded, while I remind you that you have dared to dictate to God! How often have we in our prayers not simply wrestled with God for a blessing—for that was allowable—but we have imperiously demanded it. We have not said, “Deny this to me, O my God, if You so please.” We have not been ready to play as the Redeemer did, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will,” but we have asked and would take no denial. Not with all humble deference to our Lord’s superior wisdom and grace, but we have asked and declared that

we would not be content unless we had that particular blessing upon which we had set our hearts.

Now, whenever we come to God and ask for anything which we consider to be a real good, we have a right to plead earnestly, but we err when we go beyond the bounds of earnestness and come to impudent *demand*. It is ours to ask for a blessing, but not to define what that blessing shall be. It is ours to place our head beneath the mighty hands of Divine benediction, but it is not ours to uplift the hands as Joseph did those of Jacob and say, "Not so, my father." We must be content if He gives the blessing cross-handed—quite as content that He should put His left hand on our head as the right. We must not intrude into God's almonry—let Him do as seems Him good. Prayer was never meant to be a fetter upon the sovereignty of God, much less a licensed channel for blasphemy. We must always subjoin at the bottom of the prayer this heavenly postscript, "Father, deny this if it is most for Your glory." Christ will have nothing to do with dictatorial prayers, He will not be a partaker with us in the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

Oftentimes, too, I think, we dictate to God with regard to the measure of our blessing. We ask the Lord that we might grow in the enjoyment of His presence, instead of that He gives us to see the hidden depravity of our hearts. The blessing comes to us, but it is in another shape from what we expected. We go again to our knees and we complain of God that He has not answered us, whereas the fact has been that He *has* answered the *spirit* of our prayer, but not the *letter* of it. He has given us the blessing itself, but not in the shape we asked for it. We prayed Him to give us silver, He has given us gold. But we, blind creatures, cannot understand the value of this new-shaped blessing and therefore we go grumbling to Him as if He had never heard us at all.

If you ask, especially for temporal mercies, always take care to leave the degree of those mercies with God. You may say, "Lord, give me food convenient for me," but it is not yours to stipulate how many shillings you shall have per week, or how many pounds in the year. You may ask that your bread may be given you and that your water may be sure, but it is not yours to lay down to God out of what kind of vessels you shall drink, or on what kind of table your bread shall be served up to you. You must leave the measuring of your mercies with Him who measures the rain and weighs the clouds of Heaven. Beggars must not be choosers and especially they must not be choosers when they have to deal with Infinite Wisdom and sovereignty.

And yet further, I fear that we have often dictated to God with regard to the time. As a Church we meet together and we pray God to send us a blessing. We expect to have it next week—it does not come. We wonder that the ministry is not blessed on the very next Sabbath Day—so that hundreds are pricked in the heart. We pray again and again and again and at last we begin to faint. And why is this? Simply because in our hearts we have been setting a date and a time to God. We have made up our minds that the blessing must come within a certain period. And as it

does not come, we do as it were spite our God by declaring we will stop no longer. Then we decide we have waited time enough—we have no more patience—we will be gone. It is clear the blessing will not come. We waste our words, we imagine, by seeking it.

Oh, how wrong is this!—What? Is God to be tied to hours, or months, or years? Do His promises bear dates? Has He not Himself said, “Though the vision tarry, wait for it, it shall come, it shall not tarry.” And yet we cannot wait for God’s time, but we must have our time. Let us always remember it is God’s part to limit a certain day to Israel, saying, “Today, if you will hear My voice.” But it is not our part to say to God, “Today if You will hear *my* voice.” No. Let us leave time to Him, resting assured that when the ship of our prayers are long at sea, they bring home all the richer cargo and if the seeds of supplication are long buried, they shall produce the richer harvest. For God, honoring our faith which He has exercised by waiting, shall multiply His favors and enlarge His bounty. Your prayers are out at interest at a great percentage. Let them alone. They shall come back—not only the capital, but with compound interest—if you will but wait till the time runs out and God’s promises becomes due.

Brothers and Sisters, in these matters we cannot acquit ourselves and I fear that much more than this will be necessary before our sin is fully unveiled. We have limited the Holy One in other ways and I may remark that we have done this with regard to our prayers and efforts for others. A mother has been anxious for her children’s conversion. Her eldest son has been the object of her fervent prayer. Never a morning has passed without earnest cries to God for his salvation. She has spoken to him with all a mother’s eloquence. She has prayed in private with him, she has used every means which love could suggest to make him think of a better world.

All her efforts at present seem to be wasted. She appears to be plowing upon a rock and casting her bread upon the waters. Year after year has rolled on—her son has left her house. He has commenced business for himself—he begins now to betray worldliness. He forsakes the House of Prayer which his mother frequents. She looks round every Sabbath morning, but John is not there. The tear is in her eye. Every allusion in the minister’s sermon to God’s answering prayer makes her heart beat again. And at last she says, “Lo these many years have I sought God for this one blessing. I will seek no longer. I will however, pray another month and then, if he hear me not, I think I can never pray again.

“Mother, retract the words. Blot out such a thought from your soul, for in this you are limiting the Holy One of Israel. He is trying your faith. Persevere, persevere while life lasts and if your prayers are not answered in your lifetime, perhaps from the windows of Heaven you shall look down and see the blessing of your prayers descend on the head of your child.

This has been the case, too, when we have sought to do good to our fellow men. You know a certain man in whose welfare you take an extraordinary interest. You have availed yourself occasionally of an opportunity of addressing him. You have pressed him to attend the House of God, you

have mentioned him in your private devotions and often at your family altar. You have spoken to others that they might pray with you, for you believed the promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven." But now months have rolled on and your friend seems to be in a more hopeless condition than ever. Now he will not go to the House of God at all. Perhaps some ungodly acquaintance has such power over him that your efforts are counteracted by his evil influence.

All the good you can do is soon undone and you are ready to say, "I will never use another effort. I will turn my attention to someone else. In this man's case, at least, my prayers will never be heard. I will withdraw my hand. I will not use unprofitable labor." And what is this but limiting the Holy One of Israel? What is this but saying to God, "Because You have not heard me when I wished to be heard—because you have not exactly blessed my efforts as I would have them blessed, therefore I will try this no more!" Oh impudence! Oh impertinence to the majesty of Heaven! Christian! Cast out this demon and say, "Get you behind me, Satan. For you savor not the things that are of God." Once again attempt and not once, but though a thousand times you fail, try again, for God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and your labor of love. Only continue to exercise your patience and your diligence. In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand, for either this or that shall surely prosper in its appointed season.

While thus charging the people of God with sin, I have been solemnly condemning myself and if a like conviction shall abide upon all my believing hearers, my errand is accomplished. I will address myself now to those who cannot call themselves the children of God, but who have lately been stirred up to seek salvation. There are many of you who are not hardened and careless now. There was a time when you were callous and indifferent, but it is not so with you at the present moment. You are anxiously saying, "What must I do to be saved?" and have been, perhaps, very earnestly in prayer during the last two or three months.

Every Sunday morning's service sends you home to your knees and you cannot refrain from sighs and tears even in your daily business, for you cry as one that cannot be silenced, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Perhaps Satan has been putting it into your heart that since your prayers have not been heard it is now of no avail. "Oh," says the Evil One, "these many months have you prayed to God to put away your sin and He has not heard you. Give it up—never bend your knees again. Heaven is not for *you*—make the best of this world. Go and drink its pleasures. Suck in its joys, lose not the happiness of both worlds—make yourself happy here, for God will never bless you and save you hereafter."

And is this what He has said? Oh, listen not to Satan. He designs your destruction. Hearken not to his voice. There is nothing he desires so much as that you should be his prey. Therefore, be on your watchtower against him and listen not to his flattery. Hearken to me for a season and God

bless you in the hearing, that you may no longer limit the Holy One of Israel.

Sinner what have you been doing, while you have said “I will restrain prayer because God has not as yet answered me.” I say what have you been doing? Have you not been stipulating with God as to the day when He shall save you? Suppose it is written in the book of God’s decree, “I will save that man and give him peace after he has prayed seven years,” would that be difficult for you? Is not the blessing of Divine mercy worth waiting for? If He keeps you tarrying at His gate day after day—though should you wait *fifty* years—if that gate opens at last, will it not well repay your waiting? Knock Man, knock again and go not away. Who are you that you should say to God, “I will have peace on such a day or else I will cease to supplicate”? This is a common offense with all poor trembling seeking souls. Confess it now and say unto God, “Lord I leave the time with You, but I will not cease to supplicate, for—

***‘If I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.’***

And do you not think again that perhaps the cause of your present distress is that you have been dictating to God as to the way in which He shall save you? You have a pious acquaintance who was converted in a very remarkable manner. He was suddenly convicted and as suddenly justified in the sight of God. He knows the very day and hour in which he obtained mercy and you have foolishly made up your mind that you will never lay hold upon Christ unless you feel the same. You have laid it down as in a decree, that God is to save you, as it were, by an electric shock, that you must be consciously smitten and vividly illumined, or else you will never lay hold on Christ. You want a *vision*. You dictate to God that He must send one of His angels down to tell you He has forgiven you.

Now rest assured God will have nothing to do with your dictation. With your desire to be saved He will have to do, but with your planning as to how He should save you, He will have nothing to do. Oh, be content to get salvation any way you can, by His grace, if you do but get it. If you cannot have it like the prodigal son, who felt his father’s arms about him and knew his father’s kiss and had music and dancing in the moment that he was restored—if you cannot come in by the front door, be content to enter at the back. If Mercy comes on foot do not despise her, for she is just as fair as when she rides in her chariot. Be content to go in sackcloth before God and there to bemoan your guilt and to lay hold on Him who takes away the sin of the world.

Sinner, believe in Christ—that is God’s command and your privilege. Cast yourself flat on His atonement—trust Him and Him alone and if God chooses not to comfort you in the way in which you have expected, yet be content to get the blessing so long as you receive it at all. Limit not, I beseech you, the Holy One of Israel.

Upon this point of dictation I might tarry very long and give many instances. But I choose rather to close up this first head of my discourse by observing once again, what a heinous offense, what an unreasonable in-

iquity it is for any of us to attempt to dictate to God. Oh Man, know that He is sovereign—

***“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might.”***

Will you, a beggar, dictate to the King of kings, the Lord of lords, when the angels veil their faces before Him and scarcely dare to look upon His brightness? Will you dare to lord it over Him and command your Maker?

Shall infinite wisdom stoop to obey your folly and shall Divine goodness be cooped and caged and imprisoned within the bars of *your* frantic desires? What? Do you dare to mount the steps of His Throne and affront Him with your haughty speeches, when cherubim dare not look upon His brightness—when the pillars of Heaven’s starry roof tremble and start at His reproof? Will you seek to be greater than He is? Shall mortal man be greater than his God? Shall he dictate to the everlasting—he who is born of a woman and of few days and full of folly?

No, go to His Throne, bow yourself reverently before Him—give up your will, let it be bound in golden fetters a bond-slave to God. Cry this day, “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, and let it be not as I will, but as You will.” Thus, then, I have discoursed on the first part of the subject.

II. In the second place, we limit the Holy One of Israel by DISTRUST. And here again I will divide my congregation into the two grand classes of saints and sinners. Children of God, purchased by blood and regenerated by the Spirit, you are guilty here. For by your distrust and fear you have often limited the Holy One of Israel and have said, in effect, that His ears are heavy—that they cannot hear and that His arms are shortened—that they cannot save. In your trials you have done this. You have looked upon your troubles, you have seen them roll like mountain waves—you have hearkened to your fears and they have howled in your ears like tempestuous winds and you have said, “My boat is but a feeble one and it will soon be wrecked. It is true that God has said that through tempests and tossing He will bring me to my desired haven. But alas, such a state as this was never contemplated in His promise. I shall sink at last and never see His face with joy.”

What have you done, fearful one? O you of little faith, do you know what sin you have committed? You have judged the Omnipotence of God to be finite. You have said that your troubles are greater than His power, that your woes are more terrible than His might. I say retract that thought—drown it and you shall not be drowned yourself. Give it to the winds and rest assured that out of all your troubles He will surely bring you and in your deepest distress He will not forsake you.

“But,” says one, “I did believe this once and I had hoped for an escape from my present predicament. But that escape has failed me. I did think that some friend would have assisted me and thus, I imagined I should have come out of the furnace.” Ah, and you are distrusting God because He does not choose to use the means which *you* have chosen. Because His election and *your* election are not the same, therefore you doubt Him. Why Man, he is not limited to *means*—to any means, much less to one of *your*

choosing. If He delivers you not by calming the tempest, He has a better way in store. He will send from above and deliver you. He will snatch you out of the deep waters lest the floods overflow you.

What might Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have said? Suppose they had got it into their heads that God would deliver them in some particular way. They did have some such idea, but they said, as if to prove that they trusted not really to their thought about the deliverance—“Nevertheless, be it known unto you, O king, we will not worship your gods, nor bow before the image which you have set up.” They were prepared to let God have His will, even though He used no means of deliverance. But suppose, I say, they had conferred with flesh and blood and Shadrach had said, “God will strike Nebuchadnezzar dead—just at the moment when the men are about to put us into the furnace the king will turn pale and die and so we shall escape.”

O my Friends, they would have trembled, indeed, when they went into the furnace if they had chosen their own means of deliverance and the king had remained alive. But instead of this, they gave themselves up to God, whether He delivered them or not. And, though He did not prevent their going into the furnace, yet He kept them alive in it, so that not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them. It shall be even so with you. Repose in God. When you see Him not, believe Him. When everything seems to contradict your faith, still stagger not at the promise. If HE has said it, He can find ways and means to do it. Rest assured, Sinner, He would come from His Throne to do it Himself in Person, rather than suffer His promises to be unfulfilled. The harps of Heaven should sooner lament an absent God than you should have to mourn a broken promise. Trust in Him, repose constantly on Him and limit not the Holy One of Israel.

Do you not think that the Church as a great body has done this? We do not, any of us, expect to hear that a nation is born in a day. If it should be said that in a certain Chapel in London this morning some thousand souls had been converted under one sermon, we should shake our heads incredulously and say it cannot be. We have a notion that because we have only had drops of mercy of late, we are never to have showers of it. Because mercy seems only to have come in little rills and trickling streamlets, we have conceived the idea that it never can roll its mighty floods like the huge rivers of the western world. No, we have limited the Holy One of Israel. Especially as preachers have we done it. We do not expect our ministry to be blessed and therefore it is not blessed. If we had learned to expect great things we should have them. If we had made up our minds to this—that the promise was great, that the Promiser was great, that His faithfulness was great and that His power was great—and if with this for our strength we set to work expecting a great blessing, I think we should not be disappointed. But the universal Church of Christ has limited the Holy One of Israel.

Why, my Friends, if God should will it, you need not ask where are to come the successors of such-and-such a man. You need not sit down and ask when such-and-such a one is gone where shall be another who shall

preach the word with power. When God gives the word, great shall be the multitude of them that publish it. And when the multitude shall begin to publish, believe me, God can move thousands as easily as he can move tens and where our baptismal pool has been stirred by ones and twos he can bid *millions* descend to be baptized into our holy faith. Limit not, O limit not, you Church of the living God, limit not the Holy One of Israel!

And now I turn to the poor troubled heart and although I accuse you of sin, yet I doubt not the Spirit shall bear witness with the conscience, and leading to Christ, shall this morning deliver you from its galling yoke. Poor troubled one, you have said in your heart, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." What have you done? Repent, and let the tears roll down your cheek. You have limited the Holy One of Israel. You have put your sins above His grace. You have considered that your guilt is more omnipotent than Omnipotence itself. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ. You *cannot* have exceeded the boundlessness of His Grace. Be your sins ever so many, the blood of Christ can put them all away. And if you doubt this, you are limiting the Holy One of Israel.

Another says, I do not doubt His power to save, but what I doubt is His willingness. What have you done in this? You have limited the love, the boundless love of the Holy One of Israel. What? Do you stand on the shore of a love which ever must be shoreless? Was it deep enough and broad enough to cover the iniquities of Paul and does it stop just where you are? Why, are *you* the limit, then? You stand as the limiting landmark of the grace of the Holy One of Israel? Out upon your folly! Get rid of this, your mistrust. He whom love has embraced the chief of sinners, is willing to embrace you, if now hating your sin and leaving your iniquity, you are ready to put your trust in Jesus. I beseech you, limit not the Holy One of Israel by thinking He is *unwilling* to forgive.

Are you conscious of the sin you are committing when you think God unwilling to save? Why you are accusing God of being a liar. Does not that alarm you? You have done worse than this, you have even accused Him of being perjured, for you doubt his oath. "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." You do not believe that? Then you make God to be perjured. Oh, tremble at such guilt as this, "No, but," you say, "I would not accuse Him. But He would be quite just if He were unwilling to save me." I am glad you say that. That proves you do not accuse His justice. But I still say you are limiting His love. What does He say, Himself? Has He limited it? Has He not Himself, said, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters and he that has no money; come you, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"! And you are thirsty and yet you think that His love cannot reach you!

Oh, while God assures you that you are welcome, be not wicked enough to throw the lie in the teeth of mercy. Limit not the Holy One of Israel. "But, Sir, I am such an old sinner." Yes, but limit not God. "But I am such a black sinner." Limit not the efficacy of the cleansing blood. "But I have aggravated Him so much." Limit not His infinite longsuffering. "But my

heart is so hard.” Limit not the melting power of His grace, “But I am so sinful.” Limit not the potency of the atonement. “But, Sir, I am so hard-hearted and I feel so little my need of Him.” Limit not the influences of the Spirit by your folly or your stubbornness but come as you are and put your trust in Christ and so honor God and He will not dishonor your faith.

If you will but now for half a moment consider how faithful God has been to His children and how true He has been to all His promises, I think that saint and sinner may stand together and make a common confession and utter a common prayer—“Lord, we have been guilty of doubting You. We pray that we may limit You no longer.” Oh, remember, remember more and more God’s Love and goodness to His ancient people, remember how He delivered them many a time, how He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Think how He fed them in the wilderness, how He carried them all the days of old. Remember His faithfulness to His Covenant and to His servant Abraham, and will He leave you, will He forget His Covenant sealed with blood? Will He be unmindful of His promise, will He be slow to answer or slack to deliver?

Forbid the thought, drive it far away and now come and at the foot of the Cross renew your faith. In the sight of the flowing wounds renew your confidence and say, “Jesus, we put our trust in You. Your Father’s grace can never fail, You have loved us and You will love us in spite of our sins, You will present us at last before Your Father’s face in glory everlasting.”

III. And now, to conclude, I want your solemn attention while I address myself to a very small number of persons here present—for whose sorrowful state I feel the greatest pity. It has been my mournful duty as pastor of so large a congregation, to have to deal with desperate cases. Here and there, there are men and women who have come into a state which, without meaning to wound them, I am free to confess I think, is sullen DESPAIR. They feel that they are guilty. They know that Christ is able to save. They also doctrinally understand the duty of faith and its power to bring peace but they persevere in the declaration that there is no mercy for *them*. In vain you find a parallel case. They soon discover some little discrepancy and so escape you. The most mighty promises lose all their force because they turn their edge by the declaration—“That does not mean me.”

They read in the Word of God that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” They are sinners, but they cannot think He came to save *them*. They know right well that He is able to save them to the uttermost. They would not *say* they had gone beyond the uttermost, but still they *think* so. They cannot imagine that free grace and sovereign love can ever come to them. They have, it is true, their gleams of sunshine—sometimes they believe—but when the comfortable presence of God is gone, they relapse into their old despair.

Let me speak very tenderly and O that the Spirit of God would speak also! My dear Brothers and Sisters, what are you doing? I ask you. What are you doing?—if you are not limiting the Holy One of Israel? Would you dishonor God? “No,” you say, “I would not.” But you are doing it. You are

saying that God cannot save you, or if not saying that, you are implying—that all the torture you have felt in your conscience and all the anxiety you have in your heart, have never yet moved God to look on you. Why, you make God to be the most hard-hearted of all Beings! If you should hear another groan as you are groaning, you would weep over him. But you think that God looks on you with cold indifference and will never hear your prayer. This is not only *limiting*—it is *slandering* the Holy One of Israel.

Oh, come forth, I beseech you, and dare to believe a good thing of your God. Dare to believe this, that He is willing now to save you—that *now* He will put away your sins. “But suppose, Sir, I should believe something too good?” No, that you cannot do. Think of God as being the most loving, the most tender-hearted Being that can be and you have thought just rightly of Him. Think of Him as having a mother’s heart that mourns over its sick babe. Think of Him as having a father’s heart, pitying his children. Think of Him as having a husband’s heart, loving his spouse and cherishing her and you have just thought rightly of Him. Think of Him as being one who will not look on your sins, but who casts them behind His back. Dare for once to give God a little honor.

Come, put the crown on His head—say, “Lord, I am the vilest rebel out of Hell, the most hard-hearted, the most full of blasphemous thoughts. I am the most wicked, the most abandoned. Lord let me have the honor now of being able to say, ‘You are able to save even *me*.’ And on Your boundless love, Your great, Your infinite Grace, do I rely.”

One of Charles Wesley’s hymns, which I forget just now, has in it an expression something like this—Lord, if there is a sinner in the world more needy than I am, then refuse me. If there is one more undeserving than I am, then cast me away. If there is one that needs grace and mercy, pity and compassion, more than I, then pass me by. “But, Lord,” says he in his song, “you know I, the chief of sinners am, the vilest of the vile, the most hardened and the most senseless. Then, Lord, glorify Yourself by showing to men, to angels and to devils, what Your right hand can do.”

May the Holy Spirit enable you now to come forth from the dungeon of despair and no longer limit the Holy One of Israel. I shall add no more, but leave the effect of this sermon with my God. May, by His grace, every one of us believe Him better and have greater thoughts of Him and never let us be guilty henceforth of confining, as it were, within iron bonds the limitless One of Israel.

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GOD'S DEALINGS WITH EGYPT AND ISRAEL NO. 2723

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 21, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1880.**

*“And smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the
tabernacles of Ham: but made His own people to go forth like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.”
Psalm 78:51, 52.*

THERE is a very sharp line of division here between the Egyptians and the Lord's own people, and that line of division always has existed and always will, for all attempts to blend the seed of the serpent with the seed of the woman must fail. Between the Church and the world, however debased the Church may become, and however reformed the world may be, there will still be a clear distinction even until the end—and that distinction will be seen in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when “before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”

At the present moment, in this congregation, though no human eye can read all our characters, there is a clear division among us who are here. If some infallible “teller” could now divide the house into Yeses and Noes, separating those who are on God's side from those who are not, the spectacle would be a very striking one. I pray that each one's own conscience may, at least in some measure, make that division and that we may all think within ourselves whether we fear the God of Israel or do not fear Him—whether we are for Him or against Him—for you can be well assured that as God dealt with Egypt of old, so will He deal with all His adversaries! And as He dealt with Israel of old, so will He deal with all His own people. The “parable” (for that is the expression with which the Psalm begins), will be written out again in history, and be repeated, enlarged and intensified throughout eternity. God has made an everlasting distinction between those who fear Him and those who fear Him not—and that distinction will be seen in His dealings with the children of men.

I want you, first, to spend a few minutes in solemnly and sadly thinking of *the punishment of Egypt*. And then we will more joyfully meditate upon *the salvation of Israel*.

I. First, let us think of THE PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT.

Egypt, through its kings, had become the determined adversary of God. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?" was the challenge flung down by Pharaoh in defiance. And the Lord, who is a Man of War, was not slow to accept it. Then came that great conflict between the stony-hearted king and Jehovah, the God of Israel. To all but the eye of faith, it seemed a very hopeless thing to expect that Israel should ever come forth out of Egypt. They had been so long oppressed and down-trodden that they were really only a vast herd of slaves—they had not the spirit of free men. And when Moses was sent by God to lead them out of the house of bondage, they were rather a hindrance to their deliverer than a help to him. They were a poor race of serfs crushed beneath Pharaoh's iron heel, yet Jehovah was their God and they were His people. They might be grimy with their labors at the brick kiln. They might sweat in the iron furnace, but God was on their side and He acknowledged them as His people. Notwithstanding their degradation and their sorrow, He heard their cry and He came down to deliver them—and then it became a battle royal between Jehovah of Hosts and proud Pharaoh of Egypt. God determined to strike blow after blow—to deal more gently with the tyrant at the first than He did at the last—and to end the battle by letting all men see that potsherds cannot strive successfully against a rod of iron, and that puny man, at his strongest, is as nothing before the might of his Maker! God caused all the first-born of Egypt to die on one night and so delivered His people with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Let us learn from this, that when God comes to try conclusions between Himself and His enemies, He may allow a certain time to elapse before He overthrows them. He may, for awhile, smite gently, and so give opportunities for repentance. But if they are not accepted, we may depend upon it that God is not playing with sinners. They may fancy that He is, and they may delight to listen to those dulcet voices, those velvet-lined mouths that preach, nowadays, soft things to sinners who stand out in enmity against God—but they will find that they have been deceived when God comes to close quarters with them—and they will curse the man who has deceived them and made them continue to resist the Most High to their eternal ruin! For, when He once lays hold of the sword and buckler, His own words are, "I will ease Me of My adversaries." And we may rest assured that when He comes forth to execute judgment, He will do it as thoroughly as He did when He "smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham."

I can imagine Pharaoh dreaming that he had defeated Jehovah. He possibly said to his courtiers, "I have not seen that man, Moses, for the last four days. Certainly, he has plagued this country enough, but he has played his last card now—we shall never hear of him anymore. I have stood out and I have won the day—let us have a great feast unto our gods, for, after all, we have triumphed." They spread the tables and they brought out the goblets. And the impious king drank on till far into the night. But what was that cry that made him start? What are those thousands of cries all through the palace and all around it? Pharaoh's eldest son has fallen dead in a moment! He had had him crowned a little while

before and associated him with himself in the government of the kingdom—but there he lies, struck dead in his father's presence and before all the nobles of the land! All in the court who were first-born sons perished there in the king's sight! And when he went out into the open air, that he might cool his fevered brow, he heard those awful cries from all the houses of the Egyptians, for there was not a house in the land in which there was not one dead. What do you now think, proud king? Can you stand against this unseen Power? God has struck you now even to the heart and broken your proud spirit in pieces!

We may all rest assured that God has ways of punishing us if we continue in rebellion against Him. We may live a long life and never think of Him. We may live a blasphemous life and defy Him. And He may, for a time, afflict us as He plagued Pharaoh with the flies and the locusts and the milder judgments—but He will deal with our *souls* in sterner fashion in the next world when He comes to mete out vengeance without mercy, because His Grace was utterly despised by us. David said, "Your hand shall find out all Your enemies: Your right hand shall find out those that hate You." So He will and He will know how to strike us in the most tender place if we still continue to resist Him.

In the case of Pharaoh, it was his own chickens that came home to roost—*his sins brought their own punishment*. He had slain many of the children of Israel and God had, in effect, said to Him, "Israel is My first-born. Let My people go." But as he would not let God's first-born go, God's stroke of judgment came upon his first-born. This is, perhaps, the most dreadful truth about future retribution—that a man will see his own sin in his suffering just as he sees his face in a glass. Hell is sin fully developed—a man's own soul permitted to go to extreme limits with that which it now carries out in a mitigated form—and so, becoming like a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, tormenting itself beyond all power of imagination!

I do not know anything more awful to one's own self than to know that one has done wrong. When conscience is aroused, then you can go to Jesus and be washed from the stains of guilt—and how sweet is that sense of perfect cleansing! But that conscience will still remain to accuse those for whom there will be no washing! That sense of sin will still be present, only a hundred times more vividly—and there will be no bath that can take away the sin. We shall continue to feel the guilt of our transgressions, but we shall not be able to find the sugar on the pill which tempted us when we were here, and we shall have to let it lie like a burning fire within our spirit, forever seeing our own sin, the sin of our whole life, all that we did, said and thought, coming home to us, just as Pharaoh's evil conduct came home to him.

I do not like speaking upon these horrible themes and I would not mention them if they were not true—and if men could be led to escape from sin by more tender topics—but their ears are dull of hearing, so they need the trumpet to sound an alarm! And the watchman is bound to give warning in the time of danger, for it is written, "If the watchman sees the sword come, and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned; if the sword comes, and takes any person from among them, he

is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

Remember also, dear Friends, that *there was no escape from that judgment of God upon Egypt*. The Israelites were sheltered under the sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb and not one of them was harmed. But Egypt's lintels and doorposts had no sprinkling of the blood on the bunch of hyssop and, therefore, not one first-born son in their houses escaped.

Nor was there *any possibility of recovery from that blow*. They could not restore to life one of those who fell by the mysterious stroke of the avenging angel who flew so swiftly through the land. And when God deals with men in judgment, none of them shall be able to escape. If they could go to the top of Carmel, He would find them there. If they should plunge into the depths of the sea, even there would He give commandment to the crooked serpent—and they would be punished for their sin. If they should borrow the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, His warrant officers would be there first, waiting to arrest the fugitives. There is no escape from God's judgment and no recovery from His blows. Let God kill the first-born in Egypt and they are killed! Let God condemn the ungodly and they are condemned! Let God curse them, and they are, indeed, cursed! What the curse of God must mean, may you and I, my dear Hearers, never know!

I want to turn away from this sad part of my subject, but before I do, I must ask each one of you this question—Are you an enemy of the God of Israel? If so, you can see, in the punishment of Egypt, how He will deal with you. You cannot be victorious in this fight, so yield at once! Possibly you say, "No, I am not an enemy of God, yet I never think of Him." But He made you! He breathed into you the breath of life and yet you say that you never think of Him? What a shameful slight you thus put upon Him, His Majesty! He is here close to you at this moment. He surrounds your every step with mercy and yet you never think of Him? Shall I give you one of His own messages to remember? It is a very dreadful one—"Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." May none of you ever come to know what that terrible verse means!

I am glad that it is not the duty of the preacher to look into the future and to see even one of you perishing in sin. I could not bear to turn my eyes that way, nor even to think of it as possible. Escape, I pray you, while you can escape! Flee from the wrath to come! Lay hold on eternal life! The door of God's mercy is open at present and whoever believes in Jesus Christ passes in through that door. In fact, He is the Door, as He said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, He shall be saved." Oh, that you may come unto God by Him, and that there may be peace between you and God henceforth and forever!

II. Now I will leave that sorrowful part of my theme, for I want to speak about God's own people while we think of THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL. The second verse of our text runs thus—"He made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."

I might say a great deal about how they came to be His people—by His eternal choice and Sovereign Grace—but I am not going into the doctrinal side of the subject so much as the practical. Let me say, then, that *God has His people to this day*—He has a people in this world right now who are as distinctly His as the Jews were—and who are even more separated from the rest of mankind than the children of Israel were from the heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. The all-important question for each one of you is—Do you belong to the Lord's people? I will tell you what is their distinguishing mark—they are those who have *faith*. Abraham is the father of the faithful. He believed God and all those who rely upon God as Abraham did, are Abraham's spiritual seed—and the Lord is their God. He chose them, but they have also chosen Him. They can truly say, "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

Now, can we who are here say that we believe in the invisible God and that we are trying to worship Him in that simple way which He prefers? We do not invent gaudy ceremonies, nor anything that springs of will-worship—we remember that our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." This is the special and distinctive mark of the child of God, that whereas another man takes into his calculation only as much as he can see, or hear, or touch—this man bases his chief calculation upon God whom he cannot see and whose voice he never heard with his ears—and he lives as seeing Him who is invisible, trusting in Him whom, not having seen, He loves. I ask you, dear Friends, is that your character? Have you been brought to trust in Jesus Christ's blood for the pardon and cleansing of all your sins? And is your life now a life of faith upon the Son of God? "The just shall live by faith" and that faith is the mark of God's people in the world—they have faith in Him while others have not.

Many men believe in themselves. They boast of being self-made men. It is as well that they did make themselves in that sense, for they are no credit to anybody else! Some people have placed their reliance upon others. In their exercise of faith they go no further than friends whom they can see. Their friends, inasmuch as they rely upon them, and not upon God, practically become their gods. Whatever a man depends upon, whatever rules his mind, whatever governs his affections, whatever is the chief object of his delight—is his god. So we can all judge whether Jehovah is our God or not. Do we realize His Presence and power? Do we know that there *is* such a God? Do we love Him? Do we delight ourselves in Him? Can we truly say that the greatest joy we ever have is that there is such a God and that He is ours, and we are His? The ungodly man who thereby proves that he is a fool, says in his heart, "There is no God." He wishes there were none, but to the child of God, it would be the greatest loss that he could sustain if he were to lose his God. He delights himself in God. God is his exceeding joy. He is, indeed, his all. This is the mark of the people of God and God has such a people scattered up and down in all churches and throughout the entire world—and those are the

people with whom He will deal as He dealt with Israel of old—"He made His own people to go forth like sheep."

That leads us to our second point, which is that *God brings these people out from among all others*. He brought Israel up out of Egypt and if you are one of His people, He will fetch you out of the world. You may live for years in the world, as the Israelites lived in Goshen, and you may say to yourself, "I do not want a better heritage than this." But if you are one of the Lord's own, He will turn that Goshen of yours into a place of bondage until you sigh, and cry, and long to be delivered from it! God did not drive His people out of Egypt, but He led them—they came willingly and gladly, for Egypt had become a place of misery to them. So does the world become, with all its sinful pleasures. Its fine glories turn to emptiness and vanity to the true child of God and God fetches him out of it all.

I have been astonished, sometimes, at the way in which God fetches out His people. Some of them get as far into the enemy's country as ever they can, but He brings them out. Some have gone into drunkenness, others into blasphemy, some even into what they call Free Thought—which is a state of sad bondage to the soul—and they have thought that there they would never be reached by God's mercy, yet He has tracked them out, brought them back to Himself with weeping and supplication, and made them loathe the place and the company that they once loved! When that prodigal son went away from home, with his purse full of gold and silver, it did not look as though he would ever go back to his father. Look at him there in the far country, wasting his substance with riotous living! What vile company he frequented! There was nothing filthy but he delighted in it—and so it came to pass that in process of time, a citizen of that country sent him into his fields to feed swine.

The prodigal had neither swine nor fields of his own. He had been living at such a rate that he had spent all that he had. Yet he did come back to his home, for he was his father's own child—he was obliged to go back or to starve. It is a good thing for prodigals to be brought to extremities. Some time ago I met with a young man, the son of a very godly father, and I was grieved to hear him ridicule religion and ridicule it very bitterly, too. In the course of our conversation, he said that he was keeping racehorses, and I said to him, "Keep as many as you can, for there is no hope of your ever coming back to God till you have spent all that you have, so spend it as fast as you can. Get down to the swine trough, and when you are ready to fill your belly with the husks, I daresay you will want to come back." He said that I was very sarcastic, but I told him that I was in solemn earnest and that I thought that was the usual way in which profligates went. When they have spent all, there arises a mighty famine in the land—and when they begin to be in need, they come back. But why should any of you need God to use such rough methods of fetching you back to Him? Go home at once, poor wandering child, to the great God who waits to welcome you! Oh, that His Spirit may constrain you even now!

So we see that God still has a people in the world and that He will fetch out those people of His from the rest of mankind. With a high hand

and an outstretched arm He will bring them out, even as He brought Israel out of Egypt!

Notice, next, that the Lord not only brings His people away from others, but *He brings them to Himself*—"He made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He Himself going before them through the desert way like a shepherd. Oh, that God would, this very hour, bring out of the world and unto Himself some of those whom He has chosen, for that is the soul's true place—following God as the sheep follow the shepherd! Where can any soul be so much at home as with the God who made it? Where is a son ever so completely in his right place as when he is at his father's table? Where can my poor heart ever hope to find rest but on the bosom of my God? Oh, that the Lord would, in His infinite mercy, bring any wanderers who are here to Himself! The way to God must always be through Jesus Christ—He Himself said, "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." O poor wandering Souls, come to God through Jesus Christ His Son! Follow where He leads and always walk in His way!

Further, in bringing sinners to Himself, *God will also bring them to one another*. "He made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He does not say that they should be like a solitary dog that comes at his master's whistle, but like a flock of sheep that move together in one direction. One mark of the children of God is that they love one another and that they associate with each other. Why have we been guided to form churches, and other Christian communities? It is because we are gregarious creatures and need mutual sympathy and companionship. Christ's sheep are not like ravening wolves that hunt in pairs, or singly, but they delight in company. There are some professing Christians who seem as if they could get on best by themselves, but I think that the most of us are never so happy as when we are enjoying fellowship with those who love the same Savior whom we love! We say, concerning the place where we meet with the saints—

***"There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."***

There is no society for you young people who have been lately converted like the Church of Jesus Christ. So seek admission into it—join with the rest of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ and make your home with them. I think that you hardly give evidence of being God's child if you go in and out of His house and never speak to anybody there, and never acknowledge anyone as a Brother or Sister in the Lord. Where the Father is love, the Spirit is love and the elder Brother is love, love should rule in all the household! "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." It is one of the marks of God's people that they love each other! He leads them forth like a flock of sheep. He brings them into union with one another. He gives them happy fellowship in His Church and so guides them to Heaven.

That is our last point—the Lord brings His people out from the world, and brings them to Himself, and to fellowship with one another—and then *He guides them to a place of rest*, even as He led Israel into Canaan. The Lord is gently leading all Believers onward towards their blessed

resting place above. You are not going down into Egypt, Brother, like poor old Jacob went with the wagons in the olden times—you are going up to Canaan! You shall be fed all through the desert—the manna shall fall all round your tent every morning, the water from the smitten Rock shall flow close to you through all your wanderings—and your Lord Himself has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Your hair is whitening, you lean heavily upon your staff, you have not many more years of pilgrimage left, but to the end of your wilderness journey, your feet shall not swell, neither shall your garments wax old upon you—still shall your shoes be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be! Jehovah never yet forsook any soul that trusted Him!

Some of us can bear witness to His faithfulness—not for so many years as others of you have seen—but some of us can talk of 30 years' experience of a faithful God. And though we have forgotten Him and grieved Him, He has never once broken any promise that He has made! Oh, the deliverances we have had, the merciful interpositions of His gracious hand on our behalf! He is a good God, a blessed God! His praises we can never fully sing. The service of God is happiness below as it is eternal bliss above. If I knew that I would die like a dog. If it could be proven to me that my faith would all turn out to be a delusion, I would like, somehow, never to be free from the delusion! It is so blessed a thing to serve God, even in this life! He gives us such joy and peace that though many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet His service is perfect freedom—and to honor Him is our supreme delight. Blessed be His holy name!

Then comes the end, the passage of the river Jordan and the entrance into the promised inheritance. Perhaps you are asking, “How shall I ever cross that river to enter into the portion that God has marked out for me by line and lot?” Do not be afraid! Many timorous saints go over that long-dreaded stream dry-shod—they never know that they are dying. How many fall asleep on earth and open their eyes in Heaven! I can fancy them almost thinking, “Am I really in eternity?” Yet the soul will never need to ask that question when once it has entered the pearly gates—

***“O blissful hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God.”***

An ethereal joy, such as I never knew to the full, before, shall fill my spirit when once I am absent from the body, present with the Lord! Do not be afraid to die, Beloved, but rather look at death as an experience to be desired. I have not the slightest wish to escape it. Those who live till Christ comes and do not die will have no preference over them that fall asleep in Him. Indeed, they will lose the fellowship with Him, in His death and burial, that others will have. I like that verse which I have often quoted—

***“Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory thro' death led the way.”***

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, our great Joshua will assuredly bring us into the Promised Land, Jordan or no Jordan! We shall have our lot and our inheritance beyond the river, that is, if we truly trust in Him. How

about that matter? Are you resting in Jesus Christ the one Mediator between God and men? Have you faith in the living God? A living people must have a living God. Oh, if your money is your god, if your belly is your god, if this world is your god, if Satan is your god you will have Egypt's doom! But if, through Christ Jesus the Lord, God is your one hope, and joy, and confidence, then be not afraid, for He will lead you through the wilderness and He will bring you into your eternal rest! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37.**

It may be, beloved Friends, that there is a word of comfort for some of you in this "Psalm of David." If any of you have been perplexed and worried, and there has been a stern conflict within your spirit, here are some cheering words which will bring a message from God to you.

It may be worth your while to remember that the 37th Psalm and the 73rd are upon the same subject. They are the same figures, reversed, but they both deal with the great mystery which has vexed the hearts of godly men in all generations.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* What a contrast there is between the grass before the mower comes with his scythe, and that same grass when it is cut down! And there is the same kind of difference between the glory of ungodly men at one moment and their destruction the next. How beautiful the fertile meadow appears before you mow its many-colored flowers, yet in how short a time all its beauties are cut down and withered in the sun!

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* The Psalmist begins with, "Fret not yourself . . . neither be envious," but he advances to something higher. He seeks to lead his hearer or reader up to "trust in the Lord," and then still further up to, "delight in the Lord." A Christian should constantly be on the rising scale—though he is always in the way of change, it should be a change for the better. Take care, dear Friends, that you are people of simple trust—"Trust in the Lord"—and then you shall advance to delight in Him! "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

5, 6. *Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* It may be very dark with you just now, but God will turn your midnight into noonday. It is only He who can do it, therefore be sure to commit your way unto Him—"trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

7. *Rest in the LORD.* Not only rest *on* Him, but rest *in* Him—get into such close fellowship with Him that you really "rest in the Lord."

7, 8. *And wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* It is fretting that leads to anger and all manner of evil, but when the heart truly rests in God, it forsakes wrath. When we get away from resting in the Lord, we soon drift out upon a very stormy sea where our poor little boats are not able to hold their own. Therefore is it most necessary for us to obey the injunction, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil."

9, 10. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* The very house he inhabited, the grand estate which he called his own, shall be called by the name of another owner and he shall be blotted out of remembrance.

11-15. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.* They were so eager "to cast down the poor and needy" that they used both sword and bow against them, yet they could not succeed in their evil designs, for God took care of His own people and, therefore, the Psalmist was able to say concerning their enemies, "Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken."

16. *A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.* "Many wicked." That is a strong expression! The Psalmist does not merely mention the riches of one wicked man, but he says, "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of *many* wicked."

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* He keeps on upholding them. He holds them up and, in another sense, He *lifts* them up on high and holds them up near to Himself in the glorious sunshine of fellowship with Him.

18. *The LORD knows the days of the upright.* He is well acquainted with their bright days and their dark days. He keeps a diary of all their ever-changing experiences. "The Lord knows the days of the upright."

18. *And their inheritance shall be forever.* There is an accompaniment upon Covenant blessings which ensures their enjoyment by all the chosen seed—and they shall never be taken from them. "Their inheritance shall be forever."

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* They shall not only get, as we say, "a sup and a bite," but, "they shall be satisfied." And that even "in the days of famine," when other people starve! They are well fed whom God feeds! There is no table like the one furnished and supplied by Omnipotence. He who is infinite in resources can readily supply all our necessities.

20, 21. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall vanish. Into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy and gives.* He prefers to do that rather than to lend; it generally comes to the same thing in the long run and he may as well know from the first what he is really doing. “The righteous shows mercy and gives.”

22, 23. *For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way.* What a beautiful expression that is, “the steps of a good man”—the very steps, the little things, the daily actions, the ordinary progress of a good man—“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delights in his way.” Our way is sometimes rough, but if God takes a delight in it, it must be right. It is a joy to us to know that the lives of godly men are delightful to the Most High.

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* There may be a stumble, or even a fall, and he will grieve over it. He may suffer great losses and he may think that there is an end to his mercies, but it shall not be so. God’s servants are like the sheep—they may fall many times, but they are soon up again. Hypocrites are like the swine—when they fall, they wallow in the mire, which is their congenial element.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* David had not seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but we have often seen it, for, when the seed of the righteous do not behave themselves, they have to suffer poverty as well as other people. But, under the Old Covenant, David could truly say that he had not seen this grievous sight. Yet many of us could go as far as David did in the first part of the verse—“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.” No, that shall never be the case and it is a very amazing circumstance which they who have to distribute charity have often noticed—how seldom, comparatively, do they find godly people very greatly reduced. Somehow or other, God provides for them.

The trouble we have with our Orphanages is to find the orphans of godly men and women, for they are very few compared with those of other people, You may look over any list you like, and you shall find that very seldom are the saints reduced to absolute poverty. Yet, when poverty does come, and it does come to some of the very best of men and women, then God blesses it to them and bears them up beneath it, so that they do not really lack any good thing. As for the gracious man—

26-37. *He is ever merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he*

is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. When you come to sum up the whole of his life, the total of it amounts to this—"peace." After all his varied experiences, God did give him rest and with all the turmoil and tossing which came occasionally upon him, still he was a man to be envied. It is the end to which we must always look, after all—and concerning the perfect and upright man the Psalmist says, "the end of that man is peace."

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD.* It is not the result of their own goodness or merit—it is wholly "of the Lord." Righteous men are saved men because the Lord saves them by His Grace and that is where they put their confidence.

39. *He is their strength in the time of trouble.* Dwell on that sweet short sentence. Not only does the Lord give them strength, but He, Himself, "is their strength in the time of trouble." He is so near to His people that all the Omnipotence of His Godhead is theirs. Are you in trouble just now, dear child of God? Well, you have strength enough to carry you through it all if this is true, as it is—"He is their strength in the time of trouble." If God Himself is your strength, do not talk about being weak! Of course you are weakness, itself, apart from Him—do not expect to be anything other than that—but then remember the Psalmist's declaration, "He is their strength in the time of trouble."

40. *And the LORD shall help them.* Do you need anything more than this great promise? You have a heavy load to carry, but it is nothing to Him who is Omnipotent. "The Lord shall help them."

40. *And deliver them.* He shall help them while they are in the trouble and bring them out of it in due time.

40. *He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.* O dear Friends, lean hard upon God! Lay down all your burdens at your Savior's feet and rest there in holy and happy confidence in Him! May the Lord give to all of us the Grace to enjoy this sweet rest, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 114, 885, 846.

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

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows,
turned back in the day of battle.”
Psalm 78:9.*

I DO not think that it has ever been clearly ascertained to what particular historical event Asaph here refers, and I do not find that any of the commentators mention a very obscure passage in the First Book of Chronicles which I venture to suggest may give us the explanation. In the first Book of Chronicles, the seventh chapter and the twentieth verse, you read—“And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him.”

This event appears to have occurred while the children of Israel were still in Egypt. It has been supposed by some that these sons of Ephraim made a raid upon the promised land and attacked the men of Gath. Believing the land to be theirs by promise they went to take it before they had Divine authority to do so. They made God’s decrees the rule of their life instead of God’s revealed will, and so they soon fell into trouble—as those people always do who make that mistake—and their father Ephraim mourned over them many days.

But it appears to have been, rather, an attack made upon them by some men of Gath. The people seem, some of them, to have been of Egyptian origin and they probably made an attack upon the cattle of the men of Ephraim. These young men defended their cattle for a time, but at last—if this is the event which this Psalm refers to—it would appear they turned their backs and so fell slain. That may or may not be. Still there are other passages in history which might serve to illustrate the text.

You are aware that Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and probably on account of this the ark of God was first placed at Shiloh. On the occasion when Hophni and Phinehas were slain, the children of Israel, we are told, fled. It appears to have been the peculiar duty of the men of Ephraim, in whose tribe Shiloh was, to guard the ark. It may be possible that they were set around the ark as a bodyguard to it, but fled at the approach of the Philistines, or fell slain together with Hophni and Phinehas on that terrible and disastrous day.

If this is the event alluded to you will find the history of it in the fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Perhaps, however, reference is made to the whole history of the tribe of Ephraim, that though they were well

armed and were dexterous men in the use of the bow, yet on many occasions they turned their backs in the day of battle. Whether any of these explanations interpret the historical reference or not, the subject in itself will furnish us with a theme for meditation.

I. We will first consider for a little while WHAT THESE MEN DID. They turned their backs. When the time for fighting came they ought to have shown their fronts. Like bold men they should have kept their face to the foe and their breast against the adversary. But they dishonorably turned their backs and fled.

This, I am sorry to say, is not an unusual thing among professing Christians. They turn back—they turn back in the day of battle. Some do this at the first appearance of difficulty. “There is a lion in the way,” said the slothful man, “I shall be slain in the streets.” They hear that there is some trouble involved in Christian service or that some persecution may be met with in the pursuit of the Truth of God and straightway they look before they leap, as the world has it, and turn back to the way which they suppose to be that of safety.

Timorous and Mistrust come running down the hill crying, “The lions! The lions!” And thus may a pilgrim turn back towards the City of Destruction. Others are somewhat braver. They bear the first brunt. When the skirmishers begin these are as bold as any! They can return blow for blow and you hear them boast, as they buckle on their armor, at such a rate that you would suppose, if you did not know that boasters are seldom good at fighting, that they must certainly be victorious. During the first thrust they stand like martyrs and behave like heroes, but very soon, when the armor gets a little battered and the fine plume on their helmet a little stained, they turn back in the day of battle.

Some professors bear the fight a little longer. They are not to be laughed out of their religion. They can stand the jeers and jests of their old companions. When they find that they are hated by the society which once loved them so much they can put up with that, and they are very much complimented by themselves on having done it. “Cowards,” they say, “are those who flee. But we shall never do that!”

But by-and-by the skirmishers have done their work. And if it comes to a hand-to-hand fight the struggle begins to be somewhat more arduous and now we shall see what metal they are made of. The enemy gets hold of them and—

***“That desperate tug their soul might feel
Through bars of brass and triple steel.”***

Then they find that they are being hugged in the wrong place! They are touched in a tender part and so they also turn back in the day of battle! And, alas, sad as it is to say it—firmly as we believe that every child of God is safe, yet is it true that many who profess to be so, after having fought so long that you would suppose the next thing would be for them to rest upon their laurels and receive their crown—just at the very last they fall and turn back!

We have seen gray-headed apostates as well as juvenile ones. There have been those who seemed to wear well for a time but at last one crushing blow came which they could not bear and they gave way before it! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is only those who persevere to the *end* that will be

saved! And only those who have a true faith in Jesus Christ have a sure evidence of their election of God! These are they who shall be clothed with white raiment and shall sit down upon His Throne forever.

But how many who say they will to do this, after all, turn back? I may be describing—I hope I am not—some actual case here. Some of you may say, as you turn the thought over in your minds—

***“My feet had almost gone.
My steps had well near slipped.”***

That young man over yonder was so much jeered at the other day by those with whom he works that he felt it was very unkind and he did think something about renouncing his religion altogether. And my other Brother yonder, who has had so many losses, has lately had such a time as he never had before and he thinks nobody else ever had. He cries, “God has forsaken me!” He cannot just now say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” He thinks, “Surely I had better turn to the world. I had better leave my religion and give it up, for I am encompassed about with such a terrible conflict that I shall never win the victory!”

Ah, Brethren, these are often the trials that God sends, and it is by these that He separates the chaff from the wheat and lets us see who are true soldiers and who are only the lackeys who wear regimentals, but have not the soldier’s heart pulsing beneath the scarlet. God grant us Grace to be found at last men that turned not back in the day of battle! If I take the history of the children of Ephraim, I should say that they turned their backs and failed to defend the ark. There are some who, when they are defending the Truth of God, shun controversy. They are of such a timid disposition—a *loving* disposition they call it—that as soon as ever the war-trumpet sounds they find it to be their duty to attend to the baggage in the rear.

They are very brave men, indeed, in that particular quarter of the conflict where it does not happen to rage. But there in the front—where the corpses are piled on heaps, and where the battle-axes drip with gore—they never will be found because they have not the courage to fight and to conquer for Jesus. As far as they are concerned the ark of God may be taken by the Philistines because they turn their backs. These Ephraimites ought, too, as Joshua had set the example, to have conquered Canaan and to have driven out the Canaanites still left.

Ah, my Brethren, there are some of you whose sins still live because you have turned your backs upon them, but not in the right sense, for you have turned your backs against *contending* with sin. There is that bad temper of yours—you have given up trying to curb it. You say, “Well, you know many of God’s children have bad tempers,” whereas you know that this is very wicked thing to say. You ought to slay that Agag! You have no business to tolerate a bad temper. You must never have any peace with that spiteful temper or that hasty temper of yours—you must down with it, or else it will down with you—and if you do not overcome it, it will overcome you. Rest assured that you are guilty and that you turn your back if you do not fight with it.

So too with that worldliness of yours and that want of a prayerful spirit. If you say, “Well, I will be content to be as I am. I will not try after a high state of piety,” you turn your backs, my Brothers and Sisters. You ought

to slay all these Canaanites—and you *must* do it in Christ's name and not spare so much as one of them—but say, “they compass me about, like bees, yes, they compass me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.”

And then, when these people turned their backs, Canaan was not won. So it is with you. The Lord's kingdom is not yet fully extended. And just when you ought to be pushing far and wide the conquests of the Cross, and be letting this great city of ours know that the King reigns mighty to save, you turn back in the day of battle! There are some Christians here who are doing *nothing*. I should not say this, perhaps, if I were preaching on Sunday, for I thank God that I could not in my own heart say it of my own members.

The most of them are doing, I believe, as much as lies in them. Or if not, I hope they very soon will be. But I am persuaded that there are many other Christians who are not doing what they should do. They are shrinking from practical service. They come in here, perhaps, on a Thursday night and get a little bit, and they go elsewhere on other evenings of the week and pick up sweet morsels and crumbs. They like being fed very well but they do not like work so much. There is a certain little company that come here on weekday evenings, into whose ears I should like to whisper and ask them what they are doing for Christ.

They are spiritual vagrants who go from one place to another but have no settled home where they work for the Master. And they are of very little credit to anybody. We must, all of us, have a sphere of labor! And though I am glad to see all of you, as many as like to come, yet I pray you do have your own place for your own work, and are not like the children of Ephraim who “turned back in the day of battle.”

II. Having thus observed what these men of Ephraim did, we come to look at the inopportune time WHEN THEY DID IT. They turned back, and their doing so would not have mattered much had they done it in a day of feasting. They could always be spared, then. But that was not when they did it. They always had their faces to the front when there was any feasting to be done. They turned back. When? On holidays, when the banners waved high and the silver trumpets sounded?

No, they were in the front then! Exeter Hall! May meetings! How many people are in the front there and then? When there is something sweet to feed upon they do not think of turning back! But these people turned back on a different occasion—they turned back in the *day of battle*. They turned back, it seems, then, just when they were to be tried. Ah, how much there is we do that will not stand trial! How much there is of godliness which is useful for anything except that which it is meant for! It is all in vain for me to say, if I have bought a waterproof coat, that it is good for everything except keeping the water out. Why, then it is good for nothing!

And so there are some Christians who have got a religion that is good for every day except the day when it has to be tested—and then it is good for nothing! An anchor may be very pretty on shore, and it may be very showy as an ornament when it lies on the ship's deck or hangs from the side. But what is the good of it if it will not hold when the wind blows and the

vessel needs to be held fast? So, alas, there is much of religion and of godliness, so called, that is no good when it comes to the day of trial.

The soldier is truly proved to be a soldier when the war trumpet sounds and the regiment must go up to the cannon's mouth. Then shall you know, when the bayonets begin to clash, who has the true soldier's blood in him! But ah, how many turn back when it really comes to the conflict—for then the day of trial is too much for them! They turned back at the only time when they were of any sort of use. A man who has to fight is not of any particular use to his country, that I know of, except when there is fighting to be done. Like a man in any other trade, there is a season when he is wanted.

Now, if the Christian soldier never fights, of what good is he? That is a very remarkable passage in one of the Prophets where the Lord compares His people to a vine, and then He says of them in words of which I will give the sense, "If the vine bears fruit it is very valuable, but if it bears no fruit, then it is good for nothing at all." An oak without fruit is valuable for its timber, and even thorns are useful, for you may make a hedge of them.

Smaller plants may be used for some medicinal purposes, but the *vine*, if it bears no fruit, is absolutely good for nothing. "Will a man even make a peg of it, to hang a vessel?" said the Prophet. No, it is of no service whatever. So is it with the Christian. If he is not thorough and true he is no good at all. You can make nothing of him whatever. He is, to use Christ's expressive words, "Neither fit for the land nor even for the dunghill, and men cast him out." Who would enlist a soldier that knew he would turn back? And who among us would like to be in his regiment? Take off his colors, play "The Rogue's March," and turn him out of the barracks!

And this is what will happen to some professors who turn back in the day of battle! Their regimentals will be torn off, and they will be excluded from the Church of God because they turned back in the day of trial and at the time when they were needed. They turned their backs, too, like fools, in the day when victory was to be won. The soldier wants to distinguish himself. He wants to rise out of the ranks. He wants to be promoted. He hardly expects an opportunity of doing this in time of peace! But the officer rises when in time of war he leads a successful charge. And so it is with the Christian soldier. I make no advance while I am not fighting. I cannot win if I am not warring. My only opportunity for conquering is when I am fighting.

If I run away when there is a chance of winning the crown, then I am like the ship that does not come out of harbor when there is a fair wind, or like the man who does not avail himself of the high tide to get his vessel over the bar at the harbor's mouth. I cannot win without *fighting* and therefore I thank God when the trial comes, and count it a joy when I fall into manifold temptations—because now I may add to my faith one virtue after another—till my Christian character is all complete. To throw away the time of conflict is to throw away the crown!

Oh simple Heart! Oh silly Heart, to be afraid of suffering for Jesus! You are, in fact, afraid of reigning with Him, for you must do the one if you would do the other. You, young woman, who are so alarmed at a little laughing, remember you cannot go to Heaven without being laughed at

sometimes in the circle in which you move, or the family in which you live. He that will live a godly life in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution! Since, then, this is the way to Heaven, why do you turn from it? Be not like these children of Ephraim who turned back when there was a crown to be won!

They turned back, once more, when turning back involved the most disastrous defeat. The ark of God was taken. "Ichabod," the enemy cried, for the glory was departed from Israel because the children of Ephraim turned back in the day of battle. And so, dear Friends, unless God gives you preserving Grace to stand fast to the end, do you not see that you are turning back—to *what?* To perdition! You do not turn back merely to the *world*. That is what it looks like, perhaps, to you—but you really turn back to Hell!

If, after having once put your hand to the plow, you look back, you are unworthy of the kingdom. But what are you worthy of? Why, those "reserved seats" in Hell! Did you ever think of that? There are such, and let me quote a passage, which proves it. We are told in one place of darkness "reserved" for some who were "wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!" When you turn back you turn back to those reserved places where the darkness is more black and the pain more terrible. Oh, may God save you from ever turning back in the day of battle! This, then, is when they did it—they turned back in the day of battle.

III. But now let us notice WHO THEY WERE THAT TURNED BACK. They were "children of Ephraim," and they are described as "being armed and carrying bows," or bows throwing forth sharp arrows. They were men of a noble parentage. They were the children of Ephraim. Joshua was of that line and he was the greatest of conquerors who led the people into the promised land.

And you *professors*, you profess to be descended from our Joshua—Jesus the Conqueror—and will you turn back? Are you followers of the Savior who gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and are you afraid or ashamed of anything? He gave His face to be spat upon, and will you hide your faces at the mention of His name because fools choose to laugh at you? Followers of Joshua, and yet afraid? Followers of Jesus, and yet blush? God grant that we may never blush except when we think that we ever blushed at the thought of His Son!

Oh, You dear, despised, and persecuted One, I see You on Your way amidst the scoffers! One plucks Your beard. Another pulls Your hair. A third casts his accursed spittle into Your face! Another beats You, Another cries, "Let Him be crucified." They mock You with all forms of mockery. Taunt and jeer they heap upon You! They fill Your mouth with vinegar and give You gall to drink. They pierce Your hands and Your feet, and yet You go on along Your way of kindness and of mercy!

And I—what have I ever suffered compared with You? And these, Your people—what have any of these endured, or what can they endure—compared with all Your griefs? Your martyrs follow You. Up from their fiery stakes they mount to their thrones! Confessors follow You! From

dungeons and from racks their testimony sounds. And, shall we, upon whom the ends of the earth are come in these softer and gentler times—shall we turn back, and say we know not the Man? O God, forbid! Keep us faithful unto You, that we, the sons of Ephraim, may not turn back in the day of battle!

Then, again, they were armed, and had proper weapons—weapons which they knew how to use—and good weapons for that period of warfare. And as Christians, what weapons have we? Here is this “Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Here is a quiver filled with innumerable arrows, and God has put into our hands the bow of prayer, by which we may shoot them—drawing that bow by the arm of faith against our innumerable foes. What weapons of holy warfare do you need better than those which this sacred armory supplies?

Read the last chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see how the Apostle, with a triumphant glorying, takes you through God’s armory and bids you look at the various pieces of armor, and the various weapons that are provided for you. If you lose the battle, it is not for want of being armed! And if you desert from the ranks it is not for the want of bows!

But what is more, another translation seems to show that these Ephraimites were very skillful in the use of the bow and yet they turned back. Oh, may God grant that none of us who have preached to others, and preached to others with fluency and zeal, may ever have our own weapons turned against us! I may make a confession here now. I have read some of my own utterances and have trembled as I have read them. And afterwards I have wept over them, not wanting to alter them, not regretting them, but fearing and trembling lest I should have my own words used in judgment against me at the Last Great Day, for there can be no more dreadful thing that for a man to have known and taught the Word to others and then to hear the Master say—just listen to it—“You wicked servant! Out of your own mouth will I condemn you!”

O God! Condemn me out of anybody’s mouth rather than out of my own! It will be a dreadful thing to have known how to use the bow and yet not to win the victory—to have been a sort of drill sergeant to God’s people, showing them how to use the weapons—and then not to have fought the battle one’s self! This will be a terrible thing! Some of you know how to use this Bible. You are acquainted with it. You have studied its doctrines. You know the points of divinity and theology. You are well-read in the teachings of God’s Word—you know how to use the bow. And some of you pray very sweetly at Prayer Meeting.

Ah, Beloved, what I said about myself may well apply to you! Some of you are Sunday school teachers and others tract distributors. And you all know how to use the bow. I hope I can say to you who sit here that I have, like Saul, taught you to use the bow. We have sought to teach you young men to use God’s Word both in prayer and in other exercises of your holy faith. But, Beloved, if you turn back, the art which you have learned shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you! If, as professors taught the use of God’s Word you are marched out to fight, but have not courage enough for the conflict, and turn your backs and slink into inglorious ease or into vain-glorious self-righteousness, or into false glorious pleasure, oh,

how terrible must be your ruin at the last! May you not be like the children of Ephraim, who, though skilled in the use of the bow, yet turned back in the day of battle! This, then, is who they were.

IV. And do you now ask—WHY DID THEY DO IT? Why did they, indeed? We might well have been at a loss to tell, for they were armed and carried bows. What, then, was the reason? The Word of God tells us and gives us three reasons. You will find them in the verses following the text. “They kept not the Covenant of God and refused to walk in His Law and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them.” “They kept not the Covenant.”

Oh, that great Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure.” When you can fall back upon that, how it strengthens you! When you can read in it eternal thoughts of Divine love to you, and can hear Jesus say, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” How it encourages you to go forward! You cannot be killed—you are invulnerable! You have been dipped in the Covenant stream that makes you invulnerable from head to foot! Why, then, should you fear to face the foe?

If you forget that Covenant you will soon turn back, and so prove that you are not in it! But the remembrance of it gives strength to God’s people to persevere since they feel that God’s purpose is that they *shall* persevere, and so win the victory. The Covenant, however, not only secures safety, but it also provides all sorts of blessings. If a Christian always had his eye on the Covenant storehouse he could never desert his God for the world! Will a man leave a treasury that is full of gold to go to a beggar’s cottage for money? Will a man turn from the flowing stream that comes cool and fresh from Lebanon’s melting snow to go and drink of some filthy, stagnant pool?

No, not he, and when a man knows the treasures of Divine Grace that are in Christ Jesus and remembers that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and that He has made Him a Covenant for the people—will such a man turn back? Assuredly not, but every promise of the Covenant will enable him to face his foes and prevent his turning back in the day of battle.

Perhaps, however, the covenant which we forget is the covenant we feel we made with Christ in the day when we said, “My beloved is mine, and I am His.” When we give ourselves up in a full surrender—body, soul, and spirit—to God, oh, let us never forget that covenant! Supposing we should lose our character for Christ’s sake? Did we not give Christ our character to begin with? You are of no use in the ministry, my dear Brother, if you are not quite willing to be called a fool, to be called a thief, or even to be called a devil! You will never be successful if you are afraid of being pelted. The true minister often finds his pulpit to be a place but little preferable to a pillory, and he is content to stand there feeling that all the abuse and blasphemy which may come upon him are only the means by which the world recognizes and proves its recognition of a God-sent man.

Oh, to rest upon the covenant which is made in Grace and to hold fast the covenant which Christ has compelled us to make with Him, resolved

that even should He take all away, our joy, our comfort, and our ease, we will still stand to it, and still keep the Covenant!

Another reason why they turned back was that “they refused to walk in His Law.” When we get a proud heart we very soon get beaten. With the face of a lion, but the heart of a deer, such an one is afraid of the world. If I am willing to do what God tells me *as* He tells me, *when* He tells me and *because* He tells me, I shall not turn back in the day of battle. They also seem to have turned back because they had bad memories. “They forgot His works and the wonders that He had showed them.”

My dear Friends, we the members of this Church have seen many of God’s wonders and have rejoiced in them! But if we were to forget these we should lack one means of comfort in our own darkness. Some of you have had very wonderful manifestations of the Lord’s kindness. But if you forget all these I should not wonder if you should prove to be a mere professor and turn your back! God’s true people are like that Mary, whom all generations call, “blessed.” They treasure these things in their *hearts*. We ought to stir up our remembrances of God’s loving kindness, for if we do not it will soon be a powerful reason for our turning back in the day of battle.

Oh, have we not fought in days gone by, and shall we now be afraid? Have we not slain old Giant Grim? Did we not fight with dragons and with lions? Have we not gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have we not had a conflict with Apollyon himself, foot to foot, and shall Giant Despair or his wife Mrs. Diffidence make us afraid? No! In the name of God we will use the good old sword, the true Jerusalem blade that we wielded before, and we shall yet again be more than conquerors through Him that loved us! Let us, then, not forget God’s works in the days of yore, lest we fail to trust Him in the days that are to come. This was why they turned back.

V. And now the last enquiry is—WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THEIR TURNING BACK? One result of their turning back was that their father mourned over them. We are told, in the passage I quoted first, that, “Ephraim their father mourned for them many days.” What a lamentation it brings into the Christian Church when a professor falls! There is one heart which feels it with peculiar poignancy—the heart of him who thought he was the spiritual father of the person so falling.

There are no griefs connected with our work like the grief of mourning over fallen professors, especially if these happen to be ministers—men who are armed and carry bows—for when they turn back, well-equipped and well-skilled in war—it is heart breaking work indeed! I do not exaggerate. I know I only speak the sober truth when I say that if I could submit to any form of corporeal torture that I have ever heard of, I would be willing to bear it sooner than submit to the torture I have sometimes felt over members of this Church, or what is worse, over young men educated in our College, or what is worse still, over ministers who have been for some time settled over their flocks, falling.

If at any time you desire to be malicious towards the man whom you look upon as your spiritual father. If you would send an arrow through his very liver and smite him with a dagger in the core of his heart—you

have nothing to do but to turn back in the day of battle and you have done it! It were better that you had never been born than that you should go back to the world! It were better that you should be taken out of this house a corpse than that you should live to disgrace the profession which you have espoused—especially those of you who stand in a prominent place. O God, keep us who witness before the multitude! Keep us by Your eternal power! Keep us as the apple of Your eye! Hide us beneath the shadow of Your wings, or else we who are chief and foremost, though armed and carrying bows, shall yet turn back in the day of battle!

Another result, which you perhaps will think more important by far, was that owing to their turning back the enemy remained. Owing to many Christians not doing what they ought to do in the day of battle, Romanism is still in this land, and infidelity is rife. If, in the days of Elizabeth and Cranmer, men had acted up to the light they then had we should not be as we now are, a semi-Popish nation. Had Luther himself been faithful to some of the light to which he shut his eyes he might have inaugurated a more perfect Reformation than that for which we are still devoutly grateful to God and for which we always cherish his memory.

There was a need of thoroughness even in that day. And at the present moment, if some of our Brethren were but faithful to their own convictions they would not be bolstering up an alliance of the State with a depraved Church. They would not dare to perform some ceremonies which are atrociously bad, and many of us, if we acted according to our inward monitor, would not do many things which we are now doing. Oh, may God give us Grace to smite the foe! What has sin to do in this world? Christ has bought the world with His blood, and oh, for Divine Grace to clear sin out of Christ's heritage!

The earth is the Lord's, and the kingdoms of the world and they that dwell in them—and if we were but faithful to God we should not turn back in the day of battle and Rome and all our foes would be slain. Then, again, if we did not turn our backs, the country would be conquered for Christ. I do not like the way in which some Brethren say that if we were more faithful half of London would be saved. I say that I believe God's purpose is achieved, but still we are bound to speak of our sins according to their tendencies—and the tendency of our lack of confidence in God, and our not boldly persevering—is to destroy souls. Paul talked once of destroying with meat him for whom Christ died, that being the tendency to destroy such souls if they could be destroyed.

So, humanly speaking, the darkness of the world at present is owing to the unfaithfulness of the Church, and if the Church had been as true to Christ as she was in the first century, long before this there would not have been a village without the Gospel nor a single empire in the world in which the Truth of God had not been proclaimed. It is our turning back in the day of battle that leaves Canaan unconquered for our Lord!

But, worse than this, the ark itself was actually taken. My dear Friends, those of you who are armed and carry bows, men of learning, men who understand the Scriptures, I do pray you, do not turn back just now, for just now seems to be a time when the ark of God will be taken! It can never really be so, but still we must mind that it be not the tendency of

our actions. We are in great danger from what some people will not believe—but what is most certainly a fact—and that is the marvelous increase of Popery in this land.

There are certain Brethren who are always harping upon this one string till we have grown sick of the theme. But, without at all endorsing their alarm, I believe there is quite enough for the most quiet and confident spirit to be alarmed at. The thing has become monstrous and there is need to awaken the anxious care and the earnest efforts of God's Church. You need not be long without good evidence of this. Every nerve is being strained by Rome to win England to itself, and, on the other hand, while we have less neology and less of all sorts of skepticism throughout the whole country, I am afraid that we have more of it than we used to have inside the Church itself!

There are many doctrines that are now matters of question which I never heard questioned ten years ago. I am not altogether sorry for this, but rather glad, because there are some doctrines which are not preached now, but which will be preached more in the future in consequence of doubts being thrown upon them. But it is a very ominous sign of the times that most of those Truths of God which we have been accustomed to accept as being the received and orthodox faith of Christendom are now being questioned, and questioned, too, by men who are not to be despised—men who from their evident earnestness, from their deep knowledge and from their close attention to the matter—deserve a hearing in the forum of common sense, even if they do not deserve it from *spiritual* men.

We must, all of us, hold fast the Truth of God. If there is a man who has got a truth, let him draw his bow and shoot his arrows now and not turn back in the day of battle. Now for your arrows! Now for your arrows! The more our foes shall conspire against Christ, the more we must make war against them! Give them double for their double! Reward them as they reward you. Spare no arrows against Babylon. "Happy shall he be that takes your little ones and dashes them against the stones." Happy shall he be who slays the little errors, who kills the minor falsehoods, who does battle against Popery in every shape and form and against infidelity in all its phases!

If we do not come to the front now, the ark of God, as far as we are concerned, will be taken! And then, worst of all, we shall hear the Philistines shouting while God's Church is weeping! The Philistines are good hands at shouting. They shout rather loudly about nothing, but when they get a little they bark loudly enough, then. If they see but one Christian turn back—what rejoicing there is! They ring the bells and make great mirth over the fall of the very least among us! But if those of us who are armed and carry bows should turn back in the day of battle, oh, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice, lest the sons of the uncircumcised triumph!" May God grant that we may never make mirth for Hell. If Satan must have merriment may he find it anywhere rather than in us. Oh, may we stand at last, and, having done all may we still stand!

To conclude, Brethren. If we do not stand fast, you know what will come of it. Supposing the Churches of which we are members do not stand

fast—what will come of you and what of me? What became of Shiloh? What became of Ephraim? Instead of the ark being any longer in the custody of Ephraim it was taken away from Shiloh and God transferred the custody of it to Judah, and it rested upon Mount Zion under the government of King David. So, mark you, whenever a Church becomes unfaithful and turns back in the day of battle, God takes away from it the keeping of His ark and entrusts it to others.

“I have looked upon a neighbor of yours,” said He, “who is better than you.” And so He takes the sword and gives it to David, and thus, perhaps, may He do with us. There are many Churches that were once flourishing but now are deserted altogether. So it may be with us individually, and with the Churches at large unless we are faithful to God.

Now I have said nothing to the unconverted. My drift seemed to be to speak to professing Believers. Some of you say you never went to this war and therefore you will not turn back. You never made a profession. Ah, dear Friends, it will be a very poor excuse at the Last Great Day to say, “I never made a profession”! Did you ever hear of a thief being brought up at the Mansion House before the Lord Mayor who said, when he was accused of being a thief, “Why, my Lord, I am not a very honest man. I never professed to be. I never professed that I would not pick people’s pockets. I never professed that I would not steal a watch if I had the chance. I was regularly known as a thief. I never professed to be anything else, therefore you cannot blame *me*.”

If a man should make such a defense as that, I should think it very likely that the Lord Mayor would give him an extra six months and I think it would serve him right. You smile at this, but the very same argument may be applied to you. “Well,” you say, “you know I do not make any profession of religion.” That is to say, you do not make any pretense of serving and loving the God who made you, who gave you life and has kept and preserved you in it. You do not make any profession of being washed in the precious blood of Christ. You do not make a profession of being on the road to Hell.

Well, may God save you from that excuse and may He give you Grace to look it in the face and say, “Well, I do not dare even *hope* that I am saved—I know I am not.” Then, my Friends, if you are not saved, you are lost! I would like to stop while you turn that thought over, and when you have done so I would say, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” May God’s eternal mercy seek and save you, and, if it is His will, may He find you, and lead you to put your trust in Jesus Christ! And resting upon Him, and looking to His Cross, you shall not, as the children of Ephraim did, “turn back in the day of battle.”

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THE VINE OF ISRAEL

NO. 3243

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
On behalf of the British Society for the
Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1878.**

*“Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts: look down
from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.”
Psalm 80:14.*

I FEEL somewhat straitened on this occasion because of the speciality of my subject. I have been persuaded by the Society to preach on behalf of the Jews, but my mind does not quite run in the direction which is prescribed for it. I have been so in the habit of preaching the Gospel to everybody, knowing neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, that the very recognition of anything like nationality and speciality is somewhat difficult for me. I do not think that the recognition of the distinction is wrong—no, I think it right—but it is so unusual that I scarcely feel at home. I would sooner, by a thousand times, take a text and preach the Gospel to sinners or to saints than discourse upon a special race. Yet is it necessary and, therefore, let it be done. And I trust the Holy Spirit may make our meditation profitable. Assuredly, if there is any distinction which might be maintained, and I think there is none, for that distinction of Jew and Gentile seems to me to be wiped out and obliterated—if there is any distinction, we may, at least, remember that which lingeringly subsists between the seed of Israel and the nations, for God’s election of old fell upon them—and when the old world lay in darkness, gleams of light gladdened their eyes! To them belonged the oracles. They were long the sole preservers of the precious Truth of God which they have handed down to us. And if through their unbelief we have taken their place, we cannot but recollect who occupied it for so many centuries—and we cannot but look with extraordinary tenderness and affection and earnest desire to that elder family whom the Lord loved so long and towards whom, I think, His love still burns, as shall be seen when the day comes in which He shall gather Israel again unto Himself!

We shall view the prayer of the text in its reference to Israel. “Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.” The vine was peculiarly a type of Palestine and the Jewish nation. When this Psalm was written, the Gentiles were not in the Psalmist’s mind, but only Israel. So let us now speak of Israel and let us

pray to God that He will return in mercy, behold in pity and visit this vine and the vineyard which His right hand planted.

I. First, let us reflect upon WHAT AN AMOUNT OF INTEREST SURROUNDS THIS VINE—this chosen people.

Brethren, Israel has a history compared with which the annals of all other nations are but poor and thin. Israel is the world's aristocracy and her history is the roll call of priests and kings unto God. At the very beginning, what interest attaches to *the planting of this vine!* The Psalmist speaks of the Lord bringing the vine out of Egypt and casting out the nations that He might find a trench wherein He might place Israel's roots that she might strike deep, and take possession of the soil. But what wonders God worked in the removal of Israel from the soil of Goshen, wherein her vine seemed to have taken deep root, until the wild boar of Egypt began to uproot her! Never can we forget what He did at the Red Sea. Even at the very mention of the name, we feel as if we could sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and his rider into the depths of the sea! What marvels He worked all through the wilderness when He turned the Rock into a pool of water and made refreshing streams to follow His chosen along the burning sand! Neither can we forget the Jordan—our hearts begin to sing at the mention of the name—What ailed you, O Jordan, that you were driven back when the Lord's ark led the way through the depths of the river and the priests stood still in the midst, while all the hosts of His people passed over dry-shod? Neither can we fail to exult as we think of the planting of the vine in Canaan. Saw you not the walls of Jericho tottering in ruins at the sound of the ram's horns when Israel gave her shout, for the Lord was in the midst of His people? Therefore the sword of Joshua smote the Canaanites till they were utterly destroyed! The sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, because the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, working marvelously with His people, that He might settle them in the land which He gave unto their fathers—the land which flowed with milk and honey!

When I think of such a planting, it seems to me that this vine can never be given up to be utterly burned with fire after wonders as these! It is not God's fashion to cast away a people for whom He has done so much. The commencement of Israel's national history is by far too good to close, as we fear it must, if we judge only according to carnal reason. An era brighter and more glorious must surely dawn and the Lord must bring again from Bashan, and lead up His chosen nation from the depths of the seas. Once again He will make bare His arm, even He that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon—and the whole earth shall behold all Israel, both spiritual and national—singing in one joyous song, the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb! The very planting of the nation makes us feel the deepest possible interest in its welfare. O God, behold and visit *this* vine, as the vineyard which Your right hand has planted!

Let us reflect again upon *the prosperity of Israel and the wide influence which the nation exercised for centuries*. I am keeping closely to the Psalm, which is really my text, for we are told that after the planting of the vine, “the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.” No nation has ever exercised such an influence upon the thought of the world as the Jewish people have done. I grant you that some other nations exercised greater influence upon the world’s art and sculpture and the like, for Israel eschewed much of art and science, not greatly to her loss, especially since the reason for it was so greatly to her gain. But the idea of one God, which the Lord had graciously written upon the hearts of His elect people, though it took many an age to erase the natural lines of idolatry which Nature had imprinted there—that idea of the unity of the Godhead is a treasure handed to us by the seed of Abraham! The grand Truths which were contained in type and shadow and outward ordinance, and given to the chosen people of God, exercised a far more powerful influence over the world than, perhaps, most of us have ever dreamed! I feel certain that the religion of Zoroaster came from the Jews. I believe that much of whatever is pure in Eastern religions might be distinctly traced to the teachings of Moses, to gleanings of the Israelite vintage which were carried to the nations through their commerce and intercommunication—perhaps directly and distinctly by the teachings of Jews who journeyed there as exiles in captivity.

The earth had become corrupt even in father Abraham’s time. And though, here and there, there might have been found goodly individuals like the Patriarch, Job, adhering to the simple worship of the one only God, yet for the most part, the whole world was sunken in idolatry. But the Light of God came to it and remains in it, gleaming strangely in the darkness like flashes of lightning amidst the blackness of a tempest! That light has always come, I believe, by the way of Israel! The original light of tradition grew dimmer and dimmer and threatened to die out, for in transmission from father to son its brightness was sadly clouded with human error. But the Truth retained much of its vitality and purity in the midst of Israel and from Israel it influenced the rest of the nations. In the days of Solomon, how proudly did the Temple stand upon its holy hill, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the one Pharos of the midnight sea of humanity! That little country—we often forget what a very little district Palestine occupied—was, nevertheless, the very queen among the nations! From far-off Sheba they came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to other lands the rumor of his glory extended—and all his greatness was connected with the worship of God, for she who came from Sheba, came to hear all the wisdom of Solomon “concerning the Lord, his God.” That little land thus influenced all lands and transmitted far-off down the centuries what was known of the ever-blessed God among the

people! To me it seems so sad that she that sat over against the treasury should now be poor. That she that laid the daily showbread before the Lord should now be famished. That she that piled the Temple and brought the offering, should now turn away from the one only Sacrifice and should these many days remain without priest or temple! Alas poor Israel! Our hearts take the deepest interest in you and we pray the Lord to look down and behold, and visit this vine, when we remember the days of your glory and all the splendor of the Revelation of the Most High in the midst of His people!

Nor does the interest become one particle the less when we come to *the time of Israel's decay*. She would imitate the heathen and go aside to false gods—nothing could cure her of it. She was chastened again and again and, at last, it came to banishment and the people were scattered. Alas for the tears that Judah and Israel shed! What ocean could hold them all? How God's people were made to smart, and cry, and groan! Let the waters of Babylon tell how salty they flowed with Judah's griefs. How could they sing the Lord's song in that strange land? What a history of woe has Israel's story been! And then, when they were brought back cured of idolatry as, thank God, they most effectually are, there came an equally mournful decay—for formalism, the absence of all spiritual life—the mere observance of *outward ritual*, came into the place of idolatry and the people in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed had the Christ among them, but refused Him! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Woe was the day! Speak of it with sevenfold sorrow. *He* came for whom they long had waited—Israel's Hope—and they refused Him! Yes, they crucified Him.

My tongue will not attempt to tell what came of it, when His blood was on them and on their children. Earth never saw a more terrible sight than the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! Then did they sell the ancient people of God for a pair of shoes and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The enemy plowed the holy place, sowed it with salt, and the seed of Abraham were scattered to the four winds of Heaven! Alas, the evil ceased not when the last stone was overthrown, but wrath followed the fugitives. Through many, many centuries Israel was persecuted—shame covers my face—persecuted by those who called themselves Christians! The blood of Israel hangs in great clots upon the skirts of Rome and will bring down upon that thrice-accursed system the everlasting wrath of the Most High! Did they not grievously oppress the Jews in Spain and every other Catholic country—remorselessly hunting them down as if they were unfit to live—torturing them in ways that it were impossible for us to describe, lest your cheeks should blanch as you heard the horrible story? The men that were of the same race as the Christ of God were so hated by the professed followers of Jesus that no indignities were thought to be great enough, and no severities to be fierce enough for execution upon those they thought to be the execrable Jews!

Thank God, such persecution is now over—let us hope forever—at least in the Western world. The race would have been stamped out, however, if Rome's tender mercies could have worked their will. Go to the Ghetto, today, in the Jews' quarter in Rome, and see the Church, as I have done, in which a certain number of Jews were compelled to hear a sermon, once in the year, leveled at their own race and faith, and over the door of which is written what from such a quarter is a wanton insult to them—"To Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Verily it would be so eternally if the hands of Rome were the hands to be stretched out—when she encouraged, if she did not command the racing of Jews in the Corso, and the pouring of contempt upon them in the rudest fashion! Israel would never worship images, saints and virgins! Blessed were they as a nation for this thing, at least, that they utterly rejected the idolatry of which Rome is shamelessly guilty! It were far better to not be a Christian than to think Popery to be Christianity, for it is one of the vilest forms of idolatry that ever came from the polluted heart of man! Alas, poor Israel, what have you suffered! What tongue can tell your woes? I feel compelled to apply to Israel the language which Byron applied to Rome, when he called her "the Niobe of nations," and reckoned all sorrows beside hers but petty misery—

***"What are our griefs and sufferance? Come and see
Jerusalem in heaps, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples."***

Look, too, on a princely people crushed under persecution, laboring and finding no rest. Princes were hanged up by their hands. The faces of elders were not honored. Then was fulfilled Jeremiah's Lamentation, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! They that did feed delicately, are desolate in the streets—they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills."

But we will not end here, my Brothers and Sisters. The interest which we feel with regard to Israel and which makes us pray, "Lord, visit this vine," rises as we think of *its future*. I am no Prophet or interpreter of the prophecies, but this much seems clear to me—that the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, will have dominion over them and they shall be converted and shall acknowledge Him to be the Messiah who was promised to their fathers—so does the New Testament teach us as well as the Old! It seems to me that we may work for the conversion of Israel with the absolute certainty that if we do not see it, ourselves, yet it shall be seen, for the natural branches of the olive, which for a while were cut off, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. The future of the Gentiles in the fullness of its Glory can never be accomplished till, first of all, the Jews shall be ingathered. You shall have no millennial day, or full brightness of Messiah's Glory, until yonder, by Jordan's streams and Judah's deserted hills, where once the Savior worked, and

walked, and preached, the song shall yet again arise of Hallelujah to the God of Israel!

One more thought and then I leave this point of the interest we take in Israel. We must forever take a special interest in the Jews because *of them came our Lord*. He was so completely a Man that one forgets that He was a Jew, and, perhaps, for the most part it is best that we should, for He is more a Man than a Jew. But still, "He took not up the nature of angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." Jesus is the Son of David. The Jews have a part in Him, after the flesh, which we have not. And, amid all the privileges which we enjoy, we can well afford to let them have everything that they can claim. And they can certainly prove a special kinship to Him whom our soul loves. Oh, if it were for nothing else but that our Savior was of the Jews, we ought to love them and make them the subject of our prayers and of our earnest efforts! Surely the mention of that will suffice and I need not say so much as one solitary word more! Interest in the Jews, indeed, is a very wide subject, and we have said enough for the present purpose.

II. NOW, SECONDLY, WHAT IS IT THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE NEED? We have been exhorted by all these things to pray for this vine. What is it that is needed?

The answer of our text is, "Look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." A *visitation from God* is the one thing necessary for Israel. For what purpose should God visit the Jews, then? I say, Brothers and Sisters, it is the one essential thing in order to give them *spiritual life*. Our acquaintances with the interior of the Jewish commonwealth at the present time is not very large, but some of us have observed that there are two sorts of Israelites. Some are devout—devout men with some of whom it has been our privilege to have hearty fellowship in matters of common interest touching the things of God. When we have spoken together of the Providence of God and of faith in the Divine Mercy, we have been much of the same mind. In the late debate brought on by Colenso, we were able, in comparing notes, to feel the same zeal for the value of the Old Testament and for the Glory of the ever-blessed God! Whether we were Christians or Jews, we were equally zealous to repel the infidel assaults of the famous master of arithmetic. We meet now and then with men whose sincerity and devotion we could not doubt at all—would to God that their sincerity led them to search the Scriptures and to examine the claims of our Lord Jesus! Such men lament that many of their people seem to have no religion, or—what is almost the same thing—to have nothing more than the outward form. Their being of the Israelite race is distinctly recognized and never for a moment held back—the Sabbath is almost universally hallowed, for which let Israel put to shame many so-called Christian lands! Much is done that is commendable, much which exhibits high integrity and uprightness, but yet, to a large extent, the race is sunk in worldliness and misled by superstition. Oh, that God would visit the Jew and endow him with an enquiring and unprejudiced

heart, with longing after the God of his fathers, with a deeper reverence and a truer zeal for the Glory of Jehovah!

The visitation of God may well be entreated that He would next grant *enlightenment* to His people, taking away the veil which has been cast over their eyes and enabling them to see the true Messenger of the Covenant. There are thousands of Israelites today who only need to know that Jesus is the Messiah and they would as gladly accept Him as any of us have done. It seems to us so strange that they can read the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah and so many other plain passages of the Prophets and of the Psalms without seeing that the Man of Nazareth is the Christ of God! Yet they do read, but the veil is on their hearts so that they do not perceive Christ in their interpretations. Alas that the Son of Righteousness should shine and Israel should be in darkness! With many of the seed of Abraham there is an honest desire to receive whatever can be shown to be the Truth of God. If the Lord will touch their eyes and remove the scales—what an enlightenment on the whole nation would follow! A nation would be born in a day! What joy for us, what honor to God, what happiness to themselves if they might but be delivered from their present alienation! O God, You alone can do this! We cannot. All arguments seem to be in vain, but do You behold, and visit this vine!

When the spiritual life of the nation shall have been revived and there shall be an enlightenment of the intellect, they will only need the Spirit to work upon the heart. Even as the Holy Spirit has quickened and regenerated us, so must it be with them, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in this matter. The same regenerated work is needed—the same enlightening of the Holy Spirit—and if the Lord will do this, our hearts shall be exceedingly glad!

III. WHAT, THEN, CAN WE DO? We are great debtors to Israel, what can we do for her?

Some people are always afraid of telling Christian people to do anything. They mutter between their teeth, “The Lord will do His own work,” and they are afraid that they should be interfering with God’s prerogatives. Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid that some of you will ever do the Lord’s work, for you do not do your own! That part which you *can* do is neglected! Do not be so mightily frightened lest you should be too active! It is God’s work to visit Israel and gather out His people and He alone can do it—but *He works by means*. What, then, would He have us do?

I answer, the first thing we can do is *to pray for Israel*. You believe in the power of prayer, do you not, my Brothers and Sisters? Why, some of us can no more doubt the power of prayer than we can doubt the force of a steam-engine or the influence of the law of gravity, because to us the effects and results of prayer are everyday things! We are in the habit of speaking with God about everything—and receiving replies which to us are as distinct as if He had spoken to us with words. We can speak bold-

ly in prayer to God concerning Israel! No nation can be nearer to God's heart than the Jews. We may be bold with the mighty God. We may open our mouth wide, for He will fill it. We may plead with Him urgently after this fashion—"Will you not glorify Yourself by the salvation of the Jews? What could You do that would more signally strike the whole world with awe than if you were to turn this wonderful nation to the faith of Christ? You have taught them the unity of the Godhead, you have burnt this Truth into their very souls—now teach them the Deity of Your Son who is One with You! Bring them to rejoice in the Triune God with heart and soul, and all lands shall hear of it and say with wonder, 'Who are these?' Great God, were not these Your messengers of old? When You needed heralds, did You not look to Israel? You took James and John, and Peter and Paul. You will find such as these among them, now, if You will call them—both boastful Peters and persecuting Pauls—whom Your Grace can transform into mighty testifiers for the name of Jesus!" Let us pray to God to do this. We can pray!

The next thing we can do is *to feel very kindly towards that race*. I know all that will be said about converted Jews, and I lament that there should have been grave occasion given in many instances. But, for my part, I have been glad of late to smart a little for the sake of my Lord. I have said, "Well, it was a Jew that saved me and even if this professed convert should have a hypocritical design upon my purse, I had better be deceived by him than turn away an honest kinsmen of my Lord." I do not marvel that there should be deceivers among the Jews, for have not we plenty of such in our churches, who, for the sake of loaves and fish and pelf, creep in among us, pretending to be followers of Christ when their hearts know nothing about Him? In all ranks and conditions of man, hypocrisy is sure to be found! But for all that, we do not turn round and say, "The Gentiles are a bad lot. We will have nothing more to do with them because two or three of them deceived us." The Gentiles are always taking us in! We know they are and still we have hope for them. And so must we always have hope towards Israel—and instead of thinking bitterly and speaking bitterly, we must cultivate kindness of spirit both to those who become Christians and to those who remain in unbelief. I, for one, thank God that this land has now for several years swept away the civil disabilities of the Jew. He is no longer a stranger in the land, but he settles down in the midst of us and exercises all the rights of citizenship. May the kindness of feeling which has prompted this change—and it came, I think, mainly from earnest Christians—lead the Israelites to think kindly of our faith!

Another thing we can do, dear Friends, is *to keep our own religion pure*. I marvel not that Jews are not Christians when I know what sort of Christianity, for the most part, they have seen. When I have walked through Rome and countries under Rome's sway—and have seen thousands bow before the image of a woman carried through the streets—when I have seen the churches crammed with people bowing down before

pieces of bone, hair and teeth of dead saints, and such like things—I have said to myself, “If I were a worshipper of the One true God, I would look with scorn upon those who bow before these cast clouts, moldy rags, pieces of rotten timber and I know not what besides!” No, no, good Jew! Join not with this idolatrous rabble! Remain a Jew rather than degrade yourself with this superstition! If the Lord has taught you to know that there is an unseen God who made the heavens and the earth, and who alone is to be worshipped—if you have heard the voice of thunder which says, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God,’ stand you to that and go not one inch beyond it, if the way before you invites you to the worship of things that are seen, and the reverence of men who call themselves priests—and the whispering out of every filthy thought into a confessor’s ear! No, no, no, Israel! You are brought very low, but you are far too noble to become an adorer of crosses and wafers, and pictures and relics!”

Even in our own land there is a good deal which one would not wish a Jew to regard as Christianity. To my mind, baptismal regeneration is about as glaring a piece of Popery as there is to be found in the world! And they can hear that lie publicly taught in England! Grievous, too, it is to my very heart that they may hear it among those who profess a purer form of faith than that of which we have spoken. Try, Brothers and Sisters, to keep Christ’s religion as Christ taught it. Purify it. Let it come back to its original form!

Labor also to be Christians in ordinary life. If a Jew says, “I would like to see a Christian,” do not let him see a person full of superstitions. Let him see one who believes in the Triune God, who tries to live according to the commands of God, and who, when he talks about Jesus, lets you see the mind which dwelt in Jesus—the same mind being in him. When once the Church of God shall bear a clear testimony to the Truth of God both with lips and life, great hindrances will be taken out of the way of Israel. I know you say, “Well, Jews ought to know that we hold a very different faith from Romanists.” I know that you think so, but I am not able to perceive how the Jews are to learn the distinction, for Papists are called Christians as much as we are! Their religion is dominant in some countries—it is prominent in every country. How is the Jew to know that it is not the religion of Christ? As he thinks that it is so, he declares that he will have nothing to do with it—and I, for one, cannot condemn him, but approve of his resolve! I only hope that as the years roll on, we who worship God in sincerity and have no confidence in the flesh, we who are saved by the faith which saved Abraham, who is our father after the spirit though not according to the flesh, that we, I say, may be able to bring this purer faith more clearly to the knowledge of Israel and that God will lead His ancient nation to be fellow-heirs with us! We must keep our doctrine pure and hold it individually with clean hands and a pure heart—or we have not done all that we can for Israel.

This being done, I will next say that *we must each one evangelize with all his might*. Do this not among Jews, only, but among Gentiles, also. Wherever you are, tell abroad the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Do not live a single day, if opportunity serves you, without testifying concerning the love of God which is revealed in the Cross of Calvary. Your prayer should be for the whole Church of God, “Behold, and visit this vine.” And as a large number of God’s elect ones are as yet hidden in darkness, let us pray unto the Lord that He would visit this vine and make these branches to spring out into the Light of God—that on them, also, there may be rich clusters to His praise!

Brothers and Sisters, we are, ourselves, saved, are we not? Come, before you go away, let the question be put to you, Are you saved? Are you really Believers in Jesus? Is the Christ formed in you? Have you realized that He is your Savior? Are you trusting Him now? Will you live to Him? Are you consecrated to Him—spirit, soul and body? If you are, that is the first thing. If you are not, I cannot ask you to pray for Israel, or for anybody else till, first of all, God has put a cry into your soul for *yourselves*. If you are saved, then let me ask myself and you, “Are we doing all we might for the honor and love of Jesus?” Sitting on these seats, might not many say, “We have not yet begun to live for Christ as we ought”? May the Lord quicken you!

There was a young man here, one Thursday night, when I closed with some such words as these, who derived lasting benefit from them. He was a gentleman doing a large business, to whom it had never occurred that he might preach Christ. It did occur to him that night—and he straightway went to the town in which he lived and began to preach in the streets! He is now the pastor of a large Church, though he still continues his business—and his is an example to be imitated by many! I would to God that some young man might be quickened to feel that he must do something, for Israel perhaps, for Christ, certainly! And you, Sisters, may you feel a Divine impulse upon you while you pray God to visit the vine which He has planted! May He also visit you and make you fruitful vines unto His praise! The Lord bless everyone of you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 46.**

To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

This Psalm is often called “Martin Luther’s Psalm.” Whenever there was any great trouble, Luther used to say, “Let us sing the 46th Psalm together and then let the devil do his worst.” This is the Psalm, too, from which Mr. John Wesley preached in Hyde Park at the time of a great earthquake. While the earth was shaking and there was a great storm, Mr. Wesley preached from the second verse—“Therefore we will not fear,

though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Verse 1. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* All creatures have their places of refuge. “As for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies.” All men also have their places of refuge, though some are “refuges of lies.” But God is our refuge and strength,” the Omnipotence of Jehovah is pledged for the defense and support of His people. “A very present help in trouble”—One who is near at hand—always near, but nearest when He is most needed. Not much entreaty is required to bring Him to the aid of His people, for He is close at hand and close at heart, “a very present help in trouble.”

2, 3. *Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* [See Sermon #1950, Volume 33—EARTHQUAKE BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Here we have, you perceive, a mention of the greatest convulsions of Nature, yet the Believer fears not! Doubtless, too, these verses are intended to be a picture of the great convulsions that take place in the Providential dealings of God. States and kingdoms that seem to be as solid as the earth will one day be removed. Dynasties that seem as fixed and firm as mountains may soon be swept away into the sea of oblivion. We may have famine, war, pestilence and anarchy until the whole earth shall seem to be like the sea in a great storm! Yes, hope may fail with many and the stoutest hearts may shake at the swelling thereof. Yet let the worst come to the worst, God’s people are still safe! As one old writer says, “Though God should, to use His words concerning Jerusalem, wipe the earth as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down, yes, though He should break it into a thousand shivers, yet need not His people fear, for if He does not protect them under Heaven, He will take them up to be with Him in Heaven!” If Heaven and earth could be mingled together, and chaos could return, yet as long as God is God, there is no use for the Believer to fear!

3. *Selah.* We may well pause and renew our confidence in the God who has never failed us, and who never will fail any who trust Him.

4. *There is a river, the stream whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.* Whatever river may have been in the Psalmist’s mind, it was the symbol of Sovereign Grace flowing freshly and freely from the sacred Fountain of Eternal Love to make glad the people of God! And now we have the Inspired Book, we have the preached Word, we have the many precious promises, we have the blessed Spirit, Himself, and all these make a glorious river, the streams whereof “make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.”

5. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.* The Hebrew expression is, “at the turning of the morning.” Our marginal reading gives it, “when the morning appears.” “God shall help her at the turning of the morning.” At that period when the night is the blackest, just before the light begins to come, then shall God help His Church. Child of God, this promise is to you, also! When the night gets thickest and the gloom is the heaviest, then God shall help you “at the turning of the morning.” He may tarry for a while, but He will tarry no longer than is wise. You shall find, in looking back upon God’s dealings with you, that although He sometimes seemed to be long in coming to your help and you cried out, “Lord, how long?” yet, after all, He did help you and that “right early,” too!

6. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted.* God has but to speak and His stoutest foe shall dissolve like snow when the sun shines on it.

7-9. *The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the work of the Lord, what desolation He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; He burns the chariot in the fire.* [See Sermon #190, Volume 4—THE DESOLATION OF THE LORD, THE CONSOLATION OF HIS SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Here the Psalmist invites us to behold what God has done in the past. He has desolated the desolaters and destroyed the destroyers! War has been a terrible scourge to mankind, but our God is Master even over war. When I look at the old ruined castles all over our land, I cannot help saying to myself and others, too, “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth,” and when I stumble upon some broken-down abbeys, or monasteries and Popish cathedrals, I can but wish that there were more of them, that we might see many such desolations which the Lord has made in the earth! He will get the victory over all His foes and break all His adversaries in pieces—however long He may wait before putting forth His great power in judgment upon them!

10. *Be still, and know that I am God*—Here is the command and here is the reason which will help us to obey it. Judge not the Lord hastily! Murmur not at His Providential dealings with you! Be not hurrying and scurrying here and there, but, “be still.” In silence and in confidence shall be your strength. “Be still, and know that I am God”—

10. *I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.* If God is willing to wait, you need not be impatient. His time is the best time and He will be exalted in due time.

11. *The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

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

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

ONE ANTIDOTE FOR MANY ILLS

NO. 284

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 9, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Your
face to shine; and we shall be saved.”
Psalm 80:19.***

THIS seems to be the only prayer the Psalmist puts up in this Psalm, as being of itself sufficient for the removal of all the ills over which he mourned. Though he sighs over the strife of neighbors and the ridicule of foes, and laments the ill condition of the goodly vine, though he deplores its broken hedges and complains of the wild beasts that waste and devour it—yet he does not petition the Most High against these evils in detail. But gathering up all his wishes into this one prayer, he reiterates it over and over—“Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Your face to shine. And we shall be saved.” The reason is obvious. He had traced all the calamities to one source, “O Lord God, how long will You be angry?”

And now he seeks refreshing from one fountain. Let Your face no longer frown, but let it beam upon us with a smile and all shall then be well. This is a select lesson for the Church of Christ. In your troubles, trials and adversities, seek first, chiefly, and above everything else, to have a revival of religion in your own breast—the presence of God in your own heart. Having that, you have scarcely anything beside to pray for. Whatever else may befall you shall work for your good. All that seems to impede your course shall really prove to be a prosperous gale—to waft you to your desired haven—only, take care that you seek God. Be sure that you are turned again unto Him and that He would give you the light of His countenance—and so shall you be saved.

This morning’s sermon, then, will be especially addressed to my own Church on the absolute necessity of true religion in our midst and of revival from all apathy and indifference. We may ask of God multitudes of other things, but among them all, let this be our chief prayer—“Lord, revive us. Lord, revive us!” We have uttered it in song. Let me stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, to utter it in your secret prayers and make it the daily aspiration of your souls. I feel, Beloved, that notwithstanding all opposition, God will help us to be “more than conquerors, through Him that loved us,” if we are true to ourselves and true to Him. But though all things should go smoothly and the sun should always shine upon our heads, we should have no prosperity if our own godliness failed—if we only maintained the *form* of religion, instead of having the very power of the Holy Spirit manifested in our midst.

I shall endeavor to urge upon you this morning, first of all, the benefits of revival, as we shall find some of them suggested in this Psalm. And secondly, the means of revival—"Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts." Thirdly I shall exhort you to use these means, that you may acquire these benefits.

I. THE BENEFITS OF REVIVAL TO ANY CHURCH IN THE WORLD will be a lasting blessing. I do not mean that false and spurious kind of revival which was so common a few years ago. I do not mean all that excitement attendant upon religion, which has brought men into a kind of spasmodic godliness and translated them from sensible beings, into such as could only rave about a religion they did not understand. I do not think that is a real and true revival. God's revivals, while they are attended with a great heat and warmth of piety, yet have with them knowledge as well as life, understanding as well as power. The revivals that we may consider to have been genuine were such as those worked by the instrumentality of such men as Jonathan Edwards in America and Whitfield in this country, who preached a Free Grace Gospel in all its fullness.

Such revivals I consider to be genuine and such revivals, I repeat again, would be a benefit to any Church under Heaven. There is no Church, however good it is, which might not be better. And there are many Churches sunken so low, that they have abundant need—if they would prevent spiritual death—to cry aloud, "Lord, revive us."

Among the blessings of the revival of Christians, we commence, by noticing the salvation of sinners. When God is pleased to pour out His Spirit upon a Church in a larger measure than usual, it is always accompanied by the salvation of souls. And oh, this is a weighty matter, to have souls saved. Some laugh and think the salvation of the soul is nothing, but I trust, Beloved, you know so much of the value of souls that you will ever think it to be worth the laying down of your lives, if you might but be the means of the saving of one single soul from death.

The saving of souls, if a man has once gained love to perishing sinners and love to his blessed Master, will be an all-absorbing passion to him. It will so carry him away, that he will almost forget himself in the saving of others. He will be like the stout, brave fireman, who cares not for the scorch or for the heat, so that he may rescue the poor creature on whom true humanity has set his heart. He must, he will pluck such a one from the burning, at any cost and expense to himself.

Oh the zeal of such a man as that Whitfield to whom I have alluded! He says in one of his sermons, "My God, I groan day-by-day over the salvation of souls. Sometimes," he says, "I think I could stand on the top of every hackney-coach in the streets of London, to preach God's Word. It is not enough that I can do it night and day, laboring incessantly by writing and by preaching—I would that I were multiplied a thousand-fold—that I might have a thousand tongues to preach this Gospel of my blessed Redeemer."

Ah, you find, too, many Christians who do not care about sinners being saved. The minister may preach, but what heed they the results? So long

as he has a respectable congregation and a quiet people, it is enough. I trust, my Friends, we shall never sink to so low a state as to carry on our services without the salvation of souls. I have prayed to my God many a time and I hope to repeat the prayer, that when I have no more souls to save for Him, no more of His elect to be gathered home, He may allow me to be taken to Himself, that I may not stand as cumber ground in His vineyard, useless, seeing there is no more fruit to be brought forth.

I know *you* long for souls to be converted. I have seen your glad eyes when, at the Church meetings, night after night, sinners have told us what the Lord has done for them. I have marked your great joy when drunkards, blasphemers, and all kinds of careless persons have turned with full purpose of heart unto God and led a new life. Now, mark you, if these things are to be continued, and above all, if they are to be multiplied—we must have again a revival in our midst. For this we must and will cry, “O Lord our God, visit Your plantation and pour out again upon us Your mighty Spirit.”

Another effect of a revival in a Church is generally the promotion of true love and unanimity in its midst. I will show you the most quarrelsome Churches in England, if you will show me the most lazy Churches. It has actually become a proverb nowadays. People say, when persons are sound asleep, “He is as sound asleep as a Church”—as if they really thought the Church was the soundest asleep of anything that exists! Alas that there should be so much truth in the proverb. Where a firm, established for business would have all its eyes open—where a company, that had for its object the accumulation of wealth, would be ever on the watch—Churches, for the most part—seem to neglect the means of doing good and fritter away holy opportunities of advancing their Master’s cause. And for this reason, many of us are split in sunder.

There are heart-burnings, aching, rankling of soul, quarrellings among each other. An active Church will be a united Church. A slumbering Church will be sure to be a quarrelsome one. If any minister desires to heal the wounds of a Church and bring the members into unanimity, let him ask God to give them all enough to fill their hands and when their hands are full of their Master’s work and their mouths are full of His praise, they will have no time for devouring one another, or filling their mouths with slander and reproach. Oh, if God gives us revival, we shall have perfect unanimity!

Blessed be God, we have much of it. But oh for more of it that our hearts may be knit together as the heart of one man—that we, being one army of the Living God, may none of us have any anger or ill-will towards each other, but being—as I trust we all are—Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, we may live as becomes such. Oh that Christ would give us that spirit that loves all, hopes for all and will bear burdens for all—passing by little things and differences of judgment and opinion—that so we may be united with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken. A revival, I think, is necessary for the unanimity of the Church.

A revival is also necessary in order that the mouths of the enemy of the Truth of God may be stopped. Do they not open wide their mouths against us? Have they not spoken hard things against us? Yes, and not only against us, but against the Truth of God we preach and against the God we honor. How shall their mouths be stopped? By our replying to them? No—foul scorn we think it to utter one single word in our own defense. If our conduct is not sufficiently upright to commend itself, we will not utter words in order to commend it. But the way we can shut our adversaries' mouths is this—by seeking a revival in our midst. What? Do they rail against our ministry? If more souls are saved, can they rail against that? Yes, let them, if they will.

Do they speak against the doctrines? Let them. But let our lives be so holy that they must lie against us when they dare to say that our doctrines lead any into sin. Let us seek of God that we may be so earnest, so eminently holy, so God-like and so Christ-like, that to all they say their own consciences may tell them, "You utter a falsehood while you speak against him." This was the glory of the Puritans—they preached doctrines which laid them open to reproach. I am bold to say I have preached the doctrine of the Puritans and I am bold to say, moreover, that those parts which have been most objected to in my discourses, have frequently been quotations from ancient fathers, or from some of the Puritans. I have often smiled when I have seen them condemned and said, "There now, Sir, you have condemned Charnock, or Bunyan, or Howe, or Doddridge," or some other saint of God whom it so happened I quoted at the time.

The word condemned was theirs and therefore it did not so much affect me. They were held up to reproach when they were alive and how did they answer their calumniators? By a blameless and holy life. They, like Enoch, walked with God. And let the world say what they would of them, they only sought to keep their families the most rigidly pious and themselves the most strictly upright in the world. So that while it was said of their enemies, "They talk of good works," it was said of the Puritans, that "They did them." And while the Arminians, for such they were in those days, were living in sin, he who was called Calvinist and laughed at, was living in righteousness and the doctrine that was said to be the promoter of sin was found afterwards to be the promoter of holiness.

We defy the world to find a holier people than those who have espoused the doctrines of Free Grace, from the first moment until now. They have been distinguished in every history, even by their enemies, as having been the most devotedly pious and as having given themselves especially to the reading of God's Word and the practice of His Law. And while they said they were justified by faith alone, through the blood of Christ—none were found, so much as they—seeking to honor God in all the exercises of godliness, being "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Let us follow their faith, and let us emulate their charity.

Let us seek a revival here. And so our enemies' mouths, if not entirely shut, shall be so far stopped that their consciences shall speak against them while they rail against us. We want no eminent reply to silence their

calumny—no learned articles brought out in our vindication—no voice lifted up in our favor. I thank my Friends for all they do. But I thank them little for the true effect it produces. Let us live straight on. Let us work straight on. Let us preach straight on and serve our God better than before. Then let Hell roar and earth resound with tumult—the conscious integrity of our own spirit shall preserve us from alarm and the Most High Himself shall protect us from their fury. We need a revival, then, for these three reasons, each of which is great in itself.

Yet, above all, we *want* a revival, if we would promote the glory of God. The proper object of a Christian's life is God's glory. The Church was made on purpose to glorify God. But it is only a revived Church that brings glory to His name. Think you that all the Churches honor God? I tell you, no. There are some that dishonor Him—not because of their erroneous doctrines, nor perhaps because of any defect in their formalities—but because of the want of life in their religion. There is a meeting for prayer—six people assemble besides the minister. Does that proclaim your homage to God? Does that do honor to Christianity? Go to the homes of these people—see what is their conversation when they are alone. Mark how they walk before God. Go to their sanctuaries and hear their hymns, there is the beauty of music, but where is the life of the people? Listen to the sermon—it is elaborate, polished, complete—a masterpiece of oratory.

But ask yourselves, “Could a soul be saved under it, except by a miracle? Was there anything in it adapted to stir men up to goodness? It pleased their ears. It instructed them in some degree, perhaps, but what was there in it to teach their hearts?” Ah, God knows there are many such preachers. Notwithstanding their learning and their opulence, they do not preach the Gospel in its simplicity and they draw not near to God our Father. If we would honor God by the Church, we must have a warm Church, a burning Church, loving the truths it holds and carrying them out in life. Oh that God would give us life from on high, lest we should be like that Church of old of whom it was said, “You have a name to live and are dead.” These are some of the benefits of revivals.

II. WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF REVIVAL? They are two-fold. One is, “Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts,” and the other is, “Cause Your face to shine.” There can be no revival without both of these. Allow me, my dear Hearers, to address you one by one, in different classes, in order that I may apply the former of these means to you.

“Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts.” Your minister feels that he needs to be turned more thoroughly to the Lord his God. His prayer shall be, God helping him, that he may be more fearless and faithful than ever. That he may never for one moment think what any of you will say with regard to what he utters, but that he may only think what God his Master would say concerning him—that he may come into the pulpit with this resolve—that he cares no more for your opinion with regard to the Truth of God than if you were all stones, only resolving this much—come loss or come gain by it—whatsoever the Lord God says unto him, that he must speak.

And he desires to ask his Master that he may come here with more prayer, himself, than before, that whatever he preaches may be so burnt into his own soul that you may all know, even if you do not think it true yourselves, that at any rate *he* believes it and believes it with his inmost soul. And I will ask of God that I may so preach to you that my words may be attended with a mighty and a Divine power. I do forswear all pretense to ability in this work. I forswear the least idea that I have anything about me that can save souls—or anything which could draw men by the attractions of my speech. I feel that if you have been profited by my preaching, it must have been the work of God, and God alone, and I pray to Him that I may be taught to know more my own weakness. Wherein my enemies say anything against me, may I believe what they say, but yet exclaim—

***“Weak though I am,
Yet through His might,
I all things can perform.”***

Will you ask such things for me—that I may be more and more turned to God—and that so your spiritual health may be promoted?

But there are some of you who are workers in the Church. Large numbers are actively engaged for Christ. In the Sabbath-School, in the distribution of tracts, in preaching the Word in the villages and in some parts of this great city—many of you are striving to serve God. Now what I ask and exhort *you* to is this—cry unto God—“Turn us again, O God.” You want, my dear working Friends, more of the Spirit of God in all your labors. I am afraid we forget Him too much, we *want* to have a greater remembrance of Him. Sunday-School teachers, cry unto God that you may attend your classes with a sincere desire to promote God’s glory, leaning wholly on His strength. Do not be content with the ordinary routine, gathering your children there and sending them home again—but cry, “Lord, give us the agony which a teacher ought to feel for his child’s soul.” Ask that you may go to the school with deep feelings, with throes of love over the children’s hearts, that you may teach them with tearful eyes, groaning before Heaven that you may be the means of their salvation and deliverance from death.

And you, who in other ways, serve God, I beseech you do not be content with doing it as you have done. You may have done it well enough to gain some approval of your fellows—do it better, as in the sight of the Lord. I do not mean better as to the outward form, but better as to the inward grace that goes with it. Oh, seek from God that your works may be done from pure motives, with more simple faith in Christ, more firm reliance on Him and with greater prayer for your success. “Turn us again,” is the cry of all, I hope, who are doing anything for Jesus.

Others of you are intercessors. And here I hope I have taken in all who love the Lord in this place. Oh, how much the strength of a Church depends upon these intercessors! I almost said we could do better without the workers than the intercessors. We want in every Church, if it is to be successful, intercessors with God—men who know how to plead with Him and to prevail. Beloved, I must stir you up again on this point. If you

would see great things done in this place, or in any other place, in the salvation of souls—you must intercede more earnestly than you have done. I thank God our Prayer Meetings are always full.

But there are some of you whom I do not see so often as I would desire. There are some of you business-men who are accustomed to come in for the last half-hour and I have seen you and called on you to pray. For six months I have not seen some of you at all. There are others whom I know to be as much engaged as you are, who somehow or other manage to be always here. Why is it not so with you? If you do not love prayer, then I wish you not to come until you do. But I do ask of God to bring you into such a state of mind that your soul may be more thoroughly with the Lord's Church and you may be more thoroughly devoted to His service. Our Prayer Meeting is well attended and is full, but it shall be better attended yet, and we shall have the men among us coming up, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

We do want more prayer. Your prayers, I am sure, have been more earnest at home than ever they were, during the last three weeks. Let them be more earnest still. It is by prayer we must lean on God. It is by prayer that God strengthens us. I beseech you, wrestle with God, my dear Friends. I know your love to one another and to His Truth. Wrestle with God, in secret and in public, that He would yet open the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing upon us—such as we shall not have room enough to receive. There must be a turning again to God of the intercessors in prayer.

Again—we want a turning again to God of all of you who have been accustomed to hold communion with Jesus, but who have in the least degree broken off that holy and heavenly habit. Beloved, are there not some of you who were accustomed to walk with God each day? Your morn was sanctified with prayer and your eventide was closed in with the voice of praise. You walked with Jesus in your daily business. You were real Enochs, you were Johns—you did lay your head on the bosom of your Lord. But ah, have not some of you known suspended communion of late? Let us speak of ourselves personally, instead of addressing you—have not we ourselves held less communion with Jesus? Have not our prayers been fewer to Him and His revelations less bright to us? Have we not been content to live without Emmanuel in our hearts?

How long is it with some of us since our morsel was dipped in the honey of fellowship? With some of you it is weeks and months, since you had your love visit from Jesus. Oh, Beloved, let me beseech you, cry unto God, "Turn us again." It will never do for us to live without communion. We cannot, we must not, we dare not live without constant hourly fellowship with Jesus. I would stir you up in this matter. Seek of God that you may return and experience the loveliness of Jesus in your eyes—that you may know more and more of your loveliness in His eyes.

And once more, Beloved, "Turn us again," must be the prayer of all you, not only in your religious labors, but in your daily lives. Oh, how I do groan over each one of you, especially those of you who are my children in

Christ—whom God has granted me to be the means of bringing from nature's darkness into marvelous light—that your lives may be an honor to your profession. Oh, my dear Hearers, may none among you who make a profession, be found liars to God and man. There are many who have been baptized, who have been baptized into the waters of deception—there are some who put the sacramental wine between their lips, who are a dishonor and a disgrace to the Church in which they assemble.

Some who sing praises with us here can go and sing the songs of Satan elsewhere. Yes, are there not some among you, whom I cannot detect, whom the deacons cannot, nor your fellow members either—but whose consciences tell you, you are not fit to be members of a Church? You have crept into our number, you have deceived us and there you are—like a cancer in our midst. God forgive you and change your hearts. God turn you to Himself!

And oh, my Brethren, one and all of us, though we hope we have the root of the matter in us, yet how much room there is for improvement and amendment! How are your families conducted? Is there as much of that true and earnest prayerfulness for your children as we could desire? How is your business conducted? Are you above the tricks of the trade? Do you know how to stand aloof from the common customs of other men and say, "If all do wrong it is no reason why I should—I must, I will do right"? Do you know how to talk? Have you caught the brogue of Heaven? Can you eschew all foolishness, all filthy conversation and seek to bear the image of Jesus Christ in the world? I do not ask you whether you use the "thou" and "thee," and the outward formalities of ostentatious humility—but I ask you whether you know how to regulate your speech by the Word of God. I trust, in some degree, that you all do but not as we could desire.

Cry out, then, you Christians, "Turn us again, O God!" If others sin, I beseech you, do not you sin, remember how God is dishonored by it. What? Will you bring shame on Christ and on the doctrines we profess? There is enough said against them without our giving cause of offense. Lies enough are made up, without our giving any reason that men should truthfully speak ill of us. Oh, if I thought it would avail, methinks I would go down upon my knees, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, to beg of you, as for my very life, that you would live close to Jesus. I do pray the Holy Spirit that He may so rest on you in every place, that your conversation may be "such as becomes the Gospel of Christ." And that in every act, great or small—and in every word of every sort, there may be the influence from on near—molding you to the right, keeping you to the right—and in everything bidding you to become more and more patterns of godliness and reflections of the image of Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends, to be personal with each other again—are we where we want to be just now, many of us? Can we put our hands to our hearts and say, "O Lord, I am, in spiritual things just where I desire to be"? No, I don't think there is one of us that could say that. Are we now what we should desire to be if we were to die in our pews? Come now, have we so lived during the past week, that we could wish this week to be a speci-

men-week of our whole lives? I fear not. Brethren, how are your evidences? Are they bright for Heaven? How is your heart? Is it wholly set on Jesus? How is your faith? Does it dwell on God alone? Is your soul sick, or is it healthy?

Are you sending forth blossoms and bearing fruit, or do you feel dry and barren? Remember, blessed is the man who is planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season. But how about yourselves? Are not some of you so cold and languid in prayer, that prayer is a burden to you? How about your trials? Do they not break your heart more, almost, than ever they did? That is because you have forgotten how to cast your burden on the Lord. How about your daily life? Have you not cause to grieve over it, as not being all you could desire it? Ah, Beloved, do not reckon it a light matter to be going backwards—do not consider it a small thing to be less zealous than you used to be. Ah, it is a sad thing to begin to decline. But how many of you have done so! Let our prayer be now—“Lord, revive us, Lord, revive us, all our help must come from You.”

Do, I beseech you, I entreat you—in the name of God our Father and Jesus Christ our Brother—search your hearts, examine yourselves and put up this prayer, “Lord, wherein I am right, keep me so, against all opposition and conflict. But wherein I am wrong, Lord make me right, for Jesus’ sake.” We must have this turning again unto God, if we would have a revival in our breast. Every unholy life, every cold heart, everyone who is not entirely devoted to God, keeps us back from having a revival. When once we have all our souls fully turned unto the Lord, then, I say, but not till then, He will give us to see the travail of the Redeemer’s soul and, “God, even our own God shall bless us and all the ends of the world shall fear Him.”

The other means of revival is a precious one—“cause Your face to shine.” Ah, Beloved, we might ask of God that we might all be devoted—all His servants, all prayerful and all what we want to be. But it would never come without this second prayer being answered. And even if it did come without this, where would be the blessing? It is the causing of His face to shine on His Church that makes a Church flourish. Do you suppose that, if to our number there were added a thousand of the most wealthy and wise of the land, we should really prosper any the more without the light of God’s countenance? Ah, no, Beloved, give us our God and we could do without them, but they would be a curse to us without Him.

Do you imagine that the increase of our numbers is a blessing, unless we have an increase of grace? No, it is not. It is the crowding of a boat until it sinks, without putting in any more provision, for the food of those who are in it. The more we have in numbers, the more we need have of grace. It is just this we want every day—“Cause Your face to shine.” Oh, there have been times in this House of Prayer, when God’s face has shone upon us! I can remember seasons, when everyone of us wept, from the minister down almost to the child. There have been times when we have reckoned the converts under one sermon by scores. Where is the blessedness we once spoke of? Where is the joy we once had in this house?

Brethren, it is not all gone. There are many still brought to know the Lord. But oh, I want to see those times again, when first the refreshing showers came down from Heaven. Have you ever heard that under one of Whitfield's sermons there have been as many as two thousand saved? He was a great man. But God can use the little, as well as the great to produce the same effect. And why should there not be souls saved here, beyond all our dreams? Yes, why not? We answer—there is no reason why not—if God does but cause His face to shine. Give us the shining of God's face—man's face may be covered with frowns and his heart may be black with malice—but if the Lord our God does shine, it is enough—

***“If He makes bare His arm,
Who can His cause withstand?
When He His people's cause defends
Who, who can stay His hand?”***

It is His good hand with us we want. I think there is an opportunity for the display of God's hand at this particular era, such as has not been for many years before. Certainly, if He does anything, the crown must be put on His head and on His head, alone. We are a feeble people—what shall we do? But if He does anything, He shall have the crown and the diadem entirely to Himself. Oh that He would do it! Oh that He would honor Himself! Oh that He would turn unto us that we might turn unto Him and that His face may shine! Children of God, I need not enlarge on the meaning of this. You know what the shining of God's face means—you know it means a clear light of knowledge, a warming light of comfort, a living light poured into the darkness of your soul, an honorable light, which shall make you appear like Moses, when he came from the mountain—so bright, that men will scarce dare to look upon you. “Cause Your face to shine.”

Shall we not make this our prayer, dearly Beloved? Have I one of my Brethren in the faith, who will not this day go home to cry out aloud unto his God, “Cause Your face to shine”? A black cloud has swept over us—all we want is that the sun should come and it shall sweep that cloud away. There have been direful things. But what of them, if God, our God, shall appear? Let this be our cry, “Cause Your face to shine.” Beloved, let us give no rest unto our God, until he hears this our prayer, “Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Your face to shine. And we shall be saved.”

III. Come, now, let me stir you all up, all of you who love the Savior, to seek after this revival. Some of you, perhaps, are now resolving in your hearts that you will at once, when you reach your homes, prostrate yourselves before your God and cry out to Him that He would bless His Church. And oh, do so, I beseech you. It is common with us under a sermon to resolve, though after the sermon we are slow to perform. You have often said, when you left the House of God, “I will carry out that injunction of my pastor and will be much in prayer.” You thought to do it so soon as you arrived at home, but you did not, and so there was an untimely end of the matter—it accomplished not what was designed.

But this time, I beseech you, while you resolve, be resolute. Instead of saying within yourselves, “Now I will devote myself more to God and seek to honor Him more,” anticipate the resolution by the result. You can do more in the strength of God than you can think or propose to yourselves in the utmost might of man. Resolves may pacify the conscience very frequently for a while, without really benefiting it. You say you will do it, conscience therefore does not reproach you with a disobedience to the command, but you do it not, after all, and so the effect has passed away. Let any holy and pious resolution you now form be this instant turned into prayer. Instead of saying, “I *will* do it,” put up the prayer, “Lord enable me *to* do it—Lord, grant me grace *to* do it.” One prayer is worth ten thousand resolutions. Pray to God that you, as a soldier of the Cross, may never disgrace the banner under which you fight.

Ask of Him that you may not be like the children of Ephraim, who turned back in the day of battle, but that you may stand fast in all weathers, even as good old Jacob, when “in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night”—so may you serve that God who has galled you with so high a calling. Perhaps others of you think there is no need of a revival, that your own hearts are quite good enough. I hope but few of you think so. But if you do think so, my Hearer, I warn you—you fancy you are right and in it you prove that you are wrong. He who says within himself, “I am rich and increased with goods,” let him know that he is, “poor, and naked, and miserable.” He who says he needs no revival knows not what he says.

Beloved, you shall find that those who are noted as best among God’s people are sometimes not. And those who fancy all goes well in their hearts oftentimes little know that an under-current of evil is really bearing them away as with a tide where they would not wish to go—while they fancy they are going on to peace and prosperity. Oh, Beloved, carry into effect the advice I have just given. I know I have spoken feebly. It is the best I can do just now, I have only stirred you up by way of remembrance. Think not my desires are as feeble as my words—imagine not that my anxiety for you is or can be represented by my speech.

Ask, I beseech you, ask of God, that to everyone of you Brothers and Sisters, the simple exhortation of one who loves you as his own soul, may be blessed. God is my witness, that for Him I seek to live—no other motive have I in this world, God knows, but His glory. Therefore do I bid and exhort you, knowing that you love the same God and seek to serve the same Christ—do not now, in this hour of peril, give the least cause to the enemy to blaspheme. Oh, I entreat you for His sake who hung upon the tree and who is now exalted in Heaven—by His bloody sacrifice offered for your redemption—by the everlasting love of God, whereby you are kept, I exhort, I beseech, I entreat you, as your Brother in Christ Jesus and such an one as your pastor—be in nothing moved by your adversaries. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for our Savior’s sake.” Pray that your life and conversation may be an honor to your Lord and Master. In nothing give occasion for the enemy

to malign our sacred cause—in everything may your course be “like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

But oh, you who come here and approve the Truth of God with your judgment but yet have never felt its power in your hearts or its influence in your lives, for you we sigh and groan. For your sake I have stirred up the saints among us to pray. Oh how many of you there are that have been pricked in your consciences and hearts many a time. You have wept, yes, and have so wept that you have thought with yourselves, “Never souls wept as we have done!” But you have gone back again. After all the solemn warnings you have heard and after all the wooing of Calvary, you have gone back again to your sins.

Sinner! You who heed little for yourself, just hear how much we think of you. Little do you know how much we groan over your soul. Man! You think your soul worthless, yet morning, noon and night we are groaning over that precious immortal thing which you despise. You think it little to lose your soul, to perish, or perhaps to be damned. Do you account us fools that we should cry over you? Do you suppose we are bereft of reason that we should think your soul of so much concern, while you have so little concern for it?

Here are God’s people—they are crying after your soul. They are laboring with God to save you. Do you think so little of it yourself, that you would fool away your soul for a paltry pleasure, or would procrastinate your soul’s welfare beyond the limited domain of hope? Oh, Sinner, Sinner, if you love yourself, I beseech you, pause and think that what God’s people love must be worth something. That what we labor for and strive for must be worth something. That what was reckoned worth a ransom so priceless as Jesus paid must have its sterling value in the sight of Heaven.

Do I beseech you? Pause! Think of the value of your soul. Think how dreadful it will be if it is lost. Think of the extent of eternity. Think of your own frailty. Consider your own sin and of what you deserve. May God give you grace to forsake your wicked ways! Turn unto Him and live, for He “has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but rather that he should turn unto Him and live!” Therefore, says He, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?”

And now, O Lord God of Hosts, hear our ardent appeal to Your throne. “Turn us again.” Lighten our path with the guidance of Your eye, cheer our hearts with the smiles of Your face. O God of Armies, let every regiment and rank of Your militant Church be of perfect heart, undivided in Your service. Let great grace rest upon all Your children. Let great fear come upon all the people. Let many reluctant hearts be turned to the Lord. Let there now be times of refreshing from Your Presence. To Your own name shall be all the glory, “O You that are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey!” Amen.

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OPENING THE MOUTH

NO. 1221

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

***“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”
Psalm 81:10.***

SOME have considered that our text contains an allusion to a singular custom of showing favor which has been occasionally adopted by Eastern monarchs. It is not a very long time ago that a former Shah of Persia bade an ambassador, who was in great favor with him, open his mouth, and when he had done so the monarch filled it with pearls and gems of great value which, of course, were a present to him. This certainly affords an illustration of the text, even if the passage contains no allusion to it. If we will but open the mouth of our desire, God will give to us mercies infinitely more precious than the rarest gems.

I guarantee you that if any emperor or king should bid us open our mouths that we might have them filled with diamonds, we should be very sure to extend them to their largest possible capacity and, therefore, this custom may serve as a good enforcement of the text. Open your mouth wide, for God will not fill it with secondary things, but will satisfy you with Divine mercies of exceeding preciousness. I think, however, that the illustration which we have mentioned is far fetched and I seldom like an explanation of a passage of Scripture which demands the introduction of a very rare incident. Illustrations are used in Scripture not to perplex us, but to render the teaching more clear.

We will, therefore, look to some more common act of Eastern life for the explanatory allusion. Those who have been at the tables of the Orientals know that there is another very common custom which meets the case. The host, when you are at supper, will take the fattest portions of the lamb, if that happens to be the meat, and he will apportion them to you. He may even take up the fattest and choicest morsels in his hand and, asking you to open your mouth, he will place them in it. This is a common practice of the country and lies at the bottom of many a Scriptural expression. “Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.” “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips,” and a great many other texts which I might quote, all allude to that custom.

A man greatly beloved would be asked to open his mouth wide that he might receive a very large portion of the dainties before him. I confess, however, that I am not much enamored with even this simile. I believe it to be a valuable side light, but I had rather, after all, look to Nature for an illustration than dwell upon a custom which is purely Oriental and is hardly relished by our Western delicacy. Come with me, then, to the woods, where the songsters of the grove have built their habitations. Look

at the little birds in the nest, for *there* you have the text! They are newly hatched and unable to feed themselves and, therefore, they are wholly dependent upon the parent birds.

When I have peered into their abode, they seemed, to me, to be all mouth and beak, with but faint trace of wings! If you put out your finger, or dangle a worm near them, no feature strikes you but those gaping ravenous mouths! When the mother bird brings food she never has to ask the little ones to open their mouths wide—her only difficulty is to fill the great width which they are quite sure to present to her! Appetite and eagerness are never lacking, they are utterly insatiable. If you need my text before your eyes in living realization, only picture a nest of little birds reaching up their mouths and all opening them as wide as they can.

Instead of the poor little mother bird that has been hard at work to gather a scanty portion for one of them, you have an infinite God filling all open mouths and bidding them open again, for He is able to fill them, however many they may be, or however vast their needs! It is that great Lord of ours of whom it is written, “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust,” who now speaks to us, as little birds, and says, “Open your mouths wide, for I will fill them.” That is, at any rate, a pleasing illustration of the text, even if it is not the exact idea which was in the Psalmist’s mind. The text divides itself into *the exhortation* and *the promise*.

I. The exhortation is, “OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE.” How are we to do this? The precept relates to *prayer* and desire and the like. But there is also an exhortation to *labor after a great sense of need*. For what makes a bird open its mouth wide but its hunger? The young ravens cry because they need food and nobody will ever open his mouth wide for spiritual blessings until he has a very deep and solemn sense of his need before God. You sinners will never pray till you know you need something—why should you? All the prayers offered by people who have no needs are so much vain complimenting of God. If you have no sense of need how can you pray?

Would you knock at the door of charity and then tell the good man of the house that you require nothing of him? Is not that man an arrant trifler who rings the surgery bell but tells the surgeon that he has nothing the matter with him and does not need his care? Prayers that are not based upon a sense of need are mockeries. And I say this to Christians, too. You never pray, Brothers and Sisters, except when you are in need—and rest assured when you think you have no more needs you have lost the strongest motive for prayer and the main element of power in it. You may feel, at times, that there is little to request on your own account and you may rejoice that the Lord has filled you to the full for the time being, but then there are the needs of the Church and of the world—and these should press upon your heart as if they were your own.

You cannot pray without a sense of need, it is out of the question. The man who comes to you begging because he has not a night’s lodging, or has not broken his fast all day, how well he begs! You do not need to send him to school to learn the art of begging—his hungry belly makes

him eloquent! And so, when a man feels he must have heavenly blessings or be lost. Or when he feels that, being saved, he must still be kept by daily Grace, or else he will start aside. Or when he feels that his work of faith and labor of love will be good for nothing without the Divine blessing. Or when he feels that the Church must have the anointing of the Holy One and that the world needs a visitation from God—when any of these needs solemnly weigh upon his soul—then it is that he prays! The man does not open his mouth wide till he is conscious of a great need, which only the Lord, Himself, can supply.

I exhort you, therefore, dear Brethren, to shake off the idea of being rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, for this proud notion will strangle prayer! You are weakness itself and emptiness itself—and a mass of sin and misery—apart from God your Father, and Christ your Redeemer, and the Spirit the Indweller! And when you know this, *then* you will open your mouth wide. Airy notions about having reached a higher life and being perfect will make fine gentlemen of you, but will spoil you for being beggars at the Mercy Seat. The mouth of dire necessity, God always fills, but pride has short results, for is it not one of the proverbs of His kingdom, “He has filled the hungry with good things; but the rich He has sent empty away”?

Then, dear Friends, next seek after an intense and vehement *desire*, for the mouth is opened wide only when the desire becomes intense. You know how David says, “I opened my mouth and panted.” You have seen a dog after a long run, how he stands with opened mouth panting for life and breath. Oh, that we had desires after God and Divine things strong enough to make us thus open our mouth and pant! We may never have seen a stag *in extremis*, but I dare say David had. He had seen it in the fierce hunt when it longed to have its smoking sides in the water brooks and to drink long draughts, and he said, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.”

Nothing puts such energy into prayer as intense anguish of desire. Desire comes out of a sense of need and in proportion as the necessity is overwhelming, the fervency of the desire will be vehement. My Brothers and Sisters, we *have* not, because, although we ask, we use a kind of asking which is as though we asked not! An old Puritan says, “He that prays to God without fervor asks to be denied.” There is a way of asking for a thing in which the person to whom the request is made finds it very easy to decline the request. But persons in dire need understand how to put their case so that only a very hard-hearted person could say, “no.” They know how to place their petition in such a way that the request wins, not merely because of the rightness of the petition, but also because of the very style in which it is put.

We must learn how to pray with strong cries and tears, for there are mercies which cannot be gained by any other mode of supplicating. Did you ever try your little child by holding fast in your hand something that he wanted? You wished to see whether he had perseverance enough to pull open your fingers, one by one, to get what he wished for. And you have shut your hand very tightly and tried his endeavors so long that at

last you have seen the big round tears stand in his eyes—and then you have held out no longer. The tears open your hand!

I believe that our heavenly Father exercises us in that manner at times until He gets us right down to this—that we must have it and we shall die if we do not have it because it is for His Glory—and we have His promise for it. When we come to that point we are where the Lord meant us to be! And having brought us there, He gives us our desire, having already doubled the blessing by stirring us up to vehemence. Open your mouth wide, Man! Do not play at praying! Nobody is saved between sleeping and waking—and nobody wins rich blessings by being lukewarm. I have heard mothers say of a child that, “he cried all over,” and that is the right way to pray! Let your whole man wrestle with the Most High. “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

Deep necessity and urgent desire are two great openers of the mouth in prayer. To my mind the pith of the text may be compressed into such words as these—*Ask for large things*. Do not restrict your requests and pray with bated breath, but plead with the great God for great things, such as it will be to His Glory to bestow. In this point we too often fail. I remember praying before I preached in a certain provincial town and asking the Lord that He would enable at least one poor soul to lay hold on Christ.

I went home to tea with a very worthy Brother, and a fine old Christian gentleman at the tea table said to me very kindly, “I do not know what you did with your faith this afternoon when you were praying, for you asked the Lord to give you one soul, but the sermon was such that I saw no reason why it should not be blessed to a thousand. I could not say, ‘Amen,’ to such a very narrow prayer as that. Why,” said he, “Man alive! With such a Gospel as you were preaching, and such a crowd of people, you might as well have asked for a thousand souls as one.” I thought so, too, and confessed the poverty of my prayer.

Brethren, many of us have made great mistakes and have shut ourselves up in the cells of poverty when our feet might have stood in a large room! We have laid down pipes too small to bring us a full current of blessing. We have half-killed our prayers by lacing them too tight, even as foolish mothers kill their daughters. Our cup is small and we blame the fountain! The Israelites, according to this Psalm, did not believe in God as they should. They did not expect their enemies to be driven out, nor hope to be fed with the finest of the wheat. They thought their God was a commonplace God, like the gods of Egypt. They did not know what a rich, generous, great-hearted, large-giving God He is and so they failed in asking and, therefore, they did not obtain the richest blessings of Grace. Christians should elevate the scale of their praying and enlarge their requests and never let it be said that they lose blessings solely by failing to ask for them.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we may well ask great things, for we are asking of *a great God* who fills immensity, who has all power, who has all blessings in His stores! If we were to ask Him for a world, it is no more for Him to bestow a world than it would be for us to give away a crumb!

When the poor widow gave her two mites she gave her all and knowing her poverty, one would ask very little of her and expect even less! But when you ask of a *king* you do not expect two mites from him! That poor woman who said, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table," was far nearer the mark than most of us, for much as she valued the inestimable blessing which she sought, she reckoned it as being *nothing* more than a *crumb* as it came from God!

The greatest blessings which can yet be received through Jesus Christ, though we cannot prize them enough and they are beyond all calculation, precious, are *little* in comparison with the unspeakable gift of His Son, which has already been bestowed! Open your mouth wide, for wide are the supplies of love, and boundless the riches of the Sovereign Grace of so great a God! Besides His greatness, remember His *goodness*. The good Lord delights to give—it does not diminish His possessions, but affords Him satisfaction. The sun is just as bright, notwithstanding all his shining, as if he had stored up his light. It is the sun's nature to shine and it may as well shine upon us as anywhere else! And it is God's delight to distribute His goodness and bless His creatures—and therefore we may well ask large things from One whose very nature it is to scatter His fullness among the poor and needy.

Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, what He has already done for us. "I am the Lord your God, which brought you up out of Egypt," says He, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." See what He has done! Is it a trifle to have had all your sins forgiven, to have received a new heart and a right spirit, to have been saved by the precious blood of His dear Son? If we made our prayers to scale, if they were proportioned to the measure of God's past favors, what great prayers they would be! I love a Gospel on a grand scale. I cannot bear to see anything about it lowered, or cut down—not even the terrors of it. I am certain that those who make out the punishment of the wicked to be upon a smaller scale, must, before long, diminish the Glory of the Atonement and bring down their conceptions of God, Himself, for they are all proportioned.

But you and I, who see everything to be grand, vast, infinite, ought to open our mouths wide, to keep our praying somewhat proportionate to the condition of things around us. Remember, beloved Brothers and Sisters, what *great pleas* you have to urge when you come before God. Your main argument is the gift of His dear Son. Now, if you pray according to that plea, you will have this consideration to support you—"He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things"? What a word is that—"all things"! Your prayers cannot outrun those comprehensive words—"all things." Should you not open your mouth wide? Would you employ before God the magnificent plea of the atoning blood and then come down to ask for pence and halfpence, when you might as well have countless riches?

Will you ask for enough Grace to keep you out of Hell, when you might have Grace enough to make you habitually in the suburbs of Heaven? Will you ask to be useful to two or three, when you might, with the same plea, prevail to be a spiritual benefactor to hundreds and thousands? He

deserves to be poor who has no desire to be rich and will not even take the trouble to ask for wealth. He who will not so much as open his mouth must expect no pity should he starve. Oh, Beloved, do not pinch yourselves, but ask the largest conceivable blessings! Spread your most capacious net, for the multitude of fish will fill it! Dig the deepest pools, for the rain will brim them! Bring forth all your empty vessels, for the oil shall be multiplied till all are overflowing.

Beloved, let us ask *great things for ourselves*. I do not mean let us ask great *temporal* blessings—we may leave everything of that kind with God and this is the limit He puts to such prayer—“Give us day by day our daily bread.” Having food and raiment let us be content. But as for *spiritual* things, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Here the treasury has neither lock nor key! The lid is taken off from the jewelry box—help yourself—and if you are straitened you are not straitened in God, you are straitened in your own heart! I beseech you, young Christians, do not be satisfied with getting as much Grace as the people you live with, who profess to be Christians, for there are hosts of them that I would not like to risk my soul with.

I am not their judge, but *I think, I think* it will be an extraordinary thing if they get into Heaven. I know some very loud-mouthed talkers whose actions are not pretty at all, and the less said about them the better. I mean some *professors* when I speak thus. I mean members of Churches. Now, do not you young people make them your standard—get far beyond them! Outstrip the ordinary run of Christians who are consistent and no more. I would urge you to seek far higher things than they possess. They are said to be “consistent,” though I do not know what they are consistent with. They do nothing that is grossly wrong and they are good, ordinary, respectable people, but as to joy in the Lord and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and real faith—daring faith, love and zeal for God’s Glory—and agony for the conversion of souls, why, large numbers of very consistent people know nothing about these things except when they read about them in the Bible!

Surely their condition is more consistent with membership in Laodicea than in the New Jerusalem! Their consistency is not consistency with the Divine will, but a miserable consistency with their own dead-and-alive profession. Oh, you that are beginners in the Divine Life, I pray you be not as your fathers! Do not take any of us for a standard. We are a good-for-nothing generation, taking us all round, and there had need be a far better race springing up that shall really believe and act upon their faith! We need a generation who will so live unto God with a more intense, strong and mighty life than most of us have ever realized. Open your mouth wide, young Christian, for a large measure of the Holy Spirit and for a mighty fullness of the life of God, that it may be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Open your mouths wide, dear Friends, and ask *great things for the Church*. The Church of God, I hope, is in a better condition than she was some years ago, but we have not yet learned what it is to believe in great works being done for God. There are still Churches, which if they were to

have half-a-dozen added to them in a year, would be intensely satisfied, if not overjoyed, instead of calling for prayer and fasting and humiliation because so few are brought to Christ. There are Church members around us who do not believe in many people being converted at once. If the Gospel were preached so that a dozen were brought in at one time, they would impute it to undue excitement and doubt its being the work of the Spirit of God, though we have the New Testament and the Acts of the Apostles, especially, to lead us to expect such things.

There are Churches to which, if God were to send a hundred converts at once, they would not receive them, but would put them through a rigid quarantine! And you may be sure our heavenly Father will not send His new-born babes to places where they will not be cheerfully admitted! There are certain Churches whose modes of testing and trying are such that the young lambs would be torn to bits before they would get into the green pastures—and there would hardly be two legs and a piece of an ear left after they had passed the examination—the Good Shepherd will not send His lambs where such a tribe of wolves stand gaping for prey. Pray for the Church, that she may have greater faith in her God, greater belief in the Gospel which she preaches, greater closeness of walk with Jesus, greater care to obey her Master's precepts—and then you may open your mouth wide and expect to see the kingdom of Christ more fully come.

Open your mouth for *this great city*. Who can think what a city we live in without desiring to be mighty in prayer for it? At this moment Scotland is a land where religion has mighty influence and I trace it mainly to the prayers of John Knox. His mighty pleading with God anchored Scotland to the Gospel and she cannot get away from it. We have urgent need to pray for England in these evil times. Many are *preying upon her*, we have need to *pray for her*. The darkness thickens—among the learned it has blackened into Egyptian night and among the illiterate it is as the valley of the shadow of death. Skepticism is descending upon us like a horrible mist, chilling faith even to the very marrow of our bones. Superstition, like a feverish fog, pollutes the air. We have need to cry to the Lord to do some great work in these days—to smite His enemies upon the cheek-bone—and to send forth His power among His friends.

I think I have explained sufficiently that the text means ask great things. But one more remark I must cover, and that is that many of us have need to *ask for enlarged capacities*. It would be of no use to open your mouth if you could not swallow what was put into it, or if you could not digest it after you had swallowed it. And there are many precious Truths of the Gospel which uninstructed Believers could not digest if they knew them. Therefore there is great need that their minds should be strengthened and fitted to feed upon strong meat. The grand Truths of the Covenant. The Doctrines of Election and Predestination.

The glorious facts of the Immutable Love of God and the indissoluble union of the saints with Christ, and their consequent everlasting safety—all these are sublime matters which cannot be appreciated by every novice, but require a spiritually educated mind to enjoy them. Thousands of professors sneer at these eternal Truths because they have not the spiri-

tual digestion which could assimilate such grand soul-feeding meat! They remind me of little, conceited boys affecting to despise the diet of men because they, themselves, have no taste except for sugar plums and sponge cakes. There are many mercies which persons ask for and if God were to bestow them, they would not know what to do with them! It would be like giving them a white elephant—they would not know where or how to keep it.

Yonder Brother asks for more talent and yet he does not use what he already has! Another Brother begs the Lord to make him successful in his work, but he would be top heavy and proud, and exalted above measure if he were favored with a little success. One man craves that he may know, but his knowledge would puff him up. Another prays that he may feel, but his feelings would drown his faith! If we had more room for the Lord's gifts, we should receive more. I have half a mind to exhort you to imitate the rich fool and pull down your barns and build greater. He was a fool because he meant to gather a store of wheat and grain of the earth—but if you can build greater barns to hold the precious Grace which comes from Heaven, you will be wise, indeed.

God will not give you what you cannot receive or put to healthy use. But, Oh, pray to Him, "Lord, enlarge my heart, expand my soul and give me a nobler mind free from selfishness, less cramped with ideas of my own consequence! Make me less important, more loving, more careful for the souls of others, more ambitious for Your Glory, more intensely consecrated to Your Word and will." While self hoards up its treasures there is no room for Divine things! And the surest way for our enlargement is to turn out the vile stuff. Tobiah's furniture is in the chamber of the house of the Lord and out it must go! Then there will be room for the treasure which the Master bestows.

II. The second head is the promise. "Open your mouth wide, AND I WILL FILL IT." You might expect such a promise as that. You could not think it possible for the Lord to say, "Open your mouths for nothing." It would not be according to His usual way of procedure. He does not set His servants praying and then say somewhere behind their backs, "they shall seek My face in vain." Tantalus belongs to the heathen mythology, not to the Christian's experience. "Open your mouth wide, *and I will fill it.*"

I gather from this promise, first, that *it is a promise only made to those who open their mouths wide.* Some Brethren never get their mouths filled because they never open them to any extent. They ask for some little mercy and they may get it, or may not. There is no promise about such shut-mouthed prayers—if they had opened their mouths wide they would have, for sure, had the mouth-filling blessing. With the world, it is the less you ask for, the more likely you will be to obtain it, but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. With God, the more you ask, the more likely are you to be heard. Half open your mouth and it may or may not be filled, but, "Open your mouth *wide*, and I *will* fill it."

We always pray well and successfully when the Spirit of God enables us to stand on elevated ground and plead on godlike terms for blessings

which for value, number and greatness are worthy of the infinite bounty of Jehovah. We are then dealing with God as He loves to be dealt with, for He is a rich and great God, and loves to be approached with great prayers and great requests. And when we draw near in that fashion we shall be quite sure to succeed. I would encourage you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who seem to have failed in your supplications, to enquire whether they may not have failed because their requests were too little.

God seems to say to His servant, "You have not asked enough. Come, Man, you are trifling with Me! Here is My Mercy Seat—I am rich, infinitely rich, and willing to give you according to your desires—and you are asking me for mere odds and ends. Do not play with Me in this way! Ask for something which I can feel a pleasure in giving to you—something worthy of a God." "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Should not this thought greatly strengthen us when next we draw near to God in prayer?

Remember, too, that *this is a promise given by One who can fulfill it and will.* "Open your month wide, and I will fill it" is a sort of challenge. "See whether you can ask for more than I can give you." Try whether your faith can outrun your God! See whether you can expect more of God than He will bestow. Take His promise and challenge Him, and see whether He will run back from it. He promises great things and unsearchable, let your soul's necessities impel you to ask for the greatest conceivable blessings and see whether He will deny you. "Prove Me, now, says the Lord of Hosts, and see."

Oh, if Israel had been in an experimenting mind, what wonders would they have seen! How would the windows of Heaven have been flung back and Infinite Good been showered down! But they were not in a praying mood. God encouraged them to ask by the favor with which He had surrounded them, for of old He had scattered manna about their habitations, and from the Rock He had drawn forth flowing streams. Thus He seemed to say to them, "Oh, Israel, see how you are surrounded with miracles! Heaven and earth are made subservient to you. Nothing is too hard for Me—I open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the deserts—believe in Me and act according to the scale upon which I am acting to you—and see whether I shall fail in anything." Even so the Lord puts it to you, dear Brethren, and it is not an empty boast. He is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it? "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Oh, what stories I could tell, here, of my own experience if it did not seem like egotism. When I read, as I continually do, slurs put upon our prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, and find that it has become a current opinion that there really is no such a thing as an answer to prayer, I feel indignant! Why, Sirs, I am as sure that God hears *my* prayers as I am certain that you hear me! To me the energy of prayer is as self-evident as the weight of a substance, or the force of a motive power. The law of gravitation I might doubt, but the law that God hears prayer I cannot! The wonder to me is that men should stand up and assert that God does not hear prayer when they cannot be supposed to know everything and

dare not claim to have any very special acquaintance with prayer, itself, such as to qualify them to calculate its results.

Those who deny the efficacy of prayer never pray! No, are not *capable* of offering prevalent prayer. Why do they speak so positively? What do they know about it? How dare they, as philosophers, speak dogmatically of that which they have never tried? I can say, and I do say it honestly, that *hundreds* of times, about all sorts of things, I have taken my case to God and have obtained the desire of my heart, or something far better—and that not by mere coincidence, as these objectors assert—but in a manner palpably in reply to my pleadings. There are multitudes of Brothers and Sisters here, who, from their own experience, can bear the same witness!

Yet a fellow gets up who never tried prayer and says it is of no avail! We find it hard to have patience with him. How does he know? He reminds me of the Irish prisoner who was brought up for murder and half-a-dozen people swore that they had seen him do the deed. “Your Lordship,” he said, “I could bring ten times as many that *didn’t* see me do it.” Yes, but that was no evidence at all! And in the same way, these people have the impudence to set up their theory on no better grounds than the fact that they do not pray and God does not hear them! What is the good of such evidence? We know He would not hear them if they did not pray. When He does hear simple men and women, guiltless persons who, if they were put on the witness stand, would be reckoned to be the best witnesses a court could have—is their witness to go for nothing?

And others of us, whose character, I trust, would bear us through any cross-examination—are we to assert that God has answered our prayers and be prepared to die to prove our sincerity, if need be—and yet be told that men who have not tried it, and say it is not so, are philosophers and are to be believed sooner than we are? We may not be philosophers, but we are honest men and have done nothing to make our testimony unreliable. It is easy to call us fools, but hard names prove nothing but the weakness of those who use them. Take Christians as a rule and they are not less sharp-witted than skeptics. Indeed, even when they have been fanatical, they have seldom said or done such unwise things as skeptical philosophers have propounded and attempted to carry out. However, it little matters what the ungodly say, the foundation of God stands sure.

Oh, Brethren, we will prove the power of prayer more than ever! If we have asked and had, we will ask more and we shall have more. If we have opened our mouths and God has filled them, we will open our mouths wider and obtain a larger blessing. The very best way to put to rout the falsehood of these philosophic atheists is more real prayer—fools are unanswerable. Christian Brethren, look at the promise again. “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it,” and then answer the question—*how will the Lord fill our mouth?* First, He will fill it with *prayers*. Do you ever feel as if you could not pray? Do not yield to the feeling, for then is the *time* to pray! When you cannot pray you *must* pray. Hold your empty mouth open before God, for the Holy Spirit to put the prayer into it.

I have come away from attempting to pray and felt I did not pray. And the next time I have knelt down I have been very fluent in prayer and yet there was more real prayer in my groaning and sighing and heaving heart when I thought I failed, than there was in the fluency of the second occasion! Open your mouth wide, dear Brothers and Sisters, and God will fill it with petitions of an acceptable kind. The Holy Spirit will give you “groans that cannot be uttered.” No prayer excels that in which the creature feels as if it *could not* pray and *did not* pray—and yet the Creator, Himself, strives mightily within!

Then, open your mouth wide and He will fill it with *the actual blessings*. He will not merely put blessings into your hands, but He will fill your mouth with them. It is one thing to have the cup of blessing in your hand and quite another thing to drink thereof. Many a man possesses what he never enjoys—the fruit on the tree is his own, but its sweet flavor never gladdens his mouth. When the Lord, in love, bestows a blessing, He teaches us how to enjoy it! He gives us the essence of the meat, the soul of the solace, the juice of the vine, the heart of the joy—not merely the legal claim to it but the actual enjoyment of it! This is the cream of the cream, the mercy of the mercy, the filling of the mouth with the promised good.

The Lord will also fill our mouth with *praises*. Open your mouth wide and God will fill it with songs, with shouts, with gratitude which cannot be expressed in words. Some of us know what it means to have our mouths so full of God’s praises all day long that we have wanted all mankind and all the angels to help us magnify the Lord. Open your mouths wide, then, and God will fill them with prayer, with blessing, and with praise.

In conclusion, is there not very much of rebuke in this to most of us? Parents, have you prayed for the salvation of your children—vehemently and earnestly? *All* your children? Teachers in the classes, have you expected the conversion of *all* your children and prayed for it? Preachers of the Gospel, have you looked for many conversions and prayed for them? Brethren who labor for Christ in any capacity, have you expected to see London converted to God and looked for it and worked for it? In Gospel fisheries we generally catch what we fish for. If we fish with a fly we may get one fish, but if we know how to use the great dragnet, by mighty faith we shall take 153 great fishes! And for all that, the net will not be broken! Open your mouth wide, Brothers and Sisters, and be rebuked to think you have not opened it wide before.

But is there not also a word here of consolation to the sinner? “Open your mouth wide,” says God, even to you, “and I will fill it.” What do you need, Sinner? “Well, I want a little comfort.” Do not ask for *that*, Brother. Ask for the Lord Jesus Christ at once. “Open your mouth wide.” “Oh, I want a little peace. I am so troubled.” Do not ask for *that*, Brother. Ask for a whole Christ and a perfect salvation now. “I want to feel some measure of impression under this sermon.” Do not pray for *that*, Sister. Ask God for a new heart and a right spirit outright, and now! “Open your

mouth wide.” “Will I have it if I asked for it?” It is written, “He that asks receives; he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.”

If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall have this unspeakably great blessing of being immediately saved, for, “He that believes on the Son of God has everlasting life.” “Open your mouth wide.” “But I am such a sinner.” Open your mouth, Man! The promise makes no limit as to who you are. “But I am—I am—.” There, I mind not what you are. Open your mouth, Man! Open your mouth wide! If we were to gather together in one place all the little waifs and strays of London streets, and were to say to them, “Children, we are going to give you a good dinner, and all you have to do is open your mouths,” I do not suppose one little hungry wretch would shut his mouth, or turn away muttering, “I am not fit.” Oh dear, no! You can be quite sure that they would open their mouths if all were hungry, and would need no pressing either!

And so will you, too, if the Spirit of God has made you hunger and thirst after righteousness. Open your mouth wide, believing that Jesus is the Christ! Trust your soul with Him and ask, now, for immediate pardon through His precious blood, and you will not be denied. May the Holy Spirit make you hungry and then your longing mouth shall be filled—and God shall have all the glory. May His blessing rest upon you for Christ’s sake.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 81.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—978, 986, 980.**

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ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER

NO. 2380

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 30, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1888.

*"I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the
land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
Psalm 81:10.*

The preceding verse bids us turn away from any strange God—"There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god." Idolatry is the natural sin of man. It covers a very large surface of the realm of sin and it is always cropping up in some form or other. Idolatry is not merely the bowing before graven images—the essence of it lies in putting trust in any other than the great invisible God. We can easily make to ourselves gods of our experience, of our wealth, of our talents. We can make idols of our children, of our wives, of our husbands, of our friends. We can make a god of *anything* by valuing it more than we do our Savior, or by trusting in it beyond our God, or by refusing to trust in Him apart from it. You can make a god of the means of Grace—when you think more of the *means* of Grace than of God and the Grace of the means! You can make a god of your Bible when you think that the reading of it, apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, will be all that you require! So you see that it is very easy for man to fall into idolatry.

The cure for this evil lies in our having a living God always before us. If you forget the living God, you will make to yourself an idol god. It is a necessity of your nature that you should have a god of some sort and, to prevent your having a strange god, you must trust, cling to and love Jehovah, the one only living and true God.

The man who has Christ before him does not need a crucifix. The man who comes to God through Jesus Christ does not need the intercession of the Virgin Mary or of saints and angels. The man who has set the Lord always before him does not desire symbols of Jehovah's Presence—in fact, he remembers the words of Moses to the children of Israel—"Take you therefore good heed unto yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest you lift up your eyes unto Heaven, and when you see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of Heaven, should be driven to

worship them, and serve them, which the Lord, your God, has divided unto all nations under the whole Heaven.”

Such a man is afraid, sometimes, if there is *anything* like a similitude about his prayers, lest his mind should be taken away from worshipping God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. He, therefore, generally seeks after great simplicity of worship, for an ornate ritual is a stumbling block to him, although there are some who think that it is a help to them. It only hinders him and, therefore, he rejects it. Oh, that God might always keep us clear of all idolatry by His good Spirit enabling us to worship Him in spirit and in truth! Then would these words be fulfilled in our experience—“There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god.” He who has learned to trust the Creator will not want to trust the creature! He who has stayed himself upon the Rock of Ages will not be tempted to support himself upon the broken reed of human strength! Who will lean on a cloud when his defense may be the munitions of stupendous rocks? Who will wish to feed on the mist when he has eaten the true Bread which comes down from Heaven? God, the true God, casts out all strange gods!

In our text we have God coming very near to His people, and coming near them to *encourage* them to come nearer to Him. We have the Lord speaking to them, that they may speak to Him. He opens His mouth to them, that they may open their mouths to Him. The text contains one encouragement and two arguments for it—they will be our two divisions. First, *God encouraging His people*. And, secondly, *God using two great arguments*. You see, the exhortation is sandwiched in between two arguments. The first is, “I am the Lord—I am Jehovah—your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.” Then comes the exhortation, “Open your mouth wide.” And that is followed by the other argument, “I will fill it.” There is a good reason, indeed, for opening the mouth wide, when God has promised to fill it!

I. To begin, then, the exhortation of the sermon will be that which we find in the text, in which we hear GOD ENCOURAGING HIS PEOPLE by saying, “Open your mouth wide.”

I suppose that the Lord means by this exhortation, first of all, to help us *to get rid of the paralyzing influence of fear*. A man, in the presence of one whom he dreads, cannot speak boldly. And if he has been guilty of some great crime and stands before one whom he regards as his judge, he is like the man in our Lord’s parable—“speechless.” A man on his knees, conscious of his sin, fearing the justice of God, would very naturally be unable to speak. And to encourage him, God says, “Open your mouth; be not afraid. Open your mouth wide; confess your sin; acknowledge your wanderings from your God; go into the particulars of your iniquity; ask for My mercy; plead My promises; set forth the arguments that can be drawn from the Cross of Christ. Open your mouth wide; be not afraid to speak.”

Am I addressing some child of God, or rather, one who hardly knows whether he *is* a child of God or not, but who wants to be one? Do you feel as if you cannot pray? God, here, encourages you to plead with Him! He

says, "Open your mouth." Your eyes are filled with tears, or perhaps you are wishing that they might be. Your heart is swelling with grief, but you cannot find expressions for your feelings. You are afraid to come before the Lord. You dare not take hold of the horns of the altar. You think that it would be presumption on your part to look to Christ and hope for mercy, so, there you lie, dumb before God! But, bending over you in infinite compassion, the Great Father says, "Open your mouth! Speak, My child! My ears are waiting to hear your cry. I am ready to grant your request. Oh, be not silent before Me! Pour out your heart like water in My Presence—turn it upside down and, to the last dregs, let all flow out before Me. Reserve nothing! Spread your case before Me, now." I think that this exhortation means just that.

Next, "Open your mouth *wide*." That is, *speak freely in prayer to God*, be not hampered in your pleading. I have known children of God who have felt a terrible awe in the Presence of the Lord—which is a most proper feeling up to a certain point—but they have had a fear which has brought them into bondage, and bondage is a sad evil. We need freedom and liberty of access to God when we come before the Mercy Seat. And the Lord, therefore, encourages His people to break loose from all their shackles when He says, "Open your mouth wide." There are many prayers that it would not be right to pray in public, but they are very dear to God's ears in private. I believe that there are prayers uttered by godly men—uneducated and illiterate Believers—that might provoke a smile from us, but they are accepted in the Beloved, and received as good, sound supplication before the Lord God of Sabaoth. "Open your mouth wide." If you cannot pray as you would, pray as you *can*, but make yourself free with your heavenly Father! Be bold with your Lord! Shake off all reserve and keep back nothing from Him!

Bare your hearts before Him—you cannot conceal anything from Him—do not attempt to do so. Freely commune with the Lord as friend speaks to friend, or as a child addresses his father. You are not, now, before your judge. You are not before an enemy. You are not before one who will harshly criticize you and pull you to pieces—the Lord is all love and gentleness to those who seek His face. Then open your mouth wide! What is it that you have done? What is it that you need? What is it that your soul is craving for? What is it that drives you to despair? Open your mouth wide—let all come out—hide nothing from your God! Let your very heart come marching out at the open doors of your lips, for God is waiting to hear your petition.

The exhortation of the text means, then, shake off all fear, and, also, exercise a holy boldness of familiarity and freedom in the Presence of the Most High.

Do you not think, however, that it means something more than that? It must also mean, *ask great things*. "Open your mouth *wide*." Now note this. The greater the thing that you ask, the more sure you are to have it! With men it is, usually, the smaller the favor you crave, the more likely you are to obtain it. But with God it is the other way—the greater the gift for which you ask, the more sure you are to have it! There is nothing

greater to ask for than Christ—and you may have Christ for the asking—for God has already given Him to all who believe. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” If you ask for wealth, you may not get it, for it is a small and paltry thing which the Lord may not care to give you. But if you ask for eternal life, you shall have it, for this is a *great thing* and God delights to give the greatest blessings to those who come to Him by Christ Jesus, so that, what might seem to hinder should now encourage! God can hear you if you cannot open your mouth, for He can hear the inward groans of your heart. But, oh, you can be sure that He will hear you if you can open your mouth wide!

Is your sin great? Use that as an argument! Say with David, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.” Are you in a very sad plight? Are you spiritually bankrupt? Then plead your poverty—there is no plea like it with God! Do you feel empty? Plead your emptiness! The more urgent your necessity, the more sure will mercy be to relieve you! The greater your need, the readier is God to come to you! If, in going through the town, I see a doctor’s carriage hurrying along at a great speed, I do not think that the physician is driving to a person who has only a toothache! I should conceive that somebody, in dire extremity, had sent for him in hot haste to come and cure him, if possible, of a serious malady. And when God rides upon a cherub and flies, yes, does fly upon the wings of the wind, He is coming to relieve some great need of His people! To the man who has a great need, God says, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Ask great things! God’s people need to be taught to ask great things! That was a noble utterance of William Carey, “Attempt great things *for* God, expect great things *from* God.” The less you expect from man, the better, but the more you expect from God, the more you are likely to receive. Look for great things from Him and come to Him with large requests—

**“You are coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring.”**

Our text must mean that, must it not—*ask great things?*

I think that it also means, in the fourth place, that we are to *feel intense desires*. “Open your mouth.” It has been noticed that whenever a man speaks with very great earnestness, he opens his mouth wide. We read in the Gospels that when our Lord went up into a mountain and, “was set, his disciples came unto Him: and *He opened His mouth*, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit,” and so on. Someone observed that it was quite unnecessary to say that He opened His mouth, for how could He preach without doing so? But another and a wiser person replied, “Oh, if you go into many a Church and Chapel, you can see the thing done!” When a man does not speak distinctly and clearly, he does not open his mouth—but when he is emphatic and earnest in his address, he must open his mouth wide!

The Lord urges us to be in earnest when He says, “Open your mouth wide.” Cold prayers, so-called, are not real prayers—they are rather entreaties to be denied—all their force works backwards! We must pray with fervency, importunity, reiteration, if we would prevail with God! We

must say, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." The Lord loves that kind of pleading! There is no music in God's ear that is more sweet from His child than a loud earnest cry! God delights to hear the knocker of prayer hammering away at the door of mercy! If you have been denied six times, go for the seventh time and knock, and knock, and knock—each time with greater vehemence—if you would be heard. "Open your mouth wide."

O dear Hearers, some of you have been seeking the Lord a little, lately, and you have not found Him! No, but He is not a little God, to be sought a little! And when your whole heart and soul go after Him. When you are deeply anxious and sorely exercised, and solemnly in earnest, *then* will this great God give you His great salvation! Oh, that you would open your mouth wide! Cry unto Him! I mean not with actual loudness of voice, but with the loudness of the heart's voice which shall be heard in Heaven. Sometimes, when it rains very hard, and the servant does not come to the door very quickly, you give such a pull at the bell that it rings all over the house—now give such a ring as that at the gate of Heaven! A storm is raging and you cannot endure waiting outside in the tempest. Pull the bell as if you would pull Heaven, itself, down! Give a ring that seems to say, "I must come in! Infinite Love, I must possess You! Sovereign Mercy, I must receive You! I die, I perish, I am lost forever unless You come to me, my God." Open your mouth wide and then He will be sure to fill it!

Once more, I think that this exhortation means *exercise a great expectancy*. I inadvertently touched upon that point just now. The figure is, no doubt, taken from a bird's nest. Have you ever seen the little birds, inside a nest, when they expected their mother to come and feed them? If you have ever peeped in and they mistook you for their mother, what did they look like? Why, they looked like a mass of mouth! They opened their mouths as wide as they could and it is really surprising how very wide a little bird can open its mouth! The mother is about to bring a worm, or some other thing for it to feed upon—the wee birdie is famishing and it cannot receive food any other way but by opening its mouth! And its hunger makes it feel as if its mouth was not half wide enough and so it at least makes it as wide as it can when the parent bird comes to it—the father or mother which has been toiling and working all day long to satisfy its needs. They do work, poor little creatures, and how fast and how often they fly to and fro! They seem to say to their little ones, "We will fill you. Open your mouths wide and we will fill you."

As for you, poor Souls, what a mouth you have, if you do but open it! I mean, what needs you have! I tell you that your needs are so great that if all the saints on earth, and all the angels in Heaven, were to put their stores together and say, "We will fill you," they would undertake a task utterly beyond their power! None but God, Himself, can fill the human heart! Only He can truly say, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Christ will fill it, however great your sense of sin and your need of pardon. The Father will fill it, however great your grief for having left His house. The Holy Spirit will fill it, however long your death in sin, however great your alienation from God! None but the Trinity can fill the heart of

man! It was one of Quarles' quaint sayings that the heart was a triangle and the world a globe and, he says, "a globe can never fill a triangle, and none but the Trinity can fill the heart of man." Quaint as the saying is, the Truth of God which it embodies is absolutely certain!

"Open your mouth wide and I will fill it," says God. Expect just this, that God will give you, in answer to prayer, all that you need—"I will fill it." Somebody, misquoting this text, says, "I will fill it abundantly." Tush! What do you want with your, "abundantly"? God's Word is big enough without any of your adverbs! "I will fill it." If it is filled, it is filled, and God will fill you full! He will give you all that you require and all that you can ever require between this place and the gates of Heaven! "Open your mouth wide, sensible of your urgent necessity, and I," says God, "will supply all your needs, according to My riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

Now, just two or three words, here, concerning arguments that I might use to induce children of God to come before His Presence asking great things.

First, *consider God's greatness*. You may expect great things from Him who made the heavens and the earth! Look up at the stars, see how the Lord flung them about by handfuls, and remember that all the stars that are visible to you are only the sweepings of stardust by the door of God's great House! There is an infinite number of bright worlds which our telescopes have never seen. He who made all these things is great in power. Therefore, ask something great of Him when you come before Him in prayer. Remember, also, *His goodness*. God delights to give—you are not asking Him to do that which will vex Him. The Lord is no miser who miserably doles out His coppers under pressure. He is a God to whom it is as natural to give as it is for the sun to shine, or for a fountain to flow! Come, then, to Him with large petitions, since He is so greatly good!

Remember, also, *the channel by which mercies come to you*. It is Christ Jesus your Lord. Are you coming to the Lord for pennyworths, in the name of Christ? Say, will you satisfy yourself by asking for pence and farthings through the Lord Jesus? Such a Mercy Seat as this was meant for something grand and glorious! Such a Sacrifice as Christ's was provided for the greatest needs of men! Open your mouths wide when you mention the name of Jesus Christ! It seems a poor thing to stint yourselves in your prayers when the name you plead is—

***"The name high over all
In Hell, or earth, or sky!
Angels and men before it fall—
And devils fear and fly."***

Note, next, that *the Holy Spirit is the Author of true prayer*. He "helps our infirmities." and will you stutter and stammer when the Holy Spirit helps you? Will you say of such a thing, "This is too great for me to ask"? What? When the Holy Spirit prompts you to ask, does He not know what is fit for you to ask? Yield yourself to His gracious impulses! Be borne along the stream of supplication by the Spirit's influence and ask what you will! That is a pretty story that they tell of Alexander having given a man a present which seemed far too great. So he was afraid that it could

not be his and then Alexander said, "It may be too much for *you to receive*, but it is not too much for *me to give*." So the mercy may seem too great for you to have, but it is by no means too great for Christ to grant you! Open your mouth wide, then, while you have such a Father, Son and Holy Spirit to go to in prayer!

"Open your mouth wide," for *your needs are very great*. They are much greater than you know—do not, therefore, fall short in your petitions. I think that if I could have anything I asked for of any friend, I would be inclined to overleap my necessities a little, rather than to fall short of them. Certainly with God, who is not impoverished by giving, and not enriched by withholding, we may take vast liberties. "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Ask much in prayer because your needs are so great.

And then think of *the needs of others*. Oh, when I think of what power prayer has, I would encourage Brothers and Sisters to pray great prayers for the conversion of London, for the establishment of Christ's Church in the land and for the conversion of China, Africa, India. "Open your mouth wide." There was one who seemed to have great power in prayer and I have often read his life, but I think the prayers he used to pray were for a pair of horses, or for a new suit of clothes, or something of that sort. He always obtained what he asked, but it seems a miserable business to pray like that! It is much nobler to pray, like Carey, "India for Christ!" or, "Lord, save China!" *Now* you have asked for something great this time! "Open your mouth wide," as you have such a great God to deal with about such great matters! You may ask for little things when you need them and you are encouraged to do so, but still, do not confine your requests to them. Come to great things and ask great mercies for others, if you are not under any great necessity yourself!

Remember, once more, *God's exceedingly great and precious promises*. How can you be praying on a right scale if you are always praying straitened in yourselves? O dear Friends, the promises of God are not narrow! They are "exceedingly great and precious promises." You have never fully measured them! Come, then, with an open mouth, and ask great things of your Father who is in Heaven. Thus have I, at some length, handled the exhortation in the text, but I cannot do much with it—it is only the Holy Spirit who can effectually whisper into your ear and heart, "Open your mouth wide."

II. Now, secondly, observe GOD USING TWO GREAT ARGUMENTS upon which I will only speak briefly. One is put *before* the exhortation and one is put *afterwards*, to keep it with an attendant on either side.

The first reason why you should open your mouth wide is *because of what God has done*. He says, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." You remember where these words occur, do you not? They are recorded very solemnly in the 20th Chapter of Exodus, at the commencement of the Ten Commandments—"I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." And now the same solemn words come before a promise, as if God made this precept to be

as solemn as His Law and confirmed the promise with all the solemnities with which He established the Covenant. “Open your mouth wide,” He says.

Child of God, this text belongs peculiarly to you. “I am Jehovah, your God.” The Lord has an election of Grace—He has a peculiar people whom He has chosen unto Himself—and they shall show forth His praise. God is the God of His people. “I am Jehovah, your God,” He says. If He is not the God of others, yet He is *your* God. He has revealed Himself to you. He has chosen you and you have chosen Him, Now, can you not open your mouth wide to your own God, to Jehovah, the great, “I AM,” the boundless, the infinite, the almighty God—can you not speak freely to Him?

And then it is added, “I am Jehovah, your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.” Now, that is the greatest thing that God could do for His people and, if He has done *that*, will He not do the lesser things? Oh, what a wondrous deliverance that was, when, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He brought forth His people, despite all the opposition of Pharaoh! With terrible plagues He broke the power of the proud monarch, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep and brought them out into a glorious liberty—and crushed the chivalry of Egypt at the Red Sea so that they could never again pursue the Israelites—nor disturb them in their wilderness march towards the land which God had promised them.

Well now, the Lord has done just that same kind of thing for all His people! He has brought us out of our spiritual bondage! We have eaten the Paschal Lamb. We have sprinkled the blood. We have escaped the destroying angel. We are no longer under the power of sin and Satan—the Lord has set us free! And, as for our sins, the depths have covered them! There is not one of them left—they sank to the bottom like a stone. Glory be to God for what He has done! If this does not lead us to open our mouths wide in prayer, what will?

“Ah,” sighs a poor soul, “He has never done that for *me*. I am still a bond slave.” Listen! If He has done it for others, take hope from it that God will hear prayer and save *you*, seeing that He has saved others. Did you ever notice, in the old slave times, in the Southern States of America, how, when a slave escaped, others heard that he had followed the pole star and so gained liberty, and they all took hope? Well now, if the Lord has brought some of us out of bondage, take hope, you who are still in chains! God can deliver you! Ask Him to do so—open your mouth wide! When you get home, cry to God in your chamber. Better still, here in your pew, breathe a prayer for salvation and liberty—and if you need a word of advice and counsel, come on to this lower platform and there shall be some friend to speak with you, and pray with you about your soul. Only open your mouth! Do not be ashamed! God says to you that He has brought His people out of Egypt and He who has done that can do anything! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it.

But the second argument, with which the text closes, is concerning *what God will do*. “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” “I will fill it.” The story goes—I know not how true it is, but I remember reading it very

well—that the Shah of Persia, a strange man, altogether, on one occasion said to a person who had pleased him very greatly, “Open your mouth.” And when he had opened his mouth, the Shah began to fill it up with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and all sorts of precious stones! I feel morally certain that the man opened his mouth *wide*! I do not know what your opinions may be, but I have the firm conviction that when he found that such treasure was being put into his mouth, he made it as large as it very well could be, whether it looked beautiful or not! Would not you do the same if you had such an opportunity? Suppose that your mouth was to be filled with sovereigns and you were in extreme poverty—would you not open your mouth? It would prompt a man to open his mouth wide if he heard the Shah say, “I will fill it.” Now, the Lord says to each of His own people, whom He has so highly favored, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”

Suppose you open your mouth wide in prayer. “I cannot,” says one. Well, open your mouth and God will fill it with prayer and then, when you have prayed the prayer that He has given you, He will fill it with answers! God gives prayer as well as the answer to prayer! Only open your mouth and, as it were, make a vacuum for God to fill. God loves to look for emptiness where He may stow away His Grace!

When you have done that, then open your mouth with praise! It is wonderful, when a man begins to praise God, how the praise keeps on coming. The praise of God is something like Mr. Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. He began to write, he says, and he does not know how he wrote so much, but he quaintly says, “As I pulled, it came.” And you will find it is so with the praise of God. Praise Him and you *will* praise Him. If you do not praise Him, you never will praise Him. If you do not begin, you will never keep on—but once open the sluices of gratitude and the streams will flow more and more copiously every hour! “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”

So is it in comparing our testimony concerning God’s goodness. Sometimes we who are preachers have to cry, “What shall we say to the people?” I see some dear Brothers, here, who, I dare say, get as I do, into a very poverty-stricken state. They say, “Where shall we get the next sermon from?” Well, go in God’s name and say what He bids you, and He will tell you more! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it. Bear testimony to what the Lord has done for your soul, in your own small way, and He will be pleased to fill your mouth with His good Word, so that you shall abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness!

Now, then, let us all come before God with open mouths. Whatever state of mind we may be in, if we cannot pray, let us come and open our mouth and pant, as David did when he said, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.” So let us come before our God. You who feel as if you could not speak and could scarcely *think*, come with your mouth wide open and stand there before God! Or be like the little bird in its nest—open your mouth towards Heaven! Mark how the parched earth, in times of drought, cracks and opens its mouth for the rain. Let your parched heart begin to pray in the Presence of your

God and thus ask for His Grace. May God give us mighty desires! We read of Daniel, in the margin of our Bible, instead of, “a man greatly Beloved,” “a man of desires.” He was a man of great desires! And if we are like he in this respect, we shall soon be greatly blessed, and God will be greatly glorified! May it be so, for His great name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 81***

We have here an exhortation to praise God and this is always in season. Perhaps we need more stirring up to praise than to prayer, yet it ought to be as natural for us to praise God as it is for the birds to sing. Thus the Psalm begins—

Verse 1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength.* Yes, the strength which the Lord gives you should be spent in praising Him. “Sing aloud.” Throw your whole soul into it. If the Lord makes you strong, then give your strength back to Him in sacred song—“Sing aloud unto God our strength.”

1. *Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.* Other gods, such as Moloch and Ashtaroath, are worshipped with mournful cries and sorrowful lamentations. But the God of Jacob, the God that hears prayer, the God of salvation, the God of the Covenant, is to be worshipped with joy! He is the happy God and He loves happy worshippers—“Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.” You do not need to be forced to praise Him—you will do it with alacrity and delight! The very sweetness of your song will consist in the cheerfulness of it! “Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.”

2-4. *Take a Psalm and bring here the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the Psaltery. Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a Law of the God of Jacob.* It is “a statute” that we should praise God. It is “a Law” that we should make a joyful noise before Him. Happy Law and happy men who are under such a Law! Let us be quick to obey it and let not the King’s statute be disregarded by any one of us.

5. *This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when He went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.* God understands His people’s language and, in very truth, He understands everything. But here He uses a Hebraism to show that He did not care for the speech of the Egyptians—“I heard a language that I understood not.” This sentence is like that other expression, “I never knew you.” Of course the Lord knows everyone as a matter of acquaintance, but not as a matter of affection. He cared not for the Egyptians—they were aliens to Him. He went out *against* the land of Egypt. It was for Joseph and for His own people who were under the leadership of Joseph in that heathen land, that He ordained this statute that they should praise the name of Jehovah.

6. *I removed his shoulder from the burden.* Is not that true of many of you in a spiritual sense? Oh, what a burden of sin we used to carry! How

have we got rid of it? Does not the Lord, here, remind us of how we lost that grievous load? “I removed his shoulder from the burden.”

6. *His hands were delivered from the pots.* We used to be busy enough with the slave’s occupation of making bricks without straw. Hard was the task when we were under legal bondage—harder, still, the toil, when under the bondage of our own sin, slaves of ourselves! Who could ever have a more tyrant master than himself? But that is all over, now, and the Lord can say, “I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.”

7. *You called in trouble and I delivered you.* What a gracious Word is this! How it reminds us, in the most loving tones, of our obligations to the Lord! “You called in trouble and I delivered you.”

7. *I answered you in the secret place of thunder: I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.* A very humbling sentence this! God has often proved us and He has often disproved us. When He has tried us, we have not endured the test as we ought to have done. We have murmured and complained and the waters which ought to have been waters of joy and of happy patience, have been waters of strife. “Selah.” That is, “Pause.” Tighten the harp strings, lift up the heart! Such a Psalm as this is to be read by installments, with little halts on the road for us to meditate and think upon the Truth of God brought before us. We may well pause, here, when we hear the Lord reminding us of our faults and of His great mercy to us—“I delivered you; I answered you; I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.”

8. *Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me.* What? Is there any question as to whether God’s people will listen to Him or not? Alas, sometimes our ears grow very heavy—we are so occupied with the cares of the world, so sleepy while passing over the Enchanted Ground that we do not hear that dear voice to which we ought to give heed whenever it speaks—“Hear, O My people, O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me.”

9. *There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god.* It is strange that we should ever wish to do so. Oh, that we might be wholly delivered from everything that looks like idolatry and be enabled to cleave to the worship of the one living and true God with the serenity and certainty of faith!

10, 11. *I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me.* Oh, how plaintive is this lament! Is it not full of sorrow? “Israel would none of Me.” Her own God, her own Friend, her own Benefactor, her own Husband has to cry, “Israel would none of Me—would not have My Law, My promise, My guidance, Myself—Israel would none of Me.”

12. *So I gave them up*—Dreadful word! If God gives us up, even for a moment, there is no telling into what sin we may plunge! And if He were to give us up altogether—ah, me, this is the most direful of sentences—“So I gave them up”—

12. *Unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* O God, save us from this awful state! This, indeed, is Hell—to be given up of God! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that such a terrible curse may never come upon you! Yet it is a most righteous punishment if a man will not have God—and will give God up—what can be a more righteous retribution than that God should give *him* up? He does so, at last, with ungodly men, yet He does it very reluctantly, and He says, “How shall I give you up?” May He never give up one of you!

13. *Oh that My people had listened to Me, and Israel had walked in My ways.* And can we not echo that lament and say, “Oh, that we had listened to God, and that we had walked in His ways”? What a happy life would the Believer enjoy if he always had an ear for God’s Commandments and a foot for His ways! “Oh that My people had listened to Me, and Israel had walked in My ways!”

14, 15. *I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto Him; and their time should have endured forever.* “Their time”—the time of His own people—“should have endured forever.” They might have been always conquerors, always kings, always favored of God, always walking in the light, as God is in the light. So might it be with us if we would first, listen to God, and next, walk in His ways. The mark on the ear and the mark on the foot are two of the tokens of Christ’s sheep—“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” May we all have both the ear-mark and the foot-mark!

16. *He would have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat.* How sweet would Gospel doctrine be if Gospel precepts were observed! When you do not enjoy the preaching of the Word, is it not because you are out of health and your spiritual appetite is impaired? “He would have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat.” When the soul lives near to God, then the Word of the Lord is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

16. *And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you.* You know what this “honey out of the rock” is. You have tasted it and in days gone by you have feasted on it! Perhaps you have not had much of it of late. If so, remember why this is. God will give His children bread, but He will not give them honey unless they live very near to Him—you shall have the necessaries of life, but not luxuries. The high and heavenly joys of the Divine Life shall be denied you if you work at a distance from your God. But if you stay close to Him, you shall have the finest of the wheat, and you shall be satisfied with honey out of the rock.

May the Lord bless the reading of His Word to us, and may He draw us nearer to Himself! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—214, 980, 994.

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THE WIDE-OPEN MOUTH FILLED NO. 2879

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 1904.

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE PASTOR'S COLLEGE CONFERENCE,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1876.***

***"I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the
land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
Psalm 81:10.***

You have, no doubt, met with various interpretations of this metaphor—"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." You will find that several expositors say that there is an allusion, here, to a custom which is said to have been observed by the late Shah of Persia, who, being greatly pleased with one of his courtiers, made him open his mouth and then began to fill it with diamonds, pearls, rubies and emeralds. I shall expect that, under such circumstances, the courtier would open his mouth very wide indeed!

Well, you may use that incident as an illustration, if you like and, certainly, the spiritual blessings which God gives to His children are far more precious than pearls, diamonds and rubies—and there is every inducement for you to open your mouth to receive such treasure as He is waiting and willing to give you! But I do not feel sure that the Holy Spirit intended the Psalmist to allude to any such custom as this. It is too expensive an operation to be very frequently performed and it strikes me that even such semi-maniacs as Shahs and Sultans usually are, would not be likely to often attempt such a feat as that. In default of a more suitable illustration, it might be used, but it does not appear to me to be in accordance with the chaste and natural tone of the Word of God.

Another illustration of the text may be found in a custom which is much more common in the East. At Oriental feasts, when the head of the household wishes to select the best part of the meat for an honored guest, he usually chooses the fattest portion he can find, as the Oriental mind conceives just what we would *not* conceive, namely, that a mass of fat, all dripping with grease, is the most delicious morsel that can possibly be given to a guest. So the host searches for the fattest piece of meat in the dish, takes it in his hand and puts it deliberately into the mouth of the principal guest, bidding him open his mouth wide that he may receive it. This seems a revolting practice to us, but it was evidently the custom then, as it still is in the East. Thus we have David saying, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall

praise you with joyful lips”—as if the lips sucked it with delight even while the fat was still upon them.

But I am inclined to look for quite another explanation of the text, though admitting that the second one is probably that upon which the Psalmist was thinking when he wrote these words. One springtime I discovered a bird's nest, in which there were a number of little birds. They were not fledged enough to fly and their judgments were not well developed and, therefore, they mistook me for their mother or father. I would not touch them, but I held my fingers over them and they opened their mouths wide—no, the little creatures seemed to me as if they were all mouth! I could not see any other part of their bodies—all seemed lost in one great vacuum. If you have ever seen the mother bird come to the nest with a worm in its mouth, you have noticed that, in an instant, all her little ones are up and eager to swallow that worm. She can only fill the mouth of one and she can scarcely do that, for, no sooner has it swallowed what she gives it than it begins to gape again!

So the parent birds have to keep flying very fast, all day long, collecting food for their family but, however many times they come, they never have to use the exhortation of our text! The little birds in their nests are far more sensible than we are. When God hovers over us with His wide-spread wings and covers us with His warm feathers, He has need to say to each one of us, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” But the little birds take good care, without any teaching, to open their mouths wide that their mothers may fill them. This illustration may occur again during the sermon, for, whether it is the one to which the Psalmist alludes, or not, it is a very useful one and is full of instruction. It also has the further advantage that it does not appertain to either the East or the West and, as this blessed Book is neither for East nor West, alone, but for both, I like to find an illustration which, in all times and in every clime, may open up the meaning of the Word. “Open your mouth,” then, as a bird opens its mouth when the mother bird returns with its food, and He who, in the infinitude of His condescension, likens Himself to birds, says, “I will fill it.”

Let us imitate the Inspired teachers in using things in Nature to illustrate the meaning of the messages they have to deliver. Look from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Preachers, through the long line of Prophets, to Evangelists and Apostles, and you will see that they did not utter the Truth of God with their eyes closed, but, with large sympathy, they looked abroad upon the whole range of creation, both animate and inanimate, and yoked every creature to the chariot of Truth, if, by any means, through the use of simile, metaphor and illustration, they might enable the Divine message to ride triumphantly into the hearts of the people!

If any of us are to succeed in teaching either few or many, we must imitate these masters of the art. God has given the preacher eyes as well as a tongue—yes, two eyes to one tongue—and he must take care to observe all that can be seen and to make abundant use of his observation.

Otherwise he will find his speech prove to be, as Shakespeare says, “stale, flat, and unprofitable.” The true teacher should not seek to soar on the gaudy wings of brilliant oratory, pouring forth sonorous polished sentences in rhythmic harmony, but should endeavor to speak pointed Truths of God—things that will strike and stick—thoughts that will be remembered and recalled, again and again, when the hearer is far away from the place of worship where he listened to the preacher’s words.

The text naturally divides itself into three parts. First, there is *the exhortation*—“Open your mouth wide.” Secondly, there is *the promise*—“I will fill it.” And thirdly, there is *the encouragement* contained in the name by which God speaks of Himself—“I am Jehovah your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

I. First, then, Brothers, here is THE EXHORTATION—“Open your mouth wide.”

What does that expression mean? Well, I should have to open my mouth very wide, indeed, if I were to explain all it means. You probably will know, by putting it in practice, better than by any explanation that I can give you, but, certainly, first of all, I should say that it *means that there should be a greater sense of your need*. The wide-open mouth means that you hunger. The little birds need no instruction in opening their mouths except the inward monitor. They feel a lack of food—they are growing, and growing fast, and feathers have to be made—and they need much food and those strong needs of theirs make them open their mouths by instinct, as we say. Brothers, if we had more sense of our need, prayer would be more of an instinct with us—we would pray because we could not help praying! We would pray, perhaps, less methodically, but we would pray, probably more truly, if we prayed because there were groans within us caused by intense pain and moaning that came out of inward agony and longings that came out of the consciousness of our dire necessities. Surely, this kind of opening of the mouth, by the sense of our need, ought to be easy to us, for our needs are very great. I must not say that they are infinite, for we are only finite beings, but they are so vast that only Infinity can ever supply them! What is there that you do *not* need, my Brother? Someone said in prayer, the other day, that we were “a bag of needs.” That was a very accurate description. Are we all conscious of our many needs?

Dear Brother, are you growing conscious of your own power? If so, pray against it with all your might! A much better thing is to become conscious of your own *weakness*. You will not open your mouth wide if you do not realize how weak you are. If you feel that you are strong, you will cease to cry to God for strength. Are you getting proud of your experience of Divine things? Strive to hurl that pride down, for you will be no wiser than a wild ass’s colt if you rely on your own experience. Do you feel that you have now attained to a very high degree of Grace? You have certainly not attained it if you think you have! If you are still conscious of your own shortcomings, you are probably far ahead of your own belief—

but if you are conscious of your attainments, you are far behind those attainments, rest assured of that.

I do solemnly believe, Brothers, that it is as good a test of a man's spiritual riches as can be found, namely, his own sense of his spiritual poverty. Oh, get less and less in your own esteem! Grow poorer and poorer, weaker and yet weaker—become, in yourselves, nothing and less than nothing! This is a grand way of opening the mouth because our needs, when they are truly felt, are really prayers, for prayers are merely the expression of the needs of our heart. And if, to the consciousness of our need, there is added the knowledge that God can supply that need, we have, at any rate, the basis of all true prayer. Oh, for a great sense of our spiritual poverty! Oh, for an awful vacuum within the soul, a consciousness most truly felt that there is room for God! Oh, for a deep chasm to yawn within one's nature, which only Christ, Himself, can fill!

The next way of opening the mouth will be *to increase the vehemence of desire*. How did the Psalmist do this? He said, "I opened my mouth and panted." This is what we need to do, to get such vehement desires after good things that we cannot take a negative answer to our petitions. We know that what we ask is for God's Glory and our own good and, therefore, we are not going to ask as men who may be put off, but our resolve is like that of Jacob at Jabbok—

***"With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."***

We cry, with good John Newton—

***"No—I must maintain my hold,
'Tis Your goodness makes me bold.
I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus' sake."***

Those prayers speed best that are most full of holy vehemence. There is an evil kind of vehemence which we must get rid of. I am not sure that all the expressions we sometimes hear in prayer are right—there is no need for us to seem to fight with God at the Mercy Seat. I feel, sometimes, a sort of shivering when I hear Brothers make a great noise in prayer without any evidence of corresponding earnestness deep down in their soul. Yet I know that our Lord Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." If you want to have great things of God, you must want them terribly! You must get to want them more and more. Your sense of want must keep on growing. You know also that our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst"—hunger is bad enough and thirst is awful, but hunger and thirst combined bring a man to the verge of death—yet Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for"—Christ's promise is parallel to the text before us—"they shall be filled." Get that blessed hunger and thirst, Brothers! When you cannot live without conversions, you shall have conversions! When you must have them, you shall have them! May the Lord drive that "must" into us all! May He urge us on with a passionate desire to resolve that we will know the reason why if souls are not converted to God!

Another way of opening the mouth is *to ask for greater capacity*. If you have ever fed a lot of little birds—no doubt my friend, Archibald Brown, has often done it—with pieces of egg. If you have some very small pieces, you drop them into the smaller mouths, but if you have a large piece of egg, where does it go? Into the biggest mouth you can find! You seem to feel, “That little bird cannot have a large piece because he has only a tiny mouth. But here is one whose mouth yawns like the crater of a small volcano!” So you drop into his mouth a larger piece and I have no doubt the mother birds exercise a good deal of discretion in feeding their young. They do not give the large worms to the little birds, but they drop the large ones into the large mouths and, in like manner, if we get large capacities, we shall receive large blessings.

What a wonderful difference there is in the capacity of different individuals! I have heard it said that a sinner sucks in happiness, such as it is, with the mouth of an insect, but that a Believer drinks in bliss with the mouth of an angel—and it is so. The stream of mercy seems to run right over some men because there is no place for it to run in. It runs into others in dribblets because there is only a little hole into which it can drip. But when the mouth is opened wide to receive the blessing of the Lord, how capacious it is! I should like, spiritually, to have my mouth like that of Behemoth, of which the Lord said to Job, “he trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.” Oh, for a mouth of such mighty capacity as to be capable of receiving a far greater blessing than we have ever yet received!

Dear Brothers, we are not straitened in God. If we are straitened at all, it is in ourselves. No wise man will try to put a gallon of any liquid into a quart pot. You cannot expect to put a bushel of anything into a peck measure. “Be you therefore enlarged,” is still the message we need to hear—and one part of that enlargement must consist in the enlargement of the mouth in prayer and in holy vehemence! God grant to all of us far greater capacity! What little men we all are! We sometimes call one another great and perhaps fancy that we are. I wonder what our Heavenly Father thinks of us? We see our little children, one of them three years old and another only two, and another only a month or two—they think the baby is a very little thing and that they themselves are ever so big—and they talk of their big brother who is only four or five years old! It is very much like that with us! There is not much more difference between the greatest and the least of us than between those children. So, if we can, we must grow—grow at the mouth and grow all over. We need to have greater Grace given to us, but the Lord will not give us great blessings until we are able to bear them. You remember how He said to His disciples, “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”? And He might say to us, “I have yet many things to give to you, but you cannot bear them at present.” If God were now to give to any man all the blessings that He means to bestow upon him in a few years’ time, it would ruin him! When God has given us any success, it is a great addition to the mercy if He has first fitted us to bear it. Some of

us can recollect Brothers taken almost straight from the miners' pit and elevated suddenly into a position of great popularity with no training for the ministry—no persecution, no criticism from the public press and no unkind remarks from Christian men—and we remember with sorrow how they failed. So, if you, while you are young men, have to run the gauntlet of a good deal of trial, difficulty, opposition and failures, you ought to thank God for it! You are now being made ready to receive the blessing for which you were not fit before. The Lord is increasing your capacity and when the capacity is sufficient, He will fill it.

Next, dear Brothers, I feel that the text must mean *seek for greater blessings than any that you have yet received*. You have opened your mouth and you have received something. Possibly you think that you have received a great deal. But the Lord “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” I have heard people say in prayer, “You are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we *can* ask or think.” Well, I suppose that is true, but that is not what Paul was Inspired to write. We can ask and can think a great deal, but Paul says that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we actually *do* ask or think! Well, then, as this is the case, will we not ask for greater things than we have ever asked for before? It is a singular fact that the certainty of obtaining is in proportion to the largeness of what you ask. Some men go to God and ask only for temporal favors and, possibly, they do not obtain them. He who would be content with this world will probably never get it—but he who craves spiritual good may ask with the absolute certainty of receiving it! Christ's promise is, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” If you ask only for temporal mercies and can be satisfied with them, you may get what you ask. There are gushing springs from which you might drink if you would, but the muddy waters of Sihor are evidently good enough for you.

But if you ask the Lord for *spiritual* blessings, He is sure to give them to you. It is more natural for God to give great things than little things—they are more in His line—more in His way. You know that certain men have certain ways. There are men whom you can get to do anything if it is in their way, but they will not act in another way. Well, now, the Lord's ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth! Yet David knew what God's ways were, for he said, “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” One of the ways of God is to do great things for His people. Some of them sang, “The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” So you are more sure of getting blessings from God if you ask Him for great things—therefore be sure to ask for very great things! When you do get to the Mercy Seat, do not begin asking for littles and go home with trifles, but ask for as big things as ever your soul can desire and as big things as the promises of God cover! There you have a task before you that will tax your greatest powers, but give your heart and soul to it and you will find it to be a very pleasant and profitable one!

Ask great things for yourselves, Brothers. Ask to know all the Truth of God. Ask to know the fullness of God. Ask to know the riches of His Grace. Ask to know “the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.” And when you have asked for all that, ask for holiness—and do not ask for anything less than *perfect* holiness. Continue to open your mouth wide that every Grace may be given to you, adding “to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love.” And do not rest satisfied until you have all these Christian virtues! You may also ask for joy and oh, what an ocean of bliss is before you in the joy of the Lord! In “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” what a wondrous depth of joy there is laid up in store for you! Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” It may be the same with you—therefore ask for great things! Do not be satisfied with being little Christians—seek to come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus! I will be thankful to get just inside the gate of Heaven, but if I can sing more sweetly and if I can have more fellowship with Christ nearer His Throne, why should I not get there? God grant that we may all have that high privilege!

Once more, I think that this exhortation, “Open your mouth wide,” means *attempt great things for God* as well as ask great things from God. Brothers, go in for something great! Go in for saving one soul—that is something great. Go in for preaching the whole Truth of God—that is something great. Go in to be faithful to the teaching of the whole Word of God—that is something great. It is not sufficient if you have filled your own place—a good many of you have not done that yet—go in to preach the Gospel somewhere else as well. Open some other building for worship! Penetrate into some region where the Gospel is not yet known. I wish that our College would open its mouth so wide as to include the whole world in the sphere of its operations. Brother Wigstone tells us that if we open our mouth wide, we shall swallow up the whole of Spain and Portugal. Other Brothers want us to open our mouth wide enough to absorb France, Germany, Russia and all Europe! Some of our Brethren have gone to India—there is a mouthful for us! If we open our mouth wide, India may be evangelized—and China—and the new world of America and the far-distant world of Australia will feel the power of the Gospel that we take there in the name of the Lord! Let us pray, as David did long ago, that the whole earth may be filled with God’s Glory! What is the whole earth, after all, compared with the greatness of God, and with the Infinite Sacrifice that Christ has offered? Well may the Lord say to each one of us, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

I like big prayers, Brothers. I have some regard for the memory of William Huntington, though I would be sorry to endorse all that he said and did. He was a man whose prayers God heard and answered, but what often were his prayers? I smile, sometimes, as I think of what he asked of God—“Lord, give me a new pair of leather breeches,” or, “Give me a horse

and carriage”—and he got them. William Carey cried, “India for Christ,” and his prayer has kept on ringing right down the ages! And the Church of God is still praying, “India for Christ,” and that prayer will be heard and answered in God’s good time. Little boats that carry small cargoes come quickly home, but the big ships that do business in great waters are much longer in reaching the home port. But they bring back much more precious loads! Huntington’s prayer was the little boat that proved God’s faithfulness, but Carey’s prayer was the big ship which will come home as surely as the other one did!

So, “open your mouth wide,” Brothers, and ask something that will be honoring to God to give. Did you ever think, dear Friends, how wonderful is the condescension of God in listening to the voice of a man? That He should hear our prayers at all shows that in His condescension He is as Infinite as He is in His Glory. Do you know, in your own soul, that God has ever heard your prayers? Then bless Him and love Him all your days. You know how the writer of the 116th Psalm put the matter—“I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.” It is truly marvelous that though our prayer is so full of faults and has to do with such insignificant worms as we are, yet that the Lord hears us and grants our requests.

There are some who talk as if prayer was a meaningless form to us. “It is a beneficial thing, no doubt, for you to pray,” they say. Surely, Sirs, you must be measuring our corn with your bushel if you imagine that we could do such an idiotic thing as pray to a god who cannot hear us! That is an employment only fit for imbeciles and if you tell us that no doubt it is a good thing for us to do, we reply that it would probably be a good thing for you to do it, for it could only be suitable to the imbecility which originated the charge brought against us! We assert and rejoice to assert that without working miracles, God still accomplishes His eternal purposes in answer to the supplications of His people. In earlier days He worked miracles for the deliverance of His servants. But today He does the same thing without the miraculous process and as manifestly grants the requests of His suppliants as if miracles were as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees in summer.

II. Now, secondly, we turn to THE PROMISE—“I will fill it.”

Great asking seems to me to be on a scale proportionate to the great things that are according to the very Nature of God. I have never been able to believe in a little Hell because I cannot find, in the Bible, any trace of a little Heaven, or of a little Savior, or of a little sin, or of a little God. I believe in a theology that is drawn to scale. If it is on the scale of an inch all round, I can receive it, but if it is on the scale of a foot in one place, I think it should be on the same scale throughout. Look, Brothers, at the brightness of the Shekinah Glory shining above the Mercy Seat—and that Mercy Seat red with such blood as was never spilt but once! And the Eternal Spirit leading us up to that Mercy Seat—can we go there to ask for a mere trifle? That does not seem to me to be at all congruous.

Far more congruous does it seem that before the great God, with the great Mediator and the great Spirit helping our infirmities, we should open our mouth wide and expect God to fill it! O Brethren, we may be quite sure that in dealing with the Infinite Jehovah, if we can rise to His scale of things, He will fill our mouths when we open them!

It is hard work to fill a hungry mouth, for the food disappears down the throat in a moment. When once fed, it opens again and is as empty as it was before. But God has the way of filling mouths that makes them stay full. He gives us water to drink of so wondrous a kind that we do not thirst again! Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And God says to each child of His, "Open your mouth wide,' and though it seems to be like a horse-leech crying, 'Give, give,' 'I will fill it.' Though it seems as insatiable as the grave, 'I will fill it.'" The great God Himself says it and, therefore, it must be true. If He had not said it, I would not have believed it, but having said it, He can do what seems impossible to us—He can satisfy our most insatiable cravings and longings—and He bids us keep on longing and craving that He may keep on satisfying us again and again!

This promise is given by One who knows what we are going to ask. The Lord says, "Open your mouth wide," and He knows what we desire to receive from Him—and He has it all ready to give to us. Did you ever bring home a present for your children and ask them to wish for something, although they did not know that, all the while, it was in your pocket? You have brought them up to the point of asking for something that they need—then they go to bed and when they wake in the morning, they are surprised to see the very thing they longed for lying on their pillow! In a similar manner, our Heavenly Father gives additional sweetness to His mercies by tempting us to long for various things that He has all ready to give to us. He may well say, "Open your mouth wide," when He has so many good things ready to fill it!

What will He fill our mouths with? *Sometimes He will fill them with prayer.* Do you not find, at times, that you cannot pray? Never mind, Brother, if it is so with you—open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. He will fill your mouth with arguments. Kneel down and groan because you cannot pray, agonize because you cannot pray and the next day you will say, "I wish I felt as I did yesterday, for I never prayed with greater power than when I thought I was not praying at all." Open your mouth with a sense of need, a sense of desire. Open your mouth with the sensibility of insensibility. You can comprehend, by experience, the paradox that I cannot explain. God knows how to fill your mouth with prayer when you go to your pulpit. Perhaps before the time for the service came, you thought you could not pray or preach at all. You remember how the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Eat this roll and go speak unto the house of Israel," and the Prophet said, "So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll." You also may be able to do the same thing. Sitting in your study,

you may be anxious because you cannot get a subject to really lay hold of you. At any rate, Brother, open your mouth with desire, eagerness and longing as you sit there—and if the Lord sends a roll to you, and shows you how to eat it—when you go to talk to your people, you shall get that promise to Ezekiel fulfilled in your own experience, “I will open your mouth, and you shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord God.” When you open your mouth in private and eat the roll that the Lord gives you, He will open your mouth in public and you shall tell the people the Truth of God upon which you have privately feasted.

Next, the lord *will fill our mouth with all manner of spiritual blessings*. David says that the Lord “satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Time fails me to attempt any list of proof texts upon this point. I can only say that when the Lord opens your mouth, you may be quite certain that anything He puts into it is wholesome and good even though, sometimes, it is not according to your own taste—though it will be if your spiritual palate is in a healthy condition. If your taste is out of order, even sweet things will seem bitter to you. If your heart is not right with God, you will ask for that which would injure you if He granted your request. When the Israelites craved for flesh in the wilderness, they made a terrible mistake. It will be far wiser for you, when you open your mouth in prayer, not so much to go into details as to say, “Lord, I am a mass of needs. I hardly know what they really are and what I think I need may be a mistake, but my mouth is open to receive whatever You see to be best for me.” Then you may expect that He will fill it with all sorts of good things.

Further, *the Lord will fill your mouth with sacred joy*. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, His people said, “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” It is a blessed mouthful when you get such an amazing mercy that you cannot understand it! Have you not, sometimes, received a mercy that has been like Isaac, the child of laughter? It has come to us as Isaac came to Abraham and we have heard the sound of the mercy and have laughed for very joy! God will also fill your mouth with His praise. That was a wise prayer of the Psalmist, “Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day.” What a blessed mouthful it would be to have your mouth so full of the praise of God that you could not help letting it run out!

III. Now I must close by noticing THE ENCOURAGEMENT. “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Why? “Because I am Jehovah, your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

Brother, *it is Jehovah who says to you, “Open your mouth wide.”* It does not always do to open your mouth wide to man, but the Lord says to you, “I am Jehovah, your God; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” When you stand before men, ask little and expect less. But when you stand before God, ask much and expect more—and believe that He is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think! “I am Jehovah.” That is a boundless name! We know that our asking can never exceed His benevolence or His might. We are asking of a King, yes,

of Him who is King of kings, so let us open our mouths wide as we approach Him. His very name prompts us to do so. Then He adds, "I am Jehovah, your God." So, will you not ask great things of the One who has given Himself to you? Is God, Himself, yours? Then, what is there that you may not ask of Him?

There is great force in Paul's argument, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" There is equal force in this other argument—As He spared not His own Deity, but freely gave Himself up to be the God of His chosen ones, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people," then He will not deny them anything that they ask of Him if it is really for their good. Indeed, all things are yours already! Since He is your God, you have only to ask Him to give you that which is your own by His own gracious Covenant. I should not feel afraid or ashamed to ask anyone to give me what really belonged to me, however big it was. And, in prayer, you have to ask from God what He has already given you in Christ Jesus, for "all things are yours," because "you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Then He adds, "*which brought you out of the land of Egypt.*" Notice this argument, Brothers. Our own experience of deliverance from sin is a wonderful reason for asking great things of God. I speak with the utmost reverence, but it seems to me that God Himself cannot give me anything more than He has already given me in the unspeakable gift of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. His blessed Spirit has given unto us eternal life! All the embellishments and enrichments and sustenance of that life are not equal to the life itself. The life of God in the soul is the chief blessing—and that we have already received. Well, then, as God has given us life, surely He will give us all other great blessings that we need and will deny us nothing that is for His own Glory and our present and future good. Paul often uses this kind of argument. For instance, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The greater mercy having come, the lesser one will also surely come! So, ask God for large things, for you have already received larger things than you are ever likely to ask for! And so you may rest assured that you will receive, in the future, whatever God sees that you really need.

God said to His ancient people, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." Might they not well ask large things of that God who smote Pharaoh with all those terrible plagues? Might they not well ask great things of Him who darkened the sun at midday, who brought up the locusts till they covered the land, who made the very dust of Egypt to crawl with noxious life and who sent terrific hailstorms, with fire mingled with the hail? Who would not ask great things of such a great God as that? Then think of His slaying the first-born of Egypt and dividing the sea, even the Red Sea, and leading all the hosts of Israel through the deep and through the wilderness. He that

could do all that, could, in His Infinite might, do all else that His people needed—so they might well ask great things at His hands!

Moses sang, on the borders of the Red Sea, “He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” The Israelites might well ask great things of Him who had overthrown all their adversaries! And you who have experienced such a marvelous deliverance by the blood of Jesus Christ, ought surely to be bold when you go to the Mercy Seat! The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was by blood. The paschal lamb was slain and its blood was sprinkled upon the houses of the Israelites. But you have not been redeemed with the blood of earthly lambs, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Can it be possible, after such a redemption, that anything that is needed to bring you into the promised land and to enrich you with all temporal and spiritual blessings should ever be withheld from you?

Let us, each one, go to the Mercy Seat with our mouths wide open and then let us go to our pulpits and preach with our mouths wide open, even as Paul wrote, “O you Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.” Your mouths may well be open to your hearers because they have first been opened unto God!

I am thankful that throughout this Conference, I have seen no traces of doubt and no signs of despondency. Every Brother has seemed to have confidence in God and to have hope, like a bright light, guiding him on his way. I have no doubt that some of you will see “greater things than these” even here on earth, while others will see them from the heights of Heaven. As surely as we have the Gospel with us and the Holy Spirit with us—as surely as God has led us thus far through the wilderness, as surely as He keeps us knit together in love and unity—so surely will He lead us from strength to strength—and the Lord will be magnified in our mortal bodies whether by life or by death! And we shall, by His Grace, all appear before Him in Zion. God bless you, Brothers! Amen.

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

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

SHAME LEADING TO SALVATION NO. 2491

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 15, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 31, 1886.

***“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O LORD!”
Psalm 83:16.***

THIS is a very terrible Psalm. It contains some prayers against the enemies of God and of His people that crash with the thunder of indignation. You know that we are bid to love our enemies, but we are never commanded to love *God's* enemies. We may not hate any men as men, but as they are opposed to God, to truth, to righteousness, to purity, we may and we must, if we are, ourselves, right-minded, feel a burning indignation against them! Did you ever read the story of “the middle passage” in the days of the African slave trade, when the Negroes died by hundreds, or were flung into the sea to lighten the ship? Did you ever read of those horrors without praying, “O God, let the thunderbolts of Your wrath fall on the men who can perpetrate such enormities”? When you heard the story of the Bulgarian atrocities, did you not feel that you must, as it were, pluck God's sleeve and say to Him, “Why does Your justice linger? Let the monsters of iniquity be dealt with by You, O Lord, as they deserve to be”?

Such is the spirit of this Psalm. But I like best this particular verse in it because while it breathes righteous indignation against the wicked, it has mixed with it the tender spirit of love. “Fill their faces with shame,” prays the Psalmist, “but overrule Your severity for their everlasting good, that they may seek Your name, O Lord.” The worst fate that I wish to any Hearer of mine who is without God and without hope in the world, is that this prayer may be prayed by honest and loving hearts for him and for others like he—“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O Lord.”

I. To begin with, let me remind you that UNGODLY MEN HAVE GOOD CAUSE TO BE ASHAMED.

Let us talk a little, first, of *their wrong to their Maker*. If I might take each one of you by the hand, I should say to you, “Friend, you believe in the existence of God, your Maker, do you not? Well, then, have you treated Him rightly? If you have lived in the world 20 years, or perhaps even 40 or 50 years, and yet you have never served Him, do you think that is quite just to Him? If He made you and has fed you and kept you in being all these years, has He not a right to expect some service from you? I might go further and ask, has He not a right to expect your love?”

Does He ask more than He should ask when He says, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might’? Yet you have lived these many years and scarcely *thought* of Him! Certainly you have not spoken to Him, you have never confessed your faults to Him, or sought His forgiveness. To all intents and purposes, you have lived as if there were no God at all! Yet, in your earthly affairs you are a very honest man, and you pay everybody else his due—why do you, then, rob your God of what is justly His? There is not a man in the world who could say truly of you that you had dealt dishonorably with him. You pride yourself upon your uprightness and integrity! But must God, alone, then, be made to suffer through your injustice? Out of all beings, must He, alone, who made all other beings, be the only one to be neglected? He is first of all—do you put Him last? He is best of all—do you treat Him worst? If so, I think that such conduct as this is a thing to be ashamed of and I pray that you may be heartily ashamed of it.”

Let me quit that line of thought and remind you, next, that there are many ungodly men, and I suppose some here present, who ought to be ashamed because they are acting *in opposition to light and knowledge, contrary to their conscience and against their better judgments*. There are many unconverted men who can never look back upon any day of their lives without having to accuse themselves of wrong. And although they are not Christians, they would scarcely attempt to justify their position. When they act wrongly, there is a voice within them which tells them that they are doing wrong. They are not blind—they could see if they chose to see. They are not deaf, except that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. It is a horrible thing for a man to be always holding down his conscience, like a policeman holding down a mad dog. It is a terrible thing for a man to have to be at war with himself in order to destroy himself—his better self resisting and struggling, as it were, after salvation—but his worse self thrusting back the higher part of his being, sliding his conscience and drowning the cries of any approach to bitterness that may be within him. God forbid that men should act thus and sin against light and knowledge! I venture very quietly, but very solemnly, to tell any who are doing so that they ought to be ashamed of such conduct. They ought to blush at the very thought of acting thus against such light as they have and against the convictions of their own conscience.

There are also some of my Hearers—I speak very positively upon this point—who ought to be ashamed because of *their postponements of what they know to be right*. They have, again and again, put off the observance of duties which they know and admit to be incumbent upon them. “I ought to repent of sin,” says one. And then he adds, “and I will, one of these days.” “I ought to be a believer in Christ”—he admits that—“and I shall be, I hope, before I die.” Oh, how fairly you talk, Mr. Procrastinator! You know what ought to be done at once, but you leave it all for the future. Do you not know that every time a man neglects a duty, he commits a sin? That which you admit is your duty, causes you, every moment it is delayed, to commit sin by the delay! And by delay, obedience

becomes more difficult and you, yourself, become continually more likely to commit yet greater sin! I think that a man who says, "I ought to believe in Christ, I ought to repent of sin, I ought to love God," and yet says, "Well, I will do so at a more convenient season," ought to be ashamed of himself for talking and acting in such a wicked fashion! I pray God that he may be.

I shall come more pointedly home to some when I say that they ought to be ashamed because of *their violation of vows which they have made*. You were very ill, a little while ago, and you said, "O God, if You will but spare my life, and restore me to health and strength, I will rise from this bed to be a better man!" God did raise you up, but you are not a better man. You were seriously injured in an accident and likely to die—and in your distress you prayed, "O God, if You will prolong my unworthy life, I will turn over a new leaf. I will be a very different man in the future!" Well, you *are* a different man, for you are worse than you used to be before the accident! That is all the change that has been worked in you. God keeps a register of the vows that are so lightly broken here below, but so well remembered up in Heaven, and the day will come when they shall be brought out to the condemnation of those who made them and then failed to keep them! If you are determined to be a liar, lie not to God! If you are resolved to make promises, only to break them, at least trifle not with Him in whose hands your life is, and whose are all your ways. He who must play the fool, had better do it with some fellow fool, and not parade his folly before "Him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH." Think, then, dear Friends, of vows violated and blush because of them!

Moreover, it seems to me—and I shall leave it to your judgment to consider and approve what I say—that every man ought to be ashamed of not loving the Lord Jesus Christ and *not trusting such a Savior as the Lord Jesus Christ is*. God in human flesh, bleeding, dying, bearing the penalty of human sin and then presenting Himself freely as our Sacrifice and saying that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life! Do you push Him away from you? Will you trample on His blood and count it an unholy thing? Will you despise His Cross? It sometimes seems to me that blasphemy and adultery and murder—tremendous evils though these are—scarcely reach the height of guilt that comes through *refusing the great love of Christ*—thrusting Him aside whom God took from His bosom and gave up to die that men might live through Him! If you must spite anybody, spite anybody but the Christ of God! If you mean to refuse a friend, refuse any friend but the bleeding Savior who spared not His very life, but poured out the floods from His heart that He might save the guilty!

So, you see, dear Friends, that he who loves not Christ, and trusts not Christ, has good cause to be ashamed.

I will not say any more upon this first point, except just one thing and that is, *a man ought to be ashamed who will not even think of these things*. There are great numbers of our fellow citizens in London and our fellow creatures all the world over who have resolved not to *think* about

religion at all. There stands the House of God, but on that same street there is hardly one person who ever enters it. There is a Bible in almost every house, but many, nowadays, will not read it, or try to understand it. I should have thought that common and idle curiosity alone might have made men anxious to understand the Christian religion, the way of salvation by a crucified Savior. I should have fancied that they would have strayed in to see what our worship was like. If it had been the worship of Mumbo Jumbo, they would have wanted to see *that*, but when it is the worship of the Lord God Almighty and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the multitudes seem to be utterly indifferent to it! From the Cross I hear my dying Master cry, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like My sorrow." Even the voice of His gaping wounds and the voice of His bloody sweat, and the voice of His broken heart seem to fall upon hearts that will not listen and upon ears that are as deaf as stones!

Many who come to hear the Gospel go their way to their farms and to their merchandise, but they care nothing for Him who is worth more than all beside. O Sirs, in that day when this solid earth shall rock and reel, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, when the stars shall fall like the leaves of autumn and when there shall sail into the sky, conspicuous to the gaze of all, the Great White Throne, and on it shall sit the despised Redeemer, you will repent, then, and regret when it is too late that you gave Him none of your thoughts, but put the affairs of religion wholly on the side! Investigate this matter, I charge you! By what your Immortal souls are worth, by an eternal Heaven and an endless Hell—and there are both of these, despite what some say—I charge you, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat, and would be clear of your blood—give earnest attention to the things that make for your peace and consider the claims of God and of His Christ! And seek to find the way of salvation by faith in Jesus.

Thus, surely, I have said enough upon this first point—ungodly men have good cause to be ashamed.

II. Now, secondly, concerning these ungodly people, let me show you that SHAME IS A VERY DESIRABLE THING IF IT DRIVES THEM TO GOD. Hence the prayer, "Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord."

I have known shame to drive men to God in various ways. Sometimes shame attends *the breaking up of self-righteousness*. I knew a young fellow who had been a very upright moral man all his days. He seemed to think that he should go to Heaven by his good works, but he had no notion of a Savior and no regard for the things of Christ. One day, being in the workshop, he upset an oil can and his boss, who was rather a bad-tempered man, enquired sharply who had wasted the oil. And this man, who had always, till then, been truthful, on this occasion told a lie and said that he did not upset the can. Nobody found him out, mark you—he was so highly respected that his employer fully believed that he had not done it—but he went down greatly in his own esteem. He said to me, "Sir, my righteousness went all to pieces in a moment. I knew that I had told a

lie. I felt disgusted with myself and when I got out of the shop, for the first time in my life, I cried to God for mercy, for I saw myself to be a sinner.” Now I do not wish any of you to commit further sin in order that you may realize your true condition in God’s sight! You have done already enough evil, without doing any more, but I would like some one of these sins to come so sharply home to you that it would make you feel ashamed and give up all pretence of self-righteousness—and come by faith to Christ and take His righteousness to be your perfect covering before God.

I have known this shame to operate in some, when they have done wrong, and have *lost the reputation they enjoyed among their fellow creatures*. They have been found out in doing wrong and, sad as it was to them, yet when they felt that they could no longer come to the front and lead as they used to do—when they knew that they must get somewhere in the rear and that if their true character became known, people would shun them—then it was that, like the prodigal son, they said, “I will arise and go to my Father.” There is many a man who stands high in popular esteem, but who is never likely to be saved, for he is too proud and self-conceited ever to seek the Savior. But there have been some others who, for a grave fault, have had all their glory trailed in the mire and *then* they have sought the face of Christ. I do not care *how* or *why* they seek that blessed face, so long as they find it and are saved!

There are two instances, then, in which shame drives men to God. First, when a man has lost his own good opinion of himself. And next when he has lost the good opinion of others. Filled with shame, he has often fled to Christ.

So have I also seen it in the case of *failure driving a man to the Strong for strength*. There is a young man who has come lately from the country. He knew the temptations of London, but he said to his father and mother, “You will never hear of your son John doing such things.” Ah, John! They have not heard of it, yet, but you have done a great many evil things by now and you ought to be ashamed! If your father finds it out, as likely enough he will, you will be ashamed. But, seeing that you have found *yourself* out, I wish that you would be ashamed before the Lord! O that virtuous John, that silent youth, that dear young man! You were just going to join the Church, were you not? Where were you last night? Ah, not drinking of the Communion cup, I will guarantee you! Where are you now? O John, if you could have seen yourself six months ago, to be what you *now* are, you would not have held your head so high when you came away from your native town! But your failure, that wretched broken back of yours with which you meant to stand so bolt upright should all help to drive you to God—your father’s God and your mother’s God!

My dear Friend, I pray you seek the face of the Most High and begin again, for, John, though you cannot stand by yourself, God can make you stand! With a new heart and a right spirit, you can do a deal better than you have done in the past in your own strength, which is utter weakness. I have known a teetotaler who has felt himself quite safe because he wore a blue ribbon, to become a drunk, notwithstanding that

very desirable badge. If that is your case, my Brother, when you are ashamed of yourself on that account, as well you may be, go to the Lord for a new heart and a right spirit, and then begin again, that you may truly be what you aspire to be, an example to others! So, you see, that shame in such a case of failure as I have described, may bring a man to Christ.

I have also known men brought to Christ with shame of another sort—*shame of mental terror leading to a humble faith*. A young gentleman felt that he had heard the old-fashioned Gospel long enough and he should like to go and hear the *new* gospel. More light is said to have broken out of late—I can only tell you that it comes from some very dark places—and I do not think there is much light in it. But this gentleman thought that he must know about this new light, and he has kept going further and further. And the new light has led him, like the will-o'-the-wisp does, into all sorts of boggy places. And now he begins to feel that he can do a great many things which once he dared not do, until suddenly the thought occurs to him, “Where have I got to now?” He has become altogether an unbeliever! He who was once almost persuaded to be a Christian has run into very wild ways and nothing is sure with him! It is all rocking to and fro before him, like the waves of the sea, and there is nothing solid left. Ah, now you begin to be ashamed, do you? You are not, after all, so full of wisdom as you thought you were! Come back, then! Come back and believe the old Book, and trust the Savior who has brought so many to the Eternal Kingdom! Believe His Words, follow in His track and this very shame on account of your fancied intellectual prowess, which has turned out to be sheer folly, will bind you, in future, to the simple Cross of Christ and you will never go away from it again!

I want to suggest one thing more before I leave this part of my subject. In this congregation there must be a good many men and women who might do well to look back upon *the utter uselessness of their past lives*. As I looked along these galleries, at the immense preponderance of men in the congregation, which is so usual with us, I thought, “What a number there must be here who, if they threw the weight of their influence in with us, and sought to do good to others, would be immensely valuable to the Church of God!” But are there not many, perhaps even professing Christianity, who, in looking back upon their past lives, will be obliged to say that they have done nothing? What did *you* ever accomplish, dear Friends? There was a lady who had a large sum of money in her possession—much more than sufficient for her needs. She was a Christian woman, living a quiet, comfortable life by the seaside. One night, as she walked up and down the beach, she said to herself, “What have I ever done for Him who died for me? If I were to die now, would anybody miss me? When my life is finished, shall I have accomplished anything?” She felt that she had done nothing, so she went home and ruminated upon what she could do.

She began to live very frugally that she might save all she could and she accumulated quite a large amount, for she had an objective to live for. The Orphanage at Stockwell is the outcome of that good woman's

thought at the seaside! She consecrated her substance to the starting of a home where boys and girls, whose fathers were dead, might be housed. I cannot but think of her and then say to myself, "Are there not many ladies, many gentlemen, many men, many women, who might walk up and down and say, 'Well, now, when I die, who will miss me?'" I believe that there are numbers of people who call themselves Christians who might be tied hand and foot and flung into the Atlantic—and nobody would miss them beyond the two or three members of their own families. They do nothing and they are living for nothing. "Oh, but," they say, "we are accumulating money!" Yes, yes. That is like a jackdaw hiding rubbish behind the door, putting away everything he can get. Poor jackdaw! That is what you are doing, nothing more! To get money is well enough, if you get it that you may use it well. And to learn is right enough, if you learn with the view of teaching others. If our life is not to be wasted, there must be a living to God with a noble purpose! And they who have lived in vain with multitudes of opportunities of doing good, ought to be ashamed—and such shame should bring them to the Savior's feet in humble penitence. God give such shame as that to any here who ought to have it, that they may at once seek the name of the Lord!

III. I must close by speaking only briefly upon the last head of my discourse, which is, **THE LORD IS WILLING, NOW, TO RECEIVE THOSE WHO ARE ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES.** Let me say that again. The Lord is waiting and willing, now, to receive to the love of His heart those who are thus ashamed of themselves.

I do not think that I need say much to enforce this great Truth of God. Is there one person here who is ashamed of himself because of his past sin? Then you are the man I invite to come to that Savior who bore your shame in His own body on the Cross! You are the sort of man for whom He died. Remember how He, Himself, said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And one mark of the lost is their deep sense of shame when they get to be so ashamed of themselves that they try to hide from the gaze of their fellow creatures. If you are ashamed of yourself, Christ is willing to receive you! Behold, He stands before you with open arms and bids you come and trust Him, that He may give you rest.

You are the sort of man to come to Christ, because, first, *you have the greatest need of Him.* In the time of famine, we give the meal, away, first to the most hungry family. He who has alms to distribute to the poor, if he is wise, will give the most speedy relief to those who are the most destitute. And you, my dear Hearer, are like that if you are ashamed of yourself! You are the bankrupt, you are the beggar, you are the sort of sinner whom Jesus came to save! God's elect are known by this mark—in their own natural estate they are as poor as poverty, itself. If you are empty, there is a full Christ for you! If your last mite is gone, Heaven's treasures are all open for you! Come and take them, take them freely, as freely as you breathe the air, as freely as you would drink of the flowing river! Come and take Christ without question and without delay! Take Him, now, and be happy! And the way to take Him is to *trust* Him, to trust

yourself with Him absolutely! He is a Savior—let Him save *you*. Have no finger in the work, yourself, but leave it all to Him. Commit yourself entirely and absolutely to those mighty hands that molded the heavens and the earth—to those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross! Jesus can save you! He will save you! He must save you! He is pledged to save you! If you have believed in Him, He *has* saved you and you may go your way and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Next, if you are ashamed of yourself, you are the man to come to Christ because *you will make no bargains with Him*. You will say, “Save me, Lord, at any price, and in any way!” And you are the man who will *give Him all the glory if you are saved*. That is the kind of sinner Jesus loves to save—not one who will run away with the credit of his salvation and say, “I was always good and I had many traces of an excellent character about me before Christ saved me.” Such a man might try to divide with the Lord the glory of his salvation, so he is not likely to be saved! But God delights to save those in whom there is no *trace* of goodness, no *hope* of goodness, no *shadow* of goodness—the men and women who not only feel that God may well be ashamed of them, but who are absolutely ashamed of themselves!

In preaching on this important theme, I have not used any grace of diction, nor have I made any display of oratory. I have plainly told you the Gospel message and I have expostulated with those of you who have not considered it. I wish that, by the Grace of God, even before this night passes away, you would come and rest yourselves on Christ. The Holy Spirit is here, blessedly working upon some hearts. If He is not yet working upon others of you, I pray that He may now begin to do so. Remember, my dear Hearers, that you are all mortal and some of you may soon be gone from the earth. During the past week I personally have lost some very choice friends who died quite suddenly. There was a young friend, who was here a Sabbath or so ago. He was taken ill last Sunday afternoon and he was gone in a few hours. His sorrowing friends are absent, today, for he was laid in Norwood Cemetery yesterday afternoon, almost to the breaking of the hearts of his parents and other relatives.

I had a dear old friend with whom I have often stayed at Mentone. On Monday last she seemed as well as ever, but on Wednesday she, too, was dead. Last Friday week I had a letter from a friend at Plymouth, saying that he was coming up to see me and asking at what hour I could meet him? I said, “Five in the afternoon.” It was our honored friend, Mr. Serpell. He did not come, but I received a note to say that he was not quite well. On Monday he addressed the Chamber of Commerce and while he was speaking, he fell back, apparently in a fainting fit, and so died. I have, therefore, lost some who have always been good helpers and kind friends to me. And I seem to feel more than ever I did that I am living in a dying world. It might have been any one of you! It might have been myself. Come, then, and let us all seek the Lord at once! Let us each one seek Him, now. “If *you* seek Him, He will be found of you.” God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 12; JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.**

Psalm 12:1. *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* The Psalm speaks of a very discouraging time and records a very dreary fact, but the Psalmist is wise and turns to God with that short, sententious prayer, "Help, Lord."

2, 3. *They speak vanity, every one, with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things.* They will not be able to continue speaking falsely and proudly forever—a shovelful of earth from the grave-digger's spade will silence them—and a terrible display of God's Justice will make them speechless forever.

4, 5. *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.* That is all it is, only a puff—the biggest brag of the wicked, the most tremendous threat against the Lord's people is but a puff, after all, and God will set His people high above all those who puff at them.

6-8. *The Words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.* Now let us read in Jeremiah's prophecy, Chapter Eight. Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, that Jeremiah had the very sorrowful task of warning a people who would not give heed to his warnings. He prophesied evil—evil which began to come upon the people even while he prophesied, yet they would not turn to God! I sometimes think Jeremiah was the greatest of all the Prophets because, in the teeth of perpetual opposition, with no measure of success whatever, he continued to be faithful to God and to deliver the message with which he was sent, weeping all the while over people who would not weep for themselves.

Jeremiah 8:1, 2. *At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.* This is an awful picture. Here is a nation that would worship the sun, and the moon, and the stars, instead of worshipping God. Here they are, and their bones lie exposed to the sun and moon and stars which they had worshipped—dead people before lifeless gods! This is all that idolatry produces for the ruined people who have turned away from their true Friend and Helper—their bones lie exposed in the presence of the things that they made to be their gods! How dreadful is the result of sin! No matter what modern preachers say, a sinful course must be a disastrous

one. It is in the very nature of things that we cannot go the wrong road and yet be happy. Wrong must end in wrong, it cannot be otherwise—the universal conviction in the conscience of man teaches us this fact.

3. *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places where I have driven them, says the LORD of Hosts.* These people would not have God. They cast Him off and now He casts *them* so far off that they feel that it would have been better for them if they had never been born, and they would rather die than live—“Death shall be chosen rather than life.”

4. *Moreover you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?* The old proverb says, “It is a long lane that has no turning.” So the Lord seems to ask, “Will these men always go on in sin? Will they always turn away from Me? They change from bad to worse; will they never change from worse to better?”

5. *Why, then, is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* Perseverance in evil is the very venom of evil. When men not only backslide, but continue to perpetually backslide, they are doubly staining their garments in the scarlet of iniquity! When men “refuse to return” to the Lord and continue to refuse to return, surely they are digging their own graves exceedingly deep.

6. *I hearkened and heard.*—It is God who is speaking—“I hearkened and heard.”—

6. *But they spoke not aright.* “I tried to discover whether there was any good in them. I listened to hear them offer a prayer. I watched to mark anything like repentance in them.”

6. *No man repented of wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle.* See how God described these people? When He might have expected that some of them would relent and, in their thoughtful moments turn to a better mind, they did not do so. But, as the horse, when he hears the war trumpet, rushes into the midst of the fray, so did these people go headlong into sin with desperate resolve. Careless of wounds and death, they rushed to their destruction! I hope that this is not the case with any of my hearers at this time. I pray God that it may not be so!

7. *Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD.* The birds take wing across the sea when the dampness of autumn comes and, by-and-by, when spring returns, they twitter about our roofs, again, punctual to the appointed time. But men come not to God in their season—they fly not from their sins, they return not to the Lord. The crane and the swallow rebuke the foolishness of men who know not the time to return to God, and know not their way back to Him.

8, 9. *How can you say, We are wise, and the Law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have re-*

jected the Word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them? This test may serve as a motto for some, in these days, who believe themselves to be wiser than Scripture and who fancy that, in their great wisdom, they are able to correct this Inspired Book! Many set up in the trade of “Bible makers” nowadays—they profess to be the revealers of Revelation, the improvers of this blessed Book of God. Ah, but this passage still stands true, “They have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?”

10, 11. *Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for everyone from the least even to the greatest is given to covetousness, from the Prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.* This is a very mischievous thing. For the preacher of Christ to be honest and fearless, and to speak unpalatable Truth is right in God’s sight. But to gloss over the great facts about sin and judgment, and to say to the ungodly, “Oh, do not trouble yourselves! ‘Peace, peace; when there is no peace’”—this is to murder the souls of men! And I doubt not that the blood of multitudes will be upon the skirts of those teachers who have tried to make everything pleasant to the wicked, and to suit the age in which they lived. The Lord Himself says of the Prophet and priest who have dealt falsely, “They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

12. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* What a striking expression is this! To what a condition of shameless obstinacy have men’s minds been brought when it can be said of them, “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.” The very power to be ashamed was taken from them. Surely, almost the last ray of any hope of salvation must be gone from the man who cannot blush at the thought of his own iniquity!

12-18. *Therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD. I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence, and given us water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.* Because the people refused this testimony, because they seemed set on mischief and resolved to die, therefore the Prophet’s heart was faint within him.

19, 20. *Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their engraved images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.* I will read that 20th verse again—“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” This may be the lament of some of my present hearers—and if it is, may they now bow before the Lord in true penitence of heart, and may He, in pity, save them this very hour! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but, oh, may they soon be saved!

21. *For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me.* That is the man to be God’s Prophet, the man who makes the sorrows of his people to be his own sorrows, who does not perform the duties of his office as a mere matter of profession, but enters into his service with a weeping heart, longing to be made a blessing to men.

22. *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?* No, there is none. There is balm in Christ, there is a Physician who once hung on Calvary’s Cross—but there is no balm and no physician in Gilead. If there were—

22. *Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Jeremiah 9:1. *Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* This is how God’s servants feel about the dying and perishing souls all around them. They cannot bear the thought of the sinner’s awful doom—it brings continuous heartbreak and heaviness of spirit upon them. That men should eternally perish—that they should bring on their own heads the doom of their own sin is no small thing and, therefore, the Lord’s servant mourns over those who mourn not for themselves! God save every one of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—552, 544, 521, 522.

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**PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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GOD'S HIDDEN ONES

NO. 2367

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 1, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1888.**

*“Your hidden ones.”
Psalm 83:3.*

IT was the desire of Asaph to obtain for his nation help from God. Israel was exposed to great danger—ten confederate nations had conspired, with desperate hate, to assail the chosen people. They were determined to root out the very name of Israel from among the nations! They joined together in a wicked league for this purpose and they came from all quarters—north, south, east and west—in order to utterly devour the little insignificant people whom God had called His own. It was the Psalmist's desire to bring God into this quarrel, to stir Him up to take the part of Israel and he, therefore cried, “Keep not Your silence, O God: hold not Your peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult: and they that hate You have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted against Your hidden ones.”

Nothing stirs a man more than when his children are assailed. The most quiet and inoffensive individual grows angry if his little one is touched. The blood flies to his cheeks and all his manhood is awakened to defend his child. So the Psalmist pleads with God that this nation was His own and that, therefore, He must protect it. And he describes the people by this singular but instructive title, “Your hidden ones.” I am going to enquire what may be meant by this term, “Your hidden ones,” in the desire that some of God's hidden ones may be discovered, and that the Lord's blessing may rest upon them. First, I shall ask, *Why are they called God's hidden ones?* Secondly, *What is their special honor?* They are God's hidden ones, they belong to Him and, thirdly, *What then?*

I. First, then, *Why are they called God's hidden ones?*

I think, in the connection in which these words occur, the phrase means that they were hidden by God with a view to safety. The 10 heathen nations conspired against Israel, but they could not really harm the chosen people, for God, Himself had hidden them as a hen hides her chickens under her wings when a hawk hovers overhead, or as one who has found a treasure hides it away from the hands of the thief. As the most precious things are put into cases and kept concealed for safety, so does God hide away His people and preserve them. God puts His saints where the enemy cannot find them, or, if he finds them so as to see where they are, God places them where the enemy cannot *reach* them. Sometimes He puts them in the secret places of His pavilion—yes, in the

secret places of His tabernacle does He hide them. As well might the devil think to destroy an angel as to destroy a child of God! That same power that protects the perfect ones before the Throne of God protects believing ones who are on the way there. "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations," and such a dwelling place that we have been hidden away in You so that no evil has been able to reach us!

You remember when Athaliah sought to kill all the seed royal that Jehoiada, the High Priest, took Joash, who was then a child, and hid him for six years in the house of the Lord, and there He was safe? Thus does God take each one of His children and make a Joash of him, and preserves him from the assault of the enemy so that he cannot be destroyed. God said to Noah, "Come, you and all your house, into the ark," and he and his household went into the ark and the Lord shut them in. They were hidden in that ark of safety from the floods which rose from beneath and the rain which fell from above—and thus they outlived the Deluge. So, if you believe in Jesus, God will hide you away from all the rage of earth and Hell. He will preserve you, you shall be one of His hidden ones, of whom Christ said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me; is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." They are God's hidden ones. As the king takes care of his royal diadem and crown jewels, so does God watch over those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." What a privilege is yours and mine, dear Hearers, if, indeed, we have so believed in Christ that we are hidden away in Him! "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Rightly do we sing—

***"How blest are they who still abide
Close sheltered in Your bleeding side!
Who life and strength from there derive,
And by You move, and in You live."***

I think this is the first reason why the Israelites were called God's hidden ones, because He had put them out of the reach of their adversaries and concealed them in a place of safety.

But, next, I think there is another meaning which some of us have, at times, realized. They are God's hidden ones *because He gives them quiet and peace*, even in the midst of turmoil and sorrow. The Psalmist seems to say, "Your enemies make a tumult, but Your hidden ones are quiet." Do you not know what this experience means? Have you ever felt it? That trouble you dreaded so much, of which you said, "I am sure it will crush me," *would* have crushed you if you had been left to yourself! But when it came, you were strangely upheld and kept so calm and placid that you did not know yourself! When you saw your husband die and those little children were all around you, and you knew that you were a widow, how was it that *then* you were still so trustful? Or, dear Husband, when you saw your wife, at last, expire, and the light of your home was quenched, how was it that you still said and meant it, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"? Why, it was because the Lord had made you one of His hidden ones! He said, "Come home,

dear child, come and rest with Me”—and He shut you away from all the trial and enabled you to find peace in Him.

Do you remember that wonderful poem by Miss Havergal, in which she speaks of the peculiar calm which prevails at the very center of a cyclone? The gifted poetess writes—

***“They say there is a hollow, safe and still,
A point of coolness and repose
Within the center of a flame where life might dwell
Unharméd and unconsumed, as in a luminous shell
Which the bright walls of fire enclose
In breathless splendor, barrier that no foes
Could pass at will.
There is a point of rest
At the great center of the cyclone’s force,
A silence at its secret source.
A little child might slumber undistracted,
Without the ruffle of one fairy curl,
In that strange central calm amid the mighty whirl.”***

Well now, some of us have, at times, known the experience which is typified in those lines. Troubles of every sort and size come upon us. We are vexed with every form of calamity and yet during all that time we are serenely quiet and perfectly happy. I should think that an eagle, high aloft, when he sees the sportsman coming with his gun, however far the bullet may carry, if he knows himself to be quite out of range, would poise himself upon the wing and look down upon the sportsman with a merry heart! Let him send his bullet up into the air as far as it can rise, but the eagle is high above it all—and God gives His children, at times, such mounting faith that they rise up as upon the wings of eagles—and the bullets of trouble cannot reach halfway to them! There, in the clear blue Heaven of fellowship with God, they look down on the tops of the clouds, and defy all the assaults of man! Happy are they who have thus become God’s hidden ones!

There are green meadows and there are still waters, but I believe they are mostly to be found in the places where trials most abound! There, consolations are most plentiful. I hardly think that a man knows the deeps of the serenity of God unless he has been greatly tried. There are wonderful sights that none shall see but those who are hidden away by the Lord in the time of storm and trouble. Oh, the strife of tongues, the endless babbling of slander! What a blessing not to hear it, or to hear it as a deaf man that hears not. Oh, the noise of misrepresentation! Oh, the wave upon wave of actual trouble that may come to you in business or in the domestic circle! What joy it is to be kept out of it all, as I said before, like Noah in the ark—all the world drowned, but you shut up in safety! And remember that the deeper the floods became, the higher Noah rose toward Heaven! And so shall it be with you. The more of trial you have to endure, the more of communion you shall have to enjoy! This is the happy, happy case of a tried child of God.

There are two meanings, then, of this expression—hidden away for safety and hidden away for quiet.

But, next, God’s people may be hidden away *because they are not understood*. The true Christian is a marvel to other men. He is a stranger

and a foreigner among them. He is a plant that never would have grown on earthly mold unless God had planted it there. The Christian is a man wondered at! If you are understood, you are in the wrong. If you are a genuine Christian and are right, you will be misunderstood by the world—it has not the faculty of understanding the saints. He who has been made to live unto God lives a life that is quite incomprehensible to ordinary men. No, let me put it very plainly—the spiritual life which God gives to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is altogether beyond the discernment of the carnal mind! “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” and cannot rise to an understanding of that which is born of the Spirit, which, alone, is spirit! Your life is a secret between God and yourself.

So, too, the motive of your life will not be understood by other men. They feel sure that there is something at the back of it. If you were to tell them that you lived only for God's Glory, they would laugh at you! God's Glory—what is that to them? They think, no doubt, that you make a good thing out of your religion, and herein they prove themselves to have learned their lesson in the school of the devil, for he said, “Does Job fear God for naught? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has, on every side?” The desire to live so as to please God belongs to every man who walks with God, but it will not be understood by other men. God's people are, in this sense, His hidden ones.

Therefore, the comfort that reigns in a Christian's heart is a thing which he cannot impart to others. If others were to hear the reason of the Believer's happiness, they would say, “Well, that would not make *me* happy! There is nothing in it that would sustain *me*.” And there isn't. The food on which angels live is not such as common flesh and blood could feed upon. And the inward comforts of the child of God are such as the world cannot give because it cannot even understand them.

So your hopes and the lamps that light up your life, the world knows nothing about! Perhaps some of your own brothers and sisters do not understand your hopes. And when you talk about death with pleasure, and about the eternal state with delight, they think that you are half insane! It is because they are altogether insane that they think so. But if you are one of God's hidden ones, in all these points you will be a stranger to your own mother's children—you will be one who cannot be understood! Do not expect to be understood—settle this in your mind and it will save you a great deal of heartache and disappointment.

There is a third sense, then, in which God's children may be called hidden ones, because they are not understood.

But there are some of them who are hidden in another sense—*they are very obscure*. Some of God's best children have not anything that can bring them to the light here on earth. Perhaps they may be living among rich people and, as they are very poor, nobody notices them. There is a directory containing the names and addresses of the great people who live in the town, but they have not put poor Mary's name in that book—and as to John, well, the highest degree he ever had was that he was a cobbler—and his name, of course, is not in the book, either. The Lord

has many of those hidden ones who are not known among the great because they are so little in Israel.

Some of God's hidden ones are not known because they are ill. It is now several months that poor Mary has been lying on a bed. It is years since William has gone out of the house, at all, and very few ever come to see these hidden ones. But I bear my witness that some of the best things I have ever learned from mortal lips, I have learned from bedridden saints! There are some who wickedly teach that bodily afflictions are caused by sin. It is a cruel—I was going to say, an infernal supposition—for some of the holiest people I have known have been bedridden for ten, twelve, or 15 years, and if I were to say that I thought they were sinners above others, I should belie my convictions, for in sitting down to talk with some of them I have found them to be saints above others!

I shall never forget going some miles, years ago, to see a woman who had been bedridden for, I think, 20 or 25 years. I went up a ladder to the room where she was. She was rendered comfortable by the kindness of those who came to see her. She sat up in bed as best she could and, oh, I wish that I could preach such sermons as she preached to me when she spoke about the goodness of the Lord to her, and told me how that poor chamber was made to glow in the middle of the night with the delightful Presence of her Lord! She was one of God's hidden ones—and He has many such! Now, just think of that a minute, and pray God to bless His dear hidden sick ones at this moment, and ask Him to cheer and comfort their hearts.

Perhaps there are some hidden ones who come into our places of worship and have no one to speak to them. I do not think that many such persons come to the Tabernacle—I hope there never will be. There is a Brother who was a member, here, and who will be a member, again. He has gone to live in the suburbs and he attends a very respectable place of worship. They are very good people but, you know, our friends in the suburbs are so much more respectable than we are and they know it, too! And there, in the outer ring of London, it is perfectly amazing what great people they are—you would not believe it. When they come into the City to business, they are nothing very particular, but as soon as they get out to the suburbs, they are wonderful people! This Brother says, "I have been in and out of the chapel for months and nobody ever speaks to me." The fact is, I expect, that he keeps a grocer's shop and some of these people deal with him, so they do not know him on Sunday, of course, because he is only a grocer!

I hope that you will never get such abominable notions into *your* heads! This wretched caste that divides us up into little sets, reminds me of the Hindus. Keep it up in the world if you are foolish enough to do so, but do not bring the evil into the Church of Christ! Here, at any rate, we are Brothers and Sisters. Let us feel that we are one in Christ and put away from us all that stiffness which would make us keep our petty nobodies to ourselves! If there is a man who is a really great man, I always notice that he is the most condescending and gentle man that there is. But it is your *nobody* who always makes himself appear *somebody*! Now, dear Friend, if you have come in and out of this place and you have not

been noticed by anybody, I pray you to begin to notice somebody, yourself! And if you have come in and out of any place of worship and nobody has spoken to you, remember that the Lord has His hidden ones and you may be one of them. It may be that quite from inadvertence, not from unkindness, you have not been spoken to, so begin to break the ice, yourself, by speaking to someone else and may God bless you so that you may, in that sense, be no more a hidden one!

Now I ask you to think, for a minute, of another way in which some of God's people are hidden ones. I mean this—do you suppose that God has *none* of His people *in churches and communities that are steeled in error*? If *you* think so, I do not! It is always a comfort to my heart to believe that in the great Romish Church there are hundreds of thousands who have found the Savior and are resting in His atoning Sacrifice—they are God's hidden ones. I have, here and there, stumbled upon some of these, myself. And when we have come to speak about the Cross and the wounds of Christ and His precious blood—all that rubbish about the Virgin and the saints has been forgotten—and I have found myself much nearer akin to those hidden ones than I had thought I might have been!

And there are many books that have been written by persons who are members of that church which, nevertheless, are full of such a savor of Grace and holy fellowship with God that we cannot but believe that the authors of them are God's hidden ones. Yes, and it is a very curious thing that you will find that just the very persons you would have least thought would possess the Light of God have, nevertheless, received it. Have I not been, sometimes, in a place where I thought the Gospel of Christ had never come and yet I have found clear proofs that it was there? Not long ago it was so with me. As I passed a certain spot, I noticed a kind of glitter in the eye of a person who looked at me. It was a servant in a place where I could not have thought I should find a friend. And when I came back that way, his greeting to me, was, "God bless you, Sir! You don't know me, but I take in the sermons every week and I have found the Savior." Where least I expected it, I stumbled on a friend and a disciple who was fed on the Word of God that I have preached! Does it not do your heart good, sometimes, after you have thought, "Well, I shall never find anybody *here* with whom I can sympathize," to meet with just one of the very persons with whom you have had the best of fellowship for many a day and many a year to come?

God has His hidden ones, also, *in the midst of ungodly families*. Do not you, who have to visit those who are joining the Church, sometimes find yourselves in houses where everything betokens drunkenness and all that is bad—and yet there is a dear child who has been converted, or perhaps it is the wife whom God, in Sovereign Grace, has looked upon and saved? There are many such hidden ones in London. There are some of them who cannot get out to worship—they are not permitted to come—and yet they are God's own dear ones, hidden away in ungodly homes. Breathe a prayer for them, now! Say, "Lord, help Your hidden ones in such cases as these!" God has a people—I was going to say, up to the very gates of Hell—He has an elect people, chosen by His Grace, who

know Him, trust Him and love Him although they are not known to the rest of their Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Once more, however, all God's people are His hidden ones because *all the saints are, at present, unrevealed*. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear," that is, the hidden and veiled Christ, when He shall be manifested, "we shall be like He," we shall be manifested, too! There is a great future for you, my Brother! There is a grand future for you, my Sister. Hardly can you hold your own, today, against the contentions of the adversary, but be firm, be true, cry to God for help and you shall not always be hidden as you now are, in the midst of the dust, strife and conflict—you shall come out as when the sun shines in his strength! Therefore, be of good cheer, you who are hidden ones, today—you shall, in due time, shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father.

II. I must not say more upon the first point, but must turn to the second question. WHAT IS THEIR SPECIAL HONOR? They are God's hidden ones. Their peculiar honor is that they are the Lord's.

Will each one of you do himself the favor to put to himself the question, "Am I the Lord's?" Never mind about the friend sitting next to you, but let each of you say, "Am I the Lord's?" If so, the Lord knows you, for, "the Lord knows them that are His." *He knows whom He chose and redeemed*. He knows whom He has called. He knows whom He has justified. He has not done any of those things in the dark. He has a familiar acquaintance with all that His Grace has done for you.

Remember, also, that though you are hidden, *you are not hidden from the Lord*. You are hidden *by* Him, but you are not hidden *from* Him. He can read your thoughts. He sees that hot tear that is beginning to lift the eyelid. He knows the troubles that are yet to come as well as those that have come—He reads you as I read the pages of this Bible.

Then, again, *some of God's hidden ones are among the very choicest of His children*. I think there are some who are so very dear to God that He keeps them to Himself. I have known some saints whom God has loved so much that He has taken away from them all that they loved, that *He* might have all their hearts. He loved their love so much that He would have it all Himself. "Oh!" you say, "perhaps that is the reason why I have been so tried and why I have so many graves in the cemetery." Well, it may be—and that you are one of the Lord's hidden ones whom He has hidden away in His own bosom from every other love—that you may be altogether His own.

Remember, too, that *hidden as you are, He has engaged to keep you*. His very hiding of you shows that He means to keep you in safety. You shall never perish for, "He keeps the feet of His saints." You shall not be overcome by the enemy, for you are the Lord's. If you belonged to somebody else, you might be deserted. But as you are the Lord's, you never shall be forsaken. Human masters sometimes leave their old servants to perish, but God never deserts His old servants! Even to hoar hairs and to the end of life He will be with you, and He will bear you until He brings you Home to Glory, above, to be with Him forever and ever!

III. I have spoken very briefly on the second point, but our time is nearly gone, so I must close with this third question. If the Lord has the hidden ones of whom we have spoken, WHAT THEN?

Well, the first thought that comes to my mind is this—*let us rejoice that the Lord has more people than we know.* He has His hidden ones. I know the tendency to say, as Elijah did, “I, even I, only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” It is not so—the Lord still has many thousands of knees that have not bowed to Baal. One of the wonders of Heaven will be to find so many people, there, that we never thought would get there. We shall say to ourselves, “We did not think that those people knew the Lord, yet they did!” The Grace of God can live where you and I could not. I know some people that I would not like to live with on earth, for they are very strange, yet I hope that they are God’s people. Well, we shall live with them very well in Heaven—they will be changed before they get there. They will have had their hearts washed, their whole natures renewed and they will be right enough, then! The Lord has some very strange people among His chosen ones. If you had to deal with some of God’s people that I know, you would give me credit for a little patience, at any rate, in dealing with them! You have need of patience with your own children and God’s children are, in some respects, very much like our children. If you draw a parallel between them, you will find childish faults and infirmities in the children of God which have to be borne with, even as we have to bear with the faults and infirmities of our own children at home.

My next remark is—*let us be on the look out for these hidden ones wherever we are.* If you and I have to go and live where we do not wish to go—away from our dear acquaintances, here—let us believe, when we get to that distant place, wherever it is, that God has some hidden ones there. You are going to Canada, are you? Or you are about to start for Australia? Or, in the Providence of God, you are to live in some village far away from the means of Grace. You say to yourself, “Whatever shall I do?” Do? Why, find the Lord’s hidden ones and you shall have company! Though you may say, “Surely, there is no child of God there,” you shall find that there is someone living there whom you are sent to help—while he is placed there that he may help you! Wherever you go, do not say to yourself, “This place is wholly abandoned,” but believe that there is a child of God living there.

I remember reading of a godly man who went into a village, some fifty years ago, and asked, “Is there a Christian person living in this place?” He enquired if there was anyone in the village who made a profession of religion. They shook their heads and said that they did not know of anybody. “Is there anyone here who fears God?” Then they laughed. However, after making a good many enquiries, one man said that there was a hypocritical canting Methodist woman who lived down a certain lane. He said, “That is the person I want to meet, depend upon it.” He knew at once what they meant—there was one who was *different* from the rest and, therefore, she had undeservedly earned those titles! He went and found that she was a Christian woman walking in meekness and sorrow because she had no one at all to speak to.

When our missionary, Mr. Thomas, went to Calcutta at the end of the last century, it is said that he advertised for a Christian and could not find one. Advertise for a Christian? Well, thank God, we shall not have to do *that*! Even if you live in a place where there are very few Christians, still believe that there are some and look out for God's hidden ones!

In the next place, since God has hidden ones, *let us take care never to act or speak so as to grieve them*. Sometimes, when Christian men get conceited and proud—and think themselves very great—they speak in a hard, domineering way that grieves God's people. "No," you say, "I would not use such language if I knew that one of them was about." Well then, do not use it at all—because you do not know when they may not be about, for God has His hidden ones in places where it is least suspected! Speak as you would wish the very least of God's people to hear you and do not use vain and haughty language. If you get to be like the Prophet's bullocks that pushed with horn and shoulder and drove away the weak ones, God may deal roughly with you and make you to be as hateful in His sight as they were! Let the remembrance that God has His hidden ones be a check upon your tongue and upon your whole conduct.

And, lastly, although God has His hidden ones, *let not one of us hide himself more than is necessary*. I speak to some of you who love the Lord, but who have never come out on His side. God has His hidden ones, but they ought to come forward and confess Christ. Remember that the Gospel message is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To the secret faith of the heart there ought to be joined the public profession of the lips! Why should you be ashamed of Jesus? Why should you be afraid to acknowledge that you belong to Him? Some whom I know, who love their Lord but have never confessed Him, are like the mice behind the wainscot. They come out of a night, when the cat is not there, to get some of the crumbs—and then they run back and hide in their holes. I shall not set a trap for you, but, at the same time I would like to stop up all the holes where you hide, so that you who are Christians would be obliged to come out and admit it! I leave the matter to your conscience, but I pray the Lord, Himself, to fetch you out if you are His hidden ones, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 83.***

This is a Psalm that is not often read and very seldom expounded, I should think. According to the title, it is, "A Song or Psalm of Asaph." Asaph is one of a little group of poets who flourished side by side with David. This is a patriotic hymn. The nation was about to be attacked by many adversaries, so, like a true patriot, the poet desired that God would give the victory to His people, and deliver them. You may regard this Psalm as a prophecy—it reads like a prayer or wish of the writer and, no

doubt it is, but it may also be read as a prophecy of what will happen to the enemies of God's people.

Verses 1, 2. *Keep not Your silence, O God: hold not Your peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult: and they that hate You have lifted up the head.* God's enemies are making a noise and the Psalmist's prayer is that the Lord, Himself, will speak and answer them. God's voice made the heavens and the earth—"He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." A single word from Him will win the day! The poet's prayer is not, "Grant a leader bold and brave," but, "Lord, speak, speak!" "For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult." The enemies of Israel were the enemies of God. If they were *our* enemies, only, we might keep silent, but as they are also the enemies of God, our loyalty to the Lord compels us to cry unto Him to speak against them!

3. *They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted against Your hidden ones.* Craft goes with power in plotting against God's people. The seed of the serpent are like he from whom they came, and of him it is said, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." And the seed of the serpent are full of crafty counsel and subtlety. This, the Psalmist mentions in his prayer, and then he looks to God to frustrate their minds, to baffle their craft and, by His wisdom, to save His people.

4. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* So terrible was the anger of these nations against God's people that nothing would content them but the destruction of Israel—the blotting out of its very name from the memory of men! And I am sure that if the world could have its way, it would extinguish the Church of Christ. You notice, in these days of boasted liberality and pretended charity, that the charity is only for error—for the old Gospel there is no charity! The cry concerning it is, "Let it be cut to pieces! Let it be destroyed! It is an old nuisance, put it out of the way." This is how the enemies of God would have it, "that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

5. *For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against You.* There were many nations of heathens and they were agreed in nothing except in their hatred of Israel. There they were agreed, as Herod was the friend of Pilate while Christ was under examination, but not at any other time. The Psalmist mentions ten different nations which had banded themselves together against God's chosen people Israel. Ten against one is heavy odds, but then God was on the side of Israel! One man with God is in the majority, however many there may be on the other side, for God counts for more than all who can be against Him!

6. *The tabernacles of Edom.* These descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother, ought to have been the best friends of Israel, but they were the worst of their enemies. How often does it happen that kinship in blood makes no kinship in Grace! "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

6. *And the Ishmaelites.* These, again, were near akin to the seed of Abraham and Isaac, but the Ishmaelites were always among the most bitter enemies of Israel.

6. *Of Moab.* Moab was descended from a daughter of Lot.

7. *And the Hagarenes.* Perhaps descended from Hagar by some other husband.

7. *Gehal, and Ammon, and Amalek.* All these were hereditary enemies of Israel—Amalek especially so, for God had determined that there should be war with Amalek throughout all generations.

7. *The Philistines*—These were the old enemies of Israel. Remember how Samson fought with them and what tugs of war David had with them?

7. *With the inhabitants of Tyre.* What were they doing in warring against God's people? They were merchants, shippers. Yes, but it sometimes happens that when worldly craft is in danger, men of trade and commerce can be as bitter against true religion as anybody else!

8. *Assur also is joined with them: they have helped the children of Lot. Selah.* Here is a mention of the growing power of Assyria. What a host there was! What a band of enemies against God's people! Oh, dear Friends, I trust that none of us will have our names written in this black list! Be not enemies of God and of His Truth, for, if so, you will wage a losing battle! Let the gunnysack fight with the flame, or the dust with the wind—they will speedily be overcome—and woe be unto the man who contends with his Maker! What can he do? Let us, Brothers and Sisters, be on God's side. God grant, by His Grace, that we may never lift a hand against His cause! Now comes the prayer or prophecy of the poet.

9, 10. *Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.* In those great battles, the enemies of the Lord and His people were utterly cut in pieces. Mighty men as they were, they left their corpses to manure the soil.

11. *Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yes, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.* These were four princes who were slain by Gideon and his allies—two of them bore the names of wolf and raven—cruel names, but war is always a cruel thing. But what had they done, these men of arms, these mighty warriors? The Psalmist tells us—

12. *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.* They were not content with their own houses—they wanted God's houses. And there are some men who can never rest unless when they are doing mischief to the cause and Cross of Christ! Woe unto them, for the fate of Oreb and Zeeb shall be theirs in due time!

13. *O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.* Or rather, "You shall make them a wheel," never still. The real translation, I think, would be, "Make them like those light dry flowers which are blown by the wind across the plains." Mr. Thomson, in his *Land and the Book*, speaks of the branches of the wild artichoke which form a sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter, and he says that he has seen thousands of them come wheeling along. Isaiah calls them, "a rolling thing before the whirlwind." A puff of wind would come and take them in one

direction and then a contrary wind would drive them in quite another direction! They are so light, downy, gossamer-like, that they never can rest.

Now this is just what happens to many men who set themselves against God and His Grace. They are like rolling things never at rest—*believing* nothing, *knowing* nothing, *hoping* nothing, *comforted* by nothing—they are like a wheel. Oh, that we may never know, by personal experience, what this means! “Make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind”! You know how that is—the stubble is blown up, down, to the right, to the left, whichever way the wind blows. Are any of you like that, tonight? Have you no stability? Have you no good hope for the future? When you think about death and eternity, are you like the stubble before the wind? If so, God have mercy upon you, and bring you to the only place where you can obtain salvation and stability!

14. *As the fire burns a forest and as the flame sets the mountains on fire.* Travelers tell us that they have, sometimes, seen the sides of mountains all ablaze where the timber, growing old, and everything being dry in the heat of summer, a chance spark has set the whole on fire. This is what God will do with His enemies. He will as certainly and as readily destroy them as the forest is burnt with fire, or the mountain's side is consumed by the raging flames! Who will stand against God? Who will dare attempt it? Consider His great might and flee from His wrath!

15. *So persecute them with Your tempest.* Or, “You will so follow them up with Your tempest.”

15, 16. *And make them afraid with Your storms. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD.* That is the prayer which we might pray, tonight, for all those who are denying the Godhead of Christ and His great Sacrifice of the Cross—and for all who reject the Inspiration of Scripture and the blessed Doctrines of Grace. “O Lord, fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name!” Oh, that men did but know their own character! If they did but feel ashamed of their own sin, they might be led to seek the name of God.

17. *Let them be confused and troubled forever.* Or rather, “They shall be confused and troubled forever.” That is an awful passage, “Confused and troubled forever.”

17, 18. *Yes, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know that You, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, are the Most High over all the earth.* You notice that when I read the Scriptures, wherever I find the word, LORD, in capital letters, I read it as *Jehovah*, for so it should be. I wish that the translators of the Revised Version had had the courage of their convictions and had so translated it, for we need that grand name back—Jah, Jehovah. Let me entreat You never to trifle, as some do, with that sacred word, Hallelujah, or, Hallelu-Jah—praise to Jehovah!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—881, 53, 728.

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GRACE AND GLORY

NO. 2502

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1897—
THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELOVED
PREACHER'S ENTRANCE INTO "GLORY."**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1885.**

*"The LORD will give grace and glory."
Psalm 84:11.*

WHEREVER, in the Old Testament, you see the word, "LORD," in capital letters, it ought to be read, "JEHOVAH," SO our text really is, "JEHOVAH will give grace and glory."

Who else could give either grace or glory? But God is full of grace—His very name is Love—it is His Nature to freely dispense of His goodness to others. As it is according to the nature of the sun to shine, so it is according to the Nature of God to give good things to His creatures. In Him all fullness dwells—all grace and all glory are perpetually resident in Jehovah, the Infinite. What a mercy it is that we, poor empty sinners, have to do with a God of such fullness and of such goodness! If He were shorthanded with His love, what would become of us? If He had but little graciousness, if He had but little glory, then we great sinners must certainly perish. But since the Lord is a bottomless well of love and a topless mountain of grace, we may come to Him, and come freely, without any fear that either His grace or His glory will ever suffer any diminution.

Note again that the text says, "Jehovah will give grace and glory." Not only has He these wondrous blessings, but He has them that He may *give* them freely. If He were to keep them to Himself, He would be none the richer, and when He distributes them, He is none the poorer! The Lord does not *sell* grace or glory, He does not put them up to auction to those who can give something in return for them. God is a great Giver and a great Forgiver. He gives grace and glory without money, without price and without any merit in the receiver. The Lord *gives*—there is nothing freer than a gift and there can be nothing freer than that greatest of all the gifts of God, eternal life! That expression, "eternal life," sums up these two things—grace and glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory." It is His glory to give His grace and because of His graciousness, He gives glory!

Should not this Truth of God be a comfort to anyone here who is struggling against sin and who is crying, "How shall I ever get to Heaven?" This is the answer—"The Lord will give *grace and glory*." "But I am so unworthy." "The Lord *will give* grace and glory." "But I can offer Him no recompense." There is no need of any recompense, for, "the Lord will

give grace and glory.” “But I cannot procure these by any effort of my own.” You have not to procure them, for, “the Lord will give grace and glory.” O you who are full of needs and empty of everything else, come and joyfully accept the free gift of God in Christ Jesus, for, according to the text, “the Lord will give grace and glory”!

There are just two things for me to talk about at this time—*the first gift* and *the last gift*. “The Lord will give grace.” That is His first gift. “The Lord will give glory.” That is His last gift. Glory never comes without grace coming first, but grace never comes without glory coming last—the two are bound together and, “what God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” He never gave grace without giving glory and He never gave glory without first giving grace. You must have the two. They must go together—you must not attempt to tear this seamless coat—“The Lord will give grace and glory.”

I. So we begin with THE FIRST GIFT—“The Lord will give grace.”

And, first, let me say that *the Lord will give grace to all those who feel that they need it and confess their need*. God will not give Divine Grace to a man who boasts of his merits and who claims a reward as a debt. God will meet such a man on his own ground and deal with him on his own terms—and will give him only what he merits—and what he really deserves. And what will that be, Sirs? O you who are pharisaic and boastful of your own righteousness, listen to the answer to this question! Such a man’s deserts will be shame and confusion of face forever! Remember what Jehovah says by His servant Isaiah, “Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks. Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of My hand—you shall lie down in sorrow.”

If you are willing to meet God on the ground of being undeserving and guilty, God will meet you on those terms and, so meeting you, He will come in robes of Divine Grace and say to you, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Claim anything as of a *right* and God will only give you what you have a right to claim! And that will be everlasting destruction from His Presence and from the glory of His power! But confess that you are guilty! Put the rope around your neck and stand ready for the death sentence to be executed! Acknowledge that you are an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner and appeal to the unmerited mercy of God—and you shall have grace freely given to you. Put yourself where grace can come to you, that is, in the place of the guilty, the worthless—in the place of those who merit Divine Wrath and deserve nothing better—and then God will meet you in mercy, and you will prove the truth of our text, “The Lord will give grace.” Come, then, you black sinners, for “the Lord will give grace.” Come, then, you worthless ones, for “the Lord will give grace.”

Come, then, you graceless ones, for “the Lord will give grace.” Do but be empty and He will fill you! Do but be naked and He will clothe you! Do but be hungry and He will feed you! Do but be spiritually bankrupt and he will deliver you from all your liabilities and enrich you with the boundless wealth of His grace! God cannot be gracious to a man who is not in need of Divine Grace—that were to insult Him—and until you take

the sinner's place, which is your right place, you do not stand where the free favor of God can come and deal with you. Let this Truth of God, stern as it is in some aspects, be an encouragement to confession of sin and to contrition before God, for, "the Lord will give grace" to those who need it and who confess that need.

"The Lord will give grace," that is to say, *He will give grace to those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.* No, *He has given grace to them already.* It has pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell and, therefore, fullness of Divine Grace abides in Christ. If you want Divine Grace, you must go to Jesus for it! As Pharaoh said to those who sought corn in Egypt, "Go to Joseph," so does God say to those who seek His mercy, "Go to Jesus—turn to the Crucified." He is that golden pipe through which the mercy of God flows to the guilty sons of men! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? In other words, do you trust yourself wholly with Him? Then if you do, God has given you Divine Grace—you have salvation, you are a saved man, your sins are forgiven you—you are accepted in the Beloved. "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." But that faith rests itself upon the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Further, "The Lord will give grace," that is to say, *He will give more grace to those to whom He has given some grace.* "The Lord will give grace." "Oh" you say, "I have such a little grace!" Thank God that you have any. If you have only the gleam of a candle, thank God for that, and believe that you shall yet have a light like that of the seven-branched candlestick in the ancient Tabernacle! If you have had the first droppings of Divine Grace, keep on looking to Him who gave you those first drops, for there is a shower on the way! He who has grace enough to believe in Christ may say that he hears the sound of abundance of rain. "He gives more grace." Do you not remember that Jesus has come, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly? A little genuine grace ensures the death of all our sins and the life of all our graces! If you are brought into covenant with God by Christ Jesus, then all the Divine Grace that is in the Covenant and in the Covenant Head is yours and you may freely partake of it! If you have but a morsel of the dainties of Christ in your mouth, there stands One at the table who says to you, "Eat, O Friend. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!" If you are but His son, all that He has is yours and you shall, by-and-by, have, in conscious enjoyment, more Divine Grace than you have had as yet, for where He has given some grace, He delights to give more!

"The Lord will give grace," also means that *He will give it in the form in which it is needed.* "I am looking forward to a great trouble," says one. "The Lord will give grace." "I am about to undertake a very serious responsibility," says another. "The Lord will give grace." "I am getting very old," says a third, "and infirmities are creeping over me." "The Lord will give grace." "Oh, but I am approaching the time of my death! I feel that I have received my death-wound." "The Lord will give grace." Whatever is to come upon a child of God, Divine Grace shall come with it. Therefore, Beloved, be not afraid, but remember those ancient promises, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will streng-

then you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

“The Lord will give grace,” means, too, that *He will give Divine Grace when it is needed*. He will not give you any grace to go and show about, so that you may boastingly say, “See what a lot of grace I have!” I think I have heard some testimonies which appeared to imply that the Brother had his pockets full of gold and, as he put in his hand and rattled the coins, he seemed to say, “See what a rich man I am!” That is all wrong! God does not give us any grace to turn into diamond rings to wear on our fingers and to flash in the sunshine. He does not give us any grace that we may turn into best clothes to wear on Sundays that people may see what fine people we are. Grace is a thing which has to be used and the Lord who gives it means us to use it. Whenever God sharpens my scythe, I know that there is some grass for me to cut. If ever He hands me a sword, He seems, by that very action, to say to me, “Go and fight,” and He does not give it to me that I may have it dangling between my legs to show what a man of war I am! When you need grace, you shall have grace.

One said in His heart just now, when we were singing that line—

“All needful grace will God bestow,”

“I am afraid I have not grace to die with.” My dear Friend, you may not be going to die just yet. When you are to die, you shall have dying grace in dying moments! I have heard one say, “I am afraid I am not a child of God, for I could not preach like So-and-So, and I could not pray like So-and-So.” But you shall have grace to do it when God calls you to it. Somebody, the other day, trying to excuse or justify war, said to me, “Did not God tell Joshua to go and kill the Canaanites?” I answered, “When God tells me to go and kill anybody, I will go and do it, but, until He does so, I will heed what our Lord said to Peter, ‘Put up your sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.’” It is a blessed thing that God gives Divine Grace to men according to their requirements. You remember the promise to Asher, “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be”? That was said to men who had to go on a long journey, but you do not need iron shoes and brass shoes! If you had them given to you, as soon as you reached home you would kick them off and say, “Give me a pair of light slippers.” And God will not give us grace just for show—He will give it to us as we need it! Therefore fall back on this blessed Word of God, “The Lord will give grace.” As it is needed, so shall the grace be given.

Furthermore, we know from this precious text that *He will give us Divine Grace to a much larger degree when we are prepared to receive it*. Let none of us believe that we are yet all that we are to be, or all that we ought to be, or all that we may be. Brothers and Sisters, we have no conception of what, by the grace of God, a Christian may become. “I can do nothing,” says one. That is true. Learn that lesson well! But there is another lesson, remember, to follow it—“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” Do not always rest content with the A B C—go on to the rest of the letters of the alphabet. There is a higher life than some professors live and blessed is he who attains to it. You are a doub-

ter—I am sorry that is the case and I wish I could lead you out of Doubting Castle. But only the Lord can deliver you from that dreadful dungeon! You are a trembler, weak and feeble. Well, God be thanked that you are alive at all, but still, it would be better if you were to grow “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” And you may. You, who now, through lack of faith, wear sackcloth and ashes, may yet, as God’s trustful children, put on the silken garments all bespangled with the jewels of His love! You sit today upon the dunghill, but God does not make dunghills for you—He means you to sit upon a throne, for He has made us kings and priests unto our God. Then why are we sitting on the dunghill? It is well to be even there when God places us there, but it is far better to rise from it and put on our beautiful garments and get to the top of Amana—and there hold sweet communion with Him who dwells on high! God bring us there by His grace! The promise still stands—“The Lord will give grace.” You may have it—therefore desire it! Long for it, seek it, prize it—and you shall yet have it and praise God for it.

I think that the text further means that *the Lord will give grace until it melts into glory*. “The Lord will give grace and ____.” You know that in some dissolving views, you have one picture on the sheet and then presently the operator begins to slide another over it—and the one melts into the other. That is how it is with the Believer. There is the earthly picture of grace and you can see slowly coming into it—creeping over it, not altogether concealing it, but gradually absorbing it—that blessed picture of glory! Glory is really nothing more than grace fully developed—and when Christians begin to get spiritually ripe—something of the sweetness of Heaven is seen in them even here below. Paul says to the Philippians that “our conversation is in Heaven.” Not only our *citizenship*, which the word means, but I like our version, our, “conversation” is there, because our “citizenship” is there. The Lord gives His people the grace to live a heavenly life before they get to Heaven! He gives them the grace to taste the clusters of Eshcol before they enter the Promised Land! And He will continue to give grace till grace is consummated in glory. Do not be afraid of the glorious Doctrine of the saints’ Final Preservation, but believe that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ! He who puts His hand to this plow will never look back from it, but will plow a straight furrow right to the last end of the headland. If He has begun to bear our souls up toward Himself and His glory, He will never turn from His purpose, or slacken His hand until He has finished the work in righteousness. He who has commenced this building will never cease to work till the headstone is brought forth with shouts of “grace, grace unto it.”

“The Lord will give grace and glory.” Think of that, Sinner! Think of your one day being in Glory! If you are, today, in grace, you shall one day be in Glory, as surely as you are now in grace! If you are a poor wretched sinner, only fit to make fuel for the flames of Hell, yet, if you will come and accept the grace of God and trust in the precious blood of Christ, you shall one day strike your harp among the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! You shall one day be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the Throne of God in Heaven! Does it not make

you laugh in your heart to think of it? It often makes me sing as I bless the Lord that I, too, shall be there among the blood-redeemed ones! And you, sorrowful Soul, ought to be merry of heart at the very thought that you shall yet partake with angels and glorified spirits of the bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him!

II. Now we come to THE LAST GIFT, upon which I shall say but little, yet, had I time, I could say much—"The Lord will give glory." He will give that glory to those to whom He has given His grace.

What does this word, "glory," mean? Ah, Friends, I shall not attempt to tell you all about it—it is too vast a subject for any mortal to handle. Here is sea room for the biggest man-of-war in our great King's navy! My little boat shall only do a little coasting around the edge of this boundless ocean. "Glory." What is that?

Well, first, it is *something for the soul of man*. This soul of ours, when it is glorified, will be made like to God. That image of God, which Adam had, shall be restored, only yet more brightly through our union with the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul shall be made like unto the Spirit of God in true holiness and righteousness. The glory of the soul will lie much in its absolute perfection. Whatever a soul ought to be, whatever a soul *can be*—that our soul *shall be*—it shall be rid of all sin, all tendency to sin, all liability to sin, all possibility of sinning! Oh, this is, indeed, glory, to be perfectly pure!

I do not doubt, also, that the glorified soul will be greatly enlarged and all its powers much increased—its ability to know, its ability to understand, its ability to enjoy, its ability to love, its ability to serve. We shall not be merely this poor little seed that we now are, but we shall be developed into that glorious flower which God intends to make His people to be in the day of their manifestation! Our glory will also very much consist in happy communion with God, in a very near and dear fellowship with the Most High. We shall converse familiarly with angels and the spirits of the blessed. Far more, we shall converse with Jesus, our elder Brother, our Lover, our Husband! These words drop easily enough from my lips, but what their full meaning must be, who of us can, at present, conceive? An hour with Christ on earth is worth a king's ransom—have not some of us enjoyed, in ten minutes here below, so much bliss that we have remembered that ten minutes for ten years afterwards? When our blessed Lord has lifted the veil from His face and has also taken the scales off our poor blind eyes and brought us near to Him, we have been ravished with delight! And whether in the body or out of the body, we could not tell. This bliss, and more, we shall be able to endure forever. The sweet delirium of fellowship with Christ below has in it too much of strain for creatures in these mortal bodies often to bear, but, strip us of this house of clay and then we shall be able to drink in deep draughts at the wellhead itself! Draughts, which today would drown us, shall then only content us—and these draughts shall be ours forever and ever. This is glory for the soul!

But let it never be forgotten that as we are made up of *body and soul*, so *there will be also glory for the body*. Though this body may be, for a while, separated from our spirit unless the Lord shall speedily come, yet

it is an integral part of our manhood and it, too, is to be glorified. Many of the children of God seem to forget the resurrection of the body. They who are already in Heaven are not yet perfect, as there is only a part of them there at present. The day of their perfection will be when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, incorruptible, and we who are then alive and remain shall be changed! Then our bodies will be no more capable of grief and anguish. Better still, they will never become the messengers and the servants of sin, for even this poor flesh shall be purified from all taint and from all possibility of corruption! The body is sown in weakness—it shall be raised in power! As to what the power of the glorified body shall be, we will not indulge our imagination or attempt to guess, but it will be something extraordinary. There will be no lameness there, no failing sight, no gathering deafness, no infirmity of the flesh—you shall be clean delivered from all these imperfections and your body shall be raised in the image of your immortal Lord!

There will be no scars of age, no bald heads, no signs and tokens of the work of sin. That sin of your youth, which lies in your bones—you shall be clean delivered from it all, as though you had passed through a refiner's fire, for the grave shall be but a refining pot to the bodies of the saints—and they shall be raised like unto His glorious body who is their Covenant Head and Lord! When our entire manhood, spirit, soul and body shall be in Heaven, then will this promise be fulfilled, "The Lord will give glory."

"Glory" means, first, *recognition*. When Christ shall declare that He knows us and shall say to each one of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." When He shall confess us before men when He comes in the glory of His Father, O Brothers and Sisters, when Christ shall call out His poor persecuted followers and, amidst such a scene as never was beheld before—when angels shall lean from the battlements of Heaven and a cloud of witnesses shall gather round about assembled men, when Christ shall say, "You were with Me in My humiliation, and I acknowledge you as My chosen, My beloved, My brethren—that will be "glory!" There is more glory in one word of recognition from the King of Kings than in all the Orders of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece that kings are able to distribute among their loyal subjects!

Then the next meaning of the word, "glory," is *vision*. "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." With Job, each Believer can say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Yes, we shall behold Christ in all the splendor of His final triumph! We shall see the Father and rejoice in all His infinite perfections! And we shall have fellowship with the Holy Spirit! The one God shall fill all our faculties. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." Perhaps neither eye, nor ear, nor heart will be needed then—but our whole spirit shall drink in the beatific vision of the Glory of God.

The third meaning of the word, “glory,” is *fruition*. What the fruition will be, I will tell you when I have been there! Long ago we learned that “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Brothers and Sisters, we have enjoyed His Word. We have enjoyed His Day. We have enjoyed His Covenant. We have enjoyed His love. But what will it be to enjoy God, Himself, and to enjoy Him forever? The Psalmist spoke of “God, my exceeding joy,” but that was for earth. It will be “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” to enjoy God forever! I had that text explained to me just lately during the week of the Conference. I was so happy, God was so gracious to me and to all the assembled Brothers, in answer to prayer, that I felt, each night when I got home and each morning when I woke, as if I was weighed down with a super-excess of joy! I said to myself, “I can guess, now, what is meant by a weight of glory.”

It needs a strong man to stand under a weight of Divine Grace here below. It needs a robust constitution to bear the weight of Divine Love even here! It is almost enough to kill a man and one may as well die of excessive joy as of excessive grief—but what will it be when our souls are so enlarged and we are so strengthened that we can enjoy God *forever*? Five minutes in Heaven and then let me come back—but then, if I did come back, you know, I should have heard unspeakable words which it would not be lawful for a man to utter! As I have not been there, I cannot tell you of all the wondrous things that help to make up the glory of Heaven. And if I *had* been there, it might be unlawful for me to tell you, so I will not attempt to intrude upon that reserved ground! But what I have to say to you is, *Let us all go there and see for ourselves!*

“What is the way?” asks one. Jesus shows Himself before us and says, “*I am the way*. I am the way.” You ask Him, “But are You sure of it?” “Yes,” says Jesus, “for I am the Truth.” “Oh, but Lord, how shall we traverse that way?” Jesus says, “I am the life.” The first part of our text helps you on to the latter part, for the way of grace is the way to glory. O poor Sinner, that way is open to you! You need Divine Grace and you may have it, for, “the Lord will give grace.” And He will give glory, too, and then what will you and I do? Why, we will give Him glory! When the sun shines on the moon, the moon shines back—and when the glory of God shines on us, then we shall glorify God. Meanwhile, as God is so gracious to us, let us act gratefully towards Him. You know that the word, “grace,” sometimes signifies not only free favor, but also thanks. We often use the expression, “Let us say grace,” when we mean to give thanks to God. So, here on earth, let us *think* grace, let us *live* grace, let us *sing* grace and then, when we get to Heaven, we will *live* glory, and *sing* glory, and all the glory shall be ascribed to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!

Now let us close by singing just this one verse—

**“Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days!
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”**

Sing it to the tune, “Cranbrook.” Sing it as you can sing when you praise the Lord with all your heart and soul!

EXPOSITION C. H. SPURGEON.**PSALM 84.****To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.**

It is thought, by some interpreters, that Gittith signifies the winepress. They must have been a very godly people who sang such songs as this in the time of the treading out of the grapes. Oh, that the day were come when the common places of our ordinary industries should be sanctified by Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs! Alas, at the winepress, men too often sing loose and lascivious songs—but these ancient people of God did not.

This Psalm is a song to the chief Musician and it is mainly concerning the house of God and the pilgrimage to it. Every sacred song should be sung at its best. We should call out the chief Musician in every hymn that is dedicated to the service of the Lord.

“To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.” I have often reminded you that these sons of Korah owed their continued existence to an act of special Sovereign Grace. Korah, Dathan and Abiram and all their company were swallowed up alive. They went down to the Pit because of their rebellion. But in the Book of Numbers we read, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.” Why they were spared, we cannot tell, but, ever after, they were made to be the singers of the sanctuary. They who are saved by Sovereign Grace are the most fit to praise the name of the Lord! The sons of Korah also became doorkeepers to the house of the Lord and hence, probably, is the allusion to a doorkeeper which we find in this Psalm.

Verse 1. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts!* “How amiable”—how lovely “are Your tabernacles!” The Temple was not then built. The Lord’s house was as yet only a tent, so that it is not the glory of *architecture* that makes the house to be lovely—the glory of it is the indwelling God. “How amiable are Your tabernacles!” That is to say, every part of it is lovely. The outer court, the inner court, the Holy of Holies, all the different parts in that ancient sacred shrine were lovely to the Psalmist’s eye. He does not tell us how lovely they were. He leaves off with a note of exclamation, as if he could not measure with his golden rod this city of the great King. “How lovely are Your tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts’—lovely because they are Yours! They are our tabernacles if we gather in them, but they are Yours because You are there and, therefore, are they most lovely to our eyes.”

2. *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.* His soul longed until, as it were, it grew pale—for so the Hebrew may be rendered—it grew white with faintness in the intensity of his desire to get up to the courts where God was to be found. God is a King. His ancient tabernacle was one of His royal palaces, so David longed to be a courtier there, that he might dwell in the courts of Jehovah. When he says that his flesh cried out for the living God, he does not mean flesh in the sense in which Paul uses the term, for in that flesh there dwells no good thing, but the Psalmist means to express here the whole of his nature, “My soul, my heart, and my

flesh.” The combination of his entire manhood—spirit, soul and body—was moved with such intense agony of desire that it must express itself and it could only express itself in a cry, “My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.” If it is so with you, my Brothers and Sisters, at this time, you shall have a feast of fat things! He who comes to God’s table with a good appetite shall never go away unsatisfied. It is lack of desire which often hinders us from spiritual delight, but when the desire is set upon God, it shall be satisfied! I fear that we often come to the wells of salvation and yet get nothing because merely *coming to the wells* is nothing. We read in Isaiah, “With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.” It is not the wells, but the *water* out of them which will refresh the weary one! Do not be content with being here, in your pew, in the midst of this great congregation—long after the living God, Himself, for He alone can refresh and revive your soul and spirit! Say, with David, “My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.”

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.* These little birds, so insignificant in themselves, were full of holy courage and, with sweet familiarity they came even into the sacred place. They hung upon the eaves of God’s house—they even dared to make their nests there!—

**“O make me like the sparrows blest,
To dwell but where I love!”**

O my Lord, give me the privilege of the swallow—not only to dwell with You, but to see my young ones, too, all round Your altars, that I may find with You, my God, a nest where I may lay my young! Is not this your desire, my Brother, my Sister, to have God for yourself, and God for your boys, and God for your girls—to be, yourself, God’s servant, and to have all your children His children, too? If so, God grant you the desire of your heart!

How sweetly does David address the Lord—“O Jehovah of Hosts, my King and my God!” The people of God are very fond of *mys*—they love possessive pronouns—“*my* King and *my* God.” God is good, but what is another man’s God to me if He is not mine? I must have Him for *my* King and *my* God, or else I shall not really long for Him, or cry out after Him, or delight in Him.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will be still praising You.* The nearer to God you are in your life, the sweeter and more constant will be your song to Him. They who dwell with God dwell where there must be singing—

**“Where God does dwell, sure Heaven is there,
And singing there must be.
Since, Lord, Your Presence makes my Heaven,
Whom should I sing to but Thee?”**

Blessed are they who always dwell where You dwell, O my God! “They will be still praising You.”

4. *Selah.* Tighten the harp strings, set the music to a higher key! Lift up the heart! Also let the soul rise to something still sweeter in praise of Jehovah!

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways—*Or, “Your ways.” It is not every man who is in God’s house who is blessed. The blessed man is the one who has brought his heart with him. It is not every man who is in God’s ways who is blessed—but the man whose strength is in those ways, who throws his whole heart and soul into the worship. Half-hearted worship is dreary work. It is like a blind horse going round in a mill. But when the heart is in the service, we feel, then, as if we could dance for joy in the Presence of the Lord our God—“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are Your ways.”

6, 7. *Who passing through the valley of Baca makes it a well; the rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them in Zion appears before God.* We do not know, at this date, what that valley of Baca was, for the land has been, to a large extent, destroyed. This ancient song retains the name of the valley of Baca, but it does not explain to us where or what the place was. Perhaps it was a dry and thirsty valley in which, in order to pass through it at all, the pilgrims dug wells that there might be refreshment for their journey. There are many such valleys on the road to Heaven—dark and lonesome, dry and barren—but God’s people learn to dig wells there. Only mark that though we dig the wells, the water to fill them does not rise up from the bottom—it falls down from above. “The rain also fills the pools.” In the Kingdom of Heaven there are some analogies with the kingdom of nature, but there are a great many heavenly things that have no earthly analogy at all. And you cannot with any accuracy argue from natural laws into the spiritual world. For instance, we have “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,” and we throw that anchor *up*—“which enters into that within the veil.” Whereas earthly mariners *drop* their anchors down into the sea, we fling ours up into Heaven. That is odd, but it is true. So, we dig a well, but it does not get filled from the bottom—“The rain also fills the pools.” This is a new kind of well and it teaches us that we *must use the means*, but that everything depends upon God! We have not to depend upon the means, but upon the God of the means—“The rain also fills the pools.”

See, further, Brothers and Sisters, what the way to Heaven is. It is a growing way, an increasing way—“They go from strength to strength.” Those who begin in their own strength go from weakness to weakness, but those who know their own weakness and trust in the Almighty God shall go from strength to strength! In the natural world, as we grow older, we get weaker—but in the moral and spiritual world, when it is as it should be—the older we grow, the stronger we become in God and in the power of His might! What a mercy it is to be on the road to Heaven, which is a road always upwards! From step to step, from hill to hill, from mount to mount, they climb who shall ultimately end their pilgrimage in the King’s palace above. “Everyone of them in Zion appears before God.”

8, 9. *O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.* See what a rise there is in the music, here, from, “Hear my prayer,” to, “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.” “When you cannot look on me, look on Your Anointed.”—

***“Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”***

When God looks at us, He may well be angry. But when He looks upon Christ, He must be glad and full of love.

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* That is, better than a thousand spent anywhere else. You see, we have not yet come to the country where we can stay at God’s public worship all the year together—we have to get it a day at a time. Have you not often wished that there were seven Sundays in the week? I am sure that you have when God has fed your souls and made your spirits merry in the House of Prayer. Then have you sighed for the land—

***“Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”***

If you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall come there, by-and-by, but, at present, you must be satisfied with a day at a time in the courts of the Lord. Yet the Lord can crowd mercies into one day with such a marvelous compression of Divine Grace that we shall seem to get three years’ food in a single day! The Lord make this day to be a sort of millennial day! “A day in Your courts is better than a thousand” spent anywhere else.

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* As I said before, the sons of Korah were doorkeepers in the house of the Lord and this Psalm is for them. You know that our poor door-keepers generally have many to find fault with them—somebody or other is sure to feel disobliged. Door-keeping is no very remunerative work, no very easy and pleasing task. “Yet,” says David—King David himself—“I would take off my crown of gold and turn pew-opener. I would wish to be even a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, so long as I might but be with my God. And that position would be far better than feasting and rioting in royal pavilions with the wicked.”

11. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.* Take notice of the whole of that last sentence! Do not go and quote half of it and say, “God has promised that He will withhold no good thing.” It is only promised to, “them that walk uprightly.” And if you walk crookedly, the promise does not belong to you! It is upright walking that brings downright blessing! You shall lack no good thing from God when your whole heart is made good towards God.

12. *O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* May all of us know this blessedness! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—84 (SONG II), 866, 875.

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

“GRACE AND GLORY”

NO. 3358

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 1913.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1868.**

***“The Lord will give Grace and Glory.”
Psalm 84:11.***

IT is very wise to look within ourselves to discover our own weakness and spiritual poverty, but it is very unwise to be always dwelling upon that weakness and poverty—and to forget that our strength does not lie there, nor are our riches to be found within ourselves! Let us look within to be humbled, but not to be made unbelieving. Look within, so as to be driven from all confidence in ourselves, but never so as to shake our absolute confidence in God. Our text, as it were, beckons us away from seeking the living among the dead, calling us up from searching for precious jewels amid dross and refuse, but directs us to the living God Himself—the overflowing Fountain of every good thing, our Father whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and whose ear is not heavy that He cannot hear us tonight! He—He—Jehovah, Himself, the Infinite, Eternal, Everlasting, Inimitable *I AM*—*He* will give Grace and Glory, so that though you may think you have no Grace, He will give it to you, and though you may fear that you shall never obtain Glory, yet He can and will bestow it upon you! He will give Grace and Glory. The very first word of the text, I say, is a taking us away from leaning upon the broken reeds of our own self-reliance and a calling us away to the Rock of our salvation, where we may rest with security!

“He will *give* Grace and Glory.” That word, “*give*,” also takes us off from our natural legality of self-trust. I think that we are all very apt to go back to the bondage of Mount Sinai. We are like those foolish Galatians! We are often “bewitched,” so that we do not obey the Truth of God, but, having begun in the Spirit, we seek to be made perfect in the flesh and, being saved already by faith, we often try to be perfected by the works of the Law!

“Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing,” that after having felt the whip of legal bondage, we should wish to go back to the brick kilns of Egypt and to be slaves once more! The text says, “He will *give* Grace and Glory,” which is the very opposite of wages and puts us on the footing of Grace and not on the footing of debt. Oh, it is a blessed thing to see a finger from the sky thus beckoning us away from underneath the quaking mountain, where even Moses confessed that he did altogether fear

and quake! It is a blessed thing to be set free from the thunder and lightning, and the Voice as of a trumpet, and to be brought to the blood which speaks better things than that of Abel, and to hear God speaking concerning His great and unspeakable gifts to us!

Now, in the spirit of these two thoughts, let us come to this text, which is very simple, extremely simple, but which is also exceedingly full of comfort if the Lord shall apply it to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

There are just two great and splendid gifts that God here declares He will bestow. First, the gift of Grace, and then next, the gift of Glory. We will take the first gift first in our meditations—

I. GOD WILL GIVE GRACE.

To whom will He give Grace? Broadly understood, we may say that *He will give Grace to His own chosen ones*. So is it in the Covenant of Grace. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” Grace is a most Sovereign thing. God has the right to give it where He pleases and He takes care that the Sovereignty shall be seen. Some of His chosen ones have gone afar into sin, but He gives them Grace, for all that. Some of them may be on the very verge of destruction and come to the last hour of life—but still, He will give them Grace—and there is not one upon whom His electing love has set the broad arrow of the Kingdom, marking that man to be a vessel of mercy, who shall pass away without receiving Divine Grace! This is a broad statement and though there are some that cavil at it, yet rest assured that it is the Truth of God!

Another statement we may also make as broadly, namely, that *He will give Grace to all those who were specially redeemed by Christ*. As many as Christ has redeemed and purchased by His blood, shall be His, for we hear Him say, “The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. The chosen are spoken of in this manner, “These are they who are redeemed from among men,” and although the redemption of Christ has its universal aspect very plainly taught in God’s Word, and I hope we shall never try to take away the force of those universal passages—yet there is a special redemption besides. “He is the Savior of all men,” says the Apostle, “especially of them that believe.” Now, that special redemption is of such a kind that to all those who are concerned in it, He will give Grace. Not one whom Christ has thus redeemed from among men shall perish! Not one of His own blood-bought sheep shall be devoured by the wolf. Not one member of that body of His shall be maimed. Not one part of His bride, the Church, shall be destroyed! To every one of these, it is quite certain, He will give Divine Grace!

And although some think that these two Truths of God are not practical, yet are they eminently so, for this, among other things, is one practical result—that we preach with holy confidence, with quiet confidence, that our preaching cannot be in vain since we do not cast the net at a

chance, but believe that God will fill it and that when the Gospel is preached, it must be the savor of life unto life to many!

“Other sheep have I,” said Christ, “who are not of this fold: them also must I bring,” and therefore do we preach, because they must be brought!

As the farmer sows the corn broadcast, with all the freer hand because he knows there is a predestined harvest, even so do we. And as a fisherman who should have a Divine promise that he must catch fish would throw in the net and toil all night cheerfully because he knew he could not labor in vain, so is it with us. We know that if we are steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, this is our comfort—that our labor is not in vain in the Lord! “He shall see His seed! He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.” I take the expression of the text, then, without qualification—He will give Grace.

But now, coming to ourselves—for we cannot tell, except by marks and evidences, who are those chosen and who are those specially redeemed—it may be said that the Lord will give Grace to *every believing soul*. If you will put your whole reliance upon the Atonement of Christ, He will give Grace to you. Though your faith should be so slender that it seems to you to be nothing but a bruised reed, He will not break your faith, but He will give you Grace—and though the spiritual life should seem to be so dim as to be nothing but as smoking flax, He will not quench it, but will give Grace. If you believe, though it is with the faith of despondency, you shall have Divine Grace! If you rest in Christ, though there should be much fear and much mistrust mingled with your reliance, yet He will give Grace. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” It says nothing as to how much he believes, nor how little—“He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” It does not say how loud he is to call, but if his call is never so faint, yet if he does but call, He shall have Grace! “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” It does not say whether he comes walking, or running, or crawling—if he does but come—he shall not be cast out! If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then of you it shall be said, “The Lord will give Grace.”

The same may be said to *every repenting sinner*. If you abhor your sin, if you resolve in God’s strength to give it up, if the sweetness has turned to bitterness, if it is like gravel between your teeth, then He will give you Grace, for when you are thoroughly sick of sin and self, then will He give you Grace to joy and rejoice in Christ!

The same shall be said of *all those who are prayerful*. He will give Grace to all who seek it with earnest hearts through the Savior. At the Mercy Seat, whether you are a saint or sinner, if you draw near to God in sincere prayer, He has already given you some Grace and He will give you more. Every time that you go to God with true-hearted confidence in

prayer, put this before you emblazoned in letters of gold, “He will give Grace.”

You shall not find that you wait upon God in vain, for He has not said in secret or dark places of the earth, “Seek you My face in vain.” He will, to every prayerful one, give Grace.

I might continue these instances as to different characters, but rest assured, dear Friend, if you are a Believer, and you use prayer and repentance, you shall find His promise true *in all your conditions*. If you go forth to work for God, He will give Grace. In the vineyard you shall find Him furnishing you with tools, yes, and giving you strength equal to your day. He will give Grace. And if you are laid aside from active service and made to toss to and fro upon the bed that grows harder every hour till the skin is broken and the bed becomes a misery, still He will give Grace. Perhaps you are untried at suffering, but He will give you Grace. Perhaps you are naturally of an impatient spirit—wait upon Him—He knows how to bring your spirit down one way and lift it up another! He will give Grace.

Thus might I continue to take the text from its absolute sense and apply it to all the characters that are pictured in God’s Word as having a part and lot in the blessedness of salvation—and we may say of each of these, “He will give Grace.”

But to turn the subject a moment, let us ask, *What Grace will God give?*

He will give all manner of Grace. There is Grace not only in fullness, but in all variety treasured up in Christ Jesus. As our needs are many, so the forms in which Grace blesses us are many, and He will give Grace in all these forms! Do you mourn tonight your ignorance of the deep things of God? Do you feel yourself to be like a little child studying His A. B. C. book in God’s great school? Then if you want to understand with all saints what are the heights and breadths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, He will give you Grace! He will give *Grace to instruct*. He will make you to know even as you are known. He shall give you His Holy Spirit who shall lead you into all the Truths of God and take of the things of Christ and show them to you. He will give *instructing Grace!*

Perhaps tonight you are in some great dilemma. There is one difficulty on the right aide and another on the left. There are mountains behind and the rolling sea in front, and you say, “What shall I do?” “Stand still and see the salvation of God,” for He will give you *delivering Grace*. If He does not give you money to fill your purse, He will give you Grace to help you to bear your poverty. If He does not give you health to bring you off your sickbed, He will give you Grace to make your bed in all your suffering, so that you shall bear it and yet rejoice in the Lord always! He will give Grace. If you will only wait, you shall have *directing Grace*. You shall hear a voice near you, saying, “This is the way; walk you in it.” If you will do as David did when he said, “Bring here the ephod”—that was in order

that he might ask of God’s priests what he should do—if you will wait until Christ, God’s great High Priest, takes the sacred Urim and Thummim, He shall be pleased to send the Light of God into your soul and you shall have directing Grace to guide you on your way! “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool, but He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.”

But you need, dear Friends, perhaps at this moment, not so much instruction and direction as comfort. It may be you are feeling greatly depressed. Your spirits have sunk very low, indeed. Well, He will give you Grace. The doctor can give medicine, but God can give Grace! A dram of Grace is often better than a pound of what the world can give in the form of cordials. Oh, what blessed revivals of spirit God can give to His down-cast ones!

I think it is one of the delights of the Spirit of God to comfort mourners. I know it is, for He might, if He had pleased, have taken the name of The Instructor, and Jesus might have spoken of Him as The Quickener, but yet it is so blessed to recollect that He did not do so, but that the name of The Comforter was especially His because we need most His comfort to strengthen and fortify us for all life’s endurances. We need most the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and that is His main business, His gracious occupation—that in which He most delights to act—to comfort all that are tried and mourn!

When a man has many titles, he will naturally choose to be best known by the one which he likes best. And the Holy Spirit uses this name of The Comforter, though He has many more names besides. Oh, you, then, who are troubled and distracted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, Jesus comes, and He says, “He will give you Grace,” and if He does this, you need not wish to have your trouble removed, but, like Paul, be quite satisfied with the gracious promise, “My Grace is sufficient for you.”

Possibly, however, dear Friend, you are *not* troubled tonight. Beware of that! Be thankful and pray that you may not be. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” But it is possible that you now need Grace to lead you to make advances in *inward sanctification*—and though this may seem very difficult to you in the position in which you are placed, and burdened as you are with your inward corruptions, yet He will give Grace! You have a bad temper? Down with it! “I cannot,” you say. But He will give Grace. You have a proud spirit. Away with it! “I cannot conquer it,” you say. He will give Grace. You have grown cold of late and lukewarm—you must be revived—you must recover from this back-sliding. You say, “How?” He will give Grace! Grace is the one thing that is needed to put the Christian into a healthy state of soul! And the promise of the Lord which we are using tonight—and repeating so often in your ears—is just to the point—He will give Divine Grace. You must never say you cannot be as holy as So-and-So. Never tell me you cannot grow to be

as patient as Job, or as believing as Abraham. Job received his patience and Abraham received his believing from God! He is not straitened in His gifts to us. He is as ready to enrich us as He was to enrich those ancient ones. Go to Him with child-like confidence, with this in your mouth, “He will give Grace.”

Now, it is not possible for me to state the case of everyone of my Brothers and Sisters now present. You may be lacking in strength or protection, or you may be needing correction and rebuke—but whatever your great need, His Grace will meet it and so the promise is suitable to every one of us, “He will give Grace.” Come, you poor Hannah, you whose lips move in silent prayer because of some very painful domestic affliction. Tell the Lord what it is! There may be no change in your circumstances, but oh, if He gives you Grace, it will seem very different from what it was!

Man of business, you have come here tonight having passed through a world of trouble during the day. You cannot get it out of your mind and somehow you cannot see how the Lord can alter it. Well, He may not, but He will give you Divine Grace and then the difference will be marvelous!

Thus might I select the trouble of each one, but I am sure that whatever the wound is, this plaster will just fit it. The world’s comfort is described by one of the Prophets thus, “The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it, and the covering is too narrow for him to wrap himself in it.” Ah, it is not so with my text! Now, stretch yourselves, you that have big troubles. “He will give Grace,” is a bed quite long enough for you! Now, then, you that are most naked and deprived of warmth—rap this around you—surely this will set your soul a glow—“He will give Grace.”

“All necessary Grace will God bestow.”

Perhaps you are shivering tonight at the thought of the greatest enemy of all, namely, death! And as you are getting old, perhaps you fear his approach. Well, but Friend, He will give Grace and though you must die, yet Grace will enable you to go through the Jordan singing in its utmost depths, triumphing in the Grace which will surely bring you safe to the other side! He will give Grace—Grace of all sorts to those who earnestly seek it.

But now, again—still shifting the kaleidoscope a little—taking the same thought only putting it in other lights. In *what manner will God give Grace?*

Well, dear Friends, *He will give it sufficiently.* He will give you as much Grace as you need, though certainly none to spare. Each man shall have his omer full of manna every day. There shall be no lack in the Lord’s camp! There shall be abundant Grace for abundant temptation or trial. And for those who are in many trials, there shall be Grace yet superabundant!

The Lord will give His Grace *seasonably.* It shall always come just when we need it—

**“He is never before His time,
He is never behind.”**

Whenever your testing or trouble shall come, your Grace shall come, too, and when you arrive at the spot where you will have to put your back down to the burden, there shall the Grace be given that will strengthen your back to bear the load! You shall not meet with abounding Grace when you do not require it, but just as your days, so shall your strength be.

God will also send this Grace of His *readily*. You shall not have to tug and strain to get it. You shall not have to labor and toil to win it. It shall drop upon you like honey falling from the comb! It shall come as freely to you as the water bubbles up from the great spring. He will be a very present help in time of trouble and be glad to deliver you—as glad to deliver you as you are to be delivered!

And the Grace shall come to you *constantly*—not fitfully and only sometimes, but at all times! By night and by day. God shall never cease to bless you, for His mercy endures forever—

**“At home or abroad, on the land and the sea,
As your days shall demand, shall your strength always be.”**

If the earth should forget the Covenant which God made for it with the sun and moon. If seedtime and harvest, and summer and winter should pass away, as they must in the general conflagration, yet still the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His Grace shall not depart from you! Grace shall come to you constantly.

But remember one thing. It will come to you *mediately*, that is to say, not direct from God immediately, but mediately through Christ. You shall get your Grace from Him in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. And, in another sense, you shall get it mediately through the use of means. “For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” He will give Grace, but you must pray for it! He will give Grace, but you must search the Scriptures to find it! He will give Grace, but you must observe Gospel ordinances—you must not be negligent of Baptism or the Lord’s Supper! He will give Grace, but you must listen to the Word, and hear, and your souls shall live! He will give Grace, but you must get into communion with God and draw near to Him—have your times of quiet retirement, of still meditation, for although the Lord makes the conduit head to flow unto the marketplace, yet He expects His people to bring their pitchers there to get them filled! Though He spreads the table, yet He does not force the food into our mouths! We must come to the table and eat of the dainties which He has prepared. He is very liberal and gracious. Oh, be not straitened in yourselves, for you need never be straitened in Him! So we come back to the text. He will give Grace, but we must take care that we go to Him for it in His own appointed way.

But now to close upon this first promised blessing, *Who is it will give Grace?* This brings us back in a circle to the spot from which we started. “He will give Grace.” Oh, I want so to make each Believer cling to his

God! He will give Grace. You will not get Grace from out of yourselves! It will never spring up within us apart from God. He will give Grace. You will not get Grace merely by using the means of Grace, as some do mechanically and who feel quite satisfied when they have had their morning prayer, or have been to the public service, if there is one, and have read their Bible Chapter, and so on, their hearts being really asleep all the time. No! You must go to God, for it is He who gives Grace and no one else can! And what a blessing it is that you do not need anyone to help you to come to Him! You can approach Him yourselves, through Jesus Christ! And He has promised, not by a priest, nor by any means of that kind, but by Himself, to give you Grace, so that you, tonight, who have not any Grace, if you come to God, you will get it! You will not get it by working and praying, and I do not know what, all in themselves, but if your mind can get right to the invisible God and ask Him for Grace, He will give it! Depend upon it, no man ever did sincerely seek the Grace of God but that, sooner or later, he had it. A man may be a long time seeking and he may anxiously look and not discover what he needs, but though the promise tarry, wait for it—it will come! God is faithful to His promise and He will in due time answer your prayers, for there it is on record, “He will give Grace.” Do not blot the promise out of your heart, poor Soul, but cling and hang on to it! As a drowning man clings and hangs on to a plank, so do you to this Divine assertion, “He will give Grace.”

May the Lord apply those remarks, and now let us say a few words upon the second great promise—

II. HE WILL GIVE GLORY.

He will “give Grace and Glory.” That word, “and,” seems very little as we hear it. It is nothing but a very common conjunction which is used so plentifully that it seems to carry no meaning in it at all! But in this case we would not take ten thousand pounds for these three letters which make this little word, “and.” “The Lord will give Grace and Glory.” Why, He has riveted the two things together—Grace and Glory! There are many who would like to take that diamond rivet out, but they cannot. The Lord does not say that He will give Grace and perdition. He does not say, on the other hand, that He will give Glory without first giving Grace. He has put the two together—and what God has joined together let no man put asunder!

If we have Grace, we shall as surely have Glory, for the two are tied up in one bundle. These are twin stars that shine together and if you have shared His Grace, then His Glory cannot be denied. Grace shall flower into Glory as the bulb in the blossom! Grace shall rise as the fountain and Glory shall be its spreading river!

If we possess the Grace, we shall not perish, but if we have it not, we must perish and never know the Glory! It is not possible that those shall be glorified who have not first of all been justified, and then sanctified—

and where Grace does not reign in our hearts we shall not reign in Heaven!

“He will give Grace and Glory.” Now, the Glory that He shall give—oh, that we had the power to see it and to understand it! Eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him! But He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, “that we may search all things, even the deep things of God.” We do, therefore, know a little of what that Glory is. The eye does not, the ear does not, but the enlightened soul taught of the Spirit of God does know what the Glory will be. So far as this we know, that the Glory which we who have obtained Grace are to receive is *the Glory of Heaven*—whatever Heaven may be, a place or a state, or both, as is most probable! Whatever may be meant by the streets of shining gold, the gates of pearl, the walls of jasper, calcedony, and sapphire. Whatever may be indicated by crowns, and palms, and harps of gold—whatever may be meant by the river of the Water of Life and trees that bear twelve manners of fruits—all this in perfection is the inheritance of those who have Grace in their hearts! Oh, you shall have the harps, you shall wave the palms, you shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God! If there are degrees in Glory, as some say, yet this thing is very certain, that the very least of the saints will have Glory—and I do not see how the very greatest could have more.

The very meanest, the very doorkeepers, if such there should be in the House of the Lord above, will have Glory! And I am sure we can say of Heaven that if we may but have the lowest place there, we will bless the Lord to all eternity! The Glory that God can give is the Glory of Heaven!

In the next place, it is *the Glory of eternity*. Eternity! Oh, when we begin to speak of that word we know not how to speak! Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! It must expound itself. We are always confusing it with time, and speak of the “countless ages of eternity” as though there were any “ages,” or could be anything like counting in eternity at all, which is of unending duration! Now, the Glory which Christ is to give us will be such a Glory as that. It will never know a pause, never draw near to a conclusion, never decline and we shall never grow weary of it—nor will it be weary of us. It is the Glory of eternity!

Further, Brothers and Sisters, we are told by the Lord that the Glory which He will give to His people is *the Glory of Christ*. “The Glory which you gave Me I have given them.” Can you conceive how glorious Christ is, not only in His Nature originally, but now that He has obtained as a reward, a seat upon His Father’s Throne and at His Father’s right hand? Brothers and Sisters, whatever Glory Jesus may have, He will share it with us, when we shall be like He and when we shall see Him as He is. It is the Glory of Christ!

And hence, to crown all, *it is the Glory of the Father Himself*, for Christ partakes in His Father’s Glory, and even so shall we! Does not your heart long and pant to know by actual enjoyment what this Glory is? Oh, to get away from looking in the mirror and to have a view of Christ’s face! To have the clouds and mists all swept away, and in the serene atmosphere of Heaven to behold the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off!

Why, this Glory is *the Glory of perfect nature*—spotless, sinless, incorruptible—a body that can know no weakness, or sickness, or decay! A soul that will not be capable of temptation, that cannot be fretted by care, nor distracted by trouble!

It is *the Glory of victory*. The Glory which God will give His people is the Glory of bruising Satan under his feet shortly, the Glory of seeing the arrows and the bow, the sword and the shield of the devil forever broken in pieces! The Glory of seeing all the hosts of Hell confounded and put to the blush eternally by everyone of the saints in whom Christ shall reign forever!

It is *the Glory of perfect rest*, perfect happiness and perfect security. It is the Glory of the foot upon the Rock, with the new song in the mouth and the goings established! It is the Glory of the blessed. He who knows what it is when the whole soul shall be as full of happiness as it can hold, shall float, swim, dive and plunge into seas of heavenly rest! It is when it shall not be possible for a man to have a wish ungratified, nor a desire unfulfilled! It is where every power shall find ample employment without weariness, and every passion shall have full indulgence without so much as a fear of sin—

**“Oh, happy hour, oh, blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy!”**

Do you not again say, “Why are His chariots so long in coming?” Why do You delay, Beloved? Be You as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Beza!

And now, to close. The text says, “He will *give* Glory.” So, then, although Glory is a reward and is often called so, yet still it is a gift! The rewards of Grace are of Grace. They are not legal rewards given to us because we deserve them. As one says, Christ first gives His servants Grace to serve Him, and then rewards them as if they had served Him in their own strength, though their service, indeed, is His work in them rather than their work for Him! It is a gift then. There is not a soul in Heaven that is there by merit. There is not a note of self-righteousness to mar the song of Free Grace before the Throne of God! It is all love, undeserved love, love without limit, love to be extolled throughout eternity!

But it says that He will give Glory. Now, *when will He give it?* Ah, would not some of us like to know! If we could get a hold of some Prophetical work that would tell us when we were, all of us, going to get this

Glory, I am sure we should pay the price with great readiness and cheerfulness. But we would be very unwise in so doing—and he is the wisest man who says—

**“My God I would not wish to see
My fate with curious eyes.”**

It is enough for you, Christian, that you will have Glory! And I will tell you one thing—you will have it before seventy year’s time. There is very little probability with any one of you who have grown up to manhood or womanhood, that there will be a single exception to that statement! Well, that is not long, and that is the outside! Some of you will have it very soon. Ah, we should not wonder if it came to you before this year of Grace has gone that you will have reached the land of Glory! Others may be spared a little longer, but what is the difference in the time? It really seems to be no measurement at all. Life is only a span at the longest, and but a span even at the shortest—that it is much the same as compared with eternity. When we do but get to Heaven, we shall wonder that we thought anything about time at all. An hour with our God will make up for all its troubles. Yes, I suppose that but one *sight* of Christ will take away all the taste of the bitters of life from our mouths forever! We shall wonder how we ever could have fretted and worried ourselves with such little things as they were—such insignificant trifles and how these light afflictions which were but for a moment and are not worthy to be compared to the eternal weight of Glory—could have exercised such a depressing influence upon our spirits at times! If we could blush in Heaven, surely we would blush to think that we have been so impatient with tarrying a little while here!

When shall we come to this Glory? Well, we shall come to it *when our work is done*. We shall not be kept out of the wage a moment after it is earned. We shall come to Glory when we are ripe for it. When the fruit is mellow, the farmer will gather it in. Some grow mellow soon, but some are naturally sour and they need to be long in the mellowing. We shall get to Heaven when we have really been tried in the furnace till there is no more need for the trying—when we have passed through the last crucible and have come out of it wholly sanctified—the process being complete.

This much we know, that we shall go to Heaven just when God has *purposed it*. The devil himself, with all the hosts of Hell, cannot keep us back a moment longer than that! We shall go there just when Heaven will be most Heaven to us. We shall go there just when we should have chosen to go ourselves, if we had had the wisdom of God to choose for us. We shall go there just when Christ will be ready to welcome us and when we shall know that He has prepared a place for us. Let us be patient awhile then. Only let us hang hard upon this gracious promise, putting the Lord frequently in mind of it, “He will give Grace and Glory.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, one more remark. If the Lord does give Grace and Glory to some of your friends, do not quarrel with Him about

it. He said He would, and when He does, why should we complain? Did you ever see two persons praying against each other? Can you suppose such a thing as a Believer praying for one thing and Christ praying for another? Now, listen to them. There is a Believer praying over a friend, “Oh, God, spare him! Spare him, I pray You, I beseech You I entreat You! Spare him and let him yet live here.” Listen! There is Christ praying, too, and He says, “Father, I will that they, also, which You have given Me, should be with Me where I am.” The Believer wants his friends to be with him where he is! But Christ says, “Where I am.” Now, when Christ’s prayers and our prayers cross each other in this way, I put it to *you*, which shall win? When we pull one way and Christ pulls the other, what shall our choice be? Surely we shall say, “Oh, Lord Jesus, I would not compete with You for a moment! No, You have a dearer claim upon my friend than I have, for You have bought him with Your precious blood.”

It is hard to part, but let them go! If He has given your dear children, or your friends, or your partners in life, Grace now, when He proceeds to give them Glory you may weep, for, “Jesus wept,” but you must not murmur, for that would be to deny Christ’s claim to what He has purchased with His own precious blood!

Oh, that all of you had Grace that you might all have Glory! Do not hope for Glory without Grace, but Jesus is willing to give it. Whoever trusts Him shall receive it. May it be the portion of us all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

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

A FEAST FOR THE UPRIGHT

NO. 1659

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 14, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give Grace and Glory:
no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.
O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You!”
Psalm 84:11, 12.***

IN this sweet Sabbath Psalm the writer rejoices in the House of God. He evidently loves the place of godly assembly, the place where prayer and praise were offered by the united tribes of his people. But, Brothers and Sisters, there was no superstition in this love. He loved the House of God because he loved the God of the house! His heart and flesh cried out, not for the altar and the candlestick, but for his God. True, his soul fainted for the courts of the Lord, but the reason was that he cried out for the living God, saying, “When shall I come and appear before God?” Brethren, it is well to take an interest in the place where you gather for worship. I am always glad when Brothers and Sisters are moved to contribute towards the necessary maintenance of the building and the provision for its cleanliness and propriety. I hate that God should be served in a slovenly way. Even the place where we meet to worship should show some sign of reverence for His name.

But still, our respect for our place of assembly must never degenerate into a superstitious reverence for the mere structure—as though there were some peculiar sanctity about the spot—and prayer offered here would be more acceptable than elsewhere. The great objective of our desire must be to meet with God, Himself. In hearing, the point is to hear the voice of God! In singing, the charm is truly to praise the Most High! In prayer, the main objective is to plead with God and so to speak that our cry comes up before Him, even into His ears. Let us always remember this and never rest content with merely going to a set place. Let us reckon that we have failed if we have not met with God! Let us come up here with strong desire for communion with the Lord in spirit and in truth.

The Psalmist also knew right well that the spiritual Law runs through everything. He perceived that character is an essential, not only to acceptable worship, but to all real blessedness. In our text he speaks not of those who visit the Temple, but of those who walk uprightly and trust in God. There is no necessary blessedness in visiting tabernacles and temples. In all assemblies for worship the question is, Who are they that gather? Are their hearts in God's ways? Are their souls thirsting after God? The promises are very rich, but to whom are the promises made? What if they are not made to us? Then, the richer they are, the more sorrowful will be our loss of them!

Before I unfold the inexhaustible treasures of this marvelous portion of Scripture, I want to dwell upon this fact, that these things are for a special people. The blessing is to the man that walks uprightly—the true-hearted man whose course is sincere, righteous, honest and just. He stands firmly and he walks erect. He does not bend and lean towards the right or to the left. He has no sinister motives or crooked policies. He is straight as a line, and is not to be swayed by any side winds. It is a very suggestive figure—an upright man is not twisted or doubled up or wrongly inclined—or tortuous in his ways and thoughts. He stands on the square and is distinctly perpendicular. This is the man who will enjoy the blessing from the God of Israel!

Sin is a twist and it is a twist that robs us of the blessing in our text. But, since no man is upright by nature, we are reminded of the way by which we come to be upright—“O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.” We must have *faith* as the groundwork of all. Then “faith works by love” and purifies the soul. And by this purification the man is made to walk uprightly. Oh, to be resting where God bids us rest, namely, in the atoning Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus! Oh, to be depending where all must depend—upon the faithfulness of the Covenant-making and the Covenant-keeping God! Such a man has a solid rock beneath his feet. He trusts in God and so he stands firmly and is able to walk uprightly because he has a firm foothold.

Judge you, then, yourselves. Are you trusting in the Lord? Are you walking uprightly? If so, here is “a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined.” I would say to every child of God who can claim the character I have been describing, come to the text and freely enjoy it! What? Does no star of hope shine in your midnight sky? Do clouds surround you and thicken into an impenetrable gloom? Come to the text, for “the Lord God is a sun.” Here is an end to all your darkness! When He appears, the night vanishes and your light has come! Are you in great danger? Do perils surround you—temptations from the world, assaults of Satan—the rising up of your own corruption? Do you feel as if you moved in the center of a fierce fight? Is it as much as you can do, even, to *hope* that you will escape the fiery dart?

Come to the text, then, and behold how He that keeps Israel has provided for your safety! Read the blessed words, “The Lord God is a shield.” He is a broad shield that shall cover you from head to foot and quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked One. Here is perfect safety for all who take Jehovah to be their Helper. “The Lord is your shade upon your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.” But perhaps you tell me that you feel empty of all good and dry of all joy. Spiritual life is at a very low ebb with you. You can scarcely believe, much less reach to full assurance. You scarcely feel enough life to exhibit the tenderness you sigh for and you cannot reach to the faith you desire. I hear your groans, but come along with you! Here is the exact word for you. “The Lord will give Grace.” His rich free favor waits to bless the undeserving and it is so

strong and influential that those who have nothing in themselves may at once receive every precious thing! The God of All Grace will give Grace!

“Yes,” you say, “I have Grace, but I find that the gracious life is a very struggling one. I am contending from day to day with my inward corruptions and, besides, the infirmities of old age have been creeping upon me for years and I feel them so bitterly that I wish for the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest.” Friend, you need not fly far! The text promises you the best possible rest. The Lord who says that He will give Grace now tells you that He will give Glory! Wait a little longer. The sun which shines more and more will come to perfect day. “It is better on before.” Glory will soon be in your actual possession—much sooner than you think! Between you and Heaven there may be but a step! Perhaps before another sun has risen on the earth you may behold the face “of the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off.” At any rate, here is comfort for you—the same Lord who will give Grace will also give Glory.

Do I hear another Brother sighing because he is in the depths of poverty? And is that poverty not only of bread and of water, but a poverty of soul? Do you feel straitened in spirit and so weak that you can hardly call a promise your own? Yet, dear Brother, if you are trusting in the Lord and He has helped you to walk uprightly, do not hesitate, but come to the text and dip your bucket into this deep and overflowing well—and fill it up to the brim—for what does the text say? “No good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly.” Here is everything for nothing! Everything for you! Everything to be had at once according as you shall require it. It is God’s Word, not mine! God’s own sure Word which gives you all this blessing. Come, then, quit the dust and the darkness. Mount into brightness and rejoice in the Lord, your God, who bids you shout for joy!

Have you fears about the future? I need not stay to tell you how sweetly the text will lull them all to sleep. Yet suffer me these few sentences. Do you fear the darkness of future trial? The Lord God is your Sun! Do you fear dangers which lie before you in some new sphere upon which you are just entering? The Lord will be your Shield! Are there difficulties in your way? Will you need great wisdom and strength? God’s Grace will be sufficient for you and His strength will be glorified in your weakness! Do you fear failure? Do you dread final apostasy? It shall not be! He who gives you Grace will, without fail, give you Glory!

Between here and Heaven there is provender for all the flock of God so that they need not fear famishing on the road. He that leads them shall guide them into pastures that never wither and to fountains that are never dried up, for, “no good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly.” Is not this a glorious text? It overpowers me! It is a gem of priceless value! I feel as if I could not place it in a proper setting, but must hold it up just as it is and turn it this way and that, and bid you mark how each facet flashes forth the light of Heaven! It is a true Kohinoor among the gems of promise! It is so many sided, so transparent, so brilliant it belongs to the King of kings and He bids us wear it this day!

What shall I hope to say which will be worthy of this supreme Scripture? How can *my* words fitly set forth this Word of the Lord? It would not

be an ill way of considering my text if I were to preach from it in this fashion. First let us observe what God is—"The Lord God is a sun and a shield." By nature He is both these to His people and as such He is ours, for is not this a leading article in the Covenant of Grace, "I will be their God"? "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." The Lord has given Himself to me as He is, even as Jehovah, the I AM! Is God omnipotent? He is almighty for His people. Is He omniscient? His wisdom cares for them. Is God omnipresent? Is God immutable? Is God eternal? Is God infinite? He is ours in all those respects!

The Lord God is a sun and shield and, as Sun and Shield He belongs to those who are trusting in Him and walking uprightly. If we preached thus, our second head would be what God will *give*. The Lord will give Grace and Glory! He *has* given them, *is* giving them and *will* give them, for the tense may be taken as you choose. He always will give free favor and kindly aid. He has given you Grace up to now and done great things for you. And He will show you greater things than these—

***"His Grace will to the end
Stronger and brighter shine.
Nor present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark Divine."***

He will supply you with Grace and Glory us the generous grants of His love. They are not a wage, but a *gift*. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Glory will come to you on free-Grace terms.

And then there is, thirdly, what the Lord will *withhold*. And what is that? Why, nothing at all that is good, for "no good thing will He withhold." We have among us some men who are great at withholding. If they give, it costs them an effort. But if they withhold, their purse strings are in their natural condition. Our God never was a withholding God. He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good. Ever since that first day when "He spoke and it was done," He has gone on manifesting Himself to this world, pouring out Himself in goodness, spreading His own care and love over all so that He is to be found filling all space and sustaining all existence! God's blessedness delights in scattering blessings. To withhold would not enrich Him as to give does not impoverish Him. Especially to His saints does He abound. To them He gives all things. "No good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly."

I am not going to preach from the text in that way. We shall survey it in another fashion. Here flows a living stream—bring your buckets with you! Take care that you do not come to this River of Life merely to gaze on its surface—the river of God is full of water and it is all intended for our use! Oh, for a hearty draft at this good hour! Here is enough and to spare! Make free with it, O you who trust in the Lord!

I. First, then, out of five particulars, here are, for God's people, BLESSINGS IN THEIR FULLNESS, for, "the Lord God is a sun." The blaze of my text almost blinds me! It does not say, "God is light," though that is true, for He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. But the words are, "the Lord God is a sun." Then, if God is mine, I have not only light, but I have the *Source* of light. I have for my possession the central Sun from whom all light comes to this world! We have heard of one who received apples

from a friend and was grateful. Another was more highly favored, for his friend planted his garden with fruit trees. You and I have fruit from God and therein *we* are favored. Yes, but we have the Lord, Himself, and thus we have the Tree of Life and a perpetual supply most fresh, sweet and constant!

It is well to get a drink from a pitcher, but it is better to be like Isaac, who dwelt by the well, because then, if the pitcher becomes empty, there is an abiding supply from which to fill it. God is the Source of all conceivable good, yes, inconceivable blessing lie in Him and, as such, He belongs to His people! There might be light apart from the sun, but there could be no blessing apart from God! And, on the other hand, every sort of blessing is in God and nothing is lacking in Him. He who *is* all Good and the *Source* of all good, has made Himself our Divine possession. God is a sun—that is an infinity of blessing!

No man among us can conceive the measure of the light and heat of the sun. I suppose that calculations have been made by which the heat of the sun has been thought to be estimated, but the calculations must be beyond all ordinary numeration. Concerning the sun—its light, heat and influence are beyond conception! Its light and heat have been continually streaming forth throughout many ages and yet they are unabated to this hour—all that has come forth of it is far less than that which still remains! For all practical purposes the light and heat of the sun are infinite and certainly in God all blessedness is *absolutely* infinite. There is no measuring it. We are lost. We can only say—“Oh, the depths of the love and goodness of God!” In being heirs of God we possess all in all. There is no bound to our blessedness in God.

Further, if God is called a sun, it is to let us know that we have obtained an immutability of blessedness, for He is “the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” God is not love, today, and hate, tomorrow— He says, “I am God, I change not.” There are said to be spots in the sun which diminish the light and heat which we receive, but there are no such spots in God! He shines on with the boundless fullness of His infinite love toward His people in Christ Jesus! “This God is our God forever and ever.” If we were to live as long as Methuselah we should find His love and power and wisdom to be the same—and we might confidently count upon being blessed thereby.

What treasures of mercy do you and I possess in being able to say, “O God, You are my God!” We have the source of mercy, the infinity of mercy and the immutability of mercy to be our own. There much must be added concerning God as a sun—that He is forever communicating His light and heat and excellence to all who are about Him. I cannot conceive the sun shut up within itself. An un-shining sun is a sun un-sunned! And a God that is not good and pouring forth His goodness has laid aside His Deity! It is contrary to the very notion and idea of an infinitely good God for Him to restrain His goodness and keep it back from His people!

Therefore, Beloved, you have not only God supremely good, but God abundantly giving Himself out to His people! He is not a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, but a springhead always flowing in winter and in

summer. Nothing in God is reserved from His believing people. He gives Himself to you in all His fullness. All your needs shall be abundantly satisfied out of the riches of His goodness. Has ever man such a task as I have in trying to speak of what is altogether unspeakable? Who shall fully extol the sun? Stand out in the open and look the sun full in the face for a little while—and when blindness threatens you, learn how little we can know of the *greater* Sun, the Sun of Righteousness! And if thought fails, what shall speech do? How can it be possible for men to speak aright on such a text as this—“The Lord God is a sun”?

Go, you cold words, and be exhaled in the presence of this central fire! Yet I can show you enough to let you see that there is more than I can show you! I can say enough to let you know that there is a great deal more than I can say or than you can hear! To speak on this theme calls for some of those words which they speak in Heaven in the full blaze of the Glory—words such as mortal tongues cannot compass! Fully to set forth the wondrous height and depth of this promise might need that same Spirit who of old dictated it to the Psalmist and placed it in the sacred page. “The Lord God is a sun”—here is blessedness in its fullness!

II. Now, secondly—and this is a deeply interesting point—this glorious Word of God gives us BLESSINGS IN THEIR COUNTERBALANCE. Let me explain myself. One blessing alone might scarcely be a blessing, for in being too great a blessing it might crush us. We may have too much of a good thing. We need some other gift to *balance* the single benediction. So notice here, “The Lord God is a sun and shield.” “Sun and shield” hang before my eyes like two golden scales! Each one adds value to the other! When God is a sun to His people, it may be He warms them into temporal prosperity with His bright beams so that their goods increase, their body is in health, their trade succeeds and their children are spared. They are grateful to God and joyful because of the blessings which He has bestowed upon them.

He gives them their heart’s desire. He permits them to enjoy the blessing of this life as well as the promise of the life that is to come. Yet danger lurks here! You have heard of sunstroke and prosperous persons are very apt to feel it. Our poor heads cannot bear the full beams of the sun of prosperity—we are smitten down with pride, or carelessness, or worldliness, or some other evil. It is trying for the soul to bask in the unclouded sun. Temporal gains are blessings in themselves, but such is our poor nature that we do not make blessings of them, but we often make *idols* of them and then they become curses!

What a sweet mercy it is that when God prospers His children, and is a sun to them, He comes in at the same time and acts as their shield! The same God who is the pillar of fire to the hosts of Israel is also their pillar of cloud! Our hymn well puts it—

**“He has been my joy in woe,
Cheered my heart when it was low,
And with warnings softly sad,
Calmed my heart when it was glad.”**

When everything is bright with us, the Lord knows how to sober His children’s spirits so that they use, but do not *abuse*, the things of this life.

Even when they most abound with worldly joys, He makes His people feel that these are not their heart's joy. He shades us from the noxious effect of wealth and content. He makes rich and adds no sorrow therewith. He suffers not the sun to smite us by day. Is not this a gracious style of counterbalance?

“The Lord God is a sun and shield,” too, when He shines upon us *spiritually*. Oh, how I rejoice in the sunny side of spiritual life! I do not always get it, but when I do reach it, how happy I am! My heart is ready, like the gnats in the sunbeams, to dance up and down with intense delight! When God shines upon our soul, what gladness! What ecstasy! Then, truly, we would hardly change places with the angels—and as for kings and princes—we pity them! My God, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me and I ask no more! It is Heaven below!

I know some of my Brothers and Sisters are often moping in the dungeon, but I guarantee you that when they do get out, they can dance with the nimblest and they call for the merriest tunes, too, for theirs is no second-rate delight! It is a great mercy that when God gives His people great spiritual joys He usually gives them a humbling sense of themselves at the same time. The shadow of their former depressions prevents their being unduly excited with their present joy, or else the forecast of another chastisement is given them and this sobers them when they are inclined to be lifted up. The Lord has ways and means of letting His people be as happy as they can be—but yet not happier than they ought to be! He gives them Grace so that they can be full of assurance and yet full of holy fear—always rejoicing and yet never presuming—lifted up and yet lying low before the Lord.

He gives them a well-mixed experience and so forms an all-round character. While He is, to them, a sun producing rapid growth, He is also a shield forbidding their being burned up. He is their great Benefactor, but also their wise Chastener—and in both, alike, He blesses them! Look at the text another way. When the sun shines upon a man, he is made the more conspicuous by it. Suppose a hostile army to be down in the plain and a soldier in our ranks is sent upon some errand by his captain. He must pass along the hillside. The sun shines upon him as he tries to make his way among the rocks and trees.

Had it been night, he could have moved safely, but now we fear that the enemy will surely pick him off, for the sunshine has made him conspicuous. He will have need to be shielded from the many cruel eyes. Christian men are made conspicuous by the very fact of their possessing God's Grace. You are the light of the world and a light must be seen! A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. If God gives you light, He means that light to be seen—and the more light He gives you, the more conspicuous you will be. He is your sun and He shines upon you—you reflect His light and so become, yourself, a light—and in so doing you run necessary risks. The more brightly you shine, the more will Satan and the world try to quench your light. This, then, is your comfort. The Lord God who is a sun to you will also be a shield to you. Did He not say to Abraham, “Fear not, I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward”? He will defend you against

the dangers of publicity, or even of popularity! And if He sets you upon a high place, He will make your feet like the feet of a gazelle, so that you shall stand upon your high places.

Consider the text, again, still keeping to this idea of counterbalance. "The Lord God is a sun" and a sun manifests a thing, and this manifestation is not always a joy to us, but we need a defense with it. When the Lord shines in upon the heart of His people, they begin to see their sin, their guilt, their fall, their corruption—and then the Lord is a shield—and they are not overcome by the discovery! When they see the danger, at the same time they see the defense. And when they see the disease they see the remedy. It is a blessed thing not to see sin unless, at the same time, we see the Savior. It is a blessed thing not to have a sense of weakness in self unless it is accompanied with a sense of strength in the Lord. These two things most wisely balance each other, otherwise the revealing Spirit of God, in showing us so much of our evil hearts, might almost drive us mad!

If a man could see all his past sin and all his present danger. If he could see all the trials of his future life, he might lie down in despair, unless, at the same time, he was made to perceive that if the Lord is a sun to reveal our danger, He is also a shield to secure our safety! The Lord, thus, in His Grace, abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He multiplies the value of the blessing by His wise way of dispensing it. He gives us the bitter medicine, but He also allots us the sweet cordial. He will sometimes chide, but He will not always do so. He will not give us too much of one blessing lest it spoil and breed overindulgence. He will give us another favor which shall make up a healthful mixture. Yes, thus He does with all things, so that they work together for our good. Dwell on my text and especially on this noteworthy point in it—blessings in their counterbalance.

III. Very briefly let me submit to you the third idea, namely, BLESSINGS IN THEIR ORDER, for there is a due and meet succession in my text. "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give Grace and Glory." The Lord is to us first, a sun and then a shield. Remember how David puts it elsewhere—"The Lord is my light and my salvation." Light first, salvation next! He does not save us in the dark, neither does He shield us in the dark. He gives enough sunlight to let us see the danger that we may appreciate the defense. We are not to shut our eyes and so find safety, but we are to see the evil and hide ourselves! Ought we not to be very grateful to God that He so orders our affairs? Ours is not a blind faith, receiving an unknown salvation from evils which are unperceived—this would be a poor form of life at best. No, the favor received is valued because its necessity is perceived. The heavenly Sun lights up our souls and makes us see our ruin and lie down in the dust of self-despair. And *then* it is that Grace brings forth the Shield which covers us so that we are no more afraid, but rejoice in the glorious Lord as the God of our salvation.

Then notice the order of the next two things—Grace and Glory—not Glory first. That could not be. We are not fit for it. Neither in body nor in

soul are we fit for Glory before Grace. We could not possibly receive Glory while we are sinners, for a glorified sinner would be a strange sight! Grace must first blot out our sin. To take the rebel from the prison and put him among the children would be dangerous work unless his crime were pardoned and reconciled to his king. Grace must come in to change the *nature*. We could not enter Glory or enjoy it by any possibility while we are sinful at heart. An unregenerate heart could not enter into the joy of the Lord. Only the pure in heart can see God—carnal eyes are blind to spiritual things. Grace must renew us or Glory cannot receive us. Grace must change, regenerate, sanctify, or we cannot take our places among the perfected ones.

Glory without Grace would be mockery! The prepared place would be no Heaven if the people were not also prepared. As in this case there is order, you will find it so in all the arrangements of the Lord's House. One blessing is a steppingstone to another. The holy leads on to the holiest. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The Lord gives mercies in succession and He never gives you number two till you have been qualified for it by receiving number one! "They go from strength to strength." He gives life, and then life more abundantly. First Grace and then Grace upon Grace. God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, leading us, as we do our boys, from their first-class books up to their classics, and taking care to ground us in each successive ascent of knowledge.

Step by step we rise towards God, until at last we shall see the Savior's face and shall be like He! Blessings in their order. Treasure this up, for it may be a ground of comfort to you. When you get clamoring for number seven, it may, perhaps, calm you a little if you remember that you must first have number six. Plod on step by step. Walk without fainting from one stage to another and you shall surely come unto the Mountain of God.

IV. Fourthly, and again briefly, BLESSINGS IN PREPARATION AND BLESSINGS IN MATURITY. "The Lord will give Grace and Glory." Grace is Glory in the bud—you shall see the rod of Aaron full of blooming Graces! But this is not all—Glory is Grace in ripe fruit—the rod shall bear ripe almonds. The Lord will give you both the dawn and the noon, the Alpha and the Omega, Grace and Glory. Let us be very grateful that God deals in preparatory mercies. If He had provided Heaven and we were to make ourselves fit for it, we should never get there! Yes, and there are many stages of spiritual experience which are not to be attained unless God gives us preliminary educating Grace to come at them. The blessing is that all that is necessary to reach any gracious attainment is as much promised as the blessing itself!

Is it so, my poor Friend, that you cannot, this morning, lay hold of a promise? You are such a babe in Grace. Well, our heavenly Father has an infant class in His school and a nursery in His house—He will teach you as a child and give you a child's portion upon which you shall feed and by which you shall grow! Do not be afraid to ask of God the beginnings of things. I know that sometimes in our prayers we feel that we are so blameworthy for our stupidity that we hardly dare ask to be taught the

simple Truths which we ought to know. But we must not give way to this proud humility! We must beg, even, to be taught our A B Cs.

Suppose we need to be helped to overcome an irritable temper, let us not be ashamed to acknowledge the need, but confess it and pray for help. Do we need Grace to bear our little daily trials? Then let us seek everyday Grace. Ask for a babe's blessings, for God is prepared to give them! Does He not say, "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms"? "The Lord will give Grace and Glory." Brothers and Sisters, we shall need much training to fit us to sing among the choristers above! Discords and false notes abound! We must be tutored out of them into a richness of sweet tones and ordered harmonies. If we look into ourselves carefully, we shall be shocked with the sight of our own unworthiness to mingle with perfect beings. I do not know how you feel about yourselves, but I grow worse and worse in my own judgment. I hope that I am more sanctified in many respects, but I am also more conscious of my need of fuller sanctification.

The fact is that the more Light of God a soul obtains, the more it perceives its darkness and laments it. The more God makes you holy, the more *unholy* you will judge yourself to be. No man groans so deeply, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" as the man who is nearest to complete deliverance from all evil! The last relics of sin are more horrible to the godly man than the full empire of sin to the newly awakened. Even the very *thought* of sin—the flitting of it through his soul like a bird across the sky—becomes a calamity to the full-grown saint and he cries out against it. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He who glories that he is perfectly sanctified must either have lowered the standard of holiness or else he has an exaggerated conceit of his own excellence.

He who does not daily struggle against sin is in darkness and error and I fear the life of God is not in his soul. In proportion as God has dealt with a man, he will cry out for a something yet beyond him and press forward to that which is before. Oh, how I long to be perfectly rid of sin and of every liability to fall into it! And here is the mercy—that the Lord will give Grace. All the Grace that is needed to make you absolutely perfect, God will bestow. He will reveal His righteousness from faith to faith and we shall go from Grace to Grace. Faith shall lead on to full assurance—hope shall brighten into expectancy—love shall flame into burning zeal and so we shall rise on eagles' wings from Grace to Glory! Not only the light of the lamp in its full brilliance, but the wick and the oil and the trimming, the Lord will give. Furthermore, the Lord will not deny you the maturity, namely, Glory. He who gives us breakfast in Grace will cause us to sup with Him in Glory!

Now, here I am altogether beaten. What shall I say of Glory? What do I know of it? Matthew Wilks once said, "Man is the glory of the world; the soul is the glory of man; Grace is the glory of the soul; and Heaven is the Glory of Grace." This is true, but still, what do any of us know of Glory in its heavenly sense? The Lord will give us nothing less than Glory! We deserve shame—He will give us Glory! We deserve misery, but He will give us Glory. We deserve condemnation, but He will give us Glory! We deserve

death and Hell, but He will give us Glory! What is Glory? He that has been in Heaven five minutes can tell you better than the sagest divine that lives and yet he could not tell you! No, the angels could not tell you—you would not understand them!

What is Glory? You must enjoy it to know it. Glory is not merely rest, happiness, wealth, safety—it is honor, victory, immortality, triumph! You know what men call, “glory,” here below. The people climb to the house-tops, throng the streets and sound the clarions because a conqueror has returned from war and brings with him huge spoils. See how he stands erect, drawn in his chariot by milk-white steeds. Follow him up the Via Sacra to the Capitol at Rome. Men count him happy because he is surrounded with glory. What is this glory? Smoke, noise, dust and oblivion—that is all.

But Glory, as the Lord uses the term, what is *it*? It is that which surrounds Himself, for He is the King of Glory! It is that which crowns every attribute, for we read of the Glory of His power and the Glory of His Grace. It is the outcome of all His plans and thoughts and works, for in all things He is glorified! It is that which His dear Son inherits, for He has entered into His Glory. We shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory! Yes, it is of this unutterable thing that we shall partake, and that so soon! “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

V. Now, fifthly and finally, BLESSINGS IN THEIR UNIVERSALITY. I have noticed that lawyers, who will always go into particulars as much as they can in their deeds—an excellent method of adding to their fees—usually are obliged to sum up with a general clause which includes all they have said and all they *ought* to have said! They use some sweeping final sentence to comprehend all the mentionable and unmentionables—all that can be remembered and all that might be forgotten! Now, the last part of my text is of that character—“No good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly.”

Is there some good thing which does not come to us by the Lord’s being our Sun? We shall not lose on that account. Is there another good thing which cannot be included in God’s being our Shield? We shall not be deprived of that! Is there some good thing that cannot be comprehended in Grace? I cannot imagine what it can be, but if there is such a thing, we shall not miss even that! Is there some good thing that is not comprehended, even, in Glory? Well, it does not matter, we shall have it, for here stands the boundless promise—“No good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly.”

“Well,” says someone, “but God has denied me many good things!” Yes, then they would not be good things to you! What has God done to you, then? “He has made me to be sickly in body, He has caused me to be poor, and I am tried in many ways.” In this He has fulfilled His Word that no good thing should be withheld from you. I have known a father who boasted that he never laid a hand on his children by way of chastising them. I sometimes wished that he had done so, for his children were a sad plague to all who called at the house. Now, that father was withholding a good thing from his children—a touch of the birch would have been most

wholesome! Our heavenly Father never says of any of His elect, "I never laid a hand upon them"—but it is written, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without chastisement! O you who are tried and afflicted, the Lord has not withheld from you the blessing of His rod! Accept trials from God and believe that they are tokens of His love. Is there anything you wish for and cannot get it from God? Then, depend upon it, it would not be a good thing for you! Is there any apparently evil thing which comes to you plenteously and you would gladly avoid it? Depend upon it, it really is a good thing or else the Lord would not have sent it to you! "Alas," cries one, "there are many good things which I have not received." Whose fault is that? What does the text say? It does not say, "I will force all My children to enjoy every good thing." No, but, "No good thing will He withhold."

There are thousands of mercies that we do not enjoy, not because they are withheld, but because we do not take them! We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. We are empty because we do not accept the fullness of Christ. If we were to be introduced into some of the depots in London that are full of articles most rich and rare, and the owners were to say, "Now, take whatever you please," we should help ourselves with a degree of liberality. But when the Lord takes us into the storehouses of His Grace, we have not faith enough to ask for large things! We might have 10 times as much—10,000 times as much—if we would. Many of God's people are pining on a pittance when they might feast in plenty. They are eating the coarsest meal and wearing the roughest garment—I mean *spiritually*—and going about sighing and crying! They are doubting and fearing and all the while, there is the bread of Heaven on the table for them, and the robe of Christ's righteousness is prepared for them to wear! They might dwell at Heaven's gate, but they condemn themselves to the dung-hill!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us change all this! If the Lord has said, "No good thing will I withhold," let us put Him to the test! Among other things, let us ask Him to give us more joy in the Lord—a fuller assurance and confidence in Him—and He will give it to us. Do not let us be poor by self-inflicted poverty, but let us rise to the riches which are presented to us in this blessed text. I wish I knew how to preach from it, but pray, take an hour this afternoon and do with the text as the cow does with the grass when she has been round the meadow and satisfied herself. She lies down and chews the cud. If you will ruminate by meditation you will find more in the text than I shall ever be able to bring out of it. May the Lord feed you upon this choice portion, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SPARROW AND THE SWALLOW

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A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1870.**

***“Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.”
Psalm 84:3.***

WHEN David was far away from the services of the Tabernacle, he envied the birds that had built their nests near the sacred shrine. And Christians, in like manner, when they are debarred from the holy associations of Christian fellowship and united worship, always sigh over the lost privilege of meeting with their Brothers and Sisters in Christ. With even greater emphasis we may say that when a Christian loses the realization of the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the “Minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man,” then it is, above all other seasons, that he sighs and cries for a renewal of communion with Christ. We would envy any, however poor and insignificant they may be, who can maintain unbroken fellowship with their Lord. And when it falls to our lot, through our own sin or neglect, or in the inscrutable wisdom of Divine Sovereignty, to be, for awhile, spiritually in the dark, seeking our Savior and not finding Him, we would willingly take the place of the godly captive pining in the persecutors’ dungeon, or of the dying yet enraptured saint, if we could but once again enjoy the Presence of our Master! This was David’s state of heart when he languished for the ancient Tabernacle services or, more probably, when he longed for that communion with his Lord which, perhaps, had been suspended together with his attendance upon the public worship of God’s House. It was then, as I believe, that he was inspired to pen this “Pearl of the Psalms,” including the verse upon which I am going to try to speak, praying that the Holy Spirit may enable me to utter words which shall be to the profit of both hearers and readers.

It seems that the birds which came to David’s mind when he wrote this Psalm had found two things—*houses for themselves* and *nests for their young*. And these two things Christians find in Christ and also, in a certain sense, in the assemblies of His servants for public worship in His name.

I. First, I want to remind you that CHRISTIANS FIND IN CHRIST AND, IN A CERTAIN SENSE, IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE FAITHFUL, HOUSES FOR THEMSELVES.

Turn to the text and read—“Yes, the sparrow has found a house.” And upon that our first question shall be, *What were those creatures that there found a house?*

Well, they were only sparrows, yet they found a house near the altars of God and, therefore, David envied them. Now, *sparrows are very insignificant things*. “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?” said Christ to His disciples. And you and I, dear Friends, when we really know ourselves as we are in God’s sight, are led to feel that because of our sin, we are even more insignificant than sparrows—and to realize that our being blotted out of the universe would be rather a gain to it than a loss! What unworthy creatures we see ourselves to be when once God pours upon us the bright light of His Word! Then we think that any mercy is too great and any blessing is far too good for us to receive. Yet, as the sparrows were permitted to find their house under the eaves of God’s ancient Tabernacle, we, insignificant and worthless as we are, may come and build under the shelter of God’s great House of Mercy. There we may find a safe refuge from every danger, a perfect security for all time, and even for all eternity. O you who think yourselves despised and forgotten, remember that the sparrow has found a house on God’s altar! Come, then, and see if there is not also space there for you! Jesus said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And the Apostle Paul, writing under Inspiration, says, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” Therefore, poor despised one, though you feel yourself to be a nobody, come and welcome to the Savior, come to Him with cheerful confidence, for He will not, He *cannot* reject you!

The sparrows were not only very insignificant, they were also *very needy*. They needed a house, they needed a place of shelter—and they found it at God’s altar. How needy, also, are we! Though we are insignificant, our needs are anything but insignificant. How much we need! Who can tell what we do not need? Were it not for God’s super abounding mercy, we would all be in Hell. Were it not for His unspeakable goodness, we would, this day, have no hope of Grace, no prospect of pardon, no assurance of a holy, happy hereafter in Heaven. Our needs are countless—every moment brings a fresh one—and all the supplies of the past and the present are not sufficient to meet the voracious demands that will come upon us in the future. The sparrow, needy creature that she was, having nothing to bring to God’s House, found there a house freely given to her and, you needy souls, the infinite

supply of Divine Mercy in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is freely given to you! You need not bring anything with you when you come to Christ, only come and trust Him, and all your needs shall be supplied. Whatever your souls can need to bear them safely through the troubles of earth—and bring them to the bliss of Heaven—you shall have it freely given to you if you do but come flying with the wings of faith to find a house and a home in Jesus Christ. At the great altar where Christ was offered as the one Sacrifice for sin forever, the most needy soul that ever lived on the face of the earth will find a hearty welcome!

These sparrows were *uninvited guests*, yet they found a house and took possession of it. And they were never blamed for doing so. But in this verse David seems to *commend* them—he certainly envied them. But, my dear Hearers, you who have never come to the Lord Jesus Christ are not uninvited guests. The Gospel invitation rings through this building every Sabbath day—

**“Come and welcome,
Come to Jesus, Sinner, come!”**

We not only invite you, but we earnestly press you, in Christ’s name, to come and put your trust in His great Sacrifice, assuring you that if you do, you shall find an everlasting and blessed home for your souls. So, as the sparrows came to God’s House without an invitation, will not you come to Christ with one? They were bold enough to find a house when no man bade them do so. Therefore will not you be bold enough, trembler though you are, to take what Divine Mercy freely proffers to you? Do you not remember how Agur commends the spider as being “exceedingly wise” because she “takes hold with her hands and is in kings’ palaces”? No one ever asked the spider to come into the palace. She was a loathsome creature, quite out of place in a palace, and her web would mar the beauty of the place, yet the spider knew by instinct that a storm was coming on and so sought shelter in the king’s palace. There was Solomon’s fine house of the forest of Lebanon, and the spider said within herself, “Why should not I, spider though I am, abide here?” So she crept about till she found a window open and in she slipped and made herself at home by taking hold with her hands, first of one wall and then of another, till she found herself at ease! There came along one who said, “Let that spider and her web be removed. What business has she to be here?” But Solomon thought otherwise, so the spider is immortalized in this Book of Proverbs, because of her wisdom in taking hold with her hands even on the walls of a royal palace!

O Soul, perhaps you are consciously to yourself as loathsome as that spider was, and the King’s great House of Mercy seems too fair a place for you to enter! You ask, unbelievably, “Shall I ever be made a saint? Shall I ever be cleansed from sin? Shall I ever be taken up to dwell with the great King in Heaven?” Talk not so, but rather see whether you

cannot find an entrance into the King's palace! And if you can find it, go in! Surely there is a window open for you where it is written by the King, Himself, as I reminded you just now, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Then there is another window where the King has hung up the invitation, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does not that invite you? Come in, poor spider-sinner! Take hold of the walls of Christ's great House of Love and Mercy, and I can assure you that my royal Master will not be angry with you! But when He sees you there, He will immortalize you in His "Book of Life." You shall have a name and a place there and He will think you wise, not intrusive, in daring to believe Him and to come into His palace, spider-sinner as you are! He delights to have great things thought of Him—and if you will but think great things of His love and mercy, I will guarantee you that you will never think thoughts that shall outstrip the reality, for what He has said is true, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Let us learn, then, from the sparrow finding her house near to God's altar, that although we are inconsiderable and insignificant, although we are full of needs and although we may even deem ourselves to be uninvited, yet we are at liberty to come to the Savior and find in Him our eternal dwelling place!

Next, *what does the text tell us that these sparrows did?* We should learn something from that.

The text says, "Yes, the sparrow has found a house." Then, first of all, *she looked for it.* The sparrow needed a house and she searched to see where she could find it. One great reason why many do not find salvation is because they do not look for it. Many of them do not even know that they need it or, if they know it as a matter of doctrine, they do not believe it so as to look for it and appropriate it as their own. I feel persuaded that no man ever did sincerely seek salvation, through Jesus Christ, without finding it. I do not believe that among all the lost, there is one who will be able to tell the Lord that he honestly and earnestly sought His mercy, yet did not obtain it. If you have not found Christ, my dear Hearer, it is because you have not sought Him, for He said, "He that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened." I grant you that the blessing may be delayed for awhile—you may be some time in finding peace, perhaps through your ignorance, or through some cherished sin that you have not given up—but if you truly come to the Throne of Grace and cry in real earnest for mercy, as surely as God is in Christ Jesus, He will stretch out His silver scepter toward you and you shall touch it and find Grace in His sight! Be encouraged, O you Seekers, to persevere in your search for salvation! Ask that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be given to you that you may wisely and rightly seek the way of faith and may speedily find it!

Further, “the sparrow found a house”—then *there was a house for her, or she could not have found it*. A traveler in Palestine writes in his journal that as he was wandering among the ruins on the site of the Temple at Jerusalem, he noticed a little bird—known in the Hebrew as *tzippor*, or sparrow—fly out of a crevice between two great stones where the mortar or cement had been removed—and he thought at once of these words, “The sparrow has found a house.” That is just what David meant. The sparrow no doubt found a little vacant place, just what she wanted, and in she went and there was her “house” ready-made for her! And let me say to you, O Seeker, that if you would find rest in Christ, there is rest prepared for you in Him! He who has prepared your heart to seek Him has prepared that which you would gladly find. It is not for you to make a salvation for yourself—your salvation is finished and you have but to find it. It is not for you to make an Atonement for yourself—the one Atonement for sin was made, once and for all, on Calvary! It is not for you to make a righteousness for yourself—the righteousness that Christ Jesus worked out for you is perfect and you may not add thereto any supposed righteousness of your own. If you are an honest seeker after Christ, for you there is already prepared by those dear hands that once were pierced for you, the salvation that shall lift you up from the depths of sin to the heights of Glory! As Bunyan said—“Does not your mouth water as you hear this? Do you not say, ‘Is all this really prepared for me?’ Then why do I not have it?” Ah, why not, why not indeed? In my Master’s name, I assure you that “all things are ready” for all who will seek Him, for every soul that will trust Him. If you seek Him not. If you will not believe, there is no mercy for you! But if you seek heartily and trustfully, you shall assuredly find it, for it was prepared for you long ago by Him who has gone to Heaven to prepare Glory, having already prepared Grace for you!

“Yes, the sparrow has found a house.” That also means that when she had discovered it, *she appropriated it*. There was the little place, so snug and cozy, just on the warm side of the Tabernacle where the South wind would blow and she would be shielded from the cold—and in went the little bird. She had found it and she took care to make it her own by personal appropriation. Now, we may find Christ, in a sense, so as to know much about Him, to read about Him, to hear about Him and even to understand much about Him, yet not truly find Him. The root of the matter is to get Christ for yourself! In this respect, you must be selfish and you can thus be selfish without being sinful. You must personally lay hold of Christ if you would be saved!

One who desired to teach a little girl this lesson, tried to do it when the child was waiting upon him while he was ill. “Please pour out my medicine, Jane,” said the sick man. And when it was poured out, he said to her. “Now, Jane, take that medicine for me.” “O Sir!” she said. “I would

willingly do it, if it were the right thing to do, but the medicine would not do you any good if I took it.” “You’re right,” he said, “and as I must personally take the medicine before it can do me good, my child, you must personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or else another person’s faith will do you no good.” The idea of anything like sponsorship in religion—one person vowing and promising certain things for another—is utterly without any foundation in the Word of God! Religion is wholly and only a *personal* thing—you must repent for yourself, believe for yourself and lay hold on Christ for yourself! It would have been no benefit to that little bird if all other sparrows had found houses for themselves if she, herself, had been driven about, shelterless, in the storm. Oh, no—she must have a house for herself, “and the swallow a nest for herself,” where she might lay her young.

You and I, dear Friends, will be wise if we do as this sparrow did, for she found a house for herself because she looked for it. She found it because it was already there for her and she found it by appropriating it so that it became her very own. Thus may we appropriate the Lord Jesus Christ—by an act of faith—and so make Him our very own!

I have, at various times, learned some lessons concerning living by faith. A friend frequently drives me through the streets of London and, one day, when all the cabs and wagons seemed to leave us no room to move, I said to him, more than once, “I am afraid we shall have an accident.” When I had said that to him, perhaps for the third time, he put the reins into my hand and said, “Here, if you cannot trust me, drive yourself.” Suppose God should say to us when we fear that we are getting into difficulties, “If you cannot trust Me, arrange for yourselves”? What a position we would be in then! If He left the reins in our hands for a single hour, we would be like the one who sought to drive the chariot of the sun and set the world a-blaze! When we leave all in the hands of God—and we must leave all there whether we are willing or not—then we can sing that sweet little song which Luther said that the sparrows always sing—

**“Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow.”**

May we all be able to sing that little song and to sing it to ourselves, too!

We will further prolong this simile by noticing *what the sparrow found*.

“Yes, the sparrow has found a house.” The word is a very simple one, but there is much meaning in it. And when we find, in the Lord Jesus Christ, a house for our souls, *we find safety in Him*, even as the sparrow found safety in her “house.” When the stormy wind blew all around her, the sparrow felt safe in her house hard by the altar in God’s ancient Tabernacle. And when the storm of conscience beats upon us, we feel safe in our hiding place in the altar where Jesus suffered for us! And when the last dreadful storm of Divine Judgment shall come, we shall be safe beneath the shelter of the Atonement that He offered upon Calvary. He that believes in Jesus is safe forever! When the earth and all its works

are burned up and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, no hurt shall come to the man to whom Jesus is “a hiding place from the wind and a shelter from the tempest.”

Next to safety, *we find rest in Christ*. The soul that is out of Christ knows not what true rest is, but, “we who have believed do enter into rest.”—

**“Tis done! The great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!”**

My salvation is finished, my sins are pardoned, my security is established by the promise and oath of God, Himself, ratified by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. If this is your happy condition, you can enjoy the blissful sleep of the Beloved of the Lord, “and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Just as the little sparrow felt perfectly at rest when she had entered her “house” in the Tabernacle, so do we, come what may, enjoy complete, absolute, unbroken rest when we have truly believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You!”

Further, a house is *a place of abode*. The sparrow lived in her house in the Tabernacle—and he who finds the Lord Jesus Christ, finds in Him a *spiritual* abode—he lives in Christ. He has heard his Master’s blessed command, “Abide in Me,” and he desires to dwell there, hard by the pierced heart of Jesus. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you have not a mere temporary lodging place, out of which you may someday be driven back into the cold world where you used to live. That would be a poor prospect for us—but we need not anticipate such a sad future, for we can say with Moses, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” And He always will be, blessed be His holy name!

Once more, a house is, or ought to be, *a place of delight*. When a man reaches his home, he is at his ease and can unwind himself. If he is not happy at home, where can he be happy? The little sparrow, when it reaches its home, is perfectly content. Its day’s work is over, its day’s needs are supplied, and it chirps its evening song of joy. So when we make our abode in Christ our soul is filled with delight! We have a bliss that is not only full to the brim, but it even overflows. Truly happy are those who are Christ’s servants, thrice happy are they who are looking alone to His Cross for their salvation!

But the point upon which David seemed to lay the greatest emphasis was that *the sparrow’s house was near to God’s earthly dwelling place* and oh, when we abide in Christ, how near we are to God! You remember how Christ prayed to His Father concerning His disciples, “That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You...I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.” No nearness imaginable

can be greater than Christ's nearness to His Father! Yet, as we are in Christ, we are, in His Person, as near even as He is!

I can only spare a minute or so for the secondary meaning which may be found in our text. *In a certain sense, Christians, like the sparrow, find a house in the assemblies of the saints.*

When the sparrow went to her house in the Tabernacle, she never needed to be driven there, but she went there of her own accord. And I trust that when we came up to our solemn assemblies, we need nothing to compel us to come, but that our own delightful remembrances of fellowship with God, in seasons past, make us long for the renewal of such seasons again and again! I hate to see people going to any place of worship as if they were being marched off to jail. But I rejoice to see them come up to the House of God with alacrity and holy joy, and with fleet footsteps as if they were delighted to think that the time had come when they could once more unite with their Brothers and Sisters in worship before the Throne of the Most High God. If you, like the sparrow, have found a house in God's House, you will go there with joy! And when you are there, you will be happy to be there. And when the service is over, you will wish that it had to begin again and you will long for the time when you will reach that city of God—

***“Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end!”***

There are many poor people here who scarcely ever have any peace except when they are sitting in this House of Prayer and who find here the richest enjoyments they ever know. I know some of God's afflicted children who have but little sacred mirth except when the holy hymn goes up in glorious peals to Heaven and they can join in it—

***“Then they forget their pains a while,
And in the pleasure lose the smart.”***

Cultivate more and more your love for the assemblies of the saints! We have no reverence for bricks and mortar, stones and wood, glass and iron—we do not believe in the sanctity of any one place above others—but we have a reverence for the living Temple of God, built up of living men and living women whose hearts are sanctified by the Holy Spirit! And we can say of their assemblies—

***“I have been there, and still will go,
’Tis like a little Heaven below”—***

and we can also say—

***“There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

The sparrow has found a house and we too have found a house, where God's people meet, and of that house we sing—

***“Here do I find a settled rest,
While others go and come,
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”***

II. After a man is himself saved, his first anxiety, if he is a father, will be concerning his children. The next clause of the text will be helpful to such parents—"The swallow (has found) a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God." Every Christian should think that what is good for himself is good for his children! He who does not labor and pray for the salvation of his own offspring has good reason to doubt whether he knows the Grace of God, himself. Believing parents cry, with Thomas Hastings—

***"God of mercy, hear our prayer
For the children You have given!
Let them all Your blessings share,
Grace on earth, and bliss in Heaven."***

Children should early be brought to the House of God! To keep to the figure of the text, THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE SAINTS SHOULD BE A NEST FOR OUR LITTLE ONES.

First, *because they are safe there*. At any rate, you need not fear that they will be hurt when they are where God is being worshipped in spirit and in truth. In the Sunday school, under the loving tuition of godly people, they will be safe. We never feel any need to ask whether they will be in a place of danger when we take them with us where Christ is preached and His Gospel is simply, earnestly and faithfully proclaimed. Bring, then, your children with you to the House of God, for it is a place where you may expect that your little ones, as well as yourselves, will be blessed.

The "swallow" is expressed, in the Hebrew, by a word which signifies liberty. It is the bird of freedom. It is not to be caged. Even a whole continent does not give room enough for its rapid, untiring flight over hill and dale, mountain and plain, so it crosses the ocean and flies to other lands far away. The swallow is the bird of liberty, yet David writes of one that found her nest where she might lay her young at God's altar—and if you want your children to be truly free, train them in the fear of God and the love of His Truth. The spirit of liberty will always be maintained in this land as long as we have the open Bible, the family altar and the training up of our children in the way that they should go. But take these things away and Popery will again enchain our country and bring back the curse from which our fathers set free our land even at the cost of their own lives!

Further, *the nest is a place of delight to the little birds* and so ought the House of God to be to children. And so it would be if preachers would always seek to make their language simple and would illustrate what they have to say so that the children can comprehend it. It is a bad sign concerning any man's ministry when the children do not understand him! I always look upon it as being one of the highest compliments I ever receive when I see some little boy's or girl's bright eyes, that are all too apt to wander here and there, fixed upon me while they seem to be

drinking in what I have to say. There is a great lack in the preachers of the present day in this respect—we need to have the Master’s words to Peter, “Feed My lambs,” as well as the command, “Feed My sheep,” more and more impressed upon our hearts! May you, Beloved, find a place of prayer for your children where it shall be their delight to go with you and to join intelligently in the worship of God.

When you take them there—as I have already hinted to you, *they are in the way that the blessing is often given*. I do not say that they will all be saved through coming to God’s House, but if they are there with you, He who called you by His Grace, may also call them. And that ever-blessed Spirit who led you to find the Savior may also lead them to Him. Bring them to Bethesda, “the house of mercy,” and pray to Christ to say to them, as He said to the impotent man, “Will you be made whole?...Rise...and walk.” At any rate, do not let your children miss the blessing through neglecting to use the means which the Lord has blessed to you and to many others, both old and young.

Your children, if you take them with you to God’s House, will be like the swallows in this respect, *they will be pretty sure to return to the nest even if they leave it for awhile*. Though the swallows may fly over the deep blue sea to the lands that are far away, yet when the next season comes, they find their way back again to the old nest and home. So, though some of our sons and daughters may grow up and leave the House of God for awhile, they cannot altogether forget it. The recollection of their father’s prayers and of their mother’s tears will follow them wherever they roam. Refrain your eyes from weeping, dear mothers! Your sons and daughters shall come back again! Possibly, when you sleep beneath the clods of the valley, they will recollect what they heard when, as children, you took them with you to the House of God. Words that have been forgotten for 50 years may yet ring in their souls and lead to their eternal salvation! At any rate, as the swallows found a nest for their young at God’s altar, mind that you Christian parents make the House of God your children’s house. Associate them, as far as you can, with all that is going on there so that they shall feel at home when they go with you to the place where you worship the Lord and serve Him.

But after all it is not the main thing to merely bring our children to the House of God—oh, *that we could bring them to Christ!* That is where we long to lay our young, for only there shall they be truly safe, happy and blessed! Christian parents, can you rest content as long as your children are unconverted? I am ashamed of you if you can! Do you say that you hope they will be converted in future years? I hope so, too, but are you not concerned that they are out of Christ *now*? Perhaps you remind me of what I said just now, that your instruction may be blessed to their salvation long after you have been called Home. Yes, I recollect that I said that and I do not wish to withdraw what I said—yet I would like to ask whether you are willing to run the fearful risk of your children dying

unsaved? The objective of parents, preachers and teachers should be that children should be saved while they are children! That while they are yet young their names should be enrolled in the army of the Church militant!

How can we lay our children before Christ, as the swallow laid her young before God's altar? I answer, first, *by prayer*. The Lord will hear our prayers for our children as He heard our fathers' prayers for us. *Example* will also help toward the end we have in view—godly example at home. And *personal precept* will also help. We must talk to our children, one by one, alone, about their souls. I am afraid that some of you parents do not do this. But if you do not see your children grow up to do what is right, you will have to blame yourselves because you never personally pleaded with them to flee from the wrath to come. I know that the words of my father with me, alone, when he prayed for me and bade me pray for myself—not to use any form of prayer, but to pray just as I felt and to ask from God what I felt that I really needed—left an impression upon my mind that will never be erased. I have heard of an idiot who was one day scouring a brass plate to get the name out. But the more he scoured, the more clearly it shone! And when the devil tries to erase the impressions made upon my mind and heart by my mother's tears and my father's prayers, he is as much like an idiot as he possibly could be, for, let him scour as he may, those impressions will never be removed, but will continue to shine yet more brightly!

Do, dear Christian parents, resolve that if your children perish, it shall not be through any fault of yours. But why should they perish? Why should I suppose that such a thing is possible? "The promise is *unto you, and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Did not Paul and Silas say to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *you shall be saved, and your house*"? Do not be content with being saved yourselves! Say, "No, my Master, I cannot be put off with half Your promise—it is, 'and your house,' and I would gladly have it all, and see my children—and if I live long enough, their children, too, all encompassed in the arms of Your love and all of them saved." Brothers and Sisters, if you are like the sparrow, and have found a house, now be like the swallow and find not only a nest for yourself, but a place where you may lay your young, even God's altar upon which Christ offered His great atoning Sacrifice.

I wonder what other birds are represented here. Alas! Alas! I fear that I am addressing some who will not heed what I have been saying. They are not like the sparrow and the swallow. Perhaps they are like the eagle that was far too ambitious to think of building her nest anywhere near God's altar—too fond of soaring and struggling, too fond of high and lofty things. But there will come a time when the pride of man shall be laid low. Beware, beware, you who are like the eagle! Possibly there is one

here who is like the vulture—far too foul to think of building in God’s House! He is fond of everything that is unclean—wicked amusements and sinful pleasures, which are sadly miscalled, “pleasures.” Ah, the time will come when sin will be as bitter to you as now it is sweet! Yes, and far more so, for it “will eat as does a canker.” When you come to the dregs of the cup of sinful pleasure, you shall find that there is Hell in them and that forever! Or, perhaps there is one here who is like the cormorant who will not build on God’s House because he is far too greedy after the world, seeking to gather gold and to amass property. Ah, Sir! Have you never heard of the rich fool whose soul was required of him the very night on which he boasted of his wealth? Play not you the fool, but be willing to leave all those things and come and seek enduring riches!

If you do not care for your own souls, it must seem to you an idle task for me to talk to you about your children, yet I will venture to say to any unconverted person here that it will increase his misery intolerably to see his children lost through his own example! If you must perish—if you are resolved to perish—why need you drag your child down with you? If you must drink, why need that boy of yours be taught the base habit into which you have fallen? If you will swear, do not let your child hear you. I would not have you swear at all, but if you will do so, why should your child learn from you to curse and blaspheme God? O Sirs, you will find it dreadful enough to perish, yourselves, but to bring down one, two, three—I know not how many children you have—to bring them down, one after the other to that same place of awful and eternal misery—what a terrible increase to your own wretchedness! You could not look at your dear child’s face and then do him harm. I know that you would not touch him so as to break a bone, or do his body any injury. No, you pat his curly head, and say, “God bless you!” Yes, but why do you then do injury to his soul by your evil example? Why do you take your boy where you know he will learn no good and much harm? How dare you take him to places where the amusement is defiled and defiling, lascivious, unclean? No, if you really mean it when you say, “God bless my boy!” then live so that *you* will bless him by your example! May you be saved yourself, and then may you be a true parent to your children for immortality as well as for time! May these words abide with you and God bless them, so that we and our children may meet in Heaven, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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

TWO COVERINGS AND TWO CONSEQUENCES

NO. 3500

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1916.

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

“He that covers his sins shall not prosper.”
Proverbs 38:13.

“You have covered all their sins.”
Psalms 85:2.

IN THESE two texts we have *man's covering*, which is worthless and culpable—and *God's covering*, which is profitable, and worthy of all acceptance! No sooner had man disobeyed his Maker's will in the Garden of Eden than he discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that he was naked—and he set about at once to make himself a covering. It was a poor attempt which our first parents made, and it proved a miserable failure. “They sewed fig leaves together.” After that, God came in, revealed to them yet more fully their nakedness, made them confess their sin, brought their transgression home to them, and then it is written—“The Lord God made them coats of skin.” Probably the coats were made of the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, and, if so, they were a fit type of Him who has provided us with a sin-offering and a robe of perfect righteousness! Every man since the days of Adam has gone through much of the same experience, more or less relying on his own ingenuity to hide his own confusion of face. He has discovered that sin has made him naked and he has set to work to clothe himself. As I shall have to show you, presently, he has never succeeded. But God has been pleased to deal with His own people according to the riches of His Grace—He has covered their shame and put away their sins that they should not be remembered any more.

Let me now direct your attention, first, to man's covering, and its failure. And then to God's covering, and its perfection.

May the Holy Spirit be pleased to give you discernment, that you may see your destitute state in the Presence of God, and understand the merciful relief that God, Himself, has provided in the bounty of His Grace!

I. MAN'S COVERING.

There are many ways in which men try to cover their sin. Some do so by denying that they have sinned, or, admitting the fact, they deny the guilt! Or else, candidly acknowledging both the sin and the guilt, they excuse and exonerate themselves on the plea of certain circumstances

which rendered it, according to their showing, almost inevitable that they should act as they have done. By pretext and pretence, apology and self-vindication, they acquit themselves of all criminality and put a fine gloss upon every foul delinquency! *Excuse-making* is the most common trade under Heaven! The slenderest materials are put to the greatest account. A man who has no valid argument in arrest of judgment, no feasible reason why he should not be condemned, will go about and bring a thousand excuses and ten thousand circumstances of extenuation—the whole of them weak and thin as a spider’s web. Someone here may be saying within himself, “It may be I have broken the Law of God, but it was too severe. To keep so perfect a Law was impossible. I have violated it, but then I am a man, endowed with passions that involve propensities and inflamed with desires that need gratification. How could I do otherwise than I have done? Placed in peculiar circumstances, I am borne along with the current. Subject to special temptations, I yield to the fascination, but this is only natural!” So you think. So you essay to exculpate yourself. But, in truth, you are now committing a fresh sin, for you are abasing God, you are inculcating the Almighty! You are impugning the Law of God to vindicate yourself for breaking it! There is no small degree of criminality about such an unrighteous defense. The Law is holy, just and good. You are throwing the onus of your sins upon God! You are trying to make out that, after all, you are not to blame, but the fault lies with Him who gave the commandment. Do you think that this will be tolerated? Shall the prisoner at the bar bring accusations against the Judge who tries him? Or shall he challenge the equity of the statute while he is arraigned for violating it? And as for the circumstances that you plead, what valid excuse can they furnish? Has it come to this—that it was not you, but your necessities, that did the wrong and are answerable for the consequence? Not you, indeed! You are a harmless innocent victim of circumstances! I suppose, instead of being censured, you ought almost to be pitied. What is this, again, but throwing the blame upon the arrangements of Providence and saying to God, “It is the harshness of Your discipline, not the perverseness of my actions, that involves me in sin.” What? I say, is this but a high impertinence, yes, veritable *treason against the Majesty of that thrice holy God*, before whom even perfect angels veil their faces, while they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts”? I pray you resort not to such a covering as this, because, while it is utterly useless, it adds sin to sin and exposes you to fresh shame!

In many cases persons violating the Law of God have hoped to *cover their transgression by secrecy*. They have done the deed in darkness. They hope that no ear of man heard their footfall, or listened to their speech. Possibly they themselves held their tongue and flattered themselves that no observer witnessed their movements or could divulge their action. So was it with Achan. I dare say he took the wedge of gold and the Babylonian garment mid the confusion of the battle and hid it when his comrades seemed too much engaged to notice so trivial an affair. While they were rushing over the fallen walls of Jericho, amidst the de-

bris and the dust, he might be unmolested and then, in the dead of night, while they slept, he turned the sod of his tent, dug into the earth, and buried there his coveted treasure. All looks right to his heart's content. He has smoothed it down, and spread his carpet over the grave of his lust. Little did he reckon of the Omniscient eyes! Little did he count on the unerring lot that would come home to the tribe of Judah, to the family of the Zarhites, to the house of Zabdir and, at last, to the son of Carmi, so that Achan, himself, would have to stand out confessed as a traitor—a robber of his God! Men little know the ways in which the Almighty can find them out and bring the evidence that convicts out of the devices that were intended to cover their sin!

Do you not know that Providence is a wonderful detective? There are hounds upon the track of every thief, and murderer, and liar—in fact upon every sinner of every kind! Each sin leaves a trail. The dogs of judgment will be sure to scent it out and find their prey. There is no disentangling yourselves from the meshes of guilt—no possibility of evading the penalty of transgression! Very amazing have been the ways in which persons who have committed crimes have been brought to judgment. A trifle becomes a tell-tale. The method of deceit gives a clue to the manner of discovery. Wretched the men who bury their secrets in their own bosom! Their conscience plays traitor to them. They have often been forced to betray themselves. We have read of men talking in their sleep to their fellows and babbling out in their dreams the crime they had committed years before! God would have the secret disclosed. No eye had seen, neither could other tongue have told, but the man turned king's evidence against *himself*—he has thus brought himself to judgment! It has often happened, in some form or other, that conscience has thus been witness against men.

Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a secret sin? You would not have me point you out for all the world, nor shall I do so. Believe me, however, the sin is known! Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it, it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen. “By whom?” you ask. Ah, by One who never forgets what He sees, and will be sure to tell of it. He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it. Certainly He will one day proclaim it by the sound of trumpet to listening worlds! You are watched, Sir—you are known! You have been narrowly observed, young girl—those things you have hidden away will be brought to light—for God is the great discoverer of sin! His eyes have marked you! His Providence will track you! It is vain to think that you can conceal your transgressions. Before high Heaven, disguise is futile! Yes, the darkness hides not—the night shines as the day. I have known persons who have harbored a sin in their breast till it has preyed upon their constitution. They have been like the Spartan boy who had stolen a fox and was ashamed to have it known, so he kept it within his garment till it ate through his flesh, and he fell dead. He allowed the fox to gnaw his heart before he would betray himself! There are those who have got a sin, if not a lie in their right hand, yes, a lie in their heart and

it is eating into their very life! They dare not confess it. If they would confess it to their God and make restitution to those whom they have offended, they would soon come to peace, but they vainly hope that they can cover the sin and hide it from the eyes of God and man. He that covers his sin in this fashion shall not prosper.

Again, full many a time sinners have tried to *cover their sin with lies*. Indeed, this is the usual habit—to lie—to cloak their guilt by denying it. Was not this the way with Gehazi? When the Prophet said, “Where have you come from, Gehazi?” he said, “Your servant went nowhere.” Then the Prophet told him that the leprosy of Naaman would cleave to him all the days of his life. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, in lying in order to hide their sin—how quickly was it discovered—and how terrible was the retribution! I am amazed that men and women can lie as they do after reading that story! “Have you sold the land for so much?” asked Peter. And Ananias said, “Yes, for so much.” At that instant he fell down and gave up the ghost! Three hours after, when his wife, Sapphira, said the same, the feet of the young men who had buried her husband were at the door, ready to carry out her corpse and bury her by his side. Oh, Sirs, you must weave a tangled web, indeed, when once you begin to deceive! And when you have woven it, you will have to add lie to lie, and lie to lie, and yet all to no purpose, for you will be surely found out! There is something about a lie that always deludes the man who utters it. Liars have need of good memories. They are sure to leave a little corner uncovered through which the truth escapes. Their story does not hang together. Discrepancies excite suspicions and evasions furnish a clue to discoveries, till the naked truth is unveiled. Then the deeper the plot, the fouler is the shame! But to lie unto the God of Truth, of what use can that be? What advantage is it to you to plead, “not guilty,” when He has witnessed your crime? Those Infallible eyes which never make a mistake are never closed. He knows everything—from Him no secret is hid. Why, therefore, do you imagine that you can deceive your Maker?

There are some who try to *cover their sin by prevarication*. With cunning subtlety they strive to evade personal responsibility. Memorable is the instance of David. I will not dwell upon his flagrant crime, but I must remind you of his sorry subterfuge, when he tried to hide the baseness of his lust by conspiring to cause the death of Uriah. There have been those who have schemed deep and long to throw the blame on others, even to the injury of their reputation, to escape the odium of their own malpractices! Who knows but in this congregation there may be someone who affects a high social position, supported by a deep mercantile immorality? Merchants there have been that have swollen before the public as men of wealth, while they were falsifying their accounts, abstracting money, yet making the books tally, rolling in luxury and living in jeopardy. Have they prospered? Were they to be envied? The detection that long haunted them at length overtook them—could they look it in the face? We have heard of their blank despair, their insane suicide—at any rate, a miserable exposure has been their melancholy climax. “Be sure your sin will

find you out.” You may run the length of your tether. It is short. The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb, are on your trail. Rest assured, you will be discovered. Could you escape the due reward in this life, yet certainly your guilt is known in Heaven and you shall be judged and condemned in that Great Day which shall decide your eternal destiny! Seek not, then, to cover up sin with such transparent cobwebs as these!

Some people flatter themselves that their sin has already been *hidden away by the lapse of time*. “It was so very long ago,” says one, “I had almost forgotten it—I was a lad at the time.” “Yes,” says another, “I am gray-headed now. It must have been 20 or 30 years ago. Surely you do not think that the sin of my far-off days will be brought out against me? The thing is gone by. Time must have obliterated it.” Not so, my Friend! It may be the lapse of time will only make the discovery the more clear. A boy once went into his father’s orchard and there in his rough play he broke a little tree which his father valued. But, rapidly putting it together again, he managed to conceal the fact, for the disunited parts of the tree took kindly to each other, and the tree stood as before. It so happened that more than 40 years afterwards he went into that garden after a storm had blown across it in the night, and he found that the tree had been split in two, and it had snapped precisely in the place where he had broken it when it was but a sapling. So there may come a crash to your character precisely in that place where you sinned when yet a lad! Ah, how often the transgressions of our youth remain within our bosoms! There lie the eggs of our young sin—and they hatch when men come into riper years. Don’t be so sure that the lapse of time will consign your faults and follies to oblivion. You sowed your wild oats, Sir—you have got to reap them! The time that has intervened has only operated to make that evil seed spring up and you are so much the nearer to the harvest. Time does not change the hue of sin in the sight of God. If a man could live a thousand years, the sins of his first year would be as fresh in the memory of the Almighty as those of the last. Eternity itself will never wash out a sin! Flow on, you ages, but the scarlet spot is on the sand. Flow on, still, in mighty streams, but the damning spot is still there. Neither time nor eternity can cleanse it. Only one thing can remove sin! The lapse of time cannot. Let not any of you be so foolish as to hope it will!

When the trumpet of the Resurrection sounds, there will be a resurrection of characters, as well as of men! The man who has been foully slandered will rejoice in the light that reflects his purity. But the man whose latent vices have been skillfully veneered will be brought to the light, too. His acts and motives will be alike exposed. As he himself looks and sees the resurrection of his crimes, with what horror will he face that Day of Judgment! “Ah, ah,” he says, “Where am I? I had forgotten these! These are the sins of my childhood, the sins of my youth, the sins of my manhood, and the sins of my old age. I thought they were dead and buried, but they start from their tombs! My memory has been quickened. How my brain reels as I think of them all! But there they are, and, like so

many wolves around me, they seem all thirsting for my destruction.” Beware, oh, men! You have buried your sins, but they will rise up from their graves and accuse you before God. Time cannot cover them.

Or do any of you imagine that your *tears can blot out transgressions*? That is a gross mistake. Could your tears forever flow. Could you be transformed into a Niobe, and do nothing else but weep for years, the whole flood could not wash out a single sin! Some have supposed that there may be efficacy in baptismal water, or in sacramental emblems, or in priestly incantations, or in confession to a priest—one who asks them to disclose their secret wickedness to him—and betrays a morbid avidity to make his breast the sewer into which all kinds of uncleanness should be emptied! Be not deceived! There is nothing in these ordinances of man, or these tricks of Romish priestcraft (I had almost said of *witchcraft*, the two are so much alike) to excuse the folly of those who are beguiled by them. You need not catch at straws when the rope is thrown out to you. There is pardon to be had! Remission is to be found! Forgiveness can be procured! Turn your back on yonder priests—lend not your ears to them, neither be you the victims of their snares! In the street each day it makes one’s soul sad to see them. Like the Pharisees of old, they wear their long garments to deceive. You cannot mistake them. Their silly conceit publishes their naked shame. Confide not in them for a moment. Christ can forgive you. God can blot out your sin. But they cannot ease your conscience by their penances, or remove your transgressions by their celebrations.

Thus I have gone through a rough, not very accurate list of the ways by which men hope to cover their sin, but they “shall not prosper.” None of these shall succeed.

A more joyous task devolves on me now, while I draw your attention to my second text, “You have covered all their sin.”

II. GOD’S COVERING.

This fact is affirmed concerning the people of God. All who have trusted in the atoning Sacrifice which was presented by the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary may accept this welcome assurance, “God has covered all their sin.” How this has come to pass I will tell you. Before ever God covers a man’s sins *He unveils them*. Did you ever see your sins unveiled? Did it ever seem as if the Lord put His hand upon you, and said, “Look, look at them”? Have you been led to see your sins as you never saw them before? Have you felt their aggravations fit to drive you to despair? As you have looked at them, has the finger of detection seemed to point out your blackness? Have you discovered in them a depth of guilt, iniquity, and Hell—which never struck your mind before? I recollect a time when that was a spectacle always before the eyes of my conscience. My sin was always before me. If God thus makes you see your sin in the light of His Countenance, depend upon it, He has His purposes of mercy toward you. When you see and confess it, He will blot it out. So soon as God, in Infinite loving kindness, makes the sinner know in truth that he is a sinner, and strips him of the rags of his self-righteousness, He

grants him pardon and clothes his nakedness! While he stands shivering before the gaze of the Almighty, condemned, the guilt is purged from his conscience! I do not know of a more terrible position in one's experience than to stand with an angry God gazing upon you and to know that wherever God's eyes fall upon you they see nothing but sin—see nothing in you but what He must hate and must abhor! Yet this is the experience through which God puts those to whom He grants forgiveness! He makes them know that He sees how sinful they are and He makes them feel how vile and leprous they are. His Justice withers their pride! His judgment appalls their heart! They are humbled in the very dust, and made to cry out—each man trembling for his own soul—“God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Not till this gracious work of conviction is fully worked does the Lord appear with *the glorious proclamation* that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall have his sins covered. That proclamation I have now openly to publish and personally to deliver to you. With your outward ears you may have heard it hundreds of times. It is old, yet always new. Whoever among you, knowing himself to be guilty, will come and put his trust in Jesus Christ, shall have his sins covered. “Can God do that?” Yes, He can. *He alone can cover sin!* Against Him the sin was committed. It is the offended person who must pardon the offender. No one else can. He is the King. He has the right to pardon. He is the Sovereign Lord and He can blot out sin. Besides that, He can lawfully cover it, for the Lord Jesus Christ (though you know the story, let me tell it again—the song of Redemption always rings out a charming melody), Jesus Christ, the Father's dear Son, in order that the Justice of God might be vindicated, bare His breast to its dreadful hurt and suffered in our place—what we ought to have suffered as the penalty of our sin! Now the Sacrifice of God covers sin—covers it right over and He more than covers it—He makes it cease to be! Moreover, the Lord Jesus kept the Law of God, and His obedience stands, instead of our obedience! And God accepts Him and His righteousness on our behalf, imputing His merits to our souls!

Oh, the virtue of that atoning blood! Oh, the blessedness of that perfect righteousness of the Son of God, by which He covers our sins!

There are two features of covering I should like to recall to your recollection. The one was the Mercy Seat or propitiatory, over the golden Ark, wherein were the tablets of stone. Those tablets of stone seemed, as it were, to reflect the sins of Israel. As in a mirror they reflected the transgression of God's people. God was above, as it were, looking down between the cherubic wings. Was He to look down upon the Law of God defiled and defiled by Israel? Ah, no—there was put over the top of the ark, as a lid which covered it all, a golden lid called the Mercy Seat—and when the Lord looked down He looked upon that lid which covered sin. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ, the Covering for all our sins! God sees no sin in those who are hidden beneath Jesus Christ!

There was another covering at the Red Sea. On that joyous day when the Egyptians went down into the midst of the sea pursuing the Israe-

lites, at the motion of Moses' rod, the waters that stood upright like a wall leapt back into their natural bed and swallowed up the Egyptians! Great was the victory when Miriam sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." It is even so that Jesus Christ's Atonement has covered up our sins. They are sunk in His sepulcher! They are buried in His tomb! His blood, like the Red Sea, has drowned them. "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." Against the Believer there is not a sin recorded in God's Book. He that believes in Him is perfectly absolved. "You have covered all their sin." I shall not have time to dwell upon the sweetness of this fact, but I invite you that believe to consider its preciousness—and I hope you who have not believed will feel your mouth watering after it—to know that every sin one has ever committed, known and unknown, is gone—covered by Christ! To be assured that when Jesus died, He did not die for some of our sins, but for all the sins of His people! Not for their sins up till now, but for all the sins they ever will commit! Well does Kent put it—

***"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black they're cast
And O, my Soul, with wonder view
For sins to come, here's pardon too!"***

The Atonement was made before the sin was committed. The Righteousness was presented even before we had lived. "You have covered all their sins." It seems to me as if the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world, had in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world, covered all His people's sins. Therefore, we are accepted in the Beloved, and dear to the Father's heart. Oh, what a joy it is to get a hold of something like this Truth of God, especially when the Truth gets a hold of you—when you can feel by the inworked power and witness of the Holy Spirit that your sins are covered—that you dare stand up before a heart-searching God and give thanks that every transgression you ever committed is hid from the view of those piercing eyes through Jesus Christ your Lord!

Some people think we ought not to talk thus, that it is presumptuous. But really there is more presumption in doubting than there is in believing! For a child to believe his father's word is never presumption. I like to credit my Father's Word, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Condemned I am not, for I know I do believe in Him. "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

Beloved, the covering is as broad as the sin! The covering completely covers, and forever covers, for as God sees today no sin in those who are washed in Jesus' blood, so will He never see any. You are accepted with an acceptance that nothing can change! Whom once He loves, He never leaves, but loves them to the end. The reason of His love to them does not lie in their merits nor their charms—the cause of love is in Himself. The ground of His acceptance of them is in the Person and work of Christ. Whatever they may be, whatever their condition of heart may be, they

are accepted because Christ lived and died. It is not a precarious or a conditional, but an *eternal* acceptance!

Would you enjoy the blessedness of this complete covering? Cowering down beneath the tempest of Jehovah's wrath, which you feel in your conscience, would you obtain this full remission? Behold the gates of the City of Refuge which stand wide open! The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed to the thirsty, needy, laboring, weary soul! Not merely open are the gates, but the invitation to enter is given. "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You are bid to lay hold upon Eternal Life! The way of doing so is simple. No works of yours, no merits, no tears, no preparations are required, but trust—TRUST—that is all! Believe in Jesus! Rely upon Him! Depend upon Him! Depend upon Him! I have heard of Homer's Iliad being enclosed in a nutshell, so small was it written, but here is the Plain Man's Guide to Heaven in a nutshell! Here is the essence of the whole Gospel in one short sentence—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Him! Trust Him! That is the meaning of that word, *believe*. Depend upon Him and as surely as you do it, death, nor Hell, nor sin shall ever separate you from the love of Him whom you have embraced, from the protection of Him in whose power you have taken shelter!

The Lord lead you to cower beneath His covering wings and grant you to be found in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. So shall your present peace be the foretaste of your eternal happiness! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 55:1-17.**

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David.

It needed the chief musician to sing such a Psalm as this! It is full of sorrow and yet full of confidence in God. It is a Psalm upon the stringed instruments, and it sings not of man, only, but of that Son of Man—that greatest of men, who was also greatest in grief as greatest in faith. Maschil—that is, "instructive," "full of teaching." The experience of one child of God is instructive to another, and especially the experience of the great First-Born among many brethren. A Psalm of David—David, that many-sided man who seemed not one, but "all mankind's epitome." Who has not found his own experience when he has read the Psalms of David? It is a mirror—this Book of Psalms—which reflects us all. See how he begins.

Verse 1. *Give ear to my prayer, O God.* All the saints pray. There is no exception to this rule. And in their times of trouble, they pray with greater vehemence than ever. They delight in prayer. But observe how eager they are that God should hear them. It is not praying for praying's sake—for the use of good words only. "Give ear to my prayer, O God."

1. *And hide not Yourself from my supplication.* When a man passes by his fellow in his distress, he is said to hide himself. O God, do not pass me by! When You hear my plaintive voice, do not hurry on and leave me

to my woes! Forget not, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus Christ did suffer the hiding of God's face. You and I may trust that in our hour of prayer we shall not have to do so. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But even if we should have to drink of that cup, better lips than ours have tasted its bitterness long ago!

2. *Attend unto me, and hear me.* That is three times he thus implores God to give him a hearing. It reminds me of that Gethsemane pleading of our Lord when thrice He prayed using the same words. Here David begins—makes his beginning in prayer with a threefold cry to God. "Give ear to me! Hide not Yourself from me! Attend unto my prayer, and hear me."

2. *I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise.* Sometimes prayer is scarcely articulate. "I make a noise." He was very free with God. He spoke out his heart as best his heart would speak—and he seemed to ramble. I believe that some of our sweetly-composed prayers have no prayer in them—and some of our broken petitions are those that reach the heart of God. "Groans that cannot be uttered" are prayers that cannot be refused! There may be most strength in the *passion* of the soul when there is least order in the *expression* of the soul. "I mourn in my complaints, and make a noise."

3. *Because of the voice of the enemy.* He can speak, and speak clearly, too. Malice is never short of language, "because of the voice of the enemy."

3. *Because of the oppression of the wicked.* The best men have often been the most oppressed of men. Men have often spoken worst of those who have deserved the best. David is in that plight—and so was our Lord. He, too, knew the voice of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked.

3. *For they cast iniquity upon me.* They spatter me with their mire—they slander me. They speak evil of my good.

3. *And in wrath they hate me.* It is the old story. The seed of the serpent naturally hates the Seed of the women. Even our Lord had a bruised heel. Know you not that Ishmael persecutes Isaac, the child of the promise? All down history there runs this line—the mark of blood and suffering. It must be so, "for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me."

4. *My heart is sorely pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.* I suppose that David may have written this after he had been driven out of Jerusalem by the party under the leadership of his son, Absalom, and Ahithophel. When it is all over, he sings his song of dolor, and yet of confidence before his God. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ could use this language with very great emphasis. "My heart is sorely pained within Me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon Me"—as if midnight came down upon His soul—came down from God. "Are fallen upon me." Descended, therefore, and those are the heaviest of griefs which seem to come down just when we expected that showers of mercy would come down. Our Savior knew what this meant.

5, 6. *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest.* If he could not have the wings of an eagle to fight the conflict, he begged for the wings of a dove to fly from it! But what would you and I do if we had wings? Where could we go if we had wings, but, like the dove of Noah, fly to the Lord? But we can get there without wings, Brothers and Sisters! We can get there by faith in Him. It is a vain wish, then, and yet how many have sighed—“Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade where rumor of oppression and deceit might never reach me.” Ah, we sigh for solitude, and when we get solitude—we sigh to get out of it!

7. *Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.* Why, David had been in the wilderness and then he sighed to get back to the Temple of God! But such foolish creatures are we at our very wisest that we know not what we sigh for! It was good for David that he had not wings, and it is good for you that you cannot run away. God has made you no armor for your back because you must go forward. Long ago He burned our boats. We cannot return. We must go “forward,” now, to the eternal victories in His strength!

8. *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.* But he that would fly away from slander must fly very fast. How can we escape it? That cruel tongue, that wicked tongue walks through the earth and smites with its sword the best of God’s people. Now, like a soldier, David prays as his Master would never pray.

9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.* That was not a bad prayer, for God heard it. He did divide their tongues. The counsels of the wicked were put to nothing, and so they made a mistake and David escaped through their divisions. I see not how a king driven from his throne and hunted by rebels, can pray differently from this. If he is a warrior and fights at all, he must wish for victory! Yet let me remind you that these verses need not be read in the imperative, neither may they necessarily be understood to be prayers. They can be read as prophecies. “God will destroy and divide the tongues of the wicked.” The divisions of error are the hope of truth. God divides the tongues of those who use their tongues against His Word, and so His Truth conquers.

10. *Day and night they go about upon the walls thereof: mischief, also, and sorrow are in the midst of it.* Remember, Jerusalem was in the hands of a band of wicked men. Everywhere sin prevailed when David had left it.

11, 12. *Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me—then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him.* Here you get to the center of David’s grief. Ahithophel had betrayed him and here you begin to see the portrait of Christ coming out on the canvas. David seems

to be painted first, and then there is painted an image of our Lord, which is seen here and there. "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it."

13. *But it was you.* In the original it runs thus, "But you." The ardor of poetry is upon the Psalmist. He sees him—"you." And he looks at him with indignation—"you."

13, 14. *A man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the House of God in company.* It is Ahithophel! It is Judas Iscariot! It is either—it is both. Oh, what a grief it is to be betrayed by one whom we have trusted, one whom we treated as our equal, one whom we followed as a trusted guide, one to whom we told our secrets and linked our heart. "My acquaintance." One whose friendship was sanctified by the sanctions of religion. "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the House of God in company." Have any of you had to suffer from this serpent's tongue? Be not surprised. Your Master endured it before you. And now David bursts out in words of prayer, "Let death seize upon them. Let them go down quickly into Hell."

15. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quickly into Hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.* And this prayer also was heard, for Ahithophel was hanged with a rope, and Absalom without one—and their followers perished by thousands in the woods of Ephraim—and so God swept away the good man's slanderers.

16. *As for me*—What would I do? Plot against their plots and set cunning against their cunning? No, not I.

16, 17. *I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice.* He would pray often, but not too often. Where time sets her boundaries, there are we to set up our altars—evening and morning and at noon. It seems natural that our undertakings should be begun, continued, and ended in God—and that each day. Oh, pray much when your enemies plot much! If, morning, noon, and evening, they are seeking your ill, then just as often seek you good from God. How beautifully he puts it. "He shall hear my voice." He does not pray at a chance. He is certain that his prayers will go up to God. Yes, more than that, he anticipates a blessing! He foresees, no, he *sees* the blessing!

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

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

A PRAYER FOR REVIVAL NO. 2426

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 18, 1895.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 14, 1887.**

***“Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You”
Psalm 85:6.***

BRETHREN, if you will pray this prayer, it will be better than my preaching from it! And my only motive in preaching from it is that you may pray it. Oh, that at once, before I have uttered more than a few sentences, we might begin to pray by crying, yes, *groaning* deep down in our souls, “Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?”

Notice the style of the praying here—it is in the form of a question and in the shape of a plea. There are very few words and none that can be spared. Godly men, when they prayed of old, meant it! They did not pray for *form's* sake, neither were they very particular about uttering goodly words and fine-sounding sentences—they came to close grips with God. They questioned Him, they pleaded with Him. They drove home the nail and tried to clinch it. I see that in the very shape of the prayer, “Will You not—will You not—will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?” Oh, that we knew how to pray! I fear that we do not. We are missing the sacred art, we are losing the heavenly mystery—we are but apprentice hands in prayer. Compared with such a man as John Knox, whose prayers were worth more than an army of ten thousand men, or compared with the prayers of Luther, how few of us can pray!

Luther was a man of whom they said, as they pointed at him in the street, “There goes a man who can have anything he likes to ask of God.” He was the man who, by his prayer, dragged Melancthon back from the very gates of death and, what was more, the man who could shake upon her seven hills the harlot of Rome as she never had been shaken before, because he was mighty with God in prayer! Oh, that I could but stir up my Brothers and Sisters to be instant in season and out of season, if there is such a thing as out of season with God in prayer! Let us get away to our closets! Let us cry mightily to Him! Let us come to close quarters with Him and say, “Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?”

I. To come at once to the text, let us ask, **WHAT IS THE TIME FOR SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS?**

We shall have to look at the Psalm, itself, to help us in the answer. What is the time for offering such a prayer as this? It is, dear Friends, *when we can remember some gracious acts of God in the past.* Read—“Lord, You have been favorable unto Your land. You have brought back

the captivity of Jacob...Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" Ah, now, some of you can remember grand times, when you were younger than you now are, when the Lord was present with His people in a very glorious fashion—when He laid bare His arm and the people were made to feel His Divine Presence in the preaching of the Word. Do you remember it? The 44th Psalm begins, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old." None of us can remember the early Methodist days—they were over before we were born—but they were very wonderful times when the preaching of the Word of God was like fire in the midst of the people!

[Our friends need not be troubled by the flying of a dove. It will soon go out of the window, no doubt. Let us believe that it has come as a messenger of good. Oh, that the blessed Dove would, Himself, come from Heaven and bring salvation in His wings!]

Well, I was saying that those first Methodist times were brave days, so our fathers have told us, though we cannot remember them. But some of you can remember when you were members of a happy congregation, all united, all earnest, all pleading with God and there were grand Sabbaths, then! You can never forget those days of the Son of Man upon the earth, when conversions were numerous and all the people of God rejoiced and were ready to shout for joy. If you have any recollection of such days as those, pray this prayer, "Lord, what You have done, You can do! Will You not revive us again? You can outdo all we have yet seen of Your work. Come, now, we beseech You, and repeat Your mercies in the eyes of Your people."

After some mercy drops, then, it becomes us to cry for showers of blessing. Pray again the petition that we sang just now—

***"Revive Your work, O Lord,
And give refreshing showers,
The glory shall be all Your own,
The blessing, Lord, be ours."***

Another time for such a prayer is *after tokens of Divine displeasure*, when we are somewhat under a cloud. Thus the Psalmist says, "Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" I feel that the Church of God is generally, at this time, in a very sad state and though I am told that I am a croaker, and too nervous, and so on, yet I know what I know, and I speak not without clear information nor without a heart that is heavy at knowing so much of the evil of the times! And, because the times are dark and God's Gospel is at a discount, and prayerfulness of spirit and holiness of life are things not so common among us as they should be, therefore I think that it is time to cry to the Lord, "Will You not revive us again?" I entreat God's people to pray, now, if they have ever prayed in their lives! This is a dark hour of the night—now cry mightily unto the Lord, the God of our salvation—that He will turn our captivity and send the daystar which shall herald that day that shall never know a night! It is good to pray when you have seen good

days and it is equally right to pray when you think that the days are not what they should be.

Another time for praying like this is *when saints feel lethargic*. Do you always feel active? Do you always feel energetic? I think not! If you were to look at one of the statues, say, in Westminster Abbey, you would find that it never complains of rheumatism and is not affected either by heat or cold, because it is not alive. But living men and living women have their changes because they have life. The most flourishing tree that grows sheds its leaves when the time comes. All plants are not always in flower—they have their springs, their summers, their autumns and their winters—and it is just so with God's people. Whenever you, therefore, feel dull and lethargic, here is a prayer for you—"Will You not revive us again? Lord, come and wake us up again! Pour fresh strength into Your weak children! Put the living fire into Your lukewarm children! Raise Your sleepy children, Lord—make us all to live at the highest point of life if, for a while, we have seemed ready to die." Perhaps someone will say, "Then it is the prayer for me, for I feel dull and weak." If so, be sure that you use it. Do not acknowledge the suitability of it and then put it up on the shelf, but pray to the Lord at once, "Will you not revive us again?"

Another time when this prayer is very suitable is *when efforts seem to be useless*—when, for instance, I have preached the Gospel and have had no conversions. When you have been in your Sunday school class and no child has cried to God for mercy. When you have been up and down your tract district and not one person has said a cheering word as to taking interest in the sermon that you have left. When, indeed, you have come to close quarters with some hearts and have really laid yourselves out for the conversion of such and such persons—and you appear to have failed. Well now, if that has been your experience, do not go home miserable, but go to God with this prayer, "Lord, will You not revive us again?" How quickly the Lord can revive us! Here, by the space of 33 years or so, I have been favored by the Grace of God to preach to an attentive congregation, but there have been times when I have felt that there was—

"No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,"

when I have preached, but it seemed to be like talking to a dead wall! And yet, before I have been aware of it, God's Spirit has come down upon the people and the same blessed Gospel—for we have not two gospels—has been blessed to many and, one after another, they have cried out, "What must we do to be saved?" Workers for Christ, never think of giving up your work, but stick to it and pray this prayer vehemently, and intensely, "Will You not revive us again? Lord, send us once again times of increased spiritual life, times of greater success in the winning of souls!"

And, once more, I think that this prayer may well be prayed *when we have among us a number of persons who are backsliding*. In a large Church there are always some who are spiritually sick—going back and declining—and some of us know the heartbreak of mourning over those that once ran well, of whom we have sorrowfully to ask, "What hindered them?" There are some who used to be bold in the service of God who now forsakes His House of Prayer, His way and even deny His holy name! Well, what then?—

**“When any turn from Zion’s way,
Alas, what numbers do!”**

Then let this prayer be in our heart and on our tongue, “Will You not revive us again? Great Shepherd, come and bring back the stray sheep. Holy Spirit, come, we beseech You, with Your quickening breath, and bring back to life and spiritual health those that are fainting and ready to die.”

Thus I think I have shown you that there are many occasions upon which this prayer would be a very fit one. Let us now silently, all of us who know how to pray, breathe this petition into God’s ear, “Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?”

II. Secondly, though it will be the same thought presented a little differently, let us consider THE NEED OF SUCH A PRAYER—“Will You not revive us again?” Who needs such a prayer?

Who needs it? Well, first of all, *the minister needs it*. Brothers and Sisters, you make a mistake about some of us ministers—you have a notion that we are always full of Grace, that when we come into the pulpit we are always able to command earnestness and zeal. Do not believe it! We are but poor creatures without our God. Apart from Divine Grace, we are just as hard-hearted towards sinners as any of our people are, and we have to cry mightily to God to keep our spiritual nature alive, even as you do. I entreat you, pray more for us! Pray that God would revive us again! If the preachers grow dull and sleepy, there is no wonder that the people do! Therefore give us a special place in your supplications that we may be kept right for your sakes, for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s sake. Oh, pray for ministers! I am not going to find fault with any of them any more than I find fault with myself, but there is grievous need to pray for many occupants of pulpits, that the Lord would revive them again!

There is a very common habit of criticizing us and I am sure I do not mind if you criticize me as much as you like, but it is very difficult for me to find anybody to take this pulpit because anybody that some of you like, others do not like. I have given up any idea of pleasing you all—but I just try to do my best, that is all I can do. But the habit of criticizing ministers is a bad one. Give it up and begin to *pray* for them. Pray more and more for all preachers of the Word, “Lord, revive them. Lord, revive them.” I have heard of a minister who preached once about our being epistles, written not with ink, but with the Holy Spirit. One of his divisions was that sometimes ministers were pens and they could not write upon men’s hearts because they were not dipped in the ink. I think that there is a great deal in that thought. If a minister comes forward with a good dip of ink in his pen, then he can write upon men’s hearts. When the Spirit of God fills us and we are revived, then some good writing will be done—but not else.

But, dear Friends, *all the leaders of our Church need receiving*. Of our Church, I mean. If there are any people who need praying for, it is deacons, and I put the elders with them. Never forget to pray for them. I have no fault to find with them any more than I have to find with the ministers, but they are no better than they should be, and they will not be as good as they should be unless the Grace of God shall come upon

them and bless them! Oh, to have around us a loving band of Church officers! It is our great joy and delight to have such men around us, but may the Lord make better men of them, equip them all for their spiritual work to the very highest degree and fill them all with Divine Life!

I was preaching, once, in a place which happened to be full when I preached there, but the congregation was very small at other times. And when I went into the vestry, I noticed two gentlemen leaning against the mantelpiece in a very comfortable manner, and I asked them if they were the deacons of the Church. They said that they were, and I then told them that I had looked, for some time, to find out the reason why that Church did not prosper, and I had found it out! They were anxious to know what it was, but I did not further inform them. I have no doubt that, often, dead deacons and dead elders prevent a Church prospering—therefore, let us pray earnestly for the leaders of God's Israel, "Lord, revive them again. Put more spiritual life into them."

The same is true of *all the members of the Church without exception*. How much they need reviving! And all the workers, too. You who have a large class to look after. You who are conducting a Mission. Why, if you who lead the way in Christ's work go to sleep, what is to become of the work? So, let us carry upon our hearts in prayer all our fellow members, the workers and the sufferers, and cry to God, "Lord, revive them. Keep them in a good state. Keep them in proper trim that they may do that work in noble fashion, and bring glory to Your holy name. Will You not revive us again?" Brothers, Sisters, let me breathe this prayer in the name of you all, "Lord, we want to serve You at our very best. Revive us again, we beseech You."

But, further, we must pray thus, for there is great need on the part of *the hesitators*. Some of you who are here, tonight, seemed about to be converted *years ago*! I know a man whom, to this day, you cannot get into a place of worship. He says he will never go any more. He declares that he was within an inch of being converted when he went last time and he is afraid to go again! But there are some of you who always come and you have almost learned to sit contentedly upon the brink of decision. Oh, pray for them, dear Friends! Pray for the hesitators, pray for the procrastinators, pray for those who are trifling away their conscience, gradually getting rid of everything like spiritual fear and distress—and who will shut their eyes and sleep themselves into Hell unless God, in great mercy, prevents it! O Lord, will You not revive us again—that these sleepers may wake up and become decided for You?

Besides, we have need to pray this prayer when we think of *the careless ones among us*. What strange people come into such a congregation as this! A man came here this morning for no earthly purpose but to pick pockets—and I dare say he is here again tonight! Look sharp after him! I wish I knew how to pick my way into his heart and to run away with him as a captive for my Lord! Oh, that even *he* might be transformed by Divine Grace! The most curious motives bring people under the sound of the Gospel—some of them positively wicked, others of them quite ridiculous.

Then look at the *outside public*, the myriads who never go to hear the Gospel at all. How are they to be reached by a cold, dead Church? So, for their sakes, for the sake of this great London, for the sake of this great nation, for the sake of the world, let us pray, "O God, be pleased to revive us again!"

I pause here and beseech you not to let me pass the next milestone until each one of you have prayed this prayer, "Will You not revive us again?"

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, THE ESSENCE OF SUCH A PRAYER—"Will You not revive us again?" What is this prayer if it is analyzed and we get to the very soul of it?

Well, it means, first, *dependence upon God*. If you are praying this prayer aright, you feel, "Lord, nobody can revive us but Yourself." People often talk about "getting up a revival." Is not that a *wicked* thing? "Will You not revive us, O Lord?" The machinery for getting up a revival may often be the greatest hindrance to true godliness! A Church cannot be revived unless *God* revives it! Not a soul is saved, not a saint is quickened and made to grow except by the work of God. That is what this prayer means, "Lord, put Your hand to the work. Put Your right hand to it, we beseech You. We depend alone upon You. Will You not revive us again?"

The essence of this prayer is, next, *confidence in God*. "Lord, You can revive us again. We are not so deep in the mire but that You can lift us out. We are not so dead but that You can make us alive. Will You not revive us again? It is impossible to us, but it is possible to You. Lord, one touch of Your hand, a breath from Your blessed lips, and it is done. Will You not revive us again?" Brothers, Sisters, we believe in God, do we not? And if we do, we believe that whatever state a Church is in, God can bring it out of it! Do not run away from it and say, "God can never bless it." He can bless it! Pray it up into a blessing and make this the essence of your prayer, "Lord, You can revive us. We believe it, and we look for it."

The essence of this prayer is, next, *importunity with God*. "Will You not revive us again?" It is earnest pleading, it is pushing the point home, it is urging it with God. Do this, I pray you, dear Brothers and Sisters, with regard to the state of the Church at the present time. If half a dozen of you would, tonight, or as soon as possible, shut yourselves up a while and begin to cry to God for a revival of religion—and if you continued to cry more and more until it came—there would be grand hopes for the end of this century. If we could get a band of men and women who would give God no rest until He made His Jerusalem a praise in the earth, we should see, between now and the 20th century, something that would make our very eyes sparkle, and our hearts dance for joy! It needs but that we wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant and we may have what we will. We may be in a bad case, but we are not worse off than the churches were a hundred years ago, yet God heard the prayers of mourners in Zion who in secret places cried to Him—and He will hear our prayers, too! Therefore, let us make a solemn league and covenant together, and let us in union and concert of prayer wait upon the Lord and hear what He shall speak, for He will yet speak peace unto His peo-

ple if we do but know how to ask for it. I leave with you who are the King's remembrancers this sweet prayer to be prayed night and day—"Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

IV. Now I finish with this last head—THE NET RESULT IF THIS PRAYER IS ANSWERED. "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

It seems rather singular—does it not—that the Psalmist should put as the reason for a revival that God's people should *rejoice in Him*? You and I do not always estimate things aright. Preaching is only the stalk—conversion, prayer, praise—these are the full corn in the golden ear! In the garden the leaves may represent the work that is done, but the flowers are the praise that is rendered. In a revival, part of the result is the conversion of men, but the result is the *praise of God*—and that revival brings forth most fruit that gives to God the most Glory! God is most glorified when His people rejoice in Him and, therefore, the ripest fruit, the innermost core and center of that which comes of all holy service, is the joy in God which is as worship to Him. I reckon that we have served God when we have fed the poor, when we have taught the ignorant, when we have reclaimed the wanderer, but I am equally sure that we have rendered acceptable sacrifice when we have prayed to God, when we have delighted ourselves in Him, when the joy of our heart has, in silence, exhaled towards Him!

So, therefore, if God will be pleased to send a revival, *His people will rejoice in Him because they are revived*. They will be thankful that their spirits are plucked away from their languor and lethargy and then they will begin to rejoice with the joy of gratitude because God has done such great things for them! And then sinners will be converted and straight-way saints will rejoice over sinners saved. They will say—

***"Ring the bells of Heaven! There is joy today,
For a soul returning from the wild"***

and they will give God the Glory of that soul's salvation. So, in that way, His people will rejoice in Him.

But, best of all, to come back to where I started, when everything is right in the Church and there is a happy and prosperous time, then God's people will silently and inwardly render unto Him a revenue of praise by rejoicing in Him. It must be a good thing—must it not—for you in the midst of the turmoil of business, or for me in the midst of controversy, just to forget it all, to shake it all off and say, "Oh, what a God I have! Blessed be His name"? I often revel in God my exceeding joy—I seem to just give myself up to the enjoyment of a holy festival of delight in God, feasting my heart to the fullest. And what are the dainties that are spread before us at such a feast?

Well, first, I rejoice that there is a God. What a horrible world this would be to live in without God—the house all furnished and nobody at home! But my Lord is always at home and God is better than His world, beautiful as are the avenues of trees and yonder glistening river! God is always at home—that is the joy of our life. I love to see my Father's flag on the top of the castle and to feel that He is at home. His Presence makes everything so bright.

And then what a joy it is to think that He is my God! Whatever I have, or have not, it does not matter, I have a God, and all that there is in God is mine! O my Soul, what a happy, happy being you are! Blessed be God forever for making me, seeing that He has made Himself to be mine! We praise Him, first, for our being, and then for our well-being—and the essence of our well-being is that God, the greatest of all Beings, is ours forever and ever! This God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death and each one of us who is truly His can sing—

“Yes, my own God is He.”

As I think of God, I meditate on all His attributes. He is a powerful God. Oh, how I love Him for that! I do not want to have a weak arm to lean upon—let my Lord be the mighty God! Hallelujah to Him because He can do all things and all that power will be used for righteousness and truth! I love to think of Him as the God of Love, nothing, even in His Justice, being contrary to love. Oh, what a blessed God I have—a God of Love! Then I think of Him as a God of Justice, and I am equally pleased with Him. I do not want an unjust God—a God who could pardon sin without Atonement is no God for me! I delight to feel that His justice is as much concerned and bound to save me as His mercy. Oh, what a joy to be able to rejoice in His Justice! And then to rejoice in His Truth—His faithfulness, that He cannot lie—His immutability, that He cannot change—His eternal existence, that He cannot faint or die—ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I shall not attempt to go over all the qualities of the Infinite Jehovah but whatever they are, we delight in them all, and yet we rejoice in Him most of all!

There are many causes for joy to a Christian, but the great wellhead is God Himself. I can rejoice in His people, but then they have their faults. I can rejoice in His Word, but then I sometimes tremble at that Word. I can rejoice in God’s works, but then there is a certain terror even about them. But as for God, He Himself is perfect! And whether He is dressed in robes of war, or comes to me with words of peace, now that I am reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, He is altogether delightful under any aspect and in any place!

It may seem a very little thing for us thus to delight in God, but it is the greatest thing of all! It is the crown of a revival that God’s people should rejoice in Him.

Now, dear Hearts, as you come to the Communion Table, I want you to try to rejoice in God. “But I am mourning about myself,” says one. Well, mourn about yourself if you like, but rejoice in God. “Oh, but I am troubled in my circumstances!” Well, but a child of God should rise *above* circumstances and rejoice in God. There is more in God to cheer you than in your circumstances to depress you! Say to all these things, “Good-bye! Good-bye! Go home, for tonight I am just going to rejoice in God to the fullest!” God help you to do so and if you do, I shall know that the revival has come, and we shall look to see other fruits of it, seeing that this best and sweetest fruit of all is already reached!

Let us, before I dismiss those of you who will be going away, pray this prayer together—

“Lord, revive us again. Lord, revive me. We would, each one of us, say, ‘Amen’ to that petition. Lord, revive the pastor. Lord, revive the Church officers. Lord, revive the workers. Lord, revive the members of the Church. Lord, revive the backsliders. Lord, revive those who seem to live, but have grown careless. Lord, revive the Church at large throughout the whole earth. Spirit of revival, come upon us, now, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.”

And may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit, be with us evermore! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:22-28; 44:1-8; PSALM 85.**

We will read two passages of Scripture this evening, both of which will have a bearing upon the subject we are afterwards to consider from our text. Let us first read a few verses from Isaiah’s prophecy, beginning at chapter 43:22. [The publishers chose to put the exposition *after the sermon*, but Brother Spurgeon always did the exposition first.—EO]

Isaiah 43:22. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* This was a sad charge for God to bring against His chosen people. They had grown weary of their God and yet, truly, this charge may well be brought against some of us, for we have grown weary of God, we have forgotten Him in our daily walk and conversation—and have grown cold in our love towards Him.

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* No, God’s ways are not ways of irksomeness, but ways of pleasantness! Our religion is no tax upon us. We find Christ’s yoke to be very easy and His burden to be very light. All wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. “I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.”

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices but you have made Me to serve with your sins. You have wearied Me with your iniquities.* “While your services have been neglected, your sins have been pampered.” What an accusation! As God says by the Prophet Amos, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” God seems to be oppressed with the sin of His people, but what comes next? Why, one of the very sweetest verses in the whole of the Scriptures!

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* O glorious mercy! We are sunk in the depth of sin and yet God pardons us on the spot! He at once puts every sin away and bids us go in peace.

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together, declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.* After all these charges, you see, the love of God to His chosen people is still the same! Well might Paul say, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, but even that shall not divide us from the love of God, for, “while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” So herein Grace triumphs over sin and lays our follies beneath its feet!

2-8. *Thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing is on your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD’S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any.*

Now turn to Psalm 85. This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician. It is a Psalm worthy of the ablest musician. It is to be sung with care. They are well instructed who can understand it, and enter into the experience it describes. It is called—

“A Psalm for the sons of Korah.”

I have often reminded you, dear Friends, that when Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down alive into the pit, the sons of Dathan and Abiram perished with their fathers, but we read, “Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not.” We cannot tell why. We must set it down to the Sovereign Grace of God. And if it were so, then I can see why they became singers in the sanctuary!

“A Psalm for the sons of Korah.” You will sing best who wonder most at your salvation! You who can see no reason for it, except the Sovereign goodness of God, will have sweet voices tuned with gratitude wherewith to praise God. The first verse of the Psalm contains a happy memory

Verses 1, 2. *LORD, You have been favorable unto Your land: You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have covered all their sin. Selah.* Let us think of what God has done for His people. He has been very favorable to us in years past. He has lifted up the light of His Countenance upon His chosen ones and made them glad. “You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.” We were once in captivity, exiles far off from God and home, but He has led our captivity captive, and we are now in bondage no longer, blessed be His name! Note again what the Psalmist says—“You have forgiven the in-

iquity of Your people.” What a joy that is! Forgiven sin is enough to make us sing to all eternity. If sin is pardoned, you have a mass of mercy in that fact too great for you to estimate its value. “You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people.” See how the Inspired writer puts it again—“You have covered all their sin—hidden it, put it out of sight with that Divine covering of the Atonement which has hid forever, even from the eyes of God, the sin of His people! There is a happy memory for us—to see what God has done for us. Let us bless His name for it. Now comes another happy memory

3. *You have taken away all Your wrath: You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger.* “You did stay Your bow even after it was bent. Even when Your right arm was bared for war, You did make peace for us. ‘You have turned yourself from the fierceness of Your anger.’ When it burned like fire, yet did You stay it through the great Atonement of Jesus, “Christ our Lord.” Now comes in a prayer

4. *Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease.* “You have done all this for Your people; now do this for us who fear lest we are not Your people—comfort us! Turn us and then take Your anger from our conscience, and let us be at peace with You.” How I wish that many in this Tabernacle would pray even now, “Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease!” It is the prayer of a Church that is under a cloud. It is the prayer of a nation that is suffering for its sin. It is the prayer of a sinner who sees what God has done for His people and who entreats the Lord to do the same for him.

5. *Will You be angry with us forever?* “Surely we have not got into eternity yet. Lord, do not have eternal anger toward us. ‘Will You be angry with us forever?’ Will You not hear our prayers? Will You not have mercy upon us?”

5. *Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?* “Shall our children also suffer? Will You not have pity upon them?”

6, 7. *Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation.* “We are such poor blind creatures that we cannot see! Yet, O Lord, show us Your mercy, make us see it, reveal it to us and grant us Your salvation! It must be a free grant, a grant of Grace, a grant of Love, therefore, grant us Your salvation.” Listen to this eighth verse

8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak.* “I will be silent. I have spoken to Him, now I will hear what His answer is. I will hold my ears attentive to listen to His voice.” O my dear Hearers, when you are willing to hear God, there are good times coming for you!

8. *For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints.* There is peace, peace, nothing else but peace for them!

8. *But let them not turn again to folly.* For if they do, the Lord will speak to them by rods and chastisements. They that get God’s peace must mind that they keep it. They must walk carefully, or else they will break the peace and they may, themselves, get broken in pieces. “Let them not turn again to folly.”

9. *Surely His salvation is near them that fear Him.* When you honor Him, reverence Him, worship Him—His salvation cannot be far away from you.

9, 10. *That glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together.* At the Cross is their meeting place! There, you shall see God's mercy and God's truth embracing each other over the great Sacrifice of Christ. Mercy and truth seem set at variance in the sinner's case till they are reconciled by the blood of Jesus!

10. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* It seemed impossible that God should be righteous and yet be at peace with sinners, but Christ has taken both parties by the hand and, at Calvary, they kiss each other! God is as righteous as if He were not gracious, and as gracious as if He were not just! Yes, His justice and His peace are, each of them, all the brighter because of the other!

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from Heaven.* Carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness—what a wonderful scene is before us! Truth is coming out of the ground as though it had been a dead thing which begins to live, and leaves its tomb! And righteousness is throwing up the windows of Heaven and leaning out to look down upon the sons of men! "Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from Heaven." What a wonderful meeting this is of truth and righteousness—truth lifting up her hands to Heaven and righteousness putting down its hands to earth!

12. *Yes, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.* It is all well when it is well with us in our relation to God. When we are reconciled to Him, then all things are reconciled by that fact.

3. *Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.* Lord, hear the prayer of this Psalm and answer it to us, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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

PEACE—HOW GAINED, HOW BROKEN

NO. 2112

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly.”
Psalm 85:8.

“I WILL hear what God the Lord will speak.” There were voices and voices. There were voices of the past concerning God’s wondrous mercy to His people—“You have been favorable unto Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.” But mingled with these were the sad voices of the present. He heard the wailing and the pleading of those who said, “Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?” From this mingling of singing and sighing, the Psalmist turned away and cried, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak. I will get me into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. I will hear that voice from between the cherubim which speaks peace to the soul.”

Beloved, herein is wisdom. Resort to the sanctuary of God. When you cannot find harmony in the voices of the street, or the voices of the Church, turn to the melody of that one voice which “will speak peace unto His people.”

Again, the Psalmist had been praying. At the Mercy Seat he had spread out this petition, “Will You not revive us again: that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O Lord and grant us Your salvation.” When he had spoken, he desired an answer. He watched and waited till the Lord God should give him a reply. A friend, kindly wishing to spare me, puts at the end of his letter, “No answer expected.” This is too often a footnote to men’s prayers.

David did not pray in that fashion—he expected an answer from the mouth of the Lord. He said within himself, “I have spoken—but now I will speak no more but hear what God the Lord will speak.” Always follow up prayer with holy *expectancy*. Prayers which expect no answer are guilty of taking the name of God in vain. They are a misuse of the holy ordinance of supplication. And they are a question put upon the Divine existence, inasmuch as they reduce the Godhead to an idol, like to those images of the heathen which have ears but they hear not, neither do they speak.

Prayers without faith are an insult to the attributes of God and dishonor to His sacred name. If you pray aright, in the name of Jesus, expect the Lord to hear you, even as you would hear your child, if he asked bread of you.

In addition to this, it should be the daily resolve of every Christian man—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Not only when I am dazed and confused with other voices. Nor only when I have expressed my heart in prayer—but at all times and seasons—I will hear what God the Lord shall speak. There are many doctrines and controversies. But "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." His voice, by His Prophets and Apostles, shall be the umpire of every dispute with me. I will also turn to the Word of God for the rule of my daily life, as well as for the instruction of my mind in doctrine. I will have regard to the precepts as well as to the promises. "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

When I would know my duty, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." And, hearing His Word of command, I will need neither whip nor spur, but will make haste in the way of His commands. I will listen to His Word, whatever I may do with the precepts of men. Has He spoken? Did the primeval darkness hear it? Shall not the light which He has given me be attentive to it? Even the dead shall hear that voice and they that hear shall live. Shall not I, who have been quickened by His Spirit, joyfully say, "I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You have quickened me"?

Our Savior speaks of some who enter into life halt and maimed and having one eye. But He does not speak of anybody entering into life without ears. We must *hear* the voice of God, for it is written, "Hear and your soul shall live." Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. By Ear Gate the Prince Emmanuel enters the town of Mansoul. Men are saved, not by what they touch, or see, or taste, or smell—but by what they hear. Oh, that we would all hear the voice of Christ with solemn attention!

Our Lord says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." Be this our resolve—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Like young Samuel, let each one say, "Speak, Lord. For Your servant hears."

There is one special reason given by the Psalmist why the people of God should be most willing and eager to hear what God the Lord shall speak, and that is because, "He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints." You, Beloved, will hear nothing from the Lord but that which will calm your fears and cheer your hearts. The Lord speaks no thunders against you. His tones are tenderness, His Words are mercy, His Spirit is love, His message is peace. I will hear what God the Lord will speak—for He will speak peace and nothing else but peace, unto His own people. That is the subject for us to consider this morning. The Lord Jehovah gives peace to His holy ones.

First, what we know the Lord will speak. And, secondly, what we fear may hinder our enjoying the blessing which He speaks to us—"Let them not turn again to folly"—a notable word of warning, to which we shall do well to give heed.

I. First, let us consider WHAT WE KNOW THE LORD WILL SPEAK. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak. For He will speak peace."

The first point is, He speaks peace to a certain company—"to His people, and to His saints." Let us, then, ask ourselves, Has the Lord ever spoken peace to us, or will He do so? He will certainly do so if we have an ear to hear His voice. For God will not speak sweet words to those who turn to Him a deaf ear. He that will not hear the Gospel of peace, shall never know the peace of the Gospel. If you will not hear the Holy Spirit when He warns you of your sins, neither shall you hear Him revealing peace through pardon.

If you will not hear the Lord when He proposes to you reconciliation through the sacrifice of His dear Son. If you will not hear Him when He bids you repent and believe and be washed in the blood of the Lamb, then He will never speak peace to your soul. There is no peace out of Christ, who is our Peace. There is one Ambassador and one Mediator and only one. There is one atonement by blood and only one.

There is one Covenant of peace and there can never be another. Reconciliation comes to men by Jesus Christ and by no other gate. If you will not hear the Lord when He speaks concerning His dear Son, who is the Propitiation for sins, He will never speak peace to your heart. Oh, for the ear which is opened to hear the Lord, for this is the sure mark of Divine Grace! Does not Jesus say, "My sheep hear My voice"?

Those to whom the Lord speaks peace are His people and they acknowledge Him to be their God. Many men have no God. They would not like to be called atheists but it practically comes to that. God is not in their thoughts, their plans, their actions, their business, their life. But there is peace to that man to whom God is the greatest fact of his existence. Happy is he who has God first and last and midst in all that he does. Look him through and through and you will perceive that as the color tinges the stained glass, so does faith in God color all his life.

God is with him in his loneliness and among the multitude—God is above him to govern him, beneath him to uphold him—within him to quicken him. The man has a God to worship, a God to trust, a God to delight in. If God is everything to you, you are among His people and He will speak peace unto you. That peace is, however, always connected with *holiness*, for it is added, "and to His *saints*." His people and His saints are the same persons. Those who have a God know Him to be a holy God, and therefore they strive to be holy themselves. He that has no saintship about him will have no peace about him.

If you live a blundering, careless, godless life, you will have much tossing to and fro and many questionings of heart. "There is no peace," says my God, "unto the wicked." But to His people, His saintly ones, His sanctified ones, the people who follow after righteousness—to these the Lord Himself will secure peace by His own word of mouth.

Do I hear anyone saying, "Alas, I could not venture to be classed with saints"? Listen one minute—these people, though they are now God's

people, and though they are now made saintly by His Grace—were once given over to folly. How do I know this? Because the text says, “Let them not turn *again* to folly”—which shows that once they did follow after folly. Once they followed sin with all their hearts. They knew not God, neither served Him. But they have been turned away from folly, sin and shame—a change, a conversion has taken place in them, by the Grace of God.

Therefore, dear Hearer, let not your past foolishness dismay you, if you would now come to God. Fool as you may have been, the Lord is turning you from folly. And if He brings you to be numbered among His people and His holy ones, He will speak peace to you. I think I hear one say, “I have turned away from folly but I feel that there is in my heart a tendency to return to it!” I know it. I, too, have felt the old Adam pulling at my sleeve, to draw me back to the old way, if possible.

So it was with these people, or else the Lord would not have needed to say, “Let them not turn again to folly.” They were His people, they were His saints, too—and He spoke peace to them. But the old nature lurked within, and made the heart in danger of turning again to folly. If you find the old leaven working within you, fermenting unto evil and making you feel sick at heart to think that you should be so base, then bow low at your Savior’s feet and cry to Him in the language of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Yet remember, even if it is so with you, nevertheless you may be numbered with the Lord’s people, of whom He has said that He will speak peace unto them. But if you have no horror of sin. If you have no conflict with evil. If you have no longing for righteousness and no ear for the voice of the Lord, then God will not speak peace to you. But one of these days He will speak thunderbolts and accent His words with flames of fire—and this shall be the tenor of His speech—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” May you never hear that voice of wrath. But may peace be spoken into your soul.

But now, dear Friends, I notice here that the peace which is to be desired is peace which God speaks—and all other peace is evil. The question is sometimes put—“We see bad men enjoy peace and we see good men who have but little peace.” That is one of the mysteries of life. But it is not a very difficult one as to its first part. Why do bad men enjoy a kind of peace? I answer—sometimes their peace arises from sheer carelessness. They will not think, reflect, or consider. They do not intend to look about them, or before them. For “they count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away.”

They go through the world like blind men. They are on the verge of a precipice and they do not know their danger, or wish to know it. They will go over the edge of the cliff and be broken to pieces. But they have hardened their necks and if you warn them, they will hate you for it. These are your men that fill high the bowl and chase the flying hours with glowing

feet. They live right merrily. Like the men of the old world, they marry and are given in marriage, they drink and are drunken—till the flood comes and there is no escape.

Many are quiet in conscience because of worldliness. They are too much occupied to give fair attention to the affairs of their souls. They are taken up with business. They are at it from morning to night—shutters up and shutters down. They can find time for nothing but counting their money, or shifting their stock. Adam was lost in the garden of Eden. But these men are lost in their shops, lost in their warehouses, lost in their ships, lost in their farms, lost in the market. They give no thought to the world to come, because *this* world engrosses them. From this kind of peace may we be delivered!

Some have a brawny conscience—I mean a conscience hard, callous, rough—you cannot make it feel. A healthy conscience is tender as a raw wound, which fears a touch. But some men's consciences are covered with a thick skin and are devoid of feeling. Certain sinners have a conscience seared as with a hot iron and this brings with it that horrible peace which is the preface of eternal damnation.

Around us are persons who have a peace which Satan preserves. "When a strong man armed keeps his house, his goods are in peace." When Satan is in full possession of a man, then no disturbing thoughts come in, and the sinful heart is well content. "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." They may even die at peace, for the Psalmist complains, "there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." Satan has filled them with "a strong delusion to believe a lie," and so in peace they perish. They go willingly to destruction, like sheep to the slaughter.

And some have a peace of sullenness—an awful peace of despair, in which the man steels himself against that which he calls his fate. A man says, "I know I am to be lost. I have sinned myself beyond all hope of mercy. And why should I trouble myself further?" Like a condemned criminal, who hears the hammers fitting up the scaffold and gives himself up to silent despair, he feels, "I am doomed—it is all over with me." O my Friend, it is not so! This is a lie of Satan's own invention. While you live, there is hope! While you are yet in the land where Christ is preached, you may come to Him and live.

But deadness, sullenness, and obstinacy are your worst enemies. Waters of enmity to God often run silently because they are so deep. The man has a settled enmity against God and this makes him set his teeth and defy the Almighty in grim determination to perish. God save you from this! May you be driven out of every peace except that peace which comes from God! To that I now come.

God alone can speak true peace to the soul. When once a soul begins to feel its sinfulness and to tremble at the wrath to come, none but God can

Speak peace to it. Ministers cannot. I have often failed, when I have desired to bring comfort to troubled hearts. Books cannot do it, not even the most wise and gracious of them. The Bible itself cannot do it, apart from the Spirit of God. The ordinances of God's House, whether they are Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or prayer, or preaching—none of these can bring peace to a heart apart from the still small voice of the Lord.

I pray that none of you may rest in anything short of a Divine assurance of salvation. See how the waves are tossing themselves on high! Hark to the howling of the wind! Rise, Peter, and bid the waves be quiet! Awake, John, and pour oil upon the waves! Ah, Sirs, the Apostles will themselves sink, unless a greater than they shall interpose. Only He who lay asleep near the tiller could say, "Peace, be still!" May He say that to everyone here who is troubled about his sins! The voice of the blood of Jesus speaks—"The peace of God, which passes all understanding." We read that on the storm-tossed lake, "there was a great calm." How great is the quiet of a soul which has seen and felt the power of the atoning sacrifice!

I have told you that only God can speak this peace. Let me remind you that He can give you that peace by *speaking* it. One word from the Lord is the quietus of all trouble. No deed is needed, only a word. Peace has not now to be made—the making of peace was finished more than eighteen hundred years ago on yonder Cross. The Lord Jesus, who is our peace, went up to the tree bearing our iniquities, and thus removed the dread cause of the great warfare between God and man. There He ended the quarrel of the Covenant. Harken to these words, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." He made peace by the blood of His Cross. Through His death, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. "It is finished."

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Now is the way paved for man to come back to God by reconciliation through sacrifice. There is no more blood to be shed, nor sacrifice to be offered—peace is finally made and it only remains for the Lord God to speak it to the conscience and heart by the Holy Spirit. Yet think not that for God to speak is a little thing. His voice is omnipotence in motion. He spoke the universe out of nothing—He spoke light out of darkness. Where the word of our King is, there is power.

He speaks and it is done. If He speaks peace, who can cause trouble? In Jesus Christ there is Divine peace for the guilty soul. "Come unto Me," says He, "all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." From a tempest of distress to perfect peace—a word from the God of Peace can lift us in an instant.

Sooner or later the Lord will speak peace to His own. How blessed are the shalls and wills of the Lord God!—"He *will* speak peace unto His people." Doubt it not. He WILL. He WILL. Some of you have lost your peace for a while. Yet, if you are Believers, "He will speak peace unto His peo-

ple.” You have come to Christ and are trusting Him but you do not enjoy such peace as you desire. “He will speak peace unto His people.” There may be a time of battling and of struggling, the noise of war may disturb the camp for months—but in the end— “He will speak peace unto His people.”

I have seen some of the Lord’s true people terribly harassed year after year. One for a very long time was in the dark—wrecked on a barbarous coast and neither sun nor moon appearing. I do not excuse him for some of his despondency. There was a fault, undoubtedly, and there may also have been weakness of the brain. But he was a true child of God and at length he came out into the light and wrote a book which has cheered many. If peace comes not before, yet, “Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.”

The Lord will not put His child to bed in the dark—He will light his candle before he sleeps the sleep of death. Sickness of body and weakness of mind, or some other cause, may be a terrible kill-joy. But in the end, “The Lord will speak peace unto His people.” He cannot finally leave a soul that trusts in Him. No Believer shall die of despair. You may sink very low—but underneath are the everlasting arms and these will bring you up again. Many women of a sorrowful spirit have a hard time of it, but yet the Lord has set a day in which He will give beauty for ashes. O captive Daughter, your chains last not forever! Hold on to your hope—the night is very dark but the morning will surely come—for as God is Light, so shall His children be.

Beloved, when the Lord does speak peace to His people, what a peace it is! It is sound and safe. You may have as much of it as you will and suffer no harm. The peace of God is never presumptuous. It is a holy peace. And the more you have of it, the more you will strive to be like your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. It is a peace which rules the heart and mind and not merely the face and the tongue. It is a peace that will rise superior to circumstances. You may be very poor, but you shall find an inward wealth of contentment. You may be lonely, but communion with God will bring you company. You may be very sick in body, but peace of soul enables a man to bear pain without complaining.

There may even be a measure of depression of spirit about you and yet an inward peace will enable you to reason with yourself and say, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me?” If God gives you peace, the devil cannot take it away. If God breathes peace into your soul, the roughest winds of earth or Hell cannot blow that peace from you. They that have enjoyed this peace will tell you that it is the dawn of Heaven. They that walk in the light of God’s countenance, at this moment, are as the courtiers of a king, and for them there is a Paradise restored. Perfect peace brings a joy of which no tongue can fully tell.

There is no war above—Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all reconciled to us. There is no war within—conscience is cleansed and the heart relieved. There is no fear even of the arch-enemy below. He may grind his teeth at us, but he cannot destroy us. Even the world of nature is at peace with us. “For you shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.” “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” A deep peace, a high peace, a broad peace, an endless peace is ours.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have,” in the most emphatic and unlimited sense, “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Beloved Friends, do not be satisfied without the constant possession of unbroken peace. You may have it. You *ought* to have it. It will make you greater than princes and richer than misers. This peace will shoe your feet for ways of obedience or suffering. “May the peace of God keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!”

II. Now we must come down from our elevation, to talk about a more humbling theme, WHAT WE FEAR MAY MAR THIS BLESSING OF PEACE. “He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly.”

The grounds of a Believer’s peace are always the same, but a Believer’s enjoyment of that peace varies very greatly. I always have a right to the Divine inheritance but I do not always enjoy the fruits of that inheritance. Peace may be broken with the Christian, through great trouble, if his faith is not very strong. It need not be so. For some of those who have had the greatest fight of affliction have had the sweetest peace in Christ Jesus.

Peace may be broken through some forms of disease which prey upon the mind as well as the body. And when the mind grows weak and depressed from what are physical causes rather than spiritual ones, the infirmity of the flesh is apt to crush spiritual peace. Yet it is not always so. For sometimes, when heart and flesh have failed, God has yet been the strength of our heart, as He is our portion forever.

Inward conflict, too, may disturb our enjoyment of peace. When a man is struggling hard against a sin, when some old habit has to be hung up before the Lord, when corruption grows exceedingly strong and vigorous—as at seasons it may do—the Believer may not enjoy peace as he would wish. And yet I have known warring times when the fight within has not diminished my peace. “How so?” you may ask. I have found peace in the very fact that I was fighting! I have seen clearly that if I were not a child of God, I should not struggle against sin.

The very fact that I contend against sin, as against my deadliest foe, proves that I am not under the dominion of sin. And that fact brings to my soul a measure of peace. Satan, too—oh, it is hard to have peace under his attacks! He has a way of beating his drum of Hell at a rate which will let no Believer rest. He can inject the most profane thoughts. He can flutter us and worry us, by making us think that we are the authors of the thoughts which he fathers upon us—which are his and not ours. It is a very glorious thing, then, to be able to say, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again.”

When the Lord hides His face, as He may do as the result of grave offense that we have given Him, ah, *then* we cannot have peace. Peace runs out to a very low ebb when we are under withdrawals. And then we cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His feet!” We can never rest till we again behold the smiles of His face and take our place among His children.

But, after all, the chief reason why a Christian loses his peace is because he “turns again to folly.” What kind of folly? Folly is sin and error and everything contrary to Divine wisdom. I will briefly show you a few of the different shapes of this folly.

There is the folly of hasty judgment. Have you ever judged without knowing and considering all the surroundings of the case? Have you not come to a wrong conclusion, when you have ventured to judge the dealings of God with you? You have said, “This cannot be wise, this cannot be right—at any rate, this cannot be a fruit of love.” But you have found out afterwards that you were quite mistaken, that your severest trial was sent in very faithfulness. Your rash judgment was most evidently folly. And if you turn again to such folly in your next season of sorrow, you will certainly lose your peace.

What? Will you measure the infinite wisdom of God by the rule of your short-sighted policy? Are eternal purposes to be judged of according to the ticking of the clock? There can be no peace when we assume the throne of judgment and dare accuse our Sovereign of unkindness or mistakes—

**“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace.”**

Consider things in the long run when you would estimate the ways of God. Behold, He dwells in eternity and His measures are only to be seen in the light of the endless future. Oh, that we could either judge the Lord’s ways upon eternal principles, or leave off judging altogether! My Soul, be as a little child before the Lord and you will find peace!

Another kind of folly is of like order—it is repining and quarrelling with the Most High. Some are never pleased with God—how can He be pleased with them? There can be no use in contending with our Maker. For what are we as compared with Him? Let the grass contend with the scythe, or the tow fight with the flame. But let not man contend with God. Besides,

who are you? “Who are you, O man, that replies against God?” It is true you may be, like Job, terribly smitten and brought very low, and you cannot understand the why and the wherefore of it. But I pray you bow your head in sweet submission, for your heavenly Father must be doing the best possible thing for you.

Kick not against the pricks. When the ox, newly yoked to the plow, kicks against the goad, what is the result? It drives the goad into its own flank. It would not have been so hurt had it not defied the driver. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” No man, by quarrelling with God, can gain any advantage, for the right is on God’s side and eternal principles establish His government. When the boat wars with the rock, we know which will suffer. Yield, O my Brothers and Sisters, yield to the Lord of Love! Your hope can only climb on bended knee—your peace can only return with bowed head. For to proud rebellion there is no peace, since it is folly of the grossest kind.

Another kind of folly to which men often turn is that of doubt and distrust. What peace you have had has come by faith. And when faith departs, peace goes, also. To doubt the Lord is folly. Even the least degree of it is folly of the worst order. When you said, “God is true and I will trust Him,” then your peace was like a river. Hope in Christ and in nothing else but Christ. When your expectation is in the Lord alone, then will your peace be like a river.

Some lose their peace by turning again to the folly of intellectual speculation. Some of our friends, who once walked in the light, as God is in the light, and were as happy as all the birds of the air, have now lost their joy. And all because they have read a pernicious book, which started for them a whole host of difficulties of which they never dreamed before. Would you like me to answer those difficulties? Suppose I took the trouble to do so and succeeded, what would happen?

You would read another book tomorrow, and come to me with another set of doubts. And if we were to slay all these, you would simply invite another band of invaders to land on the shores of your mind. Therefore I decline to begin the endless task. At Mentone, the trouble of some of our friends is to catch the mosquitoes, which worry them. But there is little or no use in it. For if you catch a dozen of these little pests, twenty-four will come to the funeral.

It is just the same with these intellectual difficulties. You may, by overcoming some of them, make room for more of a worse kind. No fact, however certain, is beyond a critic’s questioning. I have done with the whole band of quibblers. People say, “Have you seen the new book? It is terribly unsettling.” It will not unsettle me—first, because I know what I know. And secondly, because I do not care one atom what the unbeliever has to say. I care, indeed, so little, that I am not curious even to know what his craze may happen to be. “I know whom I have believed.”

I am going no further than that which the Holy Spirit has taught me through the infallible Word of God. What is more, I am not going to waste my time by reading what every doubter may please to write. I have had enough of these poisonous drugs, and will have no more. Does anyone say, "We ought to read everything"? No! No! If I go out to dinner and there should happen to come to table a steak that is far gone, I let it alone. When the knife goes into it, the perfume betrays it and I do not pass my plate up for a portion.

Others may carve slices from the carrion of unbelief. But having long eaten sweet Gospel food, I cannot bring my soul to feed on that which is unholy and only fit for dogs. That which denies Scripture and dishonors the blood of the Lord Jesus is more fit for burning than reading. If you have once been staggered by modern thought, do not turn again to that folly. Be not like silly people, who seem to fall down in the mud for the sake of being brushed. Why desire to be befogged and bewildered for the sake of getting set in the right way after long straying?

Stick to the Scriptures. When you have read so much of your Bibles that there is nothing more in them, then you may devote your time and study to some other book. But for the present keep to the Book whose author is the All-Wise Jehovah. Between the covers of this Book you shall find all wisdom—and I pray you turn not again to the folly which opposes the infallible and censures the perfect. God grant us Divine Grace to maintain our peace by never turning again to the folly of human wisdom!

But the worst form of folly is sin. Scripture continually calls sinners fools, and so they are. What a touching pleading there is about this use of language! "God will speak peace unto His people. But let them not turn again to folly." As much as to say, "to turn aside will not only grieve Me, but it will harm you. Sin is not only fault, but folly. It will be to your own injury as well as to My displeasure."

Dear child of God, are you out in the storm just now? Have you no rest? Let me whisper in your ear. Is there not a cause? Somebody on board your vessel has brought this storm upon you. Where is he? He is not among the regular sailors that work the ship. He is neither captain nor mate. But he is a stranger. Down under the hatches is a man named Jonah—is he the cause of the tempest? "No," you say, "he is a good fellow, for he paid his fare."

This makes me feel all the more suspicious. He is the cause of the mischief. You will never get peace until the Jonah of sin is overboard. Cast him into the sea and it will be calm. Many a child of God harbors a traitor and hardly knows that he is doing so. And the Lord is at war with him because of the harbored rebel. When Joab pursued Sheba, the son of Bichri, he came to the city of Abel, where Sheba had taken shelter. A wise woman came to him out of the city and pleaded for the people. Joab explained to

her that he warred not with the city but with the rebel. And he added, “Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.”

Then they cut off the head of Sheba and cast it out to Joab and he blew a trumpet and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. God is besieging you with trials and distresses, turning His batteries against your walls. And there is no chance of any peace until the traitorous sin shall be given up to vengeance. I do not know what particular sin it may be, but the head of it must be thrown over the wall—and then the warriors of the Lord will go their way. Bring forth the Achan, and the accursed thing, and let all Israel stone him with stones. Search and see! Arrest the hidden foe!

“Are the consolations of God too small for you? Is there any secret thing with you?” God help us to institute a solemn search this morning and may we discover the intruder and destroy him!

Beloved, I pray that no one of us may go back to folly. If we have ever tasted the peace of God and communion with God, can we leave it for earthly joys? Can we quit the banquets of infinite love for the coarse pleasures of sin? God forbid! Remember all the sorrow which sin has cost you already. Take not this viper a second time to your bosom. We were drowned in tears and sunken in distress when we found ourselves guilty of sin. Further and further from it may we fly. But never, never, may we turn back!

Remember what it cost your Lord to make you free from the consequences of former folly—never return to it. He had to die to save us from our folly—shall we count His death as nothing? Think what tugs the Spirit of God has had with us to bring us so far on our journey towards Heaven—are we now willing to turn our backs on God and holiness? Consider also what lies just beyond. Look a little way before you. Think of the street of gold, the river which never dries, the trees which bear eternal fruit, the harps of ceaseless melody.

Beloved, we cannot turn again to folly! O God, do not permit us to do so! Grant us Your peace, that by it we may be kept, both in heart and mind, loyal to You! Peace spoken to the soul by the Holy Spirit is the sure preventive of turning again to folly. Be sure that, if it passes all understanding, it also conquers all folly.

With minds at perfect peace with God, we set our face like a flint, and press on towards the haven where peace will never end. Glory be to God, who will bring us safely there! Amen.

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TOKENS FOR GOOD

NO. 1559

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

***“Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed: because You, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.”
Psalm 86:17.***

I WOULD have you note, beloved Friends, at the outset, how this man of God, in the hour of conflict, looks to his Divine Protector. He does not run about to consult with friends, nor does he set himself down to digest his bitter sorrow in solitude, but he gets away to the Lord, his God, who has covenanted to help him. That same God who in his brightest days was his great joy, is, in his darkest night, his surest consolation. Therefore he cries, “Lord, show me a token for good. Show it! Let it come from You. All other signs and tokens I can forego, but You show me a token for good and my spirit will be revived at once.” You see, he looks *away* from the secondary to the Primary, from the temporal to the Eternal—from that which he could see with his eyes—to Him whom, having not seen, he trusted and rejoiced in.

O mourner, learn wisdom from the father of the wisest of men! We need not hesitate to copy the pattern set by the man after God’s own heart! O you who are surrounded by persecutors, will you not imitate David? You cannot do better in every adversity than to look unto the Lord, the Ever-Merciful! I know you have been casting about to the right and to the left to find an anchor-hold and still the vessel drifts. Now, throw the great bower anchor into the depths! Let it go right down out of sight and let it get a grip upon eternal faithfulness and your ship shall outride both wind and tide!

Trust the quicksand of human confidence no longer. Look only to the Lord! It is a severance from man, a complete deliverance from the arm of flesh that God designs by our trouble and the sooner we come to it the better for us. Certainly we shall the more quickly obtain the benefit designed by our trouble and probably we shall the sooner come to the end of it—

***“Trust with a faith untiring
In your Omniscient King,
And you shall see admiring
What He to light will bring!
Of all your griefs the reason
Shall at the last appear;
Though hidden for a season
It will shine in letters clear.”***

Observe that in the case of David, all his troubles drove him to his God. I have noticed in the case of too many professors that they seem to have a fair-weather religion, a summer-season faith which shrinks and loses its

color in a little rain or a sharp frost, or when the wind blows from the cold corner of affliction.

I hear of some who, when they are very poor, do not come up to the House of God. They say they have not proper clothes to come in—as if the Lord had respect unto our garments which are nothing better than the covering of our shame! This is an idle excuse and yet I know that poverty *does* drive some professors away from the God whom they profess to worship—they murmur and become discouraged and give all up in a minute—as if they only loved God for the sake of bread, as a hungry dog will follow a stranger who feeds him. There are others who say, “I cannot hold up my head among my Brethren as I used to do and so I stay away from the congregation.” As if God needed you to hold your heads up—as if He did not look most to those who hold *down* both their heads and their hearts!

What? Will you turn away from the stream because you are thirsty? Will you leave the bread because you are hungry? Is not *godliness* meant to be a comfort to you in your time of trouble? Do not poor men need the Gospel? Do you not require it all the more, now that your comforts are so greatly diminished? Above all things, seek the Lord’s face when trials surround you, or else, assuredly, you cannot be His own, for God’s people, though they cry to Him daily, are yet driven to Him more and more in proportion as they are brought low and thrown into distress. “They cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He brings them out of their distresses.”

This is one of the sure marks of the children of God—they kiss the rod and, the more the Lord chastens them, the more they cling to Him.

When the Lord smites, the *ungodly* kick against Him—they are like the bullock that will not plow by reason of stubbornness and when it feels a goad it kicks and will not go on, but is bent on having its own way. But when the Lord has trained His people and accustomed them to the yoke, they are obedient to the goad as soon as they feel it and yield to His will as soon as it is made known. No, more than that—I think the more God chastens His people, the more they love Him! I am persuaded that the most whipped of the Lord’s family are the best of His children. I do not say that any of you may *wish* for affliction—you will have enough of it without wishing for it—but I do avow my belief that the favorites of Heaven are those who feel the most tribulation.

The choicest plants in God’s garden are those that are watered with affliction and made wet with the night dews of grief. His rarest vines are those which feel most of the knife and are cut back almost down to the root. There is no fragrance so sweet as that which distils from a flower which the great Farmer has bruised. And when He seems, even, to have trod upon it as though He despised it, He has been secretly blessing it, for the broken and the contrite heart He prizes above all things! Therefore, dear Friends, let all your griefs send you in prayer to God and you will then grow in blessing by every tribulation!

When big waves of trouble come, pray that they may wash you on the Rock of Ages and they will do you no harm. When you lose anything, try to make a gain of it by going to your God, that He may sanctify the loss.

Whenever you are afflicted, instead of running away from Him who smites you, run inwards to His bosom! If a man is very weak and he is contending with a strong adversary, he will do well to get close to him. The farther off, the heavier is the blow when a strong man deals it. But when the weak man closes in with him, how can the strong man smite him? What does God say? "Let him lay hold on My strength and I will make peace with him." Fly in spirit to your God! Fly to Him even when He seems angry! Run onto the point of His sword, for He will not harm the soul that confides in Him! It cannot be that humble trust should meet with a repulse. Jesus declares, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And if you will but trust Him and, when He seems angry, will *still* fly to Him, you shall find rest unto your souls. You children of God, mind this!

Once more, notice that the Psalmist, while he thus looks to God and is driven to Him by his troubles, manifestly looks only to God. There is not, in this Psalm, a word about friends, allies, or helpers. He has but one request and this is, "Bow down Your ear, O Lord, hear me." His heart is evidently saying—

***"My spirit looks to God alone;
My rock and refuge is His throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on His salvation waits."***

Only God! Oh, that is a word to be learned, to be learned by experience and most assuredly none will ever know it unless they are taught by the Holy Spirit! I do not think we often learn it till we hear it in the thunder of Divine power when the deep-throated tempest within the soul mutters—"Only God! God alone!" In fair weather we are for mixing our trust, but when the whirlwind is abroad, none but God will serve our turn. O my Brothers and Sisters, if you set one foot upon the rock of Divine faithfulness and the other foot upon the sand of human confidence, you will go down with a great fall! Both feet on the rock! Remember that!

Your whole confidence must be fixed upon your Lord. Hang only upon that sure nail upon which hangs the whole universe and hang nowhere else. What does David say? "My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Beware of setting up a rival in the temple of your trust. Who is it that you would yoke with God? What helper is there that you would put side by side with Him? If you could depend upon an angel—does it not make you smile at your folly to think of saying, "I trust in God and an angel"? Why there is no pairing such disparities! The Infinite Creator of all is not to be yoked, even, with the most glorious of His creatures—and yet you would put your fellow man into the yoke with God and trust in these two!

Go, yoke an angel with an ant if you will, but never think of joining God with man and making the two your confidence when God is All in All. Oh to be cut clear of all visible supports and props and holdfasts! You have seen a balloon well filled, struggling to rise—what kept it down? It longed to mount above the clouds into the calm serene and yet it lingered. What hindered it? The ropes which bound it to earth! Cut clear the ropes and then see how it mounts! With a spring it leaps upward while we are gazing into the open sky. O for such a clearance and such a mounting for our

spirits! Alas, we are hindered and hampered! What are the bonds which detain us? Are they not our visible supports and reliances?

O my Soul, your human confidences have been to you like the iron chain which binds the captive eagle to the rock! If that confidence of yours were gone—if that chain on which you do dote so much were broken, even though it were with a rough blacksmith's hammer—then you could stretch your wings and be a child of the sun and dwell aloft amid the eternal light! Oftentimes the things which we most dread prove to be our grand necessity—by being deprived of earthly comforts we are cut clear of everything except our God! The Lord bring us into this state of high spiritual emancipation!

With this as a preface, I now come to notice the particular prayer which David, in this state of mind, puts up. It was necessary to give you this preface as a kind of guard against the very common tendency which exists among God's people to depend upon signs and tokens. Especially as we are going to preach a little upon this prayer for a "token," it was essential to begin aright lest we should add to the too common craving for signs and wonders.

We will dwell, first, upon the request for a token and then, if we have time, we will touch upon the result which David says would come of having such a token—that those which hated him would see it and be ashamed because God had helped him and comforted him.

I. David puts up A REQUEST FOR A TOKEN. It was a token from *God*, mark you, and it was a token entirely according to God's will. Never forget that it was a token asked in *faith* and not in unbelief, for there is a great distinction here. Dear Brothers and Sisters, we have no right to say, "My God, I will believe in You if You will give me a token and, if not, I will remain in hesitating unbelief," for the English of that is, "I will reckon You to be false unless You show me a sign according to *my* will." If God is true, you are bound to believe Him, whether He give you a token or not! And you are not permitted to suspend your faith upon conditions of your own inventing. Whether He will or will not give you a token must be according to His own mind.

He may give or withhold as He pleases, but you are bound to believe Him since every man is bound to believe the Truth of God. God has never been false to you! You have, therefore, no cause to doubt Him. If He gives you the light, be thankful, but as His child you are bound to trust Him in the dark. If He speaks to you a favorable word, you are to be glad, but you are bound to trust Him even if He speaks nothing but rough words to you, for He is just as true. His Truth and your belief in that Truth must not be thought to depend upon signs and tokens—His Word is very sure and may not be questioned. Moreover, we have known some who professed to be the children of God who have picked out certain tokens according to their own whims and fancies and follies and they have spoken as if God must do this or that at their dictation.

I fear that in some this is a wicked presumption not to be tolerated for a moment. At best it is a childish folly which men in Christ Jesus ought, long ago, to have outgrown. I do not doubt that the Lord has indulged

some of His little children with wonders and signs while they were very, very feeble, which He will never give them again and which they ought never to seek again—which, indeed, now that they have grown up to riper years and to more strength of Grace, they ought, themselves, to put away as childish things. Not a few of these signs they may even suspect, saying, “Perhaps, after all, there was not so much in those signs and tokens as I thought there was. They helped me just then, but I could not rely upon them now—I prefer that which is better and surer.”

The Apostle Peter, after he has described Christ upon the mount as manifesting Himself to His servants in the Transfiguration, declares, “We have a more sure word of prophecy.” What? More sure than the Transfiguration? Yes, more sure, even, than the evidence of their eyes when they saw their Lord glorified upon the holy mountain! If you have ever been upon the mountain with Christ and if you have seen all His brightness, you are still not to compare, even, the sight of your eyes when they see the best and brightest that they can see, with the Word of Testimony which must be sure—a light that shines in a dark place! All the heavenly experiences which we have ever had are not to be trusted in comparison with the Word of God in the Bible!

I say it advisedly—even the sweetest communion we have ever had with Christ may, after all, be suspect and, indeed, it is upon such ripe fruit that Satan soon sets his hand that he may rob us of its savor, if possible, for he is not slow to cast doubts upon the holiest joys of God’s elect. There may come a time when we shall fear that we were carried away by excitement, or deluded by fanaticism, but He who speaks the Word of Scripture cannot lie! And when His Spirit speaks that same Truth of God into the soul, we have, therein, a testimony which can never be doubted but must be accepted over the head of everything. “Let God be true and every man a liar”—*ourselves* and all—all liars as compared with the eternal Truths of the Revelation of God the Holy Spirit! The *basis* of faith is not our experience, but the Testimony of God and we must mind we do not make the feet of our image partly of God’s gold and partly of our clay. Our experience may be in error, but the Infallible Word of God cannot be and it is upon that, alone, which we must stand.

Yet we may ask for tokens in a subordinate sense. Trusting in the Lord, token or no token—believing His Word, evidence or no evidence—we may, then, humbly ask confirmatory seals to our souls. Taking His promise as it stands and believing it, though the heavens, themselves, should seem to rock and reel—we may then say, “Yet Lord, inasmuch as I am but dust and ashes and, therefore, weak and trembling, show me a token for good.” We may feel quite safe in seeking tokens of the kind which are mentioned in this Psalm. And first, we may beg for answers to prayer, because the Psalm begins with, “Bow down Your ear, O Lord, hear me” and farther on we read in the sixth verse, “Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer and attend to the voice of my supplications.”

There is no fanaticism in expecting God to answer prayer and there is no misuse of logic in drawing the inference that if He does hear my prayer in the time of trouble, this is a token for good to my soul. Has my prayer

been accepted before Him? Have I received the gracious answer of peace? Then let me be comforted! Was I especially in deep distress where no man could help me and did I cry to Him and did He come to my rescue? Assuredly, this is a seal that is set to my soul that I am no hypocrite! This is a token that I am no stranger to God and that I am not cast away from His Presence! Answered prayers are hopeful arguments of acceptance. David fitly said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," and then he joyfully added, "But verily God has heard me." Thus he proved the soundness of his heart before God!

I ask you to look back and see whether you have, indeed, prevailed with God in secret prayer. Have you had your Jabboks and your Carmels? Do I not speak to many who are familiar with the great Hearer of prayer? Has He not often heard you? I am not too bold when I assert that the Lord has granted me, according to the desire of my heart, times without number! The devil himself can never dispute me out of facts—facts which shall forever stand on my memory, "engraved as in eternal brass," for out of the depths I have cried unto God and He has as distinctly answered my prayers as though He had torn the heavens and come down to succor His servant! With overwhelming delight He fills me, for He has had respect unto my cry. His tenderness to me in this respect has made my life singularly happy though I have had a large share of pain and depression.

When I think over the seasons in which the Lord has specially answered me, I bid defiance to all the skeptics and scientists who haunt our footsteps. Brethren in Christ, you have, each of you, in your own way, according to your own need, had sure instances of the faithfulness of God to you and these have been reviving tokens of love! At this present be of good cheer. Even if, for a while, the heavens should seem as brass and prayer should not be heard, remember that He *did* hear you in times gone by and He is the same God and changes not and, therefore, is hearing, still, and will answer, by-and-by. Therefore cry mightily to Him!

It may be that your prayer is like a ship, which, when it goes on a very long voyage, does not come home laden so soon but, when it *does* come home, it has a richer freight. Mere coasters will bring you coals, or such like ordinary things. But they that go afar to Tarshish return with gold and ivory! Coasting prayers such as we pray every day bring us many necessities, but there are great prayers which, like the old Spanish galleons, cross the main ocean and are longer out of sight—but come home laden with golden freight! When prayer has tarried, the Lord our God has made up for the delays and shown us why He delayed—to give us a richer and a rarer blessing through our waiting and also to prepare us to receive it. Go on in prayer if you have no immediate answer and let the answers you have had in years gone by be tokens for good to your soul at this time—

"God lives still!

Trust, my Soul, and fear no ill.

God is good. From His compassion

Earthly help and comfort flow!

Strong is His right hand to fashion

All things well for men below.

Trials often the most distressing,

***In the end have proved a blessing.
Why, then, my Soul, despair?
God still lives and hears prayer.”***

You meet with another class of tokens in the Psalm and these concern the preservation of character. Kindly read the second verse—“Preserve my soul, for I am holy.” I know I am speaking in these dark and troubled times to many of God’s children who are tried in business and sorely exercised by the general depression—your great fear arises out of a dread of failure to discharge your debts. You have been praying to the Lord about your business and, perhaps, Satan has tempted you to a measure of unbelief against which you are daily fighting. Now, has the Lord helped you to do that which is honest and upright before men? Has He preserved your soul because you are consecrated to Him?

You have been a loser, but in that loss can you say, “No fault attaches to deceit—it is the act of God. Things have not prospered with me, but I have been diligent and I have used my best discretion. I have curtailed every expense to save as much as possible. I have sought to eat my own bread and not the bread of another man and I would sooner come to labor with my hands in the most menial service than that any should say of me that I have forgotten the way of uprightness and integrity.” If such is the case, you will feel acutely the difficulties of your path, but you must not give way to despondency. Look up and play the man and by no means give up!

Fly to the Lord in this hour of need and see what He will do. It is written, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,” and if such has been your case it is a token for good. You have not lost much if your character remains untarnished. After all, “a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.” And, “a good name is better than precious ointment.” When God gives a man Grace to rejoice in his abundance, it is a great thing. But it is an equal favor when He gives to others of His people Grace to rejoice that they are brought low. There is often more contentment in a narrower sphere than in a wider one and a great deal less care and anxiety and more fellowship with God in a cottage than in a broad mansion!

If God keeps your character spotless, reckon that the smell of fire has not passed upon you. If the Lord enables you to do the right thing, let Him do what He pleases with you. If we can pay 20 shillings in the pound and walk out of the house free from any charge of unjust dealing, we may feel that the worst grief of all is over, for to an honest heart it is a crushing trial to be unable to pay every man his own. May the Holy Spirit lead you in the path of uprightness and you need not envy any among the sons of men.

A third form of token for good is found in deliverance from trouble. We have that in the second verse also—“O You, my God, save Your servant that trusts in You!” And all through the Psalm David is crying for deliverance from trouble. I am addressing many who have felt the strokes of tribulation. You have been brought very low. In your horror it seemed to you like the lowest Hell, but you have been brought up from it and you

can, at this hour, sing of delivering Grace. We are not all hanging our harps on the willows—some of us are praising God upon the high sounding cymbals because of His delivering mercy, for He has brought our soul out of prison, has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears and our feet from falling.

When these things come, they are to be regarded as tokens for good if they come as the result of prayer and faith. Our personal testimony should be like that of David in the 34th Psalm—“I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” When our distresses are ended, our songs should begin, even as the Psalmist says of men rescued from peril—they pray and then they praise. “Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He brings them out of their distresses. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

There ought to be praises where there have been deliverances. When we have gone to God in prayer with open mouth and He has filled it, then should we go back again with the open mouth, to have it filled with His praises all the day long! Come, Friends, look back upon the rescues and recoveries of the past and rejoice in the Lord! One good old saint, when she heard one sing—

***“Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through,”***

said, “Why, my road, when I look back upon it, is paved with Ebenezers! I cannot take a step but what I step upon a stone of help and on both sides I see so many records of the Lord’s goodness that the road seems walled up by them on both sides.” Many of us can say the same. Surely—

***“His love in time past forbids us to think,
He’ll leave us, at last, in trouble to sink.”***

If He has delivered us from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear, shall we be afraid of that uncircumcised Philistine? No, but the giant boaster shall fall before us! In the name of the Lord we will destroy all future foes because in His name we have destroyed the same before. That is fine language which Paul uses in the Epistle to the Corinthians—“Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.” These three forms of tokens for good are very sure and very sober—not at all like those which fanaticism seeks after and yet they are most valuable! Answered prayers, preservations from sin and deliverances from trouble are rich jewels from the Bridegroom’s hands—marks of His most costly love. Those who have them should not forget them. “Shall a maid forget her ornaments?” Shall gifts of the Bridegroom be put away as though they were of no value? God forbid!

There is another form of token which must never be overlooked and that is a sense of pardoned sin. This comes in the third and fifth verses. “Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto You daily. For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon You.” Even though we have been sustained in our integrity, we must, nevertheless, be conscious of many faults. You cannot go through

either the joys of this world or the sorrows of it without incurring a measure of defilement. He who picks his steps the most successfully will yet gather soil upon his feet and they will need washing by those dear hands which, alone, can take away the stain of sin! When that washing is given, it is a very choice token of love.

If you feel that your conscience is purged from dead works—if you are walking in the light as God is in the light and are enjoying fellowship with the Father while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses you from all sin, then rejoice in the token for good which is given you! If you know the power of that Word of God, “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”—if you are, indeed, “accepted in the Beloved”—then know of a surety that one of the best tokens for good is in your possession! It may be that your purse is scant, but your sin is forgiven! It may be that disease is creeping over your flesh, but your sin is forgiven! What a bliss is yours, whatever your trial may be!

Suppose yourself to be in danger of shipwreck—the ship is going down—the passengers are shrieking with terror, for there is nothing before them but the murderous waves. The boiling floods will soon conceal the last vestige of the ship. Grim Death opens his wide jaws! The last moment has come! But what do I see? What was that which rose upon the crest of the wave? It was a lifeboat! Yes! Here comes a lifeboat and *you* are put on board! What are your thoughts at the time? What must be your thoughts? What? Did you whine, “I have lost my best suitcase which I left in my cabin”? What a fool you would be if you talked like that! The boatmen would be ready to throw you back into the sea!

No, your gratitude forgets all minor things and rejoices in the grand deliverance. You cry, “My life is saved! My life is saved! Blessed be the Lord for saving me! My money, my very clothes—for I started up in my sleep and leaped into the lifeboat—I have lost them all, but I am alive and that is enough! Thank God I shall see my native land again!” Shall a man who is delivered from Hell and whose sins are forgiven go whining all the day long because he has lost his money, or some other trifle—for trifle it is as compared with his soul? “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” And if our life is saved in Christ Jesus through the forgiveness of our sin by His most precious blood, how can we fret?

Why, Man, God has given you a mercy that may swallow up your troubles as Aaron’s rod swallowed up all the serpents. “Strike me, my God,” said one of old, “strike me as You will, now that You have forgiven me!” The pardon of sin is such a token for good that all ills disappear before it! There is another token for good mentioned in the Psalm which you may well pray for. You will find it in the fourth verse—“Rejoice the soul of Your servant: for unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” This is support under trial. It is a very blessed token for good when you are able to keep calm, quiet and happy in the midst of losses, crosses, bereavements and afflictions. All the water in the sea will never hurt the ship so long as it is outside—it is only that which enters the vessel that can sink it. And therefore the Savior says, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God; be-

lieve also in Me.” In the world you shall have tribulation, but let not your heart be troubled.

Now, are you, dear Friend, conscious, at this time, while everything is going against you, that you never were happier than you are now? Can you give all up? Can you be resigned to your heavenly Father’s will? Does a sweet patience steal over you? Do you sometimes say to yourself and to your friends, “I would not have believed that I could have passed through this as I am doing”? Well, that is a token for good and you may take comfort from it. What does it matter to a man, after all, whether God increases the load and increases the strength, or whether He decreases the load and decreases the strength? If a man has to carry a pound weight and he is so weak that he can only manage to carry eight ounces, well, he is an overloaded man. But if a man had to carry a ton and God gave him strength enough to carry two, why, he would be a lightly-loaded man, would he not? It is not the weight of the burden, Brothers and Sisters, it is the proportion of the burden to the strength.

Now, the proportion of the burden to the strength was settled long ago—thousands of years ago. It is written, “As your days, so shall your strength be” and there was One who proved it 1,800 years ago and exclaimed, “As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.” You see the scale—if there is an ounce of suffering, there is an ounce of consolation. Almighty Wisdom keeps the measure exact! Let the tribulation abound! Put it into the left-hand scale. Heap it up! Put in more and more trial. What a weight it is! Yes, but there you see in the right-hand scale the balancing consolation—and I think if we were wise, we would be willing to accept—no, we would even *rejoice* in the abounding tribulations because of the abounding consolations!

We shall always be little, I am afraid, while our trials are little. But when we get into the deeper waters, so that the Lord helps us to swim and He makes men of us—then we begin to glory in tribulation because the power of God does rest upon us! Oh may the Lord give us faith to come up to this point and this shall be forever a blessed token for good when we can say—

***“I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul!
I hear the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll.
But I am calm with You, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies
And to the heights on which I stand,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.”***

May God endow us with that token for good—for serenity in suffering, patience in tribulation, joy in the very *prospect* of death—these are all as white stones which are the secret signs of Divine favor.

Cheering visits from Christ and fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit are also most sure tokens for good and if not mentioned expressly in the Psalm, must not be omitted in our sermon. They are, however, here in such phrases as these—“Rejoice the soul of Your servant,” in verse four. “Unite my heart to fear Your name,” in verse eleven. “O turn unto me and

have mercy upon me,” in verse 16 and in the latter clause of our text, “You, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.” The Lord graciously visits His people, the clouds break, the night declines and the day begins to dawn! Precious promises are applied to the heart with reviving power, hope is strengthened and joy is renewed.

Sweet communion is enjoyed under affliction and Christ is seen sitting as a Refiner at the mouth of the furnace. Sin is no longer allowed to burden the heart. Yes, the very memory of it, so far as it would cause pain to the mind, is utterly removed and the glad spirit rejoices in the consciousness of full acceptance with God. Ordinances and the Word become sweeter than honey or the honeycomb and the man feasts in the House of the Lord as one who is an honored guest at a royal banquet where the banner of Jesus’ love waves over his head and he leans his head on his Lord’s bosom! This is a token for good, the memory of which shall cheer him for many a long day and, being treasured up like some sweet smelling herb, shall serve to make his sick chamber or prison fragrant.

O the joy of saints when the Bridegroom is with them! They cannot fast or be of a sad countenance, for their assurance of His Divine Love drives every care and fear away—

***“Tis like the singing of the birds
When winter’s frost is fled!
And like the warmth the sun affords
To creatures almost dead.
‘Tis like the comfort of a calm
Which stills a stormy sea
And like the tender, healing balm
To such as wounded be.”***

Of such tokens for good may we enjoy until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

II. I had many things to say, but I remember Paul’s mistake that he made when he preached until midnight and Eutychus fell from the third loft, for he had gone to sleep. And as I could not possibly raise a sleeper from the dead, as Paul did, I will not try the experiment of preaching as long as Paul did! I cannot say anything as to THE RESULT OF SUCH TOKENS. The influence of these tokens upon our foes must be undescribed except that many a time the favor of God to His people has been so conspicuous that their most malicious adversaries have stood in awe of them. Their answered prayers have been like armor to them! Their patience has lit up their faces with an awe-inspiring splendor and their integrity has been a wall of fire round about them.

Even the devil has stood abashed in the presence of the favored ones when God has dressed them in their marriage robes! He has known that they were of that chosen race against which he can never prevail. As for other enemies—“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with Him.” Like Pilate’s wife, even worldly people have pleaded that good men should be left alone—the Lord has made them dream of the glory of their virtue and they have been afraid. There is a dignity which hedges about those who are kings unto God. They that

dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid because of the tokens for good which God sets on His saints.

Here we leave these words, only adding this—what an unhappy state must those be in who have troubles but have no God to go to! Those who have enemies, but no heavenly Defender—darkness and no Star of hope! How poor must you be who cannot escape affliction and yet have no Helper in affliction! You run to your friends, do you? Ah well, they are a poor refuge to fly to, for mostly they are our friends when *we* can help *them*. When we need anything from them, they do not know us! You trust *yourself*, do you? Ah well, I thought little of your friends, but I think less of you, for you are dust and ashes and nothing else—and if your trust is in yourself, it is a dream! And so you are a self-made man! Your own creator? You need not be so very proud of your work! As you made yourself and keep yourself going, you will come to a frightful end, one of these days, when the inward force decays into weakness and all the springs of Nature fail!

Whatever you make, your god is like yourself and both you and it must pass away before long! Your hope shall be as a spider's web and your expectation shall melt like the frost when the sun rises. The Lord is coming! The Lord is coming and woe unto hypocrites in that day! It will go ill with self-confident men in that day! But as for such as trust the Lord, do you know what they say? And they speak as Inspiration bids them speak—"I shall be satisfied." I am not yet, but I *shall* be satisfied. And when shall I be satisfied? "When I awake with Your likeness." When the archangel's trumpet sounds and wakes me into immortal perfection, then shall I be satisfied!

Oh seek the Savior's face! dear Hearts, that never have sought Him yet, seek Him now! There is no satisfaction to be had apart from Him! Get away to Him! Get away to Him tonight! Cry unto Him, for He will hear you! Come unto Him, for He will receive you! May His Divine Spirit lead you to cast yourselves on Him, for He will in no wise cast you out! The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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“READY, YES, READY!”

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**A SERMON
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“Ready to perish.” “Ready to forgive.” “The graves are ready for me.”
Isaiah 27:13. Psalm 86:5. Job 17:1.

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death. And at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to His children in their declining hours. Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that out of the three, there will be one intended by Divine Grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear Friends, that the motto of our navy is, “Ready, yes, ready!” That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word, “Ready,” occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be especially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit, to see their state by nature and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah 27:13—“READY TO PERISH.” “They shall come which were ready to perish.”

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger. No, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state, by nature, is alarming and defenseless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it, but they shall no more escape, by shutting their eyes, than does the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand. Whether you will have it so, or not, fast young man in the dawn of your days—whether you will have it so, or not, blustering merchant in the prime of your age—whether you will have it so, or not, har-

dened old man in the petrified state of your moral conscience—it is so—you are ready to perish!

Your jeers cannot deliver you. Your sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it. And all your contemptuous scorn and your arrogant pride cannot evade your doom—they do but hasten it. There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger—to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the Prophet—"The great trumpet shall be blown and they shall come which were ready to perish." Having passed through this anguish, myself, I think I can describe, from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because *you feel sure that you will perish*. You did not think so once, but you do now. Once you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true, but, anyway, it did not much concern you. But now you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the Divine logic of the Law of God has thundered it into your soul and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, before long, be driven from the Presence of God with that terrible sentence, "Depart, you cursed." If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, "There is, for I feel it is due me. My conscience tells me that I am already condemned and before long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God."

You have signed your own death warrant, you have put on the black cap and condemned yourself. Or, rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge—you have said, "Guilty, my Lord," and now you think you see before your eyes the scaffold and yourself ready to be executed. You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the Judgment Day—you dreamed of it, the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God! You feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing and anticipated its terrors. You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display His pardoning Grace! He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Savior's mission of mercy, for, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

You are ready to perish, in another sense, for *you feel as if your perishing was very near*. You are like the dying man who gasps for breath and thinks that each gasp will be his last—his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The Valley of the Shadow of Death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks and he feels that he will soon die. Is it not thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world, or, at mid-day I have walked in the

fields and wondered that the earth did not open and swallow me up! A terrible noise was in my ears—my soul was tossed to and fro—I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none, while always ringing in my ears were the words, “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!”

Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or 20 years, but as a thing that may be before long, yes, even today! He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close. I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless He has purposes of mercy concerning them and designs for their good! He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear! He has brought it home to you in this life that He may remove it forever from you in the life that is to come! He has made you tremble now, that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only Refuge and, as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, “Escape for your life, look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

It may be that I am also addressing some who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but *they have begun to feel it*. “Begun to feel it,” asks someone, “is that possible?” Yes, that it is. When day and night God’s hand is heavy upon us and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when Justice and the Law are let loose upon him. Did you ever read John Bunyan’s, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost. And there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive who has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit. But this I can say—that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert’s words—

***“My thoughts are all a case of knives
Breaking my poor heart.”***

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the hospital and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance! O you that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom He intends to bless—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works and then gives us confidence in Christ’s work. You know how Bunyan describes

Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind. And when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed—and though his easy-going neighbors told him not to believe it and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. An atheist might say it was all a lie and Pliable might give slight heed to it and pretend to believe it for a season, but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the Cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come. To the careless, these words, “Ready to perish,” should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that Divine Mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm 86:5—“READY TO FORGIVE.” Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulcher’s bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed—“Ready to perish.” But this rings like a marriage peal—“Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive.” What does it mean when it says that God is ready to forgive?

“Ready” means, as you all know, *prepared*. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared. Nothing is ready, in fact, till it is prepared. Sinner, God is ready to forgive—that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven! The road used to be blocked up but Jesus Christ has, with His Cross, tunneled every mountain, filled every valley and bridged every chasm so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, “I would pardon this sinner, but how shall My justice be honored?” Sinner, God’s justice has been satisfied, the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when He died upon the tree! If you believe in Him, your sin was punished upon Him and it was forever put away by the great Atonement which He offered, so that, now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of His mercy, stretch out His hands of love and say, “Sinner, I am reconciled to you. Be you reconciled to Me.”—

**“Sprinkled now with blood, the Throne,
Why beneath your burdens groan?
All the wrath on Him was laid
Justice owns the ransom paid.”**

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once and for all, the Sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, He is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ! You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready! The oxen

and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet—all you have to do, poor Penitent, is to come and sit down and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast! The bath is filled, O black Sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O you naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O you ransomed ones, so take your blood-bought liberty! All is done. "It is finished," rings from Calvary's summit! God is ready to forgive!

But the word, "ready," means something more than prepared. We sometimes use the term to indicate that *a thing can be easily done*. We ask, "Can you do such-and-such a thing?" "Oh, yes!" you reply, "readily." Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given and ask if you can carry it out. And you say, "Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfill my engagement." Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive you! "Indeed," you say, "but you don't know where I was last night." No, and I don't want to know. But it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in Hell. But you ask, "How can He do it? "He speaks and it is done! He has but to say to you, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven," and it is done! Pardon is an instantaneous work! Justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment and as white as alabaster the next! Guilty—absolved! Condemned—Acquitted! Lost—found! Dead—made alive! It takes the Lord no time to do this—He does it easily.

O Brothers and Sisters, if He could make a world with a word. If He could say, "Let there be light," and there was light—surely, now that Christ has offered up Himself as a bleeding Sacrifice for sin, God has but to speak and the pardon is given! As soon as He says, "I will. Be you clean," the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed! O Sinner, will you not offer the prayer, "Save, Lord, or I perish?" Will you not ask the Lord to forgive you? Since He can so readily forgive, will you not cry, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? Stretch forth your hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole, for He is ready to forgive—that is, He can do it with ease!

Again, the word, "ready," frequently means *promptly or quickly*. In this sense, also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing! After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond, but there is no need for you to do that. The plan of salvation is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight—singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God and, as they sing—suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open and the jailer, fearing that his prisoners have escaped,

leaps out, draws his sword and is about to kill himself! But he hears a voice crying, "Do yourself no harm! We are all here."

He calls for a light, springs in and falls tremblingly at his prisoners' feet and says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What would some of you have said in reply to that question? "Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present—you had better go home and pray about the matter." That was not Paul's answer. He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." And, to prove that he was saved, the Apostle baptized him and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that *they all believed*. What do you say to that, you old deacons who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be "summered and wintered" before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls in the country who have said, "We must not take Mrs. So-and-So into the church. We have not had time to prove her enough." But the Apostle knew that as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned—

***"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."***

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. Jehovah needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness and put the great seal of Heaven to it. He can speak the word and swifter than the lightning flash, the message shall come to you, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." And you shall say, "I'm forgiven—

***"A monument of Grace
A sinner saved by blood!
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."***

The word, "ready," is also frequently used to signify *cheerfulness*. When a person says to you, "Will you give me your help?" you say, "Oh, certainly, with readiness!" That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and I am sure that He is, Himself, a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor Soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that He sang. Yet, in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Only think of it—the Triune God singing! What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over His pardoned people, His blood-bought chosen ones! O Soul, you think, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated and that He will give His mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, otherwise it were not the sun. And when God forgives, He forgives freely, else He were not God! Never did water

leap from the crystal fountain with half such freeness and generous liberality as Grace flows from the heart of God! He gives forth love, joy, peace and pardon—and He gives them as a king gives to a king! You cannot empty His treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is He impoverished by bestowing!

Soul, you do libel Him when you think that He is unwilling to forgive you. I once had, as you now have, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that He would not forgive me. I thought He might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of Him as to believe that He would. I came to His feet very timidly and said, “Surely, He will spurn me.” I supposed that He would say to me, “Get you gone, you dog of a sinner, for you have doubted My love.” But it was not so. Ah, you should see with what a smile He received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness He clasped him to His breast, with what glad eyes He led him to His house and with what a radiant Countenance He set him by His side, at the head of the table, and said, “Let us eat, and be merry: for this My son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.”

I would that I could write upon every heart here and engrave upon every memory those sweet words, “Ready to forgive.” Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel and you may be clinging to just an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive—but how much better it would be to trust your soul to Him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week. I am not making a rash assertion—my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O Soul, you say that it is nothing to you now, but when you are in the article of death—and that may be before another Sabbath’s sun shall rise—how might this note ring like music in your dying ears, “Ready to forgive”!

Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See you do it not, for God is ready to forgive! Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive! Though your father has shut the door against you and your mother and sister shun you because of your vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive you if you will repent and turn from your iniquity! Turn you, turn you—’tis a brother’s voice that entreats you to turn! By the love with which He pardoned me. By the mercy which made Him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg you to turn, no, more, linking my arm in yours, I say to you, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord and let us say unto Him, ‘Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto You the calves of our lips.’” Ready to perish are you, but ready to forgive is He! Blessed be His holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job 17:1, is most solemnly true of each one of us—**THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME.**

About three years ago I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes, but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to Him, to spare my life and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed, then, far more likely to live than I was. This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me—it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him this afternoon, he said with greater force than Addison, “See how a Christian can die.” When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. “And what about your wife and your little ones?” I asked. And he replied, “I have left them all with God.” “And how about eternal things?” I enquired. “Oh,” said he, “you know that God’s love is everlasting and His Grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?”

He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments. When I said, “The battle’s fought, the victory’s won forever,” I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, “Well done! Enter into your rest.” I never saw a bride at her marriage look more happy than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful, when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. “Ah,” he exclaimed, “remember what you said to me, ‘Sudden death, sudden glory!’” and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord—

“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks”—

and you are gone, O earth, and my soul is in Heaven! One gasp and you have melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to you, you welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us! Christian, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that always leaves a slimy track behind it? Or would you not rather—

**“Stretch your wings, O Soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy”?**

Were we wise, we would—

**“Long for evening, to undress,
That we might rest with God.”**

“The graves are ready for me.” Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon? O Death,

you do not need to furbish up your darts, or whet your scythe! You are always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, your gates need not to be unlocked and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are always open! O world to come, you do not need long intervals to make yourself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! You are an inn whose doors are always open—you are whose gates are never closed! Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin—perhaps the fabric that shall make our winding sheet is already woven and they, who will carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us!

“The graves are ready for us.” Are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die—prepared to rise again—prepared to be judged—prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal Throne of God? What is your answer, my Hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, “Ready, yes, ready!”? Did you say Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for you did call me! Did you say, O Heaven, that you need to receive another blood-bought one? “Ready, yes, ready!” O Christian, always keep your houses in such good order that you will always be “Ready, yes, ready!” Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ and your faith so fully fixed on Him, that, if you should drop dead in the street, or some Providence should take away your life, you would be able to cheerfully say, “Ready, yes, ready! Ready for you, O Death! Ready to triumph over you and to pluck away your sting! Ready for you, O Grave, for where is now your victory? Ready for you, O Heaven, for, with your wedding garment on, we are ready, yes, ready!” The Lord make us ready, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:1-27.**

Verse 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper.* You see that particular mention is made of this one special case and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses and who thereby obtains relief from them—“Behold, there came a leper.”

2, 3. *And worshipped Him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an, “if,” in it, but still, it was genuine faith and our loving Lord fixed His eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it. And if He sees in you, dear Friend, even a trembling faith, He will rejoice in it and bless you because of it. He will not withhold His blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably you would have a greater blessing if you had

greater faith, but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ! The leper said to Him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” So Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, “and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4-7. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.* He had not asked Christ to “come and heal him.” He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man’s judgment is correct—that for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of Himself! If He will but come and abide with us, that means more than all else that He can bestow upon us.

8, 9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but only speak the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of Nature and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honor the sick man with His own personal Presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion’s servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing—so I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position—and so worked in his mind still greater confidence in Christ’s power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. *When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.* “Not in Israel”—where the Light of God and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed! This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ—had more faith than Jesus had so far found “in Israel.”

11, 12. *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into*

outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening, despite its strangeness, that the persons who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become Believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin and right away from ignorance and become believers in Christ! Oh, that none of us who sit under the sound of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this Truth of God, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers and adopts them into His family!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.* Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule—“As you have believed, so be it done unto you.” If you can believe great things of Him, you shall receive great things from Him. If you think Him good, great and mighty, you shall find Him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of Him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find Him equal to all your conceptions and your greatest faith shall be surpassed! It is a Law of His Kingdom, from which Christ never swerves—“According to your faith, be it unto you.”

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.* That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all, for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed and begin at once to attend to household matters! But Peter’s wife’s mother did this. Learn, therefore, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well! He can make the man who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord. And when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to Him, He can take away the consequences of evil habits and make us into bright and sanctified Believers. What is there that is impossible to Him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition. But this King can do it—all glory to His blessed name! May He lay His gracious hand upon many of you, for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches!

16-18. *When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. For He neither loved nor courted popularity, but did His utmost to shun it. It followed Him like His shadow but He always went before it. He never followed it, or sought*

after it—“When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”

19. *And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go.* How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so He tests him before He takes him into the band of His followers.

20. *And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* Christ means—“Can you follow the Son of Man when there is no reward except Himself—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to Him when the lone mountain-side shall be the place where He spends whole nights in prayer while the dew falls heavily upon Him? Can you follow Him then?” This is a test of love which makes many to be “found wanting.”

21, 22. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.* It must be Christ, first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ—that is their proper place. To put them before Christ—to prefer the creature to the Creator—is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23-26. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm.* Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by His peace-speaking word. The calm of Nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper—these are all deceitful and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations—after the awful groundswell and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation—when Jesus gives peace, there is “a great calm.”

27. *And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any “manner of Man” alone, but it was He who was truly Man, who was also “very God of very God,” the God-Man, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men!

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

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

CONCERNING PRAYER

NO. 2053

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

**PREACHED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1888.**

***“Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer and attend to the voice of my supplications.
In the day of my trouble I will call upon You: for You will answer me.”
Psalm 86:6, 7.***

WHEN I was reading this eighty-sixth Psalm, I reminded you that the title of it is “A prayer of David.” It is rightly named “A prayer,” for it is very especially filled with supplication. There are four other Psalms each called by the name Tephillah, or “prayer,” but this deserves to be distinguished from the rest and known as “the prayer of David,” even as the ninetieth Psalm is known as “the prayer of Moses.” It savors of David. The man of sincerity, of ardor, of trials, of faults and of great heart, pleads, sobs and trusts through all the verses of this Psalm.

Note one thing about this remarkable prayer of David—it is almost entirely devoid of poetry. Men use grand, studied, rapturous and poetical expressions in their praises. And they do well. Let God be praised with the noblest thoughts as well as the most charming music. But when a man comes to prayer—and that prayer is out of the depths of sorrow—he has no time or thought for poetry. He goes straight at the matter in hand and pleads with God in downright plainness of speech. You shall notice that in happy prayers, in times of joy, men use similes and metaphors and tropes and symbols and the like. But when it comes to wrestling with God in times of agony—there is no beauty of speech—parable and prose are laid aside.

The man's language is in sackcloth and ashes. Or, better still, it stands stripped for wrestling, every superfluous word being laid aside. Then the cry is heard, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” That is not poetry, but it is a great deal better. Throughout this Psalm David is a plain-dealer, speaking with God in downright earnest. He has got his grip of the Covenant angel and he will not let him go. Men cannot study where to put their feet prettily when they are wrestling—they have to do the best they can to hold their ground and fling their antagonist. In such a prayer-Psalm as this there is no studying of language—it is the pouring out of the heart as the heart boils over—the utterance of the desires as they bubble up from the sod's deeps with an entire carelessness as to the fashion of the expression.

This ought to be a hint to you when you pray. Do not study how to arrange your words when you come before the Lord. Leave the expression to the occasion—it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak. When your heart is like a boiling geyser, let it steam aloft in pillars

of prayer. The overflowing of the soul is the best praying in the world. Prayers that are indistinct, inharmonious, broken, made up of sighs and cries and damped with tears—these are the prayers which win with Heaven. Prayers that you cannot pray, pleadings too big for utterance—prayers that stagger the words and break their backs and crush them down—these are the very best prayers that God ever hears.

So you say, dear Friends, that you cannot pray. You are so troubled that you cannot speak. Well, then, copy the beggars in the street. They must not beg, for that is contrary to law. But a man sits down and writes on a spade, “I am starving,” and he looks as white as a sheet. What a picture of misery! He is not begging. Not he. But the money comes dropping into the old hat. So, when you cannot pray, I believe that your silent display of utter inability is the best sort of praying. The blessing comes when we sit down before the Lord and in sheer desperation expose our spiritual need. I am not going to dwell longer upon that matter but will simply show you what was the nature of David’s prayer.

There are two things which David must have when he prays—two great things after which he strains with his whole heart. The first is personal dealings with God. Read that sixth verse—“Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer. And attend to the voice of my supplications.” And, in the second place he must have personal answers from God. He is not content to pray without prayer having some practical result. So, the seventh verse is, “In the day of my trouble I will call upon You: for You will answer.”

I. First, then, David in his prayer sought, beyond all things, to have PERSONAL DEALINGS WITH GOD. To my mind that is the distinction between prayer before conversion and prayer after it. I often bring that out when I am seeing enquirers who have been religiously brought up. This is the sort of dialogue we hold—“You used to pray, did you?” “Yes, Sir. I could not have gone to sleep if I had not said my prayers.” “Was there any difference between that kind of praying and what you now practice?” The reply usually is, “Well, Sir, I do not now call the first, praying, at all. I used to say some good words that I had been taught but I did not say them to anybody. Now I speak to God and I have the feeling that He is hearing what I say and that He is present with me in my room.”

It is the realization of that second Person as really present, the consciousness of the Divine Presence, which makes prayer real. What can be the good of going through a *form* of prayer? Can there be any charm in a set of sentences? If you are not speaking to God, what are you doing? I should say that a prayer would do as much good repeated backwards as forwards, if it is not spoken to God. We have heard of instances of grown persons keeping on saying the prayer which their mother taught them and asking that God would bless their father and mother, after they had been dead twenty years. All sorts of absurdities, I do not doubt, have come from the long-continued and thoughtless repetition of mere words.

I am not now speaking against the use of a form of prayer if you feel that you can pray with it. But the point is that you must be speaking to God, and you must have personal dealings with the Invisible One, or else

there is nothing whatever in your prayer, whether it be composed on the spot, or repeated from memory. Note well that David, while he thus sought to have dealings with God—to come to close grips with the Lord in the act of prayer—was not presumptuously bold. He perceives the condescension of such fellowship on God's part. This may be seen in the Psalm.

If you have the Psalm open before you, kindly begin with the first line—"Bow down Your ear, O Lord, hear me." As if he said, "You are so high that unless You shall stoop and stoop very low, You can not commune with me. But, Lord, do thus stoop. Bow down Your ear. From Your lofty Throne, higher than an angel's wing can reach, stoop down and listen to me—poor, feeble me." This is what we must have in order to true prayer. Our prayer must climb to that great ear which hears the symphonies of the perfected and the hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim.

Is there not something very wonderful about this, that we—who are both insignificant and unworthy—should be able to speak to Him who made the stars and upholds all things by the Word of His power? Yet this is the essence of prayer—to rise in human feebleness to talk with Divine Omnipotence. In nothingness to deal with All-Sufficiency. You cannot venture upon this without the Mediator, Christ. But with the Mediator, what a wonderful fellowship a worm of the dust is permitted to enjoy with the infinite God! What condescension there is in a sinner communing with the thrice-holy Jehovah, Seek after this communion. Nothing can excel it.

As you further read in this Psalm you will notice that David, in order to obtain this high privilege, pleads his need of it. He cries, "I am poor and needy"—as much as to say, "Lord, come to me, let me have personal conversation with You, for nothing else will serve my turn. I am so poor that You alone can enrich me. I am so feeble, that You alone can sustain me. You have made me—Lord, forsake not the work of Your own hands! I, Your child, am full of wants, which You, only, can supply. Oh, deal with me in great compassion!" Virtually his plea is—

***"Do not turn away Your face,
Mine's an urgent, pressing case."***

Now, is not this very encouraging—that your claim upon God should lie in your need? You cannot say to God, "Lord, look at me and commune with me, for I am *somebody*." But you may say, "Lord, commune with me, for I am *nobody*." You may not cry, "Lord, help me, for I can do much." But you may cry, "Lord help me, for I can do nothing." Your need is your most prevalent plea with God. When you are desiring to pray such a prayer as consists in closeness with God, it is great condescension on His part to draw near to you. But He will condescend to your needs and come near—because your misery needs His Presence. God will not condescend to your pride but He will bow His ear to your grief.

If you set up a claim to merit, He will turn His back upon you. But if you come to Him with a claim of necessity, which is merely a beggar's claim when he asks for alms—an appeal to the charity of God's sovereign love—then He will turn about and hear your prayer. Come, my Heart, are you not encouraged to come near to God, seeing He has respect to your low estate and pities your sorrows? Read on and you will find that David,

in order to come into dealings with God, next pleads his personal consecration—"Preserve my soul. For I am holy."

By this I understand him to mean that he belongs to God. That he is consecrated and dedicated to the Divine service. Should not the priest handle the golden bowl? Should not the priest enter into the holy place? And should not God, therefore, come and deal with the man who is dedicated to His use and set apart to His service? My dear Brothers and Sisters, can you say tonight that you live for God? Do you recognize that you are not your own but bought with a price? Well, there dwells an argument in that fact—a reason why the Lord God should come and take hold of you and link Himself with you. You are the vessels of His sanctuary, you are the instruments of His Divine service, you are consecrated to His honor and you may expect Him therefore, to touch you with His hand, to employ you in His work and to identify Himself with you in your circumstances and necessities.

Moreover, David, anxious to use every argument, pleads his trust—"Save Your servant that trusts in You." This is a conquering plea—"Lord, my sole reliance is on You. Come to me, then, and justify the confidence which You Yourself have inspired." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." But when God has given us faith, then we may be quite sure that we do please Him. And if we please Him, then, like Enoch, who pleased Him, we shall walk with Him. You may expect, in prayer, to find God drawing near to you if in very deed you are holding to Him as the one ground of your confidence. Brethren, are you sure that you trust in God? You answer, "Yes." Ah, then let me say to you that you shall have a reward and that reward will probably be that you will be taught to trust Him more.

That you may rise to a larger faith you will probably suffer greater troubles than you have up to now known. The reward of service is more service. A good soldier, who has fought through many battles and won many victories, shall be sent out to the wars next time his master's forces want a captain. You, having already trusted, shall have your faith further tried in order that you may glorify God and so arrive at a greater faith. Do you not see that faith largely lies in the realization that God is and that God is near? And if you so realize God when you bow the knee in prayer you may expect to have sweet closeness with Him.

Many years ago I trusted God about many things and I found Him true. But of late I have had to take a step in advance and trust God wholly and alone in the teeth of all appearances. I have been called almost literally to stand alone in contending against error. And in this I have distinctly taken a nearer place in prayer with the God whom I serve in my spirit. It is very well to rest on God when you have other props but it is best of all to rest on Him when every prop is knocked away. To hang onto the bare arm of God is glorious dependence. And he that has once done it cannot think of ever going back to trust in men again.

"No," says he, "I tried man once and he failed me. I had you with me and I trusted God in you. But now that you have turned from me, I will

trust God alone without you—even though you now come back to the man you deserted.” Dependence upon the Lord creates a glorious independence of man. Verily, it is true, “Cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” But verily, verily, it is true, “Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord.” Part of that blessedness will be found in the communion which such a man enjoys with God whenever he approaches Him in prayer.

Still, following the same line, notice that David pleads for God’s Presence because he is God’s servant. He says here, “Save Your servant.” A servant has liberty to enquire as to his master’s will and he is justified in asking to see his Lord. If he is employed upon his master’s business, he says, “I want orders. I wish to tell my master my difficulties and to seek from him a supply for those necessities which his service will bring upon me.” You feel that he has a good and sufficient plea when he urges this request. Even so, if you can honestly feel that you are spending your strength in the Lord’s service, you, also, may lawfully expect that when you draw near to Him in prayer your Master will speak to you as His servant and He that has sent you will commune with you.

David urges yet another reason why just now he should see God, namely that he is always in prayer—“I cry unto you daily.” The Lord will hear your prayer, my dear Hearer, tonight, if you never prayed before—I am quite sure of it. But I am still more sure that if you have been long in the habit of prayer, it is not possible that the Father of Mercies should cease to hear you. Oh, the sweet delights of constancy in prayer! The habit of prayer is charming—but the spirit of prayer is heavenly. Be always praying. Is that possible? Some have realized it, till the whole of the engagements of the day have been ablaze with prayer. God bring us each one into that condition!

Then we need not barely hope that He will have communion with us, for we shall be already enjoying His Presence and His fellowship. Blessed are we when prayer surrounds us like an fog. Then we are living in the Presence of God. We are continually conversing with Him. May such be our lot! May we climb to the top of the mount of communion and may we never come down from it!

David also tells the Lord that when he could not attain to the nearness he desired, yet he struggled after it and strained after it. Is not this the meaning of the expression, “Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul”? As much as if he said, “Lord, when I cannot climb the hill of fellowship, I labor to do so. If I cannot enter into Your Presence, I groan until I do so.” We ought either to be rejoicing in the Lord, or pining after Him! Ask God to make you miserable unless His conscious Presence makes you happy. Unless His love is shed abroad in your heart to be the beginning of Heaven, may you mourn His absence as a very Hell to your soul! Often I pray—

**“Oh, make my heart rejoice, or ache;
Resolve each doubt for me—
Lord, if it be not broken, break;
And heal it if it be.”**

We want one of the two—either to commune with God, or else to sigh and cry till we do so. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness if we are not filled. To be in a state of content without fellowship with God would be a terrible condition, indeed.

Now, when a man's daily cries and inward strivings are after God, he may certainly expect that God in prayer will have sweet communion with him. But again, I ask, does it not seem extraordinary that you and I, insignificant persons, who can have no claim upon the great Maker of the universe, should yet be permitted to come to His courts? Yes, even to come to Himself through Christ Jesus and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend? Do not think that Abraham, when he stood before the Lord and pleaded with Him, as one man does with another, was singularly favored above the rest of the elect family. It was a high favor, I cannot tell you how great. But such honor have I the saints. There are occasions with all His people when the Lord brings them very near and speaks with them and they with Him—when His Presence is to them as real as the all-pervading air and they are as much rejoiced in it as in the presence of father, or wife, or child, or friend.

Still, David, conscious of the great privilege which he sought, was not content without pleading the master argument of all—he pleads the great goodness of the Lord. Read it in verse five—"For You, Lord, are good." As much as to say—If You were not good You would never listen to me. I am, as it were, a noxious insect which a man might far sooner crush than speak with. And yet You are so good, my God, that instead of stepping on me, You lift me up and talk with me. Who thinks of an angel talking with an ant? That would be nothing.

Here is Jehovah speaking with a creature which is crushed before the moth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And He will show them His Covenant." He lets an unworthy creature spill out its heart to Him and He bows his ear and listens as earnestly as if there were no other voice in Heaven to command His thought. He gives His whole attention to the feeble cry of an unworthy one. Such an amazing fact could not happen unless it were written, "For You, Lord, are good."

Ah, but besides that, there is sin in us. I can understand the great God forgetting our littleness and bowing down to it. But for the holy God not to be held off by our sinfulness—this is a greater wonder still. But then the verse says, He is "ready to forgive." Ah, yes! When some of us think of what we were, we must be drowned in amazement that ever we should be permitted to commune with God. Yonder is a man who could once swear at an awful rate and now God listens to his voice in prayer! Another was a Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of the Word of God, a despiser of every holy and pure thing and yet he is now permitted to come into intimate friendship with the Most High. It is very marvelous, is it not?

Remember, none ever washed Christ's feet except a woman that was a sinner. Our Lord selects those that have been the greatest sinners to come into the nearest communion with Himself. It may be He has raised up some Sister here—who was once a tempter of others—to become a mighty

intercessor in prayer for the salvation of others. It may be that some Brother here, who once was—ah, but he is ashamed to remember what he was—has now become mighty in supplication—and, like Elijah, can open or shut the windows of Heaven. Oh, the strangeness of Almighty Grace! Let God's name be magnified forever and ever!

Thus I have enlarged on the first thought—that in prayer it is vital to us really to speak with God. Before I leave it, I want to pass a question round the place. Do you, my dear Hearers, all pray so as to speak with God? If not, what does it mean? If you merely repeat good words, what is the use of it? You might as well stand on a hill and talk to the moon as kneel down and hurry through the Lord's Prayer and then think that you have prayed. I tell you, you might better do the first than the second, for you would not insult God in that case—whereas you do insult Him in every one of those holy words which you use without thought, heart and faith.

Think how you would like your own child every morning to come to you and repeat a certain set of words without meaning anything thereby. You would say, "There, child, there, I have heard that often enough. Come to me no more with your empty noise." You would not care for vain repetitions. But when your boy or girl says, "Father, I need such a thing, please give it me," you hearken to the child's words. It may be that you have not enough of this world's goods to be very anxious that your children should come with large petitions. But if you were sufficiently rich, you would say, "That is right, dear child. Is there anything else you want? Tell me what it is. I will right gladly give you all things that are needful for you."

You would wish your child's request to be an intelligent one and then you would gladly attend to it. If your prayer does not come from your heart it will not go to God's heart. And if it does not bring you near to God so that you are speaking to Him, you have simply wasted your breath. You have done worse than nothing, for in all likelihood you have daubed your conscience over with the notion that you have prayed and so you have even done yourself serious harm by a flattering deceit. Oh, that God would save you from being so foolish!

II. And now I come to the second point and I pray God to give me strength to speak upon it and give you Divine Grace to hear it. Not at any great length but with much earnestness I have to remind you that David, in his prayer, desired PERSONAL ANSWERS FROM GOD. When we pray, we expect God to hear us, even as David says, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon You: for You will answer me."

I must not speak for all Christians in this matter. But I may speak for myself and for many dear Brethren in the faith—and I must boldly say that we *expect* the Lord to hear our prayers. No, we are *sure* that He does so. We hear our fellow Christians say, when we tell them of instances in which God has heard our prayers, "How very extraordinary!" And we look at them and say, "Extraordinary?" Has it become an extraordinary thing for God to be true to His own Promise? I like better the remark of the good old lady, who, when her prayer was answered, was asked, "Does it not surprise you?" She said, "No, it does not surprise me. It is just like Him."

If anyone of you had a promise from a friend that, upon your sending in a note, he would give you such-and-such a thing—if you sent the request and he fulfilled his promise, would you say, “I am greatly surprised at his action”? No, no—you believe that your friend means what he says and you look for him to keep his word. O child of God, deal with God on those terms. The wonder was that He should make the promise at all! But when He has made the promise, it is not wonderful that He should keep it—He expects you to ask and He waits to give.

A promise is like a check. If I have a check, what do I do with it? Suppose I carried it about in my pocket and said, “I do not see the use of this bit of paper, I cannot buy anything with it,” a person would say, “Have you been to the bank with it?” “No, I did not think of that.” “But it is payable to your order. Have you written your name on the back of it?” “No, I have not done that.” “And yet you are blaming the person who gave you the check? The whole blame lies with yourself. Put your name on the back of the check, go with it to the bank and you will get what is promised to you.”

A prayer should be the presentation of God’s promise endorsed by your personal faith. I hear of people praying for an hour together. I am very pleased that they can. But it is seldom that I can do so and I see no need for it. It is like a person going into a bank with a check and stopping an hour. The clerks would wonder. The common sense way is to go to the counter and show your check and take your money and go about your business. There is a style of prayer which is of this fine practical character. You so believe in God that you present the promise, obtain the blessing and go about your Master’s business.

Sometimes a flood of words only means excusing unbelief. The prayers of the Bible are nearly all short ones—they are short and strong. The exceptions are found in places of peculiar difficulty, like that of Jacob, when he cried—

***“With you all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

As a general rule, faith presents its prayer, gets its answer and goes on its way rejoicing.

We expect our God to answer our prayer all the more surely when we are in trouble. David so expected—“In the day of my trouble I will call upon You: for You will answer me.” Trouble is sent to make us pray. When we pray, the prayer becomes the solace of our trouble. And when the prayer is heard, it becomes the salvation out of our trouble. Many of you would be out of trouble quickly if you prayed. “Sir, I have been doing my best.” And what is your best? A better thing than your best is to wait upon the Lord. Often and often trial has to rap our fingers to make us let go our harmful confidences and turn to the Lord. With our vain-confidence we are like a madman with a razor—the more we grasp it, the more it cuts us.

Drop the deadly self-trust—trust in God and look to Him and your deliverance will speedily come to you. If you should have no answer at any other time, you will assuredly be heard in the time of trouble if you trust

in the Lord. Now, if we expect God to answer us, we do so on very good grounds. There are certain natural reasons. I was turning over in my mind the question, "Why do I pray? Why have I any reason to believe that God hears me?" And I thought to myself, "Well, on natural grounds I have a right to believe that God will hear prayer, or otherwise why is prayer commanded?" The Scripture is full of prayer. It is an institution of the old Covenant, as well as of the new and yet it is a piece of folly if God does not hear it.

"Oh," says somebody, "but it does you good to pray, even though there may be no such a thing as God's hearing prayer." It might do an idiot good to pray when he knew there was no hearing of prayer on God's part. But not being an idiot myself, I could not perform such a stupid exercise. I would as soon sit on a five-barred gate and whistle to the hills as offer prayer if I did not hope to be heard. If there is no God that hears prayer, I shall not pray—nor will any other rational being. Show prayer to be unheard of God and you have shown it to be a folly. Show prayer to be a folly and who will pursue it? Does God invite us to pray? Does He *command* us to pray? Are there many injunctions of this kind—"Men ought always to pray and not to faint"? "Pray without ceasing," and so on?

Then prayer must be heard of God. How would it be with you if you said to a number of poor people, "Come round to my gate tomorrow and I will relieve your distresses"? Would you not intend to relieve their distresses when you said so? I cannot imagine that you would be so diabolical as to keep on saying, "Come to my house. Whenever you are hungry, come to my table. Whenever you need clothes, come to my door and ask." All the while saying to yourself, "But I do not intend to give you anything. You may come and ring the bell as long as you like. It will be fine exercise for you but I shall take no notice of your appeals."

It would be a most shocking and disgraceful mockery of misery. God will not serve us in that fashion. The very institution of prayer gives us the assurance that God intends to hear and to answer.

Observe, again, that prayer has been universal among all the saints. There have been saints of different molds and temperaments but they have all prayed. Some of them have been, like Heman and Asaph, masters of song and they have prayed. Others could not sing but they have all prayed. Today you may meet with all sorts of Christians, holding many kinds of doctrines—but they all pray. And what is most curious, they all pray alike, too. You can scarcely detect a difference when they pray—

***"The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word and deed and mind."***

A man may preach doctrine contrary to the Grace of God. But get him on his knees and he prays to God for Divine Grace, as heartily as John Calvin himself. We are one at the Mercy Seat. Whatever doctrinal views we may hold—when we plead with the living God, in the power of the Holy Spirit—we are poured into one mold. How is this? If, all the ages through, saints have prayed, have they all been fools? Have they all exercised themselves in a way that was utterly useless and absurd? Do not believe it!

Note again, that the more godly and holy a man is, the more he prays. You never heard yet that a man began to backslide, or that a sober man became a drunkard through praying too much. Did you ever hear of a person becoming unkind to his wife, ungenerous to the poor, negligent of public worship, or guilty of grievous sin through being too much in prayer? No. The case is the reverse. As the man loves God more and becomes more like Christ, he takes greater delight in prayer. That cannot be an idle and useless exercise which the best of men have followed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If there is a possibility of error, we err in the best of company—for yonder comes the Lord Jesus Himself from His lonely haunt with the burrs of the heather from the mountainside sticking to His garments. He has spent all night in agonizing prayer. He will not open His mouth to preach to the multitude till first of all He has received a new anointing from His Father's hand in secret fellowship with Heaven. Our Master and His best disciples have abounded in prayer.

Well, dear Friends, these are *natural* reasons. And there are a great many more, if you will think them out. But, if you turn to Scriptural reasons, why was there a Mercy Seat if there is nothing in prayer? Why does the Throne of Grace still remain as a permanent institution, of which Paul says, "Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace," unless there is a reality in it? Tell me, why is Christ the way to the Mercy Seat? Why is He Himself the great Intercessor and Mediator if there is nothing in prayer? The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities in prayer—surely there must be something effectual where He lends His aid.

What? Is He, after all, helping us to do a thing which produces no result?—helping us to present petitions which will never reach the ear of God? Tell that to the philosophers. We are not so credulous. Once more—we know that God hears prayer because we have met with multitudes of His people who can tell of answers to prayer. What is more, we are ourselves among that number. Looking back on my diary, I find it studded with answers to prayer. Often when I have talked with friends of an evening, telling them a few cases in which God has heard my cries in time of need, they have said, "Have you written these down?" "Well, no, I cannot say that I have." "Oh," says one, "pray do not let such facts be lost."

I have to reply that many cases of answered prayer are quite beyond the belief of average people. I know them to be true but I do not expect others to believe my tale. When William Huntington wrote his "Bank of Faith" some people called it a "Bank of Nonsense." I could write twenty "Banks of Faith" and every word should be as sure as an honest man could write. But the only result would be that people would say, "Oh, well, you know that is the result of the good man's fanaticism." The moment that the moderns do not like to believe a thing they call it fanatical. If we were put into a witness-box tomorrow, our testimony would have weight with the court. But yet, the moment we talk about God's hearing prayer—oh, then we are romancing, and our witness is not to be received.

But, Brothers and Sisters, we bear a true witness—whether men receive it or not. I solemnly declare that no fact is better proved by my experience than this—that the Lord hears the prayers of His believing people. You, each one, will know for himself, or herself, whether there is a God that hears prayer. Does He answer your petitions? Brethren, you are sure that He does and at the asking of the question you bow your heads and say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” My dear Brother, William Olney, sits here among us—have we not prayed him twice back from the gates of the grave? He lives as an instance of answered prayer. There is not a stone or a beam about this great Tabernacle but has been an answer to our prayers.

In days when, as a congregation, we were few and feeble, we ventured on the serious enterprise of building this great house and we prayed it up stone by stone, to the praise and glory of God. If we who worship beneath this dome did not believe in prayer, the stones out of the walls would cry out against us.

But I hear a voice saying, “There are so many difficulties about prayer being heard.” Are there? The farther I go in this life, the more difficulties I am informed of, though I should not have discovered them myself. I am assured that there are great difficulties about eating, breathing and sleeping. As to the very air, I do not know what it is not full of—it teems with the seeds of disease and the wonder is that we live at all. But we do live, do we not? And we shall eat our suppers tonight despite the difficulties in connection with food.

As to the difficulties connected with prayer, they are altogether philosophical difficulties and by no means practical ones. If you are philosophers, you may weary your heads about them. But if you are simple, practical people, you may pray and receive the blessing. “Yes but the power of prayer with God supposes that God may change.” Well, our doing anything supposes that, but it is a mere supposition. Your even walking home tonight might raise a difficulty as to the decrees of God. But it is a non-existent difficulty. After you have entertained it as long as you like, you will find that you have entertained a shadow.

Suppose that you leave off supposing and just do as God tells you and see whether it does not work. When you find that it does practically work, let other people enjoy the difficulties. I do not eat meat. But if I did, I should always feel quite satisfied to let my dogs have the bones—the meat would satisfy me. If there are any difficulties about prayer, the dogs may have them—I mean the philosophers. But as for us simple Christian people—we are satisfied with the meat of the precious fact that prayer brings every blessing from above. We pray and God hears us and that is enough for us. Our God does not change His will, and yet He wills a change in answer to prayer.

I have done when I have made this further remark. I cannot expect any man to believe that he can commune with God, or that God will, in very deed, hear his prayer and grant him his desire, unless he has been led personally to try it. But if, by the Spirit of God, he has been led to seek af-

ter God and to draw near to God, I shall have no need of further arguments with him. That man has now entered upon a new life in which he will be capable of understanding new things. Until he does enter upon that life, he is spiritually deaf and blind. And what can he know about spiritual realities?

Our Lord has said to us, "You must be born again." When we are born again, the life within turns toward the life of God and has fellowship with God and God answers it and the desire of the godly one is granted. Oh, the honor of communion with God! Happy beings who enjoy it! How unspeakable the privilege of pouring out your hearts before God! Delight yourselves therein before you fall asleep this night. Oh, the holy quietude which it brings! You have not an ounce of care to carry because all your burden is in prayer and supplication—laid on Him that cares for you!

Oh, the love that dwells in the heart of the man who draws near to God in prayer! You cannot love God at a distance. You must draw nearer and nearer, or love will not rest. As when one comes into the sunshine, he feels the warmth, so when we come nearer to God we have more joy in Him. Keep near to God. Abound in prayer. Let your supplications be instant and constant, and you will be sure that the Father Himself hears your cries!

Oh, that some here who never prayed would begin at once! Trust in Jesus, the Intercessor, and let that trust show itself by pleading the merit of His blood in earnest prayer. Oh, that you would now begin that holy life of prayer which shall lead up to the eternal life of praise at the right hand of God. Amen.

On the wing, November 19, 1888.

DEAR FRIENDS—After reading this sermon carefully, I add these words. In all my sickness, weakness, conflict and pain, the prayer-hearing God has been with me and not one word of His promise has failed. Blessed be His name! And now I am sufficiently recovered to begin my journey to the place where I take rest and change. I go beneath a canopy of prayers. Will the reader join in asking that for the sake of my work I may soon recover strength and return to my field of service? I have more confidence in prayer than in the balmy air and the rest—means are only good when the God of Means makes them so. I leave my heart with dear ones at home and with my congregation of hearers and readers. The Lord be with you!

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE LAST CENSUS

NO. 382

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The Lord shall record, when He registers the people,
that this man was born there.”
Psalm 87:6.*

SEVERAL times, according to the record of Scripture, there was a census taken of the people of God. When Jacob went down into Egypt all his offspring were numbered and they were three score and ten souls. How small, then, the visible Church of Christ! It could be contained within a single tent. It had sprung of but a solitary man. All those, then, who feared Jehovah, so far as it is known to us, were of the race of Jacob.

There was another census taken when the people came up out of Egypt and if you read in the earlier chapter of the Book of Numbers you will be astonished at the wonderful multiplication which had taken place in the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Truly, the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. There were six hundred thousand footmen, all prepared for battle, besides women and children and aged men who were exempt from the toils of warfare.

There was another census taken after the people had been thirty-eight years in the wilderness. Through their sin they had not been multiplied. So many had fallen in the wilderness, that notwithstanding the natural increase, the population stood at very nearly the same rate, or—taking the armed men as the standard—about two thousand less than it was when they first entered into the howling wilderness. You have further on in history another instance of the taking of the census, or rather of an attempt to do it, when David commanded Joab, the captain of the host, to go through all the tribes and number the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

The people were God's people. When He numbered them, well and good. But none but the sovereign power has a right to take the census of the people. David, forgetting that he was only God's viceroy, that he stood not as king in Israel, except as under the constitution which God had established, presumes to invade the priestly prerogative and commit to Joab the Levitical office of numbering the people and that without offering the shekels of sanctuary or giving the tribute of redemption. So flagrant was the breach of the laws of Israel, that even Joab was quick to remonstrate.

But before David could effect the task, the Word of God had come out against him and three days of pestilence, or three years of famine, or a period of flight before their enemies, who should defeat them in war were offered to him as dread alternatives for the punishment of his sin. So did

God seem to say, "Jehovah shall register the people, but David shall not." God shall count His redeemed and number His elect, but man shall not venture to touch the mysterious roll. None but the Lamb shall take that Book and open every seal. That Lamb's Book of Life is not to be read except by the eyes of Him who bought the people with His blood. Nor are the people to pass under any hand to be counted except under the hand of Him that tells them, even the great Shepherd Himself.

My Brethren, according to the text, there is one day to be a great census taken of the Church of God. It is concerning that one census, final and decisive, that I shall have to speak this morning. May God grant that of all of us it may be said, when the Lord registers the people, "This man was born there."

Concerning this writing up of the census I shall take four or five points. First, we shall notice *what this writing will involve* "when the Lord registers the people." Secondly, *whose names will not be found written in the census*. Thirdly, *whose names will be there* and, fourthly, *who will register the people*. And then lastly, *why will it be done at all?*

I. When this dispensation shall come to its close, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come in the clouds of Heaven, when all His people shall be gathered to Him to share His splendors and to delight themselves in His triumph, then we believe the Lord shall register His people. **WHAT WILL THIS REGISTERING OR WRITING BE?**

There will be written in this census nothing but *personal matters*. If you note my text, it says, "This man was born there." They are not taken in the plural—these *men*. They are not taken as a corporate body—this *nation*, this *church*, this *family*—but *one by one* each man's name shall be found either written there or else left out. Personal matters alone will come into the great census of eternity. There is no truth which we need more frequently to hold up before the eyes of our people than the truth that nothing but *personal godliness* will ever avail.

If you could trace your pedigree through a line of saints up to the Apostles, no, up to Mary herself, the mother of our Savior, yet, unless you did yourself believe in Christ and had yourself been the subject of the personal change which is called regeneration, you should in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven. No connections, however admirable—no relations, however desirable, no proxies, however excellent—shall ever avail for any dying man. We must ourselves stand before God, each man for himself to be acquitted, or to be condemned—to hear, "Come, you blessed," or "Depart, you cursed one."

There may be and there always must be, when we take men in the mass, (and God often in his Providence deals with men in the mass), there may be innocent persons who suffer in the common calamity. There are likewise wicked men who rejoice in common mercies. But at the last the evil shall be unto the evil and the good shall be unto the good. The wheat shall be unmixed with chaff. The wine shall no more be mingled with the water, the gold shall not become dimmed through alloy. God's people, each of them *personally* accepted and the wicked, each of them *personally*

condemned, shall meet their final doom. See to it, Sir, each one of you, that you personally have an interest in the blood of the Lamb.

Again, you will perceive that this great census deals not merely with personal matters but with *vital* matters which concern a man's birth. Here you have it that this man was *born* there. 'Tis true the things we have thought and those we have done shall be mentioned at the last, but not for their own sakes. They shall be mentioned only as means of proving that we were born again, or else as evidence that regeneration had never taken place in us. The vital question which the Lord's Great Day shall touch will be this—"Was that man ever called from darkness into marvelous light? Was that heart ever turned from stone to flesh?"

"Were those eyes ever opened to the celestial light? Were those ears ever ready to listen to the Divine command? Was there a vital, radical change insomuch that old things had passed away and all things had become new? If not, in the golden roll of the Redeemed our names can have no place. When the roll is called, our names will not be mentioned and we shall stand shivering with dismay because our names are left out when God calls—"Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

Mark, once more, the matters with which the census shall have to do will be *decisive*. Perhaps, my Hearer, your name could not be written to-day among the regenerate, but there is hope yet and we trust by God's grace before you go from here, you may have a portion among the sanctified. If we could take today the number of God's people, at present converted, I thank God that before another hour it would be imperfect, for there would have been others added to the visibly-called of God.

But the last census shall be final. To its number none shall be added—from its multitude none subtracted. Once let that be taken and the angel shall cry in Heaven, "He that is holy let him be holy still." And his voice shall reverberate to Hell, but other words shall he sound there—"He that is filthy let him be filthy still." That shall be the last polling of the people. The last counting of the jewels and casting away of the counterfeits. The last bringing in of the sheep and banishment of the goats.

This makes it all-important that you and I should know today whether, "when the Lord registers the people, it shall be said that this man was born there." Oh that we were wise to look into the future! We are so bat-like, we see but so small a distance. We only see time and its trickeries, its paint, its guilt. Oh that we were wise that we understood this—that we would remember our latter end! So that come the census day when it may, we may each have our name written beneath our Lord the Lamb, in some humble place among the chosen of the Lord our God. This census, then, will involve—personal, vital, decisive matters.

II. Let us now ask—WHOSE NAMES WILL NOT BE FOUND WRITTEN WHEN THE LORD REGISTERS HIS PEOPLE? Now this is a question which no man can answer to the full. But with God's Word before us, supposing that the characters I mention shall be at the last day what they

are now, we can tell you with a decision that is infallible, whose names will *not* be found there.

And first, for these are the most likely people to be deceived, the name of the hypocritical Church member will not be found there. You have entered the Church for the sake of gain or respectability. You have made a profession which is a lie. You have assumed a garb which is but the sheep's skin while you yourself remain a wolf. You have a name to live, but are dead. You have whitewashed the sepulcher, but a sepulcher it is still. Oh Sir! It is one thing to have deceived the elder or the deacon. It is one thing to have misled and to have cajoled the minister. It is one thing to have won the respect and the esteem of the Church, but it is another thing to escape undetected from the fiery Glance which can read the secret things of the belly and before which even Hell and death are naked and unveiled.

Do not, I pray you, hope that your masquerading, your spiritual pretenses shall be of any use before Him. He shall rend your garments in pieces and you shall stand naked to be the target for all His arrows. You shall be banished to the place where the hissing, the rebuke and the reproach of all the ungodly shall descend forever and ever. I tell you, your name may be in the Church rolls without a blot and no man may have suspected you, but except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Church members, try yourselves, the oldest and the best of you, yes and do you try yourself, O preacher, lest after having preached to others, you also should be a castaway. Oh, let us never take our religion from other men's opinions, not even from the opinion of the best of men! I would not be satisfied even with the assurance of an Apostle, if it came from his own judgment—we must have the assurance of the Holy Spirit, the witness within us that we are born of God.

Again—among the names that will not be found there we may mention the man who is a *mere hearer*. How many there are among you today whom we could but describe as hearers only! The ear is tickled, the mind is interested, the gaze is fixed upon the preacher. 'Tis well. God be thanked that so many are willing to listen to the Word of God. But to be a Hearer and not a Believer will involve no salvation. To have had the seed sown, but for the seed never to have taken root will never give a harvest. To have had the light shining upon sightless eyeballs will have been of no use or giving of sight. To have sat in these pews, though some of you may sit for twenty years—unless the Word is received into the *heart* through the *grace of God*—will minister rather to your damnation than to your salvation. Mark this, my Hearers, if we are not “a savor of life unto life,” we must be “a savor of death unto death.”

I know what a great many people think if they are regular Church-goers, if they are always in their place twice on the Sunday, that is as much as can be expected of them. I tell you, Sirs, that you may make your Church-going into a sin if you go to hear a Gospel which you reject. If you rest in your Church-goings or your Chapel-goings, you have rested in a lie, you have built upon the sand and in the last Great Day if you shall

cry, "We have eaten, we have drunk with You and You have taught in our streets," He shall say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity."

There is a man yonder, too, whose name is not written and will not be found written there, unless some great change shall take place—I mean yonder young man, who in saying, "I will repent, I will seek a Savior. I would be washed in His blood." Young man! You have said that twenty times before. You said it when you left your mother's roof and she rejoiced in the resolution. You said it when last the fever came into the establishment and you lay sick. You said it, Sir, when last time conscience pricked you, because you had retired to rest at night and had omitted the prayer in which you had been so early trained. And you say it today. But "unstable as water you shall not excel."

Your promise made in your own strength is but a broken reed. Your penitence is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. You are paving your road to Hell with your good intentions. Up, Sluggard! Up! Pull up those paving-stones and hurl them at the old Fiend who longs to keep you at this dreary work of making a smooth path to your destruction. Oh, my dear Friends, perhaps one of the worst of Satan's snares is the promissory note. Under a sermon, when the sinner has been awakened, the devil gets him to say, "Well, I will think of these things by-and-by." As you heard the other night, indifferent people are the most hopeless of all, because even when aroused, procrastination lulls them to sleep again.

If Felix had hastily said to Paul, "Paul, I hate and despise you, you are an impostor," there had been some little hope that in his quiet mood reason might reverse the words which he had uttered. But when he said in bland tones, tones which deceived himself, though not the Apostle, "Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you," then might you have read upon the brow of Felix with the spiritual eye these words—"This is one who knows the Truth, but follows not its dictates. His damnation is as sure as it is just." I had infinitely rather hear, as I have sometimes heard and as we constantly do, words of abuse against the minister and language of hatred against the Gospel, than I would hear some of you who speak fair but mean foul. Those who protest but belie, whose resolutions are like bad money or forged checks which he that takes loses thereby and he that believes is deceived. Your name, Sir, unless there is something more than this, will never be found written there.

Scarcely necessary is it, I think, to say that those men and women who are *living in vice and open sin and who die as they live*, will never find their names written there. No drunkard shall ever reel across the golden streets. No oath of the blasphemer shall ever shock the ear of angels. No light frothy or lascivious song shall ever taint the ear of perfection. Eden is not the place for thieves. Paradise is not the spot for harlots. Men and women who die with such blots upon their character and such sins upon their souls shall find at Heaven's gate the angels say, "There shall in no wise enter here anything that defiles."

And you, too, you *moralists*, against whose character no accusation can be brought—if you never received the new heart you will be as surely shut out as the immoral. The honest tradesman who was only dishonest to his God, shall find dishonesty there to be damnable. The upright man who had no crooked ways except towards Christ and His holy Gospel shall find those crooked ways destroy his soul. The man who said he loved his neighbor but forgot his God shall find that “the wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” Oh, my dear Hearers, except you have faith in Christ, except you have the Spirit of God in you, except you repent and be converted, there is a far sterner than iron and more durable than steel which will shut you out of the place of happiness and in the number of the saints your names shall never be found.

III. We shall now turn to a more pleasing work—WHOSE NAME WILL BE FOUND THERE?

When you made up the census paper last Monday morning, there may have been a thief in the house in the night. I suppose you did not put his name down. There may have been some person who, that night, knocked at the door and was for some short time under your roof, but who went out from you because he was not of you, for if he had been of you, doubtless he would have continued with you—I know that you did not put his name there. You recorded there the names of the inhabitants of the house, but of none beside.

Now, then, it shall be so at the last great census-taking. Whose name shall be there? We reply, there shall be the name of every soul that ever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, whosoever fled to the Cross for refuge, whosoever turned his tearful eye to Calvary as his hope, whosoever stretched out his finger to touch the hem of the sacred garment—these shall find their names surely there as well as the mightiest of the Prophets or the chief of the Apostles. Brethren, we will take those who think themselves most likely to be left out and we remark that there will be found there the name of the poorest.

When this last census was taken, the paper was sent as much to the hovel of the poor in St. Giles’s, as to the palace of the rich in St. James’s. None were left out. The Act of Parliament was not passed to take a census of the rich—it was not needed that there should only be those written who paid a certain amount of tax. But as they were all subjects, the name of the beggar was recorded in the register as well as the name and title of the peer. So shall it be at the last. If you have believed in Christ, though you did never glitter on the pages of heraldry, though rags were your dress and penury your portion, yet in as fair a place as those who have worn a coronet and have yet feared God, shall you find your name. Oh, let us never imagine that because a man wears fustian, or is clothed in corduroy, he has the slightest less reason to hope that he shall be saved!

Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen. But God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be the helm of the kingdom so that if there is an advantage either way, it is where some would dream it should least be given. But, then, as the poorest, so the

weakest saint shall be found there. You did not omit the name of your daughter because with some spinal complaint she has been so long afflicted that she can scarcely sit upright. You put her name there as well as that of your stalwart son, who could boldly wield arms if it were needed to defend this country from the invader.

And, I take it, when you wrote out the list, the infant child had a place as well as the full-grown man. You felt that the census would not be complete and your family list would not be well made out even if that infant whose voice was but a cry and whose life was but a pain, should miss his place. All were recorded there. And so, at the last, Benjamin shall be written as well as Judah, Mephibosheth as well as David. He that is lame in the feet as well as the giant in strength. Father Earnest and Mr. Great-Heart shall have their place, but Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid shall not miss their portion. Everyone of those who believed in Christ, though their faith was but as a grain of mustard seed and their spiritual life was but as the smoking flax, shall find their names written there.

I would that I could speak out this Truth so that the cast down and the all but destroyed could lay hold upon it. Are you miserable today? Your misery does not erase your name. Have you sinned, but do you cry, "Father, have mercy upon me"? Your sin has not blotted the writing. Engraved as in eternal brass, there stands your name. The powers of darkness shall never prevail to erase the everlasting characters. Are you today so conscious of your unworthiness that you dare not look up? Are you thinking, "If I said 'Abba, Father' it would be presumption! If I claimed the privilege of a child, it would be arrogance"? Yet if Christ is yours, if you can stretch out your hand now and say—

***"My soul would lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin,"***

you need not be afraid but that among the blood-bought you shall share your lot.

"Ah, my soul, will *you* be there?" Pass the question now through this vast throng and let each soul put itself into the balances with this as the test-weight—"What do you think of Christ? Is He your only help? Do you find cleansing in His blood, healing in His wounds, life in His death, Heaven in His pains?" If so, you shall be found when the Lord registers the people and of you it shall be said, "That man was born there."

IV. I shall now turn your attention to the next point of the subject, briefly. WHO IS TO MAKE OUT THE CENSUS PAPER?

"The Lord shall record when *He* registers the people." But why shall the Lord make out the census? The first reason is—*Who else should do it?* Suppose our enemies had the making out of the roll! "Oh, Lord, deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies, for false witnesses are risen up against me and such as breathe out cruelty." I think there is none among us who would be willing to have his eternal fate decided by an evil and gain-saying world. If we could put the pen into the hand of the wicked

they would write down the offscouring, but omit the jewels. They would surely record the base and the reprobate, while the chosen and precious would have no lot or portion.

Imagine for a moment, my dear Friends, that the pen could be given to the old Pope of Rome and that he had the writing up of the people. Now, my lord Pope, with your triple crown upon your head, write them out. I am sure he would omit yours and mine because we are not obedient to the pontifical see and even if he were under authority and command, I am sure he would make a great splutter in trying to write the name, "Martin Luther," and he would throw down his pen and utterly refuse to obey, if he had to write the glorious name of John Calvin.

Well, thanks be to God, the pen is not in the hand of that arch-deceiver, nor in that of any of our enemies, but the Lord shall make out the census *Himself*. Suppose now we put the pen into the hand of Bigotry—Bigotry, who lives not quite so far off as Italy—but takes up her residence in our own land and hard by our own abode. I think I see her with her face bitter as wormwood and with her eyes full of darkness and she, having written all the names down, reads—"There are few that shall be saved. They are so few that a child can count them." She makes a dash against the name of this man, for he did not hold all the five points of a certain system. She runs her pen right through another man's, because he dared to preach to sinners—and she takes a double dip for another, who had once ventured to say that faith was the duty of man and unbelief was a high and damning crime. Oh, how few would ever go to Heaven, if Bigotry had the making out of the census paper!

I might thus run through the list of all the enemies of Christ's Church and show you that it would not be safe to trust any of them, from the devil downward to the Pope upward, with the making up of the list of those who shall enter into the King's palace. But, suppose our friends had the task. "Yes," says one, "let my mother have the pen." Yes, if this were left with our dear Friends, they would not be long before some of them would write in bold text hand the name of their most reprobate son, or most hardened daughter. Affection in this world overmasters the understanding—and doubtless there would be many in Heaven who would defile its purity if affection had the keeping of the gates and if understanding had no place.

Yes, but young man, your mother cannot save you. She can pray and plead, but if your iniquity be written as with an iron pen and graven on the horns of the altar, her tears cannot—sold even though they are—eat out the dire inscription from the brass. You must be washed in blood, or else a Baptism of tears will not avail. You must have the Spirit of Christ, for your mother's spirit cannot bear you on its wings to Heaven. Indeed, dear Friends, if the making out of the census paper were left even to ourselves, it were left to the wrong persons, for I take that the great end of all God's dispensations is His glory and if our entrance to Heaven were left to ourselves, there are many who would go there with a bee on their lips and with blasphemy in their hearts.

They would go to Glory fresh from their sins—rising from beds of lusts to beds of bliss. They would go red with murder, black with grime, dripping with the oozing of their vice and Heaven would become a Sodom and Paradise an Aceldama. The Throne of God would be no better than the Throne of Moloch and the place of perfection would not be preferable to Hell itself. God and God only—God the Only Wise—shall have the writing up of the people—for there is no one to be found but God who could do it.

There is a second reason which I think will strike the spiritual mind with force. “The Lord shall record when He registers the people.” Instructions were given at the late census, that the paper should be made out by “*the head of the family.*” Now I suppose, though it is not always the fact, that the husband is the head of the household and that the father stands in the position of the head of the family. Well, then, the Church must not make up the census paper, for she is the *spouse*. But He who is Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, He by whose name the whole family in Heaven and earth are named, *He* shall “Register the people.”

It were, indeed, impious for you or me—it would bring down upon our heads a penalty as heavy as that which fell on David—if we thought we could write up the people. We have said perhaps, “There are only such-and-such people that shall be saved,” and we have turned about and said of another, “Lord, what shall this man do?” And like John, loving spirit though he was, we have been ready to call fire from Heaven upon some and to say of others, “Master, forbid them, because they follow not with us.” But, Brethren I hope we have done with all that now. We believe the Lord knows them that are His. They are a multitude that no man can number and no man should ever attempt the task. They are more than bigotry would include, they are fewer than a latitudinarian charity would affirm. But be they more or be they less, they are known only to the eternal mind and this is a secret into which we must not pry. The angelic footstep treads not here. Let us not be rash and foolish to pry where angels stand back and do not desire to look.

I would give another reason why God and God alone, should make up this paper had I not already anticipated myself. I meant to have said because He is the *only wise God*. You know it is said in Scripture that God is wise, but then it is added He is “Only Wise.” There is not another wise being upon the face of the earth. There is not another wise being, even in Heaven itself. God is Only Wise. Even the heathen knew this. You will remember when some fishermen had found a spoil, the old Greek legend says, “Not knowing how to divide it they repaired to the Delphic oracle, which said, ‘Let the wisest have it.’”

They sent it to Thales, the Miletian. They sent it to Solon. It went the round of the wise men of Greece—but they all refused it. They said no, confessed they were not the wisest, till at last one of them advised to send it to the altar of the gods, for the gods were the wisest of all. What the heathen thus pictured in poetic fiction we know to be true. We will not question this man or that, this denomination or that. It is not for us to use our fingers to count the brands plucked from the burning but to use

our hands to pluck them from the fire and we will pass the roll to the Only Wise God and He shall at the last decide whether they are His or not.

V. I now come to my last point. May the Spirit of God bless it to us and seal it on our hearts—WHY WILL THE CENSUS BE TAKEN AT ALL?

Why should God register the people? We answer not that God may receive fresh information. He knows all things. Not that there is any fear of God's purposed number being incomplete. The Lord knows them that are His and this is one of the stones on which the security of the Church is built. Why then?

Of course we are dealing now with a noble picture and you must view it as a picture, though within itself it bears a mighty fact. The Lord counts up His people, in the first place, *to show His value of them*. You remember that passage, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels," as though the jewels had to be put each into their proper place and then the Divine eye should run along them all and say "Yes, they are made up. Those in the basket tally in number with those in the inventory. They are made up. Neither ruby, nor emerald, nor pearl is lacking. They are all there."

God makes up His jewels. It is impossible for the human mind to conceive how dear is the poorest Believer to the heart of his Father—dearer than the widow's only child to her soul—dearer than the new-made bridegroom to his bride—dearer than life to those who stand in peril—dearer than honor to those who could give life rather than sacrifice their integrity. We love, but we love not as God loves. Love with us may be an abiding passion, but with God it is an all-penetrating principle.

Of us it may be said, that we are loving, but of God, that He is Love itself. And well does the idea of counting up the loved ones set forth the esteem and value which He sets upon them and the intensity and deep-seatedness of that affection which He bears towards their persons. The Lord will make up His jewels, He will count His sheep. He will remember the children of His family, to see if they are there who were written in the register of old.

Another thought strikes us. The last census shall be taken *to show to Satan his entire defeat*. They are all there, Fiend of Hell. They are all there. What did you say, "I will pursue, I will overtake. I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them." What say you now, Fiend of Hell? There is not one of them lacking! You greedy lion of the pit, have you sent one sheep? Has so much as a lamb been dragged to your infernal den? You legion hosts, who with cunning, sharpened by malice, sought to tear from the arms of Christ those whom He had sworn to save—has the Surety done His work or not? Have you defeated Him? You have nailed Him to the tree—have you broken His bones and robbed Him of His members? You took away His life—could you keep it? Do they not live because He lives? You struggled through eighteen hundred years and more.

You grappled with these poor men and women who wrestled hard with you—did you overcome *one* of them? You were worsted when you fought with Job in the slippery standing of a dunghill. You were defeated when

you fought with David on the pinnacle of the palace top and brought him down. You won not the victory when you seemed to win it over Peter in the hall of Pilate. You were defeated not once or twice, but many thousand times in the heirs of Life, who fought with various success in time, but with sure success as time merged into eternity. Oh, all you hosts, look there and be ashamed and let the songs of the white-robed be howls to you. Let the shouts of the complete host of the redeemed sink into your ears like death-knells and re-begin your Hell, for you are defeated, you are driven down. The pride of your looks is lowered and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day!

Yet once more, methinks the counting up of the redeemed will be performed for another reason—to let all men see that *the great riddle which has distracted human intellect was no riddle but a fact*—and facts are not riddles. What is the great mystery? It is that God decrees, that man acts—yet that God's decrees and man acts tally with one another. Of old, before the sockets of the eternal hills were carved out of the enduring granite, before the peaks lifted themselves white with snow to glitter in the sun, before stars had visited the mountain summit and looked down upon a world that had fallen into sin—yes, when this world was not, when it was uncreated, sleeping in the womb of the Divine thought as yet unborn, when suns and stars and this brave universe itself had not begun to be formed—THEN in His book His chosen were all written and the members of Christ fixed and ordained!

That book was closed and sealed. It has not been opened. Now what effect can a book, a clasped sealed book, have upon the deeds of men? "None," you say. "None," say I. The decree of God as such has no effect on any man. There it is. There it stands. But look! The world is all confusion. Never were the waves of the sea more wanton in their play. Man sins, rebels, revolts, revolts again. The checks of mercy hold him not, he breaks the bit, he scorns the yoke and yet despite the hardness and the freedom of man to rebel against his God, I see at last through grace omnipotent a multitude come streaming slowly in, year after year, through the golden gates and at last I hear the gate closed.

I see it barred and how strange shall it seem as that great sealed book is now unclasped, it is found that all who were written there have come. They come as they were written—come at the *hour* ordained! They come in the *place* predestinated! They come by the *means* foreknown! They, come as God would have them come and thus free agency did not defeat predestination and man's will did not thwart the eternal will! God is glorified and man free. Man—the man as he proudly calls himself—has obeyed God as truly as though he knew what was in God's book and had studied to make the Decree of God the very rule and method of his life.

Glorious shall it be when thus that book shall prove the mystic energy which went out from between the folded leaves—the mysterious Spirit that emanated from the eternal Throne—that unseen, unmanifested, sometimes unrecognized mysterious Power, which bowed the will and led it in silken chains, which opened up the understanding and led it from dark-

ness into light and melted the heart and moved the spirit and won the entire man to the obedience of the Truth as it was in Jesus.

I will say no more except this. Shall I be there? Will you be there? I cannot put the question better than in the words of that solemn hymn—

***“When You, my righteous Judge, shall come
To fetch Your ransomed people home
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die,
Be found at Your right hand?
I love to meet among them now,
Before Your gracious feet to bow
Though vilest of them all—
But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out,
When You for them shall call?
Prevent, prevent it by Your grace;
Be You, dear Lord, my hiding place,
In this the accepted day—
Your pardoning voice, O let me hear,
To still my unbelieving fear
Nor let me fall, I pray.
Let me among Your saints be found,
Whenever the archangel’s trump shall sound,
To see Your smiling face;
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”***

May that be your prayer and mine. May God hear it and hear it He will, if to that prayer we add the obedience of faith. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house.” Sinner, believe. God help you to believe this morning for His name’s sake.

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BLESSINGS TRACED TO THEIR SOURCE

NO. 3213

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

“All my springs are in You.”
Psalm 87:7.

It does one good to think that there are such things in the world as springs bubbling up in the shady nooks. Places of sweet refreshment in this dusty earth. The mouth waters at the very thought of the palms of Elim and the wells there. If even to us fresh springs are a blessing, much more must they have been so to the Psalmist who lived in a dry and thirsty land which owed almost all its fertility to irrigation. Nothing is more precious to the Oriental than a well. And he who finds a spring of water counts himself a much happier man than he who has found a vein of precious metal. We must, therefore, transfer the thought of precious water springing up copiously, bubbling up with living force, to our spiritual condition—and then say with David, “All my springs are in You.” That is to say, we trace all the mercies we receive to their fountainhead! The Psalmist was grateful for the blessings that were conferred upon him. He did not receive them with selfish inattention but, considering them well, he found that every good gift and every perfect gift came from his God. He had learned that not only everything good around him, but everything that was within him that was good came from the same source! And discovering within himself a living power, a living well of water within his own nature, he traced that, also, to the Grace of God—and said, “All my springs are in You.”

Did he not mean, first, “*all the springs I drink of are in You*”? Secondly, did he not mean, “*All the springs within myself come from You*”? I do not know that those two heads comprise even one-tenth of the thoughts that might arise out of our text, but then we have not time to take such a great text as this and consider it in full. We shall, therefore, just take the two series of thoughts that will spring up under those heads.

I. The first thought is, ALL THE SPRINGS I DRINK OF ARE IN YOU.

To begin, he may have remembered *the deep which lies under*. In the benediction upon Joseph, Moses said that he was to have the blessing of the deep which couches beneath. Deep down in the earth are vast reservoirs of water and when these are tapped, they spring up and we are re-

freshed by them. These are symbolical of the mighty fountains of Eternal Love, the electing Grace of God, the Infinite fullness of the heart of God in His own Nature, for, "His nature and His name are Love." When we get to the great fountains of the Infinite, Eternal, Immutable Love of the Father towards His chosen people, then, indeed, we come to the fountain-head of all the streams which make the people of God glad! There is not a blessing we receive but it may be traced to the eternal purpose of God! We may see, on every single benediction of the Covenant, the stamp of the eternal purpose and decree—

***"The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."***

Every Christian who is rightly taught, who understands the Word of God and is not afraid of the fullness of the Truth of God, will ascribe all the springs of Grace that he ever drinks of, to the eternal Fountain. God said to Job, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the search of the depth?" This is a mysterious subject and we cannot find these secret springs, but yet we know that they are there. We rejoice in them and bless the Lord for them!

But, using only illustrations from Scripture, when the Psalmist said, "All my fresh springs are in You"—for that is the force of the expression he uses—may he not have thought of *that Rock from which the living water leaped in the wilderness*, so that all the multitude that were in the desert drank of the stream? Those who had true knowledge of God also drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them and we know that, "that Rock was Christ." That Rock, too, was struck and, straightway it became a spring of water for all the tribes, even as our smitten Savior has now become the Spring from which all of us drink. So I may say—

***"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
You my sacred Fount shall be."***

We find, leaping from the cleft in His side, the cleansing blood and the refreshing water, too. As I said at first, that we may trace all our blessings to *electing* love, I may now say with equal truthfulness, that we may trace them all to *redeeming* love. There is a crimson mark on every blessing of the Covenant!—

***"There's never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan."***

That is a most sure and precious Truth of God! As we look to our dear Lord upon the Cross and see Him also exalted in His Glory, remembering that "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and that of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace," we can truly say to Him, "Emmanuel, all my springs are in You."

We meet, in Holy Scripture, with another illustration. In the times of Abraham there were certain wells which he dug, the possession of which were disputed by the Philistines. And when Isaac afterwards had to go into Philistia, he found that the wells which Abraham had dug had been filled up by the Philistines. He therefore dug others and when the Philistines began to argue with his herdsmen, he moved on further and dug another well—and the Philistines strove again for that. He moved again, for he was a peaceful man, and found they strove for that—it seemed as if he could have no water without having to contend for it.

Sometimes the wells of which we drink are *springs concerning which there is grave contention*. There are some that deny the most precious Doctrines of the Gospel. There is a sound of the shooting of archers at the place of the drawing of water. And when a poor, simple child of God would come and let down his bucket and take a draught, he finds the bowman's shaft flying past his ears! Somebody has discovered that one Doctrine is not Scriptural, and that another Doctrine is not rational, so the thirsty soul becomes afraid to drink of that well! What is worse, if there should not be any controversy about the Truth, itself, he will find a controversy in his own soul as to his right to appropriate it. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, will remind him of his faults, will tell him he can have no part or lot in the matter, or else he would not be what he is. They who are delivered from the noise of the archers in the place, of drawing water shall, bless the name of the Lord as they drink!

And truly, Brothers and Sisters, if we did but always remember that all our mercies come from God—hat whatever logic may insist upon, it must be true that salvation is of the Lord—that whichever *ism* may be right, whichever side of controversy may have made an accurate statement, it must be correct that every good gift comes from “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”—then we would find that, let the enemy contest as he will, we have access to the refreshing stream! Since all the springs worth drinking are in God our Father and Christ our Redeemer, we can come to these and drink without fear, for God is ours, Christ is ours and, therefore, every Covenant blessing is ours, too! Therefore, laying aside all disputing and contention, we come and drink of these wells because they are in God and in Christ our Savior!

We read, in the Book of Judges, of two springs of water. You often mention them in prayer. Indeed, they are a kind of proverb in the Christian Church. There were *the upper springs and the nether springs*. Now every child of God who judges rightly knows that the nether springs are in his God. I mean his lower comforts, his temporal mercies. What would we have of earthly good worth enjoying if God did not give it to us? If you

get wealth, who gives you power to get it? And if you have health, who is it that preserves your strength of limb and the blood that still leaps within your veins? He has but to will it and you would be a paralytic, or a consumptive like so many others. Your children are spared to you—bless God for each of them, for it is He that spares them! Your husband or your wife, your brother or your sister, the joys that cluster around the hearth—all these come to you through Him. They are common mercies, we say, but we would not think them so common if we had to miss them for a while! Let us bless God and see His hand in them all, and say, “Great Father, even my nether springs are in You.”

But when we come to the thought of the upper springs, we have no question connecting them. If we possess eternal life, God gave it to us. If we believe in Jesus, faith is not a flower that ever springs from the natural soil of man’s heart. If we have repentance unto life, it is the work of the Spirit of God. If we have been kept until now, faithful to our profession, we have nothing of which we can glory—we would have gone back from it if God had not preserved us. We have not had one single jot of anything from the first day until now, but we have derived it from the Lord’s Infinite Mercy! All our upper springs are in Him—shall we not bless His name? And while we say, “Spring up, O well,” shall we not also add, “Sing you unto it,” and bless and magnify that perennial Fountain of Mercy which perpetually flows to us? The old classical poets went to Helicon for their inspiration—they drank of that spring upon Mount Parnassus. But as for us, we will say, with that poetess of the sanctuary—

***“Come, You Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Your Grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise.”***

We have no Parnassus, but we have a better Mountain—

***“Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above!
Praise the Mount—oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love!”***

From this source will we derive the inspiration of our muse. Here shall we find the burden of our song. The upper and the nether springs come alike from God—yes, “All my springs are in You.”

You may read, if you turn to the 104th Psalm, *of the springs that flow into the valleys*. They are the places for springs where the wild beasts come to drink, and each of them does quench his thirst. And where the birds sing among the branches. You and I have had our valley mercies. We have been humiliated, perhaps, and we have sung with the shepherd’s boy in the Valley of Humiliation—

***“He that is down needs fear no fall.
He that is low, no pride.
He that is humble, ever shall***

Have God to be his Guide.

We have been in the Valley of Baca and made it a well—and the rain has filled the pools. We have been in the Valley of Fellowship with Christ, walking along the cool vale of communion with our Father who is in Heaven—and behold, it has been a place of springs—of springs full of water! There is not one joy in our best and happiest time but comes from God. In our choicest moments, when we are most like our Lord and most free from the encumbrances of the earth, never, even then, have we anything good that is to be ascribed to ourselves! If it be good, it all comes from God!

Then, we read in Isaiah, and in some other passages which I need not quote, of *the streams in the desert*. “In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert...I will open rivers in high places.” That is an odd place for rivers! “Rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” Do you, Beloved, remember your dry-land springs? Can you not remember when you ate of treasures hidden in the sand—when it was dark, and yet was never so much light? When you were in the land of barrenness, and yet were never so filled with plenty? When you had abounding troubles and yet never had such super abounding comforts? Oh, let us bless the Lord that our desert springs were in Him! They were in Him, or we would not have had them! Had not the Lord been with us, we would have fallen and died in the wilderness like those who came out of Egypt, whose carcasses strewed the plain!

If you turn to the 4th Chapter of Deuteronomy, verse 49, you will read about springs that some of God’s saints drink of that are not often mentioned—*the springs of Pisgah*. Moses there speaks of the springs that came from the foot of Pisgah. And believe me, they are cool streams, indeed, and supply drink that goes down sweetly and makes the lips of them that sleep to speak! He who knows what Heaven is and has, by faith, viewed it—who has seen its security, its purity, its nearness to God, its revelation of the face of Christ, its communion of saints, its joy of the Lord—such an one has found the Pisgah springs to be very precious and very soul-reviving! Oh, for a draught of them now! I think some of us had such a draught at our last Prayer Meeting when we talked together, and sang the hymn that ends—

***“A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy’s land.
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”***

The prospect of the coming Glory makes the Pisgah springs well up—and all of them are in our God, for there is no true hope of Heaven without

Him! There would be banishment into eternal woe if it were not for His Infinite Grace!

Thus I might continue to use the similes of Scripture, and show that whatever sort of springs there may be, they all come from the great deep of the Infinite Love of God and that all our springs are in Him.

II. But now we come to our second point, namely, that ALL THE SPRINGS THAT ARE WITHIN US COME FROM THE SAME SOURCE.

You know that our Savior says, concerning the man who drinks of the water that He gives, that it “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” A Christian is not a cistern that is filled and emptied, but, by God’s Grace, he becomes a living well! He is not a puppet moved with strings. He is not a machine that is wound up and goes by wheels mechanically worked—there is a living Power in him! He is a new creature in Christ Jesus, instinct with the highest form of life and that life possessed in the highest degree of freedom, for while a man is naturally a free agent, yet he is in a far superior sense a free agent when he becomes a converted soul! “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”

Our text, then, may mean this—that *all the springs of our inner life lie in God*. “For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Christ is your life. All the springs of life are in Him.

And hence, next, *all the springs of our secret thought and of our devotion are in Him*. You cannot always think of God and worship God alike. At least if you can, and it is real devotion, I greatly envy you. I find that in my soul, there are times when I have the wings of an eagle and can mount up and, with unblinking eyes, look into the Infinite Glory and I can soar on and on in strange ecstasy and delight. At another time, I cannot rise from the ground. The chariot wheels are taken off, as in Pharaoh’s case, so that we drag heavily. Then Dr. Watts’ words seem appropriate—

**“Our souls can neither fly nor go,
To reach eternal joys.”**

The preacher, too, is sometimes fertile enough and, at another time barren. Truly, the Christian’s experience is not unlike Pharaoh’s dreams. He has lean and fat cattle, withered ears, and ears rank and good come up. This is doubtless to show him that when he has sacred thoughts and devotion, they come from God. In order that he may see that, he is sometimes left to prove his own emptiness. To show that the strength of Sampson does not lie in muscle and sinew and bone, alone, his hair is shorn and when he goes forth as before, he performs no feat of strength—he is as weak as any other man. Yes, Beloved, if we have any

power of thought, or sweetness of devotion in drawing near to God, all the springs lie in Him.

So is it, most certainly, with *the springs of our emotions*. Do you not find yourselves sometimes sweetly melted down by the power of God's Word? Could you not, at such times, sit and weep under the thought of the death of Jesus and His unspeakable love to you? Sometimes do you not feel stirred with sacred joy, so that you could burst out with an impromptu hallelujah, or begin to sing a new song to the praise of His great love wherewith He has loved you? At other times you think about the same theme, but your heart feels no power—the same song is sung, but though your lips join in it, your heart does not go with the melody. You know it is so.

You cannot command your own spirit—the Lord must help you. The springs of your emotions lie in His hands. If He leaves you, you are like the Arctic sea, frost-bound. But when He comes and smiles upon you, all the icebergs melt in a moment and your heart feels the warm Gulf Stream of Eternal Love flowing right through it! Then there comes the time of the blossoming of Spring and the singing of the birds—the whole heart is alive unto the Most High! The springs of your emotions, as well as of your sacred thought and devotion all lie in Him!

And I am sure it is so with regard to *the springs of all true actions*. Christians are not all thought and all emotion—they are practical men and women—and seek to work for God. But did any of us ever do a good work in our own strength? We have done many works in our own strength, but were they good for anything? The Savior shall decide that question. "Without Me you can do nothing," He says. You can bring forth fruit without Him, but your fruits are as the vines of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah. Only that is right which comes from Him. When He blesses us, our actions done for Him are accepted through Him.

Well, Beloved, it will always be so, that our springs of holy zeal, our springs of joy, our springs of fellowship, our springs of every kind that are worth the having, all lie in Him! And it will be good if the whole Church recognizes that fact. We cannot get up a revival—it is a great pity that we should ever try to do so—for such a revival, if we seem to get it, will be very mischievous. But the Lord can send us a true revival! All our springs are in Him. We must not depend upon ministers and pray, "If So-and-So shall preach, good results will follow." Our springs are not in these poor cisterns, they are in our God! When will the Church try to look away from the creature to the Creator? When will she purge herself of that hereditary fault of hewing out for herself, broken cisterns, and forgetting the Fountain of Living Waters? I am persuaded, from my own experience, that the more I live upon God, alone, the more I truly live and

the less I know of anything like power, or wisdom, or anything of the sort pertaining to myself, the better! The more I decrease and He increases, the more do I grow up in the Lord in all things. May we, then, each one of us, adopt this sweet motto and always say, "All my springs which are within me, as well as those of which I drink, are in my God."

I shall only keep you long enough to say three more things—

The first of which is, *let us look to these springs*. If you do not feel up to the mark, if you are dull and heavy and have no springs in yourself, remember that they never were there! "All my springs are in You." Do you feel empty? Well, you only feel just as you are! You feel as though there was death written upon you. Quite so, there is! Your life is in Christ! Your fullness is in Christ! Your strength is in Christ! Has it been reported to you that Christ has lost His power, that His life has declined? If it were so, you would have great cause, indeed, for weeping, but while He is the same, the well of water is the same! I know, tonight that you are like Hagar—the water is spent in the bottle. Well, it never was much of a bottle, and it leaks. Now you think, "What shall I do? All my little store is gone." "What ails you, Hagar?" There is a well near you. Open your eyes, for God sees you and God provides for you! Christ is always the same.

"Oh, but I think I have forgotten Him," you say. Then remember Him. "But I fear I am not one of His people." Well, if you are not a saint, you are a sinner—and He came to save sinners. I always find the short cut to Christ to be the best one. "Oh," says Satan, "you are no child of God." "No," I say to him, "nor are you, either." "Ah," he says, "but you have no true experience." "No," I reply, "I have not, nor have you, either, but one thing I know—I am sinful and Christ has said that washing in His blood by faith, I shall be made clean. If I cannot go to Him as a saint, I will go even now as a sinner! Suppose I have been mistaken in the past, I will begin again." Child of God, that is the only way to end the controversy. Go and stand at the foot of the Cross, again. Begin again, for all your springs are still there! Though you cannot find any springs in yourself, they are still in God!

The next thought is this. If all my springs are in God, then *let all my streams flow to God*. All the rivers run into the sea because they all came from the sea. It was from the sea that the sun drew up the clouds which fed the thousand rills which fall into the rivers—and so the rivers run back to the sea. Let us do the same. What we have had from God must go to God. Even in temporals we ought to do this. I remember a story of Martin Luther's. When certain monks complained that the income of the monastery had got very slack, he said, "Yes, and no wonder, because once they used to entertain two strangers at the monastery, the one named *Date*, the other named *Dabitur*. *Give* was the name of one. *It shall be given* was the name of the other. Now," said Martin Luther, "you

turned out, *Give*, and very soon God took away *It shall be given*, for they are brothers and they live together. If you would have *Dabitur* back, you must also have *Date*. If you would have back, *It shall be given*, you must also have back, *Give*.”

When we are not serving God acceptably—consecrating everything to God—we lose supplies from God. In temporals, I have known men give to God by the shovelfuls—and God sent silent wagon loads by the back door—they could not send back their substance as fast as He sent it in! Jesus said, “Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom”—and many have found it so. Your mean skinflints have gone on flint-skinning until they died and have left hardly enough to be buried with respectably. While others have scattered and yet increased. If our springs are in Him even in temporal things, let the streams run back to Him. Let us not rob God! And as to spiritual things, let us give back to God the more He gives us—the faith He gives us, the spiritual strength He gives us. Let us use for Him the experience He has given us, the instruction He has given us. Let us instruct and encourage others to His Glory with what we have received! Let us lay out every talent and keep none buried in the earth. May the Lord grant to each of us Divine Grace to always say to Him, “As all my springs are in You, so all my streams shall be to You.”

And, lastly, let us have a great deal of hope about other people, because if all the streams are in God, I have not to consider, when I go forth to do good to my fellow man, what is in *them*—I have to consider what is in God! When I address a sinner and say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” I do it because God tells me to do it—just as I would have said to the dry bones, “Live”—and if I do it in God’s name, being perfectly sure they cannot believe of themselves, then I am doing right, for I am exercising my own faith! It is an act of faith on the preacher’s part—and God will bless that act of faith—and many of the dry bones will live, sinners will repent and will, by His Grace, believe the Gospel!

We must not think that our hope lies in what is in the sinner. I heard a man preach about the adaptation of the sinner to the Gospel and I thought he was very foolish, for what is there in the sinner but everything that is opposed to the Gospel, everything uncongenial, everything that would put the Gospel to death if it could?

All the power of the Gospel lies in itself, not in the sinner—salvation comes from God, and God alone. Therefore there is no reason why I should not preach the Gospel with a hope of success in Wandsworth Prison, or in the lowest slums in London! You may distribute tracts and give warnings to the harlot and the thief with good hope of success. In

fact, there are often ridges in the lowest soils, like the clearings of the backwoods in the West, which are not plowed and tilled till the goodness has gone out, as it were—to them the Gospel comes as a strange novelty. It was so in the Savior's day. The Pharisees, who knew so much, rejected His Word, but the publicans and harlots entered into the Kingdom of Heaven before them.

Therefore, there is nothing about the sinner to make us hesitate to preach to him because if he is dead, God can lift him up. Yes, if he is like Lazarus, dead and buried, the Voice of God can call him forth from the tomb! Yes, if he were as nothing, God makes the things that are not, to be mightier than the things that are! He can bless where all was cursed. Out of the stones of the brook He can raise up children to Abraham. Let us have great comfort, next Sunday, in going to preach, or to teach in the Sunday school, or to engage in other forms of usefulness. All the springs lie in God and if we are going to work in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water, never mind! Our springs are in God—our faith is in Him and, according to our faith, so shall it be done to us. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34**

Verse 1 *I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* What a sweet resolve! Oh, that all of us who know the Lord would make that resolve and keep it all our days—"I will bless the Lord at all times." In dark times and bright times, as long as I live. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth"—that is the most delightful mouthful that a man can possibly have!

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* We do not like boasters, but we would encourage every child of God to boast in the Lord as much as he pleases!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof and be glad.* There is nothing that humble people dislike more than to hear others boasting—yet there is nothing that they like more than to hear anyone boast in the Lord!

3. *O magnify the LORD with me.* There is a sweet contagion about the praise of God. We want others to help us to spread it everywhere, so we say with David, "O magnify the Lord with me"—

3-4. *And let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* There is nothing that is so effective as personal testimony to the Lord's saving power. How often is the skill of a physician commended by the grateful testimony of the patients who have been healed by him! So, shall not the prayer-hearing God be commended by those of us who have had our prayers answered

by Him? Let us not be slow to say, “I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

5. *They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* [See Sermon #195, Volume 4—LOOKING UNTO JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “They looked unto Him”—a whole army of them, an innumerable company—“They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.” There never was a face that was ashamed of being turned Christward and Godward!

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* [See Sermon #2193, Volume 27—A POOR MAN’S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Here David speaks of himself again, but he refers to himself in the third person—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* The great Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, surrounds with His army the dwellings of the saints and takes care to have them in safe keeping.

8-10. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him. O fear the LORD, you His saints. For there is no need to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* [See Sermon #65, Volume 2—LIONS LACKING BUT THE CHILDREN SATISFIED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We are often in need because we are not seeking the Lord, but are seeking what we think we need, whereas, if we sought Him and left the supply of our needs to Him, He would supply all our need according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Christ’s command is, “Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Men think that they will not get what they want except they seek it, but if they seek God, He will give them what they really need even if He does not give them all that they want!

11. *Come, you children, hearken unto me.* This man of God has made his confession to the saints and now he tells it to the children. There is nothing like working on material that will last—and those who are now children will, most of them, be alive when those who are now old men are dead and gone. So David says, “Come you children, hearken unto me”—

11-13. *I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desires life, and loves many days; that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* There is life or death in the human tongue! There is life in the tongue that is under subjection to the will of God. There is death, there is mischief of all sorts in a wild uncontrolled tongue!

14. *Depart from evil, and do good.* Get away from evil as far as you can—that is the negative side. Do good—that is the positive side of piety. He who obeys these two commands shall find happiness and blessing.

14. *Seek peace, and pursue it.* Do not be of an angry, irritable, quarrelsome frame of mind. If you do not at once find peace, seek it. And if it runs away from you, pursue it until you overtake it. Remember that it is the meek who shall inherit the earth—and that it is the peaceful spirit that is the happiest spirit.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.* He gives them His eyes and His ears—and this means that He gives them Himself and that He is always ready to perceive their needs and to hear their cries.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* He sets His face against them—and this means that He is, Himself, eternally opposed to all their wicked ways.

16, 17. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.* Not only out of some of them, but out of *all* of them. It is often a very long, “all.” The list of their troubles is often difficult to read through but in due time there comes a “finis,” to it written by the hand of Divine Mercy—“The Lord delivers them out of all their troubles.”

18. *The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* Not your proud spirits, not your hectoring ones, but your lowly, penitent souls are the ones that are dear to the heart of God. He is near to them and saves them.

19, 20. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken.* He will have many a flesh wound, but there shall be no permanent injury to him. And even though his body were diseased, his soul would be saved.

21, 22. *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants.* Great as the price is, He pays it! They are so precious to Him that He minds not what price He pays so that He may redeem the souls of His servants.

22. *And none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.* Blessed be His holy name!

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

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

HEMAN'S SORROWFUL PSALM NO. 2433

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 6, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1887.**

***"But unto You have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning
shall my prayer come before You."***

Psalm 88:13.

WHAT misery of soul some persons endure before they find peace with God! There is no need that it should be so with them—their anguish often arises from a mistake. The Gospel is very simple—it is just—"Believe and live." He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—he at once receives pardon, passes from death unto life—and he shall never come into condemnation. But a very large number of persons will not go the straight road to Heaven. They cannot believe that it is the right road, so they get troubled in their thoughts—tumbled up and down in their minds—as John Bunyan puts it. They go staggering over dark mountains, stumbling and falling, wounding and bruising themselves, and it is a long time before they come out into the light and joy of peace in believing. I would recommend you young people, especially, to take the straight way to salvation by trusting in Jesus just as you are. You shall, by doing so, avoid the poor pilgrim's Slough of Despond and many other things that might trouble and burden you. But, as I know that many do go round about and so get troubled and perplexed, I am going to talk to *them* from these words of the Psalmist.

This good man, Heman the Ezrahite, went by this rough roundabout road that some of you have taken, and thus he found himself in terrible places. He seems to have been brought about as low as a man can be brought, but all the while there was this fact in his favor—he continued praying. He did pray. He would pray. He could not be made to leave off praying! If, by some process or other, Satan could have dragged him from the Mercy Seat, he would have had the diabolical hope of his ultimate destruction. But as long as the man kept on his knees, repeating his earnest cry to God for mercy, it was not possible that he could be destroyed! I may now be addressing some who, in the depth of their trouble, have been praying to God. Not always with a brave, believing heart, but still, with intense sincerity and earnestness—and now it has come to this pass with them—the evil spirit says, "Do not pray any more. Give it up! It is of no use. God will never hear you." If that is *your* temptation,

dear Friend, may the Holy Spirit come to your rescue while I talk familiarly with you in His name!

First, from this Psalm, *learn how to pray*. Secondly, from the Psalmist's example, *resolve to pray in your very worst case*. After I have spoken upon these two points, I shall close by giving you some *reasons why you will find it wise to thus pray*.

I. First, then, from this Psalm, LEARN HOW TO PRAY.

A great many people make a mistake about what prayer really is. They seem to think that it consists in repeating a form of words, but it does not. The witch of old used to mutter certain phrases and she pretended that she worked great wonders by repeating such and such words backwards! But there was no real power about her words—it was sheer superstition to believe in her incantations. I pray you, beloved Friends, do not rely upon prayer as a kind of witchcraft, for it is nothing better than witchcraft to believe that the mere utterance of certain sacred words and phrases can have any appreciable effect either upon yourselves or upon God! Prayer is the longing of the soul to hold communion with the Most High, the desire of the heart to obtain blessings at His hands. James Montgomery happily described what real prayer is when he wrote—

***“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.
Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try!
Prayer the most sublime strains that reach
The Majesty on high!
Prayer is the contrite sinners voice
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold he prays!’”***

If you would pray aright, you will do wisely to copy the writer of this Psalm and, first, *tell the Lord your case*. In this Psalm, Heman makes a map of his life's history. He puts down all the dark places through which he has traveled. He mentions his sins, his sorrows, his hopes (if he had any), his fears, his woes and so on. Now, that is real prayer—laying your case before the Lord! Go to your chamber, shut your door and tell the Lord all about yourself! Do you lack words? Well then, use no words. Tell Him all simply by the movements of your thoughts, for God can read the thoughts of men. Act as if you, like Hezekiah, were opening a letter—and spread it out before the Lord. Hide nothing from Him! It is true that you cannot hide it, for He knows all about you. But, still, do not try to conceal anything from Your God. Tell Him about your life of sin. Tell Him of

your vain attempts to make yourself better. Tell Him of your many failures. Tell Him of your false hopes. Tell Him of all your blunders and mistakes and then say, "Lord, I do not, even now, fully understand my own case, but You do. Do with me according to Your own wisdom and prudence, and save Your servant, I beseech You." That is the way to pray! This is how the Psalmist prayed. Try the same plan as soon as you get home. No, do not delay, but pray thus at once! Open your heart to God and spread your case before Him right now!

Then, the next rule of prayer is, *pray naturally*. Note that the Psalmist says, "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You." Children are very eloquent when they cry—you have no need to teach them the arts of oratory or of posturing when they really want a thing—they cry all over till they get it! That is truly the way to pray—when you so want the blessing that your heart and your flesh cry out to the living God! You will not need to trouble about words. Your eyes shall aid you with their liquid pleas. Your breath shall assist you as you sigh and sob. Every part of your being shall help you as you stretch out your hands to God. The best prayer is like a cry—the most natural expression of the sorrow and the need of the heart. Come like that to God! Get upstairs into that little room where no eyes but the Lord's shall see you—and there cry to Him, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." That is the way to pray, not to repeat some pompous form which may have been useful to saints in ages gone by, but to let your very soul pour out itself like water before the Lord in the most natural way that it can find!

But you must also notice, in the first verse, what is very essential to prayer. The Psalmist says that he cried day and night *before God*. This makes a wonderful difference in prayer! Praying is not whistling to the winds, it is crying before God—speaking to God! You cannot see Him, but He is there! Then tell Him your case. You cannot hear His footsteps to remind you of His Presence, but He is there, so ask for what you need—deal directly with God! Remember what Paul wrote to the Hebrews—"He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Believe that God is and that He hears prayer, and you shall find it to be so in your own experience! I challenge any man to put this matter to the test and see if he does not find it as I say. There never was one, yet, who did come thus to God and God sent him away empty! Poor trembling Soul, get to your God! If up to now your prayers have been earnest, but you have left out this one important point that you have not really prayed to *Him*, then begin at once in a better style. You may write a hundred letters to a friend, but you will never receive an answer to them if you do not properly direct them and mail! So, many persons forget to direct and post their prayers by really presenting them before God.

Next, dear Friends, this Psalm will help you in prayer if you read aright its first words—"O Lord God of my salvation." Pray with this belief fixed in your mind—that your help *must* come from God—and *pray expecting salvation from the Lord*. It is true, whether you know it or not, that you are lost—and that only God, Himself, can save you. Pray in the full belief of that fact. Go to God with this thought in your mind and this utterance out of your mouth—"O Lord, I am lost unless You help me! I am undone unless You come to my rescue! Here I am at your Mercy Seat, crying to You, Lord, save me." Do not go to so-called priests. Do not go to ministers or to Christian friends with any idea that they can help you the turn of an ounce! Go straight away to God, applying to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not possible that He will turn you away! Try it and see. Some of us who were certainly as guilty as ever you can be, have tried this plan and we have found mercy and we are, therefore, all the more earnest in entreating you and all other sinners to do the same!

Further, dear Friends, that you may pray aright, notice that *the Psalmist prayed often*. In the first verse he says, "I have cried day and night before You." Further on he says, "I have called daily upon You." I like those morning prayers of which our text speaks—"In the morning shall my prayer come before You." I remember, as a lad, when I was seeking the Savior, getting up with the sun that I might get time to read gracious books and to seek the Lord. When I look back upon it, I can see why the Word was blessed to me when I heard the Gospel preached in that Methodist Chapel at Colchester, because I had, before that, been up many times crying to God for the blessing! There are some people here who do not know what it is like early in the morning. You never did, in your lives, see the sunrise, did you, unless you got up earlier than usual one winter's morning? I have often proved that the early morning is the best part of the day. The dew of the morning has medicine in it to drive away many a disease. A little while, all alone in the morning, might prove to be the time in which God would meet with you—will you not try it?

But the Psalmist says that he also prayed at night. Perhaps, when others were asleep, he stole from his couch and bowed His knee, and cried to God. When all is hushed and still—and there is, even in London, an hour of that kind, somewhere between three and four o'clock in the morning when the streets cease, for a while, their almost perpetual grind and the air is still and quiet—it is wonderful how you may be helped to pray by the silence that is round about you! O Friend, if you are not saved, I would beseech you to get up at the dead of night and cry to God for salvation! I would advise you not to go to your beds, nor to think of falling asleep till you have believed in Jesus to the saving of your soul lest you should never wake up in this world, but should awake in that state in which there is no hope, forever, for those who have died impenitent! Dear Hearts, cry often, cry continually to God until He gives you

this salvation! And after that I know you will always cry to Him, for you will not be able to help it! Prayer will become your daily breath and you will pray, then, as naturally as your lungs now heave with the breath of life! But pray often, even as Heman did.

The Psalmist tells us, also, that *he prayed with weeping and mourning*. Read verse nine—"My eyes mourns by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon You." That is a blessed style of praying, when the prayers are salted with penitential tears! If your heart is breaking with repentance and sorrow for sin, you will break down the bars which shut you out of hope and peace! If you will give up your sin. If you mourn over your sin. If you sigh and cry to become gracious and holy, you shall prevail before long, for God may permit a weeping penitent to stand awhile at mercy's door, but He can never send that penitent away empty, for it is written over that door (I can read the golden letters)—"He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." While God lives, never shall a sinner truly come to Him and yet be cast out! I say again, go and try it, go and try it, and you shall find it to be so!

Once more, you will perhaps find prayer more successful if you follow the Psalmist's way of *praying pleadingly*. Notice how he puts it in the 10th verse—"Shall the dead arise and praise You?" Plead with God! If you are in earnest, you will soon find pleas that you can use with Him. "Lord, save me! It will glorify Your Grace to save such a sinner as I am. Lord, save me, else I am lost to all eternity! Do not let me perish, Lord! Save me, O Lord, for Jesus died. By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, save me." I am going over the kind of pleas I used when I took my arguments and came before the Throne of Grace and said, "I will not go away, I will not quit the Mercy Seat except You bless me." Surely you can find some reason why you should be saved! Look not for it in any merit of your own, else you will look where you will never find it! But look to His Free Grace and Sovereign Love—to the heart of God and to the bleeding wounds of Jesus—and say to God, "Lord, I cannot, I will not, let You go except You bless me." If you pray in that fashion, it will not be long before the morning light of salvation will break in upon your troubled spirit!

II. This leads me now, briefly, to speak upon my second division—from the Psalmist's example, RESOLVE TO PRAY IN YOUR VERY WORST CASE.

I want to go over the Psalm, again, very rapidly, to remind you of the writer's experience. This man of God was, first, *full of troubles*. Note what he says in the third verse—"My soul is full of troubles." Yet he prayed! When you are full of troubles, go to God with them, that is the very time when you most need to pray. "But," you say, "Mr. Spurgeon, you do not know all that I have to think of." No, but I do know that the more you have to think of, the more reason you have to go to God in prayer about

it. That was a grand argument of Martin Luther when he said to his friend, "I have a very busy day, today. I have so much work to do that I am afraid I shall not get through it all. I must have at least three hours' prayer, or else I shall not have time to get through all my toil." The more work he had to do, the more prayer he felt that he needed! Is not that right? The more loads you have to drag, the more horses you need—and the more work there is to be done, the more reason is there for crying to God to help you to do it! That is not a waste of time. On the contrary, it is the best employment of time that anyone can have!

When you are full of trouble, pray the more. "Ah," says one, "I gave up praying, Sir, because I was in such trouble." Foolish brother! Foolish sister! Another says, "I went down in the world till I felt that I had not any clothes fit to come in." Clothes fit to come in? Any clothes are fit to come in if you have paid for them! "Oh!" says another, "but I was so troubled that I did not like to come." What? Not go to the House of the Lord when you most need comfort? That is the time when you ought certainly to come! Do not, I pray you, stay away from the outward means of Grace when you are in trouble! But especially do not stay away from God, Himself, when you are tried and perplexed. When you are as full of trouble as you can be, *then* is the time to pray the most!

Next, it seems that the Psalmist was *ready to die*—"My life draws near unto the grave." Well, do not leave off praying because you are ready to die! Then, surely, is the time to pray more earnestly than ever—

***"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air!
His watchword at the gates of death—
He enters Heaven with prayer."***

If you are going to die, die praying! Do not let the fear of death stop your praying, that would be folly, indeed!

Moreover, the Psalmist had *given himself up*—"I am counted with them that go down into the pit." Well now, if you have given yourself up, yet still pray. I know that you say, "Sir, I am in despair." Well, offer one more prayer, Brother! One more prayer and if you should not get comfort, then, I will come to you and say, yet again, "One more prayer." If you despair of everything else, yet do not despair of the mercy of God! Your extremity will be the Lord's opportunity. Keep on praying! As long as you are out of Hell, still keep on praying, and so you shall never go there, for no praying soul can ever be cast away from the Presence of God. Keep on praying, I beseech you, even if worse comes to worse.

I fancy that I hear you say, "Oh, but I have no strength left!" Well, then, you are just like Heman, *with no strength*, for he said, "I am as a man that has no strength." Pray all the more if that is your case. If you have not strength to kneel, fall flat on your face and pray to God, but keep at it, hold on to it! If you can scarcely hold on, yet somehow or other

get a grip of the Divine promise and plead for God's mercy for the sake of Jesus—and you shall never perish!

I do not know whether I am spreading my net widely enough, but there may be one who says, "*I am forgotten.*" Then listen to what Heman says—"I am like the slain that are in the grave, whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hands." Man, if you have written yourself down as lost. If you have given up all prayer. If you never open your Bible. If you have resolved never again to come to the House of God because you despair of mercy, yet, I beseech you, know that it is a *lie* that deceives you! There is still hope for you! Believe that Jesus still receives sinners—yes, such sinners as you are—and go to Him by believing prayer and you shall yet find mercy! There are many records of men and women who have been in despair through guilt for 20 years or even a longer period and then have been Divinely delivered!

I remember one case, that of Mr. Timothy Rogers, who was 28 years in despair and yet came out to light and liberty—and wrote a wonderful book on trouble of mind which has been a comfort to many other afflicted souls. Do not despair even if Satan seems to have gripped you and to be dragging you down to the bottomless pit! As long as you yet live, the Gospel woos you and entreats you to believe in Jesus Christ, for there is yet room in the heart of God and in the love of God for such a sinner as you are! I pray you, do not cease to cry unto God! Still continue calling upon Him till He gives you a comforting answer!

Perhaps you say, "*I feel the wrath of God so heavily.*" What if you do? Go and plead the mercy of God in Christ and, as Christ, in the place of sinners, bore His Father's wrath, go and rest in that great vicarious Sacrifice! "But I have nobody to speak to," says another. Never mind if you have not—that is all the more reason why you should pray to God and plead with God who will not leave you. "*But I am distracted,*" says another. Yes, and you *will be* distracted, and I should not wonder if you went out of your mind unless you go to God as you are, and implore Him to look at your distractions and to lay His gentle hand upon you and restore you to yourself—and then to restore you to *Himself*. I wish I knew how to plead with each one of you personally. I feel that I want to go down these stairs, and round these galleries, and to pick out men and women who are being tempted not to pray, again, and to give each of them a brotherly grip of the hand and to say, "Do not cease to plead for your life! Do not cease to look to Jesus on the Cross! Hope in Him! It is Satan's desire to ruin you by leading you to despair! Take heart of hope and believe that Mercy's gate is still open to you! Come, and welcome, and you shall in no wise be cast out."

III. Now I finish with A FEW REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD KEEP ON PRAYING and why you should add to your prayer a simple confidence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the first reason. Suppose, dear Friend—and I do not like even to *suppose* such a thing—but, for the sake of argument, suppose that what your despair says is true—that you will perish? Then *you cannot lose anything by prayer*, can you? Remember what we sang a few minutes ago—

***“I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”***

I repeat that you cannot lose anything by prayer. “Oh,” I have said to myself, when broken down under a sense of sin, “God cannot be angry with me for crying to Him for mercy! Surely that cannot be an increase of my guilt—that I dare to say, ‘Lord, forgive me.’ The worst criminal before a judge may at least beg for mercy, so I will put in my plea—in broken words and with many tears. I cannot lose anything by praying and, therefore, I will certainly continue to pray unto the Lord.”

Moreover, dear Friends, *it is not so great a thing, after all, to have to continue to ask*. It is not so hard a thing for me to be made to wait a little while. As a sinner I kept God waiting for me long enough, yes, far too long! He called, but I would not come—what wonder if now He keeps me waiting? Shall I be in a pet and say, “I will wait no longer”? Oh, the many sermons I have heard and thrown on one side! Oh, the many times the Spirit of God has touched my conscience and I have resisted His strivings! Ought I, therefore, to be at all surprised if now He should say to me, “You must wait a bit at Mercy’s gate, for I will have you knock, and knock, and knock again before I let you in”? Oh, no, it is not so hard a thing, and it will pay me for waiting! When He does but open the gate, I shall think very little of the many prayers and tears that I have offered to Him—I shall be so overjoyed to get inside that I shall bless Him for keeping me waiting! Therefore, my Soul, press on!

Keep on praying, for what if He should, after all, hear you? O poor Heart, what if, after all, your sin should be forgiven you and you should become a child of God? O you forlorn one, what if the light of Heaven should yet shine in upon your heart and all the bells of holy joy should ring within your spirit? What if it should be so? And it *will* be so if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! It may be that you are within an inch of salvation even now. Let me tell you, if you are but looking to Jesus, you already have salvation! One trustful glance at Him upon the Cross and you are saved, saved now, and saved forever! God grant that it may be so with you!

At any rate, cease not to pray, *for He to whom you pray is a gracious God*. The widow who went to the unjust judge was importunate and prevailed with him, unjust as he was. But you are pleading with a loving God who gave His Son to die for sinners! Take good heart—you will not

plead in vain, for He loves to hear your prayers. He must, He *will* answer you, for He is a God of Grace!

Besides, *if He does not save you, will He be a gainer by it?* And if He does save you, will He be a loser by it? Oh, no, dear Heart! If He will save you, it will increase His honor and His Glory. Why, you yourself will tell everybody what a good God He is, will you not? And your friends and your neighbors, when they see you saved, such a sinner as you are, will begin to say to one another, "Here is a wonder of Grace! Look what God has done for this man. Let us come and seek Him, too." It is not to God's disadvantage to save you, now that Christ has died. Therefore, take heart and be of good courage.

Moreover, *He has heard others.* He who speaks to you, now boldly tells you that God heard him. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears! This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Come along with you, whoever you are. I am sure you can pray as well as I did when first I sought His face. I am sure you know about as much of the Gospel as I did when I first looked to Him, for I did not really know the Truth of God till I heard that word, "Look! Look! Look!" That is about all I know even now! I look at Jesus and He looks at me! I am looking to Jesus, and I am lightened of all my burden! That is the whole story. Look to Him and you shall be lightened, too! If others have been saved, why should you not be saved? Therefore, pluck up heart and still cry mightily and believingly to Him!

More than that, *the Lord has promised to hear you.* Listen, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Here is another precious promise, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is a big, "whoever"! Let me repeat that text. "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Lord does hear prayer! Do not let any unbelief upon that point linger any longer in your heart! He will hear you, now, sitting in your pew. Try it! Try it! If you have been praying for months and yet no peaceable answer has come to you, resolve this moment that you will never cease your entreaties until He grants you the desire of your heart!

I am looking upon many young men and women here—how I wish that they would all look to Jesus even now! Oh, that at least some of you, dear young Friends, might begin to be Christians from this very hour! The harvest is past, the summer is well-near ended and you are not saved! Before the leaves fall from the trees, yield yourselves to Jesus! There are some boys and girls here—the Lord grant that they may, while they are yet children, trust in Jesus and be saved! But the most of you are men and women in middle life and many, very many of you, are aged people. Have you found Christ, dear Friend? Are there any of you old

folks who are without Christ? I cannot make you out—gray-headed and yet unconverted? What is to become of you? In the order of nature, you must soon die. The young *may* die, but the old **MUST**. Oh, that you would not rest in your declining years till all is right for eternity! You know what accidents are constantly occurring and how suddenly men pass into eternity! A man has heart disease and without a moment's warning he is hurried before his Maker's bar! Prepare to meet your God and do so by believing in Him whom God has set forth to be the Savior of men, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

God bless you, dear Hearers! We shall never, all of us, meet again on earth—that is not possible among these thousands from all quarters of the globe—but may the sincere penitent prayer of all the unsaved among us be so heard that we may all meet in Heaven! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 88.**

A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahaloth Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite. I think that this is the darkest of all the Psalms—it has hardly a spot of light in it. The only bright words that I know of are in the first verse. The rest of the Psalm is very dark and very dreary. Why, then, am I going to read it? Because, it may be there is some poor heart, here, that is very heavy. You cannot proclaim of this great crowd how many sorrowing and burdened spirits there may be among us, but there may be a dozen or two of persons who are driven almost to despair. My dear Friend, if this is your case, I want you to know that somebody else has been just where you are. Remember how the shipwrecked man upon the lonely island all of a sudden came upon the footprints of another human being? So here, on the lone island of despondency, you shall be able to trace the footprints of another who has been there before you. Hear how he prays.

Verse 1. *O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You.* It was only a cry, a cry as of an animal in pain, or, at best, the cry as of a child that has lost its mother. "I have cried day and night before You."

2. *Let my prayer come before You.* "Give me an audience, O Lord. Do not shut the door in my face. My prayer has been knocking, knocking, knocking, at Your gate! Open it. 'Let my prayer come before You.'"

2. *Incline Your ear unto my cry.* "Stoop down to me out of Heaven, O Lord. Bow that ear of Yours to hear even my feeble and unworthy cry. I know that I do not deserve it. I know that it will be a great act of condescension on Your part, but do 'incline Your ear unto my cry.'"

3. *For my soul is full of troubles.* “Full of troubles, brimming over with grief, and every drop of it is as bitter as gall.”

3, 4. *And my life draws near unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* “They put me down as a dead man. They that see the lines of fierce despair upon my face reckon that I cannot live long. ‘I am counted with them that go down into the pit.’” These were his pleas in crying unto God—

**“Distresses round me thicken,
My life draws near the grave!
Descend, O Lord, to quicken,
Descend, my soul to save!”**

4. *I am as a man that has no strength.* Here is one, in the time of manhood, when he should be strongest, who yet says, “I am as a man that has no strength.” This subject may not interest some of you, just now, but it is here, so we must mention it. And it may be needed even by you, one of these days. Bright eyes are not always bright and the earthly joy that leaps and dances does not abide forever! The day may come when you will turn to this Psalm with the two eights in it and find comfort in it because it describes your case, also.

5. *Free among the dead*—A freeman of the sepulcher, at home at death's dark door. “Free among the dead,”

5. *Like the slain that lie in the grave whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hand.* This is, perhaps, the most awful depth of the whole Psalm. The writer bemoaned that he was not remembered, even, by God, any more, and that he was cut off from God's hand. At least, so he thought.

6, 7. *You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah.* Very properly here comes a, “Selah.” Such a strain upon the harp strings had put them all out of tune! So the players had notice to retune their harps and the singers were bid to lift up the strain of their song. It seems to me as if the writer, here, lifted his head above the waves of the tempestuous sea and still kept on swimming.

8. *You have put away my acquaintance far from me. You have made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.* This is the utterance of a soul imprisoned in solitary confinement with nobody able to come to it to breathe out consolation. “You have put away my acquaintance far from me. They cannot come to me and I am shut up, and I cannot come forth to them.”

9. *My eyes mourn by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon You, I have stretched out my hands unto You.* Now hear how the Psalmist pleads with the Lord! Prayer is always best when it rises to pleading. The man who understands the sacred art of prayer becomes a special pleader with God!

10. *Will You show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah.* “Shall the dead arise and praise You?” Not in this life, though the godly *will* praise the Lord in the world to come. But now, when a Christian dies, God loses a chorister from the choirs of earth—there is one less to sing His praises here—and the Psalmist, therefore, pleads, “Lord, if I live, You can show Your wonders to me; but will You show Your wonders to the dead? If I am alive, I can praise You; but shall the dead arise and praise You?”

11, 12. *Shall Your loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?* He pleads that if he dies, he shall not be able to proclaim the mercy of the Lord! God will lose a singer from His earthly choir, a witness from His earthly courts, a testifier of His loving kindness, faithfulness and righteousness.

13. *But unto You have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer come before You.* “I will be up before You come to me. I will be first to approach You. I will salute the rising sun with my rising prayer.”

14. *LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?* Note again the earnestness of the Psalmist's pleadings. We have had many of them already—each verse has, I think, had at least two pleadings in it. If You would be heard by God, take care that you reason with Him and press your arguments with the Most High. He delights in this exercise of persevering supplication which will take no denial.

15-18. *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer Your terrors, I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me. Your terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend have You put far from me and my acquaintance into darkness.* There the Psalm ends. It is a sorrowful wail and it comes to a close when you do not expect it to finish. It really has no finish to it, as when men wind up their songs with proper finales—it is broken off like a lily snapped at the stalk. I have read you this 88th Psalm as an example of persevering prayer. The man who wrote it—“Heman the Ezrahite”—kept on praying even when he did not seem to be heard and thus he is a pattern to us. Yet notice how the next Psalm begins—“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.” It is not always the sorrowful sackbut that is to be in our hands—we can play the joyous harp as well! “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.” “I will never leave off praising Him.” “With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.”

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FOR THE TROUBLED

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 12, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have
afflicted me with all Your waves.”
Psalm 88:7.*

IT is the business of a shepherd not only to look after the happy ones among the sheep, but to seek after the sick of the flock and to lay himself out right earnestly for their comfort and succor. I feel, therefore, that I do rightly when I, this morning, make it my special business to speak to such as are in trouble. Those of you who are happy and rejoicing in God, full of faith and assurance, can very well spare a discourse for your weaker Brothers and Sisters—you can be even glad and thankful to go without your portion that those who are depressed in spirit may receive a double measure of the wine of consolation.

Moreover, I am not sure that even the most joyous Christian is any the worse for remembering the days of darkness which are stealing on apace, “for they are many.” Just as the memories of our dying friends come over us like a cloud and “dampen our brainless ardors,” so will the recollection that there are tribulations and afflictions in the world dampen our rejoicing and prevent its degenerating into an idolatry of the things of time and sense. It is better, for many reasons, to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting—the quassia cup has virtues in it which the wine cup never knew—wet your lips with it, young man, it will work you no ill. It may be, O you who are today brimming with happiness, that a little store of sacred cautions and consolations may prove no sore to you, but may, by-and-by, stand you in good stead.

This morning's discourse upon sorrow may suggest a few thoughts to you which, being treasured up, shall ripen like summer fruit and mellow by the time your winter shall come round. But to our work. It is clear to all those who read the narratives of Scripture, or are acquainted with good men, that the best of God's servants may be brought into the very lowest estate. There is no promise of present prosperity appointed to true religion so as to exclude adversity from Believer's lives. As men, the people of God share the common lot of men and what is that but trouble? Yes, there are some sorrows which are peculiar to Christians—some extra griefs of which they partake because they *are* Believers. But these are more than balanced by those peculiar and bitter troubles which belong to the ungodly and are engendered by their transgressions, from which the Christian is delivered.

From the passage which is open before us we learn that sons of God may be brought so low as to write and sing Psalms which are sorrowful throughout and have no fitting accompaniment but sighs and groans. They do not often do so—their songs are generally like those of David which, if they begin in the dust, mount into the clear heavens before long. But sometimes, I say, saints are forced to sing such dolorous ditties that from beginning to end there is not one note of joy. Yet even in their dreariest winter night the saints have an aurora in their sky and in this 88th Psalm, the dreariest of all Psalms, there is a faint gleam in the first verse, like a star-ray falling upon its threshold—“O Jehovah, God of my salvation.”

Heman retained his hold upon his God. It is not all darkness in a heart which can cry, “My God,” and the child of God, however low he may sink, still keeps hold upon his God. “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him,” is the resolution of his soul. Jehovah smites me, but He is my God. He frowns upon me, but He is my God. He tramples me into the very dust and lays me in the lowest pit, as among the dead, yet still He is my God and such will I call Him till I die. Even when He leaves me I will cry, “my God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Moreover, the Believer, in his worst time, still continues to pray, and prays, perhaps, the more vigorously because of his sorrows. God’s red flags drive His children not *from* Him, but *to* Him. Our griefs are waves which wash us to the Rock.

This Psalm is full of prayer. It is as much sweetened with supplication as it is salted with sorrow. It weeps like Niobe, but it is on bended knees and from uplifted eyes. Now, while a man can pray he is never far from light—he is at the window, though, perhaps, as yet the curtains are not drawn aside. The man who can pray has the clue in his hand by which to escape from the labyrinth of affliction. Like the trees in winter, we may say of the praying man, when his heart is greatly troubled, “his substance is in him, though he has lost his leaves.” Prayer is the soul’s breath and if it breathes it lives and, living it will gather strength again. A man must have true and eternal life within him while he can continue, still, to pray, and while there is such life there is assured hope

Still, the best child of God may be the greatest sufferer and his sufferings may appear to be crushing, killing and overwhelming. They may also be so very protracted as to attend him all his days and their bitterness may be intense—all of which and much more this mournful Psalm teaches us. Let us, in pursuit of our subject, first give an exposition of the text. And then a brief exposition of the benefits of trouble.

I. I will endeavor, in a few observations, to EXPOUND THE TEXT. In the first place, its strong language suggests the remark that tried saints are very prone to overrate their afflictions. I believe we all err in that direction and are far too apt to say, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” The inspired man of God, who wrote our text, was touched with this common infirmity for he overstates his case. Read his words—“Your wrath lies hard

upon me.” I have no doubt Heman meant wrath in its worst sense. He believed that God was really angry with him and wrathful with him, even as He is with the ungodly, but that was not true. As we shall have to show, by-and-by, there is a very grave difference between the anger of God with His *children* and the anger of God with His *enemies*.

And we do not think Heman sufficiently discerned that difference, even as we are afraid that many of God’s children even now forget it—and therefore fear that the Lord is punishing them according to strict justice—and smiting them as though He were their executioner. Ah, if poor bewildered Believers could but see it, they would learn that the very thing which they call *wrath* is only *love*, in its own wise manner, seeking their highest good! Besides, the Psalmist says, “Your wrath lies hard upon me.” Ah, if Heman had known what it was to have God’s wrath lie hard on him, he would have withdrawn those words, for all the wrath that any man ever feels in this life is but as a laying on of God’s little finger!

It is in the world to come that the wrath of God lies heavy on men. Then, when God puts forth His hand and presses with Omnipotence upon soul and body to destroy them forever in Hell, the ruined nature feels in its never-ending destruction what the power of God’s anger really is! Here the really sore pressure of wrath is not known and especially not known by a child of God. It is too strong a speech if we weigh it in the scales of sober truth. It outruns the fact, even though it were the most sorrowful living man that uttered it. Then Heman adds, “You have afflicted me with all Your waves,” as though he were a wreck with the sea breaking over him and the whole ocean—and *all* the oceans were running full against him as the only object of their fury.

His boat has been driven on shore and all the breakers are rolling over him. One after another they leap upon him like wild beasts, hungry as wolves, eager as lions to devour him—it seemed to him that no wave turned aside, no billow spent its force elsewhere—but all the long line of breakers roared upon him, as the sole object of their wrath. But it was not so. All God’s waves have broken over no man, save only the Son of Man! There are still some troubles which we have been spared, some woes unknown to us. Have we suffered all the diseases which flesh is heir to? Are there not modes of pain from which our bodies have escaped? Are there not, also, some mental pangs which have not wrung our spirit? And what if we seem to have traversed the entire circle of bodily and mental misery, yet in our homes, households, or friendships we have surely some comfort left and therefore from some rough billow we are screened. All God’s waves had not gone over you, O Heman! The woes of Job and Jeremiah were not yours.

Among the living none can literally know what all God’s waves would be. They know, who are condemned to feel the blasts of His indignation! They know in the land of darkness and of everlasting hurricane! They know what all God’s waves and billows are—but we know not. The meta-

phor is good and admirable, and correct enough poetically, but as a statement of fact it is strained. We are all apt to exaggerate our grief—I say this as a general fact. Those who are happy can bear to be told, but I would not vex the sick man with it while he is enduring the weight of his affliction. If he can calmly accept the suggestion of his own accord, it may do him good, but it would be cruel to throw it at him. True as it is, I should not like to whisper it in any sufferer's ear because it would not console, but grieve him.

I have often marveled at the strange comfort persons offer you when they say, "Ah, there are others who suffer more than you do." Am I a demon, then? Am I expected to rejoice at the news of other people's miseries? Far otherwise! I am pained to think there should be sharper smarts than mine and my sympathy increases my own woe. I can conceive of a Fiend in torment finding solace in the belief that others are tortured with a yet fiercer flame, but surely such diabolical comfort should not be offered to Christian men! It shows our deep depravity of heart, that we can decoct comfort out of the miseries of others—and yet I am afraid we rightly judge human nature when we offer it water from that putrid well.

There is, however, a form of comfort akin to it, but of far more legitimate origin—a consolation honorable and Divine. There was ONE upon whom God's wrath pressed very sorely. There was ONE who was, in truth, afflicted with all God's waves. That One is our brother, a Man like ourselves, the dearest lover of our souls. And because He has known and suffered all this, He can sympathize with us, this morning, in whatever tribulation may beat upon us. His passion is all over now but not His *compassion*. He has borne the indignation of God and turned it all away from us—the waves have lost their fury and spent their force on Him—and now He sits above the floods, yes, He sits King forever and ever! As we think of Him, the Crucified, our souls may not only derive consolation from His sympathy and powerful succor, but we may learn to look upon our trials with a calmer eye and judge them more according to the true standard. In the Presence of Christ's Cross our own crosses are less colossal. Our thorns in the flesh are as nothing when laid side by side with the nails and spear.

But, secondly, let us remark that saints do well to trace all their trials to their God. Heman did so in the text—"Your wrath lies hard upon me, You have afflicted me with all Your waves." He traces all his adversity to the Lord his God. It is God's wrath. They are God's waves that afflict him and God *makes* them afflict him. Child of God, never forget this—all that you are suffering of any sort, or kind, comes to you from the Divine hand! Truly, you say, "my affliction arises from wicked men," yet remember that there is a predestination which, without soiling the fingers of the Infinitely Holy, nevertheless rules the motions of evil men as well as of holy angels. It were a dreary thing for us if there were no appointments of God's Providence which concerned the ungodly—then the great mass of mankind

would be entirely left to chance—and the godly might be crushed by them without hope.

The Lord, without interfering with the freedom of their wills, rules and overrules, so that the ungodly are as a rod in His hand with which He wisely scourges His children. Perhaps you will say that your trials have arisen not from the sins of others, but from your own sins. Even then I would have you penitently trace them still to God. What though the trouble springs out of the sin, yet it is God that has pointed the sorrow to follow the transgression—to act as a remedial agency for your spirit. Look not at the second cause, or, looking at it with deep regret, turn your eyes chiefly to your heavenly Father and, “hear you the rod and who has appointed it.”

The Lord sends upon us the evil as well as the good of this mortal life! His is the sun that cheers and the frost that chills! His the deep calm and His the fierce tornado. To dwell on second causes is frequently frivolous, a sort of solemn trifling. Men say of each affliction, “It might have been prevented if such-and-such had occurred. Perhaps if another physician had been called in the dear child’s life had still been spared. Possibly if I had moved in such a direction in business I might not have been a loser.” Who is to judge of what *might* have been? In endless conjectures we are lost and, cruel to ourselves, we gather material for unnecessary griefs.

Matters happened not so—then why conjecture what would have been had things been different? It is folly! You did your best and it did not answer—why rebel? To fix the eyes upon the second cause will irritate the mind. We grow indignant with the more immediate agent of our grief and so fail to submit ourselves to God. If you strike a dog he will snap at the staff which hurts him, as if *it* were to blame. How doggish we sometimes are, when God is smiting us we are snarling at His rod! Brothers and Sisters, forgive the man who injured you—his was the sin, forgive it, as you hope to be forgiven—but *yours* is the chastisement and it comes from God, therefore endure it and ask Grace to profit you by it. The more we get away from intermediate agents the better, for when we reach to God, Grace will make submission easy. When we know “it is the Lord,” we readily cry, “let Him do what seems good to Him.”

As long as I trace my pain to accident, my bereavement to mistake, my loss to another’s wrong, my discomfort to an enemy and so on, I am of the earth, earthy—and shall break my teeth with gravel! But when I rise to my God and see His hand at work, I grow calm, I have not a word of repining, “I open not my mouth because You did it.” David preferred to fall into the hands of God—and every Believer knows that he feels safest and happiest when he recognizes that he is in the Divine hands. Quibbling with man is poor work, but pleading with God brings help and comfort. “Cast your burden on the Lord” is a precept which will be easy to practice when you see that the burden came originally from God.

But now, thirdly, afflicted children of God do well to have a keen eye to the wrath that mingles with their troubles. "Your wrath lies hard upon me." There is Heman's first point. He does not mention the waves of affliction till he has first spoken of the wrath. We should labor to discover what the Lord means by smiting us—what He purposes by the chastisement—and how far we can answer that purpose. We must use a keen eye clearly to distinguish things. There is an anger and an anger, a wrath and a wrath. God is never angry with His children in one sense, but He is in another. As men, we have all of us disobeyed the Laws of God and God stands in relationship to all of us as a Judge. As a Judge, He must execute upon us the penalties of His Law and He must, from the necessity of His Nature, be angry with us for having broken that Law. That concerns all the human race.

But the moment a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ his offenses are his offenses no longer—they are laid upon Christ Jesus, the Substitute—and the *anger* goes with the sin. The anger of God towards the sins of Believers has spent itself upon Christ. Christ has been punished in their place. The punishment due their sin has been borne by Jesus Christ. God forbid that the Judge of all the earth should ever be unjust—it were not just for God to punish a Believer for a sin which has been already laid upon Jesus Christ. Therefore the Believer is altogether free from all liability to suffer the judicial anger of God and all risk of receiving a punitive sentence from the Most High. The man is absolved—shall he be judged again? The man has paid the debt—shall he be brought a second time before the Judge as though he were still a debtor?

Christ has stood for him in his place and therefore he boldly asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Now, then, the Christian man takes up another position—he is *adopted* into the family of God—he has become God's child. He is under the Law of God's house. There is in every house an economy, a law by which the children and servants are ruled. If the child of God breaks the law of the house, the Father will visit his offense with *fatherly* stripes—a very different kind of visitation from that of a judge.

There are felons in prison today who, in a short time, will feel the lash on their bare backs—that is one thing—but yonder disobedient child is to receive a whipping from his father's hand—that is quite another thing. Wide as the poles asunder are the anger of a judge and the anger of a father. The father loves the child while he is angry and is mainly angry for that very reason. If it were not his child he would probably take no notice of fault. But because it is his own boy who has spoken an untruth or committed an act of disobedience, he feels he must chastise him because he loves him. This needs no further explanation. There is a righteous anger in God's heart towards guilty impenitent men. He feels none of that

towards *His people*. He is their father and if they transgress, He will visit them with stripes—not as a *legal* punishment, since Christ has borne all that—but as a gentle paternal *chastisement*, that they may see their folly and repent of it—and awakened by His tender hand, they may turn unto their Father and amend their ways.

Now, child of God, if you are suffering today in any way whatever—whether from the ills of poverty or bodily sickness, or depression of spirits—remember there is not a drop of the judicial anger of God in it all. You are not being punished for your sins as a judge punishes a culprit—never believe such false doctrine! It is clean contrary to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Gospel doctrine tells us that our sins were numbered on the Great Scapegoat's head of old and carried away once and for all, never to be charged against us again. But we must use the eyes of our judgment in looking at our present affliction to see and confess how richly, as children, we *deserve* the rod.

Go back to the time since you were converted, dear Brother and Sister, and consider—do you wonder that God has chastened you? Speaking for myself, I wonder that I have ever escaped the rod at any time! If I had been compelled to say, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning,” I should not have marveled, for my shortcomings are many. How ungrateful have we been! How unloving and how unlovable! How false to our holiest vows! How unfaithful to our most sacred consecrations! Is there a single ordinance over which we have not sinned? Did we ever rise from our knees without having offended while at *prayer*? Did we ever get through a hymn without some wandering of mind or coldness of heart? Did we ever read a chapter which we might not have wept over because we did not receive the Truth in the love of it into our soul as we ought to have done? O, good Father, if we smart, richly do we deserve that we should yet smart again!

When you have confessed your sins, let me exhort you to use those same eyes zealously to search out the particular sin which has caused the present chastisement. “Oh,” says one, “I do not think I should ever find it out.” You might. Perhaps it lies at the very door. I do not wonder that some Christians suffer—I should wonder if they did not! I have seen them, for instance, neglect family prayer and other household duties and their sons have grown up to dishonor them. If they cry out, “What an affliction,” we would not like to say, “Ah, but you might have expected it. You were the cause of it”—but such a saying would be true. When children have left the parental roof and gone into sin, we have not been surprised when the father has been harsh, sour and crabbed in temper. We did not expect to gather figs from thorns, or grapes from thistles. We have seen men whose only thought was, “Get money, get money,” and yet they have professed to be Christians! Such persons have been fretful and unhappy, but we have not been astonished. Would you have the Lord deal liberally with such surly ill-tempered persons? No, if they walk stubbornly with Him, He will

show Himself stubborn to them. Brother, the roots of your troubles may run under your doorstep where your sin lies. Search and look!

But sometimes the cause of the chastisement lies further off. Every surgeon will tell you that there are diseases which become troublesome in the prime of life, or in old age, which may have been occasioned in youth by some wrong doing, or by accident—and the evil may have lain latent all those years. So may the sins of our youth bring upon us the sorrows of our riper years—faults and omissions of 20 years ago may scourge us today. I know it is so. If the fault may be of so great an age, it should lead us to more thorough search and more frequent prayer. Bunyan tells us that Christian met with Apollyon and had such a dark journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death because of slips he made when going down the hill into the Valley of Humiliation.

It may be so with us. Perhaps when you were young you were very untender towards persons of a sorrowful spirit. You are such yourself now—your harshness is visited upon you. It may be that when in better circumstances, you were known to look down upon the poor and despise the needy—your pride is chastened now. Many a minister has helped to injure another by believing a bad report against him and, by-and-by, he has, himself, been the victim of slander. “With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.” We have seen men who could ride the high horse among their fellow creatures and speak very loftily—and when they have been brought very, very low—we have understood the riddle. God will visit His children’s transgressions. He will frequently let common sinners go on throughout life unrebuked—but not so His children!

If you were going today and saw a number of boys throwing stones and breaking windows, you might not interfere with them. But if you saw your own lad among them, I will be bound you would fetch him out and make him repent of it. If God sees sinners going on in their evil ways, He may not punish them now—He will deal out justice to them in another state. But if it is one of His own elect, He will be sure to make him rue the day. Perhaps the reason of your trouble may not be a sin committed but a duty neglected. Search and look—and see where you have been guilty of omission. Is there a sacred ordinance which you have neglected, or a doctrine you have refused to believe? Perhaps the chastisement may be sent by reason of a sin as yet undeveloped—some latent proneness to evil. The grief may be meant to unearth the sin, that you may hunt it down.

Have you any idea of what a devil you are by nature? None of us know what we are capable of if left by Divine Grace. We think we have a sweet temper, an amiable disposition! We shall see!! We fall into provoking company and are so teased and insulted—and so cleverly touched in our raw places that we become mad with wrath—and our fine amiable temper vanishes in smoke, not without leaving blacks behind! Is it not a dreadful thing to be so stirred up? Yes it is, but if our hearts were pure, no sort of stirring would pollute them. Stir pure water as long as you like and no

mud will rise. The evil is bad when seen, but it was quite as bad when not seen. It may be a great gain to a man to know what sin is in him, for then he will humble himself before his God and begin to combat his propensities. If he had never seen the filth he would never have swept the house! If he had never felt the pain the disease would have lurked within, but now that he feels the pain he will fly to the remedy. Sometimes, therefore, a trial may be sent that we may discern the sin which dwells in us and may seek its destruction.

What shall we do, this morning, if we are under the smiting of God's hand, but humble ourselves before Him and go as guilty ones desiring to confess most thoroughly the particular sin which may have driven Him to chastise us, appealing to the precious blood of Jesus for pardon and to the Holy Spirit for power to overcome our sin? When you have so done let me give one word of caution before I leave this point. Do not let us expect, when we are in the trouble, to perceive any immediate benefit resulting from it. I have tried, myself, when under sharp pain to see whether I have grown a bit more resigned or more earnest in prayer, or more rapt in fellowship with God—and I confess I have never been able to see the slightest trace of improvement at such times—for pain distracts and scatters the thoughts. Remember that word, "Nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

The gardener takes his knife and prunes the fruit trees to make them bring forth more fruit. His little child comes trudging at his heels and cries, "Father, I do not see that the fruit comes on the trees after you have cut them." No, dear child, it is not likely you would, but come round in a few months when the season of fruit has come and then shall you see the golden apples which thank the knife. Graces which are meant to endure require *time* for their production and are not thrust forth and ripened in a night. Were they so soon ripe they might be as speedily rotten.

II. Now, as time is failing me, I will take up the second part of my discourse and handle it with great brevity. I want to give a very short EXPOSITION OF THE BENEFITS OF TROUBLE. This is a great subject. Many a volume has been written upon it and it might suffice to repeat the catalog of the benefits of trial, but I will not so detain you. Severe trouble in a true Believer has the effect of loosening the roots of his soul earthward and tightening the anchor-hold of his heart heavenward. How can he love the world which has become so dear to him? Why should he seek after grapes so bitter to his taste? Should he not, now, ask for the wings of a dove that he may fly away to his own dear country and be at rest forever?

Every mariner on the sea of life knows that when the soft zephyrs blow, men tempt the open sea with outspread sails. But when the black tempest comes howling from its den, they hurry with all speed to the haven. Afflictions clip our wings with regard to earthly things so that we may not fly away from our dear Master's hands but sit there and sing to Him! But the same afflictions make our wings grow with regard to heavenly things—we

are feathered like eagles, we catch the soaring spirit—a thorn is in our nest and we spread our pinions towards the sun. Affliction frequently opens Truths of God to us and opens us to the Truth of God—I know not which of these two is the more difficult.

Experience unlocks Truths which otherwise were closed against us. Many passages of Scripture will never be made clear by the commentator—they must be expounded by experience. Many a text is written in a secret ink which must be held to the fire of adversity to make it visible. I have heard that you see stars in a well when none are visible above ground and I am sure you can discern many a starry Truth when you are down in the deeps of trouble which would not be visible to you elsewhere. Besides, I said it opened us to the Truth as well as the Truth to us. We are superficial in our beliefs—we are often drenched with Truth and yet it runs off us like water from a marble slab!

But *affliction*, as it were, plows us and sub-soils us and opens up our hearts so that into our innermost nature the truth penetrates and soaks like rain into plowed land. Blessed is that man who receives the Truth of God into his inmost self—he shall never lose it, but it shall be the life of his spirit. Affliction, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, brings much glory to God out of Christians through their experience of the Lord's faithfulness to them. I delight to hear an aged Christian giving his own personal testimony of the Lord's goodness. Vividly upon my mind flashes an event of some 25 years ago. It is before me as if it had occurred yesterday, when I saw a venerable man of 80, gray and blind with age, and heard him in simple accents—simple as the language of a child—tell how the Lord had led him and had dealt well with him so that no good thing had failed of all that God had promised. He spoke as though he were a Prophet, his years lending force to his words. But suppose he had never known a trial? What testimony could he have borne? Had he been lapped in luxury and never endured suffering he might have stood there dumb and have been as useful as if he had never spoke. We must be tried or we cannot magnify the faithful God who will not leave His people!

Again, affliction gives us, through Grace, the inestimable privilege of conformity to the Lord Jesus. We pray to be like Christ, but how can we be if we are not men of sorrows and never become the acquaintance of grief? Like Christ and yet never traverse through the vale of tears? Like Christ and yet have all that heart could wish? Like Christ and never bear the contradiction of sinners against yourself? Like Christ and never say, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"? O, Sir, you know not what you ask! Have you said, "Let me sit on Your right hand in Your kingdom?" It cannot be granted to you unless you will also drink of His cup and be baptized with His Baptism! A share of His sorrow must precede a share of His Glory. O, if we are ever to be like Christ, to dwell with Him eternally, we may be well content to pass through much tribulation in order to attain to it!

Once more, our sufferings are of great service to us when God blesses them, for they help us to be useful to others. It must be a terrible thing for a man never to have suffered physical pain. You say, "I should like to be the man"? Ah, unless you had extraordinary Grace, you would grow hard and cold—you would get to be a sort of cast-iron man—breaking other people with your touch. No, let my heart be tender, even be soft if it must be softened by pain, for I would rather know how to bind up my fellow's wounds. Let my eyes have a tear ready for my brother's sorrows even if in order to that I should have to shed 10,000 of my own. An escape from suffering would be an escape from the power to sympathize and that were to be deprecated beyond all things!

Luther was right when he said affliction was the best book in the minister's library. How can the man of God sympathize with the afflicted ones if he knows nothing at all about their troubles? I remember a hard, miserly churl who said that the minister ought to be very poor so that he might have sympathy with the poor. I told him I thought he ought to have a turn at being very rich, too, so that he might have sympathy with the very rich! And I suggested to him that perhaps, upon the whole, it would be handiest to keep him somewhere in the middle that he might the more easily range over the experience of all classes. If the man of God who is to minister to others could be always robust, it were, perhaps, a loss. If he could be always sickly it might be equally so—but for the pastor to be able to range through all the places where the Lord suffers His sheep to go—is doubtless to the advantage of His flock.

And what it is to ministers, it will be to each one of you according to his calling, for the consolation of the people of God. Be thankful then, dear Brethren, be thankful for trouble! And above all be thankful because it will soon be over and we shall be in the land where these things will be spoken of with great joy. As soldiers show their scars and talk of battles when they come, at last, to spend their old age in the country home, so shall we in the dear land to which we are hastening, speak of the goodness and faithfulness of God which brought us through all the trials of the way! I would not like to stand in that white-robed host and hear it said, "These are they that come out of great tribulation, all except *that one*." Would you like to be there to see yourself pointed at as the one saint who never knew a sorrow? O no, for you would be an alien in the midst of the sacred brotherhood! We will be content to share the battle, for we shall soon wear the crown and wave the palm.

I know that while I am preaching some of you have said, "Ah, these people of God have a hard time of it." So have you. The ungodly do not escape from sorrow by their sin. I never heard of a man escaping from poverty through being a spendthrift. I never heard of a man who escaped from headache or heartache by drunkenness—or from bodily pain by licentiousness. I have heard the opposite! And if there are griefs to the holy there are others for you. Only mark this, ungodly ones, mark this—for you

these things work no good! You pervert them to mischief—but for the saints, they work eternal benefit! For you your sorrows are punishments. For you they are the first drops of the red hail that shall fall upon you forever. They are not so to the child of God. You are *punished* for your transgressions—he is not.

And let us tell you, too, that if this day you happen to be in peace, prosperity, plenty and happiness—yet there is not one child of God here, in the very deeps of trouble, that would change places with you under any consideration whatever! He would sooner be God's dog and be kicked under the table, than be the devil's darling and sit at meat with him. "Let God do as He pleases," we say, "for while here we believe our worst state to be better than your best." Do you think we love God for what we get out of Him and for nothing else? Is that your notion of a Christian's love to God? We read in Jeremiah of certain ones who said they would not leave off worshipping the Queen of Heaven. "For when," they said, "we worshipped the Queen of Heaven, we had bread in plenty, but now we starve."

This is how the ungodly talk and that is what the devil thought was Job's case. Said he—"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" The devil does not understand real love and affection, but the child of God can tell the devil to his face that he loves God if He covers him with sores and sets him on the dunghill. And by God's good help he means to cling to God through troubles ten-fold heavier than those he has had to bear, should they come upon him. Is He not a blessed God? Yes, let the beds of our sickness ring with it—He is a blessed God! In the night watches, when we are weary and our brain is hot and fevered, and our soul is distracted, we yet confess that He is a blessed God! Every ward of the hospital where Believers are found should echo with that note!

"A blessed God?" "Yes, that He is," say the poor and needy here this morning and so say all God's poor throughout all the land. "A blessed God?" "Yes," say His dying people, "as He slays us we will bless His name. He loves us and we love Him and, though all His waves go over us and His wrath lies sorely upon us, we would not change with kings on their thrones if they are without the love of God."

O, Sinner, if God smites a child of His so heavily, He will smite you one day! And if those He loves are made to smart, what will He do with those who rebel against Him and hate Him? "Praise the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." The Lord bless you and bring you into the bonds of His Covenant, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-Psalm 88.

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

MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJESTIC SONG NO. 1565

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

***“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known
Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built
up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.”
Psalm 89:1, 2.***

THIS Psalm is one of the very choicest songs in the night. Midst a stream of troubled thoughts there stands a fair island of rescue and redemption which supplies standing room for wonder and worship while the music of the words, like the murmuring of a river, sounds sweetly in our ears! Read the Psalm carefully and it will awaken your sympathy, for he who wrote it was bearing bitter reproach and was almost broken-hearted by the grievous calamities of his nation. Yet his faith was strong in the faithfulness of God and so he sang of the stability of the Divine Covenant when the outlook of circumstances was dark and cheerless. Nor did he ever sing more sweetly than he sang in that night of his sorrow. Greatly does it glorify God for us to sing His high praises in storms of adversity and on beds of affliction. It magnifies His mercy if we can bless and adore Him when He *takes*, as well as when He *gives*.

It is good that out of the very mouth of the burning furnace there should come a yet more burning note of grateful praise! I am told that there is a great deal of relief to sorrow in complaining—that the utterance of our murmurs may, sometimes, tend to relieve our pain or sorrow. I suppose it is so. Certainly it is a good thing to *weep*, for I have heard it from the mouth of many witnesses. Most of us have felt that there are griefs too deep for tears and that a flood of tears proves that the sorrow has begun to abate. But, I think, the best relief for sorrow is to sing—this man tried it, at any rate. When mercy seems to have departed, it is well to sing of departed mercy! When no present blessing appears, it is a present blessing to remember the blessing of the years gone by and to rehearse the praises of God for all His *former* mercies towards us. Two sorts of songs we ought to keep up even if the present appears to yield us no theme for sonnets—the song of the past for what God has done and the song of the future for the Grace we have not yet tasted—the Covenant blessings held in the pierced hand, safe and sure against the time to come!

Brothers and Sisters, I want you, at this time, to feel the spirit of gratitude within your hearts. Though your mind should be heavy, your countenance sad and your circumstances gloomy—still let the generous impulse kindle and glow. Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord! It does not seem to me to be much for us to sing God’s praises in fair weather. The shouts of, “Harvest home,” over the loaded wagons are proper, but they are only natu-

ral. Who would not sing, then? What bird in all the country is silent when the sun is rising and the dews of spring are sparkling? But the choicest choir charms the stars of night and no note is sweeter, even to the human ear, than that which comes from the bare bough amidst the abundant snows of dark winter!

O sons of sorrow, your hearts are tuned to notes which the joyful cannot reach! Yours is the full compass and swell. You are harps upon which the Chief Player on stringed instruments can display His matchless skill to a larger degree than upon the less afflicted. I pray He may do so now, by leading you to be first in the song. We must, all of us, follow, but some of us will not readily yield to be outstripped in this holy exercise. Like Elijah, we will try to run before the king's chariot in this matter of praise! Accounting ourselves the greatest debtors of all to the Grace and mercy of God, we must and will sing loudest of the crowd and make even—

***“Heaven’s resounding arches ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

I invite your attention to two things. First, we shall look at the work of the Eternal Builder—“Mercy shall be built up forever.” Then, secondly, we shall listen to the resolve of an everlasting singer—“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.” I take the second verse first—it is necessary for the handling of our subject. You know, in the book of Common Prayer, the rubric prescribes concerning a certain form of words that it is, “to be said or sung.” We will do both. The first part we will have is the verse which begins, “I have said.” And then the second part shall be the verse which begins, “I will sing.” It shall be said and sung, too! God grant we may say it in the depth of our heart and afterwards that our mouth may sing it and make it known unto all generations! May the Spirit of all Grace fill us with His own power!

I. First, then, let us contemplate THE ETERNAL BUILDER AND HIS WONDERFUL WORK. “I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.” I can see a vast mass of ruins. Heaps upon heaps they lie around me. A stately edifice has tottered to the ground! Some terrible disaster has occurred. There it lies—cornice, pillar, pinnacle—everything of ornament and of utility broken, scattered, dislocated. The world is strewn with the debris. Journey where you will, the desolation is before your eyes. Who has done this? Who has cast down this temple? What hand has ruined this magnificent structure? Manhood! Manhood it is which has been destroyed and Sin was the agent that effected the Fall. It is man broken by his sin—iniquity has done it!

O you Devastator, what destructions have you worked in the earth! What desolation you have made unto the ends of the world! Everywhere is ruin! Everywhere is ruin! Futile attempts are made to rebuild this temple upon its own heap and the Babel towers arise out of the rubbish and abide, for a season, but they are soon broken down and the mountain of decay and corruption becomes even more hopeless of restoration! All that man has done with his greatest effort is but to make a huge display of his total failure to recover his position, to realize his pretentious plans, or to restore his own

fleeting memories of better things. They may build and they may pile up stone upon stone and cement them together with untempered mortar, but their rude structure shall all crumble to the dust, again, for the first ruin will be perpetuated even to the last!

So must it be, for sin destroys all. I am vexed in my spirit and sorely troubled as I look at these ruins—fit habitations for owls and the dragon, the mole and the bat. Alas for manhood, that it should be thus fallen and destroyed! But what else do I see? I behold the great original Builder coming forth from the ivory palaces to undo this mischief. He comes not with implements of *destruction*, that He may cast down and destroy every vestige, but I see Him advancing with plummet and line, that He may raise, set up and establish, on the sure Foundation, a noble pile that shall not crumble with time, but endure throughout all ages!

He comes forth with mercy. So “I said” as I saw the vision,” Mercy shall be built up forever.” There was no material but mercy with which a temple could be constructed among men. What can meet the guilt of human crimes but mercy? What can redress the misery occasioned by wanton transgression but mercy? Mere kindness could not do it. Power alone—even Omnipotence—could not accomplish it. Wisdom could not even commence until Mercy stood at her right hand. But when I saw Mercy interpose, I understood the meaning. Something was to be done that would change the dreary picture that made my heart groan, for at the advent of Mercy the walls would soon rise until the roof ascended high and the palace received within its renovated glory the sublime Architect who built it!

I knew that now there would be songs instead of sighs since God had come and come in mercy! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, blessed was that day when Mercy, the Benjamin of God, His last-born attribute, appeared! Surely it was the son of our sorrow, but it was the son of His right hand. There had been no need of mercy if it had not been for our sin—thus from direst evil the Lord took occasion to display the greatest good! When Mercy came—God’s darling, for He says He delights in mercy—then was there hope that the ruins of the Fall would no longer be the perpetual misery of men! I said, “Mercy shall be built up.”

Now, if you closely scan the passage, you will clearly perceive that the Psalmist has the idea of God’s mercy being manifest in building because a great breach has to be *repaired* and the ruins of mankind are to be restored. As for building, it is a very substantial operation. A building is something which is palpable and tangible to our senses. We may have plans and schemes which are only visionary, but when it comes to building, as those know who have to build, there is something *real* being done, something more than surveying the ground and drawing the model. And oh, what real work God has done for men! What real work in the gift of His dear Son! The product of His infinite purpose now becomes evident. He is working out His great designs after the counsel of His own will!

What real work there is in the regeneration of His people! That is no fiction! Mercy is built and the blessings that you and I have received have not mocked us—they have not been the dream of fanatics nor the fancy of en-

thusiasts. God has done real work for you and for me, as we can bear testimony and as we do bear testimony at this hour. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built.” That is no sham, no dream! It is the act and deed of God! Mercy *has* been built. A thing that is built is a fixed thing. It exists—really exists and exists according to a substantial plan. It is presumed to be permanent. True, all earthly structures will mold and decay and man’s buildings will dissolve in the last great fire, but still, a building is more durable than a tent, or a temporary lodge in a garden of cucumbers and, “I have said, Mercy shall be built.”

It is not a movable berth, but a fixed habitation—I have found it so. And have not you? God’s mercy began with some of you—no, I must not talk about when it began—I mean you began to *perceive* it many years ago. Now, when these heads that are now bald or gray had bushy locks, black as a raven’s—when you were curly-headed boys and girls that clambered on your father’s knee—you remember, even then, the mercy of your God and it has continued with you! It is a fixed, substantial, real thing. Not the old house at home has been more fixed than the mercy of God! There has been a warm place for you by the fireside from your childhood until now and a mother’s love has not failed. The mercy of God to you has been more substantial than a house has ever been. You can endorse the declaration of David—“I have said, Mercy shall be built.”

A building is an orderly thing as well as a fixed thing. There is a scheme and design about it. Mercy shall be built. God has gone about blessing us with designs that only His own infinite perfections could have completed. We have not seen the design, yet, in the full proportion. We shall be lost in wonder, love and praise when we see it all carried out, but we already perceive some lines, some distinct traces of a grand design as we caught first one thought of God and then another, of His mercy toward us. Mercy shall be built. I see that it shall. This is no load of bricks. It is polished stones built one upon another! God’s Grace and goodness toward us have not come by chance, or as the blind distribution of a God who gave to all alike and for none with any special purpose.

No, but there has been as much a specialty of purpose to me as if I were the only one He loved, though, praised be His name, He has blessed and is blessing multitudes of others beside me! As I discovered that in all His dealings of mercy there was a plan, I said, “Mercy shall be built” and so it has been. Yes, more! If I had the time I would like to picture to you the digging out of that foundation of mercy in the olden times—the marking out of the lines of mercy in the predestinating purpose and the ancient Covenant of God. Then I would appeal to your experience and entreat you to observe how progressively, line upon line, the many promises have been verified to you up till now. With what transport you would say, “Yes, the figure may run, if it likes, on all fours! Yes, and may go on as many legs as a centipede and yet there shall be no spoiling of it, the metaphor is so good! Mercy has been in course of construction and is now being raised.”

So the song begins, “Mercy shall be built.” But now he says, “Mercy shall be built up.” Will you try to think, for a minute, upon these words—“built

up”? It is not merely a long, low wall of mercy that is formed to make an enclosure or to define a boundary—it is a magnificent pile of mercy whose lofty heights shall draw admiring gazes that is being built up. God puts mercy on top of mercy and He gives us one favor that we may be ready to receive another! There are some Covenant blessings that you and I are not ready to receive yet. They would not be suitable to our present circumstances. “I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” Weak eyes that are gradually recovering their use must not have too much light. A man half-starved must not be fed at once upon substantial meat—he must have the nutrient gently administered to him.

An excess of rain might inundate the land and wash up the plants, while gentle showers would refresh the thirsty soil and invigorate the herbs and the trees. Even so, mercy is bestowed upon us in measure. God does not give us every spiritual blessing at once. There are the blessings of our childhood in Grace which we, perhaps, shall not so much enjoy when we come to be strong men. But then the blessings of the strong man and of the father would crush the child and God abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence in the distribution of His gifts. And, as I thought of that, I said, “Yes, mercy shall be built up. There shall be one mercy on another.” Would that I had a vivid imagination and a tongue gifted with eloquence—then I would try to portray the 12 courses of the new Jerusalem and show how the stones of fair colors are set, one next to the other, so that the colors set each other off and blend into a wondrous harmony!

But I can clearly see that the mercy of the azure shall not come first. There shall be the mercy of the emerald to underlie it and there shall be an advance made in the preciousness of the stones with which God shall build us up and we cannot tell what the next is to be—certainly not what the next after that is to be, nor the next after that and the one to follow after that! But as I saw half-a-dozen of the courses of God’s mercy, I said, “His mercy shall be built up.” I can see it rising, tier on tier and course on course and it gathers wonders. The longer I gaze, the more I am lost in contemplation. Silent with astonishment, spell-bound with the fascinating vision, I think, I believe, I know that—“Mercy shall be built up.”

Moreover, my expectations are awakened. I am waiting eagerly for the next scene. The designs of mercy are not exhausted. The deeds of mercy are not all told. The display of mercy must reach higher than has ever yet dawned upon my imagination. Its foundations were laid low. In great mercy He gave me a broken heart. That was pure mercy, for God accepts broken hearts—they are very precious in His sight. But it was a higher mercy when He gave me a new heart which was bound up and united in His fear and filled with His joy! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us remember how He showed us the evil of sin and caused us to feel a sense of shame!

That was a choice mercy, but it was a clearer mercy when He gave us a sense of pardon. Oh, it was a blessed day when He gave us the little faith that tremblingly touched His garment’s hem! It was better when He gave us faith as small as a grain of mustard seed that grew. It has been better, still, when, by faith, we have been able to do many mighty works for Him. We do

not know what we shall do when He gives us more faith! Far less can we imagine how our powers shall develop in Heaven, where faith will come to its full perfection! It will not die, as some idly pretend. There we shall implicitly believe in God. With the place of His Throne as the point of our survey, we shall see nothing but His sovereign will to shape events—so with joyful assurance of hope we shall look onward to the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and the glory that is to follow. We shall sit in Heaven and sing that the Lord reigns! We shall gaze upon the earth and behold how it trembles at the coming of the King of kings! And with radiant faces we shall smile at Satan's rage! We do not know what any one of our Graces may be built up into, but if you are conscious of any growth in any Grace, you have learned enough to appreciate the oracle that speaks in this wise—"I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever."

Once again would I read this verse with very great emphasis and ask you to notice how it rebukes the proud and the haughty and how it encourages the meek and lowly in spirit. "I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever." In the edification of the saints there is nothing but mercy! Some people seem to fancy that when we get to a certain point in Grace we do not need to plead for mercy. My dear Friends, if any of you get into that humor that you say, "I need not make any confession of sin. I need not ask pardon of sin," you are trifling with the very Truths of God of which you think you are the most strong in! I do not care what doctrine it is that brings you there, you are in a dangerous state if you stop there. Get away from there quickly!

Your right position is at the Throne of Grace and the Throne of Grace is meant for people that need Grace and you need Grace now! Perhaps never more than now. Without new mercies every morning, as the manna that fed the Israelites of old, your days will be full of misery. Your Lord and Master taught you to say not only, "Our Father which are in Heaven," and, "Your kingdom come," but He bade you constantly to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." "I have no trespasses," one says. Brother, go home and look at your heart. I will have no argument with you. Take the bandage off your eyes. You are about as full of sin as an egg is full of meat. Among the rest of your many sins there is this rotten egg of an accursed *pride* as to your own state of heart! I said, no matter what you say, "Mercy shall be built up *forever*."

I expect God to deal with me on the footing of mercy as long as I live. I do not expect that He shall build me up in any way but according to His Grace and pity and forgiving love. If there are any creatures in this world that can boast of having got beyond the need of asking for mercy, I have not learned their secret of self-deception! I know of some professors who climb so high up the ladder that they come down the other side. I fancy that is very much like the wonderful growing in perfection of which they boast about! It means full often going up so high that they are pure saints in their own esteem, but soon they have gone down so low that they are poor lost sheep in the estimation of the Churches of Christ! God grant you may not fall by any such process. "I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever."

Brothers and Sisters, if you and I ever get to the gate of Heaven and stand upon the alabaster doorstep with our finger on the glittering latch—unless the Mercy of God carries us over the threshold we shall be dragged down to Hell even from the gates of Heaven! Mercy, mercy, mercy! His mercy endures forever because we always need it! As long as we are in this world we shall have to make our appeal to mercy and cry, “Father, I have sinned. Blot out my transgressions!” Well, that is, as I have said, what the text declares, “I have said, Mercy shall be built up,” nothing else but mercy. There will not come a point when the angelic masons shall stop and say, “Now then, the next course is to be *merit*. So far it has been mercy—but now the next course is to be perfection in the flesh—that course has no need of mercy.”

No, no! Mercy, mercy, mercy till the very top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it.” “Mercy shall be built up.” Yet glance your eyes onward. “I said, mercy shall be built up forever.” *Forever?* Well, I have been peering back into the past and I discover that nothing else but mercy can account for my being or my well-being. By the Grace of God I am what I am. The Psalm of my life, though filled with varied stanzas, has but one chorus—His mercy endures forever. Will you look back, Beloved, on all the building of your life and character? Any of it that has been real building—gold and silver and precious stones—has all been *mercy* and so the building will go on! The operation is proceeding slowly but surely. What? Though at this present hour you may be in grievous trouble, mercy is being built up for you.

“Oh, no,” you say, “I am tottering and my days are declining and I feel I shall be utterly cast down.” Yes, you may be very conscious of your weakness and infirmity, but the mercy of the Lord is steadfast—its foundation abides firm—not a single stone can be moved from its setting! The work is going on, storm or tempest notwithstanding. There is nothing precarious about the fact that mercy shall be built up forever. Let not the murky atmosphere that surrounds you blind your eyes—the eyes of your understanding—to this glorious word, “forever.” Rather say, “If I am well set in this fabric of Mercy, my castings down are often the way in which God builds up His mercy. I shall be built up forever! And oh, if it goes on being built up forever—I am ravished with the thought, though I cannot give expression to it—what will it grow to? What will it grow to?”

If it is going to be built up in the case of any one of you, say 70 years, oh it will be a grand pinnacle, an everlasting monument to the Eternal Builder’s praise! But you see it will go on—it will be built up *forever*. What? *Never* cease? No, never! But shall it never come to a pause? No, mercy shall be built up *forever*—it shall go on towering upward. Do you imagine that it will go at a slower rate, by-and-by? That is not likely. It is not God’s way. He generally quickens His speed as He ripens His purposes! So I suspect that He will go on building up His mercy, tier on tier, height on height, *forever!* Says one, “Will its colossal altitude pierce the clouds and rise above the clear azure of the sky?” It will. Read the text—“Your faithfulness shall You

establish in the very heavens”—not in the heavens, only, but in the, “very heavens”—the heaven of heavens! He will build up to that height!

He will go on building you up, dear Brother, dear Sister, till He gets you to Heaven. He will build you up till He makes a heavenly man or woman of you, till where Christ is, you shall be—and *what* Christ is, as far as He is Man—you shall be! And with God, Himself, you shall be allied—a child of God, an heir of Heaven, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I wish I had an imagination, I say again, bold and clear, uncramped by all ideas of the masonry of men, free to expand and still to cry, “Excelsior.” Palaces, I think, are paltry, and castles and cathedrals are only grand in comparison with the little cots that nestle on the plain. Even mountains, high as the Himalayan range or broad as the Andes, though their peaks are so lofty to our reckoning, are mere specks on the surface of the great globe, itself, and our earth is small among the celestial orbs, a little sister of the larger planets.

Figures quite fail me—my description must take another turn. I try and try again to realize the gradual rising of this temple of Mercy which shall be built up forever. Within the bounds of my feeble vision, I can discern that it has risen above death, above sin, above fear, above all danger! It has risen above the terrors of the Judgment Day! It has outsoared the “wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.” It towers above all our thoughts. Our bliss ascends above an angel’s enjoyments and he has pleasures that were never checked by a pang but he does not know the ineffable delight of free Grace and dying love! It has ascended above all that I dare to speak of, for even the little I know has about it something that it were not lawful for a man to utter! It is built up into the *very arms of Christ* where His saints shall lie imparadised forever, equal with Himself upon His throne!

“I said, Mercy shall be built up forever.” The building-up will go on throughout eternity. Yes, and what is once built up will never fall down, neither in whole nor in part. *There* is the mercy of it! God is such a Builder that He finishes what He begins and what He accomplishes is *forever*. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He does not do and undo, or build for His people after a Covenant fashion and then cast down, again, because the counsel of His heart has changed. So let us sing and praise and bless the name of the Lord! I do hope that, from what little our experience has taught us already, we are prepared to cry, like the Psalmist, “I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.”

II. Well, now, we come back to the first verse. There are first that shall be last and last that shall be first, so is it with our text. We have looked at the Eternal Builder, let us now listen to AN EVERLASTING SINGER. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.” Here is a good and godly resolution—“I will sing.” The singing of the *heart* is intended and the singing of the voice is expressed, for he mentions his mouth. And equally true is it that the singing of his pen is implied, since the Psalms that he wrote were for others to sing in generations that should follow.

He says, “I will sing.” I do not know what else he could do. There is God building in mercy. We cannot assist Him in that! We have no mercy to contribute and what is built is to be *all* of mercy. We cannot impart anything to the great temple which He is building. But we can sit down and sing. It seems delightful that there should be no sound of hammer or noise of axe—that there should be no other sound than the voice of song as when they fabled of the ancient player upon the instruments that he built temples by the force of song! So shall God build up His Church and so shall He build us as living stones into the sacred structure and so shall we sit and muse on His mercy till the music breaks from our tongue and we rise to our feet and stand and sing about it! I will sing of the mercy while the mercy is being built up. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.”

But will he not soon sink these sweet notes and relapse into silence? No. He says, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord *forever*.” Will he not grow weary and wish for some other occupation? No, for true praise is a thirsty thing and when it drinks from a golden chalice it soon empties it and yearns for deeper draughts with strong desire. It could drink up Jordan at a draught! This singing praise to God is a spiritual *passion*. The saved soul delights itself in the Lord and sings on and on and on unwearily. “I will sing forever,” he says. Not, “I will get others to perform and then I will retire from the service,” but rather, “I will, myself, sing. My own tongue shall take the solo, whoever may refuse to join in the chorus. I will sing and with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness.” Oh, that is blessed—that singing personally and individually!

It is a blessed thing to be one of a choir in the praise of God and we like to have others with us in this happy employment. Still, for all that, the 103rd Psalm is a most beautiful solo. It begins, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” and it finishes up with, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” There must be personal, singular praise, for we have received personal and singular mercies! I will sing, I will sing, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever! Now note his subject. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.” What, not of anything else? Are the mercies of the Lord his exclusive theme? “Arma virumque cano”—“Arms and the man, I sing,” says the Latin poet. “Mercies and my God, I sing,” says the Hebrew Seer. “I will sing of mercies,” says the devout Christian. This is the fountain of mercy where, if a man drinks, he will sing far better than he that drinks of the Castalian fountain and on Parnassus begins to tune His harp—

**“Praise the mount, oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love.”**

Here we are taught a melodious sonnet, “sung by flaming tongues above.” “I will sing of mercies, I will sing of mercies forever,” he says and, I suppose, the reason is because God’s mercies would be built up forever. The morning stars sang together when God’s work of Creation was completed. Suppose God created a world every day? Surely the morning stars would sing every day. Ah, but God gives us a world of mercies every day and, therefore, let us sing of His mercies forever! Any one day that you live, my Brothers and Sisters, there is enough mercy packed away into it to

make you sing not only through that day but through the rest of your life! I have thought, sometimes, when I have received great mercies of God, that I almost wanted to pull up and to “rest and be thankful” and say to Him, “My blessed Lord, do not send me any more for a little while. I really must take stock of these. Come, my good secretaries, take down notes and keep a register of all His mercies.” Let us gratefully respond for the manifold gifts we have received and send back our heartiest praise to God who is the Giver of every good thing.

But, dear me! Before I could put the basketfuls away on the shelf, there came wagons loaded with more mercy! What was one to do, then, but to sit on the top of the pile and sing for joy of heart? Then let us lift each parcel and look at each label and lay them up in the house and say, “Is it not full of mercy? As for me, I will go and sit, like David, before the Lord and say, ‘Who am I, O Lord God? And what is *my* house, that You have brought me up to now? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?’” I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever because I shall never have finished with them! It is true, as Addison puts it—

***“Eternity is too short
To utter all Your praise.”***

You will never accomplish the simple task of acknowledgments because there will be constantly more mercies coming! You will always be in arrears! In Heaven itself you will never have praised God sufficiently. You will need to begin Heaven over, again, and have another eternity, if such a thing could be, to praise Him for the fresh benefits that He bestows. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: therefore will I sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.”

What a spectacle it will be as you sit in Heaven and watch God building up His mercies forever, or, if it may be, to wander over all the worlds that God has made, for I suppose we may do that and yet still have Heaven for our home. Heaven is everywhere to the heart that lives in God. What a wonderful sight it will be to see God going on building up His mercy. Ah, we have not acquired an idea of the grandeur of the plan of mercy. No thought can conceive, no words can paint the grandeur of His Justice. Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, although there have been expressions and metaphors used about the wrath to come which cannot be found in Scripture and are not to be justified, yet I am persuaded that there is no exaggeration possible of the inviolability of God’s Law, of the truthfulness of His threats, of the terror of His indignation, or of the holiness of Jehovah—a holiness that shall constrain universal homage but you must always take care that you balance all your thoughts.

In the retributions of His wrath, there shall be a revelation of His righteousness, for no sentence of His majesty will ever cast a shadow over His mercy and every enemy will be speechless before the equity of His award! They that hate Him shall hide their faces from Him—in burning shame they shall depart to perpetual banishment from His Presence. Their condemnation will not dim the purity of His attributes. The glory of the redeemed will also reveal the righteousness of Jehovah and His saints will be perfectly

satisfied when they are conformed to His likeness. On the summit of the eternal hill you shall sit down and survey that Mercy City, now in course of construction, built up! It lies four square. Its height is the same as its breadth, ever towering, ever widening, ever coming to that Divine completion which, nevertheless, it has, in another sense, already attained.

We know that God in His mercy shall be All in All. "I will sing of the mercy of the Lord forever," for I shall see His mercy built up forever. This singing of Ethan was intended to be instructive. How large a class did he want to teach? He intended to make known God's mercy to all generations. Dear, dear—if a man teaches one generation, is not that enough? Modern thought does not adventure beyond the tithes of a century and it gets tame and tasteless before half that tiny span of sensationalism has given it time to evaporate. But the echoes of the Truths of God are not so transient—they endure and, by means of the printing press, we can teach generation after generation, leaving books behind us as this good man has bequeathed this Psalm—which is teaching us, tonight, perhaps, more largely than it taught any generation nearer to him.

Will you transmit blessed testimonies to your children's children? It should be your desire to do something in the present life that will live after you are gone. It is one proof to us of our immortality that we instinctively long for a sort of immortality here. Let us strive to get it, not by carving our names on some stone, or writing our epitaphs upon a pillar as Absalom did when he had nothing else by which to commemorate himself, but get to work to do something which shall be a testimony to the mercy of God that others shall see when we are gone.

Ethan said, "God's mercy shall be built up forever," and he is teaching us still that blessed fact. Suppose you cannot write and your influence is very narrow, yet you shall go on singing of God's praise forever and you shall go on teaching generations yet to come. You Sunday school teachers, you shall be Sunday school teachers forever. "Oh," you say, "no, I cannot expect that." Well, but you shall. You know it will always be Sunday when you get to Heaven. There will never be any other day, there—one everlasting Sabbath—and through you and by you shall be made known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God!

I teach some of you now and I often think you could better teach me, some of you old experienced saints. You will teach me, by-and-by. When we are in Glory we shall, all of us, be able to tell one another something of God's mercy. Your view of it, you know, differs from mine and mine from my Brother's. You, my dear Friend, see mercy from one point and your wife, even though she is one with you, sees it from another point and detects another sparkle of it which your eyes have never caught. So shall we barter and exchange our knowledge in Heaven and trade together and grow richer in our knowledge of God! "I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens." Then I said, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations."

We will go on exulting in God's mercy as long as we have any being and that shall be forever and ever! When we have been in Heaven millions of years, we shall not need any other subject to speak of but the mercy of our blessed God and we shall find auditors with charmed ears to sit and listen to the matchless tale and some that will ask us to tell it yet again! They will come to Heaven, you know, as long as the world lasts, some out of every generation. We shall see them streaming in at the gates more numerously, I hope, as the years roll by, till the Lord comes. And we will continue to tell to fresh corners what the Lord has done for us.

We can never stop! We can never cease! But as the heavens are telling the Glory of God and every star declares in wondrous diversity His praise, so where the stars differ from one another in the Glory of God above, the saints shall be forever telling the story which shall remain untold—the love we knew, but which surpassed our knowledge—the Grace of which we drank, but yet was deeper than our draughts! We will be telling of the bounty in which we swam until we seemed to lose ourselves in love—the favor which was still greater than our utmost conceptions and rose above our most eager desires. God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, and send you away singing—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to my King!”***

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THE MIGHTY ARM

NO. 1314

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.”
Psalm 89:13.***

WHEN the soul is perfectly reconciled to God and comes to delight in Him, it rejoices in all His attributes. At the first, perhaps, it dwells almost exclusively upon His love and His mercy, but it afterwards proceeds to find joy in the sterner attributes and especially delights itself in His holiness and in His power. It is a mark of the growth of Christian knowledge when we begin to distinguish the attributes and to rejoice in God in each one of them. It betokens meditation and thought when we are able to discern the things of God and to give to the Lord a Psalm of praise for each one of His glories. And it also indicates a growingly intimate communion with the great Father when we begin to perceive His adorable Character and to rejoice so much in all that He is, that we can take the attributes in detail and bless, praise and magnify Him on account of each one of them.

Under the Jewish Law there were forms of the sacrifices which were of the simplest kind, such as the offering of turtle doves or young pigeons, which were simply torn asunder and burned upon the altar. But there were other and more elaborate rules for the sacrifices which were taken from the flock and the herd. These were rightly divided and the parts laid in their places—the head, the fat, the inwards, the legs and so on—as if to show that although some Believers only know the atoning sacrifice as a whole and after a superficial manner, there are others still further instructed who look deeper into Divine mystery and see the various forms which the great Truths of God assume.

It is a saving thing to know the Lord God with all your heart, but I would, Beloved, that you knew all the varied rays of His pure light. That you beheld the many glories of His crown and could rejoice in each distinct excellence of His infinite perfection. The subject of this morning is the power of God as the subject of adoration. Here, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have large scope for thought, for the power of God is manifested in connection with all His other attributes. It is the cause of all His works and the basis and working force by which His kingdom is maintained and Himself revealed.

How clearly is His power beheld in *creation*. There, indeed, O Lord, “You have a mighty arm.” We injure ourselves and dishonor our Creator when we pass over His works as if they were beneath the notice of spiritual minds. It is perverse on our part to forget the exhortation, “What God has

created, call not you common.” The Psalmist sang concerning the creating might of God in verses 11 and 12 of the Psalm before us—“The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.”

David did not divide between Revelation and Nature. He loved the Word of God and meditated therein day and night, but at the same time he triumphed in the works of God’s hands. In the 104th Psalm he found music in rocks and rills, in fowls and fir trees, and rejoiced that the Glory of the Lord shall endure forever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works. In the 8th Psalm he considered the heavens and burst forth with the exclamation, “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! “With the same feeling I led you to sing this morning that child’s hymn in which the power of God is revered—

***“I sing the almighty power of God,
Which made the mountains rise,
Which spreads the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies.”***

The Lord made Job and his friends remember his power as seen in creation. Indeed, it was by revealing that one attribute that Job’s friends were silenced and the Patriarch, himself, was led to cry, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You?” We ought not to overlook that which had so salutary an influence upon others. It is a pity when people become so spiritual that they have no eyes whatever for the Lord’s power in rivers and mountains, in seas and storms—for God has made them all and as in a glass He is darkly to be seen in them. “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.”

I can understand the feeling of some who say, “I prefer spiritual preaching and I delight most to read the spiritual parts of the Word of God rather than the historical records, and to think of His Grace rather than of His wisdom in Nature.” But there is a fault about such a preference, excellent as it is in one way. It is as though you had a friend who was a great artist, and a master in statuary, able to make the marble almost live and speak with his magic chisel. You are accustomed to call upon this eminent sculptor and it gives you great pleasure to talk with him and to associate with his children. But you have never gone into his studio, for his masterpieces do not interest you.

Now, this is poor fellowship. If ever you get to be in perfect sympathy with your friend, you will be interested in that which interests him, and charmed with the various proofs of your friend’s powers in design and execution. You will study his works for his sake and love him all the more because of those wonders of beauty and joy which his hands produce. If the Lord thinks fit to display the hand of His power in the visible universe, it would ill become any of His children to close his eyes to it. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” “All the works praise You, O God; but Your saints shall bless You.”

So, too, the power of God is to be seen in *Providence*—in the overruling hand which controls common events. Our sweet singer writes in verse 9, “You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise You still them.” God’s power is seen in the great phenomena of Nature and even in the lesser matters of everyday life. His hand guides the fall of every sere leaf and adorns each blade of grass with its own drop of dew! But chiefly His way is in the whirlwind and the clouds are the dust of His feet. The mighty hand of the Lord is to be seen in the events of human history. His power is manifest in courts and armies, in the rise and fall of empires, in the growth of nations, or in their overthrow. Behold how He broke Egypt in pieces as one that was slain and scattered His enemies with His strong arm.

His people did not refuse to sing of His great power when He smote great kings and slew famous kings because His mercy to His people endures forever. It ought to be a subject of great joy to all righteous souls that the world is not left to itself, or to tyrants. The might is with the right, after all, for power belongs unto God. There is a Governor and Ruler who is Lord of all and all power is in His hands. Have you not often wished more power to the arm of the man who attacks insolence and cruelty? Be glad, then, that all power is in the hand of the Judge of all the earth, who must and will do right.

He will not leave bloodshed unavenged, nor suffer wanton cruelty and horrible brutality to go unpunished. And if the great ones of the earth pass by with indifference, or wink their eye at wicked policy, there is an eye that sees and a hand that will mete out stern and sure vengeance! In patience possess your souls, O you people of God, for, “God reigns over the heathen, He sits upon the Throne of His holiness.” The needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the oppressed forever trodden down, for verily the Lord reigns and His power shall defend the cause of right. It is another subject for which we have reason, also, to adore God, that His power is seen in *the ultimate judgement of the wicked*—a terrible subject upon which I will not enlarge—but one which should prostrate us in the dust before His awful majesty.

There are two flaming jewels of Jehovah’s crown which will be terribly seen in Hell—His wrath and His power. “What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?” Righteous indignation and Omnipotence will be glorified together in that last tremendous act of judgment in which He will separate the righteous from the wicked and apportion to the unbelievers their due. “Who knows the power of Your anger?” What must be the strength of an angry God! Who shall stand against Him when once He stirs up His indignation, when He shall break the nations with a rod of iron, and shiver them like potters’ vessels?

“Beware,” He said, “you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Who shall stand against this great and terrible

God in the day of His wrath? Who shall endure in that day when Mercy's day is over and Justice, alone, sits on her burning throne? Neither of these, however, is the subject of this morning, though we should not have completed the topic without alluding to them. The subject is the power displayed in connection with the mercy of God, for so Ethan begins this noble Covenant Psalm: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations."

Power in alliance with Grace is our one theme. First, we shall consider the mighty power of God in His Grace, as *revealed in our experience*. Secondly, Divine power, as *displayed in Christ Jesus*. And, thirdly, we shall endeavor to reflect upon the same power and consider how it should be *practically recognized*. We must be brief on each point, for our time is short.

I. First, the mighty arm of God displayed in the way of Grace, as MANIFESTED IN OUR EXPERIENCE. And, Beloved, remember the *Divine long-suffering*. What a mighty arm of Grace it must have been which held back the anger of God while we were in a state of rebellion and impenitence! For God to rule the angry sea seems nothing, to me, compared with the power which He exercises upon Himself when He endures the provocations of ungodly men, the hardness of their hearts, their rejection of Christ and, oftentimes, their blasphemous speeches and their unclean deeds. O Sinner, when you are sinning with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, is it not a wonder of wonders that God does not cut you down and end your insolence?

He said, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries." Is it not a marvel that He has not eased Himself of *you* and taken you away with a stroke? You know how it is with some men—a word and a blow—but it has not been so with God. There have been many words of love and many deeds of kindness. He has waited long and is waiting now, stretching out His hands all day to a disobedient and gainsaying people. What power is this which restrains its own power, the power of God over His own Omnipotence, so that He does not let His anger flame forth at once and devour the ungodly, nor suffer the sword of execution to smite down the rebel in the midst of his provocations? Glory be unto Your loving kindness and Your long-suffering, O God, for in them we see Your mighty self-restraining power!

But, next, we saw the power of God so as to recognize it when *the Lord subdued us* by His mighty Grace. What Omnipotence is displayed in the conquest of every rebellious sinner! By nature the sinner stands out very stoutly against God and will not obey His voice. Often he is bulwarked round with prejudices and you and I, who seek to convert him, are quite unable to reach him. Prejudice is an earthwork into which you may fire with the heaviest cannon, but without use, for the balls are buried in the earth and no result follows. When men will not see, no light can help them, for they willfully close their eyes. When they will not hear, the

charms of the Gospel are useless, for they have resolutely closed their ears.

It is a wonder of wonders, when, at last, God conquers prejudice and the man finds himself where he would have sworn he never would be—melted down and penitent at Jesus' feet! If a Prophet had told him it would ever be so, he would have said, "You are mad! This cannot be! I abhor the very name of it." You have a mighty arm, O God, when prejudiced Saul of Tarsus falls down at Your feet and rises to become your Apostle! Men are surrounded often with a granite wall of *obstinacy*—they will not yield to the power of Divine Love. Preach as you may, they are not to be moved, but remain like an impregnable fortress, frowning from its own inaccessible rock, defying all assaults.

You can find no way to get at them. You would be willing, almost, to die, if you could capture their hearts for Christ, but they are neither to be taken by threats nor by wooing. They are like leviathan whose scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. "Can you fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears?" They appear to have no joints to their harness through which the arrow of conviction may penetrate. But You have a mighty arm, O God, and Your enemies are made to feel Your arrows! Those who were exceedingly stout against You have, nevertheless, come crouching at Your feet and have become Your servants! Glory be to God, the northern iron and the steel become wax at His bidding!

We have seen some, also, who have been rooted in their *habits of sin*, altogether severed from their old sins. Wonder of wonders, the Ethiopian has changed his skin and the leopard has lost his spots, for he who was accustomed to do evil has learned to do well! Behold a miracle of mighty Grace! The sinner has grown old in sin—like an old oak he has become rooted to the earth by a thousand roots. To transplant him seemed impossible—it were far easier to cut him down. Yet the giant hand of Grace has taken hold of that ancient tree and shaken it to and fro by conviction of sin and, at last, it has, by conversion, been drawn from its place right up by the roots, so that the place which once knew it knew it no more! The rock and soil in which it had been imbedded for, perhaps, half a century, were made to give way before the upheaving, uprooting force and the man, divided from his former life, has been a proof of what the Lord can do!

The Lord knows how to cleave the mountain and divide the sea and, therefore, He can separate men from their darling lusts and teach them to cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes rather than perish in sin. Truly, Lord, You have a mighty arm! Satan teaches men to defend themselves against Grace by bulwarks of *pride*. They say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" They lift up their horn on high and speak with a stiff neck! They are self-righteous. They are sure that they have done no ill—the Gospel is powerless upon them because they are so lofty in their looks and insolent in their thoughts. But You have a mighty arm, O Lord!

You lay proud sinners very low. You make them hungry and thirsty and then they cry unto You in their trouble.

You have a mighty arm among the proud and You bring down their heart with labor! They fall down and there is none to help. "He has put down the mighty from their seats." Nebuchadnezzar, from saying, "Behold this great Babylon that I have built," learned to confess that those who walk in pride, the Lord is able to abase. Equally mighty is the Lord to overcome *despair*, for this is another one of the fortresses in which sinners entrench themselves against Divine Grace. "There is no hope," they say, "therefore we will give up ourselves to our iniquities." And it is almost idle to attempt to convert those who are willfully despairing. They resent the consolations of the Bible and reject the promises of God.

And yet the Lord can break the bars of iron and cut the gates of brass in pieces! He can bring up the captives from the dungeons of despair and set them on a rock! He can put a new song into their mouths and make them praise His name forevermore. From the iron cage, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, can set the captives free! All glory be unto His name! When God resolves to save the sinner, He will have His will without violating the will of man! In a sweet, soft, gentle manner, in which the power lies in the gentleness and the force lies in the tenderness, the Lord can conquer the most obstinate! He makes the lion to lie down with the lamb, so that a little child shall lead it. Thus the power of God is seen in the conquest of sinners.

That power is equally seen in *their transformation*, for is it not a marvel that God should be able to make old and corrupt rebels into new creatures in Christ Jesus? Every conversion is a display of Omnipotence. To create the world was but half a wonder compared with the creation of a right spirit, for there was nothing to hinder when God spoke and the world began. But when God speaks to ungodly men there is a resisting force which impedes the work and even defies the great Worker. There is a darkness and a death. There is a force of evil and an inability towards good which must be overcome, yet the Lord makes all things new, and causes the new creation to arise in the hearts of His people! Verily He has a mighty arm! Glory be to the Lord who only does great wonders with a high hand and an outstretched arm!

Conversion is also called a resurrection. It will be a great feat of power when dead carcasses shall live at the sound of the last trumpet, but it is an equal wonder when the dry bones of dead sinners come to life—when those who were scattered at the grave's mouth, the hopeless, graceless, Christless—are, nevertheless, made to live at the sound of God's Word by the power of His Spirit. Oh, you that have been new created and quickened into newness of life, adore His power today! Who but a God could have made you what you are? Consider what you were and reflect upon the glorious position to which the Lord has brought you by the blood of the Cross!

Think what rebels you were and how set on mischief your nature was—and now, subdued by Sovereign Grace, your spirit longs for His embrace—you follow after holiness and seek to have it perfected in the fear of God. What a revolution is this! What a turning of things upside down! To turn the wilderness into springs of water and the desert into a flowing stream is nothing compared with turning the dead, cold, dry heart of man into a mighty wellspring of love springing up unto eternal life! Glory be to Your power, oh You infinitely mighty Jehovah, You have a mighty arm!

That same power is seen, dear Friends, *in the various deliverances* which the Lord gives to His people at the outset, when their enemies come against them so fiercely. Behold, my Brothers and Sisters, how strong was the hand of God which delivered us from the bondage of our first doubts and fears when conscience accused and the Law condemned! When we thought ourselves only waiting for the death guarantee and the execution. Behold the Lord has routed our despair, He has set us free from fear and brought us into the liberty with which Christ makes men free! We were slaves to sin, too, and oh how sin marshaled all its armies against us at the first, hoping it might cut off our earliest hopes.

But mighty was that Christ of God who put all our sins to the rout and drowned them in the Red Sea of His blood! “There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” Then Satan came forth with the most horrible temptations and roared upon us like a lion, for he will not willingly lose his subjects. He sought to cast about us all his nets, that he might hold us captive and prevent our flying to the Divine refuge. But, behold, the prey has been taken from the mighty and the lawful captive has been delivered! And we are, this day, rescued from the power of sin and Satan. Even the Law, itself, has no power over us to condemn us, for Christ has satisfied it and we are free.

Mighty is Your arm, O God! Your own right hand and Your holy arm have gotten You the victory! And since then, Beloved, *in the continual upholding of the saints*, in their final perseverance which is guaranteed, how much of the power of God is seen! You have passed through many troubles, some of you, troubles most heavy and sore, but they have not prevailed against you nor overthrown you. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord deliverers him out of them all.” Fierce were the foes that gathered against us, many a time, and had not the Lord been on our side they had swallowed us up! But You, O Lord, have a mighty arm, and in Your name have we found a refuge.

They compassed us about like bees, yes, they compassed us about, but in the name of the Lord have we destroyed them. Out of what sins and temptations have we come forth victorious! With some of you, your path has been through the wilderness and through one continuous scene of warfare. Snares and traps have been thickly strewn all along your path—trials and discouragements have fallen like a storm of hail perpetually beating—and yet you are not overthrown! He keeps the feet of His saints.

The life of any Christian is a world of wonders, but in some Believers their experience consists of a series of great miracles. “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” How has our soul escaped as a bird from the fowler’s snare! The mighty adversaries have been overcome by Him who is mightier than all!

The Divine strength has been manifested in our weakness. My Brothers and Sisters, is it not a wonder that being such a poor worm as you are, yet you have never been crushed? Is it not a marvel that though your faith has been as a bruised reed it has not been broken—and though your piety has been like smoking flax it has never been quenched? Kept alive with death so near, preserved when enemies have been so fierce, will you not say, indeed, “You have a mighty arm, strong is Your right hand”? Brethren, the end comes, but it will all be right at last, for unless the Lord shall come, we have yet to meet *the last grim adversary*, but we are not afraid! Our Brethren who have gone before us have set us an example of how to die triumphantly!

How gloriously have they triumphed in their last hours! We have stood by their side, seen the brightness of their eyes when all around was death, and heard their exulting songs when all that looked upon them wept at the thought of their departure. Their cheek blanched? Far from it! They have been as jubilant in their dying hour as the warrior when he divides the spoil. As the bride rejoices on her wedding day, they have looked forward to the coming of their great Lord and to their being blessed forever in His embrace! We have been ready to cry out with them, “O death, where is your sting! O grave, where is your victory! “Truly, Lord, when Your poor, weak, suffering people die triumphantly, we see that You have a mighty arm!

When flesh and heart are failing, when friends cannot help, when every earthly comfort vanishes—for the heart to still rejoice and triumph—this is to see the arm of the Lord made bare and this causes us to bless and magnify His holy name! I would to God that I had more ability to set forth this majestic subject, but I have done my best. I ask your meditations in the quiet of this afternoon to assist me, that you may really adore and bless the power which is so conspicuous in every vessel of mercy, so revealed in yourself if you are, indeed, a child of God! O Holy Spirit, make known to us who believe, the exceeding greatness of Your mighty power!

II. Secondly, let us behold the mighty arm of God as specially DISPLAYED IN THE PERSON OF CHRST JESUS. And here will you kindly follow me in the Psalm, itself? There you will see that the power of God displayed in Jesus Christ, in *the choice* of Him and the exaltation of Him, to be a Prince and a Savior. See verse 19—“I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Christ is the Incarnation of the power of Divine Grace. In Him dwells the power of God to save the sons of men and yet in what weakness it dwelt! He was a man

despised and rejected, lowly and meek, poor and without worldly honor. His was the weakness of shame and suffering, poverty and dishonor.

But the power of God was upon Him and is upon Him now. It is a grand thing to know that God, by the weakness of man, taking it into connection with His own Nature, has routed sin, Satan, death and Hell! The battle in the wilderness was between Satan and a Man, tempted as we are, but oh, how gloriously that matchless Man overthrew the tempter and prevailed! The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was that of a Man—it was a Man, though God, who sweat great drops of blood and uttered strong cries and tears, and won the victory by which evil is dethroned—and He that met the powers of evil on the Cross and stood alone and trod the wine-press till there remained not an uncrushed cluster, was a Man. It is by His power, even the power of the Man of Nazareth, that all the powers of evil have been forever blasted and withered so that, though they rebel, it is but a struggling gasp for life.

As surely as God sits on His Throne, the foot of the Seed of the woman shall be upon the serpent's head, to crush it forever. Mighty as were the hosts of evil, God has exalted One chosen out of the people and laid help upon Him, that He may eternally vanquish all the hosts of darkness. Strong is Your right hand, O Savior, for by weakness and suffering and death You have overthrown all Your people's foes! His power was seen, next, in our *Lord's anointing*. "I have found David My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him." You know how in His preaching there went out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword with which He smote sin because the Spirit of God was upon Him. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit bore witness in the entire body of Christ, making all His servants speak with tongues of fire the Word of the Gospel.

The Spirit of God is still with Christ on earth in His Church, so that, feeble though the speech of His ministers may be, a secret power attends it, irresistibly subduing the forces of evil. Rejoice this day, Beloved, for the anointing still rests in the Church of God and the anointed Redeemer must be victorious in every place. Thanks be unto God which causes His Word to triumph in every place by the power of the eternal Spirit! We ought, therefore, to adore Jesus Christ as having the power of God, because the Holy Spirit is always with Him and with His Word and He is, therefore, mighty to save!

We must equally magnify the power of God because of *the continuance of the empire of Christ in the world*. As said the Psalmist—"with whom My hand shall be established, My arm, also, shall strengthen Him. The enemy shall not exact upon Him; nor the son of wickedness afflict Him and I will beat down His foes before His face and plague them that hate Him." These 1,800 years every effort has been put forth to root up the Church of Christ. The devil and all his servants on earth have conspired to overthrow the growing kingdom of our Lord—but they have never succeeded.

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, what the power of God must be which has kept the Church alive under fiery persecutions, rescued it from the fangs of the Inquisition, preserved it from the poison of heresy and the pestilence of infidelity! And, what is more amazing, enabled it to survive the horrible dragon of Popery which has altogether threatened to carry away the Church with the blasphemies which it pours out of its mouth! Yet the chosen seed live on and are multiplied in the land, even as it is promised in the 36th verse of the Psalm before us: "His seed shall endure forever, and His Throne as the sun before Me." The establishment and continuation of the Church is an extraordinary proof of Divine power!

So are all *the conquests* of Christ, some of which we have seen and more of which are to come. "I will beat down His foes before His face, and plague them that hate Him," is the Divine promise. "I will make Him My First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth. I will set His hand, also, in the sea and His right hand in the rivers." Glory be to God, Christ is still triumphant! Still in the preaching of His Truth He rides forth conquering and to conquer! The Gospel has not lost its old force, but whenever it is preached in faith it wins the day.

See what power it has in drawing together the multitudes and holding them in breathless attention. A man has nothing to do but to preach Christ simply, and with all his might, and the people will hear it! We need no endowment of the State! We seek no acts of Parliament to help us. Give us a clear stage and no favor! An open Bible and an earnest tongue—and the people shall yet be awakened and the multitude shall bow before the people's King. Jesus Christ is still the mightiest name which can be pronounced by mortal tongue! Its all-subduing power shall yet be felt in the remotest regions of the earth!

Beloved, I have not time to do more than say that the great power of God's Grace is embodied in Christ's *mighty intercession*. See verse 26—"He shall cry unto Me, You are My father, My God, and the rock of My salvation." This makes Him mighty to save—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." I should like to have an hour to expound upon the gracious power of God as seen in the intercession of Christ! Omnipotence dwells in every plea that falls from those dear lips, as the eternal Son pleads His own merits with the everlasting Father!

Beloved, the power of Christ is well-known to many of you. Did it not call you from the dead? Has not it kept you from going down into the Pit? Is there not such power in His name that it makes your heart to leap? If we speak of anything else, you listen to it and glide into sleep. But if you hear about *Him*, does it not stir the very deeps of your soul? Have you not often, when you felt faint and weary, sprung to your feet with exultation at the very thought of *Him*? Has not His Presence made your sick bed soft and, what you thought your dying couch to be, a throne whereon you sat and reigned as in the heavenly places?—

**“Jesus, the very thought of You
With transport fills my breast.”**

You know it is so! The power of Jesus’ name, who can measure it?

And what will be your sense of His power when you reach another world—when He shall have brought you into His rest, even you who were so unworthy? When He shall reveal in you all the majesty of His goodness? When Heaven shall be yours and all its boundless plains and golden streets—and when, looking around, you shall find all your Christian Brethren there, without exception, as many as loved the Lord below, all safely gathered into the fold at last? What a shout shall sound throughout Heaven when the armies of the living God shall assemble and find not a soldier missing! They shall read the muster-roll and Little Faith shall be found there, and Ready-to-Halt shall be there without his crutches, and Miss Much-Afraid shall be there, and Mistress Despondency shall be there—each able to answer to his or her own name and say, “Here I am.”

Satan has not devoured a single lamb of all the flock, nor slain a single man of all the host! All along the line Jesus has been victorious! When you shall see the whole host assembled and remember the struggles through which each one of them came, the tribulation through which they waded to their crowns, you will exclaim with rapture, “You have a mighty arm, strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand!” All glory be to Jehovah Jesus, our almighty Savior!

III. Now this brings me to my conclusion and here we have to answer the question—HOW IS THIS POWER TO BE PRACTICALLY RECOGNIZED? If you will practically carry out what I say, a few words will suffice. First, if the power of God is so great, *yield to it*. Man, do you hope to resist *God*? Have you an arm like God’s and can you thunder with a voice like His? Throw down those weapons and cease to wage a hopeless war! Capitulate at once, surrender at discretion. Oh, if there is a man here who is the enemy of God, I beseech him to count the cost before he continues the war, and see whether he is able to brave it out with God! Shall wax fight with fire, or twigs contend with the flame? He would go through a host of such as you are, O man, as fire burns up the stubble, and before you have time to think of it, you shall be utterly destroyed!

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.” The next practical use is this—is God so strong? *Then trust Him to save you*. Never say that He cannot snatch you from perdition! Never doubt His power to save, even in extremity. I have shown you that He has treasured up His gracious power in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ, therefore look unto Jesus Christ and be saved! All power lies with Him. He can forgive all sin and He can also subdue all iniquity, change the most depraved heart and implant every Grace in the soul. “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

Next, if He is so strong, then *trust Him in everything*. Oh, you that are His people, never dare to distrust Him! Is His arm shortened? Cannot the Lord deliver you? Bring your burdens, your troubles, your needs, your griefs! Pour them out like water before Him. Let them flow forth at the foot of the Almighty and they shall pass away and you shall sing, “The Lord is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.” Is God so strong, then *shake off all fear of man*. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die? Man is but *grass*, withered in an hour—why should you tremble at *his* frown? He is crushed before the moth—why, then, fear *him*? Let not the faces of proud men confuse you. Trust in God and fear not, for the mighty God of Jacob is with us and greater is He that is for us than all they that can be against us.

And now as to *your service*, to which you are called by the Lord. If He is so strong, do not think of your own weakness any longer, except as being a platform for His strength! Have you only one talent? God’s Holy Spirit is not limited in power. He can make your one talent as fruitful as another man’s ten! Are you weak as water? Then rejoice this day and glory in infirmity, because the power of God shall rest upon you. Think not of what *you* can do—that is a very small affair—but consider what *He* can do *by* you! He can strengthen the feeble against the strong! Behold, this day, He said unto you, “Behold I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them.”

Last of all, with regard to all *the future* which lies before you—is God so strong? Then commit it to His hands. You have a great trouble to face tomorrow—you are expecting a greater trouble, still, at the end of the week. Now, be not afraid, for the Lord lives to deliver you. What? Do you fear? Has your Counselor perished? Has your Helper failed you? How can you sink in the deep waters when underneath you are the everlasting arms? The mighty God is your refuge, how can you be in danger? Why do you look into the future at all? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. God is the God of tomorrow as well as the God of today!

Cease from your troubling, for it weakens you and cannot help you! It dishonors your God, your Savior—and thus it is evil! In patience and quietness wait for the fulfillment of His promise. Rest in Him and be at peace. Stand still and see the salvation of God! O Lord, glorify Yourself this morning in both saint and sinner, by manifesting the greatness of Your power, for You have a mighty arm. Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 89.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—205, 89 (PART II), 679, 680.**

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THE MIGHTY ARM

NO. 674

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand,
and high is Your right hand.”
Psalm 89:13.*

WE are, during the coming week humbly but earnestly to beseech of God for days of refreshing and seasons of revival. It is well for us at the outset distinctly to remind ourselves of the source from where all the strength must come. No genuine revival can ever arise from the flesh. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Human excitement at the utmost, and carnal zeal at its extremity, can do nothing towards the real conversion of souls. Here we are taught the lesson, “not by might nor by power.”

Disappointments ought to have taught the Church of God this lesson long ago. The many revivals which she has had which have proved to be spurious—the puffing up of excitement and not the building up of Divine Grace—all these should have driven her out of the last relic of her self-confidence and have made her feel that it is not of herself to do anything in the Lord’s cause without His help. “Our help comes from the Lord that made Heaven and earth.” It is well to be constantly convinced of this. We must have God’s arm laid to the work or else nothing will be accomplished which will stand the solemn tests of the last great day.

Wood, hay, and stubble we may build alone, but gold, silver and precious stones are from the King’s treasury. “Without Me you can do nothing,” was the Savior’s word to His chosen Apostles! How much more applicable must it be to us who are “less than the least of all saints”! In vain your holy assemblies! In vain your earnest desires! In vain your passionate addresses! In vain your efforts of a thousand shapes! Unless God Himself shall step forth from the hiding place of His power and set Himself, a second time, to His own glorious work, no good can come of all your toils—

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

Having reminded ourselves, dear Friends, that our great strength lies in the God of Jacob, it is very comforting to notice how great this strength is. There is but one arm for us to rest upon, but blessed is the assurance—“You have a mighty arm.” Oh, if that God upon whom we have entirely to depend were stunted in might and had a limit put to His strength, we might despair! If the answer to the question, “Is the Lord’s arm waxed short?” were the doleful reply, “Yes, He is no longer mighty to save,” then we might give up the work! But stupendous strength is with the Most High! The treasury from which we draw is inexhaustible! We may come to

God with the cheering confidence that we cannot possibly ask what it is not in His power to perform!

We have the mighty God of Jacob to be our arm every morning and our salvation every night. I desire to speak of our God as the Almighty Lord so that you and I may be strengthened in the work in which we are engaged for His name's sake. In speaking upon the Divine power I shall have a few words, this morning, upon the power itself. Then a few words upon its manifestations. And then I will close up with the lessons to be derived from the power and its developments.

I. First, then, some few words about the POWER OF GOD itself, having as my drift the stirring up of Believers' minds to ask and to expect a great display of it. In the first place, God's power is like Himself—self-existent and self-sustained. Power in the creature is like water in the cistern. Power in the Creator is like water in the fountain. The creature is the moon which shines with *reflected* light—the Creator is the Sun whose light is not derived, springing from within Himself.

Naturally and spiritually this statement holds good. All the power that you and I have to serve God with must first come from Him! But He derives no power whatever from us. All our fresh springs are in God, but the rivers of our grace do not minister to His fullness. "My goodness extends not to you." The mightiest of men add not so much as a shadow of increased power to the Omnipotent One. His scepter is established by its own Omnipotence. He sits on no buttressed throne, and leans on no assisting arm. His courts are not maintained by His courtiers, nor do they borrow their splendor of power from His creatures.

He is Himself the great central Source and Originator of all power. We must come, then, to His footstool, feeling that all must come from Him. We must bring nothing but our weakness, nothing but our sense of need, and come to Him crying, "O God, You are in Yourself all-sufficient. You do not need us, nor can we contribute anything to You. Now let Your ability flow into us and gird each of us poor weaklings with Your might!"

In the next place, God's power is comprehensive, including within itself all the power which resides in all the creatures in the universe. "God has spoken once. Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." When the wheels of a machine revolve there is power in every cog. But all that power originally was in the engine which sets the whole in action, and in a certain sense is still there. In a far higher sense all power dwells in the Lord, "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

Whatever power there may be in the mightiest of God's creatures is still inherent in God Himself. So, my Brethren, if the Lord shall be pleased to teach some of you how to pray and others how to exhort. If He should gird you with might and send you into the midst of this Church to work spiritual miracles for Him, the power will still be His—to be in an instant withdrawn if it so pleases Him—and especially withdrawn if you begin to sacrifice unto your own self and say, "My own arm has gotten me this victory."

All power dwells perpetually and necessarily in the Lord Jehovah. The might which resides in any spiritual agency at this present moment, whether it is in the Book of God or in the ministry of truth, or in prayer,

and think that we can do nothing—remember His strength and remember that He can do everything! If you have any kinsfolk for whom you have prayed and no answer has come, and your own exertions have been mocked at and despised, come again to the Mighty God of Jacob, for He will do His good pleasure, and in answer to your prayers He will send forth the blessing! His power is irresistible! Lay hold upon it and prevail.

Nor will it be ill for me to remind you that this power is entirely independent. I mean that it needs nothing extraneous or beyond itself to enable it to work. This power is independent of *place*. Do you think there was any sanctity in the upper room at Jerusalem? Behold this room is quite as sacred as that filled by the Spirit in years gone by. Dream not that the city of Jerusalem of old, in the days of the Savior, was a more proper theater for Divine working than this is. He can make London rejoice even as He did Jerusalem of old! Equally is the Divine power independent of time. Do not dream that the ages have changed so that in this day God cannot do His mighty works!

Beloved, if you can conceive of an age that is worse than another, so much the more is it a fit platform for the heavenly energy. The more difficulty—the more room for Omnipotence to show itself! There is elbow room for the great God when there is some great thing in the way and some great difficulty that He may overturn. When there is a mountain to be cast into the valley, then there is almighty work to be done! And our covenant God only needs to see work to do for His praying people and He will shortly do it. God is not dependent upon *instruments* any more than upon times and places. He who blessed the world by Paul and Peter can do His good pleasure by His servants now.

The Christ of the fishermen is our Christ, too! Talk not of Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli as though they were specially powerful in themselves and therefore accomplished so marvelous a work! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there are humble men and women among us whom God may just as well bless as those three mighties if it so pleases Him! Dream not that there was something about the Wesleys and Whitfield which made them the only instruments for evangelizing this nation! O God Almighty, You can bless even us!

And among the thousands of ministers who up to now may have plowed as upon a rock and labored in vain, there is no one whom God may not take and make him as a two-edged sword in His hand to smite through the hearts of His foes! Beloved, I have sometimes prayed, and do often pray that out of that little band of men whom we have in our own College—some ninety or so—He would find for Himself His arrows and fit them to the bow and shoot them to the utmost ends of the earth! And why not? Unbelief has many mournful reasons, but faith sees none!

In our classes there are women, there are men, there are children, upon whom the Lord may pour forth His Spirit so that once again our sons and our daughters shall prophesy, and our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams! We have but to wait upon the Most High and He will honor us with success—He can work in any place,

in any time, among any people, and by any instruments. Let us come with confidence to His feet and expect to see Him lay bare His mighty arms.

This power, I must not forget to say, as a gathering up of the whole, is infinite. Power in the creature must have a limit for the creature itself is finite. But power in the Creator has neither measure nor bound. I am sure, Beloved, we treat our God often as though He were like ourselves. We sit down after some defeat or disappointment, and we say we will never try again—we suppose the work allotted to us to be impossible. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Why limit the Holy One of Israel? God is not man that He should fail, nor the son of man that He should suffer defeat. Behold He touches the hills and they tremble! He touches the mountains and they smoke.

When He goes forth before His people He makes the mountains to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What, then, can block up His path? You divided of old the Red Sea, O God, and You did break the dragon's head in the midst of the many waters—and You can still do according to Your will—let any hinder who may. Oh, Beloved, if I may but be privileged to lift up your hearts and mine to something like a due comprehension of the infinite power of God, we shall then have come to the threshold of a great blessing! If you believe in the *littleness* of God you will ask but little and you will have but little! But enlarge your desires! Let your souls be stretched till they become wide as seven heavens and even then you shall not hold the whole of the great God! But you *shall* be fitted to receive more largely out of His fullness.

Ask of Him that He would give the heathen unto Christ for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession—that the scepter of Jehovah shall go forth—and the monarchy of Christ shall be extended from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. It were not right, perhaps, to leave this point without observing concerning this Divine power that it is all our own, for we are told that this God is our God forever and ever. “The Lord is my portion, said my soul, therefore will I hope in Him.”

Christian, the potency which dwells in Jehovah belongs to you! It is yours to rest upon in holy trust and yours to stir up in earnest pleading. That little sinew moves the great arm—I mean the sinew of the Believer's prayer. If you can pray, God will work. “To him that believe all things are possible.” It is not, “Can You work, O God?” But it is, “Can you believe, O Christian?” You have a mighty arm, O God, but that arm is Your people's arm, for it is written, “He is their arm every morning, and their salvation every night.” Come, then, with confidence, you who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, for this God is our God forever and ever, and He will help us. Yes, He will help us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him!

II. Having given utterance to these few words upon his power in itself, I shall direct your attention to THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS POWER which are very varied in character and altogether innumerable in multitude. Following the leading of the Psalm rather than the natural order of things, I will remind you of God's tremendous power in destruction. You

have this in the Psalm. "You have broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain. You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong hand."

Look back with solemn awe upon the works of God in the overthrow of sin. See the whole earth deluged with destructive floods. "You have a mighty arm, O God." You have unloosed the gates that shut in the sea. Greater than Samson You have borne away both posts and bar and all and set free the hosts of waters that they might overthrow Your foes. Up from their cavernous prison house the furious waters leap to desolate the sin-polluted world. Noah might have sung as he floated on that shoreless sea, "You have a mighty arm."

Cast your eyes yonder to the East, to the well-watered plain of Sodom, and mark how God's anger smokes. He comes down to see if it is altogether according to the cry thereof, and when Justice has proved her point, then Judgment follows with swift feet. He rains Hell's torments out of Heaven upon sinners—fiery hail and brimstone cover the cities of the plain—and the smoke goes up to Heaven. "You have a mighty arm."

Let your eyes glance along the banks of the Nile where haughty Pharaoh vaunts himself against the Most High. Remember how He smote the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength! Let the terrible overthrow of the Red Sea never be forgotten. See how He scattered Amalek as chaff before the wind. Mark how He drove out the Hivites and the Jebusites and gave their necks to the feet of His children who were His avengers. Talk to one another and tell how He smote Philistia, how He made the sons of David cast forth their shoes upon Edom and gave Moab to be the wash pot of their feet.

Let the name of Sennacherib come up before you and think how the Lord thrust a bit into his mouth and a hook into his jaws and made him go back the way by which he came. Remember Babylon and the heaps thereof! Nineveh, and the owls and the dragons that haunt her ruined walls. Remember the proud cities of Greece, cast down and destroyed because they worshipped idols! And Rome, herself, only living like a widow in her weeds, weeping because God has bereaved her of her glory. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariots in the fire." Who is a God in might to be compared unto Him?

As we survey the works of His power in destruction, let the subject make us grateful. What a marvel that He has not struck us! My Soul, remember when you did defy Him? When you did scorn His Grace, break His Sabbaths and blaspheme His name? Yet He who breaks the ships of Tarshish by His strong east wind has not shipwrecked you, but on the sea of life you sail securely still. O Sinner! Remember that this long-suffering will not last forever! Beware, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you! He is strong to destroy and condemned souls feel that He is so.

If I could catch the distant sounds that rise from Hell, I think they might be rendered into this one line—"You have a mighty arm!" Oh, how He destroys! Imagination fails to picture the terror of His blows. The day of mercy is over with the condemned and they writhe in extreme agonies!

While with almighty hands, armed with an iron rod, He smites, and smites, and smites again. “You have a mighty arm.” Oh, bow before Him, you who have not loved Him! Tremble at Him! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

You cannot face it out with Him—neither can you escape Him. You cannot set yourselves in battle array against the Almighty. Let the thorns set themselves in battle against the fire, but do not attempt to stand against Him—

**“O sinners, seek His face
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the scepter of His Grace,
And find salvation there.”**

Looking at this part of the subject, here is a very strong argument for the people of God to stir them up to pray. The fearful nature of the sinner’s doom should arouse us to vehement and abiding earnestness. Must we not plead with God when we think of our fellow creatures who are liable to prove the terror of the Almighty’s arm?

Will you not cry, you that have hearts not altogether turned to stone? Will you not plead with all your hearts, you who have any loving tenderness and generous pity within you? Will you not cry aloud and spare not, that He would be pleased to give men right reason to see their danger and turn them to Himself, that they may be washed in the Savior’s blood and escape the terrible wrath due their iniquities?

Turning from the subject, the Psalm reminds us of the manifestation of God’s power in creation. “The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them.” Now, Beloved, it is well to remember the mighty power of God in creation. Man wants something to work upon—give him material and with cunning instruments he straight-way makes for himself a vessel. But God began with *nothing*, and by His word alone out of nothing made all things. He used no instrument except His own word. “He spoke, and it was done as He commanded, and it stood fast.”

Darkness and chaos lay in the way before Him, but these soon gave place to the excellence of His might when He said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them.” He garnished the heavens with the crooked serpent and the bear, and led forth Arcturus with his sons. How rapid was that work, and yet how perfect—how gloriously complete! Well might “the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy”!

Now, Christian, I want you to draw living water out of this well. The God, who in the old creation did all this—can He not work today? What if in the human heart there is nothing to help Him? He made the *world* out of nothing—can He not make new creatures without the aid of human will? Even out of these stones, can He not raise up children unto Abraham? His word fashioned the creation of old, and His word can still work marvels. Spoken by whomever He pleases to send, His word shall be as potent now as in primeval days. There may be darkness and confusion in

the sinner's soul—a word shall remove all—and swift and quick, requiring not even six days!

God can make new creatures in this House of Prayer and throughout this city! The Lord has but to will it with His Omnipotent will, and the sinner becomes a saint and the most rebellious cast down their weapons. Oh let creation encourage you to expect a *new* creation! The old creation had no blood upon it to plead with God to work, but we have the blood of Jesus to be our plea when we come before Him with regard to the new creation. We may cry, “O God, since You have given Your dear Son to lay the foundations of this new earth and these new heavens, wherein righteousness does dwell, come and build up Your Church, and complete the last and noblest work of Your hands.”

Again, God's power is manifest, dear Friends, to our joy in works of sustentation as well as of creation. The next stanza of the Psalm seems to hint at that: “Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.” That is to say, when the showers come dropping upon Tabor and Hermon, they send forth the perfume of their flowers and produce the abundance for the flocks. Now, Beloved, God's power has been seen, I am sure, not only in holding up the world, but in preserving His Church in the world all these years.

He would be thought to be a mighty man who held up the monument of London on the palm of his hand. But You bear up, O God, the pillars of the heavens! And he who should take up St. Paul's and turn it uppermost as though it were but a cup in his hand would be exceeding mighty. But You take up the isles as a very little thing! What must be the power of God in sustaining and supporting all worlds? But as I have said, the spiritual power which preserves the spark of the Truth of God in the midst of a sea of error is equally great! To keep His sheep alive in the midst of wolves is equally marvelous!

The mighty arm of God has been conspicuous in supporting His Church in years gone by. How the Lord has been in that gallant vessel! Never a boat more tempest-tossed than she! No voyage more dangerous than hers! She has tracked a narrow channel between threatening rocks and hidden quicksand. As for her crew, they have been a feeble folk, little able to cope with boisterous elements and furious tempests. Often the good vessel of the Church has mounted up to Heaven upon the crown of an outrageous billow, and then has gone down again into the depths of a yawning sea while her sailors have reeled like drunken men, staggering to and fro, being at their wits' end! But they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He who was strong to stir up the deep from its very bottom and make it boil like a pot has been equally strong to speak the word and still the raving of its waves.

Let us be, then, of good comfort. Why should not God bless and succor His well-beloved Church now? Why should He not make her in these peaceful days to be a Palace Beautiful for Himself to dwell in? For the fair edification of His Church new converts are needed. There can be no building up of her walls except by the quarrying of fresh stones. O God, we have confidence in You that You will help us! Strong is Your hand. You

have a mighty arm! Oh come, for the sustaining and increase of Your Church, even in this, our day!

But, Beloved, the most striking manifestation of Divine power is found in the fourth form of it, namely, in works of redemption. Typical of these was the great redeeming work at the Red Sea, and hence the song of Moses is joined with the song of the Lamb. It was by Moses' rod that God brought forth the hosts of His beloved, and in mightier fashion and to a nobler tune shall the elect sing when they have been redeemed from all their enemies. Think, dear Friends, of the mighty arm of God in working out the means of our salvation. That was no light labor which Jesus undertook. Hercules cleaned the Augean stable, said the fable, but what an Augean stable is this world!

Yet Christ will purge it. He is purging it! He did purge it by His death! This Aceldama shall yet become an Elysium. The field of blood shall be transformed into a garden of delights. Christ came to bear a load upon His shoulders compared with which the burden of Atlas is as nothing! Atlas, according to the heathen mythology, bore the world between his shoulders—but Jesus bears the world's *sin*, and that is more! Can you see Him there in the garden? Great drops of sweat prove what a tremendous toil He has undertaken!

Do you see Him on the Cross? Not a bone is broken, but every bone is dislocated to prove how great the labor. But how greater still the strength which achieved the whole! O Lord Jesus! When we see that You have burst the gates of death, that You have trod on the neck of sin, that You have broken the head of Satan, that You have led captivity captive and opened the gates of Heaven to all Your people, we may, indeed, sing—

“You have a mighty arm.”

Just now we have most to do with the *application* of this redemption by the Spirit of God, for it concerns that for which we pray. We have no reason to ask our Lord Jesus to finish the work of redemption, for He *has* completed it—on the Cross He said, “It is finished.”

III. It is the application of it which concerns our souls. And, Beloved in the faith, it is a great joy to us to know that in bringing souls to Christ by the Holy Spirit, the Omnipotence of God is very graciously displayed. Let us just a minute or two think of some sure tokens of this, and this shall furnish us with the third point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THE WHOLE.

There have been vouchsafed in the past very wonderful manifestations of Divine favor. Churches have grown very lukewarm, ministers very dull, doctrines have become unsound, the hearts of God's people have failed, the faithful have almost died out—but all of a sudden God has raised up some one man, perhaps some half dozen—and the face of the Church was changed from languor to energy! These men did but strike the spark and the flame flew over all lands.

The Reformation was a marvelous type of genuine revivals—God-given revivals—which have been frequent in all times. In England we have had them. In America they have been abundant. Ireland has not been without them. In the darkest day, when everyone said the cause of religion was

growing hopeless, then the great Lover of the Church has appeared. Have you never read the story of Livingstone preaching in a heavy shower of rain, outside the village of Shotts, to the multitude of people standing there who would not stir from the hearing of the Word?

Or have you not heard the story of Whitfield's mighty preaching, when the people moved to and fro, as the corn is moved by the summer wind, and at last fell down beneath the Word as the sheaves fall before the reaper's scythe? Why may we not see all this again? Why not? And why not greater things than these? What hinders but our unbelief? O God, You have a mighty arm! Tens of thousands beneath one ministry have been made to feel the power of the Cross, and why not again? Let us proclaim a crusade! Let us gather together in prayer and besiege the Throne, and we shall see again a revival that shall make the age glad!

God has proven the power of His arm in the persons whom He has saved. Saul of Tarsus seemed to be a very hard case, but the light from Heaven, and the Voice which gently upbraided, had power over Saul and he became one of the ablest of God's servants. There is no heart so hard but what God's hammer can dash it in pieces. Let us never despair while we can say of our God, "You have a mighty arm." Beloved, if there should happen to come within these walls at any time, some of the worst of men, we must not think that God will not bless them. Oh no! "You have a mighty arm."

Lord, here is a great and hard rock! Now wield Your great hammer and the sparks shall fly, and the flint stone shall be broken into pieces! Quarry Your own stones, O God, and make them fit for Your temple, for, "You have a mighty arm." This is seen, sometimes, in the number converted. Three thousand in one day under Peter's sermon! Why not three thousand again? Why not *thirty* thousand? Why not *three hundred* thousand in a day? There is nothing too great for us to ask for, or for God to grant!

He could, if He willed, turn the hearts of men as He turns the rivers by His foot. His might has been manifested in the instruments which the Lord has employed. He has taken the base things and the despised to make them the medium of His power! And *then* we have said, "You have a mighty arm" to do such wonders by such puny things. Now, Beloved, when I recollect the past in these various tokens of Divine strength, I wish I had time to encourage your hearts to expect great things of God. We are certainly not straitened in Him. You will be straitened in your own heart, if you are straitened at all. And I do pray my mighty Master that He may not suffer this to be, but give us large *expectations* that we may have large *realizations*!

There is a friend here who says, "I have been praying very long to this mighty God for the conversion of one who lies very near my heart, but I cannot get an answer." No, Beloved, it may be that God has not yet put forth His power—it is certain He has not—or your friend would be healed. There may have been a reason why the Lord would not work, namely, because you were not prepared for so great a blessing. Perhaps, had He honored you to be the means of your friend's conversion, you would have

grown proud. If you now feel your own utter powerlessness, now will be the time for God to work!

The reason of delay may now have gone. Certainly the fact that God has not answered you is no reason why He should not ultimately give you your desire. If He has delayed a little time, remember He is never too late and certainly never forgets in the end. He may delay, but He cannot deny. Has your friend become worse and worse? Well, then, rampant sin often stirs up God. It is time for You to work, Lord, for they make void Your Law! I look upon the present age with very great comfort. Beloved, there never was a time in which Popery was so—I was about to say omnipresent everywhere. It is working everywhere—openly and by stealth.

The Church of England has become thoroughly putrid with Puseyism. Infidelity has grown very bold. Let all these powers of evil be developed and work their will, for good will come out of it in the end! All these provocations will arouse our God. I thought within myself, when turning over these matters and seeing the signs of a breaking out of the old moderation in Scotland, “Ah, Lord! You have not answered Your friends. Perhaps You will hear Your foes. And if Your children’s prayers have not provoked You to bestir Yourself, perhaps the hard words of Your enemies will do it.”

It is a good thing for Zion when her enemies begin to curse and to lift up themselves against God, for then He will take up His own quarrel. Let them throw down the gauntlet and God will take it up! And we know when He does come forth from His resting place, the victory is sure! It is for us, however, to cry unto Him and spare not till He proves His cause to be His own by the potency which He puts into it. Let us, then, discard our dependencies and be of good courage, for strong is His hand and high is His right hand—

***“Lord, when iniquities abound,
And blasphemies grow bold,
When faith is hardly to be found,
And love is waxing cold,
Is not Your chariot hastening on?
Have You not given this sign?
May we not trust and live upon
A promise so Divine?”***

Beloved, I am encouraged to expect the visitation of Divine Grace among us for these reasons: It must be for God’s glory to save souls—there cannot be two opinions about it. Will He not therefore do it? Secondly, It must be due to Christ that souls should be saved. He cannot have seen the whole of the travail of His soul yet! I am sure He is not satisfied yet—He is yet to have many more! And shall He not have His seed and see His children? We can plead the blood and that is a prevalent argument with the Most High. I look upon our prayers as tokens for good. Some of us can say we came up here with prayer and our souls have been exercised during the week with groans and longings towards the mighty God of Jacob—that He would bless this congregation—and bless the world. This, too, is a token for good.

Our past history comforts me in cheering hope. “The Lord has been mindful of us. He will bless us.” Who would have thought that the Lord

would bless us as He has done? It is now twelve years and more since I first came up to this great city, a stripling. With what trembling did I come! You were but very few and feeble, but still there was the true life lingering among you and soon the blessing came! You remember our sore trials and troubles, when we went through fire and through water, and men did ride over our heads. But our God has brought us out into a wealthy place. This very house is, itself, a monument of what God can do!

Poor and feeble folk were we, and yet this house was built to His praise! And He has filled it and kept it full! Where else has He been pleased to gather the multitudes year after year, with never-failing, never-flagging interest and earnestness? Where else has He been pleased to add to the Church by hundreds in the year, till the only difficulty is the time to see the inquirers and to hear their confession of faith? In what other Church have there been four hundred and fifty souls added to the fellowship in one year? Where else has the baptismal pool been stirred with such a multitude of souls immersed into a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We say this not—we trust we do not—with so much as a single grain of sacrificing unto *self*, for what were we and what were our father's house that He should have brought us up to now? But we beg you to regard the past as a type of the future! Oh, start not back, you men of prayer! Fail not now since God is still your arm! You carry bows, turn not back in the day of battle! You have the trophies of past victories before your eyes! Now for a mighty attack upon the Mercy Seat that you may win power to overcome the gates of Hell!

Let us be vehement—violent I was about to say—for, “the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” Let us cannonade the gate of Heaven! Let us rise up, each man and each woman, every soul that has power, and let us cry unto the mighty God that He would be pleased to give us such a blessing that we shall not have room enough to receive it! It *must* come, only be ready for it! It *will* come—it comes even now! Thank God! Take courage! Be on your watchtower! And may the Lord bless us for His name's sake. Amen.

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THE GLORY OF OUR STRENGTH

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“For You are the glory of their strength.”
Psalm 89:17.

THE Psalmist Ethan is here speaking of the Covenant people—the people of God, the people who know the joyful sound of the Covenant of Grace and who, therefore, walk in the Light of God’s Countenance. It is said of these persons that God is the glory of their strength. All strength of every sort comes from God. Since He is the Author of all being, it is He who gives strength to every form of existence. Read the remarkable chapters which close the Book of Job and see how God there claims to have given strength to the eagle in her lofty flight and to the horse when he paws in the valley—and leviathan and behemoth, those mighty creatures of the sea and the land! God claims to have given all the strength that there is in any of these members of the inferior creation and we are certain that He also lays an equally just claim to all the strength that there is in man. The power of the arms, the swiftness of the feet, the keenness of intellect—all these come from the Most High who has worked such wonders in the formation of the human frame! Whatever of vigor and capacity there may be in it, all must be traced to the almighty hand of God! Even the glory of man’s physical strength, whether he knows it or not, belongs to God. He makes the young man vigorous and the full-grown man mature in strength, so He ought to have the service of the strength which He has, Himself, created!

Equally is this true of all mental power. The craftsmen learn their art from God. Bezaleel and Aholiab were instructed of the Most High, “to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,” as truly as Moses was taught of God in the writing of the Law. The poet receives his power for grand conceptions from God, who is beyond all human conception! And he who is most learned in any particular science—the great discoverer, the man who measures the stars or maps the seas—receives all his mental strength from the Most High! It would be well if this were always remembered, for it often happens that men who are great in wisdom ascribe their greatness to themselves and then prostitute their native talents and their acquired knowledge to their own ambitious ends, or to some mean and groveling purpose. Oh, that all men would lay out their talents for God, for He is the great Householder who has given to one of His servants one talent, to another two and to another five talents—and who

will, at His coming—require from them an account of what they have done with them! Oh, that all who are mentally strong would ascribe the glory of their strength to God!

But there is a higher and nobler form of strength than either the physical or the mental. We rise into another realm when we come to speak of *spiritual* things. There are some men whom God has raised up from spiritual death. When they “were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and so He saved them from their death in sin and they have been made spiritually strong by God through the effectual working of His Son. By Divine Grace they are the sons of the Almighty God and they have become mighty through Him, so the glory of their strength is all to be ascribed to God. The Psalmist’s declaration, “You are the glory of their strength,” is true in reference to the whole of the spiritual seed—the Covenant people who are made strong in spiritual things by the Grace of God.

I. Now, in trying to lead your thoughts into the meaning of this text, I want you first of all, by way of contrast, to spend a few minutes in considering the opposite of our text. God is *the glory of our strength*, but what I want you now to think of is THE SHAME OF OUR WEAKNESS.

This is a very humiliating subject, but it is one that should never be far from our thoughts, for we shall never realize to the fullest, the glory of the strength which comes from God until we are deeply conscious of the shame of the weakness which is in our nature as the result of the Fall and of our own sin. What poor weak creatures we are! It is no shame to us that we have not the strength of the elephant or the lion. It is no shame to us that we have not the wings of eagles or of angels. It is no shame to us that we are often the sport of the elements, so that we shiver in the cold or are blistered in the sun. It is no shame to us that when the storm sweeps over the sea, it drives our navies before it like so many cockle-shells. It is no shame to us that there are many things in this world which are far more powerful than such a puny creature as man is! Such weakness as that which God intended us to have is no cause for shame—no, we turn to God in the full consciousness of it and remind Him that we are but animated dust and that He made us weak as we are—and intended us to be weak as we are! That is not where the shame lies. The shame lies in the moral weakness which is natural to us in our fallen state!

I mean that, left to ourselves, *we are weak enough to allow our baser spirits to be our masters* and our meanest capacities to have the sway over our entire nature. God has put the earth under our feet, but we often put ourselves under the earth by permitting that which is earthy to dominate us. We have a nature that, in its origin, was akin to the Divine, yet how often we allow the passions of our fallen nature to control our whole being! We let that part of our nature which is worst be supreme over that which is best, yet it should never be so. Look at the weakness of the strongest man ever born of a woman! See him lying helpless at Delilah’s feet and there committing suicide for I can call it by no other

name—by revealing the secret of his strength and so delivering himself into the hands of the Philistines! Look at the weakness of the wisest man who ever lived and see how Solomon's heart was turned aside from God! Look at the weakness of one of the best of men who ever lived, the man who was as great as a saint as he was as a poet—David, the sweet singer of Israel—who was weak as water when left to himself! I need not mention other cases. God grant that we may not, ourselves, become instances of such weakness! But we have been, I do not doubt, in some way or other, foolish enough to let our baser passions consent to sin while our nobler spiritual nature has hated the evil thing and fought against it.

Our weakness may also be seen in another way—*we are very apt to be carried away by circumstances*. We think we are standing very firmly, but a very slight change in our position or condition will affect us very seriously. It is really extraordinary how easily a holy man, who has been truly communing with God, will be put out of temper by a circumstance so infinitesimal in importance that he would be ashamed to have it known that he had been influenced by it! I think some of you must have known what it has been to have close fellowship with God and yet, afterwards, the merest trifle in the household has sufficed to rob you of all the good you had gained. Possibly if God should give you, at this service, a very special manifestation of His Presence and you were to meet with a great trial at home, you would be enabled to bear it with equanimity. Yet some little insignificant thing—I shall not conjecture what may cause you to lose your temper or put you off your guard in some other respect, or cause you to become concerned about other things than the highest and best things and effectually bring you down from your privileged position as follower of the Lord Jesus Christ to the common level—I was about to say of an ordinary worldling! Oh, how weak we are! How weak we are in such a case as that!

It is also amazing to think how *good men have been led into sin and overcome by the very smallest adversary*. Look at Peter, for instance—bold, lion-hearted Peter. Who was it that led him to deny his Master? If some huge Roman legionary had come up to him with his drawn sword and said to him, “You Galilean, if you dare to say, ‘I know Jesus,’ this sword shall smite off your head,” I should not wonder but that Peter would have been equal to that emergency and certainly he would have wished to have in his hand the sword with which he cut off the ear of Malchus so that he might at least defend himself. If the high priest had pointed to Peter and said, “I believe that yonder stands one of the men who were with Jesus of Galilee,” it may be that he would have been bold enough to confess his Lord. But it was only a damsel, one of the high priest's maids who saw him as he was warming himself at the fire, and who said to him, “You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee”—and he denied it—and so the strong man was overcome! It is thus that little foes have frequently mastered us where great foes could not do so. I think it was Admiral Drake who, in a storm at the Nore, said to his sailors, “Surely we

have not braved many tempests out in the open sea to come here to be drowned in a ditch." Yet it has often been so. Men who have done business in great waters, (who have encountered huge Atlantic waves of temptation), have nevertheless been allured into sin by a temptation that was utterly contemptible! And perhaps it was just because it seemed to them so contemptible that they became carnally secure and so it proved to be doubly dangerous to them. But oh, what weak creatures we must be when trifling circumstances can turn us aside and when little things suffice to conquer us!

One thing in which we all betray our littleness is *the readiness with which we fall into the gross sin of idolatry*. We are, none of us, likely to bow down before blocks of wood and stone as the heathen do. Nor are we likely to worship the god made of bread which is the god of so many in this country—yet we are all too prone to make unto ourselves gods that are really idols! At one time it is favorite child who is thus worshipped. "There never was a fairer child than mine. She is more like an angel than a human being," says the fond and foolish mother whose heart is wrapped up in her little one! Then comes God's great hammer that breaks all idols—and the dead child is carried to the silent tomb. After such a painful experience as that, will the mother ever make an idol of another child? Yes, there are some who have done that, to their own confusion, time after time! If it has not been a little child who has been thus idolized, it may have been the partner of one's own life. Perhaps it has been some cherished idea which we have pursued with such avidity that it has become a god to us. It is very, very easy to put your trust in an arm of flesh—either your own or somebody else's. But as soon as you do that, you bring yourself under that ancient curse, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord"—for all trust in the creature is a subtle form of idolatry! After we have trusted in the creature once, twice, 20 times and been deceived, will we do it again? Yes, for such is the shame of our weakness that we still turn away from the eternal arm which can never fail us and cling to that poor puny arm of man that is often as false as it is weak! We still we make gods of things that are not gods, for, like the children of Israel, we are weak as water in this point also!

There is another thing that shows the shame of our weakness, namely, our *unbelief*. Have you never caught yourself saying, "After this, I shall never have a doubt again"? I have frequently found some such expression as that come to my lips, for I have had such extraordinary deliverances and such proofs of God's gracious loving kindness that when I have received them, I have said, "Oh, what a blessed God! Oh what a faithful God! Oh, what a prayer-answering God!" And then the thought has come, "The next time I am in trouble, I shall not be so timorous and so unbelieving!" Yet I fear that many of you will have to join me in confessing with deep shame and confusion of face that it has only needed a new trial to come to us to cause us to find out that what we thought was strength was utter weakness! Have not you also found it so? Why, we are

weaker even than our own children, for our children can and do trust their father! But sometimes we, the loved ones of Heaven, cannot and do not trust our Father who has never deceived us! We may well lament the shame of our weakness.

If I were to keep on speaking of this part of my theme, I might show you that *we are weak everywhere and weak in every way*—weak to all good and weak in the presence of all evil if God once withdraws Himself from us. You who are most mighty in prayer, are you not sometimes weak when you are upon your knees? You who often bear testimony to Christ with much courage, are you not sometimes weak in holy boldness? You who can generally rejoice in the Lord, are you not sometimes weak and feeble through despondency? Apart from God, our whole head is sick, our whole heart is faint and we are a mass of misery and a heap of weakness!

II. Now, having spoken thus by way of converse, I hope it is a fitting preparation for our dwelling a little while upon the second point which is, according to the text, THE GLORY OF OUR STRENGTH. True Believers, though they are a very feeble folk in themselves, are very strong when God is with them! They are so strong that their strength has a great glory in it of which we will now speak. The strength of the true Christian is so great that nothing can overcome him and he is more than a conqueror in every engagement into which he enters!

What strength God gives to us, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *at the very first, when we rise out of the grave of our spiritual death*. There we lie, bound hand and foot in that dark sepulcher—and a great stone is rolled over the mouth of it. The moment the Lord says to us, “Come forth,” we open our eyes and begin to discover the gloomy grave in which we lie. Then and there God gives us the power to unbind ourselves, to remove the stone and to come forth into liberty! I mean that men, quickened by Divine Grace, deliver themselves from evil habits, from customs which had bound them as with bands of iron, from inveterate sins which had held them captive as in a net! They become free from all these things in the strength of the Holy Spirit when He has regenerated them and brought them up from their spiritual captivity. The achievements of a new-born soul, in its first conflicts with its old sins, are perfectly marvelous! There are many wonders in the Christian life, but I believe that the first stroke he gives when he is but newly born and, therefore weak, has a marvelous degree of power in it. Many men have been swearers. Many have been drunkards. Many have been guilty of all manner of evil, but those old sins have been laid dead at their feet by one blow struck in the power of the ever-blessed Spirit. Truly, the glory of the strength of the new-born child of God must lie in his God!

The man being Divinely quickened, we now find him contending for the right. And *wherever he contends, he overcomes!* The world frowns on him and he laughs at the frown. Then it fawns on him and he despises its flattery. Sham faith soon yields to the enemy, but real faith wins the victory over the world! If the whole world should attack a true Believer,

the Believer would overcome the world and break through all its toils. Faith also overcomes the flesh and that is no small victory. He who has true God-given faith in Christ contends with inbred corruptions, strong passions and the deceitfulness that is engrained within the human heart. Where the life of God is in the heart, there is strength given to overcome the flesh. Though the man may have been sensual and devilish before conversion, Divine Grace is more than a match for the flesh and Grace gains the victory! It is a great thing to be able to overcome the world, the great world without and the little world within—but Satan comes into the field and sets himself among those who are arrayed against the Believer—and, blessed be God, the devil fares badly in the fight, for many a time the dread Apollyon who has stretched himself across the way and said that he would slay the saint, has himself been pierced by the Sword of the Spirit and has fled away wounded! What strength there must be in the Believer when he is able to overcome that accursed trinity of antagonists—the world, the flesh and the devil!

When God is in him, *the Christian finds himself able to do anything*. “By You,” says David, “I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall.” And God said, “Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel, I will help you, says the Lord” and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. “Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small.” Weak as we are, with God’s help, nothing is impossible for us! What feats of valor some Believers have performed! Read the histories of the saints of the olden ages and think of the Apostles and their immediate followers. What strength was theirs and it was only faith that made them strong! You have read Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, perhaps, till you have felt your blood boil with indignation and you have shut the book up and said, “I can read no more of the dreadful story lest it should disturb my dreams.” But if you cannot even bear to *think* of the tortures which the saints underwent, what must it have been for them to *bear* them so heroically as they did? Women and even children defied their tormentors and there were saints who, in the midst of the fire, bravely quoted verses of Scripture against their persecutors and with holy joy sang Psalms in the midst of the flames! How the saints baffled Nero, Domitian and other cruel tyrants! The Inquisition, in its dreary vaults, almost rivaled Hell in its pains and torments, but it was not able to quench the noble spirit of God’s faithful servants! The persecutors may do what they will, but only give us a band of men and women who have God’s Spirit in them—and even though their foes may tear them limb from limb—they shall not conquer them! It is impossible that God’s true saints should be overcome, for they have a glory of strength that nothing can destroy!

Neither persecution, nor tribulation, nor nakedness, nor distress, nor famine, nor peril, nor sword, no, nor even death, itself, has been able to make the saints deny their Master! And we see the same strength upholding them still! I have, in my mind’s eye now, one dear Sister, a member of this Church, in whom I have seen, within the last few days,

the matchless way in which the saints can conquer death. When they have been almost worn out by disease and incessant pain. When sleep has been banished from their eyes. When their whole body has been only a road for the feet of pain to traverse—even then they have never been impatient and they have rejoiced in the prospect of departure—not merely because they wished to be free from pain, but because the Presence of Christ had already made them so happy that they longed to get to the fountainhead of those sweet streams which were even then making them glad! Death has never yet conquered a saint! The children of God have all been conquerors. Every sepulcher of a saint is but another monument of the victory of faith! “These all died in faith,” might be inscribed over the vast mausoleum of Believers—and then the palm branch might be put at the bottom of the inscription, for, dying in faith, they, every one of them, achieved the victory!

Let me add that God’s servants have a glory of strength which I must not even mention without much humbleness of heart. God’s people are, through His Grace, so strong that they not only overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, but *they overcome God Himself*. Oh, matchless mystery, that the Omnipotent should yield to the Believer’s strength! Do you ask, “How is this?” Let me remind you of the Brook Jabbok and the memorable wrestling there when the Divine Wrestler said to Jacob, “Let Me go, for the day breaks,” but the brave man of faith replied, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” And so he won the blessing—and with it came that new name, so full of meaning—“Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed.” Truly did Joseph Hart, write, concerning God-given faith—

***“It treads on the world and on Hell!
It vanquishes death and despair!
And what is still stranger to tell
It overcomes Heaven by prayer!”***

Surely there is a great glory in the strength of a Christian when even Heaven is moved by the pleading voice of a true Believer!

III. Now let us notice, in the third place—and may the Spirit of God give His own unction and power with the thought!—that Believers, thus having God-given strength, know that ALL THE GLORY OF THEIR STRENGTH LIES IN GOD.

I hope you have understood this Truth of God even while I have been speaking about it, for it is true that the Christian has no other strength than that which has come from God. *It is so in every individual Christian*. The glory of any strength that he has must be given to God because God has given that strength to him. Have you all learned this lesson yet or are any of you proud of anything that you are, or of anything that you have done? Have you not yet learned the Truth of the text, “You are the glory of their strength”? Have you been foolish enough to say, “I preach well,” or, “I work well,” or, “I suffer well,” or, “I am growing in Grace, so there is some credit due to me?” Dear Brother, if you talk like that, may the Lord

deliver you from all such delusions! He is the glory of our strength—let us keep to that and never get away from it, for the Lord our God is a jealous God and He is especially jealous of His own glory! And if He sees that we give that glory to ourselves, or to any other but Himself, He will take away from us the strength that He gave and make us cry out once again because of our weakness. So do not destroy your own strength by taking the glory of it to yourself. Oh, how many a man has flung himself from the battlements of his pulpit by beginning to feel that *he* did it and that he had some strength of his own! How many a professor has marred a life of consistency in one dark hour—and the reason has been that self-sufficiency and carnal security were hidden away in his bosom—and at last betrayed him. When you are strong, then are you weak. But when you are conscious of weakness, then are you truly strong! While you lay the crown at the feet of Him who gave you the strength to win it, you will always be made strong. But as soon as you begin putting the crown on your own head, your strength shall be taken from you and if, like Samson, you go out to shake yourself as at other times, you will find that the Lord has departed from you to chasten you for your pride!

Further, *what is true of individual Christians is also true of a Church.* And I want to impress this Truth upon the members of this Church and upon the members of all other Churches. When God makes a Church strong, it is a very blessed and glorious thing—but the glory and strength of every Church must always lie in God. It never lies in the fact that there are many wealthy persons belonging to it. If God ever sees His people worshipping the golden calf, He will send a plague upon them to punish them for their idolatry! The glory of a Church must never lie in the fact that there are certain persons of intelligence connected with it. I believe that is the worm at the root of many Churches and that it will lead to their decay. Everything is done with the view of pleasing two or three people who are supposed to be very intellectual—yet those very people, if they are the Lord's people—do not need “intellectual preaching” at all! They have enough work for their intellect on the other six days of the week and they need the simple Gospel—plain spiritual food for their souls to feed upon on the Sabbath! There are a great many ministers who cause their hearers to break the fourth commandment for the labor involved in hearing them preach is indeed terrible—it must rack the soul instead of resting it! I should like to see a Lord's-Day Rest Society established to keep the people's mind at rest instead of their being tortured with all manner of quibbles and questions! They need to hear of Jesus Christ, for He is the true Rest for the soul and it is the very essence of the Divine Commandment to leave your own work and to rest in Christ! That is the way to keep the Sabbath holy and he who has not done that cannot know the true Sabbath rest which is the portion only of those who are resting in the Lord Jesus Christ!

So it will not do to make the glory of our strength to lie in the wealthy people or the intelligent people. And it will not do to make the glory of our strength to lie in fine elocution. “The wisdom of words” appears to

have strength in it, but when it makes the Cross of Christ of no effect, it is sheer weakness! It was one of the worst days that ever dawned upon the Church of Christ when it began to cultivate the art of oratory and turned aside to “enticing words of man’s wisdom.” But when men speak out of an overflowing soul of what God has done for them, that is the power which the Spirit of God gives to them and the power which He will bless to their hearers! They do not then try to use out-of-the-way words and nicely rounded sentences, nor to pile up perorations—for that is magnifying the preacher and dishonoring the Word that has come out of the mouth of God!

The glory of our strength must never lie in any of these things—it must lie in God alone. If it does so lie, then we shall glory in the Gospel which is one of the great supports of our strength! We shall glory in the Cross of Christ which is the main strength of the Gospel. And we shall glory in the Holy Spirit, who alone can raise the spiritually dead, who alone can give the eyes that look to Christ upon the Cross and who alone can make the heart long after its Redeemer! O Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have need to pray for God the Holy Spirit to work mightily among us! We have the Holy Spirit still with us, so we have no need to pray that He would come down from Heaven. He came down at Pentecost and He never went back to Heaven, so He is still here. He is in all His people! He is in this assembly right now. He dwells among us, though we are apt to forget that He does. We reckon that the glory of our strength lies in our ministers, or in our organizations, or in our creeds. We forget that the glory of our strength is *spiritual* and lies in the Holy Spirit, Himself, who is in us and who shall be forever in us if we are truly the Lord’s! Cry mightily in prayer, Beloved, that this true glory of our strength may continually be revealed in our midst as a Church, for so often we restrain Him, grieve Him and bind Him, as it were, with chains! He cannot do many mighty works among us because of our unbelief. He withholds His richest blessings because of our sinfulness. Let us turn to Him again! O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned, and then we shall see the glory of our strength among us, and we shall give all the glory to Him who gives to us all our strength!

I offered a prayer, this evening, (and I prayed in faith), that the Lord would, in His mercy, save some souls tonight. And I expect to hear that He has done so. I do not expect that blessed fact to remain concealed until we get to Heaven, but I expect to know *tonight* that some of my hearers have come and found rest in Jesus!

I think I hear someone say, “I would gladly be saved, but I am so weak.” But the almighty Savior came to save weak sinners! “Oh, but I am so weak I do not feel any repentance.” But Christ was exalted to give repentance! O poor weak ones, it is to just such as you are that Jesus says, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” It is but a *look* that is needed—and even *that* the Holy Spirit gives you! He gives it to you *now*—He enables you *now* to look to Jesus, the great atoning Sacrifice! And as you look, you are saved in a moment, saved through His

Grace by that simple looking unto Jesus! Oh, to leap out of death into life, out of thick darkness into unutterably glorious light in one moment! I pray that the Holy Spirit may speak to many a soul here through the words that I am now uttering. “Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” The Lord grant that it may be so—and to Him shall be the glory, for He is the glory of our strength. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 89:1-38.**

Verses 1, 2. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* [See Sermon #1565, Volume 26—MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJESTIC SONG—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] So far, the gracious man declares the resolution of his heart to praise his God forever and gives the reason for that resolve. Now he quotes the Lord’s Covenant with David.

3, 4. *I have made a Covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* That Covenant, as you well know, was not only made with David, but it had a higher spiritual bearing, for it related to that great and glorious Son of David who still reigns and shall reign forever—and in whom every Covenant blessing is secured.

5. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonders, O LORD: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.* It is often very profitable when we are enjoying fellowship with God, for us to speak to God and then wait for God to speak to us. It is so here, you see. First the Psalmist says that he will praise God forever. Then God tells him of His Covenant and explains to him the reason why mercy shall be built up forever. And then the man of God begins to praise God again. That will give you a hint for your own private devotion. Sometimes you feel that you cannot praise God and cannot pray to Him. Well then, if you cannot speak to God, sit still and let Him speak to you! Read a portion of Scripture and then, perhaps, some suggestive verse or word in it will set you praying. And then when you have prayed, stop a little while and read again—and so a blessed conversation shall be carried on between you and your God! Thus the Psalmist takes his turn again—“And the heavens shall praise Your wonders, O Lord: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.”

6, 7. *For who in the Heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared.* That is, revered.

7-9. *In the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him. O LORD God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You? Or to Your faithfulness round about You? You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, You still them.* He lets them arise

and He bids them sink down again. All the Providential dealings of God seem to be illustrated in the ever-varying phenomena of the sea. The Lord sometimes lets tempests arise in our circumstances, but soon with a Word He stills them and there is a great calm.

10. *You have broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain.* The great crocodile of Egypt.

10-12. *You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm. The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.* Oh, what a blessed spirit the spirit of true devotion is! There is such life in it that it seems to quicken all inanimate creation and make the rocks and mountains sing, the trees of the woods to clap their hands and the waves of the sea to praise the great Creator! So the whole world is like a great organ and man, guided by God's Spirit, puts his fingers on the keys and wakes the whole world to the thunder of adoration and praise! Oh to be taught of God to have a praiseful heart, for then all around us will be more likely to also praise Jehovah!

13, 14. *You have a mighty arm.* [See Sermons #674, Volume 12—THE MIGHTY ARM and #1314, Volume 22 which has the same title—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your Throne: mercy and Truth shall go before Your face.* There are wells of joy in this verse to those who know how to draw it up. It is a great delight to every man who is oppressed to know that justice and judgment stand, like armed sentinels, on either side of the Throne of God and to every human soul, conscious of unworthiness, it is an unspeakable delight that Mercy and Truth, like royal heralds, go before God wherever He goes! It has been well said that a God of all mercy would be an unjust God—but a God of all justice without mercy would be terrible, indeed!

15-21. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your Countenance. In Your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted for the LORD is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then You spoke in vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him: with whom My hand shall be established: My arm also shall strengthen him.* David was a great blessing to the nation over which God made him king. Among the choicest gifts that God ever gives to men are men and, therefore, we read concerning Christ, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"—and those gifts were men, for, "He gave some, Apostles and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These were the choice ascension gifts of Christ! Yet, while these verses primarily refer to David, the king of Israel, we must believe that a greater than David is here, even Christ,

who deigns to call Himself God's Servant, who has been anointed by the Spirit of God, with whom God's hand is always established and who is ever strengthened by the arm of Omnipotence.

22-25. *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face and plague them that hate him. But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him: and in My name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers.* Do not believe, dear Friends, any of the prophecies that some men make concerning the destruction of the Kingdom of Christ and the failure of His Church—but be certain that the Lord will not suffer Christ to fail or be discouraged—and rest assured that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands! The history of the Church of Christ is a history of conflict, but it shall be a history of victory before it is completed—"I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers."

26-34. *He shall cry unto Me, You are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and My Covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of Heaven. If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, or alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.* If, then, you are in the Covenant, you will have the rod—you may rest sure of that! If you do not walk in God's ways, but break His statutes, you will not be allowed to go unchastened. If a father saw some boys in the street breaking windows or otherwise misbehaving themselves—and he gave one of the boys a box on the ears, you may be pretty certain that the boy is his own son. And when God sees men doing wrong, He often permits the wicked to go unpunished in this life—but as for His own people, it is written, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Our heavenly Father's hand still holds the rod and uses it when necessary—but it is in love that He corrects us. Let us, therefore, when He chastens us, plead the Covenant that is here recorded and say to Him, "You have said, 'Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.'"

35-37. *Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven. Selah.*

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

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

THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST

NO. 11

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 25, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***"I have exalted one chosen out of the people."
Psalm 89:19.***

ORIGINALLY, I have no doubt, these words referred to David. He was chosen out of the people. His lineage was respectable, but not illustrious. His family was holy, but not exalted—the names of Jesse, Obed, Boaz and Ruth awoke no royal recollections and stirred up no remembrances of ancient nobility or glorious pedigree. As for himself, his only occupation had been that of a shepherd boy, carrying lambs in his bosom, or gently leading the ewes great with young—a simple youth of a right royal soul and undaunted courage, but yet a plebeian—one of the people. But this was no disqualification for the crown of Judah. In God's eyes the extraction of the young hero was no barrier to his mounting the throne of the holy nation, nor shall the proudest admirer of descent and lineage dare to insinuate a word against the valor, wisdom and the justice of the government of this monarch of the people!

We do not believe that Israel or Judah ever had a better ruler than David and we are bold to affirm that the reign of the man "chosen out of the people" outshines in glory the reigns of high-bred emperors and princes with the blood of a score of kings running in their veins! Yes, more—we will assert that the humility of his birth and education, so far from making him incompetent to rule, rendered him, in a great degree, more fit for his office and able to discharge its mighty duties. He could legislate for the many, for he was one of themselves—he could rule the people as the people should be ruled, for he was "bone of their bone" and "flesh of their flesh"—their friend, their brother, as well as their king!

However, in this sermon we shall not speak of David, but of the Lord Jesus Christ, for David, as referred to in the text, is an eminent *type* of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who was chosen out of the people. Jesus is He of whom His Father can say, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people."

Before I enter into the illustration of this Truth I wish to make one statement, so that all objections may be avoided as to the Doctrine of my sermon. Our Savior Jesus Christ, I say, was *chosen* out of the people—but this merely respects His *Manhood*. As "very God of very God" He was *not* chosen out of the people—for there was none except Him! He was His Father's only-begotten Son, "begotten of the Father before all worlds." He was God's Fellow, co-equal and co-eternal—consequently when we speak

of Jesus as being chosen out of the people, we must speak of Him as a Man. We are, I conceive, too forgetful of the real Manhood of our Redeemer, for a Man He was to all intents and purposes—and I love to sing—

**“A Man there was, a real Man
Who once on Calvary died.”**

He was not Man and God amalgamated—the two Natures suffered no confusion—He was very God without the diminution of His essence or attributes. And He was equally, verily and truly, Man. It is *as a Man* I speak of Jesus this morning! And it rejoices my heart when I can view the Human side of that glorious miracle of Incarnation and can deal with Jesus Christ as my Brother—inhabitant of the same mortality, wrestler with the same pains and ills, companion in the march of life and, for a little while, a fellow-sleeper in the cold chamber of death!

There are three things spoken of in the text—first of all, Christ's extraction—He was one of the people. Secondly, His election—He was chosen out of the people. And thirdly, Christ's exaltation—He was exalted. You see I have chosen three words all commencing with the letter E, to ease your memories that you may be able to remember them the better—extraction, election, exaltation!

I. We will commence with our Savior's EXTRACTION. We have had many complaints this week and for some weeks past, in the newspapers concerning the families. We are governed—and, according to the firm belief of a great many of us, very badly governed—by certain aristocratic families. We are not governed by men chosen out of the people, as we ought to be. And this is a fundamental wrong in our government—that our rulers, even when elected *by* us, can scarcely ever be elected *from* us. Families, where certainly there is not a monopoly of intelligence or prudence, seem to have a patent for promotion. While a man—a commoner, a tradesman, of however good sense—cannot rise to the government. I am no politician and I am about to preach no political sermon. But I must express my sympathy with the people and my joy that we, as Christians, are governed by “One chosen out of the people.” Jesus Christ is the people's Man! He is the people's Friend—yes, one of themselves. Though He sits high on His Father's Throne, He was “One chosen out of the people.” Christ is not to be called the aristocrat's Christ. He is not the noble's Christ. He is not the king's Christ. But He is “One chosen out of the people.” It is this thought which cheers the hearts of the people and ought to bind their souls in unity to Christ and the holy religion of which He is the Author and Finisher. Let us now beat out this wedge of gold into leaf and narrowly inspect its truthfulness!

Christ, by His very birth was one of the people. True, He was born of a royal ancestry. Mary and Joseph were both of them descendants of a kingly race but the glory had departed. A stranger sat on the throne of Judah, while the lawful heir grasped the hammer and the adze. Mark you well the place of His nativity. Born in a stable—cradled in a manger where the horned oxen fed—His only bed was their fodder and His

slumbers were often broken by their longings. He might be a Prince by birth—but certainly He had not a princely retinue to wait upon Him! He was not clad in purple garments, neither wrapped in embroidered clothing. The halls of kings were not trod by His feet. The marble palaces of monarchs were not honored by His Infant smiles. Take notice of the visitors who came around His cradle. The shepherds came, first of all. We never find that they lost their way. No, God guides the shepherds and He did direct the wise men, too, but they lost their way. It often happens, that while shepherds find Christ, wise men miss Him. However, both of them came, the magi and the shepherds—both knelt round that manger, to show us that Christ was the Christ of *all* men—that He was not merely the Christ of the magi, but that He was the Christ of the shepherds. They showed us that He was not merely the Savior of the peasant shepherd, but also the Savior of the learned, for—

***“None are excluded hence, but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”***

In His very birth He was one of the people. He was not born in a populous city—but in the obscure village of Bethlehem, “the house of bread.” The Son of Man made His advent, unusherred by pompous preparations and unheralded by the blast of courtly trumpets!

His *education*, too, demands our attention. He was not taken as Moses was, from his mother's breast, to be educated in the halls of a monarch. He was not brought up with all those affected airs which are given to persons who have golden spoons in their mouths at their births. He was not brought up as the lordling, to look with disdain on everyone. His father, being a carpenter, doubtless He toiled in His father's workshop. “Fit place,” a quaint author says, “for Jesus. For He had to make a ladder that would reach from earth to Heaven! And why should He not be the son of a carpenter?” Full well He knew the curse of Adam—“in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread.” Had you seen the Holy child Jesus, you would have beheld nothing to distinguish Him from other children, save that unsullied purity which rested in His very Countenance. When our Lord entered into *public life*, still He was the same. What was His rank? Did He array Himself in scarlet and purple? Oh, no—He wore the simple garb of a peasant—that robe “without seam the top to the bottom,” one simple piece of stuff, without ornament or embroidery. Did He dwell in state and make a magnificent show in His journey through Judea? No. He toiled His weary way and sat down on the well of Sychar. He was like others, a poor Man. He had not courtiers around Him. He had fishermen for His companions. And when He spoke, did He speak with smooth and oily words? Did He walk with dainty footsteps, like the king of Amalek? No. He often spoke like the rough Elijah. He spoke what He meant and He meant what He said. He spoke to the people as the people's Man. He never cringed before great men. He knew not what it was to bow or stoop.

He stood and cried, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Woe unto you, whitewashed sepulchers." He spared no class of sinners—rank and fortune made no difference to Him. He uttered the same Truths to the rich men of the Sanhedrin, as to the toiling peasants of Galilee. He was "one of the people."

Notice His *doctrine*. Jesus Christ was one of the people in His Doctrine. His Gospel was never the philosopher's Gospel, for it is not abstruse enough. It will not consent to be buried in hard words and technical phrases—it is so simple that He who can spell over, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," may have a saving knowledge of it! Hence, worldly-wise men scorn the science of Truth and sneeringly say, "why, even a blacksmith can preach now-a-days and men who were at the plow tail may turn preachers." And priestcraft demands, "What right have they to do any such thing, unauthorized by us?" Oh, sad case, that Gospel Truth should be slighted because of its plainness and that my Master should be despised because He will not be exclusive—will not be monopolized by men of talent and erudition! Jesus is the ignorant man's Christ as much as the learned man's Christ. For He has chosen "the base things of the world and the things that are despised." Ah, much as I love true science and real education, I mourn and grieve that our ministers are so much diluting the Word of God with philosophy—desiring to be intellectual preachers, delivering model sermons. Their sermons are well fitted for a room full of college students and professors of theology, but of no use to the masses—being destitute of simplicity, warmth, earnestness, or even solid Gospel matter! I fear our college training is but a poor gain to our churches, since it often serves to wean the young man's sympathies from the people and wed them to the few of the intellectual and wealthy of the church. It is good to be a fellow citizen in the republic of letters but better far to be an able minister of the Kingdom of Heaven! It is good to be able, like some great minds, to attract the mighty. But the more useful man will still be he, who, like Whitfield, uses "market language." It is a sad fact that high places and the Gospel seldom well agree. And, moreover, be it known that the Doctrine of Christ is the Doctrine of the *people*. It was not meant to be the Gospel of a caste, a clique, or any one class of the community! The Covenant of Grace is not ordered for men of one peculiar grade, but some of all sorts are included. There were a few of the rich who followed Jesus in His own day and it is so now. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were well-to-do and there was the wife of Herod's steward, with some more of the nobility. These, however, were but a few—His congregation was made up of the lower orders—the masses—the multitude. "The common people heard Him gladly." And His Doctrine was one which did not allow for distinction, but put all men as sinners, naturally, on an equality in the sight of God!

One is your Father, "One is your Master, even Christ and all you are Brothers and Sisters." These were words which He taught to His disciples, while in His own Person. He was the mirror of humility and

proved Himself the Friend of earth's poor sons and the lover of mankind. O you purse proud! O you who cannot touch the poor even with your white gloves! Ah, you with your miters and your staves! Ah, you with your cathedrals and splendid ornaments! This is the Man whom you call Master—the people's Christ—One of the people! And yet you look down with scorn upon the people—you despise them! What are they in your opinion? *The common herd—the multitude*. Out with you! Call yourselves no more the ministers of Christ! How can you be, unless, descending from your pomp and your dignity, you come among the poor and visit them? Unless you walk among our teeming population and preach to them the Gospel of Christ Jesus? We believe you to be the descendants of the fishermen? Ah, not until you remove your grandeur and, like the fishermen, come out—the people's men and preach to the people—speak to the people, instead of lolling on your splendid seats and making yourselves rich at the expense of your pluralities! Christ's ministers should be the friends of manhood at large, remembering that their Master was the people's Christ. Rejoice! O rejoice! You multitudes, rejoice! rejoice! for Christ was One of the people!

II. Our second point was ELECTION. God says, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Jesus Christ was elected—chosen. Somehow or other, that ugly Doctrine of Election will come out. Oh, there are some, the moment they hear that word, election, put their hands upon their foreheads and mutter, "I will wait till that sentence is over, there will be something I shall like better, perhaps." Some others say, "I shall not go to that place again! The man is a hyper-Calvinist." But the man is not a hyper-Calvinist—the man said what was in his Bible—that is all. He is a Christian and you have no right to call him by those ill-names, if indeed an ill-name it is, for we never blush at whatever men call us.

Here it is—"One chosen out of the people." Now, what does that mean, but that Jesus Christ is chosen? Those who do not like to believe that the heirs of Heaven were elect cannot deny the Truth proclaimed in this verse—that Jesus Christ is the subject of election—that His Father chose Him and that He chose Him out of the people! As a Man He was chosen out of the people—to be the people's Savior and the people's Christ! And now let us gather up our thoughts and try to discover the transcendent wisdom of God's choice. Election is no blind thing. God Sovereignly chooses but He always chooses wisely. There is always some secret reason for His choice of any particular individual—though that motive does not lie in ourselves, or in our own merits—yet there is always some secret cause far more remote than the doings of the creature. Some mighty reason unknown to all but Himself. In the case of Jesus the motives are apparent. And without pretending to enter the cabinet council of Jehovah, we may discover them.

1. First, we see that *justice is thereby fully satisfied* by the choice of One out of the people. Suppose God had chosen an angel to make satisfaction for our sins—imagine that an angel were capable of bearing that

vast amount of suffering and agony which was necessary to our atonement! Yet after the angel had done it all, justice would never have been satisfied, for this one simple reason—that the Law declares, “The soul that sins IT shall die.” Now, *man* sins and therefore *man* must die! Justice required that as by man came death, by man also should come the resurrection and the life. The Law required, that as man was the sinner, man should be the victim—that as in Adam all died, even so in another Adam should all be made alive. Consequently it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be chosen out of the people. For had yon blazing angel near the Throne, that lofty Gabriel, laid aside his splendors, descended to our earth, endured pain, suffered agonies, entered the vault of death and groaned out a miserable existence in an extremity of woe—after all *that*—he would not have satisfied inflexible Justice, because it is said, a *man* must die and otherwise the sentence is not executed!

2. But there is another reason why Jesus Christ was chosen out of the people. It is because *thereby the whole race receives honor*. Do you know I would not be an angel if Gabriel would ask me? If he would beseech me to exchange places with him, I would not. I would lose so much by the exchange and he would gain so much. Poor, weak and worthless though I am, yet I am a *man*—and being a man there is a dignity about manhood—a dignity lost one day in the Garden of the Fall but regained in the garden of Resurrection! It is a fact that a man is greater than an angel—that in Heaven humanity stands nearer the Throne than angelic existence! You will read in the Book of Revelation that the 24 elders stood around the Throne and in the *outer* circle stood the angels. The elders, who are the representatives of the whole Church, were honored with a greater nearness to God than the ministering spirits. Why man—elect man—is the greatest being in the universe, except God! Man sits up there—look! At God's right hand—radiant with glory—there sits a MAN! Ask me who governs Providence and directs its awfully mysterious machinery. I tell you it is a Man—the Man Christ Jesus! Ask me who has, during the past month, bound up the rivers in chains of ice and who now has loosed them from the shackles of winter. I tell you a Man did it—Christ! Ask me who shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and I say a Man. A real, veritable Man is to hold the scales of judgment and to call all nations around Him. And who is the channel of Grace? Who is the emporium of all the Father's mercy? Who is the great gathering up of all the love of the Covenant? I reply a Man—the Man Christ Jesus! And Christ, being a Man, has exalted you and exalted me and put us into the highest ranks. He made us, originally, a little lower than the angels and now despite our fall in Adam, He has crowned us, His elect, with glory and honor! And He has set us at His right hand in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

3. But, my Brothers and Sisters, let us take a sweeter view than that. Why was He chosen out of the people? Speak, my heart! What is the first

reason that rushes up to yourself? For heart-thoughts are best thoughts. Thoughts from the head are often good for nothing but thoughts of the heart, deep musings of the soul, these are priceless as pearls of Ormuz! If it is a humbler poet, provided that his songs gush from his heart, they shall better strike the cords of my soul than the lifeless emanations of a mere brain. Here, Christian—what do you think is the sweet reason for the election of your Lord, He being one of the people? Was it not this—*that He might be able to be my Brother, in the blest tie of kindred blood?* Oh, what relationship there is between Christ and the Believer! The Believer can say—

***“One there is above all others
Well deserves the name of Friend—
His is love beyond a brother’s
Faithful, free and knows no end.”***

I have a great Brother in Heaven. I have heard boys say sometimes in the street that they would tell their brother and I have often said so when the enemy has attacked me—“I will tell my Brother in Heaven.” I may be poor, but I have a Brother who is rich! I have a Brother who is a King! I am brother to the Prince of the Kings of the earth! And will He allow me to starve, or need, or lack, while He is on His Throne? Oh, no! He loves me. He has fraternal feelings towards me. He is my Brother. But more than that—think, O Believer! Christ is not merely your Brother, but He is your Husband! “Your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name.” It rejoices the wife to lean her head on the broad breast of her husband, in full assurance that his arms will be strong to labor for her, or defend her. She knows that his heart always throbs with love to her and that all he has and is, belongs to her, as the sharer of his existence. Oh, to know by the influence of the Holy Spirit, that the sweet alliance is made between my soul and the ever precious Jesus! It is enough to quicken all my soul to music and make each atom of my frame a grateful songster to the praise of Christ. Come, let me remember when I lay like an infant in my blood, cast out in the open field. Let me recollect the notable moment when He said, “Live!” And let me never forget that He has educated me, trained me up and one day will espouse me to Himself in righteousness, crowning me with a nuptial crown in the palace of His Father! Oh, it is bliss unspeakable! I wonder not that the thought does stagger my words to utter it!—that Christ is One of the people, that He might be nearly related to you and to me, that He might be the kinsman, next of kin—

***“In ties of blood with sinners one,
Our Jesus is to Glory gone!
Has all His foes to ruin hurled —
Sin, Satan, earth, death, Hell, the world.”***

Saint, wrap this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of your memory. Put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection and use it as the King's own seal, stamping the petitions of your faith with confidence of success!

4. But now another idea suggests itself. Christ was chosen out of the people—that He might know our needs and sympathize with us. You know the old tale—that one half the world does not know how the other half lives—and that is very true. I believe some of the rich have no notion whatever of what the distress of the poor is. They have no idea of what it is to labor for their daily food. They have a very faint conception of what a rise in the price of bread means. They do not know anything about it. And when we put men in power who never were of the people, they do not understand the art of governing us. But our great and glorious Jesus Christ is One chosen out of the people and, therefore, He knows our needs. *Temptation and pain* He suffered before us. Sickness He endured, for when hanging upon the Cross, the scorching of that broiling sun brought on a burning fever. *Weariness*—He has endured it, for weary He sat by the well. *Poverty*—He knows it, for sometimes He had not bread to eat, except that bread of which the world knows nothing. To be *houseless*—He knew it, for the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had not where to lay His head. My Brother and Sister Christian, there is no place where you can go where Christ has not been before you, sinful places alone excepted! In the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death you may see His bloody footsteps—footprints marked with gore. Yes, and even at the deep waters of the swelling Jordan, you shall, when you come hard by the side, say, “There are the footprints of a Man—whose are they?” Stooping down, you shall discern a nail-mark and shall say, “Those are the footsteps of the blessed Jesus.” He has been before you! He has smoothed the way. He has entered the grave, that He might make the tomb the royal bedchamber of the ransomed race—the closet where they lay aside the garments of labor, to put on the vestments of eternal rest. In all places, wherever we go, the Angel of the Covenant has been our forerunner. Each burden we have to carry has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel—

**“His way was much rougher and darker than mine.
Did Christ my Lord suffer—and shall I repine?”**

I am speaking to those in great trial. Dear fellow traveler! Take courage—Christ has consecrated the road and made the narrow way the King's own road to life!

One thought more and then I will pass on to my third point. There is a poor soul over there who is desirous of coming to Jesus, but he is in very great trouble, lest he should not come right. And I know many Christians who say, “Well, I hope I have come to Christ, but I am afraid I have not come right.” There is a little footnote to one of the hymns in dear Mr. Denham's collection in which he says, “Some people are afraid they do not come right. Now, no man can come except the *Father draws him*. So I apprehend, if they come at all, they cannot come wrong!” So do I apprehend, if men come at all, they must come right. Here is a thought for you, poor coming Sinner. Why are you afraid to come? “Oh,” you say, “I am so great a sinner, Christ will not have mercy upon me.” Oh, you do

not know my blessed Master! He is more loving than you think Him to be. I was once wicked enough to think the same, but I have found Him ten thousand times more kind than I thought. I tell you, He is so loving, so gracious, so kind, there never was one half so good as He. He is kinder than ever you can think. His love is greater than your fears and His merits are more prevalent than your sins! But still you say, "I am afraid I shall not come aright, I think I shall not use acceptable words." I tell you why that is—because you do not remember that Christ was taken out of the people. If Her Majesty were to send for me tomorrow morning, I dare say I should feel very anxious about what kind of clothes I should wear and how I should walk in and how I should observe court etiquette and so on. But if one of my friends here were to send for me, I should go straight off and see him, because he is one of the people and I like him. Some of you say, "How can I go to Christ? What shall I say? What words shall I use?" If you were going to one above you, you might ask so—but He is One of the people. Go as you are, poor Sinner—just in your rags, just in your filth—in all your wickedness, just as you are! O conscience-stricken Sinner, come to Jesus! He is One of the people. If the Spirit has given you a sense of sin, do not study how you are to come—come anyway! Come with a groan, come with a sigh, come with a tear. Any way you come, if you do but come, will do, for He is One of the people. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Let him that hears say, Come."

Here I cannot resist airing an illustration. I have heard that in the deserts, when the caravans are in need of water and they are afraid they shall not find any, they are accustomed to send on a camel, with its rider, some distance in advance. Then after a little space follows another. And then at a short interval, another—as soon as the first man finds water, almost before he stoops down to drink, he shouts aloud, "Come!" The next one, hearing the voice, repeats the word, "Come!" while the nearest again takes up the cry, "Come!" until the whole wilderness echoes with the word "Come!" So in that verse, "the Spirit and the Bride say, first of all, Come—then let him that hears say, Come and whoever is thirsty, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely." With this picture I leave our survey of the reasons for the election of Christ Jesus.

III. And now I am to close up with His EXALTATION. "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." You will recollect while I am speaking upon this exaltation that it is really the exaltation of *all* the elect in the Person of Christ. For all that Christ is and all that Christ has, is mine. If I am a Believer, whatever He is in His exalted Person, that I am, for I am made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places!

1. First, dear Friends, it was exaltation enough for the body of Christ to be exalted into union with the Divinity. That was honor which none of us can ever receive. We never hope to have this body united with a God. It cannot be. Once has Incarnation been done—never but once. Of no other man can it be said, "He was One with the Father and the Father was One with Him." Of no other man shall it be said that the Deity ta-

bernacled in Him and that God was manifest in His flesh, seen of angels, justified of the spirit and carried up to Heaven!

2. Again—Christ was exalted by His Resurrection. Oh, I should have liked to have stolen into that tomb of our Savior. I suppose it was a large chamber—within it lay a massive marble sarcophagus and very likely a ponderous lid was laid upon it. Then outside the door there lay a mighty stone and guards kept watch before it. Three days did that Sleeper slumber there! Oh, I could have wished to lift the lid of that sarcophagus and look upon Him. Pale He lay. Blood-streaks there were upon Him, not all quite washed away by those careful women who had buried Him. Death, exulting, cries, “I have slain Him—the Seed of the woman who is to destroy me is now my captive!” Ah, how grim Death laughed! Ah, how he stared through his bony eyelids as he said, “I have the boasted Victor in my grasp.” “Ah,” said Christ, “but I have you!” And up He sprang, the lid of the sarcophagus started up. And He, who has the keys of death and Hell, seized Death, ground his iron limbs to powder, dashed him to the ground and said, “O Death, I will be your plague. O Hell, I will be your destruction.” Out He came and in turn the watchmen fled away. Startling with Glory, radiant with light, effulgent with Divinity, He stood before them. Christ was then exalted in His Resurrection!

3. But how exalted was He in His Ascension! He went out from the city to the top of the hill, His disciples attending Him while He waited the appointed moment. Mark His Ascension! Bidding farewell to the whole circle, up He went gradually ascending like the exaltation of a mist from the lake or the cloud from the steaming river. Aloft He soared—by His own mighty buoyancy and elasticity He ascended up on high—not like Elijah, carried up by fiery horses. Nor like Enoch of old, it could not be said He was not, for God took Him. He went Himself. And as He went, I think I see the angels looking down from Heaven's battlements and crying, “See the conquering Hero comes!” While at His nearer approach, again they shouted, “See the conquering Hero comes!” So His journey through the plains of ether is complete—He nears the gates of Heaven—attending angels shout, “Lift up your heads, you everlasting gates. And be you lift up, you everlasting doors!” The glorious hosts within scarcely ask the question, “Who is the King of Glory?” When from ten thousand, thousand tongues there rolls an ocean of harmony, beating in mighty waves of music on the pearly gates and opening them at once, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!”

Lo! Heaven's barriers are thrown wide open and cherubim are hastening to meet their Monarch—

***“They brought His chariot from afar,
To bear Him to His Throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and said,
‘The Savior’s work is done.’ ”***

Behold He marches through the streets! See how kingdoms and powers fall down before Him! Crowns are laid at His feet and His Father says,

'Well done, My Son, well done!' while Heaven echoes with the shout, "Well done! Well done!" Up He climbs to that high Throne, side by side with the Paternal Deity. "I have exalted One chosen out of the people."

4. The last exaltation of Christ which I shall mention is that which is to come—when He shall sit upon the Throne of His Father David and shall judge all nations. You will observe I have omitted that exaltation which Christ is to have as the king of this world during the millennium. I do not profess to understand it and therefore I leave that alone. But I believe Jesus Christ is to come upon the Throne of Judgment, "and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Sinner! You believe that there is a judgment. You know that the tares and wheat cannot always grow together—that the sheep and the goats shall not always feed in one pasture. But do you know of that Man who is to judge you? Do you know that He who is to judge you is a Man? I say a MAN—a Man once despised and rejected—

***"The Lord shall come, but not the same
As once in lowliness He came—
A humble Man before His foes;
A weary Man and full of woes."***

Ah, no! Rainbows shall be about His head. He shall hold the sun in His right hand as the token of His government. He shall put the moon and stars beneath His feet, as the dust of the pedestal of His Throne, which shall be of solid clouds of light. The books shall be opened—those massive books, which contain the deeds of both the quick and the dead. Ah, how shall the despised Nazarene sit triumphant over all His foes! No more the taunt, the jeer, the scoff. But one hideous cry of misery, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne!" Oh you, my Hearers, who now look with contempt on Jesus and His Cross, I tremble for you. Oh, fiercer than a lion on his prey, is love when once incensed. Oh Despisers! I warn you of that day when the placid brow of the Man of Sorrows shall be knit with frowns. When the eyes which once were moistened by dew-drops of pity, shall flash lightning on their enemies! And the hands, which once were nailed to the Cross for our redemption, shall grasp the thunderbolt for your damnation! While the mouth which once said, "Come unto Me, you weary," shall pronounce in words louder and more terrible than the voice of the thunder, "Depart you cursed!" Sinners! You may think it a trifle to sin against the Man of Nazareth, but you shall find that in so doing you have offended the Man who shall judge the earth in righteousness. And for your rebellion you shall endure waves of torment in the eternal ocean of wrath. From that doom may God deliver you! But I warn you of it.

You have all read the story of the lady, who, on her wedding day stepped up stairs and seeing an old chest, in her fun and frolic stepped inside, thinking to hide herself an hour, that her friends might hunt for her. But a spring lock lay in ambush there and fastened her down forev-

er. Nor did they ever find her until years had passed. When moving that old lumbering chest they found the bones of a skeleton, with here and there a jeweled ring and some fair thing. She had sprung in there in pleasantries and mirth but was locked down forever. Young Brothers and Sisters! Take heed that you are not locked down forever by your sins! One jovial glass—it is all. “One moment’s step,” so said she. But there’s a secret lock lays in ambush. One turn into that house of ill-fame—one wandering from the paths of rectitude—that is all. Oh, Sinner! It is all. But do you know what that all is? To be fastened down forever? Oh, if you would shun this, listen to me, while—for I have but one moment more—I tell you yet again of the Man who was “chosen out of the people.”

You proud ones! I have a word for you. You delicate ones, whose footsteps must not touch the ground! You who look down in scorn upon your fellow mortals—proud worms despising your fellow worms, because you are somewhat more showily dressed! What do you think of this? The Man of the people is to save you, if you are saved at all. The Christ of the crowd—the Christ of the mass—the Christ of the people—*He* is to be your Savior! You must stoop, proud man! You must bow, proud lady! You must lay aside your pomp, or else you will never be saved. For the Savior of the people must be your Savior!

But to the poor trembling sinner, whose pride is gone, I repeat the comforting assurance. Would you shun sin? Would you avoid the curse? My Master tells me to say this morning—“Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” I remember the saying of a good old saint. Someone was talking about the mercy and love of Jesus and concluded by saying, “Ah, is it not astonishing?” She said, “No, not at all.” But they said it was. “Why,” she said, “it is just like He—it is just like He!” You say, can you believe such a thing of a Person? “Oh yes!” It may be said, “that is just His Nature.” So you, perhaps, cannot believe that Christ would save you, guilty creature as you are? I tell you it is just like He! He saved Saul—He saved me—He may save you! Yes, what is more, He *will* save you—for whosoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out!

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

UNPARALLELED LOVING KINDNESSES

NO. 3242

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON TUESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 17, 1863.

*“Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses,
which You swore unto David in Your truth?”*
Psalm 89:49.

THE LORD had made an Everlasting Covenant with David, ordered in all things and sure, yet that Covenant was not intended to preserve him from trouble. When this Psalm was written, he had been brought very low. His crown had been cast down to the ground, his enemies had rejoiced over him and he had become a reproach to his neighbors. Then his thoughts flew back to the happier days of the past and the Covenant which the Lord had made with him—and either David, himself, or Ethan, writing on his behalf, enquired, in the words of our text, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses, which You swore unto David in Your truth?”

I. Applying this passage to the people of God, I remark, first, that WE HAVE RECEIVED MANY MERCIES IN THE PAST.

Is that too common a matter for you to think and talk about? If you know it so well, why do you forget it so often? The mercies of God wake us every morning so that we are as used to them as we are to the sunlight, yet some of us think but little of them. They follow us till the night and we get as accustomed to them as we do to our beds, yet perhaps some of us think less of them than we do of our beds! We have Providential mercies every moment of the day and every day of our lives—we can never count the number of them, for they are more than the sands upon the seashore! I am going, however, to speak of the spiritual mercies with which God has enriched us—the blessings of the upper springs—and it will help you to recall them if I take the list of them that is given at the beginning of the 103rd Psalm.

Turn to it and read, first, “*who forgives all your iniquities.*” All of us to whom these words belong should constantly remember that we are pardoned souls. We were not so once—oh, what would we not have given, then, to know what we know now? At that time, our iniquities pressed upon us as a burden that we could not bear! The stings of conscience gave us no rest and the terrors of Hell got hold of us! When I was under conviction of sin, I felt that I would willingly have given my eyes, my hands, my all, if I might but be able to say, “I am a forgiven soul.” So,

now that we are pardoned, let us not forget the Lord's loving kindness in forgiving all our iniquities. If you, my Hearer, can forget it, I may well question whether your iniquities have ever been forgiven, for the pardon of sin is so great a mercy that the song which it evokes from the heart must last forever!

The next mercy in the Psalmist's list is, "*who heals all your diseases.*" Think again, my Brother or my Sister, what the Lord has done for you in this respect. Once, pride possessed you like a burning fever and long prevented you from submitting to God's simple plan of salvation—but you have been cured of that terrible malady and now you are sitting humbly at the feet of Jesus rejoicing in being saved by Divine Grace! Perhaps you were once like the demoniac of old. The chains of morality could not bind you and the fetters of human law could not restrain you. You cut and wounded yourself and you were a terror unto others. But, now, thanks be unto God, you are so completely healed that there is not even a scar left to show where you were wounded! Will you not praise the Lord for this unspeakable mercy? What would you not have given for it, once, when your many diseases held you in their cruel grip? Then cease not to praise Jehovah-Rophi, "the Lord that heals you!"

The next mercy also demands a song of grateful praise—"who redeems your life from destruction." You have been saved from going down into the Pit—the ransom price has been paid for you and you have been redeemed—not with silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Remember there is no wrath against you, now, in the heart of God, for His righteous anger on account of your sin was all poured out upon the head of His dear Son, your Surety and Substitute! The devil has no claim upon you, now, for you have been redeemed by Christ unto the last farthing. Then can you forget to praise Him who has done such great things for you? What would you not have given, at one time, to have had half a hope that you were a redeemed soul when your poor knees were sore through your long praying, and your voice was hoarse with crying unto God? You would gladly have bartered the light of day, the comforts of life and the joys of friendship for the assurance of your redemption! Well, then, since you have now obtained that priceless gift, forget not to praise the Lord for all His loving kindness towards you!

For the next clause in the Psalm is this, "*who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.*" Think, Brother or Sister in Christ, what the Lord has done for you. Not content with saving you from Hell, He has adopted you into His own family, made you a son or a daughter of the King of kings and set a royal crown upon your head—a crown of "loving kindness and tender mercies." You are made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! Is not this unparalleled loving kindness? Is not this, indeed, the tender mercy of our God towards you? Then can you ever forget such loving kindness and tender mercy? There have been times, in the past history of some of us, when that ancient prophecy has been

most graciously fulfilled in our experience, “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” So, as we remember the former loving kindnesses of the Lord, we rejoice that He still crowns us with loving kindnesses and tender mercies!

We must not forget the next verse—“*who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” If we are in Christ Jesus, we have all that we need—we are perfectly satisfied. We do not need a better Savior, we do not need a better hope, we do not need a better Bible, we do not need better promises. We *do* need more faith, but we do not need a better ground of faith! We do desire to have more love to our Lord, but we do not desire a better Object for our love! We desire to always dive deeper and deeper, but only in the fathomless sea of Jesus’ love! Others are roaming here and there, vainly seeking satisfaction, but our mouth is so filled with good things that we are satisfied. We asked and the Lord gave to us. We prayed for pardon and the Lord fully forgave us for Jesus’ sake. We have received so much mercy from Him that our soul is satisfied and soars aloft as on an eagle’s wings, leaving all terrestrial cares, sorrows and doubts far below us amid the earth-born clouds above which we have mounted by God’s Grace!

II. Now, having thus briefly recalled the Lord’s former loving kindnesses, I have to remind you, in the second place, that WE ARE NOT ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE SAME FLOW OF MERCY TOWARD US.

The Psalmist asks, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses?” Well, where are they? Why, they are where they used to be, though we do not always realize them! The Lord’s mercies have not changed, but our perception of them is not always as vivid as it ought to be. Let us again consider the mercies of which I have already spoken to you.

“*Who forgives all your iniquities.*” There are times when a Christian fears whether his sins are really forgiven. He is saved, yet he has a doubt whether he is saved or not. All his past sins seem to rise up before him and the foul suggestion of unbelief is, “Can it be possible that all those sins have been put away? Have all those mountains of iniquity been cast into the Red Sea of the Savior’s atoning blood?” Many young Believers who judge themselves too much by their *feelings*, are apt to imagine that they have been deceived and that they are still under condemnation. If I have any Brothers or Sisters like that here, let me assure them that there are times when the very best of the saints have to cry out in the bitterness of their soul, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses?” The Believer in Christ is always justified as far as the Law of God is concerned, but he does not always hear the proclamation of pardon in the court of conscience! God’s sun is always shining, but there are clouds that obscure its beams, yet it is only hidden for a while. So is it with the loving kindness of the Lord with regard to the forgiveness of sin—whether we always realize it or not, the forgiveness that has once been bestowed upon us will never be withdrawn from us, world without end!

It is the same with the next mercy—“*who heals all your diseases.*” It may be that there are some of us here who know that the Great Physician has healed our soul maladies, yet at times unbelief and other evil diseases cause us pain and agony of spirit. It is with us as it was in the days of Noah when the fountains of the great deep were broken up—and happy are we if we can now float in the ark of our faith above the awful sea of our depravity which threatens to drown every spiritual comfort and cover every hope! If I were to look within my own heart for comfort and hope, I would often be in despair—but when I look away to my Lord, alone, then I realize what He has done and is still doing for me, for He still “heals” all my diseases! Marvel not, dear Friends, if you cannot see yourselves growing in Grace as you would like to do. When a farmer goes to look at his root crops, he is not so much concerned as to the appearance of the part that is above ground—he needs to know how that part is flourishing that is out of sight. So, very often a Christian is growing underground, as it were—growing in Divine Grace, knowledge, love and humility—though he may not have as many virtues and graces that are visible to other people, or even to himself. Sanctification is being worked in the saints according to the will of God, but it is a secret work—yet, in due time the fruit of it will be manifest, even as the farmer at the proper season digs up his roots and rejoices that his labor has not been expended upon them in vain.

Notice, too, that next mercy—“*who redeems your life from destruction.*” Now mark this—those who are once redeemed are always redeemed! The price of their redemption was paid upon Calvary and that great transaction can never be reversed. I dare to put it very strongly and to say that they were as fully redeemed when they were dead in trespasses and sins as they will be when they stand in the full blaze of Jehovah’s Presence before the eternal Throne of God! They were not, then, conscious of their redemption, but their unconsciousness did not alter the fact of their redemption! So is it with the Believer—there are dark days and cloudy days in his experience, but he is just as truly saved in the dark and cloudy day as when the sun is shining brightly and the clouds have all been blown away! In the old days of slavery, when a slave’s freedom had been purchased, there may have been times when he had not much to eat, or when he had many aches and pains, but such things did not affect the fact that he was a free man. Suppose someone had said to him, “My poor fellow, you have nothing in the cupboard, you are very sick and ill, you are still a slave”? He would have replied, “That is not good reasoning. I know that I was redeemed, for I saw the price paid for my ransom. I have my free papers and I shall never again be a slave!” So is it with Believers—the Son of God has made them free by giving Himself as a ransom for them, so they shall be “free indeed.” Their redemption does not depend upon their realization of it, but upon their Redeemer who has made it effective for them!

The same principle applies to the next mercy—“*who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.*” There may be some Christians here who need to learn a lesson that one good Methodist tried to teach another whom he met at a class meeting. It grieved him as he heard over and over again the story of his Brother’s trials and troubles, but nothing about the multitudes of mercies with which he was continually being crowned. So one day he said to him, “My Brother, I wish you would change your residence—you do not live in the right part of the town.” “How is that?” enquired the other. “Why, you live where I used to live, down in Murmuring Street. It is very dark and narrow, the chimneys always smoke, the lamps never burn brightly and all sorts of diseases abound in that unhealthy quarter. I got tired of living in Murmuring Street, so I took a new house in Content Street. It is a fine, wide, open street where the breezes of Heaven can freely blow, so the people who dwell there are healthy and happy. And though all the houses in the street are of different sizes, it is a very remarkable thing that they are, all of them, just the right size for the people who live in them! The Apostle Paul used to live in that street, for he said, ‘I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content,’ so I would advise you, my Brother, to move into Content Street as soon as you can.” That was very good advice—and we may pass it on to any murmurers or grumblers whom we know. Think, Beloved, how the Lord is still crowning you with loving kindness and tender mercies! I know you are not strong, but then you have not that acute pain you used to have. I know that you are growing old, but that only means that you are getting so much nearer Heaven! I know your friends are fewer than they used to be, but then those who are left are true friends. So you see that you are still crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies!

So is it with the last mercy in the list—“*who satisfies your mouth with good things.*” I will venture to say that the Christian has not one real need that is not satisfied with the good things that God has provided for him. If he has any other need, or thinks he has, it is better for him not to have that need supplied. If we need the pleasures of sin, it is a great mercy that God will not give them to us, for the supply of such a need would be our soul’s damnation! If we could gather any comfort through following that which is evil, it is of the Lord’s mercy that such comfort is not our portion—

***“This world is ours and worlds to come!
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home,”***

so what can we need besides?

III. Now, thirdly, WHY ARE WE NOT ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE SAME FLOW OF MERCY TOWARD US?

Sometimes we miss our former comforts as the result of sin. Sin indulged is a certain barrier to happiness. No one can enjoy communion with Christ while turning aside to crooked ways. To the extent to which a Believer is inconsistent with his profession, to that extent will he be un-

happy—and it will be no cause for surprise if he has to cry, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses?” We must always distinguish between the punishment of sin which Christ endured on His people’s behalf and the fatherly chastisement with which God visits upon them for their wrong-doing. Though He will not condemn them as a Judge, He will chastise them as a Father. And they cannot expect to enjoy the loving kindnesses of the Lord while they are enduring the strokes of His rod because of their transgressions!

We may also lose a comfortable sense of God’s mercy *through neglecting to use the means of Grace*. Leave off the regular reading of your Bible and then you will be like the man who misses his meals and so grows weak and languid. Neglect private prayer and then see whether you will not have to cry with Job, “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me when His candle shined upon my head and when, by His light, I walked through darkness.” Stay away from the Prayer Meetings and then if your soul is not sad, it ought to be! If a man will not come where there is a fire, is it surprising that he cries that he cannot get warm? The neglect of the means of Grace causes many to enquire, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses?”

The same result follows *when any idol is set up in our heart*. While we worship the Lord, alone, the temple of our heart will be filled with His Glory. But if we set up an idol upon His Throne, we shall soon hear the rushing of wings and the Divine Voice saying, “Let Us go from here.” God and mammon cannot abide in the same house! Remember that you serve a jealous God and be very careful not to provoke Him to jealousy. Every idol must be cast down, or His comfortable Presence cannot be enjoyed.

Coldness of heart towards God is another cause of the loss of enjoyment of His favor. When the heart grows spiritually cold, the whole being soon gets out of order. If the heart is warm and vigorous, the pulsations throughout the entire frame will be kept strong and healthy, but when the heart is cold, the blood will be chilled in the veins and all the powers will be numbed and paralyzed. So, Beloved, see to it that in the power of the Holy Spirit you maintain the love of your espousals—that pristine warmth of holy affection which you delighted to manifest when first you knew the Lord—or else you will soon have to cry, “Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses?” Live near to God and this shall not often be your cry! But if you backslide from Him, this shall soon be your sorrowful enquiry. If you have to mourn an absent God, seek to know the reason why He has withdrawn Himself from you—and repent of the sin that has separated you from Him.

IV. Now, Lastly, LET US REMEMBER THAT THE DIVINE COVENANT REMAINS FIRM AND STEADFAST UNDER ALL CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES. The Covenant made with David was established by the oath of God. And Paul, writing to the Hebrews, says that “God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two Immutable things, in which

it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

For our consolation, let us remember, first, that the *parties to the Covenant are always the same*. God has not one set of chosen ones today and another set tomorrow. In the Lamb’s Book of Life there are not erasures of certain names and the insertion of others in their place. No, Beloved, that is not the way in which the Lord deals with His elect—He does not play fast and loose with them like that. He does not love them one day, and hate them the next. Oh, no!—

**“Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end.”**

And, next, *the Seal of the Covenant is always the same*. It is sealed with the precious blood of Jesus! His one great Sacrifice on Calvary made the Covenant forever sure—

**“’Tis signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well.”**

We do not seal the Covenant—Christ has done that—it is His blood that makes the Covenant sure to all for whom He stood as Surety and Substitute. This is our consolation even when we have no present enjoyment of the blessings that are secured to us by the Covenant. Even the sealing of the Spirit is not the Seal of the Covenant, though it is to us the certain evidence of our interest in the Covenant—it is like a seal on our copy of the Covenant, the great deed itself, sealed with the blood of Jesus, is safely preserved in the archives of Heaven where none can mutilate or steal or destroy it!

Further, *the efficacy of the Covenant is always the same*. It is not like human covenants which may or may not be fulfilled, or which may become void through lapse of time. This Covenant is *eternal*, covering past, present and future—and it shall be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle, for He who swore unto David will certainly perform all that He has promised to His own chosen people—

**“The Voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”**

When God said, “Let there be light,” there was light. And when that same God says, “Let there be light in that dark soul,” the light at once enters the heart and it is Divinely illuminated! Thus it has come to pass that we who were sometimes darkness, now are light in the Lord. And to us comes the Apostolic injunction, “Walk as children of light.” The efficacy of the Covenant does not depend upon us—if it did, it would be a poor, feeble, fickle thing that would fail us just when we needed it most! There would be no hope of our ever getting to Heaven if we had to depend upon our own efforts, or our own merits, or anything of our own—our comfort arises from the fact that the Covenant is made on our behalf by our great Representative and Redeemer, who will, Himself, see that all that is guaranteed to us in the Covenant is fulfilled in due season! There rolls the glorious chariot of salvation in which all Believers are riding to Heaven! Death and Hell cannot stop it! All the fears of any who are in it will

not affect their eternal safety and not one of them shall be found to be missing in the day when the roll of the redeemed is called in Glory! Be of good courage, Believer, for you are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! Even though you have, for a while, to mourn the loss of the Lord's former loving kindnesses, search your heart to see how far that loss has been caused by your own sin. And then return to the Lord with all your heart and He will renew to you His former favors and give to you new mercies of which you have not as yet even dreamed!

As for those here who have no former loving kindnesses of the Lord to which they can look back, I pray that this may be the beginning of better days for them. May they think of the mercies which the Lord has bestowed upon others and may they cry unto Him, "Lord, do to us as You have done to them! Adopt us into Your family as Your sons and Your daughters, and let us share in all the blessings that You give to Your children!" Remember, dear Friends, that it is by simple and sincere faith in the crucified Christ of Calvary that sinners are eternally saved! It is by His blood that we who once were afar off, are now made near! Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed or confounded! Therefore, my Hearer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and God shall be glorified. So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 89.**

Verses 1, 2. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* [See Sermon #1565, Volume 26—MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJESTIC SONG—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Here is an eternal song concerning eternal mercy! The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, so the saints' praise for the never-ending mercy must itself be without end. The Psalmist has made known God's faithfulness to all generations, not only by speaking of it, but especially by writing of it, for that which is written abides when that which is merely spoken is soon forgotten. God's faithfulness concerns Heaven as well as earth and He will establish it "in the very heavens."

3, 4. *I have made a Covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* The complete fulfillment of this glorious Covenant promise concerns not only David and his seed, but "great David's greater Son" and His spiritual seed—the chosen people with whom the Lord has made "an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

5-7. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonders O LORD: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be li-*

kened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him. A holy reverence is becoming in all who draw near to the thrice-holy Jehovah, whether in the upper sanctuary or in the congregation of the saints on earth! In His gracious condescension, He allows His people wondrous familiarity in their approaches to Him, yet this must never make them forget the Infinite distance that separates the Creator from even the highest and holiest of His creatures!

8-10. *O LORD God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You or to Your faithfulness round about You? You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, You still them. You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm.* The ruling of the raging of the sea, the stilling of the stormy waves and the breaking and scattering of the might of Egypt are used by the Psalmist to illustrate the Omnipotence of Jehovah, before which the mightiest monarch on earth had no more power than if it had been a corpse!

11, 12. *The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.* The Psalmist rejoices in the Lord as the Creator and Possessor of the heavens above and the earth beneath. “All things were created by Him, and for Him.”

13. *You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.* [See Sermons #674, Volume 12—THE MIGHTY ARM and #1314, Volume 22 which has the same title—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Amid all the varying expressions that the Psalmist uses, he continues to admire and magnify God’s majestic might. Whether for the defense of His people or the overthrow of His enemies, His arm is mighty, yes, more than that, for it is Almighty! No human language can adequately describe that glorious hand which has only to be opened to satisfy the desire of every living thing!

14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your Throne: mercy and truth shall go before Your face.* What blessed heralds does the Lord employ! “Mercy and truth shall go before Your face.” It is these gracious attributes, especially as they are displayed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that enable us even to welcome those sterner attributes—“justice and judgment,” which are the habitation of God’s Throne.

15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* There are many that hear it, but perhaps not one out of a thousand of them that really know it. The hearing of the joyful sound is not sufficient to make people blessed, though faith comes by hearing—it is the understanding of what is meant by the glad tidings—it is the reception of the Gospel message which brings immediate and eternal blessedness!

15. *They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your Countenance.* The practical effect of a saving knowledge of the Gospel is a holy walk, a walk of communion with God! Dear Friends, do you walk in that way? Do you know the joyful sound? Can you discern the difference between the true and the false Gospel? Can you distinguish the contrast between the harmonies of the one and the discords of the other? Do you know the inner secret of the heavenly music? Has it ever vibrated in your own souls? Happy are you if this is the case with you! The Psalmist goes on to show how such people are blessed.

16. *In Your name shall they rejoice all the day.* They shall not have mere passing fits of joy, but they shall be glad from morning to night!

16. *And in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.* They shall mount to a higher platform of joy than that on which the men of the world are standing! They shall be lifted up in soul and spirit by the righteousness of God, especially as they see how that great attribute guarantees their eternal salvation!

17-19. *For You are the Glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then You spoke in vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.* [See Sermon #11, Volume 1—THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is the very marrow of the Gospel! This is, indeed, “the joyful sound” which makes us truly blessed—the fact that God did, of old, exalt “One chosen out of the people,” with whom He entered into an Eternal Covenant, pledging Himself to bless us through Him.

20. *I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him.* David was the means of bringing great blessings to the people over whom he ruled. God blessed the whole nation through him and the Covenant made with David was virtually a Covenant made with all the people of Israel. In like manner, the Covenant made with “great David’s greater Son” is virtually made with all those for whom He stood as Surety and Representative. The essence of the Gospel lies in the Covenant which God has made with His Son, Jesus Christ, on behalf of all His chosen people. Notice that God found David and anointed him as king, even as He has taken the Lord Jesus, and anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

21. *With whom My hand shall be established: My arm also shall strengthen him.* The Omnipotence of God is manifested in Christ, for He is “the power of God” as well as “the wisdom of God.”

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.* “The son of wickedness” did afflict David for a while, but afterwards he came to the throne and ruled gloriously over God’s ancient people. So is it with our Covenant Lord and King. The wicked cannot now exact upon Him, nor afflict Him—He sits upon the Throne of God in Glory far beyond their reach!

23. *And I will beat down His foes before His face, and plague them that hate Him.* Who can ever stand up in opposition to Christ? He is that stone of which He, Himself, said, “Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

24. *But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with Him: and in My name shall His horn be exalted.* God is always with His Son, Jesus Christ, in the plenitude of His faithfulness and mercy, to make Him a continual blessing to His people.

25. *I will set His hand also in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers.* Our King is a great King and He rules over sea and land—there is no limit to His dominions—and there will be no end to His righteous rule.

26. *He shall cry unto Me, You are My Father, My God, and the rock of My salvation.* All God’s children are a praying family and His only-begotten and well-beloved Son sets a noble example in this respect as well as in everything else! He is still the great Intercessor before the Throne of His Father.

27. *Also I will make Him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* Christ is, indeed, “higher than the kings of the earth,” for He is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Do not your hearts rejoice as you think of this blessed King with whom God has entered into a Covenant to bless all who are trusting in Him, even the very poorest and feeblest of them? What a joy it is to us to see Jesus striking hands with the Eternal and entering into an Everlasting Covenant on our behalf!

28, 29. *My mercy will I keep for Him forevermore, and My Covenant shall stand fast with Him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and His Throne as the days of Heaven.* There can never be an end to the Throne of Christ, for His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom and there can never be an end to the family of Christ, for His seed shall endure forever!

30-32. *If His children forsake My Law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then—“Then”—what? “I will destroy them, and sweep them away forever”? Oh, no! “Then”—*

32. *Will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* There is no sword in God’s hand to be used against His own children, but He does hold a rod—and that rod makes us smart and causes the blueness of the wound which cleanses away evil. We are grieved when we feel its strokes, yet there is Covenant Mercy in them. The rod of the Covenant is one of the best things that ever comes to us, since it whips our folly out of us! God grant us Grace to kiss the rod whenever we transgress against Him and He visits our iniquity with stripes!

33. *Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from Him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.* Notice the use of the word, “Him,” here, as if it was intended to teach us that God’s love to His dear Son, and to

His people in Him, is so great that though He may chasten us for our transgressions, He will never cast us away.

34-37. *My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven. Selah.* In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the dynasty of David shall endure forever, and the spiritual seed of Christ shall also never come to an end. By the most binding Covenant and the most solemn pledge, and the most sacred oath, Jehovah has guaranteed the everlasting Kingdom of His Son and the eternal endurance of “His seed.”

38-45. *But You have cast off and abhorred, You have been angry with Your anointed. You have made void the Covenant of Your servant: You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. You have broken down all his hedges; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. All that pass by the way plunder him: he is a reproach to his neighbors. You have set up the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies to rejoice. You have also turned the edge of his sword, and have not made him to stand in the battle. You have made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth have You shortened: You have covered him with shame. Selah.* Spiritually, this sad description reveals the sorrowful state of the professing Church of Christ in the times in which we live.

46. *How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Shall Your wrath burn like fire?* That was the wisest thing for the Psalmist to do, and it is our best course, also. In the darkest days of the most sinful age, we can always resort to prayer. Let us do so.

47, 48. *Remember how short my time is: Therefore have You made all men in vain? What man is he that lives, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.* The brevity of life makes it all the more important that we should waste none of it—and that we should appeal to the Lord to interpose speedily on the behalf of His Truth and those who love it.

49-52. *Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses, which You swore unto David in Your truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; wherewith Your enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the LORD forevermore. Amen and Amen.* The Psalm ends upon its keynote of praise unto Jehovah. There had been much to sadden the writer, as there is much to sadden us in these days. But we can unite with him in saying, “Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen and Amen.”

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

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

THE GLORIOUS HABITATION

NO. 46

**SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK..**

***“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”
Psalm 90:1.***

Moses was the Inspired author of three devotional compositions. We first of all find him as Moses the poet, singing the song which is aptly joined with that of Jesus in the Book of Revelation, where it says, “The song of Moses and of the Lamb.” He was a poet on the occasion when Pharaoh and his hosts were cast into the Red Sea, “His chosen captains also were drowned in the Red Sea.” Further on in his life we discover him in the character of a preacher and then his Doctrine distilled as the dew and his speech dropped like the rain in those chapters which are full of glorious imagery and rich with poetry which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy. And now in the Psalms we find him the author of a prayer—“A prayer of Moses, the man of God.” Happy combination of the poet, the preacher and the man of prayer! Where three such things are found together, the man becomes a very giant above his fellows! It often happens that the man who preaches has but little poetry and the man who is the poet, would not be able to preach and utter his poems before immense assemblies but would be only fit to write them by himself. It is a rare combination when true devotion and the spirit of poetry and eloquence meet in the same man. You will see in this Psalm a wondrous depth of spirituality. You will mark how the poet subsides into the man of God and how, lost in himself, he sings his own frailty, declares the Glory of God and asks that he may have the blessing of his heavenly Father always resting on his head.

This first verse will derive peculiar interest if you remember the place where Moses was when he thus prayed. He was in the wilderness. Not in some of the halls of Pharaoh, nor yet in a habitation in the land of Goshen, but in a wilderness. And perhaps from the summit of the hill, looking upon the tribes of Israel as they were taking up their tents and marching along, he thought, “Ah, poor travelers, they seldom rest anywhere. They have not any settled habitation where they can dwell. Here they have no continuing city.” But he lifted his eyes above and he said, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Passing his eyes back through history, he saw one great temple where God’s people had dwelt. And with his prophetic eyes rolling with sacred frenzy, he could foresee that throughout the future, the specially chosen of God

would be able to sing, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Taking this verse as the subject of our discourse this morning, we shall, first of all, *explain* it. And then we shall try and do what the old Puritans called, “*improve*” it—by which they did *not* mean improve the *text*, but improve the people a little by the consideration of the verse!

I. First we will try to explain it somewhat. Here is a *habitation*—“Lord, You have been our dwelling place,” and secondly, if I may use such a common word, here is *the lease of it*—“You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

First then, here is a *habitation*—“Lord, You have been our habitation.” The mighty Jehovah, who fills all immensity—the Eternal, Everlasting, Great I Am—does not refuse to allow figures concerning Himself. Though He is so high that the eyes of angels have not seen Him. Though He is so lofty that the wings of cherub have not reached Him. Though He is so great that the utmost extent of the travels of immortal spirits have never discovered the limit of Himself—yet He does not object that His people should speak of Him thus familiarly—and should say, “Jehovah You have been our dwelling place.” We shall understand this figure, better, by contrasting the thought with the state of Israel in the wilderness. Secondly by making mention of some things by way of comparison which are peculiar to our house and which we never can enjoy if we are not the possessors of a dwelling place of our own.

First, we shall contrast this thought, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place,” with the peculiar position of the Israelites as they were traveling through the wilderness.

We remark, first, that *they must have been in a state of great uneasiness*. At nightfall, or when the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched and they laid themselves down to rest. Perhaps on the morrow, before the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded. They stirred themselves from their beds and found the ark was in motion. The fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow passages of the mountain up the hillside, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to arrange their little property in their tents and make all things comfortable for themselves before they heard the sound of, “Away! Away! Away! This is not your rest. You must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!” They could not plant a little patch of ground around their tent. They could not lay out their house in order and arrange their furniture. They could not become attached to the spot of ground. Even though just now their father had been buried in a place where a tent had tarried for a time, yet they must be off! They must have no attachment to the place—they must have nothing of what we call comfort, ease and peace—but be always journeying, always traveling. Moreover, so exposed were they that they never could be very easy in

their tents. At one time the sand, with the hot wind behind it, would drive through the tent and cover them almost to burial. On frequent occasions the hot sun would scorch them and their canvas would scarcely be a preservation. At another time the biting north wind would freeze around them so that within their tents they sat shivering and cowering around their fires. They had little ease. But behold the contrast which Moses, the Man of God, discerns with gratitude, "You are not our tent, but You are our dwelling place. Though we are uneasy, here, though we are tossed from side to side by troubles. Though we travel through a wilderness and find it a rough pathway. Though when we sit down, here, we know not what comfort means—O Lord, in You we possess all the comforts which a house can afford! We have all that a mansion or palace can give the prince who can loll upon his couch and rest upon his bed of down. Lord, You are to us comfort! You are a house and habitation." Have you ever known what it is to have God for your dwelling place in the sense of comfort? Do you know what it is when you have storms behind you, to feel like a seabird blown to the land by the very storm? Do you know what it is when you have been caged, sometimes, by adversity, to have the string cut by Divine Grace and like the pigeon that flies at once to its own dovecot, have you sped your way across the ether and found yourself in God? Do you know what it is, when you are tossed on the waves, to go down into the depths of the Godhead, there rejoicing that not a wave of trouble ruffles your spirit but that you are serenely at home with God, your own Almighty Father? Can you, amidst all the uneasiness of this desert journey, find a comfort? Is the breast of Jesus a sweet pillow for your head? Can you lie thus on the breast of Deity? Can you put yourself on the stream of Providence and float along without a struggle while angels sing around you—Divinely guided, Divinely led—"We are bearing you along the stream of Providence to the ocean of eternal bliss"? Do you know what it is to lie on God, to give up all care, to drive anxiety away and there—not in a recklessness of spirit, but in a holy carelessness—to be careful for nothing, "but in everything by supplication to make known your needs unto God"? If so, you have gained the first idea—"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations."

Again, the Israelites were *very much exposed to all kinds of curious creatures*, owing to their residing in tents and their habits of wandering. At one time the fiery serpent was their foe. By night the wild beasts prowled around them. Unless that fiery pillar had been a wall of fire around them and a glory in their midst, they might all have fallen a prey to the wild monsters that roamed the deserts! Worse foes they found in humankind. The enemy rushed down from the mountains—wild wandering hordes constantly attacked them. They never felt themselves secure, for they were travelers through an enemy's country. They were hastening

across a land where they were not wanted, to another land that was providing means to oppose them when they should arrive! Such is the Christian. He is journeying through an enemy's land—every day he is exposed to danger. His tent may be broken down by death. The slanderer is behind him, the open foe is before him. The wild beast that prowls by night and the pestilence that wastes by day continually seek his destruction. He finds no rest where he is. He feels himself exposed. But, says Moses, "Though we live in a tent exposed to wild beasts and fierce men, yet You are our habitation. In You we find no exposure. Within You we find ourselves secure and in Your glorious Person we dwell as in an impregnable tower of defense, safe from every fear and alarm, knowing that we are secure." O Christian, have you ever known what it is to stand in the midst of battles with arrows flying thick around you—more than your shield can catch—and yet you have been as secure as if you were folding your arms and resting within the walls of some strong bastion where arrow could not reach you and where even the sound of trumpet could not disturb your ears? Have you known what it is to dwell securely in God—to enter into the Most High and laugh to scorn the anger, the frowns, the sneers, the contempt, the slander and calumny of men? To ascend into the sacred place of the pavilion of the Most High and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty and to feel yourself secure? And mark you, you may do this! In times of pestilence it is possible to walk in the midst of cholera and death, singing—

***"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please, I cannot die!"***

It is possible to stand exposed to the utmost degree of danger and yet to feel such a holy serenity that we can laugh at fear. We become too great, too mighty, too powerful through God to stoop for one moment to the cowardice of trembling—"We know whom we have believed and we are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him." When homeless men wander. When poor distressed spirits, beaten by the storm, find no refuge, we enter into God! And shutting behind us the door of faith, we say, "Howl you winds! Blow you tempests! Roar you wild beasts! Come on you robbers—

***"He that has made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode!
Shall walk all day beneath His shade
And there at night shall rest his head!"***

Lord, in this sense, You have been our habitation.

Again, poor Israel in the wilderness *was continually exposed to change*. They were never in one place long. Sometimes they might tarry for a month in one spot—just near the seventy palm trees. What a sweet and pleasant place to go out each morning, to sit beside the well and drink that clear stream! "Onward!" cries Moses. And he takes them to a place where the bare rocks stand out from the mountainside and the red burn-

ing sand is beneath their feet. Vipers spring up around them and thorny bushes grow instead of pleasing vegetation. What a change they have! Yet another day they shall come to a place that shall be still more dreary. They walk through a canyon so close and narrow that the frightened rays of the sun scarcely dare enter such a prison lest they should never find their way out again! They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle. Never time to say, "Now we are secure—we shall dwell in this place." Here again, the contrast casts light upon the text—"Ah," says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich today and poor tomorrow. He may be sickly today and well tomorrow. He may be in happiness today, tomorrow he may be distressed. But there is no change with regard to his relationship to God! If He loved me yesterday, He loves me today! I am neither better nor worse in God than I ever was! Let prospects be blighted, let hopes be blasted, let joy be withered, let mildews destroy everything—I have lost nothing of what I have in God! He is my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort. The Christian never becomes poorer nor never grows richer with regard to God. "Here," he can say, "is a thing that never can pass away or change. On the brow of the Eternal there is never a furrow. His hair is unwhitened by age. His arm is unpalsied by weakness. His heart does not change in its affections—His will does not vary in its purpose. He is the Immutable Jehovah standing fast and forever! "You are our habitation! As the house changes not, but stands in the same place, so have I found You from my youth up. When first I was cast upon You from my mother's breast, I found You my God of Providence. When first I knew You by that spiritual knowledge which You, alone, can give, I found You a sure habitation. And I find You such now. Yes, when I shall be old and gray-headed, I know You will not forsake me! You will be the same dwelling place in all generations."

One thought more in contrasting the position of the Israelites with ourselves—that is *weariness*. How weary must Israel have been in the wilderness! How tired must have been the soles of their feet with their constant journeys! They were not in a place of repose, luxury and rest, but in a land of journeying and weariness and trouble. I think I see them traveling, frequently wiping the burning sweat from their brows and saying, "Oh, that we had a habitation where we might rest! Oh, that we could enter a land of vines and pomegranates, a city where we might enjoy immunity from alarm! God has promised it to us, but we have not found it. There remains a rest for the people of God—O that we might find it!" Christian, God is your habitation in this sense! He is your rest and you will never find rest except in Him. I defy a man who has no God to have a soul at rest. He who has not Jesus for his Savior will always be a restless spirit. Read some of Byron's verses and you will find him, (if he

were truly picturing himself), to be the very personification of that spirit who walked to and fro, seeking rest and finding none. Here is one of his verses—

***“I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home and a rest—
A balm for the sickness of care
A bliss for a bosom unblest.”***

Read the lives of any men who have had no Gospel justification, or have had no knowledge of God and you will find that they were like the poor bird that had its nest pulled down and knew not where to rest, flying about, wandering and seeking a habitation. Some of you have tried to find rest out of God. You have sought to find it in your wealth. But you have pricked your head when you have laid it on that pillow! You have sought it in a friend, but that friend’s arm has been a broken reed where you hoped it would be a wall of strength! You will never find rest except in God. There is no refuge but in Him. Oh, what rest and composure are there in Him! It is more than sleep, more than calm, more than quiet, deeper than the dead stillness of the noiseless sea in its utmost depths where it is undisturbed by the slightest ripple and winds can never intrude. There is a holy calm and sweet repose which only the Christian knows—something like the slumbering stars up there in beds of azure. Or like the seraphic rest which we may suppose beatified spirits have when they are before the Throne of God—there is a rest so deep and calm, so still and quiet, so profound that we find no words to describe it! You have tried it and can rejoice in it. You know that the Lord has been your dwelling place—your sweet, calm, constant home where you can enjoy peace in all generations. But I have dwelt too long upon this part of the subject, so I will speak of it in a different way.

First of all, *the dwelling place of man is the place where he can unbend himself and feel himself at home and speak familiarly.* In this pulpit I must somewhat check my words. I deal with men of the world who watch my speech and are ever on the catch. Men who wish to have this or that to criticize—I must be on my guard. So you men of business, when you are on the exchange, or in your shop, have to guard yourselves. What does the man do at home? He can lay bare his breast and do and say as he pleases—it is his own house—his dwelling place. And is he not master there? Shall he not do as he will with his own? Assuredly, for he feels himself at home! Ah, my Beloved, do you ever find yourself in God to be at home? Have you been with Christ and told your secrets in His ear and found that you could do so without reserve? We do not generally tell secrets to other people, for if we do and make them promise that they *will never* tell them, they will never tell them except to the first person they meet! Most persons who have secrets told them are like the lady of whom it is said she never told her secrets except to two sorts of persons—those that asked her and those that did not. You must not trust men of the

world! But do you know what it is to tell all your secrets to God in prayer, to whisper all your thoughts to Him? You are not ashamed to confess your sins to Him with all their aggravations. You make no apologies to God but you put in every aggravation and you describe all the depths of your baseness. Then, as for those little needs you would be ashamed to tell to another—before God you can tell them all! You can tell Him your grief that you would not whisper to your dearest friend. With God, you can always be at home. You need be under no restraint. The Christian at once gives God the key of his heart and lets Him turn everything over. He says, “Here is the key of every cabinet. It is my desire that You would open them all. If there are jewels, they are Yours. And if there are things that should not be there, drive them out. Search me and try my heart.” The more God lives in the Christian, the better the Christian loves Him. The oftener God comes to see him, the better he loves his God. And God loves His people all the more when they are familiar with Him! Can you say in this sense, “Lord, You have been my dwelling place”?

Then again, *man’s home is the place where his affections are centered*. God deliver us from those men who do not love their homes! Lives there a man so base, so dead, that he has no affection for his own house? If so, surely the spark of Christianity must have died entirely out! It is *natural* that men should love their homes. It is *spiritual* that they should love them. In our homes we find those to whom we must and always shall be most attached. There our best friends and kindred dwell. When we wander, we are as birds that have left their nests and can find no settled home. We wish to go back and to see again that smile—to grasp once more that loving hand and to find that we are with those to whom the ties of affection have knit us! We wish to feel—and every Christian will feel—with regard to his own family that they are the warp and woof of his nature, that he has become a part and portion of them. And there he centers his affection. He cannot afford to lavish his love everywhere. He centers it in that particular spot, that oasis in this dark desert world. Christian, is God your habitation in that sense? Have you given your whole soul to God? Do you feel you can bring your whole heart to Him and say, “O God! I love You from my soul! With the most impassioned earnestness I love you”?—

***“The dearest idol I have known—
Whatever that idol be—
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee!”***

O God! Though I sometimes wander, yet I love You in my wanderings and my heart is fixed on You. What though the creature does beguile me, I detest that creature. It is to me as the apple of Sodom. You are the Master of my soul, the Emperor of my heart. No vice-regent, but King of kings! My spirit is fixed on You as the center of my soul—

***“You are the sea of love
Where all my pleasures roll
The circle where my passions move—
The center of my soul.”***

“O God! You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

My next remark is concerning the *lease of this dwelling place*. God is the Believer’s habitation. Sometimes, you know, people get turned out of their houses, or their houses tumble down about their ears. It is never so with ours—God is our dwelling place throughout all generations. Let us look back in times past and we shall find that God has been our habitation—oh, the old house at home! Who does not love it, the place of our childhood, the old roof tree, the old cottage? There is no village in all the world half as good as that particular village where we were born! True, the gates, stiles and posts have been altered. But still there is an attachment to those old houses, the old tree in the park and the old ivy-mantled tower. It is not very picturesque, perhaps, but we love to go see it. We like to see the haunts of our boyhood. There is something pleasant in those old stairs where the clock used to stand—and the room where Grandmother was accustomed to bend her knee and where we had family prayer. There is no place like that house! Well, Beloved, God has been the habitation of the Christian in years gone by. Christian, your house is, indeed, a venerable house and you have long dwelt there! You dwelt there in the Person of Christ long before you were brought into this sinful world. And it is to be your dwelling place throughout all generations. You are never to ask for another house. You will always be contented with that one you have. You will never wish to change your habitation. And if you wished it, you could not, for He is your dwelling place in all generations! God give you to know what it is to take this house in its long lease and always to have God for your dwelling place!

II. Now I come to improve this text somewhat. First, let us improve it to SELF-EXAMINATION. How may we know whether we are Christians or not? Whether the Lord is our dwelling place and will be throughout all generations? I shall give you some hints for self-examination by referring you to several passages which I have looked up in the first Epistle of John. It is remarkable that almost the only Scriptural writer who speaks of God as a dwelling place is that most loving Apostle, John, out of whose Epistle we have been reading.

He gives us in his First Epistle, the 12th verse of the 4th Chapter, one means of knowing whether we are living in God—“*If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us.*” And again, further on, he says, “And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love. And he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him.” You may then tell whether you are a tenant of this great spiritual house by the love you have towards others! Have you a love towards the saints? Well, then you are a saint yourself! The goats will not love the sheep. And

if you love the sheep, it is an evidence that you are a sheep yourself. Many of the Lord's weak family never can get any other evidences of their conversion except this—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And though that is a very little evidence, yet it is such a one that the strongest faith often cannot get a much better. What? Has the devil told you you are not the Lord's? Poor Faint-Heart, do you love the Lord's people? "Yes," you say, "I love to see their faces and to hear their prayers. I could almost kiss the hem of their garments." Is it so? And would you give to them if they were poor? Would you visit them if they were sick and tend to them if they needed assistance? "Ah, yes." Then fear not! You who love God's people. You must love the Master. We know we dwell in God if we love one another.

In the 13th verse is another sign—"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because *He has given us of His Spirit.*" Have we ever had the Spirit of God in us? That is one of the most solemn questions I can ask. Many of you know what it is to be excited by religious feeling who never had the Spirit of God. Many of us have great need to tremble lest we should not have received that Spirit. I have tried, myself, scores of times, in different ways, to see whether I really am a possessor of the Spirit of God or not. I know that the people of the world scoff at the idea and say, "It is impossible for anybody to have the Spirit of God." Then it is impossible for anybody to go to Heaven! For we *must* have the Spirit of God—we must be *born-again* of the Spirit before we can enter there! What a serious question this is—"Have I the Spirit of God in me?" True, my soul is at times lifted on high and I feel that I could sing like a seraph. True, sometimes I am melted down by deep devotion and I could pray in terrible solemnity. But so can hypocrites, perhaps. Have I the Spirit of God? Have you any evidence within you that you have the Spirit? Are you sure that you are not laboring under a delusion and a dream? Have you actually the Spirit of God within you? If so, you dwell in God. That is the second sign.

But the Apostle gives another sign in the 15th verse—"Whoever shall confess that *Jesus is the Son of God*, God dwells in him and he in God." The confession of our faith in the Savior is another sign that we live in God. Oh, Poor-Heart, can you not come under *this* sign? You may have but little boldness, but can you not say, "I believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"? If so, you dwell in God! Many of you, I know, say, "When I hear a sermon, I feel affected by it. When I am in the House of God, I feel like a child of God, but the business, cares and troubles of life take me off and then I fear I am not." But you can say, "I do believe in Christ. I know I cast myself on His mercy and hope to be saved by Him." Then do not say you are not a child of God if you have faith!

But there is one more sign whereby we ought to examine ourselves, in the 3rd Chapter, 24th verse—"he that keeps His commandments dwells in

Him and He in him.” Obedience to the commandments of God is a blessed sign of a dwelling in God! Some of you have a deal of religious talk, but not much religious walk. A large stock of outside piety, but not much real inward piety which develops itself in your actions. That is a hint for some of you who know that it is *right to be baptized and are not*. You know it is one of the commandments of God, that “he that believes shall be baptized,” and you are neglecting what you know to be your duty. You are dwelling in God, I doubt not, but you lack one evidence of it, namely—obedience to God’s commandments. Obey God and then you will know that you are dwelling in Him!

But I have another word by way of improvement and that is one of CONGRATULATION. You who dwell in God, allow me to congratulate you. Thrice happy men are you if you are dwelling in God! You need not blush to compare yourselves with angels. You need not think that any on earth can share such happiness as yours! Zion, oh, how blessed are you, freed from all sins! Now you are, through Christ, made to dwell in God and, therefore, are eternally secure. I congratulate you, Christians! First, in that you have such a *magnificent house* to dwell in. You have not a palace that shall be as gorgeous as Solomon’s—a mighty palace as immense as the dwellings of the kings of Assyria, or Babylon—but you have a God that is more than mortal creatures can behold! You dwell in an immortal fabric. You dwell in the Godhead—something which is beyond all human skill! I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in such a *perfect house*. There never was a house on earth that could not be made a little better. But the house you dwell in has everything you need. In God you have all you require. I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in a house that shall *last forever*. A dwelling place that shall not pass away! When this world shall have been scattered like a dream—when, like the bubble on the breaker, creation shall have died away—when all this universe shall have died out like a spark from an expiring brand, your house shall live and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, *for it is God!* Be happy, then!

Now, lastly, a word of ADMONITION AND WARNING to some of you. My Hearers, what a pity it is that we have to divide our congregation—that we cannot speak to you in a mass as being all Christians! This morning I would that I could take God’s Word and address it to you all—that you all might share the sweet promises it contains. But some of you would not have them if I were to offer them! Some of you despise Christ, my blessed Master! Many of you think sin but a trifle and Grace to be worthless. You think Heaven is a vision, and Hell a fiction. Some of you are careless and hardened and thoughtless—without God and without Christ! Oh, my Hearers, I wonder at myself that I should have so little benevolence that I do not preach more fervently to you! I think if I could get a right estimate of your souls’ value, I would not speak as I do now,

with stammering tongue, but with flaming words! I have great cause to blush at my own slothfulness, though God knows I have strived to preach His Truth as vehemently as possible and would spend myself in His service. But I wonder why I do not stand in every street in London and preach His Truth! When I think of the thousands of souls in this great city that have never heard of Jesus, that have never listened to Him. When I think of how much ignorance exists and how little Gospel preaching there is, how few souls are saved, I think—O God, what little Grace I must have, that I do not strive more for souls!

One word by way of *warning*. Do you know, poor Soul, that you have not a house to live in? You have a house for your body, but no house for your soul. Have you ever seen a poor girl at midnight sitting down on a door step crying? Somebody passes by and says, "Why do you sit here?" "I have no house, Sir. I have no home." "Where is your father?" "My father's dead, Sir." "Where is your mother?" "I have no mother, Sir." "Have you no friends?" "No friends at all." "Have you no house?" "No, I have none. I am homeless." And she shivers in the chill air and gathers her poor ragged shawl around her and cries again, "I have no house—I have no home." Would you not pity her? Would you blame her for her tears? Ah, there are some of you that have homeless souls here, this morning! It is something to have a homeless body. But to think of a homeless soul! I think I see you in eternity, sitting on the doorstep of Heaven. An angel says, "What? Have you no house to live in?" "No house," says the poor soul. "Have you no father?" "No, God is not my father. And there is none beside Him." "Have you no mother?" "No. The Church is not my mother, I never sought her ways, nor loved Jesus. I have neither father nor mother." "Have you no house, then?" "No, I am a homeless soul."

But there is one thing worse about that—homeless souls have to be sent into Hell! To a dungeon. To a lake that burns with fire. Homeless soul! In a little while your body will be gone. And where will you house yourself when the hot hail of eternal vengeance comes from Heaven? Where will you hide your guilty head when the winds of the Last Judgment Day shall sweep on you with fury? Where will you shelter yourself when the blast of the Terrible One shall be as a storm against a wall—when the darkness of eternity comes upon you and Hell thickens round you? It will be all in vain for you to cry, "Rocks, hide me! Mountains, fall upon me!"—the rocks will not obey you, the mountains will not hide you. Caverns would be palaces if you could dwell in them, but there will be no caverns for you to hide your head in. You will be homeless souls, homeless spirits, wandering through Hell tormented, destitute, afflicted! And that throughout eternity! Poor homeless Soul, do you need a house? I have a house to let this morning for every sinner who feels his misery—do you need a house for your soul? Then I will condescend to men of low estate and tell you in homely language that I have a house to let!

Do you ask me what is the purchase price? I will tell you. It is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is *without money and without price*. Ah, you would like to pay some rent wouldn't you? You would love to do *something* to win Christ. Then you cannot have the house! It is "without money and without price." I have told you enough of the house, itself, and, therefore, I will not describe its excellencies. But I will tell you one thing—if you feel you are a homeless soul this morning, you may not have the key tomorrow! If you feel yourself to be a homeless soul, today, you may enter it now! If you had a house of your own, I would not offer it to you. But since you have no other, here it is. Will you take my Master's house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground rent of loving and serving Him forever? Will you take Jesus and dwell in Him throughout eternity? Or will you be content to be a homeless soul? Come inside, Sir. See, it is furnished from top to bottom with all you need. It has cellars filled with gold, more than you will spend as long as you live. It has a parlor where you can entertain yourself with Christ and feast on His love. It has tables well stored with food for you to live on forever. It has a drawing room of brotherly love where you can receive your friends. You will find a resting room up there where you can rest with Jesus! And on the top, there is a lookout from where you can see Heaven, itself! Will you have the house, or will you not? Ah, if you are homeless, you will say, "I should like to have the house. But may I have it?" Yes here is the key. The key is, "Come to Jesus." But you say, "I am too shabby for such a house." Never mind. There are garments inside. As Rowland Hill once said—

***"Come naked, come filthy, come ragged, come poor!
Come wretched, come dirty, come just as you are!"***

If you feel guilty and condemned, come, and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house, by-and-by! He will wash you and cleanse you and you will yet be able to sing with Moses, with the same unfaltering voice, "Lord, You have been my dwelling place throughout all generations."

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

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

THE “BEAU IDEAL” OF LIFE

NO. 2987

A SERMON
ESPECIALLY TO YOUNG MEN,
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1875.

*“O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we
may rejoice and be glad all our days.”
Psalm 90:14.*

MOSES saw, with deep regret, that the great host which came out of Egypt would have to die in the wilderness. Every day there were many funerals, for a vast multitude of men, women and children had to be buried in the wilderness. And tears of sorrow and sympathy must continually have stood in the eyes of the great leader of the children of Israel. After speaking about their days being passed away in God’s wrath, Moses offered a prayer which, under the circumstances, was most natural and most wise. It was in substance this—“Lord, if we must die in this desert. If this whole generation (except Caleb and Joshua) must pass away in the wilderness, then, at any rate, give us the fullness of Your favor now, that we may spend all our remaining days—whether they are to be few or many—in gladness and rejoicing.” Now, seeing that we, also, are all passing away and that whether young or old, we, too, must be carried to the grave unless the Lord should first return, this seems to me to be a very wise prayer for us to put up—“Lord, satisfy us with Your mercy now, that we may waste no more of our life in sinful dissatisfaction, but that from this hour to the last moment of our life, we may be filled with Your favor, and may rejoice and be glad all our days.

I. Just for a minute or two, I want, in the first place, to show you that Moses has here set before us THE “BEAU IDEAL” OF LIFE.

If one could have just such a life as he desired, could he desire anything better than to be satisfied early with God’s favor? Would it not be a very delightful thing if the whole of his life could be spent exactly as it ought to be and could be spent in the enjoyment of the highest degree of happiness of which we are capable? “O satisfy us,” is the prayer of the text—“O satisfy us early with Your mercy.” If the young man—instead of seeking after something which he will still continue to seek after if he is spared to reach the prime of life—and will still seek after even when he grows gray, could get that which would content him at once. If he could get something which would immediately fill his soul and make it run over with thankfulness and joy—would it not be a great blessing to him, especially if he could get it, as Moses says, “early”—soon—in the very beginning of his life? Many men, even good men, have wasted the early

morning of their days. And some have had the painful experience of looking back, in the afternoon of life, upon the best part of their day and even the noontide, all gone—and there has been for them only the evening and, sometimes, only a very short evening to spend in complete satisfaction and real joy. It is a pity that so many Christian's lives should, for all practical purposes, be influential at the end of their stay on earth—that as far as their influence upon others is concerned, they should be merely like the candle-ends that we put upon the save-alls—but the whole candle has never been consumed in giving light in the sanctuary of God. It is a thing to be desired beyond measure that from the first to the last of life, God's blessing should rest upon us and that we should enjoy peace and happiness without any intermingling of the distress which is caused by sin. This, as I have said, seems to me to be the *beau ideal* of life—and I think that all Christians, at least, will agree with me.

It is a poor way of building a house to have a flaw in the foundation, for, however carefully we may build the superstructure, we can never make a satisfactory building because of the flaw down below. It is poor weaving on the part of the man at the loom, when he has a flaw at the beginning of his work—however carefully he may weave the latter portion of it, he will always know that he cannot get that old flaw out—that the piece of cloth will never be perfect. In contrast to this kind of building and weaving, it would be a blessed thing to have such Grace and such wisdom given that the very first course of the foundation of the house of life should be well and truly laid, and that the whole building should be to the praise and glory of God! And it would be equally blessed that the very first throws of the shuttle of the web of life should be in accordance with the right rules for weaving, so that the whole piece of cloth might be pronounced perfect after its kind. I think this is the meaning of the prayer of the text, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

II. Secondly, as we judge this satisfaction to be the beau ideal of life, let us consider HOW SOME PEOPLE HAVE SOUGHT TO ATTAIN IT.

I do not hesitate to say that the first part of the text is the cry of all men—

"O satisfy us, satisfy us, satisfy us!"

But there is a kind of horse-leech in every man's soul that is not easily satisfied. It is like death, the grave and the sea. Whatever may be cast into the mouth of death, it is as hungry as it was before! And the sepulcher is never satisfied and, throw what you will into the sea, it is always ready to receive more. So is it with the hearts of men. "O satisfy us," is the world's cry as the heathens shout to their idol gods and as the priests of Baal cried to their lifeless image. "O satisfy us," is the world's cry today, for man's hunger is insatiable, though he disdains the only food which would satisfy his cravings. "O satisfy us," is the cry which is heard in every quarter of the globe—alas, not ascending to Heaven, as it should, but going out to the things of time and sense! Still do men seek satisfaction in that which Solomon calls "vanity of vanities."

Wise young men pray, in the words of the text, "O satisfy us *early*." They want to get that which is to be the source of their joy, not when they can no longer enjoy it, but *now*, so they cry, "satisfy us early." They do not ask for God's mercy merely as a sort of pension for their old age, but they want to have it now. At any rate, I know that I did, for I wished to obtain whatever of gladness and joy could be had even in my youthful days. There is nothing wrong in desiring to be happy. There is nothing wrong in offering the prayer, "O satisfy us early," so long as that prayer is completed in the way in which my text completes it—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy."

Many have tried to satisfy themselves by gaining money. This is a pursuit in which a man may lawfully engage if it is not the chief objective of his life, as so many make it. They believed that they would be satisfied when they had acquired a certain amount, but they were not. I might confidently ask every man of wealth, now in this world, whether he was satisfied when he reached the amount which he had himself fixed as the limit of his desire? Did he not then feel that he must have more than that amount? Of course he did! So he set before him another sum and he said that when he had accumulated *that* amount, he would be content. But was he? Is not the desire for wealth a thing which grows with that it feeds upon, so that the more a man has, the more he wants? There never did live and there never could live, a man whose entire nature could be satisfied with his worldly possessions. You know that we call the man who delights in hoarding up riches—a miser. Why do we call him by that name unless it is because he is truly miserable? The very name for the man who is engrossed with avarice signifies unhappiness—and when you need to describe somebody who is both aged and wretched, you say, "He is like an old miser." Yes, so he is. Men may amass as much wealth as they will, but if, with the money, they have not acquired something better than the best metal that ever came from the mint or the mine, they will still go on crying, "O satisfy us! O satisfy us!" The Indians of South America believed that the Spaniards' god was made of gold and well they might when they saw the strangers' devotion to their idol! They once poured molten gold down a Spaniard's throat, saying, "You have thirsted for it, now you shall have enough of it." But if a man could eat gold, drink gold, sleep with gold, walk with gold and be robed in gold, yet, still, what is there in that metal which could satisfy the cravings of the highest part of man's nature—that mysterious spiritual thing which is called the soul? No, there is no solid satisfaction for the soul in all the wealth in the world!

Others have despised this gross pursuit and *they have said that satisfaction is to be found in fame.* We, all of us, like respect, esteem, honor. It is false for any man to say that he does not like praise, for he does. And if anyone is pleased at being told that he does not like flattery, he is there being more highly flattered than at any other time of his life—and he is enjoying the sensation! Some men, to gain honors and distinction in various ways, have made complete slaves of themselves.

They have supposed that if they could but get the honors—perhaps the honor of a degree at the university, or the honor of a certain rank in the profession of the law, or even in the church, they would be satisfied. But no man was ever yet satisfied with honors. They are but as a puff of wind which can never fill an immortal soul. If you read the histories of those statesman who have risen to the greatest heights of fame, you will, as a rule, find that the most famous man in the kingdom is generally the greatest slave. He has, from the very weight of his honors, the heavier burden of responsibility to bear. As “uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,” so, in its degree, uneasy lies the head that wears the laurel or the crown. There is no contentment to be found in fame, as those have proved who have won the most of it. There was a time when the flattery of two or three poor people in a village would have satisfied them, but now the plaudits of a whole nation seem as nothing to them—and when the whole world is ringing with their renown, they sit down in despondency, wring their hands in misery, and cry, with Solomon, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

Others have said, “*But surely there is something solid and satisfying in learning.*” Well, there is more to be said for this than for either of the other two things that I have mentioned and, as far as I am concerned, I would sooner seek satisfaction in my library than in the marble halls of the wealthy or in the courts of kings! To study, to read, to make discoveries, to furnish the brain, to enrich the mind—there is something worth doing in all this, yet Solomon, who carried out this idea as far as it could be carried out in his day, recorded his very emphatic verdict concerning it, “Much study is a weariness of the flesh.” “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” is very apt to also be your utterance with regard to study, for you always have the dreary thought that even if you could know more than all other men in the world, when your turn came to sleep in the grave, there would be no difference between you and the peasant of whom Wordsworth wrote—

**“A primrose by a river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”**

If the peasant rises no higher than that, however learned any of us may be, we have only risen a little above him for a time—and in the common dust we, too, shall sleep with him! If there were no eternal futures, what would all the joys of earthly knowledge be worth to us?

Others seek satisfaction in pleasure. I may be addressing some young man who says, “I do not care for wealth. I shall never trouble myself to hoard it. On the contrary, I love to *spend* it! I do not want to use a rake—give me a shovel and I will soon scatter all my father’s substance!” There are some men who are very proficient in scattering what others have gathered with great diligence. These people say concerning study, “Let us get out of these crowded rooms into the pure, fresh air! We mean to go in for pleasure and to enjoy ourselves while we can.” This looks, at first sight, as if it were a prudent thing to do and, certainly, there is a deal more sense in enjoying ourselves in a rational fashion than there can be

in pinching and starving ourselves in order to hoard up money for heirs who will ridicule if they do not actually curse those who have provided so bountifully for them! Remember what Solomon says about others who seek what they call pleasure—"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine." There is no satisfaction there! The merriest man who ever lived—the man who drained the wine-cup of mirth even to its dregs—has dashed it to the ground in his fierce indignation and cursed the day in which he tried to find satisfaction there! Look at those who have gone to the house of the strange woman and see what comes of their sinful sojourning there—even if it is only for a little while. Does not dissipation bring disease and decay upon nature sooner than necessary? There is no satisfaction there, young man! So, if you want to really enjoy yourself, there is a nobler and a surer way of doing so. The way of so-called "pleasure" is a delusion and a snare, and the end thereof is sorrow, suffering and woe! Alas, that so many should continue to walk in a way which has such a sad end!

When a man plays the fool, let him do it for something that is worth having. Some time ago, when we were looking for a place for Messrs. Moody and Sankey to preach and sing, two of our Brothers went to see whether a certain building could be rented and, while they were waiting there, a man came up to them and presented his card—"Mr. So-and-So, clown." He thought our Brothers had gone to engage the place for some amusements! They told him that they had come to engage it for religious services and one of them said to him, "What a pity it is that you should play the fool for money!" I think the clown made a very sensible remark in reply, for he said, "You had better go and talk to those who play the fool and make nothing by it, for there is some sense in playing the fool for money." To play the fool and make nothing by it, is a very mild description of the folly of which I have been speaking! But how many *play the fool and lose money by it*? What is it that clothes so many people in rags? What is it that makes so many have red eyes, trembling limbs and even *delirium tremens*? What is that but playing the fool and losing by it? And what will it be when such a man comes to die—a man who has lived without God, without Christ and who will be without hope in his death? That will be playing the fool with a vengeance! And the Truth of God will come home to him that the eternal ruin of his soul is the cost of his folly!

If you were to realize what this kind of "pleasure" means, you would have nothing to do with it! When Mount Vesuvius suddenly began pouring forth its lava upon Pompeii, most of the inhabitants were assembled in the amphitheatre. I have seen the ruins of the place where they were gathered. I do not know what spectacle was on at the time, but however interesting it may have been, there was not a man, or woman, or child who did not run as fast as they could to wherever they hoped they might find a place of refuge! A few persons remained in their habitations,

or were unable to escape—and there they are to this day. Some of their bodies have been lately discovered in the very positions in which they were overtaken by the eruption. If men were wise, the merriest play that ever was acted upon the face of the earth, the richest golden gains that ever lay before a merchant, the choicest pleasures that ever tempted the human heart would never induce them to tarry till they were forever lost—but they would be up and away and never rest till they had escaped from the wrath to come!

Some seem to have no real objective in life. I think I hear someone say, "Well, I have cared for none of those things that you have mentioned." Where then, my Friend, have you tried to find satisfaction? "Oh, I have not troubled my head about that! I just plod along from day to day, working hard to earn my daily bread. I do not know that I have any ambition in this world except to pay my way, have enough to eat and to drink, and clothes to put on, and bring up my children as well as I can." Rest assured, my Friend, that I do not despise you for having such desires. At the same time, I do think that it is a pity for an immortal soul not to have some aim and objective higher and brighter than that, for it is pretty nearly the objective of a mill-horse that goes round and round in its daily course and never aims at anything higher. Your objective is very much like that of a swallow, or a sparrow which builds its nest, and lays its eggs and hatches them, and sees its young flying off on their own account. Your ambition might be suitable for a dog, or a horse, or a cat, but it is not worthy of you—a being of a higher order! When I look at you and remember that you were made in the image of God, I think that, surely, there must be *something* worth living for—*something* nobler than this poor ambition of yours! I ask you honestly to say whether you have found satisfaction there—and I am fully persuaded that you have not.

There are some who argue that the Gospel cannot bless them. I frequently hear this kind of talk from poor working people. One says, "Well, Sir, if I were well-to-do, then I think I ought to be a Christian, but religion is not for the poor." That is in direct opposition to the declaration of Christ, Himself, that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." And to the Inspired question, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" Yet many people will have it that the Gospel is not for them because they are so poor!

I have also heard some say that they are so ignorant that they cannot be saved. One says, "I cannot read," and another says, "I can read, but I cannot understand what I read in the Bible. And when I go to hear a sermon, I cannot make out what is meant by it." They make out that they are almost idiots with regard to spiritual matters, yet, on any other subject, they would stick up for themselves and try to prove that they are almost philosophers! Yet their plea that ignorance prevents them from being saved is directly contrary to Scripture, for the Apostle Paul, Inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote to the Corinthians, "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the foolish

things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

Then, again, others say that they are too busy to be saved! At least that is the practical meaning of their excuse. One says, "Now, do not bother me about religion, for I really have not time to think about such things as that. See, I have to be up early in the morning and to work hard till late at night." Another says, "My business cares are so numerous that I cannot get away from the counting-house to go to a Prayer Meeting." Ah, dear Friends, but how many people who have not been able to find time to pray, have had to find time to die? And how very frequently do we see that the very people who say that they have not had time to think about the things of God, have found plenty of time for indulgence in vice and sinful pleasures! That excuse, like the others I have mentioned, will not avail any of those who make it. There is time enough for the most hard-worked man to lift his eyes to Heaven and to cry, "O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, accept me, for I come to You trusting in His atoning Sacrifice!" With many, the excuse is only an excuse, for they do not want Christ and they do not believe that there is anything for them in Christ and, therefore, they make these vain excuses.

I have known some even to say that they are too sinful to come to Christ—other people may be saved, but they could never be—they have gone too far into sin and they are too much involved in sin. They are so old and they have so many friends and connections on the side of evil. Perhaps they are in a business that is not honest and they are so interlaced with bad men that they cannot get out of it. So they say—and they will say anything so as to hide that which is really at the bottom of their hearts—which is that they do not want Jesus Christ to save them. They would rather that He should leave them alone to go quietly on their own way, even though that way will inevitably lead them to everlasting destruction!

III. Now, in closing my discourse, I want to tell you WHERE REAL SATISFACTION CAN BE FOUND. It came in answer to the prayer of the text. "O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Let me try and teach you, as plainly as I can, the way to find solid satisfaction. Friend, you are young and life is before you. You would gladly make it a whole life, altogether happy. Begin, then, by realizing that there is need for you to seek satisfaction from *God*. If you were an animal, you could be easily satisfied. Sheep and oxen are perfectly satisfied if you turn them into a field where there is plenty of grass. *They* never stand and cry, "O satisfy us," but they eat as much as they need and then they are perfectly content. But you, though placed in a world of wondrous beauty and though, as a man, you are made capable of great happiness, have not obtained it! So *you may as well begin your search for*

it by the confession that you are a fallen creature. You have lost the peerless jewel of innocence. Your first father, Adam, lost it as your representative and you have also lost it on your own account. If you had not lost it, you would not need to pray to God, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy," for you would already be satisfied! Adam was satisfied as long as he kept from sinning against God—and you, also, would be satisfied if there were no sin in you. Let this confession be made by each one of you, "Lord, I am unsatisfied because I am unholy. I have not attained to satisfaction because I have not attained to perfection."

Then, remember that *if you are ever to get satisfaction, you will have to get it from God*—and it must come from Him as the gift of His mercy. The text says, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy." God has so made us that we cannot get on without Him. It is both a blessing and a curse that it is so—it is a blessing that we cannot be satisfied without God, for that necessity helps to draw us to Him—but it is a curse if we continue to try to be satisfied without Him. As the planet needs the sun, so man needs his God. As the eye is nothing without light, so your spirit is nothing without God. You must have God! Yet, up till now, some of you have not even thought of Him. Getting what you needed here below has occupied all your attention! But as for God, perhaps you have not thought of Him, or if you have thought of Him, you have only done so to wish that there were no God. The thought of God has been a troublesome subject to you—you wish you could dismiss it altogether from your mind. But, my Friend, if you are ever to get satisfaction, this state of things must be altered! You must recognize that, as a creature, you must be at peace with your Creator. I do not ask you to take my word for this assertion, but I do urge you to search the Scriptures to see whether it is not so. There you will learn that until the quarrel between you and God is ended—until you submit to God and are at peace with Him—your soul cannot find rest any more than Noah's dove could find rest as she flew over the wild waste of waters and discovered no place for the sole of her feet to rest.

Do not forget that you cannot come back to God unless God shall display His mercy to you! If you appeal to Divine Justice, you will find that it must punish you, for, young as you are, you have broken God's holy Law. You have committed sins which have provoked the Lord to anger and jealousy—and before you can be reconciled to Him and have His love shed abroad in your heart, these sins of yours must be forgiven. They can be forgiven, for God delights in mercy! They can be forgiven *now*, for He waits to be gracious. They can be forgiven without money and without price, for He freely pardons all those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, His Son!

But suppose your past sins were all forgiven? You could not, even then, get satisfaction because *there would still be in you a natural tendency to sin*. You can, all of you, sin without being taught to do it. There is no need to found an institution for the purpose of teaching the practice of vice, or to employ agents to excite men to commit crime—he natural bias of the human heart is in that direction! Now, as long as you

love sin and your heart has a bias towards evil, God and you cannot walk together. Thousands of years ago He asked the question, "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" It is necessary, therefore, that there should be a complete change in your nature, for it can never be content as it is. Whatever God might give it, even if He were to give it Heaven, itself—your nature would never be satisfied while it remained as it now is. Your nature is diseased and must be healed—otherwise it will be with you as it would be with a sick man if you piled up his room with gold, or heaped up learned volumes all around him and bade him study them! They would not take away his pains—it is the *disease*, itself, that needs to be cured.

So is it with the malady of your spirit. You must be made right with God or, as Christ Himself put it, *you must be born-again*. Now, if you could be made a new creature with a will perfectly conformed to God's will, with a heart that loved what God loved and hated what God hated, with a spirit within you as pure as God, Himself, is, with a mind which sought only after purity and abhorred everything that was evil, and if, in addition to that, all your past sins could be forgiven, would not that be a grand and a blessed thing? There is many a man who has lived a life of crime and shame, who, when he sees a little curly-headed boy kneel down to say his prayers at his mother's knees, remembers when he did the same and wishes that he could be put into a mill and be ground young again. That is the kind of thing that would give you satisfaction—and that is just what Jesus Christ came to do for those who believe in Him, for He has come into the world to "save His people from their sins." That is, not merely to save them from being punished for sin, but to deliver them from the sin itself! He can give you, my Friends, a new heart and a right spirit. He says, "Behold, I make all things new," and those who believe in Him are made new creatures in Christ Jesus!

"Oh," says one, "I wish I were a new creature in Christ." Why should you not be? He that believes in Jesus has the witness of the Spirit within his heart and this is a sure sign that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus, for the first result of regeneration is true saving faith! So, if you trust in Jesus, that is a positive proof that you are born-again. Then see what will come of this great change. You will begin your new life with a new nature, a nature that loves God and hates evil—a nature that longs for conformity with the will of God! You will begin your new career "accepted in the Beloved," with a life within you that can never die and with a pardon granted to you that can never be reversed! You shall be so completely saved that you shall never return to the old follies and sins in which you formerly lived because you will not be saved because somebody has persuaded you to live in a different fashion, but because you have been made altogether a new creature!

"What?" asks someone, "Shall I be perfect when this change comes?" No, there is a nature in you which will still remain and with which you will have to fight and wrestle. But the new life, which Christ will give you, will enable you to overcome it. "Well," says one, "I do not see how that is

to bring me satisfaction." But it will! This is a great mystery, but it is a great Truth of God. Possibly you are dissatisfied because you cannot bring the contents of your pocket up to the height of your wishes. But if you bring your wishes down to the level of the contents of your pocket, you will be satisfied with what you now have! You cannot get all that you want, but suppose that your wants are reduced to your actual needs? How will it be, then? You cannot, at present, expect to have all that your heart desires, but suppose your heart is renewed by Grace so that you do not desire what God does not see fit to give you—will not that be the way for you to obtain satisfaction? If the mountain cannot come to Mahomet, Mahomet had better go to the mountain! And if we cannot change our outward circumstances, we had better be content with such things as we have.

We have been born into a world where there is much sin and much sorrow, where no man can have all that he wishes—and it is a grand thing when our wishes get changed, our desires get altered and we become altogether different from what we used to be! This is the path that leads to satisfaction! Some people seem to think that if they had what I have, they would be perfectly content. But I am quite certain that if they had it, they would be utterly dissatisfied with my portion! Yet I am perfectly satisfied with it—not perfectly satisfied with *myself*, for that I never shall be while I am down here—but I am perfectly satisfied with what God does for me and with me. That satisfaction is what every Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a right to enjoy! And when he lives as a Believer should live, he *does* enjoy it, and he can sing with good Mr. Watts—

***"I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."***

The garden of such a man as I am just now describing is a very little one, but he walks in his rich neighbor's park and he thanks God that it does not belong to him, for he has not the trouble and expense of keeping it in order, yet he can probably enjoy it quite as much as its owner can! He goes to the top of a hill and he knows that all he can see is in a certain king's dominions, but he is glad that he is not the king, for he does not want the trouble of ruling a kingdom! He thanks God for the beauties of Nature which are all his—he knows that the mountains and the valleys, the sea and the sky are all his because they are his Father's, so he may enjoy them to the fullest. He thanks God that he does not need to put the sun into his pocket, nor to keep the moon in a cupboard all to himself—all things in the world are his as much as he needs them, but he rejoices to know that his fellow creatures may also enjoy them as much as he does.

He is brought, by the Grace of God, into such a state of mind that the joy of others is his joy, and that the sorrow of others is his sorrow. And he would not wish to forego this enlargement and expansion of his mind. The Grace of God has put him into such a condition of heart and soul that, on the land or on the sea, on a bed of sickness or walking about

with the elasticity of health, he says, "It is all right, for my Father has ordained it all. He gives or He takes away. He kills or He makes alive and as He does it, all is well and I am perfectly satisfied with it—and as long as I live, I will bless His holy name." Now, that is the truly happy man and this is the only way to be really happy! Trust in Jesus, rest wholly upon Him and He will renew your spirit and change your heart—and with that change of heart He will give you capacities for happiness which you never can have in any other way!

My dear young Friends, I want to speak these last few words especially to you. If my older friends here are not yet converted, I pray that they may soon be saved and I thank God that we have seen many such saved. No old man or old woman has any need or reason to despair! I have seen people of 70 and 80 years of age—and more than that—converted to Christ. He does not limit His Grace to any age. If you were 5,000 years old, I would be bound to preach the same Gospel to you as if you were a little child—whatever your age, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! But, at the same time, we cannot make you old people begin life again. We cannot take you back to the years of youth. Possibly you wish that we could! But as for you young people, we long for you to be satisfied early with God's mercy, that you may rejoice and be glad all your days! Are you fifteen, or 16 years of age? There was a time, I daresay, when you thought your brother was wonderfully old because he had got into his teens—but you do not feel very old, do you? But you think you will have reached a great age when you get to be forty! Perhaps, then, you will think that it is the people of sixty, or seventy, or eighty, or 90 years of age who are getting old, and not you! But let me assure you that now, *now*, NOW is your time!

I would not, God knows, deceive you about this matter for all the wealth there is in the world. I have known the Lord, blessed be His name, since I was 15 years of age, and there has never been a moment since then, in which I have regretted putting my trust in Him. A great many times I have mourned that I did not trust Him sooner and that I have not trusted Him better—but never once have I wished to go back to my former condition and leave my dear Lord and Master! You know that we sometimes hear servants speak well of their master before other people's faces—when they think their master will hear of it. But when they get together, a lot of them around the fire, no telling what they say about their master, then! But when you gather around the fire, or when you meet with any of my particular friends, ask them whether they ever heard me say a word, in public or in private, against my Master! On the contrary, I love to tell everybody how kind and good He has been to me—and to my most intimate friends I delight to relate all that I know about Him. I can tell you one thing, if a man serves a master who treats him badly, he will not be likely to bring his boy to that place of business—but it is my greatest delight to see my two boys serving my dear Lord and Master! If He had been a bad Master to me, I would have said to them, "Now, boys, do not, either of you, make the mistake that I have made in

“serving the Lord Jesus Christ as I have done.” Oh, no, they have never heard me talk like that! They know how I rejoiced when I found them believing in Jesus Christ and afterwards beginning to do what they could in His service! Young people, your godly mothers and fathers would not be anxious to make you miserable. You have no idea that they want you to be wretched and sad, have you? No, but it is because they have found such supreme delight in the service of God that they want you to find your delight in it, too! I have gone up and down this country and traveled a good deal in other countries, too, and I think I may say, without exaggeration, that I have talked with many thousands of Christians and I have heard some strange things from some of them—but, up to this moment, I have never met with any Christians who have said to me, “We are all mistaken, after all. There is no solid satisfaction to be found in Jesus Christ.”

I have seen some of these Christians at the time when men’s hearts speak out, if ever they do! I have seen them die. I have visited the dear consumptive girl in her last hours and I have been with the gray-headed saint who has passed his fourscore years, when the time came for him to die! It has been my lot to stand by many death beds and I can honestly say that if I wanted to enjoy the most intense pleasure that is possible on earth, I would seek out some dying saint that I might witness his rapturous joy and hear his gladsome and cheering testimony to his Lord and Savior! A man usually speaks the truth when he comes face to face with death and eternity is opening before him. Most men put off their masquerading, then, and appear in their true colors. And it is then that Christians speak best concerning Christ! And often the loudest songs and the sweetest praise that they have ever given to Him, they lay at His feet, then, just before they go away from earth to go to be with Him forever!

Dear young Friends, the way of the highest happiness is the way of absolute trust in Jesus, giving yourself up to the renewing of the Holy Spirit that you may become new creatures in Christ Jesus! May God, in His Infinite mercy, grant that this great work of Grace may be worked in every unsaved soul in this assembly before you leave this building! And it will be if you simply rely upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will then take you by the hand and make all things new to you. God grant it, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

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

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

THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER

NO. 513

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice
and be glad all our days.”
Psalm 90:14.***

ISRAEL had suffered a long night of affliction. Dense was the darkness while they abode in Egypt, and cheerless was the glimmering twilight of that wilderness which was covered with their graves. Amidst a thousand miracles of mercy, what must have been the sorrows of a camp in which every stop was marked with many burials—until the whole trail was a long cemetery? I suppose that the deaths in the camp of Israel was never less than fifty each day—if not three times that number—so that they learned experimentally that verse of the Psalm, “For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.”

Theirs was the weary march of men who wander about in search of tombs. They traveled towards a land which they could never reach, weary with a work the result of which only their children should receive. You may easily understand how these troubled ones longed for the time when the true day of Israel should dawn, when the black midnight of Egypt, and the dark twilight of the wilderness should both give way to the rising sun of the settled rest in Canaan. Most fitly was the prayer offered by Moses—the representative man of all that host—“O satisfy us early with Your mercy.” Hasten the time when we shall come to our promised rest. Bring on speedily the season when we shall sit under own vine and our own fig tree, “and shall rejoice and be glad all our days.”

This prayer falls from the lips of yonder Brother, whose rough pathway for many a mile has descended into the Valley of Death. Loss after loss has he experienced, till as in Job's case, the messengers of evil have trod upon one another's heels. His griefs are new every morning, and his trials fresh every evening. Friends forsake him and prove to be deceitful brooks. God breaks him with a tempest. He finds no pause in the ceaseless shower of his troubles. Nevertheless, his hope is not extinguished, and his constant faith lays hold upon the promise, that, “weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” He understands that God will not always chide, neither does He keep His anger forever.

Therefore he watches for deliverance even as they that watch for the morning, and his most appropriate cry is, “O satisfy us early with Your mercy. Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. Show Your marvelous loving kindness in this present hour of need. O my God, make haste to help me, be a very present help in time of trouble. Fly to my relief lest I perish from the land. Awake for my rescue, that I may rejoice and be glad all my days.”

See yonder sick bed! Tread lightly, lest perchance you disturb the brief slumbers of that daughter of affliction. She has tossed to and fro days and nights without number, counting her minutes by her pains, and numbering her hours with the attacks of her agony. From that couch of suffering where many diseases have conspired to torment the frail body of this child of woe, where the soul itself has grown weary of life, and longs for the wings of a dove, methinks this prayer may well arise, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy." "When will the eternal day break upon my long night? When will the shadows flee away? Sweet Sun of Glory! When will You rise with healing beneath Your wings? I shall be satisfied when I wake up in Your likeness, O Lord. Hasten that joyful hour. Give me a speedy deliverance from my bed of weakness, that I may rejoice and be glad throughout eternal days."

I think the prayer would be equally appropriate from many a distressed conscience where conviction of sin has rolled heavily over the soul till the bones are sore vexed, and the spirit is overwhelmed. That poor heart indulges the hope that Jesus Christ will one day comfort it, and become its salvation—it has a humble hope that these wounds will not last forever but shall all be healed by Mercy's hand. That He who looses the bands of Orion will one day deliver the prisoner out of his captivity. Oh, conscience-stricken Sinner, you may on your knees now cry out—"O satisfy me early with Your mercy! Keep me not always in this house of bondage. Let me not plunge forever in this slough of despair. Set my feet upon a rock, wash me from my iniquities. Clothe me with garments of salvation and put the new song into my mouth, that I may rejoice and be glad all my days."

Still, it appears to me that without straining so much as one word even in the slightest degree, I may take my text this morning as the prayer of a *young heart*, expressing its desire for present salvation. To you, young men and maidens, shall I address myself. And may the good Spirit cause you in the days of your youth to remember your Creator, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near when you shall say, we have no pleasure in them. I hope the angel of the Lord has said unto me, "Run, speak to that young man," and that like the good housewife in the Proverbs, I shall have a portion also for the maidens!

I shall use the text in two ways, first, *as the ground of my address to the young*. And then, secondly, *as a model for your address to God*.

I. WE WILL MAKE OUR TEXT THE GROUND WORK OF A SOLEMN PLEADING WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN TO GIVE THEIR HEARTS TO CHRIST THIS DAY.

The voice of Wisdom reminds you in this, our text, that you are not pure in God's sight, but NEED HIS MERCY. Early as it is with you, you must come before God on the same footing as those who seek Him at the eleventh hour. Here is nothing said about *merit*, nothing concerning the natural innocence of youth or the beauty of the juvenile character. You are not thus flattered and deceived. But Holy Scripture guides you aright, by dictating to you an evangelical prayer, such as God will deign to accept—"O satisfy us early *with your mercy*."

Young men, though as yet no outward crimes have stained your character, yet your salvation must be the work of reigning Grace, and that for several reasons. *Your nature is at the present moment full of sin and saturated with iniquity*, and therefore you are the object of God's most righteous anger. How can He meet an heir of wrath on terms of justice? His holiness cannot endure you! What if you are made an heir of Glory? Will not this be Divine Grace and Divine Grace alone? If ever you are made meet to be a partaker with the saints in light, this must surely be Love's own work—inasmuch as your nature, altogether apart from your actions—deserves God's reprobation.

It is mercy which spares you, and if the Lord is pleased to renew your heart, it will be to the praise of the glory of His Grace. Be not proud, repel not this certain Truth of God—that you are an alien, a stranger, an enemy—born in sin and shaped in iniquity! By nature you are an heir of wrath, even as others. Yield to its force, and seek that mercy which is as really needed by you as by the hoary-headed villain who rots into his grave, festering with debauchery and lust—

***“True you are young, but there's a stone
Within the youngest breast.
One-half the crimes which you have done
Would rob you of your rest.”***

Besides, your conscience reminds you that your outward lives *have not been what they should be*. How soon did we begin to sin! While we were yet little children we went astray from the womb, speaking lies.

How rebellious we were! How we chose our own will and way, and would by no means submit ourselves to our parents! How in our riper youth we thought it sport to scatter fire-brands and carry the hot coals of sin in our bosom! We played with the serpent, charmed with its azure scales, but forgetful of its poisoned fangs. Far be it from us to boast with the Pharisee—“Lord, I thank you that I am not as others.” But rather let the youngest pray with the publican—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” A little child, but seven years of age, cried when under conviction of sin—“Can the Lord have mercy upon such a great sinner as I am, who have lived seven years without fearing and loving Him?”

Ah, my Friends, if this babe could thus lament, what should be the repentance of those who are fifteen, or sixteen, or seventeen, or eighteen, or twenty, or who have passed the year of manhood? What shall you say, since you have lived so long, wasting your precious days—more priceless than pearls, neglecting those golden years, despising Divine things and continuing in rebellion against God? Lord, You know that young though we are, we have multitudes of sins to confess, and therefore it is mercy, mercy, mercy, which we crave at Your hands!

Remember, beloved young Friends, that if you are saved in the morning of life, *you will be wonderful instances of preventing mercy*. It is great mercy which blots out sin, but who shall say that it is not equally great mercy which prevents it? To bring home yonder sheep which has long gone astray, with its wool all torn, its flesh bleeding, and its bones broken, manifests the tender care of the Good Shepherd. But, oh, to reclaim the lamb at the commencement of its straying—to put it into the fold and to

keep it there and nurture it—what a million mercies are here compressed into one! The young saint may sweetly sing—

***“I still had wandered but for You;
Lord, it was Your own all-powerful Word,
Sin’s fetters broke and set me free,
Henceforth to own You as my Lord.”***

There are depths of mercy to pluck the sere brand from out of the fire when it is black and scorched with the flame. But are there not heights of love when the young wood is planted in the courts of the Lord and made to flourish as a cedar? However soon we are saved, the glory of perfection has departed from us, but how happy is he who tarries but a few years in a state of nature. As if the fall and the rising again walked hand in hand. No soul is without spot or wrinkle, but some stains are spots the young Believer is happily delivered from. Habits of vice and continuance in crime he has not known. He never knew the drunkard’s raging thirst. The black oaths of the sailor never dirtied his mouth.

This younger son has not been long in the far country. He comes back before he has long fed the swine. He has been black with sin in the sight of God, but in the eyes of men, and in the open vision of onlookers, the young Believer seems as if he had never gone astray. Here is great mercy—mercy for which Heaven is to be praised forever and ever. This, methinks, I may call *distinguishing* Grace with an emphasis. All election distinguishes, and all Divine Grace is discriminating. But that Grace which adopts the young child so early is distinguishing in the highest degree! As Hadad was brought up in the court of Pharaoh, and weaned in the king’s palace, so are some saints sanctified from the womb.

Happy is it for any young man—an elect one out of the elect is he—if he is weaned upon the knees of piety and candled upon the lap of holiness—if he is lighted to his bed with the lamps of the sanctuary and lulled to his sleep with the name of Jesus! If I may breathe a prayer in public for my children, let them be clothed with a little ephod, like young Samuel, and nourished in the chambers of the temple, like the young prince Joash. O my dear young Friends, it is mercy, mercy in a distinguishing and peculiar degree, to be saved early—because of your fallen nature, because of sins committed, and yet more—because of sins prevented, and distinguishing favor bestowed by the Grace of God!

2. But I have another reason for endeavoring to plead with the young this morning, hoping that the Spirit of God will plead with them. I remark that salvation, if it comes to you, must not only be mercy, *but it must be mercy through the Cross*. I infer that from the text, because the text desires it to be a satisfying mercy, and there is no mercy which ever can satisfy a sinner, but mercy through the Cross of Christ. There is no mercy apart from the Cross. Many say that God is merciful, and therefore, surely, He will not condemn them. But in the pangs of death and in the terrors of conscience, the uncovenanted mercy of God is no solace to the soul.

Some proclaim a mercy which is dependant upon human effort—human goodness or merit—but no soul ever yet did or could find any lasting satisfaction in this delusion. Mercy by mere ceremonies or mercy by outward ordinances is but a mockery of human thirst. Like Tantalus, who

is mocked by the receding waters, so is the ceremonialist who tries to drink where he finds all comfort flying from him. Young man, the Cross of Christ has that in it which can give you solid, satisfying comfort—if you put your trust in it. It can satisfy *your judgment*. What is more logical than the great doctrine of Substitution?—God is so terribly just that He will by no means spare the guilty, and that justice is wholly met by Him who stood in the place of His people!

Here is that which will satisfy your *conscience*. Your conscience knows that God must punish you. It is one of those Truths which God stamped upon it when He first made you what you are. But when your soul sees Christ punished instead of you, it pillows its head right softly. There is no resting place for conscience but at the Cross. Priests may preach what they will, and philosophers may imagine what they please, but there is in the conscience of man, in its restlessness, an indication that the Cross of Christ must have come from God, because that conscience never ceases from its disquiet till it hides in the wounds of the Crucified. Never again shall conscience alarm you with dreadful thoughts of the wrath to come, if you lay hold of that mercy which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

Here, too, is satisfaction *for all your fears*. Do they pursue you today like a pack of hungry dogs in full pursuit of the stag? Fly to Christ and your fears have vanished! What has that man to fear for whom Jesus died? Need he alarm himself when Christ stands in his place before the Eternal Throne and pleads there for him? Here, too, is satisfaction *for your hopes*. He that gets Christ gets all the future wrapped up in Him. While—

***“There’s pardon for transgressions past;
It matters not how black their cast,”***

There are also peace, and joy, and safety for all the years and for all the eternity to come in the same Christ Jesus who has put away your sin. Oh, I wish, young Man, I wish young Woman, that you would put your trust in Jesus *now*, for in Him there is an answer to this prayer—“O satisfy us early with Your mercy.”

3. Furthermore, anxiously would I press this matter of a youthful faith upon you, *because you have a dissatisfaction even now*. Do I not speak the truth? When looking into the bright eyes of the gayest among you, I venture to say that you are not perfectly satisfied. You feel that something is lacking. My Lad, your boyish games cannot quite satisfy you. There is a something in you more noble than toys and games can gratify. Young Man, your pursuits of business furnish you with some considerable interest and amusement, but still there is an aching void—you know there is—and although pleasure promises to fill it, you have begun already to discover that you have a thirst which is not to be quenched with water, and a hunger which is not to be satisfied with bread. You know it is so.

The other evening when you were quite alone, when you were quietly thinking matters over, you felt that this present world was not enough for you. The majesty of a mysterious longing which God had put in you lifted up itself and claimed to be heard! Did it not? The other day, after the party was over at which you had so enjoyed yourself, when it was all done and everybody was gone—and you were quite quiet, did you not feel that even if you had these things every day of your life—yet you could not be

content? You want, you know not what, but something you do want to fill your heart.

We look back upon our younger days and think that they were far happier than our present state, and we sometimes fancy that we used to be satisfied then, but I believe that our thoughts imagine a great falsehood. I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ. When I was yet a child I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now. I will even add more weariness, more care, more heartache, than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace! But before that all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me.

You do feel, if I know anything about you, that you are not quite satisfied now. Well, then, let me say to you again, that I would have you come to Jesus. Depend upon it, there is that in Him which can thoroughly satisfy you. What can you want more to satisfy *your heart* than love to Him? Our hearts all crave for an object upon which they may be set. We often surrender ourselves to an unworthy object which betrays us, or proves too narrow to accommodate our heart's desire. But if you love Jesus you will love One who deserves your warmest affection, who will amply repay your fullest confidence, and will never betray it.

You say that not only does your heart want something, but your *head*. My witness is that there is in the Gospel of Christ the richest food for the brain. Before you know Christ, you read, you search, you study, and you put what you learn into a wild chaos of useless confusion. But after you have found Christ, everything else that you learn is put in its proper place. You get Christ as the central sun, and then every science and fact begins to revolve round about Him just as the planets travel in their perpetual circle around the central orb. Without Christ we are ignorant, but with Him we understand the most excellent of sciences, and all others shall fall into their proper place.

This is an age when, without a true faith in Christ, the young mind has a dreary pilgrimage before it. False guides are standing, arrayed in all sorts of garbs, ready to lead you first to doubt this book of Scripture, then to distrust the whole. Then to mistrust God and Christ—and then to doubt your own *existence* and to come into the dreary dream land where nothing is certain—where everything is myth and fiction. Give your heart to Christ, young Man, and He will furnish you with anchors and a good anchor-hold to your mind. And then when stormy winds of skepticism sweep across the sea, and other boats are wrecked, you shall outside the storm and shall evermore be safe.

It is a strange thing that people should be so long before they are satisfied. Look at some of my hearers today. They mean to be satisfied with money. When they were apprentices they thought they should be so satisfied when they earned journeymen's wages. But they came to be journeymen, and then they were not satisfied till they were foremen. And then they felt they never should be satisfied till they had a concern of their own. They got a concern of their own and took a house in the city—but

then they felt they could not be content till they had taken the adjoining premises.

Then they had more advertising and more work to do, and now they begin to feel that they never shall be quite easy till they have purchased a snug little villa in the country. Yes, there are some here who have the villa, and handsome grounds, and so on. But they will not be satisfied till they see all their children married. And when they have seen all their children married, they will not be at rest then. They think they will, but they will not. There is always a something yet beyond. "Man never is, but always to be blessed," as Young puts it. There are Fortunate Isles for the mariner to reach, and failing these, there is no haven for him even in the safest port.

We know some, too, who, instead of pursuing wealth, are looking after fame. They have been honored for that clever piece of writing, but they are desirous of more honor. They must write better, still. And when they have achieved some degree of notoriety through a second attempt, they will feel that now they have a name to keep up, and so they must have that name widened, and the circle of their influence must extend. The fact is, that neither wealth, nor honor, nor anything that is of mortal birth can ever fill the insatiable, immortal soul of man. The heart of man has an everlasting hunger given to it, and if you could put worlds into its mouth it would still crave for more.

It is so thirsty that if all the rivers drained themselves into it, still, like the deep sea which is never full, the heart would yet cry out for more. Man is truly like the horseleech—he forever say, "Give! Give! Give!" And until the Cross is given to the insatiable heart, till Jesus Christ—who is the fullness of Him that fills all in all—is bestowed, the heart of man never can be full. Where shall we find a satisfied man but in the Church of Christ? And in the Church of Christ I find him, not in the pulpit merely, where success and position might satisfy, but I find him in the *pew* humbly receiving the Truth of God.

I find him in the pew, not among the rich, where earthly comforts might tend to make him satisfied, but among the poor, where cold and nakedness might cause him to complain. I could point you today to the workman who earns every bit of bread he eats with more sweat of his brow than you would dream of, but he is content. I could point you to the poor work-girl who scarcely earns enough to hold body and soul together—and yet in this House of God her heart often leaps for joy—for she is wholly resigned. I could show you the bedridden woman whose bones come through the skin through long lying upon a bed which friendship would gladly make soft, but which is all too hard for her weakness—and yet she is content—though a parish pittance is all that is given her to feed upon.

I say we have no need to exaggerate, or strain, or use hyperboles. We do find in the Church of Christ those who have been, and are satisfied with the mercy of God. Now, would it not be a fine thing to *begin* life with being satisfied? There are some who do not end it with this attainment. They hunt after satisfaction till they come to their dying beds, and then still do not find it. But oh, to *begin* life with being satisfied! Not to say at some future date I will be satisfied, but to be content *now*. Not when I have

climbed to such-and-such a pinnacle I shall have enough, but to have enough *now*. To begin with satisfaction before you launch upon a world of troubles! You may do so, my Brother. You may do so, my young Sister, if now with a true heart you look to Him who hangs upon yonder Cross, and commit your soul into His keeping, praying this prayer—"O satisfy us *early* with Your mercy."

The reason which our text gives I must comment upon for a moment. Our text says—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy. That *we may rejoice and be glad all our days*." We never rejoice in the true sense of the term. We never possess solid gladness till we are satisfied with God's mercy. It is all a mockery and a pretence. The reality never comes to us till God's mercy visits our heart. But after that, what joy we know! Tell me that the Christian is miserable! O Sir, you do not know what the Christian is! We need not appear before you with laughing faces, for our joy is deeper than yours, and needs not express itself out in immodest signs.

The *poor* trader puts all his goods in the window, but the rich man has rich stores even in the dark cellar—his warehouses are full and he makes no show. Still waters run deep and we are sometimes still in our joy because of the depth of our delight. Say we are not happy, Sirs! We would not change one moment of our joy for a hundred years of yours! We hear your joy, and we understand that it is like the crackling of thorns under a pot—which crackle all the louder because they burn so furiously and will so soon be gone. But ours is a steady fire.

We do mourn sometimes. We mourn oftener than we ought to do. We are free to confess this. But it is not our *religion* which makes us mourn. It is because we do not live up to it, for when we live up to it and have the company of Jesus, we tell you—

***"We would not change our blessed estate
For all that earth calls good or great.
And while our faith can keep her hold,
We envy not the sinner's gold."***

Our sickbeds are often as the doorstep of Heaven. Even when we are cast down, there is a sweet solace in our sorrow, and a profound joy about our apparent grief which we would not give away. God gave it to us and the world cannot destroy it.

They who love Jesus Christ early have the best hope of enjoying the happiest days as Christians. *They will have the most service* and the service of God is perfect delight. Their youthful vigor will enable them to do more than those who enlist when they are old and decrepit. The joy of the Lord is our strength. And on the other hand, to use our strength for God is a fountain of joy. Young Man, if you give fifty years of service unto God, surely you shall rejoice all your days! The earlier we are converted, having the longer time to study in Christ's college, *the more profound shall be our knowledge of Him*.

We shall have more time for communion, more years for fellowship. We shall have more seasons to prove the power of prayer, and more opportunities to test the fidelity of God than we should if we came late. Those who come late are blessed by being helped to learn so much, but those that come in early shall surely outstrip them. Let me be young, like John, that I may have years of loving service, and like he may have much intimate

acquaintance with my Lord. Surely those who are converted early may reckon upon more joy, because *they never will have to contend with and to mourn over what later converts must know.*

Your bones are not broken, you can run without weariness—you have not fallen as some have done—you can walk without fainting. Often the gray-headed man who is converted at sixty or seventy finds the remembrance of his youthful sins clinging to him. When he would praise, an old lascivious song revives upon his memory. When he would mount up to Heaven, he suddenly remembers some scene in a haunt of vice which he would be glad to forget. But you, saved by Divine Grace before you thus fall into the jaw of the lion, or under the paw of the bear, will certainly have cause for rejoicing all your life.

If I may have heavenly music upon earth let me begin it now, Lord. Put not away the viol and the harp for my fingers when they tremble with age. Let me use them while yet I am young. Now, Lord, if there is a banquet, do not bring me in at the end of the feast, but let me begin to feast today! If I am to be married to Jesus, let it not be when my hair is gray, but marry me to Jesus now! What better time for joy than today? Now shall my joys swell and grow like a river, which rolls on to a mightier breadth and depth as its course is prolonged! I shall rejoice and be glad in You all my days, good Lord, if You will now begin with me, in this the morning of my days.

I cannot put my thoughts together this morning as I could desire, but I still feel an earnest longing to shoot the arrow to its mark, and therefore one or two stray thoughts before I turn to the prayer itself, and these shall be very brief. My dear young Friends, you who are of my own age, or younger still, I beseech you ask to be satisfied with God's mercy early, *for you may die early.* It has been our grief this week to stand by the open grave of one who was, alas, too soon, as we thought, snatched away to Heaven. You may never number the full ripe years of manhood. We say that our years are threescore and ten, but to you they may not even be a score.

Your sun may go down while it is yet noon. God often reaps His corn green—long before the autumn comes He cuts down His sheaves. "Because I will do this, prepare to meet your God." Then, on the other hand, if you should live—*in whose service could you spend your days better than in the service of God?* What more happy employment, what more blessed position than to be found, like Samuel, a waiting servant upon God while yet you need a mother's care? *Remember how early temptations beset you.* Would you not wish to secure your early days? And how can you cleanse your ways except by taking heed unto them according to God's Word?

Do you not know, too, *that the Church wants you?* Your young blood shall keep her veins full of vigor and make her sinews strong. *Should not the love of Jesus Christ win you?* If He died and shed His blood for men, does He not deserve their best service? Would you desire to give to God an offering of the end of your days? What would you have thought of the Jew who brought an old bullock—who, after having used an ox in his own fields till it was worn out, should then consecrate it to God? Let the *lambs* be offered. Let the firstlings of the herd be brought. Let God have the first

sheaves of the harvest. Surely He deserves something better than to have the devil's leavings put upon His holy altar!

"Oh, but," you say, "would He accept me if I came to Him early?" Why, you have more promises than the old man has. It is written that God will be found of them that seek Him, but it is specially written, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." You have a peculiar promise given to you. If there were any who could be rejected, it could not by any possibility be the young. If there were one whom Jesus Christ could leave, it would not be you, for He gathers the lambs in His bosom. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." May not that cheer you, however young you are?

Jesus Christ loves to see young men and maidens join in His praise. We find that the best of saints in the Old and New Testament were those who came to Jesus young. Certain it is that the pick and cream of the Church in modern times will be found among those who are early converts. Look at those who are Church officials and ministers, and in most cases—and the exception only proves the rule—in most cases the leaders in our Israel are those who, as young Hannibal was devoted by his parents to the great cause of his country, were devoted by their parents to the great cause of Zion and to the interests of Jerusalem.

If you would be strong for God, eminent in His service, and joyful in His ways. If you would understand the heights and depths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge, if you would give yourselves before your bones are broken and before your spirit has become tinctured through and through with habits of iniquity—then offer this prayer—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

II. And now very briefly we shall take the text as YOUR ADDRESS TO GOD. Every word here is significant. "O." This teaches us *that the prayer is to be earnest*. I will suppose that I have led some of you young people here now to breathe this prayer to God. Am I so unhappy as to suppose that none of you will do it? Are there not some who now say, "I will, with my whole heart, God the Holy Spirit helping me, now in my pew offer this supplication to Heaven." It begins with an "O." Dull prayers will never reach God's Throne. What comes from our heart coldly can never get to God's heart.

Dull, dead prayers, ask God to deny them. We must pray out of our very souls. The soul of our prayer must be the prayer of our soul. "O satisfy us." Young Man, the Lord is willing to open the door to those who knock, but you must knock hard. He is fully prepared to give to those who ask, but you must ask earnestly. The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. It is not a gentle grasp which will avail. You must *wrestle* with the angel. Give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found the Savior. Remember, if you do but find Him, it will well repay you though you shed drops of blood in the pursuit.

If instead of tears you had given your heart's blood, and if instead of sighs you were to give the shrieks of a martyr, it would well recompense you if you did but find Jesus—therefore be earnest. If you find Him not, remember, you perish, and perish with a great destruction. The wrath of God abides on you and Hell must be your portion. Therefore, as one that

pleads for his life, so plead for *mercy*. Throw your whole spirit into it and let that spirit be heated to a glowing heat. Be not satisfied to stand at the foot of the Throne and say, "Let God save me if He will." No, but put it thus, "Lord, I cannot take a denial! O satisfy me! O save me!" Such a prayer is sure to be accepted.

Again, *make it a generous prayer*, when you are at it. "O satisfy *us* early!" I am glad to see among our young sisters in the catechumen class such a spirit of love for one another, so that when one is converted, she is sure to look round for another. The scores in that class who have found the Lord are always searching out some stray young woman in the street, or some hopeful ones attending the congregation whom they try to bring in, that Jesus may be glorified. The very first duty of a convert is to labor for the conversion of others, and surely it will not spoil your prayer, young Man, if when you are praying for yourself, you will put it in the plural—"O satisfy *US*."

Pray for your brothers and sisters. I am sure we are verily guilty in this thing. Those that sprang from the same loins as ourselves—would to God that they were all saved with the same salvation. You may, some of you, be happy enough to be members of a family in which all are converted. Oh that we could all say the same! May the remembrance of this text provoke you and me to pray for unconverted brothers and sisters more than we have ever done. "O satisfy *us*." If you have brought in the eldest, Lord, stop not till the youngest is converted. If my brother preaches the Word, if my sister rejoices in Your fear, then let other sisters know and taste of Your love. You young people in shops, in warehouses, in factories—pray this prayer and do not exclude even those who have begun to blaspheme—but even in their early youth pray for them—"O satisfy *us* with Your mercy."

See to it, dear Friends, in the next place *that your prayer be thoroughly evangelical*. "O satisfy *us* early *with Your mercy*." The prayer of the publican is the model for us all. No matter how amiable or how excellent we may be, we must all come together and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Do not come with any hereditary godliness. Do not approach the Lord with the fact of your infant sprinkling. Do not come before Him to plead your mother's covenant. Come as a *sinner*, as a black, foul, filthy sinner, having nothing to rely on or to trust to but the merit of God in Christ Jesus. And let the prayer be just such as a thief might offer, or a prostitute might present—"O satisfy *us* early with Your mercy."

Let the prayer be put up now *at once*. The text says, "O satisfy *us* *early*." Why not today? Oh that it had been done years ago! But there was time enough, you thought. There is time enough, but there is none to spare. Acquaint yourself *now* with God, and be at peace. "Today is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation." I would to God we would not pray our prayers meaning to have them heard so late. Let it be—"O satisfy *us* *early*." The man who truly repents always wants to have pardon on the spot. He feels as if he could not rise from his knees till God has been favorable to him—and mark you—when a man has really come to that point that he must be saved now, or else he feels that it will be too late, then

has come the solemn juncture when God will say, "Be it unto you even as you will."

I must leave this poor sermon of mine with the people of God to pray over it. Sometimes when most I long to plead with men's souls I find the brain distracted although the heart is warm. God knows, that could I plead with the young, I would do it even unto tears. I do feel it such a solemn thing for our country. Happy shall she be if her sons and daughters give their young days to God! It will be such a blessed thing for London, if our young men in business, and our young women in families become missionaries for Christ. But what a happy thing it will be for them! What joy shall they know! What transports shall they feel! What a blessing will they be to their households! What happy families they will be!

Unconverted fathers shall be made to feel the power of godliness through their daughters. And mothers who despise religion shall not dare to neglect it any longer because they see it exemplified and illustrated in their sons. We want missionaries everywhere! This great city never can by any possibility become the Lord's except by *individual* action. We must have all Christians at work, and since we cannot get the old ones to work as we would—since preach as we may, they will settle on their lees—we long for new recruits, whose ardor shall rekindle the dying enthusiasm of the seniors. We want to see fresh minds come in all aglow with holy fervor to keep the fire still blazing on the altar.

For Jesus Christ's sake I do implore you, you who number but few years—offer this supplication in your pew. Do it now. It is a Brother's heart that begs the favor. It is for your own soul's sake, that you may be blessed on earth, and that you may have the joys of Heaven. There is a prayer-hearing God. The Mercy Seat is still open. Christ still waits. May the Spirit of God compel you now to come before Him in supplication. Now may He compel you to come in, with this as your cry—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

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GLADNESS FOR SADNESS

NO. 1701

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”
Psalm 90:15-17.

TO understand this Psalm, you must observe its black border. Remember the sorrows of Moses, the man of God, who saw a whole generation die in the wilderness and was, himself, denied admission to the promised land. The man, Moses, was greatly afflicted. I might almost call him, as far as his life in the wilderness was concerned, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He dug the desert till it became a cemetery, for he lived amid 40 years of funerals. This 90th Psalm is saturated with the griefs of a sentenced generation, by whom it could be truly said, “We are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.”

We have, in our own case, as a Church and people, a double black border to surround our text this morning, for death has despoiled us a second time. We were, last Wednesday, burying our honored deacon, William Higgs, and at the moment of our meeting for that solemn purpose, another greatly esteemed deacon, William Mills, (*William Mills, Esq., for many years a beloved deacon of the Church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was taken to his rest January 12th, 1883, at the age of sixty-two*), was suddenly stricken down with paralysis, to linger for a few hours and then to breathe out his soul unto God. I shall not trust myself to speak about him, for this double loss has, to a great extent, unnerved me. But this I must say, that he was an experienced and mature Christian and, above all, a quiet, diligent, loving, gracious servant of our common Master, whose care was the poor of the Church, to whom he distributed our alms with discretion and tenderness.

It was pleasant to hear from him the story of his Christian experience. His was a calm and lowly walk. Of late, being weakly, he was much at home and there the Psalms of David and the Morning and Evening Portions were his comfort. He was always a source of strength to his pastor and his Brothers and Sisters, always of great service to the Church, far more so than the mass of our people will ever know—but of late he ripened and mellowed into an unusual sweetness and spirituality. My last interview with him gave me a high idea of his thorough composure and his perfect preparedness to commune with the glorified host above. He is gone—gone happily and safely Home. He had no pain or struggle, but

gradually melted into eternal life. To us who remain, one sorrow has succeeded another to keep our wound bleeding and smarting.

How well did Moses pray, "Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants." Oh that our God would no more put His hand into the bitter box, as Herbert calls it, but now change His dispensation and revive the spirit of His contrite ones! On our part, as we are made to sympathize with the man of God in this Psalm, so let us imitate his example. Like he in multiplied bereavements, let us be like he in Grace and faith! Observe that the first word of this painful Psalm is, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place," as if, touched by the rod, the sufferer remembered his Father. Will the hypocrite always call upon God? No, and when God deals roughly with him, he will kick against the pricks.

But the child of God, when he is smitten, turns to the hand that smote him and cries, "Show me why You contend with me?" If foxes and wolves are prowling about, and the shepherd's dog appears, they fly here and there as far away as they can. But when the dog is sent after the sheep, he fetches them back to the shepherd. Trouble drives away the carnal man from his pretended religion, but it gathers the true sheep together and, being awakened and alarmed, they seek the Good Shepherd. The more of grief we feel, the more of Grace we need—and the nearer to our Comforter we come! Closer to God is the cry of the troubled saint!—

***"Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!
Even though it be a cross
That raises me;
Still all my cry shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!"***

Observe, also, that this Psalm is "a prayer of Moses." The comfort of a child of God in the darkness is *prayer*. Adversity, blessed of the Holy Spirit, calls our attention to the promises. The promises quicken our faith. Faith betakes itself to prayer—God hears and answers our cry! This is the chain of a tried soul's experience. Brothers and Sisters, as we suffer tribulation, as we know the promise, let us immediately exercise faith and turn in prayer to God, for surely never did a man turn to God but the Lord also turned to Him! If we are set a-praying, we may depend upon it—the Lord is set on blessing! Blessings are on the way from Heaven—their shadow falls upon us even now!

I desire, at this time, to stir you up to a joyful expectancy! These clouds mean rich, refreshing showers. These sharp frosts foretell heavy sheaves. The Lord, by the Divine Spirit, make the Words of our text to be our prayer this morning! May the Lord Jesus present our supplication to the Father. The petition seems to me to be, first, for proportionate gladness—"Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil." And, secondly, our prayer is for peculiar gladness, a gladness which is described in the 16th and 17th verses—"Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and es-

establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”

I. First, then, beloved Friends, our prayer this morning as a Church and people should be for PROPORTIONATE GLADNESS—that our God, who has filled one scale with grief, would fill the other scale with Grace till they balance each other! Inasmuch as He has poured out of His vial, certain drops of wormwood, we pray Him to measure out the same quantity of the consolation of love, whereby our hearts shall be comforted. May our Covenant God, who has chastened us heavily, now revive us graciously!

We begin here by noticing that evidently the prayer desires a gladness of the same origin as the sadness. The Psalm plainly ascribes the sadness to the Lord—“You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men.” “We are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.” God is seen in bereavements—death comes distinctly at His command—second causes are left behind. Since we have a distinct idea that the sadness comes from God, our text expresses an equally distinct desire that the *gladness* may come from God. We beg for Divine comfort under Divine chastening. The words of the prayer are eminently simple and childlike—“Make us glad.”

They seem to say, “Father! You have made us sad; now make us glad! You have saddened us grievously; now therefore, O Lord, most heartily rejoice us.” The prayer as good as cries, “Lord, no one but Yourself can make us glad under such affliction, but You can bring us up from the lowest deep. The wound goes too near the heart for any human physician to heal us; but You can heal us even to the making of us glad!” The prayer is full of buoyant hope, for it does not merely say, “Comfort us; bear us up; keep our heads above water; prevent us from sinking in despair”—no, but—“Make us glad.” Reverse our state: lift us up from the depths to the heights. “Make us glad!”

I hear the music of hope drowning the discord of fear; the songs of a joyous faith rising above the mournful dirges of grief! The appeal is to only the Lord! Moses entreats Jehovah, Himself, to kindle the lamps of joy within the tabernacles of Israel. It is healthy sadness which the Lord sends and it is equally safe gladness which God gives! If we make ourselves merry, we may be mere mimics of mirth. If outward goods make us merry, we may be no better than the rich fool in the parable! But if our *God* makes us glad, we may take our fill of delight and fear no ill consequences! The wine of the Kingdom cheers, but never intoxicates! The bread of God strengthens, but never surfeits! Neither pride, nor worldliness, nor carelessness comes of feasting at the table of our God!

Come, then, let us together breathe this prayer—“Make us glad!” Let us paraphrase the expression, thus, “Lord, You are the Maker of all things, make us glad! By Your Word You did make the light; make light for us! You will make new these worn-out skies and much-polluted earth; come, then, and make us new and restore unto us the joy of Your salvation!” The parallel lies much in the source to which both sadness and gladness are ascribed. Lord, make both our summers and our winters, our calms and

our storms, for *everything* is good which comes from You, and it is our joy that our times are in Your hands.

But now notice that a proportion is insisted upon—"Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil." This is an original prayer, full of thought and hope. Truly, also, it is a philosophical prayer—one which is in accordance with the harmonies of Nature and consonant with all the ways of God. I have been told that on the Scot lakes, the depth of the lake is almost always the same as the height of the surrounding hills. And I think I have heard that the same is true of the great ocean—so that the greatest depth is probably the same as the greatest height.

Doubtless, the law of equilibrium is manifest in a thousand ways. Take an instance in the adjustment of days and nights. A long night reigns over the north of Norway—in these wintry months they do not even see the sun! But mark and admire their summers—then the day banishes the light altogether and you may read your Bible by the light of the midnight sun! Long wintry nights find compensation in a perpetual summer day! There is a balance about the conditions of the peoples of differing lands. Each country has its drawbacks and its advantages. I believe it is so with the life of God's people—the Lord also maintains a balance in them. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ."

The great Father permits some to be little in Israel, but they are none the less dear to Him for that! Such are like the minnow which swims a pool proportioned to its size—no great tempest sweeps over the tiny stream—its ruffles and its calms suit its little inhabitants. Another of God's children is made for great service. He may be compared to leviathan, for whom the ocean is prepared—with billows, tempests and hurricanes in due proportion. The great Architect draws everything to scale! While some lives are wisely arranged upon a small scale, others are fashioned for wider spheres and made to do business on the great waters! These have greater tribulations, but they also have greater consolations!

God knows how to manage us all and we have, each one, a place in His thoughts. Wisdom allots each one his talent and his work—his strength and his trial. What would a sparrow do with an eagle's wings? Given the eagle's wings and the eagle's eyes, there must be a soaring up above the Alps, a companionship with winds and lightning! To the tiny hummingbird God appoints no flight into the upper air, but allots it flowers and sunshine nearer the ground. He knows the way of His people and His love is over all! The good Lord measures out the dark and the light in due proportions—and the result is life sad enough to be safe, and glad enough to be desirable!

I do not believe that our mortal life is fitly set forth by the Thane's parable, when he said to the Saxon king, "Have you marked, O king, when you are sitting in your hall and the fires are lit, and the lamps are burning, how the sparrow comes flying out of the thick darkness, passes through the window, glides into the bright and cheerful light, and then flits out again into the darkness? Such is our life—an interval of light

amidst a long darkness.” It is not so! If a Believer flits out of the light, he glides into the light again! If we traverse a stretch of darkness, we may expect an equal breadth of brightness! If today we sail a stormy main, we may hop, tomorrow, that the sea will be as glass. We have our changes, but the preponderance of life is not to misery.

Rainy days are many and yet, in the long run, they are outnumbered by the seasons of fair weather. God makes us glad according to the days in which He has afflicted us and the years in which we have seen evil! It may not be said of God’s children that we are a wretched company. Though truly, if only in this life we had hope, we should be, of all men, most miserable. Yet, since that hope is sure, we are, of all men, the most happy! We shall not say, when life is ended here below, that it was an evil thing to have lived! We have the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come! “Happy are you, O Israel,” is for the present as well as for the future!

God has blessed us and we are blessed—and it is not for us to speak as if the blessing were in vain. Now, if it is so, that our gladness and our sadness are balanced, let us accept them, by turns, with gratitude! Let us notice, further, that sorrow is the herald of joy. Did I not tell you but a few Sundays ago how I sat in health and strength and joy in the olive gardens, and said to my friend—

**“Should we expect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight?”**

The apprehension was soon justified, as it has often been! But let us not forget the other side of this Truth of God—we may expect some mercy, near, when we are bowed with heaviest grief! Among the ashes of sorrow we shall find live coals of joy! Grief is God’s usher of the black rod, sent to intimate that in the majesty of His Grace, the Lord is drawing near to us.

There will be first, to us, even as there was to Israel, the sound of Egypt’s chariots, the cry of her horsemen and a descent into the depths of the sea—and then shall come the far-resounding, never-forgotten shout of victory! The rage of Pharaoh, the darkness of the night and the march through the Red Sea must prepare the way for Miriam’s timbrel and the loud refrain, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea!” Israel must make bricks without straw before Moses shall come! If I had been a little child among the Israelites, I think I should have known, when father set the bitter herbs upon the table, that the lamb was roasting, somewhere, and would be set out, too. “With bitter herbs shall you eat it”—and so, if there are bitter herbs, the dainty dish is near!

Job did not know, and he could not *guess* it, but in the light of Job’s book we ought to know that the preparation for making a man twice as rich as he was before is to take away all that he has. Oftentimes, in building a bigger house, it is the way of wisdom to clear away the old building altogether. Keeping up the old structure is often an expensive economy—it is better to demolish it. Even so do I believe that the adversities of the saints are to their lasting profit by removing that which would bind greater prosperity. Troubles come clothed in black, but to the eyes of *faith*

they carry silver trumpets and proclaim the approach of great mercies! God is hastening in the richness of His favor to bless His children! Sorrow is the outrider of joy!

A step further and we have it thus—sorrow often prepares for joy. It might not be safe, dear Brother, that you should enjoy worldly prosperity at the outset of life. Your adversities in business are meant to teach you the worthlessness of earthly things so that when you have them, you may not be tempted to make idols of them! I am persuaded that many men have been ruined by rising suddenly to fame and power! Had they, at first, been abused and trod down like mire in the streets, their spirits might have been hardened to endure that sharpest of all tests, namely, human honor—for, “as the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” You are not ready yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, to bear the weight of an elevated superstructure—you must be dug out, first, and a deep foundation must be laid to bear a lofty building!

In the spiritual life, God does not run us up with glittering virtues all of a sudden, but deep prostration of spirit and thorough humiliation prepare the under-courses! And then, afterwards, stone upon stone, as with rows of jewels, we are built up to be a palace for the indwelling of God! Sorrow furnishes the house for joy. The preparation for an eternal Heaven is temporary affliction. Jesus has gone to prepare Heaven for us, but He has left His Cross behind Him that the Holy Spirit may, by its means, prepare us for Heaven! You could not enjoy the rest of Paradise if you had not first known the labors of pilgrimage! You could not understand the boundless joy of Heaven if your hearts had not been enlarged by the endurance of tribulation! Let not this be forgotten, then—our troubles build a house and spread a table for our joys.

Did you ever read of a Roman triumph? Have you ever stood upon the Via Sacra which led up to the Capitol? There, when the glad day was come, the people crowded all along the road. Every roof was loaded—the very chimney tops bore each a man, while along the sacred way the conqueror rode, drawn by white horses, amid the blast of trumpets and the thundering acclamations of myriads. What glory! What renown! Rome’s millions did their best to crown their hero. But there had been to him full many a battle before that hour of pride! Victory needs conflict as its preface. The conqueror’s scars are his truest decorations. His wounds are his best certificates of valor. Because he had been smothered with the dust and defiled with the blood of battle, the hero stood erect and all men paid him reverence.

It must be so in the present condition of things. No man can wear the garland till he has first contended for it—

***“Surely we must fight if we would reign.
Increase our courage, Lord!”***

The way to the crown is by the cross—the palm branch comes not to the idle hand—

***“The path of sorrow and that path, alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”***

Once again, let me say to you, dear Friends, there is such a connection between sorrow and joy that no saint ever has a sorrow but what it has a

joy wrapped in it. It is a rough oyster, but a pearl lies within those shells if you will but look for it! Do not think I mock at grief by saying that it is the husk of joy. Far from it! I would console grief by asserting solemnly that within the black envelope of affliction there is a precious love token from God—you can be sure of that. We find the treasure of communion with Christ in the earthen vessel of sorrow. We ask to have fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings and we cannot do so unless *we* suffer. It is a joy to remember in our woe that by these things we are made like our Lord and conformed to His image! If there were only this comfort, it might suffice to sweeten every suffering!

Beside this, there is generally, with sorrow, a manifestation of the Lord amid our weakness. I have known many forms of happiness, but I think, upon the whole, I consider the purest and sweetest to be that of fainting in weakness upon the breast of Jesus and dying into His life. “Oh to be nothing, nothing, only to lie at His feet!” To be as a lily broken off at the stalk and, therefore, taken up into His hands! This is unutterable happiness! The Lord’s love to His poor and afflicted ones is most choice and tender. “He carries the lambs in His bosom.” Favored feebleness to be thus laid in the Heaven of Jesus’ bosom! I love to cower down under the Divine wings like a chick under the hen, finding myself by losing myself in God! I have found it precious to feel that no more strength is left with which to suffer and, therefore, I must die away into the Divine will!

Certain is it that in every tribulation there are consolations, even as every night has its own stars. I am sure, dear Brothers and Sisters, you that grieve most, today, for the departed, possess a joy which outweighs your mourning—it is a great sorrow to lose a father, but it is a greater joy to know that your father is not really lost, but translated to the skies! It is a great grief to part with a true Brother and fellow laborer, but it is happiness to know that he is promoted to the peerage of the skies! We might, each one, say of our departed friend, “Let us go, that we may die with him.” These good men have a head start on us—they are preferred before us—they have first seen the King in His beauty!

One of them, at least, has reached his reward before his spiritual father—he who is my joy and crown is in Heaven before me! Verily, there are first that shall be last. Our hold on the invisible is strengthened by the departure of our Brothers and Sisters. We have more in Heaven to love, more fraternal meetings to anticipate and so we have new links with the eternal. Did I not say, truly, that every sorrow contains a joy?

Once more, the day will come when all the sorrows of God’s sending will be looked upon as joys. Hear this! By some strange alchemy, known only to “the King eternal, immortal, invisible,” our sorrows shall be turned into joys! You see this in your own homes—I quote it because it is the Lord’s own metaphor—a woman, when she is in travail, has sorrow because her hour is come. But soon she remembers no more her travail, for joy that a man is born into the world! Our troubles and travails are sharp, but they will all be forgotten in the joy that will come of them. Before we enter Heaven we shall thank God for most of our sorrows—and when we are once in Glory we shall thank Him for all of them!

Perhaps in Heaven, among all the things which have happened to us that will excite our wonder and delight, our furnace experience and the hammer and the file will take the lead. Sorrow will contribute rich stanzas to our everlasting Psalm. Therefore comfort one another with these words and breathe the prayer, each one, today, "Make us glad accordingly to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil." In each case may Divine Love weigh out the ingredients of a sanctified life according to the art of the apothecary, each one in due proportion!

II. Bear with me while I come to the second part of my subject which I desire to make eminently practical. The gladness desired is also described—it is PECULIAR GLADNESS. The Psalmist wishes for a fourfold gladness—the first is gladness at the sight of God's Work. Notice—"YOUR work." There is always something cheering in God's work. Have you ever felt it so? I think you must have done so. When Mungo Park was cheered by that little bit of moss which he picked up in the wilderness, he was but comforted as many of us have been. The flowers of the garden, the wild beauties of the forest, the chance tufts by the roadside are all God's work and, therefore, breathe consolation to God's servants.

Nature is kind—her stars speak light to our hearts! Her winds chase away our gloom and her waves flash with health for us. Nature is a fond stepmother to the Lord's children because she is, like ourselves, the work of the Lord. When we are in deep tribulation it is a sweet quietus to survey the handiwork of our Father in Heaven. His work in Providence, also, is often a consolation to us. Let us but see what God has done for His people and for ourselves in years past, and we are cheered! Trouble, itself, when we see it to be God's work, has lost its terror.

A certain Persian nobleman found himself surrounded by soldiers who sought to take him prisoner. He drew his sword and fought right valiantly—and might have escaped had not one of the company said, "The king has sent us to convey you to himself." He sheathed his sword at once. Yes, we can contend against what we call a misfortune, but when we learn that the Lord has done it, our contest is ended, for we joy and rejoice in what the Lord does! Or, if we cannot get the length of rejoicing in it, we acquiesce to His will. This is our song—

***"I would not contend with Your will,
Whatever that will may decree!
But oh, may each trial I feel
Unite me more fondly to Thee."***

Brothers and Sisters, the great comfort which this Church needs, now, is to see God's work in the midst of her revived and glorified. If the Lord will but come among us and save men. And if He will build up and edify His people and give them help to accomplish their holy service—this will be our richest possible comfort—"Let Your work appear unto Your servants." Lord, our Brothers and Sisters fade away! They go into the shadow land and we see them no more. But, oh, if we can see Your hand at work among us, we shall not be discouraged! We mourn the loss of our Brothers' work, but we will not be disheartened if we see Your work! May the Lord make you to see His work on your own hearts, dear Brothers and Sisters! May He make you to see His work in the congregation, in the

Sunday school and everywhere throughout the world, bringing men to Himself—and you will find therein a sovereign balm for all your wounds.

The next consolation is also a very rich one—gladness at the Revelation of God to our children—“And Your glory to their children.” If our God will but make His glory to be seen by our children, what more can we ask? “I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the Truth of God.” No better comfort can be found for bereaved mothers than to see their sons and daughters converted! There is a sorrow for those who have departed, but I could almost say, “Weep not for the dead, neither bewail them”—for there is a sharper grief, by far, and that is our anxiety for those who survive and yet are dead unto God!

Did you ever see a chain gang of convicts marching to their labor? I could wish never to see the sad scene again. Suppose that among those convicts there was a boy of yours! Ah me! Ah me! It were better for you that he had never been born! But think of those who are prisoners in the chains of *sin*. Is there a boy or girl of yours in such bonds? Oh, then, I am sure you will pray the Lord to rescue you from so sharp a trial—and to set your sons and daughters free from the fetters of iniquity. Pray, each one of you, fervently, “O Lord, let Your glory as their Emancipator appear to my children and then do what You will.”

Did you ever visit a condemned cell? To peep through the gate and to see a man sitting there, condemned to die, is enough to make one faint! Suppose it were your boy! Suppose it were your husband! Suppose it were your brother! But listen—“He that believes not is condemned already.” Pardon us, dear unconverted relatives, if we say that we feel more sorrow for you living than we do for our gracious ones who are dead, for yours is a terrible plight, to be, even now, sitting in the condemned cell—doomed to be taken out to execution before long unless Infinite Mercy shall grant a free pardon.

What dreadful sights must meet the eyes upon a battlefield! If I see a man bleeding by a common cut, my heart is in my mouth and I cannot bear the sight! But what must it be to see men dismembered, disemboweled, writhing to and fro in the last agonies of death! What horror to walk among mounds of dead bodies and stumble at each stop over a human corpse! Yet, what is natural death compared with *spiritual* death? What terror to dwell in the same house with relatives who are dead while they live—dead unto God! The thought is full of anguish. If God will quicken our spiritually dead. If He will give life to those who are “free among the slain, as they that go down into the Pit,” what a consolation we shall find!

Did you see that alarming fire the other day? Did you hear of the hotel in flames—the one in which there were many guests in the upper story—and the flames had grasped the whole edifice, so that numbers perished? It must be dreadful to see persons at the upper windows of a burning house and to be powerless to rescue them. But if your *child* were there—your boy, your girl, or if your husband or your wife were there, or even if anyone you knew were there—your grief would have a double sting about it and you would cry, “Lord, do what You will with *me*, but save those precious lives!” Remember, then, that your ungodly friends are in the same

condition, and what greater mercy can God bestow upon you than for Him to make His glory to be seen by your children in their eternal salvation?

Therefore I turn your thoughts to that prayer. May you breathe it now and may the Lord, for Christ's sake, answer it right speedily—

“Let your glory appear unto our children.”

The third consolation which Moses here describes is gladness at beauty bestowed—“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.” Sorrow mars the countenance and clothes the body with sackcloth. But if the Lord will come to us and adorn us with His beauty, then the stains of mourning will speedily disappear! Brothers and Sisters, what a beauty is this which the Lord gives—“the beauty of the Lord our God!” This comeliness is the beauty of His Grace, for our covenant God is the God of all Grace! If the Lord makes us to know that we are His, our faces shine. If He fills us with His life and love, then brightness flashes from the eyes and there is a Grace about every movement! This “beauty” means *holiness*, for holiness is the beauty of God!

If the Holy Spirit works in you the beauty of holiness, you will rise superior to your afflictions. If this Church shall be made the holier by its bereavements, we shall gain much by our losses. This beauty of the Lord must surely mean His Presence with us. As the sun beautifies all things, so does God's Presence! When we know that Jesus is with us. When we feel that He is our Helper. When we bask in His love, when He abides with us in power—this is the beauty of the saints! If we have Christ *in* us, Christ *with* us, we can bear any amount of trouble!—

***“I can do all things, or can bear
All suffering if my Lord is there.”***

This beauty gives to the Believer an attractiveness in the eyes of men. They perceive that we have been with Jesus and they behold our faces shining like the faces of angels! It is a great thing when a Christian is so happy, so holy and so heavenly that he attracts others to Christ and people seek his company because they perceive that he has been in the company of the blessed Lord! God give you this, and if you have it, dear Friends, you may forget your sorrows—they are transfigured into joy!

The last comfort that Moses speaks of is gladness at our own work being established—“Establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” Do you notice the wonderful blending in the 15th and 17th verses? *There* it is, “Let Your work appear to Your servant.” *Here* it is, “Let our work be established.” Alas, I have heard divines rightly say that salvation is God's work and then they have harshly added that, in our preaching of the Gospel, we make it out to be our own work. Thus they speak hard things against us and their speech is not after the Lord's mind. Others, again, make out this work to be so much man's work that God is forgotten!

Neither of these is correct—we must *blend* the two! To build up the Church and win souls for Jesus is, first of all, God's work and then our work! Why should a Christian work to win souls? Answer—because God works in him to win souls! Remember the verses—“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Why? “For it is God that works in you to will

and to do of His good pleasure.” God works to set us working—our work is the result of His work! Our work is often a very effectual means of comfort to us. On the battlefield of Gettysburg there had been a terrible fight and among the wounded lay a certain chaplain of the name of Eastman who had been seriously injured in the back by his horse falling upon him.

The dark and dreary night came on and, as he lay in intense pain, unable to rise, he heard a voice at a little distance cry, “O God!” His interest was excited and he rolled himself over and over through pools of blood—and among the slain—till he reached the side of the dying man. And there they lay—talking of Jesus and His free salvation! The man expired in hope! And just then two soldiers came and told Eastman that a captain was dying a little further down the field and they must carry him there—so he was borne in anguish upon the work of mercy—and while the night wore on, he spoke of Jesus to many dying men. Could he have had a surer relief from his pain? I think not! Why, it seems to me that to lie there on his back with nothing to do but moan and groan would have been horrible! But in all his pain and anguish, to be carried about to proclaim mercy to dying men made the anguish of an injured back endurable! So is it when you miss a friend, or have lost property, or are heavy in spirit—you shall find your surest comfort in serving God with all your might.

The text prays for our work that it may succeed—“Establish the work of our hands.” Oh, if God will but prosper us in our work for Him, how happy we shall be! One day this week I had a great lift up out of deep distress when I was informed that a captain was here, last Sunday morning, and was so impressed that he found the Savior and made the fact known at one of the noonday Prayer Meetings, asking for himself that he might be kept faithful to his God. This is good. We do not always see our seed grow so quickly as that. It is wet weather just now, the damp of sorrow is on all things, and so the seed sown in tears is speedily reaped in joy! Is not this something to comfort us? Let us pray God to send us more of it, that by conversions our work may prosper.

Then we pray that our work may be lasting—that is the chief point. I look forward to the future of this Church with prayerful, hopeful anxiety! I am not old—not very old at any rate—but I am not all that I was in my earlier days. And I mistrust whispers that soon things will decline. The other day a certain great preacher said that after a preacher had been for a while in a place, all the heroism, all the earnestness, all the fervor which characterizes new efforts would be gone. He said the best thing would be to disband the Church and let them begin, again, under a new leader. That may look like a practical idea, but I do not quite see it—nor does it commend itself, to me, as sound and true. If a Church is a *man’s* work, it is dependent upon a *man*—and when he is gone, the best thing we can do with it is to let it dissolve!

But I desire to see built up on this spot, by God’s hand, a Church which will endure till the coming of the Lord! Though dear ones, who seemed to be pillars, are taken away, the Lord will find other pillars! And though just now there are breaches in Zion’s wall, here and there, yet the

wall shall again be repaired and not a broken place shall remain! If we may see this accomplished, we shall be abundantly comforted. "Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands." We belong to an established Church—established not by men, but by the Lord! This Church will flourish when you and I have passed into our rest.

Meanwhile, I beg you to take a deep interest in it and do all you can for its prosperity. Make it more and more be the model of what a Church of Christ should be. I long that the Truth of God which I have preached may be established in all the earth. They say that Calvinism is at a great discount now—perhaps it is. Yet, to me, it seems that its Free Grace spirit is far more spread than ever and is quietly saturating all true evangelical preaching. If it is so, that the Doctrines of Grace are now despised, we still hope that we shall live to see them brought to the front, again! Or, if not, we shall leave behind such a testimony that, in years to come, the Gospel of the Grace of God will be read by thousands!

At this time I beg for the loving help of you all, for the Church itself. Our institutions deserve your zeal, liberality and prayerfulness. But do not forget the old house at home, the mother of these efforts. The Church, itself, needs your love, your prayers, your help, your sustenance! I say this to you, my dear Friends, who have been with me long—be you this day what you were at first—be as knit together and as earnest as you were when you had a boy preacher to lead you and you loved him and helped him to do good service for the Lord. For nearly 30 years God has been with us—let us begin, again, from this date and see if we cannot complete the 30 years of blessing and, if the Lord permits us, let us add another 20 years to it and make up half-a-century of prosperity!

Who knows? Only let us carefully watch the present and see that nothing declines. Let each one be eager to keep the sacred cause in a healthy condition. God will establish His work upon us from day to day—and this shall be our comfort. Keep everything in the best possible working order! Plead with the Holy Spirit to clothe us with His power. Maintain all forms of holy labor vigorously and sustain every fund by your spontaneous liberality. Never need pressing, but let each one enquire, "What can I do to keep the Church well supplied to God's glory?" I believe this is the way to Church comfort. God *will* comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places! But we must, each one, take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof.

Close up your ranks! Leave no empty spaces. Let every man stand closer to his fellow—and then—"Forward!" Forward to a fuller consecration and a braver faith in God! Forward to more Grace and higher holiness! And so shall we wipe away our tears and praise the name of the Lord! And He will remember us and, by a plenitude of blessing, make up to us all that we have lost. A blessing is coming! Be ready for it! Amen.

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ESTABLISHED WORK

NO. 3142

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1909.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 20, 1873.**

***“Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”
Psalm 90:17.***

SOME of us have been to the grave this afternoon and the most forcible impression upon our minds at this time is that of our mortality. We cannot, in burying others, say, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” without thinking of the time when we, too, shall be laid in the silent grave. The thought that we are, yet are not, that we are but as shadows that flit across the path of life—coming, going, scarcely come before we are gone—the thought of our mortality has led us to ask concerning our work—Is that mortal, too? Will that die like ourselves? Some of us have darling objectives, high designs, great enterprises on our hearts—are all those shadows? We are as the grass of the field—are they also grass? Will the scythe that cuts us down cut them down, too? Truly, if we thought it would be so, it would give double bitterness to the remembrance of our own mortality to think that our work was mortal as well as ourselves!

Perhaps it was that feeling which led Moses, the great Prophet-poet of the wilderness, to cry, “If we die, if we pass away, yet ‘establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.’” Every good man who is doing a good work has a sincere desire that his work should continue. This is not a wrong desire—it is in the highest degree right. We wish not to build with wood, hay and stubble—which we know will be consumed—and if our work is of that kind, we must not pray for its continuance. But if we believe that we are building with gold, silver and precious stones, we may pray, for the prayer is a most proper one, and the thought that suggests the prayer is a right one, “Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”

At the same time, let me here remark that it is the work of God which is the ground of our confidence and peace, but our own work—even that which we dare ask God to establish—can never be such a comfort and stay to us, for it is always a cause of anxiety. It is a very strange thing that unconverted men should ever look to their own works for peace and comfort, since even to Christians their own works are rather a source of anxiety than of consolation. I feel sure that every true worker for God knows that it is so. The more you do for God, the more care you have pressing upon you. And though Grace enables you to cast that care upon

Him whose work it really is, yet still does care naturally arise out of all work for God to those who are truly concerned in it. Hence our works never can become the source of our truest consolation. They may become evidences to us of God's Presence with us and may yield to our conscience a measure of peace, but still, the anxiety which will always spring out of good works will counterbalance any sort of comfort that can come from them! It is to God's work, not our own, that we have to look—"Let *Your* work appear unto Your servants.' We are willing to work for You, Lord, but let us always have our eyes on Your work. We shall never serve You acceptably unless our eyes are directed towards what You have done for us rather than towards what we do for You. There is no glory in *our* work, but 'let *Your* work appear unto Your servants, and *Your* Glory,' which always goes with it, 'unto their children.' Let us see Your glorious work, Your finished work—let us see it always, let us see it living, let us see it dying, and so we, Your servants, will praise You even when our hearts are anxious, believing that You will remove our anxiety—"Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning our work for God. First, *what part of our work can we ask God to establish?* Secondly, in what way is He likely to establish it? And, thirdly, if we are praying as Moses did, *what ought to be our mode of action to correspond with such a prayer?*

I. First, then, WHAT KIND OF WORK CAN WE ASK GOD TO ESTABLISH? The ungodly must not pray, "Establish the work of our hands for us"—it would be blasphemy for them to do so! If the work is evil, God cannot establish it. Jesus Christ has been revealed to destroy all the works of the devil—and when He is destroying the works of the devil, He will destroy all the works that have been worked by men possessed by the spirit of evil. Nothing that has been worked unrighteously will be allowed to stand! Neither can we ask God to make it stand without supposing God to be such an one as ourselves, which He is not, and can never be. God will not help you in that which is wrong, ungodly one, however much you may try to interweave His holy name with your unrighteous actions!

And remember, too, that God will never establish our works if they are intended to rival the works of His Son. Some people work very hard in trying to make a righteousness of their own, but if they could achieve their purpose, they would then be independent of a Savior. Their attempted obedience to the Law of God is intended to be a substitute for the perfect righteousness of Christ—and their tears and repentances are intended to be a substitute for the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. But do you suppose that God will ever take the side of those who desire to rival His Son and make the work of His Son needless? That can never be! Self-righteousness is the direst of insults to the Son of God! If I conceive myself to be righteous and meritorious in God's sight, I do, as far as in me lies, cast a reflection upon the wisdom of God, for I tell Him that al-

though He provided a Savior, one was not needed—at any rate, not for me! I also insult the blood of Jesus, for I tell Him that it was shed unnecessarily—at least as far as I am concerned—for I have no sin needing to be washed away! I insult the Holy Spirit, too, for I tell Him that I do not need a new birth, for I am already as good as I need to be! Self-righteousness insults the Triune Jehovah and, therefore, we cannot ask God to establish it. If we were sensible, we should pray God to pull it down, every stick and stone of it! And rest assured, Sinners, that if God ever does save you, He will do that as one of the first things—for every stone that our fancied nobility has ever put upon its fellow with a view to building a refuge for ourselves, God will take down! Not one stone shall be left upon another if God is ever to save us. One of the most deplorable things that could ever happen to a man would be for him to be allowed to dwell comfortably in a refuge of lies until the storm of Divine Judgment should sweep both himself and his refuge away forever! Dear Hearer, may I ask whether your work is a self-righteous one, whether you are trying to save yourself? For if so, this prayer of Moses cannot properly be used by you, neither can God hear it with acceptance. No wicked works and no self-righteous works may we ask God to establish!

But may we ask God to establish the ordinary works and engagements of our daily life? Yes, assuredly we may! If you are a servant of God, you have learned to eat and drink to His Glory and your most common actions are a part of the holy priesthood to which all Believers are called. You are yourself a priest and all that you do is a part of your service for God in His holy Temple, for God's Temple is not this Tabernacle, nor any other building. Wherever there is a true heart, there is a Temple for God—and wherever there is a renewed heart, there is a priest for God—and that is the only Temple and the only priest that God wants, with the exception of the Great High Priest, who stands for us before the Throne of the Most High. Well then, whatever you are doing, if you are doing it thus before God, you may ask Him to prosper and establish it. Why not? When Abraham's servant went down to Padanaram to find a wife for Isaac, he did not say, "This matrimonial arrangement is secular business, so I must not pray about it." He did pray about it and God guided him and prospered his errand! And David, when he needed to know whether he should go to certain places to fight his enemies, enquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up?" And the Lord gave the answers to his petitions!

We should do well to always make little things as well as great things the objects of prayer. I am afraid that many people fail for lack of due attention to little things. It is not always the great things in which a man slips, but it is often the little things which trip him up. Great matters he naturally takes to God, being diffident of his own judgment, but little matters he decides according to what he considers his own wisdom—and his own wisdom is generally nothing but the most arrant folly! The Israelites were never so grossly deceived as when the case seemed perfectly clear to them. There were the Gibeonites with old patched shoes upon their feet, so it was evident that they must have come from a distant

land. They had dry and moldy bread, so no doubt what they said was true, that they had taken it hot out of the oven when they set out on their journey and it had become moldy from the long distance that they had carried it. There was no need for the people to call the priest and seek advice from God—the case was so clear that nobody could be deceived! Their own common sense was quite sufficient to guide them—so they thought! Had it been puzzling case, they would have asked the Lord to guide them, but being so very plain, they were deceived and made a great mistake. Take care to always consult God about those very plain things as you consider them!

Still, Beloved, I would be very sorry to see this prayer limited to such matters as these. It should be used concerning them, but it must also be used to higher ends, or else it will be, to a large extent, wasted. True Christians live for God and work for God—and everyone of us who claims to be a Christian is either working for God or else an impostor. I repeat my declaration that the man who calls himself a Christian and yet does nothing for Christ is an impostor! He professes to be a fruit-bearing tree, yet he bears no fruit. He declares himself to be salt, yet he has no savor. He says that he is a light to the world, yet he never helps to remove its darkness by scattering his beams. But every genuine Christian is a worker for Christ, and work done for God is the kind of work which we may ask God to establish! And it is that work which will, in the highest sense, be established!

What great works men have performed and yet how little has been the length of their endurance! When the great city of Babylon was built, we can scarcely conceive how vast it was, but where is it now? Its site may be known, but its power is gone. Its kings have long since passed away and its glory has departed. Then there was that mighty city of Nineveh, with all the power which was connected with the Assyrians. Then there was the Persian empire! And the Persian kings with great diligence built up very powerful states—yet they were not established by God and all the might of Persia melted away. The Romans also built up a vast empire. What a great metropolis they made Rome to be! As we walk amidst its massive walls, so stupendous that they look as if they must have been the work of giants, we see how the greatest works of men without God are not established! Let them build as solidly as they may, their mightiest works pass away like the child's sandcastles built on the beach that are washed away by the next tide! Nothing that man makes for man will endure! Build on, you despots, but Time, a mightier king than you, will pull down all that you put up! And the very revolutions of society, as men change from one phase of thought to another, overturn each other—and that which it seemed right to establish yesterday, it seems necessary to overthrow tomorrow! It is not merely empires that are thus cast down, but systems of religion and works that have apparently been done for God have gone, too! And schools of thought that ruled human minds have passed away—and now they are not—all this teaches us that only

that which is really done for God—and that which is of God—will be established by God!

This leads me to say that I think the work we may pray God to establish is, first, *the work of soul-winning*, the work of bringing sinners to the Savior. And, next, *the work of building up of a Church*. And then *the work of testifying to the Truth as it is in Jesus*—a work which is sadly neglected in these degenerate times. The work of soul-saving—when we have earnestly labored to bring sinners to faith in Jesus and have cried to the eternal God for the quickening power of His Holy Spirit to regenerate them—we may certainly pray God that that work may be established. And then, when we have gathered Christians together and God has given us Grace to put them in their places in His Church—and the Holy Spirit has rested upon us so that the work under our hands has been God’s work as well as ours—we may certainly pray that God would build up His own Church and establish it. And when we have borne testimony to the Truth of God we may and we must very earnestly pray that that Truth may be spread still more widely, that it may not be forgotten by those who hear it, but may abide in their hearts—and that it may come to the front and influence men and women more than it has done up to now. Thus we may pray that our witness-bearing for Jesus may be established.

I do not know what particular form of service may have fallen to the lot of my dear Brothers and Sisters here, but in any case, we may pray that what we have done for God may be established—only let us remember that *God will only establish work that is really and truly done for Him*. We can only pray to God, in the language of this prayer, to establish “*the work of our hands*.” There must be real work and it must be two-handed work—we must throw our whole strength into it. I cannot expect God to establish that work over which I have trifled. If I have served God in such a way that it is palpable that I did not think the work very important, I cannot ask Him to establish it. We have a great deal of talking about the Gospel nowadays—we would have the Truth of God spread everywhere if talking would do it—but it is “the work of our hands” that is needed—real service, the putting out of our strength, the using of all our vigor, wit, wisdom and the skill of the craftsman who has been trained to some special form of handiwork. When a man throws his whole soul into what he has done for the Lord, so that he can claim that the work of his hands is real work done as unto the Lord, then he may ask God to establish it! But it must be work that is truly done, for I am afraid that there is a great deal talked about that is never done. I am not quite sure about those 30 persons who were said to have been converted the other night at a certain meeting. I cannot always rely upon the information received from a certain Brother who goes here and there and who is quite sure that so many were converted one night, and so many another night. I shall be glad if it is true, but I am not quite clear about it—there is a good deal of “flash in the pan” about his work. I read, in certain newspapers, of the work done by an earnest Brother well known to some of

you—and I tried to find some trace of it, but I could not find any sign of it a few months afterwards. I am sorry to say that I have seen many churches “revived” until there has been nothing left of them. I am very dubious of a great deal that I have heard that seems to me like unholy boasting. If the work was exactly as it was said to be, there ought to have been a very great difference in certain towns from what there is now! My dear Brother, if God has done a great work by you, don’t you go and brag about it! If it is necessary for you to sometimes tell what the Lord has done in saving souls through your instrumentality, tell it very discreetly, giving God all the Glory—not by blowing the trumpet and shouting, “Come and see our zeal for the Lord of Hosts” which, I believe, brings a blight and a blast upon everything that is done. God the Holy Spirit is displeased if we make a boast of any work that is done by us—and He will not establish any work of that sort. The real *bona fide* “work of our hands” God will establish, but He will not establish that which we try to puff into something important by pretty paragraphs in the newspapers about what wonderful things have been performed by us! The bare truth—plain transparent facts, we may give—but anything like exaggeration should be loathed by the Christian because it is untruthful! And it should be shunned by every wise man because it leads to bitter disappointment. God will only establish work that is really and truly done for Him.

And I believe, further, that *no work is ever really established by God unless it is founded upon the downright Truth of God*. No doubt there is a great deal of work which God acknowledges although all in it is not His Truth. God prospered the work of Whitefield and the work of Wesley, but did that prove the truth of all that Whitefield or Wesley preached? No, but it proved that both of them had a measure of the Truth of God in their preaching—and that measure of Truth God blessed—but God would not establish anything that they taught in error. It may last for a while and some of it has lasted, I am afraid, much longer than is good for us, but sooner or later it will have to go. There was also Luther—he taught a great deal of the Truth of God and that Truth will last. But he also taught some error and the consequence is that there is a great deal today in Lutheranism which is doing much mischief! That will not last—it will have to go the way of all errors. That very point which God will destroy because it is erroneous may be that for which we contend with the greatest vigor! God will not establish any of His servants’ work which is not the Truth—and I am sure that every faithful servant of His is glad of that. What a mercy it is, if I do some mischief when I am trying to do my Master’s work, that the good work I do will last, but the bad I do, forgiven by His infinite mercy, shall by His great wisdom be swept away before long! Error shall not always remain to do mischief—it is the Truth of God that will abide. Therefore I think that we ought never to seek to do good by stating what is not true. There is a great deal of preaching of that which is not the Truth of God in the hope that it will be the means of converting people, but it is of no use. God will establish the Truth—but if we keep

back any Scriptural Doctrines, or if we cut the corners off them in order to make them more acceptable to our hearers—God will not establish our work! He is the God of Truth and He will not set His seal to lies.

Hence, Beloved, it is so important that *every man who works for God should always seek to work in harmony with the Spirit of Truth*. We have known some whose guiding star has been “policy.” One of these has said, “Suppose I were to leave such-and-such a church which is, in part, erroneous—what would become of my work?” Dear Brother, are you going to do a wrong thing in the hope of saving your work? Have you subscribed to that wicked maxim, “Let us do evil that good may come”? After all, what have I to do with the consequences of right actions? Is it not my business, if I have learned any Truth of God, to follow it wherever it will lead me? It will not lead me into a morass, for it is God’s Light and it will only lead me into God’s way! If Heaven could only stand by a Christian telling a lie, in God’s name let it fall, for the ruin of it would be a less calamity than for a true man to turn aside to falsehood! Stand upright and then shall you be as God would have you to be. But the double-minded, the wavering, those that lean first this way and then that, with craft trimming their sails to this wind and then adjusting them to that, where will they go? And how can we expect the God of Truth ever to establish such “policy” as that? Let our work be true work done in the Truth of God and with truthful maxims to guide us, for then we may bring it before God and say, “Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”

Do not try to build too fast, as so many do, using untempered mortar which will not hold their buildings together. Do not try to build beyond or short of the foundation lines which Christ has laid down for you. You would not employ a bricklayer who said to you, “I can get a house up much more quickly than by ordinary methods. I don’t need to use the plumb line to see whether the walls are straight or not—I do not trouble about how I put the bricks in the interior of the building. I can leave a blank here and a gap there—nobody will know it. There is no particular need why I should make the bricks fit, the one to the other—as long as I put a good facing on the front, that will do.” Such a man as that may think that he has done well, but when the master comes, he says, “All this has to be cleared away before I can do anything. You have just been doing mischief and you have wasted all the day in which you ought to have worked.” So, young man, if you go to a Church and want to see it quickly built up and begin to take unconverted people into membership, or get up a great excitement and receive a large number of persons without any careful examination, or preach what is not sound Doctrine so that big worldly people in the neighborhood come to hear you, and say, “See how fast he is building”—when the Master comes, He will point out what mischief you have been doing and He will send a better man to do the work! And that better man’s chief trouble will be to get rid of what this fast builder has put up! Let none of us build like that, but may God give us the Grace to build what He can establish, for it is not everything

that He can establish consistently with His own Character of Truth and uprightness.

II. I must not devote more time to that point, but must notice, secondly, and briefly, THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD MAY ANSWER THE PRAYER, “Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”

Possibly, *for the establishment of our work, it may be necessary for us to die.* Many a man is, perhaps unconsciously, hindering his own work. And if the work is to be established, it needs somebody else to come and do it. I may again use the very homely simile of a bricklayer. If he were to say to his master, “Let me finish the house that I have built,” the answer would be, “I do not need you any longer, you have done your part of the work—other workmen must finish the building.” So, sometimes, one good man is like the bricklayer and another good man roofs in what he has built, or does all the work in the interior of the house. There is a time for all of us to die for the good of our own work and, often, the removal of an eminent Christian is not the loss to the Church of Christ that we think it must be. Perhaps you have seen a great oak tree which has covered quite a large area with its widely-spreading branches—and when it has been cut down, you have all regretted it—it seemed as if there would be a huge gap. But there were a dozen little oaks that never would have come to anything because they could not get sunshine or rain while they were overshadowed by that great oak! And when that was cut down, all those others began to grow, so that, instead of one tree, you had a dozen. And the removal of one eminent Christian has often been the means of letting sunlight in to somebody who was obscured before, but who now, in the Providence of God, is made strong and useful. So it may be beneficial for some men to die in order that their own work may be established. If it is so with us, we may well be content to go to Heaven so that our prayers may be answered!

But, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there are some very sweet thoughts connected with working for God. *When a soul is saved by our means, our work is established,* for Satan himself cannot undo that work! Death may take that Believer away, but that will be the completion of the work. Now the wheat is in the heavenly garner and the precious grain is laid up where no mildew can injure it. When the work done by good men and women is the means of bringing sinners to Christ, it is sure work. That is gold taken out of the mine which never can rust. Soul-saving work is lasting work and there is this further comfort—that every soul that is truly converted by God’s Grace propagates itself. Let one sinner be brought to Jesus and he will bring another sinner. Light one candle and you may light 50 candles from it. One person may be converted to God through your kind, faithful words and earnest believing prayers—and that one person may bring another, and that one another, and that one another, and that one another, and so on in an endless chain of blessing to God’s Glory!

Remember too, that *if we work for God as God wishes us to do, it is really God's work that we are doing*. He who works truthfully, according to the principles laid down in the Scriptures, has God working in him, with him and by him—and all that is God's work will endure—you may rest assured of that! What he has done shall not be undone. Divine designs shall not be frustrated so that we may be sure that the work of our hands, in so far as it is God's work, will be established. Besides, God is alive to take care of the work that we do for Him. We die, but He does not. We leave the work in His hands—we could not leave it in better hands! He could have done the work without us if He had pleased, but although He has been pleased to use us, for a while, He can carry on the work without us when He takes us Home. If you have sought to teach the Truth of God for Christ, who is the Truth, to bring souls to Christ and to build up a Church for Christ, God will establish your work. It is true that there are many enemies to the Truth—devils and men of devilish spirit who would, if they could, tear down every stone that you have built up—but God shall make the wrath of even these enemies to praise Him and they shall become, perhaps unconsciously to themselves, the means of establishing your work!

Meanwhile the wheels of Providence, [See Sermon #3114, Volume 54—GOD'S PROVIDENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] which are full of eyes, are grinding on in their majestic course on behalf of the work of God in which you are engaged! And all those eyes are looking onward towards the prosperity of that great cause which is so dear to your heart! Do not have any fear of failure, Beloved—if you have really worked for God, you have worked for a cause that cannot know defeat! It may not win tomorrow, or the next day, but God can wait. Age comes upon us, but nothing shall ever make Him decrepit. And through the course of ages, God can wait. I always feel, with regard to the causes in which we are engaged, when people tell us that we are in the minority, “Very well, we can be content to be in the minority at present, for the majority will be with us one day. We cannot doubt that when God is with us! Yes, and if we are alone with God, God makes majority enough for all true hearts. But even counting human heads, the Truth shall yet have the majority! God can wait—He knows how to convince gainsayers and bring them round to His side. Our little plans come to a end in a few years—we cannot afford to bring them out unless they do—but God can let His capital lie idle for thousands of years if it is necessary. He is so rich that it does not impoverish Him and He will get His interest by-and-by!

God can wait and *we must learn to wait, too*. That work which produces no visible results at present is none the less a true work and an accepted work. If you teach the Truth and die—and that Truth appears to be forgotten, you have not lived in vain, for that Truth will spring up again in God's good time! They burnt Jerome of Prague. They took John Huss and when they fastened him to the fatal stake, he said, “You may burn the goose, today, but there shall come a swan that you cannot

burn”—and that prophecy was fulfilled in Luther, whose crest was a swan. One good man dies and another comes. If there were not brave men of Truth to go down sapping and mining, there would not be other men to come afterwards to be acclaimed victors. In any great movement that succeeds, it is not the last man who deserves the credit—it is the men who went before at whom, perhaps, everybody howled. To be able to heed the Truth when everybody tries to hiss you down and not to care for their opposition, but to feel, “I have God’s Truth and if all the devils in Hell were against me, God is with me and I am in the majority against them all,” that is the spirit to have! And when we have that spirit, we may pray, “Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands,” and it will be done!

It is now some hundreds of years ago that certain believers in Christ were burnt to death upon the very spot on which this Tabernacle now stands. Nearly everybody agreed that they ought to be burnt to death, for they were called Anabaptists, though their belief was as nearly as possible the same as ours. Catholics and Protestants alike said, “Burn them, by all means, for this pestilent sect of Baptists is always testifying against everybody else!” And burnt they were at the Butts at Newington. Suppose they had said, out of the midst of the fire, “There will one day stand, on this very spot, a great House of Prayer wherein about six thousand Baptists shall meet at one time to hear the Gospel preached for which we are being burnt to death”? Men would have laughed them to scorn! But it has come true and if I were to say that the last trace of infant sprinkling will be swept from off the earth and that the last relic of Romanism, Episcopalianism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism and heathenism will be swept away and only be remembered by men to be loathed, I would no doubt be laughed at and disbelieved! But I would be speaking only the Truth of God. All errors will die in due time. They may live for a while and they may seem to conquer, but God will assuredly pierce them to the heart with His two-edged sword! His despised Truth must come to the front for as surely as God lives, so must His Truth live, for it is part of Himself! Be on God’s side, I pray you, for that is the winning side! Be on God’s side, old men, and also young men, I charge you, as you shall appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ—follow the Truth. Away with everything but the simple Truth revealed in the Scriptures! Put everything else aside and God will establish your work in the ages yet to come. Who knows how long those ages may be? Christ may not come tomorrow—He may wait a while but He will come one day. We are to live expecting Him to return. Yet perhaps He may tarry longer than we think—true work for Him will last until the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound! If the work is of God, it will certainly endure.

I have no time to speak on our third point, **WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO IF THIS PRAYER OF MOSES IS OUR PRAYER**, but I will say just this. If we want God to establish our work, we must take care not to pull it down ourselves by inconsistent living. We must not imagine that we can establish it by any wrong methods. We must leave God to establish it in His

own way—and God often establishes His Truth by that which seems likely to throw it down. If we want God to establish our work, we must pray much about it and we must do it as His work and do it for His Glory and do it according to the rules which I have tried to lay down. If I leave only this one thought with you, that the Christian is to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and to be true to the light which God has given us in this sacred Book, I shall feel that this evening has been well spent.

The Lord grant that all of us may be looking to His work for salvation and then be doing His work with both our hands and all our heart and praying God to establish it.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 142.

[See Sermon #2282, Volume 38—DAVID'S PRAYER IN THE CAVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Verse 1. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.* Silent prayers are often true prayers, but there are times when, in extremity of suffering, it is very helpful to give expression to the soul's agony. I know some friends who can never pray to their own comfort except they can hear their own voices, and I believe that it is a good thing for the most of us to retire to some private place where we cannot be heard by men and where we can therefore freely use our voices in prayer. Very often the use of the voice helps to keep the thoughts from wandering and also gives intensity to the desires. You notice that David particularly mentions here that he cried unto the Lord with his voice. No doubt many of his prayers ascended to God from his heart without the medium of his voice, but here the cry with his voice went with the desires of his heart.

2. *I poured out my complaint before Him.* That is a beautiful expression, "I poured out my complaint"—just as you turn a pitcher upside down and let all the contents run out! "I poured out my complaint." We are generally ready enough to do that, only we usually go to some friend, or to some enemy and pour out our complaint into his ear. But what is the good of doing that? David took a far wiser course! "I poured out my complaint before *Him*."

2. *I showed before Him my trouble.* Uncovered it and set it all out in order before Him. God could see it, yet David knew that it was his place and his privilege to spread it all out before Him.

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.* Many of the Lord's saints know the meaning of that sentence, "My spirit was overwhelmed within me." They are like a vessel that has sunk in the sea and is completely covered by the waves. David was in such a plight as that—he did not know his own whereabouts, but here was the mercy—"Then You knew my path." It is much better that God should know our path than that we should know it ourselves, for we may know

it and be driven to despair by our knowledge. But God's knowledge of it moves Him to uphold us in it, or to deliver us out of it.

3, 4. *In the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me.* "They were afraid to link themselves with me, lest, when I went down like a drowning man, they should be dragged down with me."

4. *Refuge failed me.* "I could not run away—there was no place where I could find shelter."

4. *No man cared for my soul.* "They were all hard, cold, ungrateful, treacherous."

5. *I cried unto You, O LORD.* What a mercy that David was driven to do that! If there had been any earthly refuge, he would have fled to it. If there had been some human being at his right hand to help him, probably he would have trusted him. If any man had cared for his soul, perhaps he would have trusted in that person. But now that every earthly door was shut, he was obliged to turn to his God.

5. *I said, You are my refuge.* "I can flee to You."

5. *And my portion in the land of the living.* With both hands he lays hold of God and cries, "You are my refuge and my portion"—two glorious "mys"! Well did Luther say that the very pith of the Gospel lies in the little words, and it is the same with the Psalms.

6, 7. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison.* This is a suitable prayer for those who have troubled consciences, for those who are shut up in Doubting Castle and cannot get out without Divine assistance. "Bring my soul out of prison."

7. *That I may praise Your name.* As soon as you are set at liberty, you ought at once to let your glad heart magnify the God who has broken your bonds and brought you out of prison!

7. *The righteous shall compass me about.* This is a beautiful idea. It seems to imply that they would be so astonished to find him at liberty that they would all come round him to hear his story! They would be so glad to see the mourner rejoicing that they would all begin to enquire what God had done for his soul.

7. *For you shall deal bountifully with me.* In the 13th Psalm, David said, "I will sing unto the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me." But here he looks into the future and sings, "You *shall* deal bountifully with me."

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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UNDER HIS SHADOW

NO. 3267

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT A COMMUNION SERVICE AT MENTONE,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1880.**

***“He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”
Psalm 91:1.***

I MUST confess of my short discourse, as the man did of the axe which fell into the stream, that it is borrowed. The outline of it is taken from one who will never complain of me, for to the great loss of the Church on earth she has left these lower choirs to sing above. Miss Havergal, last and loveliest of our modern poets, just when her tones were most mellow and her language most sublime, has been caught up to swell the music of Heaven. Her last poems are published with the title, “*Under His Shadow*,” and the preface gives the reason for the name. She said, “I should like the title to be ‘Under his shadow.’ I seem to see four pictures suggested by that—under the shadow of a rock in a weary plain; under the shadow of a tree; closer still, under the shadow of His wing; nearest and closest, in the shadow of His hand. Surely that hand must be the pierced hand, that may oftentimes press us sorely, and yet evermore encircling, upholding and shadowing.”

“Under His shadow,” is our winsome subject, and we will in a few words enlarge on the Scriptural plan which Miss Havergal has bequeathed to us. Our text is, “He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall *abide under the shadow* of the Almighty.” The shadow of God is not the occasional resort, but the constant abiding place of the saint. Here we find not only our consolation, but our habitation—not only a loved haunt, but a home. We ought never to be out of the shadow of God. It is to dwellers, not to visitors, that the Lord promises His protection. “He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” And that shadow shall preserve him from nightly terror and ghostly ill, from the arrows of war and of pestilence, from death and from destruction. Guarded by Omnipotence, the chosen of the Lord are always safe, for as they dwell in the holy place, hard by the Mercy Seat, where the blood was sprinkled of old—the pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day, which always hang over the sanctuary—also covers them. It is not written, “In the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me”? What better security can we desire? As the people of God, we

are always under the protection of the Most High. Wherever we go, whatever we suffer, whatever may be our difficulties, temptations, trials, or perplexities, we are always “under the shadow of the Almighty.” Over all who maintain their fellowship with God the most tender guardian care is extended. Their heavenly Father, Himself, interposes between them and their adversaries. The experience of the saints, albeit they are all under the shadow, yet differs as to the form in which that protection has been enjoyed by them—hence the value of the four figures which will now engage our attention.

I. We will begin with the first picture which Miss Havergal mentions, namely, THE ROCK sheltering the weary traveler.

“The shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2).

Now, I take it that this is where we begin to know our Lord’s shadow. He was at the first to us *a refuge in time of trouble*. Weary was the way and great was the heat. Our lips were parched and our souls were fainting—we sought for shelter and we found none, for we were in the wilderness of sin and condemnation—and who could bring us deliverance, or even hope? Then we cried unto the Lord in our trouble and He led us to the Rock of Ages, which of old was cleft for us. We saw our interposing Mediator coming between us and the fierce heat of Justice, and we hailed the blessed screen! The Lord Jesus was unto us a covering for sin and so a cover from wrath. The sense of Divine displeasure, which had beaten upon our conscience, was removed by the removal of the sin, itself, which we saw to be laid on Jesus, who in our place endured all its penalty.

The shadow of a rock is remarkably cooling, and so was the Lord Jesus eminently comforting to us. The shadow of a rock is more [See Sermons #1243, Volume 21—RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE; #2856, Volume 49—OUR HIDING PLACE and #3031, Volume 53—LANDLORD AND TENANT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] dense, more complete and more cool than any other shade—and so the peace which Jesus gives passes all understanding—there is none like it! No chance beam darts through the rock shade, nor can the heat penetrate as it will do in a measure through the foliage of a forest. Jesus is a complete shelter—and blessed are they who are “under His shadow.” Let them take care that they abide there and never venture forth to answer for themselves, or to brave the accusations of Satan.

As with sin, so with sorrow of every sort—the Lord is the Rock of our refuge. No sun shall smite us, nor any heat, because we are never out of Christ! The saints know where to fly and they use their privilege—

***“When troubles, like a burning sun,
Beat heavy on their head,
To Christ their mighty Rock they run,
And find a pleasing shade.”***

There is, however, something of awe about this great shadow. A rock is often so high as to be terrible, and we tremble in the presence of its greatness. The idea of littleness hiding behind massive greatness is well

set forth, but there is no attractive thought of fellowship, or tenderness. Even so, at the first we view the Lord Jesus as our shelter from the consuming heat of well-deserved punishment and we know little more. It is most pleasant to remember that this is only one panel of the fourfold picture. Inexpressibly dear to my soul is the deep cool rock-shade of my blessed Lord, as I stand in Him a sinner saved—yet there is more!

II. Our second picture, that of THE TREE, is to be found in the Song of Solomon 2:3—

“As the apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.”

Here we have not so much refuge from trouble as special rest in times of joy. The spouse is happily wandering through a forest, glancing at many trees and rejoicing in the music of the birds. One tree especially charms her—the apple with its golden fruit wins her admiration and she sits under its shadow with great delight. Such was her Beloved to her, the best among the good, the fairest of the fair, the joy of her joy, the light of her delight! Such is Jesus to the believing soul.

The sweet influences of Christ are intended to give us a happy rest and we ought to avail ourselves of them. “I sat down under His shadow.” This was Mary’s better part, which Martha well-near missed by being cumbered. That is the good old way wherein we are to walk—the way in which we find rest unto our souls. [See Sermon #1120, Volume 19—THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Papists, whose religion is all ceremonies, or all working, or all groaning, or all feeling—they have never come to a satisfying end. We may say of their religion as of the Law, that it made nothing perfect. But under the Gospel there is something finished—and that something is the sum and substance of our salvation and, therefore, there is rest for us, and we ought to sing, “I sat down.”

Dear Friends, is Christ to each one of us a place of sitting down? I do not mean a rest of idleness and self-content. God deliver us from that! But there is rest in a conscious grasp of Christ, a rest of contentment with Him as our All-in-All. God give us to know more of this. This shadow is also meant to yield perpetual solace, for the spouse did not merely come under it, but there she sat down as one that meant to stay. Continuance of repose and joy is purchased for us by our Lord’s perfected work. Under the shadow, she found food. She had no need to leave it to find a single necessary thing, for the Tree which shaded also yielded fruit! Nor did she need even to rise from her rest, but sitting still she feasted on the delicious fruit. You who know the Lord Jesus know also what this means.

The spouse never wished to go beyond her Lord. She knew no higher life than that of sitting under the Well-Beloved’s shadow. She passed the cedar, oak and every other good tree, but the apple tree held her, and

there she sat down. “Many there are that say, who will show us any good? But for us, O Lord, our heart is fixed, our heart is fixed, resting on You. We will go no further, for You are our dwelling place. We feel at home with You and sit down beneath Your shadow.” Some Christians cultivate reverence at the expense of childlike love—they kneel down, but they dare not sit down. Our Divine Friend and Lover wills not that it should be so! He would not have us stand on ceremony with Him, but come boldly unto Him—

***“Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old.”***

Let us use His sacred name as a common word, as a household word and run to Him as to a dear or familiar friend! Under His shadow we are to feel that we are at home and then He will make Himself at home to us by becoming food unto our souls, and giving spiritual refreshment to us while we rest. The spouse does not here (Song 2:3) say that she reached up to the tree to gather its fruit, but she sat down on the ground in intense delight—and the fruit came to her where she sat. It is wonderful how Christ will come down to souls that sit beneath His shadow! If we can but be at home with Christ, He will sweetly commune with us. Has He not said, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart”?

In this second form of the sacred shadow, the sense of awe gives place to that of restful delight in Christ. Have you ever figured in such a sense as the sitter beneath the grateful shade of the fruitful tree? Have you not only possessed security, but experienced delight in Christ? Have you sung—

***“I sat down under His shadow,
Sat down with great delight!
His fruit was sweet unto my taste,
And pleasant to my sight”?***

This is as necessary an experience as it is joyful—necessary for many uses. The joy of the Lord is our strength and it is when we delight ourselves in the Lord that we have assurance of power in prayer. Here faith develops and hope grows bright, while love shines abroad all the fragrance of her sweet spices. Oh, get you to the Apple Tree and find out who is fairest among the fair! Make the Light of Heaven the delight of your heart and then be filled with heart’s ease and revel in complete contentment!

III. The third view of the one subject is—THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS—a precious word. I think the best specimen of it, for it occurs several times, is in that blessed Psalm—Psalm 63:7—“*Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.*”

Does not this set forth our Lord as our trust in hours of depression? In the Psalm now open before us, David was banished from the means of Grace to a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. What is much

worse, he was in a measure away from all conscious enjoyment of God. He says, "Early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You." He sings of memories rather than of present communion with God. We also have come into this condition and have been unable to find any present comfort. "You have been my help," has been the highest note we could strike. And we have been glad to reach that. At such times, the sight of God's face has been withdrawn, but our faith has taught us to rejoice under the shadow of His wings. Light there was none—we were altogether in the shade, but it was a warm shade. We felt that God who had been near must still be near us and, therefore, we were quieted. Our God cannot change and, therefore, as He was our help, He must still be our help—our help even when He casts a shadow over us, for it must be the shadow of His own eternal wings! The metaphor is, of course, derived from the nesting of little birds under the shadow of their mother's wings and [See Sermon #2166, Volume 36—EXPERIENCE AND ASSURANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] the picture is singularly touching and comforting. The little bird is not yet able to take care of itself, so it cowers down under the mother and is there happy and safe. Disturb a hen for a moment and you will see all the little creatures huddling together—and by their chirps making a kind of song. Then they push their heads into her feathers and seem happy beyond measure in their warm abode. When we are very sick and sorely depressed. When we are worried with the care of pining children and the troubles of a needy household—and the temptations of Satan—how comforting it is to run to our God like the little chicks to the hen and hide near His heart, beneath His wings! Oh, tried ones, press closely to the loving heart of your Lord! Hide yourselves entirely beneath His wings. Here awe has disappeared and rest, itself, is enhanced by the idea of loving trust! The little birds are safe in their mother's love and we, too, are beyond measure secure and happy in the loving favor of the Lord!

IV. The last form of the shadow is that of THE HAND. And this, it seems to me, points to power and position in service. Turn to Isaiah 49:2—

"And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword. In the shadow of His hand has He hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid Me."

This undoubtedly refers to the Savior, for the passage proceeds—"And said unto me, you are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, says the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I

will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth.” Our Lord Jesus Christ was hidden away in the hand of Jehovah, to be used by Him as a polished shaft for the overthrow of His enemies and the victory of His people. Yet, inasmuch as it is declared of Christ, it is true also of all Christ’s servants, since as He is, so are we, also, in this world. And to make quite sure of it, we have the same expression used in the 16th verse of the 51st Chapter, where, speaking of His people, He says, “I have covered you in the shadow of My hand.” Is not this an excellent minister’s text? Every one of you who will speak a word for Jesus shall have a share in it! This is where those who are workers for Christ should long to be—“in the shadow of His hand”—to achieve His eternal purpose! What are any of God’s servants without their Lord but weapons out of the warrior’s hand, having no power to do anything? We ought to be as arrows of the Lord which He shoots at His enemies! And so great is His hand of power and so little are we as His instruments, that He hides us away in the hollow of His hand, unseen until He darts us forth! As workers, we are to be hidden away in the hand of God, or to quote the other figure, “in His quiver has He hid me”—we are to be unseen till He uses us! It is impossible for us not to be known somewhat if the Lord uses us, but we may not aim at being noticed—on the contrary, if we are as much used as the very chief of the Apostles, we must truthfully add, “though I am nothing.” Our desire should be that Christ should be glorified, and that self should be concealed.

Alas, there is a way of always showing self in what we do, and we are all too ready to fall into it. You can visit the poor in such a way that they will feel that his lordship or her ladyship has condescended to call upon poor Betsy. But there is another way of doing the same thing so that the tried child of God shall know that a beloved Brother or a dear Sister in Christ has shown a fellow feeling for her and has talked to her heart. There is a way of preaching in which a great Divine has evidently displayed this vast learning and talent—and there is another way of preaching in which a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, depending upon his Lord, has spoken in his Master’s name and left a rich unction behind. Within the hand of God is the place of acceptance and safety—and for service it is the place of power, as well as of concealment! God only works with those who are in His hand, and the more we lie hidden there, the more surely will He use us before long. May the Lord do unto us according to His Word, “I have put My words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of My hand.” In this case we shall feel all the former emotions combined—awe that the Lord should condescend to take us into His hand. Rest and delight that He should deign to use us. Trust that out of weakness we shall now be made strong. And to this will be added an absolute assurance that the great end of our being must be answered, for that which is urged onward by the Almighty hand cannot miss its mark!

These are mere surface thoughts. The subject deserves a series of discourses. Your best course, my beloved Friends, will be to enlarge upon

these hints by a long personal experience of abiding under His shadow. May God the Holy Spirit lead you into it and keep you there, for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 91; 63.**

A Psalm written for comfort, but it is not addressed to all mankind, neither, I venture to say, to all Believers, but only those who are described in the first verse.

Verse 1. *He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* It is not every worshipper that comes there who shall be thus privileged, but those who *dwell* there, as Simeon and Anna dwelt in the Temple. So there are some that abide in Christ and His Words abide in them. They live near God. They receive, therefore, choicer favors than those who do but come and go. "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High." He who has learned to stand in the Holy of Holies, near the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, to whom prayer is a matter of constant privilege and enjoyment—he dwells in the secret place! Such a man, living near to God, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. You know when you walk with a friend in certain positions of the sun, your friend's shadow falls upon you, but you cannot expect to have the shadow of your friend unless you are near him. We read in the Song, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." There must be nearness to get under the shadow! So there must be great access to God—great familiarity with Him—there must be something of the assurance of faith before we shall be able to grip such a word as that which follows in this Psalm. Read it again and if you have not attained to it, labor after it!

2. *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God. In Him will I trust.* Observe the sweetness of making a personal application of any passage in the Word. "I will say." A general Doctrine gives us little consolation till we can make a particular application of it. Oh, for faith-daring, personal faith to say, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress"! That was saying a great deal, but it was saying a great deal more when the Psalmist added, "My God." He could not say more than that! God is a refuge and a fortress to me, but He is infinitely more than that. We cannot tell what He is. Rather, we cannot tell what He is not, but we sum it all up when we say, "My God." And surely it is but natural to add, "In Him will I trust." Why, who could help it? If this God is our God, and such a God—such a refuge and such a fortress to His people—surely we must trust Him! Come, if you are troubled tonight—if you have got any doubts and fears—may the Spirit of God enable you to make this the blessed resolution of your Spirit—"My God, in Him will I trust."

3. *Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.* You cannot see it. You do not know it to be a snare. The bird does not suspect the

fowler. “Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.” If the bird knew it was a net, it would not fly into it. You do not know your temptation, young man. No, and the oldest and most experienced Christian is not aware of the traps which the fowler is setting for him. But surely He shall deliver you if you abide near Him—so near that His shadow falls on you! If you dwell in secret with Him, surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler!

3. *And from the noisome pestilence.* From the noisome pestilence of error which is the worst of pestilences because it preys upon the soul. Foul air which injures the bodily frame is bad enough, but what is that foul teaching which destroys the soul—which would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect? But surely if you live near to Him, He shall deliver you from the noisome pestilence.

4. *He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler.* It is a marvelous verse! I do not think that any devout man would have been daring enough to use such language as this if he had not been led to do so by the Holy Spirit, Himself. Where the Holy Spirit leads the way, we may safely follow. But it would have been unsafe for mere poetry’s sake to talk of God’s “feathers” and “wings.” Yet see the condescension of God. He likens Himself here to the hen that broods her little ones! O child of God, nestle down closely under the warm breast of Everlasting Love, and hide yourself beneath the mighty wings of the Everlasting and Eternal God! So shall you be secure.

5. *You shall not be afraid of the terror by night; nor of the arrow that flies by day.*

For if this alludes to temporal dangers—

**“Not a single shaft shall hit,
Till the God of Love sees fit.”**

And if there is a covert allusion here to spiritual dangers—to the darts of the Wicked One and to the alarms which fill the soul when the Presence of God is withdrawn—if you dwell near to God you shall know no fear of these things, for neither death nor Hell can injure the man that lives in God!

6-10. *Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that waits at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.* And it is very wonderful when men have lived near to God and have received special faith to grasp such a promise as this! How they have outlived the most deadly pestilences! I collected, some time ago, a little list of names of devout men who in the times of pestilence remained in the field to visit the sick and to attend to those who were dying—and it is marvelous that they outlived all—and their names stand now upon the

catalog of fame as benefactors of the race. They had special faith given and they used that faith in trusting in God! I have already said that I do not believe that this applies to all Believers, for good men die as well as bad men in days of pestilence, but there are some who dwell near to God to whom the promise comes with special power—and they have been able to do and dare for God without fear—and their faith has been abundantly rewarded.

11, 12. *For He shall give His angel charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hand, lest you dash your foot against a stone.* They get special commandment to take care of the saints of God—the angels—those unseen but swift and mighty messengers of Heaven! When David had the troops paraded before him, when they were going out to fight Absalom, he gave them all a charge that they should not touch the young man, Absalom, and yet, you know, he died. But God’s angels keep His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word and go when He gives them a charge of what to do! He says, “O you angels, this day watch over My people. Keep them in all their ways. Be to them as a nurse who bears up her child in her hands, and if they are likely to meet with even some minor trial, lest they should skip and sin, bear them up lest they dash their foot against a stone.” Now comes a glorious promise.

13. *You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon you shall trample under feet.* God often gives victories like these to His people so that Satan and all the powers of evil are trampled down by the holy child-like confidence of the man who is resolved to serve his God!

14. *Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he has known My name.* He has no merits. He does not claim any. But he loves Me and, therefore, I love him and I will deliver him because he loves Me. Oh, love the Lord, all you saints! Love Him more and more, for this love of yours shall bring to you a sweet reward!

15. *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.* Were there ever words fuller of consolation than these? “He shall call upon Me.” Divine Grace will take care to give us the spirit of prayer. “And I will answer him.” Divine Grace will give the answer!

15, 16. *I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.* Now, it is not a promise to every good man that he shall live for a long period, for some among the best of men die in very early youth. But still they have had a full life, for life must not be measured by years. Oh, how much do some men pack into a little time! How much of life there may be in the man whose course is finished before he is 30 years of age and how little may some live who expand their days into 80 or 90 years! Belzoni’s toad—you remember the piece of poetry into which some imaginative person has

cast his diary, how once in a thousand years it crept from under a stone and winked with one eye? Well it did not live much in the course of two or three thousand years—it *existed*. But a man who is full of holy duties and earnest purposes lives long even though the time is short!

Psalm 63. A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah—

Exiled, ill at ease, hunted, exposed to danger. Yet he could sing! And some of the sweetest Psalms came out of the bitterest afflictions. God's songsters are like nightingales that reserve their sweetest music for the night. Whenever you and I come to be in the wilderness, may we refresh ourselves with such a Psalm as this.

Verse 1. *O God, You are my God.* Everything else has gone, but You are my God. There are gods of the heathen, but You, the true and real Jehovah, are my God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to take a firm grip of God after this fashion, "O God, You are my God."

1. *Early will I seek You.* "Oh," says one, "why did he seek God if God was his?" Would you have him seek another man's God, then? No, it is because He is ours that we seek Him and desire His company. If you know God to be your God, you will not be satisfied unless you are living near Him. "Early will I seek You." I will not wait. I cannot wait. I cannot tarry. I must not tarry. Early will I seek You.

1. *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where is no water.* Thirst is one of the strongest longings of our nature. You can appease hunger for a while, but thirst is awful. There is no staying that. When it is once upon a man, he must have water or die. "My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where is no water." No means of Grace. Nothing to help me. No Believers round about me. I am left alone thirsting for my God. And yet it is so precious a thing, so sure a mark of Grace to thirst for God anywhere, that one may be thankful even to be in a dry and thirsty land if one possesses a true thirst after God!

2. *To see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* He had seen God in His holy place, and he longs to see Him again. They that never knew God do not want to know Him. But they that have known Him desire to know Him more and more! If you do not long for the Bread of Heaven, it is because you never tasted it. He that has once tasted it will sigh and hunger till he is satisfied with it.

3. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* "Better than life." And surely life is better than anything else. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Life is better than meat. Life is better than riches! And if the loving kindness of God is better than life, then we have a very high price set upon it, but none too high a price. Oh, that you and I may know how sweet, how precious is the loving kindness of God—and then we shall say that it is better than life! And because it is so, my lips shall praise You. Not only my heart, but I will do it openly. I used to speak vanity when I served vanity. Shall I not

now speak out for God when I have come to serve Him? My lips shall praise You!

4. *Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name.* I will confess You. I will rejoice in You. I will work for You. I will encourage myself in You. I will lift up my hands in Your name. Are any of you cast down? Do your hands hang down? Then lift them up in God's name! Nothing else can make you strong. The name of the Lord shall be your strength.

5, 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips: when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* God's people know what perfect satisfaction means. When God reveals His love to them and Christ draws near in the fullness of His Grace, then they would not change places with all the kings of the earth! Not all the richest dainties that were ever served up at royal banquets are equal to the love of God. My soul, not my body, but my inmost self, my very life, shall be satisfied even as with marrow and with fatness. The oriental's idea of luxury is to eat fat. They will eat what we cannot endure, but we, dear Friends, understand the metaphor and appreciate what is meant by David. God will satisfy us with the best of the best, with marrow and fatness. He will make that satisfaction double as with marrow and fatness—and we shall be so satisfied that we shall have nothing left to do but to praise. "My mouth shall praise." Says our poet—

***"All that remains for me,
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."***

He that wrote that verse knew what was meant by this, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips."

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* That is God's logic. One likes to see "therefores" in Scripture. They are inferences drawn with great accuracy. You have *been* my helper. Well, then, You *will be* my helper and if I cannot see Your face, I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings! I know that You are there even if I cannot see You. And if I only know that You are there by the shade that You cast over me—that calming, cooling shade which dampens the ardor of my worldly spirit—if this is all that I get from You, yet in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice!

8. *My soul follows hard after You.* I am after You, my God, hard after You, following hard after You, longing for You, like a dog at the heels of his master's horse, going with all his might, following hard after You. Oh, this is a healthy condition to be in! If you cannot yet reach your God, yet if you follow hard after Him, it is well with you, for notice the next sentence—

8. *Your right hand upholds me.* No man follows after God unless God helps him to do so. It comes of the Grace of God! When you are seeking God, it is because God is seeking you—and though you know it not, there is a vast amount of Divine Grace couched in this desire.

9, 10. *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.* Or jackals, as its name became.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Very hard work to stop it, though, for they are always breaking out in a fresh place. They have always some new lie! A shovelful of earth will do it, if nothing else will. Let everyone here who is accustomed to slander or to speak evil of his neighbor listen to this prophetic voice—“the month of them that speak lies shall be stopped.” But the mouths that speak the praises of God shall go on singing forever and ever. May such mouths be ours!

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

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

ANGELIC PROTECTION IN APPOINTED WAYS NO. 2969

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1875.

*“For He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.”
Psalm 91:11.*

OUR subject this morning was the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb upon the lintel and the two door-posts of the houses of the children of Israel and Egypt. As soon as that was done and the lamb had been eaten, they had to start upon their journey to Canaan. They knew that they had to go and they were prepared to go. They had their loins girt and each man had his staff in his hand and his sandals on his feet. After being prisoners so long, they were set free in order that they might become pilgrims to the land which the Lord their God had given to their fathers.

We who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in a similar condition to theirs, for the Lord has redeemed us and we can sing the new song, “He has brought us up out of the house of bondage and with a high hand and an outstretched arm He has made us free.” And now we are pilgrims and strangers in this world, for we are on our way to a better land than the earthly Canaan ever was—a land that flows with something richer than milk and honey and where there is an eternal and abounding portion appointed for each one of the redeemed! We are pressing on, through this great wilderness, towards the land into which the Lord will surely bring us in His own good time. Our text is a promise to pilgrims. It most appropriately follows the text of this morning—“The blood shall be to you for a token.” You have set out upon the road to Heaven. You have entered the narrow way by Christ, who is the Gate at the head of the way, and now you are wondering how you will get on while you are on the road, and whether you will be proved in the right way so as to endure unto the end. This promise comes to you with much of real heart-cheer—“He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

I. My first remark is rather by way of implication from the text than in direct exposition of it. It is this—THERE ARE SOME WAYS WHICH ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROMISE because they are not our ways and they are not God's ways. They are ways into which we may be tempted by Satan—and which we are to jealously avoid.

You know how, when the devil professed to quote this text to our Lord, he left out the latter part of it, “to keep you in all your ways,” because it would not have suited his purpose to mention that proviso. We, however,

will begin with the words which the devil omitted since the very fact of his omission of them seems to show how essential they are to a right understanding of the meaning of the text! O Christian, if you keep to the King's Highway, you will be safe! But there are byways and, alas, crooked lanes which you must not go down. If you do go there, you will go at your own risk. He who travels on the King's Highway is under the King's protection—but he who takes to byroads must protect himself—and the probability is that he will meet with robbers who will make him rue the day that he ever turned to the right hand or to the left!

So first we must take care that we never go *in the ways of presumption*. This is what Satan would have had Christ do. "Cast Yourself down," he said, "for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You." This temptation to presumption is by no means an uncommon one. I have heard of it from the lips of men who were evidently not the children of God, or they would have resisted the temptation and not have yielded to it as they did. They have said, "Well, we are God's children, so we may do as we like. We are saved, therefore we may live as we please"—a dreadful inference from what, to other men, might be a precious Truth of God. O dear Friends, beware of tempting the devil to tempt you! Beware, too, of tempting the Lord, your God, as some do who venture a long way into evil company, or into doubtful paths under the mistaken notion that they are so prudent that they will not be overtaken as others might be—that they are so sage and withal so experienced that they may go where young people must not venture, and may do a great many things which less-instructed Christians had better not do. Where you think you are perfectly safe, there you are often most in danger! Horses frequently fall just at the bottom of the hill, when the driver thinks that it is unnecessary to rein them up any longer. When you are so foolish as to say, "Now I am out of the reach of temptation," you are in the very midst of temptation! And when you think you are not being tempted at all, you are being tempted the most by the very fancy that you are not being tempted!

O beloved Friends, beware of presuming! Some have been so favored in the dispensations of Providence, so prosperous in everything they have undertaken, that they have thought they might speculate as far as ever they pleased and, at last—well, they've had very shady characters at the end of their lives. They have done once what they never ought to have done and, because it succeeded, they have been tempted to do it again and yet again. But, I pray you, Sirs, never gather from the success of a wrong action, that God is willing for you to repeat it! Rather say, "God was very gracious to me in not punishing me that time, but I will never run such a risk as that again." I do not believe that Jonah, after having been once thrown into the sea and been cast forth upon the shore by the whale, ever wanted to be flung into the sea again. He might not have felt certain about another whale coming along to carry him to land! If you have been miraculously delivered once from the great deep, do not put yourself into such a position again. If you do, you may find that the next great fish is a shark—not a whale—and, instead of being brought to land,

you may be destroyed. In brief, beware of all presumptuous ways, for God has not promised to keep you there.

And, Brothers and Sisters, you scarcely need to be told that you cannot expect to be preserved *if you go into sinful ways*. I trust that you watch against the more coarse and vulgar sins to which others are prone and that you will not be allowed to fall into them, but there is such a thing as falling little by little. Mind, I pray you, the little evils. A man never falls into the great, unclean sins of lust all at once—it is usually by a long series of little familiarities that he reaches that terrible end. He is indecorous first, indecent next and then, at last, criminal! Oh, keep back, keep back from the beginnings of evil! If you keep back at the very first, you will go no further. But if you slide just a little, you will find that this world is such a slippery place that you will surely fall, and fall frightfully, too. I trust that no Christian would practice dishonesty in his business, yet you know that it is very easy for one to do a wrong thing because it is “the custom of the trade.” “They label this 100 yards, though it is only 90—but if I label it so, I will not sell it and in the next shop it will probably be marked 110—so I must label mine a little more than it is.”

Well, if you do, remember that you are a thief! Though it is the custom of the trade, you are a liar if you conform to it and you cannot expect God’s blessing upon you in doing it! Do you think that in the Day of Judgment, God will say to men, “You are not guilty, for that deception was the custom of the trade”? By no means! What does the Lord care about the customs of your trade? Do right, at all costs. If you do wrong, you do it at your peril, for you have no promise from God that He will keep you in such a way as that. I need not enlarge upon this point because you know as much about such things as I do and, therefore, you can make the application to your own particular case. But, O Christian, do keep altogether clear of every evil way! May God’s Grace preserve you from straying into Bypath Meadow!

The man who professes to be a Christian must not expect God’s angels to keep him if he goes *in the way of worldliness*. There are hundreds, and I fear thousands, of church members who say that they are the people of God, yet they appear to live entirely to this world. The great aim is moneymaking and personal aggrandizement—just as much as it is the aim of altogether ungodly men. The Kingdom of Christ, the needs of His Church, the needs of perishing souls, have a very slender place in their hearts—they live wholly for themselves—only they try to conceal it under the plea of providing for their families. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,” is a text from which we need to preach to professing Christians throughout London, and throughout the whole world.

There is also the *way of pride* which many tread. They must be “respectable.” They must move in “Society”—with a big “S”—and everything is ordered with a view to display. To be great, to be famous, to be esteemed, to keep up a high repute—it is for this that they live! And some grow very strong, in a Christian sort of way, in that line. They

profess to have attained to a “higher life” than ordinary Christians ever reach. I am not at all anxious to get up there, for I do not believe there is any higher life in this world than the life of God which is given to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ! The highest life I aspire to is to live as Jesus Christ lived and to walk as He walked—and that is the lowest kind of life with which any Christian ought to be contented! When we get such fine feathers as these, they do not make us fine birds.

There is also *the way of willfulness* which I have known some follow. Very grievous is it to see some whom we really think to be good men, shift their quarters apparently without any reason. They were doing very well, yet away they rush, for they cannot let well enough alone. Some Brothers seem to be afflicted with a kind of perpetual fidgetiness. They are rolling stones and gather no moss. They move from one position to another, not because there is any need for them to move, but just because they cannot stay still! They go away from their nest and away from their home—and very often act in direct opposition to the order of God’s Providence! Oh, beware of that spirit of willfulness! We may get to be so very strong-headed that we may have to suffer there! It is often wise, as the old saying puts it, to take advice of our pillow. He who does not sleep upon a thing may have to weep upon it. Better look before you leap. Always follow the cloud of God’s Providence—don’t run before it, for if you run before it, you may find it hard work to get back again. Many have acted thus to their cost and, of course, have had no blessing resting upon them in doing so.

One other way in which a Christian ought not to go is *the way of erroneous doctrine*. I know some professors who, as soon as a new heresy comes up, want to have taste of it. I confess that I never felt much temptation in that direction. I do not suppose if you went into a chemist’s shop, you would say to him, “I have heard of somebody being killed at Norwood by taking such-and-such a poison—I would like a taste of it.” You would not ask him to take down his big bottles and to give you a taste of all the deadly poisons he had in stock. “Oh, no!” You say, “we are in our right senses. We would not do such a foolish thing as that.” Yet I know people who as soon as ever there is any teaching spoken of as being erroneous, say, “We must have a look at that. We must have a taste of that”—never satisfied except when they are tasting poison! There is a period in life when a Christian man should obey Paul’s injunction to the Thessalonians, “Prove all things”—but let him get that done as quickly as he can and then let him get to the second part of the injunction—“Hold fast that which is good.” Never hold anything fast till you have proved it to be good—but do not be everlastingly proving it! Some things do not need *any* proving—they bear upon their forefront their character. But others need to be proved, so, having proved the right things to be right, and the true things to be true, hold them fast and turn not aside from them!

About every six weeks there is a new doctrine promulgated. Sometimes there is a new sect started. It is simply because there is somebody away up there in his study who is sorely troubled with bile or

dyspepsia. He never went out to try to win a soul. He never did any practical work for Christ. But he edits a newspaper, or he writes for a magazine—and out of that wonderful brain of his, which is full of cobwebs, he excogitates a new doctrine! And as there are certain people who are always waiting for such novelties, straightway they run off with it and spread it wherever they can. These false-doctrine makers and their disciples are the curse of the age in which we live! I implore you, my Friend, to abide in the good old paths! What you know to be true, that hold fast! Forsake not your father's God and your mother's God. As for the Truths of God which God has taught you by His own Spirit, grapple them to you as with hooks of steel, for, if you go in the way of error, you cannot expect Divine protection!

II. Now, secondly, **THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH SAFETY IS GUARANTEED.** I shall only have time to mention them very briefly.

There is, first, *the way of humble faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* You know that way, Brothers and Sisters, so walk in it. Oh, to be nothing and to let Christ be everything—to confess our own guilt and to be clothed in His righteousness! Keep to that safe road, for it is the King's Highway of which it may be said, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

There is, next, *the way of obedience to Divine precepts.* Do what God tells you, as God tells you and because God tells you, and no hurt can come to you. The Lord told Moses to take by the tail the serpent from which he fled. He did so and he was not bitten, but the serpent stiffened into a wonder-working rod! Obey the Lord in all things. Mind the jots and the tittles, for whoever will break one of the least of Christ's commandments "and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Oh, to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, step by step, and to keep closely to His footprints! It is in such ways that angelic protection will be afforded to us.

There is, also, *the way of childlike trust in Providential guidance.* Happy is that man who always waits upon God to know what he shall do—who asks the Lord to always guide him and who dares not lean upon his own understanding. Watch the Lord's Providential leadings. Wait for Divine guidance. It is far better to stand still than to run in the wrong road. Pause a while and pray for direction—and do not move until you hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." In such a road as that, angels will certainly guard you!

There is, too, *the way of strict principle and stern integrity.* Travelling along that road will often involve a good many losses and crosses, much reproach and, sometimes it will even appear to destroy your usefulness. But I charge you—young men especially—never violate any principle which you profess to hold! I believe that it has been a lasting blessing to some whom I know, that they have scorned to trim their sails, even in

the smallest degree, to please any living soul. Do the same. “Be just and fear not.” Keep to a cause that is despised if you believe it is a right one and love it all the more because it is despised! Ask not what it will pay. Care not for the flatterer’s smile. Pursue Truth even though she may go along very rough roads—she will always repay you in the long run. Cling to her and win her smile—then the frowns of the whole world need not cause you a moment’s thought! The way of principle is the way of safety. God’s angels will keep you if you keep to that road.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, I am quite sure that *the way of consecrated service for God’s Glory is another of these safe ways*. It is well when a man says, “I choose my path by this rule—how can I best serve my God? Having judged whether there is any principle involved and having a fair choice between this and that, I say to myself, ‘In which way can I hope to be the more useful? In what course of life can I best glorify God?’” That is your way to Heaven, Christian—the way in which your Master can get the most glory out of you! And if you walk in that way, you may depend upon it that you will be protected by His Sovereign Power!

And once again, *there is the way of separation from the world and close walking with God*. No man ever suffered any real injury through keeping himself aloof from the ways of ungodly men and, on the other hand, no man ever failed to be a gainer by close and intimate fellowship with God. “Enoch walked with God” and he gained not only escape from the pangs of death, but also the testimony that “he pleased God.” O Christian, could not more of us choose this blessed path and walk in it continually? If we did so, we “would have the fulfillment, in its deepest meaning, of the promise of our text, “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

III. But I must pass on to note briefly, in the third place, that THESE RIGHT WAYS WILL LEAD US INTO DIFFERING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Sometimes *the right way will lead us into very stony places*, positions of great difficulty—yet here is the promise to meet that emergency, “They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” A way is none the less right because it is rough. Indeed, often it is all the more sure to be the right way because it is so displeasing to flesh and blood.

Sometimes, also, *the right way may be very terrible with temptation*. If your path is so beset, do not, therefore, imagine that it is a wrong way, because the Psalmist goes on to say, “You shall tread upon the lion and adder.” Lions and adders will come to you—temptations will threaten to devour you even while you are in the right road—but then, you are promised that as long as it is the right road that you are in, you shall get the victory over the lion and the adder. The temptation may be of so mysterious a character that you cannot understand it. It may be like a dragon, but, if so, here is your comfort, “the young lion and the dragon shall you trample underfoot.”

And remember, beloved Friends, that even if the road is not stony and if no lion attacks you, *you will be kept from the perils of the smooth and*

easy roads. You will always need Divine and angelic keeping, for God would not have charged His angels to keep His people in all their ways if they did not need protection in all their ways! Some of you are just now prospering in business, but your way is not any safer than the way of the man who is losing his all. Indeed, yours may not be as safe as his! To you who are in robust health, I venture to say that your path is more perilous than the path of the man who is always ailing. And to all of you I say, pray for angelic keeping. Ask the Lord to guard you with His celestial hosts, or else, in any of your ways, be they rough or smooth, you will fall to your serious hurt.

IV. Now we come to the fourth point which is this—WHILE WALKING IN ALL RIGHT WAYS, BELIEVERS ARE SECURE. “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

O Christian, if you have not violated your conscience. If you have not forsaken the path of communion with your God, think what high privileges are yours! First, *God Himself concerns Himself about you*. He charges His angels to take care of you. David, when his soldiers went to battle against his rebellious son, Absalom, specially charged their leaders to deal gently with the young man, Absalom, for his sake. But he charged them in vain. In a far higher sense God charges His angels to guard His saints—but He does not charge them in vain! This is not a mere general command. It is a sort of imperative personal charge that God lays upon His angels—“Take care of My children. They are on My road—the King’s high road of rectitude. Watch over them and do not allow them to be hurt.” So you have God personally charging His angels to take care of you!

Next, *you have mysterious agencies to protect you*. “He shall give His angels charge over you.” We speak of dragons, but we do not know much about them. And we do not know much about angels, but we feel sure that angels can overcome dragons, for they are more than a match for devils! And if mysterious temptations come to you, there shall also be mysterious defenders to thrust them back. You have more friends, poor Christian, than you know of. When you are fighting the battles of God, you may hear a rush of angels’ wings at your side if you only have your ears Divinely opened. If all men forsake you, God can send His angels, though you see them not, to strengthen you in some secret manner that I cannot fully explain. “Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha,” the Prophet who dared to be true to his God and to serve Him faithfully. God would sooner empty Heaven of all the angelic host, cherubim and seraphim included, than allow any *one* of His people who has walked in His ways, to suffer defeat. He charges all His angels to take care of His saints and to keep them in all right ways.

And as angels are on our side, *so are all things, visible and invisible*. Why Believers, the very stones of the field are in league with you and the beasts of the field are at peace with you! Wherever you go, you have friends ready to help you. It is true that you have enemies among the

wicked, but their weapons shall not prevail against you. And wherever there is a messenger of God—be it wind, or storm, or lightning, or hail—it is your friend! The very stars in their courses fight for you! The forces, terrific and tremendous, which at times shake the world, are only your Father’s flaming swords unsheathed to protect you! If we are walking in the ways of God, we can truthfully sing—

**“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.”**

Sing then, you saints of the Lord, for everything is on your side! “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

What a very sweet thought is suggested by the word, “you,” in our text! It teaches us that *each one of the saints is personally protected*. “He shall give His angels charge over *you*, to keep you in all your ways.” God takes a personal interest in every traveler along the right road and charges His angels to keep them. Perhaps you say, “I do not read the text, Sir, as referring to me.” Well, I think you should. When you read the precept, “You shall not steal,” do you suppose that it refers to you? “Oh, yes!” you say, “I would not like to suggest that it did not mean me. I would not plead exemption from the precept.” Well, then, my dear Brother, do not seek to be exempted from the promise! Just as you feel sure that the precept applies to you, so, as a child of God, feel sure that the promise applies to you—“He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

This protection is perpetual as well as personal. God’s angels are “to keep you in all your ways”—in your ups and your downs, in your advancement and your retiring—to keep you when you are asleep and when you are awake—to keep you when you are alone and when you are in company—to keep you if you have to preach and to keep you if you have to hear—to keep you if you have to serve and to keep you if you have to suffer. You always need keeping and you shall always have it, for the angels are charged “to keep you in all your ways”!

And how beautiful it is to remember that *all this keeping brings honor with it*. “He shall give *His* angels charge over you.” Notice that—“He shall give *His* angels”—the very angels that wait upon God and see His face! The very angels that are the bodyguard of the Eternal! “He shall give His angels charge over you,” “Mark you,” says the Lord to Gabriel, or Michael, or whatever the angel’s name may be, “I charge you to take special care of that poor girl, for she is a daughter of Mine. Take care of that poor man whom so many despise, for he is a prince of the blood imperial. He belongs to Me—he is an heir of God and joint-heir with

Jesus Christ.” Oh, what amazing dignity this promise puts upon the very least and lowliest of the followers of the Lamb!

Note just one more point, that *all these privileges come to us by Jesus Christ*, for Christ is that mystic Ladder which Jacob saw, up-and-down whose wondrous rungs the angels came and went! The commerce between the saints and Heaven is kept up by way of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what joy is this! If Christ is yours, angels are yours, and all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places will delight to take care of you!

Now, if anyone here is going home to a lonely room, I should like you to feel that you are not going there alone. Father and mother are away in the country, perhaps, and some of you young people feel quite alone in London. But, if you are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not alone, for the Lord of all the holy angels is with you and an innumerable company of blessed spirits is round about you. Take comfort from this glorious Truth of God! God’s mysterious angelic agency, which you see not and hear not, but which is most true and real, will form a cordon round you to protect you in the midst of the temptations of this great city! And if you are but faithful to Him and keep in His ways, nothing shall hurt you between here and Heaven! There may be many darts hurled at you, but the great shield of faith shall turn them all aside or quench them forever. You will have to encounter many temptations and trials, but you will be preserved amid them all. I heard a Primitive Methodist minister speaking last Friday night, make use of a very strong expression while describing what a man could do by faith. He said, “He can not only overcome a legion of devils, but he could kick his way through a lane of devils if he did but rest in God.” I have had that idea in my mind ever since I heard him use that expression—and I am sure that it is true, for some of us have already had to do it. Those devils are great cowards. So when God once takes entire possession of a man, he need not fear even though all Hell were let loose upon him! One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep! And one man whom God makes strong, can put to route all the hosts of Hell—and he need not fear all the trials of life whatever they may be! “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

In closing, there are two or three thoughts which I think are worth remembering. The first is this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, we see, from this text, that *the lowest employment is consistent with the highest enjoyment*. The angels are our nurses—“they shall bear you up in their hands,” just as nurses hold up little children who are not able to stand by themselves. Those angels continually behold God’s face and live in the perfect bliss of Heaven, yet they condescend to do such humble deeds as these. Dear Brother, be like the angels in this respect—teach an infant class in the Sunday school, yet keep your face bright with the Light of God’s Countenance. Give away tracts, go and visit among the poor, look after fallen women, or do any other work for the Lord that needs to be done. Never mind what it is, but remember that the employment is all the more honorable because it appears to be so commonplace. Never was

Christ grander, I think, than when He washed His disciples' feet. Certainly, never are we more like He than when we, also, are willing to wash their feet, or render any lowly service that they may need.

The next thought is *as angels watch over us, how cheerfully ought we to watch over one another!* How gladly you who are older in the Divine life, ought to watch over the younger ones of the Lord's family! If God enables you to have any of the joy of angels over repenting sinners, mind that you take some of the care which angels exercise over those who walk in God's ways. What can I, the pastor of this huge church, and my brother and all the elders, do by way of watching over 5,000 of you? You must pastor yourselves to a large extent! Watch over one another. "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Visit each other in their sickness. Seek to bring back to Christ and the church all the backsliders whom you can find. Labor for the good of one another, for, in only this way can our task be done—and you shall be like the angels if you bear up the feeble ones in your hands lest they trip up and fall to their grievous hurt.

Then next, *how safe and happy we ought to feel when we know that God has charged the angels to take care of us!* Do not be nervous, my dear Sister, the next time there is a little storm, or even a great storm. Do not be afraid, my dear Friend, when sickness comes into your house. Do not be alarmed, as perhaps you are, when you hear that there is fever next door to you. Remember the promise that precedes our text—"Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." But suppose it should seem right to the Lord to let the plague come to you? And suppose you shall die of it? Well, you will the sooner be in Heaven! Therefore comfort one another with the reflection that all is well with you as long as you keep in the way of duty.

And, lastly, *how holy we ought to be with such holy beings watching over us!* If the angels are always hovering round you, mind what you are doing! Would you, my dear Friend, have spoken as you did when you were coming in at that door, yonder, if you had seen an angel standing by your side, listening to what you were saying? Oh, no, you are wonderfully decorous when there is somebody near whom you respect! How often your glib tongue is checked when there is some Christian man or woman whom you highly esteem within hearing! How many a thing is done that would not be done under the eyes of one whom you love! It is not only true that "a bird of the air shall carry the voice and that which has wings shall tell the matter," but it is also true that there are angels always watching over us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that a woman in the public assembly ought to have her head covered because of the angels—a certain decorum was due because of the angels who were there. And I am sure that I may use the same argument concerning all our actions. Whether we are alone or in company, let us not sin because angels are always watching us. And, remember, the angels' Lord is also watching us!

May He graciously keep us in His holy way. And if we are so kept, we shall be preserved from all evil while we are here and, at last, we shall see His face with joy and live with Him forever! I would to God that all who are now present were in that holy way. I remind you once more that the entrance to it is by a door that has the blood-mark upon the lintel and the two doorposts—"The blood shall be to you for a token." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-32.**

Verse 25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust.* "It sticks to it as though it were glued to it. My soul cannot be lifted up, at least by myself, out of its sadness and its earthiness." The Psalmist was not one who could boast of perfection. He had to lament that the earth which was in him by nature made even his soul cleave to Mother Earth. He did not like it. He was not content that it should be so and, therefore, he breathed this prayer—

25. *Quicken You me according to Your word.* "Lord, there is nothing but life that can bring me up out of the dust, for death lurks in the dust and the dust tends to death. Put life into me, Lord—Your life, the Divine life. You have promised to do this, therefore, do it, Lord, 'according to Your word.'" That is a prayer which is always sure to succeed, for it is based upon the promise of God. Has the Lord promised anything? Then He will surely perform it! And you cannot use a better argument in prayer than to say to Him, "Do as You have said." Or, as the Psalmist puts it, "Quicken You me according to Your word."

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me.* "I have made a full confession to You, my God. I have acknowledged my fault wherein I was wrong and I have thanked You for your Grace given to me in anything wherein I was right."

26. *Teach me Your statutes.* "O Lord, let me not have such a sorry tale to tell again. If my copy of Your handwriting has been badly written, set it afresh for me, I pray You. Teach me Your statutes."

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.* "Let me know, O Lord, what the way of Your precepts are. Get me into that way and then, oh help me to keep in it all my life!"

27. *So shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* A man never talks rightly of God's works till he knows God's ways. And it is idle to talk of them if there is no *doing* at the back of the talking. So the Psalmist prays, "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works." To preach and not practice is very bad preaching! But first to understand the way of the Lord, then to run in it—and then to speak of it—this is well!

28. *My soul melts for heaviness.* The Hebrew word is, "drops." The Psalmist's soul was like water dripping from the eaves of a house in time of rain. There are two sorts of sorrow—the sorrow that rushes like a

mighty torrent and the sorrow which is, perhaps, the worse of the two, which goes drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip—like the constant dripping which wears away stones—and which makes even the boldest heart to feel the attrition. “My soul melts, dissolves, drops, drips for heaviness.”

28. *Strengthen You me.* The Psalmist does not ask to have the trouble removed. He prays, “Help me to bear it.” Whenever there is a thing that is hard, the right way to cut through it is to get something that is still harder. If God will give us an adequate supply of His Grace, hard times will not wear us away! So the Psalmist prays, “Strengthen You me”—

28. *According unto Your word.* See how he clings to that expression, “according unto Your word”? He knows the power of that argument and, therefore, he uses it again and again!

29. *Remove from me the way of lying.* “Do not let me fall into any untrue habits. Do not let me profess to have had an experience which I have never felt, or talk about holy things of which I know nothing experimentally. Keep me from everything that has any trace of falsehood in it.”

29. *And grant me Your Law graciously.* “For Your Law is truth, and when Your Grace brings Your Law home to my heart, all that is false will be banished from me.”

30. *I have chosen the way of truth. Your judgments have I laid before me.* “I have laid them before me as a man puts his model in front of him that he may work to it.” It is well for us to have God’s way and God’s judgments always before our eyes, that we may be duly impressed and rightly guided by them.

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies.* Just now the Psalmist said that his soul stuck to the earth, yet at the same time he was sticking to God’s testimonies, for every good man is two men. There is a new-birth man who sticks to God’s testimonies, and there is that old carnal nature in us which cleaves to the dust.

31, 32. *O Lord, put me not to shame. I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* That is, “When You shall give me liberty of heart, then I will run in the way of Your commandments. When the impediments are removed—when the sin which does so easily entangle me is taken away—then will I run with delight in the way of Your commandments!

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LOVE'S REWARD

NO. 3433

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1914.

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

*“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him.
I will set him on high because he has known My name.”
Psalm 91:14.*

THAT this Psalm was written by David we see no reason to doubt. In the previous verses we have the words of the Psalmist himself. Here, however, there is a change of speaker. The promise is spoken by God, Himself, in these three closing sentences. Doubtless the words of Inspired men are very precious as a Divine testimony, but when God, Himself, directly speaks to us in His own name, what an extraordinary weight attaches to every syllable He utters! Dear child of God, you who are a believer in Jesus, can you not think that you hear your God saying, concerning you, with His own, gracious assuring voice, “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him”? And notice that He repeats these words, “I will,” four times, as if to give them the most striking emphasis! Surely this is intended to minister some comfort and refreshing to the Lord’s people. I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to give the Word and to apply it.

“Because,” says the Most High, “he has set his love upon Me.” We must look at this carefully, for it contains a description of character. If we can find ourselves classified here, it will be well for us, otherwise we shall have reason for deep anxiety. Is our love set upon God? Search your hearts, for the question is very pungent. The original Hebrew has more force in it than our translation expresses, although I do not know exactly how to improve upon our version. The idea, however, is something like this—“To have fallen in love”—as though with all the tenderness of passion and all the transport of devotion, the creature yearned for his Creator, and mortal man cherished an intense affection for the eternal God.

I. THE HEART’S SUPREME LOVE.

“*He has set his love upon Me.*” His love! Such love as draws the sympathies with its irresistible attraction, as brightens the thoughts with its fervent glow, as knits the heart with its indissoluble bonds! Yes, such love as melts the soul with its potent charms. I would have you think of it, now, as a fact, not as a fiction, or a fancy. That word, *love*, is translatable into the many tongues of earth, and so it passes current among the millions in every age and every clime. But only hearts attuned can feel

it—it finds echo only in the purest minds. But, to explain it, why, one had need combine a poet's genius with the emotions of a child, a husband or wife, a parent, a friend, all earthly relations in one to paint genuine love in living language! And even then it were all felt, and little, very little, told! Oh, but this is a high matter, for a man to set his love upon God! *His love*—not a cold sentiment, not a languid approbation, not a mild complacency, not any mere formal respect, but love, burning love, which, like coals of juniper, give forth a vehement flame—“*his love set upon God,*” like a river that is set upon its course to the sea, its volume always swelling, its tide becoming more and more rapid.

Answer now, dear Hearer, can you say that you have set your love upon God? If so, you have been the subject of a great change—a mysterious transformation—for your heart was naturally at enmity to God, and the instincts of your mind and the desires of the flesh were alien to Him. Look back. Compare your present self with your former self and consider the difference. If you were not, in your unregenerate state, in active hostility to God, yet you were indifferent towards Him. God was not in all your thoughts. You could rise at morn and lay down to rest at night without enquiring after God. You could go forth to your work and labor, and return to seek your recreation without seeking or acknowledging God in all your ways. Gladly would you try even to suffer, to die upon the bed of sickness when called to it, struggling with weakness, confiding in the physician's skill—without appealing to God your Creator and your Preserver! This was your natural state, the bent and bias of your perverse will! And in such waywardness you would have continued to this hour if the free, rich, undeserved Sovereign efficacious Grace of God had not interposed! Is your love now set upon God? Then a great change has passed over you as though a dead man had been quickened into life! As though the darkness of midnight had been suddenly turned to the brightness of midday! A great wonder of Grace, a miracle of saving mercy has been worked in you!

Though you must know to whom it is to be ascribed, let me refresh your memory, awhile, that I may awaken your gratitude. Comes not this of the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working? Depend upon it, only He who made you, could make you new! Only that Voice which brought light out of darkness, and order out of chaos, could have dispelled your vain infatuations or inflamed your soul with love, and made your known apathy and aversion give place to a sacred ardor and a devout affection! Surely the Kingdom of God has come near unto you! Salvation has come to your house! The Lord has looked upon you and spoken to you! The Eternal Spirit has brooded over your dull faculties and, as it were, by the breath of God's mouth you have been regenerated! You are born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—by the Word of God which lives and abides forever. Therefore you are in Christ, a new creature! Revolve these things in your soul, this array of lively blessings, that your gratitude may bloom with joy in God and your

praise to the Lord may burst into melodious song! Do I not speak of a matter which should compel the tongue of every redeemed man to cry, "Hosanna in the highest"? Were it marvelous if a thousand voices should utter a loud hallelujah?

Your love to God is no self-sown plant. If you have set your love on Him, it is because He first set His love on you. What? Did your love go spontaneously towards God, without any constraint to violate your will? When He lifted upon you the light of His Countenance, and when you found favor in His eyes, there were charms, attractions, drawings conformable to the nature of your mind! There were sweet constraints of Divine enchantment which enamored you of the beauties of Christ—a potent spell of Divine persuasion which led you to listen to the voice of Christ and believe! And now that you have seen and known Him, you cannot do otherwise than love Him! God has been revealed to you in the Person and work of His Son, and your heart has been warmed—your affections have been kindled—your whole soul has been drawn towards Him! So the Lord observes you, and says, "He has set his love upon Me." Are you the man of whom God speaks? Then I ask you to avow yourself to yourself and to your God, now, in the presence of all His people. "Yes," you can say, "I do love my God. I cannot now live without thoughts of Him, nor do I wish to do so. And when, for a while, through pressure of care I do not turn my soul towards God, yet, when the pressure is removed, my mind comes back to Him, as the dove flies back to the dovecot, and as the needle trembles back to the pole. Never am I happier than when my thoughts are with my God, nor is there any thought so uppermost in my soul as the thought that He loves me and that, consequently, I desire to live in obedience to His commands, seeking His honor and endeavoring to promote His Glory." I, hope, Beloved, if the Lord Jesus were to appeal to you, as He did to His servant, Peter, you could stand the threefold interrogation "Do you love Me?" And you would answer with Peter at the last, "You know all things. You know that I love You." Let this love of yours, then, which you possess, be in your soul more and more a consuming flame! Let nothing come in to quench it or to dim its ardor.

Let nothing in your conduct obscure its truthfulness. Suffer no idol to divide the Throne which God has claimed in your affections. Cry against the admission of any intruder. Beseech the Lord to stay near to you and to drive far away every attraction and allurement that would stir up rivalry in your breast. Be it your own strong resolve, in the power of His Spirit, that, as you do love Him, you will seek to love Him more and more and, till your last dying day, it shall be your soul's passion and master thought that God should be All-in-All enshrined within the heart as the bosom's Lord. "He has set his love upon Me." I think I hear some of you say, "Oh, that I *could* love Him! I am half afraid to say that I *do* love Him." Yet, perhaps, you are the very persons that, if brought to the test, would prove to be the truest lovers of your Savior. But I hear your inward whis-

per, "Though I do much that might make me fear and question the sincerity of my love to Him, yet, at times my soul's emotions get the better of these qualms, for a while, and speak out their fervor. Yes, my Jesus! I do love You! I do know and feel that You are my portion. Oh, my God, I do desire to love You more. I do give myself up to You." You know, Beloved, that it is not always easy to move the affection of love. It may be in the soul and lie there quietly. Though I know that I love the Savior, I remember a time when I was in great doubt whether I had any love to Him, till, as I listened to a sermon from a good Brother, the Truth he uttered so stirred my soul that it set the love that had been slumbering in my spirit all in motion and I perceived that, after all, I did love my Lord and Master, and had His truth near to my heart! Now, it may be that God will raise up something in Providence, or something in connection with some fellow Christian, that will cause your love to flame up and you will say within yourself, "There it is, after all! I was afraid it had died." Do you remember when you first set your love on God? Do you remember the place where Jesus met with you, where the weight of sin was taken from you and your transgression, like a thick cloud, was blown away? Ah, then the Savior was very, very dear to you. You fixed your love on Him. Do you not remember, since then, many high times and choice occasions when you have renewed your vow, when your soul has stretched out her wings towards Jesus, and He has looked towards you, and you towards Him, and the love of your espousals has been restored? Oh, that it might be so now! But whether or not there are any flames of affection, let the coals burn on, and say within your spirit, "Yes, my Savior, beyond a doubt, I do love You and I cling to You! Better it were that my heart should cease to pray than cease to love You!"

I am afraid there are some here that neither set their hearts on God nor care to do so. To them I can only say, God forbid that your present indifference should be your permanent choice! Your resolve not to love the God who made you, not to love the Redeemer of men, the Savior of sinners, the Spirit of Grace—such an obstinate resolution as that will involve the loss of all the privileges which belong to the lovers of Christ! And in that day "when the nearer waters roll, when the tempest rages high," you may regret, when it is too late, that you rejected that Jesus who, as Lover of our souls, can alone find us a haven from the storm and protect us from the wrath to come. You know, after all, that they are happiest who love God the best. I can only pray for you that His Spirit may teach you wisdom and lead you to renounce your culpable indifference and your wicked aversion—and draw you into the fellowship of those who have set their love upon God. Now we must pass on. Is our love set? Then the next thing we have to notice is—

II. GOD'S LOVE PROVED TO THE LOVING HEART.

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." Rightly understood, this savors not of human merit, but of Divine Mercy. The possession of this love reflects no credit on the creature, but the

production of it redounds to the praise of the Creator. He that gives Grace for Grace adds here another golden link to the chain of His own loving kindnesses when He says, "I will deliver him." By what gentle ways does a mother fondle her baby till the wee child clings to her? And to no stranger's arms will it go without a scream! The mother is pleased. She presses the infant to her breast and she says, "You sweet, affectionate little thing, I will take care of you. Nobody shall hurt you." Even so, Beloved, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you," says the Lord. There is more than a mother's tenderness in our heavenly Father's heart! Come, you children of God, take this gracious Word from your Father's lips, and let your souls be satisfied with fatness as you feed on it, "I will deliver him." Does it not mean that *He will defend you from all your foes and all your fears*? Are you exposed to ridicule, slander, persecution, tyranny? Or are you teased and tormented with the fawning looks, the treacherous words, the cunning devices, the gaudy allurements of those who would beguile you? Fear not their faces, whether they frown or smile! Cling to your own Protector, for thus says the Lord, "I will deliver you." Your worst enemies are evil spirits, able to tempt you in many ways, and to suit their devices to your weaknesses—fear them not, for even the Prince of the power of the air, though he comes against you with all his fiery darts at once, shall not prevail to destroy you, since it is written, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." As you love God, He will certainly deliver you from all the powers of earth and Hell. It may be that your *temporal trials* harass you. Are you poor and friendless, without supplies and without prospects? None know the stings of poverty but those who endure them. It were foolish to fret yourselves for the morrow while you have enough for today. Take heart, you that love the Lord, and cling closer to Him when the peril seems nearer, for this promise goes before you, "I will deliver him." Yes, doubtless the dinner is ordered when the cupboard is bare, for is it not written, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be fed"?

Or, perhaps, *sickness*, has stealthily crept over your mortal frame. Gradually you have been weakened in body. Why should you tremble because of the infirmities of your constitution, or the natural decay that comes with growing years, for you shall be rescued from all the ill-consequences of depression of spirit and of weakness of the flesh—"I will deliver him." It may be that *bereavement* has deprived your life of its joys. You have been losing friends, one by one. Already you have borne to the grave some of the nearest and dearest of your kindred—and others are going. Fear haunts your breast that you will soon be left alone. What will you do when all help has failed and all light faded from your dwelling? Why, will you not then have this promise to fall back upon?—"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him"? There are no straits or struggles, no cares or crosses, no weary loads or dreary hard-

ships, no privation at present, or famine in prospect, no pains or perils of any kind out of which the All-Bounteous God cannot, and will not, deliver His people! Only believe the promise and you shall find it true! "I will deliver him." Do you tell me that you are haunted by *strong temptation*, that you have been sorely beset with them of late—that your condition and position are full of danger and jeopardy—that, being tempted by those who have great influence over you, your steps have well near slipped? Go to your knees! Cry to your God for strength to endure and might to overcome, but be not dismayed with cowardly fear, for if you have set your love on God, there stands this record, engraved as in eternal brass, "I will deliver him." You shall have Grace equal to your time of trial! You shall break the snares of the foe! Though you are shut in like Samson in Gaza, and compassed about on all sides with temptations, you shall wake up as a giant, refreshed and, by your strength in God, pluck up the gates of the fortress and carry them away—post and bar and all—and your soul shall be free!

Perhaps, however, you are the victim of another fear, *you are afraid of dying*. Dying is at no time child's play, and he that treats the matter lightly knows not what he does. But you, perhaps, are subject to bondage through fear of death. Its dread accompaniments, pain of body, gasping for breath. Its strange outlook, a vast eternity. Its near approach, the rolling up of the curtain that hides from mortal view the scenes that lie beyond—all these appall you! Oh, be not troubled in mind! Have you set your love on Jesus, and does your heart cling to the Father, God? Then on the bed of languishing you shall find gracious succor and grateful relief. When your heart grows faint and your flesh wastes away, your soul shall be strengthened and your spirit endowed with fresh vigor! The noisome graveyard shall be fragrant with flowers of Paradise and the dark sepulcher shall be lighted up with a blessed hope! You shall be gently led, not roughly driven, through the dark shades. And as with the tender notes of a requiem, sweet though solemn, you shall hear this glad word, "I will deliver him: I will deliver him." Delivered you shall be! The trial shall issue in triumph! Victim of death, you shall be victor over it! As in a chariot of fire, you shall be borne from the land of gloom to the land of joy! To your Father and your God you shall rise, leading your captivity captive. But ah, this is not a subject to stand and preach about—it is rather one upon which to sit and think! So sit down, you who love the Savior, and again, and again, and again delight yourself with this sure word of Covenant promise which is given to you for your portion, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him!"

III. GOD'S PROMISE TO HIGH KNOWLEDGE.

It is set forth in the latter part of our text, "Because He has known My name, I will set him on high." This expresses a sacred mystery, "He has known My name." The Hebrews of old were not accustomed to use the name of Jehovah, either in ordinary speech or in their writing. In their sacred books they were commonly in the habit of putting in the word,

“Adonai,” or, “Lord,” instead of the word, “Jehovah,” the name of their God. To many of the heathen nations the distinctive name of the one God was not even known! They only heard it alluded to by the peculiar people who delighted to keep the name to themselves. Now there is always a secret about that vital religion which comes to the Believer not in word, only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit—a secret which the natural man cannot discern. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant.” The particular form of expression used in the text arises from the fact that there were some in Israel who did not know the name of God, while others did not know Him as the “I AM”—by that superlative name which is His memorial unto all generations. See Exodus 3:13-15. And just so, there are today people taught of God, who know the Lord, while the rest of mankind know Him not.

Let us try to give this matter a practical bearing.

“He has known My name.” This means *information*. Have you, O my Soul, a part in that high privilege of which our Great Intercessor spoke when He said to His Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”? Ask yourself, my Hearer, the question. Are you initiated into the mystery of that fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, which they enjoy who walk in the Light of God? Do you know the living God? Do you know that He is, and there is none beside Him? Do you know that He is almighty and, therefore, do you bow down before Him? Have you seen that He is merciful and, therefore, put your trust in Him? Have you understood that He is just and, therefore, do you fear Him? Have your eyes ever perceived the blended attributes that make up the crown of Deity and compel you to worship Him in the beauty of holiness? Can you discern how impartial He is in punishing sin and yet how gracious in providing a Ransom for sinners? As for the ungodly world, it concerns them not whether there is a God or not! And as to the excellence of His Character, they do not regard it. But those whom He loves and whom He will set on high, delight to know the name of God and to spell out its mystic letters as they are painted on His works, unfolded in His ways and revealed in His Word! They make it their study to know what can be known of Him. God is the one Object of their life's pursuit. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, is their instinctive cry! And the Holy Spirit is pleased to help them in their searches. Opinions, conjectures, guesses at the Truths of God count for nothing. Do you know for sure the name of the Lord, so that without hesitation you can say, “I know whom I have believed”? “He has known My name.” That means *trust*. He has relied upon it. He has come and depended upon the name of God as his dwelling place, the home of his soul. Wherein is your reliance, O Man, O Woman? On what do you depend for time or eternity? Is it on your own strength, your works, or your merits? Is it on your wit, your wealth, your rank? Ah, then these poor props will fail you before long. But happy is

that man who knows the name of God as his confidence, his refuge, his high tower, his place of defense and security!

To know God's name, likewise implies *experience*. I think many of you could rise and say, "Glory be to God, I do know Him by the distresses in which I have called upon Him, and the deliverances He has sent me! In my hours of darkness I have found Him to be a never-failing light. I have gone to His Mercy Seat in times of need, and then He has appeared to me. I have enquired at His holy oracle, and He has answered me with the Words of His mouth." Little can anyone know of God who has but heard of Him with the hearing of the ears. Nothing is known of God till we know Him by experience—nothing that is of value. All that the ear learns of God from another's teaching is shallow and superficial. Your heart must know God by its own deep communing. Let me ask you, dear Hearer, how far you have gone in this school of instruction and discipline? We shall ascertain who you are and where you are by the answer you are able to give to this question. Tens of thousands of men walk through this world and never meet with God—they do not seek Him in their troubles. They may invoke His name, and cry out, "God help me!" in a stress of grief or a surge of pain, but they forget Him when their trials are over.

Oh, how different the children of God! "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." Theirs is not occasional, but habitual drawing near unto God! A good minister, sitting one day in the house of one of his people, overheard a dialog with a beggar woman who knocked at the door. The good housewife opened it and said to the poor creature, "Do not trouble me, now. I do not intend to give you anything today." The reply was, "Please don't say so, Ma'am. I am no upstart. You know me very well. I am an old beggar at your door. I think I have begged of you every week for the last seven years. Do not turn me away, kind lady, I pray you." She was about to be sent off without any relief, when the minister said, "Give her something for my sake. She is the exact picture of me. Her plea with you is just what I am obliged to plead with my God whenever I go to Him. 'Lord, give me Your mercy. I am no new comer—I am an old beggar. I have been dependent upon Your bounty, a pensioner upon Your charity these many, many years. Oh, cast me not away!'" The Christian's life is a life of dependence upon God. He always has to go to Him. There is never an hour in which he could do without his God. Now this is the man off whom the text speaks, "He has known My name"—by long experience—he has come to rely upon My goodness and My love."

Then, Beloved, you will observe the promise that is given to such, "I will set him on high because he has known My name." "If He knows My name, I taught it to him—My Grace made him know it. And now, having given him so much Grace, I will give him more, and I will give him glory at the last—I will set him on high." What does it mean, to be set on high by God? It certainly implies *rank*. The Christian is a man of rank. How so? Because every man whom God sets on high, He acknowledges as His child, makes him to be, "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Chr-

ist.” There is much respect shown in the world to the young man or the young woman whose good fortune it is to be heir of a noble title and large estates. But what must it be to be “an heir of God,” to be “a joint-heir with Christ Jesus”? To be the son of a prince or the son of a king is no small thing in the esteem of most men. To have the blue blood in one’s veins is thought to be honorable. To trace your pedigree up to an emperor is a matter for pride. But the child of God, mean as he may be reckoned on this base earth, though he should have lived and died in an attic or a cellar, near the wind or near the damp soil, is a prince of the blood imperial! He is of the royal family of Heaven! He shall be a peer! He shall be, before long, in the court of the Most High! The blood royal runs within his veins, only it is not the royalty of a day, nor does it belong to the crown that is so readily taken from the wearer’s brow. The “crown that fades not away” belongs to every man who has set his love upon God and who knows God’s name! He is set on high, for God has made him of a princely rank.

The promise to “set him on high” will further mean a place of *security*. The Christian, when his faith is as it should be, is set so high above his enemies that they cannot reach him. We have sometimes been on the top of the Alps and seen a storm below in the valley. All has been calm over our heads in the sunlight, while below there has been all the tumult of the storm. God sets His servants on high, and often so high that when others think they will surely disturb their peace and break their comfort, they have been smiling and rejoicing in the clear atmosphere of Heaven, undismayed by the tumult that has raged beneath them! “The Lord is my Shepherd” they say, “I shall not want. He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies.” It must have been a glorious thing for those Frenchmen who went up in one of those balloons that ascended from the besieged city of Paris, to look down on the Prussian soldiers, vainly trying to reach them with their bullets, but they were up too high! It must give one a sense of security to think of the bullets coning half-way up, and then falling short. But such is the position of the Christian by faith. He is on a rock so high that all the gunshots of his enemies cannot reach him! He is perfectly safe while he is near his God. “I will set him on high”—out of harm’s reach—“because he knows My name.” It is rank and it is safety.

To be set on high, again, means *happiness*. He is the highest man, in some respects, that is the happiest man, for he wears contentment within his bosom. To bear within the soul a pure satisfaction with the Divine will has more to make him wealthy than all the coffers of Croesus! And such is the Christian. Commend me to the man whose sin is forgiven, to whom a perfect righteousness is imputed, who is adopted into the Divine family, from whose past all the blackness is blotted out, whose present is full of contentment and whose future is radiant with glory—commend me, I say, to such a man whom nothing can separate from the love of

Christ—a man to whom all things belong, whether things present or things to come, a man to whom Christ, Himself, belongs, and all the treasures of God—and say if such a man is not blessed to all the intents of bliss, where are the blessed ones to be found? If he is not ranked among the happy, and set aloft above all others, where can happiness even be dreamed of? Verily the true Christian has a portion of happiness allotted to him here below which far excels all the voluptuous pleasures and intoxicating joys of sense! He has a right to be cheerful, a duty to rejoice evermore! The worldling boasts that he is happier than you are—it is a vain boast, an empty vaunt. His mirth—what does it consist of but quips, cranks, and wanton wiles? His joys but flash and crack and sparkle—like thorns that burn for a few minutes, and then turn to ashes. Their fun will never compare with your happiness! They may have more laughter, but you have more liveliness. They dissipate their spirits, while you renovate your strength! Gloom follows their glee, but your calm even-tides forestall bright tomorrows, and your present serenity is the sure presage of a welcome eternity! Then “hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.”

“Because he has known My name, I will set him on high.” Yes, Beloved, He has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Before long, so short the time with some of us, that it may seem like tomorrow, we shall have our place among the angels. Among the angels, did I say? Nearer the Throne of God than they! Where even Gabriel cannot sit—at God’s right hand, by His side who wears our manhood on the Throne of God! There will He set us on high, where sits the Crucified, His hands still bearing the scars, and His feet the nail prints—He will set us there! Do not our hearts leap at the very thought? Worthy to be cast into the lowest pit of Hell, and yet Infinite Mercy promised us a seat of honor in Heaven! During the last week two, three venerable Brothers and Sisters, ornaments of our denomination, have passed away—some with whom it has been my habit to take sweet counsel. There was one dear Brother, who, last week, was hale and strong—a man who, though his hands were busy and his mind occupied with the cares of this life, delighted to preach the Gospel and was the pastor of a Church. When I heard of his departure, I seemed to realize more vividly how close we are to the world to come. Very soon, my Brothers and Sisters, you will hear of some in this congregation that have passed the flood. We have dear names in our recollection, the names of those dear to this congregation, whose spirits I could imagine are with us whenever we gather at the Communion Table. I can, without any immoderate stretch of fancy, picture them often within these aisles. So much did they seem to be part and parcel of ourselves, that when I miss them from their known place, I marvel that they shall occupy it no longer. And before long some of you also will be missing—the pastor, perhaps? Or the deacons, or the Elders, or some of you whose old familiar faces greet us constantly. At length you are gone! But oh, what a blessing if gone to swell

the number of the glorified, to complete the orchestra of Heaven, to add some fresh notes to the everlasting music! The army there has gaps in its ranks—they, without us, cannot be perfect. We shall soon go over to the majority. We shall soon go from the militant to the triumphant, from those that sit down here and weep over their imperfections, to those who sit up there, see their Lord and rejoice that they are like He! Let us anticipate the reunion, there, and celebrate the communion, here, full of the joys of hope and the visions of that better land towards which we journey as pilgrims! “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him”—there is your promise for this life! “I will set him on high because he has known My name”—there is your promise of the life to come!

I wish, oh, how I wish, this promise belonged to all of you! Alas, that some of you do not know His name! Neither do you set your love upon Him. You must go away without this blessing! Do seek it. Do ask forgiveness at the Savior's feet. God is willing to hear prayer, and when He compels you to pray, He will surely give the answer. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 42:1-6.**

Verse 1. *Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; My Elect, in whom My soul delights: I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* Verily this prophecy is concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe the title which He takes. He is called the Servant of God. The Father calls Him, His Servant. Above all others is Christ the Servant of the Highest deigning to become the Servant of servants, though He is the King of kings. “Whom I uphold”—which may be read two ways. According to some renderings, it should be, “Whom I lean upon”—as if God leaned the full weight of His Glory upon Christ and gave over the work of Grace into His hands—that is, if the passage is read passively. If actively, it runs as in our text, “Whom I uphold.” And both are true. God leans upon Christ. Christ draws His strength from God. They co-work, and mutual is the Glory. “My Elect.” That is first. “My choice One,” for there is none so choice as Christ. “My elected One,” for Christ is the Head of election. We are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world so that God specially calls Him, “My Elect.” “In whom My soul delights.” The delight of the Father in the Son is Infinite. He delighted in His Person. Now He delights in the work which He has accomplished. The delight of the Father is in Christ, and He delights in us because we are in Him. If, indeed, we are members of Christ, He is well pleased with us for Christ's sake. “In whom My soul delights.” “I have put My Spirit upon Him.” That was publicly done when He was baptized in the Jordan. The Spirit without measure rests and abides on Him, our Covenant Head. “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” Rejoice, then, you Gentiles! You are no

longer excluded. At first the Word of God came to the Jews, only, but He has given the Man, Christ Jesus, who has brought forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2-3. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.* Jesus was gentle, retiring, meek, quiet. His testimony was a very powerful one, but not a noisy one. He sought no honor among men. He frequently forbade the healed ones to tell of His miracles. He rather retire than came into public notice. He was not contentious. He did not seek to put out the Pharisees, who were like smoking flax. He was never hard towards the tender ones, but always gentle as a nurse among her children. Now it is very often found that where there is quietness and meekness, there is, nevertheless, great firmness of purpose. Noise and weakness go together, but quietness and strength are frequently combined. So read the next verse.

4. *He shall not fail.* He shall not faint. So it may be.

4. *Nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law.* This quiet, gentle Christ goes on pushing on His empire and extending His dominion till these far-off islands of the sea already know His power! And the day comes when the whole round earth shall be obedient to His sway! O blessed Christ, how glad we are to think that when we are discouraged, You are not, and when we fail and faint, You do not. You hold on forever, like the sun who comes forth from his chamber in the morning and stops not till he has run his race.

5, 6. *Thus says God the LORD, He that created the heavens and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it, He that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a Covenant of the people, for a Light of the Gentiles.* Thus the great God commissions Christ! Thus He declares that the eternal power and Godhead will back Him up till the Gentiles shall perceive His Light, and the people shall be brought into Covenant with God.

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

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

SHALL AND WILL

NO. 3416

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1914.

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

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.”
Psalm 91:15.

THIS Psalm is full to the very brim of exceedingly great and precious promises, nor is our text the least choice of them all. We have here two pearls. I am not sufficient merchantman to be able to say which is the more precious, but I am certain that the two put together are priceless beyond all computation!

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” “He shall call upon Me.” Prayer is, itself, a blessing. The desire to pray, the disposition to pray, the resolve, the determination to pray—what hopeful, healthy symptoms these are! But to be able to pray—ah, what some might give if they could put forth their soul’s strength in this cheering exercise! Then comes the Divine engagement favorably to hear prayer, “And I will answer him.” What would some give, especially the lost—those beyond the reach of mercy—if they could but hope that their cry of anguish could meet with a response of pity! That God would answer them, even if it were to relieve, though it might not be to remove their torments! We have this privilege. Prayer is encouraged and prayer is answered! These two are stars which shine in the Christian’s sky, lit up by God to lead him to the land where darkness shall be all unknown!

We have no time for a preface, therefore let us at once notice that *prayer must be offered—and that prayer must be answered.*

I. THERE MUST BE PRAYER.

“He shall call upon Me.” It is not said, “I will give him this and that without his praying.” He that *asks* receives. To him that *knocks* it shall be opened. He that *seeks* finds. The asking, the knocking, the seeking must come before the reception—the opening of the door and the finding. This is God’s way. “For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” Though the promise is good and sure, and will be fulfilled, we are to bring it in our hands, lay it before the Throne of God and plead with God’s faithfulness and mercy that He will do as He has said. Prayer is essential.

The text seems to assert that the man who dwells near to God must and shall pray. “He *shall* call upon me.” Others may refuse—man has a will of his own, but this will shall not stand in the way or prevent prayer.

He shall be willing to pray. He shall be made willing in the day of God's power. If having received a new heart and a right spirit, his will shall be in such gracious order that he *shall* will to pray! God declares that if other men are silent, this man *shall* pray. This is a bell which God will ring! This is a flute upon which God will play. This is an organ which shall send forth its peals, for God puts His hands upon the keys. This man shall pray!

Beloved, you who know Christ, who are in the habit of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, *you know that there is a constraint upon you that you should pray*. You are free agents, just as Paul was in the matter of preaching and yet he said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" You are free agents in the matter of prayer, and yet do you not feel that there is a Divine compelling that moves you, so that it is woe unto you unless you draw near to God?

This necessity springs from divers causes. *Within you there dwells the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of intercession. Wherever He is, there will be a groaning which cannot be uttered—intercessions made within the heart which has become the temple of the Blessed Spirit! You cannot help praying if the Spirit of God is in your hearts. Drive out that sacred Visitor and you will soon become as dumb as the fish in the sea—but while He is there, you shall be like the seraphs who continually cry before Him. Your prayer and your praise shall never cease, but, like the incense upon the golden altar—it shall always smoke—the fire shall never go out by day or by night. The Presence of the Holy Spirit secures the fulfillment of this promise, "He shall call upon Me."

Moreover, *as the Holy Spirit gradually teaches you and educates you, everything that you learn tends to make you pray*. I say everything, my Brothers and Sisters, whether you read in the illuminated books wherein you see the Glory of the Person of Christ, or whether you turn to the black-letter volume in which you discover the depravity of your own heart. Whichever may be the book, all sacred literature alike shall lead you to pray. *Certainly a sight of your own heart will do it*. You will tremble as you see the envy, the pride, the murders, the murmurings, the rebellions of every sort that lurk there—and you will turn to the Strong for strength, feeling that the monster evils of your nature cannot be overcome by your own powers! They have chariots of iron, they dwell in cities that are walled up to the skies! You cannot drive them out, except a mightier power than yours shall be enlisted in the warfare. Hence you will be driven to cry mightily unto the Lord God of Israel, that He will put forth His Omnipotence because of your impotence to overcome your corruptions and lusts!

And a sight of Christ—which is the opposite extreme of experience—equally instructive and far more pleasant—*a sight of Christ will bring you to your knees*. When Peter's boat was full and began to sink, then down he went, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Some-

times a sense of the weight of sin may make us wish to escape from Christ. Sad that it should be so! But when we see the Glory of Christ, Himself, and behold His condescension towards us, then we come very near to Him and beg Him to abide with us, finding arguments in our circumstances to compel Him to tarry yet a little longer since we cannot afford to lose his blessed fellowship.

So, *as we learn and grow in Grace*, we are sure to grow in prayer! If we do not increase in prayerfulness, we may take it as a sign that we are not advancing in the Divine Life. I am certain that the closet is the thermometer of the entire man. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, how grow you if this is the case? How is it with some of you if this is true? Oh, how little time is spent upon your knees! Time, however, is of small consequence, for I sometimes think we can pray more in five minutes at one time than we can in hours at other seasons. Have you had personal dealings with God of late? Have you come close to the Most High? Have you wrestled with the Covenant Angel? If not, there is something wrong. Begin the search! Perhaps under your beloved Rachel, your most favored delight, some evil is hidden, some idol concealed. Search and look, for if there is a lack of prayerfulness, there is mischief somewhere.

Moreover, dear Friends, not only does the Holy Spirit compel us to pray. Not only will all that we learn from Him lead us to prayer, but I think *the sense of holy joy which communion with God in prayer brings will entice us into our retirement*. We can look back upon some very, very happy times that we have had, when no stranger's foot could intrude into the sacred enclosure of our retreat with the Most High. Have we not looked into the face of God—a marvelous sight! And have we not been made to reflect from our own faces, afterwards, the light of His Glory? Have we not spoken to Christ? Why, I dare to say there are some of us who have as surely spoken with Him as a man speaks with his friend! And it has sometimes become to us scarcely a matter of faith as to whether there was a Christ or not, and whether He heard and fulfilled our desires, for we have whispered right into His ear and have felt Him to be near us. I do not mean with any carnal feeling, or under a sense of mere excitement, but in all sobriety, when there was no flush of feeling, for we have been heavy of heart with the world's troubles, or we have been racked with physical pain. Or at other times, when our passions have been subdued by long reading, by searching of the Word, or by the exercise of prayer—then in our clearest senses we have been cognizant of spiritual things as surely as ever in our lives we were conscious of worldly things! Well, now, having once been at that table, we long to get there again! Having once sipped of this glorious river, we shall never be content with the muddy rivers of Egypt anymore! We long for the hour to strike when secular business shall be over, that we may begin spiritual business, the real business of our souls in commerce with Heaven! We have wished that we could prolong the time when we could sit, like Da-

vid, before the Lord—when our spirit could gather such confidence that we could almost dance before the Lord as he did when girded with a linen ephod. I am sure that the sweetness of prayer attracts and draws the Believer. Even as birds are drawn with baits towards the snare, so towards the holy exercise of prayer we are drawn by the sweet attractions it has.

The Lord takes care that His people shall pray by *giving them a plentiful supply of daily trials and needs*. If there is anyone here without needs, I can suppose him to live without prayer. And if you have had a long course of prosperity, I can easily imagine that the Mercy Seat has grown neglected. But it will not be so with those of you who have to fight hard for daily bread, or with those of you who have many cares in the household, or who have much trouble in your position in life by persecution, by ridicule and sneers. Certainly, we who are engaged in the business of a large Church with the care of many souls upon us, cannot afford to do without prayer. And when we come into contact with other people's souls, and get to be earnest about them, if we did not pray, we would be worse monsters than those that throw their young into the depths of the sea, for we should have utterly forsaken those who have a call and claim upon us, deserting them in the most important of matters, neglecting to make intercession before the Lord for them. Surely, we would sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. You who never look after sinners and do not care whether they perish or not, you can live without prayer. But those of you who come into contact with the desponding and try to encourage them, and find you cannot—you who talk with the despairing and find you cannot comfort them—you are driven to God! You call to Him to do what you cannot—to perform what you cannot accomplish. I am persuaded that the more intelligently active and the more earnestly vigorous a man is in God's work, the more will he find the necessity of prayer. I do not wonder that Christ spent whole nights in prayer. As a Man, He could not have preached and done all He did without it. It would not have been possible to have sustained the ardor of such zeal daily, hourly, incessantly—without feeding it by nightly, restless, almost incessant intercessions! Brothers and Sisters, God will have us pray! And if we will not pray by reason of charm, He will force us to pray by reason of fear! If we will not pray when the dish is dainty, He will break our teeth with gravel and make us drunk with wormwood. If threats will not bring you to your knees, trials shall! If one cut of the rod does not remind you of your negligence, you shall have stroke upon stroke till there are welts upon the skin, till you have smarted, groaned and wept—till at length you shall say, "Before I was afflicted from the Mercy Seat, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word and come near to Your Throne of Grace." But you *shall* call upon Him. If you are elect, you shall cry unto Him. "Behold, he prays," must, and shall be said of you! If you are a quickened soul, you shall pray. You shall not be allowed to forget to breathe out

your soul unto God! If the Lord intends to crown you in Glory, He will make you wrestle in prayer before you win that crown! “He shall call upon me.” I delight to look at the text in this light—not merely as the Christian’s duty and privilege, but as God’s own purpose to make us pray! By the Divine influence of His Holy Spirit and by the workings of His Providence, He will compel His beloved ones to live near to Him. “He shall call upon Me.” And now, please, to observe the relative truth—

II. PRAYER WILL BE ANSWERED.

“And I will answer him.” If your experience has not got so far as the first head, you cannot enjoy the second. If you do not feel the propulsions and compulsions of the Holy Spirit compelling you to pray, you will have nothing to do with this—“And I will answer him.” But if you have been much engaged in prayer—then, as there was a necessity for you to pray, so there is a necessity for God to answer!

Let me show you this. *It is a part of the Divine scheme and plan by which God governs the world and manages Providence that men should pray and that He should answer them.* I do not know why God is pleased so to ordain it, but I do know that this is one of His statutes. In reading Scripture, you constantly see evidence of it in precept, in promise and in example. Now, when the sun rises, there is light. Why, I do not know. There might have been light without the sun and there might have been a sun that gave no light, but God has been pleased to put these two things together—sunrise and light. So whenever there is prayer, there is a blessing. I do not know why. There might have been prayer without a blessing, for there is in the world of wrath. And there might have been a blessing without prayer, for it often is sent to some who sought it not. But God has been pleased to make this a rule for the government of the moral and spiritual universe, that there shall be prayer, first, and that then there shall be the answer to prayer. I do not expect God to alter His rule about the sun rising. I do not expect to see it light in the middle of the night before the sun is up. Neither do I expect to see God altering this rule—that there shall be a blessing upon the Church without His people seeking it! If we did but observe it aright, we would perceive this to be as certainly a rule of God’s government as any law of Nature which has been discovered by experience and embodied in science. And instead of wondering that prayer is answered, we would come to look out for and expect answers! Some of you good people who have been known to pray for your children to be converted, have been not only pleased, which is quite right, but you have been amazed, which is quite wrong, when you have seen the Divine Grace that was in them and heard their profession of faith in Christ! That surprise of yours looks as if you were wonder-struck to find that God was honest and kept His Word, whereas you should take that as a matter of course. But as this is so reliable, “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him,” when you do *not* get an answer to prayer, you should go to the Lord with this question, “Show me

why You contend with me. What is it that hinders the blessing? Why do You withhold it? Is my prayer faulty? Or did I ask amiss? Or have I a wrong intent? Or did I not plead the blood of Jesus enough? Or is it that I am altogether unfit to receive such a blessing? Whichever it may be, Lord, set me right, that I may pray, again, and have given to me the answer to my prayer." You ought to get an answer and will get an answer because it is a part of the rule of God's government!

It should be enough for every Believer to know that his prayer will be heard *because he has God's word for it*. Why raise objections or multiply arguments? We have it before us. "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." It is no longer a matter of conjecture! God has said He will, and "let God be true and every man a liar." Settle it for certain, that what God has promised, He can perform—and He *will* perform!

Has not *God always answered prayer*? In looking back throughout the history of the saints, this seems to be their constant testimony, "This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him." He has heard them in strange places—Jonah, to wit, in the whale's belly! He has delivered them, in answer to prayer, out of very difficult positions—Peter, to wit, when sleeping with four soldiers to be his guard—and yet brought out of prison in answer to the prayers of God's Church. He has answered prayer to some of us. We are the living witnesses to this. I have sometimes said to skeptics, "You are Believers in the Baconian philosophy, by which matters are proved by induction—that is to say, certain facts are collated and then an inference is drawn from them. Now, as an honest man, I solemnly declare that I have met with not twenty, but hundreds of facts, facts certain to me, because they concerned myself, in which God has given me what I asked of Him. Who, then, are you, that you should say there is no God? Or who are you that you should say God does not answer prayer when I, as credible as you are, and quite as capable of judging of my own consciousness, and of observing facts as you are, state this and that, and when not only I, but hundreds of others, reliable people, who, if put into the witness box tomorrow, would be accepted by any lawyer as being among the most honorable and trustworthy witnesses in the parish—the very men whom he would like to get on his side of a case—declare that God has answered them? Why are they not to be believed?" Are all the thousands of God's people to be put down as fools or fanatics, and a few addle-headed infidels to be taken after the estimate of their own conceit, to know everything? Well, when the world is turned upside down, perhaps it may be so, but as long as things stand as they are and plain evidence carries its weight with impartial jurymen, we shall hold to what we know, and testify to what we have seen! God does hear! He has heard me! He changes not! You may rest assured that if you call upon Him, He will answer you.

Our God compares Himself constantly in Scripture to a Father. "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more

shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? “You do not let our children cry to you for things which you have promised them, and then refuse them. Of course, if they take whims into their heads they may take them out again. And if they like to cry for that which is not good for them, they may cry till they are tired. But if they ask for that which you have promised to give them, you give them according to their desire. Are you better than your Father in Heaven? I think not. He condescends to represent Himself *as a Friend*. Surely one friend will give to another who has need. Is Christ such a poor Friend as to deny us our repeated and importunate prayers? He calls Himself a *Husband*. You who have a tender husband’s heart would not refuse to your bride, your spouse, anything that would give her joy that it was in your power to bestow. You know you would not. And do you think that the Husband of the Church will let her cry to Him and refuse her? Oh, no! He is a model of a husband in the love He has, and He will be a model in the generosity with which He proves His love. “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” The relationships of Father, Friend and Husband, all go to prove that an answer shall and will come!

Were the duty of prayer enjoined, and no promise of answer vouchsafed, of what use would it be? *Has God enjoined upon us constantly a useless observance, and perpetually commanded us to abide in the practice of an unmeaning service?* He says, “Continue in prayer.” “Pray without ceasing.” Does God delude us and send us to an exercise which can by no possibility be profitable? God forbid! We pray because He leads us and He bids us because there is an end to be answered by it. Therefore, an answer will come!

If God does not answer prayer, *to what purpose is the Holy Spirit given to us to make intercession for us?* It were blasphemy to suppose the Holy Spirit doing a work of supererogation. Prayer is necessary and as we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Holy Spirit condescendingly comes to fulfill a useful office in helping our infirmities and assisting us to pray.

Were there no answers to prayer, *to what end would be the Mercy Seat?* It was the central part of the Jewish worship, the most mysterious of all their religious furniture—the Ark overshadowed by the cherubim—the Mercy Seat, which covered the Law and concealed the sacred things. In symbol, or in spirit, the Scripture teaches us it is a great privilege to be allowed to come to that Mercy Seat. Christ has died to rend the veil, has sprinkled His own heart’s blood to make it possible for us to approach without our being struck down for our presumption as Nadab and Abihu were. And is all this for nothing? Never tolerate such a thought for a single moment! Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there is a wonderful reality in prayer. I am afraid that some professors have not proved it and those of us who really do know its power do not use it as we should. If a man could have, somewhere in his house, some little se-

cret spring which, but to touch it, would bring him all he needed—which could shake the world, which could move Heaven, which could stop the sun and moon if necessary—would you not think him insane if he never put his finger on that spring, but let it lie idle by him? The insanity is our own! We may move the arm of God if we will. There is nothing in earth or Heaven that we may not have, if it is really good for us, if we do but know how to be importunate with God in prayer for it—and yet we do not pray as if we believed in its efficacy! Do you not often find yourselves hurrying through your prayer and then going away without ever getting near to God? Depend upon it, there is not one more ounce of prayer in the world than there is of real dealing with God. That is the measure of prayer. Unless you draw near to God and speak with Him, you may use the best language, you may think yourselves in the most devout frame, but you have not prayed at all! It is getting the grip, spiritually, laying hold upon Him who is invisible, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend, ordering your cause with arguments and then feeling, “I have really asked this of the great invisible God, who has promised to give it, and I expect it! I must look out for it, it will surely come—as sure as God is God, He will keep His promise—and as He has made me call upon Him, He, Himself, will answer me!” This is the essence of true prayer.

Do I hear somebody saying, “*But there are persons who really pray, or who think they do, but who do not get an answer.*” That is quite true, for *there are a great many persons who do formally pray, and do not truly pray.* They offer a dead prayer—there is no life in it. The heart is not at work, there is no faith, there is no communion! Now, if a man will obtain of God, he must ask in faith, nothing wavering. How can he that doubts, expect that he shall be heard? I must believe, if I come to God, that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him! And if I will not so believe, in vain do I expect to be answered!

But, Brothers and Sisters, *do not suppose that prayer will be answered in every case according to the impulse of the suppliant, or that God will give us just whatever we like to pray for.* No more dangerous power could be committed to mortals! If the Lord would say to me, “I will give you whatever you wish for,” I should tremble at the responsibility! Infinite knowledge, alone, could regulate unlimited choice. It were a prerogative not to be entrusted to any but God! Only suppose what would occur if every prayer that everybody offers were to be answered. It is pretty certain no child of God would ever resign his creature life. There would be sure to be something or other that would prompt each one to live. We should have all the aged men who lived in the days of David still here, as spectators, if not as competitors in this world’s struggles. I think, too, it is very likely that none of us would ever have any trials. We would be sure to pray not to have them and then there would be no room for faith to be exercised and no room for God to be glorified! The world would come to a dreadful pass if men were entrusted with an absolute power to

have whatever they liked! It would be, indeed, a terrible curse for any man to be put in possession of such a faculty as that! You have no right to ask of God what He has not promised. Somebody prayed the other day that he might be led to ask a person to give him 500 pounds. He was so led, or he said he was, and he asked me to do it! All I could say was that whenever I was "led" to do it, I would do it, but just then I was not led. Another person was led to pray that I might build him a cottage. Well, I was not led. A young man was once led, in answer to prayer, to ask me to let him preach for me at the Tabernacle. I was obliged to tell him, also, that when I had had it revealed to me, as it had been to him, I would then cheerfully obey the revelation, but it was lop-sided as yet, and had only been revealed to one person, and not to the other! Such fanaticism surely grows up where you get the idea that God will give you anything you ask for. He will do no such thing! He will give you what He has promised to give you, and if in His Word, He has promised to bestow it, you have but to ask in faith and He will be as good as His Word! Hold to that. If it is not a promised blessing in some form or other, you have neither the right to ask for it, nor the right to accept it!

Should any man say, "I asked for a blessing that was plainly promised, but did not obtain it," I should then say, *Are you equally clear that the obtaining of it would be for your good?* "Yes," you say, "it would make me comfortable." Just so, but is it for your good to be comfortable? "And it would get me out of my difficulty." But may it not be for your lasting good to be in the difficulty, and may there not be something in the world a great deal higher for you and for me than merely to be comfortable and to get out of difficulties? "Not as I will, but as You will," was the prayer of the Man who had more power in prayer than all of us put together—"Not as I will, but as You will." We must always put that in. God does not give up His prerogative as King when He bids us pray and promises us to answer. He still holds everything in His own hands. You say to your child, "My Dear, I will give you anything that is for your good." He asks you to let him have his father's razors to play with. You know that very soon he will be cutting himself, and you say, "No, my Child, that is preposterous." Or he asks you to let him have those sweets that are poisonous and you say, "No, my dear Child, I have no doubt they taste sweet to your palate, but think of the bitter medicines you would have to take afterwards, and of how much mischief they would do you. No, I cannot let you have those." So it is with our God. He denies us many things we wish for because they are not good for us. But there is one thing that is certain—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If it is really good for you, you shall have it and God shall be glorified by it!

To sum up all I have been saying tonight, I want, dear Friends, these two promises to stand vividly set forth before your eyes—"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." I want to stir you up to prayer. Do let us have more prayer during this year than we have ever had. It has been

by prayer that we have been established up till now. When we were very few at Park Street, before I had the pleasure of knowing the most of you, among the best signs of the coming blessing was your numerously-attended Prayer Meetings. We had a little vestry there and I think we tried it about twice but it was no use—we could not get in, but we must needs go into the Chapel. Oh, there were prayers there that have been turned into answers since! There were many times when we could not speak because we felt so much of the Presence of God that we had need to sit still and pour out in tears and sobs the groans that could not be uttered. We did pray with real, mighty, prevailing prayer—and then there came a blessing. Wherever we went, God was with us! Wherever the Word was preached—whether in Exeter Hall or the Surrey Music-Hall—it mattered not in what place—the Word was blessed! And though I am sometimes afraid that we shall get slack in prayer, yet when I frequently see the whole of this basement full, and see you sitting in the aisles on Monday evening (though some careless people say, “Oh, it is only a Prayer Meeting!”), it does cheer and make glad my heart. We cannot lose the blessing while we keep the spirit of prayer! I want you to pray still more. Among other topics, I suggest to you much more prayer for your children and for your families. We must have them saved, Beloved. We cannot bear it that our children should be cast away! The angel said to Lot, “Have you here any beside?” I say that to each of you tonight. Have you in London any beside? You have seen some saved—are there any left? Is there one left? Oh, Father, never cease to pray till that one child is brought to God! Let your prayers go up perpetually, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” When you have done with your families, pray for your neighbors. You need never be short of objects for petition in this great city which is so full of sin! In these times of poverty and distress, men, perhaps, are more easily reached than they ever were. Let us pray more for them and may the Eternal God soften them in their distress and bring them to Himself. I claim myself to have a very special right to the prayers of some here. I think I have a right to the prayers of all the members of this Church, but on some of you in particular I have a claim which none can dispute, for it has been through the Word preached here that you have been brought from darkness to the Light of God, and I charge you, my children in Christ, by the love which I trust subsists in your hearts, never forget me in your prayers! You know not how much I need it. It is not possible for any but God to know how much I need the daily prayers of the Lord’s people! Others of you are members of other churches. Well, pray for your ministers and pray for us all. The weakest of us will be strong when you pray! The strongest will grow weak when you flag. Brothers and Sisters, pray for us that we may be faithful, earnest, useful! And we say, as you shall pray for us, so may God help you in that day when you shall draw near unto Him for yourselves in distress. Pray for all your fellow Church members. Pray for the backsliding, pray

for any that are faltering, pray, I beseech you, for our work connected with the Church here. I ask your prayers for our college, in particular, that our Brothers who are going out to preach the Gospel may go as God-sent servants, having their feet winged with love and their souls fired with zeal!

Again and again, and again would I say it! If I should never say another word to you, I think I would conclude by saying. Brothers and Sisters, pray for us! Pray for yourselves and your families and your neighbors! "Continue in prayer." "Watch and pray." Watch continually, but pray, also, and the Lord hear you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:41-48; 6:1-8.**

Verse 41. *And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two.* If you can do him any service, do it cheerfully, do it readily. Do what he wants of you.

42. *Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you, turn not away.* This is the spirit of the Christian—to live with the view of doing service.

43-46. *You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them who love you, what reward have you? You have done what anybody would do.*

46-48. *Do not even the publicans do the same? And if you salute your brethren, only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans do so? Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.* Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. "Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

MATTHEW 6:1-8.

Verse 1. *Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in Heaven.* Our blessed Lord does not tell His disciples to give alms, but He takes it for granted that they do. How could they be His disciples if they did not do so? But He tells them to take care that they do not do this in order to get honor and credit from it. Oh, how much is done in this world that would be very good, but it is spoiled in the doing through the motive done to be seen of men! "You have no reward from your Father who is in Heaven."

2. *Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. So that they will never have another! They have been paid once for it by the approbation of their fellow men. They will never have any further reward.*

3-5. *But when you do alms let not your left hand know what your right hand does: that your alms may be in secret: and your Father who sees in secret, Himself, shall reward you openly. And when you pray—He does not tell His disciples to pray, but again takes it for granted that they do—and he cannot be a Christian who does not pray. “A prayerless soul is a Christless soul.” “When you pray”—*

5. *You shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. All they will ever get. People say, “What a wonderfully pious man he is to pray up at the street corner.” Yes, but that is the reward. The prayer will die where it was offered.*

6. *But you, when you pray, enter into your closet. Get into some quiet nook—some secret place—no matter where.*

6. *And when you have shut your door—So that nobody can hear you—not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer. “When you have shut your door.”—*

6-8. *Pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret, shall reward you openly. And when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like unto them, for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him. Prayers are never measured by the yard in Heaven. They are estimated by their weight. If there is earnestness in them—truth, sincerity—God accepts them however brief they are. Indeed, brevity is often an excellence in prayer. Let us never, therefore, use vain repetitions.*

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

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

MY GOD

NO. 1297

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“My God.”
Psalm 91:2.*

IF YOU were to find honey in a tree and should wish to give some of it to your friends, I can imagine you cautiously taking it up in your hands, carrying it very carefully—and yet, when you reached the company, you would find, to your sorrow, a large part of it would have oozed out between your fingers—so that you had failed to convey to others what was so delicious to yourself. I fear I shall be in the same condition when this sermon is done and, therefore, I am the more eager to assure you at the beginning that the honey which I wish you to partake of is, indeed, of the very richest kind! My text has been, to my own heart, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb!

Have you ever been in the Alps, or in some other region where the scenery is peculiarly impressive? And has there happened a singular conjunction of sun and cloud, of brightness and shadow which has made the view before you to be transcendently sublime, or surpassingly beautiful? If so, when you have reached your companions, you have tried to tell them what you have seen, but in proportion as the scene has been exquisite and charming, you have been conscious of your inability to convey to them any satisfactory idea of the spectacle. If it had been a commonplace affair you could have accomplished the description and conveyed your impression of it to other minds.

But because of its being so altogether superior and out of the common way, you have failed, after the most earnest endeavors, to succeed, and you have exclaimed, “Ah, you should have been there, yourselves! Had you seen with your own eyes, you would then have understood my descriptions. But now the task of description is hopeless. Had you been there you would have known that I do not exaggerate! On the contrary, you would have felt that when I had spoken under the greatest excitement, I fell far short of the admiration which the scene awakens.”

It happens to me in happy hours that a text of Scripture becomes peculiarly delicious to my heart, even as marrow and fatness to the feaster—and these two words have been so. They filled my spirit with sweetness even to the fullest! But I fear that I cannot convey that sweetness to you. I have seen, in these two words, such a wonderful display of Divine condescension, of the Lord's favor to His chosen, and of the intense delight which springs out of that condescension and favor that had I but been in the pulpit at the time, I could have preached with freedom, but now I do not find it so easy. Expression limps today where enjoyment *leaped* yesterday!

However, may God the Holy Spirit help you to see in the text what I have seen in it, even if I cannot point it out to you! And then our meditation will be remarkably delightful and profitable to us. May the Spirit of God bring fullness of meaning out of the text to your understanding and to your hearts. And may we all rejoice together as we go out of this Tabernacle, each one of us saying, "The Lord is my portion, said my soul."

I. First let us think of these TWO WORDS TOGETHER. And to get at them, let us see when they have occurred in sacred history. Let us consider some of the more remarkable and special occasions upon which children of God have used these two words together and have said, "My God." First, this is *the young convert's early confession*. The first instance we will give is Ruth, who lovingly said to Naomi, "Where you dwell I will dwell: where you go I will go: where *you* lodge I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

That last resolution was the avowal of a *spiritual* change. She might have been determined to lodge and to abide with her mother-in-law and there would have been but little in it. But when it came to this—"Your God shall be my God," then there was hope that she had been delivered by the Grace of God from the bondage of idolatry and had come to put her trust under the wings of Jehovah, the living God! Ah, dear young converts, if the Lord has revealed your sinful state to you and has led you to Jesus Christ to find life and salvation, you will come forward and give yourself to the Lord and declare, "I will be Your servant, for You are my God."—

***"Lord, You are mine, forever mine,
My heart is filled with joy Divine!
Henceforth You shall my treasure be,
And I will find my all in Thee."***

You will next give yourself to the Church according to the will of God and you will tell the Church that you do so because from now on the God of the Church and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be your God. You mean to dwell with the Lord's people and live and die with them, for their God is your God. Some of you have lately been converted, or profess to have been so. I trust your profession is thoroughly truthful, but be sure you examine yourselves. Have you taken God to be your God? Not to be a mere name to you, nor as a sacred word to sing about and pray about—but as truly *God* to you? Is God, in very deed, your *God*? If He is, He will rule your soul, He will dominate your whole spirit and sway His scepter over your whole heart.

No man is truly converted until God takes His right place in relationship to him. The wicked forget God. The men of Belial defy God. The infidel denies God, but the child of God acknowledges God, submits to His authority and gives Him the throne of his heart. He does not give the Lord a *secondary* place and permit *self* to be first, for that would be to *deify self* and insult the Lord! He makes God to be *God*, that is first and sole in authority and power! This is a sure index of true conversion—when God is *God* in your soul. As I have already said, God is not God to a great many—He is but a name and nothing more to them. But when He becomes *God* and it is a great word, that—when He takes the place which

the Creator, the Redeemer, the God should occupy—then is the soul converted, indeed!

Now, whether we were converted yesterday, or have known the Lord for 20, 30, or 40 years, I trust we can address our mother, the Church, and say as Ruth said to Naomi, “Where you lodge I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” These words, in the next place, may be regarded as *the statement of the Christian’s belief*—I mean, here, not merely his first confession of it, but his later statement of it. Here is our creed and our confession of faith! Take Thomas for the illustration. He has been very skeptical. Poor Thomas! He seems to have had too much brain and too little heart. He was always for fighting his way through intricate questions and for answering tough objections. If he were alive, now, if the Grace of God had not improved him, he would have been a “modern thought” Divine, a critical Brother suggesting more problems than all the rest of us could solve!

He must have tokens, marks and evidences, or else he will not believe! But he is highly indulged and the Savior permits him to put his finger into the prints of the nails and his hand into His side! And when he has done so, Thomas, by a strange but blessed logic infers the Deity of Christ from His wounds! He was the first, I believe, who had ever done so, but certainly not the last. And having, from the very wounds of his Lord’s body inspected His Deity, Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” In this plain, decided testimony to our Lord’s Divinity, we all unite! It is the heartfelt confession of faith of every Christian in reference to the Lord Jesus! There is no room for two opinions on that point!

If there are any professing Christians in this world who do not call Christ, their God—well, Brothers and Sisters, we are sorry for them and pray the Lord to give them spiritual life and light. But as for us, the Man who bled on Calvary is “very God of very God” to us, and that in the broadest and deepest sense. As the angels bow before Him, so, also, do we! We count Him “worthy to receive Divine honor and power.” There are many differences of opinion in the Church of God which may be tolerated, but this is beyond all controversy and can never be a moot point! Here our protests against error must be firm and unmistakable.

I admired a remark that was once very merrily made by good William Gadsby when a Unitarian chapel had been erected near a Baptist place of worship. The story has been told to me that someone in the vestry was greatly mourning over the circumstance and saying what a sad opposition it was. Gadsby said, “Well, man, I do not see any opposition in it.” “But surely it is a great opposition, Mr. Gadsby. They deny the Deity of Christ.” “Why, man,” said Gadsby, “that is no opposition! Suppose you kept a baker’s shop and sold good bread, and a man came and opened an iron-monger’s shop opposite, would you call that an opposition? Certainly not, it is a different line altogether.”

And so it is. Where we preach the Deity of Christ, that is one line of things. But where that is denied, we *cannot* regard it as another form of *Christianity*! It is a different thing, altogether, quite as different as iron would be from bread. The Socinian is nearer akin to the Mohammedan

than to the Christian. He who does not acknowledge the Deity of Jesus disowns Him altogether. I cannot see how Jesus Christ can be anything but one of two things—either the Son of God or else a gross impostor who allowed his disciples to think him Divine—and used the virtues of his character to support his claim. All the worse an impostor because he had a fine moral sense and yet employed even virtue's self to aid his blasphemous ambition. He must have been either God or an arch-deceiver!

Brothers and Sisters, we will have no mincing of matters about that point! Charity is all very well, but the Truth of God comes first. "First pure, then peaceable," is a good barometer for our judgment on such points. On the matter of our Lord's Godhead we cannot, for an instant, hesitate—we do not merely believe Jesus Christ to be God, but we risk our eternal future upon that Truth of God! I am a lost man, I know, and for me there can be nothing but eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord if the Savior, Jesus Christ, is not Divine! But He *is* Divine! This we will maintain in the teeth of all men as our confession of faith—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest, very God of very God, is my Lord and *my God*. Thus, *my God* is the first and last confession of faith of those who are under the New Covenant. It is the utterance, both of the babe in Grace, and of the more advanced Christian.

Furthermore, my Brothers and Sisters, the words, "My God," have often been used to declare *the determination of the Believer when he has been surrounded by opponents and persecutors*. Grandly did old Micaiah use this expression when the false priests were round about him! Prophets who pretended to be inspired delivered their oracles and old Micaiah said, "As the Lord my God lives. Whatever my God says unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more did he speak, because he believed in Jehovah as being his God and submitted himself entirely to Jehovah's sway. The false priests worshipped Baal, Moloch and Ashtaroath—but old Micaiah cared not what they worshipped—he knew who was his God and he avowed his God to their teeth.

O, you who call yourselves the people of God, be always ready to stand up for Jehovah in whatever company you may be, for there are many gods and many lords in our land at this time—and multitudes of professed Christians have turned aside from worshipping the God of Israel! They have set up new gods and the Eternal is despised. The Old Testament, they tell us, is an uncouth and harsh Revelation! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not at all the God of their fancy, for He is too terrible, too severe, too righteous, too just! They want a milder, gentler God and they pretend that Jesus Christ has revealed quite a different Deity from the God of the Old Testament. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, in this they greatly error, for the Lord changes not and is the same today under the Gospel as He was yesterday under the Law!

We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "the God of the whole earth shall He be called." We worship the God of Israel, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who divided the Red Sea, the God who spoke in thunder from Sinai! We believe that Jesus Christ has not come to reveal to us a new Deity, but to declare unto us the God

who is from the beginning! Ours is the song of Zacharias—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spoke by the mouth of His holy Prophets, which have been since the world began." "This God is our God forever and ever! He shall be our guide even unto death."—

***"The God of Abraham's praise is
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah, Great I AM!
By earth and Heaven confessed,
I bow, and bless
Your sacred name,
Forever blest!"***

The words, "my God," may well express *the secret vow of the Believer as he consecrates himself to the Most High*—of this we have an instance in the life of Jacob. He said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be *my God*." We have each said that, I hope, many times, when we have renewed our vows unto the Lord. Though we have known the Lord for 20 or 30 years, yet, as we have needed Him anew in time of trouble, or as He has revealed Himself to us afresh in a way of deliverance, we have laid hold upon Him by faith, over and over again, and said, "Yes, He is *my God*."

Have you ever felt your heart full to overflowing while thinking over such a text as this, "My Beloved is mine and I am His"? I do not know a more delightful contemplation for a quiet hour alone than to weigh each syllable of that promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Look it over, turn it over, taste it, feed on it, digest it and see the mutual possession, even as in those other texts, "The Lord's portion is His people," and, "The Lord is my portion, said my soul." Christ is ours and we are Christ's! You cannot, dear Friend, do better than oftentimes hand over, again, the title deeds of your soul to God, yes, not of your soul, only, but of everything you have! For if you make an inventory of all you have to the last penny, it is your Lord's. Even so is the Lord altogether yours and you should often renew your grasp of Him. Take Him to be your only Lord and God as long as you live and, while others boast in their treasures, be it your joy to cry, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides You!" Thus with two words, "*My God*," we avow our faith both in the presence of our enemies and before our Lord, Himself.

But I cannot linger here. I must have you notice, next, that these words, "My God," have sometimes afforded *the deepest possible comfort to children of God in times of terrible trouble*. When our dear Lord and Master was in His greatest woe—when all the waves and billows of Judgment were going over His soul—the exclamation which came from Him at the climax of His grief was, "My God! My God." True, it was attended with the question, "Why have You forsaken Me?" but still, as with a two-handed

grip, He seemed to get a hold of God when He said, “*My God! My God!*” Driven to extremity, He settled His heart on that one point. There was the anchor hold of His hope, “My God, My God.”

He did not say, “My disciples.” They had all forsaken Him. He could not call on His mother and siblings—they were powerless to console. No arm, angelic or human, could minister to His aid. He was alone in the grasp of Death, unsupported and unsustained, forsaken of earth and Heaven, and left a prey to the powers of darkness, but this—this was the cry which kept Him alive and gave Him strength to bear, even to the end! “My God,” He said, “they have not robbed Me of You! My God, I will still appeal to You! Though You hide Your face and seem to forsake Me, yet I know You are still Mine and I hold fast to You to the end! My God! My God!”

You will never have to use those words in so dire an extremity of woe! But if you ever come into deep waters, may you have Grace to say, “My God,” for if you do, you will soon be enabled to shout, “It is finished.” “My God,” is a love note in days of peace and a war cry for hours of battle! It is mighty in times of joy, but it is still more potent in nights of sorrow. The man who can say, “My God,” is a match for Death and Hell! By that watchword he shall master sin and overthrow all the hosts of the world, the flesh and the devil. In this sign you may conquer! The watchword of victory is, “My God.”

Once more. *Those words have been heard in cases precisely the opposite of deep distress.* When very marvelous deliverances have been enjoyed, the expression, “My God” has frequently come from the lips of those who have experienced them. When Miriam took her timbrel and went forth in the dance because God had overthrown Pharaoh and his hosts, she sang a song which Moses had composed for her. And you will remember that one of the verses was—“He is *my God*, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” She had never reached that point, “He is my God,” until Pharaoh’s hosts and his chosen captains had been drowned in the Red Sea—then she felt proud that she had such a God—and her faith exulted as she beheld His arm made bare!

Think, also, of Daniel and that happy moment when he exultingly called Jehovah his God. When the Prophet had been all night in the lion’s den, Darius comes, and with a plaintive cry he asks if Daniel yet lives. He is afraid the lions have devoured him. Do you notice Daniel’s answer? He says, “*My God* has sent His angel and has shut the lions’ mouths.” You do not wonder that he said, “My God,” do you? I do not think he could have coolly said, “*God*—God has sent His angel.” He could not have spoken so coldly! The deliverance he had experienced, the great goodness of God in keeping him alive that night in the lions’ den, made him feel that he must, with arms of love and faith, embrace the Omnipotent Preserver and call Him, “My God.”

Beloved, if you have experienced joyous deliverances of the same order, you have learned to say, “My God.” If you have seen your sins drowned in the Red Sea, you have said, “My God.” And if the lions have been chained and you have escaped their jaws, you, too, have said, “My God.” I earnestly hope that if the trouble which has now come upon you should

prove to be sharper and more grievous than any before, it may turn out to have been sent in order that you may say, "My God," with a deeper emphasis, and feel your soul more fully filled with the blessed meaning of those two matchless monosyllables!

So much, then, about the times when these words have been used. May the Spirit of God lead us to those specialties of experience in the midst of which these words shall become the frequent language of our hearts.

II. Briefly let us notice, in the second place, what this FIRST WORD, "MY"—"MY God," means. In what sense and respects can God be *mine*? He fills Heaven and earth—can I call Him *mine*? "His tender mercies are over all His works." I cannot set a hedge around His benevolence, or claim a monopoly of His compassion, can I? How, then, can I call Him *mine*? He is so inconceivable! He is boundless in Nature! His every attribute is Infinite! A man may call a *province* his own, for if it is within his compass, he can travel over it, or sail round it.

An emperor may call thousands of square miles his own, but still, the eagle's pinion or the dove's light wing can soar from boundary to boundary of his empire! The broadest dominion may be mapped and measured. But how can I call that mine which I cannot even *conceive*? If my thought cannot compass it, shall my heart *possess* it? Yes, yes, so the text says! "My God." Love *possesses* what reason cannot even look upon! Still, what does this mean, this daring appropriation? Why, it must mean, this, among other things—first, that *I acknowledge Him to be my God*. Whatever gods others may have, Jehovah is God to me! To whomever Jehovah may be a name, he is *God* to me, and, as Father, Son and Spirit, three Persons in one blessed Unity, I adore Him!

He may be despised and rejected. There may be other names set up in competition with Him, but to me—to *me*—He is the only God! I wish that you in this assembly may all say at once, most heartily and distinctly—"Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." I hope you will avow yourselves, this day, to be His people and take the God of Israel, the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ, to be your God! That is a part of the meaning. There is an acknowledging the Lord to be our God.

But, next, *the words imply a personal recognition of Him*. Venus and Jupiter and Bacchus—those ancient deities of Greece and Rome—we have all talked about them as myths and fictions. But as actual gods we ignore them—they are no gods to us! Some of us read classical books in our boyhood. I am sure they have done us more harm than good, but we have read them and, therefore, we know all about the imaginary history and doings of those most disgusting gods and goddesses. But we are very well aware that they are dreams and falsehoods—we know no such beings—they are nothing to us! We have heard, also, of Juggernauts, and of the thousands and millions of gods of the Hindus, but we have no acquaintance with them.

I have felt thankful when I have seen likenesses of Krishna and Siva, that they were no relations of mine! There is one god with an elephant's head and another god with a cat's head. I am delighted to think that I was

never on speaking terms with such monsters and could never call them mine! If they are gods to others they are not so to us—we know them not, their names we despise—and their pretensions we detest. But, Brothers and Sisters, we know *our* God! It is true we have not seen Him at any time. “You saw no similitude,” said He, when He spoke to His people from the top of Sinai. We have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. Yet as spirits speak to spirits we have been cognizant of the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits!

You and I know that we have often been moved by one another’s spirits. This very night, while I am speaking, my spirit is known of your spirit, and you are recognizing my spirit while I speak. In much the same way the Holy Spirit, by His mysterious operations, has come into contact with our spirits so that though we know Him not by sight, hearing, taste, or smell—all of which deceive us—yet we recognize Him by an inner and Infallible sense which was created in us at our regeneration by the hand of God! That there is a God we know by *spiritual* perception. He has opened our ears so that we hear His voice. He has given us new sight by which we perceive Him and are even more assured of His Presence than we could be if we had the evidence of our eyes and ears!

He is not a God in cloudland to us, He is intensely real and true! He is a God with whom we speak. He is a God who calls Himself our Friend, our Father—a God who invites us to come and reason with Him—a God who assures us of the love of His heart! He is a God who tells us His secrets, for, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” O men of the world, we are as sure of the existence of God and of His being ours as ever you can be sure of your gold or your lands! And we are as truly acquainted with Him as you are with your friends! Therefore it is that He is no longer simply God to me, but He is “*My God.*”

Just as when I know a man by familiar communion, he is not merely a friend, but he is, “*my friend,*” so has it come to pass between God and us and by each Believer, He is fitly styled, “*My God.*” I hope the matter has proceeded further than that. We not merely know that He is God and have not only recognized His Divine existence, but we have come into a relationship with Him. There is a natural and necessary relationship between God and His creatures, but it is not always recognized. When it is discerned by the soul, because the Spirit of God illuminates the heart, man rises into a new relationship to God and feels as he never felt before. For instance, he comes into the relationship of a pardoned child. Oh, if you have ever been forgiven, you will know Him that forgave you, and you will say, “*My God.*”

If you feel the Spirit of adoption, now, within your heart, you will know who adopted you and you will cry, “*My God, my Father.*” You receive of His bounty according to the gift of His Grace from day to day and, therefore, while consciously receiving abundant mercies from the Lord, you learn to say, “*My God will supply all my needs according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.*” The heart of the matter lies in this—“*My God*” means that *we have appropriated Him to ourselves.* We take Him by a dar-

ing act of faith to be, from now on, God to us, and all that He is we take to be ours forever and ever!

May we do this? Brothers and Sisters, may we do this? Ah, yes, appropriating faith is warranted in the Covenant, for the Covenant runs thus, "I will be their God and they shall be My people." It is justified, also, by the act of God, for did He not give His Son? And when He gave His Son to redeem us, could He withhold anything from us? Did He not, in that act, virtually give us Himself, for Christ is in the Father and the Father is in Him—and He that has received Jesus has received the Father! Say, "My Savior," and you need not be afraid to say, "My God"! Moreover, not merely does the Covenant guarantee it and the act of God justify it, but there is the witness of the Spirit within us which has taught us our right to say, "My God."

When we have said unto the Lord, "You are my God," the Holy Spirit has not chided us, nor smitten our conscience, nor rebuked us for presumption, nor humbled us for pride on that account! But, on the contrary, peace has followed—calm rest, holy joy, quiet trustfulness and assured confidence—all of which are the true fruits of saying, "My God," and at the same time the genuine works of the Spirit of God. Thus we know that we have not erred when we have made this claim. Moreover, dear Friends, we may expect our confidence and assured appropriation to become stronger and stronger as life goes on. We have not been wrong in saying, "My God," for we have grown into saying it more and more in proportion as the Lord has sanctified us.

As we conquer sin, we say, "My God," more assuredly, and as we grow in Grace we say, "My God," with greater confidence. Therefore it cannot be wrong. We expect, in Heaven, to say, "My God," still more positively. Beloved, how boldly we shall say it there! No sin, no doubts, no clouds to divide us from Him! *Then* shall we know that the Infinite Jehovah is ours to enjoy forever and ever! Oh, it is not crowns of gold, it is not music of sweetest harps, it is not palm branches or white robes of victory that our souls will most delight themselves in—we shall triumph in "God our exceeding joy!" "At His right hand are pleasures forevermore."

We shall, in Heaven, always find it bliss to say to ourselves, "God is mine." What God *does* is great, what God *has* is great, but what God *is*, is far more than what He does or has, because He can do and have infinitely more than He ever has done or has created! Yet it is God, Himself, and what He *is* which is *ours* forever! In grasping the Lord by faith and saying, "He is mine," what a sweep the soul has made! It has, as it were, encompassed eternity, set its own seal upon infinity and appropriated all sufficiency!

III. Finally, let us spend two or three minutes upon the LAST WORD—"My GOD." "GOD! What does it mean? Ah, now, you have asked me a question which I cannot answer! The wise man was asked, "What is God?" And he requested that he might have a day to consider his answer. When the sun had set, he said that he must have three days, for in thinking of it, the subject grew. They gave him three days and when these were over he demanded six days more, for the subject was greater than ever. When

they called upon him at the six days' end, he claimed 12 days more, for the subject was still beyond him. They bade him take the 12 days and they would hear the result of his thoughts. The next time he said that he must have a month, and, at the month's end, he gave them no information, but assured them he must have a year. When the year was over he confessed that he should need a lifetime—he should *never* be able to tell them what God was so long as he lived!

There is no defining the Incomprehensible One! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, you and I can call Him, "My God." Let us reflect upon His being ours as to His Nature, His Person, His Essence. There is Father, Son and Holy Spirit—Three in One. Then the Father is my God—He has loved me, He has chosen me, He has begotten me, He has provided for me—He is my Father, my All. Then, too, the adorable Son is mine—Jesus, the Redeemer, the Prophet, Priest and King. The Intercessor, the Judge—He is mine. Then the Holy Spirit is mine—the Instructor, the Quickener, the Sanctifier, the Comforter. Dew, fire, wind, dove—whatever the metaphor under which He veils Himself—He is mine. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—to these beloved and glorious of the one undivided Godhead, Faith says, "My God."

When I have thought of the blessed Persons, let me think of *His attributes*. Omniscience is mine—the Lord knows everything for me. Omnipotence is mine—He will do everything for me. Justice is mine, reconciled to me by the death of Jesus. Mercy is mine, enduring forever. Truth is mine—He will keep His promise. Immutability is mine—He changes not and, therefore, I am not consumed. Rehearse all the attributes peculiar to the Divine Nature and say unto the Lord, "You are my God and therefore all Your blessed perfections and glorious attributes are mine." Think of Him, again, *in what He has done*, as well as in what He is. As Creator He is my Creator—not merely as creating me, but as making "all things" for me—that I may richly enjoy them.

Whatever I look upon I may enjoy because He made it. He has made all things holy and the curse which sin engendered He has removed through the death of His Son. And now, as I traverse the world, I may delight myself in the works of the Creator and say, "These are Your glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty. And You give them to me that I may see You in them and enjoy them to Your honor." The Lord is also our Redeemer and the Believer calls Him, "my Redeemer," and, "my God." It was *my God* that poured out His life unto death upon the bloody tree. *My God* has loved me and given Himself for me. The Lord is, moreover, the Sanctifier. He carries on the work of Grace in the soul and in this He is my God. He is the God of Providence and rules all things according to His will—and in that Character He is my God.

The Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world—and Heaven and earth shall pass away before the Glory of His face. But He that shall make Heaven rock and reel is my God—and He that shall make the rocks run like rivers and the stars fall like withered leaves from the tree is my God, the God of my salvation! Oh, is it not blessed to think of God in any light or aspect under which you are able to conceive Him and then be able to

say at the end of it all, "He is my God in all His works and in all His relationships, in all His attributes and all His glories"? To me it is the utmost bliss at this moment to claim, with each one of my Brothers and Sisters, that He is *my God*. Do you know, if you could once say this—and I wish that every man, woman and child in this house, could, from the heart say, "My God"—if you could say this, it would sweeten so many things to you!

This Bible—how you would love this precious Bible, for then you would say, "It is my Book now, because it is my Father's Book—my God's Book." You would value every line of it! There would be a new sweetness in every single verse because it is your Father's handwriting, inspired by His own Spirit—that Spirit which belongs to *you* and it tells you of your own Savior—the Savior who loves you and who gave Himself for you. If you could call God your own, you would love the Sabbath supremely, because you would say, "It is my day because it is the Lord's day—the day of my risen Savior. He has taken it to Himself and enclosed its hours for His own—and from now on I prize its earliest and its latest moments because they are His."

A sense of the Lord's being yours would make you love His people, too. When I first came to London from the village where I formerly preached, I was very glad to see anybody who came from that region. And if I had seen a dog wag its tail that I had once seen in that village I should have been pleased! I should have loved anybody for the sake of the dear old place and, surely, when you can say, "My God," you love all the Lord's people! Many a young Christian has been deceived by hypocrites because of his love to Christians—and that love is sometimes ruined by ill deeds. But where there is overflowing love to the Father, there will be affection for the family. Be it ours to show it!

If you see in any man anything that is like Christ, love him for it! If he is not all you would like him to be, remember that you, also, are not all you ought to be. Surely if Jesus Christ loves a man, you should love him, too. Seek your Brothers' and Sisters' good and aim at benefiting them because are one of Christ's members. Love for Christ's sake all those who can say, "My God."

I do not know, but I seem to, myself, to have talked away and to have missed my aim and objective altogether, compared with what I have felt while meditating in private upon these dear and blessed words, "My God." It is a deep well, but the water is cool and sweet if you can draw it up. "My God"—there is more than satisfaction in the words! If you have no money, never mind, you are rich if you can say, "My God." If the husband is buried. If the children have gone home to Heaven, do not despair, your Maker is your Husband, if you can cry, "My God." If your friends have forsaken you, if those who ought to have sustained you have been cruel and unkind to you, He changes not, and He bids you call Him, "My God." If the unkindness of men drives you to say, "My God," you will be a gainer by it! *Anything* which weans from earth and weds to Heaven is good!

I saw, yesterday, a park in which they were felling all the trees. And yet there were the poor cranes building on elms that were marked to be cut down. I thought to myself, "You foolish birds, to be building your nests

there, for the woodman's axe is ringing all around and the tall elms are tumbling to the ground." We are all apt to build our nests on trees that will be cut down. We get to love the creature and to say, "My this," and, "My that." And from this weakness our sharpest sorrows arise. If you build nowhere but on the Tree of Life, which never can be felled—if you build nowhere but on the Rock of Ages which can never crumble—happiness will be yours of a safe and lasting kind. But you can only do this by saying, "My God"!

Now, I dare say there are some unconverted people here who wonder what we are making all this fuss about. They have their own hoarded treasures and cherished possessions. They see no beauty in God that they should desire Him. No, but let me tell you—you who have no God and no Savior—the day will come when you would give your eyes, no, you would give your very *lives*, if you could say, "My God." Men have been worth thousands of pounds and when they have lain a-dying without God they have said of their gold, "It will not do!" They have had their moneybags brought to the bed and pressed them to their heart and said, "They will not cheer my soul, they will not calm my spirit."

If you do not die crying out, "Woe is me that I die without God," yet, at any rate, after death, when you shall have risen from the dead and you see the Judge—and you stand as a criminal before His bar—you will think yourself ten thousand times ten thousand fools in one that you ever lived and died without God and without Christ! How will infinite anguish rip your heart while you have to confess, "I tried to gain the world, but lost my soul! I am a fool of the worst order! Alas! That I should be such a maniac!"

O Sinner, I wish you would go to Jesus! May God's Spirit lead you to Jesus tonight! Cry mightily to God that He would give Himself to you through Jesus Christ, the Savior! He will do it, for He waits to be gracious. Try Him! And God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 37.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—774, 198.**

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

SAFE SHELTER

NO. 902

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

***“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.”
Psalm 91:4.***

WHAT condescending words! I cannot express the sense I feel of the great loving kindness of the Lord to us in using such a simile to set forth His protecting care of His people. Had any poet suggested the metaphor, we might have recoiled from it as unseemly, or rejected it as profane. It really is so familiar and so homely that unless God Himself had spoken it by the mouth of His Holy Spirit, we might have accounted it impertinent for any human being to have used the comparison. The Lord here compares Himself to a hen covering her brood—and He speaks not only of the wings, which give shelter, but He enters into detail and speaks of the feathers which give warmth and comfort and repose. “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.”

Using thus the maternal instinct as an emblem of His own parental tenderness, God compares Himself to the mother bird which fosters, cherishes and protects her little ones. You have stood, sometimes, in the farmyard and there you have noticed the little chicks as they cowered down under the hen. She has given some note of warning that betokened danger—perhaps *your* very presence discomposed her and made her betray some little fluttering of fear. She called her little ones by her peculiar cry. They came to her and then, stooping down and spreading out her wings, she covered them and they were safe.

You would have noticed that after they were safely nestled there, the warmth of her feathers made them seem peculiarly happy and at ease. You could hear them clucking to one another and playfully pushing one another sometimes out of their places, but evidently cheerful, contented and peaceful. It was something more than the protection which a soldier would give to a comrade—it was the protection of a mother of her young. There was love in it. There was homeliness, relationship, kindness, heart-working in it all. It was not merely the relief that might supply a little cold comfort, but the breast feathers came down upon the little ones and there they rested cozily and comfortably, serene and unmolested.

Well now, that is precisely the idea that the text teaches. So, at least, I understand it. So, evidently, Dr. Watts thought, when he wrote the well-known paraphrase—

***“Just as a hen protects her brood,
From birds of prey that seek their blood,
Under her feathers, so the Lord
Makes His own arm His people’s guard.”***

There is even more fullness of meaning than the doctor has compassed. Not only is protection from danger vouchsafed, but a sense of comfort and happiness is communicated, making the child of God feel that he is at home under the shadow of the Almighty. He feels he has all the comforts that he can need when he has once come to cower down under a blessed sense of the Divine Presence and to feel the warm flowing out of the very heart of God, as He reveals Himself in the most tender relationship towards His weak and needy servants.

Carrying this picture in your mind’s eye, may it often cheer and encourage you. Though I have nothing new, no bewitching novelty to introduce to you, I want to bring this old, old Truth of God vividly before your minds, to examine it in detail and press it home to your souls.

I. Let our starting-point be a question—a question of paramount interest—WHEN MAY THIS TEXT BE RELIED UPON BY A BELIEVER? “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.” Well, it may be relied upon in *cases of extreme peril*. I do not doubt that servants of God, in times of danger at sea, when the huge billows have roared and the tempest has raged and the vessel seemed likely to go to pieces, have often cheered their hearts with such a thought as this. “Now, He that holds the waters in the hollow of His hand will take care of us, and cover us with His feathers and under His wings may we trust.”

Perhaps at this very moment, down in some cabin, or amidst the noise and tumult and the raging of the ocean, when many are alarmed, there are Christians with calm faces, patiently waiting their Father’s will, whether it shall be to reach the port of Heaven, or to be spared to come again to land into the midst of life’s trials and struggles once more. They feel that they are well-cared for. They know that the storm has a bit in its mouth and that God holds it in and nothing can hurt them—nothing can happen to them but what God permits. On the dry land, too, the same blessed text has often comforted the Lord’s people. Some are particularly timid in times of storm when the thunder comes, peal after peal and the lightning flashes follow each other—when it seems as if the very earth did tremble and the skies fled away from the glance of an angry God.

Oh, how it calms the anxious heart, stills the foreboding fears, and makes the heart tranquil to feel that He covers us with His feathers and

that under His wings we may trust! I always feel ashamed to stay indoors when peals of thunder shake the solid earth and lightning flashes like arrows from the sky. Then God is abroad and I love to walk out in the open space and to look up and mark the opening gates of Heaven as the lightning reveals far beyond and enables you to look into the unseen. I like to hear my heavenly Father's voice, but I do not think we could ever come to a state of peace in such times as those if we did not feel that He was near—that He was our Friend—that He would not hurt the children of His own love. It would be contrary to His own Nature and altogether apart from the kindness of His Character, as well as the constancy of His Covenant engagements, that He should suffer anything to touch His people that could do them real ill.

Nor is it only from violent commotions in the physical world that you are liable to suffer shocks. Many of you have known times of disruption in the mercantile world which have been the occasion of frightful horror. The wheels of trade have run off the tramline through some violent collision of opposing interests. Or on a larger scale the whole system of commerce may appear to have collapsed as with an earthquake. Great houses, whose very names were the bulwarks of credit, have suddenly tottered and fell. While curious eyes have looked on with marvel, many have been the humble people struggling hard for a bare livelihood who were involved in loss and disaster which paralyzed all their efforts. Though panic has prevailed on every side, has it not been sweet, passing sweet, to find succor under the wings of the Almighty and hear His voice saying to you, *"Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed"*?

I know that such calamities are heavy and hard to bear. Were it not so we should never have been furnished with such strong consolation. When the foundations of enterprise are slackened and gigantic schemes burst like a bubble. When the mill is at rest and looks like the hulk of a disabled vessel. When the workshops are closed and the artisans, skilled to labor, seek a pauper's pittance at the gates of the union—or when the affliction falls upon the fields and the folds, a blight destroying the crops and disease cutting down the oxen—these are the sorrows of the world, and chosen men of old have trusted in God nor found Him to fail in straits like these. So said one, *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

Yet more, Brothers and Sisters—who among you need be reminded of the fears that seize the breast when pestilence is spreading through the land and rumors that it has approached your own doors have reached

your ears? Neighbors or kinsfolk are struck down without warning. With anxious looks and eager enquiries you listen for tidings that are well near death to hear. Have you ever counted the watches of the night, dreading every sound and pondering every sensation as if it were an ominous omen? What about when the cholera has been raging, or the fever has been making havoc—when science has been baffled to find out the cause or cure of some insidious disease that walks in darkness and wastes at noonday? And when those who were prone to jeer at religion and laugh at prayer have uttered pious ejaculations and said, “This is no doubt a visitation of God”—do I need to remind you?

Well, at such times has it not been good for you to seek the cover of His wings and rely on the gracious promise, “Because *you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling*”? In all times of public calamity, in any season of domestic grief and on every occasion of personal danger, I beseech you, do not cast away your confidence which has great recompense and reward—for if your faith will not bear up under such trials as these, what is it good for? What anchorage is there for your soul? If you cannot bear these little alarms, how will you do in the swellings of Jordan, when grim Death appears in view? And amidst the terrors of the world to come, when the very pillars of the universe shall reel and all things shall pass away—how will you be able to stand calmly and serenely if these things move you?

No, Beloved, let the weakest of you play the man and as you have believed in your God, be ashamed of cowardly fear! Be as Ezra was when having once made a resolve, he resolved to abide by it at all hazard. “The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.” Pluck up courage and say within yourselves, “Now will I prove that promise true, ‘He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.’” But texts of Scripture like this are not made to be hung up on a nail and only taken down now and then in stress of weather! Blessed be God, the promise before us is available *for sunny days, too—yes, for every hour of this mortal life*. When you leave your house tomorrow morning, you will little know what peril may befall you during the day. “At least,” said an old Divine, who was accustomed to spend the most part of his time in his study—“at least the studious man is safe from the accidents which shorten the lives of others.”

So he vainly thought. The very day after he had used the expression, a chimney stack fell through his study and had he happened to have been sitting where he customarily did, he must have been crushed to pieces! There are dangers everywhere and the guardian care of God can never be safely dispensed with. If we walk aright, we shall never venture upon a

single day without first seeking Divine protection. How many who have escaped out of terrible storms have, nevertheless, died in a calm? Where some have passed through battles without a scar, they have afterwards been killed by an accident so slight that they would utterly have despised a precaution to avoid it. You always need Divine protection and, Believer in Christ, you shall always have it, for, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust." This is for you tonight when you strip off your garments and lay your weary frame upon your bed. Then you may say, "Now, Lord, cover me with Your feathers." And it is for you tomorrow, when you are going out to your daily labor, not knowing what may befall you, you can use the same petition, "This day, O God, grant that under Your wings I may trust."

When—shall I ask again—may this promise be relied upon? Well, Beloved, it may be particularly relied upon *in times of temptation*. Earnest Christian men are not so much afraid of trials as of temptations. If you could extract the tempting element from our afflictions you would have rendered the gall devoid of at least half its bitterness. To suffer is little, but to be provoked to sin—this is the great cause of fear. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," said the wise man. But why? It was not because poverty would be inconvenient, but lest he should sin through poverty. "Give me not riches," he said—not because riches might not be desirable, but lest he should sin through the deceitfulness of wealth. The great horror of a Christian is sin. Find him a place on earth where he could live without sin and there he would fix his residence, not asking you whether it were a dungeon or a palace!

If there were a place where my temper could never be ruffled. A place where I could never be agitated into pride or be silenced into cowardice. If I could find a spot where sloth would never molest me, or where earthly passions would never rise up for my casting down, thrice happy would I be to borrow the wings of a dove and fly there at once! As your temptations are just the things which you dread, it behooves you to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but remember, if the Providence of God should at any other time constrain you to go where you are tempted and must be tempted, you may then fall back upon this gracious Word of God—"He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust."

I have noticed that young people who are often exposed to severe temptations are very generally preserved from falling into sin. But I have noticed that others, both old and young, whose temptations were not remarkably severe, have been generally those who have been the first to fall. In fact, it is a lamentable thing to have to say, but lamentably true it is, that at the period of life when you would reckon, from the failure of the passions, the temptation would be less vigorous, that very period is

marked more than any other by the most solemn transgressions among God's people. I think I have heard that many horses fall at the bottom of a hill because the driver thinks the danger past, and the need to hold the reins with a firm grip less pressing as they are just about to renew their progress and begin to ascend again.

So it is often with us—when we are not tempted through imminent danger we are the more tempted through slothful ease. I think it was Ralph Erskine who said, "There is no devil so bad as no devil." The worst temptation that ever overtakes us, is, in some respects, preferable to our being left alone altogether without any sense of caution or stimulus to watch and pray. Be always on your watchtower and you shall always be secure.

In anticipating the temptations of next week—you working men who labor side-by-side with skeptics. You young women living in graceless families. You merchants who have to go among others whose mode of conducting trade is not clean. (You each and all know the temptations common to your own lot in the busy commonwealth). Resolve in the strength of God that you will walk uprightly and that as Christians you will not soil your garments. And then you may come to your heavenly Father for His protection and say to Him, "My God, I am more afraid of sin than I am of lightning, or of fire, or of the murderer's dagger. Keep me day by day from sin. Defend me from evil. 'Cover me with Your feathers, for under Your wings will I trust.'"

So, again, this text may be very blessedly applied to our souls and I hope it will be, *in times of expected trials*. I do not know that it is right for us to anticipate trials at all. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We ought never to sit down and begin fretting ourselves about what may happen, because the ill we dread may never come to pass. Many a true servant of God has said to himself—"What shall I do when I get old? I am just able, now, to pick up a living, but what shall I do when these withered limbs can no longer earn my daily bread?" Do? Why, you will have the same Father, then, as you have now to succor you and you will have the same Providence then as now to supply your needs! You thank God for your daily bread, now, and you shall have your daily bread then, for He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust!

Some of God's servants who have been thus afraid have had no cause of complaint, for their latter days have been blessed. They have been placed in comfortable circumstances and they have had to wonder at the liberal hand which furnished their table and to chide the unbelief of their own fretful spirits. Others of them have been taken away from the ills they forecast and conveyed to Heaven long before they had reached anything

like the period of bodily infirmity or mental imbecility they dreaded. So with you, dear Friends. God will take care of you. Only rest on Him.

It is bad to make troubles. I always say of home-made troubles, that they are very like home-made clothes—they never fit well and they are generally a long while before they are worn out. You had better take the troubles God sends you—they are more suitable for you! You will be able to carry them, and you will be able to get over them by His Grace. Do not begin to think of what you will do in the year, 1899. Why, Jesus Christ may come before then, or you may be absent from the body and present with Him before then! But, if you are of such a nervous temper that you cannot help sometimes anticipating, or if you are so speculatively disposed that you will carry your almanacs with you and chronicle black days in the coming years, then just make a note of this in the margin—“He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.”

Let the unknown tomorrow bring with it what it may, it cannot bring us anything but what God shall bear us through. So let it come and let it go. The Lord’s name be praised! We shall bless His name in it and after it and why not before it? There is another hour in which this text will be particularly consoling to us, and that is *the hour of death*. Ah, we may sing what we will and say what we will, but dying is no child’s play. Thank God it is going Home! We know that it is not death in some respects. It is but a change in our mode of life. Absent from the body we are present with the Lord! But still, we cannot think of that death dew which will lie cold on our brow, the failing voice and the glazing eye, without some natural shrugs. When we would gladly go forth to meet it, we shrink back again to life—“Fond of our prison and our clay.” But what shall we do when we come to die, when the physician can no longer help us and the beating of the pulse waxes faint and few? Why, then, “He shall cover us with His feathers and under His wings shall we trust.”

Oh, it will be so blessed to go cowering down right under the shadow of the Almighty, hiding ourselves as the little chickens do in the hen’s feathers—losing our own individuality in the realization of our union to Christ—finding that it is not death to die, but coming nearer to God in very deed, in blissful experience, nearer than ever we were before! Looking forward into that unknown future, across the shoreless sea and listening to the billows as we hear them sounding in the dark, we thank God that they are not billows of fire to us—that they are not waves of everlasting wrath, but that they are waves of eternal bliss!

But, be they what they may, whatever there may be in the future, whatever may be meant by the millennium and the burning of the earth, and the wreck of nature—whatever may be meant by vials and trumpets

and by all besides in the arena of prophecy, “He shall cover us with His feathers and under His wings shall we trust.” And amidst the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, safe, safe, safe and near our God and blessed eternally shall we be! Beloved, in such an hour may such an oracle as this come rolling sweetly into your souls to cheer and comfort you!

II. Having thus answered a first question and told you when this promise may be relied upon, let us proceed to answer another question—HOW MAY WE EXPECT THE TEXT TO BE FULFILLED? It may possibly be verified to us *by our being preserved altogether from the danger which we dread*. God has often, as predicted in the present Psalm, in times of pestilence and famine and war, preserved His people by remarkable Providences. Especially has this been the case in the experience of those of His people who have been lively in their faith and careful to follow His instructions. Now, if there is one instruction that Jesus Christ has plainly given to a Christian, it is this—“I say unto you, resist not evil.”

Our Brethren of the Society of Friends have been admirably firm and consistent in their declaration that they have no right to bear arms. In the times of the massacre in Ireland, when Protestants took a town, they generally cut the throats of the Catholics. And when Roman Catholics took a town, they always returned the compliment by killing the Protestants, but the cry always was—“Spare the Quakers! Spare the Quakers!” They had hurt no one—they had taken up no arms. Strange to tell, through that long and bitter warfare only three Quakers died and those three had fled from their homes to find a refuge in a neighboring castle with the troops. Of course they rested on an arm of flesh and it failed them.

When the British bolts were flying through Copenhagen, fast and furious, and the Danish town seemed given over to destruction by Nelson’s terrific bombardment, there was one house upon which not a shot or shell ever fell. Nelson and the British knew nothing of that house, of course, but there it stood, as safely as old Rahab’s house when the walls of Jericho fell down. It was the house of a Quaker, who, when an order was given for all to defend their houses in a particular way, said he had nothing to do with fighting. The man rested in God and God’s protection was wonderfully spread over him. In the literature of the Society of Friends, there is a large number of anecdotes showing how God has especially marked out times of peril for preserving those men who scrupulously refused to defend themselves and rested on the promise of their faithful God.

We all know how singularly the Lord has shielded those who trusted in Him in the times of pestilence. That old house, still standing in the High Street at Chester, is a lasting proof of the power of faith, with its old letters cut in the black wood, “God’s Providence is my inheritance.” When

everybody else was flying out of Chester into the country, the man who lived in that house just wrote that inscription up over the door and stayed in the town, depending on God that he should be preserved. And none in his house fell a victim to that black death which was slaying its thousands on all sides. Strong faith has always a particular immunity in times of trouble. When a man has really, under a sense of duty—under a conscientious conviction—rested alone in God, he has been enabled to walk where the thickest dangers were flying, all unharmed. He has put his foot upon the adder and the young lion and the dragon has he trampled under his feet. Having confidence in God, God has verified and vindicated His promise and the child of God that could so trust has never been put to confusion.

There are some dangers from which the Providence of God does not preserve the Lord's people, but still He covers them with His feathers in another sense, *by giving them Divine Grace to bear up under their trouble*. It little matters, you know, whether a man has no burden and no strength, or a heavy burden and great strength. Probably of the two, if it were put to the most of us, we should prefer to have the burden and the strength. I know I should. Now there is generally this for you—that if you have little trouble, you will have little faith—but if you have great faith, you must expect to have great trouble. A manly spirit would choose to take the trouble and take the faith, too. Well, then, God will give you this cover with His feathers—though you have to carry the load you shall have strength enough to carry it. You shall find, as a dear saint once said, the sweetest thing next to Christ in all the world was Christ's Cross. And that to carry Christ's Cross was the next best thing to beholding His Glory. You shall find your afflictions become your mercies and your trials become your comforts. You shall glory in tribulation and find light in the midst of gloom and have joy unspeakable in the season of your sorrow. Thus God covers us as with His feathers.

In yet another way does God set seal to this record when by His Grace, having sustained His servants in their trouble *He brings them out of it greatly enriched*. Oh, it is a great blessing to be put through the fire if you come out purified! It is a sweet mercy to have to go through the floods if some filthiness may be removed! The children of Israel went down to Egypt to sojourn there, but after hard servitude and cruel oppression they came up out of it with silver and gold, much enriched by their bondage. Did you ever notice that memorable passage in which the Lord has borne witness to His gracious heed for them before He brought about their deliverance? "*God heard their groaning and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them.*"

Comment is needless. In the season of their direst grief God was All in All to them. And you, child of God, shall lose nothing by your losses—you shall be a gainer by them, a greater gainer than others by their gains—for all your losses and troubles shall not touch your immortal part! As bars of iron make not a prison or a cage to a free soul, so afflictions that are merely temporal and bodily shall not hamper or lessen the joy of an immortal spirit. No, we shall mount above the billows of our griefs and sing as we lift our heads above the spray! We shall rise above the clouds of our present afflictions and look down upon them as they float beneath our feet, rejoicing that the Lord has borne us, as upon wings, above them all, to bring us to Himself!

So you see, either by keeping us out of trouble, by helping us to bear it, or by bringing us through it with great gain to ourselves, “He shall cover us with His feathers and under His wings shall we trust.”

III. A third enquiry suggests itself to me, in responding to which I shall be very brief—WHY MAY WE BE QUITE SURE THAT IT SHALL BE SO? You may find a strong ground of personal assurance in the fact *that faith enlists the sympathy of God*. Faith seems to me to enlist *everybody's* sympathy. There is a blind man going along and he wants to get across the street. He puts perfect confidence in you, though he cannot see you and does not know you. He feels sure that you will lead him across. Now, I know you will.

If there were a little child that had lost its way and it came running up to you, a big, tall man, and said, “O, Sir, I do not know my way home, nor where I came from, but I feel quite sure you will take care of me till I have found my mother.” Well, you would not, any one of you, turn round and spurn him away—you would feel as if you were firmly held with chains around you. Now, it is a point with God that He always will be as good as you think Him to be, yes, and a great deal better! And if you but think that He will be a gracious and merciful God to you and so rely on Him as His child, it is not in the heart of God to turn away from a humble faith that dares to lay hold upon Him. Try it, dear Friends, and you will prove it true.

And you may be quite sure that He will cover you with His feathers, *because we have hundreds of promises to that effect*. There is not time to quote them all, but there is one like this, “He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” And here is another, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” And then there is this, “Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God! I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My right-

eousness.” “Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded.” There are hundreds of promises like these, and will He break them? You keep your promise to your child and will not God keep His promise to you? O rest in Him, then! He shall cover us with His feathers, for His own Word declares it!

Moreover, *you are His child and what will not a father do for His own dear child?* Were one a stranger you might take little heed though he were in trouble, in danger, or in deep distress—but your child, your own child—oh, you cannot rest while he suffers! How agitated we are when our little ones are sick. How we get the best advice for them. When they are in pain how willingly would we take their pain if we could relieve them and spare those cries that seem to pierce our heart as well as our ears! If anybody hurts them, why the most placid of us find our temper soon roused. “*And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.*”

Though He bears long with their adversaries, yet will He come to the help of His own beloved ones, for He is fatherly in all the sensitiveness of His heart, as well as in all the judiciousness of His chastisements. He will protect His own. Remember there is one point of which *God is always jealous, that is His own honor.* There is no verse of any hymn we ever sing more Scriptural than that one we were singing just now—

**“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.”**

Christ must convey even the smallest boat safe into the port of Paradise. He must not suffer one of these little ones to perish, for such is not the will of our Father who is in Heaven. Come then, you tremblers, you doubters, you little ones, you that think you cannot have a part in the promise! Come now, come nestle down under those great wings which seem so close to you! The wings that are lined with the feathers of the Eternal will be strong wings, as though they were bars of iron through which no storms of trouble can ever beat—through which the enemy, though he comes from Hell itself—shall not be able to drive his darts. Come to the strong wings yet so softly feathered, so tenderly lined with loving kindness and affection that the weakest and most trembling may find comfort there!

And now, dear Friends, although I have not said anything new, yet I know that this is full of comfort to God’s people. It must be so! At least, if I am one of them, I know it is, for it has often greatly cheered and gladdened me in the times of darkness and despondency, (and I have plenty of

such times), to feel that I could abide under the wings of my God and all was well and all was safe. *But what must it be to be without God?* Blessed be His name, we do not mean to try it, but what must it be? “Sam,” said a man once to his Negro, “would you give up your religion and be made a king, or would you keep your Jesus Christ and be flogged to death?” “Oh, Massa,” said he, “give me Jesus Christ and flog me to death 20 times if you will! I could never give *Him* up! He is my joy and my comfort.”

And truly we can say that! Give us but a sense of Divine love and we will not strike about our condition. Only to know that God is our Friend we will not ask who else is on our side, for having God we have all! Let who will be our enemies—all must be well when God befriends us! What must you be without God, some of you? You may be trying to satisfy your soul with the love of kindred—your wife and children are your only inheritance under the sun. That is better than some men strive after. But they are dying comforts—there is a thorn in all these roses, sweet roses as they are. I do not think the dearest wife and the most beloved children can really fully fill the heart. I know you need something more sometimes. I know you do!

Others of you have been trying to fill your hearts full with those idle associates of yours, those jolly companions, those jolly fellows, just the sort you delight to spend an evening with. They are poor comforts when you are sick and they will be poorer comforts, still, when you come to die. You must not suppose that if you loved Jesus Christ and put your trust in Him, you would give up the joy of life. You would just have found it! You would, then, begin to be happy because you would have found what your soul needs to fill it. As quaint old Quarles says—“The heart is a triangle and all the world is a globe and you cannot fill a triangle with a globe. It is nothing but the Trinity that can fill the heart.” Let Father, Son and Spirit get into the heart by a living faith and the heart is right full to the brim and the man is content in all his trials!

I would you had Christ to be yours! He is to be had, my Friend. Whoever trusts in Him is saved. He is God—worthy to be trusted! Moreover He died, the Just for the unjust, bearing our sins. Depend upon the merit of that death of His and you shall be saved! God bring you into a state of faith and bless you now for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 91.

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THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

NO. 124

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 29, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”
Psalm 91:5.***

IF Moses wrote this Psalm, he might represent the fowler as being, in this case, the king of Egypt who sought to slay him, or the Amalekites, who pounced upon Israel in the plain when they little expected it. If David penned it, he might have compared Saul to the fowler, for he says he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But we believe if the verse is applicable to either of those cases, it was intended by the Psalmist not to have a private interpretation but to be applicable to all time! And we believe it is spoken concerning that archenemy of souls, the great deceiver, Satan, of whom we just now sang—

***“Satan, the fowler, who betrays
Unguarded souls a thousand ways”***

“The prince of the power of this world, the spirit which still works in the children of disobedience,” is like a fowler, always attempting to destroy us. It was once said by a talented writer that the old devil was dead and that there was a new devil, now—by which he meant to say that the devil of old times was a rather different devil from the deceiver of these times. We believe that it is the same evil spirit, but there is a difference in his mode of attack. The devil of 500 years ago was a black and grimy thing, well portrayed in our old pictures of that evil spirit. He was a persecutor who cast men into the furnace and put them to death for serving Christ. The devil of this day is a well-spoken gentleman—he does not persecute—he rather attempts to persuade and to beguile. He is not now the furious Romanist so much as the insinuating unbeliever, attempting to overturn our religion while at the same time he pretends he would make it more rational and more triumphant. He, only, would link worldliness with religion, and so he would really make religion void, under the cover of developing the great power of the Gospel and bringing out secrets which our forefathers had never discovered! Satan is always a fowler. Whatever his tactics may be, his objective is still the same—to catch men in his net. Men are here compared to silly, weak birds that have not skill enough to avoid the snare and have not strength enough to escape from it. Satan is the fowler. He has been so and still is so—and if he does not now attack us as the roaring lion, roaring against us in persecution, he attacks us as the adder, creeping silently along the path, endeavoring to

bite our heel with his poisoned fangs and weaken the power of Divine Grace and ruin the life of godliness within us! Our text is a very comforting one to all Believers when they are beset by temptation. "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler."

First, *a few words concerning the snare of the fowler*. Secondly, the *deliverance*. And thirdly, the *certainty of it*, dwelling upon that word, "surely," for it seems to be the diamond wherewith this precious golden Promise is embellished! "*Surely* He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler."

I. First, then, THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER. It is an illustration too suggestive for me to thoroughly unravel. I must leave it for your meditations at home to enumerate the different ways in which a fowler attempts to take his birds. Then you will have suggested to you the different means which the evil spirit employs for the destruction of souls. Allow me, however, just to begin and pass over two or three points connected with the fowler and with the Evil One.

1. First, *the fowler's snare is intimately connected with secrecy*. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Therefore the fowler carefully covers up his trap or if the trap, itself, is uncovered, he does well beguile the bird so that it is utterly ignorant of his intention to take it in the trap—little thinking that the food laid there for its banqueting is really placed there for its enticement and destruction! The fowler, when he goes after his birds, is very careful lest they should discover him. We hear, for instance, that in the taking of wild ducks in Lincolnshire, a man will hold before his mouth a piece of turf, in order that the smell of his breath may not be perceived by the birds who are exceedingly wary. The temptations of the world are of this secret sort to a Christian, though not to the wicked man, for the wicked man sins with his eyes wide open—dashing into the net knowing it is a net laying hold of iniquity with both its hands, even when destruction stares him in the face! He will commit a sin that he knows is condemned even by the law of the land—he will rush into a crime, concerning the guilt of which no doubt can be entertained. Not so the Christian—he is taken by secrecy! "Ah," says one, "if I thought such-and-such a thing were really wrong. If I were perfectly convicted of its wrongfulness, I would give it up." It is just there the difficulty lies! So would the bird say—"If I thought that really were a trap, I would not enter it. If I were perfectly persuaded that net would entangle me, I would not fly to such-and-such a spot. I would not approach there at all if I were sure it would be to my destruction." How many a professor there is who asks the question, "May I go to this place? May I go to that place?" Some of us answer, "No," and we are called Puritans for it! But let those who have attempted to keep their godliness intact, while they pursue the pleasures of this world, stand up and make the mournful confession that the healthiness of the two things can never exist together!

We must either serve God wholly, or serve the Evil One wholly. "If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him." One, or else the other! Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan not knowing that it was evil! Someone has hinted to him in business, for instance—"You may very safely do such-and-such a thing—all the shopkeepers in the street have done it. It is not actually dishonest—it improves the article—it really does! And although you can thus sell the article at a higher rate than you ought to sell it, you need not tell the public! And if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it." And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside, but, by-and-by, he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler—for he has been sinning against his God and his God, therefore, punishes him for it with many stripes and lays His rod upon him! I do not think that a Christian is so often betrayed into a sin that is palpable and known as he is into a sin that is secret. If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in! But if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true. Many a man has taken in an evil thing because it has been varnished and glossed over and not apparently an evil—and he has thought in his heart there is not much harm in it. So he has let in the little thing and it has been like the breaking forth of water—the first drop has brought after it a torrent! The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end!

Take care, Christian, of things that are secret! Take care of the common doings of the world which are well enough for the world, perhaps. We would not deny them their pleasures, for they have no others, but they are not good for you, for you have a finer life—a life of a finer texture and order than can exist in the haunts of ungodly persons! Remember, you are not to be a judge for others. Some men, especially those who are unconverted, can, without being led into sin, indulge in many gaieties and merriments. But the Christian is like the Englishman who cannot hope to survive long where the jungle fever reigns. The native can live there but he cannot. And so you who are twice-born will find your piety ruined by that which to a worldly man, does not lead him into greater evil than that which he would naturally commit. You are to have a stricter rule on yourselves than others and are to be more stern in your piety than the world would have you be, for sin is usually hidden and the snare is not often made apparent. "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler."

2. In the second place, *the snare of the fowler is generally noted for its adaptation.* You do not find a fowler setting the same snare for one bird as for another. He knows his bird and he adapts his bait to it. He would

be an unwise fowler who should go to work with the same machinery to catch the lark that flies on high as the duck that swims along the stream. The fowler is wiser than that—he adapts his snare to the condition of the bird which he desires to take! Satan, the fowler, does just the same. There is one man here. He tempts him to drunkenness. Perhaps that would naturally be his sin if left without Grace in his heart. And Satan knowing it to be his weak point, attempts to overcome him by surfeiting gluttony and drunkenness. Another man is utterly impervious to any temptation to that bestial habit but, it may be, he is easily taken in another snare—the snare of lust. Therefore Satan adapts his temptation to the hot blood of the man who naturally would be inclined to live a life of sin. Another one, perhaps, eschews every lascivious and sensual habit—then Satan comes to him and adapts his temptation to the shape of pride! The man is naturally a melancholy man, fond of solitude—Satan gets him, if he can, to wrap himself up in a solitary dignity, to say, “I am holy.” “Lord, I thank you, I am not as other men are.” Or if a man is not naturally inclined to a very high degree of pride, Satan takes him with sloth. The man likes an easy life—Satan therefore adapts his bait to him by letting him sit still, fold his arms—and so perish by slothfulness. And mark this—he who sits still in the frost when the snow is on the ground, in the depths of the wild regions of the frozen zone, must as surely perish by his idleness, as if he drove a dagger to his heart! Satan knows that and so adapts his bait accordingly. Oh, how often it happens, Beloved, that you and I condemn a thing in another person which we allow in ourselves, perhaps without knowing it! We say of such an one, “How proud he is!” Well, our pride is not exactly of that shape. We have got another shaped pride but the same article, labeled differently but the same thing!

Satan adapts the pride to each particular case. We are rich—he does not, perhaps, tempt us to the pride of riches but he tempts us to the pride of mastership and makes us harsh masters to our servants. Or if he does not tempt us to that pride, he perhaps enchants us with the pride of generosity and we are apt to boast of our kindness and of what we have given away. He will always adapt his trap to his man and his bait to his bird. He will not tempt you all with the same temptations he would tempt me with. Nor me with the temptations with which he would naturally assail another. “The snare of the fowler.” A common enemy we have to deal with. He knows our weak points, he has been dealing with men for these last 6,000 years. He knows all about them! He is possessed of a gigantic intellect. Though he is a fallen spirit, he is easily able to discover where our sore places are and there it is he immediately attacks us! If we are like Achilles and cannot be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart and nowhere else! He will find out our easily besetting sin and there, if he can, he will attempt to

work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler."

3. In the next place, *the fowler's snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit and advantage.* In the bird's case, it is for the seed scattered on the ground that he flies to the snare. It is some tempting bait which allures him to his death. And usually Satan, the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile us. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot give up such-and-such a thing, it is so pleasant. Sir, you never knew the charms of such-and-such a pursuit, otherwise you could never advise me to relinquish it." Yes, my Friend, but it is just the sweetness of it to you that makes it the more dangerous! Satan never sells his poisons naked, he always gilds them before he vends them. He knows very well that men will buy them and swallow them if he does but gild them beforehand. Take care of pleasures—mind what you are doing when you are doing them—many of them are innocent and healthful—but many of them are destructive! It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the most venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant. And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbor your grossest sins. Take care! Take care of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers—so are sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunk the sweetness of the intoxicating cup which rejoices him when his brain is rioting in frolic and when his soul is lifted up within him. He offers to the lustful man, the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth and merriment and delight and so he leads him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. He gives to you and to me, each of us, the offer of our peculiar joy. He tickles us with pleasures, that he may lay hold upon us and so have us in his power! I would have every Christian be especially on his guard against the very thing that is most pleasing to his human nature. I would not have him avoid everything that pleases him, but I would have him be on his guard against it. Just like Job, when his sons had been feasting in their houses—he did not forbid them doing it—but he said, "I will offer a sacrifice, lest my sons should have sinned in their hearts and should have cursed God foolishly." He was more careful over them at the time of their feasting than at any other season! Let us do the same. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing but our destruction!

4. In the next place, *sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example.* We all know the influence of the duck decoy in endeavoring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man—you think him to be a true Christian. You have some respect for his character, he is a high professor—can talk religion by the yard and can give you

any quantity of theology you like to ask for! You watch him commit a sin—ten to one you will do the same, if you have much respect for him—and so he will lead you on. And mark—Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. He never employs a wicked man to be a decoy for a good man. It is very seldom, when Satan would decoy a Christian into a snare, that he makes use of an open reprobate. No, he makes use of the man who is supposedly religious and who looks to be of the same quality as yourself! And therefore Satan entices you astray. Let a bad man meet me in the street and ask me to commit sin? The devil knows better than to set him at any such work as that, because he knows I would pass by immediately! If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call, Brother, and so through the brotherhood of profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect. And then if he goes astray, the force of example is very powerful and so I may easily be led into the net, too. Take care of your best friends! Be careful of your companions. Choose the best you can, then follow them no farther than they follow Christ. Let your course be entirely independent of everyone else. Say with Joshua, let others do what they will, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

5. Note, once more, that sometimes *the fowler, when he fails to take his bird by deceit and craft, will go a-hawking after it*—will send his hawk into the air to bring down his prey! It often happens, when the devil cannot ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him. He sends a hawk after him and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name! I will give you a piece of advice. I know a good minister, now in venerable old age, who was once most villainously lied against and slandered by a man who hated him only for the Truth’s sake. The good man was grieved—he threatened the slanderer with a lawsuit, unless he apologized. He did apologize. The slander was printed in the papers in a public apology and you know what was the consequence? The slander was more believed than if he had said nothing about it! And I have learned this lesson—to do with the slanderous hawk what the little birds do—just fly up! The hawk cannot do them any hurt while they keep above him—it is only when they come down that he can injure them. It is only when by mounting above the birds that the hawk comes sweeping down upon them and destroys them! If any slander you, do not go down to them. Let them slander on. Say, as David said concerning Shimei, “If the Lord has given him commandment to curse, let him curse,” and if the sons of Zeruiah say, “Let us go and take this dead dog’s head,” you say, “No, let him curse!” And in that way you will live down slander. If some of us turned aside to notice every bit of a sparrow that began chirping at us, we would have nothing to do but to answer them. If I were to fight people on every Doctrine I preach, I should do nothing else but just

amuse the devil and indulge the combative principles of certain religionists who like nothing better than quarrelling!

By the Grace of God, say what you please against me—I will never answer you but go straight on. All shall end well, if the character is but kept clean. The more dirt that is thrown on it by slander, the more it shall glisten and the more brightly it shall shine. Have you ever felt your fingers itch, sometimes, to be at a man who slanders you? I have. I have sometimes thought, “I cannot hold my tongue any longer, I must answer that fellow.” But I have asked of God for Grace to imitate Jesus, who, “when He was reviled, reviled not again.” And by His strength let them go straight on! The surest way in the world to get rid of a slander is just to let it alone and say nothing about it, for if you prosecute the rascal who utters it, or if you threaten him with an action and he has to apologize, you will be no better off—some fools will still believe it! Let it alone—let it keep as it is. And so God will help you to fulfill, by your wisdom, His own Promise, “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

And now, before I close this point, let me observe once more—the fowler, when he is determined to take his birds, uses all these arts at once, perhaps, and *besets the bird on every side*. So you will remember, Beloved, it is with you. Satan will not leave a stone unturned to ruin your soul forever—

**“Amidst a thousand snares I stand
Upheld and guarded by Your hand.”**

Old Master Quarles says—

**“The close pursuer’s busy hands do plant
Snares in your substance, snares attend your needs,
Snares in your credit; snares in your disgrace;
Snares in your high estate; snares in your base;
Snares tuck your bed and snares surround your board;
Snares watch your thoughts and snares attach your word;
Snares in your quiet, snares in your commotion;
Snares in your diet; snares in your devotion!
Snares lurk in your resolves, snares in your doubt;
Snares lie within your heart and snares without;
Snares are above your head and snares beneath;
Snares in your sickness, snares are in your death.”**

There is not a place beneath which a Believer walks that is free from snares! Behind every tree there is the archer with his barbed arrow. Behind every bush there is the lion seeking to devour. Under every piece of grass there lies the adder. They are everywhere! Let us be careful. Let us gird ourselves with the might of God’s Omnipotence and then shall His Holy Spirit keep us so that we shall tread on the lion and adder—the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet and we shall be “delivered from the snare of the fowler.”

II. Now we pass on to the second point—THE DELIVERANCE. God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler. Two thoughts here—from—

out of. First, he delivers them *from* the snare—does not let them get in it. Secondly, when they do get in it, He delivers them *out of it*. The first Promise is the most precious to some of us, the second is the best to others.

He shall deliver you from the snare. How does He do that?

Very often by *trouble*. Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us from snares. You have all heard of the old story of the celebrated painter who was painting in St. Paul's. Looking at his work, one day, he went gradually back, inch by inch, to get a view of it so that he might see the excellence of its proportions—until his feet were just on the edge of the platform upon which he stood. He would have fallen down and been dashed in pieces upon the pavement beneath but just at that moment a workman who stood there, desirous to save his life and not knowing how to do it, hit upon an expedient, which proved to be a very wise one. Instead of shouting out to his master, "Sir, you are in danger," which would most certainly have sent him backward, he took up a brush and dipping it in a pot of paint, dashed it at the picture. The good man rushed forward in anger to chastise him—but when it was explained, he clearly saw that his servant had acted wisely. Just so with God. You and I have often painted a fine picture and we have been walking backwards admiring it. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction. And He, by a sad Providence, blasts our prospect, takes away our child from us, buries our wife, removes some darling object of our pleasures and we rush forward and say, "Lord, why this?"—utterly unconscious that if it had not been for trouble, we might have been dashed in pieces and our lives would have been ended in destruction! I doubt not that many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler!

At other times God keeps His people from the sin of the fowler by *giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage*—so that when they are tempted to do evil, they say, with decision, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Oh, that was a noble escape of Joseph when his mistress laid hold of his garment! That was a noble escape of his when his soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler. And I doubt not there are many here who have done deeds almost as noble as that of Joseph! They have had Divine Grace within their hearts so that they have turned away their eyes from beholding folly—and when they have been tempted to evil, they have put their foot upon it and said—"I cannot, I cannot, I am a child of God. I cannot and I must not." And though the thing was pleasing to themselves, yet have they rejected it. You remember the case of Mr. Stand-Fast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? Madame Bubble had greatly enticed poor Mr. Stand-Fast with

her offers. He says, "There was one in very pleasant attire, but old, who presented herself to me and offered me three things, to wit, her body, her purse and her bed. Now the truth is, I was both weary and sleepy—I am also as poor as an owlet and that, perhaps, the witch knew. Well, I repulsed her once and again but she ignored my repulses and smiled. Then I began to be angry, but she mattered that nothing at all. Then she made offers again and said if I would be ruled by her, she would make me great and happy. For, she said, I am the mistress of the world and men are made happy by me. Then I asked her name and she told me it was Madame Bubble. This set me further from her, but she still followed me with enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lifted up and cries, I prayed to Him that had said He would help. So just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way. Then I continued to give thanks for this, my great deliverance, for I verily believe she intended no good but rather sought to make an end of me in my journey." That is how God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler—by giving them the spirit of prayer as well as the spirit of courage—so that they call upon God in the day of trouble and He delivers them!

And I have noticed one more very singular thing. Sometimes I, myself, have been saved from the snare of the fowler (I cannot tell how, exactly), in this way. I have felt that if the temptation had come a week before, my mind was in that peculiar condition that I would have almost inevitably been led away by it! But when it came, my mind, by passing through some process, had become in such a condition that the temptation was no temptation at all! We were just brought to such a state that what might have ruined us, before, we would not then look at. "No," we have said, "if you had offered me this some time ago it might have been accepted. But now God has, by some mysterious influence of His Spirit, turned my heart in another direction and it is not even a temptation to me at all—not worthy of a moment's thought!" So God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler.

But the second thought was that *God delivers His people, even when they get into the snare*. Alas, my Hearer, you and I know something about the net! We have been inside it! We have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds! We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler's hand has been upon our neck—it has only been the Sovereign Grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us. What a blessed thing it is, that if the Believer shall, in an evil hour, go into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! Poor Christian and Hopeful got into the fowler's net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair. But the key of promise picked the lock and they escaped. They were in the fowler's net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them and left them in the lane. But there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore,

took the net off and they went on their way, better men than they were before they were in the net! I know one who is in the net now. Some bird, one of God's own ones, too, has been taken in the snare. He is now groaning and crying out because, alas, alas, he has sinned! I have a person here, a good man, a professor of religion and a truly worthy one! But alas, he has sinned and at this hour the tears are in his eyes and he is saying—

***“The tumult of my thoughts
Does but increase my woe!
My spirit languishes, my heart
Is desolate and low!
Turn, turn You to my soul—
Bring Your salvation near!
When will Your hand release my feet
Out of the deadly snare?”***

O Backslider, be cast down, but do not despair! God will restore you yet. Wanderer though you have been, hear what He says! “Return, O back-sliding children, I will have mercy upon you.” But you say you cannot return. Then here is still another Promise—“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.” You shall yet be brought out from all the evil into which you have fallen and though you shall never cease to repent your ways even to your dying day, yet He that has loved you will not cast you away! He will receive you! He will admit you into His dwelling place and will even now restore you to the number of His people and give you joy and gladness—that the bones which He has broken may rejoice. “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

There have been very remarkable instances of God delivering His people out of the snare of the fowler, as the following illustration will show—

“A young lady who belonged to a Church in the city of New York, married a young man who was not a Christian. He was a merchant, engaged in a lucrative business and the golden stream of wealth flowed in upon him till he had amassed a large fortune. He accordingly retired from business and went into the country. He purchased a splendid residence. Fine trees waved their luxuriant foliage around it. Here was a lake filled with fish and there a garden full of rare shrubbery and flowers. Their house was fashionably and expensively furnished. And they seemed to possess all of earth that mortal could desire. Thus prospered and plied with an interchange of civilities among her gay and fashionable neighbors, the piety of the lady declined and her heart became wedded to the world. And it is not to be wondered at that her three children, as they grew up, imbibed her spirit and copied her example. ‘A severe disease,’ it is said, ‘demands a severe remedy.’ And that God soon applied. One morning intelligence came that her little son had fallen into the lake and was drowned. The mother's heart was pierced with affliction and she wept and murmured against the Providence of God. Soon afterwards, her

only daughter, a blooming girl of sixteen, was taken sick of a fever and died. It seemed, then, as if the mother's heart would have broken. But this new stroke of the rod of a chastening Father seemed but to increase her displeasure against His will! The only remaining child, her eldest son, who had come home from college to attend his sister's funeral, went out into the fields, soon afterwards, for the purpose of hunting. In getting over a fence, he put his gun over first to assist himself in springing to the ground, when it accidentally discharged itself and killed him! What, then, were that mother's feelings? In the extravagance of her grief, she fell down, tore her hair and raved like a maniac against the Providence of God. The father, whose grief was already almost insupportable, when he looked upon the shocking spectacle and heard her frenzied ravings, could endure his misery no longer. The iron entered into his soul and he fell dead, victim to his accumulated afflictions! From the wife and mother, her husband and all her children were now taken away. Reason returned and she was led to reflection. She saw her dreadful backslidings, her pride, her rebellion. And she wept with the tears of a deep repentance. Peace was restored to her soul. Then would she lift up her hands to Heaven, exclaiming, 'I thank you, O Father!—the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord.' Thus did her afflictions yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Her Heavenly Father had chastened her, "not for His pleasure but for her profit, that she might become partaker of His holiness."

So God delivered her soul out of the snare of the fowler. She started afresh in the ways of righteousness, serving God with diligence and zeal and growing up in His fear. By trouble and trial, by some means or another, God will surely deliver His people out of the snare of the fowler, even when they are in it!

III. And now, to conclude, I am to dwell for a moment or two upon that word, "SURELY." The assurance of every Truth of Scripture is the beauty of it. If it were not sure, it were not precious. And it is precious because it is sure.

Now, it says, "Surely He shall deliver you." Why? First because He has promised to do it and God's Promises are bonds that were never yet dishonored! If He has said He will, He will. Secondly, because Christ Jesus has taken an oath that He will do it. In ages long gone, Christ Jesus became the Shepherd of the sheep and the Surety of them, too. "If any of them perish," He said, "at My hand you shall require it," and, therefore, because Christ is responsible, because He is the Heavenly Sponsor for all God's people, they must be kept—for otherwise Christ's bond were forfeited and His oath were null and void. They must be kept, again, because otherwise the union that there is between all of them and Christ would not be a real one! Christ and His Church are one—one body. But if any of the members of my body were cut off, I should be maimed—and if

Christ could lose one of His children, He would be a maimed Christ. “We are His body, the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all.” If, then, the whole Church were not gathered in, Christ would be an incomplete Christ, seeing He would lack His fullness. They must all be saved, for God has determined that they shall be and the Son has sworn they shall be and God the Holy Spirit vouches they shall be! None of God’s people shall be cast away, or else the Bible is not true. The whole stability of the Everlasting Covenant rests on their final perseverance! The whole Covenant of Grace rests on this—

***“He shall present our souls
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face
With joys divinely great.”***

And therefore they must be preserved out of the snare of the fowler because otherwise the Covenant would be null and void. If one should perish, the oath would be broken. If one should be cast away, the Covenant would be void. And therefore they must be kept secure—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep!
All that His Heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep!”***

I have no time to enlarge upon that subject, which is big with glory and might afford a topic for many discourses. I now close up by saying, Brothers and Sisters—is this Promise yours? “Surely He shall deliver you.” Are you the person? “How can I tell?” you ask. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself wholly on the blood and righteousness of the Immaculate Redeemer? I do not ask you whether you are a Wesleyan, a Churchman, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian—my only question is, Are you born-again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you “a new creature in Christ Jesus”? Is all your trust put in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has His life become your model and does His Spirit dwell in your mortal body? If so, peace be unto you! This Promise is yours! You may have been the worst of men, but if you have faith in Christ, those sins are all forgiven and you may take this Promise to be yours forever! But if you are self-righteous, self-sufficient, ungodly, careless, worldly—there is no such promise for you—you are in the snare, you shall be there and you shall perish, unless you repent, for it is written, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” May God save you from perishing by giving you an interest in the blood of Christ! And to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be Glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

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

FRESH GRACE CONFIDENTLY EXPECTED

NO. 1122

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."
Psalm 92:10.*

DAVID IS very positive. He does not say, "I *hope* I shall be anointed with fresh oil and I have a pleasing expectation that it may be so." But he speaks of his future as absolutely certain—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil." Nor will it appear at all wonderful that he should be so positive if you read the Psalm, for his subject there is the ever-living and all-sufficient God. And when we get near to God we get into the region of positive certainty. While we depend upon man we are in the realm of, "maybe," and, "hope," and, "perhaps"—but when we come to rest in God we are far removed from everything that is of chance and conjecture. Our God is the God of Truth and Righteousness. "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Man is but a treacherous quicksand where confidence is shipwrecked, but the Lord is a haven of security. We do well neither to boast in ourselves nor to place our reliance on the promises of our fellow creatures. But we may wisely boast in the great "I AM," and rest our souls securely upon His Word and His love. He can neither change nor fail. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent." David, therefore, felt quite at his ease about the future. He felt certain that God, who had given him a measure of Grace, would give him more Grace. He entertained no suspicion that God's great resources would run out, or that God would withhold them from His own. He says, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

Beloved, let us draw near to God and so let us drink at the wellhead which can never be dried up. Let us give up looking to the broken cisterns which do but mock us and let us turn to the inexhaustible deep which lies under, which is always ready to overflow for our need. Let us think, at this time of the confidence of David and we shall remark upon it thus. First, it was a confidence full of meaning—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil," is a most expressive utterance. Secondly, it was a confidence exceedingly well-grounded. Thirdly, it was a confidence which calmed his fear. And fourthly, it excited his hopes. And in the last place, if we possess it, it is a confidence which will lead us to pity those who are destitute of it.

I. THE CONFIDENCE HERE EXPRESSED IS FULL OF MEANING. What did he intend by saying, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil"? He meant, first, that his strength should be renewed. It was a common belief among

the Orientals that anointing with oil added to a man's vigor. They regarded it as the symbol of renewed strength. So David felt and knew that God would, whenever it was required, renew his strength. Times of weakness will happen to us all. A great strain may be put upon us and we may become exhausted. Or, under severe depression of spirit, we may imagine ourselves to be ready to die. But at all such times God will supply strength to us—our extremity will be His opportunity—our time of famine will be His hour of plenty.

Is not His strength made perfect in weakness? Is it not written that "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength"? David sung in the 103rd Psalm, "He satisfies my mouth with good things; so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's," and he expected it always to be so. "He restores my soul," he says in the 23rd Psalm. Often do his Psalms, which commence in painful depression, conclude with exultation because heavenly love had poured fresh life into his swooning soul. From many a soul-sickness had the son of Jesse been recovered. From many a sinking had he been lifted up into holy joy. He here expresses his conviction that the Lord would always deal thus graciously with him. Expect this, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that God will give you new strength as you shall require it. "As your days, so shall your strength be." "He gives more Grace." Go to Him in the time of your weakness, in the confidence of this text—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

David meant, in the second place, that he should be afresh assured of the Divine favor. To anoint a man with oil was a token of his welcome to your house. His feet were washed that he might be refreshed and then the notable guest, worthy of special honor, was anointed with perfumed nard. So David says that as he had received tokens of Divine favor before, he should receive them yet again. O Beloved, you know what it is to revel in the smiles of God and find a Heaven in His manifested love! You have basked in the sunlight of your Father's love many a time and felt an ecstasy such as worldlings cannot imagine! Has not the Lord been pleased to make the name of Jesus to your souls "like ointment poured forth"? Oftentimes has He brought you into His banqueting house and His banner over you has been love. He has made for you a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined.

You look back upon these seasons with inexpressible delight and perhaps at this moment you are saying, "Oh, that it were with me as in months past." Pluck up courage, my Brothers and Sisters—you shall be "anointed with fresh oil." There are more tokens of love awaiting you. Further signs of your Master's love shall be afforded you. You need not cry with Esau, "Have you but one blessing? Bless me, even me, O my Father," for the Lord abounds in blessings and He delights to bestow them upon His Beloved. Yes, there are even richer mercies yet to come! The past, though full of blessedness, shall be eclipsed by the happy future. David had the favor of God as a shepherd boy. He found it anew as a warrior

and he had yet other tokens when he became king in Israel. Every favor received is a pledge of more to follow.

Dawn is the earnest of noon. Within the sacred circle of fellowship to which you have already penetrated, there is a holy of holies of yet closer communion and there you shall soon enter. "Friend, come up higher," is your Lord's sweet invitation. Have faith and be of good cheer, for you shall see greater things than these. You shall be baptized again into the Holy Spirit. You shall receive anew the spirit of adoption and your joy shall be full. Therefore lift up your head.

But again, David meant that he should be confirmed in his estate. It is noteworthy that David was anointed three times. First of all by Samuel, in prospect of his ultimately becoming king. A second time by the men of Judah, when he reigned over a part of the nation. And a third time at Hebron, when the whole Israelite nation came together and David was solemnly elected to be their king. Perhaps he remembered this, and looking upon those various anointings as confirmations of his kingly state, he felt that God would yet further confirm him upon his throne all his days. Many were the rebellions against David's authority, but they were all futile. When his throne was shaken by his rebellious son, Absalom, and his government almost annihilated, yet God restored him to the throne again, and in fact, anointed him once more.

Now this day, Beloved, you and I, who are Believers in Jesus, are kings and priests unto God. But if Satan could do it, he would soon bring our kingdom and priesthood to an end. He is plotting and devising by all manner of means to work our destruction. But it is written, "You maintain My lot." The great Keeper of our Head is one who can never be overcome. The Lord, who has set us on the throne with His Son, will neither suffer His Son nor us to be driven from it. The Lord reigns and while the Lord reigns His people shall also reign. "Because I live, you shall live, also," is the Word of Jesus, and upon that Word He has caused our souls to hope. He will confirm you again, my Brothers and Sisters, in your sonship. He will make you again to say, "Abba, Father," with an unfaltering tongue. He will confirm you in your position as a member of His body. He will make you feel that the anointing of the Head is still descending upon you and you shall thus rejoice again and again in full assurance that what God has made you, you shall be even to the end. Thus, again, you see, the Lord anoints His people with fresh oil, by confirming them in their estate.

Furthermore, David meant that he should be qualified for his office by the bestowal of fresh Grace. This was, no doubt, the meaning of the anointing of a king. It was the type and token of his receiving royal wisdom and authority. So, too, in the anointing of a priest, it was the symbol of the Spirit of God being given to him that he might discharge his sacred office. David felt that he should frequently need to be taught of God, guided, enlightened and instructed, so that he might, as king and leader in Israel, act rightly. Therefore he says, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil." Beloved, this is a very sweet confidence for us. If you are a minister of the

Gospel you will have a thousand times for feeling yourself to be incompetent. And you might well throw down the staff of your pastorate and leave work if you were not sure that your sufficiency is of God.

In such work as the instruction of the young, the visitation of the sick and the reclaiming of the fallen, or whatever it is that God has called you to, you will frequently tremble as you discover, more and more, your own unfitness to be used of God. But this will be counterbalanced by learning more and more the Divine faithfulness. Do not relinquish your work because of your feebleness, for you shall be anointed with fresh oil! Do you need wisdom? Ask it of the Lord, for He gives liberally. Do you need a warm and zealous spirit? Are you conscious of growing cold? Some drops of His dear love falling into your heart will set it on a blaze and make you as earnest as you would desire. Do you need more power in prayer? Go to Him who understood the art of wrestling on the mountainside at midnight and He will teach you how to pray. Is there anything you lack in order to the full discharge of the ministry to which God has called you? Wait upon the Lord for it with unwavering faith and He will grant it to you, and you "shall be anointed with fresh oil."

Once more, I think David meant that he should also have new cause for delight. Anointing with oil was intended to give pleasure. The element of joy in religion is looked upon with indifference by some, but they are unwise. There are some, nowadays, who would like to strike out everything from mortal life which gives pleasure. We have societies, now, which are anti to every mortal thing that is pleasant and agreeable. And if there remains one solitary enjoyment to mortal men in this vale of tears which has not some society opposed to it, I have no doubt some genius will commence a crusade against it tomorrow. The theory is that all wholesome things are nasty and that all gratifications are deadly. I wonder they do not make the parish pump run with wormwood tea and paint the meadows a dun color.

Then, when we have abstained from all that is either beautiful or agreeable and reduced ourselves to the condition of the savage who eats acorns and lives in a cave, we shall have climbed somewhat near perfection. Now I do not believe in this theory for ordinary life, much less for *spiritual* life. Men used, of old, to anoint the heads of their guests to give them pleasure and they were never blamed for it. And the Lord intends that His people should have the richest pleasures in their souls. He is the happy God and would have those round about Him happy. He never intended this world to be a great workhouse, a vast drill-shed, or a convict settlement so arranged that labor should banish joy and a crushing sense of subjection should chase away love. He has made this world to be a happy lodging for His dear children till He shall call them Home. And He has provided for their delight many enjoyments, lawful and commendable, beneficial and spiritual.

I believe the Lord intended His people to be the happiest people under the sun. When I see certain of them repining, complaining, fretting, worry-

ing and calling that state of mind, “experience,” I pray, “Lord, save me from that experience, and give me to have Your joy fulfilled in me.” Our Lord Jesus was sorrowful, not as our example, but as our Substitute. He was put to grief that we might be joyous. He bore our load that we might have no load to carry. He was full of cares for us, that we might have no care but might rejoice in Him all our days. “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” The atmosphere we breathe should be fragrant with thankful joy. Like flowers, we ought to load each breeze with the sweet perfume of holy gratitude.

We which have believed do enter into rest, and in that rest we discover new joys each day. The banks of the river, the streams which make glad the city of God are not dark with weeping willows, or dreary with a jungle of thorns and thistles, but they are lovely with the rose of Sharon and the lilies of the valley! And among their shady groves the righteous lie down at peace and sing their song of loves touching their Well-Beloved. Yes, we did rejoice, we have rejoiced, and we mean to rejoice again! “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Put all those five thoughts together and you have a great text before you, too big for me to preach from, but it may furnish you with many a theme for thought. It is a bough with many clusters—eat thereof and be glad!

II. THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR TEXT IS WELL-GROUNDED because it is grounded upon God. We could not reckon upon having supplies all our lives if we depended upon the granaries of Egypt, or upon the storehouses of the wealthiest of the land. But when we rest in God we may boast ourselves as we may. I stood the other day, as you have often done, by a spring, pleased to see it constantly bubble up with cool, refreshing water. One who came there to fetch water for her house, said to me, “It is always the same, Sir, always the same. I never knew the sharpest frost to freeze it, or the most burning summer to dry it. The stream is equally full at all times in the year.”

This was very different from a fountain which I often pass, which more than half the year bears the notice, “This drinking fountain is closed during the winter.” And very different from those brooks in our own and other lands which live upon the rains and therefore do not contain a drop of water in time of drought. Why does the spring always remain the same? Because it has tapped the great fountains. There is a deep that couches beneath. There are vast secret reservoirs in the heart of the earth and if you can set these abroach you are sure of a perpetual supply. Many a man has his water laid on, as it were, from the water company—his dependence is on man—and therefore it fails him. Or he depends on the circumstances which surround him and therefore he finds his confidence to be as a deceitful brook. But if you live upon God and say, “All my fresh springs are in You,” you have tapped the eternal deep, and you never need

be afraid of drought. You shall drink draughts of living water—you shall be anointed with oil.

Beloved, it is a grand thing to be thrown flat on God, however hard the fall! It is a glorious thing to hang upon the eternal arm with nothing else to hold you up. Just as yon unpillared arch of Heaven never starts or quivers, notwithstanding that it is without a buttress, so does faith, when it is built on God, stand gloriously serene in its mighty strength. “Trust you in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” We are quite sure of fresh supplies because of our union to Christ. Every Christian is a part of Christ, for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Now there can be no fear that my little finger will not be supplied so long as the head is nourished. If the head shall have sufficient nutriment, so shall the meanest member of the body and because we are one with Christ we shall therefore receive daily Grace.

Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure and the sacred oil descends to the very skirts of His garments. And because, without measure, the Spirit rests upon Him, therefore every one of us who belong to Him shall be anointed with fresh oil. Why does the branch of the tree expect to live? It sends out no roots into the earth. It makes no search for nourishment among the rocks and stones. No, but the branch expects to live because the sap flows into the stem and from the stem to itself. And we expect Grace because it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. Oh, if we had a pinched and starveling Christ, we might expect to run short! But with One in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily we can have no cause for fear. If I have such a Christ as this, I must be anointed with fresh oil!

Again, we have another reason. We must have fresh Grace because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. It was a good day for the poor widow of Zarephath upon which Elijah came to live with her. If I had been in her place I should have felt that I was safe enough, for if God did not think of me He would think of Elijah, and if Elijah lived in my house and went shares with me, I should not need to cry over that little meal in the barrel or that drop of oil in the cruse. I should feel, “Since Elijah lives with me, I shall share with Elijah. Elijah’s God will take care of him, and I shall be taken care of also.” O child of God, who is it that lives in your body along with you? Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit? And while the Holy Spirit lives within shall there ever be famine in the soul? Shall the cruse of oil fail? Shall the barrel of meal be entirely empty while the Holy Spirit is in us? It cannot be! Beloved, how many forget that precious doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit in every Believer. And yet, if we did but realize it, we should feel that while He who is the anointing oil dwells in our hearts, we must be anointed with fresh oil. There can be no fear about that.

Moreover, look at the promises of God’s Word and they will, at once, assure us that we shall have fresh supplies of Grace according to our need. You do not need that I quote them to you this morning—they are le-

gion—but I will tell you what I experienced, myself, in reference to those promises. They are to me a gradual Revelation. Not but what they are all in the Book, now, but I cannot realize and grasp, and understand them except by degrees. I find a promise exactly suitable for me today, but there is another. I love it and bless God for it already, but I cannot get the sweetness of it today, it is reserved for days to come. I shall find it open to me tomorrow. Another is laid up for me in six months' time and another in five years' time. The promises are fruits laid up to ripen in time to come and as most fruits become ripest and sweetest in the winter, so have we found that God's promises have a peculiar mellowness in our times of distress and affliction, such a sweetness as we did not perceive in the summer days of our prosperity.

The train which starts from London to go to the North continues to traverse the distance day by day—how is it supplied with water? Why, there are trenches between the rails in several different places and from these the engine drinks as it rushes along its iron pathway. It is supplied as it runs! That is just what our heavenly Father has done for you. You are just like an engine on the road to Heaven and between here and Heaven there are many stores of Grace awaiting you. You will take up fresh water without slacking your speed and so will be able to keep on to your journey's end. To use another illustration, when the Eastern nations used to trade across the desert in the olden times, in Solomon's days for instance, there were stations built, wells sunk and provisions stored at convenient halting places, so that the caravans might pause and take in fresh provisions. The caravans reached their journey's end because the long way was broken up by a series of resting places. Now, the promises are resting places for us between here and Heaven. There is a long line of them at well-ordered intervals and as we journey through this desert world we shall be constantly coming, first to one, and then to another, and then another, and another, and so we shall find fresh provision stored up that we may not fail. The manna will fall daily till we come to Canaan. The promises of God are so numerous that we are sure we "shall be anointed with fresh oil."

Once more, Beloved, up till now our experience has proved that we shall be anointed with fresh oil because we have been so anointed many a time already. I appeal to you who have gone for many years forward in the pathway where Jesus leads you. Have you not known many times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord? You have had times of great depression, for changes are appointed us as long as we are here. Men may promise themselves they shall never see a change, but they are greatly mistaken. David said, "My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved," but in a very little time he sang another hymn. When I hear Brothers and Sisters so very confident that they shall never doubt again, I am reminded of a story I have heard of the olden times, when a young gentleman who had never traveled before went over Hounslow Heath and was accosted by

another gentleman who rode by his side, and joined in an interesting conversation.

Our friend said at last, "I have always been told by my father that this is a very dangerous heath, but the old gentleman, I think, was exceedingly nervous, for we have come all this way without being molested by highwaymen." "Yes," said the other, "but now is the time for you to stop and deliver." And he clapped his pistol to his ear. It often happens, when we say, "I shall have no more temptations," that our very confidence is, in itself, a temptation! O yes, there have been times of sore trial, but the Lord has appeared for us. Up to this moment not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised—

***"Thus far we prove the promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood."***

We have no fault to find with our God. Jehovah Jireh, the Lord has provided to this day. In the mount of the Lord shall it be seen. Up to now, the Lord has helped us. Well, then, if He has done so up till now, so *will* He, for He is an unchangeable God. Therefore let us be assured that we "shall be anointed with fresh oil."

III. THIS CONFIDENCE CALMS ALL OUR FEARS. Sometimes, when we are not quite as we should be, we are filled with fear on account of our soul poverty. What a poor thing I am. How little Grace I have. How weak in prayer. How slow in service. How frequently depressed. How easily tossed to and fro. How shall I hope to hold on to the end? Where is the answer to it—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil." I am poor, but I shall receive my daily pension. I am weak and I have no strength in reserve, but my strength is laid up in God!

Imagine two Israelites talking together one day, and one of them says to the other, "Your cupboard seems to be very empty, I fear you are imprudent." "But," says the other, "do you know we gathered this morning an omer full of manna and it exactly supplied my family. I have a wife and a troop of boys with mighty appetites and very soon the omer which had been full was empty, but we look for more tomorrow." "Nothing in the house?" said the other. "Do you not feel distressed?" "No, not at all." "Why not?" "Because I believe the manna will fall tomorrow morning and that there will be just as much as I shall need, so that I have no need to lay by any in store."

"Very imprudent," said the other. "I believe we ought to make hay while the sun shines. If you will come to my house, I will show you the good stock of manna which I have carefully laid by." "No," said the other, "I do not care to see it just now. But I will tell you what I *will* do, I will come down tomorrow at dinner time and see it." So the man gathered in the morning his own fresh manna and his family was satisfied with it and delighted. And after they had eaten, he said, "I will go down and see my rich friend's manna. He was much better off last night than I was." He goes to his friend's door, but his friend does not seem pleased to see him. "I have come to see your manna that you stored up so carefully."

But the other blushes and admits that he has none to show. "Why not?" his friend enquires. "Well, the fact is, I do not want you to come into my tent at all. I must come forth from it myself. There is a most detestable smell all through the tent. I had to take away the manna and bury it, for it bred worms and stank." "Ah," said the other, "then, after all, I did well to live upon daily manna and to have no stock in hand. And you did foolishly to lay by a store." Now there may be some professors here who want to feel that they are strong enough for tomorrow, or that they have Grace enough for next week—they want to have such a proportion of Divine strength given them that they shall feel confident about themselves for years to come. All that will breed worms and stink—all human confidence, glory and pride must rot!

But if you remain a poor sinner and nothing at all, daily depending on the bounty of God, you will have Grace from Heaven fresh and fresh, smelling of the hand which gives it every morning. Beloved, it calms our fears about our poverty when we remember that the granary of Heaven is not exhausted and that as each morning breaks we shall find the dew of Grace lying about our tent. This also removes our fears concerning violent temptations. We must, all of us, have felt afraid of being tempted. We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Sometimes our unbelief says, "If I am tempted in a certain way I shall certainly perish."

My Brothers and Sisters, you should remember that you will be anointed with fresh oil! When the temptation comes there will be a way of escape for you. What a happy circumstance it is for Christians that it is not often that the temptation and the opportunity come together. Have not you noticed that when wrong desires stir in your mind, they come to you at times when you cannot carry them out? And at other times when you have the opportunity to sin fairly before you, you have no desire for it whatever! That is often a way of escape for God's people. Do not be distressed about temptations. There will be such in this world. Lay hold on the shield of your faith and you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked One.

But it may be you are afraid not merely of temptation, but of backsliding, and that is a very blessed fear, but do not let it depress you, for you will be anointed with fresh oil. If you had to keep yourself, you would certainly perish. If you had to sustain your own spiritual vigor, it would not be long before you would faint. But since you depend upon God and He has to preserve you, He will not suffer you to leave Him. Or if for a while you should depart from His way, He will bring your wandering heart back and set you in the King's highway once more. Or it is possible you are afraid of some great and grievous affliction. I know dear Sisters who are aware that a certain disease is upon them which will one day come to such a point that either there will be a painful operation or else they may die.

Dear Sisters, do not fret about it. You have not sufficient strength for what is coming, but you will be anointed with fresh oil! Nobody needs to-

morrow's Grace today. When you are only up to your ankles in trouble you do not require the Grace which you will have when you are up to your neck in it. You shall have Grace in proportion. You shall have ballast for your sail, and sail for your ballast, for He is a good Captain who intends to steer you into port. Do not be cast down, therefore. Some of us, it may be, have been troubled about the future death of some dear one upon whom we depend, or whose life is very precious to us. We have buried them a hundred times over in our fears. Let us remember that when the trouble comes it will be time enough for us to be cast down by it—no, we shall not be cast down—for God, who helps those who are cast down, will comfort us. "I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

And perhaps, dear Brothers or Sisters, you have entered upon a new state of sorrow. You wear today the name of widow, which you never wore before. Or, you are now called an orphan for the first time. In this new state resort to God to be anointed with fresh oil! He who made you a good wife will help you to bear well the trial of losing your husband. He who made you a dutiful child will be a Father to you and help you to sustain the position of an orphan well. You shall be anointed with fresh oil whenever affliction comes. I feel as if I could sit down now and say to myself, "Cheer up, Heart, cheer up. Whatever ails you, you shall be anointed with fresh oil. Look into the future—no, do not care to look into it—do not wish to look into the book of fate and see—

***'What gloomy lines wait for you,
Or what bright scenes arise.'***

You shall be anointed with fresh oil." This is a heavenly forecast of our nativity. We shall be anointed with fresh oil right to the end of our journey and when death comes, if come it ever shall—for Christ may come and we may not die—we shall be anointed with fresh oil!

Very wonderful is the way in which God takes His people to Himself! Two good men have lately gone to Heaven in a manner which rebuked their own prayers. They were taught in their Church to say, and did say twice every Sunday for more than 50 years, "Lord, deliver us from sudden death." Dear good men, the Lord knew it was a stupid prayer and Mr. Robert Aitken, who had for many years served his Lord, fell down dead on the railway platform and Mr. Pennefather dropped from his chair into Heaven! The Lord seemed to say to them, "Why did you ask Me to save you from sudden death? It was the best for you and I gave it to you."

To die in the pulpit preaching—to go straight from testifying about Christ below to seeing Him above—what better thing could be desired?! Do not be afraid of dying—either you will be taken away gently, perhaps in your very sleep, and will never know you died at all—or, if you have to lie a little while and linger, you will be anointed with fresh oil and you will turn your dying bed into a chariot of fire! You will be transfigured there in the presence of your family and they will wonder that the Grace of God could do such great things for a poor, weak, trembling mortal. "I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

IV. Now I must pass over the next point very briefly—THIS ASSURANCE TENDS TO RAISE OUR HOPES. We tremble lest we should not hold on to the end, but now we know we shall be anointed with fresh oil we are filled with hope. Sometimes, when we meet with Believers who are full of Grace, full of patience, full of courage, full of zeal, full of love, we say, “I can never get where they are.” Yes, we can, for we shall be anointed with fresh oil and if we obtain fresh Grace there is no place of eminence we cannot reach. What Abraham was, what David was, what Isaiah was, what Paul was, we may be. There is nothing in the whole range of Christian attainment from which we are debarred.

This raises our hope for useful service. Perhaps we have not done much for the Lord yet, or, having done something in our youth, are growing dull now and do not honor Him as we once did. Come, we won’t give up and say, “I shall never serve the Lord,” but we will rejoice that we shall be anointed with fresh oil! We have seen trees bear very little fruit for years, but they will have a splendid year, by-and-by, and then they will be loaded with fruit. Sometimes an old tree feels dead and yet at the scent of water it does bud and bring forth fruit once more. So some of you may be like a dry, barren tree, but the Lord means to visit you and you shall bring forth fruit to His name. I would say to every Brother here who is conscious that he has neglected a great deal of what he ought to have done and has not been as useful as he should, “Come, Brother, mend your ways and have good hope of brighter times to come for you shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Once more, this gives us hope of the fullest fellowship with Christ. Where John was when he leaned his head on His Master’s bosom, I may be. Where Mary was when she sat at the Master’s feet, I may be, if “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” Come, lift up your heads, you birds of Heaven! Do not sit moping! Lift up your heads, I say, and look the sun in the face, the glorious Sun of Righteousness, and rise with all your wings towards Him. He will bear you up! He will draw you to Himself! Does He not even now attract you by His own superlative beauties? “Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse,” says He, “with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana.” Up, up Christian! Higher, higher, higher! The Lord will help you, He will give you new strength and the highest place of devotion, the loftiest elevation of piety shall be attained by you.

V. Lastly, THIS MAKES US FEEL GREAT PITY FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT HOPE TO BE ANOINTED WITH FRESH OIL. And such are all who are destitute of faith. You have your choice. You who do not believe in the unseen, you have your choice in the seen things which you can see and hear. They are before you and you are very fond of them, and you think they fill your spirit. So they may for the present, but there are evil times coming. The young man’s youth will not last forever. Eyes grow dim, as every old man will tell you. The joys of youth will not come to your rescue then! The remembrance of those early joys, as past and gone forever, will only make your cup more bitter.

And going down gradually to your grave, discontented and fretful, striving, still, to gratify passions for which you have no strength. Looking again to broken cisterns and finding only a little mud at the bottom where once you found what you thought crystal waters, you will begin to cry out for fresh comforts. But you will not find them. It is a blessed thing to be so rich that there is no end to your wealth and nobody can say that but a Christian! It is a blessed thing to have a stream at your feet which will never fail—and nobody has such a river but a Christian!

If you believe in God, God is yours and all that your soul can ever need is treasured up in the Infinite God, for life, for death, for judgment, for eternity. Without God you are naked, poor and miserable already in the highest sense, but what will you be hereafter? Oh, the poverty of a man who lives without Christ! But oh, the poverty of the man who *dies* without Christ! Oh, the utter, utter poverty of a man who will live throughout eternity without Christ! He is a naked soul and the blasts of wrath shall smite upon him without pause. He is a thirsty soul—oh, how he thirsts! But no drop of consolation will ever come to him.

He is a crushed and broken soul, but there is no one to heal his broken heart, nor stanch his ghastly wounds. He is forever destroyed and banished from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. And to that destruction no restoration can ever come! To that agony no relief! To that death no resurrection! Today Christ is to be had! Today all that your soul needs is to be had! And to be had for nothing! To be had for the asking! To be had for the accepting, for whoever believes in Him receives Him, and so is saved—

***“But if your ears refuse
The language of His Grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in vengeance dressed,
Will lift His hand and swear,
You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there!”***

God grant it may not be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 40.

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FRESHNESS

NO. 1649

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.”
Job 29:20.***

***“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”
Psalm 92:10.***

THE first text tells us of the renown of Job and of the way in which the Providence of God continued to maintain the glory of his estate, his bodily health and his prosperity. He was for many days, months, years, continuously prospered of God. Everything to which he set his hand succeeded. God had set a hedge about him and all that he had, so that none broke through to molest him. He grew richer, he grew more influential, he had more honor in the sight of his fellow men each morning that he walked to the gate. In every way he was advanced from day to day and that throughout a long stretch of years. His glory was fresh in him. He did not achieve a hasty fame and then suddenly become forgotten. He did not blaze out like a meteor and then vanish into darkness, but he seemed to be continually fresh, vigorous, strong, energetic and successful.

He says that his bow was renewed *in his hand*, whereas a bow usually loses its force by use and is less able to shoot arrows after a little while and needs to lie still with a slack string—but it was by no means so with Job. He could send one arrow and then another and then another—and the bow seemed to gather strength by use! That is to say, he never seemed to be worn out in mind or body. Whatever he commenced was commenced with as great a freshness and zest as the last thing which he had accomplished and that had been commenced with the same energy as the first enterprise of his youth. However, this did not always last, for Job, in this chapter, is telling us of something that *used* to be—something that, the loss of, he very sorrowfully deplored—“my glory was fresh in me.” He found himself suddenly stripped of riches and of honor and put *last* in the list instead of first, while his purposes and aims seemed all to miss their way—and he had no strength and no glory left in him. Now he had reached the winter of his discontent and those who, before, did him homage, became his assailants. So far as glory was concerned, he was forgotten as a dead man out of mind.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, this gives us a lesson that we must not put our trust in the stability of earthly things. It is said of the world that God has founded it upon the floods. How, then, can we expect it to be substantial? Beneath yon moon, continually changing, what can we discover that abides the same? Where the very light of Heaven is waxing and waning, what is there but mutability? Change is written upon the face of all

things. If, then, you have built your nest on high, reckon not too surely that you shall die in your nest—for the axe may fell the tree and bring it down at an untimely date. If your children are round about you in good health, be not too sure of them, for they may be carried to an early grave—and the parent may yet be childless.

If up to now you have been great in the esteem of men, think less than nothing of that, for the breath of popular applause is more fleeting than a vapor! It scarcely comes before it goes, and they who, yesterday, cried, “Hosanna,” in the streets at your coming, may, before tomorrow’s sun is set, be crying, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” They did that to the Master—marvel not if they do it to the servants! This is the respect that makes all mortal things inconsiderable to a wise man—he scarcely will put them among his treasures—for they melt before they are fairly counted, like a coinage of ice. They are but as the counters that a child plays with, having only an imaginary value. The things which are seen are shadows—the things invisible are the only substances. Reckon, then, at their fit price, this transient glory of wealth, health, or fame. Lay up treasure, “where neither moth nor rust does corrupt,” and seek for stability in other things than these. Get the feet of yours joy upon the Rock of Ages and reckon all else to be but sand at its very best.

David, in the second text is talking, I think, about *spiritual* things, and he tells us with great joy that he should be anointed with fresh oil. He did not expect that his glory would depart, but he expected that it should be *renewed*. He did not reckon that the bow would lose its force in his hand, but that God would increase his strength from day to day. And if any of you, here, who are God’s people have any fears about the future as to your soul matters—if you are alarmed with the fear that you will share the same lot which Job shared as to his temporal glory—I would remind you that Job, even in temporals, received at last twice as much as he had in his best. We must remember that God can turn His hand one way as well as another and brighten your prospects as well as darken them! Predict delight rather than despair. Even the lower springs shall continue to flow till you are beyond the need of them!

Just now it is about spiritual matters that I want to speak—and if you have a fear that you must necessarily decline in these—I would remind you of the words of David, “I shall be anointed with fresh oil” and, yet further on, of his other words, “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright.” Never fall into the notion that a spiritual falling off is inevitable—there need be nothing of the kind—you may be fresh as the dew even unto the end! The subject, tonight, will run in this way—First, the excellency of freshness—“My glory was fresh in me.” Secondly, the fear of ill-departure. And, thirdly, the hope of continuance, which hope is greatly encouraged by the words of our text—“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

I. First, then, notice THE EXCELLENCY OF FRESHNESS. “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” David had been anointed, while still a youth, to be king over Israel. He was anointed, yet again, when he came to the kingdom. That outward anointing with actual oil was the testimony of

God's choice and the emblem of David's authorization. Oftentimes, when his throne seemed precarious, God confirmed him in it and subdued the people under him. When his dominion became weak, God strengthened him and his servants and gave them great victories, so that, as a king, David was *frequently* anointed with fresh oil. David's royal brow was crowned with fresh laurels again and again and his throne was settled and established by the hands of the Lord.

It was established, not with the same old stale anointing—a repetition of that which had lost its force—but with oil freshly pressed from the green olive, namely, with a new blessing and a fresh blessing from God's right hand, as I trust, you and I may be! Freshness is a most delightful thing if you see it in another. It is a charm in Nature. The other day, when the wind blew cold, someone said to me, "Yes, but how fresh the air is and how refreshing—how different from that heavy, muggy atmosphere in which we were half drowned and almost entirely suffocated but a few days ago." We need something fresh, and when we get it, we are freshened ourselves! How pleasant to go into the garden and see the spring flowers just peeping up. How agreeable to mark the rills, with their fresh water leaping down the hills after showers of rain. The young lambs in the meadows and larks in the sky are delightful because of their freshness. Everything that is fresh seems to have a charm about it to our minds.

But, dear Friends, *spiritual* freshness has a double charm! Sometimes we know what it is to have a freshness of soul, which is the dew from the Lord. You remember when first your flesh was as that of a new-born child? I mean when you were newly born again and first knew the Lord. How fresh everything was to you! The pardon of sin—how it sparkled! The righteousness of Christ—how brilliant! The idea of being a child of God—how novel and how delightful! To be joint-heir with Christ—how it almost startled you—it was such a new idea to your spirit! And oftentimes since then, when your soul has been in a lively condition, everything has been bright, charming, exhilarating—nothing flat, stale, unprofitable.

Even though you heard the same things said again and again, yet, because your soul was fresh, they came to you with unusual power. Your spiritual food, if you are healthy, is always fresh to you, like the manna in the wilderness which was never stored a single night except for the Sabbath—but fresh and fresh it fell—and Israel gathered it and fed upon it then and there. Oh, it is a blessed thing to have your soul in a fresh state, filled with the ever-flowing Living Water! It is glorious to find everything about you fresh and new through the teaching of the blessed Spirit, so that you go from strength to strength and, like a roe or a young hart, leap from hill to hill! If we are now in the possession of it, may we always keep that freshness of soul and never lose it.

How that freshness is seen in a man's devotions. Oh, I have heard some prayers that are really musty! I have heard them so often that I dread the old familiar sounds! Some hackneyed expressions I remember hearing when I was a boy. I even now hear the vain repetitions—old, worn-out, good-for-nothing rubbish expressions they were then—but they are still brought out by regular prayer-makers! Even where the words are new and

original, you will hear men pray in such a style as to make you say to yourself, "That prayer came out of Noah's Ark." As far as that man is concerned, there is nothing at all in it of life, sap, or savor. It has been dead long ago and hung up to dry till not a particle of juice remains in it.

But, on the other hand, you hear a man pray who *does* pray—whose soul is fully in communion with God—and what life and freshness is there! It may be that his expressions are somewhat rough, but they touch you because they come from his heart. Some of the confessions and petitions are strange to you, perhaps, and yet you feel that they are such strangers as it behooves you to be joyous at once! You are glad that such words and thoughts have passed through your spirit and blessed you! You feel that you can pray with such persons. Their prayers will go to Heaven, for they *came* from Heaven! *God* has inspired them and their originality is a part of the manual of the Spirit. I like to hear a Brother even stop and stammer because he cannot go on—his heart is too full and he cannot find words. Oh, but it is blessed to get a little freshness, even if it comes through a breakdown!

I suppose that those dear Friends who pray by the book of Common Prayer, somehow or other manage to put freshness into their prayers. I am always glad that they do, for it shows the vigor of their piety. As for me, I am such a poor, weak thing, that after I have repeated the same words about half-a-dozen times, they do me no good. I must use words that suit the time and suit the state of my heart—and suit my desires and suit my depressions or my joys—and suit my thankful or mournful heart! One seems to need in prayer something fresh, but when the prayer is old and worn—and seems to have been brushed and turned and very little made of it, after all—why, then it does not strike us, or impress us, or help us! I like to feel freshness even in singing a hymn. It may be that we know the words, but then we must put fresh heart into them and feel them over again as much as if we were the authors of them! Then they become a grand vehicle for our praises! How sweet to sing, as it were, a new song! It is a blessed thing to have a freshness about our devotions, be they private or public, exultant or repentant.

And so, dear Friends, it is well to have a freshness about our feelings. I know that we do not hope to be saved by our feelings—neither do we put feeling side by side with faith—yet I should be very sorry to be trusting and yet never feeling. Surely it would be a dead faith! It would be a strange thing to be a living child of God and to have no feelings. I will tell you about feelings as they strike me. Sometimes I have deplored the condition of my heart before God and thought my feelings to be the worst that could be. But what a foolish judge I have been, for in a week's time I have needed to have those despised feelings over, again, and thought that now, at last, I had fallen into a worse state than before. I am persuaded that we are very poor judges of the value of our own inward feelings, and, perhaps, when we are lowest in our own esteem we are really highest in the sight of God.

And when we feel as if we did not pray, we are praying, and the heart may be wrestling with God more when it fears that it does not pray than

when you come down complacently out of yours closet and say, "I know that I have had a good time, for I feel perfectly self-satisfied." I long for the Truth of God in the inward parts and wisdom in the secret places of the soul. Anything is good which rids us of pretense! Oh to be broken into splinters by the hand of God! And for every grain of dust to cry out to Him! I believe this mode of praying often prospers beyond any other. At any rate, give me not stereotyped pretension to feeling, but fresh feeling. Whether it is joy or sorrow, let it be living feeling, fresh from the deep fountains of the heart! Whether it is exultation or depression, let it be true and not superficial or simulated! I hate the excitement which needs to be pumped up. There is a something delightful, to my mind, in coming to the Throne of Grace, weeping—a something delightful in coming to the Lord's Supper full of joy and gladness—to come to either place cold and dead is horrible! There is something delicious in knowing that what you feel is true and comes up from the very bottom of your soul. That it has a point and edge about it which proves how sincere it is. God keep us from stale feelings and may He give us freshness of emotion!

I believe, dear Friends, that there is a very great beauty and excellence in freshness of utterance. Do not hinder yourself from that. How I long for it as a preacher! When one has, day after day, to stand before the same assembly and to talk of the things of God, one dreads lest he should be so monotonous and full of repetition that even the things of God should come to be a weariness to God's own people! I have often thought that if some Brothers who are very careful to speak exceedingly well what they say, should be a little more careless and speak as it comes—letting their heart flow over at their lips spontaneously—then there would be a far greater freshness about their utterance than there is when every sentence smells of the lamp and reeks of midnight oil!

God forbid that we should say a word against the deep study and the profound research of God's Word, but still, we may get to be so much students that we scarcely speak like practical men who live among the people! By aiming at a very superior style, we may fall into a thoroughly inferior one and all our freshness may be gone. I like, for my part, the wild bird's note. Men get the bullfinch and teach it to sing a few notes—and then the piping bullfinch is greatly prized. But I have finches outside my window, any one of which will beat any finch in the world that only pipes a note or two, for they pipe much more melodiously, though they were never taught except by God and Nature! There is a range of sweetness about their wild notes that a tutored bird cannot reach. Nature, pure and unsophisticated, is the best instrument for Divine Grace.

I like to hear men speak of God as they have known Him, every man in his own order, and with his own voice. Coming fresh, perhaps, from the very haunts of sin, out of which free Grace has fetched them, let them speak like Israelites fresh from the brick kilns! Coming from the plow-tail or from the forge with all the equipment of their trade about them and speaking just as they are. Without pretending to be anything else than they are and telling of God's amazing love to them—not quoting the experience of others, but giving out their own—this will be their wisdom and

strength! Oh, there is a freshness about that and a great power to catch the ear and to move the heart when God, the Holy Spirit, is present to bless it!

Now, you that have lately been converted, do not go and learn all the pretty phrases that we are accustomed to use. Do not go and sit down at the feet of your dear teacher in the class and feel that you must talk just like he. Strike out your own course. Be yourself! “But I would be odd,” you say. All right—so is your pastor! You need not mind that. You will not be the only odd body about. Be encouraged by that! I think that a little of what people call oddness is just, after all, leaving God’s work alone. All the trees that God makes are odd. The Dutchmen clip them round or make them into peacocks, but that style of gardening is not to our mind.

But some people say, “What a lovely tree!” I say, “What a horribly ugly thing it is.” Why not let the tree grow as God would have it? Do not clip yourselves round or square, but keep your freshness! There will be no two Christians exactly alike if they do that. There should be a freshness, dear Friends, about our labor. We ought to serve the Lord, to-day, with just as much novelty in it as there was 10 years ago. I may even venture to say 30 years ago! Oh, I remember the seriousness with which I went out to preach the first half-dozen sermons I ever preached—and what a burden it was from the Lord! And how I did go at it with all my might? Very clumsily, but still with all my soul and spirit!

And do you remember when you began to teach the class, or began to take your tract district? Did you not pray over it? It seemed almost too good to be true that you should be trusted with doing anything for your Lord and Master! And you did it, oh, so intensely and, therefore, you had God’s blessing! You did it well, though you blundered a good deal, for all your heart was in it, your motive was pure and your faith was childlike. You blundered the *right* way, for you blundered with your *heart* and so blundered into other men’s hearts! Your heart was serving God, even in the mistakes you made.

And now, perhaps, you can go round the district and you are pretty well half-asleep over it. And you can teach the class, but there is not the vigor, the force, the energy, the intense desire, the burden that there once was—perhaps not all the joy. You can stand up and preach, dear Brother, and you have got pretty well accustomed to it—and the people have got accustomed to it, too—and they can nearly go to sleep! And you can, too—preach asleep! It is an easy thing to do, if you once learn the wretched art. There is a kind of sleep-walking in preachers—they can talk in their sleep in a very precise way—much more wonderful than walking! You cannot say, “I sleep, but my heart wakes.” The fact is that it is the other way around—“I wake, but my *heart* sleeps”—and it is a great pity when it comes to be so.

We should pray to God that we may do everything fresh, just as if we had never done it before, only doing it with all the improvements which experience will bring to us! Pray with your children, tonight, as if it were your first prayer with them! Speak with them about their souls as if you had never mentioned the subject before. Talk of Jesus as if you were tell-

ing new news! Why, aren't you? Is it not always glad tidings? Always news fresh from Heaven? May God grant us Grace that, when we come to be gray and when we totter with our staff for very age—we may still tell out the story, if with feebleness of utterance, yet with juvenility of heart—feeling that we are bringing forth fruit even to old age, for the Lord still anoints us with fresh oil!

So much for the beauty and excellence of freshness. It ought to run into everything.

II. Now, dear Friends, in the second place, I will dwell upon the fear of losing it—THE FEAR OF ITS DEPARTURE. I have heard some express the thought that perhaps the things of God might lose their freshness to us by our familiarity with them. I think that the very reverse will turn out to be the case if the familiarity is that of a sanctified heart. In other things, “familiarity breeds contempt,” but in the things of God, familiarity breeds adoration. The man who does not read his Bible much is the man who has a scant esteem of it. But he that studies it both day and night is the very man who will be impressed by its infinitude of meaning till he will be ready to cry, like Jerome, “I adore the infinity of Scripture.”

I know that he that prays most loves prayer most and he that is most occupied with the praises of God is the very person who wishes that he could praise God day and night without ceasing. These things grow on you. Hence I would have no man fear that familiarity with holy things can take away from their freshness and their beauty! You may drink at other wells till you are no longer thirsty, but, strange to say, this all thirst-quenching water, nevertheless, produces a much deeper thirst after its own self. He that eats of the Bread of Heaven shall hunger for no other, but shall grow ravenous for it. His capacity for feeding upon it shall be increased by that which he has fed upon. And, whereas at first, the crumbs from under the table might have satisfied him when he knew himself to be but a dog, at last, when he knows himself to be a child of God, he wishes for everything that is set upon the table!—

***“Less than Yourself will not suffice
My comfort to restore.”***

He must have all that is to be had! Such is his desire. Dismiss, then, any fear from your minds about that.

When we first commenced to break bread on every first day of the week, I heard some say that they thought that the coming so often to the Table might take away the impressiveness of the holy feast. Well, I have scarcely ever missed a Sabbath, now, these 20 years, and I never was so impressed with the solemnity and the sweetness of the Master's Supper as I am now! I feel it to be fresher every time. When it was once a month, I had not half the enjoyment in it, and I think that where friends have the communion once a quarter, or once a year, as in some Churches, they really do not give the ordinance a fair opportunity to edify them. They do not fairly test the value of an ordinance which they so grossly neglect, as it seems to me. No, you may have more, and more, and more, and more of everything that Christ has instituted and ordained, especially more and more of Himself—and the more you have, the more freshness there will be!

“Yes, but we have had a fear, sometimes, that there will be a lack of freshness about ourselves.” Well, that fear is a very natural one. Let me tell you some points on which, I fear, we have good ground of alarm, for we do our best to rob ourselves of all life and freshness. Christian people can lose the freshness of themselves by imitating one another. By adopting as our model some one form of the Christian life other than that which is embodied in the Person of our Lord, we shall soon manufacture a set of paste gems, but the diamond flash and glory will be unknown. Many godly people have a very deep sense of their corruption and inward sin and this, together with sorrowful spirit, combines to make them a rather gloomy race. Often deeply taught in other respects, they fail to rejoice in the Lord.

Certain of these have formed a school and they have set up a standard and judge everybody to be a deceiver or a mere babe in Grace who cannot groan as deep down as they can. This is not wise. If you do that, you will lose your freshness, for you will forever be scattering your dust and ashes over all the joys of your life. Why should the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Let us be happy while we may! There is another set of Brethren who are always glad and happy, for they are healthy and competently provided for. They think they are out of the way of temptation and so they believe that they are perfect—they also set up a standard and cut down everybody who cannot sing right up into the alto notes as high as they can! Well, you will get stale, too, Brothers and Sisters, whoever you may be, for self-laudation never keeps fresh long!

When we have heard about half-a-dozen brethren boasting that they are nearly perfect, it is about as much as some of us can stomach! I cannot stand above two of them without feeling my boxing propensities set in motion! Poor fools, how have they persuaded themselves to hope that self-praise will be thought to be the height of piety? It is nauseous, even, to those of us who are prepared to make a measure of excuse for the fervid imaginations of the brethren! Drop into one particular groove and run in it—take up one line of things and stick to it—and you will very soon find yourself as far from freshness as a bit of leather which has been worked on an engine to revolve forever and ever in the same course! The beauty of real life lies much in its variety.

A Brother comes to me on Sunday morning sighing. Thank you, Brother, for that! I am glad that you are in that state, for that is where I am! And we can sympathize with each other. Perhaps tomorrow I meet this same friend and he is full of joy and delight, and I say, “Thank you, Brother, I am glad to meet with somebody who is rejoicing in the Lord. You give me a lift. Now shall I be helped to rejoice in Him, too.” Sometimes, in this pilgrimage to the Celestial City, I join company with a Brother worker who laments that he has many difficulties in dealing with poor sinners. I say to him, “I am glad of that, for I have more difficulties than you, but I see that I am not alone in my anxieties.” Another I meet with says that he has been so happy in meeting with souls that have found the Lord and I reply, “Yes, and I am glad to see you, for I am happy, too, for I have met with many who have just found the Savior.”

These changes and ups and downs are like the delicious variations of the seasons—they are not always autumn, not always spring, not always winter, not always, even, the plenitude of summer. So with our souls, we are never so long in one place as to find monotony in life. No, the monotony is in *death*—the freshness is in life! These changes and varieties create a splendid freshness which we might not hope to have if we tied ourselves to one man's chariot and resolved that our experience should be uniformly like his. Another way of spoiling your freshness is by repression. The feebler sort of Christians dare not say, feel, or do, until they have asked their leader's permission. I have known a little village chapel in which, when the preacher had delivered a sermon, the people did not know whether he was sound or not till they had asked the principal deacon! Or they waited till they got outside and consulted a little knot of good old men and women who had to act as tasters for all the others and give a verdict as to the orthodoxy of the performance! A few good souls thought the sermon to be very sweet—the man seemed to be preaching the Gospel—but they did not like to commit themselves to the tune till they had got the key note. And when they had seen the Brother that led them all, then they knew! If he said that it was all right, why, then it was all right!

Now, dear Friend, if you feel that God is blessing you in any religious exercise, mind that you are blessed and let other people who do not like to be blessed go without it if they must. But as for you, be blessed when you can! Do not be ashamed to enjoy that which others despise. Sit down and quietly feast on the kernel while others are breaking their teeth over the shells. If you feel that you must sing, sing without stint! Why not? In the kitchen—in the parlor—sing! Never mind if remarks are made. Do not worldlings sing to their own liking—why shouldn't you? If sometimes you feel that you cannot sing, well, then, do not sing! Be yourself and be natural as Divine Grace makes you natural—that is the thing. Let your mind have freedom and do not feel as if you went about in fetters, bound to this and pledged to that!

In the living kingdom of the living God there is no rule that you groan at eight o'clock in the morning and sing at noon; that you sigh at half-past three and get the plenitude of the Spirit at a quarter past seven! Nothing of the kind! It is a free Spirit under whose power we dwell and He comes like the wind and goes like the wind—and acts according to His own pleasure. Lord, uphold me with "Your free Spirit." Do not repress Him. "Quench not the Spirit." Yield yourselves to His influences and if you feel inclined to shout, be brave enough to do so—and give the praise to God! This is a successful way of keeping up freshness—to be rid of repression and to be free before God.

If we want to keep up our freshness, however, the main thing is never to fall into neglect about our souls. Do you know what state the man is generally in when you are charmed by his freshness? Is he not in fine health? Some of my dear friends were known to call and see me when I was laid up some time ago—and I am afraid that they did not find much freshness about me, then! On the contrary, they heard much the same old story—weary nights and painful days. I hope I did not display much impa-

tience, but still, the tendency is to give a good deal of telling of what one has to endure! There is not much freshness about that.

But a man is fresh, generally, when he is well and everything is going right within his internal economy. Then he thinks fresh thoughts and uses fresh words, for all around him life is in its flowery age and sparkles like the morning! I am sure that it is so with the soul. When the soul is healthy—when you are feeding on the Bread of Heaven; when you are living near to God; when you are believing the promises and embracing them; when you are getting into the very sunlight of the Lord's fellowship—oh, it is *then* that fresh words and striking words not often heard will drop from you! Pearls will fall from your lips if those lips have been with Jesus, and He has kissed you with the kisses of His mouth! Do not neglect yourself, then! Let the fountain of the heart be right and then the freshness will speedily be seen.

I have shown you the things by which a man may lose his freshness—avoid them carefully. Those of you who are workers for God may have a fear that you will lose the freshness of yours utterances—a fear which haunts a good many of us. Now, that may happen to us by our own fault if there is a need of searching the Word of God; if there is a need of fresh acquisitions of sacred knowledge. And it may happen to us, again, if we are always gathering the thoughts of others and do not think, ourselves. Then we shall lose freshness and become mere dealers in second-hand observations. Many thoughtful Brothers and Sisters are afraid that they may lose it through age. It does happen to men, as they grow old, that much of the vivacity of youth departs. And we all know ministers who have lost much of their power to edify because their freshness and variety have gone. It is a sad thing that it should have to be so with any of us, but what a blessed thing it is if we can fall back upon that assurance, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

Nature decays, but Grace shall thrive. The Holy Spirit will renew our youth. The Grace of God can give us freshness after Nature has ceased to yield it. And it shall be a better freshness—not the dew of our youth, but the dew of the Spirit of the Lord! If Jesus Christ is preached, age becomes an important help in bearing testimony to His faithfulness and power to bless. I can imagine it to be the duty of the aged minister to retire from the prominent sphere where he has long been the preacher—and I hope in my own case I shall not occupy this pulpit an hour too long! But the man of God can find another pulpit—and when he has found it, I can suppose him often beginning his youth, again, as he tells out the story of the Cross and talks of Jesus—and proclaims the Doctrines of Grace again! He can begin in his country sphere much in the same way as he set out at the first. At any rate, he has always this to fall back upon," I shall be anointed with fresh oil." The Holy Spirit will abide with him continually and give him an anointing of freshness.

And so with you, dear Friends. You think, when you have done addressing the class, "Well, I am pretty well spun out. I shall never be able to get another address." Shall you not? Read that— "I shall be anointed with fresh oil." And you that go out preaching in the villages and often cry,

“I do not know what I shall do for a sermon next Sunday,” think of this and be consoled—“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” Fall back on that! If you are called to speak to the same people for any length of time, it will make the promise all the more dear to you, as you can plead it before God, “Lord, anoint Your servant with fresh oil.” I pray that all of us in heart, soul, life, utterance and labor may always be kept fresh and may God grant that we do not backslide, for that would kill our freshness and put in the place of its sweet smell the foul odors of sin!

Oh to be holy, sweet and vigorous to the end! The Lord grant that we may make large drafts upon Himself for greater faith, greater love, and greater joy—then shall we have greater freshness! May we also be sustained from within by His blessed Spirit and so may our freshness continue to our dying day.

III. I close with the third point, which is this precious Word of God which gives us HOPE OF ITS RENEWAL. Let us not think that *we* must grow stale and *heavenly* things grow old with us, for, first, our God in whom we trust renews the face of the year. He is beginning His work, again, in the fair processes of Nature. The dreary winter has passed away. The time of the singing of birds is coming on and the sweet flowers are peeping out from their graves, enjoying a resurrection of glory and beauty.

Now, this is the God whom we serve, and if we have been passing through our wintertime, let us look for our spring. If any of you have been growing cold of late—if any of you have grown stale and mechanical and have fallen into ruts—come, look up! Look up and pray the great Renewer to visit you—

**“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers.”**

“He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” It will not take the Lord long to restore you. “His word runs very swiftly.” He speaks even to ice and frost and by His word they pass away. He has but to will it and all the genial days of spring and summer come hastening on and the banner of harvest is waving. “Awake you that sleeps and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Be hopeful! Be joyful! There are better days for you. Put your trust in God, who renews the face of the earth, and look for His Spirit to revive you.

Moreover, there is an excellent reason why you may expect to have all your freshness coming back—it is because Christ dwells in you! Do you not know it? Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory and, if so, your glory will be fresh about you, for He never grows stale. It is God that said of Him, “You have the dew of Your youth.” Oh, the doctrine of the indwelling of Christ in the Believer—let us never forget it! As long as that is a Truth of God, there is always a hope for us. Then there is the other grand doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you! If your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, shall He not always be to you a fountain of new life—a spring of fresh delights? Why, it must be so! The Holy Spirit is not exhausted. His power is not lessened in any degree

whatever. He can make your face shine, again, and your tongue sing again! He can make your heart leap, again, with unspeakable joy!

Come, you that sit in the dust, begin to rejoice, for God the Spirit is still with you and shall be with you—the Comforter whom Christ has given—never to be taken away! Rejoice in Him and ask Him, now, in His mercy, to restore your soul, and He will do it! Oh, what a blessing it is to get right deep down into God’s Word, for that Word is always new and the source of new thoughts in those who feed upon it! This is the Book of yesterday, today and forever—the Book which, though many of its verses were written thousands of years ago, is as new as though it were only written yesterday! From the mouth of God come the promises, at this moment, full of life and freshness and power! Come to it! It is all yours—every acre of this blessed land of Canaan is yours and will yield you corn and wine and oil!

There is not a star in the great firmament of Scripture but shines for you! There is not a text in all this mighty treasury of God but you may take it and spend it and live upon the produce! Therefore, while the Word of the Lord is so fresh and so full, it cannot be that you shall be stale in thought and conversation. You shall be anointed with fresh oil! God Himself is with you and He is always full! God Himself is with you and He is always living! God Himself is with you and He is always fresh—and He shall refresh your spirit! Why stay away? Come from all that is stale and flat and from all the dead past—and enter into eternal life where flowers forever bloom, fruits forever ripen—and the fresh springs forever flow!

Come and eat the new corn of the land and drink the new wine of the kingdom! And may the Lord make you glad in His House of Prayer for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

THE TREES IN GOD'S COURTS

NO. 1365

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

“Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

Psalm 92:13-15.

THESE verses occur at the close of a Psalm for the Sabbath over which there rests a Sabbatic glory of perfect calm, of hallowed peace. Amidst the business and bustle of daily life the great trouble of the Psalmist was the prosperity of the wicked, but it does not trouble him at all when he enters the sanctuary to keep the holy day. He then looks upon the ungodly who prosper in the world as so much flowering grass in their beauty and he beholds them cut down and utterly destroyed. And it is meet that a Psalm for the Sabbath should be calm and peaceful, cloudless and far-seeing. If on any day we see things in their right light and our views extend farther than at other times, surely it should be on the day of sacred rest.

I know a friend who wished to take a house in Newcastle. It stood on an elevated position and the landlord, who wished to have him for a tenant, took him to the attic of the house and said, “What a view there is from this window! Do you know,” he asked, “that on Sundays you can see Durham Cathedral?” “On Sundays!” said my friend, with a look of surprise, “And why not on other days?” “Well,” said the landlord, “on Sundays there is less smoke and so you can see farther.” And, as it is in the natural world, so it should always be in the spiritual—less of the smoke of this world—less of the dust and the care of life and, therefore, a clearer vision of the things which are beyond—things which God reveals to spiritual eyes! Read and sing this Psalm often and may your heart constantly be in that sweet restful state.

David, having here put aside this trouble which he so often brings up in the Psalms—the frequent prosperity of the wicked as they exult in power and spread themselves like a green bay tree, while the righteous are plagued all the day long and chastened every morning—after putting that aside, he dwells upon the delightful condition of the man of God and he describes him as a tree that is planted in the courts of God’s house, growing, flourishing and bearing fruit even in old age. It is of such we are now going to speak and we shall call your attention to the planting of the trees, the promise that they shall flourish, the continued fertility they exhibit and the conclusive proof they show of God’s faithfulness. “Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

I. THE PLANTING. It sounds odd to you to hear of planting a tree in a house and of its flourishing in courts, but you will please remember that an Oriental house is a sort of quadrangle. It is a four-square building with

the middle open to the sky and generally there is a small garden in which a palm tree, or an olive, or some other evergreen tree (for they generally prefer that sort) will be found planted. So what seems strange to us—a tree planted in a house—was not at all strange to David or to anybody else who lived in the city of Jerusalem. And it is a very beautiful figure—this being planted within the four courts of God's house that we might grow right in the middle of the place where God, with His family, deigns to dwell.

What, then, is it to be planted? Well, we are planted in God's house in two respects. First, in regeneration, when we are born into the house and, secondly, at our profession of faith, which should be by Baptism, when we are publicly brought into the house and planted in the likeness of Christ's death by being buried, after His commandment, in the water. We are really planted in the courts of the Lord's house by the new birth. Then we become the children of God, for "as many as received Him (that is to say, Him who is the Divine Word, the true Light, the Savior), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Every man, the world over, who has been born of the Holy Spirit, is really planted in the Lord's house. But we become manifestly and visibly so on confessing to the world this inward and spiritual Grace, for the Lord has thus put it, you know, "He that with His heart believes, and with His mouth makes confession, shall be saved," so that when I come to join God's people and ask to be admitted to their fellowship—when I come to the Lord's Table with them and publicly acknowledge myself to be one of the Master's servants—then I, am in a *public* manner, planted in the house of the Lord. Well, this being the fact, let us follow the figure a little more closely.

Planting implies, first, that there has been something done for us that that we could not do for ourselves. A tree cannot plant itself! There are self-sown trees, but such are not spoken of in the text. It is, "those that are planted in the house of the Lord." And you know it is necessary that there should be a work of Grace upon our souls, which shall come, not from ourselves, but distinctly from God, for, "every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." It cannot plant itself and, if it could, it must be rooted up, because it would not be planted by the heavenly Father. There must be worked upon us, in order to our being truly in the courts of the Lord's house, a work of *Grace* infinitely beyond the power of the will or all the power that dwells in human nature.

We must, in fact, be new-created. We must be born again! We must have as great a work worked upon us as was worked upon the body of Christ when He was raised from the dead! The eternal power and Godhead of the Divine Spirit must put forth the fullness of His strength to raise you up from your death in sin, or, otherwise you will be like sear branches and cast off pieces of wood—and you will never be as trees planted, made to live and to grow in the courts of the Lord's house. There must be something *done* for us if we are planted. That implies, too, that there must be a

great change in our position, for a tree that is planted has been growing somewhere else.

It has to reach a certain height in the nurseryman's garden, if we are speaking of England, and then it is planted where it is meant to be permanently fixed. So must it have been in the East. The tree grew somewhere else. After a time it was dug up, its roots were loosened and it was taken away from the place where it had been accustomed to stand. Many a tender rootlet was made to bleed and it was then carried and put in another place altogether and, from being outside the court, it came to be *inside* the court of the house of the Lord. So, Brothers and Sisters, if we are to answer the condition described in the text, we must have been dug up and transplanted. This is to have undergone a great and wonderful change.

Are we conscious of it? Do we know ourselves to be new creatures in Christ Jesus? If you are what you always were, you are what I pray you may not always be! But if you are new, changed, transformed, or, to come back to the text, *transplanted*, then I trust you may continue to thrive according to the promise, "They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Ah me, that transplanting business is often very painful and, while it is being undergone, we almost think that we are going to be destroyed! What anxiety it causes, for how is the plant to know why it is being taken up by the roots?

Perhaps it fancies—or rather, if it had any intellect it would fancy that it was taken up to be destroyed—just as when the Law put a big spade down to our roots and began to loosen all our soil about us, we thought, "Now we are going to be cut down." But we were not—we were going to be *transplanted* from the field of Nature into the garden of Grace! Blessed be God, we know what this means! Planting means not only that something has been done for us that we could not do for ourselves and that a great change has taken place in our position, but it implies that there is *life* in us!

I suppose that if we speak of planting a post or planting a pillar, we hardly use correct language. We plant a thing that has *life* in it and we do not consider that a thing has been planted unless it is a living thing. Most certainly the promise of the text could not be fulfilled to any but a living tree, for it is said—"They that are planted shall flourish and they shall bring forth fruit." God does not intend to have dead stumps standing in His court—

***"That little garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,
That little spot enclosed by Grace
Out of the world's wild wilderness,"***

is not intended to be occupied by dead trees! If there is such in it He will come and say, "Cut it down! Why does it cumber the ground?" It is a *living* tree that He desires to have there.

Beloved, are you conscious of an inner life? Does there beat within you another pulse—the pulse of strong desire and love to God—besides that which betokens natural life? Is there within you the heaving of another breath than that which keeps body and soul together? Is there the breath

of prayer that keeps the soul and God together and so keeps the man in spiritual life? Are you quickened? Have you had breathed into your nostrils the breath of the Life of God? Is there within you the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever? God's people are a *living* people and if we do not know the life of God we do not know God at all! There must be a life in us. And then, to complete the figure, it seems to me that the fact of our being planted implies that we, ourselves, have taken hold of the soil where we have been placed. A tree that is rightly planted, so as to flourish, begins to send out its roots—to drink in moisture—to select from the earth around it those portions which are fit food for vegetable life.

Now, Beloved, are you so incorporated with the Church of God that you have got a grip of the fellowship of the saints, that you have effectually laid hold of the citizenship of our Lord's faithful disciples? Are you seeking for vital Truths of God to sustain your soul's vitality? Do you, in the ordinances, send out the rootlets of your desire to seek after what God has prepared for you? Is there flowing in you a living sap, which sap is being fed by what you draw in from the soil in which God has placed you? Surely you know what this means! Sundays are often feeding times to you and your visits to the Lord in prayer are building-up times to your spirit!

And when you search the Word of God in private and when the Holy Spirit communes with you in your quiet retirement—yes, and when, even in the midst of business, your soul breathes her swift utterances up to Heaven—then are the roots of your soul taking hold of Christ and drawing out of Him the vital element which you need! You are of the right kind if this is the case—and you shall flourish in the courts of our God! You see, then, the figure, and what is meant by this planting in the house of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, LET US ENDEAVOR TO GRASP THE PROMISE. "Those that are planted shall flourish." "Flourish" they well may. Let us be sure of their welfare. They shall flourish because God has said that they shall! His promises are sure to be fulfilled. If He plants a tree, He will cause it to flourish. There seems to be very much against the Christian. He is exposed to many perils when he is first planted. Indeed, in the early childhood of Christian life, we undergo a world of trial. Such was our weakness and such our exposure to the bleak atmosphere of this present evil world—the chances were all against us.

But there is no chance with God! What He plants is sure to take root. If He says it shall flourish, flourish it will! Satan may seek to tear it up. The foxes may try to spoil the vines. There may be chilling winds. There may be long droughts. The sun may seek to smite it by day and the moon by night, but God has promised that it shall flourish and flourish it must! Therefore I invite you, young Christians, to be very hopeful. See to it that you are rightly planted and then you may depend upon it that you will really flourish! God, who has been pleased to give you Divine Grace, will bestow on you more Grace and then more Grace—Grace upon Grace—Grace for every crisis and every emergency!

As your needs arise, those needs shall be supplied. Just as you require spiritual health, spiritual health shall be vouchsafed to you if you seek it

at His hands, knowing that it is at His disposal. You shall not be a half-starved Christian—a sort of living skeleton of a Believer, but you shall flourish! You shall be peaceful, happy, strong, useful. Set your heart upon this and ask the Lord to make you thrive, bloom and bear fruit. Your leaf shall not wither and He will cause you to prosper if you are planted in the courts of the Lord.

Some of you, perhaps, are Christian men who have received the Word with gladness and believed to the saving of your souls and, so far, you appear to be in the courts of God's house. But you have never joined the Church, or made a profession of your faith, which, though it may be very sincere, is not very apparent! As, however, you have not gone in for the whole of the planting, you cannot reasonably expect to realize the whole of the flourishing! I like to know that I have given myself wholly up to the Lord according to His commands—not having merely embraced one part of the Gospel, but the whole of it. When one has sought to obey it in its entirety, then he may come and expect to have the promise in its entirety, too. If you are altogether Christians, planted in His house—not merely in His garden, but in His *house*—then you shall flourish, for you have the promise that you shall!

And flourish you well may, because of the goodness of the soil. They are quite sure to have good soil in the little garden enclosed by the house. It may be rocky outside, but when a man has built the four walls of his house in the East, he generally takes all the soil that is in the middle away. It may be very bad and poor, but then he has brought in baskets of the richest soil that he can possibly get, for he must have a good tree in the middle of his house. It would not do every moment of the day to look out, or rather to look in and to see a little scrubby tree, half alive. No, he procures the best soil he can get and those that are planted in the house of the Lord are planted in the best soil possible!

They are planted where the means of Grace abound! They are planted where Christians help one another with mutual fellowship. They are planted where the ordinances of the Gospel are freely enjoyed by all who dwell there. They are planted where the Holy Spirit has promised to abide. They are planted where the Word of God does not return void. They are planted where the eyes and the heart of Christ perpetually rest. They are planted in His Church—the Church that He has redeemed with His most precious blood! The soil is good and they ought to flourish—and they shall.

And then they are planted in a sheltered position. You know that trees, even if they have good soil, are sometimes a great deal kept back by having a cold northerly aspect. They may be very much bitten by the frost. But a tree that is planted right in the middle of the forecourt, surrounded by the walls, is sheltered. There is the natural warmth of the house round about it and it is sheltered from that which other trees out in the vineyard, or out in the garden, may have to endure. Oh, how sheltered some of us have been from our first profession of faith! I know that I can speak to some here who began Christian life in a class in the Sunday school where a loving teacher looked after their spiritual interests.

There are others of you that began your Christian life in the midst of a warm-hearted, earnest Church. You were no sooner seen as a member than two or three friends took hold of you and they did all they could to encourage you, guide you and sympathize with you. Whenever they may have observed a little lukewarmness or backsliding in your manner, they have looked after you as a mother anxious for her child—so tenderly have you been nursed by those who watched for your souls! And you surely cannot forget how, on Sundays, the Word of God has been a wonderful shelter to you! When your feet had almost slipped, there has been the very Word to hold you up.

When you felt dispirited there has been a promise to encourage you. When you have been ready to turn back, there has been an exhortation that has stimulated you once more to go forward—and so you have lived inside four walls. The cold could not get at you. You scarcely had enough of the cold of the world to do you any injury! The warm sun of righteousness was reflected upon you—not only did it come at once upon you by Divine favor—but it was reflected upon you with grateful sympathy by the walls of the house of the Lord in which you had been planted. You know it has been so! Is it any wonder, then, that you flourish?

There is a little wonder, sometimes, that you do not flourish *more* and that you do not bring forth more fruit, for what more could God do than He has done for some of you who have been planted in the house of the Lord? Are you not like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill which He has hedged about and walled? And does it not seem as if He has watered you every morning, and, lest any should hurt you, has kept you night and day? How sour the grapes and how few the clusters fit for the Great Vinedresser to gather, no one knows better than yourselves. Yet you ought to flourish, because you are planted in good soil and because you are placed in a sheltered position.

Still we might assign a better reason why you should flourish. It is because you are so near the Farmer. "My Father is the Farmer," says Christ. They that are planted in the house of the Lord are planted in the Farmer's house. I think I hear someone say, "I do not wonder that such a vine flourishes, because, you see, the Great Vinedresser, who understands all about it, has it on the wall of His own house. He sees it every morning and, of course He pays very special attention to it." Little do you and I know, Beloved, what special attention God has paid to us personally and individually!

Oh, there are some of us upon whom the Lord has long looked with a tender but jealous eye. If He has seen a little wrong about us, He has grieved at it and felt, "I must put it away." When He has seen us getting a little cold, He has begun at once to awaken us, for He has loved us too well to leave us exposed to even a little spiritual sickness. He has said sometimes, "There is My servant and he will get proud of his service, or of his success—I must bring him down." High looks and haughty thoughts are an abomination in His sight!

Another time He has said, "Such-and-Such is increasing in wealth. He will get worldly-minded. I must take away some of his worldly goods that

he may take more account of his treasures laid up in Heaven and set his heart more on Me." The Lord your God is a jealous God! Where there is love, there is oftentimes a sensitiveness which stirs up jealousy. The greatness of God's love makes Him very zealous *for* us and very jealous *of* us. If He sees those whom He very much loves with the slightest evil thing about them, He is quick to observe it and prompt to purge it away. You know that you do not like to see a spot on your dear child's face—you will have it washed off as soon as possible. So will the Lord cleanse His people, both on the outside and within!

The care and the trouble He has had with us, as I have already said, none of us can tell. We ought to bring forth fruit to the profit of the Farmer, to the glory of God. Branches that bring forth fruit He purges. Those that bring forth very little fruit He lets very much alone. If there is a man that brings forth much fruit, that man will have much trial because it will profit the Vinedresser to prune him. Some branches will not pay for it. They will never do more than they are doing and so there they are and thus they are left to prove their feebleness. But those that will profit for pruning will be pruned again and again! And truly, when the man of God is in his right mind, he will bless the Lord for the honor He puts upon him when He afflicts him with the view of making him still more useful.

This is evermore our Lord's design. Does He not say that they shall never perish whom He protects and provides for, holding them in His hands? But, as they cannot flourish if they run to wood, He will be quite sure to use His knife to take off this new shoot and that new shoot because it is not fruit-bearing wood. And so He takes it away and He leaves the vine in such a condition that it will bring forth good fruit in due time. They shall flourish and well they may, when they are so near to the Great Farmer's hand!

Now, if any of you are not flourishing, though you are planted in the house of the Lord, I am sure it is not through any fault on God's part. Let such ask Him, and ask themselves, the reason why and go to Him in prayer and say—"Good Lord, I am planted in Your house. Make me to flourish according to Your Word."

III. Well, now, as to THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS FLOURISHING, our third head is full of consolation. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." There are some that begin with a spurt and it is soon over. And there are some trees that promise exceedingly well for fruit, but the blossoms do not knit and, therefore, they fail to yield fruit in due season. But those whom God plants and whom He makes to flourish, bring forth fruit and continue to bring it forth, still, in old age! During all their youth and all their manhood they are fruitful and then they bring forth fruit when their years decline and their days are numbered!

When others are in the sear and yellow leaf, their fruits are ripe and mellow. When others are decaying, they are ripening. They are growing sweeter, better, holier when others are not growing at all. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age—that time when one does not expect much fruit bearing—when the strength fails and when the capacity for project-

ing seems to have gone and the power for carrying out what is projected has become very little. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is not merely a cheering promise, but it is a very gratifying fact that God's people still bring forth fruit in old age! Some of them produce very luscious fruit.

Yes, we look for the best fruit in the oldest saints. What fruit, then, you will ask, do they bring forth? Well, there is the fruit of *testimony*. I distinctly remember hearing a blind old minister talk of the loving kindness of the Lord when I was 16 or 17—and the encouragement that he gave me has never departed from me. A young man could not have done that because he had not attained so much experience. But the weight of years and even of infirmities, made that venerable blind man's testimony very, very weighty to my soul. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." Blessed be His name, I can tell of the goodness of the Lord to me these 25 years or more since I have known Him! But think of a man who can speak of 50 years—and there are some children of God who can do so!

There is a member of this Church who has been a member of it for 70 years and she can tell you how good the Lord has been to her! And the fruit is riper, you know. There is a cumulative force of evidence, because if a thing has been true 50 years and a person has tried it in all sorts and shapes and ways and modes and conditions and circumstances—50 years—well, who is to contradict that? It must be so and you feel the testimony is a blessed fruit of old age. Saints bring forth fruit in the way of savor when they grow old. Many young ministers can rattle out some of the Truths of the Gospel very readily, but if you want to taste the sweetness, to feel the unction, to enjoy the savor—you must hear one that has had long and deep experience. It must be so!

There is an inimitable mellowness about the Christian who has grown old in his Master's service. If you want to hear about the sea, talk to an "old salt." If you want to hear about war, talk to an old soldier that has been in battle and smelt gunpowder—and knows what it is to have lost a leg. He is the man to tell you! And so, if you want to know about the real deeps, the truth, the vitality, the power of religion—you must not go to boys—you must go to those who bring forth fruit in old age because they can speak out of the fullness of their soul! We have had some in this Church—there are such now and there are some in Heaven—who, every time we used to hear them speak, let drop pearls and diamonds while they talked about what the Lord had done for them!

Dear old Mr. Dransfield—how many a time he electrified us when he used to stand on that platform and talk about the blessedness of God and the sweetness of religion to his soul! You used to think a great deal more of it because he was so old. I am sure you did! It was good in itself, but still there was the age of the man at the back of it. So in that case the age gave a power to the experience which he told us. The aged Christian ought to have and I hope he often has, the fruit of patience. After having suffered so long and enjoyed the mercies of God so long, he ought to learn to be patient. I once heard a good Christian man say that he was confessing a fault.

He said, "I am afraid that the fruit of my old age is peevishness." "No," I said, "that is not a fruit of your old age—it is a fruit of your old nature." But the fruit of old age, where there is Grace in old age, should be patience. And oh, what fruit some of God's servants show by way of patience in poverty, in sickness, in infirmities! There used to sit here an aged woman who could not hear anything I said, but she always came because she thought it was setting a good example to the young people at home to attend the house of God. Whenever I used to speak with her, there was such a charm about her conversation because, though she was much tried, she never uttered a complaint. She could only bless the name of the Lord for everything!

You remember Dr. Hamilton's story of poor old Betty who could not do anything but lie in bed and cough? She said, "Well, bless the Lord, whatever the Lord has told me to do I have tried to do it. And when He said, 'Betty, bring up your family,' I tried to bring them up in the fear of God. When He said, 'Betty, go to the house of God and sing My praises,' I was delighted to do it. And when He said, 'Betty, go upstairs and lie in bed and cough,' well I did that, too, and still do it," she said, "and bless the name of the Lord for letting me do it so long as there is anything to be done for Him." Now, the promise is that if we are planted as I have described, we shall be enabled to bring forth fruit in old age. Anything that we do with a sincere desire to glorify God in it and anything that we bear with patience and quietness according to the Divine will is sweet and gracious fruit. We can, by God's Grace, bring forth that fruit in our old age.

One of the most delicious fruits that Christians produce in their old age is calm, quiet confidence in God. John Bunyan has described this in his, "Pilgrim's Progress," in the beautiful picture of the land, Beulah. I shall not at all object to have a gray head and eyes like lamps whose wasting oil is spent, weak shoulders and tottering knees if I may get to Beulah! You know that he describes it as a land that was just on the verge of the river and so near to the Celestial Country that the shining ones did often cross the river. And there was a pervading smell of sweet spices all over the land because it lay so near to the City of the Blessed that when the wind blew that way it wafted the spices across! And they could, in quiet places of the land, often hear the songs of the shining ones who wandered there.

The inhabitants were at perfect rest. The land was called Beulah, for God's delight was in her. They that dwelt in her were called Heph-Zibah, for they were married unto the Lord and they were sitting there, many of them, close by the brink of the river, waiting till a message should come from the King, for the King's messengers, every now and then, came into the country and said, "The pitcher is broken at the cistern. Rise up, my Love, and come away." And so, one by one, the Beulahites crossed that river! On bright sunshiny mornings they were known to cross it singing, "O Grave, where is your victory?"

Well, it is that patient abiding, that quiet waiting, that holy confidence, that Divine anticipation, that sweet expectation of the coming Glory that is one of the fruits which Believers bring forth in old age. And whenever we see it, we prize those golden apples and long for the time when we may

bear them, too. But now notice that the text does not speak of old age merely bringing forth fruit, but it says—"They shall be fat and flourishing," which means that Christians, in their advanced years, shall have a fullness of savor and life in them. I have known some Christians, both old and young, that have been very dry sticks—certainly not fat and flourishing! They had very little savor and very little unction, though they had very sharp teeth to bite the young people with. They were very critical, very ready to look harshly at them and ask them hard questions.

And, if the youngster could not spell the biggest word in the whole Confession of Faith, they have said, "Ah, the young people nowadays are not like what they used to be in *my* time." We have known some of that sort! But when they are planted in the house of God and God makes them to flourish, they are full of the juice of love! They are full of Christian kindness and gentleness! They are full of life! They are full of real vigor—not the vigor of the flesh, but the vigor of the Spirit—and they love the Lord and delight in Him. They greatly delight to help the young people and to encourage them in the ways of the Lord. Oh, I like to see an old man thus fat and flourishing!

And it is added, in addition to their being fat, that they shall be flourishing. It means that the aged Believer shall have a special verdure. This flourishing means his profession—and how delightful is the profession of Christianity in advanced age! I do not mean that some people get exceedingly attached to the pastor whom they have heard for many, many years. One old woman used to say that she liked to hear the old minister better than anybody else. "Well, but," they said, "He is getting very feeble." "Oh," she said, "but then I remember what he used to be and I would sooner see him shake his head than I would hear anybody else preach."

And I have no doubt that, though that grows to be an infirmity and folly, there is something praiseworthy in it because you remember the times and seasons when the Lord refreshed your soul by him and there is a moral glory about a man as you look at him who has been, say, for 50 years, living and laboring as a public professing Christian—without a stain upon his reputation—not a spot on his character! Why, the young people say, "Bless God! If He has kept him, why should He not keep *me*? And if the Lord has sustained him under many trials, why should He not sustain *me*?" It is not what the man says—it is the *man that says it* that gives force to all he says. It is what you know is behind the voice. It is the experience of the Lord's goodness. It is the long-continued honorable conduct which God has enabled him to maintain and show to others, by the abounding Grace that was within him, which preaches in accents louder than the finest voice can articulate!

Now, I pray that every young man here—and I am glad to see so many young men—will seek to be, one day, among the *old* men whose profession shall be the very strength of the Church because of this consistency! I will not say to my elder Brothers and Sisters—because the Lord will say it to them—that they ought to remember what manner of people they ought to be, seeing that God has been so gracious to them these many years.

IV. I close with my fourth point, which is **THE MANIFESTATION THAT AFFORDS CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS.** "To show that the Lord is upright." These good folks are to bring forth fruit and to be fat and flourishing, on purpose, to manifest before the eyes of all men, "That the Lord is upright. He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him." "That the Lord is upright." Well, how does the fruit-bearing of an aged Christian show that? Why, it shows that God has kept His promise! He has promised that He will never leave them nor forsake them.

There you see it—He has promised that when they are weak they shall be strong! There you see it—He has promised that if they seek Him they shall not lack any good thing. There you see it. He has promised them, "Your bread shall be given you. Your water shall be sure." Hear what they have to say and you will see it! He has said, "Even to hoar hairs I am He. I have made and I will bear, and I will carry you as in the days of old." There you have it. Ask them! There you see it. We put, "Q. E. D.," at the end of a proposition when it is proved. So you may put that down at the end of the problem of life. God is good to His people! The old man stands up and says, "Truly God is good to Israel. If you could hear my story, young man, you would see it before your eyes and it would show that the Lord is upright."

Nor is it only that He keeps His promises, but the Lord is kind and generous towards His servants. I always think it a shameful, heartless thing to turn adrift, when He gets old, a man who has been in your service from His youth. It is one of the things that have become more common in present than in former times, to turn out old servants. Since you have had the pith of their life—the marrow out of their bones—keep a roof over their heads! Grant them a pension, or at least a pittance! Supply them with a bit of bread and cheese till they die. I think it is only right that an old servant, a faithful servant, should be so treated.

You know how David puts it. "O God, You have taught me from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." It is not likely that He would, is it? Such a God as He, turn His old servants out? You remember the Amalekite who had a master that was an Egyptian and the master left him to perish and David found him? Ah, well, that is how the Egyptian masters do, but that is *not* how *our* Master does! You will not leave or desert me when my age and my infirmities multiply upon me! When these eyes grow dim You will look upon me. When another shall guard me and lead me where I would not, You, still, will be my Friend and Helper, and lay Your finger on my eyelids as I close them in the hour of death. It is a faithful God we serve, and He keeps His people alive in their old age that they may show that He is a faithful and upright God.

Now, David added at the end, "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." I want every one of my elderly friends to add his, Amen, to this sentence and to set his seal that God is true! Come forward as witnesses, attest the deed while it is being executed and put your names to the record and say, "I bear witness to that." At least I want you in the si-

lence of your hearts to come and say, "Yes, I can bear witness." David says, "He is my rock." My aged Brothers and Sisters, you can say, "God is the Rock on which my hope is founded—my Foundation—and He has never failed me. The Rock will never shake, never move, never give way. He is the Rock of my defense—the 'Rock of Ages cleft for me.' I have hidden myself in Him and I have been safe. He is the Rock of my abiding. I have dwelt in Him and lived in Him and I have found Him my castle and my high tower. He is a Rock for immutability."

Can you say that, Brothers and Sisters? He has never changed—never! He has been "without variableness or shadow of turning." Every good and perfect gift have I received from Him. Bear witness to it! This is what is needed in this age—that you should bear witness that God is a Rock—firm, strong, faithful, immutable—the defense of His people! And then "there is no unrighteousness in Him." I would have you bear witness to that. You have had some sharp troubles. Have you ever had more than you ought to have? You have had many losses. Have you really lost anything in being a Christian? You have been brought very low. Have you ever been altogether left and deserted? You have gone through fire and through water, but has the fire consumed you? Has the water drowned you?

If you have anything to say against God, you old servants of His, let us hear it! No, but the older God's people get, the more they praise Him! And one reason why I am sure that God must be a good God is that I always find that all His servants want to get their children into the same house, into the same family! A man is not badly treated by his master when he says, "My ambition is to have my boy follow me." Oh, I can speak well of my Lord and Master in all that He has ever given me to do, but it is the joy of my soul to think that my sons should follow me in the love of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel!

We who are younger men, but yet who have had a good deal of tossing to and fro, can say, "He is my Lord and there is no unrighteousness in Him. No, not a flaw in Him—not one unkindness, not one unfaithfulness, not one forgetfulness, not one angry word, not one thing but what has been full of love." He has said, "I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, or rebuke you," and He has kept His promise! And up to this hour we cannot discover speck, spot, or flaw in all the transactions of His Providence. Though sometimes they have been mysterious, they have always been right!

Blessed be His name forever and ever! Oh, who would not be planted in the courts of such a God as this to be kept even to old age and to be blessed with such unspeakable blessings world without end? God grant you all to be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified! Amen.

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MORNING AND EVENING SONGS

NO. 1138

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

***“To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning,
and Your faithfulness every night.”
Psalm 92:2.***

IT is a notion of the Rabbis that this Psalm was sung by Adam in Paradise. There are no reasons why we should believe it was so and there are a great many why we should be sure it was not. It is not possible that Adam could have sung concerning brutish men and fools, and the wicked springing as grass, while as yet he was the only man, and himself un-fallen. Still, at least the first part of the Psalm might have fallen as suitably from the lips of Adam as from our tongues, and if Milton could put into Adam's mouth the language—

***“These are Your glorious works,
Parent of good, Almighty, shine this universal frame.
Thus wondrous fair, Yourself how wondrous then!”***

He might with equal fitness have made him say, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Your name, O Most High: to show forth Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night; for You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work: I will triumph in the works of Your hands.”

The Jews have, for a long while, used this Psalm in the synagogue worship on their Sabbath and very suitable it is for our Sunday—not so much in appearance, for there is little or no allusion to any Sabbatic rest in it—but because on that day, above all others, our thoughts should be lifted up from all earthly things to God Himself. The Psalm tunes the mind to adoration and so prepares it for Sunday worship. It supplies us with a noble subject for meditation—the Lord, the Lord alone, lifting us up even above His works into a contemplation of Himself and His mercies toward us. Oh, that always on Sunday, when we come together, we might assemble in the spirit of praise, feeling that it is good to give thanks unto the name of the Most High—and would God that always when we were assembled we could say, “You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work: I will triumph in the works of Your hands.”

There is no doubt that in this second verse there is an allusion to the offering of the morning and the evening lambs, for, in addition to the great Paschal celebration, once a year, and the other feasts and fasts, each of which brought Christ prominently before the mind of those Jews who were instructed by the Spirit of God, a lamb was offered every morning and every evening, as if to remind them that they needed daily cleansing for daily sin. For then there was always a remembrance of sin, seeing that the one great Sacrifice which puts away sin forever had not yet been offered, though now, in these, our days, we need no morning or evening lamb. The very idea of a repetition or a rehearsal of the Sacrifice of Christ

is, to us, most horribly profane and blasphemous, yet we should remember continually the one Sacrifice and never wake in the morning without beholding “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world,” nor fall to sleep at night without turning our eyes anew to Him who, on the bloody tree, was made sin for us.

Our text, however, is meant to speak to us concerning *praise*. Praise should be the continual exercise of Believers. It is the joyful work of Heaven—it should be the continual joy of earth. And we are taught by the text, I think, that while praise should be given only to the One who is in Heaven, and we should adore perpetually our Triune God, yet there should be variety in our unity. We bless the Lord and the Lord alone. We have no music but for Him, but we do not always praise Him after the same fashion. As there were different instruments of music—the ten-stringed instrument or decachord, the psaltery, the harp—so, too, there are different subjects—a subject for the morning and a subject for the evening—*loving kindness* to be shown forth at one time and *faithfulness* to be sung at another.

I wish that men studied more the praise they profess to present unto God. I sometimes find, even in our own public song, simple as it is, that there evidently is a lack of thought among us—for time is not maintained with the precision which would grow out of thoughtfulness. There is a tendency to sing more slowly, as if devotion were wearying, if not wearisome. And too frequently I fear the singing gets to be mechanical, as if the tune mastered you and you did not govern the tune by making those inflections and modulations of voice which the sense would suggest if you sang with all your hearts and with all your understandings.

The very posture of some people indicates that they are going through the hymn, but the hymn is not going through their hearts, nor ascending to God on the wings of soaring gratitude. I have also noticed with sad reflections the way in which, if there happens to be a chorus at the close—a “Hallelujah,” or “Praise God”—some will drop into their seats as if they had not thought enough to remember that it was coming, and then, with a jerk, all in confusion, they stand up again, being so asleep in heart that anything out of the common is too much for them. Far am I from caring for postures or tones, but when they indicate lack of *heart*, I do care, and so should you. Remember well that there is no more of music to God’s ear in any service than there is of heart-love and holy devotion. You may make floods of music with your organ if you like, or you may make equally good music—and some of us think *better*—with *human voices*, but it is not music to God, either of instrument or of voice, unless the *heart* is there. And the heart is not fully there—the man, the whole man, is not fully there—unless the soul glows with the praise.

In our private praise, also, we ought to think more of what we are doing and concentrate our entire energies for the sacred exercise. Ought we not to sit down, before we pray, and ask our understanding, “What am I going to pray for? I bow my knee at my bedside to pray—ought I not to pause and consider the things I ought to ask for? What do I need, and what are the promises which I should plead? And why is it that I may expect that

God should grant me what I want?" We would pray better if we occupied more time in *consideration*. And so when we come to praise we ought not to rush upon it, helter skelter, but engage in it with prepared hearts.

I notice that when musicians are about to discourse sweet music there is a tuning-up. There is a preparation and there are rehearsals which they perform before they go through their music in public. So our soul ought to rehearse the subject for which it is about to bless God and we ought to come before the Lord, both in public and in private, with subjects of praise which our thought has considered, not offering unto the Lord that which has cost us nothing, but with a warm heart pouring out before His Throne adoration grounded upon subjects of thanksgiving appropriate to the occasion.

So it seems the Psalmist would have us do—"To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night." It is not mere praise, but *varied* praise, praise with distinct subjects at appointed seasons. Upon this we are about to speak for a little while. And we shall speak first—here is a subject for morning worship. Secondly, here is another for evening devotion. And this last, before we close our discourse, we shall try to practice.

I. First, then, notice MORNING WORSHIP—"To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning." "In the morning." There cannot be a more suitable time for praising God than in the morning! Everything around is congenial to it. Even in this great wilderness of brick the gleams of sunlight in these summer mornings seem like songs, songs without words—or rather music without sounds. And out in the country where every blade of grass twinkles with its own drop of dew, and all the trees glisten as if they were lit up with sapphire by the rising dawn—and when a thousand birds awake to praise their Maker, making harmonious concerts, all with all their hearts casting their entire energies into the service of holy song—it seems most fit that the key of the morning should be in the hand of praise—and that when the daylight lifts its eyelids it should look out upon grateful hearts.

We ourselves have newly risen from our beds and if we are in a right state of mind we are thankful for the night's sleep—

***"The evening rests our wearied head,
And angels guard the room.
We wake, and we admire the bed
That was not made our tomb."***

Every morning is a sort of resurrection. At night we lay us down to sleep, stripped of our garments, as our souls are of their bodies when we come to die. But the morning wakes us and if it is a Sunday morning we do not put on our work-day clothes, but find our Sunday dress ready to hand. Even thus shall we be satisfied when we wake up in our Master's likeness, no more to put on the soiled raiment of earth, but to find it transformed into a Sunday robe in which we shall be beautiful and fair, even as Jesus our Lord, Himself!

Now, as every morning brings to us, in fact, a resurrection from what might have been our tomb, and delivers us from the image of death which through the night we wore, it ought to be saluted with thanksgiving. As

the great Resurrection morning will be awakened with the sound of the trumpet's far-sounding music, so let every morning, as though it were a resurrection to us, awaken us with hymns of joy!—

***“All praise to You who safe have kept,
And have refreshed me while I slept!
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall wake,
I may of endless life partake.”***

“To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning.” We are full of vigor then! We shall be tired before night comes round—perhaps in the heat of the day we shall be exhausted. Let us take care, while we are fresh, to give the cream of the morning to God. Our poet says—

***“The flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no mean sacrifice.”***

Let us give the Lord the bud of the day, its virgin beauty, its unsullied purity.

Say what you will about the evening, and there are many points about it which make it an admirable season for devotion, yet the morning is the choice time. Is it not a queenly hour? See how it is adorned with diamonds more pure than those which flash in the crowns of eastern potentates! The old proverb declares that they who would be rich must rise early. Surely those who would be rich towards God must do so! No dews fall in the middle of the day and it is hard to keep up the dew and freshness of one's spirit in the worry, care and turmoil of midday. But in the morning the dew should fall upon our fleece till it is filled and it is well to wring it out before the Lord, and give Him our morning's vigor, our morning's freshness and unction!

You will see, I think, without my enlarging, that there is a fitness in the morning for praising God. But I shall not merely confine the text to the morning of each day. The same fitness appertains to the morning of *all* our days. Our youth, our first hours of the day of life, ought to be spent in showing forth the loving kindness of God. Dear young Friends, you may rest assured that nothing can happen to you so blessed as to be converted while you are young! I bless God for my having known Him when I was 15 years of age, but I have often felt like that Irishman who said that he was converted at 20 and he wished it had been 21 years before. I have often felt the same desire.

Oh, if it could have been so, that the very first breath one drew had been consecrated to God, that it had been possible for the first rational thought to be one of devotion—that the first act of judgment had been exercised upon Divine Truth and the first pulsing affection had been towards the Redeemer who loved us and gave Himself for us! What blessed reflections would fill the space now occupied with penitent regrets! The first part of a Christian life has charms peculiar to itself. In some respects—

***“That age is best which is the first,
For then the blood is warmer.”***

I know the after part is riper, it is more mellow. There is a sweetness about autumn fruit, but the basket of early fruit—the first ripe fruit—this is what God desires! And blessed are they who, in the morning, show forth the loving kindness of God!

Or the words may be explained mystically to signify those periods of life which are bright like the morning to us. We have our ups and downs, our ebbs and flows, our mornings and our nights. Now, it is the duty and the privilege, of our bright days, for us to show forth God's loving kindness in them. It may be some of you have had so rough a life that you consider your nights to be more numerous than your days. Others of us could not, even in common honesty, subscribe to such a belief. No, blessed be God, our mornings have been very numerous. Our days of joy and rejoicing, after all, have been abundant—ininitely more abundant than we might have expected they could be, dwelling as we do in the land of sorrows. Oh, when the joy days come, let us always consecrate them by showing forth God's loving kindness!

Do not as some do, who, if they are prospering, make a point of not admitting to it. If they make money, for instance—well, they are “doing pretty well.” “Pretty well,” do they call it? Time was, when, if they had done half so well, they would have been ready to jump for joy! How often the farmer, when his crop could not be any larger, and when the field is loaded with it, will say, “Well, it is a very fair crop.” Is that all? Oh, what robbery of God! This talk is far too common on all sides and ought to be most solemnly rebuked! When we have been enjoying a long stretch of joy and peace, instead of saying that it is so, we speak as if—well, well, God has dealt very well with us upon the whole, but at the same time He has done for us nothing very remarkable.

I saw a tombstone the other day which pleased me. I do not know that I ever saw an epitaph of that kind before. I think it was for a person of the age of 80, and it said of her, “who after a happy and grateful enjoyment of life, died,” and so on. Now, *that* is what we ought to say, but we talk as if, really, we were to be *pitied* for living—as if we were little better off than toads under a hallow, or snails in a tub of salt! We whine as if our lives were martyrdoms and every breath a woe. But it is not so! Such conduct slanders the good Lord! Blessed be the Lord for creating us. Our life has mercies, yes, innumerable mercies. And, notwithstanding the sorrows and the troubles of it, there are joys and benedictions past all count. There are mornings in which it becomes us to show forth the loving kindness of the Lord.

See, then, the season, the morning of each day, the morning of our days and the morning of our brightness and prosperity. The Psalmist suggests that the best topic for praise on such occasions is loving kindness. And truly I confess that this is a theme which might suit nights as well as days, though doubtless he saw an appropriateness in allotting this topic to the morning. Verily it might suffice for all the day long! Was there ever such a word in any language as that word *loving kindness*? I have sometimes heard Frenchmen talking about their language and I have no doubt it is a very beautiful tongue. And Germans glorify the speech of the Fatherland and I have heard our Welsh friends extolling their unpronounceable language and crying it up as the very tongue that was spoken in Paradise! Very likely, indeed!

But I venture to say that no language beneath the sky has a word in it that is richer than this—*loving kindness*. It is a duplicate deliciousness. There are, within it, linked sweetnesses long drawn out. *Loving kindness*. It is a kind of word with which to cast spells which should charm away all fears! It was said of Mr. Whitefield that he could have moved an audience to tears by saying the word, “Mesopotamia.” I think he could have done it better with the word, “loving kindness.” Put it under your tongue, now. Let it lie there. LOVING KINDNESS. Kindness. Does that mean kinned-ness? Some say that it is the root-sense of the word—kinned-ness, such feeling as we have to our own kin, for blood is always thicker than water and we act towards those who are our kindred as we cannot readily do towards strangers.

Now, God has made us of His kin. In His own dear Son He has taken us into His family. We are *children* of God—“heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus.” And there is a kinned-ness from God to us through our great Kinsman, Jesus Christ. But then the word is only half understood when you get to that, for it is loving-kindness. For a surgeon to set a man’s limb when it is out of joint or broken is kindness, although he may do it somewhat roughly and in an off-hand manner. But if he does it very tenderly, covering the lion’s heart with the lady’s hand—then he shows loving kindness. A man is picked up on the battlefield and put into an ambulance and carried to the hospital. That is kindness. But oh, if that poor soldier’s mother could come into the hospital and see her boy suffering, she would show him loving-kindness, which is something far more!

A child run over in the street outside yonder, and taken to the hospital, would be cared for, I have no doubt, with the greatest kindness. But, after all, send for its mother, for she will give it loving kindness! And so the Lord deals with us. He gives us what we need in a fatherly manner. He does to us what we need in the most tender fashion. It is kindness. It is kinned-ness, but it is *loving kindness*. The very heart of God seems written out in this word. We could hardly apply it in full force to any but to our Father who is in Heaven!

Now *here* is a subject for us to sing about in the morning! How shall I begin with the hope of going through this subject? It is an endless one. Loving kindness begins—ah, I must correct myself—it never did *begin*. It had no beginning. “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Everlasting love, therefore, is what we must begin to sing of! And that everlasting love was infinite in its preparations, for before we had been created the Lord had made a Covenant on our account and resolved to give His only-begotten Son, that we might be saved from wrath through Him. The loving kindness of God, our Father, appeared in Jesus Christ. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us always be talking about this!

I wonder why it is, when we meet each other, that we do not begin at once to say, “Brother, have you been thinking over the loving kindness of the Lord in the gift of His dear Son?”—for, indeed, it is such a marvelous thing that it ought not to be a nine-days’ wonder with us. It ought to fill us with astonishment every day of our lives!. Now, if something wonderful

happens, everybody's mouth is full of it and we speak to one another about it at once, while like the Athenians, all our neighbors are greedy to hear. Let our mouths, then, be full of the marvelous loving kindness of God! And for fear we should leave the tale half untold, let us begin early in the morning to rehearse the eternal love manifested in the great gift of Jesus Christ.

If we have already spoken about these things, and wish for variety, let us speak concerning the loving kindness of God to each one of us in bringing us to Jesus. What a history each man's own life is! I suppose that if any one of our lives should be fully written, it would be more wonderful than a romance. I have sometimes seen a sunset of which I have said, "Now, if any painter had depicted *that*, I should have declared that the sky never looked in that way, it is so strange and singular." And in the same way, should some of our lives be fully written, many would say, "It could not have been so!" How many have said of Huntingdon's, "Bank of Faith," for instance, "Oh, it is a bank of nonsense"? Yet I believe that it is correct and bears the marks of truth upon its very face. I believe that the man did experience all that he has written, though he may not always have told us everything in the best possible manner.

Many other people's lives would be quite as wonderful as his if they could be written. Speak about, then, the loving kindness of God to *yourself* in particular. Rehearse, if to no other ear, to your own ear, and to the ear of God, the wondrous story of how—

***"Jesus sought you when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God,"***

how His Grace brought you to Himself and so into eternal life. And then, Brethren, sing of the loving kindness of God to yourselves since your new birth. Remember the mercies of God! Do not bury them in the grave of ingratitude. Let them glisten in the light of gratitude! I am sure that you will find this a blessed morning portion—it will sweeten all the day.

The Psalmist would have you begin the day with it, because you will need all the day to complete it! Indeed, you will need all the days of *life* and all eternity! And I am half of Addison's mind—though the expression is somewhat hyperbolic—

***"But, oh, eternity's too short
To utter half Your praise."***

What a blessed subject you have before you—the loving kindness of the Lord. Not yourself—not yourself. That is a horrible subject to speak upon. When I hear Brethren get up and glory in their own attainments and graces, I remember the words of the wise man, "Let another praise you, and not your own lips." Above all things, when a man says that he has made great advances in sanctification it is sickening and clearly proves that he has not learned the meaning of the word "humility." I hope the eyes of our friends will be opened and that they will come to loathe the devil's meat which now deceives them. May we no longer see spiritual self-conceit held up among us as a virtue, but may it be shunned as a deadly evil. No, let my mouth be filled with God's praise, but not with my own!

My Brothers and Sisters, let not our tongues be always occupied with our griefs! If you have a skeleton in your house, why should you always

invite every friend who calls upon you to inspect the uncomely thing? No! Tell what God has done for you! Tell of His loving kindness! I have heard—and I repeat the story because it ought to be repeated, simple as it is—of a pastor who frequently called upon a poor bedridden woman who, very naturally, always told him of her pains and her needs. He knew all about her rheumatism. He had heard of it 50 times and at last he said to her, “My dear Sister, I sympathize with you deeply, and I am never at all tired of hearing your complaints. But could you not, now and then, tell me something about what the Lord does for you—something about your enjoyments, how He sustains you under your pain, and so on?” It was a rebuke well put and well taken. And ever afterwards there was less said about the griefs and more heard about the blessings! Help us from now on to resolve, Great God, “To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning.”

Thus we have considered the time and the topic. And now we are bound to observe the *manner* in which we are to deal with the subject. The Psalmist says we are to show it forth, by which I suppose he means that we are not to keep to ourselves what we know about God’s loving kindness. Every Christian in the morning ought to show it forth, first in his own chamber before God. He should express his gratitude for the mercies of the night and the mercies of his whole life. Then let him, if it is possible, show it forth in his family. Let him gather them together and worship the Lord and bless Him for His loving kindness.

And then when the Christian goes into the world, let him show forth God’s loving kindness. I do not mean by talking of it to everyone he meets, casting pearls before swine, as it would be to some men, but by the very way in which he speaks, acts and looks. A Christian ought to be the most cheerful of men, so that others should say, “What makes him look so happy? He is not rich. He is not always in good health. He has his troubles, but he seems to bear all so well and to trip lightly along the pathway of life.” By our cheerful conversation we ought to show forth in the morning God’s loving kindness.

“Ah,” says one, “but when you are depressed in spirit?” Do not show it if you can help it. Do as your Master said—“appear not unto men to fast.” Do not imagine that the appearance of sadness indicates sanctity. It often means hypocrisy. To conceal one’s own griefs for the sake of cheering others betokens a self-denying sympathy which is the highest kind of Christianity. Let us present the sacrifice of praise in whatever company we may be, but when we get among God’s own people, then is the time for a whole burnt offering. Among our own kith and kin we may safely open our box of sweets. When we find a Brother who can understand the loving kindness of the Lord, let us tell it forth with sacred delight.

We have choice treasures which we cannot show to ungodly eyes, for they would not appreciate them. But when we meet with eyes which God has opened, then let us open the jewelry case and say, “Brother, rejoice in what God has done for us. See His loving kindness to me, His servant, and His tender mercies which have been ever of old.” Thus, beloved Friends, I have set before you a good morning’s work and I think, if God’s

Spirit helps us to attend to it, we shall come out of our chambers with our breath smelling sweet with the praises of God! We shall go down into the world without care, much more without anger. We shall go calmly to our work and meet our cares quietly and happily.

The joy of the Lord will be our strength. It is a good rule never to look into the face of man in the morning till you have looked into the face of God—an equally good rule is to always to have business with Heaven before you have any business with earth. Oh, it is a sweet thing to bathe in the morning in the love of God! To bathe in it so that when you come forth out of the ivory chambers of communion where you have been made glad, your garments shall smell of the myrrh and aloes and cassia of holiness! Do we all attend to this? I am afraid we are in too much of a hurry, or we get up too late. Could we not rise a little earlier? If we could steal even a few minutes from our beds, those few minutes would scatter their influence over the entire day.

It is always bad to start on a journey without having looked to the harness and to the horse's shoes. And it often happens that the time saved by omitting examination turns out to be a dead loss when the traveler has advanced a little on his journey. Not one minute, but a hundred minutes may be lost by the lack of a little attention at first! Set the morning watch with care if you would be safe through the day. Begin well if you would end well. Take care that the helm of the day is put right. Look well to the point you want to sail to, then whether you make much progress or little, it will be so far in the right direction. The morning hour is generally the index of the day.

II. Now, let us turn to the second part of our subject very briefly. The Psalmist says, "To show forth Your faithfulness EVERY NIGHT. Now, the night, Beloved, is a peculiarly choice time for praising God's faithfulness. "Oh," says one, "we are very tired." Well, that may be, but it is a pity that we should be reduced to such a condition that we are too tired to praise God! A holy man of God always used to say, when they said to him, "Can you pray?" "Thank God, I am never too tired to pray." If anything can awaken us, the service of Christ should do it! There should be, within us, an enthusiasm which kindles at the very thought of prayer!

Have you ever known an army on the march, weary and ready to drop, and the band played some enlivening tune which has bestirred the men afresh? They have gone over the last few miles as they could not have done if it had not been for the inspiration of the strain! Let the thought of praising God wake up our wearied energies and let not God be robbed of His Glory at the close of the day! The close of the day is calm, quiet and fit for devotion. God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, before man fell, and Adam went forth to meet Him. Isaac walked in the fields at eventide and there he received a blessing. The evening is the Sunday of the day and should be the Lord's.

Now, notice the topic which is set for the evening. It is faithfulness. Why? Why, because we have had a little more experience of our God! We have a day's more experience than we had in the morning—therefore we have more power to sing of God's faithfulness. We look back, now, upon

the day and see promises fulfilled. May I ask you to look over today, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ? Can you not notice some promises which God has kept towards you? Show forth His faithfulness, then. Provision has been given you—He promised to give it—He has given it. Protection has been afforded you—more than you know of, infinitely more! Guidance, also, has been given in points where you otherwise would have gone very much astray.

Illumination has been granted you. Comfort, also, in a season of depression, or upholding in a time of temptation. God has given you much, today. If He has taken anything away from you, yet still bless His name! It was only what He had *given* and He had a *right* to take it. Look through the day and you will find that God has acted towards you as He promised that He would act. You have had trouble, you say. Did not He say, “In the world you shall have tribulation”? Has He not spoken concerning the rod of the Covenant? Affliction only illustrates His faithfulness. Carefully observe the fulfilled promises of each day—it is a good custom to conclude the day by rehearsing its special mercies. I do not believe in keeping a detailed diary of each day’s experience, for one is very apt, for lack of something to put down, to write what is not true, or at least not real.

I believe there is nothing more stilted or untruthful, as a general rule, than a religious diary—it easily degenerates into self-deceit. Still, most days, it not all our days, reveal singular instances of Providence if we will but watch for them. Master Flavel used to say, “He that notices Providences shall never be without a Providence to notice.” I believe we let our days glide by us unobservant of the wondrous things that are in them and so miss many enjoyments. As in Nature the uneducated person sees but little beauty in the wild flowers—

**“The primrose by the river’s brim,
A yellow primrose is to him,
And it is nothing more,”**

so we, for lack of thought, let great mercies go by us. They are trivial to us, and nothing more. Oh, let us change our ways and think more of what God has done, and then we shall utter a song concerning His faithfulness every night!

Do you notice, in the text, that word, “every.” It does not say, “to show forth His loving kindness every morning,” though it means that. But concerning the nights it is very distinct. “And His faithfulness *every* night.” It is a cold night. Did He not promise winter? And now it has come, the cold only proves His faithfulness. It is a dark night, but then it is a part of His Covenant that there should be nights as well as days. Supposing that there were no nights and no winters—where were the Covenant which God made with the earth? But every change of temperature in the beautiful changes of the year, and every variation of light and shade only illustrate the faithfulness of God!

If you happen, now, to be full of joy, you can tell of Divine faithfulness in rendering love and mercy to you, but if, on the other hand, you are full of trouble, tell of God’s faithfulness, for now you have an opportunity of proving it! He will not leave you. He will not forsake you. His Word is, “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you: the floods shall not

overflow you.” Depend upon it, that promise will be faithfully fulfilled. Beloved Friends, you who are getting old are nearing the night of life, you are peculiarly fitted to show forth the Lord’s faithfulness. The young people may tell of His loving kindness, but the old people *must* tell of His faithfulness. You can speak of 40 or 50 years of God’s Grace to you! And you can confidently affirm that He has not once failed you. He has been true to every Word that He has spoken.

Now, I charge you, do not withhold your testimony! If we, young people, should be silent we would be guilty, but we might speak, perhaps, another day. But for you advanced Christians to be silent will be sinful, indeed, for you will not have another opportunity in this world of showing forth the faithfulness of God. Bear witness now, before your eyes are closed in death! The faithfulness of God every night is a noble subject for His gray-headed servants. And this it is your great business to show forth. O Beloved, let us publish abroad the faithfulness of God! I wonder, sometimes, that there should be any doubts in the world about the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the saints—and I think the reason why there are any is this—those professors who fall are very conspicuous, everybody knows about them.

If a high-flying professor makes a foul end of his boasts, why, that is talked of everywhere! They speak of it in Gath and publish it in the streets of Askelon! But, on the other hand, those thousands of true Believers that hold on their way, they cannot, of course, say much about themselves. It would not be right they should, but I wish they would, sometimes, say more about the unfailing goodness and immutable truthfulness of God—to be a check to the effect produced by backsliders—so that the world may know that the Lord does not cast away His people whom He did foreknow, but that He gives strength to them even in their fainting and bears them through.

If there is any one topic that you Christians ought to speak about thankfully, bravely, positively, continuously, it is the faithfulness of God to you! It is that upon which Satan makes a dead aim in the minds of many tempted ones and, therefore, to that you should bring the strength of your testimony, that tried saints may know that He does not forsake His people.

III. And now, to close, I desire in the name of God’s people here present, TO SHOW FORTH GOD’S FAITHFULNESS THIS VERY NIGHT. My Brothers and Sisters, as a Church, let us declare how faithful God has been to us! Our history as a Church has been very wonderful. When we were few and feeble, and brought low, God appeared for us. Then we began to prosper and we began, also, to pray. And what prayers they were! Surely the more we prayed the more God blessed us. We have now had almost 20 years of uninterrupted blessing. We have had no fits and starts. We have not sponsored revivals and retreats—but onward has been our course, in the name of God, a steady, continued progress—like the growth of a cedar upon Lebanon.

Up to this time God has always heard prayer in this place. This very *building* was an answer to prayer. There is scarcely an institution con-

nected with it but what can write upon its banner, “We have been blessed by a prayer-hearing God.” It has become our habit to pray and it is God’s habit to bless us. Oh, let us not waver! Let us not hesitate! If we do, we shall be straitened in ourselves, but not in God. God will not leave us while we prove Him in His own appointed way. If we will but continue mighty in earnest intercession, we may, as a Church, enjoy another 20 years, if it so pleases God, of equal or greater prosperity! If ever there was a spot on earth where it became men to speak well of a faithful God, it is the spot where I stand, and I do speak of it to His Glory!

We have used no carnal attractions to gather people together to worship here. We have procured nothing to please their taste by way of elaborate music, fine dress, painted windows, processions and the like. We have used the Gospel of Jesus without any rhetorical embellishments, simply spoken as a man speaks to his friend—and God has blessed it—and He will bless it still! Now, dear Friends, each one of you can say of yourselves, as well as of the Church, that God has been faithful to you. Tell it to your children. Tell them God will save sinners when they come to Him, for He saved you! Tell it to your neighbors. Tell them He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins if we confess them to Him, and to save us from all unrighteousness, for He forgave you.

Tell every trembler you meet with that Jesus will in nowise cast out any that come to Him. Tell all seekers that if they seek they shall find, and that to everyone that knocks, the door of mercy shall be opened. Tell the most desponding and despairing that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. Make known His faithfulness every night. And when your last night comes and you gather up your feet in the bed, like Jacob, let your last testimony be to the Lord’s faithfulness! And like glorious old Joshua, end your life by saying, “Not one good thing has failed of all the Lord God has promised, but all has come to pass.”

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and give you all to know His loving kindness and His faithfulness. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 92.

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BLESSED DISCIPLINE

NO. 2374

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 19, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1888.**

***“Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach out of Your Law; that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.”
Psalm 94:12-15.***

THERE are times when the wicked seem to have things all their own way. This earth is not the realm of final justice—we are not yet standing before the Lord's great Judgement Seat. God permits many things to be, for a while, in confusion. They who are highest with Him are often lowest with men and, those for whom He has no regard seem to heap up the treasures of the world till their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart can wish! Let no child of God be astonished at this arrangement. It has often been so in the past and it has been the great enigma that has puzzled the world. The children of God have also sat down and looked into it, but it has been, even to them, a great deep which they could not fathom. They have sighed over it, but their sighs have not altered the facts. It is still true that often the wicked triumph and the servants of iniquity delight themselves in the high places of the earth. The righteous need not wonder that they suffer, now, for that has been the lot of God's people all along, and there have been certain times in human history when God has seemed to be altogether deaf to the cries of His suffering people. Remember the martyr age and the days of the Covenanters, who were hunted upon the mountains like the partridge. You must not wonder if the easy places of the earth are not yours and if the sentinel's stern duties should fall to your lot. It is so, and so it must be, for God has so ordained it.

To comfort any of the Lord's children who have begun to worry themselves because things do not go with them as they desire, I have selected this text, and I pray the Lord to bless it to them.

I. First, I shall ask you to notice that GOD'S CHILDREN ARE UNDER INSTRUCTION.

Other children may run about and take holiday. They may wander into the woods, gather the flowers and do very much what they like, but God's own children have to go to school. This is a great privilege for them, although they do not always think so. Children are not often good judges of what is best for themselves. No doubt we should like to play the truant—we should be very glad to put away our schoolbags, quit the

schoolhouse, go out by ourselves and wander at our own sweet will—but our heavenly Father loves us too well to let it be so with us. Because we are His children, therefore He will have us trained and prepared for that high destiny which awaits us, by-and-by.

Note how this tuition is described in our text. The very first word concerning it is, “chasten.” “Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach,” as if the chastening were the primary part of the teaching, as if it occupied so large a share of it that it was put first. “Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach.” In God’s school house the rod is still extant—*with the Lord, chastening is teaching*. He does not spoil His children, but chastens them, yes, even unto scourging, as the Apostle puts it. His chastening is the most severe with those whom He loves best—“Whom the Lord tenderly loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” Some of us know what it is to have this teaching by chastening. I have often told you that I am afraid I have never learned anything of God except by the rod and, in looking back, I am afraid that I must confirm that statement. I have forgotten some of the gentle lessons, but when they have been whipped into me, I have remembered them.

I met with a friend the other day who said that it was the very reverse with him. He could not remember any benefit that he had ever gained by chastening and he thought that all the good he had received from the Lord had come to him by tenderness and prosperity. I did not argue with him about the matter, for the experiences of God’s people may differ, but this I know, dear Friends, that some of us have learned much from the Lord’s chastening rod!

For instance, we have learned the evil of sin. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word.” There are some sorrows that evidently come as the result of our own folly. We have to reap the harvest of the seed that we sow and, by this process we are made to see that it is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing to sin against God. This is an important lesson. I wish that more had thoroughly learned it. I wish that some Christian professors had anything like a true idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but I believe that instruction upon this point often comes from the chastening hand of God.

Our chastening teaches us the unsatisfactory nature of worldly things. We can easily become attached to the things which we possess. It is a very difficult thing to handle gold without allowing it to adhere to your fingers and, when it gets into your purse, you need much Grace to prevent it getting into your heart. Even our children can soon grow into idols—and our health and our comfort may make us forget God. I never knew affliction and trial to make us do that, but when the gourds are taken away, then the sun shines on us. How often has God shaken all the leaves off our trees and *then* we have seen the heavens which we never saw when all the leaves were green! By losing this, and losing that, we are made to feel that all the things which we possess perish in the using and are such temporary joys that we cannot hope to fill our hearts with them.

Do we not, also, learn by affliction our own frailty and our own impatience? We are wonderfully patient when we have nothing to suffer, as we

are all great heroes and very courageous when there is no fighting to be done. We sometimes say to one another, "What a mass of faith that Brother has! What a vast mountain of faith that Sister possesses!" We are almost inclined to envy them, but we remember the fable of the stag which had such magnificent antlers that he said to himself, as he looked at his fine figure in the water, "It is most absurd for us stags to be afraid of dogs. The next time I hear a dog bark, I will just toss him on my horns and there will soon be an end of him." Yes, so he thought, but just then the baying of a hound was heard in the distance and the boastful stag took to his heels and ran as fast as the rest of the herd did! So it is often with those who seem to have great faith when they do not need it—but when they do need it, where is it? Stretch some men upon a bed of sickness for a week or two and see whether they will be able to swagger at the rate they now do! They would sing another song, I guarantee you, if once they had such a twist of pain as some of us have had to endure, and the beads of perspiration stood on their brow while they tried to bear it. Ah, yes, we find how great our weakness is when first, one thing is taken away, and then another, and the chastening hand of God makes the blows to fall thick and heavy upon us!

Do we not, then, learn also, the value of prayer? I said to this friend to whom I have referred, "Did you not pray much more under your affliction than you did before?" "Oh, yes!" he replied. "I grant you that—

Trials give new life to prayer.

Do we ever pray in such dead earnest as when everything seems to be sinking from under our feet and our sweetest cups are full of bitterness? Then we turn to God and say, "Show me why You contend with me." I do not think that we ever pray with such fervor of supplication in our prosperity as we do in our adversity.

And then how precious the promises become! As we only see the stars when the shadows gather at night, so the promises shine out like newly-kindled stars when we get into the night of affliction! I am sure that there are passages of Scripture which are full of consolation, the depths of which we do not even imagine—and we shall never know all that is in them till we get into the deeps of soul trouble which correspond with them. There are points of view from which scenery is to be beheld at its best and, until we find out those points of view, we may be missing the sight of some of the most beautiful objects in nature! God leads us one way and another by our chastisements to understand and prize His promises.

And, oh, dear Friends, how should we ever know the faithfulness of God if it were not for affliction? We might talk about it and theoretically understand it, but to try to prove the greatness of Jehovah's love and the absolute certainty of His eternal faithfulness—this comes not except by the way of affliction and trial!

I might talk on forever about the sweet uses of adversity and not exhaust the subject. You experienced people of God know even more than I do about this matter, for some of you have done business in deeper waters than my boat has yet plowed, and yet, I think my keel has passed over the deep places of the sea of trouble, and there may be deeper

depths before me still. I have probably said enough to prove to you that chastening is a Divine way of instructing us. You will find that if you want the most Christ-like saints, and the most deeply experimental Believers, and the Christians who are best acquainted with the Word of God, you must look for them among those who are the most intimately acquainted with the fiery furnace and its burning heat.

If you read the text through, dear Friends, you will notice that the rod is not without the Word. I call your special attention to that—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law." The rod and the Book go together! The rod drives us to the Book and the Book explains the meaning of the rod! We must have them both if we would be fully instructed in the things of God. *The Word of God is our school book*. At first, it is our primer, and when we get furthest advanced in Grace, it will be our most profound classic! And all the way along it will supply us with our choicest poetry and everything else that we desire.

We look to the Bible for comfort when we are chastened—we turn over its pages and seek to find a passage which fits our case and ministers relief to our necessity. Have you not often done so? Why, this Book is something like the locksmith's bunch of keys! Perhaps you have lost the key of your drawer and you cannot get at your things. You send for the smith and he keeps on trying different keys till, at last, he finds one that exactly fits the wards of your lock. So, if you keep on fingering away at the promises, you will come, at last, upon one that was made on purpose for your case! Perhaps your lock is one with very peculiar wards—you could never make out why it was shaped just as it is—but now that you have found the key that opens it, you understand that both lock and key were made to fit each other.

The Word of God is not only used at such times for comfort, but also for direction. How frequently you have been unable to see your way! You have wished that there was some Prophet of God with the Urim and Thummim, that he might tell you what to do. The great guiding principles of God's Truth, His Law and His Gospel, faith in Him and in His Providential care, have furnished you with a direction quite as clear as if some Prophet had plainly told you what to do. You have sought the direction of the Word of the Lord when you have gone to enquire in His Temple—He has answered you out of the secret place of thunder—and you have known without a doubt the way that you should take.

That, then, is the second use of the Word, first for comfort, and next for direction.

At such times, too, we have proved, dear Friends, the *power* of the Word of God. When your vessel is sailing along very smoothly, the Word of God may grow to be a dead letter with you, but when the waves are rolling mountains high, and dashing over you, and you are soaked through and through and fear that the deep will swallow you up, then you begin to test the promises and to prove the power of the Word of God! When its inexpressible sweetness reaches your heart, then you can, indeed, feel that you have been taught out of God's Word. You see how the two things go together—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O

Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law.” O Lord, still use the rod if You see that it is necessary. But go on teaching us out of Your Word! We are slow to learn and poor scholars at the best, but You may yet make something of us.

That leads me to say that, according to our text, *God Himself is our Teacher*. He is not satisfied with giving us a Book and smiting us when we are inattentive to its teachings, but He, Himself, teaches us. Was there ever a Teacher so full of wisdom, a Teacher who understood His pupils so well, a Teacher so altogether master of the whole art of teaching? Was there ever a Teacher so patient, so able to apply His lessons to the heart, itself, so full of power to give understanding as well as to make the thing clear to the understanding when it is given? Happy people, who have God to be their Tutor! Happy pupils, even though, when the school bell rings, you have half a mind to stay away and play with yonder children who do not belong to your school! Yet happy are you if you are truly God’s scholars. Even if, every now and then, your days are spent in weeping, and your lessons are so badly done that they bring the rod upon you, yet are you happy children. “Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law.”

So much, then, for our first head.

II. Now upon our second point I will say a little, and only a little. We have had God’s children under instruction. Now let us think of GOD’S CHILDREN EDUCATED. The Lord has chastened and taught His child for this purpose—“That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked.” “What?” you ask, “chastened to give us *rest*? It is usual for chastening to *break* our rest.” Yes, I know that it is so with other chastening, but in very deed this is the way in which God gives rest to His people.

First, *we learn to rest in the will of God*. Our will is naturally very stubborn and when we are chastened, at first we fight back, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but by degrees we feel that we must bear the yoke. We then go a little further and we feel that we *ought* to bear it, even though God should lay upon us anything He pleases, and we should feel it very galling. By-and-by, the yoke begins to fit our neck and we come even to *love* it. I do not suppose that many of us will ever get like Samuel Rutherford, when he said that he began to wonder which he loved better—Christ or his cross—for his cross had brought him so much blessing that he was quite in love with it. No, we have not reached that point, yet, so that we love our cross—still, we can say this, that we have learned that it is—

**“Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.”**

If we struggle against God’s will, we only increase our sorrow. Our self-will usually lies at the root of our greatest griefs. Give way, and you have won! Yield to God and you have obtained the blessing you desire. The bitterness is gone out of your grief when you consent to be grieved if God will have it so.

We make advances in our spiritual education when *we learn to rest after our afflictions*. When any trouble is over, great delights often come to

us. It is with us as it was with our Master—He had been with the wild beasts—worse, still, He had been tempted of the devil. But angels came and ministered to Him. There is, to a Believer, sometimes, a wonderfully clear shining after the rain. Perhaps there is no happier period of life than the state of convalescence, when the sick man is gradually recovering his former strength after a long illness. So God gives surprising peace to His people when He takes away their troubles, but He also gives them a great measure of peace *in* their troubles. Thus, for another lesson, *we learn to rest in adversity*. The Lord chastens us in order that we may learn how to stand fast and bear up bravely while the trouble is yet upon us.

I have often had to notice the singularity of my Lord's loving kindness and tenderness to myself in the time of need. I do not say that it is singularity for *Him*, for He is often doing it, but the singularity lies in the fact that the Lord does it when nobody else could or would do it. He gives us comfort when nobody else is either willing or able to render any comfort to us. This very afternoon I have had a remarkable instance of how good cheer is sent to me by my gracious God just when I most need it. I was heavy and sad at heart and there came to my door, to see me, a foreign gentleman, an officer of considerable rank in the Italian army. He spoke to me in very good English, but I cannot tell you all that he said to me, though it was most cheering and kind. I asked him why he should come so far to see me.

He spoke of me as though I were a great man and I assured him that he was quite mistaken, for I was nothing of the kind. As we walked along and talked, he said, "But you are the greatest man in all the world to me." "Why is that?" I asked. And He answered, "I was a Catholic, and a bad Catholic, too. I did not rightly know anything about the Lord Jesus Christ and I was fast becoming an infidel. But I met with a sermon of yours in Italian and, by reading it, I was brought into the light and liberty of the Gospel. I found the Savior and I felt that I must come and tell you about it." Then he further cheered and encouraged my heart by letting me see how much he knew of our Lord Jesus—and he had learned it all from nothing but the Bible, itself—which he had read after being guided to it by a stray sermon of mine.

"Well," I thought, "my Master sends this man all the way from the south of Italy to come just at this particular time, when I was sorely needing just such a comforting message." Why should He do so? Only that He likes, when His children have to take bitter medicine, to give them a piece of sugar after it! Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, be willing to take your medicine, otherwise there may come a sharp chastening with it. Oh, for Grace so to suffer, and so to endure, that we may give ourselves up into the hands of the Ever-Blessed One, and thus He will perfect in us the instruction of His wonderful Word! Then shall it be true that the Lord has taught us to rest even in the days of our adversity.

Much more might be said upon this part of my subject, especially about learning to look beyond this present life, but I have not the time or the strength to say it.

III. I must now go on to the third point which is that GOD'S CHILDREN ARE STILL DEAR TO HIM. We have thought of them at school, chastened and instructed, and we have seen them learning a few lessons. Now let us notice how dear they are to their Lord at all times, for the text says, "The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance."

First, then, *the Lord will not cast off His people*. Sometimes you are cast down, but you are never cast off. Sometimes others cast you off, but the Lord will not cast off His people! Sometimes you are cast into the furnace. Yes, it may be so, but in the furnace you are not cast off. Metal put into the furnace is not thrown away. Had it been worthless, it might have been left on the heap with the slag. But it is put into the furnace because it is of value. When you are put into the furnace and into the greatest heat that can be obtained, it is that the Lord may take away your dross and purify you for His service—

***"In the furnace God may prove you.
There to bring you forth more bright.
But can never cease to love you—
You are precious in His sight!
God is with you,
God, your everlasting light."***

"The Lord will not cast off His people." Lay hold of that precious assurance! Even if Satan should come and whisper to you, "The Lord has cast you off," do not believe it! It cannot be. The devil has *his* cast-offs, but God has no cast-offs. Sometimes He takes the devil's castaways and makes them to be the trophies of His mighty Grace—and when He has done so, they are His people, concerning whom the Psalmist says, "The Lord will not cast off His people."

Then, further, *the Lord will not forsake His people*, for it is added, "Neither will He forsake His inheritance." He chose them to be His inheritance. He has bought them as His inheritance and He will never forsake them! Still shall you be supported by the Lord, but never forsaken by Him! Still shall you be owned by Him, but never forsaken. Still shall you be kept, defended against all comers, and preserved to be the Lord's own people, for He will not forsake His inheritance!

I do not feel as if I need say much more upon this theme, but it is enough for me, I think, just to remind you of those precious Words of our great and gracious Father which are many times repeated in His Word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and leave them with you, His children. Take them and feed upon them! God give you to know the full comfort of them!

IV. So I shall close with this fourth point—GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE RIGHTED IN THE END. "Judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."

Just now, *judgement has gone away*. It has gone up to its own land. Judgment is within the veil, but there are reasons for its absence from us. Judgment has gone away, perhaps, that it may try the faith of God's people. The Lord does not, today, strike down the profane, nor slay the hypocrite, as He might if He dealt with them in strict justice. Judgment has gone out of the world for a while, though it watches and records all

things. It is gone, partly, for our trial and testing, that we may learn to trust an absent God and Savior. Judgment is also gone away in order that mercy may be extended to the ungodly, that they may live and that they may turn to God, for He wills not the death of any, but that they may turn to Him and live. Judgment has gone up to the Throne for a while until the wicked shall have completed the full measure of their sin, “until the pit is dug for the wicked.” Not yet is the iniquity of the Amorites full—and judgment has gone away and will stay away until it is.

Do not be in a hurry, child of God! The Lord has timed His absence. Listen to this next Word—“*Judgement shall return unto righteousness.*” You shall soon hear the trumpet. You shall hear the sound of that blast, “the loudest and the last,” telling you that the day of the great assize has come and that the Judge has arrived to right all wrongs, to punish all iniquity and to reward all virtue, all true, faithful service! “Judgment shall return.” We cannot tell how long it will linger, but it will return. Christ will come again! As surely as He ascended into Heaven, He will so come in like manner as He went up. He shall judge the earth in righteousness and His people with His Truth. Behold, He comes! And when He comes, judgment shall return unto righteousness.

And what then? *Judgement shall be welcomed by the godly.* When it comes, “all the upright in heart shall follow it.” The chariot of righteousness shall lead the way and all the people of God shall follow it in a glorious procession. Then shall they receive their Lord’s commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” They shall follow it as they wear their golden crowns, no, as they cast them at the foot of the Throne of God, saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power.” Saints will follow the chariot of judgment coming forth from their concealment and shining as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! They shall come from the places where slander has banished them and show themselves, again, and God shall be glorified in them! Now you who love the Lord, be not in a hurry to have all this fulfilled. Leave your cases in the dear hands of Him who will, ere long, judge all righteously.

I have done when I have reminded you that He is accursed who has never felt the chastening hand of God, or sat at His feet to learn of Him. But he is blessed, indeed, who yields himself entirely up to the discipline of the Lord. May it be so with everyone of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Let us read, this evening, the 94th Psalm, and may the Spirit of God instruct us while we read it!

Verse 1. *O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself.* God is the God of Justice and when iniquity and oppression prevail, it is natural that His people should call upon Him to come forth out of His hiding places. Sometimes, when oppression and iniquity and error prevail, it seems as if God had hidden Himself away. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist, “O Jehovah, the God of recompenses (or *revenges*, as the margin has it), show Yourself.”

2. *Lift up Yourself, You judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.* As one who is about to strike a heavy blow lifts himself up to increase the force of the stroke, so the Psalmist prays to the Lord, “Lift up Yourself, You Judge of the earth. The proud are lifted up; lift up Yourself. They boast, they glory, Lord, show them how great a God You are in the defense of righteousness; lift up Yourself, You Judge of the earth.”

3. *LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?* That question, “how long?” uttered twice over, sounds a little like howling, and, sometimes, God’s saints get so dispirited that they cry to God and weep and wail before Him until their wailing becomes almost like howling—“Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?”

4, 5. *How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage.* Their words are heavier than stones and when they hurl them at the Lord’s people with cruel intent, they do great mischief. “They utter and speak hard things. All the workers of iniquity boast themselves.” It seems to be the mark of the righteous that they are humble and lowly—and the mark of the wicked that they are boastful and proud. They have nothing of which they ought to boast, yet they boast very loudly. Pride is ingrained in our evil nature and the more there is of sin in us, the more there is of boasting by us.

6. *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.* Do you wonder that the Psalmist prayed, “O God of Vengeance, show Yourself”? Can you see the fatherless robbed and the widow and the stranger oppressed, without feeling your indignation burn? He who is never indignant has no virtue in him! He who cannot burn like coals of juniper against evil does not truly love righteousness. The Psalmist was not a man of that sort—he was righteously angry with the wicked who slew the widow and the stranger—and murdered the fatherless.

7. *Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* They were practically atheists, for, if they had a god, nominally, they regarded him as a god who did not observe sins, a blind deity, a god who took no note of evil! Do you not think that this is the prevailing religion of today? Are there not many who say, “Jehovah shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it”? God is not in all their thoughts. He is, to them, a nonentity, not the Omniscient Jehovah and hardly even a person, but a kind of secondary power or a feeble force—an unknown something or other of not much account—“Jehovah shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.”

8. *Understand, you brutish among the people.* When a man turns away from God, he casts off his manhood. He ceases to be a man and becomes like a brute, a boar, for so this expression might be read, “You boars among the people.”

8, 9. *And you fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?* Did the Lord make men’s ears, and put them near the brain in the very best place for hearing, and shall He not, Himself, hear? The argument is overwhelming! God gave us ears and made us hear—is He, Himself, deaf?

9. *He that formed the eye, shall He not see?* God makes all eyes. Is *He* without eyes? The supposition is an absurdity! It needs only to be mentioned to be held up to ridicule. “He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?”—

**“Shall He who, with transcendent skill,
Fashioned the eye and formed the ear—
Who modeled nature to His will—
Shall He not see? Shall He not hear?”**

10. *He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?* Whole nations were driven out of Canaan to make room for Israel. Many other nations have been crushed, doubled up, utterly destroyed on account of their sin. Everybody who reads history knows that this has been the case, so the Psalmist argues, “He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?” He that executes judgment upon heathen nations, can He not deal with sinful man and with single individuals? He that broke the power of Persia, Assyria, Greece and Rome—will He not punish guilty men when they dare to set themselves up as oppressors of His people?

10. *He that teaches man knowledge, shall not He know?* Our translators finish the question by putting, “Shall not He know?” But those words are not in the original and they are not at all necessary to the argument. It is as if the Psalmist abruptly broke off his utterances, as much as to say, “It is of no use arguing with you fellows,” or else as if he said, “Finish my sentence, yourselves—I put the truth so clearly before you that there is no escaping from it.” “He that teaches man knowledge.” If God has taught men all that they know, does not He, Himself, know all that is to be known? The Psalmist does not say so much as that in words, but he leaves us to draw that as the only inference from what he says.

11. *The LORD knows the thoughts of man.* God knows not only men’s words and acts, but also their *thoughts*. God knows thoughtful men, the best sort of men, when they are at their best, when they are thinking. And what does God think of the thoughts of man?

11. *That they are vanity.* Yet people talk about the thoughtful men of the age and want us to bow down and worship their thoughts! This boasting about man’s thoughts is only like the cracking of rotten sticks! “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

12. *Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach him out of Your Law.* Here is the truly blessed man—not the boaster, not the infidel, not the proud thinker—but the Divinely-chastened man! He is sore through the chastening of the Lord, his bones are full of pain, his heart is heavy and his home, perhaps, is a place of torture to him, but still it is true that he is a blessed man—“Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your Law.”

13. *That You may give him rest, from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked.* Christ has gone to prepare Heaven for His people. It is a prepared place for a prepared people. So is it with the ungodly and their eternal inheritance—it is a prepared place, “prepared for the devil and his angels.” And when men make themselves like demons and so, are ripe for Hell, then is the pit ready to receive them!

14. *For the Lord will not cast out His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.* If any of you are deeply troubled, I counsel you to get a hold of this promise! Perhaps it seems to you as if two seas of sorrow had met around you and that you were in a whirlpool of trouble. Then I say again, lay hold of this text and grip it firmly—“Jehovah will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.”

15, 16. *But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity?* Well, David, you may ask the question, but we cannot tell you who among your fellow men will stand up for you! It sometimes happens that God’s people are left without an earthly friend. Their case is so hard, their cause involves so much question, so much shame, perhaps, that nobody will stand up for them. If this is your trying condition just now, listen to the Psalmist’s testimony—

17. *Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.* If it had not been for God, he would not only have had no hand to help him, but not even a voice to speak for him! He might not have suffered quite in silence, because he would have, himself, spoken, but what he would have said would only have made the matter worse. What would he have said if he *had* broken the silence?

18. *When I said, My foot slips.* “It is going, it is gone! My foot is now slipping”—what then?

18. *Your mercy, O LORD, held me up.* God is grand at holding up His people in slippery places—and not only in slippery places—but when their feet actually slip. When they think that they are gone, they are not really gone. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” “Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.”

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me*—“I cannot collect my thoughts—they will not be gathered into orderly array. They rush to and fro, there is a multitude, a mob of them.” It is good to have thoughts, but sometimes you may have too many of them, and they may come helter-skelter, blasphemous thoughts, perhaps, despairing, proud, unbelieving, all sorts of thoughts! “In the multitude of my thoughts within me”—

19. *Your comforts delight my soul.* “Comforts which You bring me, comforts which arise from thoughts of You, the comforts of the Comforter, the comforts of the God of All Comfort, Your comforts delight my soul.” You must often have noticed that troubles seldom come alone. If you get one trial, you will probably have a whole covey of them. It very rarely happens, I think, to any one of us to have a lone sorrow. In another place the Psalmist says, “Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts; all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.” It is so with some of us at this time—we have a multitude of troubled thoughts within us. But have you also noticed that God’s mercies do not come alone? They come in flocks! The Psalmist says, “Your comforts”—not merely *one* comfort, but a great host of them—“Your comforts delight my soul.” they not merely sustain me, and keep me alive, but they delight my soul. God never does anything in halves—when He gives us comfort, He does it thoroughly. The Lord’s flowers bloom double! He gives us not

only comfort, but delight—“Your comforts delight my soul.” Now the Psalmist turns to God in prayer and says—

20. *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with You, which frames mischief by a law?* Oh, how strong are the wicked! They think they can have everything their own way, that they can make what laws they like and crush out anything that they despise! Yes, there are many thrones of iniquity, but God has no fellowship with them! And if God has no fellowship with a throne, that throne will tumble down—God will not uphold it. The day will come when He will no longer tolerate its iniquity and then one blow of His mighty right hand shall shiver it to atoms!

21. *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn innocent blood.* Agreed about nothing else, they all agree against Christ and against the holy seed—“the soul of the righteous.” They would blot out the righteous from under Heaven if they could.

22. *But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.* I commend these expressions to all Believers, let them treasure them up. “My God.” Ah, you must *personally* appropriate God to yourself if He is to bless you! Another man’s god is nothing to you unless you can also say, “My God.” When you have said, “My God,” you have uttered the grandest words that human lips can frame! If God is yours, all things are yours—earth and Heaven, time and eternity! “My God is the rock of my refuge.” You are on the Rock. You are in the Rock. You are behind the Rock. You must be safe now.

23. *And He shall bring upon them their own iniquity.* That is the punishment of sin. It seems strange that it is so, but *sin* is the punishment of *sin*. When a man has once sinned, it is part of his punishment that he is inclined to sin, again, and so on, *ad infinitum*. “He shall bring upon them their own iniquity.”

23. *And shall cut them off in their own wickedness.* It needs no fire nor worm to torment the ungodly—their own wickedness, itself, is fire, worm and pit without a bottom—and the Hell that ends not.

23. *Yes, the LORD our God shall cut them off—*

***“Surrounded by His saints, the Lord
Shall, armed with holy vengeance, come
To each his final lot award
And seal the sinner’s fearful doom.”***

God save us from being of that company! May we all be numbered with His people forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 121, 745, 748.

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.”
Psalm 94:19.*

GODLY people are thoughtful people. Indeed, it is often a sign of the beginning of Grace in a man when he begins to consider. Lack of thought has to do with the ruin of most of those who perish—it is not so much that they *despise* as that they *neglect* the great salvation. They have no time for thinking. They fly through life like mere butterflies and they rush upon destruction like wanton moths. Alas, that they should be so brutish! It is shameful and grievous that men whose noblest attribute is an intellect akin to angels should live like “dumb, driven cattle.” Even men who call themselves religious often seek for priests or ministers to do their thinking for them. They cannot be induced to give personal heed to their eternal welfare.

Good men are, none the less, full of thought because they are men of faith—believing is not the death of thinking, it is the sanctification of it. When our Savior said, according to our version, “Take no thought,” He was very far from meaning what those words would seem to imply. He meant take no carking care, no anxious thought. It was *anxiety*, not *prudence*, which He condemned. Christians are among the most thoughtful and contemplative of men. It is the foolish man who leaps before he looks and therefore often looks backward with vain regret after he has leaped. Men of Belial hate meditation, but men of God delight in it. The Gospel excites thoughts and perfumes them. It does not allow the mind to lie fallow, but sows it with heavenly seed from which spring meditations of the Truth of God, contemplations of purity and purposes of virtue.

Believing in God opens up to us the stores of Divine wisdom and then, by holy meditation, we feed on them. Faith gathers the handfuls of sacred corn from which contemplation threshes out the ears and prepares soul-sustaining bread. Gracious men take much account of their thoughts and make a conscience of them. Other men are scarcely alarmed in conscience by their actions unless they happen to commit some glaring crime. But the saint has lost his heart of stone and his heart of flesh is conscious of God's displeasure and trembles at it when an impure thought has defiled his soul. Regenerates have sensitive minds so that a word wrongly spoken grieves them sorely. And if it should never go so far as a word, but only an evil *thought* like an unclean bird flits through their mind, they are troubled lest they should have invited or secretly entertained so foul a lodger.

They dread the sparks of desire, for they know what flames may be kindled by them. They have a horror of sin in any shape—it is a deadly poison—and they dread the very odor of it. If they thought that they had lost their sensitiveness in any degree it would grieve them and make them pray—

***“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make;
Awake my heart when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.”***

They judge their thoughts severely and cannot be induced to imagine that they are mere trifles. In this they are fully justified, for thought is the foundation and formation of character. “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.” If you had not thought of evil you had never spoken it. If your thought had never conceived, your hand had never executed. Thoughts lie upon the anvil like rough iron and time hammers them into actions. If there were no plastic clay of evil thoughts there were no potters’ vessels of evil deeds. The thought is the man, the essence of himself, the core of his humanity. The outward act is but the bone—the marrow lies in the motive intent and design—therefore he who desires to be right looks mainly at his thoughts.

And as thought makes character—and therefore good men cannot afford to trifle with it—so thought makes happiness or woe. In the present life it is certainly so. Many a man never possessed a diamond or a chain of gold, and yet he is not unhappy, because he wears the pearl of content and his thoughts of future bliss are as an ornament about his neck. Men who have their breasts made brilliant with stars and gems might well envy those whose jewels flash *within* their bosoms and light up the secret chambers of their souls. Thoughts have more to do with true wealth than all the miser’s stores. The soul makes the estate. He is a poor man who ranks with emperors and yet is a stranger to inward peace. And he is rich who has not a foot of land to call his own, whose heritage is altogether in another world, but who nevertheless can say—

***“My God, You are mine,
What a comfort Divine,
What a blessing to know
That my Jesus is mine!
In the heavenly Lamb,
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart, it does leap,
At the sound of His name.”***

Thought does it all. If thoughts are full of faith in Jesus, confidence in the great Father, hope of Heaven and love to his fellow men, the man has a young Heaven within the boundaries of his manhood! But if his thoughts are full of sadness, despondency, ambition, pride, selfishness, revenge, discontent and the like, the man is and must be unhappy—he creates his own Hell and is his own tormentor. We must, then, look well to our thoughts and keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. We must watch thought, think upon thought and pray about

thought—and happy shall we be if we can say, in the language of the text—“In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.”

Now, as I may be helped to do it, I shall this morning first speak upon the Psalmist’s declarations, setting it out in some of the different lights in which he intended it to be seen. And, secondly, I shall dwell for a little upon the subject in this declaration upon which he lays the greatest stress, “Your comforts delight my soul.”

I. First, then, let us look at THE PSALMIST’S DECLARATION. We shall set it forth under five aspects. The first will be this—May we not, without twisting the text, understand David to mean that when passing many subjects in review before him, he selected the joys of true religion, or the comforts of God as the subjects which he preferred beyond all others?

The poet-king sees marching before him in procession a thousand themes for thought, many of them exceedingly attractive and fascinating. And after looking at them all with the fixed eyes of contemplation, he says, “Notwithstanding the multitude of all these subjects for thought, none of them charm me like the testimonies of my God: they afford me pleasure for awhile, but my deepest pleasure, that which delights my very soul, is found in the comforts of God.” It is worthy of note that David was a man whose contemplations could take a wide range because his experience had been a singularly varied one. He knew the joys of quiet meditation, for in his early youth he had been a shepherd’s boy and had kept his father’s flock. There are some who fancy that if happiness is to be found on earth, it may be discovered in rural scenes—in quietude and peace—and I am inclined to think that they are not far off the mark. To the mind which is rightly attuned, there are sacred charms in solitude.

Well might our poet praise God for quiet and sing—

***“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by Your kind bounty made
For those that worship You.”***

In the quietude in which he fed his flocks, David had not been a soulless clown, but a poet, a student, a Divine. At midnight he surveyed the heavens and gave us that wonderful eighth Psalm in which he says, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him; and the son of man that You visit him?” He had considered objects upon earth as well as those in the skies. Many Psalms will show that he was a careful observer of all the works of God’s hands. He loved to ramble where he startled the hind of the morning and glanced at the eagle renewing his youth. He delighted to sit down by the brooks which ran among the hills, to watch the wild goats and the conies and listen to the birds which sang among the branches of the trees.

He noted the fir trees where the storks have their nests and the cedars of Lebanon so full of sap. He knew the joys of observing the works of God’s hands and they are by no means small. If we all observed Nature more it

would be well for us. An eminent physician of the insane has said that he has never met with an insane naturalist. The observation of the works of God in the animal and vegetable kingdoms is so amusing and entertaining to the mind that it affords relaxation from the severer studies and ruder cares of life. David knew something of natural history and something of astronomy. Indeed, he knew something of every natural science and, besides, he was acquainted with the charms of music and the delights of poetry, for he was, himself, a poet of transcendent genius.

I think of all purely intellectual joys, there is none greater than to be able to pour fourth sublime truths in fitting words. Surely if the new-born child gives pleasure to its mother, the new-born poem gives even more rapturous joy to its author—"this is my own thought; it has sprung from my own soul." The author feels a fuller joy in every stanza than the reader is ever likely to do, for who admires the child one-half so much as does the parent? And then to wed an immortal hymn to celestial music, as David often did, is not this delight? To sit beneath some spreading oak and there, with skillful fingers, wake the harp to ecstasy and sing, "My hands shall find You, O my God, and every string shall have its tribute to sing"—is not this pleasure?

David knew, beyond all others of his times, the united charms of the Divine arts of poetry and music. Yet in looking back, the royal Psalmist exclaims, "In the multitude of all these charming subjects, rich beyond all price, You, my God, even You, are the chief of my delights and the comforts You have revealed to me and applied, by Your Spirit, to my heart—these are the summit of my joy! In all the rest I may take a measured solace, but Your comforts fill my heart to the brim. They not only sustain and cheer me, but they delight my soul." Remember, Beloved Friends, that David not only knew the joys of retirement, but he had felt the delights of active life and they are not few to a man who is in vigorous health and mental force.

There is rapture in being able to serve one's country by noble deeds. When the cowards were flying before Goliath, it was no small joy for the stripling of Bethlehem to come to the front to do battle for his country in heroic fashion. It is no mean thing to be stirred by—

***"That stern joy which warriors feel
In firemen worthy of their steel."***

When he came back with the grizzly head of the champion in his hand, it was no trifling joy that flushed the young warrior's bosom. He had slain the enemy of his country and now would the daughters of Israel rejoice in the dance and say—"Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." He knew the joys of battle and of victory!

Moreover, the Psalmist knew the splendors of a court and the glory of a throne, for he was the chosen king of Israel. He was an absolute monarch of a people glad to serve him. He knew the pleasures of power and the sweets of eminence. David's history was the epitome of all human experience. It was not so much one life as all our lives condensed in one. "He seemed to be not one but all mankind's epitome." That Book of Psalms—to

which of us does it not belong? Is there not a portion there for each man among us? Whereas we each have had a separate way, David appears, like his greater Lord, to have trodden all our ways and to have known the sorrows and the happiness of us all.

Yet, reviewing all his thoughts, he says, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, of all I have suffered, and all I have enjoyed; all I have gained, and all I have lost, all I have desired, and all I have attained, the delight of my soul is in my God, and in nothing else; Your comforts, O my God, delight my soul." I feel sure that we are not going away from David's words and certainly not from David's sense, if we give this meaning to the text.

Now I say to every Christian here, should not this be your assertion, that although all desirable things should pass before you in procession, yet nothing to you is like your God, nothing is comparable to His comforts? Perhaps some of you are now growing gray, having, in your time, passed through many phases of life. You were rich once, you have also been poor. You have been in company, you have been in solitude. You have been a wife. You have been a widow. You have been a child. You have been a parent. You have been a master. You have been a servant. You have been honored. You have been slandered. You have gone through most conditions of life—and now—what is your verdict? Your answer is concerning everything else except the love of Christ, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But concerning the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, you confess that it delights your souls as much as it did in your youth when you consecrated your first energies to God! The Gospel still delights us, now that we begin to miss the strength from the arm and the spring from the footstep! It still delights us now that gray hairs are on us and we are descending to the grave. It still delights us, yes, and delights us in our last hours as much as it did in our first. Blessed be the name of the Lord for this!

But we cannot linger. A second sense of the text will now come before us. David also means that when he was exercised with many cares in life he found his solace in the comforts of his God. David had many reasons for care. Probably the first part of his life was the happiest, when he had only his sheep. Afterwards, when he was called to court, his evil days began. Then was he persecuted by Saul and hated without a cause. His cares were many when he roamed the wilderness with that rough warrior band around him, so eager for vengeance, so apt to censure their leader's actions. Then his thoughts must have been many and perplexed. We find passages in David's life full of bewildering trouble, like the scene at Ziklag when the city was burned with fire and all his property and the possessions of his followers was taken away, and their wives and children, too.

The rough soldiers, in the bitterness of their spirits, spoke of stoning David, and David was much distressed. His own dear ones were missing and thus he had to bear his own share in the common calamity, and the blame of all his followers besides. At that time, "David encouraged himself in his God." He does not appear to have talked to Joab and Abishai about

it, but his heart went away to his God so that in the multitude of his cares his resort was to the Lord. After he assumed the throne, David's cares multiplied. The care of the Church of God, as well as of the State, was upon him. His own sins also multiplied his cares, for when he had transgressed against his God, his family became to him a constant source of distress and even to the last he had to say, "My house is not so with God."

He had cares heavier than yours or mine, because we are not kings and have neither armies at home, nor foes abroad to look after. However much we may have to think of, we can scarcely claim to be quite so burdened as David must have been. And I thank God we have not such rebellious children to deal with as David found in Amnon, Absalom and the rest. What, then, did David do when he was beset with thoughts of trouble and distress? He went always to the Lord and delighted in the comforts of his God!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this age is an age of care. We live too fast by half. We do too much and accomplish, therefore, too little. Our good sires could afford time for lengthened family devotions of a character which seem impossible to us. They could listen to sermons which would altogether tire us and snap the bands of our patience because their minds were of a more solid order and their lives were vexed with fewer cares. We are all hack and hurry. We ride the whirlwind—we are scarcely satisfied with the speed of lightning! Today Christian people cannot rush at this pace without serious injury to themselves unless they often refresh themselves with the comforts of God.

Sunday is the great safeguard for the sanity of merchants and business men—and those who break the Sabbath to bring business cares into the one day in seven act a suicidal part. If more often, in the other six days, Christian men would get alone with God, pour out their hearts before Him, tell Him their cares and unveil to Him their souls, they would have more ease of mind, be more strong for the struggle of life and less likely to fail through an over-worked brain. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul."

Londoners, in olden times, went into the fields on May Day morning to bathe their faces in the dew, for they thought it made them fair. I would that every morning we bathed our faces in the dew of Heaven, so should we be comelier to look upon when mingling with men in the business of the day. If every night before we went to sleep we dipped our foot in the ocean of Divine love, our sleep would be more sweet to us and care would not corrode and eat into the heart and even into the bodily constitution, as I fear it does in a great number of cases in this weary age. Get away to your God, O Christian! You see the rooks by day flying over the fields, searching for food—but as the sun goes down they congregate around their nests and offer their evening hymn together among the treetops. Beloved, let us fly away to our God, when the cares of the day are over, and praise and magnify His name! And then let us nestle down beneath the shadow of His wings.

A third meaning of the text is this—when oppressed with evil thoughts the Psalmist found his shelter in God. I may be speaking upon a subject which will be novel to some here, but it is one in which others of you have had too much experience. There are times when the thoughts within us are terrible and horrible. If all the thoughts of the most chaste and holy here could now be unveiled to all, a life-enduring blush would crimson every cheek. Some evil thoughts arise from our own depraved hearts and these are bad enough. Others are excited by the unholy world around us and these are equally as evil. But there are some of still darker form which are not thoughts of ours at all, but which are injected into the soul by Satan.

How horrible they are and how desperate is the conflict of a gracious soul when it is tortured with them! Satan will make you think that there is no God, no Savior, no Holy Spirit. There is not a doctrine of the Gospel which he will not tempt you to doubt! There is not a holy thing which he will not urge you to blaspheme. I know some who have been forced to put their hands to their mouths for fear they should utter the accursed thoughts which have rushed through their minds. Do you suppose that these were drunks and swearers? No, I am not speaking of such! I am speaking of the purest and most holy men and women it was ever my lot to know, who have, nevertheless, been tormented by the devil with the most hideous and horrible suggestions with regard to the things of God. If you have never felt this temptation I hope you never may, but the probabilities are you will, for there is scarcely a child in God's family that the dog of Hell has not barked at. I have known such seasons, have known them to my horror.

Now in such times, when obscene, profane and blasphemous thoughts swarm in the brain like so many flies, as though Beelzebub, the god of flies, had taken possession of the whole mind and made it swarm with every filthy thing—at such times the only consolation is to fall back upon your God. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, when they fret and wear me, like moths, or rather tear and rend me like wolves, I will fly to You, my God, to the splendor of Your love, to that Fountain filled with blood which washes even these sins away and to the mighty Spirit whose strong hands can chase these evil ones far away and give peace to my spirit. Your comforts shall lift me right away from all this tempestuous weather into the clear sky of communion wherein Your comforts shall delight my soul.

Let me give a fourth rendering, upon which I will be very brief. When the mind is worried with thoughts which cannot be dissipated, it is well to turn unto the Lord. Thoughtful men will have periods in which they do not seem so much to have a subject for thought as to be prisoners of war to 10,000 subjects at once. They are carried away as with a flood. Their thoughts leap over one another. They press and struggle like a raging mob. They surge like the billows of the sea. They overflow the brain as though some mountain torrent had burst its banks and rushed down with devastating force into the valleys beneath. There are riots of thoughts—

not one is well formed—or if well formed, it jostles its neighbor and is jostled in return. The motions of the mind are at such times quick, hurried, impetuous—as though a whole lifetime of thought could be lived through in a few minutes.

Have you ever been borne away by thoughts which you long to be rid of? Have you not put your hand to your weary brain and wished it would leave off thinking? Have you not envied the country boy who swings upon a gate, scares the birds, eats bacon and is as happy as a king? Have you never wished you could turn into a flower and shut yourself up for the night as a flower does? O those nights of weary watching and longing for rest that will not come! Now there is no sleeping nectar that I know of like contemplation of the love of God! I know nothing which can give the jaded spirit rest like drawing near to God.

When God smites me with pain I love to tell Him, “O God, I would not smite a child of mine like this. If I did, if there were some necessity for it, I should pity him. My heart would yearn over him. I could not be untender to my dear boy. And I am Your child and You are a better Father than I am—why, then, do you strike me?” Lay hold of the Lord. No, Brothers and Sisters, in His relationship of Father lay hold upon His *heart!* Draw near to Him and wrestle with Him in this way, and pain will often give way before your pleading, and trouble of heart will fly when you thus come to close grips with the Covenant Angel and rise to really child-like, believing dealings with your Father which is in Heaven. If you know the Law of mental storms you may reach peace, and that Law may be summed up in one line—Steer to God right away. Fly to Him and you will find a peaceful shelter where—

**“You shall smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.”**

The last meaning I shall give the text is this—that if ever we are beset by a multitude of thoughts of a doubting kind, we shall find our best solace in flying to our God. Do you ever fall into this state? Do you thus speak—“No doubt there is a Savior, and a Savior for sinners, but is there a Savior for *me*? He can forgive sins, but will He forgive *mine*? He is able to renew the heart, but has He renewed *mine*? May I not prove, after all, to be a hypocrite? Is not my experience imaginary? Is not my faith presumption? May I not be self-deceived? Can I hope to hold out to the end? Shall I not, after all, fall by the hand of the tempter? Above all what shall I do when I come to die—will not the waves of death overflow me? Will not its chill floods swallow me up? What shall I do in the world to come if God forsakes me? Alas, may He not have forsaken me already?

“My present circumstances are grievous, may I not expect to be deserted in my future distresses, and if so, what shipwreck shall I make and what a byword will my character be? Will He not leave me to my own devices because I have, in former times, been so worldly and unholy? Alas, if He does, shall I become like others, who were at their outset flaming professors and ended in being apostates from the Lord?” Now, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever such thoughts assault your soul, remember David’s

declaration—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul." Come and anchor close by your God and the storms of unbelief will no more affect you.

Francis Quarles, in his quaint, "Emblems," represents a man with a flail who is dealing heavy blows all round. And the only one who escapes is a person who, with much daring, comes close to him. The way to escape the heavy blows of Providence is to close in with Him who wields the rod, for the further off the heavier is the blow! In all dark times run home! Return unto your rest. If you cannot come to the Lord as a saint, come as a sinner! If the past should have been altogether a delusion, yet begin again! Do not discuss with Satan the question as to whether you are a saint or not, but fly to Christ Jesus! Cease all your questions about whether or not you are saved, and say—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I'll fall.
He'll be my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."***

Thus will you quickly end a fray and begin a feast, for God's comforts will delight your soul.

II. We will spend a few minutes on the second point, which is this—WHAT IS THIS SUBJECT UPON WHICH DAVID LAYS SUCH STRESS? He says, "Your comforts delight my soul." What are God's comforts? They are very many—they are certainly as many as the multitudes of our thoughts. And they are very weighty—they are certainly as weighty as our thoughts can be, so that the one may be set over against the other. The comforts of God are those refreshing Truths which surround the Person and the offices of the blessed Three in One.

First there is the Father, Oh, is there no comfort in the thought that He is our Father, and not a stranger? Not a taskmaster, as some like to call Him, but our *Father*, and "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can I be His child and will He take delight in my misery? He may chasten me for my sins, but will He always chide, will He keep His anger forever? If He is, indeed, a Father and the best of fathers, my Soul why are you cast down, why are you disquieted in me? Hope in His eternal love, for He will yet comfort you and be the light of your countenance.

Then comes Jesus, Jesus the Son of God. What comforts there are in Him! A Man, of the substance of His mother, suffering just as we suffer and touched, therefore, with a feeling of our infirmities, with a heart that always beats true to us. Jesus, God as well as Man, and therefore able to succor. Is not that case well-cared for which is in His hands? Is not a soul safe when it is under His protection? Look up, you troubled heart, into the eyes of Jesus, and see if they are not as stars to chase away the midnight of your spirit! Look at the crown of thorns of Jesus and see if it does not pluck the thorns out of your spirit! Behold Him suffering for you as Son of Man and Son of God and find your richest consolation there.

Does my sin trouble me? It was laid on Jesus, why should it trouble me? Does God's wrath distress me? It has spent itself on Jesus, how can it fall on me? Where are fears about the future? Is it not written, "Because I live, you shall live also"? Can we be burdened by fears of death? Jesus Himself has died, perfumed the grave in which we shall sleep and then removed its door so that none shall be imprisoned there. Shall we be dismayed concerning the Judgment? "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that has risen again." What room is there for distress of mind if we think upon the Person and the work of Jesus Christ?

Nor let us forget the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has already regenerated us and, in some degree, sanctified, illuminated and comforted us. And He at this time "helps our infirmities." Shall we not in all times of our distress think of Him? What if I cannot pray? He "makes intercession in the saints." What if I cannot feel? He can quicken me. What if I feel utterly dead to Divine things in my own apprehension? Cannot He make me like the chariots of Amminadib and that, too, in a single moment? Has He not coals of fire with which to kindle on the cold altar of my spirit another flame such as burned there in the day of my espousals? O blessed Spirit, You can do everything! Deal graciously with me.

Thus from the Father, Son, and Spirit we obtain fullness of comfort. But these consolations also spring from the whole work and system of Divine Grace. Old Christians, as a rule, become more and more Calvinistic because they need more comfort. And having had more experience, they have an appetite for the more solid and soul-satisfying Doctrines of Grace which they were strangers to in their youth. The idea that we are to preserve ourselves and that our salvation hinges upon our own future endeavors may be very pleasant for a summer-weather sailor—but for navigating the wintry seas we need something more cheering.

The idea that we have *not* an Immutable God to deal with may be put up with when the birds are singing in the sun, but it will not be tolerated when the owls are hooting in the night! A tried Believer must have an Immutable God or he will feel his case to be hopeless. At this moment my richest comforts are summed up in the verse—"Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

That whole system begins in Divine Grace, goes on in Grace and ends in Grace. That system makes the creature nothing and the Creator everything! That system says to self-righteousness, "Begone, for if you remain here men will boast." But that system says to Divine Grace, "Come in and dwell with guilty, worthless, helpless sinners and save them from first to last, that Christ may wear the crown"—that entire system is my consolation. In times of spiritual gloom I cling more tenaciously than ever to the old faith of my fathers, the faith which I have taught you from the beginning—that salvation is of the Lord, not *of* man, neither *by* man, but is the entire and sole work of God. I am a lost man if it is not so! If there is any-

thing for *me* to do to complete the Savior's work, I shall never accomplish it! And if the Grace of God is not effectual to save the very worst of men, then where God's face is seen in splendor I shall never come. Salvation is all of Grace, rich Grace, triumphant Grace, and therefore it delights my soul.

Again, in times when many thoughts assail us, the attributes of God are, each one of them, the delight of our soul if we are enabled to see them aright, though, alas, Satan too often makes us see them in a wrong light and tempts us to extract sorrow instead of joy from them. Is God Omniscient? Then my heavenly Father knows what things I have need of before I ask Him. Is God Omnipotent? Then He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to Him. Is God Immutable? Then from His purpose He will never turn, but will certainly perform the work of Grace. There is light in every Divine attribute for the Believer.

God is Love! Oh, what a jewel that sentence is! What a mountain of light! God is Love! Child of sorrow, sing of that God and let your sorrows flee! God is Love, Infinite, Immutable, Omnipotent, Eternal Love! Love even to you—rejoice in it! It is also most comforting to remember that God is just, for He is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love. He is not unrighteous to forget His promises or break the bonds of the Covenant, frustrate His oath and discard the many solemn engagements under which He has laid Himself to His only Son. Furthermore, dear Friends, at such times the promises of God are still before us—and what a field of comforts to delight the soul one has opening up before him!

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord.” “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed says the Lord that has mercy on you.” “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you.” “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” “Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be.” “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

“I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.” “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”? “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “He will keep the feet of His saints.” “The righteous, also, shall hold on His way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk upright.”

But, oh, if I had a thousand mouths, I could not repeat and dwell upon a thousandth part of the promises as they should be dwelt upon! This Bible is a great honeycomb and it drips with honey. Come and taste its virgin sweetness, O you whose mouths are full of bitterness, and the next time the multitude of your thoughts shall make your mouth taste of gall and wormwood, come to these comforts of the Lord, for they shall delight your soul. It is worth while to taste the bitters that the sweets may be the sweeter. Thank God for winters—we should not value summers half so much without them! Blessed be God there are nights as well as days, or we might grow weary of the sun himself. Blessed be God for trouble, for depression of spirit, for adversity, for waves and billows to go over us one after another, for here in the midst of all these, His comforts delight our soul!

The gist of the whole matter is this—the way to comfort is the way where God is to be found. Christian, the way for sustenance, strength, hope and consolation is the way which leads you to your God. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. And oh, poor Sinner, the same way is open to you! Do not look within for comfort, for you will find none. As well go to the Arctic regions and pierce icebergs to discover warmth, as look to yourselves for consolation. Away, away, away, away from your own thoughts to *God's* thoughts! Away from your own judging and weighing, and computations, and speculations, and expectations to the firm promises of a God that cannot lie, who has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and, “Whoever believes in Christ Jesus is not condemned.”

Come and throw yourself at the foot of the Cross though you are the blackest sinner out of Hell! You who are half-damned already in your own apprehension, come where the bleeding hands are streaming priceless blood and put your confidence in the propitiation God Himself has provided for such as you are! You can never perish if you will come there, and in the multitude of your thoughts within you the comforts of Jesus shall delight your soul. God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 94.

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

MULTITUDINOUS THOUGHTS AND SACRED COMFORTS NO. 883

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts delight my soul.”
Psalm 94:19.*

IF man were a mere animal, his joy and sorrow would depend entirely upon outward things. Let but the trough be full and the swine are happy. Let the pasture be abundant and the sheep are content. In the sunshine every sparrow will be twittering on the trees. Let the heavens weep and every wing is drooping. In long drought, or severe frost, or pinching famine the animal creation languishes and pines. You cannot, however, be sure of making a man happy by surrounding him with abundance, nor can you plunge a Christian man into wretchedness by any deprivations which you may cause him. Man's greatest joy or sorrow must arise from inner springs.

The mind itself is the lair of misery or the nest of happiness. Thoughts are the flowers from which we must distil the essential flavorings of life. Paul and Silas sing in the stocks because their minds are at ease, while Herod frets on his throne because conscience makes him a coward. The soul of Linneus exults within him at the sight of a common all golden with blooming shrubs, while many a millionaire has roamed amid his gardens and conservatories and found no joy amid them. A crust of bread from one heart brings a song, from another a thousand acres of ripening grain can produce no thanksgiving.

Alexander, according to the old classic tale, sits down to weep over a conquered world, while many a peasant who has not a foot of ground to call his own rejoices in tribulation and glories in reproach. Our weal or woe is the outgrowth of seeds germinating *within*, not of branches which from without run over the wall. Happiness lies not in the outward, but in the inward. The fairest garden is that whose walks and arbors are in the secret of the soul—the richest and most mellow fruits are not plucked from the trees of the orchard, but are ripened within the spirit. Hence the importance of our guarding well our thoughts.

But this is the labor and difficulty, for thoughts are unstable things, unruly as the wild horses of the plains, fickle as the waves of the sea, swift as the swallow's wings, impetuous as the hurricane, changeable as the clouds of Heaven. How are we to rule them? Sometimes they descend in clouds like the locusts, each one eager to devour our peace. They roar as the evening wolves—they howl like hungry dogs. Alas, poor boat, tossed to and fro by forces so subtle, variable and ungovernable—what shall be done for you? Harken, for the text softly tells us that for the tempest-tossed mind there is a haven of rest, an anchorage where the weakest may find shelter from the storm!

Even when multitudes of thoughts are let loose and the soul is seething and raging like a tempestuous sea, there is rest to be had—peace and quiet are yet reserved for the chosen of the Lord. The verse before us is most instructive, indicating as it does, an oasis for desert travelers, a sunny island for weary voyagers. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts delight my soul.”

Our first meditation, this morning, will be concerning *multitudinous thoughts and sacred comforts*. We shall afterwards pass on, more briefly, to take a nearer view of these *Divine consolations*. And we shall conclude by making a contrast from the text concerning those men who neither experience the multitudes of thoughts nor the comforts from on high.

I. MULTITUDINOUS THOUGHTS AND SACRED COMFORTS. This passage may be interpreted several ways. The most natural would be, I think, to refer it to *thoughts tumultuous in the night of trial*. There are occasions when we are grievously tried with troubles of an unusual order—and then it often happens that the floodgates of our judgment are drawn up and our liberated thoughts, in a raging torrent, without order, rush upon us foaming and threatening.

These thoughts will follow each other like gusts of an angry tempest. They may be such as these—the trouble itself, how severe it is, how it cuts one to the quick! Ten thousand other trials might have happened, any of which we fancy we could have borne more patiently, but this affliction is the direst of all, the fiercest lion of the woods. Will it be possible to escape from such a terrible calamity? Close upon the heels of this consideration will come the thought that the trial will be too much for you—that you will never be able to bear it—that your patience will give way and your faith will cast away her confidence and give place to despair.

Immediately in the rear of this another suggestion will lift its black head—this trouble is the consequence of past sin—you have walked contrary to God and He is now walking contrary to you. You would never have been made to smart thus if there had not been some gross disobedience of which you have not thoroughly repented—which God has still upon His mind—and therefore does He make you the target for His arrows. Then, like a serpent of the pit, there will dart upward the hissing and devilish suggestion—God is now giving you up! He has been merciful up to this moment, but this peculiar trial, so severe, so long continued, so piercing and penetrating, touching you in your most tender part—this is the turning point in your history.

From this day forward everything will go hard with you, you think—all circumstances will be black and cloudy. You shall know no comfort and no rest, for God has forsaken you. Your enemies will persecute and take you and you yourself will be cast out like savorless salt. “Ah,” says one, “such thoughts as these ought not to arise in any godly mind!” I know they ought not, but there they are and I question whether any child of God can affirm that he has been always altogether free from such conceptions in dark and tempestuous hours. Faith ought to shut the gate against every suggestion that would dishonor the veracity and loving kindness of God, but unfortunately the watchman sleeps and is troubled with weakness and then the enemy comes in like a flood! Happy is he who

in such a moment shall be able, by the Spirit of the Lord, to lift up a standard against him!

The thoughts that I have just uttered are only specimens of what will occur when the child of God is in the furnace and under a cloud. Of course these thoughts will be different in every case, but they will rush, as I have already said, like a raging torrent, sweeping everything before it in headlong fury. Now, at such times it is a great blessing if God's comforts are our stay and holdfast, delighting our souls. Happy is he who has found out a heavenly breakwater against the floods of great waters, a store of consolations for the most imminent emergencies. To these consolations may you be led by the Holy Spirit.

For a practical list of them I would refer you to the Psalm which lies open before us. You will observe that David derived comfort in his afflicted condition from the belief that God knew everything that he was suffering—"He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (Psa. 94:9). "Ah," says the soul, "whatever this trial may be, one thing is clear, my heavenly Father knows all about it. There is not a circumstance in my present condition which is hidden from Him. That eye which has watched me from my childhood is not closed towards me in this dark hour. He understands and knows the way that I take, and if I am surrounded with the thick darkness, it is no darkness to Him—

***“Even the hour that darkest seems
Will His changeless goodness prove.
From the mist His brightness streams,
God is wisdom, God is love.”***

"You God see me." "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." That is no mean consolation in the golden words which fell from the Savior's lips—"Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." The sevenfold heat of the furnace cools when we know that the Lord is there, "a very present help in trouble." Next to this, the Psalmist was comforted by the belief that chastisement is blessed to the partaker of it. Note the 12th verse—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord." "Then," says the soul, "if it is not prosperity which is set forth as a mark of blessedness. If it is *adversity* which is the Covenant spot and the choice mark of a favored child of God, then will I congratulate myself in being made to smart beneath my gracious Father's hand."

Everything as to our state of mind depends upon the light in which we regard the dealings of Providence. If our trouble comes to us as a curse. If, indeed, our afflictions are the first drops of that tremendous sheet of fire which will fall upon us forever from an angry God, then trial is, indeed, an awful thing. But if it is so, that out of love to us we are made to undergo the necessary processes of tribulation—to prepare us like winnowed wheat for the peaceful garner—then we will accept our sufferings with joy! Welcome, O Grief, if you are a black messenger loaded with treasure! Welcome, thrice! Welcome to my patient spirit, O rod of the Covenant, soul-enriching and sanctifying! Here, Beloved, is a second consolation which revives the fainting soul when ready to swoon amid the heat and burden of oppressive thoughts.

The Psalmist goes on to declare that all adversity will have a happy end, "Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart

shall follow it.” Then says the Spirit, “Though I may be cast down today and sorely vexed. And though the wicked may be at ease and spread themselves like green bay trees, yet there is an end appointed when the axe shall be for the root of the ungodly and when the Glory shall be for the afflicted and poor saints.” A sight of the end makes us to judge rightly of the whole matter. All’s well that *ends* well. If the cup is not poison, but medicine, then its bitterness shall be sweetness to me. If the plowing is not for a sowing of salt beneath the curse of desolation, but for a seedtime of Grace with a harvest of bliss, then plow on, O Lord, and though the furrows tear my soul, yet be it so, the end makes amends and therefore Your will be done!

The Psalmist still further, in the midst of his troubles, kept himself in the belief of God’s faithfulness. I called your attention in the exposition to the strong utterance of the 14th verse—“For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.” If we could believe it possible that God might suffer His chosen children to perish and that those who trust in Him might, under certain circumstances be confounded, we might very well wrap our faces in sackcloth and go our way in wretchedness, like the slaves of despair. But the Lord never has utterly deserted one of His servants yet and He never will!

When all His waves and His billows went over David, yet the Lord commended His loving kindness in the daytime and gave His servant a song in the night, for God was the health of his countenance and his God forever and ever. The Lord has made His servants to endure trials great and many—they have gone through fire and through water—but in every case the delivering arm has been made bare, and in their extremity the opportunity of love has certainly arrived. Rejoice then, O you who are vexed with multitudes of troublous thoughts, and let the Infallible faithfulness of your God delight your souls!

Once more in that Psalm, David dwells upon his own past experience—“Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, my foot slips, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.” How often have you and I found it to be one of the shortest ways to renew our hope, when we have called to mind the former days and the years of past mercy! We have said, “Was He not with me on the field of strife, to deliver me from the tumult of the people? Did I not obtain mercy from Him when I was brought very low? Did I not find safety beneath the shadow of His wings when the storm of the terrible ones assailed me? He that has enabled me to erect so many Ebenezers in days past has not helped me thus far to put me to shame at the end—He has not revealed all this loving kindness and Truth to me that He, after all, may make me ashamed of my hope.”

We have not to deal with a changeable God. Oh, no! He assuredly will complete the work which His wisdom has begun. All His power shall be put forth to finish the work of *Divine Grace*. Such thoughts as these, in the times when our heart is much distracted, will be found to minister not merely consolation, but a deep, profound quiet and even a holy exhilaration amounting, as our text has it, to “delight.” “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts *delight* my soul.”

Brothers and Sisters, I have thus spoken upon the text as referring to tumultuous thoughts in the night of trial. Permit me to remind you that it will be equally right to refer it to *perplexing thoughts and periods of dilemma*. The path of life to some men is remarkably straightforward—from their circumstances and surroundings they are very seldom at a loss to know the path of duty. But with many others the narrow way is, to all appearances, exceedingly like the track of the children of Israel through the wilderness—in and out, backward and forward—“progressive, retrograde, and standing still.” Oftentimes have we come to a turning in the road where human wisdom is at a nonplus to know whether to select the right hand or the left. Two ways may appear equally right morally, but yet the choice of either of them may involve the most solemn consequences as to our future.

I suppose that almost every Christian man has had to look about him for signposts and at times he has found none. He has felt like a traveler in the trackless bush of Australia and he has been obliged to go down on his knees and cry to God that he may hear a voice behind him saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” I may be addressing some of you today who are perplexed with a multitude of conflicting thoughts as to your course in life. You do not know what to do. A certain plan has suggested itself and for a time it has seemed the very best course for you—but just now your mind wavers, for another course presents itself—and there is much to say in its favor. You are bewildered. You cannot see the clue of Providence. You are lost as in a maze.

Indeed, at this moment you are much dispirited for you have tried various ways and methods to escape from your present difficulty, but you have been disappointed where you expected relief and probably that which you are about to attempt will end in disappointment, too. Your thoughts compass you about like bees, or as the flies of Egypt’s plague, they worry, but do not help you. You are distracted and your thoughts have no order about them, for while they lean one way at this moment, they drag you in the opposite direction the next second. The currents meet and twist you as in a whirlpool.

Now, my dear perplexed Friend, at such a time your plight may remind you of the children of Israel at the Red Sea, with the sea before them and the rocks on either hand—and the cruel Egyptians in the rear—and you must imitate their action and “stand still and see the salvation of God.” But, you reply, “I cannot be quiet, I am too agitated.” Brother, let patience have her perfect work. In quietness shall be your strength. Yet you reply, “My spirit is restless and impetuous. I wish I could be calm, for then I could better judge my position and probably discover the way of escape. But I am perturbed, perplexed, tossed up and down, distracted. Alas, what shall I do?”

Listen, then, to the text, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.” Turn your eyes to those deep things of God which have a Divine power to allay the torment of your spirit. Cease from a too anxious consideration of the things which are *seen* and *temporal*, and gaze by faith upon the things which are *unseen* and *eternal*. Remember that your way is ordered by a higher power than your will and choice. The eternal destiny of God has fixed your every footstep. Believe

that wisdom, not blind fate, but *wisdom*, has ordained the bounds of your habitation and fixed your position and your condition so definitely that no fretfulness of yours can change it for the better. In the ordinance of God, all your history is fixed so as to secure His Glory and your *soul's* profit.

Your present sorrow is the bitter bud of greater joy!

Your transient loss secures your ultimate and never-ceasing gain. How I rejoice to believe that the Lord shall choose my inheritance for me! All things are fixed by a Father's hand, by no arbitrary and stern decree, but by His wise counsel and tender wisdom. He who loved us from before the foundations of the world has immutably determined all the steps of our pilgrimage. Why, then, disturb yourself? There is a hand upon the helm which shall steer your vessel safely enough between the rocks and by the quicksand—away from the shoals and the headlands, through the mist and through the darkness—safely to the desired haven! Our Pilot never sleeps and His hand never relaxes its grasp. It is a blessed thing, after you have been muddling and meddling as you ought not to do with the affairs of Providence, to leave them alone and cast your burden upon the Lord.

Oftentimes in my own short career in connection with this Church and with the many works of God committed to my charge, I have been brought to a nonplus. I have considered and judged and been perplexed—and then discovering my gross folly, encumbering myself with much serving—I have, at last, by His Grace—resolved to lay my care upon the shelf and I have said unto the Lord, “I will never fret about this matter again. You shall judge and work for Your poor servant.” Brethren, hear my testimony! Things have always gone right with me when I have been brought to this! Whereas they have been wrong enough when I have befogged myself with care and have wondered how the College and the Orphanage could be provided for and 50,000 other things! When I have left all with my Lord, HE has brought forth my righteousness as the light, and my judgment as the noonday. I charge you, therefore, children of God in dilemma, roll your burdens upon God and He will sustain you and give you to rejoice in beholding His wisdom and His love.

The text will endure no straining if we read it as declaring that when *thoughts remorseful pass over us in the hour of recollection*, we may find peace in the comforts of God. Thoughts remorseful, I say—and what man among you could look back steadily and undismayed upon the whole course of his life? Take away the Cross and no Christian man dare recall the past to his memory. Each individual hair might stand on end with horror at the remembrance of the ruin into which our past iniquity has plunged us! Memory does well, beneath the shadow of the Atonement, to turn over each leaf of her diary. There are the sins of one's youth and the sins of mature years. There are sins of ignorance and sins against light and knowledge—secret sins and sins before the face of the sun.

All together, how many? Who shall count them? We have perpetrated aggravated offenses inasmuch as we have repeated sins which we professed to have repented of—sins in our case have worn a blacker hue because of circumstances which made them to stand without excuse. How frequently our evil ways have been injurious to others! At times that thought stings as does an adder, for we may have led others into sin who have not yet repented—who are going down to the Pit to reap the reward

of sins into which we drew them! Alas, the recollections of the past do not end in their painfulness with our conversion since we have continued to transgress.

Our sins of omission rise like Andes for height. Our sins of commission reach to the clouds. Sins against the Church and against the world, against our families, against ourselves—sins against the precious blood, sins against the blessed Spirit, sins against our loving Father—who shall count them? And when these sins are attentively viewed by the soul—not glanced at superficially, but looked into with hearty and honest repentance—how often will the question arise, “Can there be forgiveness for all these? Is it possible that they are blotted out? Is it not all a delusion and a dream, that such iniquity is really washed away?” And thought will follow thought, like lightning flashes in the thick of the tempest, till the soul will be broken in pieces with dismay, unless it turns to God’s comforts, which alone can delight the penitent soul.

Behold them now! There is a God of mercy, infinite mercy, and the greatest sin cannot be equal to the greatness of His power to forgive! There is a fountain filled with blood and the power of that blood is not exhausted. Jesus is a living Intercessor—“If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” The five wounds are still pleading and, though our sins are as scarlet, there stands the unwavering promise that they shall be as wool! Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow. Brothers and Sisters, it is of great service to the soul for us to go back frequently to our starting point. Our first penitence is one of the most lovely traits of the Christian character and ought to be always manifest—we should always be weeping for sin—but the tears should fall upon the Savior’s feet.

We should weep because our sins are *forgiven*. We should rest upon Jesus as guilty sinners still in ourselves, having nothing more to rest upon today, after 20 years of walking with God, than we had at the very first—for then we had the atoning blood and we have nothing more than that at this hour as the ground of our acceptance with God. O let us keep to this—that when many bitter thoughts are stirred as to the past—we may see the living Savior presenting His atoning sacrifice before the Throne of God and may, in it, rejoice!

The word, “delight,” has in this place in the original Hebrew the idea of dancing, and, indeed, our heart exults and leaps for joy at the sight of the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! Bold can we stand before God when we plead the righteousness of Christ! Though our sins are many, yet none shall lay them to our charge and though they are black, yet are they forgiven and none shall dare accuse whom God absolves. Let us not further linger. There are often with us *thoughts of heart-searching in seasons of spiritual anxiety*—and it is a blessed thing, in the multitude of our thoughts of heart-searching—if the comforts of God can still delight our soul.

God forbid we should ever say a word to dissuade professors from the duty of self-examination. Our salvation is too solemn a thing to be taken upon trust. No man has any right to believe that he is saved upon any assumed and taken-for-granted ground of assurance. He who is afraid to examine himself has need to be afraid—for God will examine him! He who

is right is never afraid of being searched, but rather he prays, “*Search* me, O God and try me and know my ways.” Yet, under self-examination, thoughts like these will naturally take wing in the heart—“Am I truly born again? That conversion of mine, was it a fancy, was it a reality? Do I know what the indwelling, purifying, quickening power of the Holy Spirit is, or is my experience only imagination? Is the change within me merely a transient desire after reformation?”

“Am I still in a carnal and unrenewed state? Do I produce the fruits of righteousness? Do I live as Christians are said to live? Do I follow after holiness in the fear of God? Do I, in very truth, love Christ, or is it only a pretense? Do I heartily serve Him? Does the love of Christ actually constrain me?” Ah, Brethren, when I recollect my own daily infirmities, I must confess I cannot always answer those questions without much debate of spirit! And I suspect that the most of you, in the matter of solemn heart-questioning, do not find things going very smoothly with you, either.

At such times, in the multitude of your thoughts within you, you will discover no delight unless you cast yourself upon the consolations which God has prepared for such a case—and I think they are these—“*Well*, if I never did love my Lord, if it were all a mistake, yet He still receives sinners and I will go to Him. If, after all, my religion has been a pretense, yet He has said, ‘Look unto Me and be you saved.’ My faith shall even, now, look up to the Lamb of Calvary, the Divine Savior. Jesus, I am guilty, but oh, I trust You.” I know there is no consolation like this! Never mind your experience—in hours of doubt leave it and fly at once to Jesus! If the devil calls your profession a lie, let him do so. But remember there is no lie in that Sacrifice that makes reconciliation for sin between the Believer and his God—and to that blessed Sacrifice—all guilty and undone as we are, let us fly at once!

These consolations will yet delight your soul if you push them farther. Having looked to the precious blood, then read your adoption in Christ, your union to Christ, your interest in the Covenant through Christ, your personal security by virtue of union to Christ! Get once to the Cross and you have reached the wellhead of consolations. We must not tarry there, however, but further observe that sometimes we have multitudes of *thoughts of foreboding in days of depression*. These dark prophesyings are sometimes about ourselves. How many of God’s people say, “Alas I shall die in a workhouse! I do not know what will become of me in old age, when these fingers cannot earn my daily bread.”

At other times and with some of us, much more often, we prophesy evil concerning our work—“The Holy Spirit will withdraw from our Church. Our ministry will not be useful. Our various works will fall to pieces. We shall see those who profess to be zealous go back to the world again.” Such thoughts as these haunt us. The Sunday school teacher will be afraid lest there should be no conversions in the class, or that supposed conversions will turn out to be mistakes—when you once get into the foreboding line it is very easy to be a great prophet of evil and to believe yourself when not a word of what you are saying has a smattering of truth in it.

Then we dream dreadful things concerning our nation. According to the gloomy prophets, all England is going to bad—not England alone, but all

countries are hastening on to a general and everlasting crash. Then one begins to fret about the Church of God, for, according to the soothsayers of the age, Antichrist is yet to come and new heresies are to spring up! The dogs of war are to be let loose, the Pope is to rule and burn us and one hardly knows what else! Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation have been made, sometimes, to minister poison to every bright hope! But, Brothers and Sisters, here is our comfort with regard to the future—

***“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might.
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”***

Let the worst come to the worst, the best will come of it before long. “If the heavens were a bow,” says one, “and the earth were the string and God should fit the arrows of His vengeance and shoot at the sons of men, yet they could find shelter with the Archer Himself.” Our refuge is in God! Let the worst calamities occur to the world in years to come, we are secure. It must be well—it cannot be ill. “Jehovah-Jireh.” Lift high the banner and hopefully advance to the battle, for the victory shall surely come unto the eternal arm, the immutable will!

Once more. Occasionally we have *profound thoughts in times of meditation*—and whenever we enter into profound considerations it is well for us to know the comforts which will delight our souls. Certain minds are very prone to contemplations upon themes more puzzling than profitable, such as predestination and free will. We have, all of us, I suppose, picked at that Gordian knot in our time and we have been vain enough to hope to untie it. But that deed is not for us. Many and many a good hour have we wasted over that dark mystery—how far the eternal God has fixed and how far responsible man is left free. Milton pictures the very devils musing upon that metaphysical problem, and doubtless the angels have pondered it, too.

But only God’s mind shall perfectly unriddle that enigma. Whenever we are oppressed with that great mystery, it must cheer us to know comforts of God which delight our souls. Among those comforts stands the grand fact that God is righteous—that He cannot err—that there cannot possibly be anything in Sovereignty that wars with Mercy or with Justice. Believing, moreover, that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everything on his side, we can leave the riddle solved or unsolved and feel that it is small concern to us. There are many other great mysteries in the Word of God and foolish persons utterly befog themselves with them.

Indeed, some minds never seem to be satisfied until they reach to something which they cannot comprehend and then they are ready to give up the Bible altogether! They act like one who should come in to a feast, and after turning over all the good things, should at last find a bone with no meat upon it and should insist upon it that he would not eat a morsel until he could digest that one particular bone! How foolish of men! They will not receive what they might grasp and comprehend and might be improved by—because of some one thing that happens to be above their comprehension! I bless God for a religion which I *cannot* understand! If I could perfectly understand it I would not believe it to be Divine—for I

should be sure it did not come from the infinite God if I could grasp it and comprehend it.

But oh, those blessed abysses of the Truths of God beyond my depth where I am obliged to cast myself upon the Lord and swim in His love! Oh, those soul-expanding mysteries—how well they give play for faith and room for confidence in God—where the soul, having done her best to grasp and comprehend, falls back upon her God and says, “How infinite You are. What a worthless worm I am. I bow before You in adoration and trust You in affection.” “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.”

Enough, then, upon our first point. I fear the multitude of my words have given you a weary sense of what a multitude of thoughts must be.

II. I could wish that we had time to VIEW THESE SACRED COMFORTS which we have hinted at this morning. But I ask your attention very briefly to a summary. View these comforts in *their nature*. They are said to be God’s comforts. “*Your comforts delight my soul*,” by which I understand that they are comforts concerning God, that is, connected with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This triple well continually overflows with consolation. The more a Believer thinks of his God, the more comfort he will have.

I understand the expression to mean also comforts *prepared* by God and comforts *revealed* by God—comforts which Divine mercy has ordained for the troubled sons of men—comforts which the Holy Spirit has revealed in the pages of Inspiration. I understand, however, more than this. The comforts that make us glad amid distractions are such as are *applied* by God Himself. This text has been read, and I believe rightly, by putting in a stop in a different place from that in which I have put it in my reading. “In the multitude of my thoughts, *within me*, Your comforts delight my soul.” For only when the comforts of God get *within* us do they become effectual comforts to us.

Man may pour the richest balm into the *ears* in words, but only the Holy Spirit’s pouring it into the *soul* in very deed and truth can make the heart glad. It may be possible, also, that my text may mean, “*Your comforts*,” that is, the very comforts enjoyed by Jesus Christ, Himself, the Son of God. For in the multitude of our thoughts we are often brought to rejoice where Christ rejoiced—in the joy that is set before us of God’s ultimate Glory in the salvation of the chosen. We are made to drink of the cup of trembling of which Christ drank and we are also enabled to drink of the cup of rejoicing which made Him glad in the house of His pilgrimage.

Understand, then, the comforts which God gives us to be comforts about Himself, comforts prepared and revealed by Himself, comforts applied by the Holy Spirit and comforts which have been participated in the days of His flesh by the Son of God Himself. When Archbishop Whately lay a-dying, a friend said to him, “Sir, you are great in death as well as in life. The good man shook his head and replied, “I am dying as I have lived, a simple Believer in Jesus Christ.” “But what a blessing it is,” said the other, “that your glorious intellect does not fail you at the last.” “There is nothing glorious,” said he, “but Jesus Christ.” “Still,” said the other, “your grand endurance is a great support to you.” “I have no support but faith

in the crucified Savior,” said he. Comfort, you see, comes to Believers from nothing in *themselves*—all peace proceeds from the Lord alone.

Observe, next, these comforts in their *stability*. They effectually sustain the spirit in times when they are required, for, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts delight my soul.” Many consolations are like the life-buoys we heard so much of a few weeks ago, which are exceedingly useful on dry land, but of no service whatever when once a man trusts his life to them in the sea. Even thus the world’s consolations are prized when they are not needed, but prove themselves to be something worse than ridiculous confidences when men most need their assistance.

Once more, I must ask you to notice concerning these comforts their real *efficiency*. “Your comforts delight my soul.” Not my animal nature. Not my external nature, but my very *self*. The comforts of God penetrate to the marrow of our manhood. They feed the vital spark. They make the man, himself, most thoroughly glad. Your wine, your corn, your oil—these do but tickle the palate. Your music, your viol and your dance—these do but please the ear, the eye, the foot. But the comforts of God touch the man, himself, the essential inner core of the man’s nature. “Your comforts delight *my soul*.”

Note that word, “*delight*.” God’s comforts not merely console, sustain and quiet my soul, but they “delight” it. And that, too, in the midst of tumultuous thoughts! Brethren, I know and speak by experience what I now say. There is a sad uneasiness in mirth and there is a matchless repose in sorrow. I have never been more deeply happy than when I have been laid low with chastening. When I have been broken in pieces all asunder, faith has found her strength in helplessness, her end of care in the end of her self-reliance. When Unbelief whispered rebelliously, “God must have His way, His cruel way,” and when the heart was reconciled to leave it there, a sweet peace reigned within.

Yes, there is deep joy amid deep sorrow, when the spirit is hushed and quiet and the soul is even as a wearied child. May it always be your case, beloved Friends, if ever the Lord shall call you to pass through deep waters, to find the pearls that lie hidden there—to mark the light that springs up in the midnight and the joy that comes in the morning, when the weeping is over forever.

III. Now, the last thing, with which I send you away, is A CONTRAST. Too many of our fellow men never think at all. Thinking should be the easiest thing a man could attempt, for he has not to lift his hand or move his foot, but the multitude of men will do anything, rather than think. Their thoughts, if they have any, are like a swarm of gnats, volatile, dancing up and down, light, useless! O that men would think! It is always a hopeful sign, if not of Divine Grace, yet of a prelude for the working of the Spirit of God, when men are brought to consider.

We need not so much dread infidelity as carelessness. I had rather men would think wrongly than not think at all. When a man is awake enough to defy God, it is an awful thing—but there is something to be made of him—he is not quite asleep. There is a chance that this Goliath who defies his God may have a stone sent through his forehead and by the way of his thinking may yet be brought low. But it is people who go about their daily work and pleasure and never think at all who seem to be the devil’s pecu-

liar portion. How few of these ever get to be converted? O for a thunder-clap to make the world think! Cholera, pestilence, war, calamity—these oftentimes come from God as a voice to make men consider! But in these soft and gentle times men are lulled to false security and down to the abyss of woe the multitude are being swept.

I cannot but compare thousands of my fellow men to the Indian whose story, which I remember to have read years ago in *Whitecross' Anecdotes*. Whether the tale is true or not I cannot tell. It is said that on the great river of America there was once seen a canoe some miles off Niagara floating down the stream and as the current turned it so that those on the bank could well perceive it, they saw that the paddle was slipped and an Indian was lying in the canoe fast asleep. They shouted as best they could to awake him, for they knew well the imminent hazard of the poor wretch. They shouted and called aloud, as they ran along the bank, but it was of no use. He had either been drinking or had been so fatigued that his slumber was most profound and the canoe went floating on, continually increasing its pace.

It dashed at last against a headland and spun round in the torrent, and they said one to another, "He is safe, the man will be awakened. Such a start as that will surely arouse him and he will paddle out of danger." But no, he went right on till the roaring of the fall was near and then the course of the boat was so rapid that none could keep up with it and it went whirling on faster and faster. So profound was the Indian's sleep that for awhile even the roar of the fall did not awaken him. But at last he was aroused and then he grasped his paddle—but it was too late—he was borne onward and the last that was seen of him was his standing bolt upright in the boat, as it plunged over the abyss and was never seen or heard of again.

Ah, my fellow men, how like this are those of you who are asleep and are borne onward by the treacherous current! That fever, that sickbed—like a headland jutting into the stream—we would think it would have made you think! That frail boat of yours was twisted round and round. O that your soul had but been aroused from its slumber! The noise of Hell may well be in your ears and the sound that comes up from the abyss of terror may well arouse you. But alas, I fear you will sleep on until the cataract of destruction shall be just before you in the pangs of death and then, alas, full of horror, you shall seek escape when escape is no longer possible!

God grant that none of us may thus sleep ourselves into a world of woe, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 94.

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THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR NO. 2118

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 15, 1889.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 31, 1889.**

*“He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall He not see?”
Psalm 94:9*

THE character of a man hinges upon his relation to God. You may know what manner of man he is and what are his communications, if you find out how he stands towards God. With many, God is a mere name—a word to be pronounced more or less reverently. But nothing more. He is not a force operating upon their daily lives. His Glory is no motive of action, no object of desire, no joy of their heart. “God is not in all their thoughts.” And in consequence their lives are not conformed to His holy Law. Blessed be the Most High, there are a few to whom God is everything—the First and Last, the Center and Circumference of their being.

To them the Lord is the great trust and treasure of their spirit. He is the rock of their confidence, the well-spring of their delight. Such men as they that delight in God, will seek after holiness and aim at perfection. God has shined upon them and their faces will be bright. God dwells within them, and as from a kindled lamp, light will stream forth.

Among the ungodly there are many whose lives prove that they know nothing about God. Indeed, their ignorance of God is their support in their present behavior. They comfort themselves with the notion, “The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.” To them God is out of the world as to observation or practical interference. They do not care whether He sees them or not. Their belief is that if He does see, He cares nothing what men may think or do. He is too far off to be concerned about human affairs. He will neither grow angry with the sin of the wicked, nor take pleasure in the holiness of the godly.

Of this practical atheism I am going to speak at this time, pleading against that frame of mind by the argument of the text. “He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?” May the Holy Spirit help me in my endeavor and may all my hearers believe in the living, hearing, seeing Jehovah!

I. Our first observation will be THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT HEAR OR SEE IS PERNICIOUS. In judging it, we will follow the line of the Psalm which now lies open before us.

We perceive that men who talked in this godless fashion were proud. Therefore the prayer, “Lift up Yourself, You Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.” The man who thinks that God is not in the world, or is not at all concerned in its affairs, thinks that he is, himself, about the

greatest person in existence. There may be some other poor creatures about, but he is, in many respects, the most deserving of esteem. He who thinks little of God, thinks much of himself. "Who is the Lord," he says, "that I should obey His voice?"

Who talks like this but Pharaoh, the king, the potent one, accustomed to having his own will in everything? Those speak exceeding proud who have no knowledge of the Most High. Measuring themselves by others like themselves, they are not wise. The worm exalts itself above its meaner fellow worms and dreams not of the great Eternal One who fills all things. Pride is very apt to grow great when knowledge is small, and reverence is absent. Proud language usually goes with profane talk and blasphemous ideas. For it comes of the same kindred. "How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?"

If there is no God, or no God to care about, then straightway men delight in uttering things which make the blood of the godly curdle. They render no praise to God, since they seek all glory for themselves. Because of their own conceit, they question His wisdom, cavil at His Word, doubt His justice, impugn the sentences of His bar and speak evil of Him even as they wish. Give a man of proud heart a fluent tongue and opportunity enough to speak of God, and then take away from him the idea that God hears him—and there is no telling to what lengths of profanity he will hasten. His tongue is set on fire by Hell and it burns with an inconceivable fury.

If you have ever been forced to hear or read the expressions of renowned infidels, you can form some idea of how completely Satan works his will with godless men. Take God away and the brakes are taken off, and the train dashes down hill at terrific speed. "Their tongue walks through the earth," says David. No bounds can be set to the evil perambulations of an atheistic tongue. Not even Heaven itself is free from the assaults of its pride—"They set their mouth against the heavens." They slander God, Himself, because they imagine that He does not hear.

Nor is this the end of the mischief. When the fear of God is taken away from men, they frequently proceed to persecute His servants. The Prophet complains, "They break in pieces Your people, O Lord, and afflict Your heritage." As they hate God, so they manifest their hate against His people. If they cannot get at the leader, if they cannot smite the shepherd, they will at least worry the flock. Read the long and cruel story of human malice against the Church of God—it mingles with the record of every nation—it is an awful history, written in tears and gore.

The sacramental host of God's elect has left behind it in its marches a trail of blood and ashes, filling up, in the persons of the persecuted, that which was behind of the sufferings of the Lord. For all that grief was meant for *Him* if His enemies could but have poured it on His head. At times it has seemed as if God had given up His people and caused the rod of the wicked to rest upon His heritage. No wonder that it was so with them. For thus it pleased Him to deal with his *Only-Begotten Son*. He delivered Him up to the world to do with Him as it wished. The Father did

not interpose, though they spat in His face, though they scourged Him, though they blindfolded Him and buffeted Him and made nothing of Him.

Yes, though they nailed Him to the accursed tree and stood to gloat their cruel eyes upon His agonies, the great God did not interfere to save the Beloved of His soul. A greater force than almighty power held omnipotence itself in check, that it should not lift its finger to rescue the Lord's Anointed. If He was to save others, He could not be saved Himself. Though He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" yet Jehovah left His own Son to die in the hands of the ungodly. You know the reason why. But, apart from that, it was a strange procedure.

The Lord may deal thus with His own Church and His own cause, till His people cry, "How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger!" The Truth of God may appear to be wounded, slain, dead and even buried. But yet, as Jesus rose again, so shall His true Church and cause rise again, though they are laid in the grave and the stone is sealed, and the watch is set. Truth, though entombed, must rise again. For her Lord arose and God is with His cause as He was with His Son.

Beloved, when men think that there is no God and speak evil of the Most High, we need not wonder that they take liberty to persecute the chosen of God. There is no telling to what lengths of cruelty men will go when unhindered by a sense of God's Presence. The Psalm says, "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless." Take God away and what a place this world would be! Without religion our earth would soon become a huge Aceldama, a field of blood. Ah, dear Friends, men little know what they owe to the presence of God's people even in a city like this. There is no reason but religion, why London should not become like Paris during the Reign of Terror.

If it were not that God has respect to the faithful that dwell in the midst of the city, He might give it over to the ungodly. And no greater plague could come upon it. When men say, "Does God see? Does God know?" then they seek every man his own. And, if they can, they turn like tigers upon each other—society is torn to pieces and the weak are devoured. If the Lord had not left us a remnant who fear His name, we had been as Sodom and had been made like unto Gomorrah. There is no telling how far the Evil One may be let loose to excite men to evil. But, in any case, the chosen means of the devil will be the spread of atheistic principles among the masses. A world without God is a world without fear, without Law, without order, without hope.

Note well, that if we were persuaded that God did not hear and did not see, there would be an end of worship, would there not? Could you worship a deaf God? I must confess that such a being would not be God to me. If He could not hear and hear all things, I should see at once a limit to His nature. And a being of limited nature is not God, since God is and must be, of necessity, infinite, to be God at all. Though it is hard to conceive what infinity must be, we must predicate it of the Godhead. And, if it is gone, the Godhead is gone with it—and there is an end of belief in God.

The idea of a deaf God is absurd. Does not Jehovah see me? If not, then He does not see all things—He is blind to *something*. Could you worship a blind God? If you could, you are on a par with those to whom you talk of sending missionaries. For their gods “have eyes but they see not—they have ears, but they hear not.” And they that make them as like unto they are. He is an idolater and not a worshipper of the living and true God, who worships a being of whom he entertains the notion that he cannot hear or see. There is clearly an end of worship when there is an end of belief in a hearing and observing God.

Nor is this all—it seems to me that there is, to a large extent, an end of the moral sense—if there is no God to punish sin, then every man will do as seems right in his own eyes. And why should he not? By what consideration will he be hindered? If there is no reward for righteousness, and righteousness involves self-denial, why should he deny himself? If there is to be no punishment for sin and sin is pleasurable, why should he not seize the pleasure?

Take away all thought that God sees and hears, and you have removed the underlying basis upon which morality itself is to be built up. A godless world is a lawless world. Anarchy comes in when the fear of God goes out. And all the mischiefs that you can imagine, and much more, rush in like a flood. Without God, or even with a god that does not see and does not hear, where is the hope of the despairing? Tonight she will go home with a broken heart, for, alas, her last friend is dead. She will cover her face and sit astonished in her sorrow. And now what can she do?

Poor woman, with no helper upon earth, where will she look? If she can bow by the side of that poor bed and cast her care on God, that loves and cares for her, she will rise out of the deep of her distress. But if there is none in Heaven to note her misery, the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, is taken away. What now remains? And he that is full of disease, and near to die—upon whom the physician has looked down as he lies in the hospital and has shaken his head. He knows that his doom is sealed, and that he will never quit that bed except to exchange it for the grave—if he has no God, how will he turn his face to the wall in the gall of bitterness, and moan in anguish never to be relieved?

But if God sees and hears, the widow is not without a helper and the dying man, in all his agony, is not without a hope. O cruel Unbelief, put not out our one sun, take not from the mourner his one consolation. Let me lose myself, but not my God, who is more than life to me. Yes, if you can, you may blot the glory out of Heaven and silence every angel’s harp, and quench in endless night the sevenfold luster of the celestial light. But leave me my God and I shall have all Heaven back again in Him and somewhat more.

Oh, yes, a God that hears and sees—we must have Him—or else we are orphaned indeed! If God does not see and hear, we are shipwrecked upon the rock of blank atheism. I do not care a bit what men believe in, whether it is pantheism, or agnosticism, or theism. If they have no personal God that hears and sees, they have, in fact, no God at all. “There is a power that makes for righteousness,” said one. But if that power is insensible

and never communicates with man and never notices him, there is nothing in the forced admission of any use to him who makes it or hears it. It is big talk, such as men call "bosh," and nothing more.

Though it is veiled in the language of philosophy, the scientific jargon which makes God into insensible force is covert atheism. I must have a God that hears and sees, and comes into the arena of my daily life and helps me because He loves me, or else I have no God. My God dwells with me and works for me, or else I have no God. Fine words, pretty phrases and magnificent definitions, are so many bags of wind and go for nothing—there cannot be a deaf God, nor a blind God, nor an insensible God. If any of you so believe, go to Bedlam and find there your fit associates. As for us, we know that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the living God and His memorial is that He hears prayer. So much for the first point.

II. But, secondly, THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT SEE AND HEAR IS AN ABSURD NOTION. According to our text, it is proved to be unreasonable. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" Think of that argument—here is a creature which has ears and can hear—the God who created that being—can He *not* hear? Has He given to His creature more than He has Himself? Has He made a creature which excels Himself in essential faculties? Has He bestowed a sense which He Himself never had? How can it be? The God that makes a man with ears to hear, must possess hearing Himself.

The very idea of hearing seems to me to necessitate that He who conceived the idea was Himself able to hear. He could not have borrowed the idea, for there was no other being but Himself in the beginning—from where did He get the thought but from His own being? That the mind of man should be reached by the gate of the ear, by an impression upon an auditory nerve, is a wonderful conception. If you do not think so, because you are so used to it, I would like you to tell me whether you could invent a *sixth* sense. You have hearing, smelling, taste, feeling, seeing. Will you invent another? You have not the power to invent another sense. And the idea of any sense which now exists must have been equally a feat of boundless wisdom, impossible to a being who could not hear and see.

He that invented the idea, also planned the way by which hearing would become possible. What an intellect was that which forged the link between matter and mind, so that the movements of particles of air and the impression made by these upon the drum of the ear should turn into impressions upon mind and heart! God must have every power in perfection, or He could not have contrived and constructed such an admirable instrument as the ear.

I should not think the time ill-spent if I were able to give you a lecture upon the human ear. We know far less about it than we do concerning the eye. And my own knowledge of it is so scant that I can only glance at the subject. That outer portion which we commonly call the ear is only the vestibule of curious, intricate, winding passages which communicate with chambers of bone and vaults of ivory. Curtains are stretched along these

passages—membranes which tremble as the head of a drum, or vibrate like a tambourine.

Between two of these parchment curtains a chain of very small bones is extended. Have you ever heard of the stirrup bone? Rows of fine threads, or nerves, convey the motion, or the sound, into the brain, and there the soul sits waiting for the news. It is all wonderful. Nor must I forget to remind you that the ear is “planted.” The important part—the real ear—is so deeply seated in the head, as to be beyond a mere external inspection. The lobe of the ear is like a leaf above ground but the hearing organ is “planted” in the skull. It is placed very near the brain and operates on both sides of it, so as to keep the whole mind in communication with sounds from every quarter. The ear is set deep, and its chambers—some filled with air and some filled with liquid—are thus protected from much harm, which might otherwise come to them from the outer world.

An ear doctor who explained to you the mechanism of the ear should make you feel that an undevout member of his profession is mad. The infinite wisdom of God is seen in this gate of sense. And it is there in far greater measure than we can perceive. And can you believe that this marvelous instrument for hearing was made by a deaf God, or a dead God, or an impersonal power? Or that it came into existence through “a fortuitous concourse of atoms”? I know not the precise terms in which they now attempt to describe creation without a Creator, design without a designer. But I can say that those who believe in ears created by an unhearing force or being, have more faith than I can muster.

No, I venture to say that their faith has overleaped itself, has climbed to the top of the ladder and gone down on the other side—so that, instead of being great *faith*, it has rotted into gross credulity. To fly from the difficulties of faith to the impossibilities of unbelief, is a singular infatuation. I prefer to believe in a personal, intelligent First Cause.

But even if you had an ear made—and I suppose that it would be no very great difficulty to fashion, in wax or some other substance, an exact resemblance to an ear—could you produce hearing then? God alone gives the life which hears. That particular point in which motion is translated into audible sound—where is that? That thing which hears—I mean not the vibrating parchment, nor the telephonic nerves—but that living something which is informed by the nerves and reads their message—where and what is that something?

The surgeon searches with his knife but he declares that he cannot find it. No, he cannot find it—it has fled before his instrument of search. But this much is sure—once gone, he cannot restore it. He could not make it in the first place, nor renew it when once departed. Not the whole troop of surgeons and physicians of all the hospitals could suffice to create a soul. There is a spiritual something—the true man—and this it is which God makes. Do you know yourself? Could you put your finger on yourself? Oh, no. That mystic being, that strange, half God-like existence, the soul, is not within the range of our senses. He that made the soul, has He no soul? Can He not hear? O Sirs, the argument is plain enough. It needs no elaboration. It carries conviction at first sight.

To imagine that the Creator of life does not see and hear is absurd. And yet the devil tempts gracious people, the best of people, at times to think that the Lord does not observe them in their trials. "Oh," they say, "God is too great, surely, to hear *me*, a poor sinful woman, or a frail, ignorant man. His greatness must prevent His hearing me." Yet, surely, you would not think the Lord deaf because *you* are unworthy. You would not attribute to Him a greatness which would really involve littleness. If you make Him so great that He is deaf, or so grand that He is blind, you have dishonored Him.

"No," you say, "but, surely, God does not see and hear *everything*. Look at my great sorrow—why does He allow it to grow and deepen? What keen miseries are caused by my thoughts! As George Herbert puts it, 'My thoughts are all a case of knives.'" Just so. And yet the Lord knows and permits it all in love to your soul. He does not forget you. But, "like as a father pities his children," so does He pity you. Do not be led astray by the idea that you are passed over and forgotten by your God. "He knows the number of the stars, He calls them all by their names." And he knows you, also, especially and individually.

Last summer I noticed a small flower in the center of a beech-wood in the New Forest. Surrounded by the princely trees of the woods, it smiled from the sod, a modest beauty. I thought to myself, "When do you see the sun? Does his light and glory ever cheer you?" I tarried in that forest and watched the sunbeams smiling through the interlacing branches of the trees. And while I lingered I marked how, finally, the sun found out a way to pour his golden glory directly into the center of that flower, which glowed and smiled as Heaven thus communed with its littleness.

Rest assured that God, who is our Sun, thinks of the least of us. We are not neglected weeds of the moorland. The Lord sees us. We do not waste our sweetness on the desert air. For God is there. Those valleys among the mountains, virgin of the foot of man, are trod by the great Husbandman. Those are His Holy Places, His private gardens, His secret haunts. And the flowers which bloom in them are as plants of a royal garden, which make glad the heart of the King. So too, you hidden ones, your God does not forget you. No, though you may be tempted to think that He does not hear and see everything—for men are so vile and error is so rampant—He puts up with their provocations. Yes, he considers all.

I have been inclined to cry out myself, as the Psalmist did, "Why withdraw You Your hand, even Your right hand? Pluck it out of Your bosom." That the Lord lets evil doctrine have so long a day is a great disquietude to a lover of the Truth of God. Ah, but the Lord hears every blasphemy, and marks it—and the day will come, as surely as He lives—when He will lift His right hand to smite down the edifices of error, and they shall be before Him as a bowing wall and a tottering fence. "The way of the wicked He turns upside down." "Trust in the Lord forever."

In the cloudy and dark day look for the Light. He does see—He does hear—He must work for truth and righteousness. Shall He that made the ear not hear? Shall He that formed the eye not see? Be not guilty of so ab-

surd a thought as to fancy that these evil days are not watched over by the Lord.

III. But now, thirdly and briefly, THAT GOD HEARS HIS OWN MUST BE ESPECIALLY CERTAIN, from the very argument of the text. "Why?" you say. Why, because they have new and spiritual ears and they have God-given spiritual eyes. And He that planted the spiritual ear, shall He not hear? And He that formed the spiritual eye, shall He not see? It has come to pass, my Brethren, that now when God speaks by His Spirit we hear Him, blessed be His name! Time was when His threats spoke to us as with noise of thunder. But we would not hear them.

Now we are humbled in the dust by His anger. He has given us ears which are joined to hearts of flesh. When He speaks by way of invitation, and says, "Seek you My face," we answer, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Do you imagine that if God has given us the Divine Grace to hear His voice, He will not hear us when we lift up our voices to Him? Rather let us each one say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak. For He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints."

Did He give you a new ear only that you might hear Him chide you? Did He intend never to regard your answer to His rebukes? Does He convince you of sin without intending to grant you a Savior? Does He bring you to hear the Law and to confess sin and ask for pardon? And can He not, will He not, hear you? Has He made you to hear of judgment to torment you before your time? Will He shut His ears to your humble prayers? I will not believe it. He that gave you those spiritual ears meant to say something worth your hearing and He meant to hear you when you cried to Him. He has spoken, and some of us are tonight full of ecstasy at what we have heard Him say. Has he not said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me"?

If you hear Him speak, He will hear you speak. Oh, that you would sit at His feet and ask Him to speak. And then you may be sure that He has inclined His ear unto you! He has created in the minds of some of you a sense of need and will He not pity you? Perhaps you have not reached any farther than to know your wants and dangers. But He gave you this knowledge. You are hungry and thirsty. You had not these spiritual appetites once. He gave them to you. Why? You were not hungry for mercy. You were not thirsty for righteousness till his Spirit came and gave you life and with that life the soul-hunger.

Will He not satisfy the hunger He creates? Will He not fulfill the desire He has implanted? I never heard of such cruelty as for a man to gather together five hundred poor people from the street who had learned to draw tight their hunger-belts and bear privation, and all of a sudden to excite a ravenous hunger in them, and then turn them adrift and say, "Go your ways. I have made you feel your necessities most terribly. But I have nothing else for you. I have shown you your true condition. I have made you know what destitution you feel. Be off with you!"

God will not treat you thus. It is not like He. He that planted holy longings and hungry pining and spiritual appetites, must intend to supply them. He that has made you hear the voice of your need, will hear it Him-

self. He is far quicker of hearing than you can be, and your wants appeal to His heart before your heart is awake to them. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" He that gives spiritual life will live Himself to sustain that life.

In addition to this, He makes us long after holiness. Will He not work it in us? I might say of myself and many dear Brothers and Sisters here, that we habitually desire to be holy and to be wholly free from sin. We cannot endure evil. A preacher once declared that when Paul cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he was not a Christian. That shows how very little that preacher knew about the matter. No man but a true Believer would have such anguish on account of sin.

Just in proportion as he became a Christian of the highest order, would he cry out in an agony when he found evil thoughts and tendencies within his nature. It is when we begin to loathe sin, and any leaning towards sin—and when we grow wretched because of a single evil thought—that we have grown in Divine Grace and are far advanced and are reaching towards that other verse, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory." A true Believer must hate sin with an intense hatred. And when the Lord has given him the desire to do so, he may be sure that the same Lord will give deliverance from the power of evil.

He who makes you hate sin will answer to that detestation, and deliver you from that which you so greatly loathe. Does He make you pine after holiness and will He deny you holiness? Do you hear His voice of command and will He not hear your prayer for help to obey? Does your child pine to be good and can you help him to be good and will you not do so? To the ear which God has enabled to hear His call, the Lord will lend His own ear to hear prayer. Surely, the very holiness of God that puts into us a desire to be holy is a guarantee to us that He will help us to be holy.

He that makes us long for purity will work it in us. It may be He will put us in the furnace. But by some means He will purify us as silver is refined. He that planted the desire after holiness is Himself holy and will work holiness in His people.

Do you not sometimes sit down and indulge a daydream of what you had wished to be? Do you not wake up and put down your feet and say, "This is what I resolve to be, God helping me. I will endeavor to live nearer to my Lord and to be more like my Lord Jesus." Then you feel a fire burning upon the altar of your heart. You feel that you must put forth all your energies in the Divine life and press forward after the highest degrees of Divine Grace. Be encouraged by this condition of desire, for your Lord will not deny it to you. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" He that planted in your heart the desire after this high ideal will hear you as you cry to Him for aid in the sacred enterprise. The Creator answers to that which He has created—"He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him."

Do you pray, Brothers and Sisters? I know you do. But do you really believe that God hears you? I cannot help thinking that a great mass of prayers are poured into a vacuum. I cannot shake off the thought that Brethren seem often to be praying into eternal emptiness, pleading with

an infinite nothing. They say the proper words, but they mean little or nothing by them. Does God hear prayer? Do you answer, "Yes"? Then let us pray as if we truly believed that He did. When we have done praying, let us expect Him to answer us.

When we go into the bank with our checks, we hand them in, take up the money and are gone. Do we deal thus at the Bank of Faith? Do we plead the promise? If so, the Lord counts out the money. But do we take it up? I fear we leave it on the counter. The Lord might say, "Is that man gone? Gone without what he came for? He pleaded My promise, and has he gone away content without My reply?"

Is it your habit to go to the Throne of Mercy and ask for the mere sake of asking? Do you grind at a mill for the mere pleasure of grinding? Surely he that asks receives. And if he does not, he should enquire the reason why. A little time before prayer, to prepare the petition, would much help towards reality in prayer. A little time after prayer, to consider when and how the blessing is to be used when the Lord sends it, would be a further aid to faith.

Sometimes the angels come to our letter-boxes and cannot put in the answers because the boxes are fastened down by unbelief. We are not prepared to receive what God is prepared to give. Let us pray, believing that as surely as God has given us an ear, He has an ear Himself, and will hear our pleadings. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?"

Brothers and Sisters, we are at this time greatly concerned about the Master's kingdom. Some of us have no other trouble comparable to our anxiety about the cause of God and His Truth. We mourn as we see the evil leaven leavening the whole lump. Do you not think that the great Head of the Church is as much concerned about it as we are? It is His own kingdom. It is, therefore, more upon His mind than it can be upon ours. It is God's own Truth which is denied—it is His own Son that is dishonored.

The glorious doctrine of the atonement—when we hear it scoffed at—we burn with indignation and our heart breaks with grief. Does not the Lord's heart also burn with indignation when the precious blood is trampled on? Is He indifferent to all this apostasy and heresy? Depend upon it, He is not. For "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" And He that has sworn to glorify His Son, will He forever stand still when that Son is dishonored, even in His own Church?

IV. I have done when I say just this one thing more—A BELIEF THAT GOD HEARS AND SEES HAS A VERY BENEFICIAL TENDENCY UPON THOSE WHO FIRMLY HOLD IT. It works good in a thousand ways. Time would fail me to recount a tithe of them. It may suffice to take a thought or two, and turn the matter over in our minds. If we feel that God sees and hears, what an incentive it is to do right and to be valiant for His Truth! Soldiers will play the man in the presence of their prince. If our Lord looks on, what will we not do and dare?

The same sense of His Presence will act as a check to any and every deed of sin. We cannot indulge the thought of evil when the Lord Himself hears that thought. Does the Lord look on and shall I sin in His Divine

Presence? Shall I grieve Jesus when the Beloved of my soul is Himself close to me and watches, with regretful eye, each sinful movement? The solemn conviction that God hears is a check to evil and a stimulus for good.

It acts grandly as a preservative against the desire of applause and the fear of man. He who knows assuredly that God hears him will speak the truth though all the world should listen, or though no one but God should hear him. It was a beautiful word which was spoken by a soldier to an open-air preacher not long ago. A friend who was preaching in the street had gathered a considerable audience. But as a troop of soldiers went by, with colors and martial music, the people were dispersed and the preacher was

left almost alone. A soldier, who for some reason was marching outside the ranks, called to him, "Go on, Sir—God loves to hear you praising His Son Jesus."

True, most true. God delights in the glories of Christ. What a grand audience you have if the Lord hearkens and hears you praising His Son! Do the despisers grind their teeth when they hear Jesus preached? Never mind. Let them wear out their hearts in wrath. They cannot rob Jesus of a beam of brightness. Keep on praising your Lord and Savior. For if men who have ears to hear will not hear, yet be sure your heavenly Father will not fail to listen.

We do not want applause from men, since God hears us. If the Queen were present and a soldier performed a deed of valor and a person were to say to him, "You did well and you may be proud that Corporal Brown and Sergeant Smith saw you and approved of what you did." "Oh," he would say, "I care nothing for corporals and other petty officers. Her Majesty herself looked at me and said, 'Well done.' She will, with her own hands put the Victoria Cross upon me in due time. That is the reward I seek."

If God sees me, it is a small matter who may, or who may not see, and approve. We need to grow thus healthily independent of human judgment—for he who fawns for smiles, or trembles at frowns, will never lead a noble life for long. The assurance that God sees and hears, is a wonderful care-killer. Why should I be anxious? My heavenly Father knows that I have need of these things. What if I am in trouble? This, my Father knows. Brethren, if the Lord knows our soul is in adversity, and if his eye is ever upon us, are we not safe? Know that you serve One whose eyes are upon the righteous and whose ears are open to their cry and you will live above care.

And, oh, how this will tend to promote your fellowship with God! When your heart sings, "He leads me. He hears me. He knows the way that I take," then are you filled with a sense of fellowship with the Eternal God. How we love Him who hears us always! Since He is always seeing us, we learn to see Him. "You God see me," is a word which brightens up our sad hearts till we also see God. We pass through the trouble, and toil, and temptation, and turmoil of this mortal life with serene spirit, since it is written, "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there."

Suffering is no mean thing, if we suffer in full submission to the will of Him that hears and sees us. If He is but with us, all question is ended. We cheerfully say, "It is the Lord—let Him do what seems Him good." As long as his father was captain of the ship, his little son never knew a fear. For he was sure his father could steer the vessel safely to the haven.

Be of good cheer—our Father who sees and hears us, is in the midst of His people—and not so much as one of them shall perish. If the Lord were away, or asleep, or deaf, we might be in a trembling mood. But while His ears and eyes are open to us, we cannot tolerate mistrust. By a little altering of the quaint poet's lines, we may say—

***"Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He does preserve it. He does steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of His art,
He cannot hide His eyes, much less His heart."***

Go, speak with the wise Planter of the ear. For He will surely hear!

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED READERS—From afar I greet you with hearty salutations. I am resting with the earnest desire that I may gain health and refreshment of mind for future service. I knew right well several well-beloved and useful Brethren who were weary and worn but, humanly speaking, would have soon been restored if they could have rested. They kept on painfully for a while and then died. Friends from all quarters have pointed to these beacons and have bid me take warning. And I feel that I am right in doing so. I hope to do more by attempting less.

You will be glad to know that the Special Services at the Tabernacle have been, in a memorable manner, attended with the Divine blessing. May the printed sermons, in the absence of the preacher, have an equally remarkable share in the sacred benediction!

It is in answer to many requests that this particular sermon has been selected. May it be as much enjoyed by the reader in the perusal, as by the preacher in its delivery! With it comes my hearty love in Christ Jesus to each one of the great host who, week by week, drink in the Word of God through the reading of these sermons.

Yours very heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, December 7, 1889.

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THE SEA! THE SEA! THE WIDE AND OPEN SEA! NO. 3291

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1912.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY.***

***“The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.”
Psalm 95:5.***

THIS Psalm exhorts us to sing joyfully unto God. Whether we contemplate the land or the sea, there will be found upon them both abundant reasons for adoring the great Creator. Some, I know, as they walk upon the land, can no more praise Him than if it were one vast desert of Sahara—and yet the earth is full of His goodness—it is as a garden yielding not only food for man and beast, but lovely and fragrant flowers! Forest and field, mountain and plain alike sing out the praises of the Lord! Nor is the sea less rich in excitements to worship the Lord our Maker. Ignorant persons regard the sea as a dreary waste of waters. In the olden times, our home-loving forefathers were desperately afraid of the sea and looked upon it as a devouring monster. It was a “melancholy ocean” to them—a place of constant sorrow and sudden death—they shuddered as they thought of it. But, indeed, to him who is rightly taught, the sea is full of beauty! Its every wave is lit up with splendor—the sea is the Lord’s, for He made it! You see then, that both on the land and on the sea adoration is in its place. Praise is never out of season at any time and worship is never foreign in any land. It matters not whether we travel over sand or snow, or how we are tossed about on Arctic or tropical sea—we are still in the pasture of the Great Shepherd, and within the palace of the Great King. Praise the Lord from the earth and let dragons and all deeps join in the Psalm. “Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

At this time I shall ask you only to think of the sea. I could far more easily preach upon this text if I were standing in one of my delightful haunts by the Mediterranean, looking over its blue waters, hidden away in the cleft of a rock, with the spray at my feet. Then, I think, I should not coldly read the words, but clap my hand, as I cried with my heart, “The sea is His, for He made it.” Here we are, however—stranded on this white-cliffed island and banished from the fresh sea breezes to this huge Babylon of bricks where men appear to forget God since they see so little

of His world and so much of their own! Let us try, if we can, to transport ourselves to the wide and open sea and as we gaze all around and see nothing but the rolling waves, let us sing—

***“He formed the deeps unknown,
He gave the seas their bound.
The watery worlds are all His own,
And all the solid ground.”***

There is no need for any labored division in our sermon tonight. Our first one will be that *God made the sea*. And the second will be that *therefore it is His*. And the third shall come out of the next verse—*He is therefore to be adored*. “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!”

I. Our first thought is that GOD MADE THE SEA.

Somebody made it and *who else could have made it but God?* It is not often that you find a seafaring man who is an atheist. Addison tells us of a time when he was aboard ship and there was a passenger on deck who was an infidel. He was reported to the captain as an atheist and neither he nor the sailors could make out what sort of a strange fish that might be—and so asked him what he meant. They were told that he did not believe in a God. A storm coming on, the men proposed that they should pitch him overboard seeing he did not believe in God Almighty! But he was soon cured of his unbelief, for, when things looked threatening, the first person who was down on his knees crying for mercy in great terror was the precious atheist, who soon got rid of his atheism when he felt in danger of his life! A little while ago, a Christian minister crossing to America was walking the deck with a gentleman who called himself an atheist. It was a very bad night and the vessel had to steam on in the teeth of a head wind. It would have been fatal to let her drift. The captain said, “We cannot keep any watch, we must drive ahead, and if we run into an iceberg, there’s an end of us.” Our friend, who believed in God, hearing this, said that he should turn in and go to sleep. His companion declared that he could not think of doing any such thing—he should not like to die in his sleep—and so he would walk the deck, rough as it was. All night long he who had no God was cold and wet with watching, fretting and worrying because he was afraid he should die, while my friend slept sweetly and rose in the morning fresh as a lark! Coming on deck, he accosted the philosopher, “What? Have you not turned in?” “No, no.” He was miserable, he was unhappy. “Why,” said the Believer, “I trust in my heavenly Father and I fell asleep, and I feel quite refreshed. What good have you got by staying here?” “I must confess,” said the other, “you Believers have the best of it when you get to sea.” Yes, and assuredly we have the best of it on land, too! We have the best of it in health, in sickness, in death—and we shall have the best of it forever!

God made the sea, and *the prints of His hands are still to be seen*. Skillful persons can tell that a picture is by a certain artist by its style. It

is not everybody that can judge well, but a man skilled in art knows the touch of each painter's brush. "That is Rembrandt," cries the artist, "he alone could produce such lights and shadows! And the other is by Salvator Rosa—I know the master's hand." He also who has sought out the works of the Lord and has pleasure therein, knows the great Father's style. The same sublime mind which gave us the Holy Scriptures also ordained the channels of the deep. I am absolutely sure that He who reveals the secrets of the soul is He in whose hands are the deep places of the sea. His commandment is exceedingly broad, even as the main ocean—and of His Divine Grace we are compelled to cry, "O the depth!" even as when we sound the Atlantic!

I will not go into the question tonight, but there are wonderful points of likeness between the Word and the work of the Almighty. The sea is a mystery of waters and Scripture is sometimes obscure—but yet the sea shines like a mirror and in Scripture we see the Lord as in a glass! The Bible has its most terrible storms and its calms most restful—it is full of life, even as the sea nourishes innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts. It is full of power, even as the sea moves in the fullness of its strength. There is a certain peculiar light of its own within the Word, as if it were all sun and flame, even as at times the waters are a liquid light and the waves shine as with ten thousand stars! The wisdom, goodness, power and infinity of God are all to be seen in the ocean by those who have opened eyes. He who knows God can see His hand in the scales of every little fish. If he takes up a five-finger or a crab, he perceives a master hand in the fashioning of its smallest members! If you take a beautiful needle, however admirably polished, and put it under the microscope, you say to yourself, "A man made this," for it looks like a rough bar of iron—the microscope discovers its lack of finish. But if you take a frill of seaweed, or the eye of a shrimp, and put these under the glass, you exclaim at once, "No man ever made this! No man could have made it. It is perfection!" I shall not go into further details, but I am sure that he who is acquainted with the works of God sees at once that the sea is God's creature—and in its ever-changing sameness, in its awe-inspiring majesty, in its tremendous force, unsearchable mystery, its waves and caverns, its calms and storms—it tells of an invincible hand, an unsearchable mind!

God made the sea—you can mark His wisdom there. Philosophers tell us there is just as much water in the sea as there ought to be, and no more. Perhaps if there were twice as much sea as we now have, we should not be able to live—and if there were any less, the world would become too dry for human habitation. The land and water balance each other to an ounce and a drop—there can be neither more nor less. Permanent and fixed are the relations and proportions of matter. Substances may change their combinations, but of the elements, the same

amount must abide till all things pass away. That the sea is salt and, therefore, does not corrupt. That it is moved with tides and, therefore, does not stagnate. That it evaporates and, therefore, does not increase so as to drown the earth, are all instances of Divine Wisdom. If its waters were more or less salt than they are, many fishes would die and the floating power of the ocean would change. There is a relation between the size of the ocean and the balancing of a dewdrop upon its blade of grass—a proportion between a hurricane and the dancing of a gnat in the summer's sun. The more we study the sea the more shall we say, "Your way, O Lord, is in the sea and Your path in the great waters."

And certainly no man can deny the power which thunders across the billows. What tremendous force is there displayed! "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yes than the mighty waves of the sea." When one has seen the damage the sea has worked upon our coasts, the way in which the hardest rock has been worn away—when one has sadly watched a huge boat tossed to and fro like a plaything and when one has heard how the largest vessels are caught in a cyclone and whirled away like feathers—one bows upon his face before the Almighty Lord who rules the sea! And yet God's goodness is there as well. The sea is a great benefactor! Where were the clouds, and where the rains, and where our harvests, if it were not for the ocean? The sea feeds myriads with its fish and enriches many more by its commerce. It was once thought to divide nations, but now it has been the highway by which they communicate—a silver belt by which all lands are bound to one another! England, above all nations, has reason to see the goodness of God in the sea. Perhaps we had not even remained a nation if the silver streak had not separated us from the continent. Most probably we had not been a free nation, or a Protestant nation, if the Lord had not bid the waters encompass us—

***"O Britain, praise your mighty God,
And make His honor known abroad!
He bade the ocean round you flow,
Not bars of brass could guard you so."***

May God inspire British hearts with gratitude to Him for setting old England like a queen in the midst of the sea where she laughs at the tyrant's power!

Every attribute of God shines in the sea although the more spiritual and precious are but dimly seen, these being reserved to be manifested in Christ Jesus the Lord, before whose feet the sea crouched in reverence! Perhaps even those attributes will be discovered to be there in some degree when our eyes shall be strengthened to see the Glory of the Lord in all His works. Till then we will listen to the sea and think of it as an—

***"Impassioned orator with lips sublime,
Whose waves are arguments which prove a God."***

God made the sea. I delight to reflect upon this fact, for *it brings us so very near to God*. Yonder at our feet are the blue waves which He has created. You have certain treasures which you value greatly because they were made by a dear friend, and you say, "Whenever I look at them I seem to feel him near." Thus do God's works make us feel that He is not far from us. Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, had his heart cheered by taking up a little bit of moss and reflecting that God made it, and that the Creator had been there and was there, watching over the tiny green thing! Come, then, my Friend, and stand by the sea and say to yourself, "The sea is His, for He made it. Here is something that my heavenly Father made. He has left His footprints on these waves. He is still here and His power works forever." The palpitating heart of the sea, with its perpetual tide, tells of God's present life. Its alternate advance and retreat at His bidding prove His present majesty, for He says, "To here shall you come, but no further."

I trust many of my seafaring friends have often felt near to God when alone upon the vast deep. God is in Ratcliff Highway, but it is uncommonly hard to find Him. We could find fifty devils there in five minutes, sooner than find a trace of God—for there is the den of the drunkard, there is the foul haunt in which men are robbed and ruined—the house of the strange woman, of which Solomon says, "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of Hell." Far out at sea the sailor is free from the danger of falling tiles and chimney-pots when the wind is blowing. And he is also free from many a temptation which besets him on shore. Often, I have no doubt, when you have been alone, watching at night, pacing the deck to and fro and looking up to the bright stars, you have thought, "God is very near me now." I remember, when going to Hamburg, I stood at night with the captain upon the quarter-deck and suddenly a light seemed to rush down the mast and light up the rigging and the whole ship in such a manner as I never saw before. For an instant the vessel seemed to be on fire, and then the light was gone! "What is that?" I asked. "What is that?" he said, for neither of us knew—but we felt awe-struck. Seafaring men meet with them often—strange things that we "land lubbers" never dream about! "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." God seems to come very near to those who are on the waters. When the wind howls and the sea booms, the noise would suffice to drown a thousand volleys of artillery. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of Glory thunders: the Lord is upon many waters." When men mount up to Heaven and go down again to the deep, then is God present to them and they cry unto Him in their trouble. The sea has often forced men to exclaim—

***"Great God, how infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!"***

The fact that God made the sea *should make us feel more confidence in venturing upon it*. We may trust ourselves upon the King's highway! We may go where Jesus went, and where the Lord reigns—"The Lord sits upon the flood; yes the Lord sits King forever." As "all things work together for good to them that love God," there is nothing left to work for evil. The sea cannot destroy those whom God would preserve. Even if the sea in its tempestuous mood should take away our lives, what will it do but waft us to the gates of Heaven? It is as well to go to Glory by water as by land—perhaps drowning is an easier death than expiring with broken bones or torturing pains. You who are about to emigrate to Australia or to America and are feeling dreadfully troubled tonight at the thought of the terrible sea, should be of good courage. Your Master went to sea and His disciples went with Him—they, too, were tossed with tempest, and yet their vessel and the other little ships which sailed on the billows of dark Galilee were safe! Our Master, who is Lord High Admiral on the seas, brought all the fleet into harbor safe and sound! He has not given up His rank, or lost His power, and He will save all who sail under His convoy. No tempest or tornado shall wreck a soul that is in His charge!

This ought to make us feel at rest as to those who lie buried beneath the waves. I have heard it said by one or two whom I have known, "I would not have minded, Sir, if they could have found the body." I suppose there is something natural about that regret, but I do not greatly sympathize with it. The sea is God's own—and blessed are they who lie in God's most sacred sleeping place, where no spade of sexton shall ever disturb their bones! Where can any of us lie better than where "pearls lie deep"? What myriads are there already! When the trumpet of the Resurrection sounds, the sea must give up her dead and myriads will stand upon the waves, as on a sea of glass, to be judged! And full many of them will rise to their eternal thrones from the caverns of the mighty main! God has but to speak it, and though the bodies may have been devoured by fish, or dissolved into their separate atoms by the perpetual beating of the surf, yet when He speaks it, frames shall be refashioned, life shall come back at His call and our dead men shall live, and in their flesh shall they see God, who, before they died, had learned to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Do not be distressed by the fear of dying at sea. You must die somewhere. Do you know the old story of the man who asked a captain if he was afraid to go to sea? "I am not," said the mariner, "why should I be?" "Look at the danger," said the landsman. "How did your father die?" "He died at sea" "How did your grandfather die?" "He was lost at sea." "And your great-grandfather?" "Yes," he replied, "I have heard that he, too, was drowned at sea" "Surly then, you are afraid to go to sea?" "No," said the captain, "I am not. Where did your father die?" "He died in his bed" "And where did your grandfather die?" "He died in his bed." "And where did your great-grandfather die?" "As far as I know, he also died in his bed."

“And yet you are not afraid to go to bed!” There is good, sound reason in such a view of the matter. We shall not die before our time. Our lives are in the Divine Hands. You may well smile at my tale and I hope you will keep a gleam of that pleasant look for the next time death stares you in the face—and then say to yourself, “Be still, my Heart. If my time has come, I will commit my spirit into the hands of a faithful Creator and feel that if I sink, I shall drop into my Father’s hands, for He holds the waters in the hallow of His hands.” Thus much upon that first point—God made the sea

II. Our second point is, GOD OWNS THE SEA—“The sea is His, for He made it.” *He owns it by right of creation.* It is not everything that a man makes that is his own. Many tradesmen are occupied in making divers articles which when they have made them, belong to their masters. But that is because the materials are found for them. God made the sea out of nothing—there were no materials ready to His hand to make this world of—His own *Omnipotence* spoke it into existence! He filled the sea from His own treasury, the liquid stores were His own. There is not in the sea at this moment a single wave that anybody made but God, and all the constituent elements of it were created by Him, and by Him only. Therefore He claims the sea from shore to shore, and who shall question His title? Not only did He own it once, but He owns it now—He has never handed over the ocean to any people or nation! David said, “The sea is His,” and it is still God’s. It always will be His sea!

But the sea is man’s. God evidently meant us to go to sea because when He made man, almost the first thing He said was that He made him to have dominion over the fish of the sea. And I do not see how we can have dominion over the fish of the sea if we never go to sea at all. There are the fish, thousands of miles from the shore, and if no mariner shall ever cross the deep, what dominion can we be said to have over “the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the seas”? He made man to be a fisherman as well as to be a farmer. He meant him to plow the waves as well as to plow the shore! In fact, our present race all sprang from one whose huge vessel was the cradle of the new race. Man owns the sea but still, the sea is God’s. Man is God’s viceroy, but God is the true King. Man is tenant under God and should pay the quit-rent of reverential gratitude and adoration, for the freehold of the sea remains with the Lord. There may be a victory in India or in Ireland, but India and Ireland are still the Queen’s—and so man may have dominion over the fish of the sea but it is a delegated Sovereignty—the sea is still the Lord’s.

Old ocean does not belong to Neptune, as the heathen used to say. Father Neptune is an idle dream! The idolaters parceled out the various kingdoms among their deities—one should rule the heavens, another the

clouds, another the earth and another the sea—but we know that there is only one God. The sea is Jehovah's—not Neptune's.

Though we sometimes sing, "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves," the words are not true! Jehovah rules the waves—not Britannia! There is a sense in which the patriotic song expresses a great truth—and I have not a word to say against it—but we all know that we may be on board Britannia's biggest ship of war, but the Union Jack cannot save us in the time of tempest! Jehovah must then interpose and bid the billows sleep. "The sea is His, for He made it."

I sometimes feel very glad when I look at the sea and think that it belongs to the great and generous God and not to greedy man. Here upon land, every foot of earth is enclosed by somebody and jealously guarded from trespassers. The village had a breezy common upon which a poor man might at least keep a goose—but the great folks could never rest till every inch was put within hedges and made their own. You can scarcely walk anywhere without being met by, "*Trespassers, Beware.*" Mountains and hills which everybody ought to be allowed to climb without leave, are fenced in and kept from all intruders. Men fight for years over a yard of ground that is my lord's, and this is my lady's, and this is copyhold of the manor. "The Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens, is the Lord's, but the earth has He given to the children of men"—and they scramble for it and divide it among themselves! No such greed can appropriate the sea. The free sea cannot be parceled out, nor hedged, nor ditched, nor walled! It has no lords of the manor, but remains free and unappropriated forever! "The sea is His, for He made it." According to law, a few miles from the shore the sea belongs to the country which borders on it, but once reach the main ocean and nationalities are forgotten. The sea is neither English nor French, Dutch nor American. No ship is a trespasser there! No one ever thought of impounding stray whales for going out of their owner's fields. The pastures of the deep are for all fish—they may feed where they will, from shore to shore.

"The sea is His," and *this begets in you a joyous sense of liberty*, as though for once you were beyond bounds and, like a sea bird, feared no cage or fowler's snare. Oh, for a bound from billow to billow of the unpoluted main, where sail of man has never been seen, or voice of blasphemy ever heard! Who can hinder our liberated spirit as it dances on the wave, or dives beneath it? May we always wear that free spirit about us, even in these huddled homes and narrow streets! Let us not be grasping, mean, narrow—let us not hedge in all things unto ourselves, but desire that others may share in our blessings! May we have largeness of heart as the sand which is on the seashore and greatness of love comparable to the immeasurable sea!

"The sea is His." Then *this sentence puts all other claimants out of court*. The sea is the Lord's and, therefore, He ought to be revered on it. Hush! Hush! What are you doing, Man? Swearing at God on His own

sea! Stop till you get on land—and when you reach the shore, stop till you can find a place where God is not near you, for to swear at Him to His face is madness! Will you insult God on His own sea? No, surely. If the sea is His, you will mind what you are doing. When a man is out in the street, when he wanders about as he pleases, he may often take many liberties. But if he is invited to a friend's house, he does not like to be too boisterous and noisy, but minds his manners. If any of us were invited to dinner with the Queen, I am sure we should feel quite nervous, and ask of our friends, "Jack, how do you behave when you go into a palace? What is the way of doing it?" You would all be anxious to be proper and well-behaved. On the sea it seems to me that you should be particularly careful of what you say and do for you are on God's premises! In as much as He can hear you think—mind what you think about! On the sea you are inside God's House—be holy, then—"for holiness becomes His House forever." There is the Throne of the Great King and around it is a pavement of crystal! I mean the glassy sea and you sailors should think of yourselves as God's courtiers—permitted to come very near Him, and to behold more of His Glory than any other men! Oh that you may be led to think of your position in this light!

I wish you would think highly of your honorable calling. When a man thinks that his calling necessitates his being wicked, he is sure to be wicked. But when he judges that he is under obligation to be holy, perhaps he will desire to be so and God's Grace will help him to be so! Ho, you who do business on God's own sea—fly away from His royal domain if you resolve to rebel against Him! Do not dare to sin to His face! But where shall you go? If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost of the sea you are still within His courts!

There is yet another view of the matter. The sea is the Lord's and, therefore, *I may confess my sin to Him when I am out on the ocean* and He will hear me, for He is there! I may weep the tear of penitence and He will see me, for God is there! Out at sea I may cry, "My Father," and He will hear His child! Brother, you may find Jesus at sea for He was at home on the waves and a companion of seafaring men! The Lake of Galilee was familiar with His voice and saw His answer to the prayer, "Lord, save, or I perish!" The sea around you waits to hear you pray and to see God's wonders on the deep!

Something calls for a repetition of that, "hush," which I gave just now, in the thought that "the sea is His," for *God reveals Himself through the sea*—therefore gaze with awe! I have not the slightest doubt that many a man has learned much of God on the ocean, although as yet he knows not the Redeemer and His salvation. I wish every sailor would daily read the Bible, which is our chart to Heaven, but many who have neglected that blessed Book, have found lessons of warning, yes, and lessons of hope in the rolling waves. O hear the voice of God in the storm! Be

warned as you escape from the jaws of death! Have hope as you cling to the rock! The sea is God's—take care that when you fly over its hallowed surface, you read Jehovah's Book, bow before His Throne, trust in His Son and offer continual thanksgiving to Him!

It seems to me that as the sea is God's, *then sailors should be His, too*, or they are trespassers. A man feeds his own sheep in his own pastures, and would not God have His own mariners on His own sea? Moreover, if God owns the sea because He made it, He owns *you*, because He made you, too! You are His creature and by all the rights of Creatorship you belong to Him. He claims you—will you dispute the claim? I would not like to think of you as a blot upon the fair face of the ocean. God is looking over all the waters and seeing the white sails and the smoking funnels that even now are passing from shore to shore. And He is saying, "The sea is all Mine, but those men who breast the storm are not Mine. I preserve them, but they never think of Me. I have sent salvation to them, but they will not hear it. The fish and the bird know their seasons, but man rebels against Me." I cannot bear to think that it should be so. I long for the day when every ship upon the sea shall be an ark and every sailor a Noah!

What are some of you sailors doing? Why, there are many of you whom I would trust with anything—I would not count my gold, but trust you with my purse—I am so sure that you would bring it back safely. You hate dishonesty and would not tell a lie. You speak out bravely and fear no man, and yet some of you rob God! You pay your debt to everybody most freely, but not to your Maker! You owe Him most, and yet think of Him least! Is not this wrong? See that child? They say he is very good to the servants and to strangers, but he always puts on a scowl when he sees his father, for he cannot stand him. Would you like to be the father of such a child? Yet you are like he. You are capital fellows on board a ship, capital men on shore, too, when you get among your families—and yet toward God you act shamefully! May the Spirit of God lead you to feel that you are wrong—and when you feel it, may you have Grace to tack about and steer for another point!

A little while ago, a vessel picked up a man far out at sea in an open boat. He was unconscious. The oars were lying by his side and he had evidently drifted from off the beach, carried by a current right away from help. I wonder whether any man here is drifting right away—out of sight of land, drifting on and on! Ah, Jack, when you were a boy, you went with your mother to the little chapel in the village. Do you recollect that you were in the Sunday school? You loved to worship with your mother, who is now in Heaven, but you went away from home and you went away from God, too! You have been pretty nearly round the world—do you remember the places where you have landed only to plunge into sin? Oh, you forget, do you? I must tell you, then, that God did not forget and your own conscience does not forget, for the stain is on your soul today.

You have drifted, drifted, drifted. How long is it since you read a chapter of the Bible? How long since you bowed your knees in prayer? You have drifted very far out. I wish this full-rigged ship of mine, which has just come within sight of you, might pick you up. At any rate, I hail you from this quarterdeck, and if you are not quite unconscious, I hope you will hear the call. Poor shipmate, we would like to get you up the ship's side! Some of my crew will be after you in the boats, directly, for there are true hearts here that love to rescue the perishing. If one of them comes alongside, just know that he is a friend and that he comes in the name of Jesus, "mighty to save." May the Lord Jesus come, Himself and put out His hand to some sinking Peter, and save him from a watery grave! Amen.

I wonder where the training ship, "Atalanta," now is? Where are the other vessels which have been missed so long? We have reason to fear that they are lost! Fine vessels and yet lost! Hundreds on board and all lost! We cannot bear to think of it. If they are lost, it will be of no use to go after them—the swiftest vessel cannot overtake them and the sharpest lookout will never see them. They are beyond hope. But what a mercy it is that you are not! If it had not been for the mighty hand of God last voyage, you would not only have been lost at sea, my Friend, but lost forever! To be lost at sea, if the soul is safe, is but a small calamity—but to lose the soul is to lose all—it were good for that man that he had never been born! Blessed be God, you are not in Hell yet! You are not shut out from mercy yet! Jesus Christ still flies the mercy-signal and His servant still cries to you, "Come, come, come to Jesus! Come and welcome, come and put your trust in the Savior." May His gracious Spirit lead you to do so! Remember, wherever you are, on whatever sea you may sail, the sea is His. His Grace reaches to the uttermost. The shipwrecked soul is still within the reach of mercy! If God does but lead it to cry to Him out of the lowest depths, He will hear the voice of supplication!

III. I now invite you to the third and concluding point, "O COME, LET US WORSHIP AND BOW DOWN." You of the land, and you of the sea, let us together worship the Lord our God! It is no new work for one of us, for our life is spent in worship, but oh, if it is a new thing with any man here, I would gently take him by the hand and say, "Come, Friend, let us worship and bow down, let us do it together. You are a Sinner—so am I. You have no merits and I have none. If ever you are saved, it will be by Grace, alone, and so it will be in my case. Jesus must be your only hope, and He is mine. 'O come, let us worship.'"

Have you never worshipped God? Then sit still in the pew and do it. Say, "My God, You have made me, teach me how to worship You." Shall I stop a minute while you ask pardon for Jesus' sake?

(Pause.)

This is the last thing I have to say. I recollect a man, an old sailor, who had been a great blasphemer. He was a regular old salt, but there was no

salt of Divine Grace in him, for he hated religion. He heard the Gospel. The Lord brought him to his knees, broke his heart, gave him deep conviction of sin and afterwards led him to look to Christ and trust Him and find salvation. When this weather-beaten mariner came forward to join the Church, he said, "I am come to get on the register, for I have got a new Owner. I used to carry the black flag at the masthead and there was not a timber in me but what belonged to the devil. I carried many a cargo and sailed over many a sea for him, but now I belong to Jesus from stem to stern, and I want to run up the blood-red flag of Christ, who has bought me for His own. I want you to register me under my new Owner and let me sail with those who belong to Him." We were glad enough to register him in the Church-Book. The first point is to get the Owner, the Lord Jesus, and then to acknowledge Him before all the world.

You Christian sailors, wherever you go, show your flag! A dear man of God, a captain, was baptized here last Thursday night and he told me that 20 or more of his crew were converted on the last voyage out. He said, "We cannot make Christians of them, but we give them an opportunity every day of hearing the Gospel and, blessed be God, many have found the Savior." Captains, mind you look to your crews—and don't have their blood on your skirts through your neglect! If you are not captains, if you have any influence at all, carry the Gospel wherever you go. I believe if you are nothing but a cabin boy you can speak a word for Jesus Christ if you have Jesus Christ in your hearts! And then others will say, "Why, that boy shames us, for he loves the Savior!" Though they may scoff at you and pretend to despise you, it will make a hole in their consciences, depend upon it! If you drop a lighted match down anybody's neck, he may say it is a small bit of timber and laugh at it, but he will know it is there before long! If you get on fire with the love of God. If you are placed in the company of others, you may be very small and despised, but they will soon discover the heavenly flame! Only you must mind that you are really alight and that the true fire is in your spirit—for an empty profession will only make religion a mockery! God bless you and bless the Society! (A voice—"Amen!") You said, "Amen." Well, there is to be a collection and so I hope you will carry out your amen in a practical way and bless the Society by contributing to it as you are able.

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

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

TODAY! TODAY! TODAY!

NO. 1551

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.”
Psalm 95:7, 8.***

THIS Psalm is a burst of praise. It resounds with the joyful noise of hearty thanksgiving unto Jehovah and yet before it closes you hear the solemn tones of exhortation to men to hearken to the voice of their God. Alas that it should be true, but true it is, that the Canaanite still dwells in the midst of Israel! In every gathering of the faithful there is a mixture of those who know not the ways of God. When Israel came out of Egypt, a mixed multitude came forth with the people of God—that mixed multitude did them great damage and often brought them under great sin and consequent sorrow, but they were always there. And they are always here, too, in the Church and around it, dishonoring us by their evil behavior. Not only in the great congregations, but even in little gatherings of Believers we meet with the unworthy ones. Scarcely are 12 met together without a Judas in the midst of them.

Thus it comes to pass that in our loudest praises there is always a measure of discord and when we have lauded the Most High with our best hallelujahs we shall be called upon to listen, in humble silence, to His warning voice addressed to the unbelieving and disobedient among us. Such characters are here this morning and it is well for us to know the fact. It is well for us to examine ourselves, whether we belong to this class and whether the words before us may not be addressed to ourselves—“If you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” But supposing us to have listened to the Lord and to have found peace like a river in consequence, it is well for us to think of those who are sitting side by side with us who are living in unbelief, that we may bless God the more for distinguishing Grace manifested to ourselves and that we may offer our earnest prayers for them all through the service that God may bring them to His feet and save them by His Grace.

In the spirit of hearty love to men's souls I shall try to preach. And in that spirit I beg of you to hear the Word of God today. If saints are thus moved to pity sinners and to pray for them, the Holy Spirit will bless the Word and it will be quick and powerful to search out the thoughts of men's hearts and awaken them from their indifference to the voice of God. He is a happy minister who, while he preaches, is surrounded by a praying people! Joshua in the plain is sure of the victory while Moses pleads upon the mountain with God! Borne up by your supplications, I advance to an earnest conflict with the hard hearts of the unsaved. Yet the sermon will not be altogether and only for the unbelieving, for, alas, even in God's people there is a measure of unbelief and deafness of ear. Even God's children do not hear their Father's voice so readily as they should!

We are sometimes so taken up with other things that God speaks again and again and we do not regard Him. The still small voice of His love is too apt to be altogether unheeded while the thunders of this world's traffic fill our ears. Take heed, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Lest this should be the case, let each of us take home to himself so much of what shall be spoken as may fairly be applicable to himself and let us all hear God saying to us, even to us, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation."

Let us come at once to the text. The simple plan of our speaking this morning shall at once be laid before you. We have here, first, a time specified—the Holy Spirit says, "Today." Secondly, a voice to be regarded—"If you will hear His voice." And then, thirdly, an evil to be dreaded, against which we are warned—"harden not your heart." There is a sad tendency in man to harden his heart even when God speaks and, therefore, the Holy Spirit says to us, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation."

I. First, then, THE TIME SPECIFIED—"Today if you will hear His voice." This is the uniform time and tense of the Holy Spirit's exhortations. He says nothing about tomorrow, except to forbid our boasting of it, since we know not what a day shall bring forth. All His instructions are set to the time and tune of "Today, today, today." He speaks of pressing and immediate necessities requiring to be supplied "today" and of urgent duties which must be fulfilled "today." He says, "Consecrate yourselves, today, to the Lord." "I command you this thing today." "Son, go work today in my vineyard." Therefore, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." "Today" is a time of obligation. Every man is under a present necessity as a subject of God to obey his Lord, today, and having rebelled against his God, every sinner is under law to repent of sin today!

"Repent you therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is the cry of Scripture to everyone who has sinned against the Most High (Acts 3:19). What if I should repent tomorrow, yet it will be a sin to remain impenitent today. What if I should believe in Christ next year, yet will it be a heinous offense to have been an unbeliever this year. I have no more right to continue to disobey than I ever had to disobey at all! When the Law of God has been broken, it is still binding and every fresh offense against it is reckoned to our charge. We are bound to confess and forsake sin *now*. I met with a striking sentence in the works of William Mason which is well worthy to be written among your memoranda—"Every day of delay leaves a day more to repent of and a day less to repent in."

What if this day shall be the last I live? Shall it be spent in refusing to hear the Word of my Maker? Shall my last breath be spent in rejecting my Savior? God forbid! I see that I am bound as His creature to obey Him and as His sinful creature to seek pardon of Him. Help me, therefore, Blessed Spirit, to attend to these things this day without delay. Remember, also, that today is a time of opportunity. There is, this day, set before us an open door of approach to God! This is a very favored day, for it is the Lord's Day, the day of rest, consecrated to works of Grace. Today our Lord Jesus rose and left the dead that He might declare the justification of His people.

This is a day of good tidings, Beloved! I pray you seize the golden moments. On what better day can you seek the Lord than on that day which He has hedged about and set apart that you might spend it in His love? Is it not our Sabbath? No day can be more fit for ceasing from your own works that you may rest in the work of Christ. Is it not the first day of the week? This day creating work began—why should not the new creation begin in you at this good hour? Today the fiat of the Lord went forth and there was light. O for that fiat to be heard within your souls that you might have the Light of God!

It is a day of Grace today, a day of Gospel preaching, a day of an open Bible! It is a day of promises, a day in which the Spirit of God comes to work with men, a day in which Jesus Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you! It is a day in which the Mercy Seat is approachable, a day in which justice is God's strange work, but in which mercy is His joyful occupation! These are days which kings and Prophets waited for and saw not—blessed days when Mercy keeps open house for all hungry souls and when whoever will, may come and him that comes shall in no wise be cast out! You cannot have a better time for coming to Christ than the season prescribed in the text—namely, "TODAY!" With some of you it is a time of choice opportunity, for you are in good health and possess the powers of clear connected thought.

How much better is such a day than the gloomy period when you will lie sick and near to death! That poor brain will be distracted with a thousand cares and fears—how will you, then, be able to grasp the solemn Truths of Revelation for the first time? It is ill to be setting your house in order at the moment you are leaving it! You may have enough to do even to draw your breath, while those who watch you will need to wipe the clammy sweat from your brow—it will be a poor time for these weighty matters then! It may be you will be low, or faint, or delirious and it will be hard to be without God then. Many have said to me, when I have seen them dying, "If I had a Christ to find *now* what would I do?" Do avail yourselves, dear Hearers, of the time when your reason is yet upon its hinges and the windows of your minds can yet admit the Light of God. Seek the Lord while yet your health is continued to you! The day of strength should not be wasted, nor should our youth be thrown away, but while vigor lasts we should press into the Kingdom. Today, then, listen, for today is an opportune time!

Remember, also, that you are sitting in the place where God has saved thousands of souls and you are listening to one who, though in himself is utterly unworthy, God has used for bringing many to Himself. Perhaps you have come from some distant part of the country where the preaching has not been a power to your soul. The very change and novelty of the minister's voice may be helpful to you and you may, this day, be more inclined to attend to the Gospel than you have been on other occasions. It is, therefore, a time of opportunity! Hoist sail while the wind blows! Men say, "Make hay while the sun shines," and I say the same to you! While the rain of Grace is falling, set your souls under the sacred shower. He who goes into a battle and wishes to be wounded will soon meet with a

wound and he who wishes the Truth of God to lay him low will not be long untouched by it.

Everything around seems, today, agreed to help the soul that will, at once, come to Jesus! The day, the place, the people, the preacher—all make it a time of opportunity to many of you! Remember how Paul tells us plainly that it is a time limited. He says “Again He limits a certain day, saying in David, today if you will hear His voice.” Today will not last forever—a day is but a day. When days are longest, shadows fall, at last, and night comes on. The longest life soon wanes into the evening of old age and old age hastens to the sunset of the tomb. It is a limited day! A day, but only a day. How very limited life is in many instances! How many are born but never reach complete manhood! How many pass away before they have fulfilled one half the allotted age of man! How many lives are extinguished as a candle is suddenly blown out. This thought ought to make us listen to the Divine voice which cries—“Today!” “Today!”

The thought of death has often brought men to decision. They tell us in the old histories that Peter Waldo, a certain eminent merchant, had lived a thoughtless, careless life, but as he walked the streets of Lyons, his friend, who was apparently in good health, fell dead at his side and Waldo at once sought the Lord, believed the Gospel and preached it to others. According to certain writers he became the founder of that wonderful people, the Waldensians, who maintained the Truth of God through many a century when the whole earth was covered with Papal darkness. Oh that some of you would become so conscious of your own frailty as to perceive that you are standing on the brink of everlasting woe—and thus may you be moved to seek your God at once and find your Savior today.

Reflections upon death have often driven men to Christ and so have worked life in them by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. In a book entitled, “Wonders of Grace,” by a Primitive Methodist minister, I met with a story which pleased me much. A young man in Berlin who was sick with fever was attended lovingly by a young doctor who was his bosom friend. He lived in apartments. His careful friend ordered him to be moved into the darkest part of the room, because the sunlight was too much for his eyes. It was an amazing Providence that the bed should be pushed close against the wall which was only a thin partition separating the apartment from the room in which lived the landlord of the house.

While the sick man lay there, possibly with his mind somewhat wandering in the fever, he was astonished to hear a voice whisper in his own tongue a verse which may be translated thus—

***“Today you live, yet
Today turn you to God,
For before tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead.”***

Some other words followed which he did not hear so well, but presently in a louder voice he heard the words repeated—

***“Today you live, yet
Today turn you to God,
For before tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead.”***

Over and over again those same words were whispered or spoken close to the spot where he was lying. It so impressed him that when his young friend, the physician, asked him how he was, he looked at him earnestly and replied—

***“Today you live, yet
Today turn you to God,
For before tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead.”***

The physician took his hand and said, “Your pulse is better, but if it were not for that I should think you worse, for you are evidently raving.” To this he received no answer but a repetition of the lines. He could get nothing out of his patient but that verse, spoken with an awe-struck look and thrilling voice. The young physician went home thoughtful and when he came next time he found his friend much better, sitting up in bed, reading the Scriptures. The two sought and found the Savior, for those warning words had drawn them across the boundary line and made them decide for God and for His Christ!

How came the lines to have thus sounded in the sick man’s ears? Was it a dream? Did an angel pronounce the warning? No, it was a little boy who had failed to repeat his lesson to his father and had been made to stand in the corner, with his face to the wall, till he knew the lines. He was saying his task over and over and over to himself, in order to fix it on his memory and God was using his voice through the partition to bring a heart to Himself! How various are the methods of mercy! Dear Hearer, there may be something quite as odd and yet as ordinary about your being here this morning—some simple circumstance may have stranded you on these shores—where Divine Love waits to bless you. You are not in the place where you usually attend—perhaps you thought it too far to go on such a wet day and you have turned in to worship nearer home—may God overrule it for your eternal good!

May the Lord impress you with the fact that the day of Grace is limited! Mark well the Truth of God that today is the only time that any man has and, therefore, he had need be up and doing—

***“Our time is all today, today,
The same, though changed and while it flies,
With still small voice the moments say,
‘Today, today, be wise, be wise!’”***

A word, however, of encouragement before we leave this point—it is a time of *promise*, for when God says to a man, Come to Me at such a time, He, by that very word makes an engagement to meet him! One asked me this morning, “When can I call upon you?” I said, “At ten o’clock next Tuesday.” Of course I shall then be ready to receive him if nothing unforeseen prevents. I should not have made the appointment for him to come if I had meant to refuse him when he comes! And when God says, “Hear My voice today,” He means that He will meet you and speak with you *today*!

David said to Solomon, “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” This is true of you, dear Hearer, if you will seek Him today. He has made no appointment with you to meet with you tomorrow, but He has engaged to speak with you today, if you will hear His voice. Never shall one wait and say, like young Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears,” without

God's speaking in words of love before long. There is so much to encourage in the text that I would gladly hope and pray that many of my dear hearers who have never sought the Lord will, at this moment, cry, "The time past shall suffice me to have worked the will of the flesh and now today let others do as they will, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord and seek His face."

II. Secondly, let us think of THE VOICE TO BE REGARDED. "Today if you will hear His voice." Place the emphasis upon the word *HIS*. Reading the Psalm, as we have done, we could not help noticing that its first verses are the voice of the Church of God—"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms." Throughout the first seven verses we have the voice of God's *people* pleading with all that are mingled with them to bow in joyful, humble, believing worship before the Most High. Shall not these pleas influence our minds? Surely attention should be paid to the voices of godly men and women!

The entreaties of pious parents, teachers, relatives and friends ought not to fall to the ground. When the bride says "Come," her voice is worthy of your attention, especially when you remember that the Spirit speaks in her. We, who serve God, implore you to have regard to our entreaties. When we unselfishly love you as we love our own souls and long for your salvation, you ought to regard our earnestness. When you know that our hearts break at the thought of your being lost and that we would give our eyes if we might but give eyes to you which with you should see Jesus, there ought to be some power about our love and you should give earnest heed to our entreaties! I thank God there often is a force in the love of Believers to their friends, but if in our case there is none, if you think our appeals too insignificant, yet I beseech you listen to the voice of God, for surely *His* voice may not be slighted!

Today hear His voice, for, indeed, the Gospel *is* His voice! Is not the Bible His *book*? Are not the Truths which we preach, Truths of God which He has revealed? Is not the plan of salvation of His own ordaining? Is not Christ the unspeakable gift of His own giving? Is not pardon according to His promise? Therefore, though the preacher will be quite willing that you should pour contempt upon him, he implores you not to do despite to his Master. Despise not God! Reject not Christ! "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." Remember that the voice of God is the voice of authority. God has a *right* to speak to you—shall the creature refuse to hear the Creator? Shall those who are nourished and fed by Him turn a deaf ear to the Preserver of men? When He says, "today," who among us shall dare to say that he will not listen today, but by-and-by?

It is disobedience on the part of a child when he says to his father "I will not obey you today." He might as well say "I will disobey you," for that is what he means. If you had a summons from the court to attend at such an hour, would you send a message to say that it was not convenient, but you would attend at your own pleasure? If the Queen were to command you into her presence at such an hour, I guarantee that you would be there before the time rather than after it! It is an insult to superiors when

we take no notice of their appointed times, but keep them waiting our will and pleasure. The Lord has a right to fix His own time for doing deeds of Grace and favor. He is giving away His free mercy to undeserving subjects and if He says, "I will open the gates today and I will answer prayer today," it would be the height of impertinence if we reply, "You must wait my time. Go Your way. When I have a more convenient season I will send for You."

Is God to wait as a lackey upon you? You deserve His wrath—will you slight His love? He speaks in amazing tenderness—will you exhibit astounding hardness? Be not so daring, so profane, so cruel as to talk of delay when the Divine message lays such stress on your immediate attention, saying, "Today if you will hear His voice." If this strain should not affect the conscience, let me try another. The voice here spoken of is the voice of Love. How wooing are its tones! The Lord in Holy Scripture speaks of mercy and of pardon bought with blood—the blood of His dear Son! O Man, He calls you to Him, not that He may *slay* you, but that He may *save* you! He does not summon you to a prison, but He invites you to a banquet! God speaks not as judge, but as father! Not as from Sinai, but from Calvary—"Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Do not be cruel to almighty Love! Be not ungenerous to eternal pity! When the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice," oh, I pray you, *hear*, and your soul shall live and He will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David! Personally, I can resist harshness, but love subdues me. I hope that you are cast in even a softer mold than I am. Even human love is hard to resist, but, oh, the love of God, who can withstand it? Base is the spirit that can harden itself against the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus! Remember, too, that this is the voice of *power*. This is a sweet thought for those of you who are without strength. You will, perhaps, say, "I cannot turn to God," but He can turn you! You lament that you cannot feel as you would wish—He can give you every gracious feeling!

God's voice, alone, created the world! He spoke the universe out of *nothing* and when darkness enwrapped it, He said, "Light be," and light was! He who spoke thus in Nature can thus speak in Grace and work salvation in you. The text warns you against hardening your heart and if you will listen to the voice of God it will soften your heart. "His voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon; His voice makes the hinds to calve." So can His voice break your hard heart and cause your hesitating spirit to decide. Only yield to it! Yield to it now! The day may come when you will never hear it again. It is a pitiful story I once heard told of an old man sitting alone with his little grandchild. Taking the little child on his knee, he said, "My boy, seek the Lord betimes; seek Him now."

"Grandpa," he said, "have you sought Him?" "No, child," he said, "no." "But, Grandpa, should you not seek Him?" The old man shook his head and sadly answered, "I would, child, but my heart is hard. My heart is hard. There was a time"—and then the old man wept. Oh, if such an old man is here, I say to him, there *was* a time and there *is* a time, for even

now, though your heart is hard, is there not the promise, “I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh and I will give them a heart of flesh”? Old Man, the Holy Spirit says still, “Today, today,” and He that says, “to-day” can make today for *you* a day of tenderness and melting till you will be no longer like a stone! How often have I felt the power of that verse—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

The Lord put that new song into all your mouths!

The voice of God, let me add, now, to close this point, ought to be heard because it is a *pledging* voice. God, by calling you, pledges Himself that He will hear you if you come. When He says to you, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” He pledges Himself that you shall *not* die if you turn to Him. When He says, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found,” He does, as it were, covenant that He will be found of you. Listen, then, to His promising voice, His cheering voice! It will cast all unbelieving fear out of you and drive away Satan better than David’s harp drove the evil spirit out of Saul. God help you to do so. The voice of God should be easy to hear, for “the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord of Glory thunders.”

All Nature bows before the roll of His voice. Full often during this week, above the roar of the sea, or the clamor of traffic in the street, peal on peal of the voice of God was heard till the mountains trembled to their foundations and the heavens were astonished. What deafness must sin have caused to man that he cannot hear the voice of God! Oh, be willing to let that voice penetrate your hearts—it will do so if you are but willing that it should. May God work in you to will of His good pleasure. I fear that some of you are so very busy that you will not reserve your ears for God even for half an hour. You are too much taken up with the discord of the world to heed the harmony of Heaven.

Diodorus Siculus says that in Sicily the herbs are sometimes so odoriferous and in certain places there are such thick beds of them, that when hounds pass through them they lose the scent. I fear that in some men’s lives there are so many vanities, so much love of the world, so many poisonous flowers, in fact, that they lose scent of things eternal, if they ever had any. Yet what will it profit you if you gain the world and lose your souls? You will not gain the world in business in these dull times, profits are small now—you will not gain a world, will you? No, nor half a world, nor even a moderate fortune. But whatever your gain is, look at it and judge if it is not a poor compensation for a lost Heaven, a lost eternity, a lost soul. If you lose your soul you have lost all!

A bankrupt may begin again if it is but bankruptcy of this world’s goods, but what can he do who is bankrupt for eternity and can never start anew? Oh, you that never think of this, if you never have another warning, let this come home to you! You must die, Sirs! You must leave your moneys and properties, your shops and your warehouses. You of smaller estate must leave your cozy cottage or your comfortable room and all the little treasures of home! And what will your naked spirit do if it has

no resting place beyond the skies? Must it flit forever over a shoreless deluge of woe and find no rest for the sole of its feet?

Hearken and consider. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." Thus says the Lord, "Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live." May the Lord bless you, now, and may His Spirit lead you to hear, to believe, to obey.

III. Now comes our third point and as time presses we must speak in condensed words of THE EVIL TO BE DREADED. "Harden not your hearts"—there is really no need—they are hard enough already. "Harden not your hearts"—there is no excuse, for why should you resist love? "Harden not your hearts"—there can be no good in it—a man is less a man in proportion to his loss of tenderness of heart. Sensibility is, in many aspects, a high possession. Sensibility of the affections and the heart is rather to be cultivated than lessened, for it may turn out to be the beginning of Grace. "Harden not your hearts"—*you* cannot soften them, but you *can* harden them!

There is an awful power for evil about every man. Do not try how far it will carry you. To do good, man needs the help of Grace, but to do evil he needs no aid and if he did, the devil is there to lend it to him right speedily. "Harden not your hearts," for this will be your ruin—it is the suicide of your soul, for first, it will be a serious evil if you do. To harden the heart in this case is to harden it against God. The voice is that of the Lord of Hosts. Be astonished, O heavens! God is speaking in boundless Grace and the man is hardening his heart in the Presence of God! Under the sound of Love's entreaties. Within earshot of Mercy's imploring tones, the sinner is hardening his heart! Sad work, to harden one's heart against one's own welfare! Shall any man do this and go unpunished? What do you think?

He hardens his heart willfully. He feels some drawings to good things and he pulls back. Grace leads and the man stands aside with resolve not to follow. Have you ever done that, my Hearer? Did you ever say, "It will not do," and put down the rising emotion? Did you ever, when reading a good book, or at a deathbed side, or when hearing an earnest sermon, do violence to your better self? Take care, take care! They will be lost, indeed, who of set purpose wander from the right path! O do not perish out of spite to love. Some have resisted conscience frequently—they find it hard to go to Hell and yet they push on.

Many of the more dissolute kind slide downward from vice to vice! They perform a horrible descent, as down a mountain of ice—they give themselves up to iniquity and away they go to Hell! Woe unto such! Others of us have been highly favored, for across our way God has, as it were, cast felled trees and iron chains to stop our downward career. If you do get lost, some of you will have to wade through your mother's tears and leap over your father's prayers and your minister's entreaties. You will have to force a passage through the warnings of godly people and the examples of pious relatives. Why this effort to destroy your own souls? Why so desperately set on self-destruction? It must be a gigantic evil for a man to do this and continue to do it.

Will you do it again this morning? Are you resolved to be lost? If so, then there is one thing I would like you to do and that is to put it in writ-

ing. I would, daring as it seems, challenge you to write out your covenant with Hell! I would have you look yourself in the face and say, "I have surrendered myself to a life of sin and I am resolved to take the consequences and to die an enemy to God." If you will put that in black and white I feel persuaded you will stand back from it and say, "It must not be." But you answer, "No, I could not write it." Then why *do* it? Perhaps this morning one more obstinate fit will end all our hope of you. One more holding of conscience by the throat until it turns black in the face with your grip may be the final action that shall decide your future and you will never be troubled again by compunction or conviction. Ah me, if it should come to this—that you will, from now on, glide down, without a jerk, into the bottomless pit! God forbid it! Oh Almighty Spirit, suffer it not to be so with any here!

To harden the heart is a great evil. And it is a greater sin, let me say next, in some than in others, for the Scripture quotes the instance of Israel. The Holy Spirit says, "As in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me and saw My works 40 years." Some of you are the highly privileged as compared with others. Look at the multitudes that live in our back streets and courts and alleys who never heard the Gospel, were never trained to go to the House of Prayer and who live and die ignorant of it! How much better your lot! Many of you cannot remember when you first came to a place of worship. You were brought here when you were children. You know the Gospel thoroughly, though you know it not in your hearts—what guilt must be yours to sin against such Light of God and such special advantages!

Some of you have often been warned. You have frequently twisted about on those seats most uneasily. You have gone home and you could not eat. You have felt you must turn, but you have not done so! You are as careless as ever. "He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Certain of you have also been chastened—you have had a great deal of trouble—you have lost your dearest friend, or you have been sick and been forced to look into eternity and see how dark it is. On your weary bed you moaned in spirit—

***"Dark is all the world before me,
Darker, yet, eternity."***

Yet affliction has had no good effect upon you. "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more." Already you are as ill as you can be! The whole head is sick with sorrow and the whole heart faint with grief! You have bruises and sores as the result of God's chastening. Will you revolt more and more? Will you still offend?

Yes, and on the other hand, some of you have been greatly indulged by God—you have all that heart could wish. He has prospered you in business beyond your expectation. He has made you happy in your wife and in your children. He has set a hedge about you and all that you have and yet you are not His. Oh, how can you stand out against Love when she multiplies her favors? I pray and beseech you, by the love of our dear God, treat Him not so ill, but confess your fault and seek His face! I know some, too, who have had hard struggles of conscience and are having them now. Which way they will turn I know not. May God cast the weight of time into the scale and decide them for Heaven! Perhaps I am even speaking to

some who have made a profession of religion but do not really know the power of it in their own hearts. They are acting very inconsistently with it and doing much to dishonor the name of Christ. They made vows in Baptism wherein they declared that they were buried with Christ—let them hear His voice and hearken to Him before the day of Grace shall close!

I must beg your further attention a minute while I say that this great sin, this dreadful sin, can be committed in a great many ways. Only one thing can soften the heart and that is the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit—but 50 things can harden the heart! I shall tell you what others do, but I beseech you not to emulate them—“Harden not your hearts.” Some harden their hearts by a resolution not to feel—they set their faces like flints and resolve to shake off the Word of God. I remember preaching, once, when my host disappeared about the middle of the sermon and I noticed that a friend who had traveled there with me disappeared, too. Afterwards I found out the reason. I said, “What made So-and-So go out?” He said, “I guessed what it was and I went after him and he said to me, ‘Mr. Spurgeon handles me like a piece of India rubber and shapes me as he likes. If I stay in there I shall be converted and that will never do and, therefore, I slipped out.’”

Ah me, many fly from their best Friend! While they are plastic they are afraid of being cast into the right mold! Some of you are very much like plaster of Paris, or other cement which will take any shape while it is soft, but oh, how quick it sets and there is no altering it! If you are somewhat affected this morning, do not resist the feeling, but give the full assent and consent of your heart to it. Who knows, you may now be saved! Perhaps if you are not molded while I am preaching, on the way home the plaster will set, hard as a rock, and your shape will be fixed for eternity! Many harden their hearts by delay, by not yielding today, by wishing to wait. Hundreds harden their hearts by pretended doubts, by making foolish criticisms and caviling remarks. They talk about the speaker’s mode of utterance and they get their conscience quiet by remembering a false pronunciation or an ungrammatical sentence! Or else they say, “We cannot be sure of it; Professor Wiseman says differently.”

Ah, yes. But if infidel professors are cast into Hell, their learned observations will not comfort you when you perish in their company! Look to your own souls and let the professors see to theirs. Some of these literary and scientific men will have a great deal to answer for—they gain their eminence by daring to say presumptuous words which better men tremble to hear—but unbelieving souls welcome their wickedness. I have small respect for these advocates of Satan, these decoys of the Destroyer. I charge you, do not pretend to be unbelievers if you are not, nor invent doubts for the mere sake of pacifying your consciences! Too many silence their consciences by getting into evil company and by running into silly amusements, all intended to kill time and prevent thought upon Divine things.

A number of people harden their hearts by indulging a favorite sin. There is a man here who knows the Gospel well and I thought that he was saved, but he loves the intoxicating cup. He drinks every now and then till he is drunk and that one sin is destroying him, though in other respects he is a fine fellow. As sure as he lives, he will commit that folly once too

often and perish miserably. When he is sober, he knows his wickedness as well as any man and even weeps over it. But I give very little for his tears, now, since they have flowed so many times that we cannot believe in their sincerity. His repentance dries as soon as his handkerchief. Oh that God would create sincerity in him and make his *heart* weep instead of his eyes! Darling sins are sure destroyers. We must give up sin, or give up hope of Heaven.

John Bunyan, in his, “Holy War,” describes “Sweet-Sin Hold” as a favorite fortress of Satan, which long held out against Prince Immanuel. Oh that we could raze it to the ground! My Hearer, will you have your sin and go to Hell, or will you *leave* your sin and go to Heaven? You can not take sin with you into God’s rest, neither can you be Satan’s darling and God’s favorite! Grace will not permit any sin to be loved. He who loves sin, hates God. I cannot go into further detail, but, oh, how many things may be used to harden the heart! This sin will bring with it the most fearful consequences. Harden not your heart, for by such conduct the last opportunity of entering into the Divine rest may pass away. “He swore in His wrath, They shall not enter into My rest!”

You wish to rest at last. You long to rest even now. But it cannot be till you yield to God. You are not at peace, now, and you never will be if you harden your hearts. God is gently drawing some of you this morning. I can feel that He is doing so. I have deep sympathy with you. I know how you are feeling—you want to get alone and fall down on your knees to pray. Pray now! Cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” in the pew, at once! You do not need to wait to get home. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to yield your heart to Jesus Christ at this very time, for, if not, there will surely come, one of these days, a last time in which you will feel and you will, after that, be given up to a conscience seared as with a hot iron, never to feel again!

Think in what plight you will be when you come to die without Christ! How would you like to die like Queen Elizabeth, of whom history tells us that she would not go to bed—she would have cushions on the floor—for if she went to bed she would die and she could not bear the thought! This was her frequent cry, “Call time again! Call time again! Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time! Call time again!” Her majesty, whom you have seen decked out with all her ruffles and silks and the like, all haggard and in dishabille upon the ground, shrieked out, “Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time!”

May God grant that such may never be your lot, for if you so die—there is a something after death still more awful! I will say but little on that alarming theme, but put it in one verse as I learned it when a child and as I believed it after many an anxious thought. Hear the Truth of God, tremble and turn unto the Lord!—

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

Escape for your life! Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart!

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THE NEW SONG AND THE OLD STORY

NO. 2850

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1903.

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

***“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
Sing unto the LORD, bless His name; show forth His salvation from
day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His
wonders among all people.”
Psalm 96:1-3.***

THERE are mighty passions of the human soul which seek vent and can get no relief until they find it in expression. Grief, acute, but silent, has often destroyed the mind because it has not been able to weep itself away in tears. The glow of passion, fond of enterprise and full of enthusiasm, has often seemed to tear the very fabric of manhood when unable either to attain its end or to utter its strong desires. So it is in true religion. It not only lays hold upon our intellectual nature with appeals to our judgment and our understanding, but, at the same time, it engages our affections, brings our passions into play and fires them with a holy zeal, producing a mighty furor, so that, when this spell is on a man, and the Spirit of God thoroughly possesses him, he must express his vehement emotions.

Some professors of religion are ingenious enough to conceal whatever Grace they possess. Little enough they have, I guarantee you, or it would soon be discovered. Have you never seen the brooks that were known to come down the hillsides filled up with stones through the greater part of the summer? You wonder whether there is any streamlet there at all. You may go and search among the rounded stones and scarcely find a trace of water. How different after the snows have melted, or the mists upon the mountain's brows have turned to showers! Then the water comes rushing down like a mighty torrent, nor is there any question about its being a genuine stream. It shows itself as it rolls the great stones along, perhaps breaking down the banks and overflowing the country!

And so there is a religion—a poor, miserable, ordinary Christianity which is not worth the name it bears, that can hide itself—but vital godliness must assert itself. It must speak plainly, it must act vigorously, it must appear conspicuously. The Cross reveals the hearts of men—it unveils their true character. Till the Cross was set up, Joseph of Arimathea was scarcely known to be a disciple. And Nicodemus continued to do habitually what he once did literally—resort to Jesus by night. Openly he remained in the Sanhedrim, though secretly he was a profound ad-

mirer of the great Redeemer. But when the Cross was lifted up, Joseph went boldly in, with senatorial authority, and obtained the body of Jesus for burial—and Nicodemus came out with well-timed liberality to provide his hundred pounds of spices and his fair white linen. Thus the Cross reveals the thoughts of many hearts!

If you have real Grace and true love to Jesus in your soul, you will need some way of expressing yourselves. Our purpose, therefore, is now to suggest to you two modes of expressing your consecration to God and your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. These two methods are *to sing about* and *to talk about* the good things the Lord has done for you and the great things He has made known to you. Let sacred song take the lead—“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name.” Then let gracious discourse follow—be it in public sermons or in private conversations—“Show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.”

I. We begin with THE VOICE OF MELODY.

All you who love the Lord, give vent to your heart's emotion by holy song and take care that *it is sung to the Lord, alone*. What a noble instrument the human voice is! What a compass it has! Its low, soft whispers—how they can hold us spellbound! Its full volume, as it peals forth like thunder—how it can startle and produce dismay! What profanity, then, to use such an instrument in the service of sin! Is not our tongue the glory of our frame? Had I no conscientious objection to instrumental music in worship, I would still, I think, be compelled to admit that all the instruments that were ever devised by men, however sweetly attuned, are harsh and grating compared with the unparalleled sweetness of the human voice. When it is naturally, melodious and skillfully trained, (and every true worshipper should be zealous to dedicate his richest talent and his highest acquirement to this sacred service), there can be no music under Heaven that can equal the combination of voices which belong to men, women and children whose hearts really love the Savior! So sweet, so enchanting is the melody of song, that, surely, its best efforts should not be put forth to celebrate martial victories or national jubileations, much less should it lend its potent charm to anything that is trivial or lascivious. By sacred right, its highest beauties should be consecrated to Jehovah! If you can sing, sing the songs of Zion! If God has gifted you with a sweet, liquid voice, be sure and use it to render homage unto Him who cried out for you upon the Cross, “It is finished!” “Sing unto the Lord.”

How much public singing, even in the House of God, is of no account! How little of it is singing unto the Lord! Does not the conscience of full many among you bear witness that you sing a hymn because others are singing it? You go right straight through with it by a kind of mechanical action. You cannot *pretend* that you are singing unto the Lord! He is not in all your thoughts. Have you not been at places of worship where there is a trained choir evidently singing to the congregation? Tunes and tones

are alike arranged for popular effect. There is an artistic appeal to human passions. Harmony is attended to—homage is neglected. That is not what God approves of. I remember a criticism upon a certain minister's prayers. It was reported, in the newspaper, that he uttered the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience! I am afraid there is a good deal of vocal and instrumental music of the same species. It may be the finest praise ever offered to a congregation, but, surely, that is not what we come together for! If you need the sensual gratification of music's melting, mystic sound, let me commend to you the concert room—there you will get the enchanting ravishment—but when you come to the House of God, let it be to “sing unto the Lord.” As you stand up to sing, there should be a fixed intent of the soul, a positive volition of the mind, an absolute determination of the heart that all the flame which kindles in your breast—and all the melody that breaks from your tongue—and all the sacred swell of grateful song shall be unto the Lord, and unto the Lord, alone.

And if you would sing unto the Lord, let me recommend you to *flavor your mouth with the Gospel doctrines which savor most of Grace unmerited and free*. Any other form of theology would tempt us, more or less, to chant the praise of men. Gratitude has full play when we come to know that salvation is of the Lord, alone, and that mercy is Divinely free. He who has once heard the echo of that awful thunder, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” will learn to rejoice with trembling, to sing with deep feeling and to adore, with lowliest reverence, the great Supreme to whom might and majesty belong, and from whom Grace and goodness flow! Human counsels and conceits sink into insignificance, for thoughts of loving kindness and deeds of renown belong unto the Lord alone!

Kindly glance your eyes down the Psalm from which our text is taken and note how the exhortation to sing is given three times. I draw no absolute inference from this peculiar construction, but, to say the least, it is remarkable that the number three is so continually employed. Further down in the same Psalm it is written, “Give unto the Lord,” “Give unto the Lord,” “Give unto the Lord,” three times. Is there not here some kind of allusion to the wondrous Doctrine of the Trinity? At any rate, I boldly use the threefold cord to express the homage with which it behooves us to adore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As for Unitarianism, it is a religion of units and I suppose it always will be. There is no danger of its ever spreading very widely. It is cold as a moonlight night, though scarcely as clear. It has not enough of power in it to fire men's hearts to laud and magnify the Lord. It produces, now and then, a hymn, but it cannot kindle the passions of men to sing it with fervor and devout enthusiasm. Certainly, it cannot gather a crowd of grateful people, who will make a joyful noise unto the Lord and with all their heart and voice shout the chorus of gratitude. O Beloved, I beseech you to let your souls have vent in praise! Sing, often, such a verse as this—

“Blessed be the Father and His love,

***To whose celestial source we owe
Rivers of endless joy above,
And rills of comfort here below.”***

Praise the God of Glory who loved you before the foundation of the world! Praise the God of Grace who called you when you sought Him not. Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again unto a lively hope—our Heavenly Father who provides for us, educates us, instructs us, leads and guides us, and will bring us, by-and-by, to the many mansions in His own house.

Sing you also unto the Son. Never fail to adore the Son of God who left the royalties of Heaven to bear the indignities of earth. Adore the Lamb slain! Kneel at the foot of the Cross and praise each wound, and magnify the Immortal who became mortal for our sakes—

***“Glory to You, great Son of God!
From whose dear wounded body rolls
A precious stream of vital blood
Pardon and life for dying souls.”***

And, then, sing you to the Holy Spirit! Let us never fail in praising Him. I am afraid we often do. We forget Him too much in our sermons, our prayers and our hymns—or we mention Him, perhaps, as a matter of course, with formal expressions rather than with feelings of the most intense fervor. Oh, how our hearts are bound reverently to worship the Divine Indweller who, according to His abundant mercy, has made our bodies to be His Temple wherein He deigns to dwell!—

***“We give You, sacred Spirit, praise,
Who in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living springs of Grace arise,
And into boundless Glory flow.”***

Praise you, with your songs, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—the Triune God of Israel! Have you understood this? To Jehovah let your song be addressed. Thrice be His holy name repeated!

Then, be careful of the Psalmist’s instructions. Let the song that you sing be a new song. “O sing unto the Lord a new song!” Not the song of your old legal bondage which you used to sing so tremblingly, with the dread of a slave—a new and nobler song becomes you who are the Lord’s children, His sons and daughters! “O sing unto the Lord a new song!” To some of you the song of Redemption is quite new. Once you sang the songs of Bacchus or of Venus, or else you hummed over some light air, without meaning or motive, unless to while away your time and drive away all serious thoughts. O you who used so readily to sing the songs of Babylon, sing now the songs of Zion quite as freely and earnestly! “Sing unto the Lord a new song.”

By a “new” song, is meant the *best* song. It is put for that which is most elegant, most exquisite and best composed. Pindar says, “Give me old wine, but give me a new song.” So may we say, “Give us the old wines of the Kingdom of God, but let us sing unto the Lord a new song”—the best that we can find, no borrowed air, no hackneyed lyric—and let our spirits sing unto the Lord that which wells up fresh out of the quickened heart. A new song, always new! Keep up the freshness of your praise. Do

not drivel down into dull routine. The drowsy old clerks in the dreary old churches used always to say, “Let us sing to the praise and glory of God such-and-such a Psalm,” till I should think the poor old Tate and Brady version was pretty well used up. We have new mercies to celebrate, therefore we must have new songs—

***“Blest be his love who now has set
New time upon the score.”***

With “new time upon the score,” let there be new notes for Him who renews the face of Nature.

And have we not, dear Brothers and Sisters, new graces? Then let us sing with our new faith, our new love and our new hope! Some of you have very lately been made new creatures in Christ Jesus—sing you unto the Lord a new song. Surely He has done great things for you, whereof you are glad. Others of you have been converted for years, yet, if your inward man is renewed day by day, your praises shall be always new. Luther used to say that the wounds of Christ seemed to him to bleed to-day as if they had never bled before, for he found such freshness in his Master. You pluck a flower and it soon loses its scent and begins to wither, but our sweet Lord Jesus has a savor about His name that never departs. We take His name to lie like a bundle of camphire all night between our breasts and in the morning it smells as sweet as when we laid down to sleep. And when we come to die, that Lily of the valleys will drop with the same profusion as it did when, with our youthful hands, we first plucked it and came to Jesus and gave Him all our trust! “Sing unto the Lord a new song.” Let the freshness of your joy and the fullness of your thanks be perennial as the days of Heaven!

This song, according to our text, *is designed to be universal*. “Sing unto the Lord all the earth.” Let parents and children mingle in its strains. Let not the aged among you say, “Our voices are cracked,” but sing to the Lord with all the voice you have and all the compass you can. And you young people, give the Lord the highest notes you are able to reach! Still sing unto the Lord, you that are rich—sing unto the Lord who has saved you, for it is not many of your sort that He saves—

***“Gold and the Gospel seem to ill agree—
Religion always sides with poverty,”***

said John Bunyan, and he spoke the truth! Sing unto the Lord, you poor ones whom the Lord has favored, for still does it happen that “the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.” Sing unto Him, you who are learned in many matters. Let your talents make your song more full of understanding. And you who are unlearned, if you cannot put so much of understanding into the song, put more of the spirit and sing with all the more heartiness. All the earth should sing! There is not one of us but has cause for song and certainly not one saint but ought especially to praise the name of the Lord. You remember that passage in the 107th Psalm, (it is worth noticing), where the Psalmist says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,” as if they, above all others, ought to say, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.”

In addition to its being a new song, and a universal one, it is to be a *very inspiration of gratitude*. “Sing unto the Lord: bless His name.” How apt you are, in speaking of anyone who has been kind to you, to say, “God bless him!” The expression comes right up from your heart. And although you cannot invoke any blessing on God, you can desire for His name every blessing and every tribute of homage. You can desire for His cause that it may be established and may be triumphant. You may desire for His people that they may be helped, made holy and guided to their eternal rest. You may desire for mankind that they may hallow God’s holy name and all because you feel you owe so much to the Lord that you cannot help praising—and cannot help wishing that your praise should be fruitful on earth and acceptable in Heaven.

In two ways, I think, it becomes us to sing God’s praises. We ought to *sing with the voice*. I do not consider we sing enough to God. The poet speaks of “angel harp and human voice.” If the angel harp is more skillful, surely the human voice is more grateful. For my part, I like to hear sacred songs in all sorts of places. The maidservant can sing at her work and the carter as he drives his team. The occupations are few which could not be enlivened by repeating the words and running over the tune of a hymn. If it were only in a faint whisper, the habit might be cultivated. You might expose yourselves, it is true, to a taunt and be upbraided as “a Psalm-singing Methodist,” but that would not do you any hurt—better that than make a ribald jest or utter an impious blasphemy! Those who lend their tongues to such vile uses have something to be ashamed of. Lovers of pleasure sing their songs and poor trash, for the most part, they are. If the snatches we catch in the streets are the echoes of the saloon and the music hall, little credit is due to those who cater for public amusement. Lacking alike in sense and sentiment, they betray the degeneracy of the times and the depravity of popular taste.

There is a literature of song in which peasants may rejoice, of which patriots may be proud and to which poets may turn with envious eyes. Why wed your pretty tunes to paltry words? The higher the art, the more the pity to debase it. If you cull over our hymn books for samples of bad poetry, loose rhyme, and puerile thoughts, that reviewers like to revile, and libertines like to laugh at, we can only say, “Well, we cannot always vindicate the culture of those whose sincerity we hold in the highest esteem. But we will dare to confront you on equal terms—the sanctuary *versus* the saloon—our vocalists against your vocalists, from the sacred oratorios of Handel to the choicest of your operas, from the cant of our revival hymns to the catch of your last sensational songs! Yes, indeed, the people of God should sing more. Were we to try the exercise, we would find no small degree of pleasure in the practice. It would do us good to praise God more day by day. When we get together, two or three of us, we are in the habit of saying, “Let us pray.” Might we not sometimes say, “Let us sing”? We have our regular Prayer Meetings, why do we not have Praise Meetings just as often?—

“Prayer and praise for sins forgiven

Make up on earth the bliss of Heaven.”

We are like a bird that has only one wing. There is much prayer, but there is little praise. “Sing unto the Lord. Sing unto the Lord.”

To *sing with the heart*, is the very essence of song—

“In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am

And my heart it does leap at the sound of His name.”

Though the tongue may not be able to express the language of the soul, the heart is glad. Some persons seem never to sing with their heart. Their lips move, but their heart does not beat. In their common daily life, they move about as if they had been born on a dark winter’s night and carried the cold chill into all their concerns. The lamentation they constantly utter is this, “All these things are against me.” Their experience is comprised in this sentence, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” They never get into the harbor. “In Me you shall have peace,” is a secret they have never realized. They are fond of calling this world a howling wilderness and they are utterly oblivious of its orchards and vineyards. Were God to put them in the garden of Eden, they would not take any notice of the fruit or the flowers. They would go straight away to the serpent and begin saying, “Ah, there’s a snake here!” Their harp is hung on the willows—they never can sing, for their heart is unstrung.

Well, dear Friends, a Christian ought to be like a horse that has bells on his head, so that he cannot go anywhere without ringing them and making music! His whole life should be a Psalm—every step should be in harmony, every thought should constitute a note, every word he utters should be a component part of the joyful strain! It is a blessed thing to see a Christian going about his business like the high priest of old who, wherever he went, made music with the golden bells. Oh, to have a cheerful spirit, not the levity of the thoughtless, nor the gaiety of the foolish, nor even the mirth of the healthy—there is a cheerful spirit which is the gift of Grace—that can and does rejoice evermore. Then, when troubles come we bear them cheerfully! Let fortune smile, we receive it with equanimity. Or let losses befall us, we endure them with resignation, being willing, so long as God is glorified, to accept anything at His hands.

These are the people to recommend Christianity. Their cheerful conversation attracts others to Christ. As for those people who are morose or morbid, sullen or severe, harsh in their judgment of their fellow men, or rebellious against the will of God, people of a covetous disposition, a peevish temper and a quarrelsome character—unto them it is of no use to say, “O sing unto the Lord,” for they will never do it! They have not any bells in the tower of their heart—what chimes can they ring? Their harps have lost their strings—how can they magnify the Most High? But genuine piety finds expression in jubilant song—this is the initiative, though it is far from exhausting its resources!

II. Now, in the second place, let me stir you up, especially you who are members of this Church, to such DAILY CONVERSATION and such HA-

BITUAL DISCOURSE as shall be fitted to spread the Gospel which you love.

Our text admonishes you to “show forth His salvation.” You believe in the salvation of God—a salvation all of Grace from first to last. You have seen it. You have received it. You have experienced it. Well, now, show it forth! Explain it to others and with the explanation let there be an illustration--exemplify it by your lives. God has shone upon you with the light of His Countenance that you may reflect His brightness and irradiate others. Every Christian here is like the moon which shines with borrowed light. But the sun lends not its bright rays to be hoarded up. It is that they may scatter beams of brightness over this world of night! Take care, then, that you are faithful to your trust. Show forth His salvation. God knows that I try to do so from the pulpit. I wish that you would all try and do so from the pews. Are you lacking in opportunities? I think not. Before and after service, especially to strangers and such as may have been induced to come and hear the Gospel, speak a word in season—thoughtfully, prayerfully, softly, talk with them.

Show forth this salvation, too, in your own houses, or on your visits, or wherever your lot may happen, in God’s Providence, to be cast. It is wonderful how God blesses little efforts, very little efforts! I have sometimes, I am sorry to say not as often as I ought, scattered Seed by the wayside. Only a few nights ago, I had been driven by a driver and after I had alighted and given him the fare, he took a little Testament out of his pocket and said, “It is about 15 years ago since you gave me this, and said a word to me about my soul—and it has stuck by me and I have not let a day pass since without reading it.” I felt glad. I know that if Christian people would try and show forth God’s salvation, they would often be surprised to find how many hearts would gladly receive it. Beloved, show forth this salvation from day to day. Let it not be merely on a Sunday! While you hold that day as specially sacred, let no other day be common or unclean. We are thankful for the kindly efforts put forth in the Sunday school and elsewhere, on our Sabbaths, but we want Christian activity to be put forth from day to day! Let your zeal for the conversion of your fellow creatures be continuous. “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” The result of the Sabbath work may, perhaps, not be seen by you, when the result of Monday’s work may very speedily appear.

“Show forth His salvation from day to day.” This admonition is enforced in three clauses, so let us notice the second. “Declare His glory among the heathen.” It is the same thing in another form. When you are telling out the Gospel, point especially to the glory of it. Show them the justice of the great Substitution and the mercy of it. Show them the wisdom which devised the plan whereby, without a violation of His Law, God could yet pardon rebellious sinners. Impress upon those whom you talk that the Gospel you have to tell them of is no common-place system of expediency, but it is really a glorious Revelation of Divinity. You know

men are very much attracted by anything of glory and renown. They will even rush to the cannon's mouth for so-called glory! Now, be sure, when you are talking to others about the salvation you have received at the hands of your dear Lord and Master, that you tell them about the glory thereof—what a glory it brings to Christ and to what a glory it will bring every sinner by-and-by. Tell them of the glory of being pardoned, the glory of being accepted, the glory of being justified, the glory of being sanctified. Is it not all “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”? I think you might relate some scenes from the deathbeds of the saints you have known, on which rays of glory have fallen—but I am sure you might anticipate the glory, which words cannot picture, or imagination realize, in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, the Resurrection of the just and the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom. Dwell upon these things! Declare His glory!

And do not be ashamed to do this in the presence of people of a disreputable character, though their ignorance and degradation be ever so palpable. “Declare His glory among the heathen.” “I am going on a mission to the heathen,” said a minister once to his people. Mistaking his meaning, they went home deploring the loss of their pastor. On the following Sunday, when they found him in the pulpit, they discovered that he had not been out of the city all week and when they wanted to know what parts he had visited, and what people he had seen, he reminded them that he had heathens at home—and they were to be found even in his own congregation. Ah, and there may be some heathens here! At any rate, there are plenty of heathens in this great city of London. I have no doubt there are parts of this metropolis in which hundreds and even thousands of people reside who are as ignorant of the plan of salvation as the inhabitants of Coomassie. They know nothing of Jesus, even though the Light of God is so bright around them. “Declare His glory among the heathen,” you lovers of Christ! Penetrate into the dark places! Break up fresh ground, Christian men and women!

I am persuaded and this is a matter I have often spoken of, that many of you who sit and hear sermons on the Sunday, ought rather to turn out and preach the Gospel. While we are glad to see you occupying pews, it will be a greater joy to miss you from your seats if we only know that you are declaring God's glory among the heathen! I am not sure that we are, all of us, right to be living cooped up in this little island of ours. There are, in England, enough disciples of Jesus to bear the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth—but perhaps there is not one Christian in five or ten thousand who ever deliberately thinks about going to the heathen to make known to them the way of salvation and to declare the glory of the Lord among those who have never heard His name. Pray that there may yet come a wonderful wave of God's Spirit over our Churches which shall bear upon its crest hundreds of ardent spirits resolved to carry the tidings of redemption to the jungle and the fever swamps, to the high latitudes and the southern islands! Oh, that the love of Christ may constrain them! Know you not that Christ has determined to save men by

the preaching of the Gospel? Has He not charged His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature? How poorly has His Church carried out this commission! If you love Christ, here is the opportunity for you to show your love—go and declare His glory among the heathen!

A third expression is used here. “Declare His wonders among all people.” Our Gospel is a Gospel of wonders. It deals with amazing sin in a wonderful way. It presents to us a wonderful Savior and tells us of His wonderful complex Person. It points us to His wonderful Atonement and it takes the blackest sinner and makes him wonderfully clean! It makes him a new creature and works a wonderful change in him. It conducts him to wonders of happiness and wonders of strength, and yet onward to greater wonders of light and life, for it opens up to him the wonders of the Covenant. It gives him wonderful provisions, wonderful deliverances and leads him right up, by the power of Him who is called Wonderful, to the gates of that Wonderland where we shall forever—

**“Sing, with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies.”**

Surely, dear Christian Friends, we ought to talk about the wonders of the Lord our God, and especially should we dwell upon those wonders which we have ourselves seen. Of every Christian, it might be said that he is a wonder. Will you think a minute, Christian, of the wonder that God has made of you and the wonders that He has done for you? “That ever I should be,” is a wonder—will you not say that? And then, “That ever I should be saved, is a wonder of wonders.” That you should have been kept till now, that you should not have been allowed to go back, that you should have been preserved under so many troubles, that your prayers should have been heard so continuously, that, notwithstanding your ill manners, the love of Christ should still have remained the same—oh, but I cannot recite the tale of marvels—it is a long series of wonders! The Christian’s life, if the worldling could understand it, would seem to him like a romance. The wonders of Grace far exceed the wonders of Nature and, of all the miracles God, Himself, has ever worked, there are no miracles so matchless in wonder as the miracles of Grace in the heart of man! Beloved, declare these miracles, these wonders—tell them to others!

Men like to hear a tale of wonder. They will gather round the fire, at eventide, when the logs are burning, and delightedly listen to a story of wonder. When you go home, young man, for your next holiday—if God has converted you, tell what great things the Lord has done for you. And when you go home, Mary, and see your mother—if the Lord has met with you, tell her what the Lord has done for you. “Declare His wonders among all people.” Do not be afraid of speaking about the Gospel to anybody or in any company. Whoever they may be—whether they are rich or poor, high or low—if you get an opportunity of declaring the wonders of God’s Grace, do not let the Gospel be unknown for lack of a tongue to tell it.

So, you see, I have put before you these two outlets for your love. First, sacred song and, secondly, gracious discourse. Be sure to use them both and if any bid you hold your peace, shall I tell you the answer? Use the same answer which your Master did to the Pharisees when they complained of the shouts of the little children—"If these should hold their tongues, the very stones would cry out." Ordinary Christians may be quiet because God has done nothing very wonderful for them. They go through the world in a very ordinary kind of way. Their religion is skin-deep and no more. But those who know that they deserved the deepest Hell and who have been saved by a mighty effort of Infinite Mercy must tell what God has done for them! They must come out from the world and be separate. They must be decided, zealous and even enthusiastic. Necessity is laid upon them to be earnest and intense in all they do and in all they say. They cannot help it, for the love of Jesus will fire their souls with a passion that cannot be quenched. "We thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." God help you, Beloved, thus to live!

As for those of you who have never found the Savior, you cannot tell of His excellence or publish His worth. But I do trust that you will not forget that Jesus is to be found by those who seek Him, for whoever believes on Him shall be saved. Take Him at His word. Rely on His promise. Trust Him. Commit your soul into His keeping. Cast yourself unreservedly on His mercy. He will not spurn you, but He will receive you graciously. And you shall yet praise Him and He will be the health of your countenance and your God.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DANIEL 9:14-23.**

Verses 14-21. *Therefore has the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all His works which He does, for we obeyed not His voice. And now, O Lord our God, that has brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has gotten You renown, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I beseech You, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain: because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Your ears and hear, open Your eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name: for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousness, but for Your great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for Your own sake, O my God: for Your city and Your people are called by Your name. And while I was speaking,*

and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; yes, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. That is the time when prayer is always heard, when the lamb is offered, and his blood is sprinkled, and blessed be God, the Sacrifice in which we trust has been offered once and for all. The Christ, who has gone into Heaven as a Lamb that had been slain, has, by His one offering, made perpetual oblation unto the Most High on our behalf. So pray when we will, we may expect an answer. See how quick it was in Daniel's case: "While I was speaking in prayer," the angel Gabriel, in the form of a man, appeared unto him, and brought him the answer to his petition.

22, 23. *And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the commandant came forth, and I am come to show you, for you are greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.* And then he told him of the Messiah who was coming, of all that would happen to Him, of the week of respite, and then of the final consummation when God would permit the foreign prince to come and destroy the city, and the sanctuary, and to pour upon them the desolations which He had determined to inflict upon them.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
885, 102 (PART 2), 135 (VERSION 2).**

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

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

RIGHTEOUS HATRED

NO. 208

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“You that love the Lord, hate evil.”
Psalm 97:10.*

THE Christian religion is a golden chain with which the hands of men are fettered from all hatred. The spirit of Christ is love. Wherever He governs, love reigns as a necessary consequence. The Christian man is not allowed to hate anyone. “You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you,” said Jesus, “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.”

The word “hate” must be cut out of the language of a Christian, except when it is used with one meaning and intention only and that, the meaning of my text. You have no right, O Christian, to tolerate within your bosom wrath, malice, anger, harshness, or uncharitableness towards any creature that God’s hands have made. When you hate the man’s sins, you are not to hate *him* but to love the sinner, even as Christ loved sinners and came to seek and save them. When you hate a man’s false doctrine, you are still to love the man and hate his doctrine even out of love to his soul with an earnest desire that he may be reclaimed from his error and brought into the way of the Truth of God. You have no right to excrete your hatred upon any creature, however fallen or debased, however much he may irritate your temper, or injure you in your estate or reputation.

Still, hatred is a power of manhood and we believe that all powers of manhood are to be exercised and every one of them may be exercised as in the fear of God. It is possible to be angry and yet sin not and it is possible to hate and yet not be guilty of sin, but be positively performing a duty. Christian Man, you may have hatred in your heart, if you will allow it to run in one stream only—then it shall not do mischief, but it shall even do good—“You that love the Lord, hate evil.” As much as the revengeful man hates his enemy, so must you hate evil. As much as contending despots in battle hate one another and only seek an opportunity to meet each other face to face, so you must hate evil. As much as Hell hates Heaven and as much as Heaven hates Hell, so must you hate evil.

The whole of that passion which when let loose in a wrong track becomes as a fierce lion on its prey, you must keep on leash, (like a noble lion, only destitute of ferocity) against any whom it should not hurt. But you may let it slip against the enemies of the Lord your God and do great exploits thereby. Tell me of a man who is never angry—that man has not

any true zeal for God. We must sometimes be angry against sin. When we see evil, though not vindictive against the persons who commit it, yet angry against the evil we must be. We must hate wickedness always.

Does not David say, "I hate them with a perfect hatred, yes, I count them my enemies"? We are to love our enemies, but we are to hate *God's* enemies. We are to love sinners, but we are to hate sin. As much as it is in the power of man to hate, so much are we to hate evil in every form and fashion.

The duty here enjoined is a general one to all God's people. We are to hate *all evil—not some evils*. It was said, you know, long ago, of certain professors, that they did—

***"Compound for sins they were inclined to
By damning those they had no mind to."***

And there are some, I dare say, in this day who think others extremely guilty for committing iniquities which they do not care to commit, but they themselves commit other sins with which they deal very gently. O Christian, never take hold of sin except with a gauntlet on your hand! Never go to it with the kid-glove of friendship, never talk delicately of it. But always hate it in every shape.

If it comes to you as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes. If it comes to you as a warring lion, seeking whom it may devour—or if it comes with the hug of a bear, seeking by a pretended affection to entice you into sin, smite it, for its hug is death and its clasp destruction. Sin of every kind you are to war with—of lip, of hand, of heart. Sin, however gilded over with profit, however varnished with the seemliness of morality, however much it may be complimented by the great, or however popular it may be with the multitude—you are to hate it everywhere, in all its disguises—every day in the week and in every place.

War to the knife with sin! We are to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard. With all your hosts, O Hell, with every brat of your offspring, O Satan, we are to be at enmity. Not one sin are we to spare, but against the whole are we to proclaim an utter and entire war of extermination.

In endeavoring to address you upon this subject, I shall first of all begin with it at home—*Christian Man, hate all evil in yourself*. And then, secondly, we will let it go abroad—*Christian Man, hate all evil in other people, wherever you see it*.

I. First, then, CHRISTIAN, HATE ALL EVIL IN YOURSELF. I will strive now to excite your hate against it and then I will try to urge you and assist you to destroy it.

You have good reason to hate all evil—greater reason than ever the most injured man could bring forward for the hatred of his enemies. Consider what evil has already done to you. Oh, what a world of mischief sin has brought into your heart! Sin stopped up your eyes so that you could not see the beauty of the Savior. It thrust its finger into your ears so that you could not hear the sweet invitations of Jesus—sin turned your feet into the way of evil and filled your hands with filthiness. No, worse than

that, sin poured poison into the very fountain of your being. It tainted your heart and made it “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”

Oh, what a creature you were when sin had done its utmost with you before Divine Grace began to mend you! You were an heir of wrath even as others. You did “run with the multitude to do evil.” Your mouth was an “open sepulcher.” You did flatter with your tongue and there is nothing that can be said of your fellow creature living in sin that could not be said of you. You must plead guilty to the charge, “such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Oh, you have good cause for hating sin when you look back to the rock from where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug. Such mischief did evil do you that your soul would have been everlastingly lost had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem you. Christian, hate evil. It has been your murderer. It has put its dagger into your heart. It has thrust poison into your mouth. It has done you all the mischief that Hell itself could do—mischief which would have worked your eternal undoing had not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ prevented it. You have good reason, then, to hate sin.

Again, Christian, hate evil, for it would be unbecoming if you did not when you consider your position in life. A Christian belongs to the royal blood of the universe. Beggars’ children may run about the street with unkempt hair and shoeless feet. But should princes of the blood revel in uncleanness? We do not expect to see monarchs’ children appareled in rags. We do not expect to see them rolling themselves in the mire of the streets. And you, Christian, you are one of God’s aristocracy, a prince of the blood of Heaven, a friend of angels! Yes, and a friend of God.

Good reason have you to hate all evil. Why, Man, you are a Nazarite, dedicated to God. Now to the Nazarite it was enjoined that not only he should not drink wine, but he was not even to eat the grape, nor might he so much as taste the bark of the vine, or anything whatsoever that grew upon it. He must neither touch nor handle it, or else he would be defiled. So is it with you. You are the Lord’s Nazarite, set apart for Himself. Avoid, then, every false way.

Let the appearance of evil be kept from you—it is beneath your dignity to indulge in the sins which disgrace other men. You are not a snob as they are. You are of a nobler race, you have sprung from the loins of the Son of God. Is He not your everlasting Father, even He who is the Prince of Peace? I beseech you, never demean your royal lineage nor let your holy ancestry be stained. You are a peculiar people, a royal generation. Why, then, would you stain your garments in the dust—“You that love the Lord, hate evil.”

Again—you have good reason to hate sin, because *it weakens you*. Go when you have committed a folly, retire to your chamber and fall upon

your knees in prayer. Before the sin was committed, your prayer reached the ear of God and the blessings came down swift as lightning. But now your knees are weak, your heart refuses to desire and your tongue refuses to express the faint desires you strive to reach. You attempt, but you fail. You groan, but Heaven is shut against your cry. You weep, but your tear penetrates not so as to obtain an answer from the breast of God. There you are. You bring your wants before the Throne and you carry them away again.

Prayer becomes a painful duty instead of a most gracious and excellent privilege. This is the result of sin. "Sin will make you leave off praying, or else praying will make you leave off sinning." Oh, you can never be strong in sin and strong in prayer. As long as you indulge in lust, or sin, or wantonness of any kind, your power in prayer is taken away and your lips are shut when you attempt to approach your God. Or if you will, try another exercise—after committing a sin, go into the world and seek to do good. Why, Man, you cannot do it. You have lost the power to cleanse others when you are impure yourself. What? Can I, with filthy fingers, wash the face of others? Shall I attempt to plow another man's field while my own is lying fallow and tall rank thistles and weeds are overspreading it?

I am powerless to do good until I have first cleansed my own vessel and made that pure. An unholy minister must be an unsuccessful one and an unholy Christian must be an unfruitful one. Unless you desire to have your sinews loosed, to have the marrow of your bones scorched from you—unless you will that the sap of your being should be dried up, I beseech you, hate sin, for sin can debilitate and weaken you so much that you shall drag along a miserable existence, the very skeleton of a soul instead of flourishing in the ways of your God. "You that love the Lord, hate evil."

In the next place, you will find it extremely useful if, in order to get rid of sin, you are not content with merely restraining it, but always seeking to have it taken clean away by the Holy Spirit. Mere moralists restrain their sins like a river that has locks and dykes—the water is kept from flowing, but then it gradually swells upward and upward, till by-and-by it overflows with terrible fury. Now, don't be content with mere restraining grace—that will never purge you—for the sin may be there though it break not out. Pray to God that your sin may be taken away and that though the remnant and the root thereof remain, though the channel be there, yet the stream may be dried up like the stream of the Euphrates before the presence of the Lord your God.

Again—you have good reason to hate evil, for if you indulge in it *you will have to smart for it*. God will never kill His children, He has put His sword away. He sheathed that once for all in the breast of Christ, but He has a rod and that rod sometimes He lays on with a very heavy hand and makes the whole body to tingle. The Lord will not be angry with His people so as to cast them off but He will be so angry with them that they shall

have to cry, "Heal the bones that you have broken and restore my soul, O Lord my God."

Ah, you that have ever backslidden, you know what it is to be well scourged, for when Christ's sheep run away from the Shepherd, He will not let them perish, but He will often allow the black dog to bring them back in his mouth. He will allow sore trouble and sharp affliction to lay hold upon them so that they are cast down almost to the gates of Hell. A Christian shall never be destroyed, but he shall almost be destroyed—his life shall not totally fail him, but he shall be so beaten and bruised that he shall scarcely know whether he has any life left in him at all. Hate sin, O Christian, unless you desire trouble. If you would strew your path with thorns and put nettles in your death pillow, then live in sin. But if you would dwell in the heavenly places, hearing the everlasting chimes of Paradise ringing in your own heart, then walk in all the ways of holiness unto the end. Christian Man, hate evil.

So far, I have only addressed you selfishly. I have shown you how evil may hurt *yourselves*. Now I will address you with another argument. Christian, hate evil—hate it in yourself, because evil in you will *do hurt to others*. What hurt the sin of a Christian does to the children of God! The sharpest trials God's Church has ever had has come from her own sons and daughters. I see her, I see her with her garments rent and defiled. I see her hands all bleeding and her back scarred. O Church of the living God, you fairest among women, how are you wounded! Where have you received these wounds?

Has the infidel spit in your face and reviled you? Has the Arian rent your garments? Has the Socinian cast filth upon the whiteness of your apparel? Who has wounded your hands and who has scarred your back? Has this been done by the impious and profane? "No," she says, "these are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends. Against my enemies I wear a secret armor, but my friends penetrate within it and cut me to the very quick." The bishops of God's Church, the professed leaders of the Lord's hosts, the pretended followers of the Redeemer, have done more damage to the Church than all the Church's enemies.

If the Church were not a Divine thing, protected by God, she must have ceased to exist, merely through the failure and iniquity of her own professed friends! I do not wonder that the Church of God survived martyrdom and death. But I do marvel that she has survived the unfaithfulness of her own children and the cruel backsliding of her own members. O Christians, you do not know how you cause God's name to be blasphemed, how you stain His Church and bring dishonor upon her escutcheon, when you indulge in sin. "You that love the Lord, hate evil"

Again—hate it not only for the Church's sake, but for the poor sinner's sake. How many sinners every year are driven away from all thought of religion by the inconsistency of professors? And have you ever noticed how the world always delights to chronicle the inconsistency of a professor? I

saw only yesterday an account in the paper of a wretch who had committed lust and it was said that, "He had a very sanctified appearance." Yes, I thought, that is the way the press always likes to speak. But I very much question whether there are many editors that know what a sanctified appearance means—at least they will have to look a long time among their own class before they find many that have got much sanctification. However, the reporter put it down that the man had "a sanctified appearance." And of course it was intended as a fling against all those who make a profession of religion, by making others believe that this man was a professor, too.

And really the world has had some grave cause for it, for we have seen professing Christians in these days that are an utter disgrace to Christianity and there are things done in the name of Jesus Christ that it would be a shame to do in the name of Beelzebub. There are things done, too, by those who are accounted members of the Church of our Lord Jesus, methinks, so shameful that Pandemonium itself would scarcely own them. The world has had much cause to complain of the Church. O children of God, be careful. The world has a lynx eye—it will see your faults. It will be impossible to hide them. And it will magnify your faults. It will slander you if you have none—give it at least no ground to work upon. "Let your garments be always white." Walk in the fear of the Lord and let this be your daily prayer, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe."

Once more—I have one argument that methinks must touch your hearts and make you hate evil. You have a Friend, the best friend you ever had. I know Him and have loved Him and He has loved me. There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot forever engraved upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend—my best, my only Friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad fright and looked at Him. He was basely murdered. I saw that His hands had been pierced with rough iron nails and His feet had been rent with the same.

There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges and His brow had a circle of wounds about it—clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault. He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him? For He never injured any man—all His life long He "went about doing good." He had healed the sick, He had fed the hungry, He had raised the dead—for which of these works did they kill Him?

He had never breathed out anything but love. And as I looked into the poor sorrowful face so full of agony and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile us to pierce hands like His. I said within myself, "Where live these traitors? Where can they live? Who are these that could have smitten such an One as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor we might have forgiven them. Had they slain one who had in-

dulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his due desert. Had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse—justice has at last given him his due." But when You were slain, my best, my only Beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them and they shall be put to death. If there are torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all.

Oh, what jealousy! What revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers what would I do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse I heard a footstep and wondered where it was. I listened and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark and I groped about to find him. I found that somehow or other wherever I put my hand I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have you now," said I. For lo, he was in my own heart! The murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah, then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harboring the murderer.

And I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse and sung that plaintive hymn—

***"It was you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were:
Each of my crimes became a nail
And unbelief the spear."***

Revenge! Revenge! You that fear the Lord and love His name, take vengeance on your sins and hate all evil.

Now, my Beloved, my next endeavor must be to urge you to put your sins to death. What shall be done in order that you and I may get rid of our sins? There is the axe of the Law. Shall we bring that out and smite our sins with it? Alas, they will never die under the blow of Moses—

***"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone."***

I have often tried to overcome sin by the thought of the punishment attached to it but I have very seldom found myself in a frame of mind in which my heart would receive that reason. I believe that to the most of us the terrors of the Law, although they ought to be exceedingly terrible, have but little power to check us from sin. I met with a story the other day which showed me, if nothing else, the utter powerlessness of terror for curbing the heart from sin.

It is pretended by some that it is necessary that men who commit murder should be capitally executed in order to deter others from crime. There is not, however, I believe, the shadow of a hope that the execution of a murderer will ever produce any such effect. Three traitors were once executed in this country—Thistlewood was one of them—and when the executioner smote off the head of the first man and held it up, saying, "this is the head of a traitor," there was a shudder running through the multitude, a chill, cold feeling which was perceptible even by the executioner.

When he killed the next man and held up the head in like manner, it was evidently looked upon with intense curiosity and awe, but with nothing like so much thrilling caution as the first. And strange to say, when the third head was smitten off, the man was about to hold it up, but he let it drop and the crowd with one voice cried, "Aha, butter fingers!" and laughed. Would you have supposed that an English crowd, on seeing a poor man die, could have become so hardened in so short a time, as actually to have made a joke of such an incident?

Yet so it is. Law and terrors never do and never will produce any other effect than to drive men to sin and make them think lightly of it. I would not, therefore, advise a Christian, if he would get rid of his sins, to indulge continually in the thought of the punishment. But let him adopt a better process—let him go and sit down at the Cross of Christ and endeavor to draw evangelical repentance from the atonement which Christ has offered for our guilt. I know of no cure for sin in a Christian like an abundant meditation with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with Him and it is impossible for you to dwell much with sin. What? My Lord Jesus, can I sit at the foot of that tree accursed and see Your blood flowing for my guilt and after that indulge in transgression? Yes, I may do it, for I am vile enough for anything, but still this shall be the great clog upon the wheel of my sin and this repress my lust the most of all—the thought that Jesus Christ has lived and died for me.

Again—if you would check sin, endeavor to get as much light as you can upon it. The housewife, when she is busy about her house, with curtains drawn—may have dusted all the tables and think everything looks clean. But she opens a little corner of the window and in streams a ray of light, in which ten thousand grains of dust are dancing up and down. "Ah," she thinks, "my room is not so clean as I thought it was! Here is dust where I thought there was none." Now, endeavor to get not the farthing rush light of your own judgment, but the sunlight of the Holy Spirit streaming upon your heart and it will help you to detect your sin—and detection of sin is half-way towards its cure. Look well at your transgressions and endeavor to find them out.

Yet another thing, when you have fallen into one sin make confession of it and let that lead you to search for all the rest. David, you know, never wrote so abject a confession as he did after he had committed one act of sin. Then he was led to search his heart and find out all the rest of his iniquities and he made a complete confession of them all. When you see one sin, be quite sure there is a host there, for they always hunt in packs. And take care when you discharge your confession against one, that there is enough powder and shot in your confession to wound all your sins and send them limping away. Be not content with overcoming *one* sin or one transgression, but labor to get rid of *all*.

Again—there are many sins by which you will be enticed unless you always take care to strip sin of its disguises. Sin will sometimes come to

you, wrapped up in a Babylonian garment, like Achan's wedge—pull off the covering and you will discover its iniquity. It will sometimes come to you like the iniquity of King Saul under the form of a sacrifice—strip it and discover that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Alas, sin is like Jezebel! It attires its head and paints its face and appears lovely to us—unmask it, see its vileness, discover its filthiness, disdain the profit with which it gilds itself, take away the applause with which it endeavors to plume itself and let it stand in all its naked deformity and then you will not be so likely to run into it.

Once again—try always, when your mind is in a sanctified state, to estimate the weight of the evil of sin. When you are in a sinful state you will not feel the weight of the evil. A man that dives into the water may have a thousand tons of water above his head and not feel the weight because the water is round about him. But take him out of the water and if you put half a tubful on his head, it presses him down. Now, while you indulge in sin, you will not feel its weight. But when you are out of sin, after it is over and the Spirit has applied the blood of sprinkling for your forgiveness and the sanctifying work of the Spirit has begun to restore you, then labor to realize the enormity of your guilt and by so doing you will be helped to hate it and to overcome it.

With regard to some sins, if you would avoid them, take one piece of advice—run away from them. Sins of lust especially are never to be fought with, except after Joseph's way. And you know what Joseph did—he ran away. A French philosopher said, "Fly, fly, Telemaque—there remains no way of conquest but by flight." The true soldiers of Christ's Cross will stand foot to foot with any sin in the world except this. But here they turn their backs and fly and then they become conquerors. "*Flee* fornication," said one of old and there was wisdom in the counsel—there is no way of overcoming it but by flight. If the temptation attacks you, shut your eyes and stop your ears and away, away from it. For you are only safe when you are beyond sight and earshot. "You that love the Lord, hate evil." And endeavor with all your might to resist and overcome it in yourselves.

Once again—you that love the Lord, if you would keep from sin, seek always to have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit. Never trust yourselves a single day without having a fresh renewal of your piety before you go forth to the day's duties. We are never safe unless we are in the Lord's hands. No Christian, be he who he may or what he may, though he is renowned for his piety and prayerfulness, can exist a day without falling into great sin unless the Holy Spirit shall be his Protector. Old master Dyer says, "Lock up your hearts by prayer every morning and give God the key, so that nothing can get in. And then when you unlock your heart at night, there will be a sweet fragrance and perfume of love, joy and holiness." Take care of that. It is only by the Spirit that you can be preserved from sin.

Above all, let us add, avoid all preachers who endeavor in anyway to palliate sin. Avoid all experiences and books of experience that give you a way of getting over the fact that the sin of God's people is a vile thing. I know some folks who talk of their sins as if they were proud of them. They speak of their falls and their backslidings and transgressions as if they were blessed experiences—like the dog that had a bell round his neck because he was dangerous—they are proud of that very thing which is their shame.

Remember, a nettle is bad anywhere but it is never so bad as in a flower garden and sin is bad anywhere, but never so hateful as in a Christian. If as you are going home today you see a boy breaking windows, very likely you will speak to him. But if it is your own boy you will severely chastise him as sure as he is your own son. So likewise does God deal with His people. When sinners do mischief He rebukes them. When His people do the same He smites them. He will not pass over sin in His own children at any time. It shall never go unchastened. You that fear the Lord never palliate sin, for God will not do so. He hates it with perfect hatred.

II. My second point is, HATE SIN IN OTHERS. Mark it, do not hate *others*, but hate *sin* in others. As we have only a few minutes left I will occupy them with but one or two practical remarks.

If you hate sin in others, it will be necessary for you *never in any way to countenance it*. There is many a Christian who does more mischief than he knows of by a smile. You have heard a young man telling a story of some of his freaks. Perhaps it has been in a railway carriage and he has been very witty and you have smiled at him. He knows you and he seems to think he has done a brave thing—didn't he make a Christian man smile at his sins?

You have sometimes heard loose, lewd conversation proceeding from ungodly men and you have not liked it. It has grated upon your ears. But you have sat very quietly and others have said, "Ah well, he was still enough. He was sucking it in and it was clear he liked it." Thus it was stamped at once with the seal of your approbation. Now, never let sin have your countenance. Wherever you are, let it be known that you not only cannot endure it, but that you positively hate it. Don't let people say, "Well, I don't think he likes it." But let them know you *hate* it, that you are absolutely angry with it, that you cannot smile at it, but feel your anger rise at the very mention of such shameful things.

In the last century it used to be fashionable and honorable to commit sins which are now looked upon with scorn and in another hundred years, some things that are done today will be discovered to be desperately vile and we shall look upon them with disdain also. Christian, I say never stamp another man's sins with approval.

Again—whenever you are called upon to do it—and that will be very often—take care to let your sentiments with regard to sin come out. Sinful silence may make you a partaker in a sinner's evil ways. If I saw a man

breaking into a house as I were going by late in the evening, if I passed very gently, knowing that he was doing wrong and did not give the alarm, I think I should be an accomplice in the crime. And so, if you are sitting in company where there is evil speaking, or where Christ is blasphemed, if you do not say a word for your Master, you are committing sin in your silence—you are an accomplice in the iniquity.

Speak up for your Lord and Master. What if you should get upbraided for it and be called a Puritan? It is a grand name. What if some should say you are too precise? There is good need that some should be too precise where a great many are far too lax. Or if they should never welcome you in their company again, it will be a great gain to be out of it. What if they should speak evil of you? Know you not that you are to rejoice in that day when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's namesake? Always by your speaking boldly, let sin be put to the blush.

Then again—when you see evil in anyone, always seek, if you see the slightest hope of doing good, for an opportunity of telling him privately of it. I have heard of a gentleman who was swearing and a godly man who stood by, instead of upbraiding him for it, publicly said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you a moment." "Well," said the gentleman, "you had better come into the coffee room." They went accordingly. And the godly man said to the other, "My dear Friend, I noticed that you took the name of God in vain. I know you will excuse my mentioning it. I did not say a word about it when others could hear. But really it is a great sin and no profit can come from it. Could you not avoid it in the future?"

The check was thankfully received. The gentleman bowed his acknowledgments, he confessed that it was the fault of his early education and he trusted that the rebuke might do him good. Do you not think that very often we lose an opportunity of showing our hatred of evil by not endeavoring privately to speak to those whom we discover indulging in sin? Never let slip an opportunity of having a shot at the devil, be it where it may. Always let fly at him whenever you see him. If you cannot do it in public, yet if you see a man doing evil, rebuke him in private for his sin.

And yet another thing. If you hate evil, do not get into it yourself, because it is of no use your talking to others about evil unless your own life is blameless. They that live in glass houses must not throw stones. Get out of your own glass house and then throw as many as you like. Speak to other people, when you have first of all endeavored to set your own life according to the compass of the Gospel.

And now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, all of you who love the Savior are exhorted this morning to hate evil. And I will just enlarge once more upon this exhortation. Join heart and hand in the hatred of evil with all men who seek to put it down. Wherever you see a society endeavoring to do good, encourage it. Let this be your doctrine—preach nothing up but Christ and nothing down but evil. Help all those that are for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. There is nothing else that can put evil away so

quickly as the proclamation of right. Help the minister of the Gospel—pray for him. Hold up his hands. Endeavor to strengthen him. As for yourself, become a tract distributor, a Sunday-School teacher, or a village preacher.

Show your hatred to evil by active efforts in putting it down. Distribute Bibles, scatter the Word of God broadcast over the land. Send your missionaries to foreign parts and let them penetrate the dens and alleys of London. Go among the rags and filth of our own population and seek to bring some one or two of the Lord's precious jewels who are hidden in the dunghills of the metropolis to hear the Word of God preached.

Thus, let the Lord Jesus Christ by your means get the victory and let the evil of this world be cast out. How shall that be done but by the combined exertions of all Christ's Church? In these days we have a great many men to fight Christ's battles, if they would but fight. Our Churches are increasing at a great rate. There are an immense number of Christians now alive. But I think I would rather have the one hundred and twenty men that were in the upper chamber at the day of Pentecost than I would have the whole lot of you.

I do think those one hundred and twenty men had got more blood in them, more Divine Christian blood and zeal than as many millions of such poor creatures as we are. Why, in those days every member of the Church was a missionary. The women did not preach, it is true. But they did what is better than preaching—they *lived* out the Gospel. And all the men had something to say. They did not leave it as you do to your minister serving God by proxy. They did not set deacons up and leave them to do all God's work while they folded their arms. Oh, no. All Christ's soldiers went to battle. There was no drafting out one or two of them and then leaving the others to tarry at home and share the spoil. No! Everyone fought and great was the victory. Now, Beloved Christians, all of you, go at it and always at it!

O Spirit of the living God, descend on every heart and bid every one of Your soldiers take his sword in his hand and go straightway up to the victory. For when Zion's children shall feel their individual responsibility, then shall come the day of her triumph. Then shall the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground and every soldier of the living God shall be crowned a conqueror. "You that love the Lord, hate evil," by God's grace henceforth and forever. Amen.

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SOWN LIGHT

NO. 836

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”
Psalm 97:11.***

THIS appears to be the doctrine of the entire Psalm, and the verse which follows, “Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous,” is intended to be the practical inference drawn from the whole of it. God would have His people believe that better times are in store for them, and, in the faith of the coming good, He would have them, even now, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. If you will read the Psalm you will notice that every verse may give us some strengthening of our faith as to the *future* blessedness of those that fear the Lord.

The first verse declares that “the Lord reigns.” Shall so righteous a One sit upon the Throne of God and shall not those that fear Him have their reward? If He is King, will He suffer His loyal subjects to endure damage? Will He not ultimately come to their rescue? The second verse tells us that “clouds and darkness are round about Him,” and this explains why, for the present, the upright in heart may seem to be forgotten. God’s dispensations are not always clear. It is His to conceal a thing. He wraps Himself about in mystery, for the brightness of His Glory is dark with excessive light. If His way is unsearchable and His design deep beyond human understanding, we need not be surprised if we find it so in the dispensations of His Providence towards His people.

But still, as the second verse continues, “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne,” we may be certain, therefore, that He will not be unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love—and that in dealing out judgment, both to His saints and to the ungodly—He will neither forget to reward the first nor to condemn the second. The third verse, which describes the Glory of the Divine power as displayed in deeds of vengeance, when the enemies of God are burnt up by fire, goes to prove that He will, with equal certainty, reward His people, for He who is stern to punish, surely will not be unrighteous to forget the gracious service of His saints!

If He has promised, He will be as certain to keep His promises as He has been to fulfill His threats. He will not be true on the black side towards the undeserving, and then be false on the bright side towards those who are made meritorious through the righteousness of His dear Son. He who keeps the thunder, and by-and-by will launch it from His hands, also reserves mercy for His chosen and favor for His people. Indeed, the sixth verse declares that the very constitution of the universe proves this—that every star twinkling in its sphere proclaims the righteousness and wisdom of God and therefore, since for Him to be righteous is for His people ulti-

mately to be blessed, we conclude that “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

With no other preface than this I shall take you at once to this very singular text, dwelling first upon the remarkable metaphor here used—*sown light*. And then, enlarging upon that metaphor, taking you to see the sowing, and thirdly, to survey and measure the field. Fourthly we will take an outlook upon the harvest in the future.

I. First, then, the metaphor is a rather singular one, and yet full of poetry—LIGHT IS SOWN. We can very soon catch the idea if we follow Milton in his speaking of the morning—

***“Now morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl.”***

The sun, like a sower, scatters broadcast his beams of light upon the once dark earth. Look up at night upon the sky bespangled with stars, and it seems as though God scattered them like gold dust upon the floor of Heaven in picturesque irregularity, thereby sowing light!

Or if you need a fact which comes nearer to the sowing of light, more literally than anything which our poets have written, think of our vast beds of coal which are literally so much sown light. The sun shone upon primeval forests and the monstrous ferns grew and expanded under the quickening influence. They fell, as fall the leaves of chestnut and of oak in these autumns of our latter days—and there they lie stored deep down in the great cellars of nature for man’s use—so much sown light, I say, which springs up beneath the hand of man in harvests of flame—which flood our streets with light, and cheer our hearths with heat!

Sown light, then, is neither unpoetical nor yet altogether unliteral. There is such a thing as a matter-of-fact, and we may use the expression rightly enough, without grotesqueness of metaphor. Understand, then, that happiness, joy, gladness—symbolized by light—have been sown by God in fields that will surely yield their harvest for all those whom, by His Grace, He has made upright in heart.

Sown light signifies, first, that light has been diffused. That which is sown is *scattered*. Before sowing it was in the bag, or stored up in the granary—but the sowing scatters it along the furrows. There was happiness always in the mind of God. He is unspeakably blessed in Himself. We cannot dissociate the idea of Godhead from that of infinite delight. But all this happiness was nothing to *us*—we could not reach it. God might have been infinitely blessed—but we might have been shut up in Hell, gnawing our iron bonds in the desperation of unutterable agony. But in due time, according to the eternal purpose, God sowed happiness for His people.

He took it, as it were, out of Himself, and cast it broadcast in the fields of His eternal purposes. And in the decrees of His Divine Providence, that there might be a harvest, not for Himself—for He was happy enough—but for all those whom He gave to Christ, who are made righteous in His righteousness, and upright through His Spirit. Thank God, you who love Jesus and are resting upon His Atonement, that God’s happiness is not kept to Himself, but is diffused for you and the whole company of His elect! And that the pleasures which are at God’s right hand forevermore

are not kept within their secret springs, but made to flow like a river—that you with all the blood-bought may drink to the full.

Seed that is sown is not in hand. After the farmer has scattered his wheat he cannot say, “Here it is.” It is out of sight. It is gone from him. You may walk over the fields for the next few weeks and see no trace of it. And fools might say, “Ah, now so much wheat is gone from him! He is so much the poorer—he has it not.” So the gladness which belongs to the righteous is not to be regarded as a thing of the *present*. Their great store of pleasure is yet to come—it is light that is sown, not light that now gleams upon their eyes! It is a gladness that has been buried beneath the clods for a special purpose—not a gladness which is now spread upon the table as bread that has been baked in the oven.

The Believer’s greatest happiness is not like bread ready for food—it is seed buried by the Sower. Brethren, let us remember that this world is not our rest—

**“We look for a city that hands have not piled,
We seek for a country by sin undefiled.”**

To look for happiness here were to seek for the living among the dead! Christ is not here, for He has risen, and our joy is not here, for our joy has risen with Him! Seed sown, then, is not within sight. And the great bulk of the Christian’s happiness is not a thing of present enjoyment. It is not what he can see with the *eyes*, and hear with the *ears*, and touch with the *hands*. It is a matter of faith. It is not to be feasted on today, but for a purpose it is withheld until Patience has had her perfect work and seen her joy blossom and bud, and open and ripen under the smile of the Lord her God.

As seed sown is not visible, so it is not expected that it shall be seen or enjoyed tomorrow. “The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth.” Only little children put their seeds into the ground and then turn up the dirt to discover whether the seeds are growing in the morning. It is said of the northern nations, near the pole, and said truthfully, that they sowed their barley in the morning and reap it at night because the sun goes not down for four mouths at a time! But in sober truth we must not expect to have the rewards of Divine Grace given to us immediately as we believe.

This is the time for running—not for tarrying to gaze upon the prize. This is the hour for the battle—not yet may we rest on our laurels. There must be a trial of our patience and our faith. God delights that His servants should be put through many exercises and ordeals in order that the praise of the glory of His Grace may be manifest in them and through them to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Wait, then, Christian. Be content to wait. The Bridegroom comes quickly! Rest assured of that—and if you think He lingers, ask for greater patience that you may patiently work on, continuing steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Expect not your full reward of joy tomorrow. Your lot is on the other side of Jordan. The bells of your wedding day shall ring out in another world, and your coronation will be received in the ivory palaces upon which the sun has never shone. You are espoused to a Husband who is

not here—you look for a kingdom far above these changeful skies! Have patience, then, till the great hour shall come and the King shall descend to take His own.

But while seed sown is not in sight, and is not expected to be seen tomorrow, yet it is not lost. No one but a person without sense would say that the farmer has lost so much of his capital when he has cast it in the form of seed-corn into the furrows. No, Sir, he reckons that he has *gained* when he has sown, for the seed in the granary was worth so much, but that in the furrow is worth so much *more* on account of the labor expended in the sowing. The farmer counts it gain to have sown his corn. He has transferred his treasure from one bank into another. He does not reckon that any of it has been lost.

So with the happiness of a Christian. We may today seem less happy than the gay worldling who flaunts himself in the sunlight of human approbation, but it is not a loss to renounce such inferior joys. The postponement of our joys—our waiting, our letting joy lay by at interest, our tarrying for a moment that our position may be the richer—when we come into our estate, is no loss! Joy self-denied is not lost. Lost, my Brothers and Sisters? Lost, the happiness of a single hour in which we have wept for sin! Lost, the happiness of a single moment in which we have suffered affliction for Christ's sake through persecution and slander!

No, verily, it is put to our account and the record of it remains in the eternal archives against the day when the Judge of all the earth shall measure out the portions of His people. Corn sown is not lost, but is actually still in possession. If a farmer had to sell his field, he would, of course, ask much more for that in which the seed was sown than for one which was remaining fallow—because he counts that seed sown is still his own property. He cannot see it, but he knows it is there among those crumbling clods. He reckons that sown wheat, and puts it down in every inventory of his property. That seed which is under the soil is as certainly his as that which remains in the stack, or bound up in the sacks—and so you may reckon the joys of the hereafter as your own, and you ought so to reckon them—they are the best part of your estate!

They are yours, though you do not enjoy them. Yours today the seraph's wing and the angel's harp! Yours today the cherubic song and the bliss of the immortals! The Presence of the Lord, and the vision of His face! Come, count upon the resurrection, it is yours! Upon the glory that follows it, it is yours! Upon the millennium with all its splendor, it is yours! Upon eternity with its unutterable joys—all these things are yours, and you are Christ's—and Christ is God's! You cannot see the heavenly light. You expect not to see it as yet, but, so far from being lost, it is yours this very day and you only need, by faith, to write it down upon the tablets of hope! Rejoice today that you are rich in infinite possessions!

Sown seed is in the custody of God. Jehovah is the farmer's banker. Who can take care of those bags of wheat which have been thrown out from the hand during the last few weeks? Who, indeed, but the Covenant God who has said, "While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease"? There may come the rotting under

the clods, the worm, the bird, the mildew, the blast—there may come the long drought or the too plenteous moisture—but the farmer has scarcely a hand in the future destiny of his wheat and barley—the crop remains with God.

You merchants may fancy you can do without the Lord, but the man who has to till the soil is obliged to feel, if he has any sense at all, his entire dependence upon the God of the rain clouds and the Lord of the sun. So, Beloved, here is our comfort! The light that is sown for the righteous is in the custody of *God*. Our future happiness and our eternal bliss are kept by the great Guardian of Israel who does neither slumber nor sleep! Be not afraid, therefore, that you shall lose your Heaven, for Christ keeps it for you! He has gone to take possession of it in your name, as your Representative, and He will not suffer any to rob you of your entailed heritage!

He will come a second time to take you to Himself to enjoy the portion which He has prepared for you. Oh, blessed fact, that the joys of the hereafter are in such keeping! Brethren, we have not to fight to maintain our rights in the eternal land! We have not to dispute in courts of law in order to maintain our claim to the everlasting inheritance. He is at the Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified, and He takes care that all shall be safe and well for the people of His eternal choice!

Light is sown for the righteous—that is to say it is put into the custody of Heaven, where it will be infallibly safe! A thing that is sown is not only put into God's custody, but it is put there with a *purpose*—that it may come back to us greatly multiplied. The Believer gives up in this life his self-seeking. He suffers some degree of self-denial. He yields up his own boasts to trust in Christ's righteousness. And he thereby makes a good bargain! What if he should be made poor by being honest, or if he should have to suffer through following Christ? The return, the reward, the recompense—these are so exceedingly abundant that the present light affliction is not worthy to be compared with it! We suffer for a *moment* that we may reign *forever*! We stoop for a second that we may be lifted up world without end! We shall get back the seed-corn multiplied 10,000s times 10,1000s, and we shall bless and magnify forever and ever the glorious Sower who sowed such a harvest for us!

The drift, the whole drift and meaning of this sown light is just this—that the righteous have their best things yet to come! God has begun very graciously with some of us. Indeed, so well that our loudest music falls flat compared with the praise which He deserves. And you are afraid, sometimes, that God will be worse in the future than He has been in the past? O think not so harshly of Him! You know what kind of feast the great Master makes! He does not bring forth His best wine first and then afterwards brings forth the worst. Oh, no! He puts upon His table the worst, if so I may say, first—good as that is—and then we may say of Him afterwards, “You have kept the best wine until now.”

The summers of our God do not begin with fervent heat and end with cold. God is not one who flatters us at the first to deal sternly with us at the last. We shall go from strength to strength, from good to something better, and until life's happiness culminates in Heaven's, we shall see

more and more of the loving kindness of the Lord. Our best is yet to come, and the mercy that is to come will be always coming, until life's end!

There is a story told of Rowland Hill which I have no doubt is true because it is so characteristic of the man's eccentricity and generosity. Some one or other had given him 100 pounds to send to an extremely poor minister, but, thinking it was too much to send him all at once, he sent him five pounds in a letter with simply these words inside the envelope, "More to follow." In a few days' time, the good man had another letter by the post, and letters by the post were rarities in those days. When he opened it there was five pounds again, with just these words, "And more to follow." A day or two after, there came another, and still the same words, "And more to follow." And so it continued 20 times, the good man being more and more astounded at these letters coming thus by post with always the sentence, "And more to follow."

Now, every blessing that comes from God is sent in just such an envelope, with the same message, "And more to follow." "I forgive you your sins, but there's more to follow." "I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow." "I adopt you into My family, but there's more to follow." "I educate you for Heaven, but there's more to follow." "I have helped you even to old age, but there's still more to follow." "I will bring you to the brink of Jordan, and bid you sit down and sing on its black banks—on the banks of the black stream—but there's more to follow. In the midst of that river, as you are passing into the world of spirits, My mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come there shall still be more to follow."

Light is still sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

II. Secondly, having opened the metaphor of sown light, let us now speak of the SOWING itself. When were the happiness and security of the righteous sown for them? Answer—there are three great Sowers, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit—and all these have sown light for the chosen people. First, the Father. In long ages past, or ever the world was, it was in the Eternal mind to ordain unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise. In His august mind it was determined that although His loved ones should fall in Adam, they should be raised in Christ. That they should be chosen over and above all their fellows, and in spite of their sins should be loved with an everlasting love, should be kept in time, should be glorified in eternity!

Now all those great decrees of God, of which He has revealed some inklings in His Word, were so much sowing of light for the righteous—so much provision of gladness in the future for the upright in heart! Yes, I venture to say that there was not a decree of God which in some way or other did not promote the happiness of His people—not a single Covenant provision, not a single purpose of eternal wisdom—but was intended and adapted to bring joy and peace to them! As all the rivers run into the sea, so all the purposes of God worked together for this great central purpose of His—that He might have an elect people in whom His name should be glorified.

Think now for a moment, Beloved, of the thoughts of God to you. Long, I say, before the sun began to shine, what thoughts of love were in the bosom of the Father! Trace up the mercies of the present to those grand projects of the past, and praise and magnify the name of God that such unworthy sinners as we are should be the objects of such infinite conceptions! When the Covenant, at length, was formed between the Father, the Son, and the blessed Spirit—when the decree began to take shape and to be revealed—when in the volume of the Book, Covenant mercies were written down for us, all the tenure of that Covenant—every line, and jot and tittle was so much sowing of light for the righteous!

Throughout the whole of that mysterious transaction in the cabinet chamber of eternity, when the Father pledged the Son, and the Son pledged the Father, and they entered into Covenant engagements, One with the Other, in their mysterious wisdom, every part of those stipulations, every grain of those engagements was made for a sowing of light for the righteous! And so, Beloved, when time had come when man had fallen, the first promise that was ever spoken sowed light for the righteous! When Jesus Christ was given of the Father His unspeakable gift, indeed, it was a sowing time of light for the saints, for in Him was light, and the light was the life of men!

When the Father begets again unto a lively hope His people by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When He adopts them into His family and calls them His sons and daughters. When He receives the wanderers into His bosom and feasts them at the table of His love, then, in all that, light is being sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart! Yes, and in the steering of the courses of the stars. In the ruling of the winds and tempests. In the government of nations—even in their crash, and in their fall, in the changes of events, and in all that comes from the right hand of the eternal God—light is always being sown by the great Father for the righteous whom He loves!

A second great Sower was God the Son. He sowed happiness for His people when He joined with the Father in Covenant and promised to be the Substitute for His saints. But the actual sowing took place when He came on earth and sowed Himself in death's dark sepulcher for us. Well did He Himself say, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit." He dropped Himself like a priceless seed-corn into the tomb—and what fruit He has brought forth let Heaven and all the blood-washed company declare! The flower that springs from His root is immortality and life!

Jesus Christ has brought all manner of heavenly things unto His saints and made them rich to all the intents of bliss by the sowing of Himself as the life of His people. Nor must you think that He served us alone, and promoted our happiness only by His stripes and wounds, and bloody sweat and death. No, Beloved, when He rose from the dead, the fact of His Resurrection was a preparing and storing up of future blessedness for His redeemed. When He ascended up on high, leading our captivity captive, did He not then scatter gladness for us? And when He received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, did He not accomplish a boundless sow-

ing of light for the elect people?! At this moment, standing as He does, the High Priest of our profession, pleading before the Majesty of Heaven, what are those pleadings but a sowing of happiness for us—a laying up of bliss which we possess today in measure and shall enjoy hereafter without measure in His Presence before the Throne?

Beloved, let me remind you that in the government which Christ exercises as Mediator, even as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel, so does the Lord Jesus govern the world for the sake of His people. In everything that He does He has a design towards His elect ones. He may pause and wait with much longsuffering, bearing long with the ungodly, but in that delaying there is a sowing of light for the elect! Every hour of delay shall have its recompense. And when He comes—when the clouds of Heaven shall make Him a chariot and the doors of eternity shall be opened that He may go forth in all the pomp of His Glory to judge the earth—then in that day light shall still be sown! And forever and ever while Jesus Christ lives the friend and patron of His chosen, He shall forever be preparing fresh joy for them that love Him—such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Once more, the Holy Spirit is a third great Sower, sowing in another sense, sowing in a sense that comes nearer home to our experience. Light is sown for the righteous by the Holy Spirit. In the hour when He brought the Law home with its terrors, and laid us, broken and mangled at the feet of Moses, He was sowing light for us. Out humbling was the preface to our exultation. And we have already proved it so. In that moment when we were subdued, humbled, made to loathe our own righteousness, trampled into the very mire under a sense of weakness and death, He was sowing light for us.

We did not know it—we thought that our destruction was near at hand—but oh, those precious drops of penitent tears! Those blessed heartaches—what if I had said those *priceless* broken bones?—out of them has come, through Jesus Christ, our present joy and peace! It needed that we should be weaned from self. It was necessary that we should make the terrible discovery of our soul's depravity. And as we passed through all that darkness and gloom of heart, the Holy Spirit was sowing for us our future perfection and glory at the right hand of Christ! Today that Blessed Spirit continues His sowing in us. Every gracious thought! Every stroke from the whip of affliction when sanctified! Every down-casting of our proud looks! Every discovery of our utter insignificance, worthlessness, and death—everything in us that harrows us, cuts us to the quick and wounds us, but yet brings us to the Good Physician that He may exercise His healing art—all these are sowing for us a blessed harvest of light for which we must wait a little while.

Be thankful, Brothers and Sisters, for painful inward experiences. When they are most severe they are often most beneficial. Be grateful to God that thus, by His Spirit, He is making you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and in one word is sowing gladness for the upright in heart!

Thus I have, as well as I could, shown you the Sowers.

III. Now I shall occupy a few minutes by inviting you TO GO TO THE FIELD. God has sown happiness for His saints, but you must remember it is only sown. You are not to expect to see it grown up while you live this side of the moon. Now where are the fields that we may well say are sown by God's Grace with happiness for us? Here is one field—the field of His Word. Ah, you may almost see the happiness here. We say the pearl is hidden in this field, but really it gleams upon the very surface!

Every promise of God has a secret meaning beyond what we as yet have learned, and that hidden sense is full of happiness for the children of God. Every page here is intended to be for their comfort, for their lasting good—either in the form of instruction, rebuke, or edification. The whole Book, as we pass from field to field, and, as it were, climb over one stile and another, lies before us as so many broad and fertile acres—all sown with secret light for Believers.

So it is with Providence. Every event which can occur is sown with light for the faithful. It does not appear so—far rather the fields just now are very unpleasant to look upon. The water stands deep in those broad furrows. You cannot imagine there will ever be a harvest in a land so flooded with trouble, but wait awhile. Providence may look very dark today, but it is full of light—latent light—light which must flash forth as the noonday for brightness. All circumstances are teeming with benefit to you if you are in Christ. Ships with black hulls are bringing you bright gold. Ravens shall bring you meat, and even devils shall be slaves to your service.

There is not a dying child or an ailing wife. There is not a dishonored bill. There is not a wrecked vessel. There is not a burnt house. There is not a single diseased bullock but what you shall see at the last, and perhaps before then, to have been full of real blessing for you. There is not only mercy in God's dealings with His people in the gross, but in the *detail*. All the Providence of God, far reaching as it is—and extending from our cradle to our tomb—is full of the Divine intent that His children shall be blessed, and blessed they shall be!

You have sometimes read, I daresay, with wonder, that instance of Balaam trying to curse the people of God. He offered his seven bullocks and his seven rams, and went first to one hill and then to another, to look at them from different quarters that he might be able to say a word against them. But every time that mouth of his was compelled to utter a *blessing*. And it is so with the great enemy of our souls. Sometimes we are tried with poverty—then he tries to curse us with envy. Then we are tried with wealth—and he would curse us with pride. But from whatever quarter of the compass he may endeavor to bring an imprecation upon God's people, the only result shall be their greater blessing, for “God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” Beloved, the field of the Word and the field of Providence are both sown with light.

There is one little field called, “God's Acre,” which to some here present appears to be sown with much darkness, but is really sown with light—that sleeping place, the cemetery—where your loved ones lie beneath the

sod. Yes, but they shall rise again, and so light is sown for you, even in the moldering bones of your beloved children and friends. You would not have it otherwise, would you? Would you lose that seed? Imagine, for a moment, that it should never come up again from the sepulcher? Would not that grieve you beyond measure? It is your comfort to feel that these dry bones shall live, and all the band of those you loved so dearly who have gone from you for awhile, are not lost, but gone on ahead of you.

“Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” And what a happy meeting! What joyous greetings, what blessed reunions, when they meet to part no more! In that, “God’s Acre,” then, in the many burials we have attended, light is sown for the righteous!

Beloved, light is sown for the righteous, even upon earth. I mean there is a glory promised to the Church of God even upon this earthly globe. Time shall speed its flight and the day shall come of the Master’s ultimate triumph. The millennial age is certainly foretold, and faithfully covenanted by the promise of God. Then the martyr’s blood shall be rewarded. Then the ashes of the saints shall prove to have been good seed-corn scattered to the winds, but vital in every atom. The day is coming when the monarchs of the earth shall yield their thrones to Jesus, and the gods that now do reign over mankind shall be cast away as ignoble things to the moles and to the bats! Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Glory of their Father.

What will be the bliss of a faithful servant of God at his Master’s coming? It is not mine to give you fancy pictures, but to remind you of those words of the Master that if we have been faithful in few things, He will make us ruler over many things. We shall be on earth kings and priests unto our God, and shall reign with Him. In the very land of persecution, rebuke, slander, and of scorn, the righteous shall put on their crowns and shall walk in white with their Lord, for they are worthy! Light is sown for the righteous.

But I must ask you now to look beyond your cemeteries, and to look beyond this poor narrow world. What is this earth but a mere speck? Look into eternity! Can your minds conceive it? Eternity! Duration without boundary! The whole of that boundless region is sown with light for you! Think of a prairie in America, a sea of grass. Think of it all plowed and tilled, and sown with wheat, and all yours! How rich would you be? But what are the prairies compared with the plains of Heaven? And what the finest corn compared with Heaven’s light? All far away through all the ages of ages—when this world has been consumed with fervent heat, when sun and moon have passed away like lamps blown out because the night is over—there shall still be an up-springing of never-ending blessedness for you!

Eternity is sown with light for you. The Godhead shall be yours with all its infinity ministering to your delights. The Lord Himself shall be your portion! The God of Israel shall be your endless heritage! Brothers and Sisters, what more can I say? We cannot possibly measure the great fields

that are sown for us! So let us thank God and take courage, and go on our way believing that we have fields already sown everywhere, and we must wait awhile before we shall reap the harvest.

IV. The last head is the FUTURE, but it shall occupy only a second or two, as I must close with a practical application. The future. That is always in the farmer's eye when the teams go out to plow, and when the sower's baskets are filled with corn. He thinks of next July or August, and the "Harvest Home," and the going to market with the yellow grain. So ought we always to have our eyes upon the future, having respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Today is all sowing, but we do not know how soon the reaping will begin. "As the Lord lives," said one, "there is but a step between you and death." And it may be only a step to any of us, for the Lord may descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God—and may at once begin to reap. But what a reaping! O my Soul, what an eternal satisfaction to you to be forever with the Lord! One glimpse of His dear face on earth has ravished you, but what must it be forever without a veil between to gaze into that Beloved Countenance, and to feel His love shed abroad in your heart, and your heart plunged as into a sea of that love ineffable?

Beloved, it is but a mere film of time that divides us from our expected portion. Those of us who are still young and in good health should remember, and remember with great satisfaction, that if we are spared for 40 years, yet they are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. And while you who are getting gray and have reached your threescore years and ten, you may be glad that with you it can be but a few more revolving moons, the passing away of a few more Sabbaths, and you shall be forever with the Lord!

Come, come, murmur not! If the inn is not so comfortable as flesh desires, you are not to tarry long in it, you are on your journey home, and the cry is, "Up and away!" What if the way is rough? Your face is turned *Zionward!* The road cannot be long—so smooth it with hope and cheer it with song! You are not like those unhappy creatures, some of whom are present here, whose life has been a sowing of *darkness*. They have leagues of thistles to reap—acres upon acres of briars and thorns of which they will have to make their bed forever. They have been sowing the wind, and they will have to reap the whirlwind which will carry their guilty souls forever in its dreadful tornadoes.

O you who have never had light sown for you because you have never sought mercy through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has never renewed your hearts and made you righteous, think of what your fate will be! You will be like the farmer who sowed not in the seed-time and therefore reaps not in the time of harvest. Naked, poor, miserable, destitute and forsaken, you will beg in harvest—but you shall have nothing. You will ask God, *then*, to have mercy upon you, but He will refuse you. You shall clamor for the benefits of His Divine Grace, but they shall be denied you, for He will not hear you when once life is over. If we hear Him not to-

day, neither will He hear us tomorrow. O for Divine Grace to have a seed-sowing here that we may have a reaping forever and ever!

I shall close by observing that the doctrine of our text ought to be very, very comforting to all of us who are in Christ. Sufferer, your pains are sharp—bear them manfully and repine not, for there is light springing up for you. “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” Poor man, working hard for a little, with many needs and sufferings, light is sown for you! You shall soon dwell in the City of the many mansions! You shall walk the golden streets of the pearly-gated City where poverty is banished forever! “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.”

Slandered one, whose name is cast out as evil for Christ’s sake—bear it with rejoicing—light is sown for you! Amidst the martyrs and the throng of the chosen who suffered for righteousness’ sake, you shall reap the sheaves of Glory—reap them world without end! And you who have to suffer more than slander, who lose friend and home for Christ’s sake—rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven—for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you—those ancient witnesses have reaped the light and *are* reaping it, and even so shall you when worlds shall pass away!

The Lord give Divine Grace us to forget the present—to rejoice in the future—and to count the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt! Amen and amen!

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THE NEW SONG

NO. 496

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 1862,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O sing unto the Lord a new song. For He has done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.”
Psalm 98:1.***

THERE must be new songs on new occasions of triumph. It would have been absurd for Miriam with her timbrel to conduct the music of the daughters of Israel to some old sonnet that they had learned in Egypt. No, an old song could not have spoken out the feelings of that generation, much less could it have served to utter a voice, the jubilant notes of which distant posterity should echo. They must have a new song while they cry the one unto the other, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

The like had never been known before, but from now on, father to son must show forth its fame in after times. When Deborah and Barak had routed the hosts of Sisera, they did not borrow Miriam’s song. They had a new Psalm for the new event. They said, “Awake, awake, Deborah. Awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.” In after years, at the building of the Temple, or on the solemn feast days, it was ever the custom of the inspired poets of the age to cry, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord a new song.”

Thus the grateful notes of praise have gathered volume and augmented their compass as the ages have rolled onwards. And these, as it were, only the rehearsals for a grand oratorio! What then shall be the marvelous novelty, and the matchless glory of that song which shall be sung at the last upon Mount Zion, when ten thousand times ten thousand of the warriors of God shall surround Jesus the Conqueror? When we shall hear a voice from Heaven as the voice of many waters, and like great thunders, when shall be heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps?

What shall be, I say, the strange novelty of that new song which they shall sing before the Truth of God, when the four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures shall fall before God upon their faces and worship Him forever and ever? Would that our ears could anticipate that tremendous burst of, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.”

I want to carry your minds, tonight, if I can, for a little season to that last and grandest song—at the decisive victory—which shall proclaim the

name and fame of Jehovah in all His mighty attributes, and sing of all His majestic deeds—when the battle shall be over forever! When the banner shall be furled and the sword shall be sheathed. When the last foe shall be destroyed, and placed beneath the feet of the Almighty Victor. “His right hand, and His holy arm have Him the victory.” My text seems, however suitable it may be to other occasions, to be most fitting to that last and most splendid triumph.

Three things there are in it—*victory transcendent. Deity conspicuous. Holiness glorified.*

I. First in our text we perceive very clearly VICTORY TRANSCENDENT. What shall we say of that victory? The shouts thereof already greet our ears, and the anthem that celebrates it is already prepared! When all the principalities and powers of this world shall be laid low, the pride of earth shall burst like a bubble, and the great globe itself shall dissolve. And the things that are seen shall be folded up like a vesture, worn out and crumbled with decay—that victory will be transcendent. There shall be none comparable to it. It shall stand matchless and unrivalled in all the wars of God, of angels, or men.

Well, we must say of that victory, *there shall be none to dispute the claim of God the Most High.* The most splendid victories of one army have frequently been claimed by the opposite partisans. If you stand beneath the triumphal arch in Paris, you will see the names of some battles which you simple-minded Englishmen always thought had been won by British soldiers. But you discover that our history was all a mistake, and that the Frenchmen really retired victorious from the plain.

I suppose in America it is always difficult to ascertain who has been the conqueror. And where there are no generals, and the whole affair seems to be which shall kill the most and wade through the most blood, there naturally must be difficulty in ascertaining who has won the day. But in this case there shall be no dispute whatever. The dragon’s head shall be so completely broken that he can do nothing but bite his iron bonds and growl out his confession that God is stronger than he is.

The hosts of Hell shall have been so utterly routed that the deep groans of dismay, and shrieks of terror shall be the confession that Omnipotence rules their terrible doom. As for Death, it is when he shall see his captives all loosed before his eyes. As for the grave, the key shall be rent from her grip, and all her treasures plucked from her grasp—death and the grave shall both acknowledge that their victory is gone forever! Christ has been the conqueror, the Son of God who in our nature has already taken away the sting.

There may be today some who write their names down as Atheists. There may be others who openly avow that they are the adversaries of God. And throughout the universe there are never wanting those who are

hopeful that the issue will turn out as they wish—they are hopeful that wrong will master right—that evil shall drive out good, and darkness extinguish light. But there shall not be one such being left on that great day of victory. It shall be acknowledged even by the lips of despair that the Lord God, “with His own right hand, and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory.”

Blazoned across the sky in lightning such as the eye of terror has never beheld before—thundered out with trumpet louder than even that which startled the sleeping dead—every tongue in earth and Hell shall confess, because every ear has heard, that the Lord reigns and is king forever and ever.

But further, as this victory will be certainly beyond all dispute, let me remind you it will be transcendent, because *there shall be nothing that can occur to mar it*. When the last shock of the dread artillery shall have been endured by the hosts of God’s elect. When the last charge shall have driven the foes before them as thin clouds fly before a Biscay gale. Then, as the heroes sit down to read the story of the war, they shall discover that there is nothing to mar the splendor of that glory, for it has been a victory throughout.

Of all other victories we read, at one time the balance trembled—sometimes the host on this side wavered. Perhaps for the first half day it seemed not only doubtful which would win, but it appeared as though the adversary at length defeated would certainly be the conqueror. But, Beloved, when we shall read history in the light of Heaven, we shall discover that God was never conquered—that never did the ranks reel. We shall see that even the most disastrous strokes of Providence—even the most dire calamities that ever occurred to the Church—were only the march, the tramp of victories yet to come. I am certain that those things we most deplore today will even become the subjects of the most marvelous gratitude tomorrow.

We look today upon the black side of the question, and say, “Ah, here, indeed, goodness was foiled.” But when we look at the whole matter through, we shall see that every dark and bending line meets in the center of the Divine plan. And that which seemed the most incongruous and out of place with its fellow, was the most fitting and the most necessary of the whole program. Satan at the last shall not be able to put his finger upon any spot of the battlefield and say, “Here my hosts routed the troops of Emmanuel.”

Everywhere it shall be seen that, from the dawning day, when first he struck the blow at Eve, and made her sin, to the very last, when Christ shall drag him up the everlasting hills, led captive at His chariot wheels—from the first to the last—the Lord’s “right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.”

Remember, too, that this *is a victory all along the line*. The general's cautious eye marks that there the left wing has driven the adversary back. But for that right wing, bring up the reserves, let not the ranks be broken. Stern liners, let your chivalry be seen yonder for that wing reels. Generally in the battle some part must fail, while in this portion, or the other, there shall be success. Ah, but at the last when Christ shall stand and bare His brow in Heaven's sunlight, and all His angels shall be with Him, it shall be seen that they were *everywhere* triumphant.

The blood on Madagascar's rocks shall not defeat the march of God's armies. Saints may be burned, may be sawn in sunder, may wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, but they shall be victorious everywhere. Spain may shut her gates against the Gospel, and the inquisition may make that place its stronghold, but as sure as there is a God in Heaven, Christ shall be conqueror there. Tyrants may pass edicts to exterminate Christians, conclaves may make decrees to drive out the religion of Jesus—but in every place, in every land, where ever foot of man has trod this green earth—shall there be victory!

From the north to the south, from the east to the west, everywhere shall be triumph—China and Japan, Brazil and Chili, the islands of the south, the frozen regions of the north. Even Africa with her sable sons, the dwellers in the wilderness, shall bow before Him and lick the dust at His feet. There shall be victory all along the line. Not from one place merely, but from all, shall be heard the tune—“His own right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.”

And it shall be *a victory sustained by the news of the morrow*. Not so among the embattled hosts of men. How hard to brook the morrow! Then the general's brow is dark, and his eye is heavy, for the list of the dead and wounded is brought in for inspection. “Another victory like this,” says one, “and I am defeated forever. It is dearly purchased,” he says, “with the blood of these mothers' sons. My comrades and companions in arms must bite the ground to let the country live.” But in that last great battle of God the muster roll shall be found without one missing in it!

As they call their names they shall all answer. There shall not be one left dead upon the field. “How so? How so?” says Unbelief. “Are they not dead and buried now? Have not their bodies lain to bleach upon the side of the Alps? Have they not been burned in the fire, and scattered as ashes to the four winds? Do not the saints sleep today in our cemeteries, and in our graveyards, and does not the deep engulf full many a body that was a temple of the Holy Spirit?”

I answer, yes, but they shall come again. Refrain your eyes from weeping, O daughter of Jerusalem! Refrain your heart from sorrow, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. We that are alive and remain, shall not have the preference beyond them that sleep. “For the

trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. And we shall be changed. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." "His right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

And sometimes, on the morrow, the general feels the glory of the victory is marred, for there are many prisoners. They are not dead, their corpses lie not on the field, but they have been taken off by the opposite parties and they are a prey. And who knows what may become of them? What dungeons may contain them? To what tortures they may be put? But in this last victory of God, *there shall be no prisoners*, no prisoners left in the hand of His enemy. I know there are some who say that we may be children of God, and yet fall from Grace and perish. My Brothers and Sisters, it is a foul slander upon the faithfulness and power of the Redeemer. I know that all He undertakes to save, He will save. And He will bring the troops off from the battlefield, every brow crowned with laurel, not one slain, not one a prisoner.

The gates of Hell shall never enclose the ransomed of the Lord. Among the groans of the lost there shall never be heard a sigh from one that was once a saint before God. There are no prisoners. March out your prisoners, Prince of Hell! Bring forth, if you can, one soul that Jesus bought with blood. One soul that the Spirit quickened, one soul that the Eternal Father gave to the hands of the Great Surety to keep forever—bring him Forth! Ah, you have none. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" Thus says the Lord, the God of Hosts, "My ransomed shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Then shall it be said, "His right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

But, Beloved, after the battle is over, the conqueror wipes his brow and says, "Ah, but the scattered hosts may rally. And they who were driven today like chaff before the wind, may rise again. And then long may be the campaign, and fierce the struggle before we have stamped out the sparks of war. Sleep on your arms," says he, "you may be attacked tomorrow. Be ready for the cry of 'boot and saddle,' for there may be a charge again before many hours are spent." But not so in this case—the victory is crushing, total, final. It is once forever with evil, with darkness, with Hell. They shall never again be able to tempt the righteous, or to cast them down, or to pale their cheeks with fear.

They shall never be able again to win the world to their dominion. They are routed, routed, routed forever. Hosts of evil, it is not your heel that is bruised—your head is broken. The Lord has used His people as His battleaxe and His weapons of war. And He has cleft you and left you without might or strength forever and forever. So, dear Friends, this is our joy and

comfort—that once the battle is over—the whole campaign is ended. There shall be no further onslaughts. We rest eternally—we triumph everlastingly. No more fights to risk, no more conflicts in which to tug and strive. This shall be the note that shall ring throughout the arches of eternity—“The Lord’s right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory forever and forever.”

I think these are two good reasons why I should say this victory is transcendent—there is none to dispute it, and there is nothing to mar it. But yet further we will venture to enlarge upon this victory by showing its particulars. The ultimate triumph and victory of God in all His purposes will lie in several things. How glorious the fact that *all whom He ordained to save are saved!* Calling was the first work which He worked in them. They were called, everyone of them, but like the rest of mankind they would not come. Their wills were so desperate that they resisted long. The minister preached at them. Their mother wept over them. Their father entreated them.

Providence came and hewed them. Afflictions broke them in pieces, and they were unsaved still. But not in one case where God ordains to call has the calling failed. In every case where His electing love has set its purpose, the will is turned round, the affections yield, the judgment gives way, the man is subdued. He is called, he is quickened. There may be some such here tonight, who think, “Well, I never would be saved upon such terms as acknowledging the Sovereign Grace of God, even if He wills to do it.” Your will must give way before the crushing force of the will of God. He has mysterious ways of finding an entrance into the most reluctant heart and taking up His throne there forever.

How clearly is this victory seen in *the subjugation of the lusts and passions of the called sinner!* He may have been a drunkard, he thought he could not give it up, but the rod of iron “dashes in pieces the potter’s vessel.” He may have loved the pleasures of the flesh, they were as dear to him as his right eye, but Divine Grace overcame the most darling lust, and threw to the earth the most pampered sin.

Not less conspicuously will it appear in the perseverance of every saint. Not a stone will have been left unturned by the adversary to prevent the saints holding on. The caverns of Hell will be emptied against God’s redeemed. Satan and his faithful followers will do their utmost to cast them down to destruction, but they shall hold on their way. They shall wax stronger and stronger, until at last the gates of Heaven shall be fast closed. And because there are no more to enter, it shall be proclaimed, while devils bite their iron bands in shame, that not a soul who was written in the Book of Life was lost.

Not one whom Jesus bought with blood has been unredeemed. Not one quickened by Divine Grace suffered to die. Not one who truly began the

heavenly race turned aside from it. Not one concerning whom it was said, "These are Mine, and in the day when I make up My jewels they shall be Mine," not one of these is lost, but all saved, saved eternally. Oh, that will be a splendid victory! What can be greater? You that know the conflict through which the child of God has to pass will bear me witness that if you get to Heaven, you will sing with all your might the conqueror's hymn!

And I think we all should do the same. I remember saying once that if ever I got to Heaven I would sing the loudest there, for I owed the most to Sovereign Grace. But when I came downstairs, one said to me, "You made a mistake, I shall sing more loudly than you, for I owe more than you do." And I found that was the general opinion, that each Brother and each Sister thought that he owed most to Divine Grace. Now, if we are all to sing loudest, what a shout of triumph there will be! And I suppose the verse in our hymn is quite true to the apprehension of each of us—

***"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."***

What a transcendent triumph! Not a few shall there be to share the triumph, but *a multitude that no man can number*. The glory shall be enhanced *by the salvation of so many*. Heaven is none of your narrow places for narrow-hearted bigots. No, Brothers and Sisters, our largest imagination never yet could grasp Heaven, but it will hold multitudes of multitudes. Nor will the praise be any the less, when we consider that there were so many of such varied clans and climes, some of all kindreds on the face of the earth, swarthy or white. There shall be found in Heaven the vilest sinner that lived. There shall be brought there the proudest rebel, and the stoutest hearted, and the most obstinate of sinners!

There shall be such in Heaven as would have made a wonder in Hell! Some, I say, who would have been such great sinners, had they been suffered to go to Hell, that their dreadful fall would even Hell itself appall, but they are in Heaven, saved by Sovereign Grace. And, O Beloved! As there are such persons, this will help to make the victory grand, that they were saved by such means, such simple means, by the simple preaching of the Gospel. Not by wisdom, not by science, not by eloquence—but by the simple telling out of the story of the Cross. How this will tend to make the triumph brighter than it could have been in any other way!

And, O Beloved, this victory will excel all others in *the routing of such foes, such cruel, such crafty, such mighty, such numerous foes*. Sin, sin, it is a name of horror—sin overthrown. Death—what glooms are concentrated in that word! Death destroyed. Satan—what craft, what cruelties, what malice linger there—Satan bound hand and foot and led captive. Such a victory over such foes! I find no words in any tongue by which I can describe its magnitude.

And oh, the results of that victory! How bright! Souls knit to Christ by such love, tongues tuned to such music, hearts burning with such fire, Heaven filled with such devout, such holy inhabitants, the ears of Deity regaled with such grateful music, Heaven filled with such myriads of happy spirits! The peaceful results, setting aside the overthrow, will be enough to make this victory more grand than all the triumphs of men or angels put together.

Say now, and gather up all your enthusiasm to say it—What a victory shall that be, when *there shall not be a single trophy in the hands of the adversary*. The victory shall be unparalleled in this, that all the success which the enemy thought he had achieved shall only tend to make his defeat the more galling and add luster to the victorious King of kings. You see sometimes, hanging up in old Churches, tattered flags that were taken from the adversary. Sometimes when the report of battle comes in, we are told the battle was won, that so many cannon and so many flags were left with the enemy.

But, O Lord God! You have not left a single trophy in the hands of Your foe. I said he had no prisoners, but he shall not even have a flag—not one truth rent in pieces, not one doctrine of Revelation hung up to rot in the shacks of Hell—not one single attribute of God that shall be trailed in the mire. Not one single truth of Christianity to be laughed at and despised by Fiends—not a trophy. There shall not a hair of your head perish, not so much as that shall Satan gain, not a bone, not a fragment of the saint, either of his body or his spirit—no trophies left.

And all this will make Hell angry, to think that God gave Satan vantage ground, let him contend with poor feeble men. But God was in man and fought with Satan—man, a poor feeble worm, fought with Satan, and, like David, he threw the stone of faith at the giant's head and destroyed him with his own weapons. God has destroyed death by the death of Christ, destroyed sin by the great Sin Bearer. Yes, He has destroyed the dragon by the Seed of a woman, who bruised his head with that very Seed whose heel the serpent once did bite. Glory be unto You, O Lord! This is Your victory. The more we muse upon it, the higher does our rapture rise, and the more prepared do our hearts grow to peal forth the words of the Psalmist, "His right hand, and his holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

II. Secondly, observe that DEITY IS CONSPICUOUS HERE. Man is not made mention of. There is no name of Moses, or of the Prophets, or of the Apostles here. I read not the names of Chrysostom and Augustine, nor of those modern fathers of the Church, such as Calvin and Zwingli—the stars are lost in the blaze of the Sun. O God! How glorious is Your right arm, and how do Your disciples, Your children, hide their heads and say, "Not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory!"

But mark, Beloved, as they are not mentioned, it is not because the mention needs to be avoided, for the more we talk of instrumentalities, or rather think about them—(I do not say the more we think *of* them, but the more we think *about* them)—the more persuaded we shall be that it only adds to God's Glory to use men—for men are such poor tools to work with. You have heard of the celebrated painter who gained renown by painting with poor brushes, when the good ones were stolen. And Quintin Matsys, who made a cover for the well without tools, when all the proper tools were taken away—he worked the ironwork with such poor implements as he could get.

So was the skill of the painter or artisan admired, in that he could produce such effects under such disadvantageous conditions. Ah, then what an artist must he be, they exclaim, concerning the one. And they look upon this piece of ironwork, and say of the other, "What? No engraving tools, no casting, how could he do it?" So when we shall come to look at men, when we look at them in the light which eternity shall reveal, we shall say of the best of them, "How can the Lord have won such victories with such poor things as these?"

You may mention the instruments, every one of them, from righteous Abel down to the last preacher of the Word—and yet it shall be true, that the victory shall speak the sole praise of the General. No doubt, dear Friends, this will be a part of the splendor of the triumph, to think that He did win by man. It was in man that Satan conquered—Adam and Eve were led astray by the crafty wiles of Satan. It is by man that death came, and by man comes the resurrection of the dead. This will be gall and wormwood in the cup of the lost, when they shall see the *Man*, Christ Jesus, the Seed of the woman, sitting at the right hand of God.

This is judgment's greatest terror, "Hide us from the Lamb." And this shall be Hell's greatest horror, "Hide us from the Lamb, let us not behold His face." But glory be unto You, most gracious God, for You have lifted man up above all the works of Your hands, and given him dominion above all creatures. You put principalities and powers beneath his feet in the Person of Christ. And all this only proves that, "His own right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

I wish I might enlarge here and speak of the conspicuous glory of God in this respect, that all the Persons of the Trinity will be glorified, the Father, the Son, the Spirit. All the attributes of God, His unsearchable greatness, and His unrivalled majesty, His Grace, His power, His Truths, His justice, His holiness, His immutability—these shall shine forth with resplendent luster. His wondrous works, and His terrible acts shall declare His praise. They shall be the theme of every tongue, and the topic of every conversation. "Men shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power."

All His decrees shall be seen in their final accomplishment, every one of them fulfilled, the counsel answering to the Providence. Of all that the Father willed, of all that the Son performed, of all that the Spirit revealed, not one thing is frustrated. How shall I gather up these things? O for the voice of a mighty angel! O for a seraph's lip of fire, to speak now of the splendor of that last day, when not only the great but the little, not only the abundance of God's Providence and the great deeps of His counsel, but even the small deeds of His loving kindness shall be made to sing forth His praise! When not only the leviathan deeds of God shall make the deep to praise the Lord, but even the little fish that move therein shall leap up to join the chorus, and everywhere *from* everything, *for* everything, there shall be heard the tune—"His right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

III. We have in our text a third thought, which we can only hint at in all this—**HOLINESS WILL BE GLORIFIED.**

Note the adjective—"His *holy* arm." When we contemplate any actions of God, you will notice that the name which cherubs utter, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is always brought out. Where Christ bears sin and overcomes it, I hear the cry of, "Holy, holy, holy," from the Cross. Where Jesus breaks the tomb and conquers death, I seem to hear the note of, "Holy, holy, holy," for it makes the day holy on which the deed was done. And when He ascends to Glory and the Father says, "Well done," we seem to hear, still, the note, "Holy, holy, holy."

In everything, from the Manger to the Cross, and from the Cross onward to the Crown, holiness becomes God's House and all God's acts forever. Is it not, dear Friends, after all, the hinge of the struggle? Is not this the point, just as you know in great battles, there is some one mountain or hill, which is the object of struggle? Not for the value of that particular hill, but because on that the battle will depend—so holiness is just the point—the rallying point between God and Satan. Here are the two war cries. The hosts of evil cry, "Sin, sin, sin," but the cry of the armies of the Lord of Hosts is this, "Holiness, holiness, holiness."

Every time we strike a blow it is "Holiness." And every time they attack us it is "Sin." Sin is the real object of their aim. When Satan attacks, it is to stab at holiness. And when we resist, it is to guard holiness, or to drive back sin. Mark this, I say—this is the point of the battle, and by that you shall be able to judge on which side you are. What is your war cry? What is your war cry? When Cromwell fought with the Soldiers of the Covenant at Dunbar, you will remember they were distinguished by their cries. On the one side, "The Covenant, the Covenant," and on the other side, "The Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Hosts."

And so tonight there is the cry on either side, "Sin and the pleasures of sin." Is that your war cry, Friend? You say "No." How is it, then, you were

at the theater the other night? You say "No." How is it, then, you frequent the tavern? You say "No." How is it, then, you have got so many illicit gains about you now? You say, "No." How is it you make appointments for deeds of sin, and perhaps tonight, or tomorrow night, intend to fulfill them? I tell you, Sirs, there are many of you whose war cry tonight is, "Sin and the pleasures of sin."

On the other hand, I trust there are not a few in this vast throng, who can say, "Oh, Sir, feebly though I speak it, yet my war cry is, 'Holiness and the Cross.'" Ah, Beloved, you are just now on the side that is laughed at—the world points at you and says, "There are your saints." Yes, here they are, Sir, what do you dare say against them? Abide your time, Man, and have your jeering out—you shall change that laugh for everlasting howling by-and-by. "There are your Methodists. There are your hypocritical Professors." What, Sir, dare you say it? The servants of the living God will know how to answer you in that day, when their King shall be revealed in the clouds of Heaven, and His glory shall be manifest—and they shall share His triumph, and all flesh shall see it—for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The world knows us not, because it knew Him not. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is." Come, we will pass that question again tonight, "What is your war cry?" There has been a good deal of wickedness these last few days in London. I love to see holy mirth. I delight to see men well feasted. I like Christmas. I wish it came six times a year. I like the generosity of those who give to the poor. Let it be extended. I would not stop a smile. God forbid me! But cannot men be happy without drunkenness? Cannot they be mirthful without blasphemy?

Is there no possibility of being happy without lasciviousness? Are there no other ways of finding true pleasure besides selling your soul to the devil? O Sirs! I say there have been thousands in this huge city who have been going about the streets and whose cry has been, "Sin and the pleasures of sin! Where is the music hall? Where is the Casino? Where is the coal hole? Where is the tavern? Where is the ballroom? Sin and the pleasures of sin." O Satan! You have many soldiers, and right brave soldiers they are! They are never afraid of your cause, nor ashamed of your name, nor of your unholy work. Yes, you are well served, O Prince of Hell! And rich will be your wages when your drudges earn the fire for which they have labored.

But I hope and trust there are some tonight who will change their war cry. You have not nailed your colors to the mast, have you? Even if you have, by God's Grace, I would pull the nails out. Are you determined to die? Will you serve the Black Prince forever, and perish with him? Jesus Emmanuel, the Captain of our salvation, bids me cry to you, "Enlist be-

neath My banner.” Believe in Him, trust in Him, and live! Oh, trust the merits of the Cross, the virtue of the blood, the tears and the dying groans. This it is to be a Christian, and ever afterwards this shall be your war cry—“Holiness, and the Cross!”

O take this, all! Fear not. The Cross with holiness will bring the mortifying of the flesh, the shame of the world, and the reproach of men. Take both, for now the battle is raging. But, O my Brothers and Sisters, another crush, and another, and another, and another, and we shall gain the top of the hill, and the shout of, “Holiness and the Cross!” shall be answered by the echoes all round the world, for everywhere holiness shall be victorious, and men shall know the Lord. Yes, and the echoes of Heaven shall answer, too, and the spirits of the sanctified shall cry, “Holiness and the Crown!”

Then we will not change one word of our war cry. And as our enemies have broken before us, and are utterly destroyed—as they melt away like the fat of rams—as unto smoke they consume away, we will sing forever, “Holiness and the Crown! Holiness and the Crown!” But that shall be only one note—this shall be the song—“His own right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.”

I would that some soul would believe in Jesus tonight, that it might share in the victory. I would that young man’s heart would be given to Christ tonight, or yours yonder. He deserves it of you—if it were only His mercy in having spared you, He deserves it. And you gray headed sinner there, does He not deserve your heart for sparing you so long? Yield, I pray you! His love meets you. Yield! His terrors threaten you. Yield! Lay down your weapons, and be forever forgiven!

May God help you to do it. May the Lord prove His sovereignty and His power tonight in the conversion of many of His chosen. And unto Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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“MARVELOUS THINGS”

NO. 3086

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“O sing unto the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things:
His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. The
LORD has made known His salvation: His righteousness
has He openly showed in the sight of the heathen.”
Psalm 98:1, 2.***

THE invitations of the Gospel are invitations to happiness. In delivering God’s message, we do not ask men to come to a funeral, but to a wedding feast! If our errand were one of sorrow, we might not marvel if men refused to listen to us. But it is one of gladness, not sadness—in fact, you might condense the Gospel message into this joyous invitation—“O come and learn how to sing unto the Lord a new song! Come and find peace, rest, joy and all else that your souls can desire. Come and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” When the coming of Christ to the earth was first announced, it was not with sad sonorous sounds of devil spirits driven from the nethermost Hell, but with the choral symphonies of holy angels who joyfully sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” And as long as the Gospel shall be preached in this world, its main message will be one of joy. The Gospel is a source of joy to those who proclaim it, for unto us who are less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given—that we should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ! [Mr. Spurgeon enlarged upon this theme in two Sermons on Ephesians 3:8. [See Sermons #745, Volume 13—THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST and #1209, Volume 20—A GRATEFUL SUMMARY OF TWENTY VOLUMES—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Gospel is also a source of joy to all who hear it aright and accept it, for its very name means “glad tidings of good things.” I feel that if I am not able to preach to you as I would, yet am I thrice happy in being permitted to preach at all. And if the style and manner of my address may not be such as I desire them to be, nor such as you will commend, yet it will matter but little, for the simplest telling out of the Gospel is of itself a most delightful thing! And if our hearts were in a right condition, we would not merely be glad to hear of Jesus over and over again, but the story of the love of our Incarnate God and of the redemption worked by Immanuel would be the sweetest music that our ears ever heard!

In the hope that our hearts may thus rejoice, I am going to talk of many things under two heads. The first is, *the marvelous things which God has done in the Person of His Son* and, secondly, *some marvelous*

things in reference to ourselves which are almost as marvelous as those that God has done.

I. First, I am to call your attention to THE MARVELOUS THINGS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. If you read it carefully, you will notice that first, there are some marvelous things that are marvelous in themselves. Secondly, some that were marvelous in the way in which they were done—“His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.” And then, thirdly, some that were marvelous as to the way in which they were made known—“The Lord has made known His salvation: His righteousness has He openly showed in the sight of the heathen.”

First, then, we will consider *the things that are marvelous in themselves*. “He has done marvelous things: His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.” You know the story. We were enslaved by sin—we were in such bondage that we were liable to be forever in chains. But our great Champion undertook our cause and entered the lists, pledged to fight for us till the end—and He has done it. It would have been a cause of great joy if I could have come here and said to you, “The Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to fight our battles for us,” but I have something much better than that to say! He has fought the fight and “His holy arm has gotten Him the victory.” It must have required more faith to believe in the Christ who was to come than to believe in the Christ who has come. It must have required no little faith to believe in Christ as victorious while He was in the midst of the struggle. For instance, when the bloody sweat was falling amidst the olive trees, or when He was hanging upon the Cross and moaning out that awful cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” But the great crisis is past! No longer does the issue of the conflict tremble in the balance—Christ has forever accomplished His warfare and our foes are all beneath His feet—

**“Love’s redeeming work is done—
Fought the fight, the battle won!”**

What foes has Christ overcome? Our main foe, our sin, both as to the guilt of it and as to the power of it. As to the guilt of it, there was a Law which we had broken and which must be satisfied. Christ has kept the positive precepts of that Law in His own perfect life and He has vindicated the honor of that Law by His sacrificial death upon the Cross. The Law, therefore, being satisfied, the strength of sin is gone and now, O Believers, the sins which you saw in the day of your conviction you shall see no more forever! As Moses triumphantly sang of the enemies of the chosen people, “the depths have covered them,” so can you say of your sins, “There is not one of them left.” Even in God’s great Book of Remembrance there is no record of sin against any Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. “By Him all that believe are justified from all things.” Try to realize this, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Let the great army of your sins pass before you in review—each one like a son of Anak, armed to the teeth for your destruction. They have gone down into the depths and the Red Sea of Christ’s blood has drowned them! And so He has gained a complete victory over all the guilt of sin! And as for the power of sin

within us—alas, we often groan concerning it, but let us groan no longer—or if we do, let us also sing!

The experience of a Christian is summed up in Paul’s utterance, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” [See Sermon #235, Volume 5—THE FAINTING WARRIOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If you take the whole quotation, I believe you have a summary of a spiritual man’s life—a daily groaning and a daily boasting—a daily humbling and a daily rejoicing—a daily consciousness of sin and a daily consciousness of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer it. We do believe, Beloved, that our sin has received its deathblow. It still lingers within us, for its death is by crucifixion and crucifixion is a lingering death. Its heart is not altogether fastened to the cross, but its hands are, so that we cannot sin as we once did. Its feet, too, are fastened, so that we cannot run in the way of transgressors as we once did—and one of these days the spear shall pierce its heart and it shall utterly die. And then, with the faultless ones before the Throne of God, we shall be unattended by depravity or corruption any longer! Therefore let us “sing unto the Lord a new song,” because His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory over sin within us—

***“His is the victor’s name,
Who fought our fight alone!
Triumphant saints no honor claim—
His conquest was His own!”***

In connection with sin came death, for death is the daughter of sin, and follows closely upon sin. Jesus has conquered death. It is not possible for Believers to die eternally, for Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” And even the character of the natural death is changed to Believers. It is not now a penal infliction, but a necessary way of elevating our nature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, for, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.” Even those who will be living at the coming of the Lord must be “changed” in order that they may be fit to enter Glory. Death, therefore, to Believers, is but a putting off of our weekday garments that we may put on our Sabbath attire—the laying aside of the travel-stained garments of earth that we may put on the pure vestments of joy forever! So we do not now fear death, for Christ has conquered it. He has ripped away the iron bars of the grave and He has left in the sepulcher His own winding-sheets and napkin that there may be suitable furniture in what was once a grim, cold, empty morgue—and He has gone up into His Glory and left Heaven’s gate wide open to all Believers! Unless He shall first come, we, too, shall descend into the grave where He went, but we also shall come up again as He did—and we shall rise complete in the perfection of our redeemed manhood. Then shall we be satisfied, when we awaken in the likeness of our Master. So let us “sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things.”—

***“Hosannah to the Prince of Light,
Who clothed Himself in clay,
Entered the iron gates of Death***

***And tore the bars away!
 Death is no more the king of dread,
 Since our Immanuel rose
 He took the tyrant’s sting away
 And spoiled our hellish foes.
 See how the Conqueror mounts aloft
 And to His Father flies,
 With scars of honor in His flesh
 And triumph in His eyes.”***

And as Christ has conquered sin and death, so has He conquered the devil and all his hosts of fallen spirits. This monster of iniquity, this monster of craft and malice has striven to hold us in perpetual bondage, but Christ met him in the wilderness and vanquished him there. And met him, as I believe, in the Garden of Gethsemane, in personal conflict, and vanquished him once and for all. And now He has led captivity captive. Inferior spirits were driven away by Christ when He was here upon earth and they fled at the bidding of the King. And now, although Satan still worries and vexes the saints of God, the Lord will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is the joyous news we have to bring to sinners—that sin, death and the devil have all been vanquished by the great Captain of our salvation! And for this let us so rejoice that we sing unto the Lord a new song—

***“He Hell in Hell laid low.
 Made sin, He sin overthrew!
 Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
 And death, by dying slew!
 Sin, Satan, death appear
 To harass and appall—
 Yet since the gracious Lord is near,
 Backward they go, and fall.”***

But, according to the text, what the Lord did is not only marvelous in itself, but *the way in which He did it was also marvelous*. Observe that He did it alone—“His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.” No one was associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the conquest which He achieved over sin, death and the devil—and nothing is more abhorrent to a believing soul than the idea of giving any particle of Glory to anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. He tread the winepress alone, so let Him alone wear the crown! Sinner, you have not to look for any secondary Savior—Christ has done it all. You need pay no reverence to saints, or martyrs, or priests—Christ has done it all, so resort to Him for all you need. Christ alone has accomplished the salvation of His people—no other hand has been raised to help Him in the fight. Look then to Jesus, only, for salvation! Trust in Him with your whole heart! Throw your weight entirely upon Him, my poor Brother or Sister, if you have not yet done so, and you shall find rest and salvation in Him!

Another marvel is that He did it all so wisely—“His right hand has gotten Him the victory.” You know that we use the word “dexterous” to signify a thing that is done well—we mean that it was done right-handedly. So Christ fought our battle with His right hand. He did it with ease, with strength and with infinite wisdom. Salvation is the very

perfection of wisdom because, in the salvation of a sinner, all the attributes of God are equally glorified. There is as much Justice as there is Mercy in the salvation of a sinner by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ—Mercy full-orbed, and Justice full-orbed also—God fulfilling His threats against sin by smiting Christ, and giving to the love of His heart full vent in saving the very chief of sinners through the death of His dear Son. The more I consider the Doctrine of Substitution, the more is my soul enamored of the matchless wisdom of God which devised this system of salvation! As for a hazy atonement which atones for everybody in general and for nobody in particular—an atonement made equally for Judas and for John—I care nothing for it. But a literal, substitutionary Sacrifice—Christ vicariously bearing the wrath of God on my behalf—this calms my conscience with regard to the righteous demands of the Law of God and satisfies the instincts of my nature which declare that, as God is just, He must exact the penalty of my guilt! Dear Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ suffering, bleeding, dying, has gotten us the victory! The hand that was pierced by the nails has conquered sin! The hand that was fastened to the wood has fastened up the accusation that was written against us! The hand that bled has brought salvation to us, so that we are Christ's forever! 'Twas infinite wisdom which shone in the conquest of sin, and death, and the devil.

But it was also holiness—“His holy arm has gotten Him the victory.” The Psalmist seems, as he advances in his Psalms, to fall more and more in love with the matchless holiness of God—and the holiness of the victory of Christ is a great point in its favor. There is never a sinner so saved as to make God even seem to wink at sin. Since the creation of this world, there was never an act of mercy performed by God that was not in perfect harmony with the most severe justice. God, though He has loved and saved unholy men, has never stained His holy hands in the act of saving them. He still remains the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, though He is still full of pity and compassion, and passes by transgression, iniquity and sin, and presses prodigal children to His heart. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the answer to the great question, “How can God be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes? How can He be perfectly holy and yet, at the same time, receive into His love and adopt into His family those who are unrighteous and unholy?” O Calvary, you have solved the problem! The bleeding wounds of the Incarnate God have made righteousness and peace to kiss each other. May God grant to you, unconverted Sinner, the Grace to understand how He can save you and yet be perfectly holy—how He can forgive your sins and yet be perfectly just! I know this is the difficulty that troubles you—how can you be received while God is what He is? He can receive you, for the Lord Jesus Christ took the sins of His people and bore them in His own body on the tree and, being the appointed Head of all Believers, He has vindicated in His own Person the inflexible Justice of God! There is the Man who has kept the whole Law of God—not Adam, for he failed to keep it—but the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven! And all whom He

represented are now “accepted in the Beloved,” made acceptable to God because of what Jesus Christ has done. So let us magnify that holy arm which has gotten Him the victory!

I have now to speak upon the third point, *the marvelous Grace which has revealed all this to us*. It is a very familiar thing for us who are sitting here to hear the Gospel, but will you just carry your minds back some two or three thousand years to the period when this Psalm was written? What was then known concerning salvation was known almost exclusively by the Jews. Here and there a proselyte was led into the bonds of the Covenant, but for the most part, the whole world lay in heathen darkness. Where there was the seal of circumcision, there were the oracles of God—but as for the sinners of the Gentiles, they knew nothing whatever concerning the Truth of God. And it might have been so till this day if the Lord had not made known His salvation and openly showed His righteousness in the sight of the heathen. Our present privileges are greater than those of ancient Israel and I am afraid that we sometimes despise, or at least forget those whom we have for a time supplanted. They were the favored people of God and through their unbelief they have been put away for a while, but Israel is yet to be restored to even greater blessings than it formerly enjoyed—

***“The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah’s praise!
And Your loved name, Immanuel,
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates.”***

Do we value as we ought the privilege we now have of hearing in our own tongue the wonderful works of God? My dear unconverted Hearer, how grateful you ought to be that you were not born in Rome, or Babylon, or in the far-off Indies in those days when there was no Christian missionary to seek you out and care for your soul, but when the whole of the Light of God that shone was shed upon that little land of Palestine! Jesus Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition and now it makes no difference whether we are Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, for the Gospel is to be preached to every creature in all the world—and “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—whatever his previous character may have been, or to whatever race he may have belonged!

Yet let us never forget that in order to accomplish this great work of salvation, it was necessary that the blessed Son of God should descend to this world. And it was also necessary that the Spirit of God should be given to rest upon the Church, to be the Inspiration by which the Gospel should be preached among the heathen. Again let me ask a question. Do we sufficiently reverence the Holy Spirit and love Him as we should for all that He has done? The Incarnation of the Son of God is no greater mystery than the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. It is truly marvelous that the ever-blessed Spirit, who is equally God with the

Father and the Son, should come and reside in these bodies of ours and make them His temple. Yet remember that if it had not been so, there would have been no effective preaching of the Gospel and, this night, unless the Holy Spirit is here to bless the Word, there will be no open showing of Christ's righteousness to you and no making known of His salvation to your heart. All the victories of Christ, for which I challenge your graceful songs, would be unknown to you if the Holy Spirit did not touch men's lips so that they might tell what the Lord has done and publish abroad His glorious victories!

Remember, too, that in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit, there has had to be an unbroken chain of Divine Providence to bring the Gospel to you and to your fellow countrymen. Look back through the past ages and see what wonderful revolutions of the wheels full of eyes there have been! Empires have risen and have fallen, but their rise and fall have had a close connection with the preaching of the Gospel. There have been terrific persecutions of the saints of God. Satan has seemed to summon all Hell to attack the Church of Christ, yet he could not destroy its life. Then came the night of Popery, dense as the nights of Egypt's darkness, but old Rome could not put out the Light of the Gospel! Since then, in what marvelous ways has God led His chosen people! He has raised up His servants, one after another, so that the testimony concerning the victories achieved by Christ might be continued among us and might be spread throughout all the nations of the earth. And thus it comes to pass that, tonight, you have the open Bible in your hands and I am permitted to freely expound the teaching of that Bible to you. How wonderfully has the history of our own country been working towards this happy result! Glorify God and bless His holy name that we live in such halcyon days as these when the Lord has made known His salvation and has openly showed His righteousness in the sight of the heathen!

But yet more sweetly let us praise the Lord that we not only live where the Gospel is made known, but that God has made it known to some of us in a still higher sense. Some of us now understand, as we did not at one time, the righteousness of God—His way of making men righteous through Jesus Christ. We understood it in theory long before God made it savingly known in our soul. This is another work of the Holy Spirit for which we have good reason to sing unto the Lord a new song! Sinner, I have to say to you that God has sent the Gospel to you to tell you that His Son, Jesus Christ, has conquered sin, death and the devil—and that if you believe in Jesus, you shall be a partaker in His victory! There is nothing for you to do but to believe in Him. Even the power to understand His Truth is God's gift to you. Even the faith that receives it, He works in you according to His Spirit! You are to be nothing that God may be everything! It is for you to fall at His feet, with confusion of face and contrition of heart, and when He bids you do so, to rise up and say, “I will sing unto the Lord a new song. O Lord, I will praise You, for

though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me through Him who has gotten the victory on my behalf.”

II. The second point of my subject, on which I must speak very briefly, indeed, is this—THESE ARE SOME MARVELOUS THINGS IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.

The first of these marvelous things is that after all that Christ has done, and the mercy of God in making it known, *so many are utterly careless and indifferent concerning it*. Tens of thousands will not even cross the threshold to go and hear about it! Bibles are in many of their houses, yet they do not take the trouble to read them. If they are going on a railway journey, they consult their *Bradshaw*—but they do not search God’s own Guide Book to find the way to Heaven, or to learn where and when they must start if they mean to reach that place of eternal happiness and bliss! We can still ask, with Isaiah, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The most marvelous sight out of Hell is an unconverted man! It is a marvel of marvels that the Son of God, Himself, should leave Heaven and all its glories and come to earth to bleed and die in manhood’s shape for manhood’s sake—and yet that there should be anyone in the shape of a man who should not even care to hear the story of His wondrous Sacrifice, or that hearing the story, should disregard it as if it were of no interest to him! Yet see how men rush to buy a newspaper when there is some little bit of news! With what avidity do some young people—and some old people too, who ought to know better—read the foolish story of a love-sick maid! How freely their tears flow over imaginary griefs! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ, bleeding to death in disinterested love to His enemies, moves them not to tears, and their hearts remain untouched by the story of His sufferings as if they were made of marble!

The depravity of mankind is a miracle of sin. It is as great a miracle from one point of view, as the Grace of God is from another. Jesus Christ neglected! Eternal Love slighted! Infinite Mercy disregarded! Yes, and I have to confess, with great shame, that even the preacher of the Gospel is not always affected by it as he ought to be. And not only must I, my Brothers and Sisters, confess this, but so must others, I fear, who preach the Word of God. Why, it ought to make us dance for joy to have to tell you that there is mercy in the heart of God, that there is pardon for sinners, that there is life for the dead, that the great heart of God yearns over sinners! And our hearts ought to be ready to break when we find that men disregard all this good news and are not affected by it. It is an astounding calamity that men should have fallen so terribly that they are insensible to Infinite Love! God grant that His Grace may show to you unconverted sinners what a horrible state your hearts must be in that, after all that Christ has done, you still give Him no token of gratitude, no song of praise for the wonders He has worked!

Looking from this point of view, there is another marvelous thing—that *some of us have been brought to recognize the work of Christ so that we are saved by it*, because, to confess the truth, there are some of us who were very unlikely subjects (speaking after the manner of men) to be

saved. Probably each saved person here thought himself the most unlikely one ever to be saved. I know that I thought so concerning myself. You remember the story of a Scotchman who went to see Mr. Rowland Hill and who sat and looked him in the face for so long that the good old minister asked him, “What are you looking at?” He replied, “I have been studying the lines of your face.” “What do you make of them?” asked Rowland. And the answer was, “I was thinking what a great vagabond you would have been if the Grace of God had not met with you.” “That thought has often struck me,” said Rowland! And a similar thought has often struck some of us. If we had not been converted, wouldn’t we have led others into sin? Wouldn’t we have invented fresh pleasures of vice and folly? Who would have stopped us? We had daring enough for anything—enough even to have bearded the very devil himself if we had thought that some new vice could have been invented, or some fresh pleasure of sin could have been discovered! But now that God has made us yield, “by Sovereign Grace subdued,” and brought us to His feet, and put on us the chains which now we gladly welcome and which we long to wear forever, O come and let us sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things for us! “His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory!” Dear child of God, if there is special Grace in your case, as I know you feel that there has been, there ought to be special honor given to Christ by you. Everyone who is saved ought to live a very special life, an extraordinary life. If you were an extraordinary sinner, or have been, in some way or other, an extraordinary debtor to Divine Love, may there be some extraordinary devotion, extraordinary consecration, extraordinary faith, extraordinary liberality, extraordinary loving kindness, or something else about you in which the traces of that marvelous right hand of God and His holy arm will be plainly manifested!

The last thing I will speak about is this—*there is something marvelous in the joy which we, who have believed in the victory worked by Christ, have received.* Probably all of you have sung that song of which the refrain is—

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

That refrain is very monotonous, yet I think I should like to sing it all night and should not wish to leave off even when the morning broke—

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

You may turn it over, and over, and over, and over, as long as you like, but you will never find anything that makes you so glad as that thought, “Jesus loves me.” And you will never find that the sweetness of that thought, “Jesus loves me,” will ever be exhausted. Sinner, if you only knew the blessedness of the life of Christ, you would be glad enough to run away from your own life and run to share ours in Him! We have peace like a river, we can leave all our cares and our burdens with our God. We are just where we love most to be—in the bosom of our Heavenly Father—and the Spirit of adoption makes us feel perfectly at home with Him. We can say, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!” We are in perfect safety, for who is he that can destroy those whom Christ protects? We have got into peace even

with our own conscience. We have also a blessed prospect for the future—we shall be borne along upon the wings of Divine Providence until we exchange them for the wings of angels! We have a Heaven below and we are looking for a still better Heaven above—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!”***

This is the lower part of the choir. Some of the singers are up in the galleries and we are learning, here, the notes that we shall sing above. Come, Beloved, let us make these sinners long to share our joys! If any of you saints have been moaning and groaning of late, get into your proper condition! Begin to tune up and praise the Lord with all your might till the ungodly shall say, “After all, there is something sweeter and brighter and better in the lives of these Christians than we have ever known in ours.”

But whether you will rejoice or not, my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior! And so I will, by His help, till death suspends these mortal songs, or melts them into the immortal songs before the Throne of God! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 116.

1. *I love the LORD because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* [See Sermon #240, Volume 5—PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Every answered prayer should make us love the Lord and especially those prayers that come up from our heart when it is overwhelmed within us. When we pray in deep trouble and God sends us help and deliverance, it is impossible for us not to love Him! Cannot each Believer here say, with great gratitude, “I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications”?

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* “This begging business pays so well that I will never give it up as long as I live! The Lord has heard me, so He shall hear me again and again. He is so good and so generous a God—and such bounties are continually being distributed at His door—that I will never go to anybody else, but will continue to knock at God’s door as long as I live.” The Psalmist goes on to tell us what was the special occasion which brought out this expression of his gratitude.

3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* [See Sermon #1216, Volume 21—TO SOULS IN AGONY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] His petition was short, earnest, plain and personal. It was a sharp arrow shot from the bow of prayer—and it reached its mark in the heart of God. Are any of you just now in very

sore distress? Then let each one imitate the example of the Psalmist and pray, “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” Have you been delivered as the Psalmist was? Then, make a note of it! Be sure to jot it down in your diary, so that when you get into such a trouble again, you may turn to the record of God’s delivering mercy and say, “The God who delivered me before has not changed, so I will apply to Him again, for I am sure that He will again deliver me.”

5, 6. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple: I was brought low and He helped me.* Poor simpletons who cannot help themselves, but who are, nevertheless, free from deceit and craft and take God’s Word as they find it—sincere simple souls—who trust in the Lord! He will take care of them, but He will leave those who think they are wise enough to do so, to take care of themselves.

7, 8. *Return unto your rest O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* If we have enjoyed this trinity of deliverances, let us praise the Three-One God forever and ever! Praise Him, O my Soul, if you are saved! Praise God, O my eyes! Be filled with the happy tears of gratitude since He has delivered you from the bitter, briny tears of grief! Praise Him, O you feet that He has kept from falling and run in the way of His commandments with great joy!

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* “That shall be my way of walking—not before men, that I may gain their praise, but I will consider the Lord and the Lord alone. And as long as I please Him, I shall not mind whether I please anybody else or not.

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* It is always better not to speak in haste. It is very seldom that we say much that is worth hearing when we talk too fast. “I said in my haste, All men are liars.”

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* That is better, for it is better to praise the Lord than to find fault with men, even if the fault found is really there. It is better for each one of us to be rendering our homage to God than picking holes in the coats of others, so let each one of us ask, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?”

13. *I will take*—The Psalmist asks, “What shall I render?” And he answers, “I will take.” That is a strange way of rendering, is it not? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, but that is the way for us to show our gratitude to the Lord for all His benefits toward us. John Newton was right when he wrote—

**“The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”**

“I will take”—

13, 14. *The cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.* And I

can be spokesman for you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and say that the Lord is good, and that we have proved Him to be good to us under peculiarly trying circumstances. He does not fail to help His people, neither does He turn His back upon them in their hour of need. We have tried all other dependences and have been bitterly disappointed. But the Rock of Israel’s salvation stands fast forever, Glory be to the name of Jehovah of Hosts! Let us pay our vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.

15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* [See Sermon #1036, Volume 18—PRECIOUS DEATHS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is an event for which He makes all necessary arrangements. He does not allow it to happen “accidentally,” or according to the will of man. As good old John Ryland says—

**“Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love thinks fit.”**

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.* [See Sermon #312, Volume 6—PERSONAL SERVICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Psalmist said that he was a home-born slave because his mother was a servant of God and he was born, as it were, a servant of his mother’s Lord. How delightful it is to be a Christian and the son of a Christian! Let us rejoice and be glad if that is our happy lot. It is more honor to have had a mother who feared the Lord than a mother who was princess or an empress, but who had not the Grace of God in her heart.

17-19. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORD’S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.*

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

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1866.

“The LORD reigns; let the people tremble.”
Psalm 99:1.

“The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice.”
Psalm 97:1.

No Doctrine in the whole Word of God has more excited the hatred of mankind than the truth of the absolute Sovereignty of God. [See Sermon #77, Volume 2—DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The fact that “the Lord reigns” is indisputable—and it is this fact that arises the utmost opposition in the unrenewed human heart. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” We know what the Lord thinks of their rebellion against Him—“He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure.” Let us, Beloved, not be among those who refuse to believe this great Truth of God, but may we humbly bow before that dread Sovereign who does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world—

***“God is a King of power unknown;
Firm are the orders of His Throne!
If He resolves, who dare oppose,
Or ask Him why, or what He does?”***

God has the right to act thus, first, because He is the source of all created existence. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and everything else that exists is the product of His creative power! As the writer of the 100th Psalm says, “It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves.” So He has the absolute right to do with us whatever He pleases. It rested with Him to make us or not to make us. And when He determined to create, it was according to His own will that He made one creature a worm and another an eagle, one an ant crawling upon its little hill and another a leviathan making the deep to boil. It was by His

decree that there were almost boundless variations among the great family of mankind. In constitution, disposition and temperament—in the very appearance of our bodies, in the strange diversities of our mental capacities, in our position upon the globe or our place and circumstances in any particular country and nation—we see traces of the Sovereign purpose and will of God. It is true that our ancestors, parents and surroundings have exerted certain influences upon us, but there are peculiarities about each one of us which can only be ascribed to the Sovereign good pleasure of God. That one should be a silent and unobtrusive traveler through life's pilgrimage, and that another should be so eloquent as to speak in words that find an echo the wide world over—that one should sweat and toil all his days, and that another should be dandled upon the knee of luxury—we may say what we will about all this, but whether we agree with it or not, we cannot deny that it is according to Divine appointment and order and, therefore, we must submit to it—

***“The Lord is King; who them shall dare
Resist His will, distrust His care,
Or murmur at His wise decrees,
Or doubt His royal promises?
The Lord is King, child of the dust,
The Judge of all the earth is just—
Holy and true are all His ways,
Let every creature speak His praise.”***

Not only do we believe that God being the Creator, has the right to make His creatures according to His own will, but we also believe that He has another right over us acquired from our sinful nature. We may say, though we speak it with bated breath in the Presence of His awful Majesty, that even creatures have their rights at their Creator's hand. For instance, every creature may claim from its Creator that it should not be punished if it does not offend—and that it should be made happy if it is obedient to His commands. Such rights Jehovah has always acknowledged and has never violated. But you and I, dear Friends, have lost all the rights of creatureship, for we have all sinned! A subject of this realm has the right of freedom to go where he pleases and do what he pleases as long as he does not offend against the law of the land. But if he commits high treason, or robbery, or some other crime and so is brought under the condemnation of the law, he immediately loses all right to his freedom and is put in prison with other criminals.

Now the Law of God's universe, a most equitable and just Law, runs thus, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” And we have all sinned—the sentence of death is recorded against every soul born of woman—and that any of us are still permitted to live is due to the clemency of the great King! Some of us, blessed be His holy name, have been pardoned by Him. And having been pardoned, we shall never again be condemned—but

others are put off during their Majesty's pleasure and that respite is an act of Divine Sovereignty. Had He executed the sentence pronounced upon us as soon as we had sinned, we might have bewailed His severity, yet we could never have impeached His Justice, for we should have deserved the utmost penalty that could have been demanded by His righteous Law! So that, by virtue of our sinnership, God has the right to punish us if He pleases to do so. But if He can consistently, with the principles of Eternal Justice, pardon us, He has the right to do so! You noticed that I said, "consistently with the principles of Eternal Justice," for God will never violate those principles. He can always do as He wills, but He always wills to do what is right and, by the Atonement of His dear Son, He has made a way by which He can satisfy all the claims of His inflexible Justice and yet can take infinite delight in bestowing His mercy upon the guilty! Then surely, as mercy is not only God's prerogative as King, but also had to be so dearly bought by the precious blood of His well-beloved Son, we ought not to be backward in confessing that He has the right to bestow that mercy whenever He pleases. At all events, whether we believe it or not, this declaration is still thundered forth from the Throne of the Eternal, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Observe then, three rights which belong to God—as Creator, as Judge, having the right to punish the guilty. And as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, having the right to pardon sinners and to do it without, in the slightest degree, violating His Justice. These are high Doctrines from which some turn away in despair. It is true that they are high, as high as the Throne of God Himself! When I think of them, I feel like the Prophet Ezekiel when he looked upon those wheels that were so high that they were dreadful. Yet, Beloved, as they are true, let us bow before them with awestricken spirits, yet with believing hearts knowing that the Judge of all the earth is certain to do that which is right!

Moreover, the Sovereignty of God is also displayed in His distribution of gifts among His own people—and surely He has the right to do this because the gifts are His own. If we could claim them as ours, they would not be gifts—they would be rightly due to us like anything else that belonged to us. If any man has a valid claim upon God for mercy, then it is not mercy that he should claim, but justice! If any man, by virtue of his own works, deserves to be saved, then salvation is of works and not of Grace—but this the Scriptures distinctly deny! If you come to God expecting to receive from Him spiritual gifts because of certain rights vested in yourselves, you come to Him on a footing that He cannot tolerate for a moment! He will say to you, "May I not do as I will with My own?" And He will give nothing to you who claim it as a right. But He will give all they need to those who come to Him confessing that they have no right to His

mercy and entreating that it may be bestowed upon them through the riches of His Grace in Christ Jesus—

***“Justice upon a dreadful Throne
Maintains the rights of God
While mercy sends her pardons down,
Bought with a Savior’s blood.”***

I have thus reminded you of the Truth of God which is not only stated in our two texts, but is revealed in many other Scriptures—the Truth that “the Lord reigns.” As He reigns in Creation and Providence, so does He reign in the realm of His Grace. Taking the two texts together, I want, earnestly and affectionately, first *to address the unsaved sinner*. And then *to speak to the saved Believer*, endeavoring to invoke in each soul the twin emotions of rejoicing and trembling—“The Lord reigns, let the people tremble.” “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.”

I. So, first, LET ME SPEAK TO THE UNSAVED SINNER.

Sinner, it is an unspeakable mercy for you that the Lord reigns, for *it is because He reigns that you are yet alive*. If God were not King, the sentence of Justice must be executed swiftly, surely, mercilessly! And every sinner, the moment that he sinned, must die. But, Sinner, He who is King is very gracious and He says to the officer of Justice, “Spare that man. Let him live.” He has spared some of you thirty, forty, fifty, sixty—it may be even 70 years! You would not have spared any of your fellow creatures who had offended you as long as that. If a man provoked you to your face, your anger would wax hot against him long before 20 years! Some of you would not bear with him even for 20 *minutes*—yet you have provoked the Lord year after year—but the long-suffering patience in the heart of God has borne with you even until now! He has said concerning you, again and again, “Spare him! Spare her!” When fever shot its hot darts at you, God turned them aside! And when the poison of disease was actually in your blood, He removed it with His healing hand. The Lord who reigns has spared you—therefore rejoice!

Yet tremble at the same time, Sinner, for this great King can as readily slay as He can spare. One turn of His hand, no, not as much as that—He need not even lift His little finger—He has but to will your death and then where would you be? He who has been so strong to spare can be just as strong to smite! He has not yet taken up the axe, but when once He lifts it and its sharp edge falls upon the tree that is still barren, what will become of it? “The Lord reigns; let the people tremble.” If He were to come to you tonight and lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, it would be all in vain for you to attempt to resist Him! The breath of your nostrils is so absolutely under God’s control that all the physicians in the world could not extend the lease of your life if He were to say to you, “This night shall your soul be required of you.” So tremble at the recollection that “the Lord reigns,” for you are as completely in His

power as a moth would be in yours if you held it in your hand knowing that you could crush it any moment that you pleased!

Another instance of Divine Sovereignty which may cause you both to rejoice and to tremble, is this—*God has sent the Gospel to you*. Think of this fact, my Hearer! There are millions upon millions of your fellow creatures who have never heard the Gospel and who are going down to their doom in utter ignorance of the great salvation! Their idol gods cannot save them. Their blocks of wood and stone cannot hear their cry of hopeless sorrow. But unto you is the word of this salvation sent! Many in this great London of ours are born and nurtured amid scenes of vice and iniquity—they never enter the House of Prayer and possibly even the voice of the street preacher never reaches their ears. But some of you heard the name of Jesus mingled with the hush of your first lullaby! You were dandled on the knee of piety, and carried even as a baby in the arms of earnest prayer. It is a most gracious Sovereignty that has accorded you such great privileges as these! It is the Lord, the Lord who reigns, to whom you owe all this! Therefore rejoice, yet tremble as well, for these high privileges involve corresponding responsibilities—and He will require of you a strict account of the way in which you have used these advantages which others have not possessed. One of these days He will make inquisition and will say to you, “I gave you light—did you rejoice in it? I sent the Gospel to you—did you listen to the joyful sound, or did you shut your ears to it and turn away from it with contempt and provoke Me to anger against you?” Besides, Sinner, although you are able to hear the Gospel, today, you may not be allowed to hear it tomorrow! Instead of the message to you being as it is today—“Believe and live,” tomorrow it may be—“Depart you cursed.” Instead of the entreaty being addressed to you as it is today, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” Tomorrow the dread sentence may be pronounced by Jehovah the King, “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would have none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof.” Mercy’s day lasts not forever! God’s Gospel shall not always be trifled with! You may for a time remember to listen to the loving, tender, wooing voice of the Savior, but I would have you remember that He will not always quietly submit to your rejection of His gracious invitations! Tremble, I beseech you, lest the music of the silver trumpet of the Gospel should give place to the harsh clangor of the knell announcing that you have been driven from the Presence of the King to that dread prison where the voice of love and mercy shall never be heard! Thus I bid you rejoice in your present privileges, but also tremble, lest if you do not prize them and use them aright, they may rise up in judgment to condemn you!

There are many in this place who may well thank the King for His Sovereign Mercy to them for *they are the subjects of the strivings of His Holy Spirit*. There are many here who cannot listen to the Gospel without being, to some extent, impressed by it. They have been seen to shed tears because of their consciousness of sin—and there have been times when it has been exceedingly difficult for them to continue in the service of Satan. Some of you cannot sin with impunity as others can, and it has sometimes been a question with you whether you dare occupy these seats unless you resolve to give up your darling sins! Well, if the Holy Spirit has thus strived with you, thank God, for this is another instance of His Sovereignty! Yet remember how early in the history of mankind God had to say, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” In a moment the Sovereignty of God may take away all those melting and gracious influences! And do you know what would happen to you then? Your conscience would be seared as with a hot iron and your natural hardness of heart would be followed by a judicial hardness which would be still more terrible! You might then continue to hear the Gospel, but it would be as though it were being preached to the dead—you would sit in your pews and experience no more feeling than a row of statues could—and you would live only to walk away and forget that you had been listening to the Truth of God. I tremble as I look around upon some of you! I cannot help fearing that you have already reached this dreadful state and that God has said concerning you, “They are joined to their idols, let them alone.” I see some here who once made a profession of religion and who would even speak in God’s name, but they turned aside! Then they professed to repent, but afterwards turned aside again. And now no message ever seems to startle them. They have listened to the Gospel until they have become Gospel-hardened—that which should have been the means of their salvation has become the means of their damnation! That same Gospel which has been a savor of life unto life to many others, has become a savor of death unto death to them! Take heed, Sinner, for He who melts can harden—and if you have long resisted the strivings of the Spirit, it may be that the Lord will allow you to go on sinning unrebuked—until you have filled up the measure of your iniquity and received the due reward of your evil deeds!

Let me also remind those of you who are unconverted that you have a further proof of Divine Sovereignty in the fact that *God has promised to hear prayer*. There are many promises like these, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” God in mercy invites you to come to Him—and this is a subject for heartfelt rejoicing—but it is also a cause of trembling, for the door of His mercy will not always remain open and,

“when once the Master of the house is risen up and has shut the door and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us! He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are.” *Tonight* Jesus is lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel as once He was lifted up upon the Cross, and He bids us cry to you, “Look and live! Look and live,” for it is still true that—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee.
Then look, Sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”***

But if you refuse to obey the Gospel invitation, what must become of you? Surely Captain Execution, with the sharp axe in his hand, will come forth and take you to your well-deserved doom! If God were to deal with you according to your deserts, what hope would there be for you? Yet He bids you repent and He speaks to us as He said to Ezekiel, “Say unto them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Isaiah’s message is still true— “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Sinner, I am happy in standing here as the ambassador of my King—and yet while I rejoice, I tremble lest you should reject the message that He has sent to you in the greatness of His Grace, for my King is not to be trifled with—He deals severely with those who spurn His mercy! Nothing provokes Him more than slights cast upon His dear Son! To turn away from the blood of His atoning Sacrifice will bring down upon you the indignation of the Most High! Oh, venture not upon such a perilous course, but with those trembling lips of yours kiss the Son, trust in Him, depend upon Him and you shall find salvation now to the praise and Glory of God’s good Grace!—

***“Long the Gospel you have spurned,
Long delayed to love your God,
Stifled conscience, nor have turned
Wooed though by a Savior’s blood!
Wretched, ruined, helpless soul,
To a Savior’s blood apply—
He alone can make you whole,
Fly to Jesus, Sinner, fly!”***

II. Thus have I spoken to sinners. Now I am briefly TO SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

You “precious sons on Zion, comparable to fine gold,” look by faith to your King as He sits upon the Throne! And first, *rejoice that you are His*. It is the King who has saved you! Your pardon is signed by the royal

hand—it would be worthless to you if it were not so signed! It is Sovereignty that puts the crown upon every other attribute of God! It is the King who has chosen you, the King who has saved you!

Yet, Beloved, while I bid you rejoice, I would have you *rejoice with trembling* while I suggest to you the question—are you sure that the Lord has saved you? I put the question to myself—My Soul, are you sure that the Lord has saved you? Have you made your own calling and election sure before exhorting others to seek the Lord? It is well for all of us to examine ourselves and see whether we are in the faith or not. My Brothers on the platform, you who are officers in the Church, I evoke you to make sure work for eternity! You fathers in Israel, presume not upon your gray hairs, but search yourselves, or, better still, let each of us pray David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." You parents who have been for years members of the Church—and you young men and maidens who have not long joined our ranks—rejoice with trembling and each one of you pray, "O Lord, by Your Holy Spirit witnessing with my spirit, assure me that I am born to God!"

I have been thinking of these two texts in connection with ourselves who are members of this Church. What a notable instance of Sovereignty is exhibited in the usefulness of the members of this Church! Some of us have, in a very distinguished manner, been made the parents of spiritual children and our seed has become very numerous. Here is Sovereignty in which I, for one, do exceedingly rejoice! And there are Brothers and Sisters here who also rejoice in it. But I, for one, must tremble as well as rejoice. What if the Master should take back the power which He has up to now lent us? What if our preaching should become sapless and savorless to God's people and lifeless and powerless to sinners? O my God, let me die before that should become my unhappy lot! I could never endure to live as some ministers seem content to do. To be a cumberer of the ground, to see no sign of God's hand being made bare—oh, this would indeed be misery! May the Lord preserve us from ever having that sad experience! I trust, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you all feel that it would be far better for you to die as far as your bodies are concerned than to die in the sense of being no longer spiritually fruitful. Therefore, while we rejoice over the great blessing with which the Lord has so long enriched us, let us tremble lest we give Him cause to withhold it for the future! Unless we put every wreath of laurel upon the King's own head, He will speedily withdraw any power with which He entrusted us—and we shall be as weak as Samson was when the Spirit of God had departed from him.

What a remarkable instance of Divine Sovereignty we have in this Church, itself, as well as in individual members of it! We were among the least in Zion, but the Lord has multiplied us greatly. Why is this? Why has He blessed us so wondrously and passed by others who scarcely ever hear the cry of a newborn convert? What other reason can we give than this—because it seemed good in His sight? Therefore let us rejoice, but let us also rejoice with trembling lest the Lord should take away from us such blessed experiences! Well do I recollect the words of that man of God who is now in Heaven—dear Mr. Jonathan George—at the opening of this building. Quoting Jeremiah 33:9, “They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” He said that the more blessing and prosperity the Lord gave us, the more humble must we be—and the more anxious not to provoke Him to jealousy—or else He would take away His Presence from us. I trust that many of you, Beloved, cherish this holy anxiety lest we should grieve the Spirit and drive Him away from us. At all events, I know one who, without being unbelieving, is always very anxious that “Ichabod” (“the Glory is departed”) should never be written on these walls. What if the Lord should allow your zeal to grow cold, your doctrines to become unsound and your lives unholy? What if, instead of ardor there should be lethargy? Instead of love there should be bickering? Instead of harmony there should be division and instead of mighty wrestling with the Most High there should be sad contentions with one another? May these eyes be sealed in death before such a wretched state of things as that should come! And I know that many of you are saying, “Amen,” as far as you, also, are concerned! Yet all this is possible, for the King who gives can take away, and He who now blesses can withhold the blessing! And He will do it unless as a Church, we are faithful and true to Him. Go you now to the cities of Asia Minor where once the seven golden candlesticks brought such Glory to God, and how much light will you find there? Where is Pergamos? Where is Laodicea? Where are the Churches of Philadelphia and the rest? Have not the most of them ceased to be because they left their first love and turned back unto the world? If we have any Achans in the camp, we would not stone them, but we would pray for them—and we would plead with them to repent and turn again unto the Lord—lest the whole Church should suffer through them as Israel did through the sin of Achan.

This solemn Truth of the Sovereignty of God rests very heavily on my heart. Let it rest very heavily on yours, also, so that together we may rejoice because of all the goodness that the Lord has bestowed upon us and, at the same time, let us tremble lest we should in any way provoke Him to anger and cause Him to withdraw His Presence from us, and say to us, “I will work no more through you, but I will leave you to your own

devices that you may find out what you can do when I have gone away from you.” God forbid that this should ever happen to us!

Now as we come to the Table of our Lord, let us come with deep solemnity remembering that there is Sovereignty here, also. The observance of this ordinance may be very dull and dreary to you—or God make it a time of most blessed fellowship with Him and with one another. The means of Grace are not always equally profitable to us. The pipes are always golden, but the holy oil does not always flow in our direction. There is blessing to be had at all times, but you cannot always get it. Ask the King to give you Divine Grace to recognize His right to give or to withhold the blessing—and then plead with Him, for Jesus’ sake, to remember you for good! God grant that it may be so, for His dear name’s sake! Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72**

A Psalm for Solomon.

This was David’s dying bequest to his son, Solomon—but a greater than Solomon is here, for this Psalm concerns the reign, triumph and everlasting dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Verses 1, 2 *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment.* It is the distinguishing mark of Christ’s Kingdom that He cares so much for the poor—whereas in other kingdoms they are generally pushed to the wall—and men of great estate and consequence get all the good positions. In Christ’s Kingdom the poor are exalted!

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to Your people and the little hills, by righteousness.* Those mountains, in whose caves robbers lurked, and from whose heights enemies often came down and swept away the little estates of the lowlanders—even these shall bring peace and comfort—

“No strife shall vex Messiah’s reign!”

When Jesus Christ comes a second time to this earth, we shall see these prophecies literally fulfilled—but until then we delight to know that the reign of Christ is a reign of peace!

4-6. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* After being mown, the grass is tender—should there be a long period of burning sunshine—the roots left exposed might soon be dried up and the lower portion of the stem, bereft of moisture, might become hard.

Never does rain seem so refreshing to the grass as just after the mowing! So is it in Christ's Kingdom. Upon you whose broken hearts are like mown grass. Upon you who have been cut down by the sharp scythe of affliction and who have seen your hopes withered before your eyes—Jesus shall come on gently like rain upon the mown grass. And as the showers fertilize the barren earth, so shall the Presence of Christ make your hearts to be fertile and fruitful. If any of us are like the parched earth or the mown grass, may we have this gracious promise fulfilled to us!

7. *In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.* Under other kings sinners have flourished and great oppressors have walked in public. But in Christ's days, the righteous shall flourish, "and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." There have been some times of truce. There have been some periods when the temple of Janus has been shut. But when Christ comes, the Lord shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder—not lay them by in store for days of warfare in the future—but break them up as there will be no further use for them!

8, 9. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust.* The Arabs, the wandering Bedouin tribes, unconquered and untamable, "shall bow before Him." And His enemies shall not merely be beaten once or twice, but they "shall lick the dust"—they shall be so entirely broken that there shall be no fear of their rebelling in the future!

10. *The Kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.* Britain and some of her sister islands shall do homage to this great Solomon.

10. *The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God. And men of swarthy skin shall acknowledge the King of the Jews as Lord over all!

11. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.* There is a great future for you, Christians, a glorious future for our holy religion! The handful by the side of the lake shall yet become an all-conquering host! As it was when that cake of barley bread fell into the midst of the camp of Midian and overthrew the tent, so that it lay along, and as it was when the shout was heard, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon," so shall it be with us before long. God's people having no strength of their own shall, nevertheless, break the power of their enemy when the war-cry shall be heard, "The sword of Christ and of the Lord of Hosts!"

12, 13. *For He shall deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him that has no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.* [See Sermon #1037, Volume 18—THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND—

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Now, needy one, here is a promise for you! Is there one here that has no helper? Then let that one know that Christ is the Friend of the friendless and the Helper of the helpless!

14-16. *He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised. There shall be an handful of corn on the earth*—[See Sermon #717, Volume 12—PRAY FOR JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Only a handful? O you birds of the air, how you long to eat it all up! O you thorns, how soon would you choke it to death! It is only a handful of corn—

16. *Upon the top of the mountains.* That is a bad place for corn—surely it will die there—the winter snows will chill it and, exposed to every stormy blast it will never fill the arms of the reaper. But is it so? Listen—

16. *The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.* Just as there are peculiar noises heard in a great forest when the wind sweeps through it—there is an allusion to this in the Hebrew—there should be such an abundance of fruit from this handful of corn that as when the forest bows its head before the whirlwind, so shall there be heard a sound as of God rushing among the multitude of His saints!

16. *And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* They shall be so many that one might as well attempt to count the blades of grass as to reckon the number of God's saints!

17-20. *His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended.* [See Sermons #27, Volume 1—THE ETERNAL NAME; #2187, Volume 37—JESUS—“ALL BLESSING AND ALL BLESSED”; #2451, Volume 42—“BLESSED IN HIM” and #129, Volume 3—DAVID'S DYING PRAYER—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He had nothing more to pray for! He had his heart's highest and best wish and, therefore, he closes his prayer where God had given him all that he could ask.

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

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SERVING THE LORD WITH GLADNESS NO. 769

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Serve the Lord with gladness.”
Psalm 100:2.*

MUCH of the sweetness of music lies in the ear to which it is addressed. There are mysterious sweetnesses and unknown harmonies which lurk, and the notes are detected only by the ear attuned to melody. The most enchanting strain to one ear may be discord, itself, to another! The wise man tells us that as vinegar is upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart. The song in itself may embody the soul of delight and yet it may be misery itself to the ear which is not in tune with it. So is it with my text. It is a short, but inexpressibly sweet stanza. “Serve the Lord with gladness,” is a delightful sonnet to the *spiritual* mind, but to the ungodly, the careless, the unspiritual, it is flat and dull—the grinding of labor’s wheel—and far other than a verse from a cherub’s harp.

The very first word is “serve.” And the proud spirit of unregenerate man kicks at that at once. “Serve!” says the man, “why should I be a servant? I hate the yoke and I will not bow my neck.” The lawless spirit, fond of what it calls “free thought” and “free action,” hates the sound of the word “serve.” “I will be my own master,” says the willful, wayward soul of the man who knows not what is meant by *obedience* and has never drunk into the deep joy of submission to the Lord. “Serve?” he says, “let those do so who are calves enough to bow their necks, but as for me, I know no government but my own ungovernable will.”

But to the soul that has been subdued, delivered from the bondage of its own self-dominion—the soul that is humble, teachable, weaned from the world, and changed into a little child—the thought of service has Heaven in it! For such a heart remembers that in the New Jerusalem they serve God day and night, and it looks forward to perfect service as being its perfect rest. Renewed minds accept “Ich dien”—“I serve,” as their motto and feel ennobled by it. The next word of our text, which we may well call the golden canticle of labor, is even more distasteful to the carnal mind. “Serve the Lord.”

Men’s hearts are naturally atheists—they will not endure the thought of *God*. The most of men are careless and indifferent to their heavenly King. They remember all things else except the God who made them. We find them willing to serve their country, to serve science, literature, art, trade—but as for serving God they will have none of it! The spirit of this age is too much that of Pharaoh. “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” To the philosophical mind it seems to involve an absurdity to serve a Being whom you cannot see, whose voice you cannot hear, and whose existence is unfelt by the unspiritual, unawakened mind!

Therefore the wise man turns upon his heels and says that he will serve any other master sooner than serve the Lord. The man who has once known—who has tasted that the Lord is gracious and been made to enter into the Lord's Covenant of Mercy and has seen under what obligations he is laid to the loving kindness and tender mercy of Jehovah—to such a man the very thought of serving God is liberty! He delights to run in the way of God's commandments, and the statutes of the Most High are to him sweeter than honey, or the dropping of the honeycomb. "Serve the Lord." "Ah," says the quickened spirit that has been made obedient by a work of Divine Grace within, "would God I could *always* serve Him, and never in thought, or word, or deed rebel against His gracious will." To serve God is to reign! He who obeys the King of kings is himself a king!

As for the next word of my text, which contains the rarest sweetness of it, "Serve the Lord with *gladness*," this is a point to which the mere carnal mind never did attain and never will! Any connection between religion and gladness seems to the most of men to be very remote, indeed. Many people attend to their "religion," as they call it, but it is downright slavery. They go up to their place of worship because it is a terrible necessity of custom that respectable people should meet in certain fixed places each Sunday. But they are glad when the service is short—exceedingly glad if it could be made so short as to be omitted altogether!

They look upon their religious exercises as a tax which they pay to God, or rather, as a tax which they pay to *respectability*—for we live in a country where many many think it right to profess the Christian faith. The worldly religionists' service has no gladness in it. "Serve the Lord with gladness" seems, to the carnal mind, to be a perfect monstrosity! And yet, mark you, this is the test between the genuine and the hypocritical professor—by this *one* thing shall you know who it is that fears God—and who it is that does but offer Him the empty tribute of his lips.

There is an old legend that when the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon she posed him with many difficulties, and, among the rest, placed before him a vase of artificial flowers which were so skillfully made that for awhile Solomon could not tell which of the two bouquets of flowers were the handiwork of man until he bade them open the window wide and watched to see to which the bees would fly. No bees or flies would lodge upon the artificial, but only upon the genuine ones, for there alone they discerned the mystic sweetness which dwells in the secret aroma of the living bloom.

Even so, observe the worldling's religion—it is beautifully constructed, well put together, it is everything to the eye that could be expected—but no winged delights ever alight on it, no joyous thoughts find honey there! As for the true Believer in Jesus, he serves his God because he loves to serve Him! He assembles with the great congregation because it is his delight to worship the Most High. To him it is the greatest of all earthly joys and a foretaste of joys celestial to serve the Lord with hands, and heart, and strength—and to spend and be spent for His glory. May God's Grace bring us to know that the text does not mock us, but that it is a thing which is practicable to every Believer—that we can serve God with gladness, yes, *emphatically* with gladness—with an overflowing pleasure unknown elsewhere.

I ask you, before we go further, to let this be a point of judgment with every hearer as to whether his soul finds joy in his religion or not. Let each man enquire whether that which he professes to possess ever causes him delight. With all our cares and sorrows, we who have believed have learned to rejoice in the name of our God! But the base-born professor dreads the majesty of Heaven, and feels no flames of childlike love within his bosom. Like slaves, they fear the whip and they know not the force of constraining love which rules within the hearts of adopted and Heaven-born sons of God.

In our text, gladsome service is commended and commanded. We shall first notice its secret springs. Then we will endeavor to track its manifest streams. Then a word or two about its difficulties and some other suggestions about its excellence. And then the conclusion. Briefly on each point.

I. The gladsome service of God has ITS SECRET SPRINGS. These are too many for me to mention them all, but the following may serve as a sample. One main cause why the Believer serves God with gladness is that he is free from the bondage of the Law. When the Believer serves the Lord it is with no idea whatever of obtaining eternal life thereby. He does not go up to public worship—he does not respect the commandments of the Lord's House because he thinks that thereby he shall escape from Hell or obtain Heaven.

Far from this! He *knows* that he is saved! He understands that through faith in the Lord Jesus he has been delivered once and for all from the penalty of all his sins—they are all forgiven—he is not afraid of the consequences of them. They are blotted out forever. As for Heaven, he knows that eternal life is his portion as the gift of Sovereign Grace—he is secure of that. He is one with Jesus—nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord, and full well he knows that where Christ is, there shall Christ's servants be—reigning with Him forever! Therefore the heir of Heaven serves his Lord simply out of *gratitude*.

He has no salvation to gain, no Heaven to lose—all things are his by a Covenant “ordered in all things and sure.” And now, out of love to the God who chose him and who gave so great a price for his redemption, he desires to lay out himself entirely to his Master's service. O you who are seeking salvation by the works of the Law, what a miserable life yours must be! Why, you are haunted with the miserable foreboding that unless you do this and that you will forfeit the good will of God and perish! And you hope that if you diligently persevere in obedience, you may perhaps obtain eternal life, though, alas, none of you dare to pretend that you *have* attained it!

You toil and toil and toil, but you never get that which you toil after, and you never will, for, “by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.” However holy or obedient you may be, good works are *not* the way of salvation. And, as you cannot get to London except by taking the road to London, although you may walk ever so earnestly in the wrong direction, so though you are ever so good and honest and excellent, you never shall attain Heaven by these things, for this is not the door of life. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

And since you who go about to lay another foundation set yourselves in opposition to *God*, you may build, but your building shall fall to the

ground. You may weave, but your garments shall turn to cobwebs. You may toil and labor as in the fire, but you shall never obtain comfort by your own doings. O miserable slaves! Your life is spent in bondage—you shall never be fit to die—and now you know not what it is to live, for living, you dread to die, and dying, you tremble to meet your Judge. Nothing can cover a naked soul but the righteousness of our Lord Jesus!

You may go to church or the Meeting House. You may say prayers and read your Bibles, and do what you will besides, but bond slaves you are and you shall *not* be heirs of the promise—for what says the Scripture, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” The child of God works not *for* life, but *from* life—he does not work to *be* saved, he works because he *is* saved. More zealously than the most earnest person who trusts in works will the Believer serve, and so he will prove that no power in all the world is more mighty than the force of love.

Not selfishly nor because of fear, but gratefully, joyfully, heartily, out of true *affection*, the true servant of the Lord waits at his Master’s doors! Do you not see, then, how we can serve the Lord with gladness? Because, when we make mistakes in serving God we know they will not destroy us! Because, notwithstanding the thousand infirmities and imperfections of our service, we know that Jesus washes all away in His precious blood. When we sit down sometimes after a day’s seeking to honor God and deplore that we have so greatly failed in it, we do not despair, for we know that the righteousness which covers us has not to be spun by *these* fingers!

We rejoice that we are accepted not in ourselves, but in the Beloved, and so we rise again and go once more to “serve the Lord with gladness,” because we are still His beloved, still dear to Him, notwithstanding 10,000 slips, and flaws, and errors, and mistakes—still in His Covenant—still saved. Another reason why the Christian serves God with gladness is because he has a lively sense of the contrast between his present service and his former slavery. What a hard, cruel, Egyptian bondage was that out of which Jesus brought us! We thought it liberty, but when our eyes were opened we found it to be captivity itself, for we found that the wages of sin is death.

When sin became exceedingly sinful in our esteem, then we felt the iron enter into our soul, and longed to break the chain. To serve the devil, even when he gives us most of the sweets of sin, is intolerable bondage to a sensible, awakened sinner. But to serve Christ, how pleasant, how joyful! Do but look into the face of the black prince and you will see reason enough to abhor him! But gaze into the eyes of Immanuel, the Prince of princes, the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, and you will feel that if His service involved lying in a jail, or burning at the stake, yet in comparison with the miseries of the bondage of sin, His “ways are ways of pleasantness.” Jesus is the Master and Lord whom to obey is perfect peace. But Satan, the foul tyrant, is one from whom we rejoice to have been delivered.

Moreover, the Believer’s joy in the Lord’s service springs from the fact that he serves God from the instincts of his new nature. Every nature has its instinct. If the Maker creates a bird, it is not painful to that bird to fly, and no force is needed to make it take wing—its instinct is to do so. For a

fish to swim is no troublesome matter. That element which might be very distasteful to the bird, is natural enough and pleasing enough to the fish. Now, when God creates in His people a *spiritual* nature, He puts into them impulsive, energetic instincts which push them forward or restrain them as the case may be.

Take the case of the Well-Beloved, who is the pattern of all the family. When He was but a Child, He was found in the temple hearing and asking questions of the rabbis. And when His father and mother asked Him how it was that He had left them, He said, "Do you not that I must be about My Father's business? Did you not know that there was a necessity laid upon Me—an uncontrollable impulse within Me which drove Me forward to accomplish the will of Him that sent Me?" So, when you see an earnest Christian working for God and you enquire why he is earnest, he may well reply, "Do you not that I must be about my Father's business?"

The genuine Christian, full of the love of God, cannot be an idler. "Woe is unto me," says the Apostle, "if I preach not the Gospel." To tell to others the love of God becomes to the faithful heart no arduous service. Like Elihu, he can say, "I speak that I may be refreshed." I know that some Christians do not find it so—it is because the love of God in them has come to a low ebb, and the life of God is but feebly within. But the vigorous healthy Christian must serve the Lord, yes, and serve Him with gladness, too, because he is then obeying the instincts of his nature and God has made our instincts, when we follow them, to be pleasurable.

The instincts of the new nature, when we follow them, lead us into service, and consequently there comes into our soul a pleasure unknown to those who are not partakers of the regenerate nature. I have said that to the Christian it is a delight to serve God, and so it is, because it exercises in him those powers which yield delight. There is always a delight in benevolence. Now, to tell our fellow sinners the way of salvation is the exercise of the benevolence of our heart and there must be pleasure in it. To serve God causes the exercise of faith, and to exercise faith is one of the grandest pleasures to which a mortal can attain.

Therefore to serve God with faith and confidence must be delightful! Believing service is not the performance of a work naturally irksome to us, to which we bring ourselves by effort. Christian service is the doing of *sacred* duties which to our new nature are congenial occupations—things in which we take our delights. Those grand old builders who erected the famous cathedrals of the olden times, and laid out so much time and skill in carving the ornaments and piling the pinnacles—shall we pity them for having worked so hard? Far from it! No pity did they require. Pity would be wasted on them. It was their life's work. They were in their element when they were producing this thing of beauty, or that specimen of wondrous art. And so with the Christian. The service of God is not to him an employment from which he would escape even if he could. No, he feels it to be an intense delight and only wishes that he could be more perfectly taken up with it.

Another reason why the Christian is conscious of great gladness in serving God is that he has a sense of honor with it. Did you ever reflect how wondrous a condescension it is in God to allow a creature to serve Him? "The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine," He says. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you." He sits on His Throne and establishes it by His own

power. He has no dependence upon His creatures. The greatest of spirits He has ever made are as nothing before Him, and yet, look, He condescends to be served by us! Can I give something to my *Creator*? Can I do a service to my *Redeemer*? May I lay my humble tribute at His feet to whom all things belong?

Ah, then, how I am honored! It is an honor to receive *from* God, but a greater honor still to be a *donor* to God. Man is put in a very high place when God condescends to make him a co-worker with Himself in the economy of Divine Grace, and accepts from His creature the homage of his body and his soul. Now it is well known that every man will do work which he feels to be an honor much more easily than that which he thinks degrades him. There have been thousands of enterprises undertaken by men when they have been put upon martial honor which they never would have undertaken for mere fee or reward. Men have gone to the cannon's mouth for the sake of glory. And shall the Christian be altogether insensible to the motive of honor? Shall he not feel it to be his greatest glory to serve his God? And will there not be from this a stream of joy flowing over all our holy work?

Furthermore, the Believer, when he serves God, knows that his service is not the highest place which he occupies. "I am a *servant*," he says, "I am not ashamed of it—to serve God is royal dignity, but then I am not altogether and alone a servant." Here is the Christian's joy—he hears his Master say, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Then he recollects that beyond being a friend he is a child. The spirit of adoption within him cries, Abba, Father. He looks upon the Lord Jesus Christ as his elder Brother.

Yes, and beyond that, he hears from the sacred Book that he is *married* unto Christ. Jesus has become his bridegroom, and he is the beloved spouse! He understands that there is a union near and dear, vital and matchless between him and his Master, so that Jesus is the Head, and he is a member of the same body. Do you see how the thought that the Believer is more than a servant enables him to do more than a servant could do, and gives him a gladness in his service which the mere servant cannot understand?

Again, there comes over the Christian's mind a gentle thought which in his darkest moments yields him joy, namely, that Grace has promised a reward. We are not to be rewarded for the *merit* of our works, but still the Free Grace of God has promised that we shall not toil for nothing. The diligent Christian looks for the time when he shall hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." He is "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows that his labor is not in vain in the Lord."

It may be that for the present he toils on and no one gives him a good word—he sows the thankless flood and no harvest springs from the bread cast upon the waters. But he can afford to wait—he has not measured things by the narrow inch of *time*, but he has taken a broad *eternity* into his consideration and he knows that the time shall come when those that diligently serve on earth, by faith in Jesus Christ, shall participate in the glories of the coming King and the bliss of the eternal inheritance!

So the humble, trustful worker sets to his seal that God is true, and goes on in his service, waiting upon his gracious Master—not with dependency and timorous fear, but serving the Lord with gladness evermore. I think I have thus shown you as well as I could, this morning, the secret springs which sustain the Christian's gladness when he is engaged in service.

II. Secondly, let us trace some of the MANIFEST STREAMS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN THEIR GLADNESS. Beloved, in the first place we should always serve the Lord with gladness in the public assemblies of His people. The more hypocritical people are, the more solemnly miserable their outward aspect when at worship. As a general rule I believe that those places of worship where it is thought to be wicked to ever have smiling faces are dens of formalism where there is no life of God at all. I know this—if you go through Continental Churches, perhaps two out of three of the preachers are downright deists, or infidels of some class or other—and you will find the most horribly sanctimonious faces, and tones, and manners among clergymen—especially among the worst of them.

Not believing a word they say, they are obliged to pull as long a face as possible to look as if they were in earnest, though they are not. I like to see you coming up to *this* place not as if you were going to a jail, but like children coming from school and going home to their Father's house! Last Sunday week I was awakened at six o'clock, in the Hartz mountains, by the cheerful notes of a trumpet playing a sweet enlivening German air. It struck me that was a right fitting way to begin Sunday—to wake up with music—to leave off sleep with a dream of angels singing the songs of Heaven, and to begin the day by uniting in their praise!

Let each Sunday always begin so—not with the dull solemn note of the trombone, but with psaltery and harp with joyful sound. Alas, with many the cry is—"Here's another dull day in which the Crystal Palace is shut up, and all amusement denied us!" An English Sunday is called by many a dull and dreary day! Ah, you miserable heathens! Well may you speak so! It must be dreary to *you*—but to the genuine Christian—the thought that the world's burden is laid aside, and that now he is to commune with Heaven is as the sweet sound of the trumpet waking him to a day of feasting and delight!

Then when we come up to the House of God what is there to make us sad? Is there not everything to make us happy? Shall we sing the praises of God dolorously, and imitate the worshippers of Moloch who serve him with shrieks and groans? No! The God we adore is to be praised with happy hearts, smiling faces, and joyful notes. And when we pray to Him shall we be sorrowful? To pray to our Father—a child to spread his needs before his father—can that be bondage? No, blessed be His name, if there is a sweet place on earth, it is the Mercy Seat where earth communes with Heaven!

And when we listen to the reading of the Word of God, or the preaching of His Truths, shall that be a weariness? Yes, when we have no part or lot in it! When it is like reading a will in which we have no legacy! But if the Gospel is preached as *our* Gospel, the Gospel of *our* salvation, and *we* have a share in it—what can so inspire our soul with joy? Yes, let the bells of your heart ring merry peals on Sunday! O you chosen seed, be glad, and of all the days in the week, look at the first as the prime glory of all

the feast days of the soul! Do not pull the blinds down! Let the sun shine into the room more cheerily than on weekdays. Your God is happy and would have *you* happy! And if all the other six days you have to bear your burdens, yet, at least, cast them aside on this Resurrection Day when you must not slumber in the grave of sorrow!

Well, but by serving God we do not mean merely when we come to a place of worship. For to us, in one sense, there are *no* places of worship. *All* places are places of worship to a Christian! Wherever he is he ought to be in a worshipping frame of mind. Brethren, when we serve God at the family altar, let us try as parents to mix gladness with it. It is a great mistake when the Christian parent makes the reading and prayer in the family a dull monotonous work. Let us be cheerful and happy at family worship. In your private devotions you should also “Serve the Lord with gladness.” When you get half an hour or more with the Most High, ask Him to enable you to carry out that command of this 100th Psalm—“Serve the Lord with gladness.”

But then the Christian’s service for God lasts all the day long! The genuine Christian knows that he can serve God as much in the shop as he can in the Meeting House. He knows that the service of God can be carried on in the farmyard and market—while he is buying and selling—quite as well as in singing and praying. Should not we do our business much better if we looked upon it in that light? Would it not be a happy thing if, regarding all our work as serving God, we went about it with gladness? Perhaps your work is very hard. Well, be not an eye-servant, or a man-pleaser, but with singleness of heart serve God in that work and you will perform it with gladness.

Perhaps your situation is one in which your toil is very arduous. Consider that God has put you there. If you cannot see a door of removal, accept what God has given, and accepting it from a Father’s hand you will be able to serve Him with gladness. That is a real religion which goes with us through all the acts of daily life! That is a *sham* religion which only shows itself when a man is on his knees. A few days ago, in the mountains, we went down in a valley to see a wonderful waterfall, a marvelous sheet of water precipitating itself from lofty rocks. And there sat our German friends by scores contemplating it and reverently admiring its sublimities.

As I looked at the cascade, the thought struck me it was rather too orderly to be altogether what it professed to be. And looking on, I noticed that the floods which poured down from the rocks had suddenly diminished, as if the supply of the liquid element was exhausted. Truly so, we found that this wonderful waterfall was played three or four hours a day, and was an *artificial* wonder! I walked away feeling wonderfully taken in, coming to see a cascade of a kind that was played three hours a day!

And there is plenty of *religion* of that sort! It is not genuine—it is played three hours a day, or so many hours a week. At certain set times, if you catch the man right, he will be very gracious and godly. But if you stumble in when he is immersed in all the cares of the world you find he is all a sham. O Beloved, let our religion show itself throughout the whole of life! Let us go about our business with a holy gladness because we are serving the Lord! Let us be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord and putting gladness into the whole thing! Above all, let gladness sparkle

in all those actions which we feel called upon to perform for our Master's service.

Dear Sunday school teachers, make the Sunday happy, and your children happy by serving the Lord with gladness! City missionaries and Bible women, do not go round your districts as though you were undertakers' men, but go there with gladness, serving the Lord! Preacher, throw your soul into your work! Do whatever you undertake to do for the Master with a soul flashing with fire! Look upon it not as bondage, but joy, and serve the Lord in it with a sacred alacrity and delight! Thus I have tried to show some of the manifest streams of the Christian's delight.

III. But, now, somebody says, "It is much easier to say this than to practice it, and though it may be very easy, indeed, to *tell* us to serve the Lord with gladness, does the preacher himself always find it easy to do so?" Well, this is not the place for him to make confessions, but he is quite prepared to admit that it is not always easy to serve God with gladness—if it were, we should not need to be told to do it!

But on account of THE DIFFICULTY OF IT, we are, therefore, more often bid to be happy. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again," says the Apostle, "I say, Rejoice." If he had felt it would be *easy*, it was sufficient to tell us *once*, but the repetition shows the difficulty. Our inbred sin—is not that enough, when we serve God, to make us do it with the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Yes, but we shall be delivered! I thank God, through Christ our Lord we shall be delivered from the bondage of our corruption!

Let us not think so much about the disease as about the *remedy* while we sigh over infirmities! Let us bless God that there is a way of glorying in infirmities because the power of Christ will be manifested there. Let us serve God in infirmities with the glad thought that we shall not always be imperfect, but by-and-by shall be in the glory of our Master, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing! Outward trials, again—how hard it is to serve God with gladness when one is losing an estate, or when the cupboard is bare—or when there is scarcely money to provide the children with clothes! Yet the Christian does not live upon what he *sees* alone—he knows there is a *secret* strength, a secret Helper—and he knows how to go to God in times of outward trouble and cast his care upon Him who cares for him.

Have you ever read, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose?" Does not that lantern show a light over your dark path? Beloved, may the Holy Spirit enable you to go on serving God with gladness even though the fig tree should not blossom, and though there should be no herd in the stall. "Yes, but," says another, "It is difficult to serve God with gladness when placed in the midst of the ungodly."

So the best of men have found. They have hung their harps upon the willows sometimes. How could they sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If you cannot sing His song, yet, let me tell you, go on in His work. If you cannot touch the harp strings, yet still serve Him and by-and-by the Lord who gives you Grace to *serve*, will give you Divine Grace to *sing*! Though you are not a stranger, yet you are a stranger with your God—He is with you, and you are a sojourner with Him! Though in the midst of the ungodly you walk as in a furnace—yet when the three holy children were

in the fire there was a Fourth with them—and so there is One with you like unto the Son of God!

Brethren, we are not to take up those duties which we think to be easy and to leave those we think to be difficult. The more difficult the command of God may seem to be, the more earnestly must we set ourselves to carry it out by Divine aid. The text, “Serve the Lord with gladness,” may seem to be very difficult to those of a gloomy temperament, or depressed spirit, or those who are under trying circumstances, but, O Beloved, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! What *sense* says is impossible, *faith* accomplishes! Therefore let us lift up our hearts and say, “Heavenly Father, help us to serve You with gladness according to Your command.

IV. In the last place, there is much EXCELLENCE in cheerful service. Is it possible that when we serve God with gladness, we thereby escape many fatherly chastisements which otherwise might come upon us? I was reading, reading with some degree of fear, in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, at the 47th verse, these words, “Because you served not the Lord your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the *abundance* of all things; therefore shall you serve your enemies which the Lord shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in *need* of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck.”

I was wondering whether if we receive God’s mercies and do not serve Him joyfully, it may not be more than probable that He will withdraw His hand of mercy for awhile, and make us smart under the hand of chastisement till we humble ourselves before Him. Let us serve God with gladness while we have health and strength—we may soon be on the sick bed. Let us be glad to have anything to give to His cause—we may be reduced to poverty and have no place where to lay our heads. While we have the power to serve God let us do it with gladness, being thankful that we are enabled to do it, or else it may be, seeing we prove unworthy of those things, He may make the sky to be covered with clouds and send us dark days and bitter seasons.

Do you not think, too, that when Christians serve God with gladness, they derive many benefits themselves? Does not the Lord water those who water others? Is it not the way with Him, when He sees us diligent in service, to give us greater comforts? We are not under the economy of Law, as I have said before, but still we are under the paternal economy of God’s House. Just as we do with our own children, if we see them obedient, we are apt to give them much more than we should do if they were constantly seeking to have their own way and their own will. No father uses the rod from choice—he only uses it if driven to it.

So is it with us. If we, as dear children, bring forth much fruit unto God, we shall have much boldness in prayer and much communion with God—and a thousand blessings which otherwise we might not receive shall be ours! Besides, Beloved, does not our God deserve to be served with gladness? Oh, when we get to Heaven if we could have regrets, would not this be one—that we had not served Him better? When we served the world, some of us, we used to do it very heartily. When some of you were in the devil’s service, what bold soldiers you were! Nothing was too hot or too heavy in his cause.

And shall we serve Christ with less zeal than men serve the great enemy of souls? Our Master deserves to have the best love, the warmest

confidence, the most stern perseverance, the utmost self-denial—let us seek to give Him these and to give them with a cheerful heart! Besides, if we would do good to our fellow men, we must serve God with gladness. I believe thousands of young people are kept from considering the Gospel by the gloom of some professors. I know that the world constantly makes this its excuse for not being religious—that if it began to think of God it would have to give up its happiness. O Christians, I would have your faces so gleam with the light of Heaven that even the ungodly, if they care not for your secret life, may love the manifest joy that springs from it!

Many a young woman has been led to think of Christ by the holy cheerfulness of a godly mother. There is no doubt that Christian servants have often been the wedge, in the hand of God, to break a way for the Gospel into ungodly families by their holy, cheerful conduct. Talk of religion by all manner of means, but above all, *live* religion, and let your religion be cheerful! Let the world see that you serve a good Master! Do not go about slandering the King of Zion and say He starves His people and makes them of a sad countenance.

When the four young men in Babylon would not defile themselves with the King's meat: "And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse than the children which are of your sort? Then shall you make me endanger my head to the king." But they put it to the test, and said, "Let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." We will put it to the test, too. We will try if our joy is not greater than the worldling's. We will stand foot to foot with them and see the result.

Now, Beloved, we have come to a conclusion, but I must have two or three last words. Beware of being like those speculative Christians who do not serve God at all, but are content to play games of puzzles with the Bible. It seems to be the genius of some professors, nowadays, to take up with explaining prophecies, or finding out novel interpretations of the types while they forget to do good to the people among whom they dwell. Let me warn you against that. The life of the Christian should be *service*, not speculation.

If you have time and leisure, addict yourselves to the pursuit of knowledge in the Word of God and despise not prophecies. Give a fair place to everything, but still always understand that all the speculations in the world, all the understandings of prophecy in the world are not worth the snapping of a finger compared to bringing forth fruit unto righteousness in the feeding of Christ's sheep and lambs! That is the business of Christ's Shepherds. Our business is to save souls!

Brethren, you will hear me expounding the Revelation one day, that is, when there is not another of the elect to save! When all the chosen are saved, we will preach upon the deep mysteries of Daniel and Ezekiel, but so long as souls are unsaved, we mean to keep to the plain Gospel—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the simple Gospel of Jesus. Take this home with you, you who are so fond of knotty points—serve the Lord,

and give up your star-gazing! And if you want gladness, you will find it there—you will not find it in your endless genealogies, and looking into the future!

There are other professors, too, who will do *anything* rather than serve God. The little service they do is done as slovenly as possible, and they are always unhappy. They want a *comforting* ministry! They want to hold on to the promises! My dear Brother, it is most probable what you want is neither. You need to serve God, for there is gladness! If some of you were to take a class in a Sunday school, you would soon find your spirits revive. Some of you dyspeptic Christians who find the Sunday drag heavily, if you were to go up into that alley or court to visit sick folks, you would find your hearts grow glad. Only try it, now, and give us a report! And if you do not find it a pleasant thing, I am much mistaken.

Our last word shall be a rehearsal of the text, "Serve the Lord with gladness." Do not let us get to be like Martha, who complained because she served *alone*. Suppose we do? The fewer men, the greater honor! And if Mary will not serve the Master as we wish that she should, yet as she sits at the feet of Christ we will thank God that there are diversities of operations—but the same Lord! We will not get gloomy in spirit because we are not all serving God in one direction. Let us serve God with gladness, not like the elder brother in the parable, who said, "Lo, these many years did I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

Why had not the father given him a kid that he might make merry? Because he had never asked him! So if you and I have been at work in heaviness for years, like the elder brother, let us ask the Father to let us have a feast, too. And the surest way to get it is to go out into the fields and see if you cannot find some poor wandering Brother—for if you *do* get a feast, it will be when the prodigal comes home! The pith and marrow of what I have to say is, do not sleep away the few hours of this mortal life but be up and diligent in the cause of Jesus Christ, and be glad in it! Be glad, if you are saved yourselves, that you are called to be the means of saving others!

And so with holy service let us begin a new period of time, and go on till God shall take us up to serve Him with perfect gladness where they see His face, and never sin, but from the rivers of His Grace, drink endless pleasures!

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THE CLAIMS OF GOD

NO. 1197

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Know you that the Lord, He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting: and His Truth endures to all generations.”
Psalm 100:3, 4, 5.

BRETHREN, it is a trick of Satan to distract us from the most important and vital matters by the suggestion of trivial considerations. When the best blessings are asking for our acceptance, he will bring the most trivial things into our minds. He will fill our eyes with dust to prevent our looking to the bronze serpent for healing. From the preaching of Jesus he endeavored to distract human attention by debates upon the tithing of mint and anise and cumin—the making broad of the borders of one's garments, the wearing of phylacteries—the straining out of gnats, and I know not what else.

He followed this method at Jacob's Well. When our Lord spoke to the woman about Living Water and the salvation of her soul, the evil spirit prompted her to ask concerning Gerizim and Zion—“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship.” With this same art Satan still works. It should be our business, not being ignorant of the devices of the enemy, to be more than a match for him by breaking away from all vain jangling and trivial questions. We need to go to the foundational Truths of God, the cornerstones of faith, the realities of life everlasting, the vitalities of godliness. These lie all Godward and Christward, away from the shadow land of ceremonies and vain speculations.

We must go to the eternal rock and everlasting hills whose golden tops are, to the eyes of faith, bright with the blessed daybreak. Let us get there, this morning, from the vanities of earth—and may the breath of the Spirit speed us toward the realities of Heaven—so to things essential we may give the attention which is essential to them. For what were we created, my Brothers and Sisters? I know no better answer than that of the Assembly's catechism, “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” There is a vast amount both of theology and philosophy in that simple answer which our old Divines have put into the mouth of a child.

Had man remained what God made him, it would have been his very element to glorify his God! To do the will of God would have been as natural to us as to breathe if we had not fallen from original perfection. I was about to say unconsciously, creatures which abide as God created them obey His will. But where there is consciousness there is added a supreme delight which makes their consciousness and willingness the highest

blessings. Look at yonder ponderous orbs—they are not stubborn with the so-called *vis inertiae*—but joyfully roll along in their predestined courses because God commands them to keep their settled track.

See yonder watching stars—they close not their bright eyes, but smile upon us from age to age—those sentinels of Heaven quench not their lamps, but shine right on, day and night because God has said, “Let there be light,” and from them light must come. We hear of no rebellion in the spheres, no revolt against the Law which holds them to their celestial courses. Orion breaks not his bands. The Pleiades cease not their sweet influences. These orbs, mighty as they are, are as subservient to God as the clay to the hand of the potter. And where there is intelligence, as long as the intelligence remains as God made it, there is no revolt against His will.

Yon mighty angel, “whose staff might make a mast for some tall admiral,” counts it his honor to fly like a flash of light at the bidding of the Eternal. It is no demeaning of his dignity. It is no diminution of his pleasure to do the command of the Most High, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Were we, today, what we should be, it would be our element to love, to serve, to adore our God—and we should not need ministers to stir us to our pleasurable duty or remind us of Jehovah’s claims. Even the august language of our text would not be needed to bid us worship and bow down—and know that Jehovah is God who has made us, and not we ourselves—for we should bear this Truth in every particle of our being!

As things are, however, we need recalling to duty and urging to obedience. This morning, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, are will submit our hearts to such a call.

I. First we will consider THE CLAIMS OF GOD—ON WHAT ARE THEY GROUNDED? “Know you that the Lord, He is God; it is He that has made us and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.” The claims of God are grounded, first of all, upon *His Godhead*. “Know you that Jehovah, He is God.” As Matthew Henry has very properly said, ignorance is not the mother of devotion, though it is the mother of *superstition*. True knowledge is the mother and the nurse of piety.

Really to know the Deity of God, to get some idea of what is meant by saying that He is God, is to have the very strongest argument forced upon one’s soul for obedience and worship. The Godhead gave authority to the first Law that was ever promulgated when God forbade man to touch the fruit of a certain tree. Why might not Adam pluck the fruit? Simply and only because God forbade it. Had God permitted, it had been lawful. God’s prohibition made it sin to eat the fruit. God gave no reason for saying to Adam, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die.” His commandment, seeing He is God, was the supreme reason—and to have questioned His right, to disobey the law would have been, in itself, flat rebellion.

God was to be obeyed simply because He is God. It was a case in which to have introduced an argument would have supposed unwillingness on man’s part to obey. Adam could not need more than to know that such-and-such was the will of his God. This same Truth of Godhead is the au-

thoritative basis of the moral law of the Ten Commandments. From Sinai no claim for obedience was set up but this, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In that word, "GOD," is comprehended the highest, the most weighty, the most righteous reasons for man's yielding up his entire nature to the Divine service.

Because the Lord is God, therefore, should we serve Him with gladness and come before His Presence with singing. It was upon this point that God tested Pharaoh—and Pharaoh may be regarded as a sort of representative of all the enemies of the Lord. "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go." There was no reason given, no argument, but simply this, "Thus says the Lord." To which Pharaoh, fully appreciating the ground upon which God was acting, answered, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

So they stood, foot to foot, in fair battle—Jehovah saying, "Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let My people go"—and Pharaoh replying, "I know not the Lord neither will I let Israel go." You know how that battle ended. That song of Israel at the Red Sea, when the Lord of Hosts triumphed gloriously, was a prophecy of the victory which will surely come unto God in all conflicts with His creatures in which His eternal power and Godhead are assailed. The argument derived from the Godhead has not only been used with haughty rebels, but also with questioners and debaters.

Observe how Paul speaks. He has entered upon the thorny subject of predestination—a matter which none of us will ever comprehend, a matter in which it is better for us to believe than to reason—and he is met with this, "If all things happen as God decrees, why does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?" To which the Apostle gives no reply but this, "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" Against God there can be no answer! If He wills it, so let it be. It is right. It is good because He so decrees it. Is He God? Submit! If there were no other argument, or reason, let the Godhead convince you.

Good men have been argued with in the same way for their profit. That is the core and pith of the Book of Job. There is Job, in conflict with his three friends, who are arguing that he must be a wicked man or else God would not so sorely smite him. To which reasoning he replies that he will hold fast his integrity and will not let it go. Then comes Elihu and he has much to say that is wise, but he cannot settle the matter. At last comes God into the controversy—and what is the Lord's argument? Does He proceed to justify Himself in what He has done with Job, to give Job reasons for covering him with boils and pains, and excuse Himself for having taken a perfect and upright man and laid him prostrate on a dunghill?

No, but instead He unveils a portion of His Godhead and reveals His power in some such language as this—"Where were you when the foundations of the earth were laid? Declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations fastened? Or who lays the cornerstone thereof? Have you given the horse strength? Have you clothed his neck with thunder? Does the eagle mount up at your command and

make her nest on high? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like He?" Thus the Lord displayed the greatness of His power while Job sat cowering down, and cried out, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You: therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Ah, men and women, if you did but know *what* God is, and *who* He is—if but some flashes of His Divine Omnipotence, or any other of His glorious attributes were let loose upon you—you would perceive that He has the fullest claims upon your allegiance and that you ought to live for His Glory! Imagine that at this instant midnight darkness should settle over us, out of which should burst forth a thunderclap making each stone in this building tremble while down every one of yonder columns lurid lightning should begin to stream! Imagine that the earth beneath us rocked and reeled after the manner of the city of Lisbon, or Aleppo in years gone by! Conceive that peal on peal of that terrible thunder should be heard—why there is not one of us but would long to be the servant of that terrible God and instinctively inquire what He would have us to do!

Atheists, in times of tempest and storm, have found but little help in their philosophy. Like Pharaoh, they have been ready to cry, "Entreat the Lord for me." But the reclining earth, or Heaven on a blaze—what were these? The touch of His finger and glance of His eyes would do far more. He touches the hills and they smoke, but as for Himself, who shall conceive of Him? Let us adore His overwhelming majesty and bow down before Him, for the Lord, He is God!

The second ground of the Lord's claim is *His creation of us*. "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves." We are, every one of us, the offspring of the Divine power. This is a fact of which we are informed by Revelation, but it is also one which every instinct of our nature agrees with. You never saw a child startled when it was told, for the first time, that God made him—for within that little mind there dwells an instinct which accepts the statement. The theory that we are not made, but are mere developments of materialism, wears upon its face all the marks of unsupported fiction! Certain statements are called axioms, because they are self-evident truths—but this is an axiom reversed, for it is a self-evident lie!

To an unsophisticated mind, its repetition is its refutation. Indeed, whenever I hear people mention it they seem unable to suppress a laugh, and I do not wonder, for even Nature, itself, forces them to despise what they pretend to believe. The evolution theory was originated, I have no doubt, either in Pandemonium or in Bedlam—it is worthy of either—but it is unworthy of any man who possesses either sanity or morality. No, we did not become what we are by chance or growth. God made us! This belief is the easiest escape from all difficulties and besides, it is true, and everything in us tells us it is so.

Now, since the Lord made us, He has a right to us. The property which God has in man is proved beyond dispute by our being His creatures. The potter has a right to make the vessel for what use he pleases—still he has not such absolute right over his clay as God has over *us*, for the potter

does not make the clay—he makes the vessel *from* the clay, but the clay is there from the first. The Lord has, in our case, made the clay from which He has fashioned us, and therefore we are entirely at His disposal and should serve Him with all our hearts. Why, man, if you make anything, you expect to use it! If you make a tool for your trade, you reckon upon employing it according to your pleasure! And if it would never bend to your will, or be useful to your purpose, you would speedily put it away.

So is it with you. The Lord who made you has a right to your service and obedience. Will you not acknowledge His claim? Consider what He has made us. No mean things are we! Who but God could make a man? Raphael takes the pencil in his hand and, with a master touch, creates upon yonder canvas the most wondrous forms. And the sculptor, with his chisel and his hammer, develops amazing beauty. But there is no life, thought, intellect—and if you speak, there is neither voice nor answering. How different are *you* from the canvas and the marble—for in your bosom there is a mysterious principle which makes you akin to the Deity—for your soul can know reason, believe, understand and love.

I had almost called the soul *infinite*, for God has made it capable of such wondrous things! Thus has He trusted us with high powers and faculties, and lifted us up to a high position. Surely, then, it is ours to serve Him with a loving loyalty. I like to think that the Lord has made us—and to yield myself to Him on that ground—because while the grandeur of what He has made us calls us to homage, even the lowly side has its claim, too, and a sweet one. Our powers are finite, and sometimes we are troubled about that fact, wishing we could do more for our Lord—but we need not fear when we remember that He has made us and, therefore, fixed the measure of our capacity.

In Roger de Wendover's, "Flowers of History," an ancient Saxon chronicle, we read of a Saxon king who, riding through a forest, came upon a little Church in which a priest was saying prayers. This priest was lame and hump-backed and, therefore, the rough Saxon king was ready to despise him, till he heard him chant these words, "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves." The king blushed and admitted his fault. If, then, we are of small beauty or slender talent, let us not complain, but serve Him who has made us what we are. If we are amazed at a Truth of God which we cannot comprehend. If we find portions of God's Word to be beyond our depth, let us not complain, but remember that the Lord could have made us understand all things if He had chosen, and as He has not done so. "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves."

When any say to us, "Your religion is beyond you. The Truths you believe you cannot comprehend," we answer, "We are quite satisfied it should be so, for the Lord has made us, and not we, ourselves." If He has made us capacious to a larger degree than our fellows, we will give Him all the more honor. But, if we are vessels of small capacity, we will not wish to be other than our Maker would have us to be. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I cannot conceive any higher claim upon our service than this—that God has created us—except that the same Truth of God may be sung an octave higher! Common men may sing, "It is He that made us, and not we,

ourselves.” Even the brute creation might join in that confession! But, O you saints! Yours is a loftier note, for you have been twice made, born-again, created anew in Christ Jesus, and after a nobler fashion you can sing, “It is He that made us, and not we, ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” Creation has its claims, but election and redemption rise still higher! From those peculiarly favored the Lord must have peculiar praise.

A third reason for living unto the Lord lies in *His shepherding of us*. “We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” God has not left us and gone away. He has not left us as the ostrich leaves her eggs, to be broken by the feet of the passersby. He is watching over us at every hour, even as a shepherd guards his flock. Over us all He exercises an unceasing care, a watchful Providence, and therefore we should return praise to Him daily. It has been well said that some men represent God as having taken the universe like a watch, wound it up, and then put it under His pillow and gone to sleep. But it is not so. God’s finger is on every wheel of the world’s machinery. God’s power is that which puts force into the laws of the universe—they were a mere dead letter if He were not powerfully active evermore!

Child of Adam, in your cradle you are not rocked by wild winds, but by the hand of Love. Daughter of affliction, you are not laid prostrate on yon bed to be the victim of heartless laws, but there is One who makes all your bed in your sickness with His own kind and tender hands. God gives us, day by day, our daily bread. God clothes us. He gives breath for these heaving lungs and blood for this beating heart. He keeps us in life and if His power were withdrawn we would sink immediately into death.

Now, therefore, because it is so, we are bound to give to our great Shepherd our daily service. You are the sheep of His hand. For you the hourly provision, the constant protection, the wise and judicious governance—for you the royal leadership through the desert to the pastures on the other side of Jordan! For you the power that chases away the wolf, for you the ability that finds out the pastures of the wilderness. For you those superior comforts which come from the redeeming Angel’s Presence and flow from the very fact that He is yours! Therefore, render to the Lord your homage and your praise. Men, because you are men, adore the God who keeps you living men—saintly men renewed and fed out of the storehouse of Divine Grace—serve your God, I pray you, with all your heart, soul and strength, because you especially are the sheep of His pasture and the people of His hand.

A fourth reason for adoration and service is given in the last verse of our text, it is *the Divine Character*—“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His Truth endures to all generations.” Here are three master motives for serving the Lord our God. Oh that all would feel their weight! First, He is *good*. Now, if I were to lift up a standard in this assembly this morning and say, “This banner represents the cause of everything that is just, right, true, kind and benevolent, I should expect many a young heart to enlist beneath it, for when pretenders in all lands have

talked of liberty and virtue, choice spirits have been enchanted and rushed to death for the grand old cause.

Now, God is good, just, right, true, kind, benevolent—in a word, God is Love—and therefore who would not serve Him? Who will refuse to be the servant of infinite perfection? Oh, were He not my God, but another man's God, I think I would steal away to Him to be enlisted beneath the banner of such a God as He is! To keep the Laws of God must always be incumbent upon us because those Laws are the very essence of right—none of them are arbitrary—all of them the requirements of unsullied holiness and unswerving justice. Indeed, commands of God are something more than merely right—they are good in the sense of kind.

When God says, "You shall not," it is only like a mother forbidding her child to cut its fingers with a sharp tool, or to eat poisonous berries. When God says, "You shall," it is practically a direction to us to be happy, or at least to do that thing which, in due course, leads to happiness. The Laws of the Lord our God are right in all respects and, therefore, I claim from every one of you the obedience of your heart to God. Then it is added, "His mercy is everlasting." Who would not serve One whose mercy endures forever? Observe, that He is always merciful. Never does a sinner come to Him and find Him devoid of pity. The Lord is merciful and gracious when we are children. He is equally so to us in middle life and when we grow gray in years He is still merciful.

We cannot wear out His patience nor exhaust His forgiving love. He has given us a Savior who always lives to make intercession for transgressors. What a blessing is this! So long as we sin we have an Advocate to plead for us! He has set up a Mercy Seat for us for all times and to it we may go as often as we will. He did not erect a Mercy Seat on earth for a hundred years and then withdraw it, but, blessed be His name, we always have the right of access and we have still a plea to urge, for Jesus' blood has not lost its savor. There, too, is the Spirit of God always waiting to help us to pray—and whenever we wish to draw near to the Mercy Seat, He is ready to teach us what we should pray for as we ought—and even to utter groans for us which we, ourselves, could not utter.

Oh, who would not serve a God whose mercy is everlasting? Cruel is that heart which infinite gentleness does not persuade. If God is merciful, man should no more be rebellious. It is added, "His *Truth* endures to all generations." That is to say you will not find in God one thing today and another thing tomorrow. What He promises, He will perform. Every word of His stands fast forever, like Himself, Immutable. Trust Him today and you will not find Him fail you, neither tomorrow, nor all the days of your life! The God of Abraham is our God, today, and He has not changed through the revolutions of years. The Savior whom we trusted in our boyhood is still the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Blessed be His name! I think it was this attribute of God that had the greatest charm to my young heart. It seemed so sweet to rest my soul with an Unchangeable God, so delightful to know that if I did once enjoy His love He would never take it away from me—that if He was once reconciled to me by the death of His Son, I should forever be His child and be dear to

His heart. This gave my heart gladness and I hold forth this Truth, now, as a sweet inducement to those present who have not trusted to the Lord that they should do so—for the Lord is good and His mercy is everlasting and His Truth endures to all generations!

Thus I have set before you the grounds of God's claims. Are they solid? Do you consent to them? Oh, that Sovereign Grace would constrain each of us to live alone for the glory of God! It is His most righteous due.

II. Now very briefly, indeed, THE CLAIMS OF GOD—HOW HAVE WE REGARDED THEM? Answer for yourselves. Alas, some have paid no respect to these claims—in fact they have denied them and have said, in effect, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” Have I one such person here? I pray God to change his heart, for the gnat may much more wisely contend with the flame which has already burned its wings than you contend with your Maker! As surely as you live, God will vanquish you and make you acknowledge His supremacy! If you will not obey Him, He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel.

A far larger number of persons, however, ignore, rather than oppose God's claims. They have lived in this world, now, perhaps, to middle age and never thought about God, at all, though He has made them and kept them in being. That is the way that many a debtor has done with his debts. He has felt easy because he has not been dunned about them. But surely that is a doubtful honesty which rests in peace because the creditor does not happen to clamor! A truly honest man is dissatisfied till he has discharged his obligations—and every noble spirit will be discontented with itself because it has not paid its due to God. What if the Lord has used no severities—has sent no sheriff's officers of sickness or bereavement—shall we not all the more heartily enquire, “What shall I render unto the Lord?”

Shall we rob God because He is merciful? Shall we make His goodness a reason for neglecting Him? Can it be right that we should never render to the Most High according to the benefits received? There are multitudes who, in theory, acknowledge all the claims of God, but as a matter of fact they deny them, or they evade them by a merely outward religiousness. They will not be honest, but they will go to Church. They will not cleanse themselves from iniquity, but they will be baptized. To live a holy life is a matter they care not for, but they will take the sacraments, believe in Jesus and yield themselves up to the love of God.

They will not, but they have not the slightest objection to joining in a procession or going upon a pilgrimage—thus giving God brass counters instead of gold, outward appearances instead of real obedience. The love of the heart and trust of the Spirit, man refuses to his Maker—and so long as he does so, all his offerings are in vain. Sorrowfully must we all confess, also, that where we have tried to honor the Lord and have done so, in a measure, by His Grace, yet we have failed in perfection. We have to confess that oftentimes the pressure of the body which is near, and of the things that are seen and tangible, has been greater upon us than the force of the things which cannot be seen, but are eternal. We have yielded to *self* too often and have robbed the Lord.

What shall we do in this case? Why, we have to bless our everlasting God and Father, that He has provided an atoning Sacrifice for all our shortcomings. And there is One, partaker of our nature, who stands in the gap on our behalf, in whom we can be accepted, notwithstanding all our shortcomings and offenses! Let us go to God in Christ Jesus! He bids us believe in Jesus and assures us of pardon and salvation on the spot if we do so! The demands of God are met in the life and death of His only-begotten Son. Faith lets us see that they were met for *us* and that we are clear. Brothers and Sisters, we have believed, yes, and we *will* believe, that Jesus died for us—and here comes our joy—that we are delivered from the wrath of God, notwithstanding that we have fallen short of His commands.

And now, what follows? I feel, concerning it, this—that now there are more bonds to bind me to the service of God than ever! He has forgiven me for His name's sake and washed me in the blood of His own Son—and I am His by firmer bonds than ever. No obligations are so forcible as those which arise out of Free Grace and dying love. Pardoned sin is no argument for the indulgence of future sin, but an abundant argument for future holiness in every heart that feels its power. O you saints of God, transgression being blotted out, you will no more transgress! Made His elect, you elect to serve Him! Being His adopted children, you rejoice to do your Father's will! And now and forever you are the Lord's!

III. This brings me to the concluding note of our discourse, which is this—THE CLAIMS OF GOD, WHEN THEY ARE REGARDED, HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE MEN? Give me your hearts a few minutes. I am persuaded, Brothers and Sisters, that the noblest form of man that is to be found on the face of the earth is the man who serves God. I am convinced that all other forms of manhood are faulty and imperfect in themselves, to a very high degree, and are also far inferior in force and beauty to that which is produced in men by consecration to the service of God.

A man who is guided by the Holy Spirit to live for the Lord is altogether a nobler being than one moved by a less lofty aim. Let me show you how healthy it is to serve God. The man who serves God, led by the Spirit of God to do so, is humble. Were he proud, it were proof, at once, that he was not serving God! But the remembrance that God is His Sovereign and has made him—that in His hands is his breath—makes the good man feel that he is nothing but dust and ashes at his very best. He cannot cry out with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built"—he is far more likely to crouch down where Nebuchadnezzar did after God had taught him better and to say—"Now I extol and honor the King of Heaven."

Serving God keeps man in his right place. It is a balance to him, without which he might be drifted to destruction like the myriads of butterflies which I have seen far out at sea, condemned, before long, to sink into the wave. At the same time, while it sobers a man, it fills him with joy, praise and gratitude, thus giving him sail as well as ballast. A man who loves to serve God receives mercies at His hand with great thankfulness and joy. He is content with the will of God and, therefore, is full of gratitude to

Him. And let me tell you there are no sweeter moments in a man's life than those which are occupied with adoring gratitude! Nothing is more purging, or cleanses a man from earthly grossness, and from all the defilement of selfishness, than to serve the ever-living and ever-blessed God and to feel that there is One so much greater, so much better than one's self, towards whom we aspire, for whom we live! Thus is a man at once humbled, cheered and elevated. The service of God is honorable as no other service is.

There is a man who lives for himself—his great object is to get money. Look at him and consider him well! Is not the greed of wealth one of the most beggarly passions that can possess a human bosom? Yon ant, which labors for its commonwealth, is, to my mind, up among the angels, compared with a man who sweats and toils and starves himself merely for the sake of heaping up for himself a mass of yellow metal! Can I more highly commend the lover of pleasure? What is pleasure? As the world understands it, it is a hollow sham, a veneer of mirth covering deep dissatisfaction. I often think, when I hear worldlings laughing at such poor nonsense, that they pull each other's sleeves and say, "Laugh. You ought to laugh."

I cannot see the mirth of their amusements, but they do. They struggle to seem happy, but what, after all, is it to have lived to be amused? To have spent all one's powers in killing time? Is anything more contemptible? How horrible it is when man lives for lust and puts forth all his strength to indulge his passions! Brutes! Beasts! Alas, I slander the beasts when I compare them to such men! The man who lives for God is a far nobler being. Why, in the very act of self-renunciation and of dedication to God the man has been lifted up from earth and from all that holds him down to its dust and mire. He has risen so much nearer to the cherubim, so much nearer, in fact, to the Divine! This makes a man a man, for a man who serves is courageous and too manly to be a slave.

"No," he says, "God bids me do such an act and I will do it straight ahead. And though such-and-such a thing you bid me do, since God has not commanded me, your bidding is no law to me. My knee was made to bow before my God and not to you—and my mind to believe what God reveals and not what you choose to tell." He is the free man whom the love of God makes free. What wonderful proofs we have had of this throughout history, for the men who have served God have been the most intrepid of mortals. Behold the burning fiery furnace and the tyrant's face almost as red as the furnace itself—he can hardly speak, he is choked with passion because the three young men will not worship the bronze image! But look how cool they are as they say, "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but if not, be it known unto you that we will not bow down to the image which you have set up."

Here is the true style of manhood! The love of God makes heroes! Give a man a resolve to serve God and he is endowed with wondrous perseverance. Look at the Apostles, martyrs and missionaries of the faith—how they have pressed on despite a world in arms! When a nation has been apparently inaccessible they have found an entrance! When the first mis-

sionary has died, another has been ready to follow in his footsteps! The first Church, in her weakness, poverty and ignorance, struggled with philosophy and wealth and all the power of heathen Rome, till at last the weak overcame the strong, and the foolish overthrew the wise! They that serve God cannot be conquered—from defeats they learn victory! If they have to wait they can wait, for they have linked with the lifetime of the Eternal and God is in no hurry, nor are they.

If to secure a hearing for the Truth of God takes a generation, let it take a generation! If it takes 50 generations, let it take them, but the deed shall be done and the Truth shall be preached—and the idols shall be abolished—and God shall be adored! O Lord, Your service makes us akin to You! Blessed are they that wear Your yoke! How strong they grow, how patient to endure, how firm to stand fast, how swift to run! They mount with wings as eagles when they learn to serve You! The man who is led by the Holy Spirit to serve God is incited, thereby, to a zeal, a fervor and a self-sacrifice to which nothing else could bring him.

If you are familiar with the lives of the pioneers of the Cross, and especially with the deaths of the martyrs, you will have seen what Divine Grace can make of men! Are not their deeds sublime? Why, these men laughed at impossibilities and scorned difficulties! They counted the rack and the torture mere everyday things and learned to smile in the face of death, itself, because they served God! They never thought of running away, nor dreamed of retracting their testimony. Men said, “You are fools.” They were prepared to hear them say that and reckoned it a fulfillment of prophecy. The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers took counsel together and said, “We will stamp you out.” They were prepared for that, also, but they were not stamped out!

They saw insuperable difficulties in their way to the eye of sense, but they did not care what the eye of sense saw—they used the eye of *faith*—and believing that they were engaged in the service of God they knew that God would be with them. They felt that all the forces of Nature on earth, and all the angels in Heaven, and all the attributes of Deity were on the side of the man who is doing God’s service—and therefore they went straight on! I have heard say that a mad man will often display the strength of 10 men and I know there is another side to that fact. For when a man becomes possessed with the Divine Spirit and is carried right away with it, there is *no telling* what force is in him—he will be 10 men in one!

Why, there are cases in which a *nation* of men seem to have been bound up into one single humanity when the man has surrendered himself to the service of God. Look at Martin Luther! You cannot regard him as an ordinary man. You cannot help viewing him as a conglomeration of a whole tribe of men! He believes he has the Truth of God to proclaim and in God’s name he preaches it! And if there are as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the tops of the houses it is nothing to Luther! And if the Elector of Saxony tells him that he will no longer shelter him, what will he do? Why he declares that he will shelter himself beneath the broad shield of the eternal God! When the Pope issues a Bull against him, he burns the

document! What did he care? He would have burned Rome, itself, for that matter! The man had courage enough for anything.

Or take John Knox, all emaciated, weak and ready to die—and yet so God-possessed, so inspired that he is not preaching for a quarter-of-an-hour before you think he will dash the pulpit to shivers! He shakes the whole of Scotland and is more dreaded by the Popish Queen than an army of 10,000 men, for God is in the man! Oh, get to feel, “It is God’s will, and at all hazards I am going to do it, for God bids me.” Why, Sir, you may as well try to stop the sun in its course as to stop a man who is mastered by *that* conviction! If ever this driveling age of little men is to be lifted up into something like respectability and redeemed from the morass of falsehood in which it lies festering, we must breed a race of men who mean to serve God, come what may—and to make no reckoning but this—“Is this right? It shall be done. Is this wrong? Then it shall cease.”

There must be no compromise, no talk about marring our usefulness and spoiling our position by being too exact. Usefulness and position! Let them be marred and spoiled if the Truth of God comes in the way, for God is to be followed into the jungle—yes—and down the wild beasts’ throats and into the jaws of Hell if He leads the way! God must be the Guide and if we follow God it shall be well with us. But if we do not, that which man thinks easiest, is, after all, the hardest. He thinks it easiest to be as near right as he can, but to run no risks. He thinks it best to keep peace at home, to yield many points and not be too Puritanical and too precise, and so on. *That* is the *easy* way—and the way which God abhors! It is the way which will end in a festering conscience and in being shut out of Heaven!

The way to serve God is to be washed in the blood of Jesus—and then to obey the Lord without reserve and seek only His honor. This is the way to Heaven! And when we reach those blissful seats we shall be all in tune with the perfected, for they serve the Lord day and night—and find it bliss to do so. This preparation and service on earth is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of Heaven above! May God grant you, then, by His Holy Spirit, to yield yourselves up to God, to serve Him—and may we meet above. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 95, 96.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—187, 66 (SONG I), 195.**

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THE ETERNAL TRUTH OF GOD

NO. 1265

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1875,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The truth endures to all generations.”
Psalm 100:5.

IT was very solemn work, this morning, to lay bare the sin of unbelief. [Sermon #1238, *Beware of Unbelief.*] It was the burden of the Lord to him who had to speak and it could have been but very small pleasure to those who had to listen. Nevertheless, I trust it was something better than pleasure to many and it drove their souls to pray to God for others. By His Grace sinners *were* moved, as we already know, to yield up their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. After meditating upon the heinousness of this sin—the sin of making God a liar—after even *thinking* of it, horror took hold upon my soul and it seemed to me that we ought to have a supplementary sermon, tonight, in honor of the Truth of God.

As we have, as it were, cleansed the temple and swept out the dreadful filthiness of giving the Lord the lie, it is now our part to offer a sweet smelling offering by declaring the faithfulness of the Lord. It is my earnest desire that each one of us may join in the devout exercise and bear our witness that, as far as we have known the Lord, He has been a God of truth to us. We will also rehearse the Scriptural Testimony to this great and certain fact that God cannot lie—and meditate upon the evidence that in Him and in all His actions, faithfulness shines in the highest possible perfection.

I desire in the courts of the Lord's House and in the midst of His people, to extol Him whose counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. We will consider only two points, though those will subdivide into many others, and the first is, that, according to the text and according to fact, *God is true*. And, secondly, that *God is true in all generations*.

I. First, then, GOD IS TRUE. *He is true in His very Nature.* There is no deceit, falsehood, or error in the essential Nature of God. It could not be. We, from our very birth, have deceitful hearts, deceitful above all things. And in us, the old serpent who deceived our first parents has fearfully perverted our judgement and turned aside our souls from their integrity. As a result we often put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. And frequently we believe a lie and reject the truth. But God is not a man that He should lie. His very name is, “The Lord God, abundant in goodness and truth.” This is only a *part* of His holiness. The angels could not cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,” if God were not true. Admit for a single moment, untruthfulness on the part of God, and you have, at once, destroyed the wholeness, or holiness, of His ever blessed and adorable Character.

What makes men untruthful? Whatever it may be, it is clear that nothing of the kind can operate with God. When a man tells a lie, it is often through fear—fear of the consequences of the truth. But the eternal Jehovah cannot dread consequences—He is Omnipotent—all things are in His hands. When a man utters a lie, he frequently does so because he thinks there is no other way of accomplishing his end. But the Infinite Wisdom of God is never short of resources—He knows how to accomplish His will and pleasure without adopting the mean devices and paltry schemes of poor pitiful man. Man sometimes promises what he cannot perform and then he is false to his promise. But that can never be the case with the Almighty who has but to speak and it is done—to command, and it stands fast.

Falsehood is the *wickedness*—I dare not call it the infirmity—the *wickedness* of little natures. But as for the Great Supreme, you cannot conceive Him acting in any manner that is otherwise than straightforward, upright and truthful. He is essentially a God of truth and righteousness. He must be so. The Lord our God is not only true *in* His Nature, but He is true *to* His Nature. We are not always true to ourselves. I have known a generous man who, in a spot, has acted very ungenerously. I have known a man universally admitted to be just and upright who, nevertheless, under pressure, has stooped to an action which he could not justify.

And we have read of persons exceedingly kind by nature who, nevertheless, have perpetrated cruel deeds in times of fear. They were not true to themselves. They did actions of which any candid person would say, “This is not like the man—we are astonished that he should do this. He seems to have stepped out of his ordinary path to do a something altogether foreign to his better nature.” But the Lord is always true to Himself. You never find Him doing anything that is not godlike. Select the acts of His Creation. If He makes an aphid to creep upon a rosebud, you will find traces of infinite wisdom in it—you shall submit the insect to the microscope and discern a wisdom in it as glorious as that which shines in yonder rolling stars!

If in Providence some minor event comes under your notice, in that event you shall find no deviation from the constant rule of right and love by which the Most High characterizes all His doings. There are no emergencies with God in which He could be driven to act an untruth. There are no pressures, no difficulties, no infirmities which could produce falsehood in Him. “I am Jehovah: I change not,” He says. Find Him where you will, He is what He was and what He ever shall be—the eternal and ever glorious I AM, over whom circumstances can have no kind of influence—who, indeed, *knows* nothing of circumstances, for He fills all places, and all times and all ages are present with Him! As for the creatures, they are as nothing in His sight and He is All in All. Ever true, ever true by Nature and His Nature is true is the Lord our God and adored be His thrice holy name! By Jesus Christ, we present to You, O Jehovah, our adoring praise!

Let us further notice that *God is true in action*. He has been true to the first transaction of which we are aware, namely, *the making of the Eternal*

Covenant. What God has done in the eternity which we call the past, (but which to Him is as the present), we do not fully know. We have no reason to believe that we know much of what God has done. There may be as many other worlds and sorts of beings existent as there are sands upon the sea shore, for all we know. And the Lord may have been occupied in ages past with thousands of glorious plans and economies as yet unrevealed to man.

We cannot tell what He does, or what He has done. We are creatures of a day and know nothing. We are like insects that are born on a leaf and die amid our fellows at the setting of the sun—but He lives on forever. We talk of the “eternal hills,” but they are babes that were born yesterday, as far as He is concerned. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God.” We say, “Roll on, you ancient ocean!” but the ocean is not ancient—it is a drop that fell yesterday from the tip of the Creator’s finger!

We cannot tell all that the Lord did in the past, but we are told in Scripture that He made a Covenant in the olden time with His Son and with us, also, who are believers in His Son. And in that Covenant the chief point was that He would give His Son to be a ransom for many—that Jesus Christ should lay down His life for His sheep and give Himself for His Church. That was the most astounding promise that was ever made! Indeed, all the promises made to men are couched in that. Did He keep it? Did He take the Darling of His bosom, the pure and holy Christ, and send Him down to earth to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh?

Did He submit that His peer, His equal, the Son of the Highest, should wear the smock frock of a peasant and live among the sons of men as a carpenter’s son? Did He fulfill that wondrous Word and allow that dear Son of His to be nailed to a Cross—to die on that gibbet like a common felon? Did He permit Him to slumber in the dust among the dead? He did! Let Bethlehem and Calvary say, “The Lord is true! He has kept His Covenant—

***“True to His Word, He gave His Son
To die for crimes which men have done.
Blest pledge! He never will revoke
A single promise He has spoke.”***

But it was a stipulation of that Covenant on the Lord’s side that Jesus Christ should have a people who would be His reward for His sufferings. The Father gave to Christ a chosen people—His sheep, His bride. These were to be His. “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.”

Has the Divine Father kept that part of His Covenant? Beloved, He is keeping it every day! By the preaching of the Gospel and by other means in the hand of the Spirit, those for whom Jesus died are being called from among the mass of mankind! They are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus and they are saved! And whenever these present themselves before the Throne of God, He looks upon them as forgiven, regards them as one with His beloved Son and members of the body of Christ—and therefore

He accepts them in the Beloved! For Christ's sake He preserves them. For Christ's sake He sanctifies them. For Christ's sake He will, by-and-by, glorify them! The Covenant of Grace has many promises in it, but not one of them has failed. As on Christ's side, the Covenant was kept by His death, so on the Father's side, the Covenant has been kept by the salvation of those whom Jesus redeemed from among men whom He gave himself a ransom for many.

Oh, Beloved, if it could be proven that the Covenant of Grace had failed. If there had been the smallest faltering in the fulfillment of this Divine Treaty, then might we speak with bated breath concerning the truthfulness of God, and the sinner would not be so guilty when he makes God a liar! But because in this grand Covenant transaction God has not swerved by so much as one jot or tittle from His promise, let His name be blessed! Praise Him, all you saints in Heaven! Praise Him, you saints on earth, for, "His truth endures to all generations." God being thus true *in His Nature* and true *to His Nature*—and true to His Covenant—*He has been true to all His purposes*. Whatever God resolved to do, He has done. Whatever He decreed has come to pass!

There has been no change in the purpose of God at any time. Straight forward He goes and none can hinder Him. The opposition of men and the opposition of devils are as nothing—these can no more change His plans than an infant's breath could alter the course of the sun. "Has He said and shall He not do it?" Who are you that hopes to thwart the designs of God? What He resolves to do, who shall dare to censure, much less to oppose? Who is he that shall say unto the Lord, "Your arm is short. You are not able to accomplish Your work"? Behold, His will is Omnipotence and He does as He pleases among the angels of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. From the time He planned the whole scheme of Providence and Grace, nothing has ever made Him alter so much as one single line of it. There it stands, and He is true to it and true He will be, till, like a vesture, He shall fold up Creation as a worn-out mantle which has answered its wearer's purpose.

This leads us to remark that *God is true to His promises*. There is not a promise which God has made, but what either He has kept it, or else, being dated for the future, He *will* keep it when the time appointed comes. Whatever He has said to the sons of men He has meant. How sadly common it is for men to make engagements in public while, in the long run, they never intend to do anything of the sort. How many promises are made to please the ear and cheat the heart? Blessed be the Lord, it is not so with Him! I love that passage in which it is written, "I have not spoken in secret, in the dark places of the earth. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek you My face in vain." There are no mental reservations and Jesuitical equivocations with God—there is nothing in His secret purpose which will contradict the promise which He has given.

When He says to the wicked, "You shall surely die," He means it. But when He says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool," He means it. And when He says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,

and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," it is not mere talk. It is reality. He means it. He is "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." There is truth in what He says, and He fulfils it. Oh, how many of us there are here who can tell of the pardoning mercy of God! We have been forgiven! We have been saved! We sought the Lord and He heard us! We cried unto Him and He answered us! We came before Him with no plea except the blood of Jesus and He said, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." Blessed be His name! His promises are true!

Now, child of God, I want you to note this upon the tablets of your heart. Be sure of it! For on your assurance of God's truthfulness very much depends. You cannot call out to God and be accepted if you have any suspicion of the Divine veracity, for, "without faith it is impossible to please Him." Do not play with God's promises! Do not say, "I *hope* they are true." You have no business to *hope* about it. They *are* true! Do not go with a promise on your lips and say, "Lord, I sometimes hope that this will be fulfilled." No, but say, "Lord, I know You cannot lie. You have said it and You will do it. As the pitcher hangs on the nail, so do I hang upon Your truth." God deserves to be treated with unbounded confidence. Sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than one promise of our God shall fall to the ground!—

***"He will not His great Self deny;
A God all truth can never lie;
As well might be His being quit
As break His oath or word forget."***

Now, as He is thus true to His secret purposes and true to His promises, I may add that *He is true to all His published Word* which He has made known to us in Holy Scripture. The Bible, having in it testimonies from God, is not a book for yesterday, nor shall it be merely a book for today, but for all time! It stands and must stand fast forever. Did the Law condemn sin? It condemns it still! Did the Gospel provide pardon 1,800 years ago? It does so still! Is there a promise that believers shall be saved? They are saved still! Is there a declaration that unbelievers shall be damned? Damned they must be, for that Word can never alter! Of every gracious declaration of the Most High we may sing—

***"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines,
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines."***

Every Word of God is true and stands fast like the pillars of Heaven! Neither can it ever be changed—rest assured of this.

Further, let me assure you, tonight, that *God is true in every relation that He sustains*. Is He a King? The kingcraft of God is not like that of many princes who think that their ambassadors ought to be sent abroad to tell lies for the good of their countrymen at home. No, there are no deceptions, tricks or plots with the court of Heaven! Nothing of what is called finesse and intrigue enter into the government of God! It is all straightforward with Him and so plain and clear that it baffles villainy, countermines

the mining of deceit and makes the diviners mad! O blessed King upon Your throne, Your courtiers are men of clean hands who love the Truths of God in their hearts! They dwell with You, but as for liars and deceivers, You have said that they shall be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The Lord will be true as a *Judge*. When you and I come to be tried before Him there will be no bribes taken. There will be no inducing of witnesses to commit perjury, no twisting of the law. In righteousness shall He judge the world and His people with equity, for He is just and true in all His ways and will, by no means, clear the guilty. He will only clear those whom He has made righteous through the righteousness of His Son. Blessed be His name, He is true as a *Father*. Many fathers are bad fathers—hard, forgetful, selfish—we pity the children who have such parents. They are not fathers at all, in the true sense of the word. But God is a true father, pitying and compassionate, helping and loving and providing for His children.

And He is a true *friend*. There are friends in the world of a sad sort. Friends? Perhaps we have a dozen of them—friends while we have a shilling—but they leave us when our purse is empty, or we are under a cloud. “A friend in need is a friend, indeed,” says our proverb, and such a friend is God, for, oh, how He helps the helpless! How the widow and the fatherless, and those that have no helper, look up to Him! And how in our despair, when we are sorely pressed and crushed under a burden of trouble, we have turned to Him and He has helped us, truly helped us, for He is a practical Friend. But I should tire you if I went through all the relationships in which God sustains us—only I sum up all by saying that He is true and thorough in them all.

There is no pretence or mockery with Him. And I will close this head by saying that *God is true to every man, to every woman in the world*. When you get to the end of life you will find that everything that God said is true. You may have doubted it, but experience will prove it. You may call Him a liar, as we proved that unbelievers do, this morning, but you will find Him true—true to your regret if you die rejecting Him, but assuredly true in all respects. Some dare to charge God with favoritism and I do not know what they will *not* say. Such things have I heard said about the living God that I will not defile my lips by repeating them. But, Sinner, you will find Him to be impartial. Your judgement before God will be so just that you, yourself, will agree with it!

Though it sends you down to Hell, you will be obliged, by your speechless confusion, to confess that God has kept His Word with you and has dealt out impartial justice. You will not at any time be able to turn round upon Him and say, “This is not what was written in Your Bible. This is not what Your ministers told me. This is not what my conscience tells me should be.” No, no, but as it is written, so shall you find it! Do not risk the Lord’s driving you forever from His Presence, for if you die in unbelief He will do so. If you reject Him, He will reject you. And if you despise His Son, He will despise you. If you will live and die impenitent and unbelieving, you shall be driven from His Presence into outer darkness, where there

shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—and He has told you so!

I sometimes pity persons who are brought up before the magistrates for breaking some of our new laws which the magistrates, themselves, cannot administer and which nobody can understand. The magistrate says, “It is clear you have broken a law,” and the man replies, “I did not know it.” I pity a man in that case! But you *do know* the Law of the Lord! God’s Laws have been published, fastened up in your conscience and printed in the Bible which is in all your houses! And so if you sin against His commands, you sin against light and knowledge. And you will be utterly without excuse when He calls you to His bar.

There I leave this great Truth of God, having illustrated it in a considerable number of ways. *God is true.*

II. The second head was to be that GOD IS TRUE IN ALL GENERATIONS. This fact breaks up into three heads—in the *past*, in the *present* and in the *future*. I should have to detain you here for a long time if I were to go into that first head at any length. God has been true *in the past*. The whole of history, sacred and profane, goes to prove that. Take the beginning of our race. God warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they should surely die. He indicated to them, therein, a *spiritual* death which signifies separation from God. In the day they ate thereof they *did* die—die as to all spiritual life and Adam, instead of welcoming God, went to hide himself among the trees of the garden and felt that he was naked.

God then told him that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread and that his wife should bring forth her children with bitter pangs. Has it not been so? Every man’s labor and every woman’s travail prove that God is true. But then the Lord came in with a voice of mercy and He said, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” and Jesus came, the woman’s promised Seed, and He has bruised the head of Satan and proclaimed to us salvation through the Man, the Mediator, who is also God over all, blessed forever. The first promise has been kept. Years rolled on and God destroyed the world with a flood. You know the story. God said He would and He did it. He told Noah to go into the ark and He would save him. Noah went in and God saved him.

But when he came out, perhaps Noah was half afraid the world would be destroyed again and, when a shower began to fall, he did not know but what the sluices of Heaven had been pulled up again and that once more the floods might come. Presently he saw in the skies that wonderful sight which I think none of us can look upon without delight—a rainbow, a bow of many colors, not a bloodstained bow, but a bow of joy, many-colored, like streamers of delight—a bow not turned downwards to shoot at us, but upwards, as if we might shoot our prayers up to God upon it. A bow without an arrow, to show that God has not come out to war with men.

And what did God say? “I, behold, even I, do set My bow in the cloud, for behold I make a covenant with the world that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, shall never fail. And I will no more de-

stroy the earth with a flood.” Has He not kept it? Have you not felt winter’s cold going through your bones? Did you not sweat with the heat of summer? Did He not say that He would give you the harvest time and the heat? He has kept His Covenant! Every time you see the rainbow in Heaven, no, every time you walk upon the earth and find that it is not transformed into one dreary, dreadful, all-devouring sea, you may say to yourself, “God is true.”

The world went on and there came an Abraham into the world. And God said, “Get you hence, from your kindred, and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will give it to you and to your seed after you.” Abraham believed God and went into a land that he knew nothing of. He found it full of inhabitants and he dwelt among them in tents, wandering up and down. It did not look likely that God would give him that land, nor to his seed after him, for he had no children and he was more than a hundred years old. And his wife was well stricken in years. He had to wait a long time, but Isaac came, at last, and made glad that household.

Four hundred and fifty years went on. Abraham had been gathered to his fathers and yet there was not an Israelite in all Canaan! Not a foot of that land belonged to them except the cave of Machpelah in which the dead Patriarch still lay. But the time came for Israel to come up into the promised land and they did come. God sent down Moses and told Pharaoh to let His people go, for the time was come and they must go up to their own land. Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I will not obey His voice, neither will I let Israel go.” But he had to change his tune and bow before the stammering man who spoke for God!

God chastened and plagued Egypt till, at last, they let Israel go—and they did go, though the Red Sea rolled before them—and Pharaoh’s host pursued them! They did go, and though the wilderness yielded them no meat, the heavens dropped with manna! They went through the great howling wilderness and failed not for drought, for the rocks gushed with rivers! They did go till they came to Canaan and there they were called to fight with Anakim and giants. And they threw down the battlements of their cities! And they smote the Canaanites with great slaughter, took possession of the land and dwelt therein—every man under his vine and under his fig tree—for the Lord had said it, and the Lord fulfilled it.

He gave the land to them and they possessed it in due time. Thus, you see, I might keep on with history as long as you pleased, but it all goes to show that if God says it, He does it. He said that Edom should become a desolation and the traveler can hardly pass through Petra at this present day. He said that Tyre should become a place for the mending of nets and it is still so in its desolateness. He said that Egypt should be the meanest of all the nations and who that knows Egypt, where the stick is used on almost every man, does not know that no people yield so meanly to a despot’s will as the Egyptian race? Everything has happened that the Lord has spoken up to this moment.

Now, instead of taking you back to ancient or modern history, I would like to take you to the history of your mother or of your grandmother. I think of my dear old grandfather and of what he used to say to me. If he were here tonight—I am glad he is not, because he is in Heaven, and that is a much better place for him—but if he could come from Heaven and could talk as he used to do when he was here on earth, he would say, “Ah, my boy, I *did* find Him a faithful God.” He had a large family and a very small income, but he loved his Lord and he would not have given up his preaching of the Gospel for anything, not even for an imperial crown!

He had told me often how the Lord provided for him. He had a little farm to get his living upon it and he had a cow which used to give milk for his many children. And one day when he came up to the cow it fell back with the staggers and died. Grandmother said, “James, how will God provide for the dear children now? What shall we do for milk?” “Mother,” he said, “God said He would provide, and I believe that He could send us 50 cows if He pleased.” It so happened that on that day a number of gentlemen were meeting in London. Persons whom Grandfather did not know were sitting as a committee for the distribution of money to poor ministers, and they had given it to all who had asked for it.

My grandfather had never asked for any. He liked to earn his own money. He did not send in any petition or appeal. Well, after the gentlemen had distributed to all who had asked, there was five pounds over and they were considering what they should do with this balance. “Well,” said one, “there is a Mr. Spurgeon down at Stambourne, in Essex, a poor minister. He stands in need of five pounds.” “Oh,” said another, “don’t send him five pounds. I will add five to it. I know him. He is a worthy man.” “No,” said another, “don’t send him 10 pounds. I will give another five pounds if somebody else will put a fourth five to it.”

The next morning came a letter to Grandfather with nine pence postage due! Grandmother did not like to pay out nine pence for a letter, but there was 20 pounds in it, and as my grandfather opened it he said, “Now, can’t you trust God about an old cow?” These things I tell you, and you smile, and well you may, but, oh my soul *laughs*, and my face laughs on both sides, when I think how faithful God has been to me! I can tell you about my grandfather, but I will not tell you about myself, for that would be almost as long as the history I spoke of. From the day that I left my father’s house to this day, if there is no other man in the world that can speak of the faithfulness of God, I can. I must, I will and none shall stop me of this glorying.

He has never lied unto me, or failed me, or forsaken me, but has kept His Word to the moment in every respect. No, I sometimes think He has gone beyond His Word and done for me exceedingly abundantly above what I understood Him to promise. He has exceeded my expectations even when my expectations have been at full tide. If I were to invite the Brothers round us, one by one, to get up and were to say “Brother, has God kept His Word to you in the past? Speak as you have found Him,” they would all testify to the Lord’s truth! And, oh, it is not merely the Brothers,

but there are many aged woman here—there are many widows here—there are many poor tried Believers here, and as I look round I know the stories of some of you and I know what you would say. It would be, “Blessed be His holy name, not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.” There is the testimony of history, ancient and modern. There is the testimony of the biographies of our ancestors and the testimony of our autobiographies as well. God is true, glory be to His name!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I was to have said next, that *God is still true*. Not only *was* He true, but He *is* true—He is true tonight. He is true tonight! If you want to know that, go down many of our streets in London tonight. Go to the casual ward of the workhouse, if you like, and just pick out the vagrants—those that are in rags and poverty. What do you find? In nine cases out of 10, how did they get there? What brought them to poverty? Drink and laziness! And what did God say? “The drunkard and the sluggard shall come to poverty.” God said they would and they do. He says, “The sluggard shall clothe himself with rags.” Every time I see a sluggard in rags, I say to myself, “God is true. He said it would come to that.” He tells us that sin will bring sorrow, and do you not see it everywhere? Most of the misery in the world can be traced to some sin or other—some direct breach of the Divine commands. God is true.

On the other hand, look, tonight, on many a happy face. If I were to question the man who owns that happy face—What makes you so happy?—he would say, “Because my sins are forgiven me.” “How came that about?” “I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and I had the promise that my sins should be forgiven me, and they have been.” “You had a burden once, had you not?” “Yes.” “And you have got rid of it? Did you go to Jesus Christ’s Cross with that burden?” “Yes, and I got rid of it just as He said I would.” “Did you do anything more than that?” “No, I simply trusted Jesus. He said I should have peace and I have it.” “Well, but how about your daily troubles? Do you have any?” “Oh, yes. I do.” “I ask you that question because Jesus said, ‘In the world you shall have tribulation.’ Do you find it so?” “That I do,” says one.

But then He said, “In Me you shall have peace.” Do you find it so, Brothers and Sisters? How was it with you last week when you had all those troubles? Did you enjoy peace, even then? Did you hear Him say, “Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God: believe, also, in Me”? And did you believe in Him and find at once that you could cast your burden upon God? Oh, yes, the saints will testify unanimously that whenever they trust God it is well with their souls! And tonight, as well as in the past, we have a faithful God!

Have we present tonight any friend in great distress? You have forgotten it, I suppose, during the service, but now you remember that the brunt of the storm will be upon you tomorrow. Does this alarm you? You are a child of God and do you think that your Father will leave you in the time of need? No, I will not ask you whether you think so, because it would be a crying shame if you did your Lord such an injustice. If we

never doubt our God till we have a cause for it, it will be a long while first. "But it is a new trouble, Sir." Yes, but He who was your God of old will help you through the new trial. Go to Him again. "Ah, but I dread the loss of a very dear and precious one." Yes, but as His will is, so should *your* will be. God makes all things work together for good. Do you not believe it? All things are moving according to the decree of goodness and wisdom—and you must not doubt it. Like Jacob, you sometimes say, "All these things are against me," but they are not, they are all *for* you. God is ordering all for the best.

Now, last of all, *God will be true*. I do not know how far we have to go before we shall reach our journey's end, but this I do know, the whole of the road that we have to travel is paved with love and faithfulness, and we need not be afraid. We shall soon lie down upon our beds and fall asleep in death. I bless God for that. I said to a Brother the other day, "So-and-So has gone Home," and the Brother replied, "Well, where else should He go?" Where should a child go, when the day is over, but home? It is very sweet to think that the Lord's own children shall all go Home, by-and-by. He has promised that we shall be with Him where He is, and we shall find it so! Only, like the Queen of Sheba, we shall be astonished when we get there and we shall say, "The half has not been told us."

We shall leave these poor bodies behind in the grave for a while, but they will not be lost. They are old companions of ours on the journey of life and, though the worms devour them, yet *in our flesh* we shall see God! The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and, body and soul, one perfect man shall "behold the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off." God has said so, and it will be so! We shall leave the Church behind us, but God will take care of His Church. We need not fret about that—He will not fail her nor forsake her. We shall leave the world behind us and the world is very wicked, but it will not prevail against the Truth of God, for the Lord has said the gates of Hell shall not prevail against His Church, nor shall they.

We need not be worrying about what will happen when Mr. So-and-So dies. People are always putting the question, "What will they do when their minister is gone?" Do? Trust in God as they did before! *God is alive!* Martin Luther once said to his friend, when he was fretting and worrying, "When will you leave off trying to govern the world?" And we may say the same to one another when we are anxious and fretful. God does not need any of us. We think ourselves mightily important but we really are no more important to God's plans than the caterpillar in the kitchen garden is to a Napoleon when he is marching his armies across a continent! We are nothings and nobodies, except when God pleases to use us—and He can do better without us than with us many times, for we get in His way.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, matters are all right, for they are in God's hands! The everlasting God lives and He will work His purposes, for He is the true God! The heathen will be converted to Christ, for the Lord has said, "Ask of Me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." "As I live," says the

Lord, “surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” It shall be done! It must be done. Rest sure of it! “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” Antichrist on yonder seven hills must be thrown down—the crescent of Mahomet must wane—the gods of the heathen must be utterly abolished. *Must*, I say, for is it not written, “He must reign till His enemies are made His footstool”?

I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet and, therefore, I do not dare set up a theory of futurity, but this one thing I know—“The Lord reigns”—and the Lord will accomplish His purposes and preserve His Church in the world. The Truth of God shall never die and Christ’s Throne shall never shake, for the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Thus have we tried to declare the truthfulness of God. How short of the mighty theme have we fallen! These two words and we have done. Since God is true, you children of God, why do you mistrust Him? Since God is true, you sinners, why do you belie Him by your unbelief? Echo answers, “Why?” And so we leave it. And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit be glory, forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—*Psalm 85.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 100 (VERS. IV), 193,1,009.**

THE BAPTIST BULLETIN

THE PILGRIM FATHERS—This is actually a reprint of Brown’s work, published in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. It would be good for every American (assuming that he would read with an open mind) to read this account of the noble band so indelibly tied in with the origins of our nation. It is interesting to read quotations such as this—“For that the propagation of the Gospel is a thing we do profess above all to be our aim in settling this plantation, we have been careful to make plentiful provision of godly ministers, by whose faithful preaching, godly conversation and exemplary life we trust not only those of our own nation will be built up in the knowledge of God, but also the Indians may, in God’s appointed time, be reduced to the obedience of the Gospel of Christ.” Would that such a purpose would be characteristic of our nation as a whole today!

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

A HOLY AND HOMELY RESOLVE

NO. 1230

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

***“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will You come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”
Psalm 101:2.***

THE 100th Psalm is perhaps the best known song of praise in the Word of God. To sing the “Old Hundredth” has been a habit of worshippers from generation to generation—the custom of every succeeding age as it is still our custom. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all you lands.” Now, it is somewhat significant that the 101st, which immediately follows it, should be such a practical Psalm—all about how a man should walk in his house, how he should put away sin from his very eyes and keep himself from evil companionship. What does it seem to teach us but this, that the best praise is *purity* and that the best music in the world is *holiness*?

If we would extol the Lord, the best way to do it is to labor to keep His mind before us and to walk in His commandments. The sweetest sounds that ever came from the heaving bellows or the organ pipes can never have so much melody in them as a *life* that is tuned to the example of Christ! If we obey, we praise. He sings best who works best for God. There is no praise that excels that which is like the praise of angels, “who do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.”

I suppose that this Psalm was written by David about the time when he was invested with regal authority and took the reins of government in his hands. Three times, you will remember, he was anointed king. First, in the house of his father, Jesse the Bethlehemite, when, “Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren” (1 Sam. 16:13). Secondly, at Hebron, when, “The men of Judah came and there they anointed him king over the house of Judah” (2 Sam. 2:4). And thirdly, when all the elders of Israel came to the king 7 ½ years afterwards, “And David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel” (2 Sam. 5:3).

With the solemn responsibilities of government in view he sat himself down and considered how he would behave himself when he should come to the throne. And this was the resolution which he passed and labored, by the Grace of God, to carry out. It has been well said that in this Psalm David was merry and wise. He was merry, for he said, “I will *sing* of mercy and judgment.” And he repeated his resolution to sing by saying, “Unto You, O Lord, will I sing.” Such merriment as that were well for all of us to cultivate! We cannot sing too much when we sing unto the Lord! And,

provided that the songs are the songs of Zion, the more of them we sing and the merrier we are in singing them, the better.

But he was merry and *wise*, for, having spiritual merriment, he also sought to have spiritual holiness. And so he passed this resolution—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Our meditation, then, will be of a practical character, and it will divide itself thus. First, in the text we have *a comprehensive resolution*—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Then, as if he were amazed at his resolve, feeling how much he had resolved to do and how little power he had to do it, we have, in the second place, *a devout ejaculation*—"O when will You come unto me?" But, still being firmly set upon his first hallowed resolution, he returns to it, again, and that leads us, in the third place, to notice *a particular application of his resolution*. He applies it to his own domestic household life—"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

May God the Holy Spirit, who alone can make us practically holy, help us, now, while we consider the holy resolutions before us.

I. WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE RESOLUTION THIS IS! "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." With a full knowledge of all the care and circumspection it entailed on himself—and with as clear an apprehension of all the risks of popularity it involved among his subjects—this was David's *deliberate choice*. Influenced by the Grace of God he, like his son Solomon after him, chose *wisdom* as the principal thing and accounted the fear of the Lord as the choicest safeguard.

Many a young man, if he were about to be promoted to a throne, would say, "I will behave myself grandly. In the dignified position to which I am about to be lifted up, I will be every inch a king. I will make them know how stately is my bearing, how sovereign is my word, how nobly I can play my part, how well a crown befits my head. There shall be no Shah or Sultan more dignified than I."

David might have chosen an empty conceit, but he did better, he elected a discreet conduct. He said not, "I will behave myself grandly," but, "I will behave myself *wisely*." There are many, too, who, having David's opportunity, would have said, "I will have a merry time of it! Once let me mount to Israel's throne, I will give myself up to the full indulgence of every passion. There shall be nothing that my soul shall lust for but what my hand shall grasp. Let me have horses and chariots in abundance! Give me singing men and singing women. I will get myself all manner of the delights of the flesh with whatever enjoyments I can devise. I will behave myself right joyously when once I come into power."

Not so David. His deliberate choice was neither grandeur nor pleasure, but wisdom. "I will behave myself *wisely*." Now, Brothers and Sisters, there must be some of you just starting in life. Before that household is formed, sit down and consider what is the best way of action. Or, perhaps, though you have not yet left your father's house and commenced business for yourself, you contemplate doing so. This, then, is the time to take

stock of your *moral* resolutions. Or, it may be you are in such a condition that you are now starting afresh, commencing life anew, though perhaps farther advanced in years and experience of the world than the young man I have just referred to.

Now, how will you act? What will you choose? You shall be happy, indeed, if the Grace of God leads you to say, "I choose wisdom, the truest and best wisdom. Be it mine to live as God would have me live—understanding His Testimonies and yielding obedience to His Laws. Gladly would I live as the Incarnate Wisdom lived when He was here below. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." I say it was David's deliberate choice. Oh, that every young man and woman here would emulate his example! Oh, that every one of us in our present condition and in full view of whatever prospects may be opening up before us, might be led now, once and for all, with the full consent of all our powers, to say, "Whatever happens to me, this is my resolution—I desire to behave myself *wisely* in a *perfect* way. Should others run after gain or fame, ease or luxury, let them cry, 'Who will show me any good?' Let them make *self* their idol, or follow after gold. As for me, my soul is made up to this one purpose and to seek but this one thing—I would be wise, my God, by Your Grace, and behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

This deliberate choice of David was, no doubt, *suggested by a sense of necessity*. He felt that he needed to behave himself wisely. He was to be a *king*—and a foolish king is no ordinary fool! It used to be a proverb some three or four hundred years ago that every king was born a fool. And in truth they generally so acted as to merit the disgrace. The common people were not too severe in the judgment they passed on their rulers! But, alas, for the misfortunes of a country whose king is a fool! You know what troubles came upon the Jewish nation through Rehoboam and others who were too foolish to sway the scepter righteously.

David could hardly fail to remember that as he succeeded the dynasty of Saul, Saul's descendants would survive and seek to regain the crown—therefore he would need to act very discreetly to preserve himself from the pretenders and their faction. He knew that enemies would be sure to track his course to see if they could find any fault with him. He needed, therefore, to have great wisdom if he was to walk aright. "Well," you say, "but the lesson concerns people of rank and pedigree—it does not concern *us*—we are not going to be kings." Granted. That may be so, but you need wisdom in every grade of society, however lofty or however lowly it may be. The humblest waiting maid, as a Christian, needs wisdom to do her duty and adorn her position.

Those entrusted with children need peculiar wisdom, for a child's mind may be warped by a servant as well as by a superior teacher. Any little misfortune happening to a child through your negligence may do it serious damage. If you are a tradesman, you need wisdom in such an age as this, with competition so fierce and temptation so abundant. And I am

sure, if you are a father and you wish to see your children trained up in the fear of God, you have a task before you that might tax the wisdom of a Solomon! It takes true wisdom to judge this boy's disposition and to understand that girl's character, so as neither to be too severe nor too lenient.

Much wisdom is needed to know how to deal with each child just as a gardener deals with each separate plant in the conservatory—the one needing dry heat and the other needing moisture—and not injuring or destroying either by applying the wrong treatment. Many have been injudicious with their children, to their own anguish of heart in later days. O parents and heads of households! Masters of factories! Managers of business houses and you, too—you working men and servants—you all need wisdom and you must have it, or you will make shipwreck. If the fisherman's little boat is wrecked through mismanagement, it is as bad for him, especially if he is drowned in it, as if he had lost the greatest steamship that ever plowed the waters and perished with the vessel. It is his all! And *your* all is embarked in the momentous voyage of life. If you make shipwreck of the life that God has given you, and the humble position in which He has placed you, it is your all, and to you it is as much a ruin as if you had been a monarch! You need to behave yourselves wisely whatever your vocation in the world may be.

Moreover, David recognized that *to behave one's self wisely, one must be holy*, for he says, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Observe that. He felt he could not be wise if he were unacquainted with the true ideal of absolute unblemished perfection! Wisdom lay only there. Folly might suggest a specious but vacillating policy. That, however, would be an imperfect way. Always remember this. In common life the wisest thing is the right, straight, undeviating course. The right thing is always the wisest. Sometimes it looks as if it is really necessary to go off the straight line—(you mean to come back again, you know)—just to take a short cut across Bye-Path Meadow and leave the road, for it is covered with flint stones. Surely, you think, it must be better to just cut that corner off.

It *seems* so. It *never is*. The tale of Bye-Path Meadow is a book of lamentations from beginning to end. Thousands have tried it, but always with the same result. The wise man will keep along the King's Highway, cost what it may. We have heard of young men who, under extraordinary pressure, have felt as if they must relax integrity a little to obey a master and thus keep the position they hold. Well, from that time forward their nose has been to the grindstone as long as they have lived! And if they had had the manliness, let alone the godliness, to do the *right* thing, it would have been the turning point in their entire career and have saved them from a thousand sorrows!

But you do not need to be a philosopher and consult huge books to discover how you ought to act under any circumstances. The way to act in *every* case is to fear God and keep His commandments. Constantly I re-

ceive letters asking special counsel for peculiar emergencies. It is to me an everyday annoyance. Persons tell me of painful dilemmas in which they are placed and frequently wish me to reply to such and such a place, without giving their names. Now, they need not ever write to me for *indulgences*. I have no power to grant them! All trouble might be spared. Straight ahead!—that is the way to go in every case! If the conscience of man is elastic, the Law of the Lord is inflexible.

“What, and lose all I have?” Yes. You will lose less by doing right than you can possibly lose by doing wrong, for if a man were to lose all the property he possessed by a right action, it were better than that he should lose his *soul* by deliberately choosing to avoid poverty or acquire wealth instead of seeking to abide in the favor of God. “I will behave myself wisely,” says David. But he knew that the perfect way, the way of right, the way of God, was the way of *wisdom*. Prince Bismarck may have a long head and a far-seeing eye. And he may be able to dictate the shrewdest policy under the most distracting complications. But were you to consult him in any strait of your own, he could not tell you anything that is wiser than this—to do justice and righteousness and truth towards your fellow men, and to walk humbly with your God.

Keep to the eternal principle which God has revealed! Keep to the sacred instinct which the Holy Spirit sows in every regenerate heart. Keep to the example of your Lord and Master who has bought you with His precious blood! Should it cost you trouble—should it cost you your *life*—“it were better to enter into *eternal life* crippled or maimed than, having two eyes or two feet, to be cast into Hell fire.” And, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” The perfect way is the wise way and the wise way the perfect.

David seems to have felt that this resolution would cost him a great deal of effort and strength. He does not look upon it as a light thing. He weighed it in all its bearings before he said with so much emphasis I WILL. “I will—behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” Though he does not say as much, he fully implies determination *without* power. “My will or desire is to behave myself wisely. My dependence is on Him whose cause I espouse.” The next clause seems to say, “I must have more Grace and I must get it, too. I must have more help than ever I can find in myself—I must use all the means of Grace. I must call in God to be my Helper in this matter, for, whatever it may cost, I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.”

He felt that character was too momentous to be messed with—that it must be of sterling metal—or else it were mere dross and that the actions of a man’s life were too signal to be insignificant. It shocks me—I cannot help saying it—it shocks me to my very soul when I hear persons talk about the Doctrines of Grace, which are dear to my heart as life itself, but uphold the principles while they ignore the practices of godliness, for their lives are inconsistent with their professions! I have known professors that

never talk so well about theology as they do when they are half drunk—and never seem to be so sound in the faith as when they can hardly stand on their legs. They will tell you that good works are nothing at all, and they glory in Free Grace.

Ah, dear Friends, God save you from being Mr. Talkative who can discuss at great length upon Free Grace but has never felt the power of it! If the Grace of God does not save a man from drunkenness, from lascivious conversation, from lies in trade and lewdness in jests, from slandering your fellow man and scowling at your fellow Christians, then I think the Grace of God must be a very different thing from what I read of in this precious Book! Either my judgment is at fault or your pretensions are spurious. The Grace of God, when it does come, comes freely as the Sovereign distinguishing *gift* of Heaven—but it makes men to differ and it makes them differ in holiness of character. If a man shall say to me, “Character—I don’t care anything about that,” I am not quick to answer him, neither need anybody care much about him.

I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that he did not believe in a man’s religion if his cat and his dog were not the better for it—if everybody in his house were not the better for it! If it does not make you, as a master, gentler and kinder to your servants. If it does not make you, as a servant, more respectful and more diligent. If it does not make you, as tradesmen, more scrupulous and more honest. If it does not make you, as a workman, less of an eye-servant. If it does not, in fact, make you more *moral* (that is the least thing to say of it)—if it does not make you more *holy* (that is the higher thing, by far), you may well question whether you know anything about the Grace of God in your soul at all!

David did not say, “Well, I am washed. He has made me whiter than snow and He has created a new heart and a right spirit within me—and that is quite enough. As to my outward actions, what do they signify? We are not saved by works, you know, it is all of Grace.” Ah, but that is not the language of David or of any other legitimate child of God. It is this—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” I have heard say that where they talk a great deal about good works you will not find them. But I hope among those of us who talk much about Grace, good works will always be found, for where good works do *not* follow upon faith, such faith as there seems to be is dead, indeed!

God grant you, dear Friends, to take this as the resolution of every child of God—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.”

II. But now the text is interrupted. There is a break. There is a piece inlaid, as it were, of a different metal. It IS AN EJACULATION. “O, when will You come unto me?” Many inspired writers, without diverging from their train of thought, interline their purpose with a prayer. There is an old proverb that, “kneeling never spoils silk stockings.” Prayer, to the preacher, is like provender to the horse. It strengthens and cheers him to go forward. As the scribe halts to mend his pen, or the mower to wet his

scythe without loss of time, but rather with more facility to do his work, so you expedite, instead of hinder your business by stopping in the middle of it to offer a word of prayer.

So here it is written, "O, when will You come unto me?" And he means by that, "Lord, I want to be wise. Come and teach me! I want to behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Lord, come and sanctify me! I know not how to act till You instruct me. Open my lips that I may show forth Your praise. Guide my feet that I may run in Your commands. Keep my eyes that they look not upon sin. Hold back my hand from iniquity. When will You come unto me? I need the influence of Your Grace to guide me in Your ways. Lord, come and teach me."

Then he meant further, "Lord, come and assist me. If there is any holiness to which I have not yet attained, come, Holy Spirit, lift me up unto it. If there is any sin which I have not conquered, O, come, You conquering Spirit of holiness, and overcome the evil. When will You come unto me? I am feeble, I can do nothing, but when I have Your mighty aid I become strong and can perform all things. When will You come unto me?" It is a crying of his soul after Divine teaching, Divine direction, Divine assistance. Nor less, I believe, is it a yearning after Divine fellowship. You know, Beloved, we never walk aright unless we walk with God. As I have said that holiness is wisdom, so let me say that *communion* is the mother of holiness. We must see God if we are to be like God.

And if from day to day we can be content without a word from the mouth of God, go to business without prayer, come home and go to our beds without seeking the face of our Father who is in Heaven—then, to walk wisely is impossible! The neglect of prayer is a fatal flaw in any life. Communion with God is so essential and the disregard of it is such a folly, that it is simply ridiculous for the negligent man to talk about behaving himself wisely in a perfect way. Godliness is the soul of life. Get near to God—that is the thing! If we walk with Him we walk in the light. But if we get away from Him we walk in the darkness. It cannot be otherwise—and he that walks in the darkness will stumble. He may not know why he stumbles, but stumble he will. Only he who walks in the light will be able to pick his steps and verify the blessed fact that, "If we walk in the light as God is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

And thus we are enabled to walk wisely in a perfect way when the light comes to us. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O, when will You come unto me?" appears to me like an expression of holy awe, as if he said, "Lord, I had need behave myself aright, for You are coming. I am a steward. You are my Master and You are coming to say, 'Give an account of your stewardship.' I am a servant. I need mind what I am about and how I acquit myself, for my Master can see me and my Master is on the way to say to me, 'What have you done with your talent? How have you laid it out?' When will You come unto me? It makes me feel a trembling in

my soul and brings the tears into my eyes when I think of having to go before my Lord to give Him my account. Such a stewardship as mine will not easily be accounted for.”

I often envy George Fox, the Quaker, who, as he died, used these remarkable words, “I am clear, I am clear, I am clear!” Doubtless, he meant that he was “clear of the blood of all men.” Grand thing for a minister to be able to say! It will need all the Grace that God can give a man to be able to say that! Now I ask you, fathers of families, if you were called upon at once, without further notice, to give in your account, can you tell the Lord you are clear about your children? Mothers, can you say you are clear about your boys and girls as to the way you have brought them up—as to your efforts for their souls?

Masters, mistresses, are you clear about your servants? Young men, young women, are you clear about those that you work with and in whose houses you live? If the Lord were to say to you, “Come, now, I have entrusted you with a talent, how have you used it?”—are there not some of you who would have to go and take up that napkin in which you have hidden away till it has grown rusty? “O, when will You come unto me?” seems to me a question full of solicitude. Lord, it may be You will come all of a sudden with surprise, for You have told me that in such an hour as I think not You will appear. Am I ready? Am I able to give a satisfactory account as to what I have done, as Your servant, in my general walk and conversation?

Come, let me press these thoughts upon myself and then upon you! “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way,” and well I may, since Your eye is on me, O my God, and Your day is coming when I must be put into the balances! And if I am found wanting, terrible must be my doom, for other eyes than mine shall search my heart, and other scales than I am able to use shall give the final test—and settle once and for all my endless state. God grant you to order your lives by His Grace! You cannot do so without the power of the Holy Spirit. O, that whenever the Lord shall come you may meet Him with joy!

III. Now to our third point. After a parenthesis of devotion, he returns with more intense earnestness to his resolution. IN A MOST PRACTICAL MANNER HE CONCENTRATES HIS AIM—“I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” With his house or household in view, for which he felt a deep responsibility and a yearning anxiety, he applies himself with a delicate consideration to the state of his own heart. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” A very wise thing. Elisha healed the springs when the currents ran foul. It is of no use attempting to cleanse the courses when the fountain is corrupt. The thing is to heal the springs. The heart needs putting right. When the heart is right, then all will be right.

If anywhere we show our hearts, it is at *home*. There we wear our hearts upon our sleeves. Outside, in the world, it is not safe to show too

much of our heart. There are some of us who always say everything that is uppermost. We cannot help it. We have not learned to be guarded yet, and we have had our knuckles rapped pretty dreadfully, sometimes, for our unguardedness. No doubt there are many men of a reserved disposition who go through the world more easily than those of a more open-minded character. At home everybody should be open-hearted and transparent. Hence the necessity that if we are to walk aright at home, the matter should begin with the heart being sound.

If any man were to say to you, "I mean to be a good husband, a good father"—if any woman shall say, "I mean to be a good mistress," or, "a good servant," that will not do unless you understand that the *heart* must, first of all, be altered. If the heart is right, other things will surely follow in their place. Now, the heart, if we are to walk rightly, must show itself in the house. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The heart must be perfect. And then we must show our heart in our *actions*. I think it is a miserable thing when a man does not open his heart in the sacred precincts of his own home. I can understand his restraining his feelings abroad, for he may be conscious that he is among rivals rather than friends—but when at home that restraint is unbecoming.

You know the sort of man whose hospitality is repulsive. I have been to see him at his house. I dare say you are welcome, but you would not think you were by the sinister greeting you receive when he shakes hands with you! His hand drops into your hand just like a dead fish. You talk with him and he is perfectly indifferent. When he is most friendly there is not any freedom in his conversation. Well, now, see the way in which he treats his wife. No love. He is afraid of spoiling her. I recollect very well going to a house where I sat with the husband and I heard a gentle tap at the door. His Lordship said, "Come in."

Who should enter but his wife? What a delightful picture of obedience! Knocking at a husband's door occurred to me as not the style of thing that most of us are accustomed to, or would like to see. I very soon perceived that she was the principal *servant* in the house. That was all he accounted her—and she had learned to form no higher estimate of herself. The man had not a heart. We talked about a son that was dead. Well, he seemed to regret that he was gone—he was a very good help to him in his business. That seemed to be the principal point about his deceased son—he was a great help to him in his business. No heart! No heart! No heart! No heart!

But it is worse when you see a *woman* with no heart. And there are some. And if they are Christian people—well, I often wonder at the Lord's choice of *any* of us—but I certainly wonder when He chooses any of that sort! They do not seem to be the stuff out of which you can make a Christian. No feeling—hard "Gradgrindy" sort of people. They seem to think that people are just so many machine wheels to grind round at a regular rate. And the strong-minded woman simply puts a little oil, now and then, oc-

asionally, as a trade, to the machinery and administers it just in that style. No heart!

Now David did not mean to go through the world in this fashion. O, a house is all the better for having a heart inside it! And a man is a man—and he is more like God when there is a heart inside his ribs. When he gets home the children feel that father has got a heart. And as they climb his knees and smother him with kisses, they delight to know that he has a *warm* heart! And when he greets his dear relatives, especially those that are part and parcel of himself, he has got a soul that goes beyond his own little self and is enlarged and inspires the whole of the family! O, give me heart, and that is what David meant when he said he would behave himself wisely. But when he was in his own house he would walk with a perfect heart. He would be hearty in everything he did and said.

Well, now, having noticed those two things—that the heart must be right, and that the heart must be expressed—the next thing is that the conduct at home must be well regulated. “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” The Christian man at home should be scrupulous in all departments within his house. We may have different rooms there, but in whatever room we are, we should seek to walk before God with a perfect heart. Ah, dear Friends, there are many professors that fail in this! I am not disposed to pry into your homes. I do not want to undertake the task. It would be a sad thing if it were part of a minister’s duty to be peeping through your keyholes, seeing how you act. Still, we have reason to fear that some people who pass current as saints abroad behave themselves like devils at home!

It used to be so and it is so, still, and you may depend upon it—the man is what he is at *home*. This is a simple but a crucial test of character. If a man does not make his family happy. If his example is not that of holiness in the domestic circle, he may make what pretension of godliness he likes, but his religion is base, worthless, mischievous. The sooner he gets rid of such a profession the better for himself, for then he may begin to know what he is and where he is, and seek the Lord in spirit and in truth. It is at *home* that the lack of true religion will do the most damage!

If you are a hypocrite and go out into the world, you will soon be found out—and the people who observe you will not be much influenced by your example. They will come to the conclusion that you are what you are, and they will treat you as such, and that will be the end of it. But that will not be so with little Master Johnny, who sees his father’s actions. He is not able to criticize, but he has a wonderful faculty for imitation. And, Mother, it is not likely that little Polly will begin to say, “Mother is inconsistent.” No, she does not know that, but she will take it for granted that mother is right and her character will be fashioned upon your pattern—and you will be injuring her for life unless the Grace of God wonderfully prevents it.

Why, at home, to our children, especially when they are young, we are, as it were, little gods! They take their law from us and their conduct is

shaped according to the pattern we set before them. Round the hearth, if anywhere, holiness ought to be conspicuous, for there, holiness is most beautiful, most useful and most productive. It is a blessed thing for some of us that we can look back upon a father's example and a mother's example with nothing but unalloyed gratitude to God for both. But there are others among you, who, in looking back, must say, "I thank God I was delivered from the evil influence to which I was subjected as a child." Do not let your child ever have to say that of you, dear Friend, but ask for Grace that in your own house you may walk with a perfect heart.

Surely, dear Friends, if we are not living in our households as we ought to do, this, above all common faults and infirmities, is one of the most disparaging and condemnatory marks with which we can possibly be judged! In the world we may be under some pressure, but at home we are left free, for every man's house is his castle and if, inside his own castle, he does not walk before God, then he stands condemned by the depravity of his temper and his habits! Outside, men are checked and kept within decent bounds by the example and the observation of their fellow men, so that they are not altogether what they seem—and they are partly regulated by what they wish to appear. Even when they are in Church they are under some restraint—they are constrained to show some deference to the place and the assembly. But at home they are altogether unshackled! They can think aloud, speak without premeditation, follow their own tastes and gratify their natural inclinations. There, therefore, if anywhere, the man is what he is!

Now you need not tell me what kind of appearance you will put on next Sunday morning. You need not tell me that! I would rather ask you to judge yourself by your deportment on Saturday night. I do not particularly ask you how you feel on Thursday night at this particular hour. How will you be at half-past nine? And how will you be tomorrow morning? What will you be to your servants, to your employers, to your children, to your neighbors? If God, by His Infinite Grace and the power of His Holy Spirit, helps you to walk with a perfect heart at such times and in such places, then will you be an honor to the Church of God and you will have a blessing upon your own soul.

Now, the things that I have talked of seem to be very homely, but, indeed, they are most important. I love to expound Christian doctrine! I love to open up the promises! This is all sweet work, but we must have the *precepts*. We shall never have a large increase to an unholy Church, or, if we do, that increase will be a curse instead of a blessing. I believe that the greatest power in the world, next to the ministry of the Word of God, is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the holy living of Christian families! Let us plant in this dark world garrisons of holy men and women with their children about them, and this will be a means whereby the world shall be conquered for Christ.

Ah, I may be addressing some who have no part or lot in true religion. It is just possible that they are at the heads of households and yet they may have never considered this question about walking wisely. Permit me to suggest to you how necessary it is. I have known men who, though very ungodly themselves, have been shocked at the idea of their children growing up in worldliness and wretchedness. And I have, on the other hand, known persons converted late in life who never could forgive themselves when they looked upon their children who had grown up in sin. I remember very well a poor woman who had received good under my ministry and found the Savior. She earned her living by washing.

When I went into the house to see her she hastily wiped her hands and, as she greeted me, the tears were in her eyes when she spoke about her conversion, but she wrung her hands in bitterness, for she said, "I was left with six little children when my husband died. As a lonely widow I worked hard for them. I never had any help from anybody, but I brought them up myself and now my son is this, and my daughter is that. But," she said, "they are, everyone of them, unconverted—everyone of them! And after I was converted, myself, I found that I had lost the opportunity of influencing them. I never took my children to the House of God. My eldest boy, when I went to see him the other day, and asked him to go with me, said, 'No, no. You never took us when we were little and you need never expect us to go now.'"

That was the trouble that bowed her down with heaviness when she was relieved of the former obligations to find them daily bread. Oh, Fathers and Mothers, if you are not converted early, you will live to regret it if God does save you at all, that you saw your youngsters grow up till they got beyond your influence and they grew up unsaved! You young persons who are just commencing life, I do charge you—perhaps God has sent you here that I may ring these counsels and cautions in your ears! Do pause, think, consider, look—and may God give you Grace and sense enough to see that it needs wisdom to steer the boat through this voyage of life—and that wisdom only is to be had from Heaven!

May you bend your knees at this very hour, and say, "Lord, give me Your Grace! Give me a renewed heart! Give me Christ to be my Savior and help me to behave myself rightly in a perfect way till You shall bring me to see You in Heaven in Your Glory." God fulfill to you this petition, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—James 1

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THE KING AND HIS COURT

NO. 2362

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 27, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 11, 1888.

“My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me.”
Psalm 101:6.

DAVID is going to be king and these are the resolutions that he makes before he ascends the throne. He meant that he would look for the best men in the nation and that he would take care of them. He would give them offices about his court so that he might have his work done well—that his people might be judged by wise and righteous men—and all the affairs of state should be managed by those who were faithful to God. This was a very proper thing for him to do. I wish that those who are *not* kings, but who are placed in any position of influence, would have their eyes upon the faithful of the land. Good men should patronize good men. Those who have it in their power, should, to the utmost of their ability, advance those whom they know to be upright and true and gracious men. But, my dear Friends, we are not going to talk about David, now, but about the Son of David, “great David’s greater Son,” the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! There is no doubt that in His Kingdom His eyes are upon the faithful. He looks upon the faithful among His people. He takes them into communion with Himself and He uses them as His servants in conspicuous and remarkable ways—“My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me.”

My business, tonight, is to speak especially to God’s people about this faithfulness. And I shall handle the subject thus. First, *Who are these faithful men*—“the faithful of the land”? Secondly, *What will the King do with them?* And, thirdly, *How may we get among them*, that we, also, may have this favor from the King of Kings?

I. First, then, WHO ARE THESE FAITHFUL MEN to whom Jesus, our King, will have respect at all times?

I answer, they may be known in part by this mark—they are *true in their dealings with God*. A man who is not honest to God is honest to nobody. He who will rob his God will soon rob his fellow men. Now, I mean by being truthful and upright to God, just this, that we walk before Him in deep sincerity of heart. To make a profession of being what we *not*, is not being among the faithful of the land! And to come before God with prayers which are *not* prayers, but only the skins and shells of prayers, is not being faithful before God. To profess to sing His praises, when we are only uttering words without heart, is to make ourselves as sounding

brass and a tinkling cymbal in the ears of God. We are not accepted by Him if our heart is not true. A man who is faithful before God will not go in his religious expressions beyond his religious experience—he will always be afraid of stretching his arm farther than his sleeve will reach. If he has not felt certain changes, he will not profess to have felt them. He would rather err on the side of doubting and distrusting himself than on the side of boasting and claiming for himself what he really does not possess. I think that it is a most important thing to be very true and thorough in our private walk with God. If you are backsliding, it is well to know it. If you are making but small progress, it is well to confess it. If you are an idler, it is well to admit it. If you have become lukewarm, it is well to know it. Nothing is more dangerous than to be saying to yourself, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” when all the while you are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

God has His eyes upon the faithful of the land, those who are faithful to Him, who do not attempt to deceive themselves with religious professions which they cannot support. How many a man has become a bankrupt by a lavish expenditure which exceeded his income! He said that he “must keep up appearances,” and he *did* keep up appearances till they became his ruin! God grant that you and I may never try to keep up appearances before Him! Be what you would seem to be and, in the Presence of God never seem to be or *dream* of seeming to be what you are not! Thus I think we, first of all, know the faithful by their upright dealing with God.

This will lead them to be *true in their dealings with men*. I hope that I need not say much about this, but yet I do not know. I have heard, at times, of professing Christians who are no more straight in business than worldlings are. It is a shame to you of whom this can be said and it is a disgrace to the Church to which you belong! It brings dishonor upon the Lord Jesus Christ if any of you profess to be His servants and yet you lie and cheat, or, what is much the same thing, puff your goods beyond what can honestly and fairly be said of them, or sell them under false names, deceiving the people who purchase from you. I am not going into all the tricks of trade. I remember how good old Latimer, preaching, once, at Paul’s Cross, said that he knew a man who had some wheat, poor stuff it was, and he poured out a bushel of good wheat, first, and then he put the bad wheat next. And then he put some good wheat on the top and so mixed it all together, or, rather, he concealed the bad wheat in the middle. Latimer went on telling another tale, and another, until all of a sudden he said, “Now, I am not doing you any good, for, I daresay, some of you will go and do these things, yourselves, tomorrow.”

So the good old man checked himself and dealt with the evil rather by way of generality than by specialty. That man is not faithful in God’s esteem who is not upright, honest, true to a hair’s breadth, in his dealings with his fellow men! We must stand to our bond even though we lose by it. We must be true to the word we speak though it be to our own hurt. God grant that His Spirit may work in us, not only the ordinary integrity which may be found in many a natural man, but something deeper and

more thorough than that in all our dealings in business, in the family and everywhere else, for the eyes of the King are upon the faithful of the land!

Now, dear Friends, such people will, in the next place, always *be true in their dealings with men on God's behalf*. I think this passage bears very pertinently upon the minister, the Sunday school teacher and the Christian worker. The eyes of Christ are upon the faithful of the land. If I come here and teach you what I do not believe, or if I conceal what I do believe, or if I tell you something which has in it a suppression of the Truth of God, or if I preach to you orthodox doctrine while in my own heart I believe something different, remember that I cannot be said to be one of the faithful of the land! And if I, as a minister, sit still and watch the Gospel of Christ trampled in the mire and hold my tongue for fear of shame and contempt, I cannot be called one of the faithful of the land! If you, dear Sunday school teachers, in your instruction of the children, keep back from them anything they ought to know, or if, in telling them what they ought to know, you do not press it home upon their consciences. If you do not pray with them. If you do not long for their conversion, you are not faithful to their souls on God's behalf and the eyes of Christ will not be fixed upon you with approval!

It is a very hard thing, to always be faithful with men on God's behalf. I know that it is so even in visiting the sick. One is tempted to begin to comfort some of them when they ought not to be comforted—to say very soft and gentle words to them because they are ill, when, perhaps, they have never felt their need of a Savior—and never been awakened to any sense of spiritual need. I remember one who was greatly condemned for the action that he thought it right to take. Two or three of us had been to see a sick and dying man who always welcomed visitors. We prayed with him and told him the Gospel, but we were all under the impression that we had produced no effect whatever upon his mind—that he was passing into another world without any knowledge of his lost estate—without any repentance or faith in Christ. The good man to whom I refer—he is now in Heaven, but I well remember the reproach that he suffered for what he did—he stood at the foot of the bed and he said, “Friend, you are a deceived man. You are dying and you have no well-grounded hope. You always say, ‘Yes, yes, yes,’ to all we say, but my inmost thought of you is that you are without God and without hope. And if you die as you are, you will be lost forever.”

The man's wife was thunderstruck and so was he! But when we went to visit him the next day, you should have seen the change that God had worked in him! There was a broken-hearted man crying for mercy! A man in sore trouble and distress of soul. The faithful messenger of God had told him the naked truth—it pained him to do it, but he had been more faithful to the sick man than others who had spoken very kindly to him! Oh, I believe if we are faithful, so that we are clear of the blood of all men, faithful to the Truth of God, faithful to our own consciences, faithful to the consciences of those with whom we have to deal, then we are among the number of whom the text says, “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me.”

Have you and I been faithful to our own children and faithful to our own parents? Wives, have you been faithful to your own husbands about their souls? Do you not think that some of us might go home, tonight, and pour out floods of tears before God as we confess, “No, we have not been as faithful as we should have been to what we know of the Gospel, and to those to whom we were bound to teach it”? Christ has a special eye of love for those who are faithful in their dealings with God, faithful in their dealings with man and faithful in their dealings with the souls of men on God’s behalf. Oh, that we may be among that happy company!

Then, observe that these faithful men are *thorough in all that they do*. If you read the second part of our text, you will see that the Psalmist also says, “He that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me.” May I be permitted to say, especially to you who are commencing the Christian life, that if you wish to live near to God and to be greatly used of Him, it is important that you should begin as you mean to go on—by endeavoring to walk in a perfect way? There are some who tried, at first, with their own convictions. I cannot help quoting myself, at the risk of being called egotistical. When I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and made to rejoice in Him, I read the New Testament for myself. I had no friend and no relative who was a baptized Believer. I come of a stock in which infant Baptism has long been religiously observed. I read the Scriptures and I saw, there, that only the *Believer* was to be baptized. That Truth of God came to my conscience, but the suggestion which came to me from friends was, “Well, it really is a pity to introduce this matter, for all those around you think differently.”

I have never ceased to thank God that I was thoroughly honest to my convictions about the ordinance. Do any of you think it a trifle? Very well, waive that point for the moment, but when a man is not honest to his convictions about a trifle, the next thing is that he is not honest to his convictions about something else—and so he gets off the lines—and if you begin to go a little aside, for the sake of peace, or to prevent disturbances, or to please your friends, you have taken a way of life which will lead you, I cannot tell, where! Be determined that if others do as they please, you are not accountable for their action—but still do what you believe to be right! If you are a Christian, go through with it! Be a follower of Christ in every respect as far as the Word of God and your own conscience lead you. I found that the habit of beginning to think for myself and to follow my convictions was useful to me, and it has been useful to me to this day. And at this moment, before the living God, I am able to stand on my own feet, to lean neither on this man nor on that, but only on that eternal arm which will support any man and woman—every man and woman who, in the sight of God, determines to follow the Truth of God wherever it may lead them!

Now, I earnestly pray every Christian person here, especially in the beginning of life, to look well to this matter, for the joy of your life, the peace of your life, the inward rest of your life will much depend, under God, upon your being faithful to your convictions in every point as God shall help you! The great King, Himself, seems to say, tonight, “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he

that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me. He is the man whom I will pick for My servant. I will put him here, or I will place him there, where I am unable to station some others because they are not clear and straight in their conduct and because they are not to be depended upon for loyal obedience to their Lord and Master.”

Thus have I tried to describe who the faithful men of the land are. May we all be numbered among them!

II. But now, secondly, I want very briefly to answer this question, WHAT WILL THE KING DO WITH THEM? David says, “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,” and David’s son, the Lord Jesus Christ, says the same. What does He mean?

Well, first, *His eyes of search will seek them out*. That dear Brother who is faithful to God is only a young apprentice, but he has been faithful in not breaking the Sabbath. Nobody knows about him, dear young man, but the eyes of the Lord are upon him! There is a working man who, the other day, in the midst of a swearing company, rebuked the blasphemer and spoke up for Christ. That noble action is not recorded in the newspaper and never will be—but God’s eyes are upon the faithful of the land. There is a poor woman who, the other day, lost a good deal by being straight and honest. No one will report it. Nobody will put her down in the Legion of Honor. No, but God’s eyes are upon the faithful of the land! And when you, through the Grace of God, are led to follow Christ faithfully, quite alone, not wishing to be seen, doing in secret what only God, Himself, knows—it is reward enough for you that the Lord Jesus Christ sees what you do and He, Himself, will one day reward you openly.

But there is more than that. When King David says, “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,” it means that *his eyes of favor will cheer them*. The King would first search them out and then he would bring them forward. He would promote their interests, he would see that the faithful men were not thrust into a corner and neglected, he would have an eye to cheering them as they had an eye to pleasing him. I believe that God greatly favors and blesses those whom, by His Grace, He makes to be faithful. If you are unfaithful, your unfaithfulness will come home to you, sometime or another. I mean, if you are a child of God, for there is *discipline* in the House of the Lord. I am not talking, now, about the punishments of the Law of God—the children of God are not under the Law—I am speaking about the discipline of the Gospel. You are saved by free, rich, Sovereign Grace and you are made a child of God. From the moment of your new birth you come under the discipline of the great Father’s House and if you are unfaithful, your unfaithfulness will deprive you of many a comfort and many a joy! It will dog your footsteps and track you when you least expect it. Look at David. After his great sin, he was never the man that he had been before—and many were the griefs and pangs of heart which he brought upon himself by that one terrible fall. The Lord grant that we may be kept faithful, so that God’s eyes of approval may rest upon us and that we may joy and rejoice in Him from day to day!

But then the text, after saying, “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,” adds, “that they may dwell with Me.” *The faithful shall dwell*

with God. Oh, this is a choice privilege! When Grace makes a man faithful, God rewards his faithfulness by permitting him to dwell in close communion with his Lord! It is a wonderful thing to me that if we have any good works, God always works them in us, and then he rewards us for them as if they were our own! He gives us Grace and then smiles on us because of the Grace that He, Himself, gives! So, if He makes a man faithful, He then rewards him for it according to His Grace, and says, "He shall dwell with Me."

I think I see David carrying out this resolution. There is a poor but honest man away down there in Bethlehem and David hears of his strict integrity and sends him a letter. "Come to Jerusalem," says the king, "I will make a courtier of you. I will make a friend of you. You are the sort of man I need. Come and dwell with me." He hears of another poor man, over yonder, who has been ridiculed because he stood up for Jehovah, the God of Israel, when others were inclined to worship some false god. "Come up to Jerusalem," he says, "come live with me. You are my sort of company, for you are one of the faithful ones." Now, *that* is what the Lord Jesus Christ says to us! He calls us as sinners, but He communes with us as saints! He washes us when we are guilty, but after we are washed and He has made us upright in His sight, then He takes us to dwell with Him! He delights in opening His heart to us and in permitting us to open our heart to Him!

Now, if any of you are not faithful to Christ, I can tell you that you will not be able to commune with Him. If you have done a wrong thing in business, or if you have held your tongue and not been faithful in testifying for Christ. When you go on your knees at night you will not be able to find yourself so led out in prayer as you were, before, when you were true to Him. And when you turn to the Scriptures, instead of finding them speaking to you, they will seem as if they were dumb—no voice of comfort will come from them. But if you have been faithful and true, and out and out for Christ, then you shall dwell with Him—you shall abide in Him and His Word will abide in you!

Then it is added, "He shall serve Me." *The faithful shall be Christ's servants.* I do not know which is the greater privilege, "He shall dwell with Me," or, "He shall serve Me." Perhaps the second is the higher. Have you ever thought, Beloved Friend, what an honor it is to be permitted to do anything for God? For God to bless us is great condescension on His part, but for Him to permit us to be of any use to Him—this is a wonderful honor from His right hand! I believe that there is more honor in being allowed, for the Glory of God, to teach a little Sunday school child the way of salvation than there would be in ruling the whole German Empire if it were done for the glorification of self! The honor does not lie in the *act* so much as in the *motive*—and if the motive is, "I did it unto the Lord," then I stand in the same rank with angels, yes, in a line with those wonderful living creatures that John saw in the Revelation who reveal the Glory of God and continually do Him service!

The Lord will not have you as His servant if you are not faithful, if you do not give yourself up to His Truth and to be true, through and through! It is not God's way to send forth His Truth by untruthful men. If there is

a lie in your left hand, the Truth of God in your right hand will seem to have lost at least half its power. Like the hoard of Achan hidden away in the tent which robbed all Israel of the victory at the gates of Ai, so will you find that anything which is untrue, hidden away in your life or your conduct, will deprive you of victory when you go out in the service of God. "He shall serve Me," says Christ. And He will not accept the service of those who are not true to Him.

III. Thus I have spoken of a very necessary practical Truth of God, and I am going to close by trying to answer one more question—HOW MAY WE GET AMONG THESE FAITHFUL ONES?

Perhaps we can truly say, God helping us, we hope that we are among them. If so, as we read a little while ago, "it is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves." If there is any faithfulness, if there is any uprightness, unto God be the glory of it all! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you may never lose your faithfulness, but that you may be kept even unto the end! Remember that passage in Jude's Epistle, "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling"? So it is in the Revised Version and it is an improvement and nearer to the original than our old text, for while it is a great mercy to be kept from falling, it is a still greater favor to be guarded from *stumbling*, so as to walk with careful, steady progress in uprightness before God all your life! Let it be your constant prayer that you may be thus kept faithful even unto death.

But now I speak to others who are not as yet faithful. You say, "How are we to get among the faithful?" Well, I should say, first, so far as you may be, and so far as your light goes, be faithful *tonight*—*be honest in confessing sin*. Before you sleep, put yourself before God just as you are. Have you neglected religion? Confess it. Or have you pretended to possess religion when there was no truth in your profession? Confess it. What has been your sin? Confess it. Kneel by your bedside and there, God, alone, seeing you, unveil your heart before Him. You say that He knows all about you. That is true and *that is a reason* why you should be the more explicit in your confession to Him. Speak freely to God and make Him, as you ought to make Him, your only "Father Confessor." Tell Him that you are lost. Tell Him that you are hard-hearted. Tell Him that you are unfeeling. Tell Him that you desire to be converted, but that it is only a faint desire as yet. Tell him all about yourself. In a word, begin to deal with God on the straight. If you have not done so, already, I pray God that you may do so, tonight, and I beseech you to go as far as you can in this matter. Reveal your poverty, your filthiness, your sin, your nakedness, your deserving of Hell—only do all honestly as in the sight of God. What an amazing thing it is that men do not like to act thus, yet, when the Grace of God enables them to do it, they are already on the road to salvation! When the man comes before God with a rope round his neck, confessing that he deserves to die, then there is this blessed text to comfort him—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God grant that you may find it to be so tonight!

Well, then, dear Friend, next, *be anxious to have a new heart and a right spirit*. May God make you thus anxious to-night! Remember that

there is evil in us by nature. "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And before we can be faithful, we must be born again. No man will ever be true until the God of Truth has truly renewed him. Our tendency is to lean either this way or that—to stand upright is a gift of Divine Grace and none but the Holy Spirit can bestow it upon us! Oh, that we might have a deep anxiety to undergo that wondrous change, that radical and total change of heart which the Savior described when He said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again"! Go to the Lord with David's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Plead that Old Testament promise, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Then, supposing that you have come thus far, I earnestly entreat you, if you would be found among the faithful of the land, *be sincere in all your dealings with the living God*. If you mean to pray, pray! If you believe in Jesus, do not simply *say* that you believe, but believe! If you repent, do not merely *talk* of repentance, but repent! Let everything be thorough and downright. May the Spirit of God save you from getting the *imitation* of spirituality which will damn you! And may He give you the reality of spiritual life which will effectually save you! I believe that there are many who are very much injured by being led to profess religion when they do not possess it. There is a revival meeting. There is a room for converts—they get in there—they are pressed, they are exhorted, they are entreated! They think that they are sincere—in a certain measure they are—but there is no sense of guilt, no loathing of sin, no true repentance, no wounding and, therefore, no healing, no stripping and, therefore, no clothing! The whole thing is but a mere sham! And they go away and are, themselves, deceived and afterwards return to their old sins and are worse than they were before! If you have not eternal life, do not *pretend* that you have it. I charge you before God, who shall judge the quick and the dead, in the day of His appearing, *never* cheat yourself in this matter, for you are the only person that you can really cheat for long! God, Himself, you will never deceive. Make clear, clean, sharp, distinct, decided work of this matter, or rather, may God the Holy Spirit work this miracle of mercy in you, for Christ's name's sake!

Lastly, dear Friend, if you would be among the faithful of the land, *depend continually upon the Lord Jesus and His Word to make and keep you faithful*. Every day wait upon Him for fresh anointing and renewed power. And daily live unto Him and for Him, laying yourself out to honor Him who has redeemed you. Your only hope is in His precious blood! Then let the objective of your existence be to glorify Him, alone. If this is so, you shall be among the faithful of the land and you shall dwell with the King, even with the King of Kings, and you shall serve Him forever and ever!

Are you not glad to hear this, you great sinners? Jesus is as able to pardon you, now, as He was to save the dying thief! And you who have hard hearts, He is able to give you new ones, today, as He gave them to those of old. And oh, you children of God, I pray you, do not act as if *David* had a great God, and *you* have a little God! Do not act as if, in the

trials of the olden times, God made bare His arm, but that now He will hardly put out His little finger! Do not treat Him as if it could be so. God still hears prayer! If He does not work miracles, He does the same thing in some other way which is even better! He still delivers us! He still feeds us! He still leads us! He still guards us! He is the same as He always was! Oh if you would but trust Him! Abraham's God is your God and He can help you in the day of battle. Joshua's God is your God and He says to you as He did to Joshua, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Oh, believe it! Jesus Christ—my grandfather's Jesus Christ, my father's Jesus Christ—is *my* Jesus Christ! Look back on all the godly people you have ever known and think of what the Lord did for them—and then remember that His arm is not shortened, His ear is not heavy, His love is not diminished, His wisdom is not turned to foolishness! He is still able and willing to bless you, as in all the ages that have gone by. Trust Him, you saints! Trust Him, you sinners—and the Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 100; 101.**

May the Spirit of God, by whose Inspiration David penned these Psalms, bless them to us as we read them!

Psalm 100. This is entitled "a Psalm of Praise." Note, here, that this is the only Psalm which bears that title. There are others which have titles very much like it, but this one is singled out from all the rest to be, in a very special sense, "a Psalm of Praise." Martin Luther was very fond of it and it has even been said that he composed the tune which we have just sung, and which is commonly called, "the Old Hundredth"—though other attribute it to a German named Franc.

Verse 1. *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all you lands.* Do you notice the missionary spirit here? The Jews looked upon God as the God of Israel and they had but very faint desires for the conversion of other nations. But the Holy Spirit speaks more by David than David, himself, may have known—"Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all you lands." We ought to express the praise of God, not merely to feel it, and to express it by what is called, here, "a joyful noise." All our songs to God should have in them a measure of joyfulness. The gods of the heathen were worshipped with dolorous noises, with sorrowful sounds and cries of misery—but the God of Heaven is to be worshipped with a joyful noise! "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands." Oh, that the day were come when China, India and all Asia, Africa, America and Europe would take up the gladsome note of praise to Jehovah!

2. *Serve the LORD with gladness.* What a text that is! "Serve the Lord." Obey Him, yield to Him your homage, but serve Him, "with gladness." He wants not slaves to Grace His Throne! He loves willing worship, happy worship, for He is "the happy God." "Serve the Lord with gladness."

2. *Come before His Presence with singing.* Singing is delightful, but singing in God's Presence is heavenly! Do not the spirits that are made pure and holy come before His Presence and come before it with singing?

I wish that whenever we sing, we would sing as in the Presence of God. I am afraid that we sometimes go through the tune mechanically and the words languish on our lips. “Come before His Presence with singing.”

3. *Know you that the LORD, He is God.* One says, “Man, know yourself,” and another says, “The proper study of mankind is man.” Not so! Man, know *your God!* The proper study of mankind is *God!* He who knows God knows himself, that is, he knows himself to be *nothing*. “Know you that Jehovah, He is God.” There is but one God—it is the same God in the Old Testament as in the New—Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

3. *It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves.* Note the negative, as if to deny that we had any hand in our own making, and this is also worthy of notice *spiritually*. It is the Lord who has made us Christians, not we, ourselves. He has created us in Christ Jesus. There are some who lay such stress upon the human will and I know not what, besides, in man, that it is necessary to put in the negative as well as the positive. “It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves.”

3. *We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.* Praise Him, then! Praise Him because He is your Maker! Praise Him more sweetly because He is your Shepherd. If we are His people, here is His electing love, here is His effectual calling, here is the Grace of His Spirit that made us so. “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” He leads us, He feeds us, He protects us, He has bought us with His precious blood. Truly, this is good reason why we should make a joyful noise unto God and serve Him with gladness! “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” Are you His people? O my dear Hearer, ask yourself—are you one of the sheep of His pasture?

4. *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.* Gratitude is that oil which makes the wheels of life easily revolve. And if anybody ought to be grateful, surely *we* are the men and women for whom the Lord has done so much! “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.”

5. *For the LORD is good.* Should we not praise so good a God?

5. *His mercy is everlasting; and His Truth endures to all generations.* “His Truth”—that is to say, His truthfulness, His faithfulness to His people. This is a blessed Psalm and it seems to me to reach the highest point of praise when it tells us, “The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His Truth endures to all generations.”

Psalm 101. The last Psalm was a Hymn of Thanksgiving, this one is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. I suppose it to have been written by David just when he assumed the throne, when he was about to become king over all Israel and Judah. Its title is, “A Psalm of David.” This is what he said to himself—

Verse 1. *I will sing*—That is right, David. In the 100th Psalm, he had exhorted other people to sing. Now, in the 101st he declares what he, himself, will do. “I will sing”—

1. *Of mercy and judgement.* It is a mingled theme. There are the treble and the bass notes—"mercy and judgment." There are some dear friends who, if they sing at all, will have to sing this way, for they have a heavy sorrow on their heart and yet great mercy is mixed with it. Oh, you who are troubled and bow your head in grief, say, "I will sing of mercy and judgment." Mix the two together!

1. *Unto You, O LORD, will I sing.* A second time the Psalmist says, "I will sing." It is well to make this firm resolve. "Unto You, O Lord, will I sing." Winter or summer, "I will sing." Poverty or riches, "I will sing." Sickness or health, "I will sing." Life or death, "I will sing"—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death
And praise You as long as You lend me breath."***

"I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto you, O Lord, will I sing."

2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.* This was a good resolve, but David did not carry it out to the fullest. There were evil times when he was *not* wise and there were sad times when he was far from perfect. Still, it is well to make such a resolve as this declaration of David when he came to the throne, especially when you are newly married, or just opening a business. Oh, that every young man and young woman would commence life with such a holy resolution as this—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." But notice the prayer that follows the resolve—

2. *O when will You come unto me?* For I shall be neither wise nor holy without You. "O when will You come unto me?"

2. *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* There is a great deal in the way in which a man walks in his house. It will not do to be a saint abroad and a devil at home! There are some of that kind. They are wonderfully sweet at a Prayer Meeting, but they are dreadfully sour to their wives and children. This will never do! Every genuine Believer should say, and mean it, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." It is in the *home* that we get the truest proof of godliness. "What sort of a man is he?" said one to George Whitefield, and Whitefield answered, "I cannot say, for I never lived with him." That is the way to test a man—to live with him.

3. *I will set no wicked thing before my eyes.* "I will not look at it, for if I do, I may long for it." It is the tendency of things that are gazed at to get through the eyes into the mind and the *heart*. Therefore is it wise to say with the Psalmist, "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes."

3. *I hate the work of them that turn aside.* He means all those who practice dodges—the "policy" people—those who never go straight. Kings usually like such people as these. Do not men say that an ambassador is a gentleman who is paid to live abroad and to lie for the benefit of his country? I suppose that is what diplomats in David's day generally did, but David resolved that he would have none of that sort of folk about him. "I hate the work of them that turn aside."

3. *It shall not cleave to me.* "If I touch it, by His Grace, I will not let it stick to me. Pitch defiles, so I will keep clear of it and if any man tries to practice a trick for my advantage, I will have nothing to do with him."

4. *A forward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.* “For, if I come to know him, one of these days I may be known, myself, to be a wicked person.” “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” No man or woman can afford to be the friend of a man who is not a friend of God! If he does not love God, quit his company, for he will do you no good. Say with David, “I will not know a wicked person.”

5. *Whoever privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off.* David was a king and he meant to study the peace of his people by putting down slander. Oh, what mischief is worked by backbiting tittle tattle! If we could have a race of men—and for the matter of that, of women, too—with no tongues, it might be an advantage, for there are some who use their tongues for very sorry purposes. David says, “Whoever privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off.”

5. *Him that has an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.* High looks and proud hearts are generally the characteristics of cruel, tyrannical, domineering persons—and King David would not have any such near him.

6. *My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.* Oh, that masters had more of an eye to the piety of their servants than they often have! They want “clever fellows.” Whether they are honest or not is generally a secondary question. So long as they are profitable to their masters, they will not mind what they are to their customers. But David would not have servants of that sort.

6, 7. *He that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that works deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight.* He was a king and he could choose his company—and he meant to select the truthful and upright. Now mark this! If David would not let a man who lies tarry in his sight, you must not expect that God will let such tarry in His sight. “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,” says the Scripture. God grant us to have clean, truthful tongues!

8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.* What a practical Psalm this is! I have heard of a prince of Saxe-Gotha, years ago, who, whenever he thought that one of his ministers or judges was not what he ought to be, used always to send him the 101st Psalm to read. It was commonly said of such a man, “He will get the 101st Psalm before long.” And, after reading it, if he did not mend his manners, the prince sent him his dismissal and he had to go about his business. Oh, that all who profess and call themselves Christians would act according to the tenor of this straight Psalm which is like a line drawn by the hand of God, without a crook or a turn in it!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—100 (VERSION II), 15, 123.

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ZION'S PROSPERITY

NO. 2576

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1856.

“You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.”
Psalm 102:13, 14.

A selfish man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort because the source of his joy lies entirely within himself and when he is sad, all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man, a man of benevolence and Christian philanthropy, has other springs from which to supply himself with comfort beside those which are found within himself. He can go to his God, first of all, and there seek abundant help. And we who try to comfort him can use other arguments not relating to himself, but to the world at large, to his country and, above all, to the Church of Christ. The writer of this Psalm seems to have been exceedingly sorrowful. He says, “I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.” And, finding there was no solace in his own circumstances, the only way in which he could comfort himself was to believe that God would arise and have mercy upon Zion. Though he was sad, yet Zion should prosper. However low was his own estate, yet Zion should arise. Christian you can always comfort yourself in God’s gracious dealings toward the church at large, but, if the church of which you are a member is in a sad and sickly condition, where shall you comfort yourself? Surely, then, you will be compelled to say with the Psalmist, “I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath, for You have lifted me up, and cast me down.”

We shall notice four things. The *nature, necessity, means and signs of church prosperity.*

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Here I shall differ from many, for I think that many churches that are called prosperous are far from being so, while some churches, which are despised, are the most prosperous in God’s estimation.

We do not conceive it to be, necessarily, a sign of a church’s prosperity *when the congregation is large.* We love to see people throng to hear God’s Word and to hear assembled multitudes shout aloud the praises of Jehovah. But when we witness these things, we do not take it for granted that the church is prosperous. Concerning some places, we would pray God to empty every seat, for there is in them a going away to Rome, or a wan-

dering from the fundamental principles of God's Word. The building may be full—crammed to its very doors—but there may be a desolating blight inside. There may be more prosperity in a place where but six of Christ's true people meet together than where thousands congregate to worship God in a way which they think to be right, but which is not in accordance with His sacred Word.

Nor do we conceive that *the riches of the people* make a church prosperous. Ask some member of a certain aristocratic community, "Is your church prospering?" "Yes," he says, "there were 19 carriages waiting outside the other Sunday." Ask another the same question and he will say, "Yes, So-and-So, who is worth so many thousands, has joined the church." We say that a rich man's soul is as precious as a poor man's, but, at the same time, could anyone bring to us all the gold mines of Peru, the church would not, thereby, prosper! There are many churches which are rich in wealth, but exceedingly poor in faith, which might well barter all of their riches for the humble piety of the Methodist, or the earnest zeal of the ancient Puritan.

Nor do we think that a church is necessarily prosperous *because the minister is exceedingly eloquent*. The tendency of the present day is toward what is called "intellectual preaching." I never could see any intellect in it. I have heard literary men preach and I could only say of them what Locke said, "If a man cannot make you understand what he means, very likely it is because there is no meaning in it." If you cannot understand him at once, just leave him alone, for he probably does not understand himself. We hold it to be a wrong thing that intellectual Rationalism should disgrace our churches—God's pulpit was meant for God's Gospel! We have theaters and public halls in which men may teach philosophy if they wish to do so. Take Christianity out of our pulpits and what have we done? The pulpit is the main bastion of the Church of Christ—the Thermopylae of Christendom. Here the great Truths of the Bible must be taught and he that uses not his pulpit to preach the Gospel has disgraced it, even though his talents are almost superhuman! He has disgraced God's Church in not unceasingly proclaiming the Evangelical principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Then, my Friends, you may ask me how I can tell whether the Church is prospering? I answer—I must consider for what purposes the Church was formed. And if it is not accomplishing that particular objective, it is not prospering. The Church is established for two objectives. First, for bringing God's wandering sheep back to the fold of Christ. And, secondly, for fostering those sheep that are brought within the fold.

We enter a place where we hear Divine Truth proclaimed. We enquire, "How many have been added to the church this year?" "No addition, no progress." We enquire again another year—the same reply is received, "No sinners saved, none brought into the fold." We are very deferential towards all ministers of the Everlasting Gospel—we would sooner receive a bad one as our friend than reject a good one. But we will not flatter our Brother, we will not mind about his congregation—if he does not win souls to Christ, his church is not prospering! If the pool of Baptism has never been opened to receive a convert, if the church doors have never

turned upon their hinges to receive souls seeking salvation, if no fresh members are received to sit down at the Table of the Lord, if God's elect have not been brought in, we have strong suspicions whether that man is a minister of God—we are certain that he is not a successful one! That church is in a sad, sad condition, which never hears the cry of newborn souls in its midst. God forbid we should preach for even a month or a week without winning souls! We think it would be worse than death to live a year and not hear of hundreds brought to Christ. It is true prosperity when the Lord's children are gathered out from among the ungodly, when God is pleased, by the agency of His Word, to break hard hearts, to bend stubborn wills and to bring the mourners in Zion to rejoice in the love of the Savior. Is *your* church thus increasing? Then it is truly prospering.

We also said there is another reason for the establishment of the Church of Christ, that is, for its own edification. It is a happy church in which the sheep of Christ are fed. Beloved, if God's people are not fed, we do not think the church is prospering. Some have laughed at the term, "fed." We have heard people say, "What do they mean by being fed?" Ah, children know the meaning of that word, and our hearers know what is meant by it. They do not care about our garnishing for the platter on which we serve the food, or the manner in which we carve it—we may cut it with a blunt knife, yet the child of God loves it! But if there is no food for the saints, if the members do not grow in Grace, if they are not irreproachable in their conduct, if they have not the spirit of Christ, if they do not enjoy fellowship with Jesus, if they have not attained to the knowledge of the love of God in Christ, if they have not entered into the rest of faith, if they do not live near Jesus and endeavor as much as in them lies to imitate Him—we say the church is not prospering! It may be the wealthiest under Heaven, but it may also be the most impoverished. It may be the most learned, according to human views, but the most heretical, the farthest from prosperity and the nearest to blasphemy!

Let us look at our churches as they ought to be viewed. Are souls saved? Are saints edified and built up? This is the only thing I ask myself. Some say this, some that, and some the other about our church—we care not in the least about the ten thousand opinions people form of us! We only say sinners are saved and we will keep on preaching as long as this is the case. And if we can find men, women and children declaring that they are spiritually fed, we feel that our mission is successful! Is it so in *your* church? Then you have the elements of a prosperous one.

II. We shall now consider THE NECESSITY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF OUR CHURCHES.

What matters that to some? They come regularly to chapel and occupy their pews. But they never ask themselves the question, "Does our church prosper?" Oh, no—that is the minister's business! The Deacons must look after that matter. Our friend comes to chapel Sunday after Sunday, like a very religious man. He does not go to sleep, that I have upon good evidence! Sometimes the sermon should stir him up, yet it does not. He approves of the idea of everybody minding his own business and, while carrying out the old maxim, "Charity begins at home," he al-

lows it to end there. Now and then, he prays for the minister, if called upon at the Prayer Meeting, but he does not regard the minister as his Brother, so he does not pray for him at the family altar. He hears that missions are succeeding abroad, but, for all he cares, the mission stations might be closed. He would like the church to prosper, but he would not put himself out of his way even to secure that result and, as to giving up himself, like Curtius of old, and leaping into the gulf to serve the church—oh, no—he would never commit so rash an act! He would not endanger his own life, lest the church should be damaged by losing so good a man!

But I trust that some of you have a regard for the church's prosperity. If not, you ought to have. Let me remind you why. Even selfish as we may be, we ought to care for the success of the church, first, *for our own sakes*. If we do not, by Divine Grace, live and labor for our fellow-creatures, their decline will have a deleterious influence upon our own piety. The coldness of the church of which I am a member tends to chill me. The lukewarmness of my fellow Christians has a tendency to pull me down. But if I belong to a church which is rich in Grace, the tendency will be to fill my mouth with marrow and fatness—and to make me rejoice in the ways of the Lord!

Your families, too, are deeply interested in the prosperity of the church. I know that many sons and daughters do not attend the chapels where their parents go—their parents do not ask them to do so—they would not like them to go there. "It does very well for us," they say, "but it would not suit them." Then, there must be something amiss there! What is good for the parent is good for the child, and what is good for the child is good for the parent. I like what Robert Hall once said when he had been preaching a doctrine which he was told was suitable for old women—"If it is so," he replied, "then it is suitable for everybody, and I shall preach that doctrine again." Now, if you love your families and would see them brought into Christ's Church, you must labor with God in prayer for them and ask that He would be pleased to have mercy upon Zion, that her set time may come, that her servants may take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof.

Also, *for the sake of the neighborhood in which you live*, labor for God, seeking His blessing, that your church may prosper. Wherever a minister's voice is raised in the cause of his Master, all around there ought to be a green spot, as in the desert, where water is to be found, there is an oasis where the traveler can rest, so, where a House for God is built, there ought to be a green spot where the efforts of the tract-distributor and the Sunday school teacher should tend to keep the soil fertile.

Again, *for the sake of our nation*, seek the prosperity of Zion. If we are to be a prosperous nation, we shall not accomplish that result by our commerce, or by the force of arms, but by our Christianity! As long as ever Christ's Church remains faithful in this land, old England shall stand in the front of the nations. England has been the cradle of the Gospel and, therefore, has she flourished. And, rest assured that as the true faith grows strong, England shall be mighty. The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not by our sailors, but by our God! England is safe as

long as she keeps fast by the true Protestant principles of the Everlasting Gospel. Her ministers need never fear for her, for firm as the eternal hills, strong as the mighty mountains shall this, our happy land, forever rest while she is true to Christ! God grant that the Church may prosper for old England's sake!

But, most of all, we want to see the Church prosper *for Christ's sake*. He is everything to us! Compared with Christ, our nationality is less than nothing and vanity. But, oh, when we think of all our Savior did and suffered for us here below, surely we can desire nothing less than for Him to see of the travail of His soul and to be abundantly satisfied. When you bend your knees in prayer to God to bless His Church, think that you hear Christ groaning in Gethsemane, that you see Him in agony in the garden. Think of Him when the thorns were placed on His head. Think of the shame, the spitting, the plucking off the hair that He endured. Yes, when you pray for the Church, think, then, that you behold the Lamb of God expiring on the Cross. Think that you hear Him cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani"—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" When you think of these things, surely you will say, "Did Jesus suffer thus to win a crown, and shall I not pray that that crown may rest on His head? Did Jesus thus die that His children might be ransomed and His elect saved, and shall I not pray that He may realize that desire?"

For your Master's sake—for your Lord's sake—for His blood and agonies' sake, I beseech you, pray always for Zion, "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." "They shall prosper that love her."

III. We notice, next, THE ONLY MEANS OF REVIVAL IN GOD'S CHURCH.

What is it? We may hear of some great evangelist going through the land—surely *he* will revive the churches! We will hold a convocation of the clergy and *they* shall devise means of reviving the churches! Not so, thinks the Psalmist—he says, "You shall arise," as if God had nothing to do but to arise and then His Church would arise, too! For, when God arises, Zion begins to prosper! How easy are the methods by which God accomplishes His great works! No doubt, if we had had to devise means for lighting up this earth, when the darkness of the evening first came upon it, we would have recommended some fifty thousand great lights hung about in various parts of the world. But look at God's wondrous means of lighting the globe—the sun rises, the light shines and all is done! So is it with God's plan of reviving His Church. We devise this plan and the other, but God only arises and has mercy upon Zion—and "the time to favor her, yes, the set time is come."

Let us learn this lesson—if our church is to be made to prosper, God must do it! If we are to grow up in Christ and see great revival in these latter days, God must do it! Can the minister revive the Church? Can the people revive it? Certainly not! God alone can accomplish that great work. He must arise and have mercy upon Zion. There are means which He puts into the hands of His people and wishes them to use, but still, the ultimate reason of a church's growth is that God arises and has mercy upon her! If the prosperity of a church consists in the salvation of sinners, must not God arise to save? If the building up of God's elect is

another part of spiritual prosperity, must not God arise to build up His people in their faith, for, "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it"? You may bring me a man filled with the Holy Spirit, possessing the zeal of Peter, or the eloquence of Paul, but no prosperity will there be in God's Church unless God Himself bestows the heavenly shower and sends salvation down! What our churches need, just now, is not simply men of God, but we need more of God's own Presence and Power in our midst!

We think we have our God among us, but I fear we have not so much of His Presence as our forefathers used to have. I am inclined to look back with holy envy upon the olden times—the days of George Whitefield, or of Rowland Hill—there was then a larger influx into the Church than there is now and a more visible manifestation of God's Holy Spirit. We are multiplying our places of worship and doing very much towards evangelizing the world, but we have not the shout of a King in our midst as we used to have! We have our soldiers clad in steel—their arms bright and glittering, their swords of the best metal—but the great lack is we have not the King's Presence as we once had. I am sure, having passed through many churches, there is a sad lack of the influences of the Holy Spirit. There is a lack of vital godliness and earnest piety. There is some supplication, but not that prevailing prayer which thunders in the ears of God and brings copious blessings from on high. Where are the Elijahs who can stop up the bottles of Heaven? Where are there on the earth those who can face a multitude and prophesy to the dry bones, knowing that when they speak, souls shall be saved?

Go into many Prayer Meetings in London—I hope it is not so generally throughout the country—the minister is obliged to say that he has not enough people present to ring the changes and he, himself, has to pray twice to fill up the time. By all his preaching he cannot get the people to pray! Shame upon such a church! This state of things proves that God is not in our midst as He was formerly. When God shall arise, His Church shall arise in earnest, fervent prayer, for the time to favor Zion, yes, the set time will then have come!

IV. Now, Beloved, let us consider the fourth point—THE SIGNS THAT GOD'S CHURCH IS BEING BLESSED. "For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

What are the "stones" of Zion? The Church of God is built of living stones—that is, *the children of God*. And it is a good sign when God's servants take pleasure in one another and "favor the dust"—that is, not the ministers, nor the deacons, but *the poor members*. In these degenerate times, we do not take so much pleasure in each other as we ought. There is little Christian sociability, but it is a happy sign when the members meet in a cordial spirit and begin to talk of what the Savior did and suffered here below, and of Jesus' charming name which has a sweeter sound than the most melodious music! It is profitable, indeed, when Christians begin to speak often, one to another, and God Himself turns eaves-dropper to His children. He listens and hears, and a Book of Remembrance is written—the Lord, Himself, becomes a reporter and records the conversation of them that fear Him and that think upon His

name! We shall be sure the church is prospering when all the members love each other and the poorer ones are not overlooked!

There are some chapels where a Christian Brother and Sister are divided by that rail in the center—they have sat there for years—yet they do not know each other's names! They did show each other the hymn one day, when one came late, but they have never shaken hands. They are members of the same church and one of them may be poor and starving—but the other knows nothing about it because he does not, “favor the dust thereof.” But, when God arises, and has mercy upon Zion, His people say—

**“Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would refuse to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?”**

It is a good sign for a church when its members “take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.”

The next translation we will give of this word, “stones,” is the *Doctrines of the Bible*. By the term, “Doctrines,” I do not mean merely some three or four particular points, but *all* the Doctrines which build up the Church of Christ. In these days it is usual to hear people say, “Doctrines are of no importance. You may believe this or that, but you will go to Heaven all the same.” It is not so, Beloved! God has given us a Bible, common sense and judgment—and if we foolishly say, “It does not matter what we believe,” we thereby sin against God! It is important that we should be right in Doctrine, though not so important as that we should be right in heart. The tendency of this age is toward what is called, “charity.” I hold that charity is not for us to give up our convictions, but for each of us to preach them boldly! The charity of this age wants us to get rid of our angles and points. It says, “Do not say anything to offend such-and-such an individual.” Nonsense! True charity is for me to boldly speak my views and for my Brother of an opposite opinion to do the same—and for me to love him, if he holds the Head, Christ Jesus—but it is no charity to put a gag on us all. There is a great evil in the universal charity of the present day—it is Satan transforming himself into an angel of light! He sees us divided into different camps and he says, “*Put down your flags! No sectarianism!*” He means, “*No religion.*” But let us all keep to our own regiments and fight manfully for them, yet combining against the common enemy. Let us hold God's Truth, but not with a slippery hand. If a Doctrine is true, let us grip it fast, though the earth shake or the heavens fall!

Christian, where there is a love for God's Truth, God will bless His Church. But because this is a time-serving age, because we have not come out plainly with those things which distinguish us from each other, because we have paid too much deference to each other's views and have not boldly declared the great Truths of His Word—these are the reasons why God has, to some extent, deserted us.

You say, “I do not see so much in Doctrines, after all.” Then you will not see much prosperity! I love so much what I believe to be true that I would fight for every grain of it! Not for the “stones” only, but for the very “dust thereof.” I hold that we ought not to say that any Truth of God is

non-essential—it may be non-essential to salvation, but it is essential for something else! Why, you might as well take one of the jewels out of the Queen's crown and say it is nonessential, she will be Queen all the same! Will anyone dare to tell God that any Doctrine is non-essential? O gracious Spirit, have You written what is non-essential? Have You given me a Book respecting which I say, "My father and mother believed it all, but it is not necessary for me to believe it"? God has given me a judgment—am I to follow in the wake of other people, thinking I shall be sure to be right and that God will never ask me what I was? An easy kind of religion this! It was not so in the days of good old John Bunyan and Berridge—they sang a far different song! But now people are saying, "I can listen to So-and-So and So-and-So"—men who contradict one another! We cannot think much of people who can hear opposite opinions and yet believe both to be correct! We cannot expect much growth unless you hold the Truth of God and take pleasure in the stones of Zion and, "favor the dust thereof"—every atom of it!

Once again, the stones of Christ's Church are *the ordinances* and God's people ought to take care that they love her "stones," and favor her "dust." For those two Divine Institutions—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the observance of them as handed down to us from Apostolic times—there ought to be an intense love in the hearts of God's people, that we may be kept from the innovations of men. Let us always love what God has given us! It may be thought by some to be antiquated, yet let us never let it go, for then will God build up the ruined walls of Zion.

I may also mention that it is a good sign of the church's prosperity when *the ministry of the Word and the Prayer Meeting* are well attended—especially the latter. A friend of mine said, the other evening, "I shall go to the lecture to-night, but I did not go on Monday, for it was only a Prayer Meeting." Why, that is the best service in the week! What is to become of your minister, in the other services, if you do not meet to pray for him? Yet many professing Christians never think of meeting for prayer—they leave that duty to the old members—those who always speak about "the unthinking horse rushing into the battle." A Prayer Meeting ought to be regarded as superior to any other service and there should be at least all the members met together to pray. If you say, "It is only a Prayer Meeting," even that is the "dust" of Zion, and God's people "take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof"—the little services as well as the great services. "You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

And now, dear Friends, you may not agree with me as to my ideas of a church's prosperity, but there must be one thing you have observed as the great need of the churches in the present day. That is the need of more prayer, more firm attachment to the walls of Zion and greater love to the Doctrines of the Bible. And I beseech you, be henceforth doubly in earnest in seeking for God's Spirit to enable you to cling, heart and soul, to every "stone" and every grain of "dust" in God's Temple of Truth, and let nothing be given up to please men—cleave fast to all that God has ordained and He will prosper and bless you!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EZEKIEL 34:11-31.**

The former part of the chapter contains a prophetic denunciation against the evil shepherds—the men who fed not the flocks, but fed themselves—who fouled, with their filthy feet, the waters where the flocks drank, and trod upon the soft grass that otherwise might have afforded pasture for the sheep. After pronouncing judgment upon them, the Lord turns His thoughts to His sheep and gives this precious promise—

Verse 11. *For thus says the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out.* The shepherds did not do this. They left the sheep to wander and many were lost on the mountains. But where men fail, God proves Himself all-sufficient. My Hearer, are you sitting under an unprofitable ministry? Then look to the Chief Shepherd and not to the man who is unfaithful as an under-shepherd!

12. *As a shepherd seeks for his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.* It does not matter where the place is, the Lord will find His sheep. If it is the castle of Giant Despair, He will find them. If it is the worst dungeon in Doubting Castle, He will discover them there! They may have wandered upon the mountains of Despondency and Dejection. They may have been lost in the gorges of some dark Valley of Desperation, but the Lord says, "I will both search My sheep and seek them out." And, mind you, He does not seek without finding! He discovers them, for He knows where they are. Oh, is not that a "cloudy and dark day" wherein we wander from God and know not how to return to Him? But clouds and darkness are banished when we see the light of His face!

13-15. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord GOD.* There is a blessed state of rest! God's flock are not only to be fed, but they are to lie down while they feed! You have sometimes noticed a flock, at noontide, when the sun is hot, lie down upon the grass and feed while they rest. That is what God's people are to do. They are to lie down in tranquility of spirit. They are to lie down in a state of placid submission to His will, in a state of perfect security—a state, not of idleness from the Master's service, but still a state in which they know there is nothing for them to do for their own security since Christ has accomplished the whole of their salvation! "I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God." It is not everyone of God's people that has attained to this blessed experience, to be able to lie down in quiet confidence and rest—

***"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment never can boast.
To His name eternal praises,***

None of these shall ever be lost.

Deeply engraved on His heart their names remain. If you are His sheep, yet even if you have never come to lie down in peace, if you cannot say, "I know and am confident," and cannot rest while you feed, it is still comforting for you to feel that all Christ's sheep are His sheep, whether they are lying down or standing up, or even wandering from Him!

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away.* Ah, one little thinks, perhaps, that there should be such a thing as a poor sheep driven away, but it is sometimes true! A legal preacher drives Christ's sheep away from Christ. A seeking soul would gladly come to Jesus, but he is told that he must *be* something and *do* something before he can come. The poor sinner would trust in Jesus, but he is told, first, to get such-and-such a state of heart. He is told, "You are not the man who should be encouraged to come to Christ—you must have some deeper *experience* before you come." But, blessed be God, the Good Shepherd says, if Satan has driven you away, or a legal preacher has driven you away, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away."

16. *And will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.* Those who boast of being fat and strong, who glory in themselves—these, God will destroy! But the poor, weak, sick souls shall be fed with kindness tempered with judgment.

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet? Oh, how many there are, even of God's sheep, that foul the waters! They come up to God's House, where, perhaps, they get some sweet morsel in the sermon, but there are some things in it with which they do not quite agree. They are walking home with some young Christian and he is thinking how blessedly he felt under the sermon, while, perhaps, that old professor is grumbling the whole time and stirring up the waters with his feet! If the pasture is not good enough for you, you should let the lambs eat of it without treading it down! Others like it, though you may not, and if you do not like it, you can always leave it! But what is the use of finding fault with it and treading it under your feet and not letting others eat of it? It is a great crime, says God—"Seems it a small thing" to tread it down under your feet, to spoil the spiritual enjoyment of your Brothers and Sisters? It seems, to some, of very little consequence what harm they do to God's weak ones—but it is not so—it is a great sin to tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures, so you quibblers and critics had better beware!*

19-21. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns,*

till you have scattered them abroad. I wish some people would not thrust so much with side and shoulder in their controversies with their brethren. It may be all very well for a man to be honest and faithful, and push with his horns, but there are some diseased ones who cannot stand rough usage when they are only coming in all simplicity to drink at the Fountain of Life.

22, 23. *Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them.* There is only one Shepherd. As for the rest of us, we are only under-shepherds. There is only one Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ—we are simply the men He employs to look after His sheep a little. He is the Great Shepherd and when He shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in Glory. “I will set up one shepherd over them.”

23-25. *And he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a Covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.* Those who have seen the watching of flocks by night in the East could give you quite a picture of the meaning of this verse. Sometimes the shepherds will sit down in the midst of bushes and briars that may grow at the side of the woods and, taking some of them for firewood, they will light a fire in the night. And when the wolves come around them, the sheep are quite safe. I have read of this in books of travel—and what a beautiful thing it seems to sit, with the full moon shining down on the forest, and the fires alight, feeling that, notwithstanding all the wolves, the sheep are quite safe with the shepherds there to protect them! So is it with God's people. They must always expect, while they are in the woods of this world, to have a scratch, now and then, from the briars and thorns, but, “they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.” God will always take care of His own, for, “the Lord knows them that are His.”

26. *And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.* My earnest prayer is that this church may be a great blessing to all who are around us—and I firmly believe it will be so, by God's Grace!

27. *And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.* The Jews will know that God is the Lord when they shall return to their own land. The poor tired sinner, best of all knows that God is God when he gets the bands of his neck broken off him! By nature, we all have bands about our necks—it is only God who takes them off. Pilgrim, you know, lost his burden when he looked at the Cross—it rolled away down into the sepulcher. And if you had asked him then, “Is God, God?” “Yes,” he would have said, “otherwise, I should not have had the bands of my neck loosed.” No man who has had the bands taken off him will ever doubt

that there is a God! Let him experience that holy calm which springs from the fact of his having been set at Gospel liberty and he will say, "This is the work of God! No man, no human power could have done it." I can never be an Arminian as long as I feel myself a sinner. I am obliged to come back to this—Lord, I must be saved by Sovereign Grace, or not at all. A single day's experience is enough to take all the self-conceit out of a Christian if the Lord should leave him to his own unaided strength. We best know that God is God when we have had the bands broken off our necks. How many are there sitting here with bands on their necks—slaves, wearing the yoke upon their shoulders? They cannot see it, but it is there, nevertheless. Who is there who can say, "My bands are broken from my neck"?—

***"My sins are drowned, as in a flood,
Of Jesus' pure and matchless blood."***

I am finally discharged; the bands are broken off my neck, verily, God is God."

28, 29. *And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a garden of renown.* Jesus is "a garden of renown," because you may go to Him at all times and you will always find fruit on Him. That is more than you can say of any other garden. You may go to Him and you will always find the sort of fruit you need. Is He not "a garden of renown"? You will find healing virtue in His leaves and satisfying fruits hanging in clusters upon Him. He is "a garden of renown" because His Father planted Him, because He has food enough for all His saints and a gracious variety for all their tastes! And He will blossom through eternity! Because of the multitude who sit under His shadow and rejoice therein, He is "a garden of renown" to His people, for under His shadow they are begotten and brought forth! The greatest transactions of their lives have taken place beneath the shadow of that old tree, "the garden of renown."

29, 30. *And they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord God.* Thus shall they know it. Do you know it? Has God told it to you? Have you the witness of the Spirit within your spirit that you are born of God? My Hearers, never be satisfied till you get this, for you will never be truly at rest until you know that you are God's people and until you can, each one, say, "My God, my God, you are my God."

31. *And you My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord GOD.* "However much I may have lifted you up, you are only men, after all. But I am not a man, I am your God," says the Lord. And we rest more upon what God is, than upon what man is, for He, "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think."

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

GOD'S GLORY IN THE BUILDING UP OF ZION NO. 3147

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 1909.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory.”
Psalm 102:16.***

THE Lord Himself must “build up Zion,” or it will never be built up. He first planned it. He is the Architect of His own Church. He dug the foundations, i.e., has supplied the great Cornerstone. He, by His own power, creates each living stone, polishes it and fits it into its place. He cements the whole structure and as He first sketched the plan, so will He complete it in every iota to the praise and the glory of His wisdom, His Grace and His love. It shall be said of Zion, when all her walls are built and all her palaces completed—and when all her happy inhabitants have their mouths filled with song as they walk in white—“The Lord has built it, from the foundation even to the topstone.” I remember seeing, close by the side of the Alps, a house which had upon its front, words to this effect, “This house was built entirely by the skill, wealth and industry of its inhabitants.” It struck me as not being a very modest thing to put in front of one’s house for, after all, the structure was not very marvelous. But when we look at the glorious architecture of the Church of God, it is no mean part of its luster that it may fittingly bear such an inscription as this, “This House was built entirely by the wisdom, the munificence and the power of the Infinite Jehovah.”

I. But while the text reminds us of this Truth which I hope we never can forget, it also brings to our minds three or four other Truths of God. And the first point of our discourse shall be ZION BUILT UP.

I suppose we shall all consider that one essential to the building up of Zion would be *practical conversion*. It is of small avail for a man to say he is building up a church where the power of the Holy Spirit is not seen in calling sinners out of darkness into marvelous light. There may be periods in which conversions are few, but if instead of their being exceptional, this should come to be the rule in one’s ministry, there would be grave cause to suspect that God was not working within the minister—certainly not in the sense of building up the Church. We find not infrequently, in Holy Scripture, that the fathers of households are called, “builders,” and that the term, “the building of a house,” is constantly used in respect to the birth and training up of a family. Now, in the great Christian family, our converts are the new-born children and a family is not built up for God except with these sons and daughters who are like stones polished after the similitude of a palace. We little know the blessing which young converts bring to us. They quicken the pulse of old

Christians, they strengthen and confirm the faith of those who have long been walking in the Truth and they do, as it were, infuse new blood into the fellowship of the saints. They come to us as God's message from on high. They are tokens for good and whereas we might have thought, perhaps, that the triumphs of the Cross were confined to the heroic age when the Spirit of God was poured out in Pentecostal measure, yet as we see our sons and daughters converted and the great miracle of regeneration still being performed, we take heart and are of good courage to go on in the work of the Lord! Conversions we must have, for there is no building up of Zion without them!

And then *a public confession of faith* must follow conversion. Though the invisible Church of God is built up by conversions, the outward Church is only built up as men and women associate together in the holy society which we call "the Church." It is the duty of every Christian—no, it is the instinct of his spiritual life—to avow the faith which he has received! And avowing it, he finds himself associated with others who have made the same profession and he assists them in holy labor. When he is strong, he ministers of his strength to the weak. And when he is, himself, weak, he borrows strength from those who, just then, may happen to be strong in the faith. Where were our Christian institutions if Church fellowship were broken up? Plainly, if it is right for one Christian to remain out of Church fellowship, it is right for all! And then, if there were no Churches, there would be no institutions—and where would the Gospel, itself, be? I would not lay too much stress on the Church of God, but I venture to ask you, is it not written that she is "the pillar and ground of the Truth?" If, then, I withhold my confession of faith and my personal communion with the visible Church, I to that extent weaken the pillar and ground of the faith. We need confessions of faith as well as conversions.

By a Church being thus formed in order to its being built up, something more is needed. *We cannot build without union.* A house is not a load of bricks, neither is the Church a mere conglomeration of human beings. A house must have its doors, its windows, its foundations, its rafters and its ceiling. So a Church must be organized—it must have its distinct offices and officers, it must have its departments of labor—and proper men must be found, according to Christ's own appointment, to preside over those departments.

Our Savior was raised up on high to receive gifts for men and to give gifts to men. And those gifts are first, Apostles, then pastors and teachers, and Evangelists, and so on, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Some of the old Roman walls are compacted with such excellent cement that it would be almost impossible to separate one stone from another. In fact, the whole mass has become consolidated like a solid rock—so embedded in cement that you cannot distinguish one stone from another. Happy the Church thus built up, where each cares not on-

ly for his own prosperity, but for the prosperity of all—where if there is any joy in one member, all the members rejoice, and if there is sorrow in any one part of the body, all the rest of the body is in sorrow, too, “remembering them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.” And yet, what are some churches but semi-religious clubs, mere conventions of people gathered together? They have not in them that holy soul which is the essence of unity! There is no life to keep them in entirety. Why, the body would soon become disjointed and a mass of rottenness if the soul were not in it—and if the Spirit of Christ is absent, the whole fabric of the outward church begins to fall to pieces—for where there is no life, there can be no true union!

More than this, to build up a Church, there needs to be *edification and instruction in the faith*. It is, I think, a matter for deep regret that this is not an age in which Christian people desire to be edified. It is an age in which they like to have their ears tickled and delight to have a multiplicity of anecdotes and of exciting metaphors—but they care little to be well instructed in the sound and solid Doctrines of the Grace of God. In the old Puritan times, sermons must have been tiresome to the thoughtless, but nowadays I think they are more tiresome to the thoughtful! The Christian of those days wanted to know a great deal of the things of God. And provided that the preacher could open up some mystery to him, or explain some point of Christian practice to make him holier and wiser, he was well satisfied, though the man might be no orator and might lead him into no fields of novel speculation. Christians, then, did not need a new faith but, having received the old faith, they wished to be well rooted and grounded in it and, therefore, they sought daily for illumination as well as for quickening! They desired not only to have the emotions excited, but also to have the intellect richly stored with Divine Truth—and there must be much of this in every Church if it is to be built up! There need certainly be no neglect of an appeal to the passions and no forgetfulness of what is popular and exciting—but with this we must have the solid bread-corn of the Kingdom of God, without which God's children will faint in the weary way of this wilderness!

It does not strike me, however, that I have yet given a full picture of the building up of a Church, for a Church such as I have described would not answer the end for which Christ ordained it. Christ ordained His Church to be *His great aggressive method* in combating with sin and with the world that lies in the Wicked One. It is to be a light, not to itself, as a candle in a dark lantern, but a light unto that which is outside. Albeit we are not saved by works, yet the ultimate result of salvation must always be work. The *cause* of salvation lies in Grace, but the *effect* of salvation appears in working. As sure as ever the Grace of God fills a soul, that soul desires to see others brought in. That respectable church, that wealthy church which is quite satisfied to have no debt upon its own building, content if its minister is as sparsely remunerated as possible—without enthusiasm, without zeal, always harping on the string of prudence, conservatism and orthodoxy, having no care whatever to be ag-

gressive—such a church needs to be built on other foundations, to get rid of its wood, hay and stubble, and to be built on gold, silver and precious stones, or otherwise it will not honor Christ!

It strikes me that it is necessary for the edification of every Christian that he should have something to do. We learn to be soldiers by being drilled. No, the veteran is taught to fight by fighting! I think most ministers know that one of the best methods of learning to preach is to preach—and the best way of learning Christianity is to be a Christian practically. Said one, “If you would do good, *be good*.” And I have sometimes thought if we would be good, we must *do good*—not to make us so, but as the best discipline to keep us in good health and good training! Do not let us hope that we ourselves can be devoted to God except by Christian service! And let us not hope that the Church can ever be so devoted except by casting about in the world to do for Christ whatever came to its hands.

But I must go yet a step further. After a Church has become all that I have been describing, the next thing it ought to do should be to *think of the formation of other Churches*. The building up of an empire must often be by colonization. Her majesty's dominions, upon which we proudly say that, “the sun never sets,” have been greatly enlarged by the sons and daughters of Britain who have gone to other lands. And the true process of increasing the Church of Christ must be by her forming colonies. Who dares to deny that in the building of many places of worship in England and elsewhere, the devil has had as much to do as Christ has had? I mean in our denomination, if not in any other. A great number of chapels have been as the result of schism, bad spirit, bickering, jealousy and I know not what—quarrelling and contending, perhaps, about some points of Truth which, if important, could not be so important as the spirit of love and of unity! Many and many a time a house has been dedicated to God when the first thought that led to it—and the last act that finished it—were simply a thought and an act of pride, or envy, or pure sectarian bigotry and nothing more! Now, I do not think, although He has no doubt overruled it for good, that this is legitimate. But for a number of Christian people associated together in a Church and finding that the Church has grown strong enough to be able to afford to lose them—for these to swarm off and form another Church and give of their substance to build another house—seems to me to be a legitimate and proper method in which Zion may be built up in these, our realms.

II. THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, CONNECTED WITH JEHOVAH'S BEING GLORIFIED.

“When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters! It would need a seraph to tell of all the Glory which has come to God through the building up of His Church. Heaven rang with acclamations when the angels first learned that God designed to have a Church on the earth. When they perceived, by the glimmering light of the first promise, that there was to be a Seed of the woman as well as a seed of the serpent, they began to hymn Jehovah's praise and, when Christ was given and so the foundation of the Church was actually

laid, the Glory of creation was eclipsed and even the splendor of Providence might almost have been forgotten in the more transcendent Glory of Grace. God had done marvelously before, but never did He seem so Divine as when He gave His dear Son and when, in the holy life and dying pangs of the Son of His love, the foundation of the Church was laid! So, too, God is glorified in every single part of the building of His Church. There is not a stone quarried from the dark pit of Nature, or polished by the tools of Grace, or put into its position without fresh honor to God and new Glory to His name. He cannot *be* more glorious, but He appears more richly glorious in the building up of His Church. And what will be the Glory when the topstone is brought out—when the last elect one shall be cemented to the visible whole? What shall be the undying melody, the unceasing song of ages as to principalities and powers shall be made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God?

Sometimes, however, a suspicion has arisen in the minds of God's people that God was not glorified in His Church. And the text almost seems to hint, not that God is not glorified, but at any rate, that He is not so much glorified in the Church at one time as at another, for it says, "*When the Lord shall build up Zion,*" as if He were not always building up Zion, at least not to the same extent. We know from painful experience that there are lulls—seasons when a dead calm comes over the Church—and then, to the minds of many, God's Glory is not revealed. In consequence thereof, the inhabitants of Zion hang their harps upon the willows and go a-mourning. And yet, had we more faith, and put sense more in the background, we might sing to our Well-Beloved a song touching His vineyard, even when the wild boar out of the forest is wasting her and her hedges are being broken down. The wave recedes, but the tide advances! The day may seem to be dark but every hour is bringing on the noon. God advances not by little steps. We must not judge Him by inches who is not even to be measured by leagues, nor by handfuls when the mountains are too small for His hands—and He took up the isles as a very little thing. Our belief is that the whole way through, God is building up His Church, and that He does appear in His Glory.

Perhaps one or two thoughts may make this more clear to us. God often appears in Glory to me as one of His builders and I will tell you in what respect. When I have been sitting to see enquirers, I have sometimes found that God has blessed to the conversion of souls some of my poorest sermons—those which I thought I could weep over—which seemed more than ordinarily weak and lacking in all the elements likely to make them blessed, except that they were sincerely spoken. When I have seen that the work was done though the workman, naturally weak, was on that occasion more than usually depressed with infirmity, I have only been able to lift up my hands and say, "Now, Lord, You appear in Your Glory, since You do build up Zion and convert sinners by the most unlikely means—and Your Truth, apparently when most feebly spoken, works the mightiest results. This is to make Your name glorious, indeed!"

Another thing has sometimes made one see God in His Glory. Persons have been brought up and educated under sermons that are as hostile to

spiritual life as the plague is to natural life! They have, from their youth up, seen religion in all its gaudy show of symbolism and yet one hearing of the simple Gospel has been sufficient for their conversion. Perhaps the mere reading of a single text has untwisted the knots of 40 years—and the despotism of the priesthood over the mind has fallen at the touch of a single passage of God's Word! The case of Luther is one instance of this, and in all such cases God appears in His Glory. If you will look at each conversion, and especially at the sudden conversion of those who for long years have been inured to the very reverse of the Gospel of Christ, you will see God appearing in His Glory!

Think, too, of the agencies which are abroad hostile to the Church of God. The Jews were glad to see the walls of Jerusalem rise because they remembered Geshem, Tobiah, Sanballat and all the rest that laughed and jeered at them. Up went the walls though these enemies laughed—and the foxes did not break down the walls though Tobiah so ventured to prophesy. In this age, too, the Church is not without her adversaries and they are of a very dangerous sort. They are not always outspoken adversaries. Some of them teach us how to doubt—not because they doubt, they say, but because it is so healthy a thing for our minds to be rid of the bondage of old-fashioned dogmas! They are not themselves unsound, but still, if a Brother should happen to be so, they will defend him, thereby providing a defense for themselves when they should more fully need it. If they would only state what they believe, or what they do not believe, it would be easy to deal with these foes—but inasmuch as the whole thing is too shadowy and too vague, we feel as if we were under the plague of flies which were in Egypt when we have to deal with these minute adversaries!

But let us reflect that notwithstanding all this, God is still building up His Church. Looking back over the last ten or 20 years, am I too sanguine if I say that the age is, after all, better than it was? I do not mean that the *world* is better, but I do mean that as a whole, there is more evangelical preaching and more earnest pleading with God now than there were ten years ago. I am not given to complimenting, but I do feel that we have made an advance and that the Christian Church is more awake than it was. I grant you that the foes are more vociferous. So let them be! I suppose the nearer the moon gets to its full, the more the dogs bark, and the nearer the harvest is to getting ripe, the more numerous is the horde of birds that come to feed upon the grain. This must be expected—and God appears in His Glory the more His enemies surround His Church!

Putting all these things together—poor instruments, poor materials and numerous foes—let us say that when God builds up Zion under such circumstances as these, He truly appears in His Glory!

What a splendid thing was that—may we see it repeated in our own day—when the twelve Apostles first attacked Roman idolatry! The prestige of ages made the idolatry of Rome venerable. It had an imperial Caesar and all his legions at its back—and every favorable omen to defend it. Yet those twelve men, with no patronage but the patronage of the King of

Kings, with no learning except that which they had learned at the feet of Jesus, with weapons as simple as David's sling and stone, went forth to the fight—and you know how the grisly head of the monstrous idolatry was, by-and-by, in the hands of the Christian champion as he returned rejoicing from the fray. So shall it be yet again, and then amidst the acclamation of myriads of witnesses, shall God appear in His Glory!

III. With great brevity, let us now observe THE HOPE EXCITED. If God is glorified by the building up of Zion, then most certainly Zion will be built! If He is glorified by the conversion of sinners and by the banding together of converted men and women, then it seems but natural to hope, yes, *with certainty we may conclude* that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it!

Let me suppose that you had been created as a solitary creature and that it had been made known to you, by the mouth of God, Himself, that it would be to God's Glory to create unnumbered worlds—would you be unreasonable in looking for the first day in which the heavens and the earth should be created? You would soon come to an absolute certainty, putting faith in the prophecy, that since God would be glorified in creating, He would create! And supposing when you saw the world created, you knew, from God's own mouth, that it would be to His Glory for Him to take the reins of human affairs and manage everything according to the counsel of His own will—you would feel persuaded that He would do it. Well, you are clearly informed here that it is for God's Glory to build up His Church! Then draw the inference—draw it boldly, no, draw it confidently, and say—"If it is for God's Glory, then it must and shall be done."

I like the spirit in which Luther used to say that when he could get God into his quarrels, he felt safe. When it was Luther alone he did not know which way it would go, but when he felt that his God would be compromised and dishonored if such a thing were not done, and would be glorified if it were done, then he felt safe enough. So, dear Friends, in the great crusade of Truth, is not God with us beyond a doubt? The ship of the Church carries Christ and all His fortunes, so how can she be wrecked? The honor of the Church is intertwined with the honor and glory of Christ—if she shall pass away, if she is deserted, then where is her Captain, her Head, her Husband? But as His honor must be safe, so shall hers be! Zion shall be lifted up, that God may appear in His Glory!

IV. Our whole subject SUGGESTS AN ENQUIRY.

Have I any part or lot in this work which is to bring glory to God? I may have to do with it in two ways, as a built one, and as a builder. I can have nothing to do with it in the latter capacity unless I have first had to do with it in the former. God will be glorified in the building up of Zion—*shall I minister to His Glory by being part of the Zion that is to be built up?* I remember to have heard one who half-solaced himself in the prospect of his eternal ruin. He was a hardened sinner, but he was trying to draw some sort of comfort from the thought that if he were lost forever, he should glorify Christ. I was startled! Horror seized me when he put it in that light. A Truth of God in some sense, I could not bear to see it so

handled by him as to clothe it in the vestments of a lie. I was obliged to quote the other text, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." You do not find God ever speaking of deriving glory from the death of him that dies! You do not find that it administers anything of gratification to the Eternal Mind that a soul should perish. There is a glory to His Justice, doubtless—an awful splendor wrapped about the executioner's axe—but it is a glory of which God says but little and of which my text says nothing at all! The true Glory of God is like the glory of the king who will not glory in the numbers executed upon the hill of death, but who glories in his subjects who are happy and blessed. God glories not in the soul whom there is a dire necessity to cast away, but in the soul whom Almighty Grace has chosen, redeemed and saved!

I should think, Friend, if your reason is in a right state, that you will have some wish to glorify the God that made you. "The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib"—do you not know? Will you not consider? If you build a house, you expect some comfort from it. If you sow a field, you expect to gather some grain from it. And shall God, who has made you, who has put breath into your nostrils and who feeds you every day—shall He, then, have no honor out of you, no glory at your hands? Shall you be a valueless waif and a stray drifting along on the tides of time, with none to care for you because you have lost your compass and live not for the true objective of human life? May I ask you to put this question to yourselves?

The enquiry whether you have anything to do or not with glorifying God in the building up of His Church may be very serviceable to you. If you find that you have no interest at all in the matter, may not that thought be blessed of God to make you start? Oh, that men would start! They sleep when everlasting wrath is impending! Oh, that they would feel the shock and avert the stroke! A startling preacher is needed by a slumbering age. Be startling preachers to yourselves just now. O men and women, there are some of you—it were hopeless to expect it were not so—in whom God will have no glory from your being built into His Church, for you are like the stones of the valley, which are not built up, but lie there useless, to be broken at last by the hammer when the Breaker shall come forth to the work of destruction! Would you glorify God, Sinner? Have you never heard the question asked of Christ by the Jews, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" And this was Christ's answer, "This is the work of God, (the chief work of all), that you believe on Him whom He has sent." If you would glorify God, humble yourself, bow the knee and kiss the Son and receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ! And then, being built upon this foundation, you shall glorify God!

The enquiry shapes itself afresh. *Have you anything to do with glorifying God in respect of being, yourself, a builder of Zion?* It is a shame that these lips should have to say it, but we must speak the sad truth that there are some who profess to be built, but who are not building—some who say that they are servants, but are not serving. Some who profess to be in the vineyard, but are not working. Some who say they are soldiers,

but are not fighting! My Brothers and Sisters, I count it to be one of the most precious parts of my spiritual heritage that I am permitted to serve Christ. And let me say that if my Lord Jesus gave me nothing else on earth but the privilege of serving Him, I would bless Him for it to all eternity! It is no mean honor to be a servant of the King of Kings! There is such pleasure in honoring Christ and in winning souls, that I can scarcely believe that any of you have ever tasted it if you are not hungering after more of it! Did you ever win a soul to Christ? Did you ever get a grip of the hand of spiritual gratitude? Did you ever see the tear starting from the eye when the convert said, "Bless you! I shall remember you in Heaven, for you have brought me to Christ"? Oh, my dear Friend, you will not be satisfied merely with this, for this is a kind of food that makes men hungry! Oh, that you had a rich banquet of it and yet wanted still more!

The Church of Christ shall and must be built! Even if you and I sit still, it will be built. This a glorious Truth of God though it is often perverted to a mischievous end—the Church will be built, even without us, but oh, we shall miss the satisfaction of helping in its building! Yes, it will grow. Every stone will be put in its place and the pinnacle will soar to its predestinated elevation—but every stone, from foundation to pinnacle, will seem to say to you, "You had nothing to do with this! You had no hand in this!" When Cyrus took one of his guests round his garden, the guest admired it greatly and said he had much pleasure in it. "Ah," said Cyrus, "but you have not so much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I planted every tree in it myself." One reason why Christ has so much pleasure in His Church is because He did so much for it. And one reason why some saints will have a greater fullness of Heaven than others to rejoice in will be because they did more for Heaven than others did. By God's Grace, they were enabled to bring more souls there—and as they look upon the Church they may, without self-reliance or self-conceit, ascribing it all to Grace, remember what they were enabled to do as instruments in the hands of the Lord towards its building up. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 123, 124, 125.**

Psalm 123:1. *Unto You lift I up my eyes, O You that dwell in the heavens.* Our eyes are far too apt to look below, or to look within, or to look around. But it is wisdom on our part to look up. There is always something blessed to see upward, especially when we look up to Him who dwells in the highest heavens—our Father, our Savior, our Comforter. There is little down here that is worth looking at, but there is everything for our comfort when we look up.

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He has mercy upon us.* [See Sermon #2654, Volume45—WAKEFUL AND WATCHFUL EYES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is what we are looking for—the mercy of the Lord our God. It comes from His great heart, through His almighty hands. A wave of His hand is sufficient to drive away all our troubles. When He opens His hand, He supplies the needs of every living thing, so mighty and so bountiful is He. Let us, therefore, keep our eyes upon our Lord's hands “until that He has mercy upon us.”

3. *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us.* The longing soul does not wait in utter silence without expressing its desires. I have heard of some who have said that their will was so fully conformed to God's will that they had left off praying to Him! Surely that was a Satanic delusion, for the will of Christ was perfectly conformed to that of His Father, yet *for that very reason* He abounded in prayer! We must be in an evil case if we leave off praying. The Psalmist says that he and those who were like-minded with him waited until the Lord had mercy upon them, and then he began a sort of litany, “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.” He uses the same words twice as if to express the greatness of his need, the clearness of his perception of what he needed, the earnestness of his desire and his expectation that his need would be supplied. In this verse and the previous one, we have the petition, “Have mercy upon us,” presented no less than three times, for mercy is the greatest need of the best man who ever lived!

3. *For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* That is a sharp cutting thing, most trying to the soul that has to endure it, and many have been greatly depressed in spirit by the contempt that has been poured upon them. But, Lord, Your mercy is a cure for man's need of mercy. Your thoughtfulness of us will take off the edge from man's contempt of us.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.* It does not seem to be a desirable thing to be at ease, for it was such people who were the scorers of the Psalmist and his godly companions. Job also said, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” In the stagnant air of a life of ease, all kinds of mischiefs breed—and especially that fever of pride which leads ungodly men to have contempt for God's people.

Psalm 124:1-3. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick.* That is, alive.

3. *When their wrath was kindled against us.* If it had not been God who had engaged to take care of His people, they would all have perished—and that God must be Jehovah. I wish that our translators had not been carried away by the superstition of the Jews and that they had used the word, “Jehovah,” where it is employed in the original—then this verse and the previous one would have read, “If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up alive,” as some beasts, birds and fishes swallow their prey and as some men would do with us if they could, that is, swallow us up

alive, making a short and speedy end of us, not waiting to tear us in pieces, but swallowing us whole and alive!

4, 5. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* The figure is varied. We are first likened to the lamb that is liable to be swallowed by the lion, and next we are compared to one who is in danger of being carried away by a devouring flood which shows no pity to any, but sweeps everything before it down to destruction.

6. *Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth.* Neither to Satan and his lieges, nor to wicked men, has God delivered us. We are not to be their prey, for God claims us as His own!

7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we have escaped.* [See Sermon #1696, Volume 28—THE BIRD ESCAPED FROM THE SNARE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a joyous song that is for the escaped soul to sing! Whenever a Christian has fallen into difficulties through not walking uprightly, when he has gone astray from the right path and has been caught in the fowler's net—and is in such trouble that he does not know what to do—then God comes and cuts the net, perhaps, with the sharp knife of affliction and the imprisoned soul again finds freedom from worldly associations and happy liberty in the service of God. I do not know a sweeter song than this that he and others of God's rescued birds can sing as they mount up into the clear light of God's Countenance, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we have escaped."

8. *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made Heaven and earth.* This is a good lesson for us to learn from the past experience of the Lord's people. God and God alone did deliver His servants in the past and herein is our confidence for the present and the future—our help is in the name—the revealed and manifested Character—of Jehovah, the Creator of Heaven and earth!

Psalm 125:1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* [See Sermon #1450, Volume 24—THE IMMOVABILITY OF THE BELIEVER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What comfort there is in this verse to all who trust in the Lord! We never expect to see anyone tear up Mount Zion by the roots. The Romans have been there and plowed Mount Zion as a field, but they could not remove it—it is there still and the natural features are the same as they were in the days of Abraham and David. Mount Zion "cannot be removed but abides forever." Men have swept away much that was built on it, but Mount Zion is still there, nor shall any human power ever be able to remove it. And, glory be to God, neither men nor devils shall ever be able to remove us if we trust in the Lord, for we "shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever."

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever.* [See Sermon #161, Volume 3—THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] At Jerusalem there is first the deep valley around

the hill. And then afterwards a range of encircling mountains, but the munitions of stupendous rock are nothing compared with those eternal ramparts which protect the people of God.

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity.* “The rod of the wicked” may fall upon the lot of the righteous, but it shall not “rest” there! The godly may be oppressed for a season, but that season shall not be too long for them to endure. God will not allow His servants to be tried above what they are able to bear, lest their faith should fail and, in order to escape from their oppressors, they should “put forth their hands unto iniquity.”

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* The Psalmist prays to Jehovah to do good to those whom He has made good, for there are none who are naturally good. And there is a special goodness which He bestows upon those whom He has made good by the effectual working of His good Spirit. When they no longer lean this way or that way, but stand upright in their integrity, then shall they know this special goodness of the Lord.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* Ways of policy, of lies, of self-seeking, of presumptuous sin, of backsliding.

5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* If they will work iniquity, they shall go with those that work iniquity! Each one shall go to his own company. If we have loved the people of God on earth and have walked in God's ways here, we may confidently expect to be gathered with His elect above. But if we have turned aside to crooked ways, what can we expect but that where the workers of iniquity go, we, too, shall go there? “As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, Jehovah shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.”

5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.* What a blessed benediction that is—peace! It is the one thing that we need above everything else. We are sometimes glad to know more, but we often tire even of knowing and would rather sit down as children who are satisfied with what they have been told by others who do know. We wish to be very useful in the world—and, blessed be God, we can never rest unless we are useful. But there are times of weariness when the best blessing for us—the blessing which shall most help to fit us for future service—is perfect peace, that peace of which our Savior said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.”

Are all of you who are trusting in Christ in the enjoyment of that peace at this moment? If not, you are not living up to your privileges as Believers.

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

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

GOOD NEWS FOR THE DESTITUTE

NO. 1141

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 9, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”
Psalm 102:17.***

OBSERVE that the verse which precedes the text describes the Lord as appearing in His Glory. His Zion is to be built up and therefore her King puts on the robes of His splendor. The imagery sets forth the Lord as a great Monarch, superintending with great pomp and state, the building of a sumptuous palace. We see Him commanding the architects and the workmen, and passing from point to point amid attending courtiers. Trumpets are sounding, banners are displayed, princes and nobles glitter in their array and the King appears in His Glory.

But who is this, whose mournful wail, disturbs the harmony? From where comes this ragged beggar who bows before the Prince? Surely he will be dragged away by the soldiers, or cast into prison by the wardens for daring to pollute so grand a ceremony by such wretched presumption! Were there not streets, lanes and dark corners enough for beggars? Why need he thrust himself in where his rags are so much out of place? But look! The King hears him! The sound of the trumpet has not drowned the voice of the destitute.

His Majesty listens to him while he asks for an alms and in matchless compassion pities all his groans. Who is this King, but Jehovah? Of Him, only, is it said, “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” The verse is enhanced in its beauty by its connection, even as a fair jewel receives an added beauty from the lovely neck upon which it sparkles. Let us read the verse, again, in this soft silver light. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”

It is clear that the heart of the Lord delights in the cries of needy souls and nothing can prevent His hearing them. No occupation is so sublime as to distract the Lord's attention from the prayer of the most humble of His mourners. The songs of seraphs, the symphonies of angels, the ceaseless chorales of the redeemed are not more sweet in the ears of the all-merciful Jehovah than the faint breathings of poor dying wretches who confess themselves condemned by His Justice and, therefore, appeal to His loving kindness and tender mercy!

This morning I am going to preach about the destitute. I hope there are many of them here. At any rate many are here who *once* were destitute, and would be so now, if it were not for the riches of Divine Grace. Hear me, you poor in spirit, and may the Lord comfort you by my words. Our first work, this morning, shall be to speak about a spiritual pauper, the

“destitute.” Then we will talk of his special occupation—it is clear that he has taken to begging, for the text speaks twice of his “prayer,” and prayer is the essence of begging.

Then, thirdly, here is a very natural fear of this spiritual beggar, namely, that his prayer will not be regarded and will even be despised. And then, fourthly, the whole text is a most comfortable assurance to this spiritual mendicant that his begging will be successful, for the Lord of whom he begs will regard his prayer and will not despise his supplication.

I. First, then, let us go down among the beggars and look upon THE SPIRITUAL PAUPER. It will do you good to have your spiritual gentility shocked for a while. And it will be a lasting benefit if you are made to feel, anew, your own poverty, and to cry, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” The spiritual pauper is, in our text, described as destitute. And you may take the word in its extreme sense—the spiritually poor man is not only positively—but utterly, thoroughly—terribly destitute!

He is destitute of all wealth of merit or possession of righteousness. Time was, years ago, when he was as good as anybody else, in his own esteem, and perhaps a little better. He was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. True, he had some faults, but he considered them to be outweighed by his excellences. And if he fell, sometimes, into error and sin, he had most ingenious excuses with which to shift the blame—either some companions beguiled him, or else his circumstances necessitated the fault.

He was a sinner, he admitted that, but he put his *own* meaning upon the title, so that he did not feel degraded by it. He was no vagrant or pauper in the universe of God, but rather a fellow citizen with the worthy, and of the household of self-satisfaction. He was at least as good as the average of men and possibly better than, under present circumstances, men may generally be expected to be. And if he did not actually claim anything of God by way of merit, it was because he deferred to the crotchets of the Protestant religion. But in his inmost soul he really thought he could have maintained a decent position on the score of good works—and have shown up a very presentable righteousness had it been asked for.

He never did, in his heart, see anything amiss in the Pharisee’s prayer, “God I thank You that I am not as other men are.” He, himself, reflected with a very great deal of comfort upon the fact that he had never been a drunk, that no profane word had dropped from his mouth, that he had been upright in his business and that to all intents and purposes he was a reputable and respectable man, worthy of the Divine regard. This, however, is all changed.

The man has come down from an emperor to a penniless beggar. His outward character may not have changed, but his own estimate of himself is as different as light from darkness. Now he sees the hollowness of an outward morality which does not proceed from a renewed heart. Now he knows that the sins which he has committed are exceedingly sinful and that the religious professions he has made, being nothing better than

mere pretences—the heart not going with them—were a mockery of God and an insult to the Most High.

Look at him, then, you rich men! Here was one of yourselves, richer than most, and far superior to the majority! But now he is as poor as the unfeathered bird which cruelty has flung from its nest. He has no good work that he dares bring before his God, but he admits to ten thousands of sins—every one of which accuses him before the Most High and demands punishment at the hands of Justice. He feels this and shivers in his wretched rags. Do you inquire, “Where is he?” Is he not here at this moment? Can I not see his tears and hear his groans? “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” is his cry! He is so far from claiming anything like *merit* that he loathes the very thought of self-righteousness, feeling himself to be guilty, undeserving, ill-deserving, and Hell-deserving—meriting, only to be banished from the Presence of God forever!

There is a kind of destitution which is bearable. A man may be quite penniless, but he may be so accustomed to it that he does not care. He may even be more happy in rags and filth than in any other condition. Persons of this order are well known to the guardians of our workhouses. Have you ever seen the *lazzaroni* of Naples? Notwithstanding all their attempts to move your compassion, they generally fail after you have once seen them lying on their backs in the sun, amusing themselves the live-long day. You feel sure that beggary is their natural element. They are perfectly satisfied to be beggars, like their fathers, and to bring up their sons to the profession. The ease of poverty suits their constitutions.

But the *spiritual* pauper is not a member of this free and easy *lazzaroni* club by any manner of means—he is destitute of contentment! The poverty which is upon him is one which he cannot endure, or for a moment rest under. It is a heavy yoke to him. He sighs and cries under it. His is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He knows there is something better than the state into which he has fallen and he pines for it. He knows that if he does not escape from his present condition he will fall into woes infinitely worse—and he trembles at the grim prospect of it. Therefore he sighs and cries before God in bitterness of spirit, “Have mercy upon Your poor destitute creature! Have mercy upon Your undeserving servant.”

He has no contentment in his poverty. His penury is irksome to the last degree and he cannot complacently endure it. A man, however, if he is without money, is still not utterly destitute if he has strength—a stout pair of limbs can work and earn wages. Such a man will soon get out of his destitution. Only give him a chance and those rags will be exchanged for decent attire. He will no longer be skin and bones. He will improve into good condition—only give him employment and fair pay. But this is not the case with the *spiritual* pauper. He has no merit and he cannot earn any. His strength is gone.

Once he was so strong that he used to think if Heaven were to be merited by good works he could do it, or, if not, if eternal life were to be had by conversion and by believing in Christ, he could be converted at any

time, and believe in Jesus just whenever he liked. Religion appeared to him to be a very easy matter. “Only believe and you shall be saved”—could that be managed in the twinkling of an eye? If ever he heard a sermon about, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it,” he disliked the doctrine and the preacher. He could not agree with such narrow-minded views. He felt that he had all requisite spiritual power within himself and he did not believe either in natural depravity or spiritual inability.

He had done well in business and was a self-made man. He had worked himself up from the lowest ranks into an honorable position—surely he could do the same in the matters of his soul as in the affairs of the world! That gentleman is not one of the destitute, you clearly see—and I have nothing to say to him except that I pray God to take away his fancied power from him and make him feel himself to be weak as water. The spiritual pauper feels that he can do nothing right and that he cannot even think a good thought without the help of Divine Grace. As to believing in Jesus, simple as that matter is, he has come to this pass—

***“I would, but can’t believe,
Then all would easy be.
I would but cannot, Lord, believe,
My help must come from Thee.”***

He is so staggered with doubts and fears, and so bemisted and beclouded with dark remembrances of his past sins that he does not seem able to fix his eyes upon the atoning Sacrifice and to find comfort there. He is destitute, in the very worst sense, because he is “without strength.” Still, a man may be very poor at present and he may have no power to earn his bread, but he may not be utterly destitute, for he may have an estate in reserve. When his long-lived uncle dies he may come into a fortune. It may be that in some years’ time, if the steed can live till then, the grass will be up to its knees. Many a man pressingly needs present help, though, by-and-by, he will have enough to spare.

The *spiritual* pauper has nothing to look forward to which can at all alleviate his soul’s distress. His future is even gloomier than his present. Well do I remember when I looked out upon eternity and saw nothing but a fearful prospect of judgment and fiery indignation for me! I peered into the future and I could not expect to live a better life. I had so often tried and failed that I feared I might be left to a callous conscience and go from bad to worse. In fact I knew I would unless Christ would interpose and save me. And as for my hope in another world, alas, alas, I saw nothing but the Great White Throne, an angry Judge and everlasting fire in Hell!

I had no hopes, but numberless fears. Such is the outlook of every man whom God really convinces of sin. He is stripped of hope, itself, and the man who has lost hope has lost all—He is destitute with a vengeance—for him there remains neither in Heaven nor on earth any hope, whatever, unless he can obtain one as the gift of Grace. He has, indeed, reason to cry unto his God. A man who is spiritually destitute is destitute of all friends who can help him, for those who love him best can only pray for him—they cannot *save* him. We who would help him, if we could, can only

point him to the Savior. But he has blind eyes and how shall he see while he is in the dark?

He is also destitute of all plans for doing better. Schemers sometimes manage to live by their wits when they can no longer subsist by their hands, but the poor soul who is really destitute before God has not even a plan by which to help himself! All his schemes have turned into mere wind bags and his hopes from his own wisdom have altogether failed him. He has, in fact, nothing left. Nothing whatever. He is as naked as Adam and Eve beneath the trees of the garden when God, their offended Maker, met them, and they sought to cover themselves with fig leaves. He has come to the very lowest degree of spiritual penury—it is only necessary for death to put an end to his present misery for him to be in the ruin that will never end.

Such is the case of the spiritually destitute. I do not know whether I have managed to depict, in any way, the state of any really distressed conscience here. I have tried to do so, but if I have failed, suffer me to add another sentence or two. If any in this place feel that they are sinful, feel that they deserve the wrath of God, feel that they cannot help themselves. If any feel that unless Infinite Mercy shall interpose they must forever be lost. If, moreover, they cannot find any reason why they should be saved, cannot find any argument which could move the heart of Justice to have pity on them—they are just the very persons intended by my description and by the text! I pray them not to put away from them the comfort which the text contains, but listen to it as we read it again—“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”

So much, then, for the spiritual pauper.

II. Secondly, here is HIS SUITABLE OCCUPATION—he has taken to begging and it is a very fitting occupation for him. Indeed, there is nothing else he can do! When a man is shut up to one course, it is useless to raise objections to his following it, for necessity has no law and hunger will break through stone walls. The man can do nothing else but beg! And so, since we cannot let him perish and he will not, himself, perish through lethargy, he turns to do the only thing he can do, namely, to begging and praying.

Blessed is that soul which is shut up to prayer! It thinks itself accursed, but, indeed, now the blessing is come upon it. If you feel you cannot do anything but pray, and equally feel that you must pray, I have hopes for you. If now you dare not appeal to Justice, but simply cry, “Mercy, Lord! Mercy, mercy! I have no merits, but, oh, forgive me for Your mercy’s sake!” I am right glad of it. Why, dear Friends, you are shut up in the very same place where David was shut up when he could only say, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

You are shut up where every soul has been shut up that ever was saved, for unless you are driven to admit that nothing can save you but undeserved mercy, pity, and free Grace—you have not come to the place

where God can meet with you in pardon. But when you stand as a condemned criminal at the bar and plead, "Guilty, guilty, guilty," then you stand where God can look upon you with an eye of pity and can save you. The trade of begging is one which is most suitable for a spiritual pauper, because, if he cannot do anything else, I guarantee you he can do this right well!

They say in London that many of our beggars are mere actors, they mimic distress. If so, they do it uncommonly well and are splendid imitators. But I will venture to say that nobody will ask for help so well as the man whose distress is real. He needs no one to teach him—starvation is his tutor. Take away his diffidence and give him enough courage, and his distress will make him eloquent! You may, by chance, have been accosted by a man who sought alms with awful eagerness—starvation looking out of his eyes—and speaking from his pinched countenance. He has held onto you with terrible vehemence and at last has said, "I have not eaten anything for many hours."

You can see by his very looks that it is true. And he adds, "I could bear to famish myself, but I have seven little children at home, and unless I take them bread they will be crying about me and, therefore, I do entreat you to help me." Now, if all this is true and you look into the case and find it so, the man's case speaks for itself and he is the man to move your heart. He does not need to go to a boarding school to learn elocution—*need* schools his tone—the words drop into their right places of themselves and, as to his gestures and postures, they are all apt and telling, though no teacher of rhetoric ever gave him a lesson. He will be sure to plead rightly, the suit lies heavy on his heart.

Nobody prays before God like a man who feels his sins. He cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and says it as it ought to be said. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, some of us have to pray often in public, but we never pray so well as when we feel our needs—and the needs of the times and of the country—pressing urgently upon our hearts. You, yourselves, pray best when your own sense of sin and need most burden your souls. You are the men to pray, I say, you destitute people! You make the best of beggars, for you are most in need! You pray best who feel that you must have mercy or die! There is this to be said about the spiritual beggar—he is begging where he is permitted to beg.

I remember being in Paris on a certain day in the year, I forget the name of the festival, and I was astonished at the immense number of beggars—and at their perseverance and daring. I had not observed them, before, in such swarms and such force, but I found that on one special day license was given to the poor, the lame, and the blind to persecute everybody for alms! I guarantee you they made good use of the permission and needed no pressing or inviting! Spiritual paupers! This day, even this day, is a day of Grace! A warrant has come from the King's court that you may ask and it shall be given you! You may seek and you shall find! You may knock and it shall be opened unto you!

Yes, every day is a Free-Grace Day! A festival for prayer! As long as you live and are in need, you have the King's permit to open your mouth wide and He will fill it! You have His royal authority that you may come to His Mercy Seat and ask in every time of need right boldly for whatever you want! Well may the spiritual pauper take to a trade which is permitted by the King of Heaven! He is beggar by appointment to the King's Most Excellent Majesty! Yes, more—spiritual begging is *commanded* by supreme authority—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." It is the *privilege* of a sinner to be allowed to ask for Grace—it is also the *duty* of the sinner to seek mercy at the Savior's hand!

"Acquaint, now, yourself with Him and be at peace." "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." These are promises, but they are also precepts, precepts with the weight of commands! Oh, who that is poor will be slow to beg when the Lord of Love, Himself, commands him to ask? At the back of this there is an implied certainty. There is a sacred promise that he who asks shall surely receive, for God would not tantalize us by commanding us to pray if He had not, at the same time, intended to give.

Let me further remind every spiritually destitute man here that he may pray with confidence, because begging has been the source of all the riches of the saints. Some of them are rolling in heavenly wealth, for all things are theirs! Their mouths are satisfied with good things and their hearts are filled with gladness. You may see their riches, for the joy of their countenances and the bliss of their daily work are visible to all. Do you not envy them, for they feed on Christ every day and have the Bread of Heaven always on their tables, and the Water of Life always flowing at their feet? Do you know how they became so rich? I will whisper it in your ear. They gained all they have by *begging*.

"Not very creditable to them," you say. No, but wonderfully creditable to HIM who gave them all they have! And they are accustomed to give all the honor and the glory to that dear and blessed, and generous Savior who has never denied them their requests. If the richest saint on earth were to take you into his spiritual mansion, he would say to you, "Do you see this treasure and that Covenant blessing, and yonder priceless gifts? I obtained all these by begging! I asked and I received. All that I have came to me in that way." The Lord has said, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

Now, since all the saints on earth have grown rich by begging, I recommend you poor, destitute souls to take to the business and you will find it the most remunerative one that ever you undertook! You cannot dig—do not be ashamed to beg. Your digging will dig your own grave, that is all you will do by your self-righteous efforts. But you will obtain Grace for the asking, pardon for the asking and Heaven for the asking! Who would not be a spiritual beggar when he may be thus enriched? One thing more I

will say and leave this point—you may begin begging at once. You, who are poor in spirit, may begin begging right now!

I could not start in some trades tomorrow morning—I would need the capital and should need to go to the wholesale traders and get what I needed to stock me in the trade. But a beggar needs neither stock nor capital to begin with—all his capital lies in his need of capital! He never makes a good beggar till he has nothing left, and then, when his clothes are rags and his shoes are old and worn out, and he himself looks sick and wan—*then* he is the man for his business! And you, Sinner, you need no preparations in order to ask for mercy! Nothing need be done *in* you, or *for* you, in order to prepare you for the mercy of Christ! You may come to Him just as you are. Tarry not to mend, or wash, or cleanse—come in your foulness! Come in your rags! Come in your loathsomeness!

Come just as you are—the worse you are, the more room for the display of the wonders of Divine Grace!—

***“Cast your guilty soul on Him,
Find Him mighty to redeem.
At His feet your burden lay,
Look your doubts and cares away.
Now by faith the Son embrace,
Plead His promise, trust His Grace.”***

Still, perhaps, there will be some here who say, “I do not feel in a fit state to ask for mercy.” My dear Friends, it is your *unfitness* that is your fitness! Your poverty fits you for alms, your sickness fits you for the physician, your being *nothing* fits you to have Christ made All in All to you! Your emptiness is all He wants, that He may fill it with all the fullness of His Grace! Take to begging—that is the way to be rich towards God.

III. But now, thirdly, here is THE BEGGAR’S VERY NATURAL FEAR. He is afraid that the great King will despise his prayers, or will not regard them. And he is afraid of this, first, from the greatness and holiness of that God to whom he addresses himself. He is thrice holy—can He regard the cry of one who has been a drunk or a harlot? He is infinitely great and fills immensity—can He listen to the prayers of a poor little boy, or of a gray-headed old rebel, whose only inheritance is a place in the work-house? Can He look on such an insignificant worm as I am, the creature of a day, whose non-existence would make no flaw in the universe—whose damnation would be no loss to Him?

Can He look on worthless me? Infinite God and yet listen to *my* sigh? Eternal and yet catch *my* tears? Can it be? Beloved, many are a long while in distress of soul because they do not remember that there is a *Mediator* between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. God is thus glorious, but He is not far from any of us, for there is One who is God and at the same time a Man like ourselves, even Jesus, who has compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way. Stop, then, your fearing, for the gulf is bridged! You may approach the Lord, for Jesus has paved the way! The same fear takes another shape. Trembling souls are afraid that God can never look upon them in love because their prayer itself, is so unworthy of notice.

“I should not wonder if God despised my prayer,” says one, “for my fellow men despise it. I should not like them to hear it, it is such a broken, disconnected affair. I could not expect my own parents to have patience with it! And when I get up from my knees I despise my own prayer and hardly dare think I have prayed. I feel I have tried and failed. I have only groaned because I could not groan and mourned because I could not mourn.” Ah, yes, but the Lord looks at the *heart* and He does not regard the eloquence nor the style of prayer after the manner of man. The Pharisee’s was a very fine prayer, I dare say, and very well delivered. The poor Publican’s prayer was a very poor affair by the side of it, and rather undelivered than delivered, for he would not so much as lift his eyes towards Heaven, but the Lord heard it and had mercy upon him!

Go and groan before God, that is praying! Go and weep before Him, that is praying! You need not get the book down and turn up a liturgy! I do not know of one that would quite suit a sinner in utter destitution. Men seldom use book prayers when they come before God in real earnest. Forms will suffice for *playing* at praying, but when you come to real earnest work with God, you have to put your books away. And you have to plead with the Lord with the first words that fly forth from your soul like sparks from a piece of hot iron beaten with the hammer. When the heart boils and swells with grief, *then* prayers roll down from the soul like lava from Vesuvius, because it cannot help running over and burning its way! That is the way to pray! May God help us to pray out of our very souls—and then it matters not what form the prayer takes—it is beautiful before the Most High.

“Yes,” says one, “but I am afraid my prayer may be disregarded, because my needs are so great. If a beggar in the street asks for a copper, he may get it. If he were even to venture to ask for silver, he might gain it. But if he asked for thousand pound notes he might stand a long time in the street corner before he would find one who would supply him. Now, Sir, my prayer is for *great* things—I need the Savior’s blood upon my conscience! I need the Holy Spirit, Himself, to renew my nature! I need the whole Godhead to come and bless me! I need Heaven, itself—nothing short of that will satisfy me—and how can I hope that such a great prayer as mine will be answered?”

Ah, dear Soul, you are dealing with a great God, and a great Savior and great promises. Do not be afraid to ask for great things, rather be afraid of *limiting* the Holy One of Israel! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it! Ah, and I think I hear one exclaim, “He may well despise my prayer, for my faith is so weak! If I had more faith, I think, then, He would listen to me.” Well, but the Lord has never said anywhere that He despises little faith. Can you find a passage of Scripture in which He says, “I will trample on the bruised reed, and I will quench the smoking flax”? If you have ever read a passage of Scripture like that, I never have—the whole run of the Bible goes the other way. “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

It seems that the poor and the weak are the chief objects of His care, and are not, therefore, rejected. Suppose He bruised and crushed the mustard seed—where would be the tree that is to grow out of it? Suppose He despised the day of small things—where would the day of great things be? “Behold your King comes, meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.” And as He comes, the little children gather round Him and they say, “Hosanna!” Look, He does not rebuke them! Rather does He say, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength, because of Your enemies.” Now, your faith is like a little child—God will grant you full manhood eventually—but even now He does not despise your feebleness. He looks upon it with favor and He hears your prayers.

Now, somewhere in this place there is a young man in the same condition as that in which I was found some 23 years ago. He has learned to weep in secret before God and pray for mercy. But he has not found it yet—and he is tempted to give it all up. Hearken, dear Brother, to this word—“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” Cry on and look to Jesus, and you shall find all your destitute soul needs! And one of these days you who have learned to pray shall learn to praise and bless the prayer-answering God who did not suffer the soul of the destitute to perish!

The Lord visit you at this moment and give you peace!

IV. Our last head is to be this—our text affords to the destitute beggar A MOST COMFORTABLE ASSURANCE. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute.” Now, Beloved, whatever is in Scripture we accept as the Infallible Truth of God. We dare not doubt when God speaks—if He says it is so, it is so. Others may doubt the Inspiration of Scripture, but we have not gone that length yet. Now, poor destitute Sinner, if you believe the Scripture to be Inspired, believe this passage—“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer.”

Now, there is something about this text I want you to notice, namely, that God, in order that destitute sinners should never doubt His willingness to hear their prayers, has left this on record with a very special note appended to it. I will read you the note, which is in the 18th verse. “This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.” You see the Lord not only said that He would regard the prayer of the destitute, but He added, “This shall be written,” because, when a poor soul is in doubt and fear, there is nothing like having it in black and white. God has said it, but, says He, they shall not merely go by their ears, they shall see with their eyes.

“This shall be written.” Look at it. There it stands before you, written by the pen of Inspiration, no doubt about it. “This shall be written for the generation to come,” that is, for you! It was not merely true in David’s time, or in Hezekiah’s time, but this shall be written for the generation to come—written for you and for your children—that God will hear the prayer of the destitute! Blessed be His name for that! I recommend, the next time you kneel down to pray, to put your finger on this verse and

say, "Lord, I have Your Word for it. No, more—I have your writing for it. Behold I put it to You—You have said, 'This shall be written.' O fulfill this written pledge to me!"

When a man brings my own handwriting to me and says, "You promised me, and there is the writing," I cannot get away from it. And how shall the Lord draw back from what He has said, "This shall be written for the generation to come"? Oh, it must stand true! Be of good courage, poor seeking Sinner, God will hear you! Remember, too, that when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He used to choose for His associates the destitute. "This man receives sinners," they said, "and eats with them." "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." He would sometimes sit in the house of the Pharisee, but while He was there His heart was after the poor woman that came behind Him and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head—for His heart was always with needy sinners.

Upon the self-righteous He looked with an eye of indignation. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees," He said—but to poor guilty sinners He always looked with eyes of tenderness. He was ready and glad to receive them. In fact, it was His life's work to seek and to save that which was lost! Do not be afraid to come, then! Jesus has made a feast and has not called in His rich friends nor acquaintances—He has brought in the poor, the lame and the blind—for they cannot repay Him, but will forever love Him! And such are you. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Jesus cast out none when He was here—He will cast out none that come to Him now.

Remember, in the matter of praying, that God loves to hear sinners pray. We may be quite sure of that, because He teaches them how to pray. There are passages in Scripture where God even puts the words into sinners' mouths. He says, "Take with you words, and say unto Him, 'Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render the calves of our lips.'" God must be very fond of prayer when He teaches us how to pray! Do not be afraid, therefore, to pour out those broken sentences which God the Holy Spirit has taught you. He has never despised a sinner's prayer yet! Search and look down the chronicles of His Word and see what sinner He ever rejected. Look round among your kinsfolk and acquaintance, and find out one who ever fled to Him for mercy and was repulsed!

I appeal to those who are saved on earth and they will tell you that it was infinite love and mercy that accepted them. If I could appeal to the white-robed hosts in Heaven, they would all tell you that, like yourselves, they were destitute. They had to come in *forma pauperis* before the Lord and He did not despise them, nor disregard their prayers. I wish I could take a poor trembler by the hand and say, "Dear Brother, come with me." Gladly would I do it! I have a hope of Heaven this morning and I will tell you what it is. I am as destitute, this day, of all righteousness of my own as anyone here can be! My eyes are fixed upon the Lord Jesus on the accursed tree. There He is, my Substitute, and I trust in Him and in Him, alone.

Now, if you are enabled by the Spirit of God to look right away from yourself and your misery to Christ Jesus, the sinner's Savior, you shall have, this very morning, the peace of God which passes all understanding to keep your heart and mind—and you shall know that you are saved! I am going to close with a remark upon another subject. You will have noticed, I dare say, that the whole of this verse is connected with the building up of Zion. Therefore there must be some connection between the two—and it is just this—the Church of God must never expect to see great revivals, nor to see the world converted to Christ till she comes before the Lord as destitute!

I am afraid that when we plead the most with God, we still feel we are a very respectable community of Christians with a large number of ministers and a number of wealthy laymen, a large amount of Chapel property and a good deal of power and influence. You say, "I am rich and increased in goods." It may be that all this is the sign of your *poverty*—and we may be naked, and poor, and miserable. But when we get right down and feel we are *nothing* and *nobody*—and we could not save a soul if our lives depended upon it. When we know, by His Grace, that we are weak as water and must come to God as utterly impotent apart from the power of the Spirit of God—*then* will the Lord appear in His Glory! And *then* His destitute Church shall become rich in His riches, strong in His strength, and victorious in His might!

We must be brought down! I see among the various denominations too much emulation as to their position. We stand in this position and they in the other, and the voluntaries are doing such wonders. But, Brothers and Sisters, we are just a lot of poor unworthy sinners who owe everything we have to the Sovereign Grace of God! And what we are to do for God must be accomplished, not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit! When we feel this, the building of Zion will come, and not till then. The Lord send it!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 102.

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GRATITUDE FOR GREAT DELIVERANCES

NO. 3113

A SERMON
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“For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.”
Psalms 102:19-22.

I SUPPOSE the first sense of this passage would be just this. Israel had been carried away captive and only the poorest of the people had been left in the land. Jerusalem was a heap. Zion had been plowed with the plow of desolation. The whole country was, compared with its former state, like a desert. But in due time, God, who had peculiar favor towards His people, though He had sorely smitten them, would look down upon them. From the height of His sanctuary in Heaven, He would look down upon the ruins of His sanctuary on earth. From His heavenly city above, He would look down upon His earthly city below. And as He looked and listened, He would be attracted by the moans of His people, and especially of some who were appointed to death, or, as the margin renders it, “the children of death.” Upon these He would look with tender pity and, in due time He would so come to the deliverance of His scattered people, Israel, and bring them back to their own land and work for them such wonderful mercy that, ever afterwards that deliverance would be spoken of with praise and thanksgiving! Even in the last days when all nations shall serve the Lord, the memory of this deliverance shall not be forgotten! Still shall it be the theme of joyous song and the subject of holy contemplation, just as when Israel was in Egypt, the Lord heard their groaning and with a high hand and a stretched-out arm brought them up out of the land of bondage—and ever afterwards among the sweetest patriotic songs of the nation was the one which Moses and Miriam sang on the further shore of the Red Sea—“Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” And all along Jewish history, whatever of her songs there may have been, that one has never gone into oblivion. And even in Heaven, itself, “they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” So that the deliverance promised here to Israel was to be as noteworthy as that which was given at the Red Sea and it was to be forever kept in memory by the Lord’s chosen people!

Now I am going to leave the more immediate sense of our text, yet still give you its meaning. It has been said that if a great crystal is broken into the smallest fragments, each piece will still be crystallized in the same form and, in like manner, the dealings of God with His Church, as a whole, will be found to be of the same kind as His dealings with the various parts of His Church and also with individuals. And in dealing with individuals, each separate act of God will have about it the same attributes and be of the same character as His dealings on a large scale with the whole of His people. So, if we break down the great Truth of the text, which is like a mass of bread, into small crumbs so that each one of the Lord's children may have a portion, it will still be bread! The Truth of God will be the same as we try to bring it home to individual experience—and that we shall now try to do. May the eternal Spirit, the Comforter, help us in the doing of it!

I. And first, dear Friends, our text speaks of MISERY AT ITS EXTREME.

You observe that it speaks of prisoners who are groaning and of those who are appointed unto death—who are evidently in chains because they are spoken of as being *loosed*. It has been well said that one half of the people in the world do not know how the other half lives, and it is certainly true that there are sorrows in this world of which some of us have no conception or imagination! Complaint was made, some time ago, by a hearer in a certain place of worship, that most of the sermons that he heard there were composed upon the principle that everybody was happy—and it did not appear to him that the preacher had much, if any sympathy with those who were of a sorrowful spirit, like Hannah, [See Sermon #1515, Volume 26—A WOMAN OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] or those who were in an afflicted and depressed condition who could not rejoice as he could. I do not think that charge could be truthfully brought against me. If it could, I would be sorry, for where the Spirit of God rests upon any man at all after the manner in which it rested upon Christ, that man will repeat, in his measure, what his Lord could say in the fullest possible sense, “He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, [See Sermon #1604, Volume 27—HEART DISEASE CURABLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] to preach deliverance to the captives, [See Sermon #2371, Volume 40—FREEDOM AT ONCE AND FOREVER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty they who are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” The ministry that God sends, though it will be a ministry of warning and threats to the ungodly, will be a ministry of consolation to those who are sorrowing over their sins and seeking Divine deliverance from them! So you who are the sons and daughters of joy will pardon me if there should seem to be less than usual for you in my present discourse. When someone is sick, nobody blames the physician for giving his main attention to the invalid of the house, nor finds fault with the nurse for her assiduous attentions to the poor suffering one. There are many sorrows, Brothers and Sisters, in this world, and there are many

sorrows even in the Church of God! And yet, for my part, I see much for which I can thank God, especially when I look upon the people of God. Then I say, with Moses, “Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?” Yet there are still many sons and daughters of affliction and there are many trials and tribulations for each of us to pass through before we reach that land where sorrow is unknown.

There are some sad souls who are comparable to prisoners, prisoners that groan most mournfully. And there are some who are convinced of sin, but who have not yet found the Savior—and some who, having found that Savior, have fallen into doubts and fears, or who have backslidden from Him and so lost their comforting assurances. And they are now crying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” There are also some who have experienced heavy losses and are bearing heavy crosses—some who have seen the desire of their eyes taken away with a stroke, some to whom the shafts of death have flown once, twice, thrice—each time smiting down a beloved one. There are some very dear children of God who do not always see the light of His Countenance—precious sons of God who are like fruit brought forth by the moon—those who are the bruised spices of the sanctuary all the sweeter for being bruised and just now is the time of their sorrow, when they are prisoners that cry and sigh and groan by reason of their hard bondage.

A prisoner is often a solitary man. Yet much of the sorrow of imprisonment lies in separation from friends and in utter loneliness. Perhaps I am addressing some whose condition is that of extreme solitude. You are alone in the streets of this great wilderness of a city and there is no such loneliness as that! Or you live in a house where you wish that you could be alone in one sense, for you are sadly alone in another sense, for nobody seems to understand your case, or to enter into your experience. You wear a fetter which never fretted human wrists before—at least so you think. You are in solitary confinement and in that confinement you are in the dark. The light in which you once rejoiced has gone from you. The joyous flow of spirits and the cheery countenance which you used to possess have departed from you. Your heart is troubled and you are vexed with inward doubts and fears. It is a sorrowful case when a man is in that condition and is alone in it.

It may be, also, that you feel as if you were jailed. The power to act, which you once had, has gone from you. Your former energy has departed. You are like a man spellbound. Just as sometimes, in troubled dreams, a man tries to run but cannot even lift a foot, or seeks to grasp something, but his hands seems turned to stone, so is it with you—or so, at any rate, has it been with some of us! We were chained and in the dark, and solitary. And we have tried hard to convince ourselves of the truth of what people said to us—that it was only a matter of nerves and that we must be energetic and make up our minds to get out of that state—which is what only fools say, for wise men know that such talk as this is like pouring vinegar into open wounds, making them smart still more and never producing any healing effects! You have, perhaps, been

like a prisoner who has well-near escaped, but who has been detected by the ever-watchful guards and so had to go back to his cell and to wear double chains for trying to escape! And, possibly, your imprisonment has lasted long. Some of you young people may feel frightened when you hear me talk like this. Do not be alarmed, yet lay up in your memories what I am saying, because if these dark days never come to you, you will be all the more thankful that they do not! But if they do, you will remember that I told you about them. You will then say, "This is no strange thing that has happened to us, for the preacher said it might be so, and the preacher was a man of a cheery spirits yet he said it might be so with us. As it now is so, we need not be surprised and we may know that we may be the children of God and that God may be looking down from Heaven in pity upon us—and resolving to set us free—and yet for the present we are fettered and unable to escape from our prison."

Now observe that according to the text, *there are some who are in a worse plight even than prisoners*, for they are "appointed to death"—some who feel in their bodies that they will soon die, but who have not yet learned to exult in that fact. They have not looked at the heavenward side of it and said, "Ah, we shall soon be where we shall shake off every infirmity and sickness, and see our Savior face to face and praise Him without sinning forever!" But they have said, "We are appointed to death. We have sharp pains to undergo and the dying strife to endure when the clammy sweat will thicken upon our brow." And as yet, that is all that they have thought of, or, at least they think most of that. If there are any such people here, I pray God to now give them the comfort which they so sorely need—that they may even rejoice in the prospect of departing to be with that dear Lord whom they have so long loved and served! And, alas, there are some who are "appointed to death" in a far worse sense than that for "to die is gain" to us who are believers in Christ, but the ungodly feel that they are "appointed to death" in a much more terrible meaning of the word, "death!"

Their sins are standing out before them and crying out against them! They feel like a murderer who is standing under the gallows—they are afraid that the floor will fall from beneath their feet and that they will sink down to destruction! They have not yet learned the power of the precious blood of Jesus and they have not yet heard the voice of God saying to them, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you for Christ's sake." They are under conviction of sin and under that conviction they feel that they are "appointed to death" eternal—their own conscience affirms that the Divine sentence is a just one and they dare not argue with it. Such is their own sense of their condition in the sight of God that if they had to judge themselves, they would have to condemn themselves! And, perhaps, meanwhile, Satan is reminding them of the wrath to come and making them feel how certain it is that it will be their portion. They also believe themselves to be "appointed to death" because even their fellows seem to shun them. Christian people appear to have given them up as hopeless. Their old companions look upon them as

though they were too far gone for the mercy of God to reach them. If there should be one such sinner in this building, I am right glad of it, for it is to him and to those like he that this text is especially sent! The Lord is, at this moment, looking down from Heaven with those piercing eyes of His which can discern the exact condition of all hearts here—and those eyes of His are gazing with Infinite pity upon the groaning prisoners who are “appointed to death.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there are some of us who are neither prisoners nor “appointed to death.” Let us bless the Lord who has set us free and given us eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ! But let us not forget what we used to be, nor forget those who are still in bonds and under sentence of death. Let us pray the Lord to bless them and to bring them out into liberty and joy this very hour! Whenever I meet with a poor enslaved, sin-sick soul, I say, “Ah, my Friend! I can pity you. I still have the scars upon my soul where the iron fetters used to hold me fast—and the bitterness of heart that I then experienced makes me always feel a tender, loving sympathy with the weak ones among God’s people and the tried ones among His saints.” Those who are pushed about by many as though they were not fit to live are the very ones for whom I would gladly make a way and bring them to the softest place and say, “Be of good comfort, for it is for you and such as you that God has sent His Son and His Spirit into the world.”

II. Now, secondly, in our text we notice MISERY OBSERVED.

I want you carefully to note these words, “For the Lord has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the Lord behold the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoner.” This expression is, of course, not strictly applicable to God, for He sees all things. But, speaking after the manner of men, it describes Him as going up to the highest part of Heaven, as a watchman goes up to the top of the tower, where the widest range of vision can be obtained and looks over sea and land with keen and searching eyes. The original appears to mean, “The Lord leans from the height of His sanctuary,” as if He bent down over the battlements of Heaven in order to get nearer to the object of His search and to gaze the more intently at it. And as He looks and listens, His eyes and ears are riveted upon a prison through whose dreary, grated window He sees what others cannot—a pining prisoner—and He hears a moan which others cannot bear to hear. And far off, yonder, in the place of shame and death, He sees poor wretches taken out to die. And all His heart goes out in pity towards them. We naturally look for some pleasing sight—we like to let our eyes rest upon that beautiful lake in the distance, or that forest browning with the tints of autumn, or that green hill, or that sky checkered with a thousand hues as the sun is setting. But here is the great God looking out for miserable objects, keenly observing those who are the most miserable of men and women! We like to have our ears charmed by the sweet sounds of melody and harmony, but God opens His ears to catch the sound of a moan or a groan, and turns His eyes, not to search for a diamond, but to look for a tear! O

wondrous mercy of God! How strange that the King of kings should go to the top of His castle to look for a poor wretched soul!

And yet, dear Friends, after this manner do the benevolent of the earth, who are most like their God, act. See the man whose duty it is to watch the coast—observe him going up and down the seashore and the cliffs, walking to and fro with his telescope under his arm. There is a pleasure yacht yonder, but he does not especially notice that. There is a steamer plowing the deep, but he does not notice that. Here are little rowing or sailing boats flitting about, but he does not notice them. Now it is night and presently a rocket flies up into the air. Ah, he is all attention now! There is another rocket. He calls his fellows and soon they will be off with the lifeboat in answer to the signals of distress at sea! Just so is it with God—He is looking for signals of distress. Some of you are bent on pleasure, but He does not take special note of you. Some of you are full of pride, you are rich and increased in goods, you have all your canvas spread and all your flags flying—but the Lord does not notice you except in sorrow and anger! But if there is a signal of distress anywhere about, or a poor anxious soul is crying, “O God, have mercy upon me,” or one that cannot get as far as that, but whose moan is too suffocating to become an articulate prayer, (for that is what is implied in the word, *groaning*, here), God is sure to notice that, to hear the groaning and mark the falling tear of the penitent!

To my mind it is very wonderful that while God is Omniscient and so sees everything, there should be some special objects of His Omniscient regard. Think for a moment what concentrated Omniscience must be—each individual as closely looked upon by God as if there were not another person for Him to look upon—as if he were as much the sole object of the thought of the Most High as if He had forgotten the whole universe besides! That is really the purport of what we are here taught. God is reading you through and through, poor Soul—watching you as if He had nobody else to watch, understanding you as fully as if there were nobody else to be understood—leaning over you that He may get the better view of you, bringing all His Infinite faculties to bear upon your case, searching it from top to bottom—the origin of your sorrow, the ramifications of your grief, planning the outcome of the whole matter, what balms and what catholicons you need to heal your wounds and charm away your distresses! Why, it is really worthwhile to be a prisoner to have God looking upon one like this! It is worthwhile to feel the sentence of death in one’s soul in order to know, by the testimony of Inspiration, that God is looking upon one out of Heaven in this special and peculiar sense! He can never forget His children anywhere, but if there is one place where He remembers them more specially than anywhere else, it is in the place of their sorrow!

I wonder whether you, good mother, have been especially thinking of anyone at home while I have been preaching? I should not wonder if it is so and I can guess which member of your family you have thought of more than of all the rest! Of course you have been thinking of the little

one whom you left so ill. You were scarcely sure whether you might venture to steal out this evening, but you said, "I think I must go and bow before the Lord in His House." And while you have been here, you have been wondering whether the nurse has been properly caring for your sick child. Why have you not been concerned about your big boy, John, who is away at school, or about your daughter, Mary, who is well and strong? Ah, no, you have been able to keep your thoughts away from them, but you could not keep your thoughts away from the little sick one. Now, like as a father and a mother of a family pity their children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him—and He especially pities His poor tried and troubled ones.

III. Thirdly, keeping to the same strain, we see MISERY RELIEVED.

God looks down from Heaven to hear the groaning of the prisoner and to loose those that are appointed to death. God's thoughts do not end in thoughts, nor do His words end in words. David wrote truly, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" So they are, but how precious also must His actions be! Our text is one of many proofs that *God does really hear prayer*. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I would be greatly grieved if any of you were moved in the slightest degree by the assertion that is made, in these evil days, that our prayers are really not heard by God. The persons who make that assertion do not know anything at all about the matter, for they do not themselves pray to God, so what can they know about it? If I were to contradict one of these philosophers concerning certain natural phenomena which I have never observed, he would at once say that I was out of court! If I said that I did not believe in the result which he said he had attained, he would say, "But I have proved it and, therefore, I am able to speak positively concerning it." If I were to say, "I have not tried it and so do not believe it," he would say to me, "Negative evidence is of no use in such a case as this." I cannot help using this simple illustration, which I have used before, concerning a man who was charged with theft. They brought five persons to prove that he stole the goods, and they all saw him do it, "but," he said, "that is nothing! I can bring 50 people who *did not* see me steal the goods." Just so. But the magistrate knew that there was not anything in the evidence of the 50 people who did not see the theft—the evidence of the five people who did see it was much stronger! So if there is but a very small number of us who have really proved the power of prayer and who know that we have obtained answers to our petitions, the evidence of the small number who have tested the matter is worth far more than the evidence of any number who have not tried it and who, therefore, cannot say anything about it! Some of us have been to God about great things and little things, temporal things and spiritual things—we are in the habit of going to Him all day long! There is scarcely an hour in the day in which we do not ask Him for something or other—and for us to receive answers to our prayers is as common a thing for us as breathing the air, or seeking the sunshine by day or the stars by

night! It has become such an ordinary, common occurrence with us that we cannot doubt it.

Our text also reminds us that *God hears the very poorest prayers*, those which are the poorest in the judgment of men—the groaning of the prisoners. I do not think them the poorest prayers—I consider that they are really the most powerful prayers. The prayers of the heart are often the most prevalent with God when they cannot be expressed in words, for the weight of meaning would break the backs of the words and human language would stagger beneath the crushing load. Then it is that we often pray best of all. If a man gets up from his knees and groans, and says, “I cannot pray,” he need not fret about not finding suitable words, for he *has* prayed! But our wordy prayers, whether in our private devotions or in public Prayer Meetings, are often so much chaff and nothing more. God does not need our words, yet we sometimes string them together as if we were displaying our oratory before the Eternal. This must not be! God loves the heart of the suppliant to be poured out before Him. The best prayer is when a man can take his heart and turn it bottom upwards and let all that is in it run out! That is the style of praying that has most influence with God.

He does “hear the groaning of the prisoner” and *with God, to hear means to answer*. We need not say, as many do, that “He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God,” for prayer-hearing involves prayer-answering! O mourners, still mourn before your God, but mourn with this mixture of hope—that God will not suffer the groaning that arises from your heart, in the name of Jesus, to be like the mere whisperings of the wind! He will hear them before long.

It is also said, in our text, that *the Lord will “loose those that are appointed to death.”* Is it not wonderful that God should deliver men just when it seems as if all is over with them? I remember lying in the condemned cell—I mean spiritually. I thought I heard the bell tolling out my doom and I expected to soon be taken away to execution! But it was just then that God came and loosed my bonds. I had tugged hard at them, trying to untie the knots that Moses had tied and seeing if I could break the iron fetters of conviction and condemnation which were riveted upon me, but I could not. But the sight of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the Omnipotent might of His atoning Sacrifice broke every bond from off my soul in a single moment and I leaped into ecstatic liberty! And this is how God will deal with every soul that will but turn to Jesus on the Cross and leave itself in the hands of Infinite Love! Sinner, even if you are on the very verge of Hell, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He will loose your bonds and set you at liberty! Even though your death warrant seems to be signed and sealed, the prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered, for the Lord, your Redeemer, is almighty and none can withstand Him when He resolves to bring up His children even from their prisons! Only trust in Jesus! Rest your soul upon Him and God will yet come to your deliverance!

IV. The last thing in our text is ELOQUENT GRATITUDE. “To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.”

One of the most powerful preachers who ever lived was the Prophet Jonah. And I believe that Jonah learned to preach by going, in the whale’s belly, to the bottom of the Mediterranean. That voyage was better than a university education for him and he became a good sound Calvinist before he was cast up again upon the land. He said, “Salvation is of the Lord,” before the Lord told the fish to give him up and I have no doubt that he often preached that doctrine afterwards! And if some preachers whom I know, instead of having lessons in elocution, were sent for a little while down into the depths of soul-despair. If they were tried, plagued, vexed and chastened every morning, they would learn a way of speaking which would reach the people’s hearts far better than any that can be learned by human teaching!

We need, dear Brothers, if we are to speak aright for God, to know something of our soul’s need, the depths of it, and then something of the Grace of God and the height of it in bringing us out of our distresses! Hence, according to our text, *those who are set free declare or publish the name of the Lord*. You cannot keep a man quiet if he has been, spiritually, in prison and has been brought out by God! If he has been condemned to die and has had his sentence canceled at the last moment, you cannot make him hold his tongue! You may tell him that he must keep his religion to himself, but it is impossible. He is so overjoyed about it—it has so charmed him that he must begin to tell somebody about it! You know that John Bunyan said that he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about his conversion. It seems quite natural that he should feel like that and he did tell a great many besides the crows about it! There is something in a man who gets joy and peace in believing that will not be quiet. Perhaps some of you have been very ill and a certain medicine has been recommended to you and it has restored you. Now, do you not always feel, when you meet anybody who is ill as you were, that you must tell him about the remedy that cured you? You say, “You should try so-and-so! Look what it has done for me.” Why do you need to tell him? You do not know why! You do not claim any very great measure of benevolence for doing it, for you cannot help communicating the good news to others. So is it with the man who is really saved by the Grace of God! He needs to communicate it and he is the fit man to communicate it because he who speaks from the heart speaks *to the heart* and he who speaks experimentally is the man by whom the Holy Spirit is most likely to speak to those who are in a similar experience. Perhaps, my dear Friends, some of you are now suffering on purpose that God may afterwards fit you the better to speak to others in a similar case—I believe it is often so and trust that it may turn out to be so in your case.

These people declared the goodness of God among the saints. So ought we to do. Some Christians cannot tell their experience very readily, but I think they should try to do so. Tell your Brothers and Sisters in Christ

what the Lord has done for you. If there were more commerce among Christians with their experience, they would be mutually the more enriched. But *these people also declared the name of the Lord among the nations* when they were gathered together. And Soul, if God has allowed you to go down into the deeps of the prison and to lie in the condemned cell—and has brought you out to life and liberty—you will surely not blush to tell all what great things God has done for you! I think you must sometimes feel in your heart as if you wished you had a whole universe for an audience—the devils in Hell and the angels in Heaven, the saints above and the saints below—and the sinners, too, and you would like to say to them, “I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” You cannot have quite so large an audience as that just yet, so, meanwhile, make use of the audience you can have and—

**“Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found!”**

It is in part for this purpose that this great blessing has been given to you that you might tell all you can about it to others. I pray you not to rob God of the revenue of Glory which His Grace deserves at your hands!

Brothers and Sisters, the gist of what I have said to you is just this—Are we rejoicing in the Lord? Then let us turn our joy into praise of Him! Are we very much cast down? Then let us look up to Him who looks down upon us and let us rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for He will yet bring us out of our prison! Are we as yet unsaved? Then let us catch at those words in the text that tell us that God looks down from Heaven “to hear the groaning of the prisoner.” Will you not groan, poor prisoner? The devil tempted you never to do so any more. You yourself said, “It is no use. I have been to the Tabernacle so long and I have been to other places of worship, but I cannot get any comfort. I will give up trying.” Oh, do not do so, I pray you!

Have you come to the end of yourself? Well, then, now you have come to the beginning of God! It is when the last penny of creature merit is gone that God comes to us with the boundless treasures of His Grace! If you have one moldy crust of your own homemade bread left, you shall not have the Bread of Heaven! But when you are starved. When you have no goodness in you—nor any hope of goodness, no merit, nor hope of merit, no reliance, nor shadow of reliance upon anything that you are, or ever can be—then is the time to cast yourself upon the all-sufficient mercy of God in Christ Jesus! Everything that you can spin, God will unravel! Everything that you can do for yourself, He will throw down! Your spider webs He will break! You think to spin them into silken robes, but He will strip you and He will slay you, for it is written, “I wound and I heal. I kill and I make alive.” Blessed is the man who is wounded by God, for He will afterwards heal him! Blessed is the man who is slain by God in this sense, for He will make him alive! Blessed is the man who is empty, for God will fill him! That was the theme of the Virgin’s song and

let it be ours as I close my discourse—“He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.” So may He do now, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 102.**

Verses 1, 2. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline Your ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily.* Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying’s sake. They desire to really reach the ear and heart of Jehovah. “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto You.” When prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience of the Lord.

3-7. *For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.* The Psalmist gives us here a very graphic description of his sorrowful condition at that time. He was moved to grief by a view of the national calamities of the chosen people and these so worked upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up and his very life was ready to expire.

8. *My enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.* Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing and vented itself in taunts and insults. With his inward sorrows and outward persecutions, the Psalmist was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived!

9-11. *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass.* This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness. And that was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord’s people.

12. *But You, O LORD, shall endure forever; and Your remembrance unto all generations.* All other things are vanishing like smoke and withering like grass. But, overall, the one eternal, Immutable Light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness.

13,14. *You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.* [See Sermon #2576, Volume 44—ZION’S PROSPERITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a homesickness and began to sigh after her.

15-17. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your Glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* [See Sermon #1141, Volume 19—GOOD NEWS FOR THE DESTITUTE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He will not treat their pleas with contempt. He will incline His ears to hear, His heart to consider and His hands to help.

18. *This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.* A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations—“the poor shall never cease out of the land”—and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord’s mercy to the needy in former times.

19-23. *For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.* Here the Psalmist comes down again to the mournful string and pours forth his personal complaint.

24-27. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have You laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end.* God always lives on. No decay can happen to Him, nor destruction overtake Him. O my Soul, rejoice you in the Lord always, since He is always the same!

28. *The children of Your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You.*

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

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

OWL OR EAGLE? NO. 2860

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 10, 1872.

*"I am like an owl of the desert."
Psalm 102:6.*

*"Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that
your youth is renewed like the eagle's."
Psalm 103:5.*

IN the 102nd Psalm, the Believer likens himself to an owl, and in the 103rd Psalm, in almost the parallel verse, he is compared to an eagle. What a blessing it is that the saints of God, in the olden times, were moved by the Holy Spirit to write down their experiences. And what a mercy it is that they wrote them out so fully! They have not given us miniatures so much as full-length portraits. Especially was this the case with David—again and again he draws himself to the very life. Possibly, if left to himself, he would have omitted from his autobiography some of his faults and failings, as well as the grosser sins of his life, but he was under the guidance of the Spirit of God and, therefore, he has shown us his true self—infirmities, iniquities and all that he was! It is related of Oliver Cromwell that when his portrait was about to be painted by an eminent artist, the painter desired to conceal the wart upon the Protector's face, but the true hero said, "Paint me just as I am, wart and all." In a similar style, David, the champion and hero of Israel, in the portrait of himself, painted by himself, shows us his scars and warts, his blemishes and imperfections.

This, I say again, is a great mercy because if it were not for this fact, we might have supposed that these gracious men of the olden time were not subject to the same infirmities as ourselves. And we might have concluded that we were not the Lord's people, "for, surely," we would have said, "God's true people never wandered as we wander, never failed as we fail, were never downcast as we are and were never on the borders of despair as we sometimes are." But we turn to this blessed Book and we find that the saints of God described in it were very much like the saints of the present time. The sea of life is rough to us and it was rough to them. Their vessels leaked, then, and ours leak now. The winds sometimes blow a hurricane just as they did, then, and spiritual navigation was, in their day, very much what it is today. This must always be a cause of consolation to us and also a means of direction, for, seeing that

they fought and struggled as we do, we can examine their methods to discover how they gained their victories. And, having the same sort of enemies to deal with and the same Divine assistance at our disposal, we flee for help and strength where they fled and use the same means which they used so well in overcoming their adversaries. If God had changed, that would have altered matters for us, but, since He is still the same and deals with His children after the same rule of Grace, we are both comforted and instructed as we read how He delivered His ancient people. I hope it may be so while we are meditating upon our two texts.

Observe, first, that *the saints of God have differed, the one from the other*. Some think that these two Psalms are by different authors, yet one of them says, "I am like an owl of the desert," while the other says, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's." But, as I believe that these Psalms were both written by the same person, I see another line of thought, which is that *the saints of God have, at times, differed from themselves*. Extremes have met in them. They have been like an owl one day and like an eagle another day. We shall close our meditations by observing that *the Lord alone can change the sadness of His people into gladness* and make the owl of the desert into the eagle that soars aloft on mighty wings.

I. To begin, then, **THE SAINTS OF GOD HAVE DIFFERED, THE ONE FROM THE OTHER**. One mournfully hoots, "I am like an owl of the desert." Another, stretching his broad wings, cries, as he mounts towards Heaven, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's."

This may be accounted for in various ways. Something may be set down to *the different times in which men have lived*. David, on the whole, lived in times in which the Church of God prospered. Some think that the 102nd Psalm was written by Nehemiah, or by Daniel, who lived in more troublous times, when the House of God lay waste and Israel was carried into captivity. The children of God usually sympathize very much with the condition of things by which they are surrounded. When there are revivals, they are cheered. And when there is a long season of declension, they feel humbled and brought low. We do not expect that the age of Jeremiah should bring forth many rejoicing saints. Neither, on the other hand, should we expect that the days in which the Lord magnified His name through His servant, David, should bring forth a majority of mournful saints. Much will, therefore, depend upon the times in which God's people live—yet not as much as some would think. There have always been some who have blessed the name of the Lord when they have been the only godly persons in the district. They have shone like stars of the first magnitude amidst the thick darkness of the night that reigned around them. While there have been others who, even in times of refreshing, have cried out, "My leanness, my leanness!"

Something must also be set down to *the various works in which different men have been engaged for the Lord*. Some of God's servants must be of a joyful disposition, or they would never get through the heavy work that is appointed to them. Others, who have the heavy task of rebuking incorrigible sinners and threatening God's judgments upon them, are na-

turally of a somewhat gloomy cast of mind. They would not be fitted for their stern work if they were not, themselves, stern. I have no doubt that those wonderful sermons of John Bunyan, when he “preached in chains to men in chains,” were the more powerful because there was a sympathy in the sorrow of his heart with those who were themselves in sorrow through their sin. God may be as much glorified by a weeping Jeremiah as by an eagle-winged Ezekiel!

The trials of God’s people also differ. All of them feel the weight of His rod, but they do not all feel it alike. There are some Believers whose path is comparatively smooth. In temporal things they are well provided for. They have good bodily health, the members of their family are spared to them, they seem to travel along a very easy way to Heaven. But there are others to whom the getting to Glory is like crossing the Atlantic in a storm! They have wave upon wave—all God’s billows sometimes seem to go over them. Divine Wisdom arranges our lot, but our lots are not precisely alike. I do not doubt that there is a more equal distribution of happiness than we sometimes dream. Still, there are differences and those differences are very conspicuous, here and there, among Christians.

Still, I think a great deal more is to be set down to *constitutional temperament* than to any of these outside things. I know some of my dear Brothers and Sisters who, if they were very poor, would still be happy. Indeed, I have seen them very sick and ill, but they have still been joyful! I have gone with them to the graveside, but they have rejoiced in the Lord even there. They could not help doing so—there seemed to be a fountain of joy in them, like water in a well that springs up continually! On the other hand, there are some brethren—I will not say that there are many, here—still, there are some who could not help grumbling wherever they might be! If they had the fat of the land upon their table, it would not quite suit their appetite—they would prefer a mixture of bitter herbs! I believe that there are some Christians whom God Himself will never satisfy until He takes them to Heaven. They seem to have a soul that utterly disdains to be content and shows its greatness, I suppose, in continually feeling that nothing is quite good enough for it. That is a dreadful constitution for any man to have! Perhaps it is his liver that is wrong, or, more likely his heart, but there is no doubt whatever that physical disease has a great effect upon constitutional temperament. And some sad folk are rather to be pitied than to be blamed for the dark and somber view which they take of everything around them.

I incline to think, however, that we must not lay too much stress upon such things as these, but that the main difference will be discovered in another direction. *Some saints have more faith than others have*—and very much in proportion to their faith will be their condition of heart and mind! Such saints, having more faith than others have, will also have *more zeal for God, more conscientious observance of His commands, more complete devotion to His will, more self-denying consecration to His service*—and where there is much of all these things, there will be *more joy* than there can be in any other condition of heart and life! If you are a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet are slack in serving God, you

shall get to Heaven but you shall have very little Heaven on the way there. But if your faith rests, like a trustful child, upon the Omnipotence and Immutability of God. If you simply and implicitly rely upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ and then, out of love to your Lord, are fired with a sacred devotion to be used to Christ's Glory, your peace shall be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea! God, in His all-wise Sovereignty, may send you various trials which will cast you down, but it is according to the gracious rule of His Kingdom to give the sweet reward of His Presence to His obedient children. He says to us, as He did to His ancient people, "If you will walk contrary unto Me, then will I also walk contrary unto you." But if you walk with God as Enoch did, you shall have the joy which doubtless beamed from Enoch's face, beaming also from yours!

The practical lesson of this first part of my subject is this. Do not judge yourself, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, by any other human being. Do not say, "I cannot be a Christian because I am not as mournful as So-and-So was." God forbid that you should fall into such a delusion as to think that you ought to imitate any man's miseries! Do not say, on the other hand, "I cannot be a Christian because I have not the joys which I have heard such an eminent saint speak of." It would be an ill day for you if you should try to counterfeit those joys! The man who said, "I am like an owl," and the man who said, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's," are both in Heaven praising God! If they were two different men, both were accepted in the same Savior, both were washed in the same precious blood and both entered into the same everlasting Glory—and you, whether you are joyful or miserable, if you are depending alone upon the atoning work of Jesus Christ, shall be there too, in due time, to praise the Lord forever with them!

II. But now, secondly, I have to remind you that SAINTS DIFFER FROM THEMSELVES AT DIFFERENT PERIODS. They are not at all times what they are sometimes.

I feel morally certain that David wrote both these Psalms, for there are very similar expressions in both of them. Anyone who has studied every verse and letter of the Psalms, with diligent care, as I may rightly claim that I have done, gets to feel as if he knew the tones of David's voice and could tell which is Asaph's and which is David's. And there is, to my mind, a Davidic ring in this 102nd Psalm quite as surely as there is in the 103rd. If it is so, then it was David who one day said, "I am like an owl of the desert." And the day after said to his own soul, concerning his God, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." It was the same man in different moods—and Brothers and Sisters, we know, experimentally, that the children of God have these various moods!

First, notice the contrast here—a contrast which I have verified and so have you, if you are a child of God. Here is *a man under sense of sin*. He has discovered that he is a lost soul. The arrows of God drink up the life of his spirit and his self-righteousness is smitten and withered. He cannot bear company and gaiety, nor even the common joys of life, so he

gets away alone and pines, and cries, "I am like an owl of the desert." The most dreadful verses that he can find in the book of Job, or the Lamentations of Jeremiah exactly suit his case. This is how he talks to his God—"I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up and cast me down." But look what happens when the Lord Jesus Christ manifests Himself to that poor guilty sinner! He looks at Christ upon the Cross—it is a trembling look and his eyes are half blinded by his tears and by the mists arising from his doubts and fears—but he does look to Christ, honestly and sincerely, and trusts Him with his soul!

Have you not seen the change that such an experience works in men? Now he is not like an owl any longer. His sin is completely forgiven. In a moment he has passed from darkness into marvelous light, from bondage into liberty, from death unto life! Now, like the eagle, he stretches his wings and mounts aloft into the glorious sunlight! Ask him whether he is like an owl, now, and he will say, "God forbid! Why should I be?" See how the man walks now? Before, his feet seemed like lead. Now, they appear almost as if they were winged, like the feet of the fabled messenger of the gods. Now, the man runs along the path of duty! He delights in his God. He loves Him! He adores Him! He triumphs in Him and boasts of the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior. All this change is sometimes worked in a single hour—yes, in a single *moment* the sackcloth and ashes are taken away, the loins are girded with the garments of praise—and sorrow is changed into overflowing bliss! There you have one example of the contrast between the owl and the eagle spirit.

And, afterwards, *in the Christian life*, you may see the same difference. Here is a Believer in deep trouble. Christians have a promise that they *shall have trouble* and that is one of the promises that God always keeps! "In the world you shall have tribulation." Now see the Christian in the time of his tribulation—sometimes he is bowed to the very earth under it. If you need an example, look at Job, covered with sore boils from head to foot, sitting among ashes and scraping himself with a potsherd. His children dead, his property destroyed, his friends—the few that remain—miserable comforters to him! Watch him a little while till the Lord returns to him in mercy and gives him twice as much as he had before, and "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." So is it, often, with the people of God today. If they do not receive temporal prosperity, they get spiritual blessings that are more valuable by far and so, up from the ashes, God's Jobs still arise! From the willows they take their harps, again, and—

***"Loud to the praise of love Divine,
Bid every string awake,"***

because the Lord has dealt so graciously with them! So you see that the same men may be like owls in their time of trouble and like eagles in the day of their deliverance out of it.

The contrast will be still more conspicuous if you look at another picture. It is a portrait of yourself and of myself. Do you ever sit down and look within and look around and look beneath? If so, when you look

within, you see imperfections, infirmities, temptations, sins. You fetch a long-drawn sigh and moan, "I shall surely fall one day by the hand of the enemy. With all this combustible material in my heart, someday there will be a terrible catastrophe and my profession of religion will be destroyed in a moment." Possibly you look around you. Business is not prospering. Perhaps one child is sick and ill. Another is deformed, another has gone out to a job, but is not behaving well. You have all manner of troubles. Your house is not "so" either with yourself, or with God, as you desire it to be. Then you look down. You feel that you are soon going to die and you wonder how you will bear the pains, groans and dying strife. And your dear wife will be a widow and your children fatherless. Ah, you fetch some more sighs and say to yourself, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness—I am like an owl of the desert." Of course you are and you always will be as long as you turn your eyes inside! But when, instead of looking within, or around you, or looking down to the grave, you look up and see Christ, the ever-living Savior who has passed through the grave and now lives to die no more, you will no longer dread to die because you will know that there is to be a glorious Resurrection in which you shall share!

Then you will not be, any longer, like an owl of the desert, but you will mount aloft, above the clouds, into the clear blue sky of happy fellowship with the ever-blessed God, rejoicing that in Christ Jesus your salvation is accomplished, the Everlasting Covenant is signed, sealed and ratified, your security certain beyond all doubt, you yourself adopted into the family of God and being made ready, in due season, to enter into the glorious abode of eternal bliss! When you realize all this, no longer will you sigh, and cry, and repine, but you will rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Give up the habit of looking within or around you, or if you do sometimes mourn over what you see there, even then say, with David, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me"—you can see the eagle stretching his wings there—"yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

Let me set before you another contrast. Sometimes even good men, when they rise in the morning, get up in a humor which is anything but amiable. They go downstairs and find their family in a condition which is anything but amiable. They go out to their business and they find their affairs anything but pleasing. All day long everything seems to go wrong with them, or else they go wrong with everything—which is probably the real truth. Some Believers seem to like to indulge in a little comfortable misery and appear all day long to determine to be unhappy. A certain thing in which they are interested has not prospered as they desired, although it has prospered far beyond their deserts. Another thing has not happened just as they wished it might, though it has happened a great deal better than they ought to reasonably have expected.

Have you ever met a Brother in that condition? I have, and I have also met Sisters in the same condition! I have gone to visit them and their story, from beginning to end while I have been there, has been about their rheumatism, or about the smallness of their allowance from the

church or the parish, or about their sorrow at having lost so many friends and helpers! But what a mercy it is when the sorrowful soul is helped to shake off that depression and to say, with Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This is the way to leave the owl in the desert and to let the eagle soar upwards in his glorious flight! Suppose we have miseries—have we not also mercies? Are Marah's waters bitter? Then put the Cross of Christ into them and they will at once be sweetened! Is your way rough? Yet your God leads you in it, so it must be the right way! Does it traverse a desert? Yet the manna has always fallen even there! Are you weary and footsore? Then remember that "there remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God."

Some people will always look on what they call "the black side" of things, but to faith's eye, there is no black side, for even the dark side of God's Providential dealings with us glows with light when faith looks at it! Many people appear to take a telescope and try to look through it upon the unknown future and, before they look, in their anxiety they breathe on the glass and then, as they gaze, they cry, "There are a great many clouds to be seen!" Yet, all the while, it is only their own breath that has created them! It is best for the Believer to leave the future with God—to rest entirely in His purposes of love and mercy and to march forward singing to his God—

***"What may be my future lot
Well I know concerns me not!
This should set my heart at rest,
What Your will ordains is best."***

Here is another contrast. From the 102nd Psalm we learn that the Believer, in his trouble, had forgotten to eat his bread, but in the 103rd Psalm we are told that the Believer, in his joy, has his mouth satisfied with good things. There are some persons who fall into spiritual trouble through neglecting the means of Divine Grace. You say that you are very depressed in spirit, that you have lost your evidences and are brought very low. Brother, let me ask you some personal questions. How long is it since you were at a Prayer Meeting? How long is it since you were at a week-night service? How long is it since you left off the habit of carefully reading a daily portion of God's Word? How long is it since you enjoyed conscious fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ? I asked a Christian, as I believe him to be, that question some time ago, and he shook his head and said, "I wish you had not asked me that question, for, alas, it has been many a month since I could truly say that I have had any such fellowship." If that is the case with any of you, do you wonder that you are like an owl of the desert? If a child never goes to his father to get a good word from him, is it any wonder that he doubts whether his father loves him? What wife would live in the same house with her husband and yet never speak to him by the six months together? It would be a shame if she did act like that, yet here are some of us, with Christ always near us,

living on without speaking to Him, or having fellowship with Him! Well may such a person be like an owl of the desert—but let a man begin diligently to attend the means of Grace, let him be much in private prayer, let him seek fellowship with Jesus—and he will soon shake off his mourning and forget his sorrows! And up again into the clear air he will mount, like the eagles, on wings renewed by God!

The last point of contrast is this. The owl is a bird that is afraid of the light. It loves the darkness and, therefore, it loves not the sunshine. But the eagle is not afraid of the sun—it even dares to stare into the face of the great father of day! There are also some Christians who appear to be afraid of the Light of God. They have a little, but they do not want too much. I have heard of a good man who would never read, at family prayer, that chapter about Philip and the eunuch. There is, in that chapter, a good deal of the Light of God upon the subject of Believers' Baptism and that man did not want to read about it, for he was afraid of the Light. Others will not read those passages, in the Epistles, which speak of Election, Predestination, Particular Redemption, Final Perseverance and similar great Truths of God that are revealed by the Holy Spirit. Such people say that these doctrines are too Calvinistic, so they do not read about them, for they do not want to see too much Light. I know Christians—at least they profess to be Christians—who, in various matters, are like the owl of the desert—they do not like the Light. But the true-born child of God needs the Light of God—he cannot have too much of it! He delights to do his Lord's will. He says of everything he does, "If it is not according to God's Word, I desire to be undeceived concerning it. And if there is any Truth of God taught by the Holy Spirit which I have not yet received, I desire to receive it and to sit down humbly at Jesus' feet, to unlearn all I know if it is wrong, and to learn whatever He would have me learn." Let us pray to God to give us the eagle eyes which are glad of the light and to take away from us the sleepy eyes of the owl which only see in the darkness.

III. My last point, for which I have only a minute or two left, is this—**THE LORD ALONE CAN CHANGE SPIRITUAL SADNESS INTO SPIRITUAL GLADNESS.**

No hand can heal a broken heart save the Divine hand that made it. The minister's words cannot heal your wounds. The Holy Spirit alone can pour in the true balm. The ancient question was, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" The answer is, No, there is none. There is no balm in Gilead—that is not the place to look for it. There is no physician there. If there were, the health of God's people might be recovered. But it is not recovered in Gilead and never will be. The only true balm comes from Calvary! The only unfailing Physician is He who has gone up to His Father's Throne, yet who hears the cry of all who call upon Him in sincerity. He alone can turn the owl into an eagle, but He can do it! He understands your case, for He has passed through an experience exactly similar to yours. He has not only walked the hospitals that is an essential thing for a physician to do, but He has, Himself, lain on the bed in the hospital. Christ took upon Himself our sicknesses and

bore our sorrows—and even our sins were caused to meet upon Him when He hung on the accursed tree as the Substitute for all who believe in Him! You have, therefore, the best of physicians to heal you! So, sin-sick Soul, look to Him! If you have only an owl's eyes, yet turn them unto Christ and He will change them into an eagle's eyes. If you are only as the owl of the desert, resolve that you will see no light but His Light, for, then, His Light will surely soon come to you!

Remember, O you Mourners, that there is one Person of the ever-blessed Trinity who has been pleased to consecrate Himself to the work of comforting tried and troubled souls. As Christ has redeemed us, so *the Holy Spirit comforts us*. He is The Comforter, The Almighty Comforter. As God Himself has become the Comforter, what case of sorrow can be thought to be hopeless? Of old, the Lord said, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted." And our Lord Jesus Christ, after going back to Heaven, has sent us the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter. And the Holy Spirit uses the very best medicine that can possibly be compounded. Do you ask, "What is that?" Christ said to His disciples, "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." What medicine can ever be equal to the things of Christ? O poor owl of the desert, if the Spirit of God shall come and visit you, as He will, and reveal the things of Christ to your soul, you will then spread your wings, like an eagle, and mount aloft into the heavenlies in Christ Jesus!

With one more remark I will close my discourse. *Whenever a soul is cast down by God, there is a reason for it, and that reason is love*. When the Lord kills, why does He do that? When He wounds, why does He do it? Here is the reason, given in His own words, "I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal." You must first be stripped by God if you are to be clothed by Him! You must be emptied if you are to be filled! You must be uprooted if you are to be transplanted! You must become nothing if Christ is to be your All-in-All! Is not this Christ's usual rule, that He cuts down the green tree, and makes the dry tree to flourish? The Virgin Mary truly sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty: He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." Destitute, empty, broken, crushed, wounded, dead—you are just the sort of people Jesus came to save!

He came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save the lost. So you, being lost, are the most suitable objects for the display of His love. I am sent to preach the Gospel to the broken-hearted, to minister consolation to the afflicted and tried, and to tell of the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Not to those who are satisfied with their own righteousness, but to those who know that they are sinners do we preach a Savior! You who can fall no lower than you are—unless you sink into the lowest Hell—are the very persons to be the objects of Divine regard! Your extremity is God's opportunity to bless you. To you who pine, sigh, cry and say, "We are like the owls of the desert," is this message of mercy proclaimed, by the voice that sounds even in the wilderness, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accom-

plished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Bankrupt sinners, come and learn how all your debts have been discharged! Wounded sinners, come and be healed by the Great Physician! Yes, and even to you who are dead, and in your graves, the Lord says, "Live." And you shall live, even as the Lord Jesus said to Martha, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The Lord grant you Grace to look to Jesus, that the owls' eyes may now be turned into eagles' eyes and the owls of the desert into eagles, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 102.**

Kindly notice the title of this Psalm—"Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the LORD." I call your attention to it in order to remind you what charges there are in the life of a Believer. Here, in the 102nd Psalm, the afflicted saint is pouring out his complaint. And then, in the 103rd, the rejoicing Believer is blessing the Lord in a jubilant song of grateful praise. Such are a true Christian's ups and downs, nights and days, and I can see how the 103rd Psalm blossoms out of the 102nd. When the afflicted Believer can pour out his complaint before the Lord, it will not be long before he will be able to cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." If you carry your complaint in your own bosom, or tell it to some earthly friend, you will probably continue to have cause to complain. But if you pour out your heart before God, it will not be long before He will give you ease and relief.

Verses 1, 2. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble.* "For that would make my trouble to be unbearable." So William Cowper sings—

***"That were a grief I could not bear
Did You not hear and answer prayer."***

2. *Incline Your ear unto me.* "Stoop down to me. Bend over me. Listen to the moans of my darkness, the whispers of my weakness."

2. *In the day when I call, answer me speedily.* "For I am brought so low that if a delay is not a denial, it will be tantamount to it, for I shall be dead before the answer comes unless it reaches me speedily."

3, 4. *For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as in a hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.* That is a very pitiful state for anyone to be brought into, in which the sorrow of the mind begins to weaken the strength of the body! The soul itself is so inflamed that a fever is generated within the bodily frame, which seems "burned as in a hearth."

5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.* By grief he had brought himself down to such an emaciated state that his bones pierced through his skin.

6, 7. *I am like the pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.* He had got into such a melancholy state of mind that he shunned human company, sought solitude and became as mournful a creature as “an owl of the desert.”

8-10. *My enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up and cast me down.* Observe that all David’s enemies could not make him weep. Mad as they were against him, they could not extort a tear from his eyes, but God’s indignation and wrath touched him to the quick and made him mingle his drink with weeping. He felt that God was treating him as wrestlers treat one another—when a man deliberately lifts up his opponent in order that he may give him the worse fall—“You have lifted me up and cast me down.” All the joys that he had ever known seemed to make his sorrow the more bitter. The Light of God’s Countenance, in which he had formerly walked, made the darkness, in which he was enshrouded, to seem all the blacker.

11, 12. *My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass. But You, O LORD, shall endure forever; and Your remembrance unto all generations.* That was David’s usual way—to comfort himself in his God when he could find no comfort in himself or in his surroundings. You remember that he did so on that memorable occasion when Ziklag was burned and the people spoke of stoning him—“David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” We shall be wise if we follow his example, for, when every other source of joy is dried up, when all earthly wells are stopped up by the Philistines, the stream of God’s mercy flows on as freely as ever!

13, 14. *You shall arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.* God is sure to bless His Church when the members of it take a deep interest in even the least things that appertain to God’s cause. “Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.” I fear that, in many churches, the set time to favor Zion has been postponed by the apathy, the lethargy, or the carelessness of many of those who profess to be the servants of God!

15, 16. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your Glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory.* It was to God’s Glory for Him to build up the ancient Jewish Kingdom and it is equally to His Glory to build up His Church at the present time—quarrying the stones of nature, changing them by His almighty power, polishing them, by His Grace, after the similitude of a palace, building them up upon the one Foundation, that is, Jesus Christ—laying course upon course until the whole structure shall be finished.

17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* There is a gracious promise for all destitute souls who cry unto God!

18. *This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.* This is written for our comfort, dear Friends! There it stands permanently, in this blessed Book, that as long as there is a destitute and tried people of God, He will not despise their prayer!

19. *For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth.* As if God was looking down from the battlements of Heaven, observing, watching for something—and what is it that God is looking for?

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.* Is not that a delightful view of God? Watching not for the music of sweet singers, nor for the noise of victorious warriors, but for “the groaning of the prisoner,” the sight of those shut up in the condemned cell, “appointed to death.”

21-23. *To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.* It is most instructive to notice how the Psalmist ascribes all to God, not only his strength, but his weakness—not merely his extended life, but even the shortening of his days! It takes away the sting from our sorrow when we know that it comes from God. It helps us to bear any apparent calamity when we feel that it is our Heavenly Father’s hand that has worked it all, or His will that has permitted it to happen.

24-27. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have You laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end.* The ever-living God is our constant comfort amidst the ever-changing scenes of this mortal life! Yes, and when we come even to the border of the land of death-shade, this is still our joy, “The Lord lives,” for, from the midst of the Throne of God, we hear our Savior say, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

28. *The children of Your servant shall continue.* We pass away, but our children take our place. As Wesley said, “God buries His workmen, but His work goes on.” One generation passes away, but another comes in its place.

28. *And their seed shall be established before You.* Blessed be the name of the ever-living God!

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THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD

NO. 1078

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me,
bless His holy name.”
Psalm 103:1.*

You see here a man talking to himself, a soul with all his soul talking to his soul. Every speaker should learn to soliloquize. His own soul is the first audience a good man ought to think of preaching to. Before we address ourselves to others we should lecture within the doors of our own heart. Indeed, if any man desires to excite the hearts of others in any given direction, he must first stir up himself upon the same matter. He who would make others grateful must begin by saying, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

David had never risen to the height of saying, “Bless the Lord, you His angels,” or, “Bless the Lord, all His works,” if he had not first tuned his own voice to the gladsome music. No man is fit to be a conductor in the choirs of holy song until he has learned, himself, to sing the song of praise. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” is the preacher’s preparation in the study, without which he must fail in the pulpit. Self-evident as this is, many persons need to be reminded of it, for they are ready enough to admonish others, but forget that true gratitude to God must, like charity, begin at home. There is an old proverb which says, “The cobbler’s wife goes barefoot,” and I am afraid this is too often the case in morals and religion.

Preachers ought especially to be jealous of themselves in this particular, lest, while they are crying aloud to other men to magnify the Lord, they should be shamefully silent themselves. I would this morning glow with the sacred flame of personal thankfulness while I call upon you to bless the holy name of Jehovah, our God. But what is true of preachers is true of all other workers. The tendency among men is, when they grow a little earnest, to expend their zeal upon other people and frequently in the way of fault-finding. It is wonderfully easy to wax indignant at the indolence, the divisions, the coldness or the errors of the Christian Church, and to issue our little bulls against her, declaring her to be weighed in our balances and found wanting, as if it mattered one halfpenny to the Church what the verdict of our imperfect scales might be!

Why, instead of a tract upon the faults of the Church, at the present moment, it would be easy to write a folio volume and when it was written it would be wise to put it in the fire! Friend, mind those beams in your own eye and leave the Lord Jesus to clear the motes from the eyes of His Church. Begin at home—there is in-door work to be done. Instead of vainly pointing to the faults of others, pour forth your earnestness in

praising God and say unto your own heart, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

You observe that this preacher, with an audience of one, has a very choice subject—he is exhorting himself to bless God. Now, in a certain sense it is not *possible* for us to bless God. He blesses *us* and in the same sense we cannot bless Him. He has all things—what can we give Him? When we have given our best we are compelled to confess, "Of Your own have we given unto You." But we bless Him by being thankful, by extolling Him for the gifts He has bestowed, by loving Him in consequence of His bounty towards us and by allowing these emotions of our mind to influence our life so that we speak well of His name, and act so as to glorify Him among our fellow men. In these ways we can bless God and we know that He accepts such attempts, poor and feeble though they are. God is pleased with our love and thankfulness, and so, speaking after the manner of men, He is blessed by His children's desires and praises.

Note that the Psalmist stirred himself up to bless God's *name*, by which is meant His Character—though, indeed, we may take the word literally, for every name of God is a reason for thankfulness. We will praise Jehovah, the Self-Existent. We will praise El, the mighty God whose power is on our side. We will praise Him who gives Himself the Covenant name of Elohim and reveals therein the Trinity of His sacred unity. We will praise the Shaddai, the All-Sufficient God and magnify Him because out of His fullness have we all received. And whatever other name there is in Scripture, or combination of names, every one shall be exceedingly delightful to our hearts and we will bless the sacred name.

We will bless the Father, from whose everlasting love we received our election unto eternal life—the Father who has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead. We bless the Father of our spirits, who has given to us an inheritance among all them that are set apart. And we bless the Son of God, Jesus our Savior, Christ—anointed to redeem. Our heart dances for joy at every remembrance of Him! There is not a name of Jesus Christ's Person, or offices, or relationships which we would forget to bless. Whether He is Immanuel, Jesus, or the Word. Whether He is Prophet, Priest or King—whether He is Brother, Husband or Friend—whatever name seems His beloved Person dear to us, we will bless Him under it.

And the Holy Spirit, too—our Comforter, the Paraclete, the heavenly Dove who dwells *within* our hearts in infinite condescension, whom Heaven cannot contain but yet who finds a habitation within the bodies of His servants which are His temples—we will assuredly praise Him! Each one of His influences shall evoke from us grateful praise—if He is like the wind—we will be as Aeolian harps. If He is dew—we will bloom with flowers. If He is flame—we will glow with ardor. If He is oil—our faces shall shine. In whatever way He moves upon us we will be responsive to His voice and while He blesses us we will bless His holy name.

But if the very name of God is thus blessed to us, certainly the Character which lies beneath the name shall be inexpressibly delightful. Select any attribute of God you will and it is a reason for our loving Him. Is He

Immutable?—blessed be His name, He loves everlastingly. Is He Infinite?—then glory be to Him, it is infinite affection which He has bestowed upon us. Is He Omnipotent?—then will He put forth all His power for His own beloved. Is He Wise?—then He will not err, nor fail to bring us safely to our promised rest. Is He Gracious?—then in that Grace we find our comfort and defense—whatever there is in God, known or unknown, we will bless.

My God! I cannot apprehend You with my understanding, but I comprehend You with my affections, and so, if I cannot know You all in my mind, I love You altogether in my heart! My intellect is too narrow to contain You, but my heart expands herself to the infinity of Your Majesty and loves You, whatever You may be! You are unknown in great measure, but You are not unloved by my poor heart! Thus the Psalmist calls upon us to bless the Lord. I would like to dwell upon those emphatic words in his exhortation—“His holy name.”

Only a holy man can delight in holy things. Holiness is the terror of unholy men! They love sin and count it liberty, but holiness is to them a slavery. If we are saints we shall bless God for His holiness and be glad that in Him there is no spot nor flaw. He is without iniquity—He is just and right. Even to save His people He would not violate His Law. Even to deliver His own beloved from going down into the Pit, He would not turn away from the paths of equity. “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth,” is the loftiest cry of cherubim and seraphim in their perfect bliss—it is a joyous song both to the saints on earth and those in Heaven. The pure in heart gaze on the Divine holiness with awe-struck joy!

Having thus expounded the words briefly, we will now come to the main point of the exhortation. The Psalmist stirs us up to bless God with our whole being and I pray the Holy Spirit to bring us to that condition this morning. Upon that part of the exhortation we shall now dwell.

I. And our first remark shall be that this exhortation is REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul”—there is the unity of our nature. “And all that is within me”—there are the diverse powers and faculties which make up the variety of our nature. The unity and the diversity are both summoned to the delightful employment of magnifying God!

First, the unity of our nature is here bid, in its concentration, to yield its whole self to the praise of God. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul”—he means thereby not his lips only, not his hands upon the harp strings, not his eyes uplifted towards Heaven, but his *soul*, his very *self*, his *truest* self. Never let me present to God the outward and superficial alone, but let me render to Him the inner and the sincere. Let me never bring before Him merely the outward senses which my soul uses, but the *soul* which uses these instrumental faculties. No whitewashed sepulchers will please the Lord—“Bless the Lord, O my Soul”—let the true ego praise Him, the *essential* I, the vital personality, the soul of my soul, the life of my life!

Let me be true to the core to my God. Let that which is most truly my own vitality spend itself in blessing the Lord. The soul is our best self. We must not merely bless the Lord with our body, which will soon become worm’s meat and is but dust at its best—but with our inner, ethereal na-

ture which makes us akin to angels—yes, that which causes it to be said that in the image of God we were created. My *spiritual* nature, my loftiest powers must magnify God—not the voice which sings a hypocritical Magnificat, but the heart which *means* it! Not the lips which cry Hosanna thoughtlessly—but the *mind* which considers and intelligently worships. Not only this little narrow walk of my body would I fill with song, but the infinite—through which my spirit soars on wings of boundless thought—I would make that shoreless region vocal with Jehovah’s praise! My real self, my best self shall bless the Lord.

But the soul is also our immortal self, that which will outlast time and, being redeemed by precious blood, shall pass through Judgment and enter into the worlds unknown forever to dwell at the right hand of God triumphant in His eternal love. My immortal Soul, what have you to do with spending your energies upon mortal things? Will you hunt for fleeting shadows while you are, yourself, most real and abiding? Will you heap up bubbles while you, yourself, will endure forever in a life coeval with the existence of God Himself, for He has given you eternal life in His Son Jesus? Bless the Lord, then—so noble a thing as you are should not be occupied with less worthy matters. Raise yourself on all your wings and like the six-winged cherubim adore your God!

But the words suggest yet another meaning—the soul is our active self, our vigor, our intensity. When we speak of a man’s throwing his soul into a thing we mean that he does it with all his might. We say, “There is no soul in him,” by which we do not mean that the man does not live, but that he has no vigor or force of character, no love, no zeal. My most intense nature shall bless the Lord. Not with bated breath and a straitened energy will I lisp forth His praises, but I will pour them forth vehemently and ardently in volumes of impassioned song. Never serve God with a hand loathe for labor which would gladly withdraw itself if it dared.

If you do your own business in a lax fashion, yet do not God’s business so. If you go to sleep over anything let it be over your money-making, or your buying and selling, but evermore be awake in your service of the Lord. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!” If ever you are thoroughly awakened, awake now! If ever you were all life, all emotion, all energy, all enthusiasm, enter into the same condition again! Let every part be full of ardor, sensitive with emotion, nerved with impulse, borne upward by resolution, impelled by onward force! As Samson, when he smote the Philistines hip and thigh, used every muscle, sinew and bone of his body in crushing his adversaries, so you serve God with all and every force you have. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!”

O God, my hand, my tongue, my mind, my heart shall all adore You—

“Every string shall have its attribute to sing.”

My united, concentrated, entire being shall bless You, You infinitely glorious Jehovah! I pray you, my Brothers and Sisters, either do not pretend to praise God at all, or praise Him with all your might. If you are Christian people, be out and out Christians or let Christianity alone. None hinder the glorious kingdom of Christ so much as these half-and-half men and women who blow hot and cold with the same breath! My Brethren, be thorough! Plunge into this stream of life as bathers do who dive to the

very bottom and swim in the broad stream with intense delight. Do this, or else make no profession.

But then, David speaks of the diverse faculties of our nature, and writes, "All that is within me bless His holy name." I think the Psalm itself, if we had time to comment upon it, might suggest in succession all our mental powers and passions. For instance, when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul," he meant, of course, first of all let the heart bless Him, for that is often synonymous with the soul. The affections are to lead the way in the concert of praise. But the Psalmist intended, next, to stir up the *memory*, for he goes on to say, "forget not all His benefits."

May I ask you, beloved Friends, to recollect what God has done for you? Thread the jewels of His Grace upon the thread of memory and hang them about the neck of praise. Can you count the leaves of the forest in autumn, or number the small dust of the threshing floor? Then, can you give the sum of His loving kindnesses? For mercies beyond count praise Him without stint. Then let your *conscience* praise Him, for the Psalm proceeds to say, "who forgives all your iniquities." Conscience once weighed your sins and condemned you—now let it weigh the Lord's pardon and magnify His Grace to you. Count the purple drops of Calvary and say, "Thus my sins were washed away."

Let your conscience praise the Sin-Bearer who has caused it to flow with peace like a river and to abound in righteousness as the waves of the sea. Let your emotions join the sacred choir, for you have this day, if you are like the Psalmist, many feelings of delight. Bless Him "who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, and who satisfies your mouth with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." Is all within you peaceful today? Sing the 23rd Psalm. Let the calm of your spirit sound forth the praises of the Lord upon the pleasant harp and the psaltery.

Do your days flow smoothly? Then consecrate the dulcimer to the Lord. Are you joyful this day? Do you feel the exhilaration of delight? Then praise the Lord with the timbrel and dance. On the other hand, is there a contention within? Does conflict disturb your mind? Then praise Him with the sound of the trumpet, for He will go forth with you to the battle. When you return from the battle and divide the spoil, then, "praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals." Whatever emotional state your soul is found in, let it lead you to bless your Maker's holy name!

Perhaps, however, just now your thoughts exceed your emotions for you have been considering the Providence of God as you have read the histories of nations and seen their rise and fall—and have watched the hand of God in men's lives. So also did David, and he sang, "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." Let your judgment praise the Judge of all the earth! Let every day's newspaper give you fresh matter for praise—for every Christian should so read the paper or not at all. God's praise is the true end of history! His Providence is the pith and marrow of all the stories of the empires of the past. To the man of

understanding the centuries are stanzas of a Divine epic, whereof the great subject is the Lord of Hosts in His excellency.

Do not forget to bring your *knowledge* to your aid in your song. You have the Scriptures and you have the Spirit to teach you their inner sense, therefore you can soar above David when he sang, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." He has made known His *Son* unto you and in you—therefore glorify Him! The harvests of the fields of knowledge should be stored in the garner of adoration. Even our human learning should be laid at the Lord's feet, for the vessels of the tabernacle were made of the gold which Israel brought out of the land of Egypt. We should make each rivulet of knowledge swell our gratitude. Believer, know not anything which you can not consecrate, or else loathe to know it. Whatever fruits, new or old, are stored in your memory, let them be all laid up for the Beloved and none else. Knowledge should supply the spices and love, the flame, and so the censer of worship should always smoke with fragrant perfume.

Be sure, too, that your faculty of wonder is used in holy things—let your *astonishment* bless God. You cannot measure the distance from the east to the west—you are lost in the immensity before you—but oh, bless God with your wonder as you see your sins thus far removed from you! You cannot tell how high the heavens are above the earth, but let your astonishment at the greatness of Creation lead you to adoration, for so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him! Ah, and your very fears, let them bow low before the Lord. Do you fear because you are frail? He remembers that we are dust. Do you tremble at the thought of death? Then praise Him who spares you, though you are before Him as a flower of the field withered by the wind when it passes over you. Magnify from a sense of your insignificance the splendor of that condescending love which pities you, even "as a father pities his children."

As for your *hopes*, sweet are their voices—let them not remain silent—as they peer into the future let them sing for, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." What more could hope desire to make her rouse her choicest minstrelsy? By-and-by we shall be where even the last verses of the Psalm will not be above our experience, for we shall see the Lord upon that Throne which He has prepared in the heavens. And then we will bid angels that excel in strength and all the heavenly ministry to bless the Lord! Happy are we as we anticipate the day, and, filled with expectation, cry aloud, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul!"

I think you will now perceive that, if time permitted, we could bring out every single mental faculty and show that David has given it scope, as though this Psalm were the working out of a problem and practically showed how each particular power of the soul can praise God. Brothers and Sisters, we cannot longer tarry on this point. You know, each of you, what faculty you possess in the greatest strength. I pray you use it for God. You know which phase your soul is in just now—bless God while you are in that mood, whatever it is.

“All that is within me,” says the text—then let it be all. Some of us have a vein of humor and though we try to keep it under restraint it will peep out. What then? Why let us make it bear the Lord’s yoke! This faculty is not necessarily common or unclean—let it be made a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Lord. On the other hand, some of you have a touch of despondency in your nature—take care to subdue it to the Lord’s praise. You are the men to sing those grave melodies which in some respects are the pearls of song. A little pensiveness is good flavoring. The muse is at her best when she is pleasingly melancholy.

Praise God, my Brethren, as you are. Larks must not refrain from singing because they are not nightingales, nor must the sparrow refuse to chirp because he cannot emulate the linnet. Let every tree of the Lord’s planting praise the Lord! Clap your hands, you trees of the forests, while fruitful trees and all cedars join in His praise. Both young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord, each one in his peculiar note—for you are all necessary to the perfect harmony. The Lord would not have you borrow your brother’s tones, but use “all that is within *you*,” all that is peculiar to your own idiosyncrasy, for His glory!

Spend all your strength, yes, every atom of it! Keep back nothing, but render all that is within you unto Him. If all that is within you is the Lord’s, all that is outside of you, which is yours, will also be His. All your bodily faculties will praise Him and the outer life will be all for God. Let your house praise Him. Beneath its roof may there ever be an altar to the God of all the families of Israel. Let your table praise Him—learn to eat and drink to His glory. Let your bed praise Him—let the bells upon the horses be holiness unto the Lord—let the very garments that you wear, seeing they are the gifts of His charity, commend the Lord to your praise. Yes, let each breath you breathe inspire a new song unto the Preserver of men. Make your life a Psalm and be yourself a hymn—“all that is within me bless His holy name.” The text is comprehensive.

II. Secondly, the suggestion of the text is MOST REASONABLE, for, first, God has created all that is within us except the sin which mars us. Every faculty, susceptibility, power or passion, is of the Lords fashioning. It were not ours to feel, to think, to hope, to judge, to tear, to trust, to know, or to imagine if He had not granted us the power. Who should own the house but the builder? Who should have the harvest but the farmer? Who should receive the obedience of the child but the father? To whom, then, O my Soul, should you render the homage of your nature but to Him who made you all that you are?

Moreover, the Lord has redeemed our entire manhood. When we had gone astray and all our faculties, like lost sheep, had taken, each one, its own several roads of sin, Christ came into the world and redeemed our entire nature—spirit, soul, body—not a part of the man, but our complete humanity! Jesus Christ did not die for our souls only, but for our bodies, too. And though at this present, “the body is dead because of sin,” and therefore we suffer pain and disease, yet the spirit is already life because of righteousness, and in its life we have a sure guarantee of the quicken-

ing of our mortal bodies in the day of the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body.

We shall, at the coming of the Lord, be wholly restored in body and soul by the Lord's Divine power—therefore let body and soul praise Him who has redeemed both by His most precious blood! My Body, you are not mine to pamper you, you are my Lord's to *serve* Him, for His blood has paid your ransom price and secured your resurrection. My Soul, my Spirit, whatever faculty you have, Christ's blood is on all, therefore you are not your own. It would be sad, indeed, even to think of having an unredeemed will or an unredeemed judgment—but it is not so—every faculty is emancipated by a ransom. If the blood on the lintel has saved the house, then it has saved every room—and every chamber of ours should be consecrated to the Redeemer's praise.

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has given innumerable blessings to every part of our nature. We spoke of them just now, one by one, and it would be very easy to show that all our faculties are the recipients of blessing and therefore they should all bless God in return. Every pipe of the organ should yield its quota of sound. As in an eagle, every bone, muscle and feather is made with a view to flight, so is every part of a regenerate man created for praise. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all our powers should flow towards the Lord's praise. To prove that this is reasonable, let me ask one single question—if we do not devote all that is within us to the glory of God, which part is it that we should leave unconsecrated? And being less unconsecrated to God, what should we do with it? It would be impossible to give a proper answer to this question.

An unconsecrated part in a Believer's manhood would become a nest of hornets, or, what if I say a den of devils out of which evils would come forth to prowl over our entire being? A faculty unsanctified would be a leprous spot, a valley of Gehennam, a Dead Sea, a lair of pestilence. To be sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—is essential to us and we must have it. It is but our reasonable service that within us must bless God's holy name—to withhold part of the price were robbery—to reserve part of our territory from our King would be treason!

III. But I will not further insist that it is reasonable, for I have further to assert that it is NECESSARY. It is necessary that the whole nature bless God, for at its best, when all engaged in the service, it fails to compass the work and falls short of Jehovah's praise. All the man, with all his might—always occupied in all ways in blessing God—would still be no more than a whisper in comparison with the thunder of praise which the Lord deserves!

One of our poets used a singular expression which the fact more than justifies. He said—

***“But ah, eternity's too short
To utter all Your praise.”***

It is so. The whole company of God's creatures would be incapable of reflecting the whole of the Divine Glory and such mercy and Grace does God show to us in the gift of His dear Son that the Church militant, and the Church triumphant, together, are not equal to well-deserved praise. Do not, therefore, let us insult the Lord with half when the whole is not

enough! Let us not bring Him the tithe, when, if we had 10 times as much, we could not magnify Him as we should.

We must, moreover, give the Lord all because divided powers in every case lead to failure. The men who have succeeded in anything have almost always been men of one thing. He who is jack-of-all-trades is master of none. He who can do a little of this and a little of that never does much of any one thing. The fact is, there is only water enough in the brook of our manhood to drive one wheel, and if we divide it into many trickling runners we shall accomplish nothing. The right thing is to dam up all our forces and allow them to spend themselves in one direction and so pour them all forth upon the constantly revolving wheel of praise to God.

How can we afford life to evaporate in trifles when one aim, only, is worthy of our immortal being? We who have been baptized upon profession of our faith were taught in that solemn ordinance to bless the Lord with our entire being, for we were not sprinkled here or there—but we were, in the outward sign—*buried* with the Lord Jesus in Baptism unto death. And we were immersed into the name of the Triune God. If our Baptism meant anything it declared that we were henceforth dead to the world and owned no life but that which came to us by the way of the resurrection of Jesus. Over our heads the liquid water flowed, for we resigned the brain with all its powers of thought to Jesus. Over the heart, the veins, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the significant element poured itself—symbol of that universal consecration which deluges all the inward nature of every sanctified Believer. My baptized Brothers and Sisters, I charge you not belie your profession! Remember, Beloved, this one telling argument, that Jesus Christ will have all of us or nothing—and He will have us sincere, earnest and intense—or He will not have us at all.

I see the Master at the table and His servants place before Him various meats that He may eat and be satisfied. He tastes the cold meats and He eats of the bread, hot from the oven. But as for tepid drinks and half-baked cakes He puts them away with disgust. He will look on you who are cold, and are mourning your coldness, and He will give you heat. And He will look on you who are hot and serve Him with the best you have. But of the middle-man, the lukewarm, He says, “I will spew you out of My mouth.” Jesus cannot bear lukewarm religion! He is sick of it! The religion of this present time is, much of it, rather nauseating to the Savior than acceptable to Him.

If Baal is God, serve him. But if God is God, serve Him truly. Let there be no mockery, but be true to the core. Be thorough—throw your soul into your religion! I charge you, stand back awhile and count the cost—for if you wish to give to Christ a little and to Baal a little, you shall be cast away and utterly rejected—the Lord of Heaven will have nothing to do with you! Bless the Lord, then, all that is within me, for only such sincere and undivided homage can be accepted of the Lord.

IV. We must pass on, and ask your attention yet further to the next remark—whole-hearted praise is BENEFICIAL. It is beneficial to ourselves. To be whole-hearted in the praise of God is to elevate our faculties. There

can be no doubt whatever that many a man's powers have been debased by the object which he has pursued. Poets who might have been great poets have missed the highest seats upon Parnassus because they have selected trivial topics or themes gross and impure, and, therefore, the best features of their poems have never been fully developed.

"Bless the Lord, O my Soul," and you will be a man to the fullness of your capacity! This is the way to reach the loftiest peak of human attainment. Consecration is culture. To praise is to learn. To bless God is also of preventive usefulness to us—we cannot bless God and at the same time idolize ourselves. Praise preserves us from being envious of others, for by blessing God for all we have we learn to bless God for what other people have, too. I reckon it to be a great part of praise to be thankful to God for making better men than myself.

If we are always blessing the Lord, this will save us from murmuring—the spirit of discontent will be ejected by the spirit of thankfulness. And this will also deliver us from indolence, for, if all our powers magnify the Most High, we shall scorn the soft couch of ease and seek the place of service that we may bring more honor to our Master. Nothing beautifies a man like praising God! There is a bath in Germany which enamels the bathers, and, if it does not make them beautiful forever, yet, at least beautiful for a while—but to plunge our whole nature in adoration is far more beautifying.

I was told by one who watched the revivals in the north of Ireland years ago that he never saw the human face look so lovely as when it was lit up with the joy of the Holy Spirit during those times of refreshing. You know how pleasing landscapes appear when the sun shines upon them? The scenery has not half its charms till the sun, "of this great world, both eye and soul," enriches the view with his wealth of color and makes all things glow with God's Glory. Praise is the sunlight of life.

Some of you conceal beneath a cloud of indifference all the beauty of your characters. You are like the lovely mountains of Cumberland, when they are enshrouded in mist—little or nothing attractive is visible in you. Pray that Divine Grace, like a heavenly wind, would drive off the fogs of our despondency and discontent and shed the sunlight of true praise all over our soul—then the beauty of our new-created man will be discerned! May we have many lovely praiseful Christians in this Church—and may they abound in other Churches, also.

While whole-hearted praise is beneficial to ourselves, it is also useful to others. I am persuaded many souls are converted by the cheerful conversation of Christians and many already converted are greatly strengthened by the holy joy of their Brethren. You cannot do good more effectually than by a happy consecrated life spent in blessing God. Imagine not that pensiveness is the fairest flower of piety. There have been, in the French Church especially, eminent Christians who appear to have realized a likeness to Christ more in the sorrow which marred His visage, than in the joy which sustained His spirit. Jesus sorrowed that *we* might rejoice! We are no more to imitate Him in His griefs than in His five wounds!

It is truly Christian-like to rejoice in the Lord at all times. We should seek to have Christ's joy fulfilled in ourselves. If there is anything that is cheerful, joyous, dewy, bright, full of Heaven—it is the life of a man who blesses God all his days. This is the way to win souls! We shall not catch these flies with vinegar—we must use honey. We shall not bring men into the Church by putting into the window of Christ's shops, coffins and crepe, and shrouds—and standing at the door like mutes. No, we must tell the Truth of God and show sinners the best robe, the wedding ring, and the silver sandals of joy and gladness. We must sing—

***“The men of Grace have found
Glory began below.
Celestial truths on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow.”***

I read in Thomas Cooper's, “Plain Talk,” a story of a class leader who was in a sad state of mind and therefore gave out in the class the hymn—

***“Ah, where should I go,
Burdened, and sick, and faint.”***

To one seemed inclined to sing, therefore, the leader asked a certain Brother Martin to start a tune. “No, no,” said Martin, “I'm neither burdened, nor sick nor faint, I'll start no tune, not I!” “Well, then, Brother Martin,” said the leader, “Give out a verse yourself.” Whereupon Martin, with all the power of his lungs, sang—

***“Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise.”***

Ah, that's the hymn, my Brothers and Sisters, keep to that! If you have not a thousand tongues, at least let the one you have continue to bless the Lord while you have any being.

V. Lastly, all this is PREPARATORY. If we can attain to constant praise now, it will prepare us for all that awaits us. We do not know what will happen to us between this and Heaven, but we can easily prognosticate the aim and result of all that will occur. We are harps which will be tuned in all their strings for the concerts of the Blessed. The Tuner is putting us in order. He sweeps His hands along the strings—there is a jar from every note—so He begins, first, with one string and then goes to another. He continues at each string till He hears the exact note.

The last time you were ill, one of your strings was tuned. The last time you had a bad debt, or trembled at declining business, another string was tuned. And so, between now and Heaven, you will have every string set in order and you will not enter Heaven till all are in tune! Did you ever go to a place where they make pianos and expect to hear sweet music? The tuning room is enough to drive a man mad—and in the factory you hear the screeching of saws and the noise of hammers—and you say, “I thought this was a place where they made pianos.” Yes, so it is, but it is not the place where they *play* them.

On earth is the place where God makes musical instruments and tunes them—and between now and Heaven He will put all that is within them into fit condition for blessing and praising His name eternally! In Heaven every part of the man will bless God without any difficulty. No need for a preacher there to exhort you! No need for you to talk to yourself and say, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul”—you will do it as naturally as now you

breathe! You never take any consideration as to how often you shall breathe and you have no plan laid down as to when your blood shall circulate because these matters come naturally to you.

And in Heaven it will be your nature to praise God! You will *breathe* praise! You will live in an atmosphere of adoration and like those angels who for many an age, day without night, have circled the Throne of Jehovah rejoicing, so will you! But I will not speak much on that, or you will be wanting to be flying away to our own dear country—

***“Where we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
But from the rivers of His Grace
Drink endless pleasures in.”***

You must stay a little while longer in the tents of Kedar and mingle with the men of soul-distressing Mesech. But till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, say unto your soul, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

I wish all my hearers could do this, but some of you cannot bless God at all and it would be idle for me to tell you to do it! You are dead in your sins. I read a story the other day of a woman convinced of her state by a singular dream. She dreamed she saw her minister standing in the midst of a number of flowerpots which he was watering and she thought that she was one of the flowerpots. But the minister passed her by and said, “It is no use watering that plant, for it is dead.”

This morning I must pass by the dead plants. Oh, Sinner, can you bear this? I do not invite you to sing the Believer’s song of praise—can you bear to be left out? Though I pass you by, I pray the Lord to look upon you and say to you—“Live!” And before I close I must tell you something else which is meant for dead sinners as well as living saints. It is this—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” God grant to you that saving faith for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR

NO. 2121

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 5, 1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1889.**

***“Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”
Psalm 103:1.***

BEFORE our friend who leads us in singing begins, we sometimes hear his tuning fork. He is getting the keynote into his ear. When he comes forward he often sounds out that keynote before he begins to sing. This is what David does in this wonderful Psalm. He sounds the tuning fork with this clear note—“Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” It is well for all to be ready to sing harmoniously—it is a pity when those who gather to worship do not know what they are doing. I wish I could always have you spiritually in tune and keep in tune myself. Alas, I fear we are often half a note too flat.

The words before us are the keynote of this Psalm and all the music is set to it and closes with it. Notice that the Psalm begins, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” and it ends in the same way, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” as if to show us that praise is the Alpha and the Omega of a Christian life. Praise is the life of life. So we begin; so we continue; so shall we end, world without end.

This Psalm has just as many verses in the original as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It is an alphabetical Psalm as to number and so I may say that the A of it is, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” and the Z of it is, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” Oh, that our infancy would bless the Lord and our childhood and our youth bless the Lord—and our manhood and our old age bless the Lord! From the cradle to the tomb one line of sapphire, one streak of sparkling crystal should run through the entire mass of life—and that should be praise unto God.—

***“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”***

Oh, to have Heaven's employment and Heaven's enjoyment here below by never-ceasing praise! We need never make a pause in that of which we shall never make an end.

As I said in the exposition, there is no prayer in this Psalm—it is all praise right through and through. There are times in a Christian's life when he feels as if praise employed the whole of his faculties and his own needs and faults and all about himself sank into insignificance. Usually we mix prayer and praise and they make up a delightful incense of mingled fragrance—but sometimes, when on Tabor's top we stand transfigured with the light of God's goodness—all we can do is praise His

name. All that is within us is blessing Him and there is no faculty left with which to pray Him to bless us! This is an anticipation of the occupation and enjoyment of Heaven, where forever and forever we shall bless and praise and magnify the Thrice-holy God.

At this time I pray that while I talk about this verse I may be carrying it out—and may you be, each one, carrying it out, too, if, indeed, the Lord has blessed you! Let us preach and hear with harps in our hands and songs in our hearts! If I am to lead your thoughts, I will lead them to the place of adoration. If you are His blessed people, be His blessing people! If He has blessed you for many a day, bless Him this day!

I. I call your attention, then, first to THE BLESSED OCCUPATION. “*Bless the Lord, O my Soul.*” A truly wonderful word is this! How can we bless the Lord? For God to bless me I can understand and enjoy! But that it should be mentioned in Scripture that I can bless God is one of those incomprehensible things which, though certainly true, is not to be explained. For man to bless God is a sort of Incarnation—God in human flesh. God blessing me—that is Divine! But *myself* blessing Him—there is something of the human, but also somewhat of the Divine.

The Divine blesses the human or the human could not bless the Divine! God is with us or we could not be thus with God! Our blessing Him can only be the echo of His blessing us! The more you turn it over the more you will wonder at it. If it had said, “*Praise the Lord, O my Soul,*” that would have been reasonable—but, “*Bless the Lord, O my Soul,*” rises out of the region of reason into a still higher and more spiritual atmosphere! These are heavenly words—“*Bless the Lord, O my Soul.*”

But how can *we* bless God? We cannot add to His happiness, or increase His greatness, or enlarge His goodness. “O my Soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness extends not unto You!” What can our poor drops contribute to the ocean? What can our nothingness bring to His all-sufficiency? What can our darkness contribute to His light? And yet, if the Bible says so, it must be so, for it never speaks in vain. Idle words are in the speech of man, not in the writings of Jehovah. If the Scripture teaches us to say, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” then it is a correct word. We may wonder at it, but we may not dispute it.

How, then, can we bless God? I answer, first, God blesses us by thinking well of us and *we bless God by thinking well of Him.* When the Lord says in His heart, “This people shall be blessed,” before ever He has stretched out His hand to give anything, we are blessed by His favorable regard for us. I beg you, in the same respect, to bless God by sweet, holy, adoring, loving, grateful *thoughts* of Him. Think well of Him who thinks so graciously of you! This, surely, is no task, no burden. Such thinking is the happiest exercise of the mental powers!

To think of what God has done for me—why, it makes my heart begin to beat more quickly than usual! My God! The very word is music! My Lord! How pleasant the sound! How sweet it is to speak of our Father who is in Heaven! “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!” To turn over thoughts of what God is, what He has done, what He has been,

how He has dealt with us, how He has revealed Himself unto us, how He has glorified His holy name—why, this is a heavenly pleasure!

Some of the best moments of devotion I have ever been able to enjoy I have spent in entire silence—looking up. I sat still and wondered that God should ever love me and I found a dew gathering about my eyes. I thought of how He loved me and what that love had worked in me and for me, till, not venturing to speak, I have been content to be silent before the Lord in inexpressible rapture. It was not possible for me to see Him, but yet I felt that He was very near and I looked up to Him as my Father, my Friend, my All in All. My heart felt an inward glow under a sense of Divine love and I could not have been happier if I had possessed 10,000 worlds. Oh, this is blessing God, whom your heart, not venturing to use words, has learned with every pulse to beat His praise and with every throb to mean an inward love to Him.

Spend some time in that quiet, rapt devotion which gets beyond the use of words into a communion of gratitude and love. Words are weak when Love has to load them with her treasures and therefore she is content to spare them the burden. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” My soul shall do what my tongue cannot! Think deeply of what the Lord has done. Do not pass His mercies over superficially, but look into them. Pry into their very heart—look into the deep things of God. Do not cease to think of the Covenant of electing love, of everlasting faithfulness, of redeeming blood, of pardoning Grace and all the ways in which Eternal Love has shown Himself since that day when you first heard Him speak in your ear, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” To think well of God is one of the chief ways in which we can bless Him.

We also bless God when we wish Him well. You can do a great deal in this way of wishing well and desiring great things for the Lord’s honor and glory. God’s wishes are all practically carried out. We cannot carry out ours, but, at the same time, we ought to indulge them freely. He that taught us to pray bade us begin, “Our Father which are in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.” Our prayers are not sufficiently directed to the glory of the Lord. How seldom do we begin with praying *for* God’s name and kingdom! We put that last which should always be first.

We ought to pray far more than we do *for* the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not written, “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually and daily shall He be praised”? Do you continually pray for Jesus and daily praise Him? Pray for yourself, certainly, “Give us this day our daily bread.” But this comes after, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done.” Sit down and wish that all men knew God, that all men worshipped Him—and let your wishes blaze up into prayers. Wish that all idols were abolished and that Jehovah’s name would be sung through every land by every tongue. Wish well for His name, His glory, His Truth.

Lay home to your hearts the burden of His Church and long for the success of its work. When you see His Truth dishonored and His Word, itself, defamed and despised—be grieved, for this is a way of blessing

Him—when you abhor all that dishonors Him. Wish well for His Church, His cause, His Truth, His people and all that concerns His glory. Pray without ceasing, “Father, glorify Your Son.” Turn your wishes into prayers and as the first stage of thinking well is a blessing of God by *meditation*, so this second stage of wishing well will be a blessing of God by *supplication*. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

Think well, wish well. Then, next, *you can bless God by speaking well of Him*. Perhaps you say very little about Him. Chide yourself for your reticence. Perhaps you have even spoken against Him though you are His child. I mean that you have fallen into such a state of heart that you imagine that He deals harshly with you. Ah, this is the opposite of blessing Him! Perhaps you have lost your husband or child, or in health or property you are a sufferer—and it may be that the devil says to you, “Curse God and die.” Surely you will not listen to this vile suggestion! No, no! A thousand times, “No!” Beloved, if you are His child, far be it from you to curse your Father! And yet, in a modified sense, you may do it by inward quarrelling with the will of the Lord in His Providential acts towards you.

God’s people provoke His Holy Spirit when they murmur against Him in their hearts. A murmuring spirit is the very reverse of blessing the Lord—especially when the murmurs take a loud voice—when they are not merely choked and concealed within the bosom but when, every time you speak, you complain bitterly of how the Lord deals with you and think that He acts in a very harsh and trying way. Away with every rebellious thought! “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” “He has not dealt with us after our sins.” “Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” said Jeremiah in his Lamentations.

Let us lament for sin but let us not complain because of chastisement. Indeed, some of us have nothing to complain of. We have everything for which to praise Him and if we do not do so we deserve to be banished to the Siberia of Despair. How can we complain? If we are not in Hell, everything is mercy! If you, a pardoned sinner, had to spend the rest of your days on earth in a stone cell with no food but bread and water, performing the labor of a convict, yet, so long as you know that you are pardoned and delivered from going down to Hell, you have a thousand reasons why you should bless the Lord and you have no single reason to complain! So long as you can say, “His mercy endures forever,” you have enough cause for unceasing praise.

But when the Lord gives you all things to enjoy. When He gives you food to eat and raiment to put on. When He allows you to come up to His house in peace and hear the Gospel—and have it sweetly applied to your own heart—why, Beloved, you ought to speak well of the Lord who deals so bountifully with you! Have you said anything to praise God today? “I have had nobody to speak to,” says one. Do you mean to say that you have not said anything today to the Lord’s praise? What? My dear Brothers and Sisters, have you been silent all day? You are a rare sort of people! How quiet your houses must be! You have said *something*, I am sure. Do you not think that God ought to have a tithe of our words, at the

very least, and that somehow or other, to somebody or other, we ought to speak well of His dear name every day?

“I have nothing to say,” says one. Do not say it, then. But some of us have a great deal to say and we dare not be silent about it! The wicked speak loudly enough against God. You cannot quiet them. Why should *we* be silent in any company? We have as much right to speak *for* God as they have to speak against Him! If they ever complain of people singing hymns in the street they have little cause to find fault—for they sing in the street quite enough—and some of them at very unseemly hours. If they say that we impose our religion—some of them impose their blasphemies and assuredly we may take as much liberty as they take! We shall not be muzzled like dogs either to please the world or its master. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!” Speak well of His name and let men know that you have a God who is gracious to you in a wonderful manner.

Once more—be not satisfied with thinking well and wishing well, and speaking well—but *act* well for God. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” and as He blesses you with real gifts—with gifts unspeakably precious—*bless His name by acts and deeds of holy service and consecration*. Sometimes indulge yourself with the delight of breaking an alabaster box, very precious, and pouring its fragrance on your Lord Jesus. Fetch out something rare and costly from your store and give to His cause, and bless His name. Every now and then think to yourself, “I must do something fresh for Jesus.” Let your heart say—

“Oh, what shall I do my Savior to praise?”

Invent for yourself some little thing which may give pleasure to the Lord that He may not say to you, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices.” “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” and do it with hand, purse, substance and sacrifice.

If you do truly bless Him, you will not be content with singing hymns such as—

“Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel,”

but you will long to put a feather or two into the wing of the Gospel to make it fly abroad! You will not only say, “All hail the power of Jesus’ name,” but you will be wanting to make that name known to others! You will endeavor to spread abroad His praise by work in the Sunday school, or at the village station, or on the tract district, or at the Dorcas Meeting! Bless the Lord not in word only, but in deed and in truth, even as He blesses you! “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

I cannot enlarge farther. I have given you hints, bare hints, but they may show you how you may bless the Lord after the manner in which He blesses you, though the measure is far below what He does. As the whole heavens may be reflected in a drop of water, so may infinite love be mirrored in our affections.

II. And now, secondly, let us consider THE COMMENDABLE MANNER mentioned. Half the virtue of a thing lies in the way in which it is done. Indeed, there is usually a good deal more in the *manner* of an action than in the action itself. One person would relieve a poor man in such a way as to break his heart and another will give him nothing and yet cheer him

up. You can praise a man till he loathes you and censure him till he loves you.

Now, in the service of God, it is not only what you bring but in what spirit you bring it. The Lord loves *adverbs* as much as adjectives. *How* is as important as *What*. So here it is, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and *all that is within me*, bless His holy name." That mode of blessing God to which we are called is very *spiritual*—a matter of soul and spirit. I am not to bless God with my voice only, nor merely with the help of a fine organ or a trained choir. But I am to do it after a far more difficult manner. "Bless the Lord, O my *Soul*."

Soul music is the soul of music. The music of the soul is that which pleases the ear of God—the great Spirit is delighted with that which comes from our *spirit*. Why? Surely you do not think that even the music of the best orchestra, majestic though it is, affords pleasure to God in the sense in which sweet sounds are pleasing to us! As for all human melody, it must seem so imperfect to the All-Glorious One that it is no more to Him than the grating of an old saw to Mozart or Beethoven!

His idea of music is framed on a far higher and nobler platform of taste than ever can be reached by mortal man. The songs of cherubim and seraphim infinitely exceed all that we can ever raise, so far as mere *sound* is concerned—and mere sound is as nothing to God. He could set the winds to music, tune the roaring of the sea and harmonize the crash of tempests! If He needed music, He would not ask of human lips and mouths! A *heart* that loves Him makes music to Him! A heart that praises Him has within itself all the harmonies that He delights in! The sigh of *love* is to Him a lyric! The sob of *repentance* is melody! The inward cries of His own children are an oratorio and their heart-songs are true hallelujahs! "Bless the Lord, O my Soul."

The unheard of man is often best heard of God. Speechless praise—the *heart's* deep meaning—this is what He loves. Spiritual worship! Spiritual worship! Spiritual worship! And how often this is neglected! You can go to a very fine Church where there is a very grand service and there may be spiritual service there but, alas, it is *more* probable that there will be no trace of it. You may go to a Quaker's room where there are four bare whitewashed walls and a window with a Holland blind drawn down and there *may be* spiritual worship there—but, on the other hand, there may be stolid indifference and a formalism as fatal as the gorgeous ceremonial.

It is neither the outward sumptuousness nor the plainness that will ensure spirituality. And yet this is the *life* of all worship. Only the conscious Presence of the Spirit of God will enable us to worship with the *soul*—and that is the main thing—yes, the *only* important thing! I do not greatly care whether a man wears a plain coat or a gown in worship. *I* shall not make a fool of *myself* by putting on a gown, I assure you! But I do not think that even if I did it would make much difference so long as my *heart* was right in the sight of God.

If one man feels that he can worship God best in one way and another feels that he can worship Him best in another way, it is not for his brother to judge him—let each have his own way—only let each see to it that he

worships God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth! This is the vital point—the *heart* must be in every word—the *spirit* must go with every note. Everything which does not arise from a devout exercise of the *mental* powers and even with the full occupation of the *spiritual* faculties, falls short of that to which we exhort God at this time. The right note is, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” It is *spiritual* worship—it is worship not from the teeth outwards, but from the *heart* that lies deep within the man.

When we bless God, *the sacred exercise should be intense*. “All that is within me, bless His holy name.” We ought not to worship God in a half-hearted sort of way as if it were our *duty* to bless God and we felt it to be a weary business that needed to be taken care of as quickly as we could and have done with it—and the sooner the better. No, no! “All that is within me, bless His holy name.” Come, my heart, wake up and summon all the powers which wait upon you! Mechanical worship is easy but worthless! Come, rouse yourself, my Brothers and Sisters! Rouse yourself, O my Soul! “All that is within me, bless His holy name.”

What we need is a universal suffrage of praise from every member of our manhood’s commonwealth. Every faculty within our nature is to praise God—our memory, our hope, our fear, our desire, our imagination—all our capacities and all our Graces. There is not one part of a man’s constitution which is really a part of his manhood which should not praise God. Yes, even the sense of humor should be sanctified to the service of the Most High! Whatever faculty God has given you, O my Soul, it has its place in the choir! Summon it to praise! If Nebuchadnezzar praised his idol god with flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer, psaltery and all kinds of music, mind that you praise your God with every faculty that you have within you so that there is no part or power of your nature which is not used in Jehovah’s praise.

What a difference there is between an unconcerned man and a man really awakened! In your own case I can believe you to be bright and intelligent—but your portrait—I will say nothing about it. When the photographer fits that iron rest at the back of your head and keeps you waiting 10 minutes while he gets his plates ready, why, your soul goes out of town and nothing remains but that heavy look! When the work of art is finished it is you and yet it is *not* you! You were driven out by the touch of that iron! Another time, perhaps, your portrait is taken instantaneously, while you are in an animated attitude—while your whole soul is there—and your friends say, “Yes, that is your very self!” I want you to bless the Lord with your soul at home as in that last portrait!

I saw a book today where the writer says in the preface, “We have given a portrait of our mother, but there was a kind of sacred twinkle about her eyes which no photograph could reproduce.” Now, it is my heart’s desire that you praise God with that sacred twinkle—with that feature or faculty which is most characteristic of you. Let your *eyes* praise Him! Let your brow praise Him! Let every part of your manhood be aroused and so aroused as to be in fine form. I would have your soul rise to the high-water mark! Give me a man on fire when God is to be praised! Let “all that is within me bless His holy name.”

God is not to be half praised. A whole God and a holy God should have the whole of our powers engaged in blessing His holy name. Our blessing of God must be intense—so intense that all our powers, faculties and forces are unanimous in it. The text seems to remind me that *we ought to do this repeatedly*, because in my text the word “bless” occurs twice. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, bless His holy name.” And in the next verse there is, “bless the Lord,” again. He is a Triune God—render Him triune praise! Bless Him! Bless Him! Bless Him—be always blessing Him!

How you have looked at that dear child at times, you loving mothers! You have pressed him to your bosom and you have said, “Bless him, and bless him, and bless him again.” Shall our children enjoy such affectionate repetitions and will we not bless God and bless Him and bless Him, and bless Him again? “Oh,” you say, “it is a very little thing to do!” I know it is little in itself, but take care that you do not rob Him of it. If your gratitude can only render a small return, this must not be a reason for withholding it. Thank Him! Praise Him! Bless Him!

Begin your days with blessing Him. Begin your meals with blessing Him. Go not to your beds without blessing Him. Wake not in the morning without blessing Him. Even in the dead of night, if you lie sleepless, still bless Him. Oh, what happy lives we should live if we were always blessing Him! Let us resolve to institute a new era and from this hour commence the age of praise—

***“I will praise Him in life; I will praise Him in death;
And praise Him as long as He lends me breath.”***

May this be the holy resolution of every blood-bought one in this assembly! We are all needed for this work. Who among us would like to be excused from so honorable a service?

Thus have I shown you the blessed occupation and the commendable manner of it. May the Holy Spirit help us to *love* praise and *live* praise till we *perfect* praise!

III. But I ask your attention earnestly for a minute to a third point and that is THE SACRED OBJECT of this blessing. The text is, in the original, “Bless Jehovah, O my Soul.” In the reading of the Psalms, as a rule, I frequently put the word, “Jehovah,” before you instead of, “the Lord,” for you know that wherever we get, the “LORD,” in capital letters, it is “Jehovah” in the original—and why should we not know that the sacred name is used by the inspired writer?

I am afraid that a great many so-called Christians do not worship Jehovah at all. The god of the present period is a new god, newly sprung up. The Old Testament is looked upon by some as if it were a worn-out Book and the God of Israel is regarded as a deity of the olden time and not the only living and true God. “Ah!” they say, “He is a very imperfect Revelation” and then they go on to reverence their own effeminate version of the Godhead.

For my own part I know nothing of a new god. I adore the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the God that made the heavens and the earth. I worship the God that cut Rahab and wounded the crocodile at the Red Sea—the God that led His people through the wilderness. I worship

the God that gave them the land of Canaan for a heritage. "This God is our God forever and ever. He shall be our guide even unto death." "Bless Jehovah, O my Soul." Let who will worship Baal or Moloch—let who will turn to the gods of Greece or Rome. My Soul, bless Jehovah and adore His sacred name! The gods of evolution and agnosticism are none of mine!

These invented deities, or demons, I leave to those who dote on them. Be it mine to lead this great congregation with such a Psalm as this—

***"Before Jehovah's awful Throne,
You nations bow with sacred joy
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and He destroy."***

But the text says, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, *bless His holy name.*" What is meant by blessing His *name*? The name of God is that by which He reveals Himself, so that the God we have to worship is the *Jehovah of Revelation*. Here, again, we fall foul of many. They worship the god of *reason*—the conception of the cultured mind—the god whom they have invented for themselves by their great wisdom. The god whom men find out for themselves is not the true God. I think that this day it is true as in Paul's day, "The world by wisdom knew not God." "Can you, by searching, find God?" As well might you search for the springs of the sea as expect to find God by science !

I often hear people say, "They go from Nature up to Nature's God." It is a very long step—too far for human strength! Stand on the highest Alp and you will perceive that you will never step into Heaven from there. It is far easier to go from Nature's God to Nature and far safer to believe in Him who stoops out of the heavens and reveals Himself to you. However, let me say to all Believers—"Bless His holy name," that is, bless the God who is revealed to us and bless Him as He is revealed to us.

Do not look around you for another god. Begin with the God with whom the Bible begins. Read its first word—"In the beginning God." Begin with the God with whom the New Testament begins in the Gospel of John—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Keep to Revelation. *There* is God's name spelled out in capitals! Believe the inspired Word, for it will never mislead you. O Friends, if I did not believe in the Infallibility of Scripture—the absolute Infallibility of it from cover to cover—I would never enter this pulpit again! If it is left to me to discriminate and to judge how much of this Book is true and how much false, then I must, myself, become Infallible, or what guide do I have?

If my compass always points to the north I know how to use it—but if it veers to other points of the compass, and I am to judge out of my own mind whether it is correct or not—I am as well without the thing as with it. If my Bible is always right, it will lead me right—and as I believe it is so, I shall follow it, God helping me! I will not judge the Book—the Book judges me—

***"This is the Judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail."***

God has revealed Himself in different ways and manners through His Prophets and Apostles, and as such let us bless Him tonight. We rejoice in

Him who, in the Person of the Lord Jesus and in the Scriptures of Truth has graciously unveiled His face. "Bless His holy name."

But then notice that the Psalm dwells especially upon one point. "Bless His *holy* name." Now, a babe in Divine Grace can bless God for His goodness, but only a grown Believer will bless God for His *holiness*. His holiness is an august attribute, an attribute which comprehends all the rest, for it means His wholeness, His perfection, His holiness. It is an attribute which looks darkly on sinful men. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to thunder and lighten against the sinner. But as for those of us who are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, it smiles upon us!

These see holiness resplendent in the great Sacrifice of Calvary, for they perceive how God would not ever pardon sin so as to violate His justice, but in His infinite holiness would sooner die Himself upon the Cross than that His Law should not be vindicated! Saints conspicuously see God's holiness! Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, we worship You! We bless You! Beloved, do you love a holy God? Do you bless a holy God? While you bless Him for His mercy? Do you equally bless Him for His holiness? You bless Him for His bounty, but do you feel that you could not thus bless Him if you were not fully aware that He is perfectly righteous? "Bless His holy name."

Yes, when that holiness burns like fire and threatens to devour the guilty, let us still bless His holy name! When we see His holiness consuming the great Sacrifice we bow before the Lord in deep dread of soul, but we still bless His holy name. An unholy God? It were absurd to think of such a Being! But a thrice-holy God—let us bless and praise Him! When men or women can say, "We love and bless and praise a holy God," there is something of holiness in them! God the Holy Spirit has begun to make you holy—since to appreciate holiness you must yourself be holy! No man can see the beauty of holiness until his eyes have been washed in the river of the Water of Life—and if God has made you pure so that you can praise His holiness—He has given you to be a partaker of His holiness!

So I have put before you in a few words the Truth of God that the one blessed Object of your praise is the God of Abraham—the God of the Old *and* New Testaments—who has revealed His name, the God of perfect holiness. "Bless Jehovah, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

IV. I have done when I add this fourth point. Let us remember THE SUITABLE MONITOR. In the text *a suitable monitor* appears. A Christian man who wants somebody to look after him is a very imperfect Christian man, for he who has the love of God in his soul will look after *himself*. Who is it that says to David, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul"? Why, *it is David talking to David*. The man speaks to himself! Beloved, may my voice be useful to you at this time—but the proof of it will be that from now on your own voice will suffice and you will often give yourself the exhortation—"Bless the Lord, O my Soul."

Some of you go out preaching or you teach a class in a Sunday school. Keep on with that but do not forget to look after one pupil of yours who needs your care very greatly. I mean, look to *yourself* and every now and then say, "My Soul, bless the Lord." Where are you, now? You have been grumbling of late. Wake up and say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul." You have been dull and cold-hearted of late. Chide yourself, for this will not do. If you have this monitor, you will have *one that is always at home*. You will not have to send across the road for a minister. Here is a spiritual chaplain who will be resident with you and always ready with his personal advice.

Will you not try to practice your ministry upon yourself and begin at once to apply to yourself all that you would say to another whom you would excite to bless the Lord? Ought you not to do it? Are you not *afraid of growing cold* in this holy service? "No," you say, "I am not." Then I am afraid that you are cold already! "No," you say, "I am full of life." Will you always be so? Man's security is the devil's opportunity. Whenever you say to yourself, "All is well with me," I fear for you! A foul fiend is watching for your halting and he laughs as he sees how you delude yourself! You are not all you think you are! Stir yourself and praise the Lord!

Practice this praising of God when you are *stimulated by the example of others*. If you hear others praising God, say to yourself, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul." Do not let any man praise God more than you do. When you see your Brothers and Sisters aglow with praising God, do not grovel in the dust and moan, "Our souls can neither fly, nor go to reach eternal joys," but stretch your wings and rise to hallelujahs! Rest not till a gracious example has stimulated you!

But if you happen to be where there is nobody to stimulate you and where everybody goes the other way, *then praise God alone*. Say to yourself, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul. I dwell among lions. But none the less for their roaring, bless the Lord, O my Soul." That will stop the lions' mouths. What if you are in prison, like Paul and Silas? Bless the Lord! Nothing shakes prison walls and breaks jailers' hearts like the praises of the Lord! Here I am where everybody doubts the holy God. Bless the Lord, O my Soul and be all the firmer and all the bolder! If everybody sneers at Divine Truth, bless the Lord, O my Soul. Let all men know that there is one in the world who does not sneer at Revelation! Let opposition be like a strong blast to make the furnace seven times hotter. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul." What have I to do with whether other people bless God or not? I must praise Him all the more if others are dumb before Him!

This, dear Friends, is how it ought to be from me personally. If I do not praise the Lord the stones in the wall will cry out against me—and it will complain of you, also, if you are silent. You owe Him more than many. If all forget, yet you remember. *This is pleasant as well as profitable*. Praise is not medicine—it is meat and drink. It is salutary and it is also sweet. Is any other occupation comparable to blessing the Lord? Is there anything that you can do which surpasses the spending of your life in magnifying the Lord?

If you practice it, it will be profitable to you. It will make you grow in Divine Grace. It will make your burden light. It will make your way to Heaven seem short. It will make you fearlessly face the world. If you have God within your heart and you are blessing His name, you will not mind your outward circumstances. Whether God gives or takes, you will continue to bless Him. This will be useful to you in saving others. A praising heart is a soul-winning heart. If we bless God more we shall bless our neighbors more. A happy Christian attracts others by his joy.

Lastly, *to bless God will prepare us for Heaven*. Praise is the rehearsal of our eternal song. By Grace we learn to sing and in Glory we continue to sing. What will some of you do when you get to Heaven if you go on grumbling all the way? Do not hope to get to Heaven in that style! But now, begin to bless the name of the Lord! I have not spoken thus to all of you. Some of you cannot bless the Lord as yet. Will you try? Think how sad it is to be in a state of mind in which you cannot render acceptable praise. You must be born-again before you can bless the Lord. May the Lord convince you of the necessity that *He* should bless *you* before you can bless Him!

May you receive His blessing in a moment by faith in the Lord Jesus! The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 103*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—174, 146 (FIRST VERSION).**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED READERS—My New Year's wish for you is this—*May the Lord bless you, and may you bless the Lord!* To this end may the sermons ever be helpful! Beginning the 36th Volume, I feel grateful and hopeful. For the past and the future I would bless the Lord—for the one received by experience—for the other grasped by faith. May 1890 be the best year we have ever lived!

Mentone, Dec. 27, 1889.

Yours, for Christ's sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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***“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed
our transgressions from us.”
Psalm 103:12.***

WE shall aim at no novelty tonight, nor shall we try to serve up the old Truths of God in any new and attractive forms. Upon your tables you always require bread and generally you account salt to be indispensable. Some kinds of food are presented to us over and over again and it would foretell ill for our health if they were not always relished. It was an evil lusting which made Israel tire of the manna. An Israelite in his right mind found it to be still a dainty, though he ate of it every day of his 40 years' pilgrimage. Who tires of the verdure of the fields, the light of the sun, or the air we breathe? These things are ever fresh and new, and ever necessary to us. The doctrine of forgiving love is one of those necessities of daily life concerning which it may be affirmed that if we should set them before you every day we should not be guilty of vain repetition.

None need fear of tiring man, or vexing God's Spirit by harping too much on this string. Therefore come we to our favorite theme tonight. To speak of the great Gospel truth of the forgiveness of sin in the simplest manner we possibly can is the purpose we have immediately in view. To babes, to young men and to fathers in Christ, this all-important Truth will be equally precious, while the poor trembling sinner who cannot yet claim to be one of the sacred family may be encouraged by it. Our text has in it a word of peculiarity, and to this I call your attention at the outset. It is not every man in the world that could truly use the language of this verse, for it does not refer to all mankind—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

A people separated and set apart, a people upon whom there has been a peculiar world of Divine power, a people whose experience of the Grace of God towards them has melted their hearts with devout gratitude—such as these can sing this joyous stanza—but none beside. I will describe these people to you. I should gather from the ninth verse that they are a people who have been made truly, deeply, painfully conscious that they are sinful and have felt the chidings of God in their conscience—therefore it is that they say, "He will not always chide." They know that God is angry with sin. They have felt some biting of that wrath upon their spirit and they have been humbled into contrition, repentance and confession—therefore do they now say, "Neither will He keep His anger forever."

They are a people who have keenly realized the desperate condition they were reduced to—who know that if forgiven it must be through mercy—and through mercy only. They know that they have no claim upon God. They understand that they deserve to be cast away from His Presence—therefore they say, “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” They are a people who have tasted of that surprising mercy which baffles all human thought and excites the adoring wonder of all who contemplate this darling attribute of the Most High. They have gone to Jesus, in whom the mercy of God is treasured up. They have believed in Him and they have received mercy through Him, for mercy comes to men through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And having tasted of that mercy, they say, “As the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.” Then they go on to sing, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Oh, priceless gift! Oh, matchless blessing! Say now, out of this vast throng, how many of us have been made to feel that sin is sinful, to loathe it and to confess it with bitterness of heart? How many of us have fled to the great atoning Sacrifice and have believed in Jesus to the saving of our souls? So many may repeat this verse and affirm it of themselves, with truth, but no more. Separate yourselves, then—let the force of conscience now be exercised, and let this text be to you, for a moment, like the Throne of Jesus before which He exercises the prerogatives of His Gospel sovereignty and divides the sinners from the saints, making men either tremble or rejoice.

Our text has a word of positiveness. In this song the Psalmist speaks of the pardon of sin as a positive fact. He celebrates it in grateful strains as a matter of certainty to himself and to others associated with him. David was an optimist of the right sort. Ifs and perhapses would not suit him. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” He does not indulge in fond hopes, or express vague wishes, or point in hesitant tones to some favorable omens—he speaks of his sins being forgiven, knowing it to be a matter of fact which there was no room to question. Now there are many professing Christians who do not think that you ever can know that you are forgiven while you remain in this world. They are not of this mind merely because they are ignorant of the Gospel, but because *their* gospel is beclouded with errors.

Their teachers throw dust into their eyes, or envelope them in mist. They see men as trees walking and no more. They are brought up in orthodox fashion to repeat a mournful litany and to call themselves, “miserable sinners,” in stereotyped phrases. They are taught to go on forever asking for pardon as if they had never received it. They are made to look upon themselves still as needing to be dealt with as lost sheep and reconciled as rebels. Their standing is always at the foot of Sinai. They are not taught that the Lord has forgiven us all our trespasses. Their church, as if to chasten it for its alliance with the State, has lost the jubilant tone of

faith and made its daily service rather a wail for sinners than a song for saints.

Now the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that there is pardon! That we may have it and that when we believe in Jesus, we have obtained full remission—that we are pardoned when we believe in Jesus—and that our iniquities are forgiven us! It is a matter signed, sealed, and delivered! It is a fact accomplished before the Lord and infallibly ascertainable by us. Sin is put away. Though we shall never be in such a condition, here, that we shall not have need to confess daily sin—for new sins will rise—yet, at the same time, the moment we believe in Jesus, no condemnation is upon us, nor ever can be! “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” We are forgiven! Pardon is a fact—a fact most certain in the history of Believers. There is nothing more sure to them than this, that they are certainly forgiven inasmuch as they have believed in Jesus Christ!

I know there are many professed Christians who shrink with morbid apprehension from claiming this great act of God’s love as a benefit which they really enjoy. They venture to *hope* it may be so, but still they dare not speak with confidence of their own pardon. This, to their view, would be presumption. But is it not far more presumptuous to pay so much respect to your *own* misgivings as to totally ignore the blessedness of knowing that you are *forgiven*? Is it not awful presumption to settle down as so many do while their eternal state is a matter of question to them? Do you tell me that you do not know whether you are forgiven? Why, Sir, you are, indeed, in a wretched bewilderment! You do not know if you were to die at this moment whether you would be in Heaven or Hell!

How dare you sit in comfort in that seat? Dare you go to your bed in doubt about whether you are saved or not? How can you sleep? It seems to me to be profane presumption for a man to dare to be at peace till he is sure about his reconciliation to God. The presumption lies in settling on your lees, in resting short of the inheritance and in saying, “Peace, peace” to one’s soul when you know not that you are a saved man! Oh, I beseech you, if you have any doubts do not play with them! Do not trifle with your soul’s affairs! This is a matter about which there should be no doubt whatever! No man would like to have a doubt as to whether there is a thief in the house when he goes to his bed at night. You would not like to be in doubt as to whether a mortal disease is upon you.

You are anxious to be sure of your safety and your health—will you not desire to be as sure about your soul’s safety and the health of your inner nature? Surely you ought to be! But can a man be sure? Yes, assuredly. See right here—the best evidence in all the world is the witness of God, who cannot lie. Any number of men in the world bearing witness to a thing can never be equal to the testimony of God! What He says none may dare to question. God’s witness is much more reliable and has much more

weight in it than the most exact observations and the most delicate inferences that can be drawn from them.

Suppose I can see a thing with my eyes. Men say, "Seeing is believing." Yes, but eyes deceive, as everybody knows. There are many things we think we see which we do not see, after all. Eyes may deceive—God's witness, therefore, is better than the sight of our eyes. "But surely," says one, "feeling will not deceive you." Alas, there is nothing in the world more deceptive as to a man's state than his *feeling*. Those who are worst will often imagine themselves to be best and some of the best of God's children have often felt in their humiliation as though they were the worst. I say, *God's witness* is to be preferred above our feeling, our eyesight, or the witness of men!

What does God say? He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do I believe in Jesus? Have I been obedient to the other part of the command? God says I shall be saved and therefore I shall be, despite all the devices of Satan, despite all the sins I ever have committed or shall commit, despite anything and everything however unlooked for which may occur in time to come—for God's witness must be true! "Let God be true and every man a liar." God says it! "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Have I believed in Him, then? To believe is to trust—have I trusted my soul with Jesus? Yes, yes, I am sure of that. Then I am equally sure that I am not condemned, equally sure that sin is forgiven, because as sure as I possess faith, so sure is it that, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us."

Who wants better evidence than God's Word? O, we may live on it! We may die on it! And we may stand before the Judgment Seat with it as our strong consolation. God has spoken it and His Word cannot be impugned, or His counsel invalidated. But, because we sometimes are troubled and vexed within, there is another assurance which God is pleased to give to His children. Over and above His written Word, He gives them the inward witness. The man who has believed in Jesus feels a deep peace in his soul. "Jesus died for me," he says. "Then if Jesus died in my place, my sin is put away. God will not be so unjust or inconsistent as to punish me for the sin for which He put Christ, my Substitute, to grief. If Jesus suffered in my place, I shall not suffer.

It were not *just*, that two should suffer for the same sin. The Believer, knowing this, finds satisfaction, smells a savor of rest and feels peace. O, what a peace! Believe me, there is nothing like it in this world—it is the peace of God which passes all understanding—a peace like that which rules amid angelic thrones. Then, in the midst of that deep calm the Holy Spirit comes down like the dove brooding over the waters, the calm and quiet waters of the Believer's soul, and bears witness with the man's own spirit that he is born of God. The man's own spirit bears witness in the peace it feels. Then God's Spirit comes and sets a seal and the man knows and is persuaded by the witness of God in the Word—and the living wit-

ness of God in his soul—that as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed his transgressions from him!

Some of us remember the very day and hour wherein our sins were put away and can look back to the date and call it our spiritual birthday. It shall be to us the beginning of days, even as was that day in which Israel came out of Egypt. And others, who have not so distinct a recollection of the time—yet as they look to yonder Cross and see the Incarnate God bleeding on it—feel that their transgressions are blotted out, and as they look they get a renewed assurance of complete absolution. There are some, I know, who think it best always to gaze upon their crucified Lord, as if they had never before looked upon Him. They stand and hug the Cross, kiss those bleeding feet, look up to that dear face bedewed with drops of grief and that dear brow crowned with thorns, and say, “You are my Savior! Dear lover of my soul, I rest in You! Your side riven for me yields me my pardon. Your death is my life. Your life in Heaven is the guarantee of my immortality.”

O happy they who can so stand at the foot of the Cross and always feel that as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed their transgressions! None can sing so heartily and joyfully the high praises of God—

***“Since I have found a Savior’s love,
To Him my hopes are clinging.
I feel so happy all the time
My heart is always singing.
A light I never knew before
Around my path is breaking
And cheerful songs of grateful praise
My raptured soul is making.
I feel like singing all the time,
I have no thought of sadness
When Jesus washed my sins away
He turned my heart to gladness.”***

Now, Brothers and Sisters, as we return to our text, I would have you notice the comprehensiveness of it. I do not find any list of sins here. All I find about sin is contained in these two words, “our transgressions.” I am not skillful in matters of common Law, but I remember hearing a lawyer make this remark about a man’s will, that if he were about to leave all his property to some one person, it would be better not to make a recapitulation of all that he had, but merely to state that he bequeathed all to his legatee, without giving a list of the goods and chattels, because in making out the catalog he would be pretty sure to leave out something and that which he left out might be claimed by someone else. Indeed he gave us an instance of a farmer, who, in recounting the property he left to his wife, intending her to have had all, actually omitted to mention his largest farm and the very house in which they lived. Thus his attempt to be very particular failed, and his wife lost a large part of the property.

We do not want too many particulars, and I am thankful that in this verse there is a broad way of speaking which takes in the whole compass of enumeration. "He has removed our transgressions." That sweeps them away all at once—"our transgressions." If it had said "our *great* transgressions," we should have been crying out, "How about the little ones?" We should have been afraid of perishing by our lesser faults even if the huge crimes were pardoned. Suppose it had said "our transgressions against the Law"? "Oh, but," we would have asked, "What shall we do with our transgressions against the Gospel?" Suppose it had said, "our willful transgressions"? That would have been very gracious. But we would have said, "Ah, but what will become of our sins of ignorance?" Suppose it had said, "our transgressions before we were converted"? Then we should have exclaimed, "Ah, but how shall we escape from our sins *since* our conversion?"

But here it is—"our transgressions"—He has removed them all, all, ALL! From the cradle to the tomb—they are all gone! Sins in private and sins in public! Sins of thought, word, deed—they are all removed! The moment you believe in Jesus they are all, all, all gone! I cannot help giving you a picture I have sketched before, when Miriam the Prophetess, Aaron's sister, with her timbrel in her hand went forth, the women of Israel following her, dancing by the Red Sea. As they looked over the dark waters of that mighty sea, there could not be discovered the crest of a single Egyptian captain. Not one solitary horse straggling for its life, nor a chariot, nor a banner, nor any implement of war. Nor one solitary champion that had borne arms! Therefore she struck the timbrel, and the damsels sounded it out aloud—"The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left—not one! Not one! Not one! Not one of them left!"

I think I hear their song. I think I see their feet twinkling like stars as they dance forth their joy and Jehovah's praise—"There is not one, not one, not one of them left!" Even thus do I look upon Jesus' precious atoning blood and think of all my sins and yours, my Brothers and Sisters, who have believed in Him, and I shout with equal, if not greater joy, "The depths have covered them! There is not one, not one of them left! He has removed our transgressions from us." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Another thing which claims special note in the text is the perfection—the absolute perfection of the pardon. The text says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Can anybody tell how far the east is from the west? You begin to calculate, perhaps, upon the surface of the globe, but I say, "No, not so. The east is farther off than any distance you can travel on this globe. Look to yon sun."

Then you begin to measure within the bounds of the solar system towards the east. But I say, "No. The solar system is but a speck in the universe. I must have larger measurement than that." "We will measure space, then," says one. Space! What do you mean by that? Do you mean

all that has ever been seen by the optic glass of the astronomer when he has gazed at night upon the milky way? Ah, but that is only a corner of boundless space! I must have the *infinite* measured and you shall go that way with your line to the east, and I will go this way with my line to the west—and you shall tell me how far the two are asunder. Why, the interval is boundless! It means an infinite distance!

Now God has taken His people's sins away from them to an infinite distance, that is to say, there is no fear that their sins should ever return to them—they are gone, gone, gone, gone completely! I do not know how it is, but some of our friends of a certain school of theology believe that after men are pardoned they may yet go to Hell. I will never quarrel with them about that doctrine. If it gives them any comfort, they are welcome to it. It does not seem to me worthy of a God, or even of a man! Poor is that pardon which may yet be followed by eternal torment! If God has pardoned His people, surely no fresh proceedings can be opened, no subsequent indictment preferred against them! "Who lays anything to the charge of God's elect?" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

I have heard of the Duke of Alva pardoning a man and then hanging him. But I do not believe God ever trifles, thus, with mercy. If He has pardoned my soul, then I am saved. If He has done it once, He has done it forever. He has removed my transgressions not a little way, but, "as far as the east is from the west." I think that means just this, that the pardon of our sin is so complete that when a man is pardoned he never can be punished for his sin—not in any measure or degree. He becomes a child of God and, as a child, he may be chastened, but he will never have to stand before God as his Judge and be called to account for those sins—for they are not—they do not exist! "Strong language," you say. I say it again, they do not exist, for Jesus Christ has "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

What does that mean? "Made an end of sin"? Why, it means what it says and sin is made an end of! No soul, then, for whom Jesus bled, who has believed in Jesus, being redeemed from sin can ever be punished for his sin before the bar of Divine Justice. Christ has been punished for him and his sins are gone. "But, though not punished for sin, may not a man suffer some disadvantage? If God will not send me to Hell, yet, at any rate, it may be He will not love me so much because I have been a sinner. He will not treat me as if I had never fallen." Yes, but when God wipes out sin, He puts away all the *consequences* of sin. "But do we not feel the consequences in our bodies?" Yes, assuredly, but it is for a season only and for loving reasons. Our mortal bodies are doomed to death and they are full of pain, sometimes, but they shall not always be so. Our bodies shall rise again and there shall be no detriment through sin upon those bodies!

They will be just as glorious as they would have been had God made them perfect in the garden of Eden. Man, they will be even more so, for

they shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus! But upon that I will not stay. At this day God loves us and He will love us forever. He loves us infinitely and He could not love us more than that if we had never fallen. At this time, in Christ Jesus, we are brought near—I will say it—as near as if we had never sinned, yes, and nearer! I do not see how, if we had never sinned, we could have been so near as we now are for, had we never sinned, there would never have been a Mediator and Jesus might never have been, “Immanuel, God with us.” But now we poor sinners have One who is our Brother, who is very God of very God, even Christ, the Son of Mary, and yet the Son of Jehovah!

This is a wonderful nearness which God has given us! We are made His children. We are made to come into His immediate Presence and to taste of His love! Our sins are so effectually removed that we shall not ultimately suffer any loss or damage through having sinned. That detriment was laid on Christ. His was the loss—ours is the gain. His was the tremendous suffering—ours is the unutterable joy—

***“Your blood, not mine, O Christ,
Your blood so freely spilt,
Has blanched my blackest stain
And purged away my guilt.
Your righteousness
My soul does beautify,
Wrapped in that glorious robe
Your Father I draw nigh.”***

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is what the Lord means, also, when He tells us He has put sin away “as far as the east is from the west.” He means that He has forgotten it. Can God forget? Well, we speak of the Nature of God, sometimes, after the manner of men, and rightly so if we adopt those forms of Revelation which have been vouchsafed to us. We rightly regard everything as in His remembrance, because He dwells in all ages and everything is present with Him. And yet if He tells us He forgets we may not venture to disbelieve Him.

But I do not inquire just now what our conceptions of God may be—enough that we should cordially receive what He would have us believe. Here is a text—“Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” That is God’s own assertion. He knows His own memory and He has put it so. Let me repeat those words. They melt my own heart while I speak them, and therefore I hope every child of God will feel the sweetness of them. What inconceivable love! What force, what pathos, what Grace there is in every syllable!—“And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” O, blessings, blessings on His dear name for such a Word as that!

Has He not said, “I have blotted out, like a cloud, your transgressions”? Has He not said, in another place, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool”? That is, they shall vanish as colors fade—they shall disappear

and shall no longer exist. These are glorious Truths of God. I want every child of God to endeavor to realize the fact that at this very moment his sins are gone—effectually, completely, perfectly gone—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Beloved, there is in the text a ray of Divinity full of hope to us—“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” *God* is the great Remover of sin!

There are some who, when they feel the guilt of sin weighing heavily on their conscience, go to a priest and ask him to remove the burden. The theory they act upon is this—that the priest is ordained of God and has received power from the Most High to declare and pronounce absolution in God’s name. They think it too great a thing for God Himself to deal personally with men and, therefore, He employs some ordained person to speak in His name. Now, I have no doubt that there are many persons who get a good deal of comfort from the declaration of the priest that they are forgiven. I cannot understand how they can be so wretchedly duped, but I suppose the manner of administering a sacrament may be so imposing as to stifle any enquiry into the prerogative which the “Father Confessor” pretends to exercise.

And yet I know, on the other hand, that there are some who, after they have obtained that kind of absolution, are not so comfortable as they expected to be. They feel somehow or other as if it did not quite meet the case. Perhaps such a person may have dropped in here. You want to know that your sin is forgiven by a greater authority than the lips of any mortal can impart. O may the Lord Himself put away your sins and your heart will know it and be at rest! To some people these scruples will cause the most agitation just when they looked for the most tranquility—and if they are God’s people and God is working in their hearts, I am sure of this—that 50,000 priests could never give them an assurance that could make them feel true peace or heart’s ease.

They would still be disquieted, still be troubled, even if Bishops and Popes should pronounce them absolved. God’s voice, alone, can still the tempest of their souls. See how the Romanist is pursuing phantoms all the while that he is following the directions of his church and observing her laborious ordinances. He never reaches the goal of peace! He can never be free from anxiety in life or apprehension in death because his church never speaks to him of perfection through the one Sacrifice offered once and for all. And when he dies he does not know where he may go. He conceives himself to be really forgiven, after a sacerdotal fashion, but he is not so divinely pardoned but that he has to go to “purgatory” for a time, to be purged from spots which still remain!

He is never certain where he is with regard to the bar of Divine Justice. His pardon, at the best, is not worth having as a guarantee of Heaven. In most cases the most religious Papist only goes to “purgatory,” a place which certain of their ablest writers say is so cold on one side that they are all frozen like the inhabitants of the arctic regions—and then the vic-

tims are tossed to the other side, which is so extremely hot that it is as though they were being baked alive! So they are tossed about from one side to another till sin is either frozen or dried out of them. This is a fine prospect for good religious Romanists! The statements of Romish theologians as to the purgatorial regions are even more grim and terrible, for in some such imaginary place the remainder of sin is to be put away!

But, Beloved, we have it in the text that God is to remove our transgressions! O what a removal is that! Hands off, you priests! You are too feeble for such weights as ours! Our sins are too stupendous for your puny strength! But the Lord comes with His own right hand of majesty, puts away our sins and lifts them on to Christ—and Christ comes and flings them into His sepulcher and they are gone and buried forever—“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”—

**“He seized our dreadful load, our guilt sustained;
And heaved the mountain from a guilty world.”**

Our transgressions were against the Lord our God—to Him, therefore, belongs the right to pardon them! These transgressions had done dishonor to His Holy Name. He has a right, if He wills, to put them away if He can do so without tarnishing His Glory.

By the Substitution of Jesus, Justice is satisfied and God Himself blots out our sins. And here is the beauty of it—since the Lord has removed our transgressions from us, the thing is done completely and it is done forever and forever! What a man does, he may undo. You know how some men are like children—they will give a thing and take a thing back, and so play fast and loose with you. They will speak well of you today, and say, “Yes, they forgive,” but they cannot forget! They remember again tomorrow, revive their old resentments and, in their anger, call up, again, past grievances. Not so, our God. “I am Jehovah! I change not,” says the Lord, “therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” When God removes transgression, the work is so done that it never shall be undone—certainly not by Himself—and if not by Himself, who, then, can do it? My Brothers and Sisters, what consolations you have since you have believed in Jesus! I pray you, feast upon them and be satisfied to the fullest!

Our text has in it also a touch of personality for each one of us. I has pondering upon this passage the other day and it came to me with a peculiar sweetness—not on account of any of the thoughts I have given you, but on account of this—“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from”—himself [David]? Yes, that is true, but it is “from *us*,” from *us*. And this was what passed through my mind—then my sins are gone away from me, from me! Here am I, fretting that I am not what I should be, and groaning, and crying before God about a thousand things! But, for all that, there is no sin upon me for, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

From ourselves the sins have gone! From us, as well as from His eyes. From His book and from His memory—they have gone from us. “But I committed them,” says one. Ah, that you did. Your sins were yours, yours with a vengeance! It was like that fiery tunic which Hercules put on, which he could not drag from him, let him do what he might, but which ate into his flesh and bones. Such were your sins. You could not tear them off! But God has taken them off, every one of them, if you have believed in Jesus. And where is that tunic of fire now, which would have devoured you forever? Where is it? You shall search for it, but it shall not be found, no, it shall not be, says the Lord. It is gone away from you! I sometimes see Believers troubling themselves as if all their sins were laid up in an iron safe in some part of the Lord’s house. It is not so! It is not so!

They are fretting as though somewhere or other there were a horde of sins in ambush which would accuse them and bear witness against them before God’s bar, and so they would be condemned after all. It is not so! It is not so! They are all gone! They are all gone. Satan may stand and howl for accusers and say, “Come, gather together, and accuse the child of God!” And you yourself may tremblingly fear that they will come and therefore you will put on your filthy garments and come in before God, and stand there like a poor wretched criminal about to be tried. But what does Jesus say when He comes into the court? He says, “Take away his filthy garments from him! What right has he to put them on, for I have taken them away from him long ago by My Substitution? Take them off! Set a fair miter on his head. This is one whom I have loved and cleansed—why does he stand in the place of condemnation when he is not condemned and cannot be condemned, for there is now no condemnation since I have died?”

Ah, we many times go down into the hold of the vessel and there we lie among the baggage. And our doubts and fears fasten down the hatches and there we are—half stifled—when we might as well come up upon the quarter deck and walk there, full of delight and peace! We are moaning and fretting ourselves and all about what does not really exist. I saw two men, yesterday, handcuffed and marched to the carriage to be taken off to prison. They could not move their wrists. But, suppose I had walked behind them, with my wrists close together and had never opened my hands, nor stirred them, and said, “Alas! I committed, years ago, some wrong, and have handcuffs put upon me”? You would naturally say, “Well, but are they not taken off?” And I reply, “Yes, I have heard they are, but somehow, through habit, I go about as if I had them on.”

Would not everybody say of me, “Why, that man must be insane!”? Now you, child of God, once had the handcuffs on—your sins were upon you—but Jesus Christ took them off. When you believed in Him, He broke all your fetters and now they are not there. Why do you go about trembling and saying, “I fear!—I am afraid!” What do you fear, O Man? What do you fear? Are you a Believer and afraid of your old sins? You are afraid of foes

which do not exist! Your sins are so gone that they cannot be laid to your charge. Do you not believe this? Can you not rise to something like the true estimate of your position? You are not only pardoned, but you are a child of God! Go to your Father with joy and thankfulness and bless Him for all His love to you. Wipe those tears away, smooth those wrinkles from your brow—take up the song of joy and gladness and say with the Apostle Paul—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Be glad in the Lord, you pardoned ones!—

***“Shout, Believer, to your God!
He has once the winepress trod.
Peace procured by blood Divine,
Cancell’d all your sins and mine.
In your Surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for you.
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.
Oh the heights and depths of Grace!
Shining with meridian blaze;
Here the saved records show
Sinners black but comely too.”***

As for you who have never received that pardon, does not the mention of it make you long for it, cry for it and beg for it? O that you would, above all, believe for it—for it is to be had by you. The guiltiest of the guilty shall have forgiveness if they believe in Jesus! Whoever among you will trust in the crucified Savior shall be pardoned this night! The moment you trust Him you shall have a full acquittal for all your sins and crimes. Yes, all transgressions, and you shall sing, as our poet Kent does—

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

God be praised! Let His Word be believed! Let His name be trusted and then He shall be praised! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 103.

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GOD'S FATHERLY PITY

NO. 1650

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 2, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.”
Psalm 103:13.***

IN the former part of this Psalm, the Psalmist sang of God's deeds of love, His gifts, His benefits and His acts of kindness. But here he goes deeper into the Divine motive and, therefore, he finds sweeter incentives to devout *gratitude*. There is a fullness of consolation in the fact that the heart of God is towards His people. He not only dispenses blessings—so does the sun, so do the clouds, so do the fruitful fields—but He takes a warm interest in our welfare and has a feeling towards us of kindly, gentle affection. And that of such intensity that one of the highest forms of earthly love is here used as a figure to set forth the tender mercy of our God towards us. I have always been taught as an axiom in theology that God has no griefs—that He is “without parts or passions”—I think was the definition. But I have often inwardly objected to such statements. They seemed to me so inconsistent with the tone and tenor of Scripture, for He appears to take pleasure in His people and to be “grieved” with their ill manners.

Surely, metaphors that are Inspired must have a meaning that is instructive! If the Father's “heart yearns.” If our Lord and Savior is “moved with compassion.” And if the Holy Spirit is “vexed,” there must be something analogous to what we call emotion, among ourselves, in the acknowledged attributes of the Most High! At least He appears to sympathize with us, so that “in all our afflictions He is afflicted,” and He pities us, “as a father pities his children.” “That is speaking after the manner of men,” somebody says. True. And it is exactly the way I *do* speak. In no other way do I know how to speak! And until I learn to speak after the manner of angels, you must pardon me and accept an apology—not only for my own ignorance of any other tongue than that in which I was born—but also for the incapacity of my hearers to understand any other than human language.

Neither do I *know* anything, so limited is my intelligence, except after the manner of men. It seems to me that if there is any other manner or means of communicating thoughts and emotions, it must belong to some other being than man. And if it is correct to speak after the manner of

men, then be it understood I do speak after that manner, and I am perfectly satisfied that I am able so to speak the truth as shall give a faithful and adequate impression to your minds. There is a feeling which has a measure of pain in it, familiarly known to us as, "pity." It is a love which so sympathizes with its objects that, in a manner, it makes itself one with them—and if it should involve suffering, pity shares the pang. If there is any kind of grief in the one that is pitied, he that pities becomes a partaker of that grief.

I believe in a God who can feel. As to Baal and the gods of the heathen, they may be passionless and without emotion, or without anything that is akin to feeling. Not so do I find Jehovah to be described. How did His anger kindle when He gave His people over to the sword and was angry with His inheritance! And how transporting is His love to the daughter of Zion when He rejoices over her with joy! He has a pity, yes, and a sorrow, too, according to this Book. I dismiss, therefore, the theology of the schoolmen—I am quite satisfied with the Divinity that I find in these Scriptures! Believe it then, dear Friends, with all your hearts, that God has kindly feelings towards them that fear Him, such as a father has towards his children!

This is a Truth of God of which I feel jealous and I do not wish to see it toned down. There is a sentiment abroad that sounds plausible and is accepted by many Christian people, that God puts us to much sorrow, wisely and for our good, while His own heart is unaffected or callous to our suffering because He foresees, according to His own purpose, the good that will come out of it. Some kind of analogy might, in that case, be suggested between our gracious God and a skillful surgeon, who cuts and cuts deeply, when he would remove a cancer from the flesh. Or a physician who administers potent drafts of medicine, which, perhaps, cause excruciating pain. The surgeon would be too intent on the success of his operation, or the physician would watch with too much anxiety, the effect of his prescription on the patient to bestow much thought or sympathy on those present sufferings which he confidently anticipates will effect a permanent cure.

So he calmly looks on, intent upon the result in the future, as he ignores, to some extent, the anguish of the passing hour. But I pray you not to think that it is exactly so with God. Of course, in a higher scale, He has all the wisdom of the physician and He views our afflictions that we now endure in the light of that hereafter when He will heal all our diseases, give unto us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Still, He does not steel His heart to the immediate and the present trouble of His people, but, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

I can understand the surgeon looking at the patient, while causing him acute pain under the operation, with the bravery of a man whose nerves cannot easily be shaken. But the father must leave the room! He cannot bear it. The mother cannot look on—they are carried away with the immediate grief. And so it is with God, albeit that the splendor of His wisdom and His foreknowledge enable Him to see the end as well as the beginning, yet, believe me, like as a father is pitying his children, so the Lord is pitying them that fear Him! For it is in the present tense and carries the idea of continuity—at this very moment He is pitying them that fear Him! Though He knows your trials will work for your good, yet He pities you! Though He knows that there is sin in you, which, perhaps, may require this rough discipline before you are sanctified, yet He pities you!

Though He can hear the music of Heaven—the songs and glees that will ultimately come of your present sighs and grief—yet He still pities those groans and wails of yours, for, “He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” In all our distresses and present grief, He takes His share. He pities us as a father pities his children. Let us look at the text, then, believing in its meaning and not frittering it away by saying, “That is after the manner of men.” For again, I say, there is no other manner in which we can speak and no other manner in which God, Himself, can speak if He means us to understand Him.

There is, doubtless, some high and vast meaning which, like the covering cherub, stands high over all, but, for all that, I am but a child and cannot reach it. I am content with what I *can* reach; satisfied with what is *obviously* the meaning of this text, “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Hear it, dear Friends, first, for your encouragement, and hear it, next, for your imitation. Hear it that you may be encouraged! God is not unfeelingly afflicting you, but He is pitying you! Hear it that you may be impelled to go into the world with a like pitying eye. If you ever have to say a rough word in fidelity, or are required to utter a stern rebuke, do it after the manner of your heavenly Father, pitying even if you have to blame, and gently delivering the expostulation which it grieves you to have to deliver at all!

I am not, tonight, able to preach to you much by way of set discourse, for I am one of those children, just now, who needs his Father's pity! I half think He would have bade me go home and not speak to you at all, had it not been that the sight of this assembly stirs my spirit and makes it imperative that when you come together to hear, I should have something to say to you—therefore, as best I can, I shall simply call attention to some things in our condition and our circumstances which make us resemble children towards whom God has pity. Will you please observe, on the outset, that the pity of the Lord extends to all those that *fear* Him. There are

none of them that are not fit objects of His compassion—the very best and brightest of His saints, the brave heroes, the well-instructed fathers, the diligent workers—God pities you, my dear Brothers and Sisters! Will you take that home to yourselves because there is a beautiful lesson of humility in so accounting ourselves as pitiable creatures in the eyes of the Lord—even when we are at our best estate.

I have seen some Brothers and Sisters that really did not seem at all good subjects for pity because they imagined that the very roots of sin had been eradicated out of their hearts. Their character and their conduct were akin to perfection in their own esteem. I forget how many weeks they had lived without a sin except they had some wandering thoughts, once or twice—but they could hardly remember or refer to *that* as a fault! Yes, but I venture to say I pity people that talk so! If they are God's children, all that God does with them is pity them and well He may, for He says to Himself, "Poor dear creatures! How little they know of themselves and how different their estimate of perfection is from Mine!" He still pities them, but that is as far that He goes. I do not find Him admiring them or exalting and extolling them. The biggest child He has, the child that is most like His Father and has learned most of Jesus, may come to this text and see himself depicted in it, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

As for us who are not so big and are still among His little children, I am sure the Lord, first, pities our childish ignorance. He is not angry with us because we do not know everything. He is not angry with us because the little we *do* know we mostly turn topsy-turvy, upside down. He is not angry with us because what He has taught us we are very apt to forget by reason of our fickle memory. No—He pities us! Schoolmasters of the olden type used to think that the boys must do all the lessons that were given them and learn everything that was contained in their school books. Then they asked them questions which, if the pupils could answer, there would be no need for any teachers. But if the boys did not know the answers, there was nothing for them but a fierce word and a hard blow!

That is *not* how fathers teach—true fathers—but when their children do not know, they tell them. If they cannot quite understand them, they watch their faces and they put the thing into another shape. And if the child has not got it then, they try again and, at last, they find the keyhole of the child's understanding and put the key in! And straightway the mind is opened and the truth, like a precious treasure, is stowed therein! A father does not act like a schoolmaster, but he pities his children and he is willing, patiently, to teach them. Does the father expect his child to know as much as himself? Does the politician expect the little boy to understand the secrets of the Cabinet? Does the tradesman expect his child to

come into his shop and perceive the intricacies of his business? Certainly not!

And when the child makes many mistakes, at which others laugh and mock and make some bitter jest till the tears rise in his tender eyes and roll down his little cheeks, the father feels the affront and pities his child. He, too, smiles at the strange things—the freaks of the child's mind—yet there is not an atom of scorn in that smile! He loves him too much to ever think of him in that way and he goes on to teach him more. "Why did you tell your child that piece of information 20 times?" asks one. "Why," said the mother, "I told him 20 times because when I had told him 19 times he did not know it—so I went on to 20 times." And that is how God does with us! He has taught, some of us, 19 times and we do not know it—so He will teach us 20 times, for He pities us.

Oh, if He were to treat us as some lads have been treated at schools—where they dismiss a boy as incorrigible, too dull, too stupid ever to shine—some of us would have been turned away long ago! But He takes us, dull scholars as we are, and He tires not of teaching, as He gently insinuates one Truth after another—not too much at a time—for He says, "You cannot bear them now, though I have many things to say unto you." And so by degrees He does get a little into us. Blessed be His name for that little! It is worth all the world! One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see! I have got that drilled into me. To know Him and to know something of the power of His Resurrection, and something of conformity to His death—these are lessons we are going on to learn with a sweet prospect of being taught yet more and more! And we need never fear of being dismissed because of our dullness, for, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

Let us take a word of admonition from this instance of pity before we go any further. Do not let us think that we have not the privileges of children because we do not know as much as more experienced saints, or because we cannot engage in the devotion at Prayer Meetings, or conduct a Bible class, or, perhaps, can hardly understand the creed of the Church well enough to give a clear account of it! Do not let us think our heavenly Father does not love us; that He will refrain from keeping His eyes upon us, or cease to watch our growth in Grace and in the knowledge of Christ until He shall have more fully instructed us. Do not let us begin to condemn those of God's children that do not know as much as we do. We have not got far ourselves.

Still, there is a tendency in some to say, "Why, this cannot be genuine Grace, for it is accompanied with such little knowledge." Well, now, if that suspicion shall lead you to give more instruction, it is well! But if it shall lead you to set aside the uninstructed one, it is evil. In the Church of God

it behooves us to have the same pity on the ignorant as our heavenly Father has shown towards us in *our* ignorance—and we ought to have even more, seeing He has no ignorance of His own and we have much! Let us, therefore, be very compassionate and exceedingly pitiful towards those of our Brothers and Sisters who as yet know but little.

Another thing in which our heavenly Father shows Himself pitiful to us is in our weakness. Children cannot do much; they have but little strength, especially little children too young, too helpless to run alone. The mother does not despise—she rather dotes on the babe whose little body is a burden she has to carry because it cannot walk. Her heart is not hardened against her infant because the wee baby is unable to help itself! Our heavenly Father knows our weaknesses! Some of you know something of your own lack of strength. You are bowed down under a sense of your infirmity tonight. Now, do not let your weakness lead you into any unbelief or mistrust of God. He knows our frame—He remembers that we are but dust. An infant's incapacity never excites a parent's ire. You, being evil, know how to be tender with your offspring—how much more shall the Father of Spirits sympathize with such weakness as He knows we are all prone to experience!

Possibly the weakness that distracts you comes from languor of body. I have been, sometimes, so sorely sick as scarcely able to pray, that is to say, not to express my desires in a consecutive prayer. And I remember one who said to me, "I appeal to you, as a father, were your child suffering from a fever, his mind wandering and his speech delirious, would you reproach him because he did not address you just as he has been accustomed to do when he was in health?" I felt I should have rather commiserated his sickness than complained of his frenzy. Neither will our heavenly Father deviate from the instincts that He has implanted in the nature of His creatures! He has revealed to us as an illustration of His own emotions toward those that fear Him!

If you who have been accustomed to guide your class in their studies, cannot find anything instructive to teach them. Or if you are a minister and it should seem to you that the tide runs out when you looked for your thoughts to flow freely—and that the words fall frozen when you hoped they would fire volleys from your lips—there may be some rational solution for your languor. If there is any wrong in your heart or in your habits, you may well blame yourselves! But if it is pure *weakness*—whether it comes from the body or from the mind that you are weary, disorganized, depressed and bowed down—do not think of aggravating your distress by self-reproach, but hear the text say, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."

Some of our Brethren seem to think we are made of cast iron. They would have us preach all day and all night long. At times they are so thoughtless as to make use of very bitter language when some servant of Christ cannot, through physical or mental weakness, do all they want of him. "So-and-So does it," they say. A man in perfect health and strength may joyfully accomplish what another man cannot even think of undertaking. So are God's servants misjudged by the sterner sort. But they are not misjudged by God, for He pities the weakness of His people and blames them not! I wish I could speak a word that would be encouraging to any here that would go about Christ's service if they could, but cannot.

I remember John Bunyan's little picture of the man that is sent for the doctor and he has to go on a horse. He has to go as quickly as he can, but the horse is a sorry jade and cannot go very fast. "Oh," he says, "look at the man, how he kicks, how he tugs at the bridle and his Master knows he would go if the horse would only carry him." Under such circumstances the messenger could not, surely, be to blame! So sometimes God sees the efforts of His servants to work for Him. Why, they would drive the Church before them and pull the world behind them if they could! And if they do not seem to be able to do it, does He blame them? No, verily, but He pities the weakness of them that fear Him! We will go a step further now. In children there is something much worse than ignorance and weakness—and that is their childish follies. There are some persons who have a great affection for children and find great pleasure in being with them by the days together.

I confess I find a larger portion of pleasure when they are out of the way. Perhaps it is because I need quiet and stillness that I am better able to bear with them a little at a time. But there are persons who seem to take a delight in all their childish pranks and game, and all their romps and frolic. Well, that is good, and I hope you will have plenty of it, you that like it. But the father is the one who can bear with his children when other people cannot. I have occasionally been in houses where I have felt that I was glad the father could bear with them, for I did not feel inclined to be very patient with their play, myself, however proper I may think it for young people to be lively! And you know a father and mother will put up with a thousand little things in their children that strangers would frown at.

Those dear, kind mothers, with a little tribe about them—they do not seem wearied and worn out! And if anybody says, "Oh, look what he is doing." "Ah, well," says the mother, "he is only a boy." "Oh, but see that girl." "Oh, well, she is so young, she must have her little frolics." There are all sorts of excuses made on their behalf and it is right enough that it should be so. It is not weakness in the child, it is just childishness. And when we

were children, we did the same, and others bore with us—and so parents bear with their children. But oh, how God our Father bears with us! We think we are very wise—it is highly probable that we are never such fools as when we think we are displaying our wisdom! We think we are pleasing God, sometimes, and in that very act we are displeasing Him, though we know it not! There are sins in our holy things—oh, how strange must some of the things that we do seem to our great God! We have gotten so accustomed to them! We have seen them in others. We have come to put up with them in others and others put up with them in us!

Now, we who talk, sometimes, about our doubts and fears, why, there must be much in them that must be very depressing to the mind of the great Father. Do we doubt Him? Do we distrust His promises? We try to make out that we do not, but if you sift it thoroughly, it does come to that! Oh, the Father knows that we do not mean it; that we shrink in a moment from the idea of making Him to be a liar! And if anybody else were to put forward the very doubt which we have been entertaining, we should be horrified with it! And I believe it is a great part of our heavenly Father's pity that He should thus look on us and often construe what we do in such a kind and tender way. You know how Jesus prayed for His murderers—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And the Son is very like the Father—our Father does the same with us—He forgives us because we "know not what we do."

It was very beautiful of our Lord, even with Pilate, to say, "He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin." It was the best He could say for Pilate, that though his sin was great, yet there was a greater. And our Father has all those kind thoughts ready, we may be sure, for His children's wild and wayward deeds. Jesus had them ready, even, for His most fierce and wicked adversaries. Yes, He pities our follies and still bears with us! But children have something worse than follies—they have faults to be forgiven. Now, our Father pities the faults of His children and He shows His pity by this fact—that He has provided for their cleansing and He freely gives them the use of that provision—and readily forgives them their iniquities.

A good child, when it has done wrong, is never satisfied until it gets to the father and says so, and asks the father's forgiveness. Some fathers, perhaps, think it wise to withhold the forgiving word for a little time and so may our great Father. But as a rule is it not wonderful how readily He forgives? He does, for a little time, perhaps, make us smart under the sin, for our good, but it is not often. As a rule, the kiss is on our cheek almost before the confession has left our lips! Oh, have we not gone to Him and we have thought, "He will chasten me for this. I may expect to be put in the dark and to be without communion with Him for many days." But we

have just ingenuously opened up our heart and told Him that we grieved—and asked Him to make us even more grieved that we might hate the fault—and never fall into it again. And almost at once He has said, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities; go and sin no more.”

Do you not think that Peter ought to have been thrown out of the Church a good long while after denying his Master with oaths and cursing? Well, perhaps he would have if *we* had been consulted in the matter, but when Jesus Christ was here on earth, by a kind look or a gentle word He could set very crooked things straight! So we see Peter in company with John and the rest of the Brothers within two or three days of his committing that serious trespass. The Lord is very ready to forgive—it is the *Church* that is unmerciful, sometimes, but not the Master—He is always willing to receive us when we come to Him and to blot out our transgression. Come along, then, you that have erred and gone astray, you backsliders that are sensible of sin—you, His children that did walk in the light but a few days ago, and have got into the dark by some sad slip—come along!

You are very ready to forgive *your* children, are you not? Do you not remember, you that are too old to have them about the house, how readily, in your younger days, you picked up your little ones in your arms and said—“Dear Child, do not cry any more, you must not do it again, but father fully forgives you this time”? Just so does your heavenly Father wait to pick you up and to press you to His bosom and say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Not, “with a love that can soon be set aside by your fault.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, I will blot out, again, your transgression—and set your feet on a rock and strengthen you to sin no more.” Oh, it is a sweet, sweet thought—our Father pities us in our faults!

Go a step further. A father's pity tenderly lifts up those that fall. When your child falls down, as children are very apt to do, especially when they first begin to walk, do you not pity them? Is there a nasty cut across the knee? It cries and the mother takes it up in her arms, directly. And look, she has some sponge and water to take the grit out of the wound! And she gives a kiss and makes it well. I know mothers have wondrous healing lips! And sometimes, when God's servants do *really* fall, it is very lamentable. It is very sad and it is well that they should cry. It were a pity that they should be willing to lie in the mire! But when they are up again and begin crying, and the wound bleeds—well, let them not keep away from God, “For as a father pities his fallen children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Have you come in here tonight with that cut knee of yours? I am sorry you should have fallen, but I am glad that our blessed

Master is still willing to receive you! Come and trust in Him who is mighty to save, just as you did at first, and begin, again, tonight! Come along! Some of us have had many times to begin again. Do the same! If you are not a saint, you are a sinner—and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Put your trust in Him and you shall find restoration and, maybe, through that very fall you shall learn to be more careful—and from now on you shall walk more uprightly to His honor and Glory!

But how the pity of a father comes out to a child in the matter of pain! With what exquisite tenderness a child's pains are soothed by a parent! It is very hard to stand by the bedside and see a dear child suffer. Have not some of you felt that you would gladly take your children's pains if they might be restored? You have one dear one at home now, the tears are in your eyes as I mention it—a life of suffering she has. Well, it may be others of you have children who have mental troubles—the body is healthy, but the little one has a fret and a worry. I hope you sometimes have seen your children weeping on account of sin—it is a blessed grief, and the sooner it comes, the better. In such a grief as that, as, indeed, in all others, I am quite sure you pity your children. So does your Father pity you! Broken heart, God's heart is longing to heal you! Weeping, weeping for your transgressions, the Father longs to clasp you to His bosom.

Tried child of God, you that are often despondent and always ailing, God would not send this to you if there were not a necessity for it! And in sending it, He shares it as far as this text goes—and it goes blessedly far, for He pities you! Sometimes hard-hearted persons do not pity those that suffer and some forms of suffering do not awaken sympathy. But all the sufferings of God's people touch the heart of Jesus and sympathy comes to them at once. I know some of you say, "I am quite alone in the world and I have much sorrow." Please revise that hard saying! You are like your Master, of whom it is written that He said, "You shall leave Me alone: yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Your Father is with you!

I wish you had some Christian friend to speak with you as a companion, but in the absence of such a social confidant, there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother! And there is One above who is a Father to you. Oh, believe it, there is no poverty, there is no reproach, there is no sorrow of heart, there is no pain of body in this world among them that fear God, but what the Lord sees it and knows all about it, and has a pity to them that endure it! Still passing on, our children have our pity when anybody has wronged them. I have heard say that there are some men that you might insult, almost with impunity, and should you even give them a blow they would stop to ask the reason before showing any resentment. *But*, if you put a hand on their *children*, you shall see the fa-

ther's blood come up into his face and the most patient man will, all of a sudden, become the most passionate!

There was a livid blue mark where you struck the child and the father looks as though he could forgive you if that were on his own body—but on his child? No, that he cannot endure! He turns it over and over and he cannot resist his indignation, that his child should be wantonly made to suffer! The wrongs of children call loudly for redress in the ears of every sensitive man or woman, but they are sure to awake a thrilling echo in a father's heart. "And shall not God revenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" I tell you that He will avenge them speedily, though He bears long with the adversary.

That cry of Milton's—when he prayed God to avenge God's elect among the valleys of Piedmont for all the accursed persecutions of the Church of Rome—was certainly heard and answered! Look at Spain to this day—degraded among the nations because she was chief in the army of inquisitors and crushed out the Word of God from her midst. She cannot rise, the blood of saints is on her! And other nations, too, that have shed the blood of the righteous like water, have had to smart for it. That revolution in France, when blood flowed at the guillotine, was God's reply to St. Bartholomew, for He remembered it and took vengeance for His saints! And so He will till the end of the world shall come! There is no wrong done to His people but it is registered in God's archives. "He that touches you touches the apple of My eye." Christ seemed to sit still in Heaven till He saw the blood of His saints shed. And then He stood up as in indignation when they stoned Stephen. You remember how He cries, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" It was Jesus that suffered, though His saints were made to die. Leave, then, your wrongs with God. "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord," and let your reply be always gentleness and kindness towards those who hate you for righteousness' sake.

And now, once more, the father will pity his children so as not only to set right their wrongs, but to remove his children's dreads. There are some people in the world that seem to take delight in frightening children with old bogey stories so that they hardly dare go out at night. But a kind father, if he finds his child frightened so, explains it all to him—he does not like to see him blanched with fear or haunted with terror. It may be that some here present are suffering, just now, because they are sorely afraid. Are any of you under a dread of some boding evil, as though the dark shadow of a calamity you cannot define were flitting before your eyes? Be sure of this—your heavenly Father pities you!

There are some of our hymns that always speak of death as associated with pains and groans and agonizing strife. Very much of that is old bogey—

***“Imagination’s fool and error’s wretch,
Man makes a death which Nature never made!
Then on the point of his own fancy falls,
And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one.”***

How many of God’s people have we seen die without pains or groans or dying strife! I remember one who used to be, all her life, subject to fear of death. She retired as usual to bed one night and when they went to call her in the morning, there she lay with a sweet smile upon her face—she had gone to Heaven in her sleep—it was evident she never knew anything at all about it. Are God’s people, by their observation of other saints, driven to conclude that death is always the terrible thing the world says it is? I think not!

There may be some whom God puts to bed in the dark, as we sometimes do our children, but usually He takes the candle with Him and sits and talks with His child till he falls asleep. And when he wakes up, there he is among the angels! God kisses the souls of His saints out of the bodies—

***“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks—
We scarcely can say, ‘they’re gone!’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne.”***

Go to your heavenly Father and tell Him you are frightened and He has ways of taking away these fears, for though they may be ridiculous to some, a child’s dreads are never too frivolous for the sympathy of a loving father! He meets them as if there were some great reality in them and so sets them aside. Whatever your needs, your woes, your griefs, fly away to your great Father’s Mercy Seat and spread them there and He will give you comfort! Believe, from this night forward, that God pities all them that fear Him and whatever He sees of weakness in their nature and of sorrow in their lot He will help them. So may you find it now and evermore, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S PITY

NO. 2639

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY SEPTEMBER 10, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN 1857.

“Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.”
Psalm 103:13.

WHAT a blow this is for our pride! Then God's children are pitiable objects, notwithstanding that He has crowned them with glory and honor, has given them perfection in Christ Jesus, has breathed into them the breath of spiritual life, has set their feet upon a rock and established their goings—yet they are and they always will be, so long as they are here below—pitiable objects! It is like tolling the death-knell of all our pride to talk about God pitying us! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, we shed our pity profusely upon the ungodly—we are often pitying the wicked, the profane, the blasphemer and Sabbath-breaker—but here we find God pitying us! Even David, the mighty Psalmist, is pitied! A Prophet, a priest, a king—each of these shall have pity from God, for, “He pities them that fear Him,” and finds good reasons for pitying them, however high their station, however holy their character, or however happy their position! We are pitiable beings! Oh, boast not, Believer! Be not loud in praise of yourself! Put your finger on your lips and be silent when you hear that God pities you! The next time carnal security would creep in, or fleshly conceit would get the upper hand of you, remember that while you are boasting, God is pitying—and while you are triumphing, He is looking down upon you with pitying eyes of compassion, for He finds reason for compassion when you can only see cause for glorying!

Our subject then, Beloved, will be a review—a review of our lives—if we are the Lord's children and fear Him. I hope it will be profitable to us. It will not be profitable through the newness of the thoughts, but rather by “stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance,” to look back upon all the ways whereby the Lord your God has led you. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” First of all, notice the displays of *this pity*. Then, *the spirit of this pity*. And then, lastly, *note the objects of this pity*.

I. Notice THE DISPLAY OF THIS PITY. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” When does a father display pity towards his child? I answer—on many and divers occasions.

Sometimes, *the father's pity is bestowed upon the child's ignorance*. He, himself, knows a thing which is, to his child, a profound mystery. He knows a certain truth which is, to him, an axiom and an element of his

knowledge. But to his child it seems like the apex of the pyramid of knowledge—he wonders how he can ever attain to so high a pitch of learning! And, oh, how foolish are the child's surmises! How long he is guessing at truth and how mistaken are the axioms which he founds upon his mistakes of thought! And how the father pities the child if he falls among bad companions who teach him errors, who, instead of filling his mind with truth, fill it with lies! When he comes to his father with all those strange stories, with which wicked men have filled his little ears, the father pities him that he should be so ignorant as to be carried away by every wind of tattling—that he should receive every talker into his confidence and believe everything because man has said it, taking every man's opinion and believing what any man declares to be right!

So, when, in the plentitude of our supposed wisdom, we think ourselves infallible, God looks down on our wisdom as being childish folly! When, in the glory of our wondrous eloquence, we talk great things, God looks down upon us as upon the prattler, who talks fast, but talks foolishly. And, often, when we come before our fellows and spread before them wondrous discoveries that we have made, He that sits in the heavens does not laugh in derision, but He smiles in compassion that we should think ourselves so wise in having discovered nothing, and so supremely learned in having found out untruths!

And how God must pity His dear family when He finds them led astray by false doctrine and error! How many there are of God's people who go up to houses of prayer, so-called, where, instead of hearing the Truths of the Kingdom of Heaven, they are taught all kinds of strange things—where they hear “another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble them.” Where all the isms and fancies of man are preached, instead of the Truth of God, in all its discrimination, in all its power, in all its constancy and everlastingness and the power of its application to the soul by the Spirit of God. How God pities some of His children who are thus led astray! One of them, perhaps, says of their minister, “Is he not intellectual? Is he not a wonderful minister? Though he said nothing about Jesus Christ, today, yet it was such a clever discourse! It is true, he did not preach God's Gospel, but, then, see how beautifully he cleared up that point of metaphysics! It is quite certain that he did not lead me to hold more fellowship with my Redeemer, but then how excellent was that distinction which he drew between those two similar terms which he employed!”

Another says, “I never heard a man so clever as my minister! I will not go and hear any of those vulgar preachers who talk to their hearers in a way that servant girls and mechanics can understand. I like to hear my minister, for he is so profoundly wise, that I do not believe there are many people in the chapel beside myself who can appreciate him! I will still go and hear him, dear man, though he does puzzle me, sometimes, so that I do not know what on earth he is talking about, and when he has finished his discourse, it has been such a perplexing one, that I have lost my way, and said, ‘Dear me, the time is gone and I wonder what the sermon has been all about!’”

God pities His children when they are in this position. He does not pity them when they hear His Truth—when they have real Gospel fare, however roughly the meat may be carved, and however it may be served up on the coarsest platter that human speech can supply. He pities them not when they get such spiritual food as that—but He does pity them when they are misguided, when they are carried away by “philosophy, falsely so called,” being misled by the seeming wisdom of man which, after all, is but folly, having nothing of wisdom in it—the highest wisdom being that of believing what God has said, receiving God’s Truth simply as God’s Truth and asking no questions about it. God pities His children, however, in all their ignorance. He is not angry with them, nor does He speak sharply to them, but He leads them on by His Spirit until they understand His Truth and receive His Word.

It were well, however, if there were nothing else but ignorance to bear with, but the parent often has something worse than that to suffer from his child—he has to endure *the disobedience and waywardness of human nature*. There is the continual uprising of evil passions, the perpetual proneness to disobedience, the frequent wandering from the path of righteousness and, oftentimes, the father has to pass that by with, perhaps, just a little admonition, but without a frown, without a sharp word, without a blow—he has to say, “My Child, it is all forgiven you”—and though his temper may be sorely tried, yet he has patience with his child, for he pities the child’s disobedience. He knows, too, that he was once a child, himself, and then he did the same as his child is now doing and, therefore, does he have patience with his child and he pities him. My Brothers and Sisters, what pity has the Lord had upon you and me, in all our wanderings! How often have we gone astray and yet, compared with our wanderings, how seldom have we been chastised! How frequently have we broken His Commandments and rebelled against His Covenant and yet how light have been the strokes of chastisement, compared with the weight of our guilt, and how seldom has He afflicted us, compared with the frequency of our transgressions! How has He had patience with all our shortcomings and has bid His hand be still, when, if it had been like ours, it would have risen in hot anger to smite us to the dust! Truly, He has pitied us, “like as a father pities his children,” only with a far greater patience! Even as He is, Himself, infinitely greater than all earthly fathers, so has His pity been more continuous, more patient and more long-suffering than the pity of any human parent who has ever breathed.

And as a father pities his child, not only in all his disobedience, but *in all his actual transgressions and downright sin*—when he grows from the mere wish to do evil up to the actual commission of the crime—like as a father still pities his child, even when his follies have ripened into the worst of guilt, so has God pitied us, my Brothers and Sisters, when we have gone into gross sin before our conversion. Yes, and some of us even after it! When we have gone astray like lost sheep, have broken the hedges of His commands, and have gone rambling over the dark hills of transgression, still has He had pity upon us. It is amazing how far a father’s pity will go towards his child, even when he has transgressed ever

so much. There are some who have shut the door in their children's face and bid them never enter their house again, nor come near them. They have ceased to speak of them, for they have determined that they would never take their names on their lips again, nor consider them their children.

But such fathers are, I trust, very few in number. It is rarely that we meet with them. A father usually endures much, and endures long. After he has had the peace of his home destroyed and his gray hairs almost brought with sorrow to the tomb. After his family has been made a wreck and he has lost almost everything he had, by the profligacy of his son—still his love, tenacious to the last, holds to his boy and will not let him go. And even when others speak harshly of him, the old man palliates his son's guilt—perhaps a little foolishly—but if he can find an excuse for him, he does. He will not have it that his son is worse than others and he will allow no man to make his son's guilt appear greater than it is—in fact he will, as far as he can, try to make it seem less.

Our Heavenly Father is not foolishly pitiful, but He is pitiful. Yes, and He is better than that! He is wisely pitiful over the most erring of His children. Our God is no Arminian god—the Arminian's god is a pitiless god to his children. He is represented as being pitiful enough to all the world, but pitiless to his own children, for, according to the teaching of some, when they sin, he cuts them out of the covenant! And if they transgress, he bundles them out of doors, tells them they are not his children any longer and, because of their transgressions, he will have it that they are none of his and shall be damned at last, despite the fact that Christ has died for them, that the Holy Spirit has regenerated them and that they have been justified! He casts them away from his presence and they are to be lost forever! He is a pitiless god, but the god of these people is no relation to our God!

We do not believe in their god, nor do we fear him, nor bow before him. Our God is constant in His affection and merciful towards His children! When they go astray, He pities all their guilt and sin. It is true, He takes the rod in His hand and, sometimes, causes us to weep bitterly by reason of the soreness of His chastisement. He applies the rod to our very soul and brings the iron into our inmost spirit. He makes us smart, and cry, and groan, and sigh, but all He does is in pity because He is determined to save us. He will not let us go unpunished because He pities us for our folly and sin. Just as the physician will not let the man go without his medicine because he pities him in his disease, so God will not let His children go without His chastisement because He pities them in their sin. And mark, too, even that chastisement is one of pity—there is not one twig too many in the rod, nor one stroke over the right number, nor one drop of gall too much—and that drop is none too bitter. The affliction is all measured out and weighed in balances and scales, all given as it should be—no more than what is necessary. God pities His children in all their chastisement and pities them in all their guilt and wanderings—and He will not let them go away from Him altogether, nor will He suffer them to perish, for He pities them still.

God also pities His children *in sickness*. That is a time when a father pities his children very much. It does not say, "Like as a mother pities her children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And I think the reason is not because a mother's pity is less intense, or less affectionate—for it is more so, by far—but because it is sometimes less effectual than the father's. A mother may pity her child, yet she may not be able to preserve it from an enemy. The mother may pity her child when it is sick, but she may be alone in the house and she may not be able to travel far enough to find a physician and, therefore, God has put in, not merely the affection, but the *strength of pity*. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." On the bed of sickness, the strength of pity is proved by Christ upon God's people. He does not stand, as the mother would, to weep over the child, but He does more than that. He does give true compassion, He does sympathize, but, more than that, He heals! He makes the wounded spirit whole. He removes the aching pain from the conscience, binds up the broken heart, makes the weak to be strong and the faint one to rejoice! He gives us the *strength of pity* and some of us can remember that strength of pity when, in our sickness, we lay tossing in our beds, without hardly power to pray—when we said our heart and our flesh had failed us, and we must die. When our brain was racked with discordant thoughts and reason seemed to have left its throne, and blank despair held carnival within our brain, which, for a while, was under the dominion of the Lord of Misrule and revelry was perpetually kept up there. It was then, when we could do nothing, that Jesus came to us, not merely with the faint whispers of compassion, but with the strong voice of healing, bade our fears be still, comforted our aching heart and then made our flesh leap for joy because our spirit, its twin sister which had been broken on the wheel, was delivered from the tormentor and made perfectly whole! Thus the Lord pities His children! He specially pities us in all our sicknesses.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, your Heavenly Father pities you who are His children under all your *manifold trials*, of whatever kind they are, and from whatever quarter they proceed. Thus, when persecuted, you have had His pity—when the jeer and taunt of the ungodly have been cast upon you—and when worse than that has been attempted against you. When you have had to bear the brunt of poverty, you have had God's pity shed upon you. And you have had a pity, too, that was not barely that of words—you have had the pity of help. He has given you your bread in your extremity and made your water sure when the brook was dry. You who have lost your friends and have had to weep over numerous bereavements. You who have mourned over your family who have been swept away, one after another, not once have you been bereaved without the pity of your God! Never once has the clay fallen on the coffin lid, with the sad message, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," without the pity of your God falling on your heart, like gentle dew from Heaven! He has always pitied you in your low estate. He has always been with you in all your varied troubles and has never left you—

"Mid scenes of confusion and creature complaints"—

He has kept by your side and led you all through your journey. And here you can raise your Ebenezer and write the words of our text upon it, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him, and He has pitied me up to this hour!"

Yet once more, sometimes God's people have wrongs and a father pities His children, *if they have wrongs that are unrevenged*. I know a father who sometimes says, "If you strike me, you may strike me again. I will turn the other cheek to you and you may smite me as long as you please. But," says that good man, and he is a man of peace, too—like myself, a thorough man of peace, though a little inconsistent—"strike my children and I will knock you down if I can! I will not have you meddle with them. If you hit me, I will not resist you. You may do what you please with me. But if you smite my children, that I can never endure! I love them so, that I should break through every principle to resent it! So strong is my natural affection for them that though I might conceive myself to be wrong in what I did, I should do it, most certainly!"

Depend upon it, there is nothing that brings a man's wrath up like touching his children! And the same thing is true of God. You may curse Him and He will not be so angry with you as if you touch His children. The prophet Zechariah declared to His ancient people, "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye." If any of you want to know the shortest road to damnation, I will tell you—despise God's little ones! Treat God's people ill and you will damn yourself by express! Remember our Lord's words, "But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

There never was a wrong done to one of God's people that God did not avenge! There has never been an ill deed done towards them yet but He has punished the doer of it. Though He suffered Assyria to break Israel in pieces, yet let Assyria speak, when she rises from her tomb, and tell how terribly God has shivered her with a rod of iron because she vaunted herself against the people of the Most High. Let old Rome testify that on her still rests the blood of the martyrs. Behold, our God has broken her empire in pieces! The Roman emperor has ceased to exist and his gaudy pomp is gone. Yes, and modern Rome, too, has an awful doom yet to come—she, above all other cities—has a fearful future before her. She, that is wrapped in scarlet and sits on the seven hills, the Whore of Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints, shall yet meet the doom foretold in the Revelation. Lo! God has said it! She shall be torn in pieces! She shall be burnt with fire and utterly consumed! God might have forgiven her if it had not been for the blood of the martyrs—but the blood of His children cries out against her and the curse of God rests upon her! The Church of Rome can never again be put in the ranks of Christian churches! God has forgiven other Churches their sins and, despite errors in their doctrine and their practice, He has kept them among the living Churches. But of the Romish Babylon He has said, "She has made her garments red with the gore of My children; she has stained her hands with the blood of the saints; she shall be cut off, once and for all, and be

forever cast away! Come out of her, My people, lest you be partakers of her plagues and share in her fearful doom!" God pities His children! No martyr has died unpitied, nor shall any martyr die unavenged! Springing from their graves, they cry, "Revenge, revenge, upon the apostate church of Rome!" And it shall be had. Lo! The souls of the saints beneath the altar cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Not long shall it be! The sword is being made ready in Heaven. It is furbished and the God that pities them that fear Him shall not let His hands spare, nor His eyes pity, when He comes to avenge Himself upon the church that has dyed its garments with the blood of His elect!

II. And now, dear Friends, leaving that part of the subject, I want you briefly to notice THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S PITY.

There are different sorts of pity. Some I would not have at any price whatever. Did you ever see *the pity of contempt*? Have you not often seen a gentleman watching a poor man doing something or other, and then saying to him, "Poor fellow, I do pity you"? Have you ever seen a very respectable aristocrat who has never heard anything but the most "proper" kind of preaching, turn on his heels and go out of a Chapel door, saying, "Well, I do pity people who can listen to such stuff as that"? We have often seen that pity of contempt. But that is not God's kind of pity! He never pities His people in the way of contempt and a father never so pities his children. Sometimes, when a boy is writing a copy, a stranger goes through the school and says, "Well, he is an ignoramus," and he pities him, perhaps—but there is a sneer with his pity. But the lad's father comes into the room. The boy has just got into pot-hooks and hangers and the father thinks he makes them very well for such a little boy. He pities him, perhaps, that he is not able to write better, but there is no contempt with his pity. Nor is there any contempt with God's pity—He sees what we are and pities us—but there is not a solitary grain of contempt for any of His people in His pity.

Other people's pity is *the pity of inaction*. "Oh, I do pity you very much!" says a person to a sick woman, "your husband is dead, your children have to be supported and you have to work hard. Well, my good Woman, I pity you very much, but I cannot afford to give you anything. I have so many who call upon me." How much pity there is of that kind in the world! You can get pity of that sort in abundance. If you lift the knocker of the first door you come to, you will get plenty of pity of that kind. Pity is the cheapest thing in the world if that is all. But God's pity is not pity of that sort—it is not the pity which is mere pity, it is not the pity of inaction—but, when His heart moves, His hands move, too, and He relieves all the needs of those He pities.

And let me say, again, God's pity is not *a pity of mere sensitiveness*. The other day a gentleman, talking of accidents, said in my hearing, "I saw a boy running down a lane where a cab was coming at a very rapid rate. I saw that the boy must be crushed under the horse's feet, or under the wheels. I stood for a moment thunderstruck and then I saw him crushed to pieces under the wheels! I ran down the next street in a moment. I was so sensitive, I could not bear the sight." Instead of seeing

what help he could give, he ran away. "Yet," he said, "I did not do that from any lack of sympathy, or any lack of pity, and when I stopped myself, I thought it useless to go back, for I am so sensitive that I naturally avoid every sight of misery." That is not God's way of showing pity! His pity is not the pity of the stranger who ran away! God's pity is the pity of the father—it is not the pity of the mere sensation of the moment, but the pity which desires to do something to relieve his children in distress—

***"The pity of the Lord,
To those that fear His name,
Is such as tender parents feel—
He knows our feeble frame."***

Then, tried Believer, take your case before your God tonight in prayer. He is a God of pity and not a God of man's pity. Go to Him, now, if you are poor. Tell Him all your care and see if He will not help you. Go and tell Him that your spirit is depressed and see if He will not cheer you. Tell Him that your way is hedged up and that you cannot find your path, and see if He will not direct you. Tell Him you are ignorant and know nothing, and see if He will not teach you. Tell Him you have fallen and see if He will not set you on your feet, take you by the arm and teach you to go tell Him you are black by reason of your falls—and see if He will not wash and cleanse you. Tell Him that you cut yourself against a stone when you fell and see if He will not bathe your sores. Tell Him you are distressed because you have sinned and see if He will not kiss you with the kisses of His love and tell you He has forgiven you. Go and try Him, for His pity is a heavenly pity! It is the very ointment of Paradise that heals sores effectually!

III. I close, by noticing THE PEOPLE WHOM GOD PITIES. Who are the objects of God's pity? "The Lord pities *them that fear Him.*"

Some of you He does not pity at all—you that do not fear Him, but trifle with Him. You that hate Him. You that despise Him. You that are careless about Him. You that never think of Him—you have none of His pity. When you are sick, He looks upon your sickness as something that you deserve. When you go astray, He looks upon your wandering as a mere matter of course of your guilty nature—and He is angry with you—wrathful with you! Your afflictions are not strokes of His rod, they are cuts of His sword! Your sins are not things that He overlooks, but if you die as you now are, guilty and unsaved, remember that even when you are cast away by God, justice shall look upon you with tearless eyes and say to you, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." And the stern voice of God shall, because you have been desperately guilty, drive you away from His Presence forever! Think not that this text will afford you any consolation in this life, or in that which is to come! You shall not have even a drop of water to cool your tongue in Hell—no pity shall be shed upon you there. If you could have pity bestowed upon you in the regions of your punishment, it might fall like a shower of gentle rain upon your tongues. But God bestows no pity upon you that love Him not, fear Him not and turn not from the error of your ways.

Oh, that you would but fear Him! Would to God that He would make you fear Him now! Oh, that you would tremble at His Presence and then,

oh, that you could know yourselves to be His children and fear Him as children do their parents! Oh, that you did reverence His name and keep His Sabbaths! Oh, that you did obey His Commandments and have His fear always before your eyes! Then should your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Oh, that you were wise to bow yourselves before Him and to confess your guiltiness! Oh, that you would come, "just as you are, without one plea," to Jesus Christ! Oh, that you were stripped of every rag of self-righteousness and clothed in the righteousness of Christ! Then you would have Christ as your Savior and you might rejoice that, henceforth, He would pity you in all your sicknesses and in all your wanderings! He would pity you here, and at last lead you up to be where pity shall be unneeded—in the land of the blessed, in the home of the hereafter where the weary rest and the wicked cease from troubling.

But they do not cease from trouble in Hell. They are troubled without pity, pained without compassion, scourged without any leniency and damned without an iota of mercy, being left to stern justice and inflexible severity! Seeing that they would not turn at God's reproof and would not heed His warnings, but cast His Truth behind their backs—seeing that, being often reproved, they hardened their necks—they were, therefore, "suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." Seeing that they have destroyed themselves. Seeing that they have rejected the invitations of the Gospel. Seeing that they have despised the Son of God. Seeing that they have loved their own righteousness better than Christ's and preferred Hell to Heaven, the penalties of iniquity to the reward of the righteous—therefore, without pity they shall be shut away, forever, from the regions of happiness and banished from the Presence of Him who pities them that fear Him, but punishes them that fear Him not! The Lord save us all from such a terrible doom as that, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 25.**

Verse 1. *Unto You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.* It is down and I would gladly lift it up, yet I am powerless to do so if I am left to myself. When the soul cleaves to the earth, who but God can lift it up? Yet it must be our desire and objective to seek to lift up our soul unto God.

2. *O my God, I trust in You: let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.* Whatever happens to me, I trust in You. Down goes the anchor—that ship will never drift far out to sea. "O my God, I trust in You." Can you say that, dear Friends? Then if you are in the dark, you are as safe as if you were in the light, for still this anchor holds! "O my God, I trust in You." "Let not my enemies triumph over me." They will do so if they can get me back into the world. If they can seduce me from the paths of holiness, what shouts of joy there will be in the camp of the enemy! "Hold me up, and I shall be safe."

3. *Yes, let none that wait on You be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.* When good men are in earnest on their

own account, they soon begin to pray for others and the evil which they dread for themselves, they are sure to dread for their Brothers and Sisters. David first prayed, "Let me not be ashamed." And then he added, "Let none that wait on You be ashamed." The only shame that is worth having is a blessed shame—the shame of true repentance which sorrows over past sin, of which it is ashamed. Alas, there will be an eternal shame which shall cover those who choose the ways of sin!

4. *Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.* That is the prayer of one who is taught of the Spirit, for, by nature, our desire is to have our own way and if we can have our own way, we are satisfied. But when the Lord has taught us better, our prayer is, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths."

5. *Lead me in Your truth, and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day.* We need not only to have the path shown to us, but to be led into it, for we are like babes just learning to walk—we must have a finger that we may hold, or a hand that we may lean upon. "Lead me in Your truth, and teach me." That is the second time that David has prayed for the Lord to teach Him—and as long as we are here, we also shall need to pray, Teach me. What is a disciple but a learner? His daily cry must be, "Teach me: for You are the God of my salvation." There is another grip of the hand of faith. I have taken You to be my salvation, O my God! I trust nowhere else, "On You do I wait all the day," expecting everything from You—tarrying Your leisure, but tarrying hopefully, expecting to be blessed.

6. *Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.* Your saints knew them before I was born, and I have known them since I have been born again. By the constancy of Your kindness to me to now, continue to bless me, for are You not an unchanging God?

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Your mercy remember me for Your goodness' sake, O LORD.* In this verse and the preceding one, there are three, "remembers"—first, that God would remember His tender mercies and His loving kindnesses. Next, that He would *not* remember our sins and our transgressions and, then, that He would remember us according to His mercy and goodness. This last request may remind us of the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me." And it may serve for us as a repenting prayer. "According to Your mercy remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord."

8. *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.* If good men endeavor to make others good, much more will the good God do so. A good man will seek to lead sinners in the right way and much more will our good Savior, and God, and Helper do so. Only let us be willing to be taught and come to Him confessing our ignorance, and asking to be led and instructed. This Psalm, you see, dear Friends, is all about *teaching*—and as David needed instruction, so do we! The next verse deals with the same subject.

9. *The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.* Not the proud man, but the meek—the learners—the teachable

ones! Those who, like little children, are willing to believe what they are told upon true authority. Oh, that we all may be among the meek! The tender-mouthed horse is easy to drive, but some people are so stubborn and obstinate that they are "as the horse, or as the mule which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Oh, that we were sensitive to the slightest touch of the Divine hand and always ready and anxious to be instructed by the Lord!

10. *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant and His Testimonies.* Do you believe that, you who have been sorely tried? If you are resting in Covenant love, and find your hope in Covenant blood and Covenant promises, you must believe that everything God does to you is done in mercy and truth. Yes, though He strikes till every blow of the rod leaves a blue wound, yet we rejoice in these tokens of His fatherly love and desire for our highest good, for He has said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The word, "love," in that passage conveys the idea of a very tender and ardent affection.

11. *For Your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.* Those who are not taught of God pray very differently from that, for their prayer is, "O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is little." But he who is graciously instructed confesses the greatness of his guilt and out of that he draws a plea for mercy, for is not God a great God, and is it not greatly to His Glory to pardon great sinners? And when they are pardoned, are they not filled with a great love and a great zeal, so that they are greatly serviceable to their Lord and Master?

12. *What man is he that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.* True reverence for God, a holy fear of Him, is a quality that God delights to see. And wherever He finds it, there He gives further instruction.

13, 14. *His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.* Are you one of those trembling ones who fear to offend God? Well, I daresay that you sometimes envy those who are very boisterous in their joy. Do not envy them—you have something better in having that holy, filial fear that trembles at God's Word—and you shall have the secret of the Lord with you and He will show you His Covenant.

15. *My eyes are eyes toward the LORD; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.* When they get into it, He will pluck them out of it. When Satan seems to cast a net over me, God will come and pull me out. There is force in that word, "pluck"—denoting swiftness and energy. And, perhaps, there is a little idea of roughness, but God's roughness is true tenderness.

16. *Turn You unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.* If you pass that dish round, there are some who will not help themselves from it, for they are not "desolate and afflicted." But I know that there are some, even here, who are both "desolate and afflicted." Be sure, dear Friends, that you make this prayer your own—"Turn You unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted."

17, 18. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring You me out of any distresses. Look upon my affliction and my pain.* And what follows? "Take the affliction and the pain away"? No!

18. *And forgive all my sins.* David will be quite content if God will but look with pitying eyes upon his sufferings, but, as for his sins, he must be clean rid of them—he cannot be happy until he has the answer to this petition—"Forgive all my sins."

19. *Consider my enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.* The better the man, the more bitterly is he hated by the ungodly. It is not by holiness that you will escape the hatred of the world—it is by that very thing that you will awaken its malice! Do not wish to have it otherwise, but remember your Lord's own words, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." But, "Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the Prophets." If we live near to God and are truly the seed of the woman, the seed of the serpent will constantly be nibbling at our heels—some little viper or other will be sure to be there! As the great serpent seeks to do us injury, so will his seed.

20. *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in You.* Do you notice how David gets back to his keynote? Almost at the beginning of the Psalm, he said, "O my God, I trust in You." Now he says "I put my trust in You." Let faith in God be the keynote of your life Psalm! At another time, David wrote, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." That is the motto for all Christians—"Trust, trust, TRUST!" When there is nothing to be seen, when you are in thick Egyptian darkness, let Job's confident declaration be the resolve of your spirit, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on You.* The child of God cannot hope to pass through the world safely unless he is careful to keep his integrity and his uprightness. There are some who profess to be Christians who try to get on in trade by various tricks—and they hope to win the favor of men by just bending a little to their ways. Never do so, Beloved! If you give way an inch, you will have to give way a yard or a mile before long!

22. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.* God did so Himself to Israel. Jacob, whose name was also, Israel, said, "All these things are against me." Yet God redeemed him out of his troubles! And so will the Lord do for all His people in due time, glory be unto His name, world without end! Amen.

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

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

THE TENDER PITY OF THE LORD

NO. 941

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.
For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.”
Psalm 103:13, 14.*

DAVID sang of the compassionate pity of our heavenly Father who will not always chide, nor keep His anger forever. He had proved in relation to Himself that the Lord is not easily provoked but is plenteous in mercy. Remembering how feeble and how frail we are, the Lord bears and forbears with His weak and sinful children and is gentle towards them as a nurse with her child. Although our own observation has proved this to be true, and our experience everyday goes to show how truthfully David sang, yet assuredly the clearest display of the patience and pity of God towards us may be seen in the life of Him in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Therefore, instead of speaking upon Providential patience, I shall bid you gaze upon God in Christ Jesus, and see there how human weaknesses and follies are pitied of the Lord. With a text from the Old Testament, I purpose to take you straight away to the New, and the tenderness and pity of the Father shall be illustrated by the meekness and lowliness of the Son towards His immediate disciples, the Apostles. While the Holy Spirit shows you thus the pity of Jesus Christ towards His own personal attendants, you will see as in a glass His pity towards you.

I. At the outset let us attentively and admiringly observe THE DIVINE PATIENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS TOWARDS THE APOSTLES. I shall begin on this point by reminding you of their origin. Who, and what were these whom He received into intimate fellowship with Himself? They were not the high-born and powerful of the earth, for, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are chosen.” Not a single nobleman was numbered with the Apostles. They were not even educated persons who, if poor, might still wear a gentle heart beneath a peasant’s garb.

There was not a rabbi nor a philosopher among them. They were as un-instructed and as clownish as the rest of the peasantry of Palestine. He selected them from the populace. They were either fishermen or publicans—and these He made to be the first instruments of spreading abroad the Gospel and establishing His kingdom. For our Lord Christ, who had been accustomed to the thrones, and royalties of Heaven, to stoop to be the familiar companion of any of the sons of men would be wonderful condescension! But what shall I say when He elects the weak, and the poor, and the despised, to be His friends? He might have selected for His associates the choicest spirits, the advanced intellects, the educated

minds, but, lo, He makes foolish the wisdom of this world, and chooses the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are.

I do not exaggerate when I speak of the clownishness of the Apostles—their dullness and their ignorance. They were very honest and sincere, but they were far from being naturally quick of understanding. It was intentionally that our Lord made choice of them, on purpose, to illustrate the sovereignty of election, and that no flesh should glory in His Presence. He resolved that when He had filled them with the Divine Spirit, and ordained them to be the chosen vessels to bear His name unto the Gentiles, none should ascribe their power to themselves—but all the glory should evidently belong unto the Lord alone.

At the same time we must not forget that it must have caused the Lord Jesus much inconvenience and trouble to bear with such disciples. The refined spirit cannot be in continual contact with the coarse without enduring pain. Some may call such pain sentimental, but in so doing they only reveal their own ignorance, for, probably, no shocks are more severe, no wounds more smarting than those inflicted upon the delicate, the pure, the holy, the refined, by association with the groveling, the selfish, the sinful, the unspiritual. The glory of our Master's patience is this—that He did not betray even the slightest disgust or weariness of His poor friends.

Though He might have said to them, as well as to the multitude, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" yet He bore with them without repining, and only now and then gave them a rebuke. He never looked contemptuously upon them as His inferiors, though they were vastly so in all respects. He called them friends. He told them mysteries as if they could understand them, though often when He explained them to them they missed the inner meaning. He took them into His most retired haunts. He familiarized them with the garden and the Mount of Olives, where He was likely to seek His retirement.

He would even stay His prayers to teach them how to pray—there was nothing that He would not do for them. Just such as they were He accepted them, and resolved to train them for His service. Having once loved them, He loved them unto the end. He never made them feel a dread of His superiority, or shudder at the distance between their character and His own. He kept no register of their faults—He never rehearsed the list of their shortcomings—but, on the contrary, His main rebuke was His own perfect example. And He always treated them as His friends and Brethren. Think of this, and you will see in Christ Jesus that, "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

Much forbearance He had with their lack of understanding. The Apostles, before Pentecost, were very gross and unspiritual in judgment. He Himself had to say to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken." Until the Holy Spirit came upon them, and made them quick of understanding, they were sorry dunces, dull scholars—even though the best of masters had become their Teacher. They did not understand the object of His mission. They fancied that He came to be a king, and they expected to receive crowns and dignities, and even began

to quarrel over the division of the spoil—disputing as to which of them should be the greatest peer in the kingdom which they expected Him to establish.

He was thinking of suffering and death while they were dreaming of robes and coronets. The mother of Zebedee's children even asked for her sons that one might sit on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom—a gross misconception, indeed, of what that kingdom would be—and a piece of pride and selfishness that she should seek for her sons, probably with their acquiescence—a place above their fellow disciples. When He spoke to them concerning His sufferings, though He used great plainness of speech, yet they could not understand Him. Take this passage in the ninth of Luke, at the forty-third verse—"While they wondered, everyone, at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying."

The thought that the Son of God, the King of Israel should, by-and-by, be proclaimed king upon a felon's Cross could not by any means find place in their minds. They continued to cling tenaciously to the idea of earthly dominion. What strange ignorance was that which led them to think the Savior referred to their having no bread when He said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." Think, too, of the dullness of Philip when the Lord was speaking concerning the Father, and he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us."

And Thomas was not much wiser when he said, "Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?" There were many truths which Christ did not clearly teach to them before the descent of the Spirit, for the reason which He once gave—"I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." Even when He made that simple statement, "A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father," they did not understand Him. And He said to them, "Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me?"

The expression was so simple that they should have understood it, but their prejudices blinded their eyes. Nor was this confined to the early days of their fellowship with Him, for even after our Lord had risen from the tomb, those with whom He conversed on the road to Emmaus, who were probably by no means inferior to the rest, did not understand the references of the Prophets to Christ, and were not prepared to see in His Resurrection the manifest fulfillment of the words which had been spoken of old. Their eyes were held in more senses than one. Many a master would have grown weary of such pupils, but infinite love brought to its succor infinite patience, and He continued still to teach them though they were so slow to learn. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

Reflect again, my Brethren, upon the unevangelical spirit which these Apostles often showed. On one occasion even John, as mild and gentle a spirit as any of them, asked to be permitted to call fire from Heaven to destroy certain Samaritans who would not receive the Savior because His face was set towards Jerusalem. Jesus, the friend of sinners, calling fire from Heaven? This might suit Elijah, but was not after the manner of the meek and lowly Prince of Peace. It would have been quite foreign to all His purposes, and contrary to His entire spirit. Yet the two sons of thunder would hurl lightning on their Master's foes!

He might well have spoken to them as bitterly as David did to the sons of Zeruah, when in their hot rage they would have slain their leader's foolish foes. He might have said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zebedee?" But He merely said, "You know not what spirit you are of." Read the ninth chapter of Luke, which is full of the failings of the disciples, and notice how John and the rest forbade the man who was casting out devils in Jesus' name. With the true spirit of bigoted monopoly that will not tolerate anything outside the pale of orthodoxy, they said, "We saw one casting out devils in Your name."

And instead of rejoicing that there were some beyond our company who were assisted by the Master's power, and were glorifying the Master's name, "we forbade him because he follows not with us." Their Lord, instead of angrily upbraiding their intolerance, gently chided them with the sentence, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." Remember, also, how the disciples put away the mothers of Israel when they brought their tender offspring to receive the Savior's blessing? This showed a very unevangelical spirit. They would not have their Lord interrupted by the cries of babes, and thought the children too insignificant to be worthy of His consideration.

But, though our Lord was much displeased with the disciples, yet He only said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of Heaven." But, my Brethren, it must have required great patience for our dear Lord and Master, who Himself would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, to bear with these rough men who pushed the little ones on one side, who would gag the mouths of those who were doing good in their own way, and who would even call fire from Heaven upon poor ignorant sinners! Admire much His patience with their impatience, and see how, "Like as a father pities his children, so He pitied them," because He knew they feared Him in their hearts, and their faults were rather infirmities than rebellions.

Again, their weakness of faith must have been, in itself, a great provocation to Him, and yet He bore with it most meekly. When in the storm, on the lake, they ought not to have been afraid, because Jesus was with them, though asleep. But their alarm was so great that they must awaken Him, not thinking of His weariness which required rest in sleep. And they were so ungenerously unbelieving as to insinuate that He was unkindly thoughtless of their danger—"Master," said they, "do You not care that we perish?" Oh, what unbelief was here! He might well have been angry, but

He rather rebuked the wind than they, and sweetly said, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Not many days after, however, they found themselves in a like case, and after such a deliverance, they ought to have been confident, but again they were troubled. Let us not upbraid them, for it has been our case full often. Jesus came to them in the midst of the storm, walking on the sea, and they were afraid of Him, and thought it was a spirit, and they cried out. Their faith was so feeble—it was scarcely faith, but rather unbelief. Peter was a fair representative of them all when on that occasion he said, "If it is You, bid me come to You on the water."

He had faith enough with venturous footstep to tread the wave, and to continue to do so until a more than usually boisterous gust made his heart tremble, and down he went. Jesus, as He caught him, tenderly said, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" No anger was in that fatherly rebuke. He spoke as a mother might, when, after teaching her child to walk, she saw its little feet give way and saved it from a fall.

Take another instance of their unbelief. Our Lord had fed the multitude, if you remember, with five loaves and two fishes, and but a short time after, another vast crowd was in a similar hungry condition. Jesus declared His compassion to the Apostles in much the same language as He had used previously—one would have thought that after seeing Him feed the five thousand so short a time before, they would have had no fear about the four thousand then to be fed, but would have said, "Lord, do as You did before. Here are our seven loaves and our few little fishes. If five loaves fed five thousand, surely you can feed four thousand with seven."

Instead of that they said, "Why should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?" Alas, for such unbelief! How could they doubt when with all their eyes they had seen what the Master could do? How could they be so unbelieving as to ask, "How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in this wilderness?" Surely the Savior must have been sorely put to it to bear with this. Moreover, they lost, by their unbelief, a large amount of power which they might have exercised for good—and they exposed their Master's name to derision. When He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He found a company gathered at the foot of the mountain who were glorying over the baffled disciples, because they could not cast out a devil from a poor tormented child.

There were the reviling multitude, and there the disconcerted disciples. The Lord Jesus immediately rectified the mischief by casting out the devil, and when alone with the disciples He answered their question, "Why could not we cast him out?" How pityingly and encouragingly He replied, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove therefore to yonder place. And it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Now, where unbelief not only makes the person fearful, but causes him to be weak where he should be strong—and to expose his Master's name and fame to doubt and distrust—it is enough to provoke anger in the holiest.

And yet the Master was not provoked, for He pitied His disciples as a father pities his children. Again, I would remark that it was not only in the earlier period of His communion that they were unbelieving. There might have been some excuse at that time, but even at the close of His sojourn with them they still remained doubters. Take Thomas as a case in point and hear him obstinately declare, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe." Yet our gentle Lord condescended to grant His incredulous disciple the tokens for which he had asked.

The rest of the Apostles do not seem to have been much stronger in faith, for when He appeared, "they were terrified and affrighted," and were not comforted even when He said, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." How gracious it was on His part, since they yet believed not, to eat before them all a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, to prove that He was yet alive and in a real body!

What? Had they seen Him three years? Had they beheld the miracles which He worked? Had they listened to His teaching and perceived the Divinity which dwelt within Him—and yet when He had risen from the dead, did they refuse to believe the testimony of the holy women and of Peter and John? Did they disbelieve the evidence of the empty tomb? Oh, yes! For unbelief, "as in them all, and they might each have cried, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." Yet He put up with them and pitied them still.

Nor have I exhausted this matter. Their emulations of each other must very frequently have distressed the lowly mind of Jesus. Again and again we find them striving among themselves which should be the greatest. After James and John had so foolishly sought to sit on His right hand and on His left, the ten, it is said, had indignation against *them*, proving that if they did not show it in the same manner, yet they were actuated by much the same spirit as the sons of Zebedee. We find them again contending which should be the greatest when our Lord took a little child and set him in their midst, and said, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

As much as to say, "You need not choose places in the kingdom, and dispute as to precedence, you cannot even enter there while you are moved by the spirit of ambition. You must be humble, and become like this child before you can understand that kingdom." Perhaps the worst case of the Apostles' emulation is that recorded in Luke 22:24, when even after the blessed festival of love the apple of discord was thrown upon the table. Sad to think that at the Lord's Supper Satan should be so present. Extraordinary as it may seem, yet so it was. The question, "Lord, is it I?" was succeeded by the question which of them should be the greatest.

Their Lord was about to die. Gethsemane's sweat of agony was almost gathering on His brow. His passion was close at hand, and yet His disciples were taken up with so contemptible a question as which of them should take precedence of the other. That dear rebuke of washing their feet was a sweet way of reproving them and revealing His own love.

I must not forget that on some occasions they showed their pride in a very wrong and even insulting manner. Peter, who was, after all, but a type of the rest, when our Lord had spoken of His death, took Him and began to rebuke Him! Yes, he rebuked his Master!!! His Lord then turned Himself and rebuked the devil rather than Peter, though Peter had become the foolish instrument of the devil, and He said, "Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men." Nor was this the only occasion, for when He had warned Peter that he would deny Him that night, He was contradicted point blank by His rash follower, and his fellow disciples joined Peter in the contradiction.

"Likewise also said all the disciples." They were told to pray that they might not enter into temptation, but they were proud enough to believe that their Master did not know them and to think that no temptation could overcome them. Here was pride, indeed, and yet though those poor things who had needed to be humbled in the dust, spoke so exceeding proudly and lifted up their horn on high, yet all Jesus did was just pity them and to pray for them, and bear with their ignorance and their ill manners. Having loved them He pitied them, and remembered that they were but dust.

I will only mention one other matter, and that was His patience with their infirmities. I mean not only their sinless weaknesses, but those in which sin was in some degree present. Remember their weakness in the garden? He was in agony, and He selected three of them to watch near the scene of His passion. But when, in the midst of His distress, He came to them, as if He would have a word of comfort from them, He found them sleeping. Oh, the pathos of those words, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" And such an hour—an hour of such extremity! Where was their love that they could sleep while He was in agony?

Yet how mild His language—"The spirit, truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." Worse than that, no sooner was He taken, than not one of all the band, so valiant in their own opinion, was found standing at his Master's side! Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. And the bravest of them all, in the hall where his Master was accused as a criminal, stood by the fire and warmed his hands, and said, "I know not the Man." And then with oaths and cursing, even a third time declared, "I know not what you say." Here was cowardly weakness, indeed, at which the Savior's resentment might well have been kindled. But He showed no anger, He only turned and looked at Peter.

And it was such a look of mingled sorrow and pity that the poor denier of his Lord went out and wept bitterly. When the Lord had risen from the dead, He did not upbraid Peter, but He sent a special love message to him, "Go, tell My disciples and Peter." And when Peter was with Him by the sea, the only rebuke, if rebuke it could be called, was the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Asked a third time in remembrance of the three times in which he had denied Him, and that three times he might have the privilege of saying, "Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

Beloved Friends, it is meet that I should add that the pain to our Lord arising from these faults must be estimated by His matchless Character and by the end He had in view. Remember He was perfectly holy as Man, and, moreover, He was God. And to have to bear with such poor creatures as these was therefore the most wonderful condescension and pity. Engaged as He was in seeking their good, and not His own, it was the harder to endure that they should be such stubborn materials, and so great a hindrance to Him. Moreover, remember that He did not merely bear with them but treated them as His friends.

All things that He had heard of His Father He made known unto them. He admitted them into His most intimate acquaintanceship, and all the while almost His only rebuke to them was His own perfect example. He taught them humility by His humility. He taught them gentleness by His gentleness. He did not point out their defects in words. He did not dwell upon their errors—He rather let them see their own spots by His purity, their own defects by His perfection. Oh, the marvelous tenderness of Christ, who so paternally pitied them that feared Him!

II. Let us think for a short time of THE REASONS OF THIS DIVINE PATIENCE in the case of our Lord. Doubtless we must find the first reason in what He is. Our Lord was so greatly good that He could bear with poor frail humanity. When you and I cannot bear with other people it is because we are so weak ourselves. If you cannot bear with your imperfect brother, take it for certain that you are very imperfect yourself. Jesus was so free from selfishness that anything that they might do which was injurious to the honor due to Him did not afflict Him in the same way as our pride would afflict us.

All the suffering He would feel would be grief that they should be so erring, that they should have learned so slowly. He would not think of Himself, but would only think of them. Besides, He was so gentle, so tender! It was no exaggeration or egotism when He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." I would to God we could copy His love and borrow His "meekness so Divine." He bore with them and pitied them because of His relationship to them. He had loved them as He has loved many of us, "from before the foundation of the world." He was their Shepherd, and He pitied the diseases of His flock.

He was their Savior, and He lamented the sins from which He was about to save them. He was their "Brother born for adversity," and He stooped to be familiar with their frailties. He had determined to bring many sons unto glory, and therefore, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured all things for the elects' sake.

Another reason for His patience was His intention to become perfect as the Captain of our salvation, through suffering. You have perhaps enquired, "Why did not the Lord Jesus at once perfectly sanctify these Apostles, and deliver them from sin? He might have done so." I grant you He might and I have often wondered why He does not do the same with us. But I do not wonder when I remember that it was necessary that He should become a faithful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities by being tempted in all points, like as we are.

Now, you and I have to bear with our imperfect brethren and if our Lord had never endured the same, He could not in that point have shown fellowship with us. In order that He might be a complete High Priest, and know all the temptations of all His servants, He bears with the infirmities and sins of disciples whom He could have perfected at once if He had willed, but whom He did not choose to perfect because He desired to reveal His tender pity towards them, and to obtain by experience complete likeness to His Brethren. Thus the High Priest of our profession became capable of sympathy with us in like condition, by having to bear with all the infirmities of His disciples.

Did He not also do this, my dear Friends, that He might honor the Holy Spirit? If Jesus had perfected the Apostles, they would not have seen so manifestly the Glory of the Holy Spirit. Until the Holy Spirit was come, what poor creatures the eleven were! But when the Holy Spirit was given, what brave men, what heroes, how deeply instructed, how powerful in speech, how eminent in every virtue they became! It is the object of Jesus Christ to glorify the Spirit, even as it is the design of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in our hearts.

Moreover, our Lord was considering the future of the Apostles, and therefore bore with them instead of removing all their evil. He knew that after His decease they would think of these things. And I can well conceive that in their solitude, and when they met each other, they would either soliloquize or say to each other, "Do you not remember how our Lord spoke to us on such an occasion? I do remember the very words He used." "Yes," says the other, blushing and with tears, "I do remember we did not understand Him." "And do you remember the question Philip put to Him?" "Yes," says the other, "but do you know I did not confess it, but I was just going to say the very same thing, for I was quite as foolish as Philip."

And then they would smile to themselves, and say, "How slow of understanding we were in those days!" "Yes," but the other would say, "Did you not notice that our blessed and ever dear Master never smiled contemptuously upon us, and never seemed wearied by our folly? He evidently looked at us as being little children, and He just explained Himself again and again. And when we did not comprehend He was still ready to explain once more. Oh, how tenderly He dealt with us!" And then one of them would say, "How often have I lamented that I fled that night when He was seized. I wish I had gone with Him right up to the judgment seat. I wish I had stood at the foot of the Cross or hung on another cross side by side with Him.

"But do you know when I met Him after His Resurrection, I thought He would have said a word, but there was never even a hint about my cowardice. He received me with just the same tranquil love He had been likely to show before, and He sent me on an errand just as He had been likely to do, to show He could trust me still." Oh, what a dear and tender Lord He was! They did not know when He was alive how good He was, but when He was gone, and had given them the Spirit, they could see it all.

Just as with a photograph, when it is first taken the image is not yet visible to the eye, it has to be a little while in the bath, and to be washed

before the artist brings it out. And so the picture of Christ on their hearts had to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then it was revealed to them. And as they looked on it, they said, "Never was there such a One. He was, and is, the Chief among ten thousand, and our souls shall love Him even unto death." If it is so on earth it will be much more so in Heaven—when we enter within the pearly gate we shall see how Jesus loved us when we were on earth.

"I remember well," says one, "that trial which passed over me, and I said God has forgotten me, He will be mindful of me no more—and all the while He was afflicting me in very faithfulness, and in love to my soul." Then will another saint bear testimony, "Though I was very often cold of heart and forgot Him, yet He said unto me, 'Return unto Me, I am married unto you, says the Lord.' And when I did return I do remember how gently He received me and let out the full flood of His love into my soul once again! So that He restored unto me the love of my espousals, and I rejoiced in His salvation."

You see, the Lord is thinking of our *eternity*. He does not sanctify us at once, for we should not know all the sin that is in us, and therefore should not know how much we owe to Him. No, He leaves us these thirty, forty, fifty years in the wilderness that we may see what is in our hearts and what is in His heart as He manifests it towards us in unflinching loving kindness. Blessed be His name, that thus He pities us even as a father does his children.

III. I shall now close, by indicating THE TEACHING TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS PATIENCE. Is it not this?—First, if the Lord has thus had pity upon you as He had on His Apostles, do you even so to others. I know there is a tendency with us to feel so grieved with the inconsistencies of our fellow Christians as to lose patience. Moses, the most meek of men, yet lost his temper with Israel, and said, "Hear now, you rebels, must I fetch you water out of this rock?" I do not wonder that he called them rebels, for they were such.

But God would not have Moses call them so, for they were God's children. Their Father may call them what names He pleases, but He will not have the servants take liberties with the children. Sometimes when we see the inconsistencies of God's people, we are apt to speak harshly, but our Lord sets us a different example. Jesus bore with imperfect people, ought not you and I to do the same? Jesus must have borne a great deal more than we ever have borne or ever shall have to bear, yet He was still pitiful, still kind and loving to them—let us follow in His steps.

It ought to help us when we remember that we were converted through imperfect preachers. I am sure if any of you have been converted through my ministry, you have been converted through a very imperfect one. While I deeply regret my imperfections, yet in one since I glory in my infirmities, because the power of God does rest upon me. For what are we? We cannot turn any to righteousness—the Lord, alone, can do that! But, if by imperfect instruments you are blessed to the saving of your souls, you ought never again to be out of patience with imperfect people.

Remember, also, that you are imperfect yourself. You can see great faults in others, but, my dear Brother, be sure to look in the looking glass every morning and you will see quite as many faults, or else your eyes are weak. If that looking glass were to show you your own heart you would never dare look again—I fear you would even break the glass. Old John Berridge, as odd as he was good, had a number of pictures of different ministers round his room, and he had a looking glass in a frame to match. He would often take his friend into the room and say, “That is Calvin, that is John Bunyan,” and when he took him up to the looking glass he would add, “and that is the devil.” “Why,” the friend would say, “it is myself.” “Ah,” said he, “there is a devil in us all.” Being so imperfect we ought not to condemn.

Remember, also, that if we are not patient and forbearing there is clear proof that we are more imperfect than we thought we were. Those who grow in Divine Grace grow in forbearance. He is but a mere babe in Grace who is evermore saying, “I cannot put up with such conduct from my brother.” My dear Brother, you are bound even to wash the disciples’ feet! If you know yourself, and were like your Master, you would have the charity which hopes all things and endures all things.

Remember that your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, with whom you find so much fault, are God’s elect for all that, and if He chose them, why do you reject them? They are bought with Christ’s blood, and if He thought them worth so much, why do you think so little of them? Remember, too, that with all their badness there are some good points in them in which they excel you. They do not know so much, but perhaps they act better. It may be that they are more faulty in pride, but perhaps they excel you in generosity. Or if perhaps one man is a little quick in temper, yet he is more zealous than you. Look at the bright side of your Brother, and the black side of yourself, instead of reversing the order as many do. Remember there are points about every Christian from which you may learn a lesson. Look to their excellences, and imitate them. Think, too, that small as the faith of some of your Brethren is, it will grow, and you do not know what it will grow to. Though they are now so sadly imperfect, yet if they are the Lord’s people, think of what they will be one day!

O Brothers and Sisters, shall we know them? Shall we know ourselves when we once get to Heaven, and are made like our Lord? There, my Brother, though you are a quarrelsome man, I will not quarrel with you. I am going to live in Heaven with you, and I will keep out of your way till then. I will not find fault with you, my Friend, if I can help it, because you will be one day without fault before the Throne of God. If God will so soon remove your faults, why should I take note of them? I will not peevishly complain of the rough stone, for I see it is under the Great Artist’s chisel, and I will tarry till I see the beauty which He brings out of it.

The drift of this lesson, is this—as your heavenly Father has pity on you, have pity on one another. He remembers that we are dust—remember this of others. You who live in the same house, do not fall out with each other. You, who are members of the same Church, do not criti-

cize and judge each other so severely. Or if you are severe upon the fault, be gentle towards the person who commits it, and seek not his destruction, but his good. Preacher, mind you learn your own lesson—be as tender towards those who sin as the Master was.

Another lesson, and I have done. In your own case, my dear Friends, have firm faith in the gentleness and forbearance of Christ. You are conscious, this morning, that you have been slipping, and have fallen short or gone beyond the mark. And I know unbelief will now whisper to you that you cannot expect to enjoy renewed fellowship with Christ, or to taste His love again. O think not so! Think of how gentle He was with the Apostles, and remember He is the same still. Change of place has not changed His Character. The exaltations of Heaven have not removed from Him the tenderness of His heart. He will accept you still.

My Brother, I know that prayer of yours was not what it should be—try again. He will accept the prayer, despite the fault. I know, my dear Friend, your ministry up till now has not been so earnest as it should have been—but do not give it up. Preach again, preach with greater fervor and greater unction—He will bless you, He has not put you away. I know that with all of us there is nothing we have done but what we might weep a whole shower of tears over. But Jesus, the Pitiful, knows our meaning. He will not look at the flaws, but at the jewel. He will cover our sins with the mantle of His love, He will accept the will for the deed.

Let us try again. Let us trust in Him wholly, and devote ourselves unreservedly to His service. Let us be persuaded that as we accept from our children a poor fading nosegay on our birthday, and thank them as much as if it were pearls and diamonds, because it shows their love, even so if our heart loves Jesus, He will receive our poor imperfect service for our love's sake. "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." He knows we cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. He, in His infinite compassion will cover our transgressions and accept our heart's love. Be of good courage, then. Be of good courage, my Brethren, He will accept you still.

I should think this subject ought to attract many sinners to Him, and I pray it may, "for him that comes to Him He will in no wise cast out." O that the Holy Spirit would lead many of you to fix your hope on Jesus, the gentle Lamb of God. Come and trust Him, O Sinner. The Lord bless you. Amen.

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THE FIRST NOTE OF MY SONG

NO. 1492

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Who forgives all your iniquities.”
Psalm 103:3.

I am a firm believer, not only in the Inspiration of the Psalms, themselves, but also in the correctness of their order. I believe that Paul was right when he called a certain Psalm, “the Second Psalm,” and that those are wrong who so disarrange the book as to make it the sixteenth. Anything to certain radicals in theology is better than the established order—they change for change sake! Many attempts have been made to arrange the Psalms chronologically and critics have shifted them about at their pleasure, according to this theory or that. Their wisdom is utter folly! The Psalms as they stand have an order most appropriate and instructive.

If time permitted I could illustrate this in many ways, but for this present it is more in the line of my discourse to observe that we could not have understood so well the 103rd Psalm if we had not first read the thirty-second. You remember how the 32nd begins? “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.” The pardoned man is blessed and then he blesses God. First the full, deep, effective blessing comes to him freely from the Lord and then he reflects the blessing and exclaims in joyful gratitude, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.”

First, we are blessed *with* the pardon of sin and then we bless God *for* the pardon of sin. The Divine blessing enters our hearts loaded with good things. We gladly receive the heavenly messenger and then it begins to sing like a minstrel at a feast, nor does it long sing alone for all that is within the house of our manhood arouses itself to join in the strain and never is better music made this side the heavenly places than when all that is in us is stirred up to magnify and bless God's holy name! Our text is one stanza of the never-ending “song of loves.”

In the verse before us the most wonderful point, to my mind, is the attribute of God which David selects for special praise—“All that is within me bless His *holy* name.” You might have expected to read, “gracious name,” or, “merciful name,” but you find it written “*holy* name.” Indeed, this is the emphatic point of the wonder of forgiven sin, that a holy God should pass it by! If God could wink at iniquity; if there were something in His Nature which rendered sin tolerable to Him, it would be a slight thing that He should allow it to go unpunished. But because He is a holy God—righteous, just and pure—who cannot look upon iniquity, whose fury burns against evil, therefore it becomes wonderful even to amazement that He should forgive our iniquities!

To accomplish this wonder, the miracle of the Cross was worked by unspeakable love. O man, you have but to gain a true idea of that holiness

which is like a consuming fire, that holiness which even angels cannot gaze upon, but of which they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"—you have but to gain a glimpse of that unutterable perfection and you will abhor yourself in dust and ashes—and then you will marvel to think that the Thrice Holy One should have spared your guilty soul! How abhorrent is your depravity in His sight and yet He does not smite you! What are you but a mass of pollution? And yet the Infinitely Pure has considered you in love! What are you but a sink of impurity? And yet the All-perfect One has looked upon you in compassion!

Do you believe in Him and accept His dear Son? Then Grace has looked upon you! Before the glance of Omnipotent Love, your sin shall disappear and your iniquity shall forever vanish! O blessed deed of boundless mercy! If, indeed, the royal pardon has been sent to us from the court of Heaven, we may right heartily say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name, who forgives all your iniquities." In these latter days, among the other wonderful things which have been developed, we have been enriched by a school of thinkers who kick against the doctrine of Justification by Faith and rebel against the idea of the Atonement and the forgiveness of sin.

The meager gospel which they proclaim to us poor fallen wretches is this—If you do wrong, there is no help for it. You will have to reap the consequences. If you do right you will, of course, bring your hearts into a healthier condition and you will be happy in proportion. But if you do wrong there is no hope for you—there will certainly come upon you the result of evil and you will suffer till you work yourself right. "Do not flatter yourself," they say, "with any idea of Grace and mercy interposing—there is either no God, or if there is one, He will take no notice of your prayers, but will let you develop in your own way. The fictions of substitution, imputation and pardon are mere delusions, or pious subterfuges unworthy of rational men."

These "men of culture" and "modern thought" are intent upon robbing us of the essence of the Gospel! Under cover of enforcing a Truth of God which nobody denies, they undermine the special doctrine for which Revelation was given. It is true that upon man's character his true condition depends, but this by no means disproves the interposition of supreme love. Woe to us if their philosophy should be true—and woe to them, also—yes, woe to the whole world if their denial of our best hope should be accepted for truth! As for us, this gracious forgiveness which they deny touches the chief spring of our soul and stirs us with a hope of better things! This very Grace which they deprecate as though it were immoral and could not work men towards holiness, is the cause in our soul of hatred of sin and the source of our hearts' noblest aspirations after holiness!

Moved by gratitude, we long to honor our pardoning God, who, though He is glorious in holiness, is also glorious in Grace when He blots out sin! We would gladly prove, by our lives, that we have not received this gift of mercy in vain, by letting all men see that we are now dead to sin and cannot live any longer therein. Evangelism does not flatter mere morality by making it the rival of Christ, but it is the highest promoter of all that is honest, temperate and of good report, as our daily conversation shall

prove. The grand Truth of God of forgiven sin is our subject at this time. I hope I cannot say anything which will be new to you upon this point, for if I could, it would look as if you did not already understand this early privilege of true Believers.

Many of you understand it and enjoy it and, therefore, I can only bring to your remembrance old facts. But these, like well-stored and ripe fruit, will be exceedingly sweet. I spread the table, not with foreign delicacies and novel dainties, but with the everyday fare of the great Father's house. Our sermon will be simple, but I trust it will be most consoling. It will not display the ability of the speaker, but it will reveal the Grace of His Master and this is my heart's desire. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," is one of the most blessed sentences of the creed. Dear Friends, we do most joyfully believe in it, and, what is more, we enjoy the truth personally as a matter of fact in our own case! May we feel the joy of it at this good hour. O Holy Spirit, bear witness with the water and the blood!

I. In speaking of the pardon of sin, I shall remark, first, that it is A PRIMARY BLESSING. Observe, it is put first in the catalog given by the Psalmist. It is not written, "Who heals all your diseases, who forgives all your iniquities." No, but the list commences thus, "Who forgives all your iniquities." Forgiveness leads the van and stands in the forefront of the host of mercies. When the angels of God meet us, the first messenger of love that comforts our heart brings in his hand pardon for our transgressions. As the olive leaf in the dove's mouth proved to Noah that all the waters were receded, so does a sense of forgiven sin assure us that our great griefs are ended and our liberty and joy has come. Pardon shines first of the stars of mercy.

A main reason for this is the fact that *we never enjoy a mercy as a mercy from God till we receive the forgiveness of sins*. A man lives while his sin is unforgiven. He eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he wakes and talks about enjoying life—but none of these things are received by him as gifts from God. If he thinks upon God at all, the Divine name is a terror to him. He does not eat his bread as though it were given by a Father's hand, nor does he put on his garments as though he were clothed by Divine love. That cannot be while he abides under Divine anger! The unpardoned sinner is barely able to see God as his Benefactor—as his Father he knows Him not. God does bestow mercies upon unpardoned men and women, but they cannot receive them as such until, first of all, they come to know that their transgression is forgiven.

Brethren, *there are many mercies which are not given at all and cannot be given until first of all the pardon of sin has been bestowed*. It would be out of place and inconsistent to give the blessings of the Covenant to unpardoned sinners. For instance, why should God heal the diseases of a man under condemnation for sin? It is but a scant mercy which would seek the health of a man condemned to die—by all means relieve his pain, but his disease you may leave alone! We cannot expect God to crown a man with loving kindness and tender mercies while he is still dead in sin and lives in daily dread of a second death—an *eternal* death.

A coronation for a condemned criminal would be a superfluity of inconsistency. To crown a hardened convict who lies in the cell of Newgate

awaiting his execution would be a wretched mockery! How could it be that God should wreath a chaplet of favors for a man who has refused His mercy and willfully abides under His wrath on account of unconfessed and unpardoned sin? How could our spiritual youth be renewed like the eagle's, or our mouth be satisfied with good things while as yet we are doomed to die and are withering away in our wickedness? What are good things to a tortured conscience and what is renewed youth to a soul racked by remorse? No, pardoned sin must clear the road for the march of Divine Grace—this jungle of iniquity must be removed to make a highway for our God.

The application of the blood of sprinkling must be felt! The cleansing power of the Atonement must be known or the rest of the blessings of the Covenant will never reach us. And well may the Lord place this mercy first because when it comes, it ensures all the rest! The forgiveness of sin is the dawn of the day which is always followed by the clearer light. God does not pardon us and then leave us to perish of our spiritual diseases—but when once He grants a plenary absolution, then His Spirit exercises His healing art and recovers us of the leprosy of sin. When the Lord forgives all our iniquities, it is not long before we perceive that our life is redeemed from destruction, crowned with loving kindness and satisfied with good things to the renewal of its youth!

Pardon never comes alone—troops of blessings attend it! The voice of the turtle dove, which speaks peace because of pardoned sin, also tells that the rain is over and gone and that the fruits of the Spirit will soon appear. He who gave His Son's blood to wash us will withhold no good thing from us! He who has said to us, "Your sins are forgiven you," has given us a grant of all necessary good in that one sentence of His love! Like the comet nucleus, which bears a streaming train of light behind it, so does forgiveness draw along with it a far-reaching glory of boundless favor. Well may this blessing be set first since it carries all the rest in its loins—

***"When dreadful guilt is done away
No other fears we know.
That hand which scatters pardons down,
Shall crowns of life bestow."***

There is this, also, to be thought of, that the pardon of sin comes first *that it may be seen to be an act of pure Grace*. If any other blessing had preceded it, our legal spirits would have dreamed of merit and fitness—if any attainment had been reached by us before the forgiveness of sins was given, we might have been tempted to glory in *self*—but now we perceive that God forgives our sins before He heals our moral diseases and, therefore, there is no room for pride to set her foot. While the man is still white with the leprosy of sin, the Lord visits him in pity to show that He looks for nothing in man as the motive power of His love. While yet the sinner has his judgment perverted, his affections polluted and his desires depraved—even while he is full of the plague of his own heart, God says to him—"I have forgiven you."

This, therefore, is pure Grace and is set in the foreground that its sovereignty and freeness may be written before our eyes as with a sunbeam. God pardons men as sinners just as He finds them, notwithstanding that

they have nothing to recommend them to Him. Their disease is so foul that they might have been spurned for their loathsomeness if it were not for His boundless love! But seeing them plunged in evil and dead in sin, He magnifies His mercy by quickening them to new life and forgiving them all their trespasses.

Brothers and Sisters, on this first head I want to be very practical and say to you—let us seek this forgiveness of sin as a primary blessing if we have not yet obtained it. If the Holy Spirit puts it first, let us seek it first. Be wise, O you who feel your guilt, and do not go about, first of all, to make a reformation in yourselves and *then* to come to God for mercy. But come to Him, first, and then see after other things. When you come to Him, do not ask Him to first heal your soul's disease, but first to forgive your iniquities! Follow God's order and you cannot go amiss! There is infinite wisdom in all the Lord's arrangements. Do not, I pray you, try to make that first which God makes second, nor that second which God makes first!

You are guilty, ask for pardon at the outset. Through Jesus Christ a free pardon is proclaimed, pardon for sins of the deepest dye! Pardon bought and sealed with His atoning blood! Come and receive it just as you are. Though there is nothing in you to commend you to the Divine regard, you are now in just such a state as best prepares you for His Sovereign Grace. Are you startled at this statement? It is neither more nor less than the Truth of God! You are empty, therefore there is room in you for the fullness of Divine mercy! You are polluted, therefore there is opportunity to show the power of the blood in cleansing you! You are guilty and there is space for undeserved mercy. Plead your guiltiness and say, "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." Do not urge any extenuation, but as you are guilty, say, "Forgive me." In your confessed guiltiness there is space for the great King to do as He wills and put away your sin by a sovereign act of mercy.

Let your first desire be pardoned sin! Do not wait till first you understand all mysteries, but get your sins forgiven! Do not first labor to attain a perfect life—get your sins forgiven! Do not first make a profession, join a Church and put on outward religiousness. Get your sins forgiven! There David's Psalm begins and there yours must begin if God, in love, accepts it—"Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name; who forgives all your iniquities." That is our first head. Pardon is the primary blessing—seek it as such.

II. Forgiveness is A PRESENT BLESSING. This is very apparent in the text, which is in the present tense—"Who *forgives* all your iniquities." Not, "who will, perhaps, forgive you on your death bed." Not, "Who did forgive you years ago and now condemns you." No, it is, "Who forgives"—is now forgiving daily, hourly, momentarily—is continually forgiving your iniquity. I want to bring this fact of a present blessing before your minds briefly, but very clearly. This privilege the Believer has *actually obtained*—all his sins are forgiven at this moment of time. Blessed be the name of the Lord, we are even now washed from sin!

We shall grow in Grace, but we shall never be more completely pardoned than when we first believed! We shall one day stand before the glo-

rious Presence of God in His own sacred courts and see the Well-Beloved and wear His likeness, but we shall not even *then* be more perfectly forgiven than we are at this present moment! Sin depresses our spirit—the consciousness of it often makes us weep in secret and yet none of it is imputed to us—every grain of it is as far removed from us as the east is from the west. Rejoice, Believer, that the Spirit bears this witness—“God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you.” As many as have looked to Christ upon the Cross are now justified by faith and have peace with God. They are at this moment cleansed from all sin through the application of the precious blood of Christ. This is a matter of present fact, and not of mere hope.

According to the text this present mercy is *perpetually bestowed*—He still forgives our iniquity—there is perpetuity in it. At this very moment I may be mourning my sin, but God is forgiving it. Alas, I may be sinning, for even in the holiest deeds we do there is still sin—but even then God is still forgiving! If, indeed, you are a Believer in Jesus Christ, the Lord is at all times forgiving you! As constant as your sin, so constant is His forgiveness! Never fall into the notion of some that the one forgiveness which we received at the first has rendered it unnecessary for us to seek new forgiveness, and unnecessary for us to offer new confession. It is not so! The Lord is *always* forgiving and it is for us to still be seeking that blessing!

We ask each day for daily bread though the promise has made it sure, and so must we daily seek mercy, though it is already promised. Our Lord said, “After this manner also pray you,” and a part of that prayer is, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” I know that certain brethren say that the Lord’s prayer is not for Believers—but their dictum in such a case is not worth the breath they waste in delivering it! I am quite satisfied, for one, to pray as my Lord taught me. If they prefer to pray as their whims teach them, it is at their own risk! Besides, I read that we are to confess our sins, one to another—and sins to another are certainly sins towards God! If, then, we are to confess to our fellow men the wrongs which we have done to *them*, it will take a great deal of reasoning to convince me that we are *not* to confess the wrongs which we do towards our heavenly Father!

There should be daily confession, for even, “if we walk in the light as God is in the light”—and that is a very high condition—and if we have fellowship with God clearly and distinctly, yet even *then* we shall need to have the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us from all sin. We still sin even when walking in the light and still need that Jesus should cleanse us by His blood. Herein is our consolation, that Jesus is *always* cleansing us—“He forgives all your iniquities.” You are often sinning, but He is always forgiving you! You are often wandering, often erring, often grieving Him, but “He forgives all your iniquities.”

I do not feel like preaching when I touch this text! I heartily wish I could sit down and have a happy cry over this blessed Truth—that my God is, at this moment, forgiving me! Oh, poor Heart, you have much to chide yourself for, but your Lord forgives you! You are a frail, foolish, unstable, selfish, wayward thing, but He forgives you! Whatever your faults, known and unknown, He is forgiving you now! Even while you are lamenting your many transgressions, He is casting them behind His back and

hurling them into the depths of the sea! While I speak to you with my voice, my own heart is singing inwardly, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, who forgives all your iniquities."

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, this mercy of pardon is *knowingly received*. We *know* that we are forgiven. "Presumption," says one! Simply the Truth of God, say I! Do you think David would say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, who may or may not have forgiven me." Ah, no! He speaks of favors which he had consciously received! Nobody ever sings over uncertain blessings. I say again, nobody ever sings over an uncertain pardon! A doubt as to our forgiveness is fatal to all joy, for it lets in the dread fear of Divine wrath! Absolute certainty must be realized before a heart can make a song concerning the forgiveness of sin. When by faith we accept the Lord Jesus to be our All in All, we are as clear about God's having forgiven us our sins as we are about our having committed them!

Upon our believing, we have as good evidence of being cleansed as we had of having been foul! Our sense of guilt arises from our knowledge of the Law and that is clear. But our sense of forgiveness comes from our knowledge of the Gospel—and that is equally clear. I am not sure that I was condemned if there is a question about the Law. But there is no question and, as a sinner, I am condemned. In the same way I am not assuredly absolved if there is a question about the Gospel—but as there is no question about the Gospel, I am assuredly absolved because I believe in Jesus. Resting in Christ and trusting alone in Him, you and I may have a present conscious sense of pardon—we may *know* our forgiveness and be beyond doubt concerning it. May God bring us to that happy condition!

Then, Brothers and Sisters, this present blessing is *immediately efficient*, for it secures us a present right to all that is involved in being pardoned. If a man is forgiven his offenses, he has peace towards God. He has boldness to enjoy access to God and reason to expect that his petitions will be answered. The stone which was lying at the door blocking his acceptance is now rolled away. He is a justified man and he is accepted in the Beloved. God treats him as just and rewards him as such. The man is free from guilt, for God has absolved him. He is worthy in the sight of the great Judge of all the earth. "Being justified by faith" we have—ah, my Brethren—we have not only what the Apostle tells us, but we have untold blessings! We have time and eternity, life and death, earth and Heaven, Christ and God! These are ours *now*! We have a present portion in all the Covenant promises and provisions.

The practical point is this—if this forgiveness of sin is a *present* blessing, seek for it today! Seek it at once! Do not be satisfied unless you are forgiven now! Do not be satisfied unless you are forgiven every day and all the day! Do not put off your soul with a bare hope, but labor for certainty! Do not foolishly postpone it in the mere chance that at the last pinch, when you come to die, you may be forgiven, but cry for it now! Why, man alive, if I knew I could gain pardon when I came to die I should not like to spend the interval without it. It is such a privilege to be forgiven that I want it at once and cannot endure delay. Oh, the sense of pardoned sin! What sweetness! What rest! I know its rapture in my own heart—it is my support and my delight—making my heart to be all music and dancing!

We, at this present hour, joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the Atonement. I charge you, do not postpone this matter—why should you put off joy? O repenting Sinner, believe that you can have forgiveness through Christ Jesus and you shall have it! Going to God through Jesus Christ with a humble confession of your sin, you shall TODAY enjoy the Father's kiss of reconciliation and your conscience shall be thoroughly purged from the least taint of sin. May the Holy Spirit work this present sense of forgiveness in you all.

III. Thirdly, this is a PERSONAL BLESSING. I cannot resist the tendency, in reading, to lay the stress upon the word, "*your*." "Who forgives all *your* iniquities." Our Lord is a blessed God to forgive *anybody*, but that He should forgive *me* is the greatest feat of His mercy! A good Brother wrote me the other day, "Mercy had reached its zenith when it saved *me*." He thought so of himself and we may each one think the same of his own case—

***"'Tis Grace, 'tis glorious Grace indeed,
Grace without parallel!
Great! But how great? Does far exceed
The power of speech to tell."***

You can all rejoice that God forgives iniquity, but your rejoicing will never reach so high as when you know that He forgives all *your* iniquity. Honey is not sweet except to him that tastes it. "But may we know this personally?" asks one. I answer, "Yes." Some of us know that God has forgiven us, *because we have the character which He describes as being forgiven.*

He forgives those who confess their sin—"If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We have made confession before His face and we believe His Word and are, therefore, sure that He has cleansed us. He has promised mercy to those who forsake their sins. Having forsaken our sins, we look to be forgiven for Christ's sake. Forgiveness is also freely promised to those who look to Jesus for it. We are looking to Him and we are forgiven. Are you not Believers? Then there is no hope for you—but if you are trusting alone in Jesus Christ, your iniquity is blotted out. He that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses. In repentance, in confession of sin, in forsaking sin and in faith in our Lord Jesus, we have the marks of pardoned sinners and these marks are apparent in our souls.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, if you have any doubt about whether the Lord forgives you, now, it will be well for you to make sure that you *accept His way of salvation.* It is by faith in His dear Son. Do you need any other way? He forgives because Jesus stood in the sinner's place and He puts the sinner into Christ's place. Are you satisfied with that great plan of salvation by Substitution, by Atonement, by Sacrifice? "Oh," I hear you say, "Satisfied with it! I am delighted with it! It is all my salvation and all my desire." Then, if you have accepted what God sets before you, it is not possible that He should refuse you the blessing which He has promised. What says the Scripture? "Through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins."

As sure as you have received Christ, your sin is removed from you! It cannot be that a man has Christ and has his sin, too, for his iniquity

must be covered to whom Christ is All in All. Yes, we have this pardon personally and pleasantly, for we believe in Jesus. Do you not believe *in the Divine Word and testimony concerning the pardon of sin?* Have you not heard the Lord God declare that His Son has forever put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself? What better evidence do you need than the Infallible Word? Do you look for feelings, signs, tokens, or other things to corroborate the witness of your God? Is He an unreliable witness? Is not His Word enough—alone, and by itself? It is so to those that have believed and it ought to be so to all men! For my own part, I had rather venture my soul upon one Word of God in the sacred Scriptures than upon all the whispers of angels that men have ever heard, all the visions that men have ever seen and all the ecstasies of delight that saints have ever felt! All the world, all the Church and all Heaven put together cannot make up the weight of one sentence of God's Word!

One Truth of God I would like to mention. It is this—we know that we are, at this moment, forgiven, because *we at this moment give to the Lord Jesus Christ that look which brings forgiveness.* I will put aside all the past. I will put aside all our experience, all the change of heart which we hope we have undergone and I will put the matter altogether apart from the past. If I never did look to You, Immanuel, crucified for me, I look to You now! If I have never rested in You before, I will rest in You now—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All!”***

Oh, then, we are forgiven! We must be forgiven! Never a soul did give that look without finding forgiveness of sin as surely as the Israelite found healing when he looked to the bronze serpent!

So, Beloved, if that is the case, I want you to view this blessing as a personal possession and seek it as such. I would to God that all of you that hear me would seek personal forgiveness at this moment! Do not think of the preacher, or the heavy style in which he sets forth this Truth of God, but think of yourself and your personal need of cleansing! Think nothing, just now, of those that sit at your side, but seek for mercy at the hand of God, each man, each woman, each child for himself, or herself! Pardon is to be had—rest not till you have it! It will not do *you* any good if all the rest of the congregation should be pardoned if sin should remain upon you!

Breathe, then, the personal prayer to a personal Savior—“God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Trust in Christ for yourself and you shall sing, today, “Who forgives all my iniquities.” Blessed be His name!

IV. I have now a fourth point to call your attention to, and that is, this is A PERFECT BLESSING. “Who forgives *all* your iniquities.” For, remember, the forgiveness spoken of in the text is a Divine one. It is *God* that forgives all our iniquities! A man's forgiveness, when we have wronged him, is to be sought. And when we get it, we shall find, in many instances, that it is a poor, half-hearted affair. Men often say they forgive, “but”—now that very hesitation in their speech shows it is not a full and free forgiveness! But when God does anything, He does it thoroughly.

Now, listen, just this minute. When God charges sin upon a man He does it after a very high standard, for every idle word that man shall speak he shall be brought into judgment. When God condemns man, He does it after an equally elevated standard and when God punishes man, He does it after a solemn and awful manner. The new gods that have lately come up have a little Hell because they are little gods—but my God, the God of the whole earth—has a great Hell and a fearful doom, for what He does is done by rule of strict justice.

Believe me, He pardons to the same scale! All His acts are of a sublime character. The standard of punishment is the standard of forgiveness. You know how He judges, how He condemns, how He punishes—after that same thorough, Godlike manner He forgives! He makes a clean sweep of sin, according to that blessed Word, “The day comes, says the Lord, when the sin of Jacob shall be sought for and it shall not be found: yes, it shall not be, says the Lord.” “I will subdue all their iniquities, and cast their transgressions into the depths of the sea.” “I have blotted out your iniquities as a thick cloud, and as a cloud your sins.” “They shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever!”

Oh, it is a perfect blessing, for it is a Divine pardon and, you see, its completeness is expressed in that word, “*all*.” “Who forgives *all* your iniquities.” He does not remove the great ones and leave the little ones to rankle. Nor does He leave the little ones and leave one great black one to devour us, but, “ALL” of them He covers and annihilates with the effectual Atonement made by His dear Son. And then notice the word which in our text expresses sin—“iniquities.” Pull it to pieces—it is in-equities—the matters in which we are not, according to equity. Sometimes we fall short. Sometimes we go beyond. Sometimes we do not act in equity towards our friends, our relatives, or strangers. We constantly fail to act in strict equity towards God.

Now, He says, all our in-equities—everything in which we fall short of the perfect rule of equity, or go beyond that rule—all these He forgives! What a blessed, comprehensive word this is. I was reading the other day in a very delightful little book, entitled, “Never Say ‘Die,’” which is admirably calculated to comfort a seeking soul, these few words which struck me forcibly. The writer says, “All our righteousness are as filthy rags. If you will bring your good living and your precious righteousness to Christ, *you must make sin of the whole lot*—there is nothing else you can do with it—and ask to have it all forgiven. The man who will be saved by his own righteousness says hopelessly, ‘die,’ to his own soul. You must cast all this splendid rubbish of yours *on the heap* along with the oaths and the lies, the drinking and Sabbath-breakings, the foul living—and let the ever-flowing stream that keeps eddying round wash it all away.”

As I read it, I thought—That is what I will do with mine! I will put my sermons, my prayers, my almsgiving—everything on the same heap as my sins and let them go together! Lord, be pleased to forgive all my in-equities, my good works and my bad works. I might have tried to sort them a little, but one is so much like the other that I fling them all overboard and swim to glory on the Cross. We have no hope but in our Lord Jesus—we need pardoning mercy for all we have ever done—for sin has

been mixed with it all! I advise you, my Hearer, to put the whole life you have lived into one lump, and say, "Lord, forgive me the whole of it! I cannot acknowledge every sin, for I do not know them all! Sin is such a subtle thing that it has penetrated into my most holy thoughts and desires. But, Lord, cleanse me from all sin through the atoning blood." "Who forgives all your iniquities."

What a blessed thing is this! For when God once forgives, He forgives forever! He never plays fast and loose and He never brings to mind, again, that of which He has said, "I will remember it no more." O my Brothers and Sisters, if you are pardoned once, you are forgiven once and for all! Irreversible acquittals God bestows, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Immutability is stamped upon the patent of our pardon! Until God can change or lie, He never will bring to mind, again, the sin of that man whom He has pardoned. "Your sins are forgiven you—go in peace."

Now, I want you, practically, to use this head by seeking to obtain this pardon as a complete thing. Hosts of professing Christians never reach to this. Many of you do not believe that you are or can be completely pardoned. But such pardon is possible. Do not rest till you have it! You will never know true peace of mind until it is yours. The Roman Catholic cannot believe that God pardons him altogether and he never knows that he is safe. It is a very poor thing you gain by being a Roman Catholic. If you get the best you can, you go to "purgatory" when you die! It is great cry and very little wool! But in the faith of Jesus Christ you get present and eternal pardon!

However great our cry is, it is never equal to the wool, for what a great blessing it is to receive immediate, absolute, eternal salvation on the spot so that if you live as long as Methuselah the transgressions of all those years are covered! And if you die at once, all your offenses are put away through the precious blood of Jesus Christ! Seek for this heavenly gift! Do not rest till you are as sure of perfect forgiveness as of your own existence—and when you have this glorious gift of Grace say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, who forgives all your iniquities."

V. In the fifth place, this is a PRICELESS BLESSING. It is a blessing which could not be purchased by a life of holiness. If we have once committed sin and should, from now on, be absolutely spotless, yet our previous sin would absolutely condemn us—

***"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
You must save and You alone."***

Put on a hair shirt and an iron girdle. Fast day and night. Cover yourself with the bruises of your scourging. Starve as a mendicant or shut yourself up in a hermitage—the sin of the past will remain the same. Weep tears of blood, but their crimson will not wash out the crimson of your sin! That spot, that blood-red spot upon the soul defies removal! Wash it with your heart's blood and it would still be there.

Though you could bleed as every wave that breaks upon our island's shores and fill the Atlantic with a crimson flood. Though you should gather all the seas that ever flowed together and wash and wash with niter

and much soap till you had polluted all the ocean with your filth—it would still remain. In vain you cry, “Out, damning spot.” The spot abides and *will* abide unless Almighty love shall take it out forever. Only God Himself can forgive and by Him no price can be accepted in the form of future obedience, for all that you can promise is already due and the promise, itself, will be broken.

What is more, this forgiveness could not be purchased by an eternity of suffering in Hell. There they lie in anguish, which God grant we may never know, but they are as far off from the expiation of their sin as when they first came there. When the world grows gray and sun and moon die out and time has spun its utmost thread, the last will be as far off from the expiation of their sin as ever! There is no getting rid of sin by suffering! Still must the lost suffer, for still their sin remains. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” as surely as the righteous go away into eternal life. But though it could not be purchased by a life of holiness nor by an eternity of woe, forgiveness has been procured! This pardon which is freely preached today to all who believe in Jesus has been purchased and there is He that procured it, sitting at the right hand of God the Father—a Man like unto ourselves—but yet equal with the Ever-Blessed One!

If you ask me how He procured forgiveness, I answer that He shows His hands—the scars are there. He shows His feet. He shows His side—the scars of His wounds are there. He shows His heart that was broken for our guilt. He shows His blessed Person which underwent the baptism of Divine wrath that He might deliver us from being plunged into those tremendous deeps! O Son of God, You have redeemed us, but what a price have You paid in the bloody sweat of Your face and the sorrowful breaking of Your heart! And now, today, we accept freely, gladly, what You have so dearly earned!

What else do we say? Why, that if we are pardoned through such an Atonement, then are we Christ’s forever! We ought to show deep gratitude and the least we can do is to confess, “We are not our own!” We ought to go out singing with all our heart, “He has put away my transgressions and covered my iniquities.” The Lord grant it may be so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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OUR YOUTH RENEWED

NO. 3417

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”
Psalm 103:5.*

IN this delightful Psalm, one remarks how David finds something of praise within him in everything of which he thinks. There are some desponding, morbid, murmuring, ungrateful souls who find reasons for complaining everywhere, but a man of David’s spirit, on the contrary, sucks honey out of every flower and praises God in connection with everything! I noticed, while I was reading just now, how many of these things would have made others mourn, but they only called forth from David’s soul, songs of praise! For instance, “Who forgives all your iniquities”—some would be forever complaining that they had sins and that those sins were a burden, but David sings of sin as pardoned! Some would be mourning before God that they were not well in health, complaining of their sicknesses, but David sang of Him, “Who heals all your diseases.” Morbid minds will be fretting about death and about what might come after death, but David says, “Who redeems your life from destruction.” And now, in the view of his temporal and spiritual blessedness, he pens this verse with which to crown his song, “Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

I invite you first notice in this verse and as you notice, ask that you may enjoy—

I. SATISFACTION.

David speaks of his mouth being *satisfied* with good things. Satisfaction. A rare word! It rings like a silver bell—satisfaction. The richest man in England has not found it. The greatest conqueror has never won it. The proudest Emperor cannot command it. Satisfaction! It is no more natural to man than it was to the horseleech to cease from craving and crying for itself, “Give! Give!” As well might the sea be thought to be full or its billows to be still, as the heart of man to be thought to be satisfied! It is a spiritual blessing—it is a Divine Grace that comes from the great satisfying God—the God who is, Himself, All-Sufficient, is the only One

who can be sufficient to fill the heart of man. Satisfaction! Why, that means enough, and enough is a feast!

David had enough of temporals and so, I trust, have we. If we are of the Apostle's mind, we have, for having food and raiment, we are there-with content. David had spiritual riches and that satisfied him, and so have we, for if we have Christ, we have all things, for, first, Christ is All and next, He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? For all things are yours, whether things present or things to come; all are yours and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You have enough, then, for you have all things! Your spirit is content with what it has—no, more than content—you can say with David, "My cup runs over." In receiving Christ into your soul, you have received more than your soul can hold—you are filled with all the fullness of God!

The text, in speaking of satisfaction, uses terms which denote satisfaction. "Who satisfies *your mouth* with good things." In the mouth is the palate. It is the place in which there is a sensuous kind of enjoyment, which is here put as a figure of a higher and spiritual delight. We do not merely receive God's good mercies—we enjoy them! We have not lost our taste for them. We do not swallow the honey of the Divine Mercy as though it were so much tasteless white of an egg, but we know, through having our senses exercised and taught of the good Spirit, how to get the flavor, the taste of the Word and to enjoy it. "He satisfies your mouth." We have, all of us, desires after pleasures which are natural to us, but believing men have desires after higher pleasures—and these desires are, for the time being, satisfied until we get into yonder realm where our capacities are enlarged, our desires shall be increased and there, too, we shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and shall drink of the river of His pleasures forevermore! Until then, we are satisfied with Christ, satisfied with His salvation, satisfied with the Holy Spirit, satisfied with all His gracious operations, satisfied with the Covenant of Grace, satisfied with its sureness, satisfied with the largeness of its provisions, satisfied with the love of God, satisfied, indeed, with all that the Lord wills, for we can say that His will is our will! There is enough, then, and there is enjoyment of that enough.

Note as you take the words, "Who satisfies your mouth with *good things*." See the variety of the satisfaction that is given. The mercies bestowed are not only good—they are not a good thing—but "*good things*." The Christian's spiritual wealth consists of all manner of good things. As we showed you last Thursday night—of Christ's fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. He gives more Grace. He is the God of all Grace. All sorts of blessings are provided for the Believer and the satisfaction which he enjoys is the result of receiving all the blessings that he can ever need. "He satisfies your mouth with good things," that is, with pardons bought with blood, with justifying righteousness, perfect and

complete—with adoption and all the privileges belonging thereto—with sanctification and all its gracious results! Good things, superlatively good things, Beloved! Not merely on good doctrines and good opinions shall you feed, but on real things, real blessings, and these not all of one sort, nor after one fashion, but like the fruit of that tree which becomes near to the Throne of God, and which bears its fruit every month, and has a variety of fruits to suit the tastes of all who come hungering to eat thereof!

The excellence also of the mercy which satisfies us is mentioned in the text. “Who satisfies your mouth with good things”—emphatically good. Many of “the good things of this life,” as we commonly say, are only good in a very modified sense. They are easily made into curses and they often become temptations. But the good things of Divine Grace are so good that they never can be anything else but good, and so good that they make our bad things good! I mean that they make our bitter affliction sweet and turn our trials into joys! He that gets Christ has such a good thing that no tongue shall ever tell the goodness it. He that gets everlasting love and all the streams that gush from that deep and fathomless fountain, gets things so good, and in the most superlative sense of that word, that they are like God, Himself, who is essentially good. Ah, Christian, what a happy lot is yours! To have good things from the good God and to have an abundance of them, and to have yourself so ravished in the enjoyment of them that your soul can say, “I am satisfied! It is enough. I am content. My soul is overflowing with the good things of God!”

Once more, this satisfaction is *continual*. The word is in the present tense, “Who satisfies your mouth with good things.” It is not, “did satisfy it,” though that is true. He did satisfy my mouth with good things when first I came to Him and perceived the beauty of my Lord Jesus. Often since then has He made His servant to sit at the banquet table and there, in the presence of his enemies has he been fed. But the text is in the present and that means who *now* satisfies, who, to-morrow when it comes, shall still be your present help and still shall satisfy—who not only will satisfy you in Heaven—though that is true, for I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness—but who even now, as far as your capacity goes, continually satisfies you in things here below, not with things below, but with things above—satisfied with God while yet absent from the Lord. Is not this blessing, being in the present tense, peculiarly delightful? But it is just that to which the worldling cannot come! All his good things are generally in the past or the future. I mean his good spiritual things. He will tell you of what he once felt, or else he hopes that they may yet be in the days to come, and that one of these days he may be saved. But the genuine religion of Christ is known by its bearing the motto of “Today”—*present* salvation! There is no religion under Heaven except the evangelical Truth of God that teaches present salvation!

I think I have read some such passage as this by an eminent cardinal, since departed, and gone somewhere—I do not know where, for he has gone somewhere where they have “Masses” for the repose of his soul, and surely that cannot be in Heaven! Surely, they would not need to pray for the repose of the souls that are there! But this departed cardinal says something like this—“How delightful to die after having received the saved viaticum from the hands of God’s priest, with the memorial of the cross upon your bosom and the crucifix upheld by holy hands before your expiring eyes! To pass out of this world with the sound of the passing bell in your ears and then to lie awhile, while gathered round you are the prayers of holy men and blessed virgins consecrated to God in the neighboring convent. To be carried out with the songs of choristers, with the perfume of incense and with attending monks and friars. To be put into holy ground, consecrated by sacred rites, amidst the reading of words long honored by being used by the Holy Catholic Church—to have the consecrated earth saturated with holy water falling upon the coffin lid that bears the memorial of the cross,” and so on, and so on, and so on. How delightful! How delightful he makes it all out to be, as if it all were a theater—nothing more—a piece of show! What good could there be to a soul in all that performance, and all that tag raggery and I know not what besides? What consolation could it be to a departing spirit? But that evidently is the ultimatum, the highest reward that can be obtained by that kind of faith!

But, Beloved, we speak out of this Book of God what we know and have proved! And we tell you that you may be saved NOW! The pardon of sin is not a thing merely for dying moments— it is a thing for this very present hour! What says David? “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imparts not iniquity; blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered.” What says Paul? “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” I dwell then, with a lingering delight upon the present tense of these words, “Who satisfies”—today—“your mouth with good things”—makes you even now a happy Believer, a rejoicing Believer, a hopeful Believer, a contented child of God, looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and hoping to be found among the waiting, worshipping company who “worship Christ Jesus in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.” That is the first thought of the text, then—satisfaction.

Pass on now to the second thought, which is—

II. RENEWAL.

“So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Beloved, *there is need of this*. Every Christian has need that his soul should be restored—should be refreshed, re-invigorated, newly quickened. As to those who are saved, there is a constant need restoring them to their first love. This is promised in the Words before us. I say there is need of it. There is need

of it, first, because of the ordinary wear and tear which operate upon spiritual life, as well as upon every other form of life. You cannot serve God, you cannot praise, you cannot pray, you cannot do anything without some expenditure of strength and, therefore, you need to have that strength renewed. Moreover, in such a world as this, combating with temptations, bearing up against the current of society, and I know not what besides, of difficulty, takes away our strength. We need, therefore, to go and drink again of the brook by the way, that we may lift up our head once again. The ordinary wear and tear of spiritual life requires renewal. Besides that, we are often *the subjects of sinful decline*. Backsliding is too common a complaint among Christians. We can ascend to the top of the mountain and dwell with God, but our foot soon begins to descend. There is a gravitation towards sinfulness in the best of men. Oh, that it were not so, but we are very conscious that it is so and, therefore, we need to have the renewal.

And yet again, *we sometimes fall into sorrowful spiritual diseases*. I mean apart from sin. We may get depressed in spirit. We may be nervous, fearful, timid. We may almost come to the borders of despair. We may cry out with David, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me, my heart is consumed because of grief." We may be brought very low. Well, then, again we shall need renewal. So, what with wear and tear, what with sinful inclination to decline, and what with the sorrowful diseases which may come upon our mind, we often need renewing. Mark, now, the peculiar *excellence of the renewing* that is spoken of in the text. David says, "So that *your youth* is renewed." There is great deal to be admired in the youth of the Believer. Youth is *the time of beauty*. After a while, the furrows are plowed upon our brow, and the gray hairs are scattered here and there, but the young man and the maiden rejoice in the beauty of their youth. And I am sure it is beautiful to see a young Christian. There is something so admirable in his carriage and bearing, in his first ardor his, first love and zeal, his first jealous sensitiveness and tenderness of heart, his carefulness of walk and so on, that we cannot but admire him! But thank God, we need not give up these things when our Christian youth, as to time, has gone! Thank God, He can renew our youth to us spiritually when we grow old bodily! And there is a beauty about the aged Christian who is living near to God and dwelling on the borders of Heaven, quite as fair to look upon as the beauty of the young Believer! So God gives to His people from day to day a peculiar beauty in each season of life—and thus their youth is renewed!

Youth, again, is the time *for vigor*. The young man can run. He is strong. He has even waste powers to throw away! And often how strong are the young men in Christ Jesus! They are strong and have overcome the Wicked One. Alas, it sometimes happens that growth in years does not bring growth in Grace—and we have known some who have grown weak and feeble as years have passed over their heads. But God can re-

new to us all the vigor we ever had! All the strength we had for service during the first 20 years of our Christian life, He can bring back to us again! Though we may have been living under a starving ministry, and so have lost our strength. Though we may have neglected much communion with Christ, and so have lost our vigor, He can give it all back again, and once more we shall run, and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint! Youth, again, is the time for *ardor*, for *fergency*, for *enterprise*. I would not say a word that might depreciate the wisdom and mature prudence of old age, but for all that, the most of things that are done in the world must be done by the young blood. The radical element comes in to stir the conservative element and quicken it into activity. In the Christian Church there must be young blood coming in, and if there is not, it is generally an ill time with that Church. But surely, Beloved, it need not be that our first ardor, and enterprise, and hopefulness should leave us. God can renew it to us at any time during our spiritual career. He can renew our youth like the eagle's by renewing our courage for Him, our confidence in Him, our energy towards Him, our determination for Him, our willingness to run risks in His cause, our ardor to tell to others what Christ's love has been in our hearts. If you have lost that youth, cry to God tonight for it and He, by His Spirit, will renew your youth to you! "Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Youth, too, is the time for *joy*. We expect young people to be merry, and young Christians may well make merry and be glad, now that they are brought into the house of feasting. God often makes the early part of our Christian career to be smooth—He screens us from the harder trials that will be necessary for us afterwards—but there is no reason why the joy of the Lord should ever depart from a Christian.

I have not known many, but I have known some few Christians who are just as happy and joyful as they ever were in the brightest period of their lives and have continued so by the twenty years together! I do not believe that spiritual decline, though it is very common, is at all inevitable. I believe it to be as unnecessary as it is sinful. We might always retain that early joy and delight. I must confess my own experience is that whatever joy I had in Christ 20 years ago, I have much more, now. Whatever I had that could delight me concerning Him was shallow and superficial, then, compared with the deeper delight my spirit finds in His service, in His work, in His people and especially in Himself! There is no reason why we should not continue to be young. A dear friend of yours who has lately gone to Heaven, who was close on the verge of 80 years, and whom you all knew well, why, he was as much a boy as any of us in the things of God! There was not one among us that was more hopeful or more enterprising than was our dear venerable father. We had only just

to think of any good thing for Christ, and instead of being, as some have a tendency to be when they get old, rather inclined to be a drag on the wheel for fear lest the young people should go too fast, he was always ready to gird up his loins and run like Elijah before the chariot, and do a little more than anybody else if he could! I pray that that may be our case—that we may bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright! So may it be with us, and right on as long as ever we shall live may He renew our youth like the eagle's! I shall now need your attention for only a few minutes for a third point. We have had satisfaction and renewal. The third thing in the text is—

III. A SIMILITUDE.

“So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.” How is that? Socrates and the old naturalists used to say that when eagles get to be very old, they lost their old beak and talons, and feathers, and turned young again. I suppose people used to believe that in those times, but happily there is nobody who believes such rubbish as that now! I am quite sure that David did not believe it, for my persuasion is the more I look into the Bible, though some have said that the Bible was only meant to teach us religion and that we must not look for accuracy as to scientific facts, that that is a mistake—and that the Bible never makes a mistake in natural history, in physics, or in anything else—is as much Inspired about one thing as about another! There is nothing in this text to lead us to believe that David meant that—nothing at all! Some have thought and I think they are correct, that the allusion is to the newly-molting of the eagle. As with every other bird at that time, they appear haggard, and then when their feathers are grown again, it makes them appear to renew their youth. I observe that many naturalists whose works I have consulted on the subject declare that the molting of the eagle is not sufficiently severe to produce any appreciable change, and that David must have been a very acute observer, indeed, if he could have detected such an alteration, and they seem to think that the allusion is to the well-known longevity of the eagle, which lives on, and on, and on, when many other birds have passed through many generations. The grand old monarch of the craggy rocks is still young when generations of other birds have passed away. So our youth is renewed like the eagle's—that is to say, our spiritual life continues on, and on, and on through time—right into eternity!

Let me, then, conduct your thoughts to the eagle for a minute. How is the eagle's youth renewed? I suppose in four things—in its sight, its flight, its might and its fighting.

The eagle has a keen eye, but its eye would grow dim unless there was a constant renewal of its youth and, therefore, *its eyesight is renewed*. The eagle-eye belongs to every gracious man. He can see farther than the eagle can. He can see beyond the gates of pearl—he can see farther than that—to the Throne of God! Yes, farther than that—into the heart of God. He can say—

***“The streams of love I trace
Up to their fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”***

But the eagle eye of faith is often clouded with unbelief, and it is a blessing for us that God increases our faith and that, once again, we can see invisible things and rejoice to behold what has never been given to mortal eye to see.

The eagle is a bird of strong flight, and that *flight may be reckoned as a part of its youth which is renewed*. Large as it is, sometimes measuring from six to eight feet broad when its wings are outspread, yet as soon as it vanishes out of sight it is lost in the blaze of the sun. At another time the eagle is on its flight, simply making progress. So with the Christian. His youth is renewed. He mounts upwards in communion with God, higher, higher, higher. His motto is—

***“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
This still my cry shall be—
Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee!”***

Up he mounts like the eagle, or at other times he goes onward in his Christian pathway, going from strength to strength until he appears before his God. Now, it is a mercy for us that the Lord is pleased to renew our power of fellowship with Himself—our power of making progress in the Divine Life—just as He renews the eagle’s youth.

The eagle has great *power and might*, too. He had need to be strong, or when he carries his prey to his young ones, he might soon weary. And you and I have souls to feed, and work to do for God and for His Kingdom—and we need that our might should be renewed, like the eagle’s, that we may be strong for every service imposed upon us.

And then *the eagle is made to fight*. It smells the battle afar off and delights in carnage. And the Christian, though he is a man of peace, is also a man of war. From his youth up he has to contend with his corruptions and fight with spiritual wickedness in high places! And he needs that his power to fight should be daily renewed, even as is the eagle’s. May we experience day by day what it is to have our youth renewed in these respects. But, now, let us ask the pressing and practical question, how is it that the eagle’s youth is renewed? Is it not *because there is a life within which renews it?* God has so constituted the eagle that it shall live on—God has so constituted a Believer that he shall live on. He has put a living, incorruptible seed within us that cannot die, and the Water of Life that He has given to us, is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Therefore is our youth renewed like the eagle’s. There is a holy nature, a spiritual immortality of Grace bestowed upon us and, therefore, is our youth renewed.

The eagle’s strength is renewed *by the food it eats*. That is indicated in the text, “Who satisfies your *mouth* with good things, so that your youth

is renewed like the eagle's." When the eagle has satisfied his hunger, he is strong again and when you and I have fed upon the Word of God—especially upon the Incarnate Word of God—when we have been privileged to eat His flesh and drink His blood, as spiritual men know how, ah, then again, our youth has been renewed!

The eagle's strength is renewed *by the air he breathes*. Not here below, in this smoky atmosphere, but up there, in the clear azure, where all is bright—there does the eagle breathe the pure air and thus renew his strength. So the Christian renews his strength, not here among groveling gold hunters or pleasure hunters, or fame hunters, but up, up there in the rarified atmosphere of communion with God! There he grows strong, again, and comes down from the Heaven of heavens with his face glowing with the radiance of renewed youth, renewed by breathing the atmosphere of the skies!

The eagle's youth is renewed *as the season returns*, or, if the reference I gave to some naturalists is correct, there is a season for renewal. So when the times for God's Spirit to visit us with times of refreshing come, then, and our strength is renewed. When we feel once more the Holy Spirit bedewing us and our heart gets to be like Gideon's fleece and we are saturated, then, like the eagle's, our strength is renewed!

But I shall weary you, for there is so much scope here, if I continued to speak. I shall rather leave you to think the matter over than attempt to work out the fullness of such a text as this. And thus I must bring you to the last Truth of God which I desire to enforce—

IV. A DIVINE QUICKENER.

Does not David say, "*Who satisfies your mouth with good things*"?—referring here to God, Himself. To make short work of this last point, let me say to every Believer here who has been satisfied, who has had Grace restored to him and his youth renewed like the eagle's—you have *had all this from God!* You have never had your soul renewed from anywhere or anyone else but from Him! You have never had your mouth filled with good things except by God. Every temporal mercy has His mark upon it, for He sent it. Those houses, those children, that competence of yours—all came from Him. As to every *spiritual* blessing, you must see His mark thereon—

***"There's never a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan."***

Well, it all comes from God! Then remember that and let it be all the dearer to you! Let it make your soul cling still closer to God to think that all these blessings have come from Him.

Well, then, if all has come from God, be it remembered with that fact that *all has been through God*. From Him and through Him—I mean that no mercy would have been a mercy if God Himself had not made the mercy—and that no spiritual gift could have been yours unless God Him-

self had been in the gift! In fact, there is no good thing until you get God Himself—

***“Less than Yourself cannot suffice,
My comfort to restore.”***

Life is nourished, not so much by bread, as by God’s decree that bread should nourish us, for, “man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” So the ordinances do not feed your soul, it is God IN the ordinances! It is not the sacramental bread and wine. It is not Baptism. It is not coming up to listen to a poor mortal like ourselves. It is not even private prayer—it is God IN the prayer, God IN the preacher, God IN the ordinance, so that you not only have everything *from* God, but that which satisfies and renews you is God Himself! Oh, to say, “My Lord and my God: the Lord is the portion of my soul!” This is sweetness, indeed.

Well, then, as you get everything from God, and by God, *ascribe everything to God*. Let nothing pass by without praise. Reckon that nothing comes to you by chance. Do not conclude anything to be your desert or your earning. Bless God for it all! “Oh, clap your hands, all you people. Come into His courts with thanksgiving. Praise Him with cymbals, even the high-sounding cymbals.” Let Him have the best of your songs, for you have the best of His gifts. Praise Him with a new song, for you have new mercies for which to sing.

And if you thus ascribe everything to God, take care *that you use everything for God*. Let your temporal mercies be consecrated to Him. Give Him the first fruits of all your increase, so shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst with new wine. Give to God all your spiritual strength and whenever you feel that you are renewed in it, do not shake yourselves as though your strength were your own, and you might use it as you like—but when the Spirit of the Lord moves upon you as He did upon Samson in the camp of Dan, go out and smite the Philistines as he did. Go and help in the Master’s work and the Master’s children—watch over the Master’s sheep, fight the Master’s foes and thus shall you continue to have your mouth satisfied with good things and your youth renewed because the Lord will see that you are not wasting it, or spending it upon yourselves, but giving it all to Him.

I am sure I grieve much that such a text as this should not have a bearing upon you all. But alas, there are some here, there are some here who are *not* satisfied and you never will be, my dear Hearer, till you get Christ! There are some here whose youth is not renewed. No, it were a pity that it should be. You must be born-again! You *must*, you **MUST** be born-again! Oh, that you may now be born-again, for otherwise for you to renew your youth would be to renew your sins and increase your ruin! My dear Friend, what you need most is a new heart—and there is only One who can give it to you, and that is He who made Heaven and earth, even Christ Jesus! What you need is to have your sins washed away and it is only He who can do it, who first filled the channels of the deep and

who now can wash away your sins in His own blood. Trust Him and it is done! Trust Him and it is done altogether. Trust Him and it is done altogether and forever! He that believes in Him is saved, for He who cannot lie has said it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Be obedient to that double command and, in obedience, you shall find that God is faithful to His Covenant, to His Son and to you to whom the promise is made—and you shall be saved! God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 42.**

Verse 1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul, after You, O God.* It is said that when they cannot find water, they sometimes let loose a hart, which, flying over the desert sand, by instinct seems to scent out the water brook. If he cannot find it, however, the stag is subject to a burning thirst. He stands and pants. His sides heave while he thirsts. So says David, "As the hart pants (or "brays") "after the water brooks."

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Not God's worship only. Not God's people, but God Himself he thirsts for! Oh, for such a thirst! The next best thing to having God is to have an insatiable thirst for Him. Do you think a soul ever could be cast away that longed for God? Impossible! There is never a soul in Hell that had any sincere longings after God. Grace is in your heart, dear Hearer. That thirst is Grace if you are longing after the living God.

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* "You are forsaken. God has forgotten you." At the very thought of this, he had the salt meat of his tears and nothing else, for there is nothing that touches a Christian's heart and wounds him to the quick like that. "Where is your God?"

4, 5. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.* See how he clings to God in the dark! When the question cuts through his soul, "Where is your God?" he seems to say, "I will none but Him. I will follow hard after Him. He is everything to me. I will be sick till He heals me. I will be in the dark till He gives me light. I look to none but to my God."

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar.* Or the little hill. I knew You there. There did You meet with me and I remember this. And can You have met me in love so often, and will You cast me away now? You did there manifest Yourself to me—as You do not

unto the world, and You are an unchanging lover. Will You not come to me again?

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts.* Heaven's troubles and earth's trials seem to clasp hands and form a waterspout. The deep of Your dark purposes seems to echo to the deep of human malice and Satanic wrath. "Deep calls to deep."

7. *All Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* You have concentrated an ocean upon my devoted head!

8. *Yet.* Oh, what a glorious, "yet," that is! How it swims! Never was there a swimming suit like that which is made of hope!

8. *The LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* How dear God gets to be to a gracious man in the time of trouble. Just now he called God the health of his countenance. Now he calls Him his very life. "My prayer unto the God of my life."

9-11. *I will say unto God my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why am I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted, within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Or, as the old Psalm puts it—

"Yes, my own God is He."

A sweet collocation of words, indeed! "Yes, my own God is He." He seems to revel in God—to find intense delight in God. God is everything to him!

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

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

THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE

NO. 1171

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.”
Psalm 103:9.

THIS verse has reference only to the children of God. The Psalm is for them—they alone can sing it and this statement concerns them only—for this reason, that the wrath of the great Judge of all the earth is removed from every true child of God. Our sins were laid upon Jesus Christ and He bore them for us. The penalty due to us on account of them, or its equivalent, has been endured by Jesus Christ, our Substitute. Therefore, as before the Throne of God there is no accusation against a Believer, the justice of God has no anger towards him. “Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me,” is the proper language of every justified man.

But let it never be forgotten that in pursuance of His gracious plan, God, who has blotted out our offenses as rebellious subjects, has now placed us in a new relationship, for, by *adoption* and the new birth, we have become His children and He is our Father. Though He neither *can* nor *will* ever summon us before the bar of His jurisdiction, either to charge us with sin or condemn us for it, inasmuch as Jesus Christ has put that sin away, yet, as our Father, He exercises discipline among His family, and we, as His children, are both chided and chastened for our faults. The sword of justice no longer threatens us, but the rod of parental correction is still in use. The judge no longer condemns, but the Father chides—“For what son is he whom his father chastens not.”

Remember, then, that we are not about to speak of Believers under the Law, or the anger arising out of the breach thereof—by His Grace we are quite clean from all the mire of that slough of legality. We are about to treat of Believers as the adopted, twice-born children of God—and of the rule of the Lord's household—and the chiding and chastisement which are necessary to it. The text seems to me to say two things. First, *He will chide*. Secondly, *He will not always chide*, neither will He keep His anger forever.

I. The text very plainly says to us who choose to hear it, HE WILL CHIDE. It is implied that He will be *angry*, otherwise it were not necessary to say that, “He will not keep His anger forever.” *Why will He chide?* There are many answers, but we can mention only a few. He will chide His own dearly beloved children, first, because if He did not do so it would seem like winking at sin. Eli did not restrain his sons or chasten them as he should have done and, therefore, judgments fell upon his house. God is not foolishly gentle like that aged priest—He will sorely smite His children if they follow iniquity.

David had never displeased Adonijah at any time in saying, "Why have You done so?" And therefore on his death-bed the old man heard the news that his much-indulged son was seeking to snatch the crown from Solomon, his appointed heir. God is no indulgent David—He does not spare His children the chidings due to their sins. "The Lord your God is a jealous God." In His people, sin is sin, and even yet more heinous than in those who are outside of the family, seeing that they sin against greater light and greater love. Sin is in the elect of God exceedingly sinful. The Lord regards it as an intolerable evil which His soul hates. It must be cleansed as by burning, for He will bring His people through the fire and refine them as silver is refined. Has He not said of His chosen, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities"? A man may suffer a stranger's child to do many wrong things without laying his hand upon him. But he makes his own child to smart if he dares to disobey.

God chastens and chides His children, next, because if He did not, others of the family would follow their ill example. If I knew a man who lived in sin and yet enjoyed the light of God's Countenance, should I not naturally conclude that I, also, may live as he does and yet walk in the light as God is in the light? If we had heard of David's sin with Bathsheba and had never read of his horror of soul, his broken bones and bleeding heart—should we not have inferred that we, also, might fall into the same filthiness—and find it a very small matter to return into the way of righteousness again? Every father among you knows that he has often to chasten his child's bad behavior—not only for its own sake but for the sake of the younger children—for if the fault were overlooked they might come to do the same.

Sometimes a frown which might have been spared the individual, considered by himself, must be put upon the parent's face for the sake of brothers and sisters, lest they should fall into like fault. Remember that the Lord has a large family—and like a wise father He considers the interests of all. Consequently He does not allow sin to go unchided, lest it breed folly in others. Moreover, the world outside the regenerated family looks on with unfriendly eyes. If the erring child of God were never chided or chastened, then would worldlings say, "What does it matter that God denounces sin in us, when He winks at it in His own family?"

Should we not say of a minister who preached holiness, but who suffered his own sons to indulge in vice, "Why is it that he does not begin at home?" Is it not natural for us to think that those who are in real earnest for piety and holiness will be sure to show it by the way in which they restrain their own children and conduct the affairs of their own house? If we see that a Christian man's daughters are the wildest of the group and the most frivolous of the frivolous, do we not say at once, "What a pity it is that he speaks about evil in others and yet does not set his own house in order"? It is mentioned as an essential qualification for a pastor that "he rules well his own house; for if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" Of the deacons, also, it is said that they must "rule their children and their own houses

well,” from which we gather that a man who cannot govern his children can never be anything but a rear-rank soldier of Christ, a poor, feeble Christian at best.

Now, shall it ever be said that the great Father of Spirits does not enforce discipline in His own house? Will the greatest of all Householders suffer it to be whispered throughout the world that He allows His favorites to do as they please, and His darlings to indulge in sin without chiding them? God forbid! It must not be so imagined! What says the Apostle Paul in Hebrews? “Even our God is a consuming fire.” He does not say that God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire, for God in Christ is *our God*—and in that Character He is a consuming fire, burning with infinite jealousy against sin! The terrified hypocrites in Zion, who are spoken of by Isaiah, asked a hard question, but it is one which we must answer—“Who among us shall dwell with that devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Only he can so dwell who “walks righteously and speaks uprightly,” “but he shall dwell on high, his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, his bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure” (Isa. 33:14-16).

It is not possible for the thrice holy Jehovah to act otherwise towards sin than as fire to feel, hence those who dwell with Him must be pure. God must, for the outside world’s sake, judge among His own people, separating the precious from the vile, and passing even the precious gold through the fire to cleanse it from its dross—thus making His people to be a holy people—separated unto His fear. His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. Judgment begins at the house of God.

But, Beloved, there is another reason which more nearly concerns ourselves—God must chide us when we do evil, for our own sakes, or else the evil would lie festering in us, breeding I know not what of deadly mischief. Often we do not know sin to be sin till the Lord chides us for it, or we do not perceive the high degree of its sinfulness till we hear His solemn tones rebuking us lovingly but sharply that we may be sound in His fear. This Divine chiding lays open the sore which else might have worked inwardly to mortal sickness. Besides, if sin were not chided, one fault would lead to another and we should go from bad to worse. That gradual decline which saps the bodily constitution of many would happen to our *souls*—and we should fall little by little. Gray hairs would be upon us here and there—and we should not know it.

The Lord reins us up, when our steps are almost gone, and gives us a sharp blow such as a skillful driver deals to a stumbling horse. And then we run more carefully, pick up our feet in the dangerous pathway and so hold on and hold out to the end. It is necessary, Beloved, and for our good, that we should bear His chiding, else sin would, before long, pierce us through with many sorrows. I am never afraid for my Brethren who have many troubles, but I often tremble for those whose career is prosperous. To be emptied from vessel to vessel with trouble is often the best thing which can befall us. But to stand at ease till the lees subside, and yet be there, is the greatest danger of Christians in these days. The dregs of sin fall to the bottom out of sight because we are not agitated by—and

then we get the notion that we are wholly refined and clear from sin—when it is only because we are not stirred that our impurities do not rise to the surface.

Brothers and Sisters, it is good, sometimes, to be stirred up with a temptation that you may see what a Hell there is in the depravity of your nature—and what a fiend you are apart from the Grace of God! This humbles you, drives you to prayer and makes you cry out for real purity—and so it is a blessed thing. But to have ease and freedom from toil, never to have your temper tried, never to have your patience exercised—to have a long period of prosperity—is often to breed in you an estimate of yourself which is totally false. You are no better than other men, but you happen not to be so much tempted as other men—and so you become conceited, which is one of the most grievous of calamities.

Now, the Lord can see the residue which we do not see. He knows what lees are at the bottom of the vessel and, therefore, He chides us, tells us of our secret faults and makes our faces to be suffused with blushes, though just before this we were full of self-exultation. Remember, also, that while sin would lie in us and fester, and we should also grow conceited, we may be sure that we should never attain any high position in Grace if it were not for the chidings of the Lord. His rebukes throw us on our faces before the Cross and we are then nearer Heaven than at any other time. Beloved, if we become satisfied with what we *are*, we shall cease to struggle after anything *better*—and become stunted professors.

There is grave cause in every one of us for dissatisfaction with our condition, from one point of view or another and, therefore, it is a thousand mercies that the Divine reproofs for our weakness of faith, for the coldness of our love, for the distance of our walk with Him. The Lord's corrections are the thorns in our nest which make us soar towards Heaven! His chiding shows us our emptiness and leads us to apply to the fullness which is prepared for us.

I cannot, however, stop to show you many more of the wise, tender, fatherly, gracious reasons why the Lord chides His people, but I will answer another question. *How does He do it?* I answer, sometimes, He rebukes His people by the sin itself. They sow it and He lets them reap it—there is no more fitting retribution than for the backslider in heart to be filled with his own ways. If you sow wild oats they will make bitter cakes when they are reaped and ground—and you are made to eat them. The Lord treats us as Aaron treated Israel—he took their golden calf and ground it to powder, strewed it on the water and made them drink.

Very sharp and burning is the concoction made from our darling sins. More bitter than gall is the wine which flows from the grapes of transgression. Sin's *result* is its punishment. Abraham's unbelief chastened itself when he found his wife taken by the Philistine king. A worse case is that of Lot. He did not keep the separated path as he ought to have done, but chose to dwell with the men of Sodom. And when he saw all his property destroyed by the flames which fell from Heaven—when his sons-in-law perished and his wife was turned into a pillar of salt—he must have seen in his sorrows the very image of his sins. Who brought this upon you, Lot?

Who made you what you are? What but your worldliness? And who but yourself, in your greedy choice of the well-watered plain of Sodom, and your forsaking of the pilgrim walk with God?

Child of eternal love, your God will gather twigs for His rod out of your own garden! Like Gideon, He will chastise you with thorns and briars—and those sharp teachers He will gather from the neglected corner of the field which you should have cultivated for your Lord. Frequently He chastens His people by His Providence. Chastisements come to us through sickness of body and depression of spirit, losses in business or failures of enterprise. Trouble in the family or attacks from the outside world may be other ways, but here we must be careful to discriminate, for all trials are not chastisements—many are sent as tests of integrity, or illustrations of faith. Some are sent to afford us opportunities of winning crowns for Christ and honor for Him.

In fact, trials may be regarded very often as great favors and special privileges. “Whom the Lord loves He chastens,” and, “Every branch that bears fruit He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” You must not think, because you are afflicted, that you have been more sinful than others, for it may be you are more beloved! Tribulation is often a gracious *reward* for faithfulness, affording, as it does, an opportunity for the exercise of yet higher virtue! Yet many troubles are manifestly chastisements. When Rebekah saw her darling son driven away from his father’s house, was not that a chastisement for her teaching him lies? When afterwards Jacob found himself deceived by Laban, what was that but a chastisement for the deceit which he had practiced against his brother Esau?

God’s Providence is disciplinary towards His own household—David’s sin was followed by a pestilence. Hezekiah’s proud display of his riches to the Babylonian ambassadors brought on captivity. Asa’s transgression caused the rest of his life to be troubled with wars. A happy life can be changed into one of care and affliction by careless living, for God will order all events for the correction of His rebellious child. But the Lord as often chides His people by the withdrawal of privileges. Full assurance is one of the first blessings taken from those who wander—faith burns dimly and those who could once read their title clear, now spell it out with many questions by a smoking lamp—whose light is but a glimmer. They formerly could say, “I know.” Now they can barely cry, “I hope.” Their faith is weak because it does not lie, now, in the same atmosphere, since the manifested love of God has ceased to shine upon them.

The Lord also denies His blessing to the means of Grace and they become wells without water and clouds without rain. The sermon is not sweet as it used to be. Even the Bible is not so comforting as before. The joyous assemblies are now sorrowful, the feasts are turned to fasts, the Bethels to Bochims, the hymns to howls. The wail of the mourner will be, “O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me.” Private prayer soon becomes a weariness and all the exercises of secret devotion are carried on as matters of *duty* rather than as sources of enjoyment.

The Father also chides His children by taking from them their fellowship with Himself. They dare no longer sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." Their cry is, "Where has my Beloved gone, that I may seek Him?" At the Lord's Table the emblems are no longer gates of pearl to admit to the secret chambers of the King. The Beloved is gone and the sun is eclipsed. Now they are in the dark, though once they basked in the sunlight. Some here know all about this—and they will tell you that there is no worse chastening than to be left of God and deprived of His present smile. Then there will happen to you a great withdrawal of power in prayer. You used to ask and have—but now you are made to wait and knock long and loud before the gate opens to you.

Once you were such a favorite with the King that when you had His ear you spoke to Him for your child, and that child's soul was given to you! You sought favors and they came into your bosom at once. You told the Well-Beloved your daily troubles with sweet familiarity—and they were all relieved at once. Whatever you asked in prayer, you received, because you kept His Commandments. But now you have walked contrary to Him and He walks contrary to you. The heavens are as brass above you and your prayer comes back to you unanswered. Thus does the Lord chide you. It happens, also, that the erring Christian's influence over others fades away. "When a man's ways please the Lord He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." But when he gets out of step with God, his enemies take license to rage.

Look at David. Did not the Lord let loose upon him that cursing Shimei and open the mouth of Sheba, the son of Bichri, because he had sinned? As for Solomon, the great king, what cause had he to be afraid of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, or Hadad the Edomite, or Rezon of Damascus—until the day when he had cause to be afraid of his offended God? The lions are chained for Daniel, "the man greatly beloved," but they break loose upon the man who follows afar off, and roar upon him till he denies his Master.

At times the Lord will chasten His servants by taking away all their success in service. They preached and souls were saved. But now they preach and there are no conversions. They went to the Sunday school class and the children's hearts were melted while they taught. It is not so now. Barrenness has fallen upon all their fields. Their land is sown with salt. Their vine forgets her fruit, for the Lord has said, "Inasmuch as you have left Me and sinned against Me, I also will leave you to your devices till you mourn and repent and turn unto Me." May my Lord never thus chide *me*—I would choose any plague rather than that of barrenness.

Moreover, our heavenly Father chides by His Holy Spirit. Many of us know it is for the Spirit of God to speak softly in our hearts and tell us we have done wrong the very moment we have transgressed. And happy is that man who bows before that Voice, for he will thus escape the rod, since the Lord never comes to blows when words will suffice. The Spirit of God often sends home the reproofs of Scripture to our hearts—while we are reading the Word we feel that it searches us and rebukes us! So, also, the Lord will employ His ministers to chide us. Little is that ministry

worth which never chides you! If God never uses His minister as a rod, depend upon it, He will never use him as a pot of manna, for the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna always go together—and he who is God's true servant will be both to your soul.

The Lord will also chide you through your own conscience, causing you to judge and condemn yourself. The Spirit of God will quicken your understanding and then it will be said of you as of David, "David's heart smote him." It is hard hitting when the heart smites, for it comes to such close quarters! But blessed is that man who can thus be corrected—it is a sad sign when conscience is too dead to be of any service in this direction. I believe our heavenly Father, at times, chides His people through Church discipline. I do not mean the discipline carried on by us through the minister, deacons and the Church itself. I refer to that solemn Church discipline which goes on in the Churches and is often unobserved.

Paul said of the disorders in the Corinthian Church, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Now, there is no reason to believe that these visitations of the Lord upon the Churches have ceased. Indeed, I am persuaded they have not. I have seen those who have walked inconsistently in this place die, one after another. When their inconsistencies have not been such as I could touch, but such as have grieved the children of God, the Lord has, Himself, executed discipline.

Many cases which I shall never relate are written down in the tablets of my memory with this verdict, "Removed by the discipline of God." I have seen others blighted in fortune, chastened in body and especially depressed in spirit as the result of grieving the Spirit of God in the Church. Church sins, such as injure peace and unity, dampen zeal and enterprise, or hinder prayer, or grieve holy men, are surely visited with stripes. There is no need for us to root up the tares, for the Spirit of God does it by His own processes. That same spirit that was in Peter and smote Ananias and Sapphira is still in the Church, not destroying *souls*, but taking away *life* or *health* as a solemn discipline upon grave offenses beyond the reach of human jurisdiction.

I do not say that it is so in *all* Churches, for some Churches are barely Churches of Christ at all. But when a Church lives in the light and when the Lord blesses that Church, and the Spirit of God is there, discipline from God will be decisive, for the Lord is very jealous for His name in such places. Depend upon it, one of the most awful conditions a man can hold, while it is also one of the most blessed, is to be in membership with a Church that is much loved and smiled upon by God—for there is a searching wind of discipline sweeping through it continually of a more solemn kind than I shall care further to describe just now.

Now let us ask, *when does God chide?* I will answer very briefly, that He does not chide for every sin. His Word chides for every sin, but I mean that the *Lord* does not, for every fault, actually chasten us in the sense here intended. He is angry when a sin has not been mourned over and re-

pented of. When it is known to be sin and yet committed again—when it threatens to become chronic, so that the man will continue in it and it will become habitual—He is sure to chide. When a sin has special flagrancy about it—when it indulges the grosser lusts, or some utterly contemptible passion—or is associated with pride and presumption, He is sure to chide. Surely, also, He will rebuke when the opulence follows upon high privileges. If you lie in God’s bosom you must watch that you do not offend—a common subject may do without punishment—but he who is the king’s favorite must not even think of it.

We will take from strangers, remarks which would wound us terribly if they came from those we love or friends. If you are among the king’s courtiers he will watch your walk with a jealous eye. Chiding is sure to come when the offender is not in circumstances which would suggest an excuse for his fault, such as a sudden temptation, or a fierce trial. Anything like a deliberate act of sin is certain to bring down the Father’s anger. When the poor man in his extremity acts as he should not to gain bread for his babes, God will never view his offense in the same light as the greed of the man of wealth. Is not that an incidental lesson of Nathan’s parable in which the rich man’s many flocks aggravate his robbery of the poor man’s ewe lamb?

Brethren, the sin which in me may be very grievous, might be comparatively overlooked in you. And the sin which in you is pestilent before high Heaven, might be far less grievous in another Brother whose circumstances are less favorable than yours, whose temptations are stronger and whose natural temperament, perhaps, may have a weakness in that direction. Anyway, the Lord does chasten His people and displays both wisdom and love in so doing.

II. We have been gazing at the black cloud, now let us look at the silver lining. Here is the text, itself, in its sweetness—“HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE.” What does that mean? It means that He will not chide for every fault. Of course, as I have already said, His Word chides even a sinful *thought* in His people, but the Lord does not fall to blows about it—does not grow angry so that we feel His anger for every fault—but only for some, else He would be chiding every minute! It means, too, that He does not chide long. Oh, how often does He just chide for a moment and then He has done, like a mother who speaks an angry word to her child and kisses it the next minute—

***“He will not always chide,
And when His strokes are felt,
His strokes are fewer than our crimes,
And lighter than our guilt.”***

It means, again, that He does not hold any grudges. That is the real meaning of the second clause. The words, “His anger,” are in italics—they are not in the Hebrew—they are supplied by our translators to complete the sense. It means just this, “neither will He keep a grudge against us.” Many will say, “I forgive you,” but you know very well what sort of forgiveness it is. They pardon you because they cannot help themselves and they forgive until the first opportunity comes of showing their spite. Not so with God! He has no grudge against His children. He smites them and has

done with it. Whenever God uses a rod on His children, He always burns it as soon as ever He has done with it. He does not put it up by the mirror as I have seen it in some families, but He destroys it, for He hates the sight of it.

Thus He used Sennacherib as a rod, and then He broke him in pieces. He used Babylon for the same purpose and then blotted it out of existence. He employed Assyria, also, but He destroyed her power. The rod reminds Him of His children's cries and He cannot endure it. The text especially means that there is no eternal wrath for a child of God. He may be angry with me, but my soul, in her deepest agony, clutches at this thought, "He will not *always* chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." Anger forever is for the ungodly. Oh, you unconverted ones, He *will* keep His anger forever against you! So long as God's Word is to be understood as it stands, we shall believe that as surely as His love is everlasting, so is His anger eternal against the impenitent! He will keep His anger forever against *you*, but not against Believers.

Blessed be His name, when the rod makes the bluest welts we may still rejoice that He will not slay us, "neither will He keep His anger forever." I may lie tossing on the bed of pain, but I shall never make my bed in Hell! I may be brought to poverty, but not to Perdition! I may suffer loss, but I shall not, myself, be lost eternally! What a comfort is this! The positive meaning of the text is that the Lord will soon leave off chiding—but *when will He leave off chiding?* Beloved, He will refrain from chastening when we begin *repenting*—when we come to tears—*then* He will cease from rebukes. He wants to make us see the sin and mourn it. And then will He cease to see it and forgive it!

He will chide till we come to Jesus Christ as we came at first. When He brings us to our knees with, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," He will no more send us away unheard than He sent the publican away unblest. Go, poor Prodigal, and weep your confession into your Father's bosom—and He will not make mention of chiding—for He forgives graciously and upbraids not. He will chide us till we forsake our sin. The rod and our backs will never part till our hearts and sin are separated. When we put an end to sin, there shall be an end to chastening. Often the Lord will not refrain from chiding till the results of the sin as well as the sin, itself, shall have been removed. He will chasten us till our bad example shall have been, in a measure, counteracted by our sorrows.

For instance, David's foul sin would have done great mischief to the Church, but David's bitter repentance has become a cure for that evil. When Christian people are able to see that you have to suffer and sorrow because of your sin, then, as far as they are concerned, God's reason for chiding you will have ended—and He will turn to you in infinite mercy. Do you inquire of me, *why is it that God will not always chide His people?* Blessed be God, there are many reasons for it! One is because He does not mean to confuse chastisement with punishment! The Law is angry *forever*, but the Gospel is full of *pity*. God would not have His children treated as if they were slaves—they have not come to Sinai, but to Zion.

Moreover, if the Lord *did* always chide, our spirits would fall before Him, for we would be crushed. When He rebukes, our beauty fades away like the moth. And if He continued to do so we should die. It is always a sad thing, when a parent crushes a child's spirit, as is sometimes done, and the child is made obedient and stupid, too. God will not thus injure His children and, therefore, He will not always chide. To chide too much might lead to other sins, for if the sin is love of pleasure, we might be chided into despondency, unbelief, despair and I know not what! The great Father stays His hand, lest in driving out one devil He should drive 10 in, as some parents do.

He will not always chide, lest His enemies should exult over His people, for they are always ready to say, "Aha, so we would have it." The wicked world is glad to exult over a chastened saint, but we can say, "Rejoice not over *me*, O my enemy, for the Lord will not always chide." He has said, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercy will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord my Redeemer." After all, remember that when God chastens His children He loves them just as much as when He caresses them. There is no change in Jehovah's love, though there may be changes in His ways of showing it.

It never *pleases* God to chasten His children. He does not afflict willingly. When He sees His beloved broken down and humble, He is pleased with their *humility*. But He grieves for their *misery*. Judgment is His strange work. He delights to see His people rejoice—He is a happy God—and He loves to have a happy people. Now, if he always chastened them, they would be always wretched and, therefore, He will not always chide lest the sweet fruits of the Spirit, which are joy and peace, should never be brought forth in their souls.

Beloved, are you being chided this morning? Then let me give you this word of good cheer—when you were a sinner, dead in sin and had no thought of Him nor desire towards Him, yet He came to you in love. Do you think that *now* He will reject you? You whom He has bought with blood? You who have lain in His bosom? You who have known, in days gone by, sweet fellowship with Him on the hill Mizer and the Hermonites? Will He now forsake you? Oh no, He will turn again! He will have compassion upon you, for, "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever."

And now, Brothers and Sisters, learn the lessons of the whole subject. The first inference is—here is consolation for the house of Israel! The Jews have been chided and God's anger has smoked against His chosen. But they will be gathered together one day—and the fullness of the Jews shall be brought to the feet of Jesus. Let Israel write this over her synagogues and let believing Jews inscribe this upon their doorposts—"He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." His dear people, Israel, He has not put away forever, for "where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? says the Lord." He will yet bring the seed of Abraham to Himself and comfort them in His bosom.

Let this be a lesson, also, to ministers. We have to chide, sometime, by preaching the Law and the terrors of the wrath to come. But we must not let a sharp tone *rule* our ministry. Our preaching must be quick and powerful, but as God does not always chide, so neither must we! There is to be the thunder and the lightning, but there must be the soft shower after it—we must not always chide. This is equally a lesson to all of you. If God will not always chide, then *you* must not. Have you a child who has done wrong? Chide, by all means, but do not *always* chide! There is the difficulty involved in the example to the rest of the family, but still I pray you forgive, for your Lord says He will not always chide. God is wiser than we are—and if it would be right always to chide, God would have done it—but He acts otherwise.

What the Lord does is a model for us, let us copy it. If He would always chide us where should we be? But He will not. Therefore I beseech you, forgive the wrong, forgive the wrong at once and take your child to your heart. Mark your disapprobation of the offense, kind Christian parent, but still forgive your child! Be angry and sin not—and you can only be so by not being angry too much or too long. Here, too, let us say, do not always find fault. Condemn the fault, mistresses, if there is a wrong in the servant—and speak of it very plainly—but do not be always complaining of your servants, or, as people call it, “nagging at them.” For if you do, they will very soon hate you and all chance of doing them good will be gone. By perpetually finding fault you will make them eye-servers or unhappy employees.

Do not always blame, but praise when it is due. Certain people never praise anybody. They think it will puff them up and spoil them. How many times in a year do I receive the following fatherly advice, “I hope your work will last and I pray that you may be kept humble,” and so on. A good lady once told me that she prayed every day for me, that I might not be proud. I replied, “You put me in mind of my own neglect, for I have never prayed that prayer for you and must begin.” “Oh, no,” she said, “there is no occasion for *that*, there is no danger of *my* being proud.” “Then,” I said, “I had better begin at once, for you are proud already.”

These people think a vast deal of themselves if they imagine that a little of their praise would exalt us above measure. I believe that a judicious word of encouragement and commendation is often more useful than censure—and certainly censure has all the more effect when it comes from one who has spoken justly of you on former occasions. Children and servants will not thrive on perpetual chiding any more than a horse on constant whipping. A very good gentleman had a faithful manservant who came to him one day after 10 years’ service and said, “Sir, I must leave you.” “How is that?” the gentleman asked, “have I not treated you well?” “I have no fault to find,” was the answer. “Have not I paid you enough? Do you need more?” “Oh, no, Sir,” he said, “but sometimes, do you know, when we have been traveling together and have roughed it both on sea and land, if you had spoken one kind word to me I would have stuck to you as long as you lived. But you have never spoken to me except when you gave your orders.” Our honest faithful dependents look for encour-

agement and they ought to have it. The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic writers speak well of good men and so should we.

The last word concerns God's dealings with us. That is the chief thought of the text. Let us carry it away with us. He is chiding you, dear Sister. He is chiding you, my Brother, but do not think that it will last forever. "He will not always chide." The sun went down last night and a little child who had never noticed it before might have cried and said, "Father, Father, the sun is gone away! I saw him go down behind the hills. It is dark! What shall we do?" "Oh," you say to him, "do not fear, my Baby, he will be up again tomorrow." Go, then, and tell every broken heart that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The Lord may chide today but He will kiss tomorrow! Now the smarting of His rod are terrible—tomorrow the sweetness of His love will be entrancing!

Be of good courage, then! Go to your offended Father speedily and confess the wrong which brought you chastisement. Humble yourself in His sight and He will smile again! Forgive others, and then expect to be forgiven yourself, for verily, verily I say unto you, the time of the opening of the dungeons is come! The night of mourning is almost over! You soon shall rejoice in the Lord!—

***"Come, let us to the Lord our God
With contrite heart return!
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.
His voice commands the tempest forth,
And stills the stormy wave;
And though His arm is strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save."***

Therefore, be of good courage, all you that hope in the Lord! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 103.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
103 (VERSE 1), 136 (VERSE 1), 211.**

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

IN THE HAY FIELD

NO. 757

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He causes the grass to grow for the cattle.”
Psalm 104:14.*

WE who are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brick are very likely to forget the seasons altogether. And our friends who live out in the green country and see the changing seasons, are quite as apt to hear the voices of the seasons with their ears only, and not to learn the inward meaning with their *hearts*. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter are God's four Evangelists whom He sends into this world to teach those who are willing to be taught. But the most of men are far too much intent upon the problem of how they may be fed to care for spiritual instruction.

“He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” As for others, in whom the god of this world is reigning, they will not hear though Heaven, and earth, and Hell should mingle their voices into one great thunder-clap. Just now all the world is busy with ingathering the hay, and you could scarcely ride for a few minutes in the country without enjoying the delicious fragrance of the hay field and hearing the sharpening of the mower's scythe.

I believe there is a Gospel in the hay field, and that Gospel we intend, this morning, to bring out as we may be enabled. Our text conducts us at once to the spot and we shall therefore need no preface. “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle”—three things we shall notice. First, that grass is, in itself, instructive. Secondly, that grass is far more so when God is seen in it. And thirdly, that by the growth of grass for the cattle, the ways of Divine Grace may be illustrated.

I. First then, “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle.” Here we have something WHICH IS, IN ITSELF, INSTRUCTIVE. There is scarcely any emblem, with the exception of water and light, which you will find more frequently used by inspiration than the grass of the field. In the first place the grass may be instructively looked upon as the symbol of our mortality, “All flesh is grass.”

The whole history of man may be seen in the meadow. He springs up green and tender, subject to the frosts of infancy which imperil his young life. He grows. He comes to maturity. He puts on beauty even as the grass is adorned with flowers and the meadows are bedecked with varied hues. But after awhile his strength departs and his beauty is wrinkled even as the grass withers, and is followed by a fresh generation, which withers in its turn. Like ourselves, the grass ripens but to decay.

The eons of men come to maturity in due time, and then decline and wither as the green herb. Some of the grass is not left to come to ripeness at all, but the mower's scythe suddenly removes it, even as swift-footed Death overtakes the careless children of Adam. “In the morning it flour-

ishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers. For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.” “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

This is very humbling for us to remember, but we need frequently to be reminded of it, or we dream of immortality beneath the stars. We *are* and we are *not*! We are not substance but shadow! Our years are as a shadow which declines and, as for our age, it is gone as a weaver’s shuttle. We pass away like the swift ships. We fly as the eagle. We burst as the bubble. We sink back into the wave of time that bears us as the foam dissolves into the sea—

**“Great God, how infinite are You!
What worthless worms are we!”**

We ought never to tread upon the grass without remembering that whereas the green sod covers our graves, it also reminds us of them. And it preaches, with every blade it has, a sermon to us concerning our mortality of which the text is, “all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.” In the second place, grass is frequently used in Scripture as an emblem of the wicked. David tells us from his own experience that the heart of a righteous man is apt to grow envious of the wicked when he sees the prosperity of the ungodly.

We have seen them spreading themselves like green bay trees, and apparently fixed and rooted in their places. And when we have smarted under our own troubles, and felt that all the day long we were scourged, and chastened every morning, we have been apt to say, “How is this just? How can this be consistent with the moral government of God?” But we are reminded that in a short time we shall pass by the place of the wicked, and lo, it shall not be. We shall diligently consider his place, and lo, it shall not be, for he is soon cut down as the grass, and withers as the green herb. The grass withers, the flower fades away, and even so shall pass away forever the glory and excellence of those who build upon the estate of time, and dig for lasting comfort in the mines of earth.

It is true the kings of the earth are most often on the side of evil, and the great ones with their pompous State are usually against the Most High. But let not God’s people mourn, though waters of a full cup be wrung out of them, for the portion of the wicked is not forever. They shall have their day and then shall come their endless night. They are set in lofty places, but they also stand in slippery places. They shall be brought to destruction as in a moment. “As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.”

O, you who know not the Lord, and rest not in the atonement of the Lord Jesus, see to what an end you shall come—your end shall be the oven! As the Eastern farmer gathers up the green herb and despite its former beauty, casts it into the furnace, such must be your lot, O vainglorious Sinners! Thus will the Judge command His angels, “Bind them up in bundles to burn.” Where, now, is your merriment? Where, now, is your confidence? Where, now, is your pride and your pomp? Where, now, your

boasts and your loud-mouthed blasphemies? They are silenced forever, for, as the thorns crackle under the pot but are speedily consumed and leave nothing but a handful of white ashes, so shall it be with the wicked! They shall pass away in the fire of God's wrath, and the flames shall utterly consume them.

It is more pleasing to remember that the grass is used in Scripture as a picture of the elect of God. The wicked are comparable to the dragons of the wilderness, but God's own people shall spring up in their place, for it is written, "In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." The desert of sin shall yet be verdant with Divine Grace. The elect are compared to grass because of their number as they shall be in the latter days and because of the of their rapid growth.

You remember the passage, "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains. The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." O that the long expected day might soon come, when God's people should no longer be a little flock, but when a multitude shall come to Christ and the Redeemer shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied! It is said of Zion's children, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses"—two of the fastest growing things we know of—so shall a nation be born in a day!

So shall crowds be converted at once, for when the Spirit of God shall be mightily at work in the midst of the Church, men shall fly unto Christ as doves fly to their windows, so that the astonished Church shall cry, "These, where had they been?" O that we might live to see the age of gold—the time which Prophets have foretold and longed for—when the company of God's people shall be as innumerable as the blades of grass in the meadows! Then Grace and Truth shall flourish where once everything was barrenness.

How like the grass are God's people for this reason, that they are absolutely dependent upon the influences of Heaven! Our fields are parched if vernal showers and gentle dews are withheld—and what are our *souls* without the gracious visitations of the Spirit? Sometimes through severe trials our wounded hearts are like the mown grass, and then we have the promise, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." Our sharp troubles have taken away our beauty, and lo, the Lord visits us, and we revive again!

Thank God for that old saying which is a gracious doctrine as well as a true proverb, "Each blade of grass has its own drop of dew." God is pleased to give His own peculiar mercies to *each one* of His own people. "Your blessing is upon Your people." The river of God, which is full of water, waters the Church which is a vineyard in which every vine is so dependent upon God that He must be its heavenly dew, or it will dry up at once. As you look at the fields of grass, think of them as being comparable to the great company of the redeemed whom God shall make to grow upon the face of the earth!

Once again, grass is comparable to the food with which the Lord supplies the necessities of His chosen ones. Take the 23rd Psalm and you have

the metaphor worked out in the sweetest form of pastoral song. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” Just as the sheep has nourishment according to its nature, and this nourishment is abundantly found for it by its shepherd so that it not only feeds, but then lies down in the midst of the fodder, satiated with plenty, and perfectly content and at ease—even so are the people of God when Jesus Christ leads them into the pastures of the Covenant, and opens up to them the precious Truths of God upon which their souls shall be fed.

Beloved, have we not proven that promise true in this House of Prayer? “In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”? Why, my soul has sometimes fed upon Christ till I have felt as if I could receive no more, and then I have laid down in the bounty of my God to take my rest, satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

Whenever you see the sheep at noontide, resting in the rich herbage beneath the spreading oak, think of that enquiry of Solomon when he said, “Tell me where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon.” And when you see the herds with all their needs supplied both in summer and in winter, then sing with the Psalmist, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Thus you see the grass, itself, is not without instruction for those who will incline their ear. It is a memorial of our mortality, and of the passing away of the wicked. It is a picture of the elect of God when watered with the dew of Heaven, and an emblem of the spiritual meat with which God will satisfy the sheep of His pasture.

II. In the second place, GOD IS SEEN IN THE GROWING OF THE GRASS. He is seen, first, as a Worker, “He causes the grass to grow.” He is seen secondly as a Caretaker, He causes the grass to grow for the cattle.

1. First, as a Worker, God is to be seen in every blade of grass if we have but eyes to discern Him. A blind world this, which always talks about “natural laws,” and “the effects of natural causes,” but forgets that laws cannot operate of themselves, and that natural causes, so called, are not causes at all unless the First Cause shall set them in motion. The old Romans used to say, God thundered, God rained. We say, it thunders, it rains. What “it”? All those expressions are subterfuges to escape from the thought of God.

We commonly say, “How wonderful are the works of nature!” What is “nature”? Do you know what nature is? I remember a lecturer in the street, an infidel, speaking about nature, and he was asked by a Christian man standing by whether he would tell him what nature was. “Walk in the fields, and see nature”—“nature did this and nature did that”—these are common phrases but is there any meaning in them? Is not that an old heathen way of talking?

If we see aright, we see God working *everywhere*. We frequently talk as if we were trying to thrust our God into the distance. Our good old forefathers, the Puritans, when they wanted rain, used to pray that God would unstop the bottles of Heaven. At another time that He would be pleased to bind up the clouds, that there might not be too much rain. We run to the

barometer, or grumble at the bad weather. They referred all natural phenomena to the Most High and were accustomed to see Him at work in all the events of life.

We have grown so wise nowadays that we find a thousand second causes interposing between the world and its Maker. Unhappy is the wisdom whose boasted discoveries would gladly push us away from our heavenly Father into a wild sea of laws and second causes. To my mind it would be even better if we could get back to the untutored mind of the Indian who sees God in every cloud and hears Him in the wind. We *need* our God—we are like orphans without Him—and it is well to be reminded, in the simple language of the text, that He is very near us, for He makes the grass to grow for the cattle.

The simple production of grass is not the result of natural law apart from the actual work of God. Mere law would be inoperative unless the great Master Himself sent a thrill of power through the matter which is regulated by the law—unless, like the steam engine which puts force into all the spinning-jennies and wheels of a cotton-mill—God Himself were the motive power to make every wheel revolve. How I could fall down and find rest on the grass as on a royal couch, now that I know that my God is there at work for His creatures!

Having asked you to see God as a Worker, I want you to make use of this—therefore I bid you see God in *common* things. He makes the grass to grow—grass is a common thing. You see it every day everywhere, yet there is God in it. Dissect it and pull it to pieces. There are the attributes of God illustrated in every single flower of the field, and in every green leaf. Come, my Friends, see God in your common matters, your daily afflictions, your common joys, your everyday mercies. Do not say, “I must see a miracle before I see God.” In truth, *everything* is a miracle, *everything* wonderful, *everything* teeming with marvel.

See God in the bread upon the table and the water in your cup. It will be the happiest way of living if you can say in each Providential circumstance, “My Father has done all this.” See Him in common things, I say, and see Him in *little* things. The little things of life are the greatest troubles. A man will bear that his house is burned down more quietly than he will bear to see an ill-cooked piece of meat upon his table—when he reckoned upon its being done to a turn. It is the little stone which gets into the shoe and makes the pilgrim limp. Oh, but to see God in little things, to believe that there is as much the Presence of God in a sere leaf falling from the elm as in the avalanche which crushes a village!

O, to believe that the guidance of every drop of spray, when the wave breaks on the rock, is as much under the hand of God as the guidance of the mightiest planet when steered in its courses! To see God in the little as well as in the great is true wisdom! Think, too, of God working in the solitary things, for the grass does not merely grow around our populous cities, and where men take care of it, but up there on the side of the bleak Alps where no traveler has ever passed! Where only the eyes of the wild bird has beheld their lovely verdure, the moss and the grass come to per-

fection and display all their beauty, for God's works are fair to other eyes than those of mortals.

And you, solitary child of God, dwelling far away from any friend, unknown and obscure in a remote hamlet. Or you in the midst of London, hiding away in your little attic, unknown to fame, and forsaken by friendship—you are not forgotten by the love of Heaven. He makes the grass to grow all alone, and shall not He make you flourish in loneliness? He can bring forth your graces and educate you for the skies in solitude and neglect. The grass, you know, is a thing we tread upon—nobody thinks of grass—men pass over it and have no compassion for the stems which bend beneath their weight, and yet *God* makes it grow.

Perhaps you are oppressed and down-trodden, but let not this depress your spirit, for God executes righteousness for all those that are oppressed. He makes the grass to grow, and He can make your heart to flourish under all the oppressions and afflictions of life so that you shall still be happy and holy though all the world marches over you—still living in the immortal life which God Himself bestows upon you though Hell itself set its heel upon you! Poor and needy one, unknown, unobserved, oppressed and down-trodden, God makes the grass to grow and He *will* take care of *you*.

As I turned over this text in my mind, to catch the various gleams of light which glance from it as from a prism, I thought, "How many are those blades of grass!" Set a child to count them, even in one acre, and how long the task will occupy—and yet each one of those blades God makes to grow as much as if there were not another in all the field! So with all the myriads of God's people—He preserves each child as if He had no other.

He loves as much every single one of all the blood-bought seed as if it were the only object of Divine Grace, the only one that should sing within the pearly gates. Be of good comfort, then—the God who abounds in mercy towards the grass of the field will not forget you.

2. But I said we should see in the text God also as a great Caretaker. "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle." Does God, then, care for oxen, or does He say it altogether for our sakes? "You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn," shows that God has a care for the beasts of the field. But it shows much more than that, namely, that He would have those who work for Him fed as they work. God cares for the beasts, and makes grass to grow for them. Then, my Soul, though sometimes you have said with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You," yet God cares for you.

Do you remember our sermon upon "The Ravens' Cry"? [Volume 12, #672.] "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry"—there you have an instance of His care for birds, and here we have His care for beasts. And though you, my Hearer, may seem to yourself to be as black and defiled as a raven, and as far from anything spiritually good as the beasts, yet take comfort from this text! He gives to beasts their food, and He will give to you, though you think yourself to be beast-like, what your spirit needs at His hands. Observe, He cares for these beasts

who are helpless in caring for themselves. The cattle could not plant the grass, nor cause it to grow.

Though they can do nothing in the matter, yet He does it all for them. He causes the grass to grow. You who are as helpless as oxen to help yourselves, who can only stand and moan out your misery, and know not what to do—God can prevent you in His loving kindness, and favor you in His tenderness. Now let the bleating of your prayer go up to Heaven! Let the moans of your desires go up to Him, poor guilty ones, and help shall come to you though you cannot help yourselves.

We generally say beasts are dumb and speechless things, yet God makes the grass grow for them. Will He hear those that cannot speak, and will He not hear those who can? The beasts shed no tears of penitence and pour forth no sobs and sighs of fervent prayer, and yet their needs are supplied! Will God let that poor young man yonder continue month after month seeking Him, and will He not be found of him? Shall that poor woman's briny tears all fall in vain, that poor broken heart cry out in bitterness, and meet with no response?

Shall the Lord of Mercy answer the beasts, and not hear men who are made in His own image? Since our God views, with kind consideration, the cattle in the field, He will surely have compassion upon His own sons and daughters when they desire to seek His face. How often the cattle are oppressed by man! I am sure it is painful to see them driven through these streets, bruised and faint, with their poor tongues hanging out of their thirsty mouths. I wish the authorities would provide suitable drinking troughs for them, for at present their sufferings are a disgrace to our city.

It is frequently so sickening a sight to see poor tortured cattle in our thoroughfares, that it makes one long to fly from such brutality, and cry—

***“Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless mass of shade,
Where sights of cruel men and maddened beasts
Might never reach us more.”***

Yet the great God looks after those poor dumb cattle whom men despise! Comfortable thought for some of you who are of the meekest and lowliest spirit. You despise yourselves, and others despise you, but He who causes the grass to grow for the *cattle* has an eye to you! Man may have nothing for you but strokes from the rod. Thoughtless, heartless man may goad and vex your spirit and drive you through the streets of this busy world without so much as a drop of comfort to cool your burning tongue and fevered brain when you are fainting with many cares and fears. But God thinks of you, God cares for you still.

When your father and your mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up. The cattle, forlorn as they are, have God to think of them and so have you. Shall they be silently trustful, and will you be noisily complaining? There is this also to be said—God not only *thinks* of the cattle, taking care of them—but the food which He provides for them is fit food! He causes grass to grow for the cattle, just the sort of food which ruminants require. Even thus the Lord God provides fit sustenance for His people.

Depend upon Him by faith and wait upon Him in prayer—and you shall have food convenient for you.

You shall find in God's mercy just that which your nature desires, suitable supplies for your grievous needs. This convenient food the Lord takes care to reserve for the cattle, for no one eats the cattle's food but the cattle. There is grass for them and nobody else cares for it, and thus it is kept for them. Even so, God has a special food for His own people—He knows how to preserve it, too, and keep it for them and them only. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

Though the grass is free to all men who choose to eat it, yet no creature cares for it except the cattle for whom it is prepared. And though the Grace of God is free to all men, yet no man cares for it except the elect of God for whom He prepared it, and whom He prepares to receive it. There is as much reserve of the grass for the cattle as if there were walls around it—no one else eats it—no one else cares for it. And so, though the Grace of God is free, and there is no bound set round about it, yet it is as much reserved as if it were restricted—and none might receive it but the elect of God.

God is seen in the grass as the Worker and the Caretaker. Then let us see His hand in Providence at all times. Let us see it and lean upon it, not only when we have abundance, but even when we have none, for the grass is preparing for the cattle even in the depth of winter. God is preparing and breaking the soil. He is sending the juices into the roots, giving the roots a little rest that they may afterwards bring forth abundance. And you, you sons of sorrow, in your trials and troubles, are still cared for by God. He has an end to serve in all your griefs and miseries. He will accomplish His own Divinely gracious purpose in you—only be still and see the salvation of God! Every winter's night has a direct connection with the joyous days of mowing and reaping, and each time of grief is linked to future joy.

II. Our third head is most interesting. GOD'S WORKING IN THE GRASS FOR THE CATTLE GIVES US ILLUSTRATIONS CONCERNING DIVINE GRACE. I ask every Christian here to give me his earnest attention for a few minutes, and I think he may hear something which may cheer him. I will suppose that I am soliloquizing, and I will say to myself as I read the text, "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle. Here I perceive a satisfying provision for that form of creature.

"Now, *I* am also a creature, but I am a nobler creature than the cattle! I cannot imagine, for a moment, that God will provide all that the cattle needs and not provide for *me*. But naturally I feel uneasy. I cannot find in this world what I want—if I were to win all its riches I should still be discontented—and when I have all that heart could wish of time's treasures, yet still my heart feels as if it were empty. There must be somewhere or other something that will satisfy me as a man with an immortal soul.

"God altogether satisfies the ox. He must, therefore, have something or other that would altogether satisfy *me* if I could get it! There is the grass—the cattle get it—and when they have eaten their share, they lie down and

seem perfectly contented. Now, all I have ever found, as an unconverted man, has never satisfied me so that I could lie down and be content. There must be, then, something *somewhere* that would content me if I could get at it.”

Is not that good reasoning? I ask both the Christian and the unbeliever to go with me so far. But then let us proceed another step: “The cattle do get what they need—not only is the grass provided, but they get it. Well, then, why should not *I* obtain what *I* need? I find my soul hungering and thirsting after something more than I can see with my eyes or hear with my ears. There must be *something* to satisfy my soul—why should not I find it? The cattle find that which satisfies them—why should I not obtain what would satisfy me? There must be such a thing. I cannot suppose that my heavenly Father made me as a creature without making something, also, that could satisfy my largest desires. There is such a thing, and surely if the cattle get what they need, I shall not be left unsupplied.”

Then, I begin to ask in prayer, “What is this which You, O God, have provided to satisfy my soul?” And while I am praying, I also meditate and think, “Well, God has given to the cattle something which is consonant to their nature—they are nothing but flesh, and flesh is grass—there is therefore grass for their flesh. But, then, though I am flesh, I am something else besides, I am *spirit*. Then, if I am to get something to satisfy me, it must be *spiritual*—a spiritual meat. Where is it?”

When I turn to God’s Word, I find there that though the grass withers, the Word of the Lord endures forever, and the Word which God speaks unto us is spirit and life. “Oh, then,” I say, “*here* is something spiritual for my spiritual nature, something suitable to me as an immortal being.” O may God help me to know what that spiritual meat is and enable me to lay hold upon it, for I perceive that though God provides the grass for the cattle, the cattle must eat it themselves. They are not fed if they lie down and refuse to come and eat!

Then what must I do? Must I imitate the cattle and eat that which God provides for me? What do I find provided in Scripture? I find the Lord Jesus Christ laid down as the Food of my soul. I am told that He came into this world to suffer, and bleed, and die instead of me, and that if I trust in Him I shall be saved. And being saved, the thoughts of His love will give solace and joy to me and be my strength, the strength of my life and my portion forever. I do not find the cattle bringing any purchase money to the pasture, but they enter it and receive their portion—they open their mouths and receive what they need.

Even so do I, by an act of faith in Jesus. Lord, give me Grace to feed upon Christ! Make me hunger and thirst after Him! Give me the faith by which I may be a receiver of Him, so that I may be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord. I think my text, though it looked small, begins to grow and swell as we meditate upon it!

Now, I want to introduce you to a few more thoughts on this matter as illustrations of Divine Grace. Preventing Grace may here be seen in a symbol. Before the cattle were made, in this world there was grass. We find in the first chapter of Genesis God provided the grass *before* He cre-

ated the cattle. And what a mercy that there were Covenant supplies for God's people *before* they were in the world! He had given His Son Jesus Christ to die, to be the Sponsor and Surety of the elect, *before* Adam was made in the garden. Long before sin came into the world, the everlasting mercy of God foresaw the damages of sin and provided a Refuge for every elect soul.

Oh, what a mercy it is for me, that, before I hunger, God has prepared for my hunger! That before I thirst, God has opened the rock in the wilderness to leap forth with crystal streams to satisfy the thirst of my soul! See what Sovereign Grace can do! Before the cattle come to the pasture, the grass is grown for them, and before I feel my need of Divine mercy, that mercy is provided for me! Then I perceive an illustration of Free Grace, for wherever the ox comes into the field, he brings no money with him. There is the food ready for him, but he brings *nothing* with which to purchase it.

So I, poor needy sinner, having nothing, come and receive Christ without money and without price. He makes the grass to grow for the cattle, and so He does provide Grace for my needy soul, though I have now no money, no virtue, no excellence of my own! And why is it, my Friends, why is it that God gives the cattle the grass? You will perhaps be surprised when I say to you that the reason is because they belong to Him. Here is a text to prove it. "The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." That is why He provides grass for them—because they are *His own property*.

How is it that Christ is provided for God's people? Because "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Of every herd of cattle in the world, God could say, "They are Mine." Long before the farmer put his brand, God had set His creating mark upon it. They are God's making, preserving, and feeding altogether. So, before the stamp of Adam's Fall was set upon our brow, the stamp of electing love was set there. "In Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Another thing may, perhaps, surprise you still more! God feeds the cattle because He has entered into a Covenant with them to do so. "What? A covenant with *cattle*!" says somebody. Yes! Truly so, for when God spoke to His servant Noah, in that day when all the cattle came out of the ark, we find Him saying, "I establish My Covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the *cattle*, and of every beast of the earth with you." So there was a Covenant, you see, made with the cattle, and that Covenant was that seedtime and harvest should not fail. Therefore the earth brings forth for them, and the Lord causes the grass to grow.

Does Jehovah keep His Covenant with *cattle*, and will He not keep His Covenant with His own beloved? Ah, it is because His chosen people are His covenanted ones in the Person of the Lord Jesus that He provides for them all that they shall need in time and in eternity, and satisfies them out of the fullness of His everlasting love! Once, again, God feeds the cattle and then the cattle praise Him. We find David saying in the 148th

Psalm, "Praise the Lord...you beasts and all cattle." They have their music for God! The Lord feeds His people in order that they may praise Him, to the end that their glory may sing praise unto Him and not be silent. While other creatures give glory to God, let the redeemed of the Lord especially say so, whom He has delivered out of the hand of the enemy.

Nor even yet is our text quite exhausted. Turning one moment from the cattle, I want you to notice the grass. It is said of the grass, "He causes the grass to grow"—here is a mighty blow to free will, because if the grass does not grow without God's *causing* it to grow, how is it that Divine Grace should be found in the human heart apart from Divine operations? Surely Grace is a much more wonderful product of Divine wisdom and more complicated than the grass can be! And if Grace does not grow without a Divine cause, depend upon it, Grace does not dwell in us without a Divine implantation! And if I have so much as one blade of Grace growing within me, I must trace it all to God's Divine will.

As the grass all depends upon God's causing it to grow, so the Divine Grace we have depends upon God's constant kindness and tender loving mercy to make it ripen to perfection. You are a babe as yet in Grace, and that you are alive unto God at all is due to God's quickening power. But if ever you are to attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, that must be due to the continuous putting forth of the Divine energy. There is no *having* Grace, and no *growing* in Grace except God gives us *both* the one and the other—for if He causes grass to grow, much more must Grace come from Him.

Again, if God thinks it worth His while to make grass, and take care of it, and make it grow, much more will He think it to His honor to cause His Grace to grow in my heart. If the great invisible Spirit, whose thoughts are high and lofty, condescends to look after that humble thing which grows by the hedge, surely He will condescend to watch over His own nature which He calls the incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever! Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, was much comforted when he took up a little piece of moss and saw the wisdom and power of God in that lonely piece of verdant loveliness.

So when I introduce you today to the fields ripe and ready for the mower, how your hearts ought to leap for joy to see how God has produced the grass, caring for it all through the weary months of the long-delayed spring—and the rigorous cold of a suddenly perpetuated winter—until, at last, He sent the genial rain and sunshine, and brought the fields to their proper condition. And so, my Soul, though you may have many a frost and biting winter, and much to bear with, yet He causes the grass to grow, and He will cause *you* to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Once again, you perceive that the grass does not grow without an object—the grass grows *for* the cattle. And then you know what the cattle grow for—they grow for *man*! So the whole business comes to a point. But, then, what does *man* grow for? That is the next question. Then, my Soul, if there is any good thing growing in you, it is for a purpose—and you, yourself, if you are favored with Divine manifestation, are blessed for a

purpose! And as the grass does not refuse to be fed upon by the cattle, take care that you do not refuse to yield yourself unto God!

And as the cattle do not refuse to give themselves up to labor and slaughter, so bow yourself and render yourself to God, for God has an end in sparing and blessing you, and preserving you, and strewing your path with kindnesses. Take care that you do not miss this end, for to gain it will be your happiness as well as God's glory. It should be your chief end on earth to serve Him, and to glorify Him forever above. I draw to a close when I have noticed that the existence of the grass is necessary to complete the chain of nature.

There would be no cattle if there were no grass—and no cattle, no something else—so the whole chain would go to pieces. So the meanest child of God is necessary to the family. They in Heaven without *us* cannot be made perfect—the little ones are as necessary to God's family as the great ones. The Lord cannot, *will* not, put you away from it, my desponding Friends, because, though you cannot see it, you are one stone in the building. And if you are taken away, what becomes of the next, and the next? Perhaps every heir of Heaven is necessary to complete the purpose of God. I said "perhaps," but we know it to be so, for we are told by Paul that we are the fullness of Christ.

The church is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Nature would be incomplete without the trembling grass blade, and the economy of Divine Grace would be incomplete without you, Mr. Fearing, and you, Mrs. Much-Afraid. You are necessary to complete the Divine purpose—in order to let it be seen, world without end, that God is not defeated—that since Christ loved His own, He loved them to the end. And so He can say, "Of all which He has given Me, I have lost nothing."

Oh, how blessed it is to think of this! Since we are all thus necessary, if saved by Grace, let us begin this morning to bless and to praise the God of Providence and Grace! While the grass, with its verdure, serves God by beautifying the earth. And while the cattle take their turn, also, in the economy of creation, let each Christian say to himself, "Lord, what would You have me do?" And having found it, whatever our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our might.

The Lord bless these remarks to you, and make them profitable to your souls for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

NO. 529

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1863,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The trees of the Lord are full of sap. The cedars of Lebanon,
 which He has planted.”*
Psalm 104:16.

IF Solomon were here this morning, who spoke of all trees, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar that is in Lebanon, he would greatly instruct us in the natural history of the cedar and, at the same time, uttering allegories and proverbs of wisdom, he would give us apples of gold in baskets of silver. But since the Lord Jesus Christ has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” we can dispense with the company of Solomon. For if Christ is present, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Solomon probably would confine his remarks simply to the physical conformation and botany of the wonderful tree. But our Lord, I trust, will speak to our hearts this morning concerning those who are “planted in the courts of the Lord,” and therefore flourish like cedars. May our communications this morn be blessed to us while we talk of those trees of the Lord, those plants of His own right hand planting which grow in the garden of the Lord.

I shall have to say some things this morning which are not for beginners in the Gospel school. I shall have to handle some lofty matters which belong to the more advanced of the Lord’s family. For Lebanon is a high hill and the ascent is very craggy. The pathway to the summit is not for the feet of babes—it is rather fit for those lion-like men, those men of experience—who, by reason of use, have had their feet made like hind’s feet that they may stand on the high places. Follow me as I may be led of the Spirit to climb that arduous pathway. Let us stand this morning under the venerable shadow of those ancient cedars which, to this very day, are the Lord’s witnesses and are as before, full of sap—the cedars of Lebanon, which the Lord has planted.

There are three things I shall bring before your attention this morning, in the cedars of Lebanon. First of all, *the absence of all human cultivation*. Secondly, *the presence of Divine care*. And thirdly, *the fullness of vital principle*.

You may not see all this at first, but remember that our translation is not exactly correct. You will observe that the word “sap,” is inserted in italics—it is not there in the Hebrew. “The trees of the Lord are full,” or rather, which gives the meaning clearly, “The trees of the Lord are satiated—are satisfied—the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted.”

I. That rendering of the text gives me my first point. We see in yonder venerable trees, crowning the ridge of the Lebanese range, THE ABSENCE OF ALL HUMAN CULTIVATION.

1. Note first, that these trees are peculiarly the Lord's trees, because *they owe their planting entirely to Him*. "The cedars of Lebanon, which *He* has planted." No diligent hands dug the soil, no careful farmer dropped in the fruitful cone. How those ancient giants of the grove came there, no tongue can tell. It must be left among the mysteries. Perhaps the waters of the tremendous deluge washed up the cones and laid them safely upon the ledge of rock at the top of the hill, and there they sprouted and grew. That would be but a guess. We must leave the early planting of those mighty trees among the secrets which belong unto God. Certain it is that they owe nothing to men, that there is not a tree of Lebanon of which we may not safely say, "This is one of the cedars which *the Lord has planted*."

Beloved, it is quite true of every child of God. The Lord uses instrumentality, but the instrument has no real power except as God puts power into it. If we have been converted, we were not converted of ourselves, of the energy of our own free will. We are not self-planted, but God-planted. If we have been turned from nature's darkness to marvelous light, it was not through the oratory or eloquence of the minister. If so, our religion would be in vain. It was God whose fiat said, "Let the light be," and light was.

It was He who said, "Let that dried branch be planted in My garden," and planted we were—and grow we must—and shall, while He supports us. The mysterious finger of the Divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which He had Himself prepared for its reception. And there it sprang up and continued to grow from the tender shoot until it towered aloft as a goodly cedar of mighty girth. Every true heir of Heaven, like the cedar, owns the Great Farmer as His planter.

2. As I look upon those noble trees, I note that *they are not dependant upon man for their watering*. Yonder trees in the plain are fertilized by little canals running at their roots, and therefore are they green. But these on the top of Lebanon, who shall find a stream for them? Who shall bring the rivers of water to their feet? How shall the gardener empty his bucket, that they may drink? No, there they stand on the lofty rock, not moistened by human irrigation. And yet your heavenly Father supplies them. The clouds, those wandering cisterns of the sky, arrested by their branches, hover round them and at last pour down in deluges the fructifying rain.

Or the ledges of the rock retain the streamlets which trickle from Lebanon's snowy peaks and then the roots of the cedar drink up the nourishment which they require. But man has nothing to do with it. Man's cultivation withers in the plain below. When autumn comes, the fields are all dry and parched. Man only preserves to himself a little spot of green by perpetually using the processes of irrigation, but these cedars owe not a single drop to the power and energy of man. Well, now, so is it to the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He can say—

***"My trust is in the Lord alone,
My rock and refuge in His Throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on His salvation waits."***

He is independent of man, even in temporal things, because he has learned to trust in his God. He believes the promise—"Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure." And the bread and the water *are*

sure to him in spirituals. Though he uses the means, though he loves the pastor after God's own heart, though he loves the pastures where he feeds and is made to lie down. Yet still he sings, *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not want. He leads me beside the still waters, He makes me to lie down in green pastures.*" On no priest does he rely, on no persuasions of eloquent tongues does he depend. For his full and his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God and to Him alone. The dew of Heaven is his portion and the God of Heaven is his Fountain. Every Christian, thus, is a tree of the Lord, in His planting and in His watering.

3. Furthermore, if your eyes look attentively at yonder cedars, you will see that *no mortal might protects them.* They are planted on a mountain ridge no less than six thousand feet above the level of the sea. The snow frequently lies upon their branches in enormous masses. They are in the most exposed position conceivable. When the cedars were as yet but young, the browsing goat might have destroyed them. As they grew up, the heavy falls of snow must have completely buried the young trees.

Afterward they were subjected to many dangers. Up there the lightning is at home. There the callow tempests try their young wings. Lebanon's towering peaks must be a frequent mark for the thunderbolts of God and sometimes when the time has come, the voice of the Lord, that makes the hinds to calve, also rends the cedars of Lebanon and the hoary prince of the forest bows humbly at the touch of the scepter of his King. These trees owe nothing—for their preservation from storm, wind and tempest—to man. There is no hedge set about them. There are no means used to shore up the limbs as they begin to drop by weight—man does not even keep the goat from them. They are left there unprotected in the pitiless storm and terrible blast, and yet the veterans survive. The cedars of Lebanon have not all fallen even beneath the insatiable axe of man—still they stand—God's trees, kept and preserved by Him and by Him alone.

It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation. He does not live in a world of holy and hallowed influence, preserving him from sin. He stands in the most exposed position, on yonder bare rock, where winds of mysterious Satanic influence and dreadful earthquakes of his own doubts and fears daily try him. Where terrific thunderbolts from God's right hand, the thunderbolts of desertion and stern affliction all come against him. He has no shelter, no protection, except this—that the broad wings of the Eternal God always cover the cedars which he himself has planted.

Oh, it is magnificent to think how the Christian bears up! Weak, feeble, less than nothing in himself, yet so mighty that all Hell cannot crush him and the united hosts of the world, the flesh and the devil, cannot prevail against him. Methinks I hear the cedars, as the trees of the woods clap their hands, shouting aloud—"In all these things we are more than conquerors," as they remember lightning and snow and storm. And so with the cedars of the Lord, when tribulation and trial and distress come upon them—"We are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us." Brethren, forget not that our refuge is in the Lord alone.

4. Fourthly, *as to their inspection*—they also preserve a sublime indifference to human gaze. Perhaps for thousands of years they may not have

been looked upon by human eyes at all. Moses desired to see “that goodly land and Lebanon.” David often saw them and he sang of that handful of corn whose fruit shall shake like Lebanon. But I cannot find that the cedars have become a whit more green now that they are visited by pilgrims, nor, on the other hand, that they lose anything of their verdure because the evil eyes of man may have glanced upon them.

Solomon spoke of one who was “excellent as the cedars.” Sacred to God, they stand high up in lonely grandeur, indifferent to mortal judgment. When the virgin snows of Lebanon were untouched by man’s polluted foot, and the Eternal walked in tempest, stepping from crag to crag. Or when in the cool eventide the Unseen One trod their hallowed aisles, these trees were God’s trees and God’s trees alone, stretching out their broad branches for Him to gaze upon. They were quite content if at high noon, or in the deep gloom of midnight, the Great Planter in solitary glory looked down upon them.

It is just so with the Christian. He stands, like the cedars, in a conspicuous position, but he courts not observation. He is like a city set upon a hill, yet still consciously he walks *before the Lord* in the land of the living. He owes nothing to the smiles of men, and he cares as little for their frowns. I mean that true Believer who has so grown in faith that he no longer leans upon an arm of flesh, but understands how to stand upright. I mean that advanced Christian who has not one foot upon the sea and the other on the land, but has put both his feet on the Rock of Ages and lets earth reel if it will, and bids the storms come and the winds blow, unmoved, possessing a deep calm within, because *he looks to God*. This is his joy and his only joy, “You, God see me, my Father who is in Heaven knows my needs, *He* looks upon me and regards me.”

Out with the piety which depends upon the public eye! Away, away, away with the religion that needs to be watched and guarded lest it desert the standard. I am not to have religion like a dog collar, which I may slip off and on and feel glad to be rid of it. It must be part and parcel of my being. My religion must be a thing which lives in the notice of God, in my closet, and in my secret heart. Mine must be a religion which I bring into public because I cannot leave it behind. It must not be the Pharisees’ paint and tinsel which he puts on in the public place and privately laughs at when he gets alone.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we want to be like the cedars, caring only for God, minding little whether we are praised or blamed by any of human shape. If you cannot feel it sufficient honor to be known of Him who sees in secret, you have need to begin to live aright.

5. Nor have we finished here the glorious independence of the cedar. I would I had a tongue to tell it all out, it is a theme for poet or bard. We want a Coleridge or a Milton to sing the majesty of those grand old trees in their solitary glory. Note that *their exultation is all for God* and not for man. When the fig tree yields its figs, it may well say, “Thanks to the cultivator who has taken so much care of me.” When the vine gives up her luscious clusters she has to thank the vinedresser who has used the pruning knife. When you walk your gardens, all your plants praise you as well as God, because of your care for them.

But what say the cedars? Who has planted the cedars, or who has watered them? Who has pruned them—who has hedged them about and kept them in the day of storm? The Lord, even the Lord, alone, has been everything unto the cedars and, therefore, David very sweetly puts it in one of the last Psalms, “Praise you the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars.” The cedars have not a green leaf to magnify man with, nor a single cone with which to make him proud. The cedar’s silent song is, “Let Jehovah, God of Israel, be praised and when we fall, let our split timbers build a temple to His praise, for unto Him and unto Him alone we grow.”

They fell, you know, many of them, beneath the axe of Hiram and floated on the sea to Joppa. And then again were carried to Jerusalem. But it was that they might make the holy place and build the pillars of the temple of God. So, Christians, is it with you. There is nothing in you that can magnify man. If you understand yourselves aright you give unto the Lord glory and strength, for your only thanks are due to Him. Your praise, your gratitude shall ascend to Him who chose you before ever the earth was. To Him who bought you with His precious blood. To Him who quickens and preserves you by His Spirit. And when you die, this is your hope and joy—that you shall be pillars in the temple of your God and go no more out forever. You are the Lord’s trees from first to last. If you know yourselves aright, the Author and Finisher of your Faith is your Divine Redeemer.

6. I do not know that there is a cedar upon Lebanon which is not also *independent of man in its expectations*. They never expect to be fenced about and hedged. They never reckon upon being preserved and watered by man. We have many schemes, but I have heard of none for preserving the cedars. Speculations are rife every day and one would scarcely be astonished by a projected railroad to the moon. But yet I have never heard of anyone who has attempted to purchase the cedars of Lebanon, to preserve them, or make them his private property.

Arabs and Turks do their best to ruin the whole grove, but yet there they stand, expecting as little from man as they have ever received from him, giving him their shadow, yielding him their fragrance, but getting nothing and expecting nothing from him in return. That is your example, O Christian. You are to live expecting nothing from man and you shall never be disappointed. You are to live looking upon the Lord alone and there again disappointment shall never come. You are to understand that one of God’s objects with you is to knock away every prop from you, to take away every buttress and to make you lean upon God alone.

There is the round world, what bears it up? He hangs the world upon nothing. If you are what you should be you are just like that earth—you have no visible support—there is nothing upon which you can depend that the carnal eye can see. But yet as the earth moves not and falls not from her orbit, so you, by the power of faith, shall be maintained and kept just where you are. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing.” It is a life’s work to learn independence of the creature and almost another life’s work to learn dependence upon the Creator.

To wean us from the breasts of this world is a long and painful process. To get us clean rid of that walking by sight, which is the disease of man, and to bring us to walk by faith in the Spirit, which is the glory of a Christian—this is a work well worthy of a God—and blessed is the man who has this work to a great extent accomplished in himself. I do feel, Brothers and Sisters, more and more that my soul must wait only upon the Lord, and that my expectation must be from Him alone. You, too, must come here and learn that the Lord will provide, but it is only in the mountain of the Lord that this sweet Truth of God can be seen.

II. Now for the next point. The cedars of Lebanon are a GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF DIVINE CARE.

1. First, in *the abundance of their supply*. No river, as I have observed, rolls at their feet. No canals keep their leaf from withering—man uses no labor and employs no skill to irrigate the steeps of Lebanon—and yet do the cedars need anything? Look at them! Stand under their shadow and see if they want any good thing. The text tells us, that so far from wanting, they are saturated—“The trees of the Lord are full.” Man’s trees may sometimes be ready to perish for lack of moisture. They may be frostbitten and their shoots may be nipped— but the trees of the Lord are full—there is never any want there. There is no want to them that fear Him.

Dear Friends, those Believers who have learned most to live by faith possess the richest part of the land of promise. Other Believers live in the land of Egypt and are often making bricks without straw. But these dwell in the land which flows with milk and honey. They have passed the wilderness, and having believed, they have entered into *rest*. The lot of the truly full grown Believer who stays himself upon his God alone, is well set forth in the promise, “His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth.”

He has his troubles, but faith makes them light. He has his wants, but faith never permits him to call them wants, for they are always supplied before the necessity begins to pinch him. Other men may, with all their watching and wisdom, come to nothing. They may rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness and yet be poor. But they who stay upon God in temporals and spirituals, if Heaven should shake, and if the pillars of the earth should be moved and the sea should be dried up, yet their place of defense shall be munitions of rocks. “Their bread shall be given them and their water shall be sure.”

See this on a large scale in the case of our dear brother Muller’s institution at Bristol. We often see institutions sending out fresh begging appeals—there is some new claim upon their funds. The Lancashire distress has turned aside very much contributions from this object and that society. Of course it is so—these societies usually lean on man and rest upon an arm of flesh. But our Bristol Brother, by prayer and faith makes known his wants unto God and when does he lack any good thing? When needs he issue a begging appeal? Verily, I do believe that if all England were in famine, the orphan house at Bristol would have sufficient supplies. Whatever may happen, the Lord has promised to hear prayer, and He will honor faith—the cedars of Lebanon shall be full if all the trees of the plain be famished.

I would to God we could exhibit still more and more of the same principle of faith in the conduct of our college. And in that case, too, I am persuaded that whatever may occur and whatever may happen, as that is God's work, it never can lack. My confidence in that matter is in my God. I am glad that so many of the Lord's people are made the instruments to supply the wants of the college, but still I look far higher. Sometimes when friends say, "Mention it to the people," I do not like to do it, lest I should lean too much on you. God's own work shall be carried on by God's own means. And I am sure He will send what it requires and in a way which shall be for the glory of His name. They are happy—I am a witness that they are—Brothers and Sisters, they are well supplied, who, like the cedars, exhibit Divine cultivation and independence of man.

2. Again, note concerning these cedars that they are not only well supplied, but *they are always green*. Other trees refreshed with rivers, if they have the whole Nile at their roots, must drop their leaves once every year at the command of winter—and then they stretch out their bare limbs, as if they prayed for the return of spring. The oaks of Bashan languish, the fig tree casts her leaves, the ash and the elm are ashamed, but you, O cedar, you live in perpetual spring! The green lawns of your horizontal branches fail not even in the year of drought.

The birds *always* sing in her branches, and the storks make their nests in due season among her boughs. Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is so with the man who lives upon Christ alone. He has not the changes of other men. He has his trials, but he sings through them. The reason why many of us sink so low in spirit and hang our harps on the willows, is only this—want of faith. But if—

***"Our faith is in the Lord alone,
Our rock and refuge is His Throne,"***

so that we can say with Habakkuk, "Though the fig tree shall not blossom," and so on, "yet will I rejoice in the Lord." Let our faith be vigorous and unstaggering, let us be planted up there where God has put us—on the rocky side of Lebanon—in the midst of all kinds of difficulties and dangers, yet our leaf shall be always green and we shall not know when drought comes.

3. Observe *the grandeur and size of these trees*. I have found upon reference to Mr. Thompson's work, "The Laud and the Book," that several of the trees measure forty-one feet in girth, so that they are real giants of the forest. Think of it and admire—never watered by man, never cared for by him—depending upon God and upon God alone—and yet they have grown to the height of one hundred feet and forty feet in girth! Ah, and what magnificent Christians those are who come to rest upon God alone. You think, perhaps, that they, having so little supply from second causes, would be feeble!

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is often that supply from beneath which makes us feeble. I believe it is our riches which make us poor and our strength which makes us weak, for when I am weak then am I strong. When I am brought down to feel that all the creatures put together could not help me the turn of a penny, when I know that all my power and wisdom and strength is not worth so much as a rusty nail, if I put it altogether and strain it to the utmost, O then it is so blessed to get a grip of

God—to strike one's root down to the heart of the Rock of Ages and to rest alone on Him!

The best Christians, the most splendid specimens of Divine husbandry are those who are most delivered from confidence in the creature. You shall read all biographies and you shall find in proportion as men become little in self, and little in creature love and creature trust, they become great and mighty in their doings for the Lord.

4. Note next, *the fragrance* of these venerable trees. Hosea speaks of the smell of Lebanon and we know that cedar wood was among the aromatic substances burned upon the altar of the sanctuary. Travelers tell us that when they stand under the cedars of Lebanon the smell is most delightful, the fragrant cedar wood perfumes all the air. Now few of men's trees do that. Some of them do. The citron and the orange and lemon load the air with sweets, but many others, cultivate them as we may, and nurture with the greatest care, never can or will perfume the air. How sweetly do God's trees sweeten all about them!

If your piety comes from God and if you wait in spirit upon God and lean only upon Him, there will be about you such a sweet fragrance that you shall be acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus and acceptable to your Brothers and Sisters, and even an ungodly world shall perceive that there is in you the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. No man will yield so delightful a perfume as the man who is much with Christ. The scented piece of clay declared that it owed its perfume to sleeping with a rose—and if we have learned to rest upon the bosom of the Savior, if we have taught our soul to say, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him"—our companionship and confidence in God will yield a sweet fragrance both to our words, to our actions, and to everything to which we set our hands.

5. Attentively think upon *the perpetuity of these cedars*. Do you remember how carnal men said, concerning certain works of faith which we ourselves attempted, "Ah, well, it may be all very well, it will last for a time, it is a sort of spurt of enthusiasm. It will last for a time and then die out like the wick of a candle." Societies that are blessed with patrons, vice-presidents, secretaries, directors, subscribers and that use flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music—those will get on. There is something to look at there. There is something tangible.

But a scheme which lives only upon God! The business man says, "I do not see it. I look at the pounds, shillings and pence. I have not learned to look at things unseen, I cannot confide in these visionary ideas." Now, every year somebody has said, "Muller, of Bristol, will come to nothing, Mr. So-and-So has died, that old gentleman who used to give him two thousand pounds and three thousand pounds a year. Now he is dead, now it will come to an end and cannot keep on." After his death somebody else was going to die, and that somebody died, but the orphans were still fed and housed. Even at this moment, the men of sight are prophesying evil against that marvel of faith in the same way they might tremble for the cedars and talk thus.

Now, here are these cedars of God upon the top of Lebanon, with nobody to take care of them, they will surely be destroyed. What? No society

pledged to guarantee their preservation! Why, there will not be one of them left in three weeks. They will be cut down for the sake of their timber, or carried off piecemeal by tourists. Ah, but my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some of those cedars that can be reckoned to be at the very least three thousand five hundred years old and some of them are doubtless older. And we cannot, of course, except by cutting them down, discover their precise age by counting the rings.

But there they stand and have stood all those hundreds and thousands of years with no ranger of the forest to look after them—just God Himself to be the Farmer and Keeper of them all! Depend upon it, Christian, if you rest upon God, your simple faith is a principle which you may use, not only for ten or twenty years, but all your threescore years and ten! It serves you in your youth to be your joy—it shall serve you in your old age to be your staff. If you could outlive Methuselah, yet still you should find that God would keep the cedars full and preserve you among them safely even to the end.

6. I conclude this head by noticing that these cedars *are very venerable*. A traveler declares that often as he has stayed beneath their shadow, he has never done so without feeling a solemn awe. Mr. Thompson has slept under their shade on one or two occasions, and as he has looked up and seen the stars and sometimes climbed up the cedars and marked how they spread out all their branches horizontally, making a series of green lawns one above another, he says he has never gazed upon them without feeling there was something holy in the spot.

The mountain tribes treat them with superstitious reverence, calling them saints and giving to each a name. They command, for their antiquity and glory, the veneration of man. Scarcely could even the brute pass them, one would think, without looking up with something of respect. It is most evidently so with the Christian who lives wholly upon God. Your common sort of Christians who have very little faith and live by feelings—your ordinary sort of Christians who live half by faith and half by works—mere professors who have never entered into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High and think all I am talking about to be mere mysticism.

These, I say, who do not understand the word “faith” to be so broad that it encompasses the whole of human life, so deep that it penetrates to the depths of the heart and yet so high that hope cannot desire anything greater than faith can give—these who have not learned faith fully, have no respect from among men—but those who can act upon the supernatural principle of depending upon God, sooner or later will get the respect even of the most careless. The day is coming when these cedars of God shall be honored in the eyes of the most ungodly—in that great day when the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt, then these cedars of God shall have their time of honor and the whole world shall know them to be plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting.

I leave this point. I would, dear Friends, that you and I knew more and more what it was to live upon the Lord alone. I believe it is the safest way of life and I am certain it is the happiest. Let the cedar’s lot be my lot, let

me have my God to be my sole stay and my support and I shall be rich to all the intents of bliss.

III. Now for the third and last point. Taking the text as it stands and reading it, “The trees of the Lord are full of sap,” which, although it is not in the original, is not, after all, a violence to it. It is not a literal translation, but still it is a free translation that does not violate the sense of the Hebrew. Taking our version, I get my third particular, FULLNESS OF LIVING PRINCIPLE.

1. “The trees of the Lord are full of sap,” of which, I shall notice first, that this is *vitally necessary*. Without sap, the cedar is no tree, it becomes a dead post and nothing more. Sap is needful to make it flourish and exist. Without the life of God in the heart, a man is no Christian. He may attend His Church twice every Sunday, or he may go to Chapel. He may read his Bible regularly and have family prayers in his house. He may subscribe his guineas to all sorts of societies. He may be very kind to the poor. He may be one whose outward life and conversation are quite beyond rebuke and yet, unless he has been born again and has been made a partaker of the mysterious Spirit of the living God, he is not one of the Lord’s trees.

Vitality is essential to a Christian. We call not dead ones, sons, and if you have not been quickened, you cannot be children of God. It is not likely that Christ is married to a dead corpse. And if you have not been quickened by Divine Grace, you are not His bride, nor even a member of His family. The body always ejects dead substances. With great pain and difficulty, a decayed bone is pushed out from the flesh, through an ulcer, perhaps—but out it must come. Even so, there are no dead members of Christ’s body. Painfully would the body strive to eject such a member. There must be *life*—a vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Spirit. The trees of the Lord are, without exception, full of sap.

2. Next, *essentially mysterious*. I do not understand the sap—I suppose the botanist may. The sap is the blood of the tree and in the tree there is a circulation very much like the circulation of the blood through our veins and heart. But who understands the circulation of the blood—it is a great mystery—by what force it rises and by what power it descends again? Who shall tell how that river of life is guided? It is a Divine mystery. So is it with the Life within us—it is a greater mystery still. You may discover the sea and understand it, but never the Life of God in a Christian.

This is God Himself in a Christian, God infused into the Christian’s soul as a Divine principle. How shall I set this forth? Regeneration is the Holy Spirit coming into a man and becoming that man’s Life. And the Life in a Believer afterward feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ—like sustaining like—Divine Life being sustained by Divine food. Do you know anything about this mystery? “The wind blows where it lists and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” Everyone who is a tree of the Lord must be full of this essential mystery—“The trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

3. Thirdly, it is *radically secret*. Note that. Who knows how the roots get their sap? They go searching through the soil with their little roots, look-

ing after that food which is exactly suitable to the constitution of the tree. But how they transmute the mineral into the vegetable, how they suck out the various gasses, or draw out the particles they need, who can tell? Now our root is Christ, our life is hid in Him. This is the secret of the Lord. The root of the Christian is as secret as the life itself. Who can comprehend the mystery of the life within the Believer? The root of that life, that vital union with Christ, that reception of Divine Grace—of his very soul out of the wounds of the Savior—who shall explain this? Only this we must say, however Divine Grace flows there from Jesus, it must be there and it must come from Christ—for all the trees of the Lord are full of sap.

4. Then, again, it is *permanently active*. In the Christian the Divine Life is always active—not in fruit-bearing, but in some operation within. The sap in the cedar never lies still. The sap in common trees is still in the winter, and if you cut a tree in the early spring, as I unfortunately did, then the sap comes streaming down in great white streams from the wound you have made, because the sap has begun to flow. The tree should be cut at some other period of the year—but the cedar always has its sap active. Perforate it when you may, a gum begins to exude at all times. So is it with the Christian.

His *Divine Graces*, are not all of them in activity, but the *Life* is always in activity. My hand is not always moving, but *my blood* is. I am not always working for God, but my heart is always living upon God. The essential Life of the Christian never dies—never ceases from being in active operation. There is a seed in him which cannot sin, because it is born of God, but which must still go towards holiness, because it comes from God. I do not understand this permanent activity, but still, I know it is in everyone of you, if you are Christians, for “the trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

5. I shall almost have finished when I notice, in the next place, that it is *externally operative*. A traveler tells us that in the wood, the bark, and even the cones of the cedar there is an abundance of resin. They are saturated with it so that he says he can scarcely touch one of the cedars of Lebanon without having the turpentine or resin of them upon his hands. That is always the way with a truly healthy Christian—his Divine Grace is externally manifested. There is the inner Life within, it is active, and by-and-by, when it is in a right state, it saturates everything. You talk with the gracious man, he cannot help talking about Christ. You go into his house, you will soon see that a Christian lives there.

You notice his actions and you will see he has been with Jesus. He is so full of sap that the sap must come out. He has so much of the Divine Life within, that the holy oil and Divine balsam must flow from him. I am afraid this cannot be said of all of us. It is because we get to be dependent upon man and not on God, and therefore have little of this sap. But if we are independent of man and live wholly upon God, we shall be so full of sap that every part of us will betray our piety.

6. And then let me say lastly, that this sap is *abundantly to be desired*. Oh, when I think what glory a full grown Christian brings to God, what honor the faith of a Believer puts upon Jesus! When I think what a knowledge of God and Divine things an advanced Believer possesses,

when I contemplate his joy and peace of mind—I could wish that everyone of you, (though it is well to be hyssops on God’s wall)—could be cedars upon God’s Lebanon! Oh that we would grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

There is something of the sap in us, let us pray for more. We live upon Christ. If our hearts do not awfully deceive us, you and I can say—

***“On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”***

The Lord knows our hearts and He Himself knows that we can say as Peter did, “Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You.” But oh, is there one among you that is content with himself? I am not—I am ashamed of myself—forgetting the things that are behind, I would press forward to that which is before. Not as though I had already obtained, either were already perfect. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there is such a height of glorious independence of man and a confident dependence upon God! And there is such a blessed internal joy and peace, such a Divine fullness of sap which we may yet have that I pray none of you rest till you obtain it to the praise and the glory of His Grace, who has made you accepted in the Beloved.

Sinner, that which I have been holding up as the strength and beauty of a Christian, must be Life to you. Come, every man, and trust in the Lord, for if you trust in Him, you shall never be confounded. The Lord add now a blessing upon you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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LESSONS FROM NATURE

NO. 1005

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 13, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir
trees are her house. The high hills
are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rooks for the conies.”
Psalm 104:17, 18.*

THIS Psalm is all through a song of Nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe Nature. And I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world, closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from Scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality—to me it seems to savor of absurdity!

There may be persons who think they have grown in Divine Grace when they have attained to this. It seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God, what is it but, in a measure, to despise God Himself? “Whoever mocks the poor despises his Maker.” To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin. To think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a crime. We should, none of us, think it a great honor to ourselves if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and rather injurious to their minds than improving.

If, when they passed our workmanship, they turned their eyes away lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves—surely the despising of that which is made is somewhat akin to the despising of the Maker Himself. David tells us that, “The Lord shall rejoice in His works.” If He rejoices in what He has made, shall not those who have communion with Him rejoice in His works also? “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein.” Despise not the work, lest you despise the Worker.

This prejudice against the beauties of the material universe reminds me of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, “Rise, Peter, kill, and eat,” he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the Voice should speak to him from Heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, “What God has cleansed that call not you common.”

The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it. And certain Christians appear to regard Nature as unclean. The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea—the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the mysterious glaciers, the bound-

less ocean—God has cleansed them—call them not common. Here on this earth is Calvary where the Savior died, and by His sacrifice, offered not within walls and roofs, He made this outer world a temple where everything does speak of God's Glory.

If you are unclean, all things will be unclean to you. But if you have washed your robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit has overshadowed you, then this world is but a nether Heaven. It is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendor of God, where angels see Him face to face! And this lower story is not without glory, for in the Person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have communion and fellowship with Him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of Nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, "These are strong in Grace." Not so, they were so weak in Grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried! They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal and they were not men who could resist valiantly.

Monasticism was the confession of a weakness which they endeavored to cover with the vain show of humility, and the presence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil is there. But if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not Divine Grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a nearer fellowship with God Himself.

It cannot be that Nature of itself debases me, or diverts me from God. I ought to suspect a deficiency in myself when I find that the Creator's handiworks have not a good effect upon my soul. Moreover, rest assured Brethren, that He who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest Revelation of His Divine mind, wrote also the first book, the book of Nature. And who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second. Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost." But the Eternal God has no inferior productions—all His works are masterpieces.

There is no quarrel between Nature and Revelation, only fools think so—to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the Word that He covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember Him who, while He calls the stars by their names, also binds up the broken in heart. Who will neglect the volume of Creation, or the volume of Revelation? I shall delight in them both as long as I live!

Let us, then, follow David this morning, for when he wrote our text, he evidently traveled among the works of God, admiring and adoring. Let us

go with him and see if there is not something to be learned among the birds and storks, the wild goats and the conies.

I. Our first observation from our text shall be this—FOR EACH PLACE GOD HAS PREPARED A SUITABLE FORM OF LIFE. For the fir trees, the stork. For the high hills, the wild goat, or steinbock. For the rocks, the conies, or rabbits. Almost every part of God's world was meant to be the abode of some creature or another. On earth, a countless company wait upon the Lord for meat. And as for the sea, it contains "creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts." Among the trees which shade the brooks, the birds are singing. In the tall somber pine, the silent storks are building their nests. On the lofty crags, virgin as yet to human foot, the chamois leaps from ledge to ledge. And away, where human voice was never heard, the marmot, the mouse, and the rabbit (whichever creature the Hebrew may mean) find their dwelling place among the rocks. The teaching of this fact is clear.

We shall also find that for all parts of the *spiritual* universe God has provided suitable forms of Divine life. Think out that thought a moment. *Each age has its saints.* The first age had its holy men, who walked with God—and when the golden age had gone, and men everywhere had polluted themselves, God had His Noah. In after days, when men had again multiplied upon the face of the earth, and sin abounded, there was Job in the land of Uz, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob dwelling in tents in the land which had been given to them by promise. On whatever period of the world's history you choose to place your finger you may rest assured that as God is there, so is there also some form of the Divine life extant.

Some of God's twice-born creatures are to be found even in the most barren ages. If you come to a period like that of Ahab, when a lonely Elijah bitterly complains, "I, only I am left, and they seek my life to destroy it," you shall hear a still small voice that says, "Yet have I reserved unto Myself seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal." God has still His elect remnant in the most wicked times to whom He has given a banner, because of the Truth. When the light was almost gone from Israel, and formalism had eclipsed the sun of Judaism, there were still a Simeon and an Anna waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

Times of fearful persecution, when to mention the name of Christ was to sentence yourself to death, have not been devoid of saints. But rather in the hottest times of oppression God has brought forth heroes equal to the emergency. The fiercer the trial the stronger the men. The Church of God, like the fabled salamander, has lived and flourished amid the flames, and has seemed to feed upon the flames that threatened to devour her. As on the crags where it appears impossible for life to exist, God places wild goats, so on the high crags of persecution He upholds men whose feet are like hind's feet, and who glory as they tread upon their high places.

Oppression brings out the heavenly manhood of the saints and lets the devil see what strength God can put into the weakness of man. There have been times of heresy, too—such as the age of rampant Arianism—but saints have outlived it. God has provided for such an emergency brave defenders of the faith. What a man was Athanasius, when standing upright

and alone, he said, "I know that Jesus Christ is very God, and if all the world believe the contrary, I, Athanasius, stand against the world."

Sardis may have a name to live and be dead, but the Lord says, "you have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." Is not this an encouraging Truth of God? As it has been in the past, it is in the present—and it will be in the future! Do not give way to gloomy forebodings as to the Church's future welfare. Whine not with those who deplore these evil days and prognosticate overwhelming ills. We are told that we are passing through a crisis, but I remember that it was a crisis twenty years ago, and our grandsires could tell us of a crisis every year of the last fifty!

The fact is, there is no such crisis as is talked of. *The crisis* is past, for Christ said, "Now is the crisis of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When Jesus went to Golgotha and bled and died, the crisis of the Church and of the world was over. The victory of truth and of Christ was secured beyond all shadow of a doubt. Even if times should darken and the night should grow thicker and thicker, rest assured that He who has the conies for the rocks, and goats for the high hills, and finds for the forests the stork, will find for every age a suitable form of Christian life that shall bring glory to His name!

As it has been in every age, so is it in *every position* in which men are found. Go into all classes of society and you shall find that the Christian religion, if received in truth, is equally well adapted for all conditions. Here and there upon the throne have been found those that have feared God, and have gone from a crown on earth to a crown in Heaven. There can be no better qualification for swaying a kingdom than obedience to the King of kings. Go straight down from the palace to the poorhouse—little enough of comfort there—but the richest consolation which can be found for the meanest pauper will be brought by that hand which was nailed to the tree.

He it is that can console the sorrows of poverty as well as sanctify the risks of wealth! Go where you will among the busy, whose cares buzz around them, and you shall find no relief for aching heads like a contemplation of the love of Christ—or go among those who have leisure and spend it in solitude—no meditation can be so sweet to while away their hours as the meditation which springs out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God! No man need say, "My trade does not permit me to be a Christian." If it is so, you have no business to follow that trade, for no lawful calling is without its saint.

Up there among the precipices the wild goat finds safe footing—and so amid dignity and honor saints can survive, and in the dark rock-rifts of this sin-smitten city, as conies live among the rocks, so Christian men are useful and happy. Where the Believer is persecuted on every side he shall not be forsaken, and where, through the example of the wicked, his heart is grieved, he shall be preserved like righteous Lot. As God maintains life in every region, so does He maintain spiritual life in every position and every calling. Have comfort in this, you who are placed in circumstances unfavorable to Divine Grace.

Again, you shall find spiritual life *in every Church*. I know it is the notion of the bigot that all the truly godly people belong to the denomination which he adorns. Orthodoxy is my doxy—heterodoxy is anybody else's doxy who does not agree with me! All the good people go to little Bethel, and nowhere else—they all worship at Zoar, and they sing out of such-and-such a selection—and as for those who cannot say Shibboleth, and lay a pretty good stress on the “h,” but who pronounce it “Sibboleth”—let the fords of the Jordan be taken, and let them be put to death! True, it is not fashionable to roast them alive, but we will condemn their souls to everlasting perdition, which is the next best thing, and may not appear to be quite so uncharitable.

Many suppose that because there is grievous error in a Church concerning an ordinance or a doctrine, therefore no living children of God are there. Ah, dear Brethren, this severe opinion arises from want of knowing better. A mouse had lived in a box all its life and one day crawled up to the edge of it and looked round on what it could see. Now the box only stood in a lumber room, but the mouse was surprised at its vastness, and exclaimed—“How big the world is!” If some bigots would get out of their boxes and only look a little way round them, they would find the realm of Divine Grace to be far wider than they dream!

It is true that these pastures are a most proper place for sheep, but yet upon yonder hilltops wild goats are pastured by the Great Shepherd. It is true that yonder plains covered with verdure are best fitted for cattle, but the Lord of All has His beasts in the forest and His conies among the rocks. You may have to look a long while before you find these living things but *He* sees them when you do not—and it is a deal more important to a cony for God to see it, than it is for a man to see it. And so it is an infinitely more weighty matter for a child of God for his Father to know that he is His child, than for his Brother to know it.

If my Brother will not believe me to be a Christian, he cannot help being my Brother. He may do what he will in his unkindness, but if I am one of God's children and he, also, is one, the tie of brotherhood cannot be broken between us. I love to think that the Lord has His hidden ones—even in Churches that have sadly degenerated from the faith. And, although it is yours and mine to denounce error unsparingly, and with the iconoclastic hammer to go through the land and break the idols of all the churches in pieces as far as God gives us strength, yet there is not a lamb among Christ's flock that we would disdain to feed—there is not the least of all His people, however mistaken in judgment, whom our soul would not embrace in ardent love.

God, in Nature, has placed life in singular spots, and so has He put spiritual life into strange out-of-the-way places. He has His own chosen where least we should look for them. Once more, there are to be found God's people in *every city*. Some of you are going away, it may be, to the ends of the earth and this word may be comfortable to you. The Lord has an elect people everywhere. The wild goats are on the rocks, and the conies among the stones, and the storks in the trees. Go where you will, you shall find that God has a living people. Or if you should be sent to a coun-

try where as yet there are no converted men or women, let not that discourage you, but rather say, "I am sent with the purpose of finding out God's elect, who as yet are hidden in sin. I am to be the instrument of finding out the Lord's own blood-bought but hidden ones here."

When you go into a city that is given to idolatry, you shall hear it said to you, "I have much people in this city." Go, therefore, and labor to find out who they are. Introduce the Gospel—tell of the love of Jesus—and you shall soon find that your efforts are rewarded by the discovery of those who shall love your Savior, and delight in the same Truth which now charms your heart. Do not believe that there is a rock without its wild goat. Do not think that there is a fir forest without its stork, or that there are to be found trees by the brook without their birds. Expect to find where God dwells that there are some who are sojourners with Him, as all their fathers were. I shall leave the first point, repeating the sentence, *for each place there is a form of life.*

II. Secondly, the text teaches us plainly that EACH CREATURE HAS ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE. Birds with their nests for the cedars of Lebanon, storks for the fir trees, wild goats for the high hills, and conies for the rocks. Each of these creatures looks most beautiful at home. Go into the Zoological Gardens and see the poor animals there under artificial conditions, and you can little guess what they are at home. A lion in a cage is a very different creature from a lion in the wilderness.

The stork looks wretched in his wire pen, and you would hardly know him as the same creature if you saw him on the housetops or in the fir trees. Each creature looks best in its own place. Take that truth, now, and use it for yourself. Each man has, by God, a *providential position* appointed to him, and the position ordained for each Christian is that in which he looks best. It is the best for him and he is the best for that. And if you could change his position, and shift him to another, he would not be half as happy, nor half as useful, nor half so much himself.

Put the stork on the high hills—put the wild goat on the fir trees—what monstrosities! Take my dear Brother who has been a working man this last twenty years, and always been a spiritually-minded man, and make him Lord Mayor of London, and you would spoil him altogether. Take a good hearer and set him preaching, and he would make a sorry appearance. A man out of place is not seen to advantage—you see the wrong side of him—the gracious side is hidden. The position in which God has placed me is the best for me. Let me remember this when I am grumbling and complaining. It may be I have got past that foolish discontent which is altogether selfish, but perhaps I repine because I think if I were in a different position, I could glorify God more.

This species of discontent is very insinuating, but let us beware of it. It is foolish to cry, "if I were placed in a different position, I could do so much more for God!" You could not do so much as you can do now. I am sure the goat would not show the wisdom of God so well in a fir tree, as he would up on a high hill. And you would not display the Grace of God so well anywhere else as you can do where you are. Ah, says the young Christian, "I am only an apprentice. If I were a master man, I think I could

then glorify God.” Sir, if you cannot magnify Him in your apprenticeship, you will not do so when you become a journeyman.

“Oh, but my shop is so little, my trade brings me in such a small amount, I can give but little, and I have such few opportunities of doing good.” Be slow to leave your calling till you have plain indications from Providence that you ought to do so—many a man, in moving from his place, has been as a bird that has wandered from her nest. God knows better than you what is best for you. Bow your soul to His Sovereign will. God appoints our position infinitely better than we could appoint it, even if we could have the choosing of it.

My beloved Friends, it is not only that each form of life has its own best position as to Providence, but it is so as to *experience*. God has not made two creatures precisely alike. You shall gather leaves from a tree and you shall not find two veined in precisely the same way. In Christian experience it is the same. Wherever there is living Christian experience, it is different from everybody else’s experience in some respect. In a family of children each child may be like its father, and yet each child shall be different from each other child.

And among the children of God, though they all have the likeness of Christ in a measure, yet are they not all exactly the one like the other. You read the other day the life of John Bunyan, and you said, “Oh, if I had experience like John Bunyan, then I should know I was a child of God.” This was foolish. The biographies that are published in our magazines in many cases do some good, but more mischief. For there are Christian people who begin at once to say, “Have I felt precisely thus? Have I felt exactly that?—If not, I am lost.” Have you felt yourself a sinner and Christ a Savior? Are you emptied of self and do you look to Christ alone? Well, if no other soul has trod the same path as you have done, you are in a right path!

And though your experience may have eccentricities in it that differ from all others, it is right it should be so. God has not made the wild goat like the cony, nor has He made the stork like any other bird—He has made each to fit the place it is to occupy—and He makes your experience to be suitable to the bringing out of some point of His Divine Glory, which could not be brought out otherwise. Some are full of rejoicing, others are often depressed. A few keep the happy medium. Many soar aloft, and then dive into the deeps again. Let these varied experiences, as they are all equally clear phases of the same Divine loving kindness, be accepted, and let them be rejoiced in.

The same holds good as to *individuality of character*. Each creature has its appropriate place, and I believe that each constitution is meant, under the power of Grace, to be suitable for a man’s position. I might wish to be of a different temperament from what I am—I sometimes think so—but in wiser moments I would not wish to alter anything in myself but that which is sinful. Martin Luther might have wished that he had been as gentle as Melancthon, but then we might have had no Reformation! Melancthon might certainly sometimes have wished that he had been as en-

ergetic as Martin Luther, but then Luther might have lacked his most tender comforter if Melancthon had been as rough as he.

Peter might have been improved if he had not been so rough, and John might possibly have been improved if he had been somewhat more firm. But after all, when God makes Peter he is best as Peter. And when He makes John he is best as John—and it is very foolish when Peter wants to be John, and when John pines to be Peter!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the practical matter is be yourselves in your religion. Never attempt to counterfeit another's virtues, nor try to square your experience according to another man's feelings, nor endeavor to mold your character so that you may look as if you were like a certain good man whom you admire. No, ask the Lord, who made a new man of you, to let your manhood come out as *He* meant it, and whichever Grace He meant to be prominent, let it be prominent. If you are meant to play the hero and rush into the thick of the battle, then let courage be developed. Or if He designed you to lie in the hospital and suffer, then let patience have its perfect work.

But ask the Lord to mold you after His own mind, that as He finds a stork for a fir tree and a fir tree for a stork—a hill for a wild goat, and a wild goat for a hill—He will find a place for you, the man. And find for you, the man, the place that He has created for you, There His name shall be most glorified, and you shall be the most safe. Kick not against the pricks, but take kindly to the yoke, and serve your day and generation till your Master calls you Home.

III. Now, briefly, a third point. It appears from the text that EVERY CREATURE THAT GOD HAS MADE IS PROVIDED WITH SHELTER. Birds fly to the trees and the stork to the fir. The wild goat to the high hills, and the cony to the rocks. There is a shelter for every one of these creatures, great and small. Think a moment, then—if God has made each creature happy, and given a place of refuge to each creature—then, depend upon it, He has not left man's soul without a shelter. And here is an important Truth of God, for every man is certainly in danger, and every thinking man knows it.

My God, do You shield and shelter the cony in the rock, and is there no rock for me to shelter in? Assuredly You have not made man and left him without a refuge! When You give to the rock rabbit the cleft in which he may hide himself, there must be a shelter for man. This must certainly be true, because you and I, if we have observed our inner life, must have felt conscious that nothing here below can fill an immortal soul! You have prospered in business, and have enjoyed good health. But for all that, in quiet moments of reflection, you feel a craving for something not to be found beneath the sun. Have you not felt yearnings after the Infinite—a hungering which bread cannot satisfy? A thirst which a river could not quench?

And are you never conscious—I know I am as a man—I speak not as a Christian now—of cold shivers of fear which make the entire manhood to tremble? The mind looks forward and considers, “And shall I live forever? When my body rots, shall I continue? Am I a vessel launched upon the

river of existence, and shall I be borne onward to a shoreless and mysterious sea? And what will be that sea? Will it be a calm, or tossed with storms?" Or, to change the figure, "I shall sleep, but in that sleep of death, what dreams may come?"

Have you never felt all that, and said within yourself, "O that there were a place where I could hide myself, never to tremble again! O that I could grasp something that would satisfy my insatiable longings! O that I could get my foot upon a rock and no longer feel that quicksand is beneath me! O that I knew for sure and indisputable, and possessed a treasure that would enrich me forever"?

Well, then, if you have such longings as these, surely there must be a provision to meet them. The stork has an instinct for building a nest of a certain sort. It is too large a nest to be placed on a bush—she needs a tree. There is a tree somewhere, then, for God never made a stork for a tree but he also made a tree for the stork. Here is a wild goat—you put it down on a flat meadow and it is not happy. Give it the greenest pasture, it looks up and pines. Rest assured that since those little feet are meant to traverse rocks and crags, there are rocks and crags that are meant for those feet to leap upon!

A chamois needs the Alps, and the conclusion is verified by fact. Yonder little cony cannot live anywhere but among the stones—it delights to conceal itself in the fissures of the rock. Then rest assured there are rocks meant for conies. So for me, with my thirst, my longing, my pining, my mysterious instincts—there is a God somewhere, there is a Heaven somewhere, there is an Atonement somewhere—there is a fullness somewhere to meet my emptiness. Man wants a shelter, there must be a shelter. Let us show you what it is. Beloved, there is a shelter for man from the sense of past guilt. It is because we are guilty that we are fearful—we have broken our Maker's Law and therefore we are afraid.

But our Maker came from Heaven to earth. Jesus, the Christ of God, came here and was made Man, and bore that we might never bear His Father's righteous wrath. And whoever believes in Jesus shall find perfect rest in those dear wounds of His. Since Christ suffered for me, my guilt is gone! My punishment was endured by my Substitute, therefore do I hear the voice that says, "Comfort you, comfort you My people! Say unto them that their warfare is accomplished. For they have received at the Lord's hand double for all their sins."

And as for future fears, he who believes in Jesus finds a refuge from them in the Fatherhood of God. He who trusts Christ, says—"Now I have no fear about the present, nor about the future. Let catastrophe follow catastrophe, let the world crash and all the universe go to ruin—beneath the wings of the Eternal God I must be safe. All things must work together for my good, for I love God, and have been called according to His purpose." What a blessed shelter this is! The little conies in their rock-clefts are perfectly at ease, and so we, when we enter fully into the Truth of our adoption of God, are filled with unutterable peace.

And as for the present, with its cares, griefs, and heart-throbs, there is the Holy Spirit abiding in us, the Comforter. And we fly to Him and receive

consolations so rich and powerful that this day we feel at peace in the midst of discomforts, and if perplexed we are not in despair. Brothers and Sisters, there is a shelter in the Atonement of Christ, in the Fatherhood of God, in the abiding Presence of the Comforter—there is a shelter for man—would God that all of us had found it!

IV. And now just a moment of your attention will be wanted for the fourth observation, that FOR EACH CREATURE THE SHELTER IS APPROPRIATE. The tree for the bird. The fir tree, a particular and special tree, for the stork. A high hill for the steinbock or ibex, and the rocks for the hyrax or rabbit. Whatever creature it may be, each shall have his own suitable shelter. But you will reply to me, is there a shelter, then, for each individual man? Did you not say that there was only one shelter for manhood?

If I did not say it, I certainly will say it now. There is only one shelter *under* Heaven or *in* Heaven for any man born of woman, but yet there is a shelter suitable for each. Christ Jesus suits all sorts of sinners, all sorts of sufferers. He is a Savior as suitable for me as if He came to save me and no one else. But He is a Redeemer as remarkably suitable to every other of His redeemed ones. Note, then, that there is a refuge in Christ Jesus for those simple trustful natures that take the Gospel at once and believe it.

These are like the little birds that fly to the trees and build their nests and begin to sing. These are the most common sort of Christians, but in some respects they are the best. They hear the Gospel, believe it to be God's Word, accept it, and begin to sing. Jesus Christ exactly suits them. He is a shelter for those chosen birds of the air whom your heavenly Father daily feeds. But there are others of larger intellect, who require unusual support before they can build their nest and be at ease. These, like the stork, need a special support, and they find it in the Gospel. Since they are more weighty with doubt and perplexity, they need substantial Truths of God to rest on. These find great fir tree doctrines—and cedar-like principles in the Bible, and they rest in them.

Many of us this day are resting on the immutable things where it is impossible for God to lie. We rest upon the Substitution of Christ, and repose in the completeness of the Atonement. Some get hold of one great principle and some another in connection with the Grace of God. And God has been pleased to reveal strong, immovable, eternal, immutable principles in His Word which are suitable for thoughtful and troubled minds to rest on.

Moreover, we have in the Church of God persons of great reasoning powers—these love the craggy paths of thought—but when they come to Christ and trust in Him—though they are like the wild goat and love the high places, they find in the Scriptures good ground for them. The doctrine of election and all the mysteries of predestination, the deep and wonderful doctrines that are spoken of by the Apostle Paul—where is the man of thought who will not be at home among these if he loves sublimity?

If you have that turn of mind which delights to deal with the high things of God which have been the perplexity of men and angels, you shall

find yourself at home—and what is better—safe, with the Gospel. If you are in Christ, you shall have good, solid, safe material for the most profound meditations. Perhaps, instead of being bold and daring and thoughtful, you are not comparable to the wild goat but you are a very timid, trembling little creature like the cony. If anyone claps his hands, away runs the cony—he always fears. But there is a shelter for conies! And so, in the Grace of God, for very timid trembling people there is a suitable refuge.

Here is a delightful shelter for some of you to run into—“Fear not, I am with you! Be not dismayed, I am your God.” Here is another—“He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Many a poor trembler has hidden under that condescending Word. If I cannot find shelter in one text, what a blessing it is the Bible is full of promises, and there are promises in the Bible which seem made for a certain form of mind, as if the Holy Spirit cast His thoughts and His Words into all sorts of molds to suit the habits of thought and mind of all whom He would bless!

O trembling Soul, though you are half afraid to say that you belong to Jesus, yet come and rest in Him! Hide in the rift of His side and you are safe!

V. Now we must close and we do so with this observation—EACH CREATURE USES ITS SHELTER—for the storks have made their nests in the fir trees, and the wild goats climb the high hills, and the conies hide among the rocks. I never heard of one of these creatures that neglected its shelter—they love their natural abodes. But I have heard of men who have neglected their God. I know women who have forgotten Christ. We say, “silly sheep.” Ah, if the sheep knew all about us, they would wonder we should call *them* silly! The cony in danger which does not seek its rock is foolish. But the soul in danger which does not seek its Savior is insane!

Insane? No, if there can be a madness which is as much beyond madness, as madness is beyond sanity, then such is the raving lunacy of a man who neglects the Savior. I have never heard of any of these creatures that they despise the shelter provided. The birds are satisfied with the trees, and the stork with the firs, and even the cony with its rock-hole. But, alas, there are men who despise Christ! God Himself becomes the shelter of sinners, and yet sinners despise their God! The Son of God opens His side and lays bare His heart that a soul may come and shelter there in the crimson cleft, and yet that soul for many a day refuses to accept the shelter!

Oh, where are tears? Who shall give us fit expressions for our sorrow that men should be such monsters to themselves, and to their God? The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib. But men know not God. The stork knows its fir tree, the wild goat its crag, and the cony knows its cleft, but the sinner knows not his Christ. Ah, Manhood, what has befallen you? What strange wine of Gomorrah have you drunk which has thus intoxicated you?

One other thing, I never heard of a stork, that when it met with a fir tree, demurred as to its right to build its nest there. And I never heard of a cony yet that questioned whether it had a permit to run into the rock.

Why, these creatures would soon perish if they were always doubting and fearing as to whether they had a right to use Providential provisions! The stork says to himself, "ah, here is a fir tree." He consults with his mate—"Will this do for the nest in which we may rear our young?" "Yes" says she, and they gather the materials, and arrange them.

There is never any deliberation about, "May we build here?" They bring their sticks and make their nest. So the wild goat on the crag does not say, "Have I a right to be here?" No! He must be somewhere, and there is a crag which exactly suits him. And he springs upon it. Yet though these dumb creatures know the provision of their God, the sinner does not recognize the provisions of his Savior. He quibbles and questions, "May I?" And, "I am afraid it is not for me," and, "I think it cannot be meant for me." And, "I am afraid it is too good to be true." And yet nobody ever said to the stork, "Whoever builds on this fir tree shall never have his nest pulled down."

No Inspired Word has ever said to the cony, "Whoever runs into this rock-cleft shall never be driven out of it." If it had been so, it would make assurance doubly sure. And yet here is Christ, provided for sinners—just the sort of a Savior sinners need, and the encouragement is added, "He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "Whoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

O dear Brothers and Sisters, do not be standing out against the generosity of a sin-pardoning God who bids the sinner come and welcome. Come, believe in Jesus, and find salvation now. O that you would come, it is what God has provided for your wants. Come, take it, for He bids you come. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." To believe is to trust Jesus, to trust His suffering, to trust His Atonement, and rely upon Him alone for salvation. May God enable you to do it for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 104.

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THERE GO THE SHIPS

NO. 1259

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

***“There go the ships.”
Psalm 104:26.***

I was walking, the other day, by the side of the sea, looking out upon the English Channel. It so happened that there was a bad wind for the vessels going down the Channel and they were lying in great numbers between the shore and the Goodwins. I should think I counted more than a hundred, all waiting for a change of wind. All of a sudden the wind shifted to a more favorable quarter and it was interesting to see with what rapidity all sails were spread and the vessels began to disappear like birds on the wing. It was a sight such as one might not often see, but worth traveling a hundred miles to gaze upon, to see them all sail like a gallant squadron and disappear southward on their voyages. “There go the ships,” was the exclamation that naturally rose to one’s lips.

The Psalmist thought it worth his while to pen the fact which he, too, had noticed, though it is very questionable whether David had ever seen anything like the number of vessels which pass *our* coasts. Certainly he had seen none to be compared with them for tonnage. The first lesson which may be learned from the ships and the sea is this—*every part of the earth is made with some design*. The land, of course, yields “grass for the cattle and herb for the service of man.” But what about the broad acres of the sea? We cannot sow *them*, nor turn them into pasture. The reaper fills not his arms from the briny furrows! They give neither seed for the sower nor bread for the eater, neither do herds of cattle cover them as they do the thousand hills of earth.

Remorselessly swallowing up all that is cast upon it, the thankless ocean makes no return of fruit or flower. Is not the larger part of the world given up to waste? “No,” says David, and so say we—“There go the ships.” The sea benefits man by occasioning navigation and yielding, besides, an enormous harvest of fishes of many kinds. Besides which, as the blood is necessary for the body, so it is necessary for this world that there should be upon its surface a vast mass of water in perpetual motion. That measureless gathering together of the waters is an amazing instance of Divine Wisdom in its existence, its perpetual ebb and flow and even in its form and quantity. In the ocean there is not a drop of water too much nor a drop too little! There is not a single mile of sea more than there ought to be, nor less than there should be.

An exact balance and proportion is maintained and we little know how the blooming of the tiny flower or the flourishing of the majestic cedar would be affected were the balance disturbed. Between the tiny drop of dew upon each blade of grass and the boundless main there is a relation and proportion such as only an infinite mind could have arranged. Re-

member, also, that the ocean's freshness tends to promote life and health among the sons of men. It is good that there is sea, or the land might devour its inhabitants by sickness. God has made nothing in vain. Ignorance gazes on the stormy deep and judges it to be a vast disorder, the mother of confusion and the nurse of storms. But better knowledge teaches us what Revelation had before proclaimed, namely, that in wisdom has the Lord made *all* things.

But does not the ocean grievously separate lovers and friends? Many a wife thinks of her husband on the far-off Pacific. Many a mother casts an anxious thought towards her sailor boy. And both are half inclined to think it is a mistake to place so vast a portion of the globe as a cruel dividing gulf between loving hearts. Others evidently thought so in years gone by, for among the figurative excellencies of the new earth we are told that there shall be no more sea. But what a mistake it is to think that the sea is a divider—it is the great *uniter* of the races of men—for, “there go the ships.” It is the highway of nations by which they reach each other far more readily than they could have done had no sea existed and arid deserts or towering mountains had intervened.

This is one instance in which we do not understand God's designs, for we judge them upon the surface. As the sea apparently divides, but really unites nations, so often in Providence things look one way, but go another. We say, “All these things are against me,” when all things are working together for our good! We judge that to be a curse which, in the deep intent of God, is a rich blessing! And we write that down as among the ills of life which, in God's esteem, is reckoned to be among its choicest mercies. Judge not according to the sight of the eyes, or the changeful feelings of the heart! But unstaggeringly believe in the Infallible Goodness of our great Father in Heaven!

As the child mistakes God's design in the sea, so will you also mistake His designs in Providence if you set up yourself as the measurer of the infinite—

**“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace.
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”**

Our subject, however, shall not be the *uses* of the sea, but this one simple matter—“There go the ships.”

I. And, first, WE SEE THAT THE SHIPS GO. “There go the ships.” *The ships are made to go.* The ship is not made to lie forever upon the stocks, or to be shut up in the docks. It is generally looked upon as an old hulk of little service when it has to lie up in ordinary and rot in the river. But a ship is made to go, and, as you see that it goes, remember that *you* also were made to go. Activity in Christian work is the result and design of Grace in the soul. How I wish we could launch some of you!

You are, we trust, converted, but you as yet serve but slender uses. Very quiet, sluggish and motionless, you lie on the stocks by the month together, and we have nearly as much trouble to launch you as Brunel had with the “Great Eastern.” I have tried hard to knock away your blocks, remove your dogshores, and grease your ways, but you need hy-

draulic rams to stir you! When will you feel that you must go and learn to “walk the water as a thing of life.” O, for a grand launch! Hundreds are lying high and dry and to them I would give the motto, “launch out into the deep.” The ships go, when will you go, too?

The ships, in going, at last disappear from view. The vessel flies before the wind and very speedily it is gone—and such is our destiny before long. Our life is gone as the swift ships. We think ourselves stationary, but we are always moving on. As we sit in these pews so quietly, the angel of time is bearing us between his wings at a speed more rapid than we can guess. Every single tick of the clock is but a vibration of his mighty wings and he bears us on, and on, and on, and never stays to rest either by day or night. Swift as the arrow from the bow we are always speeding towards the target. How short time is! How very short our life is! Let each one say, “How short *my* life is!”

No man knows how near he is to his grave. Perhaps if he could see it, it is just before him. I almost wish he *could* see it, for a yawning grave might make some men start to reason and to thought. That yawning grave is there, though they perceive it not—

**“A point of time, a moments space,
May land me in yon heavenly place,
Or shut me up in Hell.”**

“There go the ships,” and there go you, also! You are never in one place. You are always flying, swift as the eagle, or, to come back to the text, as the swift ship, yet, “all men think all men mortal but themselves.” The oldest man here probably thinks he will outlive some of the younger ones. The man who is soonest to die may be the very man, of us all, who has the least thought of death! And he that is nearest to his departure is, perhaps, the man who least thinks of it. Just as in the ship all were awake and every man praying to his God except Jonah, for whom the storm was raging, so does it often happen that in a congregation every man may be aroused and made to think of his latter end except the one man, the marked man, who will never see tomorrow’s sun. As you see the ships, think of your mortality!

The ships, as they go, are going on business. Some few ships go here and there upon pleasure, but for the most part the ships have something serious to do. They have a charter and they are bound for a certain port. And this teaches us how we should go on the voyage of life with a fixed, earnest, weighty purpose. May I ask each one of you, have you something to do, and is it worth doing? You are sailing, but are you sailing like a mere pleasure yacht, whose port is everywhere, which scuds and flies before every fitful wind and is a mere butterfly with no serious work before it? You may be as heavily laden and dingy as a collier, there may be nothing of beauty or swiftness about you, but after all, the main thing is the practical result of your voyage.

Dear Friend, what are you doing? What have you *been* doing? And what do you contemplate doing? I should like every young man here just to look at himself. Here you are, young man. You certainly were not sent into this world merely to wear a coat and to stand so many feet in your stockings!

You must have been sent here with some intention. A noble creature like man—and man is a noble creature as compared with the animal creation—is surely made for *something*. What were *you* made for? Not merely to enjoy yourself. That cannot be! You certainly are not “a butterfly born in a bower,” neither were you made to be creation’s blot and blank.

Neither can you have been created to do mischief. It were an evil thing for you to be a mere serpent in the world, to creep in the grass and wound the traveler. No, you must be made for something. What is that something? Are you answering your end? We were made for God’s glory. Nothing short of this is worthy of immortal beings! Have we sought that glory? Are we seeking it now? If not, I commend to your consideration this thought, that as the ships go on their business, so ought men to live with a fixed and worthy purpose. I would say this, not only to young men, but with greater earnestness, still, to men who may have wasted 40 years.

O, how could I dare to stand before this congregation tonight and have to say, “Friends, I have had no objective. I have lived in this world for myself, alone. I have had no grand purpose before me”? I should be utterly ashamed if that were the fact. And if any man is obliged to feel that his purpose was such that he dares not acknowledge it, or that he has only existed to make so much money, or gain a position in life, or to enjoy himself, but he has never purposed to serve his God, I would say to him, Wake up, wake up, I pray you, to a noble purpose, worthy of a man! May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, set this before you in the light of eternity and in the light of Jesus’ dying love! And may you be awakened to solemn, earnest purpose and pursuit.

“There go the ships,” but not idly. They go upon business. These ships, however, whatever their errand is, *sail upon a changeful sea*. Today the sea is smooth like glass. The ship, however, makes very small headway. Tomorrow there is a breeze which fills out the sail and the ship goes merrily before it. Perhaps, before night comes on, the breeze increases to a gale and then rushes from a gale into a hurricane. Let the mariner see to, it when the storm-winds are out, for the ship needs to be staunch to meet the tempest. Mark how in the tempestuous hour the sea mingles with the clouds and the clouds with the sea. See how the ship mounts up to Heaven on the crest of the wave and then dives into the abyss in the furrow between the enormous billows—until the mariners reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men.

Soon they have weathered the storm and, perhaps, tomorrow it will be calm again. “There go the ships” on an element which is a proverb for fickleness, for we say, “false as the smooth, deceitful sea.” “*They go*,” you say, “upon the sea, but I dwell upon the solid earth.” Ah, good Sir, there is not much to choose. There is nothing stable beneath yon waxing and waning moon. We say “*terra firma*,” but where, where is *terra firma*? What man has discovered the immovable rock? Certainly not he who looks to this world for it! He has it not who thinks he has, for many plunge from riches into poverty, from honor to disgrace, from power to servitude.

Who says, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved”? He speaks as the foolish speak! It is a voyage, Sir, and even with Christ on

board it is a voyage in which storms will occur! It is a voyage in which you may have to say, "Master, do You not care that we perish?" Expect changes, then. Do not hold anything on earth too firmly. Trust in God and be on the watch, for who knows what may be on the morrow? "There go the ships."

II. But now, having spoken upon that, our second point is, *HOW GO THE SHIPS?* What makes them go? For there are lessons here for Christians. We leave our steamships out of the question, as they were not known in David's day and, therefore, not intended. But *how* go the ships? Well, *they must go according to the wind.* They cannot make headway without favoring gales. And if our port is Heaven, there is no getting there except by the blessed Spirit's blowing upon us. He blows where He wishes and we need that He should breathe upon us.

We never steer out of the port of destruction upon our venturesome voyage till the heavenly Wind drives us out to sea. And when we are out upon the ocean of spiritual life we make no progress unless we have His favoring breath. We are dependent upon the Spirit of God even more than the mariners upon the breeze. Let us all know this and, therefore, cry—

***Celestial Breeze, no longer stay,
But fill my sails and speed my way."***

It is not possible to insist too much on the humbling Truth of God, "Without Me you can do nothing." It helps to check self-confidence and it exalts the Holy Spirit. Unless we honor Him, He will not honor us. Therefore, let us cheerfully acknowledge our absolute dependence upon Him.

But still, the mariner does not go by the wind without exertion on his own part, for the sails must be spread and managed so that the wind may be utilized. One man will go many knots, while another with the same breeze goes but few, for there is a good deal of tacking about needed, sometimes, to use the little wind, or the cross wind which may prevail. Sometimes all the sails must be spread, but at other times only a part. Management is required. If some were spread, they might take the wind out of others, and so the ship might lose instead of gaining. There is a deal of work on board a ship. I believe that some people have a notion that the ship goes of itself and that the sailors have nothing to do but sit down and enjoy themselves. But if you have ever been to sea as an able-bodied seaman, you have discovered that for an easy life you must not be one of a ship's crew!

And so, mark you, we are dependent upon the Spirit of God, but He puts us into motion and action. And if Christian men sit down and say, "Oh, the Spirit of God will do the work," you will find the Spirit of God will do nothing of the sort! The only operation which He will be likely to perform will be to convince you that you are a sluggard and that you will come to poverty. The Spirit of God makes men earnest, fervent, living and intense. He "works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure." We have sails to manage to catch the favoring breeze and we shall need all the strength we can obtain if we are to make good headway in the voyage of life.

Some professors say, "God will save His own people." I am afraid He will never save them! They expect there will come good times when a great

number of the elect will be gathered in, but they fold their arms and do nothing at all to promote the spread of the Gospel. When they see others a little busy, they say, "Ah, mere excitement!" and so on. They tell us God will have His own, to which I generally reply that I believe He will, but I do not believe He will have *them*, because if they were His own they would not talk in that fashion, for those who are God's own people have a zeal for God and a love for souls.

Do you not remember what God said to David? "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees then shall you bestir yourself." Not, "Then shall you sit still and say 'God will do it.'" When David heard the angels coming over the tops of the trees to fight the Philistines—when he heard their soft tread among the leaves, like the rustling of the wind—then he was to bestir himself! And so, when God's Spirit comes to work in the Church, the Christian must bestir himself and not sit still. "There go the ships." They go with the wind, but they are the scene of great industry, or else the wind would whistle through the yards and the ship would make no voyages. Thus, Brothers and Sisters, we see dependence and energy united—*faith* sweetly showing itself in *good works*.

"There go the ships." How do they go? Well, *they have to be guided and steered by the helm*. The helm is a little thing, but yet it rules the vessel. As the helm is turned, so is the vessel guided. Look you well to it, Christian, that your motives and purposes are always right. Your love is the helm of the vessel! Where your affection is, your thoughts and actions tend to be. If you love the world, you will drift with the world! But if the love of the Father is in you, then your vessel will go towards God and towards Divine things! O, see to it that Christ has His hands on the tiller and that He guides you towards the haven of perfect peace!

The ship being guided by the helm, *he who manages the helm seeks direction from charts and lights*. "There go the ships," but they do not go of themselves, without management and wisdom. Thought is exercised and knowledge and experience. There is an eye on deck which at night looks out for yonder revolving light, or the colored ray of the light of the ship just ahead there. And the thoughtful brain says, "I must steer south-west of such a light," or, "to the north of such a light, or I shall be upon the sands." Besides mere lookouts upon the sea, that anxious eye also busies itself with the chart, scans the stars and takes observations of the moon. The captain's mind is exercised to learn exactly where the vessel is and where she is going, lest the good ship unawares should come to mischief.

And so, dear Brethren, if we are to get to Heaven, we must study well the Scriptures. We must look well to every warning and guiding light of the Spirit's kindling and ask for direction from above, for as the ships go not at haphazard, so neither will any Christian his way to Heaven unless he watches and prays and looks up daily, saying, "Guide me in a plain path, O God." The voyage of a ship on the main ocean seems, to me, to be an admirable picture of the life of faith. The sailor does not see a road before him, or any land mark or sea mark, yet is sure of his course. He relies

upon fixed lights in Heaven, for far out he can see no beacon or light on the sea.

His calculations, based on the laws of the heavenly bodies, are sure guides on a wild wilderness where no keel ever leaves a furrow to mark the way. The Late Captain Basil Hall, one of the most scientific officers in the navy, tells the following interesting incident. He once sailed from San Blas, on the west coast of Mexico. After a voyage of 8,000 miles, occupying 89 days, he arrived off Rio de Janeiro, having in this interval passed through the Pacific Ocean, rounded Cape Horn and crossed the South Atlantic without making land or seeing a single sail except an American whaler. When, within a week's sail of Rio, he set seriously about, determining by lunar observations, the position of his ship, and then steered his course by those common principles of navigation which may be safely employed for short distances between one known station and another.

Having arrived within what he considered, from his computations, 15 or 20 miles of the coast, he hove to, at four o'clock in the morning, to await the break of day, and then bore up, proceeding cautiously, on account of a thick fog. As this cleared away, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing the great Sugar Loaf Rock which stands on one side of the harbor's mouth, so nearly right ahead, that they had not to alter their course above a point in order to hit the entrance of the port. This was the first land they had seen for nearly three months, after crossing so many seas, and being set backwards and forwards by innumerable currents and foul winds. The effect upon all on board was electric and, giving way to their admiration, the sailors greeted the commander with a hearty cheer. And what a cheer will we give when, after many a year's sailing by faith, we, at last, see the pearly gates right straight ahead and enter into the fair havens without needing to shift a point! Glory be to the Captain of our salvation! It will be all well with us when the fog of this life's care shall lift, and we shall see the Light of Heaven!

Once more, how go the ships? They not only go according to the wind, guided by the helm and the chart, but some ships will go better than others, *according to their build*. With the same amount of wind one vessel makes more way than another. Now it is a blessed thing when the Grace of God gives a Christian a good build. There are some Church members who are so oddly shaped that somehow they never seem to cut the water! Even the Holy Spirit does not make much of them. They will get into harbor at last, but they will need a world of tugging. The snail did get into the ark—I often wonder how he did it—he must have got up very early that morning! However, the snail got in as well as the greyhound, and so there are many Christian people who will get to Heaven, but Heaven, alone, knows how, for they are such an odd sort of people that they seem to make no progress in the Divine Life. I would sooner live in Heaven with them forever than be with them 15 minutes here below!

God seems to shape some Christian minds in a more perfect model than others, so that, having simplicity of character, warmth of heart, zealous temperaments and generous spirits, when the wind of the Spirit comes they cut through the foam. Now, I suspect that some good people

have, by degrees, become like the “Great Eastern” a short time since, namely, foul under water. They cannot go because they are covered with barnacles. A ship is greatly impeded in its voyage if it carries a quantity of barnacles on her bottom. I know lots of Christian people—I could point them out tonight, but I will not—who are covered with barnacles. They cannot go because of some secret inconsistency, or love of the things of this world rather than the love of God.

They need laying up and cleaning a bit, so as to get some of the barnacles off. It is a rough process, but it is one to which some of God’s vessels have to be exposed. What headway they would make towards Heaven if that which hinders were removed! Sometimes, when a man is on a bed of sickness he is losing his barnacles and, sometimes, when a man has been rich and wealthy and has lost all he had, it takes off the barnacles. When we have lost friends we love, and whom we have made idols of, we have been sorry to lose them—but it has cleaned off our barnacles. And when we have got out to sea there has been an ease about the going and we have scarcely known how it was, but God knew that He had made us more fit for His service by the trials of life to which He exposed us.

That is how the ships go. There are many mysteries about them and there are many in us. God makes us go by the gales of His Spirit. O, that we may be trim for going, buoyant and swift to be moved, and so may we make a grand voyage to Heaven with Christ Jesus at the helm!

III. Thirdly and briefly. When I saw these ships go I happened to be near a station of Lloyd’s. I noticed that they ran up flags as the vessels went by, to which the vessels replied. I suppose they were *asking questions*—to know their names and what their cargo was, where they were going, and so on. Now I am going to act as Lloyd’s tonight, and put up the flags and ask you something about yourselves. The third point, then, will be—the ships go, LET US SIGNAL THEM.

And, first, *who is your owner?* “There go the ships,” but who is your owner? You do not reply, but I think I can make a guess. There are some hypocrites about who make fine pretensions, but they are not holy-living people! They even dare to come to the Lord’s Table and yet they drink of the cup of devils! They will sing pious hymns with us and then sing lascivious ditties with their friends. I would say to such a man—you are a rotten vessel, you do not belong to King Jesus! Every timber is faithful in His vessels. They are not all what we should like them to be and, as I have said already, they, too, are often covered with barnacles, but still they are all sincere. The Lord builds His vessels with sound timber and unless we are sincere and right, Christ is not our Owner, but Satan is.

The painted hypocrite is known through the disguise he wears. There is another vessel over there, a fine vessel, too. Look, she is newly painted and looks spick and span. You can see nothing amiss with her. What white sails, and do you notice the many flags? Take the glass and read the vessel’s name, and you will see in bold letters, “Self-righteousness.” Ah, I know that the owner is not the Lord Jesus Christ, for all the ships that belong to Him carry the red Cross flag and cannot endure the flaunting flag of self-righteousness! All God’s people admit that they must be saved

by Sovereign Grace! Anything like righteousness of their own they pump overboard as so much leakage and bilge-water.

I see another vessel over yonder, with her sails all spread and every bit of her colors flying. There, there, what a blaze she makes! How proud she seems as she scuds over the water. That vessel is "The Pride," from the port of Self-Conceit, Captain Ignorance. I do not know where she is more often to be seen, but sometimes she crosses this bit of water. I should not wonder if she is in sight here, now, and you may be sure she does not belong to our Lord Jesus. Whether it is pride of money, or person, or rank, or talent, it comes of evil, and Jesus Christ does not own it! You must get rid of all pride if you belong to Him. God grant us to be humble in heart. I could mention some more vessels that I see here tonight, but I will not.

I will rather beg each man and woman to ask himself, "Can I put my hand on my heart and say, 'I am not my own, I am bought with a price?' Did Jesus buy me with His precious blood and do I acknowledge that there is not a timber, spar, rope, or bolt in me but what belongs to Him?" Blessed be His name, some of us *can* say there is not a hair of our head or a drop of our blood but what belongs to Him! Yours are we, You Son of David, and all that we have! I hope there are vessels here which are owned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them never be ashamed to confess their Owner. A vessel on proper business is never ashamed to answer signals. If there should be a smuggler or pirate in the offing, the crews would not be likely to answer signals. But those who are on honest business are ready to reply. And so, Brothers and Sisters, be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Never show in your actions that you are ashamed of Jesus, but always let the broad flag be flying in whatever waters you are—"Christ is mine, and I am His. For Him I live. His reproach would I bear and His honor would I maintain."

Our next inquiry is, *what is your cargo?* "There go the ships," but what do they carry? You cannot tell from looking at them far out at sea, except that you can be pretty sure that some of them do not carry much. Look at that showy brig! You can tell by the look of her that she has not much on board—from the fact of her floating so high it is clear that her cargo is light. Big men, very important individuals, very high-floating people are common, but there is nothing in them! If they had more on board they would not sink deeper in the water. As we said this morning, the more Divine Grace a man has the lower he lies before God.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, what cargo have you got? I am afraid some of you who lie down in the water are not kept down by any very precious cargo, but I fear you are in ballast. I have gone aboard some Christians. I thought there was a good deal in them, but I have not been able to find it. They have a great deal of trouble and they always tell you about it. There is a good old soul I call in to see sometimes. I begin to converse with her and her conversation is always about rheumatism—nothing else! You cannot get beyond rheumatism. That good Sister is in ballast. There is another friend of mine, a farmer. If you talk with him, it is always about the badness of the times. That Brother is in ballast, too.

There are many tradesmen who, though they are Christians, cannot be made to talk of anything but the present dullness of business. I wish they could get that ballast out and fill up with something better, for it is not worth carrying! You must have it, sometimes, I suppose, but it is infinitely better to carry a load of praises, prayers, good wishes, holy doctrines, charitable actions and generous encouragements! Some ships, I think, carry a cargo of *powder*. You cannot go very near them without feeling you are in danger—they are so very apt to misjudge and take offense. I wish that such persons were made to carry a red flag that we might give them a wide berth.

It is well to be loaded with good things. Young people, study the Word of God. Ask to be taught by experience and, wherever you go, seek to carry the precious commodities which God has made dear to your own soul, that others may be enriched thereby. It is an interesting sight to see those immense ships loaded with passengers for the colonies. I cannot help praying as I look at them, "God grant that no harm may come to them, but may they safely reach their desired haven." When I look at some of our Brethren whom God is blessing, so that they have a cargo of blessed souls on board, consisting of hundreds who have been brought to Jesus by them, I would to God we had many more!

Thank God, I have sometimes had my decks crowded with passengers who have, from my ministry, received the Gospel. The Lord has brought them on board, and O, I trust before I die He will give me thousands more who will have to thank God that they heard the Gospel from these lips! May we be emigrant vessels bearing souls away into the Glory Land where the days of their mourning shall be ended! Of course we can only be humble instruments, but still, what honor God puts upon His instruments when He makes use of them for this object. "There go the ships." Not ships of war are we, with guns to carry death, but missionary vessels carrying tidings of peace and glad news to the utmost ends of the earth!

Our last signal asks the question—*where go the ships?* "Where go the ships? Oh, yes, they went merrily down the Channel the other day, but where are they now? In a year's time, who will report all the good vessels which just now passed by our coast? I am looking out upon all of you, anxious to know what port you are making for. Some of you are bound for the Port of Peace. Swiftly may the winds convey you over the waters and safely may you voyage under the convoy of the Lord Jesus! I will try and keep pace with you! I hope that you will sail in company with others of my Master's vessels, but if you have to sail alone over a sea in which you cannot see another sail, may God, the Blessed One, protect and guard you! Bound for the Port of Peace, with Christ on board, insured for Glory, bound for Life Eternal, let us bless the name of the Lord!

But alas, alas, many ships which bid fair for the desired haven are lost on the rocks! Some soul-destroying sin causes their swift destruction. Others, equally fair to look upon, are lost on the sands. They seemed bound for Heaven, but they were not the Lord's. The sands are very dangerous, but they are only a mass of little atoms, soft and yielding. Yet as many ships are lost on the sands as on the rocks. Even so, there are ways

and habits of evil which are deceptive—there is apparently nothing very bad about them. Nothing heartbreaking, like rocks, but oh, the multitudes of souls that have been sucked in by sandy temptations! Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are not going that way. God grant you Grace to avoid little sins and I am sure you will keep off the rocks of great sin. In any case, may we turn out to be the Lord's own, and so be kept to the end. Woe unto us if we should prove to be mere adventurers and perish in our presumption!

Among the ships that go to sea, there are some that *founder*. One does not know how, but they are never heard of again. They were sighted on such-and-such a day, but we shall never more hear any tidings of them. How is that? I have known some of the members of this Church go down in mid-ocean. I never thought it could have happened, but they have gone! I can only *imagine* how it was. They *seemed* seaworthy vessels, but they were doubtless rotten through and through. Oh Brothers and Sisters, may God keep you from foundering, as some do by some mysterious sin which seems as if it clasped the soul and dragged it down to the deeps of Hell!

I have known some vessels, too, that have become *derelict*—waifs and strays upon the sea—men that were the hope of Churches, but who have abandoned themselves to reckless living. They used to worship with the people of God and seemed to be very earnest and zealous. And now, perhaps, at this very moment, they are passing through the gin palace door, or spending this evening in vices which we dare not mention. O, it is dreadful! Many start on their voyage and look as if they were Christ's own vessels—and yet for some strange, unreasonable reason they give all up. And they will be met with, in years to come, drifting about, rudderless, captainless, crewless, dangerous to others and miserable to themselves. God save you from this!

And you, my Friend, though you have been a member of this Church for 20 years, God save you from despairing and sinning furiously, for there, sometimes, come over men strange moments of insanity in which they reverse the whole of their lives, lay violent hands upon an excellent character and become castaways. The Grace of God will save the truly regenerate from this, but, alas, how many high professors never were regenerate at all?! Where will some of the vessels I see before me go? It is a fine fleet I am looking upon. Brothers and Sisters, I hope all of us will be found in that great harbor in Heaven which can accommodate all His Majesty's fleet. O, it will be a great day when we all arrive! Will you give me a hail when you get into port? Will you know me?

I shall be on the lookout for some of you. I cannot help believing that we shall know each other. We have been in rough waters together these 20 years, and we have had some glorious weather, too, have we not? We have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep! I hope we shall keep together till we reach that blessed haven where our fellowship will be eternal! How we will glorify Him who gets us there, even Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of the seas! Christ shall never hear the last of it if I get to Heaven! I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto His name! I remember

preaching once, when half of my congregation quarreled with me when I had done preaching, for I had said—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign Grace.”***

As I came downstairs I met one who said, “You will not sing loudest, for I owe more to Grace than you do!” And I found that all the Lord’s people said the same!

Well, we will have it out when we get to Heaven—we will try this contention among the birds of Paradise and see which of us can sing the most loudly to the praise of Redeeming Grace! Till then let us trust the Lord Jesus and obey His orders, for He is our Captain and it is our duty to do His bidding. But it would be a dreadful supposition—and yet, perhaps, it may be *worse* than a supposition—that some of you will have to cast anchor forever in the Dead Sea, whose waves are fire, where every vessel is a prison, where every passenger feels a Hell! What must it be like to be in Hell an hour? I wish some of you could think it over. What must it be like to be shut up in despair for one single day!

If you have a toothache a few minutes, how wretched you are and how anxious to get rid of it! But what must it be to be in Hell even if were for a short time—even it were but for a short time? O, if it came to an end, still would I say, by all the humanities that are in my soul, I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, do not risk the wrath of God! Go not down to the Pit! Pull down that black flag, Man, pull it down and cast off your old owner. Ask Christ to be your Owner! Run up the red flag of the Cross and give yourself to Jesus, for if you do not, your voyage must lead to the gulf of Black Despair where you will suffer forever the result of your sin!

God have mercy upon us and may we never have to pass through the Straits of Judgment into the Gulf of Damnation! May it never be said, “There goes one of the ships that the Tabernacle pilot signaled. It is gone to destruction.” May it rather be said of all of us, all in full sail together, as we go towards Heaven, “There go the ships!” Not one of them is drifting to the Gulf of Destruction! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all is well with you. Reject Him, and all is ill with you. May He, by His Word, enable you to make a right choice tonight, for His Love’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 104.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 686, 656.**

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THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE UNIVERSE

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*“What You give them they gather.”
Psalm 104:28.*

THIS sentence describes the commissariat of creation. The problem is the feeding of the “creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts,” which swarm the sea, the armies of birds which fill the air and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land! But in this sentence we have the problem solved, “What You give them they gather.” The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the Worker is Infinite—if He were not at the head of it, the task would never be accomplished! Blessed be God for the great *You* of the text! It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world—leviathan in the ocean and the sparrow on the bough may be, alike, glad of this, and we, the children of the great Father, much more!

The notion of modern philosophers appears to be that the world is like a clock which an omnipotent phantom has set going and left to run on, each wheel acting upon its fellow by rigid law or, as a Brother remarked to me, they think the Lord has wound up the universe like a watch and put it under His pillow and gone to sleep! What do you think, Brothers and Sisters—do you find pleasure in a world bereaved of its God? To me, such philosophy is dreary, for my soul pines for an Infinite Love which will give itself to me and receive my love in return. I am orphaned, indeed, if my Maker will not pity me as His child and hear my prayers, compassionate my tears and succor and comfort me! Babes need a mother’s heart as much as her hands. Would you wish to be a child brought up by machinery, washed by a millwheel, rocked by a pendulum, fed from a pipe, dressed by a steel hand and, in fine, committed to the care of a wonderful engine which could do everything except love you? You would miss the eyes which weep with you and smile upon you, the lips which kiss you and speak lovingly to you and the dear countenance which laughs as you are fondled and pressed to a warm bosom. No, I can neither accept a steam engine instead of my mother, nor a set of laws in exchange for my God! There is a God who cares for all His creatures and makes the grass to grow for the cattle and herbs for the service of man. There is a Father to whom we speak and who hears us! One who waters the hills from His chambers and satisfies the earth with the fruit of His works—to whom we may come boldly in every time of need! Because Jehovah lives, the creatures are fed! He gives them their daily food, they gather it and so the work is done.

The general principle of the text is God gives to His creatures, and His creatures gather. That general principle we shall apply to our own case as men and women, for it is as true of us as it is of the fish of the sea and the cattle on the hills. "What You give them they gather."

I. Our first point is this, WE HAVE ONLY TO GATHER, FOR GOD GIVES.

In temporal things, God gives us day by day our daily bread, and our business is simply to gather it. In the wilderness, the manna fell outside the camp of Israel—they had not to make the manna, but to go out in the morning and gather it before the sun was hot. Providence has guaranteed to the child of God his necessary food. "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Our part in the business is to go forth unto our labor and gather it. True, in some cases, necessary food is not gathered without excessive labor but this is occasioned by the injustice of man—not by the arrangements of God. And when true religion shall have fully operated upon all classes of mankind, none shall need to toil like slaves. They shall only need to perform such an amount of labor as shall be healthful and endurable. When no man oppresses his fellow, the work of gathering what God gives will be no hardship, but a wholesome exercise! The sweat of labor will then be a blessed medicine.

In this light let us view our worldly business. We are to go forth unto our work and our labor until the evening and to expect that bounteous Providence will thus enable us to gather what the Lord, Himself, bestows. And if by this means He gives us food and raiment, we are to be therewith content. If our faith can see the hand of God in it all, it will be sweet to pick up the manna from the ground and eat it with gratitude because it tastes of the place from where it came.

As to *spirituals*, the principle is most emphatically true. We have, in the matter of Grace, only to gather what God gives. The natural man thinks that he has to earn Divine favor, that he has to purchase the blessings of Heaven, but he is in grave error—the soul has only to receive that which Jesus freely gives! Mercy is a gift, salvation is a gift, all Covenant blessings are gifts! We need not bring a price in our hands, but come empty-handed and gather what is laid before us, even as the birds gather their food and the cattle on the hills feed on the grass which freely grows for them. This is one of the first principles of the Gospel. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of Lights." And it is for us by faith to take our omer and fill it with the angels' food which has fallen all around us, take it into our tent and there feast, even to the fullest! 'Tis God's part to give, 'tis ours to gather. Faith's sphere is that of the fleece which absorbs the dew, or the pool which is filled with the rain. Believer, this is the rule in all spiritual things! You are to be a diligent gatherer and to strive after high spiritual attainments, but still remember that your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him. These superior blessings are His gifts—and the surest way of obtaining them is to come to Him for them and receive them by faith. You have not to pluck Covenant blessings out of a closed hand—you have only to take from the Lord's open palm what

He delights to bestow. For you to be straitened and poor gives no pleasure to Him. Rather will it delight Him to fill you with His favor and to enrich you with all the blessings of His Grace.

If the calm quiet spirit of this thought could enter our minds, how happy we would be! We would then sit down at Jesus' feet with Mary and leave Martha to fret alone. Tomorrow morning, before many of our eyes are open, the sun will be rising and, as soon as his first beams salute the earth, the birds of every wing will awaken and, seeing the light, they will begin to sing! But where is your breakfast, little bird? Where is the food for today for the nest full of little ones? The birds do not know, neither are they anxious, but they gather the first seed, or crumb, or worm which they find and, continuing to do so all day long, they are satisfied. Yes, and when summer is gone and the long warm days are over, and cold winter sets in, the birds sit and sing on the bare boughs, though frost is on the ground, for they expect that God will give—and all they have to do is to gather! We may learn much from little birds—yes, even from little birds in cages, for if those who keep them should forget to give them seed and water, they must die, must they not? And yet they sing! They have no great store—perhaps not enough to last them another day—but it does not fret them, neither do they cease their music! I believe Luther well translated their song when he said that it meant this—

***“Mortal, cease from care and sorrow!
God provides for the morrow.”***

II. Secondly, it is certain that WE CAN ONLY GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES. However eager we may be, there is the end of the matter. The most diligent bird shall not be able to gather more than the Lord has given it—neither shall the most avaricious and covetous man! “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His Beloved sleep.” “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.” What God gives you, you will be able to gather. But if you set about to heap up what your avarice lusts after, no blessing will attend it. What a difference is often seen in two men placed in the same position in life, with the same work to do and very much the same possessions! You see one of them working cheerfully, happy as a king, sweetening his bread with content and joy in the Lord—while the other murmurs and repines, envying those who are richer and filled with harsh thoughts of God. What makes the one happy and the other wretched? Truly, only that the one has the Grace of God to give him contentment and so is full—and the other has a brutish hunger and greed and so, is left to be his own tormentor. As it is with the poor, so is it with the rich—the heart has more to do with making us happy than our possessions have. He whose soul is full of God, faith and contentment, is a truly rich man! The reflection that we can, after all, gather no more than God gives, should make us restful and contented. It teaches us our dependence upon God and tends to lessen our self-confidence, to moderate our desires and to abate our cares.

Recollect, dear Christian Friends, that *the same remark holds good with regard to spirituals as well as temporals*. You can only gather what the Lord grants you. Before preaching, I was trying to find food for you all and I began to pray for it because I remembered that I could only gather for you what the Lord my God gave me. If I bring more than that, it will only be chaff of my own and not good winnowed corn from His garner. I often need to think of this, for I have to feed a great multitude with spiritual meat almost every day in the week. Where is the poor minister to get the supply from if the Lord does not bring it to him? He waits, therefore, upon his God with humble faith and prayer, expecting that fit matter will be suggested. You also, dear Friends, can only obtain, when hearing the Word, what the Holy Spirit gives you. You may hear a thousand sermons, but you will gather nothing that will really quicken or feed your souls unless the Lord gives it to you. Unless the Spirit of the Lord puts fullness into the Word, all the hearing in the world will be worth nothing. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the inner man, or you will be surfeited with mere words, or puffed up with human opinions and nothing more! “What You give them they gather,” and no more.

So is it when you set out to work for the Lord Jesus Christ among the ungodly. You will win as many souls as God gives you, but no one will be converted by your own power. When we have reason to believe that the Lord has much people in a city, it gives us much comfort in going there. I always do my best for my congregations because I feel that they are always picked persons sent to me by my Master—if there are few, they are more than I can edify if He does not help me. And if there are many, so much the more help will my Lord afford me. I can only gather what the Lord gives. We may plant and we may water, too, but God must give the increase. We shall not be a sweet savor unto God, nor a savor of life unto life to any unless the almighty Spirit of the blessed God shall come forth and work with us.

Should not this lead us to much prayer? No dependence should be placed upon man, or upon the outward form of worship, for the most successful preacher cannot, by his own power, quicken the dead sinner, or regenerate a depraved soul! The Holy Spirit must be with us, or we prophesy in vain. The most laborious reaper in the Lord’s harvest cannot gather more sheaves than his Master gives him. Pray for him, then, that he may not miss his reward. Pray for him that he may be strong for labor, that his sickle may be sharp, his arm vigorous and his harvest plentiful—that he may bring in a glorious load of sheaves to the garner! As for yourselves, when engaged in any service for God, take heed that you rest not in yourselves, for you can receive nothing unless it is given you from above. Your words will be no better than silence, your thoughts no more than daydreams and your efforts wasted strength unless the Lord shall go before you. “Without Me you can do nothing” is a Truth of God you must never forget!

III. Observe, thirdly, that **WE MUST GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES** or else we shall get no good by His bountiful giving.

God feeds the innumerable creeping things, but each creature collects the provender for itself. The huge leviathan receives his vast provision, but he must go plowing through the boundless meadows and gather up the myriads of minute objects which supply his need. The fish must leap up to catch the fly, the swallow must hawk for its food, the young lions must hunt their prey. "What You give them they gather." God has not prepared, in His whole universe, a single corner for an idle being. In no society does the sluggard succeed and it is not desirable that he should. If a man will not work, he ought to die, for he is of no use alive—he is in everybody's way and, like a fruitless tree he cumpers the ground. God gives, but if a man will not gather, he deserves to starve.

It is so in business. Everybody knows that we must be diligent there, for "the hand of the diligent makes rich." The Book of Proverbs deals very hard blows against sluggards—and Christian ministers do well to frequently denounce the great sin of idleness which is the mother of a huge family of sins. Idleness is a most contemptible vice—it covers a man with rags, fills him with disease and makes him a ready servant of the devil. It is a shameful thing that God, "who works up to now," and made us on purpose that we should work, should see us wasting time and strength and leaving good work unaccomplished. God will not feed you, idle man! His own verdict is, "if he will not work, neither let him eat." If you loaf about and say, "The Lord will provide," he will probably "provide" you a place in the workhouse, if not in the county jail! If the manna falls near him and the lazy man will not take the trouble to gather it, his omer will not be filled by miracle, neither will an angel be sent to carry bread and meat to his table. Up, you sluggard, and gather what the Lord has strewn!

The law of Nature and Providence holds good in spiritual things. "What You give them they gather." There is a spirit abroad in the world—not so powerful now, thank God, as it used to be—which talks a great deal about Grace and Predestination, and therein I rejoice to hear what it has to say. But its inference from those Truths of God is that men are to sit still, to be passive in salvation and to look upon themselves as so many logs—as if they had no will in the matter, and were never to be called to an account concerning the Gospel which they hear! Now, this kind of doctrine virtually teaches that what God gives drops into our mouths and we need not gather it at all—the very reverse of the Savior's exhortation to labor for that meat which endures unto everlasting life! Sovereign Grace will not take us to Heaven by the hair of our heads, or save us in our sleep, whether we will or not! Such teaching would have been repudiated by the Apostles, for it acts like chloroform upon the conscience and plunges the soul into a deadly lethargy. The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, there is a Predestination and the Doctrines of Election and Effectual Grace are true—nor may we deny them! But yet the Lord deals with men as responsible beings and bids them "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Such exhortations are evidently intended for free agents and indicate that our salvation requires energet-

ic action! It would not appear from Scripture that we are to lie dormant and be merely acted upon, for “the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” Of men as well as of birds it is true, “what You give them *they gather*.” God gives you faith, but you must believe! God gives you repentance, but you must repent! These Divine Graces are the work of God, but they are also the acts of man. How often shall we need to remind you, Brothers and Sisters, that the Holy Spirit does not believe for us? How can He? Is faith to be exercised by proxy? That cannot be! Neither does the Holy Spirit repent for us—it is absurd to entertain such a notion! We must, ourselves, personally believe and repent! If any man does not repent as his own act and deed, his repentance and faith are not such as are spoken of in Scripture, or required by the Gospel! Brothers and Sisters, we should pray, repent and believe as much as if all these were wholly our own, but we are bound to give God all the glory of them, because it is only by His Grace that we either can or will perform them! Men must hear the Word, for “faith comes by hearing.” We must believe the Word, for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And we must repent of sin, for if sin is not forsaken, pardon is not given. We must fly to the City of Refuge, or the avenger of blood will destroy us! We must escape for our lives to the mountain, or the fire from God will overwhelm us in the City of Destruction. “What You give them they gather.” We *must* gather, or we shall not have!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we must not expect spiritual gifts without gathering them. For instance, our souls need food, but we may not expect the Lord to feed us unless we use the means, hear or read His Word, attend to private devotion and the like. These are channels of Grace to us and woe be to us if we neglect them! If you saw your friend so emaciated that you could count his bones—and so weak that he could scarcely stand—you would enquire what had reduced him so much, for he used to be a strong hearty man. You say to him, “My dear Friend, what can be the matter with you?” You expect him to tell you of some mysterious disease. But no, his tale is far more simple—he confesses that he does not eat, that he has given up having regular meals and very seldom takes an ounce of nourishment. You quite understand his feebleness and decline—he is injuring his constitution by denying it nutriment! Now, when a Christian complains that he is full of doubts and fears and has no joy in the Lord as he used to have, and no enjoyment in prayer or labor for Jesus—if you find out that he neglects all week-night services, never goes to the Prayer Meeting, reads anything rather than his Bible and has no time for meditation—you need not enquire further into his spiritual malady! The man does not gather what God provides! He lets the manna lie outside the camp and allows the water from the Rock to flow untasted! And he must not be astonished that his soul is not in a right condition. Christians will find that if they neglect the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, and if they forget to wait upon the Lord and so renew their strength, they will fall into a miserable, weak, low condition—and their souls will be full of doubts, cares, and

anxieties such as they never would have known if they had walked nearer to God and maintained intimate communion with the Savior!

As it is with ourselves, *so is it with us in reference to others*. God will give us souls if we pray for them, but we must seek after them. When the Lord calls a man to speak in His name, He intends to give him some success, but he must be on the watch to gather it. Some ministers have preached the Gospel long, but have never seen much fruit because they never tried to gather it—they have had no meetings for enquirers, nor encouraged the young converts to come to them for help. What God has given them, they have not gathered. Many professors are always wishing that the Church would increase—they would like to see an aggressive work carried on against the world—why do they not set about it? Why stand they gazing up into Heaven? Do they expect to see souls converted without means? Dear Brothers and Sisters, it will not do for us to get silly notions into our heads! Up to this day God has been pleased to use instrumentality and until the Second Advent He will continue to do so! When the Lord descends from Heaven, it will be time enough for us to talk of what He will then do—but till He comes, let us continue to gather the souls He gives us. We are not in such great need of conferences about how to win souls as of men who will do it. I vote for less talk and more work! We cannot have too much prayer, but we certainly need more effort. The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they *go forward!*” We cry, “Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!” and the Lord replies, “Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion!” God is awake enough—the awaking is needed by us! We have been praying for His Spirit, and rightly enough, but the Spirit of God is never backward—we are straitened in ourselves! He would use us if we were vessels fit for His use. Oh, that we would yield ourselves fully to the Spirit of God, to be borne whichever way He wills, even as the clouds are driven by the wind! Then He would draw and we would run—He would give and we would gather!

IV. The fourth turn of the text gives us the sweet thought THAT WE MAY GATHER WHAT HE GIVES. We have Divine permission to enjoy freely what the Lord bestows!

Poor Sinner, whatever the Lord has given in His Gospel to sinners, you may freely gather. When the manna fell in the wilderness, no guards were appointed to keep the people away. No enquiry was made as to the character or experience of those who came to gather it. There it was and no one was denied. Over the heads of the people might have sounded the words, “Whoever will, let him come and take of the manna freely.” Tests and qualifications there were none and yet the special design was the feeding of Israel. No discriminating Rabbi cried out, “You must not come unless you feel a law-work within and are sensible sinners.” Not a word of the sort was whispered! And the Lord has appointed no one to keep sinners away from the Water of Life, but He has chosen many to bid poor souls draw near and drink! And the Holy Spirit, Himself, puts forth His power to draw men to it. Jesus says, “He that comes to Me I will in no

wise cast out.” And I, for one, have no commission to discourage any, nor will I. What He gives you, you may gather! The little birds ask no questions as to whether they may enjoy the seeds or the worms—they see the food and take it boldly—so, Sinners, it is not for you to raise difficulties about the mercy of God! Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved and that *whoever* is a wide word. You need not say, “I do not know whether I am elected.” Neither can I tell you, nor can any other man. “The Lord knows them that are His,” and none of us know anything about it except as far as His Spirit teaches us that we ourselves are His. Your thoughts should run in another direction—Christ Jesus came to save sinners—are you a sinner? “Whoever will, let him come.” Are you willing? Then come along with you and quibble no longer!

God does not guard His great garden of Grace as men protect their little patches of ground, wherein they hang up old garments or dead crows to keep the birds away. The Lord gives freely and upbraids not. Certain preachers hang up the dead black crow of their own morbid experience to scare away poor sinners from coming to simple faith in Jesus, but the Lord has no scarecrows in His garden! Do but come, you blackest of sinners, and He will receive you. The strangest bird, with speckled wings, may freely gather what mercy gives. Whatever is preached in the Gospel as the object of faith, everyone that believes may have. Whatever is promised to repentance, everyone that repents may have. And whatever is promised to coming to Christ, everyone that comes to Christ shall have. “What You give them they gather,” for God gives it to be gathered! He gave the manna on purpose for it to be eaten! He would not have sent bread from Heaven if men had not needed it and if He had not meant to feed them. Grace must have been meant for sinners—it will suit no other persons. If I have a hard heart, the Spirit of God can soften it—why should He not do so? Here is a foul sinner and yonder is a fountain filled with blood which completely cleanses—why should he not wash? What was Christ meant for but to be a Savior? And if He is a Savior, why should He not save *me*? Surely, when I am thirsty and I see the water springing up before me, I may as well drink. Sinner, there is a spring open here by the Grace of our Lord Jesus! You have come this way and, therefore, I suggest to you and I pray the Spirit of God also to suggest it to you, that between the fountain and the thirsty soul there ought to be a connection begun at once! God invites you, your need calls you, may His Spirit draw you—for even now what He has given you may gather!

V. The last thought is, GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE US SOMETHING TO GATHER.

It is written, “The Lord will provide.” The other day, as I walked on a common, I picked up a dead sparrow. Going a little further, I found another. And my friend said to me, “I have found another.” And he remarked, “It must have been a bad season; these birds must have been starved.” “No, no,” I said, “you are not going to pick up dead sparrows killed by the weather. That cottager over the hedge has some rows of young peas, and he keeps a gun.” Men kill the birds—God does not starve them.

Brother, *if you are under the guardian care of God you shall not want.* If you are your own shepherd, you will probably stray into very lean pastures one of these days, but if the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. He will make you to lie down in green pastures. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger,” for they try to take care of themselves. “But they that seek the Lord,” although they are often very simple-minded people and easily imposed upon, “shall not want any good thing,” for God will take care of them. I have often noticed how wonderfully poor widows manage to live and struggle through with large families. When they were dependent upon their husbands, they were often badly off. And when their husbands died, it seemed as if they must starve! But if they are Christian women, they look to God and God becomes their Husband—and He is a far better Husband than the man they have lost! When God takes the children in hand and becomes their Father, they cannot lack. Help is raised up in unexpected quarters and they are provided for—they can scarcely tell how. If, in Providence, we have learned to live by faith in God, we may be sure that He will not fail us. “The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish.”

Thus is it also in spiritual things. If you are willing to gather, God will always give. Go to the Bible and say, “Lord, give me a promise,” and you will find one suitable to your case. Go and hear His servants whom He has sent. Go with hearts ready to receive the Word and you will not return empty. The Lord will make us speak to your case as much as if we knew all about you! Bring your largest vessel with you and the Lord will fill it to the brim. Never does a Believer open his mouth wide but the Lord fills it! Be you ready to gather and you may be right well assured that the Divine fullness will never cease to supply your need!

Thus, from a very simple text, we have had our lesson. Go home and feed upon what you have gathered—and take care to bless the name of the Lord!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 34.

The title of this Psalm is, “A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech (or, Achish); who drove him away, and he departed.” It relates to a sad scene in David’s life when he had to feign madness in order to escape from his enemies. But I notice that although the fact is recorded, yet David does not dwell upon it in the Psalm. He had acted as a fool or a madman, but he was not fool enough, or mad enough, to glory in his shame! I have heard some men, whose past lives have been very disgraceful, who, after their professed conversion, have seemed to make a boast of their sin. David does not do that, nor will any other right-minded person. Let us always be ashamed of our sin, even while we magnify the Grace of God which has saved us from it. Though we may feel that it is necessary to mention it in order to encourage others to hope in the mercy of God, yet we must take care that we never

even *seem* to dwell upon it with any kind of gusto. Thus the Psalm begins—

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times.* “Whether the times are dark or light, whether I feel well or ill, whether the Lord deals with me graciously or severely, I will bless Him at all times.”

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* What a blessed mouthful! If we could but carry out this resolve of David, we would not find so much fault with others as we often do. We shall have little or no opportunity for grumbling and murmuring if praise to Jehovah shall continually be in our mouth!

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* All men are more or less given to boasting but it seems to be especially characteristic of Englishmen and Americans. Well, there is a right way of boasting. If you can truly say, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord,” you may boast away as much as you like!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.* Any other kind of boasting makes humble people sad, but when we boast in the Lord, the more we boast the more the humble rejoice!

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* Let each one of us throw his stone upon the mound to make the heap as high as possible, for everyone has some peculiar cause for gratitude and thanksgiving.

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* It was a very poor way of seeking the Lord when he had got into the hand of the Philistines and was planning in his own mind a disgraceful way of escaping from them. It was not that calm quiet calling upon God that one would have liked to see in David. Still, God heard him and that makes the deliverance all the more wonderful.

5. *They looked unto Him.* [See Sermon #195, Volume 4—LOOKING UNTO JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “All these people that have come at my call to join me in praising the Lord—“They looked unto Him.”

5. *And were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* No, not one of them! If they looked to God, light shone from God upon their faces and their faces glowed with the holy radiance, so they had no reason to be ashamed.

6, 7. *This poor man cried,* [See Sermon #2193, Volume 37—A POOR MAN’S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* David’s deliverance had been so special that he could not help feeling that some special deliverer had been employed on his behalf—“the angel of the Lord” had been sent to his help. Then David, why did you act like a madman? Ah, that was through his lack of faith, yet even lack of faith must not make us rob God of His Glory. What though we were unbelieving, He was faithful! Therefore let us give Him His due recompense of praise. Let us try to blot out the remembrance of

our own weakness with our tears, but let us not erase the memory of God's loving kindness to us.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* You may not only believe that God is good, but it may become a matter of experience with you—"O taste and see that the Lord is good." You cannot see the goodness of God to perfection without tasting it, so use the sense of taste as well as that of sight! Some people want first to see, and then to taste, but David says, "Taste and see."

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack. They are strong, cunning, ravenous, yet they "do lack."*

10. *And suffer hunger.* They try to take care of themselves and, therefore, they get badly taken care of.

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* [See Sermon #65, Volume 2—LIONS LACKING—BUT THE CHILDREN SATISFIED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] When God takes care of us, we are well taken care of, though we are not lions, but sheep—for we have a Shepherd, and the lions have not—so we "shall not want any good thing."

11. *Come, you children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* I should not wonder but that when David played the madman and scribbled on the doors of the gate, the children in the streets gathered around him and mocked him. Wherever we have done harm to any, let us try to do them good. So did David—he sought to gather the children about his knees and to talk to them—"Come, you children." He does not begin by saying, "Stand off, you children." There would be no teaching them in that way! You must seek to draw them to yourselves if you would draw them to your Lord. "Come, you children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Though David had been anointed king, he remained a teacher of children! And the highest honor we can have is, for Christ's sake, to teach the little ones. Children love bright, happy teaching—they naturally desire life and happiness—so David begins.

12, 13. *What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* Children's tongues are very active and they need to be reminded that their tongues must be sanctified or they will say what is evil. David had both spoken and acted with guile at the court of Achish, so he particularly dwelt upon that matter. "Depart from evil"—run away from it—not merely do not *do* it, but get away from it! "Depart from evil, and do good."

14. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous.* He does not merely give a glance at them now and then, but His eyes rest on them. He is always watching them.

15. *And His ears are open unto their cry.* The translators put in the words, "are open," but they were not needed.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* You know what we mean when we say, "I set my face against it." So God sets His face against the wicked. Note how near both the righteous and the wicked are

to an observing God. In the first case, His eyes are upon the righteous. In the second, His face “is against them that do evil.”

16. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* He will stamp them out as men do with fire. He will not even let them be remembered—He will use means to ensure that their unholy example shall die with them.

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* That is something to teach the children—teach them from your own experience that God does hear and answer prayer. Teach them to always pray to God and to believe that prayer has real and beneficial results! “The Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.”

18. *The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* We often hear of people who die of a broken heart, but here we read about people who live with a broken heart. And it is the best way of living, too—with a heart that is broken for sin and broken from sin—a heart that in every portion of it feels the power of God!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Do not tell the children that the good are always happy and that the good escape trial, because you will deceive them if you do. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”—the happiness, the glory, the Heaven of the righteous is not here, but hereafter! “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.”

19. *But.* Blessed, “but.”

19. *The LORD delivers him out of them all.* Not only out of some of them, but “out of them all.” The righteous do not get out of them by their own power, but the Lord delivers them—they have a Divine Helper!

20. *He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken.* The righteous may have skin wounds and flesh wounds, but they shall not suffer any real hurt. God will not let His people be so injured as to be incapable of holiness. There shall be no bone-breaking in Christ’s mystical body, even as not one of the bones of Christ was broken!

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked.* Sin itself shall slaughter them.

21, 22. *And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.*

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

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

THE SWEET AND THE SWEETENER

NO. 2403

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 10, 1895.
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*"My meditation of Him shall be sweet."
 Psalm 104:34.*

THOSE OF YOU who were present this morning know that, with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, I pleaded with men that they would come to Christ. [Sermon # 1951, Volume 33—*The Pleading of the Last Messenger*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] If ever in my life I felt that I had spent every particle of my strength, I felt it when I had finished that discourse. I could have wished to die and end my ministry, with the testimony that I bore this morning. I know not in what way I could have more completely poured out my whole being in earnest desire for the conversion of my fellow men. I thought that it would not be possible for me to handle another subject in anything like the same fashion, tonight—I did not feel that I could do so. I said to myself, therefore, "Instead of preaching, instead of having anything to do that will cost much effort and cause much mental strain, I will just be one among the people and enjoy myself as a member of the congregation.

I will have a subject upon which we can all calmly think—I mean, all of us who know the Lord"—and it seemed to me as if nothing could be more fitting than to think of Him who is the joy of our heart, to meditate upon Him who is the strength of our spirit, even our blessed Lord, of whom the text says, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." So, then, I am not going to preach at this time—I am just going to lead your meditations a little, myself meditating while you meditate, being a sort of a leader to pitch the tune in which, I trust, all who love the Lord will heartily join. May God the Holy Spirit help us all sweetly to meditate upon Him of whom the Psalmist here speaks!

This 104th Psalm is a very wonderful one. Humboldt wrote a book which he called, *Cosmos*, that is, the world, and this Psalm is a *Cosmos*—it is a world set on fire with praise! It is all creation, from the mountain's summit down to the brooks that sparkle through the valleys praising God! I have frequently read this Psalm through in the woods and on the mountainside and, when we have come home from an excursion in the Italian mountains, I have said to my companions, "Now we will read the 104th Psalm." It is the naturalist's Psalm! It is the Psalm of nature viewed by the eye of faith and he that learns to look aright on seas and mountains, on beasts and birds, on sun and moon and stars, sees God in all things and says with the Psalmist, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

But, Beloved, redemption is a choicer theme for meditation than creation is, for its wonders are far greater! I can understand that God should make the worlds, but that He should redeem men from eternal ruin, I cannot understand. The Creator fashioning all things by the Word of His power is nothing like so remarkable an object of meditation as that same Creator, veiled in human flesh, yielding His hands to the nails of the Cross and bowing His head beneath the stroke of death! If creation is marvelous, redemption is a more sublime miracle, a wonder in the very center of all wonders!

Nor is the theme of redemption less vast than that of creation. Truly, nature is a very wide theme, from the almost infinite greatness which is discovered through the telescope to the wonderful minuteness which is perceived through the microscope. Nature seems to have no boundaries, yet it is a mere fragment compared with redemption, where everything is infinite, where you have to deal with sin and love, life and death, eternity and Heaven and Hell, God and man—and the Son of God made flesh for man's sake! Now you are among the sublimities, indeed, meditating upon redemption—your theme is vast beyond conception!

And let me add that the theme of redemption is quite as fresh as that of nature. Nature, it is true, never grows stale—from the first day of the year till the last, it is always young! Did you ever see the ocean look twice the same? Did you ever gaze upon the face of nature without always perceiving some fresh beauty? And it is just the same with redemption. The Cross never grows old! The doctrine of Christ Crucified is a spring that wells up forever with a sparkling freshness! Not even the eternal ages shall exhaust it—when untold myriads of years have passed away, this old, old story of the Cross will still be new!

There is this much more to say about a meditation upon redemption, that it comes closely home to us. I like to think of the stars, but, after all, I can be happy if the stars are quenched. I delight to think of the rolling ocean, but still, I could rejoice if there were no more sea. But in *redemption* we have a vital and personal interest—we could not live as we now live, in the sight of God we could not truly live at all—if we had not been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. The seas and the starry worlds are not ours as blessedly as Christ is ours and none of them can bring medicine to the heart and joy to the spirit as does Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us. So I think I may say, however excellent the naturalist's meditations are, and the more of right meditation upon nature the better—and I wish that we were all learned after the order of true science, which deals with nature itself, and not with theories—yet, if you know little about these things in which some take so deep an interest, your meditations of God may be exceedingly sweet! If you stay within the boundaries of redemption through Jesus Christ, which are by no means narrow, you may say, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

So, first, I shall talk about *the sweet*—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” Then I shall speak of *the sweet as a sweetener*, for it is not only sweet in *itself*, but it *imparts* sweetness—such sweetness as we need amid the many bitters of this mortal life.

I. First, then, let us talk about THE SWEET—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” “Of Him”—that is, of the Well-Beloved of the Father, of

the Well-Beloved of the Church, of the Well-Beloved of my own soul—of Him who loved me, in whose blood I have washed my robes and made them white. It is meditation “of Him” that is sweet—not merely of doctrine about Him, but of Him, of Himself—“my meditation of Him.” Not merely of His offices, and His work, and all that concerns Him, but of His own dear Self! There lies the sweetness and the closer we come to His blessed Person, the more truly have we approached the very center of bliss!

Then it is “*meditation of Him*” that makes the sweetness! Brothers and Sisters, it is very delightful to *hear* about our Lord. I am sure that I have often been charmed when I have heard what others have had to say about Him. My hearing of Him is very sweet, but it does not say that in our text. It is, “my *meditation of Him.*” When I hear over and over, again, in the echoes of my heart, what I have heard with my ears. When, like the cattle, having cropped the luscious food, I lie down, as they do, to ruminate and chew the cud, “my meditation of Him shall be sweet.” To think over, again, what I have already thought of. To turn over and over in my soul Truths of God with which I am happily familiar, which I have tasted and handled many times—just to taste and handle them, again—in doing so, “my meditation of Him shall be sweet.” The more we know of Christ, the more we want to know of Him! And the more sweet Christ is to us, already, the more sweet He will be! We can never exhaust this gold mine—it gets richer, the deeper we dig into it. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” I will not ask for the glowing periods of the orator. I will not wish for the profundities of the theologian. I will just sit down, humble as my mind may be, and think of what I have heard and known, and especially of all I have *experienced* of my Lord. And “my meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

But let me dwell a minute on that first word—“*My meditation of Him shall be sweet,*” Not another man’s meditation, which is afterwards related to me, but my *own* meditation of Him shall be sweet! Let me say, concerning the wine of communion with Christ, that it is never so sweet to a man as when he treads the grapes out himself—“*My meditation of Him shall be sweet.*” You get a text and beat out its meaning, “working your passage,” as we say, into the very soul of it. Then you will understand it and you will also enjoy it! Make meditation of Christ to be your own personal act and deed! Grasp Him for yourself and hold Him by the feet! Put your own finger into the prints of the nails and, out of your own heart’s experience cry, “*My Lord and my God!*” Then you shall not need that I tell you how sweet such a meditation is, for you will be able to say for yourself, “*My meditation of Him shall be sweet.*”

It does not matter, my dear Friend, who you are, if you do but belong to Christ, your meditation of Him shall be sweet! You are a very poor and illiterate person, perhaps, but, if you know Him, it shall be sweet to you to meditate upon Him. Or, it may be you are a man of large reading and of wide knowledge. But I am quite sure that there is not in all the range of your reading, *anything* for sweetness comparable to Him! The science of Christ Crucified leads the van of all the sciences! This is the most excellent of all knowledge—compared with which every other knowledge is but ignorance dressed in its best! “*My meditation of Him shall be*

sweet”—even mine as I stand here in the midst of you—and yours as you sit in those pews. And as you come presently to this Table of Communion, I hope each one who meditates on Christ will be able to say, “my meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

Now let us meditate on Him for a few minutes and, first, *meditate upon His Person*. This Blessed One, who is verily among us tonight, is God and Man. Meditate upon His Manhood. He is of a Nature like your own. Sin, alone, excepted, He is a Man as you are. Think of it and rejoice that He has so intense a sympathy with you and that you can have so intense a sympathy with Him! He is your Brother, though He is also the Prince of the kings of the earth! He is your Husband, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, though He is also “over all, God blessed forever.” Do not our hearts begin at once to warm towards the Man, Christ Jesus—in all our afflictions, afflicted, in all our griefs a partaker—and shall not our meditation of Him be sweet?

But then He is also God, and, as God, He has all dominion and authority in Heaven and on earth. Think, then, how near He has brought us to the Godhead! There is now no division between a believing man and God—the Christ has bridged the chasm between the Creator and the creature! One might have thought that this gulf could never have been bridged. Between an angry God and a sinner, reconciliation may be made, but between a Creator and His creature, what link of union can there be? There could have been none if Christ had not become Incarnate! If God had not taken Manhood into union with Himself, we could never have been brought so near to God as we now are. Angels, you may stand back! You can never come so near the Throne of God as man has come, for he was made a little lower than the angels, but now, in the Person of Christ, He is set in the place of dominion and honor, and made to be master over all the works of God’s hands! My meditation upon the Divine Person of my blessed Master shall be sweet, shall it not? I do but indicate a long vista of delight, as it were. I open the gate, and say, “Go in there, Friend. You shall find good food for meditation that way.”

Now let us *meditate upon our Lord’s life*, for this meditation shall also be sweet. Suppose I take the four Gospels and read the story of my blessed Master’s existence here among men? Well, it needs meditating on, for that life is much more than the Evangelists could write. The life of Christ has a wonderful depth in it! The other day I was reading aloud the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel and trying to expound it. And when I came to the close of my meditation, I said to myself, “If I were shut up to that one chapter for a whole lifetime, I could never expound all its depths.” That simple life of Christ, from Nazareth to Golgotha, is a life of fathomless deeps! And the more you shall meditate upon it, the more sweetness shall you find in it. Oh, to think of His fellowship with me if I am poor, for He hungered! His fellowship with me if I am weary, for He, “being weary, sat thus on the well”! His fellowship with me if I have to stand foot to foot with the old enemy, to contend, even, for my life! His fellowship with me if I lie in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, and have to cry, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

Read by the eye of faith, the whole story of the life of Christ is full of sweetness to the meditative mind, for remember that as He contended,

He became a conqueror! And in this, too, we shall be like He, for we shall overcome through His blood! Faith in Him will give us the victory—we shall tread Satan under our feet before the battle is finished, even as He has done! My meditation of His woes, coupled with my meditation of His ultimate joys shall be exceedingly sweet as a prophecy that, if I stoop, I, too, shall conquer—and though I am cast down, yet shall my casting down be but the means of lifting me up!

Now, here is another road for your thoughts to travel. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet,” especially when *I meditate on His death*. The death of our Lord and Master should be the habitual theme of the meditation of God’s people. I am afraid, in these days, we do not think enough of the Cross and passion of our Divine Redeemer. I read, in the “modern thought” papers and reviews, sneers about our “sensuous” hymns when we sing about our Lord upon the Cross—they would have us not talk about His blood! Those expressions are “out of date.” It is “mediaeval,” (I think that is the word), to set forth a dying Christ, they say! Now, mark you, the strength of the Church of Rome over many minds has, for centuries, lain in the fact that she keeps prominent the facts of our Lord’s passion and death. Perverted as that truth about His Cross often is, yet it has salvation in it—and I doubt not that many find their way to eternal life, even in that apostate Church, by the fact that Christ Crucified is made to be a great reality!

If it ever comes to pass among us who are called Protestants, and those who are called Protestant Dissenters, that the great fact of the death of Christ is to be regarded as a kind of myth, out of which certain obscure doctrines may be fetched, but which is not, itself, to be spoken of, we shall have cut the Achilles tendon of our strength and our power to bless the sons of men will have departed! Oh, give me the story of the Cross, the veritable story! Yes, let my eyes behold the wounds of Jesus as I stand and bow before the Crucified! His death was a literal fact—no phantom dream—and so would we hold it! And we would meditate upon it as the center of all our hopes. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet,” is especially true of Christ on Calvary’s Cross. Here I see Atonement completed, satisfaction rendered, justice honored, Grace expounded, love struggling, bleeding, contending, conquering! In the actual death of Christ upon the Cross I see the safety of His elect whom He has purchased with His precious blood! I see here the ending of the reign of evil, the bruising of the old serpent’s head. I see the great rock on which the kingdom of God is established upon a sure foundation sealed with the blood of Christ. Oh, go and live on Calvary, you saints! No better air is to be found beneath the cope of Heaven and, as you linger there, your meditation on your Lord shall be sweet!

But what am I saying? For wherever I contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, “my meditation of Him shall be sweet.” Follow Him in *His Resurrection*. Behold Him *in His present Glory*—meditate much upon *His intercession at the right hand of God*. How secure are we because He always lives to intercede for us! What prophecies of good things to come are hidden away in the Person of our great High Priest before the Throne of God.

Think, too, *of the glory yet to be revealed*. “Behold, He comes.” Every hour is bringing Him nearer! We shall see Him in that Day and though

we may fall asleep before He comes, yet at His coming He shall raise our bodies from the dust and, *in our flesh* we shall see God! Let us meditate much upon the glories of Christ's Second Advent, the transcendent splendors of our Divine Conqueror, the background of His sufferings only making His triumphs to shine the more brightly! Meditate upon these things—give your minds wholly to them—then shall you prove the sweetness which dwells in them all.

If you, who are children of God, do not feel that you could traverse any of these paths, I want you to seek to get sweetness out of this thought, "HE loves me." Say to yourself, Believer, "If there is never another one in Heaven or on earth that loves me, yet Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me! It is well-nigh inconceivable, yet is it true."

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, THE SWEET AS A SWEETENER—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet,"

That is to say, first, it *shall sweeten all my other sweetnesses*. I commend to you who are happy, to you who are full of joy, this blessed method of securing to yourselves a continuance of that happiness and in such a manner as to prevent its spoiling. If you have honey and your hands are full of it, be cautious how you eat it, for you may eat honey till you are sick of it! But if you have a great store of honey, put something sweeter than honey with it, and then it will not harm you. I mean, if God has given you joy in your youth, if you are prospered in business, if your house is full of happiness, if your children sing about you knee, if you have health and wealth, and your spirit dances with joy—all this, by itself, may curdle and spoil. Add to it a sweet meditation of your Lord and all will be well, for it is safe to enjoy temporal things when we enjoy eternal things more! If you will put Christ upon the throne to rule over these good things of yours, then all shall be well. But if you dethrone Him to set these things up—then they become idols—and "the idols He shall utterly abolish." If you are truly His, you shall have great sorrow in the falling of your Dagon, but it shall surely come to pass. O cheerful, happy, joyous people, I wish there were more of you! I am not condemning your joy—I would partake in it—but let the uppermost joy you have always be "Jesus Christ, Himself." If the occasion of joy is your marriage, ask Him to the wedding, for He will turn the water into wine! If it is your prosperity, ask Him to the harvest festival and He will bless your storehouse and your barn, and make your mercies to be real blessings to you!

But, dear Friends, I need not say much about this point, because, at least to some of us, our very sweet days are not very long or very many. The comfort is that *this sweetness can sweeten all our bitters*. There was never yet a bitter in the cup of life but what a meditation upon Christ would overcome that bitterness and turn it into sweetness! I will suppose that you are, at this time, undergoing personal trials of a temporal kind. There are a great many cures for the cares of this life which philosophy would suggest, but I suggest none of them to you—I prescribe meditation upon Christ! I have already given your many hints how the sorrows, the struggles and the conquests of the life of Christ may help to sweeten all your conflicts and your struggles. Half an hour's communion with the Lord Jesus will take away the keenness of all your anxieties. Enter into your chamber, shut the door and begin to speak with the Man of Sor-

rows, and your own sorrows will soon be relieved. If you are poor, get to Him who had not where to lay His head and you will even seem to be rich as you come back to your place in the world! Have you been despised and rejected? Do but look on Him on whom men spat, whom they cast out, saying that it was not fit that He should live—and you will feel as if you never had true honor except when you were, for Christ's sake, despised and dishonored! You will almost feel as if it was too great an honor for you to have been contemned for His dear sake, who bore the shame and the spitting and the cruel Cross for your sake. Yes, the best sweetener of all temporal troubles is a meditation upon Christ Jesus our Lord!

So is it with all the troubles that come of your Christian work and service. I do not know how it is with any of my fellow workers, here, but I can say this, my work has about it a joy that angels might envy, but, at the same time, it has also a sorrow which I would not wish any to know if it stood by itself. To preach Christ, oh, what bliss it is! To tell of my Master's sweet love and of His power to save the guilty, I would be content to stay out of Heaven for seven ages if I might always be permitted to do nothing else but preach Christ to perishing sinners! But there is the heartbreak which comes with it, often, in preparing to preach, lest haply one should not take the right subject, or should not have one's heart in a right condition for the handling of it.

Add to that the anxieties that creep over one occupying such a position as mine. Standing where I stand tonight and remembering many sorrowful histories, many disappointed hopes concerning the condition of many now before me, I go home, sometimes, wishing that I could creep into my bed and never come out of it again because of my terrible anguish over some of you who will, I fear, be eternally lost! As surely as you are here, you will be lost unless you turn to Christ! Nothing seems as if it could save you—entreaties, invitations, warnings, prayers—all are in vain! You are still without God and without Christ—and if you remain so, you will be lost—and we cannot bear the thought of it! We cannot endure to think that we should preach, and warn, and entreat, and invite and yet that it should all end in nothing except that we should look from the right hand of the Great Judge and spy you out among those to whom He will say, "Depart from Me, you cursed!"

Truly, there is an awful heartbreak that comes to us when we think of these things! And when we see some, who did run well, turning aside. Some who held the Truth of God, decrying and denying that Truth. Some who once preached it, beginning to preach up the fancies of the age instead of the Gospel of all the ages, then our heart is, indeed, heavy! But what then? "My meditation of Him shall be sweet!" He is still the same God over all, blessed forevermore. He is still exalted a Prince and a Savior. Jesus will surely save His own and He will overthrow all His adversaries, for, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth." After all is said and done, there is no dishonor possible to Him! It is true that "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," but finish the quotation, "Why God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name" (or, "in the name") "of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” So, my meditation of Him, even amid the anxieties of Christian service, shall be exceedingly sweet!

Yes, Beloved, and it is just the same when you come to the anxieties concerning your own spiritual condition. I suppose that the very good, “perfect” people we sometimes meet with, or hear of, never get into the state I sometimes get into, but I believe that many of you feel, at times, cast down and troubled about your own spiritual state. Whether men laugh at it or not, I know that many a child of God beside John Newton has had to say—

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

I venture to say that as this was the question which the Lord, Himself, put to Peter, it is, therefore, not a wrong question for us to ask ourselves. When darkness veils the skies and the spirit sinks, and a sense of sin is more prevalent than the realization of Divine Grace, then it is bitterness, indeed! And at such a time, the very best sweetener of the waters of Marah is to think of Christ—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” A sinner’s Savior—oh, how sweet He is to such a sinner as I! A Savior for those that have no strength—what a precious Savior He is to a weak one like myself! A Savior who, though we believe not as we ought, still abides faithful—what a dear Savior He is to a half-believing one who has to cry, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief!”

Let me give you a little piece of advice—do not think of yourself, but think of your Lord! Or, if you must think of yourself, for every time you give an eye to self, give twice that time to Christ! Then shall your meditation of Him be sweet.

Thus, dear Friends, as long as we live, and when we come to die, our meditation of Him shall be sweet! I would not have you fear the bitterness of death, any of you, if you are trusting in Jesus. God has a wonderful power of strengthening our souls when our bodies grow very weak and feeble. I am quite sure that some of my dear Friends were never before in such a condition in all their lives as I have seen them in when they have evidently been marked for death. The messenger has come, and, as John Bunyan puts it, has brought some timely “token” to warn the spirit that, in a very short time, it is to appear among the shining ones at the right hand of God. I have seen, just then, the spirit of the timid grow strangely brave and the spirit of the questioning grow singularly assured! The Lord has manifested Himself in an unusually gracious way to the poor fluttering heart. Just as the dove was about to take its last long flight, it seemed to have its eyes strengthened to see the place to which it must fly—and all timidity was gone forever. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

When I lie dying, when heart and flesh are failing me, when I shall have little else to think of but my Lord and the eternal state, then shall thoughts of Him pull up the floodgates of the river of bliss and let the very joy of Heaven into my heart! And, by His Grace, I shall be eager to

be up and away! I shall not dread the pains, and groans, and dying strife of which some talk so much—but the sweetness of “my meditation of Him” shall make me forget even the bitterness of death, itself!

I have done when I have just given you one more thought. Our text might be read thus, “My meditation shall be sweet *to Him*.” We are going to uncover the Table of Communion directly. You will have nothing to think of but the body and the blood of Him by whose death you live. That meditation will, I trust, be very sweet to you, but this fact ought to help to make it so—that it will be “sweet to Him.” Jesus loves you to love Him—and He loves you to think of Him! I know what you have said, sometimes. I remember a Christian woman saying to me, “I have often wished that I could preach, Sir. I have often wished that I had but been a man that I might constantly preach the Gospel.” I do not wonder, I should marvel, indeed, if a good many Christian people did not say, “I wish that I could be a missionary,” or, “I wish that I could be a poetess, like Miss Havergal, and sweetly sing of Christ.” Perhaps you cannot do any of those things, but you *can* meditate on Christ, can you not? And your meditation on Him shall be sweet to Him! He will delight in your delighting in Him!

“Oh, but I am a nobody,” says one. “I am nothing.” I tell even you that your meditation of Christ, though it seems not to go very deep, though you cannot, perhaps, keep your thoughts together, well—yet that heart meditation of yours, which longs to meditate on your Lord and craves to know more of Him—is very sweet to Him. Why, you fathers and mothers, you know how it is with those little ones of yours—and especially that first little one that just begins to talk! It has said nothing but nonsense at present, yet you respect the little words, do you not? It is a wonderful speech that little boy of yours made—but why do you think so much of your child’s little thoughts and expressions? Is it not because he is your child that you value his words so much?

Well now, you belong to Christ and because you belong to Him, He accepts your meditations because He accepts *you*! And He takes a delight even in those poor broken perplexed thoughts of yours! He knows that if you could sing like the seraphim, you would do so. If you could serve Him as the angels do, you would. Well, if you cannot do that, you can at least meditate on Christ—and your meditation of Him shall be sweet to Him. Oh, then, give Him much of it, and God bless you, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 104.

I trust that we have already felt something of holy enjoyment while our hearts and voices have been praising the Lord our God. Perhaps this Psalm may help to keep us in a praising state of mind. First of all, David sang of the majesty of God in His works. Then it seems as if the spirit of praise within him became like a strong-winged angel and, mounting into the sky, he began to soar aloft over the varied landscapes of the world until the sun went down. And even then, he continued moving along through the darkness till the sun arose again and found him still prais-

ing his God! We will note, as we read the Psalm, this strange, mysterious flight of the spirit of praise.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my Soul.* There is the keynote. Strike it, my Brothers and Sisters, each one of you!

1-3. *O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty. Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment: who stretches out the heavens like a curtain: who lays the beams of His chambers in the waters.* Or, as we may read it from the Hebrew, “who makes His halls in the waters,” those mysterious waters above the firmament are here pictured as being the cool, retired dwelling place of the majestic Deity.

3. *Who makes the clouds His chariot: who walks upon the wings of the wind.* A masterly picture, as if the Lord stood erect upon the two wings of the wind and, as if the wind, like a mighty spirit, went flying round the world with the great Jehovah standing upon its wings, and so riding along!

4, 5. *Who makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire: who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever.* Now comes a very graphic description of Noah’s flood.

6. *You covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.* What a splendid act of Divine Energy, when the waters which, before, like tamed lions, slept in their dens, came hungry and fierce and swallowed up the whole earth!

7, 8. *At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which You founded for them.* At the sound of God’s voice, those mighty deeps went back in a great hurricane. Anyone who has seen water when it is traveling at a great rate, lashed with tempests, will have seen it tossed as into mountains and then having huge holes like vast valleys in it, so, the waters rose up like mountains and fell down like valleys till they found the channels of the deep which God had found for them.

9. *You have set a boundary that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.* Jehovah puts the bit of sand into the mouth of the sea and it comes no farther than its appointed boundaries. Now you must suppose the Psalmist is leaving the crowded streets and the dingy, dusty, smoky haunts of men and flying, on the wings of his gratitude and praise, away into the quiet of the fertile country.

10-12. *He sends the springs into the valleys which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the Heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.* I know of no place that seems to bring out one’s joy and praise better than when standing by the side of some rippling brook that tumbles down the fissure among the rocks and, seeing the animals come to drink, and hearing the birds blithely sing among the branches, or hang over and dip into the very stream! Even the reading of this Psalm may be like a cool and refreshing breeze to you at this time—and your soul may, in imagination, fly away with David, as you also praise and bless your God!

13. *He waters the hills from His chambers.* From those watery halls above the firmament He pours down the showers.

13-15. *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.* The spirit of praise is flying over the fields plowed and tilled by man, over the fruitful vineyards red with clusters of grapes and over the olive gardens and other places where man's handiwork has made the earth fertile. Now the Psalmist mounts still higher and gets into the forests.

16, 17. *The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.* Flying along over the tops of the trees, he looks down among them and he notices the beasts as well as the birds

18. *The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.* So that there is not any part of the earth which is not full of God's goodness! Even the rocks, which yield nothing to the plow, furnish a refuge for the conies, and the high hills are a home for the wild goats, while the fertile earth beneath makes man's heart glad. As the spirit of praise flies over the tops of the mountains, the sun goes down. The Psalmist witnesses that grand sight, an Eastern sunset.

19, 20. *He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down. You make darkness, and it is night.* Will he now cease from his song? No, for God does not cease to work!

20, 21. *Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.* So that even night has its mysterious music and the roaring of the young lions is a tribute to the Providence of the good God who cares even for the beasts that perish!

22. *The sun arises, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.* You see, the Psalmist does not cease his praise, but finds a theme for music even in the rest of the beasts.

23, 24. *Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have you made them all: the earth is full of Your riches.* The Psalmist has made a long journey, flying along just where he could see everything upon the face of the earth, but he thinks to himself that he has not seen the half of God's works, yet, for yonder is the Mediterranean, glistening in the morning sunbeams, so he takes another flight.

25, 26. *So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships.* That is, above the water—while in it—

26. *There is that leviathan, whom You have made to play therein.* Some mighty fish leaps out of the sea. The Psalmist's eye catches a glimpse of it and he puts even that monster into his hymn of praise!

27. *These wait all upon You, that You may give them their meat in due season.* My Brothers and Sisters, what an idea we have, here, of God thus supplying all the creatures of the earth and the sea! They are all waiting upon Him—they can go to no other storehouse but His—no other

granary can supply their needs! Surely, we need not be afraid that He will fail *us*. It He feeds leviathan, with his great needs, and the many birds with their little needs, He will not forget His children! He will never withhold any real good from them that walk uprightly.

28. *What You give them they gather: You open Your hand, they are filled with good.* That is all He has to do, you see, just open His hand. If that hand were once fast closed, they would all die, but, in order to supply the needs of all the creatures He has made, He has only to open His hand!

29. *You hide Your face.* As if He did but put His hand before the brightness of His Countenance—

29, 30. *They are troubled: You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth.* When God takes away the genial light of the summer's sun, what multitudes of creatures die! And then, when the soft breath of spring blows upon the earth, how soon the multitudes of insects come teeming forth! Christian, here is comfort for you! Has God withheld His Spirit from you for a little while, and have many of your joys and comforts fallen dead? He has only to speak and He can, in a moment, renew all your comforts!

31-35. *The glory of the LORD shall endure forever: the LORD shall rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth and it trembles: He touches the hills and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.* It seems as if the spirit of praise had bred in the Psalmist a spirit of indignation against sin. He could no longer have any patience with those who would not adore so great and so good a God and, therefore, he utters this imprecation upon their heads which is rather a prophecy of what will be their doom—"Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more."

35. *Bless you the LORD, O my Soul. Praise you the LORD.* Thus the Psalmist, like a good musician, ends with the keynote of his song of praise—

"Bless the Lord, O my Soul."

May each of us say the same!

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

MEDITATION ON GOD

NO. 2690

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING IN THE SUMMER OF 1858.

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”
Psalm 104:34.

DAVID, certainly, was not a melancholy man. Eminent as he was for his piety and for his religion, he was equally eminent for his joyfulness and gladness of heart. Read the verse that precedes my text, “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.” It has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly said, that the contemplation of Divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtful persons have supposed, does not become the young—it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave. It may be well enough for those who are in poverty and deep trial, but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy man, is generally said to be out of the question.

Now, there is no greater lie than this! No man is so happy but he would be happier still if he had true religion. The man with a fullness of earthly pleasures, whose barns are full of corn and whose presses burst with new wine would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the Grace of God in his heart! Rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity. It would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup. It would purify his heart and freshen his tastes for delights and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful and, at the same time, it can make the joyous ones still more joyful! It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness. It can make the eyes sparkle with tenfold more brilliance and, happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before if he comes to the Fountain

of Atoning Mercy and knows that his name is registered in the Book of Everlasting Life!

Temporal mercies will then have the charm of Redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the Divine Testament which has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future when he shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever! He will be able to say, as the Psalmist does here, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

Taking those last few words as the theme of our discourse, I shall speak, first, concerning *a very profitable exercise*—"meditation." Secondly, concerning *a very precious subject*—"My meditation of *Him*." And, thirdly, concerning *a very blessed result*—"My meditation of Him shall be *sweet*."

I. First, here is A VERY PROFITABLE EXERCISE—"meditation."

Meditation is a word that more than half of you, I fear, do not know how to spell. You know how to repeat the letters of the word, but I mean to say, you cannot spell it in the reality of life. You do not occupy yourselves with any meditation at all. What do many of you who are merchants know concerning this matter? You rise up in the morning just in time to take your accustomed seat in the omnibus. You hasten to your counting house for your letters and there you continue all day long, for business when you are busy, or for gossip when business is dull. And at night you go home too tired for the wholesome recreation of your minds. Week by week, month by month and year by year it is still with you one everlasting grind, grind, grind! You have no time for meditation and you reckon, perhaps, that if you were to set apart half an hour in the day to ponder the weighty matters of eternity, it would be to you a clear loss of time. It is very wise of you to economize your minutes, but I suppose that if half an hour in a day could earn you a hundred pounds, you would not say that you could not afford it, because you know how to estimate pecuniary profit! Now, if you equally knew how to count the great profit of meditation, you would deem it a positive gain to yourselves to spend some time therein, for meditation is most profitable to the *spirit*—it is an extremely healthful and excellent occupation. Far from being wasted time, it is a judicious employment of time.

Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy—contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them. He shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what

he does hear. Nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes, one after the other as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he reads and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation—receiving the Word of God first into his understanding—and afterwards receiving the spirit of it into his own soul. Meditation is thus a very excellent employment. Let me for a few minutes tell you some of its uses.

First, I think meditation furnishes the mind somewhat with rest. *It is the couch of the soul.* The time that a man spends in necessary rest, he never reckons to be wasted because he is refreshing and renovating himself for further exertion. Meditation, then, is the rest of the spirit. “Oh,” says one, “I must have rest. I have been working and toiling incessantly for months! I must have a day’s excursion. I must do this thing and the other.” Yes, and such recreation, in its proper place, is desirable. We ought to have seasons of innocent recreation, but, at the same time, if many of us knew how to spend a little time daily in the calm repose of contemplative retirement, we would find ourselves less exhausted by the wear and tear of our worldly duties. To meditate would be to us a salutary recreation and, instead of running ourselves out of breath, and laboring till a respite is compulsory, we would spread our intervals of ease and refreshing over the whole year and secure a small portion everyday by turning aside from the bustling crowd to meditate upon whatever subject we wish to occupy the most honorable place in our mind.

Just as a change of posture relieves the weariness of the body, a change of thoughts will prevent your spirits becoming languid. Sit down in a silent chamber, at eventide. Throw the window up and look at God’s bright stars—and count those eyes of Heaven. Or if you like it better, pause in the noontide heat and look down upon the busy crowd in the streets and count the men, like so many ants upon the anthill of this world. Or if you care not to look about you, sit down and look within yourself—count the pulses of your own heart and examine the emotions of your own breast. At times, ‘tis well to muse upon Heaven, or, if you are a man loving to revel in the prophetic future, turn over the mystic pages and study the sacred visions recorded in the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation. As you enter these hallowed intricacies and meditate upon these impressive symbols, you will rise up from your study mightily refreshed! You will find it like a couch to your mind.

Again, meditation is *the machine in which the raw material of knowledge is converted to the best uses.* Let me compare it to a winepress. By reading, research and study, we gather the grapes, but it is by meditation that we press out the juice of those grapes and obtain the wine! How is it that many men who read a lot know very little? The reason is they read tome upon tome, and stow away knowledge with lumbering confusion inside their heads till they have laid so much weight on their brain that it cannot work! Instead of putting facts into the press of meditation

and fermenting them till they can draw out right inferences, they leave them to rot and perish. They extract none of the sweet juice of wisdom from the precious fruits of the vine. I like, when I have read a book for about half an hour, to walk awhile and think it over. I shut up the volume and say, "Now, Mr. Author, you have made your speech, let me think over what you have said. A little meditation will enable me to distinguish between what I knew before and the fresh subject you have communicated to me—between your facts and your opinions—between your arguments and those I should make from the same premises." Animals, after they have eaten, lie down and ruminate—they first crop the grass and afterwards digest it. So, meditation is the rumination of the soul whereby we get that nutriment which feeds and supports the mind.

When you have gathered flowers in the field or garden, you arrange them in proper order and bind them together with the string of memory, but take heed that you put them into the water of meditation, otherwise they will soon fade and be fit only for the dunghill. When you have gathered pearls from the sea, remember that you will have gathered with them many worthless shells and much mud—therefore, sort them in your memory, and only keep those that are worth preserving. You must also open the oyster to extract the pearl and polish it to make it appear more beautiful. You may not string it in the necklace of your mind until it has been rubbed and garnished by meditation. Thus, you see that we need meditation to make use of what we have discovered. As it is the soul's rest, so it is, at the same time, the means of making the best use of what the soul has acquired.

Again, *meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers*. When those old athletes went out to wrestle, they always took care, before they went, to oil themselves well, to make their joints supple and fit for their task. Now, meditation makes the soul supple—makes it so that it can use things when they come into the mind. Who are the men that can go into a controversy and get the mastery? Why, the men who meditate when they are alone! Who are the men that can preach? Not those who gad about and never commune only with their own hearts, but those who earnestly think as well when no one is near them as when there is a crowd around them. Who are the authors to write your books and keep up the constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service!

I have thus pointed out to you that meditation is in itself useful to every man. But you did not come here to listen to a merely moral essay—you came to hear something about the Gospel of God—and what I have already said is but an introduction to what I have to say concerning the great necessity of meditation in religion. As meditation is good for the

mind, even upon worldly topics and natural science, *it is much more useful when we come to spiritual learning.* The best and most saintly of men have been men of meditation! Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate. David says, "I will meditate on Your statutes." Paul, who himself meditated continually on all that related to the Gospel, writing to Timothy concerning the important things necessary in a good minister of Jesus Christ, says, "Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them; that your profiting may appear to all." To the Christian, meditation is most essential. I would almost question the being of a Christian and I would positively deny his well-being who lived habitually without meditation. Meditation and prayer are twin sisters and both of them appear to me equally necessary to Christian life. I think meditation *must* exist where there is prayer, and prayer is sure to exist where there is meditation.

My Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing more needed to make Christians grow in Grace, nowadays, than meditation. Most of you are painfully negligent in this matter. You remind me of a sermon that one of my quaint old friends in the country once preached from the text, "The slothful man roasts not that which he took in hunting." He told us that many people who would hunt for a sermon were too lazy to roast it by meditation. They knew not how to put the jack of memory through it and twist it round by meditation before the fire of piety, and so to cook it and make it fit for their soul's food. So is it with many of you—after you have caught the sermon, you allow it to run away. How often do you, through lack of meditation, miss the entire purpose for which the discourse was designed? Unless you meditate upon the Truths of God we declare to you, you will gather little sweetness, you will acquire little profit and, certainly, you will be in no way established therein to your edification. Can you get the honey from the comb until you press it? You may be refreshed while you listen to the sermon, but it is the meditation afterwards which extracts the honey and gets the best and most luscious savor!

Let me tell you that *there ought to be special times for meditation.* I think every man should set apart a portion of each day for this gracious exercise. A Christian will always be in a lean state if he has no time for sacred musings before his God. Those men who know most of God are such as meditate most upon Him. Those who realize most experimentally the Doctrines of Grace are those who meditate and soar beyond the reach of all sublunary things. I think we shall never have much advancement in our churches until the members begin to habitually accept the counsel, "Come, my people, enter you into your chambers and shut your doors behind you." Or that other, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Till the din and noise of business somewhat abate and we give ourselves to calmer thought and, in the solemn silence of the mind find at once our Heaven and our God, we must expect to

have regiments of dwarfs, and only here and there a giant. Giant minds cannot be nourished by mere casual hearing. Gigantic souls must have meditation to support them. Would you be strong? Would you be mighty? Would you be valiant for the Lord and useful in His cause? Take care that you follow the occupation of the Psalmist, David, and meditate! This is a very happy and profitable exercise.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider A VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

Christian, you need no greater inducement to excite you than the subject here proposed—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” To whom does that word, “Him,” refer? I suppose it may refer to all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity—“My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet.” And, verily, if you sit down to *meditate upon God the Father*, and muse upon His Sovereign, Immutable, unchangeable love toward His elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great Author and Originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of Him as the mighty Being who, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, has given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus—if you look to Him as the Giver of His only-begotten Son and who, for the sake of that Son, His best gift, will, with Him also freely give us all things—if you consider Him as having ratified the Covenant and pledged Himself ultimately to complete all His stipulations, in the gathering in of every chosen, ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation forever, even were your attention limited to the manifestation of the Father’s love!

Or, if you choose to do so, you may *meditate upon God the Holy Spirit*. Consider His marvelous operations on your own heart—how He quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins—how He brought you near to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold—how He called you with such a mighty efficacy that you could not resist His voice—how He drew you with the bands of love which would not let you go. Think of how often He has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently He has comforted you with His promises in times of distress and trouble. And if you remember that, like holy oil, He will always supply your lamp until life’s last hour—He will always replenish you with His influences, proving Himself still your Teacher and your Guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Savior face to face, in the blessed Presence of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—in such great truth you may well find a vast and, indeed, an infinite subject for your meditation.

But, tonight, I prefer rather to confine this word, “Him,” to *the Person of our adorable Savior*. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” Ah, if it is possible that the meditation upon one Person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ—

“Till God in human flesh I see,

***My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fears,
His Grace forgives my sins."***

Precious Jesus, what can be a sweeter theme for me to think of than Your exalted Being—to conceive of You as the Son of God, who, with the golden compasses, struck out a circle from space and fashioned this round world? To think of You as the God who holds this mighty orb upon Your shoulders, You who are the King of Glory, before whom angels bow in lowliest homage? And yet to consider You as, likewise, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh—

"In ties of blood with sinners one"—

to conceive of You as the Son of Mary, born of a virgin, made flesh like ordinary men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race—to picture You in all Your suffering life, to trace You in all Your passion, to view You in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement. And then to follow You to the pavement, Gabbatha, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, bearing the Cross, braving the shame when Your soul was made an offering for my sins, when You did die the reconciling death 'midst horrors, still to all but God, unknown! Verily, here is a meditation for my soul which must be "sweet" forever! I might, like the Psalmist, say, "My heart is composing a good matter." The marginal reading is, "it boils, or bubbles up, while I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

Christ! "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Consider Christ in any way you please and your meditation of Him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have perhaps seen which you may take up and hold in one way and you see one light. You hold them in another way and you see another light—whichever way you turn them, you will always see some precious sparkling of light and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah, take Jesus for the theme of your meditation! Sit down and consider Him, think of His relation to your soul and you will never get to the end of that one subject!

Think of His eternal relationship to you! Remember that the saints were free from all condemnation, in union with the Lamb, *before the world was made*. Think of your everlasting union with the Person of Jehovah-Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and remember how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean even before you fell! And after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the Person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to Him since you have been called by His Grace. Think how He has become your Brother, how His heart has

beaten in sympathy with yours, how He has kissed you with the kisses of His mouth and His love has been to you sweeter than wine. Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered, "I am yours," and you have said, "My Beloved is mine. Think of some choice moments when an angel has stooped from Heaven and taken you up on his wings and carried you aloft to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with Him.

Or think, if it shall better please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with Him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship to Christ which is to be developed in Heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when you shall—

***"Greet the blood-besprinkled band,
On the eternal shore"***

and forever range the—

***"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green."***

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as "more than a conqueror," and put a golden crown upon your head, more glittering than the stars. And think of that transporting hour when you will take that crown from off your brow and, climbing the steps of Jesus' Throne, you shall put it on His head, and crown Him once more Lord of your soul, as well as "Lord of All." Ah, if you come and tell me you have no subjects for meditation, I will answer—Surely you have not *tried* to meditate, or you would say with the Psalmist, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

Suppose you have finished thinking of your Savior as He is especially related to you. Consider Him, next, as He is related to the world. Remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved," and, undoubtedly, He will one day save the world, for He who redeemed it by price and by power, will restore it and renew it from the effects of the Fall. Oh, think of Jesus in this relationship as the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in! He will come again to our earth one day and when He comes, He will find this world still defaced with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, pestilence and war still here—but when He comes, He will bid men beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks—war shall be obliterated from among the sciences. He shall give the Word and there shall be a great company that will publish it and, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Jesus Christ shall come! Christians, be always watching and

waiting for the Second Coming of your Lord Jesus Christ! And while you wait, meditate upon that coming.

Think, O my Soul, of that august day when you shall see Him with all His glorious train, coming to call the world to judgment and to avenge Himself upon His enemies! Think of all His triumphs when Satan shall be bound, death shall be crushed and Hell shall be conquered—and when He shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

I believe that even when we get to Heaven, we shall need no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. There will be little else we shall want of Heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of Heaven will be Christ! Everything in Heaven will be Christ-like. Yes, Christ is the Heaven of His people. To be in Christ and to be with Christ, is the essence of Heaven—

**“Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove,
Or but conceal His face.”**

III. Let me proceed to point out A VERY BLESSED RESULT. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

This depends very much upon the character of the one who meditates. I know some persons who come into chapel and who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the benediction and dismiss the assembly. They are very glad when all is over and they would far rather hear the parting doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say it is very dry. If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind remembering *that*—but a meditation which would be entirely on Christ would be dry to them—and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah, that is because of the taste you have in your mouth! There is something wrong about your palate. You have your mouth out of taste through eating some of the world’s poor dainties! You have some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips and that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus! In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it with your hearts. But here the Psalmist says, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

What a mercy, dear Friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it, I am sure, for, *as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter.* Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases that you will see marked bitter! There are perhaps more aloes put in our cup than any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy it is, then, that there is one thing that is sweet! “My meditation of *Him* shall be sweet.” So sweet, Beloved, that all the other bitters

are quite swallowed up in its sweetness! Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has been called away, and he who was her strength, the stay and sustenance of her life, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands and say, “Ah, though he is gone, still my Maker is my Husband. ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away,’ blessed be His holy name”?

What was the reason of her patient submission to the will of God? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man whose property had been washed away by the tide, and whose lands had been swallowed up and become quicksand, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands and repeated Habakkuk’s words, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!” Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh, how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory through their meditation upon Jesus Christ!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste through affliction and trouble. If you have been saying with Jeremiah, “He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunken with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel, He has covered me with ashes,” take a little of this choice cordial—I can assure you that it is sweet! *Lacrymae Christi*, it is called. If you will take these tears of Jesus and put them in your mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor that is already there! Or, again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ as a piece of scented stuff that was perfumed in Heaven. It matters not what you have in your house—this shall make it redolent of Paradise—shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden’s garden, wafting the odor of flowers. Ah, there is nothing that can so console your spirits and relieve all your distresses and troubles as the feeling that now you can meditate on the Person of Jesus Christ. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

But, my dear Hearers, shall I dismiss you without asking you whether you have ever had a true meditation upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? I do not like to preach a sermon without pressing it home to the consciences of my hearers. I never like to bring you out a sword and show it to you, and say, “Here is a sword, and it is sharp.” I always like to make you feel that it is sharp by cutting you with it! Would to God that the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts! When I see so many gathered together on a weeknight, I am astonished. When I

came to London, I did not fancy there would be half such a company on the Sabbath, much less on a weekday. But why have you come, my Brothers and Sisters? “What did you go out to see? A reed shaken with the wind?” What have you come out to see? A Prophet? No, but I say that you have come to see something more than a Prophet—you have come to see and hear something of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord! How many of you meditate on Christ?

Christian men and women, do not many of you live below your privileges? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with your Savior? I think if you had a free pass to Heaven’s palace, you would use it very often. If you might go there whenever you liked and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your blessed Lord Jesus, the King of Heaven, and He gives you that which can admit you to intimate communion with Him! And yet you live without meditating upon His work, meditating upon His Person, meditating upon His offices, and meditating upon His Glory. Christian men and women! I ask myself, and I ask you, is it not time we should begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most deplorable state. True, the Gospel is preached in most places of worship, but it is preached as it might be by bumble-bees in pitchers—always with the same monotonous sound—and little or no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews as well as in the pulpits. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run uphill, but when you hearers begin to meditate and pray over the Word, your ministers will realize that you have gone beyond them—and they will themselves meditate and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts—and it will be food for your souls.

And for the rest of you—you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ—what do you think will become of you when the bitterness of death’s agony shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet “that last, that most bitter cup which mortal man can taste” is but a dire foretaste of what is to follow! The first drops are bad enough, when you sip *here* the beginning of remorse on account of sin, but that future cup in Hell—that terrible mixture which God deals out to the lost in the Pit—what will you do when you have to drink that? What will you do when it will be your sad meditation that you rejected Jesus, that you despised His Gospel, that you scoffed at His Word? What will you do in that dread extremity?

You worldly business men, will your ledgers afford you a sweet meditation in Hell? Ungodly lawyer, will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds and documents when you go there? Laboring man, will it be a sweet meditation to you to think that your wages were spent in drunkenness, or your Sabbaths profaned and your soul neglected? And you,

mere professor, will it be a sweet meditation to you to sit down and think of your hypocrisy? And, ah, you carnally-minded men who are indulging the flesh, pampering the appetite and not serving the Lord—whose god is your belly and whose glory is in your shame—will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at the last? Be assured of this, my Hearers, your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now!

O wicked men! Wicked women! Let me say my closing word to you and to all who know not God. I will give you a subject for your meditation tonight—it shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects and said to him, “What is your employment?” He answered, “I am a blacksmith.” “Then go home,” he said, “and make me a chain of such a length.” He went home. It occupied him several months and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, who said, “Go back, and make it twice as long.” He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, “Go and make it still longer.” Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said to his servants, “Take it and bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” There were his wages for making the chain!

Here is a lesson which will afford you a subject for meditation tonight, you who are servants of the devil. Your master is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been 50 years welding the links of that chain and he says, “Go and make it still longer.” Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours and put another link on. Next Sunday night you will be drunk and put another link on. Next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on adding fresh links to the chain. And when you have lived 20 more years, the devil will say, “Add still more links!” And then, at last, his command will be, “Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” “For the wages of sin is death.”

There is a subject for your meditation! I do not think it will be sweet, but if God makes it profitable, it will do you good. You must have strong medicines, sometimes, when your disease is bad. God apply this message to your hearts! Amen.

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

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

THE PLEASURES OF PIETY

NO. 2759

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 29, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1858.**

*“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”
Psalm 104:34.*

IT has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly affirmed, that the contemplation of Divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtless persons have supposed, is not becoming to the young—it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave. It may be suitable for those who are in poverty and deep trial, but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy young man—this is generally said to be out of the question!

Now, there is no greater lie than that! No man is so happy but he would be happier if he had true religion. The man with the greatest abundance of earthly pleasure or treasure, whose barns are full and whose presses burst with new wine would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the Grace of God in his heart! Rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity. It would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup. It would purify his heart and freshen his taste for delights—and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb! Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy, joyful and, at the same time, it can make the joyous ones still more joyful! It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness! It can make the eyes sparkle with tenfold more brilliance and, happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the Fountain of atoning mercy, if he knows that his name is registered in the Book of Everlasting Life!

Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the Divine Testament which has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come! While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of

his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future when he shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever! he will be able to say, as the Psalmist does in this Psalm, “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live. I will Sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”

I. First, let us consider THE VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT OF MEDITATION mentioned in our text “My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.”

Christian, you need no greater inducement to excite you to meditation than the subject here proposed—“My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.” To whom does that word, “Him,” refer? I suppose it may refer to all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity. My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet. And, verily, if you sit down to *meditate upon God the Father* and reflect on His Sovereign, Immutable, unchangeable love toward His elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great Author and Originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of Him as the mighty Being who has said that by two Immutable things, wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, He has given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. If you look to Him as the Giver of His only-begotten Son and who, for the sake of that Son, His best gift, will, with Him, also freely give us all things—if you consider Him as having ratified the Covenant and pledged Himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations in the ingathering of every chosen, ransomed soul—you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation forever, even were your attention limited to the manner and matter of the Father’s love!

Or, if you choose, you shall *think of God the Holy Spirit*. You shall consider His marvelous operations on your own heart—how He quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins—how He brought you near to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold. How He called you with such mighty efficacy that you could not resist His voice—how He drew you with the wondrous cords of His almighty love. If you think how often He has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently He has comforted you with a promise in times of distress and trouble and, if you think that, like holy oil, He will always supply your lamp—and until life’s last hour He will always replenish you with His influences, still proving Himself your Teacher and your Guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Savior, face to face, in the blessed Presence of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—in such contemplation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation!

But, at this time, I prefer to confine the application of this word, “Him,” to *the Person of our adorable Savior*. “My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.” Ah, if it is possible that the meditation upon one Person of the Trinity can excel the meditation of another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ!—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
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My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace forgives my sins"***

Precious Jesus! What can be a sweeter theme for my meditation than to think of Your exalted Being—to conceive of You as the Son of God who, with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space and fashioned this round world? To think of You as the God who holds this mighty orb upon Your shoulders and are, at the same time, the King of Glory, before whom angels bow in lowliest homage? And yet to consider You as likewise “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh”—

“In ties of blood with sinners one,”

to conceive of you as the Son of Mary, born of a virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of Humanity like mortals of our feeble race? To picture You in all Your suffering life, to trace You in all Your passion? To view You in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement and then to follow You to Gabbatha, the pavement, and then up the steep side of Calvary, “enduring the Cross, despising the shame,” when Your soul was made an offering for my sins, when You did die the reconciling death midst horrors still to all but God unknown? Verily, here is a meditation for my soul which must be “sweet” forever! I might begin like the Psalmist who wrote the 45th Psalm and say, “My heart is inditing (the marginal reading is bubbles up) a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

Consider our Lord Jesus Christ in any way you please and your meditation of Him will be sweet! Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen which you may take up and hold one way, and you see one kind of light, and then hold in another way and you see another kind of light. And whichever way you turn them, you will always see some precious sparkling light and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah, take Jesus for your theme, sit down and consider Him—think of His relation to your own soul and you will never get through that one subject! Think of His eternal relationship to you—remember that the saints, in union with the Lamb, were free from condemnation before the world was made! Think of your everlasting union with the Person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space—and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean even before you fell! And after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the Person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to Him since you have been called by His Grace. Think how He has become your Brother, how His heart has beaten in most tender sympathy with yours—how He has kissed you with the kisses of His love and how that love has been to you sweeter than wine!

Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history where Jesus has whispered to you, “I am Yours,” and you have said, “My Beloved is mine.” Think of some choice moments when an angel has stooped from

Heaven and taken you up on his wings and carried you aloft to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with Him. Or think, if it pleases you, of some pensive moments when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with Him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship to Christ which is to be fully developed in Heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when you shall—

***“Greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore”—***

and range the—

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

Picture in your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as “more than a conqueror” and put a pearly crown upon your head, glittering more brightly than the stars! And think of that transporting hour when you will take that crown from off your own brow and, climbing the steps of Jesus’ Throne, you shall put it on His head, or lay it at His feet and once more crown Him Lord of your soul, as well as “Lord of All.” Ah, if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer—Surely you have not tried to meditate—for your meditation of HIM must be sweet!

Suppose you have done thinking of Him as He is related to you. Consider Him, next, as He is related to the world. Remember that Jesus Christ says He came into the world that the world, through Him, might be saved and, undoubtedly, He *will* one day save the world, for He who redeemed it by price, and by power, will restore it and renew it from the effects of the Fall. Think of Jesus in this relationship as “the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in.” He will come again to our earth, one day, and when He comes, He will find this world still defaced with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, pestilence and war still here, but when He comes, He shall bid men, “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.” War shall be obliterated from among the sciences. He shall speak the Word and there shall be a great company that will publish it. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ shall surely come again! Christians, be waiting for the Second Coming of your Lord! And while you wait, meditate upon that coming! Think, O my Soul, of that august day when you shall see Him with all His pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment and to avenge Himself upon His enemies! Think of all His triumphs when Satan shall be bound, death shall be crushed, Hell shall be conquered and He shall be saluted as the universal Monarch—“Lord over all, blessed forever. Amen.” “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

Ah, Christian, you are not afraid to be alone a little while, now, for lack of subjects of meditation. Some persons say that they cannot bear to be even for an hour in solitude. They have nothing to do, nothing to think about. Surely, no Christian will ever talk so, for let me but give him one word to think of—Christ—and he may spell that over forever! Let me give him the word, Jesus, and only let him try to think it over and he shall find that an hour is nothing, and that eternity is not half long enough for our glorious Savior's praise! Yes, Beloved, I believe that even when we get to Heaven, we shall need no subject for meditation, there, except Jesus Christ! I know that there are some great divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to Heaven, we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another. They say that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus and all the host of celestial bodies!

We shall behold all the wonders of creation! We shall explore the depths of science, so they tell us, and they say that there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine all this concerning Heaven is that I have no objection that it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure. I hope you Christians all will have and I know my Heavenly Father will let you have whatever will make you happy. But while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look at Jesus. And if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say—Ah, yes—

***“But in His looks a glory stands,
The noblest labor of God's hands!
God in the Person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone.”***

But you will say, “You will become tired, surely, of looking at Him.” No, I would reply, I have been looking at but one of His hands and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in. And when I have lived ten thousand years more, I will take His other hand and sit down and look at each gaping wound. And then I may descend to His side, and His feet, and still I shall be able to say to Him—

***“Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall over Your beauties rove
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of Your love.”***

You may go flitting about as far as you like. I will sit there and look at the God in Human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God and more of His works in the Person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of travelling on wings of light, though you would have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search! Brothers and Sisters, our meditation of Christ will be sweet! There will be little else we shall need of Heaven beside Jesus Christ! He will be our bread, our food, our beauty and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of Heaven will be Christ—everything in Heaven will be Christ-like—yes, Christ is the Heaven of His people! To be in Christ and to be with Christ is the essence of Heaven—

***“Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove,
Or but conceal His face.”***

So you see that Christ is the very precious subject of our meditation! Our meditation of Him shall be sweet.

II. Now, in the second place, let me proceed to point out A BLESSED RESULT OF THIS MEDITATION. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet”

This result *depends very much upon the character of the one who meditates*. I know some persons who come to Chapel who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the Benediction and dismiss the assembly. They are very glad when all is over and they would rather hear the parting Doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, “It is precious dry.” If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind listening to that—but a meditation entirely upon Christ would be dry enough to them and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah, Friend, that is because of the taste you have got in your mouth—there is something wrong with your palate. You know when we have been taking a certain kind of medicine and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So is it with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world’s poor dainties. You have got some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips and that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it into your hearts. But the Psalmist says, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

What a mercy, dear Friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For, I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet, at first, but has a bitter flavor afterwards. And there are too many things that are actually bitter and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases and bottles that you will see marked bitter! There are, perhaps, more of aloes put in our cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy, then, it is that there is one thing that is sweet! “My meditation of HIM shall be sweet”—so sweet, Beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness! Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed and he who was her strength, the stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands and say, “Ah, though he is gone, still my Maker is my Husband. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”?

What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up and become quicksand, in-

stead of being any longer profitable to him! Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands and repeated Habakkuk's words, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh, how many, when they have even come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ, that death was swallowed up in victory!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste through affliction and trouble. If you have been saying of the Lord, with Jeremiah, "He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel. He has covered me with ashes." Take a little of this choice cordial—I can assure you that it is sweet—*Lacrymae Christi*, it is called. If you will take these tears of Jesus, and put them in your mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor that is there now. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ as a piece of frankincense that was perfumed in Heaven. It matters not what you have in your house—this shall make it suggestive of Paradise and shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden's garden, wafting the odor of perfect flowers. Ah, there is nothing that can so console your spirits and relieve all your distresses and troubles as the feeling that now you can meditate on the Person of Jesus Christ! "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

But, my dear Hearers, shall I send you away without asking *whether you have all had such a meditation upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?* I do not like to ever preach a sermon without pressing it home upon the consciences of all my hearers. I never care to bring to you the sword of the Spirit and show it to you and say, "Here is a sword and it is sharp." I always like to make you feel that it is sharp by cutting you with it! Would to God that the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts right now! When I see so many gathered together even on a weekday, I am astonished. When I came to London, I did not fancy that there would be half such a congregation as this even on the Sabbath, much less on a weekday. But why have you come, my Brothers and Sisters? What did you come out to see? A reed shaken with the wind? What have you come to see? A Prophet? No, but I say that you have come to see something more than a Prophet. You have come to see and to hear of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord! How many of you really do meditate upon Christ?

Christian men and women, do not many of you live below your privileges? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with Jesus? I think if you had a free pass to Heaven's palace, you would use it very often. If you might go there and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here

is your Lord Jesus, the King of Heaven, and He gives you that which can open the gates of Heaven and let you in to hold sweet fellowship with Him—and yet you live without meditating upon His work, meditating upon His Person, meditating upon His offices and meditating upon His Glory! Christian men and women, I say to you—Is it not time to begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the Gospel is preached in most places, but it is preached as it might be by bumble bees in pitchers—always with the same monotonous sound and little or no good is done!

I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run uphill, but when you begin to meditate and pray over the Word of God, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them and they will set to meditate themselves, and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts—and it will be precious food for your souls.

As for you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ, what do you think will become of you when your greatest bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet, “that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste” is but a dire apprehension. When you have to drink that gall in Hell *forever*—when the cup of torments which Jesus did *not* drain for you will have to be drained by yourself—what will you do? The Christian can go to Heaven because Christ has drunk damnation dry for him, but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah! What will you do then? The first taste is bad enough, when you sip the drops of remorse *here* on account of sin. But that future cup in Hell—that terrible mixture which God deals out to the lost in the Pit—what will you do when you have to drink that—when your meditation will be that you rejected Jesus, that you despised His Gospel, that you scoffed at His Word? What will you do in that dread extremity?

You business men, will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in Hell? Lawyer, will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man, will it be a sweet meditation to you, to think that your wages were spent in drunkenness, or your Sabbaths profaned and your duties neglected? And you, professor, will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of your hypocrisy? And, ah, you carnally-minded men who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, “whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame”—will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last? Be assured of this—your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now! May there be great searching of heart among you! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnowing hand—they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate—hearing sermons and forgetting

them. Take heed to the voice of warning lest God should say, "He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

O wicked, men! Wicked men! I need to say just this last word to all of you who know not God, and then you shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects and said to him, "What is your employment?" He answered, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," he said, "and make me a chain of such-and-such a length." He went home. The work occupied him several months and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain—only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, who said, "Go back and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go and make it still longer." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it still longer. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, "Take it, bind him hand and foot with it and cast him into a furnace of fire."

That were his wages for making the chain! Here is a meditation for you tonight, you servants of the devil! Your master, Satan, is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been 50 years welding the links of the chain and he says, "Go and make it still longer." Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours and put another link on. Next Saturday night you will be drunk and put another link on. Next Monday you will do a dishonest action and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain. And when you have lived 20 more years, the devil will say, "Put more links on!" And then, at last, the command will be, "Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." "For the wages of sin is death."

There is a subject for your meditation! I do not think it will be sweet, but if God makes it profitable, it will do you good. You sometimes must have strong medicines when the disease is bad. God apply His own Word to your hearts, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 5.

Verse 1. *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* These are very simple words, but they contain a great depth of meaning. The teaching conveyed by this Epistle is very profound, though the language is such as even a child can understand. There must be faith in Jesus Christ as the anointed Son of God—otherwise there is no new birth, no regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

1. *And everyone that loves Him that begot loves Him also that is begotten of Him.* If we love the Father, we love the Son. If we love God, we love all His people! All who are born into the Divine family are the objects of our affection.

2, 3. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.* Not that we talk about our experience. Not that we use endearing expressions concerning the Savior. Not that we are attentive to outward religious ordinances, but, “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” A holy life is the best possible proof of true love to God.

3. *And His commandments are not grievous.* To His people, they are charming, not grievous. They delight themselves in the Law of God and they only wish that they could be perfectly conformed to the Divine Will.

4. *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.* And the Apostle gives a description of what kind of faith it is that overcomes the world.

5. *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* So it is faith in Jesus which is, first of all, the evidence of the new birth and which is, afterwards, the weapon wielded by the new-born soul, with which it fights till it gains the victory over the world!

6. *This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only.* Cleansing us as to our lives, “not by water only.”

6. *But by water and blood.* The blood which takes away the guilt of our offenses. There is a double cure for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. First, the putting away of all our past guilt and then the delivering of our hearts from defilement, so that we live after a holy fashion.

6, 7. *And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in Heaven.* Or, “witness in Heaven.”

7, 8. *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* Blessed is the man who has that threefold witness—the Spirit of God quickening him, the water cleansing his daily life, and the blood delivering his conscience from trouble because he is delivered from sin by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ!

9. *If we receive the witness of men.* And we are constantly obliged to do that, for we could not get on at all if we did not believe our fellow men, yet—

9-12. *The witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.* Ah, then, my Soul, if you have, by faith, embraced the Son of God, you have a life which can never die! You have the life of God within you! You have Heaven begun within you and you have it now! Dear Hearer, have you the Son of God? Have you taken Him to yourself by a distinct believing grasp, saying, “This Christ shall be mine—this blessed Jesus shall be my Savior”? Then you have the Apostle’s Inspired declaration, “He that has

the Son has life.” And his other declaration is equally true, “He that has not the Son of God has not life.”

13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.* The Apostle said that they did believe, yet he wrote to them that they might believe on the name of the Son of God because he that believes needs to believe more—more as to matter, and more as to the firmness of the grip of his faith. There are some who do really believe on Christ who do not know that they have eternal life. They have it, but they scarcely realize that they have it—they are afraid to believe that it is theirs. But here the Holy Spirit assures us, through the Apostle, that those who believe on the name of the Son of God have eternal life. Oh, what a comfort this is! Then you can never perish! There are some who say that you can fall from Grace, but how can that be? What kind of life would that be? It would be temporary life! But the Scripture says, “he that believes on the Son has *everlasting* life.” Then, if it is everlasting, it is everlasting, and there cannot be any end to it! Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well of Sychar, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

14. *And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* We do not wish to have a more unlimited promise than that! We do not ask God to hear our prayer if it is not according to His will. The true child of God does not wish to have his own will, but he says, “No, Lord, You know much better than I do what to grant, so, when my will is contrary to Your will, Your will, not mine, be done! This is as gracious an assurance of answers to prayer as the true children of God wish to have. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

15. *And if we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him.* That is, before we actually receive the answers to our petitions. After the prayer of faith, we know that our request has been granted and we act upon the belief that we have already received what we asked of God. A true man’s promise is as good as the performance of it—we unhesitatingly take a note of hand, or a promise to pay when we know that it is drawn upon a reliable firm. We treat it as money. It passes from hand to hand, through the bankers, and is regarded as if it were the coin itself—then shall we not treat our God in this fashion when we have His promise to pay or to give? We have pleaded it in prayer, so let us rise from our knees, not merely *hoping* that we shall receive what we have asked, but *believing* that we shall surely have it! “If we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him.”

16, 17. *If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All un-*

righteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. There are multitudes of such sins, but there is a place beyond which, if a man passes in sin, he becomes henceforth dead and utterly insensible—and he will never be quickened and never be saved. If we knew a man to be in such a condition as that, the Apostle's words would apply to such a case. "I do not say that he shall pray for it." But, as we cannot tell that any man is in that condition, it is well for us to ask for Grace to be able to pray for every sinner, however great his sin may be! We know that "all unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

18. *We know that whoever is born of God sins not.* That is to say, that is not the bent and current of his life. He makes mistakes, he falls into errors and he sins, but that is not the habitual description of his life.

18-21. *But he that is begotten of God keep himself and that wicked one touches him not. And we knew that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* At the time of the Reformation, there was a general order that this text should be put around the Communion Tables. I think it is time that it was put around the Communion Tables again. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—for that is one place where idols are often found, though not by any means the only one.

21. *Amen.* And we say, "Amen. So let it be."

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

END OF VOLUME 47

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

TRIAL BY THE WORD

NO. 1277

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Until the time that his word came: the Word of the Lord tried him.”
Psalm 105:19.*

Joseph was altogether an extraordinary person. He was a young man of great personal beauty and he exhibited, also, a lovely character, full of gentleness, kindness and truth. The Grace of God had made him as beautiful in mind as Nature had made him handsome in person. He was also exceedingly thoughtful. Perhaps, at first, rather more thoughtful than active, so that his brothers, not only because he had seen two remarkable visions, but probably because of his contemplative habits, said of him, “Behold, this dreamer comes.” He was the swan in the duck’s nest—his superior genius and character separated him from the rest of the family—and none of them could understand him. He was, therefore, the object of their envy and hatred so that they even proposed to murder him and ultimately sold him for a slave.

He was destined, however, for a nobler lot than theirs. They were to feed their flocks, but he was ordained to feed the world! They were to rule their own families, but he to govern the most ancient of empires! From the very beginning his supremacy in Israel had been foretold by a double dream. Their sheaves were seen to pay homage to his sheaf, while the sun and moon and 11 stars also made obeisance to him. This was the light which shone upon Joseph’s early days, the star of prophecy which afterwards gilded his darkest moments and cheered him on while he endured affliction.

You may rest assured, Brothers and Sisters, that wherever God gives extraordinary gifts or Graces and appoints an extraordinary career, He also appoints unusual trial. There is a verse—I think it is Cowper’s—which says that—

***“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

To eminence of any desirable kind there is no royal road—we must wade through tribulation to it. For Joseph to become Prime Minister of Egypt, the path lay through the prison house—to all true honor the road is difficult. Expect, then, dear Friend, if God gifts you, or if He graces you, that He intends to *try* you. Such a reflection will tone down your exultation and prevent its degenerating into pride—and it will aid you to gird up the loins of your mind and stand in all sobriety, prepared for that which awaits you.

Look upon talents, graces and high hopes of eminent usefulness as signs of inevitable tribulation. Do not congratulate yourself and sing, “Soul, take your ease! You are happy in possessing such special gifts,” but prepare to do the lifework to which you are called. You are favored of the

Lord, but do not look for the happiness of ease, carnal enjoyment and human approval, for, “Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.”

Joseph’s worst trial happened to him when he was accused of attempting a foul assault upon his mistress. Who would not writhe under so horrible a charge? When he was put in prison and his feet were made fast with fetters, he became exceedingly troubled, so that the iron surrounded his *soul*. How long he was in “durance vile,” as a chained prisoner, we do not know, but it must have been a considerable period. And during those dreary months, thoughts of his father and his fond love, memories of his cruel brothers and reflections upon his sad lot must have keenly wounded him. He was pained to remember how much his character had suffered from a woman’s malicious falsehood and most of all, how much blasphemy the heathen had poured upon the name of God, whom he had represented in the house of Potiphar.

Do you wonder that the iron entered into his soul? The word of the Lord tried him very severely. Alone, in darkness, in an uncomfortable cell, his limbs fretted with chains, no one to speak to him, everyone condemning him as guilty of the basest treachery towards the man who had made him his confidential and favored servant—he found himself regarded as the offscouring of all things—and the object of ridicule to all who were about him. “The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.”

But, blessed be God, his bow abode in strength and he overcame at the last! This morning we will commune together upon the trials of Joseph and our own afflictions. Our first reflections shall be spent upon *the importance of trial*. Secondly, we will consider *the peculiarity of the Believer’s trial* for, “the word of the Lord tried him.” And thirdly, we will observe *the continuance and the conclusion of the trial*—“until the time that his word came.” May the ever blessed Spirit direct our meditations.

I. First, let us dwell upon THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL. The Lord might easily have taken every one of us home to Heaven the moment we were converted. Certainly His Omnipotence was equal to the task of our immediate perfect sanctification. If the dying thief was rendered fit to be in Paradise the same day on which he believed, so might each one of us have been made ready to enter Heaven. But it has not so pleased God. We doubt not that there are myriads before the eternal Throne who have reached the abode of bliss without treading the winepress of affliction—

**“Babes there caught from womb and breast,
Claim right to sing above the rest;
Because they found the happy shore,
They never saw nor sought before.”**

Theirs is a victory for which they never fought. They wear a crown though they never bore a cross. To Sovereign Grace these blessed ones will never cease to ascribe their bliss. But as for those of us who live to riper years, it will be written concerning all of us as of others who have gone before, “These are they who came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” But why is it so appointed? Is this discipline of any use to us? The word here

used is, in itself, a light upon the question, "The word of the Lord *assayed* him"—that would be the correct translation.

The word of the Lord *assayed* Joseph as gold is assayed—it is a term best understood at the mint and among refiners. Trial in the Christian Church is the Lord's refining pot which is never off the fire. It has this excellent effect that it separates the precious from the vile. As long as the Church exists I suppose she will have traitors among her number, for if Judas intruded under the watchful eye of the Chief Shepherd, we may be pretty sure that many a Judas will elude the far less watchful eyes of the minor shepherds.

Because trial and persecution test men's professions, they are used as the winnowing fan in the Lord's hand, as it is written, "He will thoroughly purge His floor." In persecution, the mere professors, the camp-followers and hangers-on, soon flee away, for they have no heart for true religion when the profession of it involves a cross. They could walk with Jesus in silver slippers, but they cannot travel with Him when His bleeding feet go barefoot over the world's rough ways. So they depart, every man to his own, and we may say of them, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

So that trial as a permanent institution is of much service to the Church in promoting her purity and we are bound to praise the Lord whose fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. A similar process goes on in the individual soul. No Christian man is all that he thinks he is—our purest gold is alloyed. We have, none of us, so much faith as we impute to ourselves, nor as much patience, or humility, or meekness, or love to God, or love to men. Spurious coin swells our apparent wealth. It is amazing how rich and increased in goods we are till the Lord deals with us by a trial—and then, full often, we discover that we are naked, poor and miserable in the very respects in which we boasted ourselves!

Oh, man, if you are a child of God, you are like a house which He is building with gold, silver and precious stones! But by reason of your old nature you are mixing up with the Divine material much of your own wood, hay and stubble. Therefore the fire is made to rage around you to burn out this injurious stuff which mars the whole fabric! If the Holy Spirit is pleased to bless your afflictions to you, then will you be daily led to put away the materials of the old nature with deep abhorrence and repentance! And thus shall the true world which He has built upon the sure foundation stand in its true beauty and you shall be built for eternity.

Every good man is not only tested by trial, but is the better for it. To the evil man, affliction brings evil. He rebels against the Lord and, like Pharaoh, his heart is hardened. But to the Christian it is good to be afflicted, for, when sanctified by the Spirit, trial is a means of instruction to him second to none in value. The rod of God teaches us more than all the voices of His ministers. When the Christian has been passed through the fire, the assaying, by removing the dross, adds a new luster to the gold.

Brothers and Sisters, you are not what you shall be, nor can you be what you shall be except through a measure of trial. Child, it is necessary

for you to feel the weight of your Father's hand, or you will never behave yourself as a man. You must see His face veiled with frowns and hear His voice in harshness chiding you for your transgressions, otherwise you will always retain the follies of childhood. Our chastisements are our promotions. They are privileges more precious than the rights of princes. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Joseph could say this—and all the Lord's Josephs either acknowledge it now or will have to admit it hereafter.

Let us look a little more closely and we shall see that trial did much for Joseph. First, *it corrected the juvenile errors of the past*. Far be it from me to find any fault with so admirable a youthful character. But it was youthful and needed maturing. As a simple-hearted, trustful child, he certainly told his dreams quite as freely as it was not wise to have done. Perhaps he thought that his brothers and his father would have been as gratified as himself. But even his father rebuked him and his brothers were indignant to the last degree!

It was natural that a boy of 17 should be pleased with the thought of power and eminence, but such a feeling might have gendered evil and, therefore, it needed to be toned down and its eager expression kept within bounds. We find Joseph more self-possessed and more reticent, by-and-by, and we read in later life that he restrained himself—yes, when the strongest passions were at work within him, and his own brother, Benjamin, was before him—he sacrificed his feelings to the dictates of prudence.

We see no more boyish exultation, no more telling of his dreams. In quietness and confidence he found his strength. This, he no doubt, learned amid the sorrows of his prison house. He was, perhaps, in his early days, too much in a hurry to realize the promised blessing. He would see the sheaves do obeisance to his sheaf at once, while he and his brothers were as yet but green corn and the harvest had not come. He thought the dream was being realized, no doubt, when that princely garment his father gave him, was put upon him and he began, in some measure, to exercise the dignity which the Lord had promised him by reporting his brothers to his father. I do not condemn this action, but it, no doubt, made his brothers feel that he took too much upon himself since they were, many of them, old enough to have been his father and they had families of their own.

At any rate, he had not learned, then, as he had to learn afterwards, during 13 weary years, that visions tarry and that we must wait for them, since the promise is not for today nor for tomorrow, but abides until it reaches ripeness. God promises us great things which we see not, as yet, and therefore we must, with patience, wait for them—we must not put on the coat of many colors yet, nor be hasty to rebuke our elder brothers—for we are not yet set on high by the hand of the Lord. Joseph had his royal coat in due time and he had the fullest conceivable opportunity for reproving his brothers when, in later days they went down into Egypt to buy corn and their hearts smote them for all the wrong that they had done to him.

In prison Joseph learned to wait. I do not know a harder or more valuable lesson. It is worthwhile to suffer slander and to feel the fret of fetters, to acquire the patience which sits still and knows that Jehovah is God! To tarry awhile and not to pluck our fruit while it is yet green and sour—this is rare wisdom. To be instructed to leave the time as well as the form of the blessing in the hands of God is to have been to school with the best result! Joseph also learned in his trial much that was good for *present* use. For instance, he found by sweet experience that the Divine Presence can cheer us anywhere. If he had always been at home with his father, always his father's darling, he would have known that the love of God is sweet to a favored youth, but no one would have been astonished at that. Even Satan would have said, "Well may he rejoice in You, O Lord. Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?"

But he learned that God could be with him when he was sold for the price of a slave! That He could be with him when led as a captive across the desert, when he walked wearily by the camel's side with the Ishmaelites. He was blessed with His Presence as He was with him in the slave mart, to find him a master who might appreciate him. He was with him when he became a servant in the house, by blessing him, prospering him and causing him to find favor in the eyes of his master till he became overseer of all that Potiphar had! And then, best of all, though some would say worst of all, he learned that God could be with him in a dungeon. He could not have known that if he had stayed at home—he must be brought into the thick darkness—that the brightness of the Divine Presence might be the more fully seen!

There is nothing in this world so delightful as the light of God's Countenance when all around is dark. You may tell me that the Presence of Jesus is glorious upon Tabor's glorious mount and I will not contradict you, though I have realized the poet's words—

***"At the too transporting light
Darkness rushes over my sight."***

But give me the soft subdued light of God's love in adversity. Christ on the stormy waters for me! Christ in the midst of the furnace with His persecuted ones! Never does the Lord's love taste so sweet as when all the world is wormwood and gall. See how the mother presses her dear babe to her bosom when it is sick, or has had a bone broken. The little one may run about the house at other times and the mother is pleased with it and loves it, but if you want to see *all* her tenderness, if you would read all her heart, you should see her when it scarcely breathes, when she fears that every moment will be its last.

Then *all* the mother is revealed. How she fondles it and what a store of sweet words she brings forth. So, if you would see all of God, you must know what deeps of trouble mean, for then the great heart, the glorious, infinite love comes welling over and the soul is filled with all the fullness of God! It was worthwhile, I say, for Joseph to be falsely accused and to be laid in irons, to learn *experimentally* the supporting power of the heavenly Father's smile. There, too, Joseph learned that temporal things are not to be depended upon. The indulgences of his father's house ended in his being sold as a slave and the coat of many colors dipped in blood. His pros-

perity in the house of Potiphar also came to a sudden end—and from being an overseer he became a prisoner in irons!

Now he knew that earthly good is not to be depended on and, therefore, not worthy to be the object of pursuit to an immortal soul. He sees that all things beneath the moon change, waxing and waning as does the moon herself, and he learns to look to something higher and more stable than circumstances and surroundings. Here, too, he was instructed in one sad truth which we are all so slow to learn, namely, to, “cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?”

I do not think Joseph had learned that fully when he interpreted the dream of the butler. It was very natural and, therefore, not to be censured that he should say, “Think of me when it shall be well with you.” But when two whole years had passed and all the while he was forgotten, Joseph must have felt that, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” He ceased from man and no longer looked for enlargement from that quarter. Cost us what it may, we are great gainers by any process which enables us to say, “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” It is a blessed thing when Providence knocks away all the blocks and lets the vessel launch into her true element. See how freely she floats upon the deep sea of God’s everlasting love and immutable faithfulness! She is no more liable to decay from the dry rot of carnal confidence, but on the broad sea of Divine power, “she walks the waters as a thing of life” in joyful reliance upon the ever blessed God! Confidence in man seems bred in our bones, but it must be taken out of us—and happy shall the day be which sees us rid of all hope but that which stays itself upon the Lord, alone.

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, the chief use of trial to Joseph and to us is very often *seen in our future lives*. While Joseph was tried in prison, God’s great objective was to prepare him for the government which awaited him. It was designed, first, to give him power to bear power—a rare acquirement. Solomon says, “As the fining pot to silver, and the furnace to gold, so is a man to his praise.” Many a man can bear affliction, but few men can endure prosperity. And I have marked it and you must have marked it, too, that the most perilous thing in all the world is to step suddenly from obscurity into power.

Have we not seen men, illiterate and unknown, suddenly introduced to the Christian pulpit and made much of? And has it not frequently turned out that their names have been, by-and-by, prudently forgotten, for they were overthrown by the dizzy heights to which they were lifted? It is far better that a man should fight his way up to his position, that he should be assailed by enemies and distrusted by friends and should pass through a probationary career. Even then, he can only stand as the Lord holds him, but without it, he is in terrible peril. Therefore the Apostle says, “not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

If I knew that some young man here present would be greatly owned of God in the future and become, in future, a prince in our Israel. If, by lifting up this finger I could screen him from fierce criticism, misrepresentation and abuse, I would not do it because, severe as the ordeal might be to

him, I am persuaded it is necessary that he should pass through it in order to make him able to bear the giddy heights of the position for which God intends him. Joseph on the throne of Egypt! I know not what he might have been if first of all he had not been laid in the stocks. His feet learned to stand fast on a throne through having been set fast in a dungeon!

His gold chain was worn without pride because he had worn a chain of iron! And he was fit to be the ruler of princes because he had, himself, been a servant among prisoners. Through his trial, God gave him power to bear power—and this is a far rarer gift than the power to endure oppression and contempt! Joseph was also trained to bear the other dangers of prosperity. These are neither few nor small. Great riches and high positions are not to be desired. Agur's prayer is a wise one—"Give me neither poverty nor riches." Joseph was in great peril when he came to be lord over the land of Egypt, but during his time in prison he had been learning to spell out a mystery and answer a riddle.

Practically, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was what he had been learning in prison, namely, that it is idle to boast of the fat cattle since the lean cattle can soon eat them up. And it is unwise to be proud of the full ears, because the withered ears can soon devour them. Pharaoh saw in the dream the lean devouring the full-fleshed, but Joseph, alone, understood it. He saw his fat cattle, when he was in his father's house, eaten up when he was sold as a slave. He saw his full ears, when he was in Potiphar's house, devoured by the withered ears when he was thrown into prison. And he now knew that there was nothing here below worth our relying upon, since on the chariot of all earthly good there rides a Nemesis and every day is followed by a night.

He was tutored to be a ruler, for he had learned the prisoner's side of politics and felt how hard it was for men to be unjustly condemned without trial. He foresaw that this could not be forever endured and that one day the long-suffering lean cattle would be goaded to fury and would eat up the fat ones that oppressed them. Hence Joseph's rule would be just and generous, for in this he would see the elements which would preserve law and order and prevent the poorer sort from overturning everything. In the prison, too, he had learned to speak out. His whole course had been a rehearsal fitting him to be bravely truthful before the king.

What temptation was there to him, when he stood before Pharaoh, to conceal his faith in God? To him, I say, who had risked life and lost liberty for God's sake? It would have been a very great temptation to an ordinary young man not to say anything about the one God in the presence of the head of the Egyptian superstitions—but this did not suggest itself to Joseph. Had he confessed his God in Potiphar's house? Did he not say to Potiphar's wicked wife, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God"? He had stood to his God in prison and told the butler and baker that "interpretations belong unto God." And now he stands before Pharaoh! He does not flinch for a moment, but he says, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Why, Brothers and Sisters, have you ever thought of the moral courage of Joseph in interpreting that dream? All the soothsayers there had tried

to interpret it and could not—was it likely the heathen king would believe a youth who had been a slave and was fresh brought from a dungeon? When he foretold seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, it was a marvel that Pharaoh believed him! If the narrative had gone on to say, “Then the king said unto his servants, cast this man into prison and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until we see whether his word shall come to pass,” we should not have been at all surprised.

The magicians, naturally enough, would be ready to say that he was set on to give this preposterous interpretation by persons interested in selling corn! Or else they would urge that a man who dared to foretell events so utterly improbable had better be sent back to his prison house. But Joseph believed the Word of the Lord and he spoke with the accent of conviction and Pharaoh believed him. Where did this simple-minded courage come from? From where came this boldness? It was the right royal valor which surrounds a virtuous soul—or rather the fearlessness which follows from the fear of God!

He stood forth and delivered his message and the Lord established his word. He had been preparing for this in the day of his sorrow. Like a good sword blade, he had been passed through the fire and through the fire again, that now he might not fail in the day of battle! Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, may you gain as much from tribulations as Joseph did and you will if the Holy Spirit sanctifies them to you.

II. We must pass on, secondly, to notice THE PECULIARITY OF THE TRIAL. According to the text, “the Word of the Lord tried him.” This might have escaped our observation if the Spirit of God had not placed it upon record. “The Word of the Lord tried him.” How was that? Potiphar tried him and the chains tried him, but did the Word of the Lord try him? Yes. But there is a previous question—how did he receive any Word of the Lord? There was no Bible, then! Moses had not lived, there was not even the book of Genesis—what Word of God had he? The answer is his dreams were to him the Word of God, for they were communications from Heaven.

The instruction he received from his father was also the Word of God to him. His knowledge of the Covenant which God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and his father, Jacob, was God’s Word to him. Moreover, the secret teachings of the Holy Spirit quickened his conscience and afforded him light on the way. When there was no written Word, the Divine Spirit spoke without words, impressing truth upon the heart itself! All these were to Joseph the Word of God. How did it try him? It tried him thus—the Word said to him in his conscience, “You shall not commit adultery.” Without that Word he would not have been tried, for Nature suggested compliance with his mistress’s desires. The pleasure of ease, of wealth, of favor were to be had through that woman’s smile, but the Word of God came in and said, “You shall not,” and Joseph was tried.

The test, however, he could bear—Divine Grace enabled him to flee youthful lusts and to cry, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” The trial which arose out of his innocence must have again tested him by the Word of God. There he is in prison—for what? Why, for an action so pure, that had he been set on a throne for it, he would have

well deserved it! Do you not think that many questions perplexed him while he lay in prison? Would not the evil spirit say, "Were you not a fool, after all? Do you not think that your chastity was mere superstition?" Thus would the purity of his heart be tried and the Word of God would search him and test his hatred of sin. Would not the Word of God try his constancy as it asked, "Do you now believe?"

What problems were put before him—Is there a moral governor of the universe? If so, why does He allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters and the lewd woman in favor? Could not an Omnipotent God deliver me? Why, then, does He leave me here? Could Joseph, in the face of such questions, still cling to the faithful Word? He could and he did! But the Word tried him and proved his constancy, his faith and his integrity! Then, too, the Word of the Lord which he had heard many years before would come to him and try him.

His trembling heart would ask, "Has God ever spoken to you at all? Those dreams, were they not childish? That voice which you thought you heard in your heart, was it not imagination? This Providence of God which has prospered you wherever you have gone, was it not, after all, good luck? Has the living God ever revealed Himself to one, who, at length became a slave? Look at your fetters and ask if you can be His child?" And then, I suspect that during the time in which Joseph was fettered, the Word of God had ceased to speak to him as of old. He did not dream nor interpret dreams and that seems to have been the special way in which the Lord revealed Himself to him.

Brother, do you know what it is to be tried by the cessation of comfortable communications? Did you ever live for a time without feeling any text of Scripture applied to your soul, without beholding any vivid flashes of the Divine light, or any streaming in of the Spirit's power through the Word of God? If you have been so afflicted, you have been tempted to enquire, "Did the Lord ever speak to me at all? Have I been truly converted or is it, after all, a myth? And these things which I have looked upon as communications from Heaven, have they been, after all, nothing but the vapors of a heated brain?" The Word of God tried him and he had to weigh himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

The bright promise of future good would also try him. His fears would say, "How is it possible that your brothers should pay homage to you? You are far away from your family and cannot hope to see them again—as for the sheaves that did obeisance to your sheaf—where are they? You are shut up and cannot come forth! Within these walls the jealous Potiphar has doomed you to die." The Word of God would say to him, then, "Can you believe Me? Can you trust the Lord to fulfill His promises?" Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it is easy for us to talk about this, but if we had to pass through the same ordeal, lying in a dungeon under an accusation of guilt which we abhorred, far away from all we loved, we might feel the Word of God to be a very trying thing!

And perhaps the dark thought might even flit across our spirit, "Would God I had never heard that Word but could have lived as the Egyptians do, for then I might have been dwelling in pleasure in Potiphar's house. But this Word of God—into what trials has it dragged me—into what diffi-

culties has it thrown me! Is it, after all, worthwhile to know it?" I remember once being very, very ill and a man who had no godliness, but who was full of wicked wit, accosted me thus. "Ah, you see, whom the Lord loves He chastens." "Yes," I said, "I am suffering greatly." "Well," he said with a sneer, "I can do very well without such love, so long as I get off such chastening." I burst into tears and my very soul boiled over as I cried, "If the Lord were to grind me to powder, I would accept it at His hands so that I might but have His love. It is *you* who need to be pitied, for sound as your health may be and merry as you look, you are a poor creature since you have missed the only thing worth living for."

I let fly a volley at him, I could not help it. I felt forced to stand up for my Master. Joseph took the Lord's yoke upon him gladly and found rest unto his soul. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the luxuries of Potiphar's house. Thus the Word tried him and he was found upright. I have no doubt the Word of the Lord tried Joseph in this way. That Word seemed to say, "You thought you loved your father's God, Joseph. Do you love Him now? You have lost your father's house. You have forfeited the ease of Potiphar's household. You have sacrificed your liberty and, perhaps, the next thing will be that you will be taken out to die! Can you still hold fast to the Lord?"

Joseph was firm in his allegiance and prepared to follow the Lord at all hazards to the death. The Word had come to him and it tried his steadfastness. I may be addressing some young men who are getting into all sorts of trouble through being Christians. I congratulate you! Thus does the Lord train His bravest soldiers. I may be addressing some of you older men who are passing through storms of trial mainly because you hold fast your integrity. I congratulate you! Rejoice in this day and leap for joy, for you are only enduring trials which have fallen to the lot of better men than yourselves! Men do not put base metal into the furnace—they spend their assaying upon precious gold. I see in the fact of your trial, some evidence of your value, and I congratulate you, my Brothers and Sisters, and pray the Lord to bear you up and bear you through, that like Joseph you may be of great service to Israel and bring glory to God!

III. The last thought is THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL. Trial does not last forever. Cheer up, the tide ebbs out, but the flood will return again. Note the word, "until." He who counts the stars also numbers your sorrows and if He ordains the number 10, your trials will never be eleven. The text says, "until," for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the Divine "until." "Until the time that his word came"—the same Word which tried Joseph in due time set him free.

If the Lord gives the turnkey permission to keep us in prison, there we must remain until He sends a guarantee for our liberation. And then all the devils in Hell cannot hold us in bondage for an instant longer. My dear Brothers and Sisters, I want you, in your troubles, to look entirely to God whose Word is a Word of power. He speaks and it is done! He has spoken trouble to you, but He can just as readily speak comfort to you. Never mind what the butler's word is. Do not entreat him, saying, "When it is

well with you, speak a word for me.” The butler’s word will not be useful, it is Jehovah’s Word you need, for “where the word of a king is there is power.”

It is a blessed thing to know that trouble comes directly from God, whatever the secondary agent may be. You must not say, “I could have borne it if it had not been for that wicked woman.” Never mind the wicked woman, look to God as overruling her malice and everything else. *He* sends the trial and therefore look to Him to deliver you from it—

***“Tis He that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave.”***

He shuts us up in prison and He brings us out again. The time was in God’s hands and it was very wisely ordered. Suppose that the butler had thought of Joseph and had spoken to Pharaoh about the interpretation of his dream? The probabilities are that when the courtiers of Pharaoh’s court heard it, they would have made the halls of the palace ring with laughter! And the magicians, especially, would have poured scorn on the idea that a slave boy who had been imprisoned for scandalous behavior knew more about interpreting dreams than the wise men of Egypt who had been brought up to the art and had gained high degrees in the profession!

It would have been a theme of ridicule all over the land! It was the wrong time and God would not let the butler remember, because that recollection would have marred the plot and spoiled the whole business. But God’s, “until,” came at the nick of time when Joseph was ready for court and when Pharaoh was ready to appreciate Joseph. The hour needed its man and here was the hour for the man. The straight way from the dungeon to the throne was not open until Pharaoh dreamed his dream—*then* must Joseph come forth, and not before. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, sit still and wait! The deliverance you are craving for is not yet ripe—wait while the Word tries you, for that same Word will, in due, time set you free!

The Word set him free in a way which cleared his character, for never a whisper would be raised against him, and Potiphar would know the truth, even if he had not already guessed it. It set him free in a way which secured his eminence and gave him the means of providing for his father and his household. He might have been liberated from prison earlier and have remained only a common person, or gone back to be a slave to some new master. But now his liberation secured his emancipation from slavery and set him in the position which enabled him to provide for his father and his family in the land of Goshen. And so the sheaves did homage to his sheaf and the sun and moon and 11 stars fulfilled the vision which he had seen so many years before!

You see, Brethren, there is a time of deliverance and the time is fixed by God—and it is a right time! Therefore we have quietly to wait for it. Does not the farmer wait for the precious fruits of the earth? And will you not tarry for the fruits of the promise? Be not impetuous. Hush those murmuring thoughts! Never allow rash expressions to escape your lips. Bear on, young man, bear on! Yes, and you gray-headed man, bear on, bear on! The anvil breaks the hammers in the long run! Bear on, bear on! The rock breaks the billows and is not, itself, broken. Bear the trials which come to

you from God and from His Word with joy and patience, for the end is not yet—but when it comes, it shall be everlasting joy!

I think I hear some saying all round the place, “Ah, I see these Believers are a very tried people! Who would wish to be one of *them*?” Listen, Friend, and I will tell you something! Joseph was not the only person in prison, and the righteous are not the only people who are afflicted. The chief butler was in prison and the chief baker, too. I wonder whether the butler and baker are here, looking sad today. If so, there is this difference between them and Joseph, that the Lord is not with them, but He is with Joseph and that makes a vast difference, for—

**“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.”**

If God is in the prison with Joseph, Joseph is happy, but it is not so with you tried worldlings. I wonder, O butler and baker, whether you have had any dreams? I wonder what has passed through your minds this morning? Why do you look so sad today?

I am no interpreter of dreams, but perhaps I can unriddle yours. Was a vine before you in your dream? That true and living vine? Did it bud and blossom and bring forth fruit before your eyes? And did you take of its clusters and present its pure blood to the King? If so, you will be set free—your dream means salvation—for there is a vine of the Lord’s own planting whose wine makes glad the heart of man. And he who takes of its living fruit is accepted. Do you know how to take those clusters and to squeeze them out? If so, the King will rejoice in you, for nothing is so dear to Him as the fruit of the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus!

But have you dreamed of cakes which you have made by your own skill? Not fruits from a vine, living and full, but mere cakes, sweetened with your own self-righteousness, baked in the oven of your own zeal and industry? And do you hope to set these before the King? The birds of the air already peck at them! You are beginning, now, to feel that your works are not altogether what you thought them to be! Oh, if this is your dream, I tremble for you, for you will come to an ill end! I pray the Lord put that dream from you and teach you something better.

Salvation is of the Lord! Whether for butler, or baker, or Joseph—redemption is by Jesus, only! Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength and they that trust in Him will never be ashamed or confounded, world without end. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 39:1-7, 21-23;
40:1-8, 23; 12:1-9.**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—214, 750, 764.

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A STANZA OF DELIVERANCE

NO. 2241

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1892,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 31, 1890.**

***“He brought them forth, also, with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”
Psalm 105:37.***

THIS verse has been making music in my heart for several days and, at times, it has even claimed utterance from my tongue. I have caught myself singing a solo, with myself as the only hearer, and this has been the theme, “He brought them forth, also, with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” I love texts which sing to me and make me join in! If this verse should get into your hearts and set you singing in a similar way, you will be entertaining a very pleasant visitor—and it will brighten a dark day for you!

Egypt may very fairly represent those states of sorrow and sadness, depression and oppression, into which God's people come far too frequently. Specially is the house of bondage a true picture of our condition when we are convicted of sin, but are ignorant of the way to escape from its guilt and power! Then, sin, which was once our Goshen of pleasure, becomes our iron furnace of *fear*. Though we yield to sin when under conviction, yet we are no longer its willing subjects—we feel that we are slaves and we sigh by reason of sore bondage. Glory be to God, He has now brought us out from that state of slavery, and we can sing of freedom given by His own right hand!

Since then we have been permitted, in the order of God's Providence, to live among evil persons who have had power over us and have used it maliciously. They have hated our God and, therefore, they have hated us, and shown their dislike of us in many harsh and exacting ways. We find no rest with them, but our soul is among lions. They seem as though they would devour us, or else frighten us from following the road to Heaven.

Full often has our gracious God delivered His persecuted people from such a sorrowful condition and brought them into a large room wherein He has made them happy with Christian fellowship and enabled them to go about holy work without let or hindrance. At such times, when God's people have come out from under the yoke of their oppressors, the Lord has “brought them forth, also, with silver and gold: and there has not been one feeble person among their tribes.”

It is possible to go down into Egypt by reason of our own depression of spirit, inward conflict and despondency. If you are like the preacher, you

are by no means a stranger to inward sinking. Though you do not give up your faith, but are, still, like father Jacob, keeping your hold while the sinew is shrinking, yet you are, “sorely broken in the place of dragons.” You feel that you are like that bush in the desert which burned with fire and, only through a miracle, was not consumed. When under temptations of the flesh and memories of old sins, Satan, himself, comes in with his fiery darts, and you have a hard time of it. He will insinuate dark and dreadful thoughts—and you will be haunted by them, day after day—till you feel like the poor Israelites under the lash of the Egyptian taskmaster. Your covenant with God will bring you out of that state of anguish and distress—and when He does so, you will sing—“He brought them forth, also, with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”

God forbid we should repeat that senseless and wicked trust in man which once made us do down into Egypt for help! We will not go there for pleasure—what have we to do with drinking the waters of the muddy river? We drink of a better river than the Nile, even of the river of the Water of Life! But we shall go to the region of weakness and pain to die. Unless the Lord should suddenly come in His Glory, we shall close our eyes in death as Jacob and Joseph did. Then when we go into the tomb, which will be a kind of Egypt for our body, we shall only tarry there for a season. We shall slumber for a while, each one in his bed of dust, but the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken us and our bodies shall rise again! We shall not, however, come from the grave so poor and feeble as we went in! No, we shall be great gainers by our sojourn in the dark abode. Those who see the saints in the day of Resurrection, ascending to their thrones from the Egypt of death, may fitly say, “He brought them forth, also, with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”

I am going to try to handle my very delightful subject in the following way—First, *the deliverances of God’s people are always worked by Divine Power*. Lay the stress on the first word—“HE brought them forth.” Secondly, *their deliverances are attended with enrichment*. “He brought them forth, also, *with silver and gold*.” And, thirdly, *their deliverances are accompanied by a remarkable degree of strength*. “There was not one feeble person among their tribes.” May the Holy Spirit make rare music for you upon this harp of three strings!

I. First, then, when we are led out of the Egypt of our sorrow, OUR DELIVERANCE IS BY DIVINE POWER. When Israel came out of Egypt, it was Jehovah who brought forth her armies. When any man is saved from spiritual bondage, *it is the Lord Jesus who loosens the captive*. Some little time ago I delivered an address at the Mildmay Park Conference upon, “Following Jesus in the dark,” and the Lord was pleased to bless that word to a great many who were then under a cloud. For this cause, I greatly rejoice, but from this happy result I have also had to suffer many things in the following way—it seems as if persons everywhere, having read that address, must write to me an account of their trouble, despondency and darkness of the soul.

Having written the doleful narrative, they very naturally ask me endless questions by way of trying to find light for themselves out of my experience and knowledge. I have been delighted to answer those questions as far as I can, but there is a limit to human power. I have lately been like a doctor who has suddenly had a new practice handed over to him, when he was already as busy as he could be, both night and day! He finds his door besieged by patients who cannot be dismissed with just a word of hope and a dose of medicine, but require a long time in which to tell their griefs and to receive their comfort. Spiritually, my night bell is always ringing—and when I visit a sick soul, it requires long and weary nursing. I know, therefore, from that, as well as from my own experience, that if ever a man is delivered from spiritual bondage of heart, it is not by any easy work, or by a hasty word.

No, all the power of sympathy and experience will fail with some souls. God, alone, can take away the iron when it enters into the soul! It is of small use for those afflicted in mind to write to me, or to others, if their distress is *spiritual*, for only *God* can deliver them. If they are in the dark, we can strike a match as well as anyone else—but since they need the shining of the Sun—that remains with the Lord who alone creates the light. Oh, that the Sun of Righteousness would rise with healing beneath His wings on every soul that now sits in the midnight of despair! Deliverance from a cruel captivity, like that of Israel in Egypt, must be worked by the hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah, alone! When such a liberation is performed, then do we rapturously sing, “HE brought them forth!”

But this does not exclude the use of means. The Lord used Moses and Aaron—and Moses used his rod and his tongue. Truly, Jehovah brought forth Israel, and neither Moses nor Aaron nor the rod in Moses’ hand, but yet the Lord’s *instruments* were employed in the service. If the Lord delivers you, my dear afflicted Friends, the work will not be done by the preacher, not by a consoling book, nor by any other means so as to prevent its being the Lord, alone! The use of instrumentality does not hide Divine Power, but even makes it more apparent! The man Moses was not only very meek, but he was also so slow in speech that he needed Aaron’s help—yet the Lord used him! Aaron was even inferior to Moses, but the Lord used him! As for the rod, it was probably nothing more than a hazel stick which had been used by Moses in walking and keeping sheep—but it pleased the Lord to make of that *rod* a very remarkable use, so that no scepter of kings was ever so greatly honored! The Lord took care to employ means which could not pretend to share the honor with Himself. Notwithstanding Moses, Aaron and the rod, “HE brought them forth,” and HE, alone!

This work of the Lord *does not exclude the action of the will.* The people of Israel came forth freely from the country which had become the house of bondage. “He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness.” They set out exultingly, glad to escape from the intolerable oppression of Pharaoh who was, to them, a tyrant, indeed! God does not violate the human will when He saves men—they are not converted against their will, but their will, itself, is converted! The Lord has a way of entering

the heart, not with a crowbar, like a burglar, but with a master key which He gently inserts in the lock and the bolt flies back—the door opens and He enters! The Lord brought Israel forth, but they had cried unto the Lord by reason of their sore bondage, and they did not receive the blessing without the *desiring* it, yes, and *sighing* for it! And when it came, they joyfully accepted it and willingly trusted themselves with him whom the Lord had made to be their mediator and leader, even Moses. They did not share the honor of their deliverance with God, but still they gave their hearty assent and consent to His salvation. Willingly as they were to move, it was still true, “HE brought them forth.”

Brothers and Sisters, he must have brought them forth, for *they could never have come forth by themselves*. If you have read enough of Egyptian history to understand the position and power of the reigning Pharaohs, you will know how impossible it was for a mob of slaves, like the Israelites, to make headway against the imperious monarch and his *absolute* power. If they had clamored and rebelled, the only possible result would have been to slaughter many—and the still further enslavement of the rest. There was no hope for the most distinguished Israelite against the tyranny of the Pharaoh! He could simply cry, “Get you unto your burdens,” and they could do no less. Pharaoh crushed even his own Egyptians—much more the strangers! You cannot look upon the pyramids and other vast buildings along the Nile and remember that all these were built with unpaid labor, with the whip continually at the workman’s back—without feeling that a pastoral, unarmed race, long held in servitude—could ever have obtained deliverance from the power of Pharaohs if the Omnipotent Jehovah had not espoused their cause. “HE brought them forth!”

Beloved, *we* can never escape from the bondage of sin by our own power. Our past guilt and the condemnation consequent thereon, have locked us up in a dungeon, whose bars we can never break! The Prince of Darkness, also, has such power over our evil natures that we cannot overcome him, or escape from under his dominion of ourselves. If we are ever set free from sin and Satan, it will be eternally and infinitely true that the *Lord* brought us forth out of the house of bondage. “Salvation is of the Lord.”

Moreover, *the spirit of the people was too crushed to have dared to come forth*, even if they could have achieved liberty by a brave revolt. Four hundred years of slavery had ground the very spirit out of the men of Israel. They toiled, they toiled, they toiled—and when Moses came and talked to them about freedom, at first they listened and they hoped—but in a few hours they began to murmur and to complain of Moses and to cry—“Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.” That abject condition was ours before conversion! We were not easily awakened to seek redemption. I remember hearing the Gospel and getting a little comfort from it and, almost immediately, falling back into my former hopelessness. And I said in my soul, “I may as well enjoy the pleasures of sin while I can, for I am doomed to perish for my iniquities.” The slavery of sin takes away manli-

ness and courage from the spirit—and where bright hope smiles upon us, we answer her with the sullen silence of despair!

Was it not so with you, my Brothers and Sisters, in those gloomy days? Therefore, it must be true, that if the prisoners of sin have some forth, the Lord, Himself, brought them forth. They had not the spirit of men who could dare to care about their freedom—they were too enfeebled by their own servile spirit. There may be some before me, at this moment, before whom God has set an open door and yet they dare not go through it. Christ is put before you—you may have Him for your trusting—you may have Him at once! But you dare not take Him. You are commanded to believe, but you dare not believe what you know to be true! You hear us sing the hymn—

**“Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now,”**

but you dare not trust the Lord Jesus, though this is your only hope of obtaining salvation! Your sin has left you paralyzed with despair! O God, bring forth these prisoners, even now! Though they lie in the inner prison, with their feet fast in the stocks, may it be said on earth and sung in Heaven, “HE brought them forth!”

Yet the Lord did bring them forth. Not in part, but as a whole, He redeemed His people. Every one of them was set free! Not only all the human beings, but all their cattle came forth, according to the Word of the Lord, “Not a hoof shall be left behind.” Christ Jesus, in redeeming His people, will have all or none! All that the Father gave Him shall come to Him! Nor shall the power of sin, death and Hell be able to hold in captivity *one* whom Jesus has effectually redeemed, nor *one* whom His Father chose! All the covenanted ones shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. He has paid too much for them to lose one of them! In the loss of one of them, too much would be involved—His Word, His Covenant, His power, His faithfulness, His honor would all suffer should one of His little ones perish! Therefore, He makes their deliverance effectual and in every deed He brings them forth.

This deliverance came when the lamb was slain. Pharaoh held Israel captive during all the plagues, but he could not go beyond a certain point. On that same night when they saw the lamb slain and roasted with fire while they sat in their houses protected by the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side posts of their doors—that same night they left Egypt! They went forth under that seal of redemption, the blood-red mark of substitutionary sacrifice. My dear Hearer, perhaps this very night you will also go forth into glorious liberty! I know you will, if you will, by faith, look to Jesus as the Lamb slain for you! Will you now accept Him as your own and trust Him to be your redemption? Behold, then, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! Take His precious blood and let it be sprinkled on your door, yes, and upon *yourself*, that the angel of vengeance may pass you by! Can you come and feed on Christ at once, as the Lamb of God’s Passover? Do you say that this would be a bold and venturesome faith? Yet be so bold and venturesome! Blessed to the name of the Lord, none were ever rejected who dared to trust Jesus! We will sing

about you and others if you have faith in the great sacrifice—and this will be our song—“HE brought them forth!”

Israel cannot remain under slavery to Egypt when once the redemption price has been accepted and the blood has been sprinkled! None know freedom from sin but those who trust the atoning blood! God forbid that I should point you to any way of hope but this one path—for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins!

I have perhaps said enough on this point, but assuredly I have fallen short unless I have made you know, each one, that deliverance from sin is solely by the power of God! “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” Unless a supernatural power is put forth in it, any form of deliverance from sin is worth nothing! If you have been born again from *below*, you will go below—you must be born again from *above* if you are to go above! There is no true liberty but that of which Christ makes you free. “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.” Do you know what it is, dear Friends, to be brought out of prison by a miracle of Grace, by a revelation of the Holy Spirit, by the blood of Jesus shed for many? If so, you will join with all the saints in singing, “As for His people, HE brought them forth!”

II. But now we reach a very pleasing part of our theme, We have now to note that OUR DELIVERANCE WAS ATTENDED WITH ENRICHMENT—“He brought them forth, also, *with silver and gold.*” “Oh,” says one, “I remember all that about that translation! That is the silver and gold which they borrowed from the Egyptians with no intent of repaying the loan. I have always thought that was a thievish trick.” It was a very unfortunate mistake of our translators when they rendered the original by the word, “borrowed,” for it is not the correct word. Our Revised Version has it more accurately, “And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked.”

Even if you were forced to read the word, “borrowed,” it might mean nothing amiss, for all borrowing and nonpayment is not thieving. “Oh,” you say, “*that is a new doctrine!*” Let me state the case. If I borrow upon the security of my property and leave the property in the hand of the lender, he will not complain if the security is worth more than the loan. These Israelites had lands and houses and other property which they could not carry with them—and now that their sudden removal involved a forced sale—they could say to those who lived near them, “Here is our land, what will you give us for it?” The people took the immovable property of the Israelites—and they granted them a loan for it—they were well aware of what they were doing and were not defrauded. But we have no need to defend Israel. The Great Proprietor of all things bade them ask and influenced the minds of their neighbors to give! It was *just* that these poor people, who had been working without fee or reward and had, thereby, screened the native Egyptians from much forced labor.

The people of Egypt were, in part, afraid of them and of their God and were, also, in measure, sympathetic with them under their cruel oppres-

sion. And so they forced presents upon the Israelites hoping to get their blessing before they departed, to save them from further plague which might visit the land. The natives as good as said, "Take whatever you please from us, for we have treated you badly. Only leave us alone—for plagues and deaths fall upon us thick and fast so long as Pharaoh detains you here." However, this is not my point. I am dealing with more *spiritual* things. When God brings His people out of bondage, they come out enriched in the best and most emphatic sense.

This seemed very unlikely. It looks to the afflicted as if they could not be profited by trials such as theirs. If they can only escape by the skin of their teeth, they will feel perfectly satisfied. Depressed spirits cannot lift their thought so high as to think of the gold of increased joy, or the silver of enlarged knowledge, or the jewels of holy graces. "I am," said one, "quite prepared to sit down behind the door in Heaven, or at the feet of the least of the saints, so long as I may but get there." In some respects this is a very proper feeling. But this is not God's way of acting—He did not lead forth His people in a poverty-stricken way, but, "He brought them forth, also, with silver and gold." Your Deliverer means to enrich you *spiritually* when He sets you free from your sorrow and trouble!

It was very far from being the design of their enemies to enrich Israel. Pharaoh had intended to work them down to the last ounce of strength and keep them in abject poverty. In fact, one chief object of his oppression was to kill down the race, lest they should too greatly multiply. But the Lord turned the curse into a blessing! "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." And the harder they worked, the healthier they became, so that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." This was not according to their enemies' will, but the will of the Lord is paramount! Even so it is not the devil's will to drive a man nearer to Christ, but yet his temptations and assaults are often used of the Lord to make the best and most experienced Christians. Satan is the dishwasher in God's kitchen and he has to scour the vessels of mercy. Trials and afflictions, which threaten to kill us, are made to sanctify us! And sanctification is the best form of enrichment. How much we owe to sorrow and sickness, crosses and losses! Our bondage ends in our coming forth with much that is better than silver and gold!

Thus do we come forth from conviction of sin. "Now tell me," asks one, "what does man gain by being in a desponding, sorrowful condition, convicted of sin and full of fears?" By the work of the Holy Spirit he will gain much. He will obtain a clearer knowledge of the evil of sin. This is a rare thing, nowadays, when we have so many Believers who were never penitent. It is a great thing for a child who has a habit of stealing apples, to get himself well filled with the sourest of them and feel the gripes strong within him. He will never touch such fruit anymore! It is a great thing for a man, in his early days, to know what a sour apple sin is and to feel heartache and soul-anguish because of the exceeding bitterness of his evil ways. It is a lasting lesson! As the burnt child dreads the fire and the scalded dog is afraid, even, of cold water, so the discipline of conscience, through Divine Grace, breeds a holy caution and even a hatred of sin! We

have few Puritans because we have few penitents. An awful sense of guilt and an overwhelming conviction of sin may be the foundation stone of a gloriously holy character!

The tried and tempted man will also see clearly that salvation is all of Grace. He feels that if he ever rises from his despondency, he can never dare to take an atom of the honor of deliverance to himself—it must be of Free Grace only. He can do nothing and he knows it! When a child of God can spell GRACE and can pronounce it clearly, as with the true Jerusalem accent, he has gained a great deal of spiritual silver and gold. I have heard a Brother stutter over that word, “Free Grace,” till it came out very much like, “free will.” As for myself, that Shibboleth I pronounce without faltering, for my free will is that which I daily try to master and I bring it into complete subjection to the will of God—to Free Grace I owe everything! Blessed is that man, who, by his experience, has been made to know that Free Grace is the source of every blessing and privilege—and that salvation is all of Grace from first to last! By a knowledge of the great Gospel principle of Grace, men are brought forth, also, with silver and gold.

Such persons gain by their soul trouble a fund of healthy experience. They have been in prison and have had their feet made fast in the stocks. “Well,” says one, “I do not want to feel *that* sort of treatment.” No, but suppose you *had* felt it—the next time you met with a Brother who was locked up in the castle of the Giant Despair, you would know how to sympathize with him and help him. You who never felt a finger ache cannot show much sympathy with broken bones! I take it to be a great gain to a man to be able to exhibit sympathy towards sufferers of all kinds, especially towards *spiritual* sufferers. If you can enter into the condition of a bondsman because you have, yourself, been a bondsman in Egypt and God has brought you out, then you will be qualified to comfort those who mourn.

Thus, you see, in various ways, the Lord’s people are enriched by the sorrows from which they are delivered by God. “HE brought them forth, also, with silver and gold.” Persons who come to Christ suddenly and find peace immediately, have much to be grateful for—and they may be helpful to others of a similar character. But those who suffer long law-work and have deep searching of the heart before they can enter into rest, have equal reasons for thankfulness, since they obtain a fitness for dealing with special cases of distressed consciences. Where this is the result of severe trial, we may well say that the Lord has brought them forth with silver and gold.

Thus do saints come out of persecution. The Church is refined by the fires of martyrdom. The heap on the Lord’s threshing floor is more largely made up of real wheat after the winnowing fan has been used upon it. Individual piety is also deeper, stronger and nobler in persecuting times than in other seasons. Eminent saints have usually been produced where the environment was opposed to the Truth of God and godliness. To this day the bride of Christ has for her fairest jewels the rubies of martyrdom. Out of each period of fierce persecution the Lord has brought forth His

people the better for the fires. "HE brought them forth, also, with silver and gold."

Thus do Believers come out of daily afflictions. They become wealthier in Grace and richer in experience. Have you noticed how real those men are who have known sharp trials? If you want an idle evening of chit-chat, go and talk to the gentleman with a regular income, constant good health and admiring friends—he will amuse your leisure hour. But if you are sad and sorrowful and need conversation that will *bless* you, steer clear of that man's door! Look into the faces of the frivolous and turn away as a thirsty man from an empty cistern. He that has never had his own cheeks wet with tears cannot wipe my tears away! Where will you go in the day of trouble? Why, to that good old man whose sober experience has not robbed him of cheerfulness, though it has killed his sinful folly! He has been poor and he knows the inconvenience of straightened means. He has been ill and can bear with the infirmities of the sick. He has buried his dearest ones and has compassion for the bereaved. When he begins to talk, the tone of his voice is that of a sympathetic friend. His lips drop fatness of comfort. What a gain is his spiritual acquaintance!

A man of God, whose life has been full of mental exercises and spiritual conflict, as well as outward tribulation, becomes, through Divine Grace, a man of a large wealth of knowledge, prudence, faith, foresight, wisdom and he is, to the inexperienced, like some great proprietor by whom multitudes of the poorer classes are fed, guided, housed and set to work. Those who have been much tried are in the peerage of the Church! A man who has been in the furnace and has come out of it is a marked man. I think I should know Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, even now, if I were to meet them! Though the smell of the fire had not passed upon them, I feel sure that it left a glow upon their countenances and a glory upon their persons which we find no where else! They are, henceforth, called, "the three holy children"—they were holy *before*, but now men acknowledge it! Do you not think that they were great gainers by the furnace? And is it not true of all the godly whose lives have been made memorable by special tribulation—"HE brought them forth, also, with silver and gold"?

When you and I reach the shores of Heaven, *thus shall we come into Glory.* When we come forth out of our graves, it will not be with loss, but with enrichment. We shall leave corruption and the worm behind us and, with them, all that earthly grossness which made us groan in these mortal bodies! God will bring us forth, also, with silver and gold. What golden songs we will sing! What silver notes of gratitude will we pour forth! What jewels of communion with one another and of communion with our Lord will adorn our raiment! If we, too, have been men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, how much more fully shall we enter into the joy of our Lord because we entered into His sorrow! We also have suffered for sin and have done battle for God and for His Truth against the enemy. We, also, have borne reproach and become aliens to our mother's children. We, too, have been bruised in the heel and yet, in death, have conquered death, even as He did—only by His Grace. Hence the joy of fellowship with Him through eternity! What news we shall have to tell to angels and prin-

cipalities, and powers! The gems of our grateful history will be our trials and deliverances. Coming up from death to eternal life, this will be the sum of it, "HE brought them forth, also, with silver and gold."

Dear Friends, I am anxious to pass on to the third point, for time is flying fast, but I cannot neglect the application of what I have said. I beg those of you who are sad and despondent to notice the Truths of God I have advanced. I want you to believe that your present affliction is for your enrichment! You will come out of this Egypt with much profit of Grace. "Let me out," cries one, "only let me out!" I pray you, be not impatient. Why rush out naked, when a little patience will be repaid with silver and gold? If I were laboring in Egypt and I heard that it was time for me to start for the land of Canaan, I should be eager to be gone at once. But if I found that I must be hindered for an hour or two, I should certainly utilize the delay by disposing of my lands and endeavoring to get together treasures which I could carry with me! The delay would not be lost time. Therefore, beloved Friend, if you cannot at once obtain comfort, make good use of your affliction! Be always more earnest to profit by your trials than to escape from them! Be more earnest after the heavenly silver and gold than about hurrying away from the scene of conflict and temptation.

III. Thirdly, here is a very wonderful thing. OUR DELIVERANCE IS ACCOMPANIED WITH HEALTH AND STRENGTH—"There was not one feeble person among their tribes." In the thousands of Israel there was not *one* person who could not march out of the land keeping rank as an efficient soldier! Everyone was fit for the journey through the wilderness. They numbered hard upon two millions, if not more, and it is a very surprising fact that there should not have been *one* feeble person among their tribes! Mark the word, not only no one sick, but no one, "feeble"—none with the rheumatism or other pains which enfeeble walking, or palsies which prevent bearing burdens! This was nothing less than a sanitary miracle, the like of which was never known in the natural order of things!

This fact is typical of the health and strength of the newly saved. The Lord's people, at conversion, are, as a rule, wonderfully strong in their love to Jesus and their hatred of sin. In most cases our young converts, when they have truly come to Christ, even if they are a little timid, are vigorous, much in prayer, abounding in zeal and earnest in speaking out the Gospel! Many of them, I believe, would die at the stake readily enough, while they are in their first love. In their earliest days, nothing is too hot or too heavy for them, for the sake of Jesus Christ, their Lord! If I need a bit of work to be done which requires dash and self-sacrifice, give me a set of Israelites who have just come out of Egypt, for there is not one feeble person among their tribes!

After they have gone some distance into the wilderness, they are apt to forget the right hand of the Lord and to get to fretting and worrying. Very soon many of them are sick through being bitten by fiery serpents, or smitten with the plague. They begin grumbling and complaining and run into all sorts of mischief in a short time. But when they first came out, they were so excellent that even the Lord said, "I remember you, the love of your espousals." I have known some of you, after you have been mem-

bers of the Church for a few months, greatly need a nice cushion to sit upon and the cozy corner of the pew—whereas once you could stand in the aisle and not know that you were standing! You have grown wonderfully particular about the singing, the tunes and the length of the prayer—and the preacher's *attitude*—and especially the respect paid to your own dear self! Only very choice service suits you—it would almost *insult* you if you were put to common work! You were not like that when you were first converted.

Do you remember how the crowd pressed upon you and yet you were so absorbed in listening to the preacher's voice that you never minded it? What walks you took, then, to reach the service! I notice, my Friend, that when your grace grew short, the miles grew long. When you first joined the Church, I said to you, "I fear you live too far off to attend regularly." But you took me up very quickly and said, "Oh, that is nothing, Sir! If I can only get spiritual food, distance is no object." When you get cold in hearts, you find it inconvenient to come so far and you go to a fashionable place of worship where your musical tastes can be gratified. Yes, when Divine Grace declines, fancy rules the mind and love of ease controls the body—and the soul loses appetite and grows greedy for empty phrases—and weary of the Word of God. May the Lord grant you Grace to be among those of whom it is said, "There was not one feeble person among their tribes."

Full often it is so with the persecuted. I do not wish that any of you should experience persecution, but I am persuaded it would do some of you good to have a touch of it. A man who has fulfilled an apprenticeship to this hard master is likely to be a man, indeed. If he has endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he will be fit to become an officer in the army and an instructor of recruits! If I could, by the lifting of my finger, screen every Believer from persecution at home and in the workshop, I would long hesitate before I did it, since I am persuaded that the Church is never more pure, more holy, more prayerful, or more powerful than when the world is raging against her! The dogs keep the wolves out! The hypocrite declines to enter the Church where he will gain nothing by reproach, or worse. When there were stakes at Smithfield, Protestantism meant heroism! When the Lord's covenanting people were meeting among the hills and mosses of Scotland, there were no "moderates" or "modern-thought" men among them! They knew and loved the Truth of God for which they fought and that Truth of God made them strong!

It could be a glorious day if it were so with all God's people, that there were none feeble. We should, as a Church, labor to reach this high standard. We would have the *weakest* to be as David and David as the Angel of the Lord! We would have our babes become young men and our young men, fathers in Christ! Do we reach this standard at the Tabernacle? Alas, we do not by a very long way! There are numbers of very feeble persons among our tribes. I will not say a word against them, dear Hearts! For I trust they are sincere, though feeble. How greatly I wish that they were more concerned about their own feebleness, for it is a real loss to the cause we have at heart! The feeble hinder the strong. We need all the

strength of the host for storming the enemies' ramparts, whereas some of us have to stay behind and nurse the infirm. We should not mind this so much, only these are the same poor creatures that were nursed 20 years ago—and they have not made any advance! May the Lord strengthen us all till we shall all be made fit for the service of Jesus!

Oh, when we meet in the Home Country, when we once get to Glory, what a delight it will be that *there will be no sin or weakness there!* When the Lord has once brought us forth from the world and all its troubles, then all sinful weakness shall be unknown! We shall all be raised in power and shall be as angels of God! Are you going there, dear Friends? "Yes," says one, "I hope that I am going there, but I am a feeble person." Thank God that you are on the right road, even if you limp! It is better to enter into life crippled, maimed and feeble, than to run and leap in the way of death! If I can give a lift to anyone who is feeble, I am sure I will. At the same time, I would urge you to cry to the Lord to make you strong—and bid you trust in Christ for the power which He, alone, can give, of faith to overcome doubts and fears.

If any of you have not believed unto eternal life, put your trust in the Lord Jesus now. They serve a good Master who trust only in Jesus and take up their cross and follow Him. In Him is life for the perishing, joy for the sorrowing, rest for the weary and liberty for the captives! Are you shut up, like a prisoner in a castle? Do but trust in Jesus and He will batter the dungeon door and bring you out! Yes, and He will not give you a peniless liberty, a liberty to perish of need! No, it shall be said of you, and of others like you, "HE brought them forth, also, with silver and gold." Amen, so be it! So be it, even at this moment, good Lord!

Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Psalm 105.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 116, 126.

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A VISIT FROM THE LORD

NO. 2599

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 4, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD,
(during the renovation of the Tabernacle),
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 30, 1883.

“O visit me with Your salvation.”
Psalm 106:4.

THIS is the prayer of a man who understood the art of praise. He begins this Psalm with a Hallelujah. “Praise you the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.” Now, mark, there is no prayer that is purer, more spiritual, more heavenly than the prayer which comes out of a heart full of praise! How often have I said that prayer is the breathing in of the air of Heaven and praise is the breathing of it out again? Prayer and praise make up the best life of the Christian and he is not yet thoroughly in spiritual health who is all for prayer and not at all for praise—but he is the really healthy Christian who has these two things rightly balanced. Such a man one moment cries, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.” And then, directly afterwards, prays, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people.” Is it not possible, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you have lost some of your power in prayer because you have somewhat neglected praise? If we do not bless God for the mercies we have received, how can we go and ask Him for more? If we have already been heard in our prayers and yet have failed to acknowledge our obligation to the Giver, do we not come to prayer with a very bad attitude? Might not God say to us, “You did not thank Me the last time I granted your request. Why should I answer you this time?” Let us, therefore, each one, take care that our prayer is the petition of one who can and who does praise the Lord.

Next, observe that this prayer was offered by one who knew the blessedness of the saints. In the third verse he says, “Blessed are they that keep justice and he that does righteousness at all times.” I introduce this remark because, to a large extent, the prayer of the text is the prayer of a sinner—the prayer of one who felt that he did not bear the character of a saint as fully as he ought to have done. And, Beloved, if we were more saintly, we would have much more power in prayer and we should be much more happy. If we walked with God more closely, and kept justice, and did righteousness at all times, we would be saved from many of those trials and afflictions and disappointments which now fall to our lot. The Psalmist tells us about what troubles the children of Israel had in the wilderness, but those troubles resulted from their sin. They need not

have had to endure half what they suffered if they had only been right with God. And so, in the later days of their history, they would never have been captives to their enemies if they had not first been captives to their sins. If they had walked as God would have had them walk, their peace would have been like a river—one of them would have chased a thousand—and two would have put ten thousand to flight! There will be, practically, hardly any limit to the blessedness which a child of God may enjoy even in this life if he will but walk carefully with his God.

So, dear Friends, if you and I feel that we have wandered and if our prayer has to be presented “out of the depths,” yet I trust that we have not forgotten that there is a peace, a rest, a joy which God bestows upon those who walk uprightly, those who live more carefully than we have done and keep nearer to Him than some of His erring children do.

Now, coming to the text, I want you to notice the prayer itself. I have nothing new to say, but I shall try to utter some very simple Truths of God suggested by the Psalmist’s prayer, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

I. The first thought is, that the Psalmist here prays for SALVATION.

What a wonderful word that word, “salvation,” is! Well might Dr. Watts say—

**“Salvation! Let the echo fly
The spacious earth around,”**

for there is something in it to be heard by all who dwell on this spacious earth. Salvation is the one thing which all men need, and when it is given to them, it conveys to them innumerable mercies for time and for eternity. Indeed, everything good is wrapped up in that word, *salvation*. As we read this Psalm, you probably noticed how the Psalmist sings concerning salvation in it. He says, first, that *God saved the people out of Egypt*. There they were, a nation of captives and bond slaves—and He began to work with a high hand and an outstretched arm to bring them out of their captivity! And though they did not understand His wonders, yet, nevertheless, He saved them. That is a salvation in which you and I also delight—salvation by the sprinkled blood—salvation by the Paschal Lamb—salvation by the right hand of God and His out-stretched arm—a salvation which reveals His faithfulness, His mercy and His power. Let us bless God if we experimentally know what this salvation means! And if we do not, let this be the prayer of each one of us, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

One of the worst results of the Fall is that men who are spiritually dead do not pray for life. But if there is one here who is sufficiently under the influence of the Holy Spirit to know that he needs spiritual life, he may begin at once to pray, “O visit me with Your salvation.” If you have not yet felt the burden of sin. If you do not yet savingly know the Sin-Bearer. If you are still a bond slave to your sin, you have, indeed, need to pray this prayer. If you know that you are not what you ought to be and that, living and dying as you now are, you will perish everlastingly, then with all your heart and with as much desire as there may be in you, do breathe the prayer to God, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

O poor Heart, as soon as you begin to pray, you begin to live! You may have very little power in prayer. In fact, your prayer may be no better than the first feeble cry of a newborn child, but it is a sign of life and the

Lord hears even a groan! And the tears that fall without a sound are liquid music to Jehovah, for He knows what they mean. May I not hope that somebody here, if he cannot pray spiritually, will yet pray as do the young ravens who, in their nests, when they are hungry, cry, and the Lord hears them and relieves their hunger? If you think that your prayer is no better than the cry of a poor bird, or the roaring of a wild beast, yet still cry, still pray! One trick of the devil is to try to stop you from praying—he will tell you that you will not be heard. But I can assure you that the cry of misery, the sob of inward grief is certain to be heard by the tender and gracious God whom we worship. Somewhere in this building, I think, there must be some heart that has been, up to now, giddy, thoughtless, careless—that will now begin to pray—“O visit me with Your salvation.”

Further on in the Psalm, the writer sings of a *second salvation when the people were delivered at the Red Sea*. Its waves rolled before them and they could not tell how they were to escape from Pharaoh who was close behind with all the chariots and horsemen of Egypt pursuing them. Ah, poor timid Israelites! They could almost hear the whips of their taskmasters and they probably feared that something worse would come upon them and that they would feel their oppressors' swords and that their blood would soon be shed! They were in a state of great anxiety and trouble, yet we read just now, “Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake. He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up—and He saved them from the hand of him that hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.”

Perhaps I am addressing some who are so fully conscious of their sin that they are driven almost to despair by it. Instead of believing that this awakened conscience of theirs is an evidence of God's Grace, they are afraid that it is a sign of condemnation. The weight of their sin crushes them—they hardly dare hope that there may be a way of escape for them, but, poor Soul, if this is your sad state, I trust that you will be able to pray, “O visit me with Your salvation.’ O God, the Red Sea rolls in front of me, the rocks frown upon me on either hand and my sins pursue me, and seek to slay me. ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’ Come, and dry up this Red Sea of iniquity! Come and destroy these adversaries of mine and let me sing with the Psalmist, ‘And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.’ ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’”

You know how it was with Israel—I always delight to dwell upon it—how the Lord brought again the waters of the Red Sea and Pharaoh and all his hosts were swallowed up. And then Miriam took her timbrel and all the women went forth after her and sang unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, and thrown the horses and their riders into the sea! And this was one of the most jubilant notes of their song, “The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left.” So it was, Beloved, when you and I, having cried to God for mercy, at last found it through Jesus Christ our Savior! Then we saw our sins cast into the depths of the sea and we were ready to dance for joy as we said, “The depths have covered them! There is not one of them left.” Our experience ought to be an encouragement to others. Come, despairing Soul, you that are like a

mouse in a hole and hardly dare to pop your head out to look! Never mind about coming out! Stay where you are and there breathe the prayer, "O visit me with Your salvation," and you shall yet come out into light and liberty, and you shall joy and rejoice in God!

It may be that you and I, dear Friends, have gone further on than this. We have been saved from our natural ruin and saved from the power of despair worked in us by conviction—and *now we are fighting with our uprising corruptions*. Our inbred sin is like the deep that lies under and, perhaps, lately, the fountains of the great deep have been broken up within us. We cannot sin without being grieved and troubled by it. It is a vexation even to hear the report of it. Oh, that we could live without sinning at all! Well, now, Beloved, if you are struggling against it, let this be your prayer to the Most High, "O visit me with Your salvation." The Lord is able at once to come into your heart and to put an end to your temptation whatever it may be. Is it unbelief? He can strengthen your faith. Is it covetousness? He can deliver you from that abomination and give you a contented spirit. Is it anger? Oh, how sweetly can He come and fill you with love! Whatever may be the evil against which you are fighting, He can help you overthrow it and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you! I earnestly commend this prayer to every struggling Believer, to everyone who feels the two natures within him striving for the mastery and who is, sometimes, in doubt whether the house of David or the house of Saul will get the victory! Doubt not, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord is with the true seed. He that quickened you will keep the new life in you—it cannot die, for it is born of God and you shall yet overcome sin and death and Hell! Only forget not to breathe the cry from your very soul, "O visit me with Your salvation," and you shall prove what a salvation it is to be saved from the power of sin.

Our text may also be used in another sense, for salvation means *deliverance from grievous affliction*, just as, in this Psalm, when the children of Israel were brought into great distress by their enemies, God came and saved them from their foes. So, at this time, dear Friend, you may be in great distress. It may be temporal distress, or mental distress, or spiritual distress. Whether you are suffering in body, or in mind, or in heart, God knows how to deliver you. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all." "He that is our God is the God of salvation and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." If you should ever get so low in spirit that you can only compare yourself with Jonah when the whale went down to the very bottom of the sea and he felt that the earth with her bars was about him forever and he was at the very foundations of the everlasting hills—yet even then the God who brought up Jonah from the depths can bring you up! See how the wheel turns—that spoke which was lowest just now has become the highest! Mark how the stars which shall, tonight, descend, and shall not be seen all day long, shall yet, when night comes round again, climb once more to their zenith and occupy their appointed places! You are not doomed to be down forever! You shall yet mount up again and you may say to the adversary, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall

arise.” “The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea.”

To every tried and troubled one, then, I suggest the prayer of our text, “O visit me with Your salvation,” for it points out the way of deliverance for them, whatever their trouble may be, and it specially concerns the all-important matter of salvation!

II. Now let us think for a few minutes upon the second thing which is very manifest in the text, and that is, VISITATION—“O visit me with Your salvation.”

You have read in the newspapers of men having “died in the visitation of God.” Sometimes, that has been the verdict of the jury at the close of an inquest. But here is a man who *lived* by the visitation of God! And, truly, it is a most blessed thing to know that the very best and truest way of living is to live by being visited by God—visited by His salvation! I admire the wording of this prayer. It does not say, “O save me.” That would be a very proper petition. It does not say, “O send me salvation.” That, under some aspects, would be proper enough. But the petition is, “Lord, come Yourself and bring the salvation that I need, by Yourself coming to me. ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’” What a blessed prayer this is! “O visit me! Lord, visit me!” It takes some faith to pray it, for humility prompts us to say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof.” Yet faith, and a childlike spirit teach us to pray, “Lord, visit me. I hear that You visit Your people. Lord, visit me. I have heard one of them say that you came under his roof and stayed with him all through the night and make him unspeakably glad. ‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me’—yes, even me—‘with Your salvation.’ Though the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You, for You are so great, yet I know that You dwell in every humble and contrite heart. Lord, come and visit me, and dwell within me.” I think this is indeed a blessed prayer.

Mark the *condescension* which the Psalmist feels that the Lord will thus manifest. “‘O visit me with Your salvation.’ Lord, I cannot be saved unless You will visit me. Visit me not as a saved one, but, ‘visit me with Your salvation.’ I am lost until You come to me. O come, Lord, and visit me as a Savior! Come and visit me as a Physician, for I am sick! Pay me a visit of mercy, a visit of Grace and tenderness. O You great and glorious Lord, I beseech You, come and visit me! By the remembrance of Bethlehem’s manger, the horned oxen, the straw and the stable, so ill fitted for Your reception, come and visit me! And, as the angels sang when You thus descended to the lowliest of lowliness, so shall my heart sing yet more sweetly if You will visit me—even me! It will be great condescension on Your part, but, ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’”

And it will be *compassion, too*. “‘O visit me.’ I am a prisoner, yet come, Lord, and visit me. I am lame and very weak. Lord, I have not a leg to carry me to Your House, so, come to my house, Lord. ‘O visit me!’ My heart is heavy and sorely burdened. My very wishes lag, my prayers limp, my desires halt. O come and visit me! If I cannot come to You, yet come You to me, my God.” It seems to me that this is a sweet, sweet prayer for one who is under a sense of inability and whose strength is utterly gone.

“O visit me with Your salvation.” In it I see condescension and compassion.

But there is more in it even than that, there is also communion—“O visit me with Your salvation.” This means more than a complimentary call such as ladies and gentlemen make when they spend half a day in going around to their friends distributing little bits of cardboard. I believe it is a wonderful token of friendship to do that, but you and I do not move in that artificial region. When we visit anyone, we mean it, and we do not make calls of mere ceremony or custom, but a visit from a beloved friend—oh, what a joy it is! Occasionally I have the opportunity of meeting dear friends who have been asking me to pay them a visit and I can see, by the very way that they receive me, that they are almost as happy as the black men were when Mungo Park went to them! They said that they began to date their existence from the day when the white man came that way. Most of you must have some friends who love you so much that when they see you at their house, they do not need to know when you are going, but, if they could, they would make you always stay there. Dr. Watts went to see Sir Thomas Abney, at Abney Park, to spend a week—but that week lasted through all the rest of his life, for he never went away from there—and he lies buried in Abney Park. And Sir Thomas is buried there, also, so that even in death, the friends are not separated from one another! They never meant to part after they once came together. That is the kind of visit we need from the Lord, so let us breathe this prayer now, “O Lord, come and visit me, but do not merely pay me a brief visit, but come to stay with me.”

“That is a bold request,” says one, “to ask God to come and abide with us.” Listen, listen, listen! There was a certain Church—you know the name of it—Laodicea, of which Christ said that it made Him sick. But what did He say next? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” That passage is not a call from Christ to sinners, as it is often used—it may, perhaps, be so used by way of illustration. But that is not its first meaning. It is this. Here are some people of God who have fallen so low in Grace that they are neither cold nor hot and Christ prescribes this remedy for their lukewarmness—that He should come and sup with them—that He should come and pay them a visit. Now, if our blessed Lord was willing to visit the Laodiceans who were neither cold nor hot, I am sure that He will come to us who are cold! And He will come to us who are hot—He would rather come to such than to the lukewarm! Let us, then, each one, breathe the prayer, “Come, Lord, and tarry not. Come now and visit me with Your salvation.” And when He does come, Brothers and Sisters, let us do as Sir Thomas Abney did with Dr. Watts—let us get Him to protract His visit! He will act as though He would go further, as He did when at Emmaus, but our wisdom will be to say, as the two disciples did, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And when He says, “No, I must go,” we must not take His, “No,” for an answer, but we must do as they did—“They constrained Him.” He will go, if you let Him, but you must not let Him! Perhaps He will say, “Let Me go, for the day breaks,” but you

must follow Jacob's example and say, "I will not let You go," and you need not add, "except You bless me," but you may say, "I will not let you go at all! I mean to hold to You on and on and on, by day and night—You shall not leave me." You will be blessed, indeed, if you can pray the prayer of our text in this sense, "O visit me with Your salvation."

III. Now, with great brevity, I turn to a third thing in my text and that is, PERSONALITY—"O visit me with Your salvation." We ought to pray for one another. We must pray for the peace and prosperity of the whole Church of Christ, but there are times when it will be well that all our desire should run in this direction and that we should cry to the Lord, "O visit me with Your salvation."

This petition of the Psalmist shows *great necessity*. It is as if he had said, "Lord, I need You more than any others do, therefore, visit me. Unless you come to me, I shall be a wretch undone forever. 'O visit me with Your salvation.'" It is always unwise to make your necessity appear little. It is so great that you never can exaggerate it—take care that you do not set it in a diminished form! When you come before God, do not try to make yourself out to be a little sinner. You are not likely to make yourself appear more guilty than you are, but your highest wisdom is to state your case to the Lord in all its blackness and its badness—and then to cry to Him, "O visit *me* with Your salvation."

It seems to me that this personality of the prayer also betokens *great unworthiness*, as if the Psalmist felt that the Lord might go and visit others and, perhaps, find some reason for so doing, but, as for him, he must cry, and cry mightily, too, or else he would be passed by, for he felt himself so unworthy. "O Lord, visit me; visit me to save me! If ever a soul needed saving, I am that one. If ever there was a sinner near despair, I am that sinner! Lord, come and visit me with Your salvation!"

The prayer also reveals *great concentration of desire*. "O visit me with Your salvation." It seems to me as if the Psalmist put all his thoughts, all his desires, yes, and his very *life* into that prayer. Let us imitate him in this earnestness and concentration. Where are you, my dear Friend? — for I feel certain that there is somebody present who can pray this prayer. "O visit *me*." If you are growing old, well may you say, "O visit *me*." If you are feeling ill—if the doctor tells you that there is something amiss with that heart of yours—you may well pray, "O visit *me*." Or do you feel yourself very weak and feeble in spirit? Well, then, do not hesitate to make your prayer, tonight, a personal one—there is nothing selfish in crying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If anybody says that it is selfish to pray for yourself so much, just ask him what he would do if he were drowning? Does anybody say that it is selfish for him to strike out and try to swim, or selfish to seize the lifebuoy that is thrown to him? If you were in a fire and likely to be burned to death, would anybody call you selfish because you looked for the fire escape and climbed on it as soon as it touched your window?

And when your very soul is in danger, it is a hallowed selfishness to seek, first, its salvation! If your own soul is lost, what can you do for the salvation of other people? If you perish, what benefit can you be to your fellow men? Truly, this is a holy charity which ought to begin at home

and I do not believe that any man really cares for the souls of others who does not first and foremost care about his own soul! If you do not pray, "O visit me with Your salvation," I am sure that you do not pray, "O visit my wife with Your salvation. O visit my children with Your salvation." Therefore, keep to this personal prayer till it is answered! And when it is, then pray for all others as earnestly as you have prayed for yourself!

IV. And now to finish. Notice one thing more in this text and that is, A SPECIALTY—"O visit me with Your salvation"—the kind of salvation he has been describing in this Psalm—the salvation worked by Omnipotent Grace, the salvation of enduring love!

Dear Friends, I have heard of a good many so-called salvations in my time. I heard, some time ago, of a woman who said that she had been saved already six times and it had not done her much good. She had been to different revival meetings and joined various societies that make a great row—and call it salvation—and in that way she had been "saved" six times and she did not know that she was any better. No, and you may be "saved" in such a fashion as that six thousand times and be none the better, for that is not God's salvation!

The Psalmist prayed, "O visit me with Your salvation," and by that he meant *real salvation*, a radical change, a thorough work of Grace. God's salvation includes a perfect cleansing in the precious blood of Jesus, a supernatural work in renewing the heart, a resurrection work in raising the dead and giving a new life. So, when you pray, "O visit me with Your salvation," you ask the Lord to give you real salvation, not a sham.

This salvation is also *competent salvation*. It saves the man from the love of sin. It not merely saves him from getting drunk, from lying, from thieving and from uncleanness, but it saves him within as well as without. It is a thorough renewal—a work of Grace that takes effect upon every part of his nature. God grant that you and I may never be content with a salvation which is not the work of Divine Grace! You remember that it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that he was met, somewhere about the New Cut, by a drunk who reeled up to him and said, "Well, Mr. Hill, I am glad to see you, Sir. I am one of your converts." "Yes," replied the good minister, "you may be one of my converts. If you had been one of the Lord's converts, you would not be drunk." There are too many of *our* converts about—we may find them everywhere except in Heaven! But woe unto the man who is content with being the convert of his fellow man! What we need is a visitation from God, Himself, and therefore, we pray with the Psalmist, "O visit me with Your salvation."

Lastly, and chiefly, God's salvation is *eternal salvation*. We hear, in various quarters, from time to time, about a salvation that is only temporary. I have been told, again and again, of men who are said to have been children of God one day, and children of the devil the next. Now, I believe that a temporary salvation is a trumpety salvation and that it is neither worth preaching nor receiving. But God's salvation is both worth preaching and receiving because it is everlasting salvation. A good old divine was once asked whether he believed in the final perseverance of the saints. "Well," said he, "I do not know much about that matter, but I firmly believe in the final perseverance of God, that where He has begun

a good work He will carry it on until it is complete.” To my mind, that Truth of God includes the final perseverance of the saints—they persevere in the way of salvation because God keeps them in it. Does the Holy Spirit renew the heart of a man and then is His work, after all, undone, so that the man goes back to his unregenerate state? What is to become of him then?

“Oh!” says someone, “he may be born again.” What? A man to be born again, and again, and again? Is there anything in the Bible to warrant such teaching as that? I believe not! If the Holy Spirit’s work in renewing the heart could ever be undone, then this text would come in, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance”—for God’s greatest work has been already worked upon them and if it could fail, nothing more could be done for them. “But, Beloved,” says the Apostle, after making this solemn declaration, “we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” So, dear Friends, if the Lord saves you, you are saved forever! If He has worked within you a work of Grace, it will assuredly end in Glory—

***“All necessary Grace will God bestow,
And crown that Grace with Glory, too!
He gives us all things and withholds
No real good from upright souls.”***

“Lord, visit me with Your salvation.” Others may have their own salvation of any sort or kind that they please, but do visit me with *Your* salvation! Take my case in Your hands, then the work will be done, well done, and done forever.” Pray thus, dear Friend, for yourself. “O visit *me* with *Your* salvation,” and He will do so. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” God lead you all to accept His great salvation even now, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 106.

This Psalm relates the story of God’s mercy to Israel, of the people’s provocation of Jehovah, and of His great patience with them, It commences with an exhortation to praise the Lord.

Verse 1. *Praise you Jehovah.* Or, “Hallelujah.” I cannot help remarking, here, that this is one of the most sacred words in the whole Bible and it ought always to be pronounced with the utmost reverence. I sometimes feel my blood chill when I hear of “hallelujah lasses” and, “hallelujah bonnets.” If those who use such expressions rightly understood the meaning of the word, they would not thus take the name of the Lord in vain!

1. *O give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* As long as you and I are sinners, this will be one of the sweetest notes in our song of thanksgiving unto Jehovah—“His mercy endures forever.”

2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise?* Neither the angels nor the perfect spirits who day without night circle His throne rejoicing can show forth all Jehovah's praise.

3. *Blessed are they that keep justice, and he that does righteousness at all times.* There is great comfort in walking near to God. The way of peace, the way of blessing is the way of righteousness, but, alas, my Brothers and Sisters, we do not always keep in that way as we should. The Psalmist himself felt that he did not, therefore he prayed—

4. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation.* He felt that he needed God's Grace in all its saving power.

5. *That I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.* He longs to get in among the people of God. He wants to share the favor which God bestows upon them—the Free Grace which He manifests to them. He wants to be included in their election, to rejoice in their gladness and to glory in their inheritance.

6, 7. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.* Very great wonders were worked there when God's time came to set His people free from their cruel bondage. There was a marvelous display of power on God's part, yet the Psalmist had to say, "Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt."

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* They had hardly started out of Egypt before they provoked Jehovah. They had only just caught sight of the rolling waters of the Red Sea when they began to murmur against God and against His servant, Moses.

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake.* Oh, is not that a grand word? Well might Jehovah say, "Not for Your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." He saved them for His own sake.

8. *That He might make His mighty power to be known.* Free Grace finds in itself, not in us, its own motive, and discovers its own reason for acting on our behalf. God's reason for mercy is found in His mercy.

9-13. *He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel.* Ah, me! Even the divided sea is soon forgotten! Enemies walled up by water speedily pass from remembrance. "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel."

14, 15. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* I do not know of anything more dreadful than that—to be fattened outside and to be starved within—to have everything that heart could wish for and yet not to have the best thing that the heart ought to wish

for! May God save us from that appearance of prosperity which is only a veiled desolation!

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.* These two men had done everything for the children of Israel. They had been the instruments in the hand of God of innumerable blessings to them, yet they envied Moses and Aaron.

17, 18. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.* Jehovah's mercy did not melt the people's hard hearts, so perhaps the fear of His judgment would. God tried both methods with them, as He has done with us, for sometimes He has been very gracious to us and at other times He has chastened us very sorely. He has tried the kiss and He has tried the blow. Yet what happened in the case of Israel?

19-22. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham and terrible things by the Red Sea.* What was to become of such a people, provoking Him again and again?

23. *Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.* How often has our blessed Mediator, who is far greater than Moses, stood before the Lord in the breach! How often has the great Husbandman said, concerning the fruitless tree, "Cut it down; why cumberst it the ground?" And then that Divine Dresser of the vineyard has pleaded, "Let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it." And here we are, still spared and still blessed through the intercession of God's chosen Mediator.

24. *Yes, they despised the pleasant land.* They said that the Canaan towards which they were traveling was not worth the trouble of getting to it—"They despised the pleasant land."

24-28. *They believed not His Word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.* They began to study necromancy and spiritualism and to join in the abominations of the worship of Baal.

29. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them.* Now notice how something always happened to spare them from the destruction which they deserved.

30, 31. *Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore.* Yet they still went on sinning against the Most High.

32, 33. *They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.* Does it not seem remarkable that Moses, the true servant of God, was not spared from punishment when it was

but a word that He spoke unadvisedly, yet still the mercy of God was continued to that provoking generation? Ah, that is always the way with our jealous God—those whom He loves best will be sure to feel His chastising rod, whatever happens to others. At last the Israelites reached Canaan—they entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey! Did that change their character? No, not in the least.

34-38. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.* Just think how low they had sunk! God's own people had come down to this—that they actually offered their own children in sacrifice to Moloch!

39-43. *Thus were they defiled with their own works and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them.* You would not have expected to find such a sentence as that, here, yet there it stands! Notwithstanding all that these people did, “many times did He deliver them.”

43-45. *But they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry: and He remembered His Covenant with them and repented according to the multitude of His mercies.* Was there ever so strange a story as this—a story of provocation continued almost beyond belief, and yet of mercy which would not be overcome—of persevering love that would not turn aside?

46-48. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise you the LORD.* So the Psalm ends upon its keynote—“Hallelujah”—“Praise You Jehovah.”

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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FINE PLEADING

NO. 3539

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1916.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1871.

*“Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You have toward
Your people; O visit me with Your salvation.”*
Psalm 106:4.

How gracious a thing it is on God's part to make prayers for us! He puts them into our mouths. No one need say, "I cannot pray because I am unable to compose a sentence." Here is a prayer already composed which would be suitable for the lips of anyone here present—high or low, rich or poor, saint or sinner! And it is a yet greater mercy that the God who thus gives us the form of prayer waits to give us the spirit of prayer, "for the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities." Whereas we know not what we should pray for, as we ought, He "makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." When He gives you the prayer, and gives you the power to pray it, what a sweet blessing! But that is not all, for when the prayer is thus presented on earth aright, there waits One above, quick of ear and ready of plea, who takes the supplication, presents it before His Father's Throne, perfected by His wisdom and perfumed by His merit—and then the Father smiles and the prayer is answered with abundant blessings!

My prayer tonight is that many here present may take the words of our text and have them laid upon their souls like burning coals—and that then the smoking incense of holy prayer may go up to Heaven—and the Lord may smell in it, through Jesus Christ, a sweet savor of rest!

We shall regard our text tonight in three lights—first, *as a suitable prayer for every Christian*. Secondly, *as a very fitting petition for distressed souls*—I mean Christians who are desponding and have lost their evidences. And, thirdly, *as a very suitable cry for an awakened, seeking sinner*. My dear Brothers and Sisters in the faith, will you join me, then, under the first head, while we consider—

I. HOW SUITABLE THIS PRAYER IS FOR EACH OF US WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.

You will observe that *he who prays here asks for no exceptional favor*. He says, "Remember me with the favor that You have toward Your people." It is not an ambitious prayer that asks to be distinguished

beyond the rest of the beloved family. It is not a discontented prayer that seeks to have some special blessing which shall be denied to the rest of the Christian brotherhood. It is a prayer for benedictions common to all the saints! “Remember me with the favor which You have toward Your people.” And this is a lesson for us in our prayers. For instance, nature suggests to me that I should pray to be saved of all bodily pain—but that is not a favor which God bears towards His people. Many of His people here endure even excruciating pain—some in the pangs of martyrdom—and others through His laying His hand upon them in natural sickness. He never intended to keep His people from pain. He had a Son without sin, but He never had a Son without suffering! The Perfect One, the First-Born, must have hands and feet pierced and every nerve must become the means of fresh agony to Him. I dare not, therefore, pray, “Lord, keep me from all physical pain.” Why should I ask to have what He has not given to the rest of His people? No, if there is a cup on the table that tastes of the bitter, and He means it for the sons, let me have my share—and His love with it! So, too, I have no right to ask God to preserve me in riches, or in a comfortable position, or to keep me from poverty. I may ask this, but it must always be with complete submission to the Divine Will, for who am I that I should not be poor? Better ones by far than I have been poor—much poorer than I am likely to be. Why am I to expect to go to Heaven by a smooth, grassy road, while others have had to tread the flints that cut their feet?—

***“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?”***

To desire to escape from every form of trial is natural to us, but it is not a dictate of Grace that we should turn it into prayer. No, be content with the common lot of God’s people. “Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord?” Let this content you, “Father, whether healthy or sick, whether rich or poor, whether honored or despised, extend to me the favor which You have toward Your people—and my greatest desires can ask no more.”

But please observe, next, that while this prayer asks for nothing more than the common blessing, it also is content with nothing less—

***“Extend to me that favor, Lord,
You to Your people do afford.”***

It is the same favor that is extended to them that is asked for, for, Brothers and Sisters, anything short of this will not answer our turn. I would desire, and I know you do, my Brethren, to have that favor from God which is eternal—that favor which has no beginning—that everlasting favor which was in the Divine Mind before the earth was. You want to also have *immutable favor*, the favor that never changes. Though we change, yet it abides the same. What would you do if the favor of God were chan-

geable? Of what use would His love be, if that love could come and go—could sometimes give, and then again could take away? You need immutable favor! And I know you need boundless favor, for your needs are unlimited. You need the love of Christ that passes knowledge—you need it in all its heights and all its depths—you need the very heart of God! You need His heart of compassion. You need a Savior to be one with you, and yourself to be one with Him. You would not like to be put off with a crown. You would not like to be put off with an empire, or with all that earth calls good and great! You need no more, but you need no less than such favor as the Lord extends towards those whom He loves, who are the objects of His sacred choice. No more. No less.

You must note, next, in the prayer what is peculiarly to be observed—that he who is praying in this case asks *for blessings on the same footing as the rest of the saints*. You will observe that it is on the footing of Grace he asks that he may have the favor which God bears towards His people. “*Favor.*” If there is one saved who has been a great offender against God’s Law—immoral, debauched, and depraved—it must be by favor. And, dear Christian Friend, whoever you may be, there is no other way in which you can be saved and you know it! When the Lord extends the blessings of the Covenant to gross sinners, it is clear that they are given to them simply because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy! But to you, also, the favor comes in precisely the same way. I am sure you dare not ask God to deal with you on the ground of merit, for what are your merits, O you saints—what are your merits, but to merit the eternal flames? You ask the Lord that He would extend to you, not the dealings of His Justice, but that He would remember you with the compassions of His Grace! Is there any professed Christian here that refuses to stand on such terms as these, and come to God and ask for favor—for gratuitous mercy? Then, Friend, you are no child of God! Whatever else the children differ in, they never disagree in this—that “salvation is of the Lord,” and is of Grace, and of Grace alone! Your spot is not “the spot of His children,” unless you look at even the bread you eat and the raiment you wear as the gift of Divine Charity and unless you place all your hope for pardon of sin and for acceptance at the last, entirely upon the free, undeserved, spontaneous favor of the Lord your God!

Well then, you see what we ask for is what He gives to all His people—no more, no less! And we ask for that, not as our due, but as a favor—a favor for which we will bless Him in life and bless Him in death, if He will but remember to grant it to us! Still looking at our text as the Christian’s prayer, I would observe that he wishes, according to the text, that the same results may follow as in the case of all God’s people, for he adds, “Visit me with Your salvation.” Beloved, God’s favor ends in salvation! And that word, “salvation,” is a very extensive term. If you read the Psalm you will see that the Psalmist evidently uses it, first, in the sense of *deli-*

verance. The children of Israel came to the Red Sea and they were afraid that there they would be destroyed. But God led them through the deeps as through the wilderness! Well then, when I pray this prayer, “O Lord, remember me with the favor that You bear Your people,” I mean this—“When I come into any trouble, I ask You to help me to go through it. As You made a way through the Red Sea for Your people of old, make a way for me.” Oh, how often does God do this for us! When it seems as if the obstacles were almost insurmountable—when our wit seems to have failed us and we can do no more—we have been ready to say, “Alas, Master, what shall we do?” Then our extremity has been the Divine Opportunity and through the depths of the sea He has led His rejoicing people! Then the word, *salvation*, is meant in the Psalm evidently to include the forgiveness of sins, for you remember, as we read the Psalm, how the sins of Israel were mentioned over and over again. But it is added, “Nevertheless, when they cried unto Him, He heard their prayers.” So if I use this prayer, I am to mean just this, “Lord, You are accustomed to forgive Your people. Forgive me! You blot out their sins like a cloud. Blot out mine! You, moreover, help Your children to overcome their sins. Help me! Sanctify me, spirit, soul and body! You preserve Your people in temptation and bring them out of it. Gracious Shepherd, keep me as one of Your flock! You save your children in the hour of great peril, and as their day, so is their strength. Oh, Infinite Preserver of Your beloved, cover me with Your feathers and under Your wings permit me to trust You! Let Your Truth be my shield and buckler!” I think it is a very, very sweet prayer. “Visit me with Your salvation when I am on my bed, tossing to and fro, and raise me up if it is Your will. Visit me when I am slandered, and my name is cast out as evil, and cheer Your servant’s heart. Visit me when I am in the deep waters and the depths overflow me—when I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. Come and prove Your saving might. Visit me when I come to die. When the chill floods of the last river are about me, visit me with Your salvation! Then deal with me as You have dealt with Your saints whenever they have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. May Your rod and Your staff comfort me. Visit me with Your salvation.” I suggest, Christian Brothers and Sisters, that this prayer will do for you living, and will do for you dying! It is a suitable prayer for the morning and for the evening, for the young and for the old, for days of joy and days of distress. Blessed prayer, let it be often on your lips!

Only one more remark we will make upon it in reference to the Christian. You observe that all through *it is a personal prayer*. Our prayers must not always be personal. Our Savior has taught us not to say, “My Father,” but “*Our* Father which are in Heaven.” Yet, for all that, he who never prays for himself in the singular never prayed aright for others in the plural. If you have never said, “Lord, remember me,” you have not got

so far as the thief on the cross. You are not qualified at all to go as far as Abraham on the plains of Mamre, when he interceded for others. He that has the largest heart must see to it that his own personal salvation is secure. So, dear Friend, professing Christian, let me ask you to take the prayer in the first person singular, and say, "Lord, remember me with the favor which You bear to Your chosen." I pray it. If You call me, Lord, to minister to this great people, as my day is, so may my strength be. As You have dealt with others of Your servants in a like position, deal so with me. Elders and deacons, with your responsibility upon you, pray that the God of Stephen and the God of Philip will be with you and extend to you the favor which He gave to Elders and deacons of old! Mothers, fathers, ask for the Grace that He gives to Christian parents. Children, servants, ask for the Grace that He has been known to give to those in your position. You who are rich, pray often that you may not miss the Divine Favor, for these things are often dangerous. You that are poor, pray that you may have this to sweeten all—to make your little to be enough! You that are in health, pray this lest the vigor of your body be the weakness of your soul. And you upon whose cheek there is the hectic flush of consumption—you that are weak and near departure—you have already got your death-song ready. Here it is—"Lord, remember me! Remember me, O Lord, with the favor which You have given Your people! O visit me with Your salvation!" I leave that prayer with every Christian heart, here, and ask that it may be engraved there by the Holy Spirit. This prayer is also—

II. A FITTING PRAYER FOR DEPRESSED, DESPONDING SOULS.

They are God's people and we give to them, now, this prayer, and we trust that as they pray it they may have "the oil of joy given them for mourning, and the garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness." I ask them to look very briefly, but with all their eyes, at this prayer. You will note that here is a case in which *a good man may seem to be forgotten*. It is a good man that wrote this Psalm—an Inspired man, and yet he says, "Remember me, O Lord." Did he think himself forgotten? He feared he was. There have been others of God's saints who have endured this fear. Yes, a whole Church has sometimes labored under it. Zion said, "My God has forsaken me. My God has forgotten me." Thus you may be, as you think, forgotten—and yet you may be very dear to God—as dear as you ever were!

Notice, next, that when you, child of God, come into this condition, *the very best prayer you can pray is a sinner's prayer*. Why do I call this a sinner's prayer? Why, because it so reminds me of the dying thief. "Lord, remember me," was such a suitable prayer for him. Oh, child of God, if you doubt your own salvation, do not dispute about it, but go as a sinner! Use a sinner's prayer! Begin where the dying thief began with, "Lord, remember me." I would recommend to every Christian who is in the dark

and has lost his evidences, to go at once by the old track that sinners have trodden so long. "I will go to Jesus, though my sin does, like a mountain, rise. I know His courts. I will enter in." Go to Him! Go even now!

And you will observe, too, that for a desponding soul *it is good to remember that everything it can obtain in the future by God must be by favor*. "Remember me, O Lord, *with the favor*." I dwelt on this when speaking to the child of God in the light, but it is even more important that we should dwell on this when speaking to the child of God in the dark, for the danger is when you are desponding to begin to become legal. Your own conscience and Satan together will be setting you upon legal methods of getting comfort. They are all fruitless! Go on the track of Grace. Free Grace is what you need, and nothing else will suit you. Cry, "Lord, remember me with Your favor! Give me what You could not give me as a mere matter of justice! Deal with me as you could not deal with me if You did see me in myself as guilty before You! Deal favorably with Your servant. Have a favor towards me, for this alone can restore me."

And then, next, it is good for a person who is in distress to remember that *God's favor towards His own people does not change*, for evidently this good man, though he asked God to remember him, had not any doubt whatever that God had a favor towards His own people! Nothing like being sound in Doctrine to help you towards comfort. If a man shall doubt the Perseverance of the Saints, and believe that God will cast away His people, I really do not see what he has to do when he is brought into distress of mind. But if he still holds to this, "Truly the Lord is good to Israel—to such as are of a clean heart. As for me, He may have forgotten me. I fear I am not one of His, but I know He would not forget His own"—why, then the fact of the Immutability of God towards His people becomes, as it were, as an argument, and we come before the Lord with better heart and greater hope, and say, "Lord, since You never change towards them, introduce me into their number and let Your eternal love pour forth itself on my poor, broken, disconsolate spirit. Remember me—poor, fallen, backsliding me—with the favor, the free Grace which You have towards Your people." It is well to hold to the Truth of God, for it may serve us like an anchor in the day of storm!

Once again. Let me speak to the depressed, and remind them that the prayer is instructive, for it shows that *all that is needed for a forsaken, forgotten spirit is that God should visit it again*. "Remember me, O Lord. Anybody else's remembering can do me no good, but if You only give one thought toward Your servant, it is all done! Lord, I have been visited by the pastor, and he tried to cheer me. I have had a visit in the preaching of the Gospel in the morning and the evening of Your Day. I went to Your Table and I did not get encouragement even there. But, Lord, You visit me!" A visit from Christ is the cure for all spiritual diseases! I have fre-

quently reminded you of that in the address to the Church at Laodicea. The Church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot, and Christ said that He would spew it out of His mouth—but do you know how He speaks of it? As if He would cure it! “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me.” That is not an address to sinners. It is sometimes used so, but it is torn out of its context. It is evidently an address to a Church of God, or a child of God who has lost the Presence and the Light of God’s Countenance! All you need is a visit from Christ. All you need is that once again your communion should be restored—and I do bless the Lord that He can do that in a moment! He can make your soul, “before it is aware, like the chariots of Amminadib.” You may have come here tonight about as dead in soul as you could be, but the flashes of Eternal Life can reach you and kindle a soul within—within the ribs of your old dead nature—once again! You may have felt as if it were all over and the last spark of Grace had gone out. But when the Lord visits His people, He makes the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice and the desert to blossom as the rose! I pray it may be such a happy hour to you that the prayer may be fulfilled, “Visit me with Your salvation.” I have great sympathy with those who are cast down. May God, the Comfort of those who are cast down, comfort you! May He bring you out who are bound with chains! And you solitary ones, may He set you in families! And I do not know a wiser method for you to pursue than incessantly to cry unto Him and let this be the prayer, “Remember me—me—with the favor which You have toward Your people. O visit me with Your salvation.” And now our last point. This is—

III. A VERY PROPER PRAYER FOR THE AWAKENED, BUT UNFORGIVEN SINNER.

There are some in this house of that character. I know there are unforgiven sinners here. I only hope that some of them are awakened to know the danger of their state. If they are, may God help them to pray this prayer, because, first, *it is a humble prayer*. “Lord, remember me”—as much as to say, “Lord, give one thought to me. I am a poor miserable sinner. I am not worth much thought, but, Lord, do at least remember me. Pass me not, O Healer of sin-sick souls! Pass me not. Hear my cry! Answer my anguish! Regard the desires of my soul. Remember me!” It is *an earnest prayer, too*. No doubt it was earnest as this Inspired man prayed it. It breathes life as you read it. Oh, dear Heart, if you need a Savior, be in earnest for Him! If you can take “no,” for an answer, you shall have “no,” for an answer, but if it comes to this—“Give me Christ, or else I die!—I must have mercy!”—you shall have it! When you will have it, you shall have it. When God stirs you up to agonize for a blessing, the blessing shall not delay. Note that this prayer, which I can recommend to you, is not only humble and earnest, but *it is a prayer directed in the right*

way. It is to God alone. “Remember me, O Lord. Visit me, O lord, with Your salvation.” All our help lies yonder. There is none here. There is none in any man. No priest can help you—no friend nor minister. When you apply to us we might say what the King of Israel said to the woman in Samaria, when it was shut up with siege, “If the Lord does not help you, from where shall I help you? Out of the winepress, or from the barn floor?” There is nothing we can do! “Vain is the help of man!” Turn your eyes to God alone—to the Cross where Christ suffered. Look there, and there, only, and be this your prayer, “Lord, remember me!” When the thief was dying, he did not say, “John, pray for me.” John was there. He did not look on the mother of Christ and say, “Holy Virgin, pray for me.” He might have said it. He did not turn to any of the Apostles, or the holy company that were around the Cross. He knew which way to look and, turning his dying eyes to Him who suffered on the center Cross, he had no prayer but this, “Lord, remember me.” ‘Tis all you need! Pray to God, and God alone, for from Him, alone, must mercy come to you!

Observe, again, O Sinner, if you would use this prayer, that *it is a personal prayer for you*. “Lord, remember me.” Oh, if we could get men to think of themselves, half the battle would be over! Who are you? Who are you? I would put this prayer into your mouth, whoever you may be, “Lord, I have been a Sabbath-Breaker this day. All the early part of it was spent as it ought not to be. But, Lord, remember me.” “O God, I have been a drunkard. I have broken all the laws of sobriety—have even blasphemed Your name. But Lord, remember me!” Is there one here into whose mouth I might put such words as these, “Lord, I stand trembling before You, for I am a woman that is a sinner. Lord, remember me! Call on me with the favor that You have toward Your people. As you did look on the woman of Samaria, so look on me”? Is there one here that has been a thief—almost ashamed to have the word mentioned, lest those who sit near should look at you? Well, this is peculiarly the thief’s prayer, “Lord, remember me.” How I wish I could come round now! I would not know who you were, but, oh, if I could, I would put this right into your heart, “Lord, remember me!” Up in the back gallery, where you can hardly hear, and cannot see, it is a good place to pray in—a capital place, there hidden away in the corner, to breathe the cry, “O God, remember me!”

Another thing about this prayer is that *it is a Gospel prayer*. It says, “Remember me with Your favor.” Everything a sinner gets must come by favor. It cannot come anyway else, for if you get what you deserve, you will get no love, no mercy, no Grace. Oh, Sinner, do come to God on the footing of favor and say, “For Your name’s sake, and for Your mercy’s sake, have pity upon poor undeserving me.” It is a Gospel prayer.

Once again. It seems to me to be *an argumentative prayer*. “Where is the argument?” you ask. Why, here, “You have had favor towards Your

people, Lord, have favor towards me.” It is always an argument for a man to do a kindness to you if he has done a kindness to others. We generally say, if we are very poor, “Such a one has been helping poor people like me.” There is a sort of implied argument that he will help you, being in the same case. Can you see it? There are the gates of Heaven. Can you bear the luster of those massive pearls? I want you not to look at them, however. Do you see *them*? Do you see them who are streaming through in long lines? They go through like a mighty river! There are hundreds, there are thousands, there are tens of thousands of them! Who are they? Who are they? They are, all of them, sinners—just such as I am, dear Friend—just such as you are! They are all clothed in white, now, but their robes were once all black. Ask them, and you will hear them say they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Ask all of them how it is they passed so happily through that pearly gate into the golden streets of the city, and they will all tell you, with united breath—

**“Ascribe salvation to the Lamb,
Redemption to His death.”**

Oh, I will even creep in that way! Ah, through the sinners’ Savior I hope to find a passage to the sinners’ Heaven, where sinners washed white dwell forever! There is an argument in the prayer. I hope you will have skill to use it till you prevail.

Once again, I commend this prayer to the awakened sinner because it is a prayer for a helpless soul, for it says, Oh, “*visit me with Your salvation.*” There are patients in London who would be very glad to be received into a hospital. They would be glad if they could be carried tomorrow morning into some one of those noble institutions, there to be cared for. But there are people worse off than they are, for there are some that could not be carried to a hospital, for they would die on the road! If they are ever to be healed at all, they are in such a bad case that the doctor must come to them. Oh, and that is a sinner’s case, too, and some feel it! And, therefore, the prayer, “Visit me with Your salvation.” “Here, Lord, I lie before You, so ruined by my sin that I can scarcely turn even an eye to the Cross, I am so blind. ‘Tis true Your Grace can save, but my hand is paralyzed, and I cannot grasp Your Grace! ‘Tis true Your love can penetrate my heart, but, ah, my heart feels so hard, how can Your love get into it? O Savior, You must do all for me, for mine is a desperate case!”

Such cases Christ loves. He came to seek and save—not the half-lost, but the lost! Commit your desperate case into His hands, who has saved desperate sinners thousands of times, and will save them yet! I do pray that before you rest tonight—before you go to your bed and dare close your eyes—this may be your heart’s prayer, “O Lord, remember me with the favor which You have toward Your people. Visit me with Your salvation.”

I can do no more than leave it in the hands of the Eternal Spirit. May He bless the Word, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116:10-19; SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7.**

PSALM 116:10-19.

The whole Psalm is one of joyous thanksgiving because of God's mercy to the singer. He had been in deep waters of trial and affliction, but had not been allowed to sink. He had known fierce assaults of sin that threatened tearful eyes and falling, stumbling stops, but God had upheld and strengthened him. As he recalls all this, he longs to make some return by way of praise and witness to others. Hence he now inquires.

Verses 10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men, they will be liars to you. They will fail you, either from lack of faithfulness, or else from lack of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you alleviation. Then you will have to come to God, and God alone—and you will never find Him fail you! The brooks of the earth are dry in summer and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs are in You, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God!

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits towards me?* Here we see gratitude is springing up in this man's breast. He lives upon God and he loves God, and now the question comes, "What shall I do for God?" Service is not first. We make a mistake when we begin with that. No, we begin as he did, with, "I love the Lord." Tell what the Lord has done for you and then go on to, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

13-15. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* We do well to notice those deaths, for God notices them. They are among His precious things. And if God thinks so much of dying saints, depend upon it, He will not forget the living ones! He will help us. He will help us to the end.

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds.* What a sweet thing to be the servant of God! Well does David say it twice over. Well does he delight to look upon himself as a slave that was born in his Master's house. "My mother," he says, "was one of Your servants. I am the son of Your handmaid." Oh, it is a blessed thing to be able to be God's every way—to feel,

in looking back, "I am not only His by redemption and by the new birth, but I seem as if I was bound to be His by a long ancestry of men and women whom His Sovereign Grace called to Himself." Grace does not run in the blood, but it is a great mercy when it runs side by side with it—and when the handmaiden of the Lord is mother of a man who is a child of God as well as her child! "You have loosed my bonds." You are never quite free—you have never got your bonds all loosed—till you can doubly feel the bonds of God. Read that—"I am Your servant. I am Your servant." That is two blows. "You have loosed my bonds." There is no freedom except in perfect subjection to the will of God! When every thought is brought into captivity to the mind of God, then every thought is free. You have heard much of the freedom of the will. There is no freedom of the will till Grace has bound the will in fetters of Divine Affection! Then is it free, and not till then. "I am Your servant—Your servant. You have loosed my bonds."

17. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.* He has been doing it. What a man has done he will do. Oh, it is a blessed thing that the children of God at last catch a habit of devotion. Just as the sinner continues in his sin, so may I venture to say, "Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, then he that has once heartily learned to praise his God may begin to forget to do so! Use is second nature, and the holy use to which God has put us, by His Grace, shall be our nature forever!

18, 19. *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.* I see that David liked company. He would have been happy here, though we meet under conditions not wholly pleasant. He would have been glad to be in the midst of a smiling company of grateful saints who could all say, "That is true, David. What you have written of yourself, you might have written of each one of us. And we can each one say, 'I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications.'"

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7.

We believe that this song sets forth the mutual love of Christ and His believing people. It is a book of deep mystery, not to be understood except by the initiated. But those who have learned a life of sacred fellowship with Jesus will bear witness that when they desire to express what they feel, they are compelled to borrow expressions from this matchless Song! Samuel Rutherford, in his famous letters, when he spoke of the love of Christ as shed abroad in his heart, perhaps was scarcely conscious that he continually reproduced the expressions of the Song, but so it is. They were naturally fresh enough from him, but they came from this wonderful Book. It stands in the middle of the Bible. It is the Holy of

Holies—the central point of all. Thus He speaks—the glorious “greater than Solomon.”

Verses 1, 2. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.* So does Christ’s Church spring up singular for her beauty—as much different from the world—as much superior thereto as the lily to the thorns. Now see how she responds and answers to him.

3. *As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.* To Him there is none like she—to her there is none like He. Jesus values His people. He paid His heart’s blood for their redemption and, “unto you that believe, He is precious.” No mention shall be made of coral or of rubies in comparison with Him. Nothing can equal Him. There are other trees in the woods, but He is the lone one bearing fruit—the citron tree, whose golden apples are delicious to our taste. Let us come up and pluck from His loaded branches this very night!

4. *He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.* You and I know what this means—at least, many here do. You know how delightful it is to feel that it is not now the banner of war, but the banner of love that waves above your head, for all is peace between you and your God! And now you are not brought to the prison or to the place of labor, but to the banqueting house. Act worthily of the position which you occupy! If you are in a banqueting house, take care to feast.

5. *Refresh me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.* Oh, that I knew Him better! Oh, that I loved Him more! Oh, that I were more like He! Oh, that I were with Him! “I am sick of love.”

6, 7. *His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love till He please.* If He is with me, may nothing disturb Him—nothing cause Him to withdraw Himself. Our Lord Jesus is very jealous, and when He manifests Himself to His people, a very little thing will drive Him away like the hinds and the roes that are very timid—so communion is a very delicate and dainty thing. It is soon broken. Oh, may God grant tonight that nothing may happen to the thoughts of any of you by which your fellowship with Christ should be destroyed!

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

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

THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER

NO. 1454B

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

***“Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.”
Psalm 106:4, 5.***

BELOVED, we always reckon it a very hopeful sign when a man begins to think of personal religion. Merely to come with the crowd and professedly to worship is but poor work. But when a man gets to feel the weight of his own sin and to confess it with his heart before God—when he wants a Savior for himself and begins to pray alone that he may find that Savior—when he is not content with being the child of pious parents, or with having been introduced into the Church in his childhood after the fashion of certain sects. When he pines for real godliness, personal religion, true conversion—it is a blessed sign, indeed! When a stag separates itself from the herd, we reckon that the dart has struck home—the wound is grievous and the creature seeks solitude—for a bleeding heart cannot bear company. Blessed are God’s woundings, for they lead to a heavenly healing!

We are still more glad when this desire for personal salvation leads a man to *prayer*—when he really begins to cry out before God on his own account—when he has done with the prayers he used to repeat by rote like a parrot and bursts out with the language of his heart! Though that language may be very broken, or consist only of sighs and tears and groans, it is a happy circumstance. “Behold, he prays” was enough for Ananias—he was sure that Paul must be converted! And when we find a man praying and praying earnestly for personal salvation, we feel that this is the finger of God and our heart is glad within us!

The passage before us is one of those earnest personal supplications which we love to hear from any lips. I will read it again and then proceed to use it in two or three ways. “Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.” Now, first, *this is a very suitable prayer for the humble Believer—it was a humble Believer who first uttered it. Next, it would make a very suitable petition for a penitent backslider. And, thirdly, it would be a very sweet Gospel prayer for a seeker.* May the Spirit of God bless the Word to each of these characters.

I. First, then, this is an admirable prayer for a poor humble Christian. I think I can hear him using the very words. Notice with interest the first fear felt by this poor trembling Christian. *He is afraid that he is such a little one that God will forget him* and so he begins with, “O remember me with the favor which You bear to Your people.” I know this man well. I

think very much of him, but he thinks very little of himself. I admire his humility, but he often complains that he feels pride in his heart. He is a true Believer, but he is a sad doubter. Poor man, he often hangs his head, for he has such a sense of his own unworthiness. I only wish he had an equal sense of Christ's fullness to balance his humility.

He is on the road to Heaven, but he is often afraid he is not and that makes him watch every step he takes. I almost wish some confident professors were altogether as doubtful as he is if they would be half as cautious. He is afraid to put one foot before another lest he should go wrong and yet he mourns his lack of watchfulness! He is always complaining of the hardness of his heart and yet he is tenderness itself! Dear Soul—you should hear him pray! His prayers are among the most earnest and blessed you ever listened to, but when he is finished, he is afraid he never ought to have opened his mouth. He is not fit to pray before others, he says. He thinks his prayers the poorest that ever reach the Throne of God. Indeed, he is afraid they do not get there but spend themselves as wasted breath.

He has his occasional gleams of sunlight and when he feels the love of God in his soul he is as merry as the cricket on the hearth. There is not a man out of Heaven more joyous than he when his hope revives. But, oh, he is so tender about sin that when he finds himself growing a little cold, or in any measure backsliding, he begins to flog himself—at which I am very glad, but he also begins somewhat to doubt his interest in his Lord, of which I am not glad, but pity him much and blame him, too, though with much sympathy for him. Now, I am not quite sure about this good man's name—it may be Little-Faith, or Feeble-Mind. Or is it Mr. Despondency I am thinking of? Or am I talking of Miss Much-Afraid? Or is it Mr. Ready-to-Halt? Well, it is someone of that numerous family.

This poor soul thinks, "Surely God will forget me!" No, no, dear Heart, He will not forget you! It is wonderful how God thinks of little things. Mungo Park picked up a little bit of moss in the desert and as he remarked how beautifully it was variegated, he said, "God is here: He is thinking of the moss and, therefore, He will think of me." Once upon a time a little plant grew right in the middle of the forest and the trees stretched for many a mile all around it and it said to itself, "The sunlight will never get at me. I have a little flower which I would gladly open, but it cannot come forth till the sunbeam cherishes me. Alas, it will never reach me! Look at the thick foliage! Look at the huge trunks of those towering oaks and mighty beeches—these will effectually hide the sun from my tiny form."

But in due season the sun looked through the trees like a king through the lattices and smiled on the little flower, for there never was a flower that God has not thought of and provided for! Say you not right well that "each blade of grass has its own drop of dew," and do you think that God will forget you, little as you are? He knows when swallows fly and when ants awake and gather their food and will He not think of *you*? Because you are little you must not suspect the love of your heavenly Father! Mother, which child is that which you never forget? If you ever went to bed at night and left one of the children out of doors, I know which one it

was *not*. It was not the babe which lies helpless in your bosom. You never forget that. And you helpless ones, you timid trembling ones, if the Lord must forget any, it would be the strong, but certainly not you! As you breathe the prayer, "Remember me with the favor that You bear to Your people," the Lord answers you, "I do earnestly remember you still."

Observe next, that this poor trembling heart seems to be in great trouble for fear the Lord should pass it by, but at the same time *feels that every good thing it can possibly receive must come from the Lord and must be brought to it by the Lord*. Note the words—"O visit me with Your salvation," as if he had said—"Lord, I cannot come to You! I am too lame to come, I am too weak to come, but visit me. O Lord, I am like the wounded man between Jericho and Jerusalem—I am half dead, and cannot stir. Come to *me*, Lord, for I cannot move to You. Visit me, for only Your visits can preserve my spirit. I am so wounded and sorely broken and undone, that if You do not visit me with Your salvation even as if I never had been saved before, I must be lost."

Now, poor Trembler, let me whisper a half word into your ear and may God the Holy Spirit make it a comfort to you. You need not say, if you have a broken heart, "Lord, visit me." Do you not know that He *dwells in you*, for is it not written, "To this man will I look and with this man will I dwell, even with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at My Word"? Are you not the very person? I wish you could rejoice at God's Word, but as you cannot, I am glad you tremble at it, for you are the man that God has promised to dwell with. "Trembles *at My Word*"—lay hold on that and believe that the Lord looks towards you and dwells with you!

What a plaintive prayer this is! Carefully consider that this poor, weak, humble, trembling one *longs to partake in the blessings which the Lord gives to His own people* and in the joy which He has in store for them. This is the way in which he speaks, "I hear many Christians around me say that they know and are persuaded—O that I had a little of their certainty! I hear them speak so confidently, with such full assurance and I see the light leap out of their eyes when they talk about their sweet Lord and Master and all His love to them—oh, how I wish I could talk so! Poor me, I am only able to say, 'Lord, I believe: help You my unbelief.' I see them sitting at a loaded table and they seem to feast most abundantly, but as for me, I am glad it is written that the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the Master's table, for if I get a crumb now and then, I feel so happy with it!

"But I wish I could sit and feast where others of God's children do. Oh that I could talk of rapt fellowship and close communion and joy and overflowing bliss! They tell me, some of them, that they sit down on the doorstep of Heaven and look within and see the golden streets and that, sometimes, they hear stray notes from the harps of the blessed ones in the far-off country. Oh, how I wish I had a sip of these joys! But, woe is me, I dwell in Mesech and sojourn in the tents of Kedar—the only music that I hear is the din of a sinful world—the viols of them that make merry in wantonness. I miss those precious things which the saints delight in."

Poor sorrowing Heart, let me say to you, and say in God's name—If you love your Lord, all things are yours. They are yours freely to enjoy even at this moment! The Lord denies you no Covenant blessing. Make bold to appropriate the sacred joys, for if you are the least child in the family, yet the heritage of God's children is the same for everyone! There is no choice thing that God will keep away from you. No, if there is one morsel more dainty than another it is reserved for such as you are! Be bold, then! If you are the Benjamin in the family, you shall have Benjamin's mess which is 10 times larger than any other! He will comfort you and bless you.

Only be of good cheer and when you are praying, "Favor me with the favor which You bear to Your people," let your faith hear Him say, "I am your portion." Rejoice in the Lord your God! Lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees. Is not my text a sweet prayer for you? Pray it in faith and be at peace.

II. We will now look another way and say that our TEXT IS A SUITABLE PETITION FOR A POOR PENITENT BACKSLIDER. I know there are backsliders here, though, alas, I am not sure that they are penitent. Only the Lord can read their hearts. But if they are penitent, I can hardly conceive a more suitable petition for them than that which is before us. It is clear that this poor, pleading backslider *feels that he has forgotten His God.* Have *you* done that? You have been a Church member and you have gone sadly astray. Have you quite forgotten His Commandments? You thought you loved Him. You used to pray, at one time. You had some enjoyment in reading and in hearing the Word.

But now you find your pleasure somewhere else. You have left your first love and gone after many lovers. But, oh, if the Lord is gracious to you, you are lamenting your forgetfulness and though you have not remembered Him, the prayer leaps to your lips, "Lord, remember me!" Blessed be His name, He does not so easily forget us as we forget Him. If you are a truly penitent backslider, your feelings of repentance prove that God remembers you! It is He that sets you weeping and makes you sorrow for your sin! If you had been altogether forgotten of God, you would not have any desire to return to Him! But those inward pangs, those secret throes, those desires to be restored to the Lord—these prove that He remembers you with the favor which He has towards His people.

And, then, I think your next trouble will be this—*you feel that you have lost your fellowship with Christ* and you are right in so feeling, for, "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" How could Christ have fellowship with you in the ways of folly? Do you think Christ would come and talk comfortably to you while you are frivolous, or while you are unclean? How could that be? All joyful communion between your soul and God is broken and well may you pray, "O visit me with Your salvation. Come back to me, Lord. Come and dwell in me again—

***'Why should my foolish passions roam?
Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?'***

Come back, my Lord, and visit me with Your salvation." Is not this a prayer made on purpose for you?

And, next, you observe in the text that the poor backslider is *longing to get a sight of the good things which for a long time have been hid from him*. He Cries, "That I may see the good of Your chosen." He has been out among the swine, but he could not fill his belly with the husks. He has been hungering and thirsting and now he remembers that in his Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. Backslider, do you remember that tonight? You know you are not happy and you begin to perceive that you never will be happy while you are living in the far country. If you had not been a child of God you might have made a happy worldling after the sort of happiness that worldlings know, but you are spoiled for a worldling if you have ever known the love of God! And you have known that, or else you have been, indeed, a hypocrite! Do you not sigh to the Lord to give you these good things again?

Well, He will freely give them to you and He will not upbraid you. Come and try Him! He is ready to press you to His bosom and to forget and forgive the past and accept you in the Beloved. The poor backslider praying in the words of my text *longs to taste once more the joy he used to feel* and, therefore, he says, "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation." And, again, *he wants to be able to speak as he once could*—"that I may glory with Your inheritance." Poor man, he is ashamed to speak to sinners. He hangs his head in company, for there are some that call him a turncoat. He does not like to have it known that he was once a Christian and, therefore, he comes stealing in to the assembly of the saints as if he hoped no one would know him.

There he is, but he feels half ashamed to be there—and yet he wishes that he were once more with the Christian brotherhood and could rejoice with them. My poor Friend, you used to be bold as a lion for Christ and now you turn tail and fly! How can you be bold with all those inconsistencies? There was a time when you might have made a martyr, but now what a coward you are! And who wonders that you are so when they know that secret sin has sapped and undermined your profession and made you weak as water? I beg you to pray the prayer—"That I may glory with Your inheritance." You will never again make your boast in the Lord till you are restored, till you come back as you came at first with the old cry, "Father, I have sinned before You and am no more worthy to be called Your son." Come back even now, my Brother, and get another application of the blood of sprinkling. Look again to Jesus!

Ah, and I may here say, even if you have *not* backslidden, look again to Jesus! Those of us who have not fallen had better look to Him with our Brothers and Sisters who have fallen, for there is the same blessing needed by us all. We have all wandered to some extent. Come, let us look at those dear wounds anew! Can you not see Him? I think He hangs before me now! The crown of thorns is on His head and His eyes are full of languid pity and tearful grief. I see His face stained with spit and black and blue with cruel bruises! I see His hands—they are fountains of gore. I see His feet—they gush with rivulets of crimson blood. I look upon Him and I cry, "Was ever grief like Yours, O King of Sorrows?"

And as I look I remember that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of all His people—and, *looking*—my sin departs from me because it was laid

on Him! *Looking*, my heart yearns to love and then yearns to leap! *Looking*, I come back to where I stood before and now, once again, Christ is my All and I rejoice in Him! Have you gone through that process, Backslider? If you have done so while I have been speaking, let us praise God together!

III. The last use I have to make of my text will, I hope, be beneficial to many here present. It is this—THIS IS A VERY SWEET PRAYER FOR A POOR SORROWING SEEKER. I beg all who desire conversion to remember this prayer. They had better jot it down and carry it home with them, or, better still, breathe it to Heaven at once. Consider it well. To begin with, it is *a sinner's prayer*. "Remember me, O Lord!" A sinner's prayer, I say, for the dying thief rejoiced to use the words. He could not have reached down for a prayer-book and said a collect, poor man, when he was dying—and there was no need he should. This is the best of prayers—"Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

Trembling Sinner, what suited the dying thief may well suit you! Breathe it now, "Forget my sins, my Father, but remember me! Forget my delays; forget my rejecting of a Savior; forget the hardness of my heart, but, oh, remember me! Let everything pass away from Your mind and be blotted from Your memory but, dear Father, by the love of the Lord Jesus, remember me!" Sinner, do not go home without presenting that prayer to God! Note, again, it is *the prayer of a lost one*. "Visit me with Your salvation." Nobody wants salvation unless he is lost. People may talk about salvation who do not feel that they are lost, but they do not *know* anything about it and do not really desire it.

Lost Soul, where are you? Are you lost in a thousand ways—lost even to society? Well here is a fit prayer for you—"Visit me with Your salvation." Jesus Christ has not come to seek and to save those who do not need saving, but He has come on purpose to seek and to save those who are lost. You are the man He came to bless. Look to Him and you shall find that He is the Savior you require. "Visit me with Your salvation"—I cannot get this prayer into your hearts, but God can—and I am praying in my own soul that many of you in the galleries, or down below there, may now be crying, "Visit me with Your salvation."

Farther, remember that our text is *the prayer of one who has a dim eye*—"That I may see the good of Your chosen." We have told the seeker to look to Jesus, but he complains, "I try to look, but I cannot see." Beloved Seeker, I do not know that you are bid to *see*. You are bid to *look* and if you could not see when you looked, you would at least have obeyed the Gospel command. The *looking*, the *looking* would bring salvation to you! But for dim eyes Christ is the great cure. He can take away the cataract and remove the *gutta serena*. Pray tonight, "Lord, open my blind eyes that I may see the good of Your chosen." Then it is a *prayer for a heavy heart*. "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation." The seeking soul moans out, "O that I had a little joy, or even a trembling hope! If it were ever so small a portion of light I should be glad." Pray for joy. The Lord waits to give it and if you believe in Jesus your joy shall be full.

And in the last place—not to detain you till you are weary—our text is *the prayer of a spirit that is humble and laid in the very dust*. It cries to God to enable it to glory with His inheritance because it is stripped of all

other glory, emptied of its own boasts. Practically its plea is, "Lord, give me to boast in Your mercy and Your goodness, for I have nothing else to boast of." Now, beloved Hearer, this prayer I would most earnestly press upon you and I would press it upon you for these reasons.

Just think for a moment. Supposing you are living now without seeing the good of God's chosen, without being saved, what a wretched life it is to live! I cannot understand what men do without God! I cannot comprehend how they live. Do you have no cares? "Oh," you say, "we have anxieties in shoals." Well, where do you take them? I find I have troubles enough, but I have a God to take them to! What do *you* do with many troubles and no God? Do your children never distress your mind? How can you live with bad children and no God? Do you ever lose money in your business? Do you ever feel distracted? Do you ever say, "What shall I do? Which way shall I turn?"

I suppose you do. Then what do you do without a helper or a guide? Poor weak thing as I am, I run under the shelter of my Father's wings and I feel safe enough. But where do you go? Where do you fly? What is your comfort? I suppose you are something like the poor creatures condemned to death in old times to whom they gave a stupefying drink so that they might die without feeling the horror of death—surely you must be under a strong delusion that you can believe a lie, for if you were in your senses you could not do without a God—no, not with your beautiful gardens and fine parks and wealth and riches and much less—many of you—with your poverty and hard labor!

Poor man without a God, how do you keep up your spirits? What comfort is there in your life? No prayer in the morning, no prayer at night—what days, what nights! Oh, men, I could as soon think of living without eating, or living without breathing, as living without prayer! Wretched naked spirits your souls must be without God to cover them! But if it is bad to *live* without Christ—and I am sure it is—what will it be to *die* without Him? What will it be to look into the future and find no light—no light and nobody that can bring you any? You have sent to the minister and he has spoken with you, but he cannot help you. You have had the prayers of your family who are sobbing at the thought of losing you, but you are looking out, alone, like one that gazes upon an angry sea in a cold winter's storm—and you can see nothing but the palpable dark.

Or, to change the metaphor, you are like a man on yonder wreck. Look, he is clinging to the mast! He hears the blast go whistling by him and soon it comes back howling around him, as if hungry for its prey. He can hear the seabirds screaming in the sky and they seem to prophesy his doom. The waves break over him, drenching him with their brine till he is ready to freeze as he hangs between Death's awful jaws. The lifeboat has been there and carried off all it can and it will never come back and, though he clings with desperation, he knows it is a forlorn hope. He will drift out to sea and his corpse will lie where pearls lie deep, in the caverns where many thousand skeletons have bleached these many years. His case is terrible to the last degree and yet it is a feeble picture of a soul leaving the body without an interest in Christ's salvation!

Before you get into that state, cry to God, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people. O visit me with Your salvation!" But the mist darkens and the tempest lowers in tenfold fury when we come to think what it must be to rise again from the tomb without Christ. When that last shrill clarion has sounded and every grave and cemetery shall have given up their sleepers. When the sea has yielded up the dead that are there and battlefields are swarming with the myriad slain that live again! When in the sky shall be seen the Great White Throne and upon it the Son of Man who bled for sinners, now come to judge and to condemn His adversaries—what will men then do if they have no personal religion, no interest in Christ, no portion in His salvation? Scripture tells us that they will ask the rocks to hide them and the hills to cover them! But they have no hearts of compassion—they will yield no shelter. There will be no refuge for the ungodly and nothing before them except the fiery indignation and wrath of God. "Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"

This is a common scene to many of you, this great gathering in the Tabernacle. I must confess I cannot look upon it without emotion, though I see it twice each Sunday. Here are all of you, and I, a lone man, standing here to talk to you in God's name. It is as much as my soul is worth if I am not earnest with you, but ah, I am not half as earnest as I ought to be. Yet hear me once more! I am a true prophet at this hour—when I warn you that you shall see this sight again if you reject the Savior. Across the flames of Hell you will see it and you will say to yourself, "The preacher warned us. He told us to cry to God for mercy. He pointed us to the Savior. He bade us pray and pray then and there."

You will remember my entreaties and then you will renew your agony with a wail which shall never end! You will cry, "God called, but I refused! He stretched out His hands, but I regarded Him not and now the day of Grace is past and the Christ whom I despised laughs at my calamity—there is no hope—no hope! I knocked too late at Mercy's door. My lamp went out. I was a foolish virgin and I am shut out in outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

In the name of the everlasting God I pray you submit yourselves to Christ your Lord at once and you shall live! Amen. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalms* 51.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—51, 584, 556.**

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GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT

NO. 1886

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry:
And He remembered, for their sake, His Covenant, and
repented according to the multitude of His mercies.”
Psalm 106:44, 45.*

THIS Psalm deserves to be read very carefully. It mentions many of the afflictions of God's ancient people, but it clearly sets forth that their afflictions were the distinct result of their rebellions and sins. It is not so with all the afflictions of God's people. It is written, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” And again, “Every branch in me that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Yet it is often so to this day that the servants of God smart because of disobedience. They are chastened for their sin, as it is written, “You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Sin in a child of God cannot go unchastened. The rod of chastisement is included in the Covenant and, if we are in the Covenant, the Lord will keep His promise. “If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”

The miseries of Israel of old were distinctly the result of their sins. They lived under a dispensation in which there was a visible reward for obedience and a prompt temporal punishment for disobedience. Therefore one might suppose that if the people fell into affliction willfully and through their own fault, the Lord might see fit to leave them in it. Did they not procure it unto themselves? Yet such is the abundant compassion of our God, that as soon as ever these people, smarting under the result of their sin, began to cry to Him, “He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry.” He might have justly said, “Go to the gods that you have set up; tell your sorrows to the calves that you have made. Ask succor at the hands of the dead whom you have consulted, or of the cruel deities to whom you have sacrificed your sons and your daughters.” But instead of thus meeting them in righteous wrath, He is tender and full of compassion for them!

I will read you the words again, for they are inexpressibly sweet—
“Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry.” There is something very powerful about the cry of a child to its own parent and God, the most tender of all fathers, cannot bear to hear His children cry—

“Such pity as a father has

***Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear."***

If there are any here who are brought low and sorely distressed through their own wrong-doing, let them, nevertheless, cry unto the Lord. Though it is because of your transgressions and your iniquities that you are afflicted, yet you may cry unto the Lord in your trouble and He will save you out of your distresses. Turn unto the hand that wounds you and that hand will bind you up. Turn unto the Lord in repentance and He will turn unto you in loving kindness.

What was the secret reason why God thus dealt with His people and heard their cry when they were in affliction through their sin? The secret reason was that, "for their sake He remembered His Covenant." If He looked upon His people in their sin and their sorrow, He could not see anything in them to justify why He should have pity upon them. What they endured they richly deserved and He knew that if He took away His rod from them, they would go and commit the same wickedness again. They were not to be driven by judgment nor drawn by mercies. Though they humbled themselves for one moment, they would soon be proud again! The Lord could see nothing hopeful about them, nothing in their future any more than in their past which should plead for mercy.

Why should they be smitten any more? Or why should gentleness be further wasted on them? Was it not high time to say, "They are given to their idols, leave them alone, that We may see what their end will be"? One Divine reason prevented the infliction of justice—this, and this alone, sufficed—"for their sake He remembered His Covenant." If He could not see anything in the erring people, or hope for anything from them, He looked to another source for a motive and an argument for mercy—He looked to the Covenant which He had made of old with their father, Abraham, when He said, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and in you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Because He had once permitted that promise to go out of His mouth, He would not withdraw it! And when He heard their cry, He regarded their affliction. Is it not a great wonder that God not only is willing to give mercy, should there be a manifest reason for it, but that He, Himself, finds and makes the reason? When there is no motive for Grace discoverable to our anxious eyes, there is a fountain of self-created mercy in the Lord's own heart—and this He causes to overflow and fill a channel of His own making! Though there is nothing in the creature, there is everything in the Covenant. If the Lord can find no plea in the character of the offender, He discovers an argument in *Himself*—He remembers His own Covenant and, for His own name's sake, He deals in mercy with the guilty!

Now, observe that in the text it does not say, "He remembered *their* covenant." They stood at the foot of Sinai and said, "All these things which You have commanded, we will do!" They willingly, eagerly, hastily, *loudly* entered into a covenant with God, before whose terrible thunders they trembled. But that covenant they soon broke. Within a few days they had departed from the living God and fallen down before the image of an ox

which eats grass! The Lord does not dwell upon the matter, since it would be to their destruction. He forgets their falseness and treachery and casts them behind His back. But what He *does* remember is *His* Covenant—"Nevertheless, for their sake, He remembered His Covenant." This proves that the Covenant referred to must have been one of pure Grace.

Do you not see this? These people were in affliction through *sin*! If that Covenant had only been a Covenant of Works, in which they were to be rewarded for good and punished for evil, the more the Lord remembered *that* Covenant, the more He would have been bound to punish them for their offenses! But a Covenant which led Him to cease from punishing the guilty must have been one of only Grace! Is it not so? A Covenant was made long before that of Sinai, a Covenant of Grace which is called, in Scripture, "the everlasting Covenant." This was made known to man in that first promise which was given to him at the gates of Paradise and it was, afterwards, revealed more clearly in the Lord's Covenant with Noah and in His gracious promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Lord said to Abraham, "I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto you and to your seed after you." This same Covenant, after being made more fully known in promises to Moses and other saintly men, was stated anew in the Lord's dealings with His servant, David, whom He exalted as one chosen out of the people—"I have made a Covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Your seed will I establish forever and build up your throne to all generations." Since then the Lord has given us promises, by His Prophets and Apostles, and specially in the Person and ministry of His only-begotten Son. All these various forms of manifestation relate to one and the same Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, which God had made with men in the person of His dear Son. It was that Covenant which God thought upon and, when He remembered it, He was able to deal with them upon terms of Grace, and even to change His hand and no longer crush them with afflictions, for He "repented according to the multitude of His mercies."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I want to show, this morning, how this remembrance of the Covenant on God's part is the great ground of hope to all of us who are in Covenant with God. Indeed, the Lord's mindfulness of His Covenant is the ground of hope to everyone of you, whether as yet you have embraced the Gospel promise or not! Inasmuch as God must, according to His Law, look upon you with anger on account of your sin, He has devised a way by which He can have regard unto the voice of your cry! Remembering His Covenant, He can pass by your transgressions and receive you as His returning children into the bosom of His love!

I. The first head of our discourse will be this—THE COVENANT EXISTS. God cannot remember, to any practical purpose, that which does not exist. Had the Covenant been repealed or abrogated, it could not have availed for God to remember it, except to strike the people into a more complete and settled despair. In love He remembered the Covenant as an

abiding thing, according to the Word of God, "My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."

Beloved, *the Covenant is, in its own nature, everlasting.* Dying David said, "Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." The Covenant is everlasting in its beginning, for it was made, "or ever the earth was," between the first Divine Person of the sacred Trinity and the Second, on the behalf of His chosen. It is everlasting, also, as to its duration, for all things are still governed under this Covenant, and shall be, world without end. "And I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations, for an everlasting Covenant." "Thus says the Lord, if you can break My Covenant of the day, and My Covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My Covenant be broken with David, My servant." Sooner shall the Covenant with the earth concerning seedtime and harvest be broken, than this Covenant of Grace. By everything that is permanent in the universe and by everything that is permanent in the Godhead, we are made to know that the Covenant of Grace is a fixed and settled thing and abides today as it always has done, for there is no variableness nor turning with Him from whom every good gift comes down.

The promises in Christ Jesus are Yes and Amen, to the Glory of God by us. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail, much less shall the Covenant of Divine Grace be disannulled. Thus says the Lord—"The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." God, in remembering His Covenant, falls back upon everlasting and immutable things!

Well may the Covenant of Grace be everlasting, for *it was made with deliberation and foresight.* If two persons enter into a contract and one, afterwards, wishes to escape from it, he may plead that he made the agreement in great haste, or under compulsion, or through being misinformed and over-persuaded—on any of these grounds he may object to the fulfillment of the covenant and thus may attempt to justify his failure to keep his word. Now, on God's part, nothing of the kind can ever be urged, for He made the Covenant, Himself, on His own suggestion, according to the good pleasure of His will. It was a free Covenant, entered into through the love of His own heart, according to the wise counsel of His infinite mind. He made it knowing all that would happen in time or in eternity! When He made the promise that whoever believes in Christ Jesus shall have everlasting life, He knew that those who believed in Christ Jesus would, nevertheless, be fallible creatures and would commit mistakes and sins—He made the promise well knowing what Believers would be!

When He chose Abraham to be His friend, He knew what failures there would be in Abraham and in his seed. He made His choice deliberately, knowing the end from the beginning and foreseeing all the provocations which He would endure for 40 years in the wilderness—and how they would anger Him when they came to their own land. His choice of His re-

deemed was made deliberately and the promises made to them were given forth in the full foresight of all our unbelief, lukewarmness, backsliding, selfishness and folly! The Lord is not deceived in the subjects of His Grace. Hear how He puts it in the 48th of Isaiah, verse four—"Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass." And again, verse eight—"I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." Man's love is blind, but the Lord's love sees all things—

***"He saw me ruined in the Fall
Yet loved me notwithstanding all."***

He knew as well in that day when He called me, by His Grace, what I should be as He knows today! Every fault and folly stood clear before His vision and yet, notwithstanding all, He determined to *give* faith and, through faith, to give eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Dear Friends, every promise in the Bible is a part of the Covenant. The Covenant that now stands between the Believer and his God is on this wise, that you take Him to be your God and He takes you to be His people. He gives His promises to you and you rely upon them. He will bless you in this life and perfect you in the world to come. The tenor of the Covenant is not according to what you *deserve*, but according to the greatness of the Lord's love! In making this Covenant, it is clear that God knew from the beginning what He was doing. He made no mistake and said no more than He intended to fulfill. He deliberately said, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." And in the day wherein we believed in Him, He guaranteed to us that we should never perish, neither should any pluck us out of His hand. This Covenant was made with such judicious deliberation and Infallible foresight, that there is no conceivable reason why it should be revoked. God is not a man that He should lie or repent.

Moreover—and this is a point to which every child of God delights to turn his eyes—that covenant was sealed and ratified in the most solemn manner. When God made a Covenant with Abraham, there was a slaying of sacrifices and a dividing of their bodies and the Lord, under the image of a burning lamp, passed between the pieces—in this solemn sacrificial manner was the Covenant established. But when the Lord made a Covenant with *us*, the seal He gave was much more precious. He took from His bosom His only-begotten Son and He gave *Him* to be a Covenant to His people. He died to make the eternal Covenant sure. Paul speaks of "the blood of the everlasting covenant" and when we come to the communion table we hear our Lord say, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." Jesus has gone into Heaven bearing with Him the blood of sprinkling! Can God deny His promise to His bleeding Son? Can He run back from the promise which He has made to the Only-Begotten in His death? "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." Can these promises fail? Impossible! The very *thought* would be blasphemous! A Covenant which has been made in so solemn a manner, by the death of our great Surety and Sacrifice, can never be repealed, neglected, or changed!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we may rest fully sure that this Covenant will stand because *the Divine Glory is wrapped up in it*. Why did God promise to save men through faith in Christ Jesus? Why? That He might manifest to angels, principalities and powers, the splendor of His love and the riches of His Grace! He has selected for this reason the very worst of men, that in them He might show forth all long-suffering and display the magnificence of His pardoning love. He selected beings that were depraved and subject to grievous temptations that, by regenerating them by His Spirit and sustaining them by His Grace, He might display the greatness of His power! We are witnesses to time and to eternity of the Glory of the Lord! Are not these His own words—"This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise"? The manifestation of the glorious love of God is the design of the Covenant—that where sin abounded, Grace might much more abound! He intends to show to all the ages His Truth, His faithfulness, His patience, His tenderness and His power. He designs to set Heaven and earth wondering until the whole universe breaks forth into the song—"Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy."

God is more glorified in the Covenant of Grace than in creation, or in Providence—in fact, creation and Providence are but the temporary scaffold of the great house which God is building, even the God who inhabits the praises of Israel! The Lord cannot break His Word, nor forego His designs, nor forget His promises. Do not even think it! The crown jewels of God are staked and pawned upon the carrying out of the Covenant of Grace!

Furthermore, *it is not possible for God to break a Covenant*. When you and I stand and tremble before a Divine promise for fear it should not be fulfilled, we cast a slur upon the truth, faithfulness and Immutability of God. Has He ever changed? Has He ever been false? Has He ever lifted His hand and sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater and by two Immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie—has He given us strong consolation and yet has He failed us? Far from it! Brothers and Sisters, there has been nothing in the past to cast suspicion upon the veracity of Jehovah! Therefore, should we doubt Him or distrust His Covenant?

My text gives us an instance of a great strain that was put upon the Covenant. These people whom God had chosen to be His heritage constantly provoked Him! I cannot imagine a greater extent of sin than that which is pictured in this 106th Psalm. The chosen seed were degraded below other nations—they had forsaken their own God to go after alien deities. Was it ever known in any other case that a nation changed her gods? Yet Israel departed from the one living and true God willfully and wantonly, times without number! And God, instead of breaking His Covenant because of their treachery, had pity upon them! When He found them in the throes of their grief as the result of their sin, He turned His eyes upon His Covenant and, because of that Covenant, He delivered them!

From which I gather that the Covenant purpose of God to save His own people shall stand fast, come what may. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." They that trust in the Lord, notwithstanding all the enormous weight of their sin, shall find Him faithful to His Word of pardon. He will keep His Word to sinners who put their trust in Him—and they shall be saved. Oh, glorious fact, the Covenant still exists!

II. But, secondly, THIS COVENANT IS TOO OFTEN FORGOTTEN BY US. The children of Israel had quite forgotten the Covenant of their God. Elijah said, "They have forsaken Your Covenant." Starting aside like a deceitful bow which fails the archer in the day of battle, they had been false to their God and useless for those great purposes for which He had chosen and ordained them. Have we not failed in the same manner?

Are not God's people at this day chargeable with forgetting the Covenant by their *unspiritual carelessness*? Have you thought of yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, as covenanted ones, as ones with whom God has entered into solemn compact, saying, "I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward: I am God Almighty: walk before Me, and be you perfect"? Have you realized your position as in covenant with God? When you have been staggered with its wonderful condescension and blessedness, as I have often been, have you not soon forgotten your great obligation and thought only of earthly things? Have you not doubted your God because you have forgotten His Covenant? When Heaven and earth were rejoicing, Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Under such a slanderous charge, the Lord is gladly to speak with plaintive earnestness and ask, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." Let it be realized by us and not passed over in a wicked carelessness, that as many as believe in Christ Jesus are in covenant with God and He has promised not to turn away from doing them good.

This cannot be better described than as a marriage covenant, even as it is written in the Book of the Prophet Hosea—"And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." O my Brother and Sister Believers, as the man puts the ring on the woman's finger and the words are said, and she is his, and he is hers, so has God, by giving you faith, put the ring on your finger once and for all—and you are His and He is yours—and He says to you, today, "You shall not be for another; so will I also be for you." Our response should be—"Other lords have had dominion over us, but now we are the Lord's alone." Oh, you covenanted ones, angels look at you with wonder! They regard you as the favorites of Heaven and yet you forget this and live as if there were no Covenant between God and you.

Sometimes, too—and in the case of Israel it was so—we get away from that Covenant by *wanton sin*, or by negligent omission of most delightful

duties. I need not go into the story of Israel, again. You see in this Psalm how they transgressed. They took no notice of the Covenant they had made with God, but violated all His precepts. May I ask whether we have not been guilty of this same sin? May not each man bury his face in his hands as he confesses, "My God, You know how often I have acted as if I were not in covenant with You. I have lived as if I were my own master instead of yielding myself wholly to Your service. I have sometimes acted as a man of the world would have done, and not as one that belonged to Christ"? Be ashamed and be confounded for all this! And then wonder and admire that Covenant still stands and the Lord has not recalled his gracious promises. He says, "Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant." This ought to yield in our hearts a harvest of repentance. It should bind us to God with intense affection that should tend towards perpetual sanctification from this day and onward!

These people had forgotten their God for another reason, namely, *in the depth of their sorrow*. A great sorrow stuns men and makes them forget the best sources of consolation. A little blow will cause great pain, but I have frequently heard, in reports of assaults, that far more serious blows have occasioned no pain, whatever, because they have destroyed consciousness. So do extreme distresses rob men of their wits and cause them to forget the means of relief. Under the chastening rod, the smart is remembered and the healing promise is forgotten! The people of Israel, when they were under the afflicting visitations of God, failed to remember His Covenant from the crushing effect of their sorrow and despair. Is it so with any of us? I may be addressing at this moment an ear which has grown dull through grief, a heart that is forgetful because of heaviness. Do not men even forget to eat bread in the hour of dire calamity? Ah, my Brother! Your affliction seems more present to you than even God, Himself! The black sorrow that lowers over you eclipses all the lamps of Heaven and earth!

May I be my Master's messenger to you, to remind you that He is still in covenant with you and though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion? He has said, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and He will keep His Word. He has also said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Depend upon it, He will preserve you! "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Remember, "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," but in *love* He corrects and chastens. Therefore, brush those tears away, anoint your head, wash your face and be of good courage, for the Lord will strengthen your heart—

"What cheering words are these!

Their sweetness who can tell?

In time and to eternal days,

'Tis with the righteous well."

Oh that you could learn to sing in the dark like the nightingale and praise God out of the midst of the furnace like the three holy children! Oh that

you may cry with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" This is what you should do and it may help you to do it if you will remember the Covenant which God has not forgotten.

O Soul, why do you forget the Covenant? Fall back upon it and sing with Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" According to the Covenant, God is to be everything to you. The Covenant does not stipulate that you shall not lose your friends, nor does it promise that you shall not lose your property, nor that you shall have no sickness—the Covenant is that God will be everything to you. Take care that you use Him as such. "These things have I spoken unto you," said our Lord, "that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." If you have received the tribulation, be not satisfied till you have enjoyed the peace in Jesus which is equally promised! Alas, God's people forget this Covenant! We have said enough upon this.

III. Though we forget the Covenant, yet GOD REMEMBERS HIS COVENANT—"For their sake He remembered His Covenant." What does this word mean? Beloved, of course the Covenant is always on the mind of God, for the infinitely wise God cannot forget anything. But the text means that He stands to His Covenant—He remembers it so as to cause it to abide. Even though these people had so grievously provoked Him, He remembers His Covenant so as to find in it a reason for pardoning their sin and dealing with them in a way of mercy. He meets the flood of their sins with the flood of His faithfulness—"Nevertheless for their sake He remembered His Covenant." He remembers it practically, that is, He puts it into effect and, in this case, He did so by repenting "according to the multitude of His mercies." He had formerly smitten them, but now He puts the rod away. He made His people to be pitied of all them that carried them away captive. He came to their relief and succor. And this is just what God will do with you, my afflicted Friend, if you turn to Him with cries and tears and a humble, penitent faith! He will remember, for your sake, His Covenant by acting in a covenant way towards you, according to that word in the Book of Zechariah, "As for you, also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

O Friend, God must remember His Covenant, for He can never forget what the making of that Covenant has cost Him. It cost Him nothing to make the heavens and the earth—He spoke and it was done. It costs him nothing to rule the nations—in the serenity of His Omnipotence, the Lord sits upon the floods—the Lord sits King forever. But to make the Covenant with man and to carry it out, cost Him His innermost Self! It cost Him His Only-Begotten—the eternal Son, the Well-Beloved, must die the death of the Cross—so that the Covenant may be established! Covenant-making was no trifle with God. I have heard people speak sneeringly of the Covenant. Indeed, no one of note preaches upon it, now, but yet it is the

grandest of themes. It is a wondrous fact Godward, for it cost Him His dear Son's heart's blood. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief," that this Covenant might be fulfilled and eternally settled!

See how readily God turns to this Covenant. You can be sure that He delights in it, for no sooner do His children cry than He, at once, remembers for their sakes, His Covenant. It was only a cry forced from them by misery, but instead of upbraiding them for the past and shutting out their cry, He straightway remembered His Covenant! When a man is easily reminded of a thing, it shows that it is agreeable to him to think of it. We are sure that God's heart is much wrapped up in the Covenant of Grace since the feeble cries of His children remind Him of it.

I think, however, the reason why God remembers His Covenant most of all is because He remembers with whom He made it. A certain man had lived abroad for a while and there he found a friend with whom, for years, he enjoyed delightful fellowship. In due time he returned to England, to carry on a business, but he never forgot his friend. He had promised and entered into brotherly covenant, that he would help his friend's family and so, in due season, he received into his employment the young son of his old friend. And he was minded to instruct him and help him, and promote his interests. He had given his friend his right hand and said, "Trust your boy with me. I will see him through." The youth came to London and entered the service of his father's friend, with every prospect bright before him. But, alas, the boy proved unworthy. He fell into all sorts of vices and follies and grieved his friend—his father's friend. His employer said, "I shall be glad to get rid of this fellow for he is a burden to me. I cannot advance him for he is unworthy of my favor." Look how loath he is to deal severely with the boy, for his father's sake! He calls him into his private office and pleads and reasons with him. He says, "I have borne more with you than with anyone else in my establishment. Remember, it is for your father's sake. Had it not been for my promise to your father, I would have dismissed you long ago." One day he cries, "I really must dismiss him! He must go." But he thinks of the father and of their days of fond familiarity with each other and he cannot bear to deal harshly with the son of such a man and, therefore, he says, "I will try him again; I will still bear with him, for my promise's sake, which I made to his father."

Now I am sure it was so with God and the seed of Abraham. These people had revolted and rebelled continually, but the Lord remembered Abraham, His friend. A memory rose before the Divine mind of the faithful man lifting the knife to slay his only son, Isaac, in obedience to the Most High. As the Lord saw that act of believing obedience, He seemed to say, "I will still have pity on his offspring—they are the most undeserving and provoking people that ever breathed, but I have entered into a Covenant with Abraham, My friend, and therefore I will have pity upon them." The fact is, with regard to the great God and you and me, that He would often say, "I must destroy them." But then He thinks of His dear Son upon the Cross. He hears ringing through the midnight of that great day of sorrow, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And the great heart of God is

moved to pity us because of the death of His Son. There is merit enough in Jesus to remove all the demerit of our sins!

The great God was not thinking of a dead man when He thought of Abraham. Our Savior tells us, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Abraham is with God and God looked at Abraham, His *living* friend, and restrained His indignation when Abraham's children provoked Him. Jesus also lives! He has gone up on high; He sits at the right hand of God and when the Lord has looked at us and grown weary of our sins, He turns His eyes upon the perfections of His dear Son and He is well pleased, for His righteousness' sake, for He has magnified the Law and made it honorable. Thus the Lord turns back to the Covenant made with Jesus—He hears our cries and remembers, for our sake, His Covenant. Oh, the Grace of this! Because of Him with whom the Covenant of Grace is made, who is forever the Father's delight and the joy of His soul, the Father has compassion on us! Does it not make you pray, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your Anointed"? Or, to quote our hymn, do we not say—

***"Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me?"***

The Person of the Lord Jesus is the Substance and Seal of the Covenant of Grace and God remembers it because He remembers Him!

IV. I will finish with this last point, which I am sure you will feel to be of the utmost importance. If God remembers, for our sake, His Covenant, LET US REMEMBER IT. You that are the Lord's covenanted ones, think of the sacred promise and begin to enjoy it and live upon it practically. What is the Covenant? Here is one form of it—"I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be you perfect." That is an early and condensed shape of it, that is to say, the Lord God Almighty gives Himself up to be our portion and we are to yield ourselves to Him, to walk before Him in perfect obedience. This also is the Covenant—"I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Come, Beloved, make God your God. This means—make God your *everything*! Say not, "I am poor." Not so, for God is yours and so all things are yours! Say not, "I am weak." Not so, God Almighty is yours—when you are weak, then you are strong. "But I have no wisdom." Is not the Lord Jesus made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification? He that has God has everything!

Will you belittle your God and limit the Holy One of Israel? Come, find your all in God! This is your part of the covenant, to accept God as being to you what He says He is. He has made Himself to be your All in All—accept Him as such. Did not David say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire"? This is the portion and heritage of the children of God. "Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is." Cast yourself upon the Covenant and find rest in it. Sing in your heart of hearts—

***"He that has made my Heaven secure
Will here all good provide,
Since Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I need beside?"***

“The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” Oh, the blessed result of standing to the Covenant and letting God be our All in All!

In this Covenant it is incumbent that we rest alone in our God. You have not taken God to be your God if you cannot be content with Him, alone. Abraham forsook *everything* for God. He went to a country he had never seen, followed a path that had never been mapped out and God said to him, “Fear not, Abram: I am your shield.” He was in the midst of enemies who would have destroyed him but for the mysterious protection which surrounded him like a shield. The Lord’s word had gone forth, “Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm.” Abraham had no shield but his God and yet no man in the world dwelt in greater safety! God said to him, “I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward”—and so He was! Abraham once lamented that he had no seed and that the steward of his house was his only heir. But the Lord who had promised him a seed yet said to him, “I am your exceedingly great reward.” Not the *seed*, but his *God* must be his joy and crown! And Abraham felt it was so and, therefore, stood ready to surrender that seed if the Lord commanded.

That is what the Lord would have you do, Beloved. Look not to what is seen with the eyes. Listen not to what is heard with the ear. Live in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High—in the place where faith takes the place of sense. Endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Penetrate into the substance which is unseen and pass by the shadow which is all that sense can discern. Live on the living God and then you know the secret of the Covenant! Your soul shall dwell at ease and your seed shall inherit the earth! Your soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and you shall praise the Lord with joyful lips!

Remember, lastly, in order to look well to this Covenant, you must give yourselves wholly up to God. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Live only to glorify God! Have no other aim or objective but your God. Brother, if God gives you much, glorify Him with it by your generous consecration. If He take it away, glorify Him by your patience under loss. Wherever you are, be always aiming to love your God with all your heart and with all your soul—and your neighbor as yourself and, verily, it shall be well with you and blessed shall you be—for God will remember, for your sake, His Covenant!

I wish that the unconverted here would desire to be a participant in this Covenant. If you do so, the very *desire* is the gift of Divine Grace! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you have entered into Covenant with God! He that has faith in the Lord Jesus is a child of the Father of the faithful and, therefore, he is a participant in the Covenant which God made with Abraham and his spiritual seed! O Lord of these poor stony hearts, raise up children unto Abraham, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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SIN—ITS SPRINGHEAD, STREAM AND SEA NO. 2204

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”
Psalm 106:7.*

OUR fathers! From them we derive our nature. We inherit our fathers' propensities, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh. As is the nature, such is the conduct. Hence the Psalmist writes in verse 6, “We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.” If we must mention our fathers' faults, it is not to screen ourselves, for we have to confess that our life's story is no brighter than theirs. It is not because the fathers have eaten sour grapes that the children's teeth are set on edge, for we, ourselves, have greedily devoured those evil clusters—“We have sinned with our fathers.” “As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.” When we read of the sins of others, we ought to be humbled and warned, for, “all we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way.” We have no space wherein to set up a monument to our own glory. As we cannot boast in our pedigree, for we are the children of sinners, so we cannot exalt ourselves because of our personal excellence, for there is none that does good, no not one. We come before God and confess our iniquities as a race and as individuals. And we cry unto Him, in the words of the 47th verse, “Save us, O Lord our God.”

It may help us to escape out of the meshes of our natural depravity if we look back and see the causes of our fathers' sins. To confess our personal sin will tend to keep us humble and, in view of the Lord's mercy, which has spared and pardoned us, a sense of our guilt will make us grateful. The less we think of ourselves, the more we shall think of Him whose “mercy endures forever.” And if we see where our fathers' sins began and how they grew, and what they came to, we may hope that the Spirit of God will help us to turn from the beginnings of evil and forsake the fountainheads of our iniquities. This will tend to repentance and holiness. May we be so worked upon by the Spirit of God that we shall not be as our earthly fathers, but become like our heavenly Father, who says to us, “Be you followers of God, as dear children.” We are not to take our fathers after the flesh for our example wherein they have gone astray, but our Father who is in Heaven we are to imitate by the power of His Grace.

Great things, whether good or evil, begin with little things. The river that rolls its mighty volume to the sea was once a tiny brook. No, it

started as a springhead, where the child stooped down to drink and, with a single drink, seemed as if he would exhaust the supply! The rivulet ripples itself into a river. Sin is a stream of this sort. It starts with a thought. It increases to a resolve, a word, an act. It gathers force and becomes habit and daring rebellion!

Follow me, therefore, first, when I notice, that *lack of understanding lies at the fountainhead of sin*—“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.” Out of this lack of understanding comes the greater offense of ungrateful forgetfulness. *Failure of memory follows upon a lack of understanding*—“They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.” This readily leads on to the sad consummation of rebellion. *Provocation follows upon forgetfulness*. Inward faults display themselves in outward offenses—“They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”

I. Let us begin at the beginning. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S WONDERS IS THE SOURCE OF SIN. The wonders that God worked in Egypt were exceedingly great and instructive. The 10 plagues were memorable masterstrokes of God’s judgment upon the proud and notable displays of His favor to the oppressed. How Egypt staggered beneath the blows of Jehovah! Those tremendous judgments came one after another with righteous deliberation and yet with terrible rapidity! Pharaoh and his proud nobles were wounded and humbled—the leviathan of Egypt was broken in pieces as one that is slain. Surely they for whom all these plagues were worked ought to have considered them and ought to have spied out the plain lessons which they taught! But they failed to do so, for they were dull of understanding. Albeit, God had come out of His secret places and had made bare His arm for them, yet, “our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.”

We see this to be the case when we read the story, for, at first, when God began to work for them, they were *so taken up with the present* that they complained of Moses, for the cruel retort of Pharaoh! He had gone in unto the proud monarch and had urged the demand of Jehovah—and the tyrant had replied, “You hinder the people from their works; get you unto your burdens.” He increased their toil by refusing to give the people straw to make bricks—and so their bondage was made bitter to the last degree—and they groaned as they saw “that they were in evil case.” They are not blamed for *groaning*, but it was very blameworthy that they should say to Moses and Aaron, “The Lord look upon you and judge; because you have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us.”

It was mean to blame their friends for the cruel fault of their enemy. How wretchedly have we also complained when God, in His gracious dealings with us, has caused us an inward grief! He began to show us our sin—a very necessary thing, but we kicked against it and said, “Is this the Grace of God? Oh, that we were rid of these convictions!” Thus the Lord took away our self-confidence, but we were full of unbelief and we thought some great evil had happened to us, whereas it was the way of God’s wisdom and love to make sin as much a bondage to us as Egypt was to Israel! How else would we feel our need of redemption and be willing to

come forth free by the blood of the Lamb? If the Lord does but lay His little finger upon us, we complain! And, instead of seeing love in our affliction, we cry out as if the Lord dealt harshly with us. His mercy designs to teach us some great lesson for our eternal benefit, but we murmur and ask, “Is this the love of God to His chosen?”

Our fathers understood not His wonders in Egypt and, oftentimes, this is our case—we judge by the feelings of the present and forget the eternal future! We cannot understand our burdens and our soul-humbling. We stand bewildered and amazed. Though the point is plain enough to faith, *unbelief* does not hear the rod, nor Him that has appointed it—and we are taken up with our present smart. Our selfish desire for immediate comfort prevents our understanding the great plans of Divine Grace.

Further on we find Israel *broken down by utter hopelessness*. Moses spoke to them again, but we read, “They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.” They had been so brutally crushed by the Egyptians that they had lost all heart. Slavery had killed all the manhood of their race—they were abject, timorous and crouching bondsmen. The last ounce that breaks the camel’s back was laid on them by Pharaoh—and they could no more listen to words of hope. Moses said he had come to *deliver* them. He told them they should be brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. But they could not think it possible—they shook their heads and turned a deaf ear to what they regarded as vain words. Hope had fled. They understood not that God could, by any possible means, deliver them from the gigantic power which held them down.

Alas, this also has been the case with us! And perhaps *is* the case with some here at this moment. You are so sad and so depressed that you cannot believe in salvation. Your presumptuous hopes lie dead in heaps round about you and you cannot believe that you will *ever* be saved. “Oh!” you say, “there may be mercy for someone else, but there is no mercy for me! God can forgive the chief of sinners, but He will never forgive *me*.” Though we tell you of Free Grace and dying love—and of pardon for sins of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus’ *blood*—you turn a deaf ear to us because your spirit is wounded and faint. You understand not God’s wonders for and in you. You cannot think that, indeed, and of a truth, the Lord Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you. You dare not hope that He has ordained you unto eternal life, that He will put His Spirit within you! You cannot believe that He will give you power to become children of God and joint-heirs with Christ! Your very sorrow for sin has made you incapable of understanding God’s wonders of Divine Grace. This is a painful state of mind.

You see, dear Friends, these people, though they saw God’s plagues on the Egyptians, which were mercies to Israel, yet *they did not enter into their teachings*. One would have thought that every Israelite would have said, when the thick darkness was over all the land, even “darkness that might be felt,” “surely Jehovah is a great and mighty God!” When there was a storm of thunder and hail over all Egypt, the likes of which had never been known before, would it not have been natural for them to cry,

“Who is like unto You, O Jehovah? We, Your people, bow before Your majesty!” The right-minded Israelite would have prostrated himself before the supreme *power* of God and would have never, henceforth, doubted the Lord’s ability to redeem His chosen nation.

Should not Israel have also learned the royal *sovereignty* of the Lord God? What armies obeyed the call of that great King! At His word the river brought forth frogs abundantly. He spoke and there came divers sorts of flies and lice in all their borders. “He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.” Jehovah’s camp is very great. The waters were turned into blood and the dust into creeping things—the heavens were set on fire—and the habitations of men were darkened.

He who did all these marvelous things is King over all the earth. “He smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength.” Even the first-born of Pharaoh, that sits on the throne, was made to die. Surely Jehovah is King of Kings! Would you not have thought that His people would have felt the force of His Divine *dominion* and would have bowed before His supreme will throughout the rest of their lives? Awed by His power and Glory, we might have expected to find in Israel a loyal people! But no, they neither seemed to tremble before the power, nor to bow before the sovereignty of Jehovah. They murmured against Him and declared that He could not deliver them—and complained that they had been brought out of Egypt to die by the hand of Pharaoh at the Red Sea!

Beyond all question, they ought to have recognized Jehovah’s *love* to them. By so much as the plagues were terrible to Egypt they were gracious to His people! Though the Israelites were a race of down-trodden slaves, the Lord loved them. He moved Heaven and earth to liberate them! He not only made the very dust of Egypt alive for them, but He sent swift angels out of Heaven to avenge the wrongs of His chosen. The orbs of Heaven and the creatures of earth—all were brought to bear upon God’s great purpose of Grace towards Israel. Truly said the Lord, “I gave Egypt for Your ransom: Ethiopia and Seba for You.” It was love, wondrous love to Israel, which made the Lord to show His signs in Egypt, His wonders in the land of Ham! Why did they not become lovingly obedient in return for such favors? Why were they hard of heart, stiff of neck and unwilling to be led of the Lord their God? Alas, they understood not what the Lord was doing for them!

To you, Beloved, it may be that the same fault can be laid. God has done great wonders for Believers, but, it may be, we have not yet learned His power so as to trust His might nor His sovereignty, so as to submit to His will nor His love, so as to rejoice in His faithfulness. Alas, we have but little understanding! No, worse, we have none at all except as the Lord, the Holy Spirit, teaches us to profit and instructs us, as children are instructed.

The tribes of Israel *did not see in all this, the claim which the Lord had upon them*. As a people, they belonged to Him who had made them a nation. Because of what He had done for them, the Lord took up a peculiar

position to them which He would have them acknowledge. Remember how, in the 20th chapter of Exodus, before the Lord proclaims His Ten Commandments, He says—"I am the Lord your God, which have brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"? By this, Jehovah separated them to be His people and He declared Himself to be their God. During the plagues, He marked His special love to His own, for when the Lord sent a thick darkness over all the land, we read, "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

When the cattle of Egypt died, Pharaoh sent and found, upon inquiry, that "there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." When the first-born of Egypt fell dead beneath the angel's sword, the sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb secured to all Israel protection from the midnight slaughter—and men were made to know that God did put a difference between His chosen and the men of Egypt! Yet, the favored people did not understand it—the Truth of God was conspicuous enough, but they did not perceive it as they ought to have done. Neither did they practically show that they were the Lord's people and that only He was their God. The same slowness to take up our true position, we may see and mourn in ourselves. After all the Lord's wonders of Grace towards us, we do not exalt Him as our God, nor serve Him as His people, as we ought to do. Lord, have mercy upon us!

The people did not see that *their God, by all His wonders, was pledging Himself to them*. After having done so much for them, He would not leave them. Could He have brought them out of Egypt to kill them at the Red Sea? They even dared to say that this was their suspicion! Oh, the slanders of unbelief! But if they had understood His wonders, they would have seen that He who had done such great things for them had bound Himself to perfect His purpose and to bring them into the land which He had promised to their fathers. "Ah," you say, "they were very stupid." I do not defend them—but what about yourselves? Have we not been mistrustful? Have we not said in our hearts, "He will yet fail us, and our faith will be disappointed"? Alas, great God, we blush and are ashamed! But, listen—

***"Determined to save, He watched o'er my path
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"***

Will the Lord lose all that He has worked in us and for us? Is He like the foolish one who began to build and was not able to finish? Does the Eternal revoke His resolves? Does the Almighty turn from His purposes? Is it not said, "The Strength of Israel will not lie; for He is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent"? O Believer, learn this lesson well and trust in your unchanging God! And thus shall you understand His wonders in Egypt.

The fact is, dear Friends, *these people had no deeply spiritual work upon their hearts*. "They understood not His wonders in Egypt" because their hearts were hardened by their association with a proud, worldly, idolatrous and yet cultured nation—and they had turned aside from the *spiritual faith* of their fathers. Wonders were worked and they saw them, and were amazed, but they did not see beneath the surface, nor perceive

the Lord's meaning in them. Beloved, I pray to God for you who are newly called out from the world, that the first working of Divine Grace in your souls may be deep, true, clear and lasting. I would have you not only know, but *understand*. Depend upon it, a man's later character is very much shaped by the mode of his conversion.

Why do some turn back altogether? It is because their change of heart was not that thorough radical conversion which involves the creation of a new nature! They felt certain superficial impressions which they mistook for the new birth and they made a hasty profession which they could not, afterwards, maintain. They were not thoroughly saved from the dominion of sin, or they would have held on to the end. Many professing Christians of whom we have a good hope that they will prove to be sincere, never had any deep conviction of sin, nor any overwhelming sense of their need of Jesus. Therefore they have seen little of our Lord in His glorious offices and all-sufficient Sacrifice—and have gained no thorough understanding of His Truth. They are like slovenly farmers who have plowed their fields after a fashion, but they have not gone deep—and the land will never yield more than half a crop!

We have all around us too much surface work. Numbers of conversions are true as far as they go, but they go a very little way. I am afraid for you if you have only a flimsy experience, a skin-deep conviction, a blind man's apprehension of the heavenly Light of God. No wonder if very soon you forgot and afterwards rebel! Let us pray God that both in ourselves and in those whom we bring to Christ, the work of Grace may be deep and thorough—and may our faith in Jesus be sustained by a clear understanding of the Gospel and of our Lord's dealings with us! The Truth of God, itself, and our experience of it, may be likened to food—it is not the food we swallow which benefits us, but that which we digest! If undigested food lies in our inward parts and unassimilated, it will brood disease rather than promote health. So Truth which is not understood and thus taken up into the soul, cannot “feed” us in the true *spiritual* sense of that word.

You see, Brothers and Sisters, there was a flaw in the Israelites at the beginning—“They understood not Your wonders in Egypt.” When an iron girder suddenly snaps, they tell us that there was a flaw in the original casting. It was quite imperceptible at the first and, therefore, the girder passed all the tests of the engineer—and it was not until years of wear and tear that it gave way. Here was a manifest flaw in the casting as to the people of Israel—“They understood not Your wonders in Egypt.” Had they well understood the Truth at the very first, they *would not* and *could not* have forgotten it—and they would not have been so little influenced by it in their conduct towards God.

So much upon the first point. We have had before us a subject which should produce great thought and devout anxiety.

II. FAILURE OF MEMORY FOLLOWS UPON LACK OF UNDERSTANDING. Children forget what they learn unless they understand it. They may pass the School Board standards and yet, in a few years, they may know very little. The capacity for forgetting in some children is amazing. Many, even among grownups, have splendid memories for forgetting! Alas, it is

the case with certain of the Lord's people. That which we do not understand we readily forget. When a child thoroughly understands his lesson, it will be fixed in his memory, but if he has merely learned the words and has not entered into their *senses*, do you wonder that his lesson slips away? So was it with Israel in Egypt and at the Red Sea. Those sentences follow each other in true logical order—"They understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies."

Mercies should be remembered. It is a great wrong to God when we bury His mercies in the grave of unthankfulness. Especially is this the case with distinguishing mercies, wherein the Lord makes us to differ from others. Light, when the rest of the land is in darkness! Life, when others are smitten with the sword of death! Liberty from an iron bondage! O Christians, these are not things to be forgotten! Abundantly utter the memory of distinguishing mercies! Discriminating Grace deserves unceasing memorials of praise!

Mercies multiplied should never be forgotten. If they are new every morning, our memory of them should be always fresh. Read the story of the 10 plagues and see how the Lord heaped up His mercies upon Israel with both His hands. Even if they had forgotten one wonder, they ought to have remembered others! "Forgot not all His benefits." Alas, some men, though their memories are refreshed with renewed loving kindnesses, yet prove by their discontent and mistrust that they do not remember the Lord's goodness. A grievous thing is this, when God sends mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy—heaps of mercies, loads of mercies, *hills* of mercies, *mountains* of mercies, *worlds* of mercies—and yet men forget! His mercies are more than the stars, more than the drops of dew, more than the sands on the seashore and yet we do not remember! This is a mournful and inexcusable fault!

"They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies." That is to say, *they did not permanently remember these blessings.* They remembered the Lord's wonders a little and then they sang—but when the song was over, their memories failed. They remembered God's mercies while they marched for the first few days as free men who had no daily task of brick-making to fulfill—but when they found that Pharaoh pursued them, they forgot all the Lord's mighty acts! When they tasted the waters of Marah and found them bitter, "they murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" They forgot God's wonders whenever they were in straits. They limited The Holy One of Israel by their unbelief! "They soon forget His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert." Our remembrance of the Lord's wonders of love should abide with us all our days. May the Lord give us a permanent recollection of His great goodness, both in Providence and in Grace!

Hutton, Bishop of Durham, was, one day riding over the bleak northern hills. He stopped and, giving his horse to his servant, he went aside from the road to kneel down on a certain spot. He always did so when he reached that place, for in the day of his wealth and honor, he had not forgotten that when he was a poor boy he had crossed those wild hills, with-

out shoes and stockings, and had turned a cow out of her place that he might warm his feet with what little heat remained in the place where the creature had lain. He had become bishop of a rich see and a man of renown, but he never passed that spot without kneeling down and praising God. May we have faithful memories for the goodness of our faithful God! The Israelites had memories out of which the mercies of God soon faded. The Lord save us from being like they and cause us to bless His name for what He did for us 50 years ago! Some of us would not have been among His people, today, if it had not been for the Lord's favors in our early youth—therefore let us praise Him for old mercies as well as for new ones.

But Israel *did not remember God's mercies powerfully*. If they remembered these things, yet the remembrance did not enable them to bear up under present discouragements. The Egyptians pursued them and when they heard the cracking of the whips and the neighing of the horses, they cried out unto the Lord—they *whined* out—"It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!" Had they forgotten Jehovah, who had glorified Himself over Egypt and had crippled all her power? Their memory of Jehovah's wonders had not influence enough over them to keep up their courage! Oh, for such a powerful memory of God's mercies that we may never distrust Him!

They did not remember practically. Their lives were not affected thereby. True gratitude shows itself in acts and deeds. A gentleman had been the means of making a position for a tradesman, but, by a misfortune, he came to be, himself, in need of immediate help to tide over a season of great pressure. He called at the house of the person he had so successfully helped and found the wife at home. He told her the case and she answered at once, "My husband will be ready to lend you his name to the full amount required. He will hasten to you the moment you need him, and be glad to do so." A prudent neighbor, afterwards, said, "But you may have to pay away all you have in the world." "Yes," said the grateful wife, "we do not mind that—he was the making of us and if we have to lose everything for his sake, we shall do it very cheerfully—for we shall only be back to where we were when he first helped us."

That is a form of gratitude which is rare enough in this world, though I have seen it here and there. Beloved, if the Lord were to take away all that we have, we should only be back where we were at the beginning! We have nothing but what we have received from Him! He takes nothing from us but what He first gave us—let us bless a *taking* as well as a *giving* God. Oh, for this practical gratitude towards the Lord, that we may in all things either do His will cheerfully, or suffer it patiently! If we remember the multitude of His mercies practically, we shall be ready to surrender honor, ease, health, estate, yes, life, itself, for Him who gave Himself for us! Oh, to remember God's mercies practically in everyday life, in thought and word and deed!

In fact, *the Lord's mercies ought to be remembered progressively*. We should think more and more of His exceeding kindness. A Christian man's life should be like another Bible, another Book of Chronicles. When we come to read through our personal life story, we should say, "Neither the

9th chapter of Nehemiah, nor the 106th Psalm can exceed my experience. The Lord has dealt well with His servant, according to His Word. If some of us had opportunity to write our lives in full—which we could hardly venture to do because there are private passages between our souls and our God which no human eye may read—how fully could we now testify to the faithful love of our Covenant God! On our parts, sin and weakness and fickleness have been conspicuous in our career. But on the Lord's part, Grace and Truth, and faithfulness and love shine forth as the sun! Beloved, we must not let go of the memory of the Lord's matchless kindness, but we must remember it more and more! The older we are, the more must we trust in Him who has not suffered one of His promises to fail!

III. I need a little time for the third head, which is this—GRIEVOUS PROVOCATION FOLLOWED THEIR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. Lack of understanding begat forgetfulness and forgetfulness brought forth rebellion. Let me read the last part of the text—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Why does the Psalmist dwell upon the place and say, "at the sea, even at the Red Sea"? Why was it worse to provoke the Lord *there* than elsewhere? It evidently was so, for the Inspired Scripture mentions the spot twice to put an emphasis upon it. Why was this?

The offense, itself, was grievous anywhere. They doubted God when they heard that Pharaoh pursued them and they said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have You taken us away to die in the wilderness?" This imputation of cruelty to their faithful God provoked His sacred heart. The Lord is full of pity and His name is Love and, therefore, He is not easily provoked. But He declares that He *was* provoked by this display of their mistrust. They provoked Him—they called Him forth, as it were, to battle! They vexed Him and stirred Him up to contend with them. O Brothers and Sisters, after so much love as God has shown us, we must not fall to provoking Him! Let us far rather spend our lives in extolling Him! To provoke Him at any time is a wanton wickedness—unjust, ungenerous, diabolical. It is no common sin which thus provokes the long-suffering Lord. Many a sin God has endured patiently, but in this case He is provoked to anger! This is an offense which touches the apple of His eye and causes His jealousy to burn like coals of fire. O children of God, how can you provoke your Father to wrath? The Lord have mercy upon us! We must bow low at His feet with sorrowful repentance. Let us shun this fault in the future.

But why did their transgression at the sea so greatly anger the Lord? Was it because *it came at the outset of their existence as a nation*? They had not gone many days' journey out of Egypt before they rebelled. They had not yet eaten up the bread they carried in their kneading troughs and they had scarcely met their first difficulty—and yet they hastened to provoke their God! How could they rebel so soon? They had scarcely reached the Red Sea before they began provoking the Lord with their dishonorable suspicions. O young Christian, if you provoke the Lord as soon as you are converted, your conduct will be black, indeed! Only a day or two ago you sang His praises and shouted, "Hallelujah! The blood of the Lamb has

saved me.” Will you so speedily distrust the Lord and provoke Him “at the sea, even at the Red Sea”? What? Stumble in the first few steps? God grant it may not be so!

If you feel that you have already thus provoked the Lord, confess the wrong and ask pardon through the precious blood. To begin to doubt almost as soon as you begin to believe is a wretched business. What? Have you come out of Egypt and have you brought its bondage with you? You have been saved by the sprinkled blood and you have fed upon the Paschal lamb—and can you so soon utter words dishonoring to your delivering Lord? To doubt in the presence of a mercy is to doubt, indeed! To doubt the power of the blood of Christ when you have newly been saved, to doubt the power of the Holy Spirit to keep you to the end when you have just been renewed—why, this is aggravated guilt! It is sadly common, but it is none the less grievous to the heart of God. He marks it down and there stands the record—“They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.” This is a poor beginning of a march to Canaan.

Now *this Red Sea was the place of their consecration*. Here they were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Here it was that they said, “He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” As they stood by that Red Sea which had swallowed up all their enemies, they sang the praises of God and proposed to do great things in His honor! What wonderful obedience they meant to render! And yet they provoked Him then and there! What? Will you come up from the waters of your Baptism and go home and provoke God by unholy conversation and ungovernable temper? Can any of you go from the Communion Table into sin? I heard of one who went from the Table of the Lord across the street into the public-house. This is too gross! Such conduct grieves holy men and much more, the Holy God. To go from prayer to robbery, from reading the Word to fellowship with ungodly men—this must be terribly provoking to the thrice holy Jehovah! It is as though it were written again, “They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”

It is a high crime and misdemeanor to sin in the presence of a great mercy. There is the sea. They have just marched through it and they have reached Marah, where the waters are brackish. If they now distrust and complain, close on the heels of their great deliverance, it will be a crime, indeed! O men, what are you doing? There is the Red Sea which God divided and yet you think He cannot give you water to drink! O fools and slow of heart, thus to doubt the Almighty! Doubt in the presence of a mercy! Doubt while so great a favor is before your eyes! This is evil, indeed! I find the Hebrew has been read by some, “They provoked Him *in* the sea, even *in* the Red Sea”—while they were passing through the deep they were rebelling! You will hardly believe it! What? When the waters stood upright as in an heap and were a wall on either side of them—and they walked through the depths of the sea and found good footing where sea monsters once had whelped and stabled—were they *then* provoking Him? Yes, they carried their *sinful hearts* with them even into the heart of the sea!

O Beloved, do not bear hard upon these Israelites, bear hard upon *yourselves* and hate the sin which dares intrude within the sacred enclosures of your joy in the Cross and dares to tempt you even when the five wounds of Jesus are shining on your soul like stars of God! Hate the sins which follow you to the Table of the Lord! Hate the wandering mind which taints the sacred bread and wine and defiles you when the instructive symbols are yet in your mouths! Abhor the sin which dogs your heels and follows you even to your knees—and hinders you in drawing near to God in prayer. Oh, the accursed sin which even on Tabor's top makes us fall asleep or talk foolishly! Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive the sins of our holy places and let it not stand against us in your Book that, "They provoked You at the sea, even at the Red Sea." It was called the Sea of Weeds and truly many were the weeds which grew, not only in the water, but in the hearts of those who stood on its shore!

I must give one or two touches to complete the picture. This provocation of God was all the worse because *they had only just done singing*. What a song it was! Handel, with all the majesty of his half-Inspired music, can hardly set forth that wondrous song of Israel at the sea. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." That was a noble anthem, but murmuring was a miserable sequel to it. "The Lord shall reign forever and ever," was a glorious hallelujah, but before its echoes had ceased to stir the heart of the lone hills, the same tongues were heard to complain against the Lord! "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation," died away into mutterings of unbelief!

Do you wonder that God was provoked? Have you ever acted so? Did you ever rise high in rapture and praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals—and then find yourself groveling on the ground within an hour? Have you felt so jubilant that you could have snatched Gabriel's silver trumpet from his mouth that you might blow it with all your might? And have you before long been looking for a mouse hole in which to hide your miserable head by reason of your unbelief? What fools we are! "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." When we know most, we are ignorant. When we swell to our greatest, we are big nothings! When God makes much of us, we think least of ourselves. How greatly do we prize and praise the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin!

This evil happened near the time of their strong faith. You remember how they sang, "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which You have purchased. You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O lord, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established." They felt quite sure of conquering the land and chasing out the foe. They were so strong in faith that they thought they should never again mistrust the

Lord, whose right hand was so glorious in power! The exultant women who followed Miriam never suspected that they could doubt the Lord, whose right hand had dashed the enemy in pieces.

One of them would probably have said, “As for our enemies, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left. I shall never fear again. I have attained full assurance and perfection and I shall never again mistrust the Lord.” Yet these were the people who speedily murmured for lack of bread until the Lord heard them and was grieved! I dare say the men of the Red Sea said, each one, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved”—and yet in how brief an hour were they challenging the faithfulness of Jehovah—and questioning His power to give them bread in the wilderness! Lord, what is man? We distrust Providence, we suspect Grace and we question the Lord, Himself—and all this after the Lord had made our assurance doubly sure! We are sad creatures and yet the Lord does not cast us away, for it is written, “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.”

Two things more and I have done. *Admire the patient faithfulness of our God.* Jehovah, though provoked, still loves His people. Admire His love to ourselves and especially that He should entertain such constancy of affection towards such wayward, fickle, unreliable souls as we are!

Next, *believe God so as to cease to grieve Him.* Do not start aside at the next little puddle you see in the road—it is not an ocean. Do not whine that you will be devoured the next time you see a cat in the garden—after all, it is not a lion. Do not groan, “I cannot pass this dread abyss,” for it is only a little ditch which you can leap by faith. God helping you, rest not till you become “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Doubt God when He gives you cause to do so, but not till then! If God had left those Israelites, once, they might have had some excuse for distrusting Him, but He had never done so. If He had ever failed in His judgments, they might have had some excuse for unbelief, but when He threatened their enemies with plagues, those plagues never failed to come! Was there a *single* weak point in what God had done for them? They had no ground, whatever, for their unbelief!

O Brothers and Sisters, let us never distrust our God until He gives us ground for doing so—and that will never be! O Blessed Holy Spirit, strengthen the faith of Your people this day, and may that faith create in us perfect obedience to the will of the Lord, so that henceforth we may magnify His holy name and walk with Him until we see His face unveiled above! The Lord sanctify us unto Himself, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 106.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—914, 688, 106.**

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WHY ARE MEN SAVED?

NO. 115

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake.”
Psalm 106:8.***

IN looking upon the works of God in Creation, there are two questions which at once occur to the thoughtful mind and which must be answered before we can procure a clue to the philosophy and science of Creation itself. The first one is the question of authorship—Who made all these things? And the next question is that of design—For what purpose were all these things created? The first question, “Who made all these things?” is one which is easily answered by a man who has an honest conscience and a sane mind, for when he lifts his eyes up yonder to read the stars, he will see those stars spell out in golden letters this word—GOD. And when he looks below upon the waves, if his ears are honestly opened, he will hear each wave proclaiming, *GOD*. If he looks to the summits of the mountains, they will not speak, but with a dignified answer of silence they seem to say—

“The hand that made us is Divine.”

If we listen to the rippling of the stream at the mountainside, to the tumbling of the avalanche, to the lowing of the cattle, to the singing of the birds, to every voice and sound of Nature, we shall hear this answer to the question, “God is our Maker. He has made us and not we, ourselves.”

The next question, as to design—Why were these things made?—is not as easy to answer, apart from Scripture. But when we look at Scripture, we discover this fact—that as the answer to the first question is God, so the answer to the second question is the same! Why were these things made? The answer is, for God’s Glory, for His honor and for His pleasure. No other answer can be consistent with reason. Whatever other replies men may propound, no other can be really sound. If they will, for one moment, consider that there was a time when God had no creatures—when He dwelt alone, the mighty Maker of ages, glorious in an uncreated solitude, Divine in His eternal loneliness—“I Am and there is none beside Me”—can anyone answer this question—Why did God make creatures to exist?—in any other way than by answering it thus—“He made them for His own pleasure and for His own Glory.” You may say He made them for

His creatures. But we answer, there were, then, no creatures to make them for! We admit that the answer may be a sound one *now*. God makes the harvest for His creatures. He hangs the sun in the firmament to bless His creatures with light and sunshine. He bids the moon walk in her course by night to cheer the darkness of His creatures upon earth. But the first answer, going back to the origin of all things, can be nothing else than this—"For His pleasure they are and were erected." "He made all things for Himself and by Himself."

Now, this which holds good in the works of Creation, holds equally good in the works of salvation. Lift up your eyes on high—higher than those stars which glimmer on the floor of Heaven! Look up where spirits in white—clearer than light—reflect yon stars in their magnificence! Look there, where the redeemed with their choral symphonies "circle the Throne of God rejoicing" and ask this question—"Who saved those glorified beings and for what purpose where they saved?" We tell you that the same answer must be given as we have previously given to the former question—"He saved them—He saved them for His name's sake!" The text is an answer to the two great questions concerning salvation—Who saved men and why are they saved? "He saved them for His name's sake."

Into this subject I shall endeavor to look this morning. May God make it profitable to each of us and may we be found among the number who shall be saved "for His name's sake." Treating the text verbally—and that is the way most will understand—here are four things. First, *a glorious Savior*—"He saved them." Secondly, *a favored people*—"He saved them." Thirdly a Divine reason why He saved them—"for His name's sake." And fourthly an obstruction conquered, in the word, "nevertheless," implying that there was some difficulty that was removed. "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake." A Savior. The saved. The reason. The obstruction removed.

I. First, then, here is A GLORIOUS SAVIOR—"He saved them." Who is to be understood by that pronoun, "He"? Possibly many of my hearers may answer, "Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of men." Right, my Friends. But not all the Truth. Jesus Christ is the Savior. But not more so than God the Father, or God the Holy Spirit! Some persons who are ignorant of the system of Divine Truth think of God the Father as being a great Being full of wrath and anger and justice but having no love. They think of God the Spirit, perhaps, as a mere *influence* proceeding from the Father and the Son. Now nothing can be more incorrect than such opinions! It is true the Son redeems me, but the Father gave the Son to die for me and the Father chose me in the everlasting election of His Grace. The Father blots out my sin, the Father accepts me and

adopts me into His family through Christ. The Son could not save without the Father any more than the Father without the Son! And as for the Holy Spirit, if the Son redeems, don't you know that the Holy Spirit regenerates? It is He who makes us new creatures in Christ, who begets us, again, unto a lively hope, who purifies our soul, who sanctifies our spirit and who, at last, presents us spotless and faultless before the Throne of the Most High, accepted in the Beloved. When you say, "Savior," remember there is a Trinity in that word—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—this Savior being three Persons under one name! You cannot be saved by the Son without the Father, nor by the Father without the Son, nor by Father and Son without the Spirit. But as they are One in Creation, so are they One in salvation working together in one God for our salvation and unto that God be glory everlasting, world without end. Amen.

But, note here, how this Divine Being claims salvation wholly to Himself. "Nevertheless HE saved them." But, Moses, where are you? Did you not save them, Moses? You stretched the rod over the sea and it divided in halves. You lifted up your prayer to Heaven and the frogs came and the flies swarmed and the water was turned into blood and the hail smote the land of Egypt. Were not you their Savior, Moses? And you Aaron, didn't you offer the bullocks which God accepted, didn't you lead them, with Moses, through the wilderness? Were not *you* their Savior? They answer, "No, we were the *instruments*, but He saved them. God made use of us but unto His name be all the Glory and none unto ourselves." But, Israel, you defeated a strong and mighty people—did not you save yourself? Perhaps it was by your own holiness that the Red Sea was dried up. Perhaps the parted floods were frightened at the piety of the saints that stood upon their banks. Perhaps it was Israel that delivered itself. No, no, says God's Word. *He saved them*. They did not save themselves, nor did their fellow men redeem them. And yet, mark you, there are some who dispute this point—who think that men save themselves, or, at least—that priests and preachers can help to do it! We say that the preacher, under God, may be the *instrument* of arresting man's attention, of warning him and awakening him. But the preacher is nothing! God is everything! The most mighty eloquence that ever distilled from the lips of a seraphic preacher is nothing apart from God's Holy Spirit! Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, are *anyone*—God gave the increase and God must have all the Glory.

There are some we meet with here and there who say, "I am a convert of Mr. So-and-So. I am a convert of the Reverend Dr. This-or-That." Well, if you are, Sir, I cannot give you much hope of Heaven—only God's con-

verts go there! Not proselytes of man, but the redeemed of the Lord! Oh, it is very little to convert a man to our own opinions, but it is really something to be the means of converting him to the Lord our God! I had a letter some time ago from a good Baptist minister in Ireland, who very much wanted me to come over to Ireland, as he said, to represent the Baptist interest, because it was low and, perhaps, it might lead the people to think a little more of Baptists. I told him I would not go across the street merely to do that, much less would I cross the Irish Channel! I would not *think* of going to Ireland for that! But if I might go there to make Christians under God and be the means of bringing men to Christ, I would leave it to them what they would be afterwards and trust to God's Holy Spirit to direct and guide them as to what denomination they should consider nearest akin to God's Truth. Brothers and Sisters, I might make all of you Baptists, perhaps, and yet you would be none the better for it! I might convert you all in that way, but such a conversion would be that you would be washed to greater stains, converted into hypocrites and not into saints! I have seen something of wholesale conversions. Great revivalists have risen up. They have preached thundering sermons that have made men's knees knock together. "What a wonderful man!" people have said. "He has converted so many under one sermon." But look for his converts in a month and where will they be? You will see some of them in the alehouse, you will hear others of them swear, you will find many of them rogues and cheats, because they were not *God's converts* but only man's! Brethren, if the work is done at all, it must be done of God, for if God does not convert, there is nothing done that shall last and nothing that shall be of any use for eternity!

But some reply, "Well, Sir, but men convert themselves." Yes, they do and a fine conversion it is. Very frequently they convert themselves. But then that which man did, man undoes. He who converts himself one day, unconverts himself the next! He ties a knot which his own fingers can loosen. Remember this—you may convert yourselves a dozen times over, but, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and, "cannot see the kingdom of God." It is only "that which is born of the Spirit" that "is Spirit," and is, therefore, able to be gathered at last into the spirit-realm where only spiritual things can be found before the Throne of the Most High. We must reserve this prerogative wholly to God! If any man states that God is not Creator, we call him infidel. But if any man entrenches upon this Doctrine, that God is the absolute Maker of all things—we hiss him down in a moment! An infidel of the worst kind, he is more bold who tells men that they may convert themselves whereas God does it all. "He" on-

ly, the great Jehovah—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and “He saved them for His name’s sake.”

Thus have I endeavored to clearly set out the first Truth of the Divine and glorious Savior.

II. Now, secondly, THE FAVORED PERSONS—“He saved *them*.” Who are they? You will reply, “They were the most respectable people that could be found in the world. They were a very prayerful, loving, holy and deserving people. And, therefore, because they were good, He saved them.” Very well, that is your opinion—I will tell you what Moses says—“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitudes of Your mercies, but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them.” Look at the 7th verse and you will have their character. In the first place, they were a stupid people—“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.” In the next place, they were an ungrateful people—“they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.” In the third place, they were a provoking people—“they provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.” Ah, these are the people whom free Grace saved! These are the men and these the women whom the God of all Grace condescends to take to His bosom and to make anew.

Note, first, *that they were a stupid people*. God sends His Gospel not always to the wise and prudent but unto fools—

**“He takes the fool and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love.”**

Do not suppose, my Hearer, because you are very unlettered and can scarcely read—do not imagine because you have always been brought up in extreme ignorance and have scarcely learned to spell your name that, therefore, you cannot be saved! God’s Grace can save you and then enlighten you!

A Brother minister once told me a story of a man who was known in a certain village as a simpleton and was always considered to be soft in the head. No one thought he could ever understand anything. But one day he came to hear the Gospel preached. He had been a drunken fellow having wit enough to be wicked which is a very common kind of wit. The Lord was pleased to bless the Word to his soul so that he became a changed character. And what was the marvel of all was his religion gave him something which began to develop his latent faculties! He found he had something to live for and he began to try what he could do. In the first place he wanted to read his Bible that he might read his Savior’s name. And after much hammering and spelling away, at last he was able to read a chapter. Then he was asked to pray at a Prayer Meeting. Here

was an exercise of his vocal powers. Five or six words made up his prayer and down he sat! But by continually praying in his own family at home, he came to pray like the rest of the Brothers and Sisters and he went on till he became a preacher! And, singularly enough, he suddenly had a depth of understanding and a power of thought such as are seldom found among ministers who only occasionally occupy pulpits! Strange it was, that Grace should tend to develop his natural powers—giving him an objective—setting him devoutly and firmly upon it and so bringing out all his resources that they were fully shown. Ah, ignorant ones, you need not despair! He saved them! Not for their sakes—there was nothing in them why they should be saved. He saved them not for their wisdom's sake, but, ignorant though they were, understanding not the meaning of His miracles, "He saved them for His name's sake."

Note, again, *they were a very ungrateful people* and yet He saved them. He delivered them times without number and worked mighty miracles for them, but they still rebelled. Ah, that is like you, my Hearer. You have had many deliverances from the borders of the grave. God has given you house and food day after day and provided for you and kept you to this hour. But how ungrateful you have been! As Isaiah wrote, "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but My people do not know, Israel does not consider." How many there are of this character, who have favors from God, the history of which they could not give in a year, but yet what have they ever done for Him? They would not keep a horse that did not work for them, nor as much as a dog that would not notice them. But here is God. He has kept them day by day and they have done a great deal *against* Him, but they have done nothing *for* Him. He has put the bread into their very mouths, nurtured them and sustained their strength—and they have spent their strength in defying Him, in cursing His name and breaking His Sabbath! "Nevertheless He saved them." Some of this sort have been saved—I hope I have some here now who will be saved by conquering Grace, made new men and women by the mighty power of God's Spirit. "Nevertheless He saved them." When there was nothing to recommend them, but every reason why they should be cast away for their ingratitude, "Nevertheless He saved them."

And note, once more, *they were a provoking people*—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah, how many people there are in this world who are a provoking people to God! If God were like man, who among us would be here today? If we are provoked once or twice, up goes the fist! With some men, their passion stirs at the very first offense. Others who are somewhat more placid will bear offense after offense, till at last they say, "there is an end to everything and I can bear that no long-

er. You must stop it, or else I must stop you!” Ah, if God had that temper, where would we be? Well might He say, “My thoughts are not as your thoughts. I am God, I change not, or else you sons of Jacob had been consumed.” They were a provoking people, “nevertheless He saved them.” Have you provoked Him? Take heart! If you repent, God has promised to save you! And what is more, He may, this morning, give you repentance and even give you remission of sins—for He saves provoking people for His name’s sake! I hear one of my Hearers say—“Well, Sir, that is encouraging sin with a vengeance!” Is it, indeed, Sir! Why? “Because you are talking to the very worst of men. And you are saying that they may yet be saved!” Pray tell, Sirs, when I spoke to the worst of men, did I speak to *you* or not? You say, “No. I am one of the most respectable and best of men.” Well then, Sir, I have no need to preach to you, for you think you do not need any. “The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick.” But these poor people, whom you say I am encouraging in sin, need to be spoken to. I will leave you. Good morning to you! You keep to your own Gospel and I wonder whether you will find your way to Heaven by it!

No, I do not wonder—I know you will not unless you are brought as a poor sinner to take Christ at His Word and be saved for His name’s sake! But I say farewell to you and I will keep on in my course. Why did you say I encourage men in sin? I encourage them to turn from it! I did not say He saved the provoking people and then let them still provoke Him as they had done before. I did not say He saved the wicked people and then let them sin as they did before. You know the meaning of the word, “saved.” I explained it the other morning. The word, “saved,” does not mean merely taking men to Heaven—it means more—it means saving them from their sin! It means giving them a new heart, new spirits, new lives. It means making them into new men. Is there anything licentious in saying that Christ takes the worst of men to make them into saints? If there is, I cannot see it. I only wish He would take the worst of this congregation and make them into the saints of the living God and *then* there would be far less licentiousness! Sinner, I comfort you. Not in your sin, but in your repentance! Sinner, the saints of Heaven were once as bad as you have been. Are you a drunk, a swearer, an unclean person? “Such were some of them. But they have been washed: but they have been sanctified.” Is your robe black? Ask them whether their robes were ever black? They will tell you, “Yes, we have washed our robes.” If they had been black, they would not have needed washing. “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Then, Sinner, if they were black and were saved, why not yourself?—

***“Are not His mercies rich and free?
Then say, my Soul, why not for thee?
Our Jesus died upon the tree,
Then why, my Soul, why not for thee?”***

Take heart, Penitents—God will have mercy on you! “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake.”

III. Now we come to the third point—THE REASON OF SALVATION—“He saved them for His name’s sake.” There is no other reason why God should save a man but for His name’s sake. There is nothing in a sinner which can entitle him to salvation, or recommend him to mercy. It must be God’s own heart which must dictate the motive why men are to be saved. One person says, “God will save me because I am so upright.” Sir, He will do no such thing! Says another, “God will save me because I am so talented.” Sir, he will not. *Your talent?* Why you driveling, self-conceited idiot—your talent is nothing compared with that of the angel that once stood before the Throne of God! They sinned and were cast into the bottomless Pit forever! If He would save men for their talent, He would have saved Satan. For he had talents enough. As for your morality and goodness, it is but filthy rags and He will never save you for anything you do! None of us would ever be saved if God expected anything of us—we must be saved purely and solely for reasons connected with Himself and lying in His own bosom! Blessed be His name, He saves us for “His name’s sake.” What does that mean? I think it means this—the name of God is His Person, His attributes and His Nature. For His Nature’s sake, for His very attributes’ sake, He saved men and, perhaps, we may also include this—“My name is in Him”—that is, in Christ. He saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. And what does that mean? I think it means this—

He saved them, first, that He might manifest His Nature. God was all Love and He wanted to manifest it. He showed it when He made the sun, the moon and the stars and scattered flowers over the green and laughing earth. He showed His love when He made the air balmy to the body and the sunshine cheering to the eye. He gives us warmth even in winter, by the clothing and by the fuel which He has stored in the heart of the earth, but He wanted to reveal Himself still more. “How can I show them that I love them with all My Infinite heart? I will give My Son to die to save the very worst of them and so I will manifest My Nature.” And God has done it—He has manifested His Power, His Justice, His Love, His Faithfulness and His Truth. He has manifested His whole Self on the great platform of salvation! It was, so to speak, the balcony on which God stepped to show Himself to man—the balcony of salvation—here it is He manifests Himself by saving men’s souls!

He did it, again, to vindicate His name. Some say God is cruel. They wickedly call Him a tyrant. “Ah,” says God, “but I will save the worst of sinners and vindicate My name. I will blot out the stigma. I will remove the slur. They shall not be able to say that, unless they are filthy liars, for I will be abundantly merciful. I will take away this stain and they shall see that My great name is a name of love.” And said He, again, “I will do this for My name’s sake, that is, to make these people love My name. I know if I take the best of men and save them, they will love My name. But if I take the worst of men, oh, how they will love Me! If I go and take some of the offscouring of the earth and make them My children, oh, how they will love Me! Then they will cleave to My name—they will think it more sweet than music. It will be more precious to them than the spikenard of the Eastern merchants. They will value it as gold, yes, as much fine gold. The man who loves Me best is the man who has most sins forgiven—he owes much, therefore he will love much.” This is the reason why God often selects the worst of men to make them His. Says an old writer, “All the carvings of Heaven were made out of knots—the Temple of God is a cedar one but the cedars were all knotty trees before He cut them down.” He chose the worst, that He might display His workmanship and His skill, to make unto Himself a name. As it is written, “It shall be unto Me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Now, dear Hearers, of whatever class you are, here is something I have to offer well worthy of your consideration, namely—that if saved, we are saved for the sake of God, for His name’s sake and not for our own!

Now this puts all men on a level with regard to salvation. Suppose that in coming into this garden, the rule had been that everyone must make mention of my name as the key of admittance? The law is that no man is to be admitted for his rank or title but only by the use of a certain name. Up comes a lord. He makes use of the name and comes in. Up comes a beggar, all in patches. He makes use of the name—the law says it is only the use of the name that will admit you—he makes use of it and he enters, for there is no distinction. So, my Lady, if you come, with all your morality, you must make use of His name—if you come, poor filthy inhabitant of a cellar or an attic—and make use of His name, the doors will fly wide open, for there is salvation for everyone who makes mention of the name of Christ and for none other! This pulls down the pride of the moralist, abases the self-exaltation of the self-righteous and puts us all, as guilty sinners, on an equal footing before God to receive mercy at His hands! “For His name’s sake,” and for that reason alone.

IV. I have detained you too long. Let me close by noticing obstacles removed, in the word, “nevertheless.” I shall do that in somewhat of an interesting form, by way of parable.

Once upon a time, Mercy sat upon her snow-white throne, surrounded by the troops of Love. A sinner was brought before her, whom Mercy designed to save. The herald blew the trumpet and after three blasts thereof, with a loud voice, he said, “O Heaven and Earth and Hell, I summon you this day to come before the Throne of Mercy, to tell why this sinner should not be saved.” There stood the sinner trembling with fear. He knew that there were multitudes of opponents who would press into the Hall of Mercy and with eyes full of wrath, would say, “He must not and he shall not escape. He must be lost!” The trumpet was blown and Mercy sat placidly on her throne until there stepped in one with a fiery countenance. His head was covered with light, he spoke with a voice like thunder and out of his eyes flashed lightning “Who are you?” said Mercy. He replied, “I am Law. The Law of God.” “And what have you to say?” “I have this to say,” and he lifted up a stony tablet, written on both sides. “These ten commands, this wretch has broken! My demand is blood, for it is written, ‘The soul that sins, it shall die.’ He must die, or Justice must.” The wretch trembles, his knees knock together, the marrow of his bones melts within him as if they were foes dissolved by fire. He shakes with very fright. Already he thought he saw the thunderbolt launched at him! He thought he saw the lightning penetrate into his soul! Hell yawned before him in imagination and he thought himself cast away forever! But Mercy smiled and said, “Law, I will answer you. This wretch deserves to die. Justice demands that he should perish—I award you your claim.” And oh, how the sinner trembles! But he pleads, “But there is One yonder who has come with me today. My King. My Lord. His name is Jesus, He will tell you how the debt can be paid and I can go free.” Then Jesus spoke and said, “O Mercy, I will do your bidding. Take Me, put Me in a garden. Make Me sweat drops of blood. Then nail me to a tree, scourge my back before you put me to death. Hang me on the Cross. Let blood run from my hands and feet. Let me descend into the grave. Let me pay all the sinner owes. I will die in his place!”

And the Law went out and scourged the Savior, nailed Him to the Cross and, coming back with his face all bright with satisfaction, stood again at the throne of Mercy and Mercy said, “Law, what have you now to say?” “Nothing,” he said, “fair angel, nothing.” “What? Not one of these commands against him?” “No, not one! Jesus, his Substitute, has kept them all—has paid the penalty for his disobedience and now, instead of his condemnation, I demand as a debt of Justice that he be acquitted.”

“Stand you here,” said Mercy, “sit on my throne. I and you together will now send forth another summons.” The trumpet rang again. “Come here, all you who have anything to say against this sinner, why he should not be acquitted!” And up comes another—one who often troubled the sinner—one who had a voice not as loud as that of the Law but still piercing and thrilling. A voice whose whispers were like the cuttings of a dagger. “Who are you?” says Mercy. “I am Conscience. This sinner must be punished! He has done so much against the Law of God that he must be punished. I demand it. And I will give him no rest till he is punished, nor even then, for I will follow him even to the grave and persecute him after death with unutterable pangs.” “No,” said Mercy, “Hear me,” and while Conscience paused for a moment, she took a bunch of hyssop and sprinkled Conscience with the blood, saying, “Hear me, Conscience, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleans us from all sin. Now have you anything to say?” “No,” said Conscience, “nothing.”—

***‘Covered is his unrighteousness
From condemnation he is free.’***

“Henceforth I will not grieve him. I will be a good conscience unto him, through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The trumpet rang a third time and growling from the innermost vaults, up there came a grim black fiend with hate in his eyes and hellish majesty on his brows! He is asked, “Have you anything against that sinner?” “Yes,” he said, “I have. He has made a league with Hell and a covenant with the grave and here it is signed with his own hand. He asked God to destroy his soul in a drunken fit and vowed he would never turn to God. See, here is his covenant with Hell!” “Let us look at it,” said Mercy. And it was handed up, while the grim fiend looked at the sinner and pierced him through with his black looks. “Ah but,” said Mercy, “this man had no right to sign the deed. A man must not sign away another’s property. This man was bought and paid for long beforehand. He is not his own! The covenant with Death is annulled and the league with Hell is torn in pieces. Go your way Satan!” “No,” said he, howling again, “I have something else to say—that man was always my friend. He always listened to my insinuations. He scoffed at the Gospel, he scorned the Majesty of Heaven. Is he to be pardoned while I repair to my hellish den, forever to bear the penalty of guilt?” Said Mercy, “Depart, you fiend. These things he did in the days of his unregeneracy. But this word, ‘nevertheless,’ blots them out! Go to your Hell—take this for another lash upon yourself—the sinner shall be pardoned but you—never, treacherous fiend!” And then Mercy, smilingly turned to the sinner and said, “Sinner, the trumpet must be blown for the last time!” Again it was blown and no one

answered. Then the sinner stood up and Mercy said, “Sinner ask yourself the question—*you* ask of Heaven, of earth, of Hell—can any condemn you?” And the sinner stood up and with a bold loud voice said, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” And he looked into Hell and Satan lay there, biting his iron bonds. And he looked on earth and earth was silent. And in the majesty of faith, the sinner did even climb to Heaven, itself, and he said, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? God?” And the answer came, “No. He justifies.” “Christ?” Sweetly it was whispered, “No. He died.” Then turning round, the sinner joyfully exclaimed, “Who shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” And the once condemned sinner came back to Mercy. Prostrate at her feet he lay and vowed henceforth to be hers forever if she would keep him to the end and make him what she would desire him to be. Then no longer did the trumpet ring but angels rejoiced and Heaven was glad, for the sinner was saved!

Thus, you see, I have what is called, *dramatized the thing*. But I don’t care what it is called. It is a way of arresting the ear, when nothing else will. “Nevertheless.” There is the obstruction taken away! Sinner, whatever is the “nevertheless,” it shall never the less abate the Savior’s love! Not the less shall it ever make it but it shall remain the same—

**“Come, guilty soul and flee away
To Christ and heal your wounds!
This is the glorious Gospel-Day
Wherein Free Grace abounds!
Come to Jesus, Sinner, come.”**

On your knees weep out a sorrowful confession! Look to His Cross and see the Substitute! Believe and live! You almost demons, you that have gone farthest in sin—now—EVEN NOW—Jesus says, “If you know your need of Me, turn unto Me and I will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

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

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

ISRAEL AT THE RED SEA

NO. 72

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 30, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“He rebuked the Red Sea also and it was dried up: so he led them
through the depths, as through the wilderness.”
Psalm 106:9.***

SEVERAL Sabbaths ago we preached upon the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt by the blood of the Passover—and we told you, then, that we believed that event to be typical of the coming forth of God’s people from that spiritual house of bondage, that furnace of mental suffering from where they are delivered by the Omnipotent Grace of God at the time of their conversion. This morning we pursue the narrative. No doubt the children of Israel supposed that now all was over. The Egyptians had sent them away, entreating them to depart and loading them with riches. Terror had smitten the heart of Egypt, for from the king on the throne, to the prisoner in the dungeon, all was dismay and fear on account of Israel. Egypt was glad for them when they departed. Therefore the children of Israel said within themselves, “We shall now march to Canaan at once. There will be no more dangers, no more troubles, no more trials. The Egyptians, themselves, have sent us away and they are too much afraid of us to ever molest us again. Now shall we tread the desert through with hasty footsteps. And when a few more days have passed, we shall enter into the land of our possession—the land that flows with milk and honey!” “Not quite so speedily,” says God. “The time is not arrived yet for you to rest. It is true I have delivered you from Egypt. But there is much you have to learn before you will be prepared to dwell in Canaan. Therefore I shall lead you about and instruct you and teach you.” And it came to pass that the Lord led the children of Israel about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, till they arrived over against Baalzephon, where, on either side, the craggy mountains shut them in. Pharaoh hears of it. He comes upon them, to overcome them. And they stand in terrible fright and jeopardy of their lives!

Now, Beloved, it is usually so with the Believer—he marches out of Egypt spiritually at the time of his conversion and he says within himself, “Now I shall always be happy.” He has bright eyes and a light heart, for his fetters have been dashed to the ground! He feels no longer the

lash of conscience upon his shoulders. “Now,” he says, “I may have a short life, but it will be a happy one”—

***‘A few more rolling years at most,
Will land me on fair Canaan’s coast.’***

And then I shall have no more warfare, no more fighting, no more disturbance. I shall be at peace.” “Not quite as you desire,” says God. “Oh, you little one, I have more to teach you before you are prepared for My palace.” Then He commences to lead us about and bring us into straits and perils. The sins which we thought had utterly left us are hunting us behind, while impassible floods block up the way! Even trembling Israel, halting by the Red Sea, is but a faint emblem of that terrible position into which the child of God usually falls within a few weeks or months after he has come out of the land of Egypt!

I shall preach, this morning, a sermon which I hope will be useful to such of you as have lately come to know the Lord. You were expecting to build tabernacles in which to dwell on the summit of the mountains of joy forever. But you find, on the contrary, that you have very great troubles and conflicts. And perhaps now you have a more terrible trial than you ever experienced in all your life before! I will endeavor to show you that this is just what you might have expected—that there will be a Red Sea very soon after you come out of your house of bondage! Others of you, my dear Friends, have passed through all these things many years ago. You can say—

***“Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now.
Who could hold me up but You?”***

But I am sure you will be glad to revisit the spot where God delivered you from your distresses. We find it very pleasant to look upon the place where we were taught in our school days, or to visit the haunts of our childhood. So you who are gray-headed in the cause of your Master will not find it very tedious work to go back a little way—and look to that Red Sea which God rebuked and dried up—that you might be led through it even as through the wilderness!

Coming, then, to the subject. The children of Israel had their *difficulties* and so, generally, the child of God has his very soon after he comes out of Egypt. But then they had their *refuges*. And moreover, God had a *great and grand design* to answer in all the troubles into which they were brought.

I. Taking the first point, the children of Israel just now had THREE DIFFICULTIES—three exceedingly great dangers. And so I believe that

every heir of Heaven, within a very short period after the time of his deliverance will meet with the same.

The first they had was a great trial sent by God, Himself. *There was the Red Sea in the front of them.* Now, it was not an enemy that put the sea there—it was God, Himself! We may therefore think that the Red Sea represents some great and trying Providence which the Lord will be sure to place in the path of every new-born child. He does this in order to try our faith and to test the sincerity of our trust in God. I do not know, Beloved, whether your experience will back up mine—but I can say this—the worst difficulty I ever met with, or I think I ever meet with, happened a little time after my conversion to God. And you must generally expect, very soon after you have been brought to know and love Him, that you will have some great, broad, deep Red Sea straight before your path, which you will scarcely know how to pass. Sometimes it will occur in the family. The husband says, for instance—if he is an ungodly man—“You shall not attend such-and-such a place of worship! I positively forbid you to be baptized, or to join that Church.” There is a Red Sea before you. You have done nothing wrong. It is God, Himself, who places that Red Sea before your path. Or perhaps before that time, you were carrying on a business which now you cannot conscientiously continue. And there is a Red Sea which you have to cross in renouncing your means of livelihood. You don’t see how it is to be done—how you are to maintain yourself—and to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Or perhaps your employment calls you among men with whom you lived before on amicable terms, but now, all of a sudden, they say, “Come! Won’t you do as you used to do?” There, again, is a Red Sea before you! It is a hard struggle. You do not like to come out and say, “I cannot, I shall not, for I am a Christian.” You stand still, half afraid to go forward. Or perhaps it is something proceeding more immediately from God. You find that just when He plants a vine in your heart, He blasts all the vines in your vineyard. And when He plants you in His own garden, then it is that he uproots all your comforts and your joys. Just when the Sun of Righteousness is rising upon you, your own little candle is blown out—just when you seem to need it most, your gourd is withered, your prosperity departs and your flood becomes an ebb! I say again, it may not be so with all of you, but I think that most of God’s people have not long escaped the bondage of Egypt before they find some terrible rolling sea lashed, perhaps, by tempestuous winds directly in their path. They stand aghast and say, “God, how can I bear this? I thought I could give up all for You, but now I feel as if I could do nothing! I thought I would be in Heaven and all would be easy. But here is a sea I cannot ford—there is

no squadron of ships to carry me across—it is not even bridged by Your mercy! I must swim it, or else I fear I will perish.”

Then the children of Israel had a second difficulty. They would not have cared about the Red Sea a single atom if they had not been *terrified by the Egyptians who were behind them*. These Egyptians, I think, may be interpreted this morning by way of parable. They represent those sins of ours which we thought were clean dead and gone. For a little while after conversion, sin does not trouble a Christian. He is very happy and cheerful in a sense of pardon. But before many days are past, he will understand what Paul said, “I find another law in my members so that when I would do good, evil is present with me.” The first moment when a new Christian wins his liberty, he laughs and leaps in an ecstasy of joy! He thinks, “Oh, I shall soon be in Heaven! As for sin, I can trample that beneath my feet!” But mark you—scarcely has another Sabbath gladdened his spirit before he finds that sin is too much for him! The old corruptions which he fancied were laid in their graves get a resurrection and start up afresh! He begins to cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He sees all his old sins galloping behind him—like Pharaoh and his host pursuing him to the borders of the Red Sea! There is a great trial *before* him. Oh, he thinks he could bear that. He thinks he could walk through the Red Sea. But oh, those Egyptians—they are *behind* him! He thought he would never have seen them again—they were the plague and torment of his life when they made him work in the brick kiln—he sees his old master, the very man who desired to lay the lash on his shoulders, riding post haste after him! And there are the eyes of that black Pharaoh, flashing like fire in the distance. He sees the horrid, scowling face of the tyrant and how he trembles! Satan is after him and all the legions of Hell seem to be let loose, if possible, utterly to destroy his soul!

At such a time, moreover, our sins are more formidable to us than they were before they were forgiven, because when we were in Egypt, we never saw the Egyptians mounted on horses, or in chariots—they only appeared as our task-masters, with their whips. But now these people see the Egyptians on horseback, clad in armor. They behold all the mighty men of valor come out with their war-like instruments to slay them! So did I find, speaking for myself, that when I first knew the weight of sin, it was as a burden, as a labor, as a trouble. But when the second time—

***“I asked the Lord that I might grow,
In faith and love and every Grace.
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face,”***

and when He answered me by letting all my sins loose upon me, they appeared more frightful than before! I thought the Egyptians in Egypt were not half as bad as the Egyptians out of Egypt. I thought the sins I knew before, though they were cruel taskmasters, were not half as much to be dreaded as those soldier-sins, armed with spears and axes, with chariots of iron, with scythes upon their axles, hastening to assault me! It is true—they did not come so near to me as before, nevertheless they occasioned more fright than when I was their slave! It may be, poor child of God, you are astonished and amazed to find that your sins are more black, now, than they were when you were under conviction. You may feel that you have less hope than you had then, and that your condition is possibly far worse than when the Law was beating you from head to foot and rubbing brine into the wounds of your conscience! You may be saying, “Ah, well, I never thought of this. If I am a child of God—if I were really pardoned and forgiven—how could it be that I should be so vexed and tormented with a sense of my guilt? And if all my transgressions have been cast into the depths of the sea, how is it that I hear the armies of my sins rattling their hoofs and chariot wheels behind me?” I tell you, Beloved, in the name of the Lord, that is just what you ought to have expected! The pangs after we come out of Egypt are at times even more painful than those we feel in the house of bondage! And there is usually a time of trial a little while after the new birth which is even more terrible and awful than the previous agony of the soul, though not usually so protracted. This was the second difficulty.

But there was a third difficulty which, perhaps, worked them more misery than either of the other two. These *poor children of Israel had such faint hearts*. They no sooner saw the Egyptians, than they began to cry out. And when they beheld the Red Sea before them, they murmured against their deliverer! A faint heart is the worst foe a Christian can have. While he keeps his faith firm—while the anchor is fixed deep in the rock—he never need fear the storm. But when the hand of faith is palsied, or the eye of faith is dim, it will go hard with us. As for the Egyptian, he may throw his spear—but we can catch it on the shield of faith—we are not terrified by the weapon. But if we lose our faith, the spear becomes a deadly dart! While we have faith, the Red Sea may flow before us as deep and dark as it pleases—for like Leviathan, we trust we can snuff up Jordan at a draught. But if we have no faith, then at the most insignificant streamlet, which Faith could take up in her hands in a single moment and drink like Gideon’s men, poor Unbelief stands quivering and crying, “Ah, I shall be drowned in the floods, or I shall be slain by the foe! There is no hope for me. I am driven to despair. It would have been better

for me that I had died in Egypt, than that I should come here to be slain by the hand of the enemy.” The child of God, when he is first born, has but very little faith because he has had but little experience. He has not tried the promises and, therefore, he does not know their faithfulness. He has not used the arm of his faith and, therefore, the sinews of it have not become strong. Let him live a little longer and become confirmed in the faith and he will not care for Red Seas, nor yet for the Egyptians! But just then, his little heart beats against the walls of his body and he laments, “Ah, me! Ah, me! O wretched man that I am! How shall I ever find deliverance?”

This description of spiritual geography may be uninteresting to some because they may not have traveled through this part of the wilderness—but others will view it with attention. Who cared about maps of the Crimea till there was war there? But as soon as our soldiers were engaged in that particular spot, every man bought a map of the Crimea and studied the boundaries of Russia. So if you have been in these straits, you will be very glad of my map, this morning, that you may see the way in which God leads His family. These are the three dangers—a great trial, sins pursuing us behind and an exceedingly faint heart.

II. But, thanks be to God! The children of Israel had THREE HELPS.

Oh, child of God, do you discern this mystery? Whenever you have three trials, you will always have three promises! And if you had 40 afflictions, you would have 40 measures of Grace! Yes, and if you had a million troubles, you would have a million measures of mercy! The Israelites had three difficulties and they had three helps. And as the difficulty was put in the way by Providence, so Providence also furnished a relief.

The first help they had was *Providence*. Providence put the Red Sea there and piled the rocks on either side. Providence, represented by the fiery cloudy pillar, had led them to its shore and conducted them into the trouble. And now the same pillar of Providence came to their assistance! They had not come there undirected and, therefore, they would not be left unprotected, for the same cloudy pillar which led them there, came behind them to protect them!

Cheer up, then, heir of Grace! What is your trial? Has Providence brought it upon you? If so, unerring Wisdom will deliver you from it. What is it you are now exercised upon? As truly as you are alive, God will remove it! Do you think God’s cloudy pillar would ever lead you to a place where God’s right arm would fail you? Do you imagine that He would ever guide you into such a trouble that He could not conduct you out again? The Providence which apparently misleads, will, in verity, befriend you! That which leads you into difficulties guards you against your foes.

It casts darkness on your sins, while it gives light to you! How sweet is Providence to a child of God, when he can reflect upon it! He can look out into this world and say, “However great my troubles, they are not so great as my Father’s power! However difficult may be my circumstances, yet all things around me are working together for good. He who holds up yon unpillared arch of the starry heavens can also support my soul without a single apparent prop! He who guides the stars in their well-ordered courses, even when they seem to move in mazy dances—surely He can overrule my trials in such a way that out of confusion He will bring order! And from seeming evil, our God produces lasting good. He who bridles the storm and puts the bit in the mouth of the tempest, surely He can restrain my trial and keep my sorrows in subjection! I need not fear while the lightning is in His hands and the thunder sleeps within His lips—while the oceans gurgle from His fist—and the clouds are in the hollow of His hands. I need not fear while the rivers are turned by His foot and while He digs the channels of the sea. Surely He whose might wings an angel, can furnish a worm with strength! He who guides a cherub will not be overcome by the trials of an ant like myself! He who makes the most ponderous orb roll in dignity and keeps its predestined orbit, can make a little atom like myself move in my proper course and conduct me as He pleases.” Christian, there is no sweeter pillow than Providence! And when Providence seems adverse, still believe it, lay it under your head—for, depend upon it—there is comfort in its bosom! There is hope for you, child of God! That great trouble which is to come in your way in the early part of your pilgrimage is planned by Love, the same Love which shall interpose as your Protector!

Again—the children of Israel had another refuge, in the fact that *they knew that they were the Covenant people of God* and that, though they were in difficulties, God had brought them there and, therefore, God, (with reverence let me say it), was bound in honor to bring them out of that trouble into which He had brought them! “Well,” says the child of God, “I know I am in a strait but this one thing I also know, that I did not come out of Egypt by myself—I know that *He* brought me out. I know that I did not escape by my own power, or slay my first-born sins myself—I know that He did it. And though I fled from the tyrant—I know that He made my feet mighty for travel, for there was not one feeble in all our tribes. I know that though I am at the Red Sea, I did not run there uncalled, but He bade me go there and, therefore, I give my fears to the winds! For if He has led me here into this difficulty, He will lead me out and lead me through!”

But the point to which I want to direct your attention most of all is this. The third refuge which the children of Israel had, *was in a man*—and neither of the two others, without that, would have been of any use. It was the man, Moses. He did everything for them. Your greatest refuge, O child of God, in all your trials, is in a *Man*—not in Moses—but in Jesus Christ! Not in the servant, but in the Master. He is interceding for you, unseen and unheard by you, even as Moses did for the children of Israel. If you could but, in the dim distance, catch the sweet syllables of His voice as they distil from His lips and see His heart as it speaks for you, you would take comfort! God hears *that Man* when He pleads! He can overcome every difficulty. He has not a rod, but a Cross, which can divide the Red Sea. He has not only a cloudy pillar of forgiving Grace, which can dim the eyes of your foes and keep them at a distance—He has a Cross—which can open the Red Sea and drown your sins in the very midst! He will not leave you. Look on yonder Rock of Heaven—He stands, Cross in hand, even as Moses with his rod! Cry to Him, for with that uplifted Cross He will cleave a path for you and guide you through the sea! He will make those hoary floods, which had been friends, forever, stand asunder like foes! Call to Him and He will make you a way in the midst of the ocean and a path through the pathless sea. Cry to Him and there shall not a sin of yours be left alive—He will sweep them all away! And the king of sin, the devil, too, shall be overwhelmed beneath the Savior's blood, while you shall sing—

***“Hell and my sins obstruct my path,
But Hell and sin are conquered foes!
My Jesus nailed them to His Cross,
And sang the triumph as He rose.”***

Look you to that Man who once on Calvary died!

III. GOD HAD A DESIGN IN IT. And here, also, we wish you to regard with attention what God's design is in leading the Christian into exceedingly great trials in the early part of his life. This is explained to us by the Apostle Paul. A reference Bible is the best commentator in the world. And the most heavenly exposition is the searching out of kindred texts and comparing their meaning. “They were all baptized,” says the Apostle, “unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea.” God's design in bringing His people into trouble and raising all their sins at their heels, is to give them a thorough baptism into His service, consecrating them forever to Himself. I mean by baptism, this morning, not the rite, but what baptism *represents*. Baptism signifies dedication to God—initiation into God's service. It is not when we are first converted that we so fully dedicate ourselves to God, as afterwards, when some great Red Sea rolls before us. I would be delighted to see some of you get into trouble. Am I unkind

to utter such a wish? Well I repeat it, I would, for I shall never get you into the Church unless you do! You will never come forward and make a thorough dedication of yourselves to God till you have had a sharp trial. Rest assured of this, that sharp trials were no slight cause of the heroic devotion of the martyrs, confessors and missionaries, who so thoroughly consecrated themselves to their Master's service. The great purpose of all our affliction is the promotion of an entire dedication to Christ in all our hearts! It is only in the font of sorrow that we are baptized with Christ's Baptism. No holy chrism has efficacy to baptize. It is the Spirit who, alone, can dedicate us in the waters of the sea of tribulation. You are brought into these straits, young Believer, that you may at such a time receive the Baptism for God! Do not, I beseech you, let the time pass by, for there are some who neglect it, who, afterwards never perfectly know what it is to be "baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and in the sea." They say, "they will wait a little while," but the consequence is, they wait a very long while! They say they will do, tomorrow, what they ought to do today. Beware how you let slip the opportunity which God presents you, that you may devote yourself publicly to Him. The very first time after conversion, when we come into straits and difficulties, is intended that we should then be dedicated to Jesus and come out openly as the children of the living God!

Now, Beloved, let these thoughts rest with you. You may think them unimportant but I am sure they are not. Believe me, you ought, indeed, to acknowledge yourselves on the Lord's side. If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God, serve him! There is nothing which I would more earnestly and ardently press upon you than the great duty of decision for Jesus Christ. How many of you have a faint and indistinct hope that when you die, you will be Christ's people? And yet you must confess that you are not decided for Christ! You think you are His, but you often neglect duty and frequently allow what you think a little sin to stain your conscience. You are not godly in worldly affairs. But, beseech you, put the Truth of God and righteousness into one scale and put your own worldly gain into the other—and see which is the most important—and if you think that prudence dictates attention to this world instead of God, then remember, that is Hellish prudence and comes of the devil! And, therefore, reject it! If you were Egyptians, I might tell you to serve another master. But since you are God's people, or profess to be, I charge home upon you. And I beg of you, if you make a profession, to be out-and-out with it! How we loathe those hot and cold people who are neither one thing nor the other! You who hold with the hare and run with the hounds—you who are first one thing and then another—you who are half horse, half alligator and

neither of them—you who are something between the two, who are neither Christians nor worldlings in your own opinion. We know which you are! I have often thought what a consistent religion the Roman Catholic would be for some of you go-between people. You are not exactly children of God, but you would not like to be called the children of the devil. Where should we put you, at last? It would be a very convenient thing to have a *purgatory* for you—to place you somewhere between the two! But as we have no such place, we do not wish to have any such characters and we believe there are none such. You are either servants of God, or servants of the devil! Don't stand between two opinions—but just say, once and for all—whom you will serve! If you choose the devil, choose him, love him, serve him and rejoice in your choice. If you choose Hell, go there, rush madly there—it's a fearful dwelling place for eternity—an awful home forever! But if you choose God, I beseech you, be in downright earnest about it. The religion of the present day—what mockery it is to call it religion at all—I protest. I believe the common religion of this age will not carry half those who profess it to Heaven. It is a religion which *they* might easily carry to Heaven, for it is too light to burden them, but *it* is too fragile to carry them there! They have a godliness which has not eaten up their soul. I heard a minister say once to his people that, “it would be a long time before the zeal of God's house would eat them up.” Take the Churches all round—what a slumbering brotherhood they are! There might almost be a controversy between the prince of this world and the prince of Heaven to whom they belonged. But I beseech you, let there be a marked and decided difference between you and the world! Let your heart be steeped in godliness! Let your life be saturated with religion! Take care that, “whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, you do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.” So shall God see His great design subserved of making you to be baptized unto Jesus, “in the cloud and in the sea.”

In concluding, there is one sad aspect of this picture which I wish you to regard. It is this. Some of you are journeying in an unconverted state to that brook from which there is no return. At death you will find a Red Sea in your way—the sea of death staring you in the face! When you come before it, you will find no bridge, no ships. You must wade that sea alone. And, mark you, if you are now living in an ungodly condition and are doing so when you die—as certainly as you are here—just when that great sea of death is rolling before you, all the Egyptian hosts of your sins will harass you in the rear! All your sins will come bellowing after you. You will have your iniquities like wild winter wolves pursuing you, thirsty for blood and swift to slay! You will hear fiends howling in your

ears. And when the raging flood of Jordan has made your bones shake and your marrow quiver, just then you will see the red eyes of your sins peering through the darkness of your despair and hear the howling of your former transgressions as they hound you to the pit of Hell, seeking after your soul's blood! Ah, then, my Hearer, you will have no cloudy pillar to give you light! You will have no pillar of darkness to confuse your foes. But you will have behind you all your sins—and before you that black sea of death which you are compelled to cross! But mark you, those sins will swim that sea with you. They will not be like the Egyptians which were drowned. When you are wading through the sea, you will find your sins like hounds fixing on a stag, drinking your heart's blood. Yes, when you have landed in eternity, you will find there was not a single one drowned in the sea but that they are all alive—every sin grown into a giant, every lust brandishing a thousand arms, each arm bearing a thousand horrid fingers of flame—and each finger a claw of iron which shall tear your soul! Oh, I warn you against these Egyptians of your sins, for unless the blood is sprinkled on your doorpost and on your lintel—and unless the destroying angel smites those sins for you, they will assuredly follow you across the sea! I think I see you there! You are just in the midst of Jordan. Poor soul! The river, itself, is work enough for a man to wade through it. For dying is not easy labor. The waters are rushing into his lips and gurgling in his throat like a whirlpool. How he shakes! White as the floods around him, he quivers like the very waves themselves! And, ah, just when in his fell despair, he shrieks—see the devils feed him with black fruits of Hell? And when he quivers most, see there the scalding brimstone of Almighty God rained upon his body? Just when he is shrieking in death's torments, then is it that Satan takes the opportunity to howl in his face and show him his glaring eyes of fire, to terrify his poor soul worse than death, itself! Sinner! When you die, remember that you will have to die two deaths—one death which *we* shall see—another death which we only know of by the shrieks, groans and anguish which even we may hear on this side of the grave!

But what you will experience in the next world, I cannot picture to you, I cannot tell you. Those dim shapes of horror I cannot paint for you. Those fierce flames of misery I cannot now describe. That doleful *misery* of desolation and that awful lament of eternity, I cannot endure to hear! I dare not lift the veil that conceals the dread scenes, which haunt the spirits of the ungodly departed!

Well, then, what shall you do to escape this death? What can you do to be saved? Why, Sinner, in the first place, of yourself you can do noth-

ing at all! But, in the second place, there is One—a Man who can do all for you! He is the Man, Christ Jesus. If you believe on Him, filthy as you are and wretched and outcast and vile, you shall never see the second death but shall have eternal life abiding in you! And when you die in this world, instead of black fiends to hound you through the river, you will have sweet angels playing over the stream, waiting to waft you unto Glory. You will feel bright spirits fanning your hot brow with their soft wings. You will hear songs, sweet as the music of Paradise, and when your troubles are the strongest, you will have a peace with God “which passes all understanding.” An “unspeakable joy and full of glory,” which shall enable you to “swallow up death in victory.” “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.” Poor, trembling, penitent Sinner, put your hand inside the hand of Christ. Now fall on His Mercy. “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” I beseech you for Christ’s sake, “be you reconciled to God.” And if you are penitents, may God give you faith that you may be Believers!

As for the rest of you, remember, before you go, I have told you no fable, but the Truth of God. You may go away and say, “There is no Hell.” Well, suppose there is none—Believers will be as well off as you are. But suppose there is—and there is for a certainty—suppose yourselves in it? You cannot, then, suppose yourselves out of it anymore. May God grant His blessing, for Jesus’ sake, turning many of you to righteousness. Amen.

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

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

SONG FOR THE FREE—HOPE FOR THE BOUND NO. 1992

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and broke their chains in pieces.
Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,
and for His wonderful works to the children of men!
For He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in two.”
Psalm 107:14-16.*

MY anxious, prayerful desire this morning is that some who have been in the condition described in the text may come out of it into full redemption. They have been too long in prison and now the silver trumpet sounds—liberty to the captives! Jesus has come into the world to break the gate of brass and to cut the bars of iron in two. Oh, that my prayer might be heard for those who are in bondage! I trust that some of those who are now immured in the dungeon of despondency will say, “Amen,” to my prayer and, if they are praying inside and we are praying outside—and the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, comes to open the prison doors, then there will be a Jubilee before long.

This passage, of course, literally alludes to prisoners held in durance by their fellow men. What a sad world man has made of this earth! With superfluity of evil, man has multiplied his Bastilles! As if there were not misery enough to the free, he invents cells and chains! One's blood boils when standing in those living graves in which tyrants have buried their victims out of sight and hearing! Could the most fierce of wild beasts display such cruelty to their kind as men have shown to men? By the horrors of such imprisonments, one must estimate the joy of being set free. To God it is a glory that, in the order of His Providence, He often provides a way of escape for the oppressed. Cruel dynasties have been overthrown, tyrants have been hurled from their thrones and then enlargement has come to those who were shut up. Liberated ones should, indeed, “praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”

But the various scenes in this Psalm were intended to describe *spiritual* conditions. The second verse is a key to the whole song—“Let the *redeemed* of the Lord say so.” The deliverance here intended is one which is brought to us by redemption—and comes by the way of the great Sacrifice on Calvary. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Him who surrendered His own liberty for our sakes and consented to be bound and crucified that He might set us free. My grateful heart seems to hear Him saying

again, as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” His consenting to be bound brought freedom to all those who put their trust in Him.

I shall endeavor, as God shall help me, to speak of the text spiritually—and we will consider it under the heading of three questions. First, *Who are the favored men of whom the text speaks?* Secondly, *How has this remarkable deliverance been worked.* Thirdly, *What shall be done about it?* The text tells us how to act. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!”

I. First, let us ask, WHO ARE THESE FAVORED MEN?

These favored persons were guilty men, as you will see by the context—“Because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.” Hear this, you sinful ones, and take heart! God has worked great wonders for a people whom it seemed impossible for Him to notice. If they came into prison through rebellion, you would expect Him to leave them there. Yet rebels are set free by an act of immeasurable Grace! The Redeemer has received gifts for men, “yes, also for the rebellious.” These men were despisers of God’s Word—was there a Gospel of freedom for them? Yes! It is for them that Jehovah, in abounding Grace, has worked miracles of mercy.

The persons described by the Psalmist were guilty of overt acts. They were in actual rebellion against the commands of the Most High. Their rebellion was not a single hasty act—their entire lives were a continuance of their wicked revolt. From their childhood, they went astray. In their youth, they provoked the Lord, and in their manhood they disobeyed Him more and more. They were in open opposition to their Creator, Benefactor and Lord. I have no doubt that I am speaking to many who must admit that they have been actual and willful transgressors against the Lord of Love. They have turned unto Him their back, and not the face—they have not been servants, but rebels.

The persons here spoken of were as evil in their hearts as in their lives, for they, “despised the counsel of the Most High.” Perhaps they intellectually rejected the teaching of Holy Scripture and scorned to receive what the Lord revealed. They refused to yield their understandings to Infallible teaching and judged their own thoughts to be better than the thoughts of God. The counsel of the Most High, though marked by the sublimity of Him from whom it came, appeared to them to be less high than their own soaring theories and, therefore, they despised it. To some men, *any* doctrine is more acceptable than that of Scripture. They gladly hear what doubters say, but they will not hear what God the Lord shall speak. His counsel of instruction, His counsel of command, His counsel of promise—His whole counsel they cast away from them—and they take counsel of their own conceit!

Now this actual and mental sin, when it is brought home to a man’s awakened conscience, fills him with dismay. Because he has transgressed with hand and heart, the convicted sinner is in sore dismay. O my Hearer, are you in distress this day through your own fault? Do you wonder that you are in trouble? Did you expect to go in the way of evil and yet to be

happy? Did you never hear those words, “There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked”? Know you not that they are “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”? Now that you find yourself taken in the thorns of your own folly, are you at all surprised? The Scripture says, “Have you not procured this unto yourself?” Are not these the wages of sin? Thank God you have not yet received more than the earnest money of that terrible wage! But, depend upon it, sin is a hard paymaster! Sin and sorrow are wedded in the very nature of things and there is no dividing them. They that sow iniquity shall reap the same. Turn as it may, the river of wickedness at last falls into the sea of wrath! He that sins must smart unless a Savior can be found to be his Surety and to smart for him.

So, then, these people who were set free were, by nature, guilty men who could not have deserved the Divine interposition. Hear this, you consciously guilty, you that are condemning yourselves and confessing your faults! This is good news for you, even for you! The Lord sets free the men whose own hands have forged their manacles. This is Free Grace, indeed! These marvels of delivering love were performed, not for the innocent in their misfortune, but for the *guilty* in their *rebellion*. “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

Go a little further and you will notice that *these persons were doomed men*, for they “sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.” It means that they were in the condemned cell, waiting for execution. No light could come to them, for their condemnation was clear. No escape could be hoped for. Not a ray of hope came from any direction. In a short time they must be taken out to execution, so that the shadow of their death fell with its damp, dread, deadening influence upon their spirits. Do I address any such this morning? Ah, my Friend, I can sympathize with you as you sit here and feel that you are doomed! I, too, have felt that sentence of death within me! I knew myself to be “condemned already,” because I had not believed on the Son of God. I recollect how those words, “condemned already,” rang in my ears as I should think the bell of St. Sepulcher’s used to sound in the ears of the condemned in Newgate, warning them that the time was come to go out upon the scaffold.

When the shadow of eternal wrath falls upon the heart, nothing worse can be imagined, for the conscience bears sure witness that God is just when He judges, condemns and punishes. When a man feels the shadow of death upon him, infidel arguments are silenced, self-conceited defenses are banished and the heart consents to the justice of the Law of God which declares, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” My Brothers and Sisters who remember being in this state of conscious condemnation will join me in praying for those who are now in that condition, for they need our pity and love. O my Hearers, condemned in your own consciences, take heart and hope, for you are the sort of people whom Jehovah, in His Grace, delights to set free! Those doomed ones were the men of whom our text sings, “He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.” It is your condemned condition which needs free mercy and, behold, the Lord meets your need in His boundless Grace!

To the doomed, the Lord God in Christ Jesus will give free pardon this morning! I speak with great confidence, for my trust is in the God of Love. The Lord is going to hear prayer for you sinners. You shall be brought from under the black cloud which now threatens you with overwhelming tempest—you shall come forth from the condemned cell, not to execution—but to absolution! Blessed be the name of the Lord! He passes by transgression and does it justly through the Atonement of His Son!

But next, *these persons were bound men*, for they, “sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.” Their afflictions were like iron, hard and cold, and such they could not break from. The iron entered into their souls. The rust cut the flesh and poisoned the blood. They were bound in a double sense—addiction within and iron without. It is a terrible thing when a man feels that he is lost and that he cannot get away from destruction. An evil habit has got him within its iron grasp and will not relax its hold. Even though he would, he cannot loosen himself from the thralldom of his sin. He has become a slave and there is no escape for him. “O my God!” he cries, “what can I do?” The more he strains, the more the iron seems to hold him. His attempts to be free from evil only prove to him how much enslaved he is. What an awful compound is described in the text—“affliction and iron”! The bondage is mental and physical, too. The enslaved spirit and the depraved flesh act and react upon each other and hold the poor struggling creature as in an iron net! He cannot break off his sins. He cannot rise to a better life.

I know that some of you who are here at this time are in this case. You long to be delivered, but you are unable to cut the cords which hold you. You are greatly troubled, day after day, and cannot rest—and yet you get no farther. You are striving to find peace, but peace does not come. You are laboring after emancipation from evil habits, but the habits still hold you! Friend thus bound, to you I have to tell the glad news that Jesus Christ has come on purpose that He might proclaim the opening of the prisons to them that are bound! “He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in two.” God is able to liberate men from every bond of sin over which they mourn! Would you be free? He will open the door! There is no habit so inveterate, there is no passion so ferocious, but God can deliver you from it! If you will but trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, His Grace is a hammer that can break your chains! Let Jesus say, “Loosen him and let him go,” and not even *devils* can detain you! Christ’s warrant runs over the whole universe and, if He makes you free, you will be free, indeed!

To advance another step, *these persons were weary men*, for we read of them, “He brought down their heart with labor.” This does not happen to all in the same degree, but to some of us, this labor was exceedingly grinding and exhausting. Our hearts were lofty and needed bringing down—and the Lord used means to do it. With some, temporal circumstances go wrong—where everything used to prosper, everything appears to be under a blight. From abundance they descend to need. Perhaps the health also begins to give way and from being strong and hearty men they become sickly and feeble. How often this tames proud spirits! If it is not

outward sorrow, it is within that they labor till their heart is brought low. They cannot rest and yet they try all earthly remedies for ease—they go to the theater, they sport with frivolous companions, they laugh, they dance, they plunge into vice—but they cannot shake off the burden of their sin!

It will not be removed. As the giraffe, when the lion has leaped upon him, bears his enemy upon his shoulders and cannot dislodge him, even though he rushes across the wilderness like the wind, so the sinner is being devoured by his sin while he madly labors to shake it off. While the unconverted seek to rest themselves, they do but increase their weariness. They labor, yes, labor as in the very fire, but it is labor in vain! In vain do they hasten to every religious service and attend to every sacred ceremony! In vain do they try to mourn—how can they put feeling into a heart of stone? If they could, they would make their tears flow forever and their prayers forever rise, but, to their horror, they accomplish nothing! The whip of the Law sounds and they must get to their tasks, again—but the more they do, the more they are undone. Like one that, having fallen into a slough, sinks all the deeper into the mire through every struggle that he makes, so do they fall lower and lower by their efforts to rise!

I understand those awful struggles of yours, so desperate and yet so unavailing. God is bringing down your heart with labor, but have you not had enough of this? Do you not remember that love word, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? Sweet promise! Will you not believe it and avail yourselves of it? Will you not come to Jesus and take the rest which He gives? How I wish you would come this very day! I beseech the Holy Spirit to turn you to Jesus. The Lord has come forth with power to draw you and to bring you away from your weariness unto the sweet rest which remains for the people of God! Poor doves, fly no further! Return to your Noah! These of whom we speak at this time were as weary men as ever *you* can be, but Jesus gave them rest—why should He not give rest to *you*? Though bad, and banned, and bound, and burdened, there is yet hope, for the Lord can set you free!

Again, *these persons were downcast men*—“they fell down, and there was none to help.” “We cannot go on any longer,” they said. “It is useless to exert ourselves. We cannot escape God’s wrath and yet we cannot bear it. We are at our wits’ end. There is no use in our trying to be better. We must give it up in despair.” “They fell down.” This shows that they were quite spent. The captive has been grinding at the mill till he cannot go another round. Even the lash cannot make him take another step—he falls in faintness—as though life had gone. So have we known men forced to acknowledge that they are, “without strength.” This was always true, but they did not always feel it. Now they have come to this, that if Heaven could be had for one more effort—and Hell escaped for one more good work—yet they could not do it! They fall down and there they lie, a heap of helplessness, dead in trespasses and sins! Where is the boasted power of their free will?

Now it is to you who have fallen down, even to you, that the word of this salvation is sent! The Lord Jesus delights to lift up those that lie at His feet. He is a great over-turner—“He has put down the mighty from

their seats and exalted them of low degree.” He that flies aloft on the eagle’s wings of pride shall be brought low by the shafts of vengeance. But he that humbles himself to the dust shall be lifted up! He that has fallen down and lies in the dust at the feet of Jesus, lies on the doorstep of eternal life! The Lord will give power to the weak and increase strength to those who have no might. I rejoice when I hear any one of you acknowledge his weakness, since the Lord Jesus will now show forth His power in you!

In fact, *these persons were helpless men*—“They fell down and there was none to help.” What a word that is—“None to help”! The proverb says, “God helps those who help themselves.” There is a sort of truth in it, but I venture to cover it with a far greater Truth of God—“God helps those that cannot help themselves.” When there is none to help you, then God will help you. “There was none to help”—no priest, no minister, not even a praying wife, or a praying mother could do anything! The man felt that human helpers were of no use. His bed was shorter than that he should stretch himself upon it and his covering was narrower than that he should wrap himself up in it. Now he saw that there was no balm in Gilead, there was no physician there—and he looked to a higher place than Gilead for balm and medicine! The balm for such a wound as his must come from Heaven, for on earth there was “none to help.” This is a fitting epitaph to be placed over the grave of self-righteousness! This also is the death-knell of priestcraft, birthright membership and sacramentarianism. The conscience sees that there is “none to help.” Is this your case? Then you are the men and women in whom God will work the marvels of His Grace—and bring you out where you shall walk in light and peace!

There was only one good point about these people—*they did, at last, take to praying*—“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.” It was not much of a prayer to hear. It was too shrill to be musical. It was too painful to be pleasant. “They cried” like one in sore anguish. They cried like a child that has lost its mother. “They cried” like some poor wounded animal in great pain. Do you tell me that you cry, but that your cry is a very poor one? I know it and I am glad to hear you say so, for the less *you* think of your cry, the more God will think of it! Do you value yourself according to your prayers? Then your prayers have no value in them! When you think that your prayers are only broken words, hideous moans and wretched desires, then you begin to form a right estimate of them and thus you are on true ground where the Lord of Truth can meet you.

“They cried.” Was it any credit to them to cry? Why, no, it was what they were *forced* to do! They would not have cried to the Lord, even then, if they could have done anything else. They cried when their hearts had been brought so low that they fell down. It is a good fall when a man falls on his knees. O my dear Hearer, whatever else you do, or do not do, are you crying to God in secret for His Grace? Then, as surely as the Lord lives, you shall come out into liberty! A praying man shall never be sent to perdition. There is that about prayer which makes it a token for good, a pledge of blessings on the road, a door of hope in dark hours. Where is the man that cries? Where is the man that prays? That is the man of whom it

shall be said, and of others like he, “The Lord brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces.”

May the Lord bless the description which I have given, so that some of you may see yourselves as in a mirror and be encouraged to hope that the Lord will save you as He has saved others like you! If you see yourself in the text, take home the comfort of it and make use of it. Do not look at it and say, “This belongs to somebody else.” You Brothers and Sisters in bondage; you self-despairing sinners—you are the ones for whom Christ went up to the Cross! If you saw a letter directed to yourself, would you not open it? I should think so! The other day a poor woman received in a letter a little help sent to her by a friend. She was in great distress and she went to that very friend begging for a few shillings. “Why,” said the other, “I sent you money yesterday, by an order in a letter!” “Dear, dear!” said the poor woman, “that must be the letter which I put behind the mirror!” Just so—and there are lots of people who put God’s letters behind the mirror and fail to make use of the promise which is meant for them! Come, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, come and taste my Master’s love, yes, take of it freely and be filled with heavenly rest!

II. Secondly, may God’s Spirit go with us while we answer the question—HOW HAS THIS DELIVERANCE BEEN WORKED? You that have been set free should tell how you were emancipated! Let me tell my story first. It was the best news I ever heard when it was told me that Jesus died in my place. I sat down in my misery, hopeless of salvation, ready to perish, till they told me that there was One who loved me and for love of me was content to yield His life for my deliverance! Wonder of wonders, He had actually borne the death penalty for me! They said that the Lord of Glory had become Man to save men and that if I trusted Him, I might know assuredly that He had suffered in my place and had blotted out my sins. I marveled much as I heard this, but I felt that no one could have invented news so strange! It surpassed all fiction, that the offended *God* should, Himself, take my nature and, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ should pay my debts, suffer for my sins and put those sins away!

I heard the blessed tidings—there was some comfort even in *hearing* it—and I believed it and clutched at it as for life. Then did I begin to live! I believe that Truth of God today—all my hope lies there. If any of you wonder that I show zeal for the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, you may cease to ponder! Would not any one of you stand up for his wife and children? This Truth is more to me than wife and children—it is *everything* to me! I am a damned man for all eternity if Christ did not die for me! I will put it no more softly than that. If my Redeemer had not borne my sins in His own body on the tree, then I would have to bear them in *my own body* in the place of endless misery! I have no shade of a hope anywhere but in the Sacrifice of Jesus! I cannot, therefore, give up this Truth of God—I had sooner give up my life!

I heard that the Son of God had suffered in my place that I might go free. I believed it and I said to myself, “Then I have no business to be sitting here in darkness and in the shadow of death.” I shook myself from my lethargy. I arose and went out of my prison—and as I moved to go out,

a light shone round about me and my fetters fell clanking to the ground! What glorious musical instruments they were! The very things that had galled me so long, now brought me joy! I found that the iron gate, which I thought could never be unlocked, opened to me of its own accord. I could not believe that it was true, it seemed too wonderful! I thought I must be dreaming. I very soon knew of a surety that it was I, myself—the cold night air blew down the street of my daily care and I said, “Oh, yes, I am still on earth and it is true! And I am free from despair and delivered from the curse!” This is how I came out to liberty—I believed in Jesus, my Redeemer. Today, my dear Brothers and Sisters here, *hundreds of them*, would, each one, tell the story in a different way, but it would come to the same thing.

Follow me while we go a little into Scriptural detail and learn from David how the Lord sets free the captives.

First, our deliverance was worked *by the Lord Himself*. Listen—“HE brought them out of darkness.” Write that, “HE,” in capital letters, Mr. Printer! Have you in the house any specially large letters? If so, set up that word in the most prominent type you have—“HE brought them out of darkness.” Read also the 16th verse—“HE has broken the gates of brass.” Did the Lord send an angel to liberate us? No, HE came Himself in the Person of His dear Son! When the Lord Jesus Christ had paid our enormous debt, did He leave us to accept our quittance entirely of our own free will, apart from His Grace? Ah, no! The Holy Spirit came and *made us willing* in the day of His power! “HE.” “HE.” “HE” worked all the work *for* us and all our works *in* us! “HE brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.” “Oh that men would praise the Lord, for HE has broken the gates of brass.” It is the Lord’s doing! It is marvelous in our eyes. There is no salvation worth the having which has not the hand of the Godhead in it. It needs Father, Son and Holy Spirit to save a soul! None but the Trinity can deliver a captive soul from the chains of sin and death and Hell. Jehovah Himself saves us!

Next, *the Lord did it alone*—“He has broken the gates of brass.” Nobody else was there to aid in liberating the prisoner. When our Lord Jesus trod the winepress, He was alone. When the Spirit of God came to work in us eternal life, He worked alone. Instruments are condescendingly used to convey the Word of Life, but the life of the Word is wholly of God. As to the Divine Father, is it not true, of “His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth”? He is the Author of our spiritual life and He, alone. None can share the work of our salvation with Him and none can divide the Glory. Ho, you that are captives, are you looking for some *man* to help you? Remember, I pray you, that there is “none to help.” “Salvation is of the Lord.” Remember that verse, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” That is to say, there is no one else in the work of salvation except God! O Soul, if you have to do with Christ Jesus, you must have Him at the beginning; you must have Him in the middle; you must have Him in the end and you must have Him to fill up every nook and corner from the first to the last. He *alone* has done it!

Note, too, that what He did was done *by the Lord's own goodness*, for the Psalmist says, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" His goodness took the form of mercy, as it is said in the first verse of this Psalm, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever!" It must have been mercy, because those whom it blessed were as undeserving as they were miserable! They were guilty—guilty in action and guilty in thought—they had rebelled against the Words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. Yet He came and set them free! You and I are always needing to know before we give alms to beggars, "Are they deserving people?" God gives the alms of His Grace *only to the undeserving!* We respond to those who have a claim upon us—God remembers those who have no claim whatever upon Him! "Ah," says one, "but the people cried!" I know they did, but they did not even do *that* till He first of all brought down their heart with labor! *Prayer is a gift from God as well as an appeal to God.* Even prayer for mercy is not a cause, but a result! Divine Grace is at the back of prayer and at the base of prayer. These prisoners would not have prayed if God had not worked upon them and driven and drawn them to pray.—

***"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee.
Your Grace is most sovereign,
Most rich and most free."***

So it has been with others and, therefore, have I hope that it will be so with you, my beloved Hearers! In the greatness of His goodness I trust my Lord will come and save you. It is not *your* goodness, but His goodness, which is the cause of hope. It is not your merit, but His mercy is His motive for blessing you. How greatly do I rejoice to remember that the Lord delights in mercy! It is His joy to pardon sin and pass by the transgressions of the remnant of His people.

Note, once again, that while we are describing this great deliverance, we cannot help seeing that *the Lord effected it most completely.* What did He do? Did He bring them out of darkness? That was to give them *light.* Yes, but a man that is chained is only a little better off for getting light, for then he can see his chains all the more! Notice what follows—"and out of the shadow of death"—so the Lord gave them *life* as well as light. That "shadow of death" is gone. It can no longer brood over their darkened spirits. Yes, but when a man has light and life, if he is still in bondage, his life may make him feel his bondage the more vividly—and his light may make him long the more for liberty. But it is added, "and he broke their chains in pieces," which means *liberty.* The Lord gave light, life and liberty—these three things. God does nothing by halves. He does not begin to save and then say, "I have done enough for you. I must stop midway." Dear Heart, if the Lord comes to your prison, He will not merely light a lamp in your dungeon, though that were something. He will not merely revive your spirit and give you more life, though that were something. But He will break your chains and bring you out into the liberty with which Christ makes men free! He will finish His emancipating work. Do it, Lord! Do it now! Help men to believe in Jesus at this moment!

There is one more point which I want you to notice very carefully. When the Lord does this, *he does this everlastingly.* He "broke their chains in

pieces.” When a man was set free from prison in the old times when they used iron chains, the blacksmith came and took the chains off and then they were hung up on the walls. Have you never been in ancient prisons and seen the fetters and manacles hanging up ready for use? Yes, for use upon those who have already worn such jewelry—if they should come that way again! This is not the case, here, for He “broke their chains in pieces.” Note this right well, O child of God! You were once shut up as with gates of brass and bars of iron—and the devil thinks that one of these days he will get you behind those gates again! But he never will, for the Lord “has broken the gates of brass.” All the powers of darkness cannot shut us up with broken gates! Satan thinks he will imprison us again, but the bars of iron are cut in two! The means of our captivity are no longer available!

My mind carries me to a certain scene and my eyes almost behold it. Behold Samson, the hero of Israel, shut in within the walls of Gaza. The Philistines boast, “Now will he be our captive.” He slept till midnight and then he arose. He found that he was shut up within the city and so he went to the gate. That gate was barred and locked, but what difference does it make? Israel’s champion bowed his great shoulders down to the gate—he took hold of both the posts, gave a tremendous heave—and in an instant tore up the whole construction from the earth in which it had been firmly placed! “He lifted the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron.” See in this thing a symbol of what our Lord Jesus Christ did when He arose from the dead. He carried away all that which held us captive—posts and bar and all! “He led captivity captive.”

When our Lord had led us forth from our prison, He said to Himself, “They shall never be shut up again, for now I will make sure work of it,” and therefore He broke the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in two. How then, can any child of God be shut up within the Gaza of sin again? How shall we be condemned when the Lord has put away our sin forever? No, the liberty received is *everlasting* liberty—we shall not see bondage any more. Oh, dear Souls, I want you to lay hold on this! You doomed and guilty! You downcast and wearied, there is everlasting salvation for you—not that which will save you today and will let you go back to your bondage tomorrow—but that which will make you the Lord’s free men forever! If you believe that Jesus is the Christ. If you believe in Him to save you, you shall be saved! It is not said half-saved, but *saved*! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” That cannot admit that we should go to Hell. Jesus says, “I give unto My sheep *eternal life*; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in two.” Lord, help some poor souls to sing this song today and receive, at this moment, everlasting salvation!

III. I close with a practical question—WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS? If such people as we have described have been brought into liberty, what is to be done about it? I do not want to tell you what to do. I would have you do it by instinct. Gladly would I, like Miriam, take a timbrel and

go first and bid all the sons and daughters of Israel follow me in this song—“Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. He has brought out His captives and set His people free.” It naturally suggests itself to the liberated spirit to magnify the Lord. So the Psalmist put it, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!”

First, then, if the Lord has set any of you free—*record it*. See how David wrote it down. Write it in your diary. Write it so that friends may read it. Say, “The Lord has done great things for us.”

When you have recorded it, then *praise God*. Praise God with all your heart. Praise God, everyone of you! Praise God every day! When you have praised God, yourselves, then entreat others to join with you! The oratorio of God’s praise needs a full choir. I remember, years ago, a bill connected with a religious service of a very pretentious character, and on this bill it promised that the Hallelujah Chorus should be sung before the sermon. The friend who led the singing for me at that time came in to me and asked if I could spare him. “See here,” he said, “a person has come from the service which has been advertised to say that they have nobody to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. The minister wants me to go down and do it.” I answered, “Yes. By all means go! If you can sing the Hallelujah Chorus, alone, don’t throw yourself away on me.”

Then we smiled and, at last, broke out into a laugh—it was too much for our gravity! Surely, for a man to think that he can sufficiently praise God, alone, is much like attempting to sing the Hallelujah Chorus as a solo! The Psalmist therefore utters that great, “Oh!” “Oh that men would praise the Lord!” I do not think he said, “men,” for the word, “men,” is in italics—the translators are accountable for it. He means, “Oh that angels! Oh that cherubim and seraphim would praise the Lord! Oh that all creatures that have breath would praise the Lord for His goodness!” Even that would not be enough—let the mountains and the hills break forth before Him into singing—and let all the trees of the forest clap their hands. Let the sea roar and the fullness, thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. With a great, “Oh!” With a mighty sigh over the holy business which was far too great for himself, David felt moved to call upon all others to praise the Lord!

I close with that, my Brothers, my Sisters—you that have been saved, praise God! Praise Him with the blessings He has lavished on you. I described them in three ways. With your *light* praise Him—the more you know, the more you see, the more you understand—turn it *all* into praise. Next, with your *life* praise Him—with your physical life, with your mental life, with your spiritual life—with life of every sort, even unto eternal life, praise the Lord. *Liberty* has been given us—let our *freedom* praise Him. Be like that man who was made straight, who went out of the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God. God has made you free, feel free to praise Him! And if men will not give you leave to praise, take French leave. Yes, take heavenly leave and praise God anywhere and everywhere!

Listen how they sing the songs of Bacchus and of Venus in the streets and even wake us up in the night—therefore why may we not sing God’s

praises in the same public fashion? We *must* praise Him! We *will* praise Him! We *do* praise Him! And we *shall* praise Him forever and ever!

Praise Him with the heart He has changed, with the lips He has loosed, with the lives He has spared! A little while ago you could not speak a cheerful word, but now you can rejoice in God. Let those lips, from which He has taken the muzzle of dumb despair, be opened in His praise. Praise Him with all the talents He has lent you. If you have any power of thought, if you have any fluency of speech, praise Him! If you have any voice of song, praise Him. If you have health and strength, praise Him. Let every limb of your body praise Him—those members which were servants of sin, let them be instruments of righteousness unto God! Praise Him with your substance. Let your gold and silver, yes, and your bronze, praise Him! Praise Him with all that you have and with all that you are—and with all that you hope to be. Lay your all upon the altar. Make a whole burnt-offering of it. Praise Him with all the influence you have. If He has delivered you from the shadow of death, let your shadow, like that of Peter, become the instrument of God's healing power to others!

Teach others to praise God. Influence them by your example. Fill your house with music from top to bottom—perfume every room with the fragrance of living devotion! Make your houses belfries and be, yourselves, the bells forever ringing out the loud praises of the Lamb of God. He bore your sins—you bear His praises. He died for you, therefore live for Him! He has heard your prayers—let Him hear your praises! Let us together sing “hallelujah to God and the Lamb.” Let us stand upon our feet and with one voice and heart let us sing—

***“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, you heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 107:1-32.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 126, 136 (SONG II).**

LETTER FROM: MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—A brief interval of relief from the incessant strain of my position has revived my spirit. And the prospect of some weeks of further rest has brought me rest by anticipation. No one can ever know till the Great Day shall reveal it, the great burden of responsibility which ordinarily presses upon me from day to day. If I am not borne up by the prayers of the Lord's people, I cannot stand! Even now I do not forget the beloved flock at home—how can I? They and the whole work of the Lord are always on my heart. I beg to be in like manner daily remembered in supplication by those who have fellowship with me. This is at this moment my one urgent word—“BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US!”
Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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

THE HISTORY OF SUNDRY FOOLS NO. 1824

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 1, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON JULY 17, 1884.

***“Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they draw near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”
Psalm 107:17-20.***

THE Psalm contains one picture in four panels. It illustrates a single experience in its main outlines, for in every case it is written, “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses.” And yet each case is very different from any of the others. We have variety and similarity. It is just so in the case of the people of God. Our fall, our sin, our call by Grace, our prayer, the Lord’s answer to that prayer by Jesus Christ—in all these, “as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.” We are wonderfully alike as children of the first Adam and alike when we become children of the second Adam—and yet no two children of God are quite the same. In human families we meet with great diversity of features among those who are, nevertheless, the offspring of the same parents. In the great family of God, the diversity of the features is very wonderful, indeed. Look at the four pictures which are so much alike and which, indeed, do but represent one, and yet you shall discover in them marked diversity.

Learn this double lesson—that unless your spot is the spot of God’s children, you are none of His. And also, do not expect to find that spot exactly the same in you as it is in others of His undoubted offspring. As on earth all flesh is not the same flesh, and as in the heavens all glories are not the same glory, for there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars—so in the ordinary life of Christians here below there is one Spirit, but there are different operations. Therefore do not judge yourself by any man’s biography. Do not condemn yourself if, after reading John Bunyan’s, “Grace Abounding,” you say, “I never went into these dark places.” Be *glad* that you never did! After reading Madame Guyon, do not condemn yourself if you never heard her, “Torrents,” nor felt her ecstasies of Divine life. Be sorry that you never have and aspire after such things, but do not *condemn* yourself.

Here are four pictures and you may find your likeness in one of the four. But do not be so unwise as to condemn yourself if you are not seen in the other three. “I never went to sea,” says one, “this cannot picture

me.” “I never traversed a Sahara,” says another, “this cannot picture me.” “I never was in prison in the dark,” says a third, “this cannot picture me.” But it is possible, dear Friend, that you have been a *fool* and, therefore, the sick fool may picture you! When you find yourself in one of the pictures, you may conclude that, as the four are but variations of the same subject, all the four, in some degree, belong to you. At any rate, if I cannot enter into Heaven by 12 gates, I shall be perfectly satisfied to go in at one.

I am only going to bring out two, out of the many thousands of things that lie packed away in the wonderful box of my text. There are two things—*the miserable people and the merciful Lord*.

I. THE MISERABLE PEOPLE, first. I am going to describe them and my objective in the description will be to show what some have been who, nevertheless, have been saved. These people are called fools. They abhorred all manner of food. They drew near to the gates of death. But they were saved for all that, for they cried unto God in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses! The inference will be that if I—if you—should happen to be in the same condition as these people, yet we may have hope that God will save us!

To begin with, the first description of them is that *they were fools*. Now, I must not call you fools, but you have, all of you, liberty to call *yourselves* so. I find it forbidden in Scripture for any man to call his brother, “fool,” but I do not find him forbidden to call himself so. Look well to yourself and see whether you are not, now, a fool—at least, if God’s Grace has saved you, you are bound to admit that you were *once* a FOOL in capital letters, for every unrenewed and unregenerate man is a fool! We call those fools who have a great lack of knowledge of things which it is necessary to know. Where other men find their way, they are lost. Where other men know what to do upon very simple matters, they are quite bewildered and cannot tell how to act. I remember when *I* did not know the way of salvation. I had heard it from my youth up and heard it explained very simply, too, but I did not know it.

Many must confess that though now they understand what faith in Jesus is, yet they were very slow in catching the idea. It is an idea which a babe in Grace can explain, but which wise men, classically instructed, do not receive. I may stand here and beat my very heart out in trying to make plain how men are to believe and live—and yet out of my congregation not one will receive God’s meaning into his heart unless God the Holy Spirit shall enlighten him—for we are such fools that the simplest matters of heavenly Truth are utterly unknown to us!

He, too, is a fool who, when he *does* know, does not make right use of his knowledge. He is a greater fool than the former one! He knows all about it, but yet he does not do it. He understands that the only way to be saved is to believe in Christ, but he does not believe. He knows that men must repent of sin if they would find mercy, but he does not repent of sin. He knows that life is uncertain and yet he is risking his soul upon the chances of his continuing to live. He lives as if he had a lease on his life and was absolutely certain that he could not die till he chose to be con-

verted. Now this it is to be a fool—to act contrary to your own knowledge and better judgment. How many fools there are of this kind!

We call him a fool who hurts himself without any profit—without any justifying cause. The man who flings his life away to save a nation, or even to rescue one solitary person from death is a hero. But what is he who, for no motive whatever, will maim himself—will take away his own health—will take away his own life? Are there none such here? Look at the drunk! Look at the man who is guilty of unclean living! Look at such as prefer this world to the world to come and throw themselves away on trifles! O Sirs, there are many men that have injured themselves so that their sin lies in their bones! Even now they feel the result of their transgressions. The moth is foolish that flies into the candle and, having burnt itself, dashes back into the flame. We count the ox foolish that goes willingly to the shambles, but there are multitudes of men and women who take delight in sin and, though every cup around them is poisoned, yet they drink at it as though it were nectar! Verily, sinners are fools!

We are great fools when we think that we can find pleasure in sin, or profit in rebellion. We are great fools when we displease our God—when our best Friend, on whom our eternal future depends, is despised, neglected and even rejected and hated by us. It is the extreme of folly when a man loses the good will of one who can help him—when he rejects the love of a tender mother, or the counsel of a wise father. Some men seem resolved to make their enemies their friends—and their friends their enemies! They put darkness for light, and light for darkness. They go to find the living among the dead and true helpers among those who pander to their sins. Such fools have you and I been. Perhaps some here are such fools now.

I call that man a fool who throws away jewels that he may gather pebbles, who casts away gold and silver that he may gather up mire and dirt. And what do they do who fling away Heaven and eternal life for the sake of a transient joy, a momentary gain? Are there not some men living in this world only to get what will, one day, turn into smoke? They know that this great world and all the works of men that are here must be dissolved with fervent heat—and yet they labor to build a mansion for their immortal souls in this place, which is to be utterly burned up! And, meanwhile, You, O Son of God, Immortal Love, are treated as though You were a mere fiction! And You, great Father, fullness of Eternal Grace, they turn their backs on You! And O, holiness, virtue and immortal blessedness—all of you are allowed to go by while men are hunting for gewgaws and gathering trinkets that shall so soon be taken from them! If haply as you sit here you confess, “I have been a fool, I know I have,” then you may gather comfort from the fact that fools were saved! He that has gone to the utmost excess of unwisdom may yet hear the invitation of wisdom and come and learn at Christ’s feet all that is necessary for eternal life.

The next thing about these people is rather worse—they were not only fools, but *sinners*. The text says that “fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.” You see they had several sorts of sin—transgression and iniquities. They began with one trans-

gression and they went on to multiplied iniquities. There was first in their heart a transgression against God. Afterwards there were found in their lives many inequities, both towards God and towards man. Sin multiplies itself very rapidly. It grows from one to a countless multitude. We will not go into the details of the transgressions and iniquities that you may have committed, but here is the point—these people, who were fools and full of transgression and iniquity, nevertheless cried to God in their trouble—and He delivered them out of their distresses! What form has your sin taken? Think of it in your own heart. But, whatever form it has taken, God is able to forgive you! “All manner of sin and blaspheming shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” There is no sin which is unpardonable if men repent of it.

The sin that *is* unpardonable is one of which no man ever thought of repenting, for it is a sin which is unto death and, when committed, the man is spiritually dead and never repents. If there is a sin upon you, however black and foul. If it is a horrible sin which I could not mention because it might crimson the cheek of modesty if I did but even *hint* at it—if you are covered with it, polluted with it beyond all imagination—yet, of the saints in Heaven it can be said, “such were some of you, but you are washed.” You are no more astray than certain others, or if you are, so much the greater shall be the glory of God’s Grace in saving you! It is written of our Lord that He is able to “have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.” O you out-of-the-way sinners, what a comfortable Word of God that is for you! No sin shall destroy you if you will come to the sinner’s Savior. No excellence of your own shall save you if you reject that Savior! Come in all your sin, though it reeks to Heaven—though the stench of it is loathsome in your own nostrils—yet come to Jesus, for, “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

But we must go on with the picture. These people were not only fools and sinners, which are two bad things, but they had a third mischief about them—*they were afflicted*. “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.” Their affliction was evidently the result of their folly and their transgression. Do I address any who are in that case? I hardly like to say what may have happened to some here. They may be distressed in spirit and unable to pursue their business with anything like cheerfulness. They may be subject to doleful forebodings and heavy glooms—and all the result of sin in years gone by. They have now got to the core of the apple of sin. It is wonderfully sweet till you get to the core—and then it is bitter—yes, more bitter than death itself!

Once these men were fools and sinners and now they have to suffer for it. They are afflicted because of their transgression and their iniquities. Some suffer in body. Others suffer in estate—their property is all gone. They have spent all. Riotously, foolishly, wickedly it has gone. They had money once—they have none now. They had the means of livelihood and competence, but they have so sinned that they cannot be trusted now. They are waifs and strays on the great ocean, drifting about, nobody wanting them. How I long to say a word of comfort to those who are in

that condition! If you repent, if you will arise and come to your Father, why should you not be delivered out of your distresses? Do you not see that God delivers such as you are? Is not the case before you in the text? They were fools afflicted, they were sinners afflicted, beginning to feel, even on earth, a part of the result of their sin. They began to reap those sheaves of fire which they sowed with such merry-making years ago and, as they put those sheaves into their bosom, they wondered how they could escape being immediately consumed. But they did escape and so may you! God has saved such as you now are and all those saved ones should encourage you to hope that He will save you!

The picture is getting black, but we must put on another coat of color. In addition to this, these people *had fallen into a soul-sickness*. Through their trouble and their consciousness of sin, they had fallen into such a state of illness that nothing could help them. The best food was brought to them, but they waved it away—their soul abhorred all manner of food. Some are in such a state that the amusements which once were joys to them are now wearisome. You have been lately to the theater and you used to be charmed there. You cannot make out what has come over it—it seems so dull to you! You used to enjoy cheerful evenings with your merry-making friends, but now you would sooner get upstairs alone, for you feel so wretched. When you *are* alone, there is one person who plagues you—if you could only get away from him, you would be content—but that person happens to be *yourself* and there appears to be no rest for you either in company or in solitude!

Your soul abhors all manner of food. I have known souls to get into such a state that books, interesting and instructive, they could not read any longer. They felt no interest in anything of the sort. And poetry and all the charms of art, which once they very properly enjoyed, could afford them no pleasure. The best mental recreation cannot give such persons any stay from their fierce, self-destroying thoughts. Yes, and they even refuse good spiritual food. If the preacher tries to give them milk for babes, that is too weak for them. If he brings out strong meat, that is too tough for their teeth. If he brings them “wine on the lees, well-refined,” that is too heating. If he offers the Water of Life, that is too cold. Nothing will suit them! They grumble at all kinds of teaching. Religious books do not cheer them—even the Bible, itself, seems stale and unprofitable. You are in a frightful condition, my Friends, are you not? You are so sick that the food which best would suit you is that which you least care for. Yet God has saved some who have fallen into this wretched way and He invites you to come to Him and trust in Him—with the promise that He will save even you, though you are as bad as you can be.

But the case was worse than that, for we read, “They draw near to the gates of death.” This poor creature was *almost dead*. He could see death’s gate and Hell’s gate right before him! He was lying at death’s door, expecting, any moment, to be thrown through the portal into eternal destruction and endless wrath! I remember when I lay in the bosom of despair in my own apprehension. I knew that I was condemned on account of sin and my conscience said, “Amen,” to the condemnation! I could not plead any

reason why I should not at once be taken out to endless execution on account of my sin. And I certainly felt the dread shadow of coming wrath falling upon my soul.

AND YET I AM SAVED, blessed be God! And so shall you, dear Hearer, though you are ready to die and ready to be damned—you shall be saved by faith in Jesus! Though you begin to feel the fire shower falling and the first of the dread drops have already buried their way into your soul, you may yet escape! The Savior comes to those who—

**“Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At death’s dark door do lie.”**

He brings “salvation” to such and He says to the dying sinner, “This day has salvation come unto your house.” What a glorious Gospel we have to preach to you miserable people!

But yet we have not quite touched up the picture with the last shade of black. This man not only lay at death’s door, full of trouble, full of distress, but he was *surrounded by many destructions*. In the 20th verse we read, “and He delivered them from their destructions.” What? Are there *many* destructions to a man? Oh, yes, a great many! I have known one man destroyed by his shop, another by his wife, another by his children. Many a woman is destroyed by her clothes! Many a man is destroyed by his eating habits! Millions are destroyed by their drinking. Everything about us will destroy us unless God saves us! There are a thousand gates to Hell, though there is only one road to Heaven. One man may perish by debauchery; another may perish by respectability! One man may be lost in the ale-house; another man may be lost through his teetotalism if he makes a god of it!

One man may go down to Hell by his lack of common decency and another by his pride and self-righteousness! Do not deceive yourself—the way to ruin is easy and many crowd it. If you want to go to Heaven—well, we shall have to tell you a great deal about what is to be believed. But if you want to go to Hell, I have no need to tell you anything—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” A little matter of neglect will land you in Hell! But it is not a little matter of thought that will bring you to Heaven—there must be a stirring up of the entire soul—an awakening of the whole man to seek after God in Christ Jesus or else you shall perish!

Surrounded, then, with destructions—snares about your bed, snares about your table, snares in your solitude, snares in the street, snares in your shop, snares at the dawn of day and snares at the setting of the sun—you are in awful, terrible danger! And yet persons surrounded with destructions have been saved, and why should not *you*? They have cried to God in their trouble and He has delivered them out of their destructions! Will He not do the same at *your* cry? What a charming Word of God is this for desponding spirits!

II. I have but a minute or two left, where I should have wished for an hour, to speak upon THE MERCIFUL LORD. Very briefly, indeed. This merciful Lord appears in this picture where you do not, at first, see Him. I think I see Him in that first verse—*He sent the affliction*. “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.” Ah

me! "Were afflicted." Who afflicted them, then? Why, their own Father—their own Shepherd—who saw that they would never come back to Him if it were not for affliction. I see you, Friend. You are a stray sheep and I could not get you back. Now you cry, "Alas, I am in trouble!" I am sorry that you should be troubled, but I am not altogether sorry. I can see the black dog is worrying you. It is that he may get you back to the Shepherd. Many will not come back till the black dog has his teeth in their flesh, but if it surely drives you to the Good Shepherd, it will be your true friend!

I question whether many of us came to the Lord Jesus Christ until we were afflicted in some way or other. Our bright days led us more and more into sin. Then came a dark day—and then we began to turn. "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land." Blessed be God for the famine! "He began to be in need"—now he will have to test his frivolous friends and flatterers! There was a gentleman who had drunk his champagne and put his feet under his mahogany, and the prodigal said, "Now I have fed that man, I dare say he will entertain me now I am in poverty." "I cannot help you," he replied. "Can you give me some employment?" "No. What are you worth? Well, you can feed my pigs." And he "sent him into his fields to feed swine." That is the black dog, again. If the gentleman had said, "Oh, yes, my dear young fellow, you were very generous when you had plenty of money! I am very sorry for you—come and live with me—while I have a crust you shall have part of it!"

That would have been the worst thing that could have happened, for the prodigal son would never have thought of going home! I say that your troubles are mercies in disguise. Your sicknesses, your poverty and your misery—oh, I bless God for them! The heavenly Father has sent this rumbling wagon to bring you home to Himself! Oh that you would but come to yourself! Oh that you would but come to Him! See, the Grace of God appears in the very affliction of these rebellious fools!

But note this, further—*they began to pray*—and here we see the Lord, again, for no one seeks after God till God has put the prayer into his heart and breathed a new life into his spirit!

Then as soon as he did pray, *the Lord heard the prayer*. We read, "*He sent His Word, and healed them*, and delivered them from their destructions." So, Beloved, all that God has to do, in order to save us, is to send us His Word! He has done that by sending His dear Son, who is the Incarnate Word. He sends us the Word in the shape of the Holy Scriptures. He sends us the Word in the preaching of His servant. But what we need most of all is to have that Word of God sent home by the power of the Holy Spirit! "He sent His Word, and healed them." There is nothing that you need, tonight, but to have the Word which the Lord has spoken sealed home to your heart, so that you accept it and believe it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

I want you to notice how the Lord rescued these people. You see, they could not eat. They had reached such a state of sickness that they could not take anything—they abhorred all manner of food and we do not find that the Lord sent them any food. No, He sent His *Word*. Did He send His Word like a tonic, to give them an appetite? No, He made surer work.

Many doctors try to deal with the *disease*, but God does not. He deals with the patient, himself, and his constitution. *He healed them* radically. Then, when He had healed them, their appetite came back. They did *not* abhor all manner of food when once God had healed them! The Lord does not operate upon the symptoms, but upon the person! He does not deliver us from this sin and that sin and the other sin—He takes away the old heart, out of which the sin comes—and gives a new heart, out of which there come repentance, faith and a change of life!

If you have a lantern and it is dark, you may polish the outside of it as long as you like, but no light will come out of it—the first thing to be done is to put a candle inside the lantern. This is what the Lord does. And then, when He puts the candle inside the lantern, we say to ourselves, “this lantern looks very dirty, it must be cleaned.” Is it any fouler than it was before the light was put into it? It is *exactly* the same lantern, but, when you put the candle into it, you perceive how dirty it is by the light shining within. It is of no use to try to clean and polish it up till you have placed the lighted candle in it. You know how Mr. Moody puts it. A lady, we will say, takes a looking-glass and she looks into it and she sees a spot on her face. That is the use of the looking-glass—to reveal spots. But you never heard of a lady trying to wash her face with a looking-glass, for that is not its use. No, the looking-glass shows the spots, but it cannot take the spots away!

First of all, by means of the Law, we find out our spots, but we have to go to Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, to get those spots taken away! Blessed are those who have gone to Him! “He sent His Word, and healed them.” With one Word, the Lord Jesus at this hour can heal every sin-sick soul before me, for where the Word of a King is, there is power! He spoke and the heavens were of old! Let Him but speak, again, and there will be new heavens and a new earth for you. Poor Sinner, you are dead, but all that Christ did when He raised the dead in His time was to speak to them—and His Word—by these lips, through His Spirit, can raise you out of your death in sin! If you are black as the very fiend of Hell and steeped up to the throat in every infamy that God abhors, yet if His Word shall come to you, and you receive it into your soul, you shall be saved upon the spot and delivered from your destructions!

Here is a Word of the Lord. Obey it, I entreat you. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Here is another—listen to it, and live—“Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Let all that labor and are heavy-laden come unto Christ and He will give them rest! The Lord grant that you may come at once, without delay, and to His name shall be the praise! Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 107*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 505, 597.**

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A VISIT TO CHRIST'S HOSPITAL NO. 3070

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1907.

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

***“Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.”
Psalm 107:17-22.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 17-20 is #1824, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF SUNDRY FOOLS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

IT is a very profitable thing to visit a hospital. The sight of others' sickness tends to make us grateful for our own health. And it is a great thing to be kept in a thankful frame of mind, for ingratitude is a spiritual disease, injurious to every power of the soul. A hospital inspection will also teach us compassion and that is of great service. Anything that softens the heart is valuable. Above all things, in these days we should strive against the petrifying influences which surround us. It is not easy for a man who has constantly enjoyed good health and prosperity, to sympathize with the poor and the suffering. Even our Great High Priest, who is full of compassion, learned it by carrying our sorrows in His own Person. To see the sufferings of the afflicted, in many cases, would be enough to move a stone. And if we visit a hospital and come back with a more tender heart, we shall have found it a sanatorium to ourselves.

I purpose, at this time, to take you to a hospital. It shall not be one of those noble institutions so pleasingly plentiful around the Tabernacle, but we will take you to Christ's Hospital, or, as the French would call it, the *Hotel Dieu*. And we shall conduct you through the wards for a few minutes, trusting that while you view them, if you are yourself healed, you may feel gratitude that you have been delivered from spiritual sicknesses and an intense compassion for those who still pine and languish. May we become like our Savior who wept over Jerusalem with eyes which were no strangers to compassion's floods. May we view the most guilty and impenitent with yearning hearts and grieve with mingled hope and anxiety over those who are under the sound of the Gospel and so are more especially patients in the Hospital of God.

We will go at once with the Psalmist to the wards of spiritual sickness.

I. And first we have set out before us THE NAMES AND CHARACTERS OF THE PATIENTS.

You see in this hospital, written up over the head of every bed, the name of the patient and his disease. And you are amazed to find that all the patients belong to one family and, singularly enough, are all called by one name—and that name is very far from being a reputable one. It is a title that nobody covets and that many persons would be very indignant to have applied to *them*—“*Fool.*” All who are sick in God's Hospital are fools, without exception, for this reason—that all sinners are fools. Often in Scripture, when David means the wicked, he says, “the foolish.” And in saying this, he makes no mistake, for sin is folly.

Sin is foolish, clearly, because it is a setting up of our weakness in opposition to Omnipotence! Every wise man, if he must fight, will choose a combatant against whom he may have a chance of success. But he who wars with the Most High commits as gross a folly as when the moth contends with the flame, or the dry grass of the prairie challenges the fire! There is no hope for you, O sinful Man, of becoming a victor in the struggle! How unwise you are to take up the weapons of rebellion! And the folly is aggravated, because the One who is opposed is so infinitely good that opposition to Him is violence to everything that is just, beneficial and commendable! God is Love—shall I resist the Infinitely Loving One? He scatters blessings—should I therefore be His foe? If His Commandments were grievous, if His ways were ways of misery and His paths were paths of woe, I might have some pretense of an excuse for resisting His will. But O my God, so good, so kind, so boundless in Grace, 'tis folly, as well as wickedness, to be Your enemy!—

***“To all that's good, averse and blind,
But prone to all that's ill.
What dreadful darkness veils our mind!
How obstinate our will!”***

Besides this, the Laws of God are so supremely beneficial to us that we are our own enemies when we rebel. God's Laws are danger signals. As sometimes, on the ice, those who care for human life put up the warning sign, “*Danger,*” here and there, and leave the part that is safe for all who choose to traverse it, so God has left us free to enjoy everything that is safe for us—and has only forbidden us that which is to our own hurt. If there is a law which forbids me to put my hand into the fire, it is a pity that I should need such a law, but a thousand pities more if I think that law a hardship! The commands of God do but forbid us to injure ourselves. To keep them is to keep ourselves in holy happiness—to break them is to bring evil of all kinds upon ourselves in soul and body. Why should I violate a law, which, if I were perfect, I would myself have made, or myself have kept finding it in force? Why need I rebel against that which is never exacting, never oppressive, but always conducive to my own highest welfare? The sinner is a fool because he is told, in God's Word, that the path of evil will lead to destruction—and yet he pursues it with the secret hope that in his case the damage will not be very great. He has been warned that sin is like a cup frothing with a foam of sweetness, but concealing death and Hell in its dregs—yet each sinner,

as he takes the cup, fascinated by the first drop, believes that to him the poisonous draught will not be fatal! How many have fondly hoped that God would lie unto men and would not fulfill His threats? Yet be assured, every sin shall have its recompense of reward! God is Just and will by no means spare the guilty. Even in this life many are feeling in their bones the consequences of their youthful lusts—they will carry to their graves the scars of their transgressions. In Hell, alas, there are millions who will forever prove that sin is an awful and an undying evil, an infinite curse which has destroyed them forever and ever!

The sinner is a fool because while he doubts the truthfulness of God as to the punishment of sin, he has the conceit to imagine that transgression will even yield him pleasure! God says it shall be bitterness—the sinner denies the bitterness and affirms that it shall be sweetness. O Fool, to seek pleasure in sin! Go rake the morgue to find an immortal soul! Go walk into the secret springs of the sea to find the source of flame! It is not there and you can never find bliss in rebellion! Hundreds of thousands before you have gone upon this search and have all been disappointed. He is indeed a fool who must rush headlong in this useless chase and perish as the result! The sinner is a fool—a great fool—to remain as he is in danger of the wrath of God! To abide at ease in imminent peril and scorn the way of escape. To love the world and loathe the Savior. To set the present fleeting life above the eternal future. To choose the sand of the desert and forego the jewels of Heaven—all this is folly in the highest conceivable degree!

Though all sinners are fools, yet there are fools of all sorts. Some are learned fools. Unconverted men, whatever they know, are only educated fools. Between the ignorant man who cannot read a letter and the learned man who is apt in all knowledge, there is small difference if they are both ignorant of Christ! Indeed, the scholar's folly is, in this case, the greater of the two! The learned fool generally proves himself the worst of fools, for he invents theories which would be ridiculed if they could be understood—and he brings forth speculations which, if judged by common sense and men were not turned into idiotic worshippers of imaginary authority, would be scouted from the universe with a hiss of derision! There are fools in colleges and fools in cottages.

There are also reckless fools and reckoning fools. Some sin greedily with both hands. "A short life and a merry one," is their motto—while the so-called "prudent" fools live more slowly, but still live not for God. These last, with hungry greed for wealth, will often hoard up gold as if it were true treasure and as if anything worth the retaining were to be found beneath the moon. Your "prudent respectable" sinner will find himself just as much lost as your reckless prodigal. They must all alike seek and find the Savior, or be guilty of gross folly. So, alas, there are old fools as well as young ones! There are those who, after an experience of sin, still burn their fingers in it. The burnt child dreads the fire, but the burnt sinner lovingly plays with his sin again! Gray hair ought to be a crown of glory, but too often they are fool's caps. There are young sinners who

waste the prime of life when the dew is on their spirit and neglect to give their strength to God—and so miss the early joy of religion, which is the sweetest and makes all the rest of life sweeter—these are fools. But what is he who has one foot hanging over the mouth of Hell and yet continues without God and without Christ, a trifler with eternity?

I have spoken thus upon the name of those who enter God's Hospital. Permit me to add that all who go there and are cured, agree that this name is correct. Saved souls are made to feel that they are naturally fools and, indeed, it is one stage in the cure when men are able to spell their own name and when they are willing to write it in capital letters and say, "That is my name! If there is no other man in this world who is a fool, I am. I have played the fool before the living God." This confession is true, for what madness it is to play the fool before the Eternal One with your own soul as the subject of the foolery! When men make sport, they generally do it with trifling things. A man who plays the fool and puts on a cap and bells is wise in comparison with him who sports with his God, his soul, Heaven and eternity! This is folly beyond all folly! Yet the sinner, when he is taken into God's Hospital, will be made to feel that he has been such a fool and that his folly is folly with emphasis. He will confess that Christ must be made unto him wisdom for he by nature was born a fool, has lived a fool and will die a fool unless the Infinite Mercy of God interposes!

II. Now, for a minute or two, let us notice THE CAUSE OF THEIR PAINS AND AFFLICTIONS. "Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted."

The physician usually tries to find out the root and cause of the disease he has to deal with. Now those souls that are brought into grief for sin, those who are smarting through the Providential dealings of God, through the striking of conscience, or the smiting of the Holy Spirit, are here taught that *the source of their sorrow is their sin*. These sins are mentioned in the text in the plural—"Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities." How many have our sins been? Who shall count them? Let him count the hairs of his head first. Sins are various and are, therefore, called "transgressions and iniquities." We do not all sin alike, nor does any one man sin alike at all times. We commit sins of word, thought, deed—against God, against men, against our bodies, against our souls, against the Gospel, against the Law, against the week-day duties, against the Sabbath privileges—of all sorts and these all lie at the root of our sorrows. Our sins also are aggravated. Not content with transgression, we have added iniquities to it. No one is more greedy than a sinner, but he is greedy after his own destruction! He is never content with revolting—he must rebel yet more and more. As when a stone is rolled downhill, its pace is accelerated the further it goes, so is it with the sinner—he goes from bad to worse.

Perhaps I speak to some who have lately come into God's Hospital. I will suppose a case. You are poor, very poor. But your poverty is the fruit of your profligate habits. Poverty is often directly traceable to drunkenness, laziness, or dishonesty. All poverty does not come from

these sources. Blessed be God, there are thousands of the poor who are the excellent of the earth—and a great many of them are serving God right nobly! But I am now speaking of certain cases and probably you know of such yourselves where, because of their transgression and iniquities, men are brought to need. There will come to me, sometimes, a person who was in good circumstances a few years ago, who is now without anything but the clothes he tries to stand upright in. And his wretchedness is entirely owing to his playing the prodigal. He is one of those whom I trust God may yet take into His Hospital.

At times the disease breaks out in another sort of misery. Some sins bring into the flesh itself pains which are anticipatory of Hell—yet even these persons may be taken into the Hospital of God, though they are afflicted to their shame through gross transgression. Oh, how many there are in this great city of London, of men and women who dare not tell their condition, but whose story is a terrible one, indeed, as God reads it! Oh, that He may have pity upon them and take them into His hospital and heal them through His abundant Grace!

In more numerous cases, the misery brought by sin is mental. Many are brought very low by sin—even to despair. Conscience pricks them. Fears of death and Hell haunt them. I remember well when I was in this way myself. When I, poor fool, because of my transgression and my iniquities, was sorely bowed in spirit. By day I thought of the punishment of my sin. By night I dreamed of it. I woke in the morning with a burden on my heart—a burden which I could neither carry nor shake off—and sin was at the bottom of my sorrow. My sin, my sin, my sin—this was my constant plague! I was in my youth and in the heyday of my spirit. I had all earthly comforts and I had friends to cheer me, but they were all as nothing. I would seek solitary places to search the Scriptures and to read such books as *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted* and *Alleine's Alarm*, feeling my soul plowed more and more, as though the Law, with its ten great black horses, was dragging the plow up and down my soul breaking, crushing, furrowing my heart—and all for sin. Let me tell you, though we read of the cruelties of the Inquisition and the sufferings which the martyrs have borne from cruel men—no racks, nor fire pans, nor other instruments of torture can make a man so wretched as his own conscience when he is stretched upon its rack!

Here then, we see both the fools and the cause of their disease.

III. Now let us notice THE PROGRESS OF THE DISEASE. It is said that “their soul abhors all manner of meat,” like persons who have lost their appetite and can eat nothing—“and they draw near unto the gates of death”—they are given over and nearly dead.

These words may reach some whose disease of sin has developed itself into fearful sorrow so that they are near unable to find comfort in anything. You used to enjoy the theater—you went lately but you were wretched there. You used to be a wit in society and set the table on a roar with your jokes—but you cannot joke now. They say you are melancholy, but you know what they do not know, for a secret arrow

rankles in your bosom. You go to a place of worship, but you find no comfort even there. The manner of meat that is served to God's saints is not suitable to you. You cry, "Alas, I am not worthy of it!" Whenever you hear a sermon thundering against the ungodly, you feel, "Ah, that is for me!" But when it comes to, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," you conclude, "Ah, that is *not* for me!" Even if it is an invitation to the sinner, you say, "But I do not feel myself a sinner. I am not such an one as may come to Christ. Surely I am a castaway." Your soul abhors all manner of meat, even that out of God's kitchen. Not only are you dissatisfied with the world's dainties, but the marrow and fatness of Christ, Himself, you cannot relish. Many of us have been in this way before you.

The text adds, "They draw near unto the gates of death." The soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and feels that it cannot bear up much longer. I remember once, in the bitterness of my spirit, using those words of Job, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life," for the wretchedness of a sin-burdened soul is intolerable. All do not suffer like strong convictions but in some it bows the spirit almost to the grave! Perhaps, my Friend, you see no hope whatever. You are ready to say, "There cannot be any hope for me. I have made a covenant with death and a league with Hell. I am past hope. There were, years ago, opportunities for me, and I was near the Kingdom of God, but like the man who put his hand to the plow and then looked back, I have proven myself unworthy of eternal life." Troubled Heart, I am sent with a message for you—"Thus says the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your league with Hell shall not stand. The prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered." You may abhor the very meat that would restore you to strength, but He who understands the human heart knows how to give you better tastes and cure these evil whims! He knows how to bring you up from the gates of death to the gates of Heaven! Thus we see how terribly the mischief progresses—

***"Our beauty and our strength are fled,
And we draw near to death,
But Christ the Lord recalls the dead
With His almighty breath."***

IV. And now the disease takes a turn. Our fourth point is THE INTERPOSITION OF THE PHYSICIAN. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

The Good Physician is the true Healer. *Observe when the Physician comes in*—when "they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." When they cry, the Physician has come! I will not say that He has come because they cry, though that would be true—but there is deeper truth still—they cried because He came! For whenever a soul truly cries unto God, God has already blessed it by enabling it to cry. You would never have begun to pray if the Lord had not taught you. God is visiting a soul and healing it when it has enough faith in God to cast itself, with a cry, upon His mercy! I cannot hope that there is a work of Grace in you until I know

that you pray. Ananias would not have believed that Paul was converted had it not been said, "Behold he prays!"

Note the kind of prayer here. It was not taken out of a book and it was not a fine prayer in language, whether extempore or composed—it was a *cry*. You do not need to teach your children how to cry—it is the first thing a new-born child does. It needs no schoolmaster to teach it that art! Our School Boards have a great deal to teach the children of London, but they need never have a department for instruction in crying. A spiritual cry is the call of the new-born nature expressing conscious need. "How shall I pray?" says one. Pour your heart out, Brother. Turn the vessel upside down and let the contents run out to the last dreg as best they can. "But I cannot pray," says one. Tell the Lord you cannot pray and ask Him to help you pray and you have already prayed! "Oh, but I don't feel as I should!" Then confess to the Lord your sinful insensibility and ask Him to make your heart tender and you are already in a measure softened! Those who say, "We don't feel as we should," are very often those who feel the most. Whether it is so or not, cry. If you are a sin-sick soul, you can do nothing towards your own healing but this—you can cry. He who hears your cries will know what they mean. When the surgeon goes to the battlefield after a conflict, he is guided to his compassionate work by the groans of the wounded. When he hears a soldier's cry, he does not inquire, "Was that a Frenchman or a German, and what does he mean?" A cry is good French and excellent German, too! It is part of the universal tongue. The surgeon understands it and looks for the sick man. And whatever language you use, O Sinner, uncouth or refined, if it is the language of your heart, God understands you without an interpreter!

Note well that as we have seen when the Physician interposed, we shall see next *what He did*. He saved them out of their distresses, healed them and delivered them from their destructions! Oh, the Infinite Mercy of God! He reveals to the heart pardon for all sin and, by His Holy Spirit's power, removes all our weaknesses. I tell you, Soul, though you are at death's door this moment, God can even now gloriously deliver you! It would be a wonder if your poor burdened spirit should, within this hour, leap for joy and yet, if the Lord shall visit you in mercy, you will do so! I fall back upon my own recollection. My escape from despondency was instantaneous. I did but believe Jesus Christ's word and rest upon His Sacrifice and the night of my heart was over—the darkness had passed and the true light had shone! In some parts of the world there are not long twilights before the break of day—the sun leaps up in a moment. The darkness flies and the light reigns—so it is with many of the Lord's redeemed. As in a moment, their ashes are exchanged for beauty and their spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise! Faith is the great transformer! Will you cast yourself, now, whether you shall live or die, upon the precious blood and merits of Jesus Christ the Savior? Will you come and rest your soul upon the Son of God? As you do so, you are saved! Your sins, which are many, are now forgiven you! As of old the

Egyptians were drowned in a moment in the Red Sea, and the depths had covered them so that there was not one of them left, so the moment you believe, you have lifted a mightier rod than that of Moses! And the sea of the atoning blood, in the fullness of its strength, has gone over the heads of all your enemies—your sins are drowned in Jesus' blood! Oh, what joy is this when, in answer to a cry, God delivers us from our present distresses and our threatened future destructions!

But how is this effected? The Psalmist says, "He sent His Word and healed them." "*His Word.*" How God enables language when He *uses it!* That word, "*Word,*" is lifted up in Scripture into the foremost place and put on a level with the Godhead. "THE WORD." It indicates a God-like Personage for, "in the beginning was the Word." No, it denotes God Himself, for, "the Word was God." Our hope is the Word—the *Incarinate Logos*, the Eternal Word. In some respects, our salvation comes to us entirely through the sending of that Word to be made flesh and to dwell among us. He is our saving health—by His stripes we are healed. But here the expression is best understood of the Gospel, which is the Word of God. Often the reading of the Scriptures proves the means of healing troubled souls or else that same Word is made effectual when spoken from a loving heart with living lips. What might there is in the plain preaching of the Gospel! No power in all the world can match it. They tell us, nowadays, that the nation will go over to Rome and the Gospel candle will be blown out. I am not a believer in these alarming prophecies. I neither believe in the battle of Dorking, nor in the victory of Pius the Ninth. Leave us our Bibles, our pulpits and our God, and we shall win the victory! Oh, if all ministers preached the Gospel plainly, without aiming at rhetoric and high flights of oratory, what great triumphs would follow! How sharp would the Gospel sword prove itself to be if men would but pull it out of those fine ornamental, but useless scabbards! When the Lord enables His servants to put plain Gospel truth into language that will strike and stick, be understood and retained, it heals sick souls that otherwise might have lain fainting a long time!

Still, the Word of God in the Bible and the Word of God preached cannot heal the soul unless God shall *send it* in the most emphatic sense. "*He sent His Word.*" When the eternal Spirit brings home the Word with power, what a Word it is! Then the miracles of Grace worked within us are such as to astonish friends and confound foes! May the Lord, even now, send His Word to each sinner and it will be his salvation! "Hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And faith brings with it all that the soul requires. When we have faith, we are linked with Christ and so our salvation is ensured.

V. That brings us to the last point—THE CONSEQUENT CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO WERE HEALED.

First, *they praised God for His goodness.* What rare praise a soul offers where it is brought out of prison! The sweetest music ever heard on earth is found in those new songs which celebrate our recent deliverance from the horrible pit and the miry clay. Did you ever keep a sparrow in a cage and then think that it was cruel to rob it of its liberty? Did you take it

out into the garden and open the cage door? Oh, but if you could have heard it sing when it had escaped from the cage where it had been so long, you would have heard the best sparrow music in all the woods! When a poor soul breaks forth from the dungeon of despair, set free by God, what songs it pours forth! God loves to hear such music. Remember that ancient Word of His, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." God loves the warm-hearted praises of newly-emancipated souls and He will get some out of you, dear Friend, if you are set free at this hour!

Notice that these healed ones praised God especially *for His goodness*. It was great goodness that such as they were should be saved. So near death's door and yet saved! They wondered at His mercy and sang of "His wonderful works to the children of men." It is wonderful that such as we were should be redeemed from our iniquities, but our Redeemer's name is called Wonderful, and He delights in showing forth the riches of His Grace.

Observe that in their praises they ascribe all to God—*they praise Him for His wonderful work*. Salvation is God's work, from beginning to end. Their song is, moreover, comprehensive, and they adore the Lord for His love to others as well as to themselves—they praise Him "for His wonderful works to the children of men."

Forget not that *they added to this praise, sacrifice*. "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving." What shall be the sacrifices of a sinner delivered from going down into the Pit? Shall he bring a bull that has horns and hoofs? No, let him bring his heart! Let him offer himself, his time, his talents, his body, his soul, his substance. Let him exclaim, "Let my Lord take all, seeing that He has saved my soul." Will you not lay yourselves out for Him who laid Himself out for you? If He has bought you with such a price, confess that you are altogether His! Of your substance give to His cause. As He prospers you, prove that you are really His by your generosity towards His Church and His poor!

In addition to sacrifice, the healed ones began to offer songs, for it was to be a "*sacrifice of thanksgiving*." May those of you who are pardoned sing more than is customary nowadays. May we, each one of us, who have been delivered from going down to the Pit, enter into the choir of God's praising ones—vocally singing as often as we can—and in our hearts always chanting His praise!

Once more, the grateful ones were to add to their gifts and Psalms, a *declaration of joy* at what God had done for them. "Let them declare His works with rejoicing." You who are pardoned should tell the Church of the Lord's mercy to you. Let His people know that God is discovering His hidden ones. Come and tell the minister. Nothing gladdens him so much as to know that souls are brought to Jesus by his means. This is our reward. You are our crown of rejoicing, you saved ones! I can truly say that I never have such joy as when I receive letters from persons, or hear from them personally the good news, "I heard you on such-and-such a night and found peace." Or, "I read your sermon and God blessed it to

my soul." There is not a true minister of Christ but would willingly lay himself down to die if he could thereby see multitudes saved from eternal wrath! We live for this. If we miss this, our life is a failure. What is the use of a minister unless he brings souls to God? For this we would yearn over you and draw near unto God in secret, that He would be pleased in mercy to deliver you!

But, surely, if you are converted, you should not conceal the fact! It is an unkind action for any person who has received life from the dead through any instrumentality to deny the worker the consolation of hearing that he has been made useful—for the servant of God has many discouragements and he is, himself, readily cast down. And the gratitude of those who are saved is one of the appointed cordials for his heavy heart. There is no refreshment like it! May God grant you Grace to declare His love, for our sake, for the Church's sake and, indeed, for the world's sake! Let the sinner know that you have found mercy—perhaps it will induce him, also, to seek salvation. Many a physician has gained his practice by one patient telling others of his cure. Tell your neighbors that you have been to the Hospital of Jesus and been restored, though you hated all manner of meat and drew near to the gates of death! And maybe a poor soul in the same condition as yourself will say, "This is a message from God to me."

Above all, publish abroad the Lord's goodness for Jesus' sake. He deserves your honor. Will you receive His blessing and then, like the nine lepers, give Him no praise? Will you be like the woman in the crowd who was healed by touching the hem of His garment and then would gladly have slipped away? If so, I pray that the Master may say, "Somebody has touched Me," and may you be compelled to tell us all the truth and say, "I was sorely sick in soul, but I touched You, O my blessed Lord, and I am saved! And to the praise of the glory of Your Grace I will tell it! I will tell it though devils should hear me! I will tell it and make the world ring with it according to my ability, to the praise and Glory of Your saving Grace!"

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:1-22.**

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* In the heading of this Psalm we are reminded that the Psalmist here exhorts the redeemed, in praising God, to observe His manifold Providence over travelers, prisoners, sick men, seamen "and in divers varieties of life." But, inasmuch as the exhortation is especially addressed to the redeemed of the Lord, I shall endeavor to cast the red ray of redemption over it and to explain these various circumstances as relating to the spiritual experience of God's people and to their deliverance out of divers perils to which their souls are exposed.

"O give thanks unto the Lord." This seems to imply that we are so slow to praise God that we have to be stirred up to this sacred duty! This exhortation looks as if we needed to be entreated to give thanks unto the

Lord. Yet this ought not to be an uncongenial or disagreeable task. It ought to be our pleasure to praise the Lord. We should be eager to do it and yet it is to be feared that we are often silent when we ought to be giving thanks unto His holy name. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." Whether you give Him your praises, or—

***"Let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die"—***

He deserves them, "for He is good: for His mercy endures forever."

2, 3. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.* Whenever God's people are redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered unto Himself, it is always by His Grace and power. They are not only gathered to Him, but they are gathered by Him and, therefore, let them all praise His holy name!

4. *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.* This is the experience of all God's redeemed and gathered ones—they were, at one time, all lost and wandering to and fro in the wilderness—as God's ancient people did.

5, 6. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* This is the point to which a true spiritual experience sooner or later brings all God's elect ones! They cry unto the Lord in their trouble. The end, the design of their trouble is that they may cry unto Him! And when they do so, it is absolutely certain that they shall be delivered out of their distresses.

7-11. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High.* All God's people, all His redeemed have been made to feel, in a greater or lesser degree, the agony of their spiritual bondage. They have been like captives sitting in darkness, dreading death, realizing that they are utterly unable to deliver themselves. They have been rebellious against the words of God, and have despised His counsel, so that it is absolutely necessary that they should be brought to their right position and be made to kneel before the Lord in true humility of heart.

12-16. *Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble. and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bonds in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* Is any child of God thus shut up in the

dark? Those of you who have ever been lost in a London fog know what a depression of spirit it brings upon you while you are in the impenetrable darkness out of which you cannot see any way of escape. All that you can do is to stand still and cry out for help. Well, try what crying to God will do for you in your spiritual depression! Your spirit is cast down into the very deeps—then, out of the depths cry unto the Lord as Jonah did! Rest in Him! Trust in Him, and see whether He will not bring you up into the light of His Countenance!

17, 18. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.* All God's redeemed people have suffered from soul-sickness and some of them have suffered from it so acutely that they have lost all appetite for spiritual comfort. "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." They cannot bear the sight or the thought of it. A man in this condition says, "Do not bring me any food. I loathe it." The very nourishment that might have restored him, he rejects because of the nausea which soul-sickness brings.

19, 20. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.* He healed them with His Word. And there is a remedy, in God's Word, for every form of spiritual malady. What we need to know is where the particular remedy for our special form of soul-sickness is to be found—and this, the Holy Spirit will teach us if we will but ask Him!

21, 22. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* [Expositions of the later verses of this Psalm were published with Sermons #3061—THE RULE OF GRACE and 3064—"AD IT WAS SO" both Volume 53—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

SICKNESS AND PRAYER, HEALING AND PRAISE NO. 3274

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1911.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 20, 1865.**

***“Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing”
Psalm 107:17-22.***

WHEN a person is very ill, one of the greatest kindnesses that you can show to him is to tell him how you felt under a similar affliction, to what physician you resorted, what remedies he prescribed, through what processes you passed, what were the symptoms connected with your recovery and how long you have been able to rejoice over the cure which has been worked in you. This kind of practical, experimental talk will be far more valuable to him than any doctor's opinions that you may read to him out of a book of medicine. Tell the sufferer what your experience has been and you will generally find that he will attach more importance to that than to any theory which you may propound to him, however well you may support that theory by argument!

I propose, this evening, as God shall enable me, to give you some of my experience. Indeed, I think that what I shall have to say will describe the experience of most of those who have been led to understand their state as spiritually sick, and who have been guided to the Great Physician and have found out how He works a complete and permanent cure. I have no doubt that this Psalm refers to actual bodily sickness and that it teaches us that we ought to praise the Lord very heartily whenever we are restored from any illness. It is no small mercy to have life preserved and health restored, especially if the end of life would be to us the beginning of eternal death and that our soul, when separated from the body, would have no “better land” to enter, and no right to a place in the home of the blessed where sickness is unknown! But while I think that the Psalm refers to bodily sickness, I am fully persuaded that it also applies to spiritual sickness and that we shall act in accordance with the mind of the Spirit if we consider the text as first, *describing the spiritually sick.*

Then, as *showing the means by which they are cured*. And lastly, as *revealing what they do after they are cured*.

I. So, first, we have in the text A DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY SICK.

First, *we are told their name*. It is not a complimentary one—"Fools." But it is a name which they richly deserve! At least I know that I deserved it when I was in their case. God never calls a man a fool unless he is one. Why, then, are unconverted sinners rightly called fools?

They are fools because they prefer the shadow to the substance. They are as foolish as the dog in the old fable who dropped the solid meat that he had in his mouth and tried to seize the shadow of it that he saw reflected in the water. And men are indeed fools when they prefer the shadows of time to the substances of eternity!

They are fools, next, many of them, because they say that this world grew up by chance. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." He said that because he was a fool—if he had not been a fool, he would neither have thought it nor said it. If I were to assert that this Tabernacle grew up by chance, without either architect or builder, I would be a liar as well as a fool! But I should have just as much reason to say that as to declare that the universe came into existence without the fiat of the great Creator. Men who deny the plain teaching of Scripture upon this point are indeed fools!

They are fools, too, because they make a mockery of sin. If men cut their fingers by playing with edged tools. If they put red-hot coals into their bosom, or fling firebrands about and say that they do it for fun, truly they are fools! But they are not such mad fools as those who play with sin and so ruin their souls forever, or who put into their lives sins that are like hot coals of juniper—and then laugh as though they had done a wise thing. They are indeed fools who prefer the pleasures of sin to the joys of eternity, for such pleasures will soon end—and then everlasting misery will be their portion. If you want to know how foolish they really are, you must view their folly in the light of eternity. Look down upon them from the heights of the Heaven which they appear so willing to lose, or try to imagine the depths and woes of the Hell which they seem determined to inherit, and you will straightway discover what fools they are! They think nothing of their never-dying souls, but Christ thought so much of immortal beings that He left Heaven with all its glories and endured suffering and shame of the most fearful character that He might deliver souls from going down into the Pit of woe forever!

The text does not say that they are fools who are short of wit as we generally use that term, but it refers to those who are short of heavenly wit. They are fools who are deficient in common sense, for it is certainly in accordance with common sense that I should look first to that which is of the greatest importance—that is to say, my soul and the position it is to occupy throughout eternity when this mortal life is ended. Whoever you may be, my Friend, though some may call you wise, and though you think yourself wise, if you have not seen that all is right with you for *eternity*, God calls you a fool—and I dare not call you anything else! You

may be a master of mathematics, but if you have not solved this great problem, “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” you are what God says you are—a fool!

But the test goes on to tell us that *these fools fall sick*—and that is a cause for devout thankfulness, for if they never feel sick, they would never get well—and the sickness which I am about to describe is one which leads to everlasting health! What is the cause of the sickness which comes upon these fools? The text says, “Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.” “Transgression” is crossing over the line which God has laid down in His Word. “Iniquity” is a lack of equity, a lack of that “right spirit” which God alone can give, and without which right words and actions are impossible. Well do I remember when I was spiritually sick because of my transgressions and iniquities. I could not sleep in peace, for I remembered that I had provoked God to anger by my sins. I had not loved Him with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. I had set up my will against His will and so I had insulted Him to His face. I felt not only that I was condemned by God, but my own conscience joined in the condemnation! As I read the whole Law of the Lord through and remembered how Christ interpreted and applied it, I felt sick at heart, and the conviction burned itself into my soul with all the force of a raging fever—that all the Ten Commandments would be swift and sure witnesses against me at the Judgment Bar of God! It must be a terrible thing to stand in front of a row of soldiers, knowing that every one of their rifles contains a bullet that is meant for your heart, but the condemnation of a sin-burdened conscience is worse than that! The ten great guns of the Law of God are all aimed at the poor sinner and there he stands, dreading the doom that he knows he deserves, for the Justice of God has but to lift its finger and swift and awful would be the punishment which his sin would bring upon him!

I can bear my testimony that there is no sickness that is so hard to bear as the sickness that is caused by sin. You may get a little rest now and then in almost every other form of affliction, but you cannot get any rest when you are suffering from this spiritual malady! “Day and night,” said David, “Your hand was heavy upon me.” So it is not at all surprising that he added, “my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” This sickness because of sin is one that no human physician can cure and no earthly medicine can even alleviate! When suffering thus, the soul can find no comfort—often, not even in the Word, itself! Yet, if there are any here who are sick in this way, let me say that I am glad that they are thus afflicted, for this is a sickness of which souls do not eternally die—it is a sickness which ends in everlasting health! So I pray with all my heart that we may *all* fall sick of it—and then that Jehovah-Rophi may come and cure us as only He can!

There is one special symptom of this soul-sickness to which the text directs our attention—“Their soul abhors all manner of meat.” Here comes the world’s waiter bearing a dainty dish in his hand. As he lifts the

cover, the sinner recognizes its contents and remembers how he has relished such food in the past. But when he tastes it, he cannot tell why, but he feels an utter revulsion to it! That which once seemed so savory is now quite nauseous to him! "Take it away," he cries. "I am sick of the very sight of it!" Then the waiter brings in something that is more highly spiced and sets it before him, but when he has tried it, he says, "I do not see why people are so fond of such fare as this! To me it is utterly flavorless and insipid." One brings him the fare that is provided at the theater, another tries to tempt his appetite with innocent pleasantries, a third tries the seductions of immoral amusements, but to the whole set of them he cries, "Get you gone, every one of you! Not one of you can bring me anything to suit my palate." He finds fault with everything that is offered to him! The fact is, his mouth is out of taste for all such dainties, as some call them. It is a blessed thing to have no liking for such fare as the world can set before you, for those who are satisfied with such food as that will find that they have to digest it in Hell—and long enough will they be in doing so! There may be some in this building, tonight, who have lost their taste for things that once charmed them. You do not know how it is, but somehow or other, you cannot get on with the company in which you used to feel quite at home. The amusements which once delighted you seem, now, to be so frivolous and senseless that you wonder how you could ever have been allured by them. The explanation is that you are now like those of whom our text speaks—"Their soul abhors all manner of meat."

The worst of it is that people in this state of mind and heart abhor the good meat as well as the bad—"their soul abhors *all manner of meat*"—the good meat of the Gospel as well as the tainted viands of the world. Many a time I have acted as a cook and I have tried to tempt these sin-sick folk with what I reckoned to be most delicious fare—food which I had myself tasted first and found it to be most palatable and nourishing. But when I have set it before them, they have turned away from it and said, "No, no, that is not for us—we cannot relish such fare as that." I have preached concerning the abounding mercy of God, but the sinner has said, "There is no mercy for me." I have talked of the power of Jesus' precious blood, but the sinner has said, "It will never cleanse *me*." I have spoken of the prevalence of believing prayer, but the poor man has shaken his head and despairingly cried, "I cannot pray!" I have told him that Christ is willing and waiting to receive all who come to Him, but he only turned his face to the wall and said, "I cannot come to Christ, and I never shall come to Him. I know that I am a condemned man." I have brought out the promises and set them in a dish garnished with Gospel invitations, but his soul has abhorred all manner of meat. The fault is not with the meat, but with the sinner's mouth—the provision is good, yet his soul abhors it!

I recollect the time when I used to come out of every House of Prayer feeling worse than when I entered it. I used to read Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and other books of the same sort—but often, when I

shut them up, I wished I had never opened them! I read the Bible most diligently, but the choicest passages in it only made me cry, "Ah, it is a most blessed Book for other people, but it is not for me." I was in the condition described by the text and my soul abhorred all manner of food, even the very best!

The text also tells us *the extent to which this soul-sickness had gone*—"they draw near unto the gates of death." Ah, poor Soul, is not this a true portrait of you? You think that your death warrant has been signed by your God, that you are shut up in the condemned cell and that you can hear the carpenters at work making the scaffold ready for your execution! In imagination you have been already shackled, you have gone up the fatal stairs, the cap has been drawn over your face, you are standing upon the drop and to your own apprehension you are about to be launched into Hell! This shows how sick you are, but while I am moved to pity as I see how you are suffering, I am thankful that your present pains are of so salutary a character and that they will prove to be for your lasting good! I can even clap my hands for joy that you are brought so low as to draw near to the gates of Death, for my hope is that you will soon be brought near to the gate of Everlasting Life! Now that God has brought you down, He will soon bring you up, for it is as Hannah sang, "The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up." Therefore be of good courage even though your soul is in such a sad and desperate state!

II. Now, secondly, let us consider the text as SHOWING THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE FOLKS ARE CURED.

First, *they call for the aid of the Great Physician*. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Now that they are brought so near to the gates of Death that there is no hope of their recovery unless God Himself interposes on their behalf, "they cry unto the Lord." I have known some who when they have got to their most desperate state, have been afraid to call upon God to help them. "How can I pray, now," one asks, "when I never prayed before?" That is all the greater reason, my Friend, why you should begin to pray now! You need not even bend the knee, but let your heart go up to God in prayer just where you are now sitting or standing. "But," says another, "if I were to pray, it would only be through fear of Hell. Poor Soul, do not be too particular about your reasons for praying! Cry from your very soul, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and God will hear you and have mercy upon you! I doubt not that many have come to God first through fear of Hell, and afterwards they have learned the attractive power of the love of God in Christ Jesus. If you go to Christ, He will in no wise cast you out!

"But my prayer would be such a selfish one! I could only ask that I might be saved." Well, and what then? For whose sake did the prodigal go back to his father? And did his father refuse to receive him because it was a selfish motive that made him return? He said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" It was a mere bread and cheese motive that took him back

from the far country, but his father's welcome was none the less hearty to the returning prodigal! I never send for a doctor except from the most selfish motive—I do it for my own good, not for his! And so it must be with you. Cry to the Great Physician because you need Him to cure you. You will think more of His honor and Glory after He has cured you, but for the present, be selfish enough to cry, “Lord, save me, or I perish!”

“But I have tried everyone else, first, so I cannot expect God to attend to me after that.” Ah, but God's ways are not like man's! If you had been round to every other shop, first, an ordinary tradesman might refuse to serve you, but God does not deal with sinners in such a fashion as that! Though you have tried the Law of God and tried your own good works, and tried all sorts of human inventions—and all have failed you, cry now to your God! “Better late than never.” All that you have yet done is but part of your disease, so go to your God and confess it, mourn over it before Him and he will tell you that all your sins are forgiven you for His dear Son's sake because He took your place and suffered in your place when He died, “the Just for the unjust,” to bring you to God!

“But I cannot pray,” says one. Then do not try to pray, but simply cry to God as they did in the Psalmist's day. Crying is the most natural expression of human needs. I expect you have learned that your child manages very early in life to let you know what he wants—he does not say, “Father, teach me a little phrase that I may say every morning when I want my breakfast.” How soon a little child in pain will let you know that something is the matter! He will cry all over—head, hands, feet and his whole body will be in such a state of agitation that you will run to his relief! And that is the way to cry to God in your trouble. If your tongue cannot express your needs, let your bended knees, your uplifted hands and your streaming eyes and heaving bosom and aching heart all help to make up for your broken utterance! And then will the Lord speedily save you out of your distress.

“But what is the Physician's fee?” asks one, who has vivid memories of earthly doctors' bills. The fee—oh, the Physician will have you, yourself, as His fee! When He heals you of your soul-sickness, He takes you to be His forever. But He wants nothing from you! Only trust Him. Only cry to Him. Then, and though your soul has abhorred all manner of meat, and you have drawn near to the gates of Death, Jehovah-Rophi will cause your disease to vanish in a moment and your soul shall rejoice in perfect restoration to health!

I can only speak briefly upon *the happy cure of the sin-sick patients by the Great Physician*—“He sent His Word, and healed them.” The one remedy for sin-sick sinners is the Word of God, so let them be diligent in reading it and eager to hear it whenever they can, for, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Certain passages of Scripture will always be peculiarly precious to us, for they were the golden keys which opened the dungeons in Doubting Castle and set us at liberty. I can never forget that blessed text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” for that was the message that brought peace to my troubled spirit! And no doubt many of you have similar memories

concerning the texts which were used by God for your deliverance. It is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, that is the means of healing sin-sick souls!

But there is a still higher meaning in this expression, for the Lord Jesus Christ is THE WORD OF GOD and it is He whom God has sent for the healing of poor sin-sick souls! He was sent by God to be the sinner's Friend and the sinner's Savior! He lived for sinners and He died for sinners. Listen to this good news, Sinner! You have sinned, but if you believe in Jesus, you shall no longer be regarded by God as a sinner, for Christ has borne your sins into the land of forgetfulness, as the scapegoat of old did typically for Israel! You have sinfulness still within you, but if you are truly trusting in Jesus, He will overcome your sinfulness by putting His holy fear in your heart and by causing His Spirit to subdue all your evil properties.

Notice, too, how quick the cure is. God has but to say to the sinner, "Be you healed," and he is healed! Just as in Creation, Jehovah said, "Let there be light: and there was light." And just as when He was upon the earth, the Lord Jesus but spoke and blind eyes were made to see, deaf ears were made to hear, the lame were enabled to walk and even the dead were raised to life! Poor Sinner, you think that your coffin will soon be needed, but Jehovah-Jesus has but to speak the word and in an *instant* the flush of health shall come upon your soul and you shall be perfectly healed!

This cure is also perfect as well as immediate, for the text says that the Lord "delivered them from their destructions," as well as that He "saves them out of their distresses." They are not only cured of one spiritual malady, but of all! They are delivered from the guilt, the power and the penalty of sin! And once they are really cured by Christ, there is no fear of their ever having this soul-sickness again! Let the Great Physician but speak the healing word to the sinner here who is in the most desperate condition—and in a moment that sinner shall be made whole, never to suffer in the same fashion again! Oh, that He would put forth His healing power this very moment! I can only talk, but He can act. I can only tell you how sin-sick sinners are cured, but He can cure you! Oh, that you who have been brought so low that you think you can go no lower unless you are cast into Hell, would only cry unto the Lord in your trouble and He will save you out of your distresses! He will send His Word and heal you, and deliver you from going down to destruction! God grant that it may be so, for His dear Son's sake!

III. Now I must close by briefly reminding you of WHAT THESE SIN-SICK FOLKS DO AFTER THEY ARE CURED. They do what I would like to do all my life!

First, *they praise the name of the Lord*. What blessed employment this is, and I think God has just cause of complaint against us that we do not praise Him more. Men of the world seem to have thoroughly learned the art of cheering themselves with song. If the woodman goes forth on a snowy morning with his axe over his shoulder, he is generally humming

or whistling a merry tune. You scarcely ever see a milkmaid in the country brushing the early dew from the grass without also hearing her singing some lively strain. And the housewife, as she rocks the cradle, soothes her babe to sleep with a tuneful lullaby. The sailors on board ship never haul up the anchor or join in other heavy labor without uniting in a jovial song to help them in their task! And Christians ought to imitate them, only on a much higher scale! I think we lose a great deal through not praising God more. We need much more singing—could you not sing much more at home, at the family altar, or when you are engaged in your various occupations? It would help to bring heavenly enjoyment into your lives if you had more of this heavenly employment!

Then, next, sin-sick souls who have been healed *offer sacrifices unto the Lord*—“Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving.” I do not believe you have ever been cured by Christ unless you need to do something to show how grateful you are to Him. A saved soul feels the sacred burdening of love and longs to consecrate itself and all it has to God’s Glory! And if there is one thing that is more difficult than another, the grateful soul says, “That is what I should like to do for Christ, to prove my love to Him.” Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, have you really devoted yourselves—body, soul and spirit—to Him who gave His all for you? Then prove it by your self-denial and self-sacrifice for His cause!

Now, lastly, those who are cured by Christ “*declare His works with rejoicing*,” by which is meant, I suppose, that if they can preach, they are to do it “with rejoicing.” There are some preachers who seem to regard the Gospel as though it were a cup of medicine of the bitterest kind. It is true that it is a healing balm—it is a most blessed cure-all—but it is neither to be presented nor taken with a wry face as though it were some nauseous concoction of the apothecary! Whitefield began one of his discourses thus—“When I read my text, I felt inclined to sing instead of preaching to you.” That is the way to preach—with a holy joyfulness of spirit, telling your hearers that you have found the priceless Pearl and inviting them to share its preciousness with you! And you who cannot preach, can talk to one another in a similar strain—how much good can be done by a bright testimony to God’s Grace in little companies of three, four, five, or six! I thank God that many of you are not strangers to this blessed work, but I wish that more of you would get at it. How can you keep this blessed secret to yourselves? You are in a hospital full of spiritually sick folks and yet you keep to yourselves the secret of everlasting health! You are surrounded by myriads of lost souls and yet you keep to yourselves the secret of salvation! Oh, shame on you for such guilty silence! End it at once—tell the good news to someone before you go to bed tonight—and then tell it to somebody else as early as you can in the morning! And keep on telling it in season and out of season as long as you live! Let us have plenty of street-preaching, plenty of Bible-distribution, plenty of Sunday school teaching, plenty of teaching young men and women in Bible classes, plenty of *everything*, in fact, that will make men know what Jesus Christ can do! I would that I could whisper in the ear of everyone who has been healed, “Go, and tell your neighbor, your friend, your

child, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife what the Lord has done for you!”

“Are we all to preach?” asks someone. Oh, no! Only you who have been healed can tell about the Good Physician’s healing power. If you are among those who are sick through sin, and sick of sin, come to Him to be healed—trust Him to save you and then—

**“Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found
Point to His redeeming blood
And say, ‘Behold the way to God.’”**

God bless you, everyone, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:1-32.**

The Psalmist exhorts the redeemed in praising God, to observe the different forms of His mercy. He views the chosen people as travelers, captives, sick men and seamen. And in each of these classes he exhorts them to praise the Lord.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good.* He is essentially good. His name, God, is only a shorter form of good, yet if we were to lengthen it, there could be no more goodness found in it than is found in the three letters, “God.”

1. *For His mercy endures forever.* That is the form which His goodness takes in relation to us, His sinful creatures. As we deserve nothing, everything that He gives us is a gift of mercy—and what a range His mercy takes! “His mercy endures forever.”

2. *Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* If nobody else will say that God is good, let His redeemed ones say it! If others are silent, let them speak to His praise! If others are doubtful, let them declare positively that the Lord is good and that His mercy endures forever!

3. *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west from the north, and from the south.* We were scattered in various directions by our own folly and sin—

**“Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road”—**

and He gathered us unto that blessed Shiloh of whom Jacob said, “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

4. *They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way.* Ah, the way of a sinner, convicted of sin, is indeed a solitary way! He has a sorrow which he cannot tell to anybody else—a stranger intermeddles not with his grief!

4. *They found no city to dwell in.* There are no cities in the wilderness for people to dwell in. We look for a city that is out of sight at present—“a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Here, in this fleeting world, we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

5, 6. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* They were a long while before they prayed to the Lord, but He was not a long while before He answered their prayer! When they were brought to that, *then*, that is to say, when they were so hungry, and so thirsty, and so faint that they could do nothing else but cry, *then*, was the moment that they cried unto the Lord, “He delivered them out of their distresses.”

7. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.* “He led them”...“that they might go.” The leadings of Divine Grace do not destroy the activities of the human will. God does not treat us as if we were blocks of wood or stone, but He treats us as reasonable beings.

8, 9. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.* We hardly looked for that verse to follow the preceding one! We might have thought that the Psalmist would have written, “for He brings them to a city of rest.” God always exceeds our expectations. He not only brings His wandering people home, but He feeds them bountifully when they are there! He holds high festival within Zion’s gate, and the citizens of the New Jerusalem are fed with the finest of the wheat. Surely souls so blessed must praise Jehovah for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Now comes another picture, the picture of the captives—

10, 11. *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High.* They “sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,” for they have lost all energy. They sit down in dumb despair, for at last their sins have found them out. They rejected God and He has left them to suffer the consequences of their sin—“being bound in affliction and iron.”

12, 13. *Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble—*This seems to always be the last thing that people in trouble do! Until they hunger and thirst, and their soul faints, as in the former case, or until they fall down utterly helpless, as in this case, they will not pray. But “then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble”—

13-16. *And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* All Glory be to the great Liberator’s name! Now comes the picture of sick men, which is also the portrait of ourselves—

17. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* Perhaps affliction comes to their bodies, but more especially it attacks their hearts—they have heart disease, a mortal tremor within, or a terrible fever of fear.

18. *Their soul abhors all manner of meat.* You cannot comfort them, they cannot or will not receive the Truth of God that would sustain them—they have lost all appetite for spiritual food.

18. *And they draw near unto the gates of death.* They seem to come close to those great iron gates that shut out all hope forever! They can hear them grind upon their massive hinges—they begin to realize what the wrath of God means.

19. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble.* Fools though they are, they have sense enough to do this!

19. *And He saves them out of their distresses.* So that a true prayer from one who is near unto the gates of death is a prevailing prayer! We earnestly urge all to repent long before they come to a dying bed, but if they are on a dying bed—if they are literally near unto the gates of death—here is evidence that if they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, He will not close His ears or His heart to their prayer!

20. *He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.* The Word of God has a sort of Omnipotent power in it. By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by the Word of the Lord are sick [See Sermons #1992, Volume 33—SONG FOR THE FREE—HOPE FOR THE BOUND; #1824, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF SUNDRY FOOLS and #2921, Volume 51—AN OLD-FASHIONED REMEDY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] souls healed. That Word can do anything that God purposes. “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” but where the Word of God is, there is Omnipotence!

21, 22. *Oh that man would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* Now we come to the seafaring men—

23, 24. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.* These words literally apply not only to seamen, but also to others who are called to endure great storms while sailing across the sea of this mortal life.

25, 26. *For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.* For even he who has his “sea legs” on, finds them of little use to him when such a storm as this is tossing everything in a dreadful hurly burly. “They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths,” and this experience is repeated, perhaps, hundreds of times, day and night, sometimes for weeks together!

27. *They reel to and fro, and stagger like drunken men, and are at their wit’s end.* But, oh, when souls are caught in a storm of conviction of sin, this is a true description of their spiritual distress—they are at their wits end and do not know what to do! Everything about them is shaking, and they are reeling to and fro, sometimes this way and sometimes that—staggering, scarcely able to believe anything, seeing some things double and everything out of place!

28. *Then they cry*—Yes, *then*, when they are reeling and staggering! That is a strange condition—is it not—in which to be praying, reeling to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man? “Then they cry”—

28. *Unto the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.* Then God will hear the prayer of a staggering man, and the prayer that has not any sense in it because the man who prays is at his wit’s end! By “sense” I mean not following the consecutiveness of an orderly petition—the prayer itself seeming to reel to and fro. The suppliant is so overpowered by sorrow that he might be thought to be drunk—as she was to whom Eli so harshly spoke bidding her put away her wine from her, whereas she was overcome by sorrow. God hears us when we cannot hear ourselves pray and when we cannot put the words of our supplication in proper order. God knows what we mean to say and gives us what we really need.

29. *He makes the storm a calm*—What a change! And what a blessing it is to get into one of God’s calms, for they are far beyond the ordinary calm of nature! Then do we enjoy “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.”

29-32. *So that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.*

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

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

AN OLD-FASHIONED REMEDY NO. 2921

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1876.

*“He sent His Word and healed them.”
Psalm 107:20.*

THE healing of natural sickness is not accomplished without the power of God. Vain were the skill of the most learned physician unless the God of Nature cooperated with the medicine. If any of you have been restored of late from sickness, I charge you to praise God for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Remember your weary nights. Remember your painful days. Call to mind the vows of your soul in anguish and take care that you play not false to God. In the day of your health, be true to the promises made on your sickbed. Let the song of gratitude go up from your heart and from your lips—and let the life which He has so graciously preserved be dedicated to His service. It ought to be so. God help you that it may be so.

However, the Psalm is intended to speak of spiritual things and so, tonight, we shall apply our text to the disorders of the mind—the diseases of the heart. There are some here present who have felt that worst of sicknesses—a sick heart—and many of us, blessed be God, have received that best of healing, the healing of the mind! They can praise God tonight while we speak of this precious fact—“He sent His Word and healed them.”

Just in a few strokes let me sketch the patient in his extremity and then at length let me describe the cure in its simplicity. “He sent His Word and healed them.”

I. First, let us give the sketch of THE PATIENT IN HIS EXTREMITY. I hope he will see himself as in a glass and say, “That is myself.”

The first thing about him is that *he is a fool*. Turn to the 17th verse. “Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities are afflicted.” It is insulting to a man to call him a fool, but I question whether any man is saved unless he has called *himself* a fool! “Fool,” says the man under a conviction of sin, “you may write the word large about me, for it describes my condition!” We sometimes speak of a born fool. Well, that is exactly what the convicted man feels he is—he has been born a fool, his very nature is foolish—for he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness! And that not now and then, but by the very force of nature he seems to constantly make a foolish choice. He has been one of those fools who has said in his heart, “No God,” for he has practically lived without thinking of his God.

He has been one of those fools who has chosen the transient present and left the eternal future to be forgotten. It is a difficult thing to cure a man of his folly. "Though you should crush a fool in the mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet his foolishness will not depart from him," says Solomon. That would be a rather rough process, would it not? But it would be useless! Folly would still remain in spite of all the grinding. When a man truly sees his sickness, he feels that he is just such a fool as that—a fool with folly ingrained. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," and in the life of a sinner!

But this man has played the fool. Besides being a fool, *he has acted like a fool*, for, "fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." Transgression means breaking bounds and trespassing and he that trespasses in the fields of a God who is so just and so strong to smite, is a fool! Iniquity means lack of equity, lack of truth, lack of rightness, lack of honesty and surely he that tries to cheat God is a fool! How shall he hope to be able to deceive the Omniscient One, or that those eyes which are like a flame of fire shall fail to detect the inequity, the dishonesty of his doings? That he has thought for a moment that he could do it, shows that he is a fool and that he has acted like a fool!

Now, I am not going to say of any man present that this is true concerning him, but if any man here present feels it is the truth about himself, he is a man that God is going to bless, for when the Lord has shown you yourself, He will afterwards show you Himself. And when He has made you see that you are a fool by nature and a fool by practice, then it is that He will take you into the school of wisdom and yet teach you the right way! The patient's disease, you will see, is a very bad one and it is one that is very hard to cure.

You notice, according to the Psalm, that *he has come into a condition in which he has lost all appetite*. It is written, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." A sick man in certain diseases loses his appetite for everything. It matters not how daintily cooked the delicate morsel may be, he turns against it. Ah, well do I remember my own season of suffering when I passed through this experience. I am only describing what has happened to myself and, therefore, I know that it has happened to some of you, for though in detail our experiences differ, in the main they are amazingly alike. How we loathe everything in our sickness! Manna—that is light bread. Bread that is heavy. Wine—it is too hot. Water—it is too cold. It mattered not what was brought to me when I was in that spiritual condition, I could not receive it. Doubtless it is so with you, too. Of the invitations of the Gospel, the soul says, "Ah, Jesus Christ could not intend to invite *me*." Of the promises of the Word, the heart says, "Ah, they may be true for everybody else, but they cannot be true for *me*." One may preach the sweetest and the softest messages of love, but when a soul is under a sense of sin, it abhors all manner of meat—it turns against all consolation—it refuses to be comforted. You may try to comfort such a case as much as you will, but the dreary thought rises in the soul, "It cannot be for *me*. As for me, I shall perish in

my iniquity! I have played the fool exceedingly and God has given me up to my heart's lusts and now I shall perish in the day when He judges mankind."

The Psalmist goes on to say of the sick man that *he is drawing near unto the gates of death*. I know some souls that feel as if it could not be long before they shall be utterly lost. They have not had any peace, rest, happiness, comfort, for such a great while that it seems to them a wonder that the earth does not open and swallow them up! They cannot sleep at night for terrible dreams and cannot rest at day for terrible sounds that are in their ears. They think of an angry God, the Judgment Seat and the dreadful sword of the Most High that is made bare to smite the wicked. I do not say that many of you are in that state, but if any of you are, it is to you that I am sent tonight with words of mercy, for the text says, "He sent His Word and healed them." These fools, these that have played the fool, these whose soul abhors all manner of meat and these who draw near unto the gates of death—to these very people He sent His Word and healed them! Oh, that Infinite Mercy might do the same with any such who are in this company!

There is one hopeful mark about this sick man and that is that he has begun to pray. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." It would not be much of a prayer if it had been printed—you could not have read it. Indeed, you could not print it, for you cannot print a cry. The reporter has not got a sign in all his stenography, I think, by which he can record a cry. A cry is the heart's own language with which the tongue cannot interfere. Is there anybody here that does pray and yet cannot pray—who groans before God, "Oh, that I might be saved"—whose only words are tears—whose only language is the anguish of his silent spirit? Ah, you are the person—the person that can cry! Cry, then, unto the Lord with all your might! It is said of such, "He sent His Word and healed them."

Well, those few touches may suffice. An artist sometimes sketches a likeness with a piece of charcoal. So have I sketched my patient in words few and simple. I am now going to take a longer time to describe the healing in its wonderful simplicity. "He sent His Word and healed them."

II. THE CURE IN ITS SIMPLICITY.

When a physician meets with a very bad case—a case in dire extremity—it will sometimes happen with him that he has to think awhile. Perhaps he has to resort to his books of medicine or to his diary of former cases, or to hold a consultation with another physician before he will venture to prescribe, for something unknown is needed in this unusual disease. But I want you to observe that though the case represented in the Psalm was a very bad one, there was no new thing needed to meet it. The old remedy would suffice. All that the Infinite Lord had to do was to send His Word and heal them! It was the old healing Word of God that had healed many a fool before and could still heal fools—the old healing word that had brought back many from between the very gates of death! Nothing more was needed in order to bring back these who were in such a dreadful condition. For the healing of the souls sick with sin and sick of it, I have no new Gospel to preach nor any new

thing to say. Thank God, the old, old Gospel meets every case! New developments of sin, strange out-of-the-way diseases of iniquity keep cropping up, but the old remedy meets them all. God needs not to consult nor make new compounds—the simple thing which healed men centuries ago still heals them. “He sent His Word and healed them.”

The text may be understood to mean three things. First God sent Christ, the Incarnate Word. That is the *essence* of the remedy. Then He sent the Bible, the revealed Word. That is the *instrument* of the remedy. He sent, thirdly, His Word of Power by the Holy Spirit. That is the *application* of the remedy. Let us speak of these three things. They are all necessary. As there is a Trinity in the one God, so must there to a trinity in the one Word by which men are saved.

First, let us look at *the essence of the remedy*. Dear Friends, when God heals a sinner He does it by Christ, who is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. Almighty healing lies in the Person and work and merit of Him who is called the Word of God, of whom you read, in the first chapter of John’s Gospel, that “the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Now, whatever your disease may be, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is able to meet it. He can heal the guilt of sin. However guilty a soul may be, Christ stands in the sinner’s place, bears the sin and makes Atonement for it unto God. So all sin can be put away. No matter how many your sins, or how black they may be, although they are double-dyed, yet the moment Jesus Christ comes to you and you accept Him—

**“Your sins shall vanish quite away
Though black as Hell before,
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea
And shall be found no more!”**

There is healing for the guilt of sin.

Probably, however, your conscience is troubled about the influence of sin over your life. Christ can meet that need, too. He can cure you of sinning. Even if you could be forgiven the past, you cannot bear the thought of going on as you have done. Dear sick one, there is healing for your foolishness as well as for your sin—for the iniquity of your heart as well as for the iniquity of your life! Jesus Christ is able to set you all right. If the wheels of the watch are wrong, He is the Great Maker and He can put it all right again. He can rectify every cog of every wheel till He shall have sanctified you wholly—spirit, soul and body. Jesus Christ is made of God unto us not only Justification but Sanctification, too! He is able to meet both the dire ills of life and the guilt and the power of sin.

Possibly you reply to me that you are suffering in your inmost soul. Well, the Great Physician speaks and *He can heal the depression of sin*. A sense of sin has broken your bones. A sense of sin has seemed to take away all courage from you. You do not seem to be half a man now, for sin has unstrung you—has made you weak as water. My Lord Jesus Christ can heal that! He can take away the depression, the despondency, yes, and the despair. Though you may have written yourself down as damned. Though you have made a league with Hell and “a covenant with

death,” yet my Lord Jesus Christ with one touch of His pierced hand can make your spirit leap for joy! It is His way to pluck us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set our feet upon the rock and put a new song into our mouths and establish our goings. You cannot tell how quickly despondency can be changed for delight when Jesus appears! He can put off your sackcloth and your ashes from you so that you shall never wear them again. He can gird you with gladness and put jewels in your ears and about your neck, and adorn you as a bridegroom decks his bride with ornaments. You little know the great joy which Christ can give, in a moment, to the most desponding sinner!

If you tell me that sin has done you all sorts of mischiefs—that you feel as if sin had poisoned you all over—that your whole nature is now out of gear and even though it should be healed, yet there are scars which you will never lose, broken bones you will carry to your tomb, I still preach to you of the power of Christ! *He can remove even the scars.* My Lord has various ointments and remedies with which He can heal even these. What He did here on earth to the bodies of men, He is now prepared to do to the souls of men! There came to Him the blind. They could not see, just as you cannot understand. You say truly that sin has darkened your judgment. What did the Master do but make clay with His spittle, anoint the eyes of the blind and say, “Go and wash,” and the blind went and came back seeing! Sometimes He touched men’s eyes and the scales fell and so they saw! My Lord can give you back your calm and right judgment again. He can so overrule your spirit that it shall no more put the bitter for the sweet and the darkness for the light. He can give you back those eyes of your heart—

**“He comes from thickest films of night
To clear the mental ray,
And on the eyeballs of the blind
To pour celestial day.”**

Ah, but you reply, “I can see well enough, but I cannot act. I know what I ought to do, but I do not do it. I perceive the right but I do the wrong—I would, but I cannot.” Still I invite you to Jesus. *He can give you the strength you have lost.* When my dear Lord was here on earth, there were men with withered hands and He bade them stretch them out and they were restored. There were some that had lain on the bed and could not stir, sick of the palsy, but He bade them walk. And there was one that had been lying for years by Bethesda’s side, that could not stop into the pool. He lay there as you lie at the pool of ordinances, but Christ said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk,” and he did so. My Lord can give you back all power that you have lost—the power to repent, the power to believe, the power to shake off sin, the power to walk in holiness! He can give it all back to you and He can do it now, even while you are sitting in this House of Prayer! Was there ever a disease that came to Christ that puzzled Him? Do you remember one that He ever turned away? In the long list of human diseases reckoned to be incurable, almost all, if not quite all, came under His glance, but was there one that foiled Him? Was there one of which He said, “My Power is

not equal to that”? No, you know He even raised the dead! Even though Lazarus had begun to stink, He raised him—he had been dead three days and yet he came forth—when the grave cloths were unwound, there was the living man! What cannot my Master do?

If I address someone who feels himself to be full of evil till he is almost like a man with a devil within him, I point that man to Christ. *He can dispossess the devil.* Do I speak to one whose raging passion, or whose lustful desire, or whose unsatisfied thirst of drunkenness, or whose long habit of blasphemy has made him like the demoniac? Oh, come here! Come you but within range of that mighty Voice and it shall say, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit, and enter no more into him.” Christ can make even you to be clean!

Wherever Jesus Christ comes, *He* is that Word of God that makes men whole! So I say to you tonight that if any of you want to save others, preach Jesus Christ, for He is the Word that heals them! And if any of you want to be saved, think much of Jesus Christ. Look to none else but Jesus Christ. Fix your mind’s eye on Him and trust Him—and as surely as you trust Him, you shall be made whole. In your case it shall be written, “He sent His Word and healed him.” There is nothing about your case that Christ cannot reach! There is in Jesus Christ something exactly adapted to the peculiarly disastrous nature of your position. He can, He will save even you, even you, if you do but trust Him now!

I am obliged to be brief for time flies so rapidly. And now, notice in the second place, *the instrument of the remedy.* “He sent His Word and healed them.” That is, He sent this Book, this Revelation which is the Word of God. Though it is Christ that heals men, and not the Bible, the Bible is like the wrapper of the bottle in which the medicine is put—and we find the remedy by unfolding the wrapper. Remember, dear Souls, if you are sick, that the medicine that is to reach your case is somewhere between these two covers. There is something in here for every sin-sick soul that seeks it!

Perhaps it is a *precept* you have been neglecting—something of that which the Lord would have you to do. I have known many a soul brought to Christ by a precept. The Law of God has often been a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ that they might find peace in Him.

But for many more of you there is here an invitation such as this, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” That refers to you, does it not? Do you not thirst? And there is the sweet invitation of last Sunday night, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” That has been the instrument of healing to countless numbers.

Sometimes it is not an invitation, but a *promise* or a grand encouraging statement such as, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Or such a sweet word as, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” which is used by the Great Physician as balm for the wounded soul.

Precepts, promises, invitations, Gospel statements—here they are! The medicine is put into many forms because the disease assumes so many aspects, but within this Sacred Volume lies that living Word of God which, if it is blessed by the Holy Spirit, will bring peace to your souls! I wish you, therefore, to value this Book beyond all price—to read it much, to read it, praying as you read, “Lord, bless it to my soul”—to lay your heart open to it when it cuts you like a knife—to receive those friendly wounds as meant for your healing. Then open your heart to receive its light that you may see by it—to receive its comforts that you may rejoice through them. Open wide the great doors of your soul that every part of this Word may have entrance there.

You that preach to others preach much of the Word of God. O dear Sirs, remember good McCheyne’s experience—he says that almost always when there was a case of conversion the hearer attributed it to a text of Scripture that had been quoted in the sermon. I believe it is largely so at all times and when McCheyne again says, “It is God’s Word, not our own, but God’s Word that is generally blessed,” I am sure it is so.

If you who are hearers have a choice in the matter, frequent a ministry that is full of Scripture. You are more likely to get a blessing, there, than anywhere else. Read books that are full of the very Word of God and then read the Word itself. But do not think you will be saved simply by reading it. That is impossible, for you are only saved by Christ—and He said to the people of His time, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and you will not come unto Me that you might have life.” But though you will not be saved *by* reading, you may be saved *through* reading and through reading the Scriptures! While you are reading and hearing God’s precious Word, He may send home some of the Light of God and the Truth of God and the Life which lie concealed within the sacred pages. “He sent His Word and healed them.” My learned doctor, we do not want your new gospel! We want the old Word of God. My friend of the fine poetical speech, you of the grand rhetoric, you of the golden mouth—we want neither you nor your mouth unless you give us the Word of God—just what is revealed in Scripture! There were great preachers before Luther and Calvin, before Wickliffe and Huss and Jerome—they went about preaching and preaching to great crowds, too, but they did not save souls! That was not because they could not speak and were not attractive, but because they had not this story to tell—the story that is in this Book—the story of Him who did hang upon the Cross. We must preach the Word! “Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season,” for it still stands true, “He sent His Word and healed them.”

Now again time checks me and I must therefore notice that there is a third sense in which we may view this text. Let us speak, then, of *the application of the remedy*. Jesus Christ on the Cross does not save men while they reject and refuse Him. And this Book does not save anybody until the Holy Spirit with power speaks to the soul. When that happens, then, it is the Word of God in another sense. Just as of old He spoke and it was done, as He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, there

seems to be needed a distinct call from God to men or they will not come to Him. The Living Word must leap from the mouth of the Living God or else the Bible will be but a dead letter! Men will turn away from Christ as if it were nothing to them that Jesus died—unless the Spirit reveals the Truth in power! Beloved, you that have been healed, do you not ascribe your healing to the secret mysterious power of the Holy Spirit? You know you give Him the glory. Hence when you wish to bring men to Christ, always honor the Holy Spirit. Do not forget to adore Him, to lean entirely upon Him for all the power with which the healing of a soul is to be accomplished. There is no faith in the world that will save except the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God! There is no true glance of the eyes toward Christ on the Cross but such as the Spirit of God has given!

Now I want to speak just two or three words about this. Some of you will say, “Ah me, would God that the Spirit of God would speak to me.” Be not deceived, He is speaking to you now! The Word, when it is faithfully preached with prayerful spirit, has the Spirit of God going with it. Men may resist it, but they add to their sin in doing so. As said the man of God of old, “You do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did so, do you.” Let us explain what the Spirit of God does *not* do. Since you can only be saved by hearing about Christ, He will not bring you a new way of salvation or reveal another Savior. And if you are not saved by reading the Word of God and hearing it, He will not be likely to use any other means. The Spirit is of the same mind as father Abraham who said about the five brothers of the man at whose gate Lazarus lay begging, “If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” You must not sit still and say, “I expect to see signs and wonders, or else I will not believe.” You shall have no sign and no wonder except the sign of a dying Savior and a Savior risen from the dead—and the added sign of this great wonder that you refuse to believe in Him and put your trust in Him.

Now know this, that when men are led to Christ by the Spirit of God, they do not know at the time that it is the Spirit of God that is leading them. They have no idea of it! They think, they meditate, they judge, they decide and they believe. They are free agents and they act as such. It is afterwards that they discover that the Spirit of God has been leading them through it all. Now if you wait till you feel the Spirit of God and *know it to be* the Spirit of God while you are yet unbelieving, you will wait forever—for such an experience will never be granted to you. No man ever knows the Spirit of God so as consciously to be aware that the Spirit is at work with him until he knows Jesus Christ. As no man comes to the Father but through the Son, so no man comes to realize and to be aware of the work of the Spirit on his soul till he knows Jesus Christ!

What is the Spirit of God, then, to do for you? What I hope in many cases He is now doing, namely, to make you willing, as I trust you are. To make you conscious of your danger, as I trust you are. To make you understand the remedy, as I think you do. And to lead you sweetly and gently to accept what God provides, as I hope you will.

“Is that all?” asks one. Ah, Beloved, it is a very great, “all.” I know I cannot do that work! And all the ministers in the world put together could not do that which you think to be so little. I am certain if I were sent to you to proclaim that you could all be saved if you would go barefoot from here to John o’Groats and start tonight, that the great northern road would be thronged by people going! People would do *anything* of that sort to be saved! They would not need to be persuaded. But if we tell them that they are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—it is so simple, it is so easy—that God has to work a miracle before He can bring their proud hearts to consent to be saved in that way! He has to give men new life and new light before they will come to it. Oh, have you come to it? Have you come to it now? Do you feel that at this instant you can say, “I do trust Jesus.” Well, dear Brother, or Sister, it is the Spirit of God that has brought you to it! He is within you! You need not raise any question about it. He has sent the Word and healed you. If He has brought you there, keep saying—

***“While I view You wounded, grieving,
Breathless on the cursed tree,
Gladly I’d feel my heart believing
That You suffered thus for me.”***

Do you trust yourself to Him now, whether you sink or swim? Do you trust yourself to Him that bled on the tree? That is the work of the Spirit of God—none but He could have done it!

“It seems so little,” says one. “It looks as if I might have done it myself.” Ah, but that little thing is the great thing here. When Elisha said, “Wash in Jordan and be clean,” that was the hard thing. “If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?” asked his servant. But it was really a great thing the Prophet had commanded. If our Gospel were hard, it would be easy, but because it is easy it is hard! It needs a strong hand to bring us down to this and I am praying while I am preaching to you that the Lord Jesus Christ would now send forth the ever-blessed Spirit—His own Word of Power—to bring you to Himself. Look and live!

Oh, are you sick? Christ is a Physician on purpose for the sick! Are you crying? Christ is One who always comes at the cry of sick souls! Are you willing to be saved in God’s way? Will you let Him do what He wills with you? Do you surrender at discretion? Do you say, “Anyway, anyway, just so I may be but saved from the wrath to come?” Will you now open wide your hearts to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord? Then the Spirit of God is present healing you! He is at work with you. He has healed you, I trust, already! Only trust the bleeding Lamb of God, only trust Him! It is done. It is done. All glory to the Lamb of God! It is done! All glory to the Divine Spirit who has brought us into this state of salvation! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107.**

1. *O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* Because we are sinners, God's goodness takes the form of mercy. Mercy—this was what we need—therefore, instead of mere benevolence towards the good, God's love takes the form of mercy towards the guilty and this mercy is forever! It always was, always is and always shall be.

2. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* Let the redeemed be the first to sing and let them sing the sweetest of all. O children of God, you are meant to be leaders in the chorus of God's praise! All nature is a great organ and if you are what you should be, you are the men and women whose fingers of gratitude are to touch the keys and bring forth thunders of praise unto God!

3. *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.* It is a part of Redemption's work to gather out all people—fetch them into a separated condition. The voice of Redemption sounds—"Come out from among them and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing." And the hand of Redemption gathers out God's chosen and brings them into a saved unity where they enjoy fellowship with each other and with God. Now here he gives a description of the gratitude which is due to God from different persons who have been partakers of His mercy. First, souls are here compared to lost travelers.

4-6. *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* Some of you know what this means. You have lost your way. You know not how to find it. Spiritually you are in a wilderness and you would, if you could, get to the city of Jerusalem. You would get to the very heart of God, but you cannot. You find no city to dwell in—no peace—no rest.

Moreover, your spiritual needs are very pressing. You are hungry and you are thirsty, but it is a wilderness and you cannot find a morsel of food. No manna drops for you. Your soul is ready to faint. You feel as if you could not go another step nor search another inch. To lie down and die is all that you can do. But the vultures are in the air and you are afraid even of despair. You are hard pressed. Notice it is said, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." Why did not they do so before? Because men do not begin to pray to God as long as they have any hope besides. But when all hope is gone, then comes the first real living, agonizing, cry to Heaven—and no sooner is that heard than God answers it! "He delivered them out of their distresses."

7-9. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.* Is there a longing soul here tonight? Amidst these thousands, surely there must be some! Well, dear Soul, God will satisfy you! He will not merely stay your hunger for a little while, and help you to break your fast, but your longing shall be satisfied. And if you are hungry, He will fill you and fill you not only with

good, but with goodness itself—the very quintessence of everything that is excellent! Next, the Psalmist describes prisoners. We have a picture of the spiritual state of man from another point of view.

10-13. *Such as it is in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron because they rebelled against the words of God's and condemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses.* These were prisoners in a prison where they were forced to work and where they found no rest. A picture of a dark soul—a soul over which death spread his dragon wings. You know what it means to be brought into spiritual death—to feel the chill of spiritual death even to your very marrow, paralyzing you and binding all your hopes in everlasting frost, do you not? Have you been in dread of the wrath to come? Have you set to work to redeem yourselves and toiled like slaves, but toiled in vain? Has your heart been brought down from your high notions, your proud desires, your boasting and your loftiness? Then is fulfilled in you the words of this text—“Therefore He brought down their heart with labor: they fell down and there was none to help.”

“Then,” but not till then—“they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses.” Proud hearts will not pray. When a man can help himself, he will not cry to God. As long as he has any hope left within the compass of his nature, he will not turn to the God who made him. But what a blessed despair that is which drives us to God! It is like the wave that sweeps the mariner up on to the rock where he is safe. May such a wave of despair catch some of us and hurl us into safety! They cried and He saved them.

14-16. *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men; for He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* The third picture of our lost estate is given us under the image of a sick man.

17-19. *Fools because of their transgressions and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry.* Even these fools! “Then they cry”—

19-22. *Unto the LORD in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* One more picture is given and that is of a soul at sea, tossed with tempest and not comforted—spiritually shipwrecked.

23-28. *They that go down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger*

like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry. Never till they get to their wit's end do men cry to God! When nothing else is to be done and all human might has utterly failed, then they cry. Now, you that have ever been in this storm—you know what it means. You recollect how you were sailing smoothly along with fair weather and suddenly a spiritual cyclone took hold of you, and twisted your soul roundabout—threw you sometimes up with presumptuous hopes, and then down again with awful despairs! You could not stand or hold to anything, even the Truth of God you knew, you could not believe, and the promises which you could believe, you could not apply to yourself. There was no hold-fast for you! You reeled and staggered and your courage was gone. Your soul was melted because of trouble. There seemed nothing before you but the abyss. Deep called to deep, and Jehovah's waterspouts sent forth a sound. "Now," you thought, "surely the end is come." And then it was that you began to pray.

28-32. *Unto the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.*

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

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

THEIR DESIRED HAVEN

NO. 3316

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1866.

“So He brings them to their desired haven.”
Psalm 107:30.

TAKEN strictly, according to its original context, the text plainly and powerfully reminds us that our Providential mercies ought never be forgotten—and more especially those remarkable mercies which concern the safety of our life in times of great peril.

If there are any of you who have been exposed to storms at sea, or who have in any other way been brought near death's door, and have then been strikingly rescued, should you not devote your life to Him who has spared and prolonged it? Do you think it was without a design that God brought you into the peril? And is it without a purpose that He has lengthened out your span of life? Oh, I pray you, if you have hitherto been ungrateful, let this tenderness of His in sparing your useless life—for remember it has been useless to Him—excite in you a hundredfold tenderness! A tenderness of repentance for the past, and of holy desire for the future. In such an assembly as this I have surely some who have either been restored from a bed of sickness when they were almost given over, or who have been preserved from accidents on land, or have had hairbreadth escapes at sea. Oh, praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works toward you! And at the foot of the Cross of Calvary dedicate your few remaining days to the service of the Preserver of men!

But this evening, while remembering these important Truths of God, we intend to use the text with yet another objective. This natural voyage on the sea may be a very excellent type and picture of the spiritual voyage which all men undertake in their soul's life. And we should first interpret the text *as it concerns the seeking sinner on the sea of soul-trouble, brought at length by the gracious Pilot to his desired haven of peace through believing.* And then we shall very briefly construe the text with reference *to the saint brought through all the troubles of life to the desired haven of the New Jerusalem, where he shall rest forever free from all future storms and perils.*

First, then, let us look at **I. THE SEEKING SINNER AS A SOUL-VOYAGER.**

Our first thought suggested here is that with regard to the sinner, *there is a haven*. The soul of the man or woman is far out at sea, liable to be wrecked and in such a storm he or she *will* be wrecked, for no craft can live it out unless it makes all speed for the haven. And there is a haven for storm-tossed, ship-wrecked souls! There is a harbor of refuge for tempest-driven sinners! That haven is Christ Jesus, received by faith into the soul. I compare Him to a haven because of *the peace which those enjoy who once shelter in Him*. It is wild, and black, and fierce out there, Sinner, where you are! But there is peace—"the peace of God that passes all understanding"—where the true Believer is. It is not because his ship is different from yours. If he were where you are, as once he was, he would still be in the same peril and suffer the same damage as you. But he is now "in Christ" and you are not. He has changed the hurricane for the haven, the danger for the calm confidence of safety! Oh, if you only knew the peace which faith brings, it would not be long before you cried to God in your trouble and He would bring you to His dear Son and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I also call Jesus a haven because of *the safety that there is to every soul that is in Him*. Ships are wrecked and broken to pieces out there, on the shoals, on the quicksand, or on the iron-bound coasts—but they escape wreck in the haven. There let the storm-king rage his worst and angriest abroad—they are in perfect peace! Sometimes, not a ripple disturbs the vessel that is in the harbor. My Hearer, you are in great danger tonight! You may soon be in Hell and even now the wrath of God abides on you, for you are "without God" and, consequently, "without hope in the world." But the Christian is in no such danger! Sin, which is the source of all soul-danger, has been fully forgiven him. He will not need even to fear death, for to him death is but the gate of life! He need have no fears of temporal trouble, for he has left his burdens with the great Burden-Bearer and may cast all his care on Him who cares for him. He has a peace which is founded upon the Immutable Truth of God! It is not a false peace which expects that there will never come a storm, but a true solid peace which knows that though the storm will come, he needs not dread it because his vessel is safe in the haven!

I call Christ a haven, again, because *when we get into Him*, we do very much what ships do in the haven—we *begin unloading*. Oh, what a cargo of black sins we had! Oh, what a store of grief, fears, follies and doubts! But when we come to Jesus Christ we unload them all. We cast overboard even what we once thought precious, counting it but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him. What a blessed riddance to be free of such foul rubbish as once threatened to founder our souls! Says the hymn—

***"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God!
He bears them all and frees us,***

From the accursed load.”

That is what faith is helped to do. It casts all its sins, doubts, fears and cares upon Jesus Christ, the great Sin-Bearer, and so is made free!

I call Him a haven, too, because when a ship gets to the haven, *it begins to load again*. The haven is as frequently the starting place for a new voyage, as the goal to the previous one. And emphatically is that so in our soul's experience.

What fine store does the trustful soul take on board when it comes to Jesus Christ! Of joy, of love, privilege, holiness, delight and fellowship, for we have inexhaustible riches of Grace and blessing in Him. When we come to Him, these unbounded treasures are all ours! God All-Sufficient is revealed to us in the Person of the Man, Christ Jesus. Like the haven of Araby, where the ships take on board their gold and their perfume, so the soul receives its most precious and priceless gifts from the All-Bountiful Redeemer Lord! Oh, you who are still out on the restless, wild sea of sin and dissatisfaction of storm and dread, will you not long to reach the haven that you may be peaceful and safe, happy and secure because you lose your sins and in their place may receive of His fullness, Grace for Grace?

Mariner! I think I hear you say, “I would gladly come to the port, but what about it, Sir? What are the dues there?” Sinner, *it is a free port*—there is nothing to pay! Of all the keels that ever floated into that haven there was never one that had anything to bring that was worth receiving. There has been much taken out, but nothing has been brought in that was worth the acceptance. Christ will charge you no custom's dues, so run to this port, for it is freely open to every sinner that desires to cast anchor there! *There is room for you, too*. There are many vessels—there is a great fleet, a blessedly peaceful fleet, within, but there is room for you. Do you tell me that there was once a bar before the harbor? Yes, but it has been blasted clean away and is now altogether removed! There is sea-room for the heaviest craft! Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool! Though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow! You say that your heavy-laden boat will draw many a foot of Mercy's water? Ah, but there's many a foot here! There is room even though your ship is burdened up to the bulwarks. There is no fear of your touching the bottom of God's bottomless Grace, wisdom and love! There is always room for you to come. Some ports are only open at certain states of the tide, and so when the tide is out and low, the boat that makes for the haven may run upon the rocks, or the Black Middens somewhere—but of this there is no fear for you—

***“The blessed gates of Gospel Grace
Stand open night and day!”***

Some souls have run for the haven at the very last and, by His mercy, they have got in—while others have run for it, blessed be God, while yet quite young! Oh, may it be your happy lot at the very commencement of

life's voyage, young men and women, to run for this blessed haven and find yourselves strong and secure and serene!

At any rate, let me say to you, however despairing you may be, if God gives you the will to run for this harbor, you may do so and find without doubt that it will be found open to receive you! Christ Jesus, then, is a true haven for the soul—and they who trust in Him are made perfectly secure!

We must not stay longer on this point, however, fair and attractive as it is, but note that the text speaks of "*a desired haven.*" Now I wonder whether to all of us, Christ Jesus is a desired haven. He *is* a haven, but is He a *desired* haven to you? Put your hand now upon your heart and see if you can find a deep desire after Christ there. Oh, I would have hope in preaching to such a congregation, even though none of you knew Christ, if you did but truly desire Him! You would then be like tinder to my spark and be like prepared ground. I should only have to sow the Seed and you would be that fruitful soil which receive it—and yield a harvest a hundred-fold! Christ is not desired by some of you and why not? But I think I can easily find out those who desire the haven. They are just these. The sailor desires the haven *when he has an unfavorable breeze*. Do you feel as if Providence were blowing in your teeth? And are temptations setting in very strong? And does the recollection of your past sin come blowing a hard gale against you? But a little while ago you sailed and were very comfortable, for 'twas all smooth water with you! The sea was like a millpond! But now the waves roll and break mountains high and the wind is in your teeth. I hope you will come to desire the Savior now. Sick of the world and all its turbulence, may you now be anxious after Him and His peace. The sailor desires to get into harbor, too, *when he finds he is in weather which he is not likely to ride out*. "Would God," says the boatswain, "that we could see the light." "Oh, that we were now in the haven," says the master, "for there are threatening, angry breakers ahead." Do you not see the breakers ahead, Sinner? Are you not afraid of dying and more afraid of living? Do not the storms and trials of life drive you to desire something better than the vain world can give you? And does not the prospect of the afterlife alarm you? Then I hope that to your belabored soul Christ is the desired haven!

But even more, the haven is desired *by the sailor whose ship is leaky*. "She will soon go down," he says, "we have kept the pump going, but the water gains upon us." Do you feel your spirit to be such an unseaworthy craft that you are afraid to go out into or stay out in the depths of the sea with her? Do you begin to feel, or fear, she is sinking? If so, then my Lord Jesus Christ will be to you a "desired haven," indeed! Ah, no sinner prizes salvation like the sinner who knows he is lost! May our God give you to know that you are!—

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

That is, a really awakened sinner, for his ship he will not take to harbor unless he feels that she must sink unless he does! I pray God that you may get into such a sinking state that you may be compelled to go to Him. *And when the sailor himself is sick*, it is then he needs the haven. When he feels as if he must die, then he says, "I wish I were safe on shore!" Do you feel sick at heart? Does your very soul turn within you till you reel and stagger like a drunken man? Then you will desire the haven and I bless God you will have it! There is many a sailor who has desired the haven who has yet never reached it but gone down into the depths—but there has never been one upon the sea of life who has *desired* Christ with a really intense longing and a loving and anxious heart, but he has found Him before long! Oh, Sinner, I have hope for you, for if you desire Christ, Christ even more desires you!

We cannot stop, however, even here, for next we have to talk about the Pilot. How do they get into the haven? *He brings them there*. The text is speaking of God. "So *He* brings them to their desired haven." We know nothing of the navigator of the sea of salvation. To get into the harbor is never effected by human skill nor wisdom. "I am a Christian" said a young woman once. Said the minister, "When did you become a Christian?" "I am sure I don't know, Sir," was the reply, "but I supposed it was when I was christened." A great many people have the same notion. Ah, but "so" He does not bring any to the desired haven, but in quite an altogether different way! It is by the personally coming on board of the soul, of the Great Pilot, the Holy Spirit, that the heart is steered into the safe haven. But she will rot or wreck outside, or founder to the bottom unless God, Himself, shall bring her into the quiet harbor of His glorious Redemption. "So *He* brings them." Dear Hearer, do you say, "There is a haven, and I desire to make for the land, but the wind is contrary. I would tack and tack about, but the more I try, the farther off from the haven do I seem to be"? Yes, but He who is the Haven is also the Pilot to bring you to the haven! You have no repentance, you say. He gives it! Ask Him for it. You have no faith. He gives it—seek it at His hands. Oh, that you had Grace to trust Him as much as to bring you to Himself, as to bring you to Heaven! You may not get at Him, you toiling boat. You cannot reach Christ who is on the land, but He comes walking on the water to meet you. "It is I," He says, "be not afraid."

Despair not, doubt not, you who desire! Put up the signals of distress—fire the guns of prayer again and again—and He will come! The Pilot who has weathered and rescued you from many a storm, before, will bring you safely to harbor. He is a Pilot who knows the sea well—

***"He knows what strong temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."***

He has steered many a vessel into port that was in quite as bad a condition as you are now. He is well-skilled! He has got a Divine Certificate

from the Trinity House. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; He has anointed Me to do this very work of bringing poor shipwrecked mariners to the Port of Peace.” Commit yourself to His hands! Let Him board your vessel and He will make your ship tack about and bring you soon into the still and quiet waters of the desired haven!

But I come now to the point I want specially to drive at, and that is *the passage to the haven*. They are brought to the haven they desire and they are brought there by the Pilot, but how are they brought? The text says, “So He brings them to their desired haven.” The way into the haven is not always a smooth one. Some are brought to Christ as if they had never known a storm. Do not, of course, desire and seek a storm—but as long as you get safely into the haven it matters not how you get there. If you trust Christ, do not trouble yourselves because you never went through the Slough of Despond. Read the life of John Bunyan and you will find him much troubled and tumbled up and down for years. You may have felt little of this, perhaps, yet if your trust in Christ is sincere and real, it matters not! If the ship reaches the haven and is safely sheltered there, whether she had a stormy passage or a smooth one is of little importance. The great thing is to be “Safe home, safe home in port.” Still, it often happens that we come into the port of Christ’s salvation through a storm. Read the passage and you will see how frequently this occurs. “They mount up to Heaven, they go down again into the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm to be a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quite. So He brings them to their desired haven.” They are greatly troubled, but it drives them to prayer—prayer gets its answer and so they get Christ! I thank God that I was brought into peace by believing. It was many and many a day before I found Christ. It is a strange thing, but as I was talking this afternoon with a dear friend in Christ about spiritual things, we remarked to one another that the most of the men who had been made useful in winning souls had a hard time of it, when they first came to Christ. For the most part a deep and painful experience seems to be absolutely necessary to enable a minister to get a hold and a grip upon the Doctrines of Grace. Still, let us never forget that the tossing is not the haven and the storm is not the port. A sense of sin does not save—and terrors of conscience do not justify. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” That is the great message to us all! Trust in Jesus—this it is that brings you into port. May God bring you there! And we will then sing together, and “praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”

I hope to meet full many of you in that other port above. Meanwhile, what a blessing and privilege it is that there are so many of us in the port of Christ here and now, on this sin-afflicted earth! Let us hand out the

flags tonight, everyone of them as we try to bless and magnify the King who is, Himself, the Pilot, who made the haven, who Himself bears the storm upon His own bosom, that we may be saved from it and be hidden from all the rolling billows, and find a secure resting place in Him!

And now for only a few minutes let us apply the text to Believers and see—**II. THE SINCERE SAINT AS A SOUL-VOYAGER.** We are accustomed to speak of Heaven as our home and I think we would not strain the point, tonight, if we speak of it as our haven. The Church in the olden times was often pictured in symbols by a ship and, perhaps, no better type of the Church could be found. The ship is out at sea. We are on our journey home. The prow is towards the Promised Land. We hope to reach the Isles of the Happy in the land of the hereafter where the waters are eternally still and the billows roll no more. In yonder haven of our soul there is a peace transcending even the peace which we have learned upon earth though *it* passes all understanding—a peace that no storm can by any possibility even break—no storm within, no tempest without. There shall be no panics there, no losses of money there, no sickening wife, no dying child, no tortured brain, no anguish in the heart—there we shall be free from all the storms that tossed us on the sea of life.

That port is one from which the ship shall never make another voyage—she is home for good—not to be broken up, but to be re-filled after a better fashion! No longer mortal, for this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruption must put on incorruption. She shall make voyages, but still be in the haven, for the eternal haven is wide as infinity and we may sail on and on forever—and it shall always be upon a sea where not a wave of trouble, a breaker of sin or sorrow shall beat on our serene soul! There shall be no more leakage there, no more complaint that the vessel is out of trim. The sin that has pierced us through and through like some of these sea-worms which eat through the staunchest timbers shall be forever done with! Yes, forever and ever!

I love to think often and deeply of that haven, dear Friends! If not to you, I am sure it is to me, a “desired haven.” If you ask me why it is desired, I can only answer that when I see the perils of the way—the storms we have had to face and outride and how little our poor vessel is able to overcome them—we may well long to be forever where such trials and, indeed, *all* trials, shall never come! I desire to be in that haven, I think, as much as anything—that I may *meet there my many comrades who have gone before.*

It has been my lot to serve under the Great Captain now for some few years. There are names that are on the roll of my Master in Heaven which I venerate and men whom I long to see. Rowland Hill once took a journey, we are told, from Cambridge, some ten or twelve miles, to see an old dying saint, and he said to her, “Now, you will be in Heaven before me, but do tell them that poor old Rowland is on the road. And when you

get there give my love to the three Johns—John who leaned on the Savior’s bosom, John Calvin and John Bunyan.” Well, we may well wish to see them and the many who shall be there, for we shall have near and intimate communion with them! Let us drink tonight the cup of fellowship and toast the friends that are ahead! We have been long enough out from shore, I think, almost to forget those behind and begin to remember those who are ahead. We are homeward bound and we long to be at home for the sake of the friends who have gone before. Some dear to us in ties of flesh are there—those who were to us as father, mother, wife or child. Your little ones are beckoning some of you to the celestial shore! How much a desired haven it should be to you! I have many spiritual children on the other side of life’s Jordan. Multitudes are now there who learned the Savior’s name from my stammering words—and came to see His transcendent beauties as He was being set forth, lifted up and exhibited here in the midst of this great congregation! I know they will welcome me, their spiritual father, and I long to be with them!

But best of all it is a desired haven, *because He is there*, who though He was of a human mother born, is yet truly Divine! He, whom though—

***“We have not seen His face,
Unceasing we adore!
The Man of Sorrows at the Father’s side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified.”***

Blow, blow you winds! Let the sails go to ribbons if they must! Let the vessel rush and fly before the gale, if only she does but get safely into “the desired haven!” We may even think the storm is blest that drives her the more quickly there, for it is, indeed, a desired haven!

Are you now desiring it, my dear Brothers and Sisters? It is not always that we do. We get a trick of loitering along the road or merely cruising on the ocean. What a strange thing that anything here should beguile us!—

***“What is there that I should wait,
My hope’s alone in Thee!
When will You open Glory’s gate,
And take me up to Thee?”***

Is there anything here that ought to make us stop a moment if there is that prospect beyond of the Savior’s face and the vision of His Glory? I think we can say, some of us, that at times—

***“Our thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land we love—
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above!”***

You see I am running over the same heads as we had in the first part—a haven, a desired haven, and *then the Pilot*. Shall I ever get to the desired haven? I would despair of it in going through so tortuous a channel so thickly set with difficulties and perils, but my Pilot knows the course! My Pilot found the way to Heaven, Himself, and if I trust Him ab-

solutely, giving the vessel entirely to His charge, He will find the way for me, too! Besides this, He has this advantage—He is the Master of the winds and waves! And so I may confidently—

***“Leave to His sovereign will
To choose and to command.”***

For He will certainly bring me safely home.

But the passage to the haven needs, too, your thought. My Christian Brothers and Sisters, you are now being tossed on the sea. You came here tonight wondering what God was doing with you. You old sailors ought not to be astonished or alarmed at a storm. Did you imagine the sea had turned to dry land? Did you expect to reach yonder distant shore without feeling the heave of the waves? Why the youngsters and novices may expect such things if they will! But you who are seasoned mariners and are getting gray ought to know better! Has it been smooth all the way until now? Why expect it to be sunny and serene now? Master John Bunyan’s ditty has it—

***“A Christian is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize.”***

Do you not expect it? If you do not, I would alter my reckoning if I were you! Just turn to the log-book of your memory—how many days together have you generally been in smooth water? Not many, I will guarantee you. You ancient mariners who have lived at sea these many years and have got your sea-legs now, and can stand where others fall, I ask you whether you have not been more accustomed to rolling billows than you have been to the ocean smooth as a mill-pond? And do you expect to see it alter for you now? Between you and Canaan there are a few more storms. Between here and the everlasting rest there are turmoils yet to encounter, but, “so He brings them to their desired haven.” Perhaps if it were always smooth, they would never get there—the treacherous stream of earthly ease would bear them out to the cataract of everlasting destruction! Perhaps without the wind and without the storm, yes, and without the clouds and the tempest, and the thunder and the lightning, the boat might never reach the haven! The boats upon earth’s seas may reach their haven without the aid of storms, but not so with us, for, to again repeat the words of Cowper, here if not in the other case—

***“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

And now my last word that I would venture to say is this—“So he brings *them* to their desired haven.” That does not mean you, young man, for Christ is not on board your heart and life—you do not desire the haven and you will never be brought there against your will! Who are they, then, that are brought there? The text and its context tells us. They are those who “cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distress.” Are you a crying soul? Pleading, entreating His rescue and deliverance? That word, “cry,” is a very appropriate and suggestive

one. That is the true way to pray. As God inspires, cry to Him! A girl who had been converted was asked what was the difference between her prayers now and before she was converted. She answered, "Sir, first I prayed as my mother taught me, but now I pray as God prompts and teaches me." That is a blessed and vital difference! You have seen and heard your children cry. Well, how is it done? Some of them seem to cry all over. When they want something very badly, they not only cry with their throats, but they cry also with their legs and hands and eyes! And, indeed, they cry with all their nature. And that, too, is the right way to *pray*. You cannot get it out, perhaps—well then, feel it within, for God can see the inward feeling. "*He hears the desires of the humble.*"

A man once in great trouble, a poor Hottentot, went to his Dutch master and said he felt a great weight and he needed to pray—would he tell him how? The Dutchman did not know and could not tell him. But when the Hottentot went to the place at Cape Town where he heard the Bible read, he listened to the story of the Pharisee. And as he heard it he said, "Dat man a good man. I can't pray like him. Dat prayer not suit me. I can't pray dat." Presently the preacher went on reading the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The man said, "Dat man a bad man. God not hear dat prayer." But when he came to, "That man went down to his house justified rather than the other," he said, "Den I'll pray dat bad man's prayer. God hear him, God hear me," and not long after he was heard to say, "Rocks, hills, rivers, trees, tell God my soul so happy, for He has heard my prayer and put my sins away!"

Now, you who want to cry to God but do not know how, I recommend to you the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Breathe that out before the Throne of God and you shall one day be among the company of whom it is said, "So He brings them to their desired haven," and you shall rest in Jesus—

"Forever with the Lord."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:81-96.**

Verse 81. *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word.* The ship rocks, but the anchor holds. The singer is ready to faint, but he is not ready to despair. He knows where his restoring will come.

82. *My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?* What a mercy it is to have our eyes on God's Word, full as it is of blessing—to be waiting till the blessing comes out of it! My eyes watch Your Word that is so full of the rain of comfort—and I say to myself, "When will it descend and refresh me? When will the clouds let fall their silver drops upon my thirsty soul?"

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes.* I feel dried up, smeared and smirched as with soot—my very

beauty is gone from me and my usefulness, too. I am not fit to hold anything, for I have become like a skin bottle that is parched up. Yet for all that, I have a memory of Your Word—the smoke and the heat have not dried out of me the flavor of that good old “wine on the lees well refined” that once filled my heart.

84. *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* “How many are the days of Your servant?” Or rather, how few they are—be not long in coming to me, lest I die while You are still on the road.

85. *The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law.* They might make pits for lions and tigers, but not for sheep. These pits were not after God’s Law. There are still cruel enemies who would, if they could, entrap the people of God—shall not this make us feel what a great mercy it is we have one to be our Guardian and Defender who knows where the pitfalls are?

86. *All Your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully—help me.* There is a fine prayer for us every day in the week—“Help me.” Lord, I am helpless if You do not help me. You are the helper of Israel—He that keeps Israel will not slumber nor sleep. “Help me.”

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts.* “They had almost consumed me upon earth.” They seemed as if they would swallow me up entirely, “but I forsook not Your precepts” and, therefore, they could not consume me. I was invulnerable and invincible because I stuck to rectitude and kept to Your precepts.

88, 89. *Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth. Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in Heaven.* There is not a new Divine Word, or a new Gospel, or a new Law—but it is a settled Gospel, a settled Law, a settled Revelation—“settled in Heaven,” stereotyped, fixed, made permanent! If perfect, then unalterable—if alterable, then would it be imperfect.

90. *Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides.* “Your faithfulness is unto all generations.” You who were true to Abraham will be true to David. You who were true to David will be true to me. You are always faithful to Your own Nature and Godhead. “You have established the earth, and it abides.” It would rot out of its place. It would rush into space like a truant planet if You did not hold it where it is. You, therefore, will hold Your Gospel where it is and Your servants where they are.

91. *They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants.* The fixed laws of the universe have their analogy in the fixed rules of Revelation. Are not all material things Your servants? And they are kept—You will therefore keep us.

92, 93. *Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You*

have quickened me. We may well keep to that which is our life! If God's precepts breed life in us and then quicken us, and so renew that life, let us stand to them, be obedient to them and that at all times!

94. *I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts.* "I am Yours, save me." Oh, what a sweet assertion. "I am Yours"—Your creature, Your redeemed one, Your chosen, Your espoused. "I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts."

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.* Let them wait.

95. *But I will consider Your testimonies.* I will not consider the wicked—they are not worth it—they would only distract or distress me. I will keep my thoughts fixed upon Your Word, and so shall I be at peace and escape from their malice.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection: but Your commandment is exceedingly broad.* Yes, all perfection in the creature! In very deed it is an attribute of the Creator, and whether it is true or false, whether men have the excellence they boast of, or have it not, there must be an end to it all—either as to its extent or its duration—but Your commandment has no limit, it covers everything! And it has no termination, it endures forever! "Your commandment is exceedingly broad."

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

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

GOD HAS SPOKEN!— REJOICE!

NO. 2864

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1903.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1876.***

***“God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide
Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth.”
Psalm 108:7.***

THERE is an old promise concerning God’s people which says, “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” This text is one of the instances in which the Lord has dealt with His saints upon the lines of that promise. Read the preceding verse. David there prays, “Save with Your right hand and *answer* me.” And while he is waiting for God to answer him, he remembers that God has already spoken. In effect, he says to himself, “I am waiting for an answer, but God has given it to me.” Very often the response to a Believer’s petition has been practically received before he presents his request—he only needs that God should open his eyes for him to see that before he called, God had answered his supplication! Indeed, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in one sense *all* your prayers—that is, your prayers that ought to be answered—are already answered, for whatever there may be that you may rightly ask of God, you really have it, since in giving us Christ, He has already given us all things! An important part of the duty of faith is to believe that you have what you ask in prayer and then you shall have it. This is blessed philosophy—may we all learn it!

Oftentimes, when we are crying to God and waiting for an answer to our petition, if we did but look around us—and if we had more acute powers of observation—if our spiritual faculties were keener and quicker, we would perceive that we already have the very thing for which we are asking. Some of you have, perhaps, been saying, “Oh, that we were, indeed, the Lord’s people who have their prayers answered even before they offer them! Well, then, turn to the Book and you will find that the Lord has there told you that you are His if, indeed, you are believing in His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has already given you, by that most sure word of testimony, the clearest possible evidence of your personal interest in Christ! If you are asking for some further kind assuring word to soothe your fears to rest, turn to the Bible, for there is in it the very Word of God you need. So, seek it out, for I may truly say of God’s Revelation in this blessed Book—

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

This leads me to the practical remark that, possibly, the very thing that you have been praying for so long, you may already have obtained—and God may not intend you to pray any longer about it, but may say to you, as He did to Moses, “Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.’ Believe that you have the blessing for which you are asking and go forward in that belief! The time for praying about it has passed. This is the time for grasping the blessing by faith and using it to My praise and glory.” So it seems to me, in our text, that David had prayed, and then suddenly remembered that he had already received the very thing for which he had asked. So he shakes himself from the dust and cries, confidently and jubilantly, “God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.”

I. Three things are clear in the text and the first is that GOD’S WORD IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH—“God has spoken in His holiness.” That is the solid basis on which faith builds.

To me this is a very precious Truth of God, even for the very childhood of Christian life—“*God has spoken.*” He has not merely put before us His works, which are like hieroglyphs, difficult to read at times, but He has actually broken what otherwise had been eternal silence and spoken to us in words that even a child can comprehend! Unbelieving men still say, as they did of old, “Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ If there is a God at all, there is a great gulf fixed between Him and men; how can we know anything about Him?” Ah, Sirs, that great gulf will always be between you and your God if you do not believe in the Revelation that He has given you in His Inspired Word! Until that terrible day comes, when He shall speak in thunder-tones of wrath and summon His guilty creatures to appear at His judgment bar, you will not hear His voice, except as it speaks to you in His Word.

But “God has spoken in His holiness” and we ought to be thankful that we have not to serve a God who is dumb. He spoke, in the garden of Eden, when our first parents sinned against Him. To the serpent He said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” It was a message of hope to the world when God spoke that great promise concerning His Son. Since then, “at sundry times and in divers manners,” God has spoken unto men by His servants and “by His Son,” of which we have the record in this blessed Book. And, since it is a message of mercy and love to us, we ought at once to rejoice that “God has spoken.” Sinner, you are pleading with God for mercy and He might well refuse to answer you even a word, but, “God has spoken” already, and the answer to your petition is already recorded in His Word! If, when Adam sinned, He had turned away from our rebellious race and said, “From now on I will hold no communication with you until that day

when, with fire and sword, I punish you for your many transgressions,” we would have had no cause for complaining against Him. Certainly we could not have impeached His justice or found fault with His severity! But, “God has spoken.” He has broken the silence which would have been death to us and, blessed be His name, He has Divinely spoken to us by Him who is THE WORD OF GOD—by God’s great LOGOS—the only voice by which He could fully speak out His whole soul so that men might be able to comprehend Him! And it is upon what God has spoken to us, by His Son, that we have to place our faith, so that, had He not spoken, we would not have had any foundation for our faith—so this is our joy, that “God has spoken.”

Many of us are, I trust, at least somewhat acquainted with what God has spoken, though I wish that we were all more perfectly acquainted with His Word and that our confidence more fully rested upon what the Lord has therein revealed to us.

Why is it that you are able to confide in God’s Word? Surely it is because you know that *for God to speak is for Him to do as He has said*. By His Word He made the heavens and the earth—and it is by His Word that the heavens and the earth continue as they are to this day! When He shall “once more” speak, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, then shall He unmake what He made and cast away the worn-out vesture, for, as the Old Hundredth Psalm reminds us—

“He can create and He can destroy.”

God’s speaking is very different from man’s. Very often man talks about something that he says he will do, but when he has talked about it, that is the end of the matter as far as he is concerned. Man has spoken. Oh, yes, but you can never be sure that with the talking tongue will go the working hand! He who is quick to promise is not always so prompt to perform. We have many proverbs which remind us that men set light by one another’s promises, and well they may, but we must never set light by the promises of God. “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” So, beloved Brothers and Sisters, if there is a promise of God to help you in a time of trouble, or to preserve you in the hour of temptation, or to deliver you out of trial, or to give you Divine Grace according to your day—that promise is as good as if it had been already performed since God’s Word shall certainly be followed by the fulfillment of it in due season! I beseech you, then, as you read the promise, to say to yourself, “It is done as God has said.” If any man of means, with whom you do business, gives you his check for the amount he owes you, do you not say that he has paid you? Yet he has not handed to you even a penny in cash—no notes or gold and silver coins have passed between you—but you rightly say that he has paid you because his signature on the check is as good as money. And is not God’s Word as good as man’s? Yes, that it is, and far better! Then, so regard it—oh, for faith to do so at this very moment!

Further, *what God has spoken shall never be reversed*. “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent.”

What He has spoken in public, He does not reverse in private. His own declaration is, “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.” Whatever there may be in the sealed scroll that records God’s purposes in predestination, there cannot be anything there to contradict what is written on the open scroll of Divine Revelation. As to the Doctrine of Election which often terrifies seeking souls, it never should do so since there can be nothing, in the secret counsels of God, contrary to the plain promises of God recorded in His Word! He has not said, “Yes,” in one place, and, “No,” in another. And if He says, “Yes,” today, He will not say, “No,” tomorrow. He Himself said long ago, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Once let any message go forth out of His mouth and it shall stand fast forever!

Oh, then, what a firm foundation for faith this is! First, “God has spoken,” and that is as good as if He had already done as He has said! And, secondly, “God has spoken,” and that which He has said can never be reversed! If there is a promise in the Bible made to a penitent sinner—and you are a penitent sinner—that promise must be kept to you! If there is a blessing promised to a believing soul and you are a believing soul—that blessing is sure to you. If God has promised to sustain you when you cast your burden upon Him, and to bring you through the furnace with your hair unsinged, He will do it, for He has never yet been false to His promise and He never will be! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His Word shall ever fail. It stands, as an immutable decree, that Jehovah’s will shall be done—and this is Jehovah’s will—that, of all that He has promised to the sons and daughters of men, not one syllable shall ever fail! Oh, how blessedly faith ought to rest on such a foundation as this!

Our text says, “God has spoken *in His holiness*.” Now, it sometimes happens that our greatest difficulty in believing a promise of God lies in His holiness. There is, for instance, a promise of pardon to the soul that believes in Jesus. We think of stern Justice, with her majestic, yet severe look. In our heart of hearts we reverence her and we ask, “How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?” We have, at times, had some idea of the perfect purity of God—the purity of Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean and who charges His angels with folly. We have trembled, sometimes, as though we were dissolved into nothingness when we have thought of His spotless purity—and we have said, “Can this holy God really mean to receive such sinners as we are whose very clothes, as Job says, abhor us? Can He purpose to bring us to His own right hand in Glory that we may be among the courtiers in His heavenly Kingdom?” Yes, He does mean to do even that! Yet the thought of His purity makes us wonder how it can be done.

Now, the joy of David was that when God spoke concerning that glorious—

“Stem of Jesse’s rod”—

He spoke it “in His holiness,” that is, in His whole-ness, with His whole perfectly pure Nature. He knew all that David then was and all that David would be, yet He saw it to be consistent with His infinite perfections to make, even with such a man, “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord entered into Covenant with Christ concerning those whom He gave to Him to be His portion forever and when, in that Covenant, He wrote down blessings exceedingly great and precious—and made promises so vast that we cannot, at present, form any estimate of their full value—He knew quite well what He was doing and He did it, knowing all about your doubts and fears concerning your sinfulness and His own holiness! And now, without in the least marring His perfect purity and inflexible justice, “God has spoken in His holiness” to poor lost sinners and said that He will save all of them who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son! And He has also “spoken in His holiness” to His poor imperfect children and said that He will bless them, and that He will not turn away from them to do them good. This is the Covenant that He has made with His people—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” All this, which “God has spoken in His holiness,” He will do without obscuring that wondrous attribute, or marring the glory of His adorable perfections!

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice THE JOY OF FAITH—“God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.”

Are any of you heavy of heart just now? If so, I hope you will catch the spirit of David when he uttered these words. You ought to be glad that “God has spoken in His holiness,” and you will be glad if you feel and know that He has spoken to you. “God has spoken; I will rejoice.”

Observe that this joy, which faith has, is *a joy in the very fact that God has spoken*. Though nothing may yet have been done for us, God has spoken and, therefore, our heart rejoices! Every Divine promise, if it is rightly viewed by faith, will make the heart leap for joy. Suppose you do not need that particular promise just now, rejoice all the same, for you will need it by-and-by. If the promise is not made especially to you, yet it is made to somebody—therefore rejoice that “God has spoken” so as to meet the needs of somebody else’s case. What if the blessing is too high for you to reach at present? Nevertheless, rejoice that there are mercies stored up for future and more advanced stages of your spiritual growth. And suppose the mercy is one that you long ago enjoyed? Still be glad that you enjoyed it in years past and so rejoice that “God has spoken.” Oh, what hymns of praise there are in this blessed Book if this is the theme of our song—“God has spoken”! Then the very first pages of Genesis ought to make us rejoice and we *will* rejoice because we know how He made the worlds. Pass along through every page and feast your eyes upon every line of every page—and say all the while, “God has spoken in

His holiness; I will rejoice.’ This shall be the subject of my joy all day long and, in the night watches, will I rejoice in His Word.”

You perceive, as I have said, that *this joy comes to the Believer even before the promise is literally fulfilled to him*. It is the joy of faith. You have not yet had the promise fulfilled to your sight, but, seeing that it is fulfilled to your faith, begin to be glad about it! Praise the Lord for all the good things He has laid up in store for you! Take upon your lips the words of that sweet singer who wrote—

**“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set—
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”**

When you are ill, bless God for the health you will enjoy when you get well! When you are down-hearted, bless God for the joy that you will have when He shall again lift up the Light of His Countenance upon you! When you go to the grave of a Christian friend, bless God because you will meet that friend again! Though you cannot yet see the joys that await you inside the gates of pearl, begin to bless the Lord for all that He has prepared for them that love Him! Borrow from the eternal future—you may, for there is plenty of it. There is an infinity of joy, therefore, antedate it a little while. Send your messengers across the Jordan to bring you some of the Eshcol clusters. You may do so, for they are yours and you may have some of them, even now, as foretastes of the bliss that is yet to be revealed. “God has spoken” to His servants of the great things that He will do for them for many years to come and throughout eternity! He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” He has said, “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Therefore, as “God has spoken,” though as yet my soul abides in the land of darkness, drought and barrenness, yet, because He will fulfill His promise, my heart shall rejoice! David says, in the 11th verse of this Psalm, “O God, who hast cast us off,” yet here, though he is one of the cast-offs, he says, “God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.”

Perhaps I am addressing a minister whose public labors are apparently unsuccessful. My Brother, you have been exceedingly grieved because your people have been like the children of Ephraim who “being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.” Well now, you must not give way to discouragement, or fall into a dull and sad state of mind. You must say, ‘God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.’ Though I have not, as yet, seen any success attending my efforts, He has said, ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,’ and I believe I shall do so, for I have often sowed in tears and sowed the good Seed of the Kingdom with many tears and many prayers. Therefore, though I seem, at present, like one of the cast-offs, and little good has come of all that I have done, yet, ‘God has spoken in His holiness’ and, therefore, I will rejoice.”

I may be speaking to a Brother or Sister who is tried in another way. You, dear Friend, have not enjoyed the means of Grace as you used to do. You blame yourself for the change and it is right and proper that you

should do so. You have not now those happy experiences that you once had—neither do you enjoy such blessed visits from your Lord as you had a year or so ago. You know that the fault lies with you. Still, remember that faith is never dependent upon feeling and our confidence is never to rest upon our inward condition. Otherwise it rests on the shifting sand. But, if this is the case with you, now is the time for you to exercise faith and to say, “Though I am, as it were, a cast-off and the Word of the Lord is not just now solacing my heart, yet, ‘God has spoken,’ and, sinner as I am, if I am not a saint, I trust to what God has said to believing sinners and ‘I will rejoice,’ even though I seem to be only a cast-off.”

Once more, notice that David, at the time he wrote this Psalm, had discovered *the vanity of human confidence*. He says, in the 12th verse, “Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.” “My best friend has proved to be a traitor; he that ate bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. Those who said that they would never leave me and who never did leave me while there was anything to be gotten out of me, are all gone. I said in my haste, ‘All men are liars,’ but ‘God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.’” It is grand faith that can rejoice in God when friends go as the swallows fly away in the autumn, or drop off as the leaves fade when the summer comes to an end! That was the kind of faith that Habakkuk had when he sang, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

This is a good crutch for Mr. Ready-to-Halt—no, better than that, surely this will take Ready-to-Halt’s crutches away and enable him to run without weariness in the ways of the Lord! Why, Brothers and Sisters, here are the wings of eagles for you, if you only know how to use them! “God has spoken.” What a mighty power your soul will have in prayer if you go to God and say, “Do as You have said.” What a sword this is to flash in the face of the foe—“God has spoken.” “*It is written*” is that which makes old Rome tremble and her seven hills to quake for fear! Get a rejoicing grip of this great Truth of God and the dwarf shall become a giant, the feeblest among us shall be as David and the house of David shall be like the angel of the Lord!

III. The latter part of the text shows us THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH—“God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth.”

That is, David says, “As God has given me these places to be parts of my kingdom, I will go and take possession of them.” Some people’s so-called faith is of this order—God has promised a great blessing! Let us go—and sleep.” Their philosophy is—God’s promise will be sure to be fulfilled—therefore, let us eat and drink, and not trouble at all about the matter. The Lord will have His own people and He will carry out His own purposes and decrees. They stand fast forever, so the best thing for us is to do nothing at all! God says that there shall be a harvest—so there is

no need for our sowing and we can stay in bed as late as we like.” That is the kind of fatalism that many carry even into their Christianity—they make the eternal purposes and blessed promises of God to become reasons for inaction! But it is not so with any sane child of God. He girds up his loins and says, “God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth.”

Whenever you look into the Word of God and read what “God has spoken” to you, *see that you appropriate it*. Suppose that He has promised you comfort—do not rest satisfied without that comfort. Suppose He has promised you joy and peace in believing—never rest till you have that joy and peace. Suppose He has promised you complete sanctification, full deliverance from the power of evil—do not be satisfied till you are delivered from it all. Never say, “Ah, that is a constitutional sin—that is the result of my temperament.” No, Brother, Sister, if the Lord has promised you the victory over your enemies, be not satisfied till you have planted your foot on their necks and they are in subjection to you. Some Christian people are living, spiritually, on a penny a week, when their income might be ten thousand a day! You might live like kings, yet you are starving like paupers! Your faith might lay hold on God’s exceedingly great and precious promises and so fill her mouth with good things, but, instead of doing so, you are quivering with the palsy of unbelief and so not grasping what God has put within your reach! There lies Succoth, but you do not mete it out. There lies Shechem, but you do not divide it. Yet they are both of them yours by Divine donation! Oh, if our faith did but really grip the promises and believe in the promise-keeping God, she would never rest till she possessed all the blessings that are really hers!

I think that every young Christian should say, when he joins the Church, “Now, I do not want to be merely an average Christian. I am nothing and less than nothing in myself, but, if there is any blessing to be had from God I will have it. If I can have a closer walk with God than others have, I will have it. If there is more of Christ’s likeness to be had than others possess, I will have it. By God’s Grace, ‘I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth!’ If God has given me permission to take anything, why should I not have it?” If you have leave given you to go to Windsor Castle, or Buckingham Palace as often as you like and to take whatever you please that is there, and to be treated as a prince, I guarantee that you would not need anyone to remind you that you had not been to either place for weeks! If you had such privileges accorded to you, you would be sure to avail yourselves of them. Yet here are the gates of the palace of prayer always open to you and the doors of communion never shut against you—and Jesus, the great King of kings, not only inviting you to come to Him, but even urging you to abide in Him and never to depart from Him—yet, alas, you do not have fellowship with Christ by the month together! Be no longer like the starving professors that, now and then, taste a little of the heavenly manna, but, generally, live on the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt.

So, if we have faith in God, we ought to take possession of all that is ours and, further, *we ought to know what we really possess*. It is delightful to see David here mentioning his various possessions—"I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine. Manasseh is mine. Ephraim is also the strength of my head. Judah is my law-giver, Moab is my washpot. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. Over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?" Perhaps you say, "That is very uninteresting—I do not understand it." No, but David did. He had seen Shechem and he knew that it was a place worth possessing. And Gilead and Manasseh and all the other places interested him even if they do not interest you. And when a child of God looks over his spiritual treasures and mentions them one by one, he takes an interest even in the very mention of them. The Bible is a dull book to a person who has no part or lot in it. There is no drier reading, in all the world, than the reading of a will in which one has no interest—but there is nothing that would interest you more than listening to the will of your old uncle in which he had left you a large fortune! You would lean forward and you would put your hand to your ear lest you should lose any of it, and you would think that you had never heard a more eloquent discourse than that! And when a man gets to know what "God has spoken," what He has written for him in this blessed Book which contains His will—every word is music to him and he is ready to pick out some of the choicest words and say, "Regeneration is mine! Justification is mine! Adoption is mine! Sanctification is mine! Union to Christ is mine! Resurrection is mine! Eternal life is mine! Yes, all things are mine!" And he would dwell upon each one with a holy unction, at least to his own soul.

Then, if you know what God has given you, *mind that you use it all*. What does David say? "Moab is my washpot. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe." As an Oriental who is weary, throws his sandals to one servant and then puts his foot out, that another servant may wash it with flowing water, so David says, "I will use Moab and Edom as my servitors." Now, Christian, if you have true faith and mean to do real business *with* God and *for* Him, say to yourself, "I have this, and that, and the other blessing—and I am going to use them all for His Glory. I have been adopted by God. I am His child, so I will plead with Him and will get all I can from my Father to use in His service! I am justified, I have peace with God, so I will go forth and, in the power of that peace, I will let others see what bliss Christians know! Then I also have sanctification given me in Christ, so I will use that and seek to be a true saint, that my life may be a blameless, holy, gracious, Christ-like life. By God's Grace I will not have even one unused privilege!

Once more, David, being in the spirit of full faith in God, now *manifests the spirit of enterprise*, for he says, "God has given me Edom—then I will have it. There is that strong city of Petra, the rock city. It is like an eagle's nest upon a crag—who is the bold man that can capture it and take the spoil? The fierce sons of Edom, in the gorge, will be sure to slay

the first men who dare to march into that rocky chasm.” “Who will bring me into the strong city?” he asks, “who will lead me into Edom?” The spirit of enterprise and of conquest is in his soul! And then he adds, “Will not You, O God, go forth with our hosts?” “Since You have spoken as You have done, You will surely lead us to victory.” In like manner, every man who has faith in God’s Word ought to be a man of enterprise. I wonder, Brothers and Sisters, how many of you have any enterprise for God in view just now—storming some rocky sin, some Petra-like evil in your soul that seems almost impregnable! You know that your Savior’s name is “Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Then, in the strength of that name, go up and kill your bosom sin and your constitutional sin—and never rest till you have driven your dagger through every evil that lurks within your soul!

Then think what room for enterprise you have among your fellow men. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,” yet vast multitudes of mankind still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Have any of you enterprise enough to go up against the strong cities that are still in rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ? Can any of you go and look after those who walk the streets—and seek to bring them to Christ? That would be conquering Edom itself. Have any of you enterprise enough to go down into the slums and dens of London to seek out the poorest and the vilest of the people? Have you confidence enough to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can give you that Petra-like city, that dark spot where thieves congregate, where blasphemy is the current language and where profanity seems even to pollute the very air? Have you “pluck” enough to undertake such an enterprise as that? Is there manliness enough in any one of you to attempt it? Then, having asked the question, “Who will lead me into Edom?” do not forget to pray, “Will not You, O God? You have spoken; will You not also act, through Your people, so that all flesh may see the salvation of God?”

Let each child of God say, “O my Father, I believe that weak and feeble as I am, my weakness and feebleness need be no hindrance to me if I go to Your service in Your strength! You have spoken in Your holiness; I will rejoice and, in Your name, I will conquer the foe, and gather the spoil for You.” “Through God,” says David, in the 13th verse, “we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.” Therefore, if you believe in God, hasten to the spoil of His enemies! Be strong! If you really are linked with Omnipotence, prove it! Do not talk about it, but let your deeds show that the Lord of Hosts is with you and that the God of Jacob is your refuge. If, indeed, the Lord’s arm is with you, smite as the Lord would smite! If, indeed, He speaks through you, speak as He would speak! Be strong, very courageous and press forward in the name of God! Set up your banners and who knows whether even this feeble message of mine, in rousing you to action upon the basis of confidence in the Word of God, may not cast down some stronghold of the enemy and make the walls of some mighty Jericho to fall flat to the ground? The Lord grant it for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 57:7-11; 108.**

Let me say, before we begin our reading, that the 108th Psalm is made up partly of the 60th and partly of the 57th, yet we are sure that the Holy Spirit is not short of language so that He needs to repeat Himself. It is always a pity to think that any portion of Scripture can be repetitious. It cannot be! There is some good reason for every repetition and you will see that in the two Psalms which we are about to read, the latter part of the 57th coincides with the first part of the 108th. And also that in the 57th Psalm we have prayer and praise and, in the 108th, we have praise and prayer. It is well that we should see how these two holy exercises can change places—so that sometimes we begin with *prayer* and pray ourselves up into praise and, at other times we begin with *praise* and find in it the strength we need to aid us in prayer.

Psalm 57:7. *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* Let the lions open their cruel mouths and roar, and let wicked men, “whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword,” do their worst against me—let my every footstep be among the nets and pits that they have set and dug to catch me. Even in the midst of danger, “my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I still sing and give praise.”

8. *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* “I will awake the dawn”—so the Hebrew has it—“I will wake up the morning and chide it for being so long in opening its eyes to look upon God’s works!” David did this, notwithstanding all the trials of his surrounding circumstances. He calls on his “glory”—perhaps he means his tongue—possibly his poetic faculty—perhaps his musical skill. It may be that he means his intellect. Whatever his “glory” is, he calls upon his highest powers to awake to praise his God. Then he takes his psaltery and harp—strange companions for a man whose soul is among lions—but saints know how to evoke sweetest music even when their enemies are fighting fiercely against them. And he sings—

9-11. *I will praise You, O lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations. For Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and Your Truth unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Your Glory be above all the earth.* Have not some of you found God’s mercy to be “great unto the heavens”? It even seemed to reach above the heavens and, as for God’s Truth, you followed it till you could follow it no further, for it had ascended above the clouds! We could scarcely, I think, ever expect to understand, here, all the Truth which God has pleased to let us hear or read. It reaches “unto the clouds” and there we must leave it for the present. When God ceases to reveal anything, we may cease to enquire concerning it.

I saw, in Florence, a picture of “The Sleeping Savior.” He is represented as sleeping in the manger at Bethlehem and the artist de-

picts the angels hovering round Him with their fingers on their lips as though they would not wake Him from His holy slumbers. So, when God bids the Truth of God sleep, do not try to wake it! There is enough revealed for you to know and more that you will know, by-and-by, so pry not between the folded leaves, but wait your Lord's appointed time to teach you more of His will.

Psalm 108:1-5. *O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise You, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto You among the nations, for Your mercy is great above the heavens: and Your Truth reaches unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Your Glory above all the earth.* Here we begin with praise—the very praise with which we finished the other Psalm—praise in a very joyous, confident spirit, for the praise which precedes prayer has more of the “Jubilate” note in it than ordinary praise has. The prayer in Psalm 57:1 which preceded the praise, was earnest, and fervent and confident, yet it did not reach so high a note as this.

6-9. *That Your beloved may be delivered: save with Your right hand, and answer me. God has spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my law-giver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.* David is claiming the kingdom which God promised to him by the mouth of Samuel the Prophet—looking first upon the kingdom, itself, and then upon the surrounding territories, and laying hold upon them all as his own because God had given them to him.

10. *Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?* In the spirit of a truly courageous leader, he means to fight with that ancient foe of Israel and, wisely, appeals to God to lead his army.

11-13. *Will not You, O God, who has cast us off? And will not You, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

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

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

THE DEW OF CHRIST'S YOUTH NO. 2724

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 28, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1859.

*"You have the dew of Your youth."
Psalm 110:3.*

WHEN you have walked in the garden, early in the morning, you must have noticed the singular freshness and beauty which a summer's morning always seems to give to the earth. The dewdrops, like tears standing in the eyes of the flowers, as if they wept for joy to see the sun again after the long night of darkness, sparkle in the sun! The greenness of vegetation has about it a more than emerald hue and every "thing of beauty" looks more beautiful in the morning than at any other season. You have gone out again, perhaps, at noon, and you have noticed how dry and dusty everything appears, for the sun has risen and by his burning heat he has exhaled the dew and the freshness of the morning has departed in the drought of noon. Now, this is just a picture of all things here below—yes, and also a picture of ourselves. When we first behold many things, they have the dew upon them and they sparkle, but in a little while all their brightness is gone and their brilliance scattered. Some of you have entered into pleasure and you have found it a delusion—you have intermeddled with all kinds of knowledge and you have found that in the making and reading of books, there was much pleasure, but, before long you have discovered that in reading many books and in making them, there was no end and much study was a weariness to the flesh.

Everything terrestrial has its dew in the morning, but its burning heat at noon, and we too, Beloved—I mean those of us who have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit—is not this too much the case even with us? When we were first converted, what a sparkling dew there was upon our leaf! We could not sing God's praises loudly enough! We could not sufficiently leap for joy before the Ark of the Lord. All the exultations of those who came before seemed utterly insufficient for us. There was, to us, such unction and savor in the Word of God that we could feast upon it everyday—yes, and all night long—and yet never be weary! We ran in the way of God's Commandments without weariness and we mounted aloft as on the wings of eagles and never thought that we could ascend too high. But, alas, Beloved, is it not the case with many of us that much of that early freshness of the morning of our youth is scattered, and some, at least, of our excellence has proved to be like the early cloud and the

morning dew? Though in some things we trust that we have grown, yet we are compelled to confess that in some other things we have diminished. While in the depths of self-knowledge we feel that we have made progress, yet in the heights of joy in Christ, in the sublimities of a full devotion to Him, we sometimes fear that we have gone backward and that we have not the bliss of our youth, the dew of the morning.

Our text, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, says He has the dew of His youth. We are certain that it is Jesus Christ who is spoken of in this Psalm, for, in arguing with the Pharisees, He quoted the first verse and applied it to Himself—"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit you at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." So that no doubt this third verse also alludes to Him—"Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth." Having, therefore, set ourselves and all terrestrial matters in contrast with Him, it only remains for me to now enter, as fully as God may help me, into the sweet doctrine of this text—that Jesus Christ always has had, and always will have, the early dew, freshness and brilliance of His youth. First, permit me *to state the fact*. Secondly, *to show the reasons for it*. And, thirdly, *to deduce the lessons from it*.

I. First of all, let me STATE THE FACT, THAT CHRIST HAS THE DEW OF HIS YOUTH.

Let me first speak of *Christ personally*. Has He not all the freshness, all the vigor, all the strength of ancient times? His goings forth were of old, even from eternity and, behold, He still goes forth, everyday, in the preaching of His Word, and in the ministrations of His Spirit. In the chariots of salvation He still rides forth and among the golden candlesticks He still walks. Have we ever imagined that He has lost the strength of His youth? Do His steps falter? Has His arm begun to feel the palsy influence of old age? Is there any sign of decrepitude or of wasting away upon His majestic brow? When John saw Him in Patmos, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," for He is the Eternal of Ages! Yet, as says the spouse in the Canticles, "His locks are bushy, and black as a raven," for He has the strength of a youth, while He has the ages of eternity upon Him! Well might He now rise up before us and ask concerning Himself personally, "Is My ear heavy that I cannot hear? Is My arm shortened that I cannot save? Am I not today what I was yesterday? Was I the Creator of the world? Did I speak it out of nothingness and am I not still its Sustainer? Was I the Redeemer of the Church? Did I purchase her with My own blood and do not still sustain with power those whom I redeemed with blood? Did I not on earth, with cries and groans, offer up My prayer before My Father and do I not now plead, not with less vigor but with greater strength, when with authority I advocate My people's cause before His Throne?"

Nor is this freshness confined to Christ in His Person—it is the same if you *think of Him as revealed in His doctrine*. We have Christ among us now, not Incarnate in flesh, but Incarnate in doctrine. The Doctrines of Grace are, in a certain sense, the body of Christ. We speak sometimes of

a Body of Divinity, but if any man would know what the true Body of Divinity is, let him learn that it is neither Calvin's "Institutes," nor Dwight's "Theology," nor Gill's "Body of Divinity"—it is Christ who is *the* Body of Divinity! His was the only body Divinity ever took when it became Incarnate. But taking Divinity, in another sense, to mean Divine Doctrine, what Christ said and what He did—that is, the Gospel—is the only body which Divinity ever will take!

The Gospel is always fresh. There are many subjects, Beloved, that get exhausted after awhile, but who ever heard of the Gospel being exhausted? You have, some of you, come up to the House of God these 30 or 40 years—did you ever feel that you needed anything newer than the Gospel? Did you ever say, as you went out, after you had heard a Gospel sermon, "I would like to have some improvements made upon it"? No! If you have heard God's Truth proclaimed, have you not said, "That was the food of my childhood in Grace, it is my food now that, by reason of years, I am able to discern between that which is good and that which is evil—and it shall be my food all through the wilderness—and until I eat of the corn of the Kingdom on the other side of Jordan"?

It is a wonderful thing, I have often thought, that any man should be able, day after day, and week after week, to attract thousands of people to hear him talk. I do not believe any man could do it with any other subject except the Gospel. I have the most intense respect for that great man and mighty orator, Mr. Gough, but, with all his ability, if he were to deliver a teetotal lecture twice every Sabbath, in any pulpit in England, he could not command a congregation for 21 years at a stretch! But the Christian minister, with only one subject—Christ Crucified—may not only keep on for 21 years, but if he should live as long as Methuselah, he might still keep on preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and he would still find that the people of God would come to hear him and never crave for a fresh subject! Let any great historian open, if he pleases, a lecture room and attempt to deliver two lectures upon history every week, and let him see whether he does not find the congregation which might, at first, gather around him, speedily diminished!

We have had an instance, in London, of one who has delivered an amusing lecture a thousand times, always to great multitudes, but then they were different persons every time. No one thought of going to hear him lecture upon the same subject the whole thousand times—it would have become a most intolerable penance even to have heard Albert Smith delivering his lecture upon Mont Blanc so often, however interesting it might have been once or twice. It would certainly pall upon the mind if we heard it so many times—but the Christian minister may keep on, and on, and on with the same theme—Christ Jesus, Christ Jesus, the same Cross, the same crown of thorns, the same bleeding wounds—from the first time that he enters his pulpit to the last when he lays down his charge—and the people may always say, and he can always feel—that the Gospel has the dew of its youth upon it and is always fresh and new!

Our text is also *especially true of Christ as revealed in the Bible*. There are many other valuable books that have been written, but, as a rule,

however valuable they may be, when you have read them half-a-dozen times, you may be quite satisfied that you need not read them anymore. Next to the Bible, the book that I value most is John Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress," and I imagine I may have read that through perhaps a hundred times. It is a book of which I never seem to tire, but then the secret of that is, that John Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress," is the Bible in another shape. It is the same heavenly water taken out of this same well of the Gospel, yet you would tire even of that book at last. You would say, "I know all that this volume contains and I need something more. Here is the experience of the Christian pilgrim—I know it is true, and I delight in it, but I want to go somewhat further." The mind would crave for something else. But read the Bible and, strange to say, the more you read it, the more satisfied you will be with it. When you begin to read the Bible, perhaps you need 50 other books in order that you may become a thorough Bible student, but your library will gradually diminish until, at last, the more you understand the Bible, the fewer books you will need, and you will come to say, "If I might have all my days over again, this should be the only book that I would study. And I would concentrate all my powers upon the understanding of this one volume."

You can get to the bottom of all other books—you dive into them and, at first, they seem to be very deep—but every time you plunge, they appear to get shallower and shallower until, at last, you can see the bottom at a glance. But in God's Word, every time you dive, the depths grow deeper! The first time you read a text, in your ignorant conceit you fancy you have learned the full meaning of it. But you look at it again and you find that though you had the meaning in one sense, yet you had not the full meaning—and you dive again, and again, and again—and you find, each time you dive, that the meaning is still far beyond your reach and that the Bible is altogether above your comprehension! It expands, it grows, it continually increases in interest.

There is such a charm about the Bible, that he who reads it but little can never feel the full force of it. It is something like the maelstrom you have heard of, only in a different and more excellent sense. The maelstrom is a great whirlpool on the coast of Norway. A ship, at a long distance from it, will feel something of its attractive influence—a very little, yet enough to make it veer from its course. But the nearer it gets to the whirlpool, the stronger becomes the current and the more forcibly is the vessel carried along by it, until, at last, the ship is drawn near, whirled round at a tremendous rate, and then engulfed in its depths. In a higher and better sense, the same is true of the Bible. The nearer you go to it, the more closely you study it, the more voraciously you devour its contents, the more rapidly do you revolve in its circles until, at last, you are swallowed up in its glory and seem to long for nothing else than to prove the heights and depths of this unfathomable bliss—the love of God in Christ Jesus as revealed to us in His sacred Word! Truly, we may say to the Bible, "You have the dew of your youth."

Again, I may add, *everything that has to do with Christ is always young*. The beds of spices where He lies are always green. The trees

planted by Him will never wither, their fruits will always come to perfection. Everything lives where He is, for He is Life and in Him there is no death at all. And because He is Life, He is always full of freshness and, therefore, does He scatter living force wherever He goes. All this we shall best know when we shall follow Him to the living fountains of waters and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

II. Now let us turn to the second point and inquire, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS FRESHNESS? What is the reason why Christ Jesus and His Gospel, and His Word, and all things about Him are always so fresh? Why have we always an abiding dew upon these holy things?

I answer, first, no man who understands what it is to have Christ in His heart *will ever get tired of Him through want of variety*. The reason why we get tired of a thing is generally because, as we say, there is a sameness about it. There are many men who have a weighty message to deliver, consisting of very good matter, but, dear me, it is a pain to sit and listen to them because they deliver all their words in a monotone—they always speak as if they were striking a bell—and word follows word, with no difference of tone. Now, the human ear loves variety. It cannot bear monotony. And so is it with the whole of our manhood—nothing monotonous will long retain its freshness. However sweet the music might be, if we always heard the same notes, we would most assuredly be as disgusted with even the music of an archangel, if we were compelled to hear it all day and all night long, as we are with the cackling of a goose! Everything is apt to lose its interest when it is repeated over and over again. But there is no fear of any monotony or tautology in Christ. You may look at Christ a thousand times and you shall have, if you please, a thousand different aspects of His beauty!

If you turn to the Old Testament, you can see Him in a vast variety of forms. You can see Him as the Paschal Lamb and as the Scapegoat. You can see Him at one time as the bullock, strong to labor, and at another time as the lamb, patient to endure. You can see Him as the dove, full of innocence. You can see Him in the blood sprinkled, in the incense burning, in the laver filled with water, in Aaron's rod that budded, in the golden pot that was full of manna, in the Ark. You can see Him having the Law within His heart and over the Ark. You can see the golden light of the Shekinah above the Mercy Seat, and say, "Christ is here." In every type you may see Christ, and in so many different shapes, too, that you can say, "Turn this whichever way I like, there is always something fresh in it." Christ, if I may compare so glorious a Person to so humble a thing, is like the kaleidoscope. As often as you look through it, you see a fresh arrangement of colors and a new design and, in like manner, as often as you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you always discover some new beauty in Him.

When you have done with looking at Him typically, look at Him officially. You have not time to consider all His glories as a Priest—you have hardly passed your eyes over His flowing vesture and His glittering breastplate, and listened to the ringing of the bells and marked the beauty of the pomegranates, before you see Him come forth as a King—

and you can scarcely stop to look at the many crowns on His head before He comes forth as a Prophet! And you have hardly time to admire Him as a Prophet before He comes forth as Mediator, as Shepherd, as Captain of our salvation, as Head of the Church, as the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. If you go further and look at His Person, you will see what a wonderful variety there is in Him. You see Him as the Child born, the Son given. When He comes into this world, you know Him to be God, and you are lost in admiration of His Deity. You also know Him to be Man and you still stand astonished when you regard Him in that aspect as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The reason why everything else loses its freshness to us is because of its need of variety. You may go to any exhibition that has ever been opened to attract attention and awaken interest, but you will find that, after a certain time, there is a need of variety in it. But with Christ there never is such a lack and, therefore, to the mind's eye He always has the dew of His youth.

There is also another reason Christ has the dew of His youth—*because of His excellence*. Today, stepping in to see a gentleman, I observed a table which had upon it a great variety of objects. I wondered what they were and took the liberty of asking him. He told me that he had some beautiful stereoscopic views there which had been taken at an immense expense in Egypt, in the Holy Land, and in all parts of the world. He showed me one or two Scriptural subjects which very much interested me. They were certainly preeminently excellent as works of art. He said, "There, Sir, I never get tired of looking at these slides. I could examine them constantly and never be weary of them." "Well," I said, "I can quite understand that. They are so excellent, for, really, there is half-an-hour's study in this one picture—and then one might begin again, it is so full of beauty, and it seems so true to the original."

But I thought to myself, "Excellent as they are, I think, if I call to see my friend in a year's time, he will tell me that he has had to buy a fresh set of views, for he has been looking at these others so often that he has become altogether tired of them." They would not have any freshness to him because he had seen them so many times. But mark, the reason why he could look at them so often was because they were so excellent. If they had been poor pictures. If there had not been great skill and art bestowed upon them, he would soon have become weary of looking at them. There are some views in nature which a man might gaze upon a hundred times and yet always wonder at them. But the reason is because they are so beautiful. There are other things that might strike one at first, but which, when they were looked into more closely, would lose their freshness because there would be no real ground for admiration, no excellence in them. But Christ Jesus will always have the dew of His youth because He is always so excellent!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you thought Christ was sweet when first you tasted Him, but you will know Him to be sweeter, still, when you know more of Him and taste and see that He is good! But you can never know all His sweetness, for you can eat, and eat, and eat to the fullest and yet not discover it all! Possibly, scarcely in Heaven itself will you know all the

sweetness of Christ. You imagine, perhaps, that you know how great is His love to you, but remember, it passes knowledge! You think that you have fully proved His faithfulness, but you have not proved it as you will yet do. All the tests to which you have ever put the Savior, it may be, are but little compared with those that are to come later. You have proved Him with the footmen, you shall soon prove Him with the horsemen. You have proved Him in the land of peace, you shall soon prove Him in the swellings of Jordan.

But the more you test and try Him, the more shall you discover that He is excellent and worth the proving. And because His excellence shall become more and more manifest, the more you look at Him, you shall say to Him continually, "You have the dew of Your youth. I find You better and better. Fairest of the sons of men, You grow fairer everyday! Bread of Heaven, You become sweeter to my taste every hour! You were once like wafers made with honey—You are now sweeter than angels' food. Water of Life, you continually grow more cooling to my tongue and more refreshing to my thirst! I loved You as soon as I knew You, but I love You more now. I delighted in You once, but I delight in You more fully now."

Still, I do not know but that the most excellent thing you and I have ever seen would, in time, lose its freshness to us because we would discover all its excellence. But Christ will never lose His freshness to us *because He is Divine*. Whatever is not Divine, in due time must lose its freshness. Suppose the Lord should give to us, to engross our attention and to interest us, the whole fields of space. Suppose, in eternity, the Lord should say, "Now I will give to you the works of My creation to be forever the objects of your attention." My dear Friends, there is enough in a single flower, the botanist tells us, to occupy a man's wonder and admiration for a number of years! There is so much skill and wisdom in but a single flower of the field, that a man might look and wonder as long as that. Well, just put together all the flowers and all the creatures of this world, and all the mighty rocks that are full of such marvelous secrets, and imagine that these are to be the objects of our eternal study and interest. I can suppose that a man would exhaust all the knowledge of this world in due time—it might take him thousands upon thousands of years, yet I can imagine that he might so fully examine everything that is noble and grand in this world that, at last, he could sit down, and say, "I know every secret of nature here upon the earth. I have made every rock tell out its story. I have dived into every mine of truth and I have ransacked all its secret treasures—but there are the stars for me yet to look at."

So picture the man going from star to star and discovering all the wonders of God in the seemingly boundless universe! Here is a great conception for you—imagine that all these stars were inhabited and all full of fresh wonders! Yet I can understand that, after myriads and myriads of years, all these marvels might be exhausted. Some stupendous mind, growing by that upon which it fed, might at last say, of all the secrets of God's works, "I know them all. I have found out every wonder

and all the storehouses of God's wisdom have I ransacked." But, Beloved, Jesus Christ is such a boundless field of knowledge—in Him there is such a gathering up of all the secrets of God that the whole of eternity would be exhausted before we could learn them all! He will have, He *must* have, forever, the dew of His youth because He is Divine. The wing of knowledge, though it had all the fields of space to fly in, must at last reach a boundary. The ship of wisdom, though it should sail across the sea that seems without a shore—the as yet unnavigated sea of ether—must at last reach a haven.

But give a man Christ to be the subject of study, the object to awaken his interest and excite his wonder, and then you have, indeed, shot an arrow which shall never reach its mark! It shall fly on, on, on, and shall never stop! You have bid the man plunge into a bottomless ocean! You have launched him, like Noah's ark, upon a sea without a shore. He may go on, and on, and on, but he can never reach the end of that voyage! Christ must forever be full of interest to him because He is Divine and, therefore, inexhaustible!

Another reason why Christ will always have the dew of His youth is *because He meets all the cravings of our nature*. Suppose I am introduced into a place full of the wonderful works of man. I look and I look on—but why is it that I get tired of them, however interesting they may be? Because they only appeal to my eyes. But suppose that there is the sweetest music at the same time, then I have something for my ears. Why is it that, even then, I get tired? Because I have another craving—I hunger and I thirst. But suppose I have the richest dainties set before me and I sit and feast, and look, and hear sweet sounds all the time? Why is it that, even then, I would, after a time, however excellent might be the entertainment, grow tired? Why, because I have other propensities that are not brought into play and other desires which have not their fair room for exercise.

But suppose I become like Solomon, so that I have all which the eyes, or the ears, or the passions can delight in? Should I, after all, be tired? Yes! Solomon tried it, and said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Why? Because there were other cravings in Solomon which all these things did not satisfy. His mind was hungering after knowledge and when Solomon satisfied that, for he spoke of all things, from the hyssop on the wall up to the cedar of Lebanon, there was one thing that was still not satisfied—that was his soul. His immortal spirit was longing for communion with his God! There was a hunger and thirst after something higher than mere mental food. His mind could not be content with wine to drink and meat to eat, for it needed knowledge. And his spirit could not be satisfied with mere knowledge, for it needed something higher than that—the ethereal and celestial ambrosia of the glorified! His spirit was panting for communion with God and, therefore, Solomon felt that all here was vanity because it could not satisfy that craving.

Give me Christ and I have no desire for anything beyond Him, for Christ is All! Whatever of good we may wish for, it is all in Christ—it is impossible for the mind that is filled with Christ to imagine anything

else! And in the day when we shall get to Heaven—we talk a great deal about golden harps, golden crowns and golden streets—I imagine we shall find that all those harps and crowns and streets are contained in that one word, “Christ.” When we really have Christ, we feel that we have nothing else that we can wish for. He that drinks, desires to eat, but he that drinks Christ drinks food. He that eats desires to be clothed, but he that feeds on Christ is clothed at the same time. He that is clothed needs something wherewithal to adorn himself, but he that is clothed in the righteousness of Christ is robed in the court dress of Heaven and has all the jewels of Divinity upon him! He that is adorned yet needs something wherewithal to wash himself and keep himself beautiful. But he that is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and adorned with God's Grace, is washed and is clean every whit. He that is clean needs to be kept clean—and he that has Christ shall be kept clean!

Dear Friends, there is nothing that a sinner can need, there is nothing that a saint can need that is not in Christ! There are many things that we think we need that are not in Him, but nothing we really need that is not in Him, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” And the fullness of the Godhead must be more than sufficient fullness for manhood. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” And if all fullness cannot meet our needs, what can? Therefore, shall we never be weary of Christ because every craving of the heart is satisfied in Him.

I will mention only one other reason why Christ will always have the dew of His youth. We shall never be tired of Christ *because the need that we have of Christ can never cease*. While I am on earth, I shall never cease sinning—therefore I shall never cease to need the fountain filled with blood where I can wash away all my guilty stains. So long as I am here, my conscience will never leave off accusing me—therefore I shall always need an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous. While I am here, I shall never be free from trouble—therefore I shall always need Him who is the Consolation of Israel. While I am here, I shall never get rid of weakness—therefore I can never bear to be without Him who is my strength. While I am here, I shall never, I fear, cease from backsliding in some measure—therefore I can never cease to love Him who restores my soul and leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

You have heard, perhaps, the story of a party of travelers who were crossing the desert. They had exhausted all their supply of water and they knew not where they should find any. But, at last, after some days' march, they came near a turbid stream of the most filthy water and in dashed the camels and defiled it still worse! Yet the poor travelers, who had come across the arid desert, were so thirsty that they drank what was more earth than water, and thought it sweeter than any wine they had ever tasted! But after they had satisfied their thirst, did they still think so? Did they then say the water was sweet? No, they understood, then, what it was they had been drinking and, after their thirst was once quenched, you could not have compelled them to drink there again until

the thirst returned in all its force. And as long as the Christian is here, he will always have the pangs of hunger, he will always have all the sufferings of spiritual thirst if Christ is removed from him and, therefore, that longing will always make Christ sweet to Him. Our Lord must always have the dew of His youth upon Him, because we shall always have an appetite for Him as long as we are here. Or if we lose it for a little while—for fools will abhor all manner of meat sometimes—yet that appetite must and shall return and we shall again fly to those Living Waters as with the wings of a dove, and hasten again to those cooling streams with all the speed of the panting hart that longs after the water brook, for it must drink or die. Therefore, Beloved, you see yet again that because we shall always need Christ, therefore will He always be fresh to us.

“But,” says one, “we shall not need Him in Heaven.” Who told you that? Whoever told you so has certainly misled you. Not need Christ in Heaven? Why, Beloved, if you could take Christ away from Heaven, you would take Heaven away, altogether, and leave every saint in Hell! They do not “need” Christ in Heaven, in one sense of the word, because they have Him—therefore they do not “need” Him as the Scotch use the word “need.” But they still need to have Christ with them every hour, for He is the sum and substance of Heaven. If I shall not need Christ to cleanse me in Heaven, yet I shall need Christ to commune with me. If I shall not need His blood to wash me, yet I shall need the offering of praise wherewith to bless and honor God. If I shall not need to pray to Him, I shall need to praise Him. If I shall not need Him to forgive me, yet I shall need Him to embrace me. If I shall not need Him as a Shepherd, I shall need Him as a Husband, as a Priest, as a King so that I may forever serve Him with joy and gladness!

III. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THIS TRUTH?

The first is for the pulpit, *a lesson of admonition*. Dear Brothers, we who occupy the pulpit must take care that we never, for a moment, entertain the idea that the Gospel has become worn out. It still has the dew of its youth. There is a good deal of nonsense talked about a Gospel adapted to the times. People say that the way Whitefield preached and the way that John Berridge and Rowland Hill preached was all wrong. True, many sinners were converted under their ministry, but, you know, sinners were different, then, from the sinners of these day, who do not need the same sort of preaching. Some say that the devil himself is improved, but I find him worse if anything—improved the wrong way! They say that sinners are improved and do not need to be addressed with the same fiery, burning words as of old. They say that they do not need the same simple preaching of Christ. The 19th Century has become so learned that it has advanced beyond the simple knowledge of Christ Crucified! It has become so erudite, that the simplicity of the Gospel is far behind it! It has marched on so far ahead that it has left the Cross miles in the rear!

Do not believe them for a moment, my dear Brothers—if you want to wake up the people of England, preach the old-fashioned Gospel! If you

want to crowd your halls and gather thousands round you, it is the Truth of God as it is in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, that you must preach! As for the manner and style of your preaching, you may leave that to the occasion, but stick to your subject, the simple Gospel in all its freshness and glory. Pentecostal youth shall be seen in the Gospel again when it is preached in all its fullness and purity. I know why some preachers like to be obscure—it is because it gives a man a peculiar kind of popularity. I believe some people like to hear a man whom they cannot understand and some, when they hear a man they can just barely comprehend, are very flattered, because the minister seems to say to them, “Now, you know that you are all very clever people. I must, therefore, preach you a very clever sermon.” And then they feel pleased that the minister should have such a good opinion of them and should think them so clever.

But when you go to hear some plain blunt man, who just simply tells out the Gospel and who believes that to try to be eloquent when he is preaching would be just as stupid as to paint the rose or to whitewash the lily, then you say, “Well, now, he did not compliment me! Why, he talked to me and all of us as if we had been a common lot of clodhoppers and crossing-sweepers. He told us just the simple story of the Cross and there is nothing flattering in that.” Yes! And, by the Grace of God, I trust that from our pulpits there will never be anything taught that is flattering to you! I hope each one of us will be able to say, with the Apostle Paul, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Be you assured that there will be more unction resting upon the enunciation of the simple Truths of the Gospel—there will be more freshness to the hearers—than there will be upon the most polished oratory garnished with almost seraphic eloquence and elaborated until it grows far beyond the comprehension of ordinary intellects! That lesson is for the pulpit.

The second lesson is a caution, *a lesson of self-examination* to each one here present. Do you, dear Friend, take less interest in the Gospel than you used to? Do you find that it has become dull to you and that even Christ Himself has lost His freshness to you? Christ has not really lost His freshness, though you may have lost yours. What you should ask yourself is, “Have I found the right Christ? If the Christ I have found has lost His freshness, is it not very likely that I have found a wrong Christ, one of my own making, one of my own conception? For the real Christ is always fresh, always interesting, always new. Have I not either laid hold of the wrong truth, or held it in the wrong way?”

I said, “the wrong truth.” Have I contradicted myself? Yet that is the palpable contradiction of this age. One man says, “Yes,” and another man says, “No.” I am told that it is uncharitable to say that another man

is wrong if I am right, but I cannot make it out how both are to be right, or how yes and no are to be made to agree together. He is a clever man who is able to tie the tails of yes and no together and make them run in the same row! The fact is, if you have lost your interest in the Gospel, it is not the right one that you have received, or else you never really accepted it. If you have lost your interest in Christ, it is because it is not the Christ of God in whom you were interested. It is very probable that if your former zeal and your former delight in Christ have departed, you have made a mistake—and it is well that you should question yourselves very solemnly lest you should be found building upon the sand when you thought you were building upon the Rock of Ages.

I have just another word to add, and that is, *a word of aspiration*. If Christ has the dew of His youth upon Him, let us, my dear Friends who serve the Lord Jesus Christ, aspire to show the world that we do too. In the olden times, the dew of Christ's youth made His people love Him so much that they were ready to die for Him—they gave all their substance to Him—they lived a life of shame and they were prepared to die a death of pain. Now let us prove to the world that Christianity has not lost its ancient vigor, that there is a godly seed yet left in the earth and that the arm of the Church is not withered. Let us prove to the world that as Christ made His people holy in olden times, He makes His people holy now. And that as the religion of Christ made men devoted to Him, zealous for His cause, prepared them to live and helped them to die, it can do so now. It is for you and for me to prove to the world that our religion has not lost its force by letting them see its influence in our daily life! Emulate the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors! Seek to live like the goodly fellowship of the Prophets and like that noble company of the Apostles! And when you shall live the holy and devoted lives they did, then shall all the world say, "These men have been with Christ, for they have the dew of the youth of Christianity upon them. They are like the early Christians and, therefore, the old religion has not grown old, so as to be likely to depart and pass away."

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

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

A WILLING PEOPLE AND AN IMMUTABLE LEADER NO. 74

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 13, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties
of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth.”
Psalm 110:3.***

NEVER has a verse in the Scripture puzzled me more than this to find out its meaning and its connection. In reading it over hastily, at first sight, it may appear very easy. But if you search into it very carefully, you will find you can, with difficulty, string the words together, or give them any intelligible meaning. I have taken down all the commentators I have in my possession—I find they all give a meaning to the words, but not a soul of them—not even Dr. Gill—gives a connected meaning to the whole sentence. After looking at the old translations and employing every means in my power to discover the meaning, I found myself as far off as when I began! Matthew Henry, one of the wisest commentators, certainly the best for family reading, makes the passage read as if it were like this—“Your people shall come willingly in the day of Your power in the beauties of holiness. In the womb of the morning you have the dew of Your youth.” That is how he explains it, though he does not say that is the proper translation. He explains the last sentence, “You have the dew of Your youth” as meaning that in early life, from the womb of the morning, young people would give themselves to Jesus Christ. But it is no such thing! There is a colon after the word, “morning,” dividing the sentence. Besides, it does not say, the “people shall be willing. You have the dew of *their* youth,” as it would read if it were as the expositors understand it. But it says to Christ, “You have the dew of *Your* youth.” It was not until we had thoroughly looked at the connection of the verse and tried to catch the scope of the Psalm, that we thought we had hit upon its meaning. But even now we shall leave it with your judgment to decide whether or not we have gained the mind of the Spirit, as we hope we have.

The Psalm is a kind of coronation Psalm. Christ is bid to take His Throne. “Sit You at My right hand.” The scepter is put into His hand.

“The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.” And then the question is asked, “Where are His people?” For a king would be no king without subjects! The highest title of kingship is but an empty one if there are no subjects to make up its fullness. Where, then, shall Christ find that which shall be the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all? The great anxiety we have is not whether Christ is king or not—we know He is. He is the Lord of Creation and of Providence. Our anxiety is about His subjects. Oftentimes do we ask, “O Lord, where shall we find Your subjects?” When we have preached to hard hearts and prophesied to dry bones, our unbelief, at times, says, “Where shall we find children for Christ? Where shall we find people who will constitute the subjects of His empire?” Our fears are all put to rest by this passage—“Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning.” And by the second promise, “You have the dew of Your youth.” These thoughts are placed here to allay the anxieties of God’s believing people and to let them see how Christ shall, indeed, be king and never lack a multitude of subjects!

First, here is *a promise concerning His people*. And secondly, here is *a promise concerning Christ, Himself*—that He shall always be as strong, as fresh, as new and as mighty a Christ as ever!

I. First, we shall look at THE PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST’S PEOPLE. “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning.” Here is a promise of time—“in the day of Your power.” Here is a promise of *people*—“Your people.” Here is a promise of *disposition*—“Your people shall be willing.” Here is a promise of *character*—“Your people shall be willing in the beauties of holiness.” And here is a *majestic figure* to show the manner in which they shall be brought forth—by a very bold metaphor, they are said to come out as mysteriously as the dew drops from the womb of the morning! We know not how, but they are produced by God. “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power in the beauties of holiness.” In the womb of the morning they shall come.

1. First, here is a promise concerning *time*. Christ is not to gather in His people every day but on one special day, the day of *His* power. It is not the day when man feels himself to be the most mighty that souls are gathered—for alas—God’s servants sometimes preach until their self-complacency tells them they have been exceedingly eloquent and mighty. And, therefore, it seems sinners *must* be saved—but there is no promise that in the day of *our* power we shall ever see men gathered to Christ! There are times, too, when the people seem to have a great power of seeking after God and when they have the power of hearing. But there is

no promise that just when an excitement reigns and when there appears to be power in the *creature*, that such a day shall be the day of God's in-gathering! It is "the day of *Your* power"—not of the minister's power, nor of the hearers'.

The day of God's power—when is it? We take it, it is *the day when God pours out His own power upon the minister*, so that God's children are gathered in by his preaching.

There are times, Beloved, when the ordained servant of the living God will have nothing to do in preaching but just to open his mouth and allow the words to flow. He will scarcely need stay to think, but the thoughts will be injected into his mind and while he preaches, he will feel there is a power accompanying his words! His hearers, too, will discern it. Some of them will feel as if they were sitting under a sledgehammer beating on their hearts. Others will feel as if the Truth of God were stealing into their hearts and slaying all their unbelief in such a way that they could not resist the blessed power! It will often happen that God's children will find an influence and an *irresistible might* going with the Word of God. They have heard that minister before, they were delighted with him, they trusted that they had been edified and profited, but on *that* day there was a special striking home—every word fell on good soil—every blow hit the mark! There was no arrow shot which did not go into the center of the soul—there was not a syllable uttered which was not like the Word of Jehovah, Himself, speaking either from Sinai, or Calvary! Have you ever known such times? Have you not felt them when you have been standing or sitting in the House of God? Ah, those are times when God, by the manifestation of Himself, is pleased to enlighten His children, to gather in His people and to make poor sinners willing! There is also a day of power *in every sinner's heart*. For, alas, the general day of power which occurs to our congregation omits many—many over whom we have to weep—while hundreds shed tears of penitence, other hundreds sit stolid and unmoved! While some hearts leap for very joy, others are bound in the fetters of ignorance and are sleeping the sleep of death! While God is pouring out His Spirit till some hearts are full to the very brim, ready to burst, there are some dry, without a drop of the heavenly moisture! The day of God's power is a day of personal power in our souls, like that day of Zaccheus when the Lord said, "Make haste and come down." It is a day, not of argument of man, but a day of Omnipotent power—God working in the heart! It is not a day of intellectual enlightenment, merely a day of instruction, but a day when God shall enter into the heart and, with a mighty hand, shall wrench the will and turn it as He would—shall make the judgment judge righteously, the imagination

think as it ought and shall guide the whole soul to Himself! Did you ever think what power that was which God exerts in every individual heart? There is no power like it! Should a man command the mighty waterfalls to congeal and stand in heaps? If they should obey him, he would not have worked a miracle half as mighty as that which God works in the heart when He bids the floods of sin to cease flowing!

Could I command Etna with its flames and smoke to cease its boiling and should it at once be still, I had not worked a deed so mighty as when God speaks to a boiling spirit sending forth fire and smoke and bids it stop! The everlasting God exhibits more power in turning a sinner from the error of his ways, than in the creation of a world or the sustentation of the universe! In the day of God's power, God's people shall be willing! Beloved, we also look for *a day of power in the coming period of the reign of Jesus Christ*. I take it there is a time coming when the feeblest among us shall be as David. When David shall be as the angel of the Lord. The time is approaching when every poor ignorant minister shall preach with power and when every child of God shall be filled with the knowledge of God! We hope for a happy day when Christ shall come and shall cause the knowledge of the Lord to be spread so rapidly that it shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. We often cheer ourselves with this subject—if we labor in vain and spend our strength for nothing, now, it will not always be so—the day will come when the fresh wind of the Spirit will fill the sails of the Church and she shall go swiftly along. Yes, the day will come when the feeble hands of the minister shall be as mighty as the hands of the boldest Christian warrior who ever wielded the sword of the Spirit when every word of Christ shall be as ointment poured forth, spreading perfume over a sinful world! When we shall never preach a sermon without effect—when, as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven, it not only shall not return void but shall water the earth! And having already brought forth and budded, it shall bring forth fruit to the glory of God—that fruit, the destruction of idols and the casting down of all false religions. Happy day, that day of power! Christians! Why do you not pray for it? Why do you not ask that God would give His people might and that Christ may speedily come and find His people willing?

There is, however, another translation to these words. Calvin translates them, “at the time of the assembling of their army,” “an jour die montres.” “In the day of the review.” You sometimes say, “Oh, if a great struggle were to occur, where would be found the men to fight for Christ?” We have heard timid Believers say, “Oh, I am afraid if persecution should set in, we would find very few valiant for the Truth of God—few ministers would boldly come forward to uphold the Gospel of Christ.” No

such thing, Believer! Christ's people will be willing in the day of God's armies. God never had a battle to fight yet when He could say, "I have no soldiers in reserve." God never had an arduous campaign in which His armies were insufficient. Once the Prophet said, Zechariah 1:18-21, "Then I lifted up my eyes and saw and behold, four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, what are these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head—but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." God had enough men to cut off the horns and to build His house—there were four. And He had the right sort of men ready to do His work. For "carpenters" were ready. Whenever a struggle is approaching, God will find His men! Whenever a battle is to commence, God will find the men valiant for His Truth. Never be afraid that God will not take care of His Church. "Your people shall be willing in the day of God's battle." Are you undertaking some noble enterprise? Are you saying, "Here is a grand endeavor to evangelize the world—where shall we find people?" The answer is, "God's people shall be willing in the day of His armies."

Some Sunday school teachers are complaining that in their Church, they cannot find enough to canvass the district. Why not? Because they have not enough of God's people—but God's people are willing in the day of His armies! We have complained that we cannot get ministers to evangelize. Why not? Because they are not thoroughly imbued with the Master's Spirit, for His people would be willing in the day of God's armies when they are needed. They always have willing hearts to be ready for the battle. They do not say, "I must consult flesh and blood." No, there is the standard—up go God's soldiers! There is the battle, out go their swords! They are ready for the fight at once! They are always ready in the day of God's armies. Beloved, fear no struggle, dread no enterprise, neither think that the silver and the gold will be withheld from us—"The silver and the gold are Mine and the cattle on a thousand hills." Think not, however grand your ideas, that you shall fail therein. God's people will come forward willingly when He requires their aid. We firmly believe that Truth of God. But we must wait for God's day. We must pray for God's day. We must hope for it. We must labor for it. And when it comes, God shall find His people willing, as they ought to be!

2. Next, we have here the promise of *a people*, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Nobody else. Here is a promise that

Christ shall always have a people. In the darkest ages, Christ has always had a Church. And if darker times shall come, He will still have His church. Oh, Elijah, your unbelief is foolish. You say, "I, only I, am left alone and they seek my life." No, Elijah, in those caves of the earth God has His Prophets, hidden by seventies. You too, poor unbelieving Christian, at times you say, "I, even I, am left." Oh, if you had eyes to see, if you could travel a little, your heart would be glad to find that God does not lack a people! It cheers my heart to find that God has a family everywhere. We do not go anywhere but we find really earnest hearts—men full of prayer. I bless God that I can say concerning the Church, wherever I have been, though they are not many, there are a few who sigh and groan over the sorrows of Israel. There are chosen bands in every Church—thoroughly earnest men who are looking out for and are ready to receive their Master—who cry to God that He would send them times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. Do not be too sad. God has a people and they are willing now! And when the day of God's power shall come, there is no fear about the people. Religion may be at a low ebb, but it was never at such a low ebb that God's ship was stranded. It may be ever so low, but the devil shall never be able to cross the river of Christ's Church dry shod. He shall always find abundance of water running in the channel thereof. God grant us Grace to look out for His people, believing that there are some everywhere, for the promise is, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power."

3. We next come to *disposition*. God's people are a willing people. Adam Clarke says—"This verse has been woefully perverted. It has been supposed to point out the irresistible operation of the Grace of God on the souls of the elect, thereby making them willing to receive Christ as their Savior." A Doctrine which he utterly discards. Well, my dear Adam Clarke, we are extremely obliged to you for your remark, but at the same time we think that the text has not been "woefully perverted." We believe that the text has been very properly used to show that God *makes* men willing. For if we read our Bibles rightly, we understand that men, by nature, are *not* willing! There is a text you are extremely fond of which we do not think belongs to you and which says, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And there is another text we would like to put you and your Brethren in mind of, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me, draw him." If you would remember *that*, we think, even though the text does not teach it, you might at least have some respect for the Doctrine. But it says, God's people *shall* be willing in the day of God's power. And if we read it as plain English people, we look upon it as a promise that God will produce a people who shall be

willing enough in the day of His power! And from the fact that no man is willing by nature, we infer from this text that there must be a work of His Grace making men willing in the day of God's power! We do not know whether you think that fair logic. We think it is. We have been accused of having no logic and we are not particularly sorry about that, for we would rather have what men call, dogmatism, than logic! It is Christ's to prove. It is ours to preach! We leave argument to Christ. For us, we have only to affirm what we see in God's Word. God's people are to be a willing people. We can tell who are the children by the fact that they are willing! I preach to many of you times without number. I tell you of Hell. I bid you flee from it. I tell you of Christ—I bid you look to Him—but you are unwilling to do so. What do I conclude from that? Either that the day of God's power has not yet come, or that you are not God's people. When I preach with power and the Word is dispensed with unction, if I see you unmoved and unwilling to cast yourselves on Jesus Christ, what do I say? Why, I fear those are not God's people, for God's people are willing in the day of His power, willing to submit to Sovereign Grace, to give themselves up into the hands of the Mediator, to hang simply on His Cross for salvation! I ask again what has made them willing? Must it not have been something in Divine Grace which has turned their will? If the will of man is purely free to do right or wrong, I ask you, my Friends, to answer this—if it is so, why do you not turn to God this very moment without Divine assistance? It is because you are not willing and it needed a promise that God's people *would* be willing in the day of His power!

I think this Word applies not only to their being willing to be saved but willing to work *after* they are saved. Did you ever know a minister who preached on the Sunday but who at the Prayer Meeting on the Monday night seemed as if he would much rather be at home? And if there was a lecture on Thursday, did not he, poor man, come up as if he were about to perform some enormously hard duty? What do you think of him? Why, you think he is not one of the people of God, else he would be willing! Some persons come to the House of God, but they come just as the slave would to his whipping place—they do not like it—and they are glad to get away again! But what do we say of God's people—

***“Up to her courts with joys unknown,
The sacred tribes repair.”***

They are a willing people! There is a collection. The Church of God requires some assistance. One man doles out as small a trifle as ever he can, to keep up his respectability. You do not think he exhibits the spirit of a Christian because he is not willing. But Christ's people are willing! All that they do, they do willingly, for they are constrained by no compul-

sion but by Grace, alone! I am sure we all can do a thing far better when we are willing than when we are forced. God loves His people's services because they do them voluntarily. Voluntarism is the essence of the Gospel. Willing people are those whom God delights to have as His servants. He would not have slaves to Grace His Throne, but true men, who, with gladness and joy, should be willing in the day of His power!

4. We shall scarcely have time for a discussion of the whole text, but we must briefly notice the *character* of these people as well as their dispositions. "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." "They shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." This is how they shall be clothed—not merely in boldness, but in the beauties of holiness, for holiness has its beauties, its gems, its pearls and what are these? They shall be clothed in the beauties of the holiness of imputed righteousness and of imparted Grace! God's people are, in themselves, a deformed people, hence their comeliness must be given them. The standard of beauty is saintship. If an angel should descend from Heaven and carry up to God the most beautiful creature he could find, he would not cull earth's roses. He would not gather her lilies. He would take up to Heaven the fair character of a child of God! Where he found a self-denying hero, where he discovered an ardent disciple—the angel would take him up, exclaiming, "Great God, here is beauty! Take it, this is *Your* beauty." We walk along and admire statues and such-like things and we say, "Here is beauty," but the Christian has on him the true beauty—the beauties of holiness! Oh, you young, you proud, you ask for beauty—but do you know that all the beauties of this earth can do you no good, for you must die and wear a shroud?—

***"Time will rob you of your bloom,
Death will drag you to the tomb."***

But if you have the beauties of holiness, they shall increase and become fairer and fairer and among the fair angels, you, as fair as they, shall stand decked in your Savior's righteousness! "Your people shall be willing" to come forward and they shall be the right sort of people. They will be a holy people, arrayed in, "the beauties of holiness."

5. Now there is a bold metaphor here which we must explain in the last place. The text says, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power in the beauties of holiness." Now you understand that—but what do the next words mean, "From the womb of the morning?" "Why, from the earliest periods of their lives," say the commentators, "God's people shall be willing." No, it does not mean that! There is a bold and brilliant figure here. It is asked, where are they to come from? How are God's people to be brought? What means are to be employed? How is it to be

done? The simple answer is this—Did you ever see the dewdrops glistening on the earth? And did you ever ask, “From where did these come? How came they here so infinite in number, so lavishly scattered everywhere, so pure and brilliant?” Nature whispered the answer, “They came from the womb of the morning.” So God’s people will come forth as noiselessly, as mysteriously, as Divinely as if they came “from the womb of the morning,” like the dewdrops. Philosophy has labored to discover the origin of dew and perhaps has guessed it. But to the Eastern, one of the greatest riddles was out of whose womb came the dew? Who is the mother of those pearly drops? Now, so will God’s people come *mysteriously*. It will be said by the bystander, “There was nothing in that man’s preaching. I thought I would hear an orator! This man has been made the means of salvation to thousands and I thought I would hear an eloquent man! But I have heard a great many preachers far more intelligent and intellectual than he—how were these souls converted?” Why, they have come from the womb of the morning,” *mysteriously*. Again—the dew drops—who made them? Do kings and princes rise up and hold their scepters and bid the clouds shed tears, or frighten them to weeping by the beating of the drum? Do armies march to the battle to force the sky to give up its treasure and scatter its diamonds lavishly? No. God speaks! He whispers in the ears of Nature and it weeps for joy at the glad news that the morning is coming. God does it—there is no apparent agency employed, no thunder, no lightning—God has done it. That is how God’s people shall be saved! They come forth from the “womb of the morning” *Divinely* called, *Divinely* brought, *Divinely* blessed, *Divinely* numbered, *Divinely* scattered over the entire surface of the globe—*Divinely* refreshing to the world, they proceed from the “womb of the morning.”

You may have noticed in the morning what a *multitude* of dew drops there are and you may have inquired, “From where comes so great a multitude?” We answer, the womb of Nature is capable of ten thousand births at once. So, “from the womb of the morning” God’s children shall come. No struggle, no pang, no shriek, no agony is heard—all is secret. But they shall come fresh “from the womb of the morning.” The figure is so beautiful that words cannot explain it. You have only to stand early one morning when the sun is beginning to shoot his rays of light up to the sky and look at the fields all glistening with dew, and say, “Where did all these come from?” The answer is, they came “from the womb of the morning.” So when you find that multitudes are saved and you see them coming so mysteriously, so gently, so Divinely and yet so numerously, you can only compare them to the dew of the morning! You say, “Where

did they all come from?” And the answer is, they have come “from the womb of the morning.”

II. Now the second part of the text is the sweetest and we must have a little time upon it. There was a promise made to Christ concerning His people and that sets our fears at rest concerning the Church. Now here is ANOTHER PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST—“You have the dew of Your youth.” Ah, Believer, this is the great source of Gospel success—that Christ has the dew of His youth! Jesus Christ, *Personally*, has the dew of His youth! Certain leaders in their young days have led their troops to battle and by the loudness of their voice and the strength of their bodies, they have inspired their men with courage. But the old warrior has his hair sown with gray. He begins to be decrepit and no longer can lead men to battle. It is not so with Jesus Christ! He has still the dew of His youth. The same Christ who led His troops to battle in His early youth, leads them now. The arm which smote the sinner with His Word, smites now. It is as unpalsied as it was before. The eyes which looked upon His Friends with gladness and upon His foes with a glance, stern and high—those same eyes are regarding us now, undimmed, like that of Moses. He has the dew of His youth! Oh, it delights us to think that Christ was “God over all, blessed forever,” in His youth, filled with Almighty Power—and He is just the same now! He is not an old Christ, a worn-out Christ, but our still Leader! He is as young as ever! The same dew, the same freshness is about Him. You hear it said of a minister, “In his younger days there was a deal of freshness about him, but he is getting old and begins to repeat himself.” It is never so with Christ! He always has the dew of His youth. He who “spoke as never Man spoke” once, when He shall come to speak again, will speak just as He did before! He has the dew of His youth personally.

So also *doctrinally*, Christ has the dew of His youth. Usually, when a religion starts, it is very rampant, but it afterwards decays. Look at the religion of Mohammed. For 100 years or more it threatened to subvert kingdoms and overturn the whole world. But where are the blades that flashed, then? Where are, now, the willing hands that smote down the foes of Mohammed? Why, his religion has become an old worn-out thing! No one cares about it. And the Turk, sitting on his divan, with his legs crossed, smoking his pipe, is the best image of the Mohammedan religion—old, infirm, effete. But the Christian religion—ah, it is as fresh as when it started from its cradle at Jerusalem! It is as hale, hearty and mighty, as when Paul preached it at Athens, or Peter at Jerusalem. It is not an old religion. Not one particle of it has waxed old, though hundreds of years have passed away. How many religions have died since Christ’s

began? How many have risen up, like mushrooms in a night? But is not Christ's as new as it ever was? I ask you, you old gray-heads, you have known your Master in your youth and you thought His religion sweet and precious—do you find it useless now? Do you find, now, that Christ has not the dew of youth upon Him? No! You can say, "Sweet Jesus, the day I first touched Your hand, the day of my espousal, I thought You altogether lovely. And You are not like an earthly Friend—you have not waxed old. You are as young as ever! Your brow has no furrows on it. Your eyes are not dim. Your hair is still black as the raven, not white with age. You are still unmoved, unaltered, notwithstanding all the years that I have known You." Well, Beloved, do you see what encouragement this is to us in the propagation of our Master's Kingdom, that we are not preaching an old thing that is out of date, but a religion which has the dew of its youth upon it? The same religion which could save 3,000 at Pentecost, can save 3,000 now! I preach old Doctrine but it is as new as when it first came from Heaven's mint! The image and the superscription is as clear and the metal is as bright and undimmed as ever! I have an old sword, but it is not a rusty one—though it has hacked and cut many a twig—yet it has not a single mark of weakness upon itself. It is as new as when it was first forged upon the anvil of Wisdom. The Gospel has the same Spirit attending it, now, that it had when it was a young Gospel. As Peter stood up to preach, then, so may Peters now—and God shall give them the same unction! As Paul preached, then, so shall Pauls now! As Timothy upheld the Lord's Word, so may Timothys now, and the same Holy Spirit shall attend it!

I am afraid Christ's people do not believe this sentence—that Christ has the dew of His youth. They have a notion that the times of great revivals are gone by. And the fathers, they ask, where are they? We are apt to cry, "The horses of Israel and the chariots thereof." No one will ever wear Elijah's mantle, again, they say. We shall never see great and wondrous deeds again. O foolish unbelief! Christ has still the dew of His youth! He has as much of the Holy Spirit, now, as He had at first, for He has it without measure! And though He has dispensed it unto thousands, He will still dispense it. But the question is asked—How is it that people in these times begin to get tired of the Gospel, if it has the dew of its youth?" Why, Beloved, it is because the Gospel does not come to them in the form of dew at all! Do we not frequently hear a Gospel all dry and without marrow? Like a lot of bones out of which the marrow has been boiled? Very nice these bones are for your philosophical divines who like to study antiquities and discover to what unclean animal this or that bone belongs—but of no service at all to God's children—for there is no

food on the bones! We need a Gospel covered with unction, full of savor. And when God's people have that, they are never tired of it—they find a dew and a freshness about it which are lasting.

Now, if Christ has the dew of His youth about Him, how earnestly ought those of us who are His ministers to proclaim His Word! There is nothing like strong faith to make a man preach mightily. If I think I preach a tottering old Gospel, I cannot proclaim it with zeal. But if I think I am preaching a strong stalwart Gospel, whose frame has not been shaken and whose might is just as great as ever, how strongly ought I to preach it? Ah, blessed be God, there are a few hearts as hot as ever, a few souls as firm in their Master's cause as ever were the hearts of the Apostles! There are yet a few good men and true, who rally round the Cross. Like David's men in the cave, Adullam, there are some mighties who rally round the standard. He is not left without His witnesses—He still has the dew of His youth and the day may come when those now hidden in darkness, shall, as dew before the sunshine, come out, glistening on every bush, adorning every tree, enlightening every village, cheering every pasture, making the little hills sing for joy! Go, Christian, and put this into the form of prayer! Pray to Christ that His people may be willing in the day of His power and that He would always retain the dew of His youth—

***“Ride forth, sweet Prince, triumphantly,
And bid the world obey.”***

Go on and prove Yourself to be the same as ever, the blessed God, “God over all, blessed forevermore.” Up, Christian, up! Fight for your young Monarch! Up with you, warriors! Let your swords flash from their scabbards! Fight for your King! Up! Up! For the old banner is a new banner, too! Christ is still fresh and still young. Let the enthusiasm of your youth gird you! Once again, start up, you aged Christians, and let your young days come again, for if Christ has the dew of His youth about Him, it behooves you to serve Him with youthful vigor! Up! Starting now from your sleep, give to Him a new youth and strive to be as earnest and as zealous for His cause as if it were the first day you ever knew Him. Oh, may God make many sinners willing! May He bring many to His feet, for He has promised that they shall be willing in the day of His power!

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

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

REMEMBERING GOD'S WORKS

NO. 2849

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***“He has made His wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He has given meat unto them that fear Him: He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.”
Psalm 111:4, 5.***

GOD'S works are, of course, wonderful because they are His works, but they are not “a nine days' wonder.” They are not intended to be admired for a little while and then to be forgotten. The Psalmist says, “He has made His wonderful works to be remembered.” I fear that we too often fail to keep in our memory the recollection of God's exceeding goodness and that we allow the works of the Lord, as well as His mercies, to lie “forgotten in unthankfulness.” If it has been so in the past with any of us, let us, at the outset of our meditation, begin to chide ourselves for our forgetfulness and ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen our memories that we may remember the wonderful works of the Lord more than we have done.

Our subject is twofold. First, *it is God's design that His wonderful works should be remembered.* And, secondly, *it is our wisdom constantly to have those wonderful works in remembrance.*

I. First then, I learn from our text that **IT IS GOD'S DESIGN THAT HIS WONDERFUL WORKS SHOULD BE REMEMBERED.**

He has ensured the carrying out of this design, for, first, *the very greatness of His works prevents them from being forgotten.* When God has come forth out of His secret places to work Redemption for His people with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He has worked such mighty marvels that all history has been made to ring with the tidings of them. Is it possible that Israel could ever forget what the Lord did in Egypt when He smote the hosts of their oppressors and brought forth His people with a great deliverance? Could they ever forget the wondrous scene at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and all his army sank like lead in the surging waters that had stood upright, like massive walls, to make a way for the ransomed hosts to escape? There were other events, in the conquest of Canaan and in the life of David which must have been, through their extraordinary character, forever burned into the recollection of God's ancient people and, truly, you and I can say of many of God's works on our behalf, that they have been so great that it would be quite impossible for us to forget them! Do you remember your conversion, beloved Friend? Perhaps you were a great and open sinner and the

change in you was so remarkable that you can easily remember the time when it occurred—and it would not be possible for Satan himself to make you doubt that such a change did happen to you! You remember, my Brother, when the load of your guilt was removed from your burdened heart? I can imagine that I could forget my own name and that I could forget my own sons, but I think I never could, under any circumstances, forget the day when I began to sing to my dear Lord and Savior—

***“I will praise You every day
Now Your anger’s turned away.”***

It was such a marvelous thing—so amazing a thing in itself—so altogether extraordinary that it could never, never, never be forgotten! “He has made His wonderful works to be remembered” because they are so wonderful. Study deeply what Sovereign Grace has done to you, that you may see the greatness of the mercy and admire it, for, very much in proportion as you appraise the mercy of God at its proper value, will you be sure to have it fixed upon your memory all your life.

God made His wonderful works to be remembered, in the next place, *because of the persons upon whom those works were worked.* There is many a man who would soon forget all he hears about the favor of God because he is not conscious of his own need of it, but when a person is, spiritually, in an exceedingly anxious state of mind and heart, and God’s great mercy comes to him, he is sure to remember it. You remember that the Israelites were in Egypt as a nation of slaves, so that when God fetched them out, the serfs of the brick-kiln, the men who were driven to their daily tasks by the oppressors’ whips, the poor slaves who were denied even the straw with which to make the bricks—well, when they were Divinely delivered, at the very time when Pharaoh’s tyranny had become utterly unbearable, they could not possibly forget how they had been delivered! That day of their emancipation became the beginning of months to them and they numbered their years from it, for, to poor oppressed Israel, it was like life from the dead!

At the present time, in a spiritual sense, God, in His mercy, interposes on behalf of those who are in a similar condition to that of Israel in Egypt. You remember how Hannah sang, “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory”? That dunghill would help the beggar’s memory. He would say, “How can I forget that I was thrown away like a worthless thing? In my own estimation, I was a rotten, worthless, useless thing, fit only to be thrown among the rubbish of creation. But the Lord suddenly appeared to me, lifted me up and set me among the princes of His people! Can I ever forget that? Let the bride forget her ornaments and let my right hand forget her cunning, but never can my soul forget how the Lord brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”

Some of us were mere wrecks of humanity—yawning chasms gaped beneath us and we thought that we would be speedily swallowed up. But we cried unto the Lord in our trouble and He brought us unto a quiet haven. Can we ever forget His wonderful works? We were sorely sick. Our

soul abhorred all manner of food and we drew near to the gates of the grave—but the Good Physician came and restored us from all our sicknesses just when death stared us in the face. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I feel certain that I can appeal to many of you and say that you were in such a plight as this when the Lord revealed Himself to you. Such was your distress and the abject condition in which you were, that, for you to forget what the Lord did for you would be such base ingratitude that I cannot believe that it is possible! Surely you feel that you must remember Him, and that sooner might a woman forget her sucking child than that you should forget the wonderful works which the Lord your God has worked for you!

Besides this, the Lord took care that His wonderful works would be remembered *by putting them on record in the Scriptures*. The five Books of Moses—the Pentateuch—are the Divinely-Inspired record of the wonderful works which God did for His people in the very early times of the world's history. The pen of Inspiration was carefully employed in order that what God had done might be written down for all future generations to read. This blessed Book has made the wonderful works of God to be remembered for all time—it was written for that very purpose! It tells the unique story of the eternal love of God to us. It also tells us the wonderful story of Love Incarnate in the Christ of Bethlehem and further tells us how He died, how He rose again and how He lives in Heaven to plead for us as our great Intercessor before the Throne of God! Let us bless Him more and more for these sacred pages in which He makes His wonderful works to be remembered! And I venture to suggest to you, Beloved, that it is well when God performs any work of mercy for you, that you should cause it to be remembered in a similar way.

Much of God's praise is never made known on this earth for lack of a ready pen to record the gracious experiences of His people. The keeping of a diary is very apt to lead to a stilted form of piety. If a man feels that he must put something down every day, he is very liable to put down that which is not true. He may think it is true even when it is really false. But the recording of the many special mercies that we receive from God appears to me to be a duty which we owe to our age and also to our successors. If some of the wonderful deliverances which are recorded in the biographies of the saints had not been jotted down at the time, we would have been great losers. And if we have anything worth recording and I think we have, even if we do not care to write it down to be seen by the public eye, yet, at least, let us record it for the sake of the little circle in which we live and move, that, perhaps, some of our descendants, or some of our friends may gather comfort from our personal experience of God's mercy. "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." Let us act in harmony with this grand design and preserve the memory of the Lord's great goodness to us!

Moreover, in order to preserve the memory of His wonderful works, *God was pleased to command His people to teach their children to remember what He had done for them*. In addition to the Inspired records, He told them to make their children's memories into books of remembrance. Jewish fathers were commanded to call their children together and tell

them how the Lord brought them out of Egypt, how He led them through the wilderness and how He gave them the land of Canaan to be their own possession. They were to teach their children and their children's children, the wonderful story of the Lord's dealings with them. And we ought to be concerned to hand down, from father to son, the memory of God's great goodness to us. Tell your own children if you cannot tell anyone else, what God has done for their father. Sitting around the fire in the evening, your children might often be not merely interested, but instructed and impressed by the narrative of God's Providential dealings with you. Possibly the story might not read well in print, but never mind that, for there will be an interest about it to your own household! So, be sure that you tell it. My memory recalls, at this very moment, many a pleasing incident from what my grandfather told me concerning his early struggles in the ministry and the Providential interpositions of God on his behalf. Perhaps he might as well have written them down, but he did not. I think that, possibly, he knew that he had a living book within his grandchild's brain and that the boy might, in later days, tell to others what his grandfather had told him. At any rate, I do earnestly exhort all Christians to make God's wonderful works to be remembered wherever they can, and do it especially by telling your children what you have experienced of His goodness. Do not die, O you gray heads, you who have passed your threescore years and ten—do not pass away from this earth with all those pleasant memories of God's loving kindness to be buried with you in your coffin—but let your children and your children's children know what the everlasting God did for you!

Once more, in order to make His wonderful works to be remembered, *the Lord was pleased to institute certain ordinances to keep them in the minds of His people.* To preserve the memory of the deliverance out of Egypt, there was the significant rite of the Passover. On that night when God brought His people out of the house of bondage, it was the blood of the paschal lamb that protected each house that was sprinkled with it. And so Israel ever afterwards kept the Passover in memory of that night when God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And you know how our blessed Redeemer has given us the institution of the Lord's Supper, saying, "This do in remembrance of Me," that the Atonement, that great master-fact of the Christian religion might always be fresh upon our memories and Christ be set forth visibly crucified among us as though it were but yesterday! If anything may be forgotten, it must not be Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Calvary!

Beloved, take care that you attend carefully to that sacred memorial. If I am addressing any true Believers in Christ, who, nevertheless, have been disobedient to their Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me," I would solemnly ask them to be disobedient no longer! I am sure, Beloved, you miss a great privilege and I am equally sure that you are omitting a very sacred duty by not obeying your Lord's command. If it is right for you, as a Believer in Christ, to stay away from your Master's Table, it is also right for me, and right for all God's servants. If we all did so, there would be no celebration of the Lord's Supper anywhere! And, so, that which our Savior, in His Divine Wisdom, instituted for a me-

morial, would cease to be. Perhaps you say that you are not a church member. If so, I reply that if you are a Christian, you ought to be a member of Christ's visible Church on earth, for, if you have a right not to be a member, I have a right not to be one and so have all the people of God. And, so, the Church of God, as an organization in the world, would cease to exist! Who is to maintain the ministry of the Word? Who is to keep up the ordinances of God's House if all His people break up into separate grains of sand instead of being living stones built up into His spiritual Temple? "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." So, join with Him in that sacred purpose and, in observing the ordinances instituted by your Lord, set forth in your Baptism, your death, burial and resurrection with Him and, in the memorial Supper, show forth His death until He come.

Thus I have shown you how God has made His wonderful works to be remembered and I press it upon the heart and conscience of all the Lord's people to see that their memory is happily burdened with the recollection of God's mercy. Study diligently, in the Biblical record, what He did in the olden times. Learn, from Church History, what He has done from the days of Christ's sojourn upon the earth until now. But especially recollect what He has done for *you* and often say, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." Abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness! The Lord's children should not be dumb! Worldlings are noisy enough in praising their false gods—they often make night hideous and startle us from our sleep as they sing the songs of Bacchus, or Mars, or other heathen deities.

Then shall the children of God be silent and allow His mercies to lie forgotten in unthankfulness? No, no! But write the record of them upon your doors! Let it be seen upon the walls of your houses! Publish the glad news wherever you go! Tell it even to unwilling ears and say, again and again, "The Lord is good, and His mercy endures forever. I can speak with confidence upon this matter, for in my experience I have proved it to be so." Facts like these are among the best arguments to silence infidel doubts and Satanic temptations. Tell the skeptics what God has done for you and ask them whether unbelief can work such wonders for them. You, poor widow, with your seven little children, tell them how you took your troubles to the Lord and He helped you, so that you know that there is a God, for you rested and your family rested upon Him in your great sorrow—and He upheld and delivered you. Tell them, you who have been sick, and in poverty, and who cried unto God and He helped you—tell them that you know that there is a God that hears prayer! Tell them, you who are rejoicing in God with unspeakable joy and who often feel so happy that you scarcely can bear the great delight—tell them that God still lifts up the light of His Countenance upon His people! And if they sneer at you, tell them that you are as honest as they are and that they have as much reason to believe your word as you have to believe theirs. Pit your experience against their arguments! Lay your facts over against their fallacies and, in this way, you shall become valiant soldiers for the Truth as it is in Jesus.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS WISDOM ON OUR PART TO REMEMBER THESE WONDERFUL WORKS OF THE LORD, for the effect upon our minds will be useful in many ways.

First, *it will assure us of the Lord's mercy and compassion.* Read the next sentence of the text, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Gracious, that is, to the sinful! Full of compassion, that is, to the weak and to the sorrowful! If we keep in remembrance the wonderful works of God, our experience will prove the Truth of the text. How gracious the Lord was to sinful Israel! When they rebelled against Him and murmured at Him, He still worked great wonders for them. He fed them with manna from Heaven and brought them flesh to eat and guided them by His fiery-cloudy pillar. He would not let their sin turn away His Grace, but He still loved them. Does not your life, Beloved, prove to you that God is very gracious to you, forgiving your sin, overlooking your infirmities and bearing long with you? I want you to notice that it has been so in your own life because, then, when you meet with a poor trembling sinner, you can say to him, or to her, "I know that God is very gracious, for He has been gracious to me." You can tell the man with a troubled conscience that Christ can ease it for He has eased yours. You can tell how your great sin was taken away by Christ's great Atonement and you can comfort those who are burdened and bowed down, by saying, "He did all this for me and though, to my shame, I have to confess that I have often grieved Him, He has never left me, nor forsaken me. Even when I have lost the Light of His Countenance, through my own fault, yet, when I have mourned over my guilt, He has beamed upon me again. In great mercy has He dealt with me and He has been wonderfully gracious to me." Such testimony as that will be a great encouragement to others. As they hear what the Lord has done for you, they will be led by the Spirit of God to turn to Him that the like favor may be displayed towards them.

Recollect, also, the great compassion of the Lord. I hope your own life has shown you how very tender He is towards those who trust Him, even as the Psalmist says, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." I can recollect how, in a time of terrible depression of spirit and of intense anguish of pain, I cast myself upon my God with that text in my mouth. I said to Him, "O Lord, I am Your child and if any child of mine were pained as I am, and I could take away his pain, I would do so. You are my Father. Prove your fatherliness by easing me, or else by strengthening my frail spirit to endure all this agony." I can even now recall the wonderful relief that came over both body and mind when I had pleaded like that before God and I, therefore, speak with confidence of His fullness of compassion, for I have tried it and proved it for myself! And I invite all who are bowed down to do as I did.

Some of you may be in great distress of mind, a distress out of which no fellow creature can deliver you, you poor nervous people at whom others often laugh. I can assure you that God will not laugh at you! He knows all about that sad complaint of yours, so I urge you to go to Him, for the experience of many of us has taught us that "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion." As a mother comforts her children so will He comfort you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking

flax—so go to Him in all the weakness of your deep contrition and you shall find a mother's heart in the bosom of Jesus—something more tender than a man's heart could ever be! Flee to your God this very hour! Our own experience leads us to urge you to do so, does it not, Brothers and Sisters in Christ? If this were the time and place, and we could turn this service into an experience meeting, would not many of you rise and say, "It is even so," as you remembered God's wonderful works to you? Would you not say, "Yes, truly He is the God of Grace, gracious and full of compassion"?

The next effect that this remembrance will have on our mind is this. *It will make us consider and acknowledge the Divine bounty to us throughout all our lives.* Observe what the Psalmist says next—"He has given meat unto them that fear Him." Now, as we remember that—as the Israelites might have recollected how they had abundance of food even in the wilderness—we shall be led to think of what poor creatures we must be to be so dependent upon our God. We would not have been alive if He had not fed us. How poor we all are in our natural condition! I heard one say of another, who had grown to be a rich man, and it was said in a wicked, envious spirit, "I recollect the time when he had not two shirts to his back and I said to him, 'And your mother remembers the time when you had not one.'" There is not much for the richest man to boast of—men glory in their possessions, and they talk of others who are poor, as though they were to be despised. There is not a man alive who has not had to be indebted to God for the breath in his nostrils! We owe everything to Him and, in looking back upon our spiritual career, we have to say, "He has given meat unto them that fear Him."

We have had to receive from the Lord the daily food that our souls have required. In temporal things and in spiritual, we have been pensioners at His gate, beggars wholly dependent upon His bounty. We have not been able to provide for ourselves one morsel of the bread of Heaven! The Lord has had to give us all that we have had all through our whole life, both physically and spiritually. He has not only given meat to His people once or twice, but all their lives! The bread you eat to nourish your body and the spiritual food whereon your soul has been fed have been continually given to you. Have you ever counted how many meals you have eaten from the first day until now? Have you ever thought of the great store of spiritual food that you have received from the Lord? The queen of Sheba was astonished at the provision that Solomon made for his household for a single day, but oh, what wonderful provision Christ has made for you! He has given you, spiritually, His flesh to eat and His blood to drink! He has given you, even in superabundance, the riches of His Grace and He will, in due time, give you the riches of His Glory! Do not fail to recollect His wonderful works, in order that, while you realize your absolute dependence upon Him, you may also see how He has continually supplied all your needs so that you have lacked nothing from the first day even until now! He has prepared a table before you in the presence of your enemies and He has made you to lie down in green pastures and led you beside the still waters.

Recollect, too, *the circumstances under which some of you have been fed*. It was a great wonder when God furnished a table in the wilderness and it has been a wonder, to some of you, where your daily bread has come from, has it not? I can look back upon the past history of some of you and note how trying your circumstances have been. Yet all your real needs have been supplied. You often woke up in the morning feeling very much like the little birds that do not know where their breakfast is to be found. But I hope that you, like the little birds, began to sing even before you found your breakfast, for you did find it! I love, in the winter, to see the robins sit on the bare tree limbs and yet sing. It is easy enough to sing in springtime when all the birds are singing—but it is not so easy to sit on the bare limbs and still praise the Lord. Still, you should do even that, for you have been fed up till now, have you not? You know that ancient promise, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure”? And that promise has been fulfilled in your experience. Sometimes, perhaps, you have attended a ministry where your soul has been well-nigh starved and you have not known where to look for the spiritual meat that you needed to make you grow. Yet, you are still alive, for the Lord Jesus has, Himself, fed you. “Not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” has your soul been nourished! So, bless Him and praise His holy name, this very hour, and let not the memory of His great goodness ever be forgotten by you.

Then remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, *the variety of supplies that you have had*. “He has given meat to them that fear Him.” All sorts of spiritual meat has He given you. When you were a child, you fed upon the simple doctrines of the Word. But since then, your Lord has given you strong meat that you may become a man in Christ Jesus. In all conditions, you have had food convenient for you. At some stages of your spiritual history, it was not every ministry that could meet your needs. You could not listen with profit to this man or that, but the Lord Himself fed you with His Word—and many a choice morsel you had while you were reading your morning chapter—and it seemed as if every verse in that chapter had been written specially for you, or as if the ink were still wet upon the page and that the love-letter came to you fresh from your dear Father's hand! Thus has He, many a time, given meat to you who fear Him.

Blessed be His holy name, not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised! Have you ever lacked anything? Has your Lord been a wilderness unto you, a land of barrenness? No, you have dwelt in a land flowing with milk and honey and you have been fed to the fullest! Do not forget this but tell the story of it to others. Tell it to your poorer neighbors. Tell it to poor saints when they are in low water. Tell it to the poor distressed children of God who cannot feed upon the Word. Tell them that their Heavenly Father will never let them die of starvation, for God, who feeds the ravens and the sparrows, will surely not allow His own children to starve!

There is another thing to be learned from the memory of God's goodness. *It is intended to certify us of His faithfulness*. “He will ever be mindful of His Covenant,” is the last clause of our text. The Lord never forgot

the Covenant He made with Abraham. Often, when He might, otherwise, have destroyed Israel, He remembered that Covenant and He turned aside His wrath. And do you think He will ever forget the Covenant which He has made with His only-begotten Son, a Covenant signed, sealed and ratified, "in all things ordered well," a Covenant confirmed by the Sacrifice of His well-beloved Son, a Covenant which He signed with His own blood and which is to stand fast forever and ever? No, He cannot be false to His oath! He cannot lie! He must perform what He has promised. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" All the past history of our lives goes to show that God is faithful and will be faithful even to the end. I have never met with a child of God whose experience did not go to confirm the fidelity of God. "You are My witnesses," said the Lord. And if He were to call me into the witness-box and, I may say that if He were to call many of you, your witness would be very straightforward, very plain, very clear, very definite. You would say, "He keeps His Covenant forever and ever." He is not forgetful of the pledge which He gave to David, and to David's Lord, therefore, go forward with unwavering confidence in Him. Doubt not, nor be discouraged, but rejoice in Him and trust Him evermore!

The last thing that this memory of God's wonderful works ought to do for us is to make us praise Him. This Psalm begins with, "Praise you the Lord," and it finishes up with, "His praise endures forever." Well, Beloved, the memory of His great goodness is intended to make us praise Him forever and ever, so let us begin to do it at once! Do not go out of this place sorrowful—let your recollection of God's goodness move you to praise Him. If you have no present cause for joy, so far as you can see, think of the past mercies that you have received. If everything looks gloomy ahead, recollect how the Lord has helped you in all the steps you have already trod. Give Him a grateful song this very hour. Smooth those wrinkles from your brow. Let your eyelids no longer hang down with heaviness, but say in your soul, "The Lord has dealt well with His servants, according to His Word. Therefore will we praise Him with our whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation." I frequently exhort you to praise the Lord because I feel how necessary it is and because we shall soon be in Heaven—therefore, it is well to be holding frequent rehearsals here of that which is to be our everlasting song!

Now I turn to the unconverted and say, Dear Friends, from our own experience we can tell you that to serve God is a blessed thing. He is a grand Master—there is none like He. He makes His servants blessed forever. He never leaves them, nor forsakes them. Therefore, come and put your trust in Him. Hide yourself under the shadow of His wings and then, you, too, shall be able to say, even as we do, "He is faithful. His mercy endures forever." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 111.**

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah," "Praise be unto Jehovah." "Praise you the Lord." I invite all Christians to give good heed to this injunction, whether others praise Him, or not, "Praise you the Lord."

Do it now! Do it always, do it heartily, do it instead of what you sometimes do, namely, doubt Him, murmur at Him, rebel against Him. "Praise you the Lord." You who are beginning the Christian life, praise Him for your regeneration. You who have long continued in it, praise Him for sustaining you. You who are the most ripe for Heaven, begin now the praises that will never, never end!

1. *I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.* It is always well when a preacher practices what he preaches. David does that here—"Praise you the Lord. I will praise the Lord." One of the best ways of enforcing an exhortation is to practically obey it. "Praise you the Lord. I will praise the Lord." But when a man becomes an example to others, he should be very careful to set a *good* example. Hence, the Psalmist not only says that he will praise the Lord, but that he will do it heartily, yes, with his whole heart. Such a God as Jehovah is, is worthy of all the praise we can give Him. We ought to praise Him with all our thought, with all our skill, with all our love, with all our zeal, with all our heart. David tells us that he would render this praise both among the choice and select company of God's people, "in the assembly of the upright," and also in the larger congregation, where a more mixed multitude would be found. Brothers and Sisters, praise is never out of place and never out of season. If you are with a little company of two or three choice Christian Friends, praise the Lord in their midst. Tell them your experience and bless the name of the Lord for His Grace and mercy. But if you should be in a larger assembly, where the characters of some may be doubtful, be not abashed, but still continue to praise the Lord.

2. *The works of the LORD are great.* They are great in number, in size, in purpose, and in effect. Even when God makes a little thing, it is great because of the wisdom displayed in making it. The microscope has taught us the greatness of God in creating tiny creatures of wondrous beauty, yet so small as not to be perceptible to the naked eye. "The works of the Lord are great,"

2. *Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.* If we take pleasure in a man, we also take pleasure in his works—we like to see what he has made and, in like manner, the saints of God take pleasure in His works. They revel in the beauties of creation. They delight to study His wisdom in Providence, but, best of all, they are most charmed with the wonders of Divine Grace. These works are so marvelous that a mere surface glance at them is not sufficient—you need to search them out, to dig deep in the mines of God's Wisdom as seen in His works, to try to find out the secret motive of His everlasting purposes and, the more you study them, the more they will grow! Some things impress you at first with greater significance than they do afterwards, but the works of God are so great that if you look at them throughout your whole lifetime, they will continue to grow still greater.

3. *His work.* I suppose the Psalmist means God's chief work, His grand work of Grace. "His work."

3. *Is honorable and glorious: and His righteousness endures forever.* The work of God is full of Grace and it is full of honor and glory to His

blessed name. And every single portion of the work of Grace is full of that which resounds to the honor and glory of the Triune Jehovah. I hope, dear Friends, that you delight to study the whole plan of saving mercy, from its initiation in the eternal purpose to its culmination in the gathering together of all the people of God. If you do, you will see that all through, it “is honorable and glorious: and His righteousness endures forever.” As it endured Calvary, it may well endure forever! Though the Lord Jesus Christ purposed so to save His people, He would not do it by sacrificing His righteousness. He fulfilled righteousness to the utmost by His perfect life and by His suffering even unto death and now we are quite sure that no further strain will ever be put upon that Divine Attribute. “His righteousness endures forever.”

4. *He has made His wonderful works to be remembered.* Do not be forgetful of God's wonderful works! They are made on purpose to be remembered, so treasure them up, for they are worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance.

4. *The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.* This is what His people always find to be true whenever they read the history of His works. The thought that strikes them is, “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.” If any of you long to be at peace with God, however far you may have wandered from Him, He is ready to receive you if you will but return to Him, for He “is gracious and full of compassion”—not merely tender-hearted, but full of graciousness. He abounds with thoughts of love towards His people! Come and try Him for yourselves.

5. *He has given meat unto them that fear Him: He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.* The needs of all His people are always supplied by Him. He finds food, both for body and soul, and you may rest assured that every promise of His Covenant will be faithfully kept. You may forget it, but He will not. “He will ever be mindful of His Covenant” and mindful of you because of that Covenant—mindful of your heavy cares, mindful of your bitter griefs, mindful of your weakness and infirmity because you are in His Covenant and He is mindful of it!

6. *He has showed His people the power of His works.* He showed the Israelites what He could do, what force He could throw into what He did and He has shown to us Christians the same thing in another way, by the power of His gracious Spirit, blessing the preaching of His Word to the conversion of sinners and maintaining the great fight against the dread powers of darkness. “He has showed His people the power of His works.”

6. *That He may give them the heritage of the heathen.* He gave to Israel the land of Canaan where the heathen dwelt. And He will give to Christ, when He asks for them, the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession! Let us pray God to prove the power of His works in the subduing of the nations unto Christ.

7. *The works of His hands are verity and judgment.* He never acts contrary to Truth and righteousness. Even when He puts on His most terrible look and smites His enemies in His wrath, still, “the works of His hands are verity and judgment.”

7, 8. *All His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in Truth and uprightness.* Whatever God commands, determines, purposes—you may rest assured that it will be accomplished. But His purposes are always accomplished, not by caprice, but by “Truth and uprightness.” God is a Sovereign, doing as He wills, but He never wills to do anything that is inconsistent with justice, truth, and uprightness.

9. *He sent redemption unto His people.* He brought them up out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched out arm. And He has sent redemption to us, first, by price, when He redeemed us from our guilt upon the tree. And then by power, when the Holy Spirit came and broke our bands asunder and set us free from the dominion of our sins!

9. *He has commanded His Covenant forever: holy and reverend is His name.* His whole Character commands our reverence because it is superlatively holy and His name is to us a word of awe never to be mentioned flippantly and never to be quoted without earnest thought and prostration of heart before Him. I fear that there are some professors who use the name of God far too freely—they do not recollect that “holy and reverend is *His* name.” I can hardly think that any man can be “reverend.” There are some who choose to be called by that title—I suppose they mean something less than the word means here. “Holy and reverend is His name,” not mine, certainly.

10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* It is the A B C of true wisdom. He who has learned to fear God has learned the first part of wisdom. According to some, the word, “beginning,” here means the chief, the head, the front, just as, often in Scripture, “beginning,” signifies that. “The fear of the Lord” is the chief part of “wisdom,” the essence of it.

10. *A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.* Practical goodness is the proof of a good understanding. A man may have an orthodox head and yet not have a good understanding. A man may be able to talk very glibly about the commandments of God and even to preach about them with considerable power—but it is the *doing* of them that is the main point.

10. *His praise endures forever.*

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

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COVENANT BLESSINGS

NO. 2681

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 1, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1858.**

***“He has given meat unto them that fear Him:
He will always be mindful of His Covenant.”
Psalm 111:5.***

THIS verse occurs in one of the Hallelujah Psalms, that is, those commencing with “Praise you the Lord.” We often find the Psalmist praising and extolling God—let us imitate his example. Let us do so because we shall find it very pleasant and profitable and because, also, it is our bounden duty. One of the highest exercises of the new life is praising God! Our doubts and fears are indications of life, for the dead man neither doubts nor fears. But our songs of praise are far higher demonstrations of the life within and are more worthy fruits of a soil which has been the subject of God’s husbandry, which has been plowed by the agonies of the Savior and made fertile through His precious blood. My Brothers and Sisters, our life should be one continuous Psalm with here and there a note descending very deep! Yet we should always seek to sing as we live. The stars sing as they shine and they sing by shining. Let us sing while we live and live by singing—and let our life be perpetually singing one great Psalm!

There are many ways of praising God. We should do it with the lips and grateful is the voice of song in the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. We should do it by our daily conversation—let our acts be acts of praise, as well as our words be words of praise. We should do it even by the very look of our eyes and by the appearance of our countenance. Let not your face be sad, let your countenance be joyous! Sing wherever you go, yes, when you are laden with trouble, let no man see it. “You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face.” Be you always glad, for it is God’s commandment, through His servant, the Apostle Paul, “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.” And yet once more he says, “Rejoice evermore.” That we may have themes for song, David has in this Psalm mentioned many subjects. Let us attend to the subjects of the text—the *subject*, I might have said, for it is all one. This verse is the voice of experience. It is not the voice of hope, saying, “He *will* give,” but the voice of experience—“He *has* given meat unto them that fear Him” and the voice of faith—“He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.”

We shall notice, first of all, *the gift*—“He has given meat unto them that fear Him.” Then we shall notice *the Covenant*—“He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.” And then, lastly, *the character of the persons here spoken of*—“He has given meat unto them that fear Him.”

I. Let us first consider THE GIFT. “He has given meat.” We are to understand this expression, of course, in a twofold sense, of our necessities. The first, temporal. The other, spiritual.

First, we are to understand this expression *in a temporal sense*. Our bodies need meat. We cannot keep this mortal fabric in repair without continually providing it with food. God’s children are not, by the fact of their being spiritual men, prevented from feeling natural needs—they hunger and they thirst even as others do. Sometimes, too, they are even called to suffer poverty and know not where their next morsel of meat shall come from. Blessed be God—

**“He that has made our Heaven secure
Will here all good provide”—**

and God’s Covenant relates not merely to the great and marvelous things that we need *spiritually*, but it is a Covenant which includes in the catalog of its gifts, mercies that are food for the body, mercies for our immediate and pressing needs—“He has given meat unto them that fear Him.”

God has never suffered His people to starve. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” The promise is as true under the New Covenant as under the Old, that our bread shall be given us and our water shall be sure. The Lord, who feeds the ravens, will not be less careful of His people. He who supplies every insect with its food and feeds the prowling lion in his majesty, will not suffer His own home-born children, those who are nearest His heart, to perish for lack of nutriment. “The cattle on a thousand hills are His,” so He will not allow His children to lack for their meat. He it is to whom the earth belongs and the fullness thereof—He will not, then, suffer His children to go without necessary supplies. “He has given meat unto them that fear Him.”

Some of us are qualified to speak from experience upon this point. We may truly say that God has always given us our meat. Indeed, we have not lacked anything. Up to now the road has been to us like that of the Israelites when they came to the camp of the Syrians and found the way strewn with gold, silver and garments! God has provided for our needs even before they have come. He has anticipated our necessities. But there are others of you who have been brought so low by poverty and affliction that you are qualified to speak in a still more emphatic fashion. You have sometimes gone, with a hungry stomach, to an empty cupboard. You have wondered where your supplies would come from. You may even have been houseless and homeless. But ah, children of the living God, has He utterly failed you? Though He has reduced you very low, so that the last morsel was eaten from the cupboard, has He not ultimately supplied your needs and that, too, by means not miraculous, but almost so? Has He not in Providence sent you things which you needed and which you scarcely expected to receive? In answer to prayer, has He

not delivered you out of your deepest tribulations? And when you were well-nigh famished, has He not spread your table with plenty when you have bent your knees before Him? Yes, you tried ones, you have tested this text and have proved it true! You sons of poverty and toil, you have had to rest the whole weight of your daily maintenance on the promise of God without anything to look to but that—and have you ever found Him fail you? No, you will unanimously bear witness that this is a great Truth of God, “He has given meat unto them that fear Him.”

But it is surprising, sometimes, how God has done it! I have heard many a story from the poor among my own flock of how God has delivered them—strange stories, at which some of you would laugh if I were to repeat them. There are some of them who could write, “Banks of Faith” that would be as wonderful as that of William Huntington! Some of you laugh at that book and do not believe it, but it is only because there are so many things of the same sort all put together that they seem to be incredible through their number. But there are many of the Lord’s servants who could easily compose a “Bank of Faith” like Huntington’s, for they have had their most deep necessities and their most poignant sorrows—and they have had their relief well-nigh miraculous—so that, if God had thrust His hand out of the clouds and handed down bread and clothing for them, their deliverance would not have been more apparently from His hand than it has been in the way whereby His Providence has supplied their needs! They can say that He has done it and He has done it marvelously and constantly, too. “He has given meat unto them that fear Him.”

Why, if the child of God were in such a position that the earth could not yield him bread, God would open the windows of Heaven and rain manna from there again! If a Christian could be placed in such a position that the common course of Providence could not serve his end, God would change the nature of everything, rather than break His promise! He would reverse all the seasons and unloose the very bonds of Creation, itself, and let the laws of Nature run riot, rather than suffer one of His promises to fail, or one of His children to lack. “He has given meat”—and He will always do so—“unto them that fear Him.”

But we are to understand this expression chiefly *in a spiritual sense*. God’s people need spiritual meat. I was talking, the other day, to a minister who certainly is not noted for his great soundness in the faith. He was making a joke to me about certain people in his congregation who said they could not feed under him. “There is Mrs. So-and-So,” he said, “who tells me that she cannot get a bit of food out of my ministry. I do not know how it is,” he continued laughingly, “for I do not think you say half as many good things as I do! But yet the old woman cannot feed upon my sermons.” He laughed at the idea of feeding under a ministry, but there is a good deal more in the expression than many think. There is much meant by it that cannot be expressed by any other word. It is only the true Christian who can understand its meaning. He hears a very eloquent discourse delivered, “but,” he says, “I have got no food out of it.” Or he hears a very learned discourse, “but,” he says, “I cannot feed under

that.” There is a peculiar style of preaching and a peculiar style of hearing which can only be described as a “feeding preaching” and a “feeding hearing,” in which the child of God feels that, though he may have learned little that is fresh, yet still his soul has been receiving spiritual food and he can go on his way rejoicing.

And, my Brothers, the House of God is one of the principal places where He feeds His people. And those to whom He has committed the solemn work of the ministry should be very careful that there is something in what they say that the child of God can feed on. The child of God can never feed under a ministry unless he hears the doctrines of Grace and listens to the things of the Kingdom of God.

“Our minister preached a fine metaphysical sermon the other day,” one says. “I never heard such a clear distinction as he made between that point and the other.” But the child of God goes out and says, “Well, I don’t need any of his metaphysics—there was no food in the sermon for my soul. I went there to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ. I went to be taught something for my soul’s welfare, something about the Heaven that is to come, or the Hell that is to be shunned. I wanted to hear something about communion with Christ, something about the Eternal Covenant. But there was nothing of the kind in the whole discourse.” Sermons need to be instructive! There should be real teaching in them concerning the things of the Kingdom of God. “Why,” said a good writer, once, “if you were to hear six lectures by a geologist, he would be the poorest geologist in the world if he did not give you some clear ideas concerning geology. But you may hear 60 sermons from many preachers without getting any notion of their system of divinity.”

It is the glory of the men of this age that they have no system of divinity—they have cast creeds to the wind—they have no forms in which they can systematically state the Truths of God which they believe. The reason is because they have nothing to state! No man will avoid having a system when he has certain definite principles. It is impossible for a man to believe the Truths in God’s Word without insensibly to himself forming a creed of some sort or other. It is the fashion to talk about giving up creeds, but creeds are only the orderly way of stating God’s Truth. If we hold the Truths, themselves, we shall always be able to set them out in some fashion and to communicate our knowledge to others so that, in a given number of discourses, our hearers will be pretty tolerably acquainted with our ideas of the Truth of God. “He has given meat unto them that fear Him” under the ministry. Sometimes God gives your minister such a gift of utterance that if he were to preach for a week, you would listen to him. There are periods when your own minister gives no food to you, though he does to others, because he has to care for different members of God’s family. But there are other periods when the Lord seems to have given him such bountiful gifts that he has let fall handfuls to be gathered by the gleaners as did the man, Boaz, and you pick them up and feast on them and are satisfied.

There is another way in which God gives food to His children—that is, in the Bible. This precious volume is the greatest granary of spiritual

food for God's people. Would to God you read it more! With your magazines, newspapers and tracts on this, that and the other subject, you have too much covered up this ancient Bible, this grand old Book, this emporium of all wisdom, this sum of all knowledge! Yes, Christian, if you need spiritual meat, study a chapter of God's Word. If you need to have food for your souls, give up, for a little while, reading the works of even the best of men, and take a Psalm for the theme of your study—or if not a whole Psalm, take *one verse* of it! Take it for your daily meditation—chew on it and digest it all day long—and so you will find meat for “them that fear Him.”

Let me just say a word or two of caution to you on this point. When you read the Bible, do not think that you will get spiritual food out of it simply by reading. I know some people who make a point of reading two chapters of the Bible every day. They do so as a sort of mental exercise—they simply run their eyes down the page and, after all, do not know a word they have been reading. That is *not* the way to feed upon God's Word! We cannot truly feed unless we understand and believe what we read. In reading the Scripture, do as Luther advised. He says, “When I get a promise, I treat it as if it were a tree in my garden. I know there is rich fruit on it and if I cannot at once get it, I shake the tree backwards and forwards by prayer and meditation until, at last, the fruit drops into my hand.” Do you the same! Read a short portion of Scripture—turn it over and over, again, in your meditation all day long—and then, if you cannot get anything out of it, I will tell you a way whereby you will be sure to get something. Go down on your knees before the passage and say, “O Lord, open this passage to me! Give me something out of it. Teach me to understand it.” And it will not be long before God refreshes you with dainty portions from the tables of Paradise and makes your soul glad with choice morsels of royal dainties wherewith He feeds His own chosen ones!

But there is another way of getting spiritual meat, even when we have not our Bible with us. The Lord sometimes gives meat “unto them that fear Him,” by bringing Jesus Christ home to them, without the use of the Word—simply in meditation and communion. You know, Beloved, after all, that what a child of God feeds upon is Jesus Christ. When the Jews went to the Temple, they did not eat the tongs and fire shovels. They did not eat the garments of the priests and the bells and the pomegranates. They valued all these things, for they were made according to God's orders and, therefore, they thought them precious. But they did, at the appointed season, eat the paschal lamb. So the Christian does not eat the Doctrines of the Word—he feeds on Christ! He loves the Truths of God. He loves the ordinances, he loves everything in the Bible for Christ's sake. But his food is the Lamb, Himself! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the real food for all the Lord's chosen! And are there not most sweet and happy moments when the spirit is carried aloft in blessed communion, when Jesus Christ seems very present and very precious, when we lean our head on His bosom, when we seem to feel the very beating of His heart

and to realize His love for us, when we lose ourselves in Him and almost forget that we have a separate existence? Then we are—

***“Plunged in His Godhead’s deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity!”***

I was much struck, the other evening, at a Prayer Meeting, by the prayer of one of our Brothers, which came home to my heart. When he prayed, he said, “O Lord, give me Mary’s place—

***“Oh that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master’s feet!
Be this my happy choice,
My only care, delight and bliss,
My joy, my Heaven on earth, be this,
To hear the Bridegroom’s voice.”***

He prayed that he might have Mary’s part and always sit at the feet of Jesus. But, by-and-by, the good man’s fervor increased and in his prayer he said, “No, my Master, I have not asked enough of You. Mary’s place is too low for me, if I may have a better one. Lift me up higher, Lord! Give me John’s place—

***“Oh, that I might, with favored John,
Forever lean my head upon
The bosom of my Lord!”***

As he pleaded for that higher degree of communion between his soul and Christ, I thought, “Surely, now you have asked enough.” But, suddenly rising another flight on the wings of communion, like the eagle taking its last soar into the skies, he said, “No, Lord, John’s place does not suffice me. You have lifted me from Your feet to Your bosom, now lift me from Your bosom to Your lips.” Then, quoting the words of the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine,” he sweetly paraphrased it thus, “Let the lips of my petitioning meet the lips of Your benediction. Let the lips of my praise meet the lips of Your acceptance—so shall the kiss of love be consummated and my joy be complete.”

Yes, and when we, also, are favored to go through these various stages of fellowship with Christ—to go from the foot to the bosom and from the bosom to the lips. To go from the mere learner to be a friend and companion and then to go still higher—to be lifted up and to feel our fellowship with Christ by standing as high as He does and our lips being on His lips—it is there that the child of God almost insensibly receives strength and, like Elijah smitten by the angel, he rises up and finds his meat baked upon the coals, eats thereof and lives upon it for forty days! This is, indeed, a most precious mode of feeding for our souls!

But, somehow or other, God does give meat to His children and will never leave them to be famished. You have often noticed, I daresay, that when one means of feeding fails for God’s children, others become available and effective. You are sick and cannot be fed by the public ministry—you cannot go out to hear sermons—so God’s Word becomes more precious to you. Or, you have nobody to read to you and your sight has failed—generally, then, communion becomes more precious. One way or other, God will have His children fed.

II. We will now consider THE COVENANT. “He will always be mindful of His Covenant.”

God has made many Covenants at divers times and none of these Covenants has He ever broken. Let me briefly mention these Covenants. There was the Covenant with Adam, the Covenant of Works—“Obey Me and you shall live; disobey Me and you shall die.” That Covenant God did not break. He did not subject Adam to pain or misery until he had first broken the Covenant and so became the inevitable heir of suffering. God made a Covenant with Noah that the waters should no more go over the earth—and the rainbow, the sign of that Covenant—has lit up the sky ever since at various intervals. And the earth has not been drowned with a flood a second time. He made a Covenant with Abraham, that he would give the land of Canaan to be the heritage of his seed. And that Covenant has He kept. Neither has He altered the thing that went out of His lips. He made a Covenant with David, that his seed should sit upon his throne and that Covenant He kept.

But the Covenant here referred to is a better Covenant than all these, it is the Covenant of Grace. That is a sweet subject to preach upon! Suffer me to go back to the time when this Covenant was made. It is older than the oldest things that man has ever seen—the Covenant of Grace is more ancient than the everlasting hills. It was made by God with Christ for us before all worlds were created! God had foreseen that man would be a sinner. Jesus Christ and His Father were determined to save him and, therefore, a Covenant was made between them. God the Son, on His part, stipulated that He would suffer all the punishment which all the elect deserved to suffer—that He would offer a perfect righteousness on their behalf and pay all the demands of God’s justice. God the Father, on His part, covenanted that all the elect, being redeemed by the blood of Christ, would most certainly be accepted and saved. That is the Covenant of which God is always mindful.

Some people believe in a rickety kind of Covenant which I could never find in the Bible—a Covenant that has conditions in it which you and I are to fulfill. If there were such a Covenant as that, it would not be a Covenant of Grace, but of works. If the Covenant of Grace were made with men—with those that should be saved, on condition of their believing—it would be as impossible for any man to be saved on that condition as it would be on the condition of obeying, since faith is no more possible to unaided man than is perfect obedience! Faith in Christ is as difficult a thing, to a man dead in trespasses and sins, as is perfect obedience to every command of God. The Covenant of Grace is a Covenant without any conditions on our part, whatever, of any sort, in any shape, in any form, or any fashion. The Covenant, in fact, is not made between us and God—it is made between God and Christ, our Representative. All the conditions of that Covenant are fulfilled so that there are none left for us to fulfill! The conditions were that Christ should suffer—and He has suffered. That Christ should obey—and He has obeyed. All that is done. And all that is now standing is the unconditional Covenant, that God will give to all His elect, though dead in sin, power to live! That He will give to

them, though black, perfect cleansing in the fountain filled with blood! That He will give to them, though naked, a robe of perfect righteousness! That He will ultimately accept them to dwell with Him forever in Glory everlasting. This Covenant, on which our hopes are built, this glorious Covenant, is—

***“Signed, sealed and ratified,
In all things ordered well.”***

Will God ever forget it? No, “He will always be mindful of His Covenant,” in everything that it guarantees and towards every person who is interested in it. God will not suffer one single promise of the Covenant to be unfulfilled, nor one single blessing of the Covenant to be kept back. Every iota, jot and tittle of the covenanted purpose of God shall be fulfilled—and everything which He has promised to His people in the Covenant, and which Christ has bought for His people through the Covenant—shall most infallibly be received by His people! As for the persons interested therein, not one of them shall be forgotten. If in the Covenant, they shall most assuredly be saved despite every attack of the devil, all their own wickedness, or any “accident,” so-called, of Providence, or whatever may happen! All who are in the Covenant must and shall be gathered in. The Arminian says there are some in the Covenant who tumble out of it—that God has chosen some men—that He justifies them, that He accepts them—and then turns them out of His family.

The Arminian holds the unnatural, cruel, barbarous idea that a man may be God’s child, and then God may disown him because he does not behave himself. The idea is revolting even to human sensibility! If our children sin, they are still our children—though chastened and punished—yet never do they cease to be numbered among our family. There are many of God’s children who have gone astray from Him and been chastened for it, but it were an idea too barbarous to suppose that God would disown His child for any sin he commits. He keeps fast His Covenant—He loves them, sinners though they may be. He keeps them from running riotously into sin, but when, sometimes, they go astray, as the best of them will, still His loving heart towards them is unchangeably the same!

I do not serve the god of the Arminians at all! I have nothing to do with him and I do not bow down before the Baal they have set up! He is not my god, nor shall he ever be! I fear him not, nor tremble at his presence. A mutable god may be the god for the Arminian—he is not the god for me. My Jehovah changes not! The god that says today and denies tomorrow. That justifies today and condemns the next. The god that has children of his own one day and lets them be the children of the devil the next has no relation to my God in the least degree! He may be the relation of Ashtaroth or Baal, but Jehovah never was nor can be his name. Jehovah changes not! He knows no shadow of turning. If He has set His heart upon a man, He will love him to the end. If He has chosen him, He has not chosen him for any merit of his own—therefore He will never cast him away for any demerit of his own. If He has begotten him unto a lively hope, He will not suffer him to fall away and perish! That were a breaking

of every promise and an abrogation of the Covenant! If one dear child of God might fall away, then might all. If one of those for whom the Savior died might be damned, then the Savior's blood would be utterly void and vain. If one of those whom He has called according to His purpose might perish, then would His purpose be null and void. But, children of God, you may lay your heads upon the Covenant and say with Dr. Watts—

***“Then should the earth's old pillars shake
And all the wheels of Nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”***

III. Now I close by noticing THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS HERE REFERRED TO—“them that fear Him.” Those who fear the Lord are in the Covenant of His Grace.

The anxious enquirer or the young convert oftentimes says to the minister, “Sir, how can I know that I am elect?” And the usual answer is, “You have nothing to do with that—you may think of that matter, by-and-by.” Begging the gentleman's pardon, that is not true! A sinner has *everything* to do with it. Instead of having nothing to do with election, he has everything in the world to do with it. But it is said that he need not trouble his mind about it. Perhaps he should not, but he will, and it is no source of comfort to tell him that he ought not. If I have a toothache, it is poor comfort for a physician to tell me that I ought not to have it. So, when a sinner is troubled about the Doctrine of Election, it is poor comfort to tell him he ought not to be troubled. The best way is to go fairly through the whole question and say to him, “Do you fear the Lord? Then, so sure as you are a living man, you are elect. You have the fear of the Lord before your eyes—then you need have no doubt but that your name is in the Covenant.” None have feared the Lord who were not first loved by the Lord. Never did one come and cast himself at the feet of Jesus simply because he feared the penalty of sin. And none ever came to embrace the loving skirts of the Redeemer because he feared lest he should go astray without having been first called, chosen and made faithful. No, *the fear of God in the heart* is the proof of being God's elect one. If we fear Him, we may believe that He will always give meat to us and that He will always keep His Covenant towards us which He has made for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“But,” says one, “how am I to know whether I am elect?” Beloved, you cannot know it by any outward profession. You may be of any church in the world, or of no church, and yet be one of God's elect. Nor can you know it even by the sentiments which you receive as being true, for you may know truth and yet not have truth in your soul. You may be orthodox in your head and heterodox in your heart. You may believe everything and yet be cast away at last. The only way whereby you can judge yourself is this—Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence His name and His Sabbath? Have you trembled at His Word? Have you cast away your self-righteousness at His command? And have you come to Him and taken Christ to be your All-in-All? I do not ask you whether you fear Hell—many fear Hell who fear not God. Do you fear to offend a loving Fa-

ther? Do you fear lest you should go astray from God's commandments? Do you cry to Him—

“Savior, keep me lest I wander?”

Do you ask Him to preserve you? And can you honestly say that if you could be perfect, you would be? That you desire to be freed from sin? That you hate every false way? And is it your dally groaning to be set free from guilt and to be wholly surrendered to the Crucified? Lastly, can you say this after me—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall—
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All?”***

Then you are elect! Then you are justified! Then you are accepted and you have no more reason to doubt your acceptance and your election than you will have when you stand before the Throne of God, amid the blazing luster of eternal Glory! You are elect and you always were elect! God has chosen you. Your fearing Him is the evidence of it and your believing in Christ, without any righteousness of your own, is proof positive that you were chosen of God before the foundation of the world!

Now what shall I say in conclusion? There are some of you who fear not God. Alas, for you, that you should be in a state so utterly miserable and pitiable, without the fear of God before your eyes! Oh, that God would teach you to fear Him! Oh, that He would break your hearts and so make you feel your ruined state as to bring you to His feet to receive the perfect righteousness of Christ—then would you fear Him—and then might you rejoice that He would give you meat and keep you in His Covenant.

I think I hear one say, “I am a great sinner. I am in the very front rank of the army of guilt. I have truly transgressed and gone astray from the Most High. Tell me, did Jesus die for *me*? Did He die—not as some say He died, for all men—but in that special sense which ensures salvation?” I will answer you. Can you say, “I am a sinner,” not as a kind of idle compliment that most men pass when they say they are sinners and do not mean what the word implies, for they no more mean that they are sinners than that they are horses. But do you really believe that you are sinners deserving God's wrath and the fire of Hell forever? Then the Lord Jesus died for you and, “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If the word is to be understood in the sense in which Hart uses it when he says—

***“A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so”***—

if you feel you are a sinner in that sense, Christ died for you.

But you say, “I wish He had set my name down in the book, that I might read it.” Why, my Friend, if He had done so, you would believe it was intended for somebody else! If the book contained the name of Smith, on such a street, Smith would declare that there were so many Smiths that it could not be meant for him! And if you could read your name, you would still doubt that it could, by any possibility, be a description of you, since another person might bear the same title. But

since it says, “sinners,” Satan himself cannot beat you out of that. God has taught you what the term, “sinner,” means and Satan cannot unteach you that. Are you, then, a sinner—fully, wholly, in all the black sense of the word? Then Christ died for you. Cast yourself upon that Truth of God— Christ died for sinners.

“But,” you say, “Sir, if I were a little better, I might believe that He died for me.” I would not, for He died for sinners. Or you say, “If I were a saint, I might believe that He died for me.” I would not, for he died for sinners. Only prove yourself a sinner and you have proved that Christ died for you! Only be sure that you are a sinner, that you have revolted from God and that you know it—only confess with your heart your transgressions and take this title to yourself, and you may believe that Jesus died for you.

Let me give you a lesson in logic—not from Whateley nor Watts, but from the logic of Faith. It is extraordinary how different are the conclusions of Faith from those of Reason. Once Reason came along and heard a man cry, “I am guilty, guilty.” She stopped and said, “The man is guilty. God condemns the guilty, therefore this man will be condemned.” She went away and left the man condemned, ruined and quivering with fear. Faith came and heard the same cry, rendered more bitter by the cruel syllogism of Reason. Faith stopped. She said, “The man is guilty, but Christ died for the guilty—therefore the man will be saved.” And her logic was correct—the man lifted up his head and rejoiced!

Reason came one day and saw a man naked. And she said, “He has not on a wedding garment. Can naked souls appear before the bar of God? Should they have a place at the supper of the Lamb? The man is naked—he must be cast out for naked ones cannot enter Heaven!” Then Faith came by and said, “The man is naked. Christ worked a robe of righteousness—He must have made it for the naked—He would not have made it for those who have a robe of their own. That robe is for the naked man and he shall stand in it before God.” And her logic was correct and just. The other might seem strictly according to rule, but this was still better.

Reason one day heard a man say that he was very good and righteous. She saw him go up to the Temple and heard him pray, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men,” and Reason said, “That man is better than others and he will be accepted.” But she argued wrongly, for, lo, he went out and a poor sinner by his side, who could only say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” went down to his house justified—while the proud Pharisee went on his way disregarded. The logic of Faith is to argue white from black, whereas the logic of Reason argues white from white.

Luther says, “Once upon a time the devil came to me and said, ‘Martin Luther, you are a great sinner and you will be damned.’ ‘Stop, stop,’ I said, ‘one thing at a time! I am a great sinner, it is true, though you have no right to tell me of it. I confess it. What next?’ ‘Therefore you will be damned.’ ‘That is not good reasoning. It is true I am a great sinner, but it is written, ‘Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,’ therefore I shall be saved. Now go your way.’ So I drove off the devil with his own

sword and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner.”

I have a right to believe that Jesus Christ died for me and I cast myself wholly upon Him. Do the same, poor disconsolate one, for you have nothing of your own to depend upon! But you, O great, and good, and rich man, I have nothing to say to you!—

**“Not the righteous,
Sinners, Jesus came to save.”**

While you have a rag of your own, you shall never have Christ’s robe! Go your way, your righteousness shall prove like the shirt of Hercules, when it burnt him and did eat his flesh away—though you glory in it, it shall be the winding-sheet of your soul forever.

But if you have nothing and are poor, penniless and miserable—reduced to utter spiritual destitution and poverty—in God’s name I preach to you the Gospel! Christ died for you and you shall not perish. God will not punish Christ for us and then punish us afterwards. He will not demand the payment, first at His hands and then again, at ours. He is not unjust to punish, first, the Scapegoat, the Surety, the Substitute—and then to punish you. Christ was your Substitute—He bore your guilt, He carried your iniquities upon His head. Your sins were numbered upon Him and your punishment was laid upon Him!

Go your way. You can never be punished. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. Rejoice in pardon bought with blood—be glad, be satisfied, be happy even till you die—and then you shall be happy forever!

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THE COVENANT

NO. 3261

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1911.

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

***“He will ever be mindful of His Covenant .”
Psalm 111:5.***

[Another Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text, is #2681, Volume 56—Covenant Blessings—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

IT is an amazing thing that God should enter into gracious Covenant with men. That He should make man and be gracious to man is easily to be conceived, but that He should strike hands with his nature and put His august majesty under bond to him by His own promise is marvelous! Once let me know that God has made a Covenant and I do not think it amazing that He should be mindful of it, for He is “God that cannot lie.” “Has He said, and shall He not do it?” Has He once given His pledge? It is inconceivable that He should ever desert from it. The doctrine of the text commends itself to every reasonable and thoughtful man—if God has made a Covenant, He will ever be faithful of it. It is to that point that I would now call your attention with the desire to use it practically.

For God to make a gracious Covenant with us is so great a gift that I hope everyone here is saying within his heart, “Oh, that the Lord had entered into Covenant with me!”

We shall practically look into this matter, first, by answering the question, What is this Covenant? Secondly, by putting the enquiry, Have I any portion in it? And, thirdly, by bidding each one say, “If, indeed, I am in Covenant with God, then every part of that Covenant will be carried out, for God is ever mindful of it.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS COVENANT?

If you go to a lawyer and enquire how a deed runs, he may reply, “I can give you an abstract, but I had better read it to you.” He can tell you the sum and substance of it, but if you want to be very accurate—and it is a very important business—you will say, “I would like to hear it read.” We will now read certain parts of Scripture which contain the Covenant of Grace, or an abstract of it. Turn to Jeremiah 31:31-34—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an Husband unto them, says the Lord. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After

those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Print every word of that in diamonds, for the sense is inconceivably precious! God in Covenant promises to His people that instead of writing His law upon tablets of stone, He will write it on the tablets of their hearts. Instead of the Law of God coming on a hard, crushing command, it shall be placed *within them* as the object of love and delight, written on the transformed nature of the beloved objects of God’s choice! “I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”—what a Covenant privilege this is! “And I will be their God.” Therefore all that there is in God shall belong to them. “And they shall be My people.” They shall belong to Me. I will love them as Mine. I will keep them, bless them, honor them and provide for them as My people. I will be their portion and they shall be My portion.

Note the next privilege. They shall all receive heavenly instruction upon the most vital point—“They shall all know *Me*.” There may be some things they do not know, but “they shall all know *Me*.” They shall know Me as their Father. They shall know Jesus Christ as their Brother. They shall know the Holy Spirit as their Comforter. They shall have communion and fellowship with God! What a Covenant privilege is this! Hence comes pardon, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” What a clean sweep of sin! God will forgive and forget—the two go together. “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” All gone—all their transgression blotted out, never to be mentioned against you again, forever! What an unutterable favor! This is the Covenant of Grace! I call your attention to the fact that there is no, “if,” in it! There is no, “but,” in it—there is no requirement made by it of man. It is all, “I will,” and, “they shall.” “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” It is a charter written in a royal tone and the majestic straining not marred by a “perhaps” or a “maybe”—but dwells always on, “shall,” and, “will.” These are two prerogative words of the Divine Majesty and in this wondrous deed of gift in which the Lord bestows a Heaven of Grace upon guilty sinners, He bestows it after the Sovereignty of His own will without anything to put the gift in jeopardy, or to make the promise insecure!

Thus I have read the Covenant to you in one form.

Turn over the pages a little and you will come to a passage in Ezekiel. There we shall have the bright-eyed Prophet—he who could live among the wheels and the seraphim—telling us what the Covenant of Grace is. In Ezekiel, the 11th Chapter, 19th and 20th verses, we read, “I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes

and keep My ordinances, and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

You will find another form of it further on in the 36th of Ezekiel, beginning at the 25th verse. How intently ought you to listen to this! It is a deal better than hearing any preaching of mortal men to listen to the very words of God’s own Covenant—a Covenant which saves all those who are concerned in it! Unless you have an interest in it, you are, indeed, unhappy. Let us read it—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them...And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” This promise always come in at the close, “I will be your God.” In this form of the Covenant, I call you again to witness that God demands nothing, asks no price, demands no payment—but to the people with whom He enters into Covenant, He makes promise after promise, all free, all unconditional, all made according to the bounty of His royal heart!

Let us go into a little detail about this. God has made a Covenant with certain people that He will do all this for them—and in each case it is of pure Grace. He will take away their own hearts—it is clear from the promise that when He began with them, they had stony hearts. He will forgive their iniquities—when He began with them, they had many iniquities. He will give them a heart of flesh—when He began with them, they had not a heart of flesh. He will turn them to keep His statutes—when He began with them, they did not keep His statutes. They were a sinful, willful, wicked, degenerate people and He called to them many times to come to Him and repent—but they would not. Here He speaks like a king and no longer pleads, but decrees! He says, I will do this and that to you and you shall be this and this in return. Oh, blessed Covenant! Oh, mighty, Sovereign Grace!

How came it about? Learn the Doctrine of the two Covenants.

The first Covenant of which we will now speak was that of Works, the Covenant made with our first father, Adam. This is not first in purpose, but it was first revealed in time. It ran thus—You, Adam, and your posterity shall live and be happy if you will keep My Law. To test your obedience to Me, there is a certain tree—if you let it alone, you shall live. If you touch it, you shall die, and they whom you represent shall die.

Our first Covenant head snatched greedily at the forbidden fruit and fell—and what a Fall was there, my Brothers and Sisters! There you and I, and all of us, fell down while it was proven once and for all that by works of the Law no man can be justified! For if perfect Adam broke the Law so readily, depend upon it, you and I would break any Law that God had ever made! There was no hope of happiness for any of us by a Covenant which contained an, “if,” in it. That Old Covenant is put away, for it

has utterly failed. It brought nothing to us but a curse—and we are glad that it has waxed old and, as far as Believers are concerned, has vanished!

Then there came the Second Adam. You know His name, He is the ever-blessed Son of the Highest. This Second Adam entered into Covenant with God somewhat after this fashion—The Father said, I give You a people; they shall be Yours: You must die to redeem them and when You have done this—when for their sakes You have kept My Law and made it honorable—when for their sakes you have borne My wrath against their transgressions—then I will bless them. They shall be My people. I will forgive their iniquities. I will change their natures. I will sanctify them and make them perfect. There was an apparent, “if,” in this Covenant at the first. That “if” hinged upon the question whether the Lord Jesus would obey the Law and pay the ransom—a question which His faithfulness placed beyond doubt! There is no “if” in it, now. When Jesus bowed His head and said, “It is finished,” there remained no “if” in the Covenant! It stands, therefore, now as a Covenant entirely of one side, a Covenant of promises—of promises which must be kept because the other portion of the Covenant having been fulfilled—the Father’s side of it must stand! He cannot and He will not draw back from the doing of that which He covenanted with Christ to do! The Lord Jesus shall receive the joy which was set before Him. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” By His knowledge shall the Christ who became God’s righteous Servant justify many, for has He not borne their iniquities? How can it be otherwise than that they should be accepted for whom He was the Surety? Do you see why it is that the Covenant, as I have read it, stands so absolutely without, “ifs,” “buts,” and, “perhapses,” and runs only on, “shalls,” and, “wills”? It is because the one side of it that did look uncertain was committed into the hands of Christ, who cannot fail or be discouraged! He has completed His part of it and now it stands fast and must stand fast forever and ever! This is now a Covenant of pure Grace and nothing else but Grace! Let no man attempt to mix up works with it, or anything of human merit! God saves now because He chooses to save—and over the head of us all there comes a sound as of a martial trumpet and yet with a deep, inner peaceful music in it—“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” God observes us all lost and ruined and, in His Infinite Mercy, comes with absolute promises of Divine Grace to those whom He has given to His Son Jesus.

So much, then, with regard to the Covenant.

II. Now comes the important question, “HAVE I ANY PORTION IN IT?” May the Holy Spirit help us to ascertain the Truth of God on this point! You who are really anxious in your hearts to know, I would earnestly persuade to read the Epistle to the Galatians. Read that Epistle through if you want to know whether you have any part or lot in the Covenant of Grace. Did Christ fulfill the Law for me? Are the promises of God, abso-

lute and unconditional, made to *me*? You can know by answering three questions.

First, Are you in Christ? Did you not notice that I said that we were all in Adam and in Adam we all fell? Now, “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” Are you in the Second Adam? You certainly were in the first one, for so you fell! Are you in the Second? Because if you are in Him, you are saved in Him! He has kept the Law for you. The Covenant of Grace made with Him was made with you if you are in Him, for as surely as Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him, so were all Believers in the loins of Christ when He died upon the Cross! If you are in Christ, you are a part and parcel of the Seed to whom the promise was made—but there is only one seed, and the Apostle tells us—“He says not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of One, And to your Seed, which is Christ.” If, then, you are in Christ, you are in the Seed—and the Covenant of Grace was made with you!

I must ask you another question. Have you faith? By this question you will be helped to answer the previous one, for Believers are in Christ. In the Epistle to the Galatians, you will find that the mark of those who are in Christ is that they believe in Christ. The mark of all that are saved is not confidence in work, but *faith in Christ*. In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul insists upon it, “The just shall live by faith,” and the Law is not of faith. Over and over again he puts it so. Come, then, do you believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart? Is He your sole hope for Heaven? Do you lean your whole weight, the entire stress of your salvation, on Jesus? Then you are in Him and the Covenant is yours—and there is not a blessing which God has decreed to give but what He will give to you! There is not a gift which out of the grandeur of His heart, He has determined to bestow upon His elect but what He will bestow it upon you! You have the mark, the seal, the badge of His chosen if you believe in Christ Jesus!

Another question should help you. It is this—Have you been born-again? I refer you again to the Epistle to the Galatians which I would like every anxious person to read through very carefully. There you will see that Abraham had two sons. One of them was born according to the flesh. He was Ishmael, the child of the bondwoman. Though he was the first-born son, he was not the heir, for Sarah said to Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” He who was born after the flesh did not inherit the Covenant promise! Is your hope of Heaven fixed on the fact that you had a good mother and father? Then your hope is born after the flesh and you are not in the Covenant! I am constantly hearing it said that children of godly parents do not need converting. Let me denounce that wicked lie! “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing better! They that are born after the flesh—those are not the children of God! Do not trust in gracious descent, or in holy ancestors! You must be

born-again, every one of you, or you will perish forever, whoever your parents may be! Abraham had another son, even Isaac—he was not born of the strength of his father, nor after the flesh at all—for we are told that both Abraham and Sarah had become old. Isaac was born by God’s power according to promise. He was the child given by Grace. Now, have you ever been born like that—not by human strength but by Divine Power? Is the life that is in you a life given by God? The true life is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of natural excellence—it comes by the working of the Holy Spirit and is of God. If you have this life, you are in the Covenant, for it is written, “in Isaac shall your Seed be called.” The children of the promise, these are counted for the seed. God said to Abraham, “In your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” and that was because He meant to justify the Gentiles by faith, that the blessing given to believing Abraham might come on all Believers! Abraham is the father of the faithful, or the father of all them that believe in God—and with such is the Covenant established.

Here, then, are the test questions—Am I in Christ? Am I believing in Jesus? Am I born by the power of the Spirit of God according to the promise, and not by the fleshly birth, or according to works? Then I am in the Covenant! My name stands in the eternal record! Before the stars began to shine, the Lord had covenanted to bless me. Or before evening and morning made the first day, my name was in His Book of Life. Christ, before the world’s foundation, struck hands with the Father in the council chamber of eternity and pledged Himself to redeem me and to bring me and multitudes of others into His eternal Glory! And He will do it, too, for He never breaks His suretyship engagements any more than the Father breaks His Covenant engagements! I want you to get quite sure upon these points, for oh, what peace it will breed in your soul, what a restfulness of heart to understand the Covenant and to know that your name is in it!

III. This is our last point. If, indeed, we can believe upon the good evidence of God’s Word—that we are of the Seed with whom the Covenant was made in Christ Jesus—then EVERY BLESSING OF THE COVENANT WILL COME TO US. I will put it a little more personally—every blessing of the Covenant will come to you!

The devil says, “No, it, won’t.” Why not, Satan? “Why,” he says, “you are not able to do this or that.” Refer the devil to the text! Tell him to read those passages which I read to you and ask him if he can spy an, “if,” or a, “but,” for I cannot. “Oh,” he says, “but, but, but, but, but you cannot do enough, you can’t *feel* enough.” Does it say anything about feeling there? It only says, “I will give them a heart of flesh.” They will feel enough then! “Oh, but,” the devil says, “you cannot soften your hard heart.” Does it say that you are to do so? Does it not say, “I will take the stony heart out of their flesh”? The tenor of it is—I will do it. I WILL DO IT. The devil dares not say that God cannot do it—he knows that God can enable us to tread him under our feet. “Oh, but,” he says, “you will never hold on your way if you begin to be a Christian.” Does it say anything

about that in the Covenant further than this, “they shall walk in My statutes”? What if we have not power in and of ourselves to continue in God’s statutes? Yet *He* has power to make us continue in them! He can work obedience and final perseverance in holiness in us. His Covenant virtually promises these blessings to us. To come back to what we said before—God does not ask of us, but He gives to us! He sees us dead and He loves us even when we are dead in trespasses and sins! He sees us feeble and unable to help ourselves—and He comes in and works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure—and then we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The bottom of it, the very foundation of it, is Himself! And He finds nothing in us to help Him. There is neither fire nor wood in us, much less the lamb for the burnt offering—all is emptiness and condemnation! He comes in with, “I will,” and, “you shall,” like a royal helper affording free aid to destitute, helpless sinners, according to the riches of His Grace! Now be sure that, having made such a Covenant as this, God will ever be mindful of it!

He will do so, first, *because He cannot lie*. If He says He will, He will. His very name is “God That Cannot Lie.” If I am in Christ, I must be saved—none can prevent it. If I am a Believer in Christ, I must be saved—all the devils in Hell cannot stop it, for God has said, “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” God’s word is not, yes, and, no. He knew what He said when He spoke the Covenant and He has never changed it, nor contradicted it. If, then, I am a Believer, I must be saved, for I am in Christ to whom the promise is made! If I have the new Life in me, I must be saved, for is not this spiritual Life the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever? Did not Jesus say, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”? I have drunk the water Christ gave me and it must spring up into everlasting life! It is not possible for death to kill the Life that God has given me, nor for all the fallen spirits to tread out the Divine fire which Christ’s own Spirit has cast into my bosom! I must be saved, for God cannot deny Himself!

Next, *God made the Covenant freely*. If He had not meant to keep it, He would not have made it. When a man is driven up into a corner by someone who says, “Now you must pay me,” then he is apt to promise more than he can perform. He solemnly declares, “I will pay you this day fortnight.” Poor fellow, he has no money, now, and will not have any then, but he makes a promise because he cannot help himself. No such necessity can be imagined with our God! The Lord was under no compulsion—He might have left men to perish because of sin—there was no one to prompt Him to make the Covenant of Grace, or even to suggest the idea! “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?” He made the Covenant of His own royal will and, having made it, rest you sure that He will never run back from it! A Covenant so freely made must be fully carried out.

Moreover, *on the Covenant document there is a seal*. Did you see the seal? The grand thing in a deed of gift is the signature or seal. What is this—this red splash at the bottom of it? It is blood! Yes, it is blood. Whose blood? It is the blood of the Son of God! This has ratified and sealed the Covenant. Jesus died. Jesus' death has made the Covenant sure! Can God forget the blood of His dear Son, or do despite to His Sacrifice? Impossible! All for whom He died as a Covenant Substitute He will save! His redeemed shall not be left in captivity, as if the ransom price had effected nothing. Has He not said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? That Covenant stands secure, though earth's old columns bow, for despite to the blood can never be possible on the part of the Father.

Again, God *delights in the Covenant* and so we are sure He will not run back from it. It is the very joy of His holy heart! He delights to do His people good. To pass by transgression, iniquity and sin is the recreation of Jehovah! Did you ever hear of God singing? It is singular that the Divine One should solace Himself with song, but yet a Prophet has thus revealed the Lord to us, "He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing." The Covenant is the heart of God written out in the blood of Jesus—and since the whole Nature of God runs parallel with the tenor of the Everlasting Covenant—you may rest assured that even its jots and its tittles stand secure!

And then, last of all, O you who are in the Covenant, do not doubt that God will save you, keep you, bless you seeing you have *believed* on Jesus, are *in* Jesus and are quickened into newness of life! You dare not doubt if I tell you one thing more—if your father, if your brother, if your dearest friend had solemnly stated a fact, would you bear for anybody to say that he lied? I know you would be indignant at such a charge! But suppose your father, in the most solemn manner, had taken an oath—would you for a minute think that he had perjured himself and had sworn a lie? Now turn to the Word of God and you will find that *God, because He knew that an oath among men is the end of strife, has been pleased to seal the Covenant with an oath*. "That by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." God has lifted His hand to Heaven and sworn that Christ shall have the reward of His passion, that His purchased ones shall be brought under His sway, that having borne sin and put it away, it never shall be a second time charged on His redeemed!

There is all of it. Do you believe in Christ? Then God will work in you to will and do of His good pleasure! God will conquer your sin! God will sanctify you! God will save you! God will keep you! God will bring you to Himself at last! Rest on that Covenant and then, moved by intense gratitude, go forward to serve your Lord with all your heart, and soul and strength! Being saved, live to praise Him! Work not that you may be saved, but *because* you are saved—the Covenant has secured your safety! Delivered from the servile fear which an Ishmael might have known,

live the joyous life of an Isaac! And moved by love of the Father, spend and be spent for His sake! If the selfish hope of winning Heaven by works has moved some men to great sacrifice, much more shall the godly motive of gratitude to Him who has done all this for us move us to the noblest service and make us feel that it is no sacrifice at all! "We thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." If you are saved under the Covenant of Grace, the mark of the covenanted ones is upon you and the sacred character of the covenanted ones should be displayed in you! Bless and magnify your Covenant God! Take the cup of the Covenant and call upon His name! Plead the promises of the Covenant and have whatever you need! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:1-22.**

Verse 1. *At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.* During the Israelites' banishment to Babylon, God's Covenant with them had been, as it were, in abeyance. But in this promise of their restoration, He brings it to the front, again, and He gives a peculiarly gracious turn to it—"I will be the God of all the families of Israel." What a mercy it is to have a family God and to have our whole family in Christ! Brothers and Sisters, you have a family Bible and you have, I hope, a family altar—may your whole family belong to God!

2. *Thus says the LORD, the people which were left of the sword found Grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.* Pharaoh tried to kill Israel. When he drew his sword, it looked as if the whole nation would be slain. But God got them away from Pharaoh into the wilderness—and there He caused them to rest. God still has a people whom He will certainly save and the adversary shall not be able to destroy them. Now comes this glorious verse—

3, 4. *The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.* [See Sermons #1914, Volume 32—SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED; #2149, Volume 36—EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED and #2880, Volume 50—NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Again I will build you and you shall be built.* Jerusalem was all broken down. Her houses were vacant and her palaces were in ruins, but God's promise to her was, "Again I will build you, and you shall be built." If the preacher tries to rebuild those who are spiritually broken down, his work may be a failure. But when God does it, it is effectually done.

4. *O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry.* God can take away His people's sorrow and fill them with exultant joy. Their flying feet shall

follow the flying music and they shall be exceedingly glad. May the Lord make His people joyful, now, in His House of Prayer!

5. *You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.* God's people shall get to work, again, and they shall have the fruit of their toil and shall rejoice before God because they do not labor in vain nor spend their strength for nothing.

6. *For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the Mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.* The men of Ephraim did not go up to Zion to worship—they forsook the one altar at Jerusalem. But the day will come when they will turn again to the Lord! Watchmen have to be on the lookout for enemies, but the day will come when even they shall be able to leave their watchtowers and say, "Let us go up to Zion unto Jehovah our God." Are any of you watching just now with anxious eyes? Have you been watching all through the night? Well, you have not seen much and your eyes ache with looking out for evil—so drop your watching, now, and say, one to another, "Let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."

7, 8. *For thus says the LORD, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations, publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them!* Notice the prayer and the answer. The prayer is put into our mouths and before we hardly have time to utter it, the answer comes—"O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them!"

8. *From the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame.* How can they come? Will they help one another? God Himself will be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame!

8. *The woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.* They were not fit for traveling, yet God, in His great mercy, can make the feeblest of His people strong! And when He means to bring them to Himself, they shall come even though it looks as if they could not come!

9. *They shall come with weeping.* Never mind the weeping, as long as they do but come, and remember that there is no true faith without the tear of repentance in its eye—"They shall come with weeping."

9. *And with supplications will I lead them.* The way of prayer is the way home to God.

9. *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble.* Happy are the people who have such precious promises as these! The way is to be straight and their feet are to be so firmly planted in it that "they shall not stumble."

9-11. *For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born. Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob.* The secret of every other blessing is redemption! If God has redeemed, He will save—depend upon it—the precious blood of Jesus shall never be shed in vain!

11, 12. *And ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come.* If they are redeemed, “they shall come.” Christ did not die in vain! The redemption that He worked must be effectual—“therefore they shall come.”

12. *And sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd.* These are all temporal mercies and it is a great blessing to see God’s goodness in them. If God blesses common mercies, they are blessings, indeed! But without His blessing they may become idols and so may become curses.

12. *And their soul shall be as a watered garden.* What a delightful simile! It is of little use for the body to be fed unless the soul is also well nourished! “Their soul shall be as a watered garden.”

12-14. *And they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.* God will give the spiritual leaders of His people enough and more than enough—more than they can take in—He will satiate them with fatness.

14. *And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.* What a delightful promise this is! Listen to it and carry it home, all of you who are truly the Lord’s people.

15. *Thus says the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.* There is here a prophetic allusion to the massacre of the infants by Herod at the time of the birth of our Lord. It was a time of sorrow, indeed.

16, 17. *Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD: and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border.* As Rachel is represented as weeping for her children, so is she represented as mourning for the tribes that were carried away into captivity. Yet is she comforted with the Lord’s gracious assurance—“they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” So they did, and there is to be a glorious future yet for the people of God of the ancient race of Abraham!

18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* [See Sermon #743, Volume 13—EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There is never a penitent in this world bemoaning himself without God hearing him! Do not think that a single penitential cry ever rises unheeded from a contrite heart! That cannot be—God has a quick ear for the cries of penitents.

18. *You have chastened me, and I was chastened as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.* “I bore the chastisement, but derived no benefit from it. I have not repented of my sin, I have not turned unto You.”

18. *Turn You me, and I shall be turned,* [See Sermon #2104, Volume 35—THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *for you are the LORD, my God.* If the Lord undertakes to turn us, we shall be truly turned—that is, converted.

19. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Are there any here recollecting the past with terror, and lamenting before God because of their sins? Then hear what God says! He seems to echo the voice of Ephraim. As Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him!

20. *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* You might expect the answer to be, “No, he has lost the rights of childhood. He has been unpleasant and provoking to God.” Yet God does not give such an answer as that to His own questions, but He says—

20. *For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* Notwithstanding that the Lord threatened him, and sent Prophets to foretell evil to him because of his sin, yet He says, “I do earnestly remember him still.”

20. *Therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him says the LORD.* What a wonderful speech for God to make! Even the infinitely-blessed God represents Himself as in trouble concerning penitent sinners, remembering them in pity and longing to have mercy upon them.

21. *Set you up signs, make you high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities.* In crossing the desert, travelers raise little mounds of stone that they may be directed on a future occasion across that pathless sea of sand. And so God bids them set up signs and make high heaps that they may know how to come back to Him.

22. *How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter?* God still asks in pity, “how long will you seek here and there for comfort?” You will never find it till you come back to your God! Emptiness is written upon everything till the heart comes to its Savior and Lord!

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

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

HEART'S EASE

NO. 647

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”
Psalm 112:7.***

THE last month has been a peculiarly gloomy season. Evil tidings have followed on one another's heels like Job's messengers. Epidemics have been rampant among our families and many are the early graves which have been filled by contagious diseases. It is greatly to be feared that the cholera is stretching its wings of death and hastening to find its prey in our crowded lanes and alleys. The disease among the cattle is cutting off the herd from the stall and polluting the most substantial food of man. And it is much to be feared that the continual showers must be spoiling much of the uncrated corn and causing serious loss to farmers in the more northern counties.

In the newspapers of the last few weeks there has been a constant succession of the most fearful crimes. Scarcely have we known a period in which persons disposed to be melancholy might more thoroughly indulge their taste for the darkest apprehensions and forebodings. Cheerful as I am, I could, in some degree, sympathize with a good old saint with whom I sat a few minutes the other night. He began to lament our national sins and tremble at the presence of what he conceived to be national judgments. Though I am very far from being troubled with uneasy forecasts, yet I freely admit that old age and long experience may justly suggest to us earnest searching of heart because of the ills of the present period.

More terrible than rumor of plague or infectious disease of our cattle is the manifest fact that Popery is advancing among us with giant strides. Turn which way we will, Popery—Romish or Anglican—reeks in our nostrils! It is no longer engaged in secretly undermining our bulwarks—it has set its ladder to the wall and is scaling the ramparts! The Popish party in the Establishment, supported by the undoubted superstition of the National Prayer Book, now seeks to regain its ancient prominence while its allies without are moving Heaven and earth to win this nation to the dominion of Antichrist.

Meanwhile, there are numerous causes for mourning in the Church of God itself—many defections, many departing from first principles and fundamental doctrines—and some, who did run well, suddenly turning aside and proving that they had never run in the power and energy of the Spirit of God. If one preferred the night side of life, one might sit down and readily gather congenial shades of cloud and mist about one's head and heart. But what good would this do? Despondency wins no victories! Let us pluck up courage and go to our *knees* and to our God!

Those who have laid hold on Christ Jesus and are resting in the Father's love and power have no reason to be disquieted—should all Hell be

unmuzzled and all earth be unhinged—they may rejoice with a joy undampened by carnal fear or earthly sorrow! They have found a secret source of supply from which they can draw, if all earth's wells should suddenly run dry—for all their fresh springs are in their God! Of each Believer, when full of faith, it is true, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings—his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

I. To come directly to the text. EVIL TIDINGS MAY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN—to those whose hearts are fixed and are trusting in the Lord. It may be of great service to us to remember this dreary fact, for it may lead us to let go of earthly things. Let us chew this very bitter morsel for a moment or two—there is nothing very palatable or pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us and prevent our boasting with the Psalmist, "My mountain stands firm: I shall never be moved." It may stay us from taking too deep root in this soil from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden.

1. Let us remember the frail tenure upon which we hold our temporal mercies—how soon may evil tidings come concerning them! We rightly class our families first in our possessions. We look with delight into the faces of our children. We mark their growing abilities. We are charmed with evidences of opening intelligence—yet they may never live to manhood—their sun may go down before it is yet noon. We are, perhaps, perplexed as to what we shall do with them when they shall be old enough to be apprenticed to a trade, or initiated into a profession. But we may never have that task to care for—long before they reach that period of life they may be slumbering in their graves.

We gaze with ever fresh delight upon those beloved ones with whom we are united in the ties of wedlock, but if we gaze wisely we shall clearly see mortality written upon the fairest brow and glistening in the most loving eyes! How soon may these partners of our heart's best affections be torn away from us! We must beware of making idols of those who are nearest and dearest, for the objects of our idolatry may soon, like the golden calf, be dashed in pieces and we may have to drink the waters of bitterness because of our sin.

If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked with the woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but *loaned* to us and the hour when we must return them to the Lender's hand may be even at the door. The same is certainly true of our worldly goods. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? And though we have heard some almost profanely say that they have clipped the wings of their riches so that they cannot fly away, yet the bird of prey may rend them where they are, and the rotting carcass of the wealth which the owners cannot enjoy may be a perpetual curse to them.

Full often gold and silver canker in the coffer and fret the soul of their claimant. God can do with us as with Israel—"While the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God came upon them." What substance have we beneath the skies? Is not what we call *substance* a mere shadow soon

departing? Your good substantial ship has often returned from her voyage to enrich her owner and just now she flies before a favoring gale. But there are storms and hurricanes and sunken reefs and quicksand—and who knows how soon your promising venture and the vessel which bears it may sink into the briny sea?

There stands your warehouse—it is full of merchandize upon which, with but a fair profit, great wealth may be obtained! But a fire may come and there may happen to be no insurance, or by a change of market, profit may wither into loss. Your present prosperity may soon be turned into distress by the failure of some larger warehouse, the dishonoring of large bills, a breach of credit, or an unexpected drain of capital. How often have enterprises high as the tower of Babel suddenly rocked and reeled and fallen in total ruin? This world, at best, is but a sandy foundation and the wisest builder may well look for an end to the most substantial of its erections.

Evil tidings may also come to us in another respect—we may suddenly find our *health* decay. That strength which now enables us to perform our daily business with delight may so fail us that the slightest exertion may cause us pain. Although unconscious of so sad a fact, we may be, even now, fostering within our bodies the disease which is destined to stretch us upon the bed of sickness. We should be prepared for the days of darkness, for they are many. The day of sickness would not overtake us as a thief if we were wise enough to remember that we are dust. Frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming forever.

Spring lasts not all the year—the time of the sere and yellow leaf must come and the frosts of winter must nip our root. Why should I suppose that I am to enjoy an immunity from the common ills of mankind? Am I not among those who are born of woman? Is it not written that all such are “of few days and full of trouble”? Do not the “sparks fly upward” from my hearth? And why, then, should I suppose that I am not “born to trouble” like the rest of my race? It were well for us if we would remember that there is a time appointed for weakness and sickness. Then we should be more thankful for the privilege of going up to the Lord’s House, since the day comes when we can no longer go up Zion’s hill.

While we can serve God let us remember that the time may come when we shall rather have to *fear* than to *do*—when we can only glorify Him by *suffering* and not by earnest *activity*. Be it ours to live while we live and snatch the present moment out of the jaws of Time. And while the evil days come not, nor the days draw near in which we shall say we have no pleasure in them, let us serve God with both our hands and spend and be spent in His service! There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction. The fondest hope which you and I have cherished may yet drop like the fruit of the tree before it is ripe—destroyed at the core by a secret worm.

Set not your affections upon things of earth—set your whole heart upon things above, for *here* the rust corrupts and the moth devours and the thief breaks through—but *there* all joys are perpetual and eternal! What is there here, after all, but cloud land? Why seek we to be lords of acres of mere mist? What are earth’s treasures but vapor? Will you heap up for

yourself haze and fog? Cloud and mist will pass away and if these are your riches, how poverty-stricken will you be when you can carry none of these airy riches into the land of solid wealth!

Christian, remember well the insecurity of all earthly things and be content to have it so! Certain expositors refer this passage to slander and reproach, and they translate it, "He shall not be afraid of evil hearing." It is one of the sharpest trials of the Christian's life to be misunderstood, misrepresented and belied. But any man who will serve his Master well must make up his mind to endure much of this affliction. The more prominent you are in Christ's service, the more certain are you to be the butt of jokes.

I have long ago said farewell to my character—I lost it in the earlier days of my ministry by being a little more zealous than suited a slumbering age! And I have never been able to regain it except in the sight of Him who judges all the earth, and in the hearts of those who love me for my work's sake. Beloved fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord Jesus, you must all set your account upon being despised and reproached for His dear sake! You weaker ones come to your minister and say, "So-and-So has spoken evil of me." What? Young Friend, is this a strange thing? Did this never happen to anybody before?

You sit down and cry, "It will break my heart! This cruel report will be the death of me!" Was no one else ever broken in heart by reproach? Did nobody else have his character besmeared by the fingers of envy and the tongue of tale-bearing? Who are you, my fine Sir, that you should escape? Gentle Sister, who are you that you are never to be abused? Humble yourself and do not be so proud as to think a special escape should be made for you when your Lord and all His followers have had to endure much contradiction of sinners!

Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! It is a blessing to attain to such a state that you care no more than the rock cares for the raging billows what men may say, so long as you have a conscience void of offense both toward God and toward man! In all these things, we ought to expect evil tidings.

2. Evil tidings will also come to us concerning spiritual matters, and babes in Grace will be greatly alarmed. Every now and then there comes a messenger with breathless haste who tells us that the sages have discovered that the Bible is a lie. Years ago we were all astonished to find that people had been digging down into the earth and had brought up loads of very hard stones with which Revelation was to be slain, like Stephen by the Jews. Revelation has lived on wonderfully well and flourished amazingly, notwithstanding all that!

Another very judicious naturalist afterwards discovered—and oh, what consternation there was—that we had all sprung from monkeys and that all living creatures were the result of successive developments from infusible atoms! Somehow or other the Gospel has managed to survive even this tremendous blow! Not many months ago a learned quarryman dug up a jawbone and a bushel or two of pointed flints—the undoubted property of primeval men who lived—according to report, ages before Adam!

Now this discovery was to silence forever the teachings of Inspiration. Those flints were invincible and deadly weapons! But the religion of Jesus is so full of life that her deadliest foes cannot make an end of her! Voltaire, you remember, had a printing press at Geneva some years ago with which he printed a prophecy that Christianity would not survive the century of which he thought himself the bright and shining light! That very press is now printing copies of the Bible in Geneva!

A few weeks ago we were informed ethnologically that Negroes were nearly allied to apes and that the Scripture statement that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth was clearly contrary to fact. But, my Brethren, this grand old Book manages still to survive and I think the most of us who know its value can say we are not afraid of evil tidings which prophesy the overthrow of its authority—for it will see all its foes withered in the grass and yet not one of its jots or titles shall pass away!

Our heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord! We can leave these gentlemen to the old women among us, whose experimental acquaintance with the power of godliness will be as a two-edged sword to slay the enemies' sounding professions of superior intelligence. The blind and the lame in the Lord's army shall laugh to scorn the champions of the Philistines, for the Lord of Hosts is with us as our Captain, and Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer!

Sadder tidings at times afflict us. We hear, dear Friends, that professors have fallen. What a thunderclap it seems when we are told that such-and-such a prominent member has forsaken the path of rectitude, or a minister has departed from sound doctrine. Yes, and we must expect this. Judas and Demas will be represented over and over again and even Simon Magus will not be wanting in the Church as long as it is here below. We shall, moreover, hear that success has vanished where once it ruled. We may preach the Gospel and win thousands of souls—but suddenly there may be no conversions and those who are the warmest adherents of the Truth of God may gradually grow cold.

Be ready for these things! There have been ebbs and flows in the Church in all ages. And her progress has been like that of the ocean when it comes to its flood—it has been by a succession of in-rolling waves and waves that fall back again into the sea. So will it be till Christ comes. We shall also hear evil tidings about ourselves. Satan will tell us that we are hypocrites and conscience will remind us of sundry things which raise the suspicion that we are not soundly regenerated. It will be a blessed thing if then we can fly again to the Cross of Jesus Christ!

If the Law thunders at us and gives us evil tidings of wrath to come, happy are we if we can fly to the great Law-Fulfiller and find a shelter from the Law's clamorous demands. But we must expect this. No saint gets to Heaven without being attacked by Satan. An old Divine said that the way to Heaven passed by the mouth of Hell. You must have spiritual conflicts. How could you be crowned if you did not fight and how could you win the victory if you knew no battle?

3. Moreover, to conclude the list, the evil tidings of death will soon be brought to you by the appointed messenger. How evil are the solemn tid-

ings of departure to the most of men! The message will be given to us, "The Master is come and calls for you." We shall see the spirit-finger which beckons down to the cold flood of Jordan—but we shall not fear those evil tidings! No! Faith shall count them a *blessed* message and we shall march cheerfully onward where Jesus leads the way!

In eternity there shall be the evil tidings of the angelic trumpet, evil to all but saints! "Arise, you dead and come to judgment." The general summons shall gather together all nations of men to stand before the dread tribunal, but truly in that case our heart shall be so fixed—no—*flooded* with Divine delights! With joy shall we receive the resurrection and with transport stand to be acquitted at the Judgment Seat!

I have thus marshaled before you a line of grim-visaged messengers—any one of whom may, within a moment—rush into your chamber, crying, "Tidings! Man of God! Tidings!"

II. Now for a second and more cheerful thought. A CHRISTIAN AT NO TIME OUGHT TO FEAR EITHER AN EXPECTATION OF EVIL TIDINGS OR WHEN THE TIDINGS ACTUALLY ARRIVE. Under no conceivable circumstances ought you, Christian, to be afraid. And why? Because, if you are troubled and distressed and distracted, what do you more than other men?

Other men have not your God to fly to! They are not favorites of Heaven as you are! They have never proved the faithfulness of God as you have done and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear—but as for you—you profess to be of another spirit! You testify to the world that God dwells in you, and you in Him! You say that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope! You testify that your heart lives in Heaven and not on earthly things!

Now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that Divine Grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new Nature which you claim to possess? Surely, dear Brothers and Sisters, unless you would be suspected of having boasted beyond your measure, you must not be afraid of evil tidings! Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances.

The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God. They murmur and think that God deals harshly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord as they do? If you are the subject of the same distraction, you will, probably, fall into the same murmuring. Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means, to evil shifts in order to escape from difficulties. And you will be sure to do the same, saint as you are, if your mind yields too far to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him! Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea—"Stand still and see the salvation of God."

But if your heart is troubled. If the water gets to leaking into your ship and the vessel, itself, is filled with the boiling flood—why, you will be plotting this and plotting the other—and before long you will be putting forth your hand unto iniquity and so piercing yourself through with many sorrows! But if the Holy Spirit enables you, in patience, to possess your souls—then, if you suffer, you will not sin and, with all your tempta-

tions—you will not suffer, by His Grace, from the regret of having departed from the living God.

Further, you must not give way to these doubts and alarms and fears, for if you do you will be unfit to meet the trouble. In storms landsmen are all in alarm and fear and they are fit for nothing. Just put them under the hatches and keep them down below, or else they will be in the sailors' way. But the old sailor has seen a storm before and the captain has had many a nor'wester blowing upon him—so he looks around him just as if all were calm and gives his orders to the pilot and the first mate with perfect composure.

And when they have to reef all sail and lie under bare poles, or, worse still, if the mast goes by the board, the captain is very serious, but still quiet and hopeful. He has weathered other tempests and he shall outlive this, also! But you flurried people who are all in a fluster at every piece of evil tidings, what will you do? Why, you will cut your own fingers in seeking to carve your own deliverance! You will push down your house about your head when you meant to have propped it up! You will be quite unable to meet the difficulty if your heart is not "fixed, trusting in the Lord."

Let me ask you another and very important question. If you give way to fright and fear when you hear of evil tidings, how can you glorify God? Saints can sing God's high praises in the fires and bless His name on beds of sickness! But you cannot if you fall into distractions. Why, Man, can your murmuring praise God? Your doubts and fears, as if you had none to help you—will these magnify the Most High? Come, I pray you, if you would honor God, be brave!

A certain good man was much troubled under a loss in business. His wife tried to comfort him but failed. But being a very wise woman she gave it up till the morning. In the morning when she came downstairs her face looked so sad that her husband said, "What is the matter with you?" She, still preserving a mournful countenance, said that a dream had troubled her. "What was it, my Dear?" he said, "you ought not to be troubled with dreams."

"Oh," she said, "I dreamed that God was dead and it was such reason for trouble that all the angels were weeping in Heaven and all the saints on earth were ready to break their hearts." Her husband said, "You must not be foolish! You know it was only a dream." "Oh but," she said, "to think of God's being dead!" He replied, "You must not even *think* of such a thing, for God cannot die! He ever lives to comfort His people."

Instantly her face brightened up and she said, "I thought I would bring you thus to rebuke yourself, for you have been dreaming that God had forsaken you and now you see how groundless is your sorrow. While God lives, His people are safe." So, Christian, I think I could give you many reasons why you should praise God and take courage even when evil tidings come! For the sake of blessing others. For your own spiritual health and profit, that you may get fatness out of famine, safety out of danger, gain out of loss—pray that your heart may be fixed in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God!

III. But now somebody will say, "I do not know how I am to keep from these fears. My mind is like that of another man and I am readily dis-

turbed.” Dear Brother, the text tells you, in the third place, that **FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS THE TRUE CURE FOR BEING ALARMED AT EVIL TIDINGS**. “Fixedness of heart.” The translators somewhat differ as to what this passage means. And some think it means preparedness of heart—“my heart is fixed,” or, “my heart is prepared.” Let it mean *both* and then we shall have the whole truth, for he whose heart is fixed is prepared!

Now in what respect is a Christian's heart fixed? I think in many. First, the Christian's heart is fixed as to *duty*. He says within himself, “It is my business to walk as Christ walked—it can never be right for me to do contrary to God's will. I have set the Lord always before me and in integrity of heart will I walk all my way, wherever that way may lead.” Such a man is prepared for anything! Whatever trial comes he is prepared to meet it because his soul is resolved that come gain, come loss, he will not be dishonest to make himself rich.

He will not tell a lie to win a kingdom. He will not give up a principle to save his life. He has not to go, as some of you have, to the next neighbor to say, “What am I to do? What is the best policy?” The Christian has no policy! He does right and leaves consequences to God. I know that if the skies wanted propping with sin, it is no business of mine to prop them and if they could only be sustained by my speaking falsely, they should fall.

The Truth of God is our business! Integrity is our line of duty and results remain with the Most High. In this respect the man who, by Grace, is fixed for the strait and narrow road is prepared, come what may. But, more comfortable than this, the Christian's heart is fixed as to knowledge and so prepared. There are some things which a Believer knows and is quite fixed about. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world's tiller and that wherever Providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything.

“It is my Father's will,” says he. He looks over the raging waters and he sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows and he hears a voice which says, “It is I, be not afraid.” He knows, too, that God is always wise and, knowing this, he is prepared for all events. They cannot come amiss, says he. There can be no accidents, no mistakes, nothing can occur which ought not to occur. If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills—the worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could occur to me if God ordains it.

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” The Christian does not merely hold this as a *theory*—he knows it as a matter of *fact*. Everything has worked for good as of yet. The poisonous drugs that have been mixed in the compound have, nevertheless, worked the cure. The sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results. And so, believing this, that God rules it, that God rules wisely, that God brings good out of evil—the Believer's heart is fixed and he is well prepared.

Bring me which cup you will, my Father fills them all and I will drink them as He sends them—not merely with resignation—but with sanctified

delight! Send me what You will, my God, so long as it comes from You! Never was that a bad portion which came from Your table to any one of Your children. My Father, write what You will concerning Your child—I will not, by Your Grace, seek to pry between the folded leaves—but I will patiently hope and quietly wait as leaf by leaf is unfolded, knowing You are too wise to err and too good to be unkind. Now see what a preparation this is for evil tidings—this having the heart fixed in a knowledge of God!

Further, there is another kind of fixedness, namely, the fixedness of resignation. There is a verse we sing in one of the hymns, that I hardly think at times some of us ought to sing, for it is not at all times true—

***“O You gracious, wise and just,
In Your hands my life I trust,
Have I somewhat dearer still?
I resign it to Your will.”***

It is very easy to say that, but very difficult to carry it out. To take Isaac, our only son, up to the altar and unsheathe the knife at God's command needs an Abrahamic faith and that kind of faith is not so common as it should be among Christians.

Beloved, when we gave ourselves to Christ we gave Him our person, our estate, our friends and everything—we made a full surrender and the only way to be right when affliction comes is to stand to that surrender—in fact, to renew it every day. It is a good thing every morning to give all up to God and then to live through the day and thank Him for renewing the daily lease. If you think you have mercies on a fifty years' lease you will become discontented if turned out of the tenancy. But if you feel you are only, as it were, a daily tenant, you will feel grateful that the great Landlord has given you a new lease!

The eyes of your body—are they given forever? Their light may never know tomorrow's sun. Those lips which you today give to God's service may soon chill in silence. So is it with all you have. Then resign all to God, for if you give it all up to Him every day, it will not be hard to give it up when He takes it away at last. If you have resigned it a thousand times before, it will only be a repetition of what you have rehearsed to yourself before and, therefore, are well taught in. Stand to your resignation! Be fixed about that and you will be prepared for the most evil tidings.

Better still, let me remind you of one form of fixedness which will make you outride every storm, namely, fixedness as to eternal things. “I cannot lose,” the Christian may say—“I cannot lose my best things.” When a carrier has many parcels to carry, if he has gold and silver or precious stones, he is sure to put them near himself. Perhaps he has some common goods and these he ties on behind—some thief, it is possible, steals from the cart some of the common goods which were outside. “Oh, well,” says the man when he gets home, “I am sorry to lose anything, but my precious things are all right. I have them all safe. I thank God the thief could not run away with them.”

Now our earthly goods, and even our dearest friends, are only the common mercies of God—but our Savior, our God, our eternal interest in the Covenant, our Heaven which we are soon to inherit—these are kept where they cannot be lost! A friend of mine once went up to the bank with a thousand pounds in his pocket. I do not think he was very wise, for after

putting that large sum in his pocket, he put his handkerchief over it and somewhere or other down in the Borough, or over London Bridge, a thief stole his handkerchief!

He said to me, "I never thought at all about that! I was so full of joy at finding that the money was not gone." The anecdote is instructive, for our earthly comforts compared with our eternal interests are but as the handkerchief compared to the thousand pounds—no—they do not bear so high a relation! If adversity should come and take everything else away, yet, Christian, your heart is still fixed because you have a grasp of eternal things. And neither life nor death, nor time, nor eternity can make you let go of your hold of the Glory which is to be revealed in you! Thus you are prepared, come what may.

I will only add one other thought on this point. I believe that holy gratitude is one blessed way of fixing the soul on God and preparing it for trouble. You have a friend who gave you a very hard word the other day. You felt very grieved, but after a few minutes you said, "There, now, if he were to *kick* me, I should always love him for the great kindness that he did to me years ago when I was in great straits." Now, when I think of what our God has done for us, how He saved us from going down into the pit and found a ransom in His own dear Son! When we remember how He has plucked us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—let Him do to me what seems good to Him!

The Lord gave us Christ! Then let Him take away what He will—we cannot think harshly of Him—after such a proof of love we are bound to Him by such ties of gratitude that let Him take away one mercy after the other till there is hardly one left, we will yet bless His name. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Let every saint of God feel himself so fixed and bound by ties of gratitude that he is prepared, whatever may come, still to bless his God!

IV. The last point is this—THE GREAT INSTRUMENT OF FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS FAITH IN GOD. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." You see that we have come here by progressive steps. Evil tidings may come to an heir of Heaven—he ought not to be afraid of them. The way to be prepared for them is to have your heart fixed and prepared. And the method of having the heart fixed is confident trustfulness in the Lord.

The Christian is not prepared for trial by trusting in his fellow men, or by relying upon his own wisdom and experience. We lean on a better prop than an arm of flesh! The Christian relies only upon his God. Every attribute engages this confidence. The heir of Heaven rests in the love of God. "Oh," says he, "my Father loves me too well to suffer any evil thing to damage me. I know by that very Spirit which He has given, by which I cry, 'Abba, Father'—I know the tenderness of His heart forbids that I should ever perish, or that anything should happen to me which shall do me serious damage."

When there was a fire many years ago in the little town of Delft, in Holland, it occurred in a house upon the top of which a stork's nest had been built. Now the storks are very affectionate to their young and it was observed that as the flames went up, the storks tried first of all to carry off their young, but when that could not be done, both parents kept flapping

their nests with their wings, as though to cool the young ones. And when the flames drew nearer, both parents set themselves down over the top of the nest and there died with their young ones.

Can it be possible that our God could have less affection for His own children than these poor birds had for the offspring of their nest? Impossible! He will cover us with His feathers and under His wings will we trust! His Truth shall be our shield and buckler. Come famine, come pestilence, come disease, come death, come judgment—

***“He that has loved us bears us through,
And makes us more than conquerors, too.”***

The Believer, thus dependent upon God's love, is also trusting in God's power. He knows that none ever did resist the Lord with success. That mighty arm breaks the enemy in pieces! When he goes forth to war, it is as when the potter breaks earthen vessels with a rod of iron. The Christian feels that the Omnipotence of God is more to be trusted than the power of the devil is to be dreaded.

“More is He that is for us than all they that are against us.” The Christian perceives the enemy round about, but his eyes have been touched with heavenly ointment and he can also see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire! And therefore he trusts in the power of his God and his soul is not disturbed. He relies also, as we have said, upon the wisdom of God, for indeed, every attribute of the Most High becomes a subject of the Believer's joy. I am afraid, dear Friends, we forget our God too often. I am sure that at the bottom we do not believe Him to be wise, or else we do not believe Him to be gracious. For if we did know and feel and realize that He is God and just such a God as Scripture says He is, we should lean back upon Him and leave trouble, adversity, loss and crosses with Him—casting all our care on Him because He cares for us.

Get, I pray you, to be assured of His sympathy with you. Do not think He is indifferent to the griefs that vex you. You are in the furnace, but He sits at the mouth of it watching you as the dross melts in the flame. God is never away from any of His children, but He is nearest to those who are the most sad and sick and troubled. If there is one sheep in the fold that is more watched over than the rest, it is the weakest sheep. “He carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young.” You cannot imagine how dear you are to His heart! And He is so determined to bring you safely home that He has sworn it with an oath. By two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, He has given you strong consolation.

Will you reject the consolation when He brings it? Is not the Comforter Himself able to comfort you? Christ has gone to Heaven that you might have that precious gift of the Comforter within you! Why will you grieve the Holy Spirit of God and bring this trouble upon your own spirit by these anxieties, these doubts, and fears? “Trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Go with joy and draw water out of the well of salvation and praise Him all the days of your life.

When Dr. Payson was getting near his end he reminded his friends that God is enough for His people. He said, “In years gone by I often dreaded the taking away of certain earthly comforts. But when they have been withdrawn, I have had so much more of the Grace and Presence of God

that I have had to be thankful for the apparent loss, for it was a real gain. And now," he said, "that I am a cripple and confined to my house, I am far happier than I ever expected to be, and am as happy as a man well could be out of Heaven."

We can sing that verse together—

***"And if our dearest comforts fall
Before His Sovereign will,
He never takes away our all.
Himself He gives us still."***

Since you have your God left, Christian, let the text be true of you, "He is not afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." I have not time to say anything about the contrast to all this, but it is a contrast which would bear very hard upon those of you who have not looked to Jesus Christ. You have need to be afraid of *everything*. The stones of the earth are not in league with you, nor are the beasts of the earth at peace with you. There is no Providence working your good. There is no special eye upon your benefit. You are orphan children.

The stars in Heaven fought against Sisera, remember, and they fight against you. The sweet influence of the Pleiades you cannot know, and heavenly blessings you can claim no share. Oh, that you could hide yourself beneath the wings of God! Do you desire it? Then remember who it was that said, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings."

Fly to the Savior! There are His wounds. They will afford you shelter. He died to save the lost! For the rebellious He has obtained mercies. Give Him your soul to save! Trust Him to work a good work in you and for you and you shall never die, but, with holy joy and confidence shall live in the light of His Countenance forevermore! The Lord bless this sermon to the staying of His people's hearts upon Himself and His shall be the praise. Amen.

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FROM THE DUNGHILL TO THE THRONE NO. 658

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy
out of the dunghill, that He may
set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.”
Psalm 113:7, 8.*

THE greatness and majesty of the Most High God are utterly inconceivable. The most masterly minds, when in the most spiritual state, have felt it impossible for the utmost stretch of their imagination to reach to the grandeur of God. Our loftiest conceptions of the universe probably fall very far short of what it really is—although the researches of astronomy have revealed facts surpassing all the powers of the human mind in the attempt to grasp them. Thought, reason, understanding, and even imagination are bewildered in the vast and illimitable fields of space amidst the marvels of God’s handiwork.

Yet all the wonders which the human eye has seen, or mortal spirit guessed at, are but *parts* of His ways. We have heard no more than one stanza of creation’s never-ending Psalm. We have viewed but one stone in the vast mosaic of the Maker’s works. An infusorial atom of life in a drop of water may know as much of the great sea as we do of the universe as a whole. An ant creeping over a sand heap by the seaside must not boast of having counted the grains which bound the ocean—nor must the most learned mortal dream that he has a full idea of the vast creation of God!

Above all this, however, is the fact that all these wondrous works bear no more proportion to the unseen, all-powerful God, than one line written by the pen of Milton would bear to His masterly mind. When God has made all that He ordains to create and when we have seen all that He has made, yet there remains in Himself infinite possibilities of creation. The potter is far greater than the vessel which he fashions and the Lord is infinitely greater than all His works. He fills all things, but all things cannot fill Him. He contains immensity! He grasps eternity! But neither immensity nor eternity can encompass Him—

***“Great God, how infinite You are!
What worthless worms are we!”***

Very fittingly does the Psalmist sing of Him as God humbling Himself to behold the things which are in Heaven. Those majestic beings—cherubim and seraphim—who flash with wings of fire to obey the behests of the Eternal are not to be observed of Him unless, speaking after the manner of men, in condescension He stoops Himself to view them. We sing of the Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens, as the Lord’s and speak of those glorious places as being His peculiar abode, and so they are. And yet the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him and celestial spirits are as nothing when compared with Him.

Consider, then, the condescension of the Lord in visiting the sons of men! What a stoop is here, my Brethren! From the Throne of the Infinite

to the clay tenements of man! Surely in a moment you will perceive that all gradations of rank among our race of worms must be less than nothing and even contemptible with Him! He does not consort with kings when He descends to earth, for what is their mimic pomp to Him? He does not seek out for Himself regal society as being more worthy of His dignity than association with poverty, for what is the child's play of courtly grandeur to Him? A king! What is he but a crowned worm? A king! What is he but dust and ashes raised a very little higher on the ash heap than the rest of the dust?

The Lord, therefore, makes but small account of the honor which comes from man whose breath is in His nostrils—

***“With scorn Divine,
He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings.”***

When His awful chariot rolls downward from the skies He makes men mark the fact of His condescension by visiting men of low estate. He would have to stoop to a palace—it is no more if He stoops to a dunghill. When He is engaged on Mercy's errands, having bowed so low as to enter a cabinet-council chamber, it is scarcely a step further to the haunt of poverty and the den of vice. Courage, you most humble of the sons of men—He who reigns in Heaven despises *none*. “He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy out of the dunghill.”

This has frequently occurred in Providence. God in His arrangements singularly alters the position of men. History is not without many instances in which the uppermost have become lowest and the lowest have been highest. Verily, “There are first that shall be last and there are last that shall be first.” Solomon said, “I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking in the dust.” And the same thing has been seen even in these modern times, when kings have fled their thrones and men who were prowling about in poverty have mounted to imperial power.

God in Providence often laughs at pedigree and ancestry and stains the honor and dignity of everything in which human nature boasts itself. From the kennel to the palace is an easy ascent when Heaven favors. It is not upon Providence that I intend to dilate this morning. My text has a special bearing upon God's acts of Grace. Here it is above all others that we see the condescending sovereignty of His dealings. He takes the base things of the world and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

He selects for Himself those whom men would have repudiated with scorn—He covers His tabernacle of witness with badgers' skins, chooses unhewn stones to be the materials for His altar, a bush for a place of blazing manifestation and a shepherd boy to be the man after His own heart. Those persons and things which are despised among men are often highly esteemed in the sight of God. In considering the text this morning, let us notice the objects of God's choice. First, where some of them are. Secondly, how He takes them from their degraded state. Thirdly, how He lifts them up. And fourthly, where He puts them.

It will be the history of a child of God—from the dunghill to the throne! Novelists are plastering our walls with sensational titles. Here is one which might even satisfy them in their ambition to delight the morbid cravings of this age. “From the dunghill to the throne,” is a subject which ought to win your attention, and if it does not, the fault must surely lie with me—in it there will always be a blessed novelty of interest. And yet

we thank God that it is a correct description of the upward experience of all the Lord's people! He finds tens of thousands in the dunghill-state and bears them up by the arms of His mercy till He makes them to sit among the princes of His people!

I. We will begin where God began with us. WHERE GOD'S CHOSEN ONES ARE WHEN HE MEETS WITH THEM. The expression used in the text implies, in the first place, that many of them are in the lowest scale socially. Sovereign Grace has a people everywhere—in all ranks and conditions of men. Were we taken up to Heaven and did the heavenly spirits wear any token of their rank on earth, we should, on returning, say, "Here and there I saw a king. I marked a few princes of the blood and a handful of peers of the realm. I observed a little company of the prudent and a slender band of the rich and famous. But I saw a great company of the poor and the unknown, who were rich in faith and known unto the Lord."

The Lord excludes no man from His election on account of his rank or condition. We shall not err if we say—

***"While Grace is given to the prince,
The poor receive their share.***

***No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair."***

Yet how true it is that many of those whom God has chosen are found not simply among the workers, but among the poorest ranks of the sons of toil! There are some whose daily toil can scarcely find them bread enough to keep body and soul together, and yet they have fed daintily upon the Bread of Heaven. Many are clad in garments of the meanest kind, patched and mended everywhere, and yet they are as gloriously arrayed in the sight of God and the holy angels as the brightest of the saints! "Yet, I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Some of the sweetest biographies of Christians have been the lives of the lowly culled from the annals of the poor. Who has not read, "The Young Cottager," and "The Dairyman's Daughter"? Who has not found the greatest pleasure in visiting those bed-ridden ones who lie in the alms' room—those saints of God who owe to charity their daily food because sickness has deprived them of the means of earning their bread? My poor Hearer, you may this morning, while sitting in that pew, feel as if you were scarcely respectable enough to be in a place of worship, but I pray you let not your poverty hinder your receiving the Gospel, whose peculiar glory it is that it is preached to the *poor*!

You may have nothing at all in this world—not a foot of ground which you can call your own. You may have been fighting against adversity—a deadly struggle—year after year, and yet you may still be as poor as poverty itself. I will neither commend nor upbraid your poverty, for there is nothing necessarily good or bad morally in any state of life. But I beg that you will not let your circumstances discourage you in the matter of your spiritual interest before God. Come as a beggar if you are a beggar. Come in rags if you have no other covering. "He that has no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!"

The expression in the text does not refer merely to social grades. I have no doubt it has a more *spiritual* meaning. The dunghill is a place where men throw their worthless things. When you have quite done with an article and cannot put it to any further use, you throw it away. It has been

turned to two or three accounts since it was first employed for its original intention and now it is in the way and can no longer be harbored. It is of no use to be sold even as old metal and therefore you throw it on the dunghill that it may be taken away with the rubbish. How often have God's own chosen people felt themselves to be mere refuse and sweepings, good for nothing but to be cast away?

You, dear Friends, are in a like case, for you have discovered your own utter worthlessness. Looking upon yourself in the light which you have received from Heaven, your fancied value has all departed. You were very important once in your own esteem, but you now perceive that your loss, so far from affecting Heaven and earth, would be of no more consequence to the world at large than the throwing of a rotten fruit upon the dunghill, or the falling of a sere leaf from one forest tree amidst a myriad.

In your own estimation there is in you a lack of adaptation for any useful purpose. You are of no more use than salt which has lost its savor. You cannot glorify God as you could wish. You do not wish as much as you should. You can neither pray with the earnestness you desire, nor praise with the gratitude you wish to feel. Looking back upon your past life you are heartily ashamed. In a corner you mourn out, "Lord, what a worthless piece of lumber I have been in this world! What a cumberer of the ground! What an unprofitable servant!"

You have been useful to your family, or to your country and once you thought this enough—but now you measure yourself as in the light of God—and inasmuch as you have never glorified Him who made you and have brought no honor to Him who is your kind and gracious Preserver, you feel yourself to be worthless. So worthless that if the Lord should throw you on the dunghill and say, "Put him away! He is as worthless as dross and dung!" He would only treat you as you richly deserve.

My dear Friend, this estimate of yourself, though it brings you much unhappiness, is a very healthy sign. When we think little of ourselves, God thinks much of us. "God resists the proud, but gives Grace unto the humble." He will not break you, O you bruised reed! He will not quench you, O you smoking flax! But though you are only fit to be cast on the dunghill, His mercy will tenderly consider you and exalt you among the princes of His people!

Again, the dunghill is a place of contempt. Contempt sometimes sneeringly says of its victim, "He is such a person that I would not pick him up if I saw him on a dunghill." The sneer of the world condemns some persons thus—"Oh, they are good for nothing. A dunghill is too good for them." Possibly, my Hearer, you may be placed in a family where you are much despised. You may not have the ability and sharpness of others of the household, and therefore you are much looked down upon and are regarded as a poor simpleton, not worth noticing. You have not succeeded in life as others have done and consequently you are viewed with much contempt by those who have prospered much and speedily.

You may even feel, this morning, as if you merited the contempt poured upon you. You have been saying, "Ah, you despise me, but if you knew me as I know myself, you would despise me more! You think nothing of me and I am less than nothing. You call me an ill name, but could you see the deceitfulness of my base heart, you would understand that the name might be worn in truth though given in jest."

Well, despised one, let me remind you that the Lord has often looked upon those whom man has despised. And though your own parents may have taken no pleasure in you and society may sneer at you and you may, yourself, now feel as if the sneer were well deserved, yet take confidence and be of good heart for God visits dunghills when He does not visit palaces and He will lift up the humble and meek from the dust where they pine and languish! The next remark may, perhaps, afford more comfort—the dunghill is like a place for filthy and offensive things. We say of a foul and unsavory thing, “It is too bad to be borne in the house, let it be swept away. Put it away with the filth—cover it up.”

When a matter becomes noisome, putrid, offensive, we want it to be removed at once. Ah, sad that we should have to say this of any of our fellow creatures, but we must say it. There are some whose sins are terribly foul. Their iniquities are so vile that they are an offense in the eyes and ears of all decent men—and the Holy God looks upon their actions with wrath and detestation. Some sinners have become so infamous in character that they are an injury to all associated with them! They cannot enter into any company without spreading the contagion of their sin. Their example is so bad that it is enough to poison the parish where they live. They are only fit to be put as so much rottenness, foulness, and putridity, on the dunghill where immorality rots out its hour of abomination.

But, oh, the love of my Master! He has often stooped to rescue the abandoned from the dunghill. In Heaven I see those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb who once were harlots like Rahab, adulterers like David, and idolaters like Manasseh! Before the Throne of God there stand today, among the peers of God, those who, in their days of unregeneracy were thieves and drunkards and blasphemers! Heaven’s courts are trod by many who once were the chief of sinners, but who now are brightest among the saints. I pray you, Beloved, never think that the Gospel of Christ saved great offenders in years gone by, but that now it is only for the upright and moral!

The moral are freely invited to Christ, which we never forget to testify, but the *immoral* are bid, too. The Lord came to our earth as a Physician. And He came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance. He came not to heal those who are already sound in health, but the sick. O my Hearer, if you are so sick with sin that your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint and from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet there is no soundness in you—nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores—yet still the love of my Master will stoop to you!

If you have added lust to theft and even murder to lust! If you are red-handed with infamous iniquity, yet the sacred crimson bath which was filled from the heart of Jesus can wash away “all manner of sin and blasphemy.” Whoever believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Refined minds thought just now that I was using a very ugly expression when I spoke of rescuing rottenness from the dunghill, but the expression is all too clean when compared with *sin*—for all the filth and loathsomeness that ever offended eye and nostril are sweetness itself compared with sin!

The foulest and most detestable thing in the whole universe is sin. It is this which keeps the fire of Hell burning as God’s great sanitary necessity. There cannot but be a constant Tophet where there is such constant sin.

We read that in certain French towns they kindled great public fires because of the cholera. The cholera? What is it compared with sin? Well may God cause the fiery flames of eternal torment to go up forever and ever, for it is only by such terrific punishment that the plague of sin can be at all restrained within bounds. Sin is a horrible evil, a deadly poison!

And yet, Sinner, though you are as full of it as an egg is full of meat and as reeking with it as the foulest piece of noxious matter can be reeking with foul smell—yet the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus can lift you from this utmost degradation and make you shine as a star in His kingdom at the last!

Once more, the dunghill may be spiritually considered as the place of condemnation. You look at a certain article of food, for instance, and the economical housewife does not wish to waste anything. Well, if it may not serve for food, may it not be useful for something else? At last, when she sees that it is of no service, the sentence of condemnation is, "Let it be cast on the dunghill." Nebuchadnezzar, in his memorable proclamation concerning the Lord Jehovah, said that whoever should speak a word against Him should be cut in pieces and his house should be made a dunghill.

There is a connection, then, between the dunghill and condemnation. Now there may be in this audience, this morning, a man who feels himself to be under sentence of condemnation. You have so often had pricks of conscience—so frequently have been taught better—and yet you have sinned against light and knowledge, and now you consider yourself to have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. My voice, this morning, very likely grates on your ears. Though it is meant to convey to you the most gladsome tidings that ever silver trumpet rung out to bankrupt sinner on the day of Jubilee, yet it sounds to you like the voice which proclaims your doom.

Well, poor Sinner, if you are, in yourself, condemned and a hoarse voice has said, "To the dunghill with him! To the flames of Hell with him!" yet I come to you in Jehovah's name and bid you hear this Word of God this morning—"He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes." What do you say to this? What if God should forgive you this morning? What if He should make you His child? What if He should give you a crown of life that fades not away? "Oh," you say, "if He would, I would love and bless Him." Sinner, He will do it if you can now believe in the Lord Jesus whose blood cleanses us from all sin!

By the death of Jesus I beseech you trust in the atoning sacrifice of Calvary and you shall live to praise His redeeming love. I must not, however, leave out a thought which just occurred to me. A thing which lies upon the dunghill is in contact with disgusting associates. And, therefore, the text may represent those who have up to now lived in the midst of evil associations. When these doors are opened, there often come in here, out of curiosity, persons who are not regular attendants at places of worship—I must say the most hopeful class that I ever address—for some of you who have heard my voice and the voices of other ministers so long are almost hopeless!

We might as well give you up for we have pleaded with you so frequently and put the Truth of God before you so constantly, that surely if it ever was to have been blessed to you it would have been blessed

already! But those to whom the Gospel is a *new* thing occasionally drop in and some of these come from the very worst society, fresh from the theater, the gin palace and worse places still—the name of Jesus scarcely known except as it may be used in blasphemy! And the person never thought of God Most High except as He is invoked in a curse.

Friend, we are glad that you are here! You have been on the dunghill. You are on the dunghill now! You have been living with publicans and harlots. You have kept bad company. You have not been nurtured among the choice and the elite of mankind! On the contrary, you have been among the pots and dwelt in the hedges. Now it is such as you are that Jesus Christ bids us gather in. “Go out quickly into the lanes and into the hedges and as many as you find bid to the supper.” And they brought in the blind and the halt and the lame and they took their seats and feasted where others who were first invited refused to come!

I call to you, then, if such there are within my hearing—to you who do not often darken the doors of God’s sanctuary—to you who live among the profane and the debauched—turn to Jesus Christ, I pray you! May the eternal Spirit turn you this day and may you be found among the chosen of God! Alas, and woe is me that I should have to say it, some of you, my Hearers, who have been moral and excellent and have listened to the Word these years, will, I solemnly fear, perish in your sins! For verily, verily, I say unto you, publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of Heaven before some of you who hear the Word but do it not! And listen to it but feel not its power! And know the joyful sound but do not receive it in your hearts!

Thus much, then, as to *where* some of God’s people are found. Let me say that in a certain sense this is where they all are—all on the dunghill of Adam’s Fall—all on the dunghill of self-conceit, self-righteousness and depravity and sin and corruption! But Sovereign Mercy comes to them just as they lie there rotting in heaps of ruin and rescues them by effectual Grace.

II. In the second place, we desire to describe HOW THE LORD RAISES THEM FROM IT. He lifts the needy out of the dunghill. It is a dead lift and none but an eternal arm could do it. It is a feat of Omnipotence to lift a sinner out of his natural degradation—it is all done by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word, filled with the energy of God. The operation is somewhat on this wise. When the Lord begins to deal with the needy sinner, the first lift He gives him raises his desires. The man is not satisfied to be *where* he was, and *what* he was. That dunghill he had not perceived to be so foul as it really is. And the first sign of spiritual life is horror at his lost condition and an anxious desire to escape from it.

Dear Hearer, have you advanced so far as this? Do you feel that all is wrong with you? And do you desire to be saved from your present state? So long as you can say, “It is well with me,” and boast that you are no worse than others, I have no hope for you. God does not lift those up who are lifted up already! But when you begin to feel that your present state is one of degradation and ruin and that you desire to escape from it, then the Lord has put the lever under you! He has begun to raise you up!

The next sign generally is that to such a man sin loses all sweetness. When the Lord begins to work with you, even before you find Christ to the joy of your soul, you will find the joy of sin to have departed. A quickened soul that feels the weight of sin cannot find pleasure in it. Although

without faith in Jesus, the evil of sin cannot clearly and evangelically be perceived, yet the conscience of an awakened sinner, perceiving the terribly defiling character of some sins, compels him to give them up.

The alehouse is abandoned. The scorner's seat is given up. The lusts of the flesh are forsaken—and though this does not lift the sinner from the dunghill, yet it is a sign that the Lord has begun His work of Grace. When sin grows bitter, mercy grows sweet. O my Friend, may the Lord wean you from the world's sweet poisons and bring you to the true pleasures which are hidden in Christ Jesus! It is another blessed sign that the man is being lifted from the dunghill when he begins to feel that his own self-righteousness is no assistance to him—when, having prayed, he looks upon his prayers with repentance—and having gone to God's House, rests not in the outward form.

It is well when a man is cut off entirely from all confidence in himself. He may be on the dunghill still, but I am sure he will not be there long, for when you and yourself have quarreled, God and yourself begin to be at peace. When you can see through that cobweb righteousness of yours, which once seemed to be such a fair silken garment—when you can hate that counterfeit coin which once seemed to glitter and to chink like the true gold—when you are plunged in the ditch and your own clothes abhor you, it is not long before you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation!

Now comes the true lift from off the dunghill. That poor, guilty, lost, worthless one hears of Jesus Christ, that He came into the world to save sinners—that poor soul looks to Him with a look which means, "Lord, You are my last resort! If You do not save me, I will perish. And You must save me altogether, for I cannot help You. I cannot give a thread with which to finish Your perfect righteousness. If it is unfinished, I cannot contribute one farthing to make up my own ransom—if You have not completely ransomed me, then Your redemption is of no service to me. Lord, I am a drowning, sinking man, I grasp You as I sink! O save me for Your mercy's sake!"—

***"All my help on You is stayed.
All my trust from You I bring.
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Your wing."***

When a soul gets there, then it is off the dunghill! The moment a sinner thus trusts Jesus Christ, his sins cease to be! God has drawn His pen through them all. They are gone. He is not guilty in the sight of God any longer—he stands acquitted through the Atonement and justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is a saved man! He may rise from his sackcloth and ashes, and walking at large, may sing of the blood-bought mercy which has set him completely free. Thus by the gift of the only-begotten Son, brought personally to the heart, the Lord raises His elect ones from their ruined state. He makes them see it to be a dunghill—makes them feel that they cannot get off of it themselves—points them to Christ—leads them to trust His precious blood and so they are delivered!

III. The third point is, HOW HE RAISES THEM UP. It is a blessed thing to be saved from degradation, but praise be to Jehovah, He does not stop there! The Lord does nothing by halves. Oh, the lengths and breadths of love! When He has come right down to where we are it is only half His journey—it remains for Him to bear us right up to where He is. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be taken off the dunghill, even if our lot were that of hired servants in our father's house—but this does not satisfy the infinite heart

of Jehovah—He will lift His people up above all commonplace joys—he will take them right up, up, up as on eagles' wings till He sets them in the place of princes and makes them to reign with Him!

Now let us have a few minutes' consideration of how our blessed Lord lifts His people up from the common level of humanity to make them rank with princes. In the first place, they are lifted up by complete Justification. Every Christian here this morning, whatever may have been his past life, is at this instant perfect in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. The spotless righteousness of Christ is imputed to that sinner believing in Him, so that he stands, this morning, "accepted in the Beloved."

Now Beloved, weigh this—turn it over and meditate upon it. Poor, needy, but believing Sinner, you are as accepted before God at this present time through Christ Jesus as if you had never sinned—as if you had done and performed every work of His most righteous Law without the slightest failure! Is not this sitting among princes? Complete Justification furnishes the Believer with a throne as safe as it is lofty—as happy as it is glorious. Ah, you scions of imperial houses, some of you know nothing of this! This is a note which many an emperor could never sing, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?"

Speak of sitting in pavilions of pleasure, or on divans of state with nobles, princes, kings, Caesars—why the figure flags—it falls short of the mark, for the state of the soul completely justified outshines all this as the sun outshines yon glimmering candle! Take the next step. The children of God who have been taken from the dunghill, many of them, enjoy full assurance of faith. They are certain that they are saved. They can say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives." As to whether they are children of God or not, they have no question.

The Infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are born of God. Christ is their elder Brother, God is their Father and they breathe the filial spirit by which they cry, "Abba, Father!" They know their own security. They are convinced that neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord." I ask every one of understanding heart whether this is not sitting among princes?

Beloved, I would not give a farthing for a prince's throne, but I would give all I had a thousand times told, if I might always enjoy full assurance of faith! The full assurance of faith is a better joy than Shushan's palace of lilies, or Solomon's house of the forest of Lebanon could ever yield. A sense of Divine loving-kindness is better than life itself—it is a young Heaven maturing below to be fully developed above. To know that my Beloved is mine and that I am His and that He loved me and gave Himself for me—this is far better than to be heir-apparent to a number of empires!

We go further. The children of God favored by Divine Grace are permitted to have interviews with Jesus Christ! Like Enoch, we walk with God. Just as a child walks with his father, putting his hand into his father's hand, looking up with loving eyes, so the chosen people walk with their Father God most lovingly, confidingly, familiarly, talking to Him, telling Him their griefs and hearing from His gracious mouth the secrets of

His love. They are a happy people, for they have communion with Jesus of a more intimate and tender sort than even angels know.

We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones! We are married unto Him! He has betrothed us unto Himself in faithfulness and in righteousness. We are dearer to Himself than His own flesh and blood—that He gave to die—and none of us shall ever perish! Neither shall any take us out of His hand. Now, is not this sitting among princes? Princes? Princes? We look *down* upon your pomp from the eminence on which Grace has placed us! Wear your crowns! Put on your purple! Deck yourselves in all your regal pomp! But when our souls can sit with Jesus and reign as kings and priests with Him, your splendors are not worth a thought!

Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in any imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the crowns of earth. Nor is this all—the elect of God, in addition to receiving complete justification, full assurance and communion with Christ—are favored with the Holy Spirit's sanctification. God the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian. However humble he may be, he is a walking temple in which resides Deity. God the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we in Him. And that Spirit sanctifies the daily actions of the Christian, so that he does everything as unto God.

If he lives, it is to Christ, and if he dies, it is gain. O Beloved, it is, indeed, to sit among princes when you feel the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. O my God, if I might always feel Your Spirit overcoming my corruption and constraining my soul to holiness, I would not so much as think of a prince in comparison with my own joy! O my dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, I am sure you can bear witness that when you fall into sin at any time, it brings you very low. You smell that vile dunghill once again and are ready to die under its fearful noisomeness! But when the Holy Spirit enables you to overcome sin and to live as Christ lived, you feel that you have a royal standing and a more than imperial privilege in being sanctified in Christ Jesus!

Moreover, many saints receive, in addition to sanctification, the blessing of usefulness. And, mark the word, every useful man is of princely rank. I am not exaggerating now, but speaking the sober truth. He is the true prince among men who blesses his fellows. To be able to drop pearls from your lips might make you a prince in a fairy tale, but when those lips bless the souls of men by leading them to Jesus—this is to be a prince in very deed! To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to reclaim the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to cheer the desponding, to inspire the wavering and to conduct saints up to God's right hand—my Brethren—this is to wear a luster which stars and ribbons, orders and distinctions never could confer!

This is the privilege of each one of you, according as the Spirit of God has given you the measure of faith. You, who once did mischief, now subserve the interest of virtue. You, who rendered up your members servants unto unrighteousness, now make those same members servants of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. No courts of sovereigns can bestow such true honors as dwell in holiness, charity and zeal. And once more, God lifts His people up in another sense—while He gives them sanctification and usefulness, He also anoints them with joy. Oh, the joy of being a Christian!

I know the world's idea is that we are a miserable people. If you read the pages of history, the writers speak of the gay cavaliers as being men of high spirit and overflowing joy—but the poor Puritans—what a wretched set they were! They blasphemed Christmas day, abhorred games and sports, and going about the world looking so terribly miserable that it were a pity they should go to Hell, for they had enough of torment here!

Now this talk is all untrue! Or at best is a gross caricature! Hypocrites, then as now, did wear a long face and a rueful countenance. But there were to be found among the Puritans hosts of men whose holy mirth and joy were not to be equaled. No, not to be *dreamed* of, or understood by those poor grinning fools who fluttered round the heartless rake whose hypocrisies had lifted him to the English throne. The cavaliers' mirth was the crackling of thorns under a pot, but a deep and unquenchable joy dwelt in the breasts of those men—

***“Who trampled on the throng of the haughty and the strong,
Who sat in the high places and slew the saints of God.”***

Oh, far above the laughter of the gallants of the court was the mighty and deep joy of those who rode from the victorious field singing unto the Lord who had made them triumph gloriously!

They called them “Ironsides,” and such they were, but they had hearts of steel, which while they flinched not in the day of danger, forgot not to flash with joy even as steel glitters in the shining of the sun. Believe me, *however, whatever* they were, we who trust in Jesus are the happiest of people—not constitutionally, for some of us have great depression of spirits. Not always circumstantially, for some of us are much tried and are brought to the utter depths of poverty—but inwardly, truly, *really*—our heart's joy, believe us, is not to be excelled. I would not stand here to lie for twice the Indies, but I will speak the truth—if I had to die like a dog tomorrow I would not change places with any man beneath the courts of Heaven for joy and peace of mind!

To be a Christian, and *know* it, to drink deep of that cup, to know your election, to understand your calling—I assure you yields more peace and bliss in ten minutes than will be found in one hundred years in all the courts of sin, though wantonness should run riot and pleasure should know no license—

***“Solid joy and lasting pleasure
None but Zion's children know.”***

So when I read the text that He sets us among princes, I think little of the figure. It halts, it limps—for the Lord puts us far above all earthly princes! And were it not for the next sentence I would even say that the figure broke down altogether. But that clause makes it right—“even the princes *of His people*”—this puts soul and force—these are princes of another blood! These are peers of another realm and among such God sets His people!

IV. To conclude, we have to notice in the last place, WHERE IT IS THAT OUR LORD SETS HIS PEOPLE. “Among princes,” we are told. We have already dwelt upon the same thought, but we will examine another side of it. “Among princes,” is the place of select society. They do not admit everybody into that charmed circle. Among an aristocracy the poor plebeian must not venture. The blue blood runs in rather a narrow channel and it cannot be expected that the common crimson should be allowed to invigorate the languid current.

The true Christian lives in very select society. Listen! “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Speak of select society—there is none like this! We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood. “We are not come unto Mount Sinai, but we are come unto the blood of sprinkling and unto the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven.” *This* is select society.

Next they have courtly audience—the prince may be expected to have admittance to royalty when common people like ourselves must stand afar off. Now the child of God has free access to the royalty of Heaven. Our courtly privileges are of the highest order. Listen! “For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.” “Let us come boldly,” says the Apostle, “to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.” We have courtly audience and peculiarly select society.

Next to this it is supposed that among princes there is abundant wealth, but what is the wealth of princes compared with the riches of Believers? For “all things are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Among princes, again, there dwells peculiar power. A prince has influence. He wields a scepter in his own domain—and, “He has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign forever and ever.”

We are not kings of England, Scotland and Ireland, and yet we have a triple dominion! We reign over spirit, soul and body! We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity! We reign in this world and we shall reign in the world that is yet to come—for we shall reign forever and ever! Princes, again, have special honor. Everyone in the crowd desires to gaze upon a prince and would be delighted to do him service. Let him have the first position in the empire—he is a prince of the blood and is to be had in esteem and respect.

Beloved, hear His Word—“He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” so that we share the honor of Christ as we share His Cross. Paul was taken from the dunghill of persecution, but he is not second to any in Glory! And you, though you may have been the chief of sinners, shall fare none the worse when He comes in His kingdom! But as He owned you on earth and redeemed you with His precious blood, so will He own you in the future state and make you sit with Him and reign among princes, world without end. May the Lord bless these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 113.**

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THE HAPPY DUTY OF DAILY PRAISE

NO. 1902

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1886,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever.
 Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.”
 Psalm 114:1, 2.*

IF I were to put to you the question, “Do you pray?” the answer would be very quickly given by every Christian person, “Of course I do.” Suppose I then added, “And do you pray every day?” the prompt reply would be, “Yes, many times in the day. I could not live without prayer.” This is no more than I expect and I will not ask the question. But let me change the enquiry and ask, “Do you bless God every day? Is *praise* as certain and constant a practice with you as prayer?” I am not sure that the answer would be quite so certain, so general, or so prompt. You would have to stop a little while before you gave the reply and, I fear in some cases, when the reply did come, it would be, “I am afraid I have been negligent in praise.” Well, then, dear Friend, have you not been wrong? Should we omit praise any more than we omit prayer? And should not praise come daily and as many times in the day as prayer does? It strikes me that to fail in praise is as unjustifiable as to fail in prayer! I shall leave it with your own heart and conscience, when you have asked and answered the question, to see to it in the future that far more of the sweet frankincense of praise is mingled with your daily oblation of devotion.

Praise is certainly not at all so common in family prayer as other forms of worship. We cannot, all of us, praise God in the family by joining in song, because we are not all able to raise a tune, but it would be well if we could. I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, “They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, read and sing do best of all.” There is a completeness in that kind of family worship which is much to be desired.

Whether in the family or not, yet personally and privately, let us endeavor to be filled with God’s praise and with His honor all the day. Be this our resolve—“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.”

Brethren, praise cannot be a second-class business, for it is evidently due to God and that in a very high degree. A sense of justice ought to make us praise the Lord. It is the least we can do and, in some senses, it is the most that we can do in return for the multiplied benefits which He bestows upon us. What? No harvest of praise for Him who has sent the

sunshine of His love and the rain of His Grace upon us? What? No revenue of praise for Him who is our gracious Lord and King! He does not exact from us any servile labor, but simply says, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me."

Praise is good, pleasant and delightful. Let us rank it among those debts which we would not wish to forget, but are eager to pay at once. Praise is an act which is pre-eminently characteristic of the true child of God. The man who does but pretend to piety will fast twice in the week and stand in the temple and offer something like prayer. But to praise God with all the heart, this is the mark of true adoption! This is the sign and token of a heart received by Divine Grace! We lack one of the most sure evidences of pure love to God if we live without presenting praise to His ever-blessed name.

Praising God is singularly beneficial to ourselves. If we had more of it, we should be greatly blessed. What could lift us so much above the trials of life; what could help us to bear the burden and heat of the day so well as songs of praise unto the Most High? The soldier marches without weariness when the band is playing uplifting strains; the sailor, as he pulls the rope or lifts the anchor, utters a cheery cry to aid his toil—let us try the animating power of hymns of praise! Nothing would oil the wheels of the chariot of life so well as more of the praising of God. Praise would end murmuring and nurse contentment. If our mouths were filled with the praises of God, there would be no room for grumbling. Praise would throw a halo of glory around the head of toil and thought! In its sunlight, the most common duties of life would be transfigured! Sanctified by prayer and praise, each duty would be raised into a hallowed worship akin to that of Heaven! It would make us more happy, more holy and more heavenly, if we would say, "I will extol You, my God, O King."

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, unless we praise God *here*, are we preparing for our eternal Home? There, *all* is praise! How can we hope to enter there if we are strangers to that exercise? This life is a preparatory school and in it we are preparing for the high engagements of the perfected. Are you not eager to rehearse the everlasting hallelujahs?—

***"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise.
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!"***

Learn the essential elements of heavenly praise by the practice of joyful thanksgiving, adoring reverence and wondering love, so that, when you step into Heaven, you may take your place among the singers and say, "I have been practicing these songs for years. I have praised God while I was in a world of sin and suffering and when I was weighed down by a feeble body. And now that I am set free from earth and sin and the bondage of the flesh, I take up the same strain to sing more sweetly to the same Lord and God!"

I wish I knew how to speak so as to stir up every child of God to praise. As for you that are not His children—oh, that you were! You must be born again! You cannot praise God aright till you are. "Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take

My Covenant in your mouth?” You can offer Him no real praise while your hearts are at enmity to Him. Be you reconciled to God by the death of His Son and then you will praise Him! Let no one that has tasted that the Lord is gracious; let no one that has ever been delivered from sin by the Atonement of Christ ever fail to pay unto the Lord his daily tribute of thanksgiving! To help us in this joyful duty of praise we will turn to our text and keep to it. May the Holy Spirit instruct us by it!

I. In our text we have, first of all, THE RESOLVE OF PERSONAL LOYALTY—“I will extol You, my God, O King.” David personally comes before his God and King and utters this deliberate resolution that he will praise the Divine Majesty forever.

Note here, first, that *he pays homage to God as his King*. There is no praising God aright if we do not see Him upon the Throne, reigning with unquestioned sway. Disobedient subjects cannot praise their sovereign. You must take up the Lord’s yoke—it is easy and His burden is light. You must come and touch His silver scepter and receive His mercy—and acknowledge Him to be your rightful Monarch, Lawgiver and Ruler. Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign—where God is truly known, He is always known as supreme. Over the united kingdom of our body, soul and spirit the Lord must reign with undisputed authority. What a joy it is to have such a King! “O King,” says David, and it seems to have been a sweet morsel in his mouth. He was, himself, a king after the earthly fashion, but to him, God, alone, was King. Our King is no tyrant, no maker of cruel laws. He demands no crushing tribute or forced service! His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. His Laws are just and good and in the keeping of them there is great reward. Let others exult that they are their own masters—our joy is that God is our King! Let others yield to this or that passion, or desire—as for us, we find our freedom in complete subjection to our heavenly King! Let us, then, praise God by loyally accepting Him as our King. Let us repeat with exultation the hymn we just now sang—

**“Crown Him, crown Him,
King of kings, and Lord of lords.”**

Let us not be satisfied that He should reign over us, alone, but let us long that the whole earth should be filled with His Glory. Be this our daily prayer—“Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven.” Let this be our constant ascription of praise—“For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.”

Note that the Psalmist, also, in this first sentence, *praises the Lord by a present personal appropriation of God to himself by faith*—“I will extol You, my God.” That word, “my,” is a drop of honey. No, it is like Jonathan’s woods, full of honey—it seems to drip from every bough and he that comes into it stands knee-deep in sweetness! “My God” is as high a note as an angel can reach! What is another man’s god to me? He must be *my* God or I shall not extol Him! Say, dear Heart, have you ever taken God to be your God? Can you say with David in another place, “This God is our God forever and ever. He shall be our guide, even unto death”? Blessed was Thomas when he bowed down and put his finger into the print of his

Master's wounds and cried, "My Lord and my God!" That double-handed grip of appropriation marked the death of his painful unbelief! Can you say, "Jehovah is my God?" To us there are Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but these are *one God*, and this one God is our own God! Let others worship whom they will, this God our soul adores and loves—yes, claims to be her personal possession! O Beloved, if you can say, "My God," you will be bound to exalt Him! If He has given Himself to you so that you can say, "My Beloved is mine," you will give yourself to Him and you will add, "And I am His." Those two sentences, like two silken covers of a book, shut in, within them, the full score of the music of Heaven!

Observe that David is *firmly resolved to praise God*. My text has four, "I wills," in it. Frequently it is foolish for us poor mortals to say, "I will," because our will is so feeble and fickle. But when we resolve upon the praise of God, we may say, "I will," and, "I will," and, "I will," and, "I will," till we make a solid square of determinations! Let me tell you, you *will* have need to say, "I will," a great many times, for many obstacles will hinder your resolve. There will come depression of spirit and then you must say, "I will extol You, my God, O King." Poverty, sickness, losses and crosses may assail you—and then you must say, "I will praise Your name forever and ever." The devil will come and tell you that you have no interest in Christ, but you must say, "Every day will I bless You." Death will come and, perhaps, you will be under the fear of it—then it will be incumbent upon you to cry, "And I will praise Your name forever and ever!"—

**"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Gladly would stop the joyful song!
Sing and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."**

A bold man took this motto—"While I live, I'll crow." But our motto is, "While I live, I'll praise." An old motto was, "Dum spiro spero," but the saint improves upon it, and cries, "Dum expiro spero." Not only while I live, I will hope, but when I die, I will hope! And he even gets beyond all that, and determines—"Whether I live or die I will praise my God!" "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

While David is thus resolute, I want you to notice that *the resolution is strictly personal*. He says, "I will extol You." Whatever others do, my own mind is made up. David was very glad when others praised God. He delighted to join with the great congregation that kept Holy Day, but still, he was attentive to his own heart and his own praise. There is no selfishness in looking well to your own personal state and condition before the Lord. He cannot be called a selfish citizen who is very careful to render his own personal suit and service to his king. A company of persons praising God would be nothing unless each individual was sincere and earnest in the worship. The praise of the great congregation is precious in proportion as each individual, with all his heart, is saying, "I will extol You, my God, O King." Come, my Soul, I will not sit silent because so many others are singing! However many songsters there may be, *they* cannot sing for *me*—they cannot pay *my* private debt of praise—therefore awake, my Heart, and extol your God and King! What if others refuse to sing? What if a shameful silence is observed in reference to the praises of God? Then, my

Heart, I must bestir you all the more to a double diligence that you may, with even greater zeal, extol your God and King! I will sing a solo if I cannot find a choir in which I may take my part! Anyway, my God, I will extol You. At this hour men go off to other lords and they set up this and that new-made god, but as for me, my ear is bored to Jehovah's doorpost. I will not go out from His service forever. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar. Whatever happens, I will extol You, my God, O King!

Now Brothers and Sisters, have you been losing your own personality in the multitude? As members of a large Church, have you thought, "Things will go on very well without me"? Correct that mistake! Each individual trust has its own note to bring to God. Let Him not have to say to you, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of *your* sacrifices." Let us not be slow in His praise, since He has been so swift in His Grace.

Once more upon this head—while David is thus loyally resolving to praise God, you will observe that *he is doing it all the time*. The resolution to praise can only come from the man who is already praising God. When he says, "I will extol You," he is already extolling! We go from praise to praise. The heart resolves and so plants the seed. And then the life is affected and the harvest springs up and ripens. O Brothers and Sisters, do not let us say, "I will extol You tomorrow," or, "I will hope to praise You when I grow old, or when I have less business on hand." No, no! You are this day in debt! This day acknowledge your obligation. We cannot praise God too soon. Our very first breath is a gift from God and it should be spent to the Creator's praise! The early morning hour should be dedicated to praise—do not the birds set us the example? In this matter he gives twice who gives quickly. Let your praise follow quickly upon the benefit you receive, lest even during the delay you be found guilty of ingratitude! As soon as a mercy touches our coasts, we should welcome it with acclamation. Let us copy the little chick, which, as it drinks, lifts up its head, as if to give thanks. Our thanksgiving should echo the voice of Divine loving kindness. Before the Lord our King, let us continually rejoice as we bless Him and speak well of His name.

Thus I have set before you the resolve of a loyal spirit. Are you loyal to your God and King? Then I charge you to glorify His name. Lift up your hearts in His praise and in all manner of ways make His name great. Praise Him with your lips. Praise Him with your lives. Praise Him with your substance. Praise Him with every faculty and capacity. Be inventive in methods of praise—"sing unto the Lord a new song." Bring forth the long-stored and costly alabaster box! Break it and pour the sweet nard upon your Redeemer's head and feet. With penitents and martyrs extol Him! With Prophets and Apostles extol Him! With saints and angels extol Him! Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

II. And now I must conduct you to the second clause of the text which is equally full and instructive. We have in the second part of it THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTELLIGENT APPRECIATION—"And I will bless Your name forever and ever." Blind praise is not fit for the all-seeing God. God

forbade of old the bringing of blind sacrifices to His altar. Our praise ought to have a brain as well as a tongue. We ought to know who the God is whom we praise—therefore David says, “I will bless Your name,” by which he means—Your Character, Your deeds, Your revealed attributes.

First, observe that *he presents the worship of inward admiration*—he knows and, therefore, he blesses the Divine name. What is this act of blessing? Sometimes, “bless,” would appear to be used interchangeably with, “praise,” yet there is a difference, for it is written, “All your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.” You can praise a man and yet you may never bless him. A great artist, for instance—you may praise him, but he may be so ungenerous to you and others that it may never occur to you to *bless* him. Blessing has something in it of love and delight. It is a nearer, dearer, heartier thing than praise. “I will bless Your name,” that is to say—“I will take an intense delight in Your name—I will lovingly rejoice in it.”

The very thought is that God is a source of happiness to our hearts and the more we muse upon His Character, the more joyous we become. The Lord’s name is Love. He is merciful and gracious, tender and pitiful. Moreover, He is a just God and righteous, faithful, true and holy. He is a mighty God and wise and unchanging. He is a prayer-hearing God and He always keeps His promise. We would not have Him other than He is. We have a sweet contentment in God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture. It is not everybody that can say this, for a great many professors nowadays desire a god of their own making and shaping. If they find anything in Scripture concerning God which grates upon their tender susceptibilities, they cannot stand it! The God that casts the wicked from His Presence forever—they cannot believe in *Him*—they therefore make unto themselves a false deity who is indifferent to sin! All that is revealed concerning God is, to me, abundantly satisfactory. If I do not comprehend its full meaning, I bow before its mystery. If I hear anything of my God which does not yield me delight, I feel that in it I must be out of order with Him, either through sin or ignorance, and I say, “What I know not, teach me, O God.” I doubt not that perfectly holy and completely instructed beings are fully content with everything that God does and are ready to praise Him for all. Do not our souls even now bless the Lord our God who chose us, redeemed us and called us by His Grace? Whether we view Him as Maker, Provider, Savior, King, or Father, we find in Him an unfathomable sea of joy! He is God, our exceeding joy. Therefore we sit down in holy quiet and feel our soul saying, “Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!” He is what we would have Him to be. He is better than we could have supposed or imagined! He is the crown of delight, the climax of goodness, the sum of all perfection! As often as we see the light, or feel the sun, we would bless the name of the Lord!

I think when David said, “I will bless Your name,” he meant that *he wished well to the Lord*. To bless a person means to do that person good. By blessing us, what untold benefits the Lord bestows! We cannot bless God in such a sense as that in which *He* blesses us, but we would if we could. If we cannot give anything to God, we can desire that He may be

known, loved and obeyed by all our fellow men. We can wish well to His Kingdom and cause in the world. We can bless Him by blessing His people, by working for the fulfillment of His purposes, by obeying His precepts and by taking delight in His ordinances. We can bless Him by submission to His chastening hand and by gratitude for His daily benefits. Sometimes we say with the Psalmist, "O my Soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Oh, that I could wash Jesus Christ's feet! Is there a Believer here, man or woman, but would aspire to that office? It is not denied you—you can wash His feet by caring for His poor people and relieving their needs. You cannot feast your Redeemer—He is not hungry—but some of His people are! Feed them! He is not thirsty, but some of His disciples are. Give them a cup of cold water in the Master's name and He will accept it as given to Himself. Do you not feel, today, you that love Him, as if you wanted to do something for Him? Arise and do it! And so bless Him. It is one of the instincts of a true Christian to wish to do something for his God and King who has done everything for him. He loved me and gave Himself for me—should I not give myself for Him? Oh, for perfect consecration! Oh, to bless God by laying our all upon His altar and spending our lives in His service!

It seems, then, dear Friends, that David *studied the Character and works of God* and thus praised Him. Knowledge should lead our song. The more we know of God, the more acceptably shall we bless Him through Jesus Christ. I exhort you, therefore, to acquaint yourselves with God! Study His Holy Book. As in a mirror you may here see the Glory of the Lord reflected, especially in the Person of the Lord Jesus who is, in truth, the Word, the very name of the Lord! It would be a pity that we should spoil our praises by ignorance—they that know the name of the Lord will trust Him and will praise Him.

It appears from this text that David *discovered nothing, after a long study of God, which would be an exception to this rule*. He does not say, "I will bless Your name in all but one thing. I have seen some point of terror in what You have revealed of Yourself and, in that thing I cannot bless You." No, without any exception he reverently adores and joyfully blesses God! All his heart is contented with all of God that is revealed. Is it so with us, Beloved? I earnestly hope it is.

I beg you to notice *how intense he grows over this*—"I will bless Your name forever and ever." You have heard the quaint saying of, "forever and a day"? Here you have an advance upon it—it is, "forever," and then another, "forever." He says, "I will bless your name forever." Is not that long enough? No, he adds, "and ever." Are there two forevers, two eternities? Brothers and Sisters, if there were 50 eternities, we would spend them all in blessing the name of the Lord our God! "I will bless Your name forever and ever." It would be absurd to explain this hyperbolic expression. It runs parallel with the words of Addison, when he says—

***"Through all eternity to You
My song of joy I'll raise!
But oh, eternity's too short
To utter all Your praise!"***

Somebody quibbled at that verse the other day. He said, "Eternity cannot be too short." Ah, my dear Friend, you are not a poet, I can see. But if you could get just a spark of poetry into your soul, literalism would vanish! Truly, in poetry and in praise, the letter kills! Language is a poor vehicle of expression when the soul is on fire. Words are good enough things for our cool judgement, but when thoughts are full of praise, they break the back of words! How often have I stood here and felt that if I could throw my tongue away and let my heart speak without these syllables and arbitrary sounds, then I might express myself! David speaks as if he scorned to be limited by language. He must leap over even *time* and *possibility* to get room for his heart! "I will bless Your name forever and ever." How I enjoy these enthusiastic expressions! It shows that when David blessed the Lord, he did it heartily. While he was musing, the fire burned. He felt like dancing before the ark. He was in much the same frame of mind as Dr. Watts when he sang—

***"From You, my God, my joys shall rise
And run eternal rounds,
Beyond the limits of the skies,
And all created bounds."***

III. But time will fail me unless I pass on at once to the third sentence of our text, which is, THE PLEDGE OF DAILY REMEMBRANCE. Upon this I would dwell with very great earnestness. If you forget my discourse, I would like you to remember this part of the text. "Every day will I bless You." I will not do it now and have done with it. I will not take a week of the year in which to praise You and then leave the other 51 weeks silent, but, "every day will I bless You." All the year round will I extol my God. Why should it be so?

The greatness of the gifts we have already received demands it. We can never fully express our gratitude for saving Grace and, therefore, we must keep on at it. A few years ago we were lost and dead, but we were found and made alive again. We must praise God every day for this. We were black as night with sin, but now we are washed whiter than snow—when can we leave off praising our Lord for this? He loved me and gave Himself for me—when can the day come that I shall cease to praise Him for this? Gethsemane and the bloody sweat; Calvary and the precious blood—when shall we ever have done with praising our dear Lord for all He suffered when He bought us with His own heart's blood? No, if it were only the first mercies, the mercy of election, the mercy of redemption, the mercy of effectual calling, the mercy of adoption—we would have had enough to begin with to make us sing unto the Lord every day of our lives! The Light of God which has risen upon us warms all our days with gladness—it shall also light them up with praise!

Today it becomes us to sing of the mercy of yesterday. The waves of love as well as of time have washed us up upon the shore of today and the beach is strewn with love! Here I find myself on a Sunday morning, exulting because another six days work is done and strength has been given for it! Some of us have experienced a world of loving kindness between one Sabbath and another. If we had never had anything else from God but what we have received during the last week, we have overwhelming reason

for extolling Him today! If there is any day in which we would leave off praising God, it must not be the Lord's Day, for—

***“This is the day the Lord has made,
He calls the hours His own.
Let Heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the Throne.”***

Oh, let us magnify the Lord on the day of which it can be said—

***“Today He rose and left the dead
And Satan's empire fell!
Today the saints His triumphs spread,
And all His wonders tell.”***

When we reach tomorrow, shall we not praise God for the blessing of the Sabbath? Surely you cannot have forgotten the Lord so soon as Monday! Before you go out into the world, wash your face in the clear crystal of praise. Bury each yesterday in the fine linen and spices of thankfulness.

Each day has its mercy and should render its praise. When Monday is over, you will have something to praise God for on Tuesday. He that watches for God's hand will never be long without seeing it. If you will only spy out God's mercies with half an eye, you will see them every day of the year. Fresh are the dews of each morning and equally fresh are its blessings. “Fresh trouble,” says one. Praise God for the trouble, for it is a richer form of blessing! “Fresh care,” says one. Cast all your care on Him who cares for you and that act will, in itself, bless you. “Fresh labor,” says another. Yes, but fresh strength, too.

There is never a night but what there comes a day after it—never an affliction without its consolation. Every day you must utter the memory of His great goodness.

If we cannot praise God on any one day for what we have had that day, *let us praise Him for tomorrow.* “It is better on before.” Let us learn that quaint verse—

***“And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-lived music set—
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”***

Let us forestall our future and draw upon the promises. What if today I am down? Tomorrow I shall be up! What if to-day I cast ashes on my head? Tomorrow the Lord shall crown me with loving kindness! What if today my pains trouble me, they will soon be gone! It will be all the same a hundred years from now, at any rate, and so let me praise God for what is within measurable distance. In a few years I shall be with the angels and be with my Lord, Himself. Blessed be His name! Begin to enjoy your Heaven now! What says the Apostle? “For our citizenship is in Heaven”—not is *to be*, but is! We belong to Heaven, now, our names are enrolled among its citizens and the privileges of the New Jerusalem belong to us at this present moment. Christ is ours and God is ours!—

***“This world is ours and worlds to come!
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home.”***

Therefore let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad and praise the name of God this very day.

“Every day,” he says, “will I bless You.” *There is a seasonableness about the praising of God every day.* Praise is in season every month. You awoke, the sunlight streamed into the windows and touched your eyelids. And you said, “Bless God. Here is a charming summer’s day.” Birds were singing and flowers were pouring out their perfume. You could not help praising God. But another day it was dark at the time of your rising. You struck a match and lit your candle. A thick fog hung like a blanket over all. If you were a wise man, you said, “Come, I shall not get through the day if I do not make up my mind to praise God. This is the kind of weather in which I must bless God or else go down in despair.” So you woke yourself up and began to adore the Lord. One morning you awoke after a refreshing night’s rest and you praised God for it. But on another occasion you had tossed about through a sleepless night and then you thanked God that the weary night was over. You smile, dear Friends, but there is always some reason for praising God. Certain fruits and meats are in season at special times, but the praise of God is always in season. It is good to praise the Lord in the daytime—how charming is the lark’s song as it carols up to Heaven’s gate! It is good to bless God at night—how delicious are the liquid notes of the nightingale as it thrills the night with its music! I do, therefore, say to you right heartily, “Come, let us together praise the Lord, in all sorts of weather and in all sorts of places.”

Sometimes I have said to myself, “During this last week I have been so full of pain that I am afraid I have forgotten to praise God as much as I should have done and, therefore, I will have a double draught of it now. I will get alone and have a special time of thankful thought. I would make up some of my old arrears and magnify the Lord above measure. I do not like feeling that there can ever be a day in which I have not praised Him. That day would surely be a blank in my life. Surely the sweetest praise that ever ascends to God is that which is poured forth by saints from beds of languishing. Praise in sad times is praise, indeed! When your dog loves you because it is dinnertime, you are not sure of him, but when somebody else tempts him with a bone and he will not leave you, though just now you struck him, then you feel that he is truly attached to you! We may learn from dogs that true affection is not dependent upon what it is just now receiving.

Let us not have a cupboard love for God because of His kind Providence, but let us love Him and praise Him for what He is and what He has done. Let us follow hard after Him when He seems to forsake us—and praise Him when He deals harshly with us—for this is true praise. For my part, though I am not long without affliction, I have no faults to find with my Lord, but I desire to praise Him and praise Him—and only to praise Him! Oh, that I knew how to do it worthily! Here is my resolve—“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You.”

IV. The last sentence of the text sets forth THE HOPE OF ETERNAL ADORATION. David here exclaims, “And I will praise Your name forever and ever.”

I am quite sure when David said that, *he believed that God was unchangeable*, for if God can change, how can I be sure that He will always be worthy of my praise? David knew that what God had been, He was and what He was, then, He would always be. He had not heard the sentence, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” nor yet that other, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed,” but he knew the Truth of God contained in both these texts and, therefore, he said, “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” As long as God Is, He will be worthy to be praised!

Another point is also clear—*David believed in the immortality of the soul*. He says, “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” That Truth was very dimly revealed in the Old Testament, but David knew it right well. He did not expect to sleep in oblivion, but to go on praising and, therefore, he said, “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” No cold hand fell upon him and no killing voice said to him “You shall die and never praise the Lord again.” Oh, no! He looked to live forever and ever—and praise forever and ever! Brothers and Sisters, such is *our* hope and we will never give it up. We feel eternal life within our souls! We challenge the cold hand of death to quench the immortal flame of our love, or to silence the ceaseless song of our praise! The dead cannot praise God and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living! Among the living we are numbered, through the Grace of God, and we know that we shall live because Jesus lives. When death shall come, it shall bring no destruction to us!

Though it shall change the conditions of our existence, it shall not change the object of our existence! Our tongue may be silenced for a little while, but our spirit, unaffected by the disease of the body, shall go on praising God in its own fashion and then, by-and-by, in the resurrection, even this poor tongue shall be revived—and body, soul and spirit shall together praise the God of Resurrection and eternal Glory. “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” We shall never grow weary of this hallowed exercise forever and ever. It will always be new, fresh, delightful! In Heaven they never require any change beyond those blessed variations of song, those new melodies which make up the everlasting harmony. On and on, forever telling the tale which never will be fully told, the saints will praise the name of the Lord forever and ever!

Of course, dear Friends, David’s resolve was that, *as long as he was here below*, he would never cease to praise God, and this is ours, also. Brethren, we may have to leave off some cherished engagements, but this we will never cease from. At a certain period of life a man may have to leave off preaching to a large congregation. Good old John Newton declared that he would never leave off preaching while he had breath in his body—and I admire his holy perseverance—but it was a pity that he did not leave off preaching at St. Mary Woolnoth, for he often wearied the people and forgot the thread of his discourse. He might have done better in another place. Ah, well, we may leave off preaching, but we shall never leave off praising! The day will come when you, my dear Friend, cannot go to Sunday school—I hope you will go as long as you can toddle there—but

it may be you will not be able to interest the children—your memory will begin to fail. But even then you can go on praising the Lord! And you will.

I have known old people almost forget their own names and forget their own children, but I have known them still remember their Lord and Master! I have heard of one who lay dying and his friends tried to make him remember certain things, but he shook his head. At last one said, “Do you remember the Lord Jesus?” Then the mind came into full play, the eyes brightened and the old man eloquently praised his Savior! Our last gasp shall be given to the praise of the Lord!

When once we have passed through the iron gate and forded the dividing river, then we will begin to praise God in a manner more satisfactory than we can reach at present. After a nobler sort we will sing and adore. What soaring we will attempt upon the eagle wings of love! What plunges we will take into the crystal stream of praise! I think, for a while, when we first behold the Throne of God, we shall do no more than cast our crowns at the feet of Him that loved us and then bow down under a weight of speechless praise. We shall be overwhelmed with wonder and thankfulness! When we rise to our feet, again, we will join in the strain of our Brothers and Sisters redeemed by blood and only drop out of the song when again we feel overpowered with joyful adoration and are constrained, again, in holy silence to shrink to nothing before the infinite, unchanging God of Love.

Oh, to be there! To be there soon! We may be much nearer than we think. I cannot tell what I shall do, but I know this, I want no other Heaven than to praise God perfectly and eternally! Is it not so with you? A heart full of praise is Heaven in the bud! Perfect praise is Heaven full-blown. Let us close this discourse by asking Grace from God that, if we have been deficient in praise, we may now mend our ways and put on the garments of holy adoration. This day and onward, may our watchword be, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!”

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

“NON NOBIS, DOMINE!”

NO. 2784

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 22, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 16, 1878.**

*“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory,
for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake.”
Psalm 115:1.*

EVERY careful reader can see the connection between this 115th Psalm and the one which precedes it. In the 114th Psalm we see the gracious and grateful Jews sitting around the Passover table, having eaten of the lamb and singing of the miracles of Jehovah at the Red Sea and the Jordan. It must have been a very jubilant song that they sang! I think I can hear them singing, “What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back?” When that joyful hymn was finished and the cup of wine was passed around the table, they struck another note. They remembered their sad condition, as they heard the heathen say, “Where is now their God?” They remembered that perhaps for many a year there had been no miracle, no Prophet, no open vision—and then they began to chant a prayer that God would appear—not for their sakes, but for His own name’s sake, that the ancient Glory which He won for Himself at the Red Sea and the Jordan might not be lost—and that the heathen might no longer be able to tauntingly say, “Where is now their God?” because the wonders worked by God would cause them to tremble before Him.

Remember that when the Israelites came up out of Egypt and were marching through the wilderness, the Lord put “the dread of them and the fear of them” upon all the nations in their track, so that they were half defeated through the terror that had made them almost like dead men in the Presence of the mighty God of Israel! So, the Psalmist’s prayer here is, practically, “Lord, do the same again—not for our sakes, but for Your own name’s sake—that once again the heathen all around may know that there is a God in the midst of Israel—and that they may be caused again to tremble as they did before—and no longer blaspheme or defy the God of Jacob.” These observations will, I hope, show you how suitably this Psalm would be chanted while still the Paschal Supper was proceeding.

Now let us take the words of our text by themselves and examine them under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are, I think, instructive to us in five ways.”

I. First, they furnish us with A POWERFUL PLEA IN PRAYER—“Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake.”

There are time when *this is the only plea that God’s people can use*. There are other occasions when we can plead with God to bless us for this reason or for that, but, sometimes, there come dark experiences when there seems to be no reason that can suggest itself to us why God should give us deliverance, or vouchsafe us a blessing except this one—that He would be pleased to do it in order to glorify His own name. Moses is an example of how this plea prevails with the Lord. When he was on the mount with God and Jehovah threatened to destroy the idolatrous Israelites, Moses pleaded, “Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own Self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.”

Joshua also used the same plea when he said to the Lord, after Israel’s defeat at Ai, “What will You do unto Your great name?” He could not say, “Lord, hear me for Israel’s sake,” for they were utterly unworthy. He did not dare to say, “Deliver us for my sake”—he had not conceit or self-righteousness enough to present such a plea as that! He could not even say, “Hear us for Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob’s sake,” for the people had broken the Covenant which God had made with their fathers. So he pleaded with the Lord, “Think of Your own honor. Think of Your great name. Think of Your repute among the heathen.” And thus he prevailed. It is noteworthy that that awful attribute of holy jealousy, which, under some aspects, is like a terrible flame, is the very one which helps us when everything else fails. Jehovah is very jealous of His own honor and therefore it is that when the heathens say, “Where is now their God?” He answers their taunt by ceasing to chasten His people—not for their sakes, but for His own mercy and truth’s sake, that the heathen may not think Him unmerciful to His people, nor be able to accuse Him of being unfaithful to His Covenant.

Brothers and Sisters, in all your times of distress, you will do well to urge this plea with the Lord. Possibly you are pleading for a certain class of men or women who have grossly sinned. It may be that you have on your heart the case of one person who has gone to great lengths of iniquity. You can always plead, “Lord, save that sinful soul to make Your Grace the more illustrious. Do it that others who have witnessed his sin may admire Your wonderful compassion—that his relatives and friends who have heard his blasphemies and been horrified by them, may see what You can do when You bare Your almighty arm and magnify Your deeds of Grace.”

You may be emboldened to urge that plea, *notwithstanding the villainess of the person for whom you plead*. In fact, the sinfulness of the sinner may even be your plea that God’s mercy and loving kindness may be seen the more resplendently by all who know of the sinful soul’s guilt. And if your prayer should not be on behalf of some gross transgressor, but on behalf of a fallen church—suppose it should be for a church that has lost its first love, a church that has turned aside from the Truth of God, a church which has ceased to be zealous, a church like that of Laodicea, fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of Christ—you may still come before Him and say, “Lord, revive it—not for that church’s sake, for You might well make it a desolation, like Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant was at the first—but do it for Your name’s sake that all may see that You can trim the lamp when it already smokes and gives forth a nauseous stench—that You can take the fig tree before it is utterly barren, and dig about it, and dung it, and make it bring forth fruit, O You wondrous Vinedresser of the vineyard!” I leave that thought with you, suggesting that in your solitude when you withdraw to pray—I mean you who, like Jacob, have your Jabboks and your Peniels—you will find that this is one of the mightiest weapons that you can wield in that secret midnight conflict. There is a sacred art of gripping even the Angel of the Covenant in that time of mysterious wrestling. Say, “For Christ’s sake, for God’s name’s sake, for His love’s sake, for the Gospel’s sake”—for all these are mightily prevalent pleas with the Most High.

Let me just whisper a word in the ear of anyone who has scarcely learned to pray. Poor Sinner—

“Laden with guilt and full of fears”—

you say, “How can I plead with God for mercy? I have rejected it for years. I have often been rebuked and I have hardened my neck. I fear I have no plea with which to urge my suit in craving God’s mercy.” Here is one for you to use—say to Him, “For Your mercy and Your love’s sake, have pity upon me, the least deserving of all Your creatures, for, surely, if You will but save me, it will be an eternal wonder to men and to angels! If you will save me, then I will sing—

**“All Your mercy’s depths I prove,
All its heights are seen in me!”**

I remember one who said, “Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ will but pardon me, He shall never hear the last of it!” And this is what all poor guilty souls may truly say, “Should there be mercy for such a sinner as I am—so old a sinner—so daring a sinner—so God-provoking a sinner? God’s Grace blot out *my* sin? Will the Lord put me into His family and call me His child? Then, tell it in the deeps of Hell and let all the devils know what great things God can do! And tell it in the heights of Heaven and let all the principalities and powers there learn new music as they sing of the greatness of the loving kindness of the Lord who can pardon and save the very chief of sinners!” I suggest that every seeking sinner here should plead the name of God and the Glory of Christ—plead that He will be honored, that men will magnify His great name and the preciousness of His atoning blood and the power of His Gospel if it shall save you. This is a good plea—take care that you use it.

II. Now, secondly, my text appears to me to embody THE TRUE SPIRIT OF PIETY. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake.” That is to say, true religion does not seek its own honor.

Self-seeking is the exact opposite of the spirit of a true Christian. He would rather strip himself and say, “Not unto me, but unto You, O Lord, be all honor and glory!” He seeks no crown to put upon his own head. Twice he refused to wear it. Even if the world would press it upon him, he says, “Not unto me; not unto me.” He does not wish for honor. He has done with self-seeking. His one great objective, now, is to glorify God—“Unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake.” Do you not think, dear Friends, that if this is the true spirit of religion, we shall very often have to condemn ourselves for being so faulty in it?

For instance, suppose, *in preaching the Gospel*, a man has, even as a small part of his motive, that he may be esteemed an eloquent person, or that he may have influence over other men’s minds—I will not suppose that he has so sordid a motive as worldly gain—but I need not “suppose” what I have suggested, for it is lamentably true that this mixture of motives may steal over the preacher’s soul. Ah, but we must fight against this evil with all our might! Somebody once told Master John Bunyan that he had preached a delightful sermon. “You are too late,” said John, “the devil told me that before I left the pulpit.” Satan is very skillful in teaching us how to steal our Master’s Glory. Yet, if ever we speak aright, it is because we are taught of the Spirit and not because of our own wisdom. Even when we have had the undoubted help of the Holy Spirit, we are far too apt to attribute at least some little power to ourselves. But a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ loathes himself when he finds that this evil habit has fastened itself upon him—and he cries, “No, Lord! Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name give all the glory and praise.” We are to preach so as to glorify God, not to glorify ourselves—and the man who occupies the pulpit merely that he may manifest his own cleverness ought to be hurled from it, forthwith, for he has no right there whatever! “Glory be to God,” should always be the preacher’s motto.

And as it should be so with our preaching, do you not think that the same thing is true concerning *our praying*? Are there no petitions presented at Prayer Meetings in which there is at least some idea that we are saying very proper things, and very pretty things, and that people will think we have a great gift of prayer? Did you ever have such a feeling as that steal over you? Yet, my Brothers, the only prayer of the right kind is that which is offered for the Glory of God. If I turn from your public prayers and look into your private supplications, shall I not see *self* there?

The right spirit in which to do everything is to do *all* to the Glory of God. In *almsgiving*, for instance—a practice which, I trust, will never die out, though there are some who tell us that it is wicked to give to the poor—in almsgiving is it not possible to do it simply to get rid of the applicant, or to satisfy your own conscience, or that you may be thought generous? That is not right! We must give our alms to God alone. Let not our right hand know what our left hand gives, for it is not to man that we

are giving it, but as unto the Lord. Let our offering be dropped into the box and nothing be said about it. Let us get as far as possible from the spoiling glance of the human eye, that the whole act may be as a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, something done for Jesus and for Jesus only, that He may have it and have all the glory of it.

And in *any service that you may render*, do you not know that it must be done simply and only for Christ’s sake if it is to be acceptable to Him? Yet, often, you can scarcely set a man to open pew doors, or to give out a hymn, or to teach a Sunday school class, but “great I” will be sure to lift its head unless it is constantly kept under! Pride grows swiftly, like other weeds. Yet remember that whatever we do in order that we may make ourselves the end and object of it, is spoiled in the doing and is not pleasing to God. Indeed, we are not offering it to God—we are offering it to ourselves! May God grant us Grace that we may never be swayed by the fear of man, or the wish to win human approbation! May we do that which we believe to be right because it is right and because we wish to honor and glorify God in doing it! And when we are rendering any service to the Master, let us never wish for human eyes to see it. That is the true spirit of piety—may God grant that we may have it to the full!

But oftentimes we cherish another kind of spirit. Even the sweet singer among you may be singing a hymn “to the praise and glory of God,” yet be thinking to himself or herself, all the while, “Do not those who are listening to me think that I have a very sweet voice?” Or, possibly, you are in the Sunday school and you feel, “Well, now, I really am one of the most efficient teachers here. They must think a great deal of me, or they ought to, at any rate.” Very often, even in the household, when we have done some little thing, we congratulate ourselves upon it and feel that everybody ought to pat us on the back and burn a little incense in our honor. Ah, dear Friends, if we think anything like this, may the Lord speedily drive it out of us! Such poor creatures as we are, if the Lord would let us be doormats for all His saints to wipe their dirty boots upon, it would be an honor to us. If He only allows us to be hewers of wood or drawers of water, like the Gibeonites of old—and if He accepts what we do, it will be all of His Grace. But for us to set up on our own account, to live to ourselves and to want honor and glory for ourselves—this will never do! We say, of some people, that they are “poor and proud” and, truly, that is what we are when we begin to boast! Lord, take away our pride—our poverty will not so much matter then!

III. I leave that point and come, thirdly, to use the Psalmist’s words in yet another sense. I think that the spirit of my text is A SAFE GUIDE IN THEOLOGY.

When I am going to read the Scriptures, to know what I am to believe, to learn what is to be my creed—even before I open my Bible, it is a good thing to say—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake.” This is, to my mind, a test of what is true and what is false. If you meet with a system of theology which magnifies man, flee from it as far as you can! If the minister, whom you usually hear, tries to make man out to be a very fine

fellow and says a great many things in his praise, you should let him have an empty place where you have been accustomed to sit. This shall be an infallible test to you concerning anyone's ministry. If it is man-praising and honors man, it is not of God! The Negro said of a certain preacher in America, “He do make God so great.” I would that it might be said of all of us that our preaching made God great. That plan of salvation that makes man to be somebody, is a wrong one, depend upon it, for he is a nobody and nothing. That kind of preaching which leaves a great deal for man to do and tells him he can do it—well, Brothers and Sisters—let those people who are so very good, strong and great, go and listen to it! But as for you and me—at any rate, for the most of us—we know that, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, that our strength is perfect weakness and, therefore, the kind of preaching that exalts man does not suit our experience. We do not ask for it, nor do we want it. It will poison those who receive it, for it comes not from God.

This is why I believe in *the Doctrines of Grace*. I believe in Divine Election because somebody must have the supreme will in this matter—and man's will must not occupy the Throne of God—only the will of God. The words of Jehovah stand fast like the great mountains. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The Sovereignty of God is a Doctrine which lifts Him up high and, therefore, I accept it and reverently bow before it. According to some men, it seems that salvation is mainly the work of the creature. Christ died for him, but Christ may have died in vain unless he, by something that he does, makes Christ's death effectual. That kind of teaching I do not believe because it throws the onus of redemption, after all, upon man, and makes him to give efficacy to the redemption of Christ! No, verily, but I believe that those for whom Christ gave Himself as a ransom shall surely be His forever—and that He did really redeem them and needs not that they add anything to make that everlasting ransom price sufficient and available for their deliverance.

There are some who seem to think that the sinner takes certain steps towards God before God comes to him, but it is not so. The sinner is dead and life must come to him from God before he can stir from the grave, or even have a *wish* to stir from it. And there are some who teach that after man is saved, he still needs to keep himself and confirm himself in Grace—in fact that his salvation depends upon himself. But it is not so, for He who has called us and saved us, has given us gifts which He will never take back and, having once loved us, He will love us to the end. We are firmly persuaded that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. From top to bottom, salvation is all of the Grace of God! From its first letter, Alpha, to its last letter, Omega, it is all Grace, Grace, Grace! There is no room for human merit and no room for confidence in self whatever! There is room for good works, yet no room for glorifying in them, “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” You know that jewelers have certain tests by which, if you take them a ring or a coin, they can tell you at once

whether it is gold or silver. Here is a test for you to apply and by it you may tell whether a thing is true or not. Does it glorify God? Then, accept it. If it does not, if it glorifies man—puts human will, human ability, human merit into the place of the mercy and the Grace of God—away with it, for it is not food fit for your souls to feed upon! I wish that all Christians were more concerned for the Glory of God than they are. Surely, then, they would become sounder in doctrine than many are nowadays.

IV. The fourth way of using our text is this. It seems to me to be A PRACTICAL DIRECTION IN LIFE.

You want to know, young man, how to direct your steps aright, and how to cleanse your way. This text will help you, dear Brother, *in the selection of your sphere of service*. You will always be safe in doing that which is not for your own glory, but which is distinctly for the Glory of God. Have you two situations offered to you? Are they equally remunerative, or equally difficult? Select that one in which you may hope to glorify God more than you could in the other! This is the voice behind you which says, “This is the way; walk you in it.” Are you choosing a profession, or seeking an honorable career in life? Then, I pray you, let this text guide you. Adoniram Judson, full of ambition, seeking a great name, met with this text and rebelled against it. But he says that all his bright visions for the future seemed to vanish as these words sounded in his soul, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.” Are you going to live, young man, to get glory to yourself? It will not do! It will not do. If the Lord loves you, He will not let it be so. “But what, then, am I to do?” you ask. Why, labor so to live, in any calling, that you may bring glory to God in it!

Sometimes my text will guide you as to which you should choose out of *two courses of action that lie before you*. Did I understand that you have had a little tiff with your brother or sister, and the question with you is, “What shall I do in this dispute?” Something says, “Go and make up and say that you were wrong.” But something else says, “Oh, but you know that we must not always be giving way and yielding because some people, if you give them an inch, will take a mile!” So, possibly, you do not know which course to take. Which is the one you do not wish to follow? Why, you do not like to humble yourself! Then *that* is the plan you should adopt! What flesh revolts against, your spirit should choose. Say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory. I will do that which will most honor my Lord and Master—and not that which would best please myself.”

Or it may be that there are two ways in which you might serve God and you are rather perplexed about which one to choose. One of them would give you a good share of honor. The other would involve more work and you would not be likely to get much credit out of it. You really do not know which of the two you ought to choose. I suggest, Brother, that the probabilities are that that is the right one for you from which you will get the least credit. At any rate, I am afraid that if you hold the scales impartially, as you think, your hand will incline just a little to give the preponderance to that which would bring you into fame. Do not do it—school

yourself so that you can say, “For my Master’s sake alone will I choose that which shall be my course, and I will follow where He leads the way, seeking to give Him all the glory.” That is a direction post which, I think, will guide you out of many of the perplexities of life.

V. Now, fifthly, and lastly, my text seems to contain within itself THE ACCEPTABLE SPIRIT IN WHICH TO REVIEW THE PAST.

Brothers and Sisters, *this is the spirit in which to live*. Has God blessed us? Do we look back upon honorable and useful lives? Has our Sunday school class brought in souls for Christ? Have we been privileged to preach the Gospel and has the Lord given us converts? Then let us be sure to stick to the text—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.” Now, young man, if you are beginning to serve the Savior and He has given you success, your conduct in this first time of testing may decide the whole of your future life. “As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” There are very few men who can bear success—none can do so unless great Grace is given to them! And if, after a little success, you begin to say, “There now, I am somebody. Did I not do that well? These poor old fogies do not know how to do it—I will teach them”—you will have to go into the back rank, Brother, you are not yet able to endure success! It is clear that you cannot stand praise. But if, when God gives you blessing, you give Him every atom of the glory and clear yourself of everything like boasting, then the Lord will continue to bless you because it will be safe for Him to do so. He is not going to put His treasure, let me tell you, into the leaky vessels of self-exaltation. No, no—He wants good sea-going ships which bear at the masthead the flag on which is inscribed, “Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.”

Yes, and when the time comes for us to die, *this is the spirit in which to die, for it is the beginning of Heaven*. What are they doing in Heaven? If we could look in there, what would we see? There are crowns there, laid up for those that fight the good fight and finish their course—but do you see what the victors are doing with their crowns? They will not wear them! No, not they—they cast them down at Christ’s feet, crying, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.” Brother, Sister—living, dying—let this be your continual cry! If the Lord favors you, honors you, blesses you, always say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, be the glory.” Are you prosperous in business? Do not be proud of your riches. Are you getting on in education? Do not boast of what you know, for there is a great deal more that you do not know. Has God given you a few converts? Do not begin thinking that you are a mighty soul-winner, for there are many more yet to be won. The way up is downward! Your Master descended that He might afterwards ascend and fill all things—and your way of ascent must be downward, downward, downward—so that you become less and less, and less. Say over and over again, “Not unto us, not unto us,” till you utterly loathe the idea of human glory and let the Lord have all the praise!

As a Church we can look back upon many years of spiritual prosperity, but we must still sing, “*Non nobis, non nobis, non nobis, Domine.*” We

can bless and magnify the Lord for unity, peace, concord and perpetual increase and success in all the works of our hands. Glory be unto the Lord for it! But, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire, so would we shake off everything that looks like attributing success to ourselves, even to our prayers, our tears, our devotion. Let all the glory be given to God alone, for—

“To Him all the glory belongs.”

Now I finish by saying that perhaps there is someone here who is longing to be saved and the only thing that stands in his way is that he will not come to this point and say, “Not unto us, not unto us.” Ah, my Friend! You want to be a little somebody! You want to do something, or be something. Brother, be nothing, for then shall Christ be your All-in-All! Remember that the end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. When you have done with every other confidence, then you can have confidence in God. The Lord bless you to this end, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen,

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 115.

This is one of the Hallel Psalms which were sung by the Jews at the feast of the Passover. It is highly probable that they were sung by our Lord on that memorable night when He instituted the sacred feast which is to be the perpetual memorial of His death, “until He comes.” They have, however, a message for us who are now gathered together here.

Verses 1, 2. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth’s sake. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?* They talk about what He did when He brought His people up out of Egypt—but they tauntingly ask, “Where is now their God?” You are not dead, O God! Nor are You even waxing weak—will You not let the heathen know that they are resisting You in vain?

3. *But our God is in the heavens.* Where they cannot see Him. But that is just where He should be—in His own royal pavilion, seated upon His own Throne—out of gunshot of all His enemies—where He can survey the whole world, where He is dependent upon none, but absolutely supreme over all—“Our God is in the heavens.”

3. *He has done whatever He has pleased.* What a grand sentence that is! After all, His eternal purposes are continually being fulfilled. His decrees can never fail to be accomplished. He is not a thwarted and defeated God—not One who has to wait upon His creatures to know their pleasure, but, “He has done whatever He has pleased.” How absolute and unlimited those words are! “Whatever He has pleased.” He has willed it and He has done it. As for the heathens who say, “Where is now their God?” we may ask, in holy derision, “Where are *their* gods, and what sort of gods are they?” The Psalmist gives the answer.

4. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.* Mere metal—called precious metal, yet, if made into idols, no better than any other metal. This shows the amount that a man will spend upon making to

himself a god that is no god—but what a fool he is to do so! How can a man call that a “god,” which did not make him, but which he himself made? “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.”

5. *They have mouths, but they speak not.* I want you to notice how the Psalmist seems to have an image before him and he points first to its head and mocks at its different parts. And then he points to its hands and its feet, and he utters scathing sarcasms about the whole person of the idol god.

5-7. *Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.* “They have mouths.” To carry out their idea of God, the makers of idols have given them mouths, but they cannot speak through them—they are dumb. Shall a man believe a dumb thing to be a god? The idols cannot communicate anything to him—it is not possible for them to speak any word of encouragement, or threat, or promise—“They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they.” Some idols had precious gems placed in their heads to appear like eyes, but they cannot see through them, for they are blind. Is it not a contradiction to speak of a blind god? What a blind man must he be who worships a blind god! “Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears.” Some Indian idols certainly have ears, for they have elephants’ ears, monstrous lobes and I think, perhaps, the Psalmist was referring to such ears as those. “They have ears,” he says, “but they hear not.” Then what is the use of their ears? You cannot communicate anything to them, so, why do you utter prayers to a thing that cannot hear what you say? Why do you present praises to images that know not what you are saying? “They have ears, but they hear not.” “Noses have they.” I note the grim sarcasm of this remark of the Psalmist. It reminds me of Elijah’s taunting words to the prophets of Baal, “Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or, perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened.”

The ancient Hebrews were not accustomed to treat idolatry with any kind of respect. They poured all sorts of ridicule upon it. Nowadays we are expected to speak very respectfully concerning all false religions—and some philosophers and divines tell us that there is something good in them all. And they say that modern Catholicism, with its many gods, and its rotten rags and cast clouts, which they call relics, is to be treated very delicately. Perhaps someone asks, “Is it not a religion?” Yes, a religion for fools—but not for those who think! “Noses have they, but they smell not.” Their devotees fill the room with the smoke of incense—they burn sweet spices before the idols but the idols nostrils are not thereby gratified. “They have hands,” says the Psalmist. Their makers give them hands, “but they handle not.” They cannot even receive the offerings presented to them! They cannot stretch out their hands to help their votaries. They are without feeling—so the original tells us, yet they have hands, but they are useless. “Feet have they, but they walk not.” They could not

even mount to their shrines by themselves—they must be lifted there and fastened with nails into their sockets!

One of the saddest sights to my mind—too sad to be ludicrous—is to see a Catholic chapel, as I have often seen it, when the priest is up on the top of the altar, taking down the various images, and dusting the dolls. He, of course, pays them no sort of reverence, but dusts them as your maid does the things in your bedchamber or your drawing room. Yet these are the things that will be worshipped when the bell rings in an hour’s time—these very things that have been dusted and treated in this fashion just like ordinary household ornaments! “Feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” Their priests pretend that by a kind of sacred ventriloquism, they make an articulate muttering—but the Psalmist very properly says, “Neither speak they through their throat.” They cannot whisper, they cannot even mutter! They cannot make even as much noise as a beast or a bird can, for they are lifeless and useless.

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them.* That is to say, they are as stupid and doltish as the idols they make. If they can bow down and worship such things as these, surely the worshippers are fitted for the gods and the gods for the worshippers! Now, Brothers and Sisters, remember that there is a spiritual idolatry that is very much in vogue nowadays. Certain “thinkers”—as they delight to call themselves, whose religion is known as “modern thought”—do not accept the one living and true God as He reveals Himself in the Old and the New Testaments—they make a god out of what they are pleased to call their own consciousness. Truly, their idols are reason and thought—the work of men’s brains. Their god does not hear prayer because it would be absurd, they say, to suppose that prayer can have any effect on Deity. Their god has little or no regard for justice—according to them, you may live as you like, but all will come right at last. They hold out a “larger hope” that the wicked will all be restored to God’s favor. If that should be the case, there would be no justice left upon the face of the earth or in Heaven either.

All this is false! A god that a man can comprehend is not really a god at all. A god that I could create from my own brain must, of necessity, be no god. There can only be the one God who is made known to us by Divine Revelation. God must be infinitely greater than the human mind—He must be beyond our utmost conception—of whom we can know but little compared with what He really is, and that little He must Himself reveal to us. Beware, I pray you, of a god that you make for yourself! Take God as you find Him in this Book and worship Him. Otherwise, you will find that there may be mental idols as well as idols of silver, gold, wood and stone.

“The God of Abraham praise.” “The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,” the God of the whole earth shall He be called. “The God that led His people out of Egypt, the God of Sinai is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” And “this God is our God forever and ev-

er.” Ours is no new religion—it is the religion of Jehovah worship, and to this we will cling, whoever may oppose.

9-11. *O Israel, trust you in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. You that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.* The first of this set of sentences seems to me to be addressed by way of exhortation, but the second is a sort of soliloquy in which the Psalmist, having exhorted others to trust, says, “Well they may trust, for God is both their active and their passive Helper—their help and their shield.” O you who know Him, and love Him, you who are of the house of Israel, however other men may turn aside to idols, keep yourselves steadfast to Jehovah and trust in Him even when He is mocked and ridiculed! O you who are His ministers, the house of Aaron, especially devoted to His service, you know Him best and you should trust Him most! O all of you, proselytes of the gate, who are not of the seed of Israel, still fear Jehovah and trust in Him, for He is your help and your shield!

12. *The LORD has been mindful of us: He will bless, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron.* He had been mindful of Israel and this guaranteed that He would still bless His people. “The times are dark and cloudy,” the Psalmist seems to say, “but by His ancient mercies, our faith is established, and our hope encouraged.”

13. *He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.* Now, little ones, look out for the blessing that is meant for you—“He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” Those who have but little faith, little joy, little Divine Grace, little growth, He will still bless!

14-16. *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the LORD which made Heaven and earth. The Heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth has He given to the children of men.* This may in part account for the fact that He is not known, and not honored among men. He is, Himself, in Heaven and, for a while, He has left men to follow their own devices. Hence it is that they have set up false gods. But, whatever others may do, or not do, let us praise the name of the Lord!

17. *The dead praise not the LORD.* No song comes up from that dark morgue, no praise ascends to God from those that are asleep in the grave. The living among them praise Him in Heaven, but “the dead praise not the Lord.”

17, 18. *Neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD.* “Praise the Lord,” that is, “Hallelujah!” The Psalm could not end with a better note than that. So may all our lives end, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—152, 242, 219.

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

THE LORD BLESSING HIS SAINTS

NO. 1077

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You are blessed of the Lord [or of JEHOVAH]
which made Heaven and earth.”
Psalm 115:15.*

WITHOUT any preface, (for where there is such a feast before us anything which detains us from the table will be out of place), let us come at once to the delightful words of our text and may the Holy Spirit lead us into their inner sense! Here is a blessing spoken of. The Lord that made Heaven and earth has been pleased to bless His people. And this blessing has several peculiarities about it of which we shall speak particularly. It will help us to reach the marrow and fatness of the text if we consider in detail the orthodox number of five points.

First, it is a blessing belonging to a peculiar people. Secondly, it is a blessing coming from a peculiar quarter. Thirdly, a blessing with a peculiar date. Fourthly, a blessing with a peculiar certainty, and fifthly, a blessing involving a peculiar duty. Where there is so much country to survey we must travel swiftly and make but a short stay upon any single thought.

I. First, we have before us A BLESSING BELONGING TO A PECULIAR PEOPLE. “*You are blessed of the Lord.*” “*You.*” Who are these distinguished persons? We would reply, first, that they are a people whom God has blessed because He willed to do so. He has given us no other reason as the first cause of their being blessed but the fact that He is good and that He is Sovereign in the distribution of His Grace. If you search to the very bottom of things you hear a voice proclaiming these words, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

If you go back to the first spring and wellhead of all blessing, you shall *not* find the merits of man as the guardian of the fountain, nor the will of man as the digger of the well—but you shall find there written, “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The will of God, alone, is the source of the rich, eternal, saving blessing which abounds towards the Lord’s elect! If you are blessed of the Lord who made Heaven and earth, you are not a people who claim to have *deserved* His favor—you abhor all boasting in self and you magnify Divine mercy. Free Grace is the Shibboleth of the true saints—those who cannot speak out upon that point may well question their lineage!

If you talk of *deserving*, you belong to another race—you are of the seed of Hagar and belong to Sinai, in Arabia, and therefore you are under the

Law and under the curse. No blessing comes to sinners by the way of the Law, but the very reverse. They only shall participate in this blessing who receive it by promise and by covenant, being the seed of Abraham by promise, even as Isaac was, who was born not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Glory, then, be to God at the very outset of our meditations, that He has been pleased to set apart unto Himself a people, elect according to His own eternal purpose in Christ Jesus! Of them and only of them has He said, "You are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth." This is true doctrine according to the Scriptures and the regenerate feel the truth of it confirmed in their own experience.

Furthermore, they are a people to whom this first will of God to bless them has been certified by countless acts of indisputable love. You who trust that you are blessed of the Lord remember how God's blessing has come to you already. It waited for you before you were born—yes, it waited for you before this *world* was fashioned—from everlasting you were ordained to this benediction! The Covenant of Grace was made on your behalf with all its sacred stipulations and its immutable seals, and immeasurable promises of love. What says the Apostle in the first chapter of Ephesians, verses three and four?—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."

For you, in the fullness of time, Jesus came to tabernacle among men. Who shall doubt that you are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth, since for you the Son of God laid aside His royalties to become the Son of Man? Union with you in your nature was clear evidence that the heart of Christ was with you. Gethsemane and Calvary speak volumes concerning the reality of the blessings which God has given to His chosen, for there they were loved to the death and redeemed by blood. An Incarnate God, a Mediator covered with bloody sweat, a Redeemer wounded and slain—what do you say about this? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift," said the Apostle, and even so say we!

Nor was the gift of Jesus Christ's dying, all, for Jesus' living is still ours! His resurrection teems with the blessings of life and immortality. We are one with Him and He is forever our Head. And in Him, by virtue of His ascension, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and will dwell in us forever. Through His indwelling we have "an unction from the Holy One," through which we "know all things," being taught of God and led into all Truth according to the office of the gracious Comforter.

Meanwhile we are also raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, while all things are ours and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. But, indeed, I am not about to make a catalog of those gifts which have already come to us—time would fail and ability would also be lacking—suffice it to hint at them to you, to remind you that if through Grace you have received Christ, you are, indeed, "blessed

of the Lord that made Heaven and earth,” for 10,000 times 10,000 of the choicest gifts have been the seals and testimonials of your heavenly Father’s affection towards you.

But, Beloved, the peculiar people to whom this blessing comes are, after their conversion, known by their character. In due time Divine Grace works in them *marks* of their election—*signs* of the inward and spiritual Grace which the Holy Spirit has implanted. One sign is mentioned in the connection of our text—“He shall bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” So then, if you *fear* the Lord, “you are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth.” Now, to fear Him is not merely to tremble before Him, fearful lest He should destroy you. Such a fear as that has been found in the hearts of even the vilest of men! We suppose that neither Pharaoh nor Belshazzar was a stranger to *that* feeling.

But *this* is another fear—the humble *worship* of God, the sincere reverence of God—the sacred awe which is found even among the angels of Heaven. This holy fear is the holy admiration which trembles at the infinite majesty of the Most High—not out of slavish dread, but out of a child-like sense of insignificance—this is the sign of inward Grace. “Blessed is the man that fears always.” The fear of grieving One so loving, of doing anything that should dishonor the name of One so infinitely glorious—this is the correct fear. Have you that fear? Have you the fear that makes you confess your past sins—the fear that makes you dread going into such sin again—the fear that makes you mourn because you nailed the Savior to the tree? Do you have the fear that makes you tremble lest you should crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame?

This is not the fear which perfect love casts out, or the fear which has torment, but a sweet fear, as we have said before, which may be felt, even in Heaven itself where they sing, “Who would not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?” It was to such as these that a voice came out of the excellent Glory, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants, and you that fear Him, both small and great” (Rev. 19:5). “Blessed is the man that fears the Lord, that delights greatly in His Commandments.” And it is very sweet to notice that this benediction is common to all God-fearing persons—“both small and great”—and the small are put first lest they should think they are forgotten.

I see many little children here this evening. Oh, if you fear God, if you pray to God, if you trust in Jesus and if your young hearts have been taught to love God, small as you are, you are the blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth! Jesus loves to receive children to His bosom as much, now, as ever He did when He lived upon earth! Come to Him by faith and He will bless you! There are here many young enquirers who have only just begun to pray and who are between hope and fear like newborn children whose lives tremble in the balances. To them it must be cheering to observe that the Lord blesses the “small” as well as the “great.” The Lord regards the contrite in spirit and He hears the groans of broken hearts—His delight is to bless the lowly in mind. Though Grace is small in

you, yet He will not quench the smoking flax. “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

And you poor in this world, you humble, you illiterate, you obscure, you sickly ones—you with little talent and slender opportunity for serving God—I pray you rejoice in the assurance of the text, for you are the blessed of the Lord if you walk before Him in holy fear! The eye that looks to God and trusts Him even when it cannot see Him, is a blessed eye. The heart that pines after God even when it cannot rejoice in Him is a blessed heart. And the hand that stretches itself out after God, saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him,” is still a blessed hand, even though for the moment it cannot lay hold upon the Word of promise. If you sigh and cry after God with a true heart, looking to Him in His own way, through Christ His Son, you are numbered with those that fear the Lord, who are blessed of Him whether they are small or great!

Now, all this is very sweet to those who fear God. To them it is peculiarly precious to know that they are blessed of the Lord because they know they deserve to have been cursed. A sense of wrath due to sin imparts a rare sweetness to the Divine favor. Did you ever hear the roar of Sinai’s thunder in your ears? If so, you will never forget it to your dying day! And even in eternity it will impart an additional melody to the music of the Cross. I would to God that some Christians were plowed a little more before they were sown, for I notice that the flimsiness and superficiality of the religion which is common now-a-days arises mainly from the lack of deep self-knowledge and solemn personal conviction that they were themselves utterly lost and ruined.

I fear many have made but poor students in the University of Theology because they were never well-grounded in the School of Repentance. I am astonished that we should live to hear from a Nonconformist pulpit that the Fall of man was a fiction! I boldly say that the religion of the man who could utter such a speech is a fiction beyond all question! What does he know about the things of God when he does not even know the things of man? Let him get back to his God in penitence and ask to be taught aright—for he who knows not the Fall of man does not know the uplifting by free Grace. If he knows not the disease, he is a wretched physician and is sure to mistake the remedy. He who has once known the curse, and smarted under it, loves the wine and oil of the blessing for by it his bleeding wounds were staunch.

The blessing of the Lord is as dew to the mown grass and as showers to the parched soil. It is life itself and the essence of Heaven. Moreover, the child of God knows the sweetness of the blessing because the effect of the curse is, in a measure, still upon him—not the *judicial* curse, for that was laid upon Christ and has gone forever—but the plague of his own heart. The remains of sin within often make him feel that it is a dreadful thing to have been a sinner, even though he is now pardoned and “accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, the Amalekites and Canaanites that still dwell in the land,

what a nuisance they are! What “thorns in our eyes,” as Joshua calls them!

A strong expression indeed! They are worse than a thorn in the flesh. Sin is a thorn in the eye to the Believer. But to know that though I fight daily with corruptions and have to mourn an evil heart of unbelief, yet I am blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth, for all that—is not that bliss? Oh, the sweetness of that word to a heart which has been sorely tempted! Besides, the child of God, in addition to what he feels within, is often called to suffer the curses of the world and the curses of Satan. If you are of the world, the world will love its own—but if you are not of the world, the world will hate you. And though at times, under misrepresentations, slanders and cruel accusations you will feel that you are shamefully entreated, this Truth of God will gloriously sustain you—“You are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth.”

The bitterness of persecution is gone when this is realized. Your faithful soul learns to say, “Let them curse on if they will, let Balak go from mountain to mountain and kill his bullocks and his rams, and call upon Balaam to curse the people of God—yet surely there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel. They may cast their spells and invoke the demons as they will, but if the Lord has blessed the people, blessed they are!” Blessed be God, if we have once received this benediction from our Great Father’s hand, all the maledictions of the Pope or the devil, or all the wicked men on earth shall not frighten our spirit! God’s blessing shall silence all!

Thus have I spoken upon the peculiar people chosen by Sovereign Grace receiving perpetual tokens of love; known by their character; all of them receiving the blessing, whether great or small, and all of them finding that blessing inexpressibly sweet.

II. Now, secondly, this is A BLESSING FROM A PECULIAR QUARTER. “You are blessed of the Lord which made Heaven and earth.” This is a blessing from one peculiarly related to us and therefore it is the more to be prized. We are glad to get a father’s blessing—let no man think little of it. A father’s curse might wither a man. If in any case it has been justly earned, I pity the poor wretch who wears it like the mark of Cain upon his soul—for him the sun has no smiling beams and the clouds no silver linings—the past no comfortable memories, the future no joyful prospects.

A mother’s blessing—how like the breath of cloudless morn—foretelling a day of peace! A brother’s blessing—how bright with sacred dew like that which gemmed old Hermon’s woods. The blessing of saintly men and holy women—who shall set a price upon it? Its merchandise is far above silver. In the olden times paternal benedictions were more thought of than they are now, and the change is not the fruit of greater wisdom. Verily, the blessing of a child of God I reckon to be a portion of my true wealth and I love you, Brothers and Sisters, for wishing me God-speed. Happy is the man whom good men love to bless!

But, ah, Beloved, if you are blessed of the *Lord* you have a more Divine benediction—you have the blessing which makes rich, indeed, true and lasting, potent and effectual—the blessing of your Father who is in Heaven! All other blessings are only blessings in proportion as they contain the essence of this blessing. God’s blessing is the sea and others are but drops. His is the sun and others are but sparks. The blessing spoken of comes not from an idol God. The Psalm leads us to make that observation. The gods of the heathen had mouths, but they spoke not. They had ears, but they heard not—any benediction from them would be a mockery! But the children of God are not blessed of Baal or Ashteroth, but of Jehovah, the self-existent Lord of All!

They receive no benediction from the priest who ministers at the shrine of a dumb god of silver, or a dead god of flour and water. Compared with the benediction of the Lord who made Heaven and earth, what a paltry thing is the blessing of a priest! Indeed, he is utterly impotent to bless. If he has any power, it lies in the opposite direction. He can *curse* the victims of his false teaching but he cannot benefit them! His *pax vobiscum* is not worth the time spent in the speaking it! His “plenary indulgence” defiles the paper it is written on. A priest’s blessing and a cockatrice’s egg are of equal value.

But to be blessed of Jehovah is a reality, as says the Psalmist, “Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord, that walks in His ways, for you shall eat the labor of your hands. Happy shall you be and it shall be well with you.” The benediction mentioned in our text comes from the Omnipotent Creator “who made Heaven and earth.” This intimates that the blessing is almighty in power. Have I the blessing of Him who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light? Then He can speak into my darkness and cheer the gloom of my despair! Does the blessing of Him who brought order out of chaos rest upon me? Then He can speak to the confusion of my circumstances and the turmoil of my desponding mind and charm all things into harmony! The blessing of Him who clothed the earth with beauty, piled the hills and dug the channels of the sea must have in it a fullness unrivalled!

A blessing from Him—how large it must be—how potent for all the purposes of Grace! A blessing from Him with whom there is no obstacle or difficulty—who shall be able to delay it or deprive me of it? The Lord who made Heaven and earth spoke, and it was done—He commanded and it stood fast! There was darkness but it fled before Him! There was confusion but it vanished at a glance of His eyes! And if God has blessed you, Christian, whatever stands in your way shall disappear before the benediction of your God. If He blesses, poverty cannot starve you, sickness cannot kill you, toil cannot wear you out, sorrow cannot consume you, life cannot allure you, death cannot slay you, Hell cannot enclose you!

If He blesses, “neither things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature,” can have power to harm you! If all the legions of Hell were armed and stood in your way and all were furious to

destroy, yet in the name of God you could defy them, for His benediction would be both shield and spear to you! Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. It is a blessing from the All-Wise One “who made Heaven and earth.”

Do not forget that the making of Heaven and earth is not merely a display of power, but of infinite wisdom! Think of all the skill which has guided the stars in their courses and of the wonderful wisdom which has created all things that are and has sustained them in their various spheres. Now, the Lord who blesses you, O heir of Heaven, is the infinitely Wise One! He knows the intricacies of your course and He will steer you through them. Though the channel of the river of your life flows close to yonder sandbar and then by the rock upon the other side; and though no earthly pilot can thread the mazes of that dangerous stream, yet He who knows all things has blessed you and with His hand upon the helm of your vessel He will bring you safe into the haven.

Therefore do not fear. You are not blessed of an erring creature, nor of a man like yourself—you are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth! Is there any searching of His understanding? Has He not balanced the clouds in judgment? Has He not in wisdom laid the cornerstone of the universe? Why then, do you say, “My circumstances have been overlooked by Him and the problem of my case will be too difficult for Him to solve”? Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, for you are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth, whose Infallible counsels shall conduct your affairs to a blessed issue! Let this console you—you are blessed of Him who *made* you, and therefore knows how to anoint every wheel of your inner workmanship with the sacred oil of His Grace.

Take that thought into your spirit, too—He made Heaven and earth and therefore you are never out of His domain. We read of Him that He has a desire to the work of His own hands. He has made you and He will not leave you. Do you leave your children? Do you forget your offspring? Have you not heard that a woman may forget and may fail to have compassion upon the suckling of her own breast but God cannot and will not forget you? He will be mindful of you, for as man and especially as *regenerated* man, you are one of the noblest works of His hands. I know not how to speak upon so great a text as this, but I know how to drink its sweetness down into my very soul and to feel that, being blessed of God, all other things matter not!

Sick and sorry, or well and rejoicing—there is not a pin to choose so long as we are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth! Rich or poor, famous or despised, a throne or a martyr’s stake, a palace or a dungeon—truly, there is not the turn of a hair between them if we are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth! If this sweet blessing could fall upon a soul in Hell it would be a Heaven to it, and could the blessing of the Lord that made Heaven and earth be taken away from the saints in

Heaven, Heaven would be a Hell to them! Our heart can sing with the Psalmist—

***“Let the ungodly race advance,
And boast of all their store.
The Lord is my inheritance,
My soul can wish no more.”***

The blessing of the Lord that made Heaven and earth is all in all.

III. Let us turn to the third word, which is this—IT IS A BENEDICTION WITH A PECULIAR DATE for it is in the present tense. The preceding verses spoke of the past and the future. “The Lord *has been* mindful of us, He *will* bless us. He *will* bless the house of Israel. He *will* bless the house of Aaron.” These are blessed “wills.” “He will bless them that fear Him, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, both you and your children.” These are all in the future but you know the Proverb says a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!

Now, those future blessings, those birds in the bush—I know not what they are worth, for they are boundless in preciousness. But here is a bird in the hand, “You *are* blessed of the Lord.” Oh, the value of that! You are at this moment blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth. This verb is in the present tense, and, indeed, it may be said to be in all the tenses put together—in a tense that is not a tense, a time that has no time but lasts on forevermore—till time shall be no more. This blessing embraces all circumstances! You are laid low and pining away with consumption but, “You are blessed of the Lord which made Heaven and earth.”

You are smitten down in the very heyday of your usefulness and laid aside but, “You are blessed of the Lord which made Heaven and earth.” You had your oxen and your cattle seized and now you are, like Job, a penniless beggar, fit to sit on a dunghill, but, “You are blessed of the Lord.” Your enemy has set his foot upon your neck and he swears that he will make a speedy end of you, but, “You are blessed of the Lord.” Like Jeremiah, you are shut up in the dark dungeon and you sink in the mire, and there seems to be no helper but, “You are blessed of the Lord.” Who shall say that John Bunyan in Bedford Jail was not “blessed of the Lord”? Who shall say that Rowland Taylor, when he went to be burnt on Hadleigh Heath, was not “blessed of the Lord” when his very face shone with sacred joy?

Ah, let me tell you that the worst places on earth bear the best evidence of the goodness of God to His people. God’s birds sing best in cages and like nightingales they sing best in the dark. And often, according to the old fable, their note is sweetest when the thorn pierces their breast. They are independent of outward circumstances except that the worse the circumstances, often the greater their joy! Glory be to God for this! They are “blessed of the Lord” that made Heaven and earth, let them be where they may and as they may. Though they seem cast out from God’s Presence and all His waves and billows go over them, yet if they fear the Lord they are “blessed of the Lord,” even then! Oh, that your faith may lay hold of

this when you are very sorely exercised, for happy is the man whom God corrects, and blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord!

Observe that our text reaches to all time and beyond all time, because it runs thus—"You are blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth." While I am on earth, this shall console me—"I am blessed of the Lord that made the earth" and He Himself has said of His servants, "Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your store. Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out."

When I have to go out of this earth into another world, this shall console me—"I am blessed of the Lord that made Heaven." I shall still dwell in a place which my Father made. I am not going into a foreign country when I leave the warm precincts of this house of clay. I shall emigrate to the country where flowers never fade and winter never chills. This poor earth is little better than a penal settlement! It is a fair and beautiful and lovely earth to those who have eyes and taste with which to appreciate its scenery, but to a spiritual man it is just a smoke-dried tent of Kedar—a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, a casual ward for wayfarers, or very little better—a great morgue. "Woe's me that I in Mesech am a sojourner so long." We long to be away to our own fair country and see our Well-Beloved face to face!

Yet, for all that, God made this world though man has spoilt it as much as ever he can. And the God who made this world has blessed us so that wherever we go about in the world we should feel that we have a blessing that is suitable for every position in it—suitable for that lowly cot on the moor, suitable for that scant room in the dark alley—suitable for the couch of ease and suitable for the hard bed where pain racks every bone. The Lord that made earth, and who has a hand in it still, has blessed us!

And then it is the Lord that "made Heaven." Why, these two words are meant to encompass all creation! They are intended to take in the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, the east and the west, the north and the south, the rising and the setting sun, the sea and the dry land, the heights and the depths—they are meant to encompass all. Here we have the true way of making the best of both worlds. God's blessing here and hereafter makes existence bliss! Oh be joyful! In whatever condition you are cast, you are blessed by God in that condition! And into whatever place you may come, you are blessed by God with mercies necessary for the place.

The heathens used to be afraid that though they might have the blessing of the god of the hills, if they went into the valleys they would not have his blessing there, for their god might not be the god of the valleys. But our God is the God of every place, and every scene, and every circumstance—and we are blessed of Him—glory be to His holy name!

IV. Now, fourthly and briefly, this is A BLESSING WITH A PECULIAR CERTAINTY. Scripture does not lie, or utter perhapses, and ifs, and buts. “You are blessed of the Lord which made Heaven and earth.” Oh you that fear God, this is a matter of *fact*—you daily and continually abide under a true and real blessing. Some blessings are vain words—the person who utters them is a hypocrite. Other blessings are sincere, but the person pronouncing them has no power to fulfill them. Such blessings are wells without water or barren fig trees bearing leaves but no fruit.

The Lord blesses not in word only, but in deed. His blessings are not futile wishes but Omnipotent *acts*. We may fail to obtain the benedictions which our friends invoke upon us, but God’s blessings are sure to all the seed. Failure and miscarriage never occur to the Lord our God. Many are the slips between cups and lips at this world’s banquet, but the chalice of Divine blessing shall surely reach the lip of the elect soul—

***“This is Your will, that in Your love
We ever should abide
And lo, we earth and Hell defy
To make Your counsel void.
Not one of all the chosen race
But shall to Heaven attain;
Partake on earth the purposed Grace,
And then with Jesus reign.”***

Now, Beloved, let us make sure of this blessing which is so sure. And how can we do so but by *faith*? We believe that God has blessed all those to whom He has given His dear Son—and He has given His dear Son to me if I believe in Jesus! As surely as I believe in Him, the blessing is mine. Grip it, Brothers and Sisters! Make sure of it. Let no man deceive you with vain words. In these times it is hard to find anybody who believes anything. Even the common history we learned at school is now suspected to be a myth. I do not think that you could, according to the modes of reasoning adopted in these skeptical days, be able to prove that you had either a father or a mother.

Nothing is certain now-a-days—nothing at all. The floods of doubt have carried all away. We are taught from the pulpit to doubt. The old Gospel was, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The new Gospel is, “He that doubts and is sprinkled shall be saved.” A sorry comedown for both the words. But, Beloved, we have not so learned the Gospel we have learned to believe and hope, still, to live by faith. Our beliefs are grounded too firmly to be shaken by fashionable quibbling. Do get a fast hold, my Brothers and Sisters! You say, “How can I?” Why, you can do it by believing the veracity of your God—believing that surely He who speaks can fulfill what He has said! And you can get your faith strengthened by experience.

Try your God—I mean, when He is trying you, trust Him and test His promise. Prove Him and see if He does not bless you. Fair-weather Christianity is all very well, but it is stormy-weather Christianity that proves a man to be truly a man of God. Can you trust God when the cupboard is

bare? Can you rejoice in God when every nerve of your body is made to throb with pain? Can you stand beneath a burden that might have made Atlas bow down to the earth and feel that Divine strength is equal to all that and 10,000 times more? Could you fling yourself, like a Samson, unarmed, upon a thousand foes and strike them because the Lord was in you? If you can, you will have no trouble about this skepticism and these questions and doubts.

You will know the Lord's Truth, for you have seen it. You will know His love, for you rejoice in it. You will know His faithfulness, for it is the pillow of your weary head. You will know His Immutability, for it is the anchor of your poor tempest-tossed boat. You will know that you are blessed of God that made Heaven and earth! May God grant us to know it by the witness of His Holy Spirit—to know it more and more by living more and more by faith, for only so shall we know it—to know it by despising everything else in comparison with it and relishing it and prizing it above all the delicacies that can be put upon the tables of worldlings. "Blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth"—may we be as assured of this as we are of our existence! Then shall we be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

V. The fifth point is THIS BLESSING INVOLVES A PECULIAR DUTY for, if God has blessed us, the succeeding duty is that we should bless Him. Note the 18th verse—"We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore." Come, then, Beloved, if God has blessed us let us bless Him! Let us answer to His benediction as the Alpine echo to the horn. I am afraid we are not very abundant in blessing and glorifying God.

What were you doing before you came here? What was your last word at home? Grumbling? Complaining? Very likely. Is this becoming in one whom God has blessed? What were your thoughts before you came here? Were you fully expecting something terrible to happen by-and-by? Mourning you know not why! Was that it? If so, is this a fit state of mind for one on whom the Divine benediction rests like a halo? What were your words on the road here? Let me guess again. Some silly chat? Some idle tale? Some frivolous joke? Is this worthy of your destiny? Is this worthy of an employment suitable for your rank?

Brothers and Sisters, we have had enough of all this! If your murmuring in times past has not sufficed, I am greatly in error. If you have not frightened yourself enough about things that have never happened, I am indeed mistaken. And if you have not wasted enough breath in idle talk, I am bereft of judgment. Now, from this day forth let us see if we cannot bless the Lord continually! Speak to one another, you children of God—speak well of His dear name who has so richly endowed you. Let us tell one another what God has done for us, saying, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul."

"I don't know what I can say," says somebody. Did God ever do anything for you? Then begin to pray for His blessing at once, for without it you are a miserable creature. But if He has been favorable to you, tell

your fainting Brethren how He has restored you! Tell your sinking friend how you felt a solid bottom beneath your feet when you went through deeper rivers than those which he is passing through. Tell others what you have tasted and handled—not what you do not know—for borrowed experience is poor stuff and savors of imposition. The Psalm says, “Praise Him from this time forth.” If the past has been marred by any other talk, *now*, “from this time,” bless the Lord! Wash your mouth of all complaining! Take the cup of gratitude to sweeten your soul and bless His name from this time forth.

What? Dumb till now? An heir of Heaven speechless? May a sight of God’s blessing open your mouth! From this time forth begin to bless Him. ‘Tis a good time in which to begin blessing God. This moment is a fair season for *repentance*. When was there a time that was unsuitable for adoring *gratitude*? And when was there an hour when it was not well to bless God? I beseech you, join me in praising Him!

Then the Psalmist resolves to praise the Lord “forevermore.” Our adoration of God is never to cease. As long as there is breath in our body let us praise Him who gives it to us. “Dum spiro spero,” said the heathen, “While I breathe, I hope.” But the Christian says, “Dum expiro spero”—“When I die, I will still hope in God.” While we exist we will adore—

**“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die!
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity!”**

Repeat the joyous strain! Cease not day nor night! Nothing of worldly business deserves so much attention as to warrant our ceasing to bless and magnify the Lord in our hearts!

Now, I pray God that some here who have never received the Divine blessing after the tenor of the text, may be led to seek it—and you know His word—“Seek you the Lord while He may be found: call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Oh, that gracious word, “abundantly pardon!” How it meets our abundant sin! Oh, for His attracting love to operate upon sinners’ hearts! May He draw you to Himself for Christ’s sake and bless you, even you who up to now have slighted His mercy! He delights to be gracious! He loves to call them Beloved, that were not beloved, and to make them a people that were not a people. Hear that word, you humble and contrite, and never rest till the Lord Himself smiles upon you. Amen.

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THE RIGHT KEYNOTE FOR THE NEW YEAR NO. 2289

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 1, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“But we will bless the LORD from this time forth
and forevermore. Praise the LORD.”
Psalm 115:18.*

IT has been truly said that if the members of our churches were in a right condition of heart, the work of the pastor towards them would be no more difficult than that of a commanding officer to his troops. A general, or a captain has never to study eloquence—he has simply to give the word of command tersely and plainly—and himself to lead the way. So, if our hearts were right in the sight of God, we would not need illustrations to win attention or arguments to urge us on—we would only need to know what is the special duty of the hour and, helped by the Divine Spirit—we would, with alacrity, seek to perform it.

Well, now, let us hope that this is our condition tonight! God grant that it may be! Certainly it ought to be our condition in reference to the duty which is taught us in the text. I shall but, as it were, give the word of command in my Master's name—and I trust that the Holy Spirit will be working in all our spirits, causing each one of us to say, “Ready, yes, ready, to bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord.”

You noticed, while we were reading the Psalm, that it contained a piece of cutting sarcasm upon the gods of the heathen which are unable to do anything for their worshippers. Albeit that they have the outward semblance of the organs of life and sense, yet in those organs there is neither life nor power. Their mouths cannot speak; their eyes cannot see; their ears cannot hear; their noses cannot smell; their hands cannot handle; their feet cannot walk. But our God is declared to be the living God who is in the heavens and who has done whatever He has pleased. Well, that being so, a living God should be worshipped by a living people in a living manner!

This is one of the rules of Christian worship which we should never forget. Let us come before the Lord, not as mere bodies, fancying that it is enough to put in an appearance in the place where prayer is known to be made, but let us bring our living selves, our souls, our hearts, into God's worship—and whether it is in prayer, or in praise, or in the proclamation of His Truths, or in the listening to the Gospel message—let us do it with

all our life! Let the praise be full of life! Let the prayer be full of life! Let the ministrations of the Truth of God be the lively oracle of the living God! And let the ear, the *heart's* ear, be all alive while we listen to the Gospel!

There is nothing more that is acceptable to God in the *mere routine* of Christian worship than there is in the turning of the windmills of the Tartars, when they put their prayers upon the mill and they revolve with the blowing of the wind! If true life is absent from our service, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we have the richest music, though we have everything that heart can devise to create a charm, yet it profits us *nothing*, and brings no Glory to God. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," is a text which may be applied to dead services as well as to dead men. May the Lord, in mercy, send to some religious services a resurrection! May He be pleased to put a living heart and soul into them, for if there are not these, He will not accept a dead sacrifice at men's hands! A living God must be worshipped in a living way by a living people!

In the context we see, also, that as it is true with the heathen's idols, that, "they that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them," so ought it to be with us in reference to our God. A living God should have a living people and a blessing God should have a blessing people. He has blessed us with unspeakable favors. He is always blessing us! It is not possible for us to compute the amount of blessing which He is constantly bestowing upon us. Therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." If He exalts you with His favor, take care that you exalt Him with your praise. If He enriches you with His blessings, bring your blessings and offer them at His feet, as the wise men brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh and laid them as tribute at the feet of the newborn King. Bless a blessing God! What can be more congruous? As the echo answers to the voice, so let our blessing of God answer to the blessing we have received from God, even as Paul puts it, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."

This, then, is the work that is to occupy us tonight, and the work in which we shall continue, I trust, from this time forth and forevermore. Living unto the living God, time and eternity will be spent in blessing the blessing God.

Notice, in the text, which is clearly intended to excite us to praise, first, *a mournful memory*, suggested by the word "but." Secondly, *a happy resolution*—"we will bless the Lord." Thirdly, *an appropriate commencement*—"from this time forth." And then, fourthly, *an everlasting continuance*—"and forevermore. Praise the Lord."

I. First, then, there is in the text the trace of A MOURNFUL MEMORY. Read the preceding verse, without which we do not get the sense of this one to the fullest. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth."

The mournful memory is that of those who, at one time praised the Lord with us, and exulted in His holy name during the past year, some have been numbered with the dead. There are gaps in our ranks, my Brothers and Sisters, which death has made during the past year. Some have been taken from us whom we could ill spare, as we thought, but they were, nevertheless, needed up above. He who bought them had a better right to them than we had and His prayers prevailed over ours, as they always should. We said, "Father, we will that they whom You have given us be with us where we are." But Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." And they have gone. He had the best right to them and we can only say, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." But, as far as this world is concerned, they who have been taken from us do not praise the Lord, save that, being dead, they speak by the recollection of their holy lives. And their memory is sweet, like incense that has been burned, and leaves a perfume behind. Save for this, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."

I know that in Heaven they are praising Him! They have been added to the orchestra above and have helped to make it complete. Fresh songsters are there before the everlasting Throne of God, but here they cannot swell our praises. Their bodies sleep beneath the green sward in the silence of the tomb. As I look round the different parts of the Tabernacle— my eyes being better able to distinguish the gaps than some of yours are because I rather know something of all, and each of you knows but a part of this great congregation—as I look around, I notice where sat one whose eyes were full of glances of delight whenever the name of Jesus was mentioned. I have heard him speak in his Master's praise most sweetly and yet tearfully, but I shall never hear him here again. I looked into his tomb but a few days ago. He has gone down into silence so far as his body is concerned.

There was another dear worker who was always here, I might say that he was always everywhere where there was anything to be done for Christ! And we went to his grave, also, and we laid him in the silent tomb. During the year I suppose some 70 or 80 of our number have gone over to the majority—I mean, 70 or 80 of those who were actually members of the Church, besides those who, I trust, loved the Lord, although they had not confessed His name in Baptism and united with His people in Church fellowship. They have gone over to the great host above—and there are so many the fewer here. Well, what does this say to us? I will not imitate Dr. Watts, and say—

"Hark, from the tombs a doleful sound!"

I think we hear too many doleful sounds from the tombs. But I hear a lively, earnest sound, and it says, "Brothers and Sisters, keep up the song of praise unto the Lord! Do not let the music falter. Our voices are gone from among you—sing, therefore, each of you, the more sweetly and loudly to make up for our absence from the earthly choir."

Now that so many saints have gone Home, *there are so many the fewer on earth to praise the Lord*. O you who have recently come into the Church, you who have been baptized for the dead to fill up the gaps in our ranks, be earnest, with your loud hosannas, to bless and magnify the name of the Lord! Brethren, let us take a blessed revenge on Death, and if he takes from our numbers, let us, as God helps us, increase the real efficiency of the Church by each of us endeavoring to become double what we formerly were in the service of our Master! O Death, you have struck down a songster who used to sing at my side, but my voice shall be louder than before! I will make music for us both and there shall yet come another to fill his place! And so there shall be *three* songs instead of two—and God shall be a gainer on earth *and* a gainer in Heaven by the loss which death seemed to cause to Christ's Church! They are going, one after another, my Brothers and Sisters. They are gathering homeward one by one. The most useful, the most mighty in prayer, the most holy, the very pillars and strength of the Church are going and, as a Brother said the other day, "When so many good ones are going, what can we do better than pack up and go with them?" As each one goes, we feel almost inclined to say what the disciples said concerning Lazarus, "If he sleeps, he shall do well." And to add, with Thomas, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

But I am of another mind and I say, "No, if there are so many going, let us ask to be allowed to *stay*, for this great fight has to be fought out somehow and, if some of the troops have fought the good fight, and exchanged the sword and shield for the palm branch and the harp, let us who are left pray with all our might unto the Lord God of Hosts to strengthen us in this day of battle, that we may not go till we have finished our part of the fight and have been the means of calling others to prolong the blessed struggle by which victory shall be given to the name of Christ."

By the thought, then, of the many dead who cannot any longer praise God among us, let us be stimulated to bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore!

There comes up in my mind, however, another reflection, that, as others are gone, *we, ourselves, shall also go soon*. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." O Brothers, if we are called to preach, it is only for a little while! We have not an indefinite period in which to be wise to win souls. Our work must be done soon or it will never be done! O teachers, you must win your children for Christ soon, for you are not to live a thousand years to go on seeking the little ones! They must be brought to Jesus soon or they will not be brought by you, for you will have passed away! O all you Christian people who love your Lord, be busy in those sacred works which can only be performed on earth, for angels cannot clothe the naked or feed the hungry! No angel can be a Dorcas to make garments for the poor. These things are for *this* life—these modes of praising God are only for *time*—there are others for *eternity*. These are for this life and to these we have to attend as long as we are here.

To keep the Church of God on earth, the Church *militant*, in good marching order, and good working condition, and so to glorify God *here* is what we must do *now*, and do it soon, for, “the night comes when no man can work.” I wish we all felt more that we are dying men. The sound of the chariot wheels of eternity should make us quicken our pace. If you could often look through the heavenly telescope and see the Judgment Seat, the Great White Throne in the heavens, and the assembled multitude, and *yourself* rendering up your books of account to the last great Examiner, some of you would live far differently than you do! God help us to do so and, by the recollection of this, “but,” though it comes over us like a cloud, tonight, let us be quickened into the immediate and joyous work of blessing and magnifying the Most High!

II. Let us now go to our second point which is this—A HAPPY RESOLUTION. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord.”

“We will bless the Lord,” for it seems to us to be the very thing for which we were created. This is the flower of our being! We are never happier, surely, never more developing what God has put into us by His Grace, than when we are praising and blessing Him.

We will bless the Lord by our songs. They shall be more frequent than they have been. Brothers and Sisters, do you sing as much as you might? Do you sing at work and do you sing in the household, and do you sing on your beds? I have known some who have managed to live always singing. It was my joy to know an old man, a very old man, who was famous in the village where he lived because, as he walked the streets, he was always humming a little bit of a hymn. He was a grand old Methodist of the grand old days—and he had always some glorious hymn that he would go along tooting as he went about the streets! And he sang himself to bed and sang himself to sleep, and, I was going to say, sang himself awake—he was scarcely awake before he began to sing again. It was all singing with him!

Now, you know how the worldlings sing. You cannot be quiet in your beds, at night, because of the noise they make in the streets. Let us be as ready with the songs of Zion as they are with the songs of Gomorrah! Let us magnify the Lord with our songs far oftener than we have done.

Then, let us magnify the Lord *in our daily talk and conversation* while we speak about Him. Never speak badly of His name. Some of you do. There is sometimes a grumbling at His Providences. There is a fretting at the trials He sends. There is a complaining about all sorts of things. But you who love Him, begin, from this night, to bless Him by speaking well of His name. Bless Him for everything! Bless Him for the bitters; bless Him for the cold; bless Him for poverty and sickness. “That is a hard thing to do,” you say. Yes, but it is a sweet thing to do—it will be as comforting to yourself as it will be glorifying to God!

Begin to praise Him *in the tone of your spirit*. May God the blessed Comforter help you to do it by a calm, equable frame of mind, by a Divine placidity of temper, by a complete subjection of the will to Him so that you

shall not feel it to be subjection, but find it to be your delight that the Lord should do with you whatever pleases Him! It is bliss to praise God so that our very *thoughts* praise Him, not by effort, but as flowers pour out their perfume, so that our inmost soul praises Him, just as the birds sing, not as if it were a task, but because it cannot help it! Was it not made to sing? And so it sits on the bare bough, before the spring has yet developed the green leaf and opening bud, and it sings even amid the frost and snow—and wakes us up in the spring morning with its hymn of praise to its Creator. “Its,” I said, but I mean a *thousand* of them—winged choristers praising and blessing God, not because they are told that they ought to do so—but because it is their intense delight to pour out their music! Oh, that we were little birds, made always to sing God’s praise! Oh, that we were drops of dew, forever sparkling in the light of God’s love!

I like to look at the lilies, sometimes, and think how they worship God. They never study a sermon, or compose a hymn, or weave a rhyme, or even *think*—but they serve God by standing still and showing themselves and breathing out their sweet perfume to the winds! Oh, to be full of God, till, at last, you bless Him even by existing! Till life becomes a Psalm and even breathing becomes a hymn of praise unto the Most High in whom we live, and move, and have our being! Blessed be His name! We will bless the Lord from this time forth, in some such way as that, as He shall help us!

For, dear Brothers and Sisters, we may well bless the Lord *because we are alive*. That, “*but*,” suggests that since others have gone, we should bless Him that we live. I do not know whether I would not as soon have been in Heaven as here, but, still, to abide in the flesh for a while may be more necessary for some and, therefore, I am glad to be alive. And some of you with your children about you, with many dependent upon you, should thank God that while you are needed here you are spared here—and you should thank Him who has kept you. You might have been killed in some accident. You might have been struck down, as many have been this year, by contagious disease. You might have been in such pain, tonight, that death would have seemed a relief to you. Bless the Lord that it is not so. Bless Him that you live. O God, our Creator and Preserver, we will, from this time forth, bless You that we are alive!

Then bless God *because of spiritual life*, for there is something in that calling for devout gratitude, for to live, and yet not to be alive *spiritually*, is to be a walking corpse, an animated dunghill, a Lazarus who by this time stinks, and yet is not in his grave! It is a horrible thing to be going about in this world with eyes that do not see God, and with ears that never hear His voice when He is speaking everywhere, and with a heart that never responds to His Divine love. Better not to be, than to be and yet not know the greatest and best of Beings. Let us bless God that He has quickened us into spiritual life, for it was not so with some of you a long while ago.

No, it is but a few *months* since some of you were made alive. And this new year may remind you of some former new years, and of how they were

spent, and into what condition you brought yourselves! O Lord, our state of spiritual death does not bear thinking of, except we wet the page of memory with many tears! Blessed be Your name, You have delivered us from the bondage of corruption and brought us into newness of life! Therefore will we bless You from this time forth and forevermore!

And let us bless the Lord because, according to the Psalm, *we have been blessed of Him*. Read, again, the 12th verse, “The Lord has been mindful of us: He will bless us.” Now, it is not only according to the Psalm, but it is also a matter of fact. “The Lord has been mindful of us.” I do not know your histories, dear Friends, as you know them, but I would like you to pull out your pocketbooks and your diaries, and just look down them. How many times has the Lord been mindful of you during the past year? I could tell of many interpositions of His Divine love on *my* behalf, but I will not do so at this time. I will bless His name in secret for His loving kindness towards His unworthy servant.

A good old woman used to hear people speak about their Ebenezers, or stones of help, in remembrance of God’s mercy, but she said that when she looked back on hers, she thought she was looking back on a wall. They were set so closely together that they seemed to make a wall on the right hand and on the left of all her pathway. Well, that is just like mine. I am such a debtor to Divine Mercy that if I could but pay half a farthing in the pound, I should need to give fifty million times more than I am, or ever hope to be worth! Oh, what I owe Him!

Rutherford speaks somewhere of his soul going right down in the stream of God’s love, not floating in it, but sinking, foundering, going down till mighty love went over the masthead of his soul. And such do I feel that our gratitude ought to be. The ocean of God’s love rises above us so as altogether to swallow us up. The Lord has done such great things for us that if we do not bless Him, the very stones we walk on in the streets might cry out against us, and every beam in the wall might groan in the night to think that it sheltered such an ungrateful sleeper! Oh, the mercy, the forgiving mercy, the abounding mercy, the ceaseless mercy of the living God! What tongue can ever tell it? Surely the poet did not strain metaphors too much, or use hyperboles, or push them too far, when he said—

**“But, oh, eternity’s too short
To utter half Your praise!”**

Again, we ought to praise the Lord, according to the Psalm, *because He will bless us*. You must have noticed that the Psalmist expressed that idea several times in different forms—“He has been mindful of us: He will bless us.” This is a very sweet duty to which I would exhort you, to bless the Lord in the prospect of what He is *going to do*. Come, let us weave songs out of tomorrows! We will not boast of them, but we will bless God for them. Let us praise Him for all the love and kindness that is going to be with us through all the year that is just beginning! Troubles will come, but the Lord will deliver the godly out of them all! Tribulation will be our portion, but in Christ we shall have peace! Perhaps we shall go Home this

year—if we are to do so, let it not cause us even so much as one single fear, but let us put that into the song and bless the Lord for gates of pearl and harps of gold—so soon to be the heritage of His unworthy children!

III. Now I must be brief on the other points, but I want to delay a minute or two on the third head, which is AN APPROPRIATE COMMENCEMENT—“From this time forth.”

When is the time to begin to praise God? *Now*, Brothers and Sisters, *now*—“From this time forth.” You see, it was just then that the heathen were saying, “Where is their God?” *When God is blasphemed by others*, then let His people praise Him! Whenever you hear anything said against God, any note of blasphemy or skepticism, then say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth.” Always feel as if you were called upon to make some recompense to the blessed name for the dishonor which the adversary has done to it. I think there will be less swearing in the world if we always do that, for the devil will tell his children to leave off when he finds that every time they curse, we bless God all the more. Whenever you hear that a bad book has come out—whenever you hear that some scientific man has been saying something that will mislead the unwary, say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth. We will have a new song because of that. We will make some kind of amends to God’s great name because of all the calumny that is cast upon it.”

So let us do it *whenever we have a sense of mercy*. He has been mindful of us, therefore, from this time forth, we will praise His name. Do you feel as if He had done great things for you, of which you are glad? Is your heart leaping, tonight because of some special mercy? Then let this be your sweet resolve, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth.”

I think that we ought to praise the Lord *from the first moment in which we know our sins are forgiven*, the first moment in which we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and then from every period of spiritual enjoyment. You who are about to be baptized may well say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth, from the time when we come forward to confess our faith in Jesus, when we put on Christ by public profession of allegiance to Him.” From every season of coming to the Communion Table, from every hallowed night of wrestling prayer, from every time you climb the Mountain of Transfiguration and behold your Master’s Glory, yes, and from every Gethsemane’s night, when you strive almost in vain to watch with Him one hour—even then, say, “From this time forth we will bless Him.”

I am sure that I may claim that *the beginning of another year* is a good time to begin blessing the Lord. For the mercies of another year, the forgiveness of another year, the provision, the instruction, the guidance, the supplies of another year, for the mercies of the year on which we enter with good heart of hope, for all our fears which have been averted, for all our hopes which have been fulfilled, for all that we have learned, for all that we have experienced, let us carry out this happy resolution that, from this time forth, we will bless the Lord!

Oh, how I wish that I could put this resolution into the hearts of some people whom I know! I hope they are Christians, but, you know, they were born on a bleak day and they always speak with lips of frost. You are never many minutes with them but you hear grievous complaining. Dear Brother, how would it do for you to say, "From this time forth I will bless the Lord"? We know some who, like myself, are depressed by this horrible wintry weather. We get to feel all our bones aching and we are very apt, when we are full of rheumatism, to begin to talk about it. Come, my Sister. Come, my Brother, let us have done with that theme, and say, "From this time forth we will bless the Lord!"

I know the style of talk that is very frequent—"Never was there such a dull time for trade. Business is worse than I ever knew it. Everything is going to the bad. There are wars and rumors of wars, and the world is coming to an end, and I do not know what is *not* going to happen." Well, Brother, if you like that strain, you must keep on at it, but as for me, and you, too—I really think that it would be better if we were *both* to say—"From this time forth we will bless the Lord." We have strummed away long enough on that sackbut—let us begin to play on the psaltery and the harp of a solemn sound! We have too long been singing—

***"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply!
No cheering fruits, no wholesome trees,
Nor streams of living joy.
But pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow;
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow."***

Let us go on to the next verse and sing—

***"Yet the dear path to Your abode
Lies through this horrid land.
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at Your command!"***

Let us begin to sing of the path, and the Guide, and the Home to which we are going! We are a day's march nearer Home, a year's march nearer Home, so from this time forth let us bless the Lord!

IV. And then comes, lastly, AN EVERLASTING CONTINUANCE—"We will bless the Lord from this time forth *and forevermore.*"

I was born in a county where there were many old-fashioned people and I am old-fashioned, myself. Whenever I read my Bible and find that it says, "everlasting," or, "forevermore," I believe that it means what it says. Of course, I have lived in a world in which I am informed that it does not mean anything of the kind—that it means a very short period—or a period longer or shorter according as circumstances may happen! I am afraid I shall never learn this new lingo. I have no intention of trying to learn it, either, so I am sure that I never shall be able to understand things the wrong way upwards, as the wise men now do. "Everlasting" will be *everlasting* with me forever and ever, I can tell you, and it will find me, at any

rate, a believer in eternity as being that which never has an end! I believe that those who think differently will have to come round to the opinion that I have found in the Word of God. At any rate, if we are to agree, they will have to do so, for I shall never come round to *their* view.

Now, then, the expression, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore,” means that *our praise shall have no end to it*, “Forevermore,” means eternity, I believe, and I pray God that we may make it to mean eternity in our praise “from this time forth and forevermore.” Falling from Grace shall not come in to make us cease praising and blessing the Lord! We began to praise Him, not in the strength of nature, but in the strength of Grace—and that strength will not exhaust itself, for it will be renewed day by day—so that we shall be able to bless the Lord forevermore.

Death itself shall not stop us from blessing God! No, it shall but increase the choir and sweeten the harmony! We shall love the Lord more and praise Him better when death shall have divested us of these tongues which now are impediments to the highest praise—and shall have given us the power to speak without lips and tongues in a nobler language before the Throne of God—

**“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die,
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity.”**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we are in the right state of heart, there *is not a time when we could leave off blessing the Lord*. When shall we cease to bless Him? When He leaves off blessing us? That will never be! When we leave off being in debt to Him? That can never be! When He ceases to be worthy of blessing? That cannot be! Or when the life of Divine Grace within us ceases to recognize His blessedness? That, also, cannot be, for it shall be in us “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Leave off praising Him? O Brothers, Sisters, never, never, never, not even for the time in which a clock might tick once! Go on praising Him if He shall take you up to the bed of sickness—if every limb shall be a mass of pain, if every nerve shall be a highway for a crowd of pains to travel on—yet still go on blessing and praising and magnifying Him, for this is His due! When we have praised Him best and most, we have not given Him what He deserves! Let us fill this House of Prayer with our praise and thanksgiving tonight! The Romanist sets his incense on fire and fills the whole place with its smoke. Oh, let there go up to God from our grateful hearts a cloud of the smoke of praise unto His blessed name! Blessed be the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, from this time forth and forevermore!

If any man cannot join in that praise, let him remember that he is not fit to live, nor fit to die—for to die without praising God and to rise again—would be to remain in a state in which he could not possibly enter Heaven, since the one occupation of Heaven is magnifying and blessing

and praising the Lord forever and forever! Let such an one seek the Lord, now! Let him trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! Then he shall be saved and he will be able to join us in saying, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALM 115.

Verses 1-3. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give Glory, for Your mercy, and for Your Truth's sake. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatever He has pleased.* It was very natural that the heathen should say, "Where is their God? because they had no outward emblem, no visible image, no tangible token—whereas the heathen had their many gods, such as they were, made of wood and stone, so that they asked, "Where is their God?" I think that when that question is suggested, it is a good sign, for it proves the purity of the faith which has cleansed itself from outward symbolism. May men often have to ask of us, "Where is their God?"

But I fear that the people of Israel were brought into so low a state, at times, that this question was also asked in scorn and derision, "Where is *now* their God?" "He was with them when they came out of Egypt. He was with them when they captured Canaan. He has been with them in many a terrible battle, turning to flight the armies of the aliens, but where is *now* their God?" It is a cutting question under such circumstances. It was so with the Psalmist when he said, "As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God?" "But our God is in the heavens where their gods never were. He has done whatever He has pleased." The gods of the heathen have done *nothing*—they *cannot* do anything.

4-7. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.* It is a grim piece of sarcasm which the Psalmist here aims at the idol gods. I do not know, sometimes, whether this is not all that superstition deserves of us—to be utterly laughed at and put to scorn. The spirit of Elijah is not altogether the most Christ-like, and yet even the Christian may well say to the priests of Baal, in derision and contempt, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." What do they deserve who so degrade themselves as to worship things which their own hands have made—things which can be seen with the eyes and touched with the hand? Yet, even in this country we have thousands who call themselves Christians, who prostrate themselves before idols made in different forms and shapes—yes and say to a piece of bread that the baker made, "This is our god." Well says the Psalmist—

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them.* They are as doltish and as stupid, as blind and as deaf, and as ridiculous as the gods that they make, for no man was ever better than the god he worshipped!

9-11. *O Israel, trust you in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. You that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.* There is real help in the living Jehovah, real protection in Him.

12. *The LORD has been mindful of us: He will bless us.* There is a New Year's motto for you. It will go back through the old year, and forward into the new one—"The Lord has been mindful of us: He will bless us." See how mindful He has been of us all through the past year in a thousand ways! Long before we have known our needs, He has supplied them. He has delivered us from dangers of which we never knew and led us into mercies of which we never dreamed!

12, 13. *He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.* Great blessings for small people, and not small blessings for those whom He makes great in Israel.

14, 15. *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the LORD which made Heaven and earth.* This is the Creator's blessing, therefore a real one. Many of you have had the new creation worked in you—you shall live to see new heavens and a new earth!

16. *The Heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth has He given to the children of men.* And they seem as if they meant to keep it, too. The sad thing is that they get the earth into their hearts and so they miss the blessing which the Lord intended them to receive from His *gift* of it.

17. *The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.* As far as this world is concerned, no note is heard from the grave.

18. *But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD.* So let us do tonight. Let us have an extra Psalm of praise to the Lord who has brought us safely through another year!

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

PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED

NO. 240

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplication.”
Psalm 116:1.***

IN the Christian pilgrimage it is well for the most part to be looking forward. Whether it is for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future, after all, must be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And looking further yet, the Believer's soul can see Death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded. He can behold the hills of light on which stand the Celestial City. He sees himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than a conqueror—crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with Him, made to sit together with Him on His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon His Throne.

The sight of the future may well relieve the darkness of the past. The hopes of the world to come may banish all the doubts of the present. Hush, my fears! This world is but a narrow span and you shall soon have passed it. Hush, hush, my doubts! Death is but a narrow stream and you shall soon have forded it. Time, how short—eternity, how long! Death, how brief—immortality, how endless—

***“Oh the transporting, rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight.
Filled with delight my raptured soul
Would here no longer stay,
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,
Fearless I'd launch away.”***

Yet nevertheless the Christian may do well sometimes to look backward—he may look back to the hole of the pit and the miry clay from where he was dug—the retrospect will help him to be humble, it will urge him to be faithful. He may look back with satisfaction to the glorious hour when first he saw the Lord, when spiritual life for the first time quickened his dead soul. Then he may look back through all the changes of his life to his troubles and his joys, to his Pisgahs and to his Engedis, to the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. He must not keep his eye always backward, for the fairest scene lies beyond—it will not benefit him to be always considering the past—for the future is more glorious by far. But

nevertheless at times a retrospect may be as useful as a prospect. And memory may be as good a teacher as even faith itself.

This morning I bid you stand upon the hilltop of your present experience and look back upon the past and find therein motives for love to God. And may the Holy Spirit so help me in preaching and you in hearing, that your love may be inflamed and that you may retire from this hall, declaring in the language of the Psalmist, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplication."

The particular objects which you are now to look back upon are the manifold and manifest answers to prayer which God has given you. I want you now to take up a book which you ought often to read, the book of remembrance which God has written in your heart of His great goodness and continued mercies. And I want you to turn to that golden page wherein are recorded the instances of God's grace in having listened to your voice and having answered your supplications. I shall give you seven reflections, each of which shall stir up your hearts to love our God whose memorial is that He hears and answers prayers.

I. And the first thing I would have you remember is, YOUR OWN PRAYERS. If you look at them with an honest eye, you will be struck with wonder that ever God should have heard them. There may be some men who think their prayers worthy of acceptance—I dare say the Pharisee did. But all such men shall find that however worthy they may esteem their prayers, God will not answer them at all. The true Christian in looking back weeps over his prayers and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray better, for he sees that all his attempts at prayer in the past have been rather blundering attempts than actual successes.

Look back now, Christian, upon your prayers and remember what cold things they have been. You have been on your knees in the closet and there you ought to have wrestled as Jacob did, but instead of that your hands have fallen down and you have forgotten to strive with God. Your desires have been but faint and they have been expressed in such sorry language that the desire itself seemed to freeze upon the lips that uttered it. And yet, strange to say, God has heard those cold prayers and has answered them too, though they have been such that we have come out of our closets and have wept over them. At other times our hearts have been broken, because we felt as if we could not feel and our only prayer was, "God forgive us that we cannot pray." Yet, notwithstanding, God has heard this inward groaning of spirit. The feeble prayer which we ourselves despised and which we thought would have died at the gate of mercy, has been nursed and nurtured and fostered and accepted and it has come back to us a full grown blessing, bearing mercy in both its hands.

Then again, Believer, how infrequent and few are your prayers and yet how numerous and how great have God's blessings been. You have prayed in times of difficulty very earnestly, but when God has delivered you, where was your former fervency? In the day of trouble you besieged His Throne with all your might and in the hour of your prosperity, you could not wholly cease from supplication, but oh, how faint was the prayer

compared with that which was wrung out of your soul by the rough hand of your agony. Yet, notwithstanding that, though you have ceased to pray as you once did, God has not ceased to bless. When you have forgotten your closet, He has not forgotten your house, nor your heart. When you have neglected the Mercy Seat, God has not left it empty, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim.

Oh, I marvel that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities! Oh, what a God is He that He should hear the prayers of men who come to Him when they have wants, but who neglect Him when they have received a mercy—who approach Him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to go to Him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few.

Look at your prayers, again, in another aspect. How unbelieving have they often been! You and I have gone to the Mercy Seat and we have asked God to bless us, but we have not believed that He would do so. He has said, “whatsoever you ask in prayer, believe that you shall have it and you shall have it.” Oh, how I could smite myself this morning, when I think how on my knees I have doubted my God! What would you think of a man who came before you with a petition and said, “Sir, you have promised to give me such-and-such a thing if I asked for it. I ask for it, but I do not believe you will give it me.” You would say “Get you gone until you believe me better. I will give nothing to a man who doubts my word.” Often might the Lord have spurned us from His Mercy Seat, when we have come to him, not believing the very promises which we were pretending to plead.

How small, too, the faith of our most faithful prayers! When we believe the most, how little do we trust. How full of doubting is our heart, even when our faith has grown to its greatest extent! What Christian is there here who is not ashamed of himself for having so often doubted a God who never yet denied Himself, who was never once untrue, nor once unfaithful to His Word? Yet, strange to tell, God has heard our prayers. Though we believed not, He was faithful. He has said, “Poor Heart, your weakness makes you doubt Me, but My love compels Me to fulfill the promise, even though you doubt.” He has heard us in the day of our trouble. He has brought us sweet deliverance, even when we dishonored Him by trembling at His Mercy Seat.

I say again, look back upon your prayers and wonder that God should ever have heard them. Often, when we awake in the morning and find our house and family all secure and remember what a poor family prayer we uttered the night before, we must wonder the house was not burnt and all in it. And you in the Church, after you have been to the Prayer Meeting and prayed there and God has actually listened to you and multiplied the Church and blessed the minister, do you not say afterwards, “I wonder that He should have heard such poor prayers as those that were uttered at the Prayer Meeting?” I am sure, Beloved, we shall find much reason to love God, if we only think of those pitiful abortions of prayer, those unripe

figs, those stringless bows, those headless arrows, which we call prayers and which He has borne with in His longsuffering.

The fact is, that sincere prayer may often be very feeble to us, but it is always acceptable to God. It is like some of those one-pound notes, which they use in Scotland—dirty, ragged bits of paper—one would hardly look at them, one seems always glad to get rid of them for something that looks a little more like money. But still, when they are taken to the bank, they are always acknowledged and accepted as being genuine, however rotten and old they may be. So with our prayers—they are foul with unbelief, decayed with imbecility and worm-eaten with wandering thoughts. But nevertheless, God accepts them at Heaven's own bank and gives us rich and ready blessings, in return for our supplications.

II. Again—I hope we shall be led to love God for having heard our prayers, if we consider THE GREAT VARIETY OF MERCIES WHICH WE HAVE ASKED IN PRAYER AND THE LONG LIST OF ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED. Now, Christian, again—be your own preacher. It is impossible for me to depict your experience as well as you can read it yourself. What multitudes of prayers have you and I put up from the first moment when we learned to pray! The first prayer was a prayer for ourselves. We asked that God would have mercy upon us and blot out our sin. He heard that. But when He had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace. We have been led to ask for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty and for succor in the day of trial.

We have been compelled to go to God for our soup, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere. All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from Heaven and all the water of which it has drunk has come out of that living Rock—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself. It has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God. And hence your prayers have had to ascend to Heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants were innumerable and, therefore, the supplies have been innumerable and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless.

But it is not for your soul alone that you have pleaded, your body has had its cries. You have been poor and you have asked for food and raiment. How frequently have they been given to you. Not by miracles, it is true. The ravens do not bring you bread and meat, but bread and meat comes without the ravens which is a greater miracle still. It is true your raiment has waxed old and therefore you have not realized the miracle of the children of Israel in the wilderness, whose clothes never grew old. Nevertheless you have had a greater miracle, still, for you have had new ones when you wanted them. All your necessities have been provided for as they have arisen. How often have these necessities come upon you? So great have they been at times, that you have said, "Surely the Lord will

forsake me and deliver me over. I shall not have my bread given me, nor shall my water be sure." But up to now God has fed you. You are not starved yet and by the Grace of God you won't be. You have been told many a time by unbelief that you would die in the workhouse. But you are out of it even now, though it seems as if a thousand miracles had been put together to keep you from it.

Then again—how often sickness has laid hold upon you and like Hezekiah, you have turned your face to the wall and cried, "Lord, spare Your servant and let him not go down to the grave in the midst of his days." And here you are, the living, the living to praise God. Remember the fever and the cholera and all those other fierce diseases which have laid you low. Remember those prayers you uttered and those vows you made. Oh, do not you love the Lord because He has heard your voice and your supplication? How frequently, too, have you prayed for journeying mercies and He has protected you in the midst of accidents. You have asked for blessings in your going out and your coming in—blessings of the day and of the night—and of the sun and of the moon. And all these have been vouchsafed to you. Your prayers were innumerable. You asked for countless mercies and they have all been given.

Only look at yourself—are not you adorned and bejeweled with mercies as thickly as the sky with stars? Think how you have prayed for your family. When you first knew the Lord your husband feared Him not. But how you wrestled for your husband's soul! And now the tear is in your eye while you see your husband sitting by your side in the House of God and remember, it is not many months ago since he would have been in the tavern. Your children, too, have through your prayers been brought to God. Mothers, you wrestled with God that your children might be God's children and you have lived to see them converted. How great the mercy to see our offspring called in early youth. Oh, love the Lord, because in this respect, too, He has heard your voice and your supplication.

How often have you presented before God your business and He has helped you in that matter. How frequently have you laid your household sorrows before Him and He has delivered you in that case. And some of us can sing of blessings given to us in the service of God in His Church. We have lived to see the empty sanctuary crowded to the full, we have seen our largest attempts successful beyond our most sanguine hopes. We have prayed for sinners and seen them saved. We have asked for backsliders and have seen them restored. We have cried for a Pentecost and we have had it. And by God's grace we are crying for it again and we shall have it once more. O minister, deacon, elder, member, father, mother, man of business, have you not indeed cause to say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications?" I am afraid the very fact that God hears our prayers so constantly leads us to forget the greatness of His mercy. Let it not be so, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul and forget not all His benefits." Let this today be brought to mind and let me raise a song to the God who has heard the voice of my supplication.

III. Let us note again THE FREQUENCY OF HIS ANSWERS TO OUR FREQUENT PRAYERS. If a beggar comes to your house and you give him alms, you will be greatly annoyed if within a month he shall come again. And if you then discover that he has made it a rule to wait upon you monthly for a contribution, you will say to him, "I gave you something once, but I did not mean to establish it as a rule." Suppose, however, that the beggar should be so impudent and impertinent that he should say, "But I intend Sir, to wait upon you every morning and every evening." Then you would say, "I intend to keep my gate locked that you shall not trouble me." And suppose he should then look you in the face and add still more, "Sir, I intend waiting upon you every hour, nor can I promise that I won't come to you sixty times in an hour. But I just vow and declare that as often as I want anything so often will I come to you—if I only have a wish I will come and tell it to *you*. The least thing and the greatest thing shall drive me to you. I will always be at the post of your door." You would soon be tired of such importunity as that and wish the beggar anywhere, rather than that he should come and tease you so.

Yet remember, this is just what you have done to God and He has never complained of you for doing it. But rather He has complained of you the other way. He has said, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob." He has never murmured at the frequency of your prayers, but has complained that you have not come to Him enough. Every morning when you have risen, your cry has gone up to Him—again with the family you have cried to the God of Jacob. At eventide you have gathered together and have prayed to Him and whenever you have a trial, or a want, or a doubt, or a fear, you have, if you have done rightly, sped away swiftly to His Throne and told Him all. Speak now, Saint, has He once said to you, "Get you gone, you weary Me?" Has He ever said, "My ear is heavy that it cannot hear, My arm is shortened that I cannot save?" Has He said, "Away with you, I do not want to be perpetually hearing you? What is your harsh grating voice, that I should always give My ear to it? Am I not hearkening to the songs of angels, to the shouts of cherubim? Away with you, tease Me not. At certain seasons you may come, on the Sabbath-Day you may pray, but I want not to hear you in the week"?

No, no, He has sweetly embraced us every time. He has always bowed the Heaven and come down to listen to our feeble cries. He has never denied a promise, never broken His Word, even when we have pleaded a thousand times a day. Oh I will love the name of such a patient God as this, who bears with my prayers though they be as a cloud of hornets in the air.

IV. Go a little further and you will have another thought arising. Think of THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCY FOR WHICH YOU HAVE OFTEN ASKED HIM. We never know the greatness of our mercies till we get into trouble and want them. I talk today of pardoned sin, but I confess I do not feel its preciousness as once I did. There was a time when my sins lay heavy on me—conscience accused me and the Law condemned me and I thought if God would but pardon me, it would be the greatest thing He ev-

er did. The creating of a world seemed to me to be but little compared with the taking away of my desperately evil sins. Oh, how I cried, how I groaned before Him. And He has pardoned me and blessed be His name for it. But I cannot estimate the value of His pardon today so well as I could when I was seeking it—almost driven to despair.

Oh, remember Soul, when you did ask for pardon you were asking for that which worlds could not buy. You were asking for that which could only be procured through the lifeblood of the Son of God. Oh, what a blessing was that! And yet He did not look you in the face and say, “You have asked too much.” No, but He gave it freely. He upbraided not. He blotted out all your sins and washed you at once in the river of the Savior’s blood. Since that time what large things have you asked! You were in trouble once, it seemed as if bankruptcy must overtake you and you did cry to Him. If the world heard it, it would have said, “What a fool are you to ask this of your God—he will never deliver you!” Unbelief, like Rab-shekeh, wrote a blasphemous letter and you did lay it before the Lord. But even when you were in prayer, your heart said, “The Lord will not deliver you this time. The lion will surely devour you. The furnace will most certainly burn you up.”

But you put up a poor, groaning prayer and you dared to ask great things, namely, that God would put His hand out of Heaven and save you from the waters, that the flood might not overflow you. Are you not surprised at this time that you dared to ask so much! You would not dare to ask so largely of any of your friends. You would not have gone to one and said, “I must have a thousand pounds by such-and- such a day, will you lend it to me?”—you knew you would not get it. Yet you asked it of your God. It came and here you are, the living to praise His name. And if this were the right place you would stand up and testify that God did hear you, that in the day of sorrow and tribulation He delivered you. Now do you not love Him for giving you such great things as these? God’s mercies are so great that they cannot be magnified. They are so numerous they cannot be multiplied, so precious they cannot be over-estimated. I say, look back today upon these great mercies with which the Lord has favored you in answer to your great desires and will you not say, “I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications”?

V. Another aspect of this case, perhaps, will reach our hearts more closely still. HOW TRIVIAL HAVE BEEN THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN TAKEN BEFORE GOD AND YET HOW KINDLY HAS HE CONDESCENDED TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS. It is a singular thing, that our hearts are often more affected by little than by great things. You may feed a child all the year round and never get its thanks, but give it a sweetmeat or an orange and you may have its heart and its gratitude. Strange that the bounties of a whole year should seem to be lost, while the gift of a moment is greatly prized. A little thing, I say, may often touch the heart more than a great thing. Now, how often have we, if we have acted rightly, taken little things before the Lord. I believe it is the Christian’s privilege to take all his sorrows to his God, be they little or be they great. I have often

prayed to God about a matter at which you would laugh if I should mention it. In looking back I can only say it was a little thing, but it seemed great at the time. It was like a little thorn in the finger, it caused much pain and might have brought forth, at last, a great wound. I learned to lay my little troubles at the feet of Jesus. Why should we not? Are not our *great ones little* in *His* sight? And is there, after all, much difference between great troubles and little ones in the sight of God?

The queen will stand at one hour listening to her ministers, who talk with her about public business, but does she seem less a queen when, afterwards, her little child runs to her as its mother, because a gnat has stung it? Is there any great condescension in the matter? She who was a right royal queen when she stood in the privy chamber is as right royal a queen and as well-beloved a mother of the nation, when she takes the little child upon her knee and gives it a maternal kiss. Her ministers must not present trifling petitions, but her children may. So the *worldling* may say this morning, "How absurd to think of taking little troubles to God." Ah, it might be absurd to *you*, but to God's children it is not.

Though you were God's prime minister, if you were not His child, you would have no right to take your private troubles to Him. But God's meanest child has the privilege of casting his care upon his Father and he may rest assured that his Father's heart will not disdain to consider even his mean affairs. Now let me think of the innumerable little things God has done for me. In looking back, my unbelief compels me to wonder at myself, that I should have prayed for such little things. My gratitude compels me to say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard those little prayers and answered my little supplications and made me blessed, even in little things which, after all, make up the life of man."

VI. Once more—let me remind you, in the sixth place, of THE TIMELY ANSWERS WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO YOUR PRAYERS and this should compel you to love Him. God's answers have never come too soon nor yet too late. If the Lord had given you His blessing one day before it did come, it might have been a curse and there have been times when if He had withheld it an hour longer it would have been quite useless, because it would have come too late. In the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, there occurs a memorable scene at Devizes. When he went there to preach, the curate of the parish assembled a great mob of people, who determined to throw him into the horse pond and if he would not promise that he would never come into the town again they would kill him. He escaped into the house and hid himself upstairs.

They besieged the house for hours, battering at the doors, breaking every pane of glass in the windows and at last to his consternation, they climbed the roof and began to throw the tiles down into the street, so as to enter the house from above. He had been in prayer to God to deliver him and he said, "I believe my God will deliver me." But when he saw the heads of the people over the top of the room in which he was concealed and when they were just about to leap down he very nearly gave up all hope. He thought surely God would not deliver him—when in rushed one

of the leaders of the mob, a gentleman of the town who did not wish to incur the guilt of murder and proposed to him that he would get him away if he would only promise that he would never come back again. "No," said he, "I will never promise that. "But," said the man, "Is it your intention that you will not return immediately?" "Well" he said, "I do not say I shall come back just yet, I do not see any use in it. As you drive me away, therefore I shall shake off the dust of my feet against you, but I mean to come back again before I die." "Well," said the man, that will do, if you only promise you will not come back directly I will get you away."

And so, by a great deliverance, he was saved from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. His prayer was answered at the right time. Five minutes afterwards he would have been dead. Now cannot you say that the answer has come to you punctually at the very tick of the clock of wisdom, not before nor after?

VII. Now, the seventh remembrance with which I would inspire you is this—will you not love the Lord, when you remember the special and great instances of His mercy to you? You have had seasons of special prayer and of special answer. Let me picture a man. There was one who feared not God, nor regarded man. He was engaged in business and his affairs were not propitious, but rather everything went against him. He went against God and kicked the more because God kicked against him. He had servants about him that feared God and worshipped Him. But as for himself, he had no thought or regard for religion. His affairs became more and more perplexed and involved. One day he passed by the house of one of his workmen, where prayer was desirous to be made, and listening, he heard words uttered in supplication that touched his heart. Though he was the master, he went inside and listened to his servant while he preached.

God touched that man's heart and made him feel his need of a Savior. He went home and he had now double cause for prayer. He went to the Lord and told him he was a poor, wretched undone sinner and that he wanted mercy. And then he told the Lord, though he did not make it very prominent, that he was a poor, almost broken merchant, and that if God did not appear for him, he knew not but that he must be driven out of house and home. These two cases were laid before God. First of all, God heard his prayer for his soul. He gave him joy and peace in believing. And poor as he was at that time, he found enough to assist in erecting a house where the Gospel might be preached. The Lord who had delivered him spiritually, now came to his assistance temporally. His affairs took a different turn, floods of prosperity rolled in upon him and he is at this very day a living witness of the power of God to answer man's prayer for spiritual and for temporal things, too.

And if it were needed, he could bear his willing witness of special answer in that special time of necessity. And does he not love his God? I know he does. For he delights to honor Him, he delights to give of his substance to Him. And there may be others of you here present whose characters have been pictured in this one which I have portrayed before

you who are saying, "Surely he means me." Oh, will you not then, at the remembrance of what God did in that double mercy, say, "I love Him. What can I do for him? There is nothing too great for me to give—nothing too large for me to do. Only let me know my duty and the remembrance of his marvelous bounty shall lead me to give of my substance to Him. To give my whole heart to Him. I will be wholly His and hope that in death He will receive me to Himself."

Men and women, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—will you look back a few short years and remember the time when you were on your knees before God, seeking Him? I could fix my eye today upon many a man who has been a drunkard, a swearer, a breaker of God's holy day, a hater of everything good. I think I see you in that upper chamber of yours. Oh, how you cried, how you groaned! Oh, with what agony did you pour out your unutterable sighs! You rose up and you thought God would not have mercy on you. You went to your business. How wretched you were! You went back again to the chamber. And how the beam out of the wall could speak now and tell you how you cried and cried and cried again before His Mercy Seat.

Do you love Him but a little today? Has your love grown cold? Go home and look again upon the chair against which you kneeled. Look at the very walls and see if they do not accuse you, saying, "I heard you pray to God for mercy and He has heard you. Now I see your cold-heartedness. I mark your lukewarmness in His cause." Go home to your chamber, fall on your knees and with tears of gratitude say—

***"O you, my Soul, bless God the Lord.
And all that in me
Be stirred up, His holy name
To magnify and bless!"***

Some of us can remember other special seasons of prayer. Members of my Church, I remind you of that solemn season, when, like a hurricane of desolation, the judgment of God swept through our midst. Standing in this pulpit this very morning, I recall to myself that evening of sorrow, when I saw my people scattered like sheep, without a shepherd, trod upon, injured and many of them killed. Do you remember how you cried for your minister, that he might be restored to a reason that was then tottering? Can you remember how you prayed that out of evil God would bring forth good, that all the curses of the wicked might be rolled back upon themselves and God would yet fill this place with His glory? And do you remember how long ago that is and how God has been with us ever since and how many of those who were injured that night, are now members of our Church and are praising God that they ever entered this house?

Oh, shall we not love the Lord? There is not a Church in London that has had such answers to prayer as we have. There has not been a Church that has had such cause to pray. We have had special work, special trial, special deliverance and we ought pre-eminently to be a Church loving God and spending and being spent in His service. Remember again the varied

times of your sickness, when you have been sick, sore and near unto death. Let me picture my own experience that I may remind you of yours. I remember when I came to this pulpit in agony and preached you a sermon which seemed to cost me my life's blood at every word I uttered. I was taken home to my bed full of grief and agony. I remember those weary nights, those doleful days, that burning brow, those roaming thoughts, those specters that haunted my dreams, that sleep without sleep, that rest that knew no rest, that torture and that pain.

Then I sought God and cried that He would spare me to stand in this pulpit once again. Oh, I thought then, in my poor foolish way, that I would preach as I never had preached before, as "a dying man to dying men." I hoped my ministry was not over. I trusted I might have another opportunity of freeing myself from the blood of hearers, if any of that blood were on my garments. Here I stand and I have to chide myself that I do not love Him as I ought. Yet nevertheless, in the remembrance of His great mercy, saving my soul from death and my eyes from tears, I must love Him and I must praise Him. And I must in reminding each of you of similar deliverances, beseech and entreat you to bless the Lord with me. O let us magnify His name together! We must do something fresh, something greater, something larger than we have done before.

Having thus delivered these thoughts, I shall want you now for about three minutes to listen to me while I teach you three lessons which ought to spring from this sevenfold retrospect. What shall I say then? God has heard my voice in my prayer. The first lesson, then, is this—He shall hear my voice in my *praise*. If He heard me pray, He shall hear me sing. If He listened to me when the tear was in my eye, He shall listen to me when my eye is sparkling with delight. My piety shall not be that of the dungeon and sick bed. It shall be that also of deliverance and of health—

***"I'll praise my Maker with my breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers—
My days of praise shall never be past,
While life and thought and being last,
Or immortality endures."***

Another lesson. Has God heard my voice? Then I will hear *His* voice, by His grace. If He heard me I will hear Him. Tell me, Lord, what would You have Your servant do and I will do it. What would you have me believe and I will believe it. If there is a labor which I have never attempted before, tell me to do it and I will say, "Here am I, Lord, send me." Is there an ordinance to which I never attended? Do you say, "Do this in remembrance of Me"? Is it Your command? However non-essential it seems to be, I will do it, because You have told me to do it. If You have heard my feeble voice, I will hear Yours, even though it is but a still small voice. Oh that we would learn that lesson!

The last lesson is, Lord, have You heard my voice? Then I will tell others that You will hear their voice, too. Did You save me? O Lord, if You saved *me* You can save anybody! Did You hear my prayer?—

***“Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found”***

and I will bid them pray, too. O you that never pray, I beseech you begin from this hour. May God the Spirit lead you to your chambers to cry to Him! Remember, if you ask through Jesus, you cannot ask in vain. I can prove that in a thousand instances God has heard my supplications. There was nothing more in me than there is in you. Go and plead the promise. Plead the blood and ask for the help of God's Spirit. And there is not one in this assembly who shall not receive the blessing, if God shall lead him to pray. Young man, young woman, go home. Plead with God for yourself first. You that love Him, plead for others. Let everyone of us practice the second verse of this Psalm, “Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.”

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FAITH JUSTIFYING SPEECH

NO. 3200

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 9, 1873.**

*“I believed, therefore have I spoken.”
Psalm 116:10.*

SOME translators render this passage, “I believed, though I have spoken as I have done,” for the Psalmist had spoken words suggestive of unbelief. But, although he had spoken unwisely and unbelievably, yet, deep down in his heart, he did still believe in his God. What a mercy it is for us that God does not judge us by our hasty speeches! If He can see only a spark of faith amidst the dense smoke of our unbelief, He accepts it!

We will, however, take the text as we find it in our version—“I believed, therefore have I spoken.” To speak what we believe to be false is atrocious. God grant that our lips may never be defiled by the utterance of anything that we do not really believe! To speak what we only think to be true is idle and often mischievous. Many have been grieved and hurt by the repetition of slanders which have passed from mouth to mouth without anyone being able to vouch for their accuracy—and those who repeated them have often done serious injury to the characters of those who were far better than themselves. On the other hand, to know the Truth of God, and not to speak it, is cowardly. The Psalmist did not say, “I believed, and yet I was silent,” for that silence might have proved that he was of a cowardly spirit and was afraid that some unpleasant consequences might come upon himself if he dared to deliver unpopular truth. Every speaker is glad enough to say that which will please his auditors and bring credit to himself, but a true man declares what he believes, even though his hearers gnash their teeth at him because of his faithful testimony! To speak what you believe is your duty—to speak what you believe will be likely to benefit those who hear it and to speak what you believe will bring honor and glory to God who taught you the Truth. Therefore say with the Psalmist, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” I spoke out with my tongue what I had verified in my inmost soul.”

I am going to use the text in three ways. First, *as the justification of the Christian minister*. Secondly, *as the argument for Christian profession*. And thirdly, *as the motive for supplication*.

I. First, then, let us consider our text as THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER. “I believed, therefore have I spoken.”

No man ever ought to speak in God's name, as a preacher of the Gospel, unless he can say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." When Paul quoted this verse, he added, "We also believe, and, therefore, speak." And we who preach the Gospel, if we are really sent of God, believe what we speak in His name. It is a scandal and a shame that there are some ministers who do not believe the doctrines of the church to which they belong, yet they still retain both their position and their pay. I would not consider that I was worthy of the name of an honest man if I took money as the pastor of a Christian Church after I had given up my belief in the Truths I had professed to hold. We hear a great deal, nowadays, about the liberty of ministers to preach what they like, but what about the liberty of the people? Are they not to be considered? Are churches made for ministers, or ministers made for churches? After the people have elected a man to be their pastor, and he changes his views, it is only common honesty that he should say so and no longer pretend to preach what he does not believe, or to belong to a church with which he is not sincerely in sympathy. I cannot imagine a more dreary task than it would be for me to stand here simply to repeat what you wished me to say although my heart did not endorse the words I had to utter! I would never be such a slave as that, but would sooner break stones on the road, or labor at the treadmill in prison!

There are some who do not believe the Bible, but we believe it. There are some who question the great Truths of the faith, but we can lay our hand upon our heart and say that we do not question them. There are some who deny the Deity of Christ and the efficacy of His atoning blood but, as for us, we verily believe them and, therefore, we proclaim them to others. We believe what we speak—and we speak because we believe God has called us to speak. If we could be silent, we would, but we feel that we must preach the Gospel! The man who is sent of God cannot do otherwise than deliver the message that has been given to him—he feels that the fire within him would consume him if he did not let flaming words pour forth from his lips! It was because the Lord had made Ezekiel a watchman unto the house of Israel that he proclaimed his Master's message with such power and unction—and it must be in a similar way that a minister must be to his people as the mouth of God!

Moreover, *we believe that the Truths of God we are bid to preach are so important that we cannot be silent concerning them.* We believe that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that God is angry with the wicked every day and that, if men live and die in their sins, they must be cast away from His Presence forever. There may be some of our hearers who will not give heed to our message, but we believe it and, therefore, we speak it. It has become unfashionable to talk of Hell and to mention the wrath to come which is awaiting the ungodly, but fashionable or unfashionable, we cannot keep silent concerning these terrible Truths and we try to use them as Paul did, "Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We will not, in unhallowed silence, keep

back from sinners a true statement of their present lost condition and of their future awful doom unless they repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! I have often used as the language of my own heart those solemn lines that John Wesley translated—

***“Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
Your Spirit’s course in me restrain?
Or undismayed in deed and word,
Be a true witness for my Lord?
Awed by a mortal’s frown,
Shall I conceal the Word of God Most High?
How then before You shall I dare
To stand, or how Your anger bear?
Shall I, to soothe the unholy throng,
Soften Your Truths and smooth my tongue?
To gain earth’s gilded toys, or flee
The Cross endured, my God, by Thee?
The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

There, is, however, more than this that we believe and, therefore, speak. We believe that a great Atonement has been offered for sin, that by His death upon Calvary’s Cross, Jesus Christ cleared the channel of Divine Mercy so that now, without injury to His Justice, God can forgive human transgression. Most intensely do we believe, “that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” How can we keep silent when we have such good tidings to tell? Accursed would be our lips if we should retain this heavenly secret! We will not do so. We believe and, therefore, do we proclaim to all that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We believe that there is a full and free pardon for every sinner who believes in Jesus, that there is acceptance with God through the righteousness of Christ for every sinner who truly repents and believes, that there is regeneration, that there is adoption into the family of God, that there is salvation here, and eternal glory hereafter, for everyone that believes in Jesus! And believing all this, can we remain silent concerning it? Why, sometimes when a man has made a great discovery, he feels as if he must run down the street, as that old mathematician did, crying, “Eureka! Eureka!” when he had solved the problem that had so long puzzled him. We, too, can cry, “Eureka! Eureka!” for we have found what we long sought in vain! We have found a sovereign balm for every wound, a cordial for all care. We have found that which brings even the dead to life and which will bring to Heaven those who have been lying at Hell’s dark door! How can we keep to ourselves such wondrous discoveries as these? Can we hide in our own heart all that we have learned concerning our blessed Savior? As for me, I say with Charles Wesley—

***“My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim
And spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of Your name.”***

Further, we speak the Truth of God that has been revealed to us because *we believe the preaching of the Gospel will effect great good*. We do not preach the Gospel merely because we believe that it may be useful—we preach it because we believe that it *must* be useful. It is not with us a question whether God will or will not bless the ministry that He has Himself ordained—we believe that He must bless His own Word, for we have His promise that He will do so. “It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” There is not a true sermon preached beneath the cope of Heaven, whether in a cathedral, or on a village green, that God will not bless, in some way or other, and make it tend to His own Glory. We do not expect this result because of any merit or fitness in our hearers, for they are spiritually like the dry bones that Ezekiel saw in the valley. Our faith is in the Spirit of God to whom we cry even as the Prophet cried, “Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” And the result in our case is the same as it was in his—

***“Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh.”***

We believe and, therefore, do we speak—and *this often accounts for our style of speaking*—and sometimes accounts for the faults of it. The man who believes does not always weigh his words, or guard his statements, or speak as coolly and deliberately as others do. They tell us that we sometimes wax too warm. If we do, it is because we believe so fervently the Truths of God that we preach! Some say that, at times, we are harsh and intolerant. But he who believes the Truth cannot be tolerant of the error that would cloud it! Was Elijah too harsh? That is not a question that we need answer—we know that it was because he believed so fully in Jehovah that he could not have any part or lot with the prophets of Baal or the prophets of the groves. He would not have used the popular language of the present day and boasted of his charity to all men, true or false. He knew that as truth is true, a lie is a lie, and is to be treated as a lie, not as though it ought to be welcomed on equal terms with the truth! He believed, and, therefore, he spoke and acted as he did! And, dear Friends, you must not be surprised if we sometimes speak more severely than you think we ought. Intense conviction often carries a man beyond what his hearers might think to be justifiable. I have seen politicians excited and some of their words have been anything but decorous. I have been in the Paris Bourse and have seen how excited the dealers in stocks and shares have been, and how they raged and raved like Bedlamites as prices rose and fell. May other men be excited about gold or government and may we never be excited about God and His Truth, about Heaven and Hell, about the eternal welfare of our own and our fellow creatures’

souls? This is our justification—we believe and, therefore, speak—we believe so intensely that we are bound to speak with the accent of conviction!

Luther used to preach like one who had found the grand secret which he must proclaim to others. Some of the things that he said could not be repeated nowadays—they would not at all suit the modern taste—yet he spoke as the times in which he lived needed that he should speak! It must have been grand to hear him, or that other mighty preacher, John Knox, of whom it was said that he was so feeble and so full of pain that as he went up to the pulpit, one might have feared that he would have died before he finished his discourse, yet, before he had proceeded far, so excited did he grow as the Truth of God burned and blazed up in his soul, that it seemed as if the pulpit, itself, would be smashed to pieces with the intense force that he threw into his preaching! Yes, Luther and Knox believed and, therefore, spoke with an emphasis and a fervor that would be accounted madness in these prim and proper times in which we live! And we would far rather be judged to be as “mad” as they were, than seek to please those to whom truth and lies appear to be of equal value! No, Sirs, you may mark out certain boundaries beyond which you say that we must not go, but we shall leap over them if we can thereby save some! And it is quite possible that our mannerisms and eccentricities, as you call them, will cause a shock to some of your notions of ministerial propriety. If souls are to be saved from going down to the Pit, we must be terribly in earnest even as our Master was. If brands are to be plucked from the burning, we shall not do such work with kid-gloved hands! This generation is so engrossed with its idols and heresies that it will not be called to the living God by gentle whispering or the lisp of a love-sick maid. We must cry aloud and spare not! We must preach earnestly, intensely and, as some will judge, roughly. And even then, nothing will come of our preaching unless the Spirit of God, Himself, shall accompany it with His own effectual working in the hearts of our hearers. God grant that He may do so!

I must close this part of the subject by saying that when the Psalmist said, “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” he meant, “*What I spoke, that I believed.*” And we are prepared to adopt his language and to attach the same meaning to it and also to add that *what we have spoken in the past, that we still believe.* We have not changed our views, our sentiments, or Doctrines. But do we not pay any tribute to the enlightenment of the age? Are we not to keep pace with the growth of the intelligence of this wonderful 19th Century? Brothers and Sisters, we do not believe in doing anything of the kind! What was true 20 years ago is true, now, and what is true now will be just as true 20 years hence. I once talked with a minister who said to me, “You must find it very easy to preach.” I asked him why he thought so, and he replied, “Because you believe a certain set of Truths and you have only to preach them.” “Yes,” I answered, “it is

so, but is not that also the case with you?” “Oh, dear no,” he said, “I think my creed out every week. It is constantly changing, for I am so receptive.” We are also receptive—not receptive of modern novelties and heresies, nor of the mere fantasies of our own brain, but we are receptive of all that we find in this blessed Book! *And that never changes.* We may receive new light upon what is in the Word, but the new light will not make that false which was true before the new light came! We hope, when the time comes for us to die, that we shall be able to say, “As we commenced our ministry, so we finish it. Our first sermon was on the same lines as our last. Of course there was a growth in our power of receiving and expounding the Truth of God, but it was the same Truth that we received and that we preached at the first and at the last.” The end of our conversion, like that of the Apostle Paul and the faithful preachers of his day, has been, is now and, we trust, by God’s Grace, still will be, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

II. Now, secondly, we are to use our text as THE ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION—“I believed, therefore have I spoken.”

Brothers and Sisters, true faith in the Gospel is not dumb faith. *When a man believes it, he is bound to make an open profession of his belief.* What is the Gospel? I will give it to you in our Lord’s own Words—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There is to be the confession of faith made in Baptism as well as the belief of the Gospel with the heart. Paul thus summarizes “the word of faith” which he preached—“If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” You see how closely the confession of faith is connected with the faith, itself. And the promise of salvation is given at least in these two texts, to the faith that is united with the confession of it. It is the bounden duty of everyone who believes in Jesus to confess that he does so believe. You know how Christ Himself put it—“Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess, also, before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, (and denying is, in that verse, tantamount to not confessing), him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.” You have no right to say, “I am a Believer in Christ, but I do not make a profession of my faith.” The profession of your faith is, under the Gospel, just as much your duty as the faith, itself, is! Indeed, I venture to say that true faith necessitates a confession of some sort. If a man believes the great Truths of which I have been speaking, he cannot altogether conceal his belief in them—his conviction of their truth is bound to come out sooner or later—and the sooner it comes out, the better. John Bunyan tells us that when he had found the Savior, he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it—which is to me an indication of the instinct which moves a man, when he has found Christ, to want to proclaim the good news far and wide!

Besides, *this confession of faith is due to the minister whose message has been blessed to his hearers.* Should he not be cheered and comforted by hearing that the Word he has preached has been used of God to the salvation of souls? He has more than enough to depress his spirit—ought he not to have anything that he can to encourage him? And what can bring him greater joy than the knowledge that he has not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for nothing?

The confession of faith is also due to the Church with which the convert unites. In the Apostolic days they first gave themselves unto the Lord and then gave themselves unto His people according to the will of God. Why should it not be the same now? How else is the Church to grow? How is it to have new blood put into its veins except concerning the coming forward of the young converts whom the Lord has looked upon in His mercy and saved by His Grace?

The confession of faith is especially due to the Lord who has implanted it in the heart. In these evil days when the enemies of the faith seem to be ashamed of nothing, none of those who are His friends ought to be ashamed of Him. The gage of battle has been thrown down. Many are massing around the black standard of the Prince of Darkness, so will not all of you who truly love the Prince Emmanuel, rally around His blood-red banner?—

***“You that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.”***

If, indeed, you have been redeemed by His precious blood. If His Spirit has, indeed, regenerated you. And if His Grace is working in your hearts and lives, surely you cannot be so cowardly as to try to conceal yourselves as secret disciples of Christ! To do battle for Jesus is the most honorable service on earth! And, in the great Day of Account, happy shall he be who has bravely borne his part in the great conflict that is now raging between Christ and His Truth and anti-Christ and his lies! Come to the front, Brothers and Sisters! Come to the front! Press forward to that point where the fight is the fiercest, for he is the happiest Christian who can *do*, and *dare*, and *suffer* the most for Jesus Christ, his Lord! Do not, for very shame, conceal your faith if you really believe in Jesus!

Probably the most of you are placed in positions where you are obliged to speak if you are Believers. In the workshop, how much is there of infidelity! In common business life, how much of indifference! In the gayer circles of society, how much of contempt for true religion! And in the coarser circles, how much of vulgar blasphemy! Shame on the man or woman who can live in the midst of worldlings and never let them know that they belong to Christ!

Surely, too, the very fact that you are so often in the company of Christian people ought to make you confess your faith. Even under the old dispensation, “they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another.”

And they that truly fear the Lord do the same now. If you are among the God-fearing people of the present day, your speech will betray you. Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ will note your accent, they will perceive that you use their shibboleth, that you have been with Jesus and have learnt of Him. If any of you have received the blessing of salvation through the ministry here, come forward and avow your faith! I do not urge you to do this simply that we may add to our numbers, but as I have already reminded you, this is the reward of our labor which we deserve at your hands. If you have, indeed, passed from death unto life, come out boldly and say so! Though you may be one of the poorer members of the congregation. Though your faith may not be as strong as that of others. Yet if it is genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall rejoice over you and with you with exceeding joy! Whoever you may be, if you are truly trusting in Jesus, “come with us, and we will do you good.” When the question rings out in your hearing, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” Answer, “I am! I have enlisted among the soldiers of Christ and as I take Him to be my Captain, now, I trust that He will acknowledge me as one of His in the day when the last muster-roll of His troops is called and He gathers them all around Him to share with Him the spoils of His great victory.”—

**“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long.
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor’s song!
To him that overcomes,
A crown of life shall be—
He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally!”**

III. I can only very briefly refer to the consideration of our text as THE MOTIVE FOR SUPPLICATION. “I believed, therefore have I spoken.”

First, *I believed in prayer, therefore have I spoken unto God.* I did not regard it as a religious luxury, a pious but useless exercise and waste of time, as so many nowadays say that prayer to God is. I believe that as truly as you are listening to me, now, so God listens to me and I can speak to Him and receive answers from Him. That is the way to pray, young man—to speak to God because you believe that He is the hearer and answerer of prayer, for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

I also believed that Jesus Christ was pleading for me. By faith I could see the Man, Christ Jesus, standing before His Father’s Throne, with His pierced hands uplifted and presenting my poor prayers to His Father and so making them acceptable through His intercession on my behalf. I believed in Him as the Mediator between God and man and, therefore, I dared to speak to God by virtue of His mediation, though I could not have acceptably approached the Majesty on High in any other way.

I also believed in the Holy Spirit as working in me and teaching me how to pray. The Holy Spirit gave me right desires and helped my infirmities,

for I knew not what to pray for as I ought. But because the mind of the Spirit is also the mind of God, I was able, under His gracious guidance, to approach the Throne of Grace acceptably and, therefore, because I believed in the Spirit, therefore have I spoken unto God in prayer—and I have not spoken in vain!

I also believed in God's promise to hear and answer prayer and, therefore, I have spoken unto Him in the full conviction that He would hear and answer me. I believed that every promise that He had given would be kept to the very letter, so I took each promise as I needed it, quoted it when bowing before God in prayer—and then left it with Him, saying, “Lord, do as You have said. Here is Your promise. I believe it, therefore have I spoken it in Your ears. Will You not fulfill this Word unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope?” I believed that God was faithful, so that He would fulfill His promise and that He was willing, so He could fulfill it and grant me all that I needed so long as I could find in His Word a promise adapted to my case.

“I believed, therefore have I spoken.” This is the way to pray. An unbelieving prayer asks God for a refusal of its requests. Remember what the Apostle James writes—“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”

If you believe the Bible, speak of it wherever you can. If you believe in Jesus, preach Him to all who are within sound of your voice. If you believe in the Spirit, walk in His might and tell others of that wondrous power. But if you have never believed, may the Lord grant you Grace to believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit! May He grant you Grace to believe the Bible, Grace to believe the Gospel and then, when you have believed, may you not keep the blessing to yourself, but first make your own personal confession of faith—and then publish far and wide all that has been revealed to you by the Spirit! So shall you be able to say with the Psalmist, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 116.

We have read this Psalm many times. Let us read it now, regarding it not so much as the language of the Psalmist uttered thousands of years ago, but as our own language at this moment.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD.* Let us go as far as that if we can. Let us, each one, say, “I love the Lord.”

1. *Because.* There is a reason for this love. People say that love is blind, but love to God uses her eyes and can justify herself! “I love the Lord, because”—

1. *He has heard my voice and my supplications.* [See Sermon #240, Volume 5—PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Can you go as far as that? Do you recollect answers to prayer when you cried to God with your voice, or when your voice failed you, but supplication rose to God from your heart? Surely there is not a man whose prayers have been answered, who does not love God! He must love the Lord when he recollects what poor prayers his were, what great blessings came in answer to them and how speedily and how often God has heard his prayers and granted his requests!

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* That is a vow which we may well make and hope for Grace to keep it. It means that as we have succeeded so well in begging at God’s door, we will keep on begging of Him as long as we live. I suppose the Psalmist meant that because Jehovah had heard him, therefore he would never call upon any false god but, as long as he lived, he would resort to the one living and true God. I hope that you and I can say the same. We have tried the Fountain of Living Waters—why should we go to broken cisterns that can hold no water? Prayer to God has always succeeded—why should we not continue it? All you who have plied the trade of mendicants at the Mercy Seat must have been so enriched by it in your souls that you are determined to stand there as long as you live. “Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.” This is sound reasoning, for even the emotions of Believers, when they are most fervent, are based upon solid reasons. We can defend ourselves even when we grow warmest in love to God and most earnest in prayer! Now the Psalmist tells one of his many experiences in prayer—

3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD.* Dark days are good days for praying. When your eyes cannot see, you pray all the better! When there is no earthly prop to lean upon, you are all the more ready to lean upon God alone! The Psalmist was like a poor worm in a ring of fire—“the sorrows of death compassed me.” The sheriff’s officer seemed to hold him in his grip—“the pains of Hell got hold upon me.” As for his inner experience, he found nothing there but “trouble and sorrow.” When the town of Mansoul was besieged, every way of escape was closed except the way upwards—and it was so with the Psalmist and, therefore, he made use of that way! “Then I called upon the name of the Lord.” His prayer was short, earnest and full of meaning—

4. *O LORD. I beseech You, deliver my soul.* [See Sermon #1216, Volume 21—TO SOULS IN AGONY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He did not have to search for a form of prayer—his words were such as came

naturally to his mind—and that is the best sort of prayer which arises out of the heart's sincere desire.

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.* The Psalmist was delivered by an act of Grace, yet it was an act of righteousness, for God is not unrighteous to break His own promise, and He has promised to help His people. Grace and righteousness both guarantee answers to believing prayers—and mercy comes in to make assurance doubly sure—“Yes, our God is merciful.”

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* Straightforward men, those who cannot play a double part, those simpletons whom others take in and laugh at because they are honest, true, genuine—the Lord preserves such people!

6. *I was brought low and He helped me.* Oh, these blessed personal pronouns! Are you laying hold of them as I read them? Are you speaking them out of your own soul?

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* [See Sermon #2758, Volume 47—“RETURN UNTO YOUR REST”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Come home to Him, for you have no other friend like He in earth or Heaven! Come back to Him, my Soul, and rest where you have often rested before.

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* An eternity of mercies from the Eternal, Himself!

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* The best style of living is walking before God, so living in His sight as to be indifferent to the opinions and judgments of our fellow men and only caring to know that God is looking upon us with approval. This is the way to live! And if we have tried it, we have found it to be so pleasant that we are resolved to continue in it!

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* They have all failed me. Some of them could but would not help me, so they were as liars to me. Others would but could not, and as I have trusted them, they were as liars to me! But You, my God, are no liar, You are the Truth itself! I ask those of you who have had a very long and varied experience to look back and tell me whether you can recollect even once when your God has broken His promise. You have sometimes been afraid that He would forget it, but has He ever done so? If you speak as you have found Him, you must praise and adore the Faithful, Immutable, All-Sufficient Jehovah who has made your strength to be as your days even to this very hour!

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* That question contains the essence of true religion. This should be the one objective of our lives if we have been redeemed by Christ and are His servants. Whatever we have done for God, we should endeavor to do much more—and to do it much better.

13. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.* This is a curious way of rendering anything, yet you know that John Newton's hymn says—

***“The best return for one like me
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”***

14-16. *I will say my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosened my bonds.* [See Sermon #312, Volume 6—PERSONAL SERVICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is a great blessing if we are able to say, as David did, that we are born into God's house. Some of us had gracious mothers who brought us to the Lord in earnest prayer long before we knew anything. I can say to the Lord, “I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid”—and I have no greater wish than that all my descendants may be the Lord's.

17-18. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.* Do it, Beloved! Let your hearts pour themselves out in silence, now, and afterwards in grateful song before the Lord. Praise Him, magnify Him, bless His name, “in the presence of all His people.” It is inspiriting to be with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Perhaps the devotion which burns low when there is only one brand on the hearth will burn all the better and brighter when we add many blazing brands to it!

19. *In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.*

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

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***“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?”
Psalm 116:12.***

DEEP emotion prompts this question. But where are the depths of love and gratitude that can meet its exuberant demands? You will perhaps remember an incident in the life of a famous soldier, who also became a famous Christian, Colonel James Gardiner. One night he was little thinking of Divine things, but on the contrary had made an appointment of the most vicious kind. He was waiting for the appointed hour when he saw, or thought he saw before him in the room where he sat alone, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

He was impressed, as if a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, had come to him to this effect—“O sinner, I did all this for you. What have you done for me?” Some such representation as that I would put before the eyes of every person in this assembly. I earnestly pray that the vision of the Christ of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, may appear to all your eyes. And may a Voice say in your conscience, both to saint and sinner, “I did all this for you. What have you done for Me?” It will be a humiliating night probably for us all, if such should be the case—but humiliation may prove salutary—yes, the very healthiest frame of mind in which we can be found.

I. I shall first of all this evening, invite you to CAST UP A SUM IN ARITHMETIC. The text suggests this. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” Come, let us reckon up! Though I know that the number will surpass all human numeration, let us try to reckon up His benefits toward any one of us. I wish each one of you, distinctly and severally, would now endeavor to think of the mercy of God towards yourself.

First, let us call over the roll of our temporal mercies. They are but secondary, but they are very valuable. There is a special Providence in the endowment of life to each individual creature. David did not disdain to trace back the hand of God to the hour of his nativity. And Paul adored the Grace of God that separated him from the time that his mother gave him birth. Our gratitude may, in like manner, revert to the days when we hung upon the breast. Or in the case of some, you may thank the goodness that supplied the lack of a mother’s tender love.

Childhood's early days might then make our thoughts busy, and our tongues vocal with praise. But here we are now. We have been preserved, some of us, these thirty or forty years. We might have been cut down and punished in our sin. We might have been swept away to the place where despair makes eternal night. But we have been kept alive in the midst of many accidents. By some marvelous godsend, death has been turned aside just as it seemed, with a straight course, to be posting toward us. When fierce diseases have been waiting round to hurry us to our last home, we have yet escaped.

Nor have we merely existed. God has been pleased to give us food, raiment, and a place where to lay our weary heads. To many here present He has given all the comforts of this life, till they can say, "My cup runs over, I have more than any heart can wish." To all here He has given enough, and though you may have passed through many straits, your bread has been given you, and your water has been sure. Is not this cause for thankfulness?

You cannot think of a shivering beggar tonight in the streets, you cannot think of the hundreds of thousands in this unhappy country—unhappy for that reason—who have no shelter but such as the poorhouse can afford them. And no bread but such as is doled out to them as a pauper's meager pittance, without being grateful that you have been, up to now, supplied with things convenient for your sustenance, and defended from that bitter, biting penury which palls self-respect, crows industry, damps the ardor of resolution, chafes the heart, corrodes the mind, prostrates every vestige of manliness, and leaves manhood itself to be the prey of misery and the victim of despair.

More than that, we have reason tonight to be very grateful for the measure of health which we enjoy. "It is indeed a strange and awful sensation to be suddenly reduced by the unnerving hand of sickness to the feebleness of infancy. For giant strength to lie prostrate, and busy activity to be chained to the weary bed." Oh, when the bones begin to ache, and sinews and tissues seem to be but roads for pain to travel on, then we thank God for even a moment's rest. Do you not know what it is to toss to and fro in the night and wish for the day, and when the daylight has come, to pine for the night?

If there has been an interval of relief, just a little lull in the torture and the pain, how grateful you have been for it! Shall we not be thankful for health, then, and specially so for a long continuance of it? You strong men that hardly know what sickness means, if you could be made to walk the wards of the hospital and see where there have been broken bones, where there are disorders that depress the system, maladies incurable, pangs that rack and convulse the frame, and pains all but unbearable, you would think, I hope, that you had cause enough for gratitude.

Not far off this spot there stands a dome—I thank God for the existence of the place of which it forms a part—but I can never look at it. I hope I never shall, without lifting up my heart in thanks to God that my reason is spared.

It is no small unhappiness to be bereft of our faculties, to have the mind swept to and fro in hurricanes of desperate, raging madness, or to be victims of hallucinations that shut you out from all usefulness, and even companionship with your fellow men. That you are not in St. Luke's or Bedlam tonight should be a cause for thankfulness to Almighty God.

But why do I enlarge here? Consider to what pains the human body may be subjected. Imagine what ills may come upon humanity. Conceive what distress, what woe, what anguish, we are all capable of bearing—and then in proportion as you have been secured from all these, and in proportion on the other hand as you have been blessed with comforts and enjoyments—“let each generous impulse of your nature warm into ecstasy.” And then ask yourselves the question, “What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward us?” Cast up the sum, and then draw a line and ask what is due to God for even these common gifts of Providence.

But, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you who have something better than this life to rest upon, I touch a higher and a sweeter string—a chord which ought to tremble with a nobler melody, when I say to you—think of the *spiritual* blessings which you have received! It is not very long ago that you were in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. We look back but for a little while, some of us, and we were under the bondage of the Law. We had been awakened, and we felt the load and the guilt of sin—a grievous burden from which we feared we never could escape—a flagrant defilement from which we knew no means of cleansing.

Do not I remember well my fruitless prayers, my tears that were my meat both day and night, my grief of heart! They cut me to the quick, and I found no kind of deliverance! How I sought the Lord then! How I cried for mercy, but I found none! I was shut up and could not come forth. I was delivered up to fear, and doubt, and despair. Bless the Lord, it is over now! Blessed be the name of God, my soul has escaped like a bird out of the net! And this night, instead of talking of sin as a thing unpardonable, I can stand here and say for you, as well as myself, that He has put away all our iniquity, and cast our transgressions into the depths of the sea!

If He had never done anything for us but that, it seems to me that we should be bound forever and forever to extol His name with as much exultation as Miriam and Moses felt, when Miriam took the timbrel, and Moses wrote the song, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.”

Not indeed, Beloved, that forgiven sin was the total. It was but an *item*, the beginning of His tender mercies towards us. For after that He comforted us like as a mother comforts her children. He bound up every wound. He removed every blot. He covered us with a robe of righteousness and decked us

with the jewels of the Spirit's Graces. He adopted us into His family, even we who were aliens by nature, foes by long habit, rebels and traitors by our revolt against His government. He made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All the privileges of sonship, which never would have been ours by nature, have been secured to us by regeneration, and by adoption. All His benefits!

If these were all, oh, what should we render unto Him who is the Author and Giver of such inestimable blessings? All His benefits! How could we estimate their value, even if we had to stop here? Mark you, they *are* benefits, indeed, not merely the kind intent of benevolence, or good wishes, which may or may not be of real service to us. But verily the saving effect of beneficence, or good deeds accomplished for us—the full advantage of which we have richly to enjoy.

There is a vexatious uncertainty about all human philanthropy. How weak it often is, expending strength for nothing, and failing to mature its best projects! Though the physician should exhaust the resources of medical science while he spares no pains in watching his patient, that patient may die. Though the advocate pleads for his client with intense fervor, cogent reasoning, and a torrent of eloquence, that client may yet lose his cause. Though the general of an army command the troops ever so skillfully, and fight against the enemy ever so bravely, the battle may yet be lost.

The heroic volunteer who assays to rescue a drowning man may fail in the endeavor and lose his own life in the attempt. The valiant crew that man the lifeboat may not succeed in bringing the shipwrecked to shore. The best aims may miscarry. Kindness, like ore of gold in the breast of the creature, may never be minted into the coin of benefit, or pass current for its real worth. Not all donations expended in charity are effectual to relieve distress. But the benefits of *God* are all fully beneficial. They answer the ends they are designed to serve.

Forgetfulness on the part of God's children is without excuse, for here we are, monuments of mercy, pillars of Grace, living Epistles—yes, the living, the living to praise You, O God, as I do this day. And thus beholden to the Lord for all His benefits, I feel that my thoughts and actions of adoring gratitude should break forth, restrained by no shore, but be continually overflowing every embankment that custom has thrown up, and send out in tears of love and sweat of labor, fertilizing streams on the right hand and on the left.

All His benefits! Ring that note again. His benefits are so many, so various, so minute, that they often escape our observation while they exactly meet our wants. True it is, the Lord has done great things for us which may well challenge the admiration of angels. But true it also is that He has done little things for us, and bestowed attention upon all our tiny needs and our childish cares and anxieties. As we turn over the leaves of our diary, we are lost in wonder at

the keenness of that vision and the extent of that knowledge whereby even the hairs of our head are all numbered .

O God, what infinite tenderness, what boundless compassion You have shown to us! You have continued to forgive our offenses—You have perpetually upheld us in the hour of temptation. What comforts have delighted our soul in the times of trouble! What gentle admonitions have brought us back in the times of our going astray! We have had *preserving* mercies, *sustaining* mercies, *enriching* mercies, *sanctifying* mercies. Who shall count the small dust of the favors and bounties of the Lord?

My dear Brethren, it is no small benefit that God has conferred upon some of us that we are members of a happy Church on earth—that we are united together in the bonds of love. I know some of you used to be members of other Churches where there were periodic conflicts, and you are glad enough that you have come with a loving and happy people where you can serve the Lord to your heart's content. By His Grace you meet with warm-hearted fellow Christians who bid you Godspeed. My heart exults in the thought of all the prosperity we have enjoyed in this place. The Lord's name be praised! Even as a Church, over and above the mercies which have come to us as private Christians, I would say—and I would invite you to join me in saying—“What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits toward us?”

But, Beloved, we have only *begun* the list of those mercies that we strive in vain to enumerate. We shall not try to finish it, for blessed be God, it never will be finished. He has given us *Himself* to be our portion. He has given us His Providence to be our guardian. He has given us His promises to be the vouchers of our inheritance. We shall not die, though we must sleep, unless the Lord first comes. Yet we shall sleep in Jesus! Our bones and ashes shall be watched over and preserved until the Resurrection trumpet shall summon them by its voice, and our bodies shall be reanimated by Divine power.

For our souls, we have the sure and certain hope that we shall be with Christ where He is, that we may behold His glory. We are looking forward to the blessed day when He shall say to us, “Come up higher,” and from the lower room of the feast we shall ascend into the upper chamber, nearer to the King, to sit at His right hand and feast forever. Oh, the depths of His mercy! Oh, the heights of His loving kindness! Faithfulness has followed us. Not a promise has been broken. Not one good thing has failed us!

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, what have I just given you but a sort of general outline of the mercies the Lord has bestowed on us, and the benefits we have received at His hand? If each one would try to fill that outline up, by the rehearsal of his own case, and the life story of his own experience, how much glory God might get from this assembly tonight! Your case is different from mine in the incidents that compose it. I believe mine is different from any

of yours—but this I know—there is not a man in this place that owes more to God than I do. There is not one here that ought to be more grateful.

There cannot be one that is more indebted to the goodness of the Lord than I am for every step of the pilgrimage that I have trod, from the first day even until now. I can, no, I *must* speak well of His name. Truly God is good, and I have found Him so. “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.” I have proved Him so. Well, I know all your tongues are itching to say the same. You feel that though He has led you through deep waters, and through fiery trials, and sometimes chastened you very severely, He has not given you over to death. He has dealt with you as a father with His son whom He loves, and been to you as a Friend that never forsakes.

You would not breathe half a word against His blessed name. Rather you would say, to borrow an expression which Rutherford constantly used, that you are, “drowned debtors to God’s mercy.” He meant that he was over head and ears in debt to God—he could not tell how deep his obligations were, so he just called himself, “a drowned debtor” to the loving kindness and the mercy of his God. Well, there is a sum for you. If you want to use your arithmetical faculties, sit down when you can get an hour’s quiet, and try to identify all the precious thoughts of God towards you—all His benefits.

II. Our second point shall be A CALCULATION OF THE GRATITUDE WHICH IS DUE TO GOD FOR ALL THIS. I should like to make each man his own assessor tonight, to assess the income of mercy which he has received, and put down what should be the tribute of gratitude which he should return to the revenue of the great King. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?”

Calculate, for a minute, what we owe to God the Father, and what we ought to render Him for the debt. As many as have believed in Christ were chosen of God the Father from before all worlds. He might have left them unchosen. It was His own absolute good pleasure which wrote them in the roll of the elect. He has chosen you, my Brothers and Sisters, that you should be holy, that you should be His children, that you should be made like your elder Brother, Christ Jesus. And because He chose you to this, to this you shall come—though all the powers of earth and Hell should withstand—for the Divine decree abides immutably steadfast and shall surely be fulfilled.

You are God’s favorite one, His child, ordained to dwell forever in eternal bliss. What shall we render for this? O let the thought just stir the depths of your soul a minute, if indeed it is so, that the seal of the Everlasting Covenant has been set upon you! Before the sun began to shine, or the moon to march in her courses, God did choose me, in whom there was nothing to engross His love—nothing to attract His favor. O my God, if it is so, that I, of all the sons of Adam, should be made a distinguishing object of Your Grace, and the subject of Your discriminating favor, take me. Take my body, take my soul, take my

spirit, take my goods, my talents, my faculties—take all I have, and all I am, and all I ever hope to be—for I am Yours. You have loosed my bonds, but Your mercy has bound me to Your service forever.

Now think for a minute of what you owe to God the Son, to Jesus Christ. I mean as many of you as have believed on Him. Think for a moment on the habitation of the highest Glory, and consider how Jesus left His Father's Throne, deserted the courts of angels, and came down below to robe Himself in an infant's clay. There contemplate Him living in our nature. See Him after He has grown up, leading a life of toil and pain, bearing our sicknesses, and carrying our sorrows. Let your eyes look straight into the face of the Man who was acquainted with grief.

I shall not ask you to trace all His footsteps, but I would bid you come to that famous garden, where in the dead of the night He knelt and prayed, until in agony, He sweat drops of blood. It was for you, for you, Believer, that there the bloody sweat fell to the ground! You see Him rise up. He is betrayed by His friend. For you the betrayal was endured. He is taken. He is led off to Pilate. They falsely accuse Him. They spit in His face. They crown Him with thorns. They put a mock scepter of reed into His hands—for you all that ignominy was endured! For you, especially and particularly, the Lord of Glory passed through these cruel mockings.

See Him as He bears His Cross—His shoulders are bleeding from the recent lashes. See Him, as along the Via Dolorosa He sustains the cruel load. He bears that Cross for *you*. Your sins are laid on His shoulders and make that Cross more heavy than had it been made of iron. See Him on the Cross, lifted up between Heaven and earth, a spectacle of grievous woe. Hear Him cry, "I thirst!" And hear His cry more bitter, still, while Heaven and earth are startled by it, "Why have You forsaken Me, My God, My God?"

He is enduring all those griefs for *you*. For you the thirst and the fainting, the nakedness and the agony. For you the bowing of the head, the yielding up the ghost, the slumber in the cold and silent tomb. For you His resurrection when He rises in the glory of His might, and for you afterwards the ascension into Heaven, when they sing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors." For you His constant pleading at the right hand of the Father. Yes, all for YOU, and what should be done for Him?

What tribute shall we lay at the pierced feet? What present shall we put into that nailed hand? Where are kisses that shall be sweet enough for His dear wounds? Where is adoration that shall be reverent enough for His blessed and exalted Person? Daughters of music, bring your sweetest songs! You men of wealth, bring Him your treasures. You men of fame and learning, come lay your laurels at His feet. Let us all bring all that we have, for such a Christ as this deserves more than all. What shall we render, Christ of God, to You for all Your benefits towards us?

Let me ask you to think for a moment on the third Person of the blessed Godhead, namely, the Holy Spirit. Let us never forget that when we were like filthy rags His hand touched us. When we were like corrupt and rotten carcasses in the graves of sin, His breath quickened us. It was His hand that led us to the Cross. It was His fingers that took the film from our eyes. It was His eye salve that illuminated us that we should look to Jesus and live. Since that hour the blessed Spirit has lived in our hearts. Oh, what a dreadful place, I was about to say, for God to dwell in! But the Holy Spirit has never utterly left us. We have grieved Him. We have oftentimes vexed Him—but still He is here, still resident within the soul, never departing—being Himself the very life of the living incorruptible seed that abides forever.

My dear Friends, how often the Holy Spirit has comforted you! How very frequently in your calm moments has He revealed Christ to you! How often has the blessed Truth been laid home to you with a Divine savor which it never could have had, if it had not been for Him! He is God, and the angels worship Him, and yet He has come into the closest possible contact with you. Christ was Incarnate, and the flesh in which He was Incarnate was pure and perfect. The Holy Spirit was not incarnate, but still He comes to dwell in the *bodies* of His saints—bodies still impure, still unholy.

Oh, what Grace and condescension is this! You blessed Dove, You dear Comforter, You kind Lover of the fallen sons of men—Your condescension is matchless! We love You even as we love Christ Himself, and this night if we ask the question, “What shall we render unto the Lord, the Holy Spirit, for all His benefits towards us?” we know not how to answer, but can only say, “Take us, take us, Holy Spirit. Use us. Fill us with Yourself. Sanctify us to Your holiest purposes. Use us right up—make us living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God—for it is our reasonable service.”

Now perhaps, by God’s Spirit, the text may come a little more vividly before your minds. You have had another opportunity of adding up all the benefits of God—another opportunity, dear Brothers and Sisters, of calculating what you ought to do. Give heed, then, for I intend to come, in closing, to be very personal and practical. I wish to speak very pointedly to you as individuals—but there are so many of you that some are sure to slip away in the crowd. I half wish I were in the position of the preacher who had but one hearer, and addressed him as, “Dearly Beloved Roger.”

I want to put the question of my text as though only one person were here, and that one person, yourself. “What shall I render to the Lord?” Never mind your neighbor, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, or anybody else just now. If you are a saved soul, the question for you is, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” “What shall I render?” Suppose, dear Friend, you had been the woman bowed with an infirmity for so

many years, and Christ had loosed you, and you had stood upright tonight? What would you render?

Well, you HAVE been loosed from your infirmity—a much worse decrepitude than the physical ailment she was released from! Suppose you had been poor blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging, born blind, and you had your sight given you tonight? What would you render? But you HAVE had such a gift bestowed on you. You were in spiritual blindness—worse than that which is only natural—and Christ has opened your eyes! What will you render? Suppose you had been Lazarus, and had been in the grave so long that you began to be corrupt, and Christ had raised you to life? What would you render? Well, you HAVE been quickened when you were dead in sin. You were corrupt. You were buried in darkness and in sin. But you can say with the Psalmist, “O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave.”

Now what will you render to Him? Suppose He stood on this platform tonight, and instead of this poor voice, and these unclean lips, the voice of the Well-Beloved should speak in music to you? And the lips that are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh could talk to each of you? What would you render to Him, then? Well, do the same as though He were here, for He sees you! Yes, and His Spirit, hovering over this assembly, will accept the tribute you give as though He were here in the flesh—or otherwise He will grieve over you and resent the neglect of your heart. Think of Him as being here, and render unto Him as though He were visibly and audibly in our midst.

What will you render? Let me ask you, dearly Beloved, whether you have ever thought of what men and women can render. You may have read the lives, I hope you have, of Mr. and Mrs. Judson in Burma, ready to sacrifice all for Christ. Or the lives of our martyrs, in Foxe’s Martyrology, who rejoiced if they might burn for Christ. We still have some men and women among us—I wish there were more whose lives of consecration tell you what men can be and do. Are you anything like they are? If not, while they are not what they ought to be, and they fall short of the Master’s image, how far short must you be? Oh, I pray you are grieved that it is so, and press the question upon yourselves the more, What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

A side question may help you. What *have* you rendered? You are getting old now, or at least you are getting to the prime of life. What have you done for Christ up to this time? Come, look. Look back now, I must urge you to do it. Converted late perhaps, or if converted young, it matters not, still the question must come—What have you done up to now? Oh, I dare not answer the question myself—yet I am not in that respect the worst here—I dare not look back upon *my* past life of service for God with anything like satisfaction. After having done all that we could do, we are but unprofitable servants. We have not done what was our duty. There is no man here, I fear, who can answer the

question, “What have I rendered?” with any self-contentment. We must all drop a tear, feel abashed, and say, “Good Lord, let not the future be as barren as the past, but by Your mercy help us to a better and a nobler sort of living!”

May I ask you, as it may assist in answering the question, how old you are? Some of you tell me that you are far advanced in age. Then what must you render in the few years you can have to live? Live hard, Beloved, live hard—live fast in a *spiritual* sense, for you have little time to use, none to waste. Get as much done as can be done for your dear Lord, before He calls you to His face. You are young, others of you tell me. Oh, then with such a long opportunity as God may give you, you ought to be diligent every moment! If you are not diligent now in your early days, there is no likelihood that you will be afterwards. Since you have the special and peculiar advantage of early piety, O render to the Lord the more, because He has opened before you a wider field, and given you more time to cultivate it than full many of His people have known.

Let me ask you, again, What are your capacities? That, perhaps, will help you to answer the question. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot do much.” Well then, my dear Friend, do the little you can. Do it all—do it up to the very point—do not leave an inch untouched. If you can only do a little, do all of that, and do it heartily. And keep at it till you die. Says another, “Perhaps God has entrusted some talents to me.” Then He expects a great deal from the employment of them. O do not let your talents lie idle! Your talents are not meant for *your* gain, nor merely to serve the *world*. They are meant to *serve your God*, who has redeemed you with the precious blood of Jesus. Take care, whether you have much or little, to give Him all.

I will put another question to you that may stir your mettle. How did you serve Satan before you were converted? What rare boys some of you were—not sparing body or soul to enjoy the pleasures of sin. Oh, with what zest, with what fervor and force and vehemence did many of you dance to the tune of the devil’s music! I wish you would serve God half as well as some of the devil’s servants serve him. What? Now you have a new Friend, a new Lover, a new Husband—shall He ever look you in the face and say, “You do not love Me so well as the old. You do not serve Me so zealously”? Shall Jesus Christ say to any man or woman among us, “You do not love Me so well as you did love the world. You were never weary of serving the world, but you do soon get weary of serving Me”? O my poor Heart, wake up! Wake up! What are you doing, to have served sin at such a rate, and then to serve Christ so little?

Another question may be to the point. How do you serve yourselves? You are in business, some of you, and I like to see a man of business with his hands full and his wits about him. Your drones, those indolent fellows who go about the shop half asleep, and seem as if they never did wake up, what is the use of them? Men who seem to cumber the earth, men who never did see a

snail unless they happened to meet one, for they could not have overtaken it, they travel so slowly—such men are of little use to God or man. I know that the most of you are diligent in business. You never hear the ring of a guinea without being on the alert to earn it if possible.

Your coats are off, and very likely your shirtsleeves are turned up when there is a chance of driving trade. That I commend. But oh, do let us have something like *it* in the service of Jesus Christ! Do not let us be drudging in the world, and drawling in the Church—lively in the service of mammon, and then laggard in the service of Christ! Heart and soul, manliness, vigor, vehemence—let the utmost strain of all our powers be put forth in the service of Him who was never prone to be slow in the service of our souls when they had to be redeemed.

I shall not keep you much longer, but still pressing the same question, let me ask you, dear Friends, how do you think such service as you have rendered will look when you come to see it by the light of eternity? Oh, nothing of life will be worth having lived, when we come to die, except that part of it which was devoted and consecrated to Christ. Live, then, with your deathbeds in immediate prospect. Live in the light of the *next* world so your pulse will be quickened, and your heart excited in the Master's service.

I now put the question, What shall we render? What shall I render unto the Lord? Let the question go all round the pews, and let everybody answer, What shall I render? Is there any new thing I can do for Christ that I never did before? Cannot I speak a word for Christ to somebody tonight? Tonight, because you cannot overtake the loss of a single opportunity. Tomorrow's mercies will bring tomorrow's obligations. Today's obligations must be discharged today. What shall I render tonight? Is there anybody I can speak to of Jesus before I retire to my chamber? It is a little thing, but let me do it! What shall I render? Let me give my God praise tonight somehow.

There is the communion table around which we are about to gather. That may help me to render Him some homage. I will there take the cup of salvation, and call upon His name. Tomorrow I shall be in the world going forth to my labors. What shall I render? I will consecrate part of my substance to God, but I will try to consecrate all tomorrow and next day to Him. While I am at my work, if I use a saw, or use a hammer, or if I stand at a counter, or in the fields, or in the streets I will ask that my thoughts may be on God—that I may be kept from sin, and that by my example I may render some tribute of honor to His name in the sight of my fellow men. And I will try to seize every opportunity that comes in my way of telling—

***“To sinner round,
What a dear Savior I have found.”***

And yet, dear Friends, it is not for me to answer the question that is propounded for you. With these few brief hints I do put the question in all its

touching pathos, in all its deep solemnity, in all its momentous gravity, before every Christian man and woman here—and I cite you to answer it before the Searcher of all hearts—“What shall I render?” Thrice happy you who respond in lip and life to the urgent call! “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end that you are not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

As for those of you, my Hearers, who are not yet converted—you who are not saved—this is not the question for you. Your question is, “What must I do to be saved?” and the answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” O believe on Him tonight! Trust Him—that is the point—trust Jesus Christ. You may come to Him and be saved at once. *Then*, not till then, you will begin to *serve* Him. May God bless you, my dear Friends, every one of you, for Christ’s sake.

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PRECIOUS DEATHS

NO. 1036

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”
Psalm 116:15.***

DAVID sought deliverance from imminent peril and he felt sure of obtaining it, for being a servant of the Lord he knew that his life was too precious in the sight of God for it to be lightly brought to an end. It should be a source of consolation to all tried saints that God will not deliver them over to the hands of their enemies. It is not the will of their Father who is in Heaven that one of His little ones should perish. A shepherd who did not care for his sheep might suffer the wolf to devour it, but he who prizes it highly will put his own life in jeopardy to pluck the defenseless one from between the monster's jaws.

The text informs us that the deaths of God's saints are precious to Him. How different, then, is the estimate of human life which God forms from that which has ruled the minds of great warriors and mighty conquerors. Had Napoleon spoken forth his mind about the lives of men in the day of battle, he would have likened them to so much water spilt upon the ground. To win a victory or subdue a province—it mattered not though he strewed the ground with corpses thick as autumn leaves—nor did it matter though in every village orphans and widows wailed the loss of sires and husbands. What were the deaths of conscript peasants when compared with the fame of the Emperor? So long as Austria was humbled, or Russia invaded, little cared the imperial Corsican though half the race had perished.

Not thus is it with the King of kings! He spares the poor and needy and saves the souls of the needy. And precious shall their blood be in His sight. Our glorious Leader never squanders the lives of His soldiers. He values the Church militant beyond all price. And though He permits His saints to lay down their lives for His sake, yet is not one life spent in vain or unnecessarily expended. How different, also, is the Lord's estimate from that of persecutors! They have hounded the saints to death, considering that they did God a service. They have thought no more of burning martyrs than destroying noxious insects—and massacres of Believers have been to them as the slaying of wild beasts.

Did they not strike a medal to celebrate the massacre of the Huguenots in France? And did not the infallible Pope, himself, consider it to be a business for which to offer Te Deums to God? What if murder made the streets of Paris run with blood?—the slaughtered ones were only Protestants and the world thought itself well rid of them. Foxes and wolves and Protestants were best exterminated! As for so-called Anabaptists—they were counted worse than vipers and to crush them *utterly* was reckoned to be a salutary Christian discipline! The enemies of

the Church of God have hunted the saints as if they were beasts of the chase. They have let loose upon them the dogs of war and the hellhounds of the Inquisition as if they were not fit to live.

“Away with such a fellow from the earth” has been the general cry of persecutors against the men of whom the world was not worthy. But, precious is their blood in His sight. Though they have been cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, or dragged to death by wild horses, or murdered in dungeons, or slaughtered among the snows of the Alps, or made to fatten Smithfield with their gore—precious has their blood been and still is in His sight. He will avenge His elect when the day shall come for His patience to have had her perfect work, and for His *justice* to begin her dread assize!

The text, also, corrects another estimate, namely, our own. We love the people of God—they are exceedingly precious to us, and therefore we are too apt to look upon their deaths as a very grievous loss. We would never let them die at all if we could help it. If it were in our power to confer immortality upon our beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, we should surely do it—and to their injury we should detain them here, in this wilderness—depriving them of a speedy entrance into their inheritance on the other side the river! It would be cruel to them, but I fear we should often be guilty of it. We should hold them here a little longer, and a little longer yet, finding it hard to relinquish our grasp.

The departures of the saints cause us many a pang. We fret, also—we even repine and murmur. We count that we are the poorer because of the eternal enriching of those beloved ones who have gone over to the majority and entered into their rest! Be it known that while we are sorrowing, Christ is rejoicing! His prayer is, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” And in the advent of every one of His own people to the skies He sees an answer to that prayer, and is, therefore, glad. He beholds in every perfected one another portion of the reward for the travail of His soul and He is satisfied in it. We are grieving here, but He is rejoicing there!

Dolorous are their deaths in our sight, but *precious* are their deaths in His sight. We hang up the mournful escutcheon and sit down to mourn our full, and yet, meanwhile, the bells of Heaven are ringing, for “the bridal feast above”—the streamers are floating joyously in every heavenly street—and the celestial world keeps holiday because another heir of Heaven has entered upon his heritage! May this correct our grief. Tears are permitted to us, but they must glisten in the light of faith and hope. Jesus wept, but Jesus never repined. We, too, may weep, but not as those who are without hope, nor as though forgetful that there is greater cause for *joy* than for sorrow in the departure of our Brethren.

I. Coming, now, to the instructive text before us, we shall remark, in the first place, that THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IMPLIES A VIEW OF DEATH OF A PECULIAR KIND. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Death in itself cannot be precious—it is terrible. It cannot be a precious thing to God to see the noblest works of His hands torn in pieces, His skillful embroidery in the human body torn, defiled,

and given over to decay. Death in itself cannot be a theme for rejoicing with God.

But death in the case of Believers is another matter. To them, it is not death to die—it is a departure out of this world unto the Father—a being unclothed that we may be clothed! It is a falling asleep—an entrance into the Kingdom. To the saint death is by no means such a thing as happens unto the unregenerate. And observe where this change lies. It lies mainly in the fact that death is no more the indication of a penalty for sin upon the Believer. One great cardinal Truth of the Gospel is that the sins of Believers were laid upon Christ and were punished upon Christ, and that, consequently, no sin is imputed to the Believer, neither can any be penally visited upon him. His sin was punished in his Substitute. The righteous wrath of God has altogether ceased towards those for whom Christ died. It could not be consistent with justice that the death penalty should be executed upon Christ and then should be again visited upon those for whom Christ was a Substitute.

Death, then, does not come to me as a Believer because I deserve it and must be punished by it—it comes so to the ungodly—it is upon them a fit visitation for their iniquities, the beginning of an unending death which shall be their perpetual portion. To the saints the sting of death is gone and the victory of the grave is removed. It is no more a penalty but a *privilege* to die! What if I say it is a Covenant blessing? Paul so esteemed it, for when he said, “All things are yours, things present or things to come,” he added, “or life, or death, all are yours. And you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s”—as if the Believer’s death came to him among other good and precious things by the way of his being Christ’s and Christ’s being God’s.

To fall asleep in Jesus is a blessing of the Covenant—it is a Grace to be asked for! “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word.” I would not miss it! If I might make my choice between living till Christ comes, so as to be changed only, and not to die, or of actually sleeping in the dust, I would prefer to die—for in this the Believer who shall fall asleep will be the more closely conformed to Christ Jesus! He will have passed into the sepulcher and slept in the tomb as his Master did. He will know, as Jesus knows, what death pangs mean and what it is to gaze upon the invisible, while the visible retreats into the distance. No, let us die. The Head has traversed the valley of death-shade—let the members rejoice to follow—

**“As the Lord their Savior rose,
So all His followers must.”**

And, therefore, as the Lord the Savior slept, so let us sleep. When we think of our Master in the tomb, our hearts say, “Let us go that we may die with Him.” We would not be divided from Him in life or in death. We are so wedded to Him that we say, “Where You go I will go, where You die I will die, and with You would I be buried that with You in the resurrection morning I may be partaker of the resurrection.” Death, then, is so far changed in its aspect as it respects the saints that it is no longer a legal infliction, but it comes to us as a Covenant *blessing* conforming us to Christ. The statement of the text refutes the gloomy thought that death is

a ceasing to be. It is not the annihilation of a man, nor ought it ever to be regarded as such!

In all ages there has fingered upon mankind the fear that to die may involve ceasing to be—and of all thoughts this is one of the most gloomy. But, when God says that the death of a Believer is precious to Him it is clear that no tinge of annihilation is in the idea, for where would be the preciousness of a Believer ceasing to exist? Oh, no! The thought is gone from us! We know that to die is not to renounce existence. We understand that death is but a passage into a higher and a nobler existence. The soul emancipated from all sinfulness passes the Jordan and is presented without fault before the Throne of God. No *purgatorial* fires are needed to cleanse her—the same day she leaves the body she is with Christ in Paradise, because she is fit to be there!

The *body* in death, it is true, undergoes decay, but even for that meaner part of our manhood there is no destruction. Let us not malign the grave—it is no more a prison, but an inn—a halting place upon the road to resurrection! As Esther bathed herself in spices that she might be fit for the embraces of the king, so is the body purged from its corruption that it may rise immortal—

**“Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh.”**

The body could not rise if it had not first died! It could not spring up like a fair flower unless it had first been sown. If a grain of wheat falls not into the ground and dies, how can it spring up again? And the body is sown in dishonor that it may be raised in honor. It is sown in weakness that it may be raised in power. It is laid in the grave as a natural body that it may arise, by the infinite power of the Almighty, a spiritual body, full of life, and glory, and majesty!

Let this mortal body die, yes, let it mold into dust! What more fit than earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes? Let the gold go into the refining pot—it will lose none of its preciousness—it will only be delivered from its dross. Let the gem go to the lapidary’s house, for it shall glitter the more brightly in the royal crown in the day when the Lord shall make up His jewels! Death, too, we may be sure from this statement, cannot be any serious detriment to the Believer. It cannot be any serious loss to a saint to die. Looking upon the poor corpse, it does seem to be a catastrophe for Death to have passed his cold hand across the brow. But it is not so, for the very death is *precious* in the sight of the Lord! Therefore it is no calamity. Death, if rightly viewed, is a blessing from the Lord’s hand.

A child once found a bird’s nest in which were eggs, which it looked upon as a great treasure. It left them, and by-and-by, when a week or so had passed, went back again. It returned to its mother grieving. “Mother,” said the child, “I had some beautiful eggs in this nest, and now they are destroyed. Nothing is left but a few pieces of broken shell. Pity me, mother, for my treasure is gone.” But the mother said, “Child, here is no destruction! There were little birds within those eggs and they have flown away and are singing now among the branches of the trees. The eggs are

not wasted, Child, but have answered their purpose. It is better far as it is.”

So, when we look at our departed ones, we are apt to say, “And is this all you have left us? Ruthless Spoiler, are these ashes all?” But, Faith whispers “No, the shell is broken, but among the birds of Paradise, singing among beautiful arbors, you shall find the spirits of your beloved ones—their true manhood is not here but has ascended to their Father, God.” It is not a loss to die! It is a gain, a lasting, perpetual and illimitable gain! The man is at one moment weak and cannot move a finger—in an *instant* he is clothed with power! Call you not this a gain? That brow is aching—it shall wear a crown within the next few ticks of the clock! Is that not gain? That hand is palsied—it shall at once wave the palm branch! Is that a loss?

The man is sick beyond physician’s power but he shall be where the inhabitant is never sick! Is that a loss? When Baxter lay dying and his friends came to see him, almost the last word he said was in answer to the question, “Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?” “Almost well,” he said, and so it is. Death cures! It is the best medicine, for they who die are not only almost well, but healed forever! You will see, then, that the statement of our text implies that the aspect of death is altogether altered from that appearance in which men commonly behold it. Death to the saints is not a penalty, it is not destruction, it is not even a loss!

II. But now, secondly, I need your earnest thought for a further consideration of the text. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IS OF A MOST UNLIMITED KIND. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” It is a broad statement, wide and comprehensive, and I need you to observe that there is no limit here as to whom. Provided that the dying one is a *saint*, his death is precious. He may be the greatest in the Church or he may be the least. He may be the boldest confessor or he may be the most timid trembler—if a saint, his death is precious in God’s sight.

I can well conceive the truth of this in respect to martyrs—to see a man enduring torments but refusing to deny his Lord—to behold him offered life and wealth if he will recant but to hear him say, “I cannot and I will not draw back, by the help of God.” To mark every nerve throbbing with anguish and every single member of his body torn with torment—and yet to see the man faithful to his God even to the close—why, this is a spectacle which God Himself might well count precious! The Church embalms the memories of her martyrs wherever they die—precious in God’s sight must their deaths be!

The deaths, too, of those who work for Christ until at last weary nature gives out—when body and brain are both exhausted and the man can no longer continue in his beloved labor, but lays down his body and his charge together, never putting off harness until he puts off his flesh—I think the deaths of such men must be precious in God’s sight. But, not more so, mark—not more so than the departure of the patient sufferer, scarcely able to say a word, solitary and unknown—only able to serve God by submissively enduring pains which make night weary and day intolerable! Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the consumptive girl who gradually melts into Heaven. The death of the

pauper in the workhouse without a friend, but uncomplainingly bearing God's will, is as precious, (not, perhaps, under some aspects), but as truly precious in the sight of the Lord as that of the most useful preacher of the Word. Precious to Jehovah is the death of the least in the ranks, as the death of those who rush to the front and bear the brunt of the battle!

There are no distinctions in the text. If you are a saint, though no one may know you—you may be too poor and too illiterate to be of much account in the world. You may die and pass away and no record may be among the sons of men—no stone set up over your lonely grave—but precious in the sight of the Lord, in every case, is the death of His saints! There is no limit as to *whom*. And, mark you, there is no limit at all as to *when*. It matters not at what age the saint dies, his death is precious to God. Very delightful to those who observe them are the deathbed scenes of young children who have early been converted to God.

There is a peculiar charm about the pious prattler's departing utterances. He can hardly pronounce his words aright, but he seems illuminated from above. He talks of Jesus and His angels, and the harps of gold, and the better land as if he had been there! Some of you have had the privilege to carry in your bosoms some of those little ones for the skies—unfledged angels sent here but for a little while and then caught away to Heaven that their mothers' hearts might follow them, and their fathers' aspirations might pursue them. I confess to a great liking for such books as Janeway's "Token for Children," where the deaths of many pious boys and girls are recorded with the holy sayings which they used. The Lord sets a high value on His little ones, and therefore frequently gathers them while they are like flowers in the bud. When these favored children die, Jesus stands at their little cots, and while He calls them away, He whispers, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Equally precious, however, are the deaths of those who depart in middle life. These we usually regret most of all because of the terrible blanks which they leave behind them. What? Shall the hero fall when the battle needs him most? Shall the reaper be sent home and made to lay down his sickle just when the harvest is heaviest and the day requires every worker? To us it seems strange, but to God it is precious! Oh, could we lift the veil—could we understand what now we see not—we should perceive that it was better for the saints to die when they died than it would have been for them to have lived longer. Though the widow mourns and the orphans are left penniless, it was good that the father fell asleep. Though a loving Church gathered round the hearse and mourned that their minister had been taken away in the fullness of his vigor, it was best that God should take him to Himself.

Let us be persuaded of this, that no Believer dies an untimely death. In every consistent Christian's case that promise is true, "With long life, also, will I satisfy him and show him My salvation"—for long life is not to be reckoned by years as men count them. He lives longest who lives best. Many a man has crowded half a century into a single year. God gives His people life, not as the clock ticks, but as He helps them to serve Him—and He can make them to live much in a short space of time. There are no untimely figs gathered into God's basket! The great Master of the vineyard

plucks the grapes when they are ripe and ready to be taken, and not before. Sainly deaths are precious in His sight.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord's Providence permits the saint to live to a good old age, then is his death precious, too. The decease which has lately occurred among us will abide in my memory as one of my choice treasures. I say but little of it today, for on another Sunday morning I may be able to tell you some of those choice things which our dear brother and venerated elder uttered which charmed and gladdened us all as we lingered about his bed. You knew him. You knew what a man he was in life—he was just such a man in death. But a day or so before he died, while he could scarcely draw his breath, he told me with a smile that it was the happiest day of his life.

As he was always desirous to rejoice in God while he was here among us, so he was kept in the same blessed spirit even to the end. "See," he said, "what a blessed thing it is to be here." "Here!" I said. "What? On a dying bed?" "Yes," he said, "for I am Christ's, and Christ is mine. I am in Him, and He is in me. What more could I have? It is the happiest day of my life," and again he smiled serenely. It was all joy with him, all bliss with him. Pain might rack him, or weakness might prostrate him, but ever did his spirit magnify the Lord and rejoice in God his Savior. Yes, these ripe ones, like the fruits of autumn, fall *willingly* from off the tree of life when but a gentle breeze stirs the branches. The deaths of these are precious unto God. There is no limitation as to when.

And, again, there is no limitation as to where. Precious shall their deaths be in His sight, let them happen where they may. Up in the lonely attic where there are none of the appliances of comfort, but all the marks of the deepest penury—up there where the dying work girl or the crossing sweeper dies—there is a sight most precious unto God! Or yonder, in the long corridor of the hospital where many are too engrossed in their own griefs to be able to shed a tear of sympathy—there passes away a triumphant spirit and precious is that death in God's sight! Alone, utterly alone in the dead of night, surprised, unable to call in a helper, a saintly life often has passed away. But in that form also precious is the death in God's sight! Far away from home and kindred, wandering in the backwoods or on the prairie, the Believer has died where there was none to call him Brother—but it mattered not—his death, too, was precious in the sight of the Lord.

Or a bullet has brought the missive from the Throne which said, "Return and be with God," and falling in the ditch to die among the wounded and the dead with no onlooker but the silent stars and blushing moon—amidst the carnage—the death of the *believing* soldier has been precious in the sight of Jehovah. Ah, and run over in the street, or crushed and bruised, and mangled in a railway accident, or stifled in the pit by the coal damp, or sinking amidst the gurgling waters of the ocean, or falling beneath the assassin's knife—precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints! They are everywhere in the sight of God when they die, and He looks upon them with a smile, for their death is precious to His heart. There is no limit as to where.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, there is no limit as to how. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Their deaths may happen suddenly. They may be alive, and active, and in a moment fall down dead—but their death is precious. I could never understand that prayer which is put into the Prayer Book, that God would deliver us from sudden death. Why, I think it is the most desirable death that a person could die, not to know you die at all! To have no fears, no shivering on the brink—but to be busy in your Master's service here, and suddenly to stand in the white robe before His Throne in Heaven! Shutting the eyes to the scenes below and opening them in the scenes above! I know if I might ask such a favor, I would covet to die as a dear Brother in Christ died, who gave out this hymn from his pulpit—

***"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode.
I'd leave Your earthly courts, and flee
Up to Your seat, my God."***

Just as he finished that line in the pulpit he bowed his head and his prayer was answered! He was immediately before the Throne of God! Is there anything in that to pray *against*? It seems to us much to be desired! But at any rate, such a death as that is precious in God's sight!

But if we linger long. If the tabernacle is taken down piece by piece, and the curtains are slowly folded up, and the tent pins gently put away—precious in the sight of the Lord is such a death as that. Should we die by a fierce disease which shakes the strong man, or by gentle decline which slowly saps and undermines, it matters not. Should a sudden stroke take us and men call it a judgment—it is no judgment to the Believer—for from him all judgments are past and the true light of love shines on him! Die *how* he may, and *where* he may, and *when* he may, and let him be in what position he will when he dies, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

III. And now, thirdly, coming to the very soul and marrow of the text, we notice that THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT MAY BE FULLY SUSTAINED AND ACCOUNTED FOR. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," is a most sober and truthful declaration. First, because their persons were, and always will be, precious unto God. His saints! Why, these are His elect! These are they upon whom His love was set before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds! These are they whom He bought with precious blood, cheerfully laying down His life for their sakes! These are they whose names are borne on Jesus' breast and engraved upon the palms of His hands! These are His children! These are members of His body! These are His bride, His spouse! He is married unto them! Therefore, everything that concerns them must be precious.

Do I not look with interest upon the history of my child? Do I not carefully observe everything that happens to my beloved spouse? Where there is love, the little becomes great and what would seem a matter of no concern in a stranger is gilded with great importance. The Lord loves His people so intensely that the very hairs of their heads are numbered! His angels bear them up in their hands lest they dash their foot against a stone. And because they are the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold, therefore their deaths are precious unto the Lord!

Precious are the deaths of God's saints, next, because precious graces are in death very frequently tested and as frequently revealed and perfected. How could I know faith to be true faith if it would not stand a trial? The precious faith of God's elect is proven to be such when it can bear the last ordeal of all—when the man can look grim Death in the face and yet not be staggered through unbelief. When he can gaze across the gulf, so often veiled in clouds, and yet not fear that he shall be able to leap over it and land in the Savior's arms. Believe me, the faith which only plays with earthly joys and cannot endure the common trials of life, will soon be dissipated by the solemn trial of death. But that which a man can die with, that is faith, indeed.

Faith, moreover, brings with it as its companions, an innumerable company of Divine Grace, among which chiefly are hope and love. Blessed is the man who can hope in God when heart and flesh are failing him, and can love the Lord even though He strike him with many pains, yes, even though He slay him! The death of the body is a crucible for our graces and much that we thought to be true Grace disappears in the furnace heat. But God counts the trials of our faith much more precious than that of gold, and therefore He counts deathbeds precious in His sight. Besides, how many Graces are revealed in dying hours? I have known plants of God's right hand planting that had always been in the shade before, and yet they have enjoyed sunlight at last!

They were silent spirits that had laid their finger on their lips throughout their lives but took them down and declared their love to Jesus just when they were departing! Like the swan, of whom the fable has it that it sings never till it comes to its end—so many a child of God has begun to sing in his last hours because he has done with the glooms of earth! He begins to sing here his swan song, intending to sing on forever and ever! You cannot tell what is in a man to the fullness of him till he is tried to the full. Therefore the last trial, inasmuch as it strips off earth-born imperfections and develops in us that which is of God—and brings to the front the real and the true, and throws to the back the superficial and the pretentious—is precious in God's sight.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” for a third reason, because precious attributes are in dying moments gloriously illustrated. I refer now to the *Divine* attributes. In life and in death we prove the attribute of God's righteousness—we find that He does not lie but is faithful to His Word. We learn the attribute of mercy—He is gentle and pitiful to us in the time of our weakness. We prove the attribute of His immutability—we find Him “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” There is scarcely a single Characteristic of the Divine Being which is not set out delightfully to the child of God and onlookers when the saint is departing.

And the same is true of the promises as well as the attributes. Precious promises are illustrated upon dying beds. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Who would have known the meaning of that to the fullest if he had not found that the Lord did not leave him when all else was gone? “When you pass through the river I will be with you.” Who could have known the depth of the Truth of God in that promise if saints did not pass

through the last cold stream? “As your days so shall your strength be.” Who could have known to the fullest that promise if he had not seen the Believer triumphant on his dying day?

“Yes, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff comfort me.” You may read commentaries upon that Psalm, but you will never value it so well as when you are in the valley yourself. My dear departed friend said to me, before I came away on one of my last visits, “Read me a Psalm, dear Pastor,” and I asked, “which one?” “There are many precious ones,” he said, “but as I get nearer to the time of my departure, I love the 23rd best, let us have that again.” “Why,” I said, “you know that by heart.” “Yes,” he said, “it is in my heart, too. It is most true and precious to me.” And is it not so? Yet you had not seen the 23rd Psalm to be a diamond of the purest water if you had not beheld its value to saints in their departing moments.

“Precious,” again, “in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” because the precious blood is glorified. It is memorable how saints turn to the Cross when they die. Not very often do you hear them speak of Christ in His Glory, then. It is of Christ, the Sufferer. Christ, the Substitute, that they then speak. And how they delight to roll under their tongue, as a sweet morsel, such texts as that one, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” With what delight do they speak about having trusted in Him years ago, and how gladly will they tell you that they have not been confounded. All their hope and all their confidence lie in the Crucified One alone, and they are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. It ought to be the object of our lives to magnify the blood of Jesus and to speak well of it, and to recommend it to others.

But oh, dear Soul, if you have no faith in Christ’s blood, one argument that ought to convince you of the sin of unbelief above all others, is this—that blood has afforded comfort when pains have been bitter and consolation when death has been imminent! Not in one case or a thousand, but in countless cases! Saints by myriads have died singing, for they have overcome the last enemy by the blood of the Lamb. Oh, you that were never washed in Jesus’ blood, I dread to think of your dying! What will you do without the Savior? Oh, how will you pass the terrors of that tremendous hour with no Advocate on high pleading for you there and no blood of Christ upon you pleading for you here. Oh, fly to that Cross! Rest in that Cross! Then will you live well and die well! But, without the blood you shall live uneasily and die wretchedly. God prevent it for His name’s sake!

Again, the deaths of Believers are precious to God, because oftentimes precious utterances are given forth in the last moments. There are little volumes extant of the deathbed sayings of saints, and if ever I have mistaken the utterances of man for Inspiration, it has been when I have read some of these dying speeches. No one ever mistook the brilliant utterances of Shakespeare, or the wise sayings of Bacon, or the profound thoughts of Socrates for Scripture—everyone could see that they were earthy and of the earth. But have you ever caught yourself imagining that the saying of a dying man must have been borrowed from the Scriptures?

And if you have searched for it you have not discovered it anywhere in the sacred pages! The voice has been so near akin to Inspiration, and so true, that if it had been permitted, you would have written it in your Bibles and made a new chapter there!

Oh, what brave things do they tell of the heavenly world! What glorious speeches do they make! To some of them the veil has been thrown back and they have spoken of things not as yet seen. They have almost declared things which it were not lawful for men to utter, and, therefore, their speech has been broken and mysterious—like dark sayings upon a harp. We could hardly make out all they said, but we gathered that they were overwhelmed with Glory—that they were confounded with unutterable bliss, that they had seen and wished to tell but must not—they had heard and gladly would repeat but could not.

“Did you not see the Glory?” they have said, and you have replied, “The sun shines upon you through yonder window.” They have shaken their heads, for they have seen a brightness not begotten of the sun. Then they have cried, “Do you not hear it?” And we should have supposed that a sound in the street attracted them, but all was the stillness of night! It was all silent—except to their ears which were ravished with the voices of harpers, harping with their harps. I shall never forget hearing a Brother, with whom I had often walked to preach the Gospel, say—

***“And when you hear my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But Glory in my soul!”***

It must have been a grand thing to hear good Harrington Evans say to his deacons, “Tell my people, tell them I am accepted in the Beloved.” Or, to hear John Rees say, “Christ in the Glory of His Person. Christ in the love of His heart. Christ in the power of His arm. This is the Rock I stand on, and now, Death, strike.” Departing saints have uttered brave things and rare things which have made us wish that we had been going away with them. And so have they made us long to see what they have seen, and to sit down and feast at their banquet!

The last reason I shall give why the death of a saint is precious is this—because it is a precious sheep folded, a precious sheaf harvested—a precious vessel which had been long at sea brought into harbor, a precious child which had been long at school to finish his training brought home to dwell in the Father’s House forever. God the Father sees the fruit of His eternal love at last gathered in. Jesus sees the purchase of His passion at last secured. The Holy Spirit sees the object of His continual workmanship at last perfected. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice that now the blood-bought ones are free from all inbred sin and delivered from all temptation! The battle’s fought, the battle’s fought, and the victory is won forever!

The commander’s eagle eye, as he surveys the plain, watches joyously the shock of battle as he sees that his victory is sure. But when at the last the fight culminates in one last assault—when the brave guards advance for the last attack, when the enemy gathers up all the shattered relics of his strength to make a last defense, when the army marches with sure and steady tramp to the last onslaught—then feels the warrior’s heart a

stern overflowing joy. And as his veterans sweep their foes before them like chaff before the winnowers' fan and the adversaries melt away even as the altar fat consumes away in smoke, I see the commander exulting with beaming eye, and hear him rejoicing in that last shock of battle, for in another moment there shall be the shout of victory and the campaign shall be over and the adversary shall be trampled forever beneath his feet!

King Jesus looks upon the death of His saints as the last struggle of their life-conflict. And when that is over it shall be said on earth, and sung in Heaven, "Your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, you have received of the Lord's hand double for all your sins." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Sirs, are you His saints? Preacher, you speak to others—have *you* been sanctified unto God? Answer this in the silence of your soul. Officers of this Church—are you saints or mere professors? Members of this Church—are you truly saints, or are you hypocrites? You who sit in this congregation Sunday after Sunday—have you been washed in the blood of Jesus? Are you made saints, or are you still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity?

Casual visitors to this House of Prayer—the same question would I press on you—are you saints of God? If not, earth and Hell combined, though they are both full of anguish, could not utter a shriek that should be shrill enough to set forth the woe unutterable of the death that shall surely come upon you! Oh, before that death overtakes you, fly to Jesus! Trust Him, trust Him now! Before this day's sun goes down, cast yourself at the feet of the crucified Redeemer and live! The Lord grant it, for His name's sake. Amen.

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

THE EXETER-HALL SERMON TO YOUNG MEN NO. 1740

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL.

***“O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son
of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.”
Psalm 116:16.***

I HAVE been wondering whether I might correctly say that I would preach, tonight, as a young man to young men. It is precisely what I should like to do, but can I do it? You are young men, I see, to a very large extent, but I wonder whether I am a young man myself. I have two opinions upon it in my own mind. Sometimes I feel very old. When I look in the mirror and see the hairs that have turned white upon my head, I suspect that I cannot be a young man! When I feel weary with my work and worn with sickness, I am persuaded that years are having their effect upon me! Yet, when I recover from sickness I feel young again—and when cheerful spirits and vivacity return, I half hope that I may still be a young man. I must not, however, deceive myself, for when I come to calculate and tally all up, I confess that if youth is essential to membership with the Young Men's Christian Association, I could not expect to be voted in.

I am a little under 50 and I am a grandfather—and so I do not think that I can call myself a young man. Very well! I will not take upon myself airs and pretend to be what I am not, nor will I claim to be quite in your position upon the life-chart. I am not old, however! I suppose that I am just in the middle passage and, as a man in the center of life, I may venture, tonight, to give some little instruction and advice to you who are at its beginning. I have received a lot of advice, myself, in former years, and have borne it pretty patiently. Everybody has advised me! I must honestly admit that I have not followed all their advice, or else I had not been here!

But now I think that I shall take my turn and see whether I may not give a little advice. And the advice, such as it is, shall come out of my own experience. I do not expect you to follow it blindly, for I have confessed that I have not always accepted everybody's counsel, myself. Only give me a hearing! Gather the good of what I say into vessels and throw the bad away. Before I get quite away from being a young man, I will try to talk with those who so lately were my comrades—before I shake hands with the old men and ask for a seat among them—I would have a word with those who are coming upon the scene of action to fill our places!

I may honestly say, at the very beginning, that I want so to preach, tonight, that *every* man here who is not yet a servant of the Lord may, at least, *desire* to become one—and that very many may actually enlist in the service of our great Lord and Master on this very spot! Why not? I shall be

thrice happy and they will be thrice happy, too, if such should be the case! I have taken a text which I can repeat on my own behalf as sincerely as the Psalmist could for himself—"O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds."

I. I begin, then, dear young men, by COMMENDING THE SERVICE OF GOD TO YOU. I want you to enter it and, therefore, I commend it! When a young man starts in life, he is apt to enquire of an older person in this fashion—"I should like to get into such-and-such a business, but is it a good one? You have been in it for years, how do you find it?" He seeks the advice of a friend who will tell him all about it. Some will have to warn him that their trade is decaying and that there is nothing to be done in it. Others will say that their business is very trying and that if they could get out of it, they would! While another will answer for *his* work, "Well, I have found it all right. I must speak well of the bridge which has carried me over. I have been able to earn a living and I recommend you try it."

I come here at this time on purpose to give my own experience and, therefore, I wish to say, concerning the service of the Lord, that I have never regretted that I entered it. Surely, at some time or other, in these 33 years since I put on Christ's livery and became His servant, I would have found out the evil if there had been anything wrong in the religion of Jesus! At some time or other I would have discovered that there was a mistake and that I was under a delusion! But it has never been so. I have regretted many things which I have done, but I have *never* regretted that I gave my heart to Christ and became a servant of the Lord.

In times of deep depression—and I have had plenty of them—I have feared this and feared the other, but I have never had any suspicion of the goodness of my Master, the truth of His teaching, or the excellence of His service! Neither have I wished to go back to the service of Satan and sin. Mark you, if we had been mindful of the country from where we came, we have had many an opportunity to return. All sorts of enticements have assailed me and siren voices have often tried to lure me upon the rocks—but never, never, by God's Grace, since the day in which I enlisted in Christ's service have I said to myself, "I am sorry that I am a Christian. I am sorry that I serve the Lord."

I think that I may, therefore, honestly, heartily and experimentally recommend to you the service which I have found so good. I have been a bad enough servant, but never had a servant so lovable a Master or so blessed a service! There is one thing, too, which will convince you that, in my judgment, the service of God is most desirable—I have great delight in seeing my children in the same service. When a man finds that a business is a bad one, you will not find him bringing up his boys to it. Now, the greatest desire of my heart for my sons was that they might become the servants of God. I never wished for them that they might be great or rich, but, oh, if they would but give their young hearts to Jesus! This I prayed for most heartily.

It was one of the happiest nights of my life when I baptized them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, upon profession of their faith! And now, while I am speaking to you, one is preach-

ing in New Zealand and another at Greenwich—and my heart is glad that the Gospel which the father preaches, the sons are preaching, too! If my Lord's service had been a hard one, I should have said to these lads, "Don't you consider it. God is a hard Master, reaping where He has not sowed—I went into the service blindly—and I warn you to avoid it." My conduct has been the reverse of this and thus I have given you hostages in the persons of my sons for my honest love to my Master and Lord!

I do, without reserve, commend to you the service of the Lord Jesus Christ! If you enter it, you will wish your sons and daughters to enter it—and it will be your ambition that to the latest generation all your house may fear and serve God. I would add this more of a personal testimony—so blessed is the service of God, that I would like to die in it! When I have been unable to preach through physical pain, I have taken my pen to write—and found much joy in making books for Jesus—and when my hand has been unable to wield the pen, I have wanted to talk about my Master to somebody or other, and I have tried to do so. I remember that David Brainerd, when he was very ill and could not preach to the Indians, was found sitting up in bed, teaching a little Indian boy his letters, that he might read the Bible. And so he said, "If I cannot serve God one way, I will, another. I will never leave off this blessed service."

This is my personal resolve, and verily, there is no merit in it, for my Lord's service is a delight. It is a great pleasure to have *anything* to do for our great Father and Friend. And, therefore, most affectionately, for your own good, I commend the service of God to you. I think of it now in the following lights and, therefore, I commend it to you for four reasons. To serve God is the most reasonable thing in the world! It was He that *made* you—should not your Creator have your service? It is He that supports you in being—should not that being be spent to His Glory? Oh, Sirs, if you had a cow or a dog, how long would you keep either of them if it were of no service to you?

Suppose it were a dog and it never fawned upon you, but followed at everybody else's heel and never took notice of you—never acknowledged you as its master at all? Would you not soon tire of such a creature? Which of you would make an engine or devise any piece of machinery if you did not hope that it would be of some service to you? Now, God has made you—and a wonderful piece of mechanism is the body and a wondrous thing is the soul—and will you never obey Him with the body or think of Him with the mind? This is Jehovah's own lament—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know. My people do not consider."

To have lived to be 21 without God is a terrible robbery! How have you managed it? To have lived to be 30 or 40 and never to have paid any reverence to Him who has kept the breath in your nostrils—without which you would have been a loathsome carcass in the grave long ago—is a base injustice! How dare you continue in it? To have lived so long and, in addition to that, to have often insulted God; to have spoken against Him; to

have profaned His day; to have neglected His Book; to have turned your back on the Son of His love—is not this enough? Will you not cease from such an evil course? Why, there are some men who cannot bear five minutes provocation, no, nor five seconds! It is “a word and a blow” with them—only the blow frequently comes first! But here is *God* provoked by the 20 years at a stretch—the 30, the 40, the 50 years right on—and yet He bears patiently with us! Is it not time that we render to Him our reasonable service? If He has made us; if He has redeemed us; if He has preserved us in being, it is but His due that we should be His servants!

And let me point out, next, that this is the most honorable service that ever was. Did you say, “Lord, I am Your servant”? I see, coming like a flash of light from Heaven, a bright spirit, and my imagination realizes his presence. There he stands, a living flame! It is a seraph, fresh from the Throne of God, and what does he say? “O Lord, I am Your servant!” Are you not glad to enter into such company as this? When cherubim and seraphim count it their glory to be the servants of God, what man among us will think it to be a mean office? A prince, an emperor—if he is a sinner against God—is but a dishwasher in the kitchen compared with the true nobleman who serves the Lord in poverty and toil! This is the highest style of service under Heaven—no courtier’s honor can rival it! Knights of the Garter or whatever else you like, lose their glories in comparison with the man whom God will call *servant* in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! You are in grand company, young Friend, if you are a servant of God!

And let me note, again, that this service is full of benefits. If I had to engage in a trade, I would like to spend my time and strength in a pursuit which did no hurt to anybody and did good to many. Somehow, I do not think that I would like to deal in deadly weapons—certainly not in the accursed drink! I would sooner starve than earn my bread by selling that or anything else that would debase my fellow men and degrade them below the level of brute beasts! It is a grand thing, I think, if a young man can follow a calling in which he may do well for himself and be doing well to others at the same time. It is a fine thing to act as some have done who have not grown rich by grinding the faces of poor needle women, or by the wage of the servant behind the counter, but have lifted others up with them and, as they have advanced, those in their employment have advanced, also. That is a something worth living for in the lower sphere of things!

But he that becomes a servant of God is doing good all along, for there is no part of the service of God which can do any harm to anybody! The service of the Lord is all goodness. It is good for yourself and it is good for your fellow men—for what does God ask in His service but that we should love Him with all our heart—and that we love our neighbor as ourselves? He who does this, is truly serving God, by the help of His Spirit, and he is also greatly blessing men! I say, it is a most charitable work to engage in and, therefore, it is that I commend it to you—for its reasonableness, its honorableness and its goodness.

And there is another thought. It is the most remunerative work under Heaven. "Not always, today," someone may say. Yet I venture to say, "*Always* today!" To serve God is remunerative now! How so? Certainly not in hard cash, as misers rightly call their gold, but in *better* material. A quiet conscience is better than gold! To know that you are doing good is something more sweet in life than to know that you are getting rich or famous! Have not some of us lived long enough to know that the greater part of the things of this world are so much froth upon the top of the cup, far better blown away, than preserved? The chief joy of life is to be right with yourself, your neighbor, your God. And he that gets right with God—what more does he need? He is paid for anything that he may suffer in the cause of God by his own peace of mind!

There was a martyr, once, in Switzerland, standing barefoot on the firewood and about to be burnt to death—no pleasant prospect for him. He accosted the magistrate who was superintending his execution and asked him to come near him. He said, "Will you please lay your hand upon my heart. I am about to die by fire. Lay your hand on my heart. If it beats any faster than it ordinarily beats, do not believe my religion." The magistrate, with a palpitating heart, himself, and all in a tremble, laid his hand upon the martyr's bosom and found that he was just as calm as if he were going to his bed rather than to the flames. That is a grand thing! To wear in your buttonhole that little flower called, "heart's-ease," and to have the jewel of contentment in your bosom—this is Heaven begun below—godliness is great gain to him that has it!

But, listen. I think that all that we can get in this world is paltry because we must leave it, or it must leave us in a very short time. I am now addressing a congregation of young men. Young men—but in how very short a time, if you all live—will your hair be powdered with the gray of age! In how brief an interval will the whole company now gathered in Exeter Hall be gathered in the grave! How short life is! How swift is time! The older we get, the faster years fly. Only that is worth *my* having which I can have forever! Only that is worth *my* grasping which death cannot tear out of my hands! The supreme reward of being a servant of God is *hereafter*!

And if, young man, you should serve God and you should meet with losses, here, for Christ's sake, you may count these "light afflictions which are but for a moment," and think them quite unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed—for there is a resurrection of the dead! There is a judgment to come! There is a life eternal! There is a Heaven of unutterable splendor! There is a place in that Heaven for everyone of us who become true servants of the living God. I think that I hear somebody saying, "Well, I do not *want* to be a servant." You cannot help it, my Friend—you cannot help it. You must be a servant of somebody! "Then I will serve myself," says one. Pardon me, brave Sir, if I whisper in your ear that if you serve yourself you will serve a fool!

The man who is the servant of himself—listen to this sentence—the man who is the servant of himself is the slave of a slave—and I cannot imagine a more degrading position for a man to be in than to be the slave of a slave! You will assuredly serve *somebody*. You will wear fetters, too, if

you serve the master that most men choose. Oh, but look at this city—this city full of free men—do the most of them know real liberty? Look at this city full of “freethinkers!” Is there any man that thinks in chains like the man who calls himself a freethinker? Is there any man so credulous as the man that will not believe the Bible? He swallows a *ton* of difficulties and yet complains that we have swallowed an ounce of them! He has much more need of faith of a certain sort than we have, for skepticism has far harder problems than faith!

And look at the free-liver, what a bondage is his life! “Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes” but the slave of strong drink? Who has rottenness in the bones but the slave of his passions? Is there any wretch that ever tugged in the Spanish galley, or any bondsman beneath the sun that is half such a slave as he who will be led, tonight, by his lusts like a bull to the slaughter, going to his own damnation and even to the ruin of his body while he makes himself the victim of his own passions? If I must be a slave, I will be a slave to Turks or savages—but never to myself—for that were the nethermost abyss of degradation! You must be a servant to somebody—there is no getting through the world without it. And if you are the servant of yourself, your bondage will be terrible.

“Choose this day whom you will serve,” for serve you must. Every man must get to his task, whether he is peer or pauper, millionaire or beggar. Kings and queens are usually the most wearied servants of all. The higher men climb, the more they have to serve their fellow men. You must serve! Oh, that you would enter the service of your God! There is room in it. Other places are crowded. Hundreds of young men go from shop to shop and beg for the opportunity to earn a livelihood. I lament that in many instances they beg in vain. Some of you wear the boots off your feet in trying to get something to do—how anxiously do I desire that you may find the employment you seek! But there is room in the service of God—and He is willing to receive you.

And let me tell you, that if you enter His service, it will help you in everything that you have to do in this life. They say that a Christian man is a fool. Ah, proud opposers, though we say not the same to you, we might, perhaps, with truth, think so! I have seen many Believers in Jesus whom it would have been very dangerous to deal with as with fools, for very soon he that dealt with them in that fashion would have found that he made a great mistake. They are not always fools who are called so—they are such, sometimes, who use those names. I like a Christian man to be all the better in every respect for being a Christian. He should be a better servant and a better master. He should be a better tradesman and a better artisan. Surely, there is no poet whose masterly excels that of the poet of the sanctuary—Milton still sits alone.

There is no painter that should paint so well as he who tries with his brush to make immortal the memorable scenes in which great deeds were done. That which you can now do well you might do better by becoming a servant of God. Thus would I commend my Master’s service with all my heart. Are there any here who will enlist in it? If so, I have a second point

to dwell on very briefly. I lift the flag and bid you rally to it, but first hear me patiently.

II. My second point is A WORD OF CAUTION. Did you notice that David said, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant.” “Truly.” The word of caution! If you become the servant of God, *truly* become the servant of God. God is not mocked. It is the curse of our Churches that we have so many merely nominal Christians in them. It is the plague of this age that so many put on Christ’s livery and yet never do Him a hand’s turn. Oh, if you serve God, mean it! If a man serves the devil, let him serve the devil! But if he serves God, let him serve God!

Some people serve their business very actively, but not their God. There was, years ago, a Brother who used to occasionally pray at the Prayer Meeting in a low tone, as if he had no lungs left. Seldom could you hear what he said and if you listened and strained your ears there was still nothing to hear. I thought that the Brother had a bad voice and so I never called on him to pray any more. But, stepping one day into his shop, I heard him say in a commanding voice, “John, fetch that half-hundred!” “Oh, dear!” I thought, “that is the kind of voice he has in his *business*, but when he comes into the service of God, that little squeak is all he can give.”

Laugh again, Sirs! Laugh again! It deserves to be laughed at! But is there not much of this hypocrisy abroad? God is to have the cheese-parings of a man’s life—and he flings these down as if they were all that God was worth? But as for the *world*, that is to have the vigor of his life and the cream of his being. God does not want nominal servants—nor do I invite them, in His name, tonight. “O Lord, *truly* I am Your servant,” said David. And he that does not mean to *truly* be God’s servant, let him not pretend to be one at all! If you would be God’s servant, then count the cost! You must leave all others. “You cannot serve God and mammon.” You cannot serve Christ and Belial. He is not God’s who is not God’s *only*.

You must also enter upon God’s service for *life*—not to be, off and on, sometimes God’s servant and sometimes not. Have you ever heard of the child who was asked by the district visitor, “Is your father a Christian?” The child replied, “Yes, Sir, Father is a Christian, but he is not doing much at it, just now.” Oh, how many Christians there are of that sort! They profess to be Christians, but they are not doing much at it. If you become the servant of God, you must be His servant every day and all day forever and ever—

**“‘Tis done, the great transaction’s done:
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine,”**

must be a covenant declaration which must stand true throughout your entire life!

And if you become the servant of God, you must cease from every known sin. You cannot give one hand to Christ and another to Satan. You must give up your dearest sins. Sweet sin must become bitter. If sins are like right hands or right eyes, they must be cut off or plucked out! And you must follow Christ fully, giving Him all your heart, soul and strength. For if it is not so, you cannot be His disciple.

So much by way of caution. I was very brief on that, but take it as though it were said at length.

III. I want, now, to OFFER COUNSEL IN THE MATTER OF DISTINCT CONFESSION IF YOU BECOME THE SERVANT OF CHRIST. "I am Your servant," says David. And then he says it again, "I am Your servant." Now, I want every young man here who is a Christian to make it known by an open avowal of his discipleship. I mean that there should not be one among us who follows the Lord Jesus Christ in a mean, sneaking, indistinct, questionable way. It has become the custom of many to try to be Christians and never say anything about it. This is beneath contempt!

I urge you true servants of Christ to "out with it," and never be ashamed! If ever a bold profession was required, it is required now. You may not be burned at the stake for saying that you are a Christian, but I believe that the old enmity to Christ is not removed and a true Believer will still be called upon to take up his cross. In many a house in London a young man will have to run the gauntlet if he is known to be a Christian. Run the gauntlet, then! You have an honorable opportunity. It is a grand thing to be permitted to endure reproach for Christ's sake—you should look at it as a choice *privilege* that you are counted worthy, not only to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for His sake!

Nowadays the world needs decided men. Everywhere it seems to be imagined that you may believe what you like or believe nothing—and *do* as you like or do nothing—and the result will be all the same, both to the unbeliever and the man of faith. But it is not so! It is time for the out-and-out servant of the Lord to put down his foot and say, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken. I am a Christian and while I leave you to your individual liberty, I mean to have mine! And I mean to exercise that liberty by being openly and unquestionably on the side of Christ and on the side of that which is pure, sober, right, true and good." Is not this well deserved by Christ?

Oh, if He never was ashamed of us, we ought never to be ashamed of Him! If the Lord of Life and Glory stooped to *die* for us, could we ever stoop at all, even if we rolled into the mire or dropped into the grave for Him? Surely, our blessed Lord deserves to be followed by heroes! Every man in the Presence of the Cross-bearing Jesus should feel that to take up his cross and follow Christ is the simplest and most natural thing that can be—and he should resolve, in God's strength, that he will do it—and continue to obey the Lord, though all the world should ridicule him! Let me tell you that it is the easiest thing to do, after all! Compared with compromise, it is simplicity, itself.

I have known many young Christians who have come up to London and they have determined that they would serve God if they could—but that they would keep it very quiet—and so they have attempted to be Christians on the sly. And they have failed! If you are a genuine Christian, it will be found out as surely as you are living! If you go down to Mitcham when the lavender is ripe, you may shut all your windows, but you will find that the perfume of the lavender will somehow get into your house! Christianity has a perfume about it which will spread abroad so that all in

the house enquire, "What is all this?" The wicked wags will whisper that you are "a Christian young man"—and if you have not come out at the first, it will be very hard for you afterwards.

Begin as you mean to go on, young man! Do not hide your flag and try to sail under false colors, for both good and bad will be against you in that case. You will be hunted from place to place if the dogs find that you will run—you will make rare sport for the hunters if you take to your heels! Come straight out and let them do their best or their worst. Live a most consistent life and the other young fellows will know where you are. They will soon reckon you up and if you are sincere, before long they will leave you alone—but if they do not, forbearance is still yours! If they continue to persecute you, so much the worse for them—for you, by your quiet, holy life, will make them feel that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks! But, anyhow, do come out bravely.

Some of you young fellows are like rats behind the wainscot—you do not mind going out at night to eat the crumbs on the floor—but there you are, back again directly. I mean that you will join in religious exercises if it is not known to the shop, but you would not, for the world, become suspected of real religion! Is that how true Christians should act? No! Put on your livery! "But I do not care about joining a Church," says one. Very likely. But do you not know that it is found to be a convenient and proper thing in warfare that a soldier should wear a uniform? At first, Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides were dressed anyway and every way. But in the melee with the Cavaliers it sometimes happened that an Ironsides was struck down by mistake by the sword of one of his own brethren and so the general said, "You wear red coats, all of you. We must know our own men from the enemy." What Cromwell said, he meant, and they had to come in their red coats, for it is found essential in warfare that men should be known by some kind of uniform.

Now, you that are Christ's, do not go about as if you were ashamed of His Majesty's service! Put on your red coats—I mean come out as acknowledged Christians! Unite with a body of Christian people and be distinctly known to be Christ's. How are the ordinances of the Lord's house to be sustained if every man is to go to Heaven, alone, by the back way? Come out boldly! If any man wants to laugh at a Christian, step out and say, "Laugh at me! If anybody wants to abuse a fellow and call him a hypocrite, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, come on! I am ready for you." If you have once done that and come right out on the straight, you shall find it the easiest thing in life to bear the reproach of Christ! And oh, remember, young men, that if you should meet with any reproach for Christ, a reward awaits you.

Shall I tell you a parable? There was once a king's son who went upon a journey, incognito, and he journeyed into a far country. And there he was ill-treated and, because of his language and his appearance, the people of the land set him in the pillory, which was, of old, the place of scorn. They set him there and the mob gathered round him and threw all kinds of filth and garbage upon him. This unknown prince was thus pelted and made as the offscouring of all things. But there was, among them, one man who

loved the prince and who recognized him—and determined to bear him company. He mounted the pillory and stood by his side! He wiped his face with his handkerchief and whenever he could, he put himself in the way of the mire and dirt, that he might catch it and screen the prince from it.

Years went on and it came to pass that the prince was back in his kingdom in all his glory. And the courtiers were standing round about the throne. This man who had been a poor man in his own country was summoned to the court and when he arrived at the palace, the prince saw him and said to the peers of the realm, “Stand aside and make way for this man. He was with me when I was ill-treated and scorned—and now he shall be with me in my glory, chief among you here.” Do you not know the story of how our sweet Lord Jesus came down to earth and suffered many things, and how He was despised and rejected of men?

Young man, are you the man who would wipe His blessed face, share His shame and take half turns with the Man of Nazareth in all His disgrace and scorn? Are you that man? Then there shall come a day when the great Father, on His Throne, shall spy you out and say, “Make a lane, you angels! Stand back, seraphim and cherubim! Make way for this man! He was with My Son in His humiliation, and now he shall be with Him in His Glory.” Will you receive that mark of honor? Not unless you are prepared to put on the badge of Christ and say, “I am His servant and His follower from this day to life’s end.” God help you to do it! O Holy Spirit, lead scores of young men to shoulder the Cross!

IV. And so, lest I weary you, I CLOSE BY CONGRATULATING SOME OF YOU who are God’s servants, UPON YOUR FREEDOM, for that is the last part of the text. “Truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.” Oh, but this is a grand thing—this loosing of the bonds! Were you ever in bonds? Did you ever feel the bonds of guilt? Are you believing in Christ? Then those bonds are loosed, for your sin is forgiven you for Christ’s sake and you are delivered from all condemnation! Oh, will you not love Him who has loosed your bonds? Were you, dear Friend, ever in the bonds of despondency and despair on account of sin? Did you ever sit and sigh because you thought that there was no salvation for you? And did the Lord Jesus Christ appear to you as your crucified Savior? And did you trust in Him and feel the bond of despondency broken? Happy day for you!

I remember it well, myself! Oh, then, will you not follow Him that has loosed your bonds? You are now delivered from the bonds of guilt and despair! You are also saved from the power of sin! The habits that were your masters are now destroyed! The lusts that lorded over you are now slain and you are free! Will you not wish to be bound to Christ from now on because He has loosed your bonds? I know some men in this world who talk a great deal about being free, but they are always in chains. There is a man I know for whom the devil makes a nauseous mixture—at least to me it is very nauseous—and he says, “Drink a quart of it,” and he drinks. “Drink another,” says the devil, and he does so. “Drink another,” says the devil, and his brain begins to reel and he is all on fire. “Drink it,” says the devil, and he lets it run down his throat—he is in chains!

I know another who, against his better self, will go into sin which he knows to be sin—and knows to be injurious to him. Yet he goes in a silly manner and harms himself more and more. He is led by the nose by the devil! He says that he cannot resist—he is a slave in the worst sense! Oh, blessed is the man who can say, “You have loosed my bonds: no evil habit now enslaves me! No passion controls me, no lust enchains me!” Young Friend, if you can stand up and say, “I am free from myself—I am no longer the slave of sin!”—you are a blessed man and you may well be God’s servant forever! What a mercy it is to be delivered from the bonds of the fear of man! Some young men dare not call their souls their own for fear of their employers. A great many more are dreadfully in fear of the young man who sleeps in the next bed. Oh, dear, they dare not do what is right!

Poor babies that they are, they must ask permission to keep a conscience! When they are about to do *anything*, they are always saying, “What will So-and-So think of it?” Does it matter to any true man what all the *world* thinks about him? Has he not risen out of that? Is he still a serf? “Go,” says the brave man, “think what you will, and say what you will. If I serve God, I am no servant of yours! By your censures I shall not fail, as by your praises I shall not rise.” Be afraid of such a thing as this and ask the leave of another man what I shall think, what I shall believe, what I shall do! I will die first! When God brings a man to know Him, and to be His servant, He sets him free from this cowardly crime of being afraid of a man that shall die! So, too, He sets him free from all the maxims and customs of the world.

Young man, when you go into business, they will tell you that you must do such-and-such because it is “the custom of the trade.” “Why,” you say, “it is lying!” You will be told that it is not *exactly* lying because your customer is used to your tricks and quite understands that a hundred means 80, and the best quality means a second-class article. I am told that half the business in London is robbery in some form or another if the customs of the trade are not understood. If it is so that it is all understood, it might just as well be done honestly—and it would pay as well! Yet, somehow, men feel as if they must do what others have done, or else they will be out of the race. Slaves! Serfs! Be honest! He is not free that dares not be honest! Shall I not speak my mind? Shall I not act out my integrity? If I cannot, then I cannot say with David, “You have loosed my bonds.”

Lastly, what a blessing it is when God frees us from the fear of death! “You have loosed my bonds.” What will it matter to you, young man, if you become the servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, whether you live or die? If you die early, so much the sooner in Heaven! If you live long, so much the longer in which to serve your God on earth! Give your heart to Christ! Trust your salvation in those dear hands that were pierced for sinners and thus become the servant of God—and you shall be provided for—for His children shall not lack. You shall be led, guided, taught, educated, prepared for Heaven! And one of these bright days a convoy of celestial spirits shall think it an *honor* to be permitted to bear your joyful spirit up to the Throne of God!

Who will be the servant of the Most High, then? I always wish, when I have done with sermons, that I could preach them over again because I have not done well enough. But all I care to preach for is that I may touch your hearts. I would not care a snap of the fingers to be an orator, or to speak pretty sentences. I want to put forward the Truth of God so that some young man will say, "I will serve God." I remember young men that began life when I began, that are now—I will not say what. Ah! I remember hearing their names mentioned as *models*! They were such fine young men and had just gone up to London. Yes, and they are, tonight, if not in jail, in the workhouse!

It all came about in this way—the young man sent word home to his mother what the text was on Sunday, yet he had not been to hear a sermon at all. He had been to some amusement to spend a happy day—wherever he went, he had neglected the House of God and, by-and-by, there was a little wrong in his small accounts—just a little matter. But that man could not pick himself up, again, having once lost his character. There was another. There was nothing wrong in his accounts, but his habits were loose. By-and-by he was ill. Who could wonder? When a man plays with edged tools, he is very likely to cut himself. It was not long before he was so sickly that he could not attend to business and, before long, he died. And they said—I fear it was true—that he killed himself by vice. And that is how thousands do in London.

Oh, if you become the servant of God, this will not happen to you! You may not be rich; you may not be famous; you may not be great—you need not desire these things—full often they are gilded vanities. But to be a man to the fullness of your manhood; to be free and dare to look every other man in the world in the face and speak the truth and do the right. To be a man that can look God in the face because Christ has covered him with His glorious righteousness—this is the ambition with which I would fire the spirit of every young man before me! And I pray God that the flame may burn in his life by the power of the Divine Spirit.

Come then, Brothers, bow your heads and say, "We will be servants of the living God henceforth and forever." God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen and Amen!

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PERSONAL SERVICE

NO. 312

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 3, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACK FRIAR'S ROAD,
ON BEHALF OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.**

***“O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son
of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.”
Psalm 116:16.***

THESE sentences suggest a contrast. David's religion was one of perfect liberty—"You have loosed my bonds." It was one of complete service—"Truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid." Did I say the text suggested a contrast? Indeed the two things need never be contrasted, for they are found to be but part of one Divine experience in the lives of all God's people. The religion of Jesus is the religion of liberty. The true Believer can say, when his soul is in a healthy state, "You have loosed my bonds. The penal fetters with which my soul was once bound are all dashed to shivers. I am free!"

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The burdensome bonds of ceremonies are all cast to the winds. Henceforth the beggarly elements are trod under foot. Shadows have yielded to substance, and the type and the symbol cease to oppress. The true light now shines and the torches are quenched. "You have loosed my bonds"—that is to say, You have not only saved me from the penal consequences of my sin and from the heavy burden of the old Mosaic ceremonial law, but You have moreover delivered me from the spirit of bondage which once led me to serve You with the fear of an unwilling slave. You have taken the yoke from my neck and the goad from behind my back.

You have made me Your freed man. No more do I crouch at your feet or go to Your footstool cowering like a slave, but I came to You with privilege of access, up to Your very Throne. By the Spirit of adoption I cry, my Father, You do own the kindred. For by the same Spirit I am sealed to the day of redemption. Thus, O Lord, "You have loosed my bonds." Nor if religion has had its full sway in us, is this all. You have loosed me from the bonds of worldly maxims. You have delivered me from the fear of man. You have rescued me from the stooping and fawning which made me once the slave of every tyrant who laid claim to my allegiance and You have made me now the servant of but one Master, whose service is perfect liberty.

Whereas before I spoke with bated breath, lest I should offend and even my condolence had continually to yield to the whims and prejudices of another man, behold now "You have loosed my bonds." As an eagle with

my eye on the sun, with wings outstretched true to the line upward which I soar, bound no longer to the rocks of prejudice or the mounds of worldly maxim—free, entirely free to serve my God without hindrance! “You have loosed my bonds.”

Vast and wide is the liberty of the Believer. The Antinomian, when he assays to describe Gospel liberty, only can by forgetting that such liberty is consistent with the fullest service. But we enjoy all the liberty that even an Antinomian theology could offer. A liberty to be holy is a grander liberty than a license to be sinful. A liberty to be conscientious. A liberty to know forgiven sin. A liberty to trample upon conquered lusts—this is an infinitely wider liberty than that which would permit me to be the comfortable slave of sin and yet indulge the delusive hope that I may one day enter the kingdom of Heaven. The largest expressions that can ever be used by the boldest minister of Free Grace cannot here be exaggerations.

Luther may exhaust his thunders and Calvin may spend his logic. Zwingli may utter his periods with fiery zeal—but after all the grand things that have been spoken about the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free—we are freer than those men knew. Free as the very air we breathe is the Christian, if he live up to his privileges. If he is in bondage at all, it is because he has not as yet yielded his spirit fully to the redeeming and emancipating influence of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullest and widest sense, therefore, the Believer may cry, “You have loosed my bonds.”

Nor is this liberty merely consistent with the most profound and most reverent service, but the service is, indeed, a main characteristic of the exalted freedom. “Truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid.” This does not relate with the sentence that follows it—“You have loosed my bonds.” This fact of my being God’s servant is to me a proof and evidence, and a delightful fruit and effect, of my having my bonds loosed by the great Emancipator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Service, then, as well as liberty!

Service is ordained to be a constant characteristic of the true religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. “We are not our own, we are bought with a price.” There is not a hair upon our head, there is not a passion in our spirit, there is not a single power or faculty in our mind which is our own. We are all *bought*—all purchased—we are all, every single particle of us, the purchased property of the Lord Jesus Christ—perfectly free and yet perfectly the property of Jesus—supremely blest with the widest liberty and yet in the fullest sense the property of another—the shackled servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This service, my Brethren, it appears from the text, should be the—“O Lord, truly I am Your servant.”

I fear there is very much service of God that only lies in terms and words. Men sit and sing hymns, in which they cry—

**“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
I love my God with zeal so great,
I’d freely give Him all.”**

But within an hour their nets belie their song. There is much of service in our own thought which never comes to service in net. I do not doubt but that we often compliment ourselves upon schemes we have devised, which fall dead to the ground like blasted figs, never having been carried into effect. We go to our chambers and bend our knees and Satan whispers some word of self-satisfaction to us, because we have some project on our soul, some device in our heart—though that project has never come to service, has only been an unborn intention, has never come into the life of an *act*.

I would that each one of us knew more fully the meaning of this word, “truly.” “O Lord, *truly* I am Your servant.” So truly that my enemies cannot dispute it—so truly that if they dare dispute it, my next action shall contradict them. So truly that never in any act of my life shall I give them reason to suppose the contrary. So truly Your servant, that my thoughts yield You obedience as well as my hands—my head as well as my heart—my heart as well as my feet. “Truly I am Your servant!” Not so in name and by profession, but so by actual deeds of holy endurance and of noble daring for you. “O Lord, truly I am Your servant.”

This service, it appears to me also from the text, is continual. “I am Your servant,” is the utterance at this moment. “I am Your servant,” is the utterance of the next. “I am Your servant,” is my utterance today. “I am Your servant,” will be my utterance when I come to die. Never should the Christian think that any other language will ever be on his lips anything less than traitorous. “I am Your servant,” is to be the exclamation of the man the moment his spirit knows its sins are forgiven. “I am Your servant” is to be his constant monitor when he stands exposed to temptation. It is to be his continual spur when idleness in a Laodicean spirit would make him lukewarm.

“I am Your servant” is to be his joy in the time of the hardest of labor. “I am Your servant” is to be his song in the time of the sternest suffering. Continually and ever we are the servants of God. We may change our masters upon earth, but our Master who is in Heaven is our Master forever. We may cease to serve our country but we could not cease to serve our God. We may cease to be linked with any denomination, but we could not cease to be the servants of Christ. Even should it be possible for us to be so forgetful of our obligations as to dream for a moment of not being the servants of the Church, we could not harbor the thought that we should cease to be the servants of Christ.

“I am Your servant.” Let the next moment repeat it. Let the next hour echo it, let the next year continue to resound it. Let my whole life prolong it. And let eternity be a continuation of the solemn swell. “Truly, I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.”

May I take the liberty now after offering you these few remarks by way of introduction as a sort of running commentary upon my text—may I take the liberty of concentrating your thoughts upon one particular, during the rest of my sermon? There is one important point which I wish to

bring before this present audience, namely, the duty and the excellence of *personal* service for their Lord and Master. I think I shall be warranted in confining my text, although it contains far more, to the repetition of that pronoun "I." "Truly *I* am Your servant. *I* am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds." The personality of the text seems to be conspicuous to allow me now to restrain myself to that one topic—the duty of the *personal* service of Christ.

I do feel at this peculiar season, when God has visited some parts of our land with rich revival and when we have reason to hope that revival will extend through this great city—I do feel just now that no topic can be more adapted to the times than the topic of personal service—personal consecration of every Christian to his Lord's will.

This evening, then, I shall first speak upon the nature of personal service. Secondly, its reasonableness. Thirdly, its excellence. And in the last place, come to that which is no doubt upon your own minds—the special assistance which the Religious Tract Society yields to personal effort in the Redeemer's kingdom.

I. First, then, THE NATURE OF PERSONAL SERVICE. Let me explain it by a contrast. The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. I would not be censorious. Judge what I say and if there is any measure of truth in it, let the truth come home to your soul. Do we not observe even in the outward worship of God, at times, a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing—certainly never in this place—but do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us?

Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our Churches and Chapels, that even the prayer is said and prayed by the minister for us? There is not always that hearty union in the one great prayer of the day which there should be whenever we are gathered together. The thought suggests itself continually to the thinking mind, "Is not much of the devotion confined to the minister and to those few who pass through the service?" In fact, we have actually degraded ourselves by applying the term "performance" to Divine worship.

"Performance!" A phrase begotten in the theater, which certainly should have spent its existence there, has actually been brought into the House of God and the services are nowadays "performed," and the worship of God is gone through and the thing is called the "doing duty" of the minister and not the taking delight and the enjoying of a pleasure by the people. Do we not observe, too, that in our Churches there is too much nowadays of serving God in acts of benevolence and acts of public instruction through the minister!

Your minister is supported. You expect him to discharge your duty for you. He is to be the means of converting sinners. He is to be the means of comforting the feeble minded. In fact, all the mass of duties that belong to the Church are considered to belong to the one man who is specially set apart to devote himself to the service of the ministry. Oh that this were

rectified! Would to God that our people could all feel that no support of ministers can ever rid them of their own personal responsibility!

I think I speak in the name of all my Brethren in the ministry—we repudiate the idea of taking your responsibility upon ourselves. We find that our own work is more than we can perform without our Master's strength. To come at last with clean hands before our Maker's bar and to be able to say, "We are free from the blood of all men," will have caused the most unremitting anxiety. We cannot take *your* work—we do not pretend to do so. If you have dreamed of it, forget the delusion and be rid of it once and for all. I will do no man's duty but my own.

I will not attempt to stand sponsor to your remissness and take upon myself the sin of your sloth and lethargy. Nor will any minister of Christ for a moment think that his most arduous efforts and most self-denying exertions can for a moment acquit you of being guilty of the blood of souls, unless you, each of you, do personally the utmost that you can. A sorry contrast to this principle, I fear, is presented in many, many a Christian Church. You have put one man into the rank and he is to do all, while you are to sit still to be fed, to be edified, to be built up. As if you had nothing to do but to be stones and bricks that are to be built up—not living men and women—who are to spend and be spent in the Redeemer's cause.

Having thus sought to exhibit by contrast, let me now illustrate the nature of this personal service by an actual picture. Look at the early days of Christendom—the Church's pride and glory—when the purest air and the most refreshing dew were upon her mouth—then was the day of personal service. The moment a man was converted to God in those days, he became a preacher—perhaps, within a week, a martyr. Every man then was a witness—not here and there a bishop, or now and then a confessor—but every Christian, whether he moved in Caesar's household, or whether he moved, like Lydia, in the pursuits of humble commerce—every Believer had a part in the service and sought to magnify the name of his Master.

Within but a few centuries after the death of Christ, the Cross had been uplifted in every land. The name of Jesus had been pronounced in every known dialect. Missionaries had passed through the deserts—had penetrated into the remote recesses of uncivilized countries. The whole earth was at least, nominally evangelized.

But what has befallen us now, my Brethren? The results of the labors of the Church through a space of years—what are they? They dribble into utter insignificance, when compared with the triumphs of the Apostolic times. My own conviction is that next to what I fear is the great cause—the absence of the Spirit's influence—next to that and perhaps first of all, is the absence of personal agency in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ whereby the Spirit is manifested in the diversities of His operations. What conqueror or mighty warrior could expect to will a campaign if his troops should vote that one in a hundred should be supported by their rations—that one in a hundred should go to battle?

No, you legions! You must, every one of you, draw swords. Every heart must be stout and every arm must be strong. The line must not be composed of here and there a warrior and an interval between. Every man must march forward with the spirit of a lion and the strength of God, to do battle against the common enemy of souls. We shall never see great things in the world till we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities. God will not give the honor of saving the world to His ministers. He meant it for His Church. And until His Church is prepared to grasp it, God will withhold the crown which He has prepared for her brow, and for hers alone, and which none but she can ever wear.

I think you may readily understand, then, what I mean by personal service. I mean this—if there are poor, it is not for you to subscribe to a society that shall send out paid agents for their relief. But as far as lies in you, personal service requires you visit them in their homes and with your own hands supply them the bounty of a Christian heart. It is not for you to say the City Mission supplies admirably a sufficient number of ministers. I may be idle. It is for you to instruct them. You are to be as a burning and a shining light in the midst of this dark generation. Personal service is for you. It is for you to say, “Though I am content with my minister’s labors, I cannot be content with my own. I must do more, and more and more. I desire to spend all that I have in Jesus Christ’s cause and not to keep back a single power which I possess, but to be continually the living servant of the living God.”

II. Having thus explained the nature of personal service, let me pass on to observe THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS PERSONAL SERVICE.

Heir of Heaven, blood-bought and blood-washed, Jesus did not save you by another. He did not sit in Heaven Himself at ease and then array Gabriel in His power and might and send *him* down to suffer, bleed and die for you. But “He, His own Self”—mark the strong expression of Scripture—“His own Self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”

He might send out Apostles and seventy disciples to preach, but He never relaxed His service when He employed others. He might kindle other lights, but He did not quench his own. He was Himself your servant. He washed the disciples’ feet, not through the medium of another disciple, but with His own hands. They fed the hungry, but He Himself multiplied the fishes and broke the bread. He sent the Gospel into the world—not by missionaries—by Himself. He became His own preacher, His own expounder and then left the Truth of God to be taken up by others, when He Himself had ascended into Glory.

By the streaming veins, then, of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the blessed body, which for your sake endured the curse—the curse of toil, aggravated till it became not the sweat of the face, but the sweat of the *heart* in very drops of blood—by these I hold the reasonableness of your personal service to Him. And, “I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

But, again, have you not a personal religion? You are not content with promises that are held in a sort of “joint stock” by the entire community. You long to have in your own heart the personal cry of adoption. Nothing but vital personal union to the Son of God can ever satisfy you. You are not content with a general election. You feel that you must have a *personal* election and a *personal* calling. You long to read *your* title clear to mansions in the skies. The charter of Free Grace, bright as it is, does not satisfy you unless you can see *your* name among its inheritors. All the broad acres of the promises cannot charm you unless you can walk over them and call them your own.

You live—if you are a true Christian—you live upon the personal realization of your interest in that Covenant of Grace. What is more reasonable, then, that you should give personal service? Were I preaching to those who were dolts, this might be seen, and felt, too. But I speak to those who are wise men, because they have been taught of God, and I say, what can be a more logical conclusion than that personal benefits enjoyed and personal blessings received, should be reciprocated by personal services rendered?

Further, let me remark to you that this personal service is reasonable, from the fact that personal service is the only kind of service at all available. I scarcely know whether you can serve God except by individual consecration. All that your minister can do is already due from him to God. You could not say before the eternal Throne, “Great God, I am Your servant, but I serve You by another.” Might He not reply, “That other was My servant, too”? Here is a man who has spent his whole life and whom you have felt to do so. Does he come before God and cry, “Great God, I have done all and I have a surplus left to supplement the dilatory character of my fellows?” No. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. We have done no more than it was our duty to have done. How, then, can you by any means hope that you can serve God through us, when even ourselves feel we cannot reach the mark to which we would have aspired in our own personal service to Jesus?

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you will but think of it, all your ideas of showing your gratitude to God by making another man carry your burden on his back is founded on idleness. It cannot be maintained in righteousness. More might I say, but I choose instead thereof to appeal to you thusly—does not the reasonableness of personal service strike you at once? If it does not, there was a time when it did. Before you were a child of God, there was a season when argument was quite unnecessary.

Do you remember the time when your sins lay heavily upon your breast and you did cry both night and day, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Have you forgotten that glad hour when at the foot of Mercy’s Cross all the strings were loosed that bound that burden to your back and you were free? Have you forgotten, then, those feelings of devout gratitude which made you fall to the ground and cry, “My Master, take me. Make something of me. Do what You will with me, only let me serve You”? Do you

remember that hot haste in which you did rush into the world to tell to another the secret which God had whispered in your ear?

Do you remember now that first month of your consecration to God, when you could not do enough, when you did long to be rid even of necessary worldly employments—that you might devote yourself to God? Methinks I hear those sighs of yours now—“O that I were a doorkeeper in the house of my God! O that I could serve my Master with all my might and with all my strength!” Ah, Brethren, and if you need argument now, what does it mean but that you have lost your first love and that you have fallen from the height of your consecration?

It seems to be believed by some men who pretend to deep experience, that the love of Christians necessarily cools after conversion. I am sure it ought not to do so. And if it does, it is a fact which is disgraceful to us. To my mind, it is palpable that if we loved our Master much when we first knew Him, we ought to love Him with a tenfold degree of fervent attachment after we have known Him more. Certain I am, if we have seen Christ, the very Christ, and have verily seen Him, we shall be more deeply in love with Him every day. Whereas at first we *thought* Him lovely, we shall come to *know* Him so.

And whereas once we thought anything we could do would be too little, we shall come to think that everything we could do would not be enough. I question that man's love altogether who has to say of it, that it grew cold after a little season. What? Is the work of God's Spirit but a sort of spasmodic twitching? Is this all the Spirit does, to lay the lash upon the back of the ass and make it go its jaded journey for an instant with a little more quickened pace? Surely not! God does not thus work. It were an inferior work to any which is exhibited in nature if this were all He did.

And shall grace be second to the deeds of nature? Does God send the planets on in their orbits and do they continue to roll and after He has made a creature serve Him, will He stop? Does He light the sun and does it blaze forever and will He kindle our zeal and shall it soon be quenched? Is God's grace as the smoke from the chimney, as the morning cloud and as the early dew that passes away? God forbid that we should harbor the idea! No, Brethren—personal service, personal *continued* service, too, is but the reasonable effect of that grace which God gave us at the first and which He continues to give us every hour and will give us till we mount to eternal glory.

III. And now let me advance to my third point—PERSONAL SERVICE—ITS EXCELLENCE,

This excellence is so manifold, that had I some three hours to preach in, I might continue to go through the list and not exhaust it. Among the first of its charms, personal service is the main argument of the Christian religion against the skeptic. The skeptic says the religion of Christ is maintained by men who make a gain of godliness. “Your living is dependent upon your advocating the canes,” says the infidel. Even to our missionaries this is often said. And though an unworthy suspicion and utterly untrue of men who sacrifice much even when they gain most—

uttered to men who in any other service might soon grow rich—in their Masters service seldom, if ever—yet nevertheless, the taunt being ever so unworthy, it has great power over unthinking minds.

Let the Church, however, work unanimously. Let every private man have his mission, let every man and woman build nearest to their own house and from that day skepticism begins to lose, at least, one of its argument. And with it, it loses one of its most formidable elements—one of its deadliest weapons with which it has attacked the Church. “See there, see there,” says the infidel, “there is an honest man, though he is an honest fool, he does at least believe what he says, for he does it not by word, but personally, he does it not by another, but by himself. Not because he is paid for it, but because he loves it.” Oh, Sirs, it were greatly to the confusion of infidelity, if not to utter destruction, if the whole Church could once see in its proper light and carry out in its full measure, the grand doctrine of personal service.

But further, I am persuaded that while it would be a grand argument against skeptics, it would be one of the greatest means of deciding that class of waverers, who, although they are not skeptical, are negligent of the things of the kingdom. There is no way to make another man earnest like being earnest one’s self. If I see others who neglect the great salvation and if I neglect it, too, I patronize and aid and abet them in their neglect. But if that man sees me earnest about his salvation, he begins at once to put to himself the question, “Why is this? Here am I asleep and going down into Hell and this man who is no relation of mine and who has no personal interest in me, is grieved, pained and vexed because I am going wrong and he cannot rest and be quiet because he fears I am in danger of the wrath to come.”

Oh, my Brethren, there would be more souls, I do believe, moved to earnestness by earnestness, than by anything else. The closest logic, the most mighty rhetoric never convinced a soul so well as that mightiest of logic and of rhetoric—the earnestness of a true Christian. Let men who are now slothful see us in earnest and they will begin to follow in our wake. God will bless our example to them—and through us He will save them. But further, the excellency of personal service, it strikes me, is not confined to the good we do, but should be argued from the good we get.

We have in our Churches, men and women who are always looking for an opportunity for quarreling. If there is a member who has made the slightest slip, they report it to the public, they tell it in Gath and publish it in the streets of Askelon. There is nothing that is right. If you do a thing today, it is wrong. If you were to alter it tomorrow, it would be just as wrong. They are never consistent in anything but in their inconsistent grumbling. The mightiest cure for the Church is to set them to work.

Armies are troublesome things, even emperors find they must allow these hungry things to blunt their appetite with war. The Church itself can never be much blessed while it has division in its own ranks. Its very activity will cause disorder. The very earnestness in the Christian will cause confusion, unless you lead forth that earnestness to its proper field

of development. I have always found that where there is a quarrelsome Church, it is sure to be an idle Church. But where men are always “at it,” they have very little time to find fault with one another. When we fuse iron, the two pieces will soon weld—bring two cold pieces together and the stoutest arm and the heaviest hammer can never weld them.

Let our Churches be united and they will be earnest. Let them be cold and they will be dashed to a thousand shivers. And moreover, we have a large class of poor creatures, who, while not discontent with others, are discontent with themselves. They don't fight with other people, but they seem to be incessantly quarreling with a personal jealousy of their own selves. They are not what they like to be and they are not what they wish to be and they don't feel as they should feel and they don't think as they would like to think. They are always plunging their finger into their own eyes, because they cannot see so well as they would wish. They are always ripping up the wounds they have, because those wounds smart, making themselves miserable in order that they may be happy. And at last, crying themselves into an inconsolable state of misery, they acquire a habit of mourning, until that mourning seems to be the only bliss they know.

To use a homely illustration and one which will be remembered, if another might not, the swiftest way for these cold souls to warm themselves is by setting them at once to work. When we were boys, we have sometimes gathered round our father's fire in the winter time and almost sat upon it, yet we could not get warm. We rubbed our fingers—but they still were blue—at length our father wisely turned us out of doors and bade us work and after some healthy pastime we soon came in with limbs no longer benumbed. The blood was circulated and what fire could not do, exercise soon accomplished.

Ministers of Christ, if your people cry to you, “Comfort us! Comfort us!—comfort them and make the fire a good one. At the same time remember that all the fire you can ever kindle will not warm them so long as they are idle. If they are idle they cannot be warm. God will not have His people eat the fat and drink the sweet, unless they are prepared to carry their burden and give a portion to others as well as seek meat for themselves. The benefit of personal service, then, is not confined to others, but will come to be enjoyed even by those who engage in it.

An example or two here may tend to enforce the lesson I am anxious to inculcate. If you wish to prove the truth of this, you can begin to make a tolerable experiment in the course of the next half-hour. Do you want to feel grateful? Do not go home and get the hymnal down. Just go down this street here and take the first turning to the left or the right, whichever you please. Go up the first pair of stairs you come to. You see a little room—perhaps the husband has come home by now—come home weary and there is a swarm of children, all dirty and all live and sleep in—perhaps, that one room.

Well, if you will only take a view of that with your own eyes and then go home to your own house, you will begin to feel grateful. Or rise up tomorrow morning and go to another house and see a poor creature stretched

on the bed of languishing, dependent on the parish allowance and worse than that, dying without hope, knowing nothing of God or of the way of salvation. And if that does not make you grateful when you think of your own interest in the precious blood of Jesus, I know nothing that will.

Again—you want to be zealous and earnest? Next Sabbath morning walk down the New Cut and if the open depravity does not make you earnest, your blood is fish's blood and you have not the warmth of man's blood in you. Just see how the street is thronged all day with those who buy and sell and get gain, while you are meeting in the House of God for prayer and praise.

If that should not satisfy you and you want to feel peculiarly zealous, take your walk abroad and not only look on but begin to act. Take your stand amidst the crowd near the Victoria Theatre and try to preach and if you do not feel desirous when you hear their clamors and see their anxious eyes, as if they longed to hear you with eyes as well as ears—if that does not make you zealous, I know of nothing that will make you so. Take a handful of tracts in your hand and a handful of coppers in your pocket—two good things together and give some of each to the poor people and they will remember you.

And after you have gone to those—the poorest and the most depraved—if you do not go home with a feeling of gratitude mingled with one of earnest zeal for the salvation of souls, I do not know what remedy I can prescribe. I wish some of you fine ladies and gentlemen would walk down some of our courts and alleys—no—I would wish you to have a special treat that you might always remember. I would like you to sleep one night at a lodging house. I should like you to eat one meal with the poor man. I should like you to sit in the midst of one drunken brawl. I should wish you to see one poor wife, her face all bleeding, where a brutal and degrading husband had been striking her.

I should like you to spend one Sabbath in the midst of sin and debauchery. I should like you to see one scene of vice and then hurry away once and for all. Methinks, if I took you there not only to see, but to act and cooperate in some holy deed of service—took you there that you might thrust your hand into the kennel and bring up some lost jewel—that you might thrust your finger into the very fire, that you might pluck some bread from the burning—I think that usefulness would not be all on the part of others, but to a great degree react upon your own heart. You would go home and say, “I could not have believed it. I could not have imagined that the necessities of this city were so great. That the need of praying and preaching and generous liberality, could have been one-tenth so huge.”

I am sure if you are Christians, from that time forward, you would be more indefatigable in your industry and more unlimited in your gifts than before. I must not tarry longer—time reproves me—though if it is that any of you shall carry out in practice, what I have suggested, the time employed in persuading you will have been well spent.

IV. I want now, for a minute or two, to come to that Society, for which I stand here to plead tonight and observe ITS PECULIAR ADAPTATION TO PERSONAL SERVICE.

We love the Missionary Society, both for home and abroad, though it does in measure help us to serve God by proxy. I love the Bible Society, because that enables me to serve God personally. For the same reason, I must ever love the Religious Tract Society, because that enables me, no, *compels* me, if I would do anything, to do it myself.

I think I need only just mention one or two particulars. The peculiar form of usefulness which the Religious Tract Society lays hold upon is admirably adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless wish to do something for Christ. They have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers. They do not feel that they could subscribe their guinea, but they may buy their thousand tracts and these they can distribute broadcast.

How many a little one in Zion has spent his life in doing this good, when he could not perhaps have found any other good within his reach? This however, is but the beginning—the smallest part of the matter. And when men begin with little efforts for Christ, such as the giving away of a tract, they become stronger to do something else afterwards. I speak personally tonight—and excuse the allusion. I remember the first service which my youthful heart rendered to Christ was the doing up of tracts in envelopes, that might send them, with the hope that by choosing pertinent tracts, applicable to persons I knew and then sealing them up, that God would bless them.

And I well remember telling them and distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before and going from house to house and telling in humble language, the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something. I sought to do something more, and then from that, something more and now have I got beyond. And so I do not doubt that many of the servants of God have been led on to do something higher and nobler because the first step was for good.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ. But were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second. But that first attained, we are encouraged to take another and so at last, God helping us, we may be made extensively useful. Besides, there is this to be said for the Society, that it does not make a man perform an act which looks like service but which is not. There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the Gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which Heaven alone shall disclose and the Judgment Day alone discover.

How many thousands have been carried to Heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell. I might say, if it were right to quote such a Scripture, “The leaves were for the healing of the nations”—

verily they are so. Scattered where the whole tree could scarcely be carried, the very leaves have had a medicinal and a healing virtue in them and the real Word of Truth, the simple statement of a Savior crucified and of a sinner who shall be saved by simply trusting in the Savior, has been greatly blessed and many a thousand souls have been led into the kingdom of Heaven by this simple means.

And now what shall I say to bind up what has been already said into a compact form! Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing. Let us do that and attempt something else by-and-by.

We are, on the other hand, diligently engaged already in some higher service for Christ, let us not despise those steps which helped us up, but let us now assist others with these steps that they, too, may rise from the grade of service which is theirs to a higher and a greater one. Let us, in fact, encourage this Society at all times with our contributions and with our prayers. I would remind you that during this year the Tract Society has sent abroad some forty-two million tracts—some four and a half millions more than last year. These have been sent throughout the whole earth. Extensive as man, I may say, has been the action of this society—not confined to any sect or denomination, or any class or clime. It has labored for all and all Christians have labored with it and God has given it a large measure of success.

I think I may leave it in your hands tonight. But permit me this one word before I bid you farewell. Many of you I shall never see again and I remember that my own sermon tells me that I have personal service to perform for Christ. It is not enough for me to urge you to do it, I must do it, too. My Hearers, imagine not that any service you can do for Christ will save your souls if you are unrenewed. If your faith is not fixed in Jesus your best works will be but splendid sins. All the performance of duties will not affect your salvation. Cease from your own righteousness, cease from all deeds of working out life and “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust Jesus and you are saved, trust self and you are lost.

Just as you are, cast yourselves on Christ. I remember Dr. Hawker concluding an admirable discourse with these brief words—The words were addressed to Rebecca of old—“Will you go with this man?” Let me conclude with the like words—Souls, will you go with Christ? Will you go to Christ? “I would go with Him,” says one, “but would He have me?” Did He ever reject one that came to Him? “I would go with Christ,” says another, “but I am naked.” He will clothe you. “I would go to Him,” says a third, “but I am filthy.” He can cleanse you—no, His own blood shall wash you and His own veins will supply the purifying stream.

“I would go with Him,” says another, “but I am diseased and leprous and cannot walk with Him.” Ah, but He is a great Physician and He can heal you. Come as you are to Christ. Many say, “But I cannot come.” I remember praying in the North of Ireland, in the revival, which just hits the mark. The young converts will say to one another, when one says, “I can-

not come,” “Brother, come if you can and if you can’t come, come as you can.” Will you not come, when by coming to Christ you may save your soul? We do not know what faith is when we say to ourselves, “It is something so mysterious I cannot reach it.”

Faith is trusting Christ. It is the end of mystery and the beginning of simplicity. The giving up of all those idle feelings and believing that anything else can save the soul and the reception of that one master thought, that Christ Jesus is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. Never soul perished trusting Jesus, never heart was blasted with perdition that had confidently rested itself upon the Cross.

There is your hope, poor shipwrecked mariner, yonder constellation of the Cross with those five stars, the wounds of Jesus. Look there and live. One glance and you are saved. Those soul-quickening words, “Believe and live,” comprehend the whole Gospel of God. May the Divine Spirit lead you now out of self unto Christ. O Lord! Command your blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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TO SOULS IN AGONY

NO. 1216

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

***“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me.
I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord;
O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul...You have delivered
my soul from death, my eyes from tears,
and my feet from falling.”
Psalm 116:3, 4, 8.***

THE great trouble which is here described very probably happened to David long after he had been a Believer. He had been living the life of faith, perhaps, for years, in a calm, happy and quiet manner. But by-and-by he met with outward tribulation and not a little of inward conflict. At some time or other it generally happens to a Believer, between the setting out at the wicket gate and the crossing of the last river, that he endures a great fight of afflictions. My observation leads me to notice that those who begin with rough times frequently have a smooth path afterwards, while others, whose first experience was very sunny and peaceful, meet with fierce conflicts farther on.

Those who have enjoyed a long, calm and comparatively easy life, may meet their stormiest hours at the close of their days, for some of the best of God's children, to use an old Puritan's expression, "are put to bed in the dark." Their sun sets in clouds, but doubtless it rises again in the full splendor of the eternal morning! Somewhere or other, Brothers and Sisters, you will learn to acknowledge that—

***“The path of sorrow, and that path, alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

The saints above who sing the new song are, at least many of them, described by the words, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." That is the general way to Heaven and perhaps few travelers reach Paradise by any other road. Let Believers, therefore, not count upon immunity from trouble, but let them reckon upon sufficient Grace for it. Let them believe that God's choicest letters of love are sent to us in black-edged envelopes. We are frightened at the envelope, but inside, if we know how to break the seal, we shall find riches for our souls.

Great trials are the clouds out of which God gives great mercies. Very frequently, when the Lord has an extraordinary mercy to send to us, He employs His rough and grizzled horses to drag it to the door. The smooth rivers of ease are usually navigated by little vessels filled with common commodities, but a huge galleon loaded with treasure traverses the deep seas. Let the children of God learn from this passage in David's experience that their best resort in trouble is *prayer*. When the sorrows of death

compass you, pray! When the pains of Hell get hold upon you, pray! When you find trouble and sorrow, pray! Everything else which prudence and wisdom suggest is to be done in a time of difficulty, but none of these things are to be relied upon by themselves.

“Salvation is of the Lord,” whether it is salvation from troubles or from sins. You do right to provide the horse for the day of battle, but still, safety is of the Lord. Use the means, but never supplant faith by the *use* of means. When you have done all, trust in God as though you had done nothing, for, “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches but in vain.” In all things pray! And be well assured that if at this moment you are in the same plight as David was, prayer will bring you out of it. Prayer is the catholicon, the universal cure! It subdues every disease. In spiritual conflicts it has a thousand uses. You may say of it, “By this will I break through a troop; by this will I leap over a wall; by this will I put on shield and buckler and by this will I smite the foe.” Prayer can unlock the treasures of God and shut the gates of Hell! Prayer can quench the violence of flames and stop the lions’ mouths. Prayer can overcome Heaven and bend Omnipotence to its will. Only pray, Brothers and Sisters, believingly and in the name of the Well-Beloved, and answers of peace must be given to you.

I intend, this evening, to use the text with another view. I mean to accommodate it, as I think lawfully, and to use it as a description of the condition of an awakened sinner. To sinners under conviction I would address myself, for I know there are such in the congregation. I was glad to hear their cries the other night, and I hope, with that, the Lord means to bless them and bring them into liberty. We shall speak, first, of *this poor soul’s condition*. Then of *his course of action*. And then of *the deliverance he obtained*.

I. First, here is THE WRETCHED CONDITION into which many a poor awakened soul has been brought. But let me, before I proceed further, say, that if any of you are believers in Christ and have not felt all that I speak of, you are not to condemn yourselves because of it. There are many maladies in the world. If I am describing a sickness and the way in which the physician cures it, you must not say, “I am surely wrong, for I never felt that phase of the disease.” That does not matter. No man suffers *all* maladies. If you are resting only upon Jesus, do not disturb yourself—that which I am about to utter is not meant for your disturbance, but for other people’s comfort.

From our text I remark that many a troubled conscience *feels the sorrows of death*. That is to say he is the subject of griefs similar to those which beset men on their dying beds. I have passed through this state, myself, and I shall therefore describe it the more feelingly. What are the sorrows of death? One of the sorrows of a sinner’s death is *the retrospect*. The dying sinner looks back and sees nothing in his life that yields him comfort. He could wish that the day had been darkness in which it was

said that a child was born into the world, for he feels that his existence has been a blank and, worse than that, an insult to God and the cause of misery to himself. He cannot see a bright or hopeful spot in his whole history.

So, too, the man truly awakened weeps over a dreadful past and laments because all is evil and the very things he once gloried in are tarnished. He sees that to have been sin, which before he thought to have been righteousness! And he bemoans himself, saying within his heart, "Would God I had never been born." Many an awakened man has said, as John Bunyan did, that he wished he had been a frog or a toad, or a venomous serpent sooner than have been a man to have lived as *he* had lived. Are you feeling, dear Friend, or have you ever felt that sorrow of death? Some of us have felt it keenly.

Another sorrow of death is grief over *the present*. The man lies tossing to and fro upon his deathbed and all his glory and beauty are gone. The bloom of health has departed from him. He is a very different man from what he was in the days of his agility and vigor—and he knows it. So is it with the sinner—he feels the pining sickness of sin consuming him as the moth consumes a garment. His moisture is turned into the drought of summer. His glory is as a faded flower and the excellency of his flesh, in which he boasted and said that he was no worse than others and, perhaps, was even better, is now passed away. The Spirit, when He blows upon man, finding all flesh to be grass, withers it all up—and so He destroys the glory of man's estate and makes his excellency decay till the man is sick to death of himself.

The dying man also sees all his strength departing. Perhaps he thinks, like Samson, to shake himself as at other times, but he is mistaken. The limbs that bore him to his bed fall under him and the hand with which he labored drops palsied by his side. The very eyelids scarcely can drop to form a curtain from the light, or lift themselves to admit the blessed beams of the sun. The golden bowl is breaking and the silver cord is being snapped. It is just so with an awakened sinner. He feels death in his soul. He used to be able, as he thought, to do anything! His notion was that he could repent and believe, amend and reform and save himself whenever he liked.

But now the cold chill of death has come upon all his powers and he hears Christ, in mercy, saying, "Without Me you can do nothing. No man can come to Me unless the Father, which has sent Me, draw him." A man experiences a dreadful paralysis in his soul when he is really and thoroughly awakened. The Spirit of God is making sure work of his conversion! He sees his beauty faded and his strength departed and thus the sorrows of death get hold upon him. Another present sorrow of death is the discovery that friends are no longer of any service. The dying man must leave wife and children. They would gladly accompany him, but they cannot.

That dear wife would be willing to dare Death, itself, if she might still continue the companion of the man whom she has loved, but it must not be. The fondest affection cannot help, now. The awakened sinner discovers precisely the same thing with regard to spiritual help. He would have looked to a priest, but he dares not. He would have looked to his minister, but he knows that if he did, he would be disappointed. He finds emptiness written upon every creature so far as his soul's necessities are concerned. His sore is too terrible for any man to find a plaster, his wound too deep for any human hand to close it up. The sorrows of death in this respect compass him.

Perhaps the worst sorrow about the death of an ungodly man is *the prospect*. The past is black, but blacker, still, the future. The present is gloomy, but, oh, the darkness, which may be *felt*, which environs the hereafter! The dying man shudders at the awful future and so does the awakened sinner. He dares not go forward! He is afraid and a dreadful sound is in his ears. I, myself, before I obtained mercy, was afraid lest every tuft of grass I trod on should open beneath my feet and swallow me up. So did sin press upon me, that I should not have been astonished if I had met, in my daily walks, an angel, as Balaam did, with a drawn sword! And if he had said to me, "You are doomed forever for your sin," I could only have been dumb before him, or confessed the justice of the sentence. Thus does many a sinner feel the sorrows of death compass him. They are all around him—those sorrows of the past, the present and the future.

The description becomes yet more graphic in the next sentence. *Awakened sinners sometimes feel what they describe as the pains of Hell*. Not that any living man does endure the pains of Hell to the extent which they are suffered in Hell, but still a dreadful foretaste of those pains may be experienced and, sometimes is experienced by an awakened conscience. What are these pains of Hell? First, there is the pain of *remorse*. Before the soul believes in Christ, it has no repentance, but it suffers remorse—a sorrow for sin because of its penalty! It is a dreadful horror of having lived such a life because it sees that it must be punished for that life, and that God, the infinitely Just, must take vengeance upon its transgressions.

Remorse! Is not its tooth as sharp as that of the undying worm? Is not its burning as the fires of Tophet? When we felt it, we cried, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life!" If God in mercy did not stay the soul with some little wavering hope, even before it comes to faith in Jesus, surely the spirit of man would utterly fail under a remorseful sense of sin! One of the pains of Hell is a sense of *condemnation*. The lost souls are called the "damned"—in other words, *the condemned*. Assuredly, before we believed in Jesus, some of us felt that we were condemned. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them."

I remember how that curse howled through my soul like the tempest shrieking among the shrouds of a sinking ship. "Cursed is everyone that

continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them”—I knew that I had not continued in all things required by the Law—and I knew that I was cursed! And then came this other text. It was the Gospel side of the same terrible blast—“He that believes not is condemned already”—*condemned already*—“because he has not believed on the Son of God.” When two such winds as those two texts meet each other, it is enough to sweep the poor frail tenement of manhood to a ruin like that which overthrew the house in which the sons of Job were met to feast! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is no little thing—let those who know it assure you—to have felt the pains of Hell!

Perhaps one of the acutest pangs of an awakened conscience is a sense of *hopelessness*, a terrible despair, unalleviated by any prospect of improvement in the future. We were driven to that, too, some of us. All hope of our being saved was lost. There was, sometimes, a little twinkling ray of light which seemed to say, “Jesus came to seek and to save sinners.” But we could not even see that lone star at all times, for we thought that He did not come to seek and to save such sinners as *we* were and, moreover, since we had rejected Him before, we feared that His mercy was clean gone, forever! How despairingly was I known to harp upon that thought!

I now wish I had not done so, but I know that some others do it and I would speak to their experience. May God deliver their frail boats from the whirlpools of despair, that awful whirlpool which has sucked down so many! There is another pang of Hell which the awakened feel and that is a *crushing sense of misery*. Though not in Hell yet—and blessed be God you will not be—yet some of you feel almost as wretched as if you *were* there, for remorse, intensified by a sense of condemnation and lashed by despair, creates a dreadful storm within your soul, till your heart cries out—

**“At noise of Your dread waterspout
Deep unto deep does call!
Your breaking waves go over me,
Yes, and Your billows all.
I am cast out from Your sight:
I seek You, but I cannot find You:
I cry after You, but You hear me not.”**

Then is the soul smitten, indeed. Read the books of Job and Jeremiah and you will see what broken hearts can suffer. Those books were not written for people in olden times only, but they declare the present experience of many a seeker after Christ—and thus they oftentimes render comfort to poor souls when no other portion of God’s Word seems to have a single syllable to speak to them.

Thus I have taken two great sentences of the text—“The sorrows of death compassed me” and, “The pains of Hell got hold upon me.” But the case was worse than this, for *the poor soul felt no alleviation* and knew of no escape. These things were, by themselves, unsoftened. They were left in all their terror—the gall was unmixed, the vinegar undiluted. Notice the language. “The sorrows of death *compassed me*.” It is a very strong word.

When hunters seek their prey, they form a circle around the poor animal that is to be destroyed. The poor panting creature looks to the right, but a man with a spear is there. He looks to the left and there are the dogs. Before and behind him are more spearmen, more hounds, more hunters—there is no way of escape.

So does an awakened soul discern no rescue, no loophole by which it may be delivered. The text says, “The pangs of Hell *got hold upon me.*” “Got hold.” As if the jaws of the lion had really gripped the lamb, or the paws of the bear were hugging the poor defenseless sheep. “Got hold upon me.” As though God’s terrible sergeant from the Court of Justice had laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, “I arrest you in the name of God to lie in Hell’s prison and perish forever.” Many a soul has felt that and felt, also, that it could not get away from the terrible grip.

Some who know nothing of contrition and heartbreak enquire, “Why don’t they get out of such bondage?” Ah, but if you were in that condition, such a question would grieve, if not exasperate you! I have known persons put a great many questions to troubled hearts which they, themselves, could not answer if they were in their state. Do you ask a man who has had both his legs broken, and lies across the rails of the railway—why do you not walk home? Why does he not walk home? Say, rather—why do you ask such a foolish question? When a poor soul is broken to pieces and despairing, tell him what Christ did for him and say very little about what he ought to do! You will never comfort the desponding man by telling him his duty. Speak, rather, of Jesus’ love! Poor souls, they are so disturbed and tossed about that they can do nothing! Tell them what Jesus has done! That is the way to bring light to their souls.

Once more, the Psalmist felt *no comfort from any exertion that he made.* That takes in the last sentence of the text’s description. “I found trouble and sorrow,” so that he looked for something, but the only result of his search was that he found trouble and sorrow. Do you remember, beloved Believer, in the days when you were under bondage on account of sin—how you bound yourself apprentice to Moses to work out your own salvation by your own goodness? What did you get? Surely you found trouble in the work and sorrow as its wages! You were like a horse at a mill—the whip was used very freely upon you, but it brought you nothing except a sense of failure—a conviction that all you had done was rather a provocation of God by setting up an antichrist of your own righteousness. There was no help towards an atonement for your sin.

You found trouble and sorrow. Perhaps you went to Mr. Legality and he, and his son, Mr. Morality, did what they could for you. But if you *were* really awakened, all that you got from them was trouble and sorrow. That was the whole result of it. It is just possible that you went over the road to the ceremonial shop—attended one of the ritualistic jogs-houses and went through the performances there. And then you were told that a priest could absolve you and an outward form and ceremony could quiet your

mind. Ah, if you were a living soul you found only trouble and sorrow in all that foolery! And now you have come to look upon it with intense contempt—as the most intolerable imposture of any age since man began to seek out many inventions!

Vain is it to harp to a hungry belly, or dance to a broken limb! And equally a mockery are all the posturing and lies of Romanism to those whose hearts bleed for sin—

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

If they look elsewhere, they will find trouble and sorrow, and nothing more. Assuredly this a pretty pass to be brought to. What is to be done? What is to be done? Sinner, there is *nothing* to be done! At least, nothing which *you* can do. You are shut up to be saved by Jesus, or to be lost! I liked the remark of a good Brother from this platform the other day, when he said that Gospel ministers were fishers and that we were to fish with nets. It was all a mistake that we were to catch people with bait—that was angling—and there was nothing about angling in Christ’s commission. We are to fish with nets.

Now, what is a net for? The net is to shut the fish up. It goes under them, around them, everywhere—and shuts them up so that they cannot get out. That is exactly what God does with poor sinners whom He means to save! He shuts them right up. He puts the net round them and they cannot get out. Only when the net quite encloses his fish can the Gospel fisherman get them out of the sea of sin and lift them into the boat where Jesus sits! We must get the net right round them—shut them up by the Law that they may be brought to Christ. Every avenue of escape is closed against you forever, Sinner, except one—and that is Christ, who says, “I am the door.” There is no other door, neither upwards nor downwards, to the right nor to the left, before nor behind! You are ruined and destroyed, O Sinner, and you must perish if left to yourself! There is none in earth, or Heaven, that can help you, save One! And O, if the Lord will lead you to look to Him, what a blessed thing it will be!

II. That brings us to the second part of our discourse, which is to speak about the awakened sinner’s COURSE OF ACTION. “*Then called I upon the name of the Lord.*” What did he do? First, *he called*—called upon God’s name, invoked Him, spoke to Him, lifted up his heart and lifted up his voice—called as a man might do who is lost in a fog and calls to a neighbor, hoping to hear a voice that will guide him. Or as one who is far away in the bush of Australia and gives a call in the hope that some human voice may respond to it.

This call is often described as a cry—a natural, simple, authentic, unpleasant, but most effectual style of expressing our distress. Oh, Sinner, if God has really been at work with you and you are where I have been describing, you will call to God *now*! Your heart will cry to God at once! Tears will speak for you, sighs will speak for you. Your heart, in its *silence*, will speak unto God and call upon His name! Notice he says, “Then

called I upon the name of the *Lord*.” There will be no more calling upon ministers, or calling upon priests, or calling upon yourself, but, “then called I upon the name of the *Lord*.”

The sinner had forgotten the Lord till then, and now the Lord came to his remembrance. “When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare?” Thus his father came to the prodigal’s remembrance. When we get among the swine and would gladly fill our bellies with their husks, but cannot, *then* we begin to pray to God whom we have forgotten. “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” Now, what better could he do, for who could help him if the sorrows of death compassed him? Who but He who overthrew death and vanquished the grave? Who can help us, when the pains of Hell get hold upon us, but He who has passed through the pains that were due us for the death penalty—and who has cast both Death and Hell into the Lake of Fire?

Who can help the hopeless one so well as the Conqueror of Death and Hell? Who can sympathize like the Lord? The Lord Jesus, Himself, has known the sorrows of Death and, therefore, He is touched with compassion for the sons of men. Is He not the Son of Man, Himself, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin? Poor Sinner, I tried to shut you up, but now I set before you an open door! Call upon the name of Him who knows your condition, is able to meet it and to deliver you! When did he call? That is the important point in this text. “*Then* called I upon the name of the Lord.” *Then*.

Was that the first time in his life? Perhaps it was. Begin at once, O Sinner! Notice, he says, “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” When his condition was at its very worst, then he called upon God. Why did he not stop till he became better? He knew that delays are dangerous. “*Then* called I.” Had he tarried till he was better, he would never have called at all, but he called then and, though it was the first time, he was not ashamed to break the ice, or if he *was* ashamed, he did it anyway and succeeded! Suppose that you never, till this night, did ever look to your heavenly Father, and now it is the worst state of life with you that you were ever in. What then?

Even now is the time for prayer! Now you need your God and now you may have your God! “*Then* called I.” You see he did not call upon God till God sent Death and Hell after him. He was a wandering sheep and so set on going astray that he would not come back till the two fiercest dogs that the Great Shepherd keeps had come after him! And then he came back with a passion! I half wish that God would send Death and Hell after some of you who never will come—that they might worry you and tear you—and make you return to the Great Shepherd. “*Then* called I.” That is to say, when I could call on no one else. No sinner ever calls upon God till he finds that he has nowhere else to go!

And yet the Lord receives these good-for-nothings! Although we only come because we have nowhere else to go, yet He will receive us! Into the port of Sovereign Grace no vessel ever runs except through stress of weather. When the sea is rough and the wind furious. When the tempest is on and the ship must go down or else—then Lord Will-Be-Will, who has held the helm before and said, “I will never enter that harbor”—is suddenly subdued and cries, “Oh for a gust of heavenly wind to blow us between the two red lights, right into the safe waters where we may ride at peace.” I pray God to send a tempest after all of you Jonahs, that you may be brought to the right place, after all, and landed safely on the shore of Sovereign Mercy. “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.”

And now for his prayer. Here it is—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” A *very natural prayer*, was it not? He just said what he meant, and meant what he said, and that is the way to pray! It is a *very short prayer*. Many a prayer is too long by at least 20 lines. It is smothered under a bed full of words. There are times when a Christian can pray from hour to hour—but it is a great mistake when Brethren measure their supplications by the clock. The great matter is not how *long* you pray, but how *earnestly* you pray. Consider the *life* of the prayer rather than the *length* of the prayer. If your prayer reaches to Heaven it is long enough! What longer can it need to be? If it does not reach the Lord, though it occupied you for a week, it would not be long enough to be of use.

It was a *humble prayer*—“O Lord, I beseech You.” It is the language of one who is bowed in the dust. It was an *intense prayer*—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” But I want you most of all to notice that it was a *Scriptural prayer*. There are three great little prayers in Scripture—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” And, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” These are all contained in the Lord’s Prayer. “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul,” is, “Deliver us from evil.” “God be merciful to me a sinner”—what is that, but, “Forgive us our trespasses”? And what is the prayer, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,” but that grand petition, “Your kingdom come”?

How wonderfully comprehensive is that prayer which our Lord Jesus has given us for a model! All prayers may be condensed into it, or distilled from it. Let no person here say, “I am in the distress which you have described, but I cannot pray.” Why not? “I have no words.” You need no words—wordless prayers are frequently the best. “But I can only groan.” Groan away, Brother! “But I feel as if I could only sigh.” Sigh, then! “My heart aches, but I do not know how to express myself.” Do not express yourself—let your heart ache on—only let it ache up to God! Turn all your desires towards Him and let this be the intense pleading of your spirit—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.”

You know we have a law that people must not beg in the streets. There is a man I know on a certain road who does not beg and yet begs. The po-

lice would not let him beg and, therefore, he never begs at all—not he! It would be a slander to say of him that he begs! But he wears a pair of shoes through which you can see his toes and the side of his heel. You can spy his knees through his trousers. His cheeks are all sunken and his whole appearance is that of a consumptive man who must soon die. He has been consuming now for many years and dying daily most comfortably! I believe that if I were to say to him, “Are you a beggar?” he would reply, “Beggar? No, Sir, certainly not! I never beg.”

Yet he is one of the most successful of beggars! His *looks* beg! His *rags* beg! His *flesh* begs! His *weariness* begs! His *general air of sickness* begs! Everything about him begs! He begs all over! That is the way to PRAY! Pour out your heart before the Lord, with or without words, as you find most easy—but let your inmost heart be really full of desire! Be resolved about obtaining the blessing! Do as one did the other night, who said within himself, “I am a lost soul, but I will never rise from the side of this bed till I find the Savior. I am determined to get forgiveness or die on my knees.” He cried and groaned and won the day!

We should not have liked to have heard his pitiful cries, for there was no beauty or elegance in his language, and no music in his groans—but the Lord heard him and saved his soul! “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul,” is a prayer most congruous to the situation and in every way *suitable* to it! Oh, that all prayers were as suitable as this! This, then, is the wisdom of every poor distressed soul in its time of trouble. It must, by a simple faith in Jesus, breathe out its desire at the Cross and say, “Jesus, Savior, save me now, and deliver my soul.”

III. Our third point is DELIVERANCE and for this I refer you to the 8th verse. This poor, pleading, doubting, trembling petitioner received *what he asked for*. He said, “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul,” and before long he sang, “You have delivered my soul.” As the echo answers to the voice, so the Lord replied to his request. If you are asking for salvation with all your heart—with your eye on Christ’s Cross—you shall have it! If you cast yourself before Jesus and say to Him, “If I perish, I will perish at Your pierced feet,” you shall not perish! If you sincerely cry for forgiveness, as the publican did, you shall go down to your house justified!

Note, next, that while he had what he asked for, *it came from Him of whom he asked it*—“You have delivered my soul from death.” Vile delight to ascribe salvation wholly to our Triune God! Some Brethren are a little cloudy in their talk about man’s salvation. But when you get to the inner experience of all true Believers, they will always tell you that they did *not* save themselves and they agree that it was not by their own will or merit that they were saved, but by the Sovereign Grace of God, alone. The unrighteous may gain deliverance from themselves, or their fellow men, but those whom the Holy Spirit convicts of sin must be delivered by the Lord Himself—nothing short of a Divine salvation will do for them. “You have delivered my soul from death.” Mine was a case in which none could help

me but Yourself, my God. My sorrows demanded Omnipotent cordials—only the blood of Jesus and the balm of the Holy Spirit could comfort me!

Note, again, that this blessing came consciously to him. “You *have* delivered my soul from death.” He does not say, “I *hope* You have” but, “You have.” “I know it, I am sure of it, I rejoice in it.” And it is not, “I have shared the blessing in common with a great many and I hope that I have an interest in it.” No, but, “You have delivered my soul from death. If there is not another saved man in the world, I am one.” The faith which looks, alone, to Jesus is an appropriating Grace and enables the soul to say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” As a dear young friend said to me last Monday night, when I was speaking to her about her soul, “I came to see, Sir, that Christ loved me as much as though there was not another man or woman in the world, and laid His life down in my place, as much as if there was not another sinner that needed His blood to be shed. When I got Christ all to myself then I rejoiced in Him and now,” she said, “I want everybody else to have Him.”

It is just so. We must get Him, ourselves, with a holy greediness that fences Him about all for ourselves, and then we shall cultivate a large-hearted love for souls and long that every other person may know the same precious Christ. So the Psalmist, you see, got what he asked for—it came from Him of whom he asked it—and it came consciously *to him*. But I want you to notice one other thing. *He gained a great deal more than he asked for*. He prayed, “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul,” and God delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from falling. He asked for one thing, and he obtained it—and two other things besides—for it is our heavenly Father’s way to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Blessed be His name!

He gained *deliverance from death*, for souls can die though they cannot cease to exist. They die when separated from God, as Adam’s soul died in the day when he ate of the forbidden fruit—and as all souls are dead until by union to God they are quickened into spiritual life. Through the Grace of God, David was delivered from the spiritual death which reigns within and the eternal death to which it leads. *His eyes were also cleared from tears*. Who is not free from sorrow when he is free from the fear of the death penalty? Forgiveness has joy at its heel wherever it comes! And then, having gained salvation and joy, the Lord gave him *stability*. Those feet that were so apt to slide were set fast and the fear of future apostasy was removed by the gracious securities which God gave to him that He would never leave him. Thus he had a blessing for his soul, his eyes and his feet—salvation, joy and stability!

The last word to be said is this—*these same blessings can be had by others*. If I address any who are now passing through the terrible experience of David, or anything like it—or if I address any who are *not* passing through any such experience, but, nevertheless, desire life everlasting—I would say to them, “Remember, the reason David was heard did not lie in

his *prayer*, or in *himself*, but it in God!" Read the verse which follows my first text—the 5th verse: "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is merciful." *That* is why the Lord heard David's prayer—because He is gracious and He loves to show Divine Grace to sinners!

It was also because He is righteous and therefore keeps His promises. He has made a promise that He will hear prayer and He has said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." And, therefore, in mercy and righteousness He will hear us. Remember, too, that if your distresses are like David's, *you may use the same prayer*, because you have the same promises. God's promises are not used up and spent so that they will not work for you. If a good meal is provided for half-a-dozen people and they eat it all up, and six more come afterwards, why, they must go without! But with God's promises it is not so! They are fed upon by myriads and yet they remain the same! Ten thousand souls have fed upon a precious Christ and received what they needed from Him, and yet 10,000 more may come—

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

Let us remember, then, that we have the same promises and the same God. Let the same prayer be offered by each unconverted one here—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." God's answer to that is, "Believe on My Son, Jesus Christ. Trust Him wholly and your soul is delivered."—

***"All your sins were laid upon Him,
Jesus bore them on the tree.
God who knew them laid them on Him,
And believing, you are free!"***

Trust Him and you are delivered, for thus says the Lord, "I will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Turn your eyes to what Jesus Christ has done! Rest in His finished Sacrifice and go your way rejoicing! May God the Eternal Spirit lead each of you poor sinners to that! And I would entreat you, when He does so, to come and let us know it.

Do as the Psalmist tells you by his example. Say, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all His people." Do not hide His love! Confess it to His Glory, for the comfort of His people, for the encouragement of His minister and for the strengthening of His Church! The Lord be with you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 116.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 138.**

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“RETURN UNTO YOUR REST”

NO. 2758

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 22, 1901.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1879.***

***“Return to your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”
Psalm 116:7.***

You who have not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ have no rest to which you can return, for you have never found any. May God grant to you the Grace to come to Christ that you may find rest unto your souls! But we who believe in Him do enter into rest. We are sometimes described as journeying through the wilderness towards Canaan, and the type is quite allowable, but still, it must not be pressed too far, for, in another sense, we have already entered into our rest. We have entered the Canaan which our Joshua has given to us. Moses, by the Law of God, could not lead us into this promised land, but Jesus has brought us into it and we now have our portion and our inheritance in the Covenant blessings which God has provided for His people in Christ Jesus His Son. God’s people, when they are as they ought to be, are in a state of rest even now. I do not mean that they will have rest so far as this world is concerned, for this earth is not our rest, it is polluted. But I do mean that as the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” I mean that, as he also says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And that peace includes “rest, sweet rest”—especially that “peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which the Apostle declares, “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

If I am, at this time, addressing any who have, for a while, lost the enjoyment of this blessed rest, my message to them is, “Return to your rest.” I hope that they will be able to take the Psalmist’s words to themselves and to say with him, “Return to your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”

I. The first thing for us to remember is that **THE BELIEVER HAS HIS REST.** The Psalmist says, “Return to your rest, O my soul,”

There is a position, or an experience in which the Believer’s heart is perfectly at rest. While trying to think how I should describe it, nothing

seemed to strike me as a more full and accurate description of the Believer’s rest than the apostolic benediction with which we are accustomed to dismiss our assemblies. He has true rest of heart who abides in the spirit of these words—“The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.”

The first rest of the heart comes to us *through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We generally speak of Him as the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, but in the benediction He is put first because, to our experience, He is first. No man comes unto God the Father except by God the Son. So, to us, Christ is first because that is the way His Grace works in us. And, Beloved, when you know how to come to Christ for Grace—no, when you *have* come to Him and have received from Him the Grace to cover all your sin—the Grace to justify you in the sight of God—the Grace of adoption, by which you become a son of God in Him who is the Father’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son—when you have received the Grace of union with Christ so that you know yourselves to be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—when you know that all His Grace is yours and that He, Himself, is yours, then it is that you get rest unto your souls!

Sin can no longer disturb you, for it is drowned in the Red Sea of His atoning Sacrifice. Your necessities cannot distress you, for they are all supplied by God “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Nothing need perplex, or afflict, or worry you any more. All the troubles of thought are ended as you believe what your Lord tells you. All the cravings of your heart are satisfied as you take Him to be the Beloved of your soul. All the struggles of your conscience are ended as Christ brings to you peace and rest forever concerning all your sin. In fact, as soon as you come to Him, He gives you, through His abundant Grace, rest about everything!

This, then, is the first rest of the Believer which comes to Him through the Grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is a further rest for us who believe and a very sweet one. It is in *the love of God*. It comes to us when we hear such a gentle whisper as this, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Or this, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you and people for your life.” Or this, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire: you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” Oh, what blessed rest springs out of electing love and adopting love! What sweet rest we obtain from the assurance that God the Father and God the Son both love us, even as our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “He that has My commandments,

and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” Thus is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.

This glorious fact gives us rest with regard to our position here. We cannot be troubled by affliction because it is sent to us in love. We cannot be worried about the future for all its concerns are in the hands of the God of Love. We no longer harbor doubt and mistrust, for we know that “God is love.” O dear Friends, when you once come to really know the love of God, it will give you wondrous rest! You will feel that He never smote a child of His except in love, that He never even frowned at one of His children except in love—and that He never was angry with one of His children except in love! And love, perhaps, never rises to a greater climax of affection than when it is forced to show its anger and so uses the rod more to its own pain than to the suffering of those who feel it. Beloved, I trust that each one of you who believes in Jesus, knows what that rest of heart is which enables you to say, “My God, my Father, You can do nothing to me but what Infinite Love dictates, for I know that You love me even as You love Your first-born and only-begotten Son.”

The third rest of the Believer is *in the communion of the Holy Spirit*. O Beloved, this is the truest rest of the soul—so far as your actual experience is concerned—when the Holy Spirit comes and takes complete possession of you, so that your will does not any longer struggle against the will of God, but sweetly yields to its control—your desires no longer wander, but stay at home in full content and you give yourself up entirely to the Divine indwelling, so that Christ dwells in you and you abide in Him by the power of His gracious Spirit. Then that same blessed Spirit brings to your mind the deep things of God which are full of rich comfort for the soul, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of the Covenant of Grace which abound in all the blessings that you can possibly need between here and Heaven, for it is the Holy Spirit’s special office to be the Comforter of Christ’s people—and He makes the soul either to sit still at the feet of Jesus, to listen to His gracious words, or else to run with cheerful, yet restful alacrity on His errands, for there is such a thing as rest in running in His holy service!

Now, dear Friend, if you have these three things—the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit—I am sure I need not stay to prove to you that in your experience you have realized what it is to enjoy rest for your soul! Do you all know what it is thus to rest in the Lord? I thank God that I do! I feel, especially at certain times, that I could not ask the Lord for anything more than He has given me. I could not wish anything altered, I could not desire to be in any other state—no, I do not even wish to be in Heaven at such times as those to which I am referring! When I sit down beneath His shadow with great delight and His banner over me is love, and His fruit is sweet

unto my taste, it is a little Heaven on earth—the vestibule of the palace of the great King! Many of you must know what this rest is—I feel sure that you do!

II. This fact makes it rather sad work to turn to the second division of my subject which is that **SOMETIMES THE BELIEVER LEAVES THAT REST.** He should not do so—it is most grievous that he does but, alas, he does, as many of us are only too well aware by painful personal experience.

Sometimes, he leaves it *through affliction* and especially if that affliction comes from man. The Psalmist tells us that in his haste, he said, “All men are liars.” Perhaps he said some other naughty things for which he was sorry afterwards. It is not always easy to be calm and prudent when you are provoked—and to be quite restful when everybody speaks ill of you, or tries to lay traps to catch you. But the child of God should so try to master himself that all the dogs that bark can no more disturb him than the baying of a hound would turn the moon out of her nightly course. Happy and blessed is that man whose heart is fixed so that he can sing and give praise even though his adversary is all the while speaking bitterly against him. Yet the flesh is very frail, and aches and pains of body as well as cruel slanders against the character will sometimes turn the Christian aside from his restful state. He is not quiet and calm. He is in a hurry, the leisure of his heart is broken and he is in great confusion. God save us from getting into such a sorrowful condition as that! For, if we had more confidence in our God we would have less confusion in our own experience. We would be much more restful if we did but do our God the justice of trusting Him at all times, for He can never fail us!

I have known some Christians to be driven from their restful state *through a lack of submission to the Divine Will.* O dear Friends, when you have been in sharp trials. When things have gone awry with you and, especially, if some beloved object of your heart’s affection is taken from you, then you have had a quarrel with your God! It is a very sad thing that we should ever differ from Infinite Love, or think that we know better than Eternal Wisdom, or begin to suspect the Grace of the Most High! It is sorrowful that this should ever be the case with any of us and we cannot, without many tears, confess that we have sometimes had a dispute with God about what He has been doing with us. And then, of course, we could not rest, for, in addition to our other sorrows, our wise and loving Father chastised us for our naughtiness. He would not spare us for all our crying, but He went on with His own designs concerning us even while we were so willful and rebellious!

Perhaps He even chastened us more because of that rebellion. We may be sure that we shall never truly rest in the Lord while we have a stubborn will! Until every desire learns to lay its head on Christ’s bosom and is fully satisfied with Him, we shall never be at perfect peace. There is, for each one of us, a modified agony and bloody sweat until, like our

Lord, we can truthfully say to our Heavenly Father, “Not my will, but Yours, be done” That lack of submission to God lies at the root of half our unrest. We must submit to Him—it would be well for us if we did so at once.

Some Christians lose their rest through lack of contentment. They are very happy in their present condition, for God has greatly blessed them, but their eyes catch sight of a Christian who is better off than they are and, straightway they want to have as much as he has. They are not quite so well dressed as that Brother is and they wish that they were. Their wife and family do not look, as the world says, quite so “respectable” as his and, sometimes in their folly, they will throw themselves out of a happy position in life, where they have the privileges of the means of Grace, and go into a state of spiritual starvation just for the sake of being a little better-off in temporal things, which is both foolish and wrong!

Now, until we are perfectly content with what the Lord appoints for us, we shall not have rest unto our souls. Until we can honestly say—

**“To Your will I leave the rest,
Grant me but this one request—
Both in life and death to prove
Tokens of Your special love,”**

we shall never know what it is to enjoy full rest of heart.

I fear that there are many Christians who lose their rest in another way, namely, *through the world’s joys*. Have you ever been with a party of friends where there has been a great deal of mirth and very little Divine Grace? If so, have you not felt, when you got home, that you could not pray as you were known to do? Sometimes you have been taking your recreation properly enough, but you have not carried Christ with you as you should have done—and you have found, after a while, that your rest has gone. Laughter and merriment may do you untold harm unless they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer—if they are so sanctified, they may not cause us to leave our rest.

Frequently, too, Christian people lose their rest *through allowing some conscious sin*. Christ and you will not long keep company with one another if you permit anything in your heart, or speech, or shop, or home that is not according to His mind! His communion is with “the poor in heart for they shall see God.” But if sin is knowingly harbored, communion with Christ will not be enjoyed. The old Puritan was right when he said, “Sinning will make you leave off communing, or else communing will make you leave off sinning,” for the indulgence of any known sin is not compatible with a close walk with God. If, Beloved, you and I get at a distance from God. If we follow Christ afar off, as Peter did. If we grow cold in heart, if we are neglectful of prayer, if the Word of God is not the subject of our constant study, if we get worldly and carnal like so many of our fellow Christians are, we shall soon find that the rest of our soul is gone.

It is a great mercy if you know when it is gone. It is a terrible thing to lose the joy of the Lord and the rest of your spirit and yet to be hardly aware that it is so with you. There is a very simple simile of this state of things, but it is a useful one. You know that a hen, if she has some eggs under her, will keep on sitting. You may take half her eggs away, you may take three-fourths of them away—but she still keeps on sitting, for I suppose she cannot count. Now, there are some Christians who are very much like that hen—they lose the most of their Grace, yet they are just as happy as they were before. But, Beloved, your spiritual sense ought to be something much higher than the instinct of a poor silly bird! Your care of the Divine Grace entrusted to your charge ought to be something far superior to the care of a sitting hen over her eggs! To lose a little Grace is to lose a great deal. To miss even five minutes communion with Christ is to lack an incalculable blessing! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if you have lost the blessed rest you once enjoyed, do not be satisfied to remain in that condition. Do not sing, with Cowper—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!”—***

unless you can also say with him—

***“But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”***

Never be happy unless you are truly resting in Jesus!

III. That brings us to our third point, which is that THE BELIEVER, WHEN HE HAS GONE AWAY FROM HIS REST, SHOULD RETURN TO IT and the sooner he does, the better. Return at once, dear Friends, if you have gone away from your rest. As Noah’s dove came back to him, fly back to Christ, who is your Noah, your Rest, for that is the meaning of the name.

And I would argue with you to come back, first, *because it is quite certain that you can never rest anywhere else.* A man who knows not the Lord Jesus Christ can find rest in many places—such rest as it is. Give him a large estate, abundance of money and plenty of worldly friends, and you will find him quite content with those things. Like the mole, which has its home in the earth, he will go and burrow and make his home there. An eagle cannot do that and you are one of God’s eagles if you are a Believer in Jesus Christ! Neither in wealth, nor in honor, nor in pleasure, nor in conjugal domestic comfort, can you ever find perfect rest! You have eaten the white bread of Heaven, so your mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of earth. You might have been satisfied with the world if you had never known Christ, but you are spoiled for that now.

A countryman who has lived all his life in a lonely village where he never heard any music, might be charmed when he first listened to one of our street organs, but let him hear some of the sweet strains of true music, then the noise of the street organ jars upon his ears and he cannot endure it! So, Beloved, your ears have been attuned to something

better than the world's merriment that can never satisfy you. To you there is only one rest—and you must come back to it. Some of you backsliders have come in here tonight—you have not been here lately, and you have been trying to be happy and comfortable apart from God—but, as surely as the Lord loves you, you will have to come back to Him and, the longer you stay away, the more bitter will be your weeping and lamentation when you do come back. Oh, that you would be wise and return at once, and never wander away again! You know too much and you have felt too much to ever rest except in Christ, so do not attempt it!

Further, *this unrest puts you out of order for everything*. I should like to put the question to you, who love the Lord, but are not perfectly at rest in Him—Does not your present state very much spoil your devotions? You cannot pray as you used to do when you had such a sweet sense of the love of God—you know that you have not the power in prayer that you had—God does not hear you, now, as He once did! You used to run to Him with your request and come back with the favor you had asked of Him! But now you ask many times, yet you receive no reply. The reason is that you are walking contrary to Him and, therefore, He walks contrary to you.

Does not this lack of restfulness also decrease your power of working for Christ? You cannot plead with a sinner as you used to do. You cannot speak to the anxious as you once did for, while your own soul is in the dark, although you may wish to give light to others, you feel that you cannot do it. If you really wish to serve the Lord effectively, you must have the joy of the Lord to be your strength.

Then, do you not think that *your lack of rest is putting you into a state in which you are very liable to be tempted and to be overcome*? “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.” And they are very sensible conies to do so, for there are many beasts of prey to seek their lives, but they run into the rocks and so they are safe. If you are out of your Rock, you are, like the coney, exposed to danger—so run back again as quickly as you can! You are never so safe as when you dwell in the wounded side of Jesus, peacefully resting in the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

There is one thing more that I must say to those of you who are not thus resting. That is, *this unrest can do no possible good*. I say this to myself as well as to you, for I, too, have sometimes erred in that way. I am ashamed to confess that it is so, for it ought not to have been the case, and I feel that I am more guilty than some of you in having done so. But I never yet have found any good come of a state of unrest. When I have not rested in God about everything, I have never found things improve any the more for all my worrying. Suppose a farmer grumbles against God because the wheat is spoiling—does his grumbling save it? Suppose a tradesman begins quarrelling with God because business is

dull—he will not bring one more customer to his shop by all his complaining! No, there is no good in grumbling, and no use in complaining. The very best thing that you can do for yourself is just to come back and rest in God and say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him. I have done all I can that was right for me to do, but I know that it is vain for me to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness unless He is pleased to send the increase. So I leave it all with Him. I will not fret and worry any longer. I cannot improve matters if I do, so I will just leave everything in the Lord’s hands.”

That is a right decision, my Brothers and Sisters, for the end of your heart’s controversy will be the beginning of your heart’s rest. So, “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of yours heart.” But if you will be unbelieving, if you will rebel and revolt against your God, you shall be smitten more and more and no rest will come to you at all. So cry with the Psalmist, “Return to your rest, O my soul” and not only say it, but actually return at once unto your rest!

IV. The last thing about which I am going to speak to you is this. **THE BELIEVER HAS ONE EXCELLENT ENCOURAGEMENT TO RETURN.** “Return to your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”

The Psalmist tells us in detail what the Lord had done for him or, rather, he tells the Lord—“For You have delivered my soul from death.” In the fourth verse, He prayed, “O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.” That was a single prayer, but he received a triple answer to it, for God is always “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.” So the Psalmist proved it and he was able to say to the Lord, “You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling.” Now, Believer, you ought to come back and rest in God because you have received from Him these three marks of His Divine favor.

First, He has *delivered your soul from death*. You will never die the second death. You are a saved man! For you, as a Believer in Christ, death has lost its sting. You may die, after a fashion, yet living and believing in Jesus you shall never see death in the full sense of that term. For you there are no flaming fires of wrath, no bottomless pit, no curse of, “Depart.” Your soul has been delivered from death! Now, if that does not make you happy, what will? Why, my dear Friends, the fact that God has saved our soul from death ought to fill our hearts with perpetual delight! Suppose I should be starved to death? Still, it is a small matter now that my soul is delivered from forever going to Hell! Suppose I had to live in poverty and obscurity, and die like the martyrs at the stake? Well, what of that? There is an everlasting crown that fades not away that will abundantly recompense all!

“Strike, Lord,” said Luther, “now that You have heard me! Do what You will with me, now that You have delivered my soul from death.” I

know how very poor you are, my dear Friend, and what grievous burdens you have to carry, but still, do not forget that the Lord has delivered your soul from death! You may be very poor, and very sick, and very sad, but you can never be lost! You may be laughed at by the ungodly, but you can never be cast into Hell. Blessed be God for this! Surely, that is one thing to make you glad and to encourage you to return unto your rest.

Next, the Psalmist says, *“You have delivered my eyes from tears.”* And the Lord has done the same for many of us. We have no cause for grief now. “No, cause for grief?” exclaims one. No, none whatever! “But I have lost my dear mother! Shall I not weep?” Well, she loved the Lord, so she is gone to Heaven. She is now before the Throne of the Most High. So, if you weep because you have lost her, then immediately begin to sing with joy because she is up among the angels! “But I have lost my little child who was so very dear to me.” Oh, well, in that case you are mother to one who is praising God day and night! So wipe those tears away. I rather like the idea of a young person, at Brighton, who asked that she might have grey horses to draw her to her funeral. Why not? Why always have black ones? Why not have the white horses of delight? Let those who linger here sorrow that their loved ones have gone, but let them not be so ungenerous as not to sympathize in the eternal joy upon which righteous souls have entered! No, wipe your tears away, for “you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, they also, who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

“Oh, but,” cries another tried Friend, “I have real cause for sorrow because I suffer so much and I am so poor.” Well, if it is so, it will all be over soon and remember what the Apostle says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight, of glory.” “Yes,” you say, “but, still, you do not know how much I suffer.” No, I do not, and you do not know how much *I suffer*, but I know this—if the two of us put all our sufferings together, they are not worthy to be compared with the eternal love of the blessed God who sent us all these aches and pains that we feel! They are all sent by Him in love, so why should we cry over them? He has wiped our tears away, so let us not weep any more, or, if tears must come, let the salt that is in them tend to our sanctification. Do not let us shed one rebellious tear—no, not even if all we have in the world were taken from us!—

**“Why should the soul a drop moan
Who has a fountain near—
A fountain which will always run
With waters sweet and clear?”**

If I have all things, I have them in my God. And if all things are gone from me, I would find them all again in Him!

Now, lastly, *God has also delivered our feet from falling* as He did in the case of the Psalmist. I know that one reason why so many do not fully rest is because they are afraid that they shall fall from Grace—afraid that

they shall dishonor their profession and so on. Now, dear Friends, I hope that you will never get rid of the godly fear of falling into sin and never lose that holy insecurity with regard to yourself—but do not let that feeling extend to your God! You know that our Lord Jesus Christ said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” He has delivered your feet from falling, so He will keep you! Therefore begin to praise Him and bless Him this very moment! Cast away that fear of being cast away, and sing Jude’s doxology, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

No, you have nothing at all to fret about! Your soul is delivered from death, your eyes from tears and your feet from failing—so rest, rest, rest, rest! You will glorify God by resting. One of the highest acts of devotion is to rest in the Lord. God grant it to you now, especially at His Table, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 85

In my brief comments upon this Psalm, I shall not feel bound to keep to the immediate occasion for which it was written, but shall seek to find a use for it in the present circumstances of God’s saints.

Verse 1. *Lord, You have been favorable unto the land: You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.* Whenever you are in a low state of mind or heart, remember God’s past loving kindnesses. Recall the record of what He has done for His people in ages long gone by, for He is the same God forever and ever and, therefore, what He has done in the past, He will do in the future. As the wise man said, “The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” It is certainly so concerning God’s dealings “Lord You have been favorable unto Your land,” even when it was stained with sin, “You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.” Even when that captivity was brought upon the people by their own fault. Lord, bring back my captivity! Be favorable unto me! Deliver me from my spiritual declensions and give me back my joy and peace.

2. *You have forgiven the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sin. Selah.* What a sweet subject for our meditation we found, last Lord’s-Day morning [Sermon #1492, Volume 25—THE FIRST NOTE OF MY SONG—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] in those words of the Psalmist, “Who forgives all your iniquities”! Now, if God has indeed blotted out the sin of His people, what a plea this is to use with

Him for all that we still need from Him! Will He pardon us and yet leave us to perish? Will He pay such a ransom price as the blood of His well-beloved Son to set us free from the bondage of sin, and then will He not help us even to the end? Will He not lift up our heavy heart and revive our drooping spirit? Ah, that He will if we know how to plead His former mercy and to urge upon Him that because He has forgiven our iniquity and covered all our sin, He should now heal our diseases, redeem our life from destruction and crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies.

3, 4. *You have taken away all Your wrath: You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease.* "Let us have a special application of the general mercy. Your wrath to Your children has passed away, so let us no longer sit down and cower beneath it, fearful of its terrors. Lord, bring us back to You! Our heart desires conversion, but You alone can give it to us to the fullest. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and we shall be turned."

6. *Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?* "You might well do so if You were dealing with us only according to the strict requirements of Your righteous Law, but we are Your children, Lord, and is a father always angry with his children? You have forgiven us our iniquity and, therefore, the great cause of Your wrath against us is gone. Now, O Lord, reveal Your love to us! Let us not any longer be under the sense of our guilt, or feel the absence of the joy and peace which You give to those whom You forgive."

6. *Will You not revive us again: that Your people may rejoice in You?* "We have got down very low, great God. We have been, these last six days, mixing with the world and, perhaps, we have forgotten You. Come to us, we pray You. Give us fresh life! Revive us again! Many a time have You, spiritually, raised us up as from the grave's mouth. Will You not do it again? All that You have done for us in the past will be lost if You do not continue Your mercy to us. 'Will You not revive us again?' You love to see us happy and You are, Yourself, the Happy God! Oh, make us happy, too, by reviving us, 'that Your people may rejoice in You!'"

7. *Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation.* So far, the Psalm is a prayer. Now the Psalmist seems to stop and wait for the answer to his supplication. Beloved, always do that when you pray. When you have spoken to God, wait for Him to speak to you. Do not let it appear that your prayer needs no answer, but really *expect* a reply to it and then, in patience and in silence, wait for it.

8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly.* For, if they do, their darkness will return and they will again have to mourn their Lord's absence. Perhaps the rod will fall more heavily upon them and their souls will sink into a deeper despondency. For a Christian to

once be a fool, is a sad thing, but for him to turn again to folly is a multiplied form of iniquity which God will surely punish!

9. *Surely his salvation is near them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land.* O beloved Brothers and Sisters, lay hold on that salvation which is near you and exalt in it! And even now let your spirits feel the glow of His glory shining in your soul!

10. *Mercy and truth are met together.* But only at one place—the Cross of Calvary, where Jesus died. There, “mercy and truth are met together.”

10. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* Through Christ’s death, sin has been punished, sinners are saved, God’s Law is vindicated and the depths of His mercy are displayed! “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth.* Promises which lay hidden in God’s Word, like seeds buried in the earth, shall spring up before our eyes like flowers carpeting the earth with beauty! “Truth shall spring out of the earth.”

11. *And righteousness shall look down from Heaven.* As if so pleased with the state of things brought about by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ that it flung up the windows of Heaven to look down and see this great sight! “Righteousness shall look down from Heaven.”

12, 13. *Yes, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.* May God thus revive us, by His Holy Spirit, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—764, 711, 708

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

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

AN EPISTLE ILLUSTRATED BY A PSALM NO. 2538

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 10, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
*In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which
commemorated the completion of the beloved Pastor's 50th year,
June 19, 1884.*

***"You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.
The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."
Psalm 118:13, 14.***

In memory of my 50th birthday, our friends have built a house at the back of the Tabernacle, to be used for the purposes of the Church, and to be called JUBILEE HOUSE. It will be a lasting Ebenezer bearing this witness, "Hitherto has the Lord helped us." I was asked to select a text of Scripture to put upon a stone which all could read and, thereby, be made to understand the meaning of the house and its name. The chosen text of Scripture (Psalm 118:13-18) was cut into a stone after a fashion, but the words were not set forth in full—the mason thought it sufficient to inscribe the chapter and the verses. Now, as people do not generally carry their Bibles with them to refer to, this appeared to me to be a failure. I like a matter made boldly clear, so that he may run that reads it! Therefore, I have had the words, themselves, engraved upon a large slab of marble, to be read by all of our day and by coming generations, also. I believe that such memorials silently work for lasting good and the more of them the better. In this case, at least, if there are not "sermons in stones," there will be texts of sermons, which is even better.

The passage which is thus made conspicuous is a truthful summary of my personal experience in reference to the faithfulness of God. It may seem to be a long inscription, but I could not afford to give up a line of it. David wrote of himself and I can appropriate every word as descriptive of God's dealings with me. Let me read the whole of it in your hearing—**"YOU HAVE PUSHED ME VIOLENTLY THAT I MIGHT FALL: BUT THE LORD HELPED ME. THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND SONG, AND HE HAS BECOME MY SALVATION. THE VOICE OF REJOICING AND SALVATION IS IN THE TABERNACLES OF THE RIGHTEOUS: THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD DOES VALIANTLY. THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD IS EXALTED: I SHALL NOT DIE, BUT LIVE, AND DECLARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. THE LORD HAS CHASTENED ME SORELY, BUT HE HAS NOT GIVEN ME OVER TO DEATH."**

You may not see why this Scripture is strikingly suitable to the occasion, but I see it most clearly and, as it is my own testimony, I will endeavor to make you sympathize with me in it by explaining it. I would say to you, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name forever."

A life so full of the loving kindness of the Lord should yield more praise to God than any one tongue can possibly utter. "The Lord has done great things for us, thereof we are glad." Let us, therefore, praise Him with all our hearts!

Christian experience is the richest product of Grace and it ought to be laid at the feet of the Well-Beloved from whom it comes, and to whom it belongs. What God has done for one of His people is an indication of what He will do for others of His chosen. The Lord's Providences are promises and His benedictions are predictions. To be silent concerning the loving kindness of the Lord is a robbery of the worst kind—it is taking from our God the glory due unto His holy name.

Some are afraid to tell what the Lord has done for them—lost men would count them boastful and proud—but this is usually quite a groundless fear. A sense of the goodness of God tends to humble a man and to make him lie low at the feet of his Savior. The more conscious he is of the Grace that has been so richly bestowed upon him, the more will he realize his own unworthiness of such abounding mercy. The best of men have continually to endure severe heart-troubles and to mourn over inward failures, so that when they tell how the Lord has delivered them with His right hand and His holy arm, there is little in that confession to minister to self-conceit. The wine that is pressed from the grapes of Christian gratitude will never cause anyone to be intoxicated with pride.

It may also be remarked that many of those who never bear witness to the goodness of the Lord are quite as proud as they could very well become and, therefore, the evil of self-exaltation would seem to be a natural weed which grows on any soil. Our business is to pull up the weed and not to lay the blame of its existence on what is a harmless and even a beneficial thing. If a dim eye is apt to be dazzled with light, that is no reason why every man should put his candle under a bushel. To kill one evil by encouraging another is a doubtful gain and a sure loss. Dear Brother, if the Lord has dealt well with you, publish it to the honor of His name and to the strengthening of your brethren! God has not blessed you for yourself, or given you bread that you may eat your morsel alone! But He intends that everything He entrusts to you should be employed for the good of all your brethren. It were a pity that a householder should be too modest to feed his family, or a Christian so much afraid of egotism as to refuse to cheer his fellow travelers.

I would stir up all experienced Believers to speak well of the name of the Lord. Do not conceal the loving kindness of the Lord. It is too much our nature to tell out our sorrows—let us not be silent as to our joys. If we fall into a little trouble, we run from one to another and repeat it till it eats into our souls like a burning acid. We do not let the funeral bells be still, but the marriage peals lie quiet year after year. Let us be eloquent upon our mercies and silent upon our miseries! Why should we have a shout for our complaints and scarcely a whisper for our thanksgivings? Shall we leave behind us no memorials but gravestones? Generations gone before us have cheered us into confidence by the records which they have left behind of the Lord's great goodness—shall we not, also,

bequeath a testimony to our descendants? Do we mean to pass on to them a flying roll written within and without with lamentations? Shall they inherit a dreary desert of unbelief? Far from it! We will write them songs of praises to be sung upon their stringed instruments from century to century! We will engrave upon eternal brass the inscription, "The Lord is good, and His mercy endures forever, and His truth throughout all generations!"

We now come to the first verses of our chosen inscription—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." David remembered his past conflicts—the scars were in his flesh. I will handle the text in the way which the Apostle points out to me in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the third, fourth and fifth verses—"Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed." First, in my text, I see *tribulation and patience*. "You have pushed me violently that I might fall." In the second place, I see *patience and experience*. "But the LORD helped me." And in the third place, I see *experience and hope that makes not ashamed*. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."

I. First, then, in the text I see TRIBULATION AND PATIENCE—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall."

Perhaps, in that word, "you," David points to all his enemies as if they had been so united in their hate and so undivided in their attacks, that he looked at them as one single person. If they had not one neck, they were guided by one head and excited by one heart. Yet David had many enemies—so many that in another place he compares them to bees compassing him about. It may be for the information of some who have lately become Christians, if I tell them that as surely as ever they are the followers of Jesus, they will find themselves the object of enmity. That same Master who has come to make men peaceable, also says in another sense, "Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." In bringing in peace, we necessarily contend with the contentious. In establishing righteousness, we inevitably wage war against injustice and oppression. Truth must always strive against error and holiness must battle against sin. Do not expect to be wafted to Heaven on the wings of fame—you may have to force your way there in the teeth of slander!

Our pilgrimage may cause us blistered feet, for it is no holiday trip, but a stern march. It is an up-hill journey to Glory and that man had need be a hardy mountaineer who resolves to ascend into the hill of the Lord and to dwell in His Holy Place. You will be attacked on all sides—yes, even from within. Your own household may furnish you the most desperate of your foes—yes, your own bed may supply the cruellest adversary. From every corner an arrow may be aimed at you. In work and rest, in the world and in the Church you may be called upon to draw your sword! Strange is it that we may do the maddest actions and awaken no opposition—but the moment we become truly wise, all men

are up in arms against us! Is there nothing to ridicule in all the world save the fear of God? Many of God's people, both in private life and in public stations, find that their piety acts upon the ungodly as a red rag upon a bull—they close their eyes and rush fiercely to the attack. The ribald throng no sooner catch sight of a Christian than they cry, "Here is a target for our witticisms. Let us be sarcastic with him."

If you do not meet with that kind of persecution, yet you will have to endure affliction and temptation in the world. He who is born for the Crown is bound for the Cross. A thousand snares are laid in your path and only He who made you a Christian can cover your head and carry you safely through the bombardment which awaits you. "They compassed me about like bees," says David. That is to say, they were very many and very furious. When bees are excited, they are among the most terrible of assailants. Their stings are sharp and they inject a venom which sets the blood on fire. I read, the other day, of a traveler in Africa who learned this by experience. Negroes were pulling his boat up the river and as the rope trailed along, it disturbed a bee's nest, and in a moment the bees were upon him in his cabin. He said that he was stung in the face, the hands and the eyes. He was, all over, a mass of fire, and to escape from his assailants he plunged into the river, but they still persecuted him, attacking his head whenever it emerged from the water. After what he suffered from them, he said he would sooner meet two lions at once, or a whole herd of buffaloes, than ever be attacked by bees, again! So that the simile which David gives is a very striking one.

A company of mean-spirited, wicked men, who are no bigger than bees, mentally or spiritually, can get together and sting a good man in a thousand places till he is well-near maddened by their scorn, their ridicule, their slander and their misrepresentation! Their very littleness gives them the power to wound with impunity. Such has been the experience of some of us, especially in days now happily past. For one, I can say, I grew used to falsehood and spite. The stings, at last, caused me no more pain than if I had been made of iron! But at first they were galling enough. Do not be surprised, dear Friends, if you have the same experience. Look for it and when it comes, count it no strange thing, for in this way the saints of God have been treated in all time. Thank God the wounds are not fatal, nor of long continuance! Time brings ease and use creates hardihood. No real harm has come to any of us who have run the gauntlet of abuse—not even a bruise remains.

But I do not think that this is quite all that the Psalmist meant. He intended to point out some grand adversary who had led the attack—"You have thrust sore at me." Perhaps it was Saul. Perhaps Ahithophel. Perhaps his own son, Absalom. In our case, we remember no adversary but Satan—"you"—I think I see him now before me. That dread fallen spirit, the arch-enemy of our souls. "O Satan, you have thrust sorely at me!" Many a child of God must utter this exclamation. It is no fault of Satan's if we are not quite destroyed! It is not for want of malice, or subtlety, or fury, or perseverance on the devil's part if we still hold the field! He has met us many times, using all kinds of weapons, shooting from the right

hand and from the left. He has tempted us to pride and despair, to care and to carelessness, to presumption and to idleness, to self-confidence and to mistrust of God! We are not ignorant of his devices, nor inexperienced in his cruelties. He has fixed himself in our memory so that we recognize him and cry, "You have thrust sorely at me."

I know that I am addressing many saints of God who can use David's language with emphasis—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall," for I dwell among a tried and tempted people. The battle between the soul of the Believer and the devil is a stern one. No doubt there are multitudes of inferior spirits who tempt men and tempt them successfully, too, but they are much more easily put aside by godly men than their great leader can be. Apollyon is master of legions and possesses the highest degree of power and craftiness. He who has once stood foot to foot with him will know that Christian was, indeed, hard put to it in the Valley of Humiliation, when the dragon stopped the pilgrim's way and made him fight for his life. Bunyan says—"In this combat no man can imagine, unless he has seen and heard, as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight! He spoke like a dragon and, on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him, all the while, give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, indeed, he did smile and looked upward—but it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw."

No Christian will find much to smile at while he is contending for his faith, his hope, his life with this most cruel of foes! Messengers of Satan buffet us terribly, but Satan, himself, wounds desperately. Therefore we are wisely taught to pray, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Single combat with the arch-enemy will strain every muscle of the soul and pain every nerve of the spirit. It will force the cold sweat from the brow and make the heart leap with palpitations of fear and thus, in some degree, bring us to our Gethsemane and make us feel that the pains of Hell have gotten hold of us. This prince of darkness has a sharp sword, great cunning of fence, tremendous power of aim, and boundless malice of heart! And thus he is no mean adversary, but one whom it is a terrible trial to meet. In his dread personality is contained a mass of danger for us poor mortals and, as we think of our experience of him in the past, we cry with emphasis, "You have thrust sorely at me!"

Carefully notice that while David thus speaks of one enemy, he indicates *the subtlety of his attack* by the language which he uses—"You have thrust sorely at me." That is not a cutting with the edge of the sword, but a piercing with the rapier, a stabbing with a dagger! A practiced soldier may guard himself against the full swing of the sword, but the rapier leaps in all of a sudden and reaches the heart. Armor protected the ancient warrior from the sword, but the thrust found out the joint of the harness and penetrated the body. Thus Satan deals with us. We stand upon our guard against him and we fancy we have shielded ourselves at all points from head to foot. We watch him, for we are not ignorant of his devices, And when he smites, we turn his blow aside. Again falls his

stroke and we ward it off, but just when we half think that we may rest a minute, the rapier is thrust in and the blood flows! Ah, me, I have heard of a ruler who, in olden times, wore armor all day and all night long for a full year, for he was aware that an assassin dogged his footsteps. But it grew burdensome to wear this heavy suit continually, so he took it off and within five minutes he was stabbed and dead! Mind that you never remove your armor, for the foe who seeks your destruction watches you so carefully that he will perceive your momentary carelessness.

Even with your armor on, you may not be secure, for he knows where the joints are, where one piece of the harness fits into another and how to give his thrust where it will count. O God, if Your servants are kept throughout life secure from such a foe as this, how they will glorify Your blessed name! In each case where, “that Evil One touches him not,” the Lord will have a grateful minstrel to sound forth His praise eternally, even as I do this day!

Remember, also, dear Friends, that the *design of these assaults is most malicious*. The objective of the enemy is to make us sin—“You have pushed me violently that I might fall.” That is, either that I might fall from my upright walk in true doctrine, or that I might decline from my first love, or, worst of all, that I might stumble into open sin and dishonor my profession. Satan would not be content for us to stagger—he desires that we fall. He has fallen and he would hurl us down if he could. This he especially desires for those who take the lead in the Church of God. If they were seen to fall, the devil would publish the wretched news through all the streets of Hades! The triumphant shout, “A champion of God has fallen,” would be heard both on earth and in Hell and it would cause great rejoicing! If, in this warfare, “The standard-bearer falls, as fall full well he may,” for I never heard, yet, of a more deadly fray, then the wish of Apollyon will be gratified and his wretched soul will feel as much of satisfaction as its misery can know! Oh, what a mercy to be kept standing where the ground is so slippery, where so many have fallen, where we, ourselves, are so apt to slide, and where such cunning foes are ready to push us down!

What gratitude we owe to Him who has given His angels charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways! How earnestly should we adore Him who has kept us from falling and who will still do so till He presents us faultless before His Father’s face! In the course of 50 years, many have been the times when my feet had almost gone—and I cannot forget them. I remember traveling in the Alps over a road that they called Hell Place because the rocks were so terribly smooth that neither men nor mules could get sure foothold. I was glad when that bit of the road was passed, even as I am this day happy to have come so far on my journey. “When I said, my foot slips; Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.” I would at this moment bless the Lord who keeps the feet of His saints.

II. I turn from the first to the second head, that I may speak of patience and experience—“You have pushed me violently that I might fall, but the LORD helped me.”

It would be well to set those words to music and let the whole congregation of the faithful sing aloud with glad hearts, "But the Lord helped me." The bass would sound well from a venerable Brother who would roll it forth ponderously, "The Lord helped *me*." And many an aged Sister would take another part and sing, in a higher key, "*The* Lord helped me." Fathers and mothers, who have had a large family of children about them and have, by a hard struggle, brought them up, will each one sing, "Hitherto has the Lord helped *me*," while the lone sufferer will sing, "I was brought low, and He helped *me*." The younger Believers, though they have not gone so far on the journey, have, nevertheless, had their share of trial and of Grace—they also can each one say, "The Lord helped *me*." Let it go round the assembly, till every child of God has added his note and the enemy, in his deep abodes, can hear us shout exultingly, "You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but Jehovah helped me!"

Helped me to what? Well, helped me, first, *to believe*, for David evidently had trusted in the Lord and found it better than trusting in man. Satan makes a special attack upon our faith. If he could destroy it, he would have captured the citadel of our spiritual life. But this he cannot do. Faith is a dear child of the Holy Spirit and He that creates faith will not desert it, but keep it as the apple of His eye. He gives more Grace and increases our faith! He enables us to trust our God and to hold fast by His way. It is He who has helped our faith to "laugh at impossibilities and say, 'It shall be done.'" In the dark hour, the Lord has given us to see by faith and in the storm He has made us to ride the billows by faith. That is the great matter, for so long as faith survives, hope is not sick unto death! I do not doubt that some of you wonder to-night that your faith has survived the putrid skepticism of the age, the stagnant atmosphere of indifference, the foul air of heresy which surrounds all things. If it were possible, the enemies of Christ would deceive the very elect, but the godly live by faith!

Next, the Lord has not only helped us to believe, but He has helped us *to pray*. When David was brought low, then he prayed, and from this holy practice we have never desisted, though tempted many a time to do so. Long waiting for an answer has been an inducement to many of you to cease from pleading. But, like the poor importunate widow, you have pressed your suit and now you are able to bear witness that it is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord! Who was it that kept you pleading? Was it not the Lord who helped you to continue in prayer? You would soon have heard the devil say, "Behold, he has ceased to pray," if the Lord had not daily led you to the Mercy Seat and enabled you to plead, there, the sprinkled blood. The fire of devotion would have been quenched by the black fiend who threw water upon it if it had not been secretly kept alive by One who was hidden behind the wall and secretly poured oil upon the flames! Men do not cry to their Heavenly Father, in their closets, unless the Divine Spirit draws them into this hallowed communion! Jacob wrestled with the Angel because the Angel wrestled with him. When the Holy Spirit creates in us the inwrought prayer, it is sure to be an effectual prayer—but the ineffectual prayers of our own unaided spirit are such

failures that we are soon induced to give them up. Help in prayer is the best of help! God never fails that man in public whom He has strengthened in private. So long as our infirmities are helped by the Spirit in prayer, we may rest assured that they will also be helped in all other respects. When blind Samson began to pray for strength, it was a sign that, notwithstanding all that the enemy had done against him, he was yet to win a great victory and declare again that the Lord had helped him!

Surely, this text also means that as the enemy tries to make us fall, so God has helped us *to stand*. O child of God, if you have maintained your integrity. If with all your losses you have never been unrighteous, but have been honest before God. If, under slander you have not lost your temper, nor rendered railing for railing. If, when much tempted of the devil, you have still said, "Get you behind me, Satan," and have strived against him, then you are ready with all your heart to Bless the Lord who has helped you! The way of the upright is beset with snares and he who has run therein for many years without stumbling is, indeed, favored of the Lord!

When I think of some professors of my acquaintance who have grievously defiled their garments, I hope that they will be saved, but I know that it must be "so as by fire." This reflection makes me pray God that others of us and especially that I, myself, may be graciously preserved so that we do not transgress. How can we stand, so feeble, so encompassed with infirmity and tempted in so many points, unless our God shall help us? Hitherto He has helped us and, therefore, we look forward to the future with a joyous confidence!—

***"He who has led will lead
All through the wilderness.
He who has fed will feed.
He who has blessed will bless.
He who has heard your cry
Will never close His ears.
He who has marked your faintest sigh
Will not forget your tears.
He loves always, fails never.
We rest on Him today, forever!"***

Beside that, God has helped us *to fight*. "You have thrust sorely at me," says David, "But the LORD helped me." Helped him to do what? Why, to thrust back, again, quite as sorely against his spiritual foes! He says of the bees, in the verse to which we have referred, "In the name of the Lord will I destroy them." Some of us can thank God that we have kept our fighting arm in trim till this very day. A bow of steel is broken by our arms even now. We have not changed our testimony for Christ, nor cast away our confidence which has great recompense of reward. We have been sorely put to it by the Rationalists of the age, but still we have held up the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel! And still we cry, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Dear Brothers and Sisters, take care that when the battle rages you do not stand altogether on the defensive. Carry the war into the enemy's country! Let us not only hold our own, but seek to win souls for Christ! Let us put Satan

on the defensive—it is much better for us to attack him than to be attacked by him. Let us give him cause to look to his own domains, that he may not have so much force to spare for his onslaughts upon us.

When poor Christian was down under Apollyon's foot, his life was nearly pressed out of him, but he saw that as God would have it, the sword which had fallen out of his hand was just within his reach. So he stretched out his hand and grasped that, "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," and therewith he gave his adversary such a terrible stab that he spread his dragon-wings and flew away! Oh, to give the fiend such a stab as that! Let us proclaim the promises! Let us proclaim the Gospel! Let us publish everywhere the Free Grace of God—and in this way we shall turn the battle to the gate and cause those who pursued us to be, themselves, pursued. Hallelujah for the Cross of Christ! We bear it forward into the ranks of the foe, confident of victory! Our courage fails not, neither does our hope wax faint—the Lord who has helped us is the God of victories! "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

III. I will conclude this meditation with the third head, which is, EXPERIENCE AND A HOPE THAT MAKES NOT ASHAMED.

What says the voice of experience? "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." When you are home, I wish you would read the song of Moses which the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea. You will find that these words are borrowed from that grand old song. One of our proverbs says, "Old songs and old wine are the best." Certainly they lose nothing by age and we may truly say of this blessed verse that it is all the sweeter because there is a ring of Miriam's timbrels about it—and we note the sound of dancing feet as we read the words! Hear you not the glorious shout, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation"? Come then, Brothers and Sisters, let us sing this song upon our stringed instruments all the days of our lives!

First, *our God has become our strength*. We are weak enough, but what a power is His! He is our strength to suffer, giving us patience. He is our strength to work, working in us, with us, by us. He is our strength to fight, for it is He that girds us for the battle. The Lord is our strength—what an unfailing fountain of force! Did you say, just now, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord"? Did you complain of being dull and weak? Have you forgotten where your strength lies? Did you allude to your own native strength? Indeed, that is utter weakness! Complain of it as much as you please, for in *you* there is neither power nor wisdom! But would it not be wise to remember that your real strength is the Lord? "The Lord is my strength." In such a case, weakness is lost, and I can say, with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Did I hear you say, my dear Sister, that you would have to give up that Bible class because you do not feel equal to it? What do you mean by being equal to it? Why, that you do not seem to have the personal strength! That is no news! It is well that you remember it and are emptied of your former self-reliance! Still, believe that in you there is no spiritual power

and turn at once to the Strong for strength! When a man is called to any holy work, the sooner he is persuaded that he is not, of himself, equal to it, the better! But, at the same time, it will be well for him to receive that further persuasion—"The Lord is my strength." If the Holy Spirit takes possession of a man, or a woman, what can they not say? What can they not do? The Lord can take up the poorest worm among us and make him thresh the mountains till they become like chaff! Let us, therefore, sing this charming sonnet with all our hearts, "The Lord is my strength." I will rely in no degree upon oratorical power, or human learning, or natural gifts, or acquired aptitude, or on anything that I have, but I will rest in the Lord alone. Brother, when God is your strength, you are girt with Omnipotence! Go to your work, whatever it may be, and believe in the Lord as to your ability to perform it.

A Negro slave used to explain what practical faith meant in this manner—"Why, Massa, if de Lord say, 'Sam, jump tro' that wall,' all Sam got to do is to jump; it's God's part to get him tro' the wall." Just so. He who gives the command will justify it by enabling us to obey it if we give our whole hearts to the doing of it. If God bids you do what is quite beyond your strength, it is yours to proceed in the way of obedience—and God will enable you to accomplish His bidding. He never did send His soldiers on a warfare at their own charges and He never will. He will supply His armies with rations, and weapons and ammunition—you can be you sure of that. He does not reap where He has not sown, nor gather where He has not strewed. He is the Lord All-Sufficient when we are most insufficient. With Him for our strength, we cannot faint, or fail, but, on the contrary, we shall renew our force and rise continually to something higher and better than before.

Notice the next word, our *God has also become our song*. "The Lord is my strength *and song*." I find that the commentators refer this to the period after the battle, so that it may mean, "The Lord is my strength while I am waging the war, and my song when I have won the victory." This is an excellent sense, but another seems, to me, more clearly in the words, "The Lord is my strength and song." Both are in the present tense—we sing while we fight! When Cromwell's men marched to battle, singing a grand old Psalm with one accord, the battle was half won before they struck a blow! Their hearts were fortified and their arms were strengthened by their song. Do you desire a far nobler example? Your great Lord and mine, when He went to His last tremendous conflict where the powers of darkness marshaled all their strength against Him, and He strove until He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood—how did He go?

Here is the answer, "After supper, they sang a hymn." After they had sung a hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives, that is, to Gethsemane—He went to His agony singing! That brave heart was about to be deserted by His friends and even forsaken of His God, but into that deadly contest, wherein He must be cast into the disgrace and dishonor of scourging and shameful spitting—even to that, our Champion went with a song upon His lips because the Lord was His song! So, my Friends, while we are working, let us sing! You will do your work much

better if your hands keep time to a cheery strain. While we are fighting let us sing and plant our blows while we chant our hallelujahs—

***“Ever this our war cry—
Victory, victory!”***

Let us claim the victory, anticipate it and shout it while yet we are contending! On our beds let us sing God’s high praises and magnify Him in the midst of the fires! Set your whole lives to music. Make your entire career a Psalm. Let not your life be a dirge, as it is with some, who, from morning till night, are mournfully wailing miseries. Let us not moan out, to the tune, “Job”—

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

But let us lift up our voices to some such jubilant hymn as this—

***“The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.
Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry!
We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground
To fairer worlds on high!”***

But what shall we sing about? Well, “The Lord is my song.” Sing the Father and His eternal love. Sing how He chose His people and made them His own before the earth was. Sing the Son of God, whose delights were with the sons of men before He came here to dwell. Tell how He took our flesh to take away our guilt. Tell how He died and rose again, and led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Tell how He will surely come again to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords when the earth shall ring with welcome hosannas at His glorious appearing! Make that your song, but do not forget to sing the Holy Spirit’s love. Magnify the Holy Spirit, the Illuminator, Comforter, Guide, abiding Advocate and Paraclete. You will never need to cease from this song, for, “this God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death.” Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit!

Whenever I grow very dull through pain, or heavy through lack of sleep, I say to myself, “I will note down what I owe to God of praise, which I cannot just now pay to Him, that I may do so when I get a little better.” And then my conscience chides me, saying, “Praise Him NOW! Bless God for aching bones! Bless God for a weary head! Bless God for troubles and trials, for he who can so praise the Lord is singing a truer and more acceptable song than youth, health and happiness can present!” A seraph never praised God with an aching head. Cherubs never blessed the Lord upon a sick bed—so you will excel even the angels if you magnify the Lord in sickness! Why should you not, since you also can say, “The Lord is my strength and song”?

The close of the text says, “and *He has become my salvation.*” Brothers and Sisters, after all our experience, we know that there is salvation in none but the Lord. If we have not any experience because we only began to believe in Jesus Christ five minutes ago, yet we know that He has become our salvation. The moment we trust the Savior, we are saved. But I

want you to consider this little sentence and so to believe it intelligently. What do I mean when I say that you are saved? If you believe in Jesus, you are saved from the guilt of sin. Yes, bless God for pardon! But do you not know that you are also saved from the *power* of sin? The dominion of sin is over! It lives like a snake with its head broken. It wriggles and writhes, but its head is crashed! The power of sin in every Believer is overcome—there is no sin from which we cannot escape. There is no evil habit that we cannot cast off if we are really saved. The Lord has become our salvation from all sin!

“Alas,” cries one, “I have to endure very fierce temptation.” Temptation in itself cannot harm you if you do not yield to it. And you need not, for the Lord has become your salvation! Temptation is, “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” “Oh, but I am so poor and I am so sick, and I am so tried in a thousand ways!” Never mind, you are saved from all the evil which is in these trials! Affliction cannot hurt you—nothing of that kind can do you any injury, for the Lord has become your salvation. “Oh, but think of the dark, black night which may come over us in the future!” Never fear—He who has become your salvation will be your light. You are as safe in the dark as in the light, if the Lord has become your Helper. “But I have to die.” Bless God for that! It were not worth while living if we could not die! It is the very joy of this earthly life to think that it will come to an end! What would a sailor say who was on a voyage that would never bring him to a port? What would a traveler say if he was toiling along a road which would never bring him home? Blessed be God, we shall come to the pearly gates, by-and-by! Let us not be alarmed about that, for the Lord has become our salvation.

We are saved from death—we cannot really die! We shall fall asleep, to wake up in the likeness of our Lord. Blessed sleep! Who does not long for it? “He has become my salvation,” not for a time, but forever—my sure salvation, my eternal salvation! Therefore, take courage and let us go forward in our walk and warfare, for this is our note of victory, as it was the hymn of Moses and the children of Israel at the Red Sea, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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

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

[This sermon was the first in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The second was #2539; the third was sermon #2237—Volume 38 and the fourth was sermon #2540.]

THE JOY OF HOLY HOUSEHOLDS

NO. 2539

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 17, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
*In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House,
which commemorated the completion of
the beloved Pastor's 50th year, June 19, 1884.*

***“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous:
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is
exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”
Psalm 118:15, 16.***

A BELIEVER in Christ is not long without finding joy. He is in the land which flows with milk and honey and he will get a sip of sweetness very soon. Like Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus in the dark, but the sun is rising. When he casts himself at the foot of the Cross, his dawning has begun and, before long, he will walk in the Light of God—being justified by faith, he will have peace with God. And not only so, for he also learns to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he has received the Atonement. This joy is in him and abounds, so that he belongs to a happy people. It is true that all Believers are not equally happy, but they have, each one of them, a right to be exceedingly glad. Some float upon a flood-tide of joy, while others drift upon the ebb, but they are all in the same stream and it is bearing them on to the ocean of perfect happiness. All who trust in Christ as they ought to do, will find a measure of this joy springing up within them, keeping company with the new life which the Holy Spirit has created. Ours is peace which passes all understanding and joy unspeakable!

This joy is contagious—it spreads like a sweet perfume. The happy man makes others happy. The man who is full of the blessedness of God overflows for others. Music is not alone for him who makes it, but for all who have ears. The happy man's influence is first felt at home—he goes home to his own family a converted man and they soon perceive the change. He tells them of what the Lord has done, but even if he did not do so, they would soon discover by his gentleness, his love, his truth, his holiness, that something remarkable had happened to him! His actions, his words, his temper, his spirit are singularly altered and those around him can see it! He is glad and, before long, they are glad, too. When the man is better, everybody who belongs to him is the better for his improvement. When the man's own heart rejoices, he distributes joy, even as Christ's disciples when they received bread and fish from the hands of their Lord, divided them among the multitude, “and they did all eat, and were filled.” I trust that many of you, dear Friends, who are my associates in the Church of God, feel this to be true in your own cases, as I am

sure I must confess it to be true in mine. To the glory of God's Grace I must give the testimony. Our own God of blessing has blessed our families.

Certain Believers, however, spread joy through a large number of families—not only those to which they belong according to the flesh, but among all the families of Zion they scatter comfort! David, for instance, when he went forth and smote the enemies of his nation, caused great rejoicing in all the tabernacles of Israel. All the chosen people shared in what the champion of the Lord had done. When any man is blessed of God so that he can teach the Word, and preach it with power, he sheds joy over all the families with which he comes in contact. Aspire, dear Brothers, to shine widely, as a candle set upon a candlestick gives light to all that are in the house! First, see to it that you are truly saved, yourselves, then cry to the Lord for your own kin and labor for them till they are all brought to the Redeemer's feet!

And then let your light shine throughout the neighborhoods wherein you dwell. It is a poor lamp which cannot be seen outside its own glass. Shine down that street from which so few ever go up to the House of God! Shine in that factory where the mass of the workers sit in darkness! Shine in that bank where few of the clerks are walking in the Light of God! Pray that you may be not merely night-lights to comfort some one sick person, but like those new gas lamps which are placed at the cross-roads and make a grand illumination all round! It may be that the Lord has placed you in a trying position on purpose that you may be of more service than you could have been under more comfortable circumstances. We ought to be happy to be where we can make others happy. It should be our will to do the Lord's will by being useful to our fellow men. We must not value our position according to the ease it brings to us, or the respectability with which it surrounds us, but by the opportunities which it affords for overcoming evil and promoting good.

I think that many Christian people would be wise to hesitate before they move from the place where they now are, even though it would be very agreeable to them to live in a more reputable locality. I say that they might hesitate to relocate because if they were gone, the very Light of God in the place would be quenched and the hope of many poor sinners would be removed. Salt can never do so much good in a box as it can effect upon meat which otherwise would corrupt. A pilot on shore may be very clever, but he cannot be useful unless he goes to sea. A river is a blessing in England, but it is beyond measure prized in Egypt or the Sudan. The Scriptures speak of "rivers of water in a dry place." Let us pray that we may be such men and women that we may bless our own households and then may be so located in Providence that, to the utmost of our capacity, we may be channels of blessing to an ever-widening circle of which we are the centers. Oh, for a share in the benediction which fell on Abraham, "In blessing I will bless you." And again, "I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing." And yet again, "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

We will now press more closely to the text and we notice in it, first, that *there is joy in the families of the righteous*. The text says so and ex-

perience and observation confirm it. And secondly, *this joy should be expressed*. “The *voice* of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.” Then, thirdly, *this joy concerns what the Lord has done*. “The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

I. First, there is JOY IN THE FAMILIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Thank God that is divinely true. Once, Paradise was man’s home and now, to the good man, his home is Paradise. I may say that, to some extent, *this is in proportion to the salvation that is found in the family*. If one or two persons are converted out of a large family, it is a thing for which to praise God, that He takes “one of a city and two of a family,” to bring them to Zion. Yet the joy will be rather a soft melody than an exulting harmony. If the wife shall be converted as well as the husband, what a comfort it is to them both! Now will two parts of the music be taken up and the hymn will be more sweetly sung. If two horses in a chariot pull together, how well it rolls along, but if one backs and the other pulls, there will be discomfort, if not mischief. I have seen two oxen in a yoke and I have marked how the true yoke-fellows seek to accommodate each other, so as to lie down together, rise together and move in step together. Where it is not so, the pain and inconvenience make it hard plowing.

If the husband and the wife are both converted, a larger joy is yet within their reach, for they will begin to pray for their children. Those who are born to them will be their anxious care till they are also born unto God. They will have great delight when one of their dear ones says, “I have given my heart to Christ,” and is able to express his faith in Jesus and to give a reason for the hope that is in him. It will further fill their cup of pleasure when another comes, saying, “I would be numbered with Christ’s flock.” Many among us can say, “All my children are children of God—they go with me from my table to the Lord’s Table. I have a church in my house and all my household are in the Church.” Here is a picture, a pattern, a paragon, a paradise! We may say what a minister of Christ once said of his spiritual children, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the Truth of God.” It is better, dear father, dear mother, that your boys and girls should be heirs of God than that you should be able to make them heirs of a vast estate! It is better that they should be good than great. Better that they should be gracious than famous.

If they are married to Christ, you need not fret about finding them husbands—and if they serve the Lord, you need not worry about their businesses. While you live, they will be your comfort, and when you die, you will leave them in better hands than your own! Their future is well secured, since it is written, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.” I think it is generally true that the joy in a family is very much in proportion to the Grace which is in its members. Circumstances and peculiar trials may cause exceptions to the rule, but in the main, it will hold good. Seek, then, the salvation of the whole of your household!

Here it would be a sad omission if I did not say that it is a greater joy when the saved circle includes not only the parents and the children, but

the servants, also. A gracious, faithful servant is a great comfort. And to be surrounded by those who fear the Lord is one of the choicest blessings of this mortal life. We ought not to be content, so long as a single domestic in our house is unconverted. The nurse-maid, the girl who comes in for part of the day, the boot-cleaner and all who are employed occasionally for extra work should be thought of by the mistress and the fellow servants. We should pray that all who set their foot over our threshold may have a name and a place in the house of our God. Why should it not be? May we not often chide ourselves that we have been forgetful of those who minister to our comfort? Oh, that all who serve us may serve God! May all who wait at our table, eat bread in the Kingdom of our Father! And may all who dwell under our roof have a place in the many mansions above!

Now we advance a step and remark that the joy which is here alluded to, is *mainly spiritual*. To fear God tends to make a man happy in every way—mentally, physically, socially, as well as spiritually. It is light to the eyes, music to the ears and honey to the mouth. It is universally a sweetener. The ordinary work of life runs easily when the wheels are oiled with Divine Grace. It should be an ambition that our house should be a temple, our meals sacraments, our garments vestments, ourselves priests unto God and our whole life a sacrifice to His praise. There are households where the Lord Jesus is the Master both of master and servants—and the Holy Spirit is the presiding Spirit in the whole economy of the house. Difficulties that disturb others never occur there, for love prevents them. All are gracious. All are anxious to be good, to do good and to get good. Consequently, jars and strifes are unknown. Little differences are never allowed to grow into disputes. Envy, bickering, clamor and evil speaking are put away. Though these spring up even among those who are of the same kin, yet gracious hearts will not tolerate their existence. Each pays due consideration to each—proper places are kept according to New Testament rule and the result is that the Angel of the Lord is in the house, the devil sees the mark upon the door and dares not enter—

***“Blessed is the man that fear
And delights in the Lord!
Wealth, the wealth which truly cheer,
God shall give him for reward.
And his children,
Shall be blest around his board.”***

Yes, the chief joy in the tabernacles of the righteous is a spiritual one! A joy of the father because he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. A joy of the mother because she, too, has had her heart opened, like Lydia, to hear and to receive the Word. A joy of the dear children as they offer their little prayers and as they talk of Jesus, whom their soul loves. I do not know that I ever have a greater joy than when, sometimes, I have to receive a whole family into the Church! Five came to see me at one time, from one house—quite a company of boys and girls. It is delightful to see our beloved offspring early in life giving their hearts to the Lord! Happy mothers, happy fathers, happy brothers, happy sisters where the Lord works so graciously! May you long continue to praise

and bless His name for this singular blessing, if you are partakers in it! I know none of my father's family, or of my own, who are unsaved and, therefore, I can lead you in the song!

This kind of joy, while it is spiritual, is *not dependent upon external circumstances*. It hangs not on wealth or honor. The joy of the Lord will be found in the palace of a prince, if the Grace of God is there, but far more often it flourishes in humble cottages and lowly rooms where Christian men are dwelling who toil hard for a livelihood and often feel the pinch of poverty. They said of old that philosophers could be merry without music and I am sure that it is still truer of Christians that they can be happy in the Lord when temporal circumstances are against them. Our bells need no silken ropes to set them ringing, neither must they be hung in lofty towers! If our joy depended upon heaping together gold and silver, or upon the health and strength of all the members of our family, or upon our rank and pedigree, we might go to our beds weeping and awake in the morning blinded with tears. But as our joy springs from another well and the precious drops of it distil from a purer fountain, whose streams flow both in summer and winter, we can bless God for a constancy of satisfaction! Steady is that flame of joy which burns in the tabernacles of the righteous, for it is fed with holy oil. God grant that we may never dim its luster by family sins towards God, or by negligence in our duties to one another—but may the sacred lamp of holy joy continually shed its radiance upon us from generation to generation! May it be said of our habitation, “Jehovah Shammah”—“the Lord is there.”

I heard of a wealthy man who had a large number of houses in various places. He owned a fine estate in the country, surrounding a magnificent mansion. He kept up an establishment at the West-End, a retreat by the seaside and a shooting-box in the Highlands—and he would often travel on the Continent. He wandered from house to house and was never known to stop more than a few weeks in any one residence. He told a friend that he was trying to find peace of mind in some one or other of his houses. What a vain quest! He might as soon have found the philosopher's stone, or the universal solvent! I have known many persons who had only one room and that but poorly furnished, yet they found peace of mind there because they carried it about with them!

Happy is the man who wears the emerald of peace upon his bosom, even though it is not set in gold. Blessed are they whose peace is like a river, having a source far away in the hills and a stream clear as crystal, continuous, ever-deepening, ever-widening, moving silently onward toward the ocean of boundless happiness! Yes, it is not *where* we are, but *what* we are. And it is not what we have, but where we have it—whether we have it in ourselves or in our God—that proves whether we are truly blessed. Peace is the best possession for an individual, the richest estate for a family and the fairest legacy for descendants. Where the salvation of our Lord Jesus comes, peace and joy are sure attendants! Therefore is it said in our text that “the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.” Made righteous in character, we may more than ever feel the temporary nature of our earthly sojourn and so may dwell rather in tabernacles than in mansions. But we are honored by the com-

panionship of these two heavenly guests—salvation and joy—and, therefore, we envy no Caesar on the Palatine Mount, no monarch in his palace of marble!

Christian joy, whether in the individual or the family, *can be abundantly justified*. Believers can always give a reason for the joy which is in them. As Christian households, why should we not be glad in the Lord? If God is pleased with us, we may well be pleased with Him. If the Lord rejoices over us, ought we not to rejoice in that fact? God Himself calls us a happy people—let us not live as if we would falsify His Word. See, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever your temporal troubles may be, all things are working together for your good—may you not, therefore, rejoice evermore? Though every drug that is put into the mixture may be bitter, yet the whole potion is salutary. Though each event may seem to be against you, yet the whole course of Providence is for you in a Divinely wise and gracious manner. Nothing occurs in your family history, whether of birth or death, of coming or departure, of loss or of gain, of joy or of sorrow, of sickness or of health, but what shall produce, in the end, the highest good! Judge not each wheel, but watch the outcome of the whole machinery. To me, it is a happy thought that not a grain of dust in the March winds, nor a drop of rain in the April showers, is left to chance, but the hand of the Lord directs all! And therefore I am confident that neither in the little nor in the great shall anything really harm the man who dwells under the protection of the Most High.

Beside this, we rejoice in forgiven sin. This is the first blessing of which David sings in the 103rd Psalm and it is the preparation for all the rest. If sin is pardoned, all bitterness is past, for this is the real wormwood and gall of life. Now that Goliath of Gath is smitten in the forehead, the rest of the Philistines are of small account. When sin is gone, the black cloud which threatened an eternal tempest is removed and the sun scatters the rest of the clouds as it disperses the morning mist. Even death has lost its dread when sin is gone—it is a bee without a sting and we look to find honey near it! If it comes into the house and takes away our dear ones, they are with Christ, which is far better! And when it bears us away, our death will be gain, for, “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” As the whole of life receives another color when sin is pardoned, so does Death, itself, look otherwise to the Believer in Jesus! That solemn business is so altered that we may even—

***“Long for evening to undress,
That we may rest with God.”***

What is there on earth to trouble you who fear God? “Why,” you say, “we could tell you of a thousand trials!” Yes, but when you had done, I would tell you that there was no ground for being troubled about any one of them, for it is written, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” “No good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly.” And again, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or to come; all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.” Therefore, let us take care that we are not as the Egyptians when they shivered in the darkness

which might be felt, but rather as the people were in the days of Solomon, when they ate and drank and made merry, and peace was without end.

I would ask any of you young people who are newly-married and just starting in life, how can you expect happiness unless you seek it in God? You have given your hearts to one another—oh, that you had given your hearts to Christ as well—for then you would be joined in One from whom you can never be separated! If you are one in Christ, you will have surer grounds of union than natural affection can afford. There will be a brief separation of the body when one of you is taken Home, but you will meet again and dwell forever in the same Heaven. Unions in the Lord are unions which have the blessing of the Lord. See to it that you begin as you mean to go on, namely, with that blessing which makes rich and brings no sorrow with it. If your home is to be happy, if the children that God may give you are to be your comfort and your delight, first let your own souls be right with God. If the Lord is the God of the parents, he will be the God of their seed. The God of Abraham will be the God of Isaac and He will be the God of Jacob, and He will be the God of Joseph, for He keeps His faithfulness from generation to generation of them that love Him. He does not cast off His people, nor their children, either. If you are an Ishmael, what will your children be? If you are far from God, how can you hope that your posterity will be near to Him?

To return to my first point, the people of God are a happy people and their families are happy families. If I have any Christian person here who complains, “I am not happy at home,” I would like to inquire, “Is that your own fault, dear Friend?” No, do not be angry, I am bound to ask the question, for I often find that those who complain of unhappiness in their own homes are the main cause of that unhappiness! Most creatures see according to their nature and men often get into their bosoms what they measure out to others. When I meet a man who cries, “There is no love in the Church,” you may turn that expression into plain English and read it thus, “There is no love in *me*.” When a person says, “Everybody at my home is wrong except myself,” you feel sure that he has kept his eyes open to the faults of others, but has never really seen himself! If you wear colored spectacles, all things around you will be colored.

“Alas,” cries another, “I am not happy, though I long to be so.” Do you know, dear Friend, the secret of obtaining happiness? The answer is very simple—do not attempt to make *yourself* happy, but endeavor to make others so. Be cheerful and cheer those about you. I bless God that I never fell into the delusion that there is virtue in a rueful countenance. Some may think it well to be “miserable sinners,” but surely it is better to be happy saints! Carry sunshine about with you in all ill-weather. Do not think that in godliness, *drive* will be equal to *draw*. A frown may benefit a few, a smile will influence more. A famous French statesman had such a dreadful countenance that a boy once asked him whether his face did not hurt him. Surely some very “proper” people might be asked the same question, for they habitually wear such gloom about them that one would think that all was night within! Let it not be so with us, but let the light of the love of God be round about our path causing flowers of cheerful-

ness to spring up on every side! There are enough weeping willows by all our streams—I would they were full of water-lilies. More Grace would enable us to glory more in the Lord and rejoice with more constant joy. So much for our first witness—there is joy in the families of the righteous.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY SHOULD BE EXPRESSED—“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.”

We should put a tongue in our joys and let them speak! The voice should be heard daily, from morn till eve, and till the silence of sleep steals over all. But it should never fail to sound forth *in the daily gatherings for family prayer*. It should be a happy occasion when we meet to read the Word of God and to pray together. It is well if we can also sing at such times. Matthew Henry says, concerning family prayer, “They that pray do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray, read the Scriptures and sing a hymn, do best of all.” Herein he was wise and gracious as usual. I wish that his words received more attention. If you cannot compass the last of the three good things, mix the praise with your prayer by making it more full of joy and thankfulness than is usual. Never let the domestic devotion degenerate into a dull formality, but throw a hearty living delight into it, so that there shall be joy in drawing near unto the Lord and not a weariness. Where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect the children to grow up in the fear of the Lord—neither can the household look for happiness.

Perhaps some of you have not begun family prayer, for you have only lately been converted. Commence it at once, if possible. Let not this day end without an attempt at it. But I hear a man say, “I never did pray aloud.” Then begin at once, my Brother. “But I am afraid.” Are you afraid of your wife? That assuredly is a great pity—I am very sorry for your manhood, for she is the last woman of whom you should be afraid! “Oh, but I should break down!” That might be no great calamity—a breakdown prayer is often the best form of supplication. May not this objection arise from pride? You do not like to pray before your family unless you can do it well and so receive their approbation. Shake off this spirit and think only of God, to whom you are to speak! Language will follow desire and before long you will have to be more afraid of your fluency than of your brevity. Only break the ice! Pray the Lord Jesus to cast out the dumb spirit and He will set you free from its power. If the husband will not lead the devotion, let the wife do it, but let no day pass without family prayer—a house without it is without a roof—a day without it is without a blessing!

Do you say to me, “Alas, dear Sir, my husband is not converted”? Then, my dear Sister, endeavor to have prayer with the children and pray, yourself. I remember, when my father was absent preaching the Gospel, my mother always filled his place at the family altar, and in my own family, if I have been absent, and my dear wife has been ill, my sons, while yet boys, would not hesitate to read the Scriptures and pray. We could not have a house without prayer—that would be heathenish or atheistic!

There will be frequent occasions for holy joy in all Christian families and these ought always to be used right heartily. Holy joy breeds no ill,

however much we have of it. You can easily eat too much honey, but you can never enjoy too much delight in God. Birthdays and anniversaries of all sorts, with family meetings of various kinds, should find us setting life to music right heartily. Moreover, it would be well *if our houses more generally resounded with song*. It drives dull care away, it wards off evil thoughts, it tends to a general exultation, for the members of a household to be accustomed individually and collectively to sing. Of course, there must be common sense in this as in all other things, but as worldlings are able to sing songs, we might, with no more difficulty, sing Psalms. I have known some very happy people who were always humming Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. I knew a servant who would sing when washing and she said it made the work grow lighter. It is a capital thing to sing when you are at work. Keep on “tooting” a little, if you cannot sing—that is a word I got from an old Primitive Methodist. I used to meet him in the morning. He was toot—toot—toot—tooting as he went along the road. When he was at work in the field, it was just the same. I asked him what made him always sing. He replied, “Well, I don’t call it singing, it is only tooting—but it is singing to me, it is singing in my heart. I sing in this fashion because I feel so happy in the Lord. God has saved me and put me on the road to Heaven, why should I not sing?” What a noise we sometimes hear from the wicked when they are serving *their* god! They make night hideous with their songs, and shouts, and blasphemies! Then why should not we make a joyful noise unto the Lord our God? I recommend you to try, in your own houses, to literally Praise the Lord with your voices in holy song.

If you really cannot sing at all, yet the voice of rejoicing and salvation may be in your tabernacles *by a constant cheerfulness*, bearing up under rain and poverty, losses and crosses. Do not be cast down, beloved child of God, or, if you are, chide yourself about it and say, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.” Joy is the normal condition of a Christian. When he is what he should be, his heart rejoices in the Lord. Does not the Apostolic command run thus, “Rejoice in the Lord always”? If you ever get outside that word, “always,” then you may leave off rejoicing—but that you cannot do! Therefore obey Paul’s injunction, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” Heap the joys, one on top of the other—joy and rejoice—and then rejoice yet again!—

**“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?”**

Why should not the children of the King of Kings go rejoicing all their days and express their joy so that others shall know of it, too?

Ah, dear Friends, if we were to go into some people’s houses where God is not known, we would hear a very different sound from the voice of rejoicing and salvation! There is the drunk’s horrible voice that grates upon the ear of her whom he promised to love and cherish, but whose life he makes unutterably miserable, while even the little children run upstairs to get out of the drinking father’s way! It is an awful thing when a house is like that and there is many a house of that kind. And in other

places, where there is no drunkenness, there is many a man without the fear of God who comes in and blusters and bullies as if everybody had to be his slave. There is a woman, perhaps, who is a careless and dirty, making the home wretched through her gossip and idleness—and driving all idea of happiness far away. These things ought not to be and they must not be. God grant that your house may not be like that, but may whoever comes into your house be compelled to know that God is there—and to know it mainly by the fact that you are a happy, joyful, cheerful, thankful Christian, speaking well of God's name and not ashamed in any company to avow that you are a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb! God give you more and more of this spirit in all your households! The whole Church shall be blessed when every family is thus made happy in the Lord and in His great salvation.

III. I close by briefly noticing that this joy of holy households IS A JOY CONCERNING WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE.

You see, dear Friends, that I have a text which is too large to be handled in one sermon, so we must have the remainder another day. But I must ask you to notice the song the holy households sing. It is this—"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." It is a threefold strain—we and our children have learned to bless the Triune God. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen."

How we should joy in God, in our families, when we *think of all that He has done* in conquering sin and Satan, death and Hell! Christ has led captivity captive. Therefore let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. In that great victory of His upon the Cross, truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted, the right hand of Jehovah-Jesus did valiantly on our behalf—and for that we ought to forever be glad and to praise His name!

Then let us think of *what the Lord has done for each one of us individually*. We were captives under the dominion of sin and Satan, but He brought us out with a strong hand and with a stretched-out arm, even as He delivered Israel from the Egyptians. Then our sins pursued us and we were ready to despair—but the Lord again worked our deliverance and plucked us from the hands of our mighty foes and set us gloriously at liberty! Truly, "the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

Since then, the Lord has *helped us in Providence and delivered us from fierce temptations* and made us to stand steadfastly when the adversary has thrust at us that we might fall. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." As I look back upon my own life, I never know where to begin in praising God and, when I begin, I am sure I do not know where to leave off. "O my Soul, you have trodden down strength!" In your case, also, dear Friend, the right hand of the Lord has been exalted in giving you strength in the midst of weakness and helping you in spite of your many falls and failures. Can not you, each one, in your separate sphere see something that the right hand of the Lord is doing for you? Do you not, therefore, think that your families ought to ring with joyous songs of thanksgiving?

When the work of the Lord is prospering, when you go home from a Church meeting after many have confessed their faith in Christ. When you see the pool of Baptism stirred by many who have come to be symbolically buried with Christ. When you see the Church breaking out on the right hand and on the left, new mission stations and Sunday schools being opened, and more workers busy for the Master, should not your hearts dance for joy as you sing, "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly"?

And *when you see great sinners converted*, when the drunk leaves his cups, when the swearer washes out his filthy mouth and sings the praises of God. When a hardened, irreligious, skeptical man bows like a child at Jesus' feet, should not our families, as well as ourselves, be made acquainted with it, and should it not be a subject for joy at the family altar? I am sure that it should be! And when you hear the missionaries reporting their success. When the heathen turn to the Lord and the nations begin to receive the Light of Christ, should we not, then, have a high day of jubilee and say, "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"? I want our families to participate more and more in the joy of the great family of God till our little families melt into the one great family in Heaven and earth, till our separate tribes become part of the one great Israel of God, till we and all our kith and kin are one body in Christ and praise that Lord who is our glorious Head!

Ah, dear Friends, but we must each one begin by exercising personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Some who are here do not yet know the Lord. You cannot make other people happy while you are, yourself, without the true secret of happiness! Yet you wish to be a fountain of blessedness to others, do you not? You do not desire to do them harm, do you? Yet you good moral people who do not yield your hearts to God do a great deal of mischief if your conduct leads other people to say, "It is quite enough to be moral and upright—there is no need for us to go to Christ, to confess our sins and to receive from Him a new heart and a right spirit." You make them talk thus by setting them such an evil example!

As for you who go in and out of the House of Prayer by the year together and scarcely ask a blessing upon your meals, much less call your children to your knee to tell them about Christ, remember that you will have to meet those children at the Day of Judgment. What will they say to you parents if you neglect their souls? You work very hard, perhaps, to earn their daily bread and to put clothes on their backs, and you love them very much, but that is a poor love which loves only the body and does not love the real child, the soul that is within! If, in the middle of the night, someone woke you up and said, "Your Johnny is not at home," there would be a stir in the house pretty quickly! There would be no sleep for you if little Johnny was out in the cold. I wish that I could wake up some of you parents who are saved, but who have children who are not converted. Pray that they may be saved before they leave your roof!

The other day I saw a woman who came to join the Church and her great sorrow was that her children were all ungodly and she could not

speak to them, now, as once she might have done when they were in her own house. She never sought their salvation, then, and that time was over, for they were men and women grown up and they paid but little respect to a mother's word. I always like to hear what two children told me only a fortnight ago. One said, "I found peace at my mother's knee," and the next one said, "I found peace with God at my mother's knee." A mother's knee is a charming place for a child to find the Savior—let your knees be thus consecrated till your children shall there draw near unto God! Will you not take them individually and pray with them, and speak to them about their souls? If you do, I think that I can venture to promise you that you shall succeed in almost every case!

Whenever I hear of the children of good people turning out badly, if ever I have had an opportunity of searching into the cause, there has generally been a good reason for it. I heard of a minister's sons who were all bad fellows, but when I began to look into the life of the family, I wondered how that minister dared enter the pulpit at all, for his own character was not such as would be likely to lead his children to the Savior! It may not be so in every case, but I believe that where there is family prayer and a happy home, and a holy example, and much earnest supplication with and for the children, Solomon's declaration is still true, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

O dear Friends, may my text come true to all of you! The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145 (PART I), 112, 215.

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

[This sermon was the second in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The first was #2538; the third was sermon #2237—*Volume 38* and the fourth was sermon #2540. All four of these sermons can be read/download from <http://www.spurgeongems.org> free of charge.]

GOD'S VALIANT RIGHT HAND

NO. 3361

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1913.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE OPENING OF THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE,
ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1872.***

***“The right hand of the Lord is exalted:
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”
Psalm 118:16.***

THIS verse might full often have leapt from the lips of Believers in the olden times. This verse might have constituted part of the Song of Moses at the Red Sea, for how wondrously did God there overthrow the host of His enemies, when, after dividing the sea, Egypt was swallowed up in it, God, Himself causing the last foe of Israel to be swept away by the mighty waters! “Sing unto the Lord,” they said, “for He has triumphed gloriously,” and by the shores of the Red Sea they knew that “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” It was so in the wilderness when Joshua fought with Amalek and Moses held up his hands in prayer. It was so when they smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Are not these things written in the Books of the wars of the Lord, and is it not said, “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name”? It was conspicuously so in the driving out of the Canaanites. When the people of Israel, untrained for war, marched into the land, they found that their enemies had chariots of iron and they were entrenched in cities that were walled up even unto Heaven—but yet all the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites could not stand against the twelve tribes of Israel! They fled before them like chaff before the wind! They were scattered like the clouds before the tempest! “Oh, praise you the Lord and magnify Him, for He cast out the heathen and He planted His people in their own land.” The right hand of the Lord was that day exalted, for His right hand does valiantly!

And was it not so throughout the period of the Judges? Time would fail us to tell you of Samson, of Gideon, of Barak and all those mighty men who were as weapons in the hands of Jehovah—javelins cast forth by Omnipotence! Truly in those days, also, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly! David, who penned this Psalm, knew this in his own experience, for he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with great slaughter. And long after David had slept with his fathers, others arose and God was with them—and the Lord did mighty deeds. Have you forgotten how

the hosts of Sennacherib lay like the sere leaves of autumn when the breath of the archangel had blasted them? Right onward throughout the whole history of Israel, the foes of God had made headway for a while, for He put His hand, even His right hand, into His bosom. But when the Lord has risen and His people have chanted the solemn Psalm, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered," then they that hated Him have fled before Him! Into smoke have they been consumed like the fat of rams! Into smoke have they been consumed away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But from those triumphs of physical might over warlike powers we turn our eyes to another field of battle—a spiritual one! And God who was mighty with weapons of war, we find mighty with the sword of the Spirit and with the weapons of the Gospel! And we claim the verse which is now before us as a song of the New Testament as well as a chant of the Old! The right hand of the Lord is this day exalted and still it does valiantly!

We shall ask your attention not to a very lengthy sermon, but to these three points—*The triumphs of the Lord Jesus; the triumphs of the Gospel in the Church; the triumphs of Grace in individual hearts.* To all these, and I know not to which one more than another, the text is most appropriate.

I. CONCERNING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LORD JESUS IT MAY BE SAID, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." He did not come as a Man of war, for He is the Prince of Peace. He came not here with sword, shield and buckler, but He came with a body fitted to suffer and with a heart that was made strong to endure. The Christ of God came in lowliness and in shame, to be despised and rejected of men, but for all that He fought great battles in the midst of His weakness and won for Himself wondrous spiritual victories. Observe, dear Friends, with holy adoration, how our Lord Jesus Christ met Satan in conflict, not once nor twice, but many times! In fact, throughout the Savior's life, the prince of the powers of the air assailed our Master. That was a glorious duel which was fought in the wilderness and on the lofty mountain, from which those two contending spirits had a view of the whole world! And on the pinnacle of the Temple, too. Sharp was the sword of Diabolus when he sought to smite the Savior under the fifth rib and make a full end of His innocence. But oh, how glorious the strokes of the Lord, Himself, with the sword of the Spirit, when He said, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and He chased the fiend away! And then triumphant angels came and ministered to the Conqueror amidst the loneliness of the desert. Oh, you Spirits, you might have sung that day, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." All through His life our Savior kept His vantage ground. The prince of this world assailed Him, but he made no dent upon His armor, much less wound upon His soul! He was

tempted in all points—the darts flew so thick that they assailed Him from head to foot—but He was without a wound at the close of the conflict! He was tempted, but yet without sin. And you know how it came to the last tug of all in the Garden of Gethsemane. Oh, what a wrestling was that, when, as it were, the arch-fiend grappled close with Christ and gripped Him so that—

***“That desperate tug His soul might feel,
Through bars of brass and triple steel.”***

It brought the bloody sweat down the Master's face, but He did not relinquish His hold upon the foe and gave him such a fall that he never shall recover the defeat which he sustained amidst the olive trees of Gethsemane! And on the Cross, too, when he rallied his forces for the last time and assailed the Spirit of our Lord with all the malice of his infernal nature, there the great Michael, the true Archangel, set His foot upon the dragon's head—and though His heel was wounded—yet He broke that head! And the strength of the power of evil is gone forever! Its monarchy is finally destroyed. “The right hand of the Lord,” though it was a pierced hand, “the right hand of the Lord,” though it had grasped a scepter of reed, “does valiantly”! “The right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

The same might be said, but we should go over the same ground, again, if we spoke of *the conquests which our Lord achieved over sin* in every shape and form. It mattered not how it approached Him—He repelled it! He overthrew it as far as He was personally concerned. And when the sins of His people were laid upon Him, oh, Brothers and Sisters, how dreadful was that hour, but how ought we to look back upon it with devout thankfulness! When the sins of His people came like an avalanche to crush Him, how gloriously did He sustain the load! With what wondrous power of angels did He suffer the wrath of God which was due for the sins of His people—

***“Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”***

And when He had made Atonement forever for all His people's sins and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His chosen, and could say, “It is finished”—when He gave up the ghost—then truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted and the right hand of the Lord had done valiantly! Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus has this day conquered all our sins! There is not a transgression left to accuse His people! There is no record against them in God's book! He has perfected forever them that are set apart. The work is finished! Salvation is complete! The right hand of the Lord has done for us what we could not have done for ourselves! What the angels of Heaven would not have been so foolish as to have attempted, the Lord Jesus Christ has most surely completed for all Believers! Heaven rings this day with the joyful songs of His triumphant saints who tell how “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

Our precious Lord is to be praised in language like our text for having *vanquished death as well as sin*. Satan and sin He overthrew and virtually therein He conquered death. It did not seem as if He would vanquish death, my Brothers and Sisters, when He lay in the grave. The image of death was set as with a seal upon His brow! The Lord of Life and Immortality seemed, and was as really dead as any of the sons of Adam! The three days passed—the appointed time in which He should be, like Jonah, in the bowels of the earth. But on the third day He could not be held by the bonds of death. I think I see Him, like another Samson who had been bound with cords, awakening from His slumber like a strong man refreshed, and He snaps the bonds of death, for it was not possible that He could be held by them! Then the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulcher and out He came, resplendent in the glory of His Resurrection body! From that moment death has been destroyed! Children of God shall pass through the grave, but they cannot be confined in it. “Oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, grave, where is your victory?” Christ has forever taken away the gates of the Gaza of the grave, carried them far away where Satan can never bring them back, and death cannot restore his stronghold. Glorify the ever-living Christ, for His right hand is exalted!

And the same was conspicuously true in the day *when our Lord left this world and rose to the Father*. Our imagination can hardly depict that scene, when they who received Him after the Apostles had lost sight of Him, brought His chariot from on high to bear Him to His Throne. Oh, what an ascent was that, when flashed the eternal coursers up the celestial hills. For He comes, mighty to save! He went forth to battle, but He comes back from conquest to wear His well-earned renown. Do you not see at His chariot wheels the bound monsters? They must be dragged to the very gates of Heaven and then hurled down again! He has led captivity captive and received gifts for men. Oh, in that day of our Lord's ascending up on high, they who gazed upon the matchless spectacle of the returning King of kings must have said, if not in words, yet certainly in sense, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

In those victories, Beloved, you and I have a share. Satan was conquered for us! Sin was overcome for us! Death was bound for us—

***“Hell and our sins obstruct our course,
But Hell and sin are vanquished foes!
Our Savior nailed them to His Cross,
And sang the triumph when He rose.”***

Believe it and be glad of it! All your enemies are overcome! You still have to battle, but you fight with conquered foes. The dragon who is most dreadful to you carries a deadly wound about him. Your sins with which you have to contend from day to day are virtually slain. They have their death wound—they shall not be able to follow you into Heaven. Oh, re-

joy in your Lord, conquer in His conquests, be victorious in His victory, overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and give Him all the glory of your triumph! Now, I pass on to note, in the second place, that our text is very applicable to—

II. THE PERPETUAL TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

The Church began with feeble numbers, with small wealth. I might add, with comparatively little talent, but she was clothed with the Holy Spirit—she was, therefore, mighty! Let us just look at the history of the Church a minute or two, that our souls may be comforted with the prospect of the like victories in days to come. When first the Church was in the world like a new-born child, the dragon vomited forth torrents with the hope of drowning it. You know the rough weapons with which the world assailed the Church at first. The sword was unsheathed, prisons were put into use, the rack, unutterable torments, shame, reproach, every infernal art of persecution was pressed into the diabolical service to put down, if possible, the cause and Kingdom of Christ in the world. Now, only think for a minute what became of the continued attempts, *the cruel attempts of the world against the Church*, for the result conspicuously shows how the right hand of the Lord was exalted! The more they persecuted Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied—and it was the same with the Church of God. They that were persecuted went everywhere preaching the Word. They might have tarried at home, perhaps, and been corn in the garner, but persecution broke down the door and they were thrown, like handfuls of wheat, broadcast over the nations—and everywhere the precious Seed sprang up! It was of no use killing the Christians—it was like the killing of the Hydra—the cutting off of one head made a hundred fresh ones spring up!

Young men went to see the martyrdom of saints and as they saw their holy patience, they came to be Believers themselves, till dying Christians became the most powerful preachers of the Gospel and even the saints that believed were comforted by the sight of the death of the martyrs—they went to see how to die, they went to learn the way to give themselves up for Christ! The anvil never smites the hammer in return, but it breaks many hammers. It wears out the hammer. Here is the patience of the saints. God being in His Church, she has borne year after year, and God has forborne to avenge her, but she has triumphed! Her weak, feeble maidens and her illiterate men, her sons and her daughters who lifted not a hand in self-defense, have vanquished those that were armed to the teeth and had the power of Imperial Rome and of all empires at their back! “The right hand of the Lord,” amidst the hosts of martyrs who wear the ruby crown in Heaven today, “is exalted,” for “the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

Then, at the same time, the Church was sent into the world to *combat with the superstitions which existed* in that age and, Brothers and Sisters, the superstitions of ancient Rome were very attractive, very venerable. They had existed through long ages. They were interwoven with the daily life of the people. Poetry, art, philosophy, all lent their power to maintain the old heathenism with which the Christian Church came in contact. I have no doubt whatever that the *Pontifex Maximus* of the day, if he had been told that in Paul he saw a rival, teaching a religion which would break down all the old altars and the temples of Rome, would have ridiculed the statement. And yet it was so, for where are the gods of old Rome today? Who worships Jupiter today? Who bows before Saturn, father of the gods? Or who pays reverence to Venus or Diana? These have gone—and what has smitten them and broken them in pieces? The stone cut out of the mountain without hands has dashed them all in pieces and broken their power like potters' vessels! And none shall set up these false gods again. Nor was it so in Rome, alone. In all countries, the Church of God has had a complete triumph. Weird superstitions woven with stories of magic which alarmed the multitudes have fled like the birds of night before the rising sun! No form of superstition which the enemy has been able to devise has had power to retain its hold where the Gospel has been fully preached. The superstition might seem to stand like the eternal hills, but Faith has said, "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain," and the mountain of superstition has melted away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But, my Brothers and Sisters, the Church has been *assailed by heresies within herself* and if anything might have destroyed her, surely it would have been these! I will single out but one—the Arian heresy. You that are well read in Church History will know how very potent at one time the Arian heresy was in the ancient Church. The Divinity of our Lord became almost universally denied! He was a great man, a good man, perhaps the best of men, but they said that He was nothing more. It was a grand day when Athanasius declared that Christ was "very God of very God," and, finding himself alone, yet said, "I, Athanasius, against the world." It did seem an unequal combat, for there were monarchs on the side of the Arians—bishops and the power of the then Church, as well as the power of the world! But Arianism—where is it now? The pure faith of God has flung it off like drops of rain that are cast off from the housetops and remain not! There may be some sleeping in the dens and corners of the earth, to hide their ignoble heads, but the heresy is dead for any power that it has in the Christian Church. And so shall every heresy die. As the eternal God lives, nothing is immortal but the Truth of God—nothing is eternal but the Gospel! The right hand of the Lord fights not for a lie, but it is lifted up and His arm is made bare for the truth of

His Son Jesus Christ! And all along through the pages of Church History this is true—that the right hand of the Lord is exalted, and does valiantly in overthrowing error!

But the Church had to suffer from something which excelled heresy because it *was the aggregation of heresy, superstition and apostasy*. I mean the spread of Popery. In the Middle Ages the night was sevenfold. There was scarcely light enough for the anxious seeker to see his Lord! And men were crushed by the Inquisition, by the practice of priestly confession, by the domination of priests, bishops and popes. And if any man had then bewailed the absence of the light, as some few did, and an angel had said to him, "Courage, my son. The day shall come in which all this system shall lose its power and the old Gospel shall come back"—I can imagine I hear the weeper say, "If the Lord should open windows in Heaven, could such a thing be?" But such a thing was! God found the man and gave him a heart of iron and a brow of brass—and Martin Luther's voice was heard ringing across these waters, saying, "Therefore is a man justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law." And other voices took up that strain till in regions where that Truth of God was an utterly unknown thing, it became familiar to the peasant at the plow and humble men and women, hiding away from the powers that would have destroyed them, cheered one another with the gladness of that Gospel sound! Oh, you know, Beloved, how God smote the church of Rome in those days gone by, and as you read the story of the Reformation, you can say, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted."

Now, I shall not detain you with history. I shall bring you to today, for the truth of the olden times is fulfilled in your ears again this day. *Wherever the Gospel is preached, the right hand of the Lord is exalted!* We have seen it and, therefore, we speak what we know. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, no matter by whom—if it is the whole Gospel affectionately declared, prayed over, believingly delivered—it will always glorify God's name! I want you to notice in these days how the Lord's hand is exalted in some respects.

First, in this *respect—in awakening the attention of a negligent people* to the Gospel. There is nothing in the world that makes so much stir as preaching Christ! You shall preach anything else you like and the people will sleep. But if you will preach Christ out and out simply, in plain Saxon, as Paul would have Him preached, not with wisdom of words, you shall find the people will come together! I know not why it is, but so it is, that even those who dislike the Gospel will come to hear it! And though sometimes they set their teeth together and curse the men that preach it, yet they come again—they cannot help it. A Gospel preacher has charms coming from his lips that bind themselves around men's hearts. And he holds them captives, unwilling at first, and afterwards joyful captives, to the power of the Word He preaches! There should be little need of adver-

tisements with a simple, plain, bold Gospel preacher. You shall put him down a back street, you shall give him a passage down a court, you shall then do nothing more for him but let him speak to a handful of people—and the first news you will hear of him is that he is eccentric, that he is extraordinary, that he is a fool, that he is a madman! This is always good news! There is a man of God somewhere about when we hear that noise! Straightway people want to hear this enthusiast, this Methodist, this Presbyterian—and they rush to listen—and then it is that there is power felt by the people! They do not know what it is, but there is a something in it which seems to grip their hearts and hold them! It is nothing other than this—that the Lord has said of Christ that if He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him! And where Christ is lifted up, people will be drawn to hear. They must hear! We need not ask them to come—they must come!. Where His body is, there will the eagles be gathered together! Where the Savior Christ is proclaimed, there shall they come who need to feed upon a Savior! Does philosophy achieve such a triumph as this? You call it a poor triumph. So it may be in itself, but in its ulterior results it is a very great one. There are wise men on the earth that would give their eyes and ears if they could but get the people to listen to them—but where Christ is not preached, there are generally more spiders than there are human souls. Put Unitarianism in the pulpit and you shall soon find how the pews begin to multiply in emptiness! Little else comes of it. A gospel with no Gospel has great power of dispersion, but it has little power of attraction—but the Gospel of Jesus Christ soon draws a multitude together and, “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

But you will still say this is little, and I shall confess it is comparatively little, but mark you, if the Gospel is preached, it does not end in coming and going to hear it, for soon that Gospel comes like an eagle from afar and pounces down on men's hearts and makes them a prey to its power! They that came to scoff, remain to pray! They that looked in from curiosity, remain to receive the Savior into their hearts! And those who came from enmity become converted into friends! Oh, how the right hand of the Lord was exalted in the days of Whitfield and Wesley! The stories of these two eminent men have been written lately by many loving pens—and I must confess I am always to read the narratives, however they may be written. Though I have read them many times, I can always read them again. Oh, it was wonderful when the whole land was asleep! The Church of England was asleep in the dark and the Dissenters were asleep in the light—but there suddenly arose up a man who dared to stand upon his father's grave in the churchyard and to preach the Gospel! And then there came another, a twin seraph, with equal wings, who went into fields and began to proclaim the strange Doctrine of Faith as a saving Grace, the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit! Oh, those were brave days—the days of the early Methodists—when the time

of the singing of birds was come and the land was full of the power of the Holy Spirit! And it is just so now. Anywhere where the Gospel is preached, and preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, there are conversions, there are broken hearts, there are spirits held by Jesus' love, there are glad ones consecrating themselves to the Redeemer's service! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

And we have seen the truth of this in some of the very darkest parts of London. What a wonderful instance of what God's Grace can do can be seen by anyone who chooses to see it in such spots as Seven Dials, where God's love has blessed the earnest Evangelist. Or in Golden Lane, where a dear Brother of our own, labors amidst the poverty and sin of the masses. Why, when I have gone there to see my Brothers and Sisters meet together, the poorest of the poor—fruit sellers, men that were drunks and blasphemers, women that were thieves and harlots—and have heard them sing the praises of Jesus and rejoice in His dear name, I have felt "the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." And so here and all around! I need not quote instances, for you know them better than I do, of how lions are turned into lambs and ravens into doves, and the most unlikely spots in East London—that were deserts, salt lands and not inhabited, that looked as if they were cursed of God—have been made to rejoice and blossom, as the rose, when the preacher of the Gospel has come into the place and His master with him! Oh, yes, "the right hand of the Lord is exalted."

But they say the Gospel has lost its power. I read the other day that some of us were the echoes of a dead Puritanism, that we were not abreast of the age and were preaching a faith that was practically dead! Sirs, they lie in their throats that say so, and some of them know it, for the Gospel is no more dead than they are, nor half as much! It lives and lives in all its energy! And they speak not the truth that dare to say it has lost its force. But it is unphilosophical! Hair-splitters do not care about it! Neological divines toss it out as a thing fit for old women! Glory be to God! If it suits old women, it will suit us and all kinds of people! But inasmuch as it is not philosophical according to their declaration, that word of God is fulfilled in our ears, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Then they turn round and say, "But look at those who preach it—uneducated men—men that are not of the higher classes of society, unskilled in the refinements, not able to always give the original word of the Scripture upon which they preach." Yes, Sirs, and it would be a difficult task for any man to prove that the early triumphs of the Gospel owed a solitary jot to education and learning! In looking at the inscriptions in the catacombs a few days ago, when in Rome, I could not help the observation continually coming to my lips that the early Christians must all, or

almost all of them, have been so illiterate as scarcely to have been able to write their own names, for the most common words that are upon the slabs of stone that face the graves of the early Christians are badly spelt—and there are Greek letters and Latin letters intermingled, showing that they hardly knew how to finish a word in one language, but must piece it out with another, not knowing completely either the one or the other! Yes, but it was because God had put His Truth into the mouth of babes and sucklings, and established strength, that when the Church had conquered by such humble instrumentalities, and the Truths of God had been mighty when preached by such simple men, the right hand of the Lord was exalted, for the right hand of the Lord had done it—not the wisdom, nor the craft, nor the energy of man! God's arm was the more conspicuous because of the feebleness of the instrumentality! Much rather, then, will we glory in infirmities, because the power of God does rest upon us, for He it is that does valiantly! But now I must, in the third place, say a few words, and but a few, for time fails us, upon—

III. THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE IN INDIVIDUALS.

Let us talk together. You remember, some of you who are this day converted, the time *when first the Gospel had power over your soul*. I remember how I fought against it. A mother's tears would not move me, nor a father's earnest rebukes. I heard the Gospel, sometimes, and I was a little affected by it, but I threw it off! But I shall never forget when it came with power to my soul. I had no shield that could keep off its darts—the arrows of God found a ready way into my conscience—and they seemed to drink my very blood! My wound rankled and was corrupt. My soul refused to be comforted. Then, as I used to go up to my little chamber and bow my knees in prayer and come down more wretched than when I entered it, when I would search the Word of God to find comfort, but could not find it—then it was that he who knew me might have said, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted in that young man, for he was proud and lofty, and self-righteous, but now he lies in the very dust, and wonders that God lets him live, and marvels that there should be a Gospel for him, and can only half believe it true that such a wretch as he should ever be saved." Oh, I wish the Lord would come with power to some self-righteous ones that are here this afternoon! You are as good as your neighbors? Ah, suppose you are condemned with your neighbors, will that help you? To be lost in company is small benefit. Oh, but you have never done anybody any harm? No, except your God—and you have robbed Him of all the praise that was due to Him! And you have lived in this world just as you might have lived if there had been no God! Oh, proud Sinner, I cannot bring you down, but God can! Oh, for a blow from the mighty arm to level you and roll you, biting the dust in shame and self-abasement! Some of us know what that means. May you know it, too, and then you will say, though your heart is breaking as you say

it, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted! He is good, but I am evil! He is great and I am nothing! He is infinitely holy, but I am shamefully impure! God be merciful to me a sinner! God save me for His Name's sake." It is in such a thing as this that the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

But let me talk with you further, you that know the Lord. Beloved, do you remember when you sought to escape from the multitude of your sins? Do you recollect when they compassed you about like bees? You could not count your sins—you had forgotten them—they seemed dead and buried, but they all came to life, again, and they swarmed about you! They buzzed about you at your table. They stung you in your sleep, in your dreams. They stung you at your work. You had no peace because of your sins! And do you remember the place, the spot of ground, where you met with Jesus? Some of us recollect it to a yard. We looked to Him upon the Cross and the battle was over at once! One look to Jesus, Crucified, and the sins that compassed us about were destroyed in the name of the Lord—and the fires that threatened to devour us were quenched as a fire of thorns through the precious blood of Jesus! Do you remember it? Oh, let your soul go back to *your spiritual birthday*. Ring the bells of your heart, again, and hang out the streamers of your soul for that happy day when Jesus washed your sins away! Oh, Beloved, that day beyond all others, the right hand of the Lord was exalted, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly for you! It is a grand picture. I should like to see some artist attempt to sketch it, but he certainly must fail. I would like to hear some poet sing it, but I think that he could hardly reach the dignity of the argument. When Miriam and the daughters of Israel took their timbrels and went forth with the song and the dance to sing because Egypt had been destroyed, and Israel was free, do you know the note in that song that pleases me best of all is this, when they said, "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left." Why, they looked upon the Red Sea and could not see a trace of their foes! And I think I hear them singing it, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one," and they answered each other, "Not one, not one, not one of them left." And so when you and I looked to Christ and saw His atoning Sacrifice like a mighty sea roll over all our sins—in that blessed day our spirits sang, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one, not one of them left." Every sin is gone, every transgression swallowed up in superabounding Grace. "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

The same has been true, beloved Friends, in the many cases in which you and I have had *to overcome our troubles*. What sore afflictions have we passed through! Some to whom I speak, it may be, have had mountains of tribulation. Yes, Beloved, but when God has been with you, you have stepped from mountaintop to mountaintop without going down into the valley at all!

And, beloved Friends, to close all, where there was much room for great enlargement, let me say, when you and I shall come to die—as soon, thank God, we shall, for it is a subject to be treated of with thankfulness—we shall find *in our dying moments* that “the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” I might almost say that I came here from the grave, for it is in truth but a day or so since I went to bury one of the holiest men I ever knew and, I may add, the happiest man I ever saw in all my life! He fell asleep at a good old age, but as I stood by his bedside often in his last illness, I envied him. Covered from head to foot, as he said, with the boils of Job and the sores of Lazarus in one—with all his bones aching as though they were out of joint, yet he said to me—“What a happy thing it is to be here.” And I said, “What a happy thing to be upon a dying bed?” “Yes,” he said, “for I am with God, and God is with me, and Christ is mine and I am His, and it is the happiest day I ever lived.” He had often said that in his lifetime, for I never knew him otherwise than rejoicing in his God. But I was glad to hear him, when his eyes were almost glazed with death, say, “It is the happiest day I ever lived.” And just before he died, instead of expressing any regrets at the pain he was feeling, or at his departure, he turned round and said to his dear ones around the bed, “You seem all changed to me from what you were. I love you, but I have reached a higher stage than things that are seen. I have seen the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off—and I have heard words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” And they said, “Can you not tell us something of what you have seen?” He said, “You must pardon me. I am forbidden to tell you. But henceforth, I have done with all things here below, and I am taken up with the joy and glory of my Lord.” “My bliss is so great,” he said, “it kills me! I cannot live much longer through the excess of joy I feel!” In a few short minutes he had closed his eyes and was with God.

The Negro said of his minister, “Sir, he is dying full of life!” So have I seen them die, full of life—the best of life! And I have then thought, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” Fear not! The last conflict shall be the chief of your victories this side the river! The Lord bless you and make you a blessing. Amen.

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

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

DECLARING THE WORKS OF THE LORD NO. 2540

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 24, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House,
which commemorated the completion of the beloved
Pastor's 50th year, June 19, 1884.**

***"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."
Psalm 118:17.***

I could not deal with all the text on the last occasion, so I return to it. May the Holy Spirit bedew the Word afresh, and make it a joy to meditate thereon!

I. MANY ARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. Are not all things His workmanship, from the heights of Heaven down to the deep places of the earth? From the remotest star blazing in magnificence of light, down to the gnat which dances in the beams of the evening's sun, the Lord's hand is seen everywhere! The Lord has made all things—Creation is the work of His fingers. He continues to work all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Some of these works are plain and manifest to all. If men have eyes to see, they have only to open them and they may behold God working all around them—above, beneath and everywhere! Others of His works are secret and not discerned by the organs of the body. These things are only to be fully perceived by *faith* as to their inner meaning, even when in their historical outcome they are seen of men. The great work of accomplished Redemption was seen by those who lived in our Lord's day, in the offering of the great Sacrifice—yet they saw it not in truth. It is clearly seen by the eye of faith though centuries have rolled away, but the eye of *sense* saw it not, even when openly transacted. That other gracious work of God which is carried on within the soul is only to be known to the man who, himself, experiences it, though its results are manifest enough to others. So that there are works of God which will never be known to the mass of mankind except as His children testify concerning them. It should be with us a great objective of our existence to bear witness to these mysterious deeds of Grace! We ought to say, in the language of our Master, "To this end were we born, and for this cause came we into the world, that we should bear witness unto the Truth of God." We are to live to declare these works of the Lord!

Let me very briefly recount certain of those works of God which we can declare. I think that this term may apply in a certain sense to all God's works. For instance, I have said that Creation is open to every man's observation and that he, if he will, may see that God is there. Yet very many

men do not perceive God to be the Author of Nature. They do not will to perceive Him and it is for you and for me, therefore, whenever we talk about the wisdom which is to be seen in Creation, most distinctly to refer the things which exist to the hand of the Lord. A scientific man does great service when he sanctifies his science by pointing out the traces of the Divine handiwork. While others see only the Creation, he goes further and sees the Creator. You and I may not rank with the scientific, but that need not hinder us from bearing our testimony to the Lord's working, for the naked eye suffices to cause wonder and adoration. When we gaze upon majestic scenery of mountain and sea, while others are entirely taken up with the beauty of the prospect, it is for us to say with Milton—

***“These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Yours this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Yourself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sits above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Your lowest works; yet these declare
Your goodness beyond thought and power Divine.”***

Thus we can preach the sermon of which the beautiful in Nature is the text! If men will not go “from Nature up to Nature's God”—as they never will till they first come down from God to nature—we, at least, can point the way. We can say to them, “We cannot suffer you to look on all these majestic works without telling you Who it is that in wisdom has made them all.” Thus we shall, like the Psalmist, “declare the works of the Lord.”

Think, next, of the work of God in *Providence*. If men would but observe it, the hand of God is clearly to be seen in human history, both in the great records of nations and in the little stories of private lives. He who will watch for Providences need not be long without spying them out. We can see evidences of design as clearly in the deeds of human life as we can in the works of Nature, but, often, men will not see them. Consequently, if you do *see* them, my Brother, *declare* them! Make the ungodly man see the hand of God, or, if you cannot make him see it, at least let him know that *you* see it and that surely the hand of God is in all the workings of Providence. Have you not some personal story to tell of how the Lord has interposed for your help? I will not insult you with the question, for, if you have led a Christian life for years, you must have many, many such records concerning the loving kindness of the Lord laid up in store in your memory! Bring these out, let them not lie, as on a moldy shelf, but bring them out and tell to others what God has done for you in the ordering of the ordinary or extraordinary events of your life. “Declare the works of the Lord.”

Especially must you and I dwell emphatically and often upon the work of God in *Redemption*. Are we not too slow to talk about this marvel of all marvels—this greatest wonder of time and of eternity—that God came here in our flesh to suffer, bleed and die, that He might work out our redemption? All this is plainly written in the Word of God, but many men

do not read the Bible. Then, let them see it and hear it! Be walking Bibles. Often tell “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” Do not wait till you can gather a great congregation—talk of it to your children, to your friends, to any with whom you are brought into contact by the Providence of God! “Declare the works of the Lord” which cluster around the Cross. Never angel had better news to bring than you have! Then play the angel whenever you can. Be the messenger of God in telling what He has done through the Redemption worked out by His only-begotten Son in His wondrous Sacrifice on Calvary.

And then, dear Friends, a further work of God which springs out of our redemption is that of *regeneration*—and we must also declare that. If men care little for the story of Creation, Providence, or Redemption, they care still less for the great mystery of Regeneration. They do not believe in it. Some of them, alas, hold it up to ridicule. Do not be ashamed to declare that work of the Lord and do it mainly by exhibiting the fruit of it in your life, but also by clearly narrating your own experience whenever you have a fitting opportunity. Oh, it is a wonderful thing to have been born twice, to have been “begotten, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It is a thing to be spoken of humbly, but yet most boldly, that we have passed from death unto life, that we have been brought out of the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son! I think that man who was born blind, to whom our Lord Jesus afterwards gave sight, if he had lived for many years and had mixed much in society, would have been sure, somehow, to turn the conversation round so that he might tell how he was once blind, but was afterwards made to see. I should not wonder if, sometimes, his friends and acquaintances were caused to smile because of the oft-told tale. They would say, one to another, “Before the evening is over, we shall hear once more the story of the Prophet who anointed his eyes with the clay and then bade him go and wash, and so caused him to find his sight! It does not matter what the subject under discussion may be, he will turn it around, somehow, and drag in his narrative of the miracle which always ends with, ‘Whereas I was blind, now I see.’”

“Ah,” he would say, “you were speaking about light. Do you know there was a time when I did not know what light was? I had never seen a ray of it, but there came a wondrous miracle worker, called Jesus, who opened my eyes.” “You spoke about water, Sir, did you not? I remember the pool of Siloam, it was wonderful water to me, when I went, and washed and received my sight.” “No,” you say, “I was *not* talking about water, I was speaking about the earth.” And the man who had been blind says, “Oh, but I remember when I had clay put on my eyes, and yet that day, when I went and washed it off, was made the means of restoring me to sight!” I am sure that he would get that familiar story in somehow! Well, take care that you do the same, dear Brothers and Sisters. “Declare the works of the Lord,” and tell what He did for you when you were regenerated by the Holy Spirit!

Since then, what a scene of wonders has opened up before our astonished gaze! I do not know which day of my life was most full of mercy since my spiritual birthday, but it does seem to me that the farther I go in the heavenly pilgrimage, the clearer is the light, the more charming the view, the sharper the lines of beauty, the more distinct the coloring and the brighter the approaching Glory. Yes, when God begins to work in us, there is no telling what is to come—it is always “better than before.” The light shines more and more unto the perfect day. Therefore, tell more as you learn more, and publish more as you experience more, and go on forever telling what never can be fully told. If you only told the blessings of the past, there would be a lifelong story for you to tell, but as each day seems to exceed its fellow, as the days of Grace so swiftly follow one another, let your testimony continually become more courageous, more clear, more frequent as you tell others what God has done for you. “Declare the works of the Lord.”

If I were to dwell at length upon these great subjects and then go on to mention everything that the Lord is doing for His Church and for the maintenance and spread of His eternal Truth, I would take up all the time with what I want to be only the preliminary to my discourse, so let us advance to my second point.

II. THESE WORKS OF THE LORD OUGHT TO BE DECLARED. There are always so many good and valid reasons for every one of God’s commands that, though it ought to be obeyed even if no reason is given, yet it should be obeyed the more quickly when there are so many reasons clearly apparent to us. Why, then, should we declare the works of the Lord?

I answer, first, *for God’s Glory*. This is man’s chief end, “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” O saint, how can you glorify God better than by declaring His works? Will you begin, now, to adore the Lord? Suppose I were to lead you in an act of adoration, what would I say? How should I praise God, except by saying what God is, or what God does? We never bring anything to God from outside, but when we want to praise Him most, we fetch the jewels for His crown out of His own regalia. What would we say if we began to praise Him? “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” You see, it is all through the story of what He is and what He has done. This is the only way in which we can truly magnify the Lord, making Him great by mentioning the greatness which He already has! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, since I am sure you would wish to pay your

revenue of praise to the great King of Kings, be sure that you “declare the works of the Lord.”

Do this, also, *for the comfort of His people*. What is there that can comfort God’s saints like telling them what the Lord has done—His love in times past, His love to others of His people, His love to you? You will comfort many despondent ones if you tell them how you were brought low and the Lord helped you. One of the readiest and surest ways of lighting a candle for a child of God in the dark is to relate your own experience of the goodness of the Lord. Therefore, then, as you want to comfort God’s people, be sure that you tell them what God has done for you.

Moreover, I know that you want *to guide the anxious* and how shall they be guided so well as by telling them what the Lord does? If you begin to tell them what *they* ought to do, you will only entangle them still more in the net, for what can these poor souls do to release themselves? Tell them what the Lord does for sinners—how He delivers them from the fowler’s snare. Tell them what a mighty arm He has to pluck them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—and especially dwell upon the fact that He has brought *you* up out of that horrible pit and set your feet upon a Rock and established your goings. I feel sure that this personal testimony of yours will be one of the best means of leading poor troubled anxious ones to put their trust in God.

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, tell what the Lord has done because it will be such *a warning to the self-righteous*. They think to go to Heaven as they are! They suppose themselves to be quite fit for the spiritual kingdom. Tell them that you have been born again. Declare to them what the Spirit of God worked in you when He made all things new and they will say to themselves, “We do not know anything about this matter, we never felt this change.” And, believe me, the narration of the Holy Spirit’s work in you and upon you will be more powerful to many of them than any words that I can put together! Your personal declaration of how the Lord takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh will induce many a man to say, “I am ignorant of all this, therefore what is to become of me?” And this anxiety will lead him to fly to Christ that he, also, may experience the new birth and himself be saved. Do not hesitate, then, to declare everywhere God’s working in you and for you, that others may be led to rejoice in the same blessings of His Grace.

Besides, *it gladdens the Church of God* when any are heard declaring the works of the Lord. Have you not, dear Friends, often been comforted when a Brother, home from a foreign land, where he has been a missionary, has told you how God has blessed him to some heathen tribe so that it has turned to Christ? Why, as you heard his story, you felt that you, also, would like to be missionaries! And when God blessed you, my dear Sister, in your Sunday school class, tell others about the sweet joy you have had in seeing His Spirit working with your girls or boys! For then they, also, will want to enter upon some holy service for the Master. When a Church gets dull and cold—and it is very apt to do so at times—

and a kind of ignoble despondency steals over the servants of God, come and tell what the Lord did in the ages past! Tell of the glorious things which He did in our fathers' days and in the old time before them! And then bring in a little of what you have, yourself, seen, how God has used you, a poor, weak, worthless instrument, to glorify Himself, for so you will put new life into these desponding ones and they will begin, again, to be of good courage.

"Well," says one, "I have not said much about what God has done for me. It is not because I do not know Him, but I have not thought it necessary to tell it." I think that no mercy of God ought to be stowed away in the cellar—everything that He does ought to be proclaimed! Last Tuesday I saw some 24 persons, whose names I was happy to give in to be proposed for Church membership, and I felt very happy and thankful, yet I said to myself as I went home, "I am not half as glad about these numerous conversions as I ought to be." Time was when if anybody had said to me when I began to preach, "You will sometimes see 40 converts in a day. Sometimes you shall go week after week and see a score coming forward each week," why, I should have said, "No, that is too much! I would die of joy if I ever saw that! Yet, by God's Grace, I *have* seen it again and again! Do you not think that God blesses us more than we praise Him and that, sometimes, if our success becomes a little less than usual, He might say to us," Well, I did use you, you know, yet you did not seem at all grateful for it. I did give you one soul and that soul was worth a thousand worlds, but you did not seem to think anything of it. I want you to appreciate the blessings I have given before I bestow any more upon you." Why, Sirs, a man might give his eyes to win a single soul, and be perfectly satisfied to go into Heaven blind, with that one soul at his right hand! Better by far to enter into life blind, halt, maimed, with some companions won for Christ, than to live here with all one's eyes and faculties, and be a barren soul and never bring a sinner to the Savior's feet.

Do let us, then, bless the Lord, praise Him and declare His wondrous works. If you do, somebody will say that you are an egotist. Whenever anybody says that of me, I feel that it is so true that I do not get angry about it, because if I am not egotistical when I tell what the Lord has done for me, and by me, I daresay that I am about some other matter and, therefore, if I do not deserve the cut of the whip for *that*, I do for something else! So I take it as a rebuke that I deserve some way or other. But I am not speaking with egotism any the more for that. When the Lord does a good thing in me, or for me, or by me, I will tell of it and I encourage you to do the same. If somebody says, "He talks about himself," answer, "Well, Paul was constantly doing the same thing." One of the humblest men who ever lived yet he was continually talking about himself. You see, he knew more about himself than he did of anybody else—and he knew more about what God had done for him than of what God had done for Apollos or Cephas. And he was quite right in giving that kind of evidence which, in his own case, would be most powerful with those who

had seen him and known him—and who understood in very deed and of a truth that God had worked great wonders in him and by him!

So, then, we may continue to say that there are good reasons for declaring the works of God.

III. Now, thirdly, WHO OUGHT TO DECLARE THESE WORKS OF THE LORD?

Well, first, let those declare them who know them. It is a wretched business to go up into a pulpit to declare God's works and to pray God the Holy Spirit to help you—and then to put your hand into your pocket and pull out somebody else's manuscript, which you have bought, to read it to the people! That borrowing or stealing of another man's testimony is not what the Psalmist means and I do not see how God can be expected to bless it. But when a man speaks out of the fullness of his own heart of what he has, himself, tasted, handled and felt, *then* is there power in the testimony! You know how pleased those quacks who sell medicine are when they can get a testimonial from somebody who says that he has been cured by their remedies. Whether or not the most of those testimonials that are published are manufactured at home, I cannot tell, but if they do get a genuine recommendation from some living person, testifying to the beneficial effect of their medicine, how they try to make it known everywhere! Well, surely, there is common sense in that, for men are convinced by the testimony of others.

It is for this reason that we *who have experienced the working of God's Grace* should bear our own personal testimony concerning what He has done for our soul. There is no man who can speak with power about the Grace of God unless he has felt its influence in his own heart—and personal witness-bearing is always effective. "I preached," said John Bunyan, "very often, like a man in chains to men in chains." He heard his own fetters rattle while he talked to others about the bondage of sin—and I am sure that he must have spoken in a most convincing way—but when he regained his liberty, then he spoke of that emancipation like one who had not a fetter left upon him—and his hearers began to believe in such freedom as he described and to ask how they could obtain the same! If you have really tasted that the Lord is gracious and you declare to others what you have experienced of His graciousness, some, at least, among your hearers will believe you. There will be the accent of conviction about your message and even if they do not believe you, then so much the greater will be their sin in remaining in unbelief after they have had the honest and hearty witness of a true man whose word they dare not question!

Think, dear Friends, if God does not get witnesses among those who have had their sins forgiven, from where are His witnesses to come? If you and I, who have had His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, do not praise Him, who will do so? Are you going to leave this work to worldlings? Then it never will be done! Are you going to hand over the testimony of the preciousness of Jesus to any chance body who may come along? Oh, let it not be so, but say within yourself, "Surely,

the very stones would rise and speak if I remained silent! And the timber out of the wall might cry against me if I did not tell what the Lord has done for my soul.”

I have thus tried to set before you the works of the Lord which are to be declared, the reasons why we should declare them and the persons who should be engaged in this blessed business of declaring the works of the Lord.

IV. Now, in the fourth place, I want, with all my heart, to stir up your hearts and my own, also, to THE DUTY OF DECLARING GOD’S WORKS.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as many of you as know the Lord, I pray you to declare His works and to be encouraged to do so because, first, *it is a very simple duty*. I wish that some preachers whom I know would think that it is so. When I have heard most elaborate discourses, or have known Brothers labor at their sermons day after day, I have wondered what their idea of true preaching could be! A minister said to me, some time ago, “I am disappointed with my people, for when I study very hard and prepare a sermon that takes me a whole fortnight to complete, they never seem to appreciate it. But the other day,” he said, “I had been so busy that I just went into the pulpit and talked upon a very simple theme concerning Jesus and His love—just such a sermon as I would deliver if I were suddenly called up from my bed and bid to preach in my shirt sleeves—and my people greatly enjoyed that simple kind of talk!” “Well then,” I replied, “if I were in your place, I would give them another discourse of the same sort! I should preach some more of those shirt-sleeve sermons, if they feed on them, and enjoy them.”

The fact is, Brothers, it is possible to hammer a sermon so long as to get all the goodness out of it, just as men will beat a beefsteak till they have driven all the juice out of it and so give you nothing but a tough piece of leather! It is very possible to elaborate a sermon until you have worked all that is good out of it. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ meant that His ministers should go into the world and preach such masterly sermons that they should almost suffer from softening of the brain and I do not know what besides, because of the strain and struggle to get at what, according to my Bible, is very plain and simple? Is there not in all this a good deal of desire to shine and to seem to be somebody of importance? I believe it is so, but it ought not to be. The very philosophy of preaching is, to “declare the works of the Lord.” I do believe that, often, our simplest language is the best we can use. I have some very rare flowers in my conservatory, but I must confess that I like a primrose or even a daisy as well as any of them. When you are teaching, my dear Friends, pluck your illustrations from the fields and the hedge rows, and they will be far better than those which are brought from distant lands and die on the road.

Is it not a very simple thing to tell what the Lord has done? Next time you try to preach a sermon, my young Friend, do just that—tell what the Lord Jesus Christ did and never mind how you do it! Tell as well as ever you can what Jesus Christ did, but do not think so much of how you *tell*

it as of what you are to tell. Another time, make known what the Holy Spirit has done in you. "Why, I could tell that!" says one. Of course you could! And that is the very best kind of discourse. "Oh, but," says another, "we must take time for study!" Certainly, study God's Word with all your might, but there are parts of it which are so simple that they do not require any study—those parts which you, yourself, have tasted and handled and felt! The simpler and plainer your personal testimony concerning them is, the more likely will you be to do good by it. Come, then, Brothers, do not go sailing all over the seas to pick up some rarities to display in a great congregation, but when you get two or three people together, just tell them what you have experienced of the Grace of God in your own soul. You know that this is what I cannot tell. "What?" you ask, "is there something *we* know that *you* do not?" Yes, of course there is. I can tell what has been done in my own soul, but I cannot tell what has been done in yours. You have a portion of testimony for Christ which nobody but yourselves can give. This work of glorifying the Grace of God is a mosaic—I can put in my little pieces of stone or marble to form the pattern so far—but there is another part of that mosaic which nobody but yourselves can manufacture. It can be made out of the odds and ends of your spiritual experience, as you think them to be but insignificant and unimportant as they seem to be, they help to complete the whole design. Therefore, do not keep back that portion, I pray you, for you can now see what a simple duty it is for every child of God to declare the works of the Lord.

Then notice what a *very manifest duty* it is that you should tell what God has done for you. Does this need any proof? Do you think that the Lord saved you that you might just be happy, keeping your joy within your own heart, ever feeding and fattening it? I do not think the Lord had such a narrow purpose as that in His mind when He saved you. Depend upon it, if God has given you a jewel to wear, it is that other eyes may be gladdened by the sight of it. He never lit the candle of His love for you to go and hide yourself in your room, shutting the door, and saying to yourself, "What a charming candle I have! What a beautiful light it gives! How I enjoy its brightness!" No, when the Lord gave you that candle, He intended it to give light to all in the house and He also meant that other candles might be lighted by it. "I had such a sweet experience the other day," one says. Did you? Then, do you not think it was given to you because another person needed it as much as you did and that, therefore, you are to go and tell others of it? There are some hearers who, if we preach the Doctrines of Grace, sit and suck them in—but if we try to bring sinners to Christ, they say, "We did not get fed tonight." And pray, who are you? Do you think that God sent His servant to do nothing but to feed you with a spoon? There are other things for the minister to do besides looking after you. I think, sometimes, it is our duty to leave the 99 and to go after the one that has gone astray—not so much to feed the people of God, as to search for such as are out of the way.

And I notice that the people of God are generally best fed when that is the case and they feel the most joy when the preacher is seeking the salvation of sinners! If you, my Friends, are not happy when that is being done, there is something wrong with you—you had better ask the Great Physician to give you a dose of heavenly medicine to cure you of that sad disease! You are spiritually out of order, for he who is in a right condition towards Christ loves the souls of men and delights in that teaching which God is likely to bless to their conversion. It is, therefore, a manifest duty for us to tell to others what the Lord has done for us, that they, also, may come and drink of the river of the Water of Life and never thirst again.

Notice, also, that this is *a very profitable duty*. I hardly know of anything that is more useful to a Christian than to tell others what the Lord has done for him. There is a lad in a school and he is getting on very well and he can only have another year's schooling. I have known this proposal made to his parents—let him become a kind of pupil-teacher—let him continue to learn and let him also begin to teach others. I was once in that condition, myself, and I can bear my testimony that I never learned so much, or learned so thoroughly, as when I had to teach others!

When I first began to preach, this was my usual way of working. I was up in the morning early, praying and reading the Word. Then all day I was either teaching or studying hard, but at five o'clock every evening, except Saturday, I started out to preach what I had learned during the day! I used to tell the people, simply and earnestly, what I had first received into my own mind and heart—and I found that I derived greater benefit by proclaiming to others what I had learned than if I had kept it all to myself. I do not believe that you can thoroughly know the Doctrines of Grace till you begin to teach them to other people. You will soon find that they will not receive them, and so you will learn the doctrine of man's natural depravity. You will speedily discover that your eloquence will not draw them to Christ and, in that way you will learn the Doctrine of Effectual Calling—that the Holy Spirit must, Himself, come and work upon them if they are to be saved! You will prove that some will reject Christ though you thought they were most likely to accept Him, and that others who you felt sure would refuse Him, will be the first to receive Him! There you have the great doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. You see, from your own observation, how the Lord has compassion upon whom He will have compassion and how He has mercy upon whom He will have mercy. You will never know the Truth of God in all its fullness till with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, you have attempted to inculcate it in the hearts of others. So it is a profitable duty to “declare the works of the Lord.”

Moreover, it is *a very pleasant duty* to those who practice it. I can testify that it is one of the most delightful exercises in the world, to proclaim the loving kindness of the Lord. Old soldiers at Chelsea barracks, or old sailors at Greenwich, who could recollect Waterloo and Trafalgar, never

tired of telling the familiar story. If you could have crept up behind them, when there were half-a-dozen people round, you would have found that they were talking about the battles they were in long years ago. They would be sure to linger over the details of their escapes and their heroic deeds, for it is a pleasure to old men thus to fight their battles over again! And, certainly, it must be a pleasure to Christians, who have experienced the wonderful working of God's Grace, to tell out that far sweeter story! It does seem to me that this ought to be our constant delight. There should be no need for me to have to come here and urge you to this happy task. Why, Brothers and Sisters, you ought to be like the Israelites when the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion—with them you should cry, "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad!" Tell it out among the heathen! Make it known unto the utmost ends of the earth that the Lord our God has given His own Son to die that we might be redeemed from wrath through Him. Be not silent, Beloved, but publish night and day the loving kindness of the Lord.

This ought also to be a constant duty with all who love the Lord. When we have once told the story, we ought to feel bound to tell it again and again and again. It is the man who has never spoken for Christ who never does speak for Him. He who has been silent is all too apt to continue silent. It is good for you young people, when you are newly-converted, to bear your testimony at the Church meeting. It often opens your mouths for Christ for the first time and I exhort you, when you begin in the workshop or the workroom as a believer in Jesus—when you begin Christian life *anywhere*—begin it not as if you were possessed of a deaf and dumb devil, but as if you first heard the voice of God and then speak out what He had said to you! I may be addressing some who are getting quite old who have not yet borne their testimony for Christ. O my dear Friends, wake up! You will have to be quick, or else your opportunity for testifying will be over. I could almost imagine that you would want to come back from Heaven to tell somebody about Jesus if you had not done it while you were here! Then do not think of going there till you have told all you can about your glorious Lord.

"But I cannot," says one. What can you not do? If you were to be cured of a dreadful disease, I am sure you would be able to tell somebody who the doctor was. And if, tonight, a thief were to break into your house and a policeman came and seized him, I am sure you would tell somebody tomorrow about what had occurred. "But," you say, "I am such a poor one at talking." I am not sorry to hear that—there are many who might be improved if they were like you in that respect. But, still, you can generally tell what happens and you can certainly tell what the Lord has done for you if you only seek the aid of the Holy Spirit. So, put away all that deadness and dullness of yours—rob God no longer of the Glory due unto His name, but tell what He has done for your soul.

Do you ask, "Whom shall I tell?" Well, good man, tell your wife if you have never yet spoken to her about these things. Christian woman, do you enquire, "Whom shall I tell?" Why, tell your husband and your chil-

dren! You cannot have a better congregation than your own family. Are you in a factory? Tell your work mates about Jesus Christ. There was a Brother, worshipping with us, who went into a certain workshop and he very soon bore his testimony in such a fashion that his master and the three other men in the place were all converted—and now they are all members of this Church—and their wives, too! When the husbands had heard the Truth of God, themselves, they wanted to go home that they might tell it to their wives, and so they have all been brought in! And, lately, there has been a new workman brought into the shop who did not love the things of God and could not stand religion, but God has blessed our Brother to him, also. Tell it out then, tell it out, you who have been lately converted! Do not hide your light under a bushel. Imitate Brother Gwillim over yonder, and others in this place who are always glad to have a word with the anxious, after the service is over. Speak up for your Lord whenever you have the opportunity!

I believe that it is a great help in bringing people to decision when Mr. Moody asks those to stand up who wish to be prayed for. Anything that tends to separate you from the ungodly around you is good for you. Now, if you have given yourselves to Christ, tell it out, for, after our Lord takes you Home, you cannot go back to the world! When Caesar landed on a certain shore, he burned the boats behind him so that his men might know that they must conquer or perish. I advise you to do likewise—burn your boats by a clear and explicit declaration, “The Lord has worked this great change in me, by His Grace, and I am His servant henceforth and forever.”

May God bless you, dear Friends, every one, for Jesus Christ’s sake!
Amen

HYMNS FROM “OUR HYMN BOOK”—408, 670, 673.

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

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

[This sermon was the fourth in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The first was #2538; the second was sermon #2539 and the third was sermon #2237—*Volume 38*. All four of these sermons can be read/download from <http://www.spurgeongems.org> free of charge.]

GRATITUDE FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE GRAVE NO. 2237

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 3, 1892,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,**

**In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House,
which commemorated the fifth year of a life often
threatened by grievous sickness.**

***"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord
has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death."
Psalm 118:17, 18.***

"This sermon begins a new volume—in fact, it commences Volume 38 of The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. I have, myself, selected it and prepared it for the press because it is most suitable as my own personal testimony at the present moment. The subject is even more my own, this day, than it was seven and a half years ago, for I have been in deeper waters and nearer to the mouth of the grave. With my whole soul I praise delivering Grace. To the Lord God, the God of Israel, I consecrate myself anew! For the Covenant of Grace, for the revelation of the Infallible Truth in the Bible, for the Atonement by blood and the immutable love of the ever blessed Three-in-One, I am a witness and more and more would I abide faithful to the Gospel of the Grace of God! I see, each day, more reasons for faith and fewer excuses for doubt. Those who will, may ship their anchors and be drifted about the current of the age, but I will sing, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise!'"

"The whole passage, Psalm 118:13-18, is inscribed upon a marble slab on the Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle and I am told that many went to read it while I lay in the greatest peril through sore sickness—and were comforted thereby. When the Lord permits me to return, I must raise yet another memorial to His praise." [This quote is at the end of the sermon with this request from Brother Spurgeon, on page one—"Will the reader kindly note the remarks at the end of this sermon, before he reads the discourse."—EOD]

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HOW very differently we view things at different times and in differing states of mind! Faith takes a bright and cheerful view of matters and speaks very confidently, "I shall not die, but live." When we are slack as to our trust in God and give way to misgivings and doubts and fears, we sing in the minor key and say, "I shall die. I shall never live through this trouble. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; and that day is hasten-

ing on. Hope is failing me. Bad times are at the door. I shall not live through this crisis.” Thus our tongues show the condition of our inner man. We talk according to our frames and feelings and would make others think that things are as *we* see them with our jaundiced eyes!

Is it not a pity that we give a tongue to our unbelief? Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! Dog, did I call him? He is a wolf—or should I call him a hound of Hell? His voice is that of Apollyon—it is full of blasphemy against God! Unbelieving utterances will do no good to yourself and will do harm to those who listen to your babblings. It would be wise to say, “If I should speak thus, I should offend against the generation of your children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” Let us be dumb with silence when we cannot speak to the Glory of God!

But, oh, it is a blessed thing, when faith is reigning and powerful in our spirit, to let it have ample opportunity to proclaim the honors of His name! To give his heart a tongue is wise in man when his heart, itself, is wise. The more talk we get from the mouth of faith, the better—her lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh! A silent faith, if there is such a thing, robs others of benedictions and, at the same time, it does worse, for it robs God of His Glory. When we have a joyous faith in full operation, let us be communicative and let us openly and boldly say, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” I would follow my own advice and crave a patient hearing from you.

You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death—Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake. Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. In this full assurance he went bravely to meet his enemies at the Diet of Worms and, indeed, went courageously whenever duty called him. He felt that God had raised him up to declare the glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith and all the other Truths of God he believed to be the Gospel of God and, therefore, no wood could burn him and no sword could kill him till that work was done. Thus he bravely wrote out his belief and set it where many eyes would see it, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

It was no idle boast, but a calm and true conclusion from his faith in God and fellowship with Him. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the same brave thoughts and speeches! We cannot show our courage unless we have difficulties and troubles. A man cannot become a veteran soldier if he never goes to battle. No man can get his sea legs if he lives always on land. Rejoice, therefore, in your tribulations, because they give you opportunities of exhibiting a believing confidence and, thereby, glorifying the name of the Most High. But take heed that you have faith, *true* faith in God—do not become a puppet of impressions—much less a slave of the judgments of others. To have David’s faith, you must be as David. No man may take up a confidence of his own making—it must be a real work of the Spirit and growth of Grace within—grasping with living tendrils the promise of the living God.

I will read the passage from the Psalms over, again, and we will consider it, with God's help. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over to death."

First, here is *the Believer's view of his afflictions*. "The Lord has chastened me sorely." Secondly, here is *the Believer's comfort under those afflictions*. "He has given me over to death. I shall not die, but live." And, thirdly, here is *the Believer's conduct after his afflictions and after his deliverance from them*—"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

**I.** At the outset, here is THE BELIEVER'S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS. "The Lord has chastened me sorely."

On the surface of the words we see the good man's clear observation that his *afflictions come from God*. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, "You have thrust sorely at me that I might fall." There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes, but that enemy's assaults were being overruled by the Lord and were made to work for his good, so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, "*The Lord* has chastened me sorely. My enemy struck at me and he might make me fall, but, in very truth, my gracious God was using him to chasten me that I might *not* fall. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause worked my education and establishment."

It is well to have Grace enough to see that tribulation comes from God—He fills the bitter cup as well as the sweet goblet! Troubles do not spring out of the dust, neither does affliction grow up from the ground like hemlock from the furrows of the field, but the Lord, Himself, kindles the fiery furnace and sits as a Refiner at the door. Let us not dwell too much upon the part played by the devil, as though he were a coordinate power with God. He is a fallen creature and his very existence depends upon the will and permission of the Most High! His power is borrowed and can only be used as the Infinite Omnipotence of God permits. His wickedness is his own, but his existence is not self-derived. Blame the devil and blame all of his servants as much as you will, but still believe in the mysterious and consoling Truth of God that, in the truest sense, the Lord sends trials upon His saints.

"Explain this statement," you say. Oh, no—I am not called upon to explain it, but to believe it! A great many things, when they are said to be explained by modern thinkers, are merely explained away—and I have not yet begun to learn that wretched art. Remember how Peter told the Jews that He whom God, by His determinate counsel and foreknowledge decreed to die, even His Son, Jesus Christ, was, nevertheless, taken by them with wicked hands when they had crucified and slain Him? The death of Christ was predetermined in the counsel of God and yet it was, nonetheless, an atrocious crime on the part of ungodly men! The Omnipotence and Providence of God are to be believed, but man's responsibility is not, therefore, to be questioned. Our afflictions may come distinctly from man, as the result of persecution or malice, and yet they may come with even

greater certainty from the Lord and may be the necessary outcome of His special love to us.

For this reason we may wisely moderate our anger against second causes. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick. If he were more intelligent, he would snap at the person using the stick and, if that intelligence were governed by the spirit of obedience, he would yield to the blow and learn a lesson from it. Thus, when Shimei reviled David and Abishai, the son of Zeruah, said unto the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you, and take off his head," David meekly replied, "So let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Why have you done so?" A sight of God's hand in a trial is the end of rebellion against it in the case of every good man! He says, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him."

We may lie at His feet and cry, "Show me why You contend with me," but, if the reason does not appear, we must bow in reverent submission and say with one of old, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it." Job saw the Lord in his many tribulations and, therefore, praised Him, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely there is nothing better for a man of God than to perceive that his smarts and sorrows come from his Father's hand, for then he will say, "The will of the Lord be done." This is the great point in the Believer's view of his afflictions—"He makes sore and binds up: *He wounds and His hands make whole.*"

Next, the Believer perceives that *his trials come on as a chastening*. "The Lord has *chastened* me sorely." When a child is chastised, two things are clear—first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him so that he needs to be corrected or instructed. And, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit and acts in loving wisdom towards him. This is certainly true if the father is an eminently kind and yet prudent parent. Children do not think that there can be any need for chastening them, but when years have matured their judgment, they will know better. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous"—if it did seem joyous, it would not be chastening! The "need be" is not only that we have manifold trials, but that we are in heaviness through them. In the smart of the sorrow lies the blessing of the chastisement! God chastens us in the purest love because He sees that there is an absolute necessity for it—"for He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Our fathers, according to the flesh, too often corrected us according to their own pleasure—and yet we gave them reverence. But the Father of our spirits corrects us only of necessity—a necessity to which He is too wise to close His eyes. Shall we not, therefore, pay *greater* reverence to Him and bow before Him and live? When Hezekiah was recovered of his sickness, he wrote, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." I find not that men live by carnal pleasure, nor that the life of the spirit is ever found in the wine vat or in the oil press. But I do find that life and health often come to saints through briny tears, through the bruising of the flesh and the oppression of the spirit. So have I found it and I bear my willing witness that sickness

has brought me health, loss has conferred gain—and I doubt not that one day death will bring me fuller life!

Be wise then, dear child of God, and look upon your present affliction as a chastening. “What son is he whom the father chastens not?” “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” There is not a more profitable instrument in all God’s house than the rod! No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan’s rod, but that is nothing compared to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah’s rod! Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her travail pangs, joy comes to the house because a child is born—and sorrow is to us, also, full often, the moment of the birth of our Graces. A chastened spirit is a gracious spirit—and how shall we obtain it unless we are chastened? Like our Lord Jesus, we learn obedience by the things which we suffer! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without sorrow—and He never will while the world stands! Let us, therefore, bless God for all His dealings and, in a filial spirit, confess, “You, Lord, have chastened me.”

Consider the Psalmist’s view of his affliction a little more carefully. *He noted that his trials were sore*—he says, “The Lord has chastened me sorely.” Perhaps we are willing to admit in general that our trouble is of the Lord, but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to Him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the most tender part of our character and has cut us to the quick. Are we to believe that this is also, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are! If it is not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from Divine permission, where are we? How can a trial be met which is independent of Divine rule and outside of the sacred zone of Providential government? It is hopeful when we find that all our ills lie within the fence of Omnipotent overruling! It is a comfort that we see a wall of fire round us—a circle so complete that even the devil, malicious as he is, cannot break through it to do more than the Lord allows!

The camels are gone, the sheep, the oxen, the servants—all are destroyed—all this is most trying, but it is still true—“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” But, look, another messenger comes and cries, “There came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead.” Might not Job, then, have said, “*This* is a blow which I cannot bear; for it is evidently from the Prince of the power of the air”? No, but even after that, he said, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” When his wife said, “Curse God, and die,” he still blessed God and held his integrity. He told her that she spoke as one of the foolish speaks and then he wisely added, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” May we stand fast in patience as Job did, even when our troubles overflow!

It is folly to imagine, as we have sometimes done, that we could bear *anything* except that which we are called upon to endure. We are like the young man who says he needs a job. What can you do? He can do anything! That man you never hire because you know that he can do nothing.

So it is with us. If we say, “I could bear *anything* but this,” we prove our universal impatience! If we had the choice of our crosses, the one we would choose would turn out to be more inconvenient than that which God appoints for us, but we will have it that our present cross is unsuitable and specially galling. I would say to any who are of that mind, “If your burden does not fit your shoulder, bear it till it does.” Time will reconcile you to the yoke if Grace abides with you. It is not for *us* to choose our affliction—that remains with Him who chooses our inheritance for us! Read well this Word of God, “The *Lord* has hastened me sorely” and see the Lord’s hand in the soreness of your trial! Even while the wound is raw and the smart is fresh—be conscious that the Lord is near!

Yet there is in the verse a, “but,” for the *Psalmist perceives that his trial is limited*—“but He has not given me over to death.” Certain of the *buts* in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have! Before us is a, “but,” which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to the abyss. By God’s Grace there is a *limit* to the force, the sharpness, the duration and the number of our trials—

**“If God appoints the number ten,  
They never can be eleven.”**

Whenever the Lord mixes a potion for His people, He weighs each ingredient, measures the bitters, grain by grain, and allows not even a *particle* in excess to mingle in the draft! Like a careful dispenser, He will not pour out a drop too little or too much—

**“To His Church, His joy and treasure,  
Every trial works for good—  
They are dealt in weight and measure,  
Yet how little understood—  
Not in anger,  
But from His dear Covenant love.”**

Our Father’s anger with our sin will never blaze into wrath against us, though in mercy He will smite our sins. Remember, then, this gracious boundary. “The Lord has chastened me sorely: *but* He has not given me over unto death.” We have never yet experienced a trouble which might not have been worse. One affliction kills another—the wind never blows east and west at the same time. When the Lord smites you with His left hand, He sustains you with His right hand. As tribulations abound, so do consolations abound through Christ Jesus. The whole band of troubles never comes forth at once. Everything painful is graded and proportioned to the man and his strength—and the objective for which it is sent. With the trial, the Lord makes the way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Faith can see an end and limit where Nature’s dim eyes see endless confusion. Where the carnal sense—

**“Sees every day new straits attend,  
And wonders where the scene will end,”**

Faith looks over the intervening space and comforts herself with that which is yet to come. Faith sings pleasant songs when she foots it over weary roads—

**“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,  
So let’s smooth it with hope and cheer it with song.”**

The Lord keep your faith alive, my Brothers and Sisters, and then whatever trials surge around you, you will sit on the Rock of Ages, above the

waves, and joyfully sing praises unto your Divine Deliverer! Oh, how sweet to say, as I do now, “The Lord has chastened me sorely: *but He has not given me over unto death!*”

**II.** This brings me, secondly, to consider THE BELIEVER’S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS. The Believer’s comfort under his afflictions is this—“I shall not die, but live.”

*Occasionally this comes in the form of a presentiment.* I do not think that I am superstitious. I fancy that I am pretty clear of that vice, yet I have had presentiments concerning things to come or not to come. And, moreover, I have met with so many Christians who, in the time of trouble, have received amazing warnings, or sweet assurances of coming deliverance, that I am bound to believe that the Lord does, sometimes, whisper to the heart of His children and assure them in trial that they shall not be crushed—and in sickness that they shall *not* die.

How do you understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been speaking against the monks and various abuses of the church. He was the first man known to history that preached the Gospel in England during the Popish ages—we know him as the Morning Star of the Reformation! He was a man so great that, if he had possessed a printing press, we might never have needed a Luther—for he had an even clearer light than that great Reformer! He lacked the means of spreading his doctrine which the art of printing supplied. He did much—he prepared everything for Luther’s hands—and Luther was but the proclaimer of Wycliffe’s doctrine! Wycliffe was ill—very ill—and the friars came round him like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity, but they were right glad that their enemy was going to die! So they said to him, “Will you not repent? Before we can give you viaticum—the last oiling before you die—would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars and His Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past and give you the last sacrament in peace.”

Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him sit up and then he cried with all his strength, “I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord and to expose the wickedness of the friars.” He did not die, either—Death, himself, could not have killed him, *then*, for he had work to do and the Lord made him *immortal* until it was done! How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy bragging, but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do—and he felt that he could not die until it was accomplished!

Now, do not be making up presentiments about all sorts of things because I have said that sometimes the Lord grants them to His saints. This would be a mischievous piece of absurdity! I remember a young woman who lived not far from here, who had a presentiment that she would die. I do not think that there was really much the matter with her, but she refused to eat and was likely to be starved. I went to see her and she told me that she had a presentiment that she would die and, therefore, she would not waste food by eating it. She spoke to me very solemnly about this presentiment and I replied, “I believe there may be such things.” Yes—she was sure I was on her side! Then I went on to say, “I once had a presenti-

ment that I was a donkey and it turned out true in my case. And now I have much the same presentiment about you!”

This surprised her and I asked her friends to bring her food. She said she would not eat it and then I told her that if she was resolved on suicide, I would mention it at Church Meeting that evening and put her out of the Church, since we could not have suicides in our membership. She could not bear to be put out of the Church and began to eat—and it turned out that my presentiment about her was correct—she had been foolish and she had the good sense to see that it was so. I felt bound to tell you this story, lest you should fancy that I would support you in sentimental nonsense. While there are so many stupid people in the world, we have no need to give cautions where the wise do not need them! Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sorely sick—and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

This, however, I only mention by the way. When a Believer is in trouble, *he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God*. The Lord scourges His children, but He does not slay them. The Believer says, “My Father may make me smart with the blow of a cruel one, but He will do me no real harm, nor allow anyone else to injure me. He will not lay upon me more than is right, nor above what I am able to bear. He will stay His hand when He sees that I have no strength left. Moreover, I know that even when He brings me very low, still underneath me are the everlasting arms. If the Lord kills, it is only to make alive—if He wounds, it is that He may heal. I am sure of that.”

O Believer, never let anything drive you away from this confidence, for it has sure truth for its foundation! The Lord is good and His mercy endures forever. It is not killing, but curing, that God means when He takes the sharp lancet in His hands. The nauseous medicine which makes the heart sick, works for the cure of a worse sickness. “His compassions fail not.” He may often put His hand into the bitter box, but He has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has He forsaken us, but with great mercies will He return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord’s fatherly compassion.

Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin and his *security from punishment*. Please notice the very distant difference between chastisement and *punishment*. I do not say between the *meaning* of the words, but between the two things which I just now would indicate by those terms. Here is a boy who has committed a theft. He is brought before the magistrate that he may be punished. Punitive justice will be executed upon him by imprisonment or by a birch rod. Another boy has also stolen—stolen from his *father*—and he is brought before his father—not to be punished as a law-breaker, but to be *chastised*. There is a great difference between the punishment awarded by justice and the chastisement appointed by love! They may be alike in painfulness, but how different in meaning!

The father does not give his child what he would deserve if it were a punishment according to the law, but what he thinks will cure him of the wrong-doing by making him feel that his sin brings sorrow. The magistrate, although he desires the good of the offender, has mainly to consider the law in its bearings upon the whole mass of the population and, therefore, he punishes, as a matter of justice, that which wrongs the commonwealth. But the parent acts on other principles. "The Lord has chastened me sorely" and, in that He has added a fatherly part, "but He has not given me over unto death," which would have been my lot if He had dealt with me as a judge! My heart trembles at His sword and cries, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, O Lord: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified."

The sentence of Justice has been fulfilled upon our Lord and our comfort is that now there is nothing punitive in all our troubles. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"—nor will He do so, for He has already laid our sins upon Christ—and Christ has vindicated the Law by bearing its penalty so that nothing more in the way of penalty is demanded by the moral government of God. That which we receive from the rod of the Lord bears the blessed aspect of chastening from a father's hand—and this is a gladsome fact which makes even the sharpest smart to be profitable. "Surely the bitterness of death is past" when, in the case of the Believer, even death has ceased to be the penalty of sin and is changed into a sweet falling asleep upon the bosom of the Well-Beloved and to wake up in His likeness! Every other affliction is changed in the same fashion. Our wasps have become bees—their sting is not the prominent thought, but the honey which they lay up in store. "All things work together for good to them that love God," and *chastisement* is chief among those, "all things." What a well of comforting thought is here!

Furthermore, it is a great blessing to a child of God to feel *a full assurance that he has eternal life in Christ Jesus*. "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." Notice the words, "Given me over." It is the most awful thing out of Hell to be *given over* by God! I fear that there *are* some such persons. Does not the Psalmist refer to such when he says, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish"? While God's own people are chastened every morning and plagued all day long, the ungodly prosper in the world and increase in riches! Of His chosen, the Lord says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

But those who are *not* the Lord's are left unchastened because the Lord has said of them, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols." They are allowed their transient mirth—let them make the most they can of it, for their end will be desolation. Unbroken prosperity and undisturbed health may be signs of being "given over unto death"—and they *are* in such cases where sin is committed without pangs of conscience, or apprehensions of judgment. Such freedom from fear may be maintained even in death—"There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." All goes

quietly with them—"Like sheep they are laid in the grave." *But*, "in Hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments." To be given over unto death is often followed by callousness, presumption and bravado—but it is a dreadful doom—the direst sentence from the Throne of Judgment as to this life! But you, dear child of God, have this comfort, *He* has not given *you* over—He is thinking about

you! Men do not prune the vine they mean to uproot, nor thresh out the weeds which they mean to burn! He who is chastened is not given over to destruction.

Years ago, I was taken very ill, in Marseilles, while attempting to come home to England. As I lay in bed, it seemed as if the cruel mistral wind was driving through my bones and breaking them with agony. I ordered a fire to be kindled, but when I saw the man begin to light it with a bundle of little branches, I cried out to him, "Pray let me look at that." I found that he was using the dry pruning of the vine and my tears were in my eyes as I remembered the words—"Men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Comfort followed, for I thought, "I am not feeling, like those dried-up shoots, but I am the bleeding vine which is sharply cut with the pruning knife. I feel the keen blade in every part of me." Then I could say, "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over." What joy lies in this, "He has not given me over!" As long as the father chastens his boy, he has hope for him. If he ceased to do so altogether, we might fear that he thought him too bad to be reclaimed. Be glad, then, dear child of God, that since the Lord chastens you sorely, He has not erased your name from His heart or His hands, nor yielded you up to your enemy's power!

Another meaning may be found in this text, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." *We are comforted by reliance upon God's power for success in our lifework.* The critics said—and I must quote this because this sermon is very much a personal one—the critics said, when the lad commenced his preaching, that it was a nine days' wonder and would soon come to an end. When the people joined the Church in great numbers, they were "a parcel of boys and girls." Many of those "boys and girls" are here, tonight, faithful to God unto this hour! Then there came upon me a heavy, heavy stroke—a sore chastening, which those of us who were present would never forget if we live for a century! And we seemed to be made the reproach of all men, through an accident which we could not have foreseen or prevented.

But still, the testimony for God in this place, by the same voice, has not ceased, nor lost its power. Still the people throng to hear the Gospel after these 30 years and more! And still the Doctrines of Grace are to the front, notwithstanding the opposition! In the darkest hour of my ministry I might have declared, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." If you have been set on fire by a Divine Truth of God, the world cannot put an extinguisher upon you. That candle which God has lighted, the devils of Hell cannot blow out! If you are commissioned of God to do a good work, give your whole heart to it—trust in the Lord and you will not

fail! I bear my joyful witness to the power of God to work mightily by the most insignificant of instruments—

***“The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and Hell obstruct the way.”***

Once more, though we may die, *we are sustained by the expectation of immortality*. When we gather up our feet in the last bed, we may utter this text in a full and sweet sense, “I shall not die, but live.” When Wycliffe died as to his body, the real Wycliffe did not die. Some of his books were carried to Bohemia—and John Huss learned the Gospel from them and began to preach. They burned John Huss and Jerome of Prague, but Huss foretold, as he died, that another would arise after him whom they should not be able to put down! And in due time he more than lived, again, in Luther! Is Luther dead? Is Calvin dead today? That last man the moderns have tried to bury in a dunghill of misrepresentation, but he lives—and will live—and the Truths of God that he taught will survive all the calumniators that have sought to poison it!

Die? Often the death of a man is a kind of new birth to him—when he, himself, is gone physically—he spiritually survives and from the grave there shoots up a tree of life whose leaves heal nations! O worker for God, death cannot touch your sacred mission! Be content to die if the Truth shall live better because you die! Be content to die because death may be to you, enlargement of your influence! Good men die as dies seed corn which thereby abides not alone. When saints are apparently laid in the earth, they quit the earth and rise and mount to Heaven’s gate and enter into immortality! No, when the sepulcher receives this mortal frame, we shall not die, but live! Then shall we come to our true stature and beauty, put on our royal robes, our glorious Sabbath dress!

**III.** So I finish with just two or three words on THE BELIEVER’S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

Here is *declaration*. If we had no troubles, we would all have less to declare. A person who has no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Such persons despise the afflicted and suspect the character of the choicest of men for lack of power to understand them. What does the man know about the sea who has only walked on the beach? Get with an old sailor who has been, a dozen times, around the world, and often wrecked, and he will interest you. So the much-tried Christian has great wonders to declare—and these are chiefly the works of the Lord for, “they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.” Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble and how He delivers out of it—and they declare His works openly—they cannot help doing so. They are so interested in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic about it—and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out!

If you read the chapter further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer *adoration*. They are so charmed with what God has done for them that they laud and magnify the name of the Lord, saying, “I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation.” The saints of God, when they are rescued from their

sorrows, are sure to sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior.”

This done, they make a further *dedication* of themselves to their delivering God. As the Psalm puts it, “God is the Lord, which has showed us light.” It was very dark! It was very, very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We were frozen with fear. We thought we were, as dead men, laid out for burial, when suddenly the Lord’s face shown in upon us and all darkness was gone! And we leaped into joyful security, crying, “God is the Lord, which has showed us light.” We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticisms—they were impossible! We said, “God is the Lord, which has showed us light.” In the fourth watch of the night, in the prison where the cold stone shut us in, where the darkness had never known a candle, there a light shone round about us and an angel smote us on the side and bade us put on our sandals, and gird ourselves, and follow him. We obeyed the word, and our chains fell off; and when we came to the iron gate which had always been our horror, it opened of its own accord, and we went out into the streets of the city, and we scarcely felt that it could be true, but thought we saw a vision. But when we had considered the thing, and found it was even ourselves, and ourselves set in a large place at perfect liberty, then we said, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.”

God has showed us light and we will live to Him forever and forever. Oh, you tried Believers, who have, nevertheless, not been given over unto death, who can say, tonight, “I shall not die, but live,” present yourselves anew unto your delivering Lord as living sacrifices through Jesus Christ your Lord! Amen.

***Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Psalm 18.***  
**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 73 (PART II), 710.**

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# THE HEADSTONE OF THE CORNER

## NO. 1420

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1878,  
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it, Save now, I beseech You, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, send now prosperity.”*  
*Psalm 118:22-25.*

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to fix with certainty the occasion which first suggested this Psalm. It has even been thought to be purely prophetic and rather foretelling history than narrating it. I rather incline to the opinion that some Israelite hero, chosen of God to high office in the midst of his people, had been rejected by the rulers, had passed through many struggles—some of them of the most violent kind—and at last, notwithstanding the rejection of his people and their leaders, had attained to a prominent position, no, to a chief place in the midst of the nation!

The Psalm is applicable to Christ and to Him it is referred in the New Testament several times, but probably from the *human* point of view it was at first intended to celebrate the victory of some chosen man of God who, despite his Divine election, had been rejected by his countrymen. Providence conducted him to a crowning success and he magnified the Lord for it. In some way or other, a stone has come to be connected with several persons whose history was of this character.

Remember Jacob. He flees from his father’s house because Esau threatens to kill him. He appears to be the rejected member of Isaac’s family by whom the house would never be built. At the end of a day’s journey he lies down with a stone for his pillow and, as he sweetly slumbers, he sees Heaven open. He beholds the mystic ladder and rises, assured of the love of the Almighty God! By faith thus infused into his soul, he becomes strong for his future life and so lives that now the house of Abraham and Isaac stands represented in the seed of Jacob, alone. And Esau, with all his dukes, has utterly passed away.

The next occurrence of the stone happens in reference to Joseph, of whom the dying Jacob said, “From thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel.” He was separated from his brothers by their envy and grievously wounded by their malice. They said, “Behold, this dreamer comes,” and they sold him for a slave into the stranger’s land. From the dungeons of Egypt he climbed to the throne and became the cornerstone of Israel’s house! On his bosom his aged father could lay his head and dream as he did at Bethel! And by his power and wisdom, the shepherd family was happily built up. Then came David, whom his elder brothers despised and even his father passed him over, until the Prophet of God asked for him, that he might be anointed with oil!

Out of his hand went that stone of Israel which laid low the pride of Philistia! Goliath must bite the ground when the stone of Israel flies from the hand of Israel's shepherd who was destined to be her king! He was rejected and hated by Saul so that he wandered about in the wilderness, hiding in caves and rocks until the hour came when he was called to the throne. Then the stone which the builders refused became the headstone of the corner and he and his people confessed that it was the Lord's doing and it was marvelous in their eyes! Be not afraid, O you persecuted ones, for you shall fulfill your destiny!

It has happened again and again in history that those who have been destined to do great things for the Lord have, first of all, been compelled to pass through a trying ordeal of misunderstanding and rejection! Such history repeats itself and it may do so in your instance. The speckled bird of the family, the one least beloved, often rises to take the most prominent place. Jephthah was driven out from his father's family and yet in their distress his brethren were glad enough to make him their champion and accept him as their head. Bow your head in patience, young man, and bear whatever God or His enemies may lay upon you, for assuredly as the Lord is in you and with you, He will bring you forth and of you, too, it shall be true in your own little way, "The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the headstone of the corner."

At this time, however, we shall confine our application of these verses to our blessed Lord, Himself, to whom they most evidently refer. Their meaning is focused upon Him and, in reference to Him, each word is emphatic. He applied them to Himself, for Matthew tells us in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of his Gospel that our Lord said to the chief priests and Pharisees, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" You remember, also, how Peter said in the face of the crucifiers of Christ, "Be it known unto you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nothing of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

In his first Epistle, Peter refers again to this Psalm in the well-remembered words, "Why also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." Of our own exalted Lord we are going to speak at this time and may the Spirit bear witness in our hearts to His honor!

**I.** First, I invite your thoughts to CHRIST REJECTED—"The Stone which the builders refused." The Lord Jesus came into this world at the fullness of time when the Messiah was expected by those devout men who waited for salvation in Israel. He came born of parents descended from that royal house from which Messiah was prophesied as coming and He was born in the very city which had been pointed out by Seers of old! All

details of His life in His early days corresponded with prophetic intimations and answered to the signs which the Lord had appointed. There was nothing in which He did that did not exactly fit the symbols of the sanctuary and the personal types of history! Everything which could speak cried with one voice, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

He was clearly placed before the Jewish people as the Stone which God would lay in Zion as the Foundation of their hopes, but they persistently refused Him. It was not from lack of evidence, for John came prophesying concerning Him and, as I have already said, John was but the last of a long list of Prophets who had all pointed to Him as the Anointed of the Lord—and yet Israel rejected Him! His own miracles and teaching were more than sufficient evidence of His mission, but Israel would have none of Him! He was a Stone evidently of God's quarrying and preparing. His extraordinary birth marked Him out as differing from all the rest of mankind! His surpassing excellence and moral beauty declared Him to be destined to the highest position!

His Person displayed the marvelous love and wisdom of God and with half an eye, if they had willed to see it, the Jews might have perceived that He was anointed to be the Cornerstone of the spiritual Temple—but yet they refused Him! "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He came to those who had the oracles, but in this thing they set at nothing the oracles! He came to those who had the Law and the Prophets, but they were deaf to all holy testimonies and disowned Him! Alas, for the blindness of men's hearts! His rejection was rendered the more remarkable and the more sorrowful because He was rejected by the builders or leaders of the nation. "The Stone which the *builders* refused."

If the common people, who were ignorant of the Law, had not perceived Him to be the chosen Stone, we might not have wondered. But there were men of learning and research among the people and *these* rejected Him! They had builders who understood spiritual architecture, or professed to do so—the scribes who studied the Law and the priests who taught the people—these were the master builders whose business it was to make the selection of the Cornerstone. But these rejected our Lord. It was not only the mob of Jerusalem that rejected Christ, but the rulers led the way! True, the many cried, "Crucify Him!" but not till they were bribed by the priests, the clergy of the day, the Sadducees, the skeptical men of science, the Pharisees and ritualistic professors—these were they who sat in Moses' seat—in whom the people had confidence! And by *their* evil, the people were led to reject the Cornerstone which the Lord Himself had laid!

Concerning this rejection we must also remark that it was no common one—it was a violent and indignant rejection! They were not content to say, "He is not the Messiah," but they turned their hottest malice against Him! They were furious at the sight of Him! This precious Stone was kicked against and rolled about with violence and all manner of ridicule was poured upon it. Nothing would content them but the blood of the Man who had disturbed their consciences and questioned their pretensions. "The Stone which the builders refused" is to be read with a heavy stress upon the word REFUSED. Peter says, "He was set at nothing of you builders." They slandered Him in life and mocked Him in death! They spat their

accusations against Him when He was free and gave Him over to be defiled with the spit of the soldiers' mouths when He was bound! They made Him live an outcast's life and then they hung Him up to die a felon's death!

This rejection was most unreasonable—they did violence to truth and justice by their evil deed. For which of His works did they stone Him? There was nothing in His Character which should have incensed them! There was nothing about Him which ought to have excited their doubts, much less their wrath. But yet they willfully and resolutely rejected Him. They said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." The cause, in part, was blind prejudice. They expected a king surrounded with earthly pomp and girt with physical force to break the Roman yoke and create an Israelite empire more famous than that of Solomon.

But because He came as the Son of a lowly virgin, robed in a peasant's dress and humbly dwelt among the sons of men in meekest fashion, therefore they refused Him. There was no real reason why He should have been refused because of His humiliation, for was not their Messiah so to come? Did not Isaiah say, "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." He agreed with the prophecies, but not with their prejudices and, therefore, they cried, "Away with Him! Away with Him." Those prejudices were the result of sheer ignorance, for if they had studied the Word of God they would have seen that the Christ of God was not the Christ of their dreams! And had they searched the Scriptures they might have known that Jesus of Nazareth was the Lord of Glory!

They had eyes, but would not see! The Light was around them, but they comprehended Him not. The pride of their hearts kept them in ignorance—they did not want to know! The proud philosophic Sadducee felt sure of his ground, for he was a thinker and despised the vulgar—he did not wish for evidence as to the existence of angel or spirit, or of the resurrection of the dead—therefore he scornfully rejected the Man who brought life and immortality to light! The Pharisee, supremely righteous in himself, did not want to know a Man who taught him that he was lost and came to be the Savior of sinners. He felt too safe, already, to need saving! Thus the Ever-Blessed was chased out of the world by the pride which scorns all excellence except its own!

Men flung away God's dearest Jewel because He outshone their own counterfeit jewelry! Nor was it pride, alone, for that mother sin was surrounded with all other evils. They wanted to devour widows' houses in secret and He exposed them! They wanted to go on saying their long prayers and yet to persecute the righteous—and Jesus unmasked them! Certain of them wanted to be free-thinkers and yet to be thought orthodox—and He denounced them as hypocrites! They denied the essential principles of Revelation, but He came forth from the Father to bear witness of God and, therefore, they utterly abhorred Him! Their sin, as it could not associate with His holiness, raised a clamor against Him and with cunning and malice they denounced, condemned and utterly rejected the Stone which

God had appointed to be the Foundation and Cornerstone of His New Jerusalem!

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you know what came of it. They threw that chosen Stone away and when they had removed it away from their Babel-building they thought their troubles at an end when, indeed, they had just begun! That Stone was removed out of the way and yet they stumbled upon Him—they stumbled to their own confusion—yes, they stumbled to their own *destruction*! How broken were they by that Stone at the awful siege of Jerusalem when they and their city perished! Now, also, that Stone has been lifted up into Heaven by the mighty power of God and in the fullness of time it will descend upon these foolish builders with terrible effect—for upon whomever it shall fall it will grind him to powder!

Even while that Stone was here, they fell upon Him and were broken! But when He comes a second time, *He* will fall upon *them* and woe unto them in that Day! Let us not be among the company of the rejecters! Let us not consort with those who cast doubts upon the Gospel of Jesus! Rather let our hearts joyfully bless God for appointing Him to be the Headstone of the corner! Let us accept Him in that Character and at once build upon Him—

**“Chosen of God, to sinners dear,  
And saints adore the name!  
We trust our whole salvation here,  
Nor shall we suffer shame.”**

God forbid that we should reject the testimony of God concerning His Son and so make God a liar and bring down eternal wrath upon our own heads! Our safety lies in reception, not in rejection, for to “as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

As for those who reject Him, we hear with trembling these words from the lips of the loving Jesus—“But those, My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me.”

**II.** With great delight I now pass to the second topic which is CHRIST EXALTED—“The Stone which the builders refused is become the Headstone of the corner”—that is to say, at this moment Christ has the chief place of honor in the building of God! He is the Headstone, for He is higher than the kings of the earth! He is higher than all the opposing powers of wisdom or of superstition and He is the Head over all things to His Church! Glory be to His name—in the midst of His people He is above all and over all—we worship Him with rapture!

He is King of kings and Lord of lords, “for by Him were all things created that are in Heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him,” There is none like He among the sons of men! In all things He has the preeminence. He that was crucified is now enthroned! He that lay in the grave now reigns in Glory! Nor is He only eminent for His position of honor, but for His surpassing usefulness! He is the Headstone of the corner, that Stone which joins two walls together and is the bond of the building—Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus!

It is true He is a Stone in Israel's wall, but He is also a Stone in the Gentile's wall. In Him is neither Jew nor Gentile distinctively, for they are both there inclusively. He has made both *one*! The Pharisees would have it that the wall should finish within the line of Judah's race, but not so thought our Master! His heart went forth to the other sheep which He had that were not yet of the fold. This made them wrathful, but their wrath did not prevent His accomplishing His design and now He is the Bond of the building, holding Jew and Gentile in firm unity! This precious Cornerstone binds God and man together in wondrous amity, for He is both in one! He joins earth and Heaven together, for He participates in each! He joins time and eternity together, for He was a man of few years and yet He is the Ancient of Days!

Wondrous Cornerstone! You bind all of us together who are in You, so that by love of You we are built together for a temple of the Holy Spirit! You are the perfect Bond, the eternal Holdfast, the Divine Cement which holds the universe in one! Is it not written, "By Him all things consist"? Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, is brought up from all rejection and shame to which His enemies put Him. He is, by usefulness and by honor, the grandest Person upon the face of the earth! And all this, none the less, but all the more, because He was rejected! He lost *nothing* by His enemies. They scourged His back, but they did not rob Him of that imperial purple which now adorns Him! They crowned Him with thorns, but those thorns have increased the brilliance of His diadem of light!

They pierced His hands and thereby prepared them to sway an irresistible scepter of love over men's hearts! They nailed His feet, but those feet stand firm forever upon the Throne of Sovereignty! They crucified Him, but His crucifixion led Him to His greater honor, since He therein finished the work which was given Him to do and now, also, God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name! As it has been, so is it, and so shall it be—man's opposition to the Gospel will not interfere with it one single whit—but the eternal purposes of Jehovah shall be fulfilled! Our adversaries may mine and undermine. They may openly oppose and secretly assail. But upon this Rock, even upon Christ, shall the Truth and the Church forever rest and no harm shall come to it! The Lord will lift the Stone which the builders refused and make it to become the Headstone of the corner—therefore let us not fail nor be discouraged!

Already our text has been fulfilled! Our Lord Christ was dead and buried, but His foes were desperately afraid that He would rise again and so they rolled a stone to the tomb's mouth and sealed it. But He rose, for all that, and became the first fruits of them that slept, the Headstone of the Resurrection! His Resurrection utterly defeated those who reckoned upon destroying His power! What could they do against One whom Death itself could not silence? When His Resurrection attested His mission, what could they say against Him? Nor was this all, for to add to His honor, He was received up into Heaven! Beyond the eternal hills He rose, the gates of Heaven opening at His coming! And amidst the acclamation of angels and redeemed spirits, He ascended to the highest place that Heaven affords!

What a change from Gabbatha and all the maltreatment of the Pavement to the sea of glass mingled with fire and to the seat of infinite Majesty! Jesus has gone from the bar to the Throne, and there He sits in majesty! His adversaries may grind their teeth at Him, but the King is set upon the holy hill of Zion beyond their wrath. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Jehovah Jesus is King and none can challenge His sovereignty! At Pentecost, too, this was fulfilled, for when His few and humble disciples were inspired by the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues of fire, all Jerusalem rang with the wonder—and then, again, the despised and rejected Stone was made the Headstone of the corner!

Very speedily throughout the known world the testimony of His name was made to sound forth till His Word had gone forth as far as the sun's utmost track and all nations beheld the light thereof. Then the gods of the heathen tottered and colossal systems of idolatry were ground to powder. Glory be unto You, O Christ! You did triumph gloriously in those first ages of Your Church! That triumph is still proceeding. It will be consummated by-and-by. What confusion will take hold upon the hearts of His adversaries when He shall be revealed! He is hidden now and His people with Him, but the day draws near when He shall come a second time to be admired in all them that believe! What astonishment will then take hold upon those who refused His righteous claims! Then will they know that this is the Lord's doing though it will be terrible in their eyes! All intelligent beings, even down to the blackest devil of Hell, shall, at the Second Advent of our Lord be obliged to confess that the Stone which the builders refused has become the Headstone of the corner!

The Man of Nazareth shall be Lord of all before the eyes of all mankind! We look forward to that Day! I call upon you, dear Brothers and Sisters, this morning, to greatly rejoice in the fact which we have thus brought before you! It is a grand Truth of God that Christ Jesus is now enthroned beyond the reach of those who rejected and despised Him—

***"Honor immortal must be paid,  
Instead of scandal and of scorn  
While glory shines around His head,  
And a bright crown without a thorn."***

**III.** Thirdly, I ask your attention to the next point, which is introduced to us by the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST IS DUE TO GOD ALONE—"This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes." Now, this was so as a matter of history. Jesus Christ's name and work were, at length, had in honor in the world, but this was due to no man's wisdom, eloquence, or power, but entirely to the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and great in might! Look, my Brothers and Sisters, if the Scribes and Pharisees had endorsed the claims of our Lord, it might have been said that Christianity was grafted upon the old stock of Judaism and, therefore, grew with vigor.

And if Pilate, or Herod, or any of the great ones, especially if the Caesar of the day had accepted it, then the following ages would have said, "Oh yes, He derived His power and was lifted to His place through the prestige of empire and the prowess of arms." But it was not so! All the establish-

ments on earth were against Him—rank and station despised the carpenter's Son—superstition abhorred His simplicity and spirituality! Ceremonialism would have nothing to do with Him who said that the Temple was to be destroyed! Skepticism could not endure Him, for He gave not a jot of ground for its doubts, or food for its speculations!

And the kings of the earth and the statesmen utterly derided Him, for He spoke of a kingdom which was not of this world! And yet He triumphed, and now His name is the most famous among the sons of men! This was not because poets sat waiting upon Parnassus to pour forth their loftiest lays, or because minstrels, with their fingers on their harp strings, stood prepared to draw forth matchless music to celebrate His advent. No, the hymns which were composed in His honor had a lowly virgin and an equally humble matron as their authors. And the music which saluted Him was the noise of children in the streets, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David." The Son of Man owes *nothing* of His glory to *man*—His elevation to the throne is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes!

And while this is true as to the past, it remains true at this day, for the Gospel of Christ, whenever it spreads in the earth, owes its triumphs entirely to Divine interposition. When I consider how hostile is human nature to the Gospel, the very existence of a True Church in the world is, to me, a miracle! Nor to me, alone, does it appear so, for it really is a super-human work and is worked by the Lord alone! Just think of it. Why, at this very day, we have all the wisdom and power and eloquence and skill of the superstition of the world arrayed against the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though they are agreed in nothing else, they all unite against Christ!

He of the Seven Hills has nothing but maledictions for the pure Gospel of Jesus and with him stand a hierarchy clothed with terrible power and a troop of Jesuits who stop at nothing! Completely organized, numerous, subtle, all-pervading—the warriors of Rome are a great host and not to be lightly thought upon! See how superstition multiplies in this land! See how the builders, appointed by the State to build up a Protestant Church, are pulling it down with both hands! These are priests, clergy—God's heritage! And what are they doing? Lifting up an idolatrous crucifix in the place of the doctrine of the Cross! They are setting sacraments in the place of the precious blood and preaching salvation by their own priest-craft instead of salvation by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ!

The builders are rejecting Him and yet His cause lives on! The wise men on the other side of the house, the builders who claim to be scientific scholars and persons of advanced thought and thorough culture—these, also, have their fling against the Gospel. For anything I can see of their pretended depth of learning, I would recommend them to attend to their science and obtain a little more culture before they set up for *teachers* or they may expose their own shallowness. These boastfully wise men, these self-styled thinking men are all against the Gospel of Jesus Christ! When I see the power which, at the present time, is enlisted on the side of doubt and skepticism, I, for my part, am astonished that *anybody* believes the Gospel at all—and I feel that it is the Lord's doing and marvelous in my eyes!

True faith is *supernatural*—it stands not in the wisdom of man, but in Divine power! Wherever Christ is exalted, as, blessed be His name, He is in many Churches, it is not because of any wit or skill or power on the part of the minister, but because the Holy Spirit is at work among the people bringing them to Christ! Do not, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, despond on behalf of Christ's cause. The real progress of Christianity must be *supernatural*! Whenever we fight with the wooden sword of reason, we may expect to be defeated—not because the Gospel is against reason or contrary to it—but because it is so much *above* reason that we cannot comprehend it and, therefore, lose power by hearing Gospel Truth as if it were a human discovery!

If there is not working with Christianity a Divine agency altogether above its reasonableness. If there is not, in fact, the Spirit of God working with it to convert men, then it will come to nothing and vanish like other systems. Our reliance must be, therefore, not upon *evidences* which we can bring to prove the Truth of the Gospel, nor upon eloquence by which we may advance its claims, but upon the Eternal Spirit of God, for it is He, and He alone, who can lift the rejected Stone and make it to become the Headstone of the corner! It is impossible for blinded human nature to believe the Truth of God! And, therefore, we must be born again! Gospel teachings are so humbling, so radical, so pure, so spiritual, so much above our thoughts that nobody will accept them unless taught of God! His chosen people shall be taught of the Spirit and the rest will choose to remain in blindness. So it has been, and so it ever shall be!

But, Beloved, let us not tremble because of this, for despite human blindness and the opposition of the wise, Christ must reign even to the world's end. Did I hear a whisper that ministers are, nowadays, very broad and have given up the old Gospel? I know it and I am not surprised! The builders are the first to reject the chosen Stone. Christ owes little to preachers and some of His worst enemies are found in their ranks! Unconverted men are in too many pulpits and are seeking out many inventions to set aside the pure Gospel which exalts Christ Jesus. Let them alone! The ditch is gaping for these blind guides. Our Lord can do without them. He owes His victories to Himself and to Himself, alone! And, therefore, let the faith of His people rest in peace, for if they will have patience, they shall see greater things than they have yet beheld.

Our text says that it is not only the Lord's doing and marvelous, but it is marvelous, "in our eyes," which it could not be if we did not see it. We shall see and we shall marvel! Some of us may have passed away, but you who are younger may live to see modern thought obtain supremacy over human minds—German rationalism which has ripened into Socialism may yet pollute the mass of mankind and lead them to overturn the foundations of society. Then "advanced principles" will hold carnival and free thought will riot with the vice and blood which were years ago the insignia of "the age of reason." I say not that it will be so, but I should not wonder if it came to pass, for deadly principles are abroad and certain ministers are spreading them!

If it ever should be so, do not, O Believers, for a single moment despair, but rest certain that the Lord is about to do a marvelous thing in the

earth and that He will lift up, once again, the Stone which the builders have again refused and cause it to become more than ever the Headstone of the corner! Never dream of defeat! Be calm amid all the din of controversy, for the hand which holds the Gospel must win the victory! This is the Lord's doing and we shall see it!

**IV.** Let us now notice that THE EXALTATION OF THE REJECTED CHRIST COMMENCES A NEW ERA. For what says the 24<sup>th</sup> verse? "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." We date from our Lord's Resurrection, even as the Jews of old counted from the night wherein they went out of Egypt. What is this day which the Lord has made? I reply first, it is the day of the Gospel! Through our Lord's exaltation, pardon for the guilty is freely preached among all nations and whoever believes in Him has everlasting life! *Now* is Christ exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins! *Now* is He on the throne of power that He may be able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him!

Let us rejoice and be glad in Him. How can we rejoice and be glad in Him except by *believing* in Him? Come, let us believe the Gospel, the Gospel of the once rejected, but now exalted Savior! Let us put our trust in Him and then let us sing for joy of heart because we have a royal Savior, an exalted Savior, an almighty Savior in whose hands our souls are safe! The era of the Gospel ought to be a time of gladness, for its favors are rich, its light is clear, its promises are abundant and its truth is certain! To be unhappy, now that Jesus reigns, is to be ungrateful! It is a royal feast! Let us eat to the full and so honor the King and bless ourselves!

What day is this which the Lord has made? Why, in the next place, it is a Sabbath day, the beginning of a long line of Sabbaths! The day in which our Lord Jesus rose from the dead is now sacred to rest and holy joy. Let us keep it with reverent love and bless God for making it—

***"This is the day the Lord has made,  
He calls the hours His own.  
Let Heaven rejoice, let the earth be glad,  
And praise surround the Throne!  
Today He rose and left the dead  
And Satan's empire fell!  
Today the saints His triumphs spread,  
And all His wonders tell."***

The world calls the Sabbath, Sunday, do not let us turn it into Cloud-day! Certain good Christian people look upon the Lord's Day as a season so solemn that it can only be properly kept by being as dreary as possible! Draw down the blinds, darken the room, chide the children, cherish every smile—*now* we are getting Sabbatic! Let us go up to the House of Prayer like convicts exercising in the prison yard and there let us be as decorously miserable as possible! Let the preacher be as dull and as monotonous as though he had no subject to preach about but death and destruction and must preserve an air of melancholy, or none would think him gracious!

Such is NOT the teaching of our Master, nor is it according to His mind and spirit! Herbert well says of the Sabbath—

***"You are a day of mirth,***

***And where the weekdays trail on ground,  
Your flight is higher, as your birth.***

It should be “a day most calm, most bright,” fit to be called, “the endorsement of supreme delight!” It is a time of the singing of birds, for the winter of our Lord’s humiliation is over and He has risen from the dead! Today we celebrate the Glory of Christ in the highest heavens as the elect of God and the cornerstone of His Church—surely it ill becomes us to go about with our hands upon our loins as if we mourned His victory and begrudged His honor! No, let us clap our hands with exultation! “The Lord reigns! Let the earth rejoice! Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.”

Again, “This is the day which the Lord has made.” The Resurrection of Christ commences an era of triumph! We have spoken of the Gospel day and the Sabbath day, but it is also a day of victories. As Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so will His Truth continually rise from the sepulcher into which men may cast it. As He triumphed over the powers of death and darkness, so will His Gospel triumph over all opposition! Whenever at any time your hearts are heavy, I would bid you stand at the open tomb of Christ and remember that He rose! And if He could not be held by the bands of *death*, certainly neither He nor His Gospel can be held by any other bands! His adversaries thrust His Gospel into the tomb again! They proclaim that the old doctrines are effete, but as surely as Jesus our Lord lives they shall see the Truth of God revive! Walk in patience, for the vision will not tarry. The day comes when in yet *greater* power the Gospel shall renew its youth and the world shall assuredly know that the Lord has done it!

Let us rejoice and be glad that we live in an era bright with victories of the right and the true. We may have to fight for them and wait for them, but they will surely come and Christ shall reign forever and ever! I would to God that the thought of the exalted Christ would be the beginning of days to some of you! This day began with sunlight but at this hour it deepens into gloom. The skies are overcast and a tempest is hurrying up. I trust that with my dear Hearers it may be the absolute reverse—that if you began this morning amid clouds of doubt and showers of tears, you may see Christ exalted in the highest Heaven because He has offered for you His great atoning Sacrifice—and may you look to Him and find clear shining after the rain, a great calm after a great storm!

**V.** I close by saying that THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST SUGGESTS A PRAYER. The 25<sup>th</sup> verse supplies us with it. “Save now, I beseech You, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, send now prosperity.” First, it is a prayer for salvation. It may mean, “God save the King: may Jesus live forever,” and in that sense we would make the heavens ring with it! But we will take it, this morning, to be a prayer for the salvation of men. Since Christ is the exalted and victorious Savior, let us beseech Him to save all those who are around us! Save them, Lord! Save them all! Save them NOW!

Put it in the present tense! Ask for a display of the present saving power of our exalted Head! O Christ Jesus, Prince and Lord, save the sinners in Zion! We beseech You save those who occupy these pews Sabbath after Sabbath and hear about You, but do not know You! Save, too, the strangers that are within Your gates and are strangers to You as well as to

us. Save the careless, good Lord! Save the anxious! Save the seekers! By Your Glory at the Father's side, we beseech You, save men! Do you believe that Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God? If you do, all things are possible with Him and He has promised to hear prayer! Hear me then, you thousands of Israel, as I entreat you now to breathe one hearty unanimous prayer to this effect—"Save now, O Lord, we beseech You!"

Put the name of your child to the prayer if you please, or that of your wife, or father, or sister, or brother—but put up the prayer to Him who is enthroned on *purpose* to save! Save *now*, O Lord! You are no more despised and rejected! Unveil Your Glory by saving men! You could save even in Your agony—on the Cross you saved a dying thief! But now, in Glory, You have mightier power! Therefore, O Savior, save now! Will you not importunately urge that petition, O you who know His readiness to hear? Sinners, will you not pray thus for yourselves? Here, now, as we sit together in this dense gloom, so unusual in the month of June, let us feel that the shadow of the Eternal is brooding over us, that the Almighty is now covering us with His wings!

Do you not feel near to Him? Be sure of this, He is very near to you! Call upon Him while He is near! In all probability we shall, in a few moments, hear His majestic voice rolling in thunder through the sky and before long we shall see the flash of His glittering spears. Let all this deepen our reverence and prompt us to entreat Him now to save us! The God that thunders at His pleasure is near! Bow before Him and trust in His Son, Christ Jesus, and let the prayer go up, "SAVE NOW." Do not wait for tomorrow, nor even until the storm has passed over, but now, even now, seek His salvation!

The other half of the prayer is for prosperity. "O Lord, send now prosperity." This is what we continually need in this Church. The prayer is in harmony with the whole passage. Since, Lord, You have lifted the chief Stone into its place, be pleased to raise up other stones of Your Temple into their places! O fit them, one upon another, and send a prosperous building up! Lord, You have conquered all the foes of Christ—come and conquer the foes of your Church today. Lord, You did gather out a people to His praise and build up a Church in the first centuries of Christianity and then Your Son Jesus was gloriously the Corner *and* Headstone! Come again and build up Your own Church throughout all the lands, a Church in which the Lord Jesus shall be exalted even to the highest!

"Send now prosperity." I pray you, Beloved, join in this prayer! Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and prosperity, for they that love her and her peace still have great happiness. Join in the supplication to the once rejected but now exalted covenant Head of the Church and the Lord will bless you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THE BEST CHRISTMAS FARE NO. 2340

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 24, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THE EVENING OF CHRISTMAS DAY, 1881.

*“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!”  
Psalm 119:103.*

THIS is a time of feasting and we may as well have our feast as other people have theirs. Let us see whether there is not something for our spiritual palate, something to satisfy our spiritual appetite, that we may eat, and be content, and rejoice before the Lord. Do you not think that two of the words in our text are very strange? If you had written them, would you not have said, “How sweet are Your Words unto my *ears*”? The Psalmist says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my *palate*!” for that is the word in the margin. He did not write, “Yes, sweeter than honey to my *hearing*!” but, “sweeter than honey to my *mouth*!” Are words, then, things that we can taste and eat? No, not if they are the words of *man*—it would take many of our words to fill a hungry belly. “Be you warmed and filled.” It would take many *tons* of that sort of fodder to feed “a Brother or Sister destitute of daily food,” for man’s words are air and airy, light and frothy. They often deceive, they mock, they awaken hopes which are never realized. But God’s Words are full of substance—they are spirit, they are life, they are to be fed upon by the spiritually hungry!

Marvel not that I say this to you! It was God’s Word that made us—is it any wonder that His Word should sustain us? If His Word gives life, do you wonder that His Word should also give food for that life? Marvel not, for it is written—“Man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” God’s Words are meat, drink and food—and if bodies live not upon words—souls and spirits feed upon the Words of God, and so are satisfied and full of delight! This is the language of an eater as well as of a hearer—of one who heard the words and then ate the words. The expression is oriental, but we are not quite strangers to it, even in our western talk, for we say, “They seem to eat the man’s words,” that is, when the hearers are very attentive to them, when they enjoy them, when the preacher’s words seem to comfort them and to minister sustenance to their mind and to their spirit.

I like this way of describing the reception of God’s Word as a matter of eating, for a man cannot eat God’s Word without living! He that takes it into himself must live thereby. There is a reality about the faith which

eats. There is a something there most sure which contains the elements of salvation, for tasting is a spiritual sense which implies nearness. You can hear at a great distance by means of the telephone, but, somehow, I do not think that anyone will invent an electrical taster. Nobody knows what may be done, but I fancy that I shall never be able to eat anything in New York. I think that we shall hardly ever reach such a triumph of science as that! There will always have to be a measure of nearness if we are to taste anything and so it is with God's Word. If we hear it, it is music in the ears, but still it may seem to be at a distance from us. We may not get a grip and grasp of it—but if we *taste* it—that means that we really have it here within ourselves! Then has it come very near to us and we enter into fellowship with the God who gave it.

This idea of tasting God's Word contains the thought of *receptiveness*. A man may hear a thing and, as we say, it goes in one ear and out the other, and so it often does, but that which a man gets into his mouth till he tastes it, and it is sweet to his palate, well, he has truly received that. If it is sweet to him, he will not do as they who have something lukewarm, which is objectionable, which they cast away out of their mouth. But when he finds it palatable, the sweetness will make him keep it where it is till he swallows it down into his inward parts. So I love this thought of tasting God's Word because it implies *nearness*, an actual *reception* and a veritable holding-fast of that which is so appreciated by the taste.

Tasting is also a personal matter. "Friends, Romans, countrymen," said Mark Anthony, in his oration over the body of Caesar, "lend me your ears!" And they go to be lent and numbers of people hear for others. But *tasting*, surely, is a personal business—there is no possibility of my eating for you! If you choose to starve yourself by a long fast of 50 days, so you must. If I were to sit down and industriously attempt to eat your portion of food, and my own, too, it would not help you in the least! You must eat for yourselves and there is no knowing the value of God's Word till you eat it for yourself. You must personally believe it, personally trust to it, personally receive it into your innermost spirit, or else you cannot know anything about its power to bless and to sustain! I do pray, dear Friends, that we may, every one of us, tonight, understand what the Psalmist meant when he spoke of tasting God's Words and of finding them sweeter than honey to his mouth.

**I.** First, tonight, I call your attention to AN EXCLAMATION. The text contains two notes of exclamation or admiration—"How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" I cannot throw the notes of admiration and exclamation into my speech, as I would like to do, but this verse is evidently the utterance of one who is somewhat surprised and amazed, one who has a thought which he cannot adequately express. The thought is also one that gives much delight to the writer, for he exclaims, "How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Now, I believe that it is a matter of wonder to many to find *the Gospel so sweet when the soul first tastes it*. Until I believed in Christ, I could not

have imagined that a man was capable of so much delight as I then experienced. When I first looked to Christ and was lightened, the ease I felt when my burden rolled from off my shoulders quite astonished me. It seemed to me as if a man could never know such rest as I then enjoyed! When I beheld my sin all put away through Christ's atoning blood and knew myself to be "accepted in the Beloved," I could have said, with the queen of Sheba, "Behold, the half was not told me." I had heard my father and other Christian men say that blessed are the people who trust in the Lord, but I never thought there really was such blessedness as I found. I fancied that they would decoy me with some sweet declarations of what, after all, might be very commonplace, but I did not find it to be so. And I am here to bear my witness that when I believed God's promise, I was so amazed and overpowered with joy that, even now, I cannot tell you the delight I felt, yes, and I, in the Word of a faithful God to all who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son!

This, then, may be the exclamation of a soul tasting the Gospel for the first time, but it may also be the exclamation of a *soul cheered by still tasting the Gospel*—"How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!" "I have known the Lord," says one, "these 40 years." Another says, "I have known Christ these 30 years, but He is as precious to me as ever He was, His Word is as fresh and novel as if I had never heard it, before, and His promise comes to my soul with as much of life and power as if He had only spoken it yesterday and I had never heard it till this moment."

Are you not surprised, sometimes, you who are getting into middle life, or even verging on old age, to find how sweet God's Word still is to you? And if, perhaps, you have been away from the House of God traveling in foreign lands, or you have been laid aside by sickness, or, if, perhaps, you are a preacher and do not often hear a sermon, is it not a very delightful thing to sit in your pew and, when you are hearing the Gospel, to say, "Oh, it is sweet! It is coming home to me now"? I heard a sermon some years ago—I do not often get the opportunity of hearing—and when my tears began to flow under a simple statement of the Gospel, I said to myself, "Yes, I am not a mere dealer in it, who hands it out to others, for I relish the flavor of it myself." Why, I have had to stand here, sometimes, like the butchers at Christmas time, cutting and chopping off joints of meat for you all, and I have not had even a snack, myself, all the while! But when I get the opportunity of sitting down at the table and listening, it may be, to a poor, humble preacher talking about Christ, I seem to set my knife and fork to work and I say, "Yes, that is just the very food for me, give me some more of it! My soul can feed upon such fare as that." And I have felt glad, with an inward and unspeakable delight, to find how sweet it was to my taste—"Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Rejoice, dear Friends, if you find it so.

I reckon that this language of exclamation and admiration will also come from *the most advanced saint, increasing in knowledge of the Gospel*—the Believer who has studied the Word of God most earnestly and who has had the deepest experience in it. Other books are soon done with,

but the Bible is never fully understood. I think that most readers will tell you that the more they read, the fewer books they treasure, whereas, to the young, there is a whole library to go through! The man who has been a diligent and careful reader all his life finds only some few books that he now cares to read. He knows the rest—he could write the most of them—perhaps could write them better than they are written! Now he keeps on striking out this one from the list and that other, for he has gone beyond them—and the book which charmed him when he was young ceases to have any value to him when he gets beyond it in his riper years. He has seen through its mistakes and now he yearns for something more accurate.

But it is never so with the Words of God. It is never so with the Word of God, the Incarnate Word, the Christ. The more you know of Him, the more you wish to know. And the more you taste of Him, the sweeter He becomes till in Heaven the sweetness will be far more intense than it is now—and Christ will be more precious and more delightful to us through the eternal ages than He is at this present moment! I believe that in Glory the saints will often lift up their hands and say, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” When those words shall have been completely fulfilled, the very retrospect of the promise will charm our immortal spirits till Heaven shall become as a forest, like that of Jonathan, which dripped with honey—and every Word that God spoke to us, when we were here below, shall come back to us with matchless sweetness as we remember it in the world to come.

**II.** But now, secondly, take the text not only with its two notes of admiration, but as A STATEMENT, a cool statement of matters of fact. David is one who, when his heart boils with holy fervor, and his hand wields the pen of a ready writer, still writes accurately. He never speaks more than the Truth even when he is most emphatic, so that I am sure that David means to tell us, here, that God’s Words were truly sweet to him.

First, *they were unutterably sweet*. “How sweet!” But he does not tell us how sweet they were. He says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” as if he could not tell us what delightfulness he found in the teachings of God’s Word—it was unutterable! We can tell you, dear Hearers, that God’s Words of promise are very, very sweet, but we can convey to you no sort of idea of how great that sweetness is! Oh, taste for yourselves and see that the Lord is good! There is no describing the flavors of a royal banquet! There is no picturing to a man who has not the sense of smell, the fragrance of a delicious perfume. And you must personally know the sweetness of the Word of God, for to us it is positively unutterable!

This much, however, the Psalmist does utter. He tells us that God’s Words are *surpassingly sweet*, for he said, “They are sweeter than honey.” Honey is supposed to be the sweetest of all known substances. So David means that if there is anything that can delight the heart of man, God’s Word could charm his heart better than that! David means that if there is anything that could cheer a man, God’s Word could comfort him better than any other consolation. If there is joy, if there is peace, if there is rest,

if there is bliss to be found in anything else—all that, and more than that—can be found in a higher degree in the teachings of God’s Word and in the blessings of the Covenant of Grace! Sweeter than sweetness, itself. Sweeter than the sweetest thing that God, Himself, has made, is God’s Word which He has spoken! Oh, that we did but know how to taste it!

The Psalmist also makes this statement, that *all God’s Words are thus unutterably sweet to him*. He does not say that they are so to *all men*, but he says, “How sweet are Your Words unto *my* taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!” He speaks thus of all God’s Words. We know some people who love God’s promises, but they do not care much about His Laws. If God speaks a Word of Grace, they like that. But if it is a word of command, they do not care about that. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I hope we have a taste for *every* Word that God has spoken! A man ought not to say, “I do not like a sermon from the Old Testament as much as I do a sermon from the New Testament.” There must be no picking and choosing with God’s Word! It is virtually *atheism* when men begin to set one Word of God over against another, for the man who dares to criticize God’s Revelation makes himself greater than God—and therein he has undeified the Deity, and there is no God to him!

My God is such to me that if I know a Word to be Inspired by His Spirit, I value it beyond all conception! It is not for me to say, “This Word of my Master is nothing compared with another Word.” All these Words came from the same mouth and, coming from the same mouth, they are all equally true to me. And, if not all alike rich in comfort, yet “all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” From one end of it to the other, it answers some *Divine purpose*—who am I that I should sit in judgment upon it? I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, value every Word of God, and let no man lend you into the error of setting this one above the other, for, if they are God’s Words, they are *all* precious—and you ought to count them so.

David seems to imply that *God’s Words were precious to him at all times*. They were sweet to him when he wrote the text—I cannot tell in what condition of body and mind he was at that time—but this I do know, lying upon the bed of sickness, racked with pain, many of God’s saints have said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” And this I also know that, lifted up with gratitude for the blessings of Providence—health, wealth, friends—yet God’s saints have found greater sweetness in His Word than in all temporal things and they have still said, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” This is an abiding mark of a child of God, that God’s Words are sweet to him, yes, sometimes very sweet even when he is half afraid to partake of them! “Oh,” he says “would God they were mine! I need nothing sweeter than God’s Word and, even if I am a little fearful of appropriating it to myself, yet still it is very, very dear to me.” If the name of Jesus is sweeter than honey to your taste, then be glad, for this is a mark of a child of God that never failed yet—and never will fail while the world stands!

**III.** Now, thirdly, look at the text, again, and you will see that it contains A REPETITION—"How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!" Well, that is all right, David—we understand you. "Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Why do you need to say that? Is not that saying the same thing twice? Yes, and intentionally so, because God's Word is sweet to His people in many ways and many times over!

As I have already said to you, it is very sweet in its *reception*. When we first take it into our heart and feed upon it, it is very precious, but, spiritually, men are something like ruminating animals—they have the power of feeding again, and again, and again—on that which they have once received. Look how the cattle lie down and chew the cud. And it is when they chew the cud, I suppose, that they get the sweetness out of that which they have eaten. And so, spiritually, when men have once received Christ, they get increasing sweetness out of Him by meditation. Having taken Him into their souls, they afterwards inwardly digest the precious Word of God and get the secret juice and latent sweetnesses out of the promises of God's most holy Revelation and out of Jesus Christ, Himself! It is thus that the Psalmist first says, "How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!" And then he rolls them around, again, in his mouth by meditation, and so he repeats himself as he says, "Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

But do you not think that the repetition in the text means something else, namely, that while, first of all, Christ's Word is very sweet to our taste, there is another sweetness when we get it into our mouth—not so much for our own eating as speaking of it to others? There is great sweetness about the *declaration* of God's Words! Some of you who love the Lord have never yet told anybody. You are *secret Christians*—you hide away behind pillar and post. Oh, but God's Word is very sweet to you, you say, as you eat your morsel of bread in the corner! So it is, but you would have another and a greater sweetness if you would come out and avow that you love the Lord! I am sure you would. In fact, there is many a child of God who never enjoys the full sweetness of religion because he has not had the courage to confess Christ before men. I wish that some of you halting ones, you who are much afraid and fearing, would obey the whole of the Gospel. You know the Gospel—"He who believes *and is baptized* shall be saved." "With the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Now, obey the whole of the Gospel and then you shall get the whole of its sweetness. But, perhaps, there is some peculiar flavor in the Word which you have never known as yet because you have been disobedient children. Did you ever notice that saying of our Lord, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Yes, you know all about that, you say. Christ says to you, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." Now go a little farther—what is the next verse? "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and you shall find rest." Why, that is another rest! I thought you had rest—did not Jesus say that He would give you rest? Yet in the next verse He says, "You shall find rest." Yes, that is

another rest, a still *deeper* one which you find when you willingly take Christ's yoke upon you and become His disciples, *learning* of Him. So I believe my text means just that. God's Word is very sweet to the taste when you receive it by faith, but it has another and a special and deeper sweetness when you bring it into your mouth *and confess Christ before men*.

And let me add to this that there is a very special sweetness about preaching Christ—in the public *proclamation* of His Word. It may be that some Brother, here, has the gift of speech, but has never used it for his Master. Let me put in my witness here. God's Word has been unutterably sweet to my own heart, as I have believed it—it has been remarkably precious to me as I have confessed it as a Christian man—but still there is a something, I cannot tell you what, of singular delight about the preaching of this Word. Oh, sometimes, when I have prepared my sermon, it has been bitter in my belly, but it has been as honey in my mouth when I have preached it to the great congregation gathered here! If I might choose my destiny and if I had, even, to stay out of Heaven for the purpose, it would be Heaven to me to be permitted to always be preaching Christ and the glories of His salvation! And I do not know that I should have any choice between that and Heaven—if I might be privileged to be, without ceasing, lauding and praising and extolling that dear Word of God—the Christ who was born at Bethlehem. If I might proclaim to sinners everywhere that God is in him making reconciliation, no, that He *has made reconciliation* for all who believe in Him, this might be Heaven enough, at least for one poor heart, world without end.

“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Try, Brother, whether it will not sweeten your mouth if you begin to preach Christ! Perhaps you have been too quiet and too silent. Get up and speak for Jesus and see whether the honey does not come into your mouth at once! In the olden times they pictured the orator with bees buzzing round his lips, storing up the honey that dropped from his sweet utterances. This may be but a fable concerning the human talker, but certainly it is true of the man who preaches Christ—that his lips drop honey, and the more he speaks of his dear Lord and Master, and the less he tries, with human eloquence, to magnify *himself*—the more of sacred sweetness shall there be in every word that he utters!

So I think I have accounted for the repetition, have I not? It is no repetition after all. At least it is no tautology—it is only a right and necessary repetition.

**IV.** And now I am going to wind up, in the fourth place, with AN EXAMINATION—the examination of everybody here present, tonight. It is the close of the year and one may not object to a few personal enquiries at such a time.

The first and chief enquiry is this—Are God's Words sweet to me? Is Christ, Himself, the Master-Word of God, the *Logos*? Is He sweet to me? For, if not, what is the reason?

First, may it be that I have no taste? *Have I spiritual taste?* It would be a sad thing to be wholly without natural taste. I do know one such person,

who has no taste at all. The poet Wordsworth was for years without the power of smell. His was a very remarkable case, with a mind so dainty, so delicate, so beautiful. Once upon a time, for a very short season, the power of smell came to him among the heather and you know how every primrose by the river's brim had words for Wordsworth and talked with him—and when the sweet perfume came from the dear May flowers, the poet was quite enraptured, as if he had, for a little while, entered into Heaven! But the power of smell soon went away and he was, again, unhappily bereft of it. The richest flower, the sweetest shrub could be nothing to the man whose nostril was not sensitive to its perfume.

And what if that should be so with me *spiritually*? Perhaps, my dear Hearer, you have heard all we have been saying about Christ and you have heard many rich and rare hymns about Him. But you never felt that there was any sweetness in Him. Then I beg you to enquire whether you may not be lacking in a sense which others have. If a person were to say to me, "How lovely is that Italian sky! What a deep blue it has!" and if I turned my face that way and said, "I see nothing at all." If, when he pointed to the sea, or to the green fields, I looked in that direction, and saw nothing, what should I infer? Why, that he possessed a power called *sight*, which I did not possess! Of course I might be foolish enough to say, "There is no blue sky. There is no such thing. There are no green fields. There is no ocean. There is no sun. I am sure there is not, for I never saw them."

One day I saw a man sitting at a table with his napkin under his chin, enjoying his dinner, and he overheard an observation that I made about a sinner, and he said, "I never had a spiritual sensation in my life and I do not believe that there is anything spiritual in this world." Now, if I had been standing near a sty and a pig had made that observation, I should not have contradicted him—and I did not contradict this man—for I thought that he spoke the truth! I believed that *he* had never experienced a spiritual sensation in his life! And when some men say, "I perceive no sweetness in Christ and, therefore, there is none," I wish that they would draw another inference—"Therefore I have not that taste which would enable me to perceive His sweetness"—for that *is* the truth. A man who has never been born again is dead as to all spiritual things and he cannot hear, or see, or taste *anything* that is spiritual. He is not alive unto God as yet. I put this solemn enquiry to everyone who says, "I see no beauty in Christ"—may it not be that you have no eyes? If you say, "I hear no music in His voice. In fact, I do not hear that voice," may it not be that your ears are sealed? And if you say, "I taste no sweetness in the Word of God, or the Christ of God," may it not be that you are still dead in trespasses and sins? If so, may God quicken you in His infinite mercy!

Still, there is another answer to the question which I beg to put by way of examination. If the Word of God is not very sweet to me, *have I an appetite*? Solomon says, "The full soul loathes honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Ah, when a soul is full of itself, of the world and of the pleasures of sin, I do not wonder that it sees no sweet-

ness in Christ, for it has no appetite! Oh, but when a soul is emptied. When a soul hungers and thirsts after God. When it is conscious of its needs and miseries, as I hope some here present are, then is Christ sweet, indeed! O hungry ones, take Him into your souls, suck down His precious Word! Christ has come on purpose to feed hungry spirits. If you need Him, you may have Him—and the more you need Him, the more free He is to you—and the more freely may you partake of Him! He is just such a Christ as you need. May God make you ravenous after Him—so ravenous that you may never rest till you have received Him as altogether your own!

Yet there is another answer. If I do not taste sweetness in Christ, *am I in health?* When a man is ill, his soul “abhors all manner of meat.” Nothing tastes nice to a man whose palate is out of order through sickness. Now, does it happen, tonight, that some of you do not feel any joy in Christ? Then you are ill! Brothers and Sisters, put out your tongue, let us look at it. Ah, it has got furred up with the world, I am sure! Something ails you if Christ is not sweet. Sometimes you have sat in these pews, some of you, and you have heard Christ preached till you hardly knew how to keep your seats. You have been ready to stand up and clap your hands to the praise of His dear name—but now you do not feel anything at all. You can almost go to sleep, if you do not actually slumber. The preacher is quite willing to share the blame with you, for he is not all he ought to be. But he does not mean to take *all* the blame of it, for, as far as he knows how, he preaches the same Savior, now, as always, and tries to preach Him with as much earnestness as ever. May it not be possible, Brother or Sister, that you are not quite right spiritually, that you are getting ill, that your heart is growing feeble? Go home and pray the Lord to set you right. Oh, that He would cleanse you, purify you, make you yet to be strong and vigorous—and then this would be one of the first tokens of it—that Christ would once more become inexpressibly sweet to you!

I must also get you to ask yourself this question—*Have I savored the world or sin?* People sometimes lose their appetite for sweetness by eating something sour. You may have had one flavor in your mouth, but when you have eaten something with a different flavor, you cannot taste the first. If a man gets fond of the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt—strong things, those—if he once gets the savor of them into his mouth, he is not likely to have any very dainty tooth for the precious things of God. Spiritual flavors have need of great spirituality to enjoy them, I know not what other word to use. They need that the palate be kept clean, for otherwise, if the world is sweet to us, if sin has any hold upon us—to that extent and degree shall we be incapable of appreciating the sweet things of God.

This is my last question—*Have I habituated myself to this food?* All earthly sweetness spoils—he who eats honey for a long while will care no more for honey. But it is very different with the Christ of God. The sweetness of Christ is not fully known except to those who have known Him long, who by reason of constant use have had their senses fully exercised. There is none so greedy after Christ as the man who has had most of Him.

Paul had been a Believer at least 15 years and yet he said this was his ambition, "That I may know Him." Had he not known Christ before? Yes, but the more he knew Him, the more he longed to know Him. Come, Brother, if you do not taste the sweetness of Christ, tonight, in the preaching of the Word of God, surely it must be because you have not of late been feeding upon Him. Make haste and come along—and let your soul be filled with Him, even from this glad hour.

I have done when I have reminded those here present who see no sweetness in the Words of God, that there is a time coming when they will be *compelled* to hear the Word of God in a very different way from that in which they hear it to-night. One of the first works of the Resurrection will be the creation of the ear. I do not know by what process we shall be raised from the dead, except that the Lord Jesus said this, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." When the voice of the Son of God shall strike upon that ear of yours, what a sensation it will cause! God has spoken to you, now, by the voice of one like yourself, and He has spoken according to the printed page—and you have chosen not to hear it.

But when, in that Last Day, He shall speak by the angel's trumpet and by the voice of His Son! You will be obliged to hear and, rising from your grave, bursting your cerements, you must obey and you must stand—willing or unwilling—before that last dread tribunal, to answer for every deed done in the body, for every idle word that you have spoken, yes, and for every thought that you have imagined against the Most High God! It may be a thousand years before that will happen, it may be ten thousand years, I cannot tell, but it will happen in God's time—and that space between will be but as the twinkling of an eye—and there will you be before the face of the great Judge and you will not be able to say with David, "How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!" But, you will cry out, in the agony of your spirit, "Oh, the gall and wormwood!" Oh, the fire that shall burn into your very soul when God shall say, "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I, also, will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." "Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

God grant that you may not be told so to depart! And, that you may not, I pray you to now listen to the voice of God which bids you trust Jesus and live! I can only speak with these poor feeble lips and there is no power in *anything* that I can say—but God the Holy Spirit can speak with irresistible might to your hearts and constrain you to taste of Christ, tonight, by hearing the Word of God, in your very soul! I pray that He may do it, for His dear name's sake! Amen and Amen

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

**PSALM 119:89-112.**

**Verse 89.** *Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in Heaven.* Other things come and go, and change. Moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, everything earthly is changeable. But, “Your Word is settled—settled in Heaven,” with the eternal settlements. No truth of it can fail, no promise of it can be broken. What a joy this is to our hearts tonight! There is something sure, after all—“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.”

**90.** *Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides.* That is, God has spoken to Nature and that Word has established the earth, and made it to stand securely.

**91.** *They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants.* It was God’s Word that made the sun, and the moon, and the stars. And it is God’s Word that bids creation still exist. And that is the almighty Word upon which you and I are resting if we are truly trusting in the living God—

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

**92.** *Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.* Let us remember how God’s Word has kept some of us alive when we had nothing else to live upon. Hope would have quite failed and we should have been driven to despair if it had not been for the precious, priceless Word of God.

**93.** *I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You have quickened me.* Nothing sharpens the memory like having been quickened. If we have been at death’s door and the Word of God has brought us renewed life, we shall never forget it.

**94-96.** *I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider Your testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection.* No matter who it is that boasts of being perfect, “I have seen an end of all perfection.”

**96.** *But your Commandment—*There lies the perfection—

**96.** *Is exceedingly broad.* Covering the whole life—covering the thoughts, the intents, the desires of the inner and secret nature.

**97, 98.** *O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your Commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies for they are always with me.* If we have God’s Law always with us, we shall be wiser than the most crafty of our enemies, for, after all, there is nothing that puzzles and baffles cunning men like simple honesty. Do that which is right and you will cut through the nets in which men would entangle you. They cannot trip you up if your feet are settled in God’s ways.

**99, 100.** *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.* There is more wisdom in obeying God than in all the

ethics of heathen philosophers. It matters not from where they take their precepts and maxims—there is no wisdom like yielding one's heart to God.

**101-104.** *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your Word. I have not departed from Your judgments: for You have taught me. How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.* The man who cannot hate does not love. But he who loves that which is right is, by no means, indifferent to the wrong and to the false—he hates it and the more intensely he loves God, and loves right—the more intensely does he hate every false way. Especially does he hate it in himself. Oh, to be delivered altogether from every trace of falsehood!

**105.** *Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* It shows me the way. It cheers me in the way. It reveals to me the difficulties of the way.

**106, 107.** *I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word.* Are any of you afflicted tonight? I commend this prayer to your use. One would have expected that David would have prayed, “I am afflicted very much: comfort me, O Lord.” Or, “Relieve me, O Lord.” Instead of praying so, he cries, “Quicken me, O Lord,” and he did well. Let us imitate him, for if we get more spiritual light and life, we shall, by that means, get more comfort, and the trouble from which we are suffering will soon cease to vex our spirit.

**108-112.** *Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Your Law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts. Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end.* Oh, that everyone of us might be able to make this declaration of the Psalmist our own! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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# THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD

## NO. 3197

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT UPTON CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 12, 1867.**

*“How sweet are Your Words to my taste!  
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”  
Psalm 119:103.*

IT is delightful to find how exactly the experience of David, under the Jewish dispensation, tallies with the experience of the saints of God in these Gospel times. David lived in an age of miracles and many manifestations. He could have recourse to the Urim and the Thummim, and the priesthood. He could go up to Zion and listen to the holy songs of the great assembly. He could converse with the priesthood but still, the food of his soul was supplied to him from the written Word of God, just as it is with us. Now that we have no open visions and the Urim, and the Thummim and the priesthood are altogether departed, we still feed upon the Word! As that is the food of our souls, so it was the food of David's soul. Martin Luther says, “I have covenanted with the Lord that I would neither ask Him for visions, nor for angels, nor for miracles, but I would be satisfied with His own Word, and if I might but lay hold upon Scripture by faith, that shall be enough for me.” Now it seems to be so with David here. The honey that gratifies his taste is not found in angels' visits, or miraculous signs, or officiating priesthoods, or special Revelations, but in the words of God's mouth and in the testimonies of Holy Writ. Let us, dear Brothers and Sisters, prize this Book of God! Be not ambitious, as some are, of seeking new Revelations, or enquire for the whispers of disembodied spirits, but be satisfied with this good household bread which God has prepared for His people! And while others may loathe and dislike it, let us be thankful for it and acknowledge with gratitude the bread which came down from Heaven, testifying to us, as it does, of the Lord Jesus, the Word of Life that lives and abides forever!

**I.** Notice, first, THE WORD APPRECIATED. This exclamation of David is a clear proof that he set the highest possible value upon the Word of God. The evidence is more valuable because the Scripture that David had was but a slender book compared with this volume which is now before us. I suppose he had little more than the five Books of Moses, and yet as he opened that Pentateuch, which was to him complete in itself, he said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” If that first morsel so satisfied

the Psalmist, surely this fuller and richer feast of heavenly dainties ought to be yet more gratifying to us! If, when God had but given him the first dish of the course, and that by no means the best, his soul was ravished with it—how should you and I rejoice with unspeakable joy, now that the King has brought on royal dainties and given us the Revelation of His dear Son! Think a minute. The Pentateuch is what we would call, nowadays, the historical part of Scripture—and haven't you frequently heard persons say, "Oh, the sermon was historical, and the minister read a passage out of the historical part of the Word"? I have, with great pain, heard persons speak in a very depreciating manner of the histories of Holy Writ. Now, understand this—the part of the Word which David loved so much *is* mainly historical—and if the mere history of the Word was so sweet, what ought those holy Evangels and sacred Epistles to be which declare the mystery of that narrative—which are the honey whereof the Old Testament is but the comb—which are the treasures of which the Old Testament is but the casket? Surely we are to be condemned, indeed, who do not prize the Word now that we have it all!

That Word of God which David so much prized was mainly typical, shadowy, symbolical. I do not know that he understand it all. I *do* know that he understood *some* of it, for some of his Psalms are so evangelical that he must have perceived the great Sacrifice of God foreshadowed in the sacrifices described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus, or it would not have been possible that he would, in so marvelous a style, express his faith in the great offering of our Lord Jesus! I put it to some professors here, do you often read the types at all? If, now, your Bible was so circumscribed that all was taken from you but the Pentateuch, would you be able, to say, "Your Word is sweet to my taste?" Are not many of us so little educated in God's Word that if we were confined to the reading of that part of it, we would be obliged to confess it was unprofitable to us? We could not give a good answer to Philip's question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Oh, shame on us that with so many more Books, and with the Holy Spirit so plenteously given to guide us into all the Truth of God, we should seem to value at least half of the Word of God even less than David did!

A great portion of the Pentateuch is taken up with precepts, and I may say of some of them that they are grievous. Those commandments which are binding upon us are not grievous. Some of the commands of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are so complex and so entrenched upon the whole domestic life of a man that they were a yoke of bondage, according to Peter, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. Yet, that wondrous 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Exodus with its Ten Commandments, and all the long list of the precepts of the Ceremonial Law which you may, perhaps, account wearisome to read, David says were sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth! What? Did he so love to hear His heavenly Fa-

ther speak that it did not much matter to him what He said as long as He did but speak, for the music of His voice was gladdening in its every tone to him? Now that you and I know that all the bondage of the Ceremonial Law is gone, that nothing remains of it but blessing to our souls—and now that we are not under the Law, but under Grace—and have become inheritors of rich and precious and unspeakably great promises, how is it that we fall so far short and do not, I fear, love the Word of God to anything like the degree that David loved it?

David here speaks of all God's Words, without making any distinction concerning some one of them. So long as it was God's Word, it was sweet to him, whatever form it might take. Alas, this is not true of all professors. With an unwise partiality, they pronounce some of God's Words very sweet, but other portions of God's Truth are rather sour and unsavory to their palates. There are persons of a certain class who delight in the Doctrines of Grace. Therein they are to be commended, for which of us do not delight in them if we know our interest in them? The Covenant and the great Truths of God which grow out of the Covenant—these are unspeakably precious things and are rightly enough the subjects of joy to all Believers who understand them! Yet certain of these persons will be as angry as though you had touched them with a hot iron if you should bring a precept anywhere near them—and if you insist upon anything being the duty of a Believer, the very words seem to sting them like a whip—they cannot endure it! If you speak of the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,” and speak of it as a holiness which is worked in us by God the Holy Spirit and as a holiness of mind and thought and action—a personal holiness which is to be seen in the daily life—they are offended. They can say, “How sweet are Your doctrinal Words to my taste, but not Your precepts, Lord! Those I do not love. Those I call legal. If your servants minister them, I say they are gendering bondage and I go away from them, and leave them to Arminians, or duty-faith men or something of that kind—for I love half Your Word and only half of it.” Alas, there are not a few of that class to be found here and there. And there are some who go on the other side! They love God's Word in the precepts of it, or the promises, but not the Doctrines. If a Doctrine is preached, they say it is dangerous—too high—it will elevate some of God's servants to presumption! It will tempt them to think lightly of moral distinctions! It will lead them to walk carelessly because they know they are safe in Christ! Thus they, too, only love half of the Truth of God, and not the whole of it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are of the same mind as David. If God shall give you a promise, you will taste it, like a wafer of honey, and feed on it. And if He shall give you a precept, you will not stop to look at it, and say, “Lord, I don't like this as well as the promise,” but you will receive *that* and feed upon *that* also! And when the Lord shall be pleased afterwards to give you some revela-

tion with regard to your inward experience, or to your fellowship with His dear Son, you welcome it with joy because you love any Truth and every Truth as long as you know it to be the Truth of God's own Word!

It is a blessed sign of Grace in the heart when God's Words are sweet to us as a whole—when we love the Truth of God, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God's Word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the Truth of God's Word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God, Himself—certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity—let us receive it as He has given it, each Truth in its own proportion—each Doctrine in harmony with its fellow—each precept carefully carried out into practice and each promise to be believed and, by-and-by, received. Let the Truth of God, and the whole Truth of God, be sweet to our taste! “How sweet are *Your* words!” There seems to be an emphasis on the pronoun, “How sweet are *Your* words!” O my God, if the Words are Yours, they are sweet to me! Had they come to me from the Prophet and I had perceived them to be merely the words of man, I might then have estimated them at their own weight, without reference to their authority. But when my Father speaks—when the Spirit lives and breathes in the Truth to which I listen—when Jesus Christ, Himself, draws near to me in the preaching of the Gospel—then it is that the Word becomes sweet to my taste! Beloved, let us not be satisfied with the truth unless we can also feel it to be God's Truth! Let us ask the Lord to enable us, when we open this Book, to feel that we are not reading it as we read a common book—truths put there by some means, unimportant to us how—but let us recollect that we are reading the Truth of God put there by an Inspired pen! That we have there God's Truth such as He would have us receive—such as He thought it worth His while to write and to preserve to all ages for our instruction.

The Psalmist is not content to say, “God's Word is sweet, and sweeter than honey,” but, “How sweet are Your Words to *my* taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!” After all, the blessedness of the Word is a matter to be ascertained by personal experience. Let others choose this philosophy and that form of thought. Let them gad abroad after the beauties of poetry, or dote upon the charms of oratory—my palate shall be satisfied with Your Word, O God, and my soul shall find an excess of sweetness in the things which come from Your mouth into my mouth!

The Word of God, then, while in itself certainly most sweet, and all the sweeter when we recognize it as coming from God, will only be sweet to us in proportion as we are able to receive it and to feed upon it. Every man must in this case feed for himself. There can be no proxy here. I wonder not at those who think lightly of God's Word, notwithstanding the

rapturous admiration they have heard expressed by others, for unless they have tasted it, and felt and handled it, they still must be strangers to its unspeakable sweetness!

**II.** Now we shall notice, in the second place, THIS TASTE GRATIFIED.

If we can join in the words of David here, how grateful we ought to be, for there was a time when we had no such taste for God's Word! A few years ago, God's Word was so far from being sweet to us that we thought it the driest book that was ever written. It is not so now. We were then dead in trespasses and sins—and what is honey in a dead man's mouth? But we are alive unto God now by Jesus Christ, being quickened by the Spirit. Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, how Divine Grace has made you to differ from the most of men. Many who see the dainties of God's Word pass them by. Like those poor hungry children that we have seen standing outside a shop where the savory meat is just within the window—they can see it and smell it—but they cannot eat it. Many of our hearers have sense enough to perceive that there is something in the Bible that is very satisfying and nourishing. They see it with their eyes, but, like the unbelieving lord in the city of Samaria, they taste not of it themselves. Yes, and there are some who are so far gone—and we were like that once—that they have no wish to taste, for their palate has become so depraved that they feed upon ashes, a deceived heart turning them aside! Like the raven which has no longing for the clean feeding of the dove, they are content with the carrion of the world. Like the swine, they are satisfied with the husks and they pine not to be fed with the children's bread. Such were some of us—utterly disregarding the Word, or seeing it to be a good thing, but not able to gain it, or else accounting it to be a mere deception, turning from it to the joys of earth as if *they* could satisfy the soul! Oh, blessed change, Divine renewal, which has passed upon us, that now the Word should be sweet!

I remember well the time when I had spiritual life and yet God's Word was not sweet to me. When God first gives us a spiritual taste, He does not make His Word sweet, but rather, if I may so say, salt or bitter. The first taste of the true Word of God I ever got was like Jeremiah's draught of wormwood. It seemed to break my teeth as with gravel stones. It was none other than this, "The soul that sins, it shall die." Did you ever have that in your mouth and have to turn it over and over again as a bitter morsel that you could not swallow? And when at last it did seem to be swallowed, it was like wormwood in your soul and bitterness filled every part and portion of your being, for you felt yourself a sinner, all undone, lost and ruined! Oh, it was a blessed thing when standing at the foot of the Cross, and calling upon the name of the Lord, you could wash your mouth clear of those bitter aloes of repentance and conviction of sin with the cup of consolation—the cup of salvation! After that first bitter draught which purged the mouth so Divinely and made it ready to re-

ceive the sweetness of the Word, then it was that on one happy day, looking up and seeing the flowing of the precious blood, you perceived your mouth to be filled with honey, instead of vinegar, for you saw the vinegar transferred to Christ and the gall and the wormwood given to Him, while you drank of the “wines on the lees,” yes, “the wines on the lees, well refined.”

Since that day, our taste has been satisfied more and more, for it has been a growing taste. It has been educated. We can now discern between things that differ. On our conversion, almost everything was sweet. There was a good deal of false doctrine put into the cup, yet we swallowed it all, for to a hungry man, even a bitter thing is sweet! But now our palate has been disciplined to discern between things that differ. But all the education, if it is worth anything, comes to this—that God's Word daily becomes more sweet and man's word daily becomes more bitter to us. Our soul is taught more and more of Divine things and we see more and more of the preciousness of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Every Christian who has a spiritual taste will tell you that his taste is gratified with every Word of God because he sees something in the Word which glorifies God. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whenever you hear a sermon in which our God is spoken well of and His Glory is set before you, are you not happy? Do you not go from the place of worship and say, “Thank God I was there! God was in the midst of the temple. The Word of God was preached and my heart is satisfied”? And, on the other hand, whenever you hear a sermon in which man is magnified and the nobility of human nature is held up and God is put anywhere or nowhere, how do you feel about that? I am certain that you say, “That word which only glorifies such a poor fallen creature as man, my soul abhors.”

God's Word honors His dear Son! I am sure I shall touch one string in your hearts when I say if the preacher shall discourse of Christ—if he shall ring the silver bell of the Savior's precious name and lift up His Cross, and tell you all the power of His blood, the love of His heart, the shame of His death, the glory of His Resurrection, the prevalence of His plea before the Throne and the certainty of His ultimate victory over all His foes—your lips will seem as though you had some dainty on your palate and you will go home, and say—

***“The King Himself came near  
To feast His saints today!”***

How often, before you have left the place, have you been willing to sing with Watts—

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

But suppose you listen to a sermon in which Jesus Christ is *not* glorified—doubts thrown upon His Deity—insinuations made about the power of His blood—the substitutionary Sacrifice twisted into a misty problem—whether an Atonement or not an Atonement, you could not tell—how do

you feel then? Why, anything which touches Christ touches the apple of your eye! You say to the preacher, "Your oratory may be ever so fine, but I cannot eat at your table. You may lay silver knives and forks, and spread many a precious thing before me, but your meat is poison! I cannot feed if you do not glorify Christ." O Lord, this is the reason why Your Word is so sweet to the palate of Your children—it glorifies Your dear Son and they delight to see Him honored among the sons of men!

God's Word is sweet, too, when it proves the Presence and discovers the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you hear a sermon in which the Spirit is worshipped and glory is given to Him as one Person in the blessed Trinity, the Word is then sweet to your taste! It is a mark of the child of God that he reverences and esteems that Spirit by whom he is sanctified. If the preaching is never about the Spirit of God—if He is systematically ignored till we can almost say, "We knew not even whether there was a Holy Spirit"—I do not wonder that barrenness and leanness should come into the souls of those who frequent such a ministry! The Word of God is communicated by the Holy Spirit and by the same Spirit it must be ministered to us. Even after His Resurrection, it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ gave commandments unto His Apostles. As it was given, so it must be received, not in words, only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit—and so shall it be sweet to your taste!

Moreover, God's Word is always pure and holy. It is shocking if there is anything in the preaching that tends to make light of sin. Whenever I read a theological treatise, I can tell it is unsound if it trifles with the guilt of sin, the claims of justice, or the supremacy of the Divine Law. Under the pretence of magnifying Grace, some will dare to say that such-and-such a sin is not what it is thought to be, or not so heinous in God's people as it would be in others! They speak of sin in God's people as if it were only a spot, instead of a mortal disease. Oh, we have known some use expressions in the pulpit not only flippant and vulgar, but verging on the impure! That is enough to make the child of God feel like a sensitive plant when it is touched—he shrivels up. You never find anything like that in God's Word! There are some things in our common version which do not suit the common ear, and should not be there, because they are not necessary to a faithful rendering of the original—but there is nothing that will ever touch the delicacy of the child of God. The pure in heart can say, "How sweet is Your Word to my taste, because there is nothing there that can shock my sanctified judgment or lead me to find fault with it because of its dealing triflingly with sin."

The Word of God will always be sweet to the Christian because it so completely quickens him to every good thing when it comes in contact with him. I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, when you hear the Word of God faithfully preached, or read it with devout appreciation, you rise up like giants refreshed with new wine! What would we do if it were not for

the quickening which this book sometimes gives us? I must confess that I sometimes seem to spring up as from a bed of sloth, quickened and filled with more energy than I ever had before when I have been touched with a single promise, or the power of a single precept! I have heard of the dead member of an animal—perhaps the dead foot of a frog—being touched with the galvanic wire of the battery, and as soon as the galvanism flows into it, the limb has been animated by the energy. Now, we do not receive a galvanic energy from the Word of God, but we get *real life from it* by which we, whose souls seem to be dead, suddenly start up with a Divine Power! To be lethargic in heavenly things must always be unpleasant to the Christian. That which makes a man serve God with the fullest liberty and the greatest excellence is being quickened with the Word of God—therefore the Word of God must be always sweet to his taste!

**III.** And now, thirdly, see here THE SWEETNESS EXTOLLED.

David does not tell us how sweet God's Words are. He gives us a note of exclamation, the word, "*How!*" and there he leaves it, as though he had tried to fathom the depth in vain and could only say, like the Apostle, "O, the depth!" "How sweet are Your Words to my taste!" He tried, however, to give us some gauge when he gave us a comparison—"Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." And that shall be the keynote which I will try to strike. Why is this Word of God to us sweeter than honey?

Honey is reputed to be the sweetest of all earthly things, yet you will discover that the Word of God is sweeter than that. Let me speak experimentally. It is a happy thing to be successful in the work of God and to win souls. I think that is the sweetest of all earthly enjoyments. I have sometimes seen 20 or 30 persons in a day, most of whom have found peace under my own ministry. Well, that is sweet, isn't it? But I am distinctly aware that the Word of God is sweeter, for when I have felt happy over my success, I have felt happier by far over some precious promise or some delightful Doctrine of Inspiration. I have thought I heard the Master say to me, when I had brought souls to Him, what He said to the disciples when they worked miracles, "Rejoice not in this; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." The thought of my election, or of my redemption, or of the Glory of Christ, or of the faithfulness of God has been distinctly sweeter than the former sweetness which I had. There are things in the world that are very white. Some good housewives have made the linen look so delicately white that they have supposed that nothing could be whiter! And then there has come a fall of snow and, in contrast, the fairest and whitest damask has seemed dark! So, the joy of winning souls, the joy of domestic love, the joy of having served God has been like the damask of the housewife—but get a promise of God's Word, and in comparison that will be like the snow which is whiter still! All the sweetness you can get from earthly joy will be exceeded by

the sweetness of an applied promise from the Word of God. It is "sweeter than honey."

The Word is sweeter than honey because it will sweeten every kind of bitter, and there are many sorts of bitter which honey will not take out of your mouth. You may feel the honey striving with the bitter, and the effect will be a singular combination of flavor more horrible than the bitter itself. It is never so with God's Word. Let a man have his mouth full of bitter poverty, or the more bitter draught of scandal and contempt—ah, let his mouth be full of the last bitter draught of death—and if he gets the Words of God sent home to his soul, death, itself, shall be swallowed up in victory! In the pleasure he shall lose the smart! In the Divine Words of God to his spirit he shall scarcely know that there is such a thing as pain or grief, or even death, for all these things shall be gain to him when his faith gets full hold upon the oath and Covenant of the ever-living God!

It is sweeter than honey, because God's Truth never cloy. You cannot eat much honey. If you want to like it, only eat a little of it, for if you eat much, you will soon come to think, "What a weariness it is!" It cloy upon the palate. Not so God's Word! You may suck as you will, but you shall never have too much out of the breast of Scriptures. Here you can come and drop your bucket every morning and night, but you shall never draw too much from this well, whose cool depths supply an ever-crystal stream! Oh, come to the banquet, you hungry ones, and never think to rise from that table, but sit there till your souls shall be taken away to a table yet more richly furnished! Feast on with appetites whose edges are always keen. It fell to this lot of one of our missionaries, in translating the Word of God into a very difficult language, to have to read one passage over a hundred times—a very laborious process, if anything would exhaust the sweetness of the Word—but he said that after the hundredth time, he began to understand it. He felt, then, as if he was just beginning to read it! This is a pasture where the grass grows the faster the more the sheep eat of it. This is a mine where the gold increases the deeper your researches become. You may keep on eating of the Word year after year, but still you will never get tired of it! I suppose the most of us would not like to have the same thing for dinner every day. And if we are confined to one form of diet, we get weary of it. There are some of you who knew the Lord when you were 11 or twelve, and some at 15 or twenty, and I perceive that years have passed over your heads till you have got to be 50 or sixty—but do you want a new Gospel now? Would you like to have another form of Doctrine, another system of theology, another Cross to trust to, or something in lieu of the Atonement by the precious blood? "Oh, no," I think I hear you say, "the longer we live, the more we are fastened to the old faith! The deeper we study, the heavier our trials, the faster we cleave to Christ—"

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

And, verily, the Word of God puts the mouth in taste. Some things are sweet in the mouth if the mouth is sweet, but if the palate is out of taste, you cannot get the flavor of them. But the Word of God cleans the mouth for you and though a man of God may find himself as much out of sorts as he can be, if he needs to get his mouth in proper order for feasting on the Word of God, he need not go anywhere else but to the Word, itself! The idea of preparing ourselves for Christ is not a Gospel idea. The idea of preparing our minds for the Gospel by thinking about something else always seems to me unnatural. If your minds are inactive, go and read a good stirring part of God's Word and that will prepare you for another part—for the Word will act first as a tonic to give an appetite and will afterwards be a food upon which that appetite can be satisfied!

Yet honey, with all its sweetness, may be forgotten. But the Word of God, if we once know its sweetness, will abide with us forever. Let your child eat honey to its heart's content, yet the flavor of it will not be in his mouth in a week's time. So, too, have some of us retained the flavor of the honey we got 15 years ago. “Ah,” says David, “I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” I do not know how many years that was, but some of us can remember times of communion and refreshing from the Presence of the Lord ten, fifteen, or, perhaps, 40 years ago! When Christ spread His flavor upon your soul, no sweetness was so sweet and you have the sense of it now! You like to talk of those seasons of delight, and you think—

**“Did Jesus once upon me shine?  
Then Jesus is forever mine!”**

Thus you get back the sweetness of the honey and the recollection of what you once knew of it.

I gather, from what I know of God's Word, that all we know of it is very little. When we get to Heaven, I imagine it will be among our surprises to find what fools we are. When young men go to college, they think they know a great deal. And after the first year, they think they don't know as much as they did. I recollect hearing my grandfather say that in the second year he was at college, he thought he was a fool. And in the third year he knew he was, and then the tutor thought he might get out. That is one of the things that we shall find out in Heaven—“Oh, what a fool I was! I thought I knew everything.” Those of us who preach to others will be of the same mind as Rutherford, who says that the poorest child who has once passed the veil and come into the immortal state, knows more of heavenly things than the most learned divine who has lived for 60 years to teach others the way of salvation. What we get in the wilderness is only just one bunch from Eshcol—we have not come into the valley

where all the clusters grow. They have got us a little balm, and a little oil, and a few almonds from the land, but the land itself flows with milk and honey. "Since we have tasted of the grapes," we sometimes long to go—

***"Where our dear Lord, the vineyard keeps,  
And all the clusters grow."***

But it is amazing how little we know about it—how little sweetness we ever enjoy! And yet, little as it is, it is so sweet that it makes us hold up our hands and say with amazement, "How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Hereby our growth in Grace may be ascertained. Is God's Word very sweet to me this day? Is it like honey to my mouth? Very many of God's children cannot say this. They can say it as a general rule, but not, perhaps, at the very moment of their present experience. It is a pretty sure sign of growth in spiritual life if God's Word is more sweet to us than it used to be. The sweetness of some parts of God's Word we can only know by being placed in circumstances where we shall understand the application of such-and-such a promise to our case. The man who never has any sickness, who has no losses in business—whose course is always one even stream—cannot, I am sure, understand some of the promises that are especially meant for the tried people of God. You cannot see the stars in the daytime, but I am told that if you went down a well, even in the daytime, you could see them from there. God often takes His people down the well of affliction and then they can see the stars of the promises. Some of the promises are written in invisible ink—and if you hold the parchment up to the fire of affliction, they will become visible—but till then, the page will be as if they were never written there at all. Now, take this promise, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Why, you who never went through fires and flames can never know the meaning of that promise! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," has often brought comfort to the tried and the persecuted. And the man that has been brought low in pecuniary matters, how often has he fed upon this promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." If you were never slandered, you never drank wine out of this bottle, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." I am sure, if you feel the sweetness of God's Word, the secret of it is that you have experienced something or other of trial, outside or within, which has distinctly brought to your soul the sweetness which otherwise you could not have known.

That experience which does not make you prize God's Word is good for nothing. A great deal of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. He experiences it as a sinner and an offender against God. But that which is Christian experience always has this for its result—that it

leads to a deeper prizing of the Word of God and a higher estimate of the preciousness of it. If you now have a very keen sense of the sweetness of God's Word, you have grown in confidence. Were anybody to say to me, "Honey is not sweet," I could not be very clear about it. Perhaps I could not argue upon the subject. But supposing there were a dish of honey here, and I just took a spoonful of it, I would say, "You tell me that honey is not sweet? Why, my dear man, I have got some in my mouth." I should scorn to argue upon it because I had the honey still in my mouth as an internal evidence and, therefore, argument would be too poor to be used in the case. I should laugh in his face when I had once got the sweetness of it on my palate. So it is with you. No infidel or skeptical remark can have any power over your mind if you are at the present moment in the conscious enjoyment of the comfort and sweetness of God's Word! If you feel that it cheers you in the dark, what a fool he must be who says that it does not give you light! Why, the man can have no toleration from you if he says it does not strengthen when you feel the strength of it!

It is a sign that you have grown in spiritual health when the Word of God is sweet to you. I remember my father saying to us children at home, when we did not like our food, that he had been to the Union House and the boys and girls always liked their breakfast there because they were hungry, and, he said, "If you had to go without, it would do you good." Sometimes, children of God get worldly and then they have no appetite for God's Word. They say, "We do not profit under Mr. So-and-So." The truth is, we do not profit under the Bible, itself, and should not profit under the Apostle Paul or under the Lord Jesus Christ, for we have spoiled our appetites! But when our appetite is healthy, we can come to the Scripture and not care much how it is carved. We would rather the preacher would carve it well, but some people must have it served up always in such dainty style—it must have little bits of poetry, like parsley to garnish the dish, and so on, and if a rough hand should bring them meat, they say, "No, we cannot feed in this style." But if you have been in the field at work for God and have got an appetite, and the blood is circulating in your veins, then you can feast upon it till your soul rises up and says, "I thank You, Lord, for this, my food, and that You have made it sweet to my taste. I will tell my fellow Christians the delights that I have received in searching Your Word, that they may come and feed at the same table where I have been so daintily fed."

May God the Holy Spirit make this the experience of every day to each one of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

# THE BELIEVER'S HERITAGE OF JOY

## NO. 2415

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 22, 1887.

*"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever:  
for they are the rejoicing of my heart."  
Psalm 119:111.*

WHEN David wrote these words, he was not in a condition of ease and luxury. He was not in a position of assured safety, for he says in the 109<sup>th</sup> verse, "My soul is continually in my hand." You know what we mean when we say that a man carries his life in his hand—that is to say, he expects death, he is in imminent peril—and may, at any moment, be cut off from his fellows. It was when David was in such a condition as that, hunted, as he tells us in another place, like a partridge upon the mountains, that he could say, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." He was rich in his poverty, he was enthroned in his exile, he was happy in his sorrow and they who have enjoyed a similar experience in their times of distress know how this can be!

I. With no further preface, I want to talk to you about our text under four heads, the first of which will be, LET US MAKE A MAP OF THIS ESTATE—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

There was David's heritage, that portion of goods that fell to him, that piece of goodly land that was his lot—"Your testimonies." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot draw a complete map of this estate, it is so large, so wonderful, but, thank God, you can go and see it for yourselves! Walk over its broad acres, lie down in its green pastures, rest beside its still waters. It is, indeed, a wealthy country that is described in those two words, "Your testimonies."

But what does the Psalmist mean by this declaration? He means, first, that *he had a heritage of truth in the testimonies of God*. A man's mind is rich very much in proportion to the truth he knows. He who knows the Word of God is mentally rich—he has a large heritage. There are persons, I am told—deists—who believe in God, but who do not believe in the Word of God. They believe, then, in a god who has never spoken, a silent god, a god who has, at any rate, never spoken to his noblest creatures most capable of understanding his mind. To them, God is One who remains locked up forever in exclusiveness, except so far as His works may reveal Him. I think there are many difficulties in the way of receiving such a theory as that. Whatever difficulties there may be about God having spoken to us and given us testimonies—and that is the meaning of the word in our text—there are none so great to overcome as this one would be, that, through all these ages, so many men have sought after

God and so many craving hearts have yearned to find God, yet He should have suffered six thousand years, at least, to pass, and should never have spoken to men a single word that they can understand!

Now, so far from accepting that theory, I believe this Word of God to be God's testimony, God's speech, God's declaration about Himself and about many other things that His creatures need to know—God's witness-bearing to us, out of the depth of His Divine Knowledge—that we may know and understand and see things aright. And I say, and I am sure that many of you will say with me, these speeches of God, these Revelations of God which I find in these two Books of the Old and the New Testaments are my heritage. I rejoice to accept them as the estate of my mind, the treasure of my thought, the mint of the heavenly realm, the mine from which I can explore fresh veins of thought as long as I live, claiming all as my heritage forever! I have been preaching the Word of God these 26 years in this one place to very much the same congregation all the while and if I had been obliged to preach from any other book, I would have worn it threadbare by this time! But the Bible is as fresh to me, today, as when first I began to speak from it as a boy, and preached to you from it as a youth. It is an inexhaustible heritage of mental wealth to the man who will accept it and give his mind to the study of it.

Look at the doctrines, the precepts, the promises, the prophecies, the histories, the experiences—it is no use for me to try to map out this estate, it is so large! As a great heritage of mental wealth, it makes every man who receives it, however illiterate he may be upon other subjects, a wealthy man *spiritually*, while they who discard it become poverty-stricken in mind, whatever else of mental attainments they may possess. That is the first meaning of our text, God's testimonies are a heritage of truth to the man who receives them.

The next meaning is that *God's Covenant is our heritage*. The word, "testimonies," may be understood to mean, and it does mean, God's Covenant. When the Lord Jehovah entered into Covenant with men, He made a testimony to them that He would do this and that—His testimony made the Covenant—and the Covenant was His testimony to men. Now, I can say, and many of you can say with me, I have taken God's Covenant to be my heritage forever. And what a heritage that Covenant is, dear Friends! This is one of its clauses, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." This is another clause in the Covenant, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

Again we read, "This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not de-

part from Me.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.” “I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.” If I took the whole range of the Covenant, one entire night would not be sufficient time in which to explain it—I would need seven weeks full of seven sermons a day before I could even go round the fringe of the Covenant! Therefore, well might David say that within the compass of that Covenant he found a heritage which he had taken to himself to be his, forever—to be the rejoicing of his heart.

I have not, however, yet brought out all the meaning of our text, or shown you the full map of the estate that is here named, “your testimonies.” *The greatest testimony of God in all the world is Jesus Christ.* He is God’s testimony embodied. God said to us, “If you want to know what I am, look, there is My Son.” And Jesus came and said, “He that has seen the Son has seen the Father.” Jesus Christ is God’s testimony against sin, for Christ died through our sin. He is God’s testimony concerning Divine Love, for God so loved us that He gave His Son to die for us. In Christ you will find that the more you study Him, the more you will see what the invisible God is, for He is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Now, Beloved, I can say, and many of you can say, “We have taken the Lord Jesus Christ to be our heritage forever”—we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus—Christ is all and in all to us. When we once get Christ, we get everything! “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?”

Now, take the testimonies mentioned in our text to be God’s Word, God’s Covenant, God’s Son and there you have a map of your great estate, your goodly heritage. Oh, may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, make us to be so enchanted with this estate, so enraptured with this Divine property, that we shall never rest until we enter into full and final possession of it—and find it to be the rejoicing of our heart!

**II.** Secondly, I want you to proceed to TAKE POSSESSION OF THE ESTATE. What did David say? “Your testimonies have I taken.” He had taken possession of them and our next enquiry must be, how can we take possession of them?

I need not, this evening, repeat what I did this morning. You remember how I went to our friend, behind me, and offered him my hand and he took it? [Sermon #1964, Volume 33—*Why Is Faith so Feeble?*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] Now, this blessed estate of Divine Grace is as free to any soul who is willing to have it as a shake of my hand was to my friend when he grasped it this morning! The Gospel of Grace is as free as the air you breathe—

**“None are excluded hence but those  
Who do, themselves, exclude.”**

If the door is ever shut, you have shut it yourselves! This blessed estate is for every man who is willing to take it. How, then, am I to take it?

Well, first, *by a deliberate choice*. David said to the Lord, “Your testimonies have I taken by my own deliberate choice, I have elected to make them my life’s chief treasure.” I, too, can say, “Because God has chosen me, I have chosen Him. I have deliberately chosen His Book to be my guide, His Covenant to be my trust, His Son to be my Savior.” And I know that there are many of you, here, who can make that choice, tonight, because you have made it for many years. Would you change your Bible for anything written by man? Would you change the Covenant for any other compact? Would you change your Savior for any other? God forbid! We have taken God’s testimonies to be our heritage forever—willingly, by His Grace, choosing His Grace, being first chosen by Him and, therefore, choosing Him in return!

Next to our choice of God’s testimonies comes *the act of faith* which is a personal grip of them. After I had preached in this place one morning, there was a sinner convinced of sin and led to tremble before God. He saw his brother after the service and he asked him, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe,” he said. “Well, Brother,” he said, “I always did believe! I always have believed the things that are preached and the things that are in the Bible. What more am I to do?” His brother answered, “Why, take them! Grasp them as your own.” “I never saw that before,” said the man, and so he was brought into the Light of God! Now, that is *faith*! Faith is the hand that grips the Savior and holds Him fast! There is a book. I believe it to be a hymnbook. I need a hymnbook in order to give out a hymn, so I take it up and use it for its own purpose. There is Christ. I believe Him to be a Savior and I need a Savior. I take Him as a Savior to save me—that is *faith*! Can you believe that Christ can save you and that He will? Then believe it! “I believe that He has saved my mother.” Yes, but *that is not saving faith*. “I believe that He can save my sister.” True, but *that is not saving faith*. Do you believe *for yourself* that He can save *you*? And will you stake your immortal existence upon His power to save *you*? Will you just rest on Him, sink or swim? If you will do *that*, you shall swim! He never sank who rested on the Lord Jesus Christ! Well, then, that is the way to take this inheritance, to take it by the grip of faith and say, “It is mine!”

“But suppose I were to take it,” says one, “and it should not be mine?” That never happened yet, and never will, for Jesus, Himself, said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” No man ever yet took Jesus Christ by mistake! If you will have Him, you have Him, and He will never say no to you. Take Him and He takes you at the same time. May God grant that you may understand that Truth of God and put it in to practice at once! Thus let us proceed to take this estate by deliberate choice and by appropriating faith.

After we have done that, the next thing is to take the full possession of this estate *by holy diligence*. He that believes in Christ has the Everlasting Covenant—he has God’s testimonies—they are all his, but he does not yet fully enjoy them. I know a friend who has an estate over which I am pretty sure he has never fully walked, for it is so large. He has climbed the highest hill, but he cannot possibly have seen half the property that belongs to him! There are many such estates that the owners

have not fully seen and there is not a Christian, here, who has ever seen a tenth part of what belongs to him! In the exercise of this holy diligence, you and I have to take possession of the Word of God by studying it more earnestly, to take possession of the Covenant by believing it more fully and to take possession of Christ by communing with Him more closely and using Him more constantly, so that we may say with David, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

Keep on taking, keep on taking, keep on taking! You know the story that is told about the hymn, "More to follow"—how Mr. Rowland Hill, having determined to give to some poor minister a hundred pounds, sent him £5 and wrote in the envelope, "More to follow." To his surprise, at the end of a month, there came another one with, "More to follow," and so it kept on, time after time, till the amount was all given. That is the pity of it—it was all given, some time or other. "More to follow" came to an end. But it is never so with God! With Him it is, "always more to follow." From strength to strength, from joy to joy, from Grace to Grace, we still go on till we come to Heaven—and I suppose, that even there we shall still go on and on in everlasting progress scaling successive heights of bliss! We shall continue to become fuller of glory, or, if always full, yet we shall be made more capacious, that the fullness may be still greater. "Your testimonies have I taken." Go on taking them, Brothers and Sisters, take them to be your heritage forever!

I wish that I could hope that everybody here had, by deliberate choice, by appropriating faith and by holy diligence, taken all the Covenant of God, all the Revelation of God and all the Christ of God to be his heritage forever!

**III.** Now, thirdly, LET US CONSIDER THE HOLDING. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

You see what kind of holding we have of this heritage. It is not leasehold, a shorter term every night we go to bed. It is not even a holding similar to that which is commonly used in Scotland, when the lease is for 999 years. No, *it is a perpetual holding*—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." Well, dear Friend, that is long enough, is it not? What else will you ever take on such a tenancy as that? That is a freehold! "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

"Well," says one, "I have a freehold." Yes, but you will not be free to hold it *forever*. You may be a freeholder, my dear Sir, but you will have to go and your heir will step into your place! Somebody else will walk those acres and call your home *his own*—you have only a life-lease of it at the very outside. It is delightful to think that this inheritance of the Word of God, the Covenant of God, the Christ of God, we have *forever* because *we shall live forever* and we shall hold it forever! It is not dependent upon any one life—it is dependent upon *three* lives—and those three lives are the life of the Father, the life of the Son and the life of the Holy Spirit! And they are all eternal—and so shall the joy and the wealth of every Believer be! We have taken this inheritance forever.

Sometimes we possess certain things which are ours, completely ours, but then they are not ours *forever* because they fade. But *our inheritance will never fade or pass away*. The crown that was won at the Greek

games, though made of amaranth, would yet return to dust before long. There is nothing here on earth but is touched by the moon, and is ready to wane and to depart. There is nothing here that can be held forever, even if we could live here forever to hold it, for all things perish in the using. But this is a crown of life that fades not away, this is a heritage which, after a million years, shall be the same as it is now in fullness of joyful satisfaction! O you people who only think about what you are going to do tomorrow, or about what you will do during the next, well, say 50 years! You sometimes say, "It will be all the same a 100 years from now." Yes, but suppose it is—what will it be a thousand years hence? Why, some, I hope, will have been in Heaven 950 years by that time! Oh, what joy we shall have known during that period! What breakings of the sea of bliss over our enraptured spirits!

But suppose any of us shall have been in Hell all that time? Oh, ghastly thought! But what must it be to have been in Heaven a million years and then to feel that we are but at the beginning of our bliss? "I give unto My sheep eternal life." "Because I live, you shall live, also." The righteous shall go into life eternal! Oh, the splendor of eternity linked with bliss! I beseech you, dear Friends, rejoice if you have taken this heritage that you have taken it forever, for it is that which makes the joy of it!

We have to reckon earthly things and say, "That is the value of the property; take it at 20 years' purchase, or 25 years' purchase." But what must be the value of a blessing that is to last forever and ever? I have sometimes thought what it would be to have a toothache to all eternity. That would be bad enough, for it is the *eternity* that makes the sting of it. But what can we say of a joy that will last when yonder sun is turned into a coal and the moon is black as a sackcloth of hair, and this old world, wrinkled like a bottle in the smoke, shall be flung away as worn-out and useless? You and I, then, in the everlasting youth of a God-given life, shall possess this heritage forever!

Once more, notice that *there is no way of taking this heritage except taking it forever*. There is a way invented by some men of being temporary Christians. It is believed by some that you can take this heritage for three months, or that you can take it for a certain term of years, and then lay it down. They take it not at all who do not take it *forever*! He that enlists in the army of Christ must enlist forever—that is the shortest term on which Christ will take him. If you become a Christian, you must always be a Christian! I heard of a Brother, the other day, a teetotaler, who had been an abstainer, he said, "ten years, off and on." Yes, you may well smile at that remark, but there are some people who want to be Christians of that kind, "off and on." My dear Friends, the members of the Total Abstinence Society are ready to get up and say that they will not admit that man, and I say the same about a Christian man who is "off and on!" No, no! We go in for salvation forever! As David says, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." You cannot take them any other way. That conversion which is not radical and thorough is of no use. If a man converts you, another man can unconvert you! But if *God* converts you, I know that what God does shall be forever! He does

not make temporary Christians, but real, lasting, everlasting Christians, as our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Will you have this heritage for this term? Will you have it forever? Then take it and welcome! May God Himself, by His Divine Spirit, make you an heir of endless life through faith in Jesus Christ His Son!

**IV.** But not to weary you, I shall close by inviting you, in the last place, to ENJOY, AT ONCE, THE POSSESSION. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." First, that was an evidence that David had taken God's testimonies to be his possession, for they had made him glad. And, secondly, that was the reason why he took them to be his possession—because they made him glad.

Now, first, *this was a proof that they were his*, because they made his heart rejoice. If your religion does not make you rejoice, it is not worth much. If you do not find a joy in it, you have not really taken it, you have not taken it forever, or, at least, though you may have taken such religion as you have, you have not taken the testimonies of God, the Covenant of Grace, the Christ of God, for if you had done so, you must *rejoice!* One said to me, the other day, speaking of the new style of ministers and the old style, "I used to notice, in the old preachers, that they seemed delighted with what they had to say—even if we did not enjoy it, *they* did. They seemed like men that set out a feast and, every now and then, they had a taste, themselves, they so enjoyed the Truths of God they were preaching. But," he said, "the modern gentlemen—well, they know that it is a poverty-stricken country through which they are traveling. They are pretty well aware that there is no spiritual food for the people and so they do not even *appear* to enjoy the service, themselves, but they get through it in a sadly dignified way—an amazing way, indeed, showing their own talent and wisdom—but there is no hearty enjoyment of it."

And it is so! But when a man has taken God's testimonies to be his everlasting heritage, when you hear him talk about it, his eyes begin to flash, his soul is all on fire, he is full of gladness over it! The genuine convert, too, who has found the Savior, did you ever know him to come see a Christian, and say to him, "Dear Friend, I think that I have believed in Jesus Christ. I think—I *think* that, perhaps, He has pardoned my sin"? Why, you say, that man is not up to the mark! As soon as ever a genuine convert comes to open his mouth, he says, "Oh, dear Sir, I hope that I have found the Savior! I do feel so happy, for I have laid my sins on Jesus, and He has appeared to me, and He has said, 'I have blotted out all your transgressions.' I am so happy that—if I talk too fast, pray do excuse me—but I have passed from death to life and I must tell somebody about the wondrous change! I can say with David, 'Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever,' I know I have done so, for they make my very heart glad! They warm my spirit! They are the rejoicing of my heart!"

You notice David does not merely say, "they make my heart rejoice," but he says, "they are the rejoicing of my heart." He does not merely say, "they give me joy, but they *are* my joy, they are essentially and really the

delight of my spirit." Oh, what a difference it makes, when the man has truly taken Christ as his Savior, in the way in which he looks at his religion! Until you have taken the Covenant, the testimonies and the Christ of God to be your inheritance, you may be, after a fashion, deeply pious, and yet sadly miserable over your piety. Your religion may be as sweet to you as slavery was to a Negro, and not a whit more so. But when you have taken Christ to be yours—

***"Tis love that makes your willing feet  
In swift obedience move."***

It is love that makes you joyful in God and, being joyful in God, nothing is too hard or too heavy for you, and you say, with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Our feet are made like hinds' feet to leap over difficulties when we have really taken a firm grip of the eternal Truths of God and have taken them to be our heritage forever. It is one of the evidences of Grace when these things are the rejoicing of our heart.

Then, lastly, another way of looking at this Truth of God is this—we take these things to be our heritage because they are the joy of our heart. Dear Friends I would like to refresh the memories of some of you Christian people by recalling your past experience. When you have been very ill, what has your religion been to you, then? I know that you can say, "I almost wish to be ill, again, to enjoy the rest, and the peace, and the delight that I had then!" When my dear Brother, William Olney, behind me, was undergoing most painful operations, I went to see him and I never saw him more happy than he was, then! I do not believe he was happier when he was going to be married than he was when he was awaiting the coming of the surgeon. He was so resting in God, so rejoicing in Christ, that he could not be more delighted than he was! His Master's Presence made him full of gladness!

Others of us know what it is to lie on the verge of death by the week together—and in the stillness of the night to contemplate very closely our approaching end—and to do so as deliberately as if we expected to rise the next morning to transact our business, regarding the eternal state, with hope and desire rather than with fear! We are glad to find that when heart and flesh failed, then there burnt within us another light that no man has ever kindled, another joy than corn and wine and oil can ever give to him who has the largest store of them! O dear Friends, I bear my own personal testimony that there is no joy like that of believing the testimonies of God, accepting the Covenant of Grace and living upon the Christ of God!

I have often said from this pulpit, and I say it again, that if I had to die like a dog, I would wish to be a Christian even for the blessings of this life! But then, of course, it is the *life to come* that makes the joy of this present life, for if that were blotted out, we might be, of all men, most miserable, for we have more than enough of trial and of sadness if it were not for the thought of the world to come! But that life beyond, that hope that enters within the veil, that vision of Christ's face, that prospect of being forever with the Lord—I would part with all the joys of sense to behold His face but for a moment! What must it be to be in His Presence—

in fullness of joy, forever and ever? The expectation of that which is soon to be revealed makes us exceedingly glad.

“Why!” one says, “I thought that Christian people were all miserable people?” It is because you do not know them! And there is another thing you do not know, some of you, that is, how Christians can rejoice. You see, that elder brother, who was such a very proper sort of gentleman, was angry at the rejoicing over the prodigal’s return and, “he would not go in.” I do not know whether he did go in, after all, but if he did not, he could not tell how merry his father was, he could not tell how merry the servants were, he could not tell how happy was his younger brother who had been lost and now was found! He was angry and would not go in, so he could not know what joy there was in the home. But if he could have gone in with his cruel, cold-blooded temperament and could have looked on—and if he could have caught sight of his brother who had been so lately with the hogs, but who was now washed and cleansed, feasting on that fatted calf—I think his heart would have begun to melt, as Joseph’s did when he saw Benjamin. Then, if he had seen the joy of the servants and heard the music, and watched the dancing, I think he would have been ready to take a turn with them!

If he had fixed his eyes on his father and had seen the greatness of his father’s love, and the joy beaming in his father’s face, I think that he would have rushed up to him and fallen on his father’s neck, and kissed him, and said, “Now I know what a blessed thing it must be to dwell in your love.” Oh, if you knew the joy of saved sinners, and the joys of those who have prayed and labored for their salvation. If you knew anything of the joy of the happy God, you would understand that a truly Christian life cannot be an unhappy one! God bring you, everyone, to trust in Jesus, His dear Son! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 119:73-88.**

In this Psalm we have, as it were, notes from David’s diary.

**Verse 73.** *Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Your Commandments.* This is a very instructive prayer. The Psalmist does as good as say, “Lord, You have made me once—make me over again. You have made my body—mold my spirit, form my character, give me understanding.” If God should make us, and then leave us without understanding, what imperfect creations we would be! A man devoid of understanding is only a blood and bone creation and, therefore, the Psalmist does well to pray, “Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.” But what sort of an understanding is desired? That I may learn to discuss and dispute? No, “that I may learn Your Commandments,” for holiness is the best of wisdom and the surest proof of a right understanding is obedience to God’s Commandments.

**74.** *They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word.* A hopeful godly man is a continual source of joy to other people. When a man can inspire hope in his fellows—and he can-

not do that unless he is full of hope, himself—he lights a fire of comfort. Bring such a man into a storm and he helps you to be brave. “They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word.”

**75.** *I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me.* We are glad to listen to a man who can tell us that—an old man, a tried man who can say that God has been faithful in afflicting him—a man who, after having borne the brunt of tribulation, can yet bless God for it. Such testimonies as these are full of joy and gladness to the young folk—they can encounter trial with a joyous heart when they hear what their fathers tell of the goodness of God to them in their troubles!

**76.** *Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant.* “Lord,” he seems to say, “I have been a comfort to others—be You a comfort to me. You have made others glad to see me, make me glad with the recollection of all my experience of Your mercy. ‘Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort.’” If you have lost your own comfort, dear Friends, see where you are to look for it—to the merciful kindness of God! Those are two beautiful words, are they not? “Merciful”—take that to pieces and it is mercy-full. Is not God full of mercy? Take the next word to pieces—“kindness.” That means, “kinned-ness”—that kind of feeling that we have to our own kin when they are very dear to us. “Lord, let Your mercy-full kinned-ness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant.”

**77.** *Let Your tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.* “I am so broken down, my bones are so full of pain, that if You handle me roughly, I shall die. ‘Let Your tender mercies come unto me.’ I am like a poor flower whose stalk is almost broken through, ready to droop and die. Let Your tender mercies bind me up, that I may live.”

**77.** *For Your Law is my delight.* God will not let a man die who delights in His Law! You are the sort of man who shall live. If you love the Law of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God, He will not let you die! There are none too many of your sort in the world, so the Lord will keep you alive so long as you can serve Him here.

**78.** *Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts.* That is a delightful turning of the subject—“They dealt perversely with me, without a cause”—but David does not say, “I will envy the proud,” or, “I will be spiteful to them,” or, “I will fret myself because of them.” No, he seems to say, “They may do what they will, but I will meditate in Your precepts.” When anyone has treated you contemptuously, or dealt perversely with you without a cause, instead of resenting it, get to your Bible! Meditate in God’s precepts! It is the noblest and, at the same time, the most successful way of fighting against contempt, so to despise the despising of men as to rejoice in your thoughts of God and His Truth!

**79.** *Let those that fear You turn unto me, and those that have known Your testimonies.* “Lord, make me such a man that they who fear You may seek my acquaintance. Of Your great mercy grant that if any of them have turned away from me through hearing slanderous reports about

me, they may be inclined, now, to come back to me, for I love them, and I would not willingly offend them. 'Let those that fear You turn unto me.'"

**80.** *Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I am not ashamed.* When the heart is right with God, there will be no need to be ashamed. Though you may make some mistakes and blunders, because you are human, yet, if you are sincere, shame shall not overtake you. What a blessing it is to have a sound heart! But when the heart is spiritually *un-sound*, the profession is always in danger. The other day a friend of ours was taken from us almost in an instant through heart disease—and when Judas sells his Master, or when Demas turns aside to the silver mines of earth, it is the result of heart disease. There are many who go about in the Christian Church with a ruddy face and apparently with great strength of religion—but all of a sudden they prove apostates. Yes, that is the effect of heart disease! Therefore, pray very earnestly with the Psalmist, "Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I be not ashamed."

**81.** *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word.* What? Faint and hoping, too? Yes, a Christian is a wonder and a contradiction to many, but most of all to himself! He cannot understand himself. He faints and yet he hopes. Two apparently opposite emotions may be at the same time in the Christian bosom! Every man is two men, if he is a man in Christ Jesus. I sometimes think that there is a triplet of characters in every man of God, so that he has *three* different experiences at the same time. Certainly he can have two, for here we have them—"My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word."

**82.** *My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?* "I look for it till my eyes ache! I strain my eyes to see Your Word, watching for it till my vision grows dull in waiting! 'My eyes fail for Your Word, saying.'" Oh, then, his eyes could *speak*! Yes, eyes can say a great many things! And blessed are the eyes that have learned to say this—"When will You comfort me?" It is a good way of praying, sometimes, to say nothing at all, but to sit still and look up. The eyes can say what lips and tongue cannot, so learn well the language of the eyes and talk to God with them, even as He talks to you with His eyes. "I will guide you," He says, "with My eye." Be you, therefore, able to speak to God with your eyes, as David was when he wrote, "My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will you comfort me?"

**83.** *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.* An old dried-up skin bottle that is hung in the smoke of the tent over the fire till it is wrinkled and cracked—and almost good for nothing.

**83.** *Yet do I not forget Your statutes.* "Beauty is gone, strength is gone, comeliness is gone, but not my memory of Your Word, O Lord." What a mercy it is that when the worst comes to the worst with us, still the best remains—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes."

**84.** *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* "Lord, I have but a short life; let me not have a long affliction." Does he mean, "Lord, I have lived too long in this miserable state; I wish my days were shortened"? We must not

murmur at the length of our days, but we may plead that persecution may come to an end. We may even go so far as to say with David, "How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?"

**85.** *The proud have dug pits for me which are not after Your Law.* It is not often that proud men take to digging, but here, you see, these children of the Pit learn to dig pits for God's people—and they still have not given up the practice! Pits were dug in olden times to catch wild beasts, but now, often, the wicked dig pits to try to catch good men, seeking, if they can, to make a fault where there is none, or to lead us into a line of conduct which they shall be able to represent unfavorably—"The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law."

**86.** *All Your Commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me.* What a prayer that is! Store it up for use, dear Friend! Carry it home with you. That is the kind of prayer to be prayed on the roadside, in a railway carriage, yes, even in an accident—"Help You me." "Help You me," is a wonderful prayer! It seems to turn on a swivel whichever way you wish—you may use it to ask for anything you need in every time of emergency—"Help You me."

**87.** *They had almost consumed me upon earth.* "They had almost eaten me up; they had almost burned my life out. Blessed be God, they could not consume me anywhere except upon earth! My immortal part would escape the burning of their coals of juniper! They had almost consumed me, but almost is not altogether." When God delivers His people from the lion and the bear, the jaws of the wild beasts may be almost closed, yet they shall be opened wide enough for us to escape! "They had almost consumed me upon earth."

**87.** *But I forsook not Your precepts.* You cleave to the right and God will not turn away from you, nor will He let you turn away from His precepts.

**88.** *Quicken me after Your lovingkindness.* That is a blessed prayer for us to offer. If any of you feel dull and drowsy. If any of you are heavy and slow in your movements, cry to the Lord, "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

**88.** *So shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.* Spiritual life is the root of holiness—"Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth." May God bless this reading to our instruction! Amen.

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

# MY HOURLY PRAYER

## NO. 1657

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1882,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Hold You me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.”***  
***Psalm 119:117.***

“HOLD You me up.” This is no novelty as a prayer. We have met with it many a time. Another form of it lies hard by. Look at the verse immediately before the text and see it, there, in another shape. “Uphold me.” I know of no difference in the two prayers, “Uphold me” and, “Hold me up.” They are two notes from the same bell and they teach us that the Psalmist’s mind was full of the petition, for he was conscious of his need of this upholding—this holding up. We use not vain repetitions as the heathen do and, therefore, when we have to express the same idea, it is natural to the living child of God to couch it in as fresh words as he can—and though it is the same note, yet he changes it, somewhat, and first cries, “Uphold me”—and then, “Hold me up.”

Of course I am now preaching only from the English text when I note these changes of expression, and I am rather giving illustrations than teaching by authority. Yet *this is* of authority—that we have need, continually, to cry for upholding Grace. You notice that in the first prayer, “Uphold me,” it is for very *life* that he entreats for this upholding. “Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.” He feels that unless fresh Grace shall flow into his soul, his spiritual life must utterly fail. Do not forget this—let it give weight to your pleading. But in the second of the two verses—the one which makes our text—he looks for *more* than life as the result of upholding. He looks for safety, a life of unsullied holiness and consequent restfulness and security. “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.”

Both verses show you the importance of the prayer and both together, will, I hope, enlist your earnest attention to what I may have to say upon it. It is a very sweet remark that every prayer is an inverted promise. That is to say, God promises us such a blessing and, therefore, we pray for it. Or, if you please, if God teaches us to pray for any good thing, we may gather, by implication, the assurance that He means to give it! If you feel in your heart a God-inspired desire to ask a certain favor, it is because God intends to bestow it upon you! A prayer is the shadow of a coming blessing. Therefore we pray because the blessing is coming!

It is said that prayer cannot alter the purpose of God. Of course it cannot! It does not *alter* it, but *indicates* it, and since people are moved to pray this way or that way by the Spirit of God, it is because the Spirit knows the mind of God and His movement to pray is a Revelation of the

mind of God to the praying one! Believing supplication is God writing His desires upon the hearts of His own children with the intent to fulfill them. Is it not written, Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart? It is not that God will give the desires of His heart to every man. No—but to that man whose heart is in such sympathy with God that he delights in God and, consequently, desires what God desires! Then, when our heart runs side by side with the mind of God, our prayer is parallel with His purpose and, consequently, it is done unto us according to our desire.

Now, I conceive that it is always according to God's mind to hold His servants up. He delights not in their slips or falls—to suppose such a thing were blasphemous! "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." God is pleased with the steadfastness of His chosen. He smiles upon the firmness of their standing. God would not have one of His people even dash his foot against a stone and, therefore, He sets the angels to guard them. If they do trip in their walk, He is quick to restore them, for He cannot endure that they should lie in the mire. His joy is that we walk with Him in constant holiness and He is ready to grant us this gift.

This prayer shows in David a great sense of the need of being upheld—a strong conviction that God could uphold Him—and an expectation and hope that He would surely do so in answer to his prayer. May we appropriate this prayer with somewhat of David's feeling—deeply conscious of utter helplessness, fully believing that the Omnipotent Grace of God can meet that helplessness—and confident that He will hear our cry and answer us and uphold us to the end. Let us believe that our heavenly Father will keep us from falling, but let us be well assured that apart from His keeping, our soul *will* fall—and great will be the fall!

First, I shall speak of God's holding us up and then of the two blessings that come out of it, namely, safety and watchfulness. "I shall be safe," and, "I shall have respect unto Your statutes continually."

**I.** First, then, UPHOLDING—God's holding us up. It implies a danger and that danger takes many forms. The true description of a believing man's life is that he walks in his uprightness. The figure is not hard to understand. "God made man upright, though he has sought out many inventions." The very form and figure of man's body teach us that we are not made to go on "all fours," gazing at the earth from where we sprang, but erect upon our feet, looking upward to the Heaven towards which we tend by God's rich Grace.

You know what is meant by an upright man, a man who does not lean this way or that, and who is not biased or inclined to that which is wrong. The upright column is the only one which can stand alone and he who is upright is independent, taking his stand, maintaining his place without a buttress to keep him in it. A very pillar of the earth is such a man. He may say, like David, "The earth is dissolved: I bear up the pillars thereof." So have I seen amid vast masses of surrounding ruin a goodly pillar lift its capital aloft as if it laughed at destruction. There is something bright and cheering about the thought of the Believer being an upright man—but the danger is that he may not *continue* upright.

Columns, slowly undermined, lean to this side or that, and their fall is near. Unseen earthworms sink the hidden bases of pillars and cast them down. And secret vices have thus brought down many a noble character. A Christian man is a pilgrim and he makes progress in his march to Glory so long as he walks uprightly. But will he keep his uprightness? No! He is certain not to keep upright unless he is *upheld*, for the way is slippery. Ah, how slippery do some find it! It is as a hill of ice and at some points it is more treacherous than usual. Those who have ever gone over the Grimsel Pass will remember that on one side of it, in descending, there is a place they call, "Hell Place," because the road is narrow and shelving—and the precipice on that side is exceedingly deep—while the path is singularly smooth.

Rain water drips and sometimes flows considerably over the red rock and keeps it polished as the floor of a royal salon—and though they chip out grips across the road that there may be a foothold, yet most travelers find it best to leave their mules and tread with timid footsteps over the slippery way. I have a lively recollection of that marble floor! I think they called it porphyry, but it had no charms for me. Most of us have had a, "Hell Place" in our journey to Heaven. You remember Joseph's slippery way and how God upheld him, otherwise he had fallen, never to rise. David had the same and his fall was grievous. I say that there is scarcely a man who has not had some glassy bit of road where, at the best, his feet had almost gone; his steps had well-nigh slipped and he had been down on his face if almighty Grace had not interposed.

Nor is the best part of the road without its dangers. Believe me, no foot of the way is safe to the careless. I have noticed that more men sin without temptation than with it and that the heaviest falls occur upon perfectly level road where there does not seem to be a stone to catch the foot. Oh, take heed! Take heed! For there is not one point in the journey—from the setting out at the wicket gate even till you reach the river's brink—which has not dangers in it! The prayer is always in season, "Hold You me up!" But that is not all. It is our feet that made the danger, as well as the way. A strong, well-footed man can traverse the precipitous mountain side and never think of a slip. Have you not seen the mountaineer go tripping up the rocks, with a heavy load upon him, as firmly-footed as if he had been climbing the steps of the Royal Exchange?

Have you not seen him come leaping down, again, with his alpenstock, where you could not have trod for a minute? It seemed as if scarcely a rabbit or a chamois could have found a pathway, and yet the strong, sure-footed man has almost danced down beneath his burden. How often have I envied the Alpine peasant those legs and feet! It is much the same in spiritual things. Strong men stand on their high places and leap from crag to crag—but as for us, we are not strong or sure-footed. Alas! We have feeble knees and hands that hang down! And often we are as weak as water. We are children whose tottering footsteps are not as yet familiar with running or climbing. It is as much as we can do to stand when leaning on the Beloved—but to stand upright upon a rough road has not yet come to such feebleness as ours!

I speak not of you all, but of far too many. The most of us are poor puny things. Ah, if you know yourself, you will not think that you can stand. It will rather be a wonder to you that you have not already fallen! And when you see others slip, your heart will be in your mouth, for you will say, "I am next—I next, unless the Grace of God prevents." So, what with the way and our feet, we have need to pray, "Hold You me up!" But that is not all, for there are cunning foes that seek to trip us up. They lay snares for us—they dig pits and cast their nets across the way. Perhaps some of you are happily free from tempters in your own households and possibly some are free from distinct temptation from the world. I congratulate you! But very few of us are in that condition.

Our foes compass us about like bees. Some threaten; others flatter. A few would bribe us; more would bully us. The bad would deceive, for they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. And the best of men, if you follow them too closely, may mislead you. Trust not in any brother—neither lay hands upon any human guide. There is One that can conduct you safely, but if you do not follow Him, you will soon slip with your feet. Many watch for our slipping and if they could find us tripping they would report it with glee to all the sons of Belial! Therefore have we good need to say, "Hold You me up." Specially is there such need to those of you who work in shops where ungodliness is in the ascendant so that religion is held in ridicule. Great need is there in the cases of children of ungodly parents with a father who will, if he can find you doing a little amiss, make a great deal of it. Equal necessity is there to you young men who meet with conceited ones who talk philosophy and rail at our old-fashioned faith. You should pray, "Lord, hold You me up, and I shall be safe."

Nor is this all, though it is quite enough, for sometimes, dear Friends, the difficulty of keeping our balance is not caused by the way, itself, but by the height to which God may elevate us. There are Brothers whose position is high whose brain might, long ago, have reeled had not infinite Mercy held them up. I know those who have not a tenth of their popularity or a hundredth part of their influence who, nevertheless, give themselves mighty airs. These lofty-minded gentlemen are in the greatest danger! Let me speak of these grandees—with all due reverence let me take them at their own value for once—though I should be sorry to be forced to complete the purchase.

My dear Friend, when you are getting on in the world and prospering, something whispers, "You are a clever fellow." And when you have won respect by your talent, then, again, a voice sweetly sings, "You are a highly superior person." At such times you are in serious peril! It happens to most of us, at times, to have done so well as to have won the approbation of our little circle. And then the temptation is quite great enough—though it comes not from thousands, or even from hundreds, but from half-dozens—for us to feel that we are somebody, too. Then the brain grows dizzy and the danger is great! Anything which leads to self-esteem leads to the utmost jeopardy. If you have a lowly opinion of yourself, I congratulate you—for this is a main element of safety.

The prayer is all the more necessary for one other reason, namely, that the most of people do not keep upright. Go forth into the world tomorrow and see how men are acting! Borrow the lantern of Diogenes and try, if you can, to find an honest man! You will succeed, but when you have done so, take security for his keeping so. On the exchange, in the market, almost everywhere—the bulk of men are not upright—they are down on all fours. There is a great gold scramble and they are clutching at it with all their might! Get money! Get money! Is not that the world's own favorite teaching—get it honestly if you can—but, if you cannot, get it in that way, get it how you can! Puff! Lie! Cheat! Do anything, only make a fortune! He is the most clever fellow who can grab the most gold!

That is the picture of the business world—a nursery floor of grown-up children scrambling on all fours. But you say they do not lie. No, no—only white lies. No, they do not cheat—it is only, “the custom of the trade,” you know. “Now, do not talk,” they say to me, “what do you know about it?” More than you think, perhaps, for lookers-on see more than players. “But, Sir, business is business.” I know it is, and business has no business to be such business as it often is! Woe to the man whose business will destroy his soul! Woe, double woe, to the man whose business destroys the bodies and souls of drunks! Woe three times over to the wretch who fattens on the iniquities of his fellow men and gets rich by their damnation—and yet pretends to religion!

But I am wandering—it is because so many people lean this way, or that way, or go altogether on all fours, that it is not the easiest thing in this world for a man to stand upright. He ought to say, “If the world's fate hung on a lie and I, by speaking the lie, could save it, I would speak the truth.” If our life depended upon doing what God would *not* approve, we ought rather to die than sin! Such should be the resolve of the Believer and he should ask for Grace to carry it out. Lord, hold You me up: keep me upright. Whatever happens, do not let me be any other than an upright, downright, perpendicular man, knowing the right thing, speaking the right thing, doing the right thing, by Your Grace, even to the end.

But you see the danger—the text suggests it to me. To my ear there is a sharp sound in it. It is almost a cry of sudden alarm. It is as if one felt himself falling and cried aloud, “Hold me up!” The deep descent yawns before him; the earth glides from under him; he cannot regain his footing and piteously he implores, “Hold You me up.” It has come to this—there is an end of the man unless a Power beyond his own shall uphold him. O Lord, see You to it! Now, how does God keep His people upright? He has many ways of doing it and, therefore, you may pray very hopefully. He can preserve you by angels—“They shall bear you up in their hands, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.”

How many stones you and I might have dashed our feet against if it had not been that we have received mysterious intimations which have put us on our guard. Often and often have I been inwardly admonished and so preserved from evil. We never knew where it came from, but perhaps the Lord sent the singular intimation by an angel whose noiseless wings came and went, and we knew not of the messenger, though we felt

the message. God works mightily this way with many who are obedient to His will. At other times God holds up His people by the ministry of the Word of God. I have often been told that when you have come in here, I, not knowing anything of your case, have, nevertheless, spoken to it exactly—and you have had the admonition, or the encouragement and direction which you needed at this point and that.

To many of you my voice has been as the Oracle of God and that in the verse of a hymn, or in the chapter chosen, or in a pointed remark in the sermon. Is it not so? Could not many of you bear testimony to it? God's Word, wherever it is faithfully spoken, is a wall of fire round about God's people. It protects them from lurking foes of whose existence they were not aware. A gracious promise supplies them with just that stimulus which they need in the hour of fainting or a stern rebuke acts as the restraint which they require in the moment of temptation.

And have you not found it so, too, by the reading of the Word in your own homes? The promise or the precept has come in exactly to fit your case and you have heard from the Scriptures a voice that said, "This is the way: walk you in it." And you have also been gently made willing to walk in it and so you have been kept in your integrity. Were professors more familiar with their Bibles, they would be less in danger from the common evils of the times. Oh that the Holy Spirit may give us all a deeper love for the Word of God so that we may be upheld that no iniquity may have dominion over us!

Often God keeps His people upright, and holds them firmly, by chastisement. When roughly smitten you feel as though you were a child falling over a precipice, half dazed by terror. And then your father has taken hold of you and, by severely shaking you, has awakened you and saved you. I have seen a driver give a horse a flip because he was getting sleepy and had stumbled—that cut woke up the creature and he went with a sure foot afterwards. The Lord has often saved us from a sad fall by a sharp chastisement. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." At times, the chastisement has been rather of the spirit than of anything outward. All things have gone well externally, but you have been depressed and despondent—and that drooping has been ordained by God that you might endure your prosperity and truly prosper in it. Lest your high places of success should cause you to slip, you have been kept *low* in spirit that you might be kept *up* in holy living to God's Glory! You have been laid down that you might not fall down!

God sometimes humbles His people that they may not need to be humbled, for to be humbled is terrible, but to be made humble by His Grace is exceedingly sweet. It is clear that our gracious Lord can hold us up by many methods. We are very far from having hinted at a tenth of them. I have known Him preserve His people by giving them great aspirations, high ideals, noble desires. With his eyes on the stars, the sailor boy is steady at the masthead. I have known Him hold up His servants by giving them plenty to do—by putting them into the Sunday school and interesting them with the children or drafting them into the Loan Tract Society

and keeping them there. It is a grand way of keeping us right—never to let us have an idle 10 minutes, nor a spare napkin to wrap a talent in.

The supreme Power which upholds us is the Holy Spirit, who, dwelling in us, warns us against evil; sets us on our watchtower against temptation; incites us to all manner of good things and so helps us to stand in the evil day. How much we owe to the love of the Spirit! He keeps the feet of the saints. When they are tried, He quickens them, and by gaining more life they surmount temptation! When they are likely to be deceived, He enlightens them, and so the Evil One touches them not. By sanctification, by helping our infirmities, by teaching us the Divine will and by His Divine comfort, He holds us up—and to Him be Glory forevermore!

Thus have I shown you the danger and how it can be prevented. Oh, how sweetly can the Lord prevent it, and how He *has* prevented it in many of His dear people! In order to prove this, I could point you to biographies of godly men. Perhaps that might be better than giving you even a hint about those who are yet alive, though there are many such, and such among ourselves. As to the departed ones upon whom my mind is now resting, their Lord did not allow them to slip at any time, but their garments were always white. They had many dangers and perils, but they walked uprightly all their days. So far from their having slipped, there seemed to be nothing in them but what we could hold up for admiration, giving to God's Grace all the praise!

Blessed are those men of faith who are never allowed to fall, in whom you see no groveling, whose noble lives are free from selfishness and far above the aims of carnal men! In them was no bending, no stooping from uprightness, but a rising, a growing elevation, till even here, among the sons of men, they had a dignity and presence as of another world. Thus have I set before you the upholding.

**II.** Briefly, I desire to show the TWO BLESSED THINGS THAT COME OUT OF THIS HOLDING UP. If God uphold us, then, according to the text, we shall be safe. "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." It is a great point to be safe, though there *are* some who prefer to be *sharp*. Some men are always trying little dodges by which they would take advantage of their neighbors. "A sharp fellow, that," cries one. "A desperately clever man," says another. "Hardly know where to find him," hints a third. "Rather sharper than honest," mutters a fourth. Just so.

Now, if God holds you up, I do not say that you will be clever, but you will be what is a deal better—you will be *safe*. "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." That is, you will be safe from all *real* harm. Suppose that you should meet with great troubles in business? You will still be safe if God upholds you so that you do not lose your integrity. So long as we do not lose a good conscience, we have not lost much if we have lost all. He that damages his character has sustained the worst damage a mortal man can know! But he that is held up—kept upright—has been kept safely! It may be that he shall be slandered, but if he knows that before God he has walked uprightly, he shall be "safe." God will light his candle in due time and his light shall shine as the sun at noonday! Only if you hold fast your integrity and will not let it go—and God's Grace can help you to do that—

you shall be safe in calamity, peaceful in panic, happy in poverty, brave under slander—in fact, “safe” in all senses of the term!

Like the lighthouse on the lone rock, buffeted by the storm, you shall stand out above all tempests SAFE. You shall be safe, too, from descending into grievous sin. The man who is held upright shall not insensibly sink lower and lower, as some do. Alas, I have seen the godly man put forth his hand unto iniquity. At first he seemed excused. No one could blame him. It was an hour of dire necessity and that he was overcome and did a questionable thing was not much to be marveled at, though it was enough to make an angel weep that such a man as he should stoop to it. After once doing the questionable thing, he had spoiled the chastity of his conscience, and he was open to a grosser sin—and he fell into that grosser sin—yet, still, it was not such a fault as the world would much condemn. A little farther and but a *little* farther, and he committed a crime that made the godly cast him off and the wicked exult over him. “Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen!”

For you and for me there is no safety in any degree of bending. We must stand upright or we cannot stand at all! “Hold You me up”—up, up—and I shall be safe.” But if I begin to incline downward in any way I am not safe. He that leans will fall! But the upright will stand, for God is able to make him stand even unto the end. I believe that when David said that by being held up he should be safe, he meant, also, that he should know that he was safe and should enjoy great restfulness of heart. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I know that you are very much tried in this world and often tempted to do that which is not right. But, if God keeps you from evil, how happy you are, because you are “safe”! You have a light pocket, but a light heart, too! Some have a heavy purse and a heavy heart to go with it. It is better for you to be in poverty and to be holy, than it would be to be unholy and to roll in wealth.

May God give you things convenient for you—so would I pray—but I would not ask Him to give you even a necessary meal as the result of an evil deed, much less to succeed you in a dishonest transaction, for *nothing* can be worse than to do wrong and prosper in it! If you are a child of God, there is no prosperity for you except by doing that which is right. Others may hoard the wages of unrighteousness. They would melt like hoarfrost in *your* hands. May you be prospered in all your works and may your substance increase. If God ordains it, so will it be. And if it is not so, what a mercy it is to carry in your heart that little bird which sings, “All is well! All is well!” He that can pick a bit of heartsease from within his bosom and wear it in his buttonhole, need not envy my lord his stars and garters—for that herb called heartsease is more precious than all else that grows beneath the moon—and God makes it bloom in the garden of the man who walks uprightly!

The man that walks uprightly and is kept in God’s way, is “safe,” and I venture to give another meaning to that word, “safe”—namely, that he becomes a safe man in his dealings with others. If you catch a man playing the double shuffle at any time, let him play it for himself, but not for you! Never link yourself in business with a person who is capable of doing an

unrighteous action. Sink or swim for yourself, but never set foot on board such a coffin ship! Sooner or later it will go to the bottom. May God make you to be upright, that you may be a safe man, true and trustworthy, for men delight to trust in men when once they find them "safe."

If you would possess the best of human friends, you will be happy should you meet with the man who in youth was an ardent Christian and has continued so throughout a generation. In times of stress and trial when others fell, he stood upright and incorruptible. Under slander he has smarted, but he has outlived the reproach and disproved every false report. Today his name is the guarantee of truth, the watchword of honor! Where he leads, others feel it safe to follow! They wait till he speaks; his judgment rules the board. Because the Lord kept him upright, he grew to be safe in the esteem of his neighbors and now he is as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the storm. A truly good man is a haven in trouble, a harbor for those who are tossed with tempest—the sons of Adam in distress fly to him, in his degree, as they do to his Master. If he swears to his own hurt, he changes not, but stands to the truth at all hazards. Men admire this and they trust him, if not with untold gold, yet with secrets which, to all other hearts, remain untold. May God make you such a man! The way to such honor lies by that prayer, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe."

But, lastly, when a man knows that he is "safe," by God's Grace, does he then become idle and careless, and think he may do as he likes? No, listen—"I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually." Watchfulness attends such sacred safety and is, at once, its fruit and its sign! A holy man—a man made holy by God's Grace—has great respect to every command of God! Before he moves, he looks round him to see whether he shall transgress by his proposed movement. You have heard of the child whose mother said, "John, you have broken one of the Commandments," and he answered, "Mother, those Commandments are awfully easy to break." With such natures as ours, sin is a very easy thing. You break the Law before you know it—and unless a man has respect unto *all* the Commandments, he will soon be trespassing and getting into mischief.

We ought, in our daily life, to walk as one that has to tread among eggs or delicate china. Heedless and Too-Bold soon rush into sin, but the genuine Believer always fears. "You are very jealous of how you act," said one to a saint of God. "Yes," he replied, "I serve a jealous God." "You are too precise," said another. "That is a crime," he said, "that God will never charge any of His children with." A conscience tender as the apple of an eye is what we want. To be alarmed, even at the distant approach of sin, is the safeguard of a child of God! Those who dally with vice will rue such dalliance when it cannot be undone! If somebody told me that there was a cobra at the far end of my room, I should look round for the door—I think such venomous creatures are near enough if they remain in their native jungles—I do not desire their interesting society.

So should it be with sin. We should flee from it at once, avoiding its first appearance, hating it in thought and word before it hatches into act,

abhorring even the garment spotted by the flesh! This holy jealousy to do the Lord's will must last continually. "I will have respect unto Your statutes continually." I will always try to obey. I will always endeavor to avoid any transgression of the Light of God. Now, dear Friends, you see this safety comes, and this special tenderness towards God's Law comes of God's holding us up, for He holds us up so that we never go down. Under His incessant upholding we shall be "safe"—and we shall be conscientious—but not otherwise. A few minutes' folly may ruin years of character. The man that is not held up goes down and rolls in the mire. He is never a conscientious man or a "safe" man, perhaps, for the rest of his life.

I know some that I hope are God's people, but they have not been upheld so as to be always complete in their integrity and, consequently, they are not "safe." They are people that we have to watch over with great care, for we are afraid of them. We could not trust them to lead, for their example is a lame one. Moreover, they are not keenly, sensitively conscientious. They can go to much greater lengths than the Lord Jesus would approve and yet they are members of the Church—pretty talkative members, too. May God improve them and mend them! They need it and God, alone, can do it, for they do not take their minister's plain hints. These people have no clear and sharp discrimination of what is right and wrong according to God's way, but they go as far as they can towards the world—to enjoy the pleasures of the ungodly—and yet they would keep in with Christians.

They are Jacks-of-Both-Sides. They run with the hare and yet hold with the hounds, and they will be glad to have a mouth full when the hounds catch the hare. This is poor work! This produces a sorry sort of Christian! Under such double influences we shall be unsafe and rather a curse to others than a blessing to them. If our integrity is always maintained by God, we shall become safe men—the pillars of the Church—we shall have a tender conscience that will warn us of the approach of evil and we shall be such as God can honor and make useful to the Brethren. So I close by commending to you, my dearly Beloved in Christ, the prayer of the text, "Hold You me up." Every morning before you see the face of men, register this prayer in Heaven—"Hold You me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall have respect unto Your statutes continually."

Are you going downstairs without that prayer? Then you may fall into sin at the breakfast table! You may lose your temper and a trifle not worth noticing may put you off the tram lines for the day. Therefore pray before the car moves. You have taken your hat and your gloves and you are going off to the City. Does it happen that there you meet careless, godless men? Are you tempted there? Then as you get into your train, or as you trudge along the pavement, breathe the prayer, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." You can meet the worst of men without fear. You have your shield on your arm, and the two-edged sword of God at your side! You are prepared for all hazards now that the upholding prayer has been breathed before the Most High!

Did you say that you are not going to the City today? It is a day's excursion, is it? You are going into the country to see friends, or you are to make holiday with a few companions? All well and good. You may have

such recreations very properly—but now is a special time for the prayer—“Hold You me up.” Your friends will not be all saints, probably, and when they go a little way in mirth, perhaps they will run a little too far. Therefore, entreat the Keeper of Israel, now, “Hold then me up, and I shall be safe”—safe at my play as well as at my work. The child of God in his recreation should prove that he has undergone a re-creation which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Grace should enter into all our enjoyments as well as into all our employments.

No, but that does not happen to be your lot. You are not indulged with a day’s pleasure—you are going to perform a service surrounded with difficulty. It tries your brain and frets your heart. It is more than you feel at all able to carry through and yet you must do it. Now is your peculiar time of need! Now is the hour to pray, “Hold You me up.” I have known young Brothers who, when first they have gone to a bank, have been so anxious to have their balances right and when they have gone round collecting have been so careful to be correct that they have made great errors—not through any dishonesty, but simply through their blundering because they were so excited! In their consuming anxiety to be exact, they have confused themselves into errors! Let the gracious young man do right and leave himself with God. Do not be nervous, but be *prayerful*.

Ask the Lord to help you. Ask Him to help you about everything—about casting up a column of figures. My Lord Jesus counts the very hairs of His children’s heads and He will help them in their little things as well as in their great things! You may ask that you may have favor in the sight of those that employ you and God will give it to you if it is good for you. Only cry, “Lord, help me to do right! And if I make a mistake let it be a mistake—but You hold me up and upright to the end.” Perhaps, dear Friends, you have to travel this week over a very unwelcome road, for you have been over it before and wished that you had never seen it. And yet you have that journey in prospect and there is no avoiding it! You have to visit those dangerous friends who led you into sore temptation two years ago. You have to undergo, the second time, an experience which before led you into sin. Then, pray eagerly, “Hold You me up.” Ask for double Grace! You know the danger of the road and your own feebleness, but you will get over it well enough by God’s upholding Grace.

But it may be, dear Friends, that you are prospering. God is giving you success and the desire of your heart has come to you. Be sure to pray earnestly, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe” for it is a dangerous thing for a child of God to prosper in this world! And yet it is a danger which many unwisely covet. If you are growing rich and great, pray God to hold you up. Or it may be that you are now going down into adversity. Things have gone wrong with you, as you think. You have to give up that fine house and lovely garden. You are moving into small rooms. You still have expenses, but your income has shrunk terribly. You hardly know how you shall support your wife and children. Now pray, “Hold You me up.” Use the prayer of Agur—“Give me neither poverty nor riches.” He that kept you when you were rich will not shun you, now that you are poor! Ask Him to uphold you still. He is able to do it and as willing as He is able.

Ah, some of you are getting old—I respectfully commend to you this prayer as suitable for the close of life. Young people, you must pray, for your passions are strong and your wisdom is little. O young men and maidens, pray, each one of you, “Hold You me up.” But, oh, dear aged Brothers and Sisters, excuse me who am so much younger, when I solemnly add—to *you* is this word of warning sent! Cease not to plead for upholding Grace! Horses sometimes fall at the bottom of the hill—the drivers grew careless and thought there was no further need for caution—and down went the horse.

The worst falls I have ever seen in the Church of God have happened to elderly men, men of experience and years. All through Scripture we meet with cases of the aged falling into sin. Mind that. They boast their experience and wisdom—and then the devil laughs in his sleeve and makes fools of them! If we were as old as Methuselah and as holy as Enoch, we ought still to cry, “Hold You me up!” And when we get to Jordan’s brink and the chill stream begins to rise to our ankles, what a blessing it is that the Lord *will* hold us up! “Courage, Brother!” said Hopeful to Christian, when he was up to his neck in the stream—“Courage, my Brother! I feel the bottom and it is good.” And so they joyfully crossed over and climbed the hill whereon the Celestial City was built!

And there, I think, among the songs that we shall sing unto our Well-Beloved, this will be a peculiarly sweet one—

***“When I said,  
My foot slips!  
Your mercy, O Lord,  
Held me up.”***

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

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# HOLY LONGINGS

## NO. 2151

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1890,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments. Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Psalm 119:131, 132, 133.***

LAST Lord's-Day we spoke about being in the fear of God all the day long and I am afraid some thought, “The pastor has set a very high standard before us—not too high, but still far above what we have been able to reach.” I know that many desires after holiness were excited and many longings of heart went up to Heaven. It ought to be so as soon as the Truth of God is received into the mind. Note the context—“The entrance of Your Word gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple.” And then the next step is intensity of desire—“I opened my mouth and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.”

When we have light enough to see what holiness is and how desirable it is, then we should hunger and thirst after it. To be holy is to go to the University—to have a desire for it is to go to a preparatory school for children—and to labor and agonize for it is to go to the grammar school. I want to teach the young children and get them ready for that grammar school, that their course may be clear for the University of actual holiness of life. I shall not take you to the grammar school of strong desire with the view of your stopping there, but that I may coach you up, by God's good Spirit, for the University of attainment where you will be “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

Here we have David desiring, praying, pleading and setting forth very clearly what he pants after. May you and I have the same burning desires. May we pant. May we thirst and at the same time may we clearly know what we are panting for, so that we may the more intelligently pursue it and thus go the nearest way to obtain it! May the Holy Spirit, the Author of holiness, help us in our meditations upon these three verses!

In the first verse you have the Psalmist *longing intently after holiness*—“I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.” In the next verse you have David *pleading fervently for the thing that he desired*, praying in this fashion, “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” In the third verse you have the same man of God *enlarging intelligently upon what it was that he pleaded for*, giving both the positive and the negative side of it—“Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

I. First, then, we will think of LONGING ARDENTLY AFTER HOLINESS—"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments." Observe carefully that *the man of God longed for the Lord's commandments*. This cannot mean anything else than that he longed to know them, longed to keep them, longed to teach them, longed to bring all around him into obedience to them.

Many religious people long after the promises and they do well, but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments. It is a sad sign when a man cannot bear to hear of the precepts, but must always have the preacher touching the string of privileges. To the renewed man it is a privilege to receive a *command* from the Lord whom he serves—and a great Grace to have the will and the power to obey it. To us Divine Grace means a power which sways us, as well as a favor which distinguishes us. To me the greatest privilege in all the world would be perfect holiness. If I had my choice of all the blessings I can conceive of, I would choose perfect conformity to the Lord Jesus, or, in one word, holiness.

I do not think I should have made Solomon's choice of "wisdom," unless it included wisdom of moral and spiritual character—and that *is* holiness. I said to a young girl the other day, "Are you perfect?" She answered that it was her greatest desire to be so, though she had not yet attained it. Just so. And that hallowed desire shows which way the heart is going. No unrenewed heart ever sighed and cried after holiness! A mere passing wish is of but little worth—I am speaking of the intense and continual desire of the *heart*. We must strive after holiness with an agony of desire. Oh, to be rid of every sin! What is that but Heaven? Oh, to escape cleanly from every tendency to it and from every trace of it! This would be bliss. What more of happiness could we desire than to fulfill that Word of our Lord—"Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"?

Are you conscious of great longings to escape from sin? Do you feel far less dread of Hell than of sin? Is sin the worst of hells to you? Is it horrible, terrible, killing? Would it be the heaviest punishment that could be laid upon you if the Great Judge should say, "You are filthy, be filthy still. You are unholy, be unholy still"? It would certainly be the worst of deaths to some of us! The deepest prayer of our hearts is to be delivered from that inbred sin which is tinder in which the sparks of temptation find fuel. We long to be delivered from that law in our members which brings us into captivity to sin. Oh, that we could be like He who said, "The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me"! How wonderful! "Nothing in Me"!

Alas, the evil prince finds very much of his own in most of us. One of the best men I ever knew said, at 80 years of age, "I find the old man is not dead yet." Our old man is crucified but he is long a-dying. He is not dead when we think he is. You may live to be very old, but you will have need, still, to watch against the carnal nature which remains even in the regenerate. I heard one speak about feeling angry when provoked and he said "he felt a bone of the old man moving." Alas, there is more than a bone of it in us—there is the whole body of this death still left—and very

palpable, very substantial it does seem to be at times, so that we are forced to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

We need deliverance, not from the bones of it, but from the very *body* of it which still plagues us. In those longings you see which way the stream of your heart is flowing. In these longings of your spirit you may fully observe the Divine commandments—these desires, I say, show that you have a clean heart and a right spirit—a heart which would do good, though evil is present within you. The tide is running in the right way, though the wind may be blowing against it. Being born of God, you do not commit sin as the tenor of your life, but you strive after that which is pure and good.

Now, observe that the Psalmist, having told us what he longed for, *shows the strength of those desires*, for he had been so eager in his pursuit of holiness that he had lost his breath. He could not find among men a good figure to describe himself and so he looked among animals and he selected the panting stag as his crest. The hart has been hunted over hill and dale. The dogs have long been close behind it. It has fled, as with the wings of a swift eagle, from their murderous teeth. For a moment it has eluded them. It pauses. It longs to bathe itself in the brook. It is hot, weary and thirsty and therefore opens its mouth wide.

See how it pants! Mark how its breast heaves and its whole body palpitates while it tries to regain its breath! The poor hunted thing is exhausted with its desperate efforts. Have not we, also, at times, felt spent in the struggle against sin? We have not yet resisted unto blood, but we have said to ourselves, “What more can we do? This fierce temptation returns—we may yet be overthrown by it. Oh, that we could take to ourselves wings and fly away! Woe is unto us, for we have no strength.” You were like a man who is out of breath—you were striving beyond yourself after “life more abundantly.”

Accursed is that man who has exhausted body and mind in the race of sin—from that curse he can only escape by looking to Jesus who was made a curse for us! But blessed is that man who has spent all the energy of his being in following after righteousness, for out of weakness he shall be made strong. When he cries, “My foot slips,” the mercy of the Lord shall hold him up. When, like David in the battle with the giant, he waxes faint, the Lord shall cover his head. Meanwhile he opens his mouth and pants out his weariness—and the Lord is with him and He will preserve him alive. Are you ready to faint this morning? Underneath are the everlasting arms! He that faints in such a pursuit as this shall swoon away upon the bosom of his Lord. Be of good comfort.

See, next, *how resolved he was*. He says, “I opened my mouth, and panted.” He is eager to go onward. Worn out by previous effort, he does not lie down to die but is determined to continue on the move. Give up the struggle? Never! My Brothers and Sisters, we have drawn the sword against the Canaanites of sin and we will never sheathe it until the last of them is slain! It may be a lifelong battle, but we will never make truce or treaty with sin. Woe unto him who says of holiness, “To here shall you

come, but no further—and here shall your proud waves be stayed.” We must never degrade ourselves by saying, “This form of sin cannot be conquered, for it is constitutional—as it was bred in my bones it must be allowed to come out in my flesh.” Brethren, we allow no excuse for ourselves. We will not plead for the life of a single sin—

**“Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;  
My heart has so decreed!  
Nor will I spare the guilty things  
That made my Savior bleed.”**

Oh, for the holy fury of a sanctified iconoclast who will spare nothing which is opposed to God! We are called to break in pieces every idol, to cast down every grove and to overthrow every altar so that Jehovah may be God alone in the land. I charge you, never compromise with sin—abhor the idea of compromise with error and with evil. If you say, “I will only sin so far,” you might as well say, “I will only take so much poison, or stab myself a few inches deep.” Alas, you have given up the fight when you have come to terms with the foe! A hot temper may be natural, but it must be conquered! An obstinate spirit may be inborn, but it must be cast out! A proud mind may be a family heritage, but it must be laid low! Certain weeds may be indigenous to the soil of your Nature and therefore it may be doubly difficult to extirpate them, but the work must be done. Keep the hoe going—never cease from the determination to uproot the last of them! Even though you open your mouth and pant with weariness, yet keep your face set like a flint towards holiness and let your case be that of one who is “faint, yet pursuing.”

Note that the follower after holiness *seeks renewed strength*. Why does he open his mouth and pant? Is it not to get more air, to fill his lungs again, to cool his blood and to be ready to renew his running? When you have an hour’s retirement from the battle against sin, spend it in refurbishing your shield and sharpening your sword—for another assault will soon be upon you. We *can* become strong again. “He gives more Grace.” We are never, for a moment, to suppose that we have exhausted the strength of God when we have exhausted our own. We ought to be all the more earnest to draw upon Divine all-sufficiency!

We are to be like that fabled giant whom Hercules could not overcome for a long while because he was a child of the earth—every time he was thrown down he touched his mother earth and rose with fresh strength. Hercules had to hold him aloft in his arms and there strangle him. Now, whenever you are thrown down and call upon your God in your faintness and weakness, you will find that He restores your soul—“To them that have no might He increases strength.” When cast down we cry, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” “When I am weak, then am I strong.” May we realize the truth of that Christian paradox! Brethren, *we can* overcome sin in the power of the Lord!

The Canaanites have chariots of iron, but Christ has a rod of iron with which He can break them in pieces. Sin is strong, but Divine Grace is stronger. Satan is wise, but God is All-Wise. The Lord is on our side, therefore let us open our mouth wide and take in another draught of

Heaven's reviving air! Let us bathe in the Water of Life! Let us drink from the smitten Rock and in thus waiting upon the Lord we shall renew our strength. Has He not said, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"? When our desires are after the best things, we may expect the Lord to meet with us and grant us times of refreshing from His Presence. In remembrance of these visitations and the time of intense desire which preceded them, we can say, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments."

The Psalmist was *dissatisfied with his attainments*. Brethren, may we never be content with *ourselves*. We are satisfied with the Word of God. We are satisfied with the Gospel of God. We are satisfied with the favor of God. We are satisfied with the Christ of God. But we shall *never* be satisfied with our own personal condition till we wake up in the likeness of the First-Born Son! Satisfaction with self is the death of progress! He that is not content with his place in the race will push forward. But he that is proud of his position in the running will soon flag and fall behind. Like the man on the bicycle, we must keep going—to stop is to drop. On! On! On! You are only safe as the wheel spins round and you throw the miles behind you.

My text is not the utterance of one who is sitting in his armchair with the motto on the wall behind him, "Rest and be thankful." As for the man who feels as the Psalmist did, his mind is far away in the land beyond him. His opened mouth and panting heart speak of desires which are not as yet fulfilled. Yet, let no tinge of discouragement mingle with your dissatisfaction—*this man is hopeful of better things*. He opens his mouth because he looks for something to fill it! He pants because he believes in brooks which will relieve his thirst. Wise men will only pant for that which it is possible to attain. We are not Quixotical—we have set out on no romantic expedition. We do not shoot at the moon nor aim at an absurd ideal. We are not even rash like those who seek the North Pole and risk their lives for a dream.

Brothers and Sisters, God can make us holy! Few of us have any adequate idea of what we may become, even here, by Divine Grace. The possibilities of sanctification are seldom explored, but the mass of professors are content with small things in this direction. When a man asks me, "Can I be perfect?" and looks as if he would lead me into a debate upon the subject, I try to find out what manner of man he is before I answer him. If he is worldly, given to appetite, an angry man, a hard man, a proud man, or a lover of his own supremacy I smile at the question as coming from him. I picture to myself a man who slept under a hedge last night, whose pockets are full of emptiness, whose clothes would disgrace a rag bag, out at elbows and beggarly—and this gentleman wishes to discuss with me the question—"Is great wealth attainable by an ordinary working man?" I cannot see what the question has to do with him!

He of the rag bag says, "You know, Sir, we cannot all acquire 10,000 a year." "No, my dear fellow, it would seem that we cannot all save 10 *pence*, much less 10,000 a year. Had you not better get a pair of shoes for your

feet before you talk about *thousands*? These are great words from a very little man.” When you are not doing what you might do, why speculate about what is possible or impossible? When a man has not enough Divine Grace to make change for a sixpence, he may waive all question about the millions of *spiritual* perfection! Do you cry, “Can I be perfect”? I answer, leave that question until you are much further on the way to it than you are now. Do not be distressed by the fear that you may by accident become better than you should be!

I will insure against that calamity at a very low rate. Have faith in God and say, in His name, “If perfect holiness is possible, I will have it. If it can be reached on earth, I will reach it.” All that the Spirit of God can make of such a poor sinner as I am, it is my desire that He should make. I gladly submit myself and all that I have to His gracious operation. Brothers and Sisters, do you not say the same? I would like to have a very dissatisfied congregation at this time—I wish that everybody here would go out of this Tabernacle grumbling at himself! I would like to hear each one say, “It will not do—I must get out of this! I must rise to a higher condition—I must be more Christ-like! I must have less and less of self.”

Brethren, may we be burning with an insatiable desire to be holy and may we say with the Inspired penman, “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.”

**II.** Desire, where it is real, will soon embody itself in prayer. Therefore we find the Psalmist PLEADING FERVENTLY FOR THE HOLINESS HE DESIRED. Here are his breathings: “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” You see, dear Friends, *he believes in God’s power to bless him* and therefore he turns to Him and cries, “Look You upon me.” Is that all? Is a *look* sufficient? Listen to me and I will show you that there is much in a look. Is it not written, “Look unto Me, and be you saved”?—that is *our* look to God! If our looking to God saves us, what will not *God’s* looking at *us* do?

If there is so much power received by the eye of faith, how much will be *given* by the glance of love from God? Think not little of a look from God. A look—only a look! Yes, but it is from Him. Remember what a look from Christ did for Peter. He did but look on him and *swearing* Peter turned to *weeping* Peter in a moment! Great sinners may be grateful for a look, for it is more than they deserve. Great saints may rejoice in a look, for it means much when the eyes which look are the eyes of Omnipotent Love! “Look You upon me.” The favor of God is a choice means of sanctification.

While affliction is greatly used of God to cleanse the heart, yet a very noble, soul-filling sense of the love of God is the truest sanctifier in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you know that God loves you with an everlasting love, you will love the Lord and hate every false way. If you walk in the light of His Countenance, you will walk in the way of His commandments. If God’s love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, like sweet perfume, your life will be fragrant with it. It will become natural for you to please Him who loves you infinitely and immutably! Blessed is that man upon whom God looks—I mean, looks with an eye of favorable regard.

Lord, look on me and say, by that look, “I have called you by your name, you are Mine,” and this will cause me to keep in Your way! That is what the Psalmist is here praying for! The Lord can sanctify us with a look of love. His choice makes us choice—His love fills us with love.

Observe that the pleader *appeals to mercy*. Let me draw your attention to the text, “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me.” To be delivered from the power of sin is the greatest of mercies. Sin is a misery from which we can only be saved by mercy. “Be merciful unto me.” We have no claim upon the Lord by way of merit—our appeal is to His Sovereign Grace. We have no rights—these we forfeited by our treason against our King. We plead, as the courts say, “*in forma pauperis*,” or as the poor man seeks help from pity.

Our appeal is *ad misericordiam*—to mercy and compassion. When you come before God in prayer, seeking sanctification, base your request upon His mercy—“Lord, You have done much for me. Do still more and make me holy. I have not profited by Your discipline as I ought to have done. Deal with me in patience. I am poor material for the potter’s skill, but exercise Your long-suffering and bear with me and go on with Your work of Grace until You have made me a vessel fit for Your use.” It is truest, wisest, safest for us to appeal to mercy. The best of saints are sinners, still, and sinners always need mercy.

Then *he pleads as one who loves God*. He asks God to deal with him, saying, “As you used to do unto those that love Your name”—implying that he is one of them. Come, dear Friends, are you of the number of the lovers of the Lord? Do you love God’s name?—that is to say, His Character and His revealed will? “Yes, that I do,” cries one, “God is my exceeding joy and I delight in His Law after the inward man. His holiness was once terrible to me, but now I admire it and delight in it. Oh, that I were a partaker of it to the full!” You see the man’s character by the way in which his heart takes its pleasure! If any man truly loves God he will grow like God. The revealed Character of God is, to some of us, a joy forever—and this is a sure mark of Divine Grace.

We are not what we ought to be. We are not what we want to be. We are not what we *hope* to be. We are not what we shall be—but we do love the name of the Lord—and this is the root of the matter. We shall be like He, for we love Him. Thus the very fact that the Lord has filled us with love to Himself is a plea for further Grace to keep His commandments. The Psalmist employs *the grand plea of use and custom*, for he says, “As You used to do unto those that love Your name.” Use and custom generally have great weight in a court of law. A friend said to me, “How will such a suit go? The case has never been before a court until now?” I answered, “Are you sure that what was done is according to universal and long-continued custom? For, if so, though there is no law, the custom of the trade will stand.”

Custom among men reaching far back holds good in court—how much shall the custom of the eternally unchanging God decide His future acts! The Psalmist pleads the Lord’s own custom! And this is a grand plea with

Him because He is unchanging. Whatever He *has* done He *will* do—and His having done it is a pledge that He will do it again—unless there is any declaration to the contrary. The Psalmist seems to say, “You are in the habit of helping those that love Your name. Lord, help me. It is the way of You to sanctify Your people. Lord, sanctify me! When saints desire to be holy, You are accustomed to grant their desires. Lord, grant mine, for I have the same desires!” Is not this a good plea—“Be merciful to me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name”? If you think it a good plea, urge it at the Throne!

This involves another fact—*he joyfully accepts God’s method*. When you cry to God to help you in your overcoming of sin, you must consent that He shall do it in His own way. Now, if it is His will that sanctification should involve chastisement, are you willing to take it? “Oh, yes!” you say, “Lord, do unto me as You used to do unto those that love Your name. And if it is written, ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,’ Lord, rebuke and chasten me so long as You do but love me.” We kiss the rod because the Father who uses it deigns to kiss us. We assent to the processes of Divine Grace that we may enjoy the results of Divine Grace. It may so happen that if God sanctifies you, He may have to grind you very small—cheerfully yield yourself to the mill!

If this is the way in which He deals with those that love His name, do not desire any different treatment. As the result, you may become a butt for the ridicule of ungodly men, but of this do not complain—for this has frequently happened unto those that love His name. God sanctifies His people, but not without their own effort in that direction—be willing to make the effort, too. Say, “Lord, I will breakfast with Your children, I will dine with Your children, I will sup with Your children and I will go to bed with Your children hoping to rise with Your children. Lord, take me into Your house and treat me not as a stranger or a guest, but as a child! I do not ask for the best bedroom, nor to have a special feast made for me—I would only share the daily bread of Your little ones.

“If You treat Your children so-and-so, treat me the same and I will be grateful. I do not ask to go to Heaven without enduring tribulation on the road. I would not pray to be exempted from the general description—“These are they that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” We would not have less than the family of love and we cannot desire more! It is enough for a sheep to be fed with the flock, for a child to fare like the rest of the family. Do you see where we have come? Our prayer is that God would make us *holy*—holy through His favor, holy through His own gracious working. But we leave *methods* in God’s hands—let Him take His own way, His tried way, His ordinary way, His fixed way—only let Him deal mercifully with us as He used to do unto those that love His name.

Let no one of us demand exemption from the customary tests and trials—

***“Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease***

***While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?"***

Do you expect to be crowned without warfare? To be rewarded without labor? You expect what you will never have! Give up such idle dreams and plead the prayer of my text—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

**III.** I thank you for your deep attention—it is greatly helpful to me in my feeble state. Will you bear with me while I conduct you to the third head, which is this—we see the Psalmist ENLARGING INTELLIGENTLY UPON THE FAVOR HE SEEKS. It is a good thing to come before the Lord with a prepared prayer. "A prepared prayer!" cries one. "Would you have us write out our prayers and learn them?" I did not say, or even *think* of such a thing! But for a man to drop on his knees and to imagine that he can at once pray acceptably without a preparatory thought is for him to deceive himself.

The best prayer is when a man waits a little and considers, "What do I need? If I had an invitation to visit the Queen and was told that I might ask whatever I pleased of Her Majesty, I should prepare my request. If I wished to make the most of the interview, I should reflect and set my petition in order. I might ask amiss—I might ask for something inconsistent, or something unfit for royalty to bestow—I should therefore turn my prayer over. When you go before God, it is well to know what you are in need of. Our older Brethren used to say in prayer, "We would not rush into Your Presence as the unthinking horse rushes into battle." I suppose they would not, for, as a rule, they did not make much of a rush at anything! I do not wish to quote the old-fashioned remark so as to revive it, for I have often wished that the old horse had been put into an omnibus and worked to death. Horses are not expected to think and therefore the term, an unthinking horse, was needless! Still, there is something in what the expression meant—we must not go before God without thought and reverent preparedness of heart and mind.

Now, let us see how the Psalmist puts it. His cry is for holiness and *he describes it as being ruled by the Word of God*. "Order my steps in Your Word." The different sects have differing ideas of holiness, but the reality of holiness is only one. It is this—"Order my steps in Your Word." If we *believe* God's Word, we are orthodox. If we *practice* it we are holy. This Book is the great umpire as to conduct—*not* the changing moral sentiment of passing generations! Pray God to order your life according to His Word. To this Word we must be conformed. This is our copy to write by—this is the image to which we must be molded.

*He would have holiness in every step of his life*—"Order my steps in Your Word." It is not, "Lord, order my journey as a whole," but, "Order my steps." We lose a great deal by lumping things—in the matter of holiness detail is all-important. Brothers and Sisters, I would not only preach a holy sermon, but I desire that every word may be a holy word, every sentence a right sentence. As you believe in the verbal Inspiration of the Bible, so pray for verbal *guidance* in your speech and minute direction in

your actions. The whole Book of Life will be excellent when every line and every letter is ordered according to the Word of the Lord. When we are careless as to the parts we spoil the whole.

Notice that *he would have every step* ordered. “Order my steps.” We wish to put the right foot forward, but the right foot to move may not always be that which is called the right. The left foot may sometimes be the right and we must not take things for granted. We wish to put down our right foot in the right place, at the right time, with the right degree of force and turned in the right direction. A great deal of holiness depends upon order, punctuality and proportion. If order is not Heaven’s *first* law, it is certainly *one* of its laws and proportion is another.

Some men’s lives are out of perspective. Do you remember Hogarth’s caricature of a picture without perspective wherein a man appears to be fishing in a river but is really standing far away from it? A sparrow in a tree looks like a huge eagle and a man on the top of a hill is borrowing a light from a candle held out of the window of a house down below on the other side of the river. Without perspective, good drawing is impossible—and without proportion a complete life is impossible. A man may be, in many points, a good man. You may say of him, bit by bit, “Yes, *that* is good and *that* is good,” and yet he may have so much of one virtue that it may become a vice—and he may have so little of another virtue that it may be a grave defect. We can never attain to the right proportion of the virtues unless the Lord Himself arranges them in order for us. O Lord, help us! Order our steps!

We remark that *he would have every step full of God*— he would have each one ordered of the Lord. He would receive his strength, his motives, his guiding influences direct from the Lord—“Order my steps in Your Word.” Lord, when I put my foot down there, may it be at Your order. And when I move it to another place, may it still be at Your command. Whether here or there, may I only step where You appoint. Let me go nowhere apart from Your Divine guidance and command. “Well,” cries one, “this is difficult.” But, my Brother, although obedience may not be easy, it is free from the far greater difficulties which accompany self-will! A child who will do nothing but what his father commands does not find his course difficult—the difficulty comes in when he wants to follow his own will and to have his own way.

You cannot serve God and self! If you try it, the mixture is nauseous and injurious. Say, “Lord, I would consult You about everything I think, or say, or do, for then that which I do will not have to be undone—that which I say will not be wished unsaid—and that which I think will not have to be wept over. ‘Order my steps in Your Word.’ Put me under orders. Keep me under orders and never let me escape Your orders.”

Observe that the last part of the verses is the negative way of describing holiness—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” *He would be wholly delivered from the tyranny of sin.* Many men are violent against one sin, but the true saint abhors *all* sin. You are a teetotaler. I am very glad to hear it—you will not allow the sin of drunkenness to have dominion

over you. But are you selfish and ungenerous? Have you developed habits of strict economy in regard to religious donations so that you always give a penny where you ought to give a pound? What have you done? You have only changed your idols! You have dethroned one usurper to set up another! If you were once profane and are now hypocritical you have only changed iniquities!

It is a very curious thing how one sin feeds on another—the death of profligacy may be the resurrection of greed. The flight of pride may be the advent of shameless folly. The man who was lewd, riotous, brawling and irreligious has killed those sins—and on their graves he has sown a handful of a poisonous weed called pride—and it flourishes amazingly! It may be London pride, country pride, or English pride, or American pride—but it is rare stuff to grow—and to grow over the rotting carcasses of other sins. Unbelief may dethrone superstition, but its own reign may be no real improvement upon that of credulity. If you only throw down Baal to set up Ashteroth, what progress have you made towards God? Little does it matter which of the false gods is set up in the temple of Jehovah—He hates them all! The right prayer is, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

Some sins are of respectable repute and other sins are disreputable among men. But to a child of God every sin is loathsome. Sins are all what Bunyan calls Diabolonians and not one of them must be suffered to live in the town of Man-Soul. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” I can see the throne set up within the heart of man. Who shall sit on it? It cannot be empty—who shall fill it? This sin, that sin, or the other? No, Lord, help me to keep every intruder out of it! Whether he come as an angel of light or in his true character as the devil, help me to treat every one as an enemy that would seek to supplant You in your dominion over me!

Oh, that God may reign over us from morn to eve, through every day of every week of every year! “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” is a prayer against the reign of sin. Sin will attack us, but sin shall not subdue us, for it is written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” You may put up “*Trespassers, beware!*” but the trespassers will come, do what you may. Still, they shall not be allowed to acquire a right of way through our Nature. If a bird flies over our head, we cannot help it—but we will not let it make its nest in our hair. So a temptation may pass by us, an evil imagination may flit over the mind, but we will not invite evil, nor patiently endure it, nor allow it to lodge in our souls! Our bosom’s throne is for the King of kings, Jesus, the Bridegroom of our hearts! This is our prayer—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

I fear that many professors have never understood this prayer. One man is a splendid man for a Prayer Meeting, a fine man for a Bible class—but at home he is a tyrant to his wife and children. Is not this a great evil under the sun? Another man is stern and honest and he inveighs with all his might against every form of evil—but he is hard, even to cruelty, with all who are in his power. One is generous and fervent, but he likes a sly

drop. Another is good-natured and pleasant, but he puts it on in his bills at times and his customers do not find the goods quite of the quality they pay for. I have known a man who would not work on the Sabbath, but then he never worked on the other six days—and another who never broke the Sabbath, but he broke many hearts by his unkindness. Beware of pet sins! If you let a golden god rule you, you will perish as well as if you let a mud god rule you. Be this your constant cry—“Let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me.”

I have done when I say just this. I have been describing these longings, but I have only been taking you to that preparatory school of which I spoke at the commencement. Already some of you are saying, “I do not think I shall make a rapid scholar even at this preparatory school.” The first thing you have to do is to see that you *have* these longings strong within you. If you have them, thank God for them. To pant and pine after holiness is infinitely better than to be self-righteous! Cultivate these desires and cravings. But, in the next place, never rest content with mere *longings*. He that really longs is not content to long—he desires to have his desire fulfilled. The only way to be holy—you that have not begun—is to go to a holy God through the holy Mediator!

Trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and so be reconciled to God by Him who alone can put away sin. Then go again to Jesus and ask Him to renew you in the spirit of your mind and wash you with water from the power of sin, as He has washed you with blood from the guilt of it. When you are washed, take care that you keep your garments unspotted from the world. When you have once known the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, do not return again to folly. Follow on watchfully and resolutely. Seek the daily renewing of the Holy Spirit and so shall you go from strength to strength till you shall be like your Lord and shall see Him as He is.

May God bless my feeble words and put power into them for your eternal good, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 119:119-136.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
42, 119 (SONG II), 119 (SONG III).**

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# A PAGE FROM A ROYAL DIARY

## NO. 2372

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 5, 1894.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1888.**

***“Look You upon me and be merciful to me, as You used  
to do to those who love Your name.”  
Psalm 119:132.***

[“We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression and it tallies with David’s experience in many interesting points. In our youth, our teachers called it, ‘David’s pocketbook,’ and we incline to the opinion often expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life.”—C. H. SPURGEON’S *Note in The Treasury of David as to the author of Psalm 119.*]

PERHAPS YOU noticed, while I was reading, that during the writing of several of the verses, David occupied himself with the praises of God’s Word. He kept to that point, extolling with all his might those Scriptures in which God had spoken to his heart, but he could not go on long without prayer. If these meditations were written in his pocket-book, day by day, it is noteworthy that although he fervently praises the Word of God, yet he also frequently breaks out into prayer. However the child of God may occupy his mind—and he very properly employs it in many holy occupations—yet he often turns to *prayer*, for he cannot live without it. Well does Montgomery say—

***“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air.”***

We *must* pray. Brothers and Sisters, we are bound to praise God for all His goodness. We cannot help bearing testimony to His faithfulness and His Truth. We are delighted to engage in all acts of holy service, but, in addition to all that, we *must* pray. Prayer is a *sine qua non* with us—we continually come back to that sacred exercise, for, without it, we *are* nothing and can *do* nothing. Therefore, again I say, we *must* pray.

Notice, also, how brief David’s prayer is, and yet how full of matter! I believe that very often, the longer the prayer is, the less there is in it, and that the best prayers that were ever prayed have usually been the shortest. An arrow may easily be too long and prayers should be like arrows shot from the bow of faith. If they are short, it does not matter, as long as they are sharp and went on their way with a good pull of the bowstring. The first petition, here, is very short, but very full—“Look You upon me.” The words are few, but the sense is deep, as I shall have to show you. Oh, that we all spoke with greater freshness and naturalness in prayer—

that we had no thought about keeping on with fine language, but great anxiety as to holding on with a firm grip of wrestling, pleading prayer!

The whole of our text is but short, yet it contains much more meaning than I can bring out to you in this one discourse. I want to call your attention to four things in it. First, *David's brief petition*—"Look You upon me." Secondly, *his humble confession* (it is not given in so many words, but it lies hidden away like the perfumed violet beneath the green leaves)—"Be merciful unto me," which is a virtual confession of sin. Thirdly, *his tacit profession*, for he says, "as You used to do unto those that love Your name," which is tacitly saying that he loves God's name, or else he could not pray the Lord to deal with him as He used to do with such people. And, fourthly—and here I shall enlarge somewhat—*his gracious aspiration*. The highest, loftiest wish that David had was that God would deal with him as He was accustomed to do unto those that love His name. He did not want to fare either better or worse than the rest of the Lord's family, so he boldly prayed, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

I. To begin with, here is, in our text, DAVID'S BRIEF PETITION—"Look You upon me."

I think that these words came to David's mouth from his heart and that he prayed, "Look You upon me," *because his own eyes had failed him*. Turn to the 123<sup>rd</sup> verse. If you look at it, you will see that one thing in a saint may suggest another. In that verse he wrote, "My eyes fail," and in our text he says, "Look You upon me. Lord, when I feel as if I could not look at You, do You look at me! My eyes fail me. I have washed them out with rivers of water, I have flooded them with fountains of grief. Unbelief has come in. I cannot see as I would—the dust of the world and the smoke of care have dimmed my eyes—I seem to grow blind, my Lord, and though I would always look at You and never take my eyes off You, yet my eyes fail me!" In such a case as that, it is so sweet to pray to God, "Look You upon me."

Brothers and Sisters, there is great virtue in our looking to Christ—it is the way of salvation! What virtue, then, must there be in Christ's love-gaze upon us! A faith-look at the blood of Jesus gives us peace, but, as I always remind you, it is *God's* sight of the blood that brings us salvation. Did He not say to Moses and Aaron, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you"?—

***"When your eyes of faith are dim  
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim."***

When you cannot see your God, still say with poor Hagar, "You God see me." Jehovah is the all-seeing One—remember that and be comforted. If your eyes are put out, His eyes can never be blinded—still does He look upon you with compassion and see you with His eyes of Grace. Again I say, Lord, if ever I should forget to look to You, or if ever I should be in such a state of despondency that I cannot look up to You, look You upon me!

Next, notice that *man's eyes had misjudged David*. I think the Psalmist's prayer is to be read in this light, that he had been condemned and persecuted by the ungodly and he was evidently under the oppression of

man as we noticed in reading the 134<sup>th</sup> verse—“Deliver me from the oppression of man.” Men had misconstrued his words and misrepresented him, so now he says, “Lord, look *You* upon me! Whenever evil men look at me, they look with disapproval—they do not see what should be seen, but they see a great deal that is not really there. Lord, I know what they say of me, but *You* look upon me!” It has fallen to the lot of many of us to pass under the censure of men and the cure for that censure is to cry, “Lord, look *You* upon me.” Mr. Blind-Man, the foreman of the Vanity Fair jury that condemned Christian’s brother, Faithful, said, “I see clearly that this man is a heretic.” And the blinder bad men are, the more fault they can see in God’s people, even when there is nothing of evil to be seen! They will make it up if they cannot find it and they will swear to it even if they know that it is not so. It is not for a child of God to battle with them about the matter, but to turn his eyes to the Lord who is our only Judge and, with David, to pray, “Look *You* upon me.”

Again, do you not think it was this that made the Psalmist pray in this way? He knew that *God’s eyes perceive what His servant needs*. David opened his mouth and panted—he knew he needed *something*, but he hardly knew what it was! At times we do not know how to word our prayers because our sense of need is so very great. It seems idle to ask for one thing when we need everything! When we are quite emptied out, we scarcely know where to begin, and when our case is very puzzling and perplexing, we cannot tell what to ask for when we come to the Throne of Grace. That is a sweet thought, “You, my heavenly Father, know what things I have need of before I ask for them!” Prayer is not for God’s *information*, but for *our instruction*! We need to be made to learn what our needs are, but God always knows them. It is a very blessed thing, when we cannot tell what our needs are, to utter such a prayer as this, “Look *You* upon me, O Lord! You will see what I need. You will see wherein I fail. You will see how I struggle. You will see what I suffer. Lord, look *You* upon me!”

This is also, to my mind, such a lovely and God-honoring prayer because it leaves all with God. David does not say what he thinks the Lord should do. When prayer dictates to God, it has gone beyond its lawful bounds and it is not, then, proper prayer. But the Psalmist prays, “Lord, look *You* upon me.” When he was very sick, he did not say, “Lord, heal me,” but he prayed, “Lord, look *You* upon me.” An ordinary physician’s look, alone, is not worth much, but one glance of the Great Physician’s eyes is sufficient to cure all the maladies of the heart! We need the earthly physician’s hand and his medicine and, possibly, the surgeon’s knife. Ah, but we get *everything* in a look from our Lord!

When Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, did He preach a sermon? He did a great deal more than that! Did He rebuke the liar? He did a great deal more than that! Did He draw the wanderer back to Himself? He did a great deal more than that! Oh, nobody knows how much lies in one look of the eyes of God! Let us, each one, present this prayer to-night—“Lord, here is my case. I do not understand it—I know what I would like—but I am not sure whether it would be right for me to ask for it. I put myself before *You*—look *You* upon me. I sit, like the blind man

by the wayside, and all I ask is that You will but turn Your face this way and see me where I am, and see what I am. And if You will but do that, do what else You please. I will not dictate to You as to what You should do. I will leave myself and my affairs entirely in Your hands—only look You upon me.”

I think David also meant this petition, “Look You upon me,” in the sense in which we sang just now—

**“Look upon me, Lord, I pray You,  
Let Your Spirit dwell in mine!”**

In this sense, *God’s look will be a sign of Divine favor*. Frequently, in Scripture, God is represented as turning His face away in anger. But when He looks towards His chosen ones, it is in love. Brothers and Sisters, is there anything under Heaven more delightful than to be loved by God and to *know* it? The love of God, in itself, is inexpressibly sweet, but if you do not apprehend it, it is a sea of sweetness of which you do not taste, or like a mountain of honey to which you cannot gain access! But oh, to be loved of God and to *know* it would make a man dance if he were in chains! It would turn a dungeon into a palace if the poor prisoner were sure that God loved him! And that is precisely what David means when He prays, “Look You upon me..” “...Make Your face shine upon Your servant.” Do you see men scowling, and do you hear them howling? What does it all matter? God is smiling and that is an end to all the oppression of man! One sun soon puts an end to all the darkness. One glimpse of God’s smiling, reconciled, eternally-loving face, drives away all sorrow from the Believer’s heart! The Psalmist’s prayer, “Look You upon me,” means just that.

I think, too, that David meant one thing more, that is, that *God’s look could prepare him for future obedience*. When David said to the Lord, “Look You upon me,” he meant, “Look at me and see that I am armed for the fight against evil. O Lord, look me up and down, search me all over and see that I do not lack any necessary thing! Look at me inside and outside. Look at my brain, look at my heart, look You upon me to see that there is nothing omitted that will be necessary for my future conduct in the world, in the Church, in the household, or alone with You!”

Does not the Psalmist mean all that I have said? And did I not speak truly when I told you that this little prayer, “Look You upon me,” has much more in it than I can draw out of it in a single discourse? I advise you to pray it as it is, with all the meanings packed away in it—“Look You upon me.” God help you to do so!

**II.** Our next division is DAVID’S HUMBLE CONFESSION. It is not actually expressed in words, but it is hidden away in his next utterance—“Be merciful unto me.”

The Psalmist’s confession is the link between his first prayer and this second supplication. *His prayer grew out of this confession*. He prayed to the Lord, “Look You upon me,” because he could not, himself, look to God. And then he added this petition because he realized his need of Divine mercy. “Be merciful unto me.” Do you remember the Savior’s parable, or the fact the Savior described when He said, “Two men went up into the Temple to pray. One of them, the publican, standing afar off,

would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’? Surely David, long before that story was told, was acting it out! He dared not look up to God. He could not look up, or he would not have prayed, “Look You upon me.”

Then he cried, “Be merciful unto me.” *By this petition he evidently sought forgiveness.* Mercy is only for guilty people. Favor may be for the miserable, but mercy is for the guilty. One said, the other day, “Oh, I am such a great sinner!” And a wise person, who stood by, said, “I am glad to hear you admit it.” “Oh,” answered the other, “but I am lost.” “It is so,” responded the friend, “and I am pleased to hear you confess it.” “And why are you so pleased? It sounds rather cruel to be glad because I am a sinner, and pleased because I am lost.” “Ah,” said the wise Christian instructor, “but Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s. He, Himself, said, ‘the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” There would be nobody to receive mercy if nobody were guilty! Oh, that you might all feel, whether you are saints or sinners, that the language of the text suits you! “Be merciful unto me.” “Oh,” said one, “I do not think I have been as guilty as some.” Nevertheless, there is no way to Heaven but one—and that way is open for the vilest as well as the most moral. “Be merciful unto me,” is the prayer you *must* learn to pray if you hope to enter the Kingdom of God!

It is evident, also, that *upon this ground, alone, the Psalmist sought for the blessing he desired*—“Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me.” Do you see what he means? “Lord, I do not expect a look from You except as a proof of Your mercy. If You only give me a glance of Your eyes, it will be a token of mercy.” If we get a crumb from God’s table, it is a mercy. If we get a promise out of His Word, it is a mercy—if we get *anything* from the Lord it is a mercy—but if we receive forgiveness of sin, what a mercy that is! Did you ever try to fathom the depth of mercy that lies in the forgiveness of a single sin? There are some sins in our lives which will always be remembered by us. That night when you gave way to that one particular fit of temper which led to that one dreadful act of sin, has God forgiven that? Ah, yes, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” When you cannot forgive yourself, yet you may know that God has, for Christ’s sake, forgiven you. You may have all the more pleasure in knowing that He has forgiven you because you cannot forgive yourself. That sin which overwhelms you and lays you in the very abyss as you remember it—that is the sin God delights to pardon! What a blessing it is that it is so, that we are able to assure you that, “He delights in mercy,” and especially in this particular form of mercy, the blotting out of sin! After David had sinned with Uriah’s wife, or after other great transgressions, this prayer was especially suitable, “Be merciful unto me.”

There I will leave this part of my subject, but I pray God the Holy Spirit not to leave it, but to lay it home to some hearts here. People are getting ready for Whitsuntide—some will be going into the country, and others are obliged to keep their shops open late before the holidays—therefore we are fewer in number, here, than usual, but I have been wondering whether God does not intend to save somebody who has come in

here, tonight, because it is the holiday season? The Lord grant that it may be so! What can be more appropriate to you who are conscious of guilt and groaning under the heavy burden of sin, than that you should pray these two petitions of David's supplication—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me"?

**III.** The third point, upon which I will not detain you long, is DAVID'S TACIT PROFESSION. There is, again, hidden away, here, not uttered in words, but secretly implied, a profession of love for the Lord—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name"

If the Psalmist does not actually declare that he loves God's name, he does at least say, "Lord, put me down among them that love Your name. Count me with them. I want to love Your name, O Lord; therefore, treat me as You treat them!"—

***"With them numbered may I be,  
Now, and through eternity!"***

David hardly dares to say that He loves God's name, but he does practically say it by praying that God will treat him as He treats those who do love His name. Some of those who love God best are not the loudest in proclaiming their love. I believe there are some, here, who would die for Christ if it were necessary, yet they have not had the courage to come out and confess Him. I heard of a good woman who was afraid to testify before the Church, of her faith in Christ. As she was going away, she turned round and said to the minister, "I cannot speak about my faith, Sir, but I would die for Christ." "Come back," he said, "come back! That confession is better than any other sort of speaking."

There have been some, in the time of the martyrs, who have been very loud in their professions, but they have recanted at the last—while others, who have been very timid have been the bravest of all when the burning day came. I remember that one martyr, when chained to the stake with two others, slipped down from under the chain and was hidden by the firewood some two or three minutes. All thought he had recanted, but he came back and placed himself in the chains, again, and stood up boldly to be burned to death. He said to a Brother at his side, "I lost sight of my Lord's face, and I could not stand there to burn until I had found Him, again. He has come to me so sweetly and now, by His Grace, I shall die like a man."

If we have Christ with us, how strong we are! But if He is not with us, we are weakness itself! I cannot, therefore, condemn those who are afraid to say very boldly that they love the Lord's name. I hope, however, that they will have the courage, at any rate, to slip in edgewise and sandwich themselves between some other Believers, and say in the words of the text, "Be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

But the true child of God does love his Lord's name. What does that mean? He loves God's name, that is, *he loves the Person of God*. He loves God! His heart goes out towards the infinitely glorious Jehovah. *He loves the Character of God*. There are a great many, nowadays, who want Jehovah to be improved upon. When they read of the God of Holy Scripture,

they do not like *Him*—they say they want a kinder and more tender God. These are the men who worship the gods of modern thought—gods newly come up which are more like the devil than the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! But the true child of God loves God as he finds Him and as he finds Him in Holy Scripture—the one living and true God who made all things, and by whom all things consist. This is the God we love, adore and worship!

The genuine child of God also *loves God's Revelation*. That is often what is meant by the expression, "His name." He who is right with God loves every Doctrine of the Scriptures and every part of that Doctrine. He does not try to alter and improve the Scriptures, nor to prepare an addendum to the Word of God—he loves the Revelation given to us in the name of God and loves every point of it. By the, "name," is sometimes meant *the Glory of God*. I trust that the very feeblest of us can say that we love the Glory of God. When we hear Him praised, our hearts are all aglow. When we hear anything that is said against Him, our indignation burns vehemently, for we love His name. Oh, that God would grant us Grace to love Him far more than we do!

I must not say more on this point, for I have only a little time left, and I need that for the last division of my discourse.

**IV.** Fourthly, we are to consider DAVID'S GRACIOUS ASPIRATION. What he asks is that God would be merciful to him as He is accustomed to be to those who love His name. That is our aspiration, too—I trust we want God to deal with us as He deals with the rest of His people.

Notice, here, that *David would be dealt with as saints have always been dealt with*. If God treats us as He treats His children, I think we may be perfectly satisfied. There was a time when, if anybody had said to me, "The Lord will put you among His children and treat you as one of them," I would have been ready to dance for joy! And I do not run back, today, from the solemn conviction that if He will only treat me as He treats the rest of His family, I shall be perfectly satisfied. How is that? How does the Lord deal with His children?

Well, you know what He used to do to those who loved His name. He used to come and visit them. For instance, there were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These all had visits from the Lord, as did Moses, when God was in the burning bush. In olden days, God could be found in the desert or in a bush. He came to His people by the brook side, by the river, in the fiery furnace and in the lions' den. And it is still the use and habit of God to visit His people! Did He ever visit you? Pray that He may visit you as He used to do to those who loved His name. Lord, come and visit me under a tree, as You met Abraham! Come and meet me beneath the city wall as You met Joshua of old! Come to the river's brink, as You came to Ezekiel by the river of Chebar! Come to the lonely island, as you did to John in Patmos!

God not only used to visit those who loved His name, but He used to instruct them. What teachings they had from Him! What revelations and manifestations of Himself! Lord, teach me as You used to teach those who loved Your name!

How patient, also, He was with them! They had many faults and failings—and they grieved His Holy Spirit—but He forgave them and went on teaching them! And when they fell and wandered from Him, He restored them and brought them back.

Then you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord was always faithful to those who loved His name. When He made them a promise, He always kept it. He said He would meet them, and He did. He said that He would help them, and He did. He said that He would strengthen them, and He did. He said that He would give them victory, and He did. He never was a liar to them—He never left them in need. By the mouth of His servant, Jeremiah, He asked, “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?” He never broke a single condition of His Covenant, so I think we can, each one, pray, “Lord, look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name!”

But notice this, also, the Lord used to whip them when they needed it! Those who loved His name were chastened. Asaph said, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” Well, suppose you should have the same treatment? You can thank God that He is doing to you as He used to do to those who loved His name! If He had a child of His who was strong, He used to try and test him. If he was brave, He made him fight. If he was vigorous, He made him bear burdens. You will always find that, in proportion to the strength the Lord gives, so He sets the trial. That is how He used to do to those who loved His name.

You cannot tell how it has comforted me, sometimes, when it has been said to me, “You are reproached.” “Very well,” I say to myself, “that is how the Lord used to allow it to be done to those who loved His name.” “But you have lost your reputation through standing up for the Truth of God.” “Yes,” I answer, “that is how it used to be done to those who loved God’s name. That is the way His servants have always gone to Glory.” You can go to Hell with a whole skin if you wish to do so, but you must go to Heaven with many a bruise and gash. If you would be faithful to the Lord, you must *expect* to be despised—but take it all as part of the lot that belongs to you and do not quarrel with it. Do you expect to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? I should be sorry to see you trying such a plan of going to Heaven, for that is *not* how the Lord used to do to those who loved His name! Do you expect to go all the way to Heaven, clapped and applauded by an eager throng, crying, “Well done”? Is that how He used to do unto those who loved His name? Far from it! Therefore, be satisfied if God deals with you as He used to do with those who loved His name.

I think, also, that when using these words, David meant that *He was quite willing that God should deal with him in His usual way*, in His regular order. He did not want to have some special railway thrown up for him in which he could ride first-class to Heaven, but he was willing to go the old way, the way the holy Prophets went, and the saints, and martyrs, and confessors of God! That is to say, *he did not want salvation without holiness*. He did not want justification without sanctification. He did not want pardon without regeneration. He asked God to do with him as He used to do with those who loved His name and, with them, you

know, the water and the blood always went together—they had the new heart as well as the new robe. Acceptance in the Beloved did not come without there also being an acceptableness of holy character given by the Spirit of God.

Next, David did not want profit without exertion. He was not one of those who said, “I want to be happy, but never to do anything. I want to take the promises, but to have no part in Christian service. I want to understand without reading the Scriptures. I want to be taught and comforted without coming to hear sermons—I want to lie down and sleep myself into Glory.” No, He was willing that God should do with him as He used to do unto those who loved Him.

David did not expect to have answers without prayer. The Lord Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” We should be willing to have it as it was done to those who loved the Lord’s name. David said, “Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” Some of our Churches expect prosperity without Prayer Meetings and hope to get many converts without unitedly asking for them. Perhaps half-a-dozen Christians meet for prayer on Monday evenings, or perhaps a few gather on Wednesdays when there is half a lecture and half a Prayer Meeting, so that they can say that they do have a Prayer Meeting when, in reality, they do not have one at all! But David said, “Make me pray, Lord. Do not give me anything unless I pray for it! Compel me to plead with You and then give me Your blessing!”

Then, again, David did not expect to pass through life without experiencing difficulties. He had to fight Goliath and he had to go into the cave of Adullam. He expected to have troubles and he certainly was not disappointed. Nor will you be. Do not reckon that God will give you a life without difficulty! Tell me, if you can, of any child of His who ever had such a portion? He had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow. No, that Son who had no sin was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—so you must expect the Lord to deal with you as He does with the rest of His household.

Lastly, you cannot expect that you shall have continual enjoyments of the light of Christ’s Countenance and a blessed experience of the sweets of His love, without having struggle of soul and conflict of spirit which come from the fact that the devil is not dead, that the world is not changed, that sin still dwells within you and still causes you grief. “Deal with me, O Lord, as You used to do with Your children! I do not want to be picked out from the rest and treated as a favorite.” David once had a favorite child, Absalom, and a dreadful fellow he turned out to be! God does not fill us with sweetmeats—it is not His custom to take away all trouble and give us nothing but joy. Sweetmeats at night mean medicine in the morning! God grant us Grace to be willing to take the bitter with the sweet, to be baptized with Christ’s Baptism and to drink of Christ’s cup—and to always be satisfied as long as we may follow where the bleeding Savior leads the way!

Now, dear Friends, I have done. I hope there has been a word for everybody. And if there has been a word from me to you, let there be a word

from you to God—and let this be the prayer that you utter before leaving this house, “Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:129-144**

**Verse 129.** *Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.* Every true Believer admires God’s Word and, more than that, it amazes him—“Your testimonies are wonderful.” View them from any point you may select, they are wonderful—wonderful in themselves, wonderful in their operation, wonderful in the way in which they endure all kinds of testing and yet remain the same—“Your testimonies are wonderful.” This wonder, however, in the true Believer, leads to godly practice, to holy living—“Therefore does my soul keep them.” Our soul must be like a golden case in which we store the priceless jewels of the Word of the Lord. You cannot rightly keep God’s Word anywhere but in your soul. To keep it merely in the memory, or in the intellect, is of no avail.

**130.** *The entrance of Your Words give light.* The very first principles—the elements of God’s Word—are full of light and no sooner does it come into the heart than there is light, directly. How much more light does it give when it penetrates into the secret chambers of our being and we begin to understand its deeper mysteries!

**130.** *It gives understanding unto the simple.* God’s Word gives understanding to those who feel that they have very little mental ability—“the simple.” They are only plain people who must have the Truth of God put very simply before them or else they cannot comprehend it, but as soon as ever God’s Word enters their heart, even such people get understanding. It is not the Word *outside* the heart that gives the blessing—it is the *entrance* of the Word that gives true life to the soul!

**131.** *I opened my mouth and panted.* That was an admirable way of praying—no words were used by the Psalmist, but his soul expressed itself by panting, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.”

**131.** *For I longed for Your commandments.* The very best kind of prayer is that inarticulate panting in which there is a longing, a sighing, that cannot be expressed in words.

**132, 133.** *Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my step in Your Word.* “Lord, I have found the way into Your Word. That is the road I intend to travel. Now I pray You to guide my every step.” They say that, “Order is Heaven’s first law,” and certainly a Christian should lead an orderly life. He should be a “Methodist”—he should have a *method* in all that he does—and he should pray for God to order his steps according to His Word.

**133.** *And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.* A hypocrite says to himself, “I do not swear, I do not steal and I do not lie, yet I allow other sins to have dominion over me.” But a true man of God will not have any master but the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not put his neck under the foot

of even the most attractive sin. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” That is the Psalmist’s prayer. Here is the Apostle’s answer to it—“Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

**134.** *Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.* He does not mean that he will not keep God’s precepts if he is *not* delivered from man’s oppression, but there are persons in such circumstances—Christian wives with wicked husbands, godly servants with ungodly masters, Believers who are greatly oppressed by evil men—and they desire to be delivered from the oppression of man that they may be the better able to keep God’s commandments.

**135.** *Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* What a blessed prayer that is! Let each one, here, pray it tonight—“Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.” The Lord is our Sun! He is the very Sun of Heaven—they need no sun, there, because they see His face!

**135.** *And teach me Your statutes.* The Lord’s servant ought to know the Law of his Lord’s house. How can he be an obedient servant if he does not know his Master’s will? So the Psalmist prays, “Lord, I will take it as a favor if You will teach me Your statutes, that I may not only *know*, but also *do* them!”

**136.** *Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.* Some think that the Psalmist meant that his eyes wept because they, that is, his *eyes* did not keep God’s Law. You know how easily sin comes in through the eyes and goes out through the eyes, too. Well may those eyes weep in sorrow that have lusted towards sin. But I think the Psalmist alludes, here, to *the ungodly*. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. “Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.” Perhaps David referred to his own children, or he may have meant his soldiers—those rough, rugged warriors who were led by Joab. He met with many in his own country who turned aside from God and he wept over them. It is a blessed sign of Grace when you can weep over other men’s sins. Do not say, “So-and-So has gone wrong,” and treat the matter with indifference. If you can do so, you may question whether you have Grace in your own heart, for a true Christian ought to be tender and compassionate at the thought of the sinful things around him. There are some who can look upon the error and false doctrine which abound everywhere and say, “Oh, let it alone! Do not trouble yourself about that.” But he who walks with God is not of their mind—it is a constant grief and agony of spirit to him that men keep not God’s Law.

**137.** *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgements.* It is always well to set God in contrast with wicked men. If others are unjust, He is not. If they forsake the Truth of God, He does not.

**138.** *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* True to the letter, true always, true to the core.

**139.** *Your zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words.* Yes, God’s faithful servants become the more zealous when others grow cold. When they see that God’s Words are forgotten by others, they remember them all the more and they grow exceedingly zealous for the Law of the Lord.

**140.** *Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it.* It is pure in the sense of being unadulterated and it is pure in the sense of being holy. There is nothing in the Scripture that would lead us to sin, nor excuse it—it is a wonderful condemner of sin. “Your Word is very pure.” Notice the Psalmist’s use of the word, “very.” In the 138<sup>th</sup> verse, he says, “Your testimonies are very faithful.” And now, in the 140<sup>th</sup>, “Your Word is very pure.” “Therefore Your servant loves it.” When purity draws out our love, it proves that our heart, itself, loves that which is pure—and the heart that loves purity is a pure heart.

**141.** *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts.* He was poor but pious, little but loving, despised but devoted. It was the man who had but one talent who went and dug in the earth and hid his Lord’s money. David was not of that kind. He was small, but he knew he was not too small to sin. He was despised, but he did not, on that account, think that he might turn aside from the right path.

**142.** *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.* God’s Word does not change, it is everlasting, and the righteousness which it reveals and which it proclaims to us is everlasting.

**142.** *And Your Law is the Truth.* God’s Word is not only true, but it is “the Truth.” The Truth is God’s Law and God’s Law is the Truth.

**143.** *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me.* Just now he said that he was despised and now he says he is unhappy. Trouble without and anguish within seemed to grip him as in a vice.

**143.** *Yet Your commandments are my delights.* A man of the world cannot understand how a Christian can be in trouble and yet be full of delight, but it is true. We can be cast down, but not destroyed. We can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. We can be poor, yet make many rich. Here you have another holy paradox—“Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet Your commandments are my delights”—not only his *delight*, but his *delights*! As if he had a whole host of them—a great company of joys, and a chorus of holy mirth!

**144.** *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding.* That is a great prayer, not only, “give me to understand,” but, “give me understanding.” It is one thing to tell a man the Truth of God, but quite another thing to make him understand it. And if you make him understand a particular Truth, he may not understand another, but David asks for understanding with which he might be able to comprehend *all* the Truths of God—“Give me understanding”—

**144.** *And I shall live.* God grant that this prayer may be offered by each one of us and heard by the Lord, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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# ORDERED STEPS

## NO. 2487

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
OCTOBER 18, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 29, 1886.**

***“Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any  
iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Psalm 119:133.***

NOTICE, in the previous verse, how the Psalmist expresses his longing desire to be treated as one of the Lord's family—“Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name.” We, also, dear Friends, wish to be treated as God treats all the rest of His children. I am sure that every humble Believer will be quite content with that arrangement. There was a time when you would have been willing that He should make you one of His hired servants, but you have seen the mistake of such a desire as that and now your prayer is, “Deal with me, O Lord, as one of Your children; treat me according to Your custom with Your redeemed! I do not ask anything different from the lot of the rest of the heirs of Heaven. If they are poor, I would be poor with them. If they suffer reproach, I would be reproached with them. If they carry a cross, I would carry a cross, too. Whatever is the appointed portion of the Lord's children, I am prepared to share and share alike with them. If You chasten them, I hope to have Your chastening. If You smile upon them, I shall delight to be smiled upon as You are known to smile on them.” Brothers and Sisters, we feel a sweet kind of communism in the Church of God—we, none of us, desire to have anything more than this common lot of the redeemed family.

At the same time, each Believer must have and will have his own apprehension of his personal needs and he will, therefore, present to the Lord his own special prayer. I hoped, just now, when we were praying, that my words might suit the cases of many of you, but I felt more concerned that each one should be offering petitions and the thanksgivings for himself. Oh, what power there often is in those personal prayers where there is no audible voice, but only the lips move, as did Hannah's! At such times the woman of a sorrowful spirit goes her way comforted because of her secret fellowship with God. Do not imagine that *any* form of prayer—liturgical or extempore—can meet the needs of your case at all times. No, you must present your own *personal* supplication, and the Lord seems to say to you, as Ahasuerus said to Esther, “What is your petition, and it shall be granted you. And what is your request...it shall be performed.”

It seems to me that my text may suit all of us who are in this assembly. I am sure that it suits me. I have prayed it before I have preached from it and I desire to be praying it while I am preaching concerning it. I commend it to those who are just beginning the Divine Life and I suggest it as equally appropriate to those who may have wandered somewhat out of the way of holiness. Yes, and I suggest it to those who are venerable and full of wisdom. I suggest it even to my elders, to the beloved fathers in our Israel, that this is a prayer which may last all of us right up to the gates of Heaven! "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." You, too, who are just beginning to seek the Savior, should be told that this is the kind of spirit to which you will have to come—and if the Lord brings you to be His own, this is the kind of prayer that you will pray. And if you cannot pray it and *will* not pray it, you will bear witness against yourselves that you are *not* the children of God. I am sure that I am not too severe when I say that.

**I.** As the Holy Spirit shall enable me, I want to bring out four things in this text which are well worthy of your earnest consideration. The first is the COMPLETE SUBSERVIENCE to the will of God of the man who thus prayed, "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

You see, he begins his prayer with the word, "*order.*" He is a man who wishes to be under orders. He is willing to obey the Lord's commands and he is anxious to receive them and to be made to carry them out. Now this is *not* the way of the world—worldlings say, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? We are our own masters! Who is Lord over us?" Free thinking and free living—these are the desires of ungodly men. But when the Grace of God has renewed the heart, the soul finds its true freedom in *obedience* to Christ's commands, and its best thinking while sitting at the feet of Jesus to observe His gracious Words.

"Order my steps in Your Word." Beloved, once we lived without any order or plan, or method, but the Grace of God makes us method-ists in the highest possible sense. It makes us live according to God's method—and our prayer is that we may never be disorderly, but that in all things, just as the universe is arranged by God, and all the stars keep their appointed courses, so we may be made to take our proper places, and may be kept in them—joyfully obedient to the will of the Most High! It is one of the marks of the Grace of God when we ask God to order us and willingly put ourselves under His command.

Moreover, the Psalmist prayed, "Order my steps in Your Word." He was perfectly satisfied with God's Revelation. He had not so much of it as we have but there was room enough in it for all his steps. "Order *my steps in Your Word.*" He needed no greater liberty than the Bible gave him, no wider range than he found in the commands of the Most High. His prayer was like that verse we sang just now—

***"Make me to walk in Your commands,  
'Tis a delightful road.  
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,  
Offend against my God."***

Are you satisfied, dear Hearer, to keep within the compass of the Divine command? If so, take it as an evidence that God has changed your heart!

But oh, my dear Hearer, if you live outside of that Book. If you never get inside it at all. If you never care what it says, what it promises, what it commands—then take it as certain that you do *not* know the Lord! Let us, each one, at this moment breathe this prayer to God, “Order my steps in Your Word. Make me to live as a man who is under authority—one who finds directions for his living in the Law of his God, and who makes it his desire and his delight to be conformed thereto.”

So you see the complete subservience of the man of God—his earnest desire that he might be cleared from every kind of iniquity. I may mention that in the Hebrew, the prayer, “Order my steps in Your Word,” may mean, “*Make my steps firm in Your Word.*” The Psalmist would be kept from all vacillation, hesitation, or wandering, but he wants, when he is right, to be firmly right, to be distinctly, decidedly right, so he pleads, “Make my steps firm.” Oh, how we often stagger along! We do what is right, but we quiver and shake while we are doing it! Have you not known, dear Friends, what it was to seem to be wavering? Your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped. But the Psalmist’s prayer is that his obedience may be firm, decided, steady obedience. You young beginners will do well to pray that this experience may be yours. It is often given to God’s saints, when they have been long in His ways, to get confirmed in habit of righteousness so that they are not carried about by every wind of temptation. And it should be the prayer of all God’s servants that they may be so established in righteousness that they can say with the Apostle Paul, “From henceforth let no man trouble me.” It is no use for them to try it, for they cannot entice me away from my dear Master’s service. “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” I bared my back to be branded as Christ’s slave so that the mark shall never be removed as long as I live! I have given my arm to be tattooed with the Cross, so that never, while I have an arm to move, should it belong to anybody but to Christ Himself!

It is a blessed thing when you reach this point and say, “I cannot and I will not listen to your temptations, O sinful world! You may call, but I will not answer. You may invite, but I will not listen. The time of parleying is past, the hour for making my choice is over. I belong to God and my prayer is that my footsteps may always be confirmed in obedience to His mind and will.”

I leave this prayer with you as to its complete subservience. Do you kick against it? Do you want to be something other than God would have you to be? My dear Hearer, I am sorry for you! But if, on the other hand, you yield to Him and desire to be like wax under the seal, that God may stamp upon you His own Image—and no other than the Lord is dealing with you in a way of Grace—then you may confidently hope that you belong to Him.

**II.** Now, secondly, I call your attention to the CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS of this prayer, the detailed watchfulness of it—“Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

You see that the Psalmist enters into detail when he presents this petition. He does not say merely, “Order my life,” but, “Order my *steps.*” Godly men desire to be kept right by God even in the little things of life. It is

often in little things, such as steps, rather than in long periods of running, that the good or the evil may be most plainly seen. Blessed is that man to whom there exists no such thing as a trifle, who desires to serve God even in the jots and tittles, for he shall not fall by little and little, as so many have done. He shall not have gray hairs upon him here and there, and yet not know it, for his careful watchfulness shall enable him to detect the slightest defection from the right way and so shall he be able to hold to the straight path of integrity. Brothers and Sisters, the old proverb is, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves," which I will translate into the language of our text, "Take care of the steps, and the day's walking, as a whole, will take care of itself." True Christians want the Lord to bless them in *everything*, yes, even in those plain and simple words which drop from their lips almost without a thought. We do more wrong, perhaps, by lack of *thought* than by any will to do evil and, therefore, the necessity of crying to God, "Order my steps; take care of the little things in my life, that I sin not against You."

"Order my steps." That prayer means, "Order *my ordinary daily life*." Do not many think that religion is only something for Sundays? They put it on with their best hat and put it away when they put that hat back into the box. Believe me, that the religion which is taken up only once a week and dropped during the rest of the week is neither fit to live with nor to die with! It is like a bad bank-note—if you find such a counterfeit, you had better lay it down and run away from it—and not let anyone suspect that it ever belonged to you!

True godliness concerns the ordinary actions of daily life. Do not tell me what you can say at a Prayer Meeting. What do you do in the parlor? What do you do in the kitchen? How do you behave yourself towards your wife? How do you act towards your children? "He is a very good man," said one to me, "he is a very good man, indeed, but his children are all afraid of him." "Then," I thought, "he is *not* a good man, but a very bad man, indeed." I could not conceive him to be good—I would rather believe Rowland Hill's saying that a man was not truly converted if his cat and his dog were not the better off for it! It ought to be a blessing and it *must* be a blessing to everybody round about him if the Grace of God enters into his soul. "Order my steps in Your Word," means, "Help me to turn the common actions of my ordinary life into a hallowed service." When I put on my weekday clothes, may I be even as when a priest in the olden times put on his holy vestments and ministered before the Lord. And may everything that I do be the exercise of a sacred priesthood to the living God. The Apostle Peter's exhortation is still in force, "As He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation." So are Paul's injunctions, "Whether, therefore, you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

Thus the watchfulness included in the text concerns the little things and the ordinary things of our lives. And following the Psalmist's example, we shall especially pray about all *our advances*. It is by steps that we

go forward. This is the age of progress—everybody is crying out, “Forward!” Well, then, here is a prayer for those who wish to progress *wisely*. “O Lord, order my steps in Your Word! So shall my progress be a progress toward Yourself, a progress within the compass of Your sacred Truth.” He who outruns Scripture will have to come back again. He who goes beyond the boundaries of the right road will lose his way and the more progress he makes the greater will be the distance that he will have to return if he is to reach his journey’s end in peace. Pray this prayer, young man, if you want to be safe, “O Lord, order my steps in Your Word!”

There is great temptation, nowadays, to take up with anything that is new. A man buttonholes you and tells you of a new discovery that he has made. Well, hear what he has to say if you think well. “Prove all things,” but, “hold fast that which is good.” And be this your continual prayer, that your steps, when you take any steps, may always be ordered according to the Word of God. “Well,” says one, “you tie us up pretty tightly.” No, my Friend, I do not want to tie you up at all! You can roam where you like, but I know that the tighter I am tied, the better it is for me, and the happier I am. There is a prayer in the 118<sup>th</sup> Psalm which I always like to pray, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” Lord, hold me fast from morning till night, and through the night as well! I long that You should fill my very dreams with thoughts of You! Lord, bind me fast, both winter and summer, and every day in the year! I would not have a single hour in which You did not order me and command me! Lord, bind me as to every step I take, and every advance I make, for where may I not go if I ever advance beyond Your Word? And what can be good for me if You do not count it good, and what will You withhold from me if it is really good for me?

So I commend this prayer to you, dwelling much on these two points—first, complete subservience to the Divine will, and then careful watchfulness about all the details of your life. Only turn them both into prayers! Do not say, “I am going to order my steps.” Are you? Do not say, “I am going to obey God in everything.” Are you? This holy road is not fit for such feet as yours while you talk like that! Until you are shod with a simple dependence upon God you will never take to this narrow way. And unless the Lord holds you up in it, you will soon either fall in it or fall from it. So make no resolutions in your own strength, but offer the prayer of our text in the name of Jesus—and the Lord will hear you.

**III.** In the third place, I call your attention to the COMPREHENSIVE OBEDIENCE which is desired in this text.

It has two clauses, the positive and the negative. “Order my steps in Your Word.” That is, “Lord, make me positively to do the right thing!” Then, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” That is, “Lord, preserve me from any thought or word or deed which would be contrary to your mind and will!” He is the right sort of Believer who is an all-round Christian, one who is positive for doing right, but who is equally determined not to do wrong. We have some very active professors who are not, at the same time, watchful on the negative side. And we have a great many negative professors who might offer the Pharisee’s prayer, “God, I

thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” They look to some extent to the negative side, but then there is nothing positive for the right, there is nothing that they are really doing to please the Lord. We need to have a Divine amalgam of the two parts of our text, “Order my steps in Your Word” and, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

With regard to this comprehensive obedience, notice that the Psalmist desires that no sin of any kind should be tolerated within his heart—“Let not *any iniquity* have dominion over me.” Some men have their pet sins and some women have their darling sins. They cry to the evil things within, “Out with you, out with you all, *except this one.*” There is a winking of the eye, or a lifting of the finger which means to some iniquity, “You may stay behind.” “But, my dear Sir,” says one, “have we not *all* some besetting sin?” Possibly it is so, but what is a besetting sin? If I were to go across a common at dead of night and half-a-dozen men met me and gathered round me, crying, “Your money or your life!” I should be beset by them. Suppose that I had to cross Clapham Common tonight and that I was thus surrounded and robbed—I should be beset by the thieves.

But suppose I went that way again tomorrow night? And on Tuesday night, and on Wednesday night, and Thursday night, and Friday night, and Saturday night? Do you think that I should be able to say that I was “beset” by the robbers? People would naturally ask, “Why did you go that way? If you are attacked and robbed once, we can understand *that*, but what do you mean by going that way again?” Here is a man who says that drinking is his besetting sin. Well, my Brother, I can understand that you were led on, by degrees, from glass to glass till you lost your balance and were overcome. You call that your besetting sin and yet you still go to the public-house! Well, that is what I call going across a common on purpose to be robbed! And I do not believe your excuse about besetting sins.

I think that I have heard many things of that character, whereby people try to excuse themselves on the ground that some sin besets them. The Black man said that drunkenness was an “*upsetting*” sin much more than a “*besetting*” sin. I think he was quite right in saying so, and there are many other upsetting sins of that kind! Men open the door and say to some iniquity or other, “Come in, you are my besetting sin.” They put themselves in the way of it! They indulge themselves in it and then they talk as if they could not help it! Down on your knees and cry, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Lord, save me from it, for my desire is to obey You completely in everything without leaving anything out from under the dominion and sway of the Laws of Christ!”

**IV.** Now, lastly, this prayer commends itself very much to me, not only for its comprehensiveness, but because of a certain CAUTIOUS APPREHENSIVENESS which seems to lie in it.

I like the holy fear which glows within the Psalmist’s prayer like the fire within an opal. He says, “Order my steps in Your Word.” He means, “Lord, I am afraid to take a single step without Your orders. I am afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should go wrong!” “Happy is the man that always fears.” He that was too bold was never too wise. He that

leaped before he looked, looked very sadly after he had leaped. He shall go right who knows where he is going, is careful about the road and afraid lest he should go astray. He is the man who prays, "Order my steps in Your Word."

Then notice, especially in the latter sentence, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me," how the Psalmist seems to say, "Lord, I feel that I am *liable to the very greatest iniquity*. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me!" Is this *David* praying? I think it was the man after God's own heart who wrote this Psalm—and he proved in his life that the very worst iniquities might assail him and that he might become their prey for a time. O child of God, you must pray against the blackest sin! You do not know what you may yet become if the Grace of God does not preserve you. I am always afraid of people who are so very good in their own esteem—superfine, hot-pressed perfectionism is generally very poor stuff. I had an old friend who was very cautious upon this point. He was met, one day, by a man who had been many years the deacon of a church and who said to him, "Friend So-and-So, I want you to lend me 50 pounds." He knew him right well and he was quite prepared to write a check for the amount at once but the venerable deacon said, "You know you can trust *me*. I am not a man of yesterday, I am not like young people who are easily led astray to do foolish and wicked things. I am perfectly safe."

My wise old friend then said, "I cannot lend you any money." The other man asked, "Why not?" "I never lend money to people who are so good as you are, for I should never see it again if I did." That man was head over heels in debt and failed, soon after, for an enormous amount! Yet there he stood, as bold as brass, pleading what a good man he was! So the man who says that he cannot sin and that he is beyond the power of temptation—well, the Lord have mercy upon him! He is already in the snare of the devil and it may not be long before he will have sorrowfully to find it out. No, Sir, pray, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me," for, unless you are kept by God's Grace, there is no form of iniquity which may *not* prevail against you! The Psalmist feels himself liable to fall into the greatest transgression, so he prays, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

But the prayer seems to me, also, to intimate that he felt *fearful of the least evil*. There is here, to my mind, a very sweet apprehensiveness concerning *little sins*, if there *are* such things. "Let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me. Perhaps, Lord, I shall never be a drunkard, for You have given me reason, thought and the love of sobriety, but then, Lord, what use is it if I should be guilty of covetousness, which is idolatry? Let not that iniquity have dominion over me. And if I should escape from covetousness, perhaps I may fall prey to some secret lust. Lord, if there is a leak in the ship, the ship will go down. Even if there is not a leak in the stern of the vessel, yet if there is a leak in the prow, or anywhere in her hull, that will suffice to sink her. Lord, let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me!" Suppose that I do not fall by any of these known sins, yet if I do not walk with God, if I neglect secret prayer, if I have not yielded myself fully up to the working of the Holy Spirit upon me, the result will

be the same! This prayer is necessary for every one of us—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid for the most of you, that you will become the prey of any overt scandalous sins, but I *am* afraid that some of you may be eaten up with dry rot—that the termites may secretly eat through you and yet leave all the skin and outside of everything just as it used to be. We have heard travelers tell that when they have gone into their rooms which they had left for some time, there stood their boxes, their sets of drawers, and their tables, just as when they left—but as soon as they have touched them, they have dropped into so much dust—for the insects had eaten all the heart of the wood away! Is it not possible for us to get into that state—to seem everything that is good, and yet the very heart of us may be eaten out? Pray, then, this prayer, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

O children of God, you who really know and love Him, be concerned about yourselves that you be not mistaken and that you do not fall under the supremacy of any evil and false thing! Cry mightily to God about this matter! Search and try yourselves and make sure work for eternity. I say this especially to myself and to all ministers, for there are so many ways in which ministers may deceive themselves. We may preach to others and yet be, ourselves, castaways. I say this, also, to you Church officers and to you revered members of the Church who have grown gray in your profession. Take heed to yourselves and everyone of you breathe this prayer, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Then what shall I say to you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will you be found? "Oh!" says one, "I never made a profession of religion." You are proud of that, are you? Suppose you were brought before a magistrate and charged with being a thief and you said to him, "I never made a profession of being an honest man." "Oh!" he would say, "take that fellow to prison! He is convicted out of his own mouth." You never made a profession of fearing God? You never made a profession of believing in Christ—is that so, Sir? Then the Day of Judgment is almost a superfluity to you, for you have judged yourself and condemned yourself! And before long my Lord's sheriff will lay his skeleton hand upon you and arrest you in the name of that Divine Justice which you have despised! There will be no resisting him and you will have to go with him to prison and to death.

Before that dread event happens, I entreat you, by the very reasonableness of the thing, to consider, repent and turn to the Lord! Look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for He is the only way of salvation! Find in Him the power to hate sin and the power to conquer it, for there is no power anywhere but that which comes from His dear streaming wounds and from His ever-living Spirit. Look to Him—and when you have done so and have trusted Him—then pray this prayer to the Lord, "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:129-144; MATTHEW 15:1-13.**

**Psalm 119:129.** *Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.* It is very wonderful that God should speak to us at all, but still more marvelous that He should write to us such a book as this Bible. The Book itself is full of wonders and one of those wonders is that it reveals Him whose name is “Wonderful.” Observe that the Psalmist, having said to the Lord, “Your testimonies are wonderful,” does not add, “Therefore do I sit down and wonder at them.” No, his appreciation was *practical*, let ours be the same—“Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.”

**130.** *The entrance of Your Words gives light.* Those who are most ignorant and have least confidence in their own abilities will, nevertheless, become very wise if they study God’s Word.

**130-131.** *It gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.* What a wonderful verse that is! The Psalmist cannot describe his longing for God’s commandments except by going to the brute creation for a suitable metaphor! He had probably seen the hunted stag stand still and pant to get its breath, all the while longing for the water brooks. So he says, “I opened my mouth, and panted.” “I could not put my prayer into words, so I panted. My heart, my breath, my lungs, my very soul panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”

**132.** *Look upon me*—That is all the Psalmist needs and all that we need, too. If a look from us to God will save us, what must a look from God to us do for us? “Look upon me”—

**132-134.** *And be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.* Some of you, perhaps, may hardly be able to do as you would if you were perfectly free to act, for you are, to a certain extent, under the government and power of ungodly persons. Well, here is a prayer for you to present to the Lord. “Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.”

**135.** *Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* That is the best sunshine for us! Let us but have the light of God’s Countenance and nothing can put us out of countenance! If the Lord will smile, men may frown as much as they please. So we pray with the Psalmist, “Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.”

**135-136.** *And teach me Your statutes. Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.* The Psalmist felt for others as well as for himself. It was not enough for him to be holy—he would have others to be the same. Sin in other men brought sorrow to his heart. “Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because *they* keep not Your Law.”

**137.** *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments.* After having wept over the sin of men, the Psalmist turns with sweet calmness of spirit to the goodness of God.

**138.** *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* “Very faithful.” You who have tried and proven God’s promises must have found them so—not only faithful, but *very* faithful, faith-

ful to the letter, faithful to the moment. God seems rather to exceed His promise than ever to fall short of it.

**139-140.** *My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words. Your Word is very pure.*—Just now the Psalmist said, “Your testimonies are very faithful. Now he says, “Your Word is very pure.” There is no adulteration in this blessed Book—it is the pure Truth of God. You cannot add to it or take from it without making it imperfect! “Your Word is very pure.”—

**140.** *Therefore Your servant loves it.* It is only a pure heart that loves the pure Word of the Lord! So, if you love the Word of God because of its purity, it is an argument that your heart has been renewed by Grace!

**141.** *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts.* In verse 139, the Psalmist complained that his enemies had forgotten God’s Words. He does not complain of the fault in others and then fall into it, himself, but he says, “Yet I do not forget Your precepts.” There are some people who seem to think that it does not much matter what they do. If they were persons of influence, they think that they would be very careful of their example. “But,” says one, “I am only a feeble woman—a poor mother with a few children.” “Oh,” exclaims another, “I am only a child as yet, I cannot influence others!” “Oh,” cries a third, “I am simply an ordinary working man, nobody notices me.” Listen to what the Psalmist says, “I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts. I do not make an excuse out of my littleness, that I may be careless in my living.” Take that message home, dear Friends, and learn its lesson, for it applies to many of you!

**142.** *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness*—What a wonderful sentence! Just now, the Psalmist said, “Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteousness.” (See the marginal reading of verse 138). Now he advances another step and says, “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.”

**142.** *And Your Law is the truth.* That is what I believe this Book of God is—“*the truth.*” I know of nothing Infallible but the Bible. Every man must have a fixed point somewhere—some believe in an infallible pope, and some in an infallible church, but I believe in an Infallible Book, expounded by the Infallible Spirit who is ready to guide us into all truth—“Your Law is the truth.”

**143.** *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet Your commandments are my delight.* What a curious mixture this verse describes! Here is a man full of trouble and anguish, and yet full of delight at the same time! Little do they understand human nature and especially gracious human nature, who cannot comprehend this paradox. There are many seemingly contradictions in the Christian life and this is one of them. “Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me”—as dogs lay hold of their prey—“yet Your commandments are my delights.” The Apostle Paul pictured another such a case as this when he wrote, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” And he also described the Christian paradox, “As unknown, and yet well known, as dying and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." May we all understand these paradoxes in our own experiences!

**144.** *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.* Now let us read what the Lord Jesus said to those who professed to reverence the Scripture, but who really made it void by their traditions.

**Matthew 15:1.** *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying.*—They had taken a journey to come and attack Him. Perhaps they had been sent as a deputation to try to thwart the Savior. What a vexation of spirit it must have been to His pure and holy mind to come into conflict with these triflers, these self-righteous, self-confident men! Why did they come to Christ? To plead with Him for the poor people who were perishing for lack of knowledge, or to ask Him how souls could be saved and how God could be glorified? Oh, no! They came to ask the Savior about a very different subject—

**2.** *Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* Would you have thought that full-grown men could have made it a matter of business to come from Jerusalem down into the country to talk to Christ about the fact that His disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate their breakfasts? Yet we have men, nowadays, who make a great point of what is to be done with the so-called "consecrated" bread that is left, and who are much concerned about what kind of a dress a "priest" ought to wear when he is engaged in the performance of certain duties! How sad is it that such trifles as these should occupy the minds of immortal beings while men are dying and God is dishonored!

**3.** *But He answered and said to them, Why do you, also, transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* He answered their question by asking another, in which he drew the contrast between transgressing the tradition of the elders and transgressing the commandment of God!

**4-6.** *For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatever you might be profited by me; and honors not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.* Whatever might be said about regarding the tradition of men, God's commandment must be regarded! That stands first and, therefore, our Lord demanded of these scribes and Pharisee an answer to His charge that they had overridden and overlaid a commandment of God by a tradition of their own. If a father and mother, in great need, said to their son, "Help us, for we need bread," and he answered, "I cannot give you anything, for all I have is dedicated to God," the Rabbis taught that he might be exempted from relieving his parents, although they also said that *the next day* he might undo the dedication of his property and employ it exactly as he pleased. He might use the fact that he had said, "That shekel is for God," as a reason for not giving it to his father who was in need—and then, the very next day—he might take that shekel and

spend it exactly as he chose. So God's commandment to honor, and love, and aid our parents was set aside by their tradition.

**7-9.** *You hypocrites! Well did Elijah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near to Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Our Lord never flattered anybody! See how honestly and in what plain terms He addressed these scribes and Pharisees! Yet these were the great teachers of His day and thought themselves the bright light of the age, the very leaders of the people in all that was good! But Christ addressed them as, "You hypocrites," and gave them a text of Scripture which clearly applied to them. They had all manner of outward forms of worship. They talked very much about the Bible—they studied every Word of it and even counted the letters in every chapter—but they had no regard to the real meaning of God's Word! And their heart was not right with the Lord. The Savior patiently talked with them, but He also sternly rebuked them and denounced them as hypocrites.

**10.** *And He called the multitude.* As much as if He had said to the scribes and Pharisees, "I cannot waste My time arguing with you. I am going to talk to these poor people who are perishing and I shall have more hope of doing good among the multitude than among you, though you consider yourselves the aristocracy of the church."

**10, 11.** *And said to them, Hear, and understand: not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* This was not very clear at first, it needed to be thought over and well considered. The Savior dropped it into the popular mind, like a seed, and left it to grow and develop in due season.

**12.** *Then came His disciples, and said to him, Do You know that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* The wonder was that they were not offended before! It certainly was not a matter of concern to Christ whether they were offended or not—He would not tone down the Truth of God in order to please them.

**13.** *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.* Every teacher whom God has not sent will find his teaching contradicted by Christ. The Truth of God is like a spade—it turns up the soil for that life to grow in it which should grow—and it is also the means of killing the weeds. "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." May we all be plants of His right-hand planting! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERSION III), 119  
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# A WELL-ORDERED LIFE

## NO. 878

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1869,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Order my steps in Your Word and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Psalm 119:133.***

This is not the prayer of an unconverted man, or the cry of an awakened sinner foolishly expecting to find salvation in good works. It is the prayer of one who is saved and who knows it. The verse preceding the text shows this, for he asks to be mercifully dealt with as the Lord is accustomed to do unto those that love His name. He therefore is confident that he is one of those—that he is a partaker of Divine favor—and has the evidence of this in his love to the name of the Lord. Now, those persons who are truly saved are among the very loudest to cry out against anything like confidence in good works—you shall hear them denounce with all their hearts self-righteousness in every shape. You shall hear them preach up with might and main the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the *only* confidence upon which a soul may rest—and yet at the same time these people are, of all others in the world, the most zealous for good works and the most earnest, themselves, to be holy and in the fear of God to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things.

David was no professor of salvation by his own merits. He had been led by Divine Grace to trust in the sprinkling of the precious blood and to glory in another righteousness than his own. And yet he is indefatigable in prayer and in earnest endeavors to be purified from all faults of life and to be made in practical holiness the faithful servant of God. The prayer before us is the sighing of a saved soul after a higher state of sanctification—it is the panting of a spirit already reconciled to God, to be more perfectly conformed unto the Lord’s mind and will.

Let us carefully note each word of the text. “*Order*,” says David, or as some read, “direct,” “set straight,” “appoint,” “firmly establish,” or, “rightly frame my steps.” David, looking abroad upon nature, saw order ruling everywhere in Heaven above and on the earth beneath and even among the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea. He desired, therefore, to fall into rank and keep the harmony of the universe. He was not afraid of being laughed at for living by method and rule, for he saw method and rule to be Divine institutions. He did not aspire to a random life, or envy the free-livers, whose motto is, “Do whatever you like.”

He had no lusts to be his own master—he wished in all things to be governed by the superior and all-perfect will of God. In the text, King David bows in homage to the King of kings—he enlists in the army of the Lord of Hosts and asks for marching orders and Grace to obey them. Note

the next word, "My steps." He is anxious as to details. David does not say, "Order the whole of my pilgrimage." He may mean that, but his expression is more expressive and painstaking—he would have each single *step* ordered in *holiness*—he would enjoy heavenly guidance in each minute portion of his journey towards Heaven.

Much of the beauty of holiness lies in little things. Microscopic holiness is the perfection of excellence—if a life will bear examination in each hour of it, it is pure, indeed. Those who are not careful about their words and even their thoughts, will soon grow careless concerning their more notable actions. Those who tolerate sin in what they think to be little things, will soon indulge in it in greater matters. To live by the day and to watch each step is the true pilgrimage method. More lies in the careful noting of every single act than careless minds can well imagine. Be this, then, your prayer—"Lord, direct my morning thoughts, that the step out of my chamber into the world may be taken in Your fear. At my table keep me in Your Presence. Behind my counter, or in my field, or wherever else I may be, suffer me not to grieve Your Spirit by any evil.

"And when I come to lie down at night, let the action (which seems so indifferent) of casting myself upon my pillow be performed with a heart that loves You, so that I shall be prepared to be with You, if wakeful during the night." This brief prayer, "Order my steps," teaches us attention to the minutiae of life—may we have Divine Grace to learn the lesson. "Order my steps *in Your Word*." Notice the expression—not *by* Your Word, nor *according to* Your Word. The sentence means that, but it means far more. The Psalmist evidently looks upon the Word of God as being the very path of his life and he prays that he may walk within the lines which God's Word has marked out—may always keep within the sacred enclosures which the commands of God have made for the king's highway.

He does not pray, "order my footsteps *by* Your Word," as though it were a law hanging up upon the column in the marketplace, to be read and studied and then left hanging in its place—but *in* Your Word, as though it were engraved in his heart and then encompassed all his ways, thoughts and being. The word is the road of our marching, the sea of our sailing, the pasture of our feeding, the home of our resting. Lord, never allow us to have a step out of it, nor a disorderly step in it.

"And let not any iniquity have dominion over me," adds the Psalmist. He frequently adds a negative petition to his positive prayers, as if to complete them. The second expression is weaker than the first and is pitched upon a lower key, as if the suppliant would say, "If, O Lord, my steps cannot be so ordered in Your Word as to be altogether without sin, yet let not any iniquity gain the mastery of my spirit. Even in the aberrations of my soul, let it still be, in the main, true to You. If sin assails me, at least let it not enslave me. If for awhile I stray, yet let me be reckoned as still Your own sheep and not one of the flock of Satan. O my Lord, suffer no iniquity to sit down on the throne of my heart and make me its serf and

vassal. If I slip into the mire let it be but a slip and do not suffer me to wallow in it.”

Thus I have opened up the words one by one, and now, leaving out the last sentence, as we shall not have time to consider it this morning, I shall ask you to give me your earnest attention while we speak upon the solemnly practical topic of sanctification. First, we shall consider the *order* of a holy life. Secondly, the *rule* of holiness by which that order is arranged, “Order my steps in Your Word.” And thirdly, *the great Director* of that order—the Lord Himself. When we have spoken upon these points, we shall conclude with a few practical words and may the Holy Spirit graciously bless them to us.

**I.** A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of ORDER. David prays that his steps may be ordered. Holiness rejoices in symmetry, harmony, proportion, order. If we consider at the outset the order of holiness to be that of *conformity* to the prescribed rule, we have that rule given us in living characters in the Incarnate Word. The law, not in the hand of Moses, but in the hand and life of the Redeemer, is the *rule of life* to a Christian man. It behooves us that every single action of life should be, if judged by itself and examined by the all-seeing God, an upright action—an action conformed into the perfect holiness of the Lord’s Christ.

Alas, I fear there are many professors who do not hesitate to perform hundreds of actions without so much as once pausing to use the plumb-line of Christ’s example to see whether those actions are upright. But a tender conscience, a heart that has been really quickened by the Holy Spirit, will often pause and after each distinct act will say, “O Lord, my God, I pray You forgive Your servant if my words have not been ordered according to Your will. Help me, now, in the next step that I am about to take, that I may proceed according to Your mind.” Every step a man takes in life, remember, is a step towards Heaven or Hell. We serve God or the devil in all that we do.

No action of a man’s life is unimportant. The pilgrim either gains or loses by each step he takes. True, being in Christ, the Believer shall not perish, but being a child of God, his naughtiness shall bring upon him certain and sharp chastisement. If he sins, he shall lose rest of spirit and somewhat of the light of his Lord’s Countenance. We can never afford to trifle with our actions, words, or thoughts. Even when we are alone and do not seem to have any duty imperatively impressed upon us—standing as we do, even in solitude, in the full blaze of the Divine inspection—it is always incumbent upon us to the highest degree to watch the outgoings of our hearts, lest by any means, by evil imaginations, we vex the Spirit of God.

Men become fools when they think with levity even of their most inconsiderable actions. Life is evermore a great solemnity, linked as it is to God and to eternity. Take care that you so regard it and never trifle with it as though it were a Vanity Fair. Many men seem to play at living, but he does best who lives earnestly and thoughtfully each single instant and

lifts up his heart to God that every one of his separate thoughts, words and deeds may bear the scales of the Last Judgment and may be found in conformity with the righteousness of God. The first order, then, of a holy life, is the order of conformity to the Lord's will.

Another form of order after which we should strive, I shall, for the helping of our memories, style the *arithmetical*. Things are never in order when the second is *before* the first, or the fifth takes precedence of the second. Order in life consists very much in seeking *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness and seeking other things in due place. Order in a Christian life consists in putting the *soul*, first, and the body second—in putting *eternal* treasure first and worldly gain second, third, fourth, or far behind—in seeking, first, the Glory of God—and our own happiness only as a subsidiary aim. Oh, it is well with the Christian when he has learned his numbers well and gives the first thing the first place, the second thing the second place and the third thing the third place!

Since many men make mistakes here and put the major in the place of the minor and the servant in the place of the master, let it be our daily prayer, "Lord, teach me this sacred arithmetic and order my steps in Your fear." Another form of order is what the mathematicians know as *geometrical*. There should be a *progress* in Christian life. It should not merely be first, second and third, but there should be a continual advance. And if the advance is by a constant multiple, how greatly will a man increase! Why, take but the lowest number, two, and beginning with one, you come to two, four, eight, 16, 32, 64, 128, and so on, to I know not what greatness of number! He who did a little for Christ when but a babe in Divine Grace, should do more as a young man and most of all as a father.

He who, having but little faith, could bid the sycamore tree be plucked up, should, when he has more faith, command the mountain to be removed and cast into the sea! The youth who tore the lion in two, should, when a man, strike a thousand Philistines, hip and thigh, or tear up the gates of Gaza, posts and bar and all! We are never to be satisfied with what we *have* done. If you are self-content, you shall soon be poor. If you shall once say, "I have attained," you shall drift down the current. But a holy *dissatisfaction*, a craving after holiness, an opening of the mouth, a panting after something better—this it is which will conserve what you have as well as enrich you in things to which you have not yet attained!

The right order for a Christian is the order of advance. "Superior," cries the eagle, as he mounts higher and higher and leaves the clouds below him. Higher, higher, higher, Believer! This is God's will concerning you and do not be slack to benefit yourself of the consecrated privilege. "Order my steps in Your Word, O Lord, by a constant geometrical progression, that I may grow in Grace and in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

There is another order which every Christian should observe, namely, *the proportional* order. There are certain duties which, to the uninstructed, appear to conflict with each other. How far am I to observe the first table?

How far the second? Sometimes my duty to God may cross the track of my duty to my parents, or to my employer. What course, then, will be right? How far shall I go in either road without sin and where shall I stop without being guilty of omission one way or the other?

All Christians should endeavor to balance their lives that there shall not be an excess of one virtue and a deficiency of another. Alas, we have known professors whose Graces in one department have been so apparent as to become glaring, while the absence of Graces in another has been lamentably manifest! Some will have courage till they are rude and coarse and intrusive. Modesty will rule in others till they are cowardly and pliable. Not a few are so full of love that their talk is sickening with cant expressions, disgusting to honest minds—while others are so faithful that they see faults which do not exist! A third class are so tender that for the most glaring vice they make apologies and sin goes unrebuked in their presence.

The Character of our Lord was such that no one virtue had undue preponderance. Take Peter and there is a prominent feature peculiar to himself—one quality attracts you. Take John and there is a lovely trait in his character which at once chains you and his other Graces are unobserved. But take the life of the blessed Jesus and it shall perplex you to discover what virtue shines with purest radiance! His Character is like the lovely countenance of a classic beauty in which every single feature is in so exact harmony with all the rest, that when you have gazed upon it you are struck with a sense of general beauty, but you do not remark upon the flashing eyes, or chiseled nose, or the coral lips—an undivided impression of harmony remains upon your mind.

Such a character should each of us strive after—a mingling of all perfections to make up one perfection! A combining of all the sweet spices to make up a rare perfume, such as only God's Holy Spirit, itself, can make, but such as God accepts wherever He discovers it. May we have Grace, then, to keep the virtues proportionate. And remember, this can only become ours by waiting upon God with daily prayer, crying evermore, "Order my steps in Your Word."

Another form of order is that of *relation*. We stand not alone in this world. We are all the centers of circles and innumerable lines intersect each other in the region of our hearts. The Believer should ask that his steps may be ordered in conformity to the relations which he bears to all things. Towards God—what is the order of my life? To walk humbly with my God is my daily duty. O may God teach us this difficult virtue! Pride is inherent in us and I suppose we shall never lay it aside till we undress for our last bed. But pride before God, on the part of a sinful creature, must be a very abhorrent thing and our souls should daily agonize after true humility towards the Most High.

The Lord, moreover, *deserves* our love, our gratitude—and in consequence—our gratitude, our zeal, our daily service, our reverent homage, our loving consecration of spirit, soul and body to His cause. O that we

did but live as in His sight, seeing Him who is invisible! We are God's creatures, God's children, God's servants, God's elect, members of Christ's body, Christ's spouse—what manner of people ought we, then, be? The Lord help us to live according to our relationship to Him. Then we also bear a relationship to the Christian Church—and there is a fitness of walk in reference to our fellow pilgrims. We are not to be censorious and yet not blind to their faults. We are to be zealous, but not passionate.

We are to be independent of man, but not disobedient to Christian rule and order. Alas, how many are unwilling to take their true place in the Church, but desire to be first and to be highly esteemed. To certain persons it is one of the hardest lessons to know how they ought to behave themselves in the House of God! Factious spirits cannot learn the lesson and must set up small establishments of their own—on the principle that they had sooner rule in Hell than serve in Heaven! They cannot bring themselves to acknowledge discipline or maintain order—from such may the Lord deliver us!

We must not forget our relationships to our families. He is a sorry Christian who would neglect to walk in his own household according to the duties required in the Word of God. Are you a child? Christianity does not loose you from honoring your parents. Are you a servant? The Gospel of Jesus does not teach you to be an eye-server, to purloin, or to be pert and disrespectful. Are you a master? Your religion puts you under bonds to be the best of masters, for you yourself have a Master, even Christ. Are you a parent? Religion imposes upon you new duties to train up your children in God's fear.

Are we neighbors? Let us bless all around us—bless and curse not. Whoever our neighbor may be, we owe him, according to our Lord's law, no small consideration. I have no right to annoy my neighbor. I have no right to do anything which causes him loss or injury—on the contrary, I am bound to love him as myself and if I can serve him in any way, to lay myself out to do so. Beloved, you have relationships towards *sinners*. These are of a very solemn kind. Since Christ loved you and died to save you, He has taught you to love others and to be willing even to lay down your lives that they may be saved. Do you see how this subject opens up? It widens before our mind's eye into a boundless expanse!

What a strange thing must holiness be, then, if the man who possesses it has to act in conformity to a thousand relationships! What a wonderful piece of artistic adjustment! A painting by a master's hand! A work of art unparalleled! A music of intricate and ravishing harmonies! "An honest man," says the proverb, "is the noblest work of God." The phrase is correct and a holy man has the Truth of God. I dare to affirm that the balancing of the clouds and the arranging of the firmament, the upheaval of the mountains and the guidance of the stars—the creation of living bodies with all their wondrous tissue of muscle and sinew and nerve—yes, and all other works of God put together do not exceed in splendor of wisdom

and power the *holiness* of a life which has been molded by the Spirit's sacred power!

In holiness God is more clearly seen than in anything else, save in the Person of Christ Jesus the Lord, of whose life such holiness is but a repetition. The relationships which encompass us on all hands cast a clear light upon David's meaning in the words, "Order my steps in Your Word." I have not quite finished this subject. I must call you to observe that there is an order of *period*—the order of the celestial Almanac. Punctuality is demanded. Seasons must be kept, due time must be regarded.

Now the Christian man can only be said to have his life ordered rightly as to *time* when all his time is sanctified to noblest ends. Perpetuity of uprightness is the very beauty of holiness. No man's life is well ordered, if by fits and starts he is careful, and again is careless as to how he acts. Holiness consists not in the rushing of intense resolve, which like Kishon sweeps everything before it and then subsides, but in the constant flow of Siloah's still waters, which perpetually make glad the city of our God. Holiness is no blazing comet, amazing nations with a transient glory. It is a *fixed* star that, with still radiance, shines on through the darkness of a corrupt age. Holiness is persevering obedience—it is not holiness at all if it is but occasional zeal and sensational piety.

Moreover, holiness as to its order in the matter of time is seasonable. It is the fault of numbers that their virtues are always too late—they are patient when the pain is over, generous when the opportunity for liberality has passed away. They are forgiving after they have vented their anger in unkind words. They are sorrowful after they have done the ill and therefore evidently right at heart—but if they could have abstained from the ill, how much better! The tree that God commends brings forth its fruit in its season. Would God we all had this ordering of our footsteps that we could bring forth the appropriate virtue in its time. O if I could have back those opportunities of pleading with sinners which I have allowed to slip, how would I hope to use them! Could I have back those times for glorifying my precious Master which have now, alas, rolled away with the years beyond the flood—how would I seek to honor His dear name! But the fruit in its season did not come, alas, alas, for me! My God, help me in the future, that when the time arrives, the man may be ready for the time by Your Spirit.

Once more on this point, there should be about the Christian's holiness an order of *suitability*, by which I intend this—what would be right enough and as much as would be expected in an ordinary man, is not the measure of a Christian's service to his God. "What do you do more than others?" is a very pertinent question to every professor of the faith of Christ. To be *barely* honest, to be *barely* just—what is this? There are thousands of Atheists who are all this! To be observant of the Sabbath, to be careful in the maintenance of regular family devotion, what is this? Many a hypocrite has done this year after year for a lifetime! There is a peculiar tenderness of walk, an elevation of spirit, an unworldliness of mind which is

expected from the Christian—not as a man, but as a man *twice born*, as a favorite of Heaven, as one whose way is Christ, whose end is Christ—and who, therefore, cannot be allowed and tolerated in conduct such as might be expected from an unconverted man.

O Christian, you are a priest! Take care how you serve your God, at whose altar you stand! Let not merely the bells of your profession sound musically, but let the pomegranates of your holiness be your beauty. O Heir of Heaven, you are a king—play not with beggars! Grasp your scepter and rule over your lusts! Be of princely character, as you are of princely blood. You are a citizen of Heaven! Let your conversation be on high. You shall soon sit to judge angels? A place at the right hand of the great Judge in the last assize is reserved for you! As your honors, as your pedigree, as your estate, as your favors are, so let your life be and let your steps be ordered according to the dignity of your condition.

We have spent too long a time, but the subject tempted us. There are vast battalions of thought in ambush in the text.

**II.** Very briefly, in the second place, we will note THE RULE of this order. “Order my steps *in Your Word*,” not “Order my steps according to my wishes.” This would be mere self-will. Many men order their steps according to the principle of worldly profit and loss—that is good that pays—that is sure to be avoided which costs too much. This is meanness and greed. The true follower of Jesus does not ask to have his steps ordered according to the rule of pleasure as those do who always choose the easiest road, whether it leads down to Hell or up to Heaven. This is childish folly.

The good man is anxious to be conformed to God’s Word, let the road be rough or smooth. He does not ask to be conformed to precedent, as the multitude do who will not attempt what has never been done before—they must always tread where they can see the marks of traffic—*custom* is their law. Not so David. If he is the first to tread the path, he is well content if it is God’s way. It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right! Then singularity, and even eccentricity, become the highest wisdom!

Better go to Heaven alone than to Hell with a herd! The saint does not request to be conformed to tradition—little cares he for that—no, less than nothing. What matters it if one is damned according to old rubrics? Better by half to be saved according to the way which men call heresy. No, no! The saint cares not for the dogmas of priests or the traditions of the elders, but, “Order my steps *in Your Word*” is his prayer. Some, I know, fall into a very vicious habit, which habit they excuse themselves—namely, that of ordering their footsteps according to *impressions*.

Every now and then I meet with people whom I think to be rather weak in the head, who will journey from place to place and will perform follies by the gross under the belief that they are doing the will of God because some silly whim of their diseased brains is imagined to be an inspiration from above. There are occasionally impressions of the Holy Spirit which guide men where no other guidance could have answered the end. I do not doubt the old story of the Quaker who was disturbed at night and could

not sleep and was led to go to a person's house miles away and knock at the door just at the time when the inhabitant was about to commit suicide—just in time to prevent the act.

I have been the subject of such impressions, myself, and have seen very singular results. But to *live* by impressions is oftentimes to live the life of a fool and even to fall into downright rebellion against the revealed Word of God. Not your impressions, but that which is in this Bible must always guide you. "To the Law and to the Testimony." If it is not according to this Word, the impression comes not from God—it may proceed from Satan, or from your own distempered brain! Our prayer must be, "Order my steps in Your Word.

Now, that rule of life, the written Word of God, we ought to study and obey. The text proves that the Psalmist desired to know what was in God's Word—he would be a reader and a searcher. O Christian, how can you know what God would have you to do if your Bible is unthumbed and covered over with dust? The prayer implies, too, that when David once knew God's Word, he wished to fulfill it all. Some are pickers and choosers. One of God's commands they will obey—another they are conveniently blind to—even directly *disobedient* to it. O that it were not so with God's people, that they had a balanced mind in their obedience and would take God's Word without making exceptions, following the Lamb where ever He goes!

"Order my steps," Lord, not in a *part* of Your Word, but in *all* of it. Let me not omit any known duty, nor plunge into any known sin. There was, in David's mind, according to this prayer, a real love for holiness. He was not holy because he felt he ought to be and yet would gladly be otherwise. If there were anything good and lovely, he desired to have it. If there were anywhere in God's garden—a rare fruit or flower of purity and excellence—he longed to have it transplanted into his soul, that in all things his life might be the perfect transcript of the Word of God. Stick, then, to God's Word. There is a perfect rule in the Divine statutes. May the Holy Spirit cast us in the mold of His Word.

**III.** Thirdly, two or three words upon the DIRECTOR whom David had chosen. He applies to God Himself to order his steps. Much will depend upon the model that a man takes and the captain under whom a man serves. We read in the papers last week of a commanding officer at Aldershot who was obeyed by his soldiers with that prompt discipline which is peculiar to the British soldier. But through some mistake or mismanagement he managed to dash together two parties of dragoons so that one or two were injured and one man was killed outright.

It is a glorious thing for us that we have a Commander who never makes such mistakes—who will so order our footsteps that our virtues shall not come into collision—and so direct our lives that it shall be always safe for us to follow His commands. What does David mean by putting himself under the orders of God? He means this. First, "Lord, give me a heart to love You—I beseech You, change me so, that whereas I once tended towards evil by the force of nature, I may now tend towards right-

eousness by a yet more powerful force—the force of a *new* nature. Order my footsteps, put a propelling power within my spirit that shall constrain my steps towards the right and the true and the holy.”

He means next, “Lord, illuminate me to know Your Word. Pour a flood of light into my spirit that I may never mistake good for evil, never choose light for darkness. O light up the darkest recesses of my soul, that I may always discern at the very first look that which is contrary to Your mind, even when it comes in the most flattering disguise!” He means again, “Let Your Holy Spirit overshadow me. Let my spirit not only follow, but let Your Spirit lead the way. Let Your Spirit subdue all my faculties, understanding, affections and will. Let everything be subordinated to a Divine government that so being, no longer independent of You, I may be holy as You are holy.”

He seems to mean again, “Charm me with the beauties of holiness. Let me so see the example of Your dear Son that I may be fascinated by it and compelled to do as He did by the Divine order and behest of His example.” And does not he also mean, “Lord, so arrange Providence that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear. Check me when I am likely to sin. Send me help just when I shall need it to achieve some difficult task of obedience”? Providence works with Divine Grace. There is the hand of a man and the wing of an angel going together. And where God sets the soul to work after sanctification, He is quite sure to order both its outward joys and sorrows so that its holiness shall be promoted. Lord, do this and thus order my steps in Your Word.

I have concluded when I have given two or three words of earnest practical advice. My Brothers and Sisters, especially you who are members of this Church, is it necessary that I commend to you earnestly to seek after conformity to the Lord’s Word as laid down in His revealed will? Should there be any such necessity, I beseech you hear me patiently but for a minute. You all desire to extend the power of the Gospel and the glory of Christ’s kingdom—know, then, that you can by no possibility do anything which shall be more likely to accomplish this than by seeking after holiness!

A holy Church is always a *powerful* Church. A band of people without gifts, without wealth—but who exhibit much of the likeness of Christ—is a power in the land! Covet not talent, but covet Divine Grace! Pant not so much after honor as after holiness! This is the great point with you, if you are to win the battle for Christ and put the crown upon His head. O give me but to know that you are godly parents, that you are obedient children, that you are pious masters, that you are diligent servants, and my crown of rejoicing will be bright, indeed!

But if your lips are unhallowed, your testimony goes for nothing and my crown is gone. I pray you, by the Glory of Him who wore the crown of thorns for you, by all His love and His compassion and by the love which you bear Him in return, “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation,” and commit your ways unto God that they may be directed in His fear.

Brothers and Sisters, I commend holiness to you, because above all things in this world it is one of the most comforting in the hour of trouble. Let a soul be brought low and let there be sin connected with its humiliation and there is a thorn in its pillow. But when a man knows that, in the sight of God, he has been kept from evil and his integrity cannot be impugned, then quiet reigns in his soul. There may be roaring tempests without, but his soul is at peace when he can say, "You have upheld me in my integrity, and You have set me before Your face forever." Remember that the best way to enjoy fellowship is holiness.

Many saints of God do not see Christ's face by the month together because they are careless in their living. "How shall two walk together except they are agreed?" The Lord will not cast off His people, but at the same time He will not manifest to them the tenderness of His love unless they walk very carefully with Him. Much will be endured by a king from a common subject which could not be borne with from a courtier. You are of the king's counsel! You are a favorite of the Lord! See that you walk circumspectly. The place where God is, according to Jacob, is a dreadful place and so it is, because there is a holiness required in the Presence of the Most High which should make us take off our shoes in holy dread.

We have been for a long time sighing and crying because we do not see a revival of religion. It is the common talk with earnest souls that the times are stale. They are not so bad as they were, yet there is no advance in the kingdom such as we looked for. But remember, if we want to see the Master come in the power and fullness of His Spirit, one of the surest ways to get Him is to be more holy. His Church hinders the blessing by her inconsistency. A *worldly* Church chases away the Spirit of God. Wherever there is a people conformed to the maxims and ways of the world—indifferent in prayer and sluggish in effort—there will be the name to live, but there will be death.

But where there is a people who, with little strength, have, nevertheless, kept God's Word and above all have kept their garments unspotted, there will, before long, come the making bare of the almighty arm in the eyes of all the people! Wash, make yourselves clean, put away your secret iniquities, humble yourselves, O professors, before God! May the Lord give you the spirit of repentance! May He pour out His spirit upon each of us! May we put away the old leaven and so shall we keep the feast. May we shake ourselves from the dust of every sin—so shall we put on our beautiful garments and the time of the Church's glory and our triumph shall come. My lips refuse to speak, as I wish they would, upon a theme which weighs upon my spirit right heavily. O God, send us holiness! If by no other means, then let trouble come to work in us hatred of sin! If You will not answer otherwise, then answer by terrible things in righteousness! O God, make us holy for Your honor's sake!

Lastly, I fear that mingled in this throng are some who never prayed the prayer, "Order my steps in Your Word," for their steps are certainly not ordered in God's Word. Some of you have uncertain steps—you are hover-

ing between two opinions—you cannot make up your minds. O Fools and slow of heart! You cannot make up your minds? Which is better, God or the devil, holiness or sin, Heaven or Hell? It seems to be a point where no delays or considerations should be necessary! O that you were taught wisdom by the Holy Spirit and would hesitate no longer, but decide this day! As the Lord my God lives, you have but a short time to live and if you continue hesitating, as some of you have done these 40 and 60 years, the sermons you have heard and the pricks of your conscience shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

There are others whose steps were never ordered in God's Word, for their ways are hypocritical. They walk today like Christians, tomorrow as worldlings. They sing the songs of Zion and they chant the hymns of Baal. They worship the Lord with His people, but they worship Bacchus, also, with his votaries. Alas for the many who wear a mask and a disguise and make fair pretences and a glittering show, but the truth is not in them! I fear there are some of you whose steps are not ordered by God, for your ways are sin. Pleasure enchants you! Alas this fleeting pleasure—whose cup glitters with bubbles—but whose dregs are Hell! Would God you would cease from your evil ways and turn at His rebuke, for then He has promised He will have mercy upon you!

Among us, this morning, are many whose outward conduct is unblemished and whose morals are excellent, but yet their heart is not right with God. They live without prayer day after day. They have an atheistic heart which shuns the Deity. I put this prayer before you not that you may use it, but that you may judge yourselves by it. And if this one prayer condemns you, how will you bear the majesty of the Judge of all the earth who shall come in Person to judge the world in righteousness according to our Gospel?

Jesus has died for sinners. He came to save the ungodly. Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him and from this day you shall begin to live! O may the Spirit of God help you to trust Him and then, but not till then, shall you be in a fit state to breathe this prayer for sanctification to God of perfect holiness, "Order my steps in Your Word."

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SEMON—Psalm 119:129-152.**

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

# ALIVE NO. 1572

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 12, 1880,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give  
me understanding and I shall live.”  
Psalm 119:144.***

YESTERDAY afternoon I was the subject of a somewhat singular circumstance. An esteemed friend and relative came over to my house, evidently laboring under great disturbance of mind and having enquiries to make of a very important order. I was, at the time, walking in the garden, so that I did not see him and he appeared to have great difficulty in mentioning the subject of his concern to my wife. At last it came out that he had seen a gentleman who had informed him that it was generally rumored that I had been taken ill with heart disease and had died in a very short time. My friend came to the point by cautious degrees and asked at length if I was seriously ill. “No,” was the joyful reply of my beloved, “he is much the same as usual.”

Then it was clear I was not dead and the great fear was removed. The question was put, “Would you like to see him?” But my kind friend was perfectly satisfied and was too full of joy to wish to linger—he would go back and answer with certainty the many enquiries which continued to be made at the Tabernacle. How the report originated, I am quite at a loss to tell. It has evoked much kindness, but it is rather odd to feel called upon to assure your friends that you are yet alive! I can but show myself and ask my friends to see for themselves if I look like a dead man! When the peculiarity of the position had given place to other thoughts, it struck me in a solemn manner that the report might have been true and my death will assuredly be a fact one day unless our Lord should come speedily.

Only sparing mercy from God's right hand has prevented it being true at this moment. We do not realize our mortality unless we are startled into a recognition of it. We believe others to be mortal and are not much surprised when they fall, but we have a secret notion that no axe will, for the present, be laid at our root. Yet reason would lead a man to ask, “It happens to many, to die suddenly, why should it not happen to me?” I regard the incident as a call to me to stand ready to depart at any time. Let it be a warning to you, also, to set your houses in order, for in a moment Death may surprise you!

A practical lesson may be gathered from the very natural scene which followed my friend's departure. I came in from my walk and found myself suddenly seized by my wife with both hands—grasping the front of my coat she turned me round and looked at me steadily with a most tender gaze, declaring that she must take a double look at me and hold me before her eyes to be quite sure that her husband was yet alive to her unutterable joy. This special outpouring of thankfulness might have been lost had

it not been for the rumor and, so far, it is well. May all of you be moved to the same feeling towards your dear ones whenever they come home at night alive! What would you do without them?

What desolation would it cause in the house if a messenger hurriedly rushed into your house with the news of their sudden death? How we ought to love those who are spared to us and to praise God to think they are still alive. Suppose they were suddenly removed—have we valued them rightly? Try and act towards them as you would act if you knew that they would die today. If husband or wife had died, what a sorrow it would be if an unkind word had been spoken, or a difference had arisen just before the last look! What a painful cause for future regret! Let your affection to those about you gush forth freely as you reflect that God has spared them to you.

Bless God, good woman, that you are a wife and not a widow! Bless God, Christian man, that you sit side by side with your dear spouse and have not to go weeping to her grave. What a blank! What a darkness! What a gloom would come over your household if either of the parents should be suddenly taken away! Therefore, praise God and be thankful and let us try to live towards one another and towards our Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus in such a way as we should wish to have done if they were suddenly to be taken. Pray for your pastor the more earnestly because you might, this morning, have missed him from your midst—and he will try and preach more earnestly to you because you may be gone before he will have another opportunity of addressing you.

Let us continue knit together in love as long as we live, for the tie which now binds us together may soon be snapped. Out of a painful rumor may thus come a great blessing to families and congregations if it shall cause an increase of mutual love and an outpouring of united gratitude for sparing mercies! So much for a lesson as to this mortal life. By this incident I was further led to turn a heart-glance upon myself and to say, “I wonder whether there is any question as to whether I am alive in the *higher* sense?” That I am alive as to my *natural* life is clear enough—but is my *spiritual* life equally evidenced? This is a very necessary enquiry, for it is easy enough to make a fair show in the flesh and yet to be alienated from the life of God.

Many abide in death, even as the Apostle says—“To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.” The enquiry came home to my own heart and, therefore, I suggest it to yours, for it may profit you. Brothers and Sisters, do you live unto God? Are you walking as those who are alive from the dead? Remember, my Sisters, that it is written, “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives”—may no woman here come under that condemnation! Brothers, I call upon you, also, to remember the word of the Lord Jesus to the Church of Sardis, “I know your works, that you have a name that you live and are dead.”

Many exist upon the face of the earth, but into “life” they have never entered. They know not the Spirit and because they are strangers to *His* indwelling, they live after the flesh and mind the things of the flesh and of these it is written, “If you live after the flesh you shall die.” Ask yourselves, then, these questions—have you been quickened from your death

in trespasses and sins? Does the Divine Life beat within you in such a forceful and healthful manner that there can be no question about it? Is your life “hid with Christ in God” and are you numbered with the living in Zion? The living, the living! He shall praise you, O God, as we do this day!

My subject is life—may the Lord of Life help me to speak of it after a lively manner! A consideration of the text will help in the enquiry as to whether we live unto God or not and it may further help those who sigh after the Divine Life to discover the way of Divine quickening. Let us again read the text, “The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.” Here we have a touchingly humble prayer for life—“Give me understanding and I shall live.”

We will first consider this prayer in its simplicity. Secondly, I shall try to open it up more fully and, thirdly, we will go still deeper and search into the argument upon which the prayer is founded. There is a something about God’s testimonies which will impart and sustain life, therefore the putting of the two sentences together—“The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.”

**I.** First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS PRAYER IN ITS SIMPLICITY. Without diving into its depths, let us see what lies upon its surface. This prayer is adapted for very general use. It would suit a child and be equally becoming from a venerable father. It might fall from the lips of those in whom there is but the faintest sign of Divine Grace and it might as fitly be used by those in whom Grace is ripening into Glory! We ask you to notice, first, that this is a suitable prayer for the awakened sinner. He discovers himself to be guilty and he perceives that there is a punishment for sin and so far he understands his position.

Alarmed by his conscience, he thinks he sees the Judge upon the Great White Throne about to pronounce the final sentence and he knows what it must be, for it is written, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” So far he understands well enough. He hears, also, that there is life, life in Christ Jesus, life for guilty men—but his mind is much confused with many terrors and with the horrible dread of the sure consequences of his sin. He has sufficient faith in the Revelation of God to know that there is life in a look at the Crucified One, but he does not quite understand what that look *means*. He knows that there is salvation in one name and in no other, but he does not quite comprehend what that faith is which obtains for a sinner the virtue of that saving name.

Then is his time to pray, “Give me understanding and I shall live.” He needs illumination for his darkened mind that he may see the way of salvation, that he may look to Christ and, by understanding the doctrine of His substitutionary Sacrifice, may be enabled, at once, to trust in Jesus and live! Christ is our life, but we need understanding, or we shall miss it. It is a blessed understanding which enables a man to feel that though the sentence of death may be in his members, yet he must and shall live if he believes in the Lord Jesus! What did the Lord Jesus say in His prayer for His people? “And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” I pray you will, dear Hearers, if you feel your need of this life, let the prayer of the text go up quietly from your hearts—“Give me understanding and I shall live.”

Equally applicable, however, will this be in the case of one who is a Christian and who is struggling against temptation. Perhaps, my Brother, you are placed in a position where you are fiercely tempted from without by the world and possibly you may fear that you will not be able to survive it. It comes with such force that you are staggered by its power! You feel that you cannot bear up under such pressure! You despair of your spiritual life! Well, then, ask God to bring home His Word to your heart, that you may act wisely and may meet the rebuke of the ungodly and the temptations of the wicked—prudently baffling the adversary by your sacred vigilance. Pray, “Give me understanding and I shall live,” for a clear understanding is necessary for your preservation from the enemy. May God make you wise as serpents and harmless as doves!

Possibly the temptation comes from within you. There are passions within you which, at times, violently rebel and you are in anguish while you struggle to mortify them, though mortified they must be. Your soul abhors evil and wrestles against the lusts of the flesh, agonizing that you may walk before God in integrity, pleasing Him in all things. At times you are harshly beset and Satan, himself, draws near to aid the flesh with his fearful insinuations, or even by injecting blasphemous thoughts. Then is your hour of peril, for you are pressed out of measure while the enemy howls at you—“The Lord has forsaken you! Your God will be gracious no more!” Ah, then you need to know how to handle your weapons, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and that master weapon of All-Prayer!

Perhaps you feel yourself so confused that you do not know what Scripture to plead in prayer, nor do you know what you should pray for as you ought. Well, then, remember the blessed word of Scripture, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not.” Let this be your prayer—“Give me understanding and I shall live, in spite of the assaults of the enemies.” Though there are fights without and fears within, we shall overcome the world, the flesh and the devil and we shall live as Christian men, adorning the doctrine of God, our Savior, in all things if the Lord will give us a clear understanding of His Word and holy prudence and judgment by which we shall know how to behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way.

Do you not think that this prayer will often well up from the heart of the suffering Believer? To some of our dear Brothers and Sisters, life is one long pang, for bodily disease has fixed its fangs in their flesh. There are others whose life is always from hand to mouth and sometimes bread is scant in the cupboard so that grinding poverty breaks them to dust. These are sore ills for those know who have to bear them. Some, too, are subject to domestic trials, watching daily the pining away of one they love, or bereavement has followed bereavement till they seem left alone in the land. Alas, the insatiate archer has taken a poisoned arrow from his quiver, yet again and again and love has had to weep over the terrible accuracy of his aim.

Beloved Ones who have been called to suffer in these ways, have you not cried out at times, “I shall never be able to bear it! I shall die of a broken heart under these great afflictions! O that I might hide in the grave”?

You fear that you will perish if the pressure continues, but you will do no such thing! God will help you to bear your burden by sustaining your soul with heavenly meat that others know nothing of. If the load is not made lighter, the shoulders shall be made stronger and this shall be done by your having a clearer understanding of the Word of God and a fuller experience of its supporting power! You do not so much need health, or wealth, or freedom from trouble, as more understanding of the Lord's mind and will in all the dispensations of His Providence. Breathe, then, the prayer to your heavenly Father—"Give me understanding and I shall live."

Divine Grace can make us live like the three holy children in the fire, or like Jonah at the bottom of the sea, or like Daniel in a den of lions! It can make us patient in tribulation and joyful in distress—and Grace works by making us understand the Word of the Lord. Brethren, if we are taught of the Lord, we can live between the jaws of death and sing a song unto our Well-Beloved amid the wailings of famine and pestilence! By a God-given understanding, we shall know that all things work together for our good and so we shall "take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities and in distresses," for when we are weak, then are we strong!

I thank God that a large number now present are not so much sufferers as workers. Now, I know that you who are working for God and trying to win souls often feel as if you were not half alive. I am compelled to make such a confession myself. I need to get alive to the utmost—not only having life, but having it "more abundantly." I have some life in me, thank God, but I need it to quicken me more completely! Sometimes we get into a sleepy state and then the Spirit chides us and we cry, "This will never do."—

***"Dear Lord! Shall we always live  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And You to us so great?"***

We need quickening, Brothers and Sisters! Do you not feel that it is so? I believe that those who are most earnest are the very persons who blame themselves the most for need of earnestness. When your whole soul is being consumed, you feel as if you need the coals of juniper to be blown up to a yet more vehement flame that you may go up like a cloud of incense unto God, dissolved in His service, consumed in His praise! Here, then, is our prayer, "Give me understanding and I shall live. Make me so to feel the power of Your Word that I may be ardent, fervent, full of life!" I will alter the poet's lines and say—

***"Lives of saintly men assure us  
We may make our lives sublime."***

We can live to noble purpose if, in answer to this prayer, God the Holy Spirit shall teach us to profit and give us understanding to know the will of the Lord and obey it faithfully.

O you who would work successfully and acceptably, ask the great Lord of the Harvest to enlighten your hearts and minds that you may not labor as in the dark, but as wise men made expert by the Holy Spirit. Is not this a very proper and blessed prayer for aspiring minds in the Church of God, of whom I trust there are many present? Such men are not satisfied with

themselves, but press forward to that which is yet beyond and above them. They have not reached that imaginary climax which some prattle of who dote upon their fancied perfectness—but their motto is, “Onward! Upward! Heavenward!” These dwell on high, but their cry is, “Higher! Higher!”

They walk with God and therefore say—

***“Oh for a closer walk with God.”***

They are calm and happy, but yet they sigh for a still serener frame. They have power in prayer, but they long for more of a wrestling spirit and for greater prevalence with God. If there are any here who are fired with such Divine ambitions, what better prayer can they use than this—“Give me understanding and I shall live”? For if God teaches us rightly to use the Divine Word so as to mark, learn and inwardly digest it by the understanding, then shall we be nourished into complete manhood and shall go from strength to strength! The new man is renewed in knowledge and nourished by the Truth of God and, “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Our prayer must be that the Lord would make us understand what He would have us do and how to do it. Then shall we live when we are made of “quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” and ready in heart to perfect all His will. This will be an angelic life, for those holy beings do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. It will be a seraphic life, for as we burn with holy fervor we shall resemble those ministers whom God makes to be a flaming fire! It will be a heavenly life, for we shall strive to do the Lord’s will on earth as it is done in Heaven. Do you long for this? The way to it is not to be found in dreams and visions and fanatical excitements and delirious conceits, but in a calm, quiet, solid and deep understanding of the revealed Word of God! Our Lord prayed—“Sanctify them through Your truth, Your Word is truth.” No other means are needed for the fullest development of holiness—you only require the Word to be unveiled by the Spirit to your mind and understanding and in the utmost sense of the term you shall “live.”

Last of all, when we shall not be so much aspiring saints as expiring saints—when we come to lie upon our last bed and to look into the unseen—then may we still pray after the same fashion! When the eyes shall begin to open to the light of Heaven and things but darkly seen, before, grow clearer in the dawn of the eternal day—when the songs of angels begin to break upon the opening ears of the soul and Heaven is drawing near, for Grace is ripening into Glory and Glory is coming to welcome its heir—then may we pray to live through the understanding and experience of the Divine Word! How blessed it will be to have such an understanding of Divine realities that we shall stay ourselves upon the promises, shall rejoice in the Everlasting Covenant and derive strong consolation from the oath of God.

How blessed, then, to understand our living union with our risen Lord and to know the experience of the happy Psalmist when He sang—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” With God’s Spirit within us lighting up the soul by the understanding of the fact that

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, we shall live in the midst of death and find our Savior's Words to be true—"He that lives and believes in Me shall never die." We shall ford that shallow stream of death, which, while it chills our feet, shall not be able to chill our hearts! It may stop our pulse, but it shall not silence our song which shall rise higher and higher as speech shall fail. We shall but shut our eyes on earth and open them in Heaven, for God, who has given us understanding here below shall, surely, give us to dwell above where they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament!

And thus, I think, I have shown you that this prayer sounds well on every note of the scale. You may sound it out of the depths of seeking penitence and you may run up to the very highest note with the expectancy of Glory and the words will sound well on any note you touch. From the wicket gate of humble faith up to the gate of pearl which admits into the golden city, you may go on praying, "Give me understanding and I shall live."

**II.** The time has come when under our second division THE PRAYER IS TO BE MORE FULLY OPENED UP. "Give me understanding and I shall live." Here is a need confessed because it is deeply felt—the suppliant acknowledges his need of understanding. Has that need been felt by you, my Brothers and Sisters? It certainly exists, "For vain man would be wise, though man is born like a wild ass's colt." The wittiest, wisest, best instructed man who has only human learning, if he knows not God, has reached no further than that acme of all carnal wisdom spelled in four letters, "FOOL." We are all fools till God gives us understanding! A sense of our own folly is the first step of all wisdom. To cry out after understanding proves that we have already received some understanding for, mark you, this text of mine is the prayer of a man of God!

I suppose the 119<sup>th</sup> is David's Psalm—at any rate it is the Psalm of a very gracious Spirit-taught man and you see he still cries, even though he has understanding in a measure, "Give me understanding." He that is taught of God is the man that asks to be taught of God and she who has chosen the good part is the woman who sits at Jesus' feet to hear His Words. It is the mark of a wise man that he does not think himself so and that he continues to pray, "Give me understanding." It is true of us all, that apart from the gifts of God, by His Spirit, we are without understanding and as naturally go astray as silly sheep. Note this fact and be well persuaded of it, that you may pray with the greater earnestness.

Next, the prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free Grace. He prays, "Give me understanding"—it must be a *gift* from God. The prayer is directed to God, for God, alone, can give understanding. Teachers can enlighten an understanding which already exists, but they cannot give one. Masters and instructors can profit nothing till we have an understanding with which to receive knowledge aright. Any man who is taught in the Word can teach us the *letter* of Scripture, but no man can give us an inner understanding of its *spirit*—that must be a revelation and it must be worked in us by Him that made the light and the sun, or we shall never come to an understanding of the Word of God!

Let it always be known that all Light of God is from the Lord Jesus, Himself—"In Him was life and the life was the light of men." "That was the true Light which lights every man that comes into the world." All real understanding of the Word of God must come to us as it did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, of whom it is written, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." The Author of the sacred Volume must, Himself, expound it to the heart and understanding or we shall be blinded by its light rather than made to see. David prayed, "Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law" and we must pray the same.

When the Lord graciously hears our supplications, we must take care to give Him all the praise and glory of the work, for it will be a deed of Grace and Grace alone. If He left us in darkness we could not complain, for we have refused the Light and if He opens our eyes, we must glorify His mercy and cry, "Blessed be the Lord who has shown us light." Brothers and Sisters, the Psalmist speaks of understanding in a general way—"Give me understanding"—as if he wanted the faculty for use in many directions. In every transaction of this life we need to be prudent, for we are surrounded by a thousand snares and pitfalls and if we do not exercise discretion we shall be taken all unawares and become the prey of our enemies. We bear within our own natures so much to confuse and confound and entangle that if we are not taught prudence and understanding we shall certainly never escape from the mischief that is within us.

We are frequently like men in a fog who cannot tell where they are. It happened but the other day near Milan that so dense a fog covered the railway that a number of workmen who were employed upon the line heard the sound of an approaching luggage train and rushed to get away from it—but at that same moment an express train, which they had not heard or seen, came rushing upon them and cut them to pieces. Such is our condition at times—we try to get away from one temptation and we fall into another—we hope to escape one form of evil and we rush into another! Haste breeds heedlessness and warmth of zeal is apt to beget indiscretion so that we daily need a good share of understanding as a ballast to our sail.

A Christian man should be a sensible man, a man with all his wits about him. He needs to possess the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs as well as the devotion of the Psalms and the rapture of Solomon's Song. Those books are placed together in the Bible as if to show that they ought to be read together and that their spirit and influence are essential to a complete practical character. I would have you bow your ears to the voice of your Well-Beloved, but you must also be ready to deal with the voices of everyday life. It is one of the objects of true religion to give subtlety to the simple and to the young man, knowledge and discretion. We must not be ignorant of the devices of the devil, nor childish in yielding credence to the falsehoods of men.

We need, in all the walks of life, to exercise understanding and, thank God, we may learn to do so, for the Scriptures say, "The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk up-

rightly. He keeps the paths of judgment and preserves the way of His saints." Still, while the understanding sought for in the prayer is evidently of a general character, the former portion of the verse links it with a special understanding of the Word of God and, oh, Beloved, we need, above all things, to understand what God has revealed! Take care, first, that you know it. Search the Scriptures—let them be the man of your right hand. Prevent the night watches while you search them. Prevent the dawn of the day by meditating upon them. Be you scribes well-instructed in the Law of the Lord.

Next, *believe* the Divine Revelation. Be it your prayer that you may so understand the Lord's statutes as fully to accept them by faith. Believe the teachings of the Word as realities, not locking them up in the dark dungeon of a forgotten creed, but making them bright realities in the life and liberty of your Christian action and full of influence upon every movement of your mind. Knowing and believing, it will be time to advance to meditation. Consider the Words of God—weigh them, test them, dive into them. The richest ore lies deepest. There may be sands of gold sparkling upon the surface of the Bible, but the great nuggets are reserved for those who dig deep both by day and by night! Consider well the words of Eternal Life and then go on to obey their teaching.

You will never have an understanding of the Word unless you practice it. He who does the will of God shall know of the doctrine. We know nothing aright till our hearts come into complete subjection to the Spirit. Oh for such an understanding as this, that the inner life may be nourished to fullness of stature by feeding on the Bread from Heaven! To this must be added experience, for who understands the Word of God till he has experienced its truth and power? What a blessed knowledge of a promise you receive when it is fulfilled to you! How you understand the reality of prayer when you have received an answer! How you know the meaning of communion with Christ when your face shines with having seen Him! How you understand the secret consolations of the Holy Spirit when, in deep water, you have felt their wondrously lifting power!

This prayer means so much that in one sermon I cannot open it all up to you. Nor, indeed, could I do so were a lifetime at my disposal! O Lord, give us understanding to know, to believe, to consider, to practice and to experience Your Word! Let each man cry, "O God, give me this and then I shall truly live!" I think you will begin to see what a connection there is between all this and the testimonies of the Lord, for the righteousness of the Divine Word is to be transcribed into the letter of our daily life if we are to live to the fullest. Permit me, now, to say that no man who is at all awakened can really live unless he knows the Word of God and understands its inner meaning. For this reason—Do you call it life to live without the Light of God?

You may have been in the sepulchral dungeons of Venice where not a ray of light ever came to the unhappy prisoners. To linger there, do you call that life? To live without the Light of God is just such an existence! We have heard of men who have been immured in dungeons for 40 years, constantly wearing manacles, never breathing fresh air—do you call that life? Can there be "life" where there is no liberty? Alas, some men have

never been free, but have remained captives to their lusts, never knowing the liberty with which Christ makes men free. Do you call such bondage, life? Another essential of life is love. To have nobody to love and nobody to love you—is that life? Yet many a soul feels that it cannot be content with *earthly* love and yet if it has not the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit, it is loveless! Do you call that life?

Infinite love is a necessity of an immortal spirit. Without light, without liberty, without love there is no life. But more, many men exist without peace—driven to and fro like a sere leaf by the tempest. Never resting, they are as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Do you call that life? “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” Is that life? And then to have no grand objective, no objective worthy of yourself—to be living in this world merely to get enough bread and cheese to eat, just keeping yourself breathing and your family breathing—is that life? No heavenly objective? No ambition worthy of an immortal spirit? Do you call that life?

Death before you, which you dare not think of! No hope, unless it is the ghastly figment of annihilation! Dreadful hope! To me a thought most horrible! To live without hope is not life—far rather call it death. Lord, give me understanding of Your everlasting testimonies—then I shall live, but I shall never live till You grant me this gift!

**III.** Now we will take the third step and go deeper, LAYING BARE THE ARGUMENT OF THIS PRAYER. What does he mean by saying, “The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live”? I think he means this—that the Word of God, when it is practically and experimentally understood by the mind, is a pledge of life. Do you think that God would take one of us to be His child and teach us His Word and then, after all, permit us to be condemned to die? Is that His fashion? Did you ever hear of a judge who instructed a criminal in the arts and sciences laboriously for years with the view of executing him when the task was done? Nothing of the sort!

If the Lord has taught you, it is because the Lord has bought you and He will not lose the purchase of His blood! If the Lord has taught you, it is because He means to take you where your education will be completed—to take you Home to dwell with Him above! “Give me understanding and I shall live”—I am quite clear about that. If You, great God, have made me understand the evil of sin, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, the power of Your Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—if You have made me experimentally to understand this, I know I shall live, for You will not make me ashamed of my hope—

***“Can He have taught me to trust in His name,  
And have brought me thus far to put me to shame?”***

The next argument is this—an understanding of the Word of God is life because we are told that the Word of God is the “living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever.” Very well, then, if that Seed is sown in my heart, my heart must live forever. There can be no death where the Seed is incorruptible! If the Word of the Lord is living within us, then there is within us a life eternal! Be you sure of this, then—if you have enjoyed a vital experience of God’s Word, you have within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life!

Furthermore, the Word of God is not only the Seed of life, but it is the food of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." And if you live on the Word that comes out of God's mouth, you cannot die. How can you? For in the Word of God you read of the "flesh," which is, "meat indeed," and that "blood" which is, "drink indeed." And the Incarnate Word, Himself, has said, "He that eats Me, the same shall live by Me. Because I live, you shall live, also." There is forcible argument here!

Once more, the understanding of God's Word is the very flower and crown and glory of true life. When a man so understands God's Word as to experience it and to practice it, he has reached a high point of spiritual culture and his life will be loaded, like Aaron's rod, with buds and blossoms and fruit unto God's glory! He will be such a man that he shall only need to take one step and be in Heaven! He is a shock of corn fully ripe, each single stalk bowing its head towards the earth as if it asked to be gathered in. Let us pray God will give us an understanding of His blessed Word, for then we shall be ripe for Glory and in the highest sense it will be true that we shall "live."

I have scarcely a minute to spare, but I must venture to detain you while we observe that the Psalmist alludes to one point in reference to God's Word which is, to us, the very marrow and fatness of the whole. God's Word is said to be righteous—"The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting." Now, upon this righteousness the life of every Christian hangs. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labor of love." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." A righteous God cannot destroy a man in whom His Grace has worked an understanding of His Word, for that were to deal unrighteously with him, since he is justified by the knowledge of Christ.

The godly serve a just God and a Savior and, therefore, they have nothing to fear. This righteousness of God's Word is so certain that it is said to be everlasting. Brothers and Sisters, my life hangs on the everlastingness of all God's Word! If it can change, then I must die—but if it cannot change, then I shall live. The righteousness of God, according to the text, is everlasting since none can challenge it. No caviler will ever prove God's way of salvation, or of Providence, to be unrighteous. If that could be done, then the Believer might die. But since that righteousness cannot be disproved, he shall live. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" The Divine righteousness stands fast forever and ever, settled in Heaven, ordained to answer all demands throughout all ages. Let us so understand it as to take it to be ours and we shall live!

I cannot understand the notion of certain professing Christians that a change comes over Christianity as the ages move on—that there is a Christianity for the first century and a revised Christianity for the present era! We have become very enlightened of late! You are aware that this is the marvelous 19<sup>th</sup> Century! We have invented the electric light and none can deny that we are the most enlightened people that ever lived on the face of the earth! It is not, of course, pride on our part to say so, for we are very modest. Among us there are men who are wonderfully brilliant—Paul

was but a farthing candle compared with them. They understand, by culture and thought, so much that it is an *honor* to speak with them!

The Gospel that was preached to the poor, which childlike persons understood by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, is, in their eyes a very poor business. They sneer and turn up their cultured noses at what they call, “the simple Gospel,” as if a simple Gospel were meant for simpletons. Well, now, to my mind this is the very bliss and blessedness of the Gospel—that the righteousness of God’s testimonies is everlasting—that though it has been tried by criticism and tested by experience, it remains the same in its spotless purity and in its Divine Infallibility to this day! If God should be pleased to lengthen out the life of any of you till you are as old as Methuselah, you will not have to say, “I must die now, for the Gospel is worn out. I must perish now, for the righteousness of the Word of God has been disproved.”

Thus says Jehovah, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” We may catch the echo of His proclamation and say, “Because the Word which reveals our God never changes, therefore we shall live.” Do you need a better Gospel, any of you? Go and fish for it, if you do, but not in the waters of the Truth of God! Do you need any nobler promise, any surer covenant? Wander through the deserts of salt till your skeleton lies bleaching there, for that will be your only reward if you turn away from the feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well-refined. As for me, I bless God that the righteousness of His testimonies is everlasting and by them I mean to abide all my days, God helping me.

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# STRUGGLING AGAINST SIN

## NO. 3482

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1915.

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

***“I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes.  
I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.”  
Psalm 119:145, 146.***

THE fear of punishment leads many people to think about their sins. And a dread of Hell in the future fills the retrospect of their past life with gloom and remorse. This is natural. It may happen to anyone, as it has happened to tens of thousands, that the peril has haunted them till at length the penalty has overtaken them. Although they have been constantly terrified with a sense of the Divine Wrath, they have never penitently looked to the Divine Mercy. Thus they have continued to despond and they have gone on to despair—and that utter desperation has curdled into a bitter remorse which has been the forecast of their eternal retribution! But it appears to me that there is a work of Grace in the heart where there is a *fear of sin* rather than a *fear of Hell*—where the desire of the soul is not so much to escape from the punishment, as to escape from the guilt which is the cause of the punishment. What thief, what murderer, when he has been arrested, convicted, sentenced and brought to the gallows, does not wish he had not committed the crime that sealed his doom? Yet there is a wide difference between a dread of suffering for the wrong you have done and a dread of doing wrong! Judge yourselves, if you are under religious impressions of any sort, whether you have merely a fear of punishment—for that is an instinct of nature—or whether you have a fear and abhorrence of sin, for that is a work of Divine Grace!

Now our text exhibits to us the frame of mind of one whose chief prayer was that he might keep God's statutes—and his chief anxiety lest he should fail to observe them. Oh, that you might be brought to this state of heart, those of you who are not saved! And may those of you who are saved have this state of heart perpetually in exercise! A tender heart, a scrupulous conscience, a tenacity of offending God in thought, in word, or in deed should hold us in check every day and every hour. Let us continually cry unto God to save us from violating His precepts and compel

us to keep His testimonies. I address myself very indiscriminately to all who hear my voice, desiring that the text may prove a test whereby everyone should examine himself. Do we, or do we not, desire to get rid of every evil way? Are we anxious to be sincere and without offense, holy in our character and obedient to God's statutes in our lives? The man who really does desire this will be sure to pray for it. "I cried," says the Psalmist. And then again he says, "I cried." Moreover, he combines his prayer with strong resolution, "I cried unto You; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes." Still further he seasons his prayer with a deep sense of his own weakness, for he puts it thus, "I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your statutes." Well then—

**I. EVERY MAN WHO DESIRES PURITY OF HEART AND CHARACTER WILL BETAKE HIMSELF TO PRAYER.**

While struggling after purity, he will soon discover that he is unable to reach it of himself. Have you ever thought that you had destroyed an evil tendency in your disposition—and then found in an unguarded moment that you fell into the temptation from the coils of which you did suppose you had escaped? You have resolved in the morning, maybe at the hour of prayer, that throughout the day your temper should be calm and quiet. Yet very likely before breakfast was over, you were more ruffled than usual. Where you fancied you had set a double guard, there it was that you were taken by surprise! You thought yourself weak in one point, but it did not happen to be that on which you were beset! Where you said to yourself, "I am safe," there you were betrayed. You must have found this out, if you are striving against sin. When it has occurred many times, you will have a habitual mistrust of yourself. Does it happen but once, you will be driven by a sense of your own incompetence to call in the sacred might of God, that with the arms of the Eternal, you may defeat the infernal adversary, prevail over your evil passions and conquer your besetting sin. "I cried unto You," says David. Not as though it were a trifling skirmish, but as one who felt that he was perilously besieged. "I cried unto You with my whole heart, for I must vanquish this sin, or be vanquished by it! I could not conquer it by myself, so I cried to You, O my God," and I said, "Oh, display Your power, and by the Irresistible might of Your Holy Spirit, crush this dragon within my nature! Beat it down, that it may rise up no more."

The importunity of this prayer shows his estimate of the value he set on the blessing he craved. Read verses 145, 146 and 147, and you will perceive how he repeats himself—"I cried." "I cried unto You." "I rose before the dawning of the morning, and cried." Three times does he reiterate it! He was not to be put off. He felt he must get the mastery of sin. Hence, in sheer desperation, the good man cries again, and again, and

again, “O God, deliver me, that I may keep Your testimonies.” Pray often, Beloved, for sin will tempt often. Cry mightily, for Satan will tempt mightily. Innumerable snares will he place in your path—let your countless entreaties outnumber his devices!

The expression by which he memorializes his prayer shows us *the intensity of it*. “I cried.” “I cried.” “I cried.” I do not know a better form of prayer than crying. It implies that the whole nature is full of anguish. Crying is the consequence of pain. His entire soul was stirred up. A cry is the expression of desire. It is a natural unpremeditated utterance. There is no affectation about it. A man that knows no Latin or Greek can cry. He that cannot speak with eloquence may yet give eloquent vent to his feelings in tears and entreaties. Oh, there are some with whom prayer is a ceremony. They call the servants together—they march in, and they march out to the routine of family worship. They read out of a book some form of words, or else they compass a little piece, themselves, and say it—and that is their idea of prayer! Not so. Prayer is crying, laying hold on God and spreading our needs before Him with an earnest entreaty that He would not reject us, but would give us what we ask of Him. It is a wrestling with the Covenant Angel. It is a sacred resolve, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” If you want to conquer sin, know that it cannot be overcome by cold prayers, muttered in a heartless manner—it will not yield to empty ceremonies! Sin only flies before the blood of Christ and the power of the Eternal Spirit. These come to our rescue when, with cries and tears, we importune the Lord to help us. “I cried.” “I cried.” “I cried.” Thrice does he repeat the words. His whole heart cried to God that he might be delivered from sin!

Wherever there is a real and true prayer about this matter, *it must be a prayer of faith*. God can, in answer to prayer, help me to conquer sin. Beloved, you pray in vain unless you steadfastly believe that there is no sin which you cannot overcome. I meet with men who say, “I can never give up drinking.” My dear Friend, God can make you! I meet with a man who has a violent temper and he thinks he can never curb or subdue it. Surely you do not think of taking it to Heaven with you! They have no passionate people in that happy clime. You will have to get that anger put away, but only God can accomplish it! Do you say, “It would be like turning a lion into a lamb”? That is just what His Grace is able to do! He can bring you from darkness to light. He can work such a transformation in you that you would not know yourself if you could see yourself after you have passed under the Divine hand. Resolve in your soul that sin must be conquered—believe that it is possible—and cry to God with a full conviction that He is able to save you from it! Yet I think there are some who would not like to have their prayers answered. They ask for a hum-

ble heart. Well, I question whether they would like it, if it were given to them—whether they would not want to send it back! They pray that they may have a pure conscience, but how, then, could they carry on that business of theirs? They ask that they may be upright in God's statutes, but they know very well that they prefer following their own crooked devices! There are thousands of prayers that are insults to Heaven, but where the Spirit of God is really at work, the man who wants to be pure, prays sincerely, and cries mightily to God for purity! And nor will he be content to tolerate anything—either in his disposition or in his daily life—which would be inconsistent with the perfect holiness of God. Oh, that God might implant in all of us this desire and then set us a-praying that we might secure the blessing we crave! Now, secondly—

## **II. THE MAN WHO DESIRES TO WALK IN GOD'S WAY NOT MERELY PRAYS, BUT HE RESOLVES.**

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I will keep Your statutes." He puts his whole heart into it. His prayer is no deceit. Then he throws that same heart into a strong resolution that he will find out what God's statutes are and when he has found them, he will keep them, cost whatever it may! Need I say that nobody becomes holy against his will? No man keeps God's statutes unless he exercises a resolve to do so. The very essence of obedience to God lies in the heart, so the heart must be set upon obedience! It must be a sincere, willing, cheerful obedience, or else it is not a genuine submission to the Almighty. Do I address anyone who is living in sin and yet saying, "I wish I could get rid of it"? I have often heard such a wish expressed by persons who must themselves have known that they were uttering a lie! A man says, "I wish I could be set free from sin tonight," and tomorrow he will mix with evil associates and loose companions, and go to places of amusement where he is as sure he will be led into sin as he would be sure that his coat would burn if he put it into the fire! He goes into the middle of the mischief—he takes the tinder of his heart where he knows there are sparks, and he says, "There will come no harm of it." He puts a candle near the gunpowder and he hopes he will not be blown away! That is what he says—but it cannot be so. If you do not want to be besmeared, do not go among the pitch and the tar. If you do not want to be defiled, avoid all ungodly fellowship. The man who means to conquer sin and resolves to conquer it, will keep himself out of mischief's way, that he may be clean before the living God! Such a man will give up everything that tempts him. If there is anything in which he knows he has weak point, he will mortify himself rather than offend his conscience. He cuts off his right arm and plucks out his right eye, according to the Gospel, which means, I suppose, whatever he is fond of, if it becomes a temptation to sin, he will forthwith have done

with it once and for all. It does not matter what it is—whether it is drunkenness or gluttony, or lust—whatever is his besetting sin! He just says, “No. This may be allowable to some men to go just so far, but I cannot go as far without going further. Therefore, I will have nothing to do with it.” He is ready to deny himself anything and everything. He completely reforms his habits, lest he should be led into sin. “I will keep Your testimonies.”

Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man really resolves to do this! When he says, “I will keep out of the way of temptation and I will deny myself that which tempts me, lest by any means I grieve the Holy Spirit of God,” he will be sure, if his resolution is of the true metal, to follow that which helps it. He knows that to hear the Gospel helps it—therefore, he will not waste the morning hours of the Lord’s-Day in slothful sleep, but he will welcome the assembly of the saints and rejoice in the preaching of the Word! He knows that reading good books will often be helpful to him, so he prefers them to light literature. He knows that association with Christian people will help him, so he likes to get among them. He knows that to lift up his heart in prayer to God, not occasionally, but regularly at set intervals, has often proved a help to him—and he accordingly endeavors to maintain such engagements as strictly as he finds it possible. If there is anything of good repute to help him to get rid of sin, he seeks after it! And when he prays to God to keep him pure, he takes care to choose all such means as God may put in his way to resist evil, and to follow after holiness!

Such a man will achieve his purpose. You may laugh at him for being too precise. His heart will not be wounded by your ridicule. He will lose the Sunday trade if, thereby, he loses half his living, rather than break God’s Command. It may be that his association with some worldly persons contributed much to his prosperity, though it involved him in serious temptations—he falters not, for he would sooner run the risk of losing all the world than stake his reputation, or jeopardize his soul, for he is bent upon getting rid of sin! Sin is the plague he hates! He would sooner be poor as Lazarus, and even covered with sores, and licked by dogs, than have the sins of the rich man upon him! He wants to be clean delivered from every foul being and every false way! One thing has he asked of the Lord, and that one thing has he set his heart upon—that he may possess himself in righteousness, that he may be without offense and that he may maintain his integrity. To obtain this, through the power of the Holy Spirit, being cleansed by the blood of Jesus, he will cheerfully suffer any imaginable privation!

Do observe how *David sought after a thorough allegiance and a perfect conformity to the will of God*. He says, “I cried with my whole heart; I will

keep Your statutes”—not some of the statutes that were agreeable to him, but *all* of the statutes that had the Divine sanction. I do not intend to be uncharitable when I suspect that some Christians do not wish to know too much, or to enquire too minutely into the Lord’s demands upon their resources. I have noticed a great many people lately who have looked upon perfection as a prize within their reach and even as an attainment to which they have already come! This is getting rather common. They profess to be perfectly sanctified. But what can I think of some of them who, to the best of my belief, are possessed of fortunes to the extent of two or three hundred thousand pounds? Were they perfectly sanctified, could they look on the outlying world, living in vice and ignorance, out of which a chosen people are being saved by the Gospel, without supporting those agents and agencies that have the Divine blessing manifestly resting upon them to the utmost of their ability? They should come nearer to the kind of consecration which was manifested in that poor widow who gave “all her living” to the Lord’s treasury! I do not believe in a perfect sanctification which allows a man to lay up so much treasure on earth, while so many works for the Lord Jesus need his help. Systematic hoarding of wealth, to my mind, does not indicate a perfect character! I am not judging ordinary Christians, but only those who talk of full consecration—and I will never believe in it till I see their gold, and their silver dedicated to a larger degree, yes, to a perfect degree! Do not let them boast, but *give*. As to those who are satisfied that they are perfect in spirit, soul and body, we wait for their last testament—to see what their wills look like when they die! A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God’s cause, depend on that! He does not merely attend conferences, and talk of good things, of spirituality of mind and sanctification by faith, and all those glittering subjects, but he lives for Jesus in some practical work and gives himself up—and his substance, too—for the honor of the Redeemer’s name and the diffusion of the glorious Gospel! I have no leading one of these Brothers in my mind’s eye, but certain of their disciples—and I do not even condemn those—but I do ask them to reconcile their large wealth with their still larger professions of perfect consecration!

*The true seeker for holiness is one who, while he resolves on obedience to God, will dare to be singular, if no man will accompany him in it.* “I cried with my whole heart: I will keep Your statutes.” He meant to do it, though he should be without companions. He was prepared to stand alone! I always admire that speech of Athanasius, when he, seeing others had turned aside to Arianism, said, “I, Athanasius, against the world.” He is a true man who can be a true man by himself! Give me no semidetached cottage, but a house that stands compact on its own foundation!

And give me such a man as can let the wind blow all round him and yet stand upright. He will hold his own whether men will bear or forebear! Let his fellow creatures applause or hiss him, he will remain true to his own convictions. If they bear him on their shoulders in triumph, it is the truth he has espoused they honor—or if they trample him under their feet in contempt, it is for righteousness' sake he suffers! But, like Luther, he will defy devil, death, and Hell to hold to his purpose to keep God's statutes! Now the Word of God animates a man's soul and the work of God is the enterprise of his life when this is the strong desire of his spirit. He prays to God and invokes His aid, yet at the same time he records his vow with a mind that is not given to vacillate. He has put his foot down where he meant to stand. He has knit his brow and closed his teeth and set all his features to the aspect of defiance, for he means to hold out till he achieves the victory! He is not going to compromise himself, nor to tolerate any wrong thing. He will foil temptation, master evil propensities and slay the sin that offends, and aggrieves, and harasses him! In the armor of God he arrays himself and, through the Grace of God, he will prevail!

The man who is thus seeking purity, while he prays and resolves, if he is really wise and taught of the Spirit—

**III. WILL HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS AND DEPRAVITY.**

Therefore, he supplicates the Lord in the language of the 146<sup>th</sup> verse—"I cried unto You; hear me; I shall keep Your testimonies." His tender misgivings are an incentive to his restless importunities. As though he should say, "Oh, Lord, I am praying and resolving, but my prayers need Your answers, and my resolutions need Your might to fulfill them. My prayers—what are they? My resolves—what can they do? I am a frail leaf and I bend before the wind of temptation! My righteousness is like the sere leaf of autumn—it is soon carried away—yes, it is like a filthy rag that ought to be set aside and hidden from view! My God, I need sifting, I need sifting! Oh, save me, and then I shall keep Your testimonies." There is no holiness in any man by nature and never will be! Some ingenious author has said that man is not dead like a stone, but dead like an egg. There was some disposition to life in him that needed brooding over to develop. Well, I should not like to be the hen that had to sit on that egg till it has hatched! That a long eternity of disappointed hopes would spread out before me, I am quite certain. It is a stone egg, this humanity of ours! There is no real spiritual life whatever in it. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. And they may sit on that unclean egg as long as they like, but a vile, unclean chick will be the only result of it. Before ever we can keep God's testimonies, *we must be saved!* We

must be saved, first, from the guilt of the past. By Substitution, by Redemption, by the application of the precious blood of Jesus, by that expiatory Sacrifice in which our blessed Lord bore for us the vengeance of God that was due to our sin, must our salvation be procured!

Sinner, you will never go out of the Egypt of your bondage to sin till the blood of the Paschal Lamb has been sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. You may strive against sin as you will, but you will never overcome it except through the blood of the Lamb. Enquire of those in Heaven who have conquered sin and do now wear the snow-white garments—

***“I asked them whence their victory came?  
They, with united breath,  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to His death.”***

Never till you see a bleeding Savior will you be able to put your sins to death! They must be crucified on the Cross. They will die nowhere else than there! “Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.”

*We need to be saved*, however, not only from the guilt of sin, but saved *from our sinful selves!* We, whose nature is evil, cannot do much with so bad a nature to baffle all our efforts to cleanse our way. This nature must be removed and a *new nature implanted*, or else, while the old nature is extant, the old evil will assert itself! There are different ways of treating diseases. A man has a bad malady upon him and it breaks out in his flesh. He goes to a quack who gives him an ointment which he applies outwardly to heal the sore till the morbid appearance vanishes. And he congratulates himself on the cure and commends the charlatan for his skill. “What a capital doctor he is, and how well my money was expended,” he says, “he has taken away all that eruption.” By-and-by, the man is lying so grievously sick and ill that he does not know what to do. “Oh,” he thinks to himself, “have I made a mistake?” And when a true physician comes, he says, “What have been your symptoms?” He tells the tale of an eruption on his skin and the remedies he resorted to. “Ah,” says the physician, “the disease is driven inwards! You have taken the wrong course—your present symptoms are fatal. You will die. It was well that it should come out on your flesh, seeing it lurked in your constitution. When you have a disease, you had need lay the axe at the root, and not at the branches. It is not the disfigurement of the skin that is so alarming, as the blood-poisoning that caused it.” Forthwith he begins to deal with the real evil.

So, my dear Friends, you are only tinkering with the symptoms, the mere eruption on the skin, while you aim at outward reformation! You must be born-again! That is the only cure for the leprosy of sin. I am glad to hear of people insisting on the importance of reforming every kind of

vicious custom and evil habit, but they do not go to the root of the upas tree unless they resort to the Gospel—which lays the axe right at the root of all manner of sin and blasphemy with its imperative demand that you repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! This is the vital and vitalizing process that will turn out to be a radical blessing. Lord, save me, save me! Change my heart! Renew my spirit! Make the fountain clean! Set the mainspring right! Oh, Holy Spirit, regenerate me! And if You do this, then, not till then, shall I keep Your testimonies!

The same is true in respect to every Christian, Beloved. We require God to keep on sifting us. Unless His spiritual work shall be carried on every day in us, we shall be unable to keep His testimonies. We are to be resolved against sin—I have told you that. We are to pray against it—I have enlarged upon that. Still, we must fall back upon the naked fact that a real conquest of sin is the work of God, Himself! “I cried unto You; hear me: I shall keep Your testimonies.”

Brothers and Sisters, beloved in Christ, live near to God! Live at the foot of the Cross! Go every day to Jesus. Never get away from the spot on which you stood when you first believed. Then and there you looked, as sinners, to find everything in Him and nothing in yourselves. Do not expect to overcome sin by any other means but by faith in the atoning blood. Do not seek anything like perfection apart from Jesus Christ who, “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Oh, I would charge upon the members of this Church to labor after holy walking. It cuts me to the quick when I hear it said of any one of the members of this Church, “Well, they may be professors of religion, but they are not honest in their dealings, or they are not choice in their language, or they do not govern their tempers. They may be saints at the Prayer Meeting, but they are devils at home! They may look very amiable at the Communion Table, but they are very cross at their own tables.” Do not let it be so! Give no cause for such an evil report, I pray you! I invite all that attend my ministry, who are truly converted, to cast in their lot with us and join the Church, for so you ought to do, but oh, do not bring dishonor—I will not say upon us—that is of small consequence. Do not bring dishonor upon the Gospel that we preach and the Christ whom we love!

The world will not say, “There, that is a false professor.” They ought to say it. And if they were honest, that is how they would put it, but, in general, they will say, “That is your religion!” And the Cross of Christ will be evilly spoken of and many a poor Believer who has trouble enough as it is, finds it more difficult to give an answer to the scoffer through having the inconsistencies of others thrown in his teeth. Better die than deny the Savior! Better that we lie sick at home, covered with boils, than

that we go about the world grieving the Holy Spirit and putting an evil word into the mouth of the ungodly! Follow after holiness, I charge you. You are not saved by works! We give no uncertain sound about that teaching! We have told you and we constantly do tell you, that you are only to be saved by the blood of Jesus! But, remember, Jesus came to save us *from our sins*. If we hug our sins, we cannot have Christ for our Savior! Christ and you must part, unless you and your sins part. Jesus Christ will take any sinner to Heaven, but He will not take any *sin* to Heaven. He will spare the sinner, but He will not spare his sin! If you want to spare your own sins, depend upon it, you will lose your souls! Watch, I pray you, against what are called “little” sins! Remember, when thieves want to get into the house, if they cannot find a ready entrance, they will often put a child through a little window—and then he opens the front or the back door. So a little sin will often open the door to a big sin. Watch, I pray you—watch against secret sins! We have heard of some who barred the doors at night and fastened the windows, but there was a thief under the bed! Mind that it is not so with you—some hidden evil—some secret lust. Watch, pray, resolve, but still come back to this—“Lord, help me; Lord, save me; Lord, keep me.” The old plowman whom I sometimes used to talk with before he went to Heaven said to me, “Depend upon it, if you and I get one inch above the ground, we shall be that inch too high.” There is much truth in his plain remark. If we get any high notions of what we are, we shall soon sink below what we should be. Lie low! Aspire high! Be nothing! Take Christ to be your All-in-All! Renounce self-confidence and have faith in God! In this way you shall conquer sin, your prayers shall be accepted, your resolutions shall be carried out and the purpose of your heart shall be verified. “I will keep Your statutes.” May it be so with everyone of us! Amen, and amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:145-168.**

**Verse 145.** *I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes.* In the time of trouble there is no resort like that of prayer, but it must be intense and earnest. “I cried with my whole heart.” And sometimes it should be accompanied with a resolve to profit by the affliction. “I will keep Your statutes.” As the child under the rod prays to be spared because he hopes in future to be obedient, so does the Psalmist here say, “Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes.” This ought to be the effect of every affliction—to make us more careful in our obedience. It is not always so, but so it ought always to be.

**146.** *I cried unto You: save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.* As if he felt that the force of gratitude would compel him to obedience. He did not merely promise it, but he prophesied it as a matter of certainty that he would keep the Lord's testimony.

**147.** *I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. I hope in Your Word.* Early prayers seem seasonable. Before we have gone into the world, should we not first go to our God? Prayer ought to be the key of the morning to open it, as well as the key of the night to close it. And notice what should always be associated with prayer, namely, hope. "I hope in Your Word." There is no prayer like a hopeful prayer, in which a man hopes, believes, expects that God will send him a blessing!

**148.** *My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your Word.* Before the watchman can cry the hour of night, my eyes are upon the Word of God, and I am studying it. Oh, it is well when we prove our love to the Word of God by our meditation upon it, our constant searching into it.

**149.** *Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness.* Not according to my earnestness, much less according to my merit, but, "Hear my voice according to Your loving kindness." Oh, what a large measure is this, for who can tell how boundless is the loving kindness of God? Such is the answer to my prayer, O my Lord.

**149.** *O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* As You try me, quicken me. Just as You see I have need of it, give me more spiritual life.

**150.** *They draw near that follow after mischief: they are far from Your Law.* Dogs are at my heels! I have heard them long ago pursuing me, but now they are getting nearer to me than ever.

**151.** *You are near, O LORD.* Is not that a blessed sentence, that when the adversaries are near, the Friend of friends is near, too? What if he is like a hunted stag, and the dogs are at his heels, yet the Omnipotent Lord, the Interposer, can come between and save His darling from the power of the dogs!

**151, 152.** *And all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* It is an old story with me that Your love is without beginning, Your Covenant from all eternity, your Grace Immutable, not fickle, nor changeable as if it were founded yesterday upon the sand, but, "You have founded them forever."

**153-155.** *Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Your Law. Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your Word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes.* If they sought that salvation, they would cease to be wicked—they would find

salvation—but while they follow out their wicked ways, they get further and further away from anything like salvation.

**156-158.** *Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments. Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your Word.* It is enough to make any man grieve that the Word of God, which is so right, so just, so good, should be despised! What madness is this which is in the hearts of men, that they despise the best of the best?

**159.** *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness.* It is a fair argument. As one friend may say to another, “Consider how I love you.” As a child might say to his angry father when he is about to chasten him, “My father, I love you, although I have transgressed. Look at my heart and see how I love you, notwithstanding all the mistakes of my character and even the faults that I have committed.”

**160, 161.** *Your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word.* “Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of”—them? No, but, “of Your Word.”

**162-166.** *I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Present duty, future expectation. It is no use our hoping for great things unless we cultivate good things. God will make tomorrow bright—let us make today holy.

**167, 168.** *My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

# GREAT SPOIL

## NO. 1641

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1882,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil."  
Psalm 119:162.***

IN the preceding verse David had avowed his reverence for God's Word in the following language—"My heart stands in awe of Your Word." It is clear that holy awe is perfectly consistent with intense delight. Fear seems to stand far apart from joy and yet, in the experience of the child of God, they are next of kin. We are familiar with combinations such as this—"They returned from the sepulcher with fear and great joy." "Happy is the man that fears always." "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." These two emotions are like two notes which, apart, are widely different, but sound harmoniously *together*—the one is far down and the other is high up in the scale—but they melt into one with sweet accord in the experience of God's people. It is a blessed thing both to reverence the Word of God and to have an intense joy in it. May we all know what the mixed emotion means.

More than this, I will go the length of saying that unless we do have deep awe of the Word, we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverence. If I think upon the Bible, as some seem to do, as though it were an ordinary piece of literature, I shall have no very special joy in it. Or if I rise no higher than many critics of the present day and conceive the Holy Book to be, in a certain sense, Inspired, but still to be marred with imperfection and open to rectification by the growing intelligence of the age—if I have such small reverence for the Word of God, I shall have a correspondently little joy in it.

A man rejoices in gold rather than in clay because the gold is more precious and, as the treasure rises in value, so his delight in it will rise. The more, then, we think of the Scriptures, the greater will be our delight in them if we see that they relate to us. "Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it." If they become to us the Infallible voice of Truth, that pure light which never misleads, that metal which is entirely free from alloy—then will our joy in Holy Writ overflow as we read in it the mind and will of our Father in Heaven! And then shall we borrow the language of the Psalmist, saying first, "My heart stands in awe of Your Word," and next, "I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil."

Observe, dear Friends, concerning this joy of David in the Word of God which he revered, that he expresses it with a martial figure. My text is quite a soldierly verse—"I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil." It is a figure taken from men of war who, after they have overcome their enemy, divide the plunder among them. This expression is most natural as coming from David. David had been a soldier from his youth up

and he knew personally and literally what it was to divide the spoil and, therefore, he did not go far to find his metaphor, but plucked it from the garden of his own life! How I like to hear men both in prayer and praise speak like themselves!

I notice that if a sailor has been converted to God, he can, in cool blood, utter proper sentences, such as one might borrow from collects and forms of prayer. But if his soul grows warm within him, he ceases to speak according to the books and begins to pray like an “ancient mariner.” When he breaks through the bonds of restraint and gets quite free, he takes you among the rolling billows and many of his expressions have a salt spray upon them, possibly also a suspicion of yarn and pitch! You soon find that you have fallen in with a shipmate whose soul has done business on the great waters.

So must it be with the soldier. If cold, dead propriety rules him, you will not know whether he is a soldier or a citizen. But let him grow enthusiastic! Let his very heart speak out and his speech betrays him! Wars and rumors of wars are in his utterances. He sings and prays to martial music! Therefore I like to hear David saying that his heart rejoices at God’s Word as one that finds great spoil, for it is his own manner of speech and sounds fitly from a warrior! Do not cut away the naturalness of yours utterances in prayer—never grow so strictly proper as to pray like somebody else. You may take a bird and teach it to pipe half-a-dozen set notes and it will be thought to be a wonder—but no piping bullfinch in the world, to my ear, sings so sweetly as the finches in my own garden, whose wild songs are all their own.

The labored notes of the trained bird’s little tune may be remarkable, but are they not also somewhat grotesque and unnatural? The notes of Nature more truly reveal the bird and are a fitter utterance for it than the ditty it has learned so painfully. It is a pity that men should speak with God in a constrained and artificial style—it far more befits them to pray in their own natural manner! If you are farmers, or artisans, or laborers, be not ashamed that your speech should savor of yours calling. If you are soldiers, pray like soldiers! Let your true selves speak out when you speak with God, for He is Truth, itself, and needs not that you put on artificial manners in His Presence!

Having thus prefaced my discourse, I come to look into this joy of David over God’s Word which he compares to the joy of a warrior when he finds great spoil. To such overflowing joy we are not strangers—we feel quite at home with the text.

**I.** Let me first observe that THIS GREAT JOY IS SOMETIMES AROUSED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS A WORD OF GOD. This is true if we regard the Scriptures as a revealing of God. After going up and down in the world searching after Deity, it is a great delight to come upon a Book in which the one only living and true God has unveiled Himself to those who care to behold Him. It is a great “find” for a man to discover that, after all, he is not left in a fog to grope his way, but that God has kindled a sun that honest hearts may walk in the light of and in that light see all things clearly. I say that a Revelation of God is a great discovery

over which a man rejoices “as one that finds great spoil.” For, dear Friends, there can be no revealing of God except by God Himself.

The Apostle Paul tells us very truly that the things of a man know no man but the spirit of a man that is in him. You cannot read a man until that man brings out somewhat from within and thus reveals himself. A man must speak, or act, or we cannot know his mind. The chief means of a man’s revealing himself is by his word—language is the gate of the soul. If the man is true and honest, his word will be a window through which you may see his mind. Even so, says the Apostle, as the heart of a man is only known to the man, himself, so the things of God knows no man but the Spirit of God. The Divine thought must be hidden in the heart of God forever until the Spirit of God is pleased to tell it to us.

There is, therefore, an absolute necessity for a Revelation, since none can, by searching, find God. This written Word is the Revelation of God and when the Spirit of God shines upon it, we see the Lord as in a mirror. Oh, but what a blessing that the Spirit of God should still be with His people, bearing witness with the Word of God which He has of old Inspired! What a comfort that we have this sure Word of Testimony in which God has spoken to us in terms so distinct, so clear, so unquestionable! He who feels the power of this Revelation in his own soul may well rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.”

Nor does our valuation of Holy Scripture depend upon this one view of it, for we also prize it as the guide of our life. Often we come to positions in which we know not which way to take. It is a great discomfort to have to be questioning, questioning and forever questioning! To hear within the soul the enquiries, “How?” “What?” “Which?” “When?” and to be confused by dubious voices is a great affliction—suspense is killing. How delightful to turn over the sacred page and find in them a guide like that of the Urim and Thummim of old! This Book tells us the right and bids us follow it! It teaches us the way of wisdom and the path of understanding and it supplies motives for walking in them. Submitting ourselves to the Spirit of God, we hear Him speak in this volume and say, “This is the way, walk you in it.”

As a bewildered wanderer in a forest hails the light in a cottage window, hoping to find a guide there to set him on his homeward path, so do we hail the light of Holy Writ which shines in a dark place. As the mariner prizes his chart and compass, so do we welcome the Law of the Lord. Tossed on the changing sea of life, our eyes are gladdened by the clear ray of this pole-star of Heaven, the fixed Light of God! If we had been left to blind reason, we would soon have stumbled into the ditch—but with Inspiration to conduct us, we have a plain path before us and we are glad. No longer in a perpetual quandary, guessing and surmising, the way of life is definitely mapped out for us and we pursue our route with confidence, knowing that, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.” This becomes our daily song, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.” O happy man that finds such sure direction as this! He can rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.”

More than this, if you think of it, dear Friends, a word from God apprehended in the soul is a sure pledge of mercy. Consider what words those Words of God are—how full of love, Grace and tenderness. I will not stay to quote the exceedingly great and precious promises, for they are, I hope, your daily food. You know what great things the Lord has spoken concerning you. But here is a thought worth pondering—these promises are backed by the Word of God—no, they are, each one, *the* Word of God! When a *man* has given his word, if he is an upright, honorable man, there is an end to further questions—he has pledged his word and that is enough. Now the Lord has given to His people His Word—His right honorable Word that cannot be broken—which must stand fast forever and ever. Happy are those who are willing to take God at His Word and accept His promise as the equivalent for the thing promised, for what the Lord has promised He will surely perform!

When a man grasps a promise of forgiveness, of acceptance in prayer, of sanctifying Grace, of daily Providence, of Divine anointing, of comfort in death, or of eternal Glory, he may well rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.” Within the Word of promise there lies the blessing, itself! The Word is to the apprehension of faith, the substance of the thing hoped for. That which is guaranteed by God—who cannot lie—is already ours! Well may he rejoice that finds it! Notice, still further, that Holy Scripture, when it comes to us with power as the Word of God, is the beginning of communion with God. It will strike you in a moment that when the Lord speaks to a man, communion has, in a measure, begun.

It may be that God speaks to a deaf ear, but even then it shows great goodness and condescension on God’s part that He should speak to men at all, and especially to those who refuse to hear Him! But oh, if you actually hear the voice of God in His Word—if it sinks into your soul by the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit—what remains, then, but for you to answer the Lord and to let Him speak again? This Bible talks—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.” This is God’s side of a heavenly conversation which ought to be kept up throughout all the days of our pilgrimage. God says this and that in the Word and we in prayer, in faith, in holy action reply to Him—and then He speaks again and we answer Him again.

When you are alone and wish to have communion with God, you probably begin with prayer. Do so. But sometimes you feel that you cannot pray. Very well, do not try. Say, “I desire to converse with God but if I cannot speak I will listen to Him speak.” Get down the Bible. Read a Psalm, or some precious portion of Holy Writ, and after God has thus spoken to you, the conversation has begun! God’s Words will suggest heart-words with which you can speak to the Most High. If it does not, read some more, till at last, within your spirit there is communion with the Eternal One. Oh, what a bliss it is that God does speak to any of us—to me—a poor, worthless, sinful creature! How highly favored is man to have a word from the great King!

Many would give their eyes to be spoken to by a monarch, but here we are spoken to daily by the King of kings if we are but willing to incline our ear to His sweet voice! And this is the commencement of a communion

which may continue throughout life and consummate itself in everlasting Glory! Personally I can, sometimes, realize my text in a peculiar sense, when the Word of God becomes to me the instrument of usefulness. How often do I look around me anxiously for the next theme of discourse! My mind enquires, What shall I preach to the people? What shall be my message? With what shall I feed my Church? This is a trying question after 28 years preaching to one congregation!

At last a passage comes home to my soul with power. I have found it. What joy fills the preacher's heart! No warrior was ever happier when he heaped up the mountains of prey. You meet with a person who is anxious—you want to say the right Word of God to him and, therefore, you prayerfully look all around until a text suggests itself, which proves to be the exact word for the person whose good you are seeking! Have you not felt great joy in handling such a passage as the instrument of usefulness? Have you not been ready to cry like the old Greek philosopher, "I have found it! I have found it!"? Have you not wanted to be off to tell it not only to the one person you are anxious about, but to 50,000 more?

Ah, yes, you have rejoiced as one that finds great spoil. You see, then, that there is a distinct a joy which comes to the man who gets God's Word into his soul—a joy which arises out of the fact that there is a Word of God which comes to us as the Revelation of God, as an Infallible Guide through life, as the pledge of Divine mercy, the beginning of Divine communion and the instrument of usefulness! Upon all these things we might profitably enlarge, but time would not allow it, so I beg you to follow me to the next point. May the Holy Spirit lead our minds.

**II.** Secondly, let us remark that FREQUENTLY THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER IN THE WORD ARISES OUT OF HIS HAVING HAD TO BATTLE TO OBTAIN A GRASP OF IT. Read the text again—"I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil." Covered with sweat, dirty with dust, bleeding from many a wound, wearied and faint, the fighting man has conquered the enemy and now he staggers forward to seize his portion of the prey, finding new strength in the joy of victory. Did you ever have to do that with God's Word, for I have had to do many times, and I will try to describe the battle as I know it.

"O my Soul, you have trod down strength." We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them. Learning doctrines out of books, or merely learning them as matters of catechism, is never enough. Such teaching is all very useful and helpful, but the sure way to learn a doctrine is to have it burned into your soul as with a hot iron. "Oh," they say of me, "that man speaks so *dogmatically*." I cannot help it! Why should I speak with bated breath when I feel absolutely certain of what I say? If I were *not* certain, I would hold my tongue until I was. I could not dare to come here to talk of matters which may or may not be true! I dare not thus waste your time and thought. I have not only found the Doctrines of the Gospel in God's Word, but I have tested and tried them in my own experience—and they have been so powerfully operative upon my own soul that I must speak as I find.

To me the things I preach are as assured as my existence! In fact, they are a part of my existence, since they are my life, my hope, my joy and strength. I am positive in speech because I am assured in mind. Nor can I see the gain which would accrue from the opposite style of speech. Of what use is this cloudy doubt? Unless a man speaks up to the best of his knowledge and belief, most positively, who is likely to believe him? Wise men will bid the speaker make up his own mind before he can hope to influence other minds. I have no doubt about the existence of a God. Have you? If you have, do not set up to be a minister for God by any manner of means!

I have no doubt about the mediatorial power of His precious blood. Have you? If you have, do not pretend to be a Christian teacher, for your whole weight will be on the wrong side! Faith receives more stabs from waverers than from avowed skeptics. Sowers of doubt are no friends to the Gospel, for men are saved by faith—nobody was ever saved by unbelief. “We know and have believed the love which God has towards us.” “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” But how do we get to this assurance? Why, by fighting our way to it! A doctrine of God’s Word comes before us. Our heart exclaims, “Yes, this seems to be the teaching of Scripture and, therefore, I must believe it.” But carnal reason rebels and conjures up a phalanx of difficulties, while our proud human nature revolts from a Truth of God which is so little to its taste. These things have to be battled with.

Faith has to bring all the faculties of the children of God upon their knees and to say to them, “Be quiet! Listen while God speaks—let God be true and every man a liar, and every faculty in the man a liar, too—sooner than God be distrusted.” This is the victory we have to strive after—the triumph of a firm belief in the veracity of God. A doubt rises, then another and another, like a flight of bats when a dark cave is startled by the blaze of torches. Away they fly and light seizes on their dreary realm! Some minds have, for a time, to contend with doubts, army after army. Do not wonder if you have to strive, even, to blood, till your very soul bleeds over the doctrine! But rejoice that when once you thus win it, you will doubt no more and the Truth of God will become doubly precious to you ever afterwards!

You have gained the Truth by fighting for it and, therefore, you cry, “This is my spoil and none shall rob me of it.” Take away the giant’s head from David? He is not to be so defrauded! Did he not cut it off himself? Did he not throw the stone which sank into the Philistine’s forehead? So when a man has slain a thousand doubts in conflict over a doctrine and has, at last, come to assured belief, straightway he rejoices “as one that has found great spoil.” What a fight there is, sometimes over a promise. Have you ever entered into such a contest? O gracious promise, most suitable to my case! How it would comfort my soul! But may I appropriate it? The devil says, “Certainly not!” He pushes us back from it. Our feeble hope assures us that it is too good to be true to us.

A thousand doubtful suggestions assail us, till at last the soul, by a desperate effort, seizes the portion and holds it against all comers. We

drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron! We take possession of their strongholds. Then does a man rejoice over a promise when he has believed it in the teeth of a thousand improbabilities and proved it to be true! He feels that he took the blessing out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow, and from now on it is a peculiar portion to his soul and he rejoices over it, "as one that finds great spoil." It is a good thing to mark your Bibles when you have received a promise. Mark the margin with T and P—and let it stand for "tried and proved." Mark the passage which the Lord fulfils to you with some private seal, bearing witness to its truth!

David set his own hand to the margin in many places as, for instance, when he exhorted us to wait on the Lord and then added, "Wait, I say, on the Lord." May that which is written with ink in the Bible be written with Grace on our hearts! May the public promise become a private promise to each one of us by the living experience of our own soul! Sometimes the hardest fight is round a precept. God has bid us do this and that, but carnal ease cries, "Let the precept alone!" And love of self says, "That command is too humbling! Pass it by." But oh, when you can battle with yourself and win the victory till your heart cries, "I will delight myself in Your Commandments, which I have loved," then your rejoicing will be great, indeed! What a joy to conquer yourself! What bliss to master your surroundings and all the peculiarities of yours disposition and temperament, so as to come to love the same precept which a little while ago was irksome! How the Believer loves the Law when he has fought down his rebellious will, vanquished his obstinacy, crushed his pride, fettered his levity and yielded himself wholly to the Word of the Lord! Holy Spirit, give us this joy!

A sharp warfare often goes on over the threats. I have had many a wrestling match over them. A voice whispers in my ear, "that threat of God is too severe! That sentence of Scripture is too harsh." Certain of my Brethren carry a bit of pumice stone with them and rub down the rough texts. Whenever they find God speaking in wrathful indignation against sinners, they meet His terrors with a "larger hope." Things that are revealed belong to me, but things that are not revealed seem to belong to them! They have many learned ways of softening down disagreeable Truths of God. Now, if I find my mind quarrelling with any line of Scripture, I say to my soul, "You are wrong, or else you would be in accord with every Word of the Judge of all the earth." If I cannot yield unfeigned assent and consent to the justice of God, it does not occur to me to *alter* the Scripture, but to school my own heart till it bows before the thunder of Divine judgment!

I try to get my heart into such a state that I can say, "If my soul were in God's place, this is exactly what I would say to the ungodly! This is precisely the measure I would deal out. For it must be right, it must be just or Jehovah would not so deal with men." When you are thus agreed with God, you will rejoice as one that finds great spoil, for you will be confident that to the toughest problems there is a gracious answer—and for the direst difficulties a sweet solution! It is hazardous to take the soul out of

texts of Scripture and to attempt to give them souls of our own invention! Let us learn God's meaning and then become friends with it. Grow accustomed to the terrible texts till, like Daniel, you feel safe even in the lions' den! The doctrine of Eternal Punishment is no longer difficult for me to believe since I am confident that it is taught in the Scriptures. The difficulties of it are for God to solve and there I leave them, being well assured that in some way, or other, all that He does will be consistent with His justice and His love! Not without a battle does one consent unto the darker side of sacred Writ, but that once fought, there is rest.

Yet, once more, this is true about the Word which reveals Christ. We know not Christ aright till we are conformed to what we know of Him. If Christ is lovely, we shall not understand that loveliness till we are, in a measure, lovely ourselves. The pure in heart see the pure and holy God because every man sees what *he* is. When the lady said to Mr. Turner, "Sir, I have seen that spot many times, but I never saw that which you have pictured." "No, Ma'am," he replied, "I dare say you have not. But don't you wish you could?" Just so, the artist's eye sees what another eye cannot—and the pure in heart see in God what nobody else can see because they are like God. When our minds become molded like the mind of Christ, then we understand Christ! If there is anything about the Character of our Divine Exemplar which staggers us, let us pray our way into it!

We must get to be like He and, oh, when we do, then every line of that dear face will be conspicuously and transcendently charming to us because we have come to it through suffering! The inner experience of many a child of God lies much in conflict and contention—and scarcely an inch of Scripture is truly gained without fighting for it foot to foot with those who would rob us of our inheritance! Canaan was given to Israel by the Lord, Himself, by a Covenant of Salt, but we all remember the long list of enemies that already occupied it. What is the name of them? Hivites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites—I will not trouble you with more, so many and so ugly are the names of those who would keep back the Believer from his portion in the Covenant. One of old said, "They compassed me about like bees: like bees they compassed me about" and yet he added, "But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them."

May it be our resolve that we will take every part of the Word of God to be our heritage and rejoice over it "as one that finds great spoil."

**III.** We shall now tarry a moment upon a third thought which is altogether different from that which has gone before. AT TIMES THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER LIES IN ENJOYING GOD'S WORD WITHOUT ANY FIGHTING AT ALL. In the text I am not sure that fighting is certainly mentioned or necessarily implied, though it is highly probable. David says, "I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil," as if he fell upon it all of a sudden, like the lepers at the gate of Samaria who, to their surprise, found all the way they traversed covered with garments, gold and silver vessels! They had not lifted a finger in war, yet they found great spoil—like the man in the parable who, when he was plowing, found a treasure hidden in the field. He had never looked for it, but he had great joy in discovering it.

In infinite mercy the Lord makes His Word open up before His people when they are not seeking it, according to the promise, "I am found of them that sought Me not." Have you ever experienced what this means and have you not rejoiced as one that suddenly finds spoil? The Word of the Lord is often as spoil *found*, not fought for. The promise lies before me on the way and I find it—and by the Law of the Kingdom of Grace it becomes mine for the finding. There it is and the Spirit of God reveals it to me! And I take it, asking no leave whatever, since all Covenant blessings are free to us when we are free to take them. Our warrant for feeding at the banquet of love is the fact that God has set before us an open door and we are invited to enter in! What joy is this!

This spoil, however, must have cost somebody else most dear, though it has cost us nothing. If we did not fight for it, somebody else fought for it once. Ah, what a fight was that! Let Gethsemane and Calvary tell. What joy there is in seizing the spoil which Jesus has left us as the result of His life's warfare! We have not trod the winepress, but yet we drink the wine! The blessing is free to us, but it cost Him groans, tears, bloody sweat and death! "This is David's spoil." Look down and see the mark of the victor's feet! See you not where the nails went in? The Crucified One has been here and smitten all our adversaries and left this spoil for us poor creatures to divide among ourselves! Great is the spoil—all the spoils of death and Hell! All that father Adam was robbed of is recovered from the robbers! Life, light, peace, joy, holiness, immortality, Heaven—all these are brought back by our great Conqueror who has taken the prey from the mighty and brought back the lawful captives, leading captivity captive!

O, Brothers and Sisters, we rejoice when we get a hold of the precious treasures of the Word as Jesus Christ's spoil, fought for by Himself and then distributed to us! What a joy there is in our heart when we remember what foes our Lord overcame to gain all this spoil for us! Sin has been routed, Death has been slain and Hell has been stripped of its prey—our direst enemies are broken in pieces and the crown of their head is crushed by Him who is the Seed of the woman—the Messiah of God! Whenever a passage of Scripture sings to you of itself, sing with it before the Lord! Whenever in reading, the verse seems to leap out of the page into your bosom—there let it lodge forever! Whenever in hearing the Word of God it darts into your heart, then will you understand what David meant when he said that his soul rejoiced over God's Word "as one who," by a happy, blessed find, "finds great spoil."

**IV.** My fourth head is the principal one and I need all your attention while I dwell on it for a short time. THERE IS A JOY ARISING OUT OF THE VERY FACT THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE MAY BE CONSIDERED TO BE A SPOIL. I will show you that in five particulars. First, a spoil is the end of the uncertainty. Whenever a fight begins, it is questionable who will win. While it rages, the result still hangs quivering in the balances, but we know who has won the battle when the victor begins to divide the spoil. No question now remains—the debate is ended. Blessed is that man who has found in Scripture a spoil in the sense that he has come to the end of uncertainty and arrived at something without doubt.

All men that think crave after certainty and gradually settle down to one standard or another. I have heard of two brothers, equally honest and thoughtful men, who commenced life at the same point, but parted in their search after a foundation firm and strong. One of them, at last, gravitated to the church of Rome, for he thought he discovered certainty in an historical church and in one at the head of it whose utterances are regarded as infallible. I do not envy him his ideal certainty—it seems to me to be a mass of fraud—a great historical imposture. The other brother found his resting place in his own reason, or in the fact that he could not be sure of anything. There is a certainty in being certain that you are not certain of anything—but certainly it is not a certainty which would afford comfort to *me*—for my reason would be to me a sorry guide for eternal things, since even in everyday concerns it has misled me!

We must find certainty somewhere, or believe that we have found it, or else we shall be, of all men, most miserable. If a man has no standard of infallibility outside, he tries to find it in himself and becomes his own pope—and depend upon it, a pope in England is as likely to err as a pope in Rome! I would not give two pence for the two of you and if I threw myself in, it would not add an extra farthing to the value. When a man has in experience fought up to confidence in the Word of the Lord, or has had it effectually laid home by the Holy Spirit to his own soul, then he reaches the end of the controversy so far as he, himself, is concerned—he is dividing the spoil, for he says—“We have known and believed the love which God has towards us.”

Of course, people come round and say, “You are mistaken.” Our answer is, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. It may not be certainty to *you*, but it is to me.” If a man should assert, “Oh, that medicine is all quackery,” he has a right to speak his mind, but his decision is not final. “Not so,” cries another, “I have been ill half-a-dozen times and on each occasion I have speedily recovered through its use! Call it quackery if you like, it is no quackery to me, at any rate, for I am certain about its good effects.” So is it when a man has, at last, by the application of the Spirit of God, felt the power of God’s Word over his soul. He says, “I am not going to fight that battle again. I am sure of the Truth of that Scripture.” Such a man is restful about that matter.

I would to God that all of you had this certainty as some of us have. How horrible it is to grope in the eternal fog, to flounder in primeval chaos seeing no road or landmark; turning this way and finding it night and the other way equally darkness; to the right, disorder; to the left, questions! Oh, to get to know that God loves me and that I love God! To know that Christ has redeemed me, my sin is put away and to feel all this witnessed in my soul by the Holy Spirit! This is to rejoice in the end of uncertainty as one that divides the spoil!

The next idea that comes out of the figure of spoil is this. It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks, for when they divide the spoil they say to one another, “The invaders will be here again, no doubt, before long, but they will not have this great gun to turn upon us—we have spiked it. Their stock of ammunition will be somewhat dimin-

ished by the capture of their magazines and they will not have this huge chest of gold with which to purchase more martial equipment, for we have taken it from them. We have weakened the adversary. Have we not entered their strongholds? Have we not captured their quadrilateral? They may again take up arms, but their force is broken.”

Every doubt a man conquers by resting on the Infallible Word of God has weakened the power of unbelief within him and strengthened his faith. Blessed is that man who has so trusted in his God that doubts are now but as the grasshopper which is only a burden to the feeble. O the joy of saying, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” Or to cry with the once-blind man, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see!” Tasting and handling of the good things of the Kingdom of God, we rise into a region of fact and leave suppositions and quibbles far below! In this lies a part of the joy of taking the spoil—we hope for less disturbance of heart, less peril of intellect, less struggle of soul from this time forth. The horns of the adversary have been broken and they cannot harm us as before.

Next, in dividing the spoil there is always a sense of victory and so there is in believing God’s Word. In getting firm hold upon the faithful Testimony of our God, we achieve a conquest over doubts, fears, disquietudes and all our proud judgments of God. There is a sense of conquest when we overcome our passions and propensities and do the Lord’s bidding according to His precepts and statutes. When that which at one time was difficult, if not impossible, becomes easy and delightful, then we wave the palm branch over a defeated enemy! When the mind is brought into subjection to all and every revealed Truth of God, then have we done more than if we had taken a strong city! “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” May we have more of it and go from strength to strength, doing valiantly in the name of the Lord!

Again, in dividing the spoil there is profit, pleasure and honor. I am not about to justify the deeds of war, for these I hate—as to plunder and chaos, such as have been indulged in by the general run of conquerors—they are detestable crimes! Men have made themselves worse than devils to men. No calamities have ever befallen nations that are so much to be deplored as the atrocities of war! I use the warlike metaphor, but condemn the fact! Men conceive, when they divide the spoil, that there is honor in it. Look at the crowds that gathered along the Via Sacra when the Roman conquerors came down from the Apian Way, passed under the arch and marched towards the capitol! Then did the populace crowd the house roofs and the chimney tops that they might see a Scipio or a Caesar expose his captives and display his spoils.

They shouted till they were hoarse and wearied themselves with applause at the sight of the spolia opima which were borne in the procession. Thus men judge of plunder in war. See how Napoleon thought to glorify himself by placing in Paris the works of art which he had taken from the capitals of Europe! What are most trophies but stolen goods, or that which is purchased by them? But when you and I lay hold of Holy Scripture, then have we grasped a prey more precious than royal treasures, a

prey which we may hold with justice and honor! When we can say that the things which God has revealed are *ours*, then we are rich beyond a miser's dream and when we can hold them against all comers! Then that which we believe becomes our honor and gives glory to us and glory to faith and chief glory to Him who worked our faith in us by His almighty Spirit!

Last of all, the spoil is a prophecy of rest and so is that delightful dividing up of the Word of God and the appropriation thereof by faith. "Ah," said the Romans when they spoiled old Carthage, "we shall never see another Hannibal at our gates, nor dread the ships of Carthage in our seas." They had overcome their most potent adversary when they utterly spoiled her—and then they looked for a long period of peace. And that is the joy of receiving the Word of God! When we can believe that Jesus took our sin and suffered for them on the tree, we are no more troubled as to the guilt of sin! When we believe that our heavenly Father overrules *all things* for the good of His people, then sorrow and sighs, fear and frets flee away! Well may he rest who sees even evil made to work for his good!

When we believe that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, then the fear of death which haunts so many receives its mortal wound. Knowing the meaning of the word, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live," the dread of death has no more dominion over us! The appropriation of the Divine promise, as the soldier appropriates his share of the booty, is to us the prophecy that the war is over! We may rest, now, and be quiet. And oh, what joy, what blessedness is this! How I would that all those who are here present were believers in my Master—first in Jesus the great Incarnate Word—and then in this book, the written Word of God and that you did not only believe these things to be true, but took them to yourselves as warriors take the spoil!

Happy and blessed would you be and your rejoicing this day would be as the joy of harvest, or as the shouting of them that divide the spoil! God grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# **THE LOVER OF GOD'S LAW FILLED WITH PEACE NO. 2004**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them.”  
Psalm 119:165.*

THIS forms part of a devotional passage. It is not merely a statement that great peace comes to those who love the Law of God, but it is uttered as part of a hymn of praise unto the Lord. We cannot praise God better than by stating facts concerning Him and His Word. If you desire to praise God, you must speak of Him as He is. If you would pour out an acceptable libation before Him, you must fill the vessel from Himself, as the wellhead of all excellence. Our Te Deums are simply declarations of what God is—there can be no higher praise. His praises can only be the reflection of His own light. All glory is already in Him, none can be added to Him.

And so, when we are adoring Him for His Law and blessing Him for giving us His Word, we cannot do better than observe how that Law operates upon the heart and praise Him because it so works. We have no need to heap up flattering titles as men do with their kings. We have no need to invent exaggerated expressions. We have but to speak the simple Truth concerning our God and we have praised Him. By the word, “Law,” here is intended, not only the Law of the Ten Commandments but the whole of Divine Revelation, as it was in David's time and as it is now. Whatever God has revealed is loved by saintly men.

This sacred Book, which we commonly call the Bible, contains the mind of God so far as He has seen fit to reveal it to men. It is the Law of holiness as the guide of our actions and the Law of faith by which we receive of His Divine Grace. Here we have the Law of the kingdom of Heaven, the Law of life in Christ Jesus. As a Law of works, this holy Book convicts us of sin. As a Law of love it leads us to Jesus, to find forgiveness through His blood. In David's day the Law was a smaller Book than ours but he found great peace in the reading of it—it was even then competent for the highest spiritual ends. We have that Book at greater length but it is one and the same.

The same Gospel is in Genesis as in Matthew. The Old Testament was perfect in itself as the Law of the Lord and the New Testament is but an expansion of the same Truth which the Old contains. We rejoice to find that our larger edition of the Word of God contains nothing which lessens that great peace which the earlier Scriptures were able to produce. As the light is clearer, the joy is brighter and the reasons for great peace are more clearly seen.

God's Law comprises all His precepts and in keeping these we have peace of conscience. It contains all His promises and these are our great peace in the hour of need. And it comprehends all those great doctrines which surround the Cross of Christ and the Covenant of Grace and each one of these is a fountain of peace to our hearts. We take this Book as a whole and in this way we have peace. We dare not rend it, we would not leave out any part of it lest we miss the blessed effect which, as a whole, it is calculated to produce. Sitting as learners at the feet of Jesus our Master, submitting our hearts and minds to the infallible teaching of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all Truth, we find that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

Three things in the text are worthy of earnest attention. May the Spirit of God bless all we say! First, here is a spiritual character—"they which love Your Law." Secondly, here is a special possession—"great peace have they." And thirdly, here is a singular preservation—"nothing shall offend them"—or nothing shall be a stumbling block to them. Oh, that we may know our text experimentally!

**I.** First, here is A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER—"they which love Your Law." Love lies deep—it is in the heart—it is not a thing of the surface, it is of the man's own self. As a man loves so is he. To love God's Law is to have the very nature and essence of our manhood in a right condition. To love the Word is something more than to read it, even though we should study it day and night. It is more even than to understand it. For the cold light of the intellect is of little worth compared with the warm sunlight of love. Many, no doubt, perceive the Truths which are taught in God's Word and so become orthodox in their professed creed.

But without love their faith is dead. You cannot learn the Law of God as you learn the laws of nature. Your heart must be affected by it and you must obey it in your life or you do not truly know it. Only he who does the will of God can know of the doctrine. Mere knowledge brings no peace to the man. The Truth must go from the head to the heart before its power is known. Some even try to keep the Law of the Lord so far as to make the outward life conformable to morality and religion. But this falls far short of the love of the heart. To stand in slavish fear and dread of God is better than to be utterly indifferent but it is a poor thing compared with love.

Slaves obey their masters because of the lash and so do many outwardly follow the Word because of the spirit of bondage which will not permit them to rebel. But there is something lacking—nothing in religion is sound till the heart goes with it. God says, "My son, give Me your heart," and He cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Search, then, my Hearers and see if you really love the Law of the Lord.

He who loves the Word would not wish to have it altered, enlarged, or diminished—it reveals enough for him and no more. For he is content with what God chooses to teach him. If he finds any want of conformity in his own thoughts to God's thoughts, he throws his own thoughts away and sets up the Divine thoughts in their place. As he is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, so is his mind reconciled to the teaching against which he at

first rebelled. He loves the Law of the Lord just as he finds it. And instead of judging it and daring to set himself up as a dictator of what it ought to be, he is humble and docile and cries, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."

He loves every Truth which the Lord declares—yes, and the very style and method of the declaration. Every word of God's Book has in it music for his ears, beauty for his eyes, honey for his mouth and food for his soul. The teachings of God's Word are to the instructed Believer not only articles of faith but matters of life. Our faith has imbibed them and our experience has assimilated them. We could part with everything except what we have learned out of the Sacred Book by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. For that flows through our souls like the blood through our body and it is intermixed with every vital part of our being.

Like wool which has been made to lie long in scarlet we are dyed in-grain. As certain insects take their color from the leaves they feed upon, so have we become tintured to the core of our nature with the living and incorruptible Word. It has proved its own inspiration by inspiring us with its Spirit. Now we live in the Word as the fish in the stream. It is the element of our spiritual life. This may suffice to set before you the sort of people who obtain great peace from the Law of the Lord, because, in the truest sense, they love it.

This inward and spiritual love to God's Word includes many other good things. Permit me to use the connection in order to help myself as to order and to help you as to memory. Read the first verse of this octave—the 161<sup>st</sup> verse—"Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word." The love of God's Law includes a deep reverence for it. That man is blessed who trembles at God's Word. This Book is not to be compared with other books. It is not of the same class and order. It is inspired in a sense in which they are not.

It stands alone and is not one among other books. As towers an Alp above the molehills of the meadow, so Holy Scripture rises above the purest, truest and holiest literature of man's composing. Even if all those other books are purged of error and are corrected to the highest degree of human knowledge, yet would they no more reach to the degree of the Book of God than man can become God. It is supreme and of another quality from all the rest of them. Other writings we feel free to criticize but, "My heart stands in awe of Your Word." The man who loves God's Word does not trifle with it. It is far too sacred to be toyed with. He does not mock it. For he believes it to be God's Word.

With a docility which comes of true sonship, it is enough for him that his Father says so. His one anxiety is, as far as possible, to know the meaning of his Father's Words—and, that known, all debate is out of the question. "Thus says the Lord," is to every true child of God the end of the matter. I have often told you, my dear Friends, that I view the difficulties of Holy Scriptures as so many prayer-stools upon which I kneel and worship the glorious Lord. What we cannot comprehend by our understand-

ing, we apprehend by our affections. Awe of God's Word is a main element in that love of God's Law which brings great peace.

This advances to rejoicing in it. Read verse 162—"I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil." As a conqueror in the glad hour of victory shouts over the dividing of the prey, so do Believers rejoice in God's Word. I can recollect as a youth the great joy I had when the doctrines of Divine Grace were gradually opened up to me by the Spirit of Truth. I did not at first perceive the whole chain of precious Truth. I knew that Jesus had suffered in my place and that by believing in Him I had found peace. But the deep things of the Covenant of Grace came to me one by one, even as at night you first see one star and then another and by-and-by the whole heavens are studded with them.

When it first became clear to me that salvation was all of grace, what a revelation it was! I saw that God had made me to differ from others—I ascribed my salvation wholly to His free favor. I perceived that, at the back of the grace which I had received, there must have been a purpose to give that grace and then the glorious fact of an election of grace flowed in upon my soul in a torrent of delight. I saw that the love of God to His own was without beginning—a boundless, fathomless, infinite, endless love—which carries every chosen vessel of mercy from grace to glory. What a God is the God of Sovereign Grace! How did my soul rejoice as I saw the God of love in His sovereignty, immutability, faithfulness and omnipotence!

"Among the gods there is none like unto You." So will any young convert here rejoice if he so loves the Law of the Lord as to continue studying it and receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit concerning it. As the child of God sees into the deep things of God he will be ready to clap his hands for joy. It is a delightful sensation to feel that you are growing. Trees, I suppose, do not know when they grow, but men and women do—when the growth is spiritual. We seem to pass into a new Heaven and a new earth as we discover God's Truth. A new guest has come to live within our mind and He has brought with Him banquets such as we never tasted before.

Oh how happy is that man to whose loving mind Holy Scripture is opening up its priceless treasures! We know that we love God's Word when we can rejoice in it. We wish that we could gather up every crumb of Scripture and find food in its smallest fragments. Even its bitter rebukes are sweet to us. I would kiss the very feet of Scripture and wash them with my tears! Alas, that I should sin against it by a thought, much more by a word! If it is but God's Word, though some may call it non-essential, we dare not think it so. The little things of God are more precious than the great things of man. The Truth of God is no trifle to one who has fought his way to it and learned it in the school of affliction. "O my Soul, you have trod down strength!" And that which you have gained in the battle is your joyful spoil.

Further than this, we receive Holy Scripture with emotion. David says, "I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love." He regards all that is opposed to the Law of the Lord as hateful lying. Those are hard words,

David! Surely you are sinning against the charity of our cultured age! Yes, but when a man feels strongly, he cannot help speaking strongly. "I hate," says he and that is not enough. He says, "I hate and abhor lying." His whole being revolts at it. He means not only that lying with which in common life men would deceive their fellows—that is hateful enough. But he refers especially to that kind of teaching which gives the lie to the Law of the Lord. For he adds, "But your Law do I love."

A good man's hate of falsehood is as intense as his love of the Truth of God. It must necessarily be so. He who worships the true God detests and loathes idols. In these days there are many men to whom the Truths of Scripture are like a pack of cards to be shuffled as occasion suits. To them peace and quietness are jewels and the Truth of God is as the mire of the streets. It does not matter to them what this man preaches and what that man writes. Hold your tongue—it will be all the same a hundred years from now—and really, nobody can be quite sure of anything!

To the man that is loyal to his Lord and faithful to his convictions, it can never be so. He hates the teaching which belies his God. He that has never felt his blood boil against an error which robs God of His glory does not love the Law, nor will he know that great peace which comes by having the Law enshrined in the heart.

One other virtue is included in the love of the Word. According to the context, great gratitude to God for His Word is formed in the believing heart. "Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments." God's judgments written in His Word are matters of praise—

***"This is the judge that ends the strife  
Where wit and reason fail."***

God's judgments actively going on in the world which tally with those predicted in His Word are also matters for adoring praise. The God of the Word is the God of the deed. What He says He does and every day and all the day we praise Him for it.

Beloved, God may do what He wills and we will praise Him. He may say what He wills and we will praise Him. We read in His Word stern things, words of wrath and deeds of vengeance. Shall we try to soften them, or invent apologies for them? By no means. Jehovah our God is a consuming fire. We love Him, not as He is improved upon by "modern thought," but as He reveals Himself in Scripture. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—"this God is our God forever and ever—He will be our Guide, even unto death." Even when He is robed in the terror of His judgments, we sing praises unto His name. Even as they did at the Red Sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his host swallowed up in the mighty waters—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

Our hallelujahs are "to Him that slew mighty kings; for His mercy endures forever." It is not mine to improve upon the character of Jehovah but to reverence and adore Him as He manifests Himself, either in judgment or in Divine Grace. I, who am less than nothing, and vanity, dare not scan His work, nor bring Him to my bar, lest I hear a voice saying,

“No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?” What am I that I should be the ultimate judge of truth, or of justice, or of wisdom? Whatever God may be, or speak, or do—that is right—it is not mine to arraign my Maker but to adore Him.

Extenuations, explanations and apologies may be produced from the best of motives. But too often they suggest to opposers that it is admitted that God's most Holy Word contains something in it which is doubtful, or weak, or antiquated. It looks as though it needed to be defended by human wisdom. Brethren, the Word of the Lord can stand alone, without the propping which many are giving it. These props come down and then our adversaries think that the Book is down, too. The Word of God can take care of itself and will do so if we preach it and cease defending it. See that lion? They have caged him for his preservation—shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes!

See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure Gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries. Yes, without attempting to apologize even for the severer Truths of Revelation, seven times a day do we praise the Lord for giving us His judgments, so righteous and so sure.

I have shown you now, dear Friends, how this love lies deep in the heart and how it includes much of honor and reverence. Let me further remark that this love is productive of many good things. They that love God's Word will meditate on it and make it the man of their right hand. What a companion the Bible is! It talks with us by the way, it communes with us upon our beds—it knows us altogether and has a suitable word for every condition of life. Hence we cannot be long without listening to our Beloved's voice in this Book of books. I hope we realize the character described in the first Psalm—“His delight is in the Law of the Lord. And in His Law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

Love to the Word of God creates great courage in the defense of it. It is wonderful how the most timid creatures will defend their young, how even a hen becomes a terrible bird when she has to take care of her chicks—even so, quiet men and women contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and will not tamely submit to see the Truth of God torn in pieces by the hounds of error and hypocrisy.

The love of the Law of God breeds penitence for having sinned against it and perseverance in obedience to it. It also begets patience under suffering, for it leads the man to submit himself to the will of God whom he loves so much. He says, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.” The Word of God begets and fosters holiness. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through Your Truth; Your Word is Truth.” You cannot study the Scriptures diligently and love them heartily without having your thoughts

and acts savored and sweetened by them. A gentleness and kindness will be infused into your spirit by the very tone of the Word. A sacred delicacy and carefulness of conduct will surround your daily life in proportion as you steep your mind in Scripture.

Let me commend to you, my beloved Friends, that you live with the Law of the Lord till even men of the world perceive that you keep choice company. The trashy lives of most people are the fit outcome of the trash which they read. A life fed on fiction is a life of fiction. A life fed on Divine fact will become a life of Divine fact. I have no time in which to show you all the sweet uses of the Law of the Lord—it does much for the formation of a perfect character. No molding force is so much to be desired as that of the Word of the Lord in the love of it.

This much, however, I must add—if in any of us there is a love of the Law of the Lord, this is a work of the Holy Spirit. Nature does not love God and hence it does not love God's Law. Human nature is in open and active rebellion to everything that is commanded or commended by the thrice-holy God. If, then, you love God and His holy Law, the Holy Spirit has been at work in you. And by this new love it is proven that you are a new creature. The old nature delights itself in everything which is of the earth earthy. It is only the new and heavenly life which can appreciate and love heavenly things. My Brothers and Sisters, let your love of the Law be to you a proof of your regeneration—you have passed from darkness into marvelous light—for you love light. Let this be to you the evidence of your election—you had never loved God and His Law if He had not loved you first.

What can your love to God be but a reflection of His love to you? Hear Him say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." See, also, in this love of God's Law the prophecy of your ultimate perfection. We do not keep the Law as we would. But if we *desire* to keep it, that which holds the will is the real Law of our life. If there is in us a strong and passionate desire to accept and obey God's Word in everything and to be conformed to it in thought and life, that desire will ultimately get the victory. Use well the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God—and by the force of your love give sin sharp and heavy thrusts and you shall conquer until every thought is brought into captivity to the Law of Christ.

**II.** We have spent too long a time upon our first point and shall have to be brief upon the other heads. Our second division is a very sweet part of the text. Here is A SPECIAL POSSESSION, "great peace have they which love Your Law."

When Orientals meet each other their usual salutation is "Shalom"—"Peace be to you." The word does not mean merely quiet and rest but happiness or prosperity. Great peace means great prosperity. Those who love God's Law have great blessedness in this life as well as in that which is to come. In loving the Law of God we have intense enjoyment and real success in life.

Let us, however, take the text as we have it in our Bibles. By peace here is not meant that a man who loves God's Law will have great peace with

everybody, for that is not at all true. If David penned this sentence, he certainly was not an instance of great peace with men flowing out of his love to the Lord's Law. He was a man of war from his youth. He had peace as a shepherd boy but even then he had to kill lions and bears and soon after he had to meet a giant in single combat. Neither in his family nor in Saul's court was he at peace. He was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains and had to run for it from day to day. He had not much earthly peace.

When he had done with Saul, the Philistines invaded the land. If it is possible, we are to live peaceably with all men. But He who has put enmity between the serpent and the woman never meant that we should enjoy the *friendship* of the world. The great peace which they have who love God's Law refers to a peace which can exist when strife rages all around us. Does not it mean this—first, great restfulness of the intellect? If we love God's Law in the sense in which we have explained it, so as to stand in awe of it and rejoice over it, the result will be great peace of mind.

Everybody must find infallibility somewhere. Some think it is with the Pope at Rome, others dream that it is in themselves—the second theory is no more true than the first. Others of us believe that infallibility lies in the Word of God—this Book is to us the final court of appeal. When God's Holy Spirit leads us into the Truth which He has revealed in this Book, we feel a full assurance that we know the Truth of God and we speak from experience when we say that the loving belief of the Word brings us great intellectual repose. I care nothing what supposed philosophers may discover—they cannot discover anything true which is contrary to God's Word. I know that I am speaking that which is best for my fellow men in the highest and best sense, when I am not venting a theory but setting forth a Revelation from Heaven.

He who gave us the infallible Book has all the responsibility for its contents. If I believe what God tells me and do what He bids me, the results are with Him and not with me. He is the ruler of the universe and not I. And if there are any terrible mysteries, He must explain them—not I—if they ought to be explained. I am like a servant who is sent to the door with a message. If I deliver the message which my Master gives me as I receive it, you must not be angry with me, for I did not invent the message, I only repeated it to you. Be angry with my Master, not with me.

That is how I feel when I have done preaching. If I have honestly preached what I believe to be in God's Word, I am free from all responsibility for my ministry. My responsibility lies in endeavoring to interpret the Word as clearly as I can. I am not accountable for its teaching. I have not before me the unbearable burden of composing a Gospel. I remember well a minister, whom I much respect, saying to me, "I wish I could feel as you do. You have certain fixed principles about which you are sure and you have only to state them and enforce them. But I am in a formative state. I make my theology fresh every week."

Dear me, I thought, what a hopeless state for progress and establishment! If the student of mathematics had no fixed law as to the value of

numbers but made a new multiplication table every week, he would not make many calculations. If a baker were to say to me, "Sir, I am always altering the ingredients of my bread—I make a different bread every week," I should be afraid the fellow would poison me one of these days. I would rather go to a man whose bread I had found good and nourishing. I cannot afford to experiment in the Bread of Life. Besides, there is an intellectual unrest in all this kind of thing which is escaped from when we come to love the Word of the Lord as we love our lives. Oh, the rest of knowing within your very soul that the Truth of God you rest upon is a sure foundation!

Those who love God's Word have also a great peace which comes of a pacified conscience. Conscience is as a terrible wild beast when aroused and irritated by a sense of sin. Nothing will quiet conscience effectually and properly but the great doctrine of the Substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. When we see that God has laid on His only begotten Son all our iniquities and that the chastisement of our peace was exacted of Him as our Substitute, then conscience smiles upon us. If God is satisfied with regard to our sins, we are satisfied, too. We see in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that which must satisfy Divine justice and therefore our conscience receives a safe and holy quiet and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.

And the same conscience also brings great peace when it bears testimony to renewal of heart and life. When a man knows in his own soul that he seeks to do that which is right in the sight of God, and that he is aspiring after a pure, gracious, useful life, he has great peace even when others ridicule him. If you have taken your own way and acted dishonestly for gain, peace will not visit your heart. But if you have loved God's Law and kept to the way of strict integrity, you will have within your own bosom an angel of peace to strengthen you in the hour of sorrow. "The testimony of a good conscience is like the song of the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem."

Beloved, what a peace the love of the Word brings to the heart! All hearts require an object of love. How many hearts have been broken because the thing beloved has disappointed them and proved false to their hopes? But when you love God's Word, your love is not wasted upon an unworthy object. It introduces you to Christ and you love Him intensely, and however much you yield your heart to Him, you are always safe. Jesus is never a Judas to His friends. Jesus cannot be loved too well and hence the heart has great peace when it comes to Him.

To love God's Word gives great peace as to our desires. You will not be grasping after wealth when the Word is better to you than the most fine gold. You will not be ambitious to shine among men when to you the Word of the Lord is a kingdom large enough. Your desires will be regulated by true wisdom when your heart is garrisoned by the Word of the Lord which dwells in you richly. When Christ Himself is our All in All, we are harbored in the haven of peace. When our desires find their pasturage around the

Great Shepherd's feet, our ambitions cease to roam and we abide at home in peace. Content with a dinner of herbs in our Lord's company, we no longer pine for the stalled ox of the wicked who prospers in his way. To love the Law is to cease from covetousness and to cease from covetousness is great peace.

When we love God's Law, we reach forward to the peace of resignation to God, acquiescence in His will and conformity to it. It is of no use to quarrel with God. Let me say more—it is disgraceful, ungrateful and wicked—for a child of God to do so. When we perfectly yield to God our heart's sorrow is at an end. The sting of affliction lies in the tail of our rebellion against the Divine will. When we love God's Word intensely, we take pleasure in persecutions, tribulations and infirmities, since they instruct us in the Divine promises and open up to us the hidden meanings of the Spirit. Our mind is so near to God and so pleased with all that pleases Him, that we do not desire to suffer less, or to be less weak, or less tried, than the will of God ordains. To love the Law and the Lawgiver goes a great way towards loving all that He appoints and decrees. And this is a garden of peace to all who know it.

Besides, the love of the Word breeds a happy confidence in God as to all things in the past, the present and the future. Whatsoever the Lord does or permits must be right, or works right. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." This is a very peace-breathing belief. When we love God's Word, we see God at the beginning of everything, God at the end of everything and God in the middle of everything. And as we see Him present whom we love, we cease from anxious thought. "My soul is even as a weaned child." Of such a man is it written, "His soul shall dwell at ease." The Lord whom he takes to be his Shepherd makes him to lie down in green pastures and he asks no more.

**III.** I am cramped by want of time. I must, therefore, in a very few words sum up what deserves to be spoken at length upon the third point. Here is A SINGULAR PRESERVATION—"Nothing shall offend them." There shall be no stumbling block in their way.

Intellectual stumbling blocks are gone. One asks me, "Do you mean to say that you read the Bible and do not find difficulties in it?" I regard the Word of God as being infallibly inspired and therefore if I find difficulties in it, which I must do from the very nature of things, I accept what God says about those difficulties and pass on. The Word of God does not profess to explain all mysteries—it leaves them mysteries and my faith accepts them as such. When out in a yacht in the Clyde we came opposite the great rock called the Rock of Arran. Our captain did not steam right ahead and rush at the rock—no, he did what was much wiser—he cast anchor for the night in the bay at the foot of it, so that we were sheltered from the wind by the vast headland.

I remember looking up through the darkness of the night and admiring its great sheltering wing. A difficulty it was—it became a shelter. Every now and then in Scripture you come before a vast Truth. Will you steam

against it and wreck your soul? Will you not, with truer wisdom, cast anchor under the lee of it? Do we need to understand everything? Are we to be all brain and no heart? What should we be the better if we understood all mysteries? I believe God. I bow before His Word. Is not this better for us than the conceit of knowing and understanding? We are as yet mere children. We know in part.

Of course, we are blessed, in this enlightened age, with some wonderfully great men who understand more than the ancients and either know the unknowable, or think they do. In a sentence I will give you the result of my observation upon men and things—"No man knows everything except a fool and he knows nothing." I have not yet met with any exception to this rule—no, not even among the superior persons who prefer culture to Scripture. If you love the Word of God, you will see no difficulties which will in the least cause you to stumble. Love to the Word is the abolition of difficulties. Things hard to be understood become steppingstones on which to rise and not stumbling blocks over which to fall.

"Nothing shall offend them." Does not this also mean that no moral duty shall be a cross to them which shall cause them to turn aside? They will not turn away from Jesus because a sin has to be abandoned, a lust denied, or a pleasure given up. The man who has counted the cost will not be offended by his Lord's requirements. Does Jesus say, "Do this"? He does it without demur. Does Jesus say, "Cease from that"? He withdraws his hand at once. When a man once loves the Law of God, albeit it involves self-denial, humiliation, loss—he shrinks not at the cost. Self-denial ceases to be self-denial when love commands it. The Cross of Christ is an easy yoke and soon ceases to be a burden. A duty which for a little season is irksome, becomes pleasurable before long to a lover of the Law of the Lord.

Moreover, the man who loves God's Law is not offended if he has to stand alone. To some persons it is impossible to traverse a lonesome way but he that truly loves God's Law resolves that if all men forsake him he will cleave to the Lord and His Truth. Can you not stand alone? Does solitude offend you? As for me, I am resolved, by God's grace, not to follow a multitude to do evil. I will keep to the old faith and the old way if I never find a comrade between here and the celestial gates. I do not think a man loves God's Word thoroughly till it breeds in him a self-contained peace so that he is satisfied from himself and drinks water out of the cistern of his own experience.

Paul was not offended though at his first answer no man stood by him. What have we to do with other men as supporters of our faith? To their own master they stand or fall. As for our Master in Heaven, let us follow Him through life and unto death. For to whom else could we go? He only has the words of Eternal Life.

Neither will such persons ever be so offended as to despair of God's great cause. The night grows darker and darker but the man who loves the Divine Law expects the sun to rise at its appointed hour. Oh, that the Lord would hasten it in His own time! If He delays we will not, therefore,

doubt. Divine Grace has produced, in past ages, men who were confident as to the triumph of the Truth of God when others feared for it. Look at the dauntless courage of Luther, who, when everybody else despaired of the Gospel, trusted his God and cheered his people and would not hear of drawing back. He could not pronounce the word "despair." "Luther, can you shake Rome? The harlot sits enthroned upon her seven hills, can you hope to dislodge her, or loose the captive nations from her bonds? Can you do this?"

"No," said Luther, "but God can." Luther brought his God into the quarrel and you know which way the conflict turned. Not today, nor tomorrow, nor in twenty years, may God's Truth win—but the Lord can afford to wait—His lifetime is eternity. O Struggler for the Truth, make sure that you are with God and with the Truth and then be sure that God is with you in Truth and will deliver you. "Nothing shall offend them."

It is wonderful, if you love God's Word, how things which are stumbling blocks to others cease to be injurious to you. Suppose you enjoy prosperity—if you love God's Law you will not be puffed up by deceitful riches or honors. You will be humble when all men admire you and all comforts flow in upon you. The Lord's Word in your heart will be as a salt to your estate so that it breeds in you neither worldliness, nor forgetfulness of God, nor pride. Your goods shall be your good, if you learn to use them for God's glory.

The same will be true of adversity. He that can stand on the hilltop can stand in the valley. If you love God's Law you are the man to be poor, to be sickly, to be slandered. For you can bear it all because you have meat to eat that the world knows not of. Your love to God's Law will furnish you with a ceaseless stream of consolation. Nothing will dampen the flame of your spirit because the Lord feeds it secretly with a golden oil. O Servants of God, let us be glad together in this day of rebuke! The thunder is heard but it is mere noise. The sea roars but it is only roaring. Let us laugh at those who would silence faithful testimony. For the Lord God omnipotent reigns and great is the peace which He gives to the lovers of His Law.

As for you who love not God's Law, who know nothing of Jesus, because you have never submitted to the Law of faith—there is no "great peace" for you. There may be the deceptive cry of, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." But may the Lord save you from it! Soul, there is no hope for you, you can not rest till you are at one with God. As surely as God made you, you must yield to your Maker and accept your Redeemer and be renewed by His Holy Spirit, or you are lost forever.

I pray God the Holy Spirit lead you to accept what God has revealed and bow yourself to the supreme majesty of His Word—especially to the power and grace of the Incarnate Word, the Lord Christ Jesus. Then will you have great peace for this world and the next. God bless you, Beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# A SINCERE SUMMARY—AND A SEARCHING SCRUTINY NO. 2671

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 22, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1882.**

*“I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies:  
for all my ways are before You.”  
Psalm 119:168.*

*“I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant;  
for I do not forget Your commandments.”  
Psalm 119:176.*

IF anyone says that these two texts contradict one another, I say that they do not. They form a paradox and they are both true, and true of the same man, at the same time. I will read them to you again. “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.” “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.”

I purpose to take our first text *as a sincere summary of a godly man's life* and our second text *as a searching scrutiny*, or as the result of a searching scrutiny, which looks below the surface, and then comes to a conclusion, not contradictory to the former one, yet supplementary to it.

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, our first text is A SINCERE SUMMARY OF A GODLY MAN'S LIFE. Looking back, he can say of it in general, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

First, let me say that *it is necessary that we should have so lived that this shall be the summary of our life*, for if we have not so lived, what evidence have we that we have been born again—that we have passed from death unto life—that we have been delivered from the bondage of sin and brought into the way of holiness? If our life is not different from what it used to be, how can we try to deceive ourselves with the idea that we are converted? If our lives are no better than the lives of unregenerate men, what reason can we have for believing that we are regenerate? After all, at the last we shall be judged according to our works. “By their fruits you shall know them,” is a test that still stands good and will stand good even to the end. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” And, in looking back, if our life has been ungodly—if it has been wanton and unchaste—if it has not been characterized by sobriety, honesty, prayerfulness, consecration, what can

we say of it? We shall have to judge ourselves to be still “out of the way” and to have need that we should turn to God with full purpose of heart and seek what, evidently, we have not at present found. If the Grace which we are supposed to have received has not made us to differ both from our former self and from men of the world, then it is not the true Grace of God.

Next, whenever a man can truly say, with the Psalmist, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies,” *it is a fruit of Grace*. It is not a product of the legal spirit. It is not a result of free will un-helped by God’s Grace and love. Wherever there is even a *spark* of holiness, it must have come from that great central fire which is in the heart of God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” There is not on earth a rare flower of loveliness and purity which is not an exotic—it is blooming in a clime to which it is a stranger. God has planted it with His own right hand.

So, then, he who can thus sum up his life has nothing of which to glory, for he has received from God everything of good there is in it and, therefore, he gives all the glory of it to the Giver and takes none of it to himself. It is faith that works by love, purifying the soul, and producing the devout and godly character—and faith never claims any honor for itself, for it is, itself, the *gift* of God. Christ says much in praise of faith because faith says so much in praise of Christ! And faith is used, in the Covenant of Grace, as a means of blessing, because it excludes boasting and gives all the glory to God, who works all that is good within us. So, you see, dear Friends, that there is nothing of legality in what I am saying now when I testify that a godly Christian, when he sums up his life, can say, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.”

Next, *this summary of life is excellent for its breadth*. Notice how it is worded. It comprehends the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord. That is, the practical and the doctrinal parts of true religion. There are some persons who appear to be very scrupulous concerning the precepts and they are very anxious to keep them. So far, they do well. But as to the Doctrines of Grace, they say, “We do not know much about them,” and they appear to think that it is not at all necessary that they should know about them. A very large part of God’s Word, which teaches most precious Truth, they slur. They think that it does not matter to them. Should they not believe according to the denomination in which they were born or brought up? They say that there is no particular necessity for them to be so diligent in searching and knowing the Word. The Psalmist thought not so, but he said to the Lord, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.” I feel that I am as much bound to *believe* right as to *act* right and it is just as truly a sin to believe error, when I can learn the truth, as it is to commit iniquity. We are responsible to God for the use we make of our understanding, as well as for the exercise of our affections. There is nothing in the Word of God to justify men in believing what they like, and anyone who neglects to search out the Truth of God commits a sin of omission. He who holds an error which he might

see to be an error if he looked in the mirror of God's Word, is guilty of rebellion against the teaching of God. If we would live a life such as we can look back upon with pleasure, we ought to try to keep the testimonies as well as the precepts of the Lord.

I have met with some people who used to be more numerous than they are now, who were very strenuous about the Doctrines of Grace. If anybody differed from their view of the Doctrines, they at once said that he was unsound. I should hardly like to repeat the hard things they used to say about such a person, but, certainly, to be sound in the Truth of God was the grand thing with them. And I do not condemn them for that, but I do blame them because, sometimes, practical preaching seemed irksome to them and the enforcement of the precepts of the Word made them wrathful—they could not endure it. You could tickle their palates and delight them with a good strong sermon on the Doctrines of Grace, but when you came to insist upon holy walking, they would turn upon their heels and say that the preacher was "legal."

Now, inasmuch as I before said that to neglect God's testimonies is an evil, so I add that to neglect the precepts is an equal evil. Be you, O man of God, as earnest to *do* the right as to *believe* the right and, on the other hand, as earnest to believe the right as to do the right! Your whole nature should be subject to God. He is to be your Teacher as well as your Law-Giver. Will you not sit at the feet of Jesus, like Mary did, to learn of Him, as well as rise up, like Martha did, to serve Him? If you will not, then you give to Him a lame and limping obedience. "The legs of the lame are not equal," and your obedience is lame, since the legs of it are not equal. There is a long doctrine and a short obedience, or a long precept and a short doctrine. Be it not so with you, O man of God, if you would look back upon a well-ordered life! Happy shall that man be who can say, "Ever since that glad day when I was brought as a penitent to my Master's feet, I have studiously endeavored to do what He has bid me do and I have just as earnestly shunned and turned away from everything which I have known to be sin. I praise the Lord that He has helped me to keep my garments unspotted from the world."

But if he would be a complete Christian, he must be able to add, I have also strived to believe all that is taught in the Word of God. I have not given myself up blindly to be led by priest or minister. I felt that God had given me a conscience for which I was responsible, not to my fellow men, but to Him, so I have gone to the Law and to the Testimony, testing everything by that Infallible standard. I have not sat down in idleness, taking things for granted because they were preached with brilliant oratory, but, like the Bereans, I have searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so or not." Ah, Beloved, it will make a soft pillow for your head if, in the retrospect of life, you can say, "I have made the Law of God, in its *teachings* and in its *commands*, to be the rule of my whole life." God grant that you may have that satisfaction at the last!

Further, dear Friends, *this summary is excellent for its length*, as well as for its breadth, for here the man of God says, "I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies." I do not know how long the Psalmist had

kept them, but it seems to me natural that he should make this summary towards the end of his life. I pray that it may be so with us when we come to die. I have known the gray-headed old man—how well I knew him, and how greatly I loved him, for I mean my venerable grandfather—who, when he was dying, could say, “That which I preached when I first entered the pulpit I have preached to the last. And for 58 years, to the best of my knowledge I have preached nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I have nothing to retract of the testimony which I have given, for what the Spirit of God taught me, that have I taught to others.” And he could equally have said at the last, “I have, as a father, trained my children in God’s fear and they are all following in my footsteps. I have, as a pastor, watched over my flock with sedulous care. I have set them an example which they can safely follow. And there is no man who can truthfully lay a charge against me, for in all uprightness and integrity have I walked before God.”

Mark you, this dear old man was a Calvinist—an out-and-out preacher of Free Grace who would not, for a moment, take the slightest credit to himself for anything that he was, or had done! Yet he could not have said less than this unless he had pretended to possess a modesty which was not true and mimicked a humility which was based on falsehood. In like manner, may we be kept, by the Grace of God, clear of all trusting in our works, but, at the same time, may we abound in good works to the Glory of God and, both in thought and in life, may we be clear in the sight of God! Oh, how I have envied that first Quaker, George Fox, who, with all the eccentricities of his life, could honestly say on his deathbed, “I am clear, I am clear, I am clear of the blood of all men.” This is the highest ambition that a minister’s heart may indulge—that he should be able to say that at the last—as other men of God have been able to do.

So, you see, this is a blessed summary as to length as well as breadth.

Above all things, *it is excellent from its cause*. Notice how the Psalmist says to the Lord, “I have kept *Your* precepts and *Your* testimonies.” That is what the true man of God still says, “I followed the precept because it was God’s precept. I did not care whether a Church or a Council of any sort had set its stamp upon it. It was God’s precept and that was enough for me. And I believed the Doctrine because it was His testimony. It might not be the testimony of any Reformer, or Confessor, but it was enough for me that it was God’s testimony.” That should be the reason for our conviction and also our action.

The Psalmist kept God’s precepts and testimonies because all his ways were before God. He felt that God was watching him. He lived under the consciousness of God’s Presence with him both by night and by day and, therefore, he dared not believe anything contrary to God’s Truth, or act contrary to God’s command. “You God see me” either held him in check or else impelled him onward. This is the way for us, also, to live, dear Friends! I pray that you may live thus.

I think the Psalmist also meant, when he said that all his ways were before God, that they were under God’s smile of approval. God not only

observed, but He communed with and commended His servant. Another Psalmist, or perhaps the writer of these words which form our text, said, “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” And Enoch might have said, “I have walked with God from day to day. Communion with Him has been my continual delight and all my ways have been before Him.” The Book of Psalms begins thus—“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord; and in His Law does he meditate day and night.” His ways are always before God and he has respect unto the Law of the Lord evermore.

Such a life as that, dear Friends, *is excellent from its use*. It is sure to be a life of happiness, even though it should bring on persecution. It is certain, also, to be a useful life. It is an example which your children and your children’s children may safely follow. It is an argument for the Gospel which the most skeptical cannot refute and it is a most blessed way of propagating that Gospel, for men are more often convinced by our actions than by our words. Seek after it, dear Friends, and let your lives be such that you may close them with the words of my first text, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

**II.** Now let us pause a moment and observe that the Psalmist, after he had spoken thus, and spoken quite sincerely and truly, yet felt that he must close his long life’s summary in another fashion. He then uttered our second text, which I called a SEARCHING SCRUTINY. “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.”

His life was perfect, after the manner of Scriptural perfection, but when it was carefully examined and scrutinized, it was found to be manifestly imperfect! Suppose you take a needle, one of the very best that has ever been made—any seamstress would be glad to use it. She would never think of sending a packet of such needles back and saying that they were not good. They are bright, untarnished, sharp, smooth—all that they should be—quite perfect needles. But just put one of them under a microscope—I have done so—and then see what it is like! Why, now, it is a bar of steel—rough and ugly-looking, tending towards a point at one end, but certainly very blunt. That is just the difference between the microscopic examination and the ordinary observation of our poor eyes. So, the life of a Believer may be like that of Job, “perfect and upright,” but when it comes under the scrutiny of an eye that is illuminated by the Spirit of God and touched with the heavenly eye-salve, quite another verdict is given! And, tremblingly, with many tears, the confession is poured into the ear of God, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep”—followed by the petition—“Seek Your servant” and the renewed declaration, “for I do not forget Your commandments.”

Here is, first, *a confession of imperfection and of helplessness*. It really means a continual imperfection and helplessness, for the Hebrew verb relates not only to the past, but to the present. It might just as well be read, “I am still going astray like a lost sheep.” Indeed, it *must* be so read,

for the Psalmist goes on to say, “Seek Your servant.” He would not have offered such a prayer if his confession had only related to something that was at an end. There is, here, not only imperfection and the tendency to a continuous imperfection, but there is also an acknowledgment of helplessness! The Psalmist does not say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but I can return when I please.” No, he prays to the Lord, “Seek Your servant,” as if the only help for him lay in the search which the great Shepherd would make and the consequent restoration which would come by His gracious and powerful hand!

Let us just think for a little while and then I feel sure that we shall soon say that we must confess to God as the Psalmist did. I mean that each one of those here present who have led godly lives will still have to say to the Lord, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.” Think first of God’s precepts. Have we ever gone astray in heart from any one of them? Suppose you never have departed from them in life—which is a very charitable supposition—have you ever in *heart* felt the precepts to be hard? Had you been really perfect, it would have been easy, it would have been natural for you to keep them. Have you not sometimes had to whip yourself up to a duty? The need of being whipped up to it proves that evil is still remaining within you. Then, have you ever forgotten a precept? Lives there a man who has carried out all the precepts of God without forgetting any one of them? I would like to see the Brother who has done so—but such a Brother I never expect to see.

I think that, with the most of us, it is thus. There is a certain duty and we try to do it with all our hearts, but, meanwhile, we forget another duty which is just as binding upon us as the first was. We look right on and so we overlook the duties that lie on the right hand and on the left. The very intensity which makes us earnest about one thing often prevents our attending to another thing which is equally important—and thus we present to God one duty stained with the blood of another! I have known a father, in aiming at being firm with his children, err by being too severe. But far oftener have I known others, intent upon being kind to their children, who have grown like Eli and have winked at their sin. That is but one instance among thousands of the evil I am deploring. A man may say, “I shall rebuke So-and-So for his fault,” but he does it too sharply and therein he errs. Or, afraid of being too severe, he says nothing and therein he errs. Did you ever, in all your life, do any one thing so well that it could not possibly have been done better? The difference between the good there was in what you did and the good there might have been in it is just so much of deficiency—and sin is any lack of conformity to perfection. Whether you fall short of the mark or go over the line matters little. In either case, you have missed the perfection God demands. If you do not reach His standard, you have not yet attained to perfect holiness and there is still something of sin to confess.

The precepts of the Lord are so broad that they touch the secret imagination of the heart. Is there a man living who never has an unclean desire? “I fought against it,” says one. I know you did, but the very *desire* was sinful. Or, if it has not come to a desire, was there never an impure

imagination that crossed your mind? “Yes, it just flitted across my mind,” you say. Well, in proportion as you yielded to it, in that proportion it was a guilty thing. Yes—I must say it—if even a *dream* has had anything of sin in it, and you have been complacent over it, it detects the sin that is within you, for were you really perfect, even the very passing thought, though it were but as a bird of the air that flew above your head, would still, by casting a shadow over your spirit, cause you vexation and sorrow. Keep that microscope close at hand and it need not have very strong lenses—only look fairly into your own life, first, by the light of the Law of God, and, secondly, by the light of your obligations to Christ who has redeemed you with His precious blood—and then I feel sure that you will have to say, “I fall short even of my own ideal and I am persuaded that my ideal falls very far short of what God’s ideal of perfection is.”

Has it not often struck you, dear Friends, as a very amazing thing that good men—some of the best of men who have ever lived—have nevertheless been guilty of things which, at the present moment, we regard as heinous crimes? Mr. Whitefield had a strong objection to slavery, but still it did not seem to him to be wrong to have a number of slaves at the orphan house at Savannah—and to speak of them as his goods and chattels. That was a matter about which the conscience of the good man was not then enlightened. We do ill if we condemn men too strongly for things about which no enlightenment has come to them, but are they not, themselves, guilty in the sight of God? Of course they are! There are men, nowadays, carrying on trades that are doing mischief and only mischief to the populace, but they are not aware of the evil, their conscience is not enlightened about it.

To take another line of thought, suppose a man is worth many hundreds of thousands of pounds and all the while there are millions of people abroad perishing for lack of the Gospel and, often, the great deficiency of the Missionary Societies is not in the men, but in the means to send out the preachers of the Gospel? Is that man right, before the living God, who says, “I am not my own, for I am bought with a price, and all that I am and have belongs to Christ,” and yet who nevertheless remains immensely rich—rich beyond anything that he or his children after him can ever need? Yet, possibly, his conscience is not enlightened about that matter and it is no very great crime in his judgment—neither may you and I condemn him, for our own conscience is probably quite as much in the dark upon something else. But whenever anybody, who is very rich, gets up and says, “I am a perfect man,” I feel inclined to say what Christ said to the young man who thought that he was perfect, “Sell all that you have.” Somebody asks, perhaps, “Does Christ propose that test to every one of us?” No, certainly not, but to any of us who say that we are perfect, that test may be applied. If you are such a perfect man, see if you can do as our Lord said—sell all that you have, and give the proceeds to the poor. I have known a man sing—

***“Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great  
That I should give Him all”—***

but, all the while, he has been trying to feel whether it was a three-penny piece or a four-penny piece that he was going to give to the collection!

As I begin to think of these various things which I have mentioned—just casting, as it were, a little ray of light upon them, not the great Light of the eternal purity of God—I cannot understand how there can be any man, even though he has kept God’s precepts and testimonies as far as he could, who, nevertheless, is not bound to say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.”

But, further, suppose it to be possible that we have not gone astray from the precepts of the Lord, how about His testimonies? Is any man here prepared to say, “I feel that I have, in every respect, believed the Truths of God as they are revealed in God’s Word, and that I have never erred from them”? Do you believe all the Truths of God and all the Truths in their right proportions and relations? And do you give due emphasis to each Truth at the right moment? Have you ever believed that which afterwards you found to be incorrect and false? Possibly you have not willfully done this, but have you done it at all? Think of Augustine, that mighty master and teacher in the Church of God, sitting down in his old age and writing his, “Confessions.” Alas, even he found that he had plenty of things to confess and to amend! And it must be so with us, too. The very man who can say, “In the main, I have preached the same things all through my ministry,” yet, nevertheless, adds, “I preached them as far as I knew them, but I did not know them at the first as I learned them afterwards. I did not know this Truth in relation to that Truth and I sometimes misrepresented God in my very zeal to give a correct statement—and I slew one Truth of God in my defense of another.” Ah, Friends, we are all so fallible! No, more than that, we do all so sadly *fail* in one way or another, that we must meekly bow our head and each one, say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.”

I am afraid that I might have put this matter much more strongly than I have ventured to lay it before you and still have been within the mark. But there I leave it, as I need to speak upon one more point.

In that prayer of the Psalmist, “Seek Your servant,” I discern *conscious faith in the Divine power*. He seems to say, “Lord, I am as silly as a sheep, but if I were only a sheep, I could not pray. I am a servant, too—‘Your servant.’ It is my joy, it is my glory to be Your servant. Now, Lord, because I am Your servant, seek me. Do not lose me, Lord! You have bought me with Your blood. I am seeking You, Lord, so come and seek me. I want to be perfectly holy—come and help me. Forgive every sin of omission or of commission. Draw me away from every mistake. Draw me nearer and yet nearer to Yourself. ‘Seek Your servant.’” Perhaps you are ill, or even dying—well, living or dying, this prayer may still suit you—“Seek me, Lord, ‘seek Your servant.’”

Then, lastly, comes in that sweet reflection, “For I do not forget Your commandments.” “I have a love for them, I have a longing for them and I am sure that this never grew in my heart by nature. It is the gift of Your Grace and, because You have put it there, Lord, and You have begun to work in me, finish Your work, I pray You. Lord, You have made me long

to be rid of every false way, therefore, deliver me from it. You have made me wish to be transparent and sincere. You have made me hungry and thirsty to be like Yourself! Then will you not satisfy the craving You have, Yourself, imparted?—

**“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,  
And worship only Thee.”**

“If I hold an error, yet You know that I wish not to hold it. Show me that it is an error and I will have done with it at once. And if I am acting in good faith in a wrong way, Lord, do You but let me see that it is wrong and, cost what it may, I will do the right and cease from the evil.”

This is a blessed way in which to close our life, but there is a still more blessed way and that is, after all is said and done, and after God’s Grace has been praised for everything that is lovely and of good repute that it has worked in us, then to cast *bad works and good works* all away and just look to the Cross, and to the Cross alone, and see our life in Jesus’ death, our healing in His wounds, our glory in His shame, our Heaven in His anguish! Look, saint! Look now! Sinner, you may do the same. Where the saint’s salvation is, there is yours, too. And if the graybeard, hoary with years of honor and of virtue, gathering up his feet in the bed, knows no better or brighter hope than that of being justified through the righteousness of Christ and washed in His blood, it is a joy to know that the same hope is free to you guilty ones who have not kept the precepts or the testimonies of God!

Turn to Christ on Calvary! Cast your eyes on Him who, like the bronze serpent, is lifted up that every sin-bitten one may look unto Him and live! Oh, by His Grace, look to Him now and you shall live, for never a soul looked to Him and died while looking there!

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

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”  
—185, 232, 119 (SONG II), 538.**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ROMANS 7; 8:1-4.**

**Romans 7:1-3.** *Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the Law), how that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman which has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if her husband is dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.* He merely states this as an illustration.

**4.** *Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the Law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. While we were under the Law of God, we could not come into the bonds of the*

New Covenant—the Covenant of Grace. But, through the death of Christ, we are dead to the Law and, therefore, we are set free from the principle and Covenant of Law, and we have come under the Covenant of Grace.

**5.** *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.* Sin is the transgression of the Law of God. Therefore, out of the Law, by reason of our corruption, springs sin. And, in our past lives, we did, indeed, find sin to be very fruitful. It grew very fast in our members and it brought forth much “fruit unto death.”

**6.** *But now we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* No longer is the message to us, “This do and you shall live.” No more are we slaves under bondage, but we have come into a new state—we are free, rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God—and what we now do is done out of a spirit of love, not of fear. We are not seeking after holiness in order to be saved by it, neither do we seek to escape from sin because we are under any fear of being cast into Hell. We have another spirit altogether within us.

**7.** *What shall we say, then? Is the Law of God sin? God forbid!* No, so far from being sin, the Law is the great detective of sin, discovering it and letting us know what sin really is.

**7, 8.** *No, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, You shall not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence.* Or, “covetousness.” The very fact that God said to us, “Do it not,” worked upon our nature so that we wanted to do it! And that which God commanded, which was a matter of indifference to us while we were in ignorance of His will, became, by reason of the depravity of our hearts, a thing to be resisted just because He had enjoined it upon us. Ah, me, what wicked hearts are ours that fetch evil even out of good!

**8, 9.** *For without the Law, sin was dead. For I was alive without the Law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* “I did not know how sinful I was until God’s commandment came to me. Sin seemed to be dead within me and I thought myself a righteous man. But when the Law of God came home to my heart and conscience, and I understood that even a sinful thought would ruin me, that a hasty word had the essence of murder in it and that the utmost uncleanness might lurk under the cover of what seemed a mere custom of my fellow men—when I found out all this, sin did, indeed, live, but I died so far as righteousness was concerned.”

**10-13.** *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me. Therefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid!* “If I sinned the more when God’s commandment was revealed to me. And if, by the light of the Law, sin was made more apparent to me, and became so exceedingly sinful that it drove me to despair and so to

commit still worse sin, the fault was not in the Law, but in sin, and in me, the sinner.”

**13, 14.** *But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the Law of God is spiritual.* The Law of the Lord is a far higher thing than it seems to be in the esteem of many people. Talk not of it as a mere “Decalogue.” It has far-reaching hands and it affects the secret thoughts and purposes of men. Even their stray imaginations come under its supremacy. “The law is spiritual.”

**14.** *But I am carnal, sold under sin.* “I am carnal.” There is the source of all the mischief—a disobedient and rebellious subject, not an irksome Law! The Law is good enough, it is absolutely perfect, “but,” says the Apostle, “I am carnal”—fleshly—“sold under sin.”

**15.** *For that which I do, I allow not.* The man himself does that which is evil, but his conscience revolts against it.

**15.** *For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.* This is a strange contradiction—a man who has Grace enough to will to do good and yet does it not! There are two men in the one man—the new nature struggling against the old nature. This must be a renewed man who talks in this fashion, or else he could not say that he hated sin! Yet there must be a part of him still imperfect, or else he would not do that which he hates.

**16.** *If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good.* “If I do that against which my will and my conscience rebel, so far, the better part of me acknowledges the goodness of the Law, though the baser part of me rebels against it.”

**17.** *Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.* The renewed man still stands out against sin. His heart is not wishful to sin, but that old nature within him will sin even to the end.

**18, 19.** *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.* Oh, how often have men who have been struggling after holiness had to use these words of the Apostle! The more holy they are, the more they realize that there is still a something better beyond them, after which they struggle, but to which they cannot yet attain! So they cry still, “The good that we would, we do not: but the evil which we would not, that we do.”

**20.** *Now if I do what I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.* The true man—the newborn man—is struggling after that which is right. The real, “I,” the immortal, “ego,” is still pressing forward like a ship beating up against wind and tide, and striving to reach the harbor where it shall find perfect rest. Oh, what struggles, what contentions, what corrections there are within the men and women in whom the Grace of God is mightily working! Those who have but little Grace can take things easily and swim with the current. But where Grace is mighty, sin will fight for the mastery, though it must ultimately yield, for there can never be any true peace until it is subdued.

**21.** *I find then a Law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.* Speaking for myself, I can say that, often, when I am most earnest in prayer, stray thoughts will come into my mind to draw me off from the holy work of supplication. And when I am most intently aiming at humility, then the shadow of pride falls upon me. Do not gracious men generally find it so? If their experience is like that of the Apostle Paul, or like that of many another child of God whose biography one delights to read, it is so and it will always be so.

**22-24.** *For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* These are birth-pangs, the throes and anguish of a regenerated spirit! The Christian man is fighting his way to sure and certain victory so the more of this wretchedness that he feels, the better—if it is only caused by a consciousness that sin is still lurking within him—and that he longs to be rid of it.

**25.** *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

**Romans 8:1.** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Some people talk about “getting out of the 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter, into the Eighth.” But who made this into an Eighth Chapter? Certainly, the Holy Spirit did not! There are no chapters in the Epistle as He inspired Paul to write it—the whole of it runs straight on without a break—“There is, therefore, now no condemnation”—while struggling, fighting, warring, contending—

**2.** *For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* “Has made me free”—that is, the real, “I,” of which he wrote a little while before—the true man, himself. “The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.’ I have broken its bonds, I am a free man. Contending against its usurpation, I have escaped from under its yoke and I shall yet tread sin under my feet, and God shall shortly bruise even Satan himself under my feet.”

**3.** *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.* That He has done most effectually!

**4.** *That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Oh, what a blessed thing it is to walk freely, “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” even though, all the while, there is, within the soul this strife that the Apostle has been describing!

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

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

# HOLY LONGINGS

## NO. 1586

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times.”  
Psalm 119:20.***

ONE of the best tests of a man's character will be found in his deepest and heartiest longings. You cannot always judge a man by what he is doing at any one time, for he may be under constraints which compel him to act contrary to his true self, or he may be under an impulse from which he will soon be free. He may, for a while, back off from that which is evil and yet he may be radically bad. Or he may be constrained by force of temptation to that which is wrong, yet his real self may rejoice in righteousness. A man may not be pronounced to be good because, for the moment, what he is doing may be condemned as evil because, under certain constraints, he may be committing sin. A man's longings are more inward and more near to his real self than his outward acts—they are more natural, in that they are entirely free and beyond compulsion or restraint.

As a man longs in his heart, so is he. I mean not every idle wish, as I now speak, but strong desires of the heart—these are the true life of a man's nature. You shall know whether you, yourself, are evil by answering this question. To which have you the greatest desire? Do you continually long after selfish pleasures? Then you are evil beyond all question! Do you sigh to be and feel and do that which is good? Is this the great aim of your life? Then in the core of your being there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. So then, dear Hearers, your heart-longings may furnish you with helps for self-examination and I beg you to apply them, as things of the heart touch the root of the matter. Unbelievers are “a people that do err in their *heart*” and men truly find the Lord when they “seek Him with their whole *heart*”—so that the *heart* is all-important and its longings are among the surest marks of its condition.

Moreover, heart-longings are prophecies of what a man will be. It is not always capacity, if we could ascertain it, which will certify us as to what a man will do, for many men of large abilities achieve nothing for lack of inclination—their talents lie hidden in the earth and, albeit they might have succeeded marvelously well in certain pursuits—they do nothing at all remarkable because they have no tendencies in that direction. An individual may have the means to relieve the poor and yet never perform a charitable act from lack of generosity. Or he may have great mental powers and yet never produce a line of useful literature because he is eaten up with idleness. But other things being equal, the longings of a man are a pretty sure index of what he will be—they cannot create capacity, but they develop it—they lead to the use of means for its increase and they make the mind keen to seize opportunities.

By some means or other a man usually becomes what he intensely longs to be, especially if those desires are formed in early youth while yet the world is all before him where to choose. Hence our proverb—"The child is father to the man." Even in little children tastes and pursuits have been prophetic—the young artist sketches his sister in the cradle—the youthful engineer is busy with his boyish inventions. If his longings deepen, strengthen and become vehement with the increase of his years, the young man's character is being molded from within and this is often a greater force than that of circumstances acting from without.

Thus it is in spiritual things—we may form forecasts as to what we shall be from our burning and pressing desires. Desires are the buds out of which words and deeds will ultimately be developed. Spiritual desires are the shadows of coming blessings. What God intends to give us, He first sets us longing for. Therefore the wonderful efficacy of prayer, because prayer is the embodiment of a longing inspired of God because He intends to bestow the blessing! What are your longings, then, my Hearer? Do you long to be holy? The Lord will make you holy! Do you long to conquer sin? You shall overcome it by faith in Jesus!. Are you pining after fellowship with Christ? He will come and make His abode with you! Does your soul thirst, yes, even pant after God as the hart for the water brooks? Then you shall be filled with all His fullness, for all these longings are prophetic of that which is to be, even as the snowdrop and crocus and anemone foretell the approach of Spring.

I say not that it is so with all human wishes, for "the sluggard desires and has nothing" and many a man has such evil cravings within his heart that it were contrary to the purity of God for Him to grant them. But where there are intense, heart-breaking yearnings of a holy order, depend upon it, they are tokens of good things to come! Where the Grace of God reigns in the soul, it makes a man become a stranger among his fellows and it breeds in him peculiar affections and novel desires. The verse which precedes my text runs thus—"I am a stranger in the earth"—he was a *king* surrounded by courtiers and friends and yet he was not at home, but like one banished from his native land. And being thus a stranger in the earth, he had a remarkable desire which worldlings could not understand and that singular craving he here expresses—"My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times."

Worldly men care nothing for the Judgments of God. No, they care nothing for God, Himself! But when a man becomes new born, a citizen of Heaven, there grows up within his spirit a spiritual appetite of which he had felt nothing before—and he longs after God and His holy Word. See to it, Brothers and Sisters, whether your souls cry out for God, for the living God, for again I say, by your longings you may test yourselves—by your heart's desires you may forecast your future—and by your hungering and thirsting you may judge whether you are men of this world or citizens of the world to come. With such aids to self-judgment, no man ought to remain in doubt as to his spiritual condition and eternal prospects.

In order that we may be helped to the right use of this text, we shall handle it thus—first, we shall notice the saint's absorbing object—"Your Judgments." Secondly, we shall reflect upon the saint's ardent longing—

“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments.” And, thirdly, we shall mention the saint’s cheering reflections which he may readily draw from the fact that he does experience such inward heart-break. Of these we will speak as the Divine Spirit shall enable us, for without Him we know nothing.

I. First, then, let us think OF THE SAINTS’ ABSORBING OBJECTIVE. They long after God’s Judgments. The word, “Judgments,” is here used as synonymous with the, “Word of God.” It does not mean those Judgments of God with which He smites sinners and executes the sentence of His Law, but it refers to the revealed will or declared Judgments of God. All through this long Psalm the writer is speaking of the Word of God, the Law of God, the testimonies, the precepts, the statutes of God—and here the word, “Judgments,” is used in the same sense. Perhaps I shall give you the meaning pretty readily if I remind you that the Commandments and doctrines of the Word are God’s Judgments about moral and spiritual things—His decisions as to what is right and what is wrong—and His solutions of the great problems of the universe.

God’s revealed plan of salvation is God’s decision upon man’s destiny—God’s judgment of condemnation against human sin—and yet His judgment of justification on behalf of believing sinners whom He regards as righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible may be rightly regarded as the book of Divine Judgments, the recorded sentences of the High Court of Heaven, the Infallible decision of perfect holiness upon questions which concern our souls—

***“This is the Judge that ends the strife  
Where wit and reason fail.  
Our guide through devious paths of life,  
Our shield when doubts assail.”***

You may come to the Scriptures as men came to the throne of Solomon, where hard cases were at once met. But a greater than Solomon is here! Search God’s Word and you will have before your eyes the ultimate judgment of unerring Truth, the last decree from the supreme Authority from which there is no appeal! The Bible contains the verdicts of the Judge of all the earth, the Judgments of God who cannot lie and cannot err.

Thus God’s Word is rightly called His “Judgments.” It is a book not to be judged by us, but to be our judge—not a word of it may be altered or questioned—but to it we may constantly refer as to a court of appeal whose sentence is decisive. David in our text tells us how he desired the Lord’s Judgments, or His Word by which we understand, first, that he greatly revered the Word of God. He was not among those who regard the Bible as only a very important portion of human literature, but as being no more Inspired than the works of Shakespeare or Bacon. Little as David had of the Scriptures, he had a solemn reverence for what he had and stood in awe of it. I have no objection to honest criticism of the keenest kind, but I am shocked at certain Divines who cut and carve the blessed Word of God as if it were some vile carcass given over to their butchery.

When learned men handle the words of this Book, let them not forget whose Book it is and whose words they are that they are examining! There is a near approach to blasphemy against God Himself in irreverence to His

Word. There is no book like this for authority and majesty—it is hedged about with solemn sanctions so that it has both a wall of fire round about it and a glory in its midst to make it distinct from all other writings. All other books might be heaped together in one pile and burned—as the Muslims burned the Alexandrian Library—with less loss to the world than would be occasioned by the total obliteration of a single *page* of the sacred volume! All other books are at the best but as gold leaf, whereof it takes acres to make an ounce of the precious metal. But this Book is solid gold! It contains ingots, masses, mines, yes, whole *worlds* of priceless treasure, nor could its contents be exchanged for pearls, rubies, or the “terrible crystal” itself.

Even in the mental wealth of the wisest men there are no jewels like the Truths of Revelation. Oh, Sirs, the thoughts of men are vanity, the conceptions of men are low and groveling at their best—and He who has given us this Book has said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Let it be to you and to me a settled matter that the Word of the Lord shall be honored in our minds and enshrined in our hearts! Let others speak as they may, “our soul breaks with longing for the Lord’s Judgments.” We could sooner part with all that is sublime and beautiful, cheering or profitable in human literature than lose a single *syllable* from the mouth of God.

But more—inasmuch as the Psalmist greatly revered God’s Word, he intensely desired to know its contents. He had not much of it—probably only the five books of Moses—but the Pentateuch was enough to fill his whole soul with delight. Never depreciate, I pray you, the Old Testament! Remember that the great things that are said in the Psalms about the Word of God were not spoken concerning the New Testament, which was not then written—although they may most fitly be applied by us to the entire series of Inspired Books, yet they were originally spoken only concerning the first five of them—so that the first part of the Bible, according to the Holy Spirit’s own testimony, is to be valued beyond all price.

Indeed, the substance of the New Testament is in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—there shut up like Noah in the ark or hidden like Moses in his mother’s house. The lovely form of queenly Truth is there, only her veil conceals her countenance. The clearer shining of the New Testament is *not* a different light, nor perhaps is it, in itself, brighter—it shines through a thinner medium and, therefore, more fully enlightens us. If I might venture to compare one part of God’s Word with another, I have even thought that the first books are the deepest and that if we had but skill to find it out, we should discover within them a more condensed mass of Revelation than even in the New Testament! I will not defend the opinion, but usually the lower strata, though most hidden, are the most dense and certainly that which is most easy to be understood is not, therefore, of necessity the fullest of meaning, but the reverse.

The various books of Scripture do not increase in real value, they only advance in their adaptation to us. The Light is the same, but the lantern is clearer and we see more. The treasure of the Gospel is contained in the

mines of the Books of Moses and I do not wonder, therefore, that David, instinctively knowing it to be there, but not being able to reach it, felt a great longing after it. He was not so well able to get at the Truths of God as we are since he had not the life of Christ to explain the types, nor Apostolic explanations to open up the symbols of the Law and, therefore, he sighed inwardly and felt a killing heartbreak of desire to reach that which he knew was laid up in store for him. He saw the jewelry box, but could not find the key!

If he had not been sure that the treasure was there, he would not have cried, "Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." But he was like a voyager on the verge of a discovery who, nevertheless, cannot quite reach it. He was like Columbus out at sea with the fruits of an unknown continent floating beneath his keel but the wind did not favor his reaching the shore. He was like a miner whose pick has struck upon a lump of metal and he is sure that gold is there, but he cannot get it away from the quartz in which it is embedded. The more certain he is that it is there and the harder it is to reach, the more insatiable does his desire become to possess the treasure! Hence I see the reasonableness of the Psalmist's vehement passion and I marvel not that he cried, "My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times."

But I am sure that David did not merely want to know as a matter of intellectual pleasure, but wished to feed upon God's Word and what a very different thing that is, that feeding upon the Word of God, from the bare knowledge of it! You can teach a child many chapters out of the Bible and yet it may not have fed on a word of it. I have known persons to be so foolish as to set it as a punishment for a child to learn a portion of Scripture. I call this foolish and surely it is also wicked to make the Word of God into a *punishment*—as well turn the Temple into a prison! Undoubtedly many know the history, the doctrine and the letter of God's Word as well as others know their Homer or their Virgil and, so far, so good. But oh, to *feed* upon the Word of God is quite another thing!

An oven full of bread is well enough, but for nourishment, a loaf on the table is better and a morsel in the mouth is better, still! And if the mouthfuls are well digested and taken up into the system they are, then, best of all! In like manner, Truths of God in a sermon are to be valued, but the Truths of God attentively heard comes nearer to practical benefit and Truth of God *believed* is better, still! And Truths of God *absorbed* into the spiritual system are best of all! Alas, I fear we are not so absorbent as we ought to be. I like to see men who can be spiritual sponges of God's Truth—suck it right up and take it into themselves! It would be well, however, that they would not be so far like sponges as to part with the Truth when the hands of the world attempt to wring it out of them!

I say we are not receptive enough, Brothers and Sisters, and that because our hearts are not in tune with God. Do we not feel, at times, that certain doctrines of the Word are hardly to our mind? We do not quite agree with the Divine Judgments on this or that—we dare not question their rightness—but we rather wish they were different. Friends, this must not be so any longer! All that kind of feeling must be gone! We *must* agree with God in all that He has spoken and let our belief run side by side with

the teaching of the Lord. It is high time that we were altogether agreed with God. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" We shall sit, at the Last Great Day, as assessors with Christ in the great assize to judge the fallen spirits! Does it not become us to be of the same mind with our Lord? Should we not delight in His Word even now that we may the more heartily say, "Amen," to His verdict from the Great White Throne?

Our judgment must be daily more and more conformed to the Judgments of God which are laid down in Scripture and there must, at any rate, be in our spirit a longing after holiness until we delight in the Law of the Lord and meditate therein both day and night. We shall grow to the likeness of that which we feed upon—heavenly food will make us heavenly-minded! The Word of God received into the heart changes us into its own nature and, by rejoicing in the decisions of the Lord, we learn to judge after His Judgment and to delight ourselves in that which pleases Him. This sense, I think, comes nearer to the explanation of David's intense longing. Doubtless, he longed to obey God's Word—he wished in everything to do the will of God without fault either of omission or of commission. He prays in another place, "Teach me Your Law perfectly."

Do you, my Hearer, long after perfection in that same fashion? All that truly know God must have a mighty yearning to run in the way of the Lord's Commandments. He does not live *before* God who does not crave to live *like* God. There is no regeneration where there are no aspirations after holiness. The actual practice of obedience is necessary as a proof of the possession of true Grace, for the rule is invariable, "By their fruits you shall know them." No man knows the Word of God till he obeys it—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

The Psalmist also longed to feel the power of God's Judgments in his own heart. You know something about this, my Friend, if the Spirit of God has had dealings with you. Have you not felt the Lord judging you in the chamber of your conscience? The Spirit comes by the Word of God and sets our iniquities before us, our secret sins in the light of His Countenance. You had forgotten the wrong, or at least you hardly remembered it as a sin—but suddenly you saw it all. As I have looked upon a landscape under a cloudy sky, a gleam of sunlight has suddenly fallen upon one portion of it and made it stand out brilliantly from the midst of the surrounding gloom—so has the Holy Spirit poured a clear light upon some one act or set of acts of my life and I have seen it as I never saw it before.

That inner Light has judged us and led us to seek fresh cleansing—the Judgments of God have come into our souls and led us anew to cry for mercy. I have found it so, have you? The sins of our youth and our former transgressions have been judged of the Lord within us. I do not think that David fully recognized all the sins of his youth till he had become an old man and, alas, many who have sinned in ways in which he never erred have failed to know the evil of their transgressions till in their bones and in their flesh they have felt its terrible effects years afterwards! The Lord will judge His people and make sin bitter to them! Ought we to wish for this? I say, Yes! Every true man should feel a longing in his soul to have every sin within him exposed, condemned and executed. He should wish

to hide nothing, but that it would be revealed and he be humbled by the sight.

There are two judgments, one of which we must undergo—either judgment in the forum of the conscience, or else judgment before the Great White Throne at last. You must either condemn yourself or be condemned! A court of arraigns must be held in your heart and you must be tried, cast and condemned in your own soul or else you will not fully know the Judgments of the Lord, or truly seek pardon at His hands. God justifies the men who condemn themselves and none but these shall ever obtain the righteousness which is of God by faith. Therefore we may long for stripping judgments that we may obtain the robe of Righteousness! We may cry to be emptied that Grace may fill us! David desires that God's Word would come right into him and hold its court and judge and try him—and he came to feel this process to be so necessary and so salutary that his soul broke with the longing which he had to be dealt with by God after this fashion.

This is wisdom and prudence when a man so desires sanctification that he is straitened till painful processes are being carried on by which his purity is to be produced. It is a wise child that will, for the sake of health, even long to take the appointed medicine! God's children are not far from being well when they have reached such a point of sacred judgment! This is the wish of all true Believers—to be perfectly conformed to the Word of God. Some of us can honestly say that we would not have a second wish for ourselves if our heavenly Father would grant us this one—that we might be perfect even as He is. We would leave all other matters with Him as to wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honor or shame, life or death if He would but give us complete conformity to His will. This is the objective of the craving, yearning and sighing of our souls. We hunger to be holy!

Here I must correct myself as to our one desire, for surely, if the Lord would make us holy we should then desire that all other men would be the same! Oh that the world were converted to God! Oh that the Truth of God would go forth like the brightness of the morning! Would God that every error and superstition might be chased away like bats and owls before the rising of the sun! O God, Your servants long for this! We ask for nothing except these two things—first reign, O Lord, in the triple kingdom of our nature—and then reign over ALL nature! Let the whole earth be filled with Your Glory and our prayers are ended! I hope that in this sense our soul breaks for the longing which it has towards God's Judgments.

**II.** And now, secondly, let us think of THE SAINT'S ARDENT LONGINGS. First, let me say of these longings that they constitute a *living* experience, for dead things have no aspirations or cravings. You shall visit the graveyard and exhume all the bodies you please, but you shall find neither desire nor craving! Longing lingers not within a lifeless corpse. Where the heart is breaking with desire, there is life. This may comfort some of you—you have not attained, as yet, to the holiness you desire, but you *long* for it—ah, then you are a *living* soul, the life of God is in you! You have not yet come to be conformed to the precept, but oh how you wish you were—that wish *proves* that a spark of the Divine Life is in your soul.

The stronger that longing becomes, the stronger is the life from which it springs—a feeble life has feeble desires—a vigorous life has vehement desires, burning like coals of juniper! Are you earnestly longing this morning? Can you say that your heart pines for God as the watcher through the midnight sighs for the dawn, or as the traveler over burning sand longs for the shadow of a great rock? Oh, then, though I would not have you *rest* in longings—and indeed, I know you never can—yet they are a *proof* that you are spiritually alive! Heart-longings are far better tests than attendance at sacraments, for men who are dead in sin have dared to come both to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Eager desires prove spiritual life much better than supposed attainments, for these supposed attainments may all be imaginary—but a heart breaking for the longing which it has to God’s Word is no fancy—it is a fact too painful to be denied!

Next, remember the expression used in our text represents a humble sense of imperfection. David had not yet come to be completely conformed to God’s Words, nor yet to know them perfectly, or else he would not have said that he longed for them. So it is with us. We have not reached perfection, but do not let us, therefore, be discouraged, for the Apostle of the Gentiles said, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” And the man after God’s own heart, even David, when he was at his best, and I think he was so when he was writing this blessed Psalm, says not so much that he had *obtained* anything as that he *longed* after it, not so much that he had yet grasped it, but sighed for it—“my soul breaks for the longing that it has.”

I do not envy those who have no more longings, who have reached so divine a height that they can climb no higher. I heard of one who said his will was so perfectly resigned to the will of God that in fact he had no will and so he had given up prayer, having nothing to seek! This is stupid talk! When a man gets so full of life that he no longer breathes, I should say that he is dead! Prayer is the breath of the soul and he that can do without it is dead in sin. When a man thinks himself so good that he cannot be better, he is probably so bad that he could not be worse. That is the judgment which caution will pronounce upon him, for all good men long to be better—and better men desire to be best of all that they may dwell in Heaven! The more Grace the saints have, the more they *desire*—sacred greed is begotten by the possession of the love of God—“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments.”

Furthermore, the expression of the text indicates an advanced experience. Augustine dwells upon this idea, for he rightly says that at first there is an aversion in the heart to God’s Word and desire after it is a matter of growth. After aversion is removed, there often comes an indifference in the heart—it is no longer opposed to godliness, but it does not care to possess it. Then, through Divine Grace, there springs up in the soul a sense of the beauty of God’s Word and will and an admiration of holiness. This leads on to a measure of desire after the good thing and a degree of appetite for it. But it shows a considerable growth in Grace when we ardently *long* after it and a still larger growth when the soul breaks because of these longings! It is a blessed thing when the soul is so stretched

with desire that it is ready to snap, or when, like a vessel full of fermenting liquor, the working within threatens to break up the vessel altogether.

The text represents the agonizing of an earnest soul. Such a state of things shows a considerable advancement in the Divine Life, but when a Believer has those desires at all times, then is he not far from being a full-grown Christian. "Oh," you say, "He thinks so little of what he has that he is crushed under the burden of desire for more." Yes, and he is the very man who has most of spiritual wealth! Those desires are mysterious entries in the account book of his heart and rightly read they prove his wealth, for in the Divine Life, the more a man desires, the more he has already obtained! You may make tallies of your desires and as you reckon by those tallies, they shall tell you to a penny what your spiritual wealth is. The more full a man is of Grace, the more he hungers for Grace! Strange it is to say so, but the paradox is true—the more he drinks and the more he is satisfied and ceases to thirst in one sense, the more is he devoured with thirst after the living God!

It is an advanced experience, then, and it is an experience which I cannot quite describe to you except by saying that it is a bitter sweet or, rather, a sweet bitter, if the adjective is to be stronger than the noun! There is a bitterness about being crushed with desire. It is inevitable that there should be, but the aroma of this bitter herb is inexpressibly sweet—no perfume can excel it! After all, a bruised heart knows more peace and rest than a heart filled with the world's delights. How safe such a soul is. "Oh," said one, "I cannot go to Hell, it is impossible, because I love Jesus Christ and long after Him. It is not possible for Him to forbid me the privilege of loving Him and to love Him and long for Him is happiness!" Better to feel a heavenly hunger than a worldly fullness! Heartbreak for God is a sweeter thing than content in sinful pleasures! There is an inexpressible sweetness, a dawning of Heaven, in longing after God and yet, because you feel you have not yet attained what you desire, there is a bitter mixed with it.

I think the only thing that honey needs to improve it is just a touch of bitter or acid in it. When you eat much honey it begins to taste bad because it is all sweet, but just a taste of lemon or a dash of quassia might strengthen the taste and enable it to take in a fresh freight of sweetness. It is surely so with true religious experience. Pangs of strong desire increase our overflowing pleasures and the longings and hungering make attaining and enjoying to be all the more delightful. May the Lord send us more of this lamb with bitter herbs, this mingled experience in which we are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing!"

Still, those longings after God's Word may become very wearing to a man's soul. The sense of our text in the Hebrew is that of attrition or wearing down. Keble reads it—

***"My soul is worn and wasted quite,  
Your Laws desiring day and night."***

They wear out the man when they become so fervent as those confessed in the text. I believe that some of the Lord's holy ones have been worn down to sickness and depression by the passion of their hearts after God—their souls have become like sharp swords which cut through their scabbards, for they have destroyed the body by intense inner desires. At times holy

men draw so near to God and pine so greatly after His Glory that for half a word they would pass the frontier and enter into Heaven! They are so fully in accord with God that the shell which shuts in their soul is almost broken and the newborn spirit is ready for its fullest life and liberty. How blessed to shake off the last fragment of that which holds us back from the freedom of an immortal life in perfect agreement with God! Oh to attain to this!

One saint cried, "Let me see the face of God," and another answered, "You cannot see God's face and live!" To which he replied, "Then let me see my God and die." So do we feel that our soul comes near to dying with her longings after her God. Little would we tremble, even if we knew that the joy of realization would be killing and would pass us over the border into Immanuel's land where we shall see the King in His beauty! But I must not linger though there is much to tempt me to speak on. Are you searching yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, to see whether you have such longings? If so, do you have them, "at all times"? We are not to long for God's Word and will by fits and starts—we are not to have desires awakened by novelty or by excitement. Nor are we to long for Divine things because for a while temporal things fail us and we are sick and sorry and weary of the world—and so, in disgust, turn to God.

Brethren, I trust you long after God when all is bright in Providence and that you love His Word when all is pleasant in family affairs. It is well to desire the Lord's will when He is permitting you to have your own will as well as when He is thwarting you. God is to *always* be our delight. He is our defense in war, but He is also our joy in peace. Do not use Him as sailors use those harbors of refuge for which they are not bound, into which they only run into in time of storm, but if it is fair they stand far out to sea! The Lord's will is to be the path of our feet and the element of our life. This it is to be a true child of God—to always have a yearning soul towards God's Word—to be eager after His Commandments "at all times." May the Holy Spirit keep us ever hungering and thirsting after God and His Truth.

**III.** And now I am going to close with a few cheering reflections. I think this morning some heart has been saying, "There are comforting thoughts for me in all this. I am a poor thing. I have not grown much. I have not done much. I wish I had, but I do have strong longings. I am very dissatisfied and I am almost ready to die with desire for Christ." My dear Soul, listen—let this encourage you! First, God is at work in your soul. Never did a longing after God's Word grow up in the soul of itself. Weeds come up of themselves, but the rarer kind of plants, I guarantee you, will never be found where there has been no sowing! And this flower, called Love-Lies-Bleeding—this plant of intense eagerness after God—never sprang up in the human breast of itself! God has placed it there!

Friend, there was a time when you had no such longings. Ah, and if you were left to yourself, you would never have such longings again! You would decline till you became as content with the world as others are. You know you would! Come, then, Beloved, God is at work in your soul—let this comfort you. The great Potter has you upon the wheel—He has not cast you away as worthless—His work may pain you, but it is honorable

and glorious. Your heart may swell with unutterable longings and it may be torn by throes of desire, but life thus proves its presence and reaches forth to something yet beyond. These pains of desire are the Lord's doings and they should be perceived with gratitude.

The result of God's work is very precious. Come, though it is only a gracious desire, thank God for it. Though you can get no further than holy longing, be grateful for that longing. I would have you strive for the highest gifts, but I would not have you despise what God has already given you! I have known times when I thought myself in a very strange case and I judged ill of myself. Yet a month or two afterwards I have looked back upon that condition which I condemned and I have wished that I could return to it! Has it not been so with you? You have been racked with sighs, groans, cravings and other forms of unrest and you have said, "O God, deliver me from this sore travail!" But when, within a week, you have had to lament insensibility and lukewarmness, you have cried, "Lord, put me back into my state of desire! Lord, set me hungering and thirsting again, a fierce appetite is better than this deadness."

Oh, you that are longing, be thankful that you are, for you have a rich promise to cheer you, since it is written, "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him." The more wretched and unhappy you are under a sense of sin, the more grateful you ought to be for tenderness of heart. And the more you are longing to lay on Christ and to become like Christ, the more you should thank God that He has worked this longing in you. How sweet is that Word of God, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear." Listen, once again—not only is the *desire* precious, but it is leading on to something *more* precious! Hear that which is written—"The desire of the righteous shall be granted."

What do you say to such words as these? "He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Do you think that God prompts us to desire a thing which He does not mean to bestow upon us? Is that the way you treat your children? I know you will play with the little ones, sometimes, and hold a nut or a penny in your closed hand and bid them open your fingers for themselves. But you *give* them their treat before long. You would not hold a sweetmeat before a poor child and promise it to him and excite his desires for it and then refuse him a taste of it—that were a cruel pastime! God is not unkind—if He makes you hunger, for that hunger He has made ready the Bread of Heaven! If He makes you thirst—for that thirst He has already filled the river of the Water of Life! If the desire comes from God, the supply of that desire will as certainly come from God! Rest you sure of that and cry mightily to Him with strong faith in His goodness.

Meanwhile, the desire, itself, is doing you good. It is driving you out of yourself. It is making you feel what a poor creature you are, for you can dig no well in your own nature and find no supplies within your own spirit. It is compelling you to look only to God. Do not need much compelling—come readily to your Lord! Be one of those vessels which can sail

with a capful of wind! Come by faith to Jesus, even though you fear that your desires are by no means so vivid and intense as those of my text. Believe and you shall be established! Rest assured of this, that there is in God whatever your soul needs! In Christ Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and in that Divine fullness there must of necessity be more than a creature can require! In Christ Jesus there is exactly what your soul is panting for.

Yes, I mean you weakest ones of the flock! You feeblest of the saints! You who dare not put your names down among God's people at all! If there is a sacred longing in your spirit, there is that in Christ which is adapted to you in spite of your feebleness and unworthiness. God is ready to give you whatever you are ready to receive. Only come and trust Him for it and look to His dear Son, for in Jesus you have all things. Oh, this is the blessedness of this longing after God's Judgments, that it makes Christ precious! And, with that remark, I have done.

We see all God's Word in Christ. We see all God's decisions against sin and for righteousness embodied in our Savior. We see that if we can get Christ we have then found the Wisdom of God and the power of God and, in fact, the All-Sufficiency of God! If we can become like Christ we shall be like God Himself. This, I say, makes Christ so precious and makes us long to more fully know Him and call Him ours! Come, you longing ones, come to my Lord Jesus even now! Come, you that are bursting with wishes and desires, come and trust the Savior and rest in Him now! And may this be the hour in which you shall find how true it is, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." May you yet sing the Virgin's song, "He has filled the hungry with good things. My soul does magnify the Lord."

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# ENLIVENING AND INVIGORATING NO. 1350

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

**“Quicken me according to Your Word.”  
Psalm 119:25.**

You will frequently find David uttering this petition. It is a favorite prayer of his, “Quicken me, O Lord!” And, as David was like the rest of us—indeed, his experience is the mirror of the experience of all Believers—you may depend upon it, we all have a great need to pray as he did, “Quicken me, O Lord!” If he felt a coldness and deadness frequently stealing over him, so do we. Did he find it hard to endure such a wretched state? So ought we, also, to loathe and abhor it. And as he cried to the Strong for strength and knew that quickening must come from God, we ought to know—I trust we know—the same resource under the same necessity. Therefore, let it be our prayer now and let the prayer be repeated often—“Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.”

How are we to understand this quickening? It means, of course, making alive, keeping alive, and giving more life—in a word, enlivening. He was alive—he was a spiritual man, or else he would not have asked for life. Dead men never pray, “Quicken me.” It is a sign that there is life, already, when a man is able to say, “Give me life, O Lord!” This is not the prayer of the unconverted! It is the prayer of a man who is already regenerate and has the love of God in his soul—“Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Quickening, of course, comes to us, first, by *regeneration*. It is then that we receive spiritual life. And as there is no natural life in the world except that of which God is the Author, so assuredly in the new world there is no spiritual life except that which God has created.

The first quickening is that which comes upon us when we begin to feel our need of a Savior, when we begin to perceive the preciousness of that Savior and when, with a feeble finger, we touch the hem of the Savior’s garment. Then are we quickened into newness of life! But that spiritual life needs to be kept alive. It is like the life of a fire which must be fed with fuel and supported with air. It is like our natural life which needs food to sustain it and needs to breathe the atmosphere in order to its continuance. We are as much creatures of God’s power in our *continuing* to live as in our commencing to live! And, *spiritually*, we owe as much to Divine Grace that we *remain* Believers as that we became Believers. As soon as we get spiritual life, this prayer is most proper as a sacred instinct, “Lord, continue this life in my soul, continue to quicken me, for, if You do not, I have no life in myself apart from You and I would die were I severed from You, as does a branch when severed from the vine. Continue therefore, good Lord, to quicken me.”

Obviously, too, some special invigoration and excitement of life must be implied here. The trees, all through the winter, are alive. Their substance is in them when they cast their leaves. The vitality is not extinct, though our poet of "The Seasons" does sing—

***"How dead the vegetable kingdom lies:  
How dumb the tuneful choir!"***

A Divine act of power secretly maintains the life, hidden away till spring comes. Then the chains of frost are broken, the genial warmth begins to light upon the sealed buds, the sap flows and the trees, in their reviving tints and bursting buds, give such promise of returning foliage and flower that in a very special sense they may be said to be quickened. As soon as the sap begins to rise, the buds swell, the leaves unwrap themselves and the concealed flowers gradually open—a quickening comes over what was alive and what had been kept alive all through its dreary, wintry time.

So, Beloved, you see, first of all, God gives us life then He maintains life. And then, at times and seasons, (would to God they were more frequent and without intermission!), He gives vigor to that life so that it becomes more manifest and mighty. And then it is that in a conspicuous manner the quickening is seen. I would to God that He would lead some poor sinner to pray in the very first sense of the word, "Lord, quicken me! Give me life!" It would be a sign that life was coming! I would that every Christian would incessantly pray the prayer in the second sense—"Quicken me, Lord"—that is, "Continually keep me faithful and true to Your Word." And then, thirdly, I would that we would all go on to the third sense and say, "Lord, inspirit me, revive me, lift me up unto a higher life. Fill me with more of Your Holy Spirit and so make me more truthful and more like Your ever living Son Jesus, who has life in Himself."

Having thus introduced to you the prayer, I would use the Psalm to explain it—to explain, rather, the experience which commends the prayer to our constant use. First, Brothers and Sisters, I would assign some reasons why you need quickening. Secondly, I would point out some motives to see it. Thirdly, we shall mention some ways in which it is worked. And, fourthly, we will suggest pleas such as the Psalmist used, for obtaining it.

**I. THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD SEEK QUICKENING.** You cannot overlook that confessed in the text—because of the deadening influence of this world—"My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word." We are surrounded with dust. We are associated with dust. The best and brightest things that are in this world are made of dust. And as for ourselves, although we have within us a new and higher life that has no fraternity with the dust, there is an old life belonging to us which is brother to the dust—which says to the worm, "You are my sister." "Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return," is true of every one of us.

Yet, Beloved, we cannot feed on the dust—that is the serpent's meat—it is not ours. The new life in us craves for something higher, but the old nature tries to be content with dust. It clings to it—the dust cleaves to it and it cleaves to the dust. You know how the care and cross, the work and worry of a busy day will often dampen your ardor in prayer and disqualify

your thoughts for devout meditation? You cannot think much of treasure laid up in Heaven if you think a great deal of this world's goods.

Riches are often a dangerous encumbrance to those who seek after righteousness. They steal the heart away from God. Matthew Henry, in his own sharp style, warns us that the care in getting, the fear in keeping, the temptation in using, the guilt in abusing, the sorrow in losing and the responsibility of giving account for gold and silver, houses and lands, accumulate a heavy burden for him to bear who would have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. And yet if you have but little of this world's wealth, you will find poverty a trying ordeal. The cares of poverty, like those of property, often break the calm repose which our faith ought to enjoy.

If things go smoothly with you in business, then those smooth, deceitful streams bear you away from God. And, if they go roughly with you, then in the deep and in the storm you are too apt to forget the Lord or to murmur against His Providence. There is *nothing* in this *world* to help a Christian—it is all against him! The world holds us to itself as tightly as it can—it acts like bird-lime to us. When we would mount on the wings of eagles, we are often like the eagle that you see in the gardens where they keep such creatures—there is a chain on our foot and we cannot rise. Our soul cleaves to the dust.

Now, as this is the case and as you cannot get out of the world, pray that you may rise superior to its influence. You men of business, you heads of families, you who guide and you who follow, you who are sociable and you who are solitary—all of you must still be in the world and mix with men of the world—therefore cry to God, yes, cry mightily, “Lord, deliver us from the deadening influence of the world in which we live! Quicken us, we beseech You, from day to day!”

A second reason for our need of quickening lies in the influence of vanity—of that which is actually sinful. Refer to the 37<sup>th</sup> verse—“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in Your way.” As we go about in the world we see a great deal of that which is injurious to us. The sins of others leave some kind of stain upon the conscience. I question whether you can read a newspaper and scan the story of a murder or a robbery, or survey with more distant glance in any book of history the sin of your fellow men without being, in a degree, injured. We are compelled to see much of vanity and sin in our daily callings. We do not merely *read* of profanity but we hear the oaths.

You enter into a railway carriage and you cannot always avoid hearing conversation which is the reverse of pure. You go into your house and, unless you are happily situated so that all are Christians, there will be a great deal of which you cannot approve and which can be of no benefit to your soul. Besides, the whole world runs after its own idols—men each seek his own, and not the things of Christ—and all these things are vanity. “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity.”

Our eyes are often fascinated by the glitter and the glare of these vanities. The world puts on a very beautiful complexion. She attires her head

and paints her face like Jezebel. And it is not always easy, like Jehu, to detest her, and to say, "Fling her down, and let the dogs consume her." We have nothing to do with this vain world! We are not citizens of this land! But, truly, Madam Bubble, as Bunyan calls her, with her purse and her person, continually presenting herself, is enough to make even Standfast, himself, to stagger and even he needs to fall on his knees, and cry, "Quicken Me, O Lord, and turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

There is thus a second good reason why we should seek for quickening. Sometimes we shall have need to cry for quickening because we are surrounded by deceivers. Turn to the 87<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> verses—"They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your Precepts. Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth." If you are often assailed by foes and if those foes happen to be the men of your own household—if they jeer at your faith, if they make a jest of holiness on purpose to pain you—you will need a great deal of Divine Grace not to be ruffled.

To always be a dove—to be a dove in the midst of ravens. To always be a lamb—to be a lamb in the midst of wolves—is not so easy. He must have much spiritual life who shall be able, wisely and discreetly, to behave himself in the midst of those who lie in wait to entrap him in every word that he says. Remember how David acted in the court of Saul, when Saul eyed him. Unsullied purity is the safest policy. Though Saul eyed David, he could not see any fault or rake up any charge that he could bring against him. Oh, that all of you young people, especially those of you who are subjected to scorn and contempt because of your fidelity to Christ, may be doubly blessed with Grace—may you be, indeed, quickened to the full spiritual life that you may stand the test of persecution and reproach, of suspicion and disparagement, of misrepresentation and slander which is sure to come upon you!

Do not pray to be rid of the grievance—rather rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for your Savior's sake! You may pray, if you like, that the distress may be lightened because your strength is small. You may pray that your flight is not in the winter—but do not make that the special object of your petition. Rather pray for Grace to endure it! Pray for life, spiritual life, that you may throw it off. I suppose that, in order to prevent disease, it is a good thing to remove the cause of the disease and take away everything that produces ill savors in the air. But the sure thing is for the man himself to be vigorous as to his own life.

I have no doubt many die in moderately healthy localities because they have no stamina. They are constitutionally weak, while the young man who is in robust health may even pass through a pestiferous district and be for hours in the midst of malaria without falling a prey to its deadly influence. And this simply because the life that is in him resists the disease. Your business, dear Friend, if you live in the midst of those that are set on fire by Hell—those who pour out venom against you, is to pray— "Lord, quicken me that I may have so much spiritual life that these evil influences may not be ruinous to me. Deliver me from them when it is Your

will, but meanwhile let me have such a full tide of life that I may be able to endure what I must encounter without being injured.”

Another reason for seeking quickening will be found in the 107<sup>th</sup> verse: “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto Your Word.” In seasons of affliction we are very apt to fall into a dark, cold, dead state of mind. We have known many persons in poverty. I have often been sorely pained by it—when members of this Church, who have much, become very poor—and have given up attendance at the House of God. I could understand their reasons far better than I could appreciate them. Their pride was doubtless wounded, because they could not dress as they used to do, though I am sure nobody here thinks any better of you for dressing yourselves in fine clothes. I do not think so much of you, myself.

As they could not dress quite so well they felt they could not mix as they did with some with whom they were once equal in circumstances. So they have gone out by the wayside. It is a sad thing when they do so. I am much saddened by it. I hope none of you ever will. You ought to think that you will be *more* welcome at the House of God when you are in trouble than you ever were before! And if you lose your earthly possessions, it is all the more reason why you should seek to hold faster to the riches which are above.

If you are in pain, too, that kind of affliction has a great tendency to distract the mind. Who can think when the brow is throbbing? Who can be calm when every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on? It is not easy. Well now, we have reason, when we feel weak, when we feel that the mind is suffering in sympathy with the body, to cry, “Lord, let Grace triumph over nature. Let Your Spirit have power—Your blessed comforting Spirit—to lift me up above the weight which now is laid upon me, that I may glory in tribulation because Your power rests upon me.”

You look upon a weight as a heavy matter which keeps you down, but mechanics know how to make a weight *raise* you. A little adjustment of ropes and pulleys and such-like contrivances, and the weight shall lift you up! And the Lord knows how to make our afflictions minister to our quickening, as we shall have to show you directly. But in themselves they deaden us. They do not assist, but rather hinder and so, whenever they come, *then* is the time for us to pray with special emphasis, “Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Thus have I endeavored to show you from the Psalm itself some of the reasons why we need quickening.

**II.** Now, let us pass on to describe SOME OF THE MOTIVES FOR SEEKING QUICKENING. There are very many. Seek it because of what you are. You are a Christian and, therefore, already alive unto God. Life seeks *more* life—it is its natural tendency. If there is life in a tree, it seeks to put forth its branches. And when it has had its spring growth spurt, you will notice that it then begins to seek for its midsummer spurt. And when the midsummer growth is over, the tree always has an eye to the growth of the next spring! And before the old leaves go there is every preparation made for the new leaves. Life is always aiming at more life. It is a law of Nature. There is a propagation continually progressing in which

life develops and multiplies itself. Now, if you have the life implanted by the Holy Spirit, you will long for more. If you do not long to have more life, it surely must be because you have *no* life. The living man will be sure to cry to God that he may have life more abundantly.

The next motive is not only because of what you are, but because of what you *ought* to be. Here is a question for you which I will leave you to answer—"What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" We like, sometimes, to work out a problem. There is one to solve. Draw a picture, if you can, of what you ought to be. I will tell you, if you draw that picture accurately, what it will be like. It will be like Jesus Christ! That is the answer to this question—"What manner of persons ought we to be?"

Now Christ was full of life. Although He did not strive or cry, or lift up His voice, or cause it to be heard in the streets by way of seeking after popular notoriety, yet what life was in Him! He was brimful of life! There was nothing stagnant, indifferent, or purposeless in any of His actions or in all His career. Why, the life of Christ was so full that it seemed to flow out even onto His garments, so that when they touched His garments, virtue went out of Him! How full must He have been of the living force—the inward power! O Beloved, we ought to be so! As we are redeemed, as we are quickened by Christ—as we are members of His body, as we belong to Him—we ought to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ!

Above all men that live, the Christian ought to live at the most vigorous rate. We have a race to run! We must not creep and crawl, or we shall not win the prize. We have a battle to fight! If we should sheath our sword, put off our armor and go to sleep, how can we overcome our enemies? We have an agony to endure, according to His power that works in us mightily, and there cannot be this resisting unto blood—striving against sin—unless all our passions are awakened and all our powers are stirred for the wondrous inward strife. We ought to ask for quickening because of what we ought to be.

Then, we ought to ask for quickening because of what we *shall* be. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Brothers and Sisters, you are to be a pure spirit in Heaven! Be spiritual *now*! Brothers and Sisters, you are to sing among the angels! Rehearse the music *now*! Brothers and Sisters, you are to see His face that is as the sun that shines in its strength! Let not your eyes be now sealed with dust! Let them be clear, as clear as they can be in this misty atmosphere of earth. Brothers and Sisters, you are to sit upon the Throne with Christ, for He says, "As I have overcome, and have sat down with My Father upon His Throne, so, also, shall you sit with Me upon My Throne." Remember where you are to be and behave yourself accordingly! You cannot maintain the dignity of your high calling, or your heavenly destiny unless you have an abundance of spiritual life—so pray, "Quicken me, O Lord."

Now, to come back to the Psalmist's own confessions and reflections. He gives us another motive for seeking this in the 88<sup>th</sup> verse: "Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth." We need quickening in order to obedience. If our life decays, then the power of sin will get the mastery over us. We cannot go in the way of obedience and punctuality and scrupulous care and inward heartiness unless we are daily quickened. I am sure you want to be holy, Brothers and Sisters. I am sure you do! Well, then, pray, "Quicken me." There is no such thing as dead holiness—it must be *living* holiness and you must be made alive in order to be obedient—for there is no such thing as dead obedience. Up to the altar of God they brought birds and they brought beasts, but they never brought fish! Why? Because they could not bring *live* fish and there must be no sacrifice presented to God but that which has life! Ask for life, that you may have obedience!

Look at the 107<sup>th</sup> verse and you have another reason for seeking quickening, because it will be your comfort. "I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word." Or, better still, at the 50<sup>th</sup> verse, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your Word has quickened me." Do you need comforting? Get quickening! Do not so much ask the Lord to give you sweet promises, as to give you *inward life*, for in life there is always light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." As the light is the life, the life is the light—and when you get the life of God within your soul, you will get the comfort of God. I urge you to seek quickening, then, if you are under any distress, because it will be the quickest means of your finding consolation in your trouble.

Look, also, at the 87<sup>th</sup> and the 88<sup>th</sup> verses, to which we have already referred, and you will see that we ought to seek quickening as the best security against attacks of enemies. We need not examine how we can meet the foe, or with what argument we can refute his sophistries, or with what weapons we can overthrow him. "Quicken me, O Lord," is still the prayer, even though they threaten to consume us from off the face of the earth! We have but to keep close to the precepts of God and pray for quickening, and we shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The use of the word, "quicken," will be seen in the 93<sup>rd</sup> verse. "I will never forget Your Precepts: for with them you have quickened me."

We are always in danger of forgetting God's precepts. So, to invigorate our memories and to fortify our hearts, we must get quickening. Nothing can make a man so secure of walking rightly and defying all the attacks of his enemies as the reception of spiritual life. The young man can only cleanse his way by taking heed to it according to God's Word. But he cannot take heed to his way if he is not alive in the way. *Life* is the great thing. Look at a pool of water when it stands still—how it becomes mantled over with weeds—how stagnant and defiled it is. But give it vent and let it run down yonder brook among the stones—let it leap in little cascades on its way down to the river. It is alive and see how pure it gets, refining as it goes, dropping all the filthiness it had accumulated before! It

become sweeter and clearer because of life! So it must be with us. We must have life!

We shall forget God's precepts, also, and lose the purity of life unless quickening is abundantly given to us. If I needed some *one* thrilling motive to awaken the reluctant, I would resort to this—the terrible consequences of losing spiritual life. I do not mean the effect of losing it, altogether, but of lacking it in its manifest display. Alas that it should be so easy to give obvious illustrations! But I could tell you of many congregations and Churches where there is no evidence of vitality, growth or increase. It is as if they were all dead. I do not say that there is *no* spiritual life, but there is none in the sense in which I am using the term. They have fallen into a dead sleep and the members of the Church are cold, apathetic, spiritless.

Life among them is at the lowest ebb. You cannot be sure they breathe. By breathe I mean—a breath of prayer. Some of them have not been to a Prayer Meeting, they could not tell when. Some do not know if they ever were. And when they attend Lord's-Day services, not a few of them literally sleep—and the rest of them sleep with their eyes open. The minister is dozing, dreaming, snoring, talking in his sleep—that is what his preaching is like. There is plenty of preaching like that—an inarticulate snoring of the everlasting Gospel! The preacher, perhaps, reads, or else he repeats what he has laboriously committed to memory and says it as a school boy does his lesson—and he is glad when it is over—for he considers that preaching twice on Sunday wears him out, dear man!

And well it may, as he does it. It wears his people out as well. They have no evangelical spirit. The surrounding neighborhood is not evangelized by them. They do not increase—they do not *think* of increasing. In fact, they get fewer as the good people go home to Heaven. Any attempt to do anything there would be looked upon as “an innovation.” Yet they do *something*—they have a disturbance every now and then. They hold what they call a, “Church meeting,” which means, in their case, a spiritual bear-garden in which they show their life. And one minister after another is driven away—not that it is a fit place for anybody to desire to go, you know, for there is very little to be had except abuse. But still, that is the style of the thing—and there are hundreds of churches in England in that condition.

O that the Lord would quicken them! May this place be reduced to ashes and may the congregation be scattered to the four winds of Heaven sooner than it should become a huge mausoleum, a catacomb of which it may be said, “the dead are there”! Ah, it is ill to have “the means of Grace” without the Grace of the means—to have a name to live and to be dead! God save us from it! Take heed to yourselves! Some of the members of this Church, I fear, are getting into that condition! Yet not, I know, you that are present this evening. You would not, most likely, have been here on such a wet night as this if you had not some care for the things of God.

I refer to those that are not here. When you get home tell them so—tell them what I have said about it—and then perhaps they will say, “Well, if

the pastor always speaks severely of those who are not there we had better go, so as to escape his censures.”

**III.** Now let us mention briefly SOME OF THE WAYS BY WHICH THIS QUICKENING MAY BE WORKED IN US. Of course the Lord, Himself, must do it. In prayer it must be sought because by His power it must be worked. The prayer is, “Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” He does not expect the quickening from any but a Divine source. From where can life come but from the ever living God? How can we expect that we should get life if, while we seek the gratuity, we totally forget the Divine energy of Him who alone can bestow it? In the 37<sup>th</sup> verse we are told how the Lord often quickens His people, namely, by turning off their eyes from beholding vanity. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”

The Lord sometimes takes the vanity away of which we made our idol—or else He takes us away from the idol and does not permit us to find any contentment in it. Oh, it is half the battle to be weaned from the creature! It is half the battle, I say, to get the eyes off vanity, for then you are likely to get your eyes turned upon God! May He be graciously pleased to quicken some of you in that way. In the 50<sup>th</sup> verse we find that God quickens His people by His Word. “Your Word has quickened me.” And the part of the Word which He often blesses to this end is remarkable, for, in the 93<sup>rd</sup> verse it is written, “I will never forget Your Precepts; for with them You have quickened me.”

Promises are quickening, doctrines are quickening, but David says, “Your Precepts—with them you have quickened me.” If we preach frequently and earnestly the precepts of our Lord there are hearers who will complain and say, “The minister is getting legal.” No, Brothers and Sisters, it is *you* that are getting *dead*, for when you are alive you will love God’s Laws and those precepts will quicken you. “But they pain me,” says one. That is often how people are quickened! While a person is drowning, we have heard that his sensations are often really delightful—but when he is fished out of the water, as soon as he begins to recover life, the blood begins to tingle in the veins and the pain is intense. The pain of returning life is something terrible.

Well, so it is with God’s precepts when He quickens us with them. These Laws pain us because they show us our shortcomings, expose to us our faultiness and humble us. Brothers and Sisters—that is the way to be quickened! When you are numbed, you know that is next door to being dead. But when that numbed flesh of yours begins to come to life again—you have felt it, you must have felt it—when the blood begins to circulate by rubbing, a sharp pain is excited in the part that, before, was numbed and painless. Be thankful for the pain—that is an index of *life*. “I love Your Precepts, for with them you have quickened me.”

May the Lord apply a text of Scripture to your soul with power, or let Him send a Word from the minister as he speaks in Jehovah’s name with a Divine force, and you will soon feel the effect. Though you appeared to be dead, you will start up and begin to live again! Have you not often

found it so? Have you not often found great reviving come to your sinking spirit? Pray the Lord to make His Word always thus vivifying and inspiriting to you. In the 107<sup>th</sup> verse we have another means of quickening which God frequently uses, namely, affliction. “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” God frequently employs adversity as a black poker to stir us up that the flame of devotion may be brighter.

When you observe the fire in your sitting room getting dull and going out, you do not always put more coals on, but you stir it—and sometimes affliction does that for us. It stirs us and makes the life which was languishing to briskly burst forth. Be thankful if God stirs your fire. Then, again, this quickening is sometimes worked in us by means of Divine comfort, as in the 50<sup>th</sup> verse—“This is my comfort, for Your Word has quickened me.” The great flush of comfort, the sudden inflow of supreme joy when you were much depressed—this has greatly cheered and invigorated you. At least I know it has often been so with me.

When very despondent and sad at heart, I have felt a soft stream, as though it were the Gulf Stream with its warm, genial temperature, flowing into my soul, melting all the icebergs that had gathered round my heart. and I have wondered what it was. How has my gratitude turned to my gracious God and found sweet expression in that hymn—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart,  
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

You will often have proved, I doubt not, how God uses the comfort of His Spirit to quicken His children.

**IV.** Our last point is to enquire WHAT ARE OUR PLEAS WHEN WE COME BEFORE GOD TO ASK FOR QUICKENING? What arguments shall we use? Well, Brothers and Sisters, use first the argument of your necessity. Whatever that necessity is, particularize it, as David does in the 107<sup>th</sup> verse—“I am afflicted very much; quicken me.” Or take our text, “My soul cleaves to the dust, quicken me.” Plead your necessities! Your needs shall be the argument for the oil and wine. Your emaciation and your hunger shall be the argument for a festival. Show the Lord what you are and where you are. Confess it before Him and this shall be good pleading.

Also plead, if it is in your power to do so, the earnest desire that God has kindled in you. Read the 40<sup>th</sup> verse— “Behold I have longed for Your Precepts; quicken me in Your righteousness.” This is as much as to say, “Lord, You have given me great longings after You. You gave me these cravings—will You not satisfy them? Do You torture me with the miseries of Tantalus? Do You grieve me with a thirst which You will not gratify? Have You given me a hunger for the Bread of Heaven only for the sake of torturing me?” Beloved, if you have a desire, you may depend upon it, the desire of the righteous shall be granted. God does not excite the appetite without providing the nourishment.

If He makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness, remember the promise, “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,

for they shall be filled.” They shall not have merely a little, a crumb or two to stay their stomachs, but they shall be filled! Go and plead that before God. “I have longed after Your Precepts; quicken me in Your righteousness.” There is the second plea. And then you may find a third in the very righteousness of God, as we have seen in the 40<sup>th</sup> verse. Appeal to His righteousness! Do I see you start back abashed? Do I hear you say, “Oh no! I could not appeal to *that*, for the righteousness of God must condemn me.”

Stop a minute. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Why, the Justice of God is on the side of the man who has received God’s promise because it were unjust of God to break it! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth! The Lord has given His Word that He will give His people life. The very fact of His having made them live at all is the proof that He means to continue to make them live! Go and plead it, then. Say—“In Your righteousness, oh Lord, quicken me.” David is very often harping upon that string. As I showed you in the reading, he twice appeals to God’s judgment, or His Justice, that He would quicken him.

Another, and a very sweet plea is that of God’s loving kindness. Read the 88<sup>th</sup> verse—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.” Look at the 149<sup>th</sup> verse—“Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness: O Lord, quicken me according to Your judgment.” And so again in the 156<sup>th</sup> verse—“Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord: quicken me according to Your judgments.” “You pitying God, give me more life. O You who wills not the death of any, give me more life. O You that loves as a father loves, give me more life! O You who have engraved me upon the palms of Your hands, quicken me! Quicken me, I beseech You.” Are they not blessed pledges to lay hold on—His loving kindness and His tender mercies? With such promises you will be sure to prevail!

And then what a comprehensive plea is that of our text—“Quicken me according to Your Word.” You have it in the 25<sup>th</sup> verse and you have it in the hundred and seventh. He pleads the Word of God. What that Word was that David had to appeal to, it would rather puzzle me to tell you. His Bible was not so large nor near so full as ours. I do not find any promise of quickening before David’s time. Perhaps a special promise had been given to him, or, at any rate, the promise is virtually in the Pentateuch. But certainly, to us, there is abundant testimony to be found in the Word of God, for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has told us—“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” The Son of man has come not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly!

Plead the promises, Brothers and Sisters! Plead the promises and, as you plead them before the Lord, you may rest quite certain that God will be as good as His Word and, if you can plead the promise, the promise will be surely fulfilled to you. Beloved in Christ, do tenderly watch over your spiritual life, or otherwise you are hypocrites when you pray

“quicken me.” Take heed lest you neglect the food of your souls! Do not go where your life would be in danger! Do not seek worldly company, do not indulge in worldly amusements. Keep out of all the deadening influences of the world as much as you can.

Have you ever seen the Grotto del Cane near Naples? It has a deadly gas at the bottom of it. They take a dog and throw him in and when they drag him up the dog looks as if he were dead. But by the aid of a fresh water bath he comes round again. As they thus kill the poor dog half a dozen times a day, I do not envy him his experience. Indeed, I rather think if I were that dog I would lose no time in seeking another master! Yet there are some professing Christians that will go into bad company—get into the bad gas of temptation—and then they go and hear a sermon and get back their spiritual life. I would advise you not to be like that poor dog, but to keep out of harm’s way.

If you have life, do your best to maintain it and do not run the risk of suspended animation. Knowing the worth and joy of life, yourself, pray very earnestly that God would give it to others. Look on the dead in sin, but not with stony eyes. Look on them with tears. Even if I knew that my hearers must be lost, I would pray God to help me to weep over them, because our Savior’s tears over Jerusalem, you remember, were accompanied with a distinct indication that Jerusalem would be destroyed. “Oh, that you had known, even you, in this your day, the things which make for your peace! But now are they hid from your eyes.” Still He wept.

We have no such terrible knowledge about the destiny of any man. We look hopefully upon you unconverted people and we exhort you because we *expect* you to believe in Jesus! We sincerely trust that you will be saved and, therefore, we pray for you in hope. May the Lord in infinite mercy lead you to feel for yourselves and pray for yourselves— “Quicken me, O Lord!” Do you feel that prayer welling up from your soul? Does it rise from your heart? Then, already there is something of spiritual life there! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have life, for He who said, “He that lives and believes in Me shall never die,” said also, “He that believes in Me, though He were dead, yet shall He live.”

God give you that living faith which is the token of the Divine life. To Him be glory forever and ever! Amen.

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# A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD

## NO. 2796

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1878.

*“I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.”*  
*Psalm 119:26.*

WORLDLY men think very little of God. They live at a distance from Him. They have no communion with Him. Like the fool, they have said in their heart, “No God,” and they try to realize in their lives their heart’s desire. Very different is it with the true Believer. He recognizes God everywhere! He sees God in all the good or ill that checkers life—he believes that God has created every worm that crawls upon the face of the earth and that He has painted every flower that blooms. The whole world is full of God to him who believes in God and he has communion with God wherever he goes. He cannot live without Him—He is his joy and delight. He is a child of God—how can he live happily in his Father’s house unless he often sees his Father’s face, speaks with Him and hears His voice in return? The Christian makes much of God and God makes much of him, for they have a mutual delight in one another! Hence, in such a text as this, you perceive how the Psalmist talked with God and God heard him—and he knew that God heard him! And then he spoke again to God and said, “Teach me Your statutes.”

This is, perhaps, one of the main differences between the Believer and the unbeliever—between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. The first lesson for man is to know his God. The second is to know himself and, as the unbeliever fails in the first, he fails in the second, also. He does not know himself. He does not think much about himself—about his real self, the most important part of his being. For his body, he caters freely—he can scarcely spend enough upon it. But he starves his soul—he scarcely recognizes its existence and he has but little thought or care about the immortality to which it is ordained! But a true Believer knows himself. We are sure, from our text, that he does, for he would not declare his ways if he did not know them. He has practiced introspection and looked within himself. He has practiced self-examination and studied his own inner life. He does not profess to understand himself altogether—for man is the next greatest mystery to God. God is the first mystery and man is the second. He does not understand his own ways. He

cannot always comprehend his own thoughts, or follow the devious wanderings of his own mind, but he does know a good deal about himself, and when he goes before his God, he can truthfully say, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me.” Among other things, he has discovered his own ignorance and, therefore, he presents the prayer with which the text concludes, “Teach me.” He is even ignorant of God’s revealed will, so he prays, “Teach me Your statutes, O Lord! I know the Book in which they are recorded and I can learn them in the letter, but You teach them to me, in my spirit, by Your Spirit, that I may know them aright.”

This, then, is to be the subject of our meditation. Let us come to it looking up to the Lord and asking Him to bless the meditation to each one of us. I shall take the text in two senses. The primary one is, I think, *a man of God alone with God*—“I have declared my ways,” (“to God”), “and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.” But I judge that it is lawful, especially in the light of the following verse, to believe that the Psalmist may have alluded to his speaking with men, so, in the second part of my discourse, I shall speak of *a man of God considering his own public testimony* and saying, when he had done so, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk”—which must mean his speaking to others—“so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”

**I.** So, first, we see here A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD. And we notice three things about him. He is making his case known—“I have declared my ways.” He is rejoicing in an audience which he has obtained—“You heard me.” And he is seeking a further blessing—“Teach me Your statutes.”

First, *he is making his case known*. I understand this to be, first, the language of a sinner confessing his sin—“I have declared my ways. He is a sensible sinner and, therefore, he is not in a confessional box with the human ear of a fellow sinner to listen to him. He is a rational being who has not degraded himself so low as that. But he is confessing his sin to the great High Priest who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”—to Him who cannot be defiled by listening to our tale of sin. To Him to whom, alone, will it avail to confess our sins, for, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” if we confess them to Him.

Can each one of us now say, in this sense, “I have declared my ways” to the Lord? For this should be done, not only at our first coming to Him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day and sum up the errors of the day, and say, “I have declared my ways’—my evil ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways. I have declared the way of my words, the way of my thoughts, the way of my imagination, the way of my memory, for it has a treacherous way of remembering evil and forgetting good. I have declared the way of my actions towards You, my God, and there is much to regret. I have declared the way of my actions in my family, in the world and in the church.” What a sorrowful stock-

taking each day would be to many professors if they were honest to themselves and to their God! Even those who “walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have the closest fellowship with Him, yet know that it is a very sweet and blessed thing even for them that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” for even they still sin and it is necessary for each one of them to say continually, “I have declared my ways.”

Do you try to hide your sins, dear Friend? It is useless for you to attempt to do so, for God always sees them. Why do you seek to conceal what is always before His eyes? Better far to confess them to Him, that He may then cast it behind His back and remember them against you no more forever! I believe that often, as sinners confessing to God, we miss much true comfort for lack of making a clean breast of our transgressions. Yet the Lord knows what is in our heart even though we do not acknowledge it. It has been well observed that when Moses tried to excuse himself to God for not wanting to go to deliver Israel, he said that he was slow of speech. And God met that objection by giving him Aaron, his brother, to speak for him—but the Lord, in His reply to Moses, also said, “All the men are dead who sought your life.” Moses had not said anything about that matter, but God knew that there was that fear in his heart, so He at once put His finger on the sore place. It is well when we can do that for ourselves. When, in our spirit, there is no guile—when we come, as David did in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm and confess the very sin which we have committed. David said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God,” calling it by its right name—then is it that the soul begins to get peace with God.

“But,” someone asks, “are we, then, to confess to God every sin in detail?” No, that would be impossible and probably it would not even be useful. But there must be no wish to conceal any sin from God. Such a desire would be a vain one, for, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” There must be an acknowledgment of the sins which we have not yet seen in their full heinousness. Each of us will do well to offer David’s prayer, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.” If we have committed faults which are hidden even from ourselves, we desire to be delivered from them so that they should not remain to our condemnation.

I do not suppose that any unregenerate sinner will act thus towards his God until the Holy Spirit has begun to work graciously within him. While the prodigal was wasting his substance with riotous living, he thought himself a fine gentleman! And even when he was feeding the swine, he only said, “I have had very bad luck.” But it was “when he came to himself” that he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” And it was when he felt his father’s warm kiss upon his cheek that he made the confession, “Father, I have sinned.” There is no contrition so deep as that of the man who can say concerning his sins—

***“I know they are forgiven—***

***But, still, their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

So, then, our text is, first, the language of a sinner confessing his guilt to his God, but it is more than that. It is, next, the private talks of a patient with his doctor—“I have declared my ways.”

See, there is the little room upstairs and there lies the patient whom the physician has come to try to cure. The doctor’s first work is to find out all he can about the patient’s disease, so he begins by asking concerning the various symptoms that have been noticed. He is sure to look at the sick man’s tongue and you may learn a great deal, spiritually, of the condition of a man’s heart from the state of his tongue. The doctor will also sound the patient’s lungs, test his heart, take his temperature and ask him a great many questions, not merely about what appears on the surface, but about his inmost self. And when, at last, the patient can say, “There, doctor, I have told you all, now will you prescribe for me?” he is in the condition of the Psalmist when he said to the Lord, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.”

The text very accurately describes such a state of things as that which exists when a patient relates his symptoms to the physician and then the physician prescribes for him, for, in addition to sin being a great evil in the sight of God, it is also a disease to which we are all prone and from which only the great Physician can cure us. We cry out against it and our better self fights against it, yet the old man within us, “the body of this death,” as Paul calls it, fights against the new nature and we would be overcome were it not for Divine Grace. So it is well for us to declare our ways. Suppose I put it for myself or for you thus, “Lord, I find that even when I am engaged in prayer, my thoughts wander. When I am in trouble, I get fretful and rebellious. When a little difficulty meets me in my business, I do not trust You as I ought. I sometimes find that when I try to be humble, I become desponding, and when I am joyful, I become presumptuous. I seem to be like a pendulum swinging too far this way and then too far that way. I know not how to steer the ship of my life between the Scylla of this sin and the Charybdis of that. O my Master, I am but dust and ashes! I am less than nothing and vanity! If You ask me what ails me, I seem to have all manner of diseases upon me at once! Sometimes I am hot with fever and full of wrath and, at other times, I shiver with chills as though I did not know what I believed and could not lay hold of Your Truth with a firm grip. Sometimes I fear that I have a fatal disease and, certainly, were it not for Your unfailing medicine—the great catholicon—my soul would pine away and die! Yet, with all these evil symptoms, there is one sign that, I trust, is for good. I know where my help lies and I look alone to You for healing. I know that Your precious blood has cleansed me and on that blood, alone, I do rely.” Thus the patient tells the Good Physician, as far as he can, what he feels and what is the disease from which he is suffering.

I think, too, that we might use another figure to illustrate the meaning of our text. It is like a client telling his advocate all about his affairs. It is a difficult case in law. There is an accuser who has come forward with very serious charges and he brings witnesses to substantiate what he affirms—the case is a very complicated one. The client says that he does not know how to plead for himself. He says that he is at his wits' end and he asks the advocate whether he has any argument that can avail for him. The advocate replies, "I must first know all about your case before I can advise you, so tell me everything." Now, the Lord Jesus, your great Advocate, already knows all about you yet He likes you to tell it all to Him. It is always a good thing to—

***"Tell it all to Jesus,  
Comfort or complaint."***

Mind that you tell it *all* to Him—do not keep anything back. Tell Him the complex part of your life and tell Him the black part of it—be sure to bring that out. Tell Him that the accuser has good ground for his charges against you and that he can bring abundant witnesses against you—yes, that your own conscience will witness against you and that you do not know of any plea, on earth or in Heaven, that can avail for you unless He will be your Advocate. Then, how dear that Advocate will be to you when He tells you that He can plead His righteousness, His life, His blood and His death, for "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I do not think, however, that we have reached the very marrow of our text until we regard it as describing the intimate communion of friend with friend—"I have declared my ways." When two men become linked together in close friendship, they are in the habit of telling one another all that happens in their lives. And if one of them is in a difficulty, he goes off to his friend and tells him about it. They agree with Solomon that "two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" and, by mutual counsel, wisdom will be found. The one who is in trouble tells his friend about it and his friend, perhaps, puts to him a number of questions, not out of prying curiosity, but in order that he may become acquainted with the whole case and so be qualified to advise or to help. And we, Beloved, if we really know the Lord in spirit and in truth, are exalted to the position of friends of Jesus. "Henceforth," said He to His disciples, "I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And we must hide nothing from our God. It ought to be the daily habit of the Believer to commune with his God—we ought to make Him our Confidant in all things. You will go amiss, depend upon it, if you do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. "Bring here the ephod," was David's command to the

priests when he was in perplexity and knew not what he ought to do. Israel made a great mistake with regard to the Gibeonites because the case seemed so simple to them that they felt they did not need to consult the Lord concerning it. Here were men with dry and moldy bread and with old shoes and socks upon their feet. They said they had come from a far country and the matter appeared so plain that the Israelites asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, but took of their provisions and made a treaty with them, as they would not have done if they had consulted the Lord. I do not think that God's people often go astray in the most difficult cases, for they do take *them* to the Lord in prayer. It is in simple matters that we make our greatest blunders, because we think we know what to do and, therefore, we do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. Yet he who leans to his own understanding is trusting to a broken reed which will be sure to fail him just when he most needs it. So let us, each one, say to the Lord, in the language of the text, "I have declared my ways."

Thus far, we have been thinking of the Believer making his case known. Now, secondly, we are to see him *rejoicing that he has obtained an audience with God*—"You heard me." I cannot tell you how my heart is touched with the sweetness of that short sentence. Did *You* hear *me*, O Lord? What condescension on Your part! You have the whole universe to rule and govern—the sweetest songsters are in Your choirs sounding forth Your praises day without night, yet You heard *me*? And I was not singing Your praises, but confessing my sins! I was not telling the story of all Your wondrous works—I was telling of my own wicked works and of my sorrows and cares—and You might well have said, "These things are too small, too insignificant to be brought before My notice." Yet You did not speak so, for You heard me.

But there is something even more wonderful than His condescension, I think, and that is His patience. It is an amazing thing that He should listen to us and then, when the sad story is told, that He should not turn away in the greatness of His wrath and utterly destroy us. I think that if you were to tell out all that is in your own heart to any one of your most intimate friends, he would never speak to you again. We read many very charming biographies of men and women, but if the whole of their lives could be written—which we may be thankful *cannot* be done—the book would not be fit to be read! But the Lord listens to us in some things that we have to confess to Him, that we would not confess, and could not confess and ought not to confess in any human ear, yet He does not turn away from us in disgust. His pure and holy eyes cannot look upon iniquity except with the utmost abhorrence. He loathes sin in such a way as we can hardly imagine, yet, when a penitent sinner comes to confess to Him, He patiently listens to the whole sorrowful story and feels nothing but pity and love for the guilty narrator of it. This is truly wonderful and is very different from the manner of men. A man would probably say, "You have told me, now, Sir, what I wish I had never heard, for I can nev-

er trust you again. I did not think you were so mean. I could not have believed it of you. You have told me something that has let me know that I have been cherishing a viper in my bosom! Never come to my house again—you are a person with whom I do not wish to be in any way associated.” That is how man talks. But when we have told the Lord everything, He does not spurn us from Him, but He says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He puts away our sins by blotting them out like a cloud and our transgressions as a thick cloud, blessed be His holy name!

When the Psalmist says, “You heard me,” he means, “You heard me with sympathy.” There are several different ways of hearing a story. When I have to deal with a case of very deep grief—I do not know whether you have all learned this lesson, but I will tell you how I act and you may be wise if you do the same, especially if you are a young pastor. If you get a case of very deep grief, hold your tongue and let the sorrowful one talk and tell out all the painful details. Those various items may not be very interesting to you, but if you cease to listen to any of them, you will be stopping the process of cure for that poor bleeding heart. Let the sufferer tell it all out and do not grudge the time it takes. Interject a word or two of sympathy now and then, and be really sympathetic all the while, but let the troubled soul tell it all out, just as here the Psalmist says to the Lord, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me.” If you do so, the tried one will go away and say, “I was so comforted by my interview with the pastor, or with that friend. It did me so much good.” Yet you are conscious that you did nothing but listen to the story of sorrow—and that is the best thing you could possibly have done. “Mother,” said a little girl, “I can’t think why our neighbor is so glad for me to go in and see her. She has lost her little baby and she sits and cries—and she says I am such a comfort to her! But, Mother, I never say anything! I only just put my arms round her neck and I cry, too.” Ah, but that is the best way to comfort the sorrowing! And that is what Jesus does for you when you get near to Him. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity and it is His being touched that enables us to bear the blow which has so grievously wounded our heart.

“You heard me.” Even if the Lord did not seem to answer us, yet there would be much comfort to us from His hearing us, letting us tell all our grief to Him in the full belief that we are not merely telling it out to the air, or speaking to emptiness, but that into His ear and into His heart the story of our grief is falling. There is no comfort like this. Try it, mourning ones, you who love His blessed name!

But I think that the Psalmist meant even more than this when he said to God, “You heard me.” Surely he meant, “You did graciously come to my help, ‘I declared my ways’—the sinfulness of them—‘and You heard me’ and did blot out my transgressions. ‘I declared my ways’—the disease of sin that was in my soul—and by Your stripes You did heal me. By

Your Spirit You did sanctify me. ‘I declared my ways’—my legal difficulties, my accusers’ words—and You did hear me by answering them and sending such joy and peace into my soul that I dared even to cry, ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again.’ I told You all my ways and, like a true and faithful friend, You did not spare anything that You might help me. As You did give Your Son to redeem me and Your Spirit to sanctify me, so did You give Your Providence to succor me and Your Presence to comfort me. ‘You heard me.’ I did not cry to You in vain.” Are not these words wondrously rich, dear Brothers and Sisters? I seem, in talking to you, as if I only skimmed the surface—as a swallow touches the brook with his wing and is up and away again in a moment—but you may dive into their depths in your happy, heartfelt experience!

Now I come, in the third place, to this man of God alone with God *seeking a further blessing*—“Teach me Your statutes.” I think the Psalmist means this, “My Lord, I have told You all. Now, will You tell me all? I have declared to You my ways. Now, will You teach me Your ways? I have confessed to You how I have broken Your statutes—will You not give me Your statutes back again? I have acknowledged my weakness. Now, will You not strengthen me, that I may run in the way of Your commandments?”

We will take this request, “Teach me Your statutes,” in the same way as we took our first division. “I, a sinner, have confessed to You, O Lord, my wicked ways. Will You not teach me Your statutes, that I may sin against You no more? Teach me how to be holy. Teach me to repent, for repentance is one of Your statutes. Teach me to believe, for faith in Your dear Son is one of Your great Gospel statutes. Teach me to pray, for this shall help to keep me pure, and prayer is a statute of Yours. Teach me to watch against temptation. Teach me to search the Scriptures. Teach me to yield myself up to You as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service. So teach me that I shall—

**“No more from You depart  
No more Your Spirit grieve.”**

Then, next, our text means, “I am a patient, and You, O Lord, are my Physician. I have told You the symptoms of my case. Now will You teach me Your statutes that I may be healed? I know that Your Word has a healing power, for it is written, ‘He sent His Word and healed them.’ Now, Lord, heal the bleeding wounds of my conscience by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word! Heal my darkened understanding by your Spirit’s illumination of it through Your Word. You see what my disease is—Your Word is the great Pharmacopoeia which contains remedies for all spiritual maladies—and You know which will best suit my case. Prescribe for me! ‘Teach me Your statutes.’”

Then, in the case of a client consulting his advocate, the text means, “I have declared my ways to You, my great Advocate. Now ‘teach me Your

statutes,' I pray You that I may be wise to meet my future accusers. 'Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.' 'Teach me Your statutes' that I may not give occasion to the enemy to accuse me. Make me wise since I have to deal with the craft of the devil and the malice of the world. Teach me when to be silent and when to speak. Give me my Master's wisdom, who baffled all His adversaries though they constantly sought to catch Him in His speech. Teach me how to live so blameless and guileless a life that I may be both wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. I have told You the difficulty of my ways and how my adversaries seek to entrap me—"teach me Your statutes, that I may escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler."

Then, as a friend speaking to his friend, this passage means, "I have declared my ways,' now 'teach me Your statutes,' O Lord, that I may never lose Your friendship! O my great Friend, I have told You how remiss and how unthankful and unkind I have been to You, but do not be angry with me! Undertake to mend me, I pray You. Make Your poor friend better. Some of my sin springs from ignorance, so 'teach me Your statutes.' Much of it springs from my corrupt heart, so, O Lord, sanctify it by the power of Your cleansing Word! O Jesus, I cannot bear the thought of losing Your friendship! You have taught me the sweetness of it, so do not take it away from me, for if now I were to lose You, I would be, of all men, most miserable! The unregenerate sinner knows not the sweetness of Your love, but, like the swine, he is content with his husks. But I have eaten Heaven's bread and if I am to lose it now, woe is me, for I shall be doubly undone!"

A poor man who has always been poor knows not the smart of poverty like the emperor or the prince who comes down to be a beggar. It must have been a sad sight to see Belisarius, the valiant general, brought down so low as to beg in the streets of Rome and, oh, if a Believer could lose the friendship of his Lord, he would be doubly damned! There would be two Hells for him who had peeped into Heaven and tasted angels' food—and then had lost it and been cast away forever! Blessed be the name of the Lord—that shall never be the case with any true Believer! And that it may not be the case with you, pray this prayer, "O Lord, 'teach me Your statutes.' I am a poor ignorant fool, but, O my blessed Friend to whom I have confessed my ignorance, teach me! I shall be but a dull scholar, yet do not put me out of Your class. It will show what a wonderful Teacher You are if You will teach me! It will make even the angels marvel if You will make a good scholar out of such a dullard as I am! Here I am, Lord, 'teach me Your statutes.'"

**II.** Now for a few minutes let us turn to the second way of considering our text which is, THE MAN OF GOD STATING HIS TESTIMONY IN PUBLIC.

First, then, according to this way of understanding the text, we have here *a man of God who has borne his testimony*. He has spoken to man experimentally. He has not spoken about something he has read of, but

he says, “I have declared my ways’—the ways which I myself have trodden. I have told them of my evil ways and warned them against the evils that lurk in the paths of sin. I have told them of the wounds I received in the house of sin, and I have warned others against going there. I have also told them of the ways of penitence, for You have graciously led me in them. I have told them of that bitter sweet or sweet bitter, the pleasing pain of weeping over sin. I have told them of the ways of faith—how I was led by the Law, as schoolmaster, to Christ—how I was shut up from every other confidence and then came and trusted in the Lord. ‘I have declared my ways’ and I have also told my fellow sinners what the Lord has done for me and in what ways I have been led since I have believed in Jesus. I have told them of the ways of answered prayer which I have trodden, of the ways of gracious help which have been vouchsafed to me. I have told them of my Ebenezers, of the ways of God’s Providence and related how I have been succored, again and again, in the hour of my distress. ‘I have declared my ways’ and said of them all, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.’”

We are bound, dear Friends, not only to preach Christ’s Gospel, but to also preach our experience of it. You remember that remarkable expression of our Lord in one of His last prayers to the Father, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through”—what? “*through their word.*” Then, is it *their* word? No, it is the Lord’s, yet it is also theirs, for they have made it theirs by personal appropriation and experience of it! The Truth of God never seems to have such vividness about it as when a man tells it out of his own soul. You read it in this blessed Book and you know it is true, for God has revealed it, but when you hear a godly man say, “I have tasted and handled this and have proved its truth,” then, somehow, there is a still greater force in it which brings the Truth of God home to you. That is what this servant of God could say, “I have declared my ways.”

And he had not declared them with any view to vain-glory, but only that he might glorify God. Neither had he spoken of himself except with the object of persuading others to walk in the ways of the Lord in which he had, himself, been so graciously led. We must always be cautious as to how we speak of ourselves—we shall do well if we can say with the Apostle Paul, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” If we ever do speak about ourselves, it must be only as a foil or setting to that priceless jewel of the loving kindness of the Lord. “I have declared my ways.”

The next sentence, “You heard me,” teaches us that God had heard this man. What solemn work it is to preach if we have God for a hearer! You know how Richard Baxter felt about this matter—

***“I preached as never sure to preach again,  
And as a dying man to dying men.”***

We should so preach as though we knew that every word was being written down by the recording angel and that God Himself was listening

to all that we said. This would make it a very solemn thing to open our mouth for the Lord and to bear testimony for Him, yet what a cheering thing it is that the Lord hears our testimony and can confirm its truthfulness! For, as surely as any of you ever speak for the Lord, you will be misunderstood—and that is not the worst of it—you will also be willfully misrepresented by some of your hearers. The very things you say, they will declare that you ought to have said—and the things that you did not say, they will pretend that you did say. They will turn your words upside down and inside out! I am judging by my own experience, for I have long proved that it is utterly impossible for me to utter a single sentence which someone or other cannot twist into mischief. This is a grievous evil under the sun—that he that speaks is not judged according to his own words, but according to whatever men choose to put into those words and to make them mean—so that the thing that was farthest from our thoughts and which our soul abhorred, has often been set down to us when we neither said nor thought anything of the kind! Now, if any of you are called to pass through that trouble—and I daresay you will if you try earnestly to serve your Master—fall back upon this declaration, “I have declared my ways,’ honestly, simply, plainly, with a pure desire to glorify God and bless my fellow men ‘and You heard me.’ I appeal to You, O Lord, for You know what was spoken! You are the Supreme Judge and to You I bring my case.”

When, with weeping eyes and with broken words, my dear Sister, you talk to some poor soul about the Savior, let it be a comfort to you that the Lord hearkens and hears, and that a Book of Remembrance is kept before Him in which are recorded all such holy acts as you are doing for Him. My dear Brother, perhaps you have not any special gift or talent, but yet you try to talk about Jesus whenever you can and somebody has heard what you said. It was very ungrammatical, and some people made a joke of it—and that grieves you very much, for you know that you were speaking in the sincerity of your heart. Now, do not say one word the less because they jest about you—rather say *more* because you have the double advantage of affording some people a little amusement and, at the same time, of doing good to others! Do not fret, or trouble, but just go straight on with your work for the Lord! And if you really did make a mistake and used the wrong word, you can say, “Ah, but the Lord knew what I meant! You did know, O Lord, with what simplicity of soul and earnestness of heart I spoke that word and if it was not the right word, and if some even see occasion for mirth in it, yet You heard me.”

The last word of all is this—and it fits in well with this view of the text—this man needed more teaching, so he prayed, “Lord, ‘teach me Your statutes.’ Now that I have become a teacher of others, You teach me.” No man can teach if he is unwilling to be taught. Any gentleman who has “finished his education” will never be an educator of others. We must be continually making progress if we would lead others onward. I am sure that every Brother here who is engaged in the Lord’s work will

find that he needs to get fresh food for his mind every day. He must eat a double portion because he has to feed others as well as to be fed. He has not only to fill his basket with bread for the eater, but also with seed for the sower, so he needs a double—no, a *sevenfold* portion—that he may have enough for others as well as for himself.

“Teach me Your statutes,” is a good prayer to be presented by you dear young friends who have lately come into the Church. I am always delighted to hear of your trying to do good. I am glad for you to get into the Sunday school, or into the Evangelists’ Society, that you may try to speak for Jesus. But do remember that you need much teaching if you are to teach others. This remark applies especially to some of you. I would not keep you back, even for a minute, from trying to teach others what you already know, but I beg you to try to learn a little more. The other night a dear Brother told some of you a good story of the Negro who heard his pastor say that they all ought to teach something to somebody. Poor old Sambo called out from the gallery that he could teach something. The minister said, “I do not mean you, Sambo, for you only know your A B C.” “Ah,” said Sambo, “but there are some brethren and little children that don’t know their A B C, so Sambo can teach them that.”

Well, there is something in that view of the case—if you only know the elements of the Gospel, teach them to those who do not know them. At the same time, dear Brother, if you can learn more, you can then teach more—so do not give up the good habit, on Sabbath days, of going to hear at least one sermon. I would like to turn a lot of the people out half a day on Sundays—I mean you experienced Christian people—that you might go out and teach others, but I would like to bring in some of the young people who are always out at work and do not come in to feed as they ought. They must feed, as well as work! They must get taught, or else their teaching will soon become very vapid and powerless. In all honesty and sincerity, let each one pray, “Lord, teach me more, so that when You hear me next time, there may be more of that which You have taught me and that, when men hear it, they may be more impressed by it, because they learn more from it.” May we all first go to Him and learn of Him—then talk to Him and learn more of Him—and then go to others and talk with them about Him!

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

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

# THE STUDENT'S PRAYER

## NO. 1344

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

***“Make me to understand the way of Your precepts:  
so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”  
Psalm 119:27.***

WHEN we seek any good thing from God, we ought, also, to consider how we may use it for His Glory. It is right that desires for good things should flow from good motives. When the heart is not only gracious but grateful, it will turn to God with doable purpose, desiring the mercy and desiring to use it to His praise. The Grace of God, which brings salvation, marvelously whets the appetite for good things—it does more, it provokes an intense anxiety to glorify God's name in the world—even before it has imparted the ability to do any good thing. Vehement passion and abject helplessness meeting together and struggling in the breast, often lead to despondency, but they ought far rather to stimulate prayer.

As soon as we are saved by Grace we are eager after supplies for our soul's needs. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.” This is the first stage of spiritual childhood, like the infant who cries for the bottle and takes its little fill and feasts, all to itself and all for itself. There follows on this another yearning, a desire for fellowship with the saints, although we feel too weak and too foolish to enter into such good company as we take the older disciples to be, or even to talk to them. But I will tell you what we can do. We may *all* venture to ask the Lord to instruct us and make us understand His ways, so that our conversation may be welcome to His people—and so He will! “Therefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as, also, you do.” This is the second stage of development.

Then comes a third grade and come, it surely will, if you follow on to know the Lord. “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” Speak, my Brothers and Sisters, on this wise—“You have told me, O my God, to earnestly covet the best gifts. I do covet them, Lord, You know, not to consume them upon my lusts, but to use them for Your service. I will gladly accept Your talents as a trust, not to trifle with them, not to vaunt them as the toys of my vanity, but, by Your Grace, as a wise and faithful steward to bring You all the profit and all the interest, for I am greedy to get gain out of all those endowments You entrust to my care.” “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”

I would have you further observe, on the threshold of our meditation, that there is not really any grave duty a man can be called on to discharge, no responsible office he may be elected to fill, nor even any plan or purpose he lays on his heart to accomplish which does not require diligent preparation on his own part to fit himself, to train his faculties and to discipline his mind. What you call unskilled labor may possibly be utilized by

efficient officers, but unskillful labor is a sheer waste of power. How much more imperative the demand that we should be endowed with the requisite faculties and qualified by suitable instruction if we have any work to do for God, or any office, however humble, in the service of the great King!

Zeal without knowledge would only betray us into reckless presumption. When called to talk of God's wondrous works, we ought not to rush upon that exercise unfitted and unprepared, but we should wait upon the Lord, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, that our stammering tongues may be unloosed and that our lips may be attuned to tell the noble tale in grateful strains. We must first obtain for ourselves an understanding of the way of the Lord's precepts before we can make it plain to others. He who tries to teach, but has never been taught himself, will make a sorry mess of it. He who has no understanding and yet wants to make others understand, must assuredly fail! Some there are who cannot teach and will not learn—and it is because they will not learn that they cannot teach.

I believe aptness for being taught is at the bottom of aptness to teach. The Psalmist had both. He says, "Make me to *understand* the way of Your statutes." There he would be taught. "Then," he says, "I shall talk of Your wondrous works." There he would be teaching. In pondering the text, it has appeared to me to set forth three things. First, the prayer of a student. Secondly, the occupation of a scholar. And thirdly, the intimate relation there is between them.

**I.** I see in it A STUDENT'S PRAYER. I hope, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we are all students in the school of Christ—all disciples or scholars—and I trust we shall adopt the student's prayer as our own—"Make me to understand the way of Your precepts." You know that prayer is to study what fire is to the sacrifice. I beseech you, therefore, join heartily in the petition of the text.

The student's prayer deals with the main subject of the conversation which is to be that student's occupation, namely, the way of God's precepts. You and I, Brothers, have to teach those things which relate to the counsels and commandments of the Lord. It is not our province to guide men in politics or to tutor them in science. Those things are better taught by men of mark, whose time and attention are absorbed in those profound and laborious researches. As for us who are Christians and servants of Christ, our business is to teach men the things of God. To that one topic we do well to keep, both for our own good and for the good of others. If we have many studies to engage us, our thoughts will soon be scattered—and if we multiply our pursuits, we shall be incapable of concentrating all our energies upon the grand topic which Divine Wisdom has selected for us—"the way of Your precepts."

In the way of God's legal precepts we have great need of sound understanding, that we may be competent to instruct others. It is well to be initiated in the Law, to discern its wonderful comprehensiveness, spirituality and severity. We need to know the way of the Law—a way too hard to be trod by any mortal man so as to win salvation. It is well to survey the way of the Lord's precepts to see how exceedingly broad and yet, at the same

time, how remarkably narrow they are. "Your commandment is exceedingly broad," and yet, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life and few there are that go in there."

It is well for us to know exactly what the Law teaches and what the Law designs—why we were made subject to its prescript, and how we may be delivered from its penalties. Great need, too, have we to understand the way of God's Gospel precepts—what these precepts are—"repent," "believe," "be converted" and the like. We need to be able to see their relation, where they stand, not as means to an end, but as results of Divine Grace—commands but yet *promises*—the duty of man but yet the *gift* of God! Happy is that preacher and teacher who understands the way of the Gospel precepts and never lets them clash with the precepts of the Law, so as to teach a mangle-mangle, half Law and half Gospel. Happy is he who knows the way of God's legal precepts and sees them all ablaze with Divine wrath on account of sin—and discerns the way of the Gospel precepts—can see them all bright and yet all crimson with the precious blood of Him that opened up for us the way of acceptance!

The way of God's precepts! Does not that mean that we ought to be acquainted with the relative position which the precepts occupy? For it is very easy, Brothers, unless God gives us understanding, to preach up one precept to the neglect of another! It is possible for a ministry and a teaching to be lopsided and those who follow it may become rather the caricatures of Christianity than Christians harmoniously proportioned. O Lord, what foolish creatures we are! When You exhort us one way, we run to such an extreme that we forget that You have given us any other counsel than that which is just now ringing in our ears!

We have known some commanded to be humble who have bowed down till they have become timorous and desponding. We have known others exhorted to be confident who have gone far beyond a modest courage and grown so presumptuous that they have presently fallen into gross transgressions. Is fidelity to the truth your cardinal virtue? Take heed of being uncharitable! Is love to God and man your highest aspiration? Beware lest you become the dupe of false apostles and foul hypocrites! Have you clad yourself with zeal as with a garment? Take care, now, lest by one act of indiscretion your garment should be rolled in blood.

Oh, how easy it is to exaggerate a virtue until it becomes a vice! A man may look to himself, examine himself and scrutinize all his actions and motives till he becomes deplorably selfish! Or, on the other hand, a man may look to others, counseling them and cautioning them, preaching to them and praying for them till he grows oblivious of his own estate, degenerates into hypocrisy and discovers, to his surprise, that his own heart is not right with God. There is a "way" about the precepts—there is a chime about them in which every bell gives out its note and makes up a tune. There is a mixture, as of old, of the anointing oil—so much of this and that and the other and, if any ingredient were left out, the oil would lose its perfect aroma. So is there an anointing of the holy life in which there is precept upon precept skillfully mingled, delicately infused, gratefully blended and Grace given to keep each of these precepts and so the life becomes sweet like an ointment most precious unto the Lord. God

grant us each, if we are to teach others—and I hope we shall *all* try to do that—to understand the way of His precepts!

As a prayer, too, this must certainly mean, “Make me understand the way to keep Your precepts.” It is not in *human* strength, for he that keeps the precepts of God must be kept by the God of the precepts. To keep the precepts we must keep Him in the heart who gave the precepts and whose life is the best exemplification of them. O Lord, teach us the way to observe and to do Your commands! Give us humble, dependent hearts receptive of the sweet influences of Your Spirit, that we may understand the way in which those precepts are to be kept. Does it not signify— “Lord, make me to understand the Christian life, for that is the way of Your precepts”?

Dear Friends, if you are teachers of others, you must be experimentally acquainted with the Christian life! You must know the great doctrines which support it and furnish motives for it—the great doctrines which are the pavement of the road along which the Christian travels. You must know the practical precepts, themselves—what they are and how the Lord has worded them for each circumstance and each age of the Christian life. You must know the doctrinal and the practical—and you must know the experimental—he is no preacher of any value who cannot tell the way of God's precepts by having experienced that way! He must have *felt* the joy of running in it—having taken the precepts and been guided by them so as to have proved that “in keeping of them there is great reward.”

Yes, and he will be none the worse teacher if he has a lively memory of the bitterness that comes of having wandered from those commandments, for he can tell the sinner, with the tears starting in his own eyes, that he who wanders from the way of obedience will miss the paths of peace, for the way of God's commandments is exceedingly pleasant, but they that break the hedge and follow their own will shall find that their willfulness entails upon them grievous sorrow and sore pain. This is what we need to understand the way of God's precepts. Let the prayer go up to Heaven, especially from every young Brother who is hoping to preach the Word before long, “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.”

Very obviously a confession is here implied. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” It means just this. “Lord, I do not understand it. I am ignorant and foolish and if I follow my own judgment—if I take to my own thinking, I shall be sure to go wrong. Lord, make me to understand.” It is a confession of a good man who may understand a great deal, but feels that he does not understand all. In this learning, he who understands most is the man who thinks he understands least. He who has the clearest knowledge of Divine things is the very one to feel that there is a boundless ocean far beyond his observation and he cries “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” It is a confession which should be made because it is intensely felt—the consciousness of folly and ignorance forcing the confession to the lips.

Our student's prayer asks a great gift when he says, “Make me to understand.” This is something more than, “Make me to know.” He had said just before—“Teach me Your statutes.” Every Christian needs this teaching for his own sake, but he that is to be an instructor of others must es-

pecially enquire for a thorough understanding. You Sunday school teachers who take the oversight of the children. You elders of the Church who look after enquirers and help them to the Savior—you both must not be satisfied with knowing—you must *understand*. A superficial acquaintance with the Scriptures will not suffice for your important office. Your mind must penetrate into the deeper meaning, the hidden treasures of wisdom. “Make me to understand.”

A catechism may supply right answers, but we need the living Teacher to give us true perceptions. Intelligence is not a faculty of babies—in understanding you must be men! Young pupils soon lose confidence in their teacher if he does not seem up to the mark. I heard two schoolboys talking of their teacher the other day. Says one, “I don’t think he knows much more than we do.” “Well, he always has to look at the book before he can tell us anything, doesn’t he?” said the other little chap. Just now, as I came along, I watched two babies trying to carry another baby a little smaller than themselves and they all three rolled down together! It is pretty to see little children anxious to help their little brother, but when the father comes up, he lifts all three and carries them with ease.

We have not many fathers, but every Christian man should aspire to that honorable and valuable estate in the Church. The wisdom that comes of experience leads up to it. “Make me to understand.” Oh Lord, the children are pleased with the flowers, help me to spy out the roots! Take me into the secrets, let me know the deep things of God! Help me to discriminate! Enable me to judge and weigh and ponder—and so to understand! Such reasons as You give, enable me to comprehend. Where You give no reason, teach my reason to feel that there must be the best of reasons for no reasons having been given! So make me to understand what can be understood and to understand that what I cannot understand is just as reliable as what I do understand. In understanding I can never find You out, O God, to perfection. In Your sight I must still be a baby, though towards my fellow Christians I may be a man. “Make me to understand.”

I love to meet with those of the Lord’s people who have had their senses exercised in Divine things and their intelligence matured. For the most part, we find disciples like babies, unskillful in the Word of Righteousness, using milk because unable to digest strong meat. Thank God for the babies! Pray God they may soon grow and develop into men! He who knows that he is a sinner and that Christ Jesus is his Savior, knows enough to save him. But we have no wish to perpetuate childishness. The spelling book is essential as a primer, but not the spelling book forever! A B C must not be sung forever in wearisome monotone! Nor must, “Only believe,” become the everlasting song!

Are there not other Truths of God deeper and higher? There is the grand analogy of the faith! There is the doctrine of the Covenant! There is the doctrine of Election! There is the doctrine of the Union of the saints with Jesus Christ! These are the deep things of God and I think we should pray, “Make me, Lord, to understand *them*.” Yet the best understanding is that which aims at personal holiness. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” Lord, if I cannot grapple with doctrine, let me know which is the right *way* for me to take in my daily life. If sometimes Your Truth

staggers me and I cannot see where this Truth of God squares with that, yet Lord grant that integrity and uprightness may preserve me! So make me to know and understand the way of Your statutes that if I am tempted and the Tempter come as an angel of light, I may so understand the difference between a true angel of light and the mock angel of light that I may not be taken in the snare. "Make me to understand the way of Your statutes." May my eyes be keen to know the right in all its tangles. May I follow the silken clue of uprightness where it seems to wind and twist. Give Your servant such a clear understanding of what Israel ought to do and of what he, himself, ought to do as a part of Israel, that he may never miss his way.

This is the best kind of understanding in all the world. The Psalmist appeals to the Fountain of all wisdom, the Source from where all knowledge springs. Who can put wisdom in the inward parts but the Lord? Or who can give understanding to the heart but God Most High? Our parents and our Sunday school teachers taught us the rudiments while we were supple and pliant with tender age. We thank them much and we esteem them highly. Yet they could only teach the Law and imprint, if possible, the letter of it on our memory, although even *that* we often repeated and as often forgot. It is the *Lord* that teaches us to profit by the Divine Spirit. How very wonderfully the Lord teaches us! Some lessons have to be whipped into us—well, He does not spare the rod for our crying! Other lessons can only be burnt into us as with a hot iron.

Some of us can bless the Lord that we bear in our body the prints of the Lord Jesus, that He branded His Truth into our very flesh and bones so that we cannot, now, miss it, but *must* understand it. Into what strange places God will put His children! You have heard of colleges called by odd names—Brasen-nose and the like—but the most amazing college I ever heard of was the whale's belly! Jonah would never have bowed himself to Sovereign Grace had he not been cast into the deep, compassed about with floods and overwhelmed with billows and waves. But the soundness of his doctrine was very palpable in the voice of his thanksgiving, for as soon as he came out of the whale's belly, he said, "Salvation is of the Lord"! A *must* college for a Prophet!

But we may be content to leave the college to God and, if we are, like Joseph, sold into Egypt, or like the Hebrew children, carried captive into Babylon, or wherever it may be—so long as He makes us to understand the way of His precepts we may be well content! Christ taught only three of His 12 Apostles upon Tabor, but 11 of them in Gethsemane. Some, though favored much with high joys, learn more by deep sorrows. He takes but three of them into the chamber where He raises the dead girl, for all His wonders are not to be seen by all His followers. But they may all behold Him on the Cross and learn the sweet wonders of His dying love!

I would not be satisfied, dear Brothers and Sisters, without trying to understand all that can be understood of the love of Jesus Christ and of all those precious Truths that make up the way of God's precepts. He is a poor scholar who does not wish to learn more than lies within the bare compass of his task—a good pupil will try to get as much as he can out of his teacher. Be it your resolve and mine always to be learning! Let us

never be content to lightly skim the wave or gently sip the river's brim. Rather let us delight ourselves with diving into the clear stream of knowledge! Revelation invites research and it unfolds its choice stores only to those who search for them as for hidden treasures.

Oh, my God! I long to glean, to gather, to gain knowledge! I would gladly yield up every hour I have to sit at Your feet! To You I would surrender every faculty I have that I may be learning. By the ear, by the eye, by the taste would I imbibe instruction! Yes, and in every season of recreation I would inhale the fragrance of Your wondrous works. And when I seek repose I would lean my head upon Your bosom that I may learn Your love by the touch as well as by every other sense. May each gate of Man-soul be filled with the traffic of the precious merchandise of heavenly knowledge. And, Lord, I would open the inmost depth of my soul that Your light may shine into the most secret parts of my nature. Oh, hear my cry! Make me to understand the way of Your precepts!

**II.** Now, dear Friends, let us pass on to notice, in the next place, THE OCCUPATION OF THE INSTRUCTED MAN. When the Lord has taught a man the way of His precepts, it behooves him to rightly use his sacred privileges—"So shall I talk of Your wondrous works." As a faithful teacher, let him testify of God's works—His wondrous works. It is a sorry sermon that is all about *man's* works, especially if the preacher makes out our good works to be something very remarkable. We are to preach not man's works, but God's works—not our own works, but the works of our great Substitute!

There are two works, especially, that you Christian people must talk about to others—the work of Christ *for* us and the work of the Holy Spirit *in* us. These are themes that will never be exhausted. The work of God the Son for us in His life and death, Resurrection and Ascension—His intercession at the right hand of God and His second advent—what a theme is before you here! How great are the works of Christ on our behalf! Preach His Substitution emphatically. Let there be no mistake about that! Let it be told that Christ stood in the place of His people and lived and died for them!

Moreover, there is the work of the Holy Spirit in us—the vital interest and importance of which it would not be possible to exaggerate. I should not like any man to try and talk about this Divine ministry unless he has been brought under its power and been led, by experience, to understand it—the work of conviction, the work of regeneration, the work of emptying, humbling and bringing down—the work of leading to repentance and to faith, the work of sanctification, the work of daily sustenance of the Divine Life, the work of perfecting the soul for Heaven! There is plenty of room for blundering, here, if God does not make you understand the way of His precepts! But if you have a good clear knowledge of what Christian life is, then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, always be dwelling on these two things—what the Lord has done *for* us and what the Lord is doing *in* us when He brings us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

The wonderful character of these works of God opens up a study on which the devout mind can discuss with ever awakening emotions of awe and delight! There are a few things in the world that men may wonder at.

They used to speak of the seven wonders of the world. I believe that there is not one of those seven wonders which some have not ceased to wonder at. If you see them a sufficient number of times you get accustomed to them and the wonder evaporates. But the works of the Lord, and these two works especially, you may think on them, meditate upon them, inspect them, enjoy them every day of a long life and the result will be, not a decrease, but an increase of your wonder! "Your wondrous works!"

God Incarnate in the Son of Mary! Wondrous work, this! God in the carpenter's shop! The Son of God driving nails and handling a hammer! Wondrous work, this! Jesus at the loom, weaving a righteousness for His people, casting His soul into every throw of the shuttle and producing such a matchless fabric for the wedding dress of His own chosen bride that all the angels in Heaven stand still and gaze at it and marvel how such a fabric was worked! Behold Him—God, Himself, in human flesh—dying, bearing human sin with a condescension that is wonderful beyond all wonder! Behold Him casting all that sin into the depth of the sea, with wondrous might of merit, which drowned it in the bottomless abyss forever! Wondrous work, that!

Then see Him going forth again, discharged from all His suretyship engagements, having paid the debt. And behold Him nailing the handwriting of the ordinances that were against us to His Cross! Oh, wondrous work! One might talk of it by night and day and never weary. View Him rising as our Representative, guaranteeing life to us! See Him climbing the skies and casting a largesse of mercies among rebellious men. Consider the influence of His mediatorial authority, the power committed to Him by His Father, for He has power given Him over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him.

Listen, listen to His pleading as the Priest upon the Throne! What wondrous work is that! Still through the apocalyptic vista gaze—gaze on all the glories of the future when He shall come to reign upon the earth! There you have new fields of light breaking on your ravished view—fresh incentives to wonder, admire and worship! And what shall I say of these wondrous works which seem so near and so familiar to our observation and yet baffle our investigation, till the more we scrutinize them the more amazement we feel? The Church in the world kept alive from generation to generation by One whose Presence was promised, was bestowed and is now felt and proved by the saints—the blessed Paraclete, the Comforter whom Jesus sent from the Father! By His agency long seasons of drought and despondency have been ever and again succeeded by times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord by revivals and renewals of signs and wonders such as *began* but did not end in the day of Pentecost!

I never know which to wonder at most—God in human flesh, the Incarnate Son—or the Holy Spirit dwelling in man! The indwelling is as wonderful as the Incarnation! Let every Gospel teacher yield up his own soul to the wonder and gratitude which these works of God are fitted to inspire. I like to see the preacher, when he is talking about these things, look like a man wonderstruck, gazing forth on a vast expanse, lost in immensity! As if he were far out at sea, trembling with adoration! As if the chords of his nature vibrated to the mystery and awe that encircle him. There are lovely

traces of God's transcendent skill in things minute when peered at through a microscope—but these wondrous works of God are of another order! They display His grander power!

Tell not the old, old story as if it had grown trite and trifling in your ears and tripped from off your tongue. Listen to the slow deep mellow voice of the mighty ocean of Grace until your soul faints within you! Then speak in tones of strong emotion like those of Paul—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Yet it becomes you to speak very plainly. See how it is put. "I will *talk* of Your wondrous works." Talk is the simplest mode of speech. You cannot all preach, but you can all *talk* and, if some preachers would refrain from rhetoric and tell their plain unvarnished tale, they would succeed better than they do now.

Do you think that God meant His ministers to kill themselves in order come out on Sundays with one or two splendid displays of "intellect" and eloquence? Surely this is not God's way of doing things! I do not believe that Paul ever preached a fine sermon, or that Peter ever dreamed of any display of intellect. I asked, the other day, of one who had heard a sermon, if it was likely that sinners would be converted by it. He said, "Oh no! By no means! But it was an intellectual treat." Is there anywhere in the Bible a word about intellectual treats, or anything approximating to such an idea?

Is there not a country on the other side of the sea where they are attempting fine flashy oratory sermons that remind you of the way in which they finish up the fireworks—discourses made up of blue lights and blazes? They call it a "peroration," I believe. But the way for the Christian—the *real* Christian—is to talk of God's wondrous works! Tell me the old, old story! Tell it not stately, but tell it simply, as to a little child! More Glory will come to God from that, more comfort to your soul in reflection and more benefit to the souls of those you teach than from all the flights of poetry or the flourishes of rounded periods. They that would win souls must take David's words here, and say, "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts." And so shall I give up all the "spread eagle" and, "I shall talk of Your wondrous works."

"Blessed be God," said a farmer at a Prayer Meeting, "that we were fed last Sunday out of a low crib, for we have mostly had the fodder so high that we poor things could not reach it." When I heard that farmer's thanksgiving, I thought it very wise. When a man is instructed in the faith, he will often speak about these things. Such conversation may be frequent without being irksome. David says, "I will talk." Preaching is an exercise to be undertaken now and then, but talking, I believe, is capable of being carried on by some people very nearly every minute of the day. Certainly few persons account it a hardship to talk every day! And when God makes us to understand the way of His precepts, we shall have the Gospel at our fingertips so that whoever we meet with, we shall be able to talk to them in an earnest and simple style about God's salvation.

I would, dear Friends, that our talk were always seasoned with salt—that our most common conversation were bedewed with heavenly unction, ministering Grace unto the hearers. But though very plain and very fre-

quent, the good Psalmist's talk was very much to the point and it did not lack propriety, for he says, "So shall I talk of Your wondrous works." What does he mean? Why, according to *understanding*. "Make me to understand and then I shall talk like an intelligent man." May you, Brothers and Sisters, who talk about Jesus Christ be enabled to talk about Him in a wise way. Very serious mischief has often come from harping upon some one string. Some men are far more interested in stating their own ideals than in unfolding God's counsels. If we understand the way of God's precepts, acquire the language of it, get into the groove of it—then we shall talk with understanding—and there will be a harmony and a wisdom about our utterances which will be blessed to the edification of the hearers.

**III.** We will close by noticing THE INTIMATE RELATION BETWEEN THE PRAYER OF THE STUDENT AND THE PURSUIT THAT HE SUBSEQUENTLY FOLLOWED. "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works." The connection lies partly in the enchantment of this knowledge and the passion to communicate it. A man who understands Christ and His mediatorial work—and the Spirit and His sanctifying work—cannot be silent! The fire once kindled, the flames will spread. He will be so transported with wonder, admiration and adoring gratitude at the great mercy and love of God that it will cause a fermentation within his breast.

He will be like a full vessel needing vent and he must have it. As with a fire in his bones, he will exclaim, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" I would to God there were a deeper understanding of the ways of God, for then many silent tongues would speak. The theme, itself, without any remarkable gifts on the part of the man, would suffice to secure the attention it strongly claims. As the heart swells with thankfulness, the lips burst forth spontaneously into song. Doubtless Hannah would tell you that it was easier for a barren wife to restrain her tears than for a joyful mother to stifle her hymn of praise!

Did Jesus love you when you were all forlorn? Did He find you, when a stranger, and prove Himself your Friend? Did He shelter you, when a sinner, and shield you from all harm? Did He die, that you might live? Do you know that Jesus is Your near kinsman and that He takes great delight in redeeming you for Himself? Let the truth of this but dawn on your heart and though your tongue were dumb before, it must now begin to talk—

***"Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found,  
I'll point to His redeeming blood  
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'"***

May this stir up some of you who love the Lord and yet never talk about Him! May it lead you to a holy searching of heart. Surely you have not such an understanding of Him as you ought to have, or else sometimes your silence would be thawed and your words would betray your strong emotions. If I understand the way of God's precepts, then I shall be fully furnished with matter to talk of His wondrous works!

What a dreadful thing it must be for a man to set up to be a teacher of others if he does not know the things of God, experimentally, himself. It can be done, you know, and done very cheaply. You can buy sermons

ready lithographed and guaranteed not to have been preached within so many miles—for nine pence each! You can be furnished with them for 10 shillings and sixpence a quarter. But there will be a heavy account at the last for the man who does that sort of thing! It is easy for you to teach in your class by reading the Sunday School Union notes, getting up the lesson and having it all in your head. Ah, but, my dear Friends, how will you answer for having taught children in the Sunday school when you have never been God's child and never have been taught of God yourself? "Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or to take My name into your mouth?"

Do not try to teach others what you do not understand yourself! Go down on your knees and cry, "Make Me to understand the way of Your precepts, so shall I talk of Your wondrous works." Dear Brethren, especially you who are to be ministers of the Gospel and have begun to preach—seek a deeper understanding of Divine things, or else your ministry will be lean and poverty-stricken. Unless you are taken into the confidence of God and initiated into His counsels, you cannot possibly discharge the solemn duties which lie upon the ambassador for Christ! Cry mightily to be well-filled with an understanding of the Gospel—and so shall you overflow to others and talk of God's wondrous works! Such sound education will clothe you with authority.

A man who, in his own heart, knows what he is talking about and preaches what he has tasted and handled of the good Word of Grace, will put weight into every utterance. It matters but little what language he uses—the power lies not in the garnishing, but in the Truth of God, itself, which he proclaims! It is not the polish of his speech but the fervor of his soul which gives force to his persuasions. Oh, how often my heart has been refreshed by a humble testimony from a poor man who has talked only about what the Lord has done for him! What a power there is about experimental talk! Dry doctrine and pious platitudes borrowed from books fall flat on the ears and are gall to the taste—but he who talks of the things which he has made touching the King—he has a tongue like the pen of a ready writer!

I know aged Christians who seem, every time they speak, to drop diamonds and emeralds from their lips. One could wish to treasure up every syllable they utter, not because there is anything very ingenious or original in any sentence, but because there is a sound of abundance of rain in every word. There is a Divine depth, a sacred sweetness, a leaping of life in each broken utterance which is born on their lips! You say, "That man knows more than he tells. He does not expose all his wares in the window. He has been in the secret place of communion. His face shines though his voice falters." Such teachers may you and I prove in our riper years, having light in ourselves and illuminating all who are within the range of our influence! What God has led us to understand, may we be the means of communicating by our ordinary conversation, by speech which is simple, unostentatious, yet earnest, faithful and heavenly-minded.

Brothers and Sisters, not all can preach, but all can be up and doing, teaching others what you know! Do not try to teach them what you do not know. As far as you know Christ, speak about Him to your kinsfolk and

acquaintances, your friends and neighbors. Our dear Brother and Elder, the late Mr. Verdon, on such a night as this would have been anxiously looking after any person who seemed to have heard with thankfulness—and he would not have suffered them to leave the place without accosting them in his own gentle manner and beginning to talk to them about Christ.

I need some more like he! He has gone Home. I pray the Lord that some may be baptized for the dead, to stand in his place and fill up the gap which his removal has made in our ranks. We need a host of wise and prudent Christian *talkers*. I do not know that we have, at present, any more urgent need—people who can talk on the train, can talk by the roadside, can talk in the kitchen, can talk in the workshop, can talk across a counter—can, in fact, *make* opportunities to talk of Jesus! I need you, dear Friends, to ask the Lord to qualify you for this service and lead you into it. Some of you appear to be marching backward, for you are even more reticent than you used to be! I would have you like Archimedes when he found out his secret and could not keep it for very joy, but ran down the street crying out, "I have found it! I have found it!"

Come, break your guilty silence and cry aloud, "I have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, and I cannot help talking about Him." As for others of you who are not Believers, I pray the Lord that you may give a listening ear to the message which I ask others to tell. Here it is—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The Lord bring you to accept these tidings, to believe in Jesus and to find eternal life. Amen.

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# MY PRAYER

## NO. 1072

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1872,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Quicken me in Your way.”  
Psalm 119:37.*

I THINK you will find the prayer for quickening repeated nine times in this Psalm. The form of it differs but it is always the same vehement cry, “Quicken me, O Lord.” In addition to this you will hear David twice acknowledge that God had quickened him, saying on one occasion, “Your Word has quickened me,” and in another place, “Your precepts have quickened me,” so that 11 times in one Psalm David turns his contemplations to the subject of quickening. This shows us the very great importance which he attached to it.

Remember well that this Psalm is dedicated to the praise of the Word of God. Throughout its entire length it sounds forth the honor of God's statutes and in some way or other the Word of the Lord is mentioned in every one of its 176 verses. The Psalm is a star of the first magnitude and all its beams direct us to the Divine statutes. It is clear from this that there must be an intimate connection between quickening and the Word of God. Indeed, it is so, for when we are much acquainted with the Word of God we also discover more of our own deadness and lack of spiritual life.

And, moreover, inasmuch as we find David twice blessing God that the Word had quickened him, we see another connection between the Word and quickening, namely, that while the Word convinces us of our death, it is also the means in the hand of the Spirit of God of our resurrection to newness of life. It kills, but it also makes alive! It quickens and it sustains what it begets. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.”

Would you mourn your sluggishness? See it in the light of God's Word. Would you escape from your sloth? Be animated by the holy warmth of the revealed Truth of God. For both purposes, for conviction and for edification, the precious Truths which are set forth in Scripture by the Holy Spirit will be exceedingly efficacious.

I purpose, this morning, in handling the brief prayer of our text, to note, first, that it deals with the Believer's frequent *need*. Secondly, it directs him to the sole Worker of his quickening. Thirdly, it describes the true sphere of renewed spiritual vigor. And fourthly, it denotes that there may be special reasons and seasons when we should say, “Quicken me.”

**I.** The prayer before us, “Quicken me in Your way,” DEALS WITH THE BELIEVER'S FREQUENT NEED. I am sure that this is a frequent need of Believers because we find David in this Psalm so often confessing his need—and where the best of God's servants feel their need of a thing—we may be quite sure that the rest of the family are under the same necessity. David seems to have been by no means sluggish in the Divine life.

That wonderful photograph of his internal being which we have in the book of Psalms shows us that he was a man of intensely fervent love to God. We see he was a man whose nature was vital to a degree of sensitive and energetic energy seldom, if ever, exceeded.

Panting, crying, pleading, singing, rejoicing, exulting—he was all life and of him it could not be said that he was neither cold nor hot. Notwithstanding the grievous fault into which he fell, his inner life was, as a rule, vigorous, healthy and energetic. And yet that man of God prayed often, “Quicken me.” Oh my Soul, you are not to be compared with David for a single moment! What need, then, have *you* to pray again and again, even with agony of soul, “Quicken me, O God!”

But, Beloved, there is no reason to refer to others of God’s servants for proof of this. You yourselves know, in your own souls, that your spirit is most apt to become sluggish and that you have need frequently to put up the prayer, “Quicken me.” Apart from Him who is your life, what are you but a mass of corruption? You know this experimentally, do you not? There are some among you who have received a more abundant measure of spiritual life than the preacher has yet obtained, but I fear that the great majority of us are in the very opposite condition and have need to sigh and cry over our lack of inward strength. We need to lament more deeply our manifold deficiencies. If there is a prayer in this Bible which well becomes *my* lips, it is just this, “Lord, quicken me in Your way.”

I fear that those who are least ready to confess this are the very persons who ought to admit it first, and I am certain that a large number of God’s people feel that they are dry and sapless and have need to be revived by life from above. Let us think over this matter a minute. Some years ago we needed quickening most emphatically, but then we had no power to pray, “Quicken me,” for we were dead in trespasses and sins. No *dead* man ever prayed to be quickened! Such a prayer would be an index of *life*. A really spiritual prayer for quickening can only come from those in whom the quickening Spirit has already taken up His abode!

Now, Beloved, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are no longer dead as we once were—the Spirit of God has breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and we have become living souls in the family of God. Let us be thankful for this, but let us, as we look around upon the spiritually dead who swarm our streets, take care to pray for them, “Lord, quicken the dead in sin.” Let our relatives be the special objects of our prayers for quickening. If we have a brother who is rotting in the grave of his iniquities, let us pray the Master to say, “Lazarus, come forth.” If we have a son who is dead in sin, let us ask the Lord to raise him up even from the bier of his transgressions. Or if it is a little daughter at home, fair and lovely yet unquicken, let our prayer be to the great Master that He would come and raise her up. He is able to raise any of the spiritually dead for He has raised *us*. Let our own conversion encourage us in praying for the spiritual resurrection of others.

But, Brothers and Sisters, although we ourselves are quickened in that sense we have still need to continue the prayer. Do you remember the days of your first awakening, when you had only sufficient life to mourn and lament that you had so little? The first sense of life in you was pain-

ful—you were under a sense of sin and your guilt lay heavy upon you—you had only life enough to dread the death that never dies. Your life did little else for you but enable you to tremble, to mourn, to dread and to reproach yourself. It was the dark side of life—the pain which is the true evidence of vitality but is terrible to endure. Then you needed fuller light and healthier life and no prayer could have better suited you than this which is now before us, “Quicken me.” Oh, the agonizing cries of awakened sinners! Theirs are no mimicries, but stern realities! Believe me, they pray.

Since that season, for blessed be God that state is over now, we have joy and peace in believing—not all the joy and peace we could wish, but still a good share of it. But we still have great cause to cry aloud and that right often, “Quicken me.” For instance, have you never felt the need of this prayer when you have been cast down by affliction? The spirit, broken and bruised, can only rally through an infusion of fresh life. When you could not get a grip at the promises because the hand of your faith was numbed, you needed an increased vitality. In temporal trial more Grace was your best support—and when the trouble was not only bodily, but spiritual—then increased inner life was the doubly efficacious remedy.

Do you remember when you were broken in pieces all asunder through some surprising sin and God, in chastisement, seemed to hunt you with the terrors of His Law? Then your expiring faith and swooning hope needed a new vitality! There was no restored joy for you till you learned, again, the meaning of the Redeemer’s words, “I am the Life.” Lying at the foot of His Cross you saw the vital blood flowing from His dear wounds and you cried “Quicken me!” Forth from the heart of Jesus came a stream of warm life which entered your soul, renewed your faith, inspired you with sacred confidence and diffused within your spirit a blessed calm in which you softly breathed the life of God and rose as one quickened from among the dead!

How many times, also, have you been the victim of worldliness, that horrible swoon of the heart towards Christ? Even over those who try to live nearest to God this evil influence exerts itself like some stifling vapor, engendering a dreadful sleepiness, even where it cannot accomplish death. Men after God’s own heart have cried, “My soul cleaves to the dust: quicken me, O God!” You have loved some earthly thing—some child, perhaps, has clambered into your heart’s throne while it has been fondled on your knee. Lawful loves have become engrossing and have eaten the Lord’s portion. The Son of David has been displaced by an usurper, or at least another throne has been set up in His palace. Have you not been horrified at your own idolatry and resolved to have done with it, cost what it may?

You have sought for the axe which should remove the right hand of sin, the hammer which should dash down the usurper’s image—but your heart has failed you, the fascination of the sin has spell-bound you! Around you the coils of the serpent have been twined and you could not tear them off, for a poison chilled your blood and stupefied your brain and heart. Ah, then you saw the beauty of the prayer, “Quicken me,” and well was it for you that, feebly as you uttered it, it was answered from the

Throne of Mercy! What could have stood you in good stead if you had been left a victim to the deadly drugs and mortal opiates of sin?

You, my Brothers, who are much engaged in business from morning to night—when things go with you very roughly, or on the other hand when they go with you very smoothly—have the deepest cause to pray, “Lord quicken me.” Earth sticks to our hearts, especially those forms of it known as gold and silver—and lumps of adhesive earth make a pilgrim’s progress tardy. You cannot wrestle in prayer while you are loaded down with worldly cares! No runner can win a race when he stoops under great weights. It is impossible to commune with God and yet to fix one’s heart on money-making. While business is what it is and the wheels of trade revolve at such a terrific rate, men had need be very vigorous in Divine Grace or their souls will be ground to dust amid their own machinery.

Oh you very busy men, you ought day by day to plead with the Lord—“Quicken me my God, lest I be overcome by the deadly influences of the world.” Though I mingle little with the business or the politics of the hour, I feel a drowsy influence creep over me from the smoke of these tents of Kedar in which I dwell, like that which Bunyan mentions in his description of the Enchanted Ground where the very air made men drowsy. This influence tends to preaching mechanically, as an automaton might do if properly wound up, and it leads to praying by routine after the manner of a Tibetan windmill or a Ritualistic priest.

Hideous is this temptation to perform one’s duties officially—because it is the time to do this and the proper hour to do that! Oh, my God, deliver us from crawling along in the ruts and slipping sleepily along the grooves! We need life, vivacity, vigor, diligence, fervor, passion, vehemence in the service of our God or else our Christianity is worth no more than a nutshell out of which the worm has eaten the kernel and left nothing but rottenness! Our God is a consuming fire and only by fire can we worship Him! Sacrifices without heart are an abomination to Him. The name to live is loathsome unless the spirit of life is present. The garments of a man may frighten birds, but only the heart and soul of manhood can avail with Heaven! Without the living soul of sincerity and earnestness, what is religion but a tomb, whitewashed on the outside but rotten within? We must have life! First, last and midst, we must have life! Therefore to all professors I commend this prayer, “Quicken me.”

My Brothers and Sisters, do not the most warm-hearted among us feel the need of more quickening? Let us consider a few matters which may awaken our desires more fully. First, let us enquire if we are as earnest in the things of God as in the common things of daily life? Is our soul as vigorous in its acts for God as in its emotions towards man? We are told by the Spirit that the time is short and it remains that those who have wives be as though they had not; they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not and they that weep as though they wept not because all these things are passing away and therefore our emotions about them should be comparatively slight.

But *spiritual* things, seeing they endure forever, ought to have a lodgment in the center of our being and concerning them we should think deeply and feel strongly. Sorrow for sin should be the keenest sorrow. Joy

in the Lord should be the loftiest of joy. Is it so? How do you find it with yourselves? Suppose it is the love of a newly-married wife—is there not an intensity about it which needs no inflaming? Do you always or often find your soul so ardent towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Yet ought He not to be before all others? Or suppose it is your weeping for your lost husband or your dear departed child—you do not need excitement to grief—no, your hearts bleed all too freely and you need arguments to relieve your sorrows!

Is it thus when you lament the dishonor done to the name of Jesus? Are the water floods quite as plentiful? Is repentance as deep and living an emotion with you as sorrow under bereavement? I fear that in these earthly matters our heart is wax and in spiritual things it is as the nether millstone. Yet is it sad, indeed, that our affections entwine themselves about a mere *creature* but put forth no tendrils towards the Lord of Love who laid down His life for us! If you are suddenly made possessors of wealth, the joy you have over your substance is very manifest. None can question it. Or if your wealth is taken away by some loss in trade or otherwise, your distress is by no means superficial. I pray you tell me, are you equally concerned about the *true* riches?

If you have found the priceless pearl, are you enchanted with it? If you have lost fellowship with Jesus, does the loss depress your spirit? Are you as eager to be rich in Grace as to be great in wealth? Do you prize Christ as you do your profits? Are you as eager in a Prayer Meeting as you are in the market? I fear, Brothers and Sisters, that a comparison between our zeal for temporal and spiritual things would lead to very humbling conclusions and give us reason to cry, “Lord, deaden me to this world, but quicken me towards the world to come.”

The same truth will be apparent if we will think of the earnestness of men of the world in their callings and pursuits. How men will wear themselves out in seeking the secular objects on which their hearts are set! To what sacrifices will they expose themselves! The votaries of science altogether shame the followers of religion. They have penetrated into the densest swamps defying fever and death. They have lost themselves among the wildest savages, or they have died amidst eternal snows. Have they not lost their lives while using deadly drugs out of which they hoped to discover curative agents? Or worn away their eyesight by weary night watching of the orbs of Heaven? Science daily increases her martyrologies but where do we find ours? Where is the chivalry of Christians? Alas, where survives the heroism of the Cross?

In former times the followers of Christ counted not their lives dear unto them for His sake. But now we hug ourselves in ease and venture little for the Lord. The world has warm followers and devoted friends, but Jesus is attended by a lukewarm band of men who are more likely to sleep at Gethsemane’s gates than to watch with Him for a single hour. Oh Lord of Love, will You not quicken us? Behold our need! Forgive our sin and from this good hour teach us how to live! We shall surely also be rebuked if we think of the zeal of some of the Lord’s servants. Their lives should make us feel how little life we have. Put yourself, beloved Brother, side by side with Paul for a few minutes. Think of his unquenchable zeal. Remember his voluntary exposure to a thousand risks—his suffering and his labors

for the propagation of his Master's Gospel. Where are we, and what are we? Alas, we blush and sink to nothing in the presence of such a man!

Others of like energy have been and are in the Church. Why are we so unlike them? Shame, shame upon us! Perhaps it may touch us with some degree of feeling if we recall what our own zeal *was* at one time. It never was much to boast of—when we were most earnest we could well have borne to be heated seven times hotter and yet not become too much inflamed—but are we now as zealous as once we were? May I ask you to look back upon the early days of your religion? Oh you then ran where now you creep! You blazed and glowed where now but a few sparks are left! The love of your espousals, when you went after your Master into the wilderness, when nothing was too heavy or too hard for His dear sake—where is it now? Where is it now?

As you grew in years you should have grown in zeal, for you know more of Him and you have received more from Him. But is it so? Why, we thought we would push the Church before us or drag the world behind us and we meant to do I know not what—but have we done it? Then we cried, “Who are you, great mountain?” “Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” But the great mountain remains where it was because our faith has declined and our zeal has flagged. Oh, for the Spirit to re-baptize us into the fullness of His life and strength!

Once more, think, dear Friends, of our condition of spiritual life and of what it ought to be when we remember our obligations to our Savior. Stand in spirit at the foot of the Cross and see the five wounds and the precious blood that bought us. Can you remain unmoved? Do we gaze into yon dear face, that mirror of love and grief, and feel no love to Him? Can we think of His returning into His Glory, and bearing our names upon His breastplate day and night before the Eternal Throne and feel no enthusiasm for Him? Can we meditate upon Him as from before all worlds loving us, and to all worlds loving us still, and yet remain indifferent?

Why, Sirs, if we lived for Jesus solely and evermore and died a thousand deaths for Him, these were *cheap* things to lay at the foot of His dear Cross! He deserves infinitely more from us! Think, I pray you, of all the Truths of our religion and ask yourselves what kind of life they require of us. We believe that men are lost and shall we be idle when in our hands is the Gospel which alone can save them? We know that men are passing into a condition in which they shall forever abide, everlastingly blessed or eternally accursed of God—and only the Truth of God that we have to tell them can secure them from unending misery—and can we withhold the saving Word?

I do not wonder that those who believe the contrary to this should take things coolly, but I do marvel at ourselves that we are so insane at heart that we are not moved to passionate earnestness for ourselves and our fellow men! Fanaticism itself were, under some aspects of it, nothing but cold-blooded reason in the face of such Truths as these! We ought to live impassioned lives, full of flaming energy and we would if this prayer were heard, “Quicken me in Your way.” Thus I have spoken upon the first head. Now may we be helped to dwell upon the second and may the Spirit bless us thereby.

**II.** Our text DIRECTS US TO THE SOLE WORKER OF QUICKENING. “Quicken me.” David seeks quickening from the Lord alone. He goes at once to Him in whom were all his fresh springs. Life is the peculiar sphere of God—He is the Lord and Giver of life. No man ever received spiritual life, or the renewal of it, from any other source but the living God. Beloved, this is worth remembering, for we are very apt, when we feel ourselves declining, to look anywhere but to the Lord. We too often look within. “Why seek you the living among the dead?” You might find a diamond upon a dunghill, but you will never find spiritual refreshing in human nature. Look, then, to some better source than to the howling wilderness of self.

We are very apt, also, to think that in the use of the means of Grace we shall necessarily obtain reviving and refreshing. “If I can hear Mr. So-and-So preach, who has often laid his hands among my heart-strings and brought out music there, then I should be again awakened. Oh, could I hear him once again I should see better days.” You do not know. That beloved voice may have lost all power over you. If you look to the servant and not to the Master, the Master will leave the servant and the servant will be of no use to you. Dig the pools by all manner of means—passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, but remember, the life-refreshing water does not rise from the bottom of the well, it drops from above—“the rain also fill the pools.”

God out of Heaven, alone, can make instrumentality to be of vital service to us. Not even the sweet succors of the Communion Table can bring back vigorous life to the Christian apart from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Rest you not in the outward, for it cannot touch the inward! Above all, never go to the law for reviving. Do not begin chiding yourself by saying, “This I ought to have done and I shall lose the love of God if I do not,” and so on. That is all *legal*. The child of God, when he hears the roar of Sinai’s thunder, sinks into a deeper death—it cannot rouse him into life. Slaves may be moved by terror, but not the true born child of God—a nobler motive sways his heart. Go not, then, to rewards and punishments for your life—you will never find it there. The ministry of the Law is the ministry of death, not of life. We must take ourselves to the Spirit of God who is the gift of the Gospel, not of the Law. Remember, Beloved, that Jesus Christ is come that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly!

Now, if any poor soul first of all obtained life from looking alone to Jesus it is clear that if she wants more life she must get it in the same way. They say that for a sick man his native air is the best. My native air was Calvary—was it not yours, dear Brothers and Sisters? Let us together seek the blood-stained spot. Go and breathe the atmosphere of atoning love again! Get back to the foot of the Cross once more and you will find effectual quickening. The Holy Spirit is the great Agent by whom the life of Jesus is infused into our nature. The Holy Spirit at this moment can come upon the coldest heart in this place and make it flame and blaze with more than angelic ardor! You are like a bush at this moment, dry and dark, but God has but to put one spark of His life in you and you will be like the bush in Horeb which flamed like the sun.

Dear Sister, have you fallen very low? Go to God, for He can lift you up when no one else can. My ministry cannot quicken you, but the Lord can. He has only to send forth the Divine Life and the dullest and most slothful, the most barren, the most dead among us would become warm with Apostolic fervor and the Divine Life would make us shine as the glittering seraphim which surround the burning Throne! Oh God, how this moves us to pray to You! You can do it. Do it now! “Quicken me in Your way!”

Did you notice that in the text nothing is said about the means by which the Lord is to quicken us? David leaves that to God’s discretion. Let Him use His own methods. There is a prayer—you will find it in the 149<sup>th</sup> verse, and also in the 156<sup>th</sup>—in which David prays, “Quicken me in Your judgment,” as if he left it to infinite prudence to select its own methods. He did not pretend to say what was the best way, but left himself in God’s hands, only praying, “Lord, quicken me.” Let us consider the various methods by which the Lord can quicken His people. Usually He does it by His Word. “Your Word has quickened me.”

There are promises in God’s Word of such effectual restorative power, that if they are but fed upon and their nutriment absorbed into our nature, they will make a dwarf into a giant in the twinkling of an eye! And he who lies faint upon the ground and cannot move hand or foot shall mount upon the wings of eagles, and run and not be weary, if but one Word out of the mouth of God is applied to him by the Spirit. Sometimes, however, God uses other instruments, such as affliction. It is wonderful how a little touch of the spur will quicken our sluggish natures! God has ways and means of touching our flesh and bone and rendering sleep an impossibility in more senses than one. Personal affliction is like a tonic medicine, by which our relaxed energies are strung up again—but to this end it must be sanctified, or it will fail. Blessed be God for a flick of His whip! We might else have stumbled in our sleep and fallen. It does good to such sorry jades as we are. I pray that some of you may get a touch of it, for you are dull enough. Just a touch now and then does all of us good and rest assured we shall have it, too, if we do not keep awake without it, for God loves us too well to withhold His paternal rod.

At the same time, He can quicken us by great mercies. A man may be stirred up to diligence by a sense of gratitude to God for great mercies. I grant you it does not always have that effect, but it ought to. Oh, if our hearts were right, it would be sweet to say, “Here is another mercy, another favor from God, this binds me with another cord to His service. I will love Him more and devote myself more intensely to His work.” Christian example, too, sometimes stirs us up. I believe the reading of holy biographies has been exceedingly blessed of God. The life of such a man as M’Cheyne, or the diary of Brainerd, or the story of Whitfield’s ministry—such things make us think, “What are we? What are we living for?” Put microscopes upon our eyes and yet we can hardly see ourselves, we are so little—we are as grasshoppers in their sight—yes, we are as grasshoppers in our *own* sight. This stimulates us.

On the other hand, if you fall in with a number of idle dolts of professors, as sometimes you do, your indignation at them will help to excite you to zeal, or it ought to do so. We have known some who have said, “I

am superior to these, at any rate,” and therefore congratulating themselves they have gradually sunk down to the same ignominious level. But in a true heart the sluggishness of others is a spur to greater exertion, for such a man says, “Is my Master served in such a beggarly manner as this? Then will I serve Him with all my heart, to make up for the lack of service in others.”

It is said that Augustus Caesar was once asked to a feast by one of his subjects, but the attendance was so dilatory, and the feast so meager, that he rose in disgust and said he supposed he was invited to be honored, but he had discovered that it was intended to insult him. Truly in many a congregation of Christians—yes, even of our own denomination—the worship of God is done in such a mean, stingy, dead-and-alive way that it seems as if Christ were asked to the assembly to be insulted rather than to be honored! Verily such treatment of our Lord is enough to make us weep tears of blood and then drive us onward to a service unparalleled in these frigid days!

Doubtless, too, a warm-hearted ministry has much to do with quickening us and if we have a choice of ministries in any place, we should select not that which tickles the *ear* most, but that which most enlivens the *heart*. If there are two ministries to be had, one of which is highly rhetorical and exceedingly pleasing to the intellect, but the other, though lacking in these points, nevertheless appeals to our conscience, arouses our heart, feeds us with spiritual meat and incites to higher degrees of sanctity—choose that one—for it is the ministry which God approves.

Under God’s blessing, every one of our Divine Graces may become a means of enlivening us. For instance, our faith, as it believes the great things of God, will be sure to arouse us. Our hope, as she looks forward to the bright reward, will cause us to labor where otherwise we should have fainted. And love, which is the fore-horse of the team, will draw us to serve Christ with might and main. True love to Jesus, if it comes to a great vehemence, will quicken the entire spiritual Nature and then will the prayer be answered, “Quicken me.” Thus, Brothers and Sisters, you see God has both gentle and rough means of quickening us, but for my part if He will but quicken me, I will make no bargain with Him—let Him do it as He wills. Do what You will with me, my Lord, only keep me from being lukewarm, coldhearted, dead and alive. Do make me to be all on fire for You!

Remember, Beloved, that this is a promised blessing. David says, “Quicken me according to Your Word.” You will find that thought repeated in the Psalm. It is a blessing to be pleaded for, for in a former verse David says, “Quicken me in Your righteousness,” as if he felt that God would not be righteous, would not be keeping His promise if He did not quicken him. This is a blessing which is always a token of God’s loving kindness wherever it comes. Look at the 88<sup>th</sup> verse and the 159<sup>th</sup>, and you will find them both saying, “Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

**III.** Our text DESCRIBES THE SPHERE OF RENEWED VIGOR. “Quicken me in Your way.” I have no business to ask God to quicken me in my own way—no right to ask Him to quicken me merely that I may enjoy myself religiously, or be thought to be a very eminent Christian—or be

able to sit down and contemplate my own beauties and perfections with self-complacency.

Somebody once said to a Christian man, "Pray, what faith have you?" Said he, "I have none to boast of." If you see a fellow who has not a six-pence to bless himself with, if he chances to possess an imitation diamond ring, how careful he is to show it. See how he always puts out his finger to let you see it! But he who is worth his millions never thinks of displaying his gewgaws in that fashion. He that has merely a name to be religious is sure to advertise it, but he who is rich towards God is the very man who thinks himself poor, and cries out, "Lord quicken me!"

Now, what is the path in which we require to be quickened? First, it is in the way of duty in common life. Am I a father—quicken me to bring up my children aright. Am I a housewife—Lord quicken me that my duties at home may be discharged as in Your fear. Am I a servant or master—Lord, quicken me. I have my temptations in my daily calling—quicken me to stand against them. And I have also my daily opportunities for serving You—quicken me to make use of them.

It means next, "Quicken me in sacred activity." Am I a preacher? Lord help me to preach with all my might and with all Your might, too. Am I a teacher in a school? Lord grant that I may not go to sleep over my children, but may win their souls, being blest by You with the earnestness which impresses youthful minds. Have I any other work to do? Am I a deacon or elder of the Church? Let me be so ardent in piety that my fellow members may be excited by my zeal. You have all some work to do for Christ—I hope you have. If you have not, go home and begin. But if you are doing your work, I know your prayer must be, "Quicken me in Your way."

Did not David mean, again, quicken me in the way of patient suffering? I must not forget that there are some whose service for Christ is more honorable even than the service of the worker, but who are very apt to think that Christ considers them useless. Oh dear Brothers and Sisters, are you called to suffer bodily pain? Your work is to bring forth the inexpressibly sweet fruit of patience! Go and pray, "Quicken me in Your way." You know the story about poor Betty, who said the Lord had called her to do this and that while she was well, but now, "The Lord has said, 'Betty, go and lie on that bed and cough,' " and she said, "I will do it for His sake." May you rejoice in the Lord's will even if it causes you to pine, to cough and to die! Not even the song of the angels is more sweet to God's ear than the resignation and patience which are to be found in the hearts of the sons and daughters of affliction. But you will need great Grace for this, my Sister. You will need a strong inner life for this, my Brother—therefore pray, "Quicken me in Your way."

And the same is true of the way of hallowed worship. We need to be quickened there, quickened in private prayer, quickened in public prayer, quickened in our family devotion, quickened in our reading the Scriptures, quickened in our contemplations of Divine love, quickened in all forms of worship. We require to be quickened in our growth in Grace, in humility, in patience, in hope, in faith, in love, in every good gift. Espe-

cially we need to be quickened in communion with our God. Then let us pray the prayer, "Quicken me in Your way."

**IV.** Lastly, the connection of our text DENOTES THAT THERE MAY BE SPECIAL REASONS AND SPECIAL SEASONS FOR THIS PRAYER. Just observe it. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and, "Quicken me in Your way." You see the connection of the prayer? David is exposed to a temptation—the temptation reaches him through his eyes—he prays God to turn his eyes away from it and then as a cure for the evil he says, "Quicken me." Brethren, are you never fascinated by a sin? Whenever you have been conscious of that diabolical fascination it has been time to cry, "Quicken me in Your way." I see I am weaker than I thought I was, Lord. I was carried away with anger when I thought I had gained a quiet temper at last. Lord, I found my heart going after an evil which I thought I had no relish for. Give me more Grace, Good Master. "Quicken me in Your way."

A fit time for this prayer is a season of great affliction. The 107<sup>th</sup> verse teaches us that. "I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word." Times of great temptation of spirit and trial of soul should be seasons for praying that God would give us extraordinary Grace. When we have been confessing past sloth we should pray for Grace to resist it in the future. If God at this time should convince any of us that we have not done 1/10<sup>th</sup> of what we ought to have done and that we have been living at a distance from the love of Christ, then the prayer should arise, "Quicken me in Your way."

Are we just now called to some extraordinary service? Does the Lord lay upon us a heavy burden for His name? Do not let us shirk it, or say, "I cannot do it." No, "Lord, quicken me!" Give me more Grace and then I shall be equal to any emergency, for as my days my strength shall be. This prayer is very suitable to the members of this Church because at this time we have seen so many of the good and excellent among us taken away. It scarcely seems as if the Lord would leave us any. During the last few months He has continued to sweep away one and another from us, and this week another valuable Brother has been borne to the tomb. Surely everyone remaining should say, "Lord, quicken me!" Grant that I may live so that if I am also soon to be removed I shall have finished my course and have fought the fight right through and gained the crown which Grace has promised.

Perhaps within the course of another week this black upon my pulpit may wear a third significance, as it has a double one already. From which of us shall it derive its third meaning. Do I stand here to preach in feebleness my last sermon to you? Do my beloved Church officers sit around me for the last time? And have I here members of this fellowship who are now, upon this last occasion, gathered for united worship? Brethren, it may be so! Then let us pray for quickening, that we may live while we live and waste no precious moment of our scant earthly existence! The needs of our Church are very great. If I stood in a harvest field and saw that the crop needed to be ingathered, and that a laborer was working in it till he fainted again and again—and if I saw him in great feebleness grasping the sickle, impelled by a brave spirit which kept him to his work—I think I should pray, "Lord, help me to reap, too. Help me to go into that mass of

standing corn and reap, too, for I see Your servant overworked with service.”

My fellow Servants, bought with the same blood, the harvest truly is plenty but the laborers are few! I entreat you, by the blood and wounds of Him who bought you, let not a single one turn away but rise up and serve God with heart and soul and strength! Ah, we shall soon have to give account for all these things. Within a few short weeks or months we shall stand before His Judgment Seat whose eyes of fire shall read us through and through! We shall then be called to account for these ungodly ones who sit with us this day! Can we answer for their souls? We are a great Church in a great city and multitudes are dying without knowing Christ—if we do not give them all the help and instruction we can—how shall we answer for it?

If standing in this pulpit to preach to crowds I do not stir my soul and preach earnestly, how shall I answer for it? When blood shall be upon these skirts in the day of judgment—the crimson of souls damned through my indolence—how shall I answer for it? Great God, forbid that it should ever be! But it may be so with *you* as well as with *me*—each one according to his responsibility and position. I again entreat you by every name that can tell upon your hearts and arouse your consciences—pray to God to quicken you to an ardor of love and an intense diligence of service for His dear and precious name!

Ah, some of you I cannot ask to offer this prayer. I have told you why. Dead Souls, how can you pray for *life*? But I will ask God’s people to pray for you and I will pray for you—that the Gospel which I am commanded to preach even to the dead in sin may come with power to your souls. Here it is: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved! He that believes not shall be damned.” The Lord lead you to obey the Word! Amen.

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# DEADNESS AND QUICKNING

## NO. 2521

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 13, 1897.

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1885.

*“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”*  
*Psalm 119:37.*

David, when he wrote these words, was in downright earnest. There were times with him when he grew lukewarm and cold and then we remember that he soon fell into grievous sin. But at the time when he was penning this verse, his spirit was lively, active and energetic—then it was that he prayed thus carefully about himself—“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” If you read the preceding verse, you will notice that he was thinking of the reality and depth and power of true religion, for he prayed, “Incline my heart unto Your testimonies and not to covetousness,” by which he evidently wished that his whole soul might be set upon things Divine, that, as misers seek after gold and store it up, and feast their eyes upon it, so he might be eager after the things of God and might store them up, making them to be his heavenly delicacies, his peculiar pleasure.

Dear Friends, you know as well as I do that there are many sorts of Christians. I am sorry to say that there are some nominal Christians who are no credit to Christianity—they bear the name of Christians and though I will not say that they are dead—yet certainly they are very sickly and seem ready to die! They stand among the people of God and their names are put down in the Church Book, but if they are spiritually alive, theirs is a very feeble form of life. Their heart is not in God's ways. They are active and energetic when they get into the shop, but they are half asleep when they are in the sanctuary. They leave “footprints on the sands of time” when they are devoting their attention to politics, but when they come to the things of God, they tread so lightly that we cannot tell that they have passed that way! It seems to me to be a horrible thing that many a man should give 15 ounces out of the 16 to the world and yet that he should label himself a Christian because of that one odd ounce which he pretends to give to God! The major part of his being—his very self—runs to turn the mill-wheel of daily care and toil, but there is just a dribble that is supposed to be saved up for Christ.

Let it not be so with you, or with me, dear Friends, but let us pray that our hearts may be inclined to the things of God—that the whole force of our nature may run in a heavenly, spiritual, gracious, holy direction—and that thus we may be epistles written by God's own right hand, “known and read of all men.” It is only a man who is in this state of spiri-

tual health and activity who will pray such a prayer as that of our text. It is only he who gets to be so careful about his eyes that he will not look upon sin—and so careful about his daily ways—that he is lively and quick in the things of God.

Hoping and believing that I am addressing many such earnest active Christians, I suggest that we, dear Brothers and Sisters, consider this double prayer. First, it seems to me that *David, here, prays for deadness in one direction*. “Lord, make me dead to vanity.” And, secondly, *he prays for life in another direction*. “Quicken me in Your way Lord, make me alive to those things that are true and real, lasting and eternal!”

**I. First, DAVID, HERE, PRAYS FOR DEADNESS IN ONE DIRECTION—** deadness to the world, that he may be so dead to it that he will not even look at it. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” He wants to be so clean delivered from the love of worldly things that he may not count them worth even a glance. So far from pursuing them with his feet, or laboring for them with his hands, or going after them with his heart, he thinks them not worth a thought and prays God of His Grace to turn away his eyes from even looking upon them.

What do you think the Psalmist means, here, by, *vanity*? I think he probably means four things, or one thing which may be seen under four aspects. Many a Christian prays, “Lord, turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” that is, *frivolity*. To some men, life is all trifling—they are the butterflies of God’s garden, alighting on flowers, but never sucking the honey out of them. They just dance their little hour in the sunbeam of existence, as the gnats do on a summer’s evening. They come, they dance, they die—and that is the end of them so far as this life is concerned. Even in our way there will frequently come frivolous things. I do not say that Christians are to disregard all trifles, or that there are not things, very trifling in themselves, which may be sanctified and used for purposes of restoration and recreation, and so be made beneficial to us.

But I do say *this*—if a man, calling himself a Christian, should *live* for mere frivolity—if to him life should be all play and no work, a daydream and not a battle. If he should make his life to be, as the poet puts it—

**“Like ocean into tempest tossed,  
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly,”**

it is a sad pity, it is a grievous evil that it should be so! I believe that there are many professing Christians who are spending their lives in drawing up buckets full of nothing because they let them down into dry wells. They have nothing particular to do and they do it very diligently—and nothing else. They spend their years, from the beginning of January to the end of December, like a tale that is told.

Now, instead of acting thus, the man who leads the true life, the heroic life, the real life, makes everything sublime, and his prayer is that his eyes may be turned away from beholding frivolities. We have put away childish things, for Christ has made us men. We cannot be decoyed, again, into kindergarten, to learn those “beggarly elements of the world” that are only fit for tiny children. We are on the confines of the eternal state. We are standing, even now, hard by the frontier of the

Glory Land. Christ has bought us with His blood and the trumpets of His coming are already sounding in our ears! God forbid that we should sleep, as others do, and toy and play as so many around us do! Our prayer is, "Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity." We have something better to do than to make this world into a mere theater and to let it be true of us that this life is only a play, with men and women as the actors in it. No—

***"Life is real, life is earnest,"***

now that we have been quickened by the Spirit of God and have entered into the life of God!

I think there is also another meaning in this word, vanity, namely, *carnality*. You know, Beloved, that the things of this life belong to the flesh—they are seen, tasted, handled and felt. But then, the things that are seen are temporal—the things that can be touched and of which the senses are cognizant—are all passing away. These things that we see, taste, grasp and hold are but for time. They are all going. Men think that *spiritual* things are dreams and that temporal things are realities—but it is the other way around—the things that are not seen are eternal! These invisible things shall last forever! When eyes are blind in the grave and ears are deaf beneath the sod, then shall the invisible become the more real to us—when eyes and ears and mere earthly senses have passed away from us.

Sometimes the Christian man gets into this state when he asks, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink and with what shall I be clothed?" I cannot and I do not want to be asking and answering those questions forever. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." I am now of a higher race than the mere worldling! There is another life now flowing in my veins. I cannot live for these temporal things. I may use them, but I must not abuse them. I may have them under my feet, but I must not permit them to crush me and to be above my head. I can float over them, as a ship sails over the sea, but I cannot let them into myself, for that were to sink the ship, as when the vessel ships a great sea and begins to go down with the weight. I must not let my heart be troubled, even though my head may sometimes seem to be. No, a Christian man turns right away from what, to other men, seems the most important business of life, and he says, "Lord, it is all vanity to me." To children of God, these things seem so frail, so fleeting as to be scarcely worth a thought! And we get away into our chamber and shut the door—and we speak in secret to our Father who sees in secret. And then all things apart from Him grow to be mere vanity, smoke, folly and sin. We cannot be always pestered with these daily cares. No, Lord, turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken us in Your way!

I think, however, that the Psalmist means even more than that and, perhaps, still more forcibly, this third thing. "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," that is, *falsehood*, for that is what he means by vanity, that which seems to be something, but really is nothing. That bubble from the child's soap and pipe looks as if it were a solid creation of rainbows, but it is gone in almost less time than you can think! And there

are many things in the world just like that, especially at this present time. We have new doctrines being preached and new “oligies” being taught which are nothing but lies! There is not as much real substance in them as there is in a soap bubble. When certain false doctrines are being preached, there are some people who are very anxious to know at once what they are. They are curious to see and to know everything! They would be much wiser if they would pray with David, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

If you can read a tainted book that denies the Inspiration of the Scriptures and attacks the Truth of God and, if you derive any profit from it, you must be a very different being from myself! I have to read such books. I *must* read them, sometimes, to know what is said by *the enemies of the Gospel*, that I may defend the faith and help the weaklings of the flock—but it is a sorry business. When those who are qualified to do so are reading these heretical works, if they are really doing it in the fear of God for the good of their fellow men, they remind me of Sir James Simpson and the two other doctors when they discovered the medical and surgical value of chloroform. They sat at the table, and scarcely knew what was going to happen, but they each took a dose, risking their lives by so doing! And when they came back to consciousness, they had certainly made a great discovery.

But, dear Friends, I do not feel that I am required to take all the drugs and poisons in the world, one after another, just for the sake of testing and trying them that I may come and tell you all about their effects! If I did, probably one of these times I would not come back to you and that would be the end to that business. It is all very well for Sir James Simpson and other eminent physicians and surgeons to make such experiments, for it is part of the duty of their profession, but it is not for the bulk of us to do so. When you go home tonight, I should recommend you to eat for supper those kinds of food which you have been accustomed to eat and which your fathers ate before you, to the building up of the physical frame! And if anybody comes and says to you, “Here is some very wonderful food! There is no telling what effect it will have upon you, it may make you turn into horses.” I do not know why you should not turn into horses if the doctrine of evolution is true—“here is food that is to evolve you into something very marvelous.” But you say to the man, “Keep it yourself, my dear Sir. I would not deprive you of it, for I am not at all ambitious of trying such things.”

I do believe that it is good for a child of God, when he has found honey, to eat it. And if anyone calls out, “Here is something still sweeter,” let him answer, “You may keep it for yourself. I am perfectly satisfied with what I have—honey is sweet enough for me.” If I had gathered manna in the morning in the wilderness and somebody had cried out to me, “Here, I have found a wonderful fungus, a brilliant mushroom, and I am going to make my breakfast of it,” I would have replied, “Well, my Friend, inasmuch as this manna came down from Heaven, it came from the best place I know of. And I feel perfectly satisfied to eat angels’ food. It exactly suits me and it has suited me so long that I will not deprive you

of all the mushrooms you can find. So far as I am concerned, you may have your fungi and fatten yourself up on them, or kill yourself with them if you are so insane as to eat them, but they are not fit food for me.”

In just that fashion, dear Friends, my mind is made up about the things of God! And concerning all the poisonous novelties that are introduced so freely nowadays, I pray to the Lord, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”

I am sure also that David had a fourth meaning to the word, vanity, and that it included, not only falsehood, but wickedness in every form. From that, we are to turn even our eyes away. Do you hear that anything is evil? Touch it not, taste it not, handle it not! Look not upon it, keep far away from it. Is there a plague from Hell let loose among the sons of men? My Son, go not near the infected region! If it is the house of the strange woman, or any other haunt of vice, however enchanting the amusement, however alluring the attractions—turn not in that direction—do not even *look* that way! With Peter, I would cry, “Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” Young man, I pray you, quit the place of danger even though you must leave your garment behind you, as Joseph did—stay not even to see what it is that would fascinate you! One look from the serpent’s eyes may fix you to the spot where you shall be destroyed! Therefore I say to you, as the angels said to Lot, “Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.”

What have you and I to do—with such gunpowder hearts as ours—where the sparks of temptation are flying? Let us, if we can, keep wholly clear of the dangers of the present day! If there is but the *smell* of sin about anything, say at once, “This is not for me. I am a child of God and what another man might do, I could not do, I must not do, I will not do, I scorn to do! My Lord clothed me in the snow-white vestments of a priest unto the Most High God, on that day when He taught me to wash my robes in the blood of the Lamb—and the slightest speck will stain my new garment, which might not show upon another man’s apparel. Therefore, I must not, I *dare not* go near the mire, but I must stay clear of it and pick my way with care along the King’s Highway.”

Dear Friends, look not towards any sin, for looking breeds longing, and longing begets lusting, and lusting brings sinning! Keep your eyes right and you may keep your heart right. If that first woman had not looked upon the forbidden tree and seen “that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” she would not have plucked and eaten of the fruit—and we would not have been the children of sorrow. O Lord, turn away my eyes, for if You will keep my eyes right, then shall I be altogether right. “The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eyes are single, your whole body shall be full of light,” so that, if the eyes are kept right, all is well. O Lord, keep my eyes right! Turn them away from beholding vanity in all these forms—frivolity, carnality, falsehood, wickedness!

When the Psalmist prayed this prayer, he *felt that his eyes were inclined to go this way*, otherwise he would not have said, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” It is much as when a child is having his portrait taken and he is told by the photographer to look in one particular direction, but there is something in the street that amuses him and draws off his gaze that way. The soldiers are passing the window and he looks at them—and you have to fix his little head fast to get him to look the right way. So the Psalmist seems to say, “Lord, make me to look the right way. Do not let me be attracted to look out there to spoil the picture of my life. Turn away my eyes. Hold my head fast and make me look the right way. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

It was David’s tendency to look that way—is it not also your tendency and mine? Oh, sadly let us confess that we are too much attracted by that which is foolish and vain! I know that I cannot remember good things as well as I can evil things—some abominable saying that I heard as I was passing along in the street will stick by me for years—while many a gracious sentiment is blown away from me by the first breeze that comes! If you do not feel the force of natural depravity in your heart, I think it must be through lack of power or willingness to feel! Alas, we seem to drink up sin readily enough, but we have to, with care, put good and true thoughts into our minds. This river of our life brings down plenty of snags. The old dead trees from the evil country come floating down the stream, but seldom do they bring to our door a log of the cedars of Lebanon. Such good wood is scarce in this river! But its torrent seems to bear along all that is base and vile! We have need to cry much to God, for the set of the current of the old nature is all the wrong way. We find another law in our members warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death, so that we have to cry with Paul, “O wretched man that I am!” And with David, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

The Psalmist, in the next place, *knew the evil of a growing familiarity with vanity*. He prayed, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” because he knew by experience that you cannot go near vanity without being drawn nearer, and then a little nearer, and then a little nearer, still! For the most part, men do not fall into great sin by sudden surprises. It is sometimes so, but usually there are several descending platforms and the descent is made by slow degrees. When King David walked upon the top of his house, that fatal evening, and saw Bathsheba washing herself, if he had been in a right state of heart, as in former times, he would, with all delicacy, have at once retreated from the sight. But he had grown cold and dull in spirit for months—perhaps for years—and that incident was but the match to fire the fuel which had been so long in the drying and which, once kindled, burned to such a fearful conflagration. The sin itself seemed to come upon him all of a sudden, but the *preparation for the sin* had been in the making long before!

O Friends, if we begin to look upon iniquity, we shall almost certainly fall! There are some sins that we poor, frail creatures cannot endure to look at. We are as moths near a burning candle—the only safety for us is

to get out of the room and fly into the open air. But if we stop near the light, we shall certainly burn our wings and, perhaps, even destroy ourselves. So we must take care that we do not get used to sin. I believe that even the common reading in the newspapers of accounts of evil things is defiling to us and if we habitually read such things, we shall come, at last, to think less and less of the coarser forms of vice than we ought to do. It is said that “familiarity breeds contempt.” So it does where heavenly things become familiar to those who have no spiritual perceptions—but it also breeds a hardness of conscience—a sort of hardness where there ought to be delicacy.

I have heard of blind persons, accustomed to read by touch, who have had to sand the tips of their fingers in order to secure sufficient feeling to make out the raised letters. Familiarity with sin covers the fingers of the conscience with a hard skin so that we do not feel as we ought. Do not some of you know, when you began to associate with worldly people—when, for instance, for the first time you went to an evening party—you came home and felt that you could not pray? And you said to yourself, “This will not do. I must keep away from such society in the future. But oh, how shall I get back to my God? I cannot bear to be in this state of heart.” But now, alas, you can go into such company and enjoy it—you are just as worldly as any of them! And yet your condition does not trouble you at all. I spoke with one who used to be a member of this Church—a truly spiritual man he always seemed to me, but he had left to attend another ministry—a ministry, I am afraid, in which there was not much of the savor of Christ. And I said to him, “Well, you like your new minister?” “Yes,” he answered. “And does your soul prosper?” I asked. “My dear Sir,” he replied, “I do not think, for these last three or four years, that I have known whether I had a soul or not.” That is a dreadful state to get into! When this friend first of all united with us in Church fellowship, he would have started back with horror from such a condition!

And you, also, can grow so thoughtless and careless that, at last, you will do things you never would have dreamed of doing before. Therefore, it is good to begin with such a prayer as this, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, lest I look, and looking, I come to look with admiration. And looking further, I come to look with desire. And looking further, still, I look myself into Hell.” Let your prayer begin at the root of the evil and have nothing whatever to do with it. Pluck out your eyes sooner than look at sin, for it were better for you to enter into life blind than that, having two eyes, you should bring yourself into Hell fire by your sin! So says the Savior and He cannot err!

The Psalmist, therefore, *would have none of this vanity* and nothing whatever to do with it because he could not tell how far he might be drawn if once he began to look upon evil. And observe, too, that *he craved Divine help*. It shows the pitiful weakness of our nature and the way in which David, an eminent saint, felt that weakness when even *he* cried to God, “Turn away my eyes.” But man, can you not turn away your own eyes? Of course he can, yet let no man here trust to himself to turn

away his own eyes from sin! Let him put the case into higher hands than his own, crying, "Lord, I am so frail, so fallible, so feeble, so liable to fall, that You must be the custodian of my eyes, or else my eyes will be my destruction. Superintend my eyes, Lord! Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity." I like this prayer of David because it shows his perfect dependence upon his God.

Then observe that *he expects God to help him in a particular way*. "Turn away my eyes." He does not say, "Put out my eyes, O Lord!" But he prays, "Let me look another way—a better way." The way not to be affected by sin is to look at something else. He that will see death and become familiar with the grave will learn to turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will see Heaven and think of its splendors will turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will look at Hell and the place appointed for the wicked will turn away his eyes from vanity.

But, Beloved, there is a better cure than any of these. If you have fixed your eyes on Christ, the Crucified, the risen, the exalted, the soon to come—if your eyes are taken up with Him, you shall find that passage true in many senses—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Salvation from a wandering, frivolous mind is to be found in looking at Christ by holy meditation! Nothing can keep us away from the fangs of error like falling into the embraces of Christ. Looking unto Jesus is the great remedy against looking unto sin! Turn away my eyes from vanity, my Lord, by filling them full with a vision of Yourself and holding me spellbound with that grandest spectacle that eyes of men, or angels, or even of God, Himself, did ever see—the spectacle of God Incarnate bearing our sin in His own body on the Cross! Keep your eyes fixed there and all will be well!

**II.** So much, then, for David's prayer for deadness. Now I have less time—as I intended—for the second division of my subject. Having prayed for deadness in one direction, DAVID PRAYS FOR LIFE IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. About 13 years ago I preached from the latter part of this text and the sermon is still extant, so I can be all the briefer now. (Sermon #1072, Volume 18—*My Prayer*—read/download the entire sermon for free at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>). "Quicken me in Your way." Let us dwell for a little on this prayer of David and try to pray it ourselves.

First, it is clear from this text that *the Psalmist was in God's way*. Dear Friend, if you are *not* in God's way, may He bring you into it at once! There is but one gate into that way. Over it is inscribed, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." As soon as you do that, you are in the way directly, for He *is* the Way. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the *life*." The first thing is to get into God's way—but that is not all.

In the next place, those who are in God's way are to pray that they may have *increasing life while they are in that way*. Little can be done in God's way without life—His way is not a way of death, for, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." We must be living men, living in God's way, if we would run in that way! Suppose God's way to be faith. We must not have a dead faith, otherwise we shall be deceived. The faith which works has life in it—it is that living faith which changes the life

and produces good works. Lord, quicken me in my faith! Deliver me, O my God, from having a dead faith in a living Savior! O Lord, give me a living faith that shall operate on my whole life in all respects to Your glory!

There is God's way of service as well as God's way of faith and how can we serve the living God with dead works? How can a dead man serve God at all? I am afraid there is a good deal of dead preaching, dead praying, dead praising—and God does not count it as anything at all. It is only the living discourse that comes from the heart and the living Psalm that wells up from a grateful spirit, and the living prayer which comes from a soul that hungers and thirsts after God that He can accept. We must have life if we are to serve God. Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of Your service! You, dear Friend, are going to teach a Sunday school class next Lord's Day. Pray, "Lord, quicken me to teach the children! Let me do it in a living way." You, my dear Brother, are going to stand up at the street corner and speak for Christ in the open air. Pray, "Lord, quicken me in bearing living testimony to Your living Truth!" It is all-important not to serve God half-asleep, but it can be done very easily. I believe that if it were proper, I could preach a very dull, sleepy sermon—snore it, in fact—and then I believe that I should set all of you snoring most devoutly all through the place! I have seen the thing done, figuratively, if not literally—the minister asleep, deacons asleep, the members asleep, the hearers asleep—everything done very properly, very regularly, very orderly, never a jar or a jolt, but all sound asleep! God save us from ever coming to that condition! Let the prayer of each of us be, "Quicken me in the way of Your service, O Lord!"

"Quicken me, also, in the way of devotion." It is a sad thing to try to pray when you feel sleepy in prayer—then is the time to cry, "Lord, help me to pray as if I were carrying the gates of Heaven by storm! Help me to draw near to You with my whole heart and soul. If I am alive at anything, let it be in my devotions. If I am dead anywhere, let it be in the world. But if I am alive anywhere, let it be when I draw near to You, my God!" This ought to be the prayer of each of us, "Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of devotion!" And as to God's way of holiness, may you and I be made so thoroughly alive in it that we shall do nothing that has not upon it the mark of, "Holiness unto the Lord!"

Yet once more, observe that *nobody but God can give us this life in God's way*. All life comes from Him, but especially is this the case with spiritual life. The sculptor can make the marble seem to breathe, but he cannot breathe life into it! And you and I may do and *ought* to do much for ourselves, but in the matter of real life, that must come from God alone. Let us, then, cry unto Him, "Quicken me in Your way, O Lord!"

Lastly, *we often need this quickening*. They who were thus quickened yesterday need to be quickened again today! He who burned with zeal a week ago, needs to have fresh oil poured into his lamp continually, else it will soon burn dim. There was never a man, yet, who had such a store of Grace that he could afford to do without constantly resorting to God for more. "Quicken me, quicken me, quicken me," is the prayer of the soul when it first begins to live! It is the prayer of the Christian when he gets

into the stern struggles of life and the poisonous damps of the world! And the prayer of the Christian when he is about to die, is still, "Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me in Your way! O Life of life, be life to me! O Spirit of God, breathe into me power, vigor, force, energy! Give me all these by giving me Yourself to be my life."

I invite each one of you personally to offer this prayer, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." It is the preacher's prayer. Let each of us who preach the Gospel ask God to keep the dust out of our eyes and make us full of spiritual life, for, if we are not filled with heavenly life, we shall be a curse to our people instead of a blessing. This prayer is also most suitable for you who are workers for Christ—"Quicken me in Your way." You know how I sometimes illustrate the truth that hard work cannot be done except by strong people. If we were going to make a railway tunnel through a hill, the contractor would not go to Brampton Hospital and pick out a hundred poor consumptives. Just imagine him trying to do it! He says, "There, my men, are the picks and the spades, go and tunnel through that hill." Why, they are panting and groaning in the effort to carry the tools! They will never get through that hill—all the picks and all the spades will be of no use to them!

But let the man get a hundred good strong English laborers and they seem to bore a way through the hill while you are talking about it! And, before long, the whole work is done and the train is puffing through the tunnel. So, if you Christian workers keep up to the mark, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," you will tunnel a way through the mass of London's sin! But if you are not spiritually strong, what can you do against the enormous evils of London, of England and of the whole world? We shall have to be getting elixirs and tonics to strengthen you and all the time of the Church will be taken up in patting you on the back and trying to comfort you! You had better go back to the hospital and pray, "O Lord, quicken me in Your way!" May God speedily make you stronger! But while you are so weak you cannot do this great work, for it needs those who are spiritually strong to serve the Lord with the utmost vigor.

But if any are sufferers rather than workers, each of them, also, needs to pray this prayer, "O Lord, quicken me in Your way!" You can endure pain, you can bear poverty, you can suffer almost anything when God quickens you in His way. But these burdens grow more heavy when the soul is at a distance from the Lord. Have any of you backslidden? Have you stolen in here after having long wandered away from your Lord? Well, here is a prayer for you, also, "Quicken me in Your way." Have any of you felt this week that you are getting into the rear rank of the army of life and that your life is ebbing away? Then cry to the Lord, "Quicken me! Quicken me." "Oh," says one, "I am full of doubts." Yes, when you are sick and ill, you begin to doubt. But pray, "Quicken me. Quicken me."

Perhaps some poor sinner here is saying, "I wish I could be saved." Well, this text may be a guide to you. Keep far off from everything that is sinful! Get out of the way of Satan! And pray to the Lord, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." Do not come

and hear sermons and then go into places of amusement where you forget them—but let each one of us bow before the living Christ and pray, “O Lord Jesus, quicken me by Your blessed Spirit! There is such a thing as spiritual life—breathe it into me. I am a poor dead soul. If I have any life at all, I have only enough life to perceive that I am as one dead—

*‘If aught is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.  
Oh make this heart rejoice or ache  
Decide this doubt for me.  
And, if it is not broken, break  
And heal it, if it be.’*

‘Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me!’” And He will do it, for He has declared, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” May we all come to Him, now, and then shall we all meet in the Glory Land, by-and-by, through His Grace! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:33-40.**

We have here some of the jottings from David’s pocketbook, the notes of his experience as recorded in his diary. The whole Psalm is a great case full of golden rings. They all fit, one into the other, but each ring is also perfect in itself!

**Verse 33.** *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.* We forget what others teach us, but we never forget what God truly teaches us. He who has been graciously taught will finally persevere.

**34.** *Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your Law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* This is the great point as to thorough godliness—to observe God’s Law with our whole heart. In these days, there is much slurring in religious matters, but they who love God aright love Him with their whole heart and they are careful, even, in what others call, “little things.” Live unto God with the utmost heartiness, exactness and precision every moment! “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” Therefore, serve Him with great jealousy and sincerity of spirit.

**35.** *Make me to go in the path of Your Commandments; for therein do I delight.* And when a man delights to do that which is right, God will help him to do it! The Psalmist seems to speak like a little child who has not found the use of his limbs yet. He says, “Make me to go; take hold of me, as a nurse does of her charge, and enable me to take my first trembling, tottering footsteps. Make me to go, for I delight to go. Lord, help me to carry out my soul’s desire.”

**36.** *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.* “Make me covetous for holiness! Let that passion which, in other men, goes after gold and silver, in me run after obedience and fellowship with You, my God. Incline my heart in another way than nature would incline it—nature puts it on the left hand and makes me covetous—my God, put my heart on my right side, that I may seek only after You and after holiness.”

**37.** *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.* The Psalmist commends all his nature to the care of his God. Just now he prayed about his feet. Then, about his heart. Now, about his eyes. We need the sanctifying Grace of God in every faculty of our spiritual manhood lest we go astray one way when we are watching against sin in another direction. It matters little at which gate a city is captured, if it is taken at all, it is taken. Oh, for Grace to watch every portal of the town of Mansoul lest we be overcome at any point!

**38.** *Establish Your Word unto Your servant who is devoted to Your fear.* “Lord, make Your Word to stand fast to me, for I do love You, I am in Your fear. Your fear has become part of me.” If you notice, the words, “is devoted,” are put in by the translators. The verse should read, “Who to Your fear,” as if his whole self had run into the mold and shape of a God-fearing man. He asks God, therefore, to establish His Word unto him, and so He did. What David asked, David’s God gave.

**39.** *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Your judgments are good.* “Lord, never let me sin so as to bring a reproach upon Your holy name! Keep me from doing anything that would grieve You and cause Your enemies to blaspheme.”

**40.** *Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.* That is a sure sign of a true child of God. Hypocrites may long after the *promises*, but only the true-born child of God longs after the *precepts*. If your chief desire is to be holy, that is a desire which comes from the Spirit of God. A bad man may desire to go to Heaven. A desperately wicked man may wish to die the death of the righteous. But he who intensely longs to live a godly, righteous life is, indeed, the subject of Divine Grace. I am sure that there are some of us here who can say that we have made no bargains with God, nor put in any conditions whatever—if He will but help us to live holy lives, He may do what He wills with us! Our one desire is this—“Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.”

**40.** *Quicken me in Your righteousness.* Let that be the prayer of every one of us. Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK —72 (SONG 2), 463, 465.**

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# VANITY DEPRECATED

## NO. 3026

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1864.**

*“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”  
Psalm 119:37.*

THERE are divers kinds of vanity. In the play of the frivolous and the sport of the idle, we see but one sort of vanity—light, open and undisguised. The cap and bells of the fool, the motley of the jester, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre and the cup of the dissolute—men know these to be vanities—they wear upon their forefront their proper name and title. Yet another species of vanity, and more deceitful, can be discovered in the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theater. If he is spending his life in amassing wealth, he is heaping vanity to himself quite as much as though he openly passed his days in vain show or empty pageant. All the fools do not dance or drink. All the fools do not make jests—full many there are of somber mood who spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not!

Moreover, there is such a thing as solemn vanity—the vanity that may be seen among those who observe the empty ceremonials of religion, invest themselves with strange garments and affect the odor of sanctity. Or, turning from the gorgeous meetings to the lowly conventicle, vanity may even be discovered beneath the broad brim of the Friend who, seeking after the world rather than after Christ, thinks that he rebukes the world's vanity when the world may well rebuke his! Vanity, I say, is quite as certainly to be found among the sober as among the frivolous. Unless we follow Christ, and make God the great Object of our life, we only differ from the most frivolous in degree—and possibly the degree may not be as great as we suppose!

You will all understand my text, as you hear it, to mean, first, “Turn away my eyes from looking upon the levities of men, the tomfoolery of the world.” But it means more than this. “Turn away my eyes from looking at the world's pride, at the world's wealth, at the world's substantial temptations.” These, as the royal preacher has said, are vanity. “Vanity of vanities,” said Solomon, “all is vanity,” as he looked at everything beneath the sun! And we may say of everything short of Christ, “Turn away my eyes from beholding it, lest my heart should love it.”

The Psalmist goes on to couple with this another petition—“Quicken me in Your way.” Beholding vanity is sure to bring deadness into the soul. You all know that this is true, not only of that which is frothy, but of all that, however specious, is not sterling. If you let the cares of this world enter into your mind too much, do they not destroy your spirituality? If honor is your *game*, or even if you are hunting after an honest livelihood without casting the care of it upon God, you know that your Grace declines, your faith grows weak and your love becomes ready to expire. No high degree of Divine Grace can be attained when the eyes are fixed upon debasing things. We must have our eyes where we profess that our hearts already are—beyond the skies. We must be looking for Christ to reveal the exceeding riches of His Grace and Glory—not after vanities to display the pleasure of this present evil world—or else our souls will soon lose the force and strength of piety and we shall have good reason to cry, “Quicken me in Your way.”

Beloved, I hope you all know what the Psalmist means by being quickened in God’s way. Often your spirits get lethargic and dull when, suddenly, the Spirit of God comes upon you and once, more your former vigor returns. And, instead of creeping, you begin to run in the way of God’s Commandments. Pray, then, this prayer as well as the former one, “Quicken me in Your way,” for, as the looking at vanity will make us dull, so our souls being quickened will be sure to turn our eyes away from vanity! As the first part of the text acts upon the second, so the second will act also upon the first. Put the two together and may they be graciously fulfilled in the experience of every one of us!

To amplify the teaching of the text, I shall now call your attention to four things—a *tacit confession*; a *silent profession*; a *vehement desire* and a *confident hope*.

**I.** First, then, I observe here A TACIT CONFESSION. It is not stated in so many words, but it is really meant.

The Psalmist seems to impeach himself and unburden his breast before God, deploring, indeed, *a natural tendency towards vanity*. What? Is it so, after all, that David has known of fellowship with the world? Does the vain still attract him? What? When God’s Covenant has been peculiarly delightful to the shepherd-king, do the mirth and revelry of this world and the gewgaws of earth still attract him? He seems to confess it. He would not need to have his eyes turned off from vanity if there were not a something in his heart that went after it! He would not ask God to turn them off unless he felt that he needed a stronger arm than his own to keep him in fitting restraints! It is very easy for you and me to stand up and play the wise man—yes, and in the closet to pray like wise men. We may feel, in our own souls, that we have experience, now, and shall never again be intoxicated by the world’s draughts, never more be deceived by its lies. But no sooner does Madam Bubble show her face than her strange fascinations draw our eyes! Let the world ring the bell and straightway we start up and our heart wanders, too often before we

are aware of it! We know they are vain things—know it thoroughly—but yet, knowing it, we do not in our own nature therefore avoid them! Reckless of the snares, the birds are foolish enough to fly into them! Though we know that the draught is poisoned, yet is it so sweet that unless prevented by God's Grace, you and I would soon be drunk with it! Every child of God knows that he is a fool or he is a great fool, indeed, if he does not know it! Every heir of Heaven understands that there is within himself a very sink of vanities—his vicious tastes respond to the vile compounds of earth as “deep calls unto deep.” It is clear enough, I think, if you turn over the prayer, that the Psalmist confesses that his heart goes after vanity.

He confesses, yet again, that *his eyes are on it now*. He says, “*Turn them off.*” What does he mean but that they are on it? And some of us, in coming up to the House of God, tonight, and, perhaps, while sitting here, have had to confess that our eyes are on vanity. Why, some of you Believers may have been thinking of some silly snatch of a song that you heard before you were converted, or some idle tale that was told you the other day. You would gladly forget it, but it has followed you in here—yes, and may even follow you to the Communion Table. Or, possibly, your worldly cares have come up with you and my poor talk has scarcely had power to lift you up from your families, from your shops, or from all the anxious thoughts that burden you! Your heart is on these things now. When you stood up to sing about Christ and asked Him to set you as a seal upon His heart, where were your flighty imaginations roaming? We tried to pray just now, but while the preacher's words went up to Heaven, did not your hearts wander, I know not where?

The confession assumes another character as it seems to hint that, *no sooner are our eyes on vanity, than our heart goes after it*. What? Can we not manage our own eyes? What? Are we such vain creatures that the mere sight of vanity is a temptation to us? Surely to see vanity ought to be sufficient to make us avoid it! Some men say that they will look at evil and, knowing that it is evil, they will be safe from the danger of being betrayed by it. Ah, how many have proved the hollowness of that pretense? Brothers and Sisters, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has brought little benefit to mankind—it has certainly brought a curse! Beware of the hope to be as gods through eating again of that tree! We are more likely to be as devils than to be as gods through feeding upon it! Oh, no! I know enough of sin without looking at it! There is enough knowledge of my sinfulness forced upon me by my daily temptations and failures, without my going to this place or to the other, that I may look upon sin! Do not tell me that you went into bad company just to ascertain its character! Do not tell me, young man, that having heard a certain thing condemned, you thought you ought to see it for yourself! That will not do! That is not a Believer's desire, nor a godly man's wish! He cries, “Turn away my eyes. Lord, let me speak to You humbly. Am I so

sinful and so weak that I have only to see a ditch to fall into it—only to see a fire to put my finger into it? I am not like that in other things—how is it that I am so besotted in the carnality of my mind? Yet so it is, Lord. You know and Your servant feels that it is so.” Therefore, let the confession stand, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

The Psalmist’s confession seems to go a little deeper, for *he seems to say that he cannot keep his own eyes off vanity*. “Turn away my eyes.” What, Lord? Have I not an optic nerve? Is there not a power in my head to turn which way it wills? Am I *compelled* to look at vanity? No, not compelled by physical necessity, but still, so compelled by the disposition of this vile nature of mine that unless You keep Your hands on my head and turn my eyes from beholding vanity, I shall surely be looking at it! We will go anywhere to see vanity! It is strange what mountains men will climb—into what depths they will dive—what leagues they will travel—what wealth they will spend to see vanity! And when they have seen all they can see, what does it come to but the sight of so much smoke, after all? And yet, Brothers and Sisters, we cannot keep our eyes off it! If anybody tells you that there is a lewd or unseemly thing, a juggle, or some witchcraft, do you not feel an inward craving, an unholy desire to see it? Is not that a well-known principle of human nature? There is a little tract, I think, entitled, “Don’t Read It”—and why, do you think, was it so entitled? Because, whatever tract might remain unread, that one is certain to be read! “Don’t Read It”—the prohibition provokes appetite, and the moment you and I hear, “don’t,” said, inclination begins to be astir! Thank God that this morbid propensity is restrained and subdued by Sovereign Grace through the love of Jesus! But still, the natural bias is toward evil and only toward evil. Therefore, Lord, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” The confession goes very deep, you see.

But there is even more in the next clause. “Quicken me in Your way.” *He seems to confess that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead*. Do not you feel the same? I hope you do not, but I often do, and I am afraid you often do, even the best of you. And when we think of how fast our spirits ought to move along the heavenly road, constrained and moved by love like that of Jesus, I think we all must cry—

**“Dear Lord! And shall we always lie  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?”**

Yes, we are dull if God leaves us for a moment—so dull and so doting that the best motives cannot quicken us! Otherwise the Psalmist would not have needed to appeal to the Almighty to effect that of which he was himself capable. What? Will not the thought of Hell quicken me? Can I think of sinners perishing and yet not be awakened? Will not the thought of Heaven quicken me? Can I think of the reward that awaits the righteous and yet be dull and stupid? Will not the thought of death quicken me? Can I think of dying and standing before my God—and yet

be slothful in my Master's service? Will not Christ's love quicken me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His Cross and think of Him, and yet not be stirred to something like fervency and zeal? Yet it seems that no such consideration can quicken to zeal, but that God Himself must do it or else there had been no need to cry, "Quicken me." It struck me, as I turned this text over, that it was amazing how poverty-stricken the Psalmist felt himself. What does a beggar ask for? The poorest beggar that I ever met never asked me, so far as I remember, for anything less than a drink of water and a bite of bread—but here is a man who does not ask God for anything so little as that—he asks for life itself! "Quicken me." The beggar has life—he only asks me for means to sustain it. But here is a poor beggar, knocking at Mercy's door, who has to ask for life itself! And that beggar represents me—represents you—represents, I am sure, every Christian who knows himself. You may well ask, every day, for spiritual existence! It is not, "Enlarge me, Lord. Enrich me in heavenly things," but, "Oh, do keep me alive! Quicken me, O Lord!" You see that the confession thus takes us into the most secret places of man's need. I pray God to teach us all so to feel what our true state is that, with humble, sincere and devout hearts, we may pray the prayer, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."

**II.** The text likewise involves A SILENT PROFESSION. Do you observe it? It is not all confession of sin—there is a profession of *something*.

There is a profession at least of this, "Lord, I know it is vanity." That is something. "O my God, how I bless You that I know the hollowness of the world and the plague of my own heart! It was always so, but I did not always think so." There are some of you who do not think that even worldly amusements are vanity. You love them—there is a sweetness and a substance in them to you. Perhaps you are like the lady who said to the minister that she loved to go to the play, because, first of all, there was the pleasure of thinking of it before she went—and then there was the pleasure of being there, then there was the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards—and the pleasure of telling it to one's friends. "Ah," said the man of God, "and there is another pleasure you have forgotten." "What is that, Sir?" asked the lady. "It is the pleasure of thinking of it on a dying bed, Madam." Small pleasure that! Some of you have never thought of that last pleasure and, therefore, the world's vanity is very satisfactory to you. I know what a pig would say if he were to talk. As he munched his husks, he would say, "I cannot tell what to think of those stupid men—they call these husks empty—and throw them away. I think them very luscious and substantial." You would, then, attribute the quality of the taste to the nature of the beast. It is after the manner of a pig and so, sinners say, "We cannot make out why these strict people, these Puritans, find fault with worldly amusements—we find them very sweet." Yes, but you see that it is only a sinner who says so—it is only a sinner

who feels so. The true child of God knows that both the pleasures of this world and its cares are, alike, vanity!

I know how some of you have often felt when you were busy. Encumbered with many things, more than you could manage, a friend has complimented you and said, "I am glad you are getting on so well. Appearances bespeak a thriving trade." "Well," you reply, "I think I am. I am grateful for business." But, as your friend turned his head, you thought to yourself, "Ah, but I should be more grateful if I had more Divine Grace, for I feel that much business needs much Grace to balance it, or else the more I get, the poorer I shall be." You felt that it was vanity unless you could have God's blessing and the Presence of Christ with it.

It is a feature of this profession that, seeing this vanity, you do not want to love it and would avoid being ensnared by it. If I say, "Turn away my eyes from it," I do, in effect, confess before God that I do *not* love it. I hope there are many of us here who can say, "Lord, our evil heart sometimes goes after it, but we do not really love it—in the bottom of our souls there is a hatred of sin so deeply rooted that if the loss of our eyes would take away temptation and prevent us from sinning, we would thank You to never allow us to see a ray of light, again, for sin is so terrible an evil to us that even blindness would be a blessing if it enabled us to escape from sin."

The second clause of the text has in it, likewise, the nature of profession—"Quicken me in Your way." The man who can pray thus is already in God's ways! He professes that he loves them—that he desires to be obedient to God's will and to continue to make greater progress in God's ways. What do you say, dear Brothers and Sisters? Some of you find the ways of righteousness very rough, yet, would you leave them? Some of you are reproached and persecuted for Christ's sake, yet, would you like to go back to the ways of sin? The devil has put a horse at your door and there is a golden bridle on it—and it ambles so softly! "Now mount," he says, "and come back and serve your old master! Nobody will laugh at you then! Everyone will call you a good fellow—charitable, kind and liberal. Come back," he says, "and I will treat you better than before!" Will you mount and ride? "No," the very least of us would say if we had the highest offer for the renunciation of Christ—we would not leave Him—

***"Go you that boast in all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine—  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,  
But my Redeemer's mine!  
I would not change my blest estate  
For all that earth calls good or great!  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner's gold."***

No, Lord, I may be weary *in* Your way, but, by Your Grace I will never weary *of* Your way.

**III.** And now, in the third place, there is before us here A VEHEMENT DESIRE—how vehement, those only experience who know the bitterness of vanity and the disappointment which it brings! How vehement those only can describe who know the excellence and sweetness of Divine Quickening! The Psalmist breathes his whole soul out in this prayer. He seems to plead most vehemently, his body and his soul seem to pray together. “Turn away my eyes,” says the body. “Quicken me,” says the soul!

This is a most reasonable and a most practical desire.

*How reasonable it is!* When a Christian is not quickened in God’s way, he is very uncomfortable. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest the sun, so is there the most happiness nearest to Christ. I am persuaded that no Christian ever finds any comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—no, that he never finds any satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may find happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for going to their pleasures. Why should I blame them? Let them have their fill—that is all they have to enjoy. I heard of a converted wife who despaired of her husband’s salvation, but she used to be always very kind to him. She said, “I am afraid he will never be converted.” But whatever he wished for, she always got for him, and she would do anything for him, “for,” she said, “I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy and, therefore, I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it.” But you Christians must seek your delights in a higher sphere because you cannot be happy in the insipid frivolities of the world, or in the sinful enjoyments of it!

Besides being uncomfortable, it is very dangerous. A Christian is always in danger when he is looking after vanity. We heard of a philosopher who looked up to the stars and fell into a pit. But if they fall deeply who look up, how deeply do they fall who look down! No Christian is ever safe when his soul is so slothful or drowsy that it needs quickening. Of course you do not understand me to mean that his soul is in danger of being lost. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards to his standing and happiness in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God—at least, I think not. It is when the Christian gets away from God and gets half-starved and begins to feed on vanities, that the devil says, “Now I will have him!” He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master’s service, but the battle is generally short. He that slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation invites Apollyon to come and fight with him!

Again, for a Christian to have his eyes fixed on vanity is injurious to his usefulness. No, more—it does positive damage to others. When a Christian is found setting his affection upon worldly things, what do

worldlings say? “Why, he is one of our own kith and kin! He is just like us! See, he loves what we love, where is the difference between us and him?” Thus the cause of Christ gets serious injury. How can you, my dear Brother, from the pulpit, for instance, preach concerning a certain sin when you are, yourself, guilty of it? I should like, for instance, to hear a man who swears that Baptism regenerates when he knows it does not, rebuke a countess for saying that she is “not at home” when she is! I should like to hear him rebuke a draper for “a white lie” across the counter. I should like to hear him rebuke the devil, for, I think he could scarcely venture to do it! Unfaithfulness to the Spirit of God is as great a sin as ever Satan committed! No, my Brothers and Sisters, we must keep ourselves clear of these sins, or else, for practical purposes, the tendon of Achilles has been cut and we cannot serve God with might and main! We can only do some trifling service for Him when our garments are spotted and our souls are set on vanity.

For all these reasons, then, let the Christian pray this reasonable prayer that he may be kept from vanity.

Did I say that this is *a very practical prayer*? So, in truth, it is. You will observe that the former pain is practical, though the latter may seem spiritual. The Psalmist says, “Turn away my eyes.” Now, the man who prays after this fashion will not fail in the directness of his aim. He who is diligent in praying this prayer will not be negligent in his life. He will not pray, “Turn away my eyes from vanity,” and then go and drink death-draughts of carnal pleasures. He will not pray, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” and then go and turn his eyes on the very evil that he deprecated! No, Brothers and Sisters, there is something so practical in the text that I commend it to your earnest observation. Make it your prayer tonight, each one of you!

**IV.** Lastly, there is in the text an expression of CONFIDENT HOPE.

The Psalmist does not pray like a waverer who will receive nothing of the Lord. It seems to me that he has an unmoved confidence that God will turn his eyes away from vanity and that God can quicken him. Have any of you backslidden? Let this sentence comfort you tonight! Do not lose the belief that Divine Love can restore you. Have you sunk very low? Do not, I pray you, doubt the efficacy of the right hand of the Most High to bring you back again! Satan will get a great advantage over you if you begin to think that God cannot quicken you. No, be assured that He can. And let me tell you that He can do so readily. It may cost you many pains, but it will cost Him none. He the made the world out of nothing can certainly restore to you the joy which you have lost!

And may I tell you what I think is the means which God often uses with his people to restore and quicken them, and take their eyes from vanity? I think it is a sight of Christ! At any rate, my personal witness is that I never know the vanity of this world so well as when I see the beauties and the perfections of the Lord, my Master. That true man of God, Dr. Hawker—I am told by a friend of mine who visited him one

morning—was asked to go and see a military review that was then taking place at Plymouth. The doctor said, “No.” My friend pressed him and said, “I know you are a loyal subject and you like to see your country’s fleets—it is a noble spectacle.” The doctor said, no, he could not go and, being pressed until he was ashamed, he made this remarkable answer, “There are times when I could go and enjoy it, but my eyes have seen the King in His beauty this morning, and I have had so sweet a sense of fellowship with the Lord Jesus that I dare not go to look upon any spectacle lest I should lose the present enjoyment which now engrosses my soul.” I think you and I will have felt the same thing, in our measure, when Christ has manifested Himself to us. What? Look on vanity, my Lord, when Your pierced hand has touched my heart? What are the grandest buildings of this world, with all their pomp of architecture, compared with You, You Great Foundation Stone, you Chief Cornerstone, elect and precious? What is the music of this world, with all its swell and roll, compared with Your name, Immanuel, *God With Us*?—

**“Sweeter sounds than music knows  
Charm me in Immanuel’s name—  
All her hopes my spirit owes  
To His birth, and Cross, and shame.”**

What are the world’s feasts compared with You, O Christ? Its dainties are not sweet, for I have tasted of Your flesh. Its wines are no longer luscious, for I have sipped from the cup of Your blood. What are the world’s choicest offers that she can make me of honor or of wealth? Have You not raised me up and made me to sit together in heavenly places with Yourself, and have You not made me a king and a priest unto God and shall I not reign with You forever and ever? Christian, you may carry on such musing as this by the hour together! You may boast yourself in God and your leviathan faith may swim in this boundless deep of Jesus’ love! You surely, after this, can never wish to go back to the pool wherein the minnow of this world disports itself. Here you can bask yourself in the rays of a meridian sun—and will you afterwards cry for a farthing candle because you have lost its beams?

Shame on you, Christian, if your soul is taken up with vanities! Let those love them find their all in them, but you cannot! The sight of Him who is white as the lily for perfection and red as the rose for sacrificial suffering must have taken away the beauty of this world for us! Says Rutherford, “Ever since I ate the Bread of Heaven, the brown bread of this world has not been to my palate. And since I have feasted on the food of angels, I cannot eat the ashes that satisfy the men whose portion is in this life.” And truly it is so! Arise, Sun of Righteousness, and our love of darkness shall be dispelled while we are charmed with Your light! We hear of some who worship the sun at its rising—that is sad idolatry—but rise, Sun of Righteousness, and we will worship You and there shall be no idolatry in that! You are not like the sun that burns out human eyes when they look upon it. We will look into Your face until Your

transporting light shall only burn out our sight for this world—to help us to gaze upon Yourself without a veil between.

Oh, that I were talking thus for you all, but I am conscious that I am not. I do pray, however, that you who love vanity may find out how vain it is before you come to die. The other night I lay awake and tossed to and fro many hours before I fell asleep. I realized then, more than at any other time in my life, what it was to die. My every bone seemed to tremble. I lay, as I thought, upon a bed of sickness—the room seemed hushed around me. The ticking of my clock sounded like the ticking of the death-watch. I thought I heard them whisper, “He must die.” And then my soul seemed to fling itself back upon the realities of God in Christ and I asked myself, “Have I preached or have I prayed for this? But now is Christ able to save me. He is my only hope and my only plea. Is it true that Christ came into the world to save sinners?” And I recalled those cogent and blessed arguments which prove that Christ is the Sent One of God and my soul rejoiced that it could die in peace! And then I could but think of that sweet rest which Jesus brings when you can throw yourself on Him.

And now, tonight, in the recollection of that strange vision of the shadow of death through which I passed, I can but ask others, “What will you do when you really come to die, if you have no Savior?” Men and women, if you have no Christ to trust to, what will you do? You must soon have the death-sweat wiped from your clammy brows. You must soon have the needed drop of water administered to your parched lips. What will you do when Death shakes the bones within the strong man and makes each nerve thrill with the dread music of pain? What will you do when death, and Hell, and judgment, and eternity, and the Great White Throne have become real things to you and your business, and even your children and your wife seem banished from your eyes? Let a brother’s love beseech you to flee from the wrath to come and to fly to Christ for salvation! God knows how I love your soul! It is for the sake of men’s souls that I suffer contempt and scorn and will gladly bear it—yes, and will provoke it more than I have ever done—provoke it because this dull, dead age needs provocation—needs to be stirred up! Even its ministers need to be stirred up to something like honesty and zeal for the souls of men! I say that I will gladly bear reproach for your souls’ sake—will not you?

Oh, will not you be persuaded to think on those things that make for your eternal peace? The gates of Heaven are up there! The gates of Hell are down yonder! The Cross of Christ points you to Heaven—follow its guidance! Look to the wounds of Jesus! These are the gates of pearl through which you must enter Heaven. But if you will turn to your vanities and to your sins and follow them—and delight yourself in worldly pleasures—then Hell is your portion as surely as you sin! May the Lord give faith to those who have none and help us who have believed

through Grace, to walk in His ways—and unto His name shall be the Glory, world without, end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:81-88.**

**Verse 81.** *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your word.* The Psalmist was so full of longing, hungering, thirsting, for God's salvation that he had come even to faintness through the strength of his desire. Yet, in his faintness, he was not too far gone to hope—and we, also, have good ground for hoping and believing that God, who gave us His Word, will stand to it, for He is both able and willing to fulfill all that He has promised!

**82.** *My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, When will You comfort me?* He looked out for a message from God as the watchers of the night looked for the breaking of the morning. His eyes ached to behold the comforts of his God. Oh, blessed state of strong desire! I pray God that we may all experience it!

**83.** *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes.* When an empty skin bottle was hung up in one of the smoky dwellings of the East, it became withered, cracked, useless. And the Psalmist says, "I am become like a bottle in the smoke,"—I seem to be good for nothing, withered, dried up—"yet do I not forget Your statutes." A good memory is one of the best of things for us to possess, but a good memory for that which is good is better still.

**84.** *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* "I am not going to live here forever, Lord. Let me not have to wait to be vindicated until I am in my grave. O my God, hasten the day of my deliverance!"

**85, 86.** *The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law. All Your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me.* God's Word is all true—the longer we test and try it, the more shall we find it to be worthy of our fullest confidence. Those who doubt its Truth have never really proved its power. Those who mistrust it in any degree are as yet like inexperienced mariners who are constantly doubting and fearing what is going to happen. But those who have long done business on the great waters of the ocean of Divine Inspiration and who have seen the wonders of the Lord there, will tell you that though Heaven and earth shall pass away, God's Word shall endure forever! We have seen a thousand things in the course of our earthly pilgrimage, but there is one thing that we have never seen, and that we never shall see, namely, God proving unfaithful to His promise and deserting His people in their time of need!

What a short yet comprehensive prayer the Psalmist prayed when he uttered those three words, "Help You me!" "Help You me"—that I may

never be frightened by those who wrongfully persecute me—that I may never do anything to deserve their persecution—that I may be able to behave myself wisely while they are plotting against me.” If you are in business, write this prayer on your shops, your offices, and your ledgers! If you are sick, have this petition hanging before your eyes, that you may be constantly reminded to cry to the Lord, “Help You me.”

**87.** *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts.* Therefore his enemies could not consume him. As long as the Believer holds fast to God’s precepts, he is indigestible even to the old dragon, himself! And no adversary shall ever be able to devour him as long as the Word of God is in his heart!

**88.** *Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.* “Give me more true spiritual life, inspirit me, revive me, ‘quicken me.’ At this very moment, good Lord, if I am cold, and half frozen, and almost dead, yet since I am like the trees whose life is in them even when they have lost their leaves, give me a new springtime—‘Quicken me after Your loving kindness .’” We all need this quickening if we are to hold on and hold out to the end and, blessed be the name of the Lord—

***“New supplies each hour we meet  
While pressing on to God.”***

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

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

# YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION

## NO. 1524

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# PLEADING PRAYER

## NO. 1969

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

***“Remember the Word unto Your servant upon which  
You have caused me to hope.”  
Psalm 119:49.***

THE 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a very wonderful composition. Its expressions are many as the waves, but its testimony is one as the sea. It deals all along with the same subject and it consists, as you observe, of a vast number of verses, some of which are very similar to others. And yet throughout the 176 stanzas, the same thought is not repeated—there is always a shade of difference even when the color of the thought appears to be the same. Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation—and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end! Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope—from a few objects, a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here. What you see is the same and yet never the same—it is the same Truth of God, but it is always placed in a new light, put in a new connection, or in some way or other invested with freshness!

I do not believe that any other subject but a heavenly one would have allowed of such a Psalm being written upon it, for the things of this world are soon spun out. Neither could such a handling have been given to the subject by any mind less than Divine—Inspiration, alone, can account for the fullness and freshness of this Psalm.

The best compositions of men are soon exhausted. They are cisterns and not springing fountains. You enjoy them very much at the first acquaintance and you think you could hear them a hundred times over, but you could not—you soon find them wearisome. Very speedily a man eats too much honey. Even children, at last, are cloyed with sweets. All human books grow stale after a time—but with the Word of God the desire to know increases and the more you know of it the less you think you know! The Book grows upon you. As you dive into its depths, you have a growing perception of the infinity which remains unexplored. You are still sighing to know more of that which it is your bliss to know.

This wonderful Psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to

adore the unity of Scripture, for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture. How manifold are the words and thoughts of God! In His Word, just as in creation, the wonders of His skill are manifold, indeed.

I very greatly admire in this Psalm the singular amalgam that we have of testimony, of prayer and of praise. In one verse the Psalmist bears witness. In a second verse he praises. In a third verse he prays. It is an incense made up of many spices, but they are wonderfully compounded and worked together so as to form one perfect sweetness. You would not like to have one-third of the Psalm composed of prayer—marked up to the 60<sup>th</sup> verse, for instance, and then another part made up exclusively of praise and yet a third portion of unmixed testimony. It is best to have all these Divinely-sweet ingredients intermixed and worked into a sacred unity, as you have them in this thrice-hallowed Psalm. My text is a prayer, but there is testimony in it and there is a measure of praise in it, too. In this single text there is the same mixing up of sweet perfumes as there is in the whole Psalm! May God give us Grace to be in such a state of heart that we may enter into the prayer of the text! Wherein it bears grateful testimony, may we be able to join in that testimony! Wherein it praises God, may we also extol Him with all our hearts!

There are only two things that I can attempt to speak about at this time. I cannot bring forth from so rich a casket all its treasures. The first is, *the prayer*—“Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” And, secondly, *the plea of the prayer*. It is a three-fold plea, as I think—it is Your word, I am Your servant and You have caused me to hope in it. Come, Holy Spirit and bless our meditation!

**I.** First, then, THE PRAYER. David prays, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.”

“Remember.” *That prayer is spoken after the manner of men*, for God cannot forget. It would be a very low conception of His Omniscience if we imagined that anything passed away from His knowledge. We see things as they come one after the other in a procession, but God is in a position from which He sees all at once. A man traveling through England sees a portion at a time, but he that looks at a map sees the whole country present before him then and there. God sees everything as *now*. Nothing is past, nothing is future to Him. He sees things that are not as though they were and the things that shall be as though they had been! God does not forget and, therefore, the text speaks only in a certain restricted sense and must be understood after the manner of men. Beloved, after what other manner could we speak? God has not taught us to speak after the manner of God! How could we? We are not Divine. There is a language above which Paul heard, of which he said that it was not lawful for a man to utter. Men must speak after the manner of men—and each sort of a man must speak after his own manner.

Do not, therefore, let us censure a young Brother when he utters a prayer which is very natural from him, though it sounds strange to us. Let us not condemn him because his language is not strictly accurate, for

though it may jar upon our ears, the Lord may be well pleased with it. You are intelligent, educated and a full-grown Christian—and the childish language of a beginner may jar upon your ears—but you must bear the jarring, for the Lord bears much more from you and others of His children. If the language is natural to the new convert and flows from his heart, he speaks after the manner and according to the manner of men, which manner is always faulty. You do no better if judged from God's point of view. We are far too apt to make men offenders for words. Certainly God might make the best of His servants offenders for the best of their words if He pleased.

In such a case as this He might have caught up His servant David, and said sharply, "Remember? Do you say 'Remember' to Me? Do you imagine that I can forget? And do you take it upon yourself to speak unto the eternal God and say to Him, 'Remember'?" Yet there is no fault found with that prayer. On the contrary, it is a prayer that the Holy Spirit, Himself, inspired and the Holy Spirit has recorded it and put it in this Psalm as a pattern, that we may pray after the same fashion. I guarantee you that if our prayers were gauged according to the standard of language which is used by angels before the eternal Throne of God, they would seem very, very poor things, full of faulty expressions. But God does not measure them so, for though we speak after the manner of men, it is much to our comfort that God loves the manner of men, for it is the manner of His Only-Begotten Son! It is thus that Jesus spoke and the Lord, in our feeble tones, which in themselves might be open to censure, hears the language of the Son of Man and for His dear sake He does not condemn our speaking after the manner of men.

He permits us so to speak, for He, Himself, knows how to read between the lines. He takes the meaning of our groans and tears—and when we fail to express ourselves suitably in words—He reads our hearts and accepts our secret meanings. I think I am warranted in making these remarks upon this expression of the prayer, "Remember the Word unto Your servant," and I hope they will furnish comfort to those of you who have very slender gifts of utterance when you approach the Mercy Seat.

I do not, however, conceal from myself the fact that it is *language which has some trace of unbelief in it*. Perhaps no unbelief was in the Psalmist's heart at the time, but it is language fit for the lips of one who has not always been at all times a firm and unstaggering Believer. It looks as if the thought that the Lord might forget had crossed the pleader's soul. It looks as if, even though it had not been tolerated—for faith had cast it out—yet the suggestion had knocked at the door of the mind, saying, "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God." We do not say to another person, "Remember," unless there is at least the apprehension of the possibility of forgetfulness. David could not quite mean, when he came to think it over, that he really thought that God would forget, but we usually speak in haste when we speak in unbelief—and then we do not measure what we say.

Unbelief is the hurry of the soul. A regenerate soul sitting still and correctly weighing the whole question between the eternal faithfulness of God and the passing troubles of life, cannot be long in coming to a confident conclusion. There is a hurry about our cares and anxieties—and in our hurry we are apt to rush to the foolish conclusion that the Lord may forget us. O poor worried child, if you are so foolish as to allow so absurd a fear to enter your bosom, your Father would sooner that you should express your apprehension to Him than hide it in your heart! A smothered fire is always dangerous. Rake it out! If you have the suspicion that you may be forgotten, pray right honestly, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” These prayers are placed in Scripture on purpose that they may be expressions of what we are half afraid to express. The dread is really there and God sees it—and He tutors us to give it vent. With groans that cannot be uttered, His Spirit helps us! But sometimes He helps us another way, namely, by helping *us* to utter those groans. He encourages us to express what at first we dared not utter. So we are helped to say, “Remember the Word,” though we blush to think that it ever should have occurred to us that God could forget!

Let us look at the prayer again—“Remember the Word unto Your servant.” *The intention of him who prayed this prayer was to ask God to remember His Word by fulfilling it.* That is the real meaning of it, as when a servant sometimes says, “I hope you will remember me.” Yes, we will remember him, but that is not quite what he means. Those who speak thus hope that we will give them some token of remembrance—some practical proof that we remember them! So does this prayer mean, “Lord, let me not only be in Your thoughts, but let me be in Your acts! You have promised to supply my needs; remember me by supplying my needs. You have promised to forgive my sin; remember me by giving me a sense of pardon. You have promised to help Your servant and give me strength according to my day—remember Your Word by *fulfilling* Your Word and granting strength to me according as I have need of it.”

Now, Beloved, this is very legitimate praying. In fact, it is the very *essence* of prayer to put God in mind of what He has promised. You can never pray an inch beyond the tether of the promise with any assurance of being heard. For my own part, I always feel on sure ground with God when I can quote His own Words. I feel, then, that I may ask boldly and I need not put in, “If it is Your will,” and those other reservations, because if His promise were not His will, He would not have spoken it. There is the promise in His Word and I know that He put it there as the index of what He intended to give and to do—and as an invitation to His child to plead with Him about those very things which He has so indicated and say to Him—“Now, Lord, do as You have said.” Therefore I follow the line the Lord has marked out for me and I expect Him to do as He has said.

It is a grand thing, when you are pleading with any man, to bring his own handwriting before him. You have, then, a hold upon him of the firmest kind. You have his promise in black and white and he cannot run back from that. The intent of God in giving us the promise, as it were, in

black and white, in His own handwriting, is that He may be enquired of by us to do those very things which He has engaged Himself to do. Ungodly men cannot make out what prayer is. “Do you suppose,” they say, “that you can change the will of God?” We reply to them—We never supposed anything of the kind, but we suppose that our prayer is the shadow of a coming blessing. As “coming events cast their shadows before them,” so, when God is about to bless us, He moves us to pray for that very blessing! If it were possible to shut out the man’s shadow, we could not expect the man to enter! And if it were possible to shut out prayer from our soul, we should feel, at the same time, that we had shut out the blessing.

Our Lord is pleased to duplicate His mercies. The blessing itself is great, but it is an equal blessing to be made to pray for it! It frequently does a child more good to get a favor from his father than the favor itself brings him. If the father sets him some little task to do, if he says, “Now, my child, prove to me that this will be a good thing,” the mental exercise, the pleading, the asking may be as useful in the child’s education as the thing for which he asks. I say, again, our God doubles His blessings by making His servants pray for them! Prayer, then, is nothing more than this—my believingly remembering that God has promised a certain blessing and then my reminding Him that He has promised it. It is not supposable that He will forget, but He would have me act towards Him as if He might forget in order that by such an exercise I, myself, may come to value the blessing and may be stirred up to importunity and fervor. The prayer is a right one when we say, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” It is, in fact, what God always intends prayer to be—a reminding our heavenly Father of His promises.

Sometimes this word, “remember,” is very fitly used, because *it seems to the mind that God is likely to remember something else which would be to our loss*. Suppose you and I have been walking contrary to God—and sometimes His people *do* walk contrary to Him—then the Lord may remember our sins and He may begin to deal with us in a way of chastisement and lay us very low. Then is the time to come in with this prayer—“Remember the Word unto Your servant.”

It is as much as to say, “Albeit that my sins clamor in Your ears and cry out that You should smite me, yet remember Your Word of promise, of pardon, of pity, of power—and let me live. I admit, my gracious Lord, that if You do listen to the voice of my actions, they proclaim me to be most ungrateful. If You do listen to my feebleness in prayer, it will accuse me of lack of earnestness and, therefore, You may be inclined to deny it to me. All my forgetfulnesses, shortcomings and transgressions cry out against me—if You hear these, my Lord, You may well reach for the rod and smite me again and again, but oh, be deaf to these voices and hear only the music of Your own Word!—

***‘Not my sins, O Lord, remember,  
Not Your own avenger be!  
But, for Your great tender mercies, Savior,  
God, remember me!’***

Remember the Word, and forget *my* words. Remember the Word whereon You have caused me to hope and forget the things wherein I have caused You to be angry. I know You might well remember my sins, as You did the sins of Israel in the wilderness, and say, 'They shall not enter into My rest,' but I beseech You, do not! You might hear my provocations and my unbeliefs and say, 'You shall die in the wilderness,' but, O my God, as Moses pleaded Your Covenant with You, so do I plead with You, not for my sake, but for Your Word's sake! Not for my sake, but for Your promise's sake, and Your Covenant's sake! I beseech You, fail not Your servant, but bear with me, still, till You shall bring me into the rest which You have promised me."

You see, then, the singular appropriateness of the expression, though at first it might seem to be a questionable one. "Remember the Word unto Your servant." Brothers and Sisters, the great mercy to us is that *God has a very strong memory*. Towards His people He has a memory so strong that He has said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget; yet will I not forget you." What a strong memory that is which is stronger than the memory of a mother towards the babe at her breast! Oh, blessed memory of God! "Yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you," He says, "upon the palms of My hands." There is no forgetting a thing that is written on the palms of your hands! You cannot do any work but you see it there! And God cannot do any work without seeing His children's names. He can do no work of judgment without seeing their names and, therefore, He spares His people. He can do no work of bounty but what their names are on His hands and, therefore, He says, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." His hands are branded with the names of His beloved and it is not possible that He can forget them! The Lord has a loving memory. He cannot forget His own. Think of Words like these—"I remember you, the love of your espousals." "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me." "The Lord your God will not forsake you, nor forget the Covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them."

And then, *our God has a long memory*. How many ages was it before Christ came and yet His coming was always on the Lord's mind! The fullness of time had not yet arrived and yet the Lord did not forget it, for no sooner did the clock strike than that very night—they did not wait till the morning—a multitude of the heavenly host recognized the sign and their praise flowed forth in a cataract of delightful song which filled the midnight air! They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Christ was born at the very moment when God decreed that He should be born. The weeks were ended, the dispensation closed and lo, He came! God has a very exact and punctual memory. Remember when Israel came out of Egypt—"the same day" did the Lord lead them forth! The Lord glories in the exactness of the hour. I know some persons who would never leave a bill unpaid for a day and, as for their rent, they are ready before twelve o'clock strikes and they say, "My landlord has never had to wait. I was always at the door to the very moment."

You shall find that God, though He never is before His time, yet never is too late. He has a very exact memory—a memory about little things and about moments of time—and He keeps touch with His servants even to the jots and tittles of the Word which He has given.

He has, Beloved, *a very gracious memory* towards His people because it is strong in certain matters, but in love He makes it very weak in other points. He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” He has forgotten their transgressions and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea! All the strength of the Lord’s memory that might have gone in the direction of noting our evil deeds runs the other way! He is all the more powerful to remember us for good because He will never remember our evil as long as He lives. Beloved, the Lord thinks upon you to do you good. Speaking after the manner of men, He schemes, plots and plans to do His people good! He says that He will bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. That is a wonderful expression! Let me give you the precise text, “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with my whole soul.” Think of God blessing His people with His whole heart, rejoicing over them to do them good! “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous” and the heart of the Lord is occupied with the cases of His own people. Blessed be His dear name, we have very much to appeal to when we pray, “Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.”

**II.** The time flies too quickly and, therefore, let me mention, in the second place, THE PLEAS WHICH THE PALMIST USES. The first is, “Remember *the Word*.” It is a blessed plea—the Word—for by the Word upon which God had caused His servant to hope is meant God’s Word. He never makes His people to hope in anybody else’s word. It is in the Lord’s Word that the hope of His people finds support. Let us consider the power, the dignity, the glory of that Word. This is the greatest of all grounds of assurance!

I have already said that you cannot have a greater hold upon a man than when you have his own word to plead. “Remember *the Word*.” God is Sovereign. He has the right to do absolutely as He wills. “Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?” But God—let us speak with reverence—when He gives a promise, binds Himself with cords of His own making. He binds Himself down to such and such a course when He says that such and such a thing shall be. Therefore, when you grasp the promise, you get a hold on God. Wondrous fact! Marvelous that we should be able, as it were, to move the arm that moves the stars and to hold the King who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand! If You have His promise for it, God must give you the blessing—God can sooner cease to be than cease to be true. “He is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it?”

There is nothing on earth, there is nothing in Heaven half so steadfast as the simple, naked Word of God. How mighty is this plea, when you present before the Lord His own sacred Word! It is a royal Word. We do not

expect kings to play fast and loose with words. They say, "If honor were banished from all the rest of mankind, it ought still to find a refuge in the breast of kings." But what shall I say of, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible"? Will He lie? Do You suspect the one "Blessed and only Potentate," the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? How you insult His Majesty if you *dream* that He can falsify His solemn pledge and break His Word! "Where the word of a king is, there is power," because there is faithfulness at the back of it.

But it is more than a royal Word, Brothers and Sisters. It is an *irrevocable* Word. Man has to eat his words, sometimes, and unsay his say. He would perform his engagement, but he cannot. It is not that he is unfaithful, but that he is *unable*. Now this is never so with God. His Word never returns to Him void. Go, find the snowflakes winging their way like white doves back to Heaven! Go, find the drops of rain rising upward like diamonds flung up from the hand of a mighty man to find a lodging place in the cloud from which they fell! Until the snow and the rain return to Heaven and mock the ground which they promised to bless, the Word of God shall never return to Him void! What He has promised shall be and what He has revealed shall surely be accomplished, for be sure of this—God has never spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, so as to revoke a single Word which He has spoken aforetime. He has never disannulled one of His ordinances, or cancelled one of His promises. The everlasting decree stands firm as the Throne of Jehovah and the promise is as unailing as the decree.

Not only is it an irrevocable Word, but it is an almighty Word. Recollect, Brethren, that by the Word of God were the heavens made and all the hosts of them! And it is by His Word that all things consist. You and I are most foolish when we want something more to rest upon than the Word of God. My great trouble in battling with anxious enquirers is that they demand needless evidences and cry out for marks and tokens. And I have to put it to them very plainly—"Then I suppose God is a liar and you will not believe Him unless He brings evidence to support His Word. You are obliged to run out of doors to find proof of what He says and you will not believe it unless you get that proof." It is too much so with us. I tell you, Sirs, that the bare Word of God is better than all the proofs, evidences, signs and marks that could be heaped together throughout eternity! And what is more, I will say that if all the marks, tokens, signs, evidences, promises and oaths of men all said, "No"—if God says, "Yes," His, "Yes," surpasses all the "Noes" and all the other denials that could possibly be gathered together!

Our faith ought to give God credit for this, for the Lord God cannot be otherwise than true—we must not suppose such a thing! Unlimited faith is no more than God deserves. He cannot err or fail. "The heavens are not clean in His sight and His angels He charged with folly." And He charged them with it not without reason, for all things compared with Him are folly and the greatest of intellects are but fools compared with God! With Him

there cannot possibly be a failure or a falsehood! Oh, that we had power to grasp His Word as it ought to be grasped! Our hope lies there.

Are you hungry tonight? Has it even come to this? And have you God's promise that you shall be fed? Then you shall be fed! You shall be fed. The devil comes to you and he says, "Yes, you may be fed, but you must do a wrong action in order to get the food." He speaks to the Son of God, again, and he says, "Command that these stones be made bread." Listen not to him, but believe God! Now is your time to glorify God. A faith that can believe over a hungry belly is faith, indeed! Yet it is only such a faith as is due to God. God will abundantly justify all the trust we repose in Him. Tell the devil, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." There is nutriment in God's Word! There is everything in that Word of God! The creature owes its power to bless and nourish to the will of God. And if the creature is absent, the will of God can still achieve its purpose by His Word without the creature! I put this in a very strong light, but I am certain that I go no further than God's Word will warrant. Oh for Grace to plead the promise and to rest upon it!

Beloved, when you are praying in time of trouble, what a blessed plea for you, "Lord, remember the Word! You have said in Your Word, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.'" He will remember it! You may forget the Word of the Lord, but He does not—and when you plead it, the answer of peace shall come to your soul—"I do earnestly remember you still." Though the Lord chastens you, yet He does not forget you. His chastisement is proof that He thinks of you. He will not set you as Admah, nor make you as Zeboim, for everlasting love cannot forget the objects of its choice. He chooses us for His love and loves us for His choice. Therefore, plead well His Word.

The second plea lies in the words, "*Your servant.*" "Remember the Word unto Your servant." A man is bound to keep his word to anybody and everybody, but sometimes there may be special persons with whom a failure would be peculiarly dishonorable. Among the rest, a man must be true to his servant.

Notice, first, "Remember the Word unto Your servant," means this, "Lord, it is Your Grace that has made me Your servant. I was once an outcast. I was once Your enemy. Lord, I did not come to You, but You did come to me. I did not seek employment at Your hands—I was too wicked for that, but You did seek me. It was Your Grace that made me Your servant. Now, Lord, have You brought me to be Your servant to put me to shame? You have done the greater thing for me, will You not do the less? To take me into Your service was great condescension on Your part—will You not grant me my rations? Will You not find me my livery? Will You not be gracious to me?" This is good pleading, is it not?

Again, here is a further plea. A servant has a claim upon his master. We dare say it very reverently, that we have a claim upon God when we are His servants. Of course, that claim is only such as He allows and it is

founded alone on Grace. But still it is a strong plea with our gracious Master. He was thought to be an evil man who left his servant to perish when he was sick. He could do no more work and so his cruel owner left him by the way to die. No good master would do that. Lord, will You do that with me? When I grow sick, will You forsake me? When I grow old, will You desert me? When I cannot speak in Your name any longer, will You disown me? When I cannot stand any longer by reason of feebleness, will You throw me on one side? When I lie gasping upon my death bed, will You say, "I have had his best days, but I will leave him now"? The supposition would be blasphemous! It cannot be. O my Brothers and Sisters, our God will not leave us! When the old man's heart cries, "O God, You have taught me from my youth and, up to now I have declared Your wondrous works! Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." The Lord answers, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Our heavenly Lord is not like that Amalekite master who left his Egyptian servant in the field because he was ill. Let us not imagine such a thing!

There is this further plea. If a man sets his servants such and such a work to do, is he not bound to find them the means of doing it? Only a cruel task-master compels men to make bricks and gives them no straw to mingle with the clay. We are not dealing with Pharaoh, remember—we are dealing with Jehovah who acts on quite another principle. Beloved, the Lord never sent any one of His soldiers to warfare at His own charges. How frequently, when my Master sends me to the front, I have to cry to Him, "Lord, grant me fresh supplies! Lord, send on the ammunition! I must have powder. I must have funds and Grace and guidance! Lord, send fresh men! Fill up the ranks as one after another falls on the field!"

I find Him always ready with His reinforcements and His succors and His stores. There is no failure of commissariat with God. He takes good care of His fighting servants, His suffering servants, His plowing servants and His sowing servants—and so you would expect Him to do. A good master will not set his servant a hard task beyond his strength and then refuse to lift a hand to help him. That would be far from the God of infinite mercy. Now, dear Sister, you that have begun to teach in the Sunday school and feel that you are hardly equal to it, the Lord will help you. Go on. Do not give up. You that have been trying to preach in the villages, but who do not see any good coming of it and are half inclined to run away, stand to your guns. Cry to the Lord for more strength and He will help you. And let this be the plea, "Lord, remember the Word unto Your servant, for I am Your servant, Lord. I desire to be wholly Yours. I give myself to You—body, soul and spirit. And my cry is, 'Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.' I am Your servant. My ear is bored to the doorpost and I would never quit Your service, or labor for another."

You remember what the old man-servant said, in the olden time, when his master angrily said, "We must part, John." "I hope not, Sir. Where are

you going?” The servant had no intention to go anywhere! “Ah,” said his master, “I do not intend to employ you any longer.” The old servant is said to have answered, “Sir, if you have not a good servant, I know that I have a good master, and I do not mean to leave him. I cannot think of going away.” It is a grand thing to feel that you are not going away from God—that you have such a good Master that you are going to cling to the posts of His door—and if He puts You out by the front door, You mean to come in at the back! Let the Lord do what He pleases, I am forever bound to belong to Him, only! Brother, resolve that if you cannot preach for your Lord, you will hear for Him! And if You cannot be a leader of the Church, you will be a follower, somewhere, but you will serve your Lord forever. This, then, is one of the pleas. “Remember the Word unto Your servant.”

The last plea I shall offer but a few words upon. “*Upon which You have caused me to hope.*” Lord, I have been hoping on Your Word and I have acted upon that hope. I believe the Word to be true and I have pledged the truth of it. That is good pleading. A man has given me a bill—not a transaction I ever have anything to do with—but suppose such a thing. Suppose I go and discount it. I say, “My Friend, you must honor that bill because I have received the cash for it. Do not fail to meet it.” It is as if we said to our God—“Lord, You have caused me to hope upon this promise of Yours. I have been raising present comfort upon the credit of it. I felt so sure that it would be fulfilled that I have taken it into the market and I have been living upon its proceeds by hoping on it.” See how David went and discounted the promissory note—he encouraged himself by it. Turn to the verses which follow my text and you will see. “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your Word has quickened me.” He had been comforting himself by the promise. And if the promise failed, that comfort would turn out to be a sheer delusion. Will the Lord delude those who trust Him?

Read the next verse—“The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Your Law.” I stuck to Your doctrine, Your precept, Your promise. I declared Your Word to be true—will You not keep it and so vindicate my confident assurance? “I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.” I have thus already derived strength and establishment out of Your promises. Will You allow the enemy to tell me that I have deceived myself? Will You revoke Your declarations? It cannot be! What is more, “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” I have been singing Your promise over and over. I feel so sure of it that, before it has been fulfilled, I have been singing about it! Lord, shall I be made a fool of by having sung for nothing?

Again, “I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law.” I rose in the night to bless You for Your promises. I sat up in my bed and clapped my hands with delight because You have given this promise and laid it home to my heart. Shall it not come true? Ah, Beloved! You may rest assured of this—Your faith never went beyond the goodness of Your God and it never will! If You believe great things of Him, He will do greater things than You believe! He will do exceeding abundantly above what You ask, or even think!

This is wonderfully blessed pleading. "You have caused me to hope; therefore, O Lord, remember Your Word!" When I read how God kept His promise to His people of old, I said, "He will keep it to me." And when I remembered how He had kept other promises to me in past times, I said, "He will keep this, also." His former dealings have induced us to trust in Him. If He had not been so gracious to us on former occasions, we would never have expected to be heard this time. But His love in times past compels us to trust Him now. "Lord, You have caused me to hope: my hope is of Your creating, nourishing and perfecting. I am justified in hoping in You on this occasion from what You have done for me in days gone by. This hope of mine is the work of Your Holy Spirit in my soul. Can Your Holy Spirit make a poor soul hope for that which He will never receive? Can Your Holy Spirit tantalize me by exciting a hope which is never to be fulfilled? You have caused me to hope. It was Your Word and I was Your servant, and I believe Your Word, and Your Spirit helped me to go from faith to hope! And now, when the windows of hope are opened, will You not be pleased to send in a messenger of Grace and peace?" O needy child of God, go home and plead in this fashion and you shall not return empty!

Have you come into a position from which there seems to be no escape? Do not ask to escape, but cry, "Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."

You, poor sinner over yonder, that has never found Christ, think of this gracious Word, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Lay hold on that loving declaration and hope in it! And then say, "Lord, remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." The Lord bless you all and give you a joyful hope in His sure promise, for His name's sake! Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:49-64.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 193, 733.**

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# MY COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

## NO. 1872

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON JULY 7, 1881.**

***“This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.”  
Psalm 119:50.***

IT is almost needless for me to say that, in some respects, the same events happen unto all men alike—in the matter of afflictions it is certainly so. None of us can expect to escape trial. If you are ungodly, “many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If you are godly, “many are the afflictions of the righteous.” If you walk in the ways of holiness, you shall find that there are stumbling blocks cast in the way by the enemy. If you walk in the ways of unrighteousness, you shall be taken in snares and held there even unto death. There is no escaping trouble! We are born to it as the sparks fly upward. When we are born the second time, though we inherit innumerable mercies, we are certainly born to another set of troubles, for we enter upon spiritual trials, spiritual conflicts, spiritual pains and so forth—and thus we get a double set of distresses, as well as twofold mercies.

He who wrote this 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm was a good man, but assuredly he was an afflicted man. Many times did David sorrow and sorrow sorely. The man after God’s own heart was one who felt God’s own hand in chastisement. David was a king and, therefore, it would be folly on our part to suppose that men who are wealthier and greater than we are, are more screened from affliction—it is quite the reverse. The higher up the mountain, the more boisterous the winds. Depend upon it, that the middle state for which Agur prayed, “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” is, upon the whole, the best! Greatness, prominence, popularity, nobility, royalty bring no relief from trial, but rather an increase of it. Nobody who consulted his own comfort would enter upon dignities attended with so much labor and sore travail. Child of God, remember that neither goodness nor greatness can deliver you from affliction! You have to face it, whatever your position in life—therefore face it with dauntless courage and extort victory from it.

Yet, even if you do face it, you will not escape it. Even if you cry to God to help you, He will help you through the trouble, but He will probably not turn it aside from you. He will deliver you from evil, but He may yet lead you into trial. He has promised that He will deliver you in six troubles and that in seven there shall no evil touch you, but He does not promise that either six or seven trials shall be kept from you. One like unto the Son of God was with the three holy children in the fire, but He was not with them till they were *in* the fire—at least not visibly—and He was not so with them as either to quench the flame, or to prevent their being cast into it. “I am

with you, Israel, passing through the fire,” may well describe the Covenant assurance.

May we realize the fire if only thus we can realize the Divine Presence! Gladly may we accept the furnace if we may but find the company of the Son of God with us there. Every child of God among you can, with the Psalmist, speak of *my* affliction. You may not be able to speak of *my* estate, *my* heritage, *my* wealth, *my* health—but you can all speak of *my* affliction. No man is a monopolist of misery. A portion of the black draught of sorrow is left for others. Of that cup we must all drink, little or much, and we must drink of it as God ordains. So far, then, one event happens to all.

My objective at this time is to show the difference between the Christian and the worldling in his affliction. First, Believers have in their affliction a *peculiar comfort*—“This is my comfort in my affliction.” Secondly, that comfort comes from a *peculiar source*—“For Your Word has quickened me.” And, thirdly, that peculiar comfort is valuable under very *special trials* such as are mentioned in the context.

I. First, then, Believers have their PECULIAR COMFORT under affliction. “This,” says David, “is my comfort in my affliction.” “*This*”—dwell on the word, “*this*,” as different from the consolations of other men. The drunk takes his cup and he quotes Solomon, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts.” And, as he quaffs his cup, he says, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” The miser hides his gold, takes down his purse, and chinks it. Oh, the music of those golden notes! And he cries, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” Men mostly have some comfort or other. Some have allowable comforts, though they are but of minor quality. They find comfort in the sympathy of men, in domestic kindness, in philosophic reflection, in homely content—but such comforts generally fail—always fail when the trial becomes exceedingly severe.

Now, just as the wicked man and the worldly man can say of this or that, “*This is my comfort*,” the Christian comes forward and, bringing with him the Word of God brimming with rich promises, he says, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” You put down your comfort and I put down mine. “*This is my comfort*”—he is evidently not ashamed of it. He is evidently ready to set forth his solace in preference to all others. And while others say, I derive consolation from *this*, and I from *that*, David opens the Holy Scripture and cheerfully exclaims, “*This is my comfort*.” Can you say the same? “*This*” in opposition to everything else—this promise of God, this Covenant of His Grace—“*This is my comfort*.”

Now read, “*this*” in another sense, as indicating that he knew what it was. “*This is my comfort*.” He can explain what it is. Many Christian people get a comfort out of God’s Word, out of believing in Christ and out of religious exercises, but they can hardly tell what the comfort is. A rose smells sweetly to a man who does not know the name of the rose. A rose-grower tells me, “This is the Marshal Niel.” Thank you, dear Sir, but I do not know who Marshal Niel is, or was or why the flower bears his name. But I can smell the rose all the same. So, many people cannot explain doctrines, but they enjoy them. After all, experience is better than exposi-

tion. Yet it is a splendid thing when the two go together, so that the Believer can say to his friend, "Listen, I will tell you, *'This is my comfort.'*"

"I saw how happy you were, dear Friend, when you were in trouble. I saw you sick the other day and I noticed your patience. I knew you to be slandered and I saw how calm you were. Can you tell me why you were so calm and self-contained?" It is a very happy thing if the Christian can turn round and answer such a question fully. I like to see him ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him with meekness and fear, saying—"*This is my comfort in my affliction.*" I want you, if you have enjoyed comfort from God, to get it packed up in such a form that you can pass it on to a friend! Get it explained to your own understanding so that you can tell others what it is, so that they may taste the consolation with which God has comforted you. Be ready to explain to young beginners—"*This is my comfort in my affliction.*"

Again, "*this*" is used in another sense, that is, *as having the thing near at hand*. I do not like speaking of my comfort from God and saying, *that is my comfort*, *that is the solace which I enjoyed long ago*. Oh, no, no! You need a comfort that you can press to your bosom, and say, "*This is my comfort*," *this which I have here at this present time!* "*This*" is the word which indicates nearness. "*This is my comfort.*" Do you enjoy it now? You were so happy once. Are you as happy now?—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!"***

Yes, that is very well, Cowper, but it would be better to sing—

***"What peaceful hours I now enjoy!  
How sweet the present hour"?***

"*This is my comfort.*" I still have it with me—as my affliction is present with me, so my consolation is present with me!

You have heard, the classic story of the Rhodian who said that at such and such a place he had made a jump of many yards. He bragged till a Greek, who stood by, chalked out the distance and said, "Would you mind jumping half that length now?" So I have heard people talk of what enjoyments they once had, what delights they once had. I have heard of a man who has the roots of depravity dug out of him and, as for sin, he has almost forgotten what it is! I would like to watch that brother when under the influence of rheumatism. I do not want him to have it long, but I should like him to have a twinge or two, that I might see whether some roots of corruption do not remain. I think that when he was tried in that way, or if not just in *that* way, in some other, he would find that there was a rootlet or two still in the soil. If a storm were to come on, perhaps our brave dry-land sailor might not find his anchor quite so easy to cast overboard as he now thinks it is. You smile at the talk of modern perfectionism and so do I, but I am sick of it! I do not believe in it. It is so utterly contrary to that which I have to learn every day, of my own unworthiness, that I feel a contempt for it. Do have your comforts always handy—pray God that that which was a consolation years ago may still be a consolation, so that you may say, "*This is my comfort in my affliction.*"

Again, I think the word, "*this*," *is meant as pleading it in prayer*. Let me read the previous verse, "Remember the Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." That is Your promise which you have

made me to hope upon, Lord—fulfill it to me—for this, Your promise, is my comfort in my affliction and I plead it in prayer! Suppose, Brothers and Sisters, you and I are enabled to take comfort out of a promise. We have, in that fact, a good argument to plead with God. We may say, “Lord, I have so believed this promise of Yours that I have been persuaded that I had in my possession the blessing promised to me. And now, shall I be ashamed by this, my hope? Will You not honor Your Word, seeing You have caused me to rest upon it?” Is not this good pleading? “Remember Your Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope, for this is already my comfort. And You will have given me a false comfort and led me into error if Your Word should fail. O my Lord, since I have sucked my comfort out of the expectation of what You are about to do, surely by this You are pledged and bound to Your servant—that You will keep Your Word!” Hence the word “*this*” is seen to be a very comprehensive word. May the Spirit of God teach each of us to say of our priceless Bible, “*This is my comfort in my affliction.*”

**II.** We pass on to note, secondly, that this comfort comes from A PECULIAR SOURCE—“This is my comfort, *for Your Word has quickened me.*” The comfort, then, is partly outward, coming from God’s Word, but it is mainly and pre-eminently *inward*, for it is God’s Word *experienced* as to its quickening power within the soul.

First, *it is God’s Word that comforts.* Why do we look anywhere else for consolation but to God’s Word? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I am ashamed to have to say it, but we go to our neighbors, or relatives and we cry, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends!” and it ends with our crying, “Miserable comforters are you all!” We turn to the pages of our past life and look *there* for comfort, but this may also fail us. Though experience is a legitimate source of comfort, yet when the sky is dark and lowering, experience is apt to minister fresh distress! If we were to go at once to God’s Word and search it till we found a promise suitable to our case, we should find relief far sooner. All cisterns dry up—only the fountain remains. Next time you are troubled, reach down to the Bible. Say to your soul, “Soul, sit still and hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people.”

You read one promise, and you feel, “No, that hardly meets the case. Here is another, but it is made to a special character and I am afraid I am not that character. Here, thank God, is one that just fits me, as a key fits the wards of a lock.” When you find such a promise, use it at once. John Bunyan beautifully pictures a pilgrim laid by the heels in Giant Despair’s castle and there beaten with a crab tree cudgel till one morning he puts his hand into his bosom and cries to his brother, Christian, “What a fool have I been to lie rotting in this noisome dungeon, when all this time I have a key in my bosom which will open every door in Doubting Castle!” “Say you so, my Brother,” says Christian, “pluck it out, and let us use it at once!” This key, which is called Promise, is thrust into the first lock and the door flies open! And then it is tried upon the next and the next with quick results. Though the great iron gate had a rusted lock in which the key did terribly grate and grind, yet it did open and the prisoners were free from the vile durance of their mistrust! The Promise has always

opened the gate and every gate—yes, the gates of despair shall be opened with that key called Promise, if a man does but know how to hold it firmly and turn it wisely till the bolt flies back.

“This is my comfort in my affliction,” says the Psalmist—God’s own Word. Dear Friends, fly to this comfort with speed in every time of trouble—get to be familiar with God’s Word so that you may do so. I have found it helpful to carry “Clarke’s Precious Promises” in my pocket, so as to refer to it in the hour of trial. If you go into the market and are likely to do a ready-money business, you always take a checkbook with you. So carry precious promises with you, that you may plead the Word of God which suits your case. I have turned to promises for the sick when I have been of that number, or to promises to the poor, the despondent, the weary and such like, according to my own condition, and I have always found a Scripture fitted to my case. I do not need a promise made to the sick when I am perfectly well. I do not need balm for a broken heart when my soul is rejoicing in the Lord—but it is very handy to know where to lay your hands upon suitable Words of cheer when necessity arises. Thus the external comfort of the Christian is the Word of God.

Now for the internal part of his consolation. “This is my comfort in my affliction, *for Your Word has quickened me.*” Oh, it is not the *letter*, but the Spirit which is our real comfort! We look not to that Book which consists of so much binding, so much paper and so much ink, but to the living Witness within the Book! The Holy Spirit embodies Himself in these blessed Words of God and works upon our hearts so that we are quickened by the Word! It is *this* which is the true comfort of the soul.

When you read the promise and it is applied with power to you. When you read the Law and it works with force upon your conscience. When you read any part of God’s Word and it gives life to your spirit—*then* it is that you get the comfort of it! I have heard of persons reading so many chapters a day and getting through the Bible in a year—a very admirable habit, no doubt—but it may be performed so mechanically that no good, whatever, may come of it. You need to pray earnestly over the Word, that it may quicken you, or otherwise it will not be a comfort to you. Let us think of what our comfort is in the time of affliction from our soul’s being quickened by the Lord. Comfort comes thus—God’s Word has, in past days, quickened us. It has been a Word of Life from the dead. In our affliction we, therefore, remember how God has brought us out of spiritual death and made us alive—and this cheers us. If you can say, “Whatever pain I suffer, whatever grief I endure, yet I am a living child of God,” then you have a wellspring of comfort! It is better to be the most afflicted child of God than to be the happy worldling. Better be God’s dog than the devil’s darling. Child of God, comfort yourself with this—if God has not given me a soft bed, nor left me a whole skin, yet He has quickened me by His Word and this is a choice favor. Thus our first quickening from spiritual death is a sunny *memory*.

After we are made alive we need to be quickened in duty, to be quickened in joy, to be quickened in every holy exercise and we are happy if the Word has given us this repeated quickening. If, in looking back, dear Friend, you can say, “Your Word has quickened me. I have had much joy

in hearing Your Word. I have been made full of energy through Your Word. I have been made to run in the way of Your Commandments through Your Word”—all this will be a great comfort to you. You can then plead—“O Lord, while You may have denied me much of the joy that some people have, yet You have often quickened me. Oh, be it so again, for *this* is my comfort!” I hope I am speaking to many experienced Christians who can say that God’s Word has very frequently refreshed them when they have been in the depths of distress and fetched them up from the gates of the grave. And if they *can* bear this testimony, they know what comfort there is in the quickening of the Word of God and they will ask to feel that quickening influence, again, so they may be of good comfort.

Brothers and Sisters, it is a very strange thing that when God wills to do one thing, He often does another. When He wants to comfort us, what does He do? Does He comfort us? Yes, and no. He quickens us and so He comforts us. Sometimes the roundabout way is the straight way. God does not give the comfort we ask for by a distinct act, but He quickens us and so we obtain comfort. Here is a person very low and depressed. What does a wise doctor do? He does not give strong drink to act as a temporary stimulus to his spirits, for this would end in a reaction in which the man would sink lower. No, he gives him a tonic and braces him up. And when the man is stronger, he becomes happier and shakes off his nervousness. The Lord comforts His servants by quickening them—“This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.”

I speak to some of you who have endured long affliction and it is a joy to see you out, again, tonight. Has not God’s Word often quickened you in affliction? Perhaps you have been sluggish when in health, but affliction has made you feel the value of the promise, the value of the Covenant blessing—and then you have cried to God for it. You may have been worried about worldly cares, but you have been obliged to drop them in the time of affliction and your only care has been to get nearer to Christ and to creep into your Lord’s bosom!

Sometimes in prosperity you could hardly pray, but I guarantee you, you prayed when you were ready to perish and pined at death’s door! Your affliction quickened your prayers. There is a man trying to write with a quill pen—it will not make anything but a thick stroke—so he takes a knife and cuts fiercely at the quill till it marks admirably. So we have to be cut with the sharp knife of affliction, for only then can the Lord make use of us! See how sharply gardeners trim their vines. They take off every shoot till the vine looks like a dry stick. There will be no grapes in the spring if there is not this cutting away in the autumn and winter! God quickens us in our afflictions through His Word. Our sorrows are made to have a salutary action on our souls. We receive by them spiritual revival and health and, therefore, comfort flows in to us. It would not be wise to pray to be altogether delivered from trial, though we should like to be. It would be a pleasant thing to have a grassy path all the way to Heaven and never to find a stone in the road—but though pleasant, it might not be safe. If the way were a fine turf cut every morning with a lawnmower and made as soft as velvet, I am afraid we should never get to Heaven at all, for we should linger too long upon the road!

Some animals' feet are not adapted for smooth places and, Brothers and Sisters, you and I are of a very slippery-footed race! We slip when the roads are smooth! It is easy to go down hill, but it is not easy to do so without a stumble. John Bunyan tells us that when Christian passed through the Valley of Humiliation, the fight he had there with Apollyon was very much due to the slips he made in going down the hill which descended into the valley. Happy is he who is in the Valley of Humiliation, for, "He that is down need fear no fall." But his happiness will largely depend upon how he came down. Gently, you that are on the hilltops of delight and prosperity. Gently, lest, perhaps you slip with your feet and mischief come of it! Quickening is what we need and if we get it, even if it comes to us by the sharpest tribulation, we may gladly accept it. "This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me."

**III.** Lastly, and very briefly, there are certain PECULIAR TRIALS of Christians in which this peculiar comfort is specially excellent.

Kindly look at the Psalm and notice, in the 49<sup>th</sup> verse, that the Psalmist suffered from *hope deferred*. "Remember Your Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." Long waiting for the promise to be fulfilled may make the soul grow weary—and hope deferred makes the heart sick. At such a time this is to be our comfort—"Your Word has quickened me." I have not yet obtained that which I prayed for, but I have been quickened while I have been praying. I have not found the blessing I have been seeking, but I am sure I shall have it, for already the exercise of prayer has been of service to me—*this* is my comfort under the delay of my hope, that Your Word has already quickened me!

Notice the next verse, in which the Psalmist was suffering the great trial of *scorn*. "The proud have had me greatly in derision." Ridicule is a very sharp ordeal. When the proud are able to say something against us that stings—when they laugh, yes, and laugh greatly, and treat us like the mire in the streets—it is a severe affliction and under it we need rich comfort. If at that time we feel that if man's word stings, yet God's Word quickens, then we are comforted! If we are driven more to God by being scorned by men, we may very cheerfully accept their contempt and say, "Lord, I bless You for this persecution which makes me a partaker of Christ's sufferings." I say it becomes a comfort to us to be quickened by the Word when the ungodly are despising us.

At the 53<sup>rd</sup> verse you will see that David was under the trouble of *living among great blasphemers* and doers of open wickedness. He says, "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law." He was horrified at their vices—he wished that he could get away from and never see or hear that which distressed him so much. But if the very sight and sound of sin drives us to pray and forces us to cry to God, the result is good, however painful the process may be! If men never swore in the streets, we should not so often be driven to cry to God to forgive their profanity. If you and I could always be shut up in a glass case and never see sin or hear of it, it might be a bad thing for us. But if, when we are compelled to see the wickedness of men and hear their curses and reviling, we can also feel that God's Word is quickening us, even by our horror at sin, it is good for us! We have great comfort in this peculiar species of afflic-

tion, though it is exceedingly grievous to tender-hearted, pure and delicate minds who dwell near to God.

Just read the 54<sup>th</sup> verse, and you will see another of David's trials indicated. "Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." *He had many changes.* He had all the trials of a pilgrim's life—the discomforts of journeying in places where he had no abiding city. But, "*This,*" he says, "has been my comfort in my affliction." Your Word has told me of a city that has foundations. Your Word has assured me that if I am a stranger upon earth, I am also a citizen of Heaven. "Your Word has quickened me." I have felt myself so strengthened by Your Word that I have been glad to feel that this is not my rest. I am glad to feel that I must be away to a better land and so my heart has been happy and, "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Lastly, in the 55<sup>th</sup> verse, you see David was in *darkness*. He says, "I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law." Even in the night he could derive comfort from the quickening influence which often comes to the soul from the Scriptures—even when we are surrounded by darkness and sorrow. I will not go over that ground, again, but certain it is that when our soul is shrouded in distress, it often becomes more active and gracious than when it is basking in the sunlight of prosperity.

All along, then, dear Friends, your comfort and mine is the Word of God, laid home by God, the Holy Spirit, to our hearts, quickening us to an increase of spiritual life! Do not try to flee from your troubles. Do not fret under your cares. Do not expect this world to bring forth roses without thorns. Do not hope to prevent the springing up of briars and thistles. Ask for quickening! Ask for that quickening to come, not by new revelations nor by fanatical excitement, but by God's own Word quietly applied by His own Spirit! So shall you conquer all your troubles, overcome your difficulties and enter into Heaven singing hallelujahs unto the Lord's right hand and holy arm which have gotten Him the victory!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 119:49-64.*  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—481, 119 (SONG III), 482.**

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# THE SINGING PILGRIM

## NO. 1652

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

***“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”  
Psalm 119:54.***

THE 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm is said, by many, to consist of detached sentences and to be rather a casket of gold rings than a chain of united golden links, yet the position of this verse is somewhat remarkable, for the verse before it runs thus—“Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” Most of you know for yourselves what that sentence means, for if you hear a man swear in the streets, your blood runs chill with horror. And when you think of what has been said by blasphemers against the Person of our Divine Lord and against the Divine Truths of Revelation, you are horrified that men should have had the audacity to think—much less to say—such wicked things against the Most High God.

David rightly said, “Horror has taken hold upon me,” and then he added our text, as if he would say, “I am horrified that they should break the Law of God and tread it under foot, for to me it is an intense delight—‘Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.’ That which is their scorn is my song. What they count dross is gold to me. How can they treat such precious Truths of God contemptuously?” He is horrified at the thought that what is, to him, the very soul of his life, and the life of his soul, should be to them a castoff and a hate. Surely some connection is visible here—these rings are evidently linked to each other.

It is well to notice the following verse. David writes, “I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law”—as much as if he had said—“It is not always daylight with me; but when it is, Your statutes are my song. My sun is not always above the horizon; but when it is dark with me and I am in trouble, I do not forget You. You are still my solace. I remember Your name and I am comforted. If I may not see Your face, it is a joy to remember Your name, for they that know Your name will put their trust in You. If I can but remember Your name when my spirits sink, I shall have my soul stayed and upheld until the daylight shall again break in upon my spirit.” Is there not much sweetness in this hopeful assurance, much to make our text overflow with meaning?

And now I invite you to consider the text itself. It seems to me to talk about three things, three things which concern us. The first is a pilgrim, who is, secondly, a singing pilgrim. And this brings before us, thirdly, his songbook—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”—

***“Sweet strains to me Your Laws have been,  
Sweet music in my heart,  
Where on my lonely pilgrimage***

***I sojourn all—apart.***

I. First, here is A PILGRIM. David was a type of all who are true disciples of Jesus. They are all pilgrims. A pilgrim is a person who is traveling through one country to another. If we are true to our profession, we are pilgrims with an emphasis, for, first, we belong to another country. We were not born here as to our highest nature. When we were born in the most emphatic sense, we were born of another country altogether—"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." "Except a man is born again"—"from above," says the margin—"he cannot see the kingdom of God." We have been born from above. Our birth makes us citizens of the City which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

We are aliens, foreigners, strangers in this world. One said of old, "I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." And another said, "I am a stranger in the earth." Indeed, all the faithful confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Jesus, our Leader, said, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And the beloved Apostle said, "You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the Evil One." We are hurrying through this world as through a foreign land. We are in this country, not as residents, but only as visitors who take this country en route to Glory!

Ungodly men live as if they never meant to die. All their plans and preparations are evidently arranged for tarrying in this country. But if God has instructed you aright, you know assuredly that you *shall* die and you have become familiar with the thought of departing from these shores. Here you have no continuing city, but are like the tent-dwelling Patriarchs, who, by their very abodes, confessed that they looked for a possession yet to be given them. You look not only upon all other men as mortal, but upon yourselves as such—nor do you at all regret it—you would not stay here forever if you could! You know that you are emigrants to the laud of the unsetting sun and these lands are but traversed on the road to your eternal heritage.

This is a rare knowledge, peculiar to the godly. You may bring an unconverted man to be conscious of his mortality, but you cannot get him to realize that he is going to another land. No, he is going, he is going, he is going where he would not. He is hurried to the land of confusion and dismay where the shadow of death forever rests on hopeless spirits. You do not wonder, therefore, that he tries to avoid the remembrance of this troublesome fact, and that he journeys on with his eyes shut, trying to forget that his life's voyage will ever end. To you, dear Friends, your passage through this world is not a transit to somewhere or to anywhere, for you *know* where you are going! As Jesus said to the disciples, "Where I go you know, and the way you know"—you know which way Jesus went and you know that you will go the same way—for He has promised that where He, is there you shall be, also.

One of His solemn declarations was, "Because I live, you shall live, also," and one of His last prayers put this promise into the form of authority and claim—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be

with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” If an Italian now in England passes through France on his way to Rome, he stays at Paris, or Lyons, or Marseilles on his journey. But all the while he is not a Frenchman, he is an Italian. Wherever he stays upon the road, he says to himself, “This is not Rome. This is not the place of my nativity. I have no citizen rights here. I am going onward to my own dear city and I must hasten as best I may until I reach it.” That is the condition of the Christian—his face is steadfastly set to go to the New Jerusalem—and nothing must detain him.

A pilgrim in the old crusading times started out to reach Jerusalem. You know how many were stricken with that insanity in those times—I commend them not, but I use the illustration in all soberness. The Crusader journeyed on foot across Europe. Whenever he came in sight of a goodly city, whether it was Vienna, or Constantinople, he stood and gazed upon the towers, the spires, the balconies. And when he had done so, he turned to his companion and said, “A fair sight, my Friend, but it is not the Holy City to which you and I are journeying.” So, whenever God brings us to any place, however pleasant or delightful it may be, it is for us to say, “A fair sight and God be thanked for it, but it is not the Golden City.”

Our gardens are not Paradise; our homes are not the Father’s house on high; our comforts are not our Heaven; our resting places are not the everlasting rest! We must not rest contented here below. We have not come to that promised land of which God has spoken to us in His Covenant. If we were mindful of the place from which we came out, truly we have had many opportunities to return—but we are not mindful of it—our whole desire lies in the opposite direction! Our citizenship rights and civic privileges connect us with a city whose jeweled walls and shining streets are waiting for our coming! Our Captain cries to us, “Forward.” Beyond the river our possessions lie. In another land is our everlasting abode. We are, then, pilgrims born in another country, passing through this world to an inheritance beyond.

A pilgrim’s main business is to get on and pass through the land as quickly as he can. You will remember how Israel desired to pass through the land of Sihon, King of Heshbon, and Moses offered these terms—“Let me pass through your land. I will go along by the highway. I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left: only I will pass through on my feet.” Sihon would not allow them to pass on these conditions—neither will the world grant us a similar privilege. The tribes had to fight their way and so must we. All we ask is a road. We may also beg the loan of six feet of earth for a sepulcher, but all else we will forego if we may the better proceed towards our inheritance! Not how to stay here in comfort, but how to pass through the land in *holiness* is our great question.

Sometimes a home sickness is upon us and then we are weary of this wilderness and pine for the land which flows with milk and honey. We hear the inviting heralds and the songs of those who hold high festival in the palaces above and we groan, being burdened, and long to end the days of this, our banishment—

***“Let me go, oh speed my journey,  
Saints and seraphs lure away.  
Oh, I almost feel the raptures  
That belong to endless day.  
Often I think I hear the singing  
That is only heard above.  
Let me go, oh speed my going,  
Let me go where all is love!”***

As pilgrims, it is true in our case that our relatives are not, the most of them, in this country. We have a few Brothers and Sisters with us who are going on pilgrimage and we are very thankful for them, for good company cheers the way. It is pleasant when Christiana can take her dear friend, Mercy, with her, and when her boys, Matthew and James, can go and Mr. Greatheart with them. Though, if necessary, Christian must leave Christiana and all the rest behind if they will not go with him—still it is much more pleasant to see them going on pilgrimage with us. Yet the majority of those dear to us are already over yonder. If I may not say the majority by counting heads, yet certainly in weight the great majority will be found to be in the far country.

Where is our Father? Where but in Heaven? And where is our Elder Brother? Is He not there, too, at the right hand of God? And where is the Bridegroom of our soul? The truest and best Bridegroom with whom we are joined in a marriage union which death cannot sever? Where, I say, is the Bridegroom of our souls? We know right well! And may not the bride desire the happy period of the home-bringing—the joyous marriage feast, the supper of the Lamb? Where our Father is and where Jesus is, must necessarily be our own country—and we are exiles till we reach it! If we have a clear eye for spiritual relationships, see what a host of our nearest and dearest ones have gone across the river, already, and are in Glory! Multitudes, multitudes are there! We are come unto “the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven.”

Let us, therefore, go on with great speed! Let us not think to tarry here, for our best friends and kindred have entered into their rest, and it becomes us to follow after them. And, you know, a man who is a pilgrim reckons that land to be his country in which he expects to remain the longest. Through the country which he traverses he makes his way with all speed. But when he gets home he abides at his leisure, for it is the end of his toil and travail. What a little part of life shall we spend on earth! When you and I have been in Heaven 10,000 years, we shall look back upon those 60 years we spent here as nothing at all! We will think of their pain as a pin’s prick, their gain a speck, their duration the twinkling of an eye!

Even if you have to tarry 80 or 90 years in this exile, when you have been in Heaven a million years, the longest life will seem no greater than a *thought* and you will wonder that you said the days were so weary and the nights so dreary, and that the years of sickness drag such a weary length along! Ah me, eternal bliss, what a drop you make of our sea of sorrow! Heaven covers up this present grief and so much overlaps it that we could

fold up myriads of such mourning and still have garments of joy enough to clothe an army of the afflicted! We make too much of this poor life—and this fondness costs us dearly. Oh for a higher estimate of the Home country, with its delights forevermore! Then would the trials of a day exhale like the dew of the morning and scarcely secure an hour of sorrow.

We are only here for enough time to feel an April shower of pain—and then we are gone among the unfading flowers of the endless May! Therefore let us not make the most of the least, and the least of the most! But let us put things in their order and allot to this brief life its brief consideration—and to everlasting Glory its weight of happy meditation! We are to dwell throughout eternity with God! Is not that our Home? That is not a man's residence into which he enters at the front door and in a moment passes out at the back and is gone, never to return, as though it were a mere passage from one street to another! And yet this is about all that Believers do as to this poor world. That is a man's home where he can sit down at his ease and look on all around him as his own and say—

***“Here will I make a settled rest,  
While others go and come,  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”***

Yes, this shows that we are pilgrims, because we are here for so short a space compared with the length of time we shall spend in the dear country beyond!

One thing that always marks us as pilgrims is this—that we are treated by the people of this land as strangers. Different races of men reveal their nationality by their speech, their dress, their manners and their habits. That which is perfectly natural in a Dutchman seems ridiculous to a Frenchman; while the customs of a Chinaman horrify a Briton! As we who are of the hill country pass through these lowlands, the people discover our foreign character and take a wondering interest in us, sometimes of a friendly sort, but more often of a hostile kind. They marvel from where we are and, as they cannot make us out, they often come to the conclusion that we are acting a part and are nothing better than hypocrites and pretenders. They, of course, are honest, and all who are not like they must be false and contemptible! This suspicion and ill will does not happen to *all* professors, but more or less it falls to the lot of all genuine Christians.

They cannot be hid and yet they cannot be understood, for their life is hid. Gladly would they pass incognito through the land, but the men of the world will not have it so. They soon discover the pilgrim strangers and they think them very odd. I suppose they *are* so, if judged by the customs of the world. We do not drop into the ways and customs of the ungodly, for our Master said to us, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Therefore, in this world, the true Christian is as strange as a Red Indian in Cheapside. People do not understand the saints—they cannot make them out—for they are constructed upon different principles from other men and often do things which men count foolish, unmanly and absurd.

The laws which govern them are not such as the world esteems. Hence it happens that the ungodly forge a strange name for a Christian—they cannot make heads or tails of him and so they set him up in their chamber of horrors, and fix a nickname upon him. They declare right positively, “He is mad.” Blessed madness! Another time they say, “He is a hypocrite.” One cries, “It is cant!” Another, “It is fanaticism!” Those are all expressions by which the world shows that it cannot make us out. Are you surprised when they use such titles? You ought to be very much surprised if they do *not* use them! If the utterly worldly man says, “I perfectly understand you,” then say to yourself, “Then I am like you, for if I had been different from you—if God’s Grace had given me a different way of thinking—you would have been sure to find fault with me.”

Oh, never be afraid of the world’s censure, Brothers and Sisters! Its praise is much more to be dreaded! When Socrates was told, “Such a man speaks well of you today,” the philosopher was by no means gratified, but concluded that he must have done something amiss that such a fellow should speak well of him. Take censures out of a foul mouth to be your highest praise, but praises out of such mouths are worse than abuse. We are strangers, speckled birds, curious creatures—beings that are twice born—who have a new life which is an enigma to ungodly men. “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes, or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” He is an unaccountable person. “You cannot tell from where he comes or where he goes.”

He who finds redemption and eternal life in Jesus is judged to be a strange, out-of-the-way being! He who looks for his happiness in the world to come is made, thereby, a pilgrim, and that is to men of this world a sort of gypsy life—fictitious, romantic, absurd and unpractical! We who are, indeed, such, accept our appointed condition and the scorn which often comes with it! And from now on we break loose from bonds of time and sense to seek another country—that is, a heavenly—

***“Cheerful, O Lord, at Your command  
I bind my sandals on,  
I take my pilgrim’s staff in hand,  
And go to seek the better land,  
The way Your feet have gone.”***

**II.** But now, secondly, according to our text, the Believer is A SINGING PILGRIM—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” He does not say “my song,” only, but “my *songs*,” in the plural, as if he had been a great singer, given to singing, which proves that pilgrims to Heaven are a merry sort of people, after all! They have their trials—some trials more than those which other men know—but then they have their joys and among these joys are sweet delights such as worldlings can never taste! On the whole, Moses is right in his judgment of the Lord’s people: “Happy are you, O Israel.” “Blessed are the people,” says the Psalmist, “that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your Countenance.”

Holy pilgrims are happy! Theirs is not the caravan of despair, but the march of those who go from strength to strength. I hear a voice objecting, "You give a rose color to facts, for some religious people are very gloomy." I dispute not the fact. For sure, some days are dark, and yet day is not the time of darkness—even at noontide he may dim—and yet noon is not the hour of gloom. On earth all men must eat some bitter herbs, whether they eat the paschal lamb or not. Moreover, all are not truly godly who profess to be so. They fancied they were religious and, therefore, felt themselves bound to keep up the profession—surliness and gloom are part of the buttressing by which they keep up the flimsy structure of their piety. Their religion is not real and so they make it terrible.

If your cheek is painted, you know that its ruddy line may yield to a handkerchief or to a drop of perfume and, therefore, you keep your distance and appear reserved. The countryman's rubies are not so soon dissolved. The roses of good health are not so speedily uprooted. I have known people who painted themselves up as Christians and they felt it incumbent upon them to look very demure, or else their paint would have come off. They thought that they must add melancholy to their profession to imitate holiness. False notion! The gloom betrays the child of darkness. "But we measure people's piety by the length of their faces," says one. Do you? So do I and I like them short—the shorter the better! Those who draw very long faces do it as a matter of pretense and this is to be utterly condemned, for Jesus says that the Pharisees had such countenances that they might appear unto men to fast, but they were hypocrites to the core!

Let me tell you for a certainty—for I have the experience of many to back me up in it—that there is a quiet, rippling rill of intense comfort in a Christian's heart, even when he is cast down and tried. And, at other times, when trials are lightened, there are cascades of delight, leaping cataracts of joy whose silver spray is as pure as the flash of the fountains of Paradise! I know that there are many here who, like myself, understand what deep depression of spirit means, but yet we would not change our lot for all the mirth of fools or pomp of kings! Our joy no man takes from us—we are singing pilgrims—though the way is rough. Amid the ashes of our pains live the sparks of our joys, ready to flame up when the breath of the Spirit sweetly blows on them.

Our latent happiness is a choicer heritage than the sinner's riotous glee. When suffering greatly and scarcely able to stand, I was met by one who has long enjoyed good health and unbroken prosperity. His mind is coarse and his tongue rasps like a file. He is always fond of expressing his rational ideas as proof that he is a superior person. With sarcastic politeness he stood before me and said, "Dear, dear, what a sufferer you are! But it is what may be expected, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens." I had barely time to admit that the chastening had been severe before he added, "You are very welcome to love which shows itself in that fashion. For my part, I had rather be without it and enjoy the use of my limbs. I can do better without your God than with Him."

Then the hot tears scalded my eyelids and forced themselves a passage. I could bear the pain, but I could not endure to hear my God spoken evil of. I flamed up in indignation and I cried, "If instead of having pain in my legs I had a thousand agonies in every limb of my body I would not change places with you! I am content to take all that comes of God's love. God and His chastening are better than the world and its delights." Truly I know it to be so! My soul has a greater inner gladness in her deep dependency than the godless have in their high foaming merriments. Yes, and even *pain* is tutor to praise and teaches how to play upon all the keys of our humanity till a more complete harmony comes from us than perpetual health could have produced!

Was not Herbert right when he wrote of man's double powers of grief and then found in them double fountains of praise?—

***"But as his joys are double,  
So is his trouble.  
He has two winters, other things but one:  
Both frosts and thought do nip  
And bite his lips  
And he of all things fears two deaths alone.  
Yet even the greatest griefs  
May be reliefs,  
Could he but take them right and in their ways.  
Happy is he whose heart  
Has found the art  
To turn his double pains to double praise."***

You that are lowest down in the scale of visible joy. You that are broken in pieces like wrecks grinding upon rocks. You that are a mass of pain and poverty—you will give your Lord a good word, will you not? You will say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." At our worst, we are better off than the world at its best! Godly poverty is better than unhallowed riches! Our sickness is better than the worldling's health. Our abasement is better than the sinner's honors. We count it better that we suffer pain like to the torture of death than that we bathe in pleasure—when that pleasure is the effect of *sin*. We will take God at all the discount you can put upon Him! And you shall have the world and all the compound interest which you are able to get out of such a sham. God's people sing! They are the children of the sun, birds of the morning, flowers of the day!

Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. We hear a music which never ceases, full-toned and ascending high—and its soft cadences are with us in the night when darkness thickens upon darkness—and the heart is heavily oppressed. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Know you that paradox? Some of us have learned it, now, these many years. It seems that the Psalmist had times of very special delight—high days and holidays, or, as the old records write—"gaudy days," days of overflowing joys. "Your statutes have been my songs." He was not always singing—at least not at his highest pitch. But there were many brave times when he poured forth a song! If you and I cannot always sing, we do, sometimes, turn to that sweet amusement and while away the time.

Remember how John Bunyan represents Mr. Ready-to-Halt, Mr. Feeble-Mind and all the rest of them? When they had cut off Giant Despair's head, they danced, and Ready-to-Halt played his part upon his crutches! Yes, we have our merrymaking, Brothers and Sisters, at which angels find themselves at home! Pilgrims can sing and touch the lively string. When the Lord kills Giant Despair for us, we have our Psalms and Te Deums, and we praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals! When we are brought from deep distress, our God deserves a song, and He shall have it, too. The heathens tune their hymns to great Diana or to Jove, and surely the living God shall not lack for praise!

Our hearts are poured out with as great delight and merriment as when the wine vats overflow. We know nothing, now, of the spirit of wine, for it is evil—but the wine of the Spirit—ah, that is another thing! It fills the heart with a Divine exhilaration which all the dainties of the world can never bestow! The singing pilgrim is a man who has a world of joy within Him and is journeying to another world, where, for Him, all will be joy to a still higher degree. He sings high praises unto God and blesses His name beyond measure, for He has reason to do so, reason which never slackens or lessens! Oh that we were always as we are, sometimes, then would our breath be praise! David remembered his best times. He says, "Your statutes have been my songs." He remembered that he sang and sang often.

I want some of you who are troubled, tonight, to rest with us awhile and remember when you were the Lord's choristers and sang as heartily as any of the company. You have hung your harps on the willows. That is a bad thing to do, but it is better to hang your harp on the willows than to break it, for it may be taken down and used again for the Lord's Glory. Jesus, who has a tender heart for mourners, will see you, again, and your heart shall rejoice! Think not that the past has devoured all your happiness—hope lives, peace abides and joy is on the wing! Recall those sweet songs you loved to sing. Recall them, I say, and find in them arguments for renewed praise! If you cannot graze in the pastures of delight and feed upon new joys, ruminate upon the old ones and get from them rich nutriment for praise. Think of happier days, and be happier. Listen to the echoes of yours former Psalms and begin to sing again!

The thing that has been is the thing that shall be. "The Lord has been mindful of us, He will bless us." The Psalmist bears his testimony that though, now, he may be mourning, yet he did once sing. I wish that Christians, whenever they feel discouraged and doubting, would not begin telling everybody, "Oh, I am bowed down," without also saying, "I was not always so. For years I was free as a bird and did not envy an angel! Nor shall I always be sorrowful. I shall wear my plumes again and fill the air with my songs. I am not going to be always bowed down. I have sackcloth on my loins today, but I remember when I was dressed in silken apparel and rejoiced before the Lord. My sackcloth will not last long. 'Weeping may endure for a night,' it is the time for dews. 'But joy comes in the morning.' That is the time for sunlight and for bird singing—and so it will be with me."

Recollect what you used to do, dear Friend, in the heyday of your faith—and tell others what you used to do that they may not think you have always been a knight of the rueful countenance! Do not let the Hill Mizar and the Hermonites be quite forgotten. When “deep calls unto deep,” say—“I will remember Your former loving kindnesses and joys long past, and so will I put my trust in You.” Well may every pilgrim to Heaven be a singing pilgrim because he is getting, every day, nearer to the land where it is all singing! There are many delights in Heaven, but the main thing about Heaven is the adoration of God. Oh, if I might once adore with my whole being, I would never ask to do anything else, forever, but to melt away in reverent worship of the blessed God!

Oh, what singing that will be, when you will sing your best, your heart made perfect to sing worthily in accord with the place and theme! Oh for the music which is all harmony and no discord! What music that will be when all the dear voices which have been hushed, which we can hardly think of, now, without a tear, will all ring out clearly the praises of God—when all the myriad voices that have gone before will join in full chorus—when all shall be perfect and all shall be there and shall praise God forever! Come, Pilgrim, sing, for you are going to sing forever!

Now, rehearse your blessed anthem! Sing unto the Lord now, since you are to sing unto the Lord world without end—

***“Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.  
And the night shall be filled with music  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.”***

**III.** Now, I must come to a close, for time admonishes me, and the last head was to be THE SONGBOOK—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” The Bible is a wonderful book. It serves a thousand purposes in the household of God. I recollect a book my father used to have, entitled, “Family Medicine,” which was consulted when any of us fell sick with juvenile diseases. The Bible is our book of family medicine. In some houses, the book they most consult, is a “Household Guide.” The Bible is the best guide for all families. This Book may be consulted in every case and its oracle will never mislead. You can use it at funerals. There are no such words as those which Paul has written concerning the resurrection of the dead! You can use it for marriages—where else can you find such holy advice to a wedded pair?

You can use it for birthdays. You can use it for a lamp at night. You can use it for a screen by day. It is a universal Book! It is the Book of books and has furnished material for mountains of books! It is made of what I call, “bibline,” or the essence of books. I am preaching to you tonight as a man without books. I cannot get at any of my books, for they are all packed away! But I have a library here in having this one volume, which is, in fact, a number of books bound together! This one Book is

enough to last a man throughout the whole of his life, however diligently he may study it. It seems that David, when he was a pilgrim, used the part which he had of this blessed Book as a songbook. It was nearly all history. What could he find to sing of *there*? He sang the wars and victories of the God of Israel!

You and I have a bigger book than David had—can we say that, as pilgrims, we use this blessed Book for songs? Truly we ought to do so, for this is the Book that started us on pilgrimage. The blessed teachings of this Book, sent home by the Holy Spirit, made us flee from the City of Destruction and made us seek the road that leads to eternal life. We sing about this Book, for it is “perfect, converting the soul.” It turned our feet from dangerous ways of folly, sin and shame. By the lessons of this Book—

***“Grace taught our soul to pray,  
And made our eyes overflow,”***

and, therefore, we sing of the gracious statutes of the Lord!

We use this Book for a songbook, as pilgrims, because it tells us the way to Heaven. We often sing as we come to a fresh spot on the route and bless God that we find the road to be just as we have read in the way-book, just as our Divine Master said it would be! Well may we sing a song of gratitude for an Infallible Word. We love this Book because it speaks of other pilgrims who have gone this way. It is a Book full of stories of the worthies of old, of whom it tells us—

***“Once they were mourning here below,  
Who wet their couch with tears,  
They wrestled hard, as we do now,  
With sins, and doubts, and fears.”***

It is very delightful to us to read and know how they conquered—and to learn that all true pilgrims who keep to the high road will conquer! So we sing of Gideon, of Barak, of Jephthah, of David, and, above all, of the great Prince of Pilgrims who went that way!

We love this Book because it describes the life and death of the Prince of Pilgrims, even our Lord Jesus! Many a sweet song we get concerning Him, as we rehearse the story of what He did and suffered for us here below and what He is doing for us now! This Book tells us the privileges of pilgrims, both here and hereafter, and of the care which the Lord of Pilgrims shows towards all who seek the better country. Best of all, if better can be than what we have said, already, we love this Book because it tells us of the place to which we are going. Oh, how it paints that city, not in many words, but in suggestive similes!

How wonderfully it talks to us of our abode! Why, if it said no more than, “they shall be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory,” we would know enough of Heaven to make our hearts dance for joy! To be with Jesus where He is! To behold His Glory! This is bliss pressed down and running over, more than our hearts can hold! Have you ever seen the heavenly country? Have your eyes ever been permitted to rest upon it? “No,” says one, “certainly not. ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard.’” A very

nice text, Brother. Go on with it; go on with it! You may make God say what He does not mean if you quote only half a text! He says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

Hence we know these joys by Revelation and that is the best of knowledge! The eye has not seen, but we have done with seeing with *eyes* when we deal with spiritual things! Our ears have not heard—these are poor deaf things. At best they only hear mortal sounds! But we have an *inward* function, faculty, power of hearing without ears! God does not speak in audible tones to his children and yet He speaks to them and they hear Him! We have a spirit which dispenses with fleshly faculties when it comes to dealing with God. He has revealed to us somewhat of the joy of communion with Christ; somewhat of the joy of conquered sin; somewhat of the joy of beholding His face and praising and blessing His name. We know, already, somewhat of the joy of being made like He and one with Him—and all this sets our feet on the top of Mount Clear—and puts the telescope to our eyes. And if our hand is steady, as, thank God, sometimes it is, we see the City and we long to enter it! "Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage," because there I read of what is to be my Home when pilgrim days are over and I shall see the Master face to face!

Now, dear Hearers, do you sing out of this holy Book? A country may be judged by its songs and so may an individual. Do you sing the Song of Songs? Are God's statutes royal music for you? A wise man once said that he would permit anybody to make the laws of a country if he had the making of the ballads, for these kindle the spirit and fashion the character. What do you sing, Brothers and Sisters? What do you sing? I leave that question as a heart-searching one—what do you sing? Or are you one that never sings at all? Poor Soul, how do you live here and where will you live hereafter? Where must non-singers go? God give you a singing heart and may you sing unto the Well-Beloved a song touching the Well-Beloved and keep on singing it "till the day break and the shadows flee away." God bless you. Amen.

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# GOD OUR PORTION AND HIS WORD OUR TREASURE NO. 1372

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1877,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You are my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Your Words.”  
Psalm 119:57.***

OBSERVE the close connection between privilege and duty. “You are my portion, O Lord.” This is an unspeakable happiness. “I have said that I would keep Your Words”—this is the fitting return for such a blessing. Every mercy given us by the Lord brings with it a claim which we ought, in gratitude, to recognize. Notice very carefully the order in which the privilege and the duty are arranged. The blessing of Grace is first and the fruit of gratitude next. The Grace given is the root and the resolve is the fruit growing out of it. It is not, “I have said that I would keep Your Words, that You may be my portion, O Lord.” No, first the portion is enjoyed by faith and then the resolution is formed. “You are my portion, O Lord, I have You already in present possession. Therefore will I, as You shall help me, keep Your Words.”

Duty in order to privilege is the Law—God be thanked that we are not under it, for we should never obtain a single blessing thereby! But *privilege* in order to *obedience* is the Gospel—God grant that we may know the fullness of its power to sanctify our souls! The Lord must first be your portion before you will be able to keep His Words. How can a man keep what he has not received? Without God to be our portion, where will the strength come from to accomplish so difficult a duty as the keeping of God’s Words? See to it, all of you, that you do not reverse the order! Do not, as the old proverb says, put the cart before the horse.

Let all things come in their due course and keep due rank, for mischief comes of the wrong placing of things. First receive from Divine Grace until you can say, “You are my portion, O Lord,” and then give forth, by daily service, what God has worked within, and say, “I will keep Your Words.” Each possession not only involves service, but *appropriate* service, even as each plant bears its own flower. The general principle which calls for service bears a particular application, for each particular Gospel benefit is linked with some special Gospel service. The unspeakable gift of having God for our portion has here fastened to it the peculiar excellence of keeping God’s Words and one objective of the present sermon will be to show that this is by no means an accidental arrangement, but that a true connection really exists and ought to be earnestly acknowledged by every child of God.

Because you can say, “You are my portion, O Lord,” you ought, also, to add, “I will keep Your Words.” First, this morning, let us consider the infi-

nite possession—"You are my portion, O Lord." Secondly, the appropriate resolution—"I have said that I would keep Your Words."

I. Begin, then, where the text begins, with THE INFINITE POSSESSION. "You are my portion, O Lord." Here, first, notice a clear distinction. The Psalmist declares the Lord to be his portion in distinction to the portion of the ungodly. "These often have their portion in this life; they increase in riches." The 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm gives a full and particular description of the ungodly in their prime and glory when, "their eyes stand out with fatness" and, "they have more than heart can wish."

But David did not desire to share their short-lived joys. He sought his happiness elsewhere, looking to the Creator rather than the creatures and to eternity rather than time—

***"What sinners value I resign,  
Lord, 'tis enough if You are mine."***

"You are my portion, O Lord." It is better to have our good God than all the goods in the world! It is better to have God for our All than to have all and be without Him. He who possesses God lives at the wellhead and drinks from the ever-flowing fountain. He who owns the choicest worldly goods, apart from Him, only drinks of the foul leavings which remain in the corners of earth's broken cisterns. What is the whole universe compared with Him who *made* it? What are the base pleasures of sin compared with the fullness of joy which always dwells at God's right hand?

David says, "You are my portion," evidently in opposition to the future portion of the wicked. "Upon the wicked, God shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." There is to come to the ungodly a dreadful awakening from their dream of security. They shall wake up in another world to find that their wealth has vanished, their joys have forever fled and that they must forever suffer the loss of all things and remain utterly undone. For them an unutterable woe is prepared and wrath like a fierce hurricane shall heat upon their guilty souls without end!

But, "You are my portion, O Lord." For me there shall be no deadly snares in life, nor horrible tempest in death. So long as I abide in this body, I shall be fed upon Your goodness, and when I shall fall asleep and shall afterwards awaken in the likeness of my Redeemer, I shall find myself in eternal possession of my God who is my All in All. Nor does the distinction end here. David here makes a distinction between his true position and the earthly comforts with which the Lord had endowed him. He was a *king* and had many possessions, but none of these were his portion! Some of the Lord's people are not the subjects of distressing poverty—on the contrary, they are blessed with many comforts for which they ought to praise God day and night—but none of these things are their peculiar heritage as joint heirs with Jesus.

Beloved, whatever we have in this world we are bound to turn our eyes to God and say, "This is *not* my portion. You are my portion, O Lord." The comforts of this life are like the youth's allowance—they are not the estate to which he is the heir—upon which he will enter when the fullness of time shall come. Present mercies are a sip by the way, a morsel eaten to

satisfy the stomach—our full meal will be eaten at the Great Supper of the Lamb! We are like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Canaan, dwelling in tents, as strangers and foreigners. The flocks and herds which graze around our camp are greatly valued, but still, we look not on those things as our portion—Canaan itself is the lot of our covenanted inheritance—and nothing else will content us. We look for a city which has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God!

Oh, Beloved, take care of ever making common things your portion! If riches increase, set not your heart upon them! If God indulges you with a healthful and happy family. If you are in a good state of bodily health. If your business prospers and if the Lord pours out for you temporal mercies from a full horn, yet never make these things your idols! Live above them and say, “I cannot be put off with these. You are my portion, O God.” I think David carried this distinction right into eternity.

Some think of Heaven as this and some as that. Fellowship with Believers of all ages is the great desire of some. Others long for Paradise as a place of increased knowledge, to know even as they are known. And a third rejoice in it chiefly as a haven of rest. There are grounds for each of these forms of desire, but concerning Heaven, this is the Believer’s chief thought—that he will be with *God*, and that God will be forever his joy and bliss! No sins will hide the brightness of Jehovah’s Glory from our eyes! No doubts will disturb the deep calm of our enjoyment of Jehovah’s love when once we fully enter upon our portion. We shall be forever with the Lord and nothing more or better can be imagined!

God is our Heaven! Whom have I in Heaven but You? Draw, then, a clear distinction between the things that are seen, which are not your portion, and the things which are not seen, which are your true heritage. Between the temporal and fleeting joys which amuse us by the way and the abiding and eternal felicity which will satisfy us at the end. Allow nothing to rival the chief good in your judgment or your affections, but cry evermore, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.”

Notice, next, the positive claim—“You are my portion, O Lord.” He deliberately declares this in the silence of his soul. As for the ungodly, they are boasting of their prosperity. They are girding themselves with pride as with a golden chain. But I dare not seek my joy in such matters, “*You* are my portion, O Lord.” To get into a corner quietly. To commune with your heart and be still. And then to find your soul reveling in the wealth which she finds in her God—this is true happiness! Let worldlings babble on as they may and let the trumpet of fame sound out its loudest blasts for her darlings—we will not envy her rich men or her great men so long as in the deep of our spirit we can feel that the Eternal, Himself, has declared, “I will be their God.”

Ours is the best portion by far! Whether we have little or much, our hereafter is our true treasure, for then shall we enjoy our God to the full. These storerooms and barns, banks and iron safes cannot hold our portion—behold our treasure is secured where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, neither do thieves break through and steal. It is worthy of observation that this clear claim which David sets up is not merely felt in his

own heart, but it is uttered in the most solemn place, even in the Presence of God. He addresses himself to the all-seeing, heart-searching God and cries, "You are my portion, O Lord." Though I stand before You, great God, even before You who can read me through and through, yet I dare make my claim—You know all things and You know that I do choose You to be my All in All.

Though I gaze upon Your splendor, which bids angels veil their faces because of its excess of Glory, yet I call that splendor mine! However great You are, I adore with trembling, but yet my faith calls Your greatness mine. You are my portion! Nothing less than Your own Self, O infinitely glorious, Omnipotent, thrice-holy Jehovah! My soul does not bound her humble claim, nor rest content with a part of You, but You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—You one God—and You, Yourself, are my portion!

Do you see how fully assured of his interest in Divine Love a man must be if He dares to speak thus in the Presence of the infinite Majesty and to challenge the Divine judgment upon his claim? You see he speaks in the present tense. There are a great many whose religion lies in, "shall be," hope and trust, but David's faith lay in the present tense. "You are my portion, O Lord." There are some things which I have not received as yet, but I have already laid hold upon my God. Many things I press forward to obtain, for I have aspirations which are, as yet, unfulfilled, and spiritual ambitions not yet satisfied, but You are even now my God, despite my infirmities and shortcomings. Yes, even today, my God, You are mine.

At this hour, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." I know whom I have believed. I know that He has given Himself to me as I have given myself to Him. Beyond a doubt, You are, at this very moment, my portion, O Lord. May the Lord teach you, Brothers and Sisters, to speak in the same confident manner. If true Believers, you have a right to speak so because you simply declare a fact. Do not be satisfied to leave such a matter in question—aim at positive certainty. Pray the Lord to give you the full assurance of faith that you may always unwaveringly say, "You are my portion, O Lord."

Now let us linger for a few moments while we muse upon the portion, itself, a subject which it might require many an hour to consider fully. The text contains an intelligent description of this portion—"You are my portion, O Lord." The Psalmist at once mentions the very heart and center of his spiritual wealth—"You are my portion, O Lord." What a boundless portion! Parochial authorities beat the bounds of the parish and great men make surveys of their estates, but none can beat the bounds or make a full survey of this inheritance of the saints! A man takes stock in trade, or sits down to balance his accounts, but there is no taking stock *here*—towards the infinite God there are no calculations—figures are lost and even imagination swallowed up!

Our inheritance surpasses that of all the men of the world put together! Yes, and apart from having something of the like, even angels could not vie with us! Heaven itself is not so vast a treasure as the God of Heaven! How ought we to prize an inheritance which knows no boundary! Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, we require something boundless—our soul pines for

the infinite! I appeal to those of you who have been favored in Divine Providence with prosperity beyond what you expected. Do you feel that it fills your soul? You are content that God should give you what He wills, but do you find satisfaction in earthly property?

What if your children are a comfort to you and your house is filled with all manner of provisions and friendly neighbors speak well of you? Can you find perfect rest in these things? Do they yield you inward, heart-filling joy? I know they cannot! If you were to be as highly favored as Solomon, himself, who beyond all men enjoyed this present world, yet would you have to come to Solomon's own conclusion, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." For a regenerate man, this life is like a bird within a shell just wakened into life. However comfortable the shell may be for him, in its way and after its fashion, yet as life becomes vigorous, he needs more space. He needs wing room, he needs to get out of his prison and roam at large!

The things which are seen are a prison to the soul—our spirit needs more air, more space in which to breathe. When a man can truly say, "My God, You are mine," he has touched the confines of the infinite and he has reached the Ultima Thule of his spirit, where he may cast anchor and no more tempt the troubled sea of desire. When we reach God, our soul is at peace, but not till then—for then the immortal soul has gained the immortal God and eternal destiny is sealed with happiness by eternal love! And while this inheritance is boundless, how abiding it is! A man who has the Lord for his portion has a freehold for eternity! His lease will never run out and there will need no renewal of lives, for there is one life on which our tenure hangs and that is everlasting! "Because I live, you shall live, also."

He that gets God has an entailed estate. He has in Him a Friend who cannot change, who cannot fail, who cannot cease to be, nor cease to be the source of blessedness to those who possess Him. Of this portion time cannot deprive us, nor death rob us, nor judgment deprive us, nor eternity bereave us. "This God is our God forever and ever." Ah, you worldlings, all your goods shall wither like Jonah's gourd, but our God shall be our shield and our exceedingly great reward, world without end! As the Lord is an abiding portion, so is He an appropriate portion in every way suitable to content the soul.

Man was made in the image of God, and nothing will satisfy man but God, in whose image he was made. Manna was fit food for man and God Himself is fit sustenance for the man of God. Only in the Lord can the mind and heart find that which all their faculties require for their development and perfection. When renewed by Grace, our powers are adapted to receive God and to rejoice in Him and, therefore, a full possession of God is the craving of the heart. In God there is food for memory which looks upon the past and for hope which gazes into the future. There is food for the judgment, which weighs, for the will, which decides—for the affections, which clasp and for the imagination, which creates.

There is no power of humanity which is properly a part of God-made man which does not find its due sphere and place in God. How well my

portion suits me! Adam was not more at home in Paradise than I am in my God. My soul, by Grace, is brought into a place of sweet content and delights herself in the abundance of peace. This portion is to the fullest degree, satisfying. Nothing else will ever end the awful hunger of the soul of man, which, like the grave, forever yawns for more. But the infinite God fills the heart and he who has the Lord for his portion has all that he can desire—

***“All my capacious powers can wish  
In You does richly meet.”***

You may sit down and imagine all that you could have wished—and then if you rightly view your God—you will see that He surpasses all your desires. Never, even in eternity, will you be able to conceive of a joy beyond your God, a bliss surpassing Himself!

Next, dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord is an elevating portion. A man is gradually changed into the image of that which he loves. He who has his portion in this world grows worldly. When a man gives himself to any pursuit he, first of all molds it, and then it molds him. We say a man rides a hobby, but after a while the hobby rides the man. You will find it so. Now, if a man seeks his wealth in the things of this life and covets gold, he will become metallic, hard, and unfeeling. He who lives to increase his land soon becomes of the earth, earthy. To pursue carnal things will degrade a man, cramp his mind and hold him in captivity to base materialism. He that loves to hoard that he may gratify his covetousness by counting over his stores—what a wretched creature he becomes!

Better, by far, to be a poor squirrel who, in due time, enjoys the little store of nuts and acorns! The worldling is little better than the mole who burrows through the earth and never looks upon the sun. Earth, earth, earth—nothing but earth does the carnal heart care for—its faculties are all pressed downward and forced to become adapted for its groveling sphere. Nothing is more debasing than to live for self and, the more a selfish man has, the more base-hearted he becomes.

But if our portion is the Lord, our delight in Him raises our thoughts and purifies our emotions. Covetousness, selfishness, worldliness all vanish when God is All in All to us. If God is ours, we seek to be like He is—we become followers of God as dear children. “He that has this hope in him purifies himself.” He who is possessed of the light is filled with light—He who has God is filled with God. The Holy Spirit transforms us until, at last, He makes us to be qualified to dwell with Him forever. Only one more thought on this portion, although many are crowding upon my mind. If God is my portion, then my portion is all of Grace, for no one can *merit* God. The idea is utterly ridiculous, if not profane. No human excellence could merit Deity. If, then, the Lord is my portion, let my song always be of that rich, free, sovereign, boundless Grace which is given to me who deserves Hell, but obtains Heaven!

I want to call your attention, once more, to this infinite possession, or rather to the seasonable utterance of David concerning it, for it is very noteworthy that this holy claim has generally been made by godly men at peculiar times. Did you ever notice the parallel passages? Truly the Lord

is His people's God at all times, but His people rejoice most in the possession of Him when they have most trouble. In the particular instance before us I find in the 51<sup>st</sup> verse, "The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Your Law." And in the 61<sup>st</sup> verse—"The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten Your Law."

David appears to have been between two fires—derided by the proud and robbed by the oppressor—and it is in the middle of this double trouble that he puts in his claim, "You are my portion, O Lord." Perhaps the robbers helped him to think more of that treasure which no thief can steal. Perhaps the derision of the proud made him remember the kindly condescension of the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, who deigned to be his portion. Look at another instance, where the same language is used, namely, in Psalm 16:5, and you will find the Psalmist declares, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh, also, shall rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hell; neither will You suffer your Holy One to see corruption."

So far as this language is that of *David*, you see that he claims God for his portion in the prospect of death and the grave. How good it is to have a living hope in dying moments, to be full of light when peering into the darkness of the grave! When death is taking away everything else, then does the Christian cling to the portion which can never be touched by Death's bony fingers. Read, again, in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, at the 26<sup>th</sup> verse. There Asaph claims God as his portion. But you know the Psalm is all about the trouble of mind which he felt while he fretted over his own affliction and contrasted it with the prosperity of the wicked.

One more instance. In Lamentations 3:24, Jeremiah says, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." But that is said in connection with a long roll of sorrows concerning which the Prophet had said, "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears." Beloved, learn this lesson—if in Scripture you find God claimed as the portion of His saints when under different forms of trial, then when *you* are in deep affliction and when you come near to die, you, also, may find the strength of your heart and the sustenance of your courage in this same blessed fact that the Lord is *your* portion.

**II.** Secondly, let us consider THE APPROPRIATE RESOLUTION—"I have said that I will keep Your Words." Here notice the preface, "I have said." Why did he not put it, "You are my portion, O Lord; I will keep Your Words"? No, he writes "I have said it," which means *deliberation*. He had thought over his happiness in having such a portion. What then? His thoughts began to stir within him and to devise a fit expression for his gratitude and he, at last, said, "I will keep Your Words."

It was no hasty thought but a determined resolve. I suppose he also means that he had given a distinct pledge. He had opened his mouth to the Lord and could not go back. "I have said"—to my God, to myself, to my fellow men—"I have said I will keep Your Words." It signifies, also, an adherence to what had been said—I have said it and that is the end of all

questions about it. Do not distress me any more, the die is cast. I have said it, and—

***“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear:  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

I have said it, my God, and I will not unsay it. What I have written I have written. Others have heard me say it. I have said it in the presence of a cloud of witnesses—men and angels looking on. I have said it and so let it stand in time and in eternity.

It is time that we investigated the link between the portion possessed and the resolution made. It is not very difficult to discover. God is best known to us by His Words. His works reveal Him by a reflected light as the moon, but His Words display Him by a direct light as a very sun of light to us. How do I know God except by His Words? The God of Revelation is the Christian’s God. Philosophers, nowadays, worship a god of their own imagination—they construct a god out of their own consciousness and a very pretty god he is, indeed! But the God of the Christian is the God who has spoken and whose Words are preserved here, in THE BOOK. The God of the Inspired Word is our God and because this God is our portion and we know Him by His Words, therefore have we said we will keep His Words.

I want you to notice that there always seems to have been a connection between the possession of the portion and the keeping of the Words of God. When God said to Abraham, “Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward,” (Gen. 15:1), a little further down, in the 6<sup>th</sup> verse, we read, “And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” First he receives God to be his own—“I am Your shield”—and then he keeps God’s Word, for he believes it. How did he know that God was his shield except through the Word which God had spoken to him?

Notice in the first verse, “After these things the Word of the Lord came unto Abram,” and again in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, “And, behold, the Word of the Lord came unto him.” He believed—this was Abraham’s way of keeping the Words of the Lord and it is worthy of our imitation. Oh for Grace to believe every Word that God speaks and to never start aside unto unbelief on any pretense whatever, for every Word of the Lord is sure and abides true forever! By keeping God’s Words we fulfill the type of Israel in the wilderness.

Do you not remember the story of the manna, which is contained in the 16<sup>th</sup> of Exodus? Now, the manna is so named, according to Rabbi Kimchi, because the people saw in it their “portion.” Our version reads, “They said, It is manna”—for they were not sure what it was, but according to the rabbi, they said, “It is a portion: for they knew not what it was.” Men did eat angels’ food in the wilderness! They realized, there, that, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Their feeding on manna was the type of the Lord being our portion! But what then? They ate the manna, but did they keep any part of it?

Assuredly they did! Look at the 32<sup>nd</sup> verse, “This is the thing which the Lord commands, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.” God Himself is my manna, or portion and, therefore, I will treasure Him up as He is revealed in His Word, which is the golden pot in which the heavenly food is preserved. Brothers and Sisters, let us keep the Divine Word in the very secrets of our heart as in a golden pot, saying with the Psalmist, “Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

Another beautiful type of the exaltation which the Believer gets when he can practically realize our text will be found in Numbers 18:20, “And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in the land, neither shall you have any part among them: I am Your part and your inheritance among the children of Israel.” See, Beloved, we take our share with the high priest, for he had God to be his only portion. Was it not a better portion than all the rest put together? Happy are the people whom the Lord Jesus has made to be priests and to whom He has given the priest’s portion, namely, Himself!

But what is our duty if this is the case? We must note how the priests of the tribe of Levi behaved and imitate them. We read in Deuteronomy 33:9—“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: or they have observed Your Word, and kept Your Covenant.” Their heritage was the Lord and they kept His Words, for the priest’s lips should keep knowledge. They lived upon the meat of the Lord’s house and they were bound carefully to keep His ordinances. If you are priests unto God it falls unto you, likewise, that as God is the lot of your inheritance and your portion, your daily business is, like the tribe of Levi, to observe the Word of God and keep His Covenant.

Moreover, the Words of God are our title-deeds to our portion. Men despise them and so might a stranger pour contempt upon old deeds relating to property in which he has no concern. “What is the good of those old parchments?” says the ignorant man when he sees legal documents. “What is the good of the old Book?” cry others even more ignorant! Ah, we know their value—those to whom those title-deeds secure an inheritance prize them exceedingly! Whenever you hear people talking about Bibliolatry and finding fault with us for believing in verbal Inspiration, you will find that they set small store by Covenant treasures. And, what is more, you will soon discover that they tamper with our Divine charter in order to rob us of the choice Truths of the Gospel—and that the top and bottom of their meddling with the Divine Words of Inspiration is a design to take away their portion from the people of God.

Leave them alone and you will soon see them tearing away one privilege after another and making great havoc with our comforts. Therefore, warned by what we have seen them do, we have said, “I will keep Your Words,” for we shall not, otherwise, be able to keep God for our portion. If

we let even the jots and tittles go, we may soon discover a flaw in our title and we cannot afford to do that! Our possession is too precious for us to tamper with the securities by which we hold it. "You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your Words."

Now, very briefly, what is this work of keeping God's Words? I pray God, the Holy Spirit, to help us to know it by practically carrying it out every day of our lives. First, then, there is a WORD which above all is to be kept, enshrined in the heart and obeyed in the life. "In the beginning was the Word." That very name, "the Word," given to Christ, puts the highest honor upon every other Word of Revelation. Beware of trifling or being negligent towards any Word of the Lord, since Jesus Christ is the chief and sum of the Words of God. Keep Him, hold Him, abide in Him, continue in Him, never let Him go. "I have said that I would keep Your Words"—this means the Words of the Gospel.

This we will accept by sincere and simple faith. The Gospel of Free Grace, of Substitution, of Atonement by blood, of Justification by Faith—this we will hold by faith right steadfastly so long as we breathe. All our hope hangs there and, therefore, there we will abide, neither shall any seduce us from it. "I have said that I would keep Your Words"—that is, "I will believe Your doctrines." When I cannot comprehend the great mysteries I will still believe them. Though others dispute, I will believe! Despite the insinuations of crafty men, I will hold to the doctrines of Grace intensely—believing them as long as Reason holds her Throne.

What I see to be in God's Word I will not dare to doubt or neglect. The Doctrines of Grace are the backbone of the Christian life. Keep to them for your comfort and you shall never be ashamed of them. If you willingly tamper with any one of the doctrines, there is no knowing where you will drift. Cast out more anchors—never let the vessel drift. "I have said that I would keep Your Words," that is, Your Words of precept. What You bid me do, I will delight to do. I will not merely rejoice in the doctrines, but in the commands, also, and I will ask for Grace to obey them all. I will keep Your ordinances, too, for they are a part of Your Word and are to be kept as they were delivered, without addition or diminution.

I will not say, "This is non-essential, and this is unimportant," but, "I have said that I would keep Your Words and keep them I will, through Your Grace, in every particular. I will do *what* You bid me, *as* you bid me, *when* You bid me." So much evil has grown out of slight departures from Scripture that Christian men ought to be very scrupulous and carefully observe every ordinance as it is set forth in the Word of God. "I have said that I would keep Your Words," that is, I will keep Your promises in my heart to comfort me. I will keep them in my faith, expecting their fulfillment. I will keep them in my mind for daily use and solace. And on my tongue, that I may encourage others.

Since the Lord keeps His promises by fulfilling them, we ought to keep them by remembering them. "I have said that I will keep Your Words," and this especially includes the Word which the Lord has pledged in His Covenant. I will rejoice to think that You have, by deed of gift, made Yourself over to me! Now will I keep in mind Your Word and oath pledged to the

Lord Jesus on my behalf! Now will I rejoice in the blood which ratified the Covenant and in the Covenant Word itself. See what an ocean of room I have in my topic and yet I have merely coasted and skirted the shore! What boundless sailing room there would be if we were to launch out into the deep!

My Brothers and Sisters, pray for Grace to keep every Word of God with all your hearts! Do not believe, as some do, that it does not matter what is truth or what is falsehood. It makes all the difference conceivable! God's Word against man's word any day in the week! I fear that the ancient power of Protestantism has evaporated through the influence of those who hold loose views upon Inspiration and who are busy manufacturing new gospels instead of preaching the old one which is already in the Word. The great thinkers may propound what they choose and the learned men of this age may invent what doctrines they like, but one thing I know—they will not cause those who have God for their portion to give up His Words!

For these 24 years you have found me here preaching the Words of God and you will find me here, still, if I live another 24 years. By His Grace I am incapable of moving one inch away from the old faith! One thing I know, namely, the Gospel of Substitution! And one thing I do, namely, preach it! I have determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! When we get through all the Words of God we will begin them again—but we shall still keep to the old Book and its old, old story! The children shall go on eating their daily bread and, not even for novelty's sake, will we give them the stones of modern thought!

Now, to conclude. This blessed subject very painfully suggests to me a solemn contrast. Will you, at your leisure, read another portion which the Lord reserves for certain persons? God grant we may never inherit it! It is the portion for hypocrites. In Matthew 24:50, our Lord speaks very strongly of some and I will tell you the reason why He deals so terribly with them. He says of some that, "the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Do you know what this man had done? He had not kept Christ's Word! His Master had said that He would come, and he did not keep the word about His second coming, nor believe in it at all, but, according to the 48<sup>th</sup> verse, he said, "My Lord delays His coming." And then he began to act upon it, to smite his fellow servants and to eat and drink and to be drunk, so that, not keeping what some think a very small matter—the Word concerning the future coming of Christ—he was found to be a hypocrite and had his portion appointed with false-hearted pretenders.

The same passage, with a little variation, comes in Luke 12:46, where the unfaithful servant is said to have his "portion with unbelievers," which is equally to be dreaded. The threat seems most to apply to ministers and teachers of the Word who are unfaithful to the Truth of God. The condemned one was not a faithful and wise steward and did not bring forth things new and old with which to feed his Master's servants and he, also,

doubted whether his Master would ever come to call him to account. And so he had his portion among unbelievers.

It will be an awful thing for me and for any minister here, or any other teacher of the people, if we do not bring forth things new and old out of the Gospel to give the saints their portion of meat in due season. If we keep from the Lord's servants, their portion, we shall be kept without *our* portion, or rather we shall have it, but it will be a portion of the most awful kind! This makes it solemn work for any of you who attempt to teach others. God grant that you may give forth a good portion! Give out the things that are new, that is the Gospel, which is always new—and give out the old things, the antiquities of everlasting love and electing Grace—bring them all forth in proportion lest you be found, at last, to have been unbelievers.

We will finish when we duly note one more point, namely this, that if you do diligently keep God's Words and if it is the joy of your heart to live on them, feed upon them and defend them against all comers, you may take this as an evidence that you are one of the Lord's people. Poor Job fell back upon that when he was in great distress. And at such seasons you may do the same. Job 23:8-10—"Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

And why? "My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the Words of His month more than my necessary food," or, "my portion," as many translate it. The Words of God were dear to him! He felt he had kept them and, therefore, he said, "He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." If you trifle with God's Words you will miss a great evidence of being His child!

Unless you are very strict as to what you believe and what you do. Unless you make the Word of God to be the chart by which you steer your course when you come into stormy waters and the devil begins to tempt you and the world laughs at you, you will not be able to fall back upon the evidence which Job could so honestly quote in his own favor. And neither will you have the sweet confidence that when the Lord has tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THINKING AND TURNING

## NO. 1181

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 5, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies”  
Psalm 119:59.***

ALMOST every phase of spiritual life is depicted in the Psalms, but we shall not always find in them the interpretation of those deep exercises of soul with which the Believer grows familiar. We must look to the New Testament for full discourses upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, upon the conflicting forces of Divine Grace, depraved nature and for the other causes which produce the mysterious experience of the Christian. In the Old Testament we get the facts—in the New Testament we find the explanation of the facts. The statement of David, which is now before us, doubtless sets forth the experience of many here present in this assembly—“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies.”

The Spirit's operation in the heart is apt to produce thoughtfulness, and through thoughtfulness to effect conversion in the sinner. In the case of the Believer, a restoration to the joy of salvation comes of like salutary reflections upon the negligence of one's life. Repentance originates in thinking upon our ways. It proceeds to compare them with God's precepts and faith prompts us to revert to the way of God's testimonies. I understand our text to be a brief but complete account of the conversion of the sinner and of the restoration of the backslidden child of God. I hope that many of us, looking back to the time of our conversion, can use the words as our own and oh, how many times since, if we have, in any measure or degree, departed from our right state with regard to our heavenly Father, have we had occasion to resort to the means suggested here—“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto your testimonies”?

The case stands thus. We are going on in the profession of a Christian life with little or no soul trouble. Temporal things are easy with us. By degrees we become unwatchful and the world steals into our hearts till the love of it creeps over us. We still pursue the even tenor of our way, unconscious of the dangers that threaten us, or the condition to which we have gradually descended. By-and-by discoveries startle us—we find ourselves unfit for the fellowship we once enjoyed. We lose our power in prayer. The duty which once was pleasant becomes irksome. All the symptoms point to serious derangement. This pulls us straight up. We look about us. We ask in sad perplexity—“Where am I? How did I get here? Am I a child of God? How, then, can I have lost my former strength and happiness?”

Thus we begin to deliberate. We survey our course during the last few months and we soon detect many sorrowful omissions of duty and, perhaps, even commissions of sin, till the Grace of God which is in us prompts us to seek the shortest way back to our right position. We have wandered into By-Path Meadow and at the sight of Giant Despair's castle we endeavor to retrace our steps. The mariner has been gaily sailing on a smooth sea and he has given no heed to his bearings. All of a sudden he sees a rock ahead—from this he ought to have been far away—at that sight he shortens sail, looks about him and in consequence of what he sees changes his course, sets a better watch, and is restless until once more he reaches the old familiar channel.

Fellow voyager on the sea of life, may not this be your case or mine? It is very likely that at this moment some of us, if enabled by God's Spirit to think upon our ways, may be led to pause and ponder our bearings. Thus by God's infinite mercy our course in life may be changed and our character may be altered for the better, so we may once more return to our rest. I pray that if we have never known the Savior at all we may become His disciples today. Perhaps a single solemn thought lodged in your breast shall become the means of your conversion. God grant it may be so! This very day may some have to say, "At that time I thought upon my ways, and I turned my feet unto God's testimonies."

Two things will engage our attention this morning—a consideration and a consequence. The first is *right thinking* and the next is *right turning*. "I thought" and, "I turned." The two things go together.

**I.** Our first point is RIGHT THINKING—"I thought on my ways." That *this thought upon his ways caused him dissatisfaction is evident*, or otherwise he would not have turned. If in reviewing my ways I find that they are all as God would have them, let me "go on." It may be well, in such a case, to *quicken* one's pace. Certainly it would be unwise to turn. So, then, it is clear that the right thinking of the text is a thinking which suggests dissatisfaction. Let your own reflections flow just now, I pray you, in this channel. Think of the days of your youth, of the time before you were born unto God. Or, if you are not converted, consider your whole life.

You are God's creature and yet you have rendered to Him no obedience! You would not keep a horse or a dog that did not do you some service, or follow at your whistle. But God has made you and kept you alive and yet, up to now, He has not been in all, or, perhaps, in *any* of your thoughts. You have been an unprofitable servant. You are like a fruitless tree planted in good soil. Is this as it should be? Do you feel any comfort in such a retrospect? I am sure, if you ponder it fairly, and judge righteous judgment, you will be very disappointed. Must you not say to yourself, "This will not do"? If you are converted, in looking back upon your unconverted days you will say, "Of all this I am now ashamed! What fruit did I have of those pursuits in which I served myself, sought my own pleasures,

reveled in my lusts and made my belly my God—living for the world instead of loving my Creator and Benefactor?

Consider your ways, O you who have never yet sought forgiveness. Would God that you might come to yourselves, and so track the course of your sins, that the tear of penitence might be distilled from your heart and begin to bedew your eyes. Were it so, I know that before long you would say, “I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned.” An unconverted state is an unhappy state. An unforgiven sinner is in constant peril. Even if the unsaved one should obtain the greatest success in business, the largest accumulation of wealth, the highest honors of fame and the loftiest degree of rank, he would remain a pitiable object because unblest of God. Such a soul in wretched unquietness walks through dry places seeking rest and finding none. Till it comes home to its God, peace and prosperity it cannot know. May God in His infinite mercy lead unconverted men to review their ways and forsake them.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if we think upon our ways since our new birth, we have little cause to be content with them. Think of the best things you have ever done. Does the flush of self-congratulation color your cheek? So far as I am concerned, far from me is every thought of glorying in anything which I have done for my Lord. Upon no sermon I have ever preached, though God knows I have preached my very soul out, am I able to look back without a measure of shame and confusion. I know I have preached the Gospel, but the manner of my preaching does not satisfy me. I would gladly wash every discourse in the tears of repentance, for in each one there are faults and failures that betray the weakness of a man, the infirmity of a creature, the unprofitableness of a servant.

No deed of charity or act of devotion that I ever performed can I look back upon with unmixed feelings. I wish that my best had been a thousand times better and had not been so sadly spoiled, as it often has been, by unbelief at the outset, or pride at the end, or by flagging zeal in the middle. This confession is no insincere regret, or a spurious attempt to appear humble—I *mean* what I say—and I believe that in the like confession the most devout of men would most heartily concur. The sins of our holy things—how grievous they are! It is only because our consciences are so blind that we do not shudder at the sight of them. Do you ever think you have done well? In that very thinking you have done ill. When I hear any of my Brethren talk of being perfect, I wonder what they mean!

Do they use the English language? Do they know themselves *or* their God? In perfect ignorance they surely must be held captive! As to their own nature and its workings, they can have no knowledge, or else such boastful expressions could not come from their lips. Brethren, the saints are still sinners! Our best tears need to be wept over, the strongest faith is mixed with unbelief! Our most flaming love is cold and chill compared with what Jesus deserves and our most intense zeal still lacks the full fer-

vor which the bleeding wounds and pierced heart of the Crucified might claim at our hands. Our best things need a sin offering, or they would condemn us!

As for our *worst* things—come, think of them! Remember your failures, your transgressions and your provocations. Blush as you recall the times when the curb has been taken from your temper and anger has flashed forth in flames of fire though you had hoped that all your passions had been subdued! Remember those times of levity, when, free from all restraints, your tongue has not spoken to edification or even within the bounds of propriety? Can we bear to think of hours when we have been tempted by avarice to withhold that which we ought to have given, or when we have given out of the pride which we fondly thought had died out of our blood-washed hearts? Have you not felt sluggish in the Lord's work? Have you not, like Jonah, in your peevishness and irritability been ready to flee from His face and forsake His calling?

Have there not been seasons when you have gone into your chamber and shut the door and wept because of your folly—and half wished never to rise from your knees again? Have you not said, “Ah me, that ever I should be such a brute beast as this”? Truly had you not been proud and self-conceited you would not have been surprised to find yourself so like a beast, as indeed you are. Do you recoil at my language and account it far too harsh? I am using Scriptural language, David's own words are—“So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before You; nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.” What a strange medley are we of the diabolical and the Divine, the sinful and the heavenly—so sadly wedded to the earth—and yet so gloriously born from Heaven.

If you look at your worst side, I am sure, Beloved, you will abhor yourself and lie in the very dust before the Lord. You will not doubt the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, but you will be filled with holy wonder that it should have availed to cleanse such sins as yours! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, bow yourself in self-abasement, follow in this examination and take stock of your ways since you have known the Lord. How have you behaved yourself in your poverty? Did your heart repine? Were you envious of the foolish? Did it seem to you that God's Providence was harsh while your lot was hard? And how did you act in your wealth? Did you have a deep solicitude to render unto the Lord according to all that He had done for you? Or did you count your cash and grudge your tithes?

Was your hand closed to your kinsman in his adversity because you would rival your neighbor in his extravagance? How went it with you in your sickness? Were you patient on the bed of languishing? Did you kiss the hand that smote you and minister to those that waited on you? How went it with you in your health? Did you consecrate your strength wholly unto your Lord? How was it with you in your honor? Could you lay your

crown at His feet? How was it with you in your shame? Did you glory in being despised for Christ's sake? How has it been with you in private and how in public? How have you comported yourself on your knees and with the sacred Book open before you? What progress have you made in the knowledge of God's will?

How have you behaved yourself in your house and how do your children speak of you? What opinion has your servant formed of your conduct? How have you acted towards sinners? Did you ever wet your pillow with tears for them? You sees them going down to Hell by the millions—did your heart never break while you were interceding for them? Come, the retrospection is painful, and I have marked out lines enough if you choose to follow them. Surely there is no room for *boasting*, but much need of *turning*. The very best man among us ought to be far better! The best man is but a man at his best. Lord, what is man? What is man that You are mindful of Him? It will be wise to think of our ways in the light of God's Law, that mirror perfect holiness. How far short do we come of the Divine requirements? Think of them, also, in the light of God's *favor*—what innumerable good things we have received from the Lord's hands!

Have our returns been at all commensurate? Think of your life in the light of the Cross. You have sinned in the Presence of your crucified Lord. Have you been dead, indeed, unto sin? Think of your life in view of your risen Savior. Have you been alive to righteousness? Are you not ashamed? Think of your life in the light of the Day of Judgment and the coming of the Lord from Heaven. How will your actions appear in the light of the tremendous day? How will they weigh in the Infallible balances of unerring Justice? Truly, as we think of our ways, we sit humbled before the Lord and boasting is excluded!

This *right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change*. When we have erred in the past, it is certain that we have been losers thereby. We have been greatly injured by sin and if we are now in a sinful condition, will not a worse thing happen to us? If I am an unconverted man, what will become of me before long? God is already angry with me, for He is angry with the wicked every day. What will that anger lead to? What must be the end of a life that is unprofitable to God? What must be the eternal future of one who has resisted the Gospel, disobeyed God and neglected Him in all ways? Am I a child of God? The tendency of sin must be fearfully injurious to me! It must pierce me through with many sorrows. And if I am now out of order with God in some degree, how much further may this disorder go?

What if I should make shipwreck of my profession? What if I should grievously transgress and have to go the rest of my journey with broken bones? What if it should be declared in my ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die? My Soul, sin, even now, has not profited you while it is in the bud—what will it be when

it ripens and its scattered seeds fly over the whole of my being—and turn that which should be a fruitful field into a tangled mass of weeds? Surely it is time for a change!

There may be some few saints among you who do not need much changing, who have gone on so well that you may pray to continue as you are. But *I* am not one of such, myself. I am afraid that there are few who are. I pine for something better, I pant to rise higher, to climb nearer my God, to love Him more, to serve Him better and to be more fully consecrated to Him. A retrospect of our ways suggests the need of a practical alteration, not merely of planning or resolving, but of practically amending our course. “I thought upon my ways,” says David, “and I turned myself unto Your testimonies.” That is to say, He really did leave the old trail and follow the better track. He rose from coldness into fervor, from neglect of prayer into intense pleadings! He left the faulty for the more excellent way.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *the retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be God-ward*—“I turned my steps unto Your testimonies.” It is no use turning if you do not turn to something better! There are certain people about who are always *shifting*—they hear some new dogma and that is the thing—straightway they are all agog for that. Tomorrow they will meet with some other new theory and straightway they will be mad in pursuit of it. They remind me of Luther’s expression, when he says, “There are certain people who, the moment they see a heresy, stare at it like a cow at a new gate.” They look and look and look again at the new thing as if it must be wonderful because it is new! The cow, at length, sees enough of the new gate, and goes back to her grass, but these people still stand staring, and another new frivolity bewitches them as soon as the former nine days’ wonder has grown stale. If I turn, God grant I may turn from good to better, or else it is ill to turn at all!

The best turn in the world is when a man turns to God. Such an one turns with purpose of heart. “Now,” he says, “I will follow the Word to the very letter. I will yield to the Spirit—His every monition shall be law to me. I will live with Jesus—and my spirit, soul and body shall be dedicated to Him.” Such a holy resolve is greatly needed nowadays. The divisions of Churches would be healed, the errors of the times would die out, the lukewarmness of this present age would pass away if once sinners were turned to God’s testimonies and saints were more fully turned to them, also. Thus right thinking about our ways suggests that we ought to be dissatisfied. It suggests a turning, suggests a turning to God, but *it also suggests that such a turning is possible*.

Many a man, in thinking upon his ways, contents himself—“Well, they are bad and they always will be bad,” and when a sinner once accepts that notion he will abide in his sin and go from worse to worse. I know of nothing which makes a man so grossly vicious as to be persuaded that virtue is impossible to him. “If I cannot repent, then I may as well be hung

for a sheep as a lamb and damned for much as little.” So the sinner feels and he advances in sin to its utmost degree. But, O Beloved, the *right* way of thinking of your ways is to remember that it is possible you still may turn unto God’s testimonies. No man’s case is hopeless! Every man’s condition *would* be hopeless apart from *God* and the precious *blood*, and the power of the *Holy Spirit*—but in connection with these, no man’s case, however habitually bad, is desperate—he may be changed—his feet may be turned to God’s testimonies.

You also, O Christian, may have fallen, today, into a very dull state. You may hardly know whether you have true godliness or not—religion may almost be a weariness to you. Ah, dear Soul, let not despair imprison you! You can yet turn your feet to God’s testimonies. By the power of the eternal Spirit you can be lifted out of your backsliding condition. As a child of God, you must not sit down and say, “I am delivered unto these corruptions and given over to the power of Satan.” The Son has made you free and free you are! Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. You have been redeemed and you are no more a slave. Your chains are broken! Christ’s mighty hammer has beaten them to pieces upon the anvil of His Cross. “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” While the Lord lives and the eternal Spirit goes forth to save, there is yet hope of restoration.

This is very simple talk. I mean it to be simple. Yet I want it to be practical. Let me pause, here, and entreat every sinner to indulge the preacher with this favor—just now, for a few minutes, look upon your past life. Perhaps you have been so moral in your character and so amiable in your disposition that you can reflect on years past without blushing. But there is one thing that ought to fill you with shame. You have entirely failed to love, or trust, or *serve* God. Why should it be so? Is it right? Can you, in any way, make it consistent with honor that you should live as you do, wronging none but your God, saving all your injustice for Him? You are kind, yes, you are kind even to a dog—but not to your God! Tender towards the sick and the poor—to everyone but our dear Lord—who, on the bloody tree, revealed His love to men! Why this exception to the usual current of your life? Why is the good God singled out as the one Person to be treated with unkindness and injustice?

But, possibly, your life has not been pure. Gross deeds of sin have stained it. Well, I shall not recall these things—*your memory will serve for that*—and your own conscience will upbraid you. What I do suggest is that you should give enough thought to your ways at least to breathe some such prayer as this—“Lord, turn me and I shall be turned. May this be the hour in which I shall put away old things and enter upon a new life through Jesus Christ.” If any of you who are children of God have become gross backsliders, I would urge you to the same self-examination and self-

accusation. Think upon your ways with a stern censorship, a bitter penitence, a strong resolve. Take time and calmly deliberate. Sum up the evidence impartially in your own case. “For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Christian people, you who are walking, in a measure, in fellowship with God, I press upon you, nevertheless, the same considerateness—not that there may be a reason for entire dissatisfaction—yet it is always wise to observe your conduct with scrupulous fidelity. Tradesmen generally give up attention to their books when things are out of sorts with them. They do not like their books, for their books do not like them. The man who does not like self-examination may be pretty certain that things need examining. Let us look diligently to our ways and may good come of it to the profit of our souls.

**II.** Secondly, our text treats of RIGHT TURNING, which grows out of right thinking. The turning of the text is thus described—“I turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” Here observe how *complete* this turn was. A man may turn his head and turn but little. He may turn his hand—there is not much movement of the whole body in that. But when he turns his feet, he turns himself completely! The turn we sinners all need is a *whole* turn. The *nature* must be changed. The things we love must no longer be the supreme objects of our affection. The pursuits of the world which were our idols must no longer be such. The things we have despised we must now esteem. Eternity, which seemed distant, must be brought near. Earthly things which ruled us must be put beneath our feet. There must be an entire revolution in our nature to make us right. The child of God, when he gets wrong, must come right away from everything which has misled him and follow the Lord fully, with purpose of heart.

The turning of the text is also a *practical* one. Whenever the foot or the hand is mentioned in Scripture, something practical is meant. “I turned my feet.” I did not merely say, “I turned my eyes,” but I showed the reality of the change of heart by change of *life*. It will not suffice for a sinner to say, “Oh, I am converted. I love Jesus Christ,” and then go to his business and cheat as he did before, or resort to his old habits and drink as freely as he did before, or keep company with his former associates and use profane language, as was his previous habit, or act as a worldling acts in following the lusts of the flesh and pursuing the vanities of the age. A change of life, alone, can *prove* a change of heart.

When the child of God gets out of order with the Lord, his change must be a practical change, too. He must not waste himself in regrets, but arouse himself to action. Let him immediately, “arise and go to his Father.” The Spirit of God must stir him to action! He must no longer sleep. He must procrastinate no more. There is vital energy and urgent haste in all positive reformation. It must be, moreover, a *Scriptural* turn, too. “I

turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” There is a spurious conversion which is not true conversion to God. A man may have *another* heart and yet he may not have a *new heart*.

We read of King Saul that he had another heart, but he remained unsaved. A man may change his idols. He may change his sins, but may not be changed in heart. Drunks have become sober and renounced their intoxicating cups, which is, so far so good, but they have presently become intoxicated with a conceit of their own virtue and extolled themselves as models of purity. Ah, then, it is a poor gain to change drunkenness for self-righteousness! Both sins are deadly. A man may as easily go to Hell by trusting in himself as by resigning himself to a besetting vice. Hell has many gates, though Heaven has but one. We must experience the change, which is according to the Word of God, and so the text says, “I turned my feet unto Your testimonies,” that is, to believe what God has revealed, to accept what God presents, to do what God commands and to be what God would have us to be. May God give us to experience within and to manifest without such a radical turn as that!

The Truth of God I want to bring out most prominently is this—the turning was *immediate*. “I thought on my ways”—well, what then?—“I turned my feet,” directly, immediately. And can this be so? Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Can the sinner *immediately* be made a saint? Can the saint who has backslidden be at *once* restored? Can I, who come into the House of God dull and dead, suddenly brighten up and become full of light and life and joy? Well, the text puts it so. “I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” Indeed, it is so! But mark you, if it is so, *it must be a Divine work*. David does not tell us this in so many words, but the testimonies to which David refer are clear and conclusive on the point.

To take a man and put him through a long process, as some do, of Law-work and repentance, and so set before him gradual enlightenment and assurance of faith as a distant result—well, I do not see so much to marvel at as a Divine operation in *that* sort of renovation! But to take a man right away from his former self and save him then and there is certainly the work of God! Zacchaeus is up in the tree. Jesus bids him, “Come down.” Down he comes! His heart is changed immediately! Salvation has come to him and he at once makes and pays the vows that prove his sincerity—that is surely Divine!

Yonder is a person, who, through a long course of experiences and performances has gradually attained to the belief that he is a Christian. I hope he is so, but I am not his judge. But here is a man, a jailer, who has been putting his prisoners’ feet fast in the stocks. He is cruel, hard, wicked—an old soldier used to war—with no tenderness in him. In the middle of the night there comes an earthquake and he holds his sword to his breast to kill himself because he fears the prisoners have escaped. A

voice cries to him, "Do yourself no harm," and he inquires, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Within half an hour that man becomes a Christian, a Baptist and a saved man!

The Lord did that, I am sure. But does He work in that manner *now*? Are not these the exceptions? No, they are the rule! How do I know that? There was a man once who hated the Church of Christ so bitterly that he meant to cut it up, root and branch. Riding on his horse to Damascus with warrants to put to death all the saints in Damascus, all of a sudden he saw a bright light. He was struck down off his horse and in a few minutes he was lying down prostrate at Jesus' feet, a penitent! That is God's work! It must be and this is still how He works. But does He work ordinarily as He did in the Apostle? Hear Paul's words. "In me, first, did God show forth all long-suffering for a pattern." If a thing is a *pattern*, the intention is to produce other articles like it. The original is—"For a *typos*, or a type." Paul's conversion was a *typical* or representative conversion.

There may be conversions which are not of that *type*, but many will be according to that *pattern*. Indeed, to speak the full Truth of God, *every* conversion must, in a sense, be sudden. The actual point of the conversion is instantaneous! I am walking through the woods and I am going the wrong direction. Well, I pause and look about, but whenever I actually turn to go the correct way, there is a critical moment when I turn, is there not? It may be that I take some time to consider and look about me—but when I do actually go back, there is a particular *moment* when I turn and take the first step. I desire that this present moment may be the instant of conversion to each one of you who are dead in sin. You have been thinking of your ways—now may you turn your feet to His testimonies! This must be the work of Divine Grace. The Omnipotent power of God must turn you to Himself.

This leads me to observe that it must be by faith because a man cannot be altogether changed in a moment by *works*. If works had a changing power—which they have not, since the fruit cannot change the root and no number of bushels of figs could turn a nettle into a fig tree—the man must have time to *do* the works, whereas *time* is *not* an element here. It is "I thought," and, "I turned," and, therefore, it must be by *faith*. Many a sinner has been, for years, desiring a change which he would find in one moment if he did but believe in Jesus. He has been praying, reading, repenting and I do not know what besides, trying to find salvation—whereas the Savior has found it for him! Let him but look to Jesus and simply trust in Him—he will be saved in a moment, he will be a renewed man and he will be able to say, in the language of the text—"I thought upon my ways and turned unto Your testimonies." I would drive home this point, but my time fails me. May God the Eternal Spirit bring many to God's testimonies at this very moment!

I have these closing words to the child of God—are you, this morning, in a sad, sorrowful, unholy condition? Do you desire to get out of it? Then, my Brothers and Sisters, arise, for Jesus calls you. “But I cannot,” you say. *You* cannot, I grant you that, for without Jesus you can do nothing! But I am not talking about what *you* can do. I would remind you that there is no reason why you should not ascend into a noble condition at once. Are you not still one with Jesus? Despite the state into which you have fallen, you are still a member of His body. Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? In Him all fullness dwells—why should you pine in poverty? You are naked, poor and miserable in yourself, but all things are yours!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, these things are to be had for the asking! God waits to give these things to you, why not enjoy them? “Oh, but I have strayed so far from God and have fallen into such a state.” Has the Spirit of God weakened? Cannot He raise you out of your sad state? What condition were you in when you were converted? You were dead, yet He quickened you. You are *not* dead now, there is some life in you, though that life is sickly. Which is easier, to make the sick man whole, or to make the dead man live? He has done the greater—He can certainly do the lesser! “But can He do it at once?” Did He not regenerate you at once? Was there not but a moment in which you passed from death to life? Well, at this moment you can pass from a state of sickness into one of spiritual health!

“But how?” Why, by the same way in which you passed into spiritual life at first, namely, by an act of faith! Come to the Cross again, my dear Brother, my dear Sister. Wipe those eyes of yours. Jesus died for sinners! Come away, just as you are, just as you came at first—and though your life is blotted with sins and your evidences blighted—your comforts shall come again. Why do you hesitate? Thus says the Lord, “I have blotted out like a cloud your transgressions, and like a thick cloud your sins.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow.” Why do you need so much persuasion to bring you to the heart which bled for you? Married to Christ, and yet ashamed to come to your Husband? A member of His body, and yet afraid to approach your Head?

Come along, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord lives and His heart moves with compassion towards you! He loves you! He *will* love you! He *must* love you. Though *you* have sinned, *He* cannot change. Though you believe not, He abides faithful. “He hates putting away.” Your transgressions have separated you, for a while, from your God, but listen to this—“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you.” “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face

from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” Come back, then, child of God, and in an *instant* your soul shall be restored!

And you, poor Sinner, the same is true for you. Do not fancy that you need remain any longer in your lost condition. Do not say, “I will go home to pray for a blessing,” but believe in Jesus even *now*, for He is able, *now*, to change your heart! He is, now, able to give you peace, now to press you to His bosom! Young woman, you are like Lydia when she went, that morning, to the Prayer Meeting by the river. She did not think to find Jesus, but the Lord, who opened her heart, sent Paul to speak to her and Lydia went home a convert—and why shouldn’t you? And you, young man of business, a money-taker like Matthew, who sat at the receipt of customs—remember Jesus said, “Follow Me,” and Matthew did not stop a moment, but followed Jesus at His call.

May the same happen to you today! You were not a disciple of Christ yesterday, but when you go to business tomorrow they will soon find out that you are a new man, and *this* will be the happy day for you, the day of your turning to God! If it is so, they will hear about it in Heaven, and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one who thought upon his ways and turned his feet unto God’s testimonies! The Lord bless you, every one of you, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:49-72.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—104, 424, 605.**

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# A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

## NO. 1443

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

***“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect  
unto all Your commandments.”  
Psalm 119:6.***

ANY attempt to keep the Law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the Divine Lawgiver and so much does it run counter to the whole Gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption. When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the Law, are you not ashamed of trying to procure it by your obedience to its precepts? When He declares that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, are you not ashamed to go and seek after justification where He tells you it never can be found? When He, over and over again, declares that salvation is by faith and that it is a matter of Grace to be *received*, do you not blush for yourself that you should give the lie to God and propound a righteousness of your own conceit in which you have vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of your life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men?

Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply vile in the sight of God! If a man seeks to keep the Commandments of God in order that he may attain eternal life, he will be ashamed and confounded. He had better at once renounce the folly of attempting so insane, so futile, so impossible a task as that of defending his own cause and justifying his own soul! But when a man is converted; when he has believed in Christ Jesus to the salvation of his soul; when he is justified by *faith* and his sin is blotted out—when he has obtained mercy, found Grace in the eyes of the Lord and entered into the rest of faith because he knows that he is a saved man—then in keeping the precepts of the Law he will gratify a strong inclination. In fact, it henceforth becomes his highest ambition to be obedient—and the great delight of his soul is to run in the ways of God’s Commandments out of gratitude for the great benefits he has received.

And let it never be imagined that because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, there is, therefore, a complete removal of all moral constraints and restraints from Christian men! We are not under the Law, but under Grace, yet are we *not* lawless and libertine since we have become servants of God and followers of Christ. No, but we are under an-

other Law—a Law of another sort which works upon us after another fashion. What if a man says, “I am free from the police, the magistrate, the judge and the executioner”? Does it, therefore, follow that he is free from the *rules* of his father’s house? Assuredly not! The child may be quite clear of the police court, but there is a rod at home. There is a father’s smile; there is a father’s frown. And though Christians shall never be so punished for their sins that they can come under condemnation, seeing they are delivered from that evil calamity by Christ, yet being children of God they come under another discipline—the discipline of His house and home—a discipline of chastisements not at all of a legal caste, for, however bitter the suffering it often entails, though He cause grief, He will have compassion.

The rebukes are sharp, but the retribution is not vindictive and the Lord is known to smile with approbation, to speak with commendation and to bestow His compensations with liberal hands on those who seek His face, listen to His voice and do His bidding. When He has committed to us some service which He only could qualify us to discharge, He has often caused us to partake of the fruits in abundant joy. Now, I shall endeavor to bring out this principle while I am speaking upon our text. Those who are children of God should seek after universal obedience to the Divine Commands. They should have respect unto all the Lord’s Commandments. If they do so, they will have a full requital and this is the reward. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” Two things, then, claim our attention—the universality of believing obedience and the excellence of its result.

**I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF BELIEVING OBEDIENCE** is here highly commended. The esteem in which we hold and the tribute we pay to all God’s Commandments is spoken of. Not *some* of His Commandments, but all of them. Not picking and choosing—paying attention to this because it pleases me and omitting that because it is not equally pleasurable—but the careful, earnest respecting of all the statutes of God and the anxious endeavor to keep them all! This it is which challenges attention and therein is great blessedness. Turn to the Psalm, itself, which is far preferable to any reflections we could offer, inasmuch as the Word of God must ever excel the word of man. There David says, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.”

Comes this blessedness simply on those who are in the way, irrespective of their walk and conversation? No, but let them take heed lest they step aside and put their foot into the puddle and stain their garments. The persons who are truly blessed are the undefiled who so watch their walk that they endeavor, in everything, to adorn the doctrine of God, their Savior, and in nothing to grieve the Spirit of God! *There* lies the blessedness, not in partial obedience, but in *perfect* obedience as far as it can be attained! Not now and then, but ever and always! Not in some things, but in all things, as far as we are taught of the living God. The only way to

avoid defilement is to have respect and pay deference to all the Commandments of the Lord.

Whether we observe it or not, there is never an omission of duty or a commission of fault that does not cast a stain upon the purity of conscience and the integrity of character. Would you wish to be spotted from head to foot, Believer? I know you would not! If you would be blest, you must be undefiled—and if you would be undefiled, there must be a universality about your obedience—walking in all the Commandments of the Lord. To enjoy this beatitude, a holy walking must become *habitual*. This sacred exercise is very different from sluggish piety. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the Law of the Lord.” A man may sit down in the road without soiling his skin or fouling his apparel, but that is not enough. There must be progress—practical action in the Christian life! And in order to blessedness we must be doing something for the Master!

Slothfulness is not the way to blessedness! Nor can we serve the Lord in this active work unless we labor in all things to mind His will and walk according to His way. God is to be sought diligently by sincere souls. “Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart.” Now, you cannot keep the testimonies and know the doctrine unless you have the will in full force and vigorous energy. It seems to be almost as inevitable as a Law of Nature that a man who is not sound in his life cannot be sound in his judgment. Wisdom will not long hold a seat in the head of that man who has yielded up his heart to folly. A pure theology and a loose morality will never blend. We have known men who thought themselves mightily orthodox, indulge in many unseemly and profligate habits. In fact, they have made light of their own sins—and that boasted orthodoxy of theirs presently develops into some pernicious fallacy!

Be assured of it, you cannot claim the promises unless you are willing to keep the precepts. Vaunt as you may your knowledge of the letter of the Scriptures, you shall fail to be owned of God as His witnesses unless there is the witness of the life as well as the witness of the lips! And how can the witness of the life be sincere unless we strive in all things to keep the statutes of the Lord? How can we be said to serve Him with our whole heart if part of our heart goes after vanity—if we hug some favorite sin or if we leave some known duty in abeyance, saying—“When we have a more convenient season we will attend to that.” No, the blessedness is to the undefiled! The blessedness is to the walkers in the way! The blessedness is to the keepers of the Divine Laws. The blessedness is to those that seek the Lord with their whole heart.

So, you see, you must take care to have respect unto all the Commandments if you are to get the blessedness of the Christian life. If you will carefully notice the fourth verse of this Psalm, you will see that this keeping of all the Commandments is, itself, a positive command of God—“You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.” That is enough guarantee for a Christian—“You have *commanded*.” Now, the

command of God to His people is not, “You shall keep *some* of My commands and walk in a measure according to My mind and after My will.” What father is there who will say to his children, “You must *sometimes* obey me. The rule of my house is that you may use your own discretion and follow your own inclination as to which of my injunctions you obey and which you neglect. You can have your own way at times if you will but occasionally yield to me in a few things”?

Such a father would be quite unworthy to be at the head of any household! Certainly our heavenly Father is not thus lax in His discipline. He has spoken to His children in tones of love. The Law of His mouth has been given as a light to illuminate our path and as a lamp to guide our feet. So palpable, then, is the Divine Benevolence, that the more imperious His voice, the more interested we must be in heeding it. Does He say—“You shall keep My statutes and observe My ordinances”?—doubt not for an instant that there is much profit in following the instructions closely and great peril in disregarding them! And inasmuch as the authority of God goes with each command—with one precept as well as another—therefore should it be the objective of the Christian that he should keep all the commands! He should make no choice, or selection, as to the words of the Lord, but take them all and pray the Lord to bring him into conformity with every one of them.

That this is a meet and proper subject of prayer becomes very obvious, for in the next verse the Psalmist exclaims, “Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!” Now, no man, I think, ever prayed God to grant him *partial* obedience. Did he ever pray—*dare* he ever pray, “O Lord, help me to overcome some of my sins, but not all! This day preserve me from some temptations, but allow me to indulge some of my propensities”? Did *you* ever pray, “O Lord, keep me, I pray You, from great and open sins, but permit me, in Your infinite mercy, to enjoy certain private sins that I am exceedingly fond of”? Such a prayer were worthier of a worshipper of Satan than of a worshipper of God! No, our heart renewed by Grace craves to be perfectly set free from sin! We have not obtained it—we are pressing on towards it—but this, even now, is our desire and our prayer. Hence you cannot wonder that in the text the believing man is spoken of as having respect unto all God’s Commandments, since, if it is a matter of prayer, it cannot be in respect to *some* of God’s Commandments, but he must pray that he may have respect to every one of them.

Now, I want to come a little closer to details. What do we mean by having respect to all God’s Commandments? I reply that whatever there is that the Lord has spoken in any part of His Word, we desire to hold in devout esteem and to have respect to every utterance of His will. The Law, as He gave it to Moses, is no longer, to us, the way of obtaining life, but it is still, in the hands of Christ, a most blessed rule of living. It is divided into two tablets and our prayer is that we should keep them both and reverently observe them, that towards God our life should always be obedient, truthful, adoring. We pray that we should have respect unto Him in all

our ways; that we should lean upon Him; that we should depend upon Him; that we should serve Him and devote ourselves wholly to Him. To seek His Glory, first and foremost, is the chief end of our being. We must not forget this.

But then there follow six Commandments upon the other stone which relate to men—and we must mind them—for it were a poor thing to say, “I am devout towards God, but I care not to be just towards men.” A devout thief would be a strange anomaly! An adoring murderer were a singular incongruity! A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ indulging in covetousness is a self-evident contradiction! No, he that loves God must love his neighbor as himself and I trust our desire is that we may not fail in obedience to either of these tablets, but may, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, be worked into an uprightness of conversation and character, both towards God and towards men. Some commands of God are highly spiritual, while others may be described rather as moral. Surely, to trust God is one of the grand commands. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” is a precept which we would never wittingly neglect.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.” “Cast your care on Him.” “Draw near unto Him.” All such spiritual exhortations as these relate to the life of the quickened Believer. God has forbidden us to disregard, to despise, or to disparage any of them. Oh that we may abound in all the Graces of the Spirit and be diligent in all the acts of our spiritual life! But we must not, therefore, forget or be negligent concerning morals, which some have accounted to be minor obligations! They pretend to abound in prayer, but are positively slothful in business. They are content to wait, but not to work. They say that they are serving at the altar, but we see that they are indolent enough in the shop. Christian men who stand up for the Truth of God should take care not to be lax in their conduct when they are so wonderfully strict in their creed.

Do not trifle with truth in speaking to your fellow man while you insist on respecting the Truth of God. Can anything be more despicable than the priests who prate much about the faithfulness of *God’s* promises but are not very particular about keeping their *own* promises? They say that they will let you have an article home on Friday night and you do not get it till the following Wednesday—that is telling a falsehood. If you saw yourselves as others see you, though you might account yourselves spiritually true, you would know for certain that you were morally false! Little duties are almost too insignificant for such high-flying spiritual professors. They are such that can pray at a Prayer Meeting, therefore they need not do an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wage!

On the other hand, they can oppress the laborer in his wages because they mean to give a donation to the hospital! It will not do! In vain you pretend to be spiritual and attend to spiritual duties, while you ignore the commonplace morals! Depend upon it—if you are not moral, you are not a disciple of Christ! It is all nonsense about your experience. If you occa-

sionally get drunk, or if you now and then let out an oath, or if, in your business you would make twice two into five or three, according as your profit happens to run—why, man, do not talk about being a Christian! Christ has nothing to do with you—at least no more to do with you than He had to do with Judas Iscariot! You are very much in the same position. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If without holiness, then much more without *morality* can no man expect to see the face of God with acceptance!

But, as true Believers in our Lord, we hope that He will enable us to have respect unto all God’s Commandments. Some Commandments specially concern the Church. Every Christian should endeavor to discharge his duties towards his fellow Christians. There are also duties connected with the family and every Christian should see that he does not let one of these kill the other. I once knew a man—I cannot tell you whether he is alive at this present moment—I knew him well. He used to go out into the villages with all the local preachers. He was a constant attendant at Prayer Meetings—in fact, you never went to a public service connected with the Church without seeing him—and he was out at tract society and missionary anniversaries and every gathering of the sort. The only place where you never found him was at home with his boys.

I had the misery to teach one of his boys. That boy died in drunkenness before he had reached the age of manhood. Others of his sons were the pests of the town in which he lived. That man was eminently good in certain respects—doing a great deal for other people’s families—but nothing for his own. Now, that will not do, Brothers and Sisters. That will never do! We must never bring to God, as a sacrifice, a duty smeared with the blood of another duty! That were an abomination! There is a balance and a proportion to be observed. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” The works of the Christian life may be divided, if you like, into public and private. How zealous some individuals are in the discharge of public work! Anything that will be seen of men shall have their closest attention!

But how about private work? We attend the Prayer Meeting, but do we forsake the closet? We hear sermons, but do we read our Bibles alone? We attend public meetings, but do we have private communion with God? O Beloved, there are two sets of duties—the outward and the inward. What, though to outward observation we walk uprightly before God and there is nothing about us that the human eye can detect as wrong, yet if the *heart* is not pure—if though the outside of the platter is washed, the inside is full of filthiness, how far we are from perfection! These reflections ought to cause a world of self-examination while I press home the crucial words—“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* Your commandments”—those Divine injunctions which concern the secret inward life as well as those which have to do with our more outward and public carriage. We sometimes divide Christian duties into greater and smaller.

Of course they are all great—none are small except in their bearing upon others even though some things appear to have less relative magnitude.

Now, some people are remiss and careless about what they call petty, trivial matters, but the genuine lover of the Lord will show his love to his Master in bestowing much care upon little things. I know it is in a family the little things that bring discomfort and the little things that give pleasure. And I believe in the family of God those who give diligent heed to the little things of the Word usually bring much comfort to their fellow Christians and great glory to God. At the same time, there were Pharisees of old who strained out gnats from their drink, but swallowed camels by their immoralities. There were those who tithed mint and anise and cumin and yet neglected the weightier matters of the Law. This must never occur with us. We must endeavor to have such a careful walk that we would not go an inch astray—and yet it is idle to talk about going an inch astray when we give ourselves license for a mile or two of wandering every now and then! God grant we may have Grace to avoid small faults, while we strive to keep clear of great transgressions!

One other word I would like to say here. In the full sweep of our text there must be taken in duties unknown as well as known. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” There may be some of God’s commands that you do not know. Study the Word of God in order that you may know them. “Well,” says one, “but I am excused if I do not know them.” Do you really think so? Because, if so, the more ignorant a man is, the safer he is from coming into condemnation, for, knowing little, he is under little obligation, according to such an estimation. But our understanding and knowledge are *not* the measure of our duty. The command of God is our sole standard! Conscience, itself, is not a trustworthy rule. If a man’s conscience is unenlightened, he may be sinning and reaping the ill consequences of his sin—not less surely because he is not conscious that his misfortunes are due to his folly rather than his fate! His conscience cannot be the standard. The standard is the Law of God.

Brothers and Sisters, I would not have you live in daily neglect of a Divine command which I am persuaded you would obey if you knew it. Hide not yourself behind a pillar, but come into the light and take the Word of God and read it and always ask that God would be pleased to open your eyes to anything there you have not seen before. You know you can wink very hard, sometimes, when you are reading the Bible. I should say that our friends in the Southern states of America, when they kept slaves, must have winked dreadfully hard when they were reading such a passage as this—“As you would that men should do to you, do you also unto them likewise.” And I could mention some other matters that concern English people that would require a frequent putting of the finger in the eye for fear too much light should come in. But be you not such! Seek to let the Word photograph itself upon your understanding and then,

straightway, when you know the Divine will, labor to carry it out in all particulars.

Thus have I tried to show the range of this text. But now notice that what is aimed at here is that the soul should pay respect unto all God's Commandments—pay respect to them—*love* them, *study* them, *value* them and thus pay respect to them all. I do not know whether you catch my thought, for I am afraid that I am putting it rather awkwardly. The commands of God are proportionate to one another. When an architect is about to erect a large edifice, say a cathedral, he has to make the height of the various proportions relative to each other. He grasps an idea of what the general effect is to be, so he does not throw out all his strength upon the nave, or the transept, or the chancel, or the spire, but he tries to make each part of the magnificent pile assist and contribute to the general harmony of the entire structure.

Now, it ought to be so, also, with the Christian life. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments"—to the *foundation* commandments, striving to dig deep. To the high soaring commandments—seeking to rise into the utmost fellowship with God. To those commandments that need stern labor, like the rugged walls upon which much toil must be spent and upon those which are a delight and a beauty, like the golden light windows that require fine taste and delicate skill. One would wish to do it all, to realize it all, to aim after a completeness of character so that we may be like the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh that we were enamored of this perfection and were seeking after it! It becomes us, dear Friends, who are believers in Christ, to set before us as our standard a perfect character and we should aim to reach it, looking to have the mind and will of God for that model.

That I may in all things do what God requires of me and abstain from everything which He forbids me should be the great objective of my life. Be it my firm resolve and my daily and hourly desire, that, by the power of His Spirit, I may attain this conformity to the Divine purpose. I should endeavor with constant maintained persistency to get nearer and nearer to this obedience to every Divine Commandment. Every failure should cost me sorrow. Every mistake should lead me to chasten myself with penitence. Every time I err I should go back to the blood and ask to be washed, that no defilement may remain upon me.

**II.** Having thus spoken upon this universal obedience, only a few minutes can be afforded for the reward, to wit—THE EXCELLENCY OF ITS RESULT, "Then shall I not be ashamed." I suppose that means, first, that as sin is removed, shame is removed. Sin and shame came into this world together. Our first parents were naked and were not ashamed, but when, in another sense, they became naked, then they were ashamed. They had no sooner sinned against God than they were told that they were naked and they hid themselves from the Presence of the Most High. Unless sin gets to a high head, which it will not do in the Believer, shame is always sure to go with sin. Excessive sin or habitual transgression at last kills

shame and gives a harlot's forehead so that the hardened culprit knows not how to blush.

It is an awful thing when a man is no longer conscious of shame, but a still more awful thing when he comes to glory in his shame—for then his damnation is not far off! But as sin is cast out of the Believer, shame is cast out of him in proportion and it, therefore, comes to pass that courage rises with a consciousness of rectitude. The man that has respect unto God's commands is no longer ashamed of men. He is not abashed by their scorn, or disconcerted by their ridicule. Let them say, "Oh, you are too precise," we would be very foolish to take that as a *reproach*. I remember a man once contemptuously calling me John Bunyan as I went down the street. I took off my hat to him and felt rather flattered. I only wished I had been more like he! If anybody says to you, "Oh, you are a Methodist," take the imputation kindly. It is a most respectable name. Some of the grandest men that ever lived were Methodists.

"Ah," but they will say, "you are one of the Presbyterians." Do not frown at the charge, but bow courteously, for some grand witnesses for Christ have belonged to that good fellowship. "Ah," says the world, "you are one of those Puritans—you are one of those religious people." Yes, but you are not ashamed of that! They might as well have said, "You are a man worth £50,000 a year." Would you blush to admit it? I dare say you would like it to be true! When anybody says, "Ah, there is one of the saints," ask him to prove his words! Tell him you only hope you will try to prove them yourself. There is nothing to be ashamed of in keeping God's commands! Then, again, before men we shall not be ashamed of our profession. Well may some Christians be inclined to put their Christianity into the shade when they remember how little credit they do to it—but when a man has respect unto all God's commands, he is not ashamed to say, "I am a Christian. Look me up and down and examine my conduct. I do not boast of it, but I know that I have sought honestly and sincerely to walk before God in righteousness."

Or, when a false accusation is brought against you, meet it in the same spirit. Perhaps somebody will libel you. I will defy you to avoid it! If you were to live the life of the most irreproachable man of God you would not be safe from calumny! Was not *God Himself* slandered, even in Paradise, by the serpent? But you need not be ashamed when you can appeal to God and feel that in all things you have endeavored to keep His commands. Thrice is he armed that has his conscience clear. No armor of steel or mail can so well protect a man as to know that before God he has walked in guileless, blameless uprightness and sought to do before the Lord that which is well-pleasing in His sight. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments."

This may likewise refer to that inward shame we sometimes feel when we examine ourselves and pass our own conduct in review. Don't you ever, when reading a promise, look upon it as a very sweet promise made to God's children, though you hardly dare appropriate it to yourself? You

feel ashamed. In fact, there are many gracious promises you never have been able to accept as your own. You have been afraid to take them. They were too rich, too ripe, too luscious fruit for you to adventure upon tasting! You thought they were intended for the favored children, not for poor strangers like you. Now call to remembrance my text—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* Your commandments." There are some delightful privileges of the Christian that you have never yet ventured to seek—some high doctrines that you have scarcely been able to believe. Dear Friend, have respect unto ALL His commandments, for, perhaps, your fear, your doubt, your hesitancy, your need of assurance may have arisen from your lack of a careful walk before God and when the Holy Spirit has enabled you to be holy, He will enable you, by full assurance, to grasp the rich things of the Covenant.

Now, may I not be speaking to some who have been ashamed of attempting their obvious duty? It is your duty to tell your experience, sometimes, to others, but have you not blushed at the very thought? I know why. It was because you thought of some inconsistency which, if they knew, would disparage your testimony and make you appear very faulty in their eyes. Ah, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." You have not dared to address even the smallest congregation though you can speak very well upon secular topics. Why is that? Is it because your walk is not as close with God as it should be? "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments."

Perhaps, my Brother, you may be a minister and yet you may almost falter in stating some grand doctrinal Truth of God. Why is that, Brother? Is there something at the back that I cannot guess—that I would not mention if I could—which weakens your testimony? Yet you will not be ashamed when you have respect unto all God's commandments! How can we stand to admonish the unrighteous if we are not living righteous lives? How can we be able, like Nathan, to say, "You are the man," if we are conscious that the person rebuked could turn round and point at our lives and say, "See what you do!" No, Brothers, the servants of God that are to have courage in doing duty for their Master must pray to be the undefiled in the way. They must walk in the Law of the Lord and though, at the very best, should they reach the highest point, they will still lie low before God and be humble in His Presence—yet they will not be ashamed when they can feel that they have, in all integrity, walked before the Lord and can say, like the Prophet of old, "Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed."

But if they could not impugn him, it gives the man Grace not to be ashamed. So will it be in the time of trial, too. I admire Job, notwithstanding the testiness he seemed to have, and I wonder who would not be testy when he was covered with boils from head to foot—yet it was a grand

thing to be able to say, “O God, You know I am not wicked”—and he could appeal to the Eternal as his Vindicator because the charges brought against him were not true. He had not sinned against his God in the way in which they said. Though he was not perfect in his nature, yet he was pure in heart. He was sincere in his disposition and blameless in his outward carriage so that he could defy them to prove any of the insinuations that they hurled at his integrity. This helped him to triumph! It was the very backbone of his patience.

And what satisfaction will it supply when *our* course is reaching its close and we face the hour of our departure if no dark clouds hang over our retrospect of life! Let God’s Grace enable you and me to live godly lives—we shall find, then, our evidences clear! Though we shall not always rely upon any works of righteousness that we have achieved, or any character of holiness that we have acquired, but shall ever rest as much in Christ as we did when at first we cast our sinful souls on Him for mercy, yet it will be sweet to look back upon a life that has been spent in the service of God and to exchange this service below for the nobler service of His courts above!

And when our course is finished and we are gathered to our fathers, do you not think it will be well to leave an unclouded reputation behind? Did you ever notice the painful contrast between the record concerning one and another of the good kings of Judah? Take, for example, Amaziah and Hezekiah. Of Amaziah it is said, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David, his father. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.” There was no such qualification to the tribute offered to Hezekiah’s memory. “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David, his father, did. He removed the high places and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” So, Brothers and Sisters, I pray it may be with each and all of us, though we may not hold any such exalted position as the kings of Judah! Yet let it be our desire and our aim to be “sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”

Once more, and I have done. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” “Then I shall not be ashamed before God.” There is such a thing as a child of God being very much ashamed in the presence of his father. He does not doubt that he is a child, but he feels ashamed. Is it not so with your own children? They know that they are your children and they know that you love them, but, still, they are ashamed because they have been doing something which grieves you and so they do not seek your company. They get away from father. Father has looked very angrily at them. And yet you never say, “Oh,

you are not your father's child because you have done wrong and your father will turn you out of the family."

They are never apprehensive of your casting them off. Oh no! They are Calvinistic enough to know that they are not threatened with such a punishment! But at the same time they are fully aware—and it is enough to distress them—that their father is vexed and that he frowns, so they keep out of his way. Now, remember, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." But we *must* walk in the light, or else we shall not have fellowship with God. Sin will mar and break up that fellowship. Sin will make you leave off communing, or else communing will make you leave off sinning! The two things are not consistent with each other. I, of course, do not mean, by sinning, those sins of infirmity which we commit unconsciously, but I mean a general *habit* of sinning to which our willfulness or our negligence contribute.

No rebellion or remissness can be tolerated in those who are living with God. Have you ever noticed two boys that want some indulgence and one of them says, "Ask Father for such-and-such. Ask Father to let us have a holiday." The other says, "John, you ask him." "No," says John, "I cannot ask him. You ask him." "Why should the younger one ask?" "Well," John says, "you know I have offended Father and though, of course, he loves me, yet I do not think it is quite the time for me to go and ask him for any great favor. You go and ask for us both." Have you not felt, sometimes, like that when engaged in prayer when you have not been walking with God as you should? You could pray for forgiveness; you could pray for common mercies; but as for any great favor or special mercy you have felt ashamed, at such times, to ask, and you have been glad for some Brother to open his mouth a little wider than *you* dared and ask for the Church and you some great blessing.

O Lord, Your servant knows what it is to draw near to Your Mercy Seat, but he feels as if he were not on such terms with You as usual and that he cannot offer prayers and intercessions with that sense of liberty he has often enjoyed. There are other times when God meets us with the kisses of His love and says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you." It is grand praying with us then! "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." I shall not plead my obedience before You. No, verily, but I shall plead the blood and righteousness of Christ—and this I shall do with all the greater boldness because my heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience—and that same Spirit which has worked obedience in me will work in me the spirit of adoption! And He that taught me to listen to Your voice will teach me so to speak that You will listen to my voice and an answer of peace shall come to me!

May God bless you, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# **“GOOD JUDGMENT”**

## **NO. 2688**

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 19, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1881.**

***“You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according  
unto Your Word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge:  
for I have believed Your Commandments.”  
Psalm 119:65, 66.***

WHEN the Psalmist wrote these words, he was contemplating the goodness of God. In the verse preceding our text, the 64<sup>th</sup>, he sang, “The earth, O Jehovah, is full of Your mercy!” as if he could not walk abroad without seeing evidences of it, or look upward, or backward, or around him, without *everywhere* perceiving the Omnipresent goodness of the Most High. Whatever season of the year it is in which we take our walks abroad into the field of Nature, we ought to be in such a condition of mind and heart as to see proofs of the fullness of God’s love everywhere around us, but especially, I think, it should be so in these summer months when the fields are ripening toward the harvest and we see how God is fulfilling His ancient Covenant, “While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” How thankful we ought to be that the Lord thus remembers the earth and makes it bring forth the corn and everything else that is necessary to supply the needs of men! So let us bless God that the earth is still full of His mercy.

Is our own life in the same condition, or are we strangers to the goodness of God? Is there mercy all around us, yet none *for us*? Well, let others answer these questions as they may, there are many here present who can reply most emphatically, “No, the earth is full of God’s mercy and we can, each one of us, say to Him, ‘You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.’ Though You have had so many others of Your creatures to care for, You have not forgotten poor me. Though I am but the merest atom, dwelling in a world which is, itself, nothing more than a speck when compared with the innumerable worlds that throng Your universe, yet You have not failed to let Your mercy come to me, even to me.”

I have sometimes lighted upon a little flower right in the depths of the forest glades. It seemed as if it were hidden quite away, utterly concealed by the towering trees and yet it bloomed as sweetly as if it had been watched over and cared for by the utmost skill, for somewhere between the branches—I could not tell where—there was a little window through which the sun shone into the heart of that tiny flower, kissing it into per-

fume, and tinting it with those lovely colors which made it so attractive! All around it, the soil was bare, but this sweet flower flourished all by itself, and so, Brothers and Sisters, if you have lived in the midst of those who have forgotten your God, you have been hidden away in obscurity, yet the Lord has not forgotten you and, somehow—yes, and continually—the beams of His gracious sunlight have come even to you and you must bless and praise and magnify Him to whom you owe all that you have and are! Therefore cheerfully bear witness with the rest of God’s people to this blessed fact and join with the Psalmist in saying, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according unto Your Word.”

You may go further and say, “You have dealt well with all Your servants, O Lord, according to Your Word.” David had not always thought so, but he did think so when he came to sum up the total of his life’s experience and to write it down in his diary—for I suppose that the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm was made up of the entries in David’s diary as he went along. This was the summary of all that he had experienced, that God had dealt well with him—but as he had not always thought so, he felt that he had been very much misled and mistaken in judgment—and therefore he prayed this prayer: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed Your Commandments.”

There will be three things for me to talk about tonight. First, *judgment expressed*. David expressed his judgment as to how God had dealt with him and very sound and judicious judgment it was—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according unto Your Word.” Secondly, I shall have to speak to you about *judgment desired*—“Teach me good judgment and knowledge.” And, thirdly, I shall tell you about *judgment possessed*. The Psalmist already possessed a measure of good judgment—he was not altogether left to be as the foolish, for he could truthfully say to the Lord, “I have believed Your Commandments.” He had possessed judgment enough for that and that is one reason why he might expect to have more, for it is an old law of God’s Kingdom, “Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

**I.** First, then, here is David’s JUDGMENT EXPRESSED—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.”

Looking through his past life, he came to the conclusion, first, that *God had dealt with him*. It is a very awe-inspiring Truth of God and one that should make us feel that this life is a solemn thing, because in it God deals with us. We thought that we had been having dealings with our fellow men and so we have, but, all the while, there has been Another who has also been dealing with us. And we say, “Under all, and over all, and within all, have been the dealings of His Providence.” Or, rather, let us say, “the dealings of God, Himself,” so that we can personally say, “You have dealt with Your servant.” It will not be strange if we add, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven. Surely the Lord is in this place.”

There are some who cannot or who will not see that God deals with men in this mortal life. Alas, for them! God is the very Life of life and there are some of us who could not be made to think otherwise than that

God has dealt with us, for there have been portions of our life which have been so surprising that whenever we look back upon them, they amaze us! There is no novel that ever was written that can equal in interest the true life of a believing man. His path is strewn with wonders and thick with marvelous displays of his Lord's love. I will not refer especially to any man's life. If I did, it would have to be the one I know best, that is, my own. Each man must speak according to his own experience and I am compelled to say, and to say it without the slightest hesitation, “The Lord has dealt with my soul.” As surely as I live, I have spoken with Him and He has spoken with me. No, more than that, He has dealt out innumerable mercies to me and constantly dealt with me—and through me He has dealt with many others, also. And this I know, that life would not be worth living if it did not continually touch the hem of Jehovah's garments! The very virtue of life streams into our life through our being in contact with Him. Where the little circle of our existence impinges upon the unutterably vast circumference of His power and Glory is where we get the blessings that we need!

I wish that we recognized far more clearly than we do that God is around us at all times. In the olden days, the saints often met with God—sometimes beneath a tree, or beside a bush, or in a lone desert, or outside a city wall, or by a brook at midnight, or in a furnace all aglow—they met Him in all manner of places, for He was much about in those good old days, or else there were men about, then, who were quick to record His manifestations to His people. But have not we also beheld His face again and again? Have not we often had communion with the Well-Beloved? Has He not had dealings with us, also? Surely the beams and timbers of this House of Prayer would cry out against us if we did not say, “Verily, the Lord has been mindful of us and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. Truly, God has dealt with us.”

This is also true of every man, though not in the same sense, nor to the same extent. God has dealt with you all. Into whatever position you have been cast, God has had some dealings with you. Take heed lest His dealings of long-suffering, being slighted, He should begin to deal with you after another fashion, for He has a rod of iron, and woe be to the potter's vessels in the day when He begins to dash them in pieces! Oh, that He might deal with us only in mercy and never come to deal with us in wrath, as He will have to do with the men who go on in their iniquities! That is the first judgment of David, that God had dealt with him.

But he also judged that *God had dealt well with him*—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” And this, too, is our conclusion. Taking God's dealings as a whole, He has dealt well with us. There are some points in His dealings with us which have been so special that the words of our text hardly appear emphatic enough to describe them. For instance, when I think of God's purposes concerning us from before the foundation of the world, it hardly seems sufficient to say, “The Lord has dealt well with us.” When I remember the Covenant, that “Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,” I want to say something much

stronger than that God has dealt well with us—I prefer to say that He has dealt with us like a God, in a Divine way for which there is no earthly comparison! Then, when He gave His Son to bleed and die for us and when He sent His Spirit to convert us, and then to dwell in us, it is not enough if I say, “You have dealt well with Your servants.” It is better than well! It is indescribably, unutterably well that God has dealt with us in the way of free, rich, Sovereign, Immutable, everlasting love—glory be to His holy name!

But take our personal experience, for I suppose the Psalmist is here referring to that. How well the Lord has dealt with us in Providence! Adding up all our varied experiences, we can truly say that all things have worked together for our good. Life has been a strange mixture for some of us—our coat of arms might be the checkers, black and white, for we have had sweets and bitters intermingled—bitter sweets and sweet bitters. What strange compounds many of our lives are! The evening and the morning have made the day from the creation and we have had darkness and brightness, but, putting the whole together, the result has been more than well. If we had been the pilot of our own ship, we could not have steered it better than God has done—no, we could not have guided it anything like as well as He has done. We would have been sure to make a spiritual shipwreck long ago if we had been our own pilots. We would have been bankrupts before now if we had been our own managers! But God has managed our affairs so successfully that looking upon the whole of them at this moment, we can truly say that God has dealt well with us.

I may go much further than that and say that if we were to take to pieces the whole of God’s dealings with us, there is not one fragment out of it all of which we would not have to say that God has dealt well with us in it. This is especially true of those parts of His dealings with us which have seemed to be the roughest. Oh, how we ought to bless God for the use He has made of the rod! Among all the blessings of the Covenant, surely there is none that, for our present imperfect state, has in it greater immediate virtues than the rod of the Covenant from the strokes of which we have not been spared! How grateful we ought to be for sanctified affliction! Wisely did the poet write, concerning the varied experiences of God’s children—

**“Tis well when on the mount  
They feast on dying love,  
And ‘tis as well in God’s account,  
When they the furnace prove.”**

I am sure that in looking back upon all the way that the Lord has led you, those of you who are His children will be bound to say that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life! There has not been a single mistake or one unkind act on God’s part. He has sometimes cut you with the very sharpest knife He had and it was necessary for Him to cut deeply with it so as to get out the very roots of the cancer that was destroying you. You would have been lost if it had not been that you lost your all—but that loss was your greatest gain! I have heard of one who said that he never saw till he was blind. And of another who

said that he never ran in the way of God’s Commandments till he lost the use of both his legs. Oftentimes that which has thrown us down has, in the best sense, lifted us up! So each Believer can adopt the language of the text, and say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” In every place, and at every time, it has been all well!

It has also been well in every sense of the word. “Well”—that is to say, *wise*. “Well”—that is to say, *kind*, which is something more than being simply wise. “Well”—that is to say, kinder than kind, the kindest of all! What God has done for us has always been the best thing that could be done! It could not have been better. I sometimes fear that, on our part, it could hardly have been *worse*—shame on us that it was so bad! But, on His part, nothing could possibly have excelled it—every step that He has taken has been full of infinite love and wisdom. And as to the ultimate effects and results of it all, it is well. There will come something better for us out of all that God has prepared for us than has come out of it yet. All is *well*, and all shall be *well*. Pronounce the word with all the emphasis that you can lay upon it and look at it from all sides, and then say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.”

Now let me shift this kaleidoscope a little, that you may take another peep at all the marvels that it contains. Notice, next, that *God has dealt well with us as His servants*—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” Of course He has dealt well with us as His children, giving us the child’s portion and the heir’s portion! He has dealt well with us as His bride, as the members of His mystical body and so on. But David said to the Lord, “You have dealt well with Your servant,” and I will try to show you how He has dealt well with us as His servants.

First, He has given us blessed work to do. There is no such employment as serving God—this employment is our enjoyment! To serve God is to reign! The Lord has sometimes given us difficult service—so we have thought—but He has always given us proportionate strength and has never exacted of us more than He has enabled us to accomplish. On another occasion, David wrote, “Unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work.” That is to say, “You have supplied the straw when you have expected the bricks to be made. You have given the five talents if you have looked for five other talents to be gained as interest on them. You have dealt well in giving little work to those who have had little strength and less work when the strength has grown less, and more strength when more work had to be done and most strength of all when work and suffering came together. You have been very considerate of Your servant’s broken bones and many weaknesses. You have dealt well with Your servant in that way.”

But servants expect to receive not only work, but provision—and the Lord has dealt well with His servants in that respect, also. He has always kept us in livery—sometimes we may have thought that our clothes were getting pretty well worn out and that it was time for us to have a change—and it has always come. We have also always had food. God has never kept a stinted table and we may say of our Heavenly Father’s house that there is always bread enough and to spare for all His ser-

vants. The Lord has supplied us in Providence and especially in Grace. What fat things full of marrow, what wines on the lees well-refined has He prepared for us! God never starves His servants or puts them on short commons. No, each one of them can truly say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word, both in provender and in labor.”

And servants like, beside that, to get a word of encouragement now and then from their masters. There was one who left an excellent master with whom he had traveled all over the Continent. And when his master asked the reason why he wished to leave him, he answered, “You have not been unkind to me; you have given me all the wages that I needed, but when I have been with you in the darkest nights, in the heaviest tempests, in the most terrible frosts, you have never spoken a cheering word to me and I cannot continue to live such a life as that.” You know that a kind word or a smiling look will go a long way and in this respect, also, we can, each one, say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” How graciously He has smiled upon us when we have been trying to serve Him! How much He has made of our little! He has often commended us even when we have been blaming ourselves—and when we confessed that we were unprofitable servants and only spoke the truth when we said so, He has been ready to say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” He has often said to us, “I know your works,” at the very time when we have hardly known them ourselves! Or, if we have known them, we have wanted not to recognize them, but to pass them by as if they were unworthy of notice. The Lord has, indeed, dealt well with His servants in the way of encouragement.

And so He has in respect to our wages. He has given us earnest of the pay which we shall receive at the end of our day’s toil. Oh, that blessed pay! How rich we shall be when we receive it, not of debt, but all of Grace—a whole Heaven and a whole Christ, and a whole God for our whole hearts to enjoy throughout the whole of eternity! Was there ever such a “penny” as that paid to laborers at the close of their day’s work? But even on the way the Lord has given us blessed earnest, sweet pledges of what is yet to come to us. We have good cause to love our Master and to love His work, and to be grateful to Him for the pay He gives us for it. And again, each one of us can say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” Is there any one of His servants here who will not say this? I always think that God has dealt well with me in not turning me out of doors and I still pray the prayer—

**“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord”—**

for I count it my highest honor to be permitted to do anything for Him. He might well say to any of us, “You are not worth your salt,” and send us adrift, but He has not done so and we can still say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, and still permitted him to take his place in the ranks of those that wait upon You and, therefore, blessed be Your holy name!”

So far, you see, David’s judgment is one in which we fully coincide—“You have dealt with Your servant” and, “You have dealt well with him.”

But we also agree with him that *God has dealt with us according to His Word*. It greatly sweetens a blessing when we know that it comes to us by way of the promises. Whatever God has done to us, in love and kindness, is only what He said He would do! Look back, now, and see whether the print of Providence does not exactly answer to the type of the promise. Concerning many things that we have needed, God said, “I will give them to you.” And now we can say to Him, “You have done so.” He promised that He would be with us. He promised that He would bless us. He promised that bread would be given us and that our waters should be sure. He said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you” and all along He has acted according to His Word!

Even when He has chastened us, He has only fulfilled His own Word, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” His pruning has been as Christ said it would be, “Every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” When He chastises us for our disobedience, He only fulfils His threat, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” It is all according to the Word and if anybody wants to know what the life of a Christian is, let him read what the promise of God is, for, as far as God is concerned in the life of a Christian—the promise is a prophecy of what it will be—and the prophecy is fulfilled in the life of every man who puts his trust in God.

Now this was a sound judgment on David’s part, but it was a judgment at which he appears to have arrived after God’s dealings with him were almost ended. It would be far better and much wiser if we could daily learn to say, “You are dealing well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word.” But we are often so foolish that, like old Jacob, we say, “All these things are against us.” David probably felt that in former days he had often made a mistake, so he here corrects himself and expresses a true and just judgment concerning the dealings of God with him. May we be taught to judge righteously of God while the work is still going on! Is there anybody here, out of all God’s people, who will do otherwise? If so, let me just suggest that if we cannot say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word,” then, in effect, do say this, “You have not dealt well with Your servant, O Lord—and You have not kept Your Word.”

Is there any child of God prepared to talk like that? Not one! And if you or I cannot say, “You are dealing well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word,” then we are, in effect, saying, “You are not dealing well with Your servant, and You are not acting according to Your Word.” Are we prepared to say that? No, not to say it—not to *say* it—perhaps we would be more honest if we did, but if anybody thinks it, let him prostrate himself before the God of Heaven and earth and ask for the forgiveness of his ungrateful unbelief in daring to think that God can be otherwise than good and kind towards a soul redeemed with the heart’s blood of Christ, chosen from before the foundation of the world and ordained to everlasting glory with God Himself! May we fall back again, then, upon the bold assertion of the text and say to God, if we do not say it to anybody else—say it as we walk home and say it as we kneel by our bed-

side—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word—and blessed be Your holy name!”

Now I must pass on to speak very briefly concerning the other two heads—they are the practical application of this first one.

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider GOOD JUDGMENT DESIRED. “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.”

David felt that his judgment had been greatly at fault, so that he had made great mistakes with regard to God. And now that he had come to a more correct judgment, he offered this prayer: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.” This is what all Christians need—better judgment—more good judgment—more sound judgment.

May God help us, for the future, first, to *judge His Providence better!*—

**“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His Grace.”**

Next, *judge your sufferings better* and learn to believe that it is good for you that you have been afflicted. May we get our judgment more correct so that it may not be so hasty, or so unbelieving! May our judgments not be, as they sometimes have been, desponding, dark, dreary! We need to have our judgments brightened up. Pray God to make them better.

Then we shall be able to have *good judgment in matters of doctrine*. I wish we could get all Christians to have good judgment in this respect. They go to hear one man who is very fluent. He preaches Calvinistic doctrine and it is very sweet to them. Another preaches Arminian doctrine and contradicts all that the first one said—but to these people it is equally good, for he, also, is an eloquent man. Almost any error is sucked down by nine out of ten of the professors of the present day so long as it is sufficiently sugared! If you will but spice it well, it matters not to them what it is. I have been shocked to find how some will go and listen to the very drivel which is not the Gospel of God at all, so long as it is but fitly spoken! May God give us good judgment upon this matter! We have not as much as we ought to have, otherwise we would have judged more wisely concerning much that we have heard.

“Lord, teach me good judgment and knowledge,” means, “Let me know You. Let me know Your Truth. Let me know the voice of Christ, so that I may not follow a stranger, because I know not the voice of strangers and have that discretion which is not to be deceived.” There are some preachers who would deceive the very elect, if it were possible, but the true saints shall not be deceived, for God will teach them “good judgment and knowledge.”

We also need *good judgment concerning our temptations*. We are often like silly little birds, which, for want of judgment, are allured by a bird call. Satan, like a cunning fowler with foolish birds, makes sure work of uninstructed Christians! They are taken as in a net and if the Lord did not graciously deliver them, they could not escape. We need good judgment to spy out the hidden temptation and to see through the devil’s tricks and traps. He does not come to men showing his hoofs and horns—but he comes as an angel of light—and he is never so much a devil as when he appears to be an angel of light. I feel pleased to think

that the Revised Version has altered that clause in the Lord's prayer to, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Some do not like it because they do not believe in the Evil One. Or, perhaps, because they are too much his friend to wish to pray against him! But, in these days he is so intensely an Archenemy and he slinks about so craftily, that many people have begun to imagine that he no longer exists! And he can do ten times more mischief because of that delusion, so we will pray against him flat to his face, "Deliver us from the Evil One. Give us good judgment and knowledge, that we may not be ignorant of his devices." We also need good judgment as to the many false spirits that are gone forth into the world. "Try the spirits," is an admonition that is still necessary and we need to be taught good judgment that we may be able to do it—and discern between good and evil.

I will not detain you by speaking at any length upon this point, only I just want to say that if we have been mistaken about God, the probability is that we have been mistaken about other things. And even if the dealings of our own Heavenly Father have sometimes perplexed us and we have come to wrong conclusions concerning them, we ought to distrust our own judgment about other things and constantly go to God the Holy Spirit for teaching and enlightening, offering this prayer, "Teach me good judgment." I wish that those who are troubled with skepticism and doubt would go to God in this way. If men who have difficulties would tell them to God in prayer, spreading out their dilemmas before the Most High, I believe He would teach them good judgment and they would see their way where now everything seems to be dark and dubious. Let this plan be tried and I believe it will not be tried in vain!

### III. My last point is concerning JUDGMENT POSSESSED.

The Psalmist had some good judgment and, therefore, he asked for more. He possessed a measure of right judgment, which he expressed in these words, "I have believed Your Commandments." That is a very unusual expression because, generally, people believe doctrines, or believe promises. But David says that he believed God's *Commandments*. That is a phase of faith that is very seldom spoken of and it means that, notwithstanding all David's troubles, he had believed God's sacred Law to be a wise one, a just one and a true one. He had believed that it came from God and he had, therefore, revered it. He had believed it to be infinitely wise and, therefore, he followed it. He believed it to be right and, therefore, he stuck to it. He believed that in the end it would turn out to be the wisest policy to do as God had bidden him, so he stood to that. He seems to say, "Lord, I am very foolish, yet I have had wit enough given me, by Your Spirit, to believe that Your Commandments are the best that can be, so I wish to keep them and to believe that Your Commandments are the best guide to me in life and, therefore, I desire to follow them."

Brothers and Sisters, if you do not know much, yet if you know enough to be able to say to God, "I have believed Your Commandments and, by Your Grace, I have not departed from Your Truth," then all will come right with you. Suppose a man is tempted to steal. I do not mean to go and pilfer, but to falsify an account, or cheat in business, or what is

much the same thing—to get money by borrowing it when he knows he cannot repay it? Well, the man who acts like that does not really believe God’s Commandment, “You shall not steal.” I have heard of one who needed wood in winter time and his neighbor in the next farm had a stack of wood. As he walked along the road, something whispered in his ear, “All things are yours.” “Well,” he said, “that thought comes from God! I will go and take home a log or two.” When he had climbed over into the field and begun to get the wood out of the stack, there came to his mind another passage of Scripture, “You shall not steal,” and he dropped the wood at once!

My dear Friends, never believe an impression that is contrary to God’s Word! In fact, I would like you not to believe any impression but that which comes from Scripture, itself. I met, the other day, a person who was impressed that he was to preach for me. He said that it was revealed to him, by the Spirit of God, that he should preach for me one Sunday. I told him that he could do so when the Spirit of God also revealed it to me, for I did not believe in lopsided revelations. I thought that it was necessary for the revelation to come to me as well as to him. When it does, I will attend to it. Some people have, every now and then, a supposed revelation that just suits them. A man believes that it is impressed upon him to do exactly what he wants to do! For instance, he is sure that he ought to get married. Many young people are quite sure about that matter when it would be far better for them not to do anything of the sort. A man is often impressed that he ought to do a thing simply because he wants to do it—the wish is father to the thought. Now, if you believe God’s Commandments, you will not always believe in what looks like a Providence. Do you not know that there are devil’s providences, sometimes? At least that is what I call them.

When Jonah went down to flee unto Tarshish, he found a ship going there—was not that a remarkable providence? Perhaps he said to himself, “I felt some doubt about whether I was right in going there, but when I got down to the seashore, there was a ship—and there was just room for me to go as a passenger, and the fare was just the amount that I had—and so I felt that it must be of the Lord.” Nonsense, Jonah! It is of the Lord for you to do what is right! And if you have judgment enough to do that, let others be foolish enough to follow this impression or that, this whim or that, this notion or that which may come to them from Satan—or their own evil hearts!

Be you, dear Friends, wise enough to stand to the plain Commandments of the Word. God help you to do so, for uprightness and integrity shall preserve you and nothing else will. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” Those who do not believe God’s Commandments and run off to all sorts of shifts and schemes, and tricks of their own, will have to suffer for it! Pray to God to teach you good judgment. And if He has given you a measure of it, may He continually give you more and more, for His name’s sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:**

**PSALM 119:64-72.**

**Verses 64-67.** *The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy: teach me Your statutes. You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according unto Your Word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Your Commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray.*—Prosperity had been to the Psalmist like the gap in the hedge through which the sheep wander from the shepherd, but affliction had been to him like the prickly bushes that often stop the sheep from wandering still further, so he says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray."

**67.** *But now have I kept Your Word.* What a benefit, then, affliction had been to him! And what a blessing it often is to us! So, instead of dreading it, as we usually do, we ought to welcome it and be on the look-out for the blessing which is to come to us through it. Many a child of God has joined with Dr. Watts in singing—

**"Father, I bless Your gentle hand—  
How kind was Your chastising rod  
That forced my conscience to a stand,  
And brought my wandering soul to God!  
Foolish and vain, I went astray  
Ere I had felt Your scourges, Lord—  
I left my Guide, and lost my way;  
But now I love and keep Your Word."**

**68.** *You are good, and do good.* What a delightful description this is of God and His works! Who is good? Our Lord Jesus supplies the answer, "There is none good but One, that is, God." And His works are like Himself—"You are good, and do good."

**68.** *Teach me Your statutes.* In the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm, David wrote, "Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way." And here, because the Lord is good, and does good, the Psalmist prays, "Teach me Your statutes." He will teach us that which is good because He is, Himself, good. What a blessing it is for us to have such a Teacher! How wonderful it is that God should be so condescending as to take us into His school!

**69.** *The proud have forged a lie against me.* They have kept on hammering away until they have finished the falsehood. They have "forged" it, as one forges a deadly weapon in the fire.

**69.** *But I will keep Your Precepts with my whole heart.* "It is no use for me to trouble about them. When they have forged one lie, they will probably forge another and there is practically no end to that black business. It is no use for me to try to answer them. I will turn to a far more profitable occupation—I will keep Your Precepts with my whole heart."

**70.** *Their heart is as fat as grease.* Insensible, lifeless—they have no conscience, no feeling—they are so proud of their prosperity that they are afflicted with fatty degeneration of the heart.

**70.** *But I delight in Your Law.* What a blessing it is for us to find our fatness there—to delight in the marrow and fatness of God's Law!

**71.** *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your Statutes.* The Psalmist was so impressed with the benefits which he had

derived from his afflictions, that he returned to the subject—“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your Statutes.” There is much teaching power about God’s rod. He always keeps one in His school and it is greatly needed for such dull scholars as we are. Many a child of God can repeat the Psalmist’s testimony—“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” “You have whipped a little knowledge into me and not much has come in any other way.”

**72.** *The Law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.* David had a great deal of gold and silver, far more than any of us have, but yet he thought very little of it in comparison with God’s Law. Many people despise gold and silver because they have not any. The fox said the grapes were sour because they were beyond his reach. But here is a case in which a man had as much gold and silver as he could ever want—yet he says that the Law of God’s mouth was better than all of it, and he was wise in saying so! For gold and silver can be stolen. Riches often take to themselves wings and fly away. Even great wealth may soon be spent and gone, but God’s Law never leaves those who love it, nor lets them lose it. When all our spending money is gone, then is the Commandment of God still our treasure. Happy is everyone who can say, with David, “The Law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—73 (Part 2), 681, 214.**

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

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

# TWO GOOD THINGS

## NO. 1629

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

*“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that  
I might learn Your statutes.”  
Psalm 119:71.*

*“It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the  
Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.”  
Psalm 73:28.*

THERE is an old proverb which says, “When a man is 40 he is either a fool or a physician,” that is to say, he either does not know anything or else he begins to know what is good for him! Some of us who are beyond that age think that we know, in some measure, what is good for us. We are not inclined to be very positive as to what is good for *other* people, but there are one or two things in reference to ourselves of which we say very dogmatically, “They are good for me.” We have undergone such a sufficient investigation, experiment and personal trial that we are not in any fear of being contradicted, or, if we *should* be, we put our foot down and defy the contradiction!

The two things in my two texts I am certain about and I believe there are many here who share my positiveness. The first is that whatever it may be for other people, “it is good for me to have been afflicted.” And the second is that whatever it may be to other people, “it is good for me to draw near to God.” We assert this, not because we have been told so, but because of personal *proof*! And we assert it now, not as young beginners who are buckling on their harness and who think themselves certain, but as those who have gone some distance in the pilgrimage of life and know by actual test and matter of fact that it is so.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, during our lives we have met with many things which we know were not good for us. Some things have been manifestly bad. Sin is always poisonous, whatever form it takes. Error is always injurious, however insidious may be its shape and however poetic may be the terms in which it is expressed. We pray God that we may have nothing to do with sin or with error, for these things cannot be good—they must be evil. We have also met with certain things which, at the time, appeared to us to be good and, under some aspects, might have been so. But we are not sure, at the present moment, whether they were good or not. We have enjoyed soft hours of ease which, perhaps, weakened us, or sunshiny times of high delight which, in a measure, turned our brain.

There have been allotted to us times of learning in which we made great acquisitions of knowledge, but “knowledge puffs up” and we fear we *were* puffed up. There have been calms with us when the seabirds sat upon the waters and the seas were glassy as a lake, for the winds were hushed. But the calm was treacherous and it bred ill savor and unhealthiness within our spirit. I am not sure, my Friend, though you thought it a fine day when

you grew rich—I am not sure that it was a good thing for you to be wealthy—for you have not been half as spiritually-minded or half as happy as you used to be. Yes, you did enter into a much larger sphere, and you thought it a noble thing. You almost rang the bells about it. Are you quite sure that it was good for you? Are you as good a man in the great sphere as you were in the little one?

Do you live as near to God, now, with that great business to handle, as you did when your hat covered your whole estate and you went to bed at night with no fear of robbers, for you had nothing to lose? Much that *seems* good is only good in the *seeming*. As for the two things before us in our texts, we have no question about them! We know that it is good for us that we have been afflicted. We know that it is good for us that we should draw near to God. We will talk about these undoubted jewels and may God grant that our talk may be profitable.

I. Turning to the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, at the 71<sup>st</sup> verse, we will talk of that good thing first—AFFLICTION HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” I repeat what I said just now—every man must speak for himself—we are not sure that affliction is good for everybody. Some persons have been soured by affliction. They fell into trouble and they rebelled against God. And so the trouble did not work in them any permanent good; it rather developed their combative tendencies and they have ever since remained with their hands against other men—compelling others to lift their hands against them.

I have known individuals in a family who seemed to have a spite against everyone they saw simply because they were disappointed in early life, or had made a venture and sustained a loss. They grew sour, they keep sour and they grow more sour every day till one wonders what strength of vinegar will yet flow through their veins! It is not good for some people to have been afflicted at all and yet it is not the fault of the *affliction*—it is the fault of the persons afflicted. It might have produced in them a splendid character if all had been right to begin with! But, inasmuch as all was wrong, that very process which should have ripened them into sweetness has hastened them to rottenness. That same thing which, in gracious souls, has brought forth everything that is pure and lovely, has, in others, produced everything that is malicious and envious. I hope, however, that I may say of many here present, or that they can say of themselves, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

The enquiry is—How has it been good? First, it has been good in connection with many other good things. It has acted as a counteractive with reference to the great blessings which God has bestowed upon us in other ways. We are so constituted that we cannot bear very much prosperity. Some men might have been rich, but God knew they could not bear it and so He has never suffered them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. Others might have been famous, but they would have been ruined by pride and so the Lord, in tender mercy, has withheld from them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, denying them this apparent advantage for their real good. Where God favors any man with prosperity He will send a corresponding amount of affliction to go with it and deprive it of its injurious tendencies.

I have seen men walking upon the high places of the earth till their brain turned and they fell—and there was woe in the Church of God. I have seen others whom God has placed on a lofty pinnacle but, at the same time, He has almost crushed them between the upper and the nether millstone of sharp spiritual trouble, or domestic suffering, or physical pain. Many have asked, “Why is this?” and the reason has been that their suffering was an offset to their success. God’s servant would have slipped with his feet if it had not been for the secret chastening that he endured. I put it to some of you whom God has greatly favored. You have looked upon your prosperity as a gift, but you have wondered why you should be tried at the same time—it was because you could not have borne the favor if you had not received the chastening! You were glad of the sail and glad of the wind that filled it, but you could not understand why the ballast was put into your hold—you thought it hindered your progress.

My Friend, you would have been blown out of the water if it had not been for the ballast which kept you where you ought to be. I, for my part, owe more, I think, to the anvil and to the hammer, to the fire and to the file, than to anything else. I bless the Lord for the correctives of His Providence by which, if He has blessed me on the one hand with sweets, He has blessed me on the other hand with bitters. To me He has measured out a *double* blessing—the lamb and the bitter herbs to eat with it, seldom the one without the other. Thus, “It is good for me to have been afflicted”—good as a corrective for other goods!

It is good, dear Friends, to have been afflicted as a cure for evils existent within our nature. David says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Your Word.” That is the case with many of God’s servants. They were prone to one peculiar temptation and though they may not have seen it, the chastening hand of God was aimed at that special weakness of their character. We sometimes talk about phrenology and the bumps on one’s head. You may make a great many mistakes over that matter, but God knows your tendencies and faculties. He knows the characteristics of His children accurately—far more accurately than any science can ever tell them—and He deals with extraordinary wisdom and prudence towards each one of His family.

I suppose that when the biographies of the saints are all read by the light of eternity, we, even we, shall be able to see why the painful career of certain Christians could not have been other than it was if they were to get to Heaven at the last. We shall see why that unusual trial was sent and sent when they seemed least able to bear it. We shall discover that God interposed the screen of trial against the unseen fiery dart which only His eternal eyes saw—and laid the weight just where Satan was about to put the hand to overthrow—that very weight adding power to stand to the man who, in the lightness of his heart, had otherwise been tripped up. It is all well, Brothers and Sisters! It is all well!

The surgery which is cutting so deep—the knife which is cutting to the very quick—is only reaching to the point where the mischief lies. That mischief must come out, root and branch. There is a cancer of evil tendency within us and not a rootlet of it must be left, for, if the least fiber of it is suffered to remain through tenderness, it will be an unkind tenderness, for

the cancer will grow again and fill the heart with its malevolence. Therefore does the Lord, out of love, cut deep—sharp and cruel are His wounds. Most cruel do they seem when they are in greatest tenderness of Divine Grace.

We do not yet know all the mischief that is in us. I could undertake, in five minutes, to make any perfect man prove to himself that he was *not* perfect. Only let me set certain persons upon him, to tease him, and we shall soon see his irritation. Let the devil loose on a man who is hard by the threshold of Heaven and you will soon find that corruption dwells even in the hearts of the regenerate! The Lord would have us aware of this and, therefore, He often sends trial to reveal the hidden evil. We are often like a glass of water which has been standing still for hours and looks very clear and bright—but there is a sediment—and a little stir soon discovers it and clouds the crystal!

That sediment is the old nature. Trial comes and awakens into activity that which had been lying still and we say, “Dear me, I had no idea that such evil was in my heart.” Of course you hadn’t! You who live so comfortably at home among Christian friends do not know how sinful you are! You hear of people out in the world doing this and that and you say, “What naughty folks they are.” They are no worse than *you* would be if you were put into the same position—only you are at ease and they are sorely tempted. Dogs sleep when no one enters the house, but a knock at the door will set them barking. The Lord does not wish us to boast of sham holiness and, therefore, He sends us trials that we may see the mischief which lurks in our hearts—and that we may be driven to the Holy Spirit for power to conquer our sin and to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ for the real taking away of guilt.

He who has struggled with his inward sins must know that he has been helped both to discover and to overcome many of them by his afflictions. And so in this sense it is good that he has been afflicted. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” If this is so, we may not only bear the rod, but even kiss it! Affliction is also useful to God’s people as an actual producer of good things in them. Some virtues cannot be produced in us—at least I do not see how they can be, apart from affliction. One of them is patience. If a man has no trial, how is he to be patient? We all think ourselves patient when we have nothing to bear. We can all stand on the mountain tops *before* we have tried those dizzy heights! We are all brave when the war is over, though things look rather different when bullets whistle about our ears!

When we are thrown into the sea, our swimming abilities are not quite so extraordinary as we thought they were. We have great notions of what we can do, but *trial* is the test. Patience, I think, can scarcely be said to be in a man unless he has endured tribulation, “for tribulation works patience.” A veteran warrior is the child of battles and a patient Christian is the offspring of adversity! There is a very sweet Grace called *sympathy*, which is seldom found in persons who have had no trouble. We are told that our dear Lord and Master, Himself, learned sympathy by being tempted in all points like as we are. He had to *feel* our infirmities, or else He could not have been touched with a fellow feeling towards us. It is surely so with us. I have stayed, sometimes, with an admirable Brother

who never had, he told me, an ache or a pain since he was born that he remembered.

He is a man of 50 and in splendid health. Well, he tries to sympathize with people and he does it to the utmost of his power, but it makes you smile. It is like an elephant picking up a pill! It is a wonderful feat for him to do. He does not understand it. You know, yourself, how hard it is to get sympathy out of those who have never endured a trial similar to your own. Someone goes to see a widow and talks to her about her grief. And she says to herself all the time, "What does he know about it? He has never lost the partner of his life." A bachelor speaks to a dear soul who has just buried her little child. Unless he is a very wise man, he is apt to say something about children which will irritate, rather than console the bereaved mother. You may try your best, but you have not much of the faculty of sympathy unless you have been in the trial. It is by passing through the fire that we know how to deal with people who are in the furnace!

So we may thank God that we have been afflicted, if we are ministers, or if we are teachers of others. We have sometimes to suffer, not for our own sake, but for the sake of others, that we may be enabled to speak a word in season to him that is weary and say to such, "I know your road. I have been that way before. I know the darkness and weariness of the way." Pilgrims who are enduring the ills of the wilderness take heart when they see a fellow traveler to whom all these are common things.

Again, it is good for me to have been afflicted because affliction is a wonderful quickener. We are very apt to go to sleep, but affliction often wakes us up. A coachman driving a pair of horses was noticed by one who sat upon the box seat to give a cut of the whip to the off horse. The animal was going on quite regularly and properly and it seemed a needless cruelty to whip it. Another journey and he was observed to do just the same at just that place and the question was put, "I always notice that you give that horse a cut of the whip just here—why is it?" "Well, Sir, he has a nasty habit of shying just at this spot," said the driver, and I take his attention off by making him think of the whip for a moment." There is something in that, Brothers and Sisters! Every now and then you and I are apt to stray—but an affliction takes our attention away from the temptation.

There is also another danger in a life of ease—we are far too apt to go to sleep. Like horses, we are apt to get into the way of going on at a regular trot till we move mechanically and pursue our way half asleep. I do not know whether we are all awake even now! Many ministers preach asleep. I am sure they do! Many deacons do all the Church business asleep and numbers of people come to the Prayer Meetings and pray in their sleep! I do not mean *physical* sleep, but I mean *spiritual* sleep, which is quite as serious a matter. The whole of some men's religion is a kind of sleep-walking! There is not that vigor in it; there is not that heart in it; there is not that earnestness in it that there ought to be. They need to be waked up by something startling.

Our trials and afflictions are intended to do this. They come like a clap of thunder and startle us till we ask, "Where am I? What am I doing?" And we begin to question ourselves, "Am I really what I profess to be?" Death stares us in the face. We are put into the balance and weighed and tried.

We try our hopes and professions and are less likely to be self-deceived. Realities become realities and fancies become fancies when sharp trials befall us. The things of this world become dreams to us when keen affliction comes. And so it is of special benefit to us because, under the Spirit of God, it is awakening and arousing.

Again, according to our text, it is good for us to have been afflicted by way of instruction. "It is good for me to have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes." Trial is our school where God teaches us on the blackboard. This school house has no windows to let in the cheerful light. It is very dark and so we cannot look out and get distracted by external objectives—but God's Grace shines like a candle within and by that Light we see what we had never seen before! I stand on the level of my fellow men in the daylight and I cannot see the stars—the glare of day hides them—but if I am made to go down the deep well of affliction—I look up, and there are the stars visible above my head! I see what others cannot see!

I get the Bible and its promises seem written as men sometimes write with the juice of lemon, in invisible characters. I hold the book before the fire of affliction and the writing comes out clearly—and I see in the Bible what I never would have seen if it had not been for fiery trials! The Word of promise must be precious, for God gave it! But I get into trial, myself, and there I test it—and of its preciousness I become *personally* assured. We learn, I hope, something in the bright fields of joy, but I am more and more persuaded that we do not learn a 10<sup>th</sup> as much, there, as we do in the Valley of Death-Shade!

There the world loses its charms and we are obliged to look to God. There illusions and delusions pass away and we are compelled to rest on the eternal Rock. There we learn the Truth of God in such a way that we never forget or doubt it. I would to God that some young preachers were plagued all the day long and chastened every morning that they might become sound in the faith! I could wish that some of God's people were plunged into a sea of tribulation that they might get rid of the modern nonsense which delights them, now, and come back to the old, substantial doctrines of the Puritans which are the only things worth having when we come to suffer or to die!

Yes, it is good for me to have been afflicted! Is it not good for you too, dear Friends, in the way of holy education, teaching you God's Word and the value and the preciousness of it?

**II.** I cannot, however, speak any longer upon the virtues of affliction, for I need two or three minutes to dwell upon the Truth of God that, DRAWING NEAR TO GOD HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US. Turn to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm at the last verse—"It is good for me to draw near to God." Here, again, we speak with great certainty. Come, Brothers and Sisters, is it not good for you to draw near to God? But what does this drawing near to God mean? First, to feel that God is near us—to be conscious of His Presence. It means to feel, next, that we are perfectly reconciled to Him by the death of His Son and that we are permitted to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend and, in speaking to Him, to praise Him for what we have received and to ask Him for what we need.

We draw near Him when we tell Him what we feel and assure Him of our belief in His great love. You know what it is to draw near to a friend and to have heart-to-heart talks with him. Then you and the beloved one are quite alone and have no secrets. You tell all your secrets and you learn all that your beloved has to tell. This is drawing near to God—when the secret of your heart is with God and the secret of the Lord is with you—when He speaks to you by the Word and you speak to Him by prayer! When you confess sin and He grants forgiveness! When you spread your needs before Him and He assures you of abundant supplies.

Now, is not this good? Is it not pleasant? Is it not enriching? Does it not raise the soul up above the world? Is it not a very good and profitable thing, so that we may say of it, emphatically, “It is good for me to draw near to God”? One good thing that comes out of it is mentioned in the text. Observe—“I have put my trust in the Lord God.” The nearer you get to God, the more you will be able to *trust* Him. An unknown God is an untrusted God. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” Those who have had the most dealings with God believe most in Him. You that begin with Him try to trust Him—but those who have dealt with Him for long feel that they *do* trust Him and cannot help it. What is faith in God, Brothers and Sisters, but commonsense? Though, like commonsense, it is the most unusual and most uncommon thing in all the world!

To trust in one who must be true is a commonsense proceeding. And to trust my God who cannot lie is the dictate of true reason! To make Him, who is the greatest fact and the greatest factor, to be, in my life, both the greatest factor and the greatest fact and to act as believing Him to be real—this is prudence. I pray you, draw near to God, so that faith may become to you the mainspring of your life, the new commonsense of your instructed spiritual nature! I rejoice in a faith that will go with me into everything. Sunday-keeping faith, meeting-going faith! If it ends there, it is a pretty piece of confectionery—but faith about my *pain*, my *poverty*, my *despondency*, my *old age*—that is faith! I want to see a more hardy, practical, workable faith abroad in the land.

Look at Abraham’s faith. I know it was spiritual and so do you—but what had it to do with? It had to do with the birth of a child; with seeking a city; with cattle; with land and the events of everyday life! That is the sort of faith you and I need—Monday faith, Tuesday faith, Wednesday faith—faith that will go into the kitchen; faith that will live in the workshop with you that are book folders, when the other girls laugh at you—faith that will be with you men that are in the workshop where others use foul language! We need faith that can cheer a sailor in a storm; faith that can help a dying man in the hospital; household faith; everyday faith! This is only to be had by drawing near to God. Get right close to Him in deed and in truth—the very life of you living upon the life of God—and then faith will enter into your daily life. You will put your trust in God as your constant Helper if you constantly draw near to Him.

I desire to bear my witness in the last words of this Psalm—“I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.” My first text, as far as it relates to a preacher, shows how he is taught it in *private*. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” My

second text, so far as it relates to the preacher, shows how he is helped to preach in *public*—"It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works." To be able to speak of God's works to others is no small gift—and you gain it by trusting in God, yourself, finding His promises true, and then bearing witness to others.

Draw near to God and have communion with Him—and then come down from the mountain and speak with the people, *believing* what you say—and *expecting* God to bless it to those who hear it! That is the way to preach and I pray that every one of us who opens his mouth for God may do it in this fashion. It is not merely what is in the Bible that we have to set before the people, but what we, ourselves, have tasted and felt of the good Word of Truth experimentally, declaring Jesus Christ in the power of His resurrection as we know it in our own hearts. We cannot do this except by intimate *personal* fellowship with God.

You, dear Friends, who are engaged in teaching, cannot learn the Truth of God without some measure of affliction. And you cannot tell it out in the right spirit without a large measure of drawing near unto God. Then you can say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him." You can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." You can say, "I sought the Lord and He helped me." There is a convincing power about such personal testimony. Then it is not only Christ's word that God blesses, but it is *your* word, too. "Oh," you say, "dare you say that?" Yes, Jesus Himself said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word."

They themselves took the word from Christ, just as they took the bread out of Christ's hands when He fed the multitude. It was Christ's word just as it was Christ's bread, till they got it! But as when they had once received the bread it became Peter's bread, and John's bread, and James' bread and they handed it out and the people fed thereon—so did the word become, "their word," when they personally accepted it and afterwards passed it to others! It was all Christ's and yet it was theirs! And you must get the bread in your own hands. You must taste it yourself. You must break it yourself, or else you will not be likely to be blessed with living power among the sons of men.

Now, let us join in thanking God, if He has afflicted us, and if He has drawn us near to Himself. And let us go forth, not to *ask* for afflictions—that would be unwise—but to *accept* them hopefully when they come! Let us draw near to God, tonight, and let us not go to our beds till we have seen the face of the Well-Beloved. This shall be my vesper song—

***"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,  
I lay me down to rest,  
As in the embraces of my God,  
Or on my Savior's breast."***

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# **GOD'S TIME FOR COMFORTING**

## **NO. 3027**

**A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1867.**

***“My eyes fail from searching Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?”  
Psalm 119:82.***

DAVID, in his troubles, knew where to turn for consolation—and that is no small piece of wisdom. When a man is ill, he may not know to which physician he had better send, but if he knows of one who has had much experience with the disease from which he is suffering, he sends for him at once if he is a wise patient. David knew that the best place for a true Believer to find consolation was in God's Word, so he did not look in a thousand places, but his eyes were turned to God's Word—and though he did not immediately find the comfort that he sought, yet he continued to look even till his eyes seemed to fail him, till they ached with looking, till they wearied with watching, till his disappointed expectation made his heart sick! Yet the idea never entered into his mind that he had better knock at another door, or seek another friend, or try another fountain! He still continued in the attitude of expectancy and desire, his eyes still searching the Word of God to find the comfort that he so greatly needed.

Christian, learn this piece of heavenly wisdom from the Psalmist's experience—there is no other comfort for you beneath the skies like that with which the Word of the Lord will furnish you. If God's promises cannot comfort you, rest assured that no speech from the lips of man can do it. If your God shall not yield you the consolation that you need, you will go in vain to the giddy world and its pleasures and follies in the hope of finding it. If that overflowing well could ever dry up, you would indeed be the subject of despair. Resolve in your mind never to expect any good thing apart from God. Say with Toplady—

***“I will not be comforted  
Till Jesus comforts me.”***

Refuse all consolation but that which comes from the Most High, for it will be fictitious, delusive, dangerous, perhaps fatal—but cling to your God whatever happens! Though He smite you, still cling to Him. Though He slay you, still trust Him. If His Word should seem to be like thunder and lightning to you, though every page of it should seem to bristle as with bayonets and not a single thought of consolation should be found in

a thousand verses, yet still cling to your father's Bible, hold fast to the good old Book which made glad your mother's heart, for, before long, comfort shall shine forth from it upon you like the sun in the fullness of its strength—and the day shall break and the shadows flee away. Go not elsewhere to look for consolation! Seek out no strange doctrines! Weary not yourself in searching for other comfort, but let your eyes, even if they fail, still look to the Word of God for the consolation that your soul needs!

David, however, besides looking to the Book of the Lord, looked to the Lord of the Book, saying, "When will *You* comfort me?" He did not expect the Word in itself to be a sufficient consolation to him, so he looked to the Word as applied by God, the Holy Spirit, the Word as spoken over again by the mouth of God into the silent soul of the waiting Believer. Paul tells us that "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." And the Psalmist so far anticipates that Truth of God as to cry to the Lord, "When will *You* comfort me?"

Christian, I again exhort you to imitate the Psalmist's example by going to your God for comfort. You are still far too apt to lean upon an arm of flesh, but have you not yet learned what disappointments are always to be met with there? Will you still go to the broken cisterns that can hold no water when they have already only mocked your thirst? When will you give up running to your neighbors and going to your brother's house in the day of your adversity? You will do far better if you will go to your Father's house and to your Elder Brother! Even our common proverb says, "Straightforward makes the best runner," so, run straight to your God! Do not beat around the bush in the hope of getting at God through second causes, but go to the great Fountainhead of all consolation at once. Depend upon it, that the more absolutely you hang upon the bare arm of *God*, the better will it be for you and the more will you learn to live independently of those poor creatures of earth whose breath is in their nostrils! The more you depend upon the great, invisible, Omnipotent, eternal Jehovah, the stronger and happier will you become! Then shall your head be lifted high above your enemies and you shall sing praises unto God for very gladness of heart.

Troubled ones, I urge you to resolve that if you cannot have comfort from God, at any rate you will not have it from the devil—determine that if you cannot do business with Heaven, you will not trade with Hell! And say that you would rather live in a dungeon with God than dwell in tents of ease with Satan. If your life must always be one of sorrow, be content that it shall be so if the Lord so wills it, but be resolved that you never will dally with sin or Satan for the sake of any present consolation. You cannot afford to buy your gold so dearly as that, nor to part with Heaven for the sake of the richest comforts of earth!

It is worthy of note that the Psalmist, even in his worst condition, always expected to be comforted. Our text was probably uttered by the same man who more than once asked himself, "Why are you cast down,

O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" Some men readily fall into a state of despair, but the Psalmist was not a man of that sort. When all God's waves and billows had gone over him, he still said, "Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me." And when deep called unto deep at the noise of Jehovah's waterspouts, he could still hear the still small voice of hope, so that he said to his soul, "Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Beloved, let none of us give way to despair! No doubt Satan will tell us that it is humble to despair, but it is not so. The pride of despair is truly terrible. I believe that when a man altogether doubts the power of God to save him and gives himself up to sin because he thinks he cannot be saved, so far from there being any humility in it, it is the proudest action that depraved flesh and blood can perform! Man, how dare you say that there is no hope for you? If the iron gates of Hell were shut upon you and God had hurled the key of the Pit into the infinite abyss, *then* you might say that there was no hope for you. But as long as there trembles in the air that blessed invitation of Christ, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is only a lying voice that tells you that there is no hope for you! No hope, Man? Why, if you were in the very jaws of death and the grim monster's teeth were about to close upon you, there would still be hope for you! The dying thief on the Cross did but trust to the expiring Savior by his side—and that very day he was with his Lord in Paradise! Never despair, Sinner, but trust in Jesus when at your worst!

And as for you, Christian, what have you to do with despairing? Be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you. [See Sermon No. 3016, Volume 52—GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Even though your eyes fail, God's eyes do not fail, nor His arm, either. And though you grow weary with your long waiting, yet when He comes to you, He will make amends for that and your weary waiting shall be well repaid. Wait at the posts of His doors, for—

***"He never is before His time,  
He never is too late."***

If you will but play the man and let patience have her perfect work, you shall be well rewarded before long. Therefore wipe away your tears and "wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Now, although the Psalmist expected to receive comfort from the Lord, whatever his trouble might be, yet he was careful to do what he could in order to obtain it. He looked into God's Word for comfort and he asked the Lord, "When will You comfort me?"—as if he meant to say, "If there is anything on my part which prevents my receiving the comfort, let me know and, Lord, I will put it away from me. Should You be withholding Your consolation from me because of any sin which I am harboring, only

say the word, Lord, and my sin shall be taken out to execution! Quick shall be my hand and sudden shall be the stroke, for I must have Your comfort to sustain my soul—I cannot longer live in this state of sadness.”

I trust that this will be the language of anyone here who is seeking the forgiveness of his sins. Perhaps I may be addressing someone who has been seeking mercy for months and he has not yet found it. I hope he is not satisfied to go without it—I trust that he will hunger and thirst until he gets it and that he will, at this moment, put up these requests to God, “Show me, Lord, why You contend with me. When will You comfort me? What is there which parts me from You and hides the light of Your face from my poor, guilty, dying spirit?”

Perhaps the words which I am about to utter, in answer to the question in my text, may be the means of bringing comfort to some who are groping for it in the dark like blind man trying to feel the way marks which they cannot see. I shall first address myself to Christians and then to seekers after salvation.

**I.** First of all, I SPEAK TO YOU, BELOVED BELIEVERS—to you who are saying with the Psalmist that your eyes are failing from searching the Word of God—to you whose hearts are saying to Him, “When will You comfort us?”

God will answer your question in His own good time and way, but it is certain that *God will comfort you one day*. He cannot leave His people without comfort. You know that He said, in olden times, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” The mother ought not to be able to forget her child when it is in that specially dependent stage of its existence—when it is a sucking child not only her love, but the very force of Nature ought to compel her to remember it! Yet, though she may forget her child, God cannot and will not forget you who are His children! That is impossible—the whole force of His Divine Nature constrains Him in loving kindness to remember you and to say to you, “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” His message to His servants is still, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” Now, how can comfort be withheld from those whose sins are pardoned? Christian, you must have comfort from your God sooner or later!

To help you to answer your question as to why you do not have that comfort now, consider, in the first place, that God may, *of His own Sovereign will and pleasure*, withhold from you the comforting light of His Countenance. He has His reason for doing so, but He may not give you that reason. And surely, if He does not tell you the reason, you will submit to His will. Remember the good advice of the Prophet Isaiah, “Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His

servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” If you do but at last get to Heaven—if the Lord should take away His candle from you on earth for a little time, you may cheerfully submit to that privation! You may cry out to Him, for “His own elect” do that—they “cry day and night unto Him,” yet you must not be impatient if He does not at once grant your request. With ardent desire you may long for Him to comfort you in the night seasons, but, amid the darkest shades, you may still say to Him, “I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me.” It may be because of Divine Sovereignty that comfort is, for a while, being withheld from you. If so, then the same Sovereignty which shuts you up in the dark room will, in due season, open the door and set you at liberty!

But more likely, dear Friends, you will get comfort *when you have cast away your present unbelief*. Most of us owe a great part of our sadness to our lack of faith in God. Is it any wonder that you are sad when you will not believe your Heavenly Father's promises? Child of God, is it a surprising thing that your mind should be ill at ease when you mistrust the veracity of your Father? Would you expect your own children to be happy if they were always doubting the truth of their father's promises to them? What a wretched household such dark suspicions would soon make! Away, then, with all suspicion of the truth of your Heavenly Father's promises! It is utterly groundless! It is unworthy of yourself and it is dishonorable to God! Testify against Him now if you can. When did He ever fail you? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has He ever forsaken you? He has chastened you, it is true, but has He ever deserted you? “Come now, testify, O My people; bear witness against Me if you can!” says the Lord. “Have I wearied you with labor? Have I borne you down with burdens and not given you help?” Oh, no! We all bear witness that He is a good and gracious God—and we pray for the Holy Spirit's power to rest upon us that we may have done with our cruel, wicked, disgraceful unbelief! Come, child of God, take down your Bible, look up some precious promise, grasp it, believe it and expect to see it fulfilled to yourself! You will not then have long to ask, “When will You comfort me?” You will be comforted as soon as you have cast away your sinful unbelief from your soul. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to do so at once!

Possibly the answer to your question may take another form—*The Lord will comfort you as soon as you have done with complaining*. There are certain people in the world whom God will never comfort until He has taken their present murmuring spirit out of them. I know some such people, to my sorrow. If they prosper very much, if they get on a great deal in their business, they say, “Oh, yes, we have had a tolerably good year!” They never admit that they have had anything beyond “a tolerably good year.” That is all that they will say even when their money is rolling

in, in floods! Many a farmer, when his ground is bearing as much corn as it possibly can, says, "Yes, I shall do pretty middling this year." He calls the very best that he can possibly have, "pretty middling!" And if he should happen to have a little loss, or a little trouble, or some little vexation, then straightway his mouth is filled with murmuring against God. And though he would not like to have it called by that name, yet it is a sort of minor blasphemy against the Most High—envying others, speaking of them as though they had all the sweets of life and talking of himself as though he had to drink all the bitters and all the dregs of the cup. Some of you know people of that kind, who seem to be "cut on the cross"—a strange sort of people who can always see clouds on the finest day and who will say that the grass is all dried up even when all can see that it is beautifully green!

Ah, my dear Friends, you must get rid of all this if you want God to comfort you! There is something expressive in that word, murmur—I have often wondered at the wisdom of the man who gave it the meaning that it has, though I do not know who he was. "*Mur-mur*"—two ugly little syllables such as any cross child could easily sound! But it is a childish, foolish, wicked habit for any of us to fall into—to be murmuring against God—for, after all, our mercies far outnumber our sorrows! As long as we are out of Hell, we have no right to complain, for, if we had received our just desserts, we would have been there. Dear Friends, may God help you to shake off this murmuring spirit as Paul shook the viper off his hand into the fire! And when you have done that, then you will probably find that the Lord will speedily appear to comfort your heart!

Again, in some persons there is an absence of Divine Consolation *because there is some sin which is tolerated within them*. There might be very startling discoveries made here, this very hour, if every professing Christian were compelled, by his accusing conscience, to stand up and tell the congregation what his secret, besetting sin is. I fear that at least some of you would never dare to show your faces in the Tabernacle again—you would be ashamed to be seen among those who knew such things about you! Yet the smoke of these burning sins rises in clouds and shuts the face of God away from such inconsistent Christians. God loves His people, but He does not love their sins. Sin is hateful anywhere, but it is most hateful in the Lord's own people. You are, none of you, fond of loathsome diseases such as fevers, but I am sure that you loathe the fever most of all when it attacks your own dear child. So, sin is a disease which God hates everywhere, but He hates it most of all when He sees it upon one of His own children and, for this reason, He takes His rod into His hand and causes His sinning child to smart and to cry out with Job, "Show me why You contend with me." When the Lord's people are really in earnest about this matter, He points to their idol-gods, or to some other evil thing which they have harbored in their hearts and so awakened His anger. Then, if they arise and cast out these abominations,

the rod is put away and God once more gives them the comforts of His Grace. Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you lack comfort, search and see where the fault lies, for it is my firm conviction that in nine cases out of ten, it is owing to some sin that has been indulged! I quoted Job's question just now, and Eliphaz asked him, "Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you? Why does your heart carry you away? And what do your eyes wink at, that you turn your spirit against God and let such words go out of your mouth?" I pass those searching questions on to anyone here to whom they may apply. And I trust that as the result of doing so, such a soul will be able to present the poet's petition with the poet's confidence—

***"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,  
And worship only Thee!  
So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame,  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb."***

Possibly the lack of comfort is owing to some other cause. Dear Christian Brother or Sister, you may be at this moment without comfort *because you have neglected some duty*. I believe that many of God's people who know their Lord's will, yet do it not, do get beaten with many stripes. They say that they do not understand why they are thus chastised and they do not know what it is that causes them to be so frequently and so sorely afflicted. It is because there is some precept, which they know to be their Lord's precept, yet they wink their eye at it and leave it neglected. Learn a lesson from Jonah's experience. If the Lord should bid any of us go to Nineveh and cry against it and, instead of doing so, we go down to Joppa and find a ship going to Tarshish, and get in it, we must not reckon upon having a smooth passage! Before long there will be "a mighty tempest in the sea." If we had not been God's servant, there might have been fair weather—but when a child of God runs away from his plain duty, God will send a tempest after him—and he may be very thankful if God also sends a whale—for although the whale may swallow him, yet it may bring him safely to land—but he will be sure to rue the day on which he turned away from his clear duty and sought out a more comfortable path.

Master John Bunyan, whom I cannot help quoting, tells us the result of Christian and Hopeful going over the stile into By-Path Meadow. They thought it would be much smother walking just on the other side of the fence and Christian tried to assure his companion that the path ran along by the way-side. No doubt they thought that they could keep so close to the King's Highway that they would see, in a minute, when the path began to turn away from the right road—and then they would just

jump over the fence and get into the right way again. They felt sure it would be all right. At least Christian did, for Hopeful was doubtful all the while, though he gave way to his older companion. But when Giant Despair found them sleeping in his grounds, he drove them off into his dungeon and came, the next morning, with a great crab-tree cudgel and gave them not a mouthful of bread, nor a drink of water, but plenty of crab tree! And when, the day after, he counseled them to destroy themselves, and left them lying, day after day, pining in their filthy prison—then they understood that smooth walking is not always safe walking, and that it is best to walk in the right road even though it may be a rough one! Let us be careful where we walk, for we may lose our comfort very speedily unless we keep strictly to the path of obedience. Let us, at all times, with a cheerful and willing spirit, wear our Master's yoke, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I will speak very plainly to some of you who get downhearted and desponding, for I am rather glad that you do get into such a state of mind. There are some who think that the blame rests with the preacher if they become despondent. They say that he ought to comfort them more than he does. Ah, but lazy professors must remember what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." As for you busy preachers, Sunday school teachers, tract-distributors and other earnest workers for Christ, when you do get to a sermon, how sweet it is to you! You have been hard at work for the Lord and it has sharpened your spiritual appetites! But lazy Christians who never fail to win souls for the Savior and who only want to be spiritually fed without doing a stroke of work in the Master's service get to be very dainty. No matter how good the fare may be, nor however much others enjoy it, they are sure to say, "That is not the food that we like." They want it spiced up to a wonderful degree and it must be carved so daintily or they will not touch it! Whereas if they had been hard at work, they would have gained a healthy appetite which would have turned even the bitters into sweets!

I pray God that those professors who do nothing for Him may be miserable! "That is a very unkind prayer," say some of you. No, it is not, for it is meant for your good. See, if you get to be happy in your idleness, you will stay in that sinful state. But if you are unhappy while you are doing nothing for the Master, I think you will be the more likely to say to Him, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Then I hope you will soon get to work and I believe that comfort will be sure to come to you when, in an evangelical spirit, depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, you go out to do what you can for the Lord! Some of you, perhaps, have a great heap of money stored up and you cannot make out why there is such a bad smell of canker all over the house—I could tell you! Some of you who have not been doing anything for your Master for a long while, think that surely your blood must be

congealed in your veins, for it does not seem to move! I think I could tell you why that is. If you would again exercise yourself in God's work, as you used to do, you would soon find that the blood would again course through your veins and that the dew of your spiritual youth would come back to you. Our sorrows are often manufactured by our sins—our sins of omission, or of commission. May we all have Grace, then, to search within ourselves to see if we can discover the answer to the question, "When will You comfort me?"

**II.** Now I am going, for a few minutes, to deal with THE CASE OF ANXIOUS, SEEKING SINNERS.

Where are you, anxious one? Never mind where you may happen to be at this moment—let the Word of the Lord come straight to you as though nobody else were here! You are sorrowfully saying, "I have been praying for pardon for months. I am in the House of God whenever it is open. I search the Bible as diligently as I can, yet I cannot find comfort. Oh, that I could get my sins forgiven! I must get that blessing, or I shall die. Tell me, Sir, when will God comfort me?"

My dear Hearer, it may be that comfort is withheld from you *because you have not fully confessed your sin*. We have God's Word for it that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Then if we do not make a complete confession to our God, we must not expect to receive pardon. "Oh," you say, "I have said, 'Lord, I am a sinner.'" That is right, but you must do more than that. Tonight, before you go to bed, think over your past life. Recapitulate your faults and confess the whole of them to God—and do not keep anything back. I have heard of a professor who was guilty of backsliding for a time and, therefore, was suspended from church membership. He prayed about the matter, but he used to pray thus, "Lord, you know that I have indulged a little—have mercy upon me!" Of course no comfort came to him. Then a Christian Brother said to him, "Tell the Lord the whole truth—He knows just what it is." The man was wise enough to follow this good advice, so he prayed, "Lord, you know that I was drunk, will you not forgive me, for Jesus Christ's sake?" Then the comfort came to him and you, also, must call your sin just what it is when you go before God, for you are not truly humbled and penitent as long as you try to put a gloss upon your sin. David could get no peace till he prayed, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God." And, my dear Hearer, you must confess the worst aspect of your case before God. "Make a clean breast of it," as we commonly say—tell the Lord all about your sin. Perhaps it is the lack of this that keeps you from being comforted—the lack of an explicit, plain, full confession of your sins.

Again, if you ask me why you do not have comfort, although you do try to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I answer, *Perhaps there is some sin that you have not given up* and, depend upon it, if that is the case,

although salvation is all by the Grace of God and we are not saved by our own works, yet, Sinner, you can never have peace with God till you have made a clean sweep of every known sin! There may be a man here who has attended the Tabernacle for a long time, and who says that he cannot get peace. Now, where was he last night? His conscience knows and I will ask him whether he expects to get peace with God while he can be found in such society? There is another man here who says that he cannot get comfort—but where is he to be found the greater part of the week? Does he not regularly go to the gin-palace? And can he expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will go there with him? No, that cannot be! There was no room for Christ in the inn when He was born and there is certainly no room for Him in the gin-palace of the present day. There are some men who can cheat in their business—they know very well that they do not deal fairly with their customers. Their goods are adulterated and they give short weight—yet they expect to have peace with God while this is the case? How can it be? Do you suppose that God will patch up a truce with your sins and give you His forgiveness while you are harboring such evil things in your house? No, that cannot be! Though you cannot be perfect, yet you must *want* to be perfect and there must not be any sin which you knowingly spare. Cut them in pieces, every one of them! As soon as you know that anything is wrong, I pray you to have such a tender conscience that you will seek to escape from it, for, as long as you harbor even one of them, comfort will never come to you.

“But this is such a little sin,” says one. Yes, and those little errors are like the little boys that the big thieves take with them to crawl through the little windows—and then they open the door and let the big thieves in! Those little sins will be your ruin unless you forsake them and get them forgiven! One of our proverbs says, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.” Turn that proverb round and it will teach you that if you look sharply after your little sins, you will not fall into great ones. It is these so-called little sins—mixing with worldly society, going into bad company and so on—that keep so many of you from getting peace with God! Some of you young women get to walking with ungodly young men. And some of you young men form acquaintances that are no good to you. And then you come here and your consciences are somewhat touched, and you ask that you may be found “accepted in the Beloved.” How can that be when you will walk straight away from this service and talk in such a way as would be impossible if the Holy Spirit were really in you? The Holy Dove would fly away from such talk as that! A defiled heart is no nest wherein He can take His rest.

Once again, is it not very likely that the reason why you do not get peace with God is this—that *you have not trusted to the Lord Jesus Christ wholly and entirely?* There is the root of the mischief! You still hope to save yourself in some measure and, as long as you cling to a rag of self-

righteousness, you cannot get peace or comfort! If ever a Sinner is to be saved, it must be entirely by the mercy of God shown to him solely because of the merit of Jesus Christ and, as long as a man puts so much as a shadow of a trust in himself beside his trust in Christ, his comfort will be marred! You must be to yourself as though you were dead, so far as any confidence in yourself is concerned—and you must rest alone in Jesus. The finished work of the exalted Redeemer must be your only confidence!

“How was it, Sam,” asked a Christian master of his servant, “that when you and I were both under conviction of sin, you got comfort so much sooner than I did? As far as I know, Sam, my life seemed to be as good as yours before conviction came to me, yet I could not get comfort, though you did.” “Ah,” said Sam, “you see, Master, I was a great deal worse than you were. And when God the Holy Spirit showed me what I was, I looked at my rags and I said, ‘Ah, they are nothing but a lot of filthy rags, they will never patch up.’ So I took them off at once and I put on the robe of Jesus Christ’s righteousness, for I knew my rags would never match that spotless garment of His. But, Master, when you got a little light, you looked at yourself and you had been so good—you had lived such a decent life that you said—‘Ah, my coat needs mending. There is a hole in the elbow and a tear here and there, but it can be patched up and it shall do a little longer.’ And so, Master, you did not get the robe of Christ’s righteousness as quickly as I did.” And some of you moral people will have hard work in fighting against your self-righteousness. When good Mr. Hervey questioned a godly farmer as to what was the greatest hindrance to a sinner’s coming to Christ, he thought the farmer would say, “Sinful self,” but he said, “Righteous self,” and so it is. Righteous self-confidence in our prayers. Self-confidence in our repentance, self-confidence in something we mean to do, or something we feel that we already have—all this keeps us back from true peace and comfort!

All the candles in the world will not enable us to do without the sun. Some of you light your poor little candles and try to get comfort that way. Put the extinguisher on every one of them and go and stand in the sunshine, for then you will have light indeed! Give up all your carnal hopes, your earthly confidences, your good works, your own righteousnesses—away with them all—and come as poor, guilty, condemned sinners and trust in Jesus Christ, and you shall get comfort this very instant, for, the moment a sinner trusts in Jesus Christ, he is saved! Peace and pardon immediately follow trust in Jesus! Only come to Him with your sins and miseries, your burdens and your unworthiness, your hardness of heart and your coldness of spirit—come to Him just as you are, for, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” The Lord Jesus is a Physician who heals the sick when

their disease is at its worst—He does not want you to try to make yourselves better, but to come to Him just as you are—and then He will heal you as you are.

That was a beautiful act on the part of the Good Samaritan who found the poor wounded man half dead by the roadside. He did not stand and gaze at his injuries, and say to him, “My dear fellow, when your wounds are less painful to you, I will come back and bind them up.” He did not say to him, “My dear man, when you are more conscious of your need of my services, and can sit up and ask me to help you, I will do what I can for you.” He did not say, “My dear man, when you are very sorry that you ever came down this dangerous road where you have been waylaid and injured, I will come and heal you.” Oh, no! There the poor man lay, half dead, and the Good Samaritan went just where he was, stooped over him and looked at his wounds. Probably the man did not feel anything just then, for most likely he had been stunned, but the Good Samaritan felt for him. The man could not plead for himself, but the heart of the Good Samaritan pleaded for him—and he tenderly bound up his gaping wounds, pouring in oil and wine—and lifted him up, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and there did all he could to ensure the completion of his cure. As the Good Samaritan went to the wounded man where he was, so Jesus Christ, “the Good Samaritan” in the highest sense of the term, comes to the sinner where he or she is!

But, Sinners, though you are trying to make your hearts ready for Christ, you will never succeed in doing it! You are wasting your strength upon a task that must end in failure. Remember that if you cannot come to Christ *with* a broken heart, you can come to Him *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come as you ought, come just as you are! And if you have no good thing to plead as a reason for your acceptance, so much the better will it be for you.

I have tried to put this matter of finding comfort plainly and in as simple language as I could. O Sacred Spirit, come now, and bring sinners to Jesus, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

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

# A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE

## NO. 71

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 23, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“For I have become like a bottle in the smoke;  
yet I do not forget Your statutes.”  
Psalm 119:83.***

THE figure of “a bottle in the smoke” is essentially oriental. We must, therefore, go to the East for its explanation. This we will supply to our hearers and readers in the words of the Author of the Pictorial Bible—“This doubtless refers to a leather bottle of kid or goatskin. The peasantry of Asia keep many articles, both dry and liquid, in such bottles, which, for security, are suspended from the roof, or hung against the walls of their humble dwellings. Here they soon become quite black with smoke, for as in the dwellings of the peasantry, there are seldom any chimneys and the smoke can only escape through an aperture in the roof, or by the door. Therefore the apartment is full of dense smoke whenever a fire is kindled in it. And in those nights and days when the smokiness of the hovels in which we daily rested during a winter’s journey in Persia, Armenia and Turkey, seemed to make the cold and weariness of actual travel a relief, we had ample occasion to observe the peculiar blackness of such skin vessels, arising from the manner in which substances offering a surface of this sort, receive the full influence of the smoke and detain the minute particles of soot which rest upon them. When such vessels do not contain liquids and are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they contract a shrunk and shriveled appearance to which the Psalmist may also possibly allude as well as to the blackness. But we presume that the leading idea refers to the latter circumstance, as in the East, *blackness* has an opposite significance to the felicitous meaning of *whiteness*. David had doubtless seen bottles of this description hanging up in his tent when a wanderer and though he might have had but few in his palace, yet in the cottages of his own poor people, he had, no doubt, witnessed them. Hence he says of himself, ‘I have become,’ by trouble and affliction, by trial and persecution, ‘like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.’”

First, *God’s people have there trials*—they get put in the smoke. Secondly, *God’s people feel their trials*—they “become like a bottle in the smoke.” Thirdly, *God’s people do not forget God’s statutes in their trials*—

“I have become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.”

**I. GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE THEIR TRIALS.** This is an old truth, as old as the everlasting hills, because trials were in the Covenant and certainly the Covenant is as old as the eternal mountains! It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people—that they should be chosen to peace and safety, to perpetual happiness here below and freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality. But rather, on the other hand, when He made the Covenant, He made the *rod* of the Covenant, too! When He drew up the charter of privileges, He also drew up the charter of chastisements. When He gave us the roll of heirship, He put down the rods among the things to which we should inevitably be heirs! Trials are a part of our lot. They were predestinated for us in God’s solemn decrees. And as surely as the stars are fashioned by His hands and He has fixed their orbits, so surely are our trials weighed in scales. He has predestinated their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles. If they do, they shall be disappointed—none of their predecessors have escaped them—

***“The path of sorrow and that path, alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

Mark Job, of whose patience you have heard. Read you well of Abraham, for he had his trials and by his faith under them, when he offered up Isaac, he became, “the father of the faithful.” Note well the biographies of all the Patriarchs, of all the Prophets, of all the Apostles and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those, whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not hung up like bottles in the smoke! It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy as the royal mark whereby the king’s vessels of honor are distinguished. As surely as we are born, we are born to trouble, even as the sparks fly upwards. And when born-again, it does seem as if we had a birth to double trouble! And double toil and trouble come to the man who has double Grace and double mercy bestowed upon him. Good men must have their trials—they must expect to be like bottles in the smoke!

Sometimes these trials arise from *the poverty of their condition*. It is the bottle in the cottage which gets into the smoke, not the bottle in the palace. The Queen’s plate knows nothing of smoke. We have seen at Windsor how carefully it is preserved. It knows nothing of trial, no hands are allowed to touch that, so as to injure it, although even it may be stolen by accident when the guards are not careful over it. Still, it was not intended to be subject to smoke. It is the bottle in the tent of the poor Arab that dwells in the smoke. So with God’s poor people. They must expect to have smoke in their dwellings. We would suppose that smoke does not enter into the house of the rich, although even then our suppo-

sition would be false. But certainly we must suppose there is more smoke where the chimney is ill built and the home is altogether of bad construction. It is the poverty of the Arab that puts his bottle in the smoke—so the poverty of Christians exposes them to much trouble and in as much as God's people are, for the most part, poor, for that reason must they always be, for the most part, in affliction. We shall not find many of God's people in the higher ranks. Not many of them shall ever be illustrious in this world. Until happier times come, when kings shall be their nursing fathers and queens their nursing mothers, it must still be true, that, "God has chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, that they should be heirs of the kingdom." Poverty has its privileges, for Christ has lived in it! But it has its ills—it has its smoke, it has its trials. You know not, sometimes, how you shall be provided for. You are often pinched for food and raiment, you are vexed with anxious cares, you wonder from where tomorrow's food shall come and where you shall obtain your daily supplies. It is because of your poverty that you are hung up like a bottle in the smoke.

Many of God's people, however, are not poor. And even if they are, poverty does not occasion so much trouble to them as some suppose—for God, in the midst of poverty, makes His children very glad and so cheers their hearts in the cottage that they scarcely know whether it is a palace or a hovel! Yes, He does send such sweet music across the waters of their woe, that they know not whether they are on dry land or not!

But there are other trials—and this brings us to remark that *our trials frequently result from our comforts*. What makes the smoke? Why, it is the fire by which the Arab warms his hands, that smokes his bottle and smokes him, too! So, Beloved, our comforts usually furnish us with troubles. It is the law of Nature that there should never be a good without having an ill connected with it. What if the stream fertilizes the land? It can sometimes drown the inhabitants! What if the fire cheer us? Does it not frequently consume our dwellings? What if the sun enlightens us? Does he not sometimes scorch and smite us with his heat? What if the rain brings forth our food and causes the flowers to blossom on the face of the earth? Does it not also break the young blossom from the trees and cause many diseases? There is nothing good without its ill—there is no fire without its smoke! The fire of our comfort will always have the smoke of trial with it. You will find it so, if you study the comforts you have in your own family. You have relations. Mark you—every relationship engenders its trial and every fresh relationship upon which you enter opens to you, at one time, certainly, a new source of joys, but infallibly also a new source of sorrows! Are you parents? Your children are your joy. But those children cause you some smoke, because you fear lest they should not be brought up in "the nurture and admonition of the

Lord.” And it may be, when they come to riper years, that they will grieve your spirits—God grant they may not break your hearts by their sins! You have wealth. Well, that has its joys with it. But still, has it not its trials and its troubles? Has not the rich man more to care for than the poor? He who has nothing, sleeps soundly, for the thief will not molest him. But he who has abundance often trembles lest the rough wind should blow down that which he has built—lest the rude storm should wreck that argosy laden with his gold—lest an overwhelming and sudden turn in the tide of commerce should sweep away his speculations and destroy his hopes!

Just as the birds that visit us fly away from us, so do our joys bring sorrow with them. In fact, joy and sorrow are twins. The blood which runs in the veins of sorrow, runs in the veins of joy, too. For what is the blood of sorrow—is it not the tear? And what is the blood of joy? When we are full of joy do we not weep? Ah, that we do. The same drop which expresses joy is sorrow’s own emblem! We weep for joy and we weep for sorrow. Our fire gives smoke to tell us that our comforts have their trials with them. Brothers and Sisters, you have extraordinary fires which others have never kindled—expect then to have extraordinary smoke! You have the Presence of Christ. But then you will have the smoke of fear, lest you should lose it. You have the promise of God’s Word—there is the fire of it—but you have the smoke, sometimes, when you read it without the illumination of God’s Spirit. You have the joy of assurance. But you also have the smoke of doubt which blows into your eyes and well near blinds you! You have your trials, and your trials arise from your comforts. The more comfort you have, the more fire you have, the more sorrows shall you have and the more smoke!

Again—the ministry is the great fire by which Christian men warm their hands. But the *ministry has much smoke with it*. How often have you come to this House of God and had your spirits lifted up! But perhaps as often you have come here to be cast down! Your harp strings, at times, have been all loose. You could not play a tune of joy upon them—you have come here and Christ tuned your harp so that it could awake, “like David’s harp of solemn sound.” But at other times you have come here and had all the rejoicings removed from you by some solemn searching sermon. Last Sabbath-Day how many of you there were like bottles in the smoke! This pulpit, which is intended at times to give you fire, is also intended to have smoke with it. It would not be God’s pulpit if no smoke issued from it. When God made Sinai His pulpit, Sinai was altogether on a smoke! You have often been like bottles in the smoke—the smoke caused by the fire of God’s own kindling, the fire of the Gospel ministry!

I think, however, that David had one more thought. The poor bottle in the smoke *stays there for a long time, till it gets black*. It is not just one puff of smoke that comes upon it. The smoke is always going up, always girding the poor bottle. It lives in an atmosphere of smoke. So, Beloved, some of us hang up like bottles in the smoke for months, or for a whole year. No sooner do you get out of one trouble than you tumble into another! No sooner do you get up one hill than you have to mount another! It seems to be all up hill to Heaven with you. You feel that John Bunyan is right in his ditty—"A Christian is seldom long at ease. When one trouble's gone, another does him seize." You are always in the smoke. You are linked, perhaps, with an ungodly partner. Or perhaps you are of a singular temperament and your temperament naturally puts clouds and darkness round about you so that you are always in the smoke. Well, Beloved, that was the condition of David. He was not just, sometimes, in trial—it seemed as if trials came to him every day! Each day had its cares. Each hour carried on its wings some fresh tribulation. Instead of bringing joy, each moment did but toll the knell of happiness and bring another grief. Well, if this is your case, fear not, you are not alone in your trials—but you see the truth of what is uttered here—you have become like bottles in the smoke.

**II.** This brings us to the second point—CHRISTIANS FEEL THEIR TROUBLES. They are in the smoke. And they are like *bottles* in the smoke. There are some things that you might hang up in the smoke for many a day and they would never be much changed because they are so black, now, that they could never be made any blacker. They are so shriveled, now, that they never could become any worse. But the poor skin bottle shrivels up in the heat, gets blacker and shows at once the effect of the smoke. It is not an unfeeling thing, like a stone—it is at once affected! Now, some men think that Divine Grace makes a man unable to feel suffering. I have heard people insinuate that the martyrs did not endure much pain when they were being burned to death—but this is a mistake—Christians are not like stones. They are like *bottles* in the smoke. In fact, if there is any difference, a Christian feels his trials more than another because he traces them to God and that makes them more acute, as coming from the God whom he loves. But at the same time, I grant you, it makes them more easy to bear because he believes they will work the comfortable fruits of righteousness! A dog will bite the stone that is thrown at it, but a man would resent the injury on the man that threw the stone. Stupid, foolish, carnal unbelief quarrels with the trial. But faith goes into the Court of King's Bench at once and asks its God, "Why do You contend with me?" But even faith, itself, does not avert the pain of the chastisement—it enables us to endure it—but it does not remove the trial. The Christian is not wrong in giving way to his feelings—

did not his Master shed tears when Lazarus was dead? And did He not, when on the Cross, utter the exceedingly bitter cry, “My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?”

*Our Heavenly Father never intended to take away our griefs when under trial.* He does not put us beyond the reach of the flood, but builds us an ark in which we float until the water is ultimately controlled and we rest on the Mount Ararat of Heaven forever! God takes not His people to an Elysium where they become impervious to painful feelings—but He gives us Grace to endure our trials and to sing His praises while we suffer, “I have become like a bottle in the smoke.”

*The trial that we do not feel is no trial at all.* I remember a remarkable case of assault and battery that was tried sometime ago. I knew a friend who happened to be in court. It was a most singular affair. For when the prosecutor was requested to state in what the assault consisted, he said, in curious English, “Ah, Sir, he struck me a most tremendous blow.” “Well, but where did he strike you?” “Well, Sir, he did not hit me. It only just grazed me.” Of course the judge said here was no assault and battery, because there was no real blow struck. So we sometimes meet with persons who say, “I could bear that trial if it did not touch my feelings.” Of course you could, for then it would be no trial at all! Suppose a man were to see his house and property burned? Would you call it a trial, if he could do as Sheridan did, when his theater was burned? He went to a house opposite and sat down drinking and jokingly said, “Surely, every man has a right to sit and warm his hands by his own fireside.” It is *feeling* a trial that makes it a trial. The essence of the trial lies in my feeling it. And God intended His trials to be felt! His rods are not made of wheat straw—they are made of true birch. And His blows fall just where we feel them. He does not strike us on the iron plates of our armor. He smites us where we are sure to be affected.

And yet more—*trials which are not felt are unprofitable trials.* If there is no blueness in the wound, then the soul is not made better. If there is no crying out, then there will be no emptying out of our depravity. It is just so much as we *feel* that we are profited! A trial unfelt must be a trial un-sanctified. A trial under which we do not feel at all cannot be a blessing to us because we are only blessed by feeling it, under the agency of God’s Holy Spirit. Christian men and women, do not blush because you are like a *bottle* in the smoke—because you are sensitive under affliction—for so you ought to be! Do not let others say you ought not to feel it so much, because your husband is dead, or your child is dead, or you have lost your property! Just tell them that you know you ought, for God sent the trouble that you might feel it. (Not excessively and murmur against God) but that you might feel the rod and then kiss it. That is patience—not

when we do not feel—but when we feel it and say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” “I am like a bottle in the smoke.”

Now, a bottle, when it is in the smoke, *gets very black*—so does the Christian—when he is in the smoke of trial, or in the smoke of the Gospel ministry, or the smoke of persecution—gets very black in his own esteem. It is marvelous how bright we are when everything goes right with us. But it is equally marvelous how black we get when a little tribulation comes upon us! We think very well of ourselves while there is no smoke. But let the smoke come and it reveals the blackness of our hearts. Trials teach us what we are. They dig up the soil and let us see what we are made of. They turn up some of the ill weeds on the surface. They are good for this reason—they make us know our blackness!

A bottle, too, that hangs up in the smoke, will become *very useless*. So do we, often, when we are under a trying ministry, or a trying Providence, feel that we are very useless. We feel good for nothing, like a bottle that has been hung up in the smoke that nobody will ever drink out of any more, because it will smoke everything that is put in it. We feel that we are of no use to anybody—that we are poor unprofitable creatures! In our joys we are honorable creatures. We scarcely think the Creator could do without us—but when we are in trouble, we feel, “I am a worm and no man”—good for nothing! Let me die. I have become useless, as well as black, “like a bottle in the smoke.”

And then a bottle in the smoke is *an empty bottle*. It would not have been hung up in the smoke unless it had been empty. And very often under trials how empty we become. We are full enough in our joys. But the smoke and heat soon dry every atom of moisture out of us. All our hope is gone, all our strength is departed—we then feel that we are empty sinners and need a full Christ to save us. We are like bottles in the smoke.

Have I described any of your characters? I dare say some of you are like bottles in the smoke. You feel your trials. You have a soft, tender heart and the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in it. You are like a piece of seaweed, affected by every change of the weather. Not like a piece of rock, that might be hung up and would never change—you are capable of being affected and it is quite right you should be—you have “become like a bottle in the smoke.”

**III.** And now, Beloved, the third and blessed thought is that CHRISTIANS, THOUGH THEY HAVE TROUBLES AND FEEL THEIR TROUBLES, DO NOT, IN THEIR TROUBLES, FORGET GOD’S STATUTES.

What are God’s statutes? God has two kinds of statutes, both of them engraved in eternal brass. The first are *the statutes of His commands*. And of these He has said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail till all is fulfilled.” These statutes are

like the statutes of the Medes and Persians. They are binding upon all His people. His precepts are a light and easy yoke. But they are ones which no man must cast from his shoulders. All must carry the commands of Christ and all who hope to be saved by Him must take up his cross daily and follow Him. Well, the Psalmist said, "In the midst of my trials I have not swerved from Your statutes. I have not attempted to violate Your commands. I have not in any way moved from the strict path of integrity. And in the midst of all my persecutions, I have gone straight on, never once forgetting God's statutes or commands." And then again—there are *statutes of promise*, which are equally firm, each of them as immortal as God who uttered them! David did not forget these. For he said of them, "Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." And he could not have sung about them if he had forgotten them!

Why was it David still held fast to God's statutes? First of all, *David was not a bottle in the fire*, or else he would have forgotten them. Our trials are smoke, but not fire. They are very uncomfortable, but they do not consume us. In other parts of Scripture, the figure of fire may be applied to our trials, but here it would not be appropriate because the bottle would be burned up if it were in the fire. But the Christian may say, "True, it is all smoke round about me. but there is nothing which tends to burn up my piety. Smoke may dim my evidence, but it cannot burn it. It may and certainly will be obnoxious to my eyes and nose and all my senses, but it cannot burn my limbs. It may stop my breath and prevent my drinking in the pure air of Heaven, but it cannot consume my lungs and burn the vital parts of my body." Ah, it is well for you, O Christian, that there is more smoke than fire in your trials! And there is no cause why you should forget your God in your troubles. They may have a tendency to drive you *from* Him, but like great waves, they often wash the driftwood of the poor lost boats upon the beach of God's love! And the mast that might have floated out to sea and been carried—no one knows where—is often stranded on the shore and there once more is made to do fresh service. So are you, Christian, washed on shore by the waves of your trouble! But never are you washed away by them. "I have not forgotten Your statutes."

Another reason why, when David was in the smoke, he did not forget God's statutes was this—*Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him and the statutes were in the smoke with him, too*. God's statutes have been in the fire, as well as God's people. Both the promise and the precept are in the furnace. And if I hang up in the smoke, like a bottle, I see hanging up by my side, God's commands, covered with soot and smoke, subject to the same perils. Suppose I am persecuted—it is a comfort to know that men do not persecute *me*, but my Master's Truth! It is a singular thing with

regard to all the envenomed shafts that have been hurled at me—that they have generally fallen on that part of my frame which is most invulnerable—because they have generally fallen on something I have quoted from somebody else or proved from Scripture. They may go on. It is sweet to think that Jesus Christ is in the smoke as well as we are. And the more flame there is, the better we shall be able to see our Master in the smoke with us—

***“By God’s command wherever I stray,  
Sorrow attends me all the way,  
A never failing Friend!  
And if my sufferings may augment  
Your praise, behold me well content—  
Let sorrow still attend!  
It costs me no regret, that she  
Who followed Christ should follow me!  
And though wherever she goes,  
Thorns spring spontaneous at her feet,  
I love her and extract a sweet  
From all my bitter woes.”***

Another reason why David did not forget the statutes was *they were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter*. Smoke does not enter the interior of the bottle. It only affects the exterior. So it is with God’s children—the smoke does not enter into their hearts. Christ is there and Grace is there and Christ and Grace are both unaffected by the smoke. Come up, clouds of smoke! Curl upward till you envelop me! Still will I hang on the Nail, Christ Jesus—that sure Nail which can never be moved from its place! And I will feel that “while the outward man decays, the inward man is renewed day by day.” And the statutes being there, I do not forget them, “For I have become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.”

To such of you as can join with David, let me give a word of consolation. If you have been persecuted and still hold fast by God’s Word—if you have been afflicted and still persevere in the knowledge of our Lord and Master—you have every reason to believe yourself a Christian! If under your trials and troubles you remain just what you were when at ease, you may then hope, and not only so, but steadfastly believe and be assured that you are a child of God! Some of you, however, are very much like Christians when you hear sermons full of promises—when I preach to you about bruised reeds, or address you with the invitation, “Come unto Me, all you that labor.” But when I give you a smoky sermon—one which you cannot endure—if you then, can say, “Guilty, weak and helpless I may be, but still I fall into His arms. Sinful I know I am and I have grave cause for doubt, but still—

***“There, there, unshaken will I rest,  
Till this vile body dies.”***

I know, poor, weak and helpless though I am, that I have a rich Almighty Friend." If you can stand a little smoke, then you may believe yourself to be a child of God. But there are some people we know of who are shocked with a very puff of smoke—they cannot endure it, they go out at once—just like rats out of the hold of a ship when they begin to smoke it. But if you can live in the smoke and say, "I feel it and can still endure it"—if you can stand a smoky sermon and endure a smoky trial and hold fast to God under a smoky persecution, then you have reason to believe that you are certainly a child of God! Fair-weather birds! You are good for nothing! It is the stormy birds who are God's favorites! He loves the birds that can swim in the tempest. He loves those who can move in the storm and, like the eagle, companion of the lightning flash, can make the wind their chariot and ride upon forked flames of fire! If in the heat of battle, when your helmet is bruised by some powerful enemy, you can still hold up your head and say, "I know whom I have believed," and do not swerve from your post, then you are, verily, a child of Heaven! For constancy, endurance and perseverance are the true marks of a hero of the Cross and of the invincible warriors of the Lord! Those are no invincible ships that flee away before a storm. He is no brave warrior who hears reports from others that a fort is impregnable and dares not attack it. But he is brave who dashes his ship beneath the guns, or runs her well-near aground and gives broadside after broadside with a desperate valour against his foe! He who in the smoke and the tempest, in the clamor and roar of the battle, can yet coolly give his commands and, knowing that every man is expected to do his duty, can fight valiantly—he is a brave commander, he is a true soldier! He shall receive from his Master a crown of glory. O Christian! Cleave to your Master in the smoke! Hold onto your Lord in trials and you shall be refined by your afflictions! You shall exceedingly increase and be profited beyond measure!

However, I have some here who can consume their own smoke. There are some of my congregation who, when they have any trials, can manage to get over them very well, themselves. They say, "Well, I don't care! You seem to be a sad set of simpletons, you feel everything. But as for me, it all rolls off and I don't care for anything." No, I dare say you don't. But the time will come when you will find the truth of that little story you used to read when you were children, that "don't care" came to a very bad end! These persons are not like bottles in the smoke, but like pieces of wood hanging over it. But they will find there is something more than smoke, by-and-by. They will come to a place where there is not only smoke, but fire! And though they can endure the smoke of this world's troubles, they will find it not so easy as they imagine to endure the unutterable burnings and the everlasting flames of that pit of Hell whose fire knows no extinction and whose worm shall know no death! Oh, hardened

Sinner, you now have sorrows which are like the skirmishers before an army, a few light-armed troops to lead the way for whole hosts of God's avengers, who shall trample you beneath their feet! One or two drops of woe have fallen on the pavement of your life—you laugh at them. Ah, but they are the heralds of a shower of fire and brimstone which God shall rain out of Heaven upon your soul throughout eternity! And yet you may be pitying us poor Christians because of our troubles and sufferings. Pity us, do you? Ah, but our light affliction is but for a moment—and it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Take your pity back and reserve it for yourselves! For your light joy, which is but for a moment, works out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of torment! And your little bliss will be the mother of an everlasting, unutterable torture which we shall happily escape! Your sun will soon set and, at its setting, your night shall come and when your night comes, it will be night forever, without hope of light again! Before your sun sets, my Hearer, may God give you Grace. Do you inquire what you should do to be saved? Again comes the old answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you shall be saved." If you are not a sinner, I have no salvation for you! If you are a Pharisee and know not your sins, I have no Christ to preach to you! I have no Heaven to offer to you, as some have. But if you are a sinner, a *bona fide* sinner—if you are a real sinner, not a sham one, I have this to tell you—"Jesus Christ came to save sinners, even the chief."

If you will believe on Him you shall go out of this House of Prayer, absolved! Absolved, without a sin—forgiven, pardoned, washed, without a stain—accepted in the Beloved! As long as you live, that pardon shall avail you. And when you die, you will have nothing to do but to show it at the gates of Paradise to gain admittance. And then, in a nobler and sweeter song, that pardon shall form the basis of your praise while Heaven's choirs shall sing, or while the praise of the Eternal shall be the chant of the universe. God bless you! Amen.

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

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

# GRAPPLING IRONS

## NO. 1779

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep  
the testimony of Your mouth.”*  
*Psalm 119:88.*

When David wrote this part of the Psalm, he was evidently beset by many enemies who sought to destroy him. And it is exceedingly important to note what part of himself he guarded with the most care. Which part of his nature did he regard as the most vital? Where did he hold the shield that he might be screened from the darts of the foe? We observe that his prayer is very little about his body or his temporal interests. Like other men, he desired to be preserved in life and kept in prosperity, but his main prayer is not about these matters. Evidently his chief thought is concerning his *soul*, his character, his adherence to God's Word, his steadfastness in the faith.

Observe the current of his supplication—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” He is not so anxious to keep his health, or to keep his house, or to keep his crown, or even to keep his life, as he is that he may keep the testimony of God's mouth! O Brothers and Sisters, everything is right when the heart is right! And everything is wrong when the soul is wrong. We are prospering even when we lose our wealth if we grow in Grace—but we are in the direst adversity—even if we are growing rich, if we become *spiritually* poor. Starve your soul and you will be wretched amid the dainties of a king's table. But let your soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness—and a dinner of herbs will be better to you than a stalled ox. The first thing, the main thing, the chief thing, is that the heart be kept true towards God and His Word!

Concerning this David prays. I would call to your notice, this morning, first, *his intense desire*, which is that he may keep the testimony of God's mouth. Secondly, *his consequent prayer* arising out of that desire. “Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” When we have spoken upon those two points we shall then endeavor to use the whole text by way of showing *his holy example*—a lesson to all believing people in all ages to strive after quickened spiritual life that they may keep the testimony of God's mouth.

**I.** First, in these words of David, we have HIS INTENSE DESIRE that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth. This desire *was founded in a high esteem of God's Word*. He viewed the Divine Revelation as coming directly from Jehovah's own mouth. To some men, this holy Book is no more inspired than the plays of Shakespeare or the poems of Milton. We have, in the Old Testament, they say, the sacred writings of the Jews

which deserve to be treated with great respect, but that is all. David thought not so and, thank God, we join with David in his opinion! David speaks of God's Word, though he had but a small portion of it compared with what we have, as "the testimony of God's mouth." To me there is no explanation of those Words except that which involves verbal and Infallible Inspiration.

The testimony of God's mouth must be given in *words*—God's heart has thoughts, but God's mouth has words—and Words from the Omniscient and true God must be Infallible. This view invests Holy Scripture with an awe and a glory which create in us the deepest reverence and brings us to the most earnest attention. When we look upon every Word of this precious Book as coming fresh from God's mouth, we liken it to those other Words by which He called the universe out of nothing and created light where there had only been darkness. To the ear that is rightly tuned by God's Spirit there is a voice and a music as of infinite wisdom and love about every syllable of Scripture. The breath of life is in the testimony from the mouth of the living God!

In truth, the Lord may have spoken His Word, actually, by the mouth of Moses, but spiritually His own mouth has uttered it. The Inspired sentence may come down to us from the pen of David, Isaiah, or any other of the Prophets may have been the visible medium of its transmission—but the Word itself has come distinctly and directly, with absolute truth and unmingled purity—from the mouth of the Most High! The coin of Inspiration comes from the mint of Infallibility! The Truth is the teaching of the God of Truth! As such, we render to it our ears, our hearts and our obedient lives. What God has said we dare not question. The man of God wraps his face in his mantle and bows before the Divine Majesty, humbly saying, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." Those who have this reverence for God's Word will long to cling to it. They will be afraid of misinterpreting it and they will not venture to add any of their own words to it, lest they be called into judgment for such presumption!

The ears of the devout man seem to hear the thunder of that sentence, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." God grant that we may accept the Bible not as the writings of man, but as the Word of the living God! A few evenings ago we were led to think of those who tremble at God's Word—may we be numbered among them, for to such will God look and, with such will He dwell. Let us unite with the Psalmist in saying, "Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them."

This prayer of David's, springing from his great reverence for the revealed will of God, *includes within it many points of virtue*. I cannot explain what he means by keeping the testimony of God's mouth by any one line of things—it is a far-reaching prayer, as full as it is brief. He means, no doubt, that he desired to be *steadfast in the doctrine* which the mouth of the Lord had spoken. He wished to be taught of the Lord so as to know the Truth of God and then to be so confirmed and established in it that no wind of doctrine should carry him away from his moorings.

He desired to be steadfast, unmovable, rooted and grounded in the Truth of God—such an attainment is much to be desired at this time.

The things which we have learned and have received, we must hold fast until our Lord shall come. He has set us in our place to keep guard over His Truth—let no sentry sleep at his post! He has put us in trust with the Gospel—God grant we may not be dishonest trustees, trifling with our charge. May those, especially, who are teachers of others, be good stewards of the manifold Grace of God. Though we bring forth things new and old, let us take care that we bring forth nothing but what we find in the treasury of the Word of God. Woe unto the man who declares “a vision of his own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord.” Too many are doing so at this hour, glorying in their boasted culture and trusting to their own intellects. Of such we may say with Jeremiah, “They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.” The Lord shall one day silence such and put their followers to confusion.

But blessed is that man who speaks the mind of God and causes the people to hear the Word of the Lord. Man’s word is for the forum, but God’s Word must be spoken in His temple. The things which we have heard, seen and received of the Spirit of God—these things we would hold and teach—and nothing else! I am sure that the prayer of our text means—“Help me, Lord, to know, believe, and hold fast the testimony of Your mouth—may I be a true Believer, having my feet upon the solid rock of Your teaching, and not upon the quicksand of man’s invention. May I never be ashamed of Your Truth. If men call it outworn and effete, may I, nevertheless, know it to be Your own eternal Word which lives and abides forever. Let me feel it to be quickening, reviving, strengthening and as full of power and energy as ever it was. May I believe concerning it that it has the dew of its youth about it, that its locks are bushy and black as a raven, that it still goes forth as the sun from the chambers of the morning and, that like a mighty man, it marches onward conquering and to conquer.”

Brethren, this Word shall never return to God void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. This meaning of the prayer is worthy of solemn note in these evil days. But there is another meaning which will seem, to some, more practical, though, indeed, it is not so, for there is as much real practice about right thinking as about right acting! And for the understanding to be obedient to God is as vital a thing as for the actions of the life to be conformed to His will. We ought to be anxious to be *obedient to God in all His precepts*—and if we are striving to be so, our prayer should daily be that we may be preserved in the keeping of the testimony of God’s mouth.

Our Father who is in Heaven has told His children what His will is—should not this cause them to fulfill it? He has been pleased to teach us what it is that pleases Him—should we not hate that which God hates and love that which He delights in? Let us pray that we may be set in the straight and narrow way which leads unto eternal life—and may be kept there even to the end. There is no Law of God’s mouth which a faithful and loving Believer would wish to be ignorant of. There is no command of His mouth which we would willfully disobey or neglect. Our prayer is, “Make me to run in the way of Your commandments.”

That Law of God which was once so terrible to us, has lost its frowns through the atoning Sacrifice—and now we delight in the Law of God after the inward man and we long to be perfectly conformed to it! Our grief is that we are not perfect. Sin is our pain and plague. We shall never be perfectly happy till we are perfectly holy. Sin is a constant fret and burden to us—whenever we see, even, a *trace* of it in our nature or our acts, we cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” We cannot endure that the shade of evil should flit across the imagination—no, even if in our dreams a sin cast its shadow over our spirit, we wake disturbed. We would not have a wish which leans towards iniquity! We would have every thought brought into captivity to the Lord, bound by the bonds of righteousness and led prisoner along the triumphant way of sanctification, for holiness is life, light and liberty to us. “I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.” Freedom from the power of evil is the highest liberty which we expect on earth. I am sure, my Friends, the prayer is rising in your hearts at this moment—

**“Teach me to run in Your commands,  
'Tis a delightful road.  
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,  
Offend against my God.”**

David further desired that he might be preserved in perfect and unwavering *confidence in the promises of God*. The testimony of God’s mouth is largely made up of exceedingly great and precious *promises*. Oh, what rich and eternal things has He promised to them that fear Him! No good thing will He withhold from them—all things work together for their good. He will give them of the dew of Heaven and of the deep that lies under! The chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills has He covenanted to give them! The sad fact is that sometimes His own people begin to question those promises—and if the vision tarries—they are in unbelieving haste and limit the Holy One of Israel! Yet the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure—“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?”

Not one of His Words shall fail, nor shall *one* blessing which He has promised be withheld! “All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” His Covenant shall stand fast, though Heaven and earth pass away! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth. Therefore our prayer is that we may keep the testimony of His mouth and, like our fathers, may be persuaded of the promises and embrace them. What an instructive word is that! “Embraced them”—pressing them to their hearts and holding them dear to their souls! Oh, never, *never* let us dare to suspect the faithfulness of our God! Rather let us emulate the faith of Abraham who staggered not at the promise through unbelief—believing that if God had promised him a seed of Isaac and yet commanded him offer Isaac as a sacrifice—believing, I say, that God was able, even from the dead, to raise Isaac up and so to keep His Word!

All things may be contrary to what they seem to be and all human witnesses may be intentionally or unintentionally false, but the Eternal God must be true! “Let God be true and every man”—yes, and every

*thing*—“a liar.” It were better to suppose the very heavens did lie, that the earth beneath us had become untrue and that all our senses were instruments of deception rather than we should, for a moment, allow that the God of Truth could falter or waver! The largest faith of which the most enlarged mind is capable is the righteous due of God, who cannot err or change! Be this your prayer, that you may be confident of the truth of every promise of the Covenant of Grace and stand to it, come life or come death! Be this your firm resolve—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

This prayer, then, you see, has a very wide significance, and I want you to observe that upon the very surface of the words there is an indication that this desire in his soul was backed up by the experience of the *past*. He desires to keep the testimony of God’s mouth—and that implies that he has *already* received that testimony and is in possession of it! If a man has not obtained a thing, he cannot *keep* it. Beloved, I would take you back, this morning, for a moment, upon memories of the past. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where you first heard of God with your inner ear? Do you remember your poverty, your disease, your death? And how the heavenly Word of God gave you wealth, healing, and life in Christ?

Since then, how precious, how soul-sustaining, how full of deliverance, how pregnant with victory have the Words of God been to you in days of affliction and conviction! At this day you must feel that you could not leave this precious Word of God, for you would be leaving the fountain of Living Waters! It has been your life, your joy, your all—why would you leave it? With David you can bear witness, “Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” Where will you go if you forsake the Lord’s testimony? What way is open to you if you turn from the way of His statutes? And, my Brothers, the mercies of the past—I might even say the *miseries* of the past—all bind us to our God and to His statutes. All that has happened up to now has only magnified His Word above all His name!

We have lived on that Word when, otherwise, our soul would have died of famine. We have had light in the midst of more than Egyptian darkness through its testimonies! What wonders we have worked through the promises of God. “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” By the power of this Word of God we have run through a troop. By our God we have leaped over a wall. Passing through the fire we have not been burned! Wading through the rivers we have not been drowned, for the Word of the Lord has brought us deliverance! Believe for the future, for the past demands it! God grant that we may, by a childlike confidence, forever keep the testimony of His mouth!

Furthermore, this desire is *necessitated by the struggles of the present*. Poor David had become like a bottle in the smoke—his eyes were failing, his heart had fainted, his days were growing few, his pathway was intercepted with pits, he was persecuted wrongfully, he was almost consumed—but he adds, “I forsook not Your precepts.” That was the saving clause of it all! We may be in the smoke, but we shall not be smothered! We may be persecuted, but we shall never be forsaken! We may be cast down, but we shall not be destroyed while we keep the testimonies of

God's mouth! We are still in the sea, therefore let us cling to our life belt. We are still in the wilderness, let us daily gather the heavenly manna. Cast not away your confidence which, even now, has great recompense of reward. Stand to it, that, be the present what it may, your choice is made, your understanding is assured, your convictions are indelible!

Change as you will, all you that know not God—we that know Him by long experience are inseparably united to Him! To quit the Truth of God for modern notions would be to leave the streams from Lebanon for the sand of the desert! The sweet waters of Siloam for the brine of the Dead Sea! Tossed no longer with tempest, our soul has found her anchorage and rests in the Lord. "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise!" We are not forever learning, but we have come to the knowledge of the Truth of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We are neither to be bribed nor bullied so as to lose our faith, for it is of the operation of God! The elect shall not be deceived, for they know the voice of their Lord and He has taught them to distinguish the language of the Truth of God from the jargon of error.

I am sure I may add that this desire of David is *well warranted by every prospect of the future*. We do not know what troubles we shall yet experience, but we *do* know that He who has helped us, bears us through and makes us more than conquerors! The testimony of God's mouth is our shield in the day of battle. We cannot put on Saul's armor, for we have not proved it, but we have proved the panoply which God provides for us in His Word and, therefore, by His Grace, we wear it daily! That future, which extends in endless vista far beyond our mortal life, demands faithfulness of us. If we are traitors to the Truth of God, today, what will become of the next generation, and the next, and the next? At this hour we suffer for the negligences of our ancestors—error has been established by a long continuance of perversity—shall we persevere in maintaining falsehood?

Today will you rebuild the Jericho which the Reformers threw down? Will you pull down the Jerusalem which they have built up? If so, our sons shall curse the memory of their fathers! This poor world may experience great delay to her grand hope if Christian men in the present are unfaithful to the Truth of God. Ages hang upon the conduct of the Church of today! Speak out the Truth of God while you live, so that when you leave this life it may be said, "He, being dead, yet speaks." Let us, today, anchor the Church to sound doctrine, lest she drift further and further in years to come. Speak God's Word faithfully, for that Word shall live and conquer when you are gone. He that sows the seed of heresy and evil doctrine entails upon succeeding generations an evil and a plague—and his very name shall rot! But he that sows the good Seed shall be the father of 10,000 successive harvests!

Today we may seal the coming centuries unto the Lord, setting the impression of the Truth of God upon them. Be you steadfast for the Truth of God in your own day, for you know not what perilous times will come before the advent of the Lord Jesus! Your words and acts, today, will affect *eternity* itself! A word spoken today, barbed with ill intent, and envenomed with the poison of falsehood, may make souls to smart

throughout a dread eternity! Tremble, therefore, lest in any way you cease to keep the testimony of the mouth of God!

Thus much upon David's desire—may a like desire burn in our hearts!

**II.** Secondly, let us consider HIS CONSEQUENT PRAYER. He did not pray immediately that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth, but he offered the next prayer to it, the one which leads up to it right surely. As a man that goes up to his chamber does not leap up all at once, but climbs the stairs, so does David rise to the keeping of the Lord's Word by the prayer—"Quicken me after Your loving kindness."

This prayer is *wisdom*. He that says, "I shall keep the testimony of God's mouth, for I am fully resolved to do it," had better salt that resolution with *prayer*, or it will *rot* like all things which come of the flesh.

"Oh, but" he says, "I am strong-minded and firmly established and shall never be moved from the hope of my high calling." O Man, you know not yourself, nor the power of temptation, if you are depending upon yourself! You will be as readily blown away as the thistledown upon the plain when the north wind is raging! O Heart, you are but human! And humanity is unstable as water. O Man, you are frail as a shadow—trust not in yourself for a moment! "Trust in the Lord with all yours heart; and lean not unto your own understanding." Put up a prayer to God that He would confirm you, for in that way and in that way, only, shall you be true to His statutes. He shall keep God's testimony that is kept by God's *power*, and he alone, therefore this prayer is wisdom.

Moreover, as there is but one Lord and Giver of life, what more could David do than pray? He could not give *himself* life—and he was wise to apply to Him who, alone, quickens the dead. This prayer was *suggested*, I do not doubt, *by David's inward state*. He says, "Quicken me." Does he mean that he was dead? Yes, comparatively. He means that he felt the power of death working in him. Before he is quite numbed, he cries, "Quicken me." He was not altogether dead, for dead men never pray for quickening—but he had a sense of deadness creeping over him, gradually chilling the genial current of his soul. He was dull. He was heavy. He felt lethargic and indisposed to activity. "Quicken me, Lord," he says. "Quicken me." The Lord has given us some life, Beloved, but that life, at intervals, seems to go to sleep through weariness—let us pray, "Quicken me, Lord." The Lord has given us His Well-Beloved Son, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly.

Is your life vigorous, dear Brother? Yet this prayer is still suitable for you. Still cry, "Quicken me." Nobody knows how much vitality a man can manifest. He who seems all alive might still have *more* life. He can rise from life to strength, from strength to activity, from activity to intensity, from intensity to violence. When a man is thoroughly alive, what a man he is! Are we not, the most of us, a droning, sleepy, half-quickened set? We mope and grope like men who are looking for their graves! But when the Lord comes to us, He quickens us from head to foot—and then the blood leaps in our veins, our spiritual breath is full and deep—and we are fired with enthusiasm. We are dry, now, and powerless, like the bush in the desert, but the Spirit descends upon us as fire and then we blaze with Divine fervor! We can do all things through Christ that strengthens us!

If we desire to cleave to the Truth of God, let us pray that up to the highest point we may be filled with the life of God, since life and truth go together. Oh that we may become quick in every respect—quickened by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. This is every way a suitable prayer—a very fitting one for lukewarm Laodiceans. It will not be out of place in the mouth of any of us! However full of life we may be, let us all together plead for this master blessing of quickening—

***“Revive Your work, O Lord!  
Disturb this sleep of death.  
Quicken the smoldering embers now,  
By Your almighty breath.”***

It is a prayer which *met David’s condition*. Carefully read the octave of verses with, “Caph,” [verses 81-88] at the head of them, and see how well it fits in at the end of each. “My soul faints”—“Quicken me.” “My eyes fail”—“Quicken me.” “I am become like a bottle in the smoke”—“Quicken me.” “How many are the days of Your servant?”—I seem near to death—“Quicken me.” “The proud have dug pits for me”—“Quicken me,” that I may spy out their pitfalls and avoid them. “They persecute me wrongfully”—“Quicken me,” Lord; for they cannot hurt me, though they pour death upon me, if You pour life into me. “They had almost consumed me”—“Quicken me,” and then I may burn with fire, but I shall not be consumed.

You see, the blessing of quickening meets all these conditions. I believe that the best preservative under trial is increased spiritual life. Did I hear you complain, “I am very poor”? Brothers and Sisters, if your soul is quickened and you become rich in faith, poverty will be a light burden! “But I am very depressed in spirit.” Truly, this is sad, but if you are more fully quickened, you will shake it off as living men put from them the garments of the tomb. But you cry, “I have such hard work to do!” If you have stronger life, the task will be easier. “But I have been disappointed and defeated.” You will have few defeats or you will bear them joyfully when your spiritual life is vigorous and full. “Quicken me!” I suggest that this prayer be presented all over the place by every child of God. Breathe it before God in the silence of your hearts. “Quicken me. Quicken me.”

I, Your minister, how much I need the quickening influences of Your Spirit, O God! My Brothers associated with me in the Church, how much they require it! Lord, quicken us all! You that have come up from the country—some of you grow dull enough in your rustic quietude—join with us in pleading, “Quicken me!” You who are Sunday school teachers need life for yourselves if you are to communicate it to others. In any and every case, increased spiritual life will be a blessing to you! Whatever your difficulty, whatever your doubt, whatever your sorrow, whatever your temptation—here is a prayer that meets every case—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

It is especially a prayer *which answered to David’s aim in presenting it*. He prayed this prayer that he might be enabled to keep God’s testimony. Now who are the people that give up sound doctrine? Why, the people who do not know the quickening power of it in their own souls and do not live in the delightful enjoyment of it! Who are the people that give up holy practice? Why, the people that are *not* dwelling in the power of the Holy Spirit, and are not full of the life of God! Who are those that are

tossed up and down like the locust and are shifty and have no fixed position? Why, they are the men that have not received the fullness of life from on high. You can do a great many things with a dead man—but you cannot make him stand up! You may try most earnestly, but a corpse cannot stand! Until you put life into the body, it will fall to the ground, and so if the Life of God is not in you, you cannot hold to the Truth of God, or maintain purity, or walk in integrity. Life is absolutely essential to steadfastness in the Truth.

Whenever I hear of churches and ministers departing from the faith, I know that piety is at low ebb among them. It is proposed that we should argue with them—it is of no use to argue with dead people! It is proposed that we should bring out another book of Christian evidences—it is small benefit to provide glasses for those who have no eyes! What is needed is more spiritual life, for as the Truth of God quickens men, they love the quickening Word of God. But dead men care little about that which is to them a dead letter. “Your Word has quickened me,” says David, and the man that is quickened clings to the Truth which quickens him. Whenever you feel a little shaky and your feet begin to totter, and your head to swim, just cry, “Lord, quicken me! Here is a sign that I am dying, for I am doubting. Pour more of Your Divine Power into me.” When spiritual life is healthy, it will feed upon the Word, and so take it into its innermost self that nothing can remove it.

Why do men grow weary of heavenly food? David tells us—“Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death.” Just so—the best meat in God’s Word is not enjoyed by men who are sinful and foolish, for they are suffering under a soul-sickness which kills holy appetites. The prayer of our text answers David’s aim—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.” *He presented this prayer on the right ground.* Observe how He pleads the mercy and love of God. “Quicken me after Your loving kindness.” That is a lovely way of putting it—“I do not, now, appeal to Your righteousness, but to Your *love*, Your *special* love, Your loving kindness—to those that are of *kin* to You! Lord, I would entreat You to bless me because of Your loving kindness to those whom You did foreknow and did predestinate to be Your own! Oh, by that special love of Yours I pray You quicken me, that I may take fast hold upon Your Word and never let it go!”

He means, too, I think, by saying, “after Your loving kindness,” that he desires to be quickened by a sense of God’s love. Is there anything that puts life into a man like that? A mother finds her babe half frozen and she warms it back to life by pressing it to her bosom—she imparts the warmth of her own heart to it until it lives, again, and smiles. It is just so with our God—there is no reviving us except by pressing us close to His bosom! Did I hear you say, “I will repent in terror. I will go to Moses to get revival”? I advise you not to do so, for he will use the rod most severely and *flog* you back to feeling! And that is by no means a desirable method. Divine Love is a sweeter and surer quickener. The true elixir of life is *love*. Oh, for a draught of it!—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,***

***Which wonders to feel its own deadness depart.  
Awakened by Your goodness I rise from the ground,  
And sing to the praise of the mercy I've found.***

“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

I would close this section of my discourse by saying, *it is a prayer which has a promise attached to it.* It was not so in David's day, but in these latter times we have a promise which fits it as the wax the seal. When I have a lock I am always glad to find a key which fits it. Here is the lock—“Lord, I feel as if I were dead.” And here is the key—“He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” That answers the supplication as a glove fits the hand—“Though he were dead, yet shall he live.” If it were possible for a Believer to get between the jaws of death and stand there, the mouth of the sepulcher could not close itself upon him! Look at Jonah. He is in the whale's belly and the whale is in the great deeps, far down from the light of day. Surely it was the very belly of Hades to Jonah, but it could not be his grave! The great fish had an indigestible morsel within him at that time—he could not possibly consume the Prophet because Jonah believed the Truth of God with a living faith.

He soon escaped after he had uttered his creed—and this was his creed—“Salvation is of the Lord.” With that confession of faith in your heart, no power can destroy you, no belly of Hell can swallow you up! You must live, for so it is written, “Though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Plead that promise and cry unto God, when you feel sloth creeping over you—“Quicken me, that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.”

**III.** We part with David and this is the last word—in this verse we have HIS HOLY EXAMPLE, which I commend to you.

First, *offer this prayer of life when you feel that you are dead.* It is a strange paradox, but I put it with all my might to you. If this morning you are forced to cry, “My heart seems like adamant! My feeling is all gone—if anything is felt it is only pain to find I cannot feel! I seem to be altogether out of sorts—if the life of God is in me at all it is like a spark hidden away among the ashes—and I cannot discover it!” Well, then, bestir yourselves to pray. “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Let your groan go up from the grave's mouth. If you can get no further than a sigh, let your moans be addressed to God, let the heaving of your anguished heart move towards your heavenly Father. Let prayer arise like smoke from the altar towards Heaven—“Quicken me! Quicken me!”

Such a prayer will prove an antidote to the poison of death. Though your bones lie scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one chops wood, yet if the sighing of your soul is towards quickening, you shall be brought up again! “Your dead men shall live.” From between the very ribs of death there shall come a higher, better and more Divine life. Breathe, then, your desire in prayer after this fashion—“Lord, Your poor, dead servant cries to You for life!” Do not say to me, “It is such an odd prayer. It is so strange and, therefore it cannot be correct.” I gather that it is genuine because it is so strange that no one would borrow it from his neighbor! In spiritual life that which is according to *routine* is often false—and that which is so strange that only a personal experience could have suggested it, is most probably correct. Therefore I say, again, to you

who seem as if you were dead, let this prayer go up, "Lord, quicken me!" And He will enlighten you by His Holy Spirit.

The next thing I learn is this, that the *living Truth of God can only be held firmly by living men*. Some who are very sound are nothing else but sound—but we need no such allies! Some of those who hold a correct creed are very narrow and will not tolerate a departure by a hair's-breadth from their fixed opinions—but narrowness is *not* strength! To know the Truth of God and feel its power—and manifest its influence in your life—is the proof that you have grappled it to your soul as with hooks of steel! A dead creed in a dead man's hand is like dead wheat in the grip of an Egyptian mummy—what can come of it?

But observe carefully a living man, with living seed to sow, and you shall yet see a harvest! A living man who grasps a living Truth of God is mighty as Moses with Aaron's rod in his hand which had life in it, for it budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds! Such a rod as this can divide the Red Sea and fetch waters out of flinty rocks! Oh, for living Truth in the grip of a living man! My dear Friend, if you are going to be a champion of reformation, first be reformed yourself! If you would become a defender of the faith, first be an exemplifier of it! Let Jesus reign in your soul and then He will make you a priest and king unto Himself by His own Divine Power!

The next lesson is, *regard God's loving kindness as a source of life*. Unhappily too many have viewed it as an excuse for death. "Oh, yes," they say, "I am one of God's chosen. I need not trouble myself about holiness or activity. I shall be saved by Sovereign Grace." Do you sit down and quietly cross your legs, fold your arms, do nothing and then look to be rewarded for it? In all probability you will be lost at the last, for you are *already* lost! The man who dares to pervert the Truth of God is already a lost man! But he that knows the loving kindness of the Lord says, "Quicken me, Lord. Such love as this I must translate into life—grant that, to me, to live may be love." Those words, "love," and, "live," are very near akin in their conformation. They are joined together in spiritual things—let no man put them asunder.

Do not get behind the door and suck your honeycomb and say, "I love enjoyment, but I hate employment! I never try to defend the Truth or to spread it, but it is very sweet to me." Ah, my dear Sir, that kind of honey will poison you! The thought of it makes me sick! The right thing is to feel that the more God loves you, the more you love Him—the more He does for you, the more you will do for Him—

***"Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn.  
Chosen of Him ere time began,  
I choose Him in return."***

"Quicken me after Your loving kindness."

And lastly, *let Divine aid, whenever we seek it or obtain it, lead us to the practical use of it in obedience*. "Quicken me" and, "so shall I keep." I put those words together in that fashion, for they *are* together. That is to say, if the Lord gives quickening, I will give steadfastness. The Believer is active, not passive! He is acted on, but he also acts. In the first work of regeneration we are passive—that must be a pure act of God's Grace. But as the child, as soon as it is born, becomes active and begins to cry, so

does a new-born soul prove its activity by its prayer! As the child ever after has an activity all its own in proportion to the measure of its vitality, so will it be with the child of God—he becomes more and more energetic in proportion as God pours into him more and more of the Divine Life.

Come, you that lie in the dust, shake yourselves from it! You that are at ease in Zion, bestir yourselves in the service of your Lord and Master before a heavy woe overwhelms you! This is an evil day—a day in which multitudes are perishing in poverty and sin by reason of their ignorance of Christ—will you not instruct them? This is a day of blasphemy and rebuke in which the Truth of God is cast down and trodden like mud in the streets—will you not stand up for it? If you come not, today, to the help of the Lord and His Truth, then shall you be cursed like the inhabitants of Meroz of old!

But oh, I charge you, men of God who live by faith on the Son of God, feed upon Him and be strong! And then quit yourselves like men and keep His testimonies in the teeth of an infidel world and a philosophizing church! Hold to the fundamentals of the faith though, with others, the foundations are shaken. Abide like rocks in the midst of foaming billows and defy all opposition! Stand fast in the house of your God, below, and this shall be your reward above—“Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God and he shall go no more out.” May the best of blessings rest upon you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:81-101.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
100 (PART II); 119 (PART III); 459.**

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# MY SOLACE IN MY AFFLICTION

## NO. 1656

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

***“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants. Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.”  
Psalm 119:89-92.***

EVEN in those Psalms which are not associated with any particular chapter of history, we can often trace out the trail of the writer's experience and track his soul through its wanderings. His reflections become vivid with intense reality. The meditation now before us is evidently prompted by some event deeply carved on the writer's memory. “Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” We know nothing of the time or circumstance when the heart was terrified, when the nerves were shaken, when the weakness of nature asserted itself—the veil is wisely drawn over the sharp pains or sullen griefs that bowed the sufferer down and we are simply solaced with a song celebrating his *deliverance* out of all his troubles and fears. Possibly his affliction was long, but certainly it reached a crisis so perilous that his life then trembled in the balance! He was then ripe for destruction, ready to have perished.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that whatever his trial may have been, whether it was a sickness or a disaster, or any other manner of adversity, he refers to it as his own—he calls it, “*my* affliction.” It would ill become us, therefore, to pry into the cause or fashion of his grief, or to ask any further questions. Quite likely I may be addressing some dear child of God who is vexed with an affliction so personal and so peculiar that he feels it to be “his own,” and would deem it an intrusion for another to interfere. Let us not intrude, for we should only increase the grief by our enquiries.

“My affliction” is an expression that bears a marked emphasis and has a tone entirely its own. I do not know whether I am more struck with its pathos or its reticence. At the sound of such words, a stranger might well be touched with pity, but a friend, however sympathizing, would shrink from prying into the secrets of a heart that so delicately conceals its own bitterness. The one and only thing that the Psalmist was eager to tell us was the prescription that soothed his pains and sustained his spirits. On mature reflection, he is confident that he would have perished under that affliction if it had not been for certain comfortable and delightful reflections concerning God's Word. You and I may, at any time, be exposed to the same mental or spiritual depression, through one or other of those manifold sorrows which enter so largely into

Christian life. There are plenty of miry places on the way to Heaven and so it will be our wisdom to diligently enquire how this good man passed through them.

I like to hear how any godly man has been comforted, for it comforts me. I take a deep interest in the simple tale of any humble prisoner whose bonds the Lord has loosed. And I feel it a choice pleasure to chime in with songs of thanksgiving which come from the lips of grateful suppliants whose cries the Lord has heard. Observe that the Psalmist appeals to certain facts which he remembered. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides," etc. And then he refers to certain delights which he experienced in reviewing these facts—"Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should have perished in my affliction."

**I.** Here, then, we have strong consolation IN CERTAIN FACTS WHICH HE REMEMBERED. Fly to the mountains when the enemy invades the land. Hide in the strongholds of your God!

**1.** Our first comfort is the eternal existence of God which is implied in the continuance of His faithfulness and power. "The Lord lives" is the plea of souls harassed and haunted by foes without and fears within. Observe, I pray you, that there is nothing casual or accidental in the tone of the Psalmist's meditation, as if some stray thought had darted a ray of light into the mind of one who was dreary and downcast. His joy is not like a flower that blooms in the desert, or a bird that chirps merrily amidst the frost of winter—he has abundant and even *overflowing* causes for joy! His confidence runs on the grand old classic lines which Inspiration has hallowed. When Moses was appalled by the frailty of man, he uttered his majestic ode to the eternity of God. "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

So here, the eternal existence of God is the first fact to which the afflicted saint clings. According to the most eminent scholars, the opening sentence should be read—"Forever You are, O Lord; Your Word is settled in Heaven." The second verse, as you may notice, is divided into two sentences, and the poetic parallelism requires a like arrangement in this verse, if the poetic rule is carried out. But this would not form two stanzas unless we read the first four words as a distinct sentence—"Forever, O Lord, You are." Whether this revision is warranted or not does not matter, for, as I have already said, the fact is implied in the wording of the authorized version. God is. He is forever the same and His years are throughout all generations. This is a very simple Truth of God—who but a madman or a fool ever doubted it?

If there is a God, He must be self-existent and eternal. But it is from simple things that sweetest consequences flow. Bread is simple enough—you do not require some eminent chief of the kitchen to teach you the art of making bread. But see what multitudes of people are fed upon that simple article of food! And so the simplest Truth of God is the most precious, for it sustains many more than that daintier form of Truth which may be only suitable for men of strong minds or of great experience in the things of God. In the song of

Moses—that song which is linked with the song of the Lamb—we have an apostrophe that language could hardly surpass. “Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods (or mighty ones)? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

To what lofty heights of expression did the holy Prophets often rise in proclaiming the grandeur of the Lord’s being, the magnitude of His works, the sovereignty of His will and the faithfulness of His promises to His people! And yet the wealth of imagery that Isaiah or Ezekiel could call up, or the melting tones that Jeremiah could utter, can but faintly display the excellence of Him that fills all in all! They rehearse His praise to whom, alone, all worship is due, in words that swell and sound forth like the music of the spheres. They assail the heathen idolatry which offered its incense to engraved images, or they expose the heartless treachery that withheld homage from the true God. They denounce the unbelief which limited the Holy One of Israel by distrusting His words. In any of these cases, if we lend them our ears, they succeed in elevating our hearts from the groveling thoughts of our fleeting life to the infinite perfection of Jehovah’s essential Deity, of whom (to accommodate the idea of His everlasting existence to our tiny computations) we are told “that one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

My Brothers and Sisters, we are compassed about with God on every side. In Him we live, move and have our being. His self-existent might is our never-failing mercy. Observe, I pray you, that this simple Truth of God is the most sublime fact which the mind of a rational creature can aspire to lay hold of. God lives—lives as God! Get a grip of this vital reality and it will send a glow of health through every faculty of your soul! “Believe in the Lord, your God; so shall you be established: believe His Prophets; so shall you prosper.” And unless God is in all your thoughts you cannot be a godly man! Nothing happens to the Lord by chance. What can threaten His existence, thwart His purpose, weaken His power, dim the clearness of His eyes, diminish the tenderness of His heart, or distract the wisdom of His judgment? “You are the same, and of Your years there is no end.”

Then remember, child of God, you are a sheep that can never lose its Shepherd. You are a child that can never lose its Father. “I will not leave you orphans,” said Jesus, and therein He did but reveal the Eternal Father’s heart. In direst straits we still have a Father in Heaven! When a widow, who had long been inconsolable, sat moaning for the loss of her husband, her little child plucked her by her gown, and said, “Mother, is God dead?” That question served to rebuke the mother’s fretfulness and to remind her that she was not without a Guardian and Friend. “Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name.” It opened up to her a well of refreshment, which, like Hagar in the wilderness, she had not before been able to see. Listen, child of God—you can lose your goods, but you cannot lose your God! Like Jonah, you can see your gourd withered; but your God remains! You may lose your land, but not your Lord; your savings, but not your Savior! Even if it came to the worst and you were left, awhile, as one forsaken of God, Himself, yet still you

would not lose Him, for, like the Lord Jesus on the Cross, you would still call Him, "My God, my God."

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul—a portion that never can be alienated—upon which there is the entail of an irreversible decree that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, might have strong consolation. He lives! He reigns! This God is our God and He shall be our Guide even unto death. Yes, it is a simple fact that God is, but it is a fact that may often recur to us with singular freshness.

I met an eminent servant of God one day in the street, a man whose name, were I to mention it, you would all honor. He was in a rather gloomy and desponding mood that morning and in the course of our conversation he told me that he believed the powers of evil in this country would get the upper hand and that Christianity would be almost stamped out, he feared, partly by Romanism and partly by infidelity. And that in all probability I should live to see the streets of London run with blood while anarchy would riot as it did in the first French Revolution. He went on at such a rate that I felt bound to remonstrate with him. So I told him that I was not easily scared by such evil prognostications, for I was persuaded that God was not dead. This is our firm rock of hope—the reins of government are in the hands of the living God—and the devil cannot frustrate His decrees, nor can events baffle His will!

When Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together against the Holy Child Jesus whom the Lord had anointed, how little could they effect! They had it all their own way, or, at least, they *thought* they had. How much did they really accomplish with their willful counsels and their wicked hands? Hear it distinctly. They (these emissaries of Satan) did whatever God's hand and God's counsel *determined before* to be done! And thus it will always be! The adversaries of the Lord are exceedingly fierce, but you and I who believe in God can afford to smile at their folly. If it must be so, let the powers of darkness have all the vantage ground they seek—and they will reap all the greater defeat. "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion."

The Church, they tell us, is in danger. That depends upon whose church it is! But if it is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Let us, in this, then, be joyous and confident! If Luther could sing when the battle had but just begun—while yet the demon of the seven hills had temporal sway—why should you and I be hanging our harps on the willows, now that the fight has made the dragon bleed? Come, let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea. And as for these Amalekites, that meet us on the road and would arrest our progress, let us, like Jehoshaphat, appoint singers unto the Lord to go before our army and meet them with hallelujahs! Let us sing—Arise, O God, and make Your enemies flee before You like chaff before the wind! Yes, let them be as the fat of rams burnt upon the altar, for You,

Lord, are King, and You shall reign forever and ever! This is a flowing well of comfort.

**2.** Closely allied to the fact of God's eternal Being is this other fact of the immutability of His Word. "Your Word is settled in Heaven." The truth of the proposition will occur to you as simple and obvious. "Thus says the Lord, the Heaven is My Throne, and the earth is My footstool." His Word is settled in Heaven and issued from Heaven, the seat of His government, and it cannot be altered on earth, this distant colony of His empire! We refer to God's Word, therefore, in grievous difficulties with great confidence, because we know that every statement it contains is reliable. God's Word can never change. It is established.

Some persons have no settled residence. They are always moving to and fro, restless, finding no anchorage. But God's Word is not fixed on earth where things are always on the move—it is settled in Heaven among the infinities and eternities that change not. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven." The design and purpose of God are fixed, not fickle. He knows what He intends. You and I often begin with a design from which we are bound to deviate as we see something that would be better, or as we see that our better thing is not attainable and we are obliged to be content with something inferior. But in God's case there can be no defect of judgment which would require amendment and there can be no defect of power which would drive Him from His first determination. God has a plan, depend upon it! It were an insult to the supreme intellect if we supposed that He worked at random, without plan or method.

To some of us it is a Truth which we never doubt, that God has one boundless purpose which embraces all things—both things which He *permits* and things which He *ordains*. Without, for a moment, denying the freedom of the human will, we still believe that the supreme wisdom foresees, also, the curious twisting of the human will and overrules all for His own ends. God knows and numbers all the inclinations and devices of men—and His plan, in its mighty sweep, takes them all into account! From that plan He never swerves. What He has resolved to do He will do. The settled purpose of His heart shall stand forever sure. Of what use could the opposition of angels or of men be when Omnipotence asserts its supremacy? As you walk down your garden on an autumn morning, the spiders have spun their webs across the path, but you scarcely know it, for as you move along, the threads vanish before you.

So is it with every scheme, however skillfully contrived, that would arrest the fulfillment of the Divine purpose! The will of God must be done! Without the semblance of effort, He molds all events into His chosen form. In the sphere of mind as well as in that of matter, His dominion is absolute! One man cannot immediately operate on the will of another man so as to change its course, although intermediately he may propound reasons which, by their effect on the understanding, may completely alter the inclination of His fellow creature. But this is a true Proverb—"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He wills."

God can bend the thoughts of men as easily as we can lay on the pipes and turn the water into any cistern we choose. His purpose is settled forever in Heaven! So, too, are His Covenant and His Plan. Brothers and Sisters, I could imagine God changing His mode of procedure, but I could not imagine His changing His Covenant! He has entered into Covenant with Christ on our behalf—the Sacrifice that makes it valid has been slain—and now the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure! Every jot and tittle of it is signed and sealed and ratified by the death and the Resurrection of our glorious Surety and blessed Representative! From that Covenant God will never turn aside. The Covenant of Works we broke, but God kept it, for He did what He said He would do.

The Covenant of Grace we cannot break, for it is made with Another, on our behalf, who has already fulfilled it, so that the Covenant of Grace stands, now, towards the saints without an, “if,” or, “but,” or “perhaps,” and consists simply in unconditional promises of, “I will,” and, “you shall.” Read that Covenant for yourselves and see. Whether you choose to take the copy of it in Ezekiel, or the copy of it presented by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there it stands—a Covenant without conditions, enduring forever, never to be changed! Oh, how I rejoice in the sure mercies of David! “This is as the waters of Noah unto Me,” says the Lord, “for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you, or rebuke you.” Now, blessed be His name, the Covenant is settled in Heaven!

Then there is another matter which is settled, namely, God’s promise and the power to carry it out. I spoke of the promise being settled because it is virtually a constituent element of the Covenant, but now I mean that Gospel promise which has been proclaimed to the sons of men. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—that shall stand good throughout all generations. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life”—that shall always be true. “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”—that shall never alter till the day of doom. God will not reverse the things that have gone forth out of His lips! It was proclaimed by Christ, Himself! It was testified by His Apostles. It was ratified by the descent of the Holy Spirit! The promises of the Gospel are settled in Heaven and, therefore, the preaching of the Gospel is full of power among the sons of men.

Go and preach it, dear Brothers! Go and tell it, dear Sisters! Never be afraid that you will make a mistake if you proclaim free Grace and dying love! God has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. The salvation of souls shall be the evidence of the efficacy of the Gospel till every blood-bought one is brought by its power to Jesus’ feet. There is no change in the charge that is committed to our keeping—“Your Word is settled in Heaven.” Moreover, the *doctrine* of the Gospel as well as the *promise* of the Gospel is settled in Heaven. I do not know where I shall drift if I once leave the old channel to wind about among sandbanks. Certain of my Brothers delight to sail down a river which has neither buoys nor fixed lights, but plenty of ever-shifting sands! They do

not steer according to any chart, but according to their own heaving of the lead, from time to time, and very heavy lead it is to heave!

They say that they are thinking out their doctrines! I would be greatly sorry to have to think out the road to Heaven without the guiding star of Heaven's Grace or the map of the Word of God! Not Gospel preachers but Gospel *makers* these men aspire to be. And their message comes forth, not as the Gospel of the Grace of God, but as the gospel of the imagination of men—a gospel concocted in their own kitchen—not taught them by the Holy Spirit! It is the reverse of being “settled in Heaven.” It is not even settled in the mind of its inventor! I pity the hearers, as well as the preachers, of a precarious gospel! That which I preached to you in the beginning of my ministry, I shall preach to you, by God's Grace, till this tongue shall be silent in the grave! I know the doctrines better, but I know no better doctrines!

There are certain things indelibly impressed on my mind, of a surety fixed, definite, true and beyond doubt. As to ideas that are dubious, concerning which we need to be diffident—I leave my Brothers to discuss them. Sentiments fluctuate so constantly in this 19<sup>th</sup> Century that I suppose we shall soon require to have barometers to show us the variations of doctrine as well as the prospects of the weather! We shall have to consult quarterly reviews to see what style of religious thought is predominant—and then we shall have to accommodate our sermons to the dictum of the last wise man who has chosen to make a special fool of himself! As for myself, I shall continue to be unfashionable and abide where I am. “Stick in the mud,” says somebody. “Standing on the Rock,” say I! No, if you will—*grown* to the Immovable Rock—not to be turned aside.

If this Gospel is a lie, I grieve that I ever preached it and I will never preach it again. If it is true, truth is not a thing of almanacs and quarterlies. If true in the year, “two,” it is as true in the year, “1882.” And if it is not true today, it never was and never will be true, for the Truth of God does not come and go and be and cease to be. Fall you back, O simple hearts, upon this blessed fact—God's Word is “settled in Heaven.” It cannot be settled at Oxford, or settled at Cambridge, or at any other university! But it is settled in Heaven. Go to Heaven's Book and read Heaven's Word under the teaching of Heaven's own Spirit. And you shall go from strength to strength in the knowledge—not of what may be true, but of what *is* true, having the Revelation of God to confirm it—an authority from which there can be no appeal!

**3.** The third thing is the faithfulness of the fulfillment of that Word of God. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations.” Those men who have trusted God's Word in any generation have always found it true. In Apostolic times, or further back than that, in David's age, in the era of Moses, in the time of Abraham, in the days of Noah, in the life of Abel—whoever has trusted in God—has found that He has heard prayer, that He has been the Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him!

The Covenant, as I have already said, does not change, and the Truth of God does not change, and though the generations greatly differ in the judg-

ment of men, I greatly question whether God thinks them different. One generation is as like another as successive waves of the sea. We think we grow much wiser, but it is not a very strong proof that we are wiser because we *think* we are! I very much question all this fiddle-faddle about the progress of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. True, we rush over the country by steam instead of traveling by broad-wheeled wagons, and we get smashed up all the more readily! We now go all round the world to buy a bit of bread—we used to grow it in our own fields—and it was just as good, then, as it is now that it comes from afar.

There were good people then. There are good people now. I will not decry whatever progress has been made in machinery and the arts and so on. I thank God for it all, but about the improvement in *ourselves*—that is the point! I imagine that we bear a striking resemblance to our fathers. When I read the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think I see their sins and their follies, their murmurs and complaints repeated in our own lives. But whether or not the race has changed, there has been no change in God's dealings with the race. Whenever a Believer has rested in Him, He has fulfilled His Word to that Believer to the letter. This has always been the rule of the Kingdom of God—"According to your faith, so is it unto you."

Were I to enlarge upon all the vicissitudes through which God's servants have passed, we should have to come to the one conclusion, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all." That is so today as it was thousands of years ago. O Beloved, this is the mercy—that God is still faithful! When I used to hear my grandfather tell of the faithfulness of God to him, my young heart was encouraged to trust in God. When I have heard my father tell of the faithfulness of God to *him*, I have been strengthened in my confidence in my father's God. But I can tell the same tales, myself and, perhaps, I can record more instances than they of God's goodness to those that put their trust in Him. It will be the same with our children and with our children's children.

O tried Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will be faithful to you as He has been to me! The Lord will not fail you. Therefore be not discouraged. As your days, so shall your strength be. Underneath you are the everlasting arms. You shall conquer, however hot the fight may become. Only stay yourself upon the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself, in anything, to do evil, for you shall be delivered and God shall be glorified in you.

**4.** But I must pass on to the next fact worth considering, and that is the perpetuity of the Word of God in Nature. To this the Psalmist alludes in the following words—"You have established the earth and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants." By the Word of God were the heavens made and it is by His Word that all things consist. We talk of the force of gravitation and the laws of Nature, but in very deed the one force in Nature is that God *spoke*. The Word of the Lord is the power by which all things hold together and remain in their places.

Look at the earth. We talk of the pillars of it—the columns upon which it leans—but what does it rest upon? Our modern science does not weaken the

point of the text, it rather strengthens it. The earth rests upon nothing! There it is, floating in space, and yet it has never drifted from its place or turned aside from its proper orbit! There are little quivers within its own bosom, but it does not rush away from the place where God ordained it to be. It continues its course around the sun with immutable fidelity. This world is rather larger than you are and requires more power to keep it in its place than is requisite to keep *you* in your place. Yet there it is! Shall not the Lord hold up His servant and keep him from wandering? All the machinery in the world could not turn the globe on its axis or move it in its orbit. I suppose that no angelic force would be adequate to bring about such results as God accomplishes simply by His will. He establishes the world and it abides.

Let us be confident, then. Whenever God means to break His Word and change His ordinances, we may expect to find this earth go steaming into the sun, or else it will rush far off into space, nobody knows where. But while it keeps its place, what have you and I to worry about? Is it not the sign that the Lord will keep us, also? Has He kept the stars, which are the major? Shall He not much more keep us, who are the minor? What are we but small specks, grains of dust things scarcely to be seen? And yet we talk about the great power of God that we shall need to keep us in our place! Let us cease from doubt as we see this huge world kept like a sapphire in its golden setting by the Divine hands. Nor, Brothers and Sisters, is it this world alone, vast though it may seem to us, yet a little planet amidst the larger spheres! The Lord upholds all worlds comprehended in one vast system. "They continue this day according to Your ordinances."

Every star maintains its place. "One sun by day, by night ten thousand shine," yet these constellations and all other creations of God's hands observe, each one, the ordinance of Heaven! God does not swerve from His own statutes, nor does He suffer the shining hosts to break their ranks. They may not rush about in wild confusion. They are the sentinels of Heaven. He calls them all by name, as He musters and marshals their serried ranks. Are they not all His servants, waiting at His feet as maidens attend their mistress? They all do His bidding! Ought not this cheer our hearts and inspire us with courage? If the heavenly bodies—as we are known to call those inanimate creatures of the Most High—are upheld by His power and disposed of by His wisdom, why should we discredit the Omnipotence which preserves our souls, or the Omniscience which orders our steps? If yon arch stands without buttress, cannot my faith rest on the promise, though no means of support are visible?

Those mighty orbs to which we have been referring are under God's Law and subject to the Divine statutes—alike in respect to the motions they perform and to time influence they produce. All the creatures obey their Maker except man! There is no rebellion, to our knowledge, anywhere in the universe except among fallen angels and fickle mortals like ourselves. What, then, am I troubled about? Opposing forces cannot injure me. If God wills, He can send a squadron of angels to help me. He can bid the stars in their courses fight for me if it is necessary. All are His servants. The perpetuity of the Laws of Nature

is a proof of the continuance of the Word of God. Strengthen your confidence as to things not seen by the steadfastness of the things that are—

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

**5.** There is one other fact which I will only touch upon—the perpetuity of the Word of God in experience. “Unless,” said the Psalmist, “Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” We know, by experience, what he means. The trouble is a thing of the past, but the trembling is still present to our memory. We were mercifully delivered when we might have been utterly destroyed! My Brothers and Sisters, that same Word of God which has made the earth keep its place, has, up to now, been sufficient to make you keep your place. Some of you have passed through deep waters and yet you have not been drowned. I have a sympathy with young people, when they are doubting, because they have not seen the mighty works of which their fathers have told them. But if you have been sustained for 40 years in the wilderness, you ought to know the faithfulness of God—and I am ashamed of you when you get disheartened and discourage your Brethren.

Most of all, I am ashamed of myself whenever I fall into despondency. Admiral Drake had been round the world. He had survived all sorts of storms and battles. One day, when coming up the Thames, he was caught in such an ugly wind that he was likely to be wrecked, and the admiral cried, “No, no, I have been round the world, and I do not intend to be drowned in a ditch.” I want you to be animated by the same courage, for the Lord will not leave you! Surely He who has preserved you in all your previous distresses will not desert you in your present adversities! If you had not taken delight in God’s Word, you would long ago have perished in your affliction! Look back upon the past, then, and see that God has been sufficient for you up till now. What reason have you for the suspicion that He will not befriend you even to the end?

**II.** Having thus drawn your attention to the facts that the Psalmist recounts, I pass on, in the second place, to speak of THE DELIGHTS WHICH HE EXPERIENCED IN THE TIME OF HIS TROUBLE. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,” said one of Job’s comforters, though I fear Job got little enough of comfort out of that sage reflection. Those troubles, however, that are common to men, are often the occasion of uncommon anguish to persons of sensitive nature. Some men and women receive a shock from which they never recover. They gradually droop and languish, health and happiness, alike, failing them. It is in such seasons of acute distress, when this world has no palliative to offer, that God’s Word can minister infinite delights to soothe the distractions and heal the sorrows of the heart. These Psalms—most of them written by David, and the rest written by disciples of the David school—compass almost every conceivable form of adversity to which our poor suffering humanity is exposed.

And there is another thing which I am sure you will find it sweet to muse upon. It is this—in all cases the sigh was turned into a song before it was ad-

mitted into the sacred calendar. This is a Law of the Kingdom of Heaven over which I linger with unspeakable delight! In fact, I can take a survey of your troubles, as well as of my own, with much composure when I perceive that they are all capable of being turned into joy! Our sympathies are continually stirred by the bereavements one and another of us are called to suffer. The ties of kindred and friendship are being broken all around. Each day has its obituary. This goes on from generation to generation. But the sharp pang of losing those we love is in no wise lightened by the fact that it is so general.

Some of us today live in dread. Others have drawn down the blinds. He is gone on whom you leaned for succor. She has been snatched from your side, of whom you could say that none upon earth excelled her. Your nurslings, the flowers that bloomed around your hearth, have faded. I hear your desolate moan, but there is music not far off! All creatures are shadows, yet there is substance. At length you turn to these Scriptures and as you read, "The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation," your soul revives! You quit the treacherous sea and reach the solid rock when you repeat the words, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Alas, dear mourner, your thoughts have wandered, like the dove from out the ark, over the watery waste. But now, again, Noah's hand encloses you. There you have calm and peaceful rest. Here is the pillow on which your aching head can lie at ease—"You are the same; of Your years there is no end." Such delights can sustain a sinking soul.

David was oftentimes in such a condition that everything seemed shifting and inconstant. Nothing about him was fixed. Those whom he had most trusted seemed to be his worst enemies. His fortunes changed. He was driven from the home of his father and from the palace of the king to wander in the wilderness and lodge in caves of the earth. And he became distrustful, at times, of his own destiny, for his heart was heavy, even though, once, he had been the happiest of the sons of men! Oh then, this was his delight—he fell back upon the eternal settlements! "Your Word is settled," said he. "I have no settlement. I have to go off to Gath to try and find a shelter, but every place seems to cast me out. The men of Keilah will deliver me up. I am hunted and harried by Saul. Nothing is settled for me, but O, my God, Your Word is settled." Now peace comes like a river to his spirit. His delights are in the Word of God and his heart is full of holy glee.

So, too, sometimes he felt that his own faith failed him—and that is a desperate failure. When your vision is obscured and you walk in darkness, you are sorely molested by doubts and haunted with fears. You can believe nothing. You can hardly grip at anything that others believe in—this is terrible! Your own frailty, your own unfaithfulness to God, your own waywardness, your own fickleness disquiet you with feverish dreams and waste every particle of your strength. Then what a grand comfort it is to stand upon the Divine faithfulness— "Your faithfulness, O God, is unto all generations. You have not changed." Oh, try, dear troubled ones, and may God the Holy Spirit help you in the trying, to get a hold of this delightful Truth of God! And while you

mourn your own unfaithfulness, rejoice in the faithfulness of God and the immutability of His Covenant.

David's Bible was of much smaller compass than ours, but there was one passage in it which I dare say he often read and deeply pondered. It was that which tells us how, when Abraham was lonely and desponding, "The Lord brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward Heaven and count the stars, if you are able to number them." How often have those ordinances of Heaven sent beams of light into the heart of the spiritual mariner while he has been heaving to and fro on the troubled sea of life! So did David look right up to the deep of Heaven and rest in God, the Stable and Abiding!

Last of all, when none were his servants and all helpers failed him—when he was alone and none would do him homage, he found comfort in this thought—that all are God's servants, that all the powers of Nature wait upon the princes of the blood royal and do homage to the children of the King of kings! You are not poor! Your Father is rich! You are not deserted! God is with you! You are not without helpers! The angels are bid to keep watch about you! Oh, that I could touch the mourner's downcast eyes and let him see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha! Oh, that I could touch the heart of some of God's desponding servants and make them see how God is working for them, even now, and how surely they shall be helped!

Perhaps you remember the story of a conversation between the burgomaster in Hamburg and holy Mr. Oncken when he first began to preach. The burgomaster said to him, "Do you see that little finger, Sir? While I can move that little finger, I will put the Baptists down." Mr. Oncken said, "With all respect to your little finger, Mr. Burgomaster, I would ask you another question. Do you see that great arm?" "No, I do not see it." "Just so," said Mr. Oncken, "but I do, and while that great arm moves, you cannot put us down! And if it comes to a conflict between your little finger and that great arm, I know how it will end."

It was my great joy to see the burgomaster sitting in the Baptist Chapel, at Hamburg, among the audience that listened to my sermon at the opening of the new Chapel. The little finger had willingly given up its opposition and the great arm was made bare among us. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength! God bring us all to that, both saint and sinner, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD

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A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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***“O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.”***  
***Psalm 119:97-100.***

DAVID had a very small Bible, but he thought it a very precious one. Our Bible is quite a large library compared with the one that David had, yet he read and re-read it and exulted greatly in the treasure which he found in it. I have sometimes heard people say that they wished they had fuller records of the life of Christ. And when they find John writing that he supposed that even the world itself could not have contained all the books which might have been written about the Savior, they ask, “Why have we not more of the interesting incidents of His career preserved?” Some of these very people do not read what is preserved and they seem to forget that the Bible is exactly the right size—most portable and most useful and that if we had a larger one, some people might then have said—“It is too large a Book for us ever to read it through and to have it at our fingertips.” Let us be thankful that the Bible is so large that there is abundance of fresh reading for every day of the year, and let us prize it as David prized his much smaller portion.

David was one of those who helped to enlarge the Bible. The Spirit of God rested upon him in so large a degree that he has given us, in the Book of Psalms, a most precious part of Sacred Writ. Yet he did not despise the rest of the written Word that he possessed and it is notable that those saints who had most of the Spirit of God were always those who most highly valued the Scriptures. When Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven, on the day of Pentecost, his sermon consisted mainly of quotations from the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit even quotes from writings which He Inspired in order to show the value which all of us should attach to the written Word. Certain persons have said that they did not need what was written, for they had the Spirit within them to teach them all they needed to know. But such talk as that is not according to the Spirit of Christ. Neither is it according to the mind of the Inspired Psalmist, for although God spoke by him, yet he greatly valued that which God had spoken by others and he searched the Scriptures which he possessed with much avidity and intense delight. Beloved, if the man who was Inspired by the Spirit of God thought so much of the

Word of the Lord, how highly ought we to value it, we who will never be inspired writers, and who cannot stand on the same platform with David in that respect! Our conscience ought to commend to us the Infallible Truth which God has presented for our use in the Sacred Scriptures.

Being desirous to press upon you, Beloved, a sense of the value of Holy Scripture, I want you to learn from our text, first, *David's love for the Word*. Secondly, *how he showed it*. And, thirdly, *what benefit came to him from it*.

**I.** First, then, let us consider DAVID'S LOVE FOR THE WORD. He has tried to express the inexpressible by saying, "O how I love Your Law!" He cannot tell the Lord how much he loves it. He had good reason for loving God's Law—his love was a reasonable one. Love is sometimes blind, but in this case, David loved with his eyes open and loved with good reason. We ought to love all that God gives to us, and especially all His blessed teaching. If you do not love the Bible, you certainly do not love the God who gave it to us—but if you do love God, I am certain that no other book in all the world will be comparable, in your mind, to God's own Book. Where God's handwriting is most plainly to be seen, there God's servants will at once turn their eyes. When God speaks, it is the delight of our ears to hear what He says.

Further, David loved the Law of the Lord, *because being God's Word, it was solid Truth*. In other books, there is some truth and some error. Apart from the Bible, the best book that was ever written in this world has mistakes in it. It is not possible for fallible men to write Infallible books. Somehow or other, we either say more than is true or less than is true. The most skillful writer does not always keep along that hairline of truth which is more difficult to tread than a razor's edge. But Scripture never errs. Here is the gold bullion without a single particle of alloy. Here is the Living Water leaping from the Rock and there is no defilement in it. David truly wrote, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Such is the Truth of God as we find it in Scripture. Now, a man of truth naturally loves the Book of Truth, and finding it to be so pure he cries, "O how I love Your Law!"

In addition to this being God's Book and being, therefore pure, David no doubt loved it, *because of the majestic goodness, the sublime Grace of its Revelation*. What has the Bible taught us? Some terrible things, certainly, for it has revealed the wrath to come. But glorious things, too, for it has revealed the great Substitute who took our sins upon Himself and put that wrath away for all who trust Him. How wondrous is the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus! Well might the Prophets long for it and kings desire to see it. You have it in this blessed Book of God. You have far more of the Revelation than David had, for though he could see Christ in the types of the Old Testament, you can see Him much more clearly in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. How much, then, you ought to love that Word which so plainly shows you the way of salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son! Clasp the Bible to your bosom, repentant, pardoned Sinner, and say to the Lord, "O how I love Your Law, for through this Word my chains have been broken and I have been set free forever!"

David also had good cause to love that Law of the Lord *because it had been his comfort so often in the time of his sorrow*. And many of us can say the same. How often have I, in times of frightful depression of spirit, reached down my Bible and within a few minutes have been able to leap for joy of soul and sing in the conscious realization of the comforting Presence of my God! Get but the one text suitable to the occasion, applied to the heart with power by the Holy Spirit, and it will not matter where you are—you will be sure to be glad. You might lie in a dungeon, as Paul and Silas did, scarred with the scourge, but you would sing as they did and make your fellow prisoners hear you. If you could but get the right text applied to your soul by the Holy Spirit, it would be precious to your soul in your times of deepest distress and would be like a star lighting up your darkest night!

I might thus go on for a long while, showing you that David had good reason to love the Law of the Lord, but you probably believe that as much as I do, so I will content myself by reminding you that *he loved it all*. He says, “O how I love Your Law!” He means not only some of it, but all of it. Dear Friend, if there is any text of Scripture that has a quarrel with you, you had better submit to it at once! If you are not in full agreement with the Word of God, you are wrong and it is not! There are some passages of Scripture which certain Brothers and Sisters do not care to read, as they do not suit the views that they hold. There are some commentaries that seem to have been written on the principle of twisting the text into the shape that the commentator approved. And I am afraid we have all had a share in attempts to make the Word of God say what we think it ought to have said according to our system of divinity. That will not do, Brothers and Sisters! We must give up trying to mend the Scripture and say to the Lord, “O how I love Your Law! I love it too well to wish to alter a single letter of it.”

One Brother does not like the Doctrine of Election. Another likes the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, but he does not like the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he cannot endure exhortations to sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Well, Brothers, it does not matter what *you* like, or what you do not like! If the Doctrines are in the Word of God, you had better make up your mind to like them, for they will not be taken away to please you! You cannot bend the Bible to your mind—how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible and to say, “O how I love Your Law—the Doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promises of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!” Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it!

Further, *David loved it always*. I find that we might read his declaration in the past tense and yet give the sense of the original—“O how I have loved your Law!” He is a saint who loves God’s Word always. We have heard of some who read their Bibles on Sunday, but put them away in a drawer with a sprig of lavender all the week. That was not David’s plan—he could say, “O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation

all the day.” And no doubt he meant every day of the week. We must love God’s Word when we are at business and act upon it there. And love it in our families and act upon it there. To love the Bible in the study as a book to start into is a good thing, but it is not a good thing if it ends there—we must love the Word so as to live upon it wherever we may be. In any company, if it is right for you to be there, you will feel, “I am not afraid to take God’s Word with me here, for I am now doing what is in accordance with it.” I have heard that “the Golden Rule” once went to a place where men were gathered together to make money—I think it was the Stock Exchange—and they called the manager and locked it up, for they said, “Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you,” is a rule that will never do here.” But the Christian does not find it so—he can transact his business and keep his Bible near his heart all the time. When the Bible and the ledger fall out, it is a bad business. Oh, that we might love God’s Book all the day and make it the guide of our ordinary business transactions!

David not only loved God’s Law always, but *he was not ashamed to say that he loved it*—“O how I love Your Law!” Young man, were you not afraid, the other night, to confess that you were a Christian when your companions began chaffing you about your religion? I hear that they read a paper that was very critical and sarcastic and that one of them turned round to you and said, “I think you are one of that sort.” And you blushed a good deal at the accusation. Well, blush now to think that you blushed then, for there was nothing to blush about! Ashamed of being a Christian? Be ashamed of ever having been ashamed! David said, “O how I love Your Law!” He cared not who heard him and if our hearts are right with God, we shall not be ashamed to stand up, even if we are alone, and confess Christ! Minorities have generally been in the right, and the multitude usually runs to do evil. *Vox populi* is not often *vox Dei*—it is more frequently the voice of the devil than the voice of God! That man is worthy of being called a man who dares to do right whatever others may do or say. “O how I love Your Law!” said David, to let all men know that he was in love with the Law of the Lord to the best conceivable extent!

**II.** But now, secondly, HOW DID HE SHOW HIS LOVE? He says, “It is my meditation all the day.”

Perhaps some thoughtless person says, “I suppose that David had nothing to do but sit down and read his Bible.” He had to be fighting Philistines and ruling a kingdom! And with so much to do that his hands were kept fully occupied, someone asks, “How, then, did he meditate all the day?” Well, those who are the most busy are often the very men who do the most meditation, for idleness and meditation are not generally very close companions. An idle man usually has idle thoughts, but the busy man, when he is able to think, thinks busy thoughts that are worth thinking. Now, if we love God’s Word as David did, we shall meditate upon it all the day as he did. How are we to do that?

It is an admirable plan to fix your thoughts upon some text of Scripture before you leave your bedroom in the morning—it will sweeten your meditation all the day. Always look God in the face before you see the face of anyone else. Lock up your heart in the morning and hand the

key to God and keep the *world* out of your heart. Take a text and lay it on your tongue like a wafer made with honey and let it melt in your mouth all day. If you do this, and meditate upon it, you will be surprised to notice how the various events of life will help to open up that text. If that particular text does not seem suitable to some special occasion, steal away into a quiet place and get another one—only let your soul be so full of the Word of God that at all the intervals and spaces when you can think upon it, the Word of God dwelling in you richly may come welling up into your mind and make your meditation to be sweet and profitable!

I am afraid there are not many Christian who meditate upon the Word nowadays. Meditation seems to have gone out of fashion. But if you do not meditate upon what you read, you might as well read some ordinary book for all the good your reading will do you. It is no use to hurry through your reading of the Scriptures like a man riding through a field of ripe corn—it is no use trying to reap a good harvest in that fashion. To get the goodness out of the Scriptures, you must meditate upon them and so digest them, just as you have seen the cattle lie down to chew the cud after eating. To get the nourishment out of a text, turn it over and over in your mind, ruminating upon it, pull it to pieces word by word. It is a good thing, sometimes, not to be able to read fast, so that, like Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom*, one has to spell a text out letter by letter—L e t, let—n o t, not—y o u r, your—h e a r t, heart—let not your heart—b e, be—t r o u b l e d troubled. That is the way to suck the sweetness out of the text! A text of Scripture is often like an apple tree with abundance of ripe fruit on it and we are underneath the tree. Give it a shake, Brothers and Sisters—shake it till the ripe fruit drops down!

David proved his love to the Law of the Lord by meditating upon it. Perhaps you think that would be very dull work, but I am sure it was not, nor will you think it so if I tell you what it was upon which he meditated. The Word of God was a letter from his Father—and if ever your father has been away in a far country, you know how you have prized a letter from him! Good wife, if your husband has gone for a long sea voyage and he has written home to you, how many times you have read his letter! Did I not see it, the other day, almost worn to pieces because you have carried it in your pocket ever since you received it? Nobody else knows how precious it is to you because nobody else is as nearly related to the writer as you are.

The Bible also contains the portrait of our truest and best Friend. I have seen you look at a photograph, the likeness of your dear mother who is in Heaven, or of a dear child, or of someone still dearer, for you like to look at that face. And one reason why we love to read the Bible and meditate upon it, is that it contains such a lifelike portrait of Christ. The Bible is also the charter of the Christian's liberty. He was once a slave, but he is now free through the blessed Emancipator who is revealed in this Book. The Bible is the title-deed to our heavenly inheritance. The Bible is our patent of nobility, for here we read that we are made kings and priests unto God! The Bible is our chart by which we

steer safely across the watery wastes of life. The Bible is our checkbook. We come to it and take out the promises upon the Bank of Heaven—we fill them up and present them before God in prayer—and we have what we will of Him when we ask in the name of Jesus! The Bible is to us the telescope through which we look forward to the celestial city where we are journeying!

I might keep on thus, by the hour together, singing the praises of this blessed Book, but I have, surely, given you reasons enough for our making it the theme of our meditation all the day. I wonder how many of us do this? If I were to say, “Hands up, everyone who has a Bible,” everybody’s hands here would go up. I suppose that nobody here is without a Bible. But if I were to ask, “How many here, constantly, as a habit and a delight, meditate upon the Scriptures?”—I wonder what answers I would receive? Well, I will not ask you that question, but let everybody ask it of himself and judge himself concerning it in the sight of God.

**III.** Thirdly, we have to enquire, WHAT BENEFIT CAME TO DAVID THROUGH LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD? He was such a Bible reader and Bible lover that he gained some benefit from it—what was that benefit? He tells us that he grew wiser than three different sorts of people. First, he was made wiser than his enemies. Secondly, he had more understanding than all his teachers. And, thirdly, he understood more than the ancients. These are three of the blessings which meditation upon the Bible will give to us!

First, *we shall be wiser than our enemies*. God had taught David the meaning of the Scriptures and, by his daily meditation upon them, he had become wiser than his enemies. Some of you young Christians have to live from day to day among those who would like to pick holes in your coat if they could. They are watching you to try to bring an accusation against you—and they are very subtle and crafty—how shall you be able to guard yourselves against them? This is the best way. Get the Bible worked into your soul and act according to its teachings—and then your enemies will not be able to bring a true accusation against you! Or if they do, they will be like the men who watched Daniel who could find nothing to bring against him except his religion. If you want to baffle all those who would bring a charge against you, do not trouble about them in the least. Care only to walk according to God’s Word, for so you will defeat them!

In addition to trying to bring accusations against you, they will also seek to lay traps for you. Many a young man has had a hard time of it through the traps that have been laid for him. All sorts of schemes and plots have been devised to try to draw him aside from the right path. But the craftiest man in the world will not be able to overthrow the man who simply follows the directions given to him in the Word of God! Keep to that course and you will win in the long run. Although I do not like our common proverb, “Honesty is the best policy,” yet there is a measure of truth in it—that even as a matter of policy, to do right is the best plan. I have often seen very cunning men quite puzzled by a simple-minded, straightforward, honest Christian.

David says that he was able to defeat all his enemies because God's Word was always with him and he followed the directions that he found there. And, dear Friends, whether you are young or old, if you love the Law of the Lord, put your trust in Jesus and then obey the teachings of your Divine Master, you will certainly be able to defeat all the subtlety and all the malice of Hell! You may, like Joseph, be put in prison without being guilty of the crime laid to your charge, but it will be the straightest way to a Throne! You may be persecuted for righteousness sake, but if it came to the very worst and you were to be a martyr for the Truth of God, that would be the straightest way to Heaven! Therefore be just and fear not. Obey your God. Let the dogs of Hell howl at you as they may—you shall be more than conqueror at the last!

Next, *David had more understanding than all his teachers*. He went into the schools as well as into the camp and after his mental battles with the leaders there, he says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation." I do not think he means that he had more understanding than the wise, good, pious teachers, but that he had more understanding than those who vainly set up to be leaders. There are still some of that kind left to plague us—the dry-as-dust teachers who would gladly teach us the letters of the Word, but ignore its true spirit. If there were any teachers in David's days like the Jewish Rabbis who have left us the Talmud, the Mishna and the Gemara, he might well say that he knew more than they did! They knew so much that they muddled everything. They went down so deep that they stirred up the mud at the bottom and then neither they nor anybody else could see! David meditated upon the Law of the Lord and, therefore, he knew a great deal more than those learned Rabbis knew.

But surely I may use the text with reference to skeptical learned men. Every now and then there is a great eruption—a volcano bursts up just under the foundations of the temple of the Truth of God as if it were going to blow it all up—and the lava of skepticism begins running down our streets as if everything were about to be destroyed! At one time, it is a bishop who has been figuring on a slate and found out that Genesis is wrong. At another time we are told to give up some other portion of Scripture as being incorrect. Well, what do we say to all this? Why, that we have more understanding than all these skeptical teachers if we meditate in God's statutes! We may not know how to answer all their questions, but we know how to ask them questions which they cannot answer! We may not be able to confute them in argument, but we shall still believe the Law of the Lord! Many a poor Christian has been baffled by some clever infidel, but he has said to himself, "If that gentleman had tried to prove that I do not exist, I daresay he could have proved it in the same fashion as he has proved this point, which I could not answer, but I know what I do know—and I do know that Christ is a precious Savior. And as I have read of Him in His Word, so have I found it in my own experience. The Word of the Lord and my experience tally, so I am satisfied." If you come straight from searching the Scriptures, you need not mind who attacks you—the Scriptures will be like a coat of mail to

repel all the darts of those who assail you—and you shall be able to stand up against those who are far more learned than you are. It is well if you can cope with all the arguments of the skeptic and meet him and master him on his own ground—but the most of believing men and women are not able to do so. If you cannot argue thus, be content if you are like Cowper's poor woman who knows no more than that the Bible is true, for you may, like David, still be more than a match for the skeptic and understand more than all your teachers because you meditate upon God's statutes.

Last of all, David says that *he had more understanding than the ancients* because he kept God's precepts. Oh, those ancients—they have a great deal to answer for! Some people seem to think that if anything is ancient, it must be right. If you look (I hope you will not care to do so) into some of our parish churches, you must say that no human being could see any difference between them and the Roman Catholic places. If you do go in, ask the Ritualistic "priest" why he wears all that finery, why he burns stuff that has such a nasty smell—and what he means by all the mummeries and incantations that are such a mystery to you. He says, "This is what the ancient Church did." If he could quote the really ancient Church of the New Testament, you might agree with him—but he refers you to St. Honorius, St. Veronica, or some other ancients, either real or legendary. Does this "priest" succeed in getting people to believe in his ancient nonsense? Yes, he gets his conversation among those silly women and sillier men who read novels, but never read their Bibles! But they never do and never will pervert a true Bible reader and Bible lover! If they ever do get hold of a nominal Baptist, they make a great boast of it because we are so accustomed to go to the Bible for everything we teach, and to test everything by the Bible! I have known a Romanist say, "I can't make any headway with you. You don't believe in any traditions, not even in infant baptism! You will have a Bible proof for everything, or else you will not accept it." Yes, and if all professing Christians would but keep to that principle, Romanism and Ritualism would make far less headway than they do! We say, with Isaiah, "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Give us a Bible-reading, Bible-loving people, and all the "priests" in the world, with all their finery, will never make any headway! An open Bible is death to their follies and lies if there are but people with open eyes to read it! The worst of it is that although we have the open Bible, we have not as many Bible readers and Bible lovers as we wish to see. May the Lord graciously increase the number the whole world over!

There is another kind of ancients that we have to guard against—very old sinners. There are old sinners who will say to you young men and young women who have lately been converted, "Ah, we have seen a good many people just as earnest as you are now, but you will soon grow as cold as they did." Some of them will shake their heads and say, "We know you religious people, you are all a set of hypocrites." A wicked old sinner will tell you that when you are as old as he is, you won't be led astray in this way, yet he is himself going to Hell as fast as he can! He

says, “Don’t you, young man, imagine that you know everything. I have had more experience than you have had and I know a thing or two that is worth knowing.” I used to have an old man of that kind in my congregation at Waterbeach—a man pretty near 70 years of age whose whole life had been one of wickedness and sin. He came to the place where I preached on purpose to pick up young men to lead them astray if he could. He was nothing better than a walking beer-barrel and his mouth poured out little but filth. I had some sharp brushes with him and I could not help feeling a holy indignation against him whenever I saw him. There are some such old sinners still about. Beware of them! Their hoary hairs are no crown of glory to them, but a crown of shame! A hoary head, where there is no Divine Grace, is worse than a fool’s cap—and there is no fool in the world like an old fool, and no other fool that can equal a gray-headed sinner who has for 70 years rejected Christ and, in spite of a thousand warnings and invitations, has deliberately made his own damnation sure! Take no notice of him, I pray you. If it is an old woman who has lived in the ways of sin and tries to allure you to evil, O young man, flee from her—young woman, escape from her at all costs! There are none whom Satan uses so much as he does these ancients, because they can balk so glibly and look so sweetly at you and all the while they are deceiving you and trying to ruin your immortal soul! If you cling to the Bible, they can do nothing with you. When there is a great parade of age and authority, yet the advice given is backed up by experience that is vicious, turn at once to your Bibles and say to the old man, or to the old woman, respectfully, yet firmly, “That is what you say, but *this* is what God says”—and then turn to your God and say with David, “I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.”

To sum up all, the heart must be right with God and it can only be so as the result of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the heart is right and you are saved, I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you continually. And read it, and read it, and read it again and again! Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams! Let its precepts color your lives! Let its promises cheer your darkness, let its Divine illumination make glad your life! As you love God, love this Book which is the Book of God and the God of books, as it has rightly been called. And may God make this Book to be your comfort when you pass through the valley of death-shade. And may you in Heaven have forever to praise Him who revealed Himself to you through the pages of this blessed Book! Amen and amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:113-128.**

**Verse 113.** *I hate vain thoughts: but I love Your Law.* Presumptuous thoughts, erroneous thoughts, wicked thoughts, foolish thoughts—all three David hated. A good man ought to be a good hater as well as a good

lover. What should he hate? He should hate vain thoughts. What should he love? He should love the Law of the Lord. If we do not hate sin in the very egg, we shall not be likely to hate it in its fuller development. The very thought of sin must be detestable to us and if we do not think of evil, we shall not speak evil, nor do evil. We ought to begin with David at the beginning, and say, "I hate vain thoughts." Yet negative religion is not sufficient, so we should go on to the positive form—"I love Your Law' and I love it so much that I wish I could always keep it, never transgress it and never forget it."

**114.** *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word.* "You are my protection against every kind of danger." David had been accustomed to hide in the caves of the mountains, but now he says that he hid himself in his God. When he did not hide, but stood out bravely against the ranks of his foes, then God was his shield to cover him in the day of battle.

**115.** *Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* If, by your evil example, you would keep me from serving my God, I will make you keep yourselves from me so that I may neither see nor follow your ill example—"Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." David puts his foot down firmly and says, "I will keep the commandments of my God." It is a grand thing to be able to speak of "*my God.*" Another man's God would be of little use to me, but when He is my own God, *my God* in Covenant relationship, then I may well say, "I will keep the commandments of *my God.*"

**116.** *Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live.* "Lord, I cannot even live unless You uphold me according to Your promises." The Christian is so dependent upon God that he owes his life and the continuance of it to upholding Grace.

**116.** *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.* "If Your promises could fail me, then I would have cause to be ashamed of my hope. Therefore, O Lord, let me never at any time have the shadow of a doubt concerning the truthfulness of Your promises, lest I should begin to be ashamed of my hope!"

**117-118.** *Hold me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually. You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.* "They are like salt that has lost its savor, which is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out and tread it under their feet. And this is what You do with ungodly men, especially with those 'that err from Your statutes.' Then tread them beneath Your feet, 'for their deceit is falsehood.' They try to make it look like truth, but it is falsehood all the while." How much of deceit there is in this world which men gloss and varnish so that the thing looks right enough though all the while it is deception and a sham! May God keep us from all the trickeries and falsehoods and errors of the age!

**119.** *You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross.* "As the dross is thrown away when the useful metal has been extracted from it, so, O Lord, when You have taken all Your saints out of the world You will put the wicked of the earth away like dross."

**119.** *Therefore I love Your testimonies.* What? Does David love God's testimonies because they are thus severe? Yes, for it is the mark of a true Believer that he does not kick against the severities of his God. Worldlings can rejoice in the god of this age who is said to be nothing but effeminate benevolence, but the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of Justice who will by no means spare iniquity! And for that very reason a true Believer says with David, "I love Your testimonies."

**120.** *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.* This is the man who truly loves God and this is the kind of fear that perfect love does not cast out. Though we love God supremely, we become for that very reason God-fearing men, and dread to do anything that would cause Him anger or sorrow.

**121.** *I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors.* When a man is conscious of doing right, he has a good ground of appeal to God. If, when it was in your power, you did not oppress others, you may plead with God that He will not let others oppress you. If it has been your habit to act with judgment and justice towards others, you may expect that God will defend you against all your oppressors.

**122, 123.** *Be surety for Your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. My eyes fail for Your salvation.* "I have looked for it so long, I have longed for it so eagerly that my eyes seem to grow inflamed with watching—a film seems to come over them so that I cannot see out of them—'My eyes fail for Your salvation.'"

**123.** *And for the Word of Your righteousness.* "I look for no salvation except in the way revealed in Your Word. And I do not wish You to do an unrighteous thing even to save me from my oppressors."

**124.** *Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy.* He dares not ask to be dealt with by God on any other ground than that of mercy. Though he is innocent of that which the ungodly laid to his charge, he is not innocent before God and, therefore, he pleads for *mercy*. He acknowledges that God is his Lord and Master and that he is God's servant. And as a man should deal mercifully with his servant, he pleads that God will so deal with him—"Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy."

**124.** *And teach me Your statutes.* He had kept God's statutes so far as the eyes of men could see but, before God, he takes a humbler position and begs to be taught what he is to do. He asks to be instructed, like a child, in the statutes of his God.

**125.** *I am Your servant.* This is the third time in four verses that David mentions this relationship. He seems proud of being God's servant. Though he were but as a menial, yet would he glory in it—"I am Your servant."

**125.** *Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies.* "Lord, do not merely teach me, but give me understanding." That is what our teachers cannot do. They may put the truth before us so plainly that we ought to understand it, but they cannot give us understanding.

**126.** *It is time for You, LORD, to work: for they have made void Your Law.* And surely this is an age in which this prayer is very suitable. On all hands we see God's Law ridiculed, or denied, or travestied, or else hidden under tradition or under the dicta of so-called scientific men, or in some way or other "made void." Oh, that God's right hand of Grace might be stretched out to do some miracle of mercy in the land at this very time!

**127.** *Therefore I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above pure gold.* "Therefore"—because the wicked tasted God's Law and made it void—David loved it all the more! It is a live fish that swims against the stream, it is a live man of God who can say, "They have made void Your Law, *therefore* I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above fine gold."

**128.** *Therefore I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be right.* "Ungodly men think they are wrong. That is an additional proof to me that they are right." When a certain old philosopher had been praised by a bad man, he asked, "What have I done amiss that he should speak well of me?" And there are some men's mouths out of which the praise of Christ or the praise of the Scriptures would be to God's dishonor. They tell me that So-and-So spoke blasphemously against Christ, but why should he not do so? It is natural for him to be a blasphemer. When serpents hiss, do they not act according to their nature? I do not read that Christ stopped men's mouths when they blasphemed Him, but I do know that when the demons bore witness to Him, He silenced them, for He liked not to be praised by diabolical mouths! Let ungodly men say what they may—we know the value of their speeches and we are not troubled by them.

**128.** *And I hate every false way.* Again David mentions his hatred of all falseness. Some men are such "chips in the porridge" that they neither love nor hate, but the Believer is a man or woman who has both loves and aversions. He loves the truth and, therefore, he hates every false way.

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

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

# THE SOJOURN IN MESECH NO. 2780

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 25, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

*“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”  
Psalm 120:5.*

MESECH was the son of Japheth, from whom, according to history, were descended the men who inhabited that most barbarous of all regions, according to the opinion of the ancients, the northern parts of Muscovy or Moscow and Russia. The inhabitants of the tents of Kedar were the descendants of one of the sons of Abraham who had taken to nomadic habits and were continually wandering about over the deserts. They were thought to have and doubtless were, guilty of plundering travelers and were by no means the most respectable of mankind. We are to understand, then, by this verse, that the people among whom the Psalmist dwelt were, in his esteem, among the most barbarous, the most fierce and the most graceless of men. And, therefore, it is that he cries, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” He felt a woe in his heart because of that evil companionship in which he was compelled to abide.

This has been the cry of the children of God in all ages. Lot had his ears vexed with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. Many of the woes of Micah sprang from those men who were sharper than a thorn hedge—every one of them ready to tear and scratch his neighbor. David's deepest griefs came from the men who surrounded him—on the one hand, the unfriendly sons of Zeruah, who were too strong for him and, on the other hand, Shimei and the sons of Belial, who made a reproach of every word he uttered and every deed he did. Even Isaiah, himself, that happy-spirited Prophet, one day cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips!” And then he added another cause of his woe, “and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” And I expect I may truly say that, to this day, you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are followers of Jesus, have often had to cry out, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” And you have longed to be far away from this dusky world, so full of sin, traps, pitfalls and everything that makes us stumble in our path—and of nothing that can help us onward towards Heaven.

I propose, on this occasion, first, to say *a word or two in justification of the Psalmist's complaint*. Secondly, to *justify God's dealings with us in having subjected us to this dwelling in the tents of Mesech*. And thirdly, a

few words, by way of comfort, *to those who are sad at heart by reason of those ill times and those ill places in which they abide.*

**I.** First, then, Brothers and Sisters, A WORD OR TWO IN JUSTIFICATION OF THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT. I will not say that it is thoroughly commendable, in a Christian, to long to be away from the place where God's Providence has put him. But I will say, and must say, that it is not only excusable, but scarcely needs an apology, for that Christian to sometimes cry out, "My soul is weary. I am almost weary of my life because of the wicked men that surround me on every hand."

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what Christians have to suffer from the wicked world, and you will not wonder, you will not feel, I am sure, that they should excuse themselves when they cry, "Woe is me," for *think how the wicked world slanders the Christian.* There is no falsehood too base for men to utter against the followers of Jesus! There was a shameful slander that was circulated among the heathen, that the early Christians, when they came together, met for the most obscene and even cruel rites—whereas those holy men and women only gathered together to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him whom they loved. And, to this day, the chosen weapon of Satan with which the Evil One does great mischief, and on which he relies as his masterpiece of hellish ammunition against the Church, is slander! And this often wounds the Christian and cuts him to the quick when he finds his good name suddenly blasted and when filth is thrown upon his snow-white garments. It is but little marvel when he has sought studiously to avoid the very appearance of evil—when he has picked his steps, knowing the world is a miry place—when he has sought in everything to avoid giving offense to any man, and yet he sees himself abused on every hand! It is but little marvel, I say, that he should cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!"

But if slander were all, though this might suffice to justify the complaint, yet would there be something lacking. For, alas, the Christian, dwelling as he does among wicked men, finds *his good things are continually marred*, so that he has to cry, "When I would do good, evil is present with me—not only here in my own heart, but in my own house and round about my neighborhood!" I know that some of you live in crowded places where you can scarcely pray without being overheard and laughed at and, if you have a meeting for prayer and friends join you in singing the songs of Zion, a crowd soon gathers round your little window and the mockers make all manner of discordant sounds. If you would learn a lascivious song, you have but to throw up your window and listen to what is being sung in the street—but if you would have thoughts of Heaven and sing of God, how hard it is when you have those about you who will cast these things in your teeth, suggest all manner of ribaldry and turn your best words into a reproach against you!

The Christian is like a chained eagle. How often does he fret over that chain and bite it! He sees the stars up yonder and he knows that he is brother to the lightning and he wants to be aloft there in his own native element—how he frets and fumes at his captivity! His mighty spirit struggles within his body and he longs to stretch his wings and fly straight to yonder lofty heights! And when he sees those about him feed-

ing upon the husks that swine eat, or when they hurl their carrion at him, how often does he long to be free—to break down the bars of his cage and get away to his own companionship—to some associates that are fit for him, some spirits that are congenial with his spirit! How he pants to be with his own group—the cherubim and seraphim, the holy ones that day without night keep ceaseless watch and sing in unending harmony around the Throne of Jehovah who lives and abides forever! Were he a worldling, he would be satisfied with the world, but since he is of nobler blood, these things here below all tend to check the aspirations and the longings of his Heaven-born spirit. It is, indeed, no strange thing that he should cry, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

But, besides this, the Christian is conscious that *evil companionship is damaging to him*. If he is not burnt, he is at least blackened by contact with the ungodly. This world is to him a place where if he does not accumulate actual filth, it is hard to travel an hour along its roads without being covered with its dust. Though, by the Grace of God, he is kept upright, yet he feels, when he goes upon his knees again, he has suffered from contact with poor, fallen humanity. He goes up into his chamber for communion with Christ and his spirit seems to drink the dew of Heaven fresh from the Throne of God! But he has to go down into the world and the hot sun of business shines upon him—and then comes the dust of this world to mar him and he goes back to his chamber and feels like Samson when his hair was shorn away. He begins to cry, “My soul lies cleaving to the dust!” Sometimes he longs to get away from his fellows. He would, if he could, keep himself abstracted and alone that he might cultivate continual friendship with Christ and abide near to the bleeding side of Jesus. That is a foolish wish, as I shall have to show, by-and-by, but yet it is no wonder that he cries aloud, when he finds his spirit so confined and his best things so deteriorated, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

There are many other reasons, doubtless, why the Christian longs to be gone from the company of the ungodly and why he would be far away from them if he could. I shall be content, however, with mentioning one other, namely, *the continual process of temptation which surrounds the Christian who is situated in the midst of men of unclean lips*. Men lay traps for us and, sometimes, they lay them right warily and craftily—and unless our God has given us the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the harmlessness of the dove, we shall find our heels tripped up before we are aware. Often, in my own case, I am asked questions, apparently by enquirers who are anxious to know something about the Truth of God, only with the desire to entrap me in my words and make some capital out of my answer. And, doubtless, it is so with each one of you. You are questioned merely that your answer may become the theme of ridicule. Some temptation is put in your way—a supposed friend advises you to do this or to do that. Perhaps you do it—and he is the first man to accuse you of having done wrong. Before, he said, “Oh, it is just the thing I would do if I were in your place!”

Perhaps he would—but when he has seen you do it, he has become your accuser—your tempter has afterwards turned round to bring an accusation against you! The Christian will long to be out of a world like this, where there is a Satanic rifleman behind every bush, a devilish archer behind every crag and where, oftentimes, while we are going along some quiet vale of life, all secluded and peaceful, the Archfiend comes behind us and we hear his flattering words and, all of a sudden, he gives a shrill call and from every side, tempters rage! We see everyone of them armed to the teeth and with their arrows winged for flight and thirsty to destroy! And we wonder why we are brought into such a place, where all seemed so calm and secluded—but now we are surrounded by the enemy and we have to cry, “Good Lord, deliver us! Come from above and snatch us out of this danger! Cast down our foes and put our feet in a large place.” Well may God’s dove long to roost in Heaven when there are so many snares here and so many archers with their bows all ready, seeking its life! This made the Psalmist talk of fleeing as a bird to the mountain. Well may we sometimes wish we could do so and even begin to sing, in the language of the poet—

**“Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Name always dear to me,  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy, and peace, and thee?”**

**II.** Having thus spoken a word of justification for the Psalmist’s complaint, I am going, next, TO JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD WITH US, IN HAVING SUBJECTED US TO THIS DWELLING IN THE TENTS OF KEDAR.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, whatever God does is right—we believe that once and for all—if He should do that which seemed, to our reason, to be the most wrong thing in the world, we would believe our reason to be a liar sooner than imagine that God would either be unkind or unwise. It is a happy thing when we can believe God to be right when we cannot see it, when we can trust Him even if we cannot trace Him. It is pleasant to believe that, but we would rather see it. Now, I think, in this case, we can see a little why God deals thus with us.

It is right, and just, and good that God has spared us to be here a little longer, for, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, has not God put us here to dwell in the tents of Kedar *because these, though perilous places, are advantageous posts for service?* The angels, those mighty spirits that serve God perfectly, seem to me to be like the soldiers in an army who bring up the rear. They are behind—there, the arrows do not reach them. When the volleys of Satanic malice are being fired off, the angels are behind and can scarcely hear their echoes. But we that are born of women must face the fire and lead the vanguard in the heavenly battle between the Son of God and that great traitor. We must go into the front rank and every shot must fall upon our harness and rattle upon our armor—and is it not a glorious thing to stand in the front? Who would care to be behind in such a battle as this? Angels might long to come where we are and earnestly desire to stand in the front of the battle—for if this is a place of danger, it is the place of honor, too!

That was a noble speech of our old English king at Agincourt, when he was surrounded by multitudes of enemies, "Well, be it so. I would not lose so great an honor, or divide my triumph. I would not," he said, "have one man the fewer among my enemies, because then there would be a less glorious victory." So, in like manner, let us take heart even from our difficulties! The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Jehovah-Nissi is inscribed on our banner! We are privileged above all the creatures of God. We have a high and noble honor to fight for Jehovah and, standing out as the soldiers of the Cross—the Church militant of the Divine One—we can do what the angels have not the power to do and, therefore, we have great reason to bless God that He lets us stop here because we are doing something for Him that even they cannot do! If you had been an angel and never been a man, you might sit down, if such thoughts could ever pass through an angelic mind, on some sunny crag high up on the celestial hills and muse thus—"I am a glorious being. The great God has made me to be happy and blest, but, down yonder, on that little planet that is glittering in the light of the sun, there are glorious creatures living that are more blest than I am, for they can do what I must not. They tell of Jesus' love! They wipe the tears from the eyes of the mourner. I can carry the soul a-loft and I am glad when I have the commission to do so—but I cannot go and bring the wanderer back and tell him how Jesus Christ has bought him with His precious blood."

I think an angel might almost fold his wings and cherish that wish! If such a thought could ever go through a cherubic spirit, such a wish might be conceived to be quite natural. For really, my Brothers and Sisters, they cannot do what we can do. There are works of charity and resignation, and deeds of heroic suffering that those blessed spirits can never perform. "Give me a body," says the angel, "and let me be a martyr, for a martyr is greater than an angel. Give me a tongue and let me be a preacher, for the noble army of the Apostles is more noble than the glorious hosts of cherubim and seraphim! They have suffered for God. They have testified for God. They have stood in the midst of a multitude of enemies, firm as a rock in the time of storm—and they have been kept steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If there were nothing else to say upon this point, it should certainly be satisfactory enough to the Christian to remember that God has kept him here on purpose to do Him honor.

Yet another thought, my Brothers and Sisters. You never will wish, I am sure, to get away from the tents of Kedar if you will recollect that *it was through another Christian tarrying here—when, perhaps, he wanted to be gone—that you are this day a Christian*. Look back upon the instrumentality that God used for your conversion. It may have been the teaching of some aged woman who herself had long ago wished to go Home to her Father and her God. But she was kept here, pale and shivering with old age, in order to point you to the City of Refuge. Or, perhaps, it may have been some younger servant of God who preached the Gospel—and you heard it and were blessed. But that man of God had often wished to be in Heaven. Had he been in Heaven when he wished it, where would you have been? It is true, God might have found other in-

struments, but we are to speak, as men, after the manner of men. Have we not reason to thank God that these instruments were spared and still kept here, that we might be brought to Him by them?

And now, mark, is it not a fact and will you not look out and see whether it is so that there are many of God's elect ones, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, who are parts of Christ's mystical body, who are not yet brought in—and you are to bring them in? Brethren, if you were to go to Heaven, now, perhaps you would go almost alone—you must stay till there is a companion to go with you! There are two stars very prominent at this season of the year, the Gemini, the twins, glistening in the sky. You can see them, in about an hour's time, almost overhead. Yes, and you, perhaps, would have been a star, all alone, in the heavenly firmament, if you had had your own way, but, now, there will be two of you glittering together! And with some of us, blessed be God who has given us this honor, there will be a whole constellation of stars which, though they did not borrow their light from us, yet through us have been able to receive their light from Jesus Christ! And who would like to go to Heaven alone—to go through those bright fields of ether with no other redeemed spirit with him?

I sometimes think it would be a noble thing for the minister of God to have a host behind him and to look back and say, "Who are you that are following after me?" And to hear them reply, "We are they whom God has given you. As the sheaves come with the farmer in the day of harvest, so we are coming with you"—and then to enter Heaven, and cry, "Here am I, and the children that You have given me!" To say, "Here am I," is a blessed thing, but that other clause, "and those whom You have given me," that is a grand addition! What must it be to be in Heaven? Glory be to God if we are ever there, but to be in Heaven with others who are given to us—this shall be to multiply Heaven, to heap celestial mountains upon one another, to double the light of the sun, yes, to make it sevenfold, to make Heaven more than Heaven—Heaven multiplied in the Heaven of others! To not simply say, "I see the sun," but the sun reflected from a thousand glasses—the souls of others who have been led to Christ and then reflect that enjoyment upon the man who, through God, was the means of bringing them to glory! Well, Brothers and Sisters, this should make us willing to stay here.

There is, however, one other reason left, namely, perhaps our Master keeps us *in the tents of Kedar because it will make Heaven all the sweeter*. The old Romans—you hear a great deal of praise of the Greeks and Romans—but the Greeks were the biggest thieves who ever lived and the Romans were about the greatest gluttons and bullies that ever existed! Well, the Romans were such gluttons that before they came to their meals, they were accustomed to drink all the most bitter things they could, that they might be thirsty and that they might drink as much as they could—very nasty things, such as one would not like to think of—but they always liked to get their palates in such a state that when they drank their wine, they would enjoy it. Verily, Brothers and Sisters, this is something like our case. After those draughts of wormwood which we have had to drink, how sweet Heaven's nectar will be! Yes, we have had

to drink the gall, as we think, to the very dregs—but when that cup is drained and God gives us some of the new wine of the Kingdom, how sweet that will be!

Nothing makes a day of rest so sweet to a man as having long labored and long toiled. The tradesman who goes home to his little country house thinks, “Well, if ever I can make enough to always come and live in this house, I shall be so happy.” He does it—and yet he doesn’t like it—in a week he cannot stand it! The reason he used to enjoy the rest was because the toil of the day sweetened it. Brothers and Sisters, it will be so with us when we get to Heaven—then, when our rest shall last eternally, it will be sweet, indeed! The long wilderness of drought shall make the joys of Heaven rare and real! The waters of the Nile were considered by the Egyptians to have an excellent flavor. Our travelers say it is not so, but the reason is because the Egyptians have never drunk any water but that of the Nile, while we, who have it in all our streets so abundantly, think but little of that turbid stream. Now, we who have had much, but not too much, of sorrow from the men that dwell in the tents of Kedar, how blessed will it be there when we shall be—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in!”***

**III.** My third topic is A WORD OF COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN WHILE PLACED IN THESE APPARENTLY EVIL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Well, there is one word in the text that ought to console him in a case like this. “Woe is me, that I *sojourn*”—thank God for that word, “sojourn.” Yes, I do not live here forever—I am only a stranger and a sojourner here, as all my fathers were, and though the next sentence does say, “I dwell,” yet, thank God, it is a *tent* I dwell in and that will come down, by-and-by—“I dwell in the *tents* of Kedar.” You men of this world, you may have your day, but your day will soon be over! And I will have my nights, but my nights will soon be over, too. It is not for long, Christian, it is not for long. They may laugh at you, but every day they laugh, that is one day less for you to be laughed at. They may scoff and mock, and set you in the pillory with cruelty, but you will not be there forever. Perhaps tomorrow you may be in Heaven—we never know how near we are to the gates of Paradise. But, at any rate, suppose we should live to the longest period of human life? It is not long, after all.

When we get home to Heaven and come to look back, what a short way it will seem! While we are travelling in it, and our feet are covered with blisters and sores, we think all the inches are miles, but when we get up there, we shall say, “Why, that light affliction was but for a moment. I thought ‘twas half a century, but, ‘twas but for a moment—yet it has worked out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” We say, sometimes, “God has appointed unto us wearisome days and nights of weeping.” But when we are in Heaven, we shall say, “Weeping endured but for a night, but joy came in the morning.” I say to the Christian—

***“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,  
So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”***

Up, Christian! A few successful struggles and you will not have one more conflict! Another blow or two and your foot shall be on your oppo-

ment's neck! What? Give up the battle when it is near its termination? Would you sit down in the shade when the sun is rising and the morning star of promise is giving you the first token of the dawn? Cheer up, cheer up, I beseech you! The end will make amends for all that you endure and you will thank God that He kept you, and blessed you, and enabled you to suffer and endure and, at last, brought you safely Home!

This, however, is not all the comfort I have for you, because that would look like something at the end, like the child who has the promise of something while it is taking its medicine. No, there is something to comfort you *during* your trials. Remember that even while you are in the tents of Kedar, *you have blessed company*, for God is with you! And though you sojourn with the sons of Mesech, yet there is Another with whom you sojourn, namely, your blessed Lord and Master! You are not alone, for Christ is with you! It is true that those who are around you are uncongenial companions, but then, there is One who walks through the midst of all these scenes and snares, who says to you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God." There may be a noise in the street, but Christ is with you in your chamber. There may be a storm within your very doors—a husband who will not let you rest and children who cast your religion in your teeth—but there is another Husband in that house, too, a heavenly Husband—and His consolations are far more powerful than all the sneers of the other husband—the manna that He gives is so sweet that it can take all the bitterness out of the sarcasms of your foes!

Surely, when Christ is with us, the bitterness of death is past. Much more, then, the bitterness of those little trials which daily come to us from those sons of Mesech and those inhabitants of the tents of Kedar. If, my Lord, You will go with me, I will not choose the path. If I must go alone, alas, alas for me, though the road is grassy, the sky is clear, the sun is bright and the brooks are flowing on every side! Though the birds are singing on the trees and though my own eyes have a luster in them, yet I am miserable, I am wretched, I am unsafe, I am in danger if You are not with me! But come, my Master, if the sun is set, if no moon or stars appear, if all around me there are found those that would devour me. If there is a ditch on this side and a yawning gulf or a quagmire on the other. If there are all kinds of horrible things and evil spirits—if under my feet there are dead men's bones, snares, chains and pitfalls—if over me there is the shadow of death that keeps the sunlight from reaching me and if within my heart there is fear, yet, if You are with me, into the very gates of Hell, itself, my soul should enter unharmed! Through the wall of fire, amidst the blazing of Divine Vengeance my soul may walk unscathed! Nothing can harm me if Jesus is near. Does not this make the tents of Kedar as white and fair as the tents of Solomon if Jesus has visited them? And are not the men of Mesech, with their rough beards, their stern faces and their unknown tongues, as friendly angels when we know that Jesus Christ is with us forevermore?

I have but one thing more to say, and with that I shall conclude. Brothers and Sisters, you may be comforted yet again with this sweet thought—that not only is God with you, but *your Master was once in the*

*tents of Kedar*—not merely spiritually, but personally, even as you are—and inasmuch as you are here, too, this, instead of being painful, should be comforting to you! Have you not received a promise that you shall be like your Head? Thank God that promise has begun to be fulfilled! If you were happy in the tents of Kedar, you might think, “I am not like my Master, for He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But inasmuch as you have evil things thrown at you and your way is hard and rough, you may say, “Now I know what it is to have fellowship with Him in suffering, in some feeble measure. As I was buried with Him in Baptism unto death, so with Him I trust I have had conformity unto His death.” When any pang from slander or misrepresentation rends your heart, then you can say, “Now I know what He meant when He said, ‘Reproach has broken My heart.’” When you find yourself abused and misrepresented, you can say, “Now I understand what Christ endured when they said He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber; a friend of publicans and sinners.”

It is worthwhile to be like Christ in the worst of times because that is an assurance that we shall be like He in the best of times! If I carry a cross as He carried one, I shall wear a crown as He wears one. If I have been with Him in the degradation of the flesh, I shall be with Him in the glory of the Spirit. If I have been with Him when men hooted and hissed, and dogs compassed Him, and the bulls of Bashan beset Him around, I shall be with Him, too, when angelic hosts are around Him and He shall be admired of all that love Him—and adored of all creation! You shall be like your Head, poor sufferer—like your Head! Then what more can you want? Is not this a sufficient honor, that the servant is as his Master and the subject is as his Sovereign?

This may seem strange language in the ears of some hearers. All that they know is that they sometimes sneer at Christians themselves. Well, Sir, you have spoken ill of your wife and children because they follow Christ. I would not be in your shoes for half the world, nor for the whole of it! Do you see that man there with the millstone around his neck? He is going to be cast into the midst of the sea—that man is better off than you are, for Christ has said it, “Whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea.” Don’t laugh at a Christian or a professing Christian, even if he is a beggar, for he may be a child of God—and it will be an ill thing for you to be caught laughing at a child of God! There is nothing that makes a man so angry as to laugh at his children. There is nothing which brings a man’s spirit up like touching his children. “Say what you like against me, but don’t say anything against them. Touch them,” says the man, “and you touch me. Touch them and you shall feel my wrath.” Our Father loves them and he that touches them touches the apple of His eye. If you want to be damned, go and do something else, but don’t do that! But if you want to go to Hell and to the hottest fire of Hell, go and vent your spleen on God’s people! If you do it, you shall surely be punished for it.

Herod shall be eaten of worms, though his voice is as the voice of a god and not of a king. There shall be creatures who, like Antiochus, shall

have their very bowels burnt because they hurt the people of God—and you who touch them with your little finger shall feel the weight of the Divine arm! And if you have smitten them with the arm, you shall find His loins crushing you to the very lowest Hell! But, remember, there is mercy for the persecutor. Did not the Lord say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” “John, John, why do you persecute Me?” “Lord, I only laugh at my little daughter.” “You have persecuted Me—it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” “Thomas, Thomas, why do you persecute Me?” “But, Lord, I only told my wife I would shut her out if she went to the weeknight services.” “You have done it unto Me, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, My people.” And He cries to you and says, “It is hard for you to kick with naked feet against these pricks.” And do you say, “Who are You, Lord?” His answer is, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute.” And then, if you say, “Can You forgive me, Lord?” His answer is, “I am ready and willing to forgive. ‘Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” Trust in Jesus and you are safe! Cast yourself, once and for all on Him, and you cannot be lost, for he that relies on Jesus is a saved man! May God add the blessing of His Spirit, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
MARK 16.**

**Verse 1.** *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* True love had made a mistake, but it was true love for all that, and the Lord accepted it, although He had no need of the sweet spices that the women brought.

**2.** *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.* There had already been another rising of the sun that morning, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen and, with His rising, our hopes had risen and eternal life had come to light! These holy women proved their affection to their Lord by being there so early. Love will not wait—it delights to render its service as speedily as it can—“they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.”

**3, 4.** *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.* Take comfort from this verse, you who are seeking to serve your Lord. There will be sure to be stones in your way and some of them may be very great ones, but they will be rolled away in the Lord’s good time. And in the rolling away you often will have all the greater joy. If the effort shall need the strength of an angel, then an angel will be sent from Heaven for the purpose. There might have been no angel if there had been no stone—and you might have no revelation of the power of Heaven to help you if you had not first

had a revelation of your own weakness and inability to roll away the stone.

**5.** *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened.* An angel had assumed the appearance of a young man sitting inside the sepulcher.

**6.** *And he said unto them, Be not afraid.* Why should they be afraid? They had come to serve their Lord and so had the angel, so there was no cause for fear. Those who love Jesus need never be afraid of angels, nor, for that matter, of devils either, for the Lord, whom they serve, will take care of them.

**6.** *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.* This was the first Gospel sermon preached after the Resurrection, so note particularly how the angel describes Christ. He calls Him by His lowly name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” and does not speak of Him as the risen or reigning Christ, but as “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.” The angels are evidently not ashamed of the Cross of Christ—they do not attempt to hide the shame of it—for this one speaks of “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.”

**6.** *He is risen; He is not here.* That is the epitaph inscribed on Christ’s tomb—“He is not here.” On other people’s graves it is written, “Here lies so-and-so,” but on Christ’s sepulcher it is recorded, “He is not here.” He is everywhere else, but, “He is not here.” He is with us in our solitude. He is with us in our public assemblies. But there is one place where He is not and that is, in the empty tomb! Thank God that He is not there! we do not worship a dead man lying in the grave. He, on whom we rely, has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory where He always lives to carry out the great design of salvation! “He is not here.”

**6-8.** *Behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.* There was a mixture of joy with their fear, and of fear with their joy—and that tended to keep them silent for a while. Some people tell all they know, even when it would be wiser not to speak. But these godly women waited till they reached those to whom they were bid to speak. They said nothing to anybody by the way, but hurried on to find the disciples, that they might give them the blessed tidings of their Lord’s Resurrection!

**9.** *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.* Where Grace had worked its greatest wonders, there Christ paid His first visit—“He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”

**10, 11.** *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* I can imagine that scene—the weeping and mourning disciples—and this eager woman telling her story, and telling it with evident truthfulness and deep pathos, but they believed her not. Do you expect to be believed whenever you tell the story of

your Lord's Resurrection, or any other part of the Gospel message? You have to tell it, not to Christ's disciples, but to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and, probably, you do not tell it as well as Mary Magdalene did. Marvel not, therefore, if many a time those who hear your message believe it not! Mind that you believe it yourself and keep on telling it whether others believe it or not—and God will bless it to some of them, by-and-by

**12, 13.** *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest, but they did not believe them either.* Unbelief is not easily driven out of even true disciples, but let none of us ever harbor it in our hearts. As we see how unbelieving these disciples were and know how wrong their unbelief was, let us not be like they were.

**14-20.** *Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at the table, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with accompanying signs. Amen.* God bless to us the reading of His holy Word! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—127, 550, 309.**

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

# WAKEFUL AND WATCHFUL EYES

## NO. 2654

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 24, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 13, 1882.**

***“Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”  
Psalm 121:4.***

***“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters,  
and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress;  
so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.”  
Psalm 123:2.***

NOTICE, dear Friends, that both these texts begin with the word, “Behold.” That word is meant to attract the readers’ attention. In some books, which are intended to be sensational, you are asked to behold—and when you look, there is nothing to see! But when God’s Word bids you behold what it has to say, you may be sure that the exclamation is not superfluous or misleading! It would be a marring of the Word of God to leave out even one of its smallest expressions and, therefore, when we see this word, “Behold,” placed at the beginning of each of these texts, we may rest assured that there is, in both of them, something worth noting, worth examining and considering—and worth remembering and carrying away!

A very useful series of discourses might be preached upon the “Beholds” of the Old and New Testaments which culminate in John the Baptist’s, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” and Pilate’s, “Behold the Man.” And still more in our Lord’s own message to John, “Behold, I come quickly.” But two Old Testament, “Beholds,” are to furnish us with a theme of meditation at this time. It is somewhat singular that they both relate to eyes. The first tells us about *God’s* eyes—“Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” His eyes are never closed. No feeling of weariness or need of slumber ever causes them to be heavy and to shut. And the second text tells us about *our* eyes—“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.”

See, Brothers and Sisters, both our texts speak about eyes, and they ask for the use of our eyes by saying, “Behold,” which is as though God said to us, “I am going to tell you about My eyes which never slumber. Therefore, look and see, for you shall find them always open and always watching over you.” Then the next text tells us about our eyes and reminds us how God gives to His people clear and quick eyesight, so that

they observe all the motions of their Master's hands and are glad to note them—and prompt to do as He directs. I have put these two texts together because I hoped that when you saw with joy how the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears open to their cries, you would then feel that it was a fit return that your eyes should be unto the Lord your God, and that your ears should be open to receive His teaching and to learn His commands. God grant that this may be the result of the sermon upon these two texts!

**I.** First, then, I am to speak to you concerning THE WAKEFUL EYES OF THE LORD OUR GOD. We are told, in our first text, that the Lord, who keeps Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.

We learn from these words, first, *that the Lord keeps Israel*. Read the 121<sup>st</sup> Psalm through and you will find the word, “preserve,” or, “keep,” or, “keeper,” repeated many times. God has Himself undertaken the work of keeping His people—it is His high office to preserve those who are His chosen ones!

“He that keeps Israel.” By this expression we understand that the Lord keeps His people as a shepherd keeps his flock. There is a great depth of meaning in that word, “keep,” as it is thus used, for a shepherd keeps the sheep by feeding them, by supplying all their needs and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging wolf or by the straying of the sheep. Even an ordinary shepherd takes great pains and the utmost care to preserve his sheep both by night and by day—while, “our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,” who was brought again from the dead, uses His Omnipotence, His Omniscience and all His Divine Attributes in the keeping of His sheep! O Beloved, if you are, indeed, His people and the sheep of His pasture, rest assured that He will preserve you! You are in good keeping, for He is the Good Shepherd, and the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd and He will perform all the duties of His office well and faithfully, that He may securely keep all whom His Father has committed unto Him!

Another figure may equally well illustrate the meaning of this expression. The Lord keeps His people, not only as a shepherd keeps his sheep, but as a king keeps his jewels. These are rare and precious things which are his peculiar treasure and he will not lose them if he can help it. He will go to war sooner than be deprived of them. He will put them in the most secure case that he has in his strong room—and set his most faithful servants to guard the place wherein they are stored. He will charge those who have the custody of his crown jewels to take a full and accurate account of them—and to be careful to examine them, from time to time, to see that they are all there, for he greatly prizes them and is not willing for one of them to be lost. They probably cost him a great price, or, if not, they are part of his royal heritage and of the glory and honor of his kingdom, so he desires to keep them all. Even so does the Lord Jesus keep His people, for they are His jewels. He delights in them—they are His honor and His glory! They cost Him a greater price than they can ever realize. He hides them away in the case of His power and protects them with all His wisdom and strength. Concerning those who feared the Lord and thought upon His name, it is written, “They shall be Mine, says

the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” It is God’s work to keep His own jewels. He does not commit them even to the custody of the tall archangel who stands nearest to His Throne, but the Lord, Himself, keeps them—and *no one* shall be able to pluck them out of His hands!

This is not all, for we might multiply figures to almost any extent and still not exhaust the meaning of the text. The Lord keeps His people as a governor keeps the city committed to his charge. He places his guards around the walls, he has his cannon on the battlements to defend the place against those who besiege it. And he is constantly on the watch. Early in the morning and late at night he is on the walls—and through the night, the watchmen keep their continual rounds, for the city must be preserved from scaling ladders and from assaults of every sort. The Lord will not let even the suburbs of the New Jerusalem be conquered by the foe! He will preserve the holy city, His own Church, until the day when His Son shall come to reign in her forever.

I find that in all probability, the figure here used is an allusion to the common custom of having guards to watch the tents of travelers passing through the desert. At this very time, if you were journeying through the Holy Land, you would find that when you came to your camping ground, and nightfall drew on, there would be certain persons employed to watch over the different tents, for, otherwise, the wandering robbers of the desert would soon enter and take away your valuables, or even your life. I have noticed in the books of two or three travelers, this observation, “We found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a tent-keeper who could stay awake all night.” One gentleman speaks of discovering a thief in his tent and when he went outside to call the watchman, he found that the man had gone so soundly to sleep that he could only be awakened by one or two gentle kicks! When a man has been traveling with you all day, it is unreasonable to expect him to stay awake through the night to take care of you. Therefore, see the beauty of the expression used by the Psalmist, “Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” There shall be no deep sleep falling upon Him! No, there shall not even be a brief period of slumber, not even a wink of sleep shall ever overcome Him! A man may say, “I am so tired that I cannot keep my eyes open,” but God never says that.

Now turn to the second part of our first text—“Behold, He that keeps Israel *shall neither slumber nor sleep,*” and think, first, of *God’s eyes as never wearying of His people*. I suppose that the fondest mother is sometimes glad when she can put her children to bed and have a little quiet time by herself. She at last grows weary even of their pretty ways and she is willing to let them go out of her sight for a while. But the Lord never grows weary of His people. If some of you had such children as God has, you would never be able to endure their trying ways. None but the God of Infinite patience could bear with such a family as He has. Any one of us might exhaust the patience of a hundred Jobs rolled into one—yet, shout it out and let even the angels hear it—we have not exhausted the patience of God! He has never been so wearied and worried by us as to say, “I must go to sleep, My children, and leave you to take care of yourselves.” Our Savior’s eyes are never weary of looking on us—those eyes

that closed upon the Cross and then that opened, again, on the Resurrection morning, like bright stars. Those eyes that, from the heights of Heaven, have looked down upon the redeemed with ineffable delight of love—those eyes never grow weary of the chosen ones! Our Lord Jesus has such joy in His people as keeps Him from ever being weary of them. That is one meaning of His never slumbering or sleeping.

The next is, that *God is never forgetful of His people for a single moment*. You and I forget things which we most need to remember. Have you not, my Sister, often shifted your ring from one finger to another and then had to say to yourself, “How did it come to be here?” And then you remembered the reason why you removed it? Yes, I know you have done so and we have had a hundred ingenious inventions to keep us in mind of something that we wished not to forget—yet we have forgotten it, after all. The fondest human heart at times forgets, but that Divine heart, alone, never does. And those eyes which look down on us with Infinite love flashing forth from them are never sealed in the slumber of forgetfulness. We forget all things in our sleep and lie completely indifferent to all that is happening around us, but God never does so—He never forgets us and He is never indifferent to us. Oh, what a blessed Truth of God this is!

Sleep also throws us into a condition in which *we are incapable of helping ourselves*. But God is never in such a state as that. He is always awake to show Himself strong on the behalf of those who trust Him. You will never have to call to Him in vain, or get from Him the answer, “I cannot help you right now.” Elijah, in his irony, said that perhaps Baal was sleeping, or on a journey, and the idol god was quite unable to deliver those that called upon him. But our God, who made the heavens, is quick to hear the faintest cry of any of His people! He is perpetually girt with all might and energy—if you do but appeal to Him, He will speedily fly to your relief! Yes, He will fly upon the wings of the wind, for He is prompt to deliver all those who put their case into His hands. God is never asleep in the sense that He is unable to help us.

And, moreover, *God is never asleep in the sense that He ceases to consider us*. I do not know whether you can catch the thought so as to lay hold of it by faith, but we have an instance of it in the 40<sup>th</sup> Psalm where David says, “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me.” When? Now? Yes. Tomorrow? Yes. And yesterday? Yes. He was *always* thinking of us and He is always thinking of us! The Infinite mind of God can think of all things at once. You and I, in thinking of one thing, often forget another—but it is not so with God. He is so great that His center is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere! And you, dear Brother or Sister, may be the very center of God’s thoughts and so may I—and all His redeemed may at the same moment have His thoughts fixed upon each one of them! Can you realize the wondrous Truth of God that there is never a moment, night or day, in which the great mind of the Eternal ceases to think of you? Then, how safe you are with God always looking upon you! How happy you ought to be with God always thinking of you! Yes, how joyful you ought to be because, even if others forget you, He never does!

You remember how Cowper represents Alexander Selkirk, when far away an that island of Juan Fernandez, saying—

***“My friends, do they now and then send  
A wish or a thought after me?”***

He could not bear, in his loneliness, to be altogether forgotten by everybody. And none of us would like to be in that condition, but even if we were in such a plight, we could still find comfort in that ancient promise, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget.” It is rarely enough that mothers are so unnatural—still, “they may forget. Yet,” says the LORD, “will I not forget you.” Oh, drink that down! Is it not a sweet draught? Of all the luscious drinks that men ever delighted in, there can be none with such flavor as this choice wine of Covenant faithfulness!

So much, then, for our first text, “Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” I have only given you a few brief hints. Lay them up in your memories and come with me to consider our second text, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.”

**II.** The lesson of these words is that THE WATCHFUL EYES OF THE SAINTS ARE FIXED UPON THEIR GOD.

Which is the more wonderful text of the two? Certainly, it is a great marvel that God should always fix His eyes upon us, but I think it is a greater marvel that you and I should ever be brought to fix our eyes on God! For God to look at His people is according to His own Nature, but for *us* to look upon God, is something superior to human nature—it is the *gift* of God and the work of Sovereign Grace! I think that both looks are to be regarded as miracles of mercy. For a child of God to be so sanctified that He always fixes His eyes upon God, as a servant does upon his master’s hands—this is a very eminent degree of sanctification and is a thing worthy to be looked at, and worthy to have the word, “Behold,” put before it! I wonder whether you and I have yet reached such a height of consecration to God as to be able to truly use the language of this text?

Alas, in many cases we cannot get men’s eyes fixed upon God at all. There is this natural world, with all its wondrous beauty. God has painted every flower and tinged the clouds with the glory of the setting sun. He is everywhere and yet men walk through His great house of nature and—fools that they are—they say, “There is no God.” It is hard to get men to see God. We put the Bible into their hands. They read it and are interested in its stories, but they see not God in it. Providence comes to their very doors with marvels, yet they say that they do not see God’s hand in anything that happens to them! And even when we preach—and this is the woe of woes—we cannot get men to look to the Lord! God knows that I have never tried to speak that you would think of *me* for a single moment. I have sought to tell my tale as plainly as I could and to force it home on man’s hearts and consciences as God might help me. And yet, at the end of the sermon, often the hearer’s only remark is, “How did you like *him*?” It does not matter at all how you like me! Is that what we came here for—to fiddle to you, as men do in your orchestras, or speak before you as if we were mere actors playing for your amusement?

It is of no concern to us what you think of our style or manner—it is the Truth of God itself which we would drive home to you! It is that Truth of God which, if we could, we would make you feel as the ox feels the sharp goad! It is the blessed Doctrine of Christ Crucified which we would have you feed upon, as the hungry man devours the bread that is given to him and does not care whether he ever knows the baker's name, or not! Still, I must say again that it is a hard thing to get men to see God. They look around, above, beneath, everywhere—but to get them to fix their eyes upon God, “This is the work. This is the difficulty.”

The man of God who wrote this 123<sup>rd</sup> Psalm had been taught to look to God in a very remarkable manner. And I call your attention to it in the hope that many of you will do likewise. First, *his eyes were reverentially fixed upon the Lord*. He looked to God's hands, wherever they were, with deep reverence—“as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters.” He was, of course, talking about Oriental servants—the Hebrew word bears the meaning of slaves—and travelers tell us that when they go into the house of a wealthy person in the East, the master will give certain signs to his slaves and refreshments are brought in. But, except when they are called, the servants stand at a distance, watching for the slightest motion of their master's hands—they do not have the liberties that we happily accord to our servants—they are nothing and nobody, mere tools for their master to use as he pleases. And, as to the maidens, I have heard that the women in the East have a harder time of it with their mistresses than the men do with their masters and that the lady of the house is a more severe taskmaster than her husband is. So the maidens watch their mistress' hands very carefully, for they are sorely afraid of them—and they look with great care and fear to see what “Madam” would have them do. Now, casting aside everything of human fear out of the figure, this is the way in which we ought to look to God—He is in Heaven—we are upon earth. He is great—we are nothing. He is good—we are lumps of sin. It is for us, therefore, with the utmost reverence, to seek to learn God's will in every point—in His Word and in His works—and at once, without question, reverently to do what He commands us.

The next point is that the truly sanctified man looks to God's hands *with obedience as well as with reverence*. Orientals, as a general rule, speak far less than we do, except when they sit around the fire at eventide and tell their tales. But an Eastern master seldom speaks. A gentleman went, some time ago, into an Eastern house and as soon as he entered, the master waved his hand and the servants brought in sherbet. He waved his hand again, and they brought dried fruits. Then he moved his hands in a different way and they began to spread the table and, all the time, not a word was spoken, but they perfectly understood the motion of his hands! They had to look sharply to see how the master moved his hands so that they might do what that motion meant. We have not very much of that dumb action among us, but, on board a steamboat you may see the captain moving his hands this way or that, and the call-boy is ready at once to pass the word down to those who are in charge of the engine.

That is just how the child of God should watch the hands of God in the Bible and in Providence, so as to do at once whatever we plainly perceive to be our Lord's will. Ah, me, I know some professing Christians who will not do God's will till they have had a good whipping, or not until they have been chastened again and again! Remember that ancient injunction, "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you"? You know how the drivers have to pull at their reins. They say, "This creature is so hard in the mouth that we do not know how to manage him at all." And some of God's people are terribly hard in the mouth—they need very rough handling to make them move. Yet we ought to be different from horses and mules. We ought to be ready at once, at a beck, or a wink, or a nod, to know what God would have us do—and do it reverently and obediently.

Then, also, *our eyes should be absolutely fixed upon our Lord*. The eyes of servants ought to be so directed to their masters that they not only see the sign, but obey it, whatever it means. It may be a very little thing, but yet the little thing should not be neglected. I would again say what I sometimes feel ashamed of having to say. I sometimes meet with a person who says, with regard to the matter of Believers' Baptism, "Now, you know that Baptism will not save me." You evil, miserable soul! Will you do nothing but what is necessary for your salvation? Is that the spirit that drives you? Will you do only what is necessary to save your poor soul, which is hardly worth saving if you talk like that? It is too small a thing to be worth anything, but unless Baptism will save your soul, you will not attend to it? "Well," says another, "I have reversed the Scriptural order—I have put my baptism before my believing." Who gave you leave to alter the Lord's order? If servants were to act like that, what mischief we would have! Suppose they were to bring us in our dessert before they brought in our dinner—that would be a very small affair, yet it is important to observe the right order even in such matters! Or suppose we were to tell them to sweep the room and dust it—and they should dust the room and then sweep it? It is only altering the order, but you know what would happen! So is it with those who put Baptism first and believing afterwards—it spoils the whole transaction—and it violates the intention of God in the ordinance. You have no right to act like that!

I may remind you of a story which I think I told you some time ago. A poor youth earnestly wished to join the Church, but his friends thought he was somewhat deficient in brain power and that he had better not be baptized. He lay sick and was evidently dying. And he said to his mother, "Mother, I wish I had been baptized and joined the Church." She replied, "My dear boy, you know that being baptized would not have saved you. You will go to Heaven because you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh, yes," he said, "I know that! You do not think I am so stupid as to fancy that Baptism would save me, do you, Mother? I know that has nothing to do with going to Heaven! But when I get there, I shall see my Savior and, perhaps He will say to me, 'Isaac, why did you not join the Church?' If I should say, 'Lord, that was a very little thing,' He would say, 'Yes, then you might have done it to please Me.'" That story is just to the point—the smaller the matter is, the more careful we should be to at-

tend to it, if it would please the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not be so clever, you servants who fancy that you know better than your Master, for perhaps He may find somebody else to be His servant if you behave like that!

Suppose that I was starting on a journey, early in the morning, and I said to my servant, "I would like a cup of coffee before I start"? And suppose that when I came down, she brought me a glass of cold water? I would ask her, "Why did you do that?" If she should reply, "Oh, Sir, I thought that the water would be better for you than coffee!" I would say, "Well, I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me in that considerate way, but I shall have to engage another servant who does what she is told." So I advise you not to alter or judge God's Word, but to obey it! Do not begin to calculate as to whether what you read in His Word is right in your sight, or in the eyes of other people—the one question for you is—Has my Lord bid me do this? If so, then, as the eyes of the maiden are to her mistress, so let your eyes be unto the Lord your God!

Once more, *our eyes are to be turned ONLY to the Lord*. The Eastern servant is not allowed to think. It is no business of his to have his eyes upon his master's guests. They are to be fixed upon his master. And the maiden does not think it to be her business to watch the movements of the hands of the lady who calls to see her mistress—her eyes are to be on the hands of her mistress. She does not dare to take them off, for, perhaps, just when she is looking out of the window, or gazing in curiosity at some object, her mistress may be waving her hand and she may not see it. And then there will be a serious scolding and possibly something worse when the mistress gets her alone. So you and I must not take our eyes off our God at any time—His way and His will must be our only law—and for this we must live, that we may please Him whose servants we are, for has He not bought us with His precious blood? So we are not our own, we are "bought with a price."

"Ah," says one, "we have not come to that yet." No, I fear you have not, but you ought to. There is no peace for us till we do. He who, either by omission or commission, neglects to do or goes beyond His Lord's command will find sorrow in his soul. Depend upon it, the roots of our most bitter griefs strike into our sins and, if our sins were overcome, the major part of our sorrows would be removed! Oh that God would give us Grace to be very tender in conscience, to tremble before Him, as well as to rejoice before Him, for in very deed the man who does not tremble at His Word has not yet learned to truly love Him!

Now I must speak to some here who, perhaps, know nothing about what I have been saying, for they have lived without God. I will finish my sermon by just reminding you that this may do very well for *this world*—though it is a poor business at the best—but when you come to die, you will need God! Now, when I die and go to be with God, I know that Christ will not say to me, "I never knew you." I am sure He cannot because He has long known me. I was about to say that He has known me to His cost, for I have long been a beggar at His door every day and I cannot live without Him. I am naked, poor and miserable apart from Him. I have always some errand or other to make me go to Him—some sin to confess, or some need to be supplied. So He knows me well enough. You are sure

to know a beggar who is always at your door. Perhaps he says that he has not been there before, but you reply, "Why you have been here every morning for the last six weeks! I have always seen you begging here the first thing in the morning." You cannot say that you do not know him, yet that is what will happen to those of you who have never sought the Lord Jesus Christ and never prayed to Him. Christ will say to you, "I never knew you."

I feel that the spot I occupy just now is a very solemn one, for, like the captain of a ship, I can see all over this place. Often, when I come here on a Sunday, somebody says, "So-and-So has gone." There is one gone out of that seat which you occupy, my Friend. He was there last Sabbath, but he has gone. And I can point to many of you and say, "You are sitting in the seat where one used to sit whose face was vary familiar to me, but he has gone Home." And some go to my great surprise. I have thought to see them again many times, and when I have missed them, I have said, "Oh, she has gone to the seaside for a little holiday." But someone has said to me, "No, she is dead. She was suddenly taken away." Or, "He was called away only this last week." Ah, me! Ah, me! And what faces I may be looking into now that I shall never see again! Give me your hand, my Friend, for this is the last time I may ever speak to you. I beg you to get ready to go on that last long journey. Oh, do not die unsaved! I beseech you, do not attempt to enter the eternal world, with all its dread, without a Savior!

This is the way of salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust yourself with Him! Put your soul, as a sacred deposit, into the hands of that dear Banker whose bank has never failed—no, more—who has never lost a penny that was entrusted to Him! And before you sleep, just rest in Jesus. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—194, 119 (SONG VI), 123, 538.**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 30:1-22.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.* We believe in Verbal Inspiration and, though some people treat with contempt the very ides of words being Inspired, be you sure of this, if you have not Inspired Words, you are not likely to get Inspired men! Besides, words are to the thought what the shell is to the egg and if you break the shell, you have destroyed the egg. Somehow or other, the thought will ooze out unless it is conveyed in God's own Words. Observe that the Lord does not say to Jeremiah, "Write you all the *thought* that I have given you," but, "Write you all the *words* that I have spoken unto you in a book."

**3.** *For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* And so they did, and so they shall in a yet fuller sense, for this is a promise that has fulfillments and fulfillments. Man's promises, once kept, are

ended, but God's promises are perpetual—they are springing wells which never run dry! That which He fulfilled once, He often takes the opportunity to fulfill again on a yet larger scale, as He will doubtless do to His ancient people in the latter days. You who are in spiritual captivity tonight may derive comfort from these words, "I will bring again the captivity of My people." It is the way of God to deliver the captives. What He does once is only an index of what He is in the habit of doing. It is God's delight to devise means by which He will bring back His banished ones. So, in due time, He will end your captivity and you shall enjoy the blessed liberty which is the portion of His people.

**4, 5.** *And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.* God hears His people's voices when they cry. He knows the tone and accent which they use and, sometimes, when He is listening to them, He hears "a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace." Possibly that may be the condition of some who are here tonight. If so, may the Lord, who hears their cry, bring them out of their trembling and fear—and fill their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing!

**6, 7.** *Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Therefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.* This passage evidently alludes to a time of very great distress, when men's hearts were swollen within them as if they would burst for very grief. Not simply here and there one, but the great mass of the people seemed to be in sore trouble. Even the stout-hearted ones began to feel inward pangs of affliction, yet it was *then* that the Lord said, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

**8.** *For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him.* Here is a word for you tried ones! God, who sometimes permits His child to wear the yoke of the oppressor, will take that yoke away! He will snap the bands that are around your neck and enable you to rise into the glorious liberty where-with Christ makes His people free! O enslaved ones, be of good comfort and look for speedy deliverance through the power of the great Emancipator!

**9, 10.** *But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear you not, O My servant Jacob, says the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.* There are great things in reserve for God's ancient people Israel, but there are not less laid up for God's *spiritual Israel*, for by them shall the greatest fulfillment of the promise be realized! They shall indeed be quiet and none shall make them afraid. Note that these are the very men who had their hands upon their loins and whose faces were pale with fright! These are they who were ready to die of heartbreak! Yet even they shall, by the rich Grace of God, be in rest and quiet—and no one shall

make them afraid. I wish that we could all realize the fulfillment of that promise even now and that our gracious God would dwell with us as He is known to abide with those who bear His name and thus give us that blessed quiet and rest which we so much need.

**11.** *For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.* Look abroad and see what God has done to Israel. This is peculiarly the time of Israel's trouble and the Jewish people were, perhaps, never worse persecuted than they now are in certain parts of the world. Yet the Lord will not allow any nation to crush them and He will, Himself, avenge all wrongs that they suffer. He still says to them, "He that touches you touches the apple of My eye." And it is very noteworthy that whenever God has used any nation as a rod to chasten the Jews—and He has used many in that way—He has always broken that kingdom up when He is done with it. Think of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Look at Spain and see how mean and despicable that nation has become because of its cruelty to the people of God. Now, if this is true of Israel after the flesh, depend upon it that it is also true concerning God's spiritual people! Though He will correct us when we deserve chastening, it will always be in measure and He will not make a full end of us. God has measureless wrath against the ungodly for their measureless sin, but as for His own people, He has cast their sin behind His back and only as a wise and faithful Father does He chasten them for that sin.

**12-14.** *For thus says the LORD, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased.* God never gave His people leave to sin—and sin in *them* is worse than sin in any other people, for they sin against more light, more love and, therefore, it grieves the Lord more—and He smites all the more heavily and, mark you, when God smites, there is nobody who can comfort us! A quaint old writer, whose book I was reading the other day, commenting on that part of the parable where the friend, disturbed at midnight, said, "My children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you," wrote something like this, "When God is in bed, there are none of His children up to help us. If He does not open the door, there are none of His saints to give us a crust—all must come from Him." Therefore we must cry unto Him and say, "Awake for my help, O God; for all my lovers have forgotten me; they seek me not in the time of my distress." When God wounds us, men often desert us—and those that seemed to be most fond of us forsake us when God smites us.

**15, 16.** *Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things to you. Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured.* How striking is this sentence! And what a surprise it gives us as we read it! We might have thought, after the Lord had spoken as He did, that He would have given His people up to their enemies, but, instead of doing so, He says, "Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured;"

**16, 17.** *And all your adversaries, everyone of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.* Did you notice that word, “therefore,” in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse? Can you see any, “therefore,” in it—any logical conclusion that could be drawn from the Prophet’s premises? The argument seems to be, “Because your disease is incurable, therefore will I restore health unto you. Because no one else can heal your wounds, therefore I will heal them.” It is a blessed thing to feel that you are incurable, for then it is that God will cure you! When there is an end of you, then you shall begin with God! But as long as you are full of self or sin, that passage shall be fulfilled to you, “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.”

**18, 19.** *Thus says the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the choice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.* Well might the Lord introduce such a promise as this with the word, “Behold”!

Again I remind you that these are the people who had their hands on their loins! These are they who were in sore trouble of soul! Yet now they are merry and full of gladness! And *we*, also, have learned to sing—

***My mourning He to dancing turns,  
For sackcloth, joy He gives,  
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,  
But long your favor lives.***

**20, 21.** *Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the LORD.* There is One, whom we call Master and Lord, who approaches the Throne of God on our behalf—One who fulfils that ancient Word of God, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Our glorious Savior, through His humanity, is one of us and He appears before God on our behalf, blessed be His holy name!

**22.** *And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.* Happy are we if we can rejoice in this precious Truth of God!

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

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

# THE BIRD ESCAPED FROM THE SNARE

## NO. 1696

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

*“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers;  
the snare is broken, and we are escaped.”  
Psalm 124:7.*

THIS text describes a soul-matter. The Psalmist is not speaking of a temporal deliverance, although, even in that sense, an escape from death would be a theme worthy of his sweetest song. He says, “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,” thus denoting a spiritual rescue. The man’s soul is the soul of the man and though some give all their attention to the body, their folly is great. It is as though a man should spend all his substance upon his house and have no bread for himself to eat. Do I speak to any who never think about their souls? Do you really believe that you will die like dogs and horses? I cannot believe that you have such brutal views of yourself! Believe me, you have within you an immortal spirit which will outlive the sun! If you have, up to now, been careless of your nobler part, may God’s Spirit teach you wisdom. I pray that you may so think of your soul that our text may become deeply interesting to you, so that you may join in its song of deliverance.

I have called the text a song—does it not read like one? “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” It is a canticle of certainty. It does not say, “We *hope* that we have escaped and we *trust* that the snare is broken,” but, “The snare is broken, and we *are* escaped.” “Ifs,” and, “buts,” make no music! Poetry flees when chance enters! Certainties are melodies. We hear people speak of “dead certainties,” but the Christian rejoices in *living* certainties, and is wretched till they are his own! Rise then, my Beloved, above the fogs and mists which cover the marshes of carnal questioning! Climb the mountains of full assurance and stand there with your foreheads bathed in sunlight, breathing that serene atmosphere which is untainted by a cloud of doubt!

The text reads like a song, not only because of its certainty, but also because of its joy. It has the wing and the throat of a lark! Look how it rises from the net to God—“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.” Soon it takes another rise—“The snare is broken.” And it mounts yet, again, with still greater joy—“And we are escaped.” The words melt away into the music of Heaven as the spirit perfectly escapes from the snares of earth. The metaphor used in the text is simple, but yet beautiful and instructive. Pardon me if I make as much of it as I am able

to do. First, we have here the bird. Secondly, the snare. Thirdly, the capture, and fourthly, the escape. We may then add a lesson from it all.

I. First, we have, here, the soul compared to A BIRD. It is a little bird, too—a sparrow, or one of the sparrow kind. “Our soul is escaped as a little bird”—not as a great bird that could break the net and free itself by its own force. A little bird fitly represents our soul when we are lowly in heart. In our unregenerate condition, we think ourselves eaglets, at the very least, but we are not great creatures, after all. We talk as great men, but we are all little in God’s sight. “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him?” Sparrows were very cheap in our Lord’s day because of their littleness—in the market you could buy two for a farthing and five for two farthings—so that they threw an odd bird in when you bought at such a wholesale rate as two farthings’ worth. Sparrows were inconsiderable things, “yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father.” If He cares for sparrows, be sure He cares for souls! And when you think least of yourself, yet believe that the Lord regards you.

Again, our soul is like a little bird because it is so ignorant. Birds know little about snares, yet they know so much that, “surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.” Even this slender wisdom is more than men display, for they fly into the net when it is spread in their sight! Yes, into the same net out of which, in God’s Providence, they have just been permitted to escape! Man naturally is the essence of folly and he is desperately set on destroying himself. He must “see life,” he says and, therefore, he haunts the gates of death! He reckons the fowler to be his friend and dreams that he spreads his nets for purposes of friendly hospitality! He does not know that the fowler is hunting for his life and will destroy him if he can. So foolish are we and ignorant, we are as birds ready for the snare, till the Lord teaches us wisdom—and even then we need hourly keeping, or we are entrapped by the Destroyer.

Our soul is often like a little bird because it is so eager and venturesome. How birds will trust themselves in winter around traps of the simplest kind if but a few crumbs are used as bait! Alas, men are equally foolhardy—they see others perish, yet they follow their ways! Many sip of the intoxicating cup, yet declare they will never be drunks! They pilfer a little and yet they despise a thief! They indulge in wanton words, but vow to be chaste as snow! They go into questionable places of amusement, but hope to remain pure. Oh, silly birds! I mean silly *souls*! Thus the fowler fills his bags. Young people associate with ungodly persons and say, “We are not so weak-minded as to be led away by them”—thus displaying a weak mind by that boastful speech!

Youths tell us that to read skeptical books, impure novels and to hear lewd songs and spicy language will do them no harm. Believe no such flattering falsehoods, or you will rue the day! “You don’t catch old birds with chaff,” says the simpleton—and he hops into the net. “Younger birds must not come here,” he says, “it is dangerous for them, but I am safe enough.” Yet old birds’ necks are wrung as well as those of young birds—and experienced men are as foolish as the juveniles! When a man says, “It is no

temptation to me,” it may be true, for soot will not blacken a sweep. Little birds, beware—the fowler promises pleasure, but the end thereof is death! The little bird, also, when once taken in the net, is a good comparison with the soul captured by sin, for it is defenseless. What can it do?

A mouse might eat the ropes and set free the lion, but no mouse will liberate the sparrow! He will have a short flutter and we shall hear no more of him. When a man is birdlimed by a vice, the more he flutters, the tighter he is held by it. What is more defenseless than a soul in the net of sin? What little power men seem to have against their habits! They boast that they can stop anywhere—but, alas, they stop nowhere! “Oh, I have only to come to a determination.” Yes, “only to come to a determination”—but to that determination you will not come! When men become entangled in the meshes of sin, their power to escape is gone. Jeremiah asks—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also, do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Such is the entanglement of habit, the slavery of lust.

While they are thus defenseless, we must notice, too, how alarmed they often are. The bird is no sooner in the net than he is frightened. Poor thing, how gladly would he escape if he could! Souls are not always so. They will be taken in Satan’s snares and yet they say that they are happy! Custom in sin kills conscience of sin. “A short life and a merry one,” they say, as if there could be any true merriment anywhere except in the great Father’s house where they begin to be merry, as if they had never been merry before. Many souls have enough of conscience and of enlightenment by the Word of God to alarm them when they find themselves entangled in sin. And then they beat about and hurt themselves, but, alas, notwithstanding all their efforts, unless a stronger hand than theirs shall break the net, they will perish by the fowler’s hand!

Our souls, once more, are like birds because they are the objects of snares. If the Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, certainly Satan will compass all the universe to ruin a single soul, for he delights in destroying the souls of men. Nor is it Satan, only, for all the world seems to have taken to this fowling, and men who would not lift a finger to save their fellows will go far to ruin them! Oh, little birds, there is no place on earth safe for you till Jesus covers you with His protecting wings!

**II.** Secondly, we will now speak of THE SNARE. The text speaks twice of the snare. It is wonderful what a variety of snares there are for birds. The tombs of Egypt exhibit the art of bird catching and show us decoys, traps, nets and so forth. Such arts are still practiced by fowlers. The main point about the snare is that it is concealed. So, when the arch-fowler comes after the souls of men, he will not usually spread his net in their sight. Some silly birds can be taken in that way, but most souls need that the temptation should be veiled. Always suspect that in a temptation to sin there is more than you can see! Never say that it is a little thing, for great evil lurks in a little fault. Death and destruction hide under apparently small offenses.

Oh, if we could see everything as God sees it, then we poor silly souls might be in far less danger! But, alas, Satan covers the hook with a tempting bait and we are taken! Snares and traps are usually attractive. The poor bird sees seeds which he is fond of and he goes for them, little judging that he is to give his life in exchange for brief enjoyment. So is it with Satan. He tempts us with pleasures, with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life—we taste the sweet and are pierced with the smart. Did we perceive the intent of the great enemy of souls, we should fly from sin! You know the old adage, “Fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts”—even so, fear a temptation to sin, even should it offer you all the kingdoms of this world! May God keep us from the attractions which conceal the snare!

But Satan’s snares, like the fowler’s, are sadly effectual. Look at the quantities of small birds that will be found for sale in the markets—fowlers must be exceedingly skillful to catch all these. If we could walk through Satan’s market, what a multitude of souls should we see in his bands! Multitudes upon multitudes are the victims of their own passions, victims of that hellish art which makes evil appear to be good! God save us from being taken in these most deadly snares! What are these snares? I cannot mention them all, for they are legion. Snares tuck our bed and snares attend our board. Snares are in the street and snares are in the field. Snares are on the table and snares are in our daily walk.

But the chief among them are temptations to *sin*. The Evil One endeavors to lead us into a false way which will be congenial to our taste. We each have a peculiar weakness and he knows how to adapt himself to it. He has been a student of human nature for so long a time that he knows more about man than man knows about himself and he, therefore, chooses that bait which is most likely to attract us. Oh that we may have Grace to keep clear of pleasurable sin! The rabbis said to the Nazarite who was not to drink wine or strong drink, “O Nazarite, go about, go about—and do not pass through a vineyard.” So, child of God, it will be well for you to go about and not enter into temptation. Your Master bids you pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Against *temptation* we are to watch and pray as well as against the sin that is likely to come of it.

Another snare is erroneous doctrine. There is plenty of that abroad at this time. Be warned! You can have high doctrine and doctrine low; broad doctrine and narrow doctrine. You can have it how you like, for nowadays every man makes his own gospel and sits in judgment upon the Word of God! Dearly Beloved, hold fast the Truth of God, and be not decoyed by error! If any come with a new gospel, turn your ears away from their deceptive teaching, for false doctrine is the poison of asps and the venom of Hell lies within them. Even Christian people are in danger from another snare, namely, deceitful action. The Tempter whispers, “You need not do evil, but there are different ways of judging right and wrong—and it is best to go by the custom of the trade!”

Satan puts things very prettily when he means to ruin us. You have somebody else’s money entrusted to you. Of course, you would not *steal*

it—but you can *use* it for a little while—and then replace it. It is true, if it should be lost, people will call you a thief, but then you are *not* going to lose it! You are going to *double* it by your cleverness! That is the snare! At other times the temptation is in this form—“Be sure to buy the thing if you would like it, though you have no money with which to pay for it.” You would not steal. No, no! There is another way of doing it. Buy it, and do not pay for it. This is one of the snares with which Satan seduces men till they are ruined. Ah, me, that men should be so moved from their integrity! Oh, child of God, be upright in everything! However well you may gloss a matter over, and however much others may excuse it, yet if a certain act would be wrong in the sight of God, you must not think of it!

I have noticed another snare. Satan tries to get Christian people to ignore the experience of others. A certain good man is often melancholy. “Ah,” says Satan, “that is how you ought to be—you ought to be bowed down with holy sorrow.” I remember right well, when I was a youth, hearing a preacher say that it was dangerous to be sure of our salvation! He preached up the duty, beauty and sweetness of being everlastingly in doubt as to your condition! A few people would gather around such a preacher and sit and have a little comfortable misery all to themselves—and think that they were worshipping God! Now, that is a snare to a Christian because he has a right to be glad and, “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” May we be kept out of that snare!

On the other hand, anxious people see Christians who are advanced in Grace and full of faith while they, themselves, are much cast down—then the Evil One whispers, “You are not like those good men! You are no Christian.” Brother, you cannot have another man’s experience any more than you can wear another man’s face! Certain lovely ferns grow best in the shade and never flourish in the sun, while many flowers cannot have too much sunlight. Do not wish to be like this man or that man, but pray God to make you like *Jesus Christ*—and to let your experience glorify His blessed name! Otherwise, the desire to copy others will be a snare to you. Thus I might go on mentioning snares. They are, some of them, gross and carnal. But for the spiritual, there are snares so neat and pretty that they are apt to be taken in them before they are aware!

According to Pliny, the nets in which the Egyptians took little birds were frequently so fine that one person could carry a net large enough to encompass a whole tree. Surely, it must have been a small tree, but even then, it is a remarkable statement for so reliable a writer to have made. We may here see an illustration of the delicacy of those temptations with which Satan surrounds the nobler order of minds. Strong as iron, yet filmy as gauze, are the snares for spiritual men. Why, Satan can encompass a whole Church with one of those nets and you scarcely know that it is there! And yet the minds within its meshes are quite unable to mount up and sing unto their Lord, as once they did, for they are within an invisible net.

**III.** We cannot further dwell on the subject of the snare, but we must turn to consider THE CAPTURE. Birds are taken in nets and souls are

taken by temptations to sin, by errors of doctrine and by a thousand other methods. Dear Friends, it is a dreadful thing for the poor little bird, when it is taken, especially when it is so anxious to escape that it hurts itself in its efforts to get free. How came it to be taken? It may have been taken through hunger. Half-starved, it dashed into peril for necessary food. Many true men are in such straits and difficulties that they are sadly liable to be brought into the net.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, pray God to deliver you from poverty and from great riches, for there are perilous snares about *each* of those positions. May you be neither exalted nor depressed, but preserved in the middle path of experience. If you are extremely needy, you may be tempted to do wrong to provide for your wife and family. I pray that you may never yield to the temptation, but trust in God and He will deliver you without your putting forth your hands unto iniquity. Other birds are taken merely by their appetite. They are not excessively hungry, but they enjoy certain choice seeds and the fowler knows it—and he scatters such around the trap. Ease of body, indulgence of taste, the joy of being admired, the sweets of power and position—all these and many more have been the fowler's baits.

Hundreds have all that heart ought to wish for, but they desire to be rich and, therefore, fall into a thousand snares which they might have avoided. Men are snared by eating and by drinking; by fine raiment and by vainglorious display. Snares lie thickly around the appetites of the body and the longings of the mind. Some persons are entrapped by fear. Birds have rushed into the net for fear of danger—many persons have become great offenders against God through lack of moral courage. They are afraid of the laughter of fools! They cannot bear the sarcasm of the so-called wise—and so they suppress the Truth of God and join in sin to escape scorn. God give us a holy bravery with which to defy every man's opinion when we know that we are obeying the Lord!

Some little birds are lost by love of company. The fowler has a decoy which sings sweetly or chirps pleasantly and the other birds must follow it. In the Church of God we lose many members by ungodly marriages. The worldling pipes his pretty note and the tender heart is taken by it. The fair enthusiast says, "I shall convert him," but it is very, very seldom that this happens—it is usually the other way! This is a snare of Satan in which many are taken. Thus you see how souls are captured. Perhaps I am speaking to one here who has flown into the net. You do not know what to do, Friend, for you are quite helpless to break your bonds. You went in very eagerly and, oh, how eagerly you would get out, again, if you could! But you cannot escape. Your own helplessness is now apparent as it never was before.

One thing, however, you can do—you can cry to One who is stronger than you! You can pray the Lord to pluck your feet out of the net—and He is able to do it, for all things are possible with Him!

**IV.** Just a word or two upon THE ESCAPE. This is a very blessed text, although the sermon has been gloomy so far, for now we shall see the

fowler disappointed and the captive let loose! I wish that everybody here could repeat the utterance and cry, "Our soul is escaped. We were in the net, but our soul has escaped. The snare is broken! It has no power over us any longer. We are free from its grasp! We have escaped! Up, up, we soar away from the fowler and his nets. Glory be to God, we have escaped!—

***"As when the fowler's snare is broke,  
The bird escapes on cheerful wings  
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,  
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings."***

This escape is due to God, alone! As the bird could not get out of the snare, so the soul cannot escape from temptation, but God can bring it out, and He works the rescue. Hear this, you that are slaves to drunkenness—God can deliver you! You that have fallen into licentiousness—hear it—God can deliver you! Whatever the sin that has birdlimed you, those gracious hands which once were nailed to the Cross can set you free! Up, up, up, you that pine on the borders of despair! Jesus can deliver you! He that made the world out of nothing can make a joyful Christian even out of you! He can turn your mourning into dancing and your despair into confidence.

This escape is achieved by power. That word, "broken," has force in it. "The snare is broken"—the meshes torn with a strong hand; the steel trap dashed in pieces! It matters not what danger you are in, there is power enough in God to fetch you out of it! I thought, once, that God could never save me. I supposed that He would bless my brother and my sisters, but that He would leave me—yet He did save me, blessed be His name! And you, too, He is able to deliver. "Oh, but I am the odd man," cries one! Then there are two of us! And if God has saved one odd man, He can surely save another—and why should He not save *you*, in spite of all your eccentricity? "But I do not think that He will save me." What are your thoughts worth? He can save even you! Only trust Him, though you are in the net, and out of that net you shall be fetched, for He leaves no soul to perish that puts its trust in Him!

Observe that the escape was complete—"the snare is broken, and we are escaped." As long as a little bird has the tiniest bit of cotton tied to its leg, and that is fastened anywhere, the bird has not escaped. And as long as you have one evil habit—one wrong thing that you really love—you have *not* escaped! You must be altogether separated from your sins. No man can be married to Christ till he is divorced from sin. Our deliverance must be complete, or it is not true. Who can give us this but the Lord Jesus Christ by His blessed Spirit? Trust Him to set you free and no net shall hold you! I would again put the question, "How many of us can say, 'We have escaped?'" Let us sing unto the Lord if we can—and let those who *cannot* say that they are free, continue to plead earnestly with God that He would deliver them.

**V.** I would close with THE LESSON which this subject ought to teach us. A word or two only. It ought to teach us, first, to sing, for if a bird gets

out of the net, does it not sing? How glad it seems to be when once it flies away! Oh, you that have been delivered from sin and Satan, sing unto the Lord! Praise and bless His name! Be as happy as possible. Be something *more* than full of happiness! How can that be? Why, be so full of it that it overflows and cheers others. Let us communicate our joy as far as we can, for we are escaped. We are escaped and we will praise the blessed God who broke the snare.

Next, let us trust, for if the Lord has saved us from the dreadful snare of sin and Satan, He will save us from everything else. It is sad, to me, that any should trust the Lord with their souls and yet they cannot trust Him for their daily bread, or for help in their daily trials! This must not be! If the Lord has given our soul so great an escape, depend upon it, He will take care of our bodies. He that gave us Jesus will give us food and raiment and let us be content. Lastly, let us watch. If we have fallen into the snare, once, let us keep our eyes open not to go there again. May the Holy Spirit prevent any child of God from turning aside, even for a moment, from the straight way. "Let them not turn again to folly," is one of God's own cautions to His people. He has brought you up out of the horrible Pit—do not play near the edge of it. He has set your feet on a rock—what have you to do with the miry clay? Get away from the slippery ground and let your goings be established on the rock.

I would say, again, to you netted ones—you that are really caught in the trap and held fast—oh, that the Lord would come at once and set you free! I think He will, yes, I am sure that He will if you cry to Him to do so. I have heard of a sailor who had been in prison, that after his release, he had money in his pocket and, going over London Bridge, he saw a man selling birds—thrashes, larks and so on. "What do you want for the lot?" said Jack. I forget how much it was, but Jack found the money and, as soon as the birds were his, he opened the door and let them all fly away. The man called out "Whatever did you buy those birds for, and then let them out?" "Oh," said the sailor, "if you had been in prison as I have been, you would be sure to set everything free you could get a hold of."

You and I ought to display the same kind of feeling towards all poor ensnared souls. I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is more tender-hearted than we are and, therefore, He will certainly come and set free all prisoners who beg Him to open their cage doors! He is the great Emancipator—show Him your bonds and beg for liberty—and He will set you free!

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

# THE IMMOVABILITY OF THE BELIEVER

## NO. 1450

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1878,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.”*  
*Psalm 125:1.*

THIS is the first verse of one of the Songs of degrees. These Songs were probably sung by the pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem, when they halted at the various stations or passed certain places of interest. It is very possible that this Psalm burst forth from joyful lips at the moment when Zion first came into sight and the worshippers gazed upon the city of their solemnities. Happy pilgrims! They had left behind them many a dreary glen and dangerous wood and now they saw in their full view their journey's end and, therefore, they sang with all the gathered joy of days gone by. They could not have so exulted if they had not previously sorrowed. The same truth may be learned from the use of the term, “Song of degrees”—it warns us that this Psalm rises out of that which preceded it, as one step of a staircase rises above its fellow.

David had not sung the 125<sup>th</sup> Psalm if he had not first learned to sing the one hundred and twenty-fourth. If he had not been where men threatened to swallow him up quickly and found in such a case that the Lord was on his side, he could not have been quite so sure that, “they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.” Our experiences are our instructors even concerning themselves—they shed light upon each other and we learn enough from one trial to begin to unfold the mysteries of another. The 124<sup>th</sup> Psalm must first, to some extent, be passed through so that we see that all our help lies in the Lord, or we shall never reach to the grand positiveness of this 125<sup>th</sup> and sing, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.”

We have heard some of the brave expressions of Christian heroes and we have thought, “I wish I could speak with that man's faith.” Brothers and Sisters, to possess such faith you must take with it, its owner's trials! You may rest assured that God never gave a penny's worth of faith to any man that it might be hoarded in a cupboard—faith is sure to be used and what is more, *great* faith is not possessed by those who are untrained in its need and use. It is a sword which is not girt upon a man till he has come to years and strength to use it.

I do greatly joy in that utterance of Luther when going to Worms. Some of his friends told him that he would be burned to powder, as Huss had been before him, but he laughed and said he had no fear. “If,” said he, “they shall build a fire between Wittenberg and Worms that should reach to Heaven, in the Lord's name I would appear and step into behemoth's mouth, between his great teeth and confess Christ and let him do his

pleasure.” His joy at that time seems to have been overflowing, though his danger was manifest to all.

Now, this holy boasting sounds well, but it is not to be imitated by every baby in Grace—this man had passed through a preparatory process which brought his mind into a triumphant state, in which he was a king of men, a lion among a pack of dogs! It is not to be forgotten that there was a subsequent sinking of his soul, as in the case of Elijah, to prevent his being exalted above measure at the recollection of his own courage. For this, also, he who would have a right royal faith must stand prepared. They that do business in great waters must sail in ships fitted for stormy seas. You and I, perhaps, paddle around the shores of a quiet lake where our little boat is large enough for most purposes. We are not tested by great storms, neither is our boat held by great anchors. Our needs are not of the greatest and, therefore, our supplies are not like those of the larger craft which sail upon greater waters.

Still, one would wish to be among the Lord’s most useful servants and to that end would cheerfully accept the great risk. We would not wish to remain babies, but we desire to become full-grown men and surely David is one who has drank up the 124<sup>th</sup> Psalm as a somewhat bitter cup and then feels that he can dine upon the 125<sup>th</sup> and rise to bless the Lord who makes His people to “be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” Note that the metaphor which is used in the text was drawn by the pilgrims from the hill before them, or, if the Psalm does not belong to pilgrims, to all Israel. They took the comparison from that mountain with which they were best acquainted.

If they might not all see Lebanon, which lay at the northern extremity of the land—if they might not all behold the excellency of Carmel, or gaze upon the heights of Hermon—yet once in the year they must all look upon Zion, “where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel.” The emblem was, therefore, a familiar one and I wish, sometimes, that we were more apt at sanctifying to holy uses the common objects which are round about *us*—these streets and houses, our own country and our own home. I am afraid our eyes are open when we seek emblems of sadness and we find them on every hedge and in any garden-plot—but we should also look at home when we need metaphors of thanksgiving with which to set forth our security and our comfort in the Lord.

To have a house at all is something. Cold blows the wind, but warm is our own fireside. And even so, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” All you who love your homes may see in them the figure and representation of your dwelling in God in peace forever. Believing Englishmen, you may especially bless God that your country gives you an admirable picture of your own security! You dwell alone, separated by the floods from all other nations—this is the security of our beloved isle—

***“He bade the ocean round you flow,  
Not bars of brass could guard you so.”***

They that trust in the Lord shall be as these happy islands which shall not know the rod of the oppressor, for the Lord has guarded them with a better defense than walls or bulwarks. Hebrew comparisons were most fit

for Hebrew believers—let us make English figures out of our own circumstances and surroundings—thus will it appear as if our faith were less a tradition and more truly a present-day reality!

Thus, also, will true religion wear a more real and homely aspect and will strike others with greater force. Faith, when she is active and observant, finds illustrations of her own blessedness all around. Amid the descending snows of this cheerless wintry day, she says, “Did He not say that cold and heat and summer and winter should never cease?” Have we not His Covenant with the earth still fulfilled before our eyes and may we not rest certain, therefore, that the Covenant with His people will not fail? Are not these snowflakes tokens of His Word which comes not forth in vain? Does not this bitter chill assure us of His Omnipotence of whom we read, “He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?” Open your eyes, my Brothers and Sisters, and look about and as the believing Israelite saw Zion and began to sing about it, so shall you, also, “go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.”

Now, to come to the text—I have merely touched its angles in this rough preface. We have in the verse before us, first of all, a lowly people—“They that trust in the Lord.” One talks a good deal about them, yet they are of no reputation among men. Secondly, a singular stability in them—“they shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” And then, thirdly, we shall for a while consider the evident reason for this stability of theirs.

**I.** First, here we read of A LOWLY PEOPLE. That which is said of them is nothing very great in the judgment of human reason—they are merely said to “trust in the Lord.” This is a very simple thing to do. God gives promises and they believe them. God is at work in Providence and they trust Him. God invites them to the Mercy Seat and they approach it. God gives them His Son as their salvation and they believe in Him. God grants His Holy Spirit as their teacher and they learn of Him and obey Him. To sum up all in one, they “trust in the Lord.”

“That is a small matter,” cries one, “any fool can do that!” Just so. Perhaps more would do so if the most of men were not foolishly wise. Any child can trust and more would trust in the Lord if more men were child-like. “Trust in the Lord.” It needs no effort of intellect to trust and it needs no laborious education to learn the way. Trusting in the Lord is simply depending where there is unquestionable reason for reliance, believing what is assuredly true and acting upon it. Trusting in the Lord is taking at His Word, One who cannot lie, or change, or fail. And certainly this is no great feat if we look at it from the carnal man’s own point of view.

These trusters in the Lord cannot plume themselves upon the feat they have performed, for to trust in the Lord would naturally seem to be one of the commonplaces of human thought. Should not a being trust its Creator? Strange that any creature should think it difficult! It is a sure sign of the depravity of our race that we not only think it difficult, but find it so! It is a sure evidence of how much Satan has bewitched the human mind that simple faith has even become impossible to unrenewed hearts,

though it is, in itself, the easiest exercise of the mind. Men cannot even understand what trusting in the Lord *means* till God, the Holy Spirit, opens their understandings—and then He must both beget and nourish their faith or they will have none of it!

To trust in the Lord we have admitted to be a very simple matter, but at the same time it is very right, is it not? Poor simpletons that we are, we can even appeal to the wise ones of the earth and let them be judges in this matter. Should not a man trust in his own Creator? Is it possible for us to discover a being more worthy of confidence than our own God? Does He not deserve to be trusted? In what *one* respect has He ever played us false? Is there a *single* instance in which the Word of the Lord, once given, has been found to fail? When have thirsty mouths resorted to this Fountain and found it dry? If there is anything against the veracity of God, let us hear it. Evidence is invited! The Lord Himself bids any testify against Him who have anything to declare.

Lo, these thousands of years have rolled along and Jehovah has challenged men to bring forth their strong arguments against Him if they could, but they have found no cause why He should be distrusted and His Word dishonored. If, then, there is new evidence, O unbelievers, you are here to declare it! Let us hear it. There is none! You know that there is none! Surely it is a matter of clear honesty and right to any man to trust Him till He has deceived us or afforded us cause for suspicion. We always say we will trust the bridge that has carried us safely over. Has not the Lord been faithful to those who have trusted Him?

What say the trusters of former times, or of this present? Lives there *one* who will come forward and say, “I have trusted in the Lord and have been confounded. I have stayed myself upon the Eternal and I have found Him false”? No, Hell itself contains not one adversary of God who dares to utter such a calumny against His Divine faithfulness! Well, Brothers and Sisters, if we are told that our trust is simple, we will be reconciled to the statement by the equally manifest fact that it is *right*. Moreover, is it not *wise*? What can be wiser? Those of us who have tried trusting in God have never found Him fail, whereas when we have trusted in *men* we have been disappointed! You who have been self-reliant must have found self-reliance to be, at certain times, a terrible mistake! But those who are God-reliant have never found an instance in which their rest in the Lord has been a questionable policy.

Would it not be an awfully grand fact if a man should make a failure of his life and could then turn round and truly say, “Oh God, the cause of my failure was that I trusted alone in You and You could not, or would not help me”? As there is a terrible grandeur in the infamous wickedness of Milton’s Satan, so much of grandeur that sometimes the reader has been made forgetful of the vileness of the fiend in the greatness of the rebel, so there would be a sort of appalling splendor about a being who should have implicitly lived to God, depended upon Him and then should have failed. The idea is next door to blasphemous and tremblingly I let it pass before you that you may perceive that it can have no real existence!

Borrowing a poetic license, I have shadowed it, but I know it to be utterly impossible.

See, then, how certain of success is the Believer! How impossible it is that he should make shipwreck! The mere notion of it has passed before you and you have rejected it as worse than absurd. It must be wise to link yourself to Him whose name is Love. To get that little boat of yours in tow with the Infinite must be wise! To gain some kind of connection between yourself, the creature of an hour, and the Eternal who spoke the world into existence and whose glance will return it to nothing must be wise! It must be a grandly wise thing to be joined unto the Lord God and there is no link that can, at first, be cast between God and sinful man but that of simple confidence—be that link ours at this moment and forever!

Blessed are they that by the Holy Spirit have been led to trust in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us speak further about these simple people—these half fools, as the world thinks them to be. They came to trust in God as a matter of necessity, they could not do otherwise. Why is it that numbers of people deal with their friends on trust? It is because no other way is open to them. Matthew Henry says, “All that deal with God must deal upon trust and He will give comfort to those only that give credit to Him.” We cannot bring the Lord our merits, but let us give Him our confidence. Because we are poor, let us appeal to His riches! Because we cannot help ourselves, let us cast ourselves upon His power!

What else can we do? God is to be trusted—let us trust Him with all our hearts. Do other trusts invite us? Let us reject them, for we remember the past heartbreaks which they have caused us. Lord, we trust in You and come to cast ourselves upon You! To whom else can we go? You have the words of eternal life! Oftentimes trust is, to a Believer, his only path, he is shut up to faith—he must believe or die. He is pushed into a corner; he is bewildered; he can scarcely pray; he cannot comprehend himself, nor lift a finger. And then trusting is the resort of his desperation—it is not his choice, but the fruit of compulsion.

Brethren, I feel it a sweet thing to faint away into faith! Did you ever do that? Were you ever so far gone that at last you have melted right away from yourself and sunk into God? I believe that this swooning faintness is the door of faith to multitudes of souls! They enter into peace, not by strength, but by sheer weakness! They do not run into the arms of God, but they *fall* there! There are doubtless some who run to Christ, for we read of one who came running to Him, but there are others who must be dropped down before Him upon a bed. It matters not how they come to Jesus, so long as they come to Him! Yet it is worthy of note that faith, in many cases, is a child of weakness.

On its human side it is a Jabez, borne with sorrow, the birth of self's expiring pang. Yet faith which thus arises out of very weakness, like the phoenix from its own ashes, has a great side to it. It is, in some respects, the most sublime effort of the human mind. If ever the bright spirits which stand before the Truth of God test their own faculties upon the mysteries of Providence, foreknowledge, predestination and the free will of man—if they ever enquire where the agency of the created ends and where the Di-

vine is found—if ever, I say, they try the edge of their intellect upon themes like these, they make an end by declaring, “We are lost! Our spirits cannot comprehend the infinite, but we believe in God and are sure that He orders all things aright.” They doff their coronets before the Throne of their superior King in reverent confidence in His eternal goodness—this is their grandest worship, their truest adoration—they believe!

Brothers and Sisters, faith is not of earth alone, but saints and angels in Heaven believe in the Eternal God! It were a crime to suspect them of the contrary. The mystery of Jehovah’s dealings still manifests their faith—they remember His unfulfilled promises and they look for their accomplishment—for they have not as yet seen the Bridegroom coming to His bride, nor the earth subdued unto His sway, nor the full manifestation of the creation when the sons of God shall be revealed and the creature, itself, shall cease from its groaning. Trust is the simplicity of a baby, but it is the glory of a genius! It is grand in seraph or in saint—and while it befits a child, it is worthy of an archangel! Poor fools are these trusters, yet they are near akin to nobler beings!

Now, can you tell me why is it that if a man trusts in God he is generally despised by his fellows? If a person were to say, “As for my getting on in the world, I am trusting to a friend of mine who is influential with the government,” or if another said, “My father was born before me and he will see me provided for,” nobody would condemn either of such persons as an idiot, but would treat his confidence as quite legitimate! But if any one of us were to say, “Our confidence, as for our future in this world is resting in our heavenly Father,” there would be a shrugging of the shoulders, a knowing look of the eyes and when they got far enough away, our critics would say, “That man is a fool, or a cant!” Alas, God is *nobody* to the bulk of mankind and it seems a ridiculous thing to them to trust in Him!

To trust in God is to the worldly man the next thing to building castles in the air! The unbelieving laugh because they cannot understand us—but what is the reason they become *angry* with us? Why do they turn, again, and rend us? Other simpletons they let alone, but those who trust in God become objects of scorn! The Believer finds that a jest is made upon his faith and mirth is excited by his confidence! What he says is widely laughed at and more than a little distorted—and he is looked upon as little better than a natural fool! This was always so and always will be so till the Lord comes. He that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit! The man who walks by sight cannot understand the man who walks by faith—how could he? And if we get to trust in God and that trust becomes the great motive power of our life, as I earnestly hope it may be with each one of us, then the worldly man will not know how to make heads or tails of our conduct and he will, first of all, ridicule and then oppose. Care nothing for the opposition—he who is right has conquered!

Before we proceed further, let us notice how the text includes all who truly trust in the Lord, both small and great, for it says, “They that trust in the Lord.” It does not say, “They that trust in the Lord with a highly intelligent faith.” It is a good thing to understand much and to trust in the

Lord with growing knowledge, but, dear Soul, if you do not know much, yet if you are trusting in the Lord, you shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed! The text does not limit the blessing to only those who have *great* faith. The stronger your faith the better—the more faith you can have the richer and happier your life will be—but the assurance of our text is for those who have *any* faith, even a mustard seed of faith! They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.

And note it does not say, “those who have had faith for many years.” It is a great thing to have had faith for a long time—it ripens and sweetens—but this promise is made to the youngest as well as to the oldest; to those who have believed in the Master’s Word for a few years, or months, or days, as well as to the veterans. They that trust in the Lord, though it was only yesterday that they began to trust, shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed! Neither does the text demand a loftiness and heroism of trust—it simply speaks of the trust itself. Your faith may not be like that of Samson, which slays a thousand men, but it may be a humble, teachable faith, which sits like Mary at the Master’s feet at home. Well, you shall be as Mount Zion that cannot be removed. Only have *real* trust in God and you shall have the steadfastness of the sacred hill of the Lord.

Some of you may have been so sweetly taught to trust in the Lord that you can say, “Yes, blessed be His name, I do trust Him, altogether, unreservedly and without a suspicion.” Be you abundantly sure that the text is your portion this day! I hope there are some of us who can now trust our Lord in any case. If we do but see the Lord’s Word in any teaching, however mysterious or obnoxious to flesh and blood, our questions are at an end. We accept unhesitatingly the hard and the deep things of God. If we see any attribute, or promise, or half a promise of our Lord to be on our side, we feel more than safe.

A good old saint who lately lay dying told her pastor that she was resting upon the justice of God. The good pastor thought that she had chosen a strange point of the Divine Character to rest on, but it was not at all so, for she explained herself. “I rest in His justice to my great Surety and Substitute, that He would not let Him die for me in vain.” Thus hard, stern Justice becomes a blessed pillow for our confidence and none can be softer for a dying head! Though Justice is as a stone, yet he that can use it as Jacob used the stone at Bethel shall see the ladder which reached to Heaven and angels trooping upon its rungs! Awkward Providences, too, like stern attributes, we have learned to use for helps in our trusting. It happened that Rabbi Joshua was walking up Mount Zion one day with his brother, Rabbi Eliezer, and as they walked along they startled a fox, which ran out from among the rubbish.

“Alas, my Brother,” said Joshua, “this is a sad sign. Does it not show us the anger of the Lord against Israel? He has given Zion to be a desolation and the foxes walk about her.” Eliezer replied, “True, my Brother, but does it not also prove the faithfulness of Jehovah towards Zion, for inasmuch as He said that the foxes should go about her when she sinned, has He not also said that He will build her walls again? If He is thus faithful to His threats, will He not, in due time, fulfill His promises?”

Brothers and Sisters, you must trust the Lord wholly and entirely in everything and concerning everything. "Trust in Him at all times." You must trust the dark side of Him. You must trust in the shadow of His wings as well as in the light of His Countenance. Some of you have only learned to trust to the smile of His face—you must learn to trust in the blows of His fists. God bring us to that! "No," you say, "we can never come to that!" Surely we can, for did not one of old say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him"? That is precisely what we mean!

**II.** Under our second head we shall consider the grand privilege of the text, THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—"They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." Mount Zion had, in David's day, undergone a great many changes and it has seen many more since, but it has never been removed. There it was when the Jebusite defied David; there it was when Araunah threshed his wheat; there it was when the Temple gleamed in the sun; there it was when the Roman soldier cast the firebrand into the holy place and it is there now—it has never been removed and it never will be!

God's children undergo a variety of experiences. Today their hearts are a place of sacrifice and tomorrow a battlefield. By turns their soul is a temple and a threshing floor—but whatever their ups and downs may be, they shall never be removed from their ordained and appointed place—by the Grace of God they are where they are and where they shall be. They shall never be effectually removed from that place before the Lord in which infinite love has fixed them. Where, then, *are* Believers? We answer first, they are in the place of *justification*. As soon as they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they were justified by faith. How many years have passed since then? Never mind—"there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

They have not fallen into the place of condemnation—they have not been driven from the honorable position of justified men, for, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Lord has covered them with the righteousness of Christ and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea and, therefore, they must and they shall stand in His favor as long as Zion's famous rock abides in its place. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." The sheep of Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands! The Believer is also in the place of *regeneration* and out of that condition he shall never be removed. He was born again—prove that fact and there is no reversing it! He that is born again is born again. You cannot take from a man his first birth and neither can you take from a man his *second* birth—the thought is ridiculous, the fact is impossible!

Are you a child of God? You are a child of God and you can never be other than a child of God, either in time or in eternity. Have you a child? You may disown him, but he is yours none the less. Your child may be rebellious and his character may make you sorrowful, but he is your child for all that. You cannot "unchild" him. Even so, if God is my Father, which I know He is, since He has taught me to trust in Him, then I may not question the perpetuity of my sonship since it is an abiding thing and I

shall no more be removed from it than Mount Zion from its ancient seat! Where is the Believer? He is in the place of the gracious purpose—"for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."

Being *called*, my Brothers and Sisters, you are a Believer, for that is the mark of the heavenly calling! Therefore you can be sure that you were foreknown and predestinated, and you can be equally certain that from this predestination you shall no more be removed than the mountains shall be torn from their sockets and thrown into the depths of the sea! You are also in the place of Divine Love, dear to the heart of God, for the Father Himself loves you and nothing shall make Him cease to love you! He did not love you because of anything good in you—when He chose you He knew what you would be—you will never surprise Him, whatever evil you fall into, for He has foreseen and provided for it all. And He has said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you; for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you."

Beloved, if you are, indeed, trusting in God, you are in the stronghold of the Covenant—God has entered into bonds with you to bless you! By oath and promise, by two immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, He has given you strong consolation concerning everlasting salvation in Christ Jesus and you are like Mount Zion—you shall never be removed from your place in the Covenant. Although your house is not so with God as you might desire, yet has He made with you an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure. What is your position? Why, you are in Christ! You are one with your Lord and Head, a living member of His body! You are a part of the mystical Christ and none shall dismember the Only-Begotten or rend in pieces the Lord of All! It can never be that He shall lose a single limb of His own august body!

Till Mount Zion shall be torn from its eternal base none who are in Christ shall ever be torn away from Him! In this Truth of God there is something to feed upon. Here is a downy couch of precious consolation to lie upon when you are sick—and a garden of delights to walk in when health returns. Here is meat for men in the strength of which we may do and dare and *die* for our Lord! "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed, but which abides forever." This shall not only be a matter of fact as to the Believer's actual *position* with God, but, to a large extent, this shall be true in his own consciousness as he advances in the life and walk of faith.

Believers are too often tossed about in their minds and suffer great shakings and moving of heart because they do not trust in the Lord as they should. These things ought not to be, for we ought to be steadfast and immovable. But by reason of infirmity and immaturity many are tossed to and fro as in a tempest. Still, even in these, deep in their soul their faith is earnestly keeping its hold and does not permit them altogether to drift. At the back of a great deal of grievous unbelief, when we

are in a depressed condition, there lives a faith which is not moved, but in secret takes hold as for dear life, biding its time till better days shall come.

I remember another story of Martin Luther which may fitly be told in this place. Great-souled Martin Luther could believe and doubt as much any man of his time! In believing he could excel the angels and in horrible thoughts of doubting he could almost match the devils! Great-hearted men are subject to horrible fits of faintness and despair unknown to minds of smaller caliber. One day he fell so low in spirit that his friends were frightened at what he might say or do. Things were going ill with the great cause and the Reformer might, in his dreadful condition, have upset everything. So his friends got him out of the way, saying to themselves, "The man must be alone. His brain is over-worked. He must be quiet."

He rested a bit, and came back, looking as sour and gloomy as ever. Rest and seclusion had not stilled the winds nor lulled the waves! Luther was still in a storm and judged that the good cause was shipwrecked. I will now give you my own version of the method adopted for the great man's cure. He went home, but when he came to the door nobody welcomed him. He entered their best room and there sat Catherine, his wife, all dressed in black, weeping as from a death in the house. By her side lay a mourning cloak, such as ladies wear at funerals. "Ah," says he, "Kate, what is the matter? Is the child dead?" She shook her head and said the little ones were alive, but something much worse than that had happened. Luther cried "Oh, what has befallen us? Tell me quick! I am sad enough as it is. Tell me quick!"

"Good man," said she, "have you not heard? Is it possible that the terrible news has not reached you?" This made the Reformer the more inquisitive and ardent and he pressed to be immediately told of the cause of sorrow. "Why," said Kate, "have you not been told that our heavenly Father is dead and His cause in the world is therefore overturned?" Martin stood and looked at her, and at last burst into such a laugh that he could not possibly contain himself, but cried, "Kate, I read your riddle—what a fool I am! God is not dead, He always lives, but I have acted as if He were! You have taught me a good lesson."

It is only by realizing the everlasting abiding love of God that they that trust in the Lord shall come to feel steadfast as Mount Zion which shall never be removed. The man of God may know that he is safe and yet there may be such a rush and tumult in his experience that he may not be able to understand himself or realize his true position. This may happen even to more advanced Christians. But as we grow in Divine Grace, the tendency is to reach a more even and equable condition. Experienced Believers are not to be put about by every puff of wind. No, they come, at last, to hold on their way in the teeth of all ill weathers and, like hardy mariners, make small account of the lesser storms of life. It is grand to gaze into the face of a Patriarch who wears written on his placid brow the words, "He shall not be moved forever. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

Such men are the pillars of society and help poor trembling, doubting hearts to hope that there is yet something stable. Let it be our objective

and desire to grow into such confirmed and established Believers. The promise of God deserves unwavering faith and why should we not render it and thus become fixed in our repose of soul? Once more, while it is delightful to consider the actual immovability of the Believer and most profitable to seek after a growing establishment of faith, there is one point of which we have already and can never allow a question to be raised about. As to the Gospel which we believe and teach, we are once and for all fixed and settled about it—our creed is not a variable quantity, or a shifting cloud. We know whom we have believed and are as fixed as Mount Zion as to the eternal verities upon which our hopes are built.

Since we have trusted in the Lord we have, at times, felt that we did not just then derive the support and the comfort that we expected from it, but what then? Shall we leave it and look elsewhere? God forbid! We are at a pass with all the world of doubters, thinkers, philosophizers and scientific dreamers! We know enough of the Truth of the Gospel to be resolved to hold it against legions of *their* order! We defy, alike, the council of infidels and the Hell of devils—we never will depart from the grand old Gospel which we have received! No, my Brothers and Sisters, at the very worst, our Gospel is better than their modern thought at the best! I would sooner drink the dregs of the wine vat of Christ when the berries are sour than I would quaff the sweetest wines on the lees well-refined which come of the vintage of unbelief!

We are sure and positive in our faith in God and in His Infallible Word. O unbelievers, we are in no degree moved from the certainty of our confidence by the depression of our spirits! You may catch us, sometimes, in the dumps and say, “Now you find the Gospel does not cheer you as you thought it would.” But our answer is ready for you—we believe the Gospel whether it is yielding us present comfort or not. We would sooner be God’s dogs than the devil’s darlings! And we would sooner feed on the husks of the Gospel, if such there are, than on the finest of your wheat! Having learned to trust in the Lord, we are as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but which abides forever. As to the essential Truth of the Gospel, we defy the world in arms!

**III.** Now I have to finish. In the third place, let us consider THE EVIDENT REASON for all this. Why is it that they that trust in the Lord shall not be moved? Why, first, because they are trusting in the Truth of God! They have not believed a lie and, therefore, they shall not be swept from their foundation. They are trusting in One who will not deceive them and cannot fail them. They have laid their foundation on the Rock, have they not? If they had trusted to man, man would fail or change, but, lo, they are trusting to One who is Truth, Power, Immutability, Holiness, Justice—why should they be moved? I cannot imagine a reason! I ask again, why should they be moved?

They are trusting where their reliance is observed and welcomed. God loves to have many dependents about Him. It is His way of revealing Himself and manifesting His Glory. In these later ages, do you not know what the Lord has been doing? He dwelt up yonder a self-contained God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—within His own supreme Person, self-sufficient.

He needed nothing more and if He willed anything beyond, it was that there might be creatures that could trust Him, love Him, hang upon Him, depend upon Him. He went about in creation and in Providence and in Grace to make dependents!

A great nobleman with a big house in a wide country is not content to be all alone, he needs servants and tenants and if he is of a generous spirit, he seeks the poor. He needs poor neighbors to help and he says, "This Christmas time I must give something away—is there anybody needing a round of beef? Is there anybody needing their chimney set alight with a slab of beef? Is there anybody needing a blanket in this cold season?" Thus God must have dependents. He must have those about Him who need Him. He loves dependents and I do not see why He should cast them away. Why should He? If this is what He desires—if He seeks such to worship Him who believe that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—why should He reject them?

It is not the Nature of God to cast away any who rely upon Him. On the contrary, He is very careful that Faith should never have less than she has expected. He respects the courage of Faith—He never confounds her. If you open your back door and a robin comes bravely in out of the cold, do you drive it out? No, you are pleased with his assurance and give him a hearty welcome! Even so does God deal with poor trembling souls when they come to Him. We read of Charles V., the German Emperor, that when a pair of birds had built their nest among the poles and lines of his pavilion, he would not allow it to be removed though the time was come for the camp to be on the march. The birds had trusted to him and they would not be disappointed! The same zealous care does the Lord exhibit towards the trembling hopes and feeble confidences of poor souls that trust in Him! There is, therefore, no reason why they should be removed, since it is not like the Lord to cast them away.

Once more, for a true Believer to be suffered to perish would be violation of all the promises of God. He has said to such "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." His own Word is, "the righteous shall hold on his way," "He that believes in Him shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Now then, if these promises could fail, the child of God could be removed—but it is not possible so long as God is God, that he who trusts in the Lord shall ever be removed. As long as there is a God in Heaven, every Believer is safe! Let him go and rejoice in this—because it brings glory to God to save him, but for him to be lost would put a slur upon the name of the Most High! The Lord bring us to a simple faith in Jesus and keep us fixed there. Amen.

## **END OF VOLUME 24**

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# THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH

## NO. 161

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1857,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.”  
Psalm 125:2.***

THE changes of society may well illustrate the immutability of God. In the days of David, Jerusalem was looked upon as an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a natural rampart of hills and appears to lie in the center of an amphitheatre raised purposely for its defense. By the ancient Jew it was considered to be an impregnable citadel. How changed now are the manners of war! A small troop could easily take the city and it must indeed be a strong army that would be able to garrison it in its present condition.

Yet while Jerusalem is changed and the figure has become inappropriate, Jerusalem's God remains the same, for with Him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We must this morning consider the text, not as we should understand it in *our* day but as we should have understood it in David's time. David looked upon the city of Jerusalem and he thought within himself, “No army can ever be able to surprise this city and however numerous may be the invading hosts, my people will always be able to hold their own in the midst of a city so firmly fortified both by nature and by god.”

In his time, indeed and in the time of his son Solomon, I suppose it would have been utterly impossible for any enemy, possessed only of the tactics of ancient warfare, to have scaled those mighty ramparts of earth which God had piled about the city. Therefore, when David said in his day, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people,” he meant this—“As Jerusalem is fortified by the mountains, so are God's people castled in the Covenant, fortified in the Omnipotence of God and therefore they are impregnable secure.”

We shall thus understand the text and endeavor this morning to work out the great thought of the security of God's people in the arms of Jehovah their Lord. We shall consider the text, first, *as relating to the Church as a whole* and then we shall endeavor to note *how it applies to every individual in particular*.

**I. FIRST, THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE** is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence and she is castled within the faithful engagements of the Covenant. How often has the

Church been attacked? But how often has she been victorious? The number of her battles is just the number of her victories. Foes have come against her. They have compassed her about, they have compassed her about like bees—but in the name of God she has destroyed them. The bull of Bashan and the dog of Belial, the mighty and the insignificant, have all conspired to overthrow the Church. But He that sits in Heaven has laughed at them. The Lord has had them in derision and His Church has been as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed but which abides forever. Turn now to the roll of history and read how the Church has been fortified by God when fiercely attacked by men.

**1.** *Persecution* has unsheathed its bloody sword and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes. The martyrs of Christ have been dragged by thousands to a terrible death. The confessors have had to stand forth at the risk of their lives, protesting the Gospel of God against the dominant of the times. The little flock has been scattered here and there and the dogs of persecution have worried them in every corner where they have fled. Into every nation of the earth have they wandered. In sheepskins and goatskins have they been clothed. Their houses have been in the rocks and their sleeping places in the caves of the earth.

Like the stag pursued by the hounds, they have not had a moment's space for so much as to take their breath. But has the Church been subdued? Has she ever been overcome? O God, You have proved the invincibility of Your Truth. You have manifested the power of Your Word, for You have not only preserved Your Church in the time of greatest trouble, but, blessed be Your name, you have made the hour of her peril the hour of her greatest triumph. You will find that whenever the Church has been the most persecuted she has been the most successful.

The heathen Pro-consuls wondered when they saw the many who were prepared to die. They said, "Surely a madness must have seized upon mankind, that they cannot be content to commit suicide but are so fond of death that they must come to our bar and plead that they are lovers of Christ as if they sought to compel us to execute them." God gave grace for the moment and in the day of persecution He braced the nerves of His people and made them mighty to do or die, as God would have it. But, surely, had not Christ's Church been surrounded by the mountains of God's Omnipotence, she must have fallen prey to her numerous enemies.

**2.** But by-and-by the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God's Church and he therefore adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. "I will not only slay them," said he, "I will *malign* them." Did you ever read in history the horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians? I dare not tell you with what vices the early Chris-

tians were charged in their private assemblies. It is certain that they were the purest and most virtuous of men but never were men so fearfully belied. The very heathens who reveled in vice despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the Liar had laid to their charge.

A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast upon the snow-white garments of Christ's Church fell off from them, leaving them whiter than before—the clouds that sought to obscure the light of the Heaven of the Gospel were blown away and "fair as the moon and clear as the sun"—the innocence of Christ's Church shone forth again. But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. He has always sought to slander any race of Christians who are the means of revival. I would not believe any minister to be eminently successful if I were informed that everybody praised him. I am certain that such a case would be an exception—a glaring exception to all the rules of history.

You remember what was said of Whitfield in his day. He was charged with crimes that Sodom never knew—and yet a more pure and heavenly man God never sent to tread this wicked earth. And it ever must be so. The Church struggling with sin and wickedness, must through the enmity of the Evil One, find herself bespattered and besmeared with slander. The wicked, when they can do nothing else against the righteous, will spit falsehood on them. But has the Church suffered through their slander, or has ever a solitary Christian lost anything by it? No, the Lord God who set the mountains round about Jerusalem has so put Himself about His people that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and every tongue that rises against us in judgment we shall condemn.

This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. Fear not, O Church of Christ, the slimy serpent of slander—for even in your cradle, like Hercules, when the marks of slander came against you—you did slay them in your infantile grasp more than a conqueror through Him that loved you. And now that God is with you and the shout of a king in your midst, fear not though all men should speak against you—your Master will yet honor you and you will come up from the pool of slander like a sheep from the washing—the fairer for your black baptism, the more admired, the more lovely for all the scorn and ignominy that men have cast upon you!

**3.** Again, Satan learned wisdom and he said, "Now inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, I will do this—I will send into their midst wolves in sheep's clothing. I will inspire many different *heretics*, carried away with their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the Church promulgate lies and prophesy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance. In every era of the Church there have been numberless bands of heretics. Only a small company have in certain times adhered to the Truth, while the mass of professing Christians have gone aside and have perished in the gain-saying of Korah.

Look at the earliest days of Christianity. Scarcely were the Apostles in their graves and their souls in Paradise than there sprang up men who denied the Lord that bought them. Some who did evil that good might come, whose damnation was just. Heresies of all kinds began to spring up, even in the first fifty years after the departure of our Master. Since that time the world has been very prolific of every shape and form of doctrine except the Truth. And down to these modern times heresies have prevailed. Now behold how Satan seeks to quench the light of Israel. There is the heresy of Rome, she that sits upon many waters seeks as far as she can to delude the Church and to draw the rest of the world aside from the Truth of God.

The Roman Catholic Church, with all the craft of Hell, seeks to proselyte wherever she may from those who are the professed followers of the Gospel. She will change her shape in every land. In her own dominions she will build the dungeon and practice intolerance. In a land of freedom she can plead for liberty and pretend to be its warmest friend. Base harlot that she is, her whoredom has not yet ceased, nor is the cup of her fornications full. She seeks still to devour the nations and swallow them up.

There is her Sister the Puseyism of the Church of England. I speak nothing now concerning my evangelical Brethren. God Almighty shield them and bless them! My only marvel is that they do not come out altogether and touch not the unclean thing. But, alas, Puseyism is seeking to eat out the very vitals of our godliness, telling the masses that the priest is everything—putting down Christ and exalting the man. Putting baptismal water in the place of the influences of the Divine Spirit and exalting sacraments into the place which is only to be held by the Lord our God. Truly this dangerous and deceptive, beautiful and foolish system of religion is much to be feared—although we know that the true Church of God must ever be safe—for against her the gates of Hell shall not prevail.

Alas, that we should have to say something else! And this concerning those who are commonly called evangelicals, who have a form of error more insidious and evil still. Alas that I should have to “cry aloud and spare not,” concerning these matters. These are days when a false charity would have us hold our tongues against the evils that we hate. My Brethren, in the midst of our Dissenting Churches, there is a system which does not deserve the name of “system,” except from its systematic desire to crush every system. There is a system springing up which takes out of the Gospel every Truth that makes it precious. It plucks every jewel out of the crown of the Redeemer and tramples it under the foot of men.

In a large number of our pulpits at this time you will not hear the Gospel preached in a month all together. Anything else you like you may hear preached—Anti-state Churchism, political affairs—these are the current staple of the day. Christ and Him crucified may go to the dogs for them. Politics fill up the pulpits and philosophy stands in the place of theology.

And when there is a little theology, what do they say? Instead of exalting the Holy Spirit as the first and prime agent, they are ever exhorting men to do what only God's Spirit can do for them and not reminding them that the effectual grace of God is necessary. The Covenant, the "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure" is sneered at.

The banner once held so manfully by Calvin, who took it from the hand of Augustine leaping over centuries to grasp it, who again received it from the hand of the Apostle Paul—the banner of the old fashioned Truth is to a great degree furred and we are told that these old doctrines are effete and out of date. Puritanical divinity, they say, is not the divinity for these times. We must have a new Gospel for a go-ahead era. We must have sermons preached which, if they are not the absolute denial of every doctrine of the Gospel, are at least sneers at them all. The man effects to be so supremely wise that he, in his own brain, can devise a Gospel better and fairer than the ancient Gospel of the blessed God.

Now, this is one of the attempts of the Enemy to put down the Truth but he will never be able to do it, for, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever."

I will not be hard but I must say a word to many of my Brethren of the denomination to which I belong. There are many of you who call yourselves Particular Baptists, by which you mean that you are Calvinists. And yet, Gentlemen, your consciences are easy and some of you have never preached upon election since you were ordained. The peculiarities of "the five points" are concealed. These things, you say, are offensive. And so, Gentlemen, you would rather offend God than you would offend man. But you reply, "These things, you know, are high doctrines. They had better not be preached—they will not be practical."

I think that the climax of all man's blasphemy is centered in that utterance. Will you dare to say, "There are some parts of God's Truth that we do not want to preach to the people"? Tell me that God put a thing in the Bible that I am not to preach! You are finding fault with my God! But you say, "It will be dangerous." What? God's Truth dangerous? I should not like to stand in your shoes when you have to face your Maker on the Day of Judgment after such an utterance as that. If it is not God's Truth, let it alone. But if you believe the thing, out with it. The world will like you just as well for being honest and if the world does not, your Master will.

Keep back nothing. Preach the whole Gospel. Preach man's responsibility—do not stutter at it. Preach Divine sovereignty—do not refuse to talk of election—to use the word, even if they sneer. Tell men that if they believe not the blood is on their own heads and then if the high people turn against you, snap your finger in their face. Tell them you do not care—that to you it is *nothing*—*nothing* at all to please man. Your Master is in Heaven and you will please Him, come fair, come foul. This done, Satan

would be balked and defeated. But at the present moment he is mightily striving thus to overthrow the Church by ill doctrine.

4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks in the last place to put out the Church, is a device which has amazed me above every other. "Now," says Satan, "If I can quench the Church, neither by persecution, nor slander, nor heresy—I will invent another mode of destroying her." And I have often marveled at the depths of deceit which are centered in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the Church, to set us apart from one another and not allow those who love the same Truth to meet with each other to work together in love and peace and harmony.

"Now," says the devil, "I have it. Here is one body of good men—they are very fond of one part of God's Truth. Now, there are two sets of truths in the Bible. One set deals with man as responsible creature, the other class of truths deals with God as the infinite Sovereign, dispensing His mercy as He pleases. Now these dear brethren are very fond of man's responsibility—they will preach it and they will preach it so that if they hear the brother on the other side of the street preach God's sovereignty, they will be very upset with him. And then I will make the brethren who preach Divine sovereignty forget the other part of the Truth and hate the brethren that preach it."

Do you not see the craft of the enemy? Both of these good men are right. They both preach parts of Truth. But they each so set their part of Truth at the top of the other that a rivalry commences. Why, I have stepped in and heard a godly Brother preach a sermon that sent my blood through my veins at a most rapid rate while he earnestly preached of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come! But he spoilt all his sermon by indirectly hinting—"Now, take care you don't hear Mr. So-and-So, because he will contradict all this and tell you that you are saved by grace and that it is not of yourself but it is the gift of God."

I went, of course, and heard the good man, because I was told not to go. Well, he was preaching that "it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God," and I thought he handled the text very manfully when he showed that God was the Author of all salvation. Only in a parenthesis he told us not to go to that work-mongering shop on the other side of the road. Why, they were both right but they had each got different parts of the Truth—one, that Truth which dealt with man as responsible. The other, that which deals with God as a Sovereign. And the devil had so perverted their judgment that they could not see that both things were true but they must go fighting each other just to make sport for Satan.

Now, I wonder that the Church has not been utterly destroyed by this last device, for it is the craftiest thing, I believe, that Satan has yet brought under our notice—though without doubt his depths are too deep for our understanding. But, Brethren, despite all this, let bigotry rave, let intolerance rail till it goes mad, the Church is just as secure—for God has

set Himself round about her—“even as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from henceforth even forever.”

And now just notice, before we leave this point, that as the Church always has been preserved, the text assures us she always will be, *henceforth even forever*. There is a nervous old woman here. Last Saturday night she read the newspaper and she saw something about five or six clergymen going over to Rome—she laid down her spectacles and she began crying, “Oh! the Church is in danger, the Church is in danger.” Ah, put your spectacles back on! That is all right—never mind about the loss of those fellows. Better gone. We did not want them. Do not cry if fifty more follow them. Do not be at all alarmed. Some Church may be in danger but God’s Church is not. That is safe enough, that shall stand secure, even to the end.

I remember with what alarm some of my friends received the tidings of the geological discoveries of modern times which did not quite agree with their interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation. They thought it an awful thing that science should discover something which seemed to contradict the Scriptures. Well, we lived over the geological difficulty, after all. And since then there have been different sets of philosophic infidels who have risen up and made wonderful discoveries and poor timid Christians have thought, “What a terrible thing! This surely will be the end of all true religion. When science can bring *facts* against us, how shall we be able to stand?”

They just waited about another week and on a sudden they found that science was not their enemy but their friend, for the truth, though tried in a furnace like silver seven times, is ever a gainer by the trial. Ah, you that hate the Church, she shall ever be a thorn in your side! Oh, you that would batter her walls to pieces, know this—that she is impregnable, not one of her stakes shall be removed, not one of her cords shall be broken! God has fixed her where she is and by Divine decree established her on a Rock. Do you hate the Church? Hate on—it will never be moved by all your hate. Do you threaten to crush it? It shall crush you but you shall never injure it. Do you despise and laugh at it? Ah, the day is coming when the laugh shall be on the other side! Wait a little while and when her Master shall suddenly come in His glory, then shall it be seen on whose side is the victory and who were the fools that laughed.

Thus we have disposed of the first point—THE CHURCH impreguably secure, fortified and castled by God.

**II.** What is true of the mass is true of the unit. The fact which relates to the Church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God has fortified His people so that every Believer is infallibly secure. There are in the world certain people who teach that Christ gives grace to men and tells them, “Now, you shall be saved if you will persevere. But this must be left to yourself.” This reminds me of an old Puritanical illustration, “The

Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was, that, 'he would grant them life but no meat.' And they were famished to death."

The deniers of *final perseverance* represent the Deity in a similar view—"God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end, but He will not grant to them the continuance of that grace without which eternal life cannot be had." Oh, surely if that were true, eternal life were not worth a fig to any of us! Unless our God who first saves us did engage to keep us alive and to provide for all our necessities, of what use were eternal life at all? But we bless His name—

***"Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.  
Once in Christ, in Christ forever,  
Nothing from His love can sever."***

The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O Child of God, there are many that will seek to destroy you and your fears will often tell you that you are in the jaws of the enemy. *Providence* will often seem against you, your eyes shall be seldom dry. It may be funeral shall follow funeral. Loss shall follow loss. A burning house shall be succeeded by a blasted crop. The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils which happen to manhood. Oh, Child of God, it may seem that all things are against you! Perhaps all God's waves and billows will go over you. You may learn first hand what hunger and nakedness and thirst mean.

You may be found in this world houseless, friendless, fatherless, motherless—but remember that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt—can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord. You may sink ever so low but you can never sink lower than the arm of God can reach. Your poor ship may be drifted before the gale but it shall never go so fast but God can keep her off the rocks. Be of good cheer, the trials of this mortal life shall work out for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Again—you may be *tempted* by the world. Traps may be set for you on every hand. You may be tempted by your flesh. Your corruptions may have great power over you and often stagger your faith and make you tremble lest you should be utterly overthrown. And the devil may set upon you with fiery darts—he may pierce you with foul insinuations. He may almost make you blaspheme and with terrible suggestions he may drive you well-near to despair. But remember—

***"Hell and your sins obstruct your course,  
But Hell and sin are vanquished foes.  
Your Jesus nailed them to His Cross  
And sang the triumph when He rose."***

And you, too, may be overcome by *sin*. You may fall—God grant you may not. But though you are kept eminently consistent and extremely virtuous, you will sin and sometimes that sin will get such a head against

you that you can scarcely stem the torrent. Conscience will whisper, "How could you be a child of God and yet sin thus?" And Satan will howl in your ears, "He that sins knows not God." And so you will be ready to be destroyed by your sin. But then, in the hour of your dark distress, read this verse—"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever."

Be confident in this, that even sin itself shall not be able to cut the golden link which joins you to your Savior. Have you ever heard the sermons of those people who believe in the apostasy of the saints? Have you not heard them very pathetically enlarge on the dangers of Christians? They say, "Yes, you may serve God all your life but perhaps in the last article of death your faith may faint, sin may prevail and you may be destroyed." And they illustrate their very beautiful and comfortable idea by the figure of a ship foundering just as she reaches the harbor. Now, many wooden ships, I doubt not, do founder and many ships built in free will dockyards founder, too. But the chosen vessels of Mercy are insured against perishing and were never known to be shipwrecked yet.

As an old Divine says, there are no wrecks to be seen on the sea which rolls between Jerusalem on earth and Jerusalem above. There are many tempests but never any shipwrecks. Bishop Hooker sweetly says "Blessed forever and ever, be that mother's child whose faith has made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under us, the countenance of the Heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory—but concerning the man that trusted in God the fire has proclaimed itself unable to singe a hair of his head.

"If lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful man, what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affections towards God, or the affection of God to him?" Oh, when we once believe this doctrine and receive it in our hearts as true, what a tendency it has to make the spirit buoyant in the deep waters and sing in the midst of the fierce billows! Who should fear, if our salvation is made secure by the Covenant of God?

And now, for a few moments, without detaining you too long, I will try to show some reasons why it is quite certain that the Believer cannot by any possibility perish. I want to do this because I have a multitude of letters from this large congregation every week. And I have to say to the glory of God there are many of those letters that make me so glad I can scarcely contain myself—while others arouse all the anxiety of my heart. Among them is one something like this. "Sir, I know that I was once a child of God. Many years ago I had such delightful feelings and such ecstasies that I cannot doubt but what if I had died then I should have gone to

Heaven. But now, Sir, I am in such distress that I am quite sure if I were to die now I should be lost.”

Now, my Brother, I know you are here. You may take it to yourself. There are only two solutions to your mystery. If you were a child of God *then*, you are a child of God *now*. And if you would have gone to Heaven then you will go to Heaven now—be you what you may. If you ever were regenerated, regeneration is a work that is never done but once. And if it has been done once for you, it has not lost its efficacy—you are a child of God still. But I am inclined to think you never were a child of God—you had a few fine ecstasies. But you never knew the plague of your own heart. I am afraid, young man, you were never taken into God’s stripping room, never were tied up to the halberts and never had the ten-throged whip of Law on your back.

But, anyhow, do not tell me any more that you were converted once but not now, because if you were converted to God, God would have kept you. “The righteous *shall* hold on His way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” And now shall I tell you why it is certain a Believer cannot perish? In the first place, how can a Believer perish if that Scripture is true which says, that every Believer is a member of Christ’s body? If you will only grant me my head afloat above the water I will give you leave to drown my fingers.

Try it—you cannot do it. As long as a man’s head is above the flood you cannot drown him—it is clean impossible—nor yet drown any part of his body. Now, a Christian is a part of Christ, the Head. Christ, the Head of the body, is in Heaven and until you can drown the Head of the body, you cannot drown the body and if the Head is in Heaven, beyond the reach of harm, then every member of the body is alive and secure and shall at last be in Heaven, too. Do you imagine, O Heretic, that Christ will lose a member of His body? Will Christ dwell in Heaven with a mangled frame? God forbid!

If Christ has taken us into union with Himself, though we are the meanest members of His Heavenly body, He will not allow us to be cut away. Will a man lose an arm, or a leg, or an hand, while he can help himself? Of course not! And while Christ is Omnipotent nothing shall pluck His children from His body, for they are of “His flesh and His bones.” But again—how can a Believer perish and yet God be true? God has said, “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.” Now, if they should overflow us, how can God be true? “When you pass through the fires you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

Then if we could ever find a Believer consumed, we could prove God’s Promise broken. But we cannot do that. God is with His children and ever will be. Besides has He not said, “I give unto My sheep *eternal life* and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”?

Tell me, Beloved, how can God be God and yet His people be plucked out of His hands? Surely He were not God to us if He were unfaithful to a Promise so oft repeated and so solemnly confirmed. Besides, mark you this—if one saint should fall away and perish, God would not only break His word but His oath, for He has sworn by Himself because He could swear by no greater, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

No, an oath-breaking God, a promise-despising Jehovah is an impossibility—and therefore a perished child of God is alike impossible.

But we need not fear, Beloved, that we shall ever perish, if we love the Savior for the last reason is all potent. Will Christ lose that which He has bought with His own blood? Yes, there are men with judgments so perverted that they believe Christ died for those that are damned and bought with His own blood men that perish. Well, if they choose to believe that, I do not envy them the elasticity of their intellects. But this I conceive to be but an axiom, that what Christ has paid for so dearly with His own heart’s blood He will have. If He loved us well enough to bear the excruciating agonies of the Cross, I know He loves “well enough to keep us to the end.” “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.”

And now I close by addressing myself for a moment or two to ungodly persons present. Thinking persons they must be, or else what I say will not be likely to be noticed by them. When I was a boy I remember having a meditation something like this—“Now, I should not like to be a thief or a murderer, or an unclean person.” I had such a training that I had an abhorrence of sin of that sort. “And yet,” thought I to myself, “I may be hung yet. There is no reason why I should not turn out a thief,” because I recollected there were some of my schoolfellows, older than I was, who had already become very eminent in dishonesty. And I thought, “why may not I?”

No one can tell the rapture of my spirit, when I thought I saw in my Bible the doctrine that if I gave my heart to Christ He would keep me from sin and preserve me as long as I lived. I was not quite sure of it—not quite certain that was the Truth of the Bible, though I thought so. But I remember when I heard the minister of some small hyper Chapel utter the same Truth—Oh, my heart was full of rapture! I panted after that Gospel. “Oh!” I thought, if God would but love me, if I might but know myself to be His!” The enchanting part of it was that if I were so He would keep me to the end. That made me so in love with the Gospel, that boy as I was, knowing nothing savingly about the Gospel, it made me love the thought of being saved, because, if saved, God would never turn me out of doors.

That made the Gospel very precious to me in my childhood—so that when the Holy Spirit showed me my guilt and led me to seek a Savior—

that doctrine was like a bright star to my spirit. I always looked forward to that. I thought, “Well, if I can once look to Christ and cast myself on Him, then He will grant me grace that I shall to the end endure.” And oh, that doctrine is so precious to me now, that I do think if anybody could possibly convince me that final perseverance is not a Truth of the Bible, I should never preach again! For I feel I would have nothing worth preaching.

If you could once make me believe that the regeneration of God might fail of its effect and that the love of God might be separated from His own chosen people, you might keep that Bible to yourself. Between its cover there is nothing that I love, nothing that I wish for, no Gospel that is suitable for me. I count it to be a Gospel beneath the dignity of God and beneath the dignity of even fallen manhood, unless it be everlasting, “ordered in all things and sure.”

And now, poor trembling Sinner, you that know your sins—believe on Christ this morning and you are saved and saved forever. Do but this moment look to Him that died upon the tree and, my Brothers and Sisters, give me your hand and let us weep for joy that you believe and let our joy accumulate when we remember that the pillars of the Heavens may totter, the solid foundations of the earth may reel, the countenance of the Heavens may be astonished, the sun may be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—but *nothing* shall pluck you from the strength of Israel’s hands! You are, you shall be infallibly secure. Come, O Holy Spirit, bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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# TEARFUL SOWING AND JOYFUL REAPING

## NO. 867

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1869,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”*  
*Psalm 126:6.*

THE whole of our life we are sowing. In activity, in suffering, in thought, in word we are always scattering imperishable seed. Some sow amidst laughter and merriment—they sow unto the lusts of the flesh and shall of the flesh reap corruption. Theirs is easy work and suitable to their inclinations. All around them siren songs cheer them in the fields of transgression as they go forth with the seed of hemlock to scatter it broadcast in the furrows. Alas, for them, they shall reap under other skies—they shall gather sheaves of flame in the harvest of fire—in the day of vengeance of our God. They have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind and who shall help them in that hour of terror?

A chosen company are sowing unto the spirit and in their case, albeit that they are blessed among men and shall reap amid eternal songs, they sow in sadness, for sowing unto the spirit involves a self-denial, a struggling against the flesh, a running counter to the fallen instincts of our depraved nature—a wrestling and a life of agony involving plentiful showers of tears. To sow unto the spirit, in the field of obedience or patient endurance, is such a work as only the Holy Spirit can enable us to accomplish. And even then the oppositions from outward circumstances, from the powers of Hell and from the depravity of our nature is oftentimes so severe that we are compelled with bitter tears and strong cries to lift up our heart unto God out of the depths of anguish.

They who sow unto the spirit, as a rule, have to sow in tears, but their reaping will so compensate them that even in the prospect of it they may dry their eyes, reckoning that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in them. Our momentary weeping, while we let fall the precious seed, is scarcely to be thought of in comparison with the mighty sheaves of the exceeding Glory in the land where tears are Divinely and finally wiped from every eye.

The principle that the mournful sowing of the saints will end in a joyful reaping stands good in regard to the whole spiritual life, but it is equally applicable to individual incidents in that life. For instance, many prayers are offered under circumstances of great depression of spirit, with mighty

vehemence and desire, but perhaps under strong temptations to unbelief. Over such prayers, cataracts of tears are poured forth, and, Brethren, you may count it a blessed sign when you can sigh and cry in your supplications, for your tears are like the prevalent wrestling of Jacob when he won the name of Israel. Your agony of spirit, like the plea of Moses, shall hold the Lord and bind His hand.

There is a conquering power in the heart's tears in prayer. You shall have what you desire when you desire it unto weeping. Take the anguish of your spirit to be the premonition of the fulfillment of the promise. You shall come again out of your closet crying, like Luther, "I have conquered." You shall see sheaves of blessing, since you have sown your prayer amid a shower of tears.

Some Believers also sow in sadness through daily sufferings. It is appointed unto some to be the daughters of affliction, the sons of pain. Happy is it when those who are thus called to suffer continue to sow while they suffer. It is not always so easy to be practically useful when one has at the same time to maintain patience and resignation. We are apt to think that one form of service at a time is enough and perhaps it may be so, but if we can add another, our blessedness will be doubled! To shed tears and yet to sow! To be racked with pain and to turn the couch into a pulpit! To make the sick bed a tribune from which to tell of the love of Christ—oh, this is blessed living! To work for Christ Jesus under such terrible disadvantages shall surely win a double recompense—and if the preacher fails from the pulpit—yet shall not the sick saint be successful from his bed?

And if the orator shall not prevail in the strength of his manhood, yet shall the pining consumptive, when he warns his friend to escape from the wrath to come, assuredly win success—his weakness shall be his strength and his sickness shall put force into his speech. I doubt not that the text may be so read as to imply that the heart-sorrow of men engaged in the Lord's service shall help to secure for them from the hand of Divine mercy a double reward. Those who can sow while yet they weep, shall, beyond all question, come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

There are many other instances which I might thus detain you with, but I prefer at once to proceed to the main business of this morning and that is to consider this text in its relation to every Christian worker. Let us first *describe his service*—"He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed." Let us, secondly, *contemplate his reward*—"He shall come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him." Let us in the third place, notice *the certainty which, like a golden link, binds these two things together*—the weeping service and the rejoicing success.

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, behold THE CHOSEN WORKER FOR GOD, the man who shall reap an abundant harvest. It is said of him that *he goes forth*. Every word here is instructive. What is intended by going forth?

Does it mean, first, that he goes forth from God? Observe that our text speaks of his coming again—but where is he to return at the last with his sheaves but to his God? Then, as he returns to the place from which he went forth, surely he goes forth from God! And I understand by this that the chosen servant of God has received consciously a Divine commission from Heaven.

If he has never in the temple seen the glory of God, high and lifted up. If he has never seen an angel fly with the golden tongs to bear a live coal from off the altar to touch his lips. If he has never heard the voice saying, “Whom shall we send? And who will go for us?” yet his heart has said, “Here am I, send me.” He has felt within his soul a yearning to be useful, a panting which could no more be quenched, unless he can win souls, than the panting of the deer could be stopped unless it could bath itself in the water brooks. I will not believe that any man can be useful in the Church of God unless he feels a Divine vocation. Especially is it a sin beyond all others for a man to take up the ministry as a mere profession and to follow it as though he might have followed something else.

I remember the saying of an old divine who was asked by a young man whether he should enter the ministry. He replied, “Not if you can help it.” No man has any right to be a preacher unless he is one who cannot help it. He must be one who feels that he is driven into it, and that woe is unto him unless he preach the Gospel! In the same way is it in the other departments of Christian service. You Christian people all have a duty, you all have responsibilities—but your duties and responsibilities, somehow or other, never move you until they take the active form of a vocation. I would to God that every Christian in this Church felt that he had a call as from the Christ of God exalted on His Throne to go out and tell others of the way of salvation!

I wish that the men and women who have here banded themselves together in a sacred confraternity felt every one of them commissioned of God, each one according to his ability, to pluck brands from the burning, to rescue souls from going down into the Pit. It is in going forth from God with His call upon you that you have the prospect of coming back successful—no way else! This going forth from God seems to me to imply that the worker had been with God in *prayer*. We must go fresh from the Mercy Seat to the field of service if we would gather plenteously. Our truest strength lies in prayer.

I am persuaded, Brethren, that we are losing much of blessing which might come upon the Church through our negligence in private supplications. I cannot pry into your prayer closets, but I believe that in the conscience of many of you there will be an affirmative voice to the charge I lay against some of you—you have restrained prayer before God. Your restraining of prayer, if you seek to serve God, is binding your own hands and cutting the sinews of your strength! As you could not expect to be

vigorous if you denied yourselves food, so neither can you hope to be strong if you deny yourselves prayer. Get close to God, for strength flows out of Him. Keep at a distance from Him and you lose all power and become weak as water.

“He that goes forth,” must mean, then, that he has stood before the Mercy Seat. That he has told out the story of his needs where the blood is sprinkled and then has gone forth in the power which prayer alone can bring from Heaven to scatter his precious seed among men. Does not this going forth from God imply, also, that the man has been in communion with God? He wears a shining face who has looked into the face of God and in the power of that brightness he shall make the desert bloom and the wilderness rejoice! He has looked up to the God of miracles and held fellowship with Him! The Lord lends much of Himself to the man who is much with Him. He endows with marvelous power the man who has learned to live close to Him and to walk in the light of His Countenance.

To “go forth,” however, may be looked at from another angle. Does it not refer to whether the man is to go as well as to the place from which he comes? “He that goes forth,” that is, away from the world, outside the camp. If you would be serviceable, you must come right out from the common track and in holy decision step out of the ranks for Christ. Of all the men who lived on the face of the earth, the most remarkable and the most singular in His age was the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no man who was so manly, no man so unlike a mere monk or separatist as Christ. He eat and drank just as other men did and yet there was a something about His Character which distinguished Him altogether from the whole mass of humanity.

He had gone forth, evidently, outside the camp—holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. If you want to win golden sheaves for Christ, you must come out, my dear Brother, as your Lord did. Depend upon it, the world’s religion is not that which breeds useful men! Nor, though I may be rebuked for saying it, is the ordinary character of our Churches equal to the production of successful servants of Christ. Common religion has become, nowadays, so cold and dead and sleepy a thing, that unless you can come out of it and get *above* it, you cannot expect to be one of those who shall come again rejoicing in abundant sheaves.

Aspire to be something more than the mass of Church members! Lift up your cry to God and beseech Him to fire you with a nobler ambition than that which possesses the common Christian—that you may be found faithful unto God at the last and may win many crowns for your Lord and Master, Christ. He that goes forth taking up Christ’s Cross, leaving the multitude and separating himself for service—he shall win the great service! Going forth may represent, also, entire giving up of yourself to that particular field of labor to which God has called you. As when the day

dawns, as the laborer goes forth to plow in the field, so the consecrated man hastens to his department of service.

He is not running here and there wasting time, but, like a man who knows his vocation, he goes straight to it and abides in it until the evening of his life. I am inclined to think that there is a version of these words which may be very useful to enterprising Believers. "He that goes forth"—that is, gets beyond the range of ordinary Christian labor—he shall find a double harvest. The most successful servants of God have been those who have not built upon other men's foundations, but have ventured to break up new soil.

There comes very little reward to me from preaching to the many who regularly attend this Tabernacle, because the most of you have heard the Gospel so long that if there were any probabilities of its converting you, in all likelihood you would have been converted long ago. The probabilities seem to be that the soil upon which the seed will germinate is already plowed and only rock remains—that the elect of God have been gathered out of my congregation and that we may not expect, in our ministry, to see great results in the future among our older hearers. But whenever we have broken up *fresh* ground—when we have gone someplace not usually occupied for worship, when we have got at a new piece of unbroken prairie—what wonderful results have always followed!

Why, I fear there were more conversions in the Surrey Music Hall than there ever have been here. In Exeter Hall, God converted more in proportion by our ministry than He has done of late in this house—not because the ministry has changed, nor the blessing upon it—but because continuing to plow upon the same old soil, again and again, we can hardly expect to reap much of a harvest! Hearts have become seared! Consciences have become callous! By going forth to get fresh ears to hear and fresh hearts to know the joyful sound, we may hope to see golden sheaves.

I say, then, to you Christian workers, reach out after those who have been thought to be beyond the range of hope! Seek to convert those who have been neglected! Let it be the effort of Christian people to go after those that nobody else is going after—the best fruit will be gleaned from boughs up to now untouched. And let our missionary operations be continually breaking forth, on the right hand and on the left, as opportunity may be given. If the Burmans rejected the Gospel, the Karens received it. Sometimes, when a superior race, so called, has rejected the Truth of God, those who have been downtrodden pariahs of the land have been made ready by God to accept the Gospel.

There is more hope, I think, of conversion work to be done in Italy and in Spain than in any other parts of the world. Where the ministry of Christ has been all but silenced, the Truth will come like an angel's hymn and there it is that we may expect to hear glad hearts welcoming the Good News. "He that goes forth"—not he that sits at home, throwing random

handfuls out of his window and expecting the corn to spring up on his doorstep—but he who obeys the Word, “Go you into all the world,” and leaps over the hedges which shut in the narrow sphere of nominal Christendom and labors to have fresh lands, fresh provinces, fresh wildernesses broken up for Christ! He is the man most likely to win the reward.

The next word is, “*and weeps.*” What does this mean? I take it, Brethren, that, as in the first words, “he that goes forth,” we see the man’s mode of service, so here we note a little of the man, himself. He goes forth and weeps. The man likely to be successful is a man of like passions with ourselves, not an angel, but a *man*, for he weeps. But then he is very much a man. He is a man of strong passions, weeping because he has a sensitive heart. The man who sleeps, the man who can be content to do nothing and is satisfied with no result is not the man to win sheaves. God chooses, usually, not men of great brains and a vast mind, but men of true-hearted, deep natures—with souls that can desire and pant and long and heave and throb!

It is a great thing that makes a genuine man weep. Tears do not lie quite so fleet with most of us. But the man who cannot weep cannot preach, at least, if he never feels tears within, even if they do not show themselves without, he can scarcely be the man to handle such themes as those which God has committed to His people’s charge. If you would be useful, dear Brothers and Sisters, you must cultivate the sacred passions. You must think much upon the Divine realities until they move and stir your souls. Men are dying and perishing! Hell is filling! Christ is dishonored! Souls are not converted to Christ! The Holy Spirit is grieved! The kingdom does not come to God, but Satan rules and reigns—all this ought to be well considered by us and our heart ought to be stirred until, like the Prophet, we say, “O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears.”

The useful worker for Christ is a man of tenderness, not a stoic—not one who does not care whether souls are saved or not. He is not one so wrapped up in the thought of Divine Sovereignty as to be absolutely petrified, but one who feels as if he died in the death of sinners and perished in their ruin—as though he could only be made happy in their happiness, or find a paradise in their being caught up to Heaven. The weeping, then, shows you what kind of man it is whom the Lord of the Harvest largely employs.

He is a man in earnest, a man of tenderness, a man in love with souls, a man wrapped up in his calling, a man carried away with compassion, a man who feels for sinners—in a word, a Christ-like man. Not a stone, but a man who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a man of heart, a man ready to weep because sinners will not weep. “Why does he weep?” asks someone—“He is on an honorable work and he is to have a glorious reward.” My Brethren, he weeps as he goes forth because he feels his own

insufficiency. He often sighs within himself, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He did not know what a weak creature he was until he came into contact with other men's hearts. He fancied it was easy work to serve God, but now he is somewhat of Joshua's mind, "You cannot serve the Lord."

Every effort that he makes betrays to him his own lack of natural strength. Well may he weep! He never teaches in the Sunday school class—he never prays at the sick bed but what he feels ashamed when he has done his work that he did not do it better. He never takes a little child on his knee to talk to it of Jesus, but he wishes that he could have spoken more tenderly of the sweet gentleness of the Lover of little children. He is never satisfied with himself, for he forms a right estimate of himself and he weeps to think that he is so poor an instrument for so good a Master.

Moreover, he weeps because of the hardness of men's hearts. He thought, at first, he should only have to tell these great Truths of God and men would leap for joy. Have you ever seen fancy pictures at the head of our missionary magazines—of respectable gentlemen dressed in black suits, landing out of boats manned by devout sailors, carrying Bibles in their hands—and these well-to-do evangelists are surrounded by Turks and Chinese, black people, and copper-colored people, who are running down to the seashore and taking these precious Bibles in their hands and looking as if they had found a priceless treasure?

All, it is all in the picture, it is *nowhere* else—the thing does not occur! Natives of barbarous isles and heathen kingdoms do not receive the Gospel in that way. Heralds of the Cross have to do a deal of rough work and toil! The Gospel, which ought to be welcomed, is rejected! And as there was no room for Christ in the inn when He became Incarnate, so there is no room for the Gospel in the hearts of mankind. Yes, and this makes us weep, since where there should be so much readiness to accept, there is so much obstinacy and rebellion.

The Christian worker weeps because, when he does see some signs of success, he is often disappointed. Blossoms come not to be fruit, or fruit half-ripe drops from the tree. He has to weep before God, oftentimes, because he is afraid that these failures may be the result of his own lack of tact or need of Divine Grace. I marvel not that the minister weeps, or that any worker for Christ bedews the seed with his tears—the wonder is he does not lament far more than he does! Perhaps we should all weep more if we were more Christ-like, more what we should be. And perhaps our working would have about it more Divine results if it came more out of our very soul, if we *played* less at soul-saving and *worked* more at it. If we cast soul and strength and every energy of our being into the work, perhaps God would reward us at a far greater rate.

The next point is he "*bears precious seed.*" Here, indeed, is a special point of all success. There is no soul-winning by untruthful preaching. We must preach the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Workers for God must tell

out the Gospel and keep to the Gospel. You must continually dwell upon the real Truth as it is in God's Word, for nothing but this will win souls. Now in order to this, my fellow workers for Christ, we must *know* God's Truth. We must know it by an inward experience of its power as well as in theory. We must know it as precious Truth. It must be precious seed to us for which we should be prepared to die if it were necessary. We must understand it as being precious because it comes from God. Precious because it tells to man the best of news. Precious because sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Precious because Christ values it and all holy men esteem it beyond all price.

We must, therefore, not deliver it with flippancy, not talk of solemn themes with levity, not tell out the Gospel as though we were retelling a mere tale from the Arabian Nights, a romance meant for amusement, or to beguile a passing hour. O Brethren, we who sow for God must sow solemnly and in right good earnest, because the seed is *precious* seed, more precious than we can ever estimate! Work for God, dear Brethren, as those who *know* that the Truth is a seed. Do not speak of it and forget it. Do not tell the Gospel as though it were a stone and would lie in the ground and never spring up. Tell out the Truth as it is in Jesus with the firm conviction that there is *life* in it and something will come of it.

Be on the alert to see that and you will be the man who will have results. Our estimate of the preciousness of the seed will have much to do with the *result* of the seed. If I do not esteem thoroughly and heartily the Gospel which I teach, if I do not teach it with all my heart, I cannot expect to see the sheaves. But if, valuing the Gospel, I tell it out to my fellow men as being priceless beyond all cost and tell it out, therefore, with due vivacity and with an earnestness that brings me to tears, I am the man who shall come again rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me.

I do not know whether I have brought out what I meant, but we have, I think, in our text a full description of the successful worker.

**II.** You have in the text, THE WORKER'S SUCCESS. It is said of him, "*He shall come again.*" What does that mean but that he shall come again to his God? And this the worker should do after he has labored. You sought a blessing—go and tell your God of what you have done and if you have seen a blessing come, give Him thanks. Those men always come back to God with their sheaves who went from God with their seed. Some workers can see souls converted and take the honor to themselves, but never that man who sowed in tears—he has learned his own weakness in the school of bitterness. And now, when he sees results, he comes back again. He comes back to God, for he feels that it is a great wonder that even a single soul should be convicted or converted under such poor words as his.

Oh, I know some of you have had your sheaves. Dear Brother, beyond a doubt, if you had those sheaves as the result of a holy vehemence in

prayer, you will be sure to come back with a holy ardor of thanksgiving and lay those sheaves in their honor and their praise at the foot of God who gave them to you. "He shall doubtless come again." Does not that mean in the longest and largest sense, he shall come again to Heaven? He did, as it were, go forth from Heaven. His body had not been there, but his soul had. He had communed with God. Heaven was his portion and his heritage, but it was expedient for him to tarry a little while here for the sake of others, and so, in a certain sense he leaves the Heaven of his rest to go into the field of sorrow among the sons of men. But he shall come again.

Ah, blessed be God, we are not banished by our service. We are kept outside the pearl gate for a little while—thanks be to God for the honor of being permitted thus to be absent from our joys for awhile—but we are not shut out, we are not banished, we shall doubtless come again! Here is your comfort! You go, perhaps, into the mission field. You journey to the remotest parts of the earth to serve God, but you shall come again. There is a straight road to Heaven from the most remote field of service and in this you may rejoice.

But the text adds, "He shall come again *with rejoicing*." What will he rejoice in? Take the whole text and wrap it up together and it seems to me to say that he shall come again rejoicing even in his very tears. I reckon that at the last, when Christian service shall be done and Christian reward shall be rendered, the toils endured in serving God—the disappointment and the racking of heart will all make raw material for everlasting song. Oh, how we shall bless God to think that we were counted worthy to do *anything* for Christ!

Was I enlisted in the host that stood the shock of battle? Did the Master suffer *me* to have a hand upon the standard that waved so proudly aloft amidst the smoke of the battle? Did He suffer me to leap into the ditch, or scale the rampart of the wall among the forlorn hope? Or did He even suffer me to watch by the baggage while the battle was raging afar off? Then am I thankful that He, in any way whatever, permitted me to have a share in the glory of that triumphant conflict! And then, Brethren, as old soldiers show their scars and as the warriors in many conflicts delight to tell of hair-raising escapes in "the imminent breach," and of dangers grim and ghastly, so shall we rejoice as we return to God to tell of our going forth and of our weeping when we carried the precious seed.

There is not a single drop of gall which will not turn to honey. There is not, this day, one drop of sweat upon your aching brow but shall crystallize into a pearl for your everlasting crown! Not one pang of anguish or disappointment but shall be transmuted into celestial glory to increase your joy, world without end! But the main rejoicing will be doubtless in their success. O you Sunday school teachers, if you go forth as the text has told you and as I have explained to you, you shall not be without

fruits! I have heard many discussions among my Brothers and Sisters, about whether or not every earnest laborer may expect to have fruit.

I have always inclined to the belief that such is the rule and though there may be exceptions and perhaps some men may be rather a savor of death unto death than of life unto life, yet it seems to me that if I never won souls I would sigh till I did. I would break my heart over them if I could not break their hearts! If they would not be saved and were not saved, I would almost cry with Moses, "Blot out my name out of the Book of Life." Though I can understand the possibility of an earnest sower never reaping, I cannot understand the possibility of an earnest sower being *content* not to reap! I cannot comprehend any one of you Christian people trying to win souls and not having results and being satisfied without results!

I can suppose that you may love the Lord and may have been trying your best unsuccessfully for years, but then I am sure you feel unhappy about it. I can not only suppose that to be the case, but I am thankful that you are unhappy! I hope the unhappiness will increase with you till at last, in the anguish of your spirit, you shall cry, like Rachel, "Give me children or I die! Give me fruits or I cannot live!" Then you will be the very person described in the text—you go forth weeping, bearing *seed* that is precious to you—and you must have results, you must come again rejoicing, bringing your *sheaves* with you!

The last point is coming back rejoicing *with sheaves*. I do not suppose the text means that the reaper is to bring home all his sheaves on his own back, but, as an old expositor says, he comes with the wagons behind him, with the wagons at his heels, bringing his sheaves with him. Yes, they are *his* sheaves. "How so? All saved souls belong to Christ. They are God's." Yes, but for all that they belong to the worker. There is a kind of sacred property which exists and which God acknowledges in the case of men and women who bring souls to Christ. I am persuaded there is no love in this world more pure and crystal, more celestial and enduring, than the love of a convert to the person through whose agency he or she may have been brought to Christ.

All earthly love has a tinge of the flesh about it, but this is *spiritual*—this is worthy of immortal spirits—this will therefore endure. While the converts that are brought to Christ are all the Lord's own, yet they belong, also, to those who brought them in—so God puts it, "bringing his sheaves with him." And, ah, I like to think of that! If God shall privilege me to bring souls to Him, I shall count them all and say, "Here am I and the children which You have given me." Oh, it is blessed to give all the glory to Christ! It is a great honor to give all the honor to Him! But you must have the glory first, or you cannot give it to Him! The sheaves must be yours, or evidently you cannot carry them honestly and offer them to Him.

Souls are saved through God's Word, yes, but Christ prays for those who shall believe, "through *their* word," that is, through the preachers' word. The Apostle gives much honor to workers, for in one place he speaks of himself as though he were the mother of souls, "Little children for whom I have travailed in birth." In another place he speaks of himself as though he were a father of souls, as though both relations were centered in the true laborer. Thus does God put high honor upon Christian workers by making the souls, as it were, completely theirs—the sheaves their sheaves. They threw themselves into the work. They made the work their very life. They wept. They cried and pleaded as they sowed.

And now God does not come in to take away all property in the sheaves, but as they come back, the workers have an interest and a share in all the results of the blessed Gospel and God makes those sheaves *their* sheaves! He gives them honor in the sight of men and angels through Jesus Christ His Son!

**III.** And now I have not time, as I ought to have, for the conclusion, which is upon THE GOLDEN LINK OF "DOUBTLESS," therefore I must just launch rapidly these concise hints. The true worker will be a reaper. I am afraid I have put this in the shape as though I were speaking to ministers, but I am not. I am trying to talk to *every* Christian here. If you are a true worker, you doubtless will be a reaper. Why? First, because the promise of God says so. "My Word shall not return to Me void: it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it."

Secondly, God's honor in the Gospel requires it. If there is a failure and you have preached the true Gospel rightly, it will be the Gospel that will fail. But God's attributes are all wrapped up in the Gospel—it is His wisdom and His power. And shall God's wisdom be nonplussed and God's power be put back? Again, you must reap because the analogy of Nature assures you of it. The poor peasant whose little stock of corn is all but spent, takes a little wheat, which is very precious to him, and with many tears he drops it into the soil in the wintry months. And God gives him a harvest. In due time, in the mellow autumn days, he gathers in the sheaves, which reward him for his self-denial.

It shall be so with you. God mocks not the farmer. He appoints the seedtime and He brings round the harvest. As He does not change the ordinances of Nature, so will He not change the ordinances of Divine Grace. Be satisfied with this. Moreover, Christ, the model of the Christian life, assures you of this. He went forth weeping, sowing drops of bloody sweat, sowing with pierced hands and feet that dropped with blood. He went forth sowing living seeds of love and they are springing up today already in the Glory and in the multitudes that are gathered into it. And soon, in the coming and the superior splendor that shall envelop it, the Christ who sowed in tears will reap in joy!

Even thus it must be with you. And if this is not enough to comfort you, remember those who have gone before you in this service who have proved this fact. Think of those you have known who have not been unsuccessful—when, with hearts broken and bruised, they have spent their life-power in their Lord's work. Remember Judson and the thousands of Karens that this day sing of the Savior whom he first taught to them. Think of Moffat, in his old age still in the kraals of the Bechuanas, not without glorious seals to his ministry!

Think of our own missions in Jamaica, of the wonders and trophies of Grace in the South Sea Islands, the multitudes that were turned to Christ during revival seasons in our own land and in the United States, and you have proof that those that know how to weep and sow and who go forth from God to the sowing, shall, beyond a doubt, come again rejoicing with their sheaves! Up, you laborers, sow in hope! Sow broadcast and enlarge your spheres! Up, you desponding ones who are wrapping your cloaks about you and seeking consolation in indolence because you think your toil too desperate! Up, I beseech you, for the harvest comes!

O miss not your share in the shouting and the rejoicing—but you will so miss it if you miss your part in the weeping and in the sorrowing! Would God I could put zeal into your hearts, but that I cannot. May the *Holy Spirit* do it and as a band of Christian men, may we be resolved that henceforth, while we live, and until we die, we will with passionate longing—with all the forces of our manhood worked up and strained to the utmost pitch—seek to tell the good news of Jesus Crucified to the sons of men, knowing that our work of faith cannot be in vain in the Lord!

O you who are not saved at all, I ask you not to work! I ask you not to sow! But come to Christ Jesus! Look to His Cross! One look at Christ will save you! Trust in Him and you shall live. The Lord bless these words for His name's sake. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms 126, 127, 129.***

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

# CO-WORKERS WITH GOD

## NO. 2559

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 6, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, 1883.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,  
to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His Beloved sleep.”  
Psalm 127:1, 2.*

Did you notice, when we were reading this Psalm, that it is entitled, “A Song of Degrees for Solomon”? The title may be either, “*for* Solomon,” or, “*by* Solomon.” If it is *by* Solomon, I can only say that it is worthy to be placed side by side with the Book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. It is a Psalm which is very brief and which has the soul of wisdom in it. It is, in fact, a Solomonic Psalm—it is quite after his style of writing. The whole of it might be made into a Proverb and its separate sentences might be cut up into proverbial expressions. It was inspired by the Spirit of God and He may have used for the writing of it no less accomplished an individual than King Solomon, whose wisdom was greater than that of the men of his age. If it is a Psalm, “*for* Solomon”—which it strikes me it is, then it is none the less admirable in our esteem, for, if Solomon needed to be taught it, certainly we do. If, when David knew that Solomon was to build the house of the Lord, he thought it necessary, before he began the Temple, to remind him that “unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it,” we may depend upon it that as we are less wise than Solomon, we need to have just such a lesson taught us! Let us accept it as from David and let each one of us hear the words of the dying king as he speaks to us as well as to his son and successor.

I intend, as God shall help me, to fetch out three or four lessons from our text which it may be well for us to learn.

**I.** The first is WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT, namely, that God will build the house without our laboring, that God will guard the city without the watchman's staying awake, or that He will give us bread without our toiling for it. This principle may be applied to a great many matters.

And, first, to *what we call our ordinary life*, though I never like to draw any distinction between one portion of our life and another. It is a part of the Christian religion to sanctify *everything* so that we worship God in the shop as well as in the meeting house—and we are as reverent about our domestic affairs as about our devotional concerns. But, still, as it is our habit to speak of the ordinary affairs of life, it is necessary to say that

in all things to which we put our hand, we are expected to use all available means. We are not allowed to be idle, to sit still and do nothing because we say that we are trusting in Providence. One of the things which Christianity cannot bear is laziness! The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, was inspired to pass a very sharp sentence upon them—"This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"—a sentence which would exterminate a great number of persons who at the present time seem to flourish! If in business I am not diligent, I cannot expect to prosper. If I wish to be a man of learning, I cannot get it simply by praying for it—I must study, even to the weariness of the flesh. If a man is sick, he may trust in God as much as he wills—that should be his first thing—but let him also use such remedies as God has given if he can discover them, or learn of them from others.

My grandfather said to me, many years ago, concerning the preparation of a sermon, and I have always remembered his words, "I study my sermon as much as if the work of preaching depended entirely upon myself. And I go into the pulpit relying upon the Spirit of God, knowing that it does not depend upon myself, but upon Him." For us to do all that we can do is the appointed way in which the blessing comes. We would all think it ridiculous if men left off sowing because they had so much faith in God that they were sure He would not suffer men to starve and would be certain to send a harvest. Suppose the farmer said, "Plowing is for ordinary people. I live by faith, I never plow. Harrowing, fertilizing, sowing—these are all the pitiful shifts of unbelief. I shall do nothing with the land, I shall just wait. I cannot doubt that God can make wheat to grow quite as well as weeds and, if He pleases, He can give me a harvest without my using any of these ordinary means which are only a coverlet for unbelief."

Within a year, he would be convinced of his folly! I wish it were as easy to convince all Christians of their folly in thinking that faith means that they are to work no more. "Faith without works is dead." "Faith works by love." There is no stronger and more forceful principle for fetching out the energy of a man than his conviction that God is with him. If God works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, then the natural result is that I must work *out* what He has worked *in*. Where God has united means and ends, I would say of them, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." To trust in the means without God is presumption—but to profess to trust in God without the means is only another form of presumption—it will come to the same thing in the end. I am to believe in God and in God, alone, but if I perceive that He works in a certain way, I am to drop into God's way and to believe that He will work while I am pleading with Him to do so, and seeking to carry out His plan of doing it!

So, in the ordinary affairs of life, my dear Brothers and Sisters, do not go and put your feet on the fender and sit still, and say, "The Lord will provide," because if you act so foolishly, very likely He will provide you with a place in the workhouse! If you go up and down the town with no profession, with your hands in your empty pockets and say that you are

trusting in God, God will give you the wages that you earn, namely poverty! He will clothe you with rags if you clothe yourself with idleness. If you will not serve Him, you shall find the reward that comes to the man who wastes his Master's talents by wrapping them in a napkin!

The same thing is true in *the great matter of our salvation*. Dear Friends, it is quite true that God saves His people. "Salvation is of the Lord" from first to last, but no man is saved apart from his own believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is God's gift, but it is man's *act*. The Holy Spirit does not believe for us—what would He believe? No man is saved apart from repentance—and repentance is a work of the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God does not repent—what has He to repent of? It is the man, himself, who must repent and believe. "If you believe not, you shall die in your sins." "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Do not, therefore, any of you, sit still and dream about the Predestination of God! Divine Predestination is most blessedly true—it is the joy of my spirit—but do not turn it into a pillow for your idle head and fancy that blessings will come to you when you are not looking for them. "Faith comes by hearing." Therefore hear most attentively and reverently the Word of God—and drink it in. And "salvation comes by faith." Therefore, what you hear of God's Word, believe and accept simply and with a child-like faith—and so you shall be saved. Do not, I pray you—any of you—fall into the idea that it matters not where you are, or what you do, or how inattentive you are, or how careless you are about the things of God. It does matter! All these things are *sins*—sins for which you shall be called to account!

Oh, that the Spirit of God may lead you to adopt quite another line of conduct! Search the Scriptures, says our Lord, "for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." May you often be found upon your knees, for the Lord hears them that cry unto Him! May you be found confessing your sins, for, "whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy"! May you be found believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no soul lost that casts itself at the foot of Christ's Cross! Do not, then, misread the text as though, either in common things or in the loftiest matter, we were to do nothing and leave everything to God.

This also is true, dear Friends, as to the matter of *our spiritual growth*. We are not to assume that because we are Christians, we shall go on growing in Grace if we use no sort of means whatever. I know persons who stint themselves in their meals—and they are often faint—do you wonder? What shall I say of persons who, on the Sabbath, practice once-a-day Christianity and who never go out to a week-night service? They have not time, they say, yet I hear of their being at various secular entertainments. They stint themselves in their spiritual food and then they say—

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

That is a point I long to know, too, for the case is very doubtful! If a man will not feed himself upon the Bread of Heaven, can he expect that he shall grow strong? We see some who neglect private prayer—of course not giving it up altogether—but they have little of it and they are seldom found where the assemblies of God’s people are gathered for prayer. And they say they do not know how it is that they do not enjoy religion! I should think not, dear Friend—you do not have enough of it, for it is with religion as the poem says it is concerning learning—

**“A little learning is a dangerous thing.**

**Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”**

It is often so with religion—a man gets just enough of it to make him miserable! He can no longer be satisfied with the world and he is not satisfied with God—so he is miserable all round. Oh, that you had not only religion enough to make you a miserable sinner, but enough to make you a rejoicing saint! But if we neglect to search the Word and neglect private prayer, and neglect the assemblies of God’s House. If we restrain communion with the Most High, can we wonder if we do not grow? God will undoubtedly build our spiritual house, but we, also, must labor in it—there must be an earnestness, a prayerfulness, a watchfulness, an intensity of desire, a using of all appointed means by which we may be built up in our most holy faith.

I am certain that this is also true in a fourth matter, namely, *in our Christian work*, in our trying to bring souls to Christ. We cannot expect to see men converted if we are not earnest in telling them that Truth of God which will save the soul. It is the work of the Spirit to convert sinners—to regenerate must always be the sole work of God—yet the Lord uses us as His instruments. The great honor that God often puts upon instrumentality is very wonderful. Paul speaks of himself as the very mother of those to whom he was the means of conversion—“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Then, in writing to Philemon, he says, of Onesimus, “whom I have begotten in my bonds”—making himself to be, as it were, both father and mother—strong expressions and yet they are warranted, otherwise Paul would not have used them. God uses those who seek to win souls so that, as it were, He puts the very paternity of those souls upon them! It is great condescension that He should do so, but let it teach us this lesson that if God works by means, as He does, He will not have us neglect those means, or we will be found unfit for the Master’s use!

A Brother complains that there are no conversions under his ministry. Will he ask himself whether he has aimed at conversion? A Sunday school teacher says that she has seen no girls in her class brought to Christ. Has her teaching been such as to tend that way? Has Christ been set forth in His sweet attraction? Has prayer been offered that the girls might come to Christ? Have they been pleaded with? Have they been taught their lost condition? Have they been shown the excellence of Christ as a Savior? You see, if we live in a region of means suited to ends, it is the path of wisdom to find out the means best suited to the desired end—and to use it in dependence upon God! Our text tells us

that without God our labor will be in vain. But it does not tell us that we may expect to have our desire in our spiritual service unless we, ourselves, work for the Lord. I believe, my Brothers, that if we preach Christ Crucified with crucified hearts—if we set forth Christ with earnest longing that men may see Him, they will see Him. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

I believe, teachers in the Sunday school, that if Christ is taught in the classes earnestly and prayerfully, the children will receive Him. Ask those who have tried it—there are many such here—and I am sure that if I were to appeal to their experience, they would tell you that though they may have been, at times, slack in their service, God has never been slack concerning His promise! His Word has not returned unto Him void—it has accomplished what He pleased and prospered in the thing where He sent it. Let there be no listless indifference, no falling back upon the Sovereignty of God as an excuse for half-heartedness! Solomon was too wise a man to write a Psalm that would be meant to encourage idleness! The Holy Spirit would never have led him to write sentences that would bring us into such a state of heart as that.

**II.** But now, secondly, our text suggests to us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT. That is, we may expect failure if we attempt the work without God.

We may expect it and we shall not be disappointed. Going back, again, to *our ordinary life*, note what the Psalmist says. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows.” The pivotal word in the text is the word, “vain.” Three times it rings out as a death-knell to the hope of every man who tries to do without God! Vain is your building a house; vain is your watching a city; vain is your rising up early and sitting up late. “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher. All is vanity—utter vanity without God! Success in life, without God, is always vain! A man may be a millionaire without God, but what is that? He may be reported in the newspapers to have died worth a million, when, in fact, he was not worth a brass button! He was put into a coffin, lowered into the grave, but he was worth nothing at all. He could take nothing with him. Even the silver plate on the coffin did not belong to him. If anyone had dug open the grave and taken the plate away, he could not have said, “Leave that alone, it is mine!” “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.” So life is a failure if it is only used in amassing gold.

“Oh,” says one, “but a man may be famous without God.” Yes, in a sense, he may. But have you ever analyzed fame? Of what good is it to a dead man? Of what good is it to a *damned* man? A man in Hell and his name in every newspaper! A man in the bottomless Pit and they say that he is one of the great men of the age who has left his mark upon the world! But if it is a mark without God, what kind of mark is it? A mark that had better be obliterated as soon as possible! No creature can be a success unless it pleases its Creator. No man can be a success unless he has treasure laid up for immortality, a mansion in Heaven, a place to

abide in the islands of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. Without God, he is a complete failure in life.

It may be that some of you are trying to attain success without God, but you will not succeed and, in the process, you will fritter away your life. What would you think of a man who cut himself up into strips with which to make himself a coat? "That would be a most absurd thing," you say. Well, but what think you of a man who destroys himself that he may get himself bread, or that he may find a house and clothes for himself? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" That is, supposing he could gain the whole world by bartering his soul for it, what profit would he make? But men do not gain the world by losing their soul—they lose both this world and the next, too! And for what do they lose all this? Why, they "rise up early." Oh, what would they not give for another half-hour in the morning? They rise up early and they "sit up late," till they fall asleep at their work. Oh, dear! What mill horses! What worse than slaves! And they, "eat the bread of sorrows." There is very little bread and, instead of being buttered, it seems to be smeared over with gall. There are some that I know who would not eat bread if they could help it—they grudge the money that it costs to keep body and soul together. And so they are losing this life and they are not getting anything for the life to come. They are throwing all away for some vain hope of becoming rich, that they may be talked of among men! Oh, happy and blessed is the man who has risen above that groveling and who knows that without his God he cannot prosper! He first of all goes to Him to learn what true prosperity is—and then looks to Him to bestow it.

Now, dear Friends, here is a very important and blessed Truth of God which concerns *our salvation*. What we may expect regarding our salvation is this—if we attempt to obtain salvation apart from God, it will be a failure. Oh, how many there are who are seeking salvation through the works of the Law! They build and they watch. And they rise up early and they sit up late. And they eat the bread of sorrows and, let me tell you, if you are trying to be saved by your good works, you have need to get up early, sit up late, work your fingers to the bone, worry yourselves into your graves and then it will still be all in vain! Let me read to you, again, the beginning of that 126<sup>th</sup> Psalm, though we had it just now. The man of works rises up early, sits up late and eats the bread of sorrows all in vain.

But this is what Faith says—"When the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them." You are trying to see what you can do. But we have found out what the Lord can do! You are fretting and fuming because of what you cannot do. But we are laughing and singing because of what the Lord has done by the redemption accomplished on the Cross of Calvary! I wish you would flee from Moses and get away to Christ and begin to trust and rejoice in Him, for, if you do not, this is what you may expect—if you spend the next half-century in

tears and mortification of the body, if you deny yourself and give all your goods to feed the poor, and even give your body to be burned, yet vanity of vanities shall it all be! Without God, all that you can do in the matter of your salvation shall be vain!

It is just the same with regard to the Christian's *growth in Divine Grace*. The Believer must never think that he will naturally and necessarily grow in Grace because he uses the means of Grace. I just now insisted upon the reading of the Scriptures, but that may be a very dry formality unless we look to God to bless it to us. I spoke of gathering to hear the Word, but that will be a very unprofitable piece of ceremonialism unless our eyes are toward the Lord rather than toward the preacher. I spoke of private prayer, but that may degenerate into a mere form unless we have communion with God in it. Indeed, it is *nothing* unless God is there! You cannot go an inch in the pilgrimage to Heaven without God! It is not possible for you to overcome a solitary sin, or to produce a single virtue apart from the Holy Spirit. "They labor in vain who build" without God. You may rise up early and sit up late—and be one of the most outspoken professors of religion—but nothing will come of it unless God is in it all.

And so is it with regard to *the work and service of God*. O Brothers and Sisters, we may preach, but none of our preaching will raise the spiritually dead unless the Lord is there! We may adopt every kind of expedient and go what length we like in seeking a revival, but it will be a farce and a nullity unless our dependence is upon the Lord alone. Give us a working Church, but let it first be a trusting Church! Let the man be earnest, but first let him be humble. Let him believe in the Gospel being blessed, but let him first believe that it is God, alone, who can bless the Gospel. If not, we shall certainly meet with failure. If we dream for a moment that we can change a heart of stone into flesh, that stony heart will, by its obduracy, teach us a severe lesson! If we even think that one little child can be converted by our tears and prayers, apart from God, we shall be utterly disappointed. Without God, we are nothing!

**III.** Now, thirdly, and briefly, let us notice, from the text, WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO.

And the first point is that *in our ordinary affairs we should not fret, or worry, or grieve*. You know how some people act—they forget that God rules all things and that they are taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." So they are all in a fume, up in the morning far too early, waking everybody up who needed a little extra rest, then toiling hard all day, not really doing much, but fussing over it all, rather than really accomplishing anything. They seem as if they cannot go to bed at night—there is always something more to be done. There is another drawer that needs putting to rights, or something else that must be attended to even at midnight! Then look at the man in business—he does not do half as much as the quiet man who goes calmly about his work. But you would think, from the fuss he makes, that he is going to compete with all the traders in London and that his shop, if he is to live by it, must cut out all the shops that ever existed! If there is a bad debt, oh, he will be ruined!

I know of some people who seem to make all the affairs of life into a kind of slavery by the way in which they are agitated about them. It is sad to see an immortal soul worrying itself thus about the things of time. Well did the poet say that it resembled—

**“Ocean into tempest tossed  
To waft a feather or to drown a fly.”**

Yet this is the way with very many—they forget that God “gives His beloved sleep.” They would be far better in bed, sometimes, when they are sitting up and worrying. If they could just sleep on it and leave the matter with God, it would go on a deal better without them than it does with them. Yet they fancy that if they are not there to hack, drive and scold from morning to night, everything would go amiss. My dear worrying man or woman, pray the Lord to give you a little patience and a great deal of faith—and the Grace to be quiet and leave all in His hands.

In the matter of *the soul’s salvation*, a man should be anxious, yet his salvation will never come by his working and running from this one to that and the other. I have known men who have desired to be saved and who have not been satisfied with the preacher they have been accustomed to hear—so they have gone to another. They have not been satisfied with him—so they have gone to still another! They have not been content, perhaps, in one denomination, so they have drifted off to another and, at last, it is highly probable that they have cast anchor with the worst lot of all. Perhaps they have got as far as the Papacy and they think now they have something real—here is an historic church—they can cast anchor there. Yet very soon they are off somewhere else. Possibly they go to the Plymouth Brethren, or to the Irvingites—nobody knows where they may go, but they keep flying about here and there. This is not the way that salvation comes! I can stop just where I am and find that by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am saved. “Lord Jesus, I believe. I trust You and I am saved.” That is the way salvation comes—not by all that running about and gadding to and fro! This is our Lord’s declaration—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” That is how, in the Great Commission, He bade us put it and I shall not put it otherwise than He commanded us. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But instead of doing that, some must be here and there, and everywhere. Oh, that they would listen to the text! “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows,” for to those who are in Christ, to those who simply believe on Him, “He gives His beloved sleep.”

Now, with regard to *growing in Divine Grace*, I believe that it is much the same. I do not know that I ever looked down my own throat, but there are some Christians who seem to live that way—they will not believe that they are spiritually breathing unless they can see down their own throats! They do not believe that their heart is beating unless they can hear it palpitating. I mean this! There is often such an amount of introspection about Christians that they miss the very essence of true Christian life. They look into *themselves* instead of looking to *Christ alone*. You remember that when the face of Moses shone because he had

looked at God, we read that, “Moses wished that the skin of his face had not shone.” You go and look in the mirror and you are in hopes that you will see your face shine that way, but it will not. You say, “Would you not have a man look in the mirror?” Of course I would, that he may see the spots on his face. But he cannot remove them by his looking—he must go to the water to wash the spots away. The way to become like Christ is to think about Christ. Some people think so much about their own sanctification that they miss sanctification altogether. They are looking at their own image and admiring it until they are gradually being more and more conformed to their own image! But he who looks away from himself, entirely to Christ, shall go from glory to glory and be transformed into the image of his Master. It is foolish to be always fretting and worrying, and saying, “I am not humble enough, I am not believing enough, I am not this or that.” Go to Christ and rest yourself on Him—and believe that what He has begun to do for you and in you, He will certainly perform and perfect!

Here comes in, again, *our working for the Lord*. Beloved Friends, let us work for the Lord without being “cumbered” with much service as Martha was. The Lord Jesus Christ is admirable in His life for the quiet way in which He does everything. He always seems ready. Whatever the occasion is, He is never put about or flurried. He works all day long and He gets weary, but He says nothing about it. It is a sweet way of working for Christ—“to do the next thing,” the next that needs to be done today—not always forecasting all that we are going to do tomorrow and the next day, but calmly and quietly believing that there are so many days in which a man shall be able to walk and to work, and while we have them we will both walk and work in the strength of God! It is a very sweet thing when a man is brought into such a condition that he can work for Christ in Christ’s own quiet way, calmly leaving all his cares at his Savior’s feet.

**IV.** I will finish up with the description of SOMETHING WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO SEE. When Solomon was building the Temple for the Lord, it was done very quietly. The men had the plan—not one of them had to consider about it—the plan was all before them and when the stones came from the quarries, they did not need any hammering or any altering. They only needed quietly fixing, each stone into the place that was prepared for it. Those who went to work for Solomon on the mountains had one month in Lebanon, and then they had two months at home, so that they were not killed by overwork. I can well believe that while the Temple was building, it was about the noblest form of human labor that ever fell to men’s lot. I should think they began the morning with Psalms—not too early, before the sun was up—but just when they could begin it properly. And they worked well on till evening—not too late, for this was work for God, and God is no tyrant—He does not want His servants to be slaves—and before the sun went down there was an evening hymn and they said, when they went home, “Oh, we have had another blessed day’s work! It has been so pleasant! Another big stone has been hoisted up—we could not have believed that it would move, but we got it into its place all right. We had not to hammer it, or even to tap

it with a mallet—it just fitted precisely and we felt so glad, for it is the Lord’s House that is being built. We kept singing all day. All the time the great cranes were lifting the big statues, we kept praising and blessing the Lord as we saw the Temple being built. We never had such work, before, and never enjoyed work like it—it seems like one long blessed holiday.”

Those who were privileged to work from day to day with all their might yet found every day to be like a Sabbath, for now their ordinary work was work for God. They were not like common workmen who were toiling for the world! Even that by which they earned their daily bread was all for the Lord. So every day went merrily on till they came to the very last day and they saw the top stone raised. And then they looked with the utmost delight upon it and they were the most glad of all the company! When Solomon prayed that wonderful prayer to the great Lord of the House, they felt that they had not labored in vain, for God had blessed them and now He had filled the House with His Presence so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the brightness of the Glory!

Now, I want all of us to feel that as workers for God—pastor and people, Sunday school teachers and you who teach the Bible classes, you who distribute tracts, you who preach at the street corners, all of you, my beloved fellow helpers—we are doing grand work! You know that it is God’s House that we are building. Under God and with His help, we are building up His Church with stones that He points out to us, helps us to quarry and enables us to bring into their places. And the work goes on so easily, too, if we will but do it according to the Great Architect’s plan. And if we do not get too fussy and busy, and if we do not think that we should knock a corner off here, and alter the shape of a stone there, but will just do it as God would have it done, in His fear, in simple dependence upon Him, confident that it is all right—the great Master-Builder will complete His work! I think that we ought to be the happiest workers who ever lived! It should be a joy to us to do *anything* for the Lord Jesus. And, oh, when it gets finished, and the top stone is laid, and the Lord descends and fills the House and none of us will be any longer needed, for the priests will not be able to stand and minister by reason of the Glory of the Christ who has filled His Church—oh, then what joy we shall have that ever we were engaged in the work!

I mean that for you, my dear Sister—do not go on fretting and saying, “I shall have to give up my class. Things do not seem to go well.” I know how you talk—do not speak like that any longer! And you, dear Brother, must not go home to your church in the country and say, “I cannot stir the people. The work does not flourish as I wish it would.” Of course it does not! My work does not prosper as I wish it might. You and I can never go at the pace we would like to go, but can we not be willing to be driven by our Lord and to go at HIS pace? It is quite right to work as if the salvation of all the souls in the world depended upon you, yet, as it does not, you had better throw that burden back upon your Lord and Master! Feel the weight of men’s souls till it crushes you down to Christ’s feet, but do not let it crush you any lower than that—you are not the

Savior, you are not to have the Glory of their salvation. Neither, if you have served your Lord faithfully, shall you have the shame of their ruin if they are lost! Rise not up early and sit not up late. I mean, so as to work yourself away—but give yourself up by faith to do all you can do, all that God shall help you to do—and then trust in Him to bless you and He will bless you. God make this discourse a word of comfort to His own people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALMS 126. AND 127.**

**Psalm 126:1.** *When the LORD turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* We could hardly believe it! We began to talk incoherently, as men do in their sleep. We were so carried away with joyful rapture that we did not know where we were—"we were like them that dream."

**2.** *Then was our mouth filled with laughter.* We became Issacs, for he was the child of laughter. We laughed as Abraham did, for very joy of faith! Sometimes laughter may become the holiest possible expression. It may be one of the meanest utterances of our nature, but it may also be one of the loftiest. These people not only laughed, but their mouth was filled with laughter! They could not laugh loudly enough. There was no expression of articulate speech that sufficed them at all—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter."

**2.** *And our tongue with singing.* When they did find their tongue, they could not speak, they must sing! They could not have anything so slow as a mere declaration, they must have a Psalm—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

**2.** *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD has done great things for them.* The heathen could not help seeing that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel. No other people except the Jews ever came back from captivity. The Babylonian tyrant never restored any others to their land, but he did restore these people. And the very heathen said, "It is their God, Jehovah, that has done it." And what did God's own people say?

**3.** *The LORD has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.* See the difference between the outsider and the insider. The outsider says, "The Lord has done great things for *them*." Ah, but they who belong to God say, "The Lord has done great things for *us*." Oh, the privilege of being able to say, "*for us*"! Dear Hearers, can you join with all the saints and say, "The Lord has done great things *for us*"? This is what happened to God's people, before, but now they have fallen into another trouble, so hear how they pray.

**4.** *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.* "You did it once. Do it again. You made us to live. Make us to live again. We sang, then, O Lord—enable us to sing again, 'Turn again our captivity.' As the dry river-beds are suddenly made to be filled with water at the melting of the snow, so come, and fill our hearts, 'as the streams in the south.'"

**5.** *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Take that for certain! Lay it down as a Scripture Proverb. When God sends us a wet time, and we have to sow in the moist, foggy atmosphere—never mind—there are brighter days yet to come. We shall reap amid the sunbeams and carry home our sheaves with joy!

**6.** *He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* “He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” Now, you disconsolate workers, you who have only a handful of seed, you shall come back with an armful of sheaves! You shall come back rejoicing though you now go forth sorrowing, for the Lord has said it! Therefore be of good courage.

**Psalm 127:1-3.** *Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows for so He gives His beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD and the fruit of the womb is a reward.* The Psalmist had been speaking about house building and there is the building up of the house in the sense of a family being built up by children. Some people think children an encumbrance, but they are, “a heritage of the Lord,” and they are to be looked upon with gladness. One said, “I have 12 sons,” and his friend answered, “That is exactly Jacob’s number.” “Yes,” said the first speaker, “and I have Jacob’s God to enable me to sustain them.” There is a comfort in that thought—may God grant that none may be troubled by those whom God sends to us for a heritage!

**4.** *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.* In the case of an arrow, you know it all depends which way you shoot it. Mind, therefore, that you direct your children aright. Give them a good start, a true aim from the very first, God helping you, and then they shall fly from you like the arrows of a mighty archer!

**5.** *Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.* That is, when they are like arrows—not when they are gnarled and knotty, like crooked sticks! When they are unwilling to be tutored and trained, then they become a trial and a trouble. But happy is the man who has a quiver full of arrows—the more the merrier of such children as the Psalmist here speaks of.

**5.** *They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.* When there was any suit at law, these sons of his would be there to plead for him. If there was any fighting to be done, they also would be to the front. It was a dangerous thing to attack a man who had a house full of strong, loyal, loving sons! They would be his defense—they would speak—and speak with very considerable emphasis, too, with his enemies in the gate.

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

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

# THE PECULIAR SLEEP OF THE BELOVED

## NO. 12

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 4, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“For so He gives His beloved sleep.”  
Psalm 127:2.*

THE sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture and that, therefore, we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God and not a man would close his eyes did not God put His fingers on his eyelids—did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there are some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well near to death and then call it sleep. But the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it, He rocks the cradle for us every night. He draws the curtain of darkness. He bids the sun shut up his burning eyes and then He comes and says, “Sleep, sleep My child. I give you sleep.” Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive to slumber? And as it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you—“The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him.” You have attempted it, but you could not do it. It is beyond your power to procure a healthy repose. You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention you will then sleep. But you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole earth were agitated before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild phantasmagoria before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see. And there are things in your ears and head and brain which will not let you sleep. It is God, alone, who alike seals up the sea boy’s eyes upon the giddy mast and gives the monarch rest—for with all appliances and means to boot—he could not rest without the aid of God. It is God who steeps the mind in oblivion and bids us slumber, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for tomorrow’s toil we may rise recruited and strengthened.

O my Friends, how thankful should we be for sleep! Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep has healed more pains of wearied bones

than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine—the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. There is nothing like sleep! What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all! God does not make sleep the gift of the rich man. He does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can keep it as a peculiar luxury for themselves. He bestows it upon all. Yes, if there is a difference, the sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much. He who toils, sleeps all the sounder for his toil. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of soft down, the hard-working laborer, with his strong and powerful limbs worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps—and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed! You know not, my Friends, how much you owe to God, that He gives you rest at night. If you had sleepless nights, you would then value the blessing. If for weeks you lay tossing on your weary bed, you then would thank God for your favor. And as it is the gift of God, it is a gift most precious—one that cannot be valued until it is taken away. Yes, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought!

The Psalmist says there are some men who deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. Some of us who are here present may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge. We have sat at night until our burned-out lamp has chided us and told us that the sun was rising—while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbled, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out. We have risen up early and sat up late and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow. Many of you business men are toiling in that style. We do not condemn you for it. We do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late. But we remind you of this text—“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—for so He gives His beloved sleep.” And it is of this sleep—that God gives to His beloved—that we mean to speak this morning, as God shall help us—a sleep peculiar to the children of God—a sleep which He gives to “His beloved.” Sleep is sometimes used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth—of whom Solomon tells us they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame, so that when the harvest is spent and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state of sloth, of deadness, of indifference in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, “It is time for us to awake out of sleep.” “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober.” There are many who are sleeping the sluggard’s sleep, who are resting upon the bed of sloth. But an awful

waking shall it be to them when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted. That the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hourglass. And that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation! In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security—not like David, when he said, “I will lay me down and sleep, for You, Lord, make me to dwell in safety.” Abner lay there and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul, sleep on! But there is an Abishai standing at your pillow and with a spear in his hand he says, “Let me smite him even to the earth at once.” Still he sleeps. He knows it not. Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your soul. Satan is standing, the Law is ready, vengeance is eager and all are saying, “Shall I smite him? I will smite him this once and he shall never wake again.” Christ says, “Stay, Vengeance, stay.” Lo, the spear is even now quivering—“Stay, spare him yet another year in the hope that he may yet wake from the long sleep of his sin.” Like Sisera, I tell you, Sinner, you are sleeping in the tent of the Destroyer! You may have eaten butter and honey out of a lordly dish, but you are sleeping on the doorstep of Hell! Even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and the nail to smite you through your temples and fasten you to the earth, that there you may lie forever in the death of everlasting torment—if it may be called a death.

Then there is also mentioned in Scripture a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks and such sleep as many have when they indulge in sin and wake to find themselves stripped, lost and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence such as the virgins had, when it is said, “they all slumbered and slept.” And the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James and John. But none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature. They come upon us because we are fallen men. They creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God. Nor does He bestow them on His beloved.

We now come to tell you what those sleeps are, which He does bestow.

**I.** First, there is a *miraculous sleep* which God has sometimes given to His beloved—which He does not NOW grant. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam when he slept sorrowfully and alone. But when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which He had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had when it is said that a deep sleep came on him. He laid down and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, “Fear not, Abram. I am your Shield and your exceeding great Reward.” Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob, when, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the winds for his

music and the beasts for his servants, he laid down and slumbered. Dreaming, he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to Heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. Such a sleep had Joseph when he dreamed that the other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and that the sun, moon and seven stars were subject unto him.

So oftentimes did David rest, when his sleep was sweet unto him, as we have just read. And such a sleep was that of Daniel when he said, "I was asleep upon my face and behold the Lord said unto me, Arise and stand upon your feet." And such, moreover, was the sleep of the reputed father of our blessed Lord, when in a vision of the night an angel said unto him, "Arise, Joseph, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." These are miraculous slumbers. God's angel has touched His servants with the magic wand of sleep and they have slept, not simply as we do, but slept a wondrous sleep! They have dived into the tenfold depths of slumber, they have plunged into a sea of sleep where they have seen the invisible, talked with the unknown and heard mystic and wondrous sounds—and when they have awakened, they have said, "What a sleep! Surely, my sleep was sweet unto me." "So He gives His beloved sleep."

But, nowadays, we do not have such sleeps as these. Many persons dream very wonderful things but most people dream nonsense. Some persons put faith in dreams—and, certainly God does warn us in dreams and visions even now. I am sure He does. There is not a man but can mention one or more instances of a warning, or a benefit, he has received in a dream. But we never trust dreams. We remember what Rowland Hill said to a lady, who knew she was a child of God because she dreamed such-and-such a thing—"Never mind, Ma'am, what you did when you were asleep. Let us see what you will do when you are awake!" That is my opinion of dreams. I never will believe a man to be a Christian merely because he has dreamed himself one. For a dreamy religion will make a man a dreamer all his life—and such dreamers will have an awful waking at last, if that is all they have to trust to!

**II.** He gives His beloved, in the second place, the sleep of a quiet conscience. I think most of you saw that splendid picture in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy—the Sleep of Argyle—where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him, almost with compunction. The jailer is there, with his keys rattling—but positively the man sleeps, though tomorrow morning his head shall be severed from his body and a man shall hold it up and say, "This was the head of a traitor." He slept because he had a quiet conscience—for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage where it is said that Herod intended to

bring out Peter on the morrow, but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? *Sleeping between two guards*, when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear. He had committed no evil. He could say, "If it is right to serve God or man, judge you." And, therefore, he laid down and slept. O Sirs! Do you know what the sleep of a quiet conscience is? Have you ever stood out and been the butt of calumny—pelted by all men? The object of scorn—the laugh, the song of the drunkard? And have you known what it is, after all, to sleep, as if you cared for nothing because your heart was pure? Ah, you who are in debt! You who are dishonest—you who love not God and love not Christ—I wonder you can sleep, for sin does put pricking thorns in the pillow. Sin puts a dagger in a man's bed so that whichever way he turns it pricks him! But a quiet conscience is the sweetest music that can fill the soul to sleep. The demon of restlessness does not come to that man's bed who has a quiet conscience—a conscience right with God—who can sing—

***"With the world, myself and Thee,  
I, before I sleep, at peace shall be."***

"So He gives His beloved sleep."

But let me tell you who have no knowledge of your election in Christ Jesus, no trust in the ransom of a Savior's blood—you who have never been called by the Holy Spirit. You who never were regenerated and born-again—let me tell you that you do not know this slumber. You may say your conscience is quiet. You may say you do no man any wrong and that you believe at the bar of God you shall have little to account for. But, Sirs, you know you have sinned! And your virtues cannot atone for your vices. You know that the soul that sins, if it sins but once, must die! If the picture has a single flaw, it is not a perfect one. If you have sinned but once, you shall be dammed for it, unless you have something to take away that one sin. You do not know this sleep, but the Christian does—for all his sins were numbered on the "scapegoat's head of old." Christ has died for all his sins, however great or enormous and there is not now a sin written against him in the Book of God. "I, even I," says God, "am He that blots out your transgressions for My name's sake and I will not remember your sins." Now you may sleep. For "so He gives His beloved sleep."

**III.** Again—there is the sleep of contentment which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever needs fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man! For if anyone came to claim the reward, he would of course prove his discontent. We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot. The great majority of mankind are always on the wing. They never settle, they never light on any tree to build their nest—they are always fluttering from one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that one is not high

enough, this one is not beautiful enough, that one is not picturesque enough. So they are always on the wing and never build a peaceful nest at all. The Christian builds his nest. And as the noble Luther said, "Like yon little bird upon the tree, he has fed himself tonight—he knows not where his breakfast is tomorrow. He sits there while the winds rock the tree—he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing and sleeps. And when he awakes in the morning, sings—

***'Mortals cease from toil and sorrow—  
God provides for the morrow.'***

How few there are who have that blessed contentment—who can say, "I need nothing else, I need but little here below—yes, I long for nothing more—I am satisfied—I am content." You sung a beautiful hymn just now, but I suspect that many of you had no right to it, because you did not feel it—

***"With Your will I leave the rest.  
Grant me but this one request.  
Both in life and death to prove  
Tokens of Your special love."***

Could you say there was nothing you needed on earth, save Jesus? Did you mean that you are perfectly content—that you had the sleep of contentment? Ah, no! You, who are apprentices, are sighing till you shall be journeymen. You who are journeymen, are groaning to be masters. Masters are longing till they shall retire from business and when they have retired, they are longing that all their children shall be settled in life. Man always looks for a yet beyond—he is a mariner who never gets to port—an arrow which never reaches the target! Ah, the Christian has sleep. One night I could not rest and in the wild wanderings of my thoughts I met this text and communed with it—"So He gives His beloved sleep." In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, I thought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe. But I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch—and scarcely had I closed my eyes, before a trumpet blew, "To arms! To arms!" And when the danger was over, I lay down again. "To arms! To arms!" once more resounded and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armor on and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, awakened by some fresh alarm! At one time a foe was coming from the west. At another, from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me! I awoke and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the Castle of Discontent, the Castle of Ambition in which man never rests. It is always, "To arms! To arms! To arms!" There is a foe here or a foe there.

His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the draw-bridge of the Castle of Discontent. Then I thought I would supplant it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast. And I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light. That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God—"the peace that passes all understanding." I slept because I slept in the House of Content, satisfied with what I had. Go, you overreaching misers! Go, you grasping ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken. The dream of the miser is always evil. The sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty, but God "gives," by contentment, "His beloved sleep."

**IV.** Once more—God gives His beloved the *sleep of quietness of soul as to the future*. O that dark future! That future! That future! The present may be well but ah, the next wind may wither all the flowers and where shall I be? Clutch your gold, miser, for "riches make to themselves wings and flee away." Hug that babe to your breast, mother, for the rough hand of death may rob you of it. Look at your fame and wonder at it, O you man of ambition! But one slight report shall wound you to the heart and you shall sink as low as ever you have been lifted high by the voices of the multitude. The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God gives to His beloved a happy sleep with regard to the events of coming time—

***"What may be my future lot,  
High or low concerns me not;  
This does set my heart at rest,  
What my God appoints is best."***

Whether I am to live or die is no matter to me. Whether I am to be the "offspring of all things," or "the man whom the king delights to honor," matters not to me. All alike is provided by my Father if He does but give it. "So He gives His beloved sleep."

How many of you have arrived at that happy point that you have no wish of your own at all? It is a sweet thing to have but one wish, but it is a better thing to have no wish at all—to be all lost in the present enjoyment of Christ and the future anticipation of the vision of His face! O my Soul! What would the future be to you if you had not Christ? If it is a bitter and a dark future, what matters it, so long as Christ your Lord sanctifies it and the Holy Spirit still gives you courage energy and strength? It is a blessed thing to be able to say with Madame Guyon—

***"To me 'tis equal, whether love ordained,  
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease.  
My soul perceives no real ill in pain  
In ease or health, no real good she sees.  
One good she covets and that good alone,***

**To choose Your will, from selfish bias free,  
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,  
And grief to comfort, if it pleases Thee.  
That we should bear our cross is Your command—  
Die to the world and live to sin no more,  
Suffer unmoved beneath the rudest hand,  
As pleased when shipwrecked, as when safe on shore.”**

It is a happy condition to attain. “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Ah, if you have a self-will in your hearts, pray to God to uproot it! Have you self-love? Beseech the Holy Spirit to turn it out. For if you will always will to do as God wills, you must be happy. I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little water. Lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, “What? All this and Christ, too?” It is “all this,” compared with what we deserve. And I have read of someone dying, who was asked if he wished to live or die and he said, “I have no wish at all about it.” “But if you might wish, which would you choose?” “I would not choose at all.” “But if God bade you choose?” “I would beg God to choose for me, for I should not know which to take.” Happy state! Happy state! To be perfectly content—

**“To lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His.”**

“So He gives His beloved sleep.”

**V.** In the fifth place—there is the *sleep of security*. Solomon slept with armed men round his bed and thus slumbered securely. But Solomon’s father slept one night on the bare ground—not in a palace—with no moat round his castle wall—and he slept quite as safely as his son, for David said, “I laid me down and slept and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.” Now, some persons never feel secure in this world at all. I query whether one half of my hearers feel themselves so. Suppose I burst out in a moment and sing this—

**“I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given;  
More happy but not more secure,  
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven,”**

you would say, that is too high a doctrine. And I would reply, very likely it is for you, but it is the Truth of God and it is sweet Doctrine for me. I love to know that if I am predestinated according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, I must be saved if I was purchased by His Son’s blood! I cannot be lost, for it would be impossible for Jesus Christ to lose one whom He has redeemed, otherwise He would be dissatisfied with His labors. I know that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on. I never fear that I shall fall away, or be lost. My only fear is lest I should not have been right at first. But, provided I am right, if I am really a child of God, I might believe that the sun would be smitten with madness and go reeling through the universe like a drunken man before I may perish! I

might believe that the stars would run from their courses and instead of marching with their measured steps, as now they do, whirl on in wild courses like the dance of Bacchanals! I could even conceive that this great universe might all subside in God, “even as a moment’s foam subsides again upon the wave that bears it.” But neither reason, heresy, logic, eloquence, nor a conclave of divines shall make me pay a moment’s attention to the vile suggestion that a child of God may ever perish! Hence I tread this earth with confidence.

Arguing a little while ago with an Arminian, he said, “Sir you ought to be a happy man, for if what you say is true, why you are as secure of being in Heaven as if you were there already!” I said, “Yes, I know it.” “Then you ought to live above cares and tribulations and sing happily from morning to night.” I said, “So I ought and so I will, God helping me.” This is security—“He gives His beloved sleep.” To know that if I died I should enter Heaven—to be as sure as I am of my own existence that God, having loved me with an everlasting love and He, being Immutable—will never hate me if He has once loved me! To know that I must enter the Kingdom of Glory—is not this enough to make all burdens light and give me the hind’s feet wherewith I may stand upon my high places? Happy state of security! “So He gives His beloved sleep.”

And there is a sleep, my dear Friends, of security which is enjoyed on earth even in the midst of the greatest troubles. Do you remember that passage in the book of Ezekiel where it is said, “They shall dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods”? A strange place to sleep! “In the woods.” There is a wolf over yonder. There is a tiger in the jungle, an eagle is soaring in the air. A horde of robbers dwell in the dark forest. “Never mind,” says the child of God—

**“He that has made his refuge God,  
Shall find a most secure abode!  
Shall walk all day beneath His shade,  
And there at night shall rest his head.”**

I have often admired Martin Luther and wondered at his composure. When all men spoke so ill of him, what did he say? Turn to that Psalm—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” In a far inferior manner I have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther and have been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn. But it has not broken my spirit, yet, nor will it, by His Grace, while I am enabled to enjoy that latent state of—“So He gives His beloved sleep”! But thus far I beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me that they are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. My motto is *cedo nulli*—I yield to none. I have not courted any man’s love. I asked no man to attend my ministry. I preach what I like and when I like and as I like. Oh,

happy state—to be bold, though downcast and distressed—to go and bend my knees and tell my Father all and then to come down from my chamber and say—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,  
Shame and reproach shall be,  
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
For You’ll remember me.”***

**VI.** The last sleep God gives His beloved, is *the sleep of a happy dismissal*. I have stood by the graves of many servants of the Lord. I have buried some of the excellent of the earth. And when I bid farewell to my Brother down below, there slumbering in his coffin, I usually commence my speech with those words, “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that “so He gives His beloved sleep”? Oh, happy sleep! This world is a state of tossing to and fro. But in that grave they rest. No sorrows there. No sighs. No groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Well may I address the dead thus—“My Brother, oftentimes have you fought the battles of this world. You have had your cares, your trials and your troubles. But now you are gone—not to worlds unknown but to yonder land of light and glory. Sleep on, Brother! Your soul sleeps not, for you are in Heaven! But your body sleeps. Death has laid you in your last couch. It may be cold, but it is sanctified. It may be damp, but it is safe. And on the Resurrection Morning, when the archangel shall set his trumpet to his mouth, you shall rise! “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” “Sleep on in your grave, my Brother, for you shall rise to Glory.” “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Some of you fear to die and have good reason to do so, for death for you would be the beginning of sorrows. And as it approaches, you might hear the voice of the angel of the Apocalypse—“One woe is past, but behold two woes more are to come.” If, Sirs, you were to die unprepared and unconverted and unsaved, “There remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” I need not speak like a Boanerges, for it is to you a well known Truth that without God, without Christ, “strangers from the commonwealth of Israel,” your portion must be among the damned—the fiends—the tortured—the shrieking ghosts—the wandering souls who find no rest—

***“On waves of burning brimstone tossed,  
Forever, O forever lost!”***

“The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!”

But, beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, why do *you* fear to die? Come let me take your hand—

***“To you and me by Grace ‘tis given  
To know the Savior’s precious name!  
And shortly we shall meet in Heaven***

***Our end, our hope, our way the same.***

Do you know that Heaven is just across that narrow stream? Are you afraid to plunge in and swim across? Do you fear to be drowned? I feel the bottom—it is good. Do you think you shall sink? Hear the voice of the Spirit—“Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, I am your God—when you pass through the river, I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.” Death is the gate of endless joys and do you dread to enter there? What? Fear to be emancipated from corruption? Oh, say not so, but rather gladly lay down and sleep in Jesus and be blessed.

I have finished expounding my subject. There is only one question I want to ask of you before you pass out of those doors. Do you seriously and solemnly believe that you belong to the “beloved” here mentioned? I may be impertinent in asking such a question. I have been accused of that before now and I have never denied it. I rather take the credit of it than not. But seriously and solemnly I ask you—Do you know yourselves to be among the beloved? And if it happens that you need a test, allow me to give you three tests, very briefly and I have done. It has been said that there are three kinds of preachers—doctrinal preachers, experimental preachers and practical preachers. Now I think there are three things that make up a Christian—true Doctrine, real experience and good practice.

Now, then, as to your Doctrine. You may tell whether you are the Lord’s beloved partly by that. Some think it matters not what a man believes. Excuse me—the Truth of God IS ALWAYS precious and the least atom of the Truth of God is worth searching out! Nowadays the sects do not clash so much as they did. Perhaps that is good, but there is one evil about it. People do not read their Bibles as much as they did. They think we are all right. Now I believe we may be all right in the main, but we cannot be all right where we contradict one another! And it becomes every man to search the Bible to see which is right. I am not afraid to submit my Calvinism, or my Doctrine of Believer’s Baptism, to the searching of the Bible. A learned lord, an infidel, once said to Whitfield, “Sir, I am an infidel, I do not believe the Bible, but if the Bible is true, you are right and your Arminian opponents are wrong. If the Bible is the Word of God, the Doctrines of Grace are true.” He added that if any man would grant him the Bible to be the Truth, he would challenge him to disprove Calvinism, the Doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance and all those great Truths of God which are called Calvinism—though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an able writer and preacher upon the subject! These are, I believe, the essential Doctrines of the Gospel that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask you whether you believe all this—it is possible you may not—but I believe you will before you enter Heaven. I am persuaded, that as God may have

washed your hearts, He will wash your brains before you enter Heaven! He will make you right in your doctrines. But I must enquire whether you read your Bibles. I am not finding fault with you, this morning, for differing from me. I may be wrong—but I want to know whether you search the Scriptures to find what is Truth. And if you are not a reader of the Bible, if you take Doctrines second-hand, if you go to Chapel and say, “I do not like that,” what matters your not liking it provided it is in the Bible? Is it Biblical Truth, or is it not? If it is God’s Truth let us have it exalted. It may not suit you, but let me remind you that the Truth that is in Jesus never was palatable to carnal men and I believe never will be. The reason you love it not is because it cuts too much at your pride. It lets you down too low. Search yourselves, then, in Doctrine.

Then take care that you remember the experimental test. I am afraid there is very little experimental religion among us—but where there is true Doctrine, there ought always to be a vital experience. Sirs, try yourselves by the experimental test! Have you ever had an experience of your wretchedness, of your depravity, your inability, your death in sin? Have you ever felt life in Christ, an experience of the light of God’s Countenance, of wrestling with corruption? Have you had a Grace-given Holy Spirit-implanted experience of a communion with Christ? If so, then you are right on the experimental test.

And, to conclude, take care of the practical test. “Faith without works is dead, being alone.” He that walks in sin is a child of the devil and he that walks in righteousness is a child of light. Do not think because you believe the right Doctrines, therefore you are right. There are many who believe right, act wrong and they perish. “Be not deceived. God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

I have done. Now let me beseech you by the frailty of your own lives—by the shortness of time—by the dreadful realities of eternity—by the sins you have committed—by the pardon that you need—by the blood and wounds of Jesus—by His Second Coming to judge the world in righteousness—by the glories of Heaven—by the awful horrors of Hell—by time—by eternity—by all that is good—by all that is sacred—let me beg of you, as you love your own souls, to search and see whether you are among the beloved, to whom He gives sleep. God bless you.

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

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

# **“PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN” NO. 2574**

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 12, 1898.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1883.**

*“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Let Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. The Lord is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up: which the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves his arms. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.”  
Psalm 129.*

You see, dear Friends, the Psalm speaks of two sorts of people—there is Israel and there are those that hate Zion. The first three verses are dedicated to God’s people. The last five speak of those who are not God’s people, but are the haters of them. From the very first, there have been two seeds in the world. The first man that was born—Cain, was of the seed of the serpent, but the second was, by the Grace of God, of the seed of the woman. And so early, when those two boys had but just developed into manhood, he that was born by Grace served his God and brought a lamb as his sacrifice. But he that was born after the flesh—the firstborn of man—became his brother’s murderer. Thus, in the very first household that ever existed, there was a sharp line of demarcation between the man of faith and the man of sense—the man that lived unto God and the man that lived after his own passions. Always and everywhere since that day there have been the same two characters and, albeit there is a large number of persons about whom you or I may not be able to give any decision, for they seem as if they stood between the two! Yet in the sight of God there is a line, narrow, but most sure, which divides the living from the dead—the believing from the unbelieving—the men that fear God from them that fear Him not.

And still, right down the ages, that Word that was spoken to the serpent in the Garden of Eden stands true—“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” There are the believing people of God—His own elect brought out from among men, and there is the world that lies in the Wicked One. To one of these two classes we all belong—there are really no neutrals—it is not possible that there should be. There is no borderland between life and death—a man is ei-

ther alive by the quickening of the Spirit, or he remains dead in trespasses and sins.

I am going to speak of each of these two classes that are mentioned in my text. So, first, let us notice the description given of God’s own people. The first three verses of the Psalm may be summed up thus—*Israel persecuted, but not forsaken*. When I have spoken on that theme, I shall hope to say something about *the wicked flourishing, but perishing*. Those two words—flourishing, perishing—describe the condition of those that hate Zion and that hate the children of Zion. Before I plunge into the text, however, let me give you a few sentences by way of introduction.

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the picture of the life of His people. “As He was,” says Paul, “so are we, also, in this world.” This is so remarkably true that, in the Psalms we sometimes can hardly tell whether the writer is describing himself or the Lord Jesus, because, as is the Head, so are the members, and there is a growing likeness which is often spoken of in Scripture as if these two were one, as indeed, in the highest sense, they are. If you read this Psalm carefully, you can see Christ in it. Jesus could truly say, “Many a time have they afflicted Me from My youth: yet they have not prevailed against Me.” Herod sought the young Child’s life to destroy it. Satan seemed to stir Hell, itself, to seek the destruction of the Infant Jesus. “The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows.” How true was that of our Divine Master—when He was in His agony in the garden, the furrows were plainly visible! When He was brought before Herod, and before Pilate, and was scourged till He was covered with wounds—and when He died and they took down that blessed but mangled body—how deep were the furrows!

Now the sufferings of Christ, of which I spoke to you last Sunday night [See Sermon #2573, Volume 44—*Unparalleled Suffering*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] are, in their measure, repeated in His people—we are made to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord? If they have persecuted Him, they will also persecute us! He bids us look for such treatment as this. Do not, therefore, expect rest where Christ had none, or look to wear a crown of gold where Christ wore a crown of thorns.

My next observation is that the history of God’s people, Israel, is also, in type, a history of His Church. Truly, the sins of Israel are far too often repeated in Believers, but the woes and griefs of Israel, and their deliverance out of them, are the means of comfort to many of God’s saints. See how the Israelites were afflicted from their youth, when they were but a little nation and went down into Egypt. How hard they had to work in the brick-kilns! With what enmity did Pharaoh look upon them! How cruelly and craftily he sought to compass the destruction of the nation by drowning the male children in the Nile! He used his wit and his power every way possible to destroy the chosen people—but the Lord preserved His own. Then, in the day of Israel’s youth, when she went into the wilderness, she was afflicted. “I remember you,” says God, “the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” But in the wilderness she had

her trials and when she came to the promised land, her trials did but begin again. Scarcely was she delivered from the Canaanites before she fell prey to the Philistines! And the Philistines were hardly overcome before we hear of the Syrians, the Edomites, the Moabites—and then of the Assyrians and the Babylonians who, at last, carried away captive the people of God. That nation, Israel, to this day may say, “Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: but they have not prevailed against me.”

Now one more remark. I have already reminded you that Christ’s life is the picture of His people’s life and that the history of Israel is the picture of His Church. Now notice how true it is that the Church, from her very outset, has always been afflicted—first by Herod, when he sought to slay the Apostles, and did murder James. Next afflicted by the Jews and driven from city to city. Then afflicted by Saul of Tarsus who breathed out threats and slaughter against the Church of Christ from her youth. Then broke out the great Pagan persecution. Your knowledge of history, I suppose, tells you how the emperors of Rome used the whole of their force to crush the Christian Church, yet they prevailed not against her! When the Roman emperors had done their worst, and done it in vain, the Church of Christ was turned into an established church by patronage—and from that moment became a harlot and so grew into the apostate Church of Rome!

Then the Pope, with all his might, sought to crush out the Church of God. Read the stories of the Albigenses in the South of France, the Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont. Read the history of the Lollards in England and of the saints of God in any country which you please to choose. They were torn asunder. They were made to rot in prison. They were tortured on the rack. They were put to death in all manner of ways. In our own country, especially, by being burned to death at the stake. Yet the enemies of Zion have not prevailed against her. No, Rome, you shall never triumph! And even now, though today our clergy preach your doctrines and wear your garments, yet you shall not prevail against the Church of God, for He shall surely come, even He that has delivered in days gone by, and shall work deliverance for His Israel once again!

So I have spoken to you of Christ, of Israel, and of the Church. Now I come to deal with the subject as it relates to yourselves. As it was with the Church at large, as it was with Israel, as it was with our Lord Jesus, so expect it to be with you! As I go through this Psalm with you, and dwell upon it, you can apply it to yourself, my dear tried and persecuted Friend.

**I.** In the first three verses of the Psalm, we have a description of ISRAEL PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN.

First notice, concerning Israel’s affliction, *from where it came*—“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.” Who was it that afflicted Israel? The text says, “*they*.” And why is the word, “*they*,” used? Because, to enter into particulars would rather obscure the sense than impress anything upon the memory. “*They*.” Why, it meant, in the case of the nation of Israel, Egyptians, Amalekites, Hivites, Hittites, Jebusites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians—it would be such a long list—so the Psalmist just says, “*they*.” Who are the people that have afflicted you, my

dear Friend? The Scripture leaves room for you to add the names if you care to put them in. But perhaps it will be wiser for you to forget all the names and simply to leave it as it is here—“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.”

I hardly like to think of who they are, who, in many cases, have afflicted God’s true servants, but it is still true that “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” A woman is just brought to Christ and her greatest trouble comes from him whom she loves best of all living mortals—her husband becomes her terror! When a child has been brought to the Savior, it is sad that his worst fears should arise concerning the treatment he will receive from his father or his mother—but it has often been so. We do not put the names in—we can pray for the persecutors all the better if we leave it, “they.” A newly-converted Christian goes out into business. Does he find friends there? Sometimes God is very tender and pitiful, and casts the lot of his young children in among the gracious. But there are others who have a hard time of it, for they have to earn their bread in the midst of the ungodly. Christ seems to say to them, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” And these wolves are always seeking to destroy the lambs, if possible! Is it not a singular thing in Providence that though the wolves might have eaten all the lambs up long ago, yet there are a great many more sheep in the world, now, than there are wolves? And in this country, you know, there is not a wolf left—they have all died out. They could take care of themselves and fight, yet they have all gone. The sheep could not defend themselves, yet here they are in flocks! God takes care of the weak and the feeble—and in that very fact of natural history He seems to say to His people, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. “The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Outside, in the world, the Christian frequently meets with those who would rejoice to see him stumble, who try to make faults where there are none and exaggerate little mistakes into great crimes. Wherever he goes, he has to travel with his sword drawn—he finds an adversary behind every bush. He is a pilgrim through the midst of Vanity Fair whom the traders cannot understand. In his case, that ancient word is again fulfilled—“My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her.” Such a man can truly say, “Many a time have they afflicted me.”

But, next, let us ask, *how does this persecution come?* The Psalm says, “Many a time.” That means very often. So then, you who are faithful to God must expect that you will frequently be assailed by the foe. I know some of God’s saints who feel almost frightened when people speak well of them. They begin to say, “What have we been doing wrong? Would these people commend us if we had been serving our Master faithfully?” There is another side to that truth, for, “when a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” But, between the two, it is not always easy to tell which is the right course. This we know—we are not to expect to find favor where Christ found no favor! If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect that they

will have ill names for us. If they imputed evil motives to Him, they will impute evil motives to us. If they even said of Him that He was a drunk and a wine-bibber, we must not be astonished if sometimes things of which we have never heard, or things that we abhor, should be laid to our charge! Therefore, arm yourselves, also, with the same mind as Christ had, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself many and many a time.

The Psalm tells us that these attacks of the ungodly were a real affliction to the people of God. "Many a time have they afflicted me. . . Many a time have they afflicted me." It is written twice over to show how trying it was. The brine made poor Israel's wounds smart. She was really hurt and she felt it. I have sometimes met with a person who has said, "I do not care what people say of me." I am not sure whether that feeling is right, or wrong. Sometimes it may be an indifference which is pitiable. At other times it may be a courage which is admirable. But this I do know, that the saints of God have found slander to be a very piercing thing—it has gone right to their heart—the iron has entered into their soul. Hence the Savior said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled," for trouble tries, sometimes, to get to the heart. Affliction that does not really afflict is no affliction. But here they felt it. They groaned under it. The plowers made deep furrows, not mere surface ones—they cut down deep into the very spirit, into the very soul of Israel. And we must not wonder if, sometimes, for Christ's sake, we have to meet with this kind of trial.

Possibly, some Christian sitting here is saying, "I do not know much about that sort of affliction." Well, be very thankful if you do not, but be ready for it—be prepared for it. There are some of us who had a hard time of it in years gone by. There was not any name in the catalog of contempt which some of us have not been made to bear. And now, perhaps, we have smoother times, but we stand quite ready to go into the burning fiery furnace, again, if so it must be, for this is a part of the portion of God's servants—"Many a time have they afflicted me . . . Many a time have they afflicted me."

But notice, while we are speaking of how affliction came to Israel, that it came to her in her youth. What a coward Satan is! He always tries to attack God's children most fiercely when they are young. Fight one of your own size, Sir! But that he is afraid to do. When the child of God gets well matured and, by experience knows how to fly to his God, Satan will often leave him quietly alone. You know the story in the Revelation of how, when the woman was delivered of a Man-Child, the dragon sought to destroy the Child at once and it was, therefore, caught up unto God, and to His Throne. No sooner did the devil spy out Christ, as He rose dripping from the waters of Baptism, than he determined to assail Him with his fierce temptations and, if possible, destroy Him before He began His ministry! But that young Christ, freshly anointed of the Spirit, was more than a match for him. Many a time since then has the Adversary met God's people in their youth, when as yet they were feeble—when they were not expert in war, just as David in his youth had to fight the lion and the bear, and *afterwards* to meet the giant.

Oh, it was grand for that ruddy youth to be able to say to Saul, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” It may be so with you who are young in Grace—do not be astonished if you meet with your fiercest attacks in the morning of your days! But have courage and say to yourself, “It was told me that it would probably be so. I am not taken at unawares, I was warned of that as I read the Psalm, ‘Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.’”

Notice again that the Psalm goes on to describe this persecution of Israel under the imagery of plowers plowing her back. It is a kind of duplicate metaphor. It is just as the scourger, when he takes his dreadful lash and brings it down with all his might on the bare back of his victim, makes a deep gash where the throng falls. And it is also like the furrow that is cut by a plow, only it is not made in dead clods, it is right in the quivering flesh! The scourge falls again and there is another mark—again you can hear the dreadful motion of the whip of wire as it falls and cuts deeper and deeper into that poor sensitive bleeding back.

Now, just so, Israel says, it was with her, and you know that it was so, for she seemed to be all but destroyed many times. That little nation was hacked to pieces. Zion was plowed as a field. So is it with some of God’s people—as it was, also, with their Master, and as it has been with the entire Church of Christ. The whip has come down mercilessly again and again and again—forty stripes save one—for Satan will never stint his blows. He will vex God’s people again and again and again, and if he could, he would utterly destroy them. Such often has been the lives of God’s saints—the very best and truest of them—and such are their lives now. It is not so with all of us, but it has been so with many. May the Lord help His suffering people! In patience may they possess their souls! As I remind you of what some of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ are just now suffering, I pray you to remember those that are in bonds as bound with them, and those that are in trouble, knowing that you, yourselves, also are yet in the body.

This, then, is the description of what God’s people have often had to suffer. The plowers have made long their furrows—they have left no headlands—they have plowed the back again and again—and scourged it with the cruel lash.

But now, *what is the reason for all this persecution?* There are two reasons. And the first is the hatred of the serpent and his seed. There are two things that are inconceivable in length and breadth. The first is the love of God to His people, which is altogether without limit. And the next is the hatred of the devil, which is and must be finite, for he is only a creature, but still, it is as great as it possibly can be. We have no idea with what determined vehemence Satan hates these who belong to Christ! He will do anything he can in the hope of destroying one of them. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That, Beloved, is why you have so many persecutions from those who are the faithful children of Satan—they are of their father, the devil, and his

works they will continue to do—and one of those works is persecuting those who are the children of God.

Still, there is a higher reason for the persecution of the saints. The second reason is because God permits it. Why does He permit it? Well, very often for your safety. “For our safety?” you ask. “For our safety?” Yes, the Church of God has often been preserved by persecution—she was never purer, she was never holier, she was never truer and she never lived nearer to God and more like her Savior than when she was persecuted! I venture to say of the Church of Scotland that she was never grander than in the Covenanting times when they met among the glens and up in the lone places when she sat on the heather watching, lest Claverhouse’s dragoons should be near. I think, of late years, she was never nobler than in Disruption times, and I believe she will never again be so good and great unless she is persecuted.

Often we do not prosper in spiritual things, in times of ease, as we ought to do. Sometimes, the best friend of the sheep is the dog—and when the shepherd lets him loose, he fetches back the wanderers. And if there are any animals that ought not to be with the flock, the dog gets in among them and makes the separation between his master’s sheep and other people’s. We owe a great deal to persecuting dogs! I knew a young man who used to steal in here on Thursday nights and who would come into the Prayer Meetings and pray very sweetly and very earnestly. But he had no comfort in his home, for he had a father who could not endure his religion and was very bitter against him. His father died and the son inherited his property. He is never here, now. He has no love for God, as far as I can judge. He has grown cold and has turned aside, but as long as he was persecuted, he certainly seemed to be one of the most earnest men I ever knew! I believe that it has often been so, for silken days do not suit Christ’s soldiers—but in the battle they will glory when their Master is with them. So you see how persecution is sometimes for our safety.

Next, it is for our trial and testing, to separate the precious from the vile. We are put into the sieve and Satan sifts us. He likes that task, but what a fool he is to do the sifting for Christ! It is good work when it is done and Satan, in persecuting the saints, is simply a scullion in Christ’s kitchen, cleansing His pots and pans. They never are so bright as when he scours them and it is a scouring with a vengeance. Yet, in that way he separates, or God, *through him*, separates, between the precious and the vile! The Lord sometimes allows persecution to break out upon His people that they may know more of themselves. And oh, how we fail when we come to times of persecution! I have heard of one who, when he was condemned to die for the faith, got out of bed in the night and held his finger over the candle to see whether he could burn. Poor soul, he felt that he could not endure that pain, but yet he said, “I do verily believe that when I come to the stake, the agony which I cannot endure in my finger, now, I shall bear in my whole body, for then I shall be suffering God’s will. Now, when I hold my finger in the candle, I am only suffering for my own curiosity and I get no support and strength.”

And it was so. In Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, the tale is told of a poor woman who was taken with the pains of travail when condemned to die

in prison. And when she cried out, her enemies said to her, "If you cannot bear this which is but natural, what will you do when you come to burn?" The woman answered, "Now, I am only suffering the curse that came upon the race through sin, and I feel it bitterly. But when I am burning at the stake, I shall be suffering for Christ's sake, and I shall feel it to be sweet." And it was noticed how bravely—to quote a strange phrase—*she played the man*. No, she played the WOMAN for Christ and suffered well for Him without tears or cries! Ah, yes, when God is with His people, He helps them wonderfully. But what a test it is to them and how they are driven at such times to prove their own weakness! How it tries their faith and proves of what stuff it is made! And how it makes them reel trembling and weak where they thought they were steadfast and strong!

I find that my time has nearly gone, yet I am not half-way through my subject. I must just mention *the blessings which come to the tried children of God through their troubles*. I do so enjoy the reading of that part of the Psalm where it says, "But they have not prevailed against me." You see a troop of horsemen riding into the very midst of the battle and you lose sight of them for a moment amidst the dust and smoke. But out of the middle of that cloud you hear the brave captain's cry, "They have not prevailed against me!" You see that little band advancing into a yet more crowded host, all glaring upon them like wolves. Surely they will be cut to pieces! But in the very center of the struggling mass you see the banner still waving and again comes the cry, "They have not prevailed against me!" That is, in brief, the story of the Church of Christ, and that shall be the story of every Christian who puts his trust in God—he shall have to say, at the close of every trouble—yes, and even in the midst of it—"They have not prevailed against me."

What is the reason why the enemy cannot prevail against the saints of God? Read the next verse. "The Lord is righteous." If He were to forsake His people and they were to perish, He would not be righteous. But He will not forget our work of faith and labor of love, nor will He leave us to fall in the evil day. "The Lord is righteous." That is to say, He will take the right side, He will defend those that fight for the right and for the truth, He will prove Himself strong on the behalf of them that put their trust in Him. "The Lord is righteous" and, therefore, He will smite His adversaries upon the cheekbone! He will not let them go on forever in their pride and cruelty. They get the upper hand for a while, and they smite His saints, but, "the Lord is righteous," and He will speedily avenge His own elect that cry day and night to Him! He may delay the overthrow of His people's foes, but He will, in the end, take their part and display His Almighty Power. For the present, He is patient. He bears long with the ungodly, but He will not always do so. The fact that "the Lord is righteous" is the pledge that the wicked shall not prevail over His saints.

Then notice the next sentence—"He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked." Literally, it should run thus—"He has cut the traces of the wicked." They are plowing, you see, and in the East, the oxen are fastened to the plow by a long cord. What does God do in the middle of their plowing? There are the bulls and there is the plow, but God has cut the

harness—and how wonderfully He has sometimes cut the harness of the persecutors of His people! Look at the way He did this for our poor hunted Brothers and Sisters in Piedmont. They were likely, every one of them, to be crushed and, apparently, there was nobody to protect them. The Duke of Savoy, whose subjects they were, had given them up to be destroyed. The next country was France, but the King of France was a Roman Catholic and as eager for their destruction as was the Duke. But one day, Oliver Cromwell sent for the French ambassador and said to him, "Tell your master to order the Duke of Savoy to leave off persecuting my brethren in Piedmont, or he shall hear from me about the matter." "Sir," said the ambassador, "they are not the subjects of the King of France. He has nothing to do with them. The Duke of Savoy is an independent prince—we cannot interfere with him." "I do not care about that," replied Cromwell. "I will hold your king answerable if he does not stop the Duke of Savoy from persecuting the Piedmontese."

And they knew that "Old Noll" meant what he said. So, somehow, the King of France managed to interfere with that precious independent prince and told him that he had better cease his persecutions, for if he did not, Oliver Cromwell would take up the quarrel. Yes, and when the Pope, himself, had persecuted some English sailors at Rome, Cromwell wrote and said that he did not know whether "his holiness" would like to hear the thunder of his guns at Rome, but he very soon would do so unless he ceased his cruelties. Cromwell was the defender of those that feared God, and it was most Providential that such a man should have come into power just when he was needed for the protection of the persecuted. God always knows how to save His people! What He has done in the past, He can do again. He can cut the traces of those that are plowing and there will be no more deep furrows. How frequently He has done it! How often has He put out His hand and said to the wicked, "Stop!" And they have had to stop and that has been the end of their persecution! Cry mightily, then, you who are tried! Cry mightily unto the Lord to deliver you!

Dearly Beloved, "avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore, leave your persecutors in His hands. Be you like the anvil—there have been a great many generations of hammers that have come and have gone, but the old anvil still stands in the smithy! Be you just like that—let your persecutors hammer away, but stand you steadfast to your God and to your faith—and may His blessed Spirit keep you so even to the end!

The latter half of the sermon must come, if the Lord wills, on another Thursday night. May God's blessing be with you! Oh, happy are they that are God's people! Blessed are they that are in the furnace! Blessed are they that are tried and troubled! Has not He, whose lips can never lie, pronounced them blessed? "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the

Prophets which were before you." Therefore, reckon yourselves gladdened and honored when you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
GALATIANS 4, 5:1.**

**Galatians 4:1-5.** *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he is lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Like little children, the Jewish Believers were under the Law. They observed this ceremony and that, just as children, though they may be heirs to vast estates, yet, while they are in their minority, are under tutors and governors. But now in Christ we have come of age and we have done with those schoolbooks and that tutorship, and we have received the adoption of sons! Now we have joy and peace in believing. We have begun to enter into our possession. We already have the earnest of it and, by-and-by, we shall receive the fullness of the inheritance of the saints in the Light of God.

**6.** *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* While the Jewish Believers, like children, were under the Law, they did not have such direct access to the Father as we have. They could not enter into such close fellowship with God as we now can. We who are the sons of God, really born into His family, feel within us a something that makes us call God, "Father," not only in prayer, saying, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," but, inwardly, when we are not in the attitude of prayer, our hearts keep on crying, "Father, Father." The Jew may say, "Abba," and the word is very sweet. But we cry, "Father," and it means the same thing.

**7.** *Therefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.* All God's sons are, in a certain sense, His servants, but there is a sense in which servants are not sons. We, therefore, are not like those servants who have no relationship to their master and no share in his possessions—we are sons. Whatever service we render, we are still sons, and we have a share in all that our Father has. We are heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Are you living up to your privileges, Brothers and Sisters? Are we, any of us, fully realizing what this heirship means? Do we not often live as if we were only servants toiling for hire? Do we not tremble at God as if we were His slaves rather than His children? Let us remember that we are God's sons and daughters, His heirs, and let us come close to Him. Let us take possession of the blessed inheritance which He has provided for us.

**8-11.** *Therefore, then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are not gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, why turn you, again, to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I*

*have bestowed upon you labor in vain.* Among the heathen, there were many “lucky” and, “unlucky” days—sacred days and days in which they indulged in sensual excess. They had even “holy” months and, “unholy” months. Now, all that kind of thing is done away with in the case of a Christian—he is set free from such weak and beggarly superstitions! Among the Jews there were certain sacred festivals—times that were more notable than other seasons—but they, also, were done away with in Christ. We observe the Christian Sabbath, but beyond that, to the true Believer, there should be no special observance of days, months and years. All that is a return to “the weak and beggarly elements” from which Christ has delivered us. That bondage is all ended, now, but there are some who still “observe days, and months, and times, and years.” And Paul says to them, “I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Every day is holy, every year is holy to a holy man! And every place is holy, too, to the man who brings a holy heart into it.

**12.** *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all.* “Be perfectly at home with me, for I am so with you. Though you Galatians have treated me very badly, yet you have not really injured me and I freely overlook your ill manners toward me.”

**13-15.** *You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is, then, the blessedness you spoke of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.* The Apostle remembers how they received him at first. His Gospel was, to them, like life from the dead and though he was full of infirmities—perhaps had weak eyes—perhaps had a stammering tongue—perhaps was, at that time, very much depressed in spirit—yet, he says, “You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. You loved me so much that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.”

**16.** *Have I, therefore, become your enemy because I tell you the truth?* There come times, with all God’s servants, when certain people proclaim something fresh and new in doctrine—and then the old messenger of God who was blessed to them, comes to be despised. I have lived long enough to see dozens of very fine fancies started, but they have all come to nothing. I daresay I shall see a dozen more and they will all come to nothing. But here I stand—I am not led astray either by novelties of excitement or novelties of doctrine. The things which I preached at the first, I still preach, and so I shall continue, as God shall help me. But I know, in some little measure, what the Apostle meant when he said, “Have I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

**17-20.** *They zealously affect you, but not well; yes, they would exclude you, that you might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.* The point of doubt was that they had been led astray by legal teachers—they had been made to believe that, after all, there was

something in outward ceremonies, something in the works of the Law and so they had come under bondage again. So the Apostle says—

**21-23.** *Tell me, you that desire to be under the Law, do you not hear the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh—by Abraham’s own strength—*

**24.** *But he of the freewoman was by promise.* Born when Abraham and his wife were past age—born by the power of God’s Spirit, according to promise.

**24.** *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two Covenants: the one from the mount Sinai which genders to bondage, which is Hagar. It is the strength of the flesh which leads to bondage.*

**25, 26.** *For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. That is, of all of us who believe in Christ Jesus. We are born of the freewoman, not of the bondwoman—not born of the Covenant of Works and in the strength of the creature—but born of the Covenant of Grace, in the power of God, according to promise.*

**27, 28.** *For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband. Now we, Brothers and Sisters, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. If we are God’s children, it is not by our own strength, or by the strength of the flesh in any measure or degree—it is by the Grace of God and the promise of God—that we are what we are.*

**29, 30.** *But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what says the Scripture? Make a compromise, and be friends? Let Isaac and Ishmael live in the same house and lie in the same bed? No!*

**30, 31.** *Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, Brothers and Sisters, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

**Galatians 5:1.** *Stand fast therefore in the liberty which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. God grant us Grace to keep to Grace! God grant us faith enough to live by faith, even to the end, as the freeborn children of God, for His name’s sake! Amen.*

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

# A PSALMIST'S QUESTION AND ANSWER NO. 2792

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 17, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1878.

*“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Psalm 130:3, 4.*

NOTE, dear Friends, that the Psalm begins with this remarkable expression, “Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord,” and I call your special attention to that utterance of the Psalmist because there are many who are afraid to pray when they are in the depths of soul-despair. It is comparatively easy to think you are praying when you have a fine notion of your own excellence. At such a time you can stand up in the Temple with the boasting Pharisee and pour out, as glibly as possible, expressions which you call prayer, but which God will never accept. But the very best prayer in all the world is that which comes from a broken heart and a contrite spirit—when, away in the corner there, beside the conscience-stricken publican, we smite upon our breast and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not, I beg you, think that your prayer will not succeed because you are in the depths. There is no place for praying like that! If ever a man is more sure to succeed with God at one time than at another, it is when he is in his greatest straits.

You know those men who are wisely generous, when they are about to distribute their alms, like to give to the most needy cases. The plea with them is the greatness of need, the urgency of distress—and it is just so with God and yourselves. It is not your *goodness* that will ensure an answer to your prayer—it is the greatness of your need. Even if you have sunk very low in your own esteem, till not a ray of hope seems left to you and you are shut up in the blackest darkness of despair, that is the very time for you to pray, even as the Psalmist said, “Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord.” No prayers are more true, more real and, consequently, more acceptable—and no prayers are so likely to be quickly answered as those that come up from the very depths of soul-distress.

I begin my discourse with this observation because I want to cheer some of you who, at present, hardly dare to pray. Yet you are the very people who may pray—you who think that the Lord will never hear you are the people whom He is certain to hear and answer! When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket and you stand before your God as a

wretched, starving and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love! Now—if never before—now that you have come to your worst, dart your prayer up to Heaven and the Lord, who heard Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and Manasseh when he was in captivity in Babylon, will hear you and send you a speedy answer of peace to your supplication!

Note, also, how intensely the Psalmist pleads. In the second verse of the Psalm, he says, "Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." So, when you pray out of the depths, mind that you plead with all your might. Cold prayers ask God to refuse our requests, but the red-hot petition of a soul on fire with agony after Divine Grace is certain to be heard. If you have hitherto knocked in vain at Mercy's door, knock again—only knock more loudly than before—and if one blow of the hammer of prayer has not sufficed to make that portal open, knock, and knock, and knock again, determined that if you perish, you will perish praying and pleading! But you shall not perish if you will but ask, and seek, and knock with that importunity which will take no denial. He who has this holy resolve strongly worked within him by the blessed Spirit of God shall soon come into the morning light of gracious acceptance—and his heart shall be glad because the Lord has granted his petition.

This brings us to the threefold position which the Psalmist occupied when he prayed this prayer. It was, first, *one of confession*—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" It was also one of *humble confidence*—"But there is forgiveness with You." And it was one in which he saw *the consequences* of God's mighty pardon—"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

**I.** First, then, in our text, we have A CONFESSION—a confession which it will be well for everyone to make—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The Psalmist may have felt that *if a human witness had been appointed to mark his sin, he might have been able to stand*, but he says, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, who shall stand?" "If my fellow man should watch me honestly and speak of me candidly, it may be that he would not be able to see a flaw in my life." There are some men who could say as much as that. They have been enabled, by the Grace of God, to behave themselves in all integrity and uprightness, so that no one could justly bring any accusation against them. If the policeman were set to watch, or a spy were put into their house, or if even wife or child were the watcher, there are some who might be able to say, "I have borne myself uprightly both in the house and abroad among my fellow men and I could pass such a test as that." But the Psalmist said, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" He knew that the Lord sees what no one else can see and He sees behind the action into the motive of it, the secret design hidden in the heart.

If any one of us will just think how we have been watched everywhere—at our board and in our bed, in our home and in the public

street—if we will remember how the Omniscient eyes of God have seen everything and how He has recorded everything that we have thought and said, as well as what we have done—such a person must feel the force of the Psalmist's question, "O Lord, who shall stand?" When I have occasionally met with brethren who have talked about their own perfection, I must confess that I have felt a sort of shudder go through me. The very last thing in this world that I would dare to claim would be my own perfection—and I believe that all of you will say that when you have lived nearest to God—it is then that you have mourned most your distance from Him. When your prayer has been most prevalent, it is then that you have seen most of its imperfection! And when your faith has been most vigorous, it is just then that you have had to lament your unbelief!

I firmly believe that it is only the gross spiritual darkness of ignorance that makes any man think himself perfect. If he had more light, he would see how abundant are the spots upon him. You have sometimes had a white pocket handkerchief and you have admired its whiteness. But when the snow has fallen and you have laid your handkerchief upon the newly-fallen snow, it has looked quite yellow instead of white—and so is it with the holiest life when it is placed by the side of the life of Christ, or looked at in the light of the perfect Law of God—then we see how stained and defiled it really is. So, Lord, we might stand up before our fellow men, and plead, "Not guilty," when they belie and slander us, as they do, but, before Your holy Presence, "if You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The Psalmist not only mentions the Divine Witness of his sin, but he also speaks of *a special form of guilt*. He does not say, "If You should mark open and overt transgression—the breaking out of bounds and going astray into the paths of evil." But he says, "If You should mark iniquities." Pull that word to pieces and it becomes "inequities"—whatever is not right in the sight of God. If He were to mark those inequities, who could stand before Him? Not one of us could do so! God observes how, after obeying the First Commandment, we forget the Second. Or, if we are mindful of the first table of the Law, which concerns our relationship to God, we neglect to observe the second table, which relates to our duty to our neighbor. Sometimes, perhaps, we spend much time in private devotion, yet do not attend to our family duties. At another time, family duties are attended to, but private devotions are forgotten. Sometimes there is a well-balanced relationship towards wife and children, but not towards our parents—or towards our own household, but not towards the world. It may be that we are kind to our friends and act according to the rule of equity with regard to them, yet we may be ungenerous towards those who are not our friends—and so be guilty of inequity there. Our character ought to be harmonious throughout and no life can be right in the sight of God unless it is holy. Let me alter that word a little and spell it in a different way, yet retain the same meaning—that is, *whole*—not part of it devoted to righteousness and part to unrighteousness, but all of it of one character, so that it is whole and holy! If that is what God re-

quires, who among us can stand before Him? If You, Lord, should mark inequities, who among us could stand in Your sight? Not one! We must all fall down before You and confess our guiltiness.

Notice, next, how the Psalmist enquires, "*Who shall stand?*" If there were any way of getting into Heaven by a back door, or of hiding our sins from God's eyes, we might have some ground of hope, but, Brothers and Sisters, there will come a day when we shall stand before God like prisoners at the bar. In that grand assembly, which shall be summoned by the sound of a trumpet around the Judgment Seat of God at the last assize, there is no one who will then be able to find a place of shelter, for the rocks will fall on us and not yield to our entreaties, nor will the mountains fulfill our wish and hide us from Him who will then be seated upon the Throne of God. No, we must then be before Him and when He begins to judge, then shall the wicked flee from before His face like chaff before the wind! And unless you and I have some better righteousness than our own, when God begins to mark inequities and to punish them, we shall no more be able to stand than will the rest of mankind, but we, too, shall be driven before the blast of Justice into the fire which never can be quenched!

Think of this, my Brothers and Sisters—could any one of you now, apart from Christ, stand up before the living God? If you had, at this moment, to enter the dock and plead for your life before the Most High, without any Mediator to intercede for you, could you do it? No! You know that you could not. There is nobody here who would dare to appear before God except through Jesus Christ! We should all shudder at the very thought of such fatal presumption! Even those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are not always quite clear about appearing before God—how much less, then, must they be who have no robe of righteousness at all, but are only clad in the rags of their own inequities? How shall they stand in that last dread day?

The Psalmist asks, "*Who shall stand?*" as if he felt that he could not himself do so and, moreover, that he did not know anybody in the whole range of his acquaintance who could thus stand. David, who probably wrote this Psalm, had known many good men in his time and he was accustomed to associate with the excellent of the earth. Yet he says, "O Lord, who shall stand?" And I may repeat his question now, since God has marked our inequities, "Who among us can stand in His sight upon the footing of our own good works?" Echo answers, "Who?" Did you think that you could, my Friend, before you came in here? You say, "I attend a church regularly. I have been baptized, confirmed and have taken the sacrament. I can stand." Oh, do not attempt to stand on such a rotten plank as that! You need something far more substantial than that to support you! Or did you say, good Friend, "Well, I have always been a Dissenter. I have taken my seat, almost from a child, in the Meeting House and I have lived so that others esteem me and reckon me to be a man of God. And I think I can stand in my own consistency of character"? Ah, my Brother! You know not what the requirements of God really

are if you can talk like that, for there are none of us who shall be able to stand when He comes to judge and try us unless we stand upon Christ's merits! When God puts us into His scales, one by one, we shall all be found wanting! When He puts us into the furnace, one by one, He will find us nothing but a mass of dross! I mean, of course, unless we are saved by Grace and are trusting in the perfect obedience and atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son.

Let us, therefore, all repeat this confession of the Psalmist and acknowledge that we are all guilty before God, for it is clear that no mercy can come to us until we are willing to put ourselves in the position where mercy can rightly deal with us. Mercy is for the guilty, forgiveness is for the unrighteous—so, if we will not class ourselves among the guilty and the unrighteous, mercy and forgiveness can never come to us!

**II.** Now, secondly, we come to THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE. Although he felt that none could stand before God by themselves, yet he said, "But there is forgiveness with You." How did he know that? And how do we know it?

Well, we know that there is forgiveness with God, *because we have been informed by Revelation concerning the Character of God*—and we find one prominent feature in the Character of God is that "He delights in mercy." It gives Him the greatest possible pleasure when He can righteously forgive sin. He needs not to be entreated, as though He were slow to pardon, for it is one of His special joys to cast iniquity into the depths of the sea! God's Character, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, convinces us that there is forgiveness with Him!

Moreover, this impression, conveyed to us by the general tenor of the Scriptures, *is deepened by the direct teaching of the Gospel*. Why did Jesus come into the world to be a Savior if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did He offer an Atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that Atonement? Why was the fountain filled with blood if it were not God's intent to wash away the stains of His people's guilt? Oh, yes, that accursed and yet blessed Cross, or, rather, that bleeding Savior dying upon it ought to give us such an assurance of God's forgiveness that we might never doubt it! There is forgiveness with God! Each wound of Christ proclaims it with an emphasis which makes it an absolute certainty!

Further, Beloved, we are assured that God will forgive sin *because we have so many definite promises to that effect*. I shall not stop to quote many of them, for I hope you know them for yourselves. Here are three—"Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This blessed Book is as full of promises and proclamations of mercy as an egg is full of meat! It

abounds in messages of love and Grace! It tells us that God wills not the death of the sinner, that He delights not in judgment, for that is His left-handed work, but that His compassion freely moves towards the blackest and vilest of sinners when they repent and return to Him. He is never so much at home, so completely fulfilling the purposes of His Being as when He presses the wanderer to His bosom and cries, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together." This is the Doctrine that is clearly taught in the Word of God and, therefore, we share the Psalmist's confidence that there is forgiveness with Him!

In the Scriptures we are told that God's forgiveness is full. He does not half forgive, as men often do. "I can forgive," says somebody, "but I cannot forget." But God—wonderful as it seems to us—forgets as well as forgives! This is His own declaration—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Man's forgiveness is often only verbal. The venom of anger lingers in his heart while the profession of forgiveness is upon his lips. But God's forgiveness is full and ample. When He says that He forgives, He means it in the fullest sense of the word. He will treat you, repenting Sinner, as though you had never transgressed against Him! He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus and you shall stand before Him, throughout eternity, as if even a *thought* of sin had never defiled your mind!

It is full forgiveness that God bestows and it is as free as it is full. You are not to buy it with your tears or your good deeds, for it is freely given to you by God. He is more willing to forgive you than you are to be forgiven—and it is more easy for Him to blot out your sin than it was for you to commit that sin! If there were no provision for the removal of your sin, what would you do? But there is abundant provision, made by God, for your forgiveness! His great mercy has been at work from before the foundation of the world so as to have everything in readiness for the complete forgiveness of all who repent of sin and trust in Jesus!

That forgiveness is also immediate. It is yours as soon as you repent and believe. Oh, how my soul leaped with joy when I first understood that God had forgiven me all my sin! That great act was instantaneous and it may be so with you, also! Your coming to God may take time, but God's forgiveness of your sin is bestowed in a moment! The instant that a sinner believes in Christ, his sin is all gone, just as much gone as it will be if he lives 50 years and is a diligent servant of God all the time. Yes, I venture to say that the dying thief, when he had given one penitent glance at Christ, was as truly delivered from sin as those blessed spirits which had been for centuries before the Throne of God on high! Only think, my Friend, what it would be for you to receive forgiveness in a moment! You may have come in here as black as Hell itself through sin—yet go out without a stain upon you! "It cannot be done," says someone. Yes it can, but only by God! For with Him all things are possible and He

has already done it for many whom I know—and He will do it for all those who come to Him in penitence and put their trust in His dear Son!

And this forgiveness, once received, is irreversible. It is not God's way to pardon a man and then, afterwards, to condemn him! That is the fashion of a certain set of theologians who believe in people being once forgiven and yet ultimately lost. I find no such teaching as that in the Scriptures! If the Lord says to anyone, "I absolve you," it is done and, in that moment, every sin is forever put away! I even go the length of Kent's hymn—

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

There is no playing fast and loose with you, Beloved. If you believe in Christ, you are justified with a justification that will stand the test of time, the strain of death and the trial of eternity! "He that believes on Him is not condemned," and he shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end. What do you say to this full, free, immediate and irreversible pardon?

And this pardon is for every sinner, of every kind, who repents and believes in Jesus. Many people seem to think that when we preach about the pardon of sin, we mean the pardon of not having "taken the sacrament," as they express it, or not attending regularly a place of worship, or some such matters—but we mean the pardon of the greatest sins that anyone can commit—the pardon of thieving, the pardon of lying, the pardon of swearing, the pardon of infidelity, the pardon of fornication, the pardon of adultery, the pardon of murder! We do not preach a sham forgiveness for sham sinners. Christ Jesus is not a physician who came into the world merely to cure the finger ache. No, but it is the deadly disease of sin that Christ has come to cure! He has not come all the way from Heaven to earth and died in order that He might simply wash a tiny spot of blackness from a fair lady's hand! He has come to make a Blackamoor white, to make the foulest and most abominable wretch that curses the earth, whiter than the snow! I will go as far as ever I can and say that if there is anybody who has committed every mentionable and every unmentionable sin—if he has even lived in secret vice and transgression till he would not dare to sit in the seat he occupies if others did but know one-tenth of what he has done—I am sent to tell even him that Jesus receives just such sinners as he is as soon as they repent and believe in Him! Well may we sing—

***"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

So we have come thus far with our subject. First, there is the confession that none of us can stand before God without a Mediator and, next, there is the confidence that, with God, there is forgiveness!

**III.** Every thoughtful person will be glad to follow on to the third point, which is, THE CONSEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS.

I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that together with the return of Popery to this country—and it is coming back fast—there is scarcely a street in London in which you may not smell it at one end or the other. There has come back with it a kind of Roman fog which has obscured the vision of the general public. The editor of one precious newspaper—the newspaper editors, as you know, are all very profound theologians and you may always accept any theology that you find in the newspaper when it agrees with the teaching of the Bible—one of these clever men is alarmed because people are taught to sing—

***“Till to Jesus’ work you cling  
By a simple faith,  
Doing is a deadly thing,  
Doing ends in death.”***

“This is dreadful,” says the critic. All those gentlemen who bring out newspapers are so moral that they are afraid for the morality of Christian people, so they give us a great deal of warning and exhortation against such teaching as that hymn contains! The time was when almost every pulpit in England rang with the grand Doctrine of Justification by Faith and then the whole current of religious thought was strongly set against anything like salvation by the works of men! But, alas, it is not so now, for, with this Popery which has returned to our land, there has come back the common notion that, after all, salvation must be by works and there must be some merit in what man is doing. And that, if we go in for preaching the free pardon of sin, we shall demoralize this wonderfully pious country! And if we preach Lutheranism and Calvinism, we shall run the risk of making London a most wicked city!

It would be a dreadful thing, certainly, to make London worse than it is! But to my mind, that is a thing almost impossible of achievement. Still, that is the fear which is held before us, that we might pollute the precious intelligence and purity of this wonderful 19<sup>th</sup> Century by preaching the full justification of all who believe in Jesus. It will stand a good deal of polluting and then not be much worse than it is at present—but that is the fear with which our newspaper editors are trying to alarm us. Now it so happens that this was the constant talk of the Papists against Protestantism—their cry was, “If you preach Justification by Faith, men will never do good works. If you preach that pardon of sin is freely given, you will never get the people to be even decently honest.” But this theory has been exploded by fact. Remember what Dr. Chalmers said—that, in his first pastorate, he preached morality till he had scarcely a moral person in his parish! He preached righteousness and goodness till he could hardly find a single decent honest man anywhere about him! But, as soon as he began to preach salvation by the Grace of God, there came a total change over the characters of those who were round about him and, therefore, that man of profound erudition and of a masterly mind, sat like a child at the feet of Jesus to bear His testimony that it is the Gospel of the Grace of God, and not the preaching of the works of the Law, that creates holiness and produces good works!

You may go to the work-mongers to hear about good works, but you must come back to the Believers in Christ to find them. Their changed lives prove that the Gospel does produce the best possible results. The more we trample down human merit, the more do we exalt the merit of Christ! The more we show the absolute uselessness of good works to merit salvation, the more do we promote the highest type of morality and the more we lead men to live unto God from motives of gratitude for what He has done for them. This is a matter of fact.

What did the Romanism and the work-mongering of Laud produce? The Cavaliers, with their dainty perfumed curls! But what did the Justification by Faith, preached by Owen, and Howe, and Charnock, produce? Our Puritan forefathers, who, with all the sternness against which some speak, were the godliest race of Englishmen who have ever lived in this land! God send us back the like of them! You usually find that side which boasts its practicalness to be impractical and, on the other hand, the side which cries out against human works as a ground of trust, to be the very side which abounds in holiness unto the Glory of God! Well now, the text says, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Thus, you see, the Doctrine of Free Forgiveness actually produces in man's mind a fear of God! You might have thought the Psalmist would have said, "There is no forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," but it is not so.

*The opposite of our text is very manifest.* When there is no forgiveness, or when a man thinks there is none, what is the consequence? He is driven to despair and despair often leads to desperate living. Our old proverb says, "You may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," and that is the spirit that actuates the despairing sinner. He says, "I cannot be forgiven. I must be damned—so I may as well enjoy life while I have it. There is no hope of Heaven for me, so why should I not make the most I can of earth? If I cannot obtain salvation from God, I will see what I can get out of the devil." Is not that kind of talk quite natural? If there is no hope of forgiveness, then there is no proper fear of God.

Many are abiding in a state of carelessness *because they really do not know whether there is any pardon to be had.* When a man is in doubt as to whether he can be forgiven, he says, "I am afraid it would be a very long process and I do not know whether I would get it even then. Perhaps there is no pardon to be had, so I might become a religious man and yet miss the forgiveness of sins." That is the thought of many and, therefore, they become torpid and lethargic, careless and indifferent. But when the Holy Spirit teaches a man that there is forgiveness to be had, he would leap out of his very body rather than miss it! Now you will see him gird up his loins and run with endurance till he reaches the goal! Now the man will play the man! He says, "What? Is there forgiveness for such a sinner as I am? Is a new start in life possible for one who has been so sad a failure? Is the picking up of the harlot off the street and the thief from the prison and the debauchee out of the gutter possible?" This hope gives the man something that is like a new mainspring to a watch. You

have put within him that which will help him to subdue his sin and become a better man throughout the rest of his life. Is it not so? Only assure the man of the pardon of his sin and that assurance supplies new vigor to his soul!

*How encouraging, too, is the belief that there is pardon to be had!* But, more, how sanctifying is the actual reception of it! Imagine the experience of some dear friend who has just believed in Jesus and to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is forgiven. What sort of a man will he be? I will try and picture him to you. Already I see his eyes glistening with a light I never saw there before. The man looks positively handsome! You would hardly recognize him if you knew him before this great change happened to him. He had a burden on his mind that made him always look worn out. That has gone and now he looks supremely blest! But I also see tears in his eyes—why? He was not much given to weeping in his old days. He is grieving to think that he should ever have offended so kind a God, for nothing makes us so sorry for sin as the sense of being completely forgiven. He knows he is pardoned, he is sure of it! He knows that God loves him and now he loathes himself that he should ever have sunk so low. Yet, if you will take one of his tears and put it under a microscope, or analyze its component parts, you will find that there is no bitterness in it. Joy is mingled with his sorrow as he stands at the foot of the Cross and bathes his Lord's feet with his penitential, yet rainbow tears. Now see him go home. He has some Christian friends there, I hope, and if so, he will not be long with them before they begin to notice the change in him! And it is not long before he wants to tell them the blessed secret! Mother wants to know what has happened to her boy and his arms are thrown around her neck as he says, "Mother, I have found the Lord." She is very delighted and perhaps very surprised, for it was not his usual way to talk about religion! Sometimes he used to sneer and jeer at it. Will he go to bed without prayer? No, he needs nobody to tell him to pray—he has been praying all the way home and while he has been sitting there. These are the first real prayers he has ever presented, but it has now become as natural for him to pray as it is for a living man to breathe!

Watch that man, tomorrow, when he goes to his work. Perhaps he does not introduce the subject of religion among his workmates, but he keeps himself to himself as much as he can. By-and-by, they begin using filthy language around his bench and, at last, he cannot endure it, so he lets fall just a little word or two of protest—and then they have found him out. For the next few days, they will cluster round him, jesting and jeering. "He is a hypocrite, of course." That is their notion of fair play—everybody who does not think as they think must be a hypocrite! "He has some selfish motive for turning Methodist." They know very well that they would not do anything good unless there was something to be got by it, so they measure the other man's corn by their own bushel and they impute to him some unworthy motive. And now he, who was always, "Hail fellow well met," gets abundance of banter and abuse, if not worse. He

gets away, sometimes, where he can pray by himself, and he likes to find a quiet corner where he can read his Bible. He used to read nothing but the low trashy novels of the day, if he read anything at all, but the Word of the Lord has now become sweet and precious to him. He has a little two-penny Testament in his pocket and he gets a few minutes, whenever he can, that he may become better acquainted with his Master's Word. He is missed very much over at "The Black Bull," or, "The White Horse," and he is likely to be missed there, for he has found a better tap to draw from and to drink at—and he no longer goes to the entertainments where his former companions revel in rioting and chambering and wantonness. They ask, "Where is old Jack gone? What has become of him?" It has happened to him, as to many more—"Old things are passed away; all things are become new."

There is another man in that workshop who swears occasionally and drinks a great deal—and he says that he does not believe in this Doctrine of Grace—he thinks its tendency is immoral. Ah, his own talk is not very sweet, but he is very strong upon that point of morality! Give him a pint of beer and see how he will argue! Give him another pint and then see how he will denounce this Calvinistic doctrine of immediate pardon through faith in Jesus! He says that if everybody believed in that way, he does not know what would happen, but he appears very horrified at the prospect, especially after he has had a third pint of beer! I notice that some of you laugh at my description. Well, the thing I am alluding to, the miserable hypocrisy of the world, *ought* to be laughed at—unless we *cry* over it—which would be better. They call us cants, but the biggest cants are on the other side. I tell you that there is no cant in all the world so despicable as the mean hypocritical man who picks out every honest Christian and says that he is a hypocrite! Such people know better, yet they must bespatter us with mud in order that their own filthiness may not be observed. I may well speak upon this matter, for I am one of the principal sufferers from this kind of treatment and I contend that we do not deserve this at the hands of the world. We know, too, that it is enmity against our Master and against His Truth that provokes such attacks.

Yet, sometimes a converted man has a different experience from that which I have been describing. There is a dear Brother—not present now, or else I might not tell the story—an earnest and useful member of this Church. Many years ago I recollect his writing to tell me of his conversion. He was then a butler in a noble family and I rejoiced with him over his conversion. Some months later, he came and brought me two guineas as an offering to God. And, as he laid them on my vestry table, he said, "This is how I came by them. I am employed as butler to Lady So-and-So. When I became a Christian, I cleaned my plate so much better than I had ever done before, that her Ladyship took notice of what I did and, on one occasion, when she had company, she brought a number of distinguished individuals into the butler's pantry to see how beautiful her plate looked. "One of them said to me, 'You do this work thoroughly well, young man! Here are a couple of guineas for you.' So I said to him, 'It is

very kind of your Lordship, but I shall take that money, next Sunday, to Mr. Spurgeon.' He made some jesting remark and then asked, 'Why are you going to do that?' I replied, 'It is because I love the Lord Jesus Christ that I have become a better servant to her Ladyship than I used to be. I hope I am not careless now about any of my duties and I want my Savior to have the credit of all I do.'"

So, dear Friends, you see that you can glorify Jesus Christ in cleaning plate, or digging in a garden, or selling potatoes, or anything else that is right, so long as you do it unto Him and to His praise—doing the best you can because you feel that a Christian ought never to do anything badly. Even the most common thing that he turns out should be done by him as a servant of Christ to the very best of his ability. If you act so, I shall not care what profession or occupation you choose, so long as it is a lawful one, nor in what line of life you may be called to move, so long as this is your firm and fixed resolve, "I will not seek the glory of self. I will not seek my own honor. I will seek the glory of God alone."

My Friends, come and put your trust in Jesus! Take His blood and righteousness to be your only hope and then you may, by your blameless, honest, upright, sober, kindly Christian lives, put to silence the accusations of foolish men, or, at least take away from them any ground of accusation. Walk carefully, prayerfully, humbly before God and men, putting your trust, not in yourselves, but in Christ, alone, and you shall then find, in your experience, the best exposition of the text, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," for you will prove, by your own fear of God, which is continually before your own eyes, that His free, rich, Sovereign Grace, manifested in your pardon, did not produce in you, indulgence in sin, but gave you the sweet liberty of walking in holiness and in the fear of the Lord. God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

# **“THERE IS FORGIVENESS”**

## **NO. 2422**

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JULY 21, 1895.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
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***“But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Psalm 130:4.***

HAVE you noticed the verse which comes before the text? It runs thus, “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” That is a confession. Now, confession must always come before absolution. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” If we try to cloak our sin, “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” and no pardon can come from God to us. Therefore, plead guilty, plead guilty! You ought to do it, for you *are* guilty. You will find it wisest to do it, for this is the only way to obtain mercy. Cast yourself upon the mercy of your Judge and you shall find mercy—but first acknowledge that you *need* mercy. Be honest with your conscience and honest with your God—confess the iniquity which you have done and mourn over the righteousness to which you have not attained.

You notice that this confession is recorded with a kind of grave astonishment—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” This is as much as for the Psalmist to say, “I am sure that *I* cannot, and who can?” And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if God shall deal with us according to our iniquities, where shall *we* stand, and who among us shall stand anywhere? I dare not stand to preach if God shall judge me according to my iniquities! You dare not stand to sing—what have you to do with singing if God is marking your iniquities? I wonder that men can stand at their counters and stand at their work while their sin is unforgiven! And then how shall we stand in the Day of Judgment? The best saint on earth, if he stands in his own righteousness, alone, and is judged according to his own offenses, why, the Justice of God will blow him away like the chaff, or consume him as with a flame of fire! “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

It is a dreadful fact that this, “if,” is no, “if,” to those who are not believers in Christ, but it is a matter of terrible certainty! God marks the iniquities of you who are unbelievers. Although as yet He does not visit them upon you, else you could not stand, yet He sees them and He records them! As gold and silver are put into a bag and sealed up, so are your iniquities. All the transgressions of your past life are in the Book of Record, from which they can never be blotted out except by one gracious hand! Would to God that you would accept pardon from that pierced

hand! But, apart from that, your iniquities are engraved as in eternal brass! And in that day when the forgotten things shall be brought to light, all the sins that now lie at the bottom of the sea of time shall be cast up upon the shore and all shall be seen. And every secret thing shall be set in the light of day, and every transgression and iniquity shall be revealed by the light of the Great White Throne—and the ungodly shall be punished for all their ungodly words and ungodly deeds and ungodly thoughts according to the rules of equity in that last day of assize!

O Sirs, God *will* mark iniquity and then, whoever is out of Christ shall be able to stand! Whoever has never hidden in the riven Rock of Ages shall find no shelter! No, shall they not all cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the dreadful face of Him who shall sit upon the Throne of God? Even at this time there are some in this House of Prayer whose sins are lying upon them and whose transgressions are written in God’s Book of Remembrance! How can they dare to stand, even, before a Throne of Grace, and how will they stand before the Throne of Judgment?

That third verse makes an appropriate preface to my text—it is the black thundercloud upon which I see written, as with the finger of God and with a lightning flash, the wonderful words we are now to consider, “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

**I.** My first head is taken from the first word of the text—“But.” Here is A WHISPER OF HOPE. “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? *But*”—Oh, the sweet music of that little word! It seems to come in when the terrible drum of alarm is being beaten and the dreadful clarion of judgment is sounding forth! There is a pause with this word, “*But there is forgiveness.*” It is a soft and gentle whisper from the lips of Love—“*But there is forgiveness.*”

This comes into the soul *after a full confession of sin*. When you have knelt down before God and acknowledged your transgressions and your shortcomings, and your heart is heavy, and your soul is ready to burst with inward anguish, then may you hear this gracious Word of God, “But there is forgiveness.” When, under a sense of sin, it seems as if the very fiends of Hell were shrieking in your ears because of the awful doom which is drawing near—when you shall be driven from hope and from the Presence of God, then, when you fall on your face in the terror of your soul because of your iniquity, *then* comes this sweet Word of God—“But there is forgiveness.” It is all true which your conscience tells you. It is all true which the Word of God threatens concerning you! Then acknowledge that it is true and bow yourself in the dust before God—and then you shall hear in your soul, not only in your ears, but in your *heart*, this blessed Word of God, “But there is forgiveness.”

Some of us remember when we first heard this Word. When it came, it was to us like the clear shining after rain—“But there is forgiveness.” Some of us were, perhaps, for weeks and months without any knowledge of this blessed Truth of God—pining for it, hungering for it—and when the Lord brought it home with power into our hearts by the Holy Spirit,

oh, there was no music like it! Angels could not sing any tune so sweet as these Words of God spoken to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “But there is forgiveness.” Go your way, my Hearer, and confess before God all your sin! I will not say what it has been. Perhaps you have lived for many years in the pursuit of sinful pleasures. Perhaps you have been dominated by your own will—you have tried to be lord and master, or queen and mistress of your own wicked spirit. And, perhaps, you have done evil as often as you could, and you are sensible of your sin, and your wounds bleed before God because of it. Well, then, in comes this whisper of hope—“But there is forgiveness.” God make it as sweet to you to hear it as it is to me to tell of it!

This whisper of hope sometimes comes to the soul by the Spirit of God *as the result of observation*. A man, full of sin, thinks to himself, “Well, but others, also, have been full of sin, yet they have been forgiven. What if I have been a blasphemer and injurious? Yet so was Saul of Tarsus and he had forgiveness from the Lord. What if I have been a thief? Yet so was he who hung upon the cross, and that day was with his Lord in Paradise. What if I have been a fallen woman, and have been defiled with sin? Yet there is forgiveness, for she was forgiven who was a sinner, and came and washed Christ’s feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, loving much because she had much forgiven. What, even if I have been an adulterer? Yet such was David. What if I have been a persecutor? Yet such was Manasseh. Into whatever sin I may have fallen, I observe that others like I have been snatched from these horrible pits—and why should not I be?” I would whisper this message into the ear of anybody here who is conscious of sin. If you will but look about you, you will see others like yourself who have been washed, cleansed and sanctified. Some of them are on earth, and many more of them are in Heaven, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Sweet, then, is this whisper of hope arising out of observation of others—“But there is forgiveness.”

This whisper also comes in *opposition to the voice of despair*, for despair says to a soul under a sense of sin, “There is no mercy for you! You have sinned beyond all limits. Your death warrant is signed, the verdict has been given against you, there remains nothing for you but everlasting burnings!” No, Soul, God’s Word against your word any day! God’s Word says, “There is forgiveness,” Nothing can destroy despair except a message from God, Himself, and this passage is like a huge hammer to break in sunder the gates of brass and dash in pieces the bars of iron—“There is forgiveness.” “All manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” In the greatness of His heart, Jehovah declares that He delights in mercy, and this is the song which went up to Him in the old Jewish Church with many a repetition, and is just as true today—

**“For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure!  
He His chosen race did bless  
In the wasteful wilderness.  
For His mercies shall endure,**

***Ever faithful, ever sure.  
He has, with a piteous eye,  
Looked upon our misery!  
For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

You have not gone beyond His mercy! You cannot go beyond His mercy if you will trust His Son! “There is forgiveness.” Let this whisper drive away despair! What a blessed whisper it is! “There is forgiveness.” “There is forgiveness.” Let it enter your soul and drive those grim ogres and hobgoblins of despair away into the sea of forgetfulness. “There is forgiveness.”

This whisper of hope is, further, *the answer to conscience*. When Mr. Conscience is really at work, he has a very terrible voice. There is no lion in the thicket that roars like a truly awakened conscience. Conscience says, “You knew your duty, but you did not do it. You have sinned away many a day of Grace—you have refused Gospel invitations, you have striven against the light of nature and the Light of God—you will go down to Hell well deserving your doom! When the millstone is about your neck, to sink you into the abyss, you will deserve to have it so, for you have earned all this for yourself by your iniquities.” I will not seek to stifle conscience, nor ask you to shut your ear to his voice. Let him speak, but still, do you not hear between his roars this sweet note as of a silver harp, “But-but-but-but there is forgiveness”? O conscience, there is forgiveness! I am as guilty as you say I am, and much more, for you cannot see all the sin that I have committed—“but there is forgiveness.”

Let me go still further and say that this whisper of hope is *an answer, even, to the Law of God*. The Ten Commandments are like ten great cannons fully charged and if we were, like the rebels in India, tied to the muzzles of them and blown to pieces, it would be only what we deserve! But just when the fuse is lighted and about to be applied, there rings out this blessed Word of God, “There is forgiveness. There is forgiveness.” The Law says, “The soul that sins, it shall die,” and the Law knows no mercy—it cannot know any mercy. Sinai has never yet yielded one drop of water to cool the parched tongue of a guilty sinner! Never did a shower reach its craggy peaks! It is a mountain of fire and the thunder rolls over its summit with the sound of a trumpet exceedingly loud and long, making all who hear it to tremble!

God, when He comes to judge, must judge according to justice—“but-but-but-but there is forgiveness”! There is another mountain besides Sinai—you have not come unto Mount Sinai—but you have come unto Mount Zion! There is another Lawgiver besides Moses! There is Jesus, the Son of God! There is another Covenant besides the Covenant of Works—there is a Covenant of rich, free, Sovereign Grace, and this is the essence of it—“There is forgiveness.” Oh, that I could convey that whisper into the ear of every sinner who is here! I *can* do that, but oh, that God the Holy Spirit would put it into your *heart*, that you might never forget, “There is forgiveness”!

**II.** Now I advance to my second division. In our text I see, besides the whisper of hope, AN ASSURANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD—

**“There is forgiveness with You.”**

Dear Friends, “there is forgiveness.” Nature could never tell you this great Truth of God. You may walk the cornfields at this moment and see the bounty of God in the waving grain, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You may climb the hills and see the beauty of the landscape. You may look upon silver streams that make glad the fields, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You can see the goodness of God to man, but not the mercy of God to sinners! But if you come to this Book, you can read it here.

Turn to the Old Testament and you will see that *it reveals sacrifice*—lambs, bullocks and goats. What did they all mean? They meant that there was a *way of pardon through the shedding of blood*—they taught men this, that God would accept certain sacrifices on their behalf. Then turn to the New Testament and there you will see it revealed more clearly that God has accepted a Sacrifice, the Sacrifice which He, Himself, gave, for, “He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” In this Book you read how He can be “just, and the Justifier of him that believes.” How He can be a just God and yet a Savior. How He can forgive and yet be just as righteous as if He punished and showed no mercy. This, in fact, is the Revelation of the Gospel! This is what this Book was written to teach, to tell you that, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Therefore we come to you, not merely with a hopeful whisper, but with a full, distinct, emphatic, unquestionable assurance—“There is forgiveness.” “There is forgiveness.”

Turn to this Word of God and you will find *the certainty of forgiveness*. “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” What a grand article of the creed that is! Do you believe it? Then do not doubt, do not hesitate—“There is forgiveness.” You must know that there is such a thing, or else you will not be eager to seek for it! It is in vain to go in quest of a myth or a perhaps—but here is a certainty for you. “There is forgiveness.” Doubt it not! Believe it to be so and then seek after it with all your heart. “There is forgiveness.” That is a matter of certainty.

Notice, if you please, *the broad indefiniteness of the text*—“There is forgiveness.” It does not say, “There is forgiveness for this sin or for that,” but, “There is forgiveness.” Where God draws no limit, do not you draw any! If God sets the door wide open and says, “There is forgiveness,” then come along, you sinners, whoever you may be, from jails and penitentiaries! Come along from your Pharisaic places of boasting and self-righteousness! Come along with you, for there is forgiveness even for you! You rich, you poor, you learned, you ignorant that know nothing, know at least this—“There is forgiveness.” This text shuts out nobody! I bless God, sometimes, for the grand vagueness of His speech. When He draws lines of distinction, as sometimes He does, then are we anxious to know who is shut in and who is shut out. But when He simply says, “There is

forgiveness,” let us jump at it and grasp it by an act of faith and, once let us but grasp it, He will never take it from us, for Jesus Himself said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Notice, too, *the immediate presentness of the text*. Our version has it, “There is forgiveness,” but there is no verb in the Hebrew. The translators put in the words, “There is,” so we are to read it, “There *was* forgiveness.” “There *is* forgiveness.” “There *will be* forgiveness as long as life lasts.” But I like it as it stands here. “There is forgiveness” *tonight*. “There is forgiveness” *now*. “There is forgiveness” where you sit, just as you are, just now! Oh, that I could say it so as to convince you of the truth of it, and give a grip, a squeeze of my right hand, to each one of you! I would like to do it! O my dear Friends, do not despair, do not be bowed down any longer, “there is forgiveness.” There is forgiveness now!

And it is intended to have a *personality about it*. It is no use telling anybody that there is forgiveness for other people, but none for him. This text is made for you, dear Friends, and the preacher is sent to proclaim this Truth of God to you, for he is sent to preach, as far as he can, to every creature under Heaven. “There is forgiveness” for you, though you think there is none! Your thoughts are not as God’s thoughts—neither are your ways as His ways. There is, there surely is, at this moment, forgiveness! Oh, that you would prove it by an act of faith! The moment you believe in Christ, your sins are all forgiven! Look to Him whom I would hold up before you, as Moses held up the brazen serpent on the pole! Look, for there is life in a look to Him that died for guilty men—

**“There is life for look at the Crucified One!  
There is life at this moment for thee.  
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved—  
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”**

May this be the moment when the Spirit of God shall make it to be so to many here present! “There is forgiveness.”

**III.** Now I must go a little farther and notice, in the text, A DIRECTION OF WISDOM—“There is forgiveness with You.” “With You.”

Do you hear this, dear Heart? You are shrinking from your God. You are anxious to run away from Him—but *that is where the forgiveness is*—with God! Where the offense went, from that very place the forgiveness comes—“There is forgiveness with You.” “Against You, You only, have I sinned,” but, “there is forgiveness with You,” with the very God whom you have offended! It is with God in such a way that it is *part of His Nature*. “He delights in mercy.” “God is Love.” He glorifies Himself by passing by transgression, iniquity and sin. There is forgiveness with God. It is in God’s very Nature that it lies. Fly not away, then, from the very place where forgiveness awaits you!

“There is forgiveness with You.” Some read the passage, “There is a propitiation with You.” Now, *the Lord Jesus Christ is that Propitiation*, and He is with God. He has gone up into Glory and He is at the right hand of the Father even now. Make your way to God, for the Propitiation is there before you! Meet your God at the Mercy Seat lest you have to meet Him

at the Judgement Seat! There is forgiveness always with God, for Jesus is always there. Therefore, go to Him and find it.

“There is forgiveness with You,” that is to say, *God has it in His immediate gift*. He will not have to hunt for it, for it is with Him, He has it ready to bestow! He will not need you to plead for it with so many sighs, cries and tears, but He has it waiting for you. The writ by which you shall be set free is already made out! “There is forgiveness with You.” The Lord Jehovah has signed you free pardon, it lies before Him now—go and take it! “There is forgiveness with You,” immediately, and if you do but believe in Jesus, you shall receive it from His hand!

“There is forgiveness with You.” Then, depend upon it, there is *a way for forgiveness to get to me*, for if God has it, He can somehow get to me with it! I may be far off from hope. I may be surrounded, as it were, with brick walls, shut in like a man in one of the dungeons of the Bastille, where men lay till they were forgotten and the very jailer did not know who they were, nor when they came there. If you are even in such a sad state as *that*, God can get at you—there is forgiveness with Him—and He can get it to you!

And if it is with God, then *there is a way for you to get to it*, for there is One come who stands between you and God! There is a Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus—but you do not need a mediator between Christ and yourself—you can come to Him just as you are! You need a Mediator with God and there is Jesus Christ, who is God and Man, able to lay His hands both on you and on your gracious God, and to bring you into His Presence!

I feel somehow certain that I am going to have some souls, tonight, to be my reward. I love to ring those charming bells, “Free Grace and dying love.” A great part of the pleasure of preaching is derived from the fact that I know that God’s Word will not return to Him void, but that some who hear the Gospel message will receive it and be saved! Listen to this Word of God, you doubting, trembling, despairing sinner—“there is forgiveness”—that forgiveness is with God! If I told you that it was with me and that I was the priest, perhaps you would be foolish enough to believe me. But I will tell you no such lie! It is not with any priest on earth—it is with the Lord! “There is forgiveness with You,” and you may go to God just as you are, with nothing in you hands, and cast yourself at His feet, quoting the name of His dear Son. Rest there and the work is done, for, as God lives, it is true, that there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared!

**IV.** I close with this word. The last part of the text shows A DESIGN OF LOVE—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

Somebody said, “I should have thought that it would have read, “that You may *be loved*.” Yes, so I would have thought, but then, you see, fear, especially in the Old Testament, *includes* love! It includes every holy feeling of reverence, worship and obedience towards God. That is the Old Testament name for true religion—“*the fear of God*.” So I might say that the text declares, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be loved,

worshipped and served.” Still, even in the sense of fear, it is a most blessed fact that they who fear the Lord are delightful to Him. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

Do you not see how it is, dear Friends, that men fear the Lord because He forgives their sins? It must be so because, first, if He did not forgive their sins, *there would be nobody left to fear Him*, for they would all die! If He were to deal with men after their sins, He must sweep the whole race of mankind off the face of the earth! But there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared.

Next, if it were certain that God did not pardon sin, *everybody would despair*, and so, again, there would be nobody to fear Him, for a despairing heart grows hard like the nether millstone. Because they have no hope, men go on to sin worse and worse—but there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. The devils never repent, for there is no pardon for them. There is no Gospel preached in Hell and, consequently, there is no relenting, no repenting, no turning towards God among lost spirits. But there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared by you. What a wonderful effect pardon has upon a man!

What a wonderful effect it has upon a man to know that he is pardoned, to be sure that he is forgiven! *He begins to tremble all over*. Remember how it is written, “And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”

A man who has been forgiven is afraid that he should go and sin again after such love and such mercy. He is melted down by the goodness of the Lord. He does not know what to make of it. For a time he can hardly believe that it is true! I know that when I was converted, I felt at first like Peter when the great iron gate was opened, and the angel brought him out of prison. He knew not what was done to him by the angel and he thought he saw a vision—he could not believe it to be true that he was really released! So is it with the saved sinner—you are so amazed, you are so overwhelmed, that you are filled with fear at the intense delight of pardon, being half afraid that it cannot really be true that such a wretch as you can have been pardoned and that all your iniquities are blotted out forever! The wondrous Grace of God makes you tremble with a holy reverential fear and you sing, with Dr. Watts—

**“When God revealed His gracious name  
And changed my mournful state,  
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,  
The Grace appeared so great!”**

Are there any of God’s people here who are afraid that they do not fear God enough? If you want to revive your fear of God and have it deepened,

believe in your pardon. Believe! It is a singular way to come to fear God, but *believe* that you are forgiven, *prize* your forgiveness, *know* that your sins are blotted out, *cling* to the Cross and all that sweet fear of God, by which is meant the *whole of piety*, will abound in your soul!

Some think that it will be a good way of deepening their Graces to begin to question whether they are Christians. That is the wrong way altogether! Unbelief does not heal anybody—it is *faith* that heals! Believe up to the hilt! Believe, come what may! Believe in Christ, though your sins rage and rave and roar! Believe in Christ, though the devil tells you, you are damned! Should Hell seem to open at your feet, believe in your pardon through the precious blood! Do not stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, and you shall feel yourself filled with a holy fear, joy, peace, love, zeal and a burning desire to serve Him who has done all this for you! “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

If any of you poor people, here, who have not yet found the Savior, are saying, “We wish that we could feel our sin more. We wish that we could fear the Lord more.” Let me tell you that this fear is to come to you *afterwards*. There is forgiveness, first, and *then* the fear comes afterwards. All the fear in the world that is worth having is the result of pardoned sin. The fear that is not to be cast out, the fear that has no torment in it, is that fear which comes of a sense of every iniquity being blotted out! I charge you, believe in Jesus Christ! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I say to you unbelieving ones—Believe in Him now! Rise, take up your bed, and walk. I, who have no power whatever of myself, yet speaking in my Master’s name, know that His power will go with His Gospel and that His Word shall not return to Him void. Believe and live! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALMS 129; 130; 131.**

Three Songs of degrees.

**Psalm 129:1, 2.** *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.* The trials of some of God’s people begin very early. When first we put on the armor of God, the adversary is usually very bitter against us. Some of our old friends and acquaintances cannot bear to see the change in us—and they bitterly oppose us—so that God’s children may have to say, “From our youth they have afflicted us.” But you must not think that the beginning of sorrows will be the end of them. Oh, no! “Many a time have they afflicted me.” God’s children are often called to pass under the rod and the rod is frequently held in the hands of the children of men. Your Savior carried the Cross and He expects you to carry it, too. He does not tell you to take it up now and then, but to take it up *always*, and to follow Him with a constant will, cheerfully bearing it for His dear name’s sake. “Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet”—is not that sweetly put?—“yet they have not

prevailed against me.” You remember how Joseph’s brothers envied him and, at last, sold him into Egypt? Yet from the dungeon he rose to the throne and he could say, “Yet they have not prevailed against me.” If you are of the seed royal, one of the chosen people of God, they shall not prevail against you! Even proud Haman, with all his plotting, was not able to overcome poor Mordecai! And the Lord your God will preserve you from the fury of all your adversaries and bring good to you out of all the evil they try to do to you.

**3.** *The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.* Like one that has been cruelly scourged until each cut of the lash seemed to make a furrow through the quivering flesh. “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.” How truly could our blessed Lord utter these words when He was delivered up to wicked men to be scourged!

**4.** *The LORD is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* “The Lord is righteous.” There is our hope and comfort! He takes away from them the scourge and cuts up the cords of which it is made. And those cords with which they would bind the righteous He cuts into pieces, so that they can do nothing against them—“He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.”

**5.** *Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.* So it seems that the one aimed at and made to suffer is the Church of God—“Zion.” She has often been scourged and afflicted! Her experience is like that of her Covenant Head, and her triumph will be like His triumph.

**6-8.** *Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up: wherewith the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves to his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.* So the adversaries of the Church of God may grow as fast as grass on the roof of a house, but they will perish just as fast, and there will be nothing left of them! They threaten, they bully, they rage, they rave—but it is only for a little while. Now we will read the “De Profundis” Psalm.

**Psalms 130:1.** *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* God’s people have to go into the depths and God’s people pray in the depths—and often they pray best in the depths! The rarest pearls lie deepest in the sea and the most precious prayers come out of the depths of affliction—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Cannot many of you say the same? Looking back upon your past afflictions and trials, yet you can feel that you did pray in them. He that can pray in the depths will soon sing in the heights! If you can pray, you cannot be drowned by all the seas that roll over you. God who brought you into them will bring you out of them if you can pray.

**2.** *Lord, Or, “Adonai,” Sovereign Lord—*

**2.** *Hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* “Hear me, Lord!” What is the use of prayer if God does not hear it? It is said to be a profitable spiritual exercise. So it is, because we believe that God hears it! But apart from that, it would be an idle waste of

words. “Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”

**3.** *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Not one of us, surely! If God were to now deal with us according to our sins, who among us could stand in His Presence?*

**4, 5.** *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.* See, this is all in the first person. Dear Friend, can you use it in the first person? Can you say, “I wait for Jehovah”? Blessed are they that are content to wait His will, but yet, with holy eagerness, are prepared to do that will or to suffer it, as He pleases. “My soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.” All my hope is there. If it were not for His promises I would have no confidence, but one Word of God is better than all the things that can be seen! It is better to trust in God’s declaration than in man’s oaths. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

**6.** *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.* I say, more than they that watch for the morning! Those on the sick bed, who long for their weary waiting to be over. Those afflicted ones who cry in the night of pain, “Would God it were morning!” Those, too, that stand as sentinels, the night before the battle, or after the fight, watch and long to see the morning light. There are many such weary waiters and my soul is one of them, waiting for the Lord, “more than they that watch for the morning.”

**7.** *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.* Enough to buy us back from all our slavery and to buy back our inheritance as well. Our Redeemer is the redeemer of the inheritance that has been mortgaged and now is burdened by the enormous debt of sin—“with Him is plenteous redemption.”

**8.** *And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* That is our worst slavery, our in-equities, our lack of equity, our having acted unfairly to God and unfairly to man. He will redeem us from all that evil—yes, He has redeemed us by price—and He will redeem us by power!

**Psalm 131:1.** *LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.* I commend this verse to some who profess to be Christians, but who are always puzzling their poor brains with intricate questions—who want to solve the mystery of where free will and predestination can meet, how man can be responsible and yet God’s predestination can be fulfilled—and I know not what beside! These are great waters the waves whereof are too big for our little boats! We have quite enough to do, my Brothers, to attend to the plain things of God’s Word, and to strive after holiness and the salvation of our fellow men, without addicting ourselves to tying knots and trying to untie them! It is an unprofitable business—it genders to pride rather than to anything else—and well did David say, “My heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

**2.** *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.* That is a very blessed thing to be able to do, to quiet yourself when, like a weaned child, you are crying under the afflicting hand of God—when you feel a proud spirit murmuring, or when you want to pierce the darkness that veils Divine Truth and want to understand what cannot be understood—and you worry because you are not Omniscient. Oh, it is a blessed thing, then, to say to yourself, “Be quiet, child! Be quiet!” What are you but a child, after all, at your best? What do you know? What *can* you know? Are you not satisfied to hear your Father say, “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter”? Do you not know that here we know but in part, and see but in part? By-and-by, we shall know even as we are known, but not yet. “I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother”—as a child who sucks his thumb and goes to sleep, sobbing—“my soul is even as a weaned child.” David did not say, “My soul is even as a *weaning* child”—fretting, worrying, wanting to have its own will. There is no happiness in that state! But when it is not the, “ing,” but the, “ed”—not the present participle, but the past—then we get into comfort! “My soul is even as a weaned child,” who has given up his old comfort, which he thought was as necessary to him as his life. He finds that, after all, he can live without it, and grow without it, and come to a better manhood without it than with it! “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

**3.** *Let Israel hope in the LORD*—You will never be weaned from Him if you are His, but if you are weaned from the world, so as to have all your hope in the Lord, thrice happy are you! Now, too, you will grow. Now you will come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus which you could never have done if you had not been weaned! I remember that when Sarah weaned Isaac, there was a great feast at the weaning, and I believe that God’s children often have a great feast at their weaning from the world. All the while they are but babes and suck their comforts from the world, they get but little real joy. But when, by Divine Grace, they outgrow that state of things, then is there a great feast made for them!

**3.** *From henceforth and forever.* That is real comfort that you may always enjoy, hoping in the Lord from henceforth and forever! In life and in death here is a blessed confidence that will never fail you! God grant that we may enjoy it now and evermore! Amen.

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

# **FORGIVENESS AND FEAR**

## **NO. 2882**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1904.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1876.***

***“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Psalm 130:4.***

THIS is good news, indeed—the best of news—and they will prize it most who are like the Psalmist was when he wrote these words. And who are they?

First, they are those who are in soul-trouble—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Some of you may, perhaps, think this subject is a very commonplace one, but the soul that is in deep spiritual trouble will not think so. Bread is a very commonplace thing, but it is very precious to starving men. Liberty is an everyday enjoyment to us, but it would be a great gift to those who are in slavery. O you who are in the depths of soul-trouble, like shipwrecked mariners who seem to be sinking in the trough of the sea, or being dragged down by a whirlpool—this text will bring sweet music to your ears! “There is forgiveness.” There is forgiveness with God.

This good news will also have a peculiar sweetness to those who have begun to pray. Read the second verse—“Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” Prayer makes men value spiritual blessings. They are asking for them. They are sincerely seeking them. They are knocking loudly at Mercy’s gate in order to obtain them. And they who are in earnest in their prayers prove that they value the blessing they are seeking and they are delighted to hear that they are likely to secure it. Oh, that it might be said, for the first time, of someone here, “Behold, he prays.” I am sure that such an one will be right glad to listen to even the simplest language that tells out these glad tidings—“There is forgiveness with God.”

And if, to soul-trouble and earnest prayer, there should be added a very deep sense of sin amounting, even, to utter self-condemnation, then I am quite certain that there is no carol that will have sweeter music in it than my text has! Read the third verse and see if you can truly repeat it—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Do you feel that your iniquities condemn you? Are you compelled to plead guilty before God? Well, then, though you cannot claim acquittal on the

ground that you have no sins, yet here is the blessed information that there is forgiveness for sinners! Stand in the dock where the guilty ought to stand and let the Judge condemn you. No, spare Him the trouble—condemn yourself and, when you have done so, and have also trusted the great Atonement made by His dear Son, He will say to you, “There is forgiveness. Be of good cheer—your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” I do not expect to say anything to delight deaf ears, but I do believe that the simple tidings I have to tell will have great weight with those who are in soul-trouble, with those who have begun to pray—and those who are self-condemned on account of sin.

I am going to take the text thus. First, here is *a most cheering announcement*—“There is forgiveness with You.” Secondly, here is *a most admirable design*—“That You may be feared.”

**I.** First, here is A MOST CHEERING ANNOUNCEMENT—“There is forgiveness with You.”

This announcement has great force and value because *it is most certainly true*. When a man hears some news which pleases him, he loses that pleasure if he has reason to suspect that it is not true. The first questions you ask, when someone tells you of some good fortune that concerns you, are of this sort, “Are you quite sure it is so? Can you give me good authority for your assertion?”

Well, this news is certainly true, for *it is consistent with God’s very Nature*. He is a gracious God. “He delights in mercy.” Mercy was the last of His attributes that He was able to reveal. He could be great and good when the world was made, but He could not be merciful until sin had marred His perfect handiwork. There must be an offense committed before there can be mercy displayed towards the offender. Mercy, then, I may say, is God’s Benjamin—His last-born, His favored one, the son of His right hand. I never read that He delights in power, or that He delights in justice, but I do read, “He delights in mercy.” It is the attribute that is sweetest to Himself to exercise. When He goes forth to punish, as He must, His feet are, as it were, shod with iron—but when He comes to manifest His mercy, He rides, as David says, “upon the wings of the wind.” He delights to be gracious and, therefore, I feel sure that there is forgiveness with Him.

We are even more sure that it is so when we remember that *God has given us the best pledge of forgiveness by giving us His dear Son*. He could not be merciful at the expense of His justice, for His Throne is established in righteousness and that righteousness requires that He should by no means spare the guilty. How, then, could He display His Grace and mercy and yet be the just God? He did it thus. The offended One took the nature and the place of the offenders and here, on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, who was “very God of very God,” suffered all that we had brought upon ourselves, that the Law of God might be honored by executing its full penalty and yet that the Free Grace and mighty mercy of God might be equally manifest. If any of you doubt whether

there is forgiveness with God, I pray you to stand on Calvary, in imagination, and to look into the wounds of Jesus. Gaze upon His nail-pierced hands and feet, His thorn-crowned brow, and look right into His heart where the soldier's spear was thrust—and blood and water flowed out for the double cleansing of all who trust Him. O Christ of God, it could not be that You should die and yet that sinners cannot be forgiven! It would be a monstrous thing that You should have bled to death and yet that no sinner should be saved by that death! It cannot be—there must be forgiveness—there is forgiveness since Jesus died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

Moreover, *we have God's promise of forgiveness*, as well as the gift of His Son. His Word says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” It is declared by the Apostle John, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Many other passages in the Bible teach the same glorious Truth—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” Time would fail me to mention all the Lord's promises of forgiveness, they are so many. And remember that it is the God who cannot lie who has given the promises, so you may be sure that they are all true and that there is forgiveness with Him!

We are certain, also, that there is forgiveness, *because there is a Gospel, and the very essence of the Gospel lies in the proclamation of the pardon of sin*. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” But no one can be saved without sin being pardoned—therefore, there is pardon for the sin of everyone who believes and is baptized according to the Gospel command. Christ's ministers may all go home, for their office is useless, if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may shut up all our houses of prayer, for it is a mockery to God and man to keep them open if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may abolish the Mercy Seat, itself, and burn this blessed Bible if there is no forgiveness of sins! What value can there be in the means of Grace—what can be the use or signification of any Gospel at all—if sin is not pardonable? But it can be pardoned! There is forgiveness. If you want evidence in confirmation of that declaration, there are hundreds of us who are prepared to prove that we have been forgiven—and there are hundreds of thousands, now alive, who know that their sins have been pardoned and that they have been absolved from all their guilt for Christ's sake! And there are millions of millions, beyond all count, before yon burning

Throne of God who continually praise Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood!

I bear my own personal testimony that I know there is forgiveness, for I have been forgiven. If it were the proper time to do so, I would ask all here who know that their sins have been forgiven, to stand up. If I did so, some of you would be astonished to see how great an army of men and women in this Tabernacle would declare that they, also, have been saved by Grace, and that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Unless we are all deceived—and we are not, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God within us that we are not—and unless all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, there is forgiveness with God! This fact should make us very joyous because it is so certain. There is no need to dispute it—I hope none of you will do so. If any of you doubt it, I beg you to come and test it and try it for yourselves and, with the blessing of God, you will say with the Psalmist, “There is forgiveness.”

This fact gathers additional sweetness from another source, namely, that *the declaration is in the present tense*. “There is forgiveness.” When? Now—at this moment there is forgiveness. Possibly you are 80 years of age, but there is forgiveness. Or you may be very young—a little boy or girl, but there is forgiveness for the young as well as for the old! You tell me that you have already rejected many invitations? Yes, but there is forgiveness. It is to be had now, blessed be God, for, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Believe right now in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and you have forgiveness *now*—in a moment! It takes no appreciable period of time for God to forgive sin. Swifter than the lightning flash is the glance from the eye of God that conveys peace and pardon to the soul that trusts in Jesus! You would need time to get a pardon signed and sealed by an earthly monarch, but time is out of the question with the God of Everlasting Love. A sigh, a groan, a genuine confession of sin, a believing glance of the eye to Christ on Calvary—and all is done—your sin has passed away, there is forgiveness and you have received it! Therefore, go and rejoice in it!

You must not forget to notice, however, that *this is a fact which refers to God Himself*—“There is forgiveness *with You*”—and with nobody else. I charge you to spurn, with the utmost indignation, the so-called “absolution” by a so-called “priest,” whether of the Church of England or the Church of Rome! Such absolution as that is not worth the foul breath that utters it! I marvel, sometimes, how any man can ever, apparently, delude himself and try to deceive his sinful fellow creature by daring to say, “I forgive you your sins.” I suppose it is use and habit that makes men do strange things at which an unsophisticated conscience shudders, but, to me, the blasphemer’s coarse oath that makes my blood curdle as I go down the street has not half the iniquity in it of the man who deliberately puts on certain specified vestments, claims to be a priest of the Most High God, and then says to a sinner like himself, “I absolve

you.” I think the time has come when all Christians ought, in every way they can, to shake themselves from these abominable priestcraft and lies altogether! The very dress we wear, the very position we occupy in the congregation, should be a protest against this wickedness in the sight of God—for wickedness it is, of the most extreme kind—though I believe the perpetrators of it do not always know what they do, so we may pray, “Father, forgive them and open their blind eyes.”

Go, Sinner, straight to God for pardon, through Jesus Christ! But never, never, go to man! As to confessing your sins to a man—pouring the dirty sewage of your filthy nature into another man’s ear and making that ear the common cesspool of the parish—oh, that is intolerable even to ordinary decency—and much more to the purity which the Grace of God suggests! Go to Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men! Go and kiss His pierced hands and feet, and confess your sin to Him who made the propitiation for it! But go nowhere else, I charge you, at your soul’s peril—lest, like Judas, who first went and confessed to a priest and afterwards went out and hanged himself, you should be driven to despair and a similar awful suicide! O God, as “there is forgiveness with You,” deliver Your poor fallen creatures from the further dreadful degradation of bowing themselves down before sinners like themselves, confessing their sins and seeking pardon where it cannot be found! There is forgiveness, but that forgiveness is only to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ, His Son.

Notice, next, in the text, *the unlimited character of this forgiveness*—“There is forgiveness with You.” You see, there is no word to limit it—it does not say that there is forgiveness only for a certain number—there is no such restriction as that. Nor does it say that there is forgiveness only for a certain sort of sin—there is no such limit as that. Nor is it said, “There is forgiveness up to a certain point, or forgiveness up to a certain date.” No, but the declaration, “there is forgiveness with You,” stands out in all its glorious fullness and simplicity, with no abridging or qualifying words whatever. Do not, poor Sinner, put a limit where God puts none, but build your hope of pardon and salvation on this declaration and go to God, through Jesus Christ, and you shall find that there is forgiveness for you—even for you, at this very hour! I pray that you may prove it to be so.

Let me also add that *the forgiveness which God gives to a sinner is complete*. He blots out all sin. It is also *sincere*. He really does forgive when He says that He does. It is lasting, too. God does not forgive us today and accuse us again tomorrow. No, let me give you a better word than lasting—God’s forgiveness is *everlasting*. He who is once forgiven is forgiven to all eternity! Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without change—He never gives it and then regrets that He has done so. If you get forgiveness from God, you have the first link in an endless chain of mercies. You shall become God’s child—His beloved. He will teach you, care for you, keep you, sanctify you, bless you, perfect you

and, in due time, bring you to Heaven! Oh, the heap of blessedness which lie in this one gracious gift of God—the forgiveness of sins! I wish that, by any power of *mine*, I could induce all of you to seek this forgiveness. No, I retract that expression—I do not wish that any power of mine should do it, lest I should have the honor of it—but I do pray that *God's* power may do it for all of you—that you may be made conscious of sin, believe in Jesus Christ and so find that perfect pardon which God is waiting and willing to give to all who trust His Son!

**II.** Now I pass on to the second part of our subject which is A MOST ADMIRABLE DESIGN—There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” How does forgiveness cause men to fear God?

First, *it is clear that God's design in proclaiming forgiveness is the opposite of what some men have said and thought.* We have known many who have said, “There is forgiveness, so let us keep on sinning.” Others, not quite so base, have said, “There is forgiveness, so we can have it whenever we please.” Holding this idea, they have trifled with sin and they have delayed to seek forgiveness, drawing—oh, I am ashamed to say it of my fellow men!—drawing the infamous inference that, as God is merciful, they may live in sin as long as they like and then find mercy at the last! I would like any man who has adopted that strangely cruel and wicked way of dealing with God's mercy to look straight at it for a minute. I think that if I had a friend whom I had grieved and I knew that he was ready to forgive me, I would not, therefore, put off the reconciliation and so grieve him still more! I would be very base, indeed, if I acted like that! Or if I were a child and I had vexed my father, but he was very gentle and forgiving, I think that if I were to say, “It does not matter much—father will forgive me whenever I ask him, so I shall not ask him for months, or perhaps years.” If I did talk so, it would be very base on my part. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, not to talk so and not to act so. It is not fair and just treatment of our gracious God! It is not even worthy of man. Why, if even a beast is treated kindly, it will scarcely return a kick for kindness. Some perverse animals will do that, but most will generally, at length, yield to kindness. And the long-suffering of God ought much more to lead you to repentance and not induce you to continue in your sins.

This design of God is quite contrary to what some other men have said would naturally arise out of the Doctrine of Free and Full Forgiveness. So-called “priests” have said, “If men can have pardon by simply believing in Jesus, they will cast off all restraint, so, let us keep them under our thumb—tell them that there are certain ‘sacraments’ that they must attend and that they must look up to us and then we will get them into Purgatory. And then, when sufficient money is paid to us, we will get them out.” But pardon—free pardon, perfect pardon, pardon given on the spot to simple faith—they tell us that this would tend to demoralize people! Well, that is a subject on which they can speak, for nobody has demoralized people more than so-called “priests” have done! But it is evi-

dent that God does not agree with them. It is written here, by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “There is forgiveness with You, *that You may be feared*,” so that, instead of destroying any man’s fear, or reverence, or religion, the gift of a free pardon is to be the very means of producing such a condition of heart and life! Let us look at this point for a minute or two.

In the first place, *if there were no pardon, it is quite certain that nobody would fear God at all*. There is no forgiveness for the devil and all his legions—and there is not a devil that has any reverence or love or adoration for God. No, they abide in sullen despair. They know that there is no hope for them and, being shut up to despair because their sin is unpardonable, they rage and rave against the God of Heaven! You never read of a devil on his knees in prayer. Whoever heard of a devil saying, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications”? And why do the devils not pray like that? Why, because, among other reasons, there is no forgiveness for devils and, therefore, none of the right kind of fear of God! They tremble, I grant you. They have a certain sort of dread and, without pardon, there may be a dread and horror of God. But that is not what our text means, for the fear of God, in Scripture, does not signify *dread*—it signifies true religion, holy reverence and awe—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” And, unless there is pardon of sin, it is clear that its absence drives the sinners to despair and prevents them from worshipping God.

Again, *if there were no pardon, there would be nobody to fear God*, for, Brothers and Sisters, if God had not had mercy upon us, He would long ago have swept us away! It is mercy—even if it is not *pardoning* mercy, it is mercy—which permits us to live! If God had no pardon for any of the whole human race, there would be no necessity for relieving men at all—the tree of humanity would long since have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

Now turn to the positive side of this subject. When the Gospel is faithfully preached and attentively heard, the very hearing of it, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, *breeds faith in the soul*, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” But, Brothers, suppose we had no pardon to preach—would there be any faith? Could there be any faith then? Have you ever heard of a man who believed in an unpardoning god? Did anybody ever yet hear of a sinner believing in a god who manifests no mercy and bestows no forgiveness? Only the heathen trust to such gods, which are no gods! The very fact that pardon is proclaimed and carried to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the soul—and faith is the root and foundation of all true fear of God.

After faith comes *repentance*, or, rather, repentance is faith’s twin brother and is born at the same time. Nobody ever repented until he heard of pardon. Let a man be certain that he cannot be pardoned and you may be quite sure that he will not repent. He may feel remorse. He may regret and lament his sin because of the penalty which follows it,

but that gentle softening of the soul which makes us hate sin because it is committed against such a good and gracious God is not possible until, first of all, the heart has believed that there is forgiveness with God. Evangelical repentance is one of the fruits of the Gospel of forgiveness and no other tree can produce it. So, you see, Beloved, that because there is forgiveness, men exercise faith and they also experience repentance—and these two Divine Graces are a very large part of what is meant by the Scriptural term, “the fear of the Lord.”

It is also the good news of pardon that inclines the heart to *prayer*. You would never have heard of a man praying for mercy if there had been no mercy to be obtained! If Jesus had never died and the Gospel had never been sent into the world—if there had been no proclamation of pardon, it would never have been said of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold, he prays.” No, prayer arises in the soul as a result of the telling of the glad tidings that pardon is to be had. And prayer, like faith and repentance, is a large part of “the fear of the Lord.” The man who truly prays is certainly one who fears God.

When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds *love* in the soul and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God? If a man really loves God, has he not discovered the very essence of true religion? But how could he love God if there was no pardon to be had?

Pardon also breeds *obedience*. A man says, “Have I been forgiven? Then I will seek to avoid all sin in the future. Out of love to God I will labor to do that which He bids me do.” And, surely, obedience is a very large part of the fear of God.

And, oftentimes, this forgiving love of God breeds in the soul *deep devotion and intense consecration to Him*. There have lived and there are living now, men and women who have given their whole selves to Jesus, many of whom are laboring for Him even beyond their strength—yes, and many such men and women have died, for His sake, the most cruel deaths, without shrinking back or seeking to escape that terrible cross. Where came such a fear of God as that? Why, it could never have come into their hearts if they had not received the forgiveness of their sins for Christ’s sake, but, having been forgiven, they came to love and fear—not with a servile fear, but with a holy awe—the Blessed One through whose precious blood they have been cleansed! Thus forgiveness of sin is essential to true fear of God—and wherever it is enjoyed, it is the main motive which moves them to fear God and brings them into that blessed condition. Is not that clear to all of you?

I finish my discourse by asking and trying to answer this question—*As there is forgiveness to be had, why should YOU not have it?* I may not be able to point “*you*” out, though, often, God does direct my finger, or eye, or word, to the very person for whom there is forgiveness. So I ask

again—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should *you* not have it? Young man under the gallery, why should you not have it? Young woman down in that area, why should *you* not have it? Suppose you should never get it? Suppose you should die without being forgiven? Oh, that would greatly aggravate all the ordinary pains of death! If you die unpardoned, your doom will be the more terrible because there is forgiveness with God, yet it is of no use to you!

One of my predecessors, Dr. Rippon, had considerable influence with the government of his day. Those were what some foolish people call, “the good old days,” when they used to hang people on a Monday morning, as a regular thing, and take little notice of it. It so happened that one who was related to a former member of this church was condemned to die. It was believed that he was innocent, so there was much intercession offered on his behalf to the government—and a pardon was granted and signed by King George III. Very Providentially, it happened that one of the members of the church, going to the prison, said to the governor, “I hear that you have eight prisoners to hang tomorrow.” He answered, “I have nine for tomorrow.” “No,” said the other, “there were nine, but one of them has been pardoned.” “I know nothing about that,” said the governor, “I have received no pardon and, unless I do receive one, I shall hang him tomorrow morning.”

The news came to Dr. Rippon, and he took the post chaise [a closed, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, formerly used to transport mail and passengers]—in those times, that was the only way of travelling—and rode down to Windsor. He went to the castle and, by dint of that modesty which is always becoming in a minister of the Gospel, if it is not carried too far, he pushed himself in and demanded to see the king! He managed, at last, to get to the ante-room, next to the one where His Majesty was sleeping. Hearing a noise, the king asked, “What is that?” His attendant answered, “Here is a Dr. Rippon who says he must see Your Majesty.” “Show him in, then,” he said, and Dr. Rippon saw the king in bed and said to him, “Your Majesty gave a pardon to such-and-such a man.” “Yes, I know I did.” “But they have not got it at the prison and the man is going to be hanged in the morning if I do not get back to London in time.” So the king posted the good doctor back with another pardon—and the man was saved!

Suppose he had been hanged? What would his parents have said? Well, they might have said, “There was forgiveness, yet he was hanged.” I think that would have been the bitterest ingredient in their grief—that they had obtained forgiveness for him and yet, after all, that he was hanged. Happily, it was not so, but, Sirs, as there is pardon to be had—if you will not ask for it—as there is pardon to be had by confessing your sin and believing in Jesus, yet you will not seek it—why, then, when you are lost, you will say to yourself, “Oh, what a fool I was! There was forgiveness, but I neglected to seek it! There was forgiveness, but I did not realize that I needed it, so I have perished by my own folly.” I charge you,

men and women, to remember that if you are lost, your doom will be far more terrible than that of those who have never heard the Gospel because you have had the way of salvation plainly set before you and I have again exhorted you, as best I can, to walk in it! Oh, how I wish I could exhort you with more earnestness, and in more persuasive words, but, perhaps even then there would be an equal failure! I implore you, do not put eternal life away from you! Do not refuse the pardon that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to all who trust Him! Trust Him, I pray you, trust Him now! And the pardon shall be yours.

“But,” says someone, “I am afraid of what I may do in the future. If I were forgiven now, I am afraid I should again act just as I have done before.” Well, then, take the text as a whole—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” If you receive the forgiveness of God, you will have the fear of God put into your heart at the same time, for this is a part of the ancient Covenant—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Poor Sinner, here is a wonder of Grace for you—the past forgiven and the future guaranteed by a wondrous miracle of mercy worked within your heart—making you a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Blessed Spirit, apply this message to the Lord’s own chosen ones and save many precious souls through it, for the Redeemer’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALMS 32; 130.**

**Psalm 32:1.** *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* No man knows the blessedness of pardoned sin but the man who has felt the weight of guilt upon his conscience. If you have ever been burdened and crushed under a load of sin, it will be a joy worth more than ten thousand worlds for you to get the burden lifted from your shoulders! “Blessed”—blessed beyond description—“is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

**2.** *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He has no need to dissemble, for his sin is forgiven. David had tried to tamper with his conscience after his great sin. He invented all sorts of excuses and schemes to try to hide his guilt, but when, at last, he was fully convinced of the awful sinfulness of his sin, and when God had put it away forever—then—when the guilt was gone, the guile went, too.

**3, 4.** *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* As if he was parched and scorched with inward grief. The agony of his soul kept him from sleeping, prevented him from taking his necessary food and made him seem like a prematurely old man.

**5.** *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* O blessed termination of a terrible condition of heart! Confession pulled up the floodgates of his soul and God caused the black stream to flow away and disappear! Friend, are you trying to conceal any sin or to excuse yourself in any wrong course? Then your soul will fret and worry more and more. But make a clean breast of it before God—in the humblest and most honest language you can use—and then you shall receive the Lord’s full and free forgiveness!

**6.** *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* A man who can pray shall see even the ocean driven back, as Moses did! If you get near to God and stay near to Him, the floods of great waters shall never get near to you.

**7.** *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* The world is full of music to the man to whom God has said, “I forgive you.” Do not rest, dear Friend, till you really know that you are forgiven, for if you do, you will rest short of all true happiness. But if you have sought God’s mercy and had your sin forgiven, you are already at the gates of Heaven!

**8.** *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with My eye.* When God forgives, He also sanctifies. When He has brought back the sheep that wandered off into the wrong road, He afterwards leads it in the right track. Notice how the Lord says, “I will guide you with My eye.” A look from the Lord ought to be enough to guide us—we should not need a blow, nor even a word, but be ready to be directed by the very gentlest monition of God’s gracious Spirit.

**9.** *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Do not be difficult to manage. Be not hard-mouthed. Be ready to be guided by the eye of God. Be not like stubborn beasts that must be held in with bit and bridle—and that often need the whip, too.

**10.** *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Wicked man, that is the portion that is to come to you—and it will surely come to you if you continue in your present evil course. This is the title deed of your future inheritance—do you like the prospect of such a possession as that? “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

**10, 11.** *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Let your joy be demonstrative! Do not be ashamed to let others see how happy you are. The Lord has done great things for you—therefore, “be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” Be so jubilant that others shall be compelled to glorify God with you and to ask, “May not we also share this great blessing with you?”

**Psalm 130:1.** *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. “Sinking, sinking, sinking—drowning, dying—hope all but gone, almost everything gone—yet I have cried unto You with much fear and little hope. ‘Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.’”*

**2, 3.** *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Judged by ourselves, on the ground of absolute justice, none of us can hope to stand before His Judgment Seat without being condemned. I trust that we all know and feel that this is true.

**4, 5.** *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.* Never yet has any poor soul perished that could use such language as this! It may be a long while before you get the full comfort of all the Lord’s promises, but you are sure to have it, sooner or later, if you can but hope “in His Word.” Well did good John Newton sing—

**“Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord,  
Who makes your cause His own!  
The hope that’s built upon His Word  
Can never be overthrown!”**

**6-8.** *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities.* Children of God, plead that precious promise—“He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities.” And never rest till you are fully freed from the bondage of sin, for God will work a perfect work in you and then He will take you Home to be with Him forevermore!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—202, 556, 559.**

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

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

# **FORGIVENESS**

## **NO. 2972**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1863.**

***“But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Psalm 130:4.***

How significant is that word, “but,” in our text! It is as if you heard Justice clamoring, “Let the sinner die,” and the fiends in Hell howling, “Cast him down into the fires,” and Conscience shrieking, “Let him perish,” and Nature, itself, groaning beneath his weight, the earth weary with carrying him, the sun tired with shining upon the traitor, the very air sick with finding breath for one who only spends it in disobedience to God! The man is about to be destroyed, to be swallowed up, when suddenly there comes this thrice-blessed, “but,” which stops the reckless course of ruin, puts its strong hand, bearing a golden shield, between the sinner and destruction and pronounces these words, “But there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared.”

Suppose the question had been left open—forgiveness or no forgiveness? We know that we have offended God, but suppose it had been left a moot point for us to find out, if possible, whether there was any forgiveness? Where could we find it? We might turn to the works of God in Nature, and say, “Well, He is good, who loads the trees with fruit and bids the fields yield so plenteous a harvest.” But when we remember how His lightning sometimes strikes the oak and how His hurricanes swallow up whole navies in the deep, we shall be ready to say that He is terrible as well as tender—and we might be puzzled to know whether He would or would not forgive sin, more especially as we see all creatures die and no exception made to that rule. If we knew that death was a punishment for sin, we should be led to fear that there was no forgiveness to be had from the hand of God! But when we turn to this open page which God has so graciously written for our instruction, we are left in doubt no longer, for here we have it positively declared, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Exclusively in the Bible is this Revelation made, but the words of my text are not exclusive. The page is but one among a thousand echoes from the Throne of God which proclaim His willingness to save sinners!

In attempting to bring this great doctrine of the possibility of pardon before the mind of the sinner tonight, I shall handle it in two or three ways. First, *I shall try to prove it is so, that he may be sure of the fact.* I shall then try to attract him to accept this doctrine by dwelling upon the *pardon, itself*, hoping that the Spirit of God may work with my words.

And before I have done, I shall notice *what will be the sure result of this pardon*—whenever a man has been forgiven through the mercy of God, he is then enabled to fear the Lord and to worship Him in an able manner.

**I.** By way of assurance, O MAN, THERE IS FORGIVENESS FOR YOUR SINS, WHATEVER THEY MAY HAVE BEEN! However sinful your life may have been up until now, there is forgiveness with God even for you! God's bare Word ought to be enough for you, but since the Spirit of God and your conscience have shown you something of your sins, and since you will be desponding and full of doubts, it will be well for me to give you something more than the bare Word of God to make you confident there is forgiveness with Him.

Follow me, I pray you, back to the garden where your parents and mine first sinned. It was the greatest sin that was ever committed, with the exception of the murder of our Lord and Savior—the sin when Adam knowingly and wittingly rebelled against the one gentle command which his Master had given him as a sign of his obedience. This was the mother-sin from which all other sins have sprung—the well from which the great river of iniquity, which drowned the world, first streamed. What did the Lord say when this sin was committed? Did He lift His angry hand and smite the guilty pair at once? Did He visit our first parents with a curse that withered them and sent them down to their eternal portion in the Pit? He cursed, but it was the ground. He spoke in angry terms, but the serpent felt the weight thereof. As for man, though God pronounced a sentence upon him that we call a curse, but which has been transformed into a blessing, yet He gave that matchless promise which is the mother of all promises, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” In that one single promise that God, Himself, would provide a Deliverer by whom the tempter would be destroyed and all his craft would be foiled, I see written as clearly as with a sunbeam that God meant to have mercy upon me! He would not talk about the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head if He had not intended something comforting for you and for me. The fact, I say, that though He did drive our first parents out of Eden, He did not drive them down to Hell—that though He did banish them from Paradise, He did not immediately consign them to the flames of His wrath—that He did, then and there, give them a bright promise which for many a hundred years was the only one that covered the thick darkness of the Fall—that fact alone should make you hope that there is forgiveness with God!

But what, I pray you, do those many altars with lambs and bullocks smoking upon them mean—altars whose unhewn stones are dyed crimson with gore? Above all, what does that priestly man, wearing that jeweled breastplate, who comes forward in obedience to God and offers every morning and evening a lamb, mean? Or what does it mean that once in the year he produces a scapegoat which carries the sins of the people into the wilderness? What do those rivers of blood and those mounds of ashes from the altar mean, if God does not forgive sin? There can be no meaning whatever in all the long and gorgeous pageant of the

Jewish religion unless it taught to every onlooker this great and solemn lesson—that though God is just and blood must be shed, yet God is gracious and accepts a substitute that the sinner may go free! By all those smoking altars, the blood of rams, lambs, goats and bullocks, believe, O Sinner, that God has found a Ransom and a Sacrifice and that He, therefore, can and will pardon sin!

If you see these things dimly, here, you will see them more clearly in another fact. Do you not know, O man, that God has commanded you to repent? The times of former ignorance God winked at, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent. What for? Surely He would not command us to repent and then intend to punish us afterwards! It could not be possible that God would woo sinners to return to Him and yet not intend to forgive them! I cannot believe a theory so monstrous as that God would send His ministers and send His own Book—and earnestly and affectionately invite sinners to turn from their evil ways and repent of their sins—and yet intend, even if they did repent, to punish them on account of their iniquity! It cannot be!

Do you not know, too, that God has commanded you to pray for forgiveness? What is the meaning of that prayer, “Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us”? Would Christ put these words into your mouth if there were no pardon? Would He teach you to ask for forgiveness if forgiveness were an impossibility? Does God mock men? Does He teach beggars to beg when He intends to refuse? Does He bring you down on your knees that He may see you mourn—and laugh at your despair? Does He intend to see you rolling in the dust, girt with sackcloth and ashes, that He may afterwards put His iron heel upon your neck and crush you to the lowest Hell? It is not possible! The God who commands you to repent is just and merciful to forgive you your sins—and He who has bid you seek His face has not said unto the seed of Jacob, “Seek you me in vain.”

Moreover, Sinner—and here we come to something still clearer—do you not know that Jesus died? Have you not heard the wondrous story how the Son of God came down from Heaven and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Do you not know that after 30 years of holy life, wherein He rendered perfect obedience to the Divine Law and made it honorable, He took upon Himself the guilt, the crimes, the iniquities of a multitude that no man can number, for He bore the sins of many, and now He makes intercession for the transgressors? See there, if you can dare to look amidst those moonlit olives where upon the ground there kneels a Man—no, more, there kneels Incarnate Deity—what does it mean that His head, His hair, His garments are saturated with blood? How came it that, on yonder ground, I see great clots of gore—where did they come from? Came they from His forehead? But what could have forced them from Him? What does yonder sight mean? I watch that Man dragged away and charged most infamously with crimes He never knew, tied to a pillar and there lashed with a Roman scourge until the white bones stand out like islands of ivory amidst a sea of coral—and His whole back has become a stream of blood! What does it all mean?

And yonder sight where He is stretched upon the transverse wood, where the nails have pierced His hands and feet, and where His life goes oozing from Him in anguish and extreme agony? What does that shriek of “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani” mean? He is a just Man—does God punish the just? He is God’s dear Son, and has done no ill—does God hate Him and punish Him for nothing? Does He pour wrath upon Him without a cause? You know how it was. The sin of man was imputed to Christ. The iniquity of His people was laid upon Him. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And here is the riddle solved—He dies that we may live—

***“He bore that we might never bear,  
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

Then there must be forgiveness! I cannot see a bleeding Savior without understanding that there must be pardon! Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha—three sacred words, three irresistible arguments by which it is proved beyond controversy that there is forgiveness even for the chief of sinners!

But if this contents you not, O troubled Sinner, here is another fact for you to reflect upon—what multitudes have already been pardoned! Dare you look up yonder beyond the skies? Have you strength of eyesight enough to see that multitude clothed in white, who, today, are standing before the Throne of God? If there were no forgiveness, not one of them had been there! Were their robes always white? Listen to their answer—“We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are we before the Throne of God.” FORGIVENESS brought them there! Not one redeemed soul would ever have seen the everlasting Glory unless it had been for the pardoning mercy of God—

***“Round the altar priests confess  
If their robes are white as snow,  
‘Twas the Savior’s righteousness,  
And His blood that made them so!  
Who were these? On earth they dwelt  
Sinners once of Adam’s race—  
Guilt, and fear, and suffering felt,  
But were saved by Sovereign Grace!”***

Here are scores and hundreds of us who bear witness that God has pardoned us! Whatever I may doubt, I dare not doubt my pardon in Christ Jesus. There are moments when one has to look well to one’s evidences and come to Jesus Christ again—but this one thing I know—that Christ says, “He that believes on Me is not condemned.” And I do believe on Him! If I have an existence, I know that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ! And if so, then I am pardoned. And oh, how sweet it is to know this! What peace it gives! I can look forward to living or to dying with equal delight now that I can say, “My sin is forgiven.” You can say, as I often do, in these sweet words of Kent—

***“Now freed from sin, I walk at large,  
My Savior’s blood my full discharge.  
At His dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”***

Do you know what it is to be forgiven, young man? If you do not, you have not tasted the sweetest thing out of Heaven! Oh, it is such joy! Angels hardly have ever tasted a joy that exceeds the bliss of having sins put away. It yields a calm so deep, so profound, that it can only be called, “the peace of God which passes all understanding.”

I have thus tried to bring forward the great Truth of God that there is forgiveness with Him. And let me say, before I leave this point, that you will please remember that we have warrant in God’s Word for saying that there is forgiveness for you. However great your sins may have been, with but one exception—there is the sin against the Holy Spirit which, if you have any tenderness left in your conscience, you have not committed—but, apart from that, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” I wish I could go round these galleries and to these pews, and find out where the aching hearts were. Perhaps I would find one who said, “O Sir, I never attended a place of worship for 20 or 30 years—can I be pardoned?” I would say, “Yes, there is forgiveness for you!” Another might say, “Why, I cursed God to His face! I have dared Him to damn my soul! Can I really be forgiven?” I will answer, in the words of the text, “There is forgiveness.”

And I might meet another who would say, “But I used to persecute my wife. I have ill-treated my children because they would serve God. Can I, a hardened wretch such as I am—can I be pardoned?” “There is forgiveness.” And I might meet another who would say, “Years ago, I was a high professor, but I became entangled in the world and I have gone bad. Am I not cast out?” And I would say, “There is forgiveness.” But there would be another who would say, “I cannot tell you what my crime is. Will you stoop down and let me whisper it in your ear?” And when I heard the awful words, which I must not tell again, I would still say, before you all, “There is forgiveness.” And though it were murder or adultery—whatever it might have been and however frequently it might have been committed—though the woman were a harlot and the man a practiced thief, yet still we have the same Gospel for every creature—“There is forgiveness.” And though you are 80 or 90 years of age, “There is forgiveness.” Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against mercy, against God and Christ, His dear Son, yet still—“there is forgiveness.” You have come to the brink of the precipice—O God, I see it! You are just going over—one foot already rests upon nothing and you totter to your fall! O man, let me catch you in my arms and tell you that “there is forgiveness!” One more step and you may be where there is no forgiveness, but where the black and terrible pall of despair shall hang over your soul forever! And it shall be said of you, “There are no acts of pardon passed in that cold grave to which he has gone. He is lost! Lost! Lost forever!”

**II.** And now, secondly, I SHALL RECOMMEND THIS GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS TO YOUR NOTICE.

I commend it *for its nature*. It is a perfect pardon—every sin is blotted out at once—not a few sins, but every sin! Though they are innumerable, they are all gone, they are all gone at once! And it is *eternal* pardon—they

are all gone forever! Once forgiven, they will never be laid to your charge again. They are like the Egyptians in the Red Sea—the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left—the pardon is complete in every respect. I heard one man say of his friend, the other day, when the two had disagreed and I had tried to make it right, “Yes, I forgive him, but.” That is not how God puts it. He has no “buts” in His forgiveness. You sometimes say, “Yes, I forgive him, but I will never trust him again.” Not so the Lord! You make a clean breast in confession and He will give you a clean breast by absolution. He will put all the sin you have committed so wholly away that they shall not be remembered against you any more forever! And this pardon is instantaneous. You know that it takes but a moment to receipt a bill when the debt is paid—and Jesus Christ has paid the debt of every Believer! And all that is to be done is for God to give you the receipt, to write in your heart the word, “JUSTIFIED”—and this He does in a moment! When I think of the nature of this pardon—putting away all sin in a moment, and all the consequences of sin, I feel as if I wish we had a choir of angels here, that they might sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

Consider too, dear Friends, not only the pardon, itself, but the *person to whom it is sent*. Remember that it is sent to you. Not to the fallen angels—they were greater than you but, when they fell, they fell without a hope of being restored to the favor of God. It is not sent to the damned in Hell. Oh, what would they not give for it? How would they stretch forward—how would they catch every word! Though they have been there but one moment, they know more of God’s wrath than you and I do and oh, how they would prize the presentation of eternal life in Christ Jesus! It is not sent to them—it is sent to you. You know what you have been. You know something about the hardness of your heart and the sinfulness of your past life—yet God sends this message to you, “There is forgiveness.”

And I want you to remember *who it is that sends the forgiveness*. It is the God whom you have offended—that very God whom you may have cursed, whose Sabbath you have broken, whose Book you have despised, at whose ministers you have laughed and whose servants you have persecuted! Yet He says, even He, “There is forgiveness.” And lest you should doubt it, He takes a solemn oath before you all—and God never swears unless there is need for it, and thus He swears—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” What more can we ask than this? Admire and be attracted by the pardon when you think of who it is that sends it!

Consider, too, *how it comes to you, and by what channel*. It comes through the wounds of your best Friend, through the sufferings of Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. “He was despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs,

and carried our sorrows.” O Sinner! Will you not be only too glad to lay hold of that which comes to you through so Divine a channel which is marked with the heart’s blood of One who is the Friend of sin even unto death?

And, then, I pray you to remember that if you do not receive this forgiveness which is preached unto you, *there is no other way under Heaven by which you can be saved*. Enter by this door or stand shivering outside forever! Bow the knee and kiss the Son, or else He will break you in pieces with His rod, as men break potters’ vessels. “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” But if you reject this pardon of God, you write your own death warrant and prepare the noose that is to be your souls’ destruction!

I would to God that I had such powers of persuasion that I might induce you to lay hold of this precious pardon that God presents to you. I know that my pleading is useless unless the Spirit of God shall be pleading, too. But many, many times in this House, while I have been talking about the full, rich Grace of God, some poor soul has felt that there was a message from God in it and I trust, I hope it may be so tonight! Remember that in the message of mercy, I am authorized to leave out no one—I am told to preach it to every creature under Heaven, and I do. There are no terms but just this—that you will take what God freely gives you! Just as when men enlist for soldiers, the soldier does not give the sergeant anything, he takes the shilling. And the way in which your souls are saved is by taking what Christ freely offers to you, freely presents to you—the finished righteousness which He worked out in His life and death! You are to take, not to give! If there are terms, they are very simple. They are put so as to suit the dead in trespasses and sins! Christ comes to you just where you are. You have no power, no spiritual life, no goodness, no tenderness of heart—but Jesus, like the good Samaritan, comes just where you are and He cries in your ear, “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” He bids me say to you, though your hand is withered, “Stretch out your hand.” Power shall go with the command and you shall be made whole!

I remember the time when if anyone had tried to preach to me full and free forgiveness to be had for nothing, and to be had on the spot, I do believe I would have leaped almost out of my body to have heard it! I have heard, sometimes, of Methodists and Welshmen standing up to dance and I do not wonder at it, if they really do but get the full sense of this, that the big, black, foul villain of a sinner—the moment he trusts Jesus Christ—is forgiven, is a child of God and is accepted! Why, it sounds too good to be true! And it could not be true if it came only from me, for I am but a man and can only think and act as a man! But because it comes from the true God and it is just like Him, because it accords with His attributes of loving kindness and truth, therefore we know it is true. “I am God, and not man,” He says, and He gives that as a reason for His mercy. Why, if His love were not as much superior to ours as the heavens are above His earth, there would never be mercy

presented in any shape, much less in a shape like this! There is nothing asked of you, only that you will just be nothing and let Christ be everything—and take from Christ’s hand that which He freely presents to you—pardon through His precious blood!

**III.** Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this Truth of God more plainly than I have done, but I have the last part of the text just to comment a little upon—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

You see, the only men that ever fear God are those that are forgiven. Other men may pretend to do it, but they fail to do it. Why I believe that the religion of nine out of ten professing Christians is just this, “I go to church, or I go to chapel, regularly, and I then think I have done very well.” That is what the men think, and the outside world believes that religion is this, “If a man is honest, and sober, and walks righteously, and so on, he goes to Heaven.” But how startling must the sermon of this morning [See Sermon No. 515, Volume 9—THE SINNER’S ADVOCATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] have been to some of these stuck-up Pharisees when we told them it was not the righteous who would go there, but the sinner! And that the Apostle John did not say, “If any man has done good works, he has an Advocate,” but, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.” As Martin Luther gloried to put it, “Jesus Christ never died for our good works—they were not worth His dying for! He gave Himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” What did our Savior, Himself, say, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The Lord never has any who really and acceptably fear Him but those who once were sinners and who are led as sinners to accept His pardon—and these are the people that fear Him. Do you want to find a warm-hearted woman who really loves Jesus Christ and who would break the alabaster box for His sake? You will find her in one who may be called “a woman who was a sinner.” Do you want to find a man who would preach Christ’s Word with tears running down his cheeks? You must go and find him among them who once were foul, of whom the Apostles said, “Such were some of you, but you are washed.” When the Lord wanted a man to write the next best book in the world to the Bible—*The Pilgrim’s Progress*—He did not go to Lambeth Palace for him, and He did not go to any of the fine streets of this city to pick up some moral person. There was a swearing tinker playing at “cat” on Sunday on Elstow-Green, and the Lord said, “That is the man.” He laid hold of him, washed his heart, made him a new man in Christ Jesus—and John Bunyan, the master-dreamer, has given us that remarkable book! And when the Lord wanted a man who would stir up London from end to end by preaching in St. Mary Woolnoth, where should He find him? Why, among the ragamuffins who were conducting the slave trade on the coast of Africa among the sweepings and dregs of the universe! Almighty Grace picked up John Newton, changed his heart and made him one of His mightiest teachers!

And when the Lord will bring out any that shall really fear Him and do anything great for His sake, it will be either from among those who have

been outwardly great sinners, or else those who have been made in their conscience to feel the greatness of their guilt and thus have been fitted to deal with others. Oh, how many times I have blessed God for the five years of despair that I had to endure! No poor soul was ever more racked than I was, nor more hunted of the devil. For five years I was a victim to that black thought that God would never forgive me and I bless His name for it. I never could have preached to the chief of sinners if it had not been for that experience! If I had come freely from my mother's apron strings without any deep sense of sin, and had found Christ as many and many a young man does, readily and at once, I would never have liked to go down and run my hands in the mire to get at the foul and the vile. But now I look back upon those times of anguish—why, they were days when I thought I was worse than the devils in Hell! They were days when if anybody had asked me my character, though no one ever knew anything amiss of it, still I would have said, and felt it, too, that there did not breathe God's air a greater miscreant that more deserved to be in Hell than I did! I wrote bitter things against myself and if any had said, "Why, your life is moral," I would have said, "Yes, but my heart is a reeking dunghill, full of everything that is foul!" And I felt it, too, for though my lips never cursed God, yet my heart did with blasphemy so foul that I shudder when I think of it. When I was given up as prey to the devil, and it seemed as if there was a pandemonium within my heart, then indeed I knew what it was to be sorely broken in the place of darkness and to be like a ship driven out to sea with the mast gone over the side and every timber strained and the hold filling with water—and nothing but Omnipotence keeping it from going down into the lowest depths! Ah, then I knew that I needed a great Christ for great sinners! And I dare not ever preach a little Christ! And I dare not preach Him to little sinners either!

Oh, how great your sin has been, my Hearers! But Jesus Christ is still greater! You have gone deeply into sin, but the arm of Mercy can reach you! You have wandered far, but the eyes of Love can see you and the voice of Love calls to you now, "Come, come, come and welcome, come and welcome!" Come just as you are and you will not be cast away, but be accepted in the Beloved! "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," and none fear, and love, and bless, and praise God as much as those who know that there is forgiveness with Him!

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 145.**

When you get to the 145<sup>th</sup> Psalm, you enter the Beulah Land of the Psalms. Henceforth the time of the singing of birds is come and you go from one Hallelujah to another! In the Hebrew, this is one of the alphabetical Psalms, but one letter (nun) is omitted, perhaps, as Dr. Bonar suggests, "we must be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition." Those ancient singers sang their way through the alphabet from A to Z, and it is also well for us to begin to praise the Lord

while we are yet children, and to keep on praising Him till we get to the “Z” in the very hour of death, gasping His praises till we get into eternity—

***“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,  
And praise You when I die!  
And praise You when I rise again,  
And to eternity!”***

**Verses 1-3.** *I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.* Such as the Lord is, such should His worship be. If He were a little God, He would deserve little praise, but the great God is “greatly to be praised.” There is no fear of going to any excess in our praises—we will never laud Him too highly, however lofty our expressions may be.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.” David knew what it was to be searched by God and he prayed, “Search me, O God.” But he could not search the greatness of his God. There, he was utterly lost—the utmost range of his faculties could not compass the greatness of Jehovah—“His greatness is unsearchable.”

**4.** *One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.* There is a hallowed tradition of praise. Each generation should hand out the praise of God as a precious legacy to the next one. Train up your sons and daughters to praise your God so that when your voice is silent in death, another voice like your own may continue the strain.

**5.** *I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works.* “I will speak.” What a powerful speaker David was! Note how he piles up his golden words. He is not content merely to talk of God’s majesty, but he speaks of its “glorious honor.” When he talked of God’s works, he calls them “wondrous works.”

**6.** *And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts.* If they will not speak of anything else, they shall be obliged to speak with awe when the terrors of the Lord are abroad in the earth. If they were as dumb as fishes before, they shall begin to say to one another, with bated breath, when earthquakes, famines, war and pestilence are rife, “What a terrible God He is!”

**6.** *And I will declare Your greatness.* While other men were talking, David did not say, “Now I can be quiet.” When they did not speak, he did, and when they began to speak, he still added his quota of praise to Jehovah.

**7.** *They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.* What a beautiful expression! “They shall abundantly utter.” The original has in it the idea of bubbling up, boiling over, bursting out like a fountain! Men’s hearts shall get to be so full of gratitude to God that they shall overflow with the memory of His great goodness! Then they shall sing. Singing is the language of jubilant nature—“the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.” Singing is the language of men when they wish to express their

highest joys. The saints sing the high praises of their God. Singing is the language of the holy angels! Did they not, when they came to Bethlehem, sing concerning the newborn King? Singing is the language of Heaven and most marvelous of all, singing is the highest language that God ever uses! “He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Oh, for more holy singing!

**8.** *The LORD is gracious.* That alone is enough to make us sinners sing, for we need Divine Grace and, “the Lord is gracious.”

**8.** *And full of compassion.* There is no “passion” in Him, but there is “compassion” in Him. What a mercy that is for us! “He is full of compassion.”

**8.** *Slow to anger, and of great mercy.* Do you hear that, you great sinners and you saints who need great forbearance?

**9.** *The Lord is good to all.* Even to His enemies! Does not the dewdrop hang upon the thistle as well as upon the rose?

**9.** *And His tender mercies are over all His works.* He cares for the worm in the sod and for the fish in the sea as well as for men upon the face of the earth.

**10.** *All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.* Their voices can reach a higher note and a loftier strain than God’s works can ever reach. “Your saints shall bless You.”

**11.** *They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom.* For the saints love God as their King, and they rejoice to remember what the King’s Son said to His disciples, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” So well may they sing of it!

**11-13.** *And talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom. Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.* What is the use of preaching if it does not glorify God? What is the use of a tongue that does not speak or sing of the glory of God’s Kingdom? Let one of God’s bards have this as the theme of his song and he feels like a hind let loose, rejoicing in glorious liberty!

**14.** *The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up as those that are bowed.* Does not this seem to be an amazing change in the strain? The Lord is a King and His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom—yet what is He doing? Why, He is upholding, propping up those that are ready to fall and lifting up those that are crushed and oppressed! Earthly kings often glory in the terror of their power and the splendor of their majesty. What a condescending God is ours, whose Glory is a moral glory and whose chief delight consists in blessing the poor and needy! Let us bless His name for this. Are any of you ready to fall? Then praise Him for this glorious truth, “The Lord upholds all that fall”! Are any of you bowed down? Daughter of Abraham, have you been bowed down these many years? Oh, that you might be made straight this very hour! And you may be, for God can lift you up, for He “raises up all those that are bowed down.”

**15, 16.** *The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season. You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living*

*thing.* What a glorious God we have! How easily can He supply the needs of His people! He has but to open His hands and it is done! We need not be afraid to come to Him, as though our needs would be too great for Him to supply. The commissariat of the universe is superintended by this truly Universal Provider, who has but to open His hands to satisfy “the desire of every living thing.”

**17.** *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.* This is a thing for which many modern divines do not praise God. The attribute of righteousness in the Character of God is expelled from a good deal of modern theology. But he who loves God rightly, loves the righteousness of God! I would not care to have salvation if it were unrighteous salvation. The righteousness of God gleams like a sharp two-edged sword and it is terrible to those who are at enmity against Him. But the true children of the Most High delight to see this sword of State carried in the front of the great King of kings! The seraphim cry, one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!” The redeemed in Glory sing, “Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints!” But the critical critics of the present day care nothing for these attributes of Jehovah.

**18.** *The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.* If you read this Psalm through carefully, you will notice the great number of, “alls,” with which the latter part of the Psalm is studded. And this is appropriate, for God is All-in-All, He is the One, the All, so let Him have all praise from all!

**19.** *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them.* When you have respect to God’s will, God will have respect to your will. When you fear Him you will have no one else to fear, and when you make His service your delight, He will make your needs His care.

**20.** *The LORD preserves all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy.* As in a state of sanitary perfection, everything that breeds pollutants and disease is banished—so must it be in God’s great universe when He has completed His works—“all the wicked will He destroy.”

**21.** *My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.*

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

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TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

# WAITING, HOPING, WATCHING NO. 2579

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 17, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1883.

*"I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope, My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning."  
Psalm 130:5, 6.*

As we read this Psalm, we noticed, from the opening verses of it, that David was in the depths. He is not the only one of God's people who has been there. If we imagine that the experience of true saints is always a happy, high level of peace, we make a great mistake. They have their rising and their falling, their days and their nights, their summers and their winters. Where there is life, there are pretty sure to be changes. The statues in St. Paul's Cathedral are, I suppose, always cold, but living men are sometimes ready to faint in the heat—and sometimes they are well-near frozen with the cold. If you are a living child of God, expect that you will have many variations in your experience and that sometimes you will be in the depths as others have been. Was not your Lord there? This Psalm is called, in the Latin version, *De profundis*, and I am sure that our Lord, though He is now *in excelsis*—in the very heights—yet had on earth times when He could sing this *De profundis* Psalm—"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Then, how could we have fellowship with Him in His suffering if we were not, sometimes, in the depths, too? How could we know what He felt, how could we be made like unto our Lord if we were not also cast down?

The best of godly men will be, occasionally or even often, in the depths of temporal trouble. David was hunted by Saul, hated by the Philistines, grieved by his son Absalom—he had many trials—and the best of God's people will have their trials, too. Though faith often lifts us up above them, yet there are times when the iron enters into our soul, when, "for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold trials."

God's people, too, are sometimes in the depths of spiritual sorrow. They do not always live upon the mountain with their transfigured Master. Sometimes they come into the valley where they are made to feel the power of inbred sin and to mourn over it exceedingly. When the light of God's Countenance is withdrawn, the dearest of His children has to cry, with his Lord on Calvary, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" There are depths of soul-agony which some Christians have never known, but into which others have been plunged again and again. It has

been as much as the saint could do to call his God his own, for his very faith seemed to tremble under the pressure of affliction and depression of spirit. This Psalm ought to comfort you who are in the depths, as you see that others have had to go there, too. But mind that you follow the example of the Psalmist and, *whatever* you are called to suffer, never leave off praying! Whatever else you do, never neglect this one prime means of deliverance. Then you may say with David, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.”—

**“Long as they live should Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live,”**

but especially when their soul seems, as it were, to have found a sepulcher—when, while yet alive, they appear to be sinking down into the depths. Then is the time when, with sevenfold earnestness, they must lift up their hearts and their voices and cry mightily unto the Lord.

One of the designs of Satan, when he finds saints in the depths, is to keep them there, but the wise child of God will cry to his Lord when he gets there, for then Satan cannot keep him there for long. He who cries “out of the depths” will soon be out of the depths! That cry is the voice of life and God will not leave that soul in the depths, or suffer His redeemed one to see corruption there. Up you will rise if you can but cry! There is something marvelous about the power of prayer—when Jonah prayed out of the belly of the fish—he was soon brought up from the depths of the sea to stand on the dry land and to go on his Master’s errand. Cry, then, if you are in the depths! If you never cried before, cry now. If you have been accustomed to pray, pull out all the stops of this wonderful organ of prayer and let the music ascend into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, even though it seems to you to be nothing but discord.

But notice, also, that while David thus cried unto the Lord, he made confession of his sin. He felt he could not stand before God on the footing of his personal character. He could not hope to prevail with Jehovah by his own merits, so he pleaded, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Come, child of God, if sin is a dark cloud that hides your Lord’s face from you, come to Him with this great Truth of God on your tongue and in your heart, “there is forgiveness.” When Luther was in great trouble of soul, he was comforted by one who said to him, “Do you not believe your Creed?” “Yes,” replied Luther, “I believe the Creed.” “Well, then,” rejoined the other, “one article in it is, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins.’” Luther’s heart was lightened at once by the remembrance of the words in this Psalm, “there is forgiveness.” It may be that you have sinned many times and grievously, but, “there is forgiveness.” Though a child of God, you have gone far astray from Him—but, “there is forgiveness.” You have backslidden sadly and horribly, but, “there is forgiveness.” The devil comes and howls at you and tells you that your doom is sealed and your damnation is sure—but, “there is forgiveness.” Oh, blessed sentence! “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

When David really felt in his soul that whatever the depths might be in which he was plunged, yet there was forgiveness for him—that however feeble his cries might be, there was forgiveness—then he rested in perfect

peace and he said, in the language of the text, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning.”

There are three words on which I am going to speak. The first and the chief word is, *waiting*—“I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait.” The next word, which helps the first one, is, *hoping*—“and in His Word do I hope.” And then the third word grows out of the first, and that is, *watching*—“My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning.” May the Holy Spirit bless us both in speaking and hearing while we meditate upon these three words—waiting, hoping, watching!

**I.** The first word is, waiting. “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait.”

Upon which I observe, first, that *this is the constant posture of all the saints of God*. Before our Lord Jesus Christ came, all the spiritual people among the 12 tribes were waiting for His appearing. They firmly believed that He would come, yet they died without the sight for which they were looking. Over the door of the great mausoleum of the Old Testament saints is inscribed this epitaph, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” They were waiters—waiting until the Rod should come forth out of the stem of Jesse—and the Branch should grow out of his roots. Some few of these waiters were found in the Temple when the Lord appeared. You remember the names of Simeon and Anna, who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel”? They had grown gray in waiting, but still they were among “them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” And, at last, Simeon could say, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your Salvation.” This expression, waiting for the Lord, describes all the saints, from righteous Abel down to faithful old Simeon who took the Infant Jesus in his arms and blessed God for the appearing of the Messiah, the woman’s promised Seed.

But what about the saints since then? They also are, or should be, waiting for the Lord—“Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Though too many forget it, He has said, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” This is the Church’s glorious hope in which, in some senses, both Jews and Gentiles are now united, for if the Jews are waiting for the coming of the Messiah, so are we, only they, in their unbelief, see not that He has once come. Let it not be said of us that we, in our unbelief, see not that He will come again, but, believing in His First Advent, let us, therefore, patiently wait and longingly look for the time when, “the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.” O glorious hope! We are still waiting for its blessed realization!

Yes, and in this respect I may say with Dr. Watts, that—

**“The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make”**

in this fellowship of waiting! Fancy not, Beloved, that in Heaven they have no emotion but that of joy! We know that all their emotions are joyous, but among them is this one—that they, too, are waiting until the Lord shall again manifest Himself, for, in the day of His appearing, those disembodied spirits shall put on their resurrection bodies, changed and made like Christ's glorious body! And in that day they shall be united with all the saints who remain upon the earth, for, without them, the glorified spirits above could not be made perfect. That is to say, the Church of God above cannot be perfected as to all its members till those who are still in the world of trial shall be brought Home to meet with them—and so the whole Church shall be “forever with the Lord.” Therefore, dear Friends, if any of you are troubled because you are waiting for the return of your Lord and He seems long in coming, I remind you that the whole Church of Christ is waiting—the whole 12 tribes of our spiritual Israel are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body,” at the return of our Lord! The manifestation of the Head will also be the manifestation of all the members of His mystical body. Therefore, be content to be waiters, for all God's saints have been and still are such!

Observe, too, that the *children of God, on earth, are frequently in the posture of waiting as individuals*. Not only as forming part of Christ's body do they wait together with the rest of His people, but each one has to wait individually. In the first dawning of Grace in the soul, when the heart is taught to believe in Jesus, it does not always happen that peace immediately follows upon faith. We meet with many about whose salvation we have no doubt, but they have, themselves, little or no hope as to their own eternal safety. We feel sure that they have really trusted in the Savior and, therefore, have been saved by Him, but, by reason of temptation, or bodily weakness, or a measure of darkness remaining upon them through ignorance, they do not yet know the glorious liberty and assurance of the children of God. I have no doubt that there are many in the fold of Jesus who do not feel themselves at rest—they are waiting until they shall possess full peace with God. They at times enjoy that peace—sweet gleams of sunlight come to them—but they are soon in darkness, again, and their unbelief struggles with their faith. They cannot get further than to cry with that poor man who said to Christ, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.”

Well, beloved Brother or Sister, if you are in that condition, you are waiting that your faith may grow—waiting till the blessed Spirit shall be a Spirit of Consolation to you and shall take of the things of Christ and show them to you. You are sitting, as it were, in the porch of the King's house. There is safety in waiting at his doors, but you would be much happier and more at rest if you entered the King's palace and sat at His table! You do trust Him—may you never have any other trust! You are relying upon His righteousness, yet you do not feel that joy and peace which others of the children of God feel. Well, then, you are in this place of waiting and, for a while, perhaps, you will have to exercise that waiting spirit.

Many of us have gone further than that, but we are still waiting—waiting, among other things, for victory over sin. You know that you are forgiven, dear Brothers and Sisters—you are quite sure that you are a child of God and, by God’s Grace, you have driven out many sins—but still, when you are fiercely tempted, strongly provoked, or placed in certain trying circumstances, you discover your weakness very sadly. And then your cry is, “Lord, give me victory over sin!” And you will never be content till you have it. Well, go on crying for it out of the very depths! Go on hoping for it through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! But if it does not come to you and you have, day after day, and even year after year, to bitterly feel that the work of God is not perfected in you, still wait, for the Lord will not leave His work unfinished! He will have regard to the work of His own hands. He will go on with it till it is perfected! But, in the meantime, you will be waiting for the complete victory.

And if you should get that, you will still have to be a waiter, oftentimes, in the matter of prayer. God answers His people’s prayers when they ought to be answered. The prayers that are such as you and I, in our most spiritual moments, would wish to have answered, shall be answered. But perhaps not at once. It would be difficult to say how long a Christian may have to wait for answers to prayer. If I remember rightly, there is one godly man who has been praying every day for 36 *years* for one thing and recording his prayers in a book. And other Believers have joined with him, yet the answer has not come. But he as fully expects it as when he first began to pray! I need not mention the Brother’s name, but I feel sure that he will be heard and answered, although at present he has not received the blessing he is seeking from the Lord. I have heard of wives praying for the conversion of their husbands through their whole lifetime and never living to see them saved—yet they were brought to the Lord after their partners had gone Home. I have heard of parents pleading for their children by the score of years, together, yet the prayer has not been answered at present. God is keeping them waiting and it is theirs to still wait at the posts of His doors hoping and expecting the blessing they have asked of the Lord.

I will suppose that you have had your prayers answered and, therefore, you have not to wait for that mercy. Yet I am sure you know of something else to wait for. Sometimes we have to wait for conscious fellowship with God. We had it once, but we have lost it, so we cry to have it restored. When we enjoy it, again, we cry for more of it—and when we have more of it, we still cry for more! And when we have the most that we have ever had, then our cry is yet keener for still more—for this sweet love of God enlarges the heart into which it enters! It brings with it a hallowed hungering and thirsting—it kills all unholy craving, but it creates a sacred appetite which is greatly to be desired. O Lord, make my hunger for You to be insatiable! Let it never be satisfied. Enlarge my heart till it is as large as Heaven and then, since, “the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You,” make my soul as large as seven heavens and then, since seven heavens could not contain You, go on to enlarge my spirit till I am filled with all the fullness of God! If this is the desire of your heart, you

will always be waiting, asking and longing for more and more of fellowship with your Lord.

“But,” you say, “I thought that Christians sometimes reached a point beyond which they could go no further.” Then you thought amiss, for that is not the teaching of Scripture. When the Apostle Paul, the most marvelous runner who ever ran the Christian race, had been running for many, many years, he said that he had not yet attained—he even forgot the things that were behind and still pressed forward toward that which was before, the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, there is an infinity of Grace and mercy beyond you! Whatever of blessings you have as yet received, you have but sipped from the ever-flowing stream of Eternal Love. You have but gathered a few shells washed up on the shore of the ocean of Boundless Grace. You have not yet received all! You cannot yet enjoy all—you must wait, and wait, and wait, for—

**“Still there’s more to follow.”**

Yes, and if we were to get as much of personal blessings as ever we could hold, we should still be waiting! You ask, “What for?” Well, I, for one, am waiting for the Lord to bless my work of faith and labor of love in the preaching of the Gospel. And are not you waiting for the same thing? After every address you give, after every time you have the members of your class gathered together and talked to them about Christ, are you not waiting for more souls to be saved through your service? Do you not wait to be able to better serve God? Are not some of you waiting to have your tongues unloosed—waiting to have your hearts enlarged—waiting for better opportunities of doing God’s work, or for more Divine Grace to use the opportunities you have—and waiting for the Divine Seal upon the efforts which you have put forth? I know that it is so and if we could all get that, we would still be waiting—waiting to see all our families saved—waiting to see all our neighbors saved—waiting to see this great London saved—waiting to see all nations bowing at Immanuel’s feet! We can never be satisfied until we have that. And if we had it, we would then be waiting, as some of my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Church are just now waiting—waiting to be taken up to their Home above—waiting till men shall say, “The pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern,” because the Lord had said, “Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” David said, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness.” And we, too, shall be satisfied when we see Christ—satisfied when, in our flesh, we shall see the God that died for us—satisfied when He shall reign upon the earth and we shall reign with Him—satisfied when we shall hear the eternal, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Yet I imagine that, even then, we shall be waiting, waiting, waiting, throughout eternity, for some fresh revelation of the unutterable, unreliable love of God in Christ Jesus.

You see, dear Friends, how I have tried to set before you this waiting posture of the saints as a whole, and also of each one in particular. Now I want to show you that it is *a very blessed posture*, for waiting tries faith—and that is a good thing—because faith grows by trial! Waiting ex-

ercises patience and that is also a good thing, for patience is one of the choice gifts of God. Waiting endears every blessing when it comes—and thus we get two joys—the joy of waiting for the joy, as well as the joy of enjoying the joy when it comes! We get a better appetite for the banquet by waiting awhile before we sit down to it. Oh, the joy it will be to rest after toil! Oh, the delight of heavenly wealth after earthly poverty! Oh, the bliss of being perfectly rid of every tendency to sin after having struggled with it here for years! Thus, all these trials are preparations for a higher state of joy, by-and-by.

While we are waiting, *this posture becomes intense* till, with the Psalmist, we can say twice over, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.” That is really three times over. We throw our very soul into it—“My soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.” It is as if our whole being was craving after more of God! Notice how it is all summed up in the object for which we wait—“My soul waits for *the Lord*. I need HIM! My soul waits for the Lord; I need nothing else; I am not waiting for anything else.” There is nothing else to wait for! As David said on another occasion, “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.” But oh, we are waiting intensely, insatiably, for God, the living God! When shall we come and appear before God? This, then, is the great longing and waiting of each one of the people of God. “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.”

**II.** I have scarcely a minute in which to speak about the second word, HOPING—“and in His Word do I hope.”

Observe, first, that *hope is the reason for waiting*. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Then, next, *hope is the strength of waiting*. You do not wait for a thing about which you are absolutely hopeless. If you have no hope of obtaining it, you say, “Then I will go my way. It is useless to wait any longer.” But inasmuch as you have some degree of hope in waiting for God, your spirit is sustained so that you can still continue to wait for Him.

Further, *this hope is the sweetener of waiting*. Waiting is always sweet when there is a hope at the end of it. The trip may be very long, but you pursue your way with willing footsteps because you hope to reach the shelter at the end. But make sure that your hope is a good hope, that it is a well-founded hope, that it is a happy hope, that it is a hope that “makes not ashamed,” that it is a hope that fixes itself on Christ, alone, for if you have not that hope, you will not wait. And if you do not wait, you will not receive. It is the waiting soul that gets the blessing! “It is good for me to draw near to God,” said David. And he also said, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” You cannot do this unless you have hope—therefore pray the Lord to give you a good hope, to brighten your hope and keep your eyes always looking for that which is yet to come, and which is laid up in the promise of God for all His people.

**III.** Then the third word is WATCHING. He that waits and he that hopes learns to watch. First, notice the figure used here, and then observe that the figure is exceeded—"My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning."

First, *what is the figure used here?* I should not wonder if it is partly the Temple. There was the great Temple at Jerusalem and all the people went up to it to worship so many times a year. I will suppose that God has given warm hearts to you and me—and that we desire to be at the ancient Temple. We have made our last march in the middle of the night. We have reached the bottom of the hill and climbed up its steep sides and we have reached the very gate of the Temple. When we get there, it is still night, so we ask one of the guards, "We have come to appear before God. When will the service begin?" He replies, "Not till the day breaks." "And what will happen when the day breaks?" "Why, then, they will offer the morning lamb and they will burn the incense. The priest will trim the lamps and the day's service will begin." We are lifting up our hearts to God—we have come up to the Temple on purpose to worship the Lord—we want to have a good long day of service, so we turn our eyes towards the hills over yonder and we watch. We say, "Watchman, what of the night? Is the morning coming? When will the blessed day begin? We are longing to enjoy all the ordinances of the Lord's House." So the watchers stand there and look out for the first tokens of daybreak on the Eastern hills.

Or, it may be that the figure is that of the guards upon the city walls. The sentinels have had to watch all night long. With steady and weary tramp, the watchman has gone from one tower to another, speaking to his brother sentinel as he has met him, keeping to his beat all through the dreary, cold, rainy, windy night. And he says to himself, "I wish it were morning." As he exchanges the watchword with his companion, he says, "I wish it were morning. My eyelids are heavy, my head begins to ache with this constant watching for the enemy. I wish it were morning." Have you never been in that posture, dear Friend? Have I? I hope I know what it is to watch for the morning—that I may meet with God in His holy Temple above and also to watch for the morning that this weary sentinel work may be done—and that I may be where there are no more enemies who can assault the sacred walls of Zion!

Then, again, some of you know what it is to watch for the morning in another sense. There is a dear one sick. How he tosses to and fro! He has a high fever and you constantly give him a cooling drink—and you take care at the proper hour to administer the medicine. But there is many a groan and many a weary cry. And you are all alone with the patient—everybody else in the house is sound asleep. Have you not sometimes gone to the venetian blind and turned it up just a little to see whether the sun has not risen? That clock's unwearied tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick—thousands of times—seems to go right into your brain and into your heart. And the poor sufferer says, "Would God it were morning!" You remember how, in the day, he said, "Would God it were

evening!” That is the way with the sick and, at last, you get as weary as your patient is. The fact is, you are half afraid you did fall asleep—you do not know what mischief may come if you do not watch—and you begin to say with the sufferer, “Would God it were morning!” Have you ever watched thus in a spiritual sense over a poor sin-sick soul? Have you ever watched thus over your own sick soul, until you have said, “I watch for the morning”? If so, this watching has been to you a picture and emblem of what your state of heart is in reference to your God. You are waiting and you are watching, and you cry, “When will the day break, and the shadows flee away?”

But, *the figure is exceeded by the fact*, for the text says, “My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning.” We have been watching longer than they who guard the Temple or the city towers! The sentinel has only a few hours’ night-watch, but some of us have been watching for these 30 years! Some of you for these 50 years! Ah, some of you for 60 years! I do not wonder that you have a stronger desire for the morning than they have who have only watched for one night.

Besides, you expect so much more than they do, for when the day comes, what does it bring to them? A little ease for the sentinel, a little rest for the nurse—but they will have to go back to the nursing or the watching as soon as the shades of night return. You and I are waiting for a daylight that will bring us endless rest and perfect joy! Well may we watch more than they who watch for the morning, for theirs is but the morning of a day, but ours is the morning of an eternity which shall know no end! They do but watch for the sun with its passing beams—we watch for the Sun of righteousness whose Glory makes Heaven itself! Well may we grow eager when we think of what is yet to be revealed in us. Well may our hunger increase as we think of the sweets that are reserved for us. You have heard of the Goths and Vandals? It is said that, somehow, they tasted of the grapes of Italy. I suppose that some bunches of fruit were carried across the Alps and when those poor Goths and Vandals tasted them, what did they say? “Let us go to the land where these clusters grow and eat them fresh from the vines.” And it was not long before, in innumerable hordes, they swarmed over Italy! In a far higher sense, something like that has happened to us and, therefore, we sing—

***“My soul has tasted of the grapes,  
And now it longs to go  
Where my dear Lord, His vineyard keeps,  
And all the clusters grow.”***

We wait for Him “more than they who watch for the morning; I say, more than they who watch for the morning.” Never did bride expect her marriage day as the true saint expects his Lord! Never did woman in travail long to behold her child as they who watch for their Lord and long for His appearing! Never did prisoner, pining in the dungeon till the rust ate into his soul, pine for liberty as saints pine for their Lord! This is the right posture for the whole Church—and for each individual Christian—waiting, hoping, watching till He appears who is their Husband, Savior,

Friend and All-in-All! God bless you, dear Friends, and keep you thus watching, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 130.**

I will first read the Psalm through and, afterwards, say a few words by way of exposition.

**Verses 1-8.** *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD, for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* You notice that this is one of the Songs of Degrees, that is, Psalms ascending by steps, and it begins at the very bottom—"Out of the depths." But it gradually climbs up to the heights—"He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." May your experience and mine, Beloved, be like a ladder—upward, always upward, step by step, always rising and getting nearer to our God!

The Psalm begins very low—"Out of the depths." The Psalmist is in the depths of sorrow and conscious sin, the depths of weakness, the depths of doubt and fear. Yet, though he is in those depths, he does not leave off praying—"Out of the depths have I cried." Some of the best prayers that were ever prayed have been offered in the depths. There are some men who never prayed at all until they came into the depths of sorrow—and those sorrows pressed their prayers out of them.

The Psalmist's prayer was a cry. That is a child's prayer—it cries to its mother or its father—"Out of the depths have I cried." But it was not like a child's cries sometimes are—cries to itself, or cries to nobody—"Out of the depths have I cried unto YOU, O Jehovah." That is the right kind of prayer which is directed to God as an arrow is aimed at the target.

In looking back over his past experience, the Psalmist tells the Lord that he has prayed. Sometimes, it is a good thing to pray over your prayers. "I have prayed, Lord; now I present one more petition, 'I pray You to remember that I have prayed. I pray You to hear me. Lord, hear my voice.'" What is the good of prayer if God does not hear it? Sometimes we ask God to answer our supplication. That is right, but, at the same time, remember that it may be a greater blessing for God to *hear* our prayers than to answer them, for if He were to make it an absolute rule that He would grant all our requests, it might be a curse rather than a blessing! At any rate, I should feel it a very dreadful responsibility to have cast upon me, for then, after all, I should have to depend upon my own prayers and, therefore, have to order my own way. But when I read that God will hear my prayer, that is much better, for He can do as He likes about answering it. And if I pray an improper prayer, what is better

for me than for God to hear it and then to set it aside? And, often, mine are such poor feeble prayers that it is much better for me that He should hear them and then do for me exceeding abundantly above what I have asked or thought! I used to think that we ought to say that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, but I do not say that now. It is enough that He hears, enough that you have presented your petition and that God has heard it!

“Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” That is, “Lord, consider my prayer; have respect unto it. Answer it according to Your wise consideration of it. ‘Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.’” Our prayers must usually be supplications—that is the word for a beggar’s pleading when he supplicates and asks for favors. That is what we do when we plead with God! And even if we do not speak, yet there is a voice in our supplications. In the sixth Psalm, David speaks of the voice of his weeping. And there is often a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a voice. God hears the grief that cannot itself speak to Him—“Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”

And now, having put up his petition, notice his confession—“If You, Jehovah, should mark iniquities, O Adonai, who shall stand?” So it should run. If God were to sit like a Judge taking notes of the evidence and putting down, against His people, all their errors, who would be able to stand in that court? We would all be condemned! Then, does not God mark iniquities? Yes, He does in one sense, but not in another. And, through His infinite love and mercy, He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. “If He did,” David seems to say, “I could not stand.” But he says more, “Who shall stand?” Whatever pretensions to perfection any persons may make, they are false! There is no man who can stand in God’s sight when He comes to mark our iniquities. And if we are taught of God’s Spirit, we shall know it to be so! In fact, the more holy a man becomes, the more conscious he is of unholiness.

“But”—and what a blessed, “but,” this is! One of the most blessed, “buts,” in the Word of God! “But there is forgiveness with You.” Or, “There is a propitiation with You.” There is a readiness to deal with men, not according to their just deserts, but according to Free Grace and the infinite mercy of God. “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Is not that a very strange expression? One would have thought that it would have said, “There is *judgment* with You, that You may be feared.” But no, Brothers and Sisters, if there were judgment with God and no forgiveness, *then* men would grow despairing and they would be hardened and rebellious! Or else all would be swept away in God’s wrath and there would be nobody left to fear Him. It is mercy that softens the heart, it is the forgiveness of God that leads men to love Him and to fear Him. The true fear of God—the holy *filial* fear—never rises out of judgment, but springs out of forgiving love. I hope, Beloved, you feel that because you are forgiven, you fear to offend God. Because of so much love, you fear to grieve the blessed Spirit of God.

“I wait for Jehovah, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for Adonai”—the King, the Sovereign Lord—“more than they who watch for the morning, they who watch for the morning.” Our translators put in the words, “I say more than”—I suppose, to make the sense more clear. But, by doing so, they spoiled the beautiful poetic simplicity of the original.

“Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Until this verse, the Psalmist has been talking about himself. Now he speaks about all the people of God. True religion is expansive! As your own heart gets warmed, you begin to call others in to share your happiness. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Did not their father Jacob do so? When all night he wrestled at the brook Jab-bok, he hoped in the Lord, and so he gained his name, Israel, and went away triumphant because he hoped in Jehovah!

“For with Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe that, O seeking sinner! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, O backslider! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, downcast child of God! “And with Him is plenteous redemption.” There is enough for you and there is enough for all who come to Him! There is not a slave of sin whom God cannot redeem, for “with Him is plenteous redemption.”

“And He shall redeem.” There is the comfort of it—He not only has the redemption, but He will make use of it. “He shall redeem Israel”—the whole of His Israel, all His people—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Oh, come to Him, then, with all your iniquities, and pray to be redeemed from them! And as surely as Jehovah lives, He will fulfill this promise and redeem you from all your iniquities!

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## **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—113, 130.**

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

# ISRAEL'S HOPE—OR, THE CENTER OF THE TARGET NO. 2199

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1891,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy,  
and with Him is plenteous redemption.”  
Psalm 130:7.*

When he penned this Psalm, the writer, David, was in deep distress, if not of circumstances, yet of conscience. He constantly mentions iniquities and begs forgiveness. He felt like a shipwrecked mariner, carried overboard into the raging sea. Thus he reviews the situation—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Yet he lived to tell the tale of deliverance! His prayer from among the waves was a memory worth preserving and he preserves it. The mercy of God to him he weaves into a song for us—and in this our text is found.

Two things the rescued sufferer tells us. First, that, *as God delivered him from the power of sin, so He will deliver all His praying, wrestling, believing people.* That is the last verse of the Psalm—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” The argument is—He delivered *me*. What am I more than others? The gracious Lord who saved me will save all those who call upon Him in truth. He delivered me, though laden with iniquities, and His pardoning mercy is unfailing and, therefore, He can and will rescue others from their uttermost distresses. This is a good line of reasoning, for the Lord's ways are constant and He will do for all Believers what He has done for one of them.

The other thing which the Psalmist sets before us is this—*we are wise if we apply to God, alone, for help.* He says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.” He incidentally tells us that it is vain to wait upon man and put our trust in any human support, for the way of deliverance only lies in reliance upon God, immediately and alone. We are not to depend upon outward means, but upon the God who lends efficacy to all means. Why is it that we need to be told of this? Why is faith in God so rare? To go first to the Lord is to save time! Straightforward always makes the best runner and to go straight to God is not only our *duty*, but it will be our happiest course. The Psalm encourages us to this by the assurance that the Lord can and will help all that seek Him—and it urges us to let that seeking be distinctly and directly turned to the Most High, to Him alone and to none other. To join

another ground of confidence with the Lord is a sort of practical idolatry which is to the wounding of faith.

May we learn well the lesson of this Psalm! When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass in order that if we are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. You meet with a man that has long been sorely afflicted—to find him full of joy at his relief is a pleasure and a personal comfort! You heard him lamenting for years and now you hear him rejoicing—and this excites your wonder and your hope! It is as though a cripple saw another lame man leaping and running. He very naturally enquires, “How is this?” The other day you saw a blind man begging in the street—and now he has eyes bright as that which sparkle on the face of a gazelle—and you cry in astonishment—“Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes, for I may be in the same case and I would be glad to know where to go.” Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. The Psalmist found salvation and deliverance in going directly to God and trusting in Him! Let us follow his example and in all times of distress, caused by our own iniquity, or by anything else, let us repair to the Throne of Grace, for the Most High will also deal with us even as He dealt with His servant of old, to whose cries, out of the depths, He lent an attentive ear. This Psalm is called “*De Profundis*”—its teaching is not only profound but practical.

Let me freely speak with you as concerning the great salvation which, as fallen creatures, we all need. In that matter our only resort must be to God, alone, for, “salvation is of the Lord.” God has been pleased, in these last days, to reveal Himself in a glorious manner, suitable to our salvation. He was always to be seen in creation by those whose sight was not darkened by moral evil and, doubtless, angelic eyes always beheld Jehovah in all the works of His hands. He was to be seen under the old Law in types and shadows and, believing men and women were enabled, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to behold the Lord in His Temple. But in these last days, the Lord has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has made heir of all things, and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is the Father most clearly to be seen—and now, if we read that Israel is to hope in the Lord and if we see that the way of salvation lies in relying upon “the Lord”—we must read between the lines and understand that the glorious Lord must *always* be the object of faith according as He, at this time, reveals Himself.

It is written, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” That is to say, they trust, as they know how He reveals Himself. At this moment the manifestation of God stands thus—His dear Son has descended from the highest heavens and taken upon Himself our human nature, so that He is God and Man in one sacred and mysterious Person! In that complex form, the Word made flesh dwelt among men on earth some 30 years and more. And then He took upon Himself the weight of human sin and bore it upon His shoulders up to the Cross. He was arrested by the hand of Divine Justice and treated by Justice as if He had been a sinner, though sinner He could never be. He was numbered with

the transgressors and given over to wicked men, who, in their willful malice, scourged Him, spit upon Him, crowned Him with thorns and condemned Him to a felon's death. He died, not for any iniquity of His own, but for the transgression of His people was He smitten. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Yes, "He was made a curse for us" and even more—"He was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

If, then, we would trust God for our personal salvation, we must confide in Him as He manifests Himself for that purpose. And as we perceive that God sets forth Christ to be the Propitiation for our sin, we must accept that ordained way of putting away our sin. This is the way in which, "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." And thus it is that, "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." We trust in the Lord God as He reveals Himself in the Person of His Son Christ Jesus who has displayed in His own self the Love and the Justice of God—and has shown how these were equally glorified by the way of redemption through the substitution and sacrifice of One who is the Fellow of the Highest, and yet next-of-kin to man! Our Lord has buried our sin in His sepulcher and has gone up into Heaven to plead, there, with God, for transgressors and, at the same time, to prepare a place for as many as believe in Him and so are saved by His plenteous redemption! Understand, then, that if we read in the text, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption," we now, today, in the light of the Gospel, read it thus—"Let the seeking sinner, who would be redeemed from all his iniquities, trust in God as He is seen in and through Jesus Christ, for there forgiveness is freely given through plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer marked or imputed to the Believer, because the sacrifice of Jesus has blotted it out and removed it forever."

This is the introduction of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit now grant His anointing both to preacher and hearers!

**I.** The chief point to which I desire you to give earnest heed is this—in obtaining Gospel blessings, **THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS** and not towards the blessings, themselves. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." We do not read, "Let Israel hope for *mercy*." But we read, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy." Neither does it say, Let Israel hope for plenteous redemption." But it is worded thus, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption." To me this has the look of a very encouraging Truth of God—the sinner is not to hasten with his first thoughts to the mercy that he needs, nor even to the promise of God to which he may look—but he is to go *to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself*, as the Lord of Mercy and Fountain of Redemption! The first exercise of our faith is to deal immediately with the Lord God as He meets us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here let me say that *this is the most natural order which faith can follow*. Look first to the Giver and *then* to the gift! Look for the Helper and then for the help! Do not be saying, "I long to be forgiven. I labor to believe

that I am forgiven. I desire to be saved. I want to know that I am saved." This is looking for the *fruit*, when you have need, *first*, to find the tree! Your first business, as a seeker of pardon and salvation, is to believe in Jesus Christ, that is, to trust yourself with the Divine Savior. The natural order is believe in the Promiser and then you will believe the promise! You never say to yourself, "I should like to be able to take that man's word. I will sit down and try to make my mind confident of the truth of what he says." This would be a foolish and futile method of procedure. You follow a much more reasonable course—you enquire about the individual's character and standing—you find out who he is, what he is and what he has done. And thus you gather arguments for confidence and faith. You cannot help believing the promise when once you believe in the promiser. If you find a merchant to be an eminently upright and substantial man, you do not hesitate to take his checks. In fact, you would be glad to have your wallet full of them! Faith prizes the promises of her faithful God, and calls them precious.

Apply this rule and deal with heavenly things in due order. You seek pardon. Do not look continually at this priceless mercy at first, but look to the pardoning God! You will soon believe in forgiveness if you cause the first exercise of your faith to refer to the Forgiver, even Christ Jesus, Himself. When you have believed *in Him*, as able to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," then you will believe in sins being forgiven! This is the natural order of things. So, also, if you desire to believe for salvation and to be assured that you have it, or may have it at once, the simple course—the natural course—is to believe in the Savior! To be healed, you believe first in the Healer. When you have believed in the Savior, then you will believe in the salvation. If you know that Jesus can save you; if you desire to be saved, you will trust Him to save you. You will be readily able to believe that you can be saved when you trust in Jesus as able to save to the uttermost.

Poor trembling Heart, do not look at the blessing and say, "Alas, it is too great!" Look at the Savior Himself! Is anything too great for Him to give who gave His heart's blood to redeem? Do not say, "My heart is so hard it cannot be changed." Look at the Savior—is anything impossible to Him to whom the Father has committed all power? Is He not mighty to save? Fix your eyes, first and foremost, upon Him who is both God and Man and has, therefore, power and sympathy, majesty and mercy, Omnipotence and brotherliness. I pray you, do not consider so much the greatness of the *effect* as the unlimited power of the *Cause*. I may doubt my washing, but not when I believe in the cleansing virtue of the precious blood! It may be difficult to believe in my salvation, but not to believe in my Savior! It may be hard to hope for Heaven, but the text sets me an easier task—"Let Israel hope in the Lord." When I open my window God-wards and look towards the Lord Jesus, I see glorious things in the light of the rising sun, even things which I could not have seen if I had not first turned towards the light. "In the beginning God"—this, according to the first chapter of Genesis, is the natural order of all Divine work—do not attempt to alter it.

To this I would add, *this is the necessary order*. It must be so—the Savior first and then the salvation. Suppose, for a moment, that it were possible for you to obtain pardon without Christ—what good would it do you? I would remind you that no blessing is a Covenant blessing, or a blessing at all, except as it is connected with Christ Jesus and so with the Lord God. No comfort is worth having if Jesus does not comfort us! No forgiveness is worth the words which utter it if Jesus does not forgive. There is no coming to the Father except by Christ. If, therefore, I imagine that I have come to the Father *without* Christ, it is clear that I have not come! If I fancy that I have saving blessings apart from the appointed Savior, I am a deceived man! Beloved, do not seek after mercy, pardon, holiness, Heaven—except through Christ Jesus our Lord—for you will be seeking counterfeits, shadows, delusions. Begin at the Cross! See how Jesus puts it—“Come *unto Me*, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He does not first say, “Take My yoke upon you,” but first, “Come *unto Me*.” He first gives us rest and then, afterwards, we find it. But we *begin* with coming to Him.

First Christ and then His yoke. First Christ and then rest. Do not ask for rest, first, and then say, “I will come to Christ afterwards.” This is an impossible order! Do not even say, “I must get a broken heart and *then* come to Christ.” No, come to Christ FOR a broken heart! I preach a Savior to you, tonight, who wants nothing of you, but who is ready to begin with you at the beginning, just where you are, in all your unworthiness and ill desert—in all your depravity and vileness! He is ready to take you up from the mire of the pit wherein you lie and to look on you with love in all the pollution with which you are disgraced! Come, then, and begin with Jesus! It is the necessary order of your coming—first to Christ and *then* to His yoke and to His peace. Let your faith exercise itself, not so much on *what* you ought to be, or on what you *hope* to be, as on what *Christ is* and on His ability to make you all that your heart pines after. Hear the good word of my text and give good heed to it. Note well the permission of heavenly love—“Let Israel hope *in the Lord*.”

Observe, also, that, as it is the natural order and the necessary order, so it is evidently *the easiest order*. Sometimes it seems, to a burdened heart, to be more than difficult to believe in the pardon of innumerable sins—it appears impossible. Guilty One, do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but believe in Jesus the Sacrifice and Savior, who has once and for all appeared to put away sin. Believe in the Divine Substitute and then you will believe that the forgiveness of your sins is a thing provided for by Him. Do not even say, “I can never be sanctified. Such a wretched sinner as I am could never be made into a saint.” Do not try to believe in sanctification, but rely upon the boundless power of Jesus to “make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight.” For all parts of salvation, hope in the Lord and look to His hands for the working thereof. Forget yourself, now, and only think of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Cease looking for the water and look for the Well! You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for He is lifted up, even He who is God,

and beside Him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eyes on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing. When the work seems hard, look to *His* hands—“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

You may fix your eyes upon a Covenant promise till it dazzles you, but if you see Jesus, the sight will strengthen your eyes and you will see the promise in Him—and perceive it to be, yes and amen, to the Glory of God. It is easier to believe in a personal Christ than in impersonal promises. That poor woman who was sick, in Jesus Christ's day, might have said to herself, “It is impossible that I should be healed,” but then she thought not so much of the healing as of the Healer—and when she saw Jesus walking about among the crowds, healing all manner of diseases—and when she believed that God was in Him, why, then she inferred that He could heal her disease! And so she came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. She sought *Him* and so sought healing! Stay in this line—let not the devil take you from it—that the first object of your faith should be the Lord Jesus, for by Him, as the Ladder which God has set up, you can climb to the highest place of privilege and lay hold upon the choicest gift of Divine Grace!

This is the way to God, Himself, and the only way which our human feet can tread. Consider well who Christ was and what He has done—and then you will conclude that He can save even you! By *looking to Him*, you will be saved and what is easier than to look? To hope in God is a far more simple matter than to search for signs and evidences in yourself, or to labor to force yourself up into certain states of mind. Answer the question, “Will He save me?” by looking to see what kind of a Savior Jesus is—and when you perceive the Glory of His Person, the perfection of His obedience and the merit of His blood—you will be convinced that you may safely trust in Him according to His command, for He *commands* you to believe! Jesus declares, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Let us come at once, for it is the nearest and best road to peace!

To come, first of all, to God in Christ Jesus is *the wisest course*. You are too bewildered to know which blessing to seek, therefore seek Jesus, Himself, and He will be unto you wisdom! It is easier to come to the Cross than to the separate blessings which come of it. Take the straight road which lies plainly before your face.

In faintness and trembling of heart we dare not appropriate a mercy—our palsied hands cannot grasp a favor and, therefore, it is our wisdom to fall at Jesus' feet and let Him give us what seems good to Him. Through our ignorance, we know not what to ask for—and through our doubt we are afraid to ask—therefore, let us leave all with our Lord. We need the wine and oil, but we are sorely wounded and shall do well to lie still and let Him pour them in. When the Good Samaritan is come, all is come. Let us, therefore, neither cry for wine nor oil, but for HIM—we know His name! The wisdom of the prayer is seen in its completeness. At first, sinners, conscious of their ill desert, cry to be saved from Hell and this is the most of their prayer. But suppose the Lord should give them this and not change their natures—would they be one whit the better? If there were no

fires of Tophet, so long as a man has sin within him, he creates his own Hell! In seeking the Lord Jesus, a man finds escape from punishment and much more. No man knows enough to be able to ask for an all-round salvation—he will only seek this or that which seems to him most pressingly necessary. We are too ignorant, too much the creatures of feeling, too partial, too childish to make a catalog of what we need. But we can ask for Jesus, and He is all in one! How excellent is that hymn of ours with the refrain—

**“Give me Christ, or else I die!”**

We have asked all when we have asked for the Savior anointed of the Lord. When our hope is in God through the Mediator whom He has appointed, we hope in Him in a way which renders our hope sure and steadfast—and this is the highest wisdom. In laying hold upon Jesus you have obtained not only something, but everything. In looking first to Jesus, you have sought for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and you know the promise that all other things shall be added. If you need strength, comfort, guidance, fruitfulness and anything else that makes up eternal salvation, behold, you have it in your Lord! Nothing that is needed for a soul between this present state of trial and the perfection of Heaven is omitted from Christ—“you are complete in Him.” If, therefore, you make Him the first object of your faith, and lay hold upon Him, rather than upon any or all blessings, you are delivered from anxiety as to whether your ignorant prayers have comprehended all you need—and this is be a wise course to follow.

It is, therefore, *the most profitable course* for needy souls like ourselves. By grasping our Lord and hoping in Him, we fill our hands, not with brass or silver, but with gold of Ophir. Let others hope where they may, but let Israel, the Prince, hope in the Lord from whom he has already won such royal favors. I see at times, in the newspaper, “Principals only will be dealt with,” and in our heavenly business we had better keep to this rule. Go not to the servants—make all your applications to the Master—and in your dealings with Him seek not so much His gifts as Himself, for the Giver is always greater than what He gives! The bottle of water which Hagar carried for Ishmael is a poor thing compared with that well of God beside which Isaac abode. Fruit from a choice tree is well, but apples of gold in baskets of silver are not to be despised. But, if one can have the tree planted in his own garden, he is far richer. Our Lord is the apple tree among the trees of the forest and, to possess HIM, is to have the best of the best, yes, all things that can be desired! Covenant blessings are streams, but our Lord Jesus is the Wellhead. Believe for the infinite, immutable, inexhaustible “deep which lies under,” and you may sink as many wells as you please.

I believe that in every case wherein the soul finds peace, this is *the actual order*. We may go about after pardon, renewal and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto HIM and are lightened—and not by any other means. If, by aiming even at *repentance*, we are taken off from the Lord—we are taken off the right road. It is possible even to look to faith in such a manner as to

forget the Object of faith! It is not my *hand*, but what my hand *grasps* that saves me when I lay hold on Christ! It is not my eye, but what my eyes see which saves me when I look to Jesus! In very deed no heart can find salvation in that which comes forth from itself—its hope lies only in the Lord, alone, to whom it must trust for everything. Beware of trusting to an anchor which lies on your own deck, or to a confidence which depends in the least degree on yourself. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Now the Lord is not *self*, nor will He be joined with self! The Lord is beyond and outside of all that the creation can find within, or hope to produce from itself. Mercy and redemption are with the Lord, not with self. Why, then, should we look where, in the very nature of things, those are not and cannot be? Why not look to the Lord, in whom, alone, all heavenly treasures abide?

This, then, is my message to every man or woman who desires salvation, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Do not begin by hoping in mercy and redemption, for these are not to be found apart from the Lord—but go at once to that Divine Person with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption—then both of those will be granted to you. I wish I knew how to put this so plainly that every bewildered and cast-down spirit would catch my meaning and accept its counsel. I would also have preachers learn a lesson from the point I have been driving at. Let them not so much preach sinners to Christ as preach Christ to sinners. I am persuaded that a full and clear declaration of what Jesus is, as to His Person, offices, Character, work and authority would do more to produce faith than all our exhortations. “Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life”—but how shall they believe unless they hear of Him?

The very best topic for the immediate conversion of men is Christ Crucified—the doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. I know one that came in here full of evil, living an unchaste life—and the text was, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” There would not seem to be anything about the sermon to convict of sin but the charming mercy of God won that heart, and that heart, being won by love, learned at once to hate evil and to serve the Lord Jesus in all that is pure, lovely and of good report! There sat in this very house, not long ago, side by side with one who is still in the service of Satan, a woman who had not attended the House of God for years. Nothing was heard but the simple proclamation of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus to the guilty—and she was shot down by the side of her companion—the thought of the amazing mercy and infinite love of God, in giving His Son to die, touched her heart and she began to weep. Immediately her companion upbraided her, but she answered, “I have found mercy.” That was enough for her—she made no other excuse for her emotion.

I pray that the same effects may follow this sermon. I bid you hope in the Lord! Look not to abstract mercy! Look not to any feelings or resolves in yourselves! Look not, even, to the hearing of the Word of God, or to promises, alone, but look to Jesus, who still lives, and who is in the midst of His people at this time, waiting to receive all who are willing to come to

Him! While I tell you this, I am praying the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to your souls, so that, at once, without delay, you may look only to the Lord and may trust in Him and be saved! You are allowed to do so, for the text says, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." If the Scripture permits, who shall forbid?

**II.** Another form of the same Truth of God now invites our attention—ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. I began with our first exercise of faith, but I would not end there. As the stars called, "the Pointers," always point to the polestar, so must our faith always look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. Let Israel always hope in the Lord, for with Him is what she still requires. What do you need tonight, dear Friend? Ask, and you shall receive—but ask only of the Lord! Knock, but knock at the same door! Plead, but when you are pleading, still plead the name of Jesus! Whenever you are expecting a heavenly favor, expect it from the Father through His dear Son, by the Holy Spirit! Whenever you are longing, long for nothing more than there is in Christ! And whenever you obtain a mercy, remember that you have received it only because you have, by faith, received Jesus, and so have become a child of God. Whenever you rejoice in a mercy, take care that you do not so much glory in *it* as in the *Lord* from whom it came. Hope in the Lord and never have any hope in yourself, for that would be a fruitless, groundless, rootless, sapless hope! You are still to find mercy and plenteous redemption in the Lord alone.

I am afraid that sometimes we seek *mercies* apart from God the Giver, or apart from Christ, the channel of their bestowal—and this is always ill of us. Avoid such dangerous error! I read in the papers, frequently, allusions to "Providence." I know what *I* mean by Providence, but I do not know what the newspapers mean by it. I fear it is only a convenient phrase, a conventional expression which is not to be too carefully examined. They do not mean a living, foreseeing, providing, working Personality—that would be too much like religion! They admit a certain *something*, "a power which makes for righteousness," a nonentity called, "Providence." I have too often heard Christian people talk about thanking Providence. What is that? Do you mean, "thank God"? If so, say it boldly! It is *God* that provides. *God* arranges, *God* overrules, *God* works out His gracious designs! Again, how often do we hear of, "Nature" doing this and, "Nature" being that and, "Nature" producing the other! What do you mean? An infidel, some time ago, was speaking in the open air and he orated very eloquently about the elevating influences of Nature and what a blessing it was to study Nature. A friend in the crowd said to him, "That is very pretty, but would you have the goodness to tell me what Nature is, which does all this?" The orator answered tartly, "Every fool knows what Nature is." "Well," said the questioner, "then it will be easy to tell us." "Nature," said the speaker, "Well, Nature is Nature."

Just so. That is where it ended. And so it is with very many people when they talk about Providence or Nature. Let us not speak without knowing what we mean, or without declaring our meaning. We do not

erect an altar and inscribe it TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. We know the Lord and are known of Him and, therefore, we should speak of Him as our hope, our trust, our joy! We know no Providence apart from Jehovah-Jireh, the God who foresees and provides! To us there is no fickle chance, but the Lord reigns. Equally to us is there no blind, inexorable fate, but the Most High decrees and works out His wise and sovereign will! Therefore do not let God's Israel talk as if they hoped in luck or fate, but let them, "hope in the Lord," and acknowledge their reliance upon a personal God who is always working for them—"for with Him is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, do you need *mercy*? In your prayers for pardoning mercy, quote the Savior's Sacrifice. Do you need sparing mercy? Mention Him whom God did not spare in the great atoning day. Do you need restoring mercy? Plead Him whom God brought again from the dead! Do you need to behold the light of Jehovah's Countenance? Plead Him who said, "Why have You forsaken Me?" In hoping for mercy, set the eyes of your hope upon the Lord Jesus and let no mercy be hoped for by you apart from Him! Remember what happened to Uzziah. He was a man of God and a king—but when he had grown very great, he thought that he would act as priest for himself. He went into the sanctuary of the Lord and burned incense on his own account—without the Lord's appointed priest—and he was struck with leprosy! And not only was he thrust out of the Temple, but he, himself, hurried to get out!

I tremble for those in whom I see any sign of going before God in right of their own character. I fear that among God's own professing people there are some who are so conscious of their own knowledge and growth, that they pray without Christ, praise without Christ, and talk of being no longer in need of confessing sin! They dare to act without humbly depending upon the Presence of the great High Priest—and then they fall into sin and thus they are struck with leprosy and, perhaps, to their dying day they can never enter into such fellowship with God as once they knew. I would do nothing without Jesus! I would not even wish to repent except my eyes were upon the Cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my All. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it is mercy received through Jesus, for He, alone, is full of Grace and of His fullness must we receive! I would bind you, Brothers and Sisters, if I could, to the Cross as your one hope! I pray the Lord bind me forever to the Cross—the wounds my only fountains of hope, the blood and water my only cleansing! Go, you who have a righteousness of your own, and hope elsewhere! The only hope of my soul is the bleeding, dying, buried, risen, coming Savior! "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy," and with Him, alone! All the exercises of faith about mercy must always be tethered to the Cross. Mercy flows through Christ alone.

So is it with "*plenteous redemption*." What a grand utterance that is—"plenteous redemption!" I would like to dwell upon it. Is there not rare music in the sound? It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. Only in Christ can you find this!

“*With Him* is plenteous redemption.” Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and Person of the Son of God! “*With Him* is plenteous redemption.” He has paid a great price and, therefore, a great debt is blotted out! Great offenses are forgiven, but only through the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer.

“Plenteous redemption.” Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters! My God, I long to be so delivered and redeemed! And there is with You all Grace, power and provision for plenteous deliverance by redemption—but this is found in Christ alone. I charge you, my Hearers, do not look for escape from the slavery of sin apart from the redemption of Christ! Do not expect to overcome the smallest sin except by the blood of the Lamb! There is nothing, I believe, more deceiving than the notion of the *unregenerate* heart that it is seeking after holiness—though it is destitute of the power of the Holy Spirit and takes no thought of the merit of Jesus Christ. We need much grace and plenteous redemption in fact—but all of all that we receive must come to us from the Lord, by Jesus Christ the Mediator!

“Plenteous redemption” includes in its range of meaning great growth in Divine Grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality and perfect preparedness for Heaven. For all these we must hope in the Lord, for they are with Him. Never think to have redemption in the least or in the highest degree apart from your hope in the Lord—your trusting in Christ Jesus.

The pith and marrow of what I have said is this—*hope distinctly in the Lord*. There are many stars, but let one, alone, of all the train be the Object of your believing eye. Lay the foundation of your hope in the Lord! Go on building up your comfort in the Lord Jesus and in Him bring forth the top stone. Begin with Christ and end with Christ! As Christ grows more to you, take care that self grows less and less. If your Christianity puffs you up, it is not Christ's Christianity. I spoke just now of King Uzziah, let me refer to him once more. Read in the Second of Chronicles, chapter 26, at the 15<sup>th</sup> verse—“He was marvelously helped, till he was strong.” When he became strong, he went off the lines and we read, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.” *Mind that*. God will always help us while we are weak. When we are strong—what shall I say? Then are we weak and have need to fear, for we are already being lifted up, or we should not count ourselves strong—poor, puny creatures that we are! God will always bless us as long as we confess our dependence upon His blessing. He will always fill us as long as we are empty! He will always feed us as long as we are hungry. He will be your All in All so long as *you* are *nothing*.

But the moment you boast in yourself, and say, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” you will be left to learn that you are naked, poor and miserable! Woe was the day in which dust and ashes set up somebody! Nebuchadnezzar is proud and soon finds a rapid descent from the throne to eating grass like cattle! Worms, in the Presence of the Lord, do all they may do when they *hope*—they do all they can do

when they hope in Him! They have nothing but sin and He has mercy upon them. They are slaves to evil, but He has plenteous redemption with which to set them free. The poorest, weakest, saddest among us may hope in the Lord, for He can do all things! Therefore, let us end our meeting with each one of us hoping in the Lord—and let us continue in our faith in “the God of hope”—till we receive the Heaven we hope for through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
Psalm 130, John 3.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 560, 538.**

**A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
London, April 13, 1891.**

DEAR FRIENDS—This sermon is issued this week instead of the discourse of last Lord's-Day morning because I am spending a few days in retirement so as to be rested and ready for the College Conference which commences April 20. This Conference is a great muster of ministers and my very soul is on fire with a desire for a special blessing from the Lord when I am addressing them and, indeed, through all the meetings. I would entreat every reader to pray that this Conference may be greatly influential in establishing the Brothers in the faith and in awakening in them a great passion for souls. By this means their churches and congregations will become partakers of the benefit. We need not merely “a little reviving,” but a second Pentecost! What we need we will seek, and what we seek we will expect. God has great things in reserve, which he will give in answer to prayer.

In the midst of the week, which some lovingly call the Feast of Tabernacles, one evening is given up to the College Annual Supper and, on that occasion, gifts are sent in for the support of THE COLLEGE. It would greatly cheer me if many of my readers who cannot be present in person, would, nevertheless, have fellowship in the work by sending in their help by April 22. The funds coming in for different parts of the Lord's work under my care have been rather smaller of late. This causes me no anxiety, for the Lord can soon fill the coffers, but I think His people ought to be informed of it, lest any should suppose that their aid is not needed. I would be glad for help from all the members of my “larger congregation.”

Brothers and Sisters, I *suggest*—I do no more. And yet I do beg your prayers for the Lord's work.

Yours heartily, for Jesus' sake,  
C. H. SPURGEON.

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

# PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION

## NO. 351

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING DECEMBER 16, 1860  
BY THE REV. C. H. Spurgeon,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“With Him is plenteous redemption.”  
Psalm 130:7.***

REDEMPTION is a word which has gladdened many ears when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by corsairs and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be *redemption*.

His cruel master who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him. But a rumor came that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow countrymen. That the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the Moors might return to their homes. Truly I can suppose the hours would run happily along and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged when once that word “*redemption*” had sounded in their ears!

So with our fellow subjects and our fellow men who once were slaves in our West India settlements, we can well conceive that to their lips the word *redemption* must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money—that on a certain morning their fetters should be snapped asunder, so that they should no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip—but they should call themselves their own and none should be their masters to possess their flesh and have property in their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose—when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea and the whole land was at liberty—how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared. O there are many sonnets in that one word “*redemption*.”

Now you who have sold for nothing your glorious heritage. You who have been carried bond slaves into Satan's dominion. You who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them. You who have smarted beneath the lash of the Law. What the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you tonight. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—"plenteous redemption."

This evening I shall consider the subject of *redemption* and then notice the *adjective appended to the word*: "*plenteous redemption.*"

**I.** First, then, we shall consider the subject of REDEMPTION.

I shall commence in this way, by asking, *What has Christ redeemed?* And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine—consistent with common sense and declared to us by Scripture—namely that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ will most assuredly have. I start with that as an axiom—that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ must have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason and much more to Revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what He never shall obtain. And I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Savior's death can ever be frustrated. Whatever was Christ's intention when He died—we lay it down as a very groundwork Truth which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain.

I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures that when He has once intended a thing it must most assuredly be accomplished. And if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed His blood in vain. Nor that He should die with an intention of doing something and yet should not perform it—that He should die with a full intention in His heart and with a promise on the part of God that a certain thing should be given to Him as a reward of His sufferings—and yet should fail to obtain it.

I start with that. And I think that everyone who will weigh the matter and truly consider it, must see it to be so—that Christ's intention in His death must be fulfilled and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out. Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ's atonement is just as great as God meant it should be and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what He *meant to redeem* and exactly what the Father had decreed He should redeem.

Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that *all* men are redeemed. Some may hold it, as I

know they do and hold it very strongly and even urge it as being a fundamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it. This is a land of liberty. Let them hold their views but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter. For if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God's intention is frustrated and that Christ has not received what He died to procure. If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything. And I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake, or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason.

Starting then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe according to sound doctrine and Scripture. Christ has *really* redeemed. His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things. He has redeemed the souls of His people. He has redeemed the bodies of His people. He has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam. He has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which He will have the world at last.

Christ has redeemed *the souls of all His people who shall ultimately be saved*. To state it after the Calvinistic form Christ has redeemed His *elect*. But since you do not know His elect until they are revealed, we will alter that and say, Christ has redeemed all *penitent souls*. Christ has redeemed all believing souls. *And* Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy—seeing it is to be received that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to Heaven—instead of toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's Book of Life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way and ultimately attain to Heaven—these, I believe were redeemed—and I most firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption.

I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed. I could not conceive my Savior bearing the punishment for Judas, or if so how could Judas be punished again? I could not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ's hands the penalty of his sin and then at the sinner's hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed His blood in vain. And though I have read in the books of certain Divines that Christ's blood is fuel for the flames of Hell, I have shuddered at the thought and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of

God. The souls of God's people, whoever they may be and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I could fondly hope they are all of you—are redeemed effectually.

Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin and from the power of sin. The souls of Christ's people have guilt on account of sin until they are redeemed. But when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are every one of them from that moment forever blotted out—

***“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified Lord,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through His blood.”***

The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God's sight any longer a guilty person. You are reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you. And therefore, you can say—to recall a verse which we often repeat—

***“Now freed from sin I walk at large  
My Savior's blood's my full discharge;  
At His dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved and homage pay.”***

Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression is by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from all the Lord's believing family.

And mark, next—not only the guilt, but the *punishment* of sin is taken away. In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether. Take away the guilt—the punishment is gone. But to make it more effectual, it is as it were written over again that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned. They can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their place and therefore, they cannot—unless God is unjust—be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ, their ransom died, they cannot die.

If He, their Surety, paid their debt, then unto God's justice they no longer owe anything for Christ has paid it all. If He has shed His blood, if He has yielded up the ghost, if He has “died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” how, then, would God be Just and yet the punisher of those whom He has already punished once in the Person of Jesus Christ their Savior? No, Beloved, through the plenteous redemption of Christ we

are delivered from all punishment on account of sin and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.

Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom He died—are most effectually delivered from the *power* of sin. Oh, there are some who suck in the two truths I have been mentioning, as if they were honey—but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the *power* of sin. Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed from the *guilt* of sin or from the *punishment* of sin, unless he is at the same time delivered from the *power* of sin. Unless he is made by God to hate his own sin. Unless he is enabled to cast it to the ground. Unless he is made to abhor every evil way and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before Him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed.

If you are still under the dominion of your lusts, O wicked Sinner, you have no right to think yourself a purchased heir of Heaven. If you can be drunk, if you can swear, if you can curse God, if you can lie, if you can profane the Sabbath, if you can hate His people, if you can despise His Word then you have no right whatever, any more than Satan in Hell, to boast that you are redeemed. For all the Lord's redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Are you delivered from the power of sin, my Hearer? Have you mortified it? Are you dead unto it? Is it dead unto you? Is it crucified unto you and you unto it?

Do you hate it as you would a viper? Do you tread on it as you would tread upon a serpent? If you do, albeit there be sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if you hate the sin of your heart, if you have an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort. The Lord has redeemed you from the guilt and penalty and also from the power of sin. That is the first point of redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should mistake me—I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want to so preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, “He could not have meant what he said.”

Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I do believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the *guilt*, the *punishment* and the *power* of sin. I say again—it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture—to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Savior's blood, or that His blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them.

2. Now let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the *bodies of all His children*. In that day when Christ redeemed our souls, He redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ who gave His human soul and His human body to death, purchased the *body* as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way redemption operates upon the body of the believer? I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by His death a glorious resurrection. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive.”

All men are by virtue of the death of Christ quickened to a resurrection—but even here there is a special property of the *elect*—seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, while others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection. A resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, your body is redeemed—

**“What though your inbred sins require  
Your flesh to see the dust,  
Yet, as the Lord your Savior rose,  
So all His followers must.”**

What? Though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer lives and because He lives I *know* that in my flesh I shall see God.

These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death shall not be always closed in darkness—death shall be made to give back his prey. He shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He has the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons. They are wrapped up in their cerements and he thinks they are secure—he has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O Death! Foolish Death! Your caskets shall be rifled. Your storehouses shall be broken open. Lo, the morning is come! Christ has descended from on high. I hear the trump, “Awake! Awake!” And lo, from their tombs, the righteous start—while Death sits in confusion howling in vain—to find his empire all bereft of its subjects—to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey.

“Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” Precious shall be their bones! Their very dust is blessed and Christ shall raise them with Himself. Think of that, you that have lost friends—you weeping children of sorrow! Your redeemed friends shall live again. The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch shall grasp them in Paradise. Those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noonday of felicity. That very frame which you did sorrowfully convey with dread attire of a funeral to bury in its tomb—yes,

that self-same body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless the selfsame body, shall rise again.

And you, if you are redeemed, shall see it—for Christ has purchased it and Christ shall not die in vain. Death will not have one bone of the righteous—no, not a particle of their dust—no, not a hair of their heads. It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body and the whole body shall be completed and united forever in Heaven with the glorified soul. The bodies of the righteous are redeemed and redeemed for eternal happiness.

**3.** In the next place, all the *possessions of the righteous* which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! Where are you? I have a controversy with you, Man, for I have lost much by you. Come here. Adam! You see what you are now, tell me what you once were. Then I shall know what I have lost by you and then I shall be able to thank my Master that all you did lose He has freely bought back to all believers. What did you lose? “Alas!” cries Adam, “I had a crown once. I was king of all the world. The beasts crouched at my feet and did me reverence. God made me that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills and over all fowls of the air. But I lost my crown. I had a miter once,” said Adam, “for I was a priest to God and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills and sing sweet prayers of praise to Him that made me. My censer of praise has often smoked with incense and my voice has been sweet with praise.

“Oft have I bid misty exhalations. Sun and moon and stars sing His praise. Daily have I bid the herds upon the hills low out His glories and the lions roar His honors. Nightly have I told the stars to shine out and the little flowers to blossom forth. But ah, I lost my miter and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be His holy servant.” Ah, Adam, you have lost me much. But yonder I see my Savior. He takes His crown off His head, that He may put a crown on *my* head. And He puts a miter on His head, to be a priest, that He may put a miter on *my* head, too—and on the head of all His people—for, as we have just been singing—

***“You have redeemed our souls with blood,  
Have set the prisoners free;  
Have made us kings and priests to God,  
And we shall reign with You.”***

Just what Adam lost—the kingship and the priesthood of Christ—is won for all His believing people. And what else did you lose, Adam? “Why, I lost Paradise.” Hush, Man! Say nothing upon that. For Christ has bought me a Paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as yours. So we can well forgive you that. And what else did you lose? “Why, I lost the image of my Maker.” Ah, hush, Adam! In Jesus Christ we have something more than that. For we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and

surely that is even better than the image of the Maker—for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore. So, Adam, all that you have lost I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nothing. I who have sold for nothing a heritage Divine, shall have it back unbought—the gift of love, says Christ, even Mine. Oh, hear it, then! The trump of Jubilee is blown. Christ has redeemed the lost possessions of His people.

4. And now I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed the *world*. “Well, now,” says one, “that is strange, Sir. You are going to contradict yourself flatly.” Stop a moment. Understand what I mean by *the world*, if you please. We do not mean every man, in it. We never pretended such a thing. But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell God cursed the world with barrenness. “Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto you and in the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” God cursed the earth. When Christ came into the world they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorn and they put that on His head and made Him king of the curse. And in that day He purchased the redemption of the *world* from its curse.

And it is my very belief and I think it is warranted by Scripture that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of Paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert, shall one day blossom like Sharon and rejoice like the garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer forever. I believe that she is yet to be clothed with verdure, such as she once wore. We have evidences in the beds of coal underneath the earth that this world was once much more fertile than it is now.

Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have built half a forest for us now. Then mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth. And I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew shall be restored to us and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known. No more cursed with blight and mildew, with no more blast and withering we shall see a land like Heaven itself—

**“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.”**

When Christ comes He shall do even this.

In the day of the Fall, too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament and began to prey on each other—of this we are not sure. But if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox and that the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice

den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind. God shall restore to us again and even to the beasts of the field the blessing which Adam lost.

And, my Friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin—that, too, is to be removed. See yonder planet? It is whirling along through space—bright, bright and glorious. Hear the morning stars sing together because this new sister theirs is made? That is the earth. She is bright now. Stay! Did you remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The planet is dimmed and on her trace there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet. She glides along in ten-fold night—scarcely does a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again—the day is not come, when that planet shall renew her glory—but it is hastening again.

As the serpent slips its slough and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet has slipped its clouds and shone forth bright as it was before. Do you ask who has done it? Who has cleared away the mist? Who has taken away the darkness? Who has removed the clouds? “I have done it,” says Christ, the Sun of righteousness. “I have scattered darkness and made that world bright again.” Lo, I see a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this—this world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry and crime. The day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword. It shall be no more intoxicated with blood. God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth.

The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth. Then down shall go idols from their thrones. Down superstitions from their pinnacles. Then slavery shall cease. Then crime shall end. Then peace shall spread its halcyon wings over all the world. And then shall you know that Christ has died for the world and that Christ has won it. “The whole creation,” said Paul, “groans and travails in pain together until now.” Waiting for what? “Waiting for the redemption.” And by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you—that this world shall be washed of all her sin. Her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from His mind—as when like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer she first flashed in her orbit. This Christ has redeemed. This, Christ shall and most assuredly must have.

**II.** And, now, a word or two concerning the last thought—“PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.”

It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Surely I could have made it no more plenteous if I had lied against my conscience and told you that He had bought every man. For of what use is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of Hell? How will that glorify Christ—that He has redeemed me and yet failed in His intentions? Surely it is more to His honor to believe that according to His immutable, sovereign and all-wise will, He laid the foundation as wide as He intended the structure to be and then made it just according to His will. Nevertheless, it is “plenteous redemption.” Very briefly, lend me your ears just a moment.

It is “plenteous” when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. Think, if you can, how great that host who have already washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to Paradise—all of them redeemed. They all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Is it not “plenteous redemption” when you reflect that it is a “multitude that no man can number” that will be gathered in? Let us close that by saying, “And why not *you*?” If so many are redeemed, why should not *you* be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?

It is “plenteous,” again, if we consider the *sins* of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all—to wash it all away —

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

This plenteous redemption can take all your sins away. They are no greater than Christ foresaw and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus believing that however great your guilt, His atonement is great enough for all who come to Him and therefore you may safely come.

Remember, again, that this “plenteous redemption” is plenteous because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite. But this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable. But this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs you can scarce tell. But this redemption I know you cannot tell. Believe, then, that it is a “plenteous redemption.” O believing Sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is “plenteous redemption” and that you have a lot in it. You will most certainly be brought safely home by Jesus’ grace.

Are you seeking Christ? Or rather do you know yourselves to be sinners? If you do, I have authority from God to say to everyone who will confess his sins that Christ has redeemed him. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner. There are lots of them about, but I have no Gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, “Yes, I am a sinner”—who are sinners out of compliment and do not mean it. I will preach another thing to you—I will preach against your self-righteousness another day. But I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

But are you a sinner, in the *bona fide* sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then in God’s name I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you. For as sure as ever He has revealed to you your guilt by the Holy Spirit, He will not leave you till He has revealed to you your pardon by His only Son. If you know your lost estate you shall soon know your glorious estate. Believe in Jesus now. Then you are saved and you may go away happy—blest beyond what kings could dream.

Believe that since you are a sinner Christ has redeemed you—that just because you know yourself to be undone, guilty, lost and ruined—you have this night a right, a privilege and a title to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Believe that and then you shall know the meaning of this text—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.” God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

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

# THE WEANED CHILD

## NO. 1210

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

***“My soul is even as a weaned child.”  
Psalm 131:2.***

I was once conversing with a very excellent aged minister and while we were talking about our attitude and feelings, he made the following confession—he said, “When I read that passage in the Psalm, ‘My soul is even as a weaned child,’ I wish it were true of me, but I think I should have to make an alteration of one syllable and then it would exactly describe me at times—‘My soul is even as a *weaning* rather than a weaned child,’ for,” said he, “with the infirmities of old age, I fear I get fretful and peevish and anxious. And when the day is over I do not feel that I have been in so calm, resigned and trustful a frame of mind as I could desire.”

I suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters, that frequently we have to make the same confession. We wish we were like a weaned child, but we find ourselves neglecting to walk by faith and getting into the way of walking by the sight of our eyes. And then we get like the *weaning* child which is fretting and worrying, and unrestful and who causes trouble to those round about it and, most of all, trouble to itself. Weaning was one of the first real troubles that we met with after we came into this world and it was, at the time, a very terrible one to our little hearts. We got over it somehow or other. We do not remember, now, what a trial it was to us, but we may take it as a type of all troubles, for if we have faith in Him who was our God from our mother’s breasts, as we got over the weaning and do not even remember it, so we shall get over *all* the troubles that are to come and shall scarcely remember them for the joy that will follow.

If, indeed, Dr. Watts is correct in saying that when we get to Heaven we shall, “recount the labors of our feet,” then, I am quite sure that we shall only do it, as he says, “with transporting joy.” There, at least, we shall be, each one of us, as a weaned child. It is a very happy condition of heart which is here indicated—and I shall speak about it with a desire to promote the increase of such a state of heart among Believers—and with the hope that many of us may reach it and all of us who *have* reached it may continue to say, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

I. First, let us think WHAT THE PSALMIST INTENDED BY THIS DESCRIPTION. We will begin by noticing the *context*, in order to understand him, and then we will consider the *metaphor* in order, still further, to see what he literally meant. First, look at the context and you will see that he intended that *pride had been subdued in him* and driven out of him, for he commences the Psalm with this, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty.” We are all proud by nature, though there is not one among us

that has anything to be proud of! It makes no difference what our condition is—we universally dream that we have something to glory about.

The Lord Mayor is not a bit prouder in his gold chain than the beggar in his rags. Indeed, pride is a kind of weed that will grow on very poor soil quite as freely as in the best cultivated garden. Every man thinks more of himself than God thinks of him, for when a man is in his highest estate and at his best, he is nothing but dust and the Lord knows his constitution and remembers that he is just that and nothing better. Some poor creatures, however, indulge their pride and let it run away with them as a wild horse with its rider. They cannot be trusted with a little money but straightway they hold their heads so high that one might think the stars in danger! They cannot be trusted with a little talent but straightway their genius is Omnipotent, in their own opinion, and they, themselves, are to be treated like demi-gods.

And if they are God's servants, they cannot have a little success in the ministry or in the Sunday school without becoming quite unpleasant to those round about them through their boastful ways and eagerness to talk of self. Scarcely can they have enjoyment, even of the Presence of God, but what they begin to make an idol of their attainments and Graces, and begin to say, "My mountain, *my* mountain, stands firm. I, *I* shall never be moved." Great I grows without any watering, for the soil of nature is muddy and the rush of pride takes to it mightily! You need never be troubled about a man's keeping up his opinion of himself—he will be pretty sure to do that—the force of nature usually runs in the direction of self-conceit.

This pride very often leads to haughtiness, domineering ways towards others and contempt of them—as if they were not as good as we are. And if we see any errors and mistakes in them, we conclude that they are very foolish and that we would act much better if we were in their position. If they act nobly and well, this same pride of ours leads us to pick holes in them and to detract from their excellence. And if we cannot get up as high as they are, we try to pull them down to our own level. This is a base thing to do, but the proud man is always mean. Loftiness of looks and meanness of heart run, with him, like a couple of hounds in a leash.

The humble man is the truly great man! Because God's gentleness has made him great, he is sure to be kept lowly before the Lord by the Holy Spirit. The proud man is really little—no, more—he is really *nothing* even in the things in which he boasts. David could say, "My heart is not haughty." His brother, Eliab, said that David was proud when he went down to carry his father's present to his soldier brothers, but it was not so. His heart was content to be with the sheep—he was quite willing to follow the "ewes great with young." When he was in Saul's court, they thought him ambitious, but he was not so—he was quite satisfied to be a servant there, to fight the battles of Israel. The place of captain over a wandering band was forced upon him, but he would sooner have dwelt at home. And when he was king he did not exalt himself.

Absalom, when he was aspiring to the kingdom, was a far greater man to look at than his father David, for David walked in lowliness of spirit before the Lord. Whatever faults he had, he certainly had not the fault of vanity, or of being intoxicated in spirit with what God had done for him. Now, it is a great blessing when the Spirit of God keeps us from being haughty and our looks from being lofty. We shall never be as a weaned child till it gets to that, for a weaned child thinks nothing of itself. It is but a little babe! Whatever consciousness it has at all about the matter, it is not conscious of any strength or any wisdom! It is entirely dependent upon its mother's care.

And blessed is that man who is brought to lie very low in his own spirit before the Lord, resting on the bosom of Infinite Love. After all, Brothers and Sisters, we are nobodies and we have come from a line of nobodies! The proudest peer of the realm may trace his pedigree as far as ever he likes, but he ought to remember that if his blood is blue, it must be very unhealthy to have such blood in one's veins! The common ruddy blood of the peasant is, after all, far healthier! Big as men may account themselves to be on account of their ancestors, we all trace our line up to a gardener who lost his place through stealing his Master's fruit—and that is the farthest we can possibly go. Adam covers us all with disgrace and under that disgrace we should all humbly sit.

Look into your own heart and if you dare to be proud, you have never seen your heart at all! It is a mass of pollution! It is a den of filthiness! Apart from Divine Grace your heart is a seething mass of putrefaction and if God's eternal Spirit were not to hold it in check, but to let your nature have its way—envy, lust, murder and every foul thing would come flying forth in your daily life! A sinner and yet proud? It is monstrous! As for children of God, how can *they* be proud? I fear we are all too much so. But what have we to be proud of? What have we that we have not received? How, then, can we boast? Are we dressed in the robe of Christ's Righteousness? We did not put a thread into it—it was all given us by the charity of Jesus!

Are our garments white? We have washed them in the blood of the Lamb. Are we new creatures? We have been created anew by Omnipotent power or we should still be as we were. Are we holding on our way? It is God that enables us to persevere, or we should long ago have gone back. Have we been kept from the great transgression? Who has kept us? We certainly have not kept ourselves! There is nothing that we have of which we can say, "I did this and it is all my own"—except our faults and our sins—and over these we ought to blush.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord favors us, especially in early life—though I do not know but what it is almost as much so with us who have got a little farther on—if you get a full sail and a favoring breeze, and the vessel scuds along before the wind, there is need of a great deal of ballast or else there will soon be a tale to tell of a vessel that was upset and a sailor who was too venturesome and was never heard of again! We have need *continually* to be kept lowly before God, for pride is the besetting sin

of mankind. O, that God would give us to be as David was—not haughty, neither our eyes lofty. This is the first help towards being as a weaned child.

And next he tells us that *he was not ambitious*—“Neither do I exercise myself in great matters.” He was a shepherd. He did not need to go and fight Goliath, but when he did do it, it was because his nation needed him. He said, “Is there not a cause?” Otherwise he had stayed in the background. When he went into the cave of Adullam, he never lifted a hand to become king. He might have struck his enemy several times—and with one stroke have ended the warfare and seized the throne—but he would not lift a hand against the Lord’s Anointed, for, like a weaned child, he was not ambitious. He was willing to go where God would put him, but he was not seeking after great things.

Now, dear Brethren, we shall never be as a weaned child if we have high notions of what we ought to be and large desires for self. If we are great men in our own esteem, of course we ought to have great things for ourselves. But if we *know* ourselves and are brought into a true condition of mind, we shall avoid those “vaulting ambitions which leap over themselves.” For instance, we shall not be hankering after great possessions. “Having food and raiment” we shall be “therewith content.” If God adds to our store of the comforts of life, we shall be grateful. We shall be diligent in business, but we shall not be greedy and miserly. “While others stretch their arms, like seas, to grasp in all the shore,” we shall be content with far less things, for we know that greed after earthly riches brings with it slackness of desire as to *true* riches. The more hungry a man is after this world, the less he pines after the treasures of the world to come.

We shall not be covetous if we are like a weaned child. Neither shall we sigh for position and influence—whoever heard of a weaned child doing that? Let it lie in its parent’s bosom and it is content—and so shall we be in the bosom of our God. Yet some Christian men seem as if they could not pull unless they are the fore horse of the team. They cannot work with others, but must have the chief place, contrary to the word of the Apostle who says, “My Brethren, be you not many masters, lest you receive the greater condemnation.” Blessed is that servant who is quite content with that position which his master appoints him—glad to unloose the laces of his Lord’s shoes—glad to wash the saints’ feet—glad to engage in sweeping a crossing for the king’s servants.

Let us do *anything* for Jesus, counting it the highest honor, even, to be a doormat inside the Church of God, if we might be such a thing as that for the saints to remove the filthiness from themselves upon us—so long as we may but be of some use to them and bring some glory to God. You remember the word of Jeremiah to Baruch? Baruch had been writing the roll for the Prophet and straightway Baruch thought he was somebody. He had been writing the Word of the Lord, had he not? But the Prophet said to him, “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” And so says the mind of the Spirit to us all. Do not desire to occupy positions of emi-

nence and prominence, but let your soul be as a weaned child—not exercising itself in great matters.

Very often we seek after great approbation. We want to do great deeds that people will talk about and especially some famous work which everybody will admire. This is human nature, for the love of approbation is rooted in us. As the old rhyme puts it—

***“The proud to gain it, toils on toils endures.  
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”***

But that man has arrived at the right position who has become, “careless, himself a dying man, of dying man’s esteem.” It is he who judges what is right before God and does it caring neither for public nor private opinion in the matter—to whom it is no more concern what people may say of an action which his conscience commends than what tune the north wind whistles as it blows over the Alps! He who is the slave of man’s opinions is a slave, indeed. I would sooner go to some barbarous climate where yet the slave whip would fall upon my shoulders and the cruel fetter would chain me to the floor, than live in dread of such a thing as I myself, and tremble with fear of offending this man and the other by doing what I believe to be right. He who fears God needs fear no one else! But he who reaches that point has undergone a painful weaning and had it not been for that he would not be able to say, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

Frequently, too, we exercise ourselves in great matters by having a high ambition to do something very wonderful in the Church. This is why so very little is done! The great destroyer of *good* works is the ambition to do *great* works! A little thing can be done by a Christian Brother very well. But if it strikes him, “I will organize a society to do it and a committee, a secretary, a president, and a vice-president,” (it being well known that nothing can be done till you get a committee, a president and all that kind of thing), the Brother soon hampers himself and his work ends in resolutions and reports—and nothing more.

But the Brother who says, “Here is a district which nobody visits. I will do what I can in it”—he is probably the man who will get another to help him and another, and the work will be done! The young man who is quite content to begin with preaching in a little room in a village to a dozen, is the man who will win souls! The other Brother, who does not begin preaching till he can preach to 5,000 will never do anything—he never can. I read of a king who always wanted to take the second step first, but he was not a Solomon! There are many such about, not kings but common people, who do not want to do the first thing, the thing they can do, the thing which God calls them to do, the thing they ought to do! No, they must do something great.

O, dear Brother, if your soul ever gets to be as it ought, you will feel, “The least thing that I can do, I shall be glad to do. The very poorest and meanest form of Christian service, as men think it, is better than I deserve.” It is a great honor to be allowed to unloose the laces of my Lord’s shoes! A young man who once had a small charge and only about 200 hearers, complained to an old minister that he wished he could move

somewhere else. But the old one said, “Do not be in a hurry, Brother. The responsibility of 200 souls is quite a heavy load enough for most of us to carry.” And so it is. We need not be so eager to load ourselves with more.

He is the best draftsman, not who draws the largest, but the most perfect circle. If the circle is perfect, nobody finds fault with it because it is not large. Fill your sphere, Brother, and be content with it. If God shall move you to another, be glad to be moved. If He moves you to a smaller, be as willing to go to a less prominent place as to one that is more so. Have no will about it. Be a weaned child that has given up fretting, crying, worrying and leaves its mother to do just what seems good in her sight. When we are thoroughly weaned it is well with us—pride is gone and ambition is gone, too. We shall need much nursing by One who is wiser and gentler than the best mother before we shall be quite weaned of these two dearly beloved sins.

Next, David tells us *he was not intrusive*—“Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.” I have seen many men always vexed and troubled because they would exercise themselves in things too high for them. These things too high for them have been many but I will mention only a few. They have expected to comprehend everything and have never been satisfied because many Truths of God are far above and out of their reach. They have expected, especially, to know all the deep things of God—the Doctrine of Election and how predestination coincides with the free agency of man, and how God orders everything and yet man is responsible—just as responsible as if there had been no foreknowledge and no foreordination.

It is folly to hope to know these “things too high for us.” Here is a little child that has just come off its mother’s knee and it expects to understand a book on trigonometry and cries because it cannot? And here is another little child that has been down to the sea and is fretting and kicking in its nurse’s arms because it cannot get the Atlantic into the hollow of its hand? Well, it will have to kick, that will be the end of it. But it is fretting itself for nothing, without any real use or need for its crying, because a little child’s palm cannot hold an ocean. Yet a child might sooner hold the Atlantic and Pacific in its two hands, without spilling a drop, than you and I will ever be able to hold all the revealed Truth of God within the compass of our narrow minds!

We cannot know everything and we cannot understand even half what we know! I have given up wanting to understand. As far as I can, I am content with believing all that I see in God’s Word. People say, “But you contradict yourself.” I dare say *I* do, but I never contradict *God* to my knowledge, or the Bible. If I do, may my Lord forgive me. Do not believe me for a minute if I speak contrary to God’s Word in order to appear consistent. The sin of being inconsistent with my poor fallible self does not trouble me a tenth as much as the dread of being inconsistent with what I find in God’s Word!

Some want to shape the Scriptures to their creed or denomination and they get a very nice square creed, too, and trim the Bible most dexter-

ously—it is wonderful how they do it! But I would rather have a crooked creed and a straight Bible, than I would try to twist the Bible round to suit what I believe. “Neither do I exercise myself,” says the Psalmist, “with things too high for me,” and I think we do well to keep very much in that line. “Oh, but really, one ought to be acquainted with all the phrases of modern thought.” Yes, and how many hours in a day ought a man give to that kind of thing? Twenty-five out of the 24 would hardly be sufficient, for the phrases of modern thought are innumerable—and every fool who sets himself up as a philosopher sets up a new scheme! Am I to spend my time in going about to knock his card-houses over?

Not I! I have something else to do! And so has every Christian minister. He has real doubts to deal with which vex true hearts! He has anxieties to relieve in converted souls and in minds that are pining after the Truth of God! He has these to meet without everlastingly tilting at windmills and running all over the country to put down every scarecrow which learned simpletons may set up! We shall soon defile ourselves if we work day after day in the common sewers of skepticism! Brothers and Sisters, there is a certain highway of Truth in which you and I, like wayfaring men and women, feel ourselves safe—let us travel on it!

There are some things that we *do* know because we have experienced them—some doctrines which nobody can beat out of us because we have tasted them and handled them. Well, if we can go further, well and good. But to my mind, we are foolish to go further and fare worse. If a man has reached the Land’s End and some great genius should tell him to walk on farther than Old England reaches. And if he ridicules him because he will not go a step further into the fog which conceals an awful plunge—I think, upon the whole—he may be content to put up with the ridicule! Put your foot down, Brothers and Sisters, and see whether there is anything under it! Check whether there is a good text or two underneath—whether there is a little personal experience underneath and, if you do not find it, let the advanced thinkers go alone—you had better keep to the Rock.

“Prove all things”—do not run after their novelties till you have proved them. But what you have proved hold fast. Be conservative in God’s Truth, and radical too, by keeping to the root of the matter. Hold fast what you know and live mainly upon the simplicities of the Gospel, for, after all, the food of the soul does not lie in controversial points—it lies in points which we will never have controverted, for “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.” There is the food of the soul where there is no controversy in any devout Christian spirit! Exercise yourself, then, in the plainer matters, and do not imbibe the notion that you must read all the quarterlies and master, “The Contemporary Review” and the like, or else you will be a nobody. Be content to be just such a nobody as a weaned child is, and say, “I exercise not myself in great matters or in things too high for me.”

The same evil comes up in another form when we want to know all the reasons of Divine Providence—why this affliction was sent and why that? Why Father died—why those two children that we loved so well were taken

from us? Why we do not prosper in our various enterprises? Why? Why? Why? Ah, when we begin asking, "Why? Why? Why?" what an endless task we have before us! If we become like a weaned child we shall not ask, "why?" but just believe that in our heavenly Father's dispensations there is a wisdom too deep for us to fathom, a goodness veiled but certain!

We exercise ourselves in things too high for us, too, when we begin considering the results of duty and hesitate to do it. A man's course is quite clear in the Word of God, but he says, "If I do that, how am I to provide for my family? If I do that, shall I not be throwing out a sphere of usefulness? I know it would be right to do it. My conscience tells me that I ought—but other people manage, somehow, to make notches in their conscience and they are evidently very useful where they are."

Ah, my dear Brother, pray God to lead you in a plain path, and remember, you have nothing to do with *results* except to receive them as tests of your faithfulness! Results must always be left with God! If the result of doing right would be that you lost your *life*, your Master tells you that you must hate even your own life, also, or else you cannot be His disciple. You will get helped if you can trust, but if, for the sake of this or that, you do wrong—I do not mind how you put it—you are doing evil that good may come—and you are grieving the Spirit of God! Your mind will never get to be like a weaned child. It is not the childlike spirit to try to excuse yourself for maintaining a false position. The childlike spirit is to do what our heavenly Father tells us, *because* He tells us, and leave the consequences with Him.

Thus I have said enough, perhaps too much, about the connection. Now, *from the simile itself* we gather that the condition of heart of which David spoke was this—that he was like one who was *able to give up his natural food*, which seemed to him absolutely necessary, and which he greatly enjoyed. The weaned babe has given up what it loved. By nature we hang on the breasts of this world and only Sovereign Grace can wean us from it. But when we give up self-righteousness, self-confidence, the love of the world, the desire of self-aggrandizement—when we give up trusting in man, trusting in ceremonies, trusting in *anything* but God—then and only then has our soul become like a weaned child! Then it has given up what Nature feeds upon that it may feed upon the Bread of Heaven!

It means, next, that he had at last *conquered his desires*, his longings. The weaning child has his desires strong upon him and he frets. But the weaned child is content, his desires lie still. And the child of God, when sufficient Grace has come, feels no desires for that which once delighted him. He submits himself so completely to his Father's will that if he is to do without, he does without. Paul said he had learned in whatever state he was to be content. To be content to be without as well as to be with is a high attainment. Not to have and to be as happy in not having as if one had all he desired is well. O, blessed state to be in! Not merely taken away from the breasts of earth, but taught no longer to wish for them!

Now, a weaned child is *entirely dependent upon its mother*. It knows nothing about how it is to be fed. It could not feed itself and it must die if deprived of the care of another. But it rests quietly, free from even a *trace* of anxiety. I find that the Hebrew gives the idea of a child lying in its mother's bosom, perfectly satisfied. And David puts it something like this, O my Lord, "my soul lies in Your bosom like a child that has done with crying and fretting, and is weaned altogether." Oh, happy man who so depends upon God that he leaves all his concerns with the God of Love and sings sweetly in confidence in God!

Thus I have tried to describe the state which the Psalmist intended by being "as a weaned child."

II. And now, secondly, WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS CONDITION? Why is it desirable to be even as a weaned child? It is excellent in every way. You will know it best by attaining to it, for when you are weaned, your desires will no longer worry you. Curb desire and you have struck at the root of half your sorrow! He smarts not under poverty who has learned to be content. He frets not under affliction who is submissive to the Father's will and lays aside his own. When your desires are held within bounds, your temptations to rebel are ended.

You wanted this and you wanted that, and so you quarreled with God and your Lord and you were seldom on good terms. He did not choose to pamper you and you wanted Him to and so you fretted like a weaning child. Now you leave it to His will and you have peace. The strife is over. Your soul is quieted and behaves itself becomingly. Now, also, your resentments against those who injured you are gone. You were angry with a certain person, but your pettishness has ended with your weaning—you see that God sent him to do this which has troubled you and you accept his hard words and cruel actions as from God—and by His Grace, you are angry no more.

You do not kick and struggle, now, against your condition and position. And you no longer murmur and complain from day to day as if you were harshly dealt with. No, if God chooses to better your circumstances you will be glad. If He does not, you just take it as you find it, for you could not blame His Providence. You give your thoughts to something better than the things of earth, for you now resolve as David did in the 132<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, which is very remarkable as following the Psalm which contains our text, because there he goes on to declare that he will build for the Lord of Hosts. When your own business is all right and you are weaned from all fretting, worrying and self-seeking, then you are free to undertake the *Lord's* business.

He has done for you what you want and now you want to do something *for Him*. You have sought the kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all other things have been added to you, so that you are as happy as the days are long in June! Look at the birds in the winter. When there is not a leaf on the trees they sit and sing! And in the early spring, when still the winter's cold is lingering, they pour out their very choicest songs—and yet there is not a lark or thrush among them that has an hour's provision in

store! Not one among them has house or barn, or gathers anything and yet, according to Martin Luther's interpretation of their song, they sing—

***“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow,  
God provides for the morrow.”***

Happy is the man who comes to that condition! God, bring us there!

When we are weaned we have got rid of the ground of future troubles and disappointments. We do not get weaned all at once from everything. One person, here, has been weaned from confidence in riches, but perhaps his heart, his affectionate heart, is clinging to some human love, some mortal joy. Well, Brother, well, Sister, remember that where your treasure is your heart will go—and if that treasure is taken away, your heart must ache. If we trust in an arm of flesh, we make a rod for our own backs. You never lean upon a man, or woman, either, and steal away from simple trust in God, but what you are preparing for yourself a trial! It may be in the treachery of the one you trusted. It certainly will be, if you live long enough, in the death of that beloved one.

“Dust to dust” and, “ashes to ashes,” will be the end of all earthly joy. If a building leans upon a buttress, if that buttress is taken away it must be weakened. But if it can stand alone, upon its own foundation, then it stands firmly. The man who depends alone upon his God and whose expectation is from Him, has not half the occasions for trouble that he has who is leaning here and leaning there, and leaning in 50 places! For each earthly prop will be the cause or occasion of distress at some time or other.

III. I have very much to say on this point, but my time is gone. I will only close with the last inquiry, which is this—IS THIS STATE ATTAINABLE? *Certainly*. David said, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” He did not say that he *hoped* it would be. We can surely get where David got, for he was a man of like passions with ourselves. No attainment in Grace is to be viewed as the monopoly of one man or one age! In fact, we have more advantages than the Psalmist, for he lived under a much more poverty-stricken dispensation than we do.

Now the gates of Heaven are set wide open and the treasure houses and the granaries of our heavenly Joseph are free to all Israel! And, if we are at all straitened, it certainly cannot be in the Lord! He does not stint us. Did David say, “My soul is even as a weaned child”? Then no Believer here ought to be content till he can say, “By the Grace of God I am brought into that same condition.” This sacred weanedness of heart is possible under *any* circumstances. The poor have often attained it.

I saw, this week, a poor woman entirely dependent upon what was given to her by others. She is confined to her chamber, needing to be lifted from her bed. She is racked with rheumatic pain and yet as happy as an angel! She was joying and rejoicing in the Lord and one of her greatest pleasures was to sit on the side of the bed for an hour, when her pain was not so bad but what she could sit up, and get through a chapter or two of her Bible. Then her heart took to itself wings and soared up to Heaven! Her soul was as a weaned child. She had no anxieties and no fretfulness.

Those who attended her said that such a thing as a murmur never escaped her. Hear this, you poor ones!

And you who are better off may get there in the midst of riches, for David was a king and yet he did not suffer his worldly wealth to canker his spirit. He was as a weaned child though dwelling in a palace! He could get at the breast of worldly pleasures and yet he was weaned from it! A man may be in this condition when he is tossed to and fro and troubled. Business men are apt to say, "It is all very well for you ministers to talk about calm and peace of mind. But if you had to sell flour and bread, or measure out drapery, or look after a lot of clerks, or go into a large factory and see after a pack of work girls, you would find it very difficult."

My dear Friends, look at David's life. How tossed about he was! What cares, what trials, what changes, what singular alternations of condition—and yet for all that his soul was even as a weaned child! Do you think the religion of Jesus Christ was meant to be kept under a glass case and that it would make good people of us if we were locked up in a cloister? No, it is a practical everyday religion meant for you that have factories and you that have bakeries and you that have shops! The religion which cannot stand the wear and tear of everyday life is not worth two pence—and the sooner you are rid of such rubbish, the better! We need a religion which we may take with us wherever we go, that will keep us calm and quiet and self-possessed, because we are possessed of the Spirit of God. May we reach this happy state and never leave it!

*What is the way to get it?* The Psalm tells us, "Let Israel hope in the Lord, from now on and forever." Faith blossoming into hope is the way of sanctification—the road to a calm and quiet spirit. You cannot say to yourself, "I will fret no longer," and then expect never to fret. No, Brothers and Sisters, you must expel one affection by another—one propensity must be vanquished by another. You are too ready to trust in man—trust in *God* will push out carnal confidence. You are expecting great things of the world, that is foolish! Expect great things of God and you will cease from carnal hopes. You are seeking, from day to day, for this world's good. You feel an ambition to rise—seek after the *eternal* good and feel an ambition to get nearer to God—and the other ambition will die. You are worried by fears and anxieties—come and rest your soul upon the faithful promise and, resting there, your anxieties will cease.

I fear that many Christian people think that faith has nothing to do with everyday life. They do not expect to find that it relieves them of anxieties as to bread and cheese for themselves, or shoes and socks for the children—and all those little troubles and worries which concern a housewife and a father. But, oh, Beloved, it is not so! The heathen had their household gods and, blessed be God, He is *our* household God, the God of all the families of Israel! The Lord hears the young ravens when they cry—will He not hear His people? The ravens only cry for meat—a dead rabbit or a pigeon is all they need—yet the Lord sees that their needs are supplied! And I find that, "not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

These poor hairs? These little things! These trifling things! You will never be as a weaned child till you leave these little things with God, for the *child* has no great things. A child's matters are all little—though they are great to the babe they are little to us. Leave your little things with God! Leave *everything* with God! Live in God! Dwell in God! Have no secrets between yourself and God! The troubles of life which fret us most are the little things. If a man goes on a long walk it is not the climbing and it is not the slipping down the steep hillside—it is that nasty little stone which has got into his shoe which troubles him! He can hardly see it, but there it is, and it blisters his foot and lames him.

Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, take the little stone to God! Ask Him to remove that little vexation from you, for as with God there is nothing great, so is there nothing little. The greatest philosopher in the world, or the greatest king, if his little child had a thorn in his finger, would not think himself disgraced if he stooped to take it out with a needle. The Lord who makes all things and calls the stars by their names does not dishonor Himself when He binds up our broken hearts. Go, then, to your God and let your soul leave everything with Him by faith, being made as a weaned child. “Easier said than done,” says somebody. Yes, Brethren, except by *faith*—but to faith it is easy enough.

And I boldly say here that I have sometimes found it easier to exercise faith than to talk about it. When I trust God—and I hope I do that habitually—I do not find that to give up anxiety and to trust in God is difficult, now, though it used to be. Blessed be my Lord, I cannot help believing Him, for He loads me down with evidences of His Truth and fidelity! Once get really into the swim of faith and you do not need to struggle—the sacred current of Grace will carry you along. Give yourself completely up to the Lord Jesus Christ and the mighty energy of the blessed Spirit—and you will find it sweet to lie passive in His hands and know no will but His!

God bring you there! If there is any unconverted person here who cannot understand all this, I pray the Lord to make him a child, first, and then make him a weaned child! Regeneration must come first, but sanctification will follow. Believe in Jesus for pardon and then you will have Grace given to resign yourself to the Divine will. May the Lord wean you from earth and wed you to Heaven. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalms 130, 131.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 778.**

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# THE LORD'S ETERNAL REST

## NO. 3294

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1886.

*“This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”*  
*Psalm 132:14.*

THESE are the words of Jehovah Himself concerning the hill of Zion, but it is clear that He did not intend us to understand them merely in their literal reference to Zion, because Zion could not be a fitting place for His eternal rest. Nor has He made it literally His rest forever, for Zion has been trodden down of the Gentiles for all these centuries. I have no doubt that the Lord had in His mind the greater Zion, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” The eternal God, looking down from His Throne of Glory upon all the creatures He has made, selects His Church—elect, blood-bought, called, preserved and sanctified, and He says concerning this Church—“This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

We would never have ventured to conceive of God as finding rest in such puny creatures as we are. However beloved, and however filled with His Spirit, it would seem too great a thing for the Creator ever to rest in His creature! Yet it is true that this is where He finds His rest. It is concerning the redeemed souls who make up the Church of Christ that He says, “This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

I must, at the outset, confess my inability to dive into the depths of this subject. I can only, as it were, flit across its surface as the swallow with swift wings skims over the brook. I am going to ask, first, about *God finding rest in His Church*. Then about *the duration of that rest*. And in closing, I want to say a few practical words concerning *our finding rest where God finds rest*.

### I. First, then, let us think of GOD FINDING REST IN HIS CHURCH.

He does this, in the first place, *because in His Church all the three Divine Persons of the Trinity are honored*. A man does not find rest in anything which gratifies only one part of his nature. Therefore it can truly be said to Christians concerning this world, “This is not your rest,” for whatever gratification it may yield to the body, it can never satisfy our soul. If there were in the Church of God honor only for God the Father, but none for God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, it could never be the Lord’s eternal rest. But, Beloved, when the Father looks upon the

Church, He views with delight His own chosen children and sees His eternal purposes accomplished in them! He thinks of the Covenant into which He entered with His dear Son on their behalf, and of the Atonement which He gave for them when He gave His only-begotten Son to die as their Substitute and Surety. As for God the Son—when He looks upon the Church, He beholds those for whom He paid the ransom price on Calvary—every member of that Church He has purchased with His own blood and, therefore, He looks upon them with peculiar complacency. As for God the Holy Spirit, He—

***“Takes delight to view  
The holy souls He formed anew.”***

As He gazes upon them, He sees the gracious results of His regenerating energy and He rests in holy contemplation. I hope, Beloved, you will never exalt one member of the ever-blessed Trinity above either of the rest—it is quite a mistake to ascribe the work of salvation entirely to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit. In the first Creation, it is most emphatically true that God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” The first Creation was the work of Deity as a whole, and so is the new Creation! And for both we may most justly sing—

***“Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”***

All are equally concerned in perfecting the Church, the true Zion, and therefore God, in the Trinity in Unity—Father, Son, and Spirit—says concerning the Church, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”—

***“Arise, O King of Grace, arise,  
And enter to Your rest!  
Lo, Your Church waits with longing eyes,  
Thus to be owned and blest.  
Enter with all Your glorious train,  
Your Spirit and your Word—  
All that the Ark did once contain  
Could no such Grace afford.”***

Just think for a minute or two what this rest of God is. Is it the entire cessation from toil? When we do nothing, but sit still in listless inactivity, that cessation from toil may yield us a measure of rest, but it is not rest of a kind that we could long love—certainly it is not such rest as we should wish to enjoy forever! We would be in a most restless state if we had nothing to do! We would soon be worn out with the weariness of living an aimless, purposeless life. I believe the truest state of rest is when a man has just as much to do as he can perform with ease. If your mind does not think at all, it is in a coma or in a sort of fainting fit. But when it is occupied with pleasing themes, not working out difficult problems, but meditating upon simple themes which you can easily understand, then it is at rest! Perhaps you sit down quietly by the fire and indulge in what we call day-dreams—your mind is active all the while, yet its activity does not prevent it from resting. Heaven is a place and state of perfect rest, yet it is not the rest of silence and stagnation! In one sense, they

rest not day nor night, yet they serve God continually—and that is perfect rest!

It is in His Church that God finds His rest, *for it is there that He finds work exactly adapted to His infinite capacities*. The blessedness of God must consist partly in His activity—what an active Being God is! There is not a cloud that flies across the sky of which He is not the pilot. How busily He worked in creating the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, yet He never rested in them for the visible creation is too narrow a couch to provide a resting place for the Eternal! But when He comes to the mightier work of Redemption and reveals the combined Majesty of His Justice and sublimity of His love in those whom He forms anew, then He is engaged in a task that occupies those attributes which He most delights to exercise! And therefore He says to His Church, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell.” When He made the earth, “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But you never read that God *sang* at the Creation. It is when He is working in the higher sphere that He says to Zion, the Church of His choice, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” In the new Creation He finds such rest as the old Creation never could afford Him. We know so little of the Infinite God that we must speak with due humility and reticence concerning these great mysteries, yet it seems to me that in the making of those who shall show forth His praise forever, He is doing a work in which He especially delights and in which He, therefore, rests and rejoices as He does in nothing else!

Further, He rests in His Church *because He sees, there, His eternal purposes fulfilled*. Whenever a soul is saved, God sees, there, another of His Divine decrees accomplished. And that affords His heart rest—to speak after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other way. As, one by one, those who were chosen by Him unto eternal life, those whom He gave in Covenant to His Son, those who were redeemed by that Son's precious blood are delivered from the Egyptian bondage of sin, conducted safely through the howling wilderness waste of this world and carried across the Jordan of death into the Canaan of heavenly rest, God sees His eternal purposes fulfilled and therein He finds most blessed rest! When the entire Church of God shall have been brought, safe and perfected, to His right hand in Glory, then will He say, in the words of our text, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” I must confess that I do not understand the condition of mind of those brethren who are not able to perceive in the Scriptures a clear Revelation concerning the purposes of God in the salvation of His elect. It would be strange if the work of Grace were left to chance. An architect would not permit an important building like St. Paul's, for instance, to be erected according to the whims and fancies of the individual workers employed! He would not leave to the freewill of every laborer the decision as to

where each pillar should be placed, or what stone and other materials should be used in the building—he has everything done according to the plan that he designed before the work was commenced! And shall not the Most High, who is building a habitation for Himself, have it erected in harmony with the plan that He had prepared from all eternity? I think, Brothers and Sisters, it is because God has planned what His Church is to be and because that plan will be exactly followed until the whole building is complete, that the Lord says concerning it, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

Then, in the next place, have we not in the Church of God *almighty energies rewarded*? God rested on the seventh day because Creation's work was done. And God rests in His Church in so far as it also is a finished work. Every soul saved by Grace, every soul brought home to Glory is the result and the reward of almighty labor. He who spoke and it was done in the making of the material world made not His Church so easily. It was with His word that He made this world, but it was the Incarnate Word that was necessary to the new creation! No blood needed to be spilt for the making of this earth in all its pristine beauty and glory, but the new heavens and the new earth could be cemented by nothing less than the product of almighty suffering! The Church of God is a most wonderful fabric upon which not only have the purposes of God been exercised from all eternity, but “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” has been at work to accomplish this marvel of marvels which shall set all Heaven ablaze with astonishment when it is at last complete and perfect! For many centuries stroke upon stroke from God's hand and instruments has been telling upon the rough block of marble, and when the last touch shall have been given to it, and the work appears in all its Glory and beauty before the eyes of God, He will rest, just as a skilled workman does in the successful accomplishment of some great task which he has undertaken and which he regards as his masterpiece.

Best of all, however, is the next reason why God rests in His Church! That is because *it is the reward of stupendous suffering*. We are told that “the Lord smelled a sweet savor” when Noah offered burnt offerings after he came out of the ark. The marginal reading is “a savor of rest.” And when God is dealing with sinners, now, He finds no savor of rest except in the Sacrifice of His dear Son! All the world over the spirit of Justice flew in search of a righteous man, but the only result of that long search was the verdict, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Justice next looked to see if there was any helper who could deliver the guilty, but none could be found until she turned her eyes to the Cross where hung the Son of God in extreme agonies. And as she marked the falling blood, the bowed head and the crown of thorns—and heard the Voice that said, “It is finished,” she rested! Her long quest was over, for she had found the One who was Himself perfectly righteous and who was, therefore, able to deliver the guilty by the full and complete Atonement that He offered for their Redemption. The Son of God takes delight in His Church

because He sees that in her, all His pains and agonies have yielded to Him a glorious harvest! And God the Father, who smote His Son so heavily when He took the place of His sinful people, delights in His Church because He sees in her a full reward for all that His well-beloved Son endured.

Then do you not think that God finds rest in His Church *because of the relationships there developed?* Where do you find rest, dear Friends? You not only rest in the garden which you have planted, and in the house which you have with a great effort, bought—but your choicest rest is found with the children whom you so fondly love. There is no stranger in the family circle! The door is closed, the fire is burning brightly and now is mother's time for rest, and father's time for joy, for there are only loved ones around the hearth. The merchant comes home from the counting-house where he has been on the watch all day lest he should be deceived and over-reached. But he can come down from his watchtower, now, for he has no fear of being deceived in the family circle. The judge has been sternly administering the law while he has been upon the bench, but He lays aside all his sternness when he takes off his robes of office and gathers his children around him. The toiling laborer wipes the sweat from his brow and gladly rests at home among those whom he loves. "Perfect love casts out fear," and fear is like a thorn in our nest—it prevents us from resting. But when "perfect love" comes, then we are perfectly at our ease. When you are at home, you may say what you will, and do what you please—there are none to slander and align you there. You do not say all you feel in the presence of your servants—they are faithful and true, but you do not tell them all that is in your heart. It is when you are among your children that you feel free and unrestrained. So it is with God! Not even among the angels does God find His rest—bright and perfect beings though they are, they are but ministering spirits waiting in the great Temple of God to render service to the saints! But here, where He sees His own likeness in every blood-bought soul. Here where He sees those whom He has begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—here it is that He feels at home and finds His rest! Do not think that I am speaking too boldly when I use the family metaphor to illustrate this great Truth of God, for I am but following the example of our Lord Jesus, Himself, when He said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" He rejoices over the son who was dead, and is alive again—who was lost, and is found—and because He is our Father, and we are His children, He says of us and of the whole company of His redeemed, "This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

**II.** Now I am to speak briefly concerning THE DURATION OF GOD'S REST IN HIS CHURCH. "This is My rest forever."

Then *this proves that there will always be a Church of God.* There are certain persons who are constantly subject to great fear and their fears make them quiver and shake—and then they imagine that God's Church is quivering and shaking, which is a very different matter! They hold up their hands, and cry, "Alas! Alas! The Church is in danger!" Well, some particular church, designed by men, may be in danger, but I do not believe that the Church of God is, or ever was, or ever will be in danger! It is thought by some that Popery will swallow the Church of Christ just as the whale swallowed Jonah. But if it should do so, the Church would come back again as surely as Jonah was cast up upon the dry land! There is no sword fashioned that can smite the Church of God, nor will there ever be one! There will be a Church as long as there is a world—and when this world is burned up, the Church shall shine more brightly than ever—and it shall keep on shining to all eternity, and be a rest for God forever—

***"Glorious things of you are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed you for His own abode:  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake your sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
You may smile at all your foes."***

Further, *there will always be a Church with God in it, and such a Church as God can rest in.* Some people think that there is no church of which they can comfortably be members. But, dear Friends, there is a Church of which Jesus Christ is a member, for He is the Head of it! And if you cannot be members of any visible church, be not content unless you are members of that Church in which God rests forever, for that is always a pure Church! You sometimes hear a great deal about Apostolic succession—it is a gross lie as it is generally understood, but in itself it is a great Truth of God. The Apostolic succession may be very clearly traced through the Novatians, Donatists, Lollards, Albigenses, Waldenses, Anabaptists and Huguenots, right down to the Christians of various denominations that exist today. There is a true line that never entered the Stygian bog of Rome! A pure silver stream which has flowed down to us right from the times of the Apostles! There always has been a Church in which God could dwell and there always will be a Church that shall be His dwelling place! You know that Christ prayed, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are." And I do not believe that Christ prayed any prayer that will not be answered in due time! More than that, I believe that the Church of Christ is one now. "Oh, but!" says someone, "look at the many divisions and denominations that there are!" Yes, I know about them, but the only true unity is that of the spiritually quickened souls that form the Mystical Body of Christ. Whatever division there may be among them at present is only external—if we could see beneath the surface and judge as God

judges—we should perceive that in the truly vital matters, they are one. Being one with Christ, they are also one with each other. We must look less and less to mere externals, and think more and more of that which is spiritual, for it is only in the invisible and spiritual Church of Christ that God finds rest. I do not believe that He finds rest in the Baptist denomination, or in the Independent, or in the Church of England, as such—He finds His rest in all the saved to whatever denomination they may belong! His rest is not in great human organizations, but in those whom His Grace has called—who are already one in Christ Jesus!

Another inference that I draw from the text is that *the Church of God will always be secure*. “Here will I dwell,” says the Lord. And there would be no rest for Him if the enemy could be continually scaling the ramparts, damaging the walls and carrying away His people as captives. A king within his capital could not rest if one suburb after another fell into the hands of his foes. The rest of a shepherd would be effectually broken if he heard a lion scrunching the bones of any of his sheep, or if a wolf seized even one of the lambs of his flock. When the Lord says, “This is My rest forever,” He seems to me to guarantee the eternal security of every soul that is in the true Church of Christ. All who are in the Church which Jesus bought with His precious blood must be perfectly safe forever—

***“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
He will not, He will not desert to His foes!  
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,  
He’ll never, no never, no never forsake!”***

There may be many in any part of the visible church who will perish, but there shall never be one who is truly a member of the Church of the living God who shall be lost! I started a little, the other night, when a Brother said that once we are brought into the Church, we are safe forever. But when he went on to show that by the expression, “the Church,” he meant what God means by those words, I fully agreed with him! This is the Zion of which Jehovah says, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” And it is His rest because He knows that all who are within it are safe forever! At the last, Jesus will be able to say to His Father, “Of all whom You gave Me have I lost none.”

I also infer from the text that *the whole Church will be eternally glorified*, otherwise God could not say of it, “This is My rest forever.” The living stones that are to form the “habitation of God through the Spirit,” are being quarried, fashioned and polished here below—and one by one they are being transported to the holy hill above. And so, “all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord.” And when it is complete, He will say, “Here will I dwell forever.” The eternal duration of the Church’s blessedness ought to be a theme of greater consideration and rejoicing than it is. Think of it, Beloved, that the great God will forever find His rest in you and in others like you who have been redeemed by the precious blood of His dear Son! Does not this make time seem a mere

trifle, and earth but a tiny speck scarcely worthy of our notice? Then, as you are forever and ever to be the object of Divine delight, cannot you see that you must *always* have been so? Oh, revel in this thought, that every blood-bought soul shall eternally be the temple and abode of God, Himself, and that all of them united in one shall be His rest forever!

**III.** Now we are to close with a few practical words concerning OUR FINDING REST WHERE GOD FINDS REST.

God finds His rest in His Church. *Is that where we find our rest? I wonder how many here could truly repeat the language of Dr. Watts—*

***“Let others choose the sons of mirth  
To give a relish to their wine.  
I love the men of heavenly birth,  
Whose thoughts and language are Divine.*”**

Do you, dear Friends find rest in the company of God's chosen people? The ungodly do not. If some gracious person should go to their house and begin talking about the mysteries of the Cross, their impatient glances at the clock would soon show that such a theme was a weariness to them. When they go up to the place where God's people meet, to worship Him, the shorter the service is the better they like it! And the reason is that they do not savingly know the Lord. A man without sight would not be likely to be very much charmed in a picture gallery. And a man who was stone-deaf would not be very delighted with the grandest oratorio that was ever performed! In like manner, we cannot expect that those who have no spiritual sense can find delight in the company of God's people. But how different it is with the man who is really saved! He can say, with David, of the saints that are in the earth, that they are “the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” A good old saint, whom I went to see on her dying bed, said to me, “It always gives me comfort, Sir, to think that God is not likely to send me to dwell with the wicked, for I never liked their society here. I believe He will let me go with my own company and I have always kept company with His people since I have learned to know Him.” I assured her that I believed it would be so. It is a sign of Grace when we find rest with those who are really spiritual because they are spiritual. You may love some saints of God, yet it may be no sign of Grace on your part—there may be something specially lovable about them so that you cannot help loving them or you may have received some temporal kindness from them and, therefore, love them for purely natural reasons. But it is a very different matter when we can say, with John—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Some of us can truthfully declare that our happiest hours are those that we expound with the saints of God! And we can fully sympathize with Dr. Watts when he says—

***“My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains;  
There my best Friends, my kindred dwell,  
There God my Savior reigns.*”**

God says of His Church, "This is My rest forever," and we can say the same. I cannot say that concerning any visible church—I should not like to have to rest forever in any portion of the church on earth! But in union with the redeemed in Glory, I can rest! When I think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When I read the lives of Prophets and Apostles. When I turn to more modern times and think of Calvin, and Luther, and Zwingli, and Berridge, and Wesley, and Whitefield, and a host of others, I can say, "Ah, let me once get into their company and then I shall feel, 'This is my rest forever.' I do not need anything more than this except to be in the Master's own company!" Oh, what rest it will be to be with Him! This is our rest even now—to be with Him! And to be *forever with Him* will be the perfection of rest—

***"Let me be with You, where You are,  
My Savior, my eternal rest!  
Then only will this longing heart  
Be fully and forever blest."***

Do you not think that Abel must have felt very strange when he went to Heaven? How startled the angels must have been when they saw the first soul redeemed by blood in Glory all by himself! I think they must have hushed their songs awhile to ask all about him. Here was a man come to sing in Heaven, to chant before the Eternal Throne the praises of a Sacrifice greater than any that he had offered! Yes, but Abel could not have felt perfectly at rest, for Paul tells us that the Church in Heaven will not be made perfect without us. When another and yet another joined Abel in Heaven, I think it must have increased his happiness. And now, as others keep on going Home, the glorified saints welcome them with exceeding joy, for they all feel that their bliss will not be perfect until every redeemed soul is gathered there with them and the whole of the shining ranks are filled! Then, when all shall be there, each one of them will say, as God Himself now says, "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

I wonder if there are any here who will never find rest in the Church of the First-Born which are written in Heaven? If you want to get into the Church of God, do you know the way to get in? You say, "I must come before the Elders." No, no—that is the way to get into our Church, here, but not into the invisible Church above! "Well, then, I must be baptized." No, that is the ordinance for you *after* you have entered the Church of God. "Well, then, how am I to get in?" He whose hand was pierced says, I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." The only door to the Church of God is Jesus Christ! Trust to His precious blood sprinkled upon the altar to give you access to and acceptance with God—and having that blood sprinkled upon yourself, you may venture to draw near even to the Eternal, for you shall be "accepted in the Beloved." God grant that it may be so, for Jesus sake! Amen.

[See Sermon #3287, Volume 58—THE ONLY DOOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 132.**

***A Song of Degrees.***

**1.** *LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions.* God had entered into an Everlasting Covenant with David, “ordered in all things and sure,” and in this Psalm either David, himself, or some of his people or descendants pleaded that Covenant in time of affliction and trial. “Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.” The Lord would not forget either David or his people, yet it pleased Him for them to come before Him in prayer and to remind Him of the Covenant that He had made with His servant. Using this prayer in a Gospel sense, we bow before the Lord and cry, “Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of David, and all His afflictions! Remember all that He endured as His people’s Substitute, and have pity upon us for His sake, as we plead that Eternal Covenant which You have made with Him on our behalf.” That ancient Covenant was made with David and the far more ancient Covenant of Grace was made with great David’s greater Son,” our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

**2-5.** *How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* David remembered that he had built himself a palace, but he wished even more ardently to build a palace for his God—a house for the celebration of His worship—“an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” But where can a worthy house be built for God? Where can there be made a fit dwelling place for the Most High? He fills all things, yet all things cannot contain Him! There is but one dwelling place of God—it is in Christ Jesus, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Oh, how we ought to thank God that He has provided Himself a fitting dwelling place in the Person of His dear Son, in whom all Believers are also built together for a habitation of God through the Holy Spirit! As for the Ark of the Covenant, it had long ago in David’s day dwelt in obscurity.

**6.** *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods.* [See Sermon #2590, Volume 44—HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God is willing to dwell in the woods. Many a time He does so. In many a cottage far removed from the haunts of men, God is found—and to many a backwoodsman God is as near as He is to those who worship Him in temples or cathedrals. “We found it in the fields of the woods.”

**7.** *We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.* This Psalm is called “A Song of degrees.” Notice the steps here described. We heard of it, we found it, we will go into it, we will worship in it! It is a

good thing when in our prayers and praises, we ascend step by step—not on the steppingstones of our dead selves which are pieces of rubbish—but by the living steppingstones upon which the ever-living Spirit helps us to rise tier above tier, His own almighty hand helping us continually to rise higher and higher!

**8.** *Arise, O LORD into Your rest; You and the ark of Your strength.* Let us pray that the Lord may constantly find rest in the midst of His people. He finds rest in them because they are one with His well-beloved Son. Come, Lord, at this moment, and take Your rest in the midst of this assembly and make us all rest in You!

**9.** *And let Your priests be clothed with righteousness.* This is the best robe for all God's holy ones who are priests and kings unto Him. This is better than snow white linen or robes decked with crimson and gold!

**9.** *And let Your saints shout for joy.* The worship of God should be very gladsome and even demonstrative. We may shout. Sometimes the overflowing of joy demands more than ordinary expression, therefore we pray, "Let Your holy ones shout for joy."

**10.** *For Your servant David's sake turn not away the face of Your Anointed.* Much more may we ask this for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. O God, remember Your Son, our Lord and our King, and for His sake look in love and pity upon us today,

**11, 12.** *The LORD has sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it. I will set upon the throne the fruit of your body. If your children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore.* Long did the house of David reign over Israel. But they proved unfaithful, and therefore the scepter passed out of their hands. But it is still in the hand of another Son of David. In a spiritual sense Jesus Christ has a throne and a dominion that shall know no end—

***"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun  
Does its successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."***

**13.** *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.* The literal Zion was the Lord's habitation for a time, but the spiritual Zion will be His dwelling place throughout eternity!

**14.** *This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* God rest in His people. The whole company of the redeemed shall be His abiding place forever!

**15.** *I will abundantly bless her provision: will satisfy her poor with bread.* God sends the necessary provision for His people, and sends His blessing with it. We are so poor that we have not even spiritual bread for our souls to eat unless He gives it to us. But here is His gracious promise, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." This He will do both literally and spiritually.

**16.** *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* In the 9<sup>th</sup> verse we had a silver prayer, but here, in this 16<sup>th</sup> verse, we have a golden answer. The prayer of the Psalmist was, "Let your saints shout for joy." The Lord's answer is, "Her saints shall shout aloud for joy." God always gives good measure, pressed down, and running over. Often we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. His command to each one of us is, "Open your mouth wide." And His promise is, "I will fill it." If you ask great things of Him, He will give you yet greater things for He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

**17.** *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed.* Oh, that today the horn of David might again bud! May every Believer in Jesus feel the life of God reviving within Him, and in many a case where there is no spiritual life at all, may life Divine begin today! Pray for it, Beloved—and then look for it, and you shall surely see it!

**18.** *His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.* We have no King but Jesus and His crown is always flourishing. It sits well upon a blessed head. Let us crown Him once again this day with our gladsome praise and thanksgiving!

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

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

# **GOD'S KING MAGNIFIED**

## **NO. 3333**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1912.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1866.**

***“His enemies will I clothe with shame:  
but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.”  
Psalm 132:18.***

THE Lord Jesus Christ communicates much to men with whom He comes in contact and has a mighty influence upon them. *He* is blessed and He is made a blessing. To those who love Him, Jesus Christ becomes a savor of life unto life. To those who are rebellious and continue to despise Him, He becomes a savor of death unto death. Our Savior, then, has an influence upon all those with whom He comes in contact and association. If I compare His Human Nature with clay, I must compare it with the scented clay which yields a perfume on all sides. You cannot hear of Jesus Christ without either getting a blessing or involving the responsibility of rejecting a blessing. I repeat it—He becomes a blessing to all those who are round about Him, or else, if that blessing is not received, it brings guilt upon the souls of those who reject Him. He is either the stone on which we build our hope and our trust, or else He becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who stumble at His Word, being disobedient.

You see the text teaches very definitely this Truth of God, for it not only speaks of Christ, Himself, but of what will become of those who are His enemies. No doubt we may also very properly draw from the text what shall become of His friends, for that same hand which is sure to clothe His enemies with confusion, will be certain yet to clothe His friends with honor and with glory. He who uses the left hand so powerfully to smite His foes, uses His right hand with equal force to bless His friends.

The text, therefore, divides itself very easily and naturally into the two great declarations. We see the clothing of the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ with shame, but then, again, the crowning of the Lord with a flourishing diadem of eternal Glory. Let us look, then, at—

**I. THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST WHOM GOD SAYS HE WILL CLOTHE WITH SHAME.**

Who are these enemies of Christ? In the days of His flesh, you could very easily have discovered them. Some slandered Him, calling Him

friend of sinners, gluttonous and a wine-bibber, having a devil and even being a blasphemer. Some took up stones to kill Him. Some cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And others bribed the multitude that they might thus hound Him to His shameful and cruel death. Enemies He had on all sides! But there are many who think today that had they lived in that age they would have been numbered with His friends. If it is so, is it not strange that they are not among His friends now? If they would have behaved so well 1800 years ago, it is amazing they should behave so badly now. Our belief is—and the common actions of mankind justify it—that had the sinners of this present day who pretend to have so much affection for the Person of Christ, lived in that age, they, too, alas, would have helped to crucify the Lord of Life and Glory, for they do, in effect, crucify Him now!

Who are His enemies, then, today? We will not think about those Scribes and Pharisees, and so on, who are all dead and gone, but let us ask who are His enemies NOW? Of course, everybody says that open sinners *are the enemies of Christ*. Do they not, by their actions, say, "we will not have this Man to reign over us?" His Book they will not read. His day of rest they do not care to keep. To the messages of His ministers they will not listen. His word, "Believe and live," they cast behind their backs—and having done this, they destroy their own souls and do everything that must grieve His Holy Spirit. Are there any such here, now—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—some who would even use the word of blasphemy and indulge in the sins of the flesh? We are not harsh if we put you down among the enemies of Christ! You are evidently not with Him and He, Himself, has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." You are not on the Lord's side—there can be no "betweentimes"—you are on the side of His enemies! He Himself declares that it must be so. "If God is God," said Elijah, "serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him." You do in effect say, "The world is my god—myself, my own soul, my own pleasures, my own opinions—these are my gods! As for Jehovah and His Christ, I know nothing concerning Them." Well, you must be put among His enemies and I would ask you, then, just to take this text and taste the bitterness of it. And I pray that may save you from knowing its bitterness in another world! "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

But Christ has other enemies, namely, *those who are outwardly moral and excellent in conversation and conduct, but who deny the Lord Jesus Christ*. There are some very excellent people in all other respects who doubt His Deity, or say they do—who will even say hard things of Him as the Son of God. They say they much revere His Character as a Man, and conceive Him to be, in fact, a very model of what manhood should be, but they will not accept Him in His true Character as the anointed Son of God and the Savior of the world! Now, the Lord Jesus Christ will most

certainly consider such to be His enemies. It is no use for a man to say concerning a monarch, "I have a great respect for the monarch in his private character. I would not do anything to injure him—I would even hold him up to respect in his private character—but as a king I will never yield him loyal homage, I will never obey him. Indeed, I will do all I can to pluck the crown from off his head." Could the king do otherwise than reckon such a person to be his enemy? It would be in vain for the man to say, "I am privately your friend." The king would say, "Oh, but I esteem my crown to be as precious as my life." So the Lord Jesus Christ cannot have the crown-rights of His true Deity touched. He "counts it not robbery to be equal with God," and He is called, "God Over All, Blessed Forevermore." He who trod the waves of Galilee's Lake, whose voice Death heard and gave up its prey—He who opened the gates of Paradise to the dying robber—claims to be none other than equal with the Eternal Father, and like He, "God Over All." And it is in vain for you to say you respect His Character as a Man, if you do not accept Him in His Deity and accept Him in His official Character as the Savior of sinners! You cannot be otherwise than numbered among His enemies! Well, now, if this should seem to be uncharitable, let me say that I cannot help telling you what I solemnly believe to be the truth and I must, therefore, my Friend, leave with you this text, "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

But again, there are other persons who are sound enough in their doctrinal views concerning Christ and who are excellent in their moral character, too, but *who are trusting in themselves that they are righteous*. You will, perhaps, be startled when I class you among the enemies of Christ! My dear Friend, Christ is the King of Grace. He is in this world to vindicate the plan of salvation by Grace. You, you see, instead of accepting this plan of salvation by Grace, set up the opposite principle of salvation by *merit*. Merit is anti-Christ! The very essence of Popery, that which is so hateful in it to us and, we believe, so obnoxious to the Lord, is not so much its outward rites and ceremonies as its inward spirit of setting up human merit! There are two merits—your own merit and the merit of Christ. If you trust your own merit, you do in fact proclaim that you are opposed to Christ's way of saving by His merits! Christ claims to be the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Alpha and the Omega, but if you come in and say, "No, I will do this myself—my moral character, my private devotions, my outward attendance at the House of God will serve me in good place as a righteousness," you touch Christ in His most tender point, for He claims among all His Glories this first and chief, that He is the Savior of sinners—and if you say that you can do without Him and if you profess to be your own savior—you shall most certainly, however excellent your life may be, be numbered with His enemies! Oh, it will be a sad case for you respectable people, you good, excellent people, when this text shall be fulfilled in you, "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

There is one other class I would gladly speak to—and I think they are the worst of all—those who acknowledge that salvation is by Grace and profess to be saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ, who unite themselves with Christ's Church, but *whose lives are so unhallowed as to dishonor Him*. You know how the Apostle, half-choked with his sobs as he speaks, says as he gazes upon such, "There are some of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." What a terribly sad reflection! A member of a Christian Church and yet an enemy of the Cross of Christ? I can suggest no better question for each and all of us than this, "Lord is it, I? Lord, is it I?" Why may it not be you? The preacher may ask himself why may it not be he? But whoever it may be among us, this is certain—our Church standing will, so far from excusing us, only increase our guilt—and so it shall be tragically and sadly true, "His enemies will I clothe with shame." They may clothe themselves with the garments of an outward profession and make broad their phylacteries, but they shall one day be stripped and their hypocrisy shall be discovered! "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

Having thus given you, then, a brief list of who are Christ's enemies and being anxious that you should ask yourselves, my dear Hearers, whether you are among them, I want now to call your attention to the particular phraseology of the text in order to make out what is meant by this being clothed with shame. Do you see it? Shame! Nothing makes a man feel so cowardly and so mean as *shame*. There have been persons who would sooner die than be put to shame. Many a man would have been able to burn at the stake who has not been able to face public shame. It is a thing which cuts man's nature to the very quick! Now, if you and I have done anything that makes us ashamed, do you know what we do? Why, we put our shame into the hollow of our hand and we keep it there. We do not tell our wife, our children, our neighbors—and if we can, we go and hide our shame and put it away! Now God seems to say to you and to me, "You have been hiding that shame of yours. You have been wearing the garb of an outward righteousness. Come here! You must put this shame on." "No, Lord," you say, "but I want to hide it." "No," He says, "you shall put it where it must be seen—where nobody shall be able to see you without seeing it! I will clothe you with it—it shall be all over you. You shall put it on as your outward array. You shall be wrapped in it—you shall sleep in it, awake in it and walk abroad in it—you shall be clothed with shame!" And it strikes me that the text may also bear this meaning—that when God comes to fulfill this threat, shame will be the sinner's *only* garment. He had the garment of a profession once—that is to be torn sharply from him and he is to be arrayed only with his scarlet, blushing shame! Once his filthy rags, bad as they were in the sight of God, gave him a sort of covering, but now they shall all be

stripped from him and he will have nothing remaining but his shame. Shame shall be his garb from head to foot, nothing but shame in which to wrap himself! When shame only comes into the cheek, it turns it crimson, but here the man or woman shall be shame all over and this shame shall be conspicuous to all onlookers, for he or she shall be clothed with it as with a robe, from head to foot! This seems to be the unmistakable meaning of the text. Now, when does this come true? And how is it true that God's enemies are clothed with shame?

Well, in the first place, *this threat is sometimes very graciously turned into a promise*. I cannot wish for some of you a better wish than that you may, in the first sense in which I am going to explain it, be clothed with shame, for when the Lord comes to a soul and says to it with a voice of love, "You have been My enemy, but I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you," then the soul is covered with shame. It cries out, "How could I be an enemy to so dear and true a Friend?" I recollect one being converted to God by reading the hymn—

***"Jesus, lover of my soul."***

"Oh," said the man, "is He the lover of *my* soul? Then how is it that I have been an enemy to Him? Did He love *me* when on the tree of shame and death? Did He love *me* so as to pour out His heart's blood to redeem *me*? How can I have lived without honoring Him?" And the man was clothed with shame! Some of us have felt what it is to be thus clothed, so that when we went into the House of God we felt almost ashamed to sit with God's people. They did not know anything about what we were feeling, but we thought they did. And when we went to pray, we felt ashamed to pray, as though our sins would hide God from us and we could not expect to obtain a blessing. We were so clothed with shame that we could not get it away from our eyes! Our whole soul seemed covered with it. No pride, no self-righteousness was left. We could not say, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men," but we began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, it is a mercy when, in a gracious sense, the soul is thus covered with shame—a hallowed shame on account of its many sins! I would pray that this terrible text may be fulfilled in the sweetest possible manner by your being covered with shame for sin!

But alas, dear Friends, it bears on its front a very much more terrible meaning than this. *There are some persons who are clothed with shame in this world through disappointment*. There are some who think they should put an end to Christianity. They get a notion into their heads, for instance, that if the wife is converted, they will break her of it, or if a child shows some signs of Divine Grace, the man says, "I will laugh it out of him." Or perhaps they do it on a large scale. Like Voltaire, they boast that within another 20 years there will not be a Christian to be found anywhere. They say that the thing is absurd and is dying out. It is very

strange that the very press with which Voltaire printed his works is now used in Geneva to print the Bible—and that while Voltaire, himself, is only remembered to be despised, Christianity seems never to have been so strong as it is at the present day! If all those men who have risen up, one after the other, to injure Christ's Kingdom, could just now be called back to life and see what has happened, they would look at their predictions and be clothed with shame to see how mistaken they have all been! Their theories have been exploded. They had their little day and have died out and are generally utterly forgotten. And so will all theories that oppose Christ today die out—and their systems of denial will be all clothed with shame!

In the case of those persecutors who have tried to drive religion out of individuals, they have always been disappointed. They have not succeeded, for the poor, trampled down one has borne it all with supernatural patience and triumphed by endurance—for the Grace of God is not to be expelled from the heart! You know what stout old Martin Luther said. He declared that Grace was like leaven—you put it into the meal and then you may boil it or bake it, fry it or freeze it—but you can never get out the leaven! Once the meal is leavened, nothing can unleaven it. And so is it with the Grace of God! You may do what you will with the man who possesses it. Put him into a mortar and pound him with a pestle until there are not two atoms of him left together—and yet the immortal spirit leaving the anatomy and all its weaknesses behind it, would but the more clearly lay hold on Christ and more fully rejoice in Him! And so, when the disappointment which this brings, comes upon them, then Christ's enemies are clothed with shame!

Sometimes, again, in this world *the enemies of Christ are clothed with the shame of remorse*. Look at Judas Iscariot when he took the pieces of money and threw them down in the treasury and went out and hanged himself. There was the covering of shame. And there have been such men since, who, in life and in death, have been clothed with shame because they have apostatized from the faith and, after making a profession, have, Demas-like, turned back again to the world! It is a blessed thing if that shame leads them to true repentance, but in many cases it is only a repentance that comes from a fear of punishment and is not the work of the Grace of God! Oh, how many have gone down to Hell with its fire burning in their hearts before they got there, feeling the guilt of sin upon them even before God began to handle them, having a foretaste of the flames, a foretaste of that eternal flame-shower which must descend upon their heads! God grant, dear Hearers, that not one of you may know what it is to be clothed with the shame of remorse!

But the most terrible fulfillment of my text *is left for another world*. Then shall Christ's enemies be clothed with shame! Servants of Satan, here is your livery! Do you say you will not put it on? Listen—"His ene-

mies will I clothe with shame.” *God* will put it on you! You would not wear the robe of righteousness—you shall not be able to decline to wear the robe of shame! God, Himself, stands here, as it were, and declares that He will dress His creature in the proper garment for him to wear. You must put it on, there is no escape! You must wear it. Here is your eternal convict’s dress and, convicted of being an enemy of God, you must wear it—of all dresses the most terrible! To be clothed with pain would be far less dreadful than to be clothed with shame. I would sooner at any time feel the acute pain that is possible in the body than feel shame, for a prick of the conscience is worse than the thrust of the surgeon’s knife! To go crawling about God’s world not able to look one’s fellow creatures in the face? Why, I would sooner die! And then, in the next world, to be so ashamed that you will not be able to look even the devil in the face, because he never had a day of grace as you have had—never a Savior preached to him, never made any pretence of being converted to God and, therefore, though an enemy of Christ, has no such cause of shame as you will have! Clothed with shame! Why, they shall cry to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to cover them, for when a man is ashamed, he wants to get out of everybody’s way and, most of all, out of his own! And you will be so ashamed that you, yourselves, will be ashamed of yourselves! You will be like the man of whom we read that when the king said to him, “How came you in here, not having a wedding garment?” He was speechless. Why speechless? Shame made his tongue refuse to do its office—and so will shame do with you. You will be ashamed.

Shall I tell you why, when you hear of the Cross of Christ and yet reject it, you will be ashamed? You will be ashamed then of your sins. You are not able, perhaps, to boast of them, now, but you will be ashamed to think, then, that they shall be published. Men are afraid, now, to have some things put in the newspaper, but what will it be when God will gazette your private sins, when He shall publish to the whole assembled world of every age, to Heaven, earth and Hell, the sins which you have committed—when they shall be read out so that all shall hear and all your filth be discovered? What shame will this revelation of secret things produce! And what will be your shame when the hypocritical profession which you have made shall also be laid bare? Then shall those who were open sinners laugh you to scorn and say of you, as the Prophet pictures the kings saying of the great monarch of Babylon, “Have you become like one of us? Have you also become weak as we, and covered with shame?” Most of all, perhaps, will you be ashamed when you see the very people you despised reigning in triumph—when you see the saints whom you laughed at sitting at the right hand of the Judge—those fools who disdain this world’s pleasures now entering into everlasting pleasure! And you, the wise man, who took the bird in the hand and would not wait for

the bird in the bush—now rewarded for it all by receiving the very worst things, inasmuch as you had your best things, first, and must now have your worst things, last!

It is a sad, sad text I have to preach upon. I would to God it would go into your souls that you may turn to the King and be no more His enemies! God, Himself, has said it—it is no word of mine, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.” He Himself, who can do it, who can make you ashamed, however proud you are—who knows how to put His hand inside your heart and touch the strings, thereof, and loosen them, so that your pride can no longer help you to bronze it out with Him—He has said it, “His enemies will I cloth with shame.” I pray you, “Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

Now, we shall need a little time to take the second part of our subject—“Upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” We are here very clearly taught that—

**II. THE SAVIOR WILL WEAR A CROWN, THAT THE CROWN WILL FLOURISH, THAT IT WILL FLOURISH UPON HIM!**

Brothers and Sisters, I need not detain you long by mentioning to you the crowns which Jesus wears. He has the royal crown of the kingdoms of Heaven, earth and Hell, for “the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! But He has a crown which He especially now wears as Head of the Church and in this He takes great delight—the crown which is called in the matchless song, “The crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals.” That is the crown which the Church has put upon Him and which she still delights to put upon His head! Do you not all delight to crown the Savior, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ? What song wakes up your heart more completely than the one—

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

Have we not sometimes seemed to make these walls echo again and again as we sang—

***“Crown Him, crown Him  
Crowns become the Victor’s brow”?***

I hope He has a crown from each of our hearts and we wait for the day when we shall be taken up to cast our crowns at His feet, and to ascribe unto Him honor and Glory, and dominion and power forever and ever! Crowned once with thorns for us, He ought now to be crowned with the royal diadem! Everyone of us must seek to spend and to be spent that we may add to the luster of that tiara, that He may be exalted above all

principalities and powers in the estimation of men—and that He may have a Kingdom in all men's hearts!

Christ is thus said to have a crown and it is added *that His crown shall flourish*. There are some crowns that are gradually diminishing in luster. The monarchy is growing weaker and weaker and still more *effete* and, by-and-by, shall be extinct, “but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” When does a crown flourish? You understand that the very term is metaphorical. Some think that to speak of a crown flourishing is to liken the king to an antlered stag whose horns flourish. Others suppose it to be an allusion to the primitive form of crowns, as Doddridge sings—

**“Fair garments of immortal joy  
Shall bloom on every head.”**

It is a metaphor expressive of joy, comfort, tranquility in a kingdom. Now, when does a crown flourish? Does it not flourish *when the sovereign is beloved by his subjects*? The foundations of a throne are always to be found in the love of the people. Christ's crown, then, indeed, flourishes, for the upright love Him! His name is as ointment poured forth! Therefore the virgins love Him. We can truly sing—

**“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast.”**

We are not slaves who scarcely even talk of ourselves as being His subjects, for He has called us friends and not servants, seeing that His secret is with us. He is dear to our souls and His crown thus flourishes.

A crown flourishes when the power of the monarch is *victorious in war and acknowledged in peace*. It is so with Christ. Oh, that it were more publicly so! We are praying for revivals and may God send them! May this time of God's visitation of London in judgment be attended with a visitation in mercy! And oh, that Jesus Christ's crown may flourish in the conquest of innumerable hearts who shall add fresh territories to the dominion of the Savior—for a crown flourishes when a king's subjects increase and His numbers are multiplied.

It shall be so with Christ. Until the sun has gone down with age and the moon has quenched her nightly lamp and every star has, like a withered fig leaf, fallen from the sky, Christ's Kingdom shall go on and on! First as a brook, it seemed to leap down Calvary's side. It has swollen to a river now. Still it deepens and widens. It becomes an ocean which shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea! Christ rose and it was twilight. Now He begins to climb the steep. And the day is coming and the full noontide draws near when He shall flood the whole earth with the splendor of His Light and His Glory—and when it shall be found that its going forth is from one end of the heavens to the other! May the long-expected day fully come! May the realms of woe, of sin and death be filled with this great Light of God! His crown shall flourish!

It is remarkable that while all sorts of dynasties have come and gone, the dynasty of Christ still exists! How many mighty monarchs have

climbed, with great slaughter, to their thrones—but where are they now? Rome has gone, but the Man of Nazareth is still King! And, besides Rome, how many empires have arisen? Earth has been shaken with the tramping of their legions, but where are their thrones and the men who filled them? They are gone, gone to the dust from which they came! But the name of Jesus shall endure forever—men shall always be blessed in Him and all generations shall call Him blessed! The day shall come, unless the Lord, Himself, appears, when the moss shall grow in the halls of the greatest kings, when the markets of commerce shall have shifted from their places. Perhaps the day may come when this modern Babylon, this emporium of all the riches of the earth, shall cease from her glory. Perhaps to western climes—for everything moves westward—the greatness may yet go. We do not know. We must not expect that our island shall abide forever Mistress of the Sea any more than any other. Venice wedded the Adriatic in her golden days, but now her canals have heard for many a day the clanking of the prisoner's chains and long must it be before her glory can ever return. It may be so with England in days to come. But Zion shall never cease to be the city of the great King! "Those eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation." There is a river that shall not cease to flow, whereon shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby, but there the glorious Lord shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams. Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever! A scepter of righteousness is Your scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness and, therefore, God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." This, then, is the crown that flourishes!

But do notice, once more, and then we have done, it is said, "*But upon Himself* shall His crown flourish." Does it mean that the crown shall always be seen to have reference to Himself? Does it also mean that it shall be by His own power and His own Person that He shall sustain the dignity of His crown? Sometimes the crowns of monarchs seem to flourish upon the heads of their prime ministers or privy councilors. It seems as if the empire flourishes because of some admirable person at its back. But it is not so with Christ. "*Upon Himself* shall His crown flourish." He won it! He wears it. He sustains it. He throws down the gauntlet to every foe who would rob Him of it! Now, this seems to say to us when we preach His Gospel, we must preach Christ, because it is upon Truths of God concerning *Him* that His crown shall flourish! If we do not, therefore, preach up Christ, Himself. If He is not the great Subject of our discourse. If He is not held up manifestly crucified among the people, we have kept back the mightiest theme! It is upon Himself that His crown must flourish! Brothers, suppose we give ourselves up to the preaching of Doctrine, only? What comes of it? Well, those persons who always delight in Doctrines may be, and some of them are, the very best of people, but, as

a rule, there is bitterness of spirit engendered by it from which may the Lord deliver us. Even the constant preaching up of experience is pretty sure to bring such people into spiritual bondage and to make them rather care to grovel in the dust than to mount up towards the sun. But preach Christ! Make Him first and make Him last and there will be souls won and saints comforted, for, “upon Himself shall His crown flourish.”

What is needed in the midst of His Church, then, is that the King Himself should appear in His Glory! That He should once again make bare His arm and use that mighty sword of His which cuts through coats of mail and pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow! And when He comes, oh, when He comes, His crown, indeed, flourishes! We must pray for Him to be constantly with us by His Spirit. We must watch, also, for His personal Advent, for He whom the disciples saw go up to Heaven shall in like manner appear again. Then the Glory! Then the manifestation of the hidden ones! Then the declaration of the love of God towards those who have been under reproach and under adversity! Be of good courage, Brothers and Sisters, for He comes, He comes and then, “upon Himself shall His crown flourish!”

I have thus tried to preach both to saint and sinner. Oh, that He would bring the sinner to Himself tonight! Oh, dear Hearer, I cannot bear the thought that you should have to wear shame as your everlasting covering! Tomorrow morning, when you are putting on your clothes, just consider how you would like to be clothed with shame. Ah, fine lady, when you are decking yourself out in all your pretty things, remember that you shall have no waiting maid to dress you in that day, but another—even God, Himself, shall come into your robing room and clothe you with a dress you would gladly never wear!

“His enemies will I clothe with shame.” See what your livery is to be forever and ever? See what your everlasting garment is to be? God grant that you may, instead of being clothed with shame, breathe the prayer, “Lord, clothe me with Your righteousness. Wash me in Your precious blood. Make me Your friend and allow me no longer to be among those of whom it is written, ‘Shame shall be the promotion of fools.’” God bless you for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 95.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms.* There must be, there should be joy in our worship—it is the very juice, the wine that flows from the trodden grape. It is the cream of the soul when the heart takes delight in God and joys in Him. To worship as if it were mere duty

would be but the reverence of slaves before one who is dreaded, but to worship with delight—this is the adoration of children who come to One whom they love! God grant us that joy while we adore the Lord. Let us, however, mingle great reverence with joy.

**3.** *For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* “For the Lord is a great God.” Jehovah is a great God, “and a great King above all gods,” above all that are ever called gods, whether they are kings or magistrates, or whatever they may be.

**4.** *In His hands are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.* Low and high, mysterious, sublime, the dominion of God encompasses all Nature!

**5.** *The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.* Creation is the best ground for possession—what He made is His own, the great Freeholder, the Sovereign Lord of all!

**6, 7.** *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God.* “For He is our God.” Oh, that is the sweetest of it all—“He is our God.” Let lords and lands have what masters they will—let us obey and worship our own God!

**7.** *And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.* He is the Shepherd leading, feeding, protecting, guarding us every day.

**7-10.** *Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* Was not that enough? Is there any need to grieve Him again? Think with sympathy of what God endured from one generation and let not another generation follow in their evil footsteps!

**10.** *And said, It is a people that do err in their heart.* Not merely through ignorance, but “in their heart.” They were not alone with their feet and their tongue, but in their hearts.

**10.** *And they have not known My way.* They have seen them but not understood them. He says, “They saw My work,” but you may see and yet not know, for what is merely seen with the eyes but not understood by the heart is not known—they were a willful, erring people—and an ignorant people.

**11.** *Unto whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.* Ah me!

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

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

# HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING NO. 2590

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 2, 1898.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1883.*

*“Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods.  
We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.”  
Psalm 132:6, 7.*

LONG before David's time, the Ark of the Lord had been almost forgotten by the children of Israel. It formed a most important part of the Ceremonial Law which God had ordained. I may almost call it the central portion of that pattern which was shown to Moses in the mountain. But the Ark had been carried into captivity by the Philistines and, afterwards, the terrible judgment worked upon the men of Beth-Shemesh may have made many afraid to go near it. So it remained a long time in Kirjath-Jearim and there David found it. And, after leaving it for a while at the house of Obed-Edom, brought it up to Jerusalem with great rejoicing. David's heart was so full of zeal for God that he desired that every part of the Lord's worship should be carried out with due order and proper solemnity. He wished to see a sanctuary built in which the Ark of the Lord should rest in its place and the worship of God should be carried out as He judged was meet and fit.

The first thing, therefore, for David to do was to find the Ark, for, as I have already said, it was a central portion of the Divinely-ordained Ceremonial Law. The Ark was put away in the Most Holy Place and it was an express and notable symbol of the Presence of God among the people. It was there, from above the Mercy Seat, that God met with man and communed with him in the person of the High Priest. It was there that the Shekinah glory, denoting the special Presence of God, shone forth between the cherubim. It is clear, therefore, that if David meant to restore the worship of God to its due and proper order, his first business was to find the Ark. Yet, without forgetting that fact, I am not going to talk so much about David finding the Ark as to think of some who are in the condition in which I once was. When I desired to find God, I longed to meet with Him, in the Person of Christ, in His own appointed way, but I could not find Christ. My heart was dark, my eyes were blind and I looked everywhere but in the right place. I did not look where the true Light of God was shining. But, at last, I resolved that I must find Him and I did, by His Grace, find Him! I found Him where I little expected to find Him and now, having found Him, myself, I have it on my heart to come and speak to everyone who is saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” It may be that my message shall be like the voice that

reached poor Hagar in the wilderness, when she and her son were ready to perish with thirst, though there was a well of water close at hand. As the Lord said to her, "What ails you, Hagar?" so would I ask, "What ails you, poor seeking Soul, when Christ is so near?" His people will breathe a prayer for you that you may find Him even while I speak to you.

**I.** My first remark will be that, LIKE DAVID, WE WISH TO FIND THE ARK, THAT ARK BEING CHRIST.

Dear Friends, most here present—and I should suppose, all—are well instructed as to where God will meet with us as our reconciled God. The *symbol* was the Ark of the Covenant. And the Mercy Seat, the *reality*, we know is Christ. We know this, I say, for most of us have been instructed in the Scriptures from our youth up. Oh, that we all knew it in our hearts!

Now, concerning that Ark, the first point to be noted is that it was covered with a *golden Mercy Seat* which was the place of forgiveness when it was sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. Those who came to it, through the High Priest, knew that God had accepted them and forgiven their sins. You and I know that we can never meet with God except at the Mercy Seat which is Christ Jesus, the Lord! Christ made an Atonement, a Propitiation, for our sins—He "offered Himself without spot to God." Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us. For our sake He came under the curse of the broken Law of God and now, if we want to meet with God, it must be at the Mercy Seat, by the Propitiation which Christ has made. You say that you know this is the case—then never try to meet God anywhere else, for remember that He is a consuming fire! There is no safety in making any attempt to come to God except by Christ Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men. His pierced body, that torn veil, is the only means of access for a sinner to a holy God!

In addition to this, the Ark was not only a Mercy Seat, but it was a *Throne of Grace*. God sat there, as it were, upon a throne of mercy and to us, today, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Throne of Grace. God in Christ Jesus is our reigning God, stretching out the silver scepter of His mercy and accepting all who come to Him. Do you want to pray, poor Soul, so that God will hear you? Then plead the blood of Christ! Do you wish to pour out your burdened spirit before the God of Grace? Then come with the name of Christ in your mouth and His blood trusted in your heart—and you shall not be refused! There is no meeting place with God, there is no place for prevailing prayer, but where you meet God in the Person of Jesus Christ the one great Sin-Offering!

Then, further, the Ark was *the place of God's Manifestation*. As much as could be seen of the Glory of God was seen between the cherubim. It is said that a bright light *always* rested there as a token of Jehovah's perpetual Presence—and if you would see the Glory of God, you must look into the face of Jesus Christ. "No man can see God's face and live." But we may see the face of Christ and live by seeing it! But only through the veil of Christ's Humanity can we see it. I have noticed that when men look at the sun, it has to be through smoked glass. And when we look at God, it must be through the Incarnation of Christ, who was found in fashion as a Man, though He thought it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God.

Furthermore, David knew, and you also know, that there were within the Ark three notable things—first, *the tablets of stone* which God had ordered to be placed there for preservation. There was, next, *the golden pot with manna*. And then there was also *Aaron's rod that budded*. Now, if you come to Christ, you will find in Him all that these things represented and all that you need.

First, there is preserved *the complete, vindicated and honored Law of God*. You will never be able, in your own strength, to keep the Law of the Lord—you will break it as surely as you live. Yet you cannot be accepted without a perfect righteousness! Unless God sees you clothed in the garments of righteousness, He will never admit you to the wedding feast. So where are you to get that spotless robe? It is in Christ, for faith is imputed for righteousness to him who believes in the Son of God, even as Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him for righteousness! But how is righteousness imputed to the guilty? Why, the Believer lays hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is reckoned as if it were his own! “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” That “One” is the Lord, our Righteousness, and when we put on His robe of righteousness, we stand before God, “holy as the Holy One.” If, then, you need a perfect Law, you will only find it in Christ. If any say that they have it in themselves, I believe that is only setting up another and a false Christ, for it is a derogation to the special Glory of Christ, of whom alone it can be said that He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by keeping it perfectly! I have no righteousness in and of myself, nor has any child of God any of his own—any that we once *thought* we had, we do count but dross and dung—that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, how we need, then, to find the Ark, Christ Jesus, that we may see, there, the unbroken tablets of the Law of God!

But every child of God also needs *spiritual food*. If the Lord has quickened you, He has given you hunger with your new life, for spiritual hunger always goes with spiritual life and you are saying, “Oh, that I might but eat of the crumbs that the little dogs get under their master's table—I must have some spiritual meat!” You will never have it till you get where the golden pot of manna is to be found. There is the food of the saints treasured up in Christ! There is no food for a soul even in Heaven except in Christ Jesus. He is the Manna, of which, if a man eats, he shall live forever! This shall satisfy his soul, strengthen him, build him up and develop him into a perfect man in Christ Jesus! But you must come to Christ for the food that was typified by the golden pot full of manna.

I think that I hear someone say, “I remember that a third thing that was in the Ark was Aaron's rod that budded. And that reminds me that I need *a power that can rule me*, that can say to my rebellious passions, ‘Be still,’ and that can make me walk in the way of God's commands, even bringing every wandering thought into captivity.” Well, there is no rod that I know of that can rule our rebellious nature but the rod of Christ Jesus, the great High Priest of God! Once let that blessed rod be all-powerful over us, and with it shall come all manner of buds, blossoms

and ripe fruit to our soul. Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls." Only from that rod can come the perfect fruit-bearing that every true child of God desires to produce!

**II.** This leads me to my second remark, which is that knowing what we do about Christ, the Ark, WE DESIRE TO FIND HIM.

I hope that I am addressing some who could even use the language of David and say that they intensely desire to find Him. They cry to the mighty God of Jacob in their affliction and with their whole heart and soul they long to find Christ! David made a vow about it, for his heart was set upon finding the Ark. Dear Friend, is *your* heart set upon finding Christ, or are you merely trifling with Him? Have you been so thoroughly awakened by the Holy Spirit that within you there burns a strong desire, insatiable as death, itself, so that you feel that you must find Christ? If so, I am happy to be addressing you—and you are already a happy person to have this hungering and thirsting after Christ, for that holy craving shall be fully satisfied with Him.

David thirsted to find this Ark *immediately* and so much in earnest was he that he said, "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to me eyelids until I find out a place for the Lord." Oh, when it comes to this—that you must have Christ, then you shall have Christ! When with every breath you seem to say, "Give me Christ, or else I die," then you shall not die, but you shall have Christ and live! I have heard of some who have at last been driven to such a pitch of vehement determination that they have gone into their chamber and said, "By the Grace of God I will never leave this place until I have found my Lord." I knew one who said, "I dare not eat till I have found Christ, lest every morsel should choke me." And in the ardor of his spirit to roll himself upon his Savior and to be cleansed in His precious blood, he cast himself upon his knees and cried to his God—and the Lord revealed Himself to him! If you must have Christ, you shall have Him! But if you can be put off, you shall be put off.

Next, David sought the Ark *most reverently*, for he recognized it as being a token of the Presence of "the mighty God of Jacob." And you and I must seek Christ reverently. I do not like to hear the irreverent appeals of those who speak of Christ as though He were to be seized by force and carried off against all law and justice. Truly, "the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence," but it is the violence of humble men and women who dare to act with holy boldness because they are encouraged by their God. That I, a poor sinner, should ever speak with God in a sort of bullying tone, as I have heard some do, as though they said even to their God, "Stand and deliver," this will never do! Your mouth is in the best position when it is in the dust—and your heart is nearest to prevailing with God when it is bowed even to the ground. "Out of the depths have I cried to You, O Lord," should be the language with which we humbly approach His Throne of Grace.

But while David thus sought very reverently, yet observe that it was *with intense desire that he might receive this Ark when once he found it*. He wanted to find it, but his ultimate objective was to harbor it, to give

hospitality to it, to find a resting place for it. And oh, dear Heart, if you want to find Christ, let it be with this desire, “Oh, that He may come and live in my soul, and be my own personal Christ! I do not want merely to hear *about* Him, to be taught *about* Him—I want to *have* Him—and if He is to be had, I *will* have Him! If there is Grace beneath the sky for a poor sinner, then I, the chief of sinners, will not rest until I find rest in Him.” If I am speaking to any here of that kind, I say again that I am thrice happy!

**III.** Proceeding still further with our subject and coming directly to our text—first, knowing what this Ark is, and then desiring to find it—thirdly, WE HAVE HEARD WHERE IT IS—“Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah.”

“We heard of it.” And is it not a blessed thing that *we have heard about where Christ is?* Where did you first hear of Him? I do not know whether, by Ephratah, David meant Bethlehem. Some think he did. That was the place where he was born and in his own father’s house David had heard about the Ark. And there are some of us who can say with overflowing gratitude that we heard about Christ in our Ephratah, in our Bethlehem. His dear name was mingled with our mother’s hush of lullaby. Among the earliest recollections I have are memories of hymns about the Lord Jesus Christ! The Word of God was our first school book—do we not remember, as little children, spelling out in Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, something about that dear Lord? “We heard of it at Ephratah,” in our earliest home—if that is the meaning of David’s words.

Oh, but, if you heard of Christ so soon, why have you not found Him yet? You who go to market know that there is nothing like the morning market—and there is nothing like seeking Christ early. They that seek Him early, *shall find Him*. If others do not, they shall—they shall find Him with an emphasis—find Him to a degree and in a measure in which some others do not. Oh, go to Christ in the morning market! Be the first there to buy the Truth of God and never sell it!

But Ephratah means—well, I do not know what it means, nor do any of the critics—it probably means some town of Ephraim. And I do not know and some of you do not know, perhaps, where you did *not* hear about Christ. You went to Sunday school and you heard of Him there. You went home and you heard of Him there. In these days, there are agencies that surround men so that they are often hearing of Him. Some here present have long heard of Christ and you are always hearing about Him—is it not time that you should get further than merely knowing and hearing—and should intensely seek until you *find* Him? You have heard of Christ from ministers. They have told you, many a time, where Christ is. You have heard of Him from Christian men and women. I hope that you will hear of Him again tonight from some Brother or Sister who will buttonhole you before you get out of this place, for there are some here who are very quick at that blessed work! And they will be sharp after you, for their love to you is great and they cannot bear that a soul should ever come within these walls and then, at last, be lost. I do pray the Lord that none ever may!

Oh, that your coming here might be the result of God’s Grace working upon your soul, that you may be saved! I remember one friend coming to

me and he said to me very earnestly, "I should like, Sir, to take a seat in the Tabernacle." I answered, "Well, do so, by all manner of means! I am very glad when people do so." "But," he said, "I may not come up to what you expect of me, for I have heard that if I take a sitting here, you will expect me to be converted—and I cannot guarantee that." "No," I replied, "I do not want you to guarantee it. I do not mean the word, *expect*, in that sense at all, but I do hope that it will be so." "Oh," he exclaimed, "and so do I! I am going to take a sitting with that very view." And it was so, of course it was so! When the man wished it to be so, God accepted the wish and heard the prayer—and he was brought to Christ and joined the Church! May everyone who comes here have to say, "Well, wherever we did *not* hear about Christ, we *did* hear of Him at the Tabernacle—that was our Ephratah. We were told where He was and we received plain and clear directions as to how we might find Him."

**IV.** Now, fourthly, the next words are, "WE FOUND IT."

You remember the learned Grecian who, when he had made a discovery while in the bath, leaped out of it and ran down the streets crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" Oh, those are the best words in my text! "We found it."

Well, where did we find it? David said that he found it "in the fields of the woods," that is, *where he did not expect to find it*. Have not many of us found Christ where we never thought we should find Him? "Oh," says one, "I shall never go to Heaven, I am sure, through the preaching of Mr. So-and-So! I cannot stand him. I am sure I would never get a blessing among such-and-such people." And, perhaps, dear Friend, the very man that you have thought could not be a blessing to you is to be made a blessing to you—and the very place where you did not expect to find Christ will be the exact spot where you shall meet with Him!

In the case of David finding the Ark, it was not only where he could not have expected it, but it was *in a place that was despised*—a rustic place—"in the fields of the woods." Perhaps the Lord may lead you to some very plain minister, without any polish, or talent, or ability—a rustic speaker—a very Amos and, lo, there you will find the Ark of the Lord! If the Lord will guide you to Heaven through the word of a chimney-sweep, it would be far better than that you should go to Hell under the ministry of the most eloquent orator or the greatest bishop who ever lived. If you are brought to Jesus Christ by one who murders the Queen's English—it is a pity that he should do that but, still, it does not matter much, so long as he does not murder the Lord's Gospel, for the Gospel comes out straight and clear, despite his broken words. Then you will, as it were, find Christ "in the fields of the woods." I have known some who have found Christ in a very lowly place. They have gone away from all companions and up in their own little room they have sought and found Him. I knew one who found the Savior down a saw-pit and another who found Him in a hayloft. Some have walked the streets of London and have been more alone, there, than anywhere else and, as they have trudged along, men have seemed to them like trees walking—they have found Christ, figuratively, "in the fields of the woods." Get alone, dear Friends—it is horrible to live in a crowd! I do not know how a man's spiritual life is to be constantly maintained in a crowd—he must often be

alone. "You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret."

"We found it in the fields of the woods," may, perhaps, mean, Brothers and Sisters, that you will find Christ *where you lose yourselves*. You know that it is very easy to lose yourself in the woods. You get in among the trees and you do not know whether you should turn to the right or to the left. Or you are in "the fields of the woods" and you are quite lost, for you cannot tell which way to go. The nearest thing to being saved is knowing that one is lost! When a man is really lost in his own consciousness, the next thing is for him to be saved. The end of yourself is the beginning of Christ. May the Lord cause you to know that you are thoroughly lost, and then soon you shall sing, "We found Christ in the woods where we lost ourselves."

It has struck me, too, in thinking over our text, that often we find Christ *very near to us*. Where did Adam go after he had disobeyed his Lord? He went and hid himself among the trees. And you and I found Christ where we were hiding—we did not know that He was among the trees of the woods—we thought that we were out of sight of God and far away from Heaven and Grace and mercy. Yet all the time, there was the mercy close at hand. Poor Sinner, you do not know how easy it is to be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You do not know how near that salvation is to you. "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

**V.** Fifthly, and very briefly, "WE WILL GO." "We will go into His tabernacles."

Now that we have found where Christ is and we can go to Him, we *will have Him*. We will go to God in Christ—"we will go into His tabernacles." We will not delay a minute longer, but we will, even now, by faith, go to the great Father in His own appointed way. We will go to Him for all that He is prepared to give—"we will go into His tabernacles" to find the Mercy Seat, to bow before the Throne of Grace, to behold the Glory of God, to eat of the manna, to see the perfect Law of God and to come under the governance of the blessed rod that buds. "We will go into His tabernacles," first, into the outer court. Then, into the inner court and, last of all, into the Holy of Holies. It is a blessed thing to see a soul on the go towards God when Christ becomes the Way!

"We will go into His tabernacles" and *we will dwell there*. We will dwell with God. We will get back to the Father's House where there is "bread enough and to spare," and there we will stay. We will go to learn of God. We will be the disciples of Christ. We will go and we will go at once. Oh, I wish that I could hear some saying, "We will go. We know about Christ, we have found Him near us—we will now go and simply trust and rest—and so dwell in the great Father's love." God grant that you may do so!

**VI.** And then the last word is, WE WILL WORSHIP. "We will worship at His footstool."

*In lowly reverence* we will bow ourselves down in the very dust, for we are but dust and ashes even when we are saved. "We will worship at His

footstool.” That is, *with deepest solemnity*, for even His Ark, His Temple, is but the footstool of the great King! Oh, what must He be! Heaven is His Throne, but the earth is His footstool. This world is a wonderful place. I have looked upon mountains, hills, valleys and mighty seas—yet the whole earth is nothing but the footstool of God! Let us go, then, and worship before Him in lowly reverence and with deepest solemnity.

But let us worship there *with great joy*. His “saints shall shout aloud for joy” and, as they bow at His footstool, it shall not be as slaves, but as His chosen and accepted ones. Let us also bow there *very gratefully*, blessing God that He has brought us to His feet. Part of the preparation for Heaven is to worship at God’s footstool on earth, but, by-and-by, we shall worship in His palace above! “We will go and worship” because we have found Christ and He is ours! May this be true of all of you, dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 132.**

This Psalm is a prayer and pleading of the Covenant, such a prayer as might have been offered by Solomon at the opening of the Temple, or by any of the descendants of David, either in their times of joy or in their seasons of affliction. It divides itself into three parts. In the first seven verses, mention is made of David’s zeal for the Ark and for the House of the Lord. Then, in three more verses, there follows the prayer at the moving of the Ark. And then the last verses mention the Covenant which God made with His servant, David, which is pleaded by David’s descendants in later years. The Psalm begins thus—

**Verse 1.** *LORD, (or Jehovah), remember David, and all his afflictions.* We cannot come before God in our own name; so what a mercy it is that we have a good name to plead! You and I do not approach the Lord in the name of any saint or holy man—we plead the name of “great David’s greater Son” and with the utmost emphasis can we say, “Lord, remember Jesus, and all His afflictions—His griefs and sorrows on our behalf.” This was a most proper prayer, however, as it stands, from those who belonged to David’s race—they pleaded the name of him with whom God had entered into Covenant on the behalf of all his seed—“Lord, remember David, and all his trouble—his trouble which he took about Your house, and about Your Ark.”

**2.** *How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.* Jacob was the great maker of vows and you will also remember that Jacob, on his dying bed, made mention of “the mighty God of Jacob.” David, in this Psalm, imitated his forefathers—he made a solemn vow to the Lord that he would build a house for God, even as Jacob did when he said, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothes to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house.”

**3-5.** *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* He

used strong words to signify that his house would be no house to him and that he would not regard his bed as a place of rest until he had discovered where God would dwell. It means that he would give himself wholly up to this project—it would be his life-work to find a suitable place for the worship of the Most High. I wish that this same zeal would take firm hold of all Christians. How many there are who dwell in their ceiled houses while the House of God lies in waste! They can provide abundantly for themselves, but for God's cause, for God's Gospel, for a place wherein the poor may meet for the preaching of the Word, they do not seem to care. May the Lord give us to feel something of this self-denial and devotion to God that moved the heart of David!

**6, 7.** *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.* This is what David did and you see what trouble he took in the matter. But you know that he was not permitted to build a house for God. Yet he had the same reward as if he had done so, for God built up *his* house and established his dynasty for many generations! God often takes the will for the deed with His servants. And when they wish to do a good work and there is some reason why they may not carry out their plans, the Lord looks upon them and gives them the same reward as if they had accomplished their design. After all, dear Friends, David wised to build a house for God and although it was very right and proper in itself, yet, in the sight of God, it was but a small matter! He took little account of Solomon's Temple, though it was "exceedingly magnificent!" You remember how Stephen said, just as a sort of passing remark of no great importance, "Solomon built Him an house. Howbeit, the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." And it is a very curious fact in history that from the very day in which the great Temple was dedicated, spiritual religion began to decline in the land! God's worship was never more pure than when it was rendered in a tent in a humble way. But, as soon as the great gilded Temple was erected and priestly pomp began to display itself, it seemed as if men began to depart from the spiritual worship of Jehovah. How often it is that the more gorgeous the Ceremonial Law, the less hearty and the less spiritual the worship becomes! Our great and glorious God who fills Heaven and earth takes small account of noble architecture and earthly pomp and splendor, or of the sweetness of music, or the fumes of incense. He is far above all that is merely sensuous! He delights to dwell where there are broken hearts that He can bind and where genuine Believers worship Him in spirit and in truth.

**8-10.** *Arise, O LORD, into Your rest; You, and the Ark of Your strength. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Your saints shout for joy. For Your servant David's sake turn not away the face of Your anointed.* Turn back for a minute to the 8<sup>th</sup> verse. "Arise, O Jehovah, into Your rest." This exclamation was very similar to the language which Moses used whenever the Ark set forward—"Rise up, Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You." And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel." So David did well to use similar words when the Ark was, at last, brought to its resting place. He calls it the Ark of God's Strength, for such it really was. It had done great wonders. It was when

the Ark was borne by the priests into the midst of Jordan that the river was divided so that the people could pass over with dry feet. Even when the Ark was taken captive, it brought disaster to the Philistines. And when the men of Beth-Shemesh irreverently looked into it, great numbers of them were slain! It was truly the Ark of God's Strength—the great type of the power of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! In the 9<sup>th</sup> verse we read, "Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness." That is the best robe that he can wear who serves God! And you know that all of us who believe in Jesus have been made kings and priests unto God. Righteousness, therefore, should be the garment which we wear from head to foot. "And let Your saints shout for joy." God's holy ones should be happy ones! No man has so much right to be happy as he that is holy. We serve the happy God—we may well be happy ourselves—and we are not to keep our happiness hidden within our own hearts. "Let Your saints shout for joy." Let them exult, let them triumph, let them express their delight. The 10<sup>th</sup> verse is a prayer for the king and for the whole line of kings—the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to continue to look upon them for the sake of David with whom He had made His Covenant. Now the Psalm finishes with the Covenant made with David.

**11.** *The LORD has sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it, I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.* That was literally fulfilled in a long line of kings, but it is more gloriously fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. David the prophet-king is dead, but he, seeing before that God would raise up Christ, laid hold upon this precious promise, "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body." Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King of the Jews, but He is also King of kings and Lord of lords and, as God has set Him on the Throne, neither devils nor men can ever pull Him from it.

**12.** *If Your children will keep My Covenant and My Testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore.* And so it would have been. The kingdom of Israel would never have been broken up, either by internal rebellion or external attack, if it had not been that the kings flagrantly turned aside from God. He bore with them very long, but they waxed worse and worse and, at last, God's Covenant had to be kept, through their default, by a deed of vengeance against them. Yet today, in spirit, this Covenant stands fast, for the Lord Jesus has kept it on His people's behalf and now He shall sit upon the throne of David forevermore, blessed be His holy name!

**13.** *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.* Here are some of the sweetest words that were ever written! There are fathomless depths of sweetness in them, for here we have the Truth of God concerning the election of the Church of God. "The Lord has chosen Zion." Some men cannot endure to hear the Doctrine of Election—I suppose they like to choose their own wives, but they are not willing that Christ should select His bride, the Church! Everybody is to have a free will except God! But let them know that God still exercises a Sovereign choice among the sons of men. Jesus said to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Blessed be His name, the Truth still stands! "The Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation." We delight to dwell with those whom we love and God so loves His

Church that He desires to always dwell in it—and He does dwell in it by His Spirit—and a day shall come when the perfected Church, the new Jerusalem, shall come down out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of the Lord, and the Lamb shall be the Light thereof. You know how the last chapters of the Book of Revelation describe the glorified Church and God dwelling in the midst of it. “The Lord has chosen Zion.” That is the first thing—election. “He has desired it for His habitation. That is the next thing—the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Church. And this is one of the greatest marvels of which we have ever heard!

**14.** *This is My resting place forever.* Is it not amazing that God, Jehovah, should say of His people, “This is My resting place forever”? Now, if He rests, I am sure that we may! It is very remarkable that when God was making the world, He never rested till He had fitted it up for His child, and everything was ready for Adam. God never stopped His work till there was everything that Adam could desire. And when it was all complete, then He rested the seventh day. So, when He has done everything for His Church, when His work for her is all completed, then Christ rests, but not till then! He says, by the mouth of Isaiah, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.” But that being once accomplished, He says, “This is My rest forever.” God does not rest in the work of His hands as a Creator, He rests in the work of Christ as the Redeemer!

**14.** *Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* God dwells in His Church and will dwell in it. He has desired to do so and His desire will certainly be realized—who can cause Him to be disappointed?

**15.** *I will abundantly bless her provisions.* By which I understand that there will be provisions, that there will be abundant provisions and that there will be abundant blessings on those provisions. God grant that we may always find it so! Let us plead this precious, “I will.” “I will abundantly bless her provisions.”

**15.** *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Poor, and yet satisfied—satisfied with bread! Yes, but what kind of bread? The Bread that came down from Heaven, the Bread of God, which is Christ Jesus, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed. “I will satisfy her poor with bread.” The Lord does not say anything about her rich. No, but we read in another place, “The rich He has sent away empty.” I wish to always remain among the poor of the Lord’s flock—not to put my name down among those perfect people who are so rich in Grace that they are obliged to tell everybody about it! No, I would be poor in spirit—emptied more and more, lying lowly and humbly at my Lord’s feet. I am the more ready to do this because I perceive that the Lord has prepared all His goodness for the poor in spirit. “I will satisfy her poor with bread.”

**16.** *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* The prayer in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse was, “Arise, O Lord, into Your rest.” In the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, we read the answer, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell.” Then in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse was the petition, “Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness.” Now the Lord gives the response, “I will also clothe her priests with salvation.” Righteousness is only a part of salvation, but oh, what glorious raiment it is when a man once wears the

silken dress of salvation! Talk of “cloth of gold”—there is nothing among royal array that can be compared to the vestments of the saints! I go in for vestments when they are those of which the Lord says, “I will also clothe her priests with salvation.” They shall be covered over with it, from head to foot, so that there shall be nothing of His people to be seen but His own salvation! Notice the prayer in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse, “Let Your saints shout for joy.” And the answer is here, “Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” God always gives more than we ask! Silver prayers get golden answers! “Open your mouth wide,” He says, “and I will fill it.” Yes, and then open it again and He will fill it yet again, for He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

**17.** *There will I make the horn of David to bud.* As a stag’s horn grows, putting out fresh buds and branches, so shall the power of David be increased and enlarged. We see that promise fulfilled spiritually in the growing Kingdom of Christ.

**17.** *I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed.* His name shall never go out like an extinguished lamp. If it is blown out, once, as it were, in the death of Solomon or any other, king, yet from that lamp shall another be lighted. The Lord says, “I have ordained a lamp,” and Christ will always be a source of brightness in the world! He will always be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.” As the holy lamp in the sanctuary was never to go out, so has God ordained that Christ shall always shine to the joy and delight of His people.

**18.** *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* In this Psalm two sets of clothing are mentioned and you can have which you like. Here is one, “I will clothe her priests with salvation.” And here is the other, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.” Shame is a terrible thing! Many a man has thrown away his life to try to escape from the shame of a guilty conscience. But the ungodly will be forever clothed with shame and they will be eternally condemned. “His enemies,” that is the description of the ungodly. It is of small account what your outward character appears to be—if you are an enemy of Christ, these are the garments in which you will die—and these are the garments in which you will continue to suffer forever. “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”

**18.** *But upon Himself shall His crown flourish.* Upon Christ the laurel wreath, or rather, the Crown of Glory, shall never wither. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.”

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—617, 130.**

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# A STRANGE YET GRACIOUS CHOICE

## NO. 2600

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1898.

BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
(on its re-opening after repairs),  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1883.

*“For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel  
for His peculiar treasure.”  
Psalm 135:4.*

This is a Psalm of praise all through. It is to be sung to the high-sounding cymbals. There is not a low note anywhere—it is all robust, exhilarating, joyful! It is “Hallelujah!” from beginning to end and it did not seem possible to the Psalmist that he could omit from it the high jubilant note of election, for if there is anything that makes Believers’ hearts sing unto the Lord, it is the recollection that He has chosen them and fixed His love upon them! “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” is one of the best reasons in the world why we should adore the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul and strength! If the Lord has made us to be His people, we will, indeed, with joy and gladness declare Him to be our God! If He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, we will make such return to Him as we can, and bless Him with our loudest and sweetest music. Blessed be the Lord because He “has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

It may be said that this verse relates to the seed of Abraham. So it does, but please remember that everything which belonged to the seed of Abraham after the flesh belongs yet more to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit! Indeed, there always was a peculiar blessing which never came to those who were only born according to the flesh, for Ishmael received it not, neither did Esau enter into it. The line of inheritance is the line of promise, the line of the Divine choice, and if you and I have believed in Jesus Christ, we are in that spiritual line! The mark of that line is *faith*—they that believe are of the seed of believing Abraham. His very name is “the father of the faithful” and those that are full of faith—the faithful—are the true seed of Abraham. The Covenant in its highest and best meaning is theirs—it was made with Abraham on their account. Therefore we shall take all there is in this verse to ourselves if we are, indeed, God’s covenanted ones! If He has brought us into the bond of the Covenant by a work of Grace upon our hearts, and we are now one with that glorious promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is true of us and of all who are like us in this respect—“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

I. The first thing which lies upon the very surface of our text is THE CHOICE—"The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself."

This choice is a *Divine* one. It is the Lord that has chosen Jacob, that very Lord who made the heavens and the earth! Jehovah, in whose hands are all things. He has made the choice and it is a very wonderful thing, though we speak of it as if it were a commonplace Truth of God. Yet, if we dive into its depths, we shall see that it is truly marvelous that God should ever have chosen any of the fallen race of mankind! He once regretted that He had made men upon the face of the earth, so sinful had they become, yet, knowing beforehand all about their wickedness, the Lord was pleased to make a choice of men. He might have chosen angels, but let it always stand as a wonderful instance of His mysterious Sovereignty that He did not choose the fallen angels—no, not even one of them! Our Lord Jesus Christ "took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham."

Why was it that all the hosts of spiritual beings that fell with Lucifer are left in their fallen state without any hope of salvation, while God's eternal election has fallen upon the sons of men? Why, indeed! We can never understand it and can give no answer but this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The choice, however, was Divine, and let us not get away from that glorious Truth of God. It will give you, Believer, the highest joy to know that the Lord has chosen you—and that knowledge will be to you a source of great strength. It will also be one of the best rebukes to the devil. You remember how, when Joshua, the High Priest, was standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him, the Lord said to the accuser, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" There is no slap in the face for the devil that is so painful to him as that declaration, "The Lord has chosen Jerusalem; He has elected His people and you, O Satan, may do what you will, but you cannot change the choice of God! If He has chosen anyone, that man is of the conquering Seed before whom you have begun to fall, as Haman fell before Mordecai. But you shall fall yet lower, for the Lord has promised to the godly that He will bruise Satan under their feet shortly." God has chosen them! It is He that says it and, therefore, let the full force of the blessed Truth of God come to each believing heart, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." There is an infinite sweetness in that thought!

The choice, being Divine, is also *sovereign*. About this point, we are not left to speculation, for Paul has told us that "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls," it was said to their mother Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger." The Divine purpose was made in that case irrespective of character, for no character had been developed! If anyone says that it was made on account of character foreseen, I reply that there was no good character to foresee, but as far as Jacob is concerned, although Grace did make him into a true Patriarch and heir of the promise, yet by nature he was a very

poor stick. As I read what he does, when his human nature is uppermost, I feel that there is nothing in him why any mortal man should choose him, and certainly there is no reason why God should do so! There is nothing foreseen about him except that God foresees that He will *make* him gracious—but that is not the *reason* why He makes him gracious!

There is, at the back of it all, the reason that the Lord gave to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” I find such a stuttering and stammering about this great Truth of God in these days that I mean to be all the more emphatic in preaching it, for I believe that this doctrine largely helps in producing that state of spirit into which God would have sinners brought so as to make them feel that they have no claim upon Him—no right to His mercy and that, if He gives it, He gives it simply because He chooses to give it! The choice was made by that great King who has a right to do as He wills and who exercises that right and, therefore, the declaration stands in our text, “Jehovah has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

So we have seen that the choice is Divine and sovereign.

And, Beloved, it is a most *gracious* choice. As I have already said, the more we look at the character of Jacob, the more we must discard all idea that he was chosen for what he was by nature. From his birth, he bore the name of a supplanter and his brother, Esau, bitterly said, “Is not he rightly named Jacob (that is, a supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” The expression really is in the original, “Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he has Jacobed me these two times.” He had supplanted his brother—put him out of his proper place. He was truly the father of all the Jews and, though I will say nothing to their disparagement, yet at driving a bargain are they not the masters of us all? And such was Jacob from the very beginning! So, as God chose him, assuredly He chose him of His Grace and for no other reason than because He would do it. Election was not of works, certainly, in Jacob’s case, but of Grace and of Grace alone!

And, putting all things together, was it not *a very wonderful thing* that the Lord should choose Jacob? There were other men upon the face of the earth of whom God might have made a nation and from whom He might have formed the chosen Seed. I do not suppose that even after Abraham and Isaac had come to know the Lord, they were the only people in the world who knew Him. Doubtless, there were some scattered up and down, like Job, who, I should think, is but a sample of many others. It seems to me that if we had been about to choose a man who should found a race, we should have said, “There, Job is the man! ‘Perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’” He was a right princely man—I sometimes think that he was the grandest of all men, when I see him sitting on a dunghill, transforming it into a throne and reigning there right royally, while he says—“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It was a noble saying

of the man who cannot be said to be less than the very greatest of mankind! “You have heard of the patience of Job,” and all the world shall hear of it again and again while there are ears to hear and tongues to speak! And yet, though Job is chosen unto salvation, he is not the founder of a great race—it is not in his line that the promised Messiah is to be found, but—“the Lord has chosen Jacob.”

Ah, me, why did He do it? When you have told me why He chose Jacob, I shall then try to find out why He chose me! And if I should find that out, probably you will, at the same time, discover why He chose you. It is all a great mystery of Grace and must be left with Him who does as He wills—not without reasons, mark you—but without reasons that are revealed to us. God never acts unreasonably, yet He does not find His reasons for acting in men, but within Himself, in the heart of His compassion, in the eternal counsels of His own will. Do not think that we are talking of God as we speak of men. A man, who has a strong will, and who carries it out as he pleases, is a very dangerous person. A despot, let him be ever so gentle, is a terrible being! But God—the infinitely Holy, the perfectly Just, the supremely Good—we may well leave everything with Him. It is not merely that we *must do so*, but it is the best and wisest course for us! Even if we could “snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,” into what other hands could we put them? No, they must remain with Him, and we are glad it is so. To me the unlimited dominion of God is glorious. I want to have no constitutional monarchy upon the Throne of Heaven. No, let Jehovah do absolutely as He wills, for His will must be perfect justice, perfect goodness, perfect righteousness!

So we leave this first point, the choice—“The Lord has chosen Jacob.”

**II.** The second part of our subject is full of practical teaching, for it concerns THE REASON OR RESULT OF GOD’S CHOICE.

There are many persons who like to hear about God having chosen Jacob, but listen, dear Friends, to the next words in our text. “The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself*.” It does not say, “unto Heaven”—“unto certain privileges”—“unto certain favors.” All that is quite true, but it does not say so here. “The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself*.” Oh, what a blessed choice is this—to be chosen unto God! Then Jacob is not his own, for God has chosen him, “unto Himself.” Then Jacob does not belong to any man, for the Lord has chosen him, “unto Himself.” Now Jacob must have no motives except such as he finds in God. He must have no aims for which he is to live but that he may glorify his God, for “the Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are chosen by the Lord, you are chosen to be God’s child, picked out from the rest of mankind to be, from henceforth, no longer your own, or the world’s, or the devil’s, but to be God’s—and God’s alone!

“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself,” first, *that Jacob might know Him*. While others knew not God, but paid reverence unto those that were not gods, Jacob was chosen that he might, while he slept at Bethel, see the mystic ladder by which he might climb to his God—and down which God might send the angels to him. Jacob must be taught about God and Jacob’s seed must have committed unto them the oracles

of God. The world lies in darkness, but there is a lamp in the house of Jacob. It is black midnight over Assyria, Babylon and Egypt, but a star shines in the heavens for Jacob and his seed! O dear Hearts, do you understand the great mysteries of which I am speaking? Do you know the Lord—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit? Have you been taught of God? Are you among those to whom your neighbor need not say, “Know the Lord,” because you belong to the people of God who all know Him from the least even to the greatest? If so, happy, indeed, are you!

And, next, the Lord chose Jacob and his seed *that they might keep His Truth afire in the world*—that God’s Revelation of Himself might be preserved by them against all comers. It is just so with Christians now—the Lord has put us in trust with the Gospel. He has committed to His servants that wonderful treasure which we have “in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Still are we bound to earnestly “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” And it is as much the duty of God’s people this day to guard His Truth as it was the duty of the seed of Israel to preserve, in the midst of heathen darkness, what was known of the one living and true God. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself” that he may preserve His Truth among the sons of men.

*It was also committed to Jacob’s descendants to keep up the worship of God.* They must offer the morning and the evening lamb. They must bring the bullocks and goats and birds for sacrifice. They must set up the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They must build the Temple and there the praises of Jehovah must be sung by sweet songsters day and night. Nowhere else was God to be publicly worshipped with rites ordained by Himself except upon Mount Zion. And now, today, the pure worship of Jehovah is entrusted to His saints—nobody else can worship Him in spirit and in truth but those who have been quickened and made true by the Holy Spirit. There is no true worship of God under Heaven except that which is rendered by His own people. Men may make their ceremonies as gorgeous as they please, with splendor of architecture and great show of millinery, with the sound of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music—but, after all, there is no true worship except that which comes from hearts in which the Spirit of God dwells! So you see, dear Friends, that the maintenance of God’s worship in the world is still entrusted to His chosen.

And the Lord has chosen His people unto Himself *that He may manifest His Grace in them.* “In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” And it is in the midst of God’s own people that His Grace is still revealed. There He breaks the arrows of sin and there He scatters all the battalions of evil. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined” and still, out of the hearts of His chosen people, out of the congregation of His faithful ones, does He shine forth, for the Lord is always with those who are on His side, even with the humble hearts in which He deigns to dwell. But He is not with the ungodly, for they are far from Him by

wicked works. Remember then, you who are chosen, that God has chosen you “unto Himself” that He may manifest His Grace in you.

And, especially God has chosen His people *that He may commune with them*, that He may manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world—that they may come near unto Him in Christ Jesus and that He may lay bare the very secret of His heart to them. Here is a text to prove my assertion—“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.” He makes His glory to pass before them and to them He reveals His choicest secrets. Happy and blessed are the people of whom this sentence is true, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

Now, dear Friends, let the question go round among you—Am I one of the chosen seed? You can tell whether you are chosen of God by this test—Have you been chosen unto God? Can you say with Paul, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”? Are you the branded slaves of Jesus Christ and yet His free men rejoicing in the liberty wherewith He makes His people free? Do you feel as if you were shut up to one course in life, so that you can say with Paul, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”? Are you torn away from all former ambitions? Have you a single eye unto God’s Glory? Does your heart beat for this one objective—that you may live because Christ lives in you? Then the text describes you! “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” Oh, what a thrill of delight these words may cause to pass through many, even of those who think they have known the Lord for years!

Come, my Heart, it is all very well for your lips to have sung about God’s everlasting love, but have you been brought into communion and fellowship with Him? Do you feel and know that you are, indeed, the Lord’s? I fear that there are some who profess and call themselves Christians who live unto God in a very unsatisfactory, secondary sort of way. Like a man I have heard of who had a large farm and then took another, which he called his “off-hand farm.” And there are some professors who have their business farm, or their pleasure farm, which is the chief matter with them—and their religion is a kind of an off-hand farm and, sometimes, they think they will get a minister or a “priest” to be the bailiff, and see to it. My Friend, I give you due notice that I will be no bailiff of such a farm! And I also warn you that you will never get anything worth having unless it is your home farm and you make it the main concern of your life! God will never be put in second place—He must be everything or He will be nothing! “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

O my dear Friend, is it so with you? Or are you still living as if there were no God, or as if God did not demand your heart’s full allegiance?

**III.** Now I will pass on to notice, very briefly, in the third place, THE SEPARATION WHICH GROWS OUT OF THIS CHOICE. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

Then, *He separates His people from the rest of mankind*. Though this is not expressed in the words of the text, it is the true sense of it. And the

Lord has done so. He did so with Jacob—with Israel. He made a Covenant with them and a Covenant with God always means separation from men. What a wonderful condition for a soul to be in—to be in Covenant with God and that Covenant to run on these lines—“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” That Covenant makes a clear division between the two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—it is one of the grandest distinctions between man and man. If you are in the Covenant, Beloved, you are on the right side of that happy and blessed line of demarcation!

Then, after the Covenant with Jacob and Israel, came *the Covenant heritage* which made another division, for the Lord gave the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham and to the seed of Israel by a Covenant of salt. And God has given to His spiritual Israel a Covenant heritage—we are to possess all things in Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”—everything we can desire, for all things are ours if we are Christ’s. Ours is a glorious inheritance! We have everything that is necessary for this life and also for the life to come. Even Canaan had its drawbacks, but we go to a land which in very deed flows with milk and honey, where the sun goes no more down, where there is no death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, a sweet land beyond the flood, the heavenly Canaan which stands forever dressed in living green! Blessed are the eyes that can look from the top of Pisgah and “view the landscape over.” But what a difference it makes between man and man that this one has a Covenant heritage and the other has none, for he sold it for a mess of pottage, and has nothing more to do with it!

Then came the broad distinction which all could see, namely, that of *redemption*, for the seed of Jacob had to be redeemed. They had come into bondage in Egypt, but with a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring them from there. Then the difference began to be visible. That night when the blood-mark was on the lintel and down the two side posts, Israel was distinct from Egypt. The blood had made the difference, for the Lord had said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” O dear Hearers, have you had the blood-mark put upon you? Has the atoning Sacrifice of Christ been laid home to your heart and conscience? This is the great distinction between man and man—the blood that makes atonement for the soul! The Lord has, indeed, manifested His choice of us when we have entered into the fullness of His great redemption!

Then came the going out of Egypt which may be likened to *conversion*. The passage through the Red Sea, which sets forth *regeneration*. The dwelling in the wilderness which is a type of *the life and experience of many Believers*. The passing of the Jordan and the entering into Canaan

which should be a picture of *the joy of all who believe in Jesus*, for “we which have believed do enter into rest” and come into the land of promise. These things, which I have only mentioned in passing, made very grave distinctions between the people of Jehovah and all other nations who looked upon them as a strange race dwelling alone and not numbered among the ordinary nations of the earth.

This brings me again to the critical question—Has the Lord made any difference between you and the rest of mankind, dear Hearers? Have you received any pledge of the Covenant of Grace? Do you know what redeeming love means? Have you been separated from the world? Have you heard the voice of God crying to you, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”? Is the world a wilderness to you? Have you looked to the bronze serpent and lived by the sight? Does the water from the Rock follow you—that Rock which is Christ? Do you feed on heavenly manna? Is the Lord in the midst of your camp? Is His Glory manifested there? Do you delight to be led by His fiery cloudy pillar from day to day? All this will be the manifestation of the eternal separation which God made in His predestinating purpose—“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” He led Israel out into the wilderness that there He might speak to their hearts. He drew them away from men. He made them live solitary and alone, like eagles on the rock, that they might dwell there with Him and have no strange god among them. Blessed are the people who enjoy this separation! But unhappy are the men and women who talk about election and yet have never known the separation which stamps their election as being a matter of fact.

**IV.** Now I close with one more characteristic of the people of God, and that is, THEIR ELEVATION. This is clearly in the text, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” But He elevates Jacob in a moment, for He adds, “and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

*The “supplanter” has grown into a prevailing prince.* He took his brother by the heel but now he has accomplished a grander feat than that—he has grasped the Angel and he has said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” He supplanted Esau, but now, as a prince, he has prevailed with God and seen Him face to face—and yet he has lived! And though he goes limping away from the wrestling, yet is he more than conqueror through Him that loved him! Yes, Beloved, God’s choice wonderfully elevates a man! He may have been Jacob, before, but he becomes Israel afterwards! Has such an elevation as that taken place in *you*, my Friend?

Then see, next, that *God elevated His choice in value*, for He compares Jacob to a “peculiar treasure.” “Since you were precious in My sight”—oh, that is a wonderful word!—“precious in My sight,” to be used by the God who says, “The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” “Since you were precious in *My sight*, *you have been honorable, and I have loved you.*” They are put to an honorable use, for the choicest treasures of kings, that make up their regalia, are meant to

be brought out on coronation days and on other grand occasions when they bedeck themselves with all their pearls and diamonds and stars and crowns. And such are the Lord's people, precious in His sight, "His peculiar treasure." And they are put to this use—to adorn His doctrine in all things—to be as the jewels of His crown—to be as the signet ring upon His finger—to be as precious stones upon His breastplate! God's people are everything to Him! There is nothing that you have, that you account rich or rare, that is anything to you in value in comparison with what God's people are to Him! His delight is in them—the pleasure which God has in His people is truly wonderful. He made the heavens and the earth, the stars and all things that are—and then He touched the world with His wondrous finger and molded it into the thing of beauty which it is today! And it took Him six days to do it and when He had done it, what happened? "The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

But did God sing? No, He simply said, in plain prose, that it was very good. That is all He had to say about it. Ah, but when the time comes for the *new* creation, when He makes a true Believer, when He forms His Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, we read, "He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Think of God, the Everlasting Father, the Ever-Blessed Son, and the Divine Spirit bursting out into singing! What a song must that be! I would like to hear the singing of the angels and of all the host redeemed with blood that stand in their white robes before the Throne of the Most High. It must be such a song as mortal ears as yet have never heard. But, oh, to hear *God* sing—the great Father, Himself with His holy hymn—the glorious Son with His sweet Psalms—the Holy Spirit with His blessed song! We can scarcely imagine what it must be, but the expression shows how precious the Church must be to the Lord when He is said to rejoice over her with singing!

As the love of a husband to his bride, such is the love of Christ to His people. Otherwise the Song of Solomon means nothing at all and is an idle book. As the love of a tender mother—and what can excel that?—such is the love of God to His people! Like as a mother comforts her children, even so shall the Lord God comfort you. So, then, you see, dear Friends, that the choice of God has lifted His people right up from all their former degradation and made them precious in His sight, so that He, Himself, takes delight in them.

Go home, then, and take delight in God. If He can and delight in you, much more may you delight in Him! And, as the Psalm from which our text is taken begins with, "Praise you the Lord," so now, you who know that you are chosen by Him, praise Him! And as the Psalm ends with, "Praise you the Lord," you who love Him, you who have been loved by Him, continue to praise Him even till your last breath—gasp out a "Hallelujah!" as you pass into eternity!

The Lord be with you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:**

## **PSALM 135.**

**Verse 1.** *Praise you the LORD.* Or, “Hallelujah.” “Hallelujah” is the keynote of it. So this is one of the Hallelujah Psalms, for so it begins. And if you look at the end, you will see that so it closes. There is, “Hallelujah,” again. The whole Psalm is shut in at the beginning and at the end with this which is both our duty and our delight! “Praise you the Lord.”

**1.** *Praise you the name of the LORD.* The Character, the work, all that is revealed of God is a subject for praise. And especially that wonderful and incommunicable name, Jehovah—never mention it without praise! “Praise you the name of the Lord.”

**1.** *Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD.* Make it a part of your service. Praise Him because you are His servants. Praise Him because He accepts your service. You ought to be first in sounding His praises, therefore, “Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord.”

**2.** *You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.* You are permitted to dwell near Him. You have a standing and an abode, an office and a work in the courts of the Lord’s house. Therefore take care that you begin the strain. Should not the King’s courtiers praise Him? Praise Him, then, “you that stand in the courts of the house of our God.”

**3.** *Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good.* There is one excellent reason for praising Him and you can never praise Him too much. He is so good that you can never extol Him to an exaggeration.

**3.** *Sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant.* That is, singing God’s praises is pleasant—it is a pleasant duty and the Lord’s name is pleasant, or lovely. The very thought of God brings the sweetest emotions to every renewed heart. There is no pleasure in the world that exceeds that of devotion. As we sing praises unto the Lord, we shake off the cares of the world, we rise above its smoke and mists and we get, then, the clearer atmosphere of communion with Him.

**4.** *For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.* There is something for you who are the Lord’s chosen to sing about—

***“In songs of sublime adoration and praise,  
You pilgrims to Zion who press,  
Break forth and extol the great  
Ancient of Days, His rich and distinguishing Grace.”***

**5.** *For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.* “I know it,” says the writer of the Psalm. “I know it by experience. I know it by observation. I am sure of it. There is no god like our God. He is a great Creator, a great Preserver, a great Redeemer, a great Friend, a great Helper. I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Adonai is above all gods.”

**6.** *Whatever the LORD pleased, that He did in Heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.* The heathen divided out the universe into provinces—they had Jupiter to rule Heaven and earth, and Neptune for the sea, and even today many sing, but, oh, how inaccurately, “Britannia rules the waves.” It is Jehovah and no one else that rules the waves! And

the people on either land or sea! He is Lord everywhere and whatever He pleases to do is done! He is no lackey to wait upon the free will of His creatures—"Whatever Jehovah pleased, that He did."

**7.** *He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth.* That is a very wonderful work! What millions of tons of water are every day turned into vapor and caused to ascend from different regions of the earth to fall, again, in cheerful, refreshing rain! What would we do if this process were suspended? It is the very life-blood of the world.

**7.** *He makes lightning for the rain.* It is said that the Bible was written to teach us religion, not science. That is very true, but the Bible never makes a mistake in its science—and I would rather agree with the old writers who held that the Bible contained all science than go with those who blasphemously pretend to correct the Holy Spirit and to set Him right upon geology and I know not what besides. In the long run, it shall be proven that the old Book beats all the scientists! And when they have made some wonderful discovery, it will turn out that it was all recorded here long before. "He makes lightning for the rain." There is an intimate connection between electricity and the formation of rain—in the East this is very clear, for we are constantly reading in books of travel of heavy downpours of rain almost always accompanied by thunderstorms.

**7.** *He brings the wind out of His treasures.* The wind never comes puffing around us according to some freak of its own, but, "He brings the wind out of His treasures," counting and spending it as men do their money, not suffering more wind to blow than is needed for the high purposes of His wise government. Let praise for this be given to the God of Nature who is ruling over all and always doing as He wills! The Psalmist goes on to show that the God of Nature is also the God of His people.

**8.** *Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.* It was God's own hand that did it. The firstborn of man and beast could not have died by accident all over the land of Egypt at the same hour of the night! Jehovah thus punished the guilty nation. Had they not oppressed His firstborn? Had they not cruelly trampled on His people and refused to listen to His Word? And when the time came for this last and heaviest blow, the Lord did but act in justice to them, and in mercy to His people.

**9.** *Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.* "Tokens and wonders"—not only prodigies which astounded the people, but, "tokens," which taught them, for the plagues were directed against their deities—and large books might be written to show how every plague exposed the impotence of some one or other of the false gods which the Egyptians worshipped! Pharaoh and his servants were all involved in the sin, so they were all included in the punishment. How much better was it to be a servant of Jehovah than to be a servant of Pharaoh!

**10.** *Who smote great nations and slew mighty kings.* Two of them are mentioned, perhaps because they were two of the most powerful kings who blocked the road of Israel.

**11-13.** *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto*

*Israel His people. Your name, O LORD, endures forever.* He is the same Jehovah now as He ever was. Multitudes of people, nowadays, have made unto themselves new gods—they have imagined a new character for Jehovah altogether, and the God of the Old Testament is ignored and slandered. But not by His chosen people—they still cling to Him! The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living! And that is true spiritually as well as naturally. Those who are spiritually dead refuse to acknowledge Him and set up gods that they have imagined—but those who are quickened by His Grace delight in Him and glorify His name. Let this, Beloved, be our joyful song, “Your name, O Lord, endures forever!”

**13, 14.** *And Your memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants.* For they have their dark times and are often in trouble through their sin. Then the Lord sends chastisement upon them, but when it has answered His purpose, He gladly enough withdraws it. How different are the idols of the heathen from our God!

**15.** *The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.* They can do no works, for they are themselves the result of the work of men! Their handiwork can be nothing, for they are the work of men’s hands.

**16-18.** *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is everyone that trusts in them.* The original conveys the idea that those who make such gods grow to be like them—they are continually getting to be more and more like them. They become dumb, blind, deaf, dead as they worship such idols as these.

**19, 20.** *Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: bless the LORD, O house of Levi: you that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.* All of you, whether you are of the house of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi, to whatever house or tribe you belong, bless the Lord! And if you are Gentiles, even though Abraham acknowledges you not, yet, “you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.”

**21.** *Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwells at Jerusalem.* Our inmost hearts would bless Him. We cannot make Him more blessed than He is! We cannot add to His Glory, but, oh, we do wish that everything we can do, everything that can be done to His honor, may be done!

**21.** *Praise you the LORD.* That is, once again, “Hallelujah!” Oh, for the spirit of Divine Grace to set us praising God from the heart—and to keep us at that holy exercise all our days!

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”  
— 219, 147, 231, and the Doxology.**

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

# A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON AND A SUMMONS NO. 787

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For His mercy endures forever.”  
Psalm 136:1.*

THIS 136<sup>th</sup> Psalm was constantly sung in the Temple by appointed singers, among whom the names of Heman and Jeduthun are mentioned. These, we are told in the Book of Chronicles, were chosen to give thanks unto Jehovah, whose “mercy endures forever.” This continued service of song was most fitting, for, if Jehovah’s mercy endures forever, our praise should endure forever! If His goodness never ceases, our thanksgiving should never be silent! It seemed to me most appropriate to direct your attention to this text in the closing Sunday of the year because it is a fit accompaniment to that upon which I addressed you on the *first* Sunday. [*Good Cheer for the New Year*, Sermon #728.]

You will remember that we then spoke of the ever watchful mercy of the Lord our God, from the words, “The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” Having almost reached the close of the year let us acknowledge that the mercy has been equal to the promise—that God has not failed to fulfill his gracious Word, “for His mercy endures forever.” May all your hearts be full of gratitude and the music of your spirits stand in the stead of trumpets and cymbals which of old proclaimed the joy of Israel when they made mention of Jehovah’s name!

**I.** At the outset we shall regard the text as A SONG. So it was originally intended to be used. It was a song for all singers, for it was the refrain of each verse, the chorus to be taken up by the whole assembled multitude. I suppose that the practiced singers commenced thus, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,” and then the entire multitude, whether they were taught in psalmody or not, chanted the chorus, “For His mercy endures forever.” Then would the choir again sweetly sing, “O give thanks unto the God of gods,” and a fresh burst of many voices would reply, “For His mercy endures forever.”

In imitation of that ancient mode of singing, I shall ask the whole assembly to make a chorus with their *hearts* and mentally to bless the Lord whose “mercy endures forever.” Let the young and the old join in the common praise! Let the rich and the poor, the instructed and the ignorant, yes, let the *saved* and the *unsaved* each take a part in the choral music, for the Psalmist so words the Psalm that even the unconverted may claim a share in it! He bids us praise God for common mercies—common as we frequently call them—and yet so priceless that when deprived of them we are ready to perish! He bids us sing concerning the great lights whose radiance is universally enjoyed. He bids us extol the Maker of the sun and the moon, for without the cheerful light of the celestial lamps we should live in perpetual darkness, if, indeed, we lived at all!

Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad in the sunlight. Let us praise Him for the mercies which are new every morning, for the bread we eat, for the raiment which clothes us, for houses which give us shelter. Let us bless Him that we are not deprived of our reason, or stretched upon the bed of sickness. Let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined among the guilty. Let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts. Let us praise Him, in fact, for *everything* which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. “His mercy endures forever.” Every morning’s light proclaims it, the beams of every moon declare it! Every breath of air, every heaving of the lungs, every beating of the pulse are fresh witnesses that “His mercy endures forever.”

But, Beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in the chorus must always be reserved for those who sing of *redeeming* love. A few verses further down the Psalmist writes, “To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born, and brought out Israel from among them with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, for His mercy endures forever.” Yes, God’s redeeming acts towards His chosen are forever the favorite themes of praise. Many of us know what redemption means. Let us not refuse our sonnets of thanksgiving. Glory be to God, we have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged! We have been led to the Cross of Christ—our shackles of guilt have been broken off—we are no longer slaves but children of the living God!

We can look *back* to the source of that redemption in the council chambers of eternity where the plan was first ordained and settled. We can look *forward* to the results of that redemption, and antedate the period when we shall be presented before the Throne of God without wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm branch and wrap

ourselves about with the fair white linen which is to be our everlasting array! And shall we not this day give thanks to the name of the Lord whose redeeming “mercy endures forever”?

Child of God, can you be silent? Shall there be one dumb soul here this morning? Awake, awake, you heritors of Glory, and lead your captivity captive as you cry with David, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” Further on our poet invites the experienced Believer to join in the Psalm. Just as some among us, whose voices are deep, can take the bass parts of the tune, so the educated saint who has been for years in the ways of the Lord can throw a force and a weight into the song which no other can contribute.

We are reminded in the Psalm that the Lord led His people through the wilderness and smote their enemies, “and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever.” You who are men and fathers among us, bless the Lord who has safely led you until this hour. The pillar of cloud, the column of fire you have not seen, and yet you have been conducted as pilgrims in the desert, safe and well. The heavenly manna has been your food and the water from the living Rock has been your drink. Your mightiest foes have been slain with the sword of the Lord. Temptations sharp and strong have not prevailed against you. Trials incessant you have been able to bear.

“Up to now the Lord has helped you.” What is your experience worth if it does not kindle the flames of gratitude? To what end has God manifested all this goodness to you unless you delight yourself in God in the remembrance of it? Remember all the ways by which the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness! Remember how He has hedged you about, and kept off your enemies and given you peace within your soul and fed you with the finest of the wheat! If you are silent you will be most guilty of all the ungrateful ones! Therefore, Believer, take the cymbals, yes, the high-sounding cymbals, and with all your might dance before the ark of the Lord your God, and praise and magnify His holy name!

The peculiar point which is brought out in this chorus is the enduring character of Divine mercy—“His mercy endures forever.” By this I suppose is intended that God’s mercy, as an attribute and as a rule of His action, is continual throughout all ages. He was a merciful God to our first parents. At the fatal portal of Eden when they were first driven forth into the world in judgment, the sweet promise came like the breath of Heaven upon them, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Abraham and Isaac and Jacob received mercy at His hands. Samuel and David and Solomon found Him gracious, and the Prophets and those who loved the Lord in their days knew that He turned not His love from His

people. The multitude understood the abounding mercy of the Most High when healing was given by our Lord on the right hand and on the left.

In Apostolic times the first champions of the faith drank deep at the fountain of God's love, and afterwards our sires, who upheld the banner of the Cross in ages of persecution, trusted in God and bore witness that His mercy endured unto them. It is the same today! God has not quenched the lamp of His goodness—the river of His mercy flows deep and broad as before. I was musing upon this—God's mercy through the ages—and I saw as before my eyes the goodness of God conquering the sin of many all along the ages.

Did you ever stand upon the field of Waterloo and see the golden harvest waving there? So you have seen how the mercy of God has blotted out the cruelty of man. There where man struggled with his fellow and dyed the ground crimson with human gore—Mercy came and covered all with a robe of emerald, covered with fairest flowers, turning Aceldama into Eden! Moreover, Mercy so triumphs over Judgment that before long men look upon the judgments as a noble form of mercy! When our ancient city was consumed by fire and the distressed inhabitants walked among the ashes of all their precious things, the pulpits rang with the cry of the judgment of God.

But what do we say now? Why, that it was a most gracious visitation—destroying pestilence in its lair, and banishing the plague from the land! Thus it is seen that “His mercy endures forever.” If Jehovah shall shake the earth with earthquakes, or dash down the dwellings of men with tornadoes, or make the cruel sea to engulf a navy, the after results teem with blessings to mankind! While the judgment itself vanishes, flowers bloom amid the rifts of the earthquakes, and children play where the hot lava ran from the red lips of the volcano! Mercy still abides, and judgment is but for a little season.

Doubtless, also, the Psalmist meant that mercy continues in its fullness. We make great draughts upon the mercy of God, but we do not *diminish* it. There are fears that we shall one day exhaust those great storehouses in which the earth's best fuel is laid up. This may be probable, and is certainly possible—a few hundred years will make a heavy demand upon our mineral treasures—but quarry as you will in the mines of God's *blessing*, neither you nor your children, nor your children's children shall complain of a deficiency!—

**“Great God, the treasures of Your love  
Are everlasting mines,  
Deep as our helpless miseries are,  
And boundless as our sins.”**

May we not also understand by, “His mercy endures forever,” that the patience of God abounds? Have you ever reflected upon the infinite, long-suffering of God? Consider, for a moment, the sins of men are all before the Lord. You and I can readily put up with offenses which do not touch us in the quick, or actually under our own eye—but the sinner’s sin is perpetrated before the countenance of Jehovah! No word is said behind His back. No blasphemy is uttered in secret to Him—and sin affects God as it does not affect us. We have grown so hardened that the heinousness of iniquity is little discerned by us—we take it as a matter of course.

But God, who is infinitely pure, is, if I may use such an expression, infinitely sensitive in regard to sin. He knows sin to be sin and the heinousness of it, which we do not perceive, is all before His mind continually. And yet His mighty patience reigns over all and bears with men’s iniquities. Remember, too, that these insults against Heaven are constantly repeated. The most patient man at last yields to anger. Constant dripping will wear away a stone. But here is God insulted, as I have said, to His face thousands and thousands of times a *day*, and yet keeps His sword in its scabbard and bids His thunder sleep!

A wish would blast the rebels into everlasting torment, but He wills it not. As the Lord lives He says He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Him and live. To all this you must add the reflection that all the while rebellious sinners are partaking of God’s mercy—the rebel wears God’s gifts of clothes upon His back, and sits at the table of God’s Providence. The breath that is in his nostrils is the gift of Divine charity and yet the wretch uses this breath against his Maker! Can you understand this? Could you bear to be insulted for a single day by one who was receiving all he had from you? Would you not, by-and-by, yes, very speedily, say to him, “Get out of here! If you are my enemy, why should I treat you as I treat my friend?”

Then be it remembered that God is not only sparing the guilty, but is putting ways of mercy before them. Some of you are invited to repent as often as the Sunday dawns! With some of you there are incessant movings upon your conscience—you seldom pass a day without hearing the voice say, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” God is always wooing you to come to Him, inviting you by His mercy and threatening you by His judgments. And yet while His long-suffering should lead you to repentance, you add sin to sin and ripen in your iniquity!

One thing more I would have you remember and I think you will admire the amazing patience of God, namely that He is doing this with millions! Millions! Perhaps a thousand millions at this moment, for I suppose—though no one can ascertain accurately—there are a thousand millions of unregenerate men upon the face of this earth at this very moment—all

enemies of God! They are either worshipping gods of wood and stone or else such spiritual idols as their imaginations have fashioned. And with all these God is compassed about as with bees but He does not destroy them! He still has patience, and still He cries, "Come unto Me! Repent! Believe in My Son and you shall have eternal life." Truly "His mercy endures forever," if you think upon these things.

May not the endurance of Divine Grace be faintly pictured in the following scene? Out yonder, just beyond those grinding rocks, there is a vessel rolling and tossing on the jagged granite, and evidently going to pieces. See you not the mariners clinging to the masts? It is not possible that they should escape except by help from the shore. The rocket apparatus has been used and a rope is fastened to the vessel—and now a cradle is drawn along the rope. What joy! One man is safely landed, but the rope is weak, and it is doubtful whether it will bear the strain. Two at one time are clinging to the rope and the ship is nearly broken up—will the rope bear them?

The wind howls terribly and the waves lash furiously—will the rope hold out? Another is venturing! Ah, see how the rope dips! The waves have gone over him. Will it be able to sustain his weight and save him? Now we never have such anxiety concerning the salvation of souls by Christ Jesus, "for His mercy endures forever." The salvation of God brings every soul to shore that hangs on it, and, when the world is gone to wreck, Free Grace will bring all who trust it to the eternal shore! Should the biggest sinner out of Hell hang upon that rope of mercy, it will bear him up and bring him safely to land!

I would liken God's mercy to a great temple which strong men have sought to overturn with their utmost might. They have labored to overturn the two great pillars where the house leans. The ancient temple of the Philistines stood firm enough till an unexpected hero entered it—Samson felt for the pillars, and finding them, bowed himself with all his might—and the pillars snapped! And down came the house upon the Philistine lords, and Samson himself perished. Many a Samson-like sinner has gone into the temple of God's mercy and bowed with all his might to overturn it—to see if he could not wear out the patience of God and blaspheme himself into swift damnation—and yet these bold and gigantic sinners have never been able to do this! And very frequently these very men have been subdued by Divine Grace and have worshipped Him in the temple which they once sought to destroy. Yes, Philistia's house may bow, but the house of Jehovah stands fast, and "His mercy endures forever."

There is but one reflection to make the subject of the song complete, namely that the potency of God's mercy in delivering His saints is equally immutable. He is always able to deliver His children, so that we may say

in the language of the three holy children, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of the enemies’ hands.” There is no possibility that a child of God should be cast into a difficulty out of which the stretched out arm of Jehovah cannot bring him. He who brought His people of old from the brick kilns of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea and the howling wilderness will surely bring all His elect ones out of all their trials safely to their heavenly rest.

**II.** I now use the text as A SOLACE. We have many troubles and we need comfort. God is willing that we should be comforted, for He says, “Comfort you, comfort you My people.” Moreover, He has provided for it, for He has given us the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter. I shall use the text as a solace as to the *past*. The year is all but gone. Have we not found, up till now, that His mercy has endured forever? If the stories of all could be told who are sitting here, I suppose a great roll of lamentation would need to be written, and around every roll we could bind the silken cord of mercy!

Beloved, whether you will say it or not, I must, as the minister of such a congregation as this—involved in so many cares, with so many labors and so much of anxiety pressing daily upon my soul—I must bless my God that up till now, to me, at any rate, His mercy has endured. It brought me to tears when you were singing just now—

***“He His chosen race did bless  
In the wasteful wilderness.”***

Yes, it is a wasteful wilderness to us—but He has blessed us—He has made it blossom like the rose where we expected nothing but weariness and barrenness. Blessed be God for the past! We will comfort ourselves with recollections of the past because He will not change in His dealings. He that has helped us thus far will not forsake us. “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.”

But the chief solace about the past lies in this—every right-minded Christian at the close of the year looks back upon his sins of omission and sins of commission. I shall not invite you to any lengthy confessions this morning, but which of us would not blush scarlet if his sins could be known? Beloved, acknowledge them now into the ear of your God and then remember that mercy covers all. Whatever it may have been, mercy covers all, and, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

I am no more a sinner than I was at the end of last year, and yet I have committed thousands of sins. There is no more in God’s book against me than there was then—there was *nothing* then, blessed be His name!—for the blood had cancelled all. There is nothing *now*, for the same atoning sacrifice has taken all my sin away. Come to the Cross, my Brothers and

Sisters! Come to the Cross again, and as you look up to the wounds of Jesus which bled for you, believe that “His mercy endures forever.” Your sins, however innumerable, are cast behind His back, yes, thrown into the depths of the sea.

Our text is also a very sweet consolation as to the *present*. Have we, at this moment, a sense of present sin? Then, “His mercy endures forever.” Our Lord comes to us, in the language of this text, girt with the towel and bearing the ewer, and the basin, and washes our feet yet again. From the accumulated dust of a year’s journey He cleanses us! May you have no consciousness of sin, but on the contrary, a consciousness of *reconciliation* in the Beloved. But perhaps you have on your mind some spiritual disability. Perhaps you have been so disquieted at home that you cannot concentrate your thoughts, and however the preacher may try to bring you to the point, your mind is so disturbed that you cannot appreciate it.

There is a fog in your soul as well as in the streets. Beloved, thank God our acceptance is not injured by our depressed state of mind! Whether we are depressed or exalted, whether we are enjoying communion or not, we still stand in the Beloved all fair and glorious in the sight of Him whose mercy endures forever! Possibly you have come here today and brought with you too much of yesterday’s troubles. These ought not to come into the Sunday, for this is a day of rest. Still you cannot help it—you are beset with such daily anxiety that while sitting here you have been mentally looking into your ledger, or nursing the sick child. Your mind has been in the fields of vanity when it should have been on the mountain with God. Drive out your cares by remembering that “His mercy endures forever!”—

**“Come, make your needs, your burdens known!  
He will present them at the Throne,  
And angel bands are waiting there,  
His messages of love to bear.”**

You cannot be in such a difficulty that He cannot sustain you in it, or bear you out of it. “His mercy endures forever.”

As to the *future*. Ah, we are poor fools when we begin to deal with the future! It is a sea which we are not called upon to navigate. The *present* is the whole of life, for when we enter into the future it *is* the present! Yet, standing here this morning, I can conceive some who feel infirmities creeping over them, trembling with the foreboding, “What shall I do when I come to extreme old age? My friends are gone. I have none who are likely to maintain me. When these fingers cannot perform their daily work. When my brow is wrinkled and I can scarcely totter to my toil, what shall I do?” Ah, “His mercy endures forever.”

It does not stop at 70, nor pause at 80—it will bear you safely over 90—if your pilgrimage is so far prolonged. When I looked the other day upon a

number of poor old men and women in the wards of the workhouse, some of whom had not risen from their beds at all for *years*, I thought to myself it was far better to die than so to live. And yet, if they had a good hope, I was mistaken, for if Christ should make that bed to become soft as downy pillows with His Presence, there might be a Glory in the workhouse, and a Heaven in the midst of poverty and they would there learn as well as anywhere, that “His mercy endures forever!” “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” Therefore trust in the Lord, and be not afraid, you whose days of weakness are coming, for He will not fail you nor forsake you.

We are sometimes alarmed at the prospect of the storms of life. They are not few. In the past they have been many—we may expect more. He who reckons upon smooth weather between this and the Fair Haven, reckons without his head! But, Beloved, come what tempest there may, “His mercy endures forever.” There must have been some trepidation on board that mail steamer a few weeks ago when the tornado was thundering over the West Indies. The captain very wisely put on all steam and faced the wind—but with what anxiety must they have asked the question—“Will she have force enough to face such a mighty whirlwind? Can the engines keep up speed enough to battle with the hurricane?”

The engines groaned and every timber creaked as the good ship steamed right into the teeth of the tempest, sailing, as it were, between the very jaws of death and into the throat of the grave. Surely they whispered to one another, “Will she brave it out? She seems but a mere cockleshell in the midst of these huge Atlantic waves! Will she be carried on the reef and dashed to pieces as hundreds of others have been, or will she conquer the furious blast?” When the good vessel kept her head to the wind and pierced the waves, holding her own against such odds, there must have been great joy on board! You and I are in a nobler vessel! With her head to the tempest Jehovah steers her! And we shall not only outlive the storm, but sail into port with all our colors flying to the praise and glory of His name whose “mercy endures forever!”

Looking forward to the future, there are some who say, “We are most of all alarmed because of far travels which we are expecting.” Out of this congregation a considerable number emigrate from year to year, called to a distance from friends and kinsfolk. Should that be your case, dear Friend, is it not a comfort to think that God’s mercy endures forever? Two friends agree never to go farther apart than they can communicate with one another by telegraph. One of them has crossed the Atlantic, and resides in the United States or in the far west, but still he has only to go to

the office where a wire can be touched and a message will flash to his friend in England and tell him his needs.

This is just the compact God has made with His people! They shall never go where there is not a telegraphic communication between them and Himself. You may be out at sea, or in Australia, but the communication of prayer is always open between your soul and God! And if you are commanded to ride on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, or if for awhile you have to make your bed in the abyss—if you are His child, still will you be able to reach His heart! Neither distance, nor time, nor eternity itself, shall divide an heir of Heaven from the mercy of God which endures forever!

I think I hear one say, “I am not looking forward to that, for I have no doubt I shall lay my bones among my brethren. But I have lost many friends and others are pining with consumption, and are likely to be taken from me.” This is a grief which occurs more often to us as we grow older. The young man may look upon his wife and children and see his father, and mother, and friends about him—but as sure as we are men, either we must go from them or they from us—for no unbroken families can long remain on earth. And the less of death we have had the more is yet to come. We are those who have not drunk the cup, but we must and will drink it even to the dregs. What a comfort to know that we sorrow not as they that are without hope! If we lose our friends and dear ones in the Lord, we part to meet, and we meet to part no more. If they die—if our best beloved ones depart—yet “the Lord’s mercy endures forever.”

And this year some of us *will* die. As I look around here I feel that truth most solemnly. The young *may* die. The old *must*. Some of us must tread the dark valley this year. It may be the preacher—there are many more unlikely things. It may be you—you young people. It may be any of us. Do we know the mercy of God? Then God forbid we should lift our little finger to have it otherwise, for His mercy will endure when the death dews lie cold on our brow! We shall find that last day to be no more dreadful than the ordinary days of life. Yes, we shall perhaps be favored with such visions of angels and such sights of the better land that we shall be *glad* for evening, to undress that we may rest with God!

**III.** I wish we had time to use the text more fully in that light, but we have not. Therefore, I shall come, now, in the third place, and with much brevity, to use the text as A SERMON—a sermon with three heads.

**1.** “His mercy endures forever.” Then, in the first place, let *our* mercy endure. Have you, during this year, or at any time previously, offended another or been offended so that there is any ill-will in your mind between you and anyone? Then may I entreat you, as this is a most fitting day, at the close of the year, to end it at once! Even if we feel we have been

grossly ill-treated, grossly insulted, yet now let the token of reconciliation be given by every one of us. Remember, you Christians *must* do it or you are *not* Christians. You are nothing better than deceitful hypocrites if you harbor in your minds a single unforgiving thought.

There are some sins which may be in the heart, and yet you may be saved—but you cannot be saved unless you are forgiving. “If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Those are Christ’s own words. If we do not choose to forgive, we choose to be damned! Now, there is a good deal of lying about this. People will say, “Yes, I will *forgive* it, but I cannot *forget* it.” You mean you do *not forgive* it! Everything like enmity must be renounced if you would be saved.

When Mr. Wesley was going out to America with General Ogilvie, he heard a great storming and raging going on in the cabin. It was the general scolding his servant. He said, “I had so many bottles of Cypress wine put on board for me—the only wine I am allowed to drink—and that villain has drunk it all himself. I have put him in irons, and I am going to send him on board a man-of-war to be flogged, for I never forgive.” “Well,” said Mr. Wesley, “I hope you never sin.” The inference was so irresistible that the general said, “Here, Sir, take my keys. I forgive you this time.” If we would be forgiven, let us forgive.

**2.** The second head of the sermon is this—if God’s mercy endures forever, then let us learn the duty of hoping for everybody. You have no right to say of the poor fallen girl in the street, “Oh, it is no use looking after those outcasts, they always turn out badly before long.” God’s mercy endures forever! If *you* had any of it, you would not talk so! You have no right to say of the drunken man who has been reclaimed three or four times, but has gone back, “It is no use trying any more with him.” Brothers and Sisters, “His mercy endures forever.” Would you be more severe than your Maker? He bears with sinners—surely we may!

Especially this ought to be so with our relatives and children. A mother’s love must never burn out, and a father’s patience never expire. Hope for the most hopeless. Till they are in Hell pray for them. Till they are in their graves, hope for them. Till they die, labor to bring them to Christ. God’s mercy endures forever—let our tenderness endure.

**3.** And, in the third place, if God’s mercy endures forever, then see the duty of hoping for *yourself*. If you have been ever so guilty, do not say, “There is no hope.” “His mercy endures forever.” Away with that whisper of Satan, “Too late.” It is NOT too late. So long as you desire Christ, it is not too late for Him to receive you. It *will*, one day, be too late, when life is over. Then will you hear those words, “Too late! You cannot enter now!” But it is not too late for repentance and faith to be accepted. *Despair* is

*sin*—hope is the duty of man with regard to God. I pray you cast not yourself away. Till God has cast you into Hell, have hope, and come to Christ.

**IV.** I cannot say more upon the sermon, time is gone. The last head is A SUMMONS: “His mercy endures forever.” Is not that a most loving and tender summons to the wandering child to return to his Father? To the backsliding professor to approach his God? To the chief of sinners to humble himself before the Mercy Seat? There is mercy—seek it! There is mercy in Jesus—believe in Him! Bunyan tells us that Prince Emmanuel hung out the white flag upon Mount Gracious. It is still there! Surrender, Man! Surrender today, and fight no more against yourself and your eternal interests. Behold the white flag! You have but to trust your Lord, and leave your sin, and He will be merciful to you.

When that man of God, Mr. Andrew Fuller, was once preaching in Scotland, the place was very crowded and numbers were outside. A woman, the worst woman in the town, seeing the crowd, thought she would push into the Kirk to listen to the English minister. He was preaching from the text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” “Ah,” said she, “I have gone far, but I have not gone over the ends of the earth, at any rate, and if God says, ‘Look, and be saved, all the ends of the earth,’ He must mean me.” She did look, and became afterwards an honorable woman in that parish, converted by the Grace of God!

On this last Sunday morning in the year, I solemnly present those same words as fresh from God’s lips to every unconverted person here, “Look unto Christ, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” May God bring you to obey that gentle summons to come to your heavenly Father and live!

Believers, the summons is also meant for you. It says this, “His mercy endures forever,” therefore let your love to souls continue! Let your labor for conversions abide! Let your generosity to God’s cause abound! Let your endeavors to extend the kingdom of Christ endure evermore! At this season, let me say, enlarge your exertions! If you have done much, do more! If you have done little, be ashamed and begin afresh!

If God’s mercy continue forever, do not let us talk about resting and taking things easy! No, time is very precious, every hour has six wings, like a cherub, and flies like the lightning’s flash. Let us live and work while we may, “for the night comes when no man can work.”

## END VOLUME 13

# SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL NO. 1285

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

***“To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.”  
Psalm 136:17-22.***

THESE six verses iterate and reiterate the same fact. They rehearse and repeat the same reflection. Is the tautology tedious? Do the chimes weary you with their monotony? No. And this is a veritable charm in poetry. When the poet touches upon some important theme which illuminates his soul and kindles his nobler passions to a flame, he is very apt to dwell upon it with enthusiasm, inclined to pursue it with eagerness, to follow it up with feeling and echo it over and over again with strong and yet stronger emotion. Nobody feels that repetition is out of place in poetry, because in weal or woe, with pleasure or with pathos, we dwell on the theme which awakens our sympathy.

This Psalm, of which the refrain is always the same—“His mercy endures forever,” has in it several instances of this repetition. “To Him that made great lights,” is followed by, “The sun to rule by day,” and by the next, “The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.” The repetition is natural and secures attention. The words are musical as they strike on our ears and the style is not only allowable, but acceptable as a beautiful license of the poetic school. For my part, I like a repetition in the tune of a Psalm as well as in its language. There has sprung up a fashion in music, now, to quibble at repeats. I must confess, I do not feel of the same mind as some who, when the Psalm or hymn is given out, seem to say, “Now, let us go through it as quickly as ever we can, from beginning to end.”

I prefer to chew some of the words—to have them come over again—to get the flavor of them in my mouth, or rather, in my soul. For instance, an old tune like the one we have sung is none the worse because it gives us the repeat of “His loving kindness.” Such a word as that you would like to keep on repeating, if it were necessary, a dozen times—

***“His loving kindness,  
His loving kindness,  
Oh, how good!”***

A repeat ought to be considered a beauty rather than a blemish in music. There is, moreover, a reason for every repetition in Scripture, for we may say of the ornaments of poetry, when we find them in the sacred Volume, that they are never mere ornaments. The repetitions, though elegant, are not merely flowers of rhetoric—they have a design. The Holy Spirit dwells upon a theme because He has an intention in doing so.

My present purpose is to endeavor to show you why there should be six verses here when one verse might have sufficed. It is clear one might have been quite sufficient. Suppose it had run thus—"Who slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, and gave their land for a heritage to His people: for His mercy endures forever." That would have comprehended all the sense, but the Holy Spirit did not judge that to be the best way of speaking, and so He divided it into six parts. He repeated it that there might be heard six times the refrain—"His mercy endures forever." Not, I think, merely for the sake of repeating that beautiful Truth of God so often, but for other reasons connected with the Truth of which He was writing. It is well to dwell long and to dwell deliberately, upon some of God's dealings with us. This is the theme on which I want to thread a few ideas.

I. And, first, IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS. One does not always see *mercy* in, He "slew mighty kings: for His mercy endures forever: and smote famous kings: for His mercy endures forever." It would have read more naturally if He had said, "Who smote mighty kings: for His *justice* endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His *vengeance* endures forever." The point to be brought out, however, was that there was *mercy* in these judgments. The Holy Spirit would have us know that there is mercy abroad in the world even—

***"When God's right arm is bared for war,  
And thunder clothes His mighty bar."***

The removal from the earth of these great oppressive kings, though it was terrible for *them*, was a great blessing! When tyrants die, nations have time to breathe. When great oppressors are cut off, it is as when a lion falls, or as when wolves are slain and the deer and sheep have time to rest. Who knows how often, in answer to the tear of the slave, God has been pleased to smite his tyrant master? Mercy, herself, had brushed the tear from her eye, and said, "Smite, O God!" Sometimes when we have read stories of oppression and tyranny, wrong and violence, the gentlest among us, who would not have hurt a hair of a man's head, have been the very first to express indignation and to marvel that God kept back the thunderbolt—that He did not pour vengeance on the adversary and deliver the injured and down-trodden.

If you read all through history and see how dynasties have crumbled and empires have melted away—could you but discern the secret history of the nations and how much there was of robbery and oppression, injustice and cruelty—you would understand that when emperor after emperor was slain in battle, or overtaken by sudden death, and king after king was swept from the throne, it was because God's mercy endures forever! It was not mercy to the one man, perhaps—to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or the like—but was it not mercy to the millions who had grown weary of their abominable rule? The sufferings of the helpless cried to God for redress. The moans and tears of serfs, vassals, prisoners and captives presented their wretchedness before Him—till His mercy linked hands with His wrath and He slew great and famous kings because His mercy endures forever!

Read the pages of history, I say, with this sentiment in your mind, and you will often judge that what seemed to be a very severe retribution upon some man of eminence may turn out, after all, only to have been an act of mercy towards those who were under his power. Apply the thought another way. There are huge systems of power in the world and such there always have been—systems like Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose force and fame have held vast hordes and populations in terror. And the defenses of these systems have been strong as the walled cities of Og, king of Bashan. But since the day when Christ came into the world and gathered His 12 Apostles around Him, how many of these systems have been utterly destroyed?

Ask, at this moment, where are the gods that were worshipped when Paul entered Athens and preached Jesus and the Resurrection? Where are all the gods that held sway over Greece and Rome when Peter and the rest of the fishermen were telling of our Lord Jesus Christ and the propitiation that He made for sin? They have passed away and they are not! And, since then, there have risen up great systems and schools of thought—in which human wisdom has opposed the Divine wisdom. Strong and mighty systems they have been, but the student of history knows how they have all passed away, one after the other.

And in our own land there has passed away—I pray God never to return—the system of Popery more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan! And now their ruined abbeys are scattered all over the land—ruins which make our souls rejoice as we look upon them, for we say, “Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth.” And here is another instance of how He can put His foes to flight. At this day there are other systems still standing, crushing down the people, darkening the night of Nature with a denser darkness of superstition—turning a midnight of human depravity into a darkness that might be felt as in the plague of Egypt of old.

But, as the Lord lives, as He has scattered falsehoods one after the other, so will He scatter all these systems! And the day shall come when we shall say, “Mohammed’s crescent is forgotten now, for His mercy endures forever; and the pomp of anti-Christ has passed away and all his ‘infallibility’; for the mercy of the Lord endures forever.” One great error after another is brought down by the strong hand of the God of Jacob, for His mercy endures forever! And though, in each case, these things seem like judgments upon the people, yet are they judgments full of mercy, for it is a blessing when God smites any system which is contrary to Himself and to His Truth, contrary to His Son, contrary to the liberties and the rights of man and, above all, contrary to the Gospel life and the holy purity of the Church.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, there are other judgments yet to come—judgments which we, surely, are to look forward to with great hope as instances of the mercy of God. The day is coming when he who is more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, shall be cast out. Christ, by His death, has broken the power of Satan, but Satan still holds sway, to a great extent, over the sons of men. As the Gospel spreads, his power shall lessen and, by-and-by, there shall come the time when he shall be cast

into the Lake of Fire and his power shall cease. It will be a judgment upon him. But what an illustration it will be of how God's mercy endures forever! Then shall Satan lift "his brazen front with thunder scarred," receive his sentence and begin anew his Hell—and in that day the saints shall sing, "His mercy endures forever!"

And death, too, that terrible thing, that, also, is to be destroyed. It is the last enemy, but it is the last enemy *that shall be destroyed*. And when death, itself, shall cease to be, and the sepulcher shall be rifled of all its treasures, then shall we magnify and bless the Lord as Israel did when they thought of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever! And when that last tremendous act of vengeance shall come and death and Hell shall be cast into the Lake of Fire and all the hosts of evil—even all that have done iniquity and have rejected Christ, shall be cast out forever from all hope and joy—in that dread day, while it shall be, to them, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it shall be to the righteous, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For God and goodness, the right and the Christ have triumphed forever."

Yes, even in the condemnation of the lost, it shall be a token of mercy to the universe that sin was not permitted to triumph, that evil was not allowed to have its sway, but that God overcame it at a mighty cost and, at last, shut it up within its proper bound, never to break forth again, for, "His mercy endures forever." We know not, Brethren, what may happen to ourselves, but we know what *has* happened and, in the light of the Truth of God I am now dwelling upon, we may now sing unto the Lord a new song! We have had our smiting and we have had our slayings. We have had sins within us slain that were mighty kings and we have had corruptions that were famous kings, but they have been brought down!

We have had our idols broken and judgments have come upon our inventions. Oh, what a smashing of idols there has been with many a heart here present! How have you stood with tears in your eyes as your Dagon was made to fall before the ark of the Lord! You tried to set it in its place again, but you could not, for the Lord broke it to pieces—and He has taken away the gods in which you trusted and the things that your heart doted upon. The delight of your eyes and the joy of your spirit—He has taken these away, one by one—mighty kings that swayed you and famous kings that ruled your heart and mind and engaged the best of your affections. These have been slain because His mercy endures forever and, for my part, I would say, "O sword of the Lord, rest not! Return not to your scabbard if you are slaying my sin, if you are overcoming my corruptions! Go through me, Lord, and smite again, and if You break up the idols, break on!"—

***"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne  
And worship only Thee."***

Still would I say of every act of idol-breaking and of king-slaying within my soul, "His mercy endures forever, His mercy endures forever." Therefore these blows, therefore these trials, therefore these afflictions—they are sent, not in anger, but in His dear Covenant love—not to harm us, but to bless us. They are sent, not to impoverish us, but to make our inheri-

tance wider and larger both here and in the world to come. This is our first thought. In the midst of judgments we should wait and watch till we see the mercy side of them, for then we shall sing, "Who smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever."

**II.** Secondly, EACH MERCY DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. With what special point and emphasis each instance is put, "Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever." Why not give them in the gross—Sihon and Og? Why not, as we commonly and vulgarly say, lump them together and thank God for them in the mass? No, no! They must come in detail—"Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever."

Why should they thus come in detail? Because *every mercy we have received is undeserved*. The Israelites did not deserve that God should smite Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. It was a mercy so rich and gracious that it deserved to be recorded! In that very chapter, from which I read to you just now, where God smote Sihon, you will find that the children of Israel murmured, so that God sent fiery serpents among them. In that same chapter we have the record of His chastening them with fiery serpents and yet He is giving them victory over their foes! Oh, it brings tears into our eyes and fills us with humiliation when we remember that many of our choicest mercies have come to us just after our very blackest sins!

It is not that the Lord gives us His mercy when we are walking consistently—when we are obedient, when we are what we ought to be. There would be great Grace in that, but the crowning mercy is that when we have gone out of the way—when we have gone down By-Path Meadow, when, like Peter, we have denied our Master—yet still some great mercy has been given to set us right again! Sihon, king of the Amorites, just when we had provoked the Lord, has come down upon us to destroy us. But the Lord has said, "No, I will smite My children, but I will not let *you* smite them. I will chasten them and send fiery serpents, but, Sihon, you must not touch them. Get back! If you dare lay a finger upon them, My jealousy shall burn and smoke against you, for they are My children and I will deliver them in the day of their afflictions." Oh, bless the Lord for each mercy because it has been so undeserved!

Nor have we received a mercy *that we could have dispensed with*. Had God smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then when Og came against them had said, "I have done enough for you and I will do no more," the nation would have been destroyed! No, Sihon, king of the Amorites, is no more. Bless the Lord for that. Yet if the Lord does not smite Og, king of Bashan, what will become of Israel? Thus each mercy is *needed*—why, then, should not each mercy have a separate song? When you are in present trouble, you think much of the present mercy.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, when you have got through the trouble, why not think a great deal of the mercy afterwards? Then as it comes, a brand new mercy in a fresh dilemma, the more you need it, the more store you set by it. Why not set the same store by these mercies after you have

received them and commemorate, in particular, the benefits which flow out of *each*? Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan shall be sung of, each one separately, because neither victory could be dispensed with. They were both necessary that Israel might enter into the promised land.

Moreover, there was *a peculiarity about each mercy*. This was sure to be the case. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. There were some special circumstances which made a marked difference. Pluck the leaves from a tree—commonly speaking, they are alike, yet there are no two leaves veined exactly in the same manner. So, too, with mercies. There is some distinction if you look narrowly into them. Generally, when we are in deep waters, there is some peculiar feature to distinguish the trial and to identify it afterwards. I know that Monday's mercy will not do for Tuesday and I should be sorry if I had nothing but Tuesday's mercy to help me through Wednesday. His mercies "are new every morning: great is His faithfulness."

Now, since they are all new, and each one separate, why could not each one be spoken of by itself? As God paints so many fresh pictures, why should we not set them in appropriate frames, saying of each one, "His mercy endures forever"? There is a specialty about each. Sihon is not Og and Og is not Sihon. Well may my text assign to each one its place in the song of praise! But if any mercy deserves to be rehearsed more distinctly than another, it is *early* mercy. The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They had not crossed the Jordan. They had not entered Canaan where they were to be soldiers everyday.

They were on this side of the Jordan and they had not learned war. They offered to Sihon and to Og to go quietly through their land and not so much as pluck a fruit from their trees, or drink a drop of water from their wells. But Sihon and Og were in an ill state of mind and they would not allow them to go peaceably through. There was a battle—the first of their battles—the commencement of their warfare and so they always looked back with happy and grateful memories to their first fights and their first victories. No doubt they remembered all about Adonibezek and about the king of Ai and all those other kings. But these were later—their first fights were with Sihon and Og.

Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I should like you to recall your first troubles—your first labors for Christ, your first trials and your first successes! You remember the first soul that you brought to Jesus—you cannot forget the little room where you began to work. You remember the half-dozen girls that you collected for the first time to form a class—those two or three boys that you got into that little room down in the back slum. Now, remember your Sihon, king of the Amorites and your Og, king of Bashan and how God helped you over those beginnings! It was a great thing, you know, for you were not so big, then, as you are now.

You begin to think (I am only saying out loud what your heart whispers to you)—you begin to think that you can do it. Why, you are a man of experience, are you not? And you, young man, why, you are a well developed minister now! You can do a great deal. We too often feel as if our experience had matured us into something far more important than we dreamed

of in the first stage of our little career. It is a wicked feeling, but the vanity of our hearts will sometimes assert itself. Let us revert to the time when we were little in Israel and all unknown! Some of us were, perhaps, quite boys and girls, though we truly loved our Lord. We were weak and feeble. Nobody thought there was anything in us, or, if they did, we ourselves did not think so.

We were all trembling and afraid. But, glory be to God, we overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and our early victories are fresh in our memories! Let us recall them, partly to humble us and partly to strengthen us. Let us, like David, say, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The Lord who helped those young days will not forsake you now. Only trust Him with the same simplicity. Only *distrust yourself* as much as you did, then, and a little more. Only sink into the very dust of self-abasement and rise in all the grandeur of childlike confidence in God—and as He smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, so will He make all your foes as driven stubble before your face.

He will make you as a new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth and you shall thresh the mountains and make them as chaff. Thus each mercy deserves to be specially remembered, for not one is deserved, not one is needless and every one has its peculiarity—but especially the early ones—they have a never-to-be-forgotten specialty.

**III.** Thirdly, EACH MERCY DOES REALLY, IN ITSELF, DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION. I will show you exactly why I think so. I go to visit a sick person. He has been in trouble. Let me suppose it is yourself who makes the visit, for I dare say you have done the same thing. Very soon after you enter you get an account of the trouble in pretty full details and then you have all the special circumstances related to you. "You see, my dear Sir, I should not have felt the loss of this dear child so much, only it is the second or the third I have lost. And then, you see, Sir, she was such a sweet girl." Or, "It was that dear boy upon whom I had set all my hopes."

These little points are always mentioned as occasions of special grief or aggravations of a heavy sorrow. "My dear husband is taken away," says the disconsolate widow. And, unwilling to mingle her tears indiscriminately with other weepers in like afflictions, she adds, "Ah, Sir, but in my widowhood there are pangs peculiarly bitter. Just after he had been toiling and struggling, with the tide against him, and we were beginning to get on more smoothly, he was taken away with a sudden stroke or a slow consumption before there was a proper provision made for these dear children. When they seemed to need a father's care and tenderness, it was then, just then, he was smitten, and I am left with a heart withered like grass."

Then you meet another who has lost money and you hear of the failure that is likely to come on. And then there are certain details about the loss—about the person that was trusted—certain circumstances about the cruel manner in which he acted and the shameful way in which he betrayed confidences. You hear all that. Oh, I know all about it! I have heard it and, moreover, when I have got some trouble of my own, I think I gener-

ally find myself turning it inside out, like a child does a new dress, saying, "Look here," and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the right way up, the wrong side up and the wrong side out and all ways! You always do that, do you not, with all your troubles?

Now then, dear Friends, ought you not to do the same with all your *mercies*? Do you not think so? If the Lord gave you nothing but troubles, then, I think, there might be some justification in dwelling so much upon them. But since there are so many mercies, would not it be wisdom to tell your friends, sometimes, all about those mercies with a sparkling eye and say, "They were manifold mercies. There was fold upon fold. See the goodness of the Lord in this thing. He sent that mercy just when I needed it—just when I most required it—and it came to me in such a beautiful way, too, and it was delivered to me by the very person that made it most acceptable. The way in which the gift was bestowed so sweetened it that I do not know how to praise the Lord enough for it."

Oh, if only I heard Christians often saying one to another, "Have you heard what the Lord has done for me? Sit down a little while and let me fill your ears with the sweet tale of His loving kindnesses and His tender mercies." Is not this justice? Bare justice? If you will harp on your sorrows, you should, in a better sense, harp on your joys and bring out the best harp with all its ten strings—and touch all those strings with praise to Him who has done so much for you! Tell the world not only that He overcame your foes, but say, "To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever."

"We might tire people," says one. I am glad you are a little sensitive on that point, because you have been rather *inconsiderate*, sometimes, when you have been talking about your *troubles*. And I think you might be excused if you were to weary us occasionally by declaring your mercies! Oh, but the ears of saints are not tired with such themes as this! On the contrary, they are gladdened and made to rejoice. "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul!" I am sure the response of all God's people will be—"Let us hear it! Tell it to us, for we will rejoice with you and magnify the name of the Most High."

**IV.** Fourthly, CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY. For God to slay Sihon, king of the Amorites, may hardly prove, by itself, that His mercy endures *forever*, though it does prove that He had mercy *then*. Therefore the inspired poet wisely strikes that string and before the note has died away upon the listening ear, He touches another. "Og king of Bashan," says He, "for His mercy endures forever." One, two, three, four, five, six succeeding stanzas—these mercies come quickly, one after the other, and so they show the continuance of the mercy, while the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity gives sanction to the chorus, "His mercy endures forever!"

Thus, dear Brethren, were we in the habit of dwelling distinctly upon God's distinct mercies, do you not think we should have in our souls a firmer faith as to the endurance, the continuity, the everlastingness of the mercy of God? Oh, what the Lord did for us when we were babes in Grace!

When we think of what He did then, we say, "His mercy endures forever." Then consider what He did for us when we were young men in Christ Jesus! "His mercy endures forever." Think of what He has done for us after we have grown to be fathers! "His mercy endures forever." And O you gray heads, tell of what the Lord has done for you, for when you put all four ages together you can say with peculiar emphasis, "His mercy endures forever."

I wish I had a memory strong enough to remember all the mercies of God to me in the past year. They have been very many, very great, and taken one by one, they have been very sweet. As I look at them, one after the other, the evidence seems to accumulate till the argument becomes conclusive that "His mercy endures forever." It has endured all through the year! It was connected with all the years that went before! It is gathering fresh force in the year that is current! Therefore I may trust for the years that are yet to come that He who was yesterday so full of mercy and is, today, so full of Grace, will be forever the same!

Do you not see that the striking of these bells, one by one—the bringing out of each mercy in its distinctness, one after the other—goes to illustrate the precious and ever-blessed Truth of God that His mercy endures forever? Let our hearts look forward with the calm confidence which must come to a soul that lives by faith and sings without fear—

***"For His mercies shall endure  
Ever faithful—ever sure."***

**V.** Fifthly, THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT. Read the verses—"And gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant, for His mercy endures forever." The Israelites did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og. Their land was on the *other* side of the Jordan, but since Sihon and Og assailed them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory.

You and I have had, and we do have, unexpected trials. In looking back, we have suffered many trials which we did not anticipate, from unlikely quarters—from persons who ought to have been our friends, our helpers, our comforters. The result has shown that we have had unexpected *advantages*—our perils have proved pioneers of our progress. I want you to remember this, that you may sing the more sincerely, "His mercy endures forever."

How many sins and how much unsuspected treachery of heart have we been led to discover through our troubles? Those vipers would have slept in our soul quietly—they would have bred disease there of the deadliest kind. But trouble came and we were put in such a state of trembling that we began to search. And as we searched we found the deadliest evil and we put it away. How many a vice has been discovered to us in the hour of trial? Whenever I hear of a Brother who thinks his corruptions are dead, I feel inclined to say, "Put him half-an-hour in the furnace and if he does not hear the dogs bark inside his soul, I am mistaken."

There they are, sure enough. Depend upon that. As a general rule, he is possessed of most devils who thinks he has the fewest imperfections. Only let us get into trouble—be thrown into the sieve—and let the devil give us an extra shake or two, and there is enough of chaff or dust in us all to

blind our eyes, or to fill them with tears when our Lord sends us repentance. This trouble must come and we must be thankful for the trouble since it winnows the wheat and makes us clean before the living God. Besides helping to cleanse us, how many times has trouble helped to instruct us? You may read the book all through, young man, and you may think that you know all about it, but your grandfather knows the meaning of texts that you cannot read yet.

“Oh,” you say, “I have been studying the commentators. I have been looking into them for the meaning of the passages.” Yes, but there is another way of reading the commentators and it comes from *experience*. Experience is the grand way of getting texts written upon your heart. There are many texts that cannot be brought home to your own heart yet. A text of that sort must be brought home to you when you are in such a position as to need its application—it cannot be understood until then. You may have learned all about anchors, Sir, but you never know the value of a sheet anchor till you have gotten into a storm.

You may read and hear, on shore, all about a tempest and you may have met with beautiful descriptions of it and think you know how it tosses the ship about. But I will guarantee you that a good heave or two will let you know more about sea-sickness and the effects of those mighty tempests that rouse the billows and rock the vessels than all the books you have ever read for sound instruction or seasonable entertainment! And how much has the Character of God been revealed to us in trouble? We do not know our friends till we fall into adversity! Neither is that, “Friend who sticks closer than a brother,” truly prized by us till we are brought into trouble. Then we know His power to sympathize and to succor. Trials help to strengthen us.

It is impossible for a Christian to be very strong—in certain ways, at any rate—unless he grapples with difficulties and endure hardships. There is no proving your courage and prowess in war unless you smell gunpowder and are exposed to the dread artillery. There is no learning to be strong in the battle unless you pass through trouble, depend upon it. My arm would soon weary if I had to lift the blacksmith’s hammer for an hour or two and make horseshoes. I am afraid I should soon give up the business. But the blacksmith’s arm does not ache, for he has been at it so many years and he rings out a tune on the anvil so joyfully does his strong arm do the work. Practice has strengthened him.

And so, when we have become used to trial and trouble, faith is to us a far more simple matter than it was before. Then we become “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” What shall we say, then? Thanks to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for teaching us war? No, but we will thank the Lord who has given “their land to be a heritage, even a heritage for Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.”

**VI.** Lastly, THE HAPPENING OF ALL THIS TO THE SAME PERSONS IS A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION THAT HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER. These six verses tell of great things done for *Israel*, all for Israel. That last verse is very sweet to me—“Even a heritage unto Israel His servant.” What are the kings slain for? For Israel. What does Sihon die for? For Israel.

Why does Og fall? For Israel. For whom is the heritage? For Israel. And who is Israel and what has Israel done to have all this?

What have they done? Brothers and Sisters, it is a sad but gracious story. Israel! Israel! Why, that is the nation that made the golden calf and said, "These are your gods, O Israel." Israel! Why, these are the people who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt have You brought us into this wilderness to destroy us?" Israel! Why, these are the people that took the daughters of Moab and committed lewdness with them. Israel! Why, these are the people who provoked the Lord, so that He said to His servant, Moses, "Let Me alone! Let Me alone, that I may destroy them," for they provoked the Lord to jealousy. Israel! Why, these are the people of whom God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. Yet it is the same nation! Their children have followed them! It is Israel, still, and God has done all this for Israel.

Now, while you are thinking about Israel, just begin to think about yourselves. For whom has God done all this—turned judgment into mercy, fought great battles on their behalf and given them a great inheritance of mercy and loving kindness and favor? Who is it for? Well, I will not mention anybody's name, but I will mention my own to myself, and as I mention it, I think—

***"O Grace, it is Your known love  
Into unlikeliest hearts to come."***

How amazing that You should do all this for such an one as I am.

Brother, Sister, I can better understand God's mercy to you than I can His mercy to me! I know one who has, in distress, sometimes doubted the loving kindness of the Lord. I know one who has been proud, envious and worldly. I know one whose heart has been cold, dead, callous, careless—when it ought to have been tender and full of pity and full of love. I know one that is all imperfections, all faults. He seems, to himself, to grow worse, instead of better, everyday—at least he loathes himself more a hundred times than he used to do. And yet I know that the Lord loves that man. But why, I do not know, except, "even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight."

And if you tell your own story and know your own hearts and your own lives, you will wonder and be astonished to the extreme of wonderment that the Lord should give a heritage to Israel—to you, His servant, truly His servant—but a poor, faulty servant to have such a heritage given him out of the abundance of the Grace of God. And why does He do it but that His mercy endures forever? Is there one of us who might not justly be in Hell before the clock ticks again if it were not that His mercy endures forever? The brightest saint here has no brightness but what God lends him, and He only lends it to him because His mercy endures forever!

Oh, bless His name, you children of His that live near to Him—you that have climbed to the highest stage of communion! Remember, you do not stand there because of anything in *yourselves*, but because His mercy endures forever! If you have conquered your sins—Sihon king of the Amorites—it is because His mercy endures forever. And if, today, you put your foot upon the neck of Og, king of Bashan, it is not because you are strong, but because His mercy endures forever. If you have grown in sanctifica-

tion and begun to possess the land which God has given to be a heritage to His people, it is still because His mercy endures forever.

And when death, itself, is dead, and you have passed beyond the gate of pearl and taken possession of the throne reserved for you with Christ at God's right hand, the only reason why you shall get there will be because His mercy endures forever. This is the song of every saved soul in this Tabernacle, as it shall be in the temple above, from now on and forevermore. I think it ought to be a great encouragement to those of you who are not God's people, if there are any such present, and there may be. Oh, how it ought to ring in your ears, "His mercy endures forever!" You are very old, but His mercy endures forever! You are very sick and near death, but His mercy endures forever! You have gone to the utmost extreme of sin, but His mercy endures forever!

You have resisted His Spirit. You have stifled your conscience. You have been disobedient to Christ, but His mercy endures forever! You have indulged every evil passion. You have broken loose from every bond that ought to have held you to the way of right, but His mercy endures forever! The last day of your life is almost come, but His mercy still endures and will endure till you die. If death comes, we have no Gospel for the dead, but as long as you live, that mercy still endures—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."***

The returning Prodigal, trusting in Jesus Christ, shall find mercy. If you say, "Oh, but, Sir, my sins are strong, how can I master them?" The answer I shall give you is in the words of my text, "He slew great kings: for His mercy endures forever: yes, slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever." Cannot God slay your sins? As for Satan and the world, He slew Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever. If you say that you never can be holy and never can grow like His children, I know, "He gave their land to be a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever."

And why should He not, even thus, enrich you with sanctifying Grace? May God in His rich mercy abundantly bless you, that you may sing His praise forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
Numbers 21:21-35; Deuteronomy 2:16-37, 3:11.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 196.**

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# GOD THE WONDER-WORKER

## NO. 1981

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.”  
Psalm 136:4.***

BELOVED, when we get into God's world of wonders, we have range enough. Which way shall I turn? On what subject shall I speak? If I turn to nature, it teems with wonders. Altering a little the language of Coleridge I would say, “All true science begins with wonder, and ends with wonder—and the space between is filled up with admiration.” If we turn to Providence, the history of the nations, the history of the Church, what centuries of wonders pass before us! It is said that wise men only wonder once and that is *always*. Fools never wonder because they are fools. The story of the Church is a constellation of miracles. I cannot venture upon themes so vast as Creation and Providence. Shall we turn to the works of Grace, the wonders of Redemption? If we consider the glory of Grace surrounding the Cross, which is the wonder of wonders, we are upon a boundless ocean! Here is sea room, indeed—we are at no loss for a subject, but we are lost in the subject. Now are we where the height, and depth, and length, and breadth are each immeasurable! It was said of Dr. Barrow that he was an unfair preacher because he exhausted every subject he touched and left nothing for anyone else to say. I would like Dr. Barrow to try *my* text! I am sure for once he would have to vary his style. He would only be able to suggest to us what *might* be said by 10,000 preachers, all occupied 10,000 years upon this one theme!

“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” I feel inclined to bow the knee instead of opening the mouth—and to ask you rather to meditate in the silence of your hearts than to listen to my scanty speech. Happily, the text assists me, for it suggests that I narrow my theme to the consideration of wonders of mercy—and that I then narrow it again to present wonders of mercy, for the text is in the present tense—“To Him who alone does great wonders,” that is to say, is doing them now! Only, then, of marvels of mercy shall I speak at this time and I shall endeavor, as far as possible, to direct your thoughts to present wonders of mercy. I say, as far as possible, for it must necessarily be that we link with the present both the past and the future because they are all of one, for God lives in all the tenses at once.

**I.** Our first head shall be this—GOD IS WORKING WONDERS OF MERCY NOW. “To Him who alone *does* great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” It is enduring now and is in the present tense forever.

Wonders are things out of the common, unusual things, extraordinary things. Usually they are unexpected. We wonder at them partly because they are novel and surprising. They take us aback—they are things which we looked not for. When they come, they astonish us and put us both in a muse and in a maze. We look, and look, and look, and cannot believe our eyes! We hear, and hear, and scarcely believe our ears! Great wonders, even when we grow accustomed to them, still continue to excite admiration and frequently they cause us to praise the worker of them, as it is written, “Sing unto the Lord; for He has done marvelous things.”

I believe that today God is doing great wonders in saving great sinners. It is a wonder that God should touch a sinner at all, yes, that He should even look at him! A sinner is such an evil thing. His sin is so vile, so foul, that holiness cannot take any pleasure in him. He who fails to obey his Maker is creation's blank, creation's blot—and it is a wonder that his Creator should think of him with patience. But that God should call the sinner with the voice of love and bid him return and find favor is a wonder. That when he does not return at the gracious bidding, the Lord should draw him with bands of love, is still more wonderful! The Lord takes more trouble with a sinner than it cost Him to make a world—He could complete the globe in six days, but it often takes many years to bring a sinner to repentance and to perfect his salvation. The abounding of Divine wisdom, prudence, long-suffering and patience are needed to work salvation. The Lord, travailing with compassion, goes about to compass the salvation of the greatly erring one. He is still doing great wonders in changing depraved natures, breaking hard hearts, subduing obstinate wills, enlightening darkened judgments and winning rebellious minds. Jesus is still working spiritual miracles and of this fact many of us are instances in our own persons—and also eyewitnesses of the like wonders worked on others. Blessed be God! We still see with wonder, sinners saved by the marvelous Grace of God! The riches of His mercy are still displayed in the salvation of the lost!

Nor less may the wonders of the Lord be seen in the preservation of those who believe on His name. A true Believer's life is a mystery to himself and to others. Concerning the wind, you cannot tell from where it comes, nor where it goes and, “so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” We are men wondered at! Do you not wonder, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are still a Christian? Faith is so contrary to nature that its existence in the heart is like a spark burning in the sea! Faith is so much attacked, especially in this evil day, that it is like a candle kept alight in a cyclone! Yet you have not drawn back unto perdition! Still, though faint, you are pursuing. Truly if you had been mindful of the country from which you came out, you would have had many opportunities to return. Satan's chariots and his horses have waited upon you with many invitations to ride back into the land of your former slavery if you had a mind to go. Alas, the evil heart of unbelief has lusted for the leeks and garlic and onions many a time! Kept alive with death so near, you are a standing wonder to yourself. What great things the Lord has done for you! How He has led you, instructed you, helped you, comforted you! All these, as I

mention them, will wake up many admiring memories and cause you to cry—"The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!"

To me, also, it is a great wonder that God should use any of us—we seem so unfit for His holy purposes. Can He write with such a pen as I am upon the fleshy tablets of men's hearts? What? Can He paint a fair picture of holiness in the characters of my hearers with so poor a brush as I am? Then, indeed, He does great wonders! That which God does by our instrumentality at any time, if, indeed, it is for His Glory, should fill us with astonishment! When Saul, who formerly persecuted the saints, saw saints made under his ministry, he was drawn out in wondering adoration as he wrote, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given."

The Lord God still does wonders by maintaining His church and the cause of Truth in the midst of the world. Read through history and you meet with periods when the light seemed quenched. But then suddenly it burned with superior luster! Remember the Reformation—and the revival of the last century! When spiritual life seemed almost extinct, there came times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. It will be the same at this dark hour! All the devils in Hell can never quench the light of the Truth of God. They may do all they can in union with all the wise men of the world to put down the old Gospel of the Cross, but even though they should slay it and bury it, it would rise again! When the voices which have been lifted up against the Gospel shall have been silenced forever, the Word of the Lord shall sound forth to the ends of the earth! God is still doing great wonders in the maintenance of His despised Gospel and in the keeping alive of those spiritual doctrines which the carnal mind hates as much today as it ever did.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, why may we expect the Lord to still do wonders? I answer, first, because *His Word raises our expectations*. Surely the Lord will not cease to work wonders and descend to the commonplace, for this Book talks of great things and marvelous things! Does He not say concerning His great Grace, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"? Have we not many passages of Scripture which run in this wise—"Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow"? The universe is challenged by the question, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Hear our Lord speak and invite the laboring and heavy laden to His rest. Hear Him declare that, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Hear how His Apostles declare that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Paul, that chief of sinners, sets himself forth as the type and pattern according to which God will work in the after ages. This inspired Book does *not* promise us *small* things! It is not pitched in a low key. Concerning the multitudes that will be saved in the latter days, it speaks in grand terms, saying, "Nations that knew You not shall run unto You." We have so much to this effect that I will not stay to quote the passages—only of this we are sure—that one day we shall hear the glorious shout, "Hallelu-

jah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Anyone who is familiar with Holy Scripture will expect that God will continue to work wonders in the realm of Grace.

But, Beloved, we have something more than words. *God has evidently made preparations for doing great things.* When He made the Covenant of Grace to be the very soul and center of all His acts. When He put it first, last and midst, He did not intend little things. Jehovah does not swear by Himself about trifles, nor lift His hand to Heaven concerning small matters! The very existence of the Everlasting Covenant is the sure prophecy of Grace on a grand scale, Grace magnified to the astonishment of all intelligent beings. When the glorious Son of the Highest came from Heaven and veiled His Godhead in human flesh, He had designs of a majestic Character. An Incarnate God forebodes great Grace to our humanity. And when as God and Man, in one Person, our Lord Jesus suffered shame, scourging, condemnation and bowed Himself, at last, to death, the result of all His passion cannot mean the salvation of a *few*, or a *questionable* salvation for many! It must foretell a sure salvation for a multitude of great sinners! Stupendous guilt is intended to be washed away by the blood of so Divine a Sacrifice. If our Lord Jesus Christ is to receive a reward commensurate with His accomplished work, we may safely look for things which shall amaze the world! Such a feast as I see spread within the royal halls of Grace is not intended for a handful of guests. When oxen and fatlings are killed to provide such abundant meat, the host must have an eye to vast numbers of guests of voracious appetite! The provision of Grace in Christ Jesus is so abundant that it must be meant for a wonderful assembly of needy souls. Come, then, and try the freeness and fullness of Christ and see if you are refused!

Furthermore, when I reflect that the Holy Spirit has come down from Heaven and that He has never left us, but abides with His Church to carry out the purposes of Grace by convicting men of sin and glorifying Christ, I am encouraged to look for great things. The Holy Spirit is not here in vain! He intends to do great things. If the biggest blasphemer out of Hell were reported to be saved today, I should not find it difficult to believe the news. If, in this house, there should be one who has denied the Deity of our Lord and has cast off all fear of God and, consequently, has plunged into the worst forms of sin, I can readily hope that the Lord may pass by all his transgressions and make him one of His most earnest servants! It would be a wonder—it may seem to be an impossibility—but this is no reason why it should not be done! God has made preparation for producing this kind of wonder! Faith is led confidently to expect what reason would never suggest!

When I see, in addition to the Covenant, the Christ and the Holy Spirit, all the preparations of the Lord’s effectual power for the coming of the Lord, for His glorious reign upon the earth and for the eternal glorification of the redeemed, I am assured in my own soul that the Lord is working upon a wonderful scale, whether we see it or not. Between now and the consummation of all things, wonders are to be common! The pathway of

Grace shall blaze with splendor. I invite you to enlarge your hope concerning Him who alone “does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.”

Dear Friends, we are not left to promises and preparations. *Our faith is continually refreshed by new facts.* I have the great happiness of frequently seeing very extraordinary instances of God’s Grace among sinful men. I will not relate even one of them, but my memory is stored with them. Often my eyes are filled with tears when I grip the hand of a convert who but a little while ago was a blasphemer and injurious, a Sabbath-breaker, a drunk—and sunk in every form of uncleanness. When I see such a man converted, renewed and made holy because the Lord has met with him and revealed Himself to him through the preaching of the Word, my eyes are filled with tears of wondering joy. When I find that such a poor testimony as I am able to bear is made effectual, by God’s Grace, to work a total change of nature, I am overwhelmed with wondering and grateful emotions! To see the Lord lift wretches from the dunghill and set them among the princes of His people causes us to hold up our hands in joyful astonishment and ascribe all praise “To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.”

*The joy is that you and I assembled here this morning either are, or may be, personal instances of the wonder-working power of God.* O my Hearer, if you will now, in your great sin, accept great mercy you may have it! If you will come with all your evil habits binding you and ask to be set free from them, the great Redeemer will break those manacles from your wrists and give you a glorious liberty! Is not our Lord named Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins? If you are the greatest sinner out of the bottomless pit, if you will look to Christ upon the Cross and trust in Him, alone, you shall be born again! You shall pass from death unto life and your many sins shall be forgiven you. Some of us are always wondering why the Lord loved us, why He bought us, why He sought us and why He continues to acknowledge us—and our heart’s desire is that all of you who come to this House of Prayer may become similar wonders of Divine Grace! The Lord grant that the wonders may begin this morning!

We are assured that among us upon whom the ends of the earth have come, “the Lord does great wonders.” Did I hear anyone say, “Truly, if I were converted it would be a wonder”? Yes, you are excellent raw material for God to work upon in the creation of a wonder. Did I hear another say, “A person is here this morning who, if he were saved, would be a wonder, indeed”? Pray for him, then! Pray at once, distinctly for him, in the glad hope that he will be another wonder! The God of Infinite Mercy looks out for room for His Grace to work in and space for Almighty Love to display its power! Your necessity, feebleness and emptiness are the space in which Infinite Mercy finds elbowroom for its energy! He “who alone does great wonders,” looks for the greatly guilty and the greatly needy—that in them He may reveal His Grace. Oh, that my heart were enlarged and my mouth were opened fitly to encourage you who think you are beyond the bounds of Divine Mercy! Oh, think not that the Grace of God can never come to you! The Lord delights in mercy! He loves to do that which is un-

expected by the heart of man! He delights in surprising men with His Grace and getting to Himself renown by His love! He will, for His own name's sake, do great wonders of mercy. Because no reason can be found in men, themselves, the Lord resolves to find it in Himself and, therefore, He lavishes His Grace that His Glory may be wondered at, both in Heaven and in earth!

**II.** I pass on to another phase of the same thought, for upon this one thought I mean to harp at this time so that this one note shall linger in your ears for many a day. Our first head has been that God is working wonders of mercy. Our second point is that **THESE WONDERS ARE STILL GREAT.** "To Him who alone does *great* wonders."

We have heard of wonders that were not great, for they were not even true. The magicians of Egypt withstood Moses with their enchantments—and false prophets have much relied upon tricks and deceptions. Anti-christ to this day is prone to use lying wonders. But God's wonders are real! They are truly wonderful and are not mere pretences. Neither Nature, nor Providence, nor Grace lends any countenance to mere outside appearance—the deeper you go in God's wonders, the more wonderful they are! That which the Lord does is peculiarly His own. Even as the magicians said, "This is the finger of God," and ceased from their conjuring, they had touched upon the inimitable and were forced to pause.

Many apparent wonders can be explained and, therefore, the wonder is gone. Certain nations wonder at an eclipse, which to the astronomer is a very simple affair. Now, you cannot explain away election, redemption, regeneration and the pardon of sin—these great wonders of Almighty Love are all the greater, the more you know of them. Many wonders, also, are diminished by familiarity. Well do I remember as a child being taken to see the first train drawn by a steam engine to our town—I greatly wondered—but I have now ceased to wonder at such an ordinary sight. I remember a viaduct, which to my juvenile mind was stupendous. I have seen it since and it is by no means one of the wonders of the world! The wonders of Grace are such that the more you see them the more your wonder grows. In these cases it is ignorance which does *not* wonder, but knowledge marvels exceedingly.

Those who are most familiar with the Lord think the most of Him and of His Grace. The wonders of Divine Grace are so great that they can never be eclipsed by any greater marvels. No one will ever tell us a more marvelous story than the life and death of our Lord for sinful men. In the gift of Jesus Christ the Infinite God has outdone all His previous acts. This is the greatest wonder that angels ever heard of—they still desire to look into it. This is, in words and sense, the climax of all miracles—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When you and I have, for millions and millions of years, realized what Divine Mercy means, my conviction is that we shall wonder more at the Lord's Grace than we do now! Salvation is an exceedingly *great* wonder, like the great mountains, or the great sea. The loving kindness of the Lord is immeasurable.

“Now,” cries someone, “you speak about wonders. If I were to be converted it would not only be a wonder, but a *great* wonder.” That is why I expect it, for the Lord still takes pleasure in performing great wonders! “Oh, but I am such a devil in sin! I have gone to the brink of Hell! It is impossible that I should be forgiven.” That is why I expect to see such pardons given! Unconquerable mercy will, I trust, take up the challenge of your sin. The Lord is at home with great things. You and I are often over-balanced with small affairs, but the Lord’s element is greatness. See Him making worlds, striking them off like sparks from the anvil of His creating power! Miracles are commonplace with God. His is essential and unrivalled greatness. “The nations are as a drop of a bucket: He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” The Lord grants great forgiveness to great sinners and takes pleasure to work great transformations in those who were soaked through and through with sin.

Why does God work great wonders of Grace? I answer, *because He is great and greatly wonderful*. He acts according to His Nature when He does great wonders. He is so wonderful a God that no one has ever formed an adequate conception of Him. We do not understand God, nor can we comprehend Him. We know that there is such an One and we love and praise Him, but to say that we *understand* God as a man is understood by his fellow would be very far from the truth. Ten thousand minds, educated to the highest and even filled with the Holy Spirit, if they could unite their largest ideas, could not compass the Infinite Jehovah! You have filled so many little cups with the waters of the sea, but you are as far off as ever from having taken up the great deep. It is but natural that the Infinite One should do great wonders. The Lord is inconceivably great and, therefore, we are unable to imagine a limit to what He may do in a direction so much His own as that of mercy, since God is Love. Assuredly, to be great in everything is after the manner of the great Lord—He does greatly pardon, greatly renew, greatly love, greatly bless, greatly glorify. Oh, that we would believe Him to be great, then should we, with Mary, sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior.”

*Do not despondingly imagine that God will allow His wonders to dwindle down as the world grows old.* “Oh,” you say, “He did great wonders in the olden times, but He is not of that mind now.” Is that *your* God? My God is the same—He faints not, neither is weary. He still does great wonders. Jehovah who divided the Red Sea is our God forever and ever! He could divide the Atlantic if He willed it and would do so if it were necessary for the fulfillment of His gracious purposes. The God who fed His people in the wilderness may not cause manna to fall from Heaven, today, but He will, none the less, give food unto His people. “Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure.” The Lord can do as much today as He did in the elder ages. Yes, we may look for *greater* things than these! I do not believe that God’s music is now marked with *diminuendo*, but I see *crescendo* on the score—it grows in volume and in force as the ages roll along! The Lord leads our wondering minds on from height to height and reveals to us more and more the glory of His power.

This leads me to believe that *the Lord Jesus will yet save greater sinners than He ever did* if there are such sinners. Our Lord celebrated His entrance into Paradise by the salvation of a thief. And soon after His Resurrection, He restored Peter. He will always be saving thieves and restoring backsliders! He went after Saul of Tarsus, who was both a persecutor and a blasphemer—and He means always to be saving sinners of that kind. That Philippian jailer, converted at the dead of night, is but a specimen of the sort of hard, rough, cruel brutes that He will still subdue by His mighty Grace! The Lord will go on to save great sinners, for He has put His hand to the plow of Grace and He will not look back—

***“Jesus reigns on Zion’s hill,  
He receives poor sinners still.”***

The most guilty and most hardened—and most daring of rebels are welcome to come to Jesus and look to Him and live! How pleased I am to preach this Gospel! Oh, that I could preach it better! I expect the Lord to go on saving great sinners by these words of mine and this shall be to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

*We may expect the Lord to forgive great sins* such as murders, adulteries, robberies, blasphemies and sins unmentionable. Mercy gets to itself renown when it annihilates giant sins—then we sing of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, overthrown by the Lord, whose mercy endures forever. His mercy is not an atom less than it used to be, for it endures *forever*. The ocean of today is as full as when Jonah went down into its deeps. The sun of today is as bright as when it shone on Lot entering Zoar. And the Grace of God is as full, as broad, as deep, as Omnipotent, as when our Savior dwelt among men and said to one and another, “Your sins are forgiven you”!

*The Lord is also doing great wonders in displaying great condescensions to those who believe on His Son Jesus Christ.* It would be a great wonder and make our hearts leap for joy if the Lord should meet with us today. And, unworthy as we are, He is ready to do so. It would be a great wonder if He were to restore our backslidings and heal the bones which are broken by our sins. And He waits to act as our soul’s surgeon. It would be a great wonder if He were to enter in and sup with us, and we with Him—and He even *now* knocks at the door of our hearts with that design! The Lord’s bosom may still be leaned upon! We may still lean on our Beloved! He will still kiss us with the kisses of His mouth! The Lord still dwells with the humble and contrite, for this great wonder of condescension still delights Him.

*The Lord is working great wonders of delivering Grace.* Are any of you in great trouble or great danger? The Lord that delivered David out of the paws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear, and from the hand of the uncircumcised Philistine will deliver you, also, with a great deliverance! He that saved Daniel in the den of lions and brought him out unharmed, even He that walked with the holy children in the burning fiery furnace, is still the same God! He can, He will, He does deliver! You shall see His great wonders if you will but trust in Him. You that are tossed about and sorely pained with the present state of the Church of God—you may look

for wonders of Grace. I expect our Lord to do great wonders at this time by sending us great revivals of religion, or in some other way making bare His holy arm. What shall withstand Him if He does but awake Himself!

In former ages the light has burned very low and then the Lord has trimmed the lamp. The Lord has spoken and great has been the multitudes of them that have published His Word. Then “kings of armies did flee; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.” It shall still be so! Oh, You that do great wonders, fight for Yourself this day and make the adversaries of Your Truth melt away! Let us pray for the visitations of the Holy Spirit, but never let us give way to doubt, even for a moment. “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Now we have got some good way into our text—“To Him that does great wonders” be glory forever and ever!

**III.** The third point is this—THESE GREAT WONDERS ARE WORKED BY GOD ALONE. He *alone* does great wonders. Lay emphasis heavily upon the word, “alone.”

My Brothers and Sisters, there are deeds of kindness which you could not expect anyone else to do. The most forgiving of human spirits can never pardon as God does. You, poor sinner, have been measuring God’s corn with your bushel and, therefore, you conclude that He cannot forgive you. But His long-suffering and Grace are greater than yours! If you had offended others as you have offended God, you might safely come to the conclusion that forgiveness would be out of the question. But the Lord far outruns all others in mercy! None can forgive and forget as the Lord does! It was never heard of, that one could pass over such offenses and rebellions as God does freely blot out. The Lord can and is daily doing such acts of love and mercy as would be looked for in vain among men and angels! Believe that God is more able to forgive than you are able to believe!

Have you written it down among your sadly sure conclusions that you are certain to be lost? The God of All Grace delights to contradict our despairs. He will disannul your covenant with death and deliver the lawful captive from the hand of the destroyer. He will interpose in an unheard-of manner. He says, “Behold, I will do a new thing.” He will do that which we looked not for—and thus make us acknowledge that He, alone, does great wonders! God’s Grace is unique. To whom will you liken Him? In this He alone is seen to be God. None can approach Him, so as to be mentioned in the same day! He does for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Ah, poor desponding soul! You had a dream. Did you not dream that you were a child, again, and could begin life once more? You woke up and cried, “Ah me! This will never be true. I wish it were.” It can be true! The Lord can make you to become a little child again by being born again! It is hard, I know, for you to believe it, but nothing ought to be hard to believe concerning the God whose mercy endures forever! He alone, Himself, and by Himself, can perform prodigies of love!

When it is said that He does these great wonders, “alone,” it means that He does them when nobody can help Him. My Friend, *you* cannot do anything—you are now reduced to utter impotence under a sense of sin. You

fear that you cannot even believe, or feel, but the Lord is All-Sufficient and He, alone, does great wonders. He can *do* all for you and *work* all in you. What strange creatures we are! We feel that we must try to help *God*. What folly is this! O poor creature of a day, did you help Him to make the world? Where were you when the mountains were brought forth? O feeble creature, what can you do? Can you help Him in Providence? He asks no aid from you. I have known some poor souls complain that they cannot feel their nothingness—and they fancy that if they felt their nothingness, Christ could, then, save them! This is odd, is it not? Here is a man who must help God by his *nothingness*! Out of the way with you! You do but block the road! Stand aside and let Grace work! What can you do? Do you reply, “I must believe and repent?” I know you must, but—

**“True belief, and true repentance,  
Every Grace that brings us nigh—  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

Jesus Christ comes to save you just as you are and His salvation comes to you where you are. When they make railways in England, they usually carry them sufficiently far from a town to give work to an omnibus. Seldom does the station stand near the house where one wants to go. The railway to Heaven is of another sort—it comes to your door! Jesus comes where you are and meets your actual condition. Though you lie at death’s door, Christ comes as the Resurrection and the Life. Though you pine in the vestibule of Hell, almighty mercy comes to free you from condemnation. In your spiritual helplessness and hopelessness, Jesus comes to you, saying, “Trust Me now to be All in All to you.” Praise Him who alone, without your puny aid, or the aid of a priest, or the aid of mortifications and penances, can remove your sins and make you pure and holy! His own arm brings salvation to those who trust Him and He, alone, does great wonders!

When the Lord uses means in the salvation of a soul, He takes care that nobody shall praise the means or ascribe the salvation to the agent. He has many ways with His most useful servants of making them keep their places—and you will notice that as soon as ever any one of them begins to grow rather large in his own esteem, he is usually met with weakness and barrenness. We must, Brothers, keep self out of the way. We must put ourselves absolutely into God’s hands that He may use us in the winning of souls—and then we must send the great *I* down, down, down, till it is buried out of all remembrance. They tell us that when you go fishing it is wise to stand back and keep yourself out of sight as much as possible. The fish that *see you* will not take the bait. The Lord will not do great wonders in company, but alone! His servants must not set up to be masters, or they will be sternly rebuked. On the Throne of Grace, God will brook no rival. If we are to see Jesus increase, *we must decrease*. If Christ goes up, *self* goes down. The Lord says, “My Glory will I not give to another.” We shall be made to forget the minister and every other worker—and recognize the fact that the Lord, alone, does great wonders.

O Brothers and Sisters, when I think of what the Lord has done for some of us by forgiving and saving us, how His glorious name rises and

fills the whole Heaven! God is not to be compared with any—they vanish as He appears. The Father is everything! He alone does great wonders when He receives the returning prodigal. The Son of God who bore our sins in His own body on the tree is everything to us and, He, alone, is The Wonderful. When we shall see Him it will be as the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God. We shall give no praise for our salvation to any but Himself and that Divine Spirit who regenerates us. Beloved, we rely on no influences of any sort save that almighty influence which proceeds from the Holy Spirit. “He alone does great wonders.”

This should be a great comfort to those of you who are not yet saved. If I were in your condition I would try to catch at the text this morning. God Himself is able to save. Trust Jesus and live!

Here is also comfort for children of God who are exercised concerning the state of the Churches. Be encouraged, for the Lord who alone does great wonders is equal to the emergency. Perhaps He will strip us still more. Perhaps He will take away every able man that now preaches the Gospel—and when our Calvins and Luthers and Zwinglies are all dead, then, maybe, He, alone, will do great wonders. Be it so, if so it pleases Him, for He must have all the Glory. The extremity of the Church shall be the opportunity of God. But, man of God, you can be sure that His everlasting purposes will stand and His Divine Covenant of mercy will endure forever!

**IV.** I close with my last head—upon which I will speak briefly. Beloved, if you know anything about these wonders, these great wonders, these wonders in which God stands alone, then remember that FOR THESE WONDERS HE IS TO BE PRAISED. This verse is an ascription of praise. “To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” It means—to Him be thanks and praise and power and honor and majesty forever and ever. Oh, that we could fill the universe with praise!

Wonder is a sort of praise—it is the chaos out of which a world of praise is to be made. Sit still and silently meditate on the greatness and goodness of God until you are overcome with admiration—and then you will adore. Our wonderment should always blossom into thanks. Holy wonder is like sweet incense, but love must set it on fire with a burning coal of gratitude. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.”

If you will begin to praise the Lord for His great wonders of mercy, I will tell you what will happen to you. First, we shall find *His Nature revealed to us*. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.” We shall begin to see the essential goodness of God and then we shall the better understand the manifestations of it as seen in 10,000 ways. This is something to learn. We learn through the habit of praise to know, in a measure, what God is!

Next, while praising Him for His wonders, you will learn to *adore His Godhead*. “Give thanks unto the God of gods.” It is a grand thing to be deeply impressed that God is God. Has He not said, “Be still and know that I am God”? We do not know what God is, but we know that He is God. We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend this much—that He is God. It is the greatest thought a man can ever think when He thinks

that God is God. I would have you praise Him until you know that He is God, for you will treat Him as He should be treated when you distinctly recognize the Glory of His Deity.

If you will keep on praising Him for His wonders, you will come to *know somewhat of His sovereignty*. “O give thanks unto the Lord of lords,” for He rules over all things, both in Heaven and in earth, and in all deep places. I reverently adore and heartily love the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Those words which are terrible to the ungodly are sweet to him who knows the love of God—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” We can trust our God with unlimited power and with the right to do whatever He wills. And it is a part of our worship that we should never question whatever He may do. “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Still, when you praises God for the wonders He has worked for you, and for others, let the climax of your praise be this, that, “*His mercy endures forever*.” Magnify with all your faculties of mind and heart—with memory, hope, fear and every emotion of which you are capable—the changeless mercy of God. He is always merciful, or full of mercy. He always will be so. You have a God of Immutable goodness, rejoice in Him at all times and under all aspects! When you think upon His terrible Justice, doubt not His Mercy. Pharaoh is cast into the Red Sea, but Jehovah’s mercy endures. He slays mighty kings, but, “His mercy endures forever.” Yes, when you see Hell engulf the impenitent and you think with solemn awe of the dread punishment necessary to sin, rest assured that this alters not the fact that God is Love and that, “His mercy endures forever.” There must be no collision in your thoughts between His Justice and His Mercy—they are both Divine and they both endure forever!

Do you say, “Hallelujah!” even when you see His wrath? Accepting His mercy in Jesus, praise Him! Resting in that mercy, praise Him! Hoping in that mercy, that it will follow you all the days of your life, praise Him! By-and-by, Brothers and Sisters, we shall know more of His eternal mercy and then we shall praise Him in loftier strains. Shall we ever need a sweeter song than this—“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever”? As we shall hear the harpers harping with their harps and see the holy ones casting their crowns before Him on the glassy sea, shall we not chant this *great Hallel*—“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever”? The Lord bless you always! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 136.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
(SONG I), 117, 136 (SONG II).**

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# OPEN PRAISE AND PUBLIC CONFESSION NO. 2604

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 8, 1899.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1883.**

***“I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing  
praise unto You. I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and  
praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your  
Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all  
Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered  
me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.”  
Psalm 138:1-3.***

IT is a very grievous thing, to one who worships the only living and true God, to see others engaged in idolatrous worship. It stirs one's indignation to see a man worship—not his own hands, but what is even worse than that—the thing which he has made with his own hands and which must, therefore, be inferior to himself. As the righteous soul of Lot in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the inhabitants of that guilty city, so the righteous soul of David was vexed when he saw the many lords and gods before whom his neighbors were bowing down and, in like manner, as long as we are in this world, we shall often be troubled through seeing how others turn aside from the living God, how they forget His Truth, set up thoughts of their own in the place of the thoughts of God and dishonor the Holy Scripture by thinking that their own vain ideas can equal, if not even excel, the Revelation of God!

David, in this matter, becomes a guide to us. What he did in the presence of the idols of the heathen is, to a great extent, what we should do in the presence of the false systems of religion and the errors which are all around us! You, dear Friends, cannot love the right if you do not hate the wrong! I would not give a penny for your love to the Truth of God if it is not accompanied with a hearty hatred of error. I have taken this text as an instruction to myself as well as to you. What David did with all his heart, as a man who loved Jehovah, the only true God, we also should do if, indeed, we love the Lord Jesus Christ and all the glorious Truths which cluster around His glorious Deity and His atoning Sacrifice.

**I.** How, then, will we act? We will try to act exactly as David did, and if we do so, we shall, first of all, SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE. “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.” This seems a very singular thing to do. Here is a man indignant with these false gods—one would suppose that he would begin to argue on behalf of the true God, that he would raise a controversy on behalf of Jehovah—but he does nothing of the kind. At least, this is not the

first thing that he does. He begins to praise God and to sing that praise aloud! “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.”

This was a very singular method of procedure, yet a very wise one, for, first, *his song would openly show his contempt for the false gods*. What does it matter to him what these idols really are? Men call them gods, so, for the moment, he calls them gods, too. And he begins to sing, not to them, but to his own God, the only living and true God! He pitches the tune, he lifts up the strain, he sings a Psalm—and this is the theme of his music—“Glorious are You, O Jehovah!” And he does this in the very presence of the idol gods and their worshippers, as much as to say, “I take so little notice of them all that I will not even be disturbed about them. I was singing the praises of Jehovah and I shall go on singing them. I was full of holy joy and I intend, still, to be so. Those gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God made the heavens! Therefore, I will not rob Him of His Glory, or deprive Him of His full revenue of praise, by turning aside even for a single moment to pay any attention to these mere blocks of wood and stone.” It was a wise way of acting on the part of David, and it was also a generous way, because he did not in words pour contempt upon the idols, but he showed his contempt for them by presenting his praise to Jehovah alone.

Let us do the same, Beloved. Do not worry yourself about those who turn aside from the Truth of God and run in their own crooked ways. Warn them as best you can, but remember David’s advice on another occasion—“Fret not yourself because of evildoers.” You have better work to do than to fret about them! Begin to praise your God and go on praising Him! Sing as many songs unto Him as ever you did and let your heart be just as glad as ever it can be. “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” And if the Lord laughs, let us not cry! If He treats them with such calm contempt, let us do the same and lift up our voices again and again unto Him whose mercy endures forever, and whose throne is so established that all the leaguered hosts of earth and Hell cannot shake it for a single moment! “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns.” “The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Therefore, let no man’s heart fail him, but let all who love the Lord show their contempt for His adversaries by pouring out their joyful adoration unto the Most High!

I like David’s plan of dealing with the idols, by continuing his wholehearted praise to God, because, next, *it would show his strong faith in the true God*. I cannot tell any better way by which he could have shown his confidence in Jehovah. He had already poured contempt upon the false gods, but now his calm, happy singing proves his reverence for the Most High and makes men see that if they doubt, he does not! If they rail, he knows how vain their railing is. It proves to them that there is at least

one man who has true faith in God, for he stands like a solid rock amid the surging sea. He is not moved. No, he is not affected enough to postpone his music, but he keeps on singing and singing the more loudly, as the more the sea roars and the fullness thereof. The more shrill the noise of the tumultuous idolaters, the more does he proclaim aloud his holy joy and his unshaken confidence in his God! True faith is one of the best of sermons. He who is—

***“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,  
Confident of victory,”***

has, by that trustful calmness, done more to inspire the timid with confidence than if he were the most eloquent of men who had, with great vehemence, urged them to trust in God. Thank God, faith, as well as unbelief, is contagious! And if—

***“One sickly sheep infects the flock,  
And poisons all the rest”—***

there is another side to that Truth—one true Believer tends to strengthen all the rest and to make them “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” He who can sing as he goes to battle, if he is a leader, is likely to lead a tribe of heroes in his train! He who can sing in the time of shipwreck is likely to put courage into everyone of the crew, so that they do their best for the laboring vessel and, if it is possible, bring her safely into the haven. Sing, then, Brother! Sing, my Sister, for this will prove your child-like confidence in God, your implicit reliance upon Him!

That is a second commendation of David’s mode of action.

The next is that by continuing to praise Jehovah in the presence of the idols, *he declared his all-absorbing zeal for God’s Glory*. He did not need to stand up and say, “I love the Lord with all my heart.” Hear him sing, “I will praise You with my whole heart.” See what force he puts into every note! Listen to his jubilant song—you can tell by the very sound of his voice that his praise of Jehovah comes up from his heart—and from his whole heart. He is enthusiastic, he is full of confidence! If he had a doubt concerning Jehovah, he could not sing like that. And if he were lukewarm, he would not sing like that. But, as he is singing with his whole heart, those who are opposed to him say to themselves, “It is no use to trouble ourselves about *that* man—we shall never turn him from the faith.” They will sheer off, one by one, knowing that it is no use to attack such a firm Believer. He who praises God with his whole heart is like a man on fire—he is terrible to the adversaries of the Most High. When the great Spanish Armada was ready to swoop down upon the English coast, our brave Admiral Drake took some of his small ships and placed them where the wind would carry them right among the Spanish fleet. He filled the vessels with combustible material and set them afire. Then he had no need to go, himself, for the wind just took the fire-ships and drifted them up against the Spanish galleons that floated high out of the water—and exposed a vast surface to the air—and one and another of the big unwieldy monsters were soon on fire—and a great victory was won without a blow being struck!

So, I like to get a red-hot Christian full of music and praise unto Jehovah and just let him go, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, right into the

middle of the adversaries of the Truth of God! They cannot make him out! They do not know how to handle a man on fire! If he would try to argue with them, they might overwhelm him with their logic. If he would fire a shot at them, they could shoot back at him. But he does nothing of the kind. He simply blazes and burns to the Glory of God—and that is a most effective mode of warfare with the Lord's enemies. Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, that you were to have your hearts all on fire, burning and glowing with the intense conviction that the Gospel is true and that the God of Heaven and earth is the one living and true God—and that the atoning blood of the Divine Savior is the one hope of guilty sinners? Then you might do grand work for God! Tolerate no doubt in your spirit! Believe right up to the hilt with unstaggering confidence and then sing out your praises of Jehovah with a joyful confidence! Those who hate the Truth of God will not know what to make of you. They will probably get out of your way as quickly as possible, but, if they do not, then perhaps you will set *them* on fire and it may be, by the Grace of God, that you will burn up some of their errors and put them into a terrible state of confusion and anxiety if they still resolve to fight against the Lord of Hosts!

It was a wise plan, this of David, of getting in among the heathen gods and singing to the praise of Jehovah! They could not understand him, but they were affected by his singing all the same. If he could have walked through any temple where all the idol gods could have been gathered together, and if he could have sung, there, the words of our grand Doxology—

***“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise Him all creatures here below,  
Praise Him above, you heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”—***

I would not have wondered if old Dagon had come tumbling down to the ground and if Chemosh, and Milcom, and Baal, and Ashtaroth and all those other abominations of the heathen had fallen prone upon the earth at the sound of this glorious song of praise unto Jehovah! Therefore, if we would overthrow the idols of our own day, let us imitate this wise mode of action on the part of the Psalmist.

I believe, also, that David was quite right in singing with all his heart before the idol gods because *it would shield him from all danger wherever he went*. To walk among the wicked is a dangerous exercise. It is as though a man had to go into infected air, or traverse the wards of a leper hospital—he is, himself, apt to become affected by the poisonous atmosphere and to become infected with some deadly malady. But, oh, if you keep on, with all your heart, praising God all the day, you may go with confidence wherever duty calls you! Ah, you might go between the jaws of death, itself, and yet suffer no injury, for an atmosphere of praise would be the best deodorizer and disinfectant wherever you might be bid by the Lord to go. As long as you kept on praising God and magnifying His holy name, no adversary could do you any harm. Remember how the hosts of Jehoshaphat triumphed in the valley of Berachah when they began to sing praises unto God—then were their adversaries routed! Remember,

also, how Paul and Silas could not be held in bonds when, at midnight, they sang praises unto God! Then the prison rocked, the chains were broken and the doors flew open, for there must be liberty where men can sing unto Jehovah! Where wholehearted songsters continually adore the Most High, the prisoners' fetters snap and the foundations of dungeons are moved! Therefore, dear Friends, mind that you keep up the spirit of praise.

I used to know, years ago, a poor old laboring man. He was a Methodist of the good old-fashioned school. I never met him, or spoke with him without finding that, wherever he was, he was always singing. He was up in the morning at half-past five to get out to his farm work and he sang while he was dressing. He sang as he pulled on his corduroys. He sang as he put on his smock. He sang as he walked downstairs, he sang as he tramped off down the street and he sang all day as he was at his work. He did not keep on singing while I was preaching, but he seemed almost as if he wanted to do that. And, every now and then, he would burst out with, "Hallelujah!" or, "Praise the Lord!" He was so full of thanksgiving to God that sometimes he was obliged to give expression to his feelings even when it would have been more proper if he had kept quiet! He was one of the holiest men I ever knew and I used to account very much for his simple gentleness, integrity and happiness by the habit he had acquired of constantly singing the praises of God. He worked with some men who were in the habit of swearing, but he kept on singing and, after a time, they began to think that it was not the right thing for them to swear. He went among men who drank, but he never left off singing and, somehow, even among such men, there was a kind of respect for him. It was so with all who knew him. His employer tried to put him where he would have easier tasks than others as he grew old. And everybody loved him.

I always wished that he had been a Baptist—that would have been just the finishing touch to make him perfect—and then we would have lost him, for all perfect people go to Heaven at once! But if I mentioned that subject to him—and sometimes I did—it was not long before he began to sing and he would ask me to join him, which I gladly did. His was a happy way of living. I wish that I and all of you could rise to it. Perhaps somebody says, "That good man was a very happy, gracious soul, but still he was very childish." Perhaps so, but I would like to be just as he was. I do not speak of him as having been child-*ish*, but child-*like*, always praising God like a happy child who is always singing. You know, dear Friends, you can keep on praising the Lord whatever else you may be doing. You can sit down in your house with the needle in your hand, or go abroad into the garden with the hoe and still be praising God. We do not have half enough of praise, Brothers and Sisters—I am sure the devil would be more angry with us if we would begin to praise God more—and since we certainly are under no obligations to Satan to keep from irritating his temper, let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live—and defy the devil to do his worst! As he likes neither music nor song in praise of Jehovah, let him have plenty of them both! Let us continually do as David declared that he would—"I will praise You with my whole

heart: before the gods (or before the devils, before the kings or before the beggars, before the drunks, before the swearers, before anybody and everybody) will I sing praise unto You.”

That, then, was the first part of David’s action—singing unto Jehovah with whole-hearted praise.

**II.** The second thing that David did was to WORSHIP BY THE DE-SPISED RULE. Even in the presence of those who set up their idol gods, and their false systems, he declared to Jehovah, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”

Some said, “Worship this way.” Others said, “Worship that way.” In the present day some say that the Old Testament is not Inspired, that there is much that is very doubtful in the five Books of Moses. Some are going to worship in one way, some in another way of their own inventing. But if we are of David’s mind, we shall say to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.” Let every other man have his own way of worshipping if he will, but, Brothers and Sisters, as for me, I say to the Lord, with David, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”

I admire this declaration, first, because *it is a quiet way of ignoring all will-worship*. “Oh,” says one, “I am resolved to worship God with all kinds of show, ceremony, flowers and millinery.” Another says, “I intend to worship God out in the fields and never to mingle with His people at all.” Very well, you go your own ways, but I ignore both of your ways, for my way is to worship toward God’s holy Temple—that is the way in which the Apostles and the early Christians worshipped Christ, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is—the way in which they cheered their own hearts and the hearts of their fellow Believers, with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—the way in which they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance—the way in which they gathered around the Table of their Lord to remember His great love to them. You may go and set up whatever novelty you like, but I shall keep to that—

**“Good old way, by our fathers trod”—**

and I trust that every true child of God will make this personal declaration to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”

What did David mean by that expression, “Your holy Temple”? Well, the Temple, like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was *typical of the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was not that the tent in the wilderness or the Temple on Mount Zion was anything of itself—these were the places where God was especially pleased to reveal Himself. Now, today the Temple of Jehovah is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which He, Himself, expressly called “the Temple.” Let others worship saints and angels, if they will, but we will worship the Incarnate Christ and Him, alone! Let others worship the man and think him nothing more than man, but we shall worship Christ as God. I was delighted to sing with you, a little while ago—

**“Jesus, my God! I know His name,  
His name is all my trust!  
Nor will He put my soul to shame,  
Nor let my hope be lost.”**

Jesus is not only my Savior, but He is also my God! And my prayers are to be presented to the Father through Him and to come up unto the Most High through the Person of the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! I will worship toward that shrine, the Person of the Son of God and God the Son!

But the Temple was also *the place of sacrifice* and we shall only praise God aright as we trust to the one great Sacrifice. Oh, how many, nowadays, deny the great Truth of vicarious suffering, the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, saying that He is our Exemplar, but not the Maker of propitiation and reconciliation by His blood. Well, do not trouble your head about these people and begin to argue with them, but say, "As for me, 'I will worship toward Your holy Temple.' I have not any hope of my prayers speeding except through the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. I can have no assurance of being accepted by God unless I am 'accepted in the Beloved.' So I will offer no prayer but that which goes to God by the crimson road of the substitutionary death of Christ. 'I will worship toward Your holy Temple.'" Keep to that declaration with unshaken firmness of resolve and it will be the best answer that you can give to the idols, or to the devils, or to anyone else who may oppose the Most High.

**III.** Now notice, thirdly, what David did. He went on from singing and worshipping to PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES—the very attributes which are being questioned in this present age. "I will praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth."

The true Believer should praise God, first, for His loving kindness and for that loving kindness in its universality. Some say that the God whom we preach cannot be a God of Love because He banishes unbelievers into endless misery. If they refuse His Son, He gives them no hope that there can be any hereafter for them except that of eternal banishment from His Presence and from the glory of His power. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." And there are some preachers who cover up and try to hide this solemn Truth of God, or speak as if they had velvet in their mouths when they come to deal with it. I shall not do so! By God's Grace, I shall never do so! There is enough love in God to satisfy me and I shall not need to make another god in order that I may believe in his loving kindness! My heart delights to praise the very Jehovah of whom the Psalmist sings, "To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever."

I am quite certain that He never executes judgment with a severity which will be questioned by right minds. And in the Last Great Day, when the whole of this dispensation is wound up, it will be seen that "God is Love." We may not be able to see it now—He may seem to be, as

David says in another Psalm, “terrible out of His holy places.” Jehovah Himself declares that He is a jealous God who will by no means clear the guilty—and there are many who quibble at that, but the Day shall declare it. When the veil is rolled up, to the astonishment of all God’s creatures, it will be seen that He did the best, the wisest and the kindest thing which, all things considered, could have been done and, therefore, though I cannot yet understand all His dealings with the sons of men, yet I believe that they are right and I will praise His name for His loving kindness!

There is a special note, here, which bids us think of *God’s loving kindness in its speciality*. Many quibble at this great Truth of God which seems to me to be self-evident—that Christ should choose His own spouse. They want to have entrusted to them the selection of a bride for Him! They want God to be lackey to the free will of man and that none of His purposes should be carried out unless man permits it! Their notion is that the great Creator must sit and wait till He gets His creature’s permission to be gracious. But as for us, Beloved, we adore the glorious Truth of His electing love. We admire the sovereignty of His Grace and we delight to know that He does as He wills among the inhabitants of this lower world and deals out His mercy, as Paul puts it, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Instead of disputing with idols, or devils, we begin to sing with all our heart concerning the special love of God to His chosen and the favor which He bears towards them that put their trust in Him! We cannot employ our time to better purpose—to argue and debate might be a waste of effort and might depress our own spirit. But to bless the name of the Lord will do us good and will also be to His honor and Glory!

I find that the original bears another meaning—“I will praise Your name *for Your Grace*, and for Your Truth.” Is it not a blessed thing to have that word, “*Grace*,” always in the mouth? “*Grace*.” Is it not one of the sweetest words that God ever permitted human lips to utter? And we often say, “*Free Grace*,” even if some tell us that is tautology. If one tap of the hammer will not suffice, we will give two. If men do not understand what, “*Grace*,” means, we will call it, “*Free Grace*” and we will bless and praise the name of the Lord that we have two such words in the language as, “*Free Grace*!”

The other attribute for which David said that he would praise the name of the Lord is, *God’s Truth*. Our heart may well be sad as we see how men are pecking at God’s Truth. One part of the Bible is given up by one and another part is rejected by another. One of our wise men says, “I have given up all the Old Testament and a large part of the New.” Well, Sir, you might just as well give it all up, because you evidently have no part nor lot in it, or else you would not talk like that! Those gentlemen who want to mend the Bible really need mending themselves! That is where the mischief lies in most cases. If they were savingly converted by the Grace of God, they would love every letter of the Book, from Genesis to Revelation, and find it food to their souls. But they do not know the inner meaning of it and, therefore, they despise the Scripture as being

but husks to them. And I greatly fear that is all that it is to many of them. But as for us, we shall glory in God's Truth—in the historic accuracy of every Word of this blessed old Bible! In the absolute Truth of God of everything that is recorded here! In the certainty of the fulfillment of every promise and every threat that is in this Book! And, what is more, in the absolute correctness of every unfulfilled prophecy as being just as certain as certainty itself! There is where we mean to stand!

We believe in plenary verbal Inspiration, with all its difficulties, for there are not half as many difficulties in that Doctrine as there are in any other kind of inspiration that men may imagine. If this Book is not the real solid foundation of our religion, what have we to build upon? If God has spoken a lie, where are we, Brothers and Sisters? And if this Book, for which the martyrs bled, and which sustained our sires in prison and on their deathbeds—if this precious Book which is today hugged to the heart of many a dying saint—is to be torn away from us, it shall not go without a struggle in which we will, if necessary, sacrifice even our lives! We will never give up the Bible! We will love it in life and in death, and we will still believe that it is the glorious and perfect Revelation, as far as our imperfect minds can discern it, of the loving kindness and Truth of God! And for it we will praise and bless His holy name!

This is what David said he would do, and I recommend all tried saints to do the same.

**IV.** Now, fourthly, there was another thing which David meant to do and that was to REVERENCE GOD'S WORD TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. He puts it thus. "You have magnified Your Word above all Your name." My text is such a great one that I need half-a-dozen nights to discuss it, so I can only give you hints of what I would say if I had the time.

God's name, dear Friends, is revealed in a measure in Nature. In Providence that name may be spelt out, but David tells us, here, that the Lord has magnified His Word above all His name. That is to say that Revelation is made by God to be infinitely superior to Creation and to Providence as a revealing of Himself, for, first, *it is more clear*. If a man paints grand pictures, even if I never saw the man, I know a little about him when I see his paintings. Yes, but if he writes me a letter and in that letter tells me what is in his very heart, I know more about him by his words than I do by his works! And there is more of God in some passages of the Bible than in the whole universe besides! If science could be all known, it would not contain as much real Light of God as there is in a single verse of Scripture, for the best Light of God is in the Word! There is other light, too, but it is only moonlight as compared with the sunlight. God has magnified His Word, for its clearness, above every other method of revealing His name or Character.

It is not only more clear, but it is also *more sure*. If we look into God's works, one man sees one thing and another man sees another. But if you look into God's Word and you have a childlike spirit, you will see what another childlike-spirited man sees. If you are God's child, you will see what others of God's children see there. And in the great fundamental Truths discoverable in His Word, the saints are almost entirely agreed.

The whole universe is not big enough to mirror God in all His Glory. If He looks into the great and wide sea that He has made, the glass is too small to reflect more than a part of His Glory. Suppose that God should reveal Himself fully in Nature? It would soon be seen that the axles of the wheel would be all too weak to sustain the weight of Deity! It is only Revelation that can truly manifest Him to us.

Think again—God’s Word is *more lasting* than His other works. The Revelation of God in Nature is not unique. If He has made one world, He can make another. If He has made one universe, He can make 50 universes! But after having given us one complete Revelation of His will, He will never give another—that one stands alone. What God has made known in the book of Nature will all pass away—there will come a day when the elements, themselves, shall be dissolved with fervent heat and, like a worn-out vesture, all this material creation shall be put away. But, “the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you,” so that God magnifies His Word by making it everlasting. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.”

Does not God magnify His Word in your hearts, dear Friends? You have sometimes been in the fields on the Sabbath and a sweet sense of rest has stolen over you. In the time of harvest, or on a bright morning when the sun has risen, you have been overwhelmed with a sense of the Glory of God. But, still, that sweet feeling never comes to the heart so as to affect its secret springs like a passage out of Scripture! A promise from God will cast more light into your soul than all the beauties of sea and land! I do not for a moment depreciate the wondrous Glory of God in all His works, but, still, I do say God is seen better in His Word than in all His works besides—and He has magnified His Word above all His name! They say that we ought to alter Scripture because scientists have found out something or other. Yes, I know all about that kind of talk! Scientists found out many things years ago and within 10 years somebody else rose up and found out that they were all wrong! The history of so-called philosophy is the history of fools! And the philosophers of this day are no more right than those of 50 years ago. The men are coming to the front who will confute the positive assertions of the present and, when they have made their own assertions, and made their bow, another set of wise men will be coming after them to confound them! They are all as the grass that withers, but, “the Word of the Lord endures forever.” It has been tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times and here it remains—still the pure refined metal—and in this will we glory and not be ashamed!

**V.** Lastly, David was going to PROVE ALL BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. A bit of experience is the best thing with which to close up my discourse. “In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.”

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, men say that facts are stubborn things, and so they are. And when a man once gets a fact with regard to the religion of Jesus Christ, he becomes a stubborn man. The man who is in the

habit of praying to God and who is in the habit of having answers to his prayers—the man who lives a life of prayer and consequently who is enriched by innumerable mercies, says to those who deny the efficacy of prayer—“You may say what you like, but you cannot trouble us about this matter, because I am daily testing and daily proving in my own experience what prayer can accomplish.” “Well,” they say, “you did not get out of the trouble. You prayed, but you did not escape from it.” That is quite true, I did not. But God strengthened me with strength in my soul and it is a grand thing when the mind becomes calm, when the soul grows strong, when courage increases, when confidence comes, when deep peace and quiet restfulness flow into the soul! All that is a blessed answer to prayer and as long as God gives us that, we cannot desert His standard, or deny His faithfulness and His Truth! Let those who will, go and leave the snows of Lebanon, and the pure flowing river of God for the broken cisterns that can hold no water, or for the muddy waters of Egypt—but we cannot, we dare not, we will not! God helping us, we will stand fast in our belief in the power of prayer! We have tried it, we have proved it and we are not to be shaken from our confidence in its efficacy!

The Lord give to everyone of you who do not, at present know it, to prove it yourselves, to try it to your heart’s joy and satisfaction—and you, also, shall stand fast in your confidence in Him even to the end! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 138.**

**Verse 1.** *I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* “Gods or no gods, whatever they may be, ‘I will praise You with my whole heart.’ I will not be ashamed to declare my confidence in Jehovah, whoever may listen to me.”

**2.** *I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.* Now was his time to speak. The gods of the heathen had their worshippers. Then should Jehovah be deserted by His loyal subjects? “No,” says David, “I will worship You, and I will praise You, whoever may oppose me.”

**3.** *In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* What worshipper of idols could ever say that of his god? “Ears have they,” but they hear not the cries of their worshippers. “Hands have they,” but they cannot deliver those who cry to them. “Feet have they,” but they cannot come to the help of their votaries. But David declares that God had heard him in the day of his trouble and strengthened him with strength in his soul.

**4.** *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the Words of Your mouth.* He felt that he had had such good things to say concerning God, such blessed Words of God to make known, that even the kings of the earth, when they began to listen to him, would become

attentive and would even become converts—and begin to praise Jehovah with him.

**5.** *Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the Glory of the Lord.* Think of that—kings singing in the ways of the Lord! Crowned princes becoming choristers in God’s service. Someone has said that there are few in Heaven who wore crowns on earth. And I am afraid it is true that of all who are crowned on earth, few ever get to that land where all are kings and priests unto God. To have a crown on earth and a crown above is a rare thing! But David says that these kings “shall sing in the ways of Jehovah: for great is the Glory of Jehovah,” and they shall be overpowered by that Glory—melted, subdued, wooed, won, converted by its power!

**6, 7.** *Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.* He was a king, yet he expected trouble. And do you complain when it comes to your cottage, after it had been to David’s palace? “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.”

**7.** *You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me.* He expected, first, to be revived, and afterwards to be protected. He believed that God would stretch out His hand, as men do when they make a supreme effort, and put forth all their force—“You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies.” David also expected ultimate preservation—“Your right hand shall save me.’ You will do it dexterously, readily, gladly, will You do it. ‘Your right hand shall save me.’”

**8.** *The LORD will perfect that which concerns me.* “All that has to do with me—my business, my family, my work, my temporal and my eternal interests—‘that which concerns me,’ and that which troubles me, moves my heart with the deepest concern, Jehovah will perfect.”

**8.** *Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.* And He will not do it! He will carry on unto completion the work which He has begun, blessed be His holy name!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—138, 670, 324.**

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# SINGING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD

## NO. 1615

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord:  
for great is the glory of the Lord.”  
Psalm 138:5.*

ACCORDING to the context, this is spoken of kings. “All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” It will be a novel spectacle to see kings singing in the ways of the Lord! As a rule, they have not much troubled themselves with singing, but they have often troubled those who love the ways of God and opposed them, both by their laws and by their example. There will yet be another order of things in the earth! These days will be shortened for the elect’s sake and the time shall come when kings shall fall down before the King of kings and all people shall call Jesus blessed! Oh that the time may speedily arrive when a choir of kings shall, with loud voices, magnify the name of the Lord!

Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, that time has not come yet and, therefore, let *us* sing all the more. If the kings have not begun to sing, let us sing! And well we may. We have full permission to do it, for the next verse encourages us—“Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” He will be just as pleased with the song of the peasant as with that of the prince—with the Psalm of the workman as with that of the monarch! We, too, may come, though obscure and unknown, and we may bring our two mites which make a farthing—and if they are all the praise our soul can give—the Lord will count that we have not given less than kings themselves!

Let us make up for royal silence. If others cannot praise God and speak well of His name, yet let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hands of the enemy! If we do not speak, surely the stones of the street will cry out against us! Therefore I shall take the text and use it in reference to ourselves, believing that for us this promise stands fast, “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.”

**I.** We shall discuss the text under four observations, the first of which is the text itself—“THEY SHALL SING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.” That is to say, first, gracious persons take pleasure in the things of religion. A man’s religion is worth nothing if it is not his chief delight. That which we do before God as task work is ill done and is *not* acceptable. God will not have slaves to grace His Throne! Nor would He be served by us in the spirit of bondage. It is His delight to be served by sons and daughters and to be waited upon by those who do His commandments with delight. If your pleasure is not in the ways of the Lord, then, surely, you *cannot*

know much about those ways. You must be a stranger to them and you must be walking in paths which may *look* like the ways of God, but are not really so.

I do not say that those who know the Lord are always happy, but I say that they are always “the seed that the Lord God has blessed.” I may not say that we are always pleasurable in heart in the ways of wisdom, but I will say of the ways of wisdom, themselves, that they are pleasantness and that all its paths are peace. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we do not groan out our religion! We do not go to our places of worship as slaves went to the calaboose to be flogged! I do see *some* each Sunday who look dreadfully solemn and they walk to their places of worship as if they were going to the gallows and never expected to come back alive—but that is *not* the spirit in which I would have you go up to the House of God! Go with lightly tripping feet, saying—

***“I have been there and still will go  
Tis like a little Heaven below.”***

I would not be kept away, or bought out of the House of God by all that could be offered me. I believe that Sunday should be spent in recreation! You are dreadfully shocked and well you may be—but what do I mean by, “recreation”? It means creating us over anew! Oh, that everybody who talks about spending Sunday in recreation would know the meaning of the word, “recreation,” and would come to be re-created, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, invigorated, strengthened, revived and made to rejoice in God! The Lord’s Day is the highest hill of the week! On that day we stand on tiptoe on Pisgah and look to “the rest which remains for the people of God!” It is the type of that everlasting Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

Now, as it is with Sabbath-keeping and going up to the House of God—that there we sing in God’s ways, so it is with *all* God’s ways—they are all full of delight to His people! Those who heartily enter into them are happy people. “Blessed are the people in whose heart are Your ways.” Their heart shall be full of joy and overflowing with delight. Hence it follows, next, that they do not go out of God’s ways to get their songs. They shall sing in the ways. Alas! I have heard of some who go here and there, as they say, “to get a little pleasure.” What? What? Do I understand you? You find no pleasure in the ways of God? Then, Friend, you are a hypocrite! That is plain English—for he that is *really* in God’s ways finds his pleasure there. That is his chief delight and he can sing, as our hymn puts it—

***“I need not go abroad for joys,  
I have a feast at home!  
My sighs are turned into songs,  
My heart has ceased to roam.”***

Do you call that man a loving husband who says, “Well, you know, you must go away from home sometimes just to have a little pleasure. You cannot always be in the company of your wife and children. You must go from home to get a little pleasure.” That is a bad fellow! I am very sorry for his wife and children. A bad lot. I am sure he is. And he who talks about being married to Christ and joined to His Church—and then says that he goes elsewhere to find his pleasure—is a traitor! I shake my head about

him! I am afraid that I may have to break my heart over him one of these days. When you see professors seeking pleasure in sin and worldliness, there is something rotten at the core! True men of God shall sing in the ways of the Lord and find something to sing of while they are in those ways.

It means, too, that they sing as they are actively engaged in the ways of the Lord. That is to say, while they are engaged in the service of God their hearts are joyous and glad. They do not stop the work to go and sing, but they sing as they work! Sailors, when they pull a rope, make a cheery sound. As they heave the anchor they sing after their fashion. Soldiers march to battle with sounds of trumpet and the beat of drums, listening to music while they march. So Christians go on their pilgrimage and keep step to the sound of joyous Psalms and hymns. They sing in the ways of the Lord. But sometimes the ways of the Lord call for difficult service. Gracious men may have to visit sick and desponding persons. Surely, if they are of any use to the sick, their hearts will sing even while they are sympathizing with them.

They have to talk with those who are anxious and to lead them to the Savior. And I believe there is no way of doing it so well as by showing them the peace which Jesus gives. Perhaps Believers are called to plow fields that seem barren. Yes, but they must still do it! They must be singing as they break the clods; singing as they plow and singing as they sow the Seed of God! That is the best way to do it. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord when those ways call for prayer. Song and prayer are like butter and honey, a royal mixture.

I have heard that of old, in America, the principal day of the year was a day of fasting until some good Divine said that since God had brought the Puritans from England and landed them in a wilderness, but fed them till the wilderness became a garden. And since He had multiplied their numbers till they had become a great nation, He thought it was time that they kept a day of *thanksgiving* and so they have done ever since! A day of prayer should be a day of thanksgiving, too. Saints sing in the ways of earnest prayer. It never dampens the ardor of intercession to give thanks unto the Most High. Whatever you are doing for the Lord, whether it is distributing tracts or teaching the young, mix holy joy with it! I may say of thanksgiving to God what was said of salt in the Bible—"Salt, without prescribing how much." Set no limit to it! Nobody ever sings the high praises of God too often or too heartily! "They shall sing in the ways." And when the ways get very tough and become the paths of sufferings—and the pains are frequent and incessant—then still sing!

No music that goes up to the Throne of God is sweeter in Jehovah's ears than the song of suffering saints. They shall praise Him upon their beds and sing His high praises in the fire! To go right through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and sing all the way. To climb Hill Difficulty and to sing up its crags—to pass by Giant Grim and even by the Castle of Giant Despair and through the Enchanted Ground and still keep singing—and to come to the river's brink and descend into it still singing is lovely in

a Christian! May the statutes of the Lord be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage till we mount to sing above!

Once more, under this first head, I think, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the children of God sing in the ways of God because they are in a cage for singing—in a right state of mind for singing. When we are in the ways of the Lord, dear Friends, we are strong—“They go from strength to strength.” When we walk as God would have us walk, we are made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Limping pilgrims cannot sing, but those whose weakness casts itself upon the strength of God can. Do you know how strong you are? I will be bound to say you are better acquainted with the other question—how weak are you? But do you know how strong you are when God is with you? Why, you are irresistible! The belt of faith girds a man with strength that is only equaled by Omnipotence!

If the Lord is with you, what can stand against you? If God strengthens you, you shall run without weariness; you shall walk without fainting and sometimes you shall even mount as upon the wings of eagles! Well may that pilgrim sing who is made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. You have safety, also, for in the ways of the Lord all His servants are protected from danger. On the king’s highway “no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon.” You shall be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” in the ways of the Lord. Well may that traveler sing who is perfectly safe! He holds his tongue if there are thieves about and robbers likely to pounce upon him. But when he feels that he is under the guardian care of the Lord of the Ways who has given His angels charge over him to keep him—yes, when he feels that the Lord, Himself, is round about him like a wall of fire—he must sing in the ways! Strength and safety are ours and, therefore, let us sing!

Saints also sing in the ways of God because they have guidance. He that does not know whether he is in the right way or not may well be silent, but he that is sure about his road—yes, sure about it even to his journey’s end—may well sing in the ways! We have One with us who will lead us into all the Truths of God—we have the Comforter with us who will direct our ways even to the end—how can we keep from singing? Pilgrims bound to Zion’s city who have such a Conductor as the Infallible Spirit of God ought to sing! It would be *treason* on their part if they did not! Strength, safety, guidance—surely these should make us glad.

And then, besides that, we have provision all along the road. The pilgrim who does not know where he will lodge at night feels a little anxious. But if he knows where there is an inn, or where he has a friend, he goes along right cheerily. I know nothing about my way to Heaven from this spot to Heaven’s gate—but this I do know—there are places of refreshment provided for God’s weary pilgrims every day and every night until we enter into the great mansion of God above. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” Perhaps we shall halt at Elim, where there are wells and palm trees. But if we do not come to Elim, we shall rest somewhere else. There is sure to be a place of shelter for the saints in every night of their travel. Therefore do we sing in the ways of

the Lord, for our pasture is on all high places. It is a way of abundant provision and we may well sing, for the Lord continually fills our hearts with gratitude.

As we journey on in the ways of the Lord, fresh streams of comfort come to us from one earthly source and another, but chiefly from the great Source of everlasting consolation, even from Christ Jesus, Himself. I can speak well of the ways of the Lord and earnestly stir up all my fellow pilgrims to sing in them, for they have been good ways to me. Let us march on and sing on! Let us proceed with a step and a song, a step and a song! Let our halting places be charmed with sacred Psalmody and may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, abide with us and keep us singing the praises of God! That is the first observation—"they shall sing in the ways."

**II.** But I find that Dr. Gill gives another reading of the text, "THEY SHALL SING OF THE WAYS OF THE LORD," that is true doctrine and an admissible translation and so we will dwell upon it. "They shall sing of the ways of the Lord." Not only are God's ways the place of their song but the *subject* of their song. How shall we sing of the ways of the Lord? We will arrange them under two heads. We will sing of God's ways to us and we will sing of our ways which lead us to God. We will sing of God's ways to us, but where shall we begin? Shall we begin where God began with us? With that eternal council chamber—with that Divine Predestination—with that secret decree of salvation by which He separated His people from the mass of the world and made them to be His before the earth was?

Here is a grand beginning! We will sing of the eternal ways of God in His purpose and decrees before time began! But then we shall have to sing of God's actual ways when the time for the fulfillment of the purpose came—of the Covenant and all its provisions—of the Incarnate God descending to the manger. We shall have to sing of that same Incarnate God opening His heart to pour out the purchase price of our redemption! Oh, the ways of the Lord with us through Christ Jesus and through the Spirit who was given because Jesus ascended to His Father and to your Father! What a subject!

Then we will sing of the ways of God in the application of Redemption to us, His people—how He convinced us of sin and led us to the Savior—and how, since then, He has led us by a right way, helped us, comforted us, chastened us, directed us, opened all His rich treasures to us, communed with us, told us the very secret of His soul, wiped our tears away, removed our fears, charmed our hearts! This is a long, long story, and each Believer sees a new phase of it in his own experience. Surely, the mere hints I have given are enough to show that we may well sing of the ways of the Lord! And you never need be ashamed to sing of those ways. David says, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways." God's ways are such gracious ways, such wise ways, such holy ways, such ways of wisdom and of lovingkindness, that in any company we may talk about them and in every place we may sing of them! We will sing of the ways of the Lord with us.

But then the next thing, and the main thing in this particular passage, is to sing of our ways *to* God. What is there to sing of with respect to those

ways of God by which we come to Him? I think that there is everything in them to sing about! For one, I am so glad that I am in the ways of the Lord when I remember where I once was. As a dear Brother said in prayer before this service began, what a mercy to be plucked like a brand from the burning! The saddest saint is, after all, happier than the most glad sinner! The best house in the City of Destruction, where everything is to be burnt with fire, is not equal to the poorest shanty on the road to Heaven, where, if the pilgrim fares hard, he is on the way to Glory! When we think of where we used to be—of the city from where we came. When we think of Egypt and the iron furnace, the bondage and the slavery from which God has brought us out with a high hand and an outstretched arm—why, we ought to sing in the ways of the Lord!

But, then, it is not only where we came *from*, but it is where we are *going* that should make us sing in the ways of the Lord. When Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, was a preacher of the Gospel and a young man, he set his affection upon a young lady who was an heiress. Her father said, “Mr. Henry is, no doubt, a good man, and a scholar and a gentleman, but he is a poor man. And I would have you remember that we hardly know where he came from.” “Oh! Father,” said the young lady, “but I know where he is *going* and he is going where *I* should like to go with him. Do not let that stand in the way.” And it did not!

That is the point about all God’s people. We know where we are going and we can sing in the ways of God because we know where the road ends. Unconverted men and women, every step you take, you are a step nearer Hell. It is a very solemn thought, but I want you to remember it. Every hour that you unconverted people live, you are an hour nearer to the pit that burns with the wrath of God! Oh, I pray you, think of that! But the man who is a Believer is on a road which brings him, every step, *nearer Heaven!* I do not know a sweeter hymn than that which we sometimes sing—

**“And nightly pitch our moving tent  
A day’s march nearer Home.”**

And what a Home it is! Oh, if our way Home lay through 7,000 Hells, yet the end would be worth it! If we had to pass through deaths as many as the hairs of our head, yet five minutes with Christ would make up for all our pain! I am sure that it is so! Let us, therefore, press forward singing, because we are getting nearer to the place where song shall be our element forever.

They shall sing of the ways of the Lord because they know where they come from and where they are going. But about the ways themselves. Well, we sing of them because it is a good road. The road to Heaven is a splendid road and it has had some fine travelers on it. The way the holy Prophets went. The road that leads from banishment. The King’s highway of holiness. I’ll go, for all His paths are peace. The glory of that way is that the Prince Emmanuel trod it! With sorrowful steps He traversed that way and He has left the prints of His pierced feet all along it—it is for us to feel that it must be a good way—since holy men and their glorious leader have walked it. It is a way in which many who are very dear to us have gone—

some of whom have reached the end of it now. Some of us can track the footprints of a grandfather, a grandmother, uncles and aunts. We rejoice to be going to Heaven with father, mother, friends, relatives and dear ones whom we cherish. The way is good enough for them—I am sure it is good enough for us!

Lately our modern divines have pretended to improve the road. They have taken up the stones and laid down a rotten wood pavement which is very slippery for pilgrims! But we will have none of their nonsense. The road that was good enough for Whitefield and Wesley is quite good enough for me! And the road that suited John Bunyan and the Puritans is quite to my mind. These modern ways are a modern nuisance and I would like to see them deserted forever. We can do better with the good old way than with any of these refinements—

***“We are going forth with our staff in hand,  
Thro’ a desert wild in a stranger land.  
But our faith is bright and our hope is strong,  
And the Good Old Way is our pilgrim song,  
‘Tis the Good Old Way, that our fathers trod,  
‘Tis the Way of Life, and it leads to God.  
‘Tis the only path to the realms of day,  
We are going home in the Good Old Way.”***

We love to sing of the way because there is good company in it. No company in the world is equal to that of those who are going on pilgrimage to Heaven. If I meet with any who are not going there, I can enjoy their talent and their interesting conversation, but their talk is poor, after all. We say when the conversation is over, “That was a fine gentleman and he made merry company, but it did us no good. Better far to get with half a dozen godly old women at a cottage meeting than waste time with him.”

Let us meet with those who talk about Jesus Christ and experimental godliness, however ungrammatical their language may be, sooner than sit with the greatest of worldlings whose conversation lacks a savor of Christ! Go you in the ways with a song, because there is such good company to sing with. And there is such good accommodation on the road. I have told you of that, before. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” God in Providence makes all things work together for good. Our heavenly Father bids the angels keep watch and ward about His children. God gives us the provender of His promise and supplies our souls so that no good thing is kept from us. Well may we sing, then, in the ways of the Lord.

We sing because we have such fine prospects on the road. Down in the Valley of Humiliation—why, no scenery is lovelier! Upon the hilltops of Amana, Tabor and Pisgah, when the Beloved is with us, what views of Himself and of His coming and of His Kingdom and of the Glory to be revealed open up before us! The way seems short with all these pleasant views before our mind’s eyes and we burst forth into singing in the ways of the Lord! But the best of it is that we have daylight to travel by, for we are not the children of darkness. We walk in the Light of God to the Kingdom of Light. Even when we say that it is dark with us, we do not mean

that it is so dark as it is with the sinner when it is bright with him, for our darkest darkness is brighter than the sinner's brightest brightness!

As I have often said, I would sooner be God's dog than the devil's darling. Better to lie like God's Lazarus, full of sores, with no surgeons but the dogs, than go and sit up there clothed in scarlet with pampered Dives! Oh, yes, we are a joyful people and we travel by daylight to Heaven—the Light of God we have from Christ, and the Light of God we have within will melt into the eternal light! Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us sing of the ways of the Lord! When we have a mind for a tune, let us sing about God's goodness to us in His ways—

***“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below!  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.  
Then let our songs abound!  
And every tear be dry;  
We're marching through  
Emmanuel's ground  
To fairer worlds on high.”***

**III.** The third observation is that THOSE WHO SING IN THE WAYS OF GOD ALSO SING OF THE LORD OF THE WAY. “They shall sing the ways of the Lord.” And then some read it, “That great is the glory of the Lord.” That is the subject of their song. When they sing about the Lord of the Way, this Psalm supplies us with the points of their song. Kindly open it and keep your eyes upon it. “I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the gods will I sing praise unto You.” What for? “I will worship toward Your holy temple and praise Your name.” What for, David? “For Your lovingkindness.” God is kind, but He is more than that. It is *lovingkindness*. A man breaks a leg and the surgeon sets the bone. That is kindness. But suppose the man's mother could set the bone? Oh, how she would do it with lovingkindness! When the surgeon's own son is under his hand and the surgeon is dealing with a broken bone, it is not only kindness, but lovingkindness—the sweetest of the sweet—the kindest of the kind!

Now, that is how God has dealt with us. Oh, how tenderly! “Your gentleness has made me great.” He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Was there ever a God so good to anybody as God has been to us? I reckon myself to be the darling child of His Providence and I think I hear many of you say, “And so are we!” Some of you, perhaps, have had more whipping than others—not so much because you deserved it but because, “Whom the Lord loves He chastens.” Often the master is hardest with that boy in the school who is getting on best because chiding will make him grow. He will find no fault with a dull, stupid boy—he never can make much of him—but the very one who does the best is he whom he drives on the most vigorously, for he means to make a senior wrangler of him.

So, perhaps, you, dear Friends, are having more pruning than anybody else because you are a branch that will grow with pruning and will bring forth better grapes. There is more love in the chastening that you get than in the gentler way in which God deals with others. Come, let us bless His

name! He is a loving God! Let us sing in His ways and chant the tune of His lovingkindness. And what next? “For Your lovingkindness and for Your truth.” Ah, that is a blessed thing—a faithful God, a true God, a God that cannot lie—a God that cannot fail His people, a God that never breaks His promise or forgets it. Oh, come, let us sing unto His name while we are in His ways! Let us tell the world that men of high degree are vanity and men of low degree are a lie, but our God is true!

Let us tell the world that riches make to themselves wings and fly away; that honor and fame are but so much wasted breath and empty air! But let us tell them that God is—and that in Him there is substantial good and faithfulness that never fails! Here is a sweet song for you to sing concerning the Lord of the Way while you are in the way! David goes on to say, “In the day when I cried, You answered me and strengthened me with strength in my soul.” Answered prayers make a fine set of hymns! Old prayers make new songs! When God hears prayers, we should let Him hear them again! When He has heard them as prayers, then let Him hear them as praises! We are often faulty here. I am afraid that we go to God with our errands when we are in need, for we have a cupboard love for Him. We are like many a dog to his master—he loves his master for the bones he gives him.

I do not say that we ever rise *above* that—we love the Lord because He has heard our prayers and our supplications, but let us sometimes go to the Lord wholly to praise Him. Say, “Lord, this time I will not ask anything of You except a grateful heart. And if You give me that, then I will praise You and praise You, and praise You because my soul is wholly taken up with adoring gratitude for what I have received.” Oh, dear Friends, file your prayers when God does not hear them, and when He does hear them, put them in another file! Keep a silver file for prayers that are unanswered, but a golden file for prayers that are answered so that you may render unto Him according to the benefit you have received! Psalms penned at the Mercy Seat when petitions are granted are sweet sonnets for the children of God.

The next subject for song is God’s condescension. Read the sixth verse and let your heart sing it—“Though the Lord is on high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” Oh, do sing this! I remember when I was but a youth and began to preach the Gospel and won souls to Christ—they called me “the boy preacher”—oh how I used to bless the Lord that He would save souls by a boy! Obscure and unknown, but yet the Lord thought of me and used me! I cannot help praising Him on my own account because of that. Very likely some of you are in the same condition. You may be poor; you may have little talent; you may be quite unknown, but though the Lord is on high, yet has He respect unto the lowly! He hears the praises of the unknown! Wonderful is the power of “the great unknown.”

I am persuaded that the strength of the Church lies in its unknown members and possibly the soul of the music that goes up from earth to Heaven lies in the unknown singers unnamed among men, who, nevertheless, praise God day and night. Oh, bless Him that He thinks of you! O you maidens, whom He looks upon as He did on her of old who said, “My

soul does magnify the Lord, for He has remembered the low estate of His handmaiden,” praise His name! And O, you matrons, remember Hannah, whose sweet song in the Old Testament was to the same effect as Mary’s in the New Testament! She, too, praised Him who looked upon the weak and the feeble, but caused the bows of the mighty ones to be broken. Condescending love is a charming theme.

Have you got through that list of songs, dear Friends? Then I have another subject for you. Just read on and begin to sing of God’s *delivering* mercy! “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.” Someone says, “Why, that is a song about something that is to *be done*.” That is so. We ought to have quite a collection of songs for the future—

**“And a new song is in my mouth,  
To long-loved music set!  
Glory to You for all the Grace  
I have not tasted yet.”**

Did you ever praise God for tomorrow’s dinner? “We have not had it yet.” No, but you *will* have it. Thank God for it tonight! Martin Tupper recommends young men, long before they are married, to pray for the wives that they will have, and there is good sense in his advice. Don’t you think that it is right for us to pray ahead a bit? Yes? Well, if it is right to pray ahead, let us *praise* God ahead for the mercies that we are to have!

When I lay very sick, I used to praise God at the thought of getting better. I could not help it. I was so glad when I thought of standing in the pulpit again! I am sure I praised God for this night’s sermon six months ago. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us bless the Lord for the favors which the Lord has laid up for them that fear Him! When you do not seem to have anything to sing about, today, sing about what is going to be tomorrow! And if there seems to be nothing on earth to sing about, sing about the everlasting future! Soon you shall never be tempted to say, “What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and with what shall I be clothed?” You shall have no cares to fret you, nor sins to repent of, for you shall be perfect before the Throne of God, clean escaped from all the dangers and the trials of the way! Come, let us sing for what *will* be! “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.”

In the last verse there is something to sing about which certain of our friends are afraid of—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Sing of final preservation! Some good people are not sure of that. They say, “Saints fall from Grace. God begins a good work in them, but He leaves them and they do not get to Heaven.” Brother, if you cannot reach the note of final salvation, put your fingers as high on the harp strings as they will go! But I am happy to say that mine can touch this lofty note, for if there is a doctrine that I am certain of, it is the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! I will undertake to say that if the Bible does not teach that, it does not teach anything!

Words have ceased to have a meaning if the Bible does not teach the eternal life of true Believers! At least to my soul it is so. Hear these words—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “He that drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of wa-

ter springing up into everlasting life.” Why, there are 50 reasons why he that has the Grace of God truly in him and is really born unto God shall not fall away! But one said to me some time ago, “Yonder man has fallen from Grace and has been regenerated three times.” “Oh,” I said to him, “You need a new word then—re-re-regenerated.”

I have heard of the new birth, but I never heard of a newer birth! I have heard of being born again, but I never heard of being born again and again and again! I discover no trace of it in the Word of God, but I do see distinct tokens that it is impossible. It is written—“If these shall fall away, it is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they have crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.” There is a life which God puts into the soul and that life is eternal! *If* it could die—*if* that were *possible*—the man would be hopelessly dead. “If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is from now on good for nothing, but to be trodden under foot of men.” “We believe better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” “Faithful is He that has called you, who also will do it.” “He will perfect that which concerns me” and, therefore, I will sing this song to my stringed instruments as long as I live—

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

Now *there* is something to sing about!

**IV.** And now I close with the fourth observation, which is this—THEY SHALL SING TO THE LORD OF THE WAY, AS WELL AS OF THE LORD OF THE WAY. “They shall sing in the ways, for great is the glory of the Lord.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us take care that all our songs are to the honor and praise of God, for if we ever sing to our own praise it will be idolatry! I fear much public worship is thus marred. We heard of a man in Boston, in America, praying such a grand prayer that the newspapers said, the next day, that it was, “the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience.” I am afraid that a good deal of praying is of that sort and I am sure much singing is no better. Why, we hear of churches where four people are hired to do the praise of God and all the people sit still and listen to them! And that is according to the New Testament, is it? It must be a very “revised version,” surely!

I find nothing of that sort in the Book I have been accustomed to use. Let *all* the people of God praise Him! Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation. “Such very remarkable singing! The place is quite renowned for its musical performances.” This is a poor achievement! Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure—singing in which there is not so much art as *heart*—not so much of musical sound as of *spiritual* emotion. They shall sing to the glory of God!

And mark this, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you and I sing with the Spirit and the understanding, we shall increase the manifested Glory of God by bringing others to sing in His ways. Sinners pass by God's ways, sometimes, and as they go by, though they cannot see, for they are blind, they can *hear* something, and they say to one another, "Who are those people that tramp along the road?" They are pilgrims to Heaven. And the sinners say, "Let us stop and listen a bit." They listen and they hear the pilgrims groaning along, and moaning along, and one says to another, "Let us go the other way. Let us escape from such miserable company."

But another time a number stand listening by the side of the hedge and they ask, "Are these pilgrims going along? Why, they are singing! Are they Methodists? Are they Presbyterians? Are they that strait-laced kind of people?" "Yes." Well, but they are singing and they sing very heartily, too! They seem to be uncommonly merry. Is that their general way? "Oh, yes," says one, "and they have good reason to be happy. I was with one of them and he was telling me what the Lord had done for him—and I thought that if the Lord had done as much for me I should be happy, too." "And do you know any of these people? Are they troubled as we are?" "Oh, yes, they have their troubles, but they take their cares to their heavenly Father and find rest." "Then," says one, "I would like to go to their meetings and learn their secret"—and so they come and find the Savior!

Legions of flies are caught by this honey! Many are brought to God by the sweet lives of His people. If we can always rejoice in the Lord, we shall bring many to God who otherwise would have turned on their heels and said, "We will have nothing to do with these dull dreamers. We are too young to lose all our joy in life." Tell the young people that the most joyous life is the life that is nearest to God—that the most merry life is the life of the man who has found all for this world, and all for the world to come, in God and in His Christ! God help you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to sing all day long and may you even have "songs in the night," to the glory of Him whose name is—"the happy God." Amen.

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# **CHOICE COMFORT FOR A YOUNG BELIEVER NO. 1506**

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

***“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy,  
O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.”  
Psalm 138:8.***

CONTINUALLY I am clearing the ground and laying the foundation of eternal salvation in the Grace of God which was manifested in Christ Jesus when He came into the world to save sinners. This I did this morning and the Lord has set His seal thereon right speedily, which is to me a sure proof that the frequent preaching of the foundation Truths of God is according to the mind of God. That necessary work cannot be done too often, for men need to hear the true Gospel as often as they hear the striking of the hour and even then, they forget it. Yet do not all forget. There are a few, like those who were saved with Noah, who seek the Ark of salvation and live.

To those who have newly come to put their trust in Jesus I wish to speak this evening and I do so with much delight, for as the sight of the new-born babe makes glad the mother, so does the news of a new-born soul fill me with exceeding joy! Good tidings have come to my ears! We do not often sow and reap quite so quickly as I have done on this occasion, for since this morning's service I have hopeful evidence that God has blessed the Word to many souls and my beloved fellow helpers, who watch around this congregation like scouts around an army, report that the slain of the Lord have been many.

Now, between half-past twelve o'clock this morning and this time in the evening such souls have gone a day's journey towards Heaven and already they have begun, I dare say, to question themselves and possibly to be exercised with some few fears. Thus early they may have met with lions in the way, or have found worse than real lions in their own fears. They have only lately known the Lord, but already they are growing anxious and looking into the future with a somewhat troubled gaze. Therefore we come forth lovingly as a shepherd hastens to cherish the newborn lambs. We come to the little ones with words of good cheer, for they need them and we have special orders from our Master to see that they are tenderly comforted.

We trust to also speak to those who have known the Lord for many years, some words of help with regard to matters which may now be causing *them* alarm. The consolations of the Lord are very reviving and they abound in number, therefore let small and great partake of them. “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” When a man becomes a Christian and the Grace of God commences its work in his soul, he learns

to be serious and thoughtful. That is one of the first noticeable changes in him. He renounces his former carelessness and indifference and becomes a sober, considerate man in whose mind there is a deep concern as to his own character in the sight of God. He is concerned about the temptations he meets with in his walk among the sons of men lest these temptations should be too much for him and he should be betrayed into sin.

He longs to lead a holy life. In fact, holiness is his great concern. He prays that he may leave such a life behind him for others to remember as shall be worth their following as an example. He asks himself, "Will the hope I have just obtained really endure to the last days of my life? Will it sustain me amidst the pangs and weaknesses of death? Is it truly such that when I go before the burning Throne of God, Himself, I need not tremble?" Such matters were sport to him once—they are serious questions now. He has thrown down the cap and bells of the jester and taken up the staff of a pilgrim and the sword of a warrior, confessing in an unmistakable manner that "life is real, life is earnest."

He is a man of *concern* now, concerned about his soul's affairs, his sins, his life, his death, his eternal salvation. A solemn air is about him—he hears the wheels of eternity sounding in his ears, he girds his loins for his lifework and he puts away childish things. This is all well, but as every state has its dangers, so the peril of religious *concern* is despondency. Thoughtfulness soon degenerates into distrust and holy anxiety easily rusts into unbelief. The more a man looks within him, the less he can trust himself, and the more a man looks around him, the more he feels that he is in danger and so he is apt very early in his Christian course to be downcast and much afraid and to say within himself, "I shall surely one day fall by the hands of the enemy. My confidence will prove to be a delusion and my conversion a fiction." He is fearful as to the result of future temptations like a fresh recruit in the battle who feels certain that every boom of the cannon proclaims his death.

Now I want, if God will help me, to meet such fears tonight. May the Divine Spirit enable us to have a strong and mighty faith in God, not only with regard to past transgression, which is clean gone through the atoning blood, but with regard to all the difficulties and dangers of the present and future. And may we drink into the spirit of the text which is now before us—"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands."

Here, first, we see that *God fills us with assurance*—"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Secondly, *He gives us rest in His mercy*—"Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." And thirdly, *He puts prayer into our hearts and supplies us with a plea*—"Forsake not the works of Your own hands." May God, the Holy Spirit most graciously help us in this meditation.

**I.** At the beginning of our text, to meet our fears about the future, THE LORD FILLS US WITH ASSURANCE. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." You see the assurance is, first, that *God is really at work on our behalf*. Get a grip of this, you troubled ones, and by a personal faith say, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." You have come to Je-

sus and trusted your soul in His hands—we take it for granted that you have done so—then it is certain that the Lord has brought you to this state of mind, for never did a man in this world simply come and trust in Christ unless the Spirit of God had led him to it. What says the Savior? “No man comes unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him.”

You would never have come to a simple reliance upon the mediatorial work and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus if there had not been a work of Grace in your soul! Every effect has a cause and all spiritual faith is created in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Since the Lord has begun to save you, your confidence with regard to the future must be that He who began this good work will continue to operate in your soul. If the work of God upon your heart were discontinued—your life, your hope, your faith, your love would be discontinued, too—for you only live because the Holy Spirit lives and works in you! The same power which first made the world and built yonder arch of azure must sustain it still, or the world would feel its final crash and the blue dome would utterly dissolve.

Continued outgoings of power from the Creator are essential to the continued existence of creation! There is neither power, nor life, nor being apart from God. This is true in the kingdom of Grace as much as in that of Nature—we are gracious because God gives us Grace and we keep His ways because the Lord keeps us by His power unto salvation. The new life within us has been created by the Lord and by Him it must be sustained. Let no one of my hearers forget this. You are to put your reliance upon the working of the eternal power and Godhead within your soul, for there is the fountain of Grace and from there the streams must flow.

Now mind you, if you base your reliance upon your own perseverance, your own prayerfulness, your own spirituality, your own strength of resolution, or your own settledness of purpose, you will learn that “cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” Of all the men in the world who are unfit to be trusted, the most unfit one is yourself! It were almost better to trust your fellow man than to trust in yourself. “Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” I think you will see that the first clause of the text means just this—“*The Lord will perfect that which concerns me,*” not, “I will perfect it myself,” but, “*The Lord will do it.*” There is a consciousness that God is at work and the full assurance that *He will still be at work* in order to complete that which He has commenced.

Have you obtained a religion which is not the work of God? Then I would exhort you to get rid of it! If your religion shines and glitters and seems to you to be inexpressibly lovely, yet if it has budded out of your own nature, or is the result of your own free will and is not traceable to the operation of Divine Grace and to Divine Grace alone, do as the man did with the bad banknote—throw it down on the highway, or into a ditch and run swifly from it. Let no one know that the homemade counterfeit belongs to you! For it is worthless now and it will prove deceptive at the last. But if the religion you have received is the work of God, then be certain that He who began the work will perfect it. Be well assured that He who works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure will always find a

pleasure in thus working and will never forsake the work of His own hands.

The Psalmist, however, did not merely believe that God was at work and *would* be at work, but he affirms that He will complete the work. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Has He begun it? Then, my Soul, rest sure of this, that He will finish it! Have you ever seen an unfinished work of God? If you had been present on the second or the third day of the week of Creation you might have seen a work unfinished. Before the morning stars sang together over a perfect creation, many things were made, but the complete chain of being was not as yet visible. But did the Almighty pause in the middle of the week and leave His design unfinished?

How would the record of creation run? That God had made the light but had not made the sun? That He had made the waters, but had not divided them from the land, or said to the sea, “Up to here shall you go, but no farther”? No, the first day of Creation was a guarantee of the five which followed it and of the grand day of rest which crowned the week! You might have been certain from that very first day when He said, “Let there be light,” that He meant to make eyes to see the light. And when there were living creatures for each domain of Nature, beasts of the field, fowl of the air and fish of the sea, you might be morally certain that He meant to crown the kingdom of Nature by bringing forth into it a being to whom He should say, “I have made you to have dominion over the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the sea.”

God’s beginnings ensure His endings. He makes no mistake in the plan and feels no weariness in the execution and, therefore, when He puts forth His hand He never draws it back till His work is done. It is always so. Devils of Hell and men under their influence, no doubt think to stop the path of God in Divine Providence, but He who can lift the telescope of prophecy and can see the end of the present age, may also hear the ultimate millennial song of, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns” going up from every hill and dale of this emancipated earth! No machinations of Hell or craft of the Prince of Darkness can ever prevent the Lord from bringing about the consummation of His promise for which His Church is daily praying.

Here then, youthful Believer, is your confidence—you have begun to be a Christian! God’s Grace has just changed your heart. You are anxiously asking, “How shall I persevere to the end? How shall I arrive at perfection?” You shall be kept and perfected by the Lord in whom you trust! The same power which commenced a good work in you can complete it and will complete it! Do you doubt it? Think of what is done at the beginning of spiritual life and let this confirm you as to its end. The Holy Spirit raises men from the dead—can He not keep them alive after He has made them alive? He brings His people out of Egypt in the day that they believe—do you think that He who brings them out cannot preserve them in the wilderness till He lands them in Canaan?

He has already given us Christ to be the Bread of Heaven, will He not furnish us with that Bread till we shall enter into the purchased posses-

sion? Let us rest in confidence! Our Alpha will be our Omega and He will secure every letter which lies between, for it is not His way to lay a foundation without building thereon even to the top stone! Now, I want you to have this blessed confidence that God is at work and will finish what He has begun and I would have you carry this confidence into *everything*. You may take it into Providence—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you there. Dear Friend, you have a plan on hand. You say, “I wish I could be sure that I shall carry it through. Can you tell me?” No, I cannot. I can tell you this, however, that if it really ought to be your purpose, if it is God’s plan for you for life, you will carry it through.

I have known men, actuated by their own folly, obstinately choose a pursuit for which they were not fit. And in such cases one of the best things that the Lord can do for them is to make them suffer shipwreck and lose their all. It would have been a bad case for our friend Jonah if he had really gone down to Tarshish, for I do not know what he would have done *there*—he could not have turned sailor, for no crew would have endured so sour a comrade! It was a great mercy for him when he was thrown into the sea and was forced to travel towards Nineveh in the fish’s belly. And so, sometimes we enter upon a giant scheme of our own inventing, but it is not the Lord’s scheme and so it comes to nothing. Like Jehosaphat, we make ships of Tarshish go to Ophir for gold, but they go not for they are broken at Eziongaber as Jehosaphat’s navy was. And we complain, perhaps, but it is better to *submit*, for it comes forth from the Lord of Hosts who is amazing in counsel and excellent in working.

He often perfects that which truly concerns us by taking us away from that which never ought to concern us. It may be, dear Hearer, that the Lord is dealing thus with you. You have been setting up in business in the direction of your own choice and not of His. So He ends that matter by a heavy loss and you may be very thankful that He does. But that course of life which you have submitted to His wisdom, which you have taken up in obedience to the plain indications of His Providence which you follow out with integrity, walking before the Lord with all singleness of purpose and committing your way unto Him—that course of life, I say, shall have His blessing and none shall be able to put you on one side. He will perfect, in your case, that which concerns you.

The Lord told David that he should be a king. It did not look very likely when he was a lowly shepherd, but since such was the purpose of the Eternal, there was no keeping the son of Jesse off the throne! He is called to court and there Saul’s javelin almost makes an end of him! He goes to battle and takes a giant’s head and that brings the king’s envy upon him. He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains by those who thirsted for his life, *but he must be king*—no Saul or Deog could hinder the Divine decree—David must be king! Though he will not lift a hand to smite Saul, yet must his persecutor vacate the royal seat for him. Judah shall acknowledge him, but half a crown shall not be enough. Speedily shall Israel submit to him. The Lord must perfect that which concerns him and make him king over the whole nation and establish the throne to his seed after him.

Now, my Brother, if the Lord has called you to the work of the ministry, the devil cannot shut the mouth that God opens! If He has called you to any post of honor or difficulty in His Church, or for His cause, you will arrive at it and your hands shall be sufficient for you. Whatever may stand in the way, the Lord will carry you through and perfect that which concerns you. Rest you sure of that! "If I thought so," says one, "I should be much more quiet than I am." Think so, my Brother, and be quiet! "Oh, but I should feel more confidence." Have confidence, Brother! Perhaps that very confidence will be the means to the end and help you to succeed. "Such assurance would make me more patient and I should not put out my hand so hastily if I knew that what I am hoping for would come in due time."

Do not put out your hand hastily, Brother. Keep back just as David did when there was Saul lying before him sound asleep and his spear was ready for fatal use. Then his friend said to him, "Let me smite him but this once." It could have been done in an instant and the crown would have been gained by a single stroke! But David did not take the business into his own hands—he would leave matters with God. Though a sin may seem to be the straight line which leads to an end, yet be sure of this, that it is always the longest way! The nearest way to be a gainer forever is to be a loser for the present for conscience sake, while the road to failure and to shame is found in the tempting path of hastening to be rich. Be sure that it is no business of yours to perfect that which concerns you in Providence. God has promised to do it and only presumption will dare to interfere. "Stand still and see the salvation of God" is often the wisest policy as well as the truest heroism. Take care that you put not forth an unbelieving hand to snatch the unripe fruit from the tree. Wait, and in patience possess your soul.

But this, dear Friends, is more especially true in the work of Grace in the *heart*. In that case the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. You have only a little faith. It looks like a spark and scarcely can be called a flame, but it will increase until it burns aloft like a beacon fire. The Lord will give you an Abrahamic faith if you will wait upon Him for it and exercise what faith you already possess. Trust Him, trust Him with your faith! Trust Him with your trust! You have a little love and you sigh to be altogether taken up with affection for your Lord—such affection shall be worked in you before long—even that "perfect love, which casts out fear." Trust God with your love and the God of Love will reveal Himself in you till your whole soul is saturated with gratitude!

You have some little of the likeness of Christ already. Walk before the Lord in all confidence and He will sketch the image of Christ upon your character to perfection and you shall become so manifestly Christly that men shall know you to be Christ's disciple by your very speech! You are a long way from being perfect, you say. Ah, but you shall be perfect—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. Will you know yourself, Brother, when you are made perfect? I do not expect to see you coming up these aisles when you have reached that point, for another and better assembly will claim you and gain you! If at some future period of your so-

jour here I should hear you say, "I am perfect," I shall know better at once, for you will prove your pride by your silly bragging! Yet you *will*, one day, be completely holy and spotlessly pure.

You and I and all those who trust in Christ shall be perfect—every sin cast out, every virtue brought to harmonious completeness. We shall be holy as our Father in Heaven. "Oh," says one, "that is the best news I ever heard! Shall I be perfect?" Yes, as surely as you are in the perfect Christ, so surely shall you be perfect with Him. We shall be holy, unblameable and unprovable in His sight in the day of His appearing. Even while we are here, we are struggling after perfection—this is the goal to which we run—this is the target at which we aim. That we may perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord and be sanctified spirit, soul and body is the high ambition of our lives! Let us never despair of it, for there stands the promise—"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me."

Now, if this is true in Providence and true of the work of Grace in us, it is also true of the work of Grace all around us. How often do I go before the Lord with the weight of this Church and all its institutions upon me! I cry from my heart, "What will come of them all?" Then it is my confidence and delight that the Lord will perfect that which concerns me! Up to now He has helped me in a marvelous manner and why should I fancy that He will forsake me, seeing that with all my heart I desire to honor Him? Only have trust in God, you who live for the Glory of Christ and, as your day your strength shall be. You shall go forth conquering and to conquer if your sword is drawn only in Christ's quarrel!

If your charge is but a few children in the Sunday school, or if it is the raising of a cause for Christ in a hamlet or a village, only give your whole soul to it and rest in God and you shall find Him perfecting that which concerns you! Why, we have not half the confidence in God about our religious efforts that we ought to have! We go to work with a faint heart and tremblingly hope that perhaps we shall succeed. Look how amazed we are when we find a soul converted here and there—and what a noise we make over a solitary convert—like a hen that has laid a single egg and must tell all the world about it! If we had more confidence in God, we would *expect* converts by the hundreds and we would have them!

We should go to work with the great weapon of the Gospel which God has put into our hands and, with the power which God has promised, we would see the kingdom given unto Messiah and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hands! May we have faith enough to be certain that our unchanging God will perfect that which concerns us. So I leave that first part, trusting that our hearts may be filled with quiet assurance by the Holy Spirit.

**II.** And now, secondly and very briefly, THE LORD GIVES US REST IN HIS MERCY, for what says the text, "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." See, my Brothers and Sisters, how this works in us rest from fear? "Alas!" sighs one troubled heart, "I fear I shall fall into many sins between here and Heaven." Well may you have that dread, my Brother. But you may readily overcome the fear by singing in your heart, "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." The blood of Atonement will never fail and, there-

fore, mercy will always endure. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”—

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

Your sins between here and Heaven shall be forgiven you, so let the dread of condemnation be banished!

Then comes up another fear—“But I do not see how I am to be perfected. My nature is so vile. I find such resistance to the Divine operations. The flesh struggles against the Spirit and I cannot get my rebellious flesh to be subject to the Law of God.” The answer to this distressing lament is the same as in the former case—“His mercy endures forever.” He will bear with you and forbear beyond all bounds. None but a God could have patience with you, but the Lord is God and not man! Some of God’s children were the most crooked people that ever were in this world and it must be sovereignty which chose them, for they are by no means naturally desirable or attractive.

It was hard work, even, for a Moses to have patience with them of old. Though he was the meekest of men, yet his anger waxed hot against them and he said, “Hear now, you rebels!” But their God had no such angry words for them—

He was still patient and bore with them for 40 years. Brother, Sister, He will have patience with you because His mercy endures forever. He has been teaching you faith, but how slowly you have learned! There is a man who has been learning faith these 25 years and he still is an unbeliever at times. Doubts frequently mar the face of his assurance, but the Lord still bears with his unbelief and goes on to teach him, little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept.

There is one here who has been taught love. Yes, for the past 40 years that Brother has been learning love to the Lord and love to the Brethren, spelling out the lessons of love, letter by letter. He is in the infant class even now, but the Lord is having a deal of patience with him and He will yet make him tender, considerate and affectionate. Let us hope it will be soon, for his own sake, and still more for the sake of his Brethren to whom he acts so roughly. Many of God’s people are very slow learners—they have been at school these 20 years and cannot yet read their own titles to eternal mansions, though penned in capitals by their Redeemer’s own hand!

As for myself, I am more brutish than any man and other teachers would long ago have lost patience with me, but “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever.” Between now and Heaven, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of you will, perhaps, have to pass through a great deal of affliction and some of us who are called daily to see others suffer, feel much tenderness towards those who are the children of affliction and, therefore, we speak with great sympathy when we say, “Do not shudder with regard to those pains and tremors which may come over your poor trembling frame, for His mercy endures forever. He

will make your bed in your sickness and underneath you shall be the everlasting arms.”

Between here and Heaven, perhaps you will experience a great many needs. It may be you have been afraid of poverty. You have not a very large sum of money in the bank and you have not a very large sum in your pocket, either, and sometimes you are out of work. Many times you hardly know what you shall eat or what you shall drink—be this your comfort—“His mercy endures forever.” “Having food and raiment let us be content, for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” All the streams may dry, but the brook Cherith will flow on and even if that chosen rivulet should fail, behold, God has a widow woman at Zarephath who will feed you! Though she has nothing herself but a handful of meal and a little oil in the cruse, yet you shall both live upon it till the famine is over.

The heir of Heaven shall not lack for the bread of earth while God lives, for it is written, “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” “He gives food unto all flesh, for His mercy endures forever.” “Your bread shall be given you.” At last, unless the Lord should suddenly appear, there will come the hour of death which, by many, is exceedingly dreaded. You will gather up your feet in the bed and bid adieu to all temporal things. And then the enduring mercy of God shall be your abounding consolation! A large part of our fears about death are idle. One man of God always feared death, but he might have spared himself his wretchedness, for he fell asleep one night in apparently excellent health and died in his sleep! He never could have known anything about dying, for on his face were no tokens of pain or struggle, nor was there any reason to believe that he ever awoke till he lifted up his eyes amid the cherubim!

Beloved, if we die awake and even if we die in pain, we shall yet hope to die triumphantly! If we do not die shouting victory, we hope that we shall peacefully fall asleep—the Lord, Himself, kissing away our soul into the eternity of joy—“for His mercy endures forever.” “He will perfect that which concerns me.” Now, I want you young friends, especially, who are just beginning life, each one to feel, “Now, I am going to put myself and all my temporal circumstances, all my fears, all my engagements, my living, my dying, *everything* into the hands of God and there I am going to leave it. I will trust Him with my all. In the beginning I will trust Him and I will do so even to the end and go my way with this calm confidence, ‘He will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever.’”

I remember hearing one of our evangelists once say that some Christian people, when they first profess to be Christians, are like a man who is going a long distance by rail, but only takes a ticket for a short distance and then he has to get out and make a rush for new tickets as he goes along. “Now,” said he, “there are other Believers who know better and take a ticket all the way through at the first, which is by far the wiser way.” Some trust the Lord to keep them for a quarter of a year and others for a month. But when I believed in Christ Jesus, I thank His name, I trusted Him to save me to the end! I sought for and obtained a finished salvation which is my joy and hope at this moment! I took a ticket all the way

through and I have not had to get a fresh ticket yet. I have sometimes thought I should, but when I have run to the office, they have handed me back my old ticket, the one I lost, the same one as before—and I knew it to be the same, for it bore this stamp upon it—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

The Believer is saved at first by believing and he shall be so to the last. Do not trust a rickety salvation which may break down with you—a temporary, trumpety salvation which may only last you for a time and then fail to embrace with all your heart that Divine promise—“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Cry out after the Living Water which shall be in you as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life and suck the marrow out of this text, “He that believes in Me has”—has then and there, down on the nail—“has”—*now, today*, “has everlasting life”—not life for a time, but life everlasting as surely as he believes in Christ!

**III.** This brings me to conclude with the third clause of our text which is a prayer. The Lord, having given His people Grace to rest in His mercy, PUTS IT INTO THEIR HEARTS TO PRAY AND SUPPLIES THEM WITH A PLEA—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” To my mind, it is a very touching prayer. “Lord, You have begun the work upon me; go on to finish it, for if You do not, it will never be finished. If You leave it, it is left undone and I am undone, indeed. But do not forsake the work of Your own hands.” It is such a prayer as the clay might put up when it is revolving on the potter’s wheel. The potter is using his best skill and producing an article of great beauty, bringing out its shape and form as it spins round before him.

Already you can see something of what it will be—the design does not yet perfectly appear, but you can guess it. But suppose the potter were to stop the wheel, take up the clay and fling it back, again, into the lump? That vessel would never be finished, for it cannot finish itself. It has no power to shape itself in any degree and so if it were rational clay and could speak, it would say, “Forsake not the work of your own hands. Persevere in what you have begun.” This is a prayer which you and I may well bring before God, whose workmanship we are! “O God, if I have only a little faith, yet You gave it to me. Oh, give me more! If You have given me only a desire after You, yet that desire is a Divine creation! Have respect unto it, I pray You, and fulfill it.”

This is a powerful argument with our gracious God, for, Brothers and Sisters, He does not give you a little Grace to tantalize you. Now He has given you a hunger and thirst after Him—suppose He does not satisfy you? That hunger and that thirst will be cruel gifts! He has taken away from you the power to be happy in the world, has He not? Well, if He does not intend to give you His own Divine happiness, why has He made you weary of the world and the pleasures of sin? A dog likes bones and I am sure I would not teach him to leave his bones or turn him into a man if, afterwards, I had to say, “Now you have become a man, there is nothing for you. If you want a meal you must try the bones again.” No, no! He who makes us hate the world means to give us something better! He who makes us loathe sin means to cleanse us from it! He who begins to build

in our souls is not a foolish Builder of whom it shall be said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish."

Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord has found out something in you which is so bad that it baffles Him and compels Him to give up His work? If it were so, why did He ever begin it? He knew what would be in you. The prescient eye of God foresaw every sin and every tendency to sin in the heart of every man that lives—and so when He began His work He knew all that it would require to perfect it. He has not gone forth to fight the devil in you to discover that He is not strong enough to meet him! Oh, no, He knows the force of your evil nature, the force of your hasty temper, the force of that obstinate self-love, the force of that imperious pride, the force of that dogged will—He knows all this, nor can anything take Him by surprise and, therefore, since He has begun to save you, rest assured that He will accomplish His design!

His hand is not shortened, nor His heart dismayed. You may cry to Him out of the utmost depths and be quite assured that He can and will, even there, carry on His purposes of love, for He will not forsake the work of His own hands. Go to Him, then, in prayer! Plead with Him mightily! Prayer is the channel appointed to convey to you the blessing. Open the valves and let the stream flow into your heart. Whenever you feel as if you must be broken in pieces like a poor earthen pot, then cry to Him—"Lord, forsake not the work of Your own hands. Oh, do not leave me, for I bear the print of Your hands! Be patient with this ill-worked clay and work upon me till You shall have made me a vessel unto honor fit for Your own special use."

The closing word is just this. I have often preached to you salvation to sinners, as sinners, just as you are and I have bid you, in my Master's name, come and receive that free mercy which He presents to the guilty, even to the guiltiest of all, when they will but take it and trust in His dear name. Now, I supplement that by advising you to carry the rule of faith into every part of your life. Trust the Lord Jesus for everything! Do not come, tonight, to trust in Christ half way, but for all things commit yourself into His eternal keeping, for He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy. If you Believers have been trusting the Divine Lord to keep you—but if you are keeping yourselves—get beyond that and trust in Him to keep you that you may keep yourselves! If you have said, "I believe that He will be faithful to me if I am faithful to Him," go much farther, for it will never do to stop there.

Trust in Him to make you faithful to Him! Do not suffer the pivot to rest in you—put the whole stress and burden upon the Lord Jesus. If you retain any, "if," or, "but," about your eternal salvation, it will be a thorn in your pillow and a serpent at your heel. If *you* are the cornerstone and mainstay of your own salvation, you are lost! You must hang upon the sure nail, Christ Jesus, all the burden and all the glory of His Father's house. As for depending on your own watchfulness, or constancy, or anything else of your own, I want you to get right away from it and now, once and for all, by an act which you shall rejoice in as long as you live, commit

your whole future—time and eternity—into the pierced hands of Him who says that He gives to His sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands!

In this one thing I would have you be as I am, for I have no shade of hope apart from the Lord Jesus, either as to my pardon or my perseverance, my new birth or my ultimate perfection. I want to know what is to become of me in death and what is to become of me when I live, again, in eternity. And if I could not have a far-reaching faith which flung itself across the awful gulf that separates this world from the next, my religion would yield me but small comfort. But to-night—and may everybody here be enabled to do so—I do put my whole self, my soul, my body, my engagements, my prospective sufferings, my future troubles, my labors—*everything* which has to do with me or about me into those same hands which bought me when they was nailed to the tree!

He shall keep me, or I shall never be kept! Once and for all I make a deposit of my eternal interests and leave them with Him whose honor it is to keep safely that which is committed to Him. He is able to preserve me and I have done with it. I hand over my all to Him. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, do the same and when you have done so be of good cheer! A man takes his money into his bank and leaves it. He does not go back in a quarter of an hour and say, “Mr. Cashier, have you my money safely?” “Yes, Sir.” “Well I want to see it.” They would not want such a man to deal with their bank long, for he has no confidence and will be more trouble than profit.

Put in your all with Jesus and leave it there! Make a permanent investment. Draw the interest of it and spend it in present enjoyment, but leave your all as a permanent investment and sing with me—

***“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I’ve committed to His hands  
Till the decisive hour.  
Then will He own my worthless name  
Before His Father’s face,  
And in the New Jerusalem  
Appoint my soul a place.”***

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# FAITH IN PERFECTION

## NO. 231

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 2, 1859,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.”  
Psalm 138:8.***

I HAVE selected this text, or, rather, it has been given to me to furnish a motto for the whole year to all the believing family of God now present. It was brought under my notice from a very dear friend, a venerable minister of the Church of England and an earnest lover of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. He always sends me, at the beginning of the year, or a day or two previously, a little envelope sealed up, that I am not to open till New Year's day, containing a printed text of Scripture, which he desires to be preserved during the remainder of the year, to act as a staff whereon we may rest through the pilgrimage of the next twelve months.

When I opened my envelope I found this text and it charmed me. It contains in itself the very essence of the Grace of God. It reads like music to the soul and is like a bottle of water in the desert to the thirsty lip. Let me read it again and remember it and dwell upon it and digest it during all the year. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever—forsake not the works of Your own hands.” In the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, “me,” in the text, cannot be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this Psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its heart a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Now, have you a concern in and a concern about heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time? That the mansions of Heaven are more worthy of your consideration than the dwelling places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of the butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things and afterwards you must have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in

heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of Holy Scripture for you to appropriate these things to yourselves.

Can we then, each of us, put our hand upon our heart and say, without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite—can we say honestly, as in the sight of God—“I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity! I may not have assurance, but I have concern if I cannot say I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I cannot say I know that my Redeemer lives, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Well soul, if you have a concern about the things of God, this is your promise and let not Master Clip-Promise take it away from you. Suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness. It is all yours, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns you.”

Another question is suggested by the second clause, “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” Have we then tasted of God’s mercy? Have you and I gone to the Throne of Grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus? And do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief’s petition and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? And have we gone to our house justified by God’s mercy? Remember, O Man, if you have never received God’s pardoning mercy and His forgiving grace, this text is a Divine enclosure into which you have no right to intrude. This is a banquet of which you have no right to eat. This is a secret place, into which you have no right to enter. We must first taste God’s mercy and, having tasted that, we may believe that He will perfect that which concerns us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart lest you should be misled—by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak—into the foul delusion that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, “Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” Have you then a religion which is the work of God’s hands? Many men have a religion which is their *own* work, there is nothing supernatural about it—human nature began it, human nature has carried it on and as far as they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force enough in it to spout a fountain into Paradise and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to Heaven.

You may practice morality and I beseech you do so. You may attend to ceremonies and you have a right to do so and must do so. You may endeavor to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ. And you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Spirit. Man’s religion which is born on earth and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh, Beloved, except a man be born again, or from above, as the original has it, he cannot see the kingdom of God! That which is born of the flesh is flesh and cannot enter Heaven—only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit and is, therefore,

capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance, which God reserves for spiritual men.

Have I then the work of *God* in my heart? Am I sure it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to Heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having begun the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full. Let each hearer, then, put these three questions to himself—Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God’s work? They are solemn questions—answer them!—And if you can even humbly say “Yes,” then come to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here, first, the Believer’s confidence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Secondly, the ground of that confidence—“Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” And thirdly, the result and outgrowth of his confidence expressed in the prayer—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.”

**I.** First, then, THE BELIEVER’S CONFIDENCE—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way. “The Lord.” Well, then, the Psalmist’s confidence was a Divine confidence. He did not say, “I have grace enough to perfect that which concerns me.” “My faith is so strong that I shall not fail.” “My love is so warm that it will never grow cold.” “My resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it”—no, his dependence was on the Lord—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

And, O Christian, if you have any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the Rock of Ages, your confidence is worse than cream. It shall deceive you, pierce you, wound you and cast you down to your own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord’s works. Sure as I am, the Lord began the good work in our souls, He has carried it on and if He does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there is one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there is one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there is one contingency—one “if,” or “though,” or “but,” about my soul’s salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence—the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, He *will* do it all.

My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord will do. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” “Oh,” says Unbelief, “you will never be able to purify

yourself from sin. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that away—look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you—you will surely be lured aside and led astray.” Ah, yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honor, fit for the Master’s use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but as a little lamb. And if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might, indeed, lie down and die. Yet if I am clay, He is my Potter and He will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel. And if I am a lamb He is my Shepherd and He carries the lambs in His bosom—He wards off the wolf, He smites the destroyer and He brings every sheep into the fold upon the hilltop of glory. The Lord, then, is the Christian’s Divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. “Jehovah will perfect that which concerns me.”

Take the next word, “will.” So the Psalmist’s confidence was a confidence for the future. It is not only what the Lord *does*, but what the Lord *will* do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him. And I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God—so far as they can see Him—and no farther. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table and the drink is the cup. But would they believe God if the table were bare and the cup were empty? No. They have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat. But if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting.

The Psalmist’s faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. The “Lord will,” says he, the “Lord will.” He looks on all through his life and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing He will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand staring into the future and trembling, because we think we see many omens and strange sights which predict some future trouble? O child of God! Leave the future to your God. O, leave everything that is to come in the hands of Him to whom the future is already present and who knows beforehand everything that shall befall you. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future. Hatch from the altar fires of today a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that He who is today your sun, shall be your sun forever—even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon you. And He who is today your shield shall be your shield forevermore. And even in the thickest part of the battle He shall catch the dart and you shall stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word “will” once again. There is a little more in it. It does not say the “Lord may,” it does not say, “I hope He will, I trust He will,” but it says He will. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the sweet

privilege of full assurance and in talking with a godly Christian I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great Truth of God that He would never forsake His people, nor leave His work undone. I was at once chided—I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands and believe it and ask no questions—just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection than he had about his existence. He says, “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know will happen—

**“He shall present my soul,  
Unblemished and complete,  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys Divinely great.**

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall stand and His promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise *maker*, but He never was a promise *breaker*. He is a promise-keeping God and his people shall prove it so. Come then, you that are always hoping amidst trembling and fear, but are never confident—for once take that doubting note out of your mouth and say assuredly “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” If I am really His child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect. If I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see His face with joy. And let whatever foes obstruct, I shall conquer through the Lamb’s redeeming blood. He “will perfect that which concerns me.” I like to hear God’s people speak unassertively of *themselves*, but confidently of their *God*. Doubts are the greatest of sins and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them and speak confidently where God’s Word is confident.

Now, take the next word, “The Lord will perfect.” That is a large word. Our Wesleyan Brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect! And if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honored and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant. And what is more, if any of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master.

I have had a perfect Master ever since I first knew the Lord and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an under-master, while the great Supreme must ever be

chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, "I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house. I think I should be hardly able to get into your room." How is that? "Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would be no room for me." He did not like that. So I broke another joke or two upon his head—whereupon he went into a perfect furor. "Well Friend" I said to him, "I think I am as perfect as you, after all—do perfect men get angry?" He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry. At any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out.

I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad. And I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites. That is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he cannot, unless he is the most impudent of impostors, talk about his being *perfect*. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head—if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars forever—if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection! But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky. And yet, I feel sure, that to every Believer, future perfection is an absolute certainty. The day shall come, Beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good. When he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out. When he shall make us not only tolerable and bearable and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in His sight. That day however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord and are glorified together with Christ in Heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? "The Lord will make me perfect." He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope and every grace. He will perfect His purposes. He will perfect His promises. He will perfect my body and perfect my soul. "He will perfect that which concerns me." And now there is the word "that"—"that which"—"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Very indefinite, it seems. But how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." Once pardon of sin concerned me. That He has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me. That He perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me. That He will perfect. One day deliverance was my fear. Now it is support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, "that" embraces all, be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Alas, Beloved, we cannot say we have any good thing

without having concern for it. I suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other, our doubts always go before God's mercies. Whereas we ought to believe and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now. But though that faith is tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it surmounts even its own doubts and cries, "The Lord will perfect even this." Have you learned this lesson—being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A Christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a storm and the mountain waves are rolling. But down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were dug—where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph.

Beloved, it is so with the Christian's heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles. But in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear and he can say confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." But I hasten to dwell upon the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns *me*." Here is the loudest note of all. This is the handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright—"that which concerns *me*." Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all His saints—'tis sweeter still to know that "He will perfect *me*." It is blessed to believe that all God's people shall persevere. But the essence of delight is to feel that *I* shall persevere through Him.

Many persons are content with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community. They have joined a Christian Church and they think they shall be saved in the lump—in the mass. But give me a *personal* religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt is full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I am thirsty? Unless I drink myself what are all these? If I am poor and in rags, you do but mock me if you tell me that Potosi's mines are full of treasure. You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda's diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, "It is my own," then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own. This promise even if it were smaller would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could but see my right to it personally myself.

But now, by humble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in His merits, trusting in His death I come to the text—and say throughout this year and every year—"The Lord will perfect that which concerns *me*"—unworthy *me*, lost and ruined *me*. He will yet save *me*. And—

***"I, among the blood-washed throng,  
Shall wave the palm and wear the crown,  
And shout loud victory."***

This, then, is the Believer's confidence. May God grant you the same!

**II.** The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this—"Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." The Believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Because of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No. He believes he shall be perfected because of God's *mercy*. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced Believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the Cross and when we have climbed ever so high, is it not at the Cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart's content till at His Cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honors down.

My sins I laid there and anything else that He has given me I would lay there, too. You began there and your watchword is the Cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the Cross. And you have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The Cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the theme of our song here. And mercy enduring forever must be the subject of the sonnets of Paradise. None other can be fit for sinners—no, and none other can be fit for grateful saints.

Come then, Beloved, let us just look at this ground of our confidence and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants, when they are going to cross a bridge, are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, "I am an elephant and I must see whether it will bear me." Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of *your* sins. Now, I say, here is God's mercy. Ah, this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led the Lord to bring you and me into the Covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like infidels. Some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because He has said, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."—

***"What was there in you that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?"***

'Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if He chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy is always the same, He will always choose me and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect? We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they

must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same. The sole cause then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man. He does not save you because of anything in yourself, but because He will do as He pleases and because He loves to act *mercifully*—that is His only reason.

Oh, My God, if You loved me when I had not any faith, You will not cast me away because my faith is now weak. If You loved me when I had all my sin about me, You will not leave off loving me now that You have pardoned me. If You loved me when I was in my rage and beggary and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me—at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost will surely love me, even as I am now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build we derive this inference, that if the base cannot move, the pyramid will not? “The mercy of God endures forever—the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

Note the very words of the text—“Your mercy, O Lord” David brings his confidence into the court of Divine inspection, in order that it may there be proved. He says, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” It is very well for you and me to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God and there, feeling His presence, actually present our confidence before Him and ask Him to try it? There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God’s tribunal. He puts it in the scales of infinite justice and waits the decision. “Your mercy, O Lord.” Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady—

**“The terrors of law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do,  
My Savior’s obedience and blood,  
Hide all my transgressions from view.”**

Can you come into God’s presence and say this, or, to quote Hart’s words, can you say—

**“Great God I’m clean,  
Through Jesus’ blood I’m clean.”**

He that can say that is blessed, indeed. The Lord shall perfect that which concerns him.

Ah, what if God’s mercy towards men should change? Blessed be His name it cannot. It endures forever. But what if He should remove His mercy from one man to another? That also He will never do. It endures forever. But suppose we should sin so much that God’s mercy should give way? It cannot give way. It endures all the weight of sin. It endures forever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in Him? That cannot be. We cannot sin longer than forever—His mercy cannot be tried longer and even if it could be tried forever it would endure forever. All the weight of my trouble,

all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief—all these the everlasting arches of Divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall rock. The stone never shall be crumbled. It never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because His mercy endures forever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of His hands. And now I come to the third and last point and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.

**III.** The third particular is—THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE—it leads him to prayer. Away with those men who have a confidence that helps them to live *without prayer*. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me and said unto me, You are one of God's elect and you may live in sin and do whatever you please, I will save you at last." Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas, there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered if it is not begotten. There are some ministers—I trust they hardly know what they are about—who by leaving out the doctrine of man's responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ.

Hear then, you seed of the presumptuous and you that bear the whores' forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord has *not* chosen you, neither has He cut your name into His lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously, trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah, soul—election has nothing to do with you. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be your lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Do you live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man's damnation is just, but yours shall be emphatically so. What? Do you dare to pawn yourself off as a child of God when you are a brat of Hell? Do you claim that you are a heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on your very forehead? What? When you are like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, do you dare still to claim any part in the inheritance of the saints in light? Away with your confidence. "Hail shall sweep away your refuge of lies." The true-born child of God has a spot that is not like *your* spot. He is of a different mold and make from you. You are a deceiver—not the legitimate child of God.

Mark, my Friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not lead us to give up prayer, but leads us *to* prayer. "The Lord will perfect me." Am I, therefore to say, "He will do it and I will not pray?" No, because He will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such shallow minds that they cannot perceive how God's determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, "Now, Sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing." He knows he is a fool when he says it. Or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, "If the Lord intends to feed me, He will feed me and I will

go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, He will give me a harvest and I shall not sow any wheat and I shall not plow.”

Suppose another were to say, “If the Lord intends to keep me warm today, He will do it. So I will not put on my coat.” Suppose a man should say, again, “If the Lord intends me to go to bed tonight, I shall go to bed. And, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like.” You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me,” am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear Friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to *action*. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, “I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight.” No, he said, “I know that I shall conquer—therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God and aim at ‘em!” So with you. If you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerns you, begin with prayer. Trust the promise and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.

And now, note this prayer—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” The prayer is full of confession. It must be that, or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him and this is a Truth of God, Brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation—do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in *communion* as if he were to forsake us in *temptation*? When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, “Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here.” When you are down on the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, “Lord, save me now,” but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? For he still needs to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of Hell and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let Him but withdraw the salt of His Grace and the proudest Believer must be cast into the depths of Hell and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh, let this always make us cry aloud, “Forsake us not, O God.”

There is yet another confession in the text—the Psalmist’s confession that all he has he has from God. “Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” I will not, however, dwell upon it, but urge you who are Believers to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. Let this be a New Year’s Day prayer. “Forsake not the work of Your hands, Father, forsake not Your little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not Your lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great Husbandman, forsake not Your little plant, lest the frost should nip it and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now and when I am old and gray-headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse You. Forsake me not in my

sorrows, lest I murmur against You. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon and fall into despair. And forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my faith degenerate into presumption and so I perish by my own hand.”

Cry out to God, that He would not forsake you in your business, in your family. That He would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of *this* year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers and having fulfilled His promise. I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear Friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerns me. There has been a work done in this place and God has blessed the congregation. But the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the Word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to make the Churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new Chapel, we must build something else. We must always have something in hand. If I have preached the Gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet. And when I have preached it there, I must solicit a longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries and act as a missionary throughout the nations.

I am confident that God will perfect that which concerns me, I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that He would not forsake the work of His own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labor of love is not mine, but God’s. I have done nothing, except as the instrument. He has done it all. Oh, my dear Friends, you that love me as a Brother in Christ and as your pastor in the Church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that He would not forsake His work. Plead that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of Grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God’s Spirit may blow the sparks across the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to Heaven, shall be accepted as a whole burnt offering before the Throne of God Most High.

“May the Lord bless you and keep you and cause His face to shine upon you and lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace,” and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, shall be glory forever!

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# GOD'S THOUGHTS AND OURS

## NO. 3246

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1868.**

***“How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!  
How great is the sum of them!”  
Psalm 139:17.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon verses 17 and 18 is #2609, Volume 45—  
OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS

—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>. ]

IT is very comforting to us to believe in a personal God and to be able to confide in One who condescends to think lovingly of us, considers our needs and supplies them. It would not be very comforting to us to believe in a mere abstract Deity, or in what some people call, “the laws of Nature” acting by themselves apart from God, or in a fixed fate that would crush us like some colossal car of Juggernaut. Yet some people seem to be always struggling to get away from the thought of one true personal God—Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and All-in-All to His people. Those who deny the Inspired record of the Creation would have us believe that we are descended from monkeys, or from something with even less intelligence than an ape possesses! But I could gather no comfort from such a belief as that if it were true. It fills me rather with pity or contempt for those who can be so foolish as to cherish such a delusion. But when I come back to the Revelation of the Bible concerning a personal God—a Revelation which has been confirmed by my own spiritual experience—and when I realize that this personal God takes a special interest in me and thinks of me with tender, loving, gracious consideration, then I lift up my hands in adoring wonder and say, as David did, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” Yes, there is great comfort in being able truthfully to say, “Our Father, who are in Heaven”—and those who are really the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty find it to be their chief delight that He thinks about them and plans all that is for their present and eternal good!

**I.** Coming to our text, I ask you to consider, first, HOW PRECIOUS ARE GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US AND HOW PRECIOUS IT IS TO US TO THINK ABOUT THESE THOUGHTS.

First of all, let me say that *the very fact that God thinks of us is, in itself, precious.* Perhaps someone here says, “It is not so in my case! I am

quite alarmed at the thought that God thinks about me. It is no comfort to me to say, 'You, God, see me.' Such a thought as that only fills me with terror." I can quite understand, dear Friend, how you feel. Of course, if you only think of God as if He were an officer of justice with a warrant for your apprehension, it would be a dreadful thing for you to realize that He is thinking of you. But suppose you were His child—would it not then be a continual joy to you to reflect that your heavenly Father was constantly thinking of you? If you were completely reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. If no consciousness of guilt remained upon your conscience. If you knew that all God's thoughts concerning you were thoughts of love—then you would bless His name that He was so gracious and kind as to think of you!

Further, *those who are serving the Lord delight to remember that He is thinking of them.* After we have been reconciled to God, it becomes our great privilege to spend such strength as we have in promoting His Glory. Well, no one is ashamed of being sent on a good errand! The eyes of God, instead of being dreadful to the man whose heart is right with Him, is one of His greatest encouragements! He feels that though his fellow men may never say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it will be enough for him to know that God has seen him, that God keeps a Book of Remembrances, and that, at the last, a full reward, not of debt, but of Grace, shall be given to him who is faithful. I do not know how it is with you idle professors who profess to be saved, but who do little or nothing for Christ—I do not see how the fact that God is observing you can give you any comfort. If it is true that you are not your own, but that you are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, can you calmly think of God watching your idle hours, listening to your many words that have no weight, no value in them and noting how you neglect your many opportunities of serving your day and generation? But, on the other hand, in proportion as you are constrained by the love of Christ to be instant in season and out of season, in the same proportion will it be sweet to you to remember that the Lord is observing you and that He is always at your right hand to help you in your service for Him!

We also learn the preciousness of God's thoughts to us *as we depend implicitly upon Him as the great Lord of Providence.* It is of little use to you to have anyone thinking of you if his thoughts never bring you any practical help. But if you have a rich friend who has promised, as soon as possible, to find you a position in which you will be provided for as long as you live, I would not be surprised to hear that even while you have been at this service, you have been gratefully thinking of him. "Yes," you have been saying, "I could not make my way on my own account, but I have a friend at my back who says that he will see that I shall never be in need—and it comforts me to think that he is thinking of me." Well then, if the promise of an *earthly friend* affords so much consolation as that,

how much more should this be the case with you who have a *heavenly Friend* who is both able and willing to fulfill all His promises? He is always thinking of what is best for you—what you require today and what you will require tomorrow—He is always anticipating your needs, providing Elims, with wells and palm trees while you are travelling through the desert. And as you meditate upon the way in which He is thinking of how He shall bless, perfect and glorify you, His thoughts must, indeed, be precious to you!

One reason why God's thoughts concerning us are peculiarly precious is that *gracious men long to get near to God*. They are not satisfied with what they are. The wanderings of their thoughts towards inferior objects are a burden to them and they are continually longing to get nearer to God. If there is one cry that rises more frequently to our lips than any other, it is this—

**“Nearer, my God, to You,  
Nearer to You!”**

But, alas, our thoughts of God are a very poor help to us in drawing us nearer to Him! They flag, tire and soon die—but the thoughts of God toward us are strong, like God, Himself, is—and these, like so many unbreakable cords firmly fastened to us, are drawing us always nearer to Him! Thought leads to action and God's thinking of us leads to the practical action of drawing us nearer to Himself. So the fact that He is continually thinking of us encourages us to believe that we shall one day be close to Him and be qualified to be close to Him—being perfectly conformed to the image of Christ—and drawn into the closest possible fellowship with God.

And *the nearer we get to God, the more precious will His thoughts of us become to us*. If we were not such babes in Christ and so carnal, we would prize every crumb from our Father's table—and much more—every thought from our Father's mind! We would prize, far above gold and rubies, what I may call the ordinary outgoings of the Divine mind in His Providential arrangements for us. But much more should we value those deep, eternal, infinite thoughts which have already secured our salvation and which shall, before long, complete our sanctification and our glorification, too!

**II.** Now, secondly, there are SOME POINTS IN CONNECTION WITH GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US WHICH RENDER THEM ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS TO US.

And, first, let us remember that *God's thoughts of us are everlasting*. When we begin to think of Jehovah's thoughts of love concerning His people, we have to go back beyond the region of time and get where all dates are lost in the shoreless sea of eternity! Beloved, you were loved of your God long before He created the world! Yes, from everlasting He had thoughts of love toward you—then must not those thoughts be, indeed,

precious to you? Besides, as they were *from* eternity, so they will be *to* eternity—God will still be thinking lovingly of you when sun, moon and stars have fulfilled their mission and been forgotten—and when all things which men now count solid and lasting shall have dissolved like the bubble upon the billow's crest and passed away forever! God has so linked you with His Son that He has made you also to have a life which is eternal and which can never die. Let all things perish and the pillars of the universe crumble and decay, and the whole visible creation fall with thunderous crash, yet you, the Beloved of the Lord, shall dwell safely with Him!—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin  
With God eternally shut in.”***

His thoughts will always be directed towards you, He will never forget you! There has never been a moment in the past when He did not think of you. Even in your years of sin, He looked upon you with an eye of pity. In your deepest depression His heart was full of sympathy for you. Never has there been an hour, in the silent watches of the night, or amid the cares and businesses of the day, in which He has not always been thinking of you just as much as if you were the only being He had ever created! The Lord has from the first been looking upon you and thinking of you as though you were the sole center of His undivided attention—and so will He continue to think of you incessantly!

The Lord's thoughts of you are especially precious because *they have always been thoughts of love*. Even when you were dead in trespasses and sins and He hated your sins, He did not hate you, for He had loved you with an everlasting love—

***“He saw you ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved you, notwithstanding all.  
He saved you from your lost estate,  
His loving kindness oh, how great!”***

This is the love of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins.” And ever since your conversion, God's thoughts concerning you have been thoughts of love. He has smitten you sorely until you have felt that surely He must be your enemy, but it was not so—never has there been anything but love for you in the great eternal heart of God. If—

***“With afflictions He may scourge us,  
Send a cross for every day”—***

this is not a proof of His anger toward us—on the contrary, it is a token of His affection—

***“All to make us  
Sick of self, and fond of Him.”***

Besides this, *God's thoughts of us have always been wise thoughts*. They have not been such casual thoughts as pass through men's minds while journeying quickly by road or rail and merely noticing this object here and that other object over yonder. But God's thoughts have infinite—

ly more in them than the deepest thoughts of men can ever have. You know that there are many ways of thinking of a certain thing—you may think of it in such a way as just to keep it in remembrance, or you may think of it so intently as to lie awake at night, turning it over in your mind, looking at it from all points of view so that you may understand it in all its bearings. You may think of it with the careful consideration that a barrister gives to an important case for which he is about to plead, or that an inventor gives to the intricate details of a machine that he is seeking to perfect. Such consideration as that, only of an infinitely higher order, God gives to every one of His people! He is continually arranging that which is most for the good in His Providential dealings with them and constantly thinking and working on their behalf with the ultimate view of bringing many sons unto Glory. God's thoughts are always wise, but they are so high above our thoughts that we cannot attain to them! Yet the more we are able to comprehend them, the more wisdom and prudence shall we perceive in them.

Once more, *these thoughts of God towards us are pre-eminently practical*. God so thought of you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as to ordain you unto eternal life! Concerning the whole Church of the living God this decree was pronounced, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Not only was there a Divine Decree concerning them, but there was an Eternal Covenant made between the Father and the Son by which the everlasting salvation of all the chosen is Infallibly secured! More than that, in the fullness of time, those eternal thoughts of love took practical effect in the gift of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for His people, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." These thoughts of God further took effect by the coming into our hearts of the Holy Spirit so that now, through His Divine power and energy, we have been converted, renewed in the spirit of our minds, helped thus far towards Heaven and comforted with the full assurance that we shall, in due time, be brought into our heavenly Father's immediate Presence, unblemished and complete! So you see, Beloved, that the thoughts of God toward us should be exceedingly precious to us because they are of such a practical character that they bring to us all the blessings—temporal and spiritual—which we daily enjoy.

**III.** Now, thirdly, let us briefly notice SOME TIMES WHEN GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE PECULIARLY PRECIOUS TO US.

It is so *when we have been betrayed and deserted by some in whom we have confided*. When he that ate bread with us has lifted up his heel against us, then we turn to our ever-faithful Friend and we rejoice to know that *His* thoughts concerning us are never false and treacherous! He is the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is always true even though everyone else should prove to be a liar. Ahithopel may forsake his king, Judas may betray his Lord and we, in our measure, may know

what it is to be forsaken and betrayed—but God's thoughts towards us shall, all the while, be thoughts of love and faithfulness! Vain was the trust we reposed in some who went out from us because they were not of us! But God has never forsaken us, He has always been thinking of us for good and, therefore, His thoughts are peculiarly precious to us.

So are they also *when we are neglected by our fellow Christians and by others who ought to esteem us*. It must be very hard to continue toiling on in some obscure sphere without having a kind word or a cheering smile from anyone—to be living, perhaps, as a servant in a family and striving to do your duty faithfully—yet never meeting with the slightest encouragement from those at the head of the household. Or to be earnestly working as a Bible-woman or a city missionary in some back district and having so little success that your superintendent looks upon you as if you were doing nothing! I can imagine how painful this must be to your sensitive spirit and how comforting it is to you to think, “Well Jesus knows all about it and *His* thoughts are worth far more than the thoughts of men, for He can read my heart and He can see that it is love to Him that constrains me to do what I can in His service. Men may call me a fool, but if my Master knows that I only desire to be a fool for His sake—if He considers that I am faithfully serving Him to the best of my ability—how precious will His thoughts be to me!”

This is also especially the case *when our words and actions are misconstrued and misrepresented*. Some of us know what this trial means. When we have tried to be disinterested and have really been so, men have said that we have acted from some sinister motive. When we have spoken with the utmost plainness and simplicity, we have often been misunderstood and, worse than that, we have been willfully misrepresented! Well, what then? Our heavenly Father knows the sincerity of our motives and the meaning of our words, so we take the whole case away from this lower court where human tongues jangle and cause strife, and we appeal to the Supreme Court of King's Bench in Heaven! Our petition is, “O Lord, You give the verdict in this case! You know who has desired to serve You faithfully and to speak Your Truth with courage! You give a righteous decision which none can deny!” At such times as these, the fact that God thinks upon us is peculiarly precious to us.

So is it *in times of perplexity* when we are, as Bunyan said, “all tumbled up and down in our thoughts.” I suppose, dear Friend, you sometimes get into such a condition that although you have all the forces of Omnipotence at your disposal, you are so distracted that you do not know how to make use of them. You are in a place where two seas meet—wave upon wave rolls over you and you fear that you will be overwhelmed. You do not know what to do! You cannot think of any way of escape out of your perplexity. Well then, do not try to do it—cease from even thinking about the matter and refer it to the Great Thinker who can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness and order out of confusion!

God's thoughts are also precious to us *when our own thoughts are bright and cheerful*. The genuine Christian does not run to his God merely in his times of trouble, but he delights himself in the Lord at all times, and under all circumstances! He thinks of Him when he is in the land of drought, but he does not forget Him in the land of peace and plenty, for he sings then—

***“If peace and plenty crown my days  
They help me, Lord, to speak Your praise.”***

Let your brightest thoughts, Beloved, always be those that concern your Lord! And above all the joys of earth let this joy rise to the very zenith—that your heavenly Father thinks of you! This is a better fortune for you than thousands of gold and silver! This is a better protection for you than the friendship of ten thousand times ten thousand earthly friends! This a greater consolation than all the comforts of time can ever afford you! In your brightest hours, Believer, I hope that you will still say with the Psalmist, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

**IV.** My time has gone, but I want to give you just A FEW PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ARISING OUT OF THIS SUBJECT.

The first is this—*if God's thoughts are so precious to us, how very precious His Words ought to be!* Here, in this Inspired Volume, you have the thoughts of the Divine Thinker, Incarnated, if I may use the word in that sense and, therefore, I would have you prize very highly every Word in this blessed Book. There are many, nowadays, who refuse to believe in the verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures, but I fail to see how the sense of Scripture can be Inspired if the Words in which that sense is expressed are not also Inspired! I believe that the very Words, in the original Hebrew and Greek, were revealed from Heaven! And notwithstanding every objection that can be brought from any quarter, I have never been able to get away from the firm belief that if I give up my Master's Words, I give up His thoughts, also. I cannot well love a man's soul without having an affection for his body, also. And I cannot love God's thoughts, which are the soul of His Revelation, without loving the Words which are the body in which it comes to us. Do not tamper with the Words of Scripture, nor even with a single letter of it, but say, “How precious also are Your Words unto me, O God!” Have we not known times when the blessing which we have derived from a text has come to our hearts, not so much from the main thought contained in it, as from the use of one special Word? Some of us, on turning to our Greek Testaments, have been perfectly astounded to find that a particular Word has been used which has exactly met the predicament in which we have been placed—and if the Holy Spirit had moved the writer to use any other word, it would not have been so suitable to the circumstances in which we then were! We praise Him for selecting that very word and not any one of its synonyms which would

not so precisely have met our case. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, prize the Words of God above everything else that you possess!

Oh, for more Bible reading! I fear that this is an age when almost everything else is read except that which is most worth reading! I believe that many professedly Christian people positively poison their minds and stop up all the avenues of sense with the masses of sawdust, chaff and smut that they get out of their light reading—which a man might read to all eternity without ever being the better for it! Yet, all the while, there are solid, sober, interesting books full of valuable information and instruction that are left unread and, worst of all, God's Book, the Bible, itself, is lying neglected upon the shelf! True Bible readers and Bible searchers never find it wearisome. They like it least who know it least and they love it most who read it most. They find it newest who have known it longest, and they find the pasture to be the richest whose souls have been the longest fed upon it. When one of our missionaries had to read a certain Book of the Old Testament through a hundred times while he was translating it, he said that he certainly enjoyed the 100<sup>th</sup> time of reading it more than he did the first, for he understood it better and it seemed to him to be fuller and fresher, the more familiar he became with it.

In the next place, as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *God's actions, which spring from His thoughts, ought also to be precious to His people.* They ought to be so, but are they? Perhaps one of God's actions has been to lay low in sickness one who is very dear to you—can you say to God, "How precious is that action"? No. You shake your head, for you cannot say that. Possibly you have had a great loss, today, and that loss came by the direction of God. Now, God first thought. Then He acted and took away something that you greatly prized. You say that you cannot see any preciousness in *that*—but if you judged according to *faith*, and not according to sense, you would say—"Yes, Lord, this trial is precious to me because I believe it comes from You. And I will not only submit to it, but I will thank You for it, and even fall in love with the cross which You have laid on me." As we look back over our past experience, we see how precious our trials have been to us. Someone said, "Give me back my bed of languishing. Give me back the aches and pains that I suffered in that long, trying illness if I may but have such enjoyment of my Master's Presence as I had then."

Now, in closing, let me just say that as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *we should make the best return we can by thinking much of Him.* You, Believer, are married to Christ. And as your Husband is always thinking of you, can you be content to live without thinking often of Him? Have you lived through this day in forgetfulness of Him? Have you been so occupied with the toils and cares of this life that you have forgotten Him who has given you a higher, nobler and better life than this? If that has been the case with you, then blush for very shame and ask forgive-

ness of your Lord—and let this be your sincere prayer—“Lord Jesus, You are always thoughtful of me. From now on, by Your gracious Spirit’s blessed working, make me always thinking of You.”

I fear that I am addressing a great many who do not often think of God and that there are some of you to who it would be a comfort if there were no God at all. Or, if you do think of Him at all, He is only an all-powerful Being of whom you stand in dread because you fear that He will punish you for your sins. Then take warning, by your own thoughts of God and seek to be reconciled to Him so that you may no longer have cause to fear His righteous anger! That reconciliation may be obtained by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one Mediator between God and men! So if you put your case into His hands and ask Him to act as your Advocate, He will, by His Spirit, reveal to you the glorious Truth of God that the reconciliation was effected long ago, when He laid down His life for you upon the Cross of Calvary! Then, when you have received this blessed assurance, it shall be your continual delight to think of God, and your constant bliss to know that He is thinking of you. And you will say, in the words of our text, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 119:105-120.**

We will read tonight two of the stanzas which make up the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, beginning at the 105<sup>th</sup> verse.

**Verse 105.** *Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* God’s Word is full of brilliance. It is always giving out its blessed light. It casts a light upon all our daily life. It is a light for the house and a light for the way, and happy is the man who never walks abroad without this lantern to light up his pathway! There are many pitfalls on the road and many places where the traveler’s garments may soon be smeared, so he has great need of this light to guide him.

**106.** *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.* I scarcely remember ever hearing of a man swearing and then approving of it, but this kind of swearing is right enough—“I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.” We are to determine with the most vehement resolution that, God helping us, we will keep His righteous judgments, for if we have only a weak resolution, we usually fall short even of our own determination. What shall we do, then, if that determination is itself weak? Some of us have lifted our hands to Heaven and pledged ourselves to the living God that we will be His faithful people—

**“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear.”**

**107.** *I am afflicted very much.* Here is a good man, a better man than most of us, a man who is determined to do right, yet he gets into trouble because he is determined to do right. God's wheat will be threshed. His gold will be put into the furnace. If you were worth nothing to Him, God might not take the trouble to afflict you, but when you are resolved to do right, you may expect that resolution to be tried and tested! And if it is worth anything, it will stand the trial. "I am afflicted very much"—what will be the next words, "Lord, deliver me"? No, no! "Lord, bring me out of the furnace"? Nothing of the sort! "I am afflicted very much"—

**107.** *Quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word.* "Give me more spiritual life! Give me more spiritual strength! That is what I most need." Oftentimes that prayer is answered by the affliction, itself—we are afflicted very much and by that very affliction the Lord quickens our Divine Graces, strengthens our souls, drives away many of our wandering thoughts and brings us nearer to Himself!

**108.** *Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD.* "My prayers, my praises, my testimonies, my ministries—accept them all, O Lord"—

**108.** *And teach me Your judgment.* He who teaches others needs teaching himself. He who hopes that what he says will be accepted by those who hear it, opens his ears to hear what God says to him. There will be no acceptance of what you say to others unless you accept what God says to you!

**109.** *My soul is continually in my hand.* David's life was often in jeopardy. Saul hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains and he afterwards fled from Absalom. He was sometimes very sick and ready to die. Perhaps also, at times, he was in such great sorrow that he felt as if his soul was a thing that he held in his hand. We do not know exactly where our soul is, but we usually think of it as being somewhere in the very center of our being. David says that he had his soul in his hand—where he might at any time lose it. But what else does he say?

**109.** *Yet do I not forget Your Law.* "If I have even to die for it, I am willing to die for it. If I have to lay down my life because I will do right, I will do right even while I lay down my life."

**110.** *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts.* "If I had done so, I should have been caught in their snare, but as I kept straight on in the way of Your precepts, it little mattered how many snares they laid for me."

**111.** *Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.* Some take their own thoughts for their heritage, but it is a poor portion for anyone to have. Some take other men's philosophies for their heritage, but such a heritage as that is soon gone. But some of us can say, with regard to the Eternal and Immutable Truth of God, that we have got such a grip of it that we cannot give it up! There may come a thousand other changes

but, by God's Grace, there will be no change in this matter! "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

**111.** *For they are the rejoicing of my heart.* [See Sermon #2415, Volume 41—THE BELIEVER'S HERITAGE OF JOY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Well may a man love that which rightly makes him glad. Shall we ever forsake that which is the source of our greatest comfort? If some men had greater gladness in the Gospel, they would be more true to it. If they had ever eaten the sweet, and enjoyed the fat things full of marrow, they would never go away from the old old Gospel which has made their hearts so glad!

**112, 113.** *I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end. I hate vain thoughts: but Your Law do I love.* Notice that the word, "vain," is not in the original. The Psalmist wrote, "I hate thoughts," yet the word for *thoughts* includes the idea of mere thoughts. So, if any teaching in the world is the result of human thought, alone, you may not rely upon it for a moment, for the Lord knows the thoughts of man, that "they are vanity," and they never will be anything better than that. The thoughts even of the most profound and the best instructed of men will not bear the weight and pressure of an immortal soul's eternal interests! Revelation is the one reliable thing that we can rest upon. What God has spoken is all true, but as for what men have thought, I have been so often disappointed and deceived that I can say with the Psalmist, "I hate mere thoughts, but Your Law do I love." In the Law of the Lord there are verities, certainties, immutabilities—here may we abide and rest securely!

**114.** *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word.* For You will be sure to do as You have said. Your promises are not like men's—they cannot be broken—and when I get one of Your promises, O my God, I hide behind it, I am protected by it and I am comforted through it.

**115.** *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* Holy men often find that in order to be holy, they have to be solitary. It sometimes happens that the force of evil companionship is too much for the gracious heart to bear—and the Christian has to say to the ungodly, "Depart from me." Now, if even godly David had to say to evildoers, "Depart from me," you need not wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day say to all impenitent men, "Depart from Me, you evildoers." If we keep the commandments of our God, we shall often have to walk in a separate path from the ungodly. And even if we do not keep ourselves to ourselves, we shall keep ourselves to our God.

**116.** *Uphold me*—I thought we should soon come to that petition. We have been reading about David's resolutions and we might have thought that he was too bold in speaking so positively, but now he shows us the modesty of his mind—"Uphold me"—

**116.** *According unto Your Word, that I may live.* The Lord upholds us as a nurse holds up a little child and teaches him to walk. ‘Uphold me,’ O Lord, for I cannot stand by myself. My good resolutions will soon evaporate unless You sustain me.” There is a gracious promise which just answers this petition, “I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

**116.** *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.* “O my God, never let me have to say that I have hoped in You in vain! I know I never shall, but I trust to You not to disappoint me. Cast me not off in the time of old age! Forsake me not when my strength fails me!”

**117.** *Hold You me up*—[See Sermon #1657, Volume 28—MY HOURLY PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] One is fond of that short, simple prayer. First it is, “Uphold me,” and then, “Hold me up.” Either way it is equally good—“Hold You me up”—

**117.** *And I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.* When God holds us up, there is no fear of our falling down! We have respect unto His statutes when He has respect unto us.

**118, 119.** *You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross.* Perhaps some of you have seen the great heaps of slag lying outside the furnace. That is a picture of the ungodly—“You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross.”

**119.** *Therefore I love Your testimonies.* What? Does love to the Truth of God and to the God of Truth spring out of this putting away of the wicked? Yes, even the stern justice of God makes His people love Him and love His Truth! I am of the same mind as the children of Israel were when Pharaoh and his army were swallowed up in the Red Sea, and the emancipated slaves sang unto the Lord who had triumphed so gloriously. Some cannot do that because their sympathy is so entirely with the wicked, but the destruction of all that is evil creates a flow of joy in the heart of the true Believer! Still, it is a fearsome joy, full of holy awe and trembling!

**120.** *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.* Well may we also tremble when we see how terrible God is out of His holy places! There is a fear which is akin to love. As there is a fear which perfect love casts out, so is there another fear which love dandles on her knee—and such is the fear which David felt. May we, too, always have that holy awe of God in our hearts! Amen.

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

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

# OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS NO. 2609

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1, 1883.**

***“How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.”  
Psalm 139:17, 18.***

This Psalm dilates upon the Omniscience of God. In the most forcible manner, it shows that God's eyes have always rested upon us and are resting upon us now. We are here made to see that God knew all about us before we were born, that He now reads our most secret thoughts and that our unspoken words are all known to Him. And I want you to notice that the Psalm is not at all in that mournful strain in which we sometimes speak of the Omniscience of God. It is a very solemn thing that God should be everywhere. “You God see me,” is a note of the most serious kind when sounded in the sinner's ear, but, to those who are the people of God, there is nothing dreadful in the thought that God sees us. There is nothing to cause us to despond or to make us feel gloomy in the fact that God compasses our path and our lying down. In fact, in proportion as we are fully reconciled to God, love Him and rejoice in Him, it will become a cause of joy to reflect that our best Friend is never away from us—that our Protector's hand is never removed, that the great observant eyes of Divine Love are never closed!

Oh, dear Friends, could we ever go to any place where God is not to be found, that would be the Hell of hells to His people! And if there could be a period in which the Lord did not look upon us, we might say, “Let that day be blotted out from the calendar.” It is a joy, a bliss, a foretaste of Heaven to know that—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found”***

and even when we are not seeking Him, yet still He is above, beneath and all around us! He is never far from any of us. May we all have the Grace that will enable us to rejoice in a present God! We may judge as to our position before God by this test—is the thought of His constant observation of us a subject of joy or of dread? If we dread it, surely we have the old spirit of bondage still upon us! But if we rejoice in it, then we may know that we have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

I am going to try to speak, as God shall help me, first, upon *God's thoughts of us*. “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” Then, secondly, I want to say a little upon

*our thoughts about God's thoughts.* His thoughts become precious to us as we think about them. Then, thirdly, I wish to speak at somewhat greater length concerning *our thoughts upon God Himself.* "When I awake, I am still with You."

**I.** First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US.

That the infinite Jehovah thinks of us is *absolutely certain.* He thinks about all the inhabitants of the whole world. There is a general Providence which has a superintendence over all that happens in all parts of the earth. I know that the notion of some men is that the world is like a watch and that God has done with it as we do with our watches—that is, wound it up, put it under His pillow and gone to sleep. But it is not so, for in this great world-watch—to keep up the figure—God is present with every wheel and every cog of every wheel—there is no action in it apart from His present putting forth of power to make it move. There is nothing that happens merely as the result of, "law," as some people seem to dream, for a law is nothing without a *force* at the back of it! When we speak of certain things as being governed by law, we simply mean that as far as we have discerned, that is the general way in which this particular thing moves, or is acted upon, or acts upon some other thing. But, then, where is the force that enables it to act so, or that makes it to be so acted upon? "That is gravitation," says one. Yes, that is your name for that force, but it is really God who is everywhere at work! Though the law of gravitation may be said to be abiding, yet the force of gravity is but the force which proceeds from God. It is God still putting forth His power and operating after His own manner upon material substances.

God, therefore, thinks upon the whole world—and I am glad that it is so! I do not like the idea of being put out to nurse, as it were, and left without my Heavenly Father's personal supervision. I like to be in a world that is really God's garden, a part of His own homestead in which He dwells and where I am always directly under the glance of His eyes. Rivers unknown to song, far distant from civilization, are nevertheless homely places to one who has learned to be at home with God.

Now, as God thinks and must think of the whole material universe which He has created, much more does He think of men and most of all of us who are His own chosen people, to whom He stands in a very peculiar relationship as our Father, who has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." God must think of us—the blood would not flow in our veins, nor would the breath make our lungs to heave, nor would our various bodily processes go on without the perpetual exercise of His power. God must think of us especially in all the higher departments of our being, for they would speedily come to nothing apart from His constant care. There would be none of the spirit of prayer if He did not work it in us. There would be no spirit of sonship if the Holy Spirit did not teach us continually to cry, "Abba, Father." Faith and hope and love are plants that only live in the sunlight of God. And if the great Father of Lights withdrew, all these would die. "Without Me you can do nothing," is as certainly true of us who are His people, as of those who are far from Him by wicked worlds. We must be united to God, or else we shall perish and, therefore, as we know that we shall

never perish, we are quite sure that our Heavenly Father thinks of us. Think of all the gracious influences that meet in your person to perpetuate your life—I mean, your *spiritual* life—your holiness, your comfort, your joy. Think of all the purposes of God that center in you in order that, by them, you may be made perfect and so be fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of these things, I say, and you will at once see that for the grand design which God has concerning you, it is absolutely essential that He should think of you—and He does think of you!

Next, God's thoughts of us must be *very numerous*. According to our text the sum of them is very great—how great, the Psalmist does not say. The number of God's thoughts is so vast that even if you could count the sand on the seashores, you could not count the thoughts of God concerning you! Oh, how important this makes us poor creatures, when we remember that God thinks of us! I would like you to sit still a minute and think over this wonderful Truth of God. You know that people are very proud if a king has merely looked at them. I have heard of a man who used to boast, all his life, that King George IV—such a beauty as he was!—once spoke to him. He only said, "Get out of the road," but it was a *king* who said it, so the man felt greatly gratified thereby. But you and I, Beloved, can rejoice that God, before whom kings are as grasshoppers, actually thinks of us and thinks of us often. One or two thoughts would not suffice for our many needs—if He only thought of us now and then, what would we do in the meantime? But he thinks of us constantly! He says that He has engraved our names upon the palms of His hands, as if to show how continually we are before Him. David said, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." And our Savior said to His disciples, "Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him," proving that He had thought about them and had looked upon them with careful eyes and observed all their necessities. Yes, God does in very deed and of a truth think upon His people—and His thoughts concerning them are very numerous!

And they are also *very tender*. God never thinks of His people in a harsh way. He never has an unkind thought concerning even the most erring of those who are His own children. He looks upon them as a father looks upon his child, with intense affection, pitying them when they stray from Him. And if, sometimes, He chides them for their wrongdoing, even then He does but veil the purpose of His love that He may accomplish it the better. He is always aiming at that which will promote our best health, our truest wealth and our ultimate perfection. At times, clouds come between our souls and our God, but His love is always shining. O Beloved, if the Lord had not thought very tenderly of us, He would have cut some of us down long ago as cumberers to the ground. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." How often He has screened us from trouble! How frequently He has prepared us for a trial, so that, when it came, it did not crush us! How often He has rescued us out of sore perils! How often He has visited us in the night and given us songs amid our sorrow! "Your gentleness has made me great," said David, and many another child of God has said the same!

There is nothing that can equal the tenderness of God towards us, His poor, frail and erring children.

But while God's thoughts concerning us have been thus tender, they have also been *very wise*. To make a glass that should reflect without any color the object placed before it, was long the desire of those who made certain kinds of optical instruments. They worked a long time to no purpose, but, at last, someone discovered how to form an achromatic lens and then, lo and behold, when this man had thought out his plan perfectly in all its details, he was able to make a glass which was exactly like the eyes of an insect which I have often seen. So, when the man thought aright, he thought just as God thought and, after going a long way round about, when he did come to the right conclusion, he came just where God was. And, in like manner, if you and I were to try to work out the problem of our lives, and if we were wise enough to discover the best way in which we could get to Heaven, we would come exactly to the route which God has marked out for us and we would do with ourselves precisely what God does with us! Were we always wise, we would never murmur. Were we to be endowed with infinite wisdom, we would rejoice in the very things which now distress us—and the clouds and darkness which we now seek to avoid, we would willingly pass through if we did but see, as God sees, the end as well as the beginning! His thoughts are wise for the whole of our lives. He does not simply think how He shall make us happiest today, or how He should give us the most enjoyment for a week—that is how fond and foolish mothers think and plan for their boys. They make ducks of them—and they grow up geese. They indulge them and spoil them, but it is never so with God in His thoughts concerning the happiness of His children. He looks far ahead. He takes *eternity* into the compass of His thoughts and He judges what is best to do for us, not merely under the aspect of an hour, or a week, or a month, or even of a whole life below, but He puts eternity into the scale and orders all things well for everlasting ages!

You and I could not think like that, could we? We soon get puzzled with our little calculations and it is unwise for us to look too far ahead. If we begin considering 50 cares at once, they will prove to be too many for us. Our best way is to take them one by one and live by the day, or, better still, moment by moment. Such a course as that would not be wise for us if it were not that there is Another who, not living by the day, Himself, but filling all eternity, judges for us according to that blessed stanza of the Psalmist, "His mercy endures forever."

These, then, are the thoughts of God concerning us—certain, numerous, tender and infinitely wise.

And God's thoughts, too, are *very practical*. He does not think of us and let it end with thinking, but God's thoughts are really His acts, for, with Him, to will is to do. He utters His thought and, lo, it is accomplished! His fiat has achieved it. God might have thought much of us and the thought would have had no comfort in it if it had not moved His hand to succor and to help us. Think awhile of the practical thoughts of God for us in the eternity when He chose us before the daystar knew its place. Think of the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, made before the sun had shed a single ray of light upon the earth. Think

especially of that part of the Covenant in which the Father made His Son to be our Covenant Head and gave Him to stand in our place as our Surety and Substitute. Oh, what a thought was that—how wonderfully practical—that God should take His Beloved Son from His bosom and give Him up to die that we might live! And, ever since, all along our history, God has thought of us. He thought of us when we were babes and we were nourished and cherished. He thought of us when we were children and we learned to lisp His name. He thought of us—

***“When, in the slippery paths of youth,  
With heedless haste we ran.”***

He has thought of us since we have come to manhood. Yes, and in the case of many of us, He has thought of our children and of our children's children, too. And He is still thinking of us and He will continue to do so when our last thoughts die out in insensibility. Remember His ancient promise to His people—“Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” And we shall find it to be so! And each Believer may say, with David, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” These, then, are God's thoughts concerning us—constant, kind, wise, tender, gracious, perfect, Divine—like He in whose infinite mind they are found!

**II.** Now let us meditate for just a few minutes upon OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS.

What do you say, my Heart, to this wondrous Truth of God—that the Lord thinks upon you? I have been ready to say what would be a very fair translation of the Hebrew—“how *rare* are Your thoughts!” You know that the word, “rare,” was used in a different sense in olden times from what it is now. In Westminster Abbey there is a stone with these words upon it, “O rare Ben Jonson!”—meaning strange, special, peculiar, marked. So the thoughts of God are rare thoughts, the like of which cannot be found anywhere else! The thoughts of angels, or the thoughts of perfect spirits above must be something very wonderful, but, oh, the thoughts of God! If I were told that some bright angel was sent to think of me all day and all night long, that he was my Master's servant to watch over me, I would feel pleasure in the thought, yet that would be a poor, poor thing compared with the fact that *God* thinks upon us and watches over us! The Lord told Moses that His angel would go before the people through the wilderness, but you may have noticed how Moses pleaded against such a decision—“If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” We do not need angelic presence one hundredth as much as we need the Divine Presence! Here, then, in God's thoughts concerning us, is something rare and wonderful, indeed! And this is our thought about it, that there is no other thought that can, for a moment, be compared with it!

How *delightful*, too, it is to be thought upon by God! I have already said that to some people, the Truth that God is looking upon them wears an aspect of awe and dread. “Oh,” says one, “is it not terrible to think that God's eyes are always upon me?” It is not terrible to me—I am right glad that it should be so, and I pray, with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” You will see

much that will grieve You and much that You will have to amend, but still, I would not wish to hide anything from You, my Lord. Lies not all my hope, my very Heaven, that way? The glances of Your eyes, are they not the very medicine that shall cure my soul-sickness, or, at least, the means by which I shall get the medicine that will heal me of the dire disease of sin?"

It is even so, and the true child of God wishes to always get more and more closely under the inspection of his Heavenly Father—and the thoughts of God towards him charm and delight him. Does God in very deed think of me, from the moment when I wake in the morning, and all through the day, till I lock up my heart at night and give Him the key? Does He keep on thinking of me while I lie asleep, unable to think of anything except poor wandering thoughts that come in my dreams? If so, blessed be His name that He condescends to do anything of the kind! "How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" How delightful is it to be thus thought of by You! And how consoling it is, also!

We all like to be thought of and remembered. I went to call on one who was sorely sick. The doctor had said that he must see no one, but when his friends told him I was there, he exclaimed, "Oh, let him come up!" "No," they replied, "he must not, for it might excite you, and do you harm." "Give him my love, then," he said, "and tell him that it does me good to know that he is downstairs." We like to be thought of, I am sure that we do. Even the thoughts of a little child towards us have comfort in them. There is many a mother who is made a widow and she sits down to weep as if her heart must break. But when her little one plucks her skirt, ignorant of the sorrow which it will one day have to feel with the mother, and the mother hears the child's merry little note, it is often the best form of consolation that God sends to her bereaved spirit!

We all like to be kindly remembered, but, oh, what is it to be thought of by *God*? "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." And if men misrepresent us, and misinterpret us, and speak evil of us, and put us out of their company, what does it matter, as long as the Lord draws nearer to us than He did before? God's servants in Scotland had brave times among the heather when they had to watch for Claverhouse's dragoons and stood in jeopardy of their lives. The Lord was especially present among the lone crags and they heard His voice in the Psalm and then from above in the thunder! So near was the Lord to them in the dark days of persecution that afterwards, when peaceable times came and they could go to the kirk in quiet, there were some who looked with regret on those other days when they met at the peril of their lives and God was their Leader! So, God's thoughts are precious to us by way of consolation.

They also have other effects upon us, for the thoughts of God often move the souls of Christians, *strengthening them in faith, awakening them to love and stirring them to zeal*. There is many a man who has done, under a sense of God's Presence, what he would never have dreamed of doing if he had not realized that the Lord was there. As the Highland chieftain, when he fell and was dying, said to the men of his clan, "I shall watch you, my children, as you rush to the fight," and so made them brave—when we think of God's watching us and of His eyes

being upon us, we also become valiant and do exploits in His sight! And each one of us sings—

***“I can do all things, or can bear  
All sufferings, if my Lord is there!  
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,  
While His left hand my head sustains.”***

His Presence is all that our heart requires. Indeed, Beloved, when we really drink in the thoughts of God towards us, our spirit is filled with all that it needs and is borne onward as with a mighty rush—a full tide of Grace—up to the Throne of Heaven!

**III.** Now I come to the last part of my discourse, OUR THOUGHTS UPON GOD HIMSELF. David says, here, “When I awake, I am still with You.”

I want you to notice, first, that he seems to imply that *our thoughts bring us near to God*. Thinking of Him, we realize that we are in His immediate Presence. I cannot describe the feeling of a spirit consciously present with God, but, though I cannot describe it, I am sure that many of you know what it is, and I am equally sure that I, also, know what it is. There have been times with us when we did not actually walk by sight but, still, we had a very joyful experience of God's Presence with us. We not only believed in God's existence, but our spirits seemed enveloped in and encompassed with His Spirit and appeared to be, as it were, set on fire, as when the bush in the desert was all aglow with the indwelling God. It is not always so with us, but we have had times of extremely conscious nearness to God. After prayer, as we rose from our knees and looked at the clock, we perceived that a full half-hour had gone, whereas we thought that it was only a minute or two that we had been at our devotions. In our chamber, alone, as we have read the Word, the sacred page has seemed to glow with unusual brilliance. We do not remember noticing such glory in those words, before, but God has spoken to us through the Word and that has made the difference.

Sometimes, as we have been sitting in the sanctuary, a solemn awe has manifestly been on every heart. And when we went away, we said to one another, “Surely God was in that place, and we knew it.” You know how Paul says about his rapturous experience, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows.” Such things have happened to many of God's people and I believe that the more we live in Him, and walk with Him, the more often will this be our experience till it may even come to be perpetual, and our soul shall be as certain of the Presence of God as we are of the presence of our body. We shall get to have as keen a sense and recognition of the Presence of God with us as we have of the atmosphere which surrounds us. David's declaration, “When I awake, I am still with You,” implies that holy thoughts of the precious thoughts of God place us near to God!

And, next, it implies that these thoughts *help to keep us near to God*. “When I awake, I am still with You,” said David, as if he meant, “I have a long time been in Your company. I have been now by the week, the month, the year, abiding in the light of Your Countenance, enjoying Your sweet society. Your Grace has kept me near You.”

Still further, such thoughts *help to restore God's Presence to us* if, for a while, we have lost it. "When I awake"—that means, "I have been asleep and so have lost the consciousness of God's Presence." Have you ever known what it is, at night, to be quite sorry to go to sleep because you have been so full of holy joy that you were afraid you might lose it while you were unconscious? Have you never lain awake thinking and meditating upon your God, enjoying His Presence so much that you have said, "This is better than sleep. I wish that my eyes might be kept wide awake that they might forget their need of rest, that I might continue this hallowed communion"? But with our poor frail frames we must sleep, so, is it not sweet that when you awake, you should be where you left off, that, as your soul was holding fellowship with God as you fell asleep, when you opened your eyes, again, He was still there? You were ready to take up the happy employment where you left off, for you had not broken the thread—and you went on still communing with your God!

This text evidently refers in part to natural slumber. When our thoughts are much with God, then it will happen that our sleep will make no break in our communion with Him. Were you ever pained by a dream? I will hold no man responsible for his dreams, but, if there were no sin in us, we would have no sin even in our dreams. If we were perfectly pure—as some think that they are—we would be perfectly pure even in our dreams. Take off the bridles from the horses, remove the bits from their mouths and let them go where they will, yet, if they are thoroughly trained, they will not rush wildly about and they will still obey your call. If a house is perfectly clean, it will be just as clean if you take all the locks off and leave the doors open. If a man is perfectly pure, he would be pure in any case and in any condition. Therefore, even a dream may sometimes set us watching to know how such mischief could get into our thoughts. It could not have come there if sin had not been dwelling in us. But, oh, it is blessed to get so near to God that when you fall asleep, you seem to hear, even in your dreams, the music of His voice! And when you wake in the morning, you will wish to recall those blessed thoughts that came to you even when your whole being seemed steeped in sleep! The text says, "When I awake, I am still with You." And I think that it also means, "When I wake up from any temporary lethargy into which I may have fallen, I am still with You." We all, sometimes, get into that state—sleeping, though our heart is awake. We wish to be more brisk, more lively—but we cannot stir ourselves up. We sing—

***"Dear Lord! And shall we always lie  
At this poor dying rate?"***

We have fallen into a kind of stupor. What a blessing it is to be awakened out of it, possibly by a severe affliction, perhaps by an earnest discourse! Then the awakened one says, "Now I have come back to You, my God. There was a something within me that could not forget You, even for a while, though it lay still and dormant."

And, best of all, what a grand thing it will be, one of these days, to go upstairs for the last time and stretch ourselves on the bed and say, "Adieu! Adieu!" to all we love below—and then put our head back on the pillow while those who are watching say, "He sleeps in Jesus!" "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." "When I awake, I am still

with You.' I trusted You when I fell asleep and in the morning I awoke to find You still my Friend."

Then, when my body wastes from its long sleep in the tomb, every rising bone of it shall acknowledge the Lord! My eyes shall see Him in that day—the God that loved me and died for me! Oh, how blessed it is to keep the whole heart so fixed upon God that come sleep, come life, come death, come what may, we shall be just like the needle in the compass which always turns to the pole! You may turn it around, if you like, but it always goes back and will not point anywhere but in that one direction. May it also be true of you and me that we can rest nowhere but in our God! I close my discourse, as I have often done before, with that sweet verse—

***"All that remains for me  
Is but to love and sing,  
And wait until the angels come  
To bear me to the King."***

I wish that all of you knew this blessed experience of which I have been speaking. Some of you do not. You are afraid of God. You are afraid of His seeing you. You are afraid to go to Him. See, then, here is Jesus Christ who took upon Him our nature though He is God! Go to Him, trust Him, believe in Him—then He will make you to be a child of God and you will not be afraid of your Father. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 139.**

May the all-seeing God, of whom this Psalm speaks, look down upon us and bless us richly while we read it!

**Verse 1.** *O LORD You have searched me, and known me.* "Known me perfectly, far better than I know myself. You have made an inquisition and investigated every secret thing concerning me. 'You have searched me, and known me.'"

**2.** *You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts afar off.* "Before I think it, while as yet it is not actually my thought, while it is still unformed and far away, You understand it. You not only know what it is, but You understand it—the motive from which it springs, the state of mind out of which it arises, and whereunto it tends—'You understand my thought afar off'"

**3.** *You compass my path.* "You are all round me—behind, before, above, beneath"—

***"Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God."***

**3.** *And my lying down.* "When wearied by my journey I lie down to rest, You still bless my lying down."

**3.** *And are acquainted with all my ways.* "I cannot tell you anything which You do not know; nor can I hide anything from You. Whatever I have done, or am doing, or shall do, 'You are acquainted with all my ways.'"

**4.** *For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether—*

***“He knows the words I mean to speak,  
Ere from my opening lips they break.”***

God sees the word that is lying quietly on the tongue as well as the word which has been uttered by the tongue. “You know it altogether.” God’s knowledge is not partial or imperfect. He never misjudges any, for He is acquainted with every part of every man.

**5.** *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* “You have come so near me that You touch me. You not only know my thoughts and my words, but You come into contact with me. You know me as I know a thing when I feel it with my hand—‘You have laid Your hand upon me.’”

**6, 7.** *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit?* Not that David desired to go away from God, but he wished to show the impossibility of escaping from the eyes of God. “Where shall I go from Your Spirit?”

**7.** *Or Where shall I flee from Your Presence?* “You are everywhere and Your far-seeing eyes will behold me in every place. Vain is it, therefore, for me to think that I can ever flee from Your Presence.” Is it not a very striking thought that every sin is committed in the Presence of God? He must be a very bold rebel who would insult his monarch to his face! Men are generally on their best behavior when they stand upon the palace floor—yet the whole earth is but the habitation of the great King eternal, immortal, invisible—and every time we sin, we sin in His very Presence, and with His eyes resting upon us.

**8-10.** *If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* Well did Dr. Watts write—

***“If mounted on a morning ray  
I fly beyond the western sea,  
Your swifter hand would first arrive,  
And there arrest your fugitive.”***

There is no hope of escaping from God by any speed to which we may attain, for if we could fly with the speed of light, yet would Jehovah be before us—His hand would lead us, and His right hand would hold us.

**11.** *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* It shall be light to the eyes of God, for He depends not upon the light in order that He may see. Light is a most welcome aid to our poor eyes, but God sees just as well in the dark! “Even the night shall be light about me.”

**12.** *Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* This is a very commonplace Truth of God and yet how seldom do men realize it! They still fancy that when the night comes on and they are not perceived by mortal eyes, they may do what they will. But there is no curtain in the night that can hide a deed of guilt from the eyes of the Omniscient Jehovah! “The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”—

***“Almighty God, Your piercing eyes  
Strike through the shades of night  
And our most secret actions lie  
All open to Your sight.”***

**13.** *For You have possessed my reins.* “The innermost parts of my being—You have possessed them as Your own. You know as much about them as a man knows of the rooms in his own house. ‘You have possessed my reins.’”

**13, 14.** *You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You.* That is a very sweet thing for the Psalmist to say. Just when he felt stricken with awe by reason of this august attribute of the Omniscience of Jehovah, he looks up to his God and says, “I will praise You.”

**14.** *For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Anyone who understands anatomy will tell you that man is strangely formed. So fearfully are we made that our life stands in constant jeopardy—it looks as if every breath might be our last and every pulse might speedily end our life. You cannot examine a blood vessel—especially some of the very small one through a microscope without being utterly astonished. Any medical man will tell you that there are many times in an hour—perhaps even in a minute—in which a very simple thing would put our life in imminent peril of destruction! Truly we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”—

**“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one is gone!  
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings  
Should stay in tune so long!”**

Every man is a world of wonders. He need not go abroad for miracles, for he is, himself, a marvelous and miraculous combination!

**14.** *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* How there can be a compound of spirit and matter—how the earth on which we tread should enter into our composition and yet we should be akin to angels. How there can be something about us that links us with the dust, yet much about us that joins us to God, Himself—these are extraordinary things which we do not understand. Where is the point in which the spirit touches materialism? How is it that the will can move the hand or the finger? How does spirit act on matter? Those are questions much more easily asked than answered.

**15.** *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously made.* Embroidered, as it were, with a needle. So extraordinary is the body of man that it may be compared to the needlework of God—“curiously made.”

**15, 16.** *In the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect. And in Your book all my members were written.* Just as an architect sketches his plan for a building and specifies so much of this and that, so the Psalmist represents God as writing down in a book all the members of our body.

**16.** *Which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* God mapped out what He intended that we should be even when as yet we were not in existence! And from our earliest days He cared for us. If we look back upon our infancy—that considerable period of life in which we were utterly helpless and could do nothing whatever for ourselves—it ought to check our unbelief, because, if God took charge of us, then, and found means for our protection and our growing up when we were but little babes, if we should live to a second infancy, we may fairly trust that God will take care of us again! And if we should ever, through

sickness, be reduced to such a helpless state that we can do nothing for ourselves, yet He that cared for us before we saw the Light of God, and when we saw it with feeble trembling eyes, will take care of us still!

**17-19.** *How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You. Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.* It must be so! God cannot let sinners continue to live and provoke Him to His face. He must, one day, take down the sword of Justice, unsheathe it, and slay the foes of righteousness! "Surely You will slay the wicked, O God."

**19.** *Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* "Get away, lest, when He comes to kill you, I should have to see you die."

**20-22.** *For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God's enemies! We are to forgive our personal enemies, but we cannot forgive God's enemies! That man loves not the Truth of God who does not hate a lie and he loves not the right who has no anger against wrong. We are living in an age in which we are practically told that truth and error are the same, that the devil's lie and the Divine Revelation may lie down together! If we will not endorse this lie, men call us bigoted or dogmatic. Bless the Lord, we mean to be a great deal more dogmatic than we have been, and to stick even closer to the Truth of God than we have up to now done, if that is possible!

**23, 24.** *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in Your way everlasting.* That is a blessed prayer! May God hear it in the case of each one of us, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—230, 229, 194.**

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

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# THE WAY EVERLASTING

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Lead me in the way everlasting.”  
Psalm 139:24.***

WE must all of us have a “way.” We must be journeying, for this is not our resting place. We cannot abide in any one stay. “Forward” is the word of command. As the round earth never pauses but perpetually revolves. As the stars never halt in their course but traverse incessantly their ordained orbits. As the rivers evermore seek the sea—as the ocean waves unrestingly pursue each other—even so feel we the common motion and always must we move onward, onward through this life unto the next—onward forever and ever.

Since we must have a way, it is of the highest importance that our way should be a right one. Important, because if it is not right we shall not long be happy in our course since the happiness of those who follow the path of evil is fleeting as a meteor, mocking as a will-o’-the-wisp, deceptive as the mirage, frail as a bubble on the wave and unsubstantial as a phantom of the night. Today the path of sin leads us through flowery meads and groves resounding with song of birds, but tomorrow it will wind among the desolations of many generations where souls and all their joys are withered as the green herb in the summer sun. The ways of righteousness are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. The good is growing and the pleasure deepening where the wise in heart are walking, but nowhere else. We have need, then, to find the right way, that we may be happy pilgrims along it.

We have need of the right way, also, because whatever the way we pursue, others will be affected by it. Little ones who gather around our knees will think, “father’s way” must be the way for them. Servants, neighbors, brothers, sisters and if we are very young, playmates and school fellows under our influence—any or all of these will be affected for good or evil by our choices. Our following the wrong way will lead them to the wrong and we shall become a ministry of evil unto them if we choose evil unto ourselves. More important, still, is it that we should choose the right way because of the right end. “All’s well that ends well.” But what if the way is such that it must end amiss—must lead to the blackness of darkness forever—must land us “where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched”? Oh, then it will be terrible to have been found in such a way! Terrible for our souls to meet such a doom!

May it be yours, my dear Hearers, to be led early in life through the gate of faith in Jesus which leads into the straight and narrow way of eternal life! May it be yours to be kept in that way, your faith confirmed by

following in it. May it be yours to be found in that way when the summons shall come from the Master to render up your account. May it be yours to win, through Divine Grace, the sure results of perseverance in the way of holiness by reaching that blessed end that has no end—the joy of the blessed in the land of the hereafter at the right hand of the Most High!

We shall take the text as a prayer and point out to you three things in it which strike us as being somewhat remarkable. The first is *a remarkable attribute of the right way*—it is said to be “everlasting.” Secondly, *a remarkable confession* implied in the language here employed. And then, thirdly, *the remarkably comprehensive prayer* contained in the words before us.

**I.** First, then, A REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTE OF THE RIGHT WAY—IT IS “THE WAY EVERLASTING.” It is most certain that the way of many men cannot be everlasting. *The way of the sinful is not so.* I hope, with regard to some, that their way will last but for a very little time, for it is the way of evil. May they soon turn from it! “It is a long lane that has no turning.” May their road be so hedged up by God’s Providence and Grace that they may be compelled to take another road. May their prayer be unto God, “turn me and I shall be turned.” The way of the sinner ought not to be a way everlasting, for if it should be, it must be a way of everlasting sorrow. The sinner’s way of pleasure is far from being everlasting, for even here the wine cup of sin first yields the sweetness of intoxication, but afterwards it becomes insipid with satiety. And after that it grows bitter with remorse, and as for the dregs, what a Hell burns within them!

The way of pleasure in sin is but as the way of foam on the breaker, soon to disappear. The devil would gladly persuade men that their life shall always be as it is, that they shall dance on forever—forever as the merry butterflies that need not toil and that flit away the golden hours. He would have them forget the killing frosts that will blight forever each idle wing. Death and the Justice of God have decreed that the way of pleasure and the life of sin shall not be everlasting. An end must surely come to the houses of cards built on carnal merriment—their bowing walls must lie level with the dust—their tottering fences must fall down to the ground.

*The way of the merely moral man* is not a way everlasting. It may be that he is one who steadily pursues money, conducting his business on the best principles, commanding the fullest confidence of the mercantile community and the admiration of all who can appreciate tact and principle. The man may manage to acquire wealth, it may grow from day to day—his account may be large at the bank, his capital may be ample and the stream of interest that flows in may, every day, be more considerable. But this cannot always last. There may come disaster and loss and that which was long in accumulation may very swiftly be swept away. At any rate, death will put an end to the filling of the money bags. Like Jesus in the Temple, Death will enter and overturn the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sell doves—and with a voice of authority he will cry, “Take these things out!”

Men will find that they cannot barter and bargain, that they cannot accumulate and grow rich when the time has come to lay aside their mortal bodies and face the Judge of all the earth! These things of time, however dear to them, those who are summoned to the land of spirits must leave. Bitter the parting, but it is inevitable. Naked came they forth and naked must they return—let them have gained what they may. It may be that the man, instead of making money, finds it difficult to make ends meet and his way is that of plodding hard and industriously to rear a family as respectably as he can. This has in it much to be commended, but even then, unsanctified by nobler ends, it is not a way everlasting, for there is a land where they neither marry nor are given in marriage and where, consequently, there shall be no wife nor children for whom to toil and no avocation for the worker who lived by bread alone.

There will be no sphere for the mere servant of men or master of men to occupy in Heaven. The mere earth-server will be out of place—his way must come to an end. The arm must be paralyzed that earned the bread and the fingers that drove the pen or wielded the needle must rest in long repose. And when they are reanimated at the Resurrection they cannot pursue their old toil. If they know nothing but the handicraft of earth, their way will have a wretched end. The way of the merely moral is not a way everlasting. It might be if it were consecrated by the Grace of God. These more common things might be the prelude to the everlasting service before the Throne of God, but inasmuch as the life is unconsecrated, let it be spent as it may—the way is a way that comes to an end.

*The way of the purposeless and dabbler* is not everlasting. How many a man's life reminds you, instead of an everlasting way, of a mere *cul-de-sac*—a blind alley, as we say—down which you wander merely to come back again! Hundreds of men's lives are like that—like the famous king in the nursery rhyme who led his troops up a hill and then down again. They live and they die and that is all that you can say of many. Their way is a vain show—it passes and is gone and we say, "Where is it?" Some remind me of those circular lanes which we have sometimes been lost in—you go round and you come hack to the same place again and you are no more forward. As the tramp of the blind horse going round the mill, such is the way of many—from morn till eve, from year to year—they are mere pendulums swinging to and fro. Their life would be, if they could exist forever, an everlasting toil. But since they must die, it must come to an end, and their unhappy spirits must remain forever in that pathless wilderness of woe from which no traveler ever finds his way of escape.

My Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you, also, that *the way, even of some religious people, is not the way everlasting*. I mean the path, for instance, of those who are hypocritical. They may put on the mask and look like beauty, itself, but death will rudely dash the visor on one side and let their face be seen. Like the veiled prophet, who wore over his leprous brow a mask of silver, such are many men. They may pass in the crowd as bright and beautiful, but when the time comes for them to be *seen* in the

light of God, their loathsomeness will be discovered. The way of the Pharisee, again—who differs somewhat from the hypocrite—is not the way everlasting. He will not always dare to say, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men.” Not always will he be able to boast, “I fast twice in the week. I pay tithes of all that I possess.” The time will come when he will see all this outside washing of the platter to have been of no service, because his inward part was full of very wickedness. What will be his dismay and despair!

No, Brethren, neither the way of the hypocrite, the formalist, nor the Pharisee, is the way everlasting. Neither is any way but that which is according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not tell me that if you are sincere it will little matter which way you take! You know better! If you sincerely believe that you are going to St. Paul’s, or to London Bridge, when you leave this Tabernacle and you turn to the right, you will probably find yourselves at Clapham or at Tooting, but not at St. Paul’s or London Bridge, with all your sincerity of misbelief. The sincere belief that you will be saved by your good works will by no means avert your damnation if you persist in refusing to trust in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus is the *only* way of salvation and if you will not walk in that way, there is no other.

Our Lord’s teaching leaves us no room to hope for the salvation of unbelievers. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” But what of those who do not believe? May they not be sincerely *mistaken*? May they not be very good people, after all, and be saved in their own way? Our Lord’s reply is sharp, clear and decisive, “He that believes not shall be damned.” He has nothing else for them but that! Christ is too great and too honest to court popularity, as many do nowadays, by an affectation that right or wrong are much the same. The wicked charity of this age sickens us with its deceptive cant, as it whines out, “It will little matter what you believe. Nothing, nowadays, is of very great consequence. Believe what you like and it shall be all right in the long run.” No, but according to the Gospel of Jesus you must believe the Truth of God and have faith in the power of the Truth, for a lie will not regenerate you! A lie will not fit you to see the face of God. A lie will not conduct you to Heaven, but only that Truth which has the stamp and seal of God and of His Holy Spirit.

I have thus shown you that there are many ways which are not everlasting. Let us now notice that the *right* way—the way of faith in God and of a life that flows out of faith in God—the way, indeed, which Jesus trod, the way which we tread when we follow in Jesus’ footsteps—is the way everlasting, because it is *a way which was mapped out upon everlasting principles*. The Truth of God will never die. The stars will grow dim. The sun will pale his glory, but the Truth of God will be forever young. Integrity, uprightness, honesty, love, goodness—these are all imperishable. No grave can ever entomb these immortal principles. They have been in prison, but they have been freer than before. Those who have enshrined them in their hearts have been burned at the stake, but out of their ashes

other witnesses have arisen. No sea can drown, no storm can wreck, no abyss can swallow up the ever living Truth of God!

You cannot kill goodness and truth and integrity and faith and holiness! The way that is consistent with these must be a way everlasting. Holiness is a way everlasting, *because it is pursued by the possessors of a life that is everlasting*. No man enters the way of truth, righteousness, faith, love to God and love to his neighbor but the man who has received the new birth. Now, the product of the new birth is not like the fruit of the flesh which is mortal and perishable—it is a living and incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever, so that the man who is born again can no more die than God Himself! He has received the life of Christ *within* him, and, according to the Scriptures, because Christ lives he shall live also. It is an everlasting way, then, because the pilgrims who tread it, though they are mortals to all appearance, are yet, in the sight of God, immortal! They bear within them a life unquenchable, whose endurance shall be co-existent with the life of Jehovah Himself.

Godliness is a way everlasting, *because no circumstances can by any possibility necessitate any change in it*. The man who lives by policy is like a sailor on a gusty day, or who has a foul wind against him and must tack about to reach first this point, and then the other, and makes but slow progress, after all, in the direction which he really wishes to pursue. But the man who has the life of God and follows the way of the Truth of God is like the steamship which plows its road straight on, wind or tide notwithstanding. Why needs it to tack? It bears its force *within itself* and is not dependent upon the extraneous circumstances of winds and waves! Happy is that man who is in this condition! If he is poor, he may cheerfully pursue the way of Truth and find his poverty a blessing! If he is rich, the same immortal principles which guided him in poverty will suffice him now that he has come to the possession of wealth.

If he were elected to a kingdom, such a man, having the Law of God in his heart, would know how to walk and to behave himself right royally. His way is everlasting because he has not to stop every morning and enquire, "How am I to behave today? What is the new rule by which I shall shape my course?" Your tricky politicians, who this day are one thing and that the other, as they fancy the public mind may change—these had need to consult their barometer to know what kind of weather the popular will ordains. But we, if we are taught of God to do the right thing, care not about the weather or the will of man. Whether it is fair or foul—whether the sun shines or not—we would still serve our God and do the right, by His Grace, and if the heavens should fall, expect to still find a shelter.

Righteousness is the way everlasting, *because such a way, even death, itself, shall not terminate*. The man who learns to live as God would have him live, will find death to be only a circumstance in his immortality. He will pass onward, with no more pause than the earth makes when the moon comes between her and the sun. As when the iron horse pursues his rapid way, he shoots through a tunnel and is out of it again, making

the darkness but an interlude in his progress—even so is death a small matter to the converted and regenerate man! The man who walks in the way of God passes through death as through a temporary gloom, but he still pursues the even tenor of his way. What he did on earth he shall do in Heaven, only he shall do it better and after a nobler sort!

On earth he loved his God. In Heaven he shall do the same. On earth he found his joy in a sight of Christ—in Heaven he shall enjoy that sight more near and unveiled! On earth he loved the true and the right and the good—and in Heaven he shall dwell in the midst of the city that is of pure gold and whose light is brighter than the sun, where only holiness and perfection are admitted. He shall not even change his company, for the Church militant in which he fought on earth is also the Church triumphant with which he shall reign forever and ever in Heaven! You see, then, that the godly man's path is a way everlasting. I might have said much more, but this shall suffice.

**II.** Dear Brothers and Sisters, the next remarkable thing in the text is THE CONFESSION WHICH IS MADE. David says, "Lead me in the way everlasting." David was a good man, a Grace-taught man, a spiritual man, an eminently spiritual man and yet he required to be led in the way—"Lead me in the way everlasting." What is more, David was a deeply *experienced* man. This Psalm is towards the end of the book and I suppose his hair was all gray when he wrote it. He had come to threescore years and ten, probably, and there he is, dear man, able to teach others, yet pleading, "*Lead me, lead me.*"

He was a ripe Believer, for he had not only the years of age, but the experience of a much-tried life. In fact, David seems to have been an epitome of all men. You never had a trouble but what you could find something to suit you under it in the Psalms. And I think you never had a joy but what you discovered a verse that would help you to sing out your joy. David, somehow or other, seems to have known all the ups and downs, all the hills and all the valleys of Christian experience and yet for all that he cries, "Lead me, lead me." David was the man after God's own heart, despite his slips. His sin was the soldier's common sin—we must remember that. His position was an extraordinary one, such as ours can never be. He was a man after God's heart because of his deep sincerity, his childlikeness and his warmth of soul. And yet notwithstanding that and all his eminence in Divine Grace, he says, "Lead me, lead me."

What does this prayer teach us? Why, that the most mature Christian, if he judges aright, feels that he needs as much to be *led* in the right way as if he were only beginning the spiritual life! The words seems to me to be almost humiliating, "Lead me." It is a little child saying, "Lead me, Mother, lead me." It is more than that—it is a blind man putting out his hands, he cannot see, he cannot find his way and he is begging—"Lead me." Such babes are we. Such blind men are we, apart from the guiding Grace of God! Oh, how dependent we are, then, and what confessions ought *we* to make who are so much less than David, so much younger, the most of us,

so much less experienced than he! How ought we to pray emphatically, “Lead me, Lord, for I am so little, so uninstructed and have had such little experience. Lead me in the way everlasting.”

This remarkable confession and prayer should suggest two things—ignorance and impotence. When we say, “Lead me,” if it is a blind man, it means ignorance—he cannot see the way and therefore he needs to be led, though he may be strong enough to walk if he only knew the way. “Lead me, Lord,” also signifies impotence if it is judged of as the child’s case—he needs to be led in another sense because he has not strength enough in his little feet to go without the help of his mother’s hand. “Lead me in the way.” So, you see, our confession should be double—of our ignorance and of our impotence—of our need of knowledge and of our lack of strength.

1. First, *our need of knowledge*. “‘Lead me in the way everlasting,’ for I do not know that way everlasting. Naturally I know nothing of it, nor can I, as a natural man, until You teach me—for only the spiritual man receives spiritual things and the carnal mind cannot know the things of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. O God, how dangerous is my case and how hopeless, too, unless You teach me! I pray You, therefore, instruct me! Enlighten me. Lead me in the way everlasting! O Lord, I may well confess that I need this instruction because even though I am converted and so know something of Your way, yet it often happens that I know not which is the right way through defect of judgment.

“If willing to do the right, yet it may sometimes happen that I may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Though anxious and even desirous to take the right road, yet I may come to a place where two ways meet which seem, both of them, to be the right one and I may not know which way to choose. My judgment, Lord, is very imperfect and apt to err. Lead me, I pray You. He that leans to his own judgment is foolish and he that trusts to his own heart is a fool—neither to my judgment nor to my heart would I trust, but say, ‘Lord, lead me.’” Moreover, in addition to a deficient judgment we ought to confess, and I hope we shall humbly do so, that we are apt to be misled by *vitiating affections*. There is a leaning in us all towards the evil way if we dare pursue it! Ah, how soon we touch the forbidden fruit! How does the heart run after vanity, even when we have resolved by Divine Grace that we will always close our eyes to it!

That man must have well listed his door who can keep out Satan’s temptations. But he who should have done that and left no crack by which the old serpent could enter would find a serpent within the core of his own heart, in his own corruptions. “Alas, then, O God, since my soul leans towards evil and will go amiss if it can, lead You me, lest my depraved affections should further pervert my judgment and I should leave the King’s highway.” In addition to this, all over this world there are *influences which would make us take the wrong way*, deceiving us into the notion that we are right. The air is not clear anywhere—there are mists and fog all around—the best of men often have to pause and feel the hot sweat

upon their brow through trembling anxiety as to the right course. Which is right? Which is wrong?

This fog of *custom*—everybody does it! This fog of *tradition*—everybody has done it these hundreds of years! The dread of being singular, the dislike of being thought to be precise and I know not what beside—all these cast a mist about us. Oh, how easy it is when we are traveling through a thick and murky atmosphere for us to mistake the way! Lead us, then, Lord! Lead us in the way everlasting! Alas, how many have set out, as they thought, under God's guidance on the voyage of life, but they have not really received Christ nor His life within them? And so, being deluded by the false lights of wreckers, have soon come to everlasting shipwreck, believing all the while that they were sailing into the celestial haven!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, judge not yourselves to be wise, or the Word will judge you to be foolish! But go, now, with a confession of your ignorance unto God in silent prayer and lift up this petition, "Guide me, O You great Jehovah! I am a pilgrim through this misty land. I am foolish, You are wise—guide me with Your powerful hand, conduct me safely, let no enemy tempt me from the narrow way, but lead me in the way everlasting."

2. But, secondly, the confession also contains *an admission of lack of strength*, for it is not merely, "Show me," which would suffice if the man were strong, but, "Lead me," which, as I have said before, is as the child that needs its mother's finger, or its father's supporting hand. We not only need knowledge, but we need power to run in the right way. Morally and physically men *can* do right if they will. "It is as easy," says one, "for a man not to get drunk as it is to open his hand." And that is a fact, for if a man, when he holds the intoxicating glass, would only open his hand the liquor would fall to the ground and the drink would not make a beast of him.

So any other sin may easily be avoided, so far as the moral and physical power are concerned. But then there is a lack of will in the man, and *that* is the point—and therefore we need to ask of God to give us will, which is the real power. Oh, how irresolute a man often is concerning a sin which he knows to be a sin, but which enchants him with its sweetness! Ah, how a man will say, "I must give it up, but I cannot!" How, like the serpent in the old story of Laocoon, Sin will twist itself round and round a man and if he tugs and pulls away one coil, yet there is another and another and another! Ah, how men dally with sin! When it comes to plucking off the right arm and plucking out the right eye, you say to yourselves, "We do not like losing this arm, and besides, we have not yet found the proper knife to take it off with."

Ah, if you had the proper knife, yet you would be slow to make the gash! You would plead that it might be spared at least a little longer—that a little good work might yet be done with it! There will always be some excuse for delay in giving up sin and if the surgeon does not interpose and take it off, the mortification of sin will spread through the entire body be-

fore the man will be willing to lose his limb. Sin dies hard. It makes a hundred excuses for itself and pleads, “Is it not a little one? Is it not a sweet one?”

O Lord, then, give me strength of resolution, and when I know that a thing is wrong, help me to have done with it! And when I perceive an action to be right, help me to make haste and delay not to keep Your Commandments. O my Lord, may I never try to patch up a peace between my conscience and myself by trimming and compromising. If I know a thing to be Your will, may I never parley nor question—for that is to rebel. The spirit that parleys is the essence of high treason. May I put away all questioning and, obedient to You, at once yield my will to be Yours. Lead me, Lord, lead me! Uphold me with Your hand of Grace and give me strength and resolution to be holy!

There are some who have strength and resolution enough by fits and starts, but they have not stability enough to persevere. If Heaven could be won by one great leap, how soon they would have it! But if to enter into the pearly gates one must go on pilgrimage all the way, then they cannot hold out to the end. Lord, lead me! How speedily do I begin to shrink! How soon would my rebellious heart draw back from Your service! O give me persevering Grace and when I would stand aside, lead me forward! Draw, draw me, good Lord! Yes, gently tug at my laggard soul and when—

***“My heart can neither fly nor go  
To reach celestial joys,”***

Then—

***“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all Your power Divine.  
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,  
And that shall kindle mine.”***

Lead me, Lord! You see what is meant by the prayer and I need not go further, though there is much room for enlargement. Need of knowledge and lack of strength are both confessed in this remarkable verse.

**III.** Let us close by noticing THE REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE PRAYER before us. I do not know many of the collects or particularly wish to know them, but I will give you my text for a collect and you shall never find its superior. Let this be your constant prayer—you may use it as long as you like and as often as you please, for if it is sincere, it will never be a vain repetition—“Lead me in the way everlasting.”

**1.** Now, notice this prayer very carefully. First, observe how comprehensive it is, because of *its object*. Its object is the whole man. “Lead me—not half of me, not part of me. Lead me in the whole way—not in some part of the way, but in the whole way, that is to say, let my thoughts be led in the way that I may not think unrighteously, that I may not believe the Truth of God in *part*, but that I may be sound in the faith. Lead me that I may not believe false doctrine. Lord, lead my understanding and my intellect in the way of Revelation—make me to know Your Covenant Truths and the great Doctrines of Grace. Let me not be satisfied to know half Your Truth and think I know it all, but lead me into all Your Truth.

Let there not be one doctrine that I would erase, nor one precept that I would forget, nor one single word in Your Book that I would blot out. Lord, lead me as to my understanding, knowledge and thoughts—lead me in the way everlasting.”

He means *his emotions*, too, as well as his intellectual part. “*Lord, lead me in Your way, for well I know that if my head should go without my heart, yet were I all undone. Lord, help me to love not the world nor the things that are of the world, but lead me in the way everlasting. Let my best passions boil when Christ is the fire. Let my heart be in its best trim when Christ has come to see it, like a garden that is watered by His Presence and whose fruits are ripened by the sunlight of His love.*” He refers *his tongue* to the same leading. “*Lord, grant that my tongue may not be a slanderous tongue, or a trifling tongue, or a lascivious tongue, or a tongue that talks for mere talk’s sake. But, Lord, salt my tongue for me. Grant me Grace so to speak that my conversation shall edify the hearer. Lead me in the way everlasting.*”

He means, indeed, *himself as to his actions*. “*I would keep Your way, O Lord, when I go to my chamber—not sinning there—and when I come down to my meals—not getting out of Your way by wrong-eating or drinking. When I go to my shop, or to my work, to the field or to the market, to the streets and to the Exchange let me not err in anything. Still, Lord, lead me in the way everlasting and may no path of business, no path of recreation, no path of society, no path of solitude ever take me out of Your way, but wherever I am let the whole of me be altogether and wholly in the whole of Your way.*” You see what a full prayer it is as to its objects!

**2.** But it is also a great prayer, if you consider it in the matter of *its modes*. “*Lead me.*” How does God lead? Brothers and Sisters, He leads us by the Law. The Law tells us what we ought to do. The Ten Commandments of the Law are, as it were, ten signposts, all of them saying—“*This is the way; walk you in it.*” He leads us, better still, by the example of Christ—

***“We read our duty in Your Word,  
But in His life the Law appears  
Drawn out in living characters.”***

The Law tells us what we should do, but Jesus has done it for us and shown us how to do it! The whole life of Christ is a leading of us in the way. He leads us in the way by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enlightens the conscience, influences the will, guides the judgment and sweetly leads the heart in the path of sanctity. Under God, the Holy Spirit, the ministry often becomes our guide in the way everlasting. Some choice word from God’s servants, coming at a right time, may check us when we would do evil, may inspirit us when we would faint in the way of right. And then good books and I know not what besides—the example of the saints, the hints of Providence, the emotions of our own hearts when near to God—these are often prompts to guide and lead us in the way everlasting. So, you see, as to its modes the prayer of the text is very comprehensive.

**3.** It is, dear Brothers and Sisters, a great prayer, if you think for a minute of its *issues*. “Lead me in the way everlasting.” Oh, what a word is that word, “everlasting!” I think I see before me the gate of pearl, as though this word, “everlasting,” were that glorious gate. With what soft radiance it beams upon my eyes at this moment! And lo, it turns upon its hinges! It stands wide open and what do I see? Everlasting! Everlasting! Why, I see before me the sea of glass and the harpers standing on that waveless ocean, “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.” And what do I hear? I hear their songs like the sound of many waters, yet sweet as harpers harping with their harps!

And what do I see as I gaze, but Jesus Christ, the sun and center of Heaven’s Glory? And I behold His saints who trod this way everlasting on earth, continuing, still, to tread it, proceeding further into the bliss of His Presence and into the ecstasy of His love and into the experience of His fellowship! Every day is advancing in this way that has no end, this way everlasting! Oh, what a prayer this is! I, when I say, “Lead me in the way everlasting,” as good as ask for a holy life, a happy death and a Heaven to crown it all! I do ask for all that is in the Covenant, all that Christ came to give, all that God has laid up in store and all that the Spirit works in men. It is a mighty prayer, indeed!

**4.** The last remark is the prayer is most comprehensive as to *the persons* who may fitly use it. It has but one stroke and aim. It is, “*Lead me, lead me.*” But it is suitable to thousands. It is a great prayer and it is just suitable to your lips—*yours*, my Brother! *Yours*, my Sister. *Yours*, whom I could not address by either of those names. *Yours*, O stranger to the Grace of God. “*Lead me.*” Who is there here whom it would not suit? There are none too well grown in Divine Grace and none too far gone in sin!

“*Lead me.*” Is there one that is so far off from God and hope that she has given herself up to despair? When your heart is overwhelmed within you, He can lead you to the Rock that is higher than you are and bring you out of the way of ruin into the way everlasting! Is there a man here whose backslidings have become so numerous that he dares no longer look up? Friend, your prayer can still reach God’s ear! “*Lead me in the way everlasting.*” Poor Prodigal, if you cannot return, if you feel yourself too vile to hope, yet *He* can come to you, even if to Him you cannot come! Breathe the prayer, “Lead me, Lord, even me, from the depths of Hell. I cry unto You like Jonah out of the whale’s belly! Out of the Hell of my despair, out of the Hell of my infamous sin, I venture to ask You—black-handed, black-mouthed, black-hearted as I am—lead me, O my God!”

He will hear you, Sinner, through the intercession of Jesus. He will wash you in the atoning blood. He will guide you and bring you, even *you*, into the way everlasting. Let it not, then, be omitted by any one of us to make this our prayer before we leave this house! I charge you, let not this evening’s gathering be in vain, and I know it will be in vain to each one present who is not led so to pray. Come! Let us pray this prayer together and may the Lord hear us!

[Then the people bowed their heads and worshipped and said “Amen” after the following prayer.]

“O Lord, my God, lead me in the way everlasting! I need it! You have made me to teach others and my example influences many. Lead me in the way everlasting! And Your servants who gather around me, my beloved deacons and elders, whose example, also, will be potent for good if they are good, and for evil if they are evil—Lord, hear them as they say, ‘Lead us in the way everlasting.’ And the members of the Church, the many hundreds, yes, the thousands who are associated in Church fellowship here—who eat of Your bread and drink of Your cup—O hear them, such of them as are now present who shall now cry unto You, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’

“Hear every Brother in dilemma and difficulty, every Sister in duty and danger, every heart that is weary, every soul that is sick who says, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ And Lord, hear the unconverted sinner as he breathes this desire towards your Throne of Grace. Is there one here that has left the paths of virtue and of honesty and do his lips tremblingly say, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting’? Lord, hear his supplication! Lord, hear it for Jesus’ sake. Where ever there stands or sits in this Tabernacle one old or young, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, moral or immoral—if there is such a one here who in his heart says, ‘Father, forgive me and lead me in the way everlasting’—O do You answer that prayer speedily, for Your dear Son’s sake. And now, once more, for Jesus’ sake we do each of us beseech you, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ Amen.”

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 139.***

[Mr. Spurgeon’s illness prevented his revising the sermons of last week and he much regrets that in the discourse entitled, “The Upper Hand,” (Sermon #901), a passage concerning the Law has been wrongly printed. The mistake was corrected as soon as observed.]

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# DAVID'S FIVE-STRINGED HARP

## NO. 2527

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 25, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1884.

*"I said unto the LORD, You are my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence.  
Psalm 140:6, 7, 12, 13.*

This Psalm was written by David when he was sorely vexed by many adversaries. These adversaries were bent upon his destruction—they could not bear that the son of Jesse should be favored of God and that he should come to the throne—so they set their wits to work to invent all manner of slanders against him. They misconstrued his actions, they misrepresented his motives. They spat the very venom of asps from their mouths against him and, at the same time, they said to one another, "If we can lead him to do wrong. If we can, somehow or other, entrap him, either in his speech, or in his private character, or in his public actions, then we shall have a weapon wherewith we can smite him." The ungodly are fully aware that slander is, after all, a very dangerous weapon to handle and, like the Australian boomerang, it is very apt to come back to the man who throws it. Stones, hurled into the air, often fall upon the head of the thrower, and slander often recoils upon those who utter it. So, if they can but get a *truthful* accusation against a man of God, then they are exceedingly glad. Slander is like shooting at a man with only powder, or with very small shot that can sting, but cannot kill. But, oh, if they can discover some questionable action of the man, or some decided wrongdoing, then they can load their rifles with bullets and have something deadly to fire at the righteous!

David was exceedingly troubled by all this malice on the part of his enemies. He was a man who would have liked to go through the world at peace with everybody. Even when Saul tried to hunt him to the death, you remember that he would not lift his hand against his adversary even when he might have slain him. When, at night, he stood looking at his sleeping foe, and Abishai said to him, "God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." David answered, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" And when David and his men were in the sides of the great cave at Engedi, Saul

came in to sleep awhile and he was, again, in David's power, but David did not touch him, save only that he cut off a piece of the skirt of the king's robe that he might show him, afterwards, how completely he was in his servant's hands. It is peculiarly trying to a man who is thus patient and long-suffering to be incessantly compassed about with false accusations and manifold temptations. David said of his adversaries, "They compassed me about; they compassed me about like bees," stinging him here, and stinging him there, and stinging him wherever they could!

I want you to notice how this man of God acted in this trying time. He betook himself to his knees—he began to pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man." And again, in the next Psalm, he said, "Lord, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You." He found his remedy for all the stings of falsehood in drawing near to the living God! He was a wise man, thus, to bathe his wounds in that bath which alone could take the venom out of them, by a prayerfully drawing near to the Most High. And he mingled great faith with his prayer. When trying to expound this Psalm, I was much struck with the positive way in which David speaks all through it. Notice that sixth verse—"I said unto the Lord, You are my God." That is a grand way to talk! And then, further on, in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse—"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted." He has no question about the matter, no hesitation. He does not say, "I hope He will," but, "I know He will, I am confident of it." And that makes him say, in the last verse, "Surely"—he felt so certain about it that he could say, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

It is a blessed thing when faith rises as tribulations increase. A little faith may do for a skirmish with the enemy, but you need the full assurance of faith for a pitched battle. When the waters are up to the ankles, a little faith may enable you to stand. But when you get to "waters to swim in," then you need, in childlike confidence, to cast yourself entirely upon the stream of Divine Love, or else, assuredly, you will sink. May God be pleased to increase the faith of all of us who believe in Jesus! If we are tempted and tried very sorely, may the Great High Priest, whom we cannot see, but who always sees us and foresees every danger to which we are exposed, pray for us till He can say to each one of us, as He did to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." For, if faith keeps her proper place and prayer does her duty, there will be a way for the child of God to escape from every trial.

There are five things in my text to which I especially want to draw the attention of any who are in sore trouble—and particularly those who are in trouble from enemies who are seeking to ruin them. That which occupied and satisfied David's mind may wisely occupy and satisfy ours when we are in a similar condition to his. Flowers from which this bee has sucked some honey are the kind of flowers for us to light upon, with the expectation that in them we shall find honey, too! The first thing I see here is, *possession asserted*. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God." The second is, *a petition presented*. "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." The third is, *preservation experienced*. "O God the Lord, the

strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." The fourth is, *protection expected*. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." The last is, *praise predicted*. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence." I can only speak very briefly upon each head.

**I.** The first is very precious. I pray that every child of God may realize and experience it. It is POSSESSION ASSERTED. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God."

What was *the possession*? It was the Lord Himself! "I said unto the LORD, You are my God." The word, "LORD," here, means Jehovah. You see that it is in capital letters and wherever our translators print the word, "LORD" thus, they mean Jehovah. "I said unto Jehovah, the only living and true God, You are my God." This is a wonderful speech for David to make—"You are my God,' in opposition to the gods of the heathen. They may worship Baal and Ashtaroath, but, 'You are my God.' I count other gods to be idols, the works of men's hands, and I despise them. All other confidences, all other grounds of trust are to me but as broken cisterns that can hold no water. 'I said unto Jehovah, the only living God, You are my God,' in opposition to every other who is called God."

"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' I have taken You unto myself as much as if no other man ever trusted You. I feel that I could stand alone and acknowledge You to be the God of the whole earth. I said to my heart, 'All that God is, is henceforth mine.' He has given Himself to me in the Covenant wherein He said, 'I will be their God.' And He is as much mine as if He belonged to nobody else. Yes, as fully, as completely and as entirely mine, if I am a Believer in Him, as if I were His only child, His only chosen, His only redeemed one." Oh, but this is a wonderful thing, to put the lines of possession round the Infinite, to lay the grasp of faith upon the Incomprehensible, and to say, "Jehovah, You are my God"! Your possessions, dear Friends, are very large. "Why do you say that?" asks one—"my garments are wearing out and I am sure I do not know how I shall ever renew them. My cupboard is very bare and my wallet is empty." My dear Brother in Christ, you are a very rich man, after all, for all these treasures that may be eaten up with moth, or cankered and corrupted, what are they? But if God is your God, all things are yours, for all things are in God and the God who has given Himself to us cannot deny us anything! No, He has already, by that very act, given everything to us! So I pray that every child of God may know that he has this possession and be able to say without any hesitancy, "O Jehovah, You are my God."

Observe in the text, not only mention made of the possession, but of *the claim to it*. "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." David exhibited his title deeds. He did not say to himself, "That possession is mine, but I will leave it unrecognized and unclaimed," but he declared his right to it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Oh, if the children of God would sometimes be silent instead of speaking, they would be wise! But if, on the other hand, they would sometimes speak instead of remaining

silent, they might be equally wise! Have *you*, dear Friend, ever *said* to the Lord, "You are my God." Have you said it? "Well, I have *hoped* it," says one. Oh, but I want you to get much beyond that, till, with full assurance, helped by the Holy Spirit, you can say, "It is so! My faith has grasped my God and I have dared to say it, say it at the Mercy Seat, say it when I stood at the foot of the Cross—and I expect to say it, before long, when I stand before Jehovah's Throne above, 'You are my God!' I put in my claim. I dare not do otherwise. I could not let You go without claiming You as my own. O Lord, You have been my dwelling place in all generations. I have said unto You, You are my God."

Notice also where this claim was made, in whose Presence, and who was *the attesting Witness* to it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." It is a very easy thing to say to the minister, "The Lord is my God," or to say it to some Christian friend by way of profession. But it may not be true. It is a very solemn thing to be able to say *to Jehovah*, "You are my God." True Believers have dialogs with their God! They are accustomed to speak with the Most High. They may say some good things to men, but they say their best things to God—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Can you stand, at this moment, in the dreadful Presence of the Eternal? Can you realize to yourself that He sees and hears you, that He is all around you, that He is in you? Can you think of His infinite holiness and His inflexible justice and yet say to Him, "You are my God; You are a consuming fire, but You are my God"? Even our God, the God of those who believe, is a consuming fire, yet we call Him ours. It is a grand thing, in time of trouble, in time of slander, in time of temptation, if you can just turn your back on it all and say, "I look to God, and I say, 'O Jehovah, You are my God. I say it even in Your Presence.'" If you can truly say this, it will spread a delightful calm over your spirit! It will encase you as in an armor of proof! It will make your bleeding wounds to be stanching and your broken heart to rejoice, if you can say it!

And, once more, it seems to me to be a grand point in this text to note *the occasion chosen* by David to say, "You are my God." It was in the time of his trouble that he repeated to himself the fact that he had made this declaration. "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' Men said that I had a devil, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was a castaway, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was without a friend, but I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.' They said of me everything they could think of that was bad and they would have said worse things if they could have thought of them. And after they had done their worst and said all they could say, I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.'"

I cannot say that I care much for a conversation which consists all of, "he said and I said," and, "says he and says I," and so on. But for once it is good for a man to tell us what he said! Sometimes, in the court, a judge stops a witness and says, "I do not want to know what you said, and what the other man said! I want to know what you *saw*." But in this case, we do not wish to stop the good man. We wish him to go on and tell us more of what he said when he was in the very midst of his trouble. "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God,' and my enemies may say what they like after that. Now, open your mouths, let your venom come forth—you

who are like adders and asps, sting as sharply as you may, you can do me no harm, for, 'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.'"

That is the first thing I see in the text—possession asserted.

**II. The next thing I see is, A PETITION PRESENTED.**

It ran in this fashion—"Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord," from which I gather that *his prayers were frequent*. He puts the word in the plural. "Hear the voice of my *supplications*." He did not, in those days of trouble, pray once, and have done with praying, but he prayed again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! When you have double trouble, take care that you have double prayer. When men speak worst against you, then speak most with your God. Multiply your supplications as God multiplies your tribulations. "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." Importunate prayers will prevail.

Next, I gather that *David's prayers were full of meaning*. "Hear the voice of my supplications." There are some people's prayers that are dumb prayers. They offer just so many words and yet there is no voice in them. It is a grand thing to have a voiceful prayer. We cannot always tell what is the "voice" of a man's prayer, especially when that prayer is full of moans, tears, sobs and sighs, but God hears a peculiar "voice" in every true supplication. If there were a houseful of children and they were all to cry, yet a mother would distinguish her baby's supplication from all the other cries. And when she went to the child, she would find out what the little one wanted. You and I would not know, perhaps, but she does. "Poor darling," she says, and she puts herself into such sympathy and union with her baby that she soon discovers the child's needs. What the baby cannot express, the mother can hear and discern. And when you cannot pray as you would, God can hear the voice of your supplications just as if you had said what you wanted to say. He takes the meaning out of our hearts, for our thoughts are like words to God. Remember that to speak into a man's ear, you must make a sound, otherwise he cannot distinguish your voice, but in God's ear there need be no sound whatever, for He can hear the voice of your tears, the voice of your silent supplication—

***"To Him there's music in a groan,  
And beauty in a tear."***

Is it not a blessed thing that God understands the meaning of our prayers? "Hear the voice of my supplications."

We also learn that David's prayers were *meant for God*. "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God. Hear the voice of my supplications, O Jehovah." Some men's prayers are meant for themselves—just to quiet their consciences. Other men's prayers are meant for their friends, that they may see what pious people they are. But the true suppliant's prayer is meant for God! When he addresses the envelope that contains his supplications, he addresses it to the God of Heaven, for the prayer is meant for Him.

And, once more, David's prayers were of such a kind that *he could not rest unless he had the Lord's attention*. This was his great cry, "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Jehovah." He could not bear to hear his own voice unless God heard that voice. I urge every troubled child of God to

go straight to his own God and cry unto Him. You thought of going down the street and calling on Mrs. So-and-So, and telling her your sorrow. Yes, very well, you may do so if you like. But it is a shorter road to go to God with your trouble. Straightforward makes the best runner and there is no door that has such an inviting knocker, and that opens so easily, as the door of God! Go to the Lord with your trouble. Ask Him to hear you, for assuredly He will.

So much, then, on that second point. We have spoken of possession asserted and a petition presented.

**III.** Now, very briefly, David, to encourage himself, mentions PRESERVATION EXPERIENCED. "O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." As much as to say, "You have done this for me before. Will You not do the same again? As You have begun with me, do not leave off with me till You have taken me to the country where there are no more battles—and where my head shall be covered with a crown of glory—and need not be covered with a helmet to ward off the enemy's sword."

You remember that when David went out to meet Goliath, two warriors came towards him, for Goliath came out with his armor-bearer—"the man that bore the shield went before him." Poor little David! He had no armor-bearer, had he? Saul had offered him armor that he might wear in the fight, but it did not fit him. He had never tried and proved such a protection as that, so he laid it aside. But was David without armor? No! The Hebrew of our text runs, "You have covered my head in the day of armor." That is to say, *God had been David's Armor-Bearer*. The Lord had borne a shield before him. Instead of the harness in which warriors put their confidence, God had covered David with a coat of mail through which no sword of the enemy could possibly cut its way! Has it not been so with us in days past? Have we not had our heads covered when God held His shield above us? Have we not been guarded from all hurt by the Providence and by the Grace of the Most High? I know it is so! Well, then, the God who delivered us out of the jaws of the lion and the claws of the bear will deliver us from the uncircumcised Philistine! And the God that in our youth taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight, so that the bow of steel was broken by our arms, will not leave us and forsake us now that we have grown older and feebler—but even to the end will He preserve and protect us! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and let our past experience encourage us to trust in the Lord.

"You have covered my head in the day of battle," said David; that is, *God had guarded his most vital part*. "Lord, I have a cut or two here and there. I have scars upon my right arm and my foot has been injured, but, 'You have covered my head.' The adversaries could not give me such a blow as would lay bare my brain and spill my soul upon the field, for 'You have covered my head.'" Flesh wounds there may be, and deep bleeding gashes that cause pain and sickness of heart, but the essential part has been guarded and we may rest contented that it shall be protected unto the end!

Moreover, David adds here that *God had been the strength of his salvation*. The power that had saved him had been God's power and it is so

with all of us who have been brought into the way of life. Some of us came to Christ long ago, yet still we sing—

***“Many days have passed since then,  
Many dangers I have seen.  
Yet have been upheld till now—  
Who could hold me up but You?”***

Now, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, would He have done so much for us as He has done? I feel, when I think of some of my present troubles, very much like Admiral Drake who had sailed round the world and, here and there fought the Spaniards on the great ocean. And when he came back to the Thames, it blew a gale and his ship was likely to be driven ashore. He said, “No, no, no! We have not gone round the world and now come home to be drowned in a ditch!” So let us say, “No, no, no! We have not experienced so much of the goodness of God to be drowned in a paltry ditch like this.” So let us still rejoice in the God who has preserved us until now and who will preserve us until the day of Jesus Christ!

**IV.** But I must hasten on to notice the fourth thing in our text, that is, PROTECTION EXPECTED. “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor.”

If a man is oppressed, if he is slandered, if he is evilly spoken of, let him say to himself, “God will see to this. *He is the Judge of all the earth* and shall not He do right?” Do not meddle with the case yourself. Leave it in the Lord’s hands. Our proverb says, “If you want a thing done well, do it yourself,” but, if it is anything which has to do with your own character, let me tell you that this is the worst proverb that ever was invented! If you want a blot that you have made, or that somebody else has made, multiplied into two, try and rub it out with your finger while it is wet. But if you are wise, you will leave it alone. All the dirt that ever comes on a man’s coat will brush off when it is dry. I do believe that, sometimes, holy characters shine all the brighter because they have been tarnished for a while by the filth cast upon them by ungodly men. If men cast mud at you, leave it alone. “But,” says one, “this slander affects my character.” Oh, yes, I know, but who are you that your character should not be assailed? “But it is the only one I have,” you say. Well, that is quite right—and mind that you do not get another and a worse one—by making a fool of yourself! Leave it alone and be wise! The God who gave you the Grace to have a good character will take care of what He has given you and you need not be afraid, for God is a righteous Judge.

Moreover, beside that, *God is a compassionate Friend*. And when He sees any of His dear saints very poor and afflicted, do you not think that when they cannot take care of themselves, He will take care of them? David thought so, for he said, “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.” The rich man can take care of his own rights, but the poor man cannot—so God will take care that the poor man shall not lose his rights, or if he does, God will avenge him of his adversary. Trust your cause with God! You can not have a better Advocate or a better Helper. Put not forth your hand unto unrighteousness, neither speak you on your own behalf. You will be wise if you will do as your Master did, “who, when He was reviled, reviled not again.”

Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth.

**V.** Now, lastly, here is PRAISE PREDICTED. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

They are down in the dumps today. They are troubled and burdened, despised and made to cry. But, says David, "Surely they shall give thanks unto Your name." *Praise is assured by gratitude.* There shall come a day when their gratitude shall be so great that they shall be obliged to give thanks unto God on account of all that He has done for them. "Surely" they shall. God will so astound them by His delivering mercy that they shall be compelled to speak up and to speak out—and give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

Yes, and they shall do more than that, for they shall not only express their thanks, but *they shall praise God by their holy confidence.* "The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." They shall be drawn nearer to God and be peaceful, happy, quiet and at ease. This is a beautiful and comforting promise—"The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." All the world is up in arms against them and there is a great uproar. And what do they say? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life: and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." One of the grandest ways of praising God is not by singing Psalms and hymns—that is a very sweet way of praising Him—but a grander way is by being quite calm in the time of trouble, quite happy in the hour of distress, just dwelling with God and finding all your grief relieved in His blessed Presence. How really and truly a child praises his father when he just bears anything from him! "It must be right," he says, "for my father does it." And I believe when a child of God says, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him," he is praising God more than he could ever do with the cornet or the high-sounding cymbals! Let us try to do that.

And, once more, we can equally praise God by *abiding in fellowship with Him.* "The upright shall sit in Your Presence." So it may be rendered. How can I explain it? If you could look within the veil up yonder, in the Glory Land, you would see a Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God, and round about Him all those redeemed by blood who have entered into their happiness. And you down here, in your time of trouble, can just go to your Father's table and take your seat as one of His children, or go to your dear Savior's feet and take your place with Mary—and so you will be praising the Lord Jesus Christ in the most effectual manner! I know that your temptation will be to be buzzing about the kitchen with Martha, fretting and worrying over what has happened and what has not happened—but all that the Lord Jesus Christ will say to you will be, "Martha, Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about many things." I know men who ought to be called Martha, for they are as much cumbered as ever the women are and just as ready to fret and to worry, so that the Savior might say to them, "You are cumbered about many things, but if you want to praise Me, come and sit here. Come and learn of Me, for that is the good part which shall not be taken away from you. Come and listen to Me. Give up your whole heart to drinking in My Word and I will bless you. You come and mind My business and I will stay and

mind your business. Come and try Me, and I will give you proof that trusting in Me is the safest and best way of living in this world.”

All this I have spoken to the people of God. I would you were all such, but, if you are not, I pray the Lord to bring you into the bonds of the Covenant. It is a very blessed thing to come to Christ and, when you do come to Him, all these precious things are yours! Trust in what Christ has done for sinners. Trust in the promise of the faithful God to save all who believe in Jesus! And when you have trusted, you shall never be confounded, sinner though you are. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALMS 140 and 141.**

**Psalm 140.** *To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.* Very likely this Psalm was written by David while he was being hunted about by Saul, and while all manner of falsehoods were being spoken against him. He therefore comforts himself in his God. He writes this Psalm and he means to have it sung, and sung well, so he dedicates it “to the chief Musician.” There are some parts of our life which are so crowded with urgent necessity and so full of Divine mercy that we feel that if we ever get through them, we will make a song about our deliverance and dedicate that song unto God through “the chief Musician.”

**Verse 1.** *Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.* He is wicked at heart and violent in his temper. Whenever we meet with such an adversary, we have good reason to cry to God, “Deliver me: preserve me.” Yet, if we must have enemies, we prefer that they should be bad men. We do not wish to have a child of God against us. If we must have an antagonist, we would much rather that he should be one who is “evil” and “violent.”

**2.** *Which imagine mischief in their hearts continually are they gathered together for war.* It goes hard with a peace-loving man—a man of quiet spirit—when he is beset by those whose very hearts are set on mischief and who cannot meet one another without conspiring to prepare for some fresh form of battle.

**3.** *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.* Before a serpent strikes any object, its tongue is in quick motion. If you ever see a cobra when he is angry, you will notice that his tongue darts to and fro, as if impatient to sting. And the Psalmist, here, writing of the tongue of the ungodly, remarks how quickly it moves. They seem to have sharpened it—to have prepared it for all manner of mischief. “Adders' poison”—the poison of the deadliest known serpent in the East—“is under their lips.” Perhaps you think that this is a very dreadful description of some remarkably bad man. So it is, but remember that when Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wishes to describe us all, both Jews and Gentiles, he quotes this very passage and says, “The poison of asps is under their lips.” There is still poison in our mouths unless Grace has taken it away. We, too, shall soon be speaking

evil and talking slanderously, if the Grace of God does not keep our tongues and our lips.

**4, 5.** *Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man who has planned to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me.* “They have put it where I cannot see it. I do not know where it is, nor what it is, but I know that they want to lead me into such sin that they can afterwards turn round upon me and accuse me for it. ‘The proud have hid a snare for me.’”

**5.** *And cords; they have spread a net by the wayside.* “Close to where I am walking, so that if I go even an inch out of the way, I shall be caught in it. They seem to be tempting me in my usual course of life. ‘They have spread a net by the wayside.’”

**5.** *They have set traps for me. Selah.* As men try to ensnare poor birds in all kinds of traps, so the ungodly sometimes seek the destruction of the righteous by setting many snares for them.

**6.** *I said unto the LORD, You are my God.* Ah, that was the right thing to do—to leave the ungodly and their traps and go straight to God. “I said unto the Lord, You are my God.”

**6, 7.** *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle.* “When the darts flew thick and fast, and when the battleaxe came down with a mighty crash, ‘You have covered my head in the day of battle.’” This Psalm reminds me of that passage in the song of Deborah and Barak—“O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” What wonders we also have been enabled to do by the upholding and preserving Grace of God!

**8.** *Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not their wicked devices lest they exalt themselves. Selah.* If it seemed that God’s Providence was helping them against the righteous, they would be too proud to be borne with—they would lift up their heads on high, and say, “See how God is with us, how He permits us to have our way?”

**9.** *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* This may be read as a prophecy in the future tense—“The mischief of their own lips shall cover them.”

**10.** *Let burning coals fall upon them.* Or, “Burning coals shall fall upon them.”

**10.** *Let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.* The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind’s eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits and perished. And, truly, it is but just that, if men lie and slander—and try to tempt the righteous to their destruction—they should fall into the pits that they have themselves dug.

**11.** *Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth.* Neither shall he be! The man who is glib of tongue and who uses that facility of speech for the destruction of the characters of godly men shall never be established.

**11.** *Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.* His own dogs shall eat him. He was a huntsman against the righteous and, behold, the

evil of his own mouth shall turn upon him to devour him! "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him."

**12.** *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.* We may always leave such matters with the Lord. God is the poor man's Executor and the proud man's Executioner! He will take care of the oppressed and such as are down-trodden.

**13.** *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your Presence.* Now let us read the next Psalm, which is to much the same effect.

**Psalm 141:1.** *LORD, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You.* You see how a child of God prays when he is in trouble. David says, "I cry unto You," and then the second time, "I cry unto You." And he cried *for* God as well as *to* Him. "Make haste unto me." The very best thing you can do, when you cannot help yourself, is to cry unto God, for He will help you.

**2.** *Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* David was probably far away from the Tabernacle and he could not join in presenting the morning or the evening sacrifice there. But he prayed God to let his prayer be such a sacrifice—"Let it be sweet as the perfume of the smoking spices of the morning; let it be as acceptable as the burning lamb of eventide."

**3.** *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.* Our mouth is a door and it needs a watchman, and there is no watchman who can keep it except God, Himself. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

**4.** *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.* That last petition is a very proper one. We are neither to think the thoughts of the wicked, nor to practice their ways, nor to enjoy their pleasures. "Let me not eat of their dainties." There are certain amusements which are fraught with sin—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some erroneous doctrines which are very pleasant to the taste of those who believe them—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some sins that seem to have a peculiarly sweet flavor and so are very attractive to men—"Let me not eat of their dainties."

**5.** *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.* You see, dear Friends, David cries out against slander. He cannot bear that wicked men should lie against his character, but he says, "I do not want to be left alone where I am in the wrong. I do not wish to be flattered. 'Let the righteous smite me.' He is the man who ought to do it. When I have done wrong, it is his duty to correct me, and I wish him to do it. 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.'"

**5.** *And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head.* Some people cannot bear to be spoken to about a fault. They feel as if the reprover had broken their head, directly, and they are as savage as a bear with a sore head! But the child of God is not so—he looks upon the rebuke of a good man as being like healing, sweet-smelling oil—and he prizes it. Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend! It may not be a pleasant thing for him to

do it and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship—but he is a true and sincere friend—therefore thank him for his reproof and learn how you may improve by what he tells you.

**5.** *For yet my prayer, also, shall be in their calamities.* I will try to repay the righteous for their rebukes by praying for them when they are in trouble. I will say to my God, “These good men tried to keep me right and they smote me when I did wrong. Now, Lord, they are in trouble, I pray You to help them and bring them out of it.”

**6.** *When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.* Wicked men often will not hear the Gospel, but when they get into trouble, they will. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, then they begin to be willing to hear what good men have to say. A bitter world makes a sweet word and when Providence frowns upon us, it often happens that we love the Gospel all the more, and smile upon its messengers, for their words are sweet.

**7.** *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.* “We are like men ready to be put into their graves, or the cause that we advocate seems so totally dead that we seem to be like dry bones that are flung out of a grave.”

**7.** *As when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth.* “We feel as if we were like chips out of a tree that has been cut down.”

**8.** *But my eyes are on You, O God the Lord: in You is my trust.* “I may be cut to pieces, I may be chopped up, I may seem to be made into a bundle of firewood, but, Lord, my eyes are on You. ‘O God the Lord: in You is my trust.’”

**8.** *Leave not my soul destitute.* “If I have You, I am still rich. Even if I lie at the grave's mouth, I may still live. But if You are gone from me, then am I destitute, indeed.”

**9, 10.** *Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape.* Amen! So let it be!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—632, 626, 627.**

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# INTERCESSORY PRAYER

## NO. 1049

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1872,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”  
Psalm 141:5.***

THIS is a very difficult passage in the original and it is hard to fix its meaning with absolute certainty. However, it is no business of mine, at the present, to go into the various interpretations which have been given, for I am aiming at something else. I am, for my immediate purpose, quite content with the authorized version. The meaning given to the passage by our translators is this—David says although the righteous man should rebuke him most sternly so as to strike his conscience and bring before him his wrong-doing—and even though he should do this with considerable severity, yet he would not be displeased with him. He would love him all the better, be thankful to him for having acted so faithfully, and he would prove his love by continuing to pray for his reprover, should the good man at any time be overtaken by calamity.

David would always give his honest censor a warm place in his prayers. Now, if this is the meaning, and I think it is, it shows us that David was in the habit of praying for the saints. If he had not been, he would not have said that even in their calamities his prayers should go up for them. He had made it his daily custom to bring before his God in his private prayers the names of God's righteous ones, or else, I say, he would not have made the remark that even if some of them should rebuke him and reprove him sternly, he still would continue to pray for them.

Our subject this morning shall be the high duty of intercession, a duty all too little regarded in these days. We shall speak upon it, first, as the text would lead us to do, in reference to saints, and, secondly, we shall urge it upon you on behalf of sinners.

**I.** First, then, we have to speak upon the duty of INTERCESSORY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. To arrange our thoughts in some order we will take for our first keynote the word *obligation*. It is incumbent upon every child of God to pray for the rest of the sacred family. Does not Nature, itself, teach us this? I mean not the old nature, but the new nature created within us by the Holy Spirit. Did you not find, my Brethren, as soon as you were yourselves possessors of Divine life, that you began without any exhortation to pray for others? Your very first believing cries began with, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” and so included others besides yourself.

Among the earliest prayers which a renewed heart offers will be one for the man through whose agency it was brought to Jesus. No new convert forgets to pray for the minister who was the instrument of his conversion. The newly delivered soul also pleads for others who are still in the deplorable condition from which Grace has enabled it to escape. “You have

brought my soul out of prison, Lord, set my fellow captives free. In Your loving kindness enable others to taste the sweetness of Your salvation.” Then the Christian people who have at any time conversed with the convert, who have ministered to his comfort or instruction, will be sure to obtain a share in his prayers—for a renewed heart is a tenderly *grateful* heart—and a man is not born-again from above who feels no thankfulness to earnest friends below.

Set a bird free from a cage and it will sing you its thanks as it speeds forth into the air! Even thus, if you are enabled to open the prison doors of bandaged spirits, they will repay your loving efforts with prayer. I say it is a *natural* instinct of the new-born Believer to begin to intercede for others, and this instinct continues with him throughout his life. It is one of the things that he *must* do—it is a pleasure for him to do it—it would be impossible for him to utterly cease from it, for the indwelling Spirit in his bosom makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And, Brothers and Sisters, as it is an instinct of the Heaven-born nature, so it is a law of the elect household. The saints in their due order may be described as “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Every Believer has a watchman’s place appointed him in the matter of prayer and he is bound not to be silent, but to give the Lord no rest till He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. We are all equally bound to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and our prosperity is made to hinge upon it. The new commandment which the Lord has given us, in which He bids us, “love one another,” necessitates our praying for each other. How shall a man claim that he loves his brother if he never intercedes with God for him?

Can I live continually with my fellow-Believers and see their sorrows, and never cry to God on their behalf? Can I observe their poverty, their tribulation, their temptation, their heaviness of heart and yet forget them in my supplications? Can I see their work of faith and labor of love and never implore a blessing upon them? Can I wrap up myself within myself and be indifferent to the cares of those who are my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus? Impossible! But if I can, I must belong to some other family than that of God, for in the family of love common sympathy leads to *constant* intercession. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for our Brethren! Every bee in the hive of the Church should bring in its own share of this honey to the common store. As all the roots of a tree traverse the earth for nutriment and all suck in provision for the benefit of all, so should each Believer with open mouth of prayer search out and drink in spiritual blessings for the benefit of the whole Church. Forget not, then, my Brethren, the sweet obligation under which you are laid by your relationship to the saints and their ever-blessed Lord.

Moreover, Beloved, we recognize a vital union among Believers, a oneness of a very intimate kind. We are not barely brethren, but we are “members of the same body.” Christ is the Head of His mystical body the Church, and we are all members of His body. Now, as in the human frame each separate limb, member, organ, vein and nerve is necessary to the

whole, so in the Church each Believer is necessary to the rest, and the rest are necessary to him. We may not be able to show what particular mischief would be done to the arm by an injury to the knee, yet, rest assured there would be a sympathetic suffering. No single cell or sac within the whole system can be out of order without in some degree affecting all the rest of the frame.

Even so has God made us dependent upon one another—far more than we imagine. In Church unity every man contributes to the health or to the disease of the whole corporation, nor can he avoid doing so. No man lives to himself in the Church of God and no man dies to himself. When a Believer grows in Grace, he is enriched not for himself alone—the Christian community has increased its spiritual wealth by his gains. When, on the other hand, a man declines in Divine things and so becomes poor and feeble, it is not to himself, alone, that the injury occurs, but in a measure the Church is impoverished, weakened, and injured. O Brethren, since this is the case, let us discharge abundantly the duties which we owe to the body of which we form a part! And in the delightful exercise of supplication let us abound more and more.

Intercession should throb like a pulse through the whole body, causing every living member to feel the sacred impulse. Intercession is one of the *least* things which we can do, and yet it is one of the greatest—let us not be slack in it. A prayerless Church member is a hindrance—he is in the body like a rotting bone, or a decayed tooth—and, before long, since he does not contribute to the benefit of his Brethren, he will become a danger and a sorrow to them. Brothers and Sisters, let it not be so with any one of you! Besides, Brethren, if an argument were needed to touch our hearts, it is not far to find. We ourselves owe much to the prayers of others. Many Christians can trace their conversion to their mother's prayers which went up to Heaven for them when as yet their infant tongues could not pronounce the Savior's name.

A mother brought them to Jesus and besought Him to lay His hands on them and bless them. Many of you owe your conversion to the pleadings of Sunday school teachers, or to the supplications of ministers, or to earnest individual Christians who were led to intercede for you. Now, if by the way of prayer you have received a blessing, show your gratitude by praying for others! Endeavor to confer the blessing in the same way as you have received it. For myself, personally, I say this morning that no man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me! I reckon, Brethren, that the more of prayers I have the wealthier I am in real riches, in that form of personal estate which is better than gold and silver.

An old Puritan remarks that when a man thrives in business he sets many hands to work for him, and, he says, when a man grows in usefulness he brings many souls to pray for him and so his business is carried on. The greater the expenditure of Divine Grace in the case of the Lord's servant, the more he needs intercessory help from all his Brothers and Sisters that he may be able to carry on his work under the Divine blessing. I am under bonds, my Brethren, to pray for you since I know that many of you continually besiege the Throne of Grace on my behalf. I put the argument, therefore, to you—if you have received blessings through

the intercession of saints, would you not be ungrateful, indeed, if you did not intercede for others in return?

Did a mother's prayers bring you to Christ? Then, dear young Mother, send up your entreaties to the Lord for your dear little ones. Did a father's supplications lead to your salvation? Then, young Man, uphold your father with your constant prayers and so enrich his latter days. Freely you have received, freely give. The soil fertilized by the dew gives back its harvest—you also make a fair return to the Church which has been the channel of blessing to you. It is *not*, therefore, a matter of choice with us, today, whether we shall pray for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ or not! Beloved Brethren, you are not alive unto God—you have not the instincts of the new life if you do not intercede for the household of faith! You have not the love which is of God—which is the sure sign of regeneration—if you forget intercession! You are unmindful of the debt you owe, and you are acting unworthily of your professed union with the Church of Christ if intercession is neglected by you. As with a trumpet call I would entreat you, my Brothers and Sisters, to effectual, earnest prayer for the family of the living God.

Let us change our watchword now from obligation to *honor*. What an honor it is to be permitted to pray for the saints! For, observe, this brings us into the closest conceivable fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We cannot assist in providing an atonement for human sin—"It is finished," said the Savior, and finished it is. In that work we can have no fellowship except as we receive of its *results*, for, "He has trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him." In preaching the Gospel today, we are exercising an office in which our Lord Jesus has now no share—the Holy Spirit helps us, but the Man, Christ Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and His voice is not heard proclaiming the glad tidings. Therefore, in some respects we have diverse occupations and exercise different offices, but, in the business of intercession we are one—at this very moment our Lord is pleading before the Truth of God and when we intercede for His people we are doing precisely the same!

We, in praying for the saints, have actual present fellowship with our great High Priest who intercedes within the veil. I say again, if I preach today, Christ is not preaching. But if I pray, my voice harmonizes with His! If I pray for the Brethren, I remember that He stands before the Throne of Glory with the breastplate on, having the names of all His chosen glittering there upon its precious stones. Is it not, then, a delightful thing to be partakers with the Son of God in the ministry of intercession? In this service He has made us priests unto our God! He is the great Angel with the golden censor, and the smoke of the incense which He offers ascends with the prayers of the saints before the Lord! Beloved, you would be conformed in service to the Lord Jesus—the opportunity is ready to your hand—be much in intercession for the saints!

And, what an honor it is that we, who so lately were beggars for ourselves at Mercy's door, are now received so much into royal favor that we may venture to speak a word in the king's ear for others! It was sovereign mercy which allowed us to say, "Have mercy upon me!" But what condescension is this which has taken us into such nearness with itself that

now we can come to the Lord and say, "I would wish to speak a word with You for a Brother of mine. I would venture to ask bounties at Your hands, my Father, for a Sister who needs compassion." See, my Brothers and Sisters, how eminently you are promoted—you are ordained to the high office of "the King's remembrancers," to enquire of Him concerning the good things of His Covenant! You are constituted a royal social worker for the King! He sets before you His open treasury and bids you ask what you will. O priceless Grace!

If you, O Believer, know how to ask by faith, you may hand out to your Brothers and Sisters wealth more precious than the gold of Ophir, for intercession is the key of the ivory palaces wherein are contained the boundless treasures of God! Saints in intercession reach a place where angels cannot stand! Those holy beings rejoice over penitent sinners, but we do not read of their being admitted as suppliants for the saints. Yet we, imperfect as we are, have this favor! We are permitted to open our mouth before the Lord for the sick and for the tried, for the troubled and for the downcast—with the assurance that whatever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive. In this thing great honor is put upon us. Brothers and Sisters, avail yourselves of this honor!

I know very well if Her Majesty should give a permission to any one of you to call at the palace, and to ask what you would for your friends, you would not neglect the opportunity. Why, in these days if a man thinks he has the ear of a member of Parliament, or somebody in power, it is not often that he neglects the opportunity of speaking for his cousin or his son who desires an office where there is little to do and much to receive. All over the world place-seekers are in abundance. Men of influence, having the ear of the authorities, are always pressed to make all possible use of their position in society. And yet I have to stand here this morning and urge you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have the ear of *God*, to exercise your choice prerogative!

You have promises from God of the granting of your request, and many are saying, "I would be spoken for unto the King"—pray to be not slow to help. Use the liberty which your Prince has given you and plead for your Brothers and Sisters! If there are no other who needs your prayers, I eagerly ask for a place in them. "Brethren, pray for us," said an Apostle—how much more may I say it! Having to minister daily in holy things, our responsibilities and needs are very great. Do not, therefore, forget us when it is well with you. Say a kind thing unto the Prince for His servants and ask Him to grant us more of His Grace.

We will change the word now from honor to *excellence*. Intercessory prayer is a most excellent thing, for first, it benefits those who use it. I know you desire, Beloved, to be of real service in the Church of God. I trust we have no members of this Church who are satisfied to have their names in the book, and to attend services, and to feel that all is done when this is done. No, you wish to be really helpful and to bring glory to God. Well, then, I urge upon you for this end the excellence of intercessory prayer! First, Brethren, it will suggest to you to know your Brothers and Sisters. You cannot pray well for those you know nothing about. You will not, therefore, go in and out of the assembly not knowing the person who

sits next to you in the pew, but you will enquire how the Brethren fare, and, when you hear of anyone being in distress of mind, or body, or estate, you will be ready to take notice of that, in order that you may offer prayer on his account, and then there will be in you a sympathetic knowledge of your Brethren.

Paul tells us to know them that labor among us and are over us in the Lord! And I wish all Church members did know more of their pastor's struggles, and sorrows, and joys—that they might have more sympathy with him. And the same is true of the rest of the Brethren—the more you know and sympathize the better will your prayers be. And because you will need to know, in order to intercede, I call intercession an excellent exercise. Earnest intercession will be sure to bring love with it. I do not believe you can hate a man for whom you habitually pray. If you dislike any Christian, pray for him doubly—not only for his sake, but for your own—that you may be cured of prejudice and saved from all unkind feeling.

Remember the old story of the man who waited on his pastor to tell him that he did not enjoy his preaching? The minister wisely said, "My dear Brother, before we talk that matter over, let us pray together," and, after they had both prayed, the complainant found he had nothing to say except to confess that he, himself, had been very negligent in prayer for his pastor. And he laid his not profiting to that account. I ascribe need of brotherly love to the decline of intercessory prayer. Pray for one another earnestly, habitually, fervently, and you will knit your hearts together in love as the heart of one man. This is the cement of fair colors in which the stones of the Church should be laid if they are to be compact together.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you pray for one another, not only will your sympathy and love grow, but you will have kinder judgments concerning one another. We always judge leniently those for whom we intercede. If a talebearer represents my Brother in a very black light, my love makes me feel sure that he is mistaken. Did I not pray for him this morning, and how can I hear him condemned? If I am compelled to believe that he is guilty I am very sorry, but I will not be angry with him—but I will pray the Lord to forgive and restore him—remembering myself, also, lest I be tempted. We think our children beautiful because they are our own and have a place in our heart. And in the same way we are quick to perceive any admirable traits of character which may exist in those for whom we intercede—and we are willing to suggest extenuations for the failings of their dispositions.

Prayer is a wondrous blender of hearts and a mighty creator of love. Intercessory prayer is of much efficacy in fostering watchfulness. Suppose that you, as a member of this Church, are brought into contact with backsliders and are led to seek their restoration. Your prayers for their recovery will naturally lead you to pray, "Lord, preserve me from this evil. Keep me from backsliding. Preserve me from becoming cold and indifferent as these Brethren have done." If we meet with professed Christians who have fallen into drunkenness and we are earnest in pleading with the Lord to rescue them from that horrible ditch, our own souls are made to loathe the sin and to stand upon its watchtower against it. If we perceive that two Brethren have disagreed and cannot be brought into a state of

peace, if we pray to God that unity may be restored between them, we are led, also, to ask that we may be of a gentle and quiet spirit—that we may not cause strife—and that if we have caused it at any time we may be prepared to confess the wrong and amend it.

Thus the objects of our prayerful solicitude become beacons to us. If you observe others with critical dispositions and censure them eagerly, and go from house to house to spread the ill-savor industriously, your unhallowed course of action will breed self-righteousness in yourself. But, if you go to the Lord with sorrow about all misdeeds of Brethren and importunately seek the restoration of the erring, you will foster in your own heart tenderness of feeling and watchfulness against sin. Those who supplicate much for others will frequently find on their own lips the prayer, “Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I cannot stay to tell you what other excellent things there are wrapped up in this exercise of intercession, but I am persuaded it is one of the holiest, healthiest, and most heavenly exercises in which a devout man can possibly be occupied. Do you not think, dear Brothers and Sisters, that if we were, each one, required upon the spot to give an account of his attention to this excellent duty we should, most of us, need to be ashamed? May I venture to put the question to every Christian here—have you rendered to God and His Church your fair proportion of intercessory prayer? We have not interceded too much, I am certain, for of this salt it may be said, “salt without prescribing how much.” No man prays too much for his fellow man!

Have we prayed enough? I give you space and make a pause in which you may put the question. I will give you my own answer. I am clear as to my duty to this Church in the matter of *preaching*, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If I could learn to preach better I would gladly do so. I am conscious of my failures, but I have served you heartily and faithfully before God in this pulpit. But I cannot say so of my intercessions. I have many confessions to make to God of shortcomings in that department. And I am afraid that a great number of my fellow workers here must plead guilty to the same indictment. You have never missed your class on Sunday afternoon. You are always at your work on time with the Scripture lesson well studied. That is right, but, dear Brother, do you always pray the lesson into your soul?

Dear Sister, have you made a habit of praying for the girls under your care, one by one, with intense fervor? I do not accuse, but I ask you to look into your own soul, for the fault is not a trivial one, but causes ourselves and the Church no little damage. Elders and Deacons of this Church, are you clear in the matter of intercession? Some men among us may be without blame in this business, but I am afraid that the most of us have attended to other duties far beyond the proportion in which we have attended to this. We have prayed in public at the Prayer Meetings, and we have not forgotten supplication for the saints at the family altar, either, I trust. But, still, if we had prayed for our Brethren 10 times as much, or even a 100 times as much, we should not have gone too far!

We stand up, sometimes, on the public platform, and we charge the Church of God with growing cold. Let us ask ourselves the question—Have we, by our prayers, added to her heat? Have we pleaded for her revival? We find fault with the Missionary Societies because such slender results are apparent. Do we pray for missions as we should? I hear a mournful complaint about the present and rising race of preachers—have we interceded for students and for pastors as we should? I hear people speak of Christians as either worldly, superficial or proud. Have you prayed them out of their worldliness and pride? May it not be that you would have done far better if you had prayed for them than found fault with them? Yes, and may not the errors you see in them be, in a considerable measure, traceable to the neglect of the office of intercession by yourself? Oh, let us have done with murmuring and complaining, criticism and finding fault, and take the whole of it up to the Mercy Seat—for if half the breath that is vainly spent in censorious complaints were turned into intercession—there would be much more holiness in the Church!

Now, I must come to the text, again, while I give you another word, and that is *extent*. David says in the text, “For my prayer also shall be in their calamities” and his meaning is this—if any of the saints of God should, by their fidelity to his soul displease him, he would nevertheless pray for them. Brothers and Sisters, we are not to confine our prayers to those who please us in their mode of addressing us—but we are to pray lovingly for those who are too sharp, too harsh, too cutting in their remarks.

Suppose they should be so severe as to grieve our spirits? Suppose their rebukes appear to be uncalled for, injurious and unjust? We are still bound to pray for them. David, in the text, seems to say this—let the righteous do what they might with him, he would still pray for them in their calamities. And I urge you, my Brethren, if there is any member of this Church who has treated you unkindly, revenge yourself upon him by loving him 10 times more than ever you did, and praying for him more constantly and more earnestly! If some Brother has crushed your spirit and wounded you so that to think of him causes you pain, never mind! The best cure for the wound is to go to God in prayer and pour out your soul for him—ask the Lord to give him a great blessing and to make him a better Christian—to fill him full of Divine love!

And, then, when you see him improved, you will either come to think that you made a mistake in judging what he said, and took wrongly what he meant to do you good, or else you will find that he will come to you and will say, “I was in the wrong, my Brother.” Or, if he does not confess that in words, he will by extra kindness to you acknowledge it in his deeds. And, Brethren, if ever we find a fellow Christian in a calamity, then we are to pray for him doubly. Men of the world leave their companions when they get into trouble—as the herd leaves the wounded deer. We have many friends when all goes well. We have very few when the evil days are lowering. But with Christians it should not be so! We should be faithful friends—we ought to be more kind to those who become poor than we are to others.

If we meet with a fellow Christian who has lost his comfort and is desponding—though his society may not be very pleasant and may even

have a depressing influence upon ourselves—we should pray for him more, and try to lift him out of the Slough of Despond. Especially if a Brother in Christ should be slandered we are bound to stand by him. Too many follow the bad habit of getting right out of the way of a man who is disgraced. Somebody has thrown a handful of mud at a professed Christian—let us clear the coast, for the mud may light upon us, too. So say cowards, but we do not! No, Brother, if you belong to the army of Immanuel and our persecuted Brother has done no wrong, let us stand or fall by him! Let us never desert a comrade!

If the world says, “Down with him! Down with him! Down with him!” we will rush like the old Greek hero to the rescue and hold our shield over the fallen one, fighting for him till he can get up again—for one of these days we may be down, too, and we may need a Brother soldier to cover us from the enemy. Let us pray our Brothers and Sisters out of their troubles and not desert them—and if that prayer should be long before it gets an answer, let us persevere in importunity, saying with David, “Yet my prayer shall be in their calamities.”

I shall say no more upon this matter of intercession for the saints, but shall leave it before the Eternal Throne and with your own consciences. I beseech you, unless you are traitors to Christ—if you are members of the true unity, if your souls are knit together by the Holy Spirit—wrestle much for one another and do not let the Covenant Angel go till a blessing shall come to the whole house of God, and then flow into the world at large.

**II.** Now, secondly, the high office of intercession FOR SINNERS. Upon this I shall speak briefly, but, I trust, earnestly. As a Church we have a crown, and for many years we have held it. But, I would use the language of Christ in the Book of the Revelation. When speaking to one of the Churches, He says, “Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown.” Now, what has been our crown as a Church? It has not been our wealth, for in that we do not excel. It has not been our *learning*—we do not make any show of it. It has not been our tasteful services, the beauty of our music, or the sweetness of our chants.

No, we do not care about such things, but cultivate simplicity. Our crown has been this one thing—that if there has been a Church in Christendom which has given itself to winning souls, this Church has done so. Our ministry has aimed always at this—the plucking of the brands from burning, the bringing of sinners out of darkness into marvelous light. And I do you nothing but simple justice, my Brethren, when I say that by far the larger part of this Church is really alive for soul-winning. It does my heart good to meet with different knots of Brethren among you who everywhere about this city are working away unostentatiously but successfully in bringing souls to Christ. I hope it always will be so. Hold fast, O Church, what you have, that no man take your crown! Let it always be our joy and glory that God gives us spiritual children and souls are born to Him.

Now we desire to do this, and I am sure we do, but we must look more to intercession for the souls of the unconverted. Pray first, for this is the most essential thing to do. What can you and I alone do in the conversion

of a man? We cannot chance his heart! We cannot put life into him—we might as well think to create a soul within the ribs of death! It is God's work to regenerate souls. What then? If I am to be His instrument in doing it, my very first action must be to fall on my knees and pray, "O God, work with me." You are going to your Sunday school this afternoon, or you are off to your street preaching. Now, if you could do the work, I would not urge you to waste time in asking God to do what you could do alone! But, as you are utterly powerless to win a single soul to Jesus without the Spirit of God, let your first action be to pray, "O Divine power, come and clothe me! O tongue of fire, be given to me, and sacred, rushing, mighty Wind, come forth to breathe life upon dead souls!" Prayer is the most essential thing in turning sinners from the error of their ways.

Then intercessory prayer will fit you for becoming God's instrument. If I pray for a person's conversion, especially if I single out some individual, then my heart gets warmed into love to that individual as I think over his position and condition in prayer. Very well, that instructs me, and helps me to deal out the proper word to him when I come near to him. I am like a surgeon, who, coming to a case where he has to use the knife, knows exactly where every bone is and also what part has been injured. My prayer has given me a diagnosis of the man's state. I have looked it through and considered it in my petitions, and when I come practically to work upon him, I shall be wise, by the Spirit of God, to do the right thing and in the right way.

If we wished to send a man to college to make him a good helper to troubled hearts, we should send him to the college of all-prayer, for intercession is the mode to become wise in winning souls! And, Brethren, prayer will have this effect upon you—that you will go to work hopefully. It is a very horrible thing to think of persons being buried alive, put underground by their friends in their coffins while yet there was breath in their bodies. Let us mind that we never bury a *soul* alive—I am afraid we are in the habit of doing it. We judge of such an one that he will never be converted—it is a case, we say, where all effort would be useless. We think of another person that he is so abandoned we may very well give him up and attend to more hopeful cases.

In all this we are wrong, since we have no right to sign a soul's death warrant, or to say to the Grace of God, "to here You may come but no further." Believe that as long as a man lives in this world there are possibilities of Grace for him! Take him in your arms before God in prayer—and when you begin to pray for him you will feel that there is hope—and you will afterwards converse with him in a hopeful and, perhaps, believing manner. I do not believe a man was ever saved by another one talking to him in a tone of despair, but the cheerful utterance of hopeful love wins its way. Believe that the hard heart may be broken, the blasphemer's tongue cleansed, the persecutor's mind changed and that the rebel may yet obey Christ Crucified and become a bright star in the Heaven of God.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I pray you, then, since the power is of *God*, and since intercession will make you fit to be *used* by God, and since also it will give you great hopefulness with regard to those you deal with—exercise yourselves much more than ever in intercessory prayer. This is a

work in which all of you can aid. If I came to you this morning and said, "Brothers and Sisters, the Lord's cause requires money," I know, from long experience, that you would do your best. But there are some who would be compelled to reply, "The necessities of my family do not permit my doing anything in that direction." But, when we ask for intercession, no Christian can say, "I cannot plead with God." If I were to press upon you at this moment the need of more public preaching, many of my congregation would be justly excused, for they are slow of speech and without gifts of utterance.

But, O Brothers and Sisters, when it comes to *interceding* you can *all* fulfill the office! And by so doing you can have a share in all the great works of the Church. I have heard of a holy woman who used to say, "I cannot preach but I can help my minister to do it by my prayers. Therefore, whenever I see him come into the pulpit I will pray that God will bless his word, and so I shall have a share in what he does." When you hear of a missionary working anywhere abroad, pray for him, and then you will become his co-worker. Beloved, some of you are often sickly in body and during the weary night you get but little sleep—do you know why the Lord keeps you awake? It is that while others of us are sleeping you may be *praying* for us!

God must have some to keep the night watches! He determines that a guard of prayer shall be set around His Church all day and all *night* long—you are the sentries of the night watches. You cannot do anything else, but you can pray—and by praying you can obtain a share in the noblest works of the Church! Now mark—David, by implication, tells us that some of those we pray for may, perhaps, not care for our prayers and they may come into great calamities through their sins. Then is our time when we should be yet more earnest in intercession for them! If I have spoken to an ungodly man for many years and he has ridiculed all I have said, then I will resolve within myself, "I will never leave off praying for him. Perhaps one of these days I shall find him sick, and then he will ask for the prayers he now rejects. Perhaps I shall find him with a broken heart, and then the words he now jests at will be very sweet to his taste."

You who seek after souls must know how to keep up the chase—those who are short of breath in soul-winning will never be successful. Follow them up! Follow them up! Follow them to the gates of the grave! If they are not saved after 20 years of prayer, follow them up to the gates of Hell! If they once pass those gates your prayers are unallowable and unavailing, but to the very verge of the infernal Pit follow them—follow them with your prayers. If they will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers, for they do not know when you offer them. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? Your prayers can reach them! You can still bless them. Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, God has a voice which they must hear—speak to Him, and *He* will make them feel.

Though they now treat you despitefully, rendering evil for your good, follow them, follow them, follow them with your prayers! Never let them perish for need of your supplications. The time may come when those who

have been longest in yielding their hearts to Christ will repay us a thousand-fold for all the efforts and supplications we may put forth. I have sometimes seen a great sinner, when he is saved, become of as much use as 20 ordinary converts, for in proportion as he was hard to win, he has become useful when won. We do not expect that we shall get Sauls every day made into Pauls, but when it is so, then the Church is rich, indeed, for one Paul is worth a thousand ordinary Believers! These deep sea pearls are precious. These difficult cases may turn out to be Pauls—therefore be instant in season and out of season—praying for them till they are brought to Christ.

The one thing I desire this morning is that my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ should pledge themselves to be more importunate in prayer for sinners all around us. Like Abraham, a great city is before us—let us plead for it! Like Moses, we dwell among a sinful people—let us stand in the gap for them I charge every member of this Church, by his fealty to God, if, indeed, he is not a liar in the profession that he has made, to pray importunately for the ungodly that they may be brought to Jesus! Plead with Jehovah! Plead—He loves your prayers—your intercessions are like the sweet incense upon the golden altar. Plead with Him and you shall live to see a reward for your pleadings in the conversion of the sons of men! Go home and make your children the special objects of this afternoon's cries. Implore the Lord to save your husbands or your wives, your kinsfolk and your nearest neighbors.

Implore a blessing upon the seat-holders and hearers of this congregation who remain unregenerate! Then take your streets, take the district in which you live and entreat a gracious visitation—you shall never lack for persons to pray for—therefore continue in supplication. It was but a few days ago I saw four husbands who were converted to God, but their wives were left outside the Church. And those four Brothers, probably all here this morning, met together in prayer for their wives' conversion—and on the first communion Sunday of last month the four wives were brought in in answer to the prayers of the four husbands!

Anything is possible! Everything is possible to him that believes! God help us to believe and to intercede, and then may He send His benediction, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# DAVID'S PRAYER IN THE CAVE

## NO. 2282

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1892.  
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*"Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave."  
Title of Psalm 142.*

"A PRAYER when he was in the cave." David prayed when he was in the cave. If he had prayed half as much when he was in the palace as he did when he was in the cave, it would have been better for him. But, alas, when he was king, we find him rising from his bed in the *evening*, looking from the roof of the house, and falling into temptation. If he had been looking up to Heaven—if his heart had been in communion with God—he might never have committed that great crime which has so deeply stained his whole character.

"A prayer when he was in the cave." God will hear prayer on land, on the sea and even under the sea. I remember a Brother, when in prayer, making use of that last expression. Somebody who was at the Prayer Meeting was rather astonished at it and asked, "How would God hear prayer under the sea?" On enquiry, we found out that the man who uttered those words was a diver and often went down to the bottom of the sea after wrecks. And he said that he had held communion with God while he had been at work in the depths of the ocean. Our God is not only the God of the hills, but of the valleys, also! He is God of both sea and land. He heard Jonah when the disobedient Prophet was at the bottom of the mountains and the earth with her bars seemed to be about him forever. Wherever you work, you can pray! Wherever you lie sick, you can pray! There is no place to which you can be banished where God is not near—and there is no time of day or night when His Throne is inaccessible!

"A prayer when he was in the cave." The caves have heard the best prayers. Some birds sing best in cages. I have heard that some of God's people shine brightest in the dark. There is many an heir of Heaven who never prays so well as when he is driven by necessity to pray. Some shall sing aloud upon their beds of sickness, whose voices were hardly heard when they were well. And some shall sing God's high praises in the fire, who did not praise Him as they should before the trial came. In the furnace of affliction the saints are often seen at their best! If any of you tonight are in dark and gloomy positions—if your souls are bowed down within you—may this become a special time for peculiarly prevalent com-

munion and intercession! And may the prayer of the cave be the very best of your prayers!

I shall, tonight, use David's prayer in the cave to represent the prayers of godly men in trouble. But, first, I will talk of it as a picture of *the condition of a soul under a deep sense of sin*. This Psalm of the cave has a great likeness to the character of a man under a sense of sin. I shall then use it to represent *the condition of a persecuted Believer*. And, thirdly, I shall speak of it as revealing *the condition of a Believer who is being prepared for greater honor and wider service than he has ever attained before*.

**I.** First, let me try and use this Psalm as a picture of THE CONDITION OF A SOUL UNDER A DEEP SENSE OF SIN.

A little while ago you were out in the open field of the world, sinning with a high hand, plucking the flowers which grow in those poisoned vales, and enjoying their deadly perfume. You were as happy as your sinful heart could be, for you were giddy, careless and thoughtless—but it has pleased God to arrest you. You have been apprehended by Christ and you have been put in prison—and now your feet are fast in the stocks. Tonight you feel like one who has come out of the bright sunshine and balmy air into a dark, noisome cavern where you can see but little, where there is no comfort, and where there appears to you to be no hope of escape.

Well, now, according to the Psalm before us, which is meant for you as well as for David, your first business should be to *appeal to God*. I know your doubts. I know your fears of God. I know how frightened you are at the very mention of His name, but I charge you, if you would come out of your present gloom, go to God at once! See, the Psalm begins, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication." Get home and cry to God with your voice; but if you have no place where you can use your voice, cry to God in silence—only cry to Him! Look Godward. if you look any other way, all is darkness. Look Godward. There, and only there, is hope. "But I have sinned against God," you say. But God is ready to pardon—He has provided a great Atonement through which He can justly forgive the greatest offenses. Look Godward and begin to pray!

I have known men who have hardly believed in God, do this, but they have had some faint desire to do so and they have cried. It has been a poor prayer and yet God has heard it. I have known some cry to God in despair. When they hardly believed that there could be any use in it, still it was that or nothing, and they knew that it could not hurt them to pray and so they took to their knees and they cried. It is wonderful what poor prayers God will hear, and answer, too! Prayers that have no legs to run with and no hands to grasp with, and very little heart, but still, God has heard them and He has accepted them. Get to your knees, you who feel yourselves guilty! Get to your knees if your hearts are sighing on account of sin! If the dark gloom of your iniquities is gathering about you, cry to God and He will hear you!

The next thing to do is *make a full confession*. David says, "I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble." The human

heart longs to express itself. An unuttered grief will lie and smolder in the soul till its black smoke puts out the very eyes of the spirit. It is not a bad thing, sometimes, to speak to some Christian friend about the anguish of your heart. I would not encourage you to put that in the *first* place—far from it—but still, it may be helpful to some. But, anyway, make a full confession unto the Lord. Tell Him how you have sinned. Tell Him how you have tried to save yourself and broken down. Tell Him what a wretch you are, how changeable, how fickle, how proud, how wanton, how your ambition carries you away like an unbridled steed! Tell Him all your faults, as far as you can remember them. Do not attempt to hide anything from God—you cannot do it, for He knows all. Therefore, hesitate not to tell Him everything—the darkest secret—the sin you would not wish, even, to whisper to the evening's gale. Tell it all! Tell it all!

Confession to God is good for the soul. "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy." I press upon any of you who are now in the gloomy cave, that you seek a secret and quiet place and, alone with God, pour out your heart before Him. David says, "I showed before Him my trouble." Do not think that the use of pious words can be of any use—it is not merely words that you have to utter—you have to lay all your trouble before God. As a child tells its mother its griefs, tell the Lord all your griefs, your complaints, your miseries, your fears! Tell them all out and great relief will come to your spirit! So, first, appeal to God. Secondly, make confession to Him.

Thirdly, *acknowledge to God that there is no hope for you but in His mercy*. Put it as David did, "I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me." There is but one hope for you—acknowledge that. Perhaps you have been trying to be saved by your good works. They are altogether worthless when you heap them together. Possibly you expect to be saved by your religiousness. Half of it is hypocrisy—how can a man hope to be saved by his hypocrisy? Do you hope to be saved by your feelings? What are your feelings? As changeable as the weather! A puff of wind will change all your fine feelings into murmuring and rebellion against God! Oh, Friend, you cannot keep the Law of God! That is the only other way to Heaven. The *perfect keeping of God's Commandments* would save you if you had never committed a sin! But, having sinned, even that will not save you, now, for future obedience will not wipe out past disobedience. Here, in Christ Jesus, whom God sets forth as a Propitiation for sin, is the only hope for you! Lay hold on it. In the cave of your doubts and fears, with the clinging dampness of your despair about you, chilled and numbed by the dread of the wrath to come, yet venture to make God in Christ your *only* confidence—and you shall yet have perfect peace!

Then, further, if you are still in the cave of doubt and sin, venture to *plead with God to set you free*. You cannot present a better prayer than this one of David in the cave, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name." You are in prison tonight and you cannot get out of it by yourself. You may get a hold of those bars and try to shake them to and fro, but they are fast in their sockets—they will not break in your

hands. You may meditate, think, invent contemplate, but you cannot open that great iron gate! But there is a hand that *can* break gates of brass and there is a power that can cut in sunder bars of iron! O man in the iron cage, there is a hand that can crumble up your cage and set you free! You need not be a prisoner. You need not be shut up. You may walk at will through Jesus Christ the Savior! Only trust Him and believingly pray that prayer, tonight, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name," and He will set you free! Ah, sinners praise God's name when they get out of prison! I remember how, when I was set free, I felt like singing all the time and I could quite well use the language of Dr. Watts—

***"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise!"***

My old friend, Dr. Alexander Fletcher, seems to rise before me now, for I remember hearing him say to the children that when men came out of prison, they did praise him who had set them free. He said that he was going down the Old Bailey one day and he saw a boy standing on his head, turning cartwheels, dancing and jumping about in all manner of ways, and he said to the boy, "What are you doing? You seem to be tremendously happy." And the boy replied, "Ah, old gentleman, if you had been locked up six months and had just got out, you would be happy, too!" I have no doubt that is very true. When a soul gets out of a far worse prison than there ever was at Newgate, then he must praise "Free Grace and dying love," and, "ring those charming bells," again, and again, and again, and make his whole life musical with the praise of the emancipating Christ!

Now, that is my advice to you who are in the cave through soul-trouble. May God bless it to you! You need not notice anything else that I am going to say tonight. If you are under a sense of sin, heed well what I have been saying, and let other people have the rest of the sermon that belongs more especially to them.

**II.** I pass on to my second point. This Psalm may well help to set forth THE CONDITION OF A PERSECUTED BELIEVER.

A persecuted *Believer*? Are there any such nowadays? Ah, dear Friends, there are many such! When a man becomes a Christian, he straightway becomes different from the rest of his fellows. When I lived in a street, I was standing, one day, at the window, meditating what my sermon should be, and I could not find a text, when, all of a sudden, I saw a flight of birds. There was a canary which had escaped from its cage and was flying over the slates of the opposite houses—and it was being chased by some 20 sparrows and other rough birds. I thought of that text, "My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her." Why, they seemed to say to one another, "Here is a *yellow* fellow! We have not seen the likes of him in London. He has no business here—let us pull off his bright coat—let us kill him, or make him as dark and dull as ourselves." That is just what men of the world try to do with Christians! Here is a godly man who works in a factory, or a Christian girl who is occupied in folding books, or some other work where there is a large number employed—such persons will have a sad tale to tell of how they have been

hunted about, ridiculed and scoffed at by ungodly companions. Now *you* are in the cave.

It may be that you are in the condition described here and *you hardly know what to do*. You are as David was when he wrote the third verse, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me." The persecutors have so turned against you and it is so new a thing to you as a young Believer, that you are quite perplexed and hard put to it to know what you should do. They are so severe, they are so ferocious, they are so incessant! And they discover your tender points and they know how to touch you on the raw places that you really do not know what to do! You are like a lamb in the midst of wolves—you know not which way to turn. Well, then, say to the Lord, as David did, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path." God knows exactly where you are and what you have to bear. Have confidence that when you know not what to do, *He* can and will direct your ways if you trust Him!

In addition to that, it may be that you are *greatly tempted*. David said, "They privately laid a snare for me." It is often so with young men in a warehouse, or with a number of clerks in an establishment. They find that a young fellow has become a Christian and they try to trip him up. If they can, they will get up some scheme by which they can make him appear to have been guilty, even if he is not. Ah, you will need much wisdom! I pray God that you may never yield to temptation, but may hold your ground by Divine Grace. Young Christian soldiers often have a very rough time of it in the barracks, but I hope that they will prove themselves true soldiers and not yield an inch to those who would lead them astray.

It will be very painful if, in addition to that, *your friends turn against you*. David said, "There was no man that would know me." Is it so with you? Are your father and mother against you? Is your wife or your husband against you? Do your brothers and sisters call you "a canting hypocrite"? Do they call you a "Methodist," or a "Presbyterian," not knowing, themselves, the meaning of the words? Do they point the finger of scorn at you when you get home? And often, when you go from the Lord's Table, where you have been so happy, do you have to hear an oath the first thing when you enter the door? I know that it is so with many of you. The Church of Christ in London is like Lot in Sodom. In this particular neighborhood, especially, it is hard for Christian people to live at all. You cannot walk down the streets anywhere without having your ears assailed with filthy language—and your children cannot be permitted to run these streets because of the abominable impurity that is, on every hand, round about us.

Things are growing worse with us, instead of better. They who look for brighter times must be looking with their eyes shut. There is grave occasion for Christians to pray for young people who are converted in such a city as this, for their worst enemies are often those of their own household. "I should not mind so much," says one, "if I had a Christian friend to fly to. I spoke to one the other day and he did not seem to interest himself in me at all." I will tell you what hurts a young convert. Here is one just saved. He has really, lovingly, given his heart to Christ and the principal

or manager where he works is a Christian. He finds himself ridiculed and he ventures to say a word to this Christian. He snuffs him out in a moment! He has no sympathy with him. Well, there is another old professing Christian working near at the same bench and so the young convert begins to tell *him* a little about his trouble, but he is very grumpy and Cross.

I have noticed some Christian people who appear to be shut up in themselves and they do not seem to notice the troubles of beginners in the Divine Life. Let it not be so among you! My dear Brothers and Sisters, cultivate great love to those who, having come into the army of Christ, are much beset by adversaries! They are in the cave. Do not disown them—they are trying to do their best—stand side by side with them. Say, “I, too, am a Christian. If you are honoring that young man with your ridicule, let me have my portion of it! If you are pouring contempt upon him, give me a share of it, for I, also, believe as he believes.”

Will you do that? Some of you will, I am sure. Will you stand by the man of God who vindicates the Lord's revealed Truths? Some of you will, but there are plenty of fellows who want to keep a whole skin on their body, and if they can sneak away out of any fight for the right, they are glad to get home and go to bed—and there slumber till the battle is over. God help us to have more of the lion in us and not so much of the cur! God grant us Grace to stand by those who are out and out for God and for His Christ, that we may be remembered with them in the day of His appearing!

It may be that the worst point about you is that *you feel very feeble*. You say, “I should not mind the persecution if I felt strong, but I am so feeble.” Well, now, always distinguish between *feeling* strong and *being* strong. The man who feels strong is weak! The man who feels weak is the man who is strong! Paul said, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” David prays, “Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.” Just hide yourself away in the strength of God. Pray much. Take God for your refuge and your portion. Have faith in Him and you will be stronger than your adversaries. They may seem to pull you over, but you will soon be up again. They may set before you puzzles that you cannot solve. They may come up with their scientific knowledge and you may be at a discount—but never mind that—the God who has led you into the cave will turn the tables for you one of these days! Only hold on and hold out, even to the end.

I am rather glad that there should be some trouble in being a Christian, for it has become such a very general thing, now, to profess to be one. If I am right, it is going to be a very much less common thing than it is now for a man to say, “I am a Christian.” There will come times when there will be sharp lines drawn. Some of us will help to draw them if we can, when men shall not wear the Christian garb, but bear the Christian name and act like worldlings, and love the amusements and the follies of worldlings. It is time that there was a division in the House of the Lord and that the “ayes” went into one lobby, and the “nays” into the other lobby. We have too long been mixed together! And I, for one, say, may the day soon come when every Christian will have to run the gauntlet! It will be a good thing

for genuine Believers. It will blow some of the chaff away from the wheat. We shall have all the purer gold when the fire gets hot and the crucible is put into it, for then the dross will be separated from the precious metal. Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are now in the cave—the Lord will bring you out of it in His own good time!

**III.** Now, to close, I want to speak a little about THE CONDITION OF A BELIEVER WHO IS BEING PREPARED FOR GREATER HONOR AND WIDER SERVICE.

Is it not a curious thing that whenever God means to make a man great, He always first breaks him in pieces? There was a man whom the Lord meant to make into a prince. How did He do it? Why, He met him one night and wrestled with him! You always hear about *Jacob's* wrestling. Well, I dare say he did, but it was not Jacob who was the principal wrestler—"There wrestled a man with Him until the breaking of the day." God touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and put it out of joint before He called him "Israel," that is, "a Prince of God." The wrestling was to take all his strength out of him and when his strength was gone, *then* God called him a prince. Now, David was to be king over all Israel. What was the way to Jerusalem for David? What was the way to the throne? Well, it was round by the cave of Adullam. He must go there and be an outlaw and an outcast, for that was the way by which he would be made king. Have none of you ever noticed, in your own lives, that whenever God is going to give you an enlargement and bring you out to a larger sphere of service, or a higher platform of spiritual life, you always get thrown down? That is His usual way of working! He makes you hungry before He feeds you! He strips you before He robes you! He makes nothing of you before He makes something of you! This was the way with David. He is to be king in Jerusalem, but He must go to the throne by the way of the cave. Now, are any of you here going to Heaven, or going to a more heavenly state of sanctification, or going to a greater sphere of usefulness? Do not wonder if you go by the way of the cave. Why is that?

It is, first, because if God would make you greatly useful, He must *teach you how to pray!* The man who is a great preacher and yet cannot pray, will come to a bad end. A woman who cannot pray and yet is noted for the conducting of Bible classes, has *already* come to a bad end. If you can be great without prayer, your greatness will be your ruin! If God means to bless you greatly, He will make you pray greatly, as He does David who says in this part of his preparation for coming to his throne, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice: with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication."

Next, the man whom God would greatly honor must *always believe in God when he is at his wits' end.* "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path." Are you *never* at your wits' end? God has not sent you to do business in great waters, for, if He has, you will reel to and fro and be at your wits' end, in a great storm, before long! Oh, it is easy to trust when you can trust yourself, but when you cannot trust yourself—when you are dead beat, when your spirit sinks below zero in the chill of utter despair—then is the time to trust in God. If that is your

case, you have the marks of a man who can lead God's people and be a comforter of others.

Next, in order to greater usefulness, many a man of God must be taught *to stand alone*. "I looked on my right hand, and behold, but there was no man that would know me." If you need men to help you, you may make a very decent follower. But if you need no man and can stand alone, God being your Helper, you shall be helped to be a leader. Oh, it was a grand thing when Luther stepped out from the ranks of Rome! There were many good men round him who said, "Be quiet, Martin. You will get burnt if you do not hold your tongue! Let us keep where we are, in the Church of Rome, even if we have to swallow down great lumps of dirt. We can believe the Gospel and still remain where we are." But Luther knew that he must defy Antichrist and declare the pure Gospel of the blessed God! And he must stand alone for the Truth of God even if there were as many devils against him as there were tiles on the housetops at Worms! That is the kind of man whom God blesses! I would to God that many a young man here might have the courage to feel, in his particular position, "I can stand alone, if need be. I am glad to have my master and my fellow workmen with me, but if nobody will go to Heaven with me, I will say farewell to them and go to Heaven alone through the Grace of God's dear Son."

Once more, the man whom God will bless must be the man who *delights in God alone*. David says, "I cried unto You, O Lord: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." Oh, to have God as our refuge and to make God our portion! "You will lose your job! You will lose your income. You will lose the approbation of your fellow men." "Ah," says the Believer, "but I shall not lose my Portion, for God is my Portion! He is job, and income, and everything to me—and I will hold by Him, come what may." If you have learned to "delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart." Now you are come into such a state that God can use you and make much of you—but until you make much of God, He never will make much of you! God deliver us from having our portion in this life, for, if we have, we are not among His people at all!

He whom God would use must be taught *sympathy with God's poor people*. Hence we get these words of David, in the sixth verse, "I am brought very low." Mr. Greatheart, though he must be strong to kill Giant Grim and any others of the giants that infest the Pilgrim path, must be a man who has gone that road himself if he is to be a leader of others. If the Lord means to bless you, my Brother, and to make you very useful in His Church, depend upon it, He will try you. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the trials of God's ministers are not sent to them on their own account. They are sent for the good of other people. Many a child of God who goes very smoothly to Heaven, does very little for others. But another of the Lord's children who has all the ins and outs and changes of an experienced Believer's life, has them only that he may be better fitted to help others! That he may be able to sit down and weep with them that weep, or to stand up and rejoice with them that rejoice.

So then, dear Brothers who have got into the cave, and you, my Sisters, who have deep spiritual exercises, I want to comfort you by showing you

that this is God's way of making something of you. He is digging you out! You are like an old ditch—you cannot hold any more—and God is digging you out to make more room for more Grace. That spade will cut sharply and dig up sod after sod, and throw it to one side. The very thing you would like to keep shall be cast away and you shall be hollowed out, and dug out, that the word of Elisha may be fulfilled, "Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water." You are to be tried, my Friend, that God may be glorified in you!

Lastly, if God means to use you, you must get to be *full of praise*. Listen to what David says, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me." May God give to my Brothers and Sisters here, who are being tried for their good and afflicted for their promotion, Grace to begin to praise Him! It is the singers that go before—they who can praise best shall be fit to lead others in the work. Do not set me to follow a gloomy leader. Oh, no, dear Sirs, we cannot work to the tune of "The Dead March in *Saul*"! Our soldiers would never have won Waterloo if that had been the music for the day of battle! No, no! Give us a rejoicer—"Sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously; praise His great name again and again." Draw the sword and strike home! If you are of a cheerful spirit, glad in the Lord and joyous after all your trials and afflictions, and if you can rejoice more because you have been brought so low, then God is making something of you and He will yet use you to lead His people to greater works of Grace!

I have talked to three kinds of people tonight. May God grant each of you Grace to take what belongs to you! But if you see any of the *first* sort before you go out of the building—any who are in the cave of gloom under a sense of sin—if you want to go to the communion, but feel that you ought to stop and comfort them, mind that you do the latter! Put yourself second! There is a wonderful work to be done in those lobbies and in those pews after a service. There are some dear Brothers and Sisters who are always doing it—they call themselves my, "dogs"—for they go and pick up the birds that I have wounded! I wish that they might be able to pick up many tonight. Oh, that some of you might always be on the alert to watch a face and see whether there is any emotion there! Just paddle your own canoe alongside that little ship and see whether you cannot get into communication with the poor troubled one on board and say a word to cheer a sad heart. Always be doing this, for if you are in prison, yourself, the way out of it is to help another out! God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. When we begin to look after others and seek to help others, God will bless us. So may it be, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON**  
**PSALM 57.**

To the chief Musician, Al-Taschith, Michtaim of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave. This is one of the “Destroy not” Psalms, for that is the meaning of the title, Al-Taschith, which is used here, and in Psalms 58, 59 and 75. Michtaim of David. David's golden Psalm, “when he fled from Saul in the cave.” In this Psalm we see the calmness of David's heart when he was in great peril. He was a man of peace and to be hunted cruelly, as he was by Saul, greatly pained him. Yet with all the sensitiveness of his nature, he did not fall into unbelief, for his sensitiveness was balanced by his confidence in his God. You will see how, greatly as he was afflicted, he was greatly strengthened.

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* He pleads twice, for his was an urgent case. He would have the Lord help him at once, for, perhaps, if the Lord's mercy came not to him at once, it would be too late. So he cried, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.”

**1.** *For my soul trusts in You* This is the feather on the arrow of prayer that guides it straight to the heart of God! This is the condition attached to the promise, “According to your faith be it unto you.” If you can truly plead that your soul is trusting in God, you may be assured that He will not deny you His mercy.

**1.** *Yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast.* What a sweet realization there is, here, of the power of God to protect him! Just as the little chick hides beneath the mother's wing and knows no fear, so says David, “in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge.” There was no refuge to be seen, but David does not ask to see—an unseen God is all that faith needs. If it is only a shadow, yet the shadow of Jehovah's wings is substantial enough for our confidence—“In the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast.” They will be overpast—the worst calamity will not last forever. We shall think differently of these rough times, by-and-by. We ought not to give up in despair and cast away our confidence while we are in the thick of the fight. Until the calamities are overpast, it should be our joy to run under God's protecting wings and hide ourselves securely there.

**2.** *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me.* Faith is never dumb. True faith is a crying faith. If you have a confidence in God of such a kind that you do not need to pray, get rid of it! For it is of no use to you—it is a false confidence, it is presumption! Only a crying faith will be a prevailing faith. “I will cry unto God most high”—the very height and sublimity of God is an attraction to faith, for though He is so high, He can and will stoop. Though God is so high, He can lift me up above the storm, for He is above it, Himself, and He can set me above it, too. “I will cry unto God most high” and David sweetly adds, “unto God that performs for me.” The translators have inserted the words, “all things,” and very properly, too. But David leaves, as it were, a gap, so that we may fill in anything that we please. Thus do we—

***“Sing the sweet promise of His Grace,  
And the performing God.”***

He is not one who gives us promises and then puts us off without the thing promised—but He fulfils the promises He has made—He is the Faithful Promiser! “God that performs for me.”

**3.** *He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.* If He cannot find any means upon earth for saving David, He will send from Heaven to do it, but He will save him. God is sure to find an ark for His Noahs if the floods should cover the whole earth. And when they cannot be preserved any longer on the earth, He will take them away to Himself in Heaven, but He will surely take care of His own—“He shall send from Heaven, and save me.” If there were only one of His people in danger, He would rend the heavens in order to save him—“He shall send from Heaven and save me,” not only from the danger to my life, but from danger to my character—“from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.” Often, the enemies of the righteous are so fierce and cruel that they would, like some huge python, swallow up the godly man, devour him, make an end of him, make one meal of him if they could. But God will not allow them to do so. He will send from Heaven and deliver us from the reproach of them that would swallow us up.

**3.** *God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.* The Psalmist had only prayed for mercy. Twice he had said, “Be merciful unto me.” But God always answers us more largely than we ask in our prayers. He does exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. So His truth comes with His mercy, as a double guard to protect His people—“God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.”

**4.** *My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.* Yet, notice that David says, “I lie,” there. That is the emphatic word and the force of that word conveys this idea, “I recline there. I feel at ease, notwithstanding the danger of my position. I recline, and rest, even among them that are set on fire.” Oh, the calm confidence of the faith that forgets the adversary when once she has hidden herself under the shadow of Jehovah's wings! The description given of ungodly persecutors is very strong—“whose teeth are spears and arrows.” Their mouth seems to contain deadly armory—they have no molars to grind their food, they are all canine teeth, cruel, cutting. You must know some such critical spirits that seem to be all teeth, and whose every tooth is a spear or an arrow. But their *tongue* is worse than their teeth, for it is not only a sword, but, “a sharp sword,” a sharpened sword. Oh, how tongues will cut and wound! You may heal the cut of a sword, but who shall heal the cut of a deadly, cruel, malicious, slanderous *tongue*? Yet for all that, David was not dismayed, but he said, “I lie down among such men, my soul is among lions.” Like Daniel among the lions, so does this man of God take his night's rest as calmly as though he were sleeping in his own bed at home.

**5.** *Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* David so rises above his present circumstances that he begins to praise his God. O Beloved, there is no condition in which God ought to be robbed of a song! What if I am sick? Yet my Lord must have my music,

even if the harp strings are not well tuned. What if I am poor? Yet why should I be poor towards Him and deny Him my need of praise? What if I am busy? Yet I must still find time for praising Him. How sweetly David seeks to exalt and glorify his God, "Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth."

**6.** *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.* They hunted him as they spread a snare for a bird, or as they sought to entrap a wild beast by digging a pit and covering it over that he might stumble into it. David scarcely has time to tell us of their devices before he discovers that their plans have come to nothing—"they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves." You may go calmly on, my persecuted Friend, for those who seek to hurt the righteous will only hurt themselves—their bows shall be broken, their arrows shall fall back into their own bosoms! Only be still and let the wicked alone—let God fight for you—and you hold your peace.

**7.** *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* That is enough for me, I will not stop my singing for all my adversaries. Let them howl like lions, I will sing on! Let them dig their pits, I will sing on! I find this my best employment, to keep on praising my God—

***"All that remains for me  
Is but to love and sing,  
And wait until the angels come  
To bear me to the King."***

**8.** *Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* My tongue, the glory of my frame, be not silent! Bestir yourself! "I myself will awake early," or, "I will awake the dawning." I will call the sun up to be shining! I will bid him wake to shine to the honor of my Lord! With the earliest birds I will make one more singer in the great concert hall of God. I will not need more rest, or a longer time to myself to consider all my troubles—I will give my best time, the first hour of the day, to the praise of my God.

**9.** *I will praise You, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations.* I will make the Gentiles hear it. They who know not the Lord shall be astonished when they hear me praising Him and they shall ask, "Who is this God of whom this man makes so much?"

**10, 11.** *For Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds. Be You exulted, O God, above the heavens: let Your glory be above all the earth.* God give us that same calm praiseful frame of mind that David possessed if we are called to endure such trials as fell to his lot!

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# AT SCHOOL

## NO. 1519

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

***“Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.”  
Psalm 143:10.***

THIS is a prayer about doing, but it is perfectly free from legal taint. The man who offered it had no idea of being saved by his doings, for in the second verse of the Psalm he had said, “Enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.” This is not the prayer of a sinner seeking salvation, for salvation is not by doing the will of God but by *believing* in Christ. It is the prayer of the man who is already saved and who, being saved, devotes himself to the service of God and wishes to be taught in the fear of the Lord. “Teach me to do Your will, O God.” The connection leads us to make the remark that David looked upon the doing of God’s will as his best escape from his enemies.

He speaks of his cruel persecutors. He declares that though he looked all around he could find none who would help him. Then he prays, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” And depend upon it, the surest way to escape from harm is to do no ill. If you are surrounded by those who would slander you, your best defense is a blameless life! If many are watching for your halting and maliciously desiring your fall, your safety lies in holiness! The very best prayer you can pray for your own protection is, “Teach me to do Your will.” If you do right, none can harm you. This prayer was suggested by the perplexity of the Psalmist’s mind. He was overwhelmed and did not know what to do and, therefore, he cried, “Teach me to do Your will, O God,”

He had come to a place where many roads met and he did not know which path to take and so he prayed God to guide him in the way appointed. I commend this prayer to all who may be sorely puzzled and anxious. You have exercised your own judgment and you have, perhaps, consulted too much with friends and yet your way seems entirely blocked up—resort to God with this as your heart’s prayer, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” May the Spirit of God now bless us while we open up this short prayer that we may be helped to understand it and use it. First, we will speak upon the prayer. And then, secondly, upon its answer.

I. And, first, THE PRAYER ITSELF—let us notice its character. It is a holy prayer. “Teach me to do Your will.” The man who utters this language desires to be free from sin, for sin can never be God’s will. Under no circumstances, whatever, may I do wrong and fancy that I am doing God’s will! I have read of an extremely poor man who needed fuel for the fire for his children and the text came to his mind, “All things are yours.” Armed with this text, he thought he would take a little wood from his neighbor’s woodpile but, very happily there came to his mind another text, “You shall not steal.” He was quite clear about its meaning and so he left the wood alone. And he remembered, afterward, how that text had saved him from a great transgression.

Depend upon it, whatever circumstances or impressions may seem to say, it is *never* God’s will that you should do wrong! There are devil’s Providences as well as God’s Providences. When Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish, he found a ship going there and I dare say he said, “How Providential!” Yes, but no Providence can ever be an excuse for sinning against God! We are to do right and, therefore, we pray, “Teach me to do Your will.” It is a humble prayer—the prayer of a man of deep experience and yet, for all that and, perhaps, *because* of that, a man who felt that he needed teaching as to every step he should take. When you do not need teaching, Brothers and Sisters, it is because you are too stupid to learn—you may depend upon that.

It is only a very young lady fresh from a boarding school who has “finished her education.” And it is only a great fool of a man who thinks that he can learn no more. Those who know themselves best and know the world best and know God best always have the lowest thoughts of themselves. They have no wisdom of their own except this—that they are wise enough to flee from their own wisdom and say to the Lord, “Teach me to do Your will.” This is a holy prayer and a humble prayer and commends itself to every holy and humble heart.

It is, dear Friends, a docile prayer—the prayer of a teachable man. “*Teach* me to do Your will.” It is not merely, you see, “Teach me your will,” but, “Teach me *to do it*.” The person is so ignorant that he needs to be taught how to do anything and everything. You may *tell* a child how to walk, but it will not walk, for all that! You must *teach* it to walk. You must take it by the arms as God did Ephraim. He says, “I taught Ephraim, also, to go, taking them by their arms,” just as a nurse teaches her little ones. “Teach me to do.” Lord, it is not enough that You teach my head and teach my heart, but teach my hands and my feet. “Teach me to do Your will.”

Such a suppliant is docile and ready to learn. It is an *acquiescent* prayer, also, which is a great thing in its favor. “Teach me to do Your

will—not *mine*. I will put my will to the side.” He does not say, “Lord, teach me to do part of Your will—that part which pleases me,” but *all* Your will. If there is any part of Your will which I am not pleased with, for that very reason teach it to me until my whole soul shall be conformed to Your mind and I shall love Your will, not because it happens to be pleasing, but because it is Your will. It is a prayer of resignation and self-abnegation and is, perhaps, one of the highest that the Christian can pray, though it may well befit the learner who stands for the first time at Wisdom’s door.

And then notice that it is a *believing* prayer—“Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” There is faith in God in this claim. “You are my God”—and there is faith in God’s condescension that He will act as a Teacher. Brothers and Sisters, we have two faults. We do not think God to be as great as He is and we do not think God can be so little as He can be. We err on both sides and neither know His height of Glory nor His depth of Grace. We practically say, “This trial is too menial. I will bear it without Him.” We forget that the same God who rules the stars condescends to be a Teacher and teaches us to do His will! We heard, once, of a president of a great nation who, nevertheless, taught in a Sunday school—it was thought to be great condescension—but what shall I say of Him who, while He sits amid the choirs of angels and accepts their praises, comes down to His little children and teaches them to do His will? The prayer before us is very precious, for it is holy, humble, docile, acquiescent and believing.

Let us now notice what the actual request is. In so many words it says, “Teach me to do Your will.” So, Brothers and Sisters, it is a *practical* prayer. He does not say merely, “Teach me to *know* Your will”—a very excellent prayer, that—but there are a great many who stick fast in the *knowing* and do not go on to the *doing*! These are forgetful hearers deceiving themselves. An ounce of *doing* is worth a ton of knowing! The most orthodox faith in the world, if it is accompanied by an unholy life, will only increase a man’s damnation. There must be the yielding up of the members and of the mind unto God in obedience, or else the more we know, the greater will be our condemnation!

The Psalmist does not say, “Lord, help me to talk about Your will,” though it is a very proper thing to talk about and a very profitable thing to hear about. But still doing is better than talking. If t’s were w’s there would be more saints in the world than there are. That is to say, if those who *talk* uprightly would also *walk* uprightly, it would be well. But with many, the talk is better than the walk. Better a silent tongue than an unclean life! Practical godliness is preferable to the sweetest eloquence. The prayer is, “Teach me to *do* Your will.”

There are some who long to be taught in all mysteries and, truly, to understand a mystery aright is a great privilege, but their main thought seems to be to know the deep doctrines, the mysterious points. Many go into prophecy and a nice muddle they make when they get there. We have had I do not know how many theories of prophecy, each one of them more absurd than the rest and so it will be, I fear, to the world's end. Truly, it would be a good thing to understand the prophecies and all knowledge, "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"—and that excellent way is to live a life of humble, godly dependence and faith and to show forth in your life the love that was in Christ Jesus! Lord, I chiefly long to know Your will to do it—teach me that and I am content.

I have already said that this prayer asks that we may do God's will, not our own. Oh, how naturally our heart prays, "Lord, let me have my own way." That is the first prayer of human nature when it is left alone—"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? Let me have my own way!" That desire will sometimes enter the Christian's heart, though I hope it will not long remain there! We may be praying, "Lord, not my will, but Yours be done," and yet the wicked, rebellious heart may be saying inside, "But let it be *my* will, Lord! Let it be *my* will." Still do we cling to self! May the Lord deliver us from Lord Will-He-Will who is a terrible tyrant wherever he rules! And may this be our prayer, "Teach me to do Your will."

We are not to ask to do other people's will, though some persons are always slaves to the wills of others. Whatever their company is, that is what they are. In Rome they do as Rome does—they try to accommodate themselves to their family—they cannot take a stand, or be decided. They are ruled and governed, poor slaves that they are, by their connections. They fear the frown of man! Oh that they would rise to something nobler and pray, "Lord, teach me to do Your will, whether it is the will of the great ones of the earth, or the will of my influential friends, or the will of my loud talking neighbors or not! Help me to do Your will, to take my stand and say, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'"

It is a blessed prayer. The more we look at it the more we see in it. What does he mean by doing God's will? Does he not mean, "Help me to do as Your Word bids me"? For the will of God is put before us very plainly in His Law and, especially, in that Law as viewed in the hands of Christ. "This is the will of God, even our sanctification." To serve Him devoutly and to love our neighbor as ourselves—this is the will of God. May His Spirit help us. "Teach me to do Your will, O God." That will also takes the form of Providence. Out of two courses equally right, we sometimes have to ask the question, "Lord, what is Your will here?" There is nothing immoral in either the one or the other and, therefore, our difficulty. And so we go to the Lord and say, "Here is a case in which Your Law does not

guide me, otherwise I should decide at once, but will You now show me what You will have me to do?"

In another case the will of God may be suggested by opportunity. Dear Friend, the will of God is that you should speak to that friend sitting near you about soul matters. The will of God is that your unconverted servant should have your prayers and your instruction. God puts men in our way on purpose that we may do them good. I have no doubt whatever that many a Christian is made to go where he would not choose to go and to associate with persons that he would not wish to associate with on purpose—that he may be the means of taking light into dark places and of carrying life from God to dead souls. So if you pray this prayer, "Teach me to do Your will," and carry it out, you will watch for opportunities of serving the Lord.

The prayer seems, to me, to have all that compass and much more. But I would answer another enquiry. What is the *intention* of the prayer as to manner? It does not say, "Lord, *enable* me to do Your will," but, "*Teach* me to do Your will," as if there were some peculiar way of doing it that had to be *taught*. As when a young man goes apprentice to acquire a trade. Lord, I would put myself under indenture to Your Grace that You may teach me the art and mystery of doing Your will. How, then, ought God's will to be done? It should be done *thoughtfully*. A great many Christians are not half as considerate as they should be. We should go through life not flippantly like the butterfly that flits from flower to flower, but like the bee that stays and sucks honey and gathers sweet store for the hive.

We should be seriously in earnest and one point of earnestness should be—

***"With holy trembling, holy fear,  
To make my calling sure,  
Your utmost counsel to fulfill,  
And suffer all Your righteous will,  
And to the end endure."***

Lord, help me to do Your will, seriously bending all my soul to the doing of it, not trifling in Your courts, nor making life a play, but loving You with all my understanding! The Lord's will should be done *immediately*. As soon as a command is known, it should be obeyed. Lord, suffer me not to consult with flesh and blood. Make me prompt and quick of understanding in the fear of God. Teach me to do Your will as angels do, who no sooner hear Your word than they fly like flames of fire to fulfill Your wishes!

His will should be done cheerfully. Jehovah seeks not slaves to grace His Throne. He would have us delight to do His will, yes, His Law should be in our heart. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you need to pray this—"Teach me to do Your will," or else you will miss the mark. Teach me to do it con-

stantly. Let me not *sometimes* be Your servant and then run away from You. Keep me to it. Let me never weary. When the morning wakes me, may it find me ready and when the evening bids me rest, may I be serving You until I fall asleep. Teach me to do it also, Lord, universally, not some part of it, but all of it—not one of Your commands being neglected—nor one single part of my daily task being left undone. I am Your servant.

Make me to be what a good servant is to her mistress, neglecting none of the cares of the household. May I be watchful in all points. Teach me to do Your will spiritually, not making the outside of cups and platters clean, but obeying You within my soul. May what I do be done with all my heart. If I pray, help me to pray in the Spirit. If I sing, let my heart make music unto You. When I am talking to others about Your name and trying to spread the savor of Jesus, let me not do it in my own strength, or in a wrong spirit, but may the Holy Spirit be upon me. Teach me to do Your will intensely. Let the zeal of Your house eat me up. Oh that I might throw my whole self into it! This little prayer grows, does it not? Pray it, Brothers and Sisters and may the Lord answer you.

Once again, there are necessary qualities which we must seek if we would sincerely pray this prayer, “Teach me to do Your will.” You must have decision of character, for some never do God’s will though they wish they did and they regret, they say, that they cannot—they resolve that they will and there it ends. O you spongy souls! Some of you are sadly squeezable! Whatever hand grips you can shape you. Decision is needed, for you cannot do God’s will unless you know how to say, “No,” and to put your foot down and declare that whatever may happen, you will not turn aside from the service of your God! If the Lord shall teach you to do His will, you will also need courage. The prayer virtually says, “When my enemies ridicule me, teach me to do Your will. When they threaten me, teach me to do Your will. When they tempt me, teach me to do Your will. When they slander me, teach me to do Your will—to be brave with the bravery which resolves to do the right and leaves the issues with God.” “Teach me to do Your will.”

It means—Give me resignation, kill in me my self-hood. Put down, I pray You, my pride. Make me willing to be anything or to do anything You will. It is a prayer that necessitates humility. No man can pray it unless he is willing to stoop and wash the saints’ feet. “Teach me to do Your will.” Let me be a dishwasher in Your kitchen if so I may glorify You. I have no choice but that You be All in All. It is a prayer, too, for spiritual life and much of it, for a dead man cannot do God’s will. Shall the dead praise Him? Shall they that go down to the Pit give Him thanks? Oh, no, Brothers and Sisters! You must be full of *life* if you are to do God’s will!

Some professors are not quickened one-third of the way yet. I hope they have a measure of quickening, but it does not seem to have reached the extremities. There may be a little quickening in the heart, but it has not quickened the tongue to confess Christ, nor quickened the hands to give to Christ, or to work for Christ. They seem to be half-dead. O Lord, fill me with life from the sole of my feet to the crown of my head, for how can I do Your will unless Your Spirit saturates me through and through, till every pulse is consecrated? I would be wholly Yours. "Teach me to do Your will."

**II.** I will not detain you many minutes over the second part of our sermon in which we are to say a little upon ITS ANSWER. There is the prayer, "Teach me to do Your will." Will it get an answer? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, it will assuredly obtain an answer of peace. For, first, there is a reason for expecting it. "You are my God." Oh, yes, if we were asking this of someone else, we might fear, but, "You are my God" is a blessed argument because the greater supposes the less! If God has given us Himself, He will give us teaching!

It is also God's way to teach—"Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach transgressors in the way." It is a quality of a good man to wish to make others good. It is supremely the quality of the good God to make others good. When I think of what the Lord is, I am certain that He will be willing to teach me to do His will. Moreover, He has *promised* to do it. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you shall go. I will guide you with My eyes." And, again, He is glorified by so doing, for it brings Glory to God when His people do His will. Therefore I may expect, for all these reasons, that He will teach me to do His will.

Again, dear Friends, it *needs* to be answered. "Teach me to do Your will. Lord, there is nobody who can ever teach me Your will unless You do it. I shall never learn it by myself. This scholarship I shall never pick up by chance. Lord, unless You hold me fast and teach me with Your supreme art, I shall never learn to do Your will as I desire to learn it." You see, he turns away from every other teacher to his God. He puts himself to school with God alone. And there is the prayer, "Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God." Brothers and Sisters, you must have this teaching, or else you will never do God's will. No strength of nature, no wit of nature can ever suffice to serve the Lord aright—you must be *taught* from above!

There are many ways in which God gives His answer to this prayer, "Teach me to do Your will." We have received one wonderful answer to it already. He has given Jesus Christ to be our Example. There is no teaching like actual example! If you want to know the will of God, study the life of Christ! The Lord is pleased to give us fainter copies of that same will of His in His saints. Read the sacred biographies of the Scriptures. Watch the holy lives of those who are among you, who live near to God, and fol-

low them so far as they follow Christ. They are not complete copies—there are blots and blunders—still, the Lord does teach young people by the godly lives of their parents and He instructs all of us by the biographies of devoted men and women.

Again, the Lord teaches us by every line of His Word and oftentimes when that Word is heard, or carefully read, it comes home with great power to the soul and guides us in the way of life. Moreover the Lord has a way of teaching us by His own Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks in secret whispers to those who are able to hear Him. It is not every professing Christian that has the visitations of the Spirit of God in personal monitions, but there are saints who hear a voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” God guides us with His eyes as well as by His Word. Opened eyes can see, in a moment, what the Lord means. He has gentle means. His daily dealings in loving tenderness are guides to us. Every mercy is a star to pilot us to Heaven.

When we are not willing to be guided so easily, He will teach us by rough means. The Lord has a bit and a whip for those who need them. He will restrain us by affliction and infirmity and sometimes chasten us very sorely with losses, bereavements, depression of spirit and the like—in some way or other He will hear the prayer for teaching, for it is a Covenant promise—“All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” Blessed are they to whom the teaching comes sweetly and softly! It can be so if we are willing to have it so, but surely if we will not be tenderly guided, God will make us do His will as men compel the bullock to do their will when it is rebellions under the yoke and must be broken in. The Lord will hear our prayer for instruction, but it may not be quite in the way we would have chosen.

One thing more. I trust we have, all of us who know the Lord, prayed the prayer, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” Now mind, my dear Friends, mind that you do it *sincerely* and know what you are doing because after offering such a petition as this, you dare not go into sin! You cannot say, “Teach me to do Your will,” and then go off to frivolous amusements, or spend your evenings in vain and giddy society. That would be an insolent mockery of God! “Teach me to do Your will,” you say, and then get up and do what you know to be clean contrary to His mind and will—what defiant profanity is this! Again, do not offer this prayer with a reserve. Do not say, or mean, “Teach me to do Your will in all points but one. There is a point in which I pray You have me excused.”

I am afraid that certain Believers do not want to learn too much. I have known them not like to read special passages of Scripture. Perhaps they trouble them doctrinally, or as to the ordinances of the Christian faith, or as to matters of Church discipline. If they do not paste those pages to-

gether to hide the obnoxious passage, yet they do not like them opened too much. They would rather read a verse which looks more to their mind. But, Brothers and Sisters, if you and a text have a quarrel, make up with it at once! You must not alter the text—alter your creed, alter your life, alter your thought, God the Holy Spirit helping you—for the text is right and you are in the wrong!

“Teach me to do Your will,” means, if we pray it honestly, “I will search God’s Word to know what His mind is.” Why, there are numbers of you who join the Church you were brought up in, whatever it is! You do not take the trouble to examine as to whether your Church is Scriptural or not. This is a blind way of acting! This is not obeying the will of God. Know what God’s Book teaches. Search the Scriptures! Many Christians believe what their minister preaches because he preaches it. Do not believe a word of what *I* preach unless you can find it in the Word of God. “To the Law and to the Testimony! If we speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in us.” We are all fallible and though we teach as best we can and hope that God teaches you much by us, yet *we are not inspired* and do not pretend to be!

Search the Book of God on your own account and abide by what you find there and by nothing else. Where the Bible leads, you are bound to follow and following its guidance you shall not walk in darkness. Seek to know the will of God and when you know it, carry it out and pray the Holy Spirit to take away the dearest idol you have known—the thought that pleases you best—out of your mind if it is contrary to the supreme will of the eternal God! The Lord grant we may thus pray and thus be heard.

Alas, unconverted people cannot pray after the fashion of my text. They have, first of all, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before they can do the will of the Lord. May you all be led to believe in the Savior and when you have done so, then may the Holy Spirit lead you to pray, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

### **LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON**

DEAR FRIENDS—I had joyfully expected to set out for home next Monday, but flights of letters have come to warn me against returning while an Arctic temperature freezes our native land. Many matters make me anxious to see my dear home and Church, but I submit to the loving advice of my Deacons, which has just reached me by telegram, and I shall abide in this warm retreat for another week, hoping for a change of weather.

Yours heartily,

**C. H. SPURGEON**

Mentone, January 31, 1880

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# **“HIDING IN YOU!”**

## **NO. 2930**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 14, 1876.**

***“I flee unto You to hide me.”  
Psalm 143:9.***

WHAT a great mercy it is for us that David had not a smooth path and an easy life! We would have lost much valuable instruction if he had been able to hold on continually the even tenor of his way. Whereas, now, we are great gainers by his trials and sufferings. In reading the Psalms of David, you will often find a verse which just suits your own case. It is hardly possible for you to be placed in any position without discovering that the son of Jesse has been there before you. I cannot, in all respects, liken him to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet, to a large extent, it was so with David as well as with “great David’s greater Son.” He seems to have been not merely one man, but “all mankind’s epitome,” and to have known almost all human temptations, human sins and human joys, having been led, sometimes by the Spirit, and sometimes, alas, by his own frailty and foolishness, into all sorts of strange places in order that he might become an instructor to us.

You have probably heard this remark a great many times, but, did it ever strike you that very much the same may be said concerning your own experience? When you are wondering why you are so strangely tried and why your experience is often so remarkable, may it not happen that the reason does not lie in yourself so much as in others to whom God means to make you useful? You are being led along a rough road and being tried and instructed in order that you may be the means of helping others whom you will find in some of the dark places of the earth. You are being trained as a hardy mountaineer in order that when the Lord’s sheep are lost on wild craggy places, you may know how to climb up after them and bring them down to a place of safety. You are being taught how to find your way through the country of despondency and despair in order that when the pilgrims to the Celestial City lose their way and get into the marshy places of fear and doubt, you may know how to bring them out again and set their feet again upon the Rock and establish their goings once more.

The bearing of any one man’s life upon the lives of other men can scarcely be fully known to us here. Even when we are able to look upon the completed life, we shall hardly know how much it has been intertwined with other men’s lives and, certainly, until the life is

completed, no man can know how much his present sufferings have to do with his usefulness to others. Nor can he fully understand how he is being prepared here, there, and in a thousand other places for usefulness in a position of which he little dreams that he will ever be the occupant. Yet he is one day to be placed where all this mysterious training will be of the utmost service to other people. The steel blade that was put into the fire again, and again, and yet again to be tempered, did not know that the Cid would use it in the day of battle to cut through the armor of his adversaries! If it had not been prepared for use in this fashion, it would not have been fit to be placed in such a hero's hands. Believers are being made into vessels meet for the Master's use and it is not every vessel that is fit for Him to employ in His Divine service. David was prepared, but he could only have become so by means of the remarkable life of trial through which he was called to pass.

Whenever we read the story of David's life, or note in the Psalms where he went and what he did, we should not merely notice how David acted and suffered and what he did while undergoing the suffering, but we should try to so study his experience as to be able to do as he did if we are placed in circumstances similar to his. Avoid his sin—let that be a beacon to warn you—but imitate his virtues. Pray the Lord to make you a partaker of the fullest measure of the Grace which the Psalmist possessed, but never look at his life as you gaze at a statue—merely to admire it and to say how beautifully it is worked—but look at it as a boy should look at his copy, that he may imitate it. Look at it as the soldier looks at his leader, that he may march step by step as he sets him the example and, above all things, always keep your eyes on David's Lord and Master, lest even David should be the means of misleading you! Let your admiration both of David and of the Lord Jesus Christ be practical—there is far too much of that kind of religion which consists in merely admiring other people, or in seeing what we, ourselves, ought to be, or in regretting that we are not what we should be—true godliness is manifested as we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit by being and doing that which we feel we ought to be and to do. To this end, gracious Spirit, be pleased to help us! Let us give to our text that sort of meditation which shall all the while be aiming at a practical result—and while we see how David fled to his God in the time of trial, let us each one, also, make this resolve, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—“I will do the same as David did. I will flee unto God to hide me.”

In our text we have David's declaration to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.” We also ought to do as David did, but no man will do this unless he has the five things of which I am about to speak.

**I.** And, first, no man will ever flee to God to hide him unless he has A SENSE OF DANGER.

David was in danger from many cruel enemies and he fled to God to hide him from them. You and I may not be in any such danger as that, physically. We live in a country where, happily, we are protected from such a danger as that—at least, the most of us do—but there are other dangers to which we are exposed. David fled to God to hide him because

he realized the danger in which he was placed and we shall only flee to the Lord to hide us when we realize our own personal peril.

We are all well aware that *many persons have perished because they have not realized their danger*. You know how often this is the case. Men have gone, without any thought of peril, into places where there have been pestilential odors or the seeds of deadly diseases. If they had known what was there, they would not have gone in that direction, or they would have taken various precautions to guard themselves from infection. But, in ignorance of their peril, they have breathed the fatal air and have gone home to sicken and die. Many a gallant ship has struck upon a hidden reef, or upon a sandbank that was not marked on the chart. I have never heard of any vessel being wrecked through its officers keeping too good a look-out. Nor do we often read of ships being lost because the captain was too anxious to keep far away from the treacherous sands and the dangerous headlands. But we often hear of wrecks which have occurred through the captain's ignorance of the danger to which his vessel was exposed. Every now and then we learn that some obstruction has been encountered upon the railway as the express train has come rushing along. If the driver had but known that the permanent way, as it is called, was out of order and that there would be a collision if he did not stop the train, he would have done all that he could to avoid such a calamity—but because he did not know that he and his passengers were in danger, he went on as though all had been well—and the most terrible consequences ensued.

Many have perished—I am using the word, “perish,” in the ordinary sense—because they have not known that they were in danger. And we know (oh, that it were not so!) that concerning *spiritual* things, there are millions of our fellow countrymen who are in danger of the eternal wrath of God, yet they are not conscious that it is so. They know that they are living in sin and they have some dim perception that sin is an evil thing in God's sight, yet they are not fully conscious of what sin is. Many of them do not know, in the full meaning of the word, that they are sinners. See how contented they are with their fancied righteousness, conceiving themselves to be in perfect safety—and all the while they are in the utmost peril! They eat and they drink. They are married and they are given in marriage as though such a state of things would last forever. Talk to them concerning the last dread conflagration which is to consume the world and they will laugh you to scorn, and cry, “Peace and safety,” even though sudden destruction is coming upon them! If we could once make men realize that they are in danger, there would be some hope that they would seek to escape from the peril that threatens them! But we cannot make them believe in its reality and certainty. They are unbelieving with regard to such disturbing news. If we cried aloud to them, “Peace, peace,” although we know there is no peace for them as long as they continue as they now are, they would probably believe us, for they lend their credulous ears to any superstition that seems to promise them a false peace. But if we try to warn them of their danger—

danger of the most terrible kind—they will not, as a rule, be persuaded to listen to such unwelcome tidings—or if they do listen, they do not believe our message and they will not admit they are in danger.

If any such persons are present with us here—and I fear that there are some—I mean those who have no sense of danger and yet have never trusted in Christ for salvation, let me remind you, dear Friends, that your sins must inevitably bring punishment upon you! There is a Judge of all the earth who must do right—and every transgression of His righteous Law must be followed by punishment, otherwise why should there be a Judge of the earth at all if He is indifferent to the iniquities of man? Let me also remind you that your sin is holding you in its power and though, at present, you may not indulge in the grosser forms of vice, you are in great danger of going much further into paths of sin than you like to think you will. You cannot stop in an evil course just when and where you please. You cannot say to sin, “Thus far shall you go and no further.” The beginnings of evil are like the letting out of water—and when the dyke is once broken and the pent-up flood is set free—it soon deluges the fields and, perhaps, sweeps away multitudes of men and their habitations as well. Oh, that men could but realize that while they are living in sin, they are always in danger of committing more sin, and yet more sin—going on from bad to worse and from worse to the very worst of all!

Many a young man would shudder with horror if he could foresee what he will yet become unless the Grace of God shall prevent it. You have often seen that familiar picture of the child and the kind of man that he will yet become—either drunken or sober. If that child should be told that, one day, he would be like that red-faced old drunkard, he would not believe that he could ever grow to be as bad as that! Neither will most young men who are now living in sin, believe that they can ever grow to be what they will be if they continue in their present course. Yet that is the danger to which they are continually exposed—the danger of sin always producing yet more sin—and, to my mind, it seems to be punishment of a most grievous kind even if there were no other, that sin should be allowed to breed within itself something yet more black and foul and filthy than it is itself! So foul that on the cancer of sin there comes yet another and another, more foul and loathsome, and yet another, and another, and another until the man who was possessed with one devil becomes possessed with seven devils even more wicked than the first one was! There is this real danger, this grievous danger, in the case of every unconverted man or woman upon the face of the earth! Therefore each one of them should cry unto the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.”

No man ever flees to God for shelter until he realizes that he is in danger, yet all men, whether they are the children of God or the children of this world, are in danger of one kind or another. As for the men of this world—the children of disobedience—they are in danger of the punishment which is due on account of their present sin and that awful growth of sin of which I have been speaking. But are the children of God

also in danger? Ask them and they will tell you that they are pilgrims to the Celestial City which they will, in due time, reach by God’s Grace. But they will also tell you that all along the road to Heaven, there are dangerous places where the traveler might fall to his very grievous hurt—for instance, the descent in the Valley of Humiliation, with Apollyon waiting there, determined to slay, or at least to wound the pilgrim! Or the Valley of the Shadow of Death, a little further on, with its miry bog and its hobgoblins and all manner of terrifying sights and sounds. And then the Enchanted Ground with its temptation to the pilgrim to sleep. And Vanity Fair, where there are all sorts of ill wares to allure and deceive the pilgrim. Dangers of every sort beset the followers of the Lamb—and they are only safe as they are Divinely protected. The moment you become a Christian, you are—

**“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”**

as far as your ultimate and final perseverance is concerned, but all the while you are on the road to Heaven you must wear the armor provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for you are always exposed to danger from the adversary’s arrows and sword. All the while that you are in the earthly pastures, you need the protection of the good Shepherd. Why? Because you are in danger from the roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may destroy and unless the Great Shepherd’s rod and staff protect you, you will certainly be destroyed!

Let me also remind you that some dangers are not readily perceived and those are generally the worst of all. We may be able to keep clear of “the arrow that flies by day,” but who can guard himself against “the pestilence that walks in darkness”? Possibly we do not fall into open sin, but the dry rot of gradual declension—the silent sliding away of the heart from Christ—who but God can guard us against *that*? Many a man is caught in the invisible nets of Satan and well-near destroyed even while he dreams that he is safely pursuing the path that leads to Heaven! Therefore do I sound the alarm and ring the bell again and again to remind you that we are all in danger, though some think they are not! Those who think they are not are the very persons who are in the greatest danger of all because they think they are not in peril. I wish I had the power to awaken all of you to a true sense of your danger with regard to spiritual things, for then you would, like David, flee to God to hide you. You never will do that until you realize the peril in which you are placed and recognize that as long as you are not abiding in Christ, you are in continual peril and that your only safety lies in fleeing to God to hide you, even as the Psalmist did long ago.

**II.** The second great need of a man in order that he may flee to God to hide him is A SENSE OF WEAKNESS.

A man who thinks that he can fight his own battles in his own strength will not flee to God to hide him. *But we are, all of us, as weak as water if we are left to ourselves* and we soon show that we are quite unable to cope with our spiritual foes. The unforgiven sinner proves how weak he is by yielding at once to the tempter. He has a traitor within his own heart who opens the gates to Satan and so he is easily overcome.

The Believer, though he has within him the new life which hates sin, is as weak as other men if he is left without the Spirit of God for a single moment. There is enough of the fire of Hell in you, my Brother—you who are the most spiritual and most like Christ—to set all Hell aright again if the infernal fires were ever put out! You are inclined toward that which is good, but if the Grace of God ever left you, you would be quite as much inclined toward that which is evil! I will not quite say what Ralph Erskine said concerning himself—

**“On good and evil equal bent  
And both a devil and saint”—**

but I will say that if a saint could ever be left of God, he would soon become a devil. And he who was so eager after that which was good, would be just as eager after that which is evil. So again I say that we are, all of us, as weak as water if left to ourselves.

*But some people think that they are very strong.* Hear how the boastful man says, “I can drink my glass of beer or wine, but I shall never become a drunkard. I can attend the theater and see what a low standard of morals prevails there, but I shall never fall into such an evil thing as fornication or adultery! I shall never become a blasphemer! I am not in the habit of even using coarse language and it is quite impossible that I should become profane.” He thinks, when he stakes his small sums of money, that he will never become a gambler. “No,” he says, “I am not such a fool as that.” Yet, often, when a man says that, you may write his true name in large capital letters—“A FOOL”—for there is no other fool who is so foolish as the one who thinks he is not such a fool as other men are!

When Hazael was told by Elisha what he would afterwards do, he exclaimed, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are all sadly weak and those are the weakest of all who think themselves to be strong! Past failures ought to have taught us all how great is our weakness. I wonder if any of you ever tried to soar away into the clouds with the perfectionists who delight to go up in a balloon and seek to live far above all ordinary mortals? If so and if you are at all like me—and I expect your flesh and blood are very similar to mine—I imagine that you soon discovered your mistake. The very day that you thought your temper was perfect, you found that it was very imperfect! And at the very time that you intended to have no thought or care, and when you had made up your mind that you were not coming down again to the level of this poor groveling world, you found that you could not rise an inch above the ground and that you were, as far as spiritual things were concerned, just like a lump of lead! You were made to feel that the best of men are but men at the best and, in that way, your failure taught you how weak you are. Even if you are the best man or woman in the world, in yourself you are utter weakness—only Christ Himself can make anything of you! Saint as you are, you are still a sinner saved by Grace and you are only holy as you are made so by the blessed Spirit who sanctifies you! If you were left by

Him for a single moment, your sinnership would come to the front all too prominently and your saintship would retire to the rear.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, *in our weakness lies our strength*. The Apostle Paul says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And I wish it were possible for me to produce in all of you, whether you are sinners or saints, the sense of positive inability and utter weakness, for, until you feel that, you will never say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.” On the contrary, you will stand out boldly in the place of danger and you will even defy your foes to do their worst against you! You will venture into worldliness. You will go up to the very mouth of the furnace of sin. You will become more daring and more presumptuous and you will be less on your watchtower—you will keep on going further and further in the wrong way as long as you imagine that you are strong. But if the Lord will aim His arrows right at the very heart of your strength and lay all your fancied glory in the mire and make you to know that you are less than the least of all saints, then it will be better for you. But before you will reach this point, you will have to confess your own nothingness and say—

**“But, oh, for this no strength have I!  
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”**

Then you will flee to the Lord to hide you, and then you will be hidden by Him in a safe place—but never till then.

**III.** A third thing which we must all have before we are likely to use the language of the text with truth is A PRUDENT FORESIGHT—“I flee unto You to hide me.”

The ungodly man and, in a measure, also the unwise Believer, will perceive the peril in which he is placed and yet hesitate, linger, delay, deliberate, procrastinate. This is great folly, yet it is just what thousands are doing. I feel sure that some of you who are here are not prepared to live—much less are you prepared to die. I am glad to see you come to the House of God on a weeknight, for it looks as if you had some desire to find out the way of Everlasting Life. Yet how many there are among you who are living as if this life were all! You are quite unprepared for that great day to which you all know you are hastening and you do not like to even hear anything about death and the judgment to come because you are utterly unfit to face those stern realities. Are you always going to put off thoughts about these all-important matters and to go on living without the slightest preparation for eternity? You know that you are in danger and that you are too weak to face that danger all alone though you have not yet fully perceived how great your weakness is. Oh, that you would be wise enough to begin to look about you for a way of escape! When you are in this sense, wise, you will flee to God to hide you—but until you do get at least a little of this sacred prudence and some of the wisdom which the Holy Spirit teaches, you will delay, and delay, and delay, till, on some dread day, the long-gathering clouds will discharge the awful storm of Divine Judgment upon your devoted head! And then you will not be able to flee to Christ to hide you, for the harvest will be past and the summer will be ended—but you will be “not saved.”

The Lord, by His Grace, has made Christian men and women more full of forethought than the ungodly are. And they have desired to escape from the wrath to come and they have done so. And let me tell you, Sinner, you who have not yet fled to Christ for salvation, that while it is a blessed thing to be delivered from the wrath to come, it is also a most delightful thing to be delivered from the fear of it even now! I do not think that I could live an hour without being in the bitterest agony if I had any sort of doubt about my safety in Christ Jesus, for I have a most vivid sense of my danger and my weakness apart from Him and these, like wings, bear me to the Rock of Ages where I can hide in absolute security. But I could never rest in peace if I thought that God was angry with me, or if I knew that if I were to drop down dead, my soul would be in Hell! How can any of you remain unconcerned in such a sad condition as that? Surely it must be because you do not realize what your true condition is!

If I could lock some of you up in a room and make you think about your position with regard to God, you would be very uncomfortable. You would almost as soon go to prison as sit down to think about the needs of your immortal spirit. Yet it is wrong for a man to be afraid to look into the books in which he keeps his soul's accounts! It is worse than foolish to be afraid to test the soundness of the foundation of the house in which he dwells! It is sheer madness to be afraid to look to the state of his soul to see whether it has the marks of death upon it or not! Do not any of you be so foolish, so insane! You insure your lives, you insure your houses, you put on warmer garments as winter approaches and if you have only some slight ailment, you run to a doctor! Have you no care about your immortal souls? Have you no anxiety concerning death and eternity? Or are you resolved to play the fool before high Heaven? I pray you, do not do it, but awake to something like prudence! And any one of you who does so will say to God, as David did, “I flee unto You to hide me.” You never will do this until you exercise such wise forethought as I urge upon you.

**IV.** Now, fourthly, and briefly, before anyone of us will say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me,” there must be A SOLID CONFIDENCE.

What kind of confidence do I mean? *A solid confidence that God can hide us.* Did you notice the second hymn that we sang? It always seems to me that the writer had a wonderful conception of God in His awfulness and greatness to be feared and then he says—

**“Yet I may love You, O my God!”**

Think of the great God who made the Heavens and the earth, who is everywhere, filling all things and doing all things according to the good pleasure of His own will—and then say to yourself, “If I flee to Him—if He will permit me to flee to him to hide me—how safe I must be! It is He of whom I have been afraid, but if I can hide in Him, how secure I shall be! If I can find a shelter in Him, what a perfect shelter that must be!” When God lifts up His sword of Justice in His almighty hand to smite the sinner, if that sinner can lay hold upon His arm and cling firmly to it, how can God smite him? And He urges us to take hold of His strength! A

heavy blow falls with the greatest force upon those who are some little distance away from the striker. When a man intends to strike a tremendous blow, if his adversary runs up close to him and clings to his arm, what can he do with him? And fleeing to God to hide us does, as it were, disarm God—therefore I urge you to flee to God in Christ that He may hide you from His Justice and He can rightly do this because Christ has borne for all Believers the punishment that was due to their sin and, therefore, the God of Justice can, Himself, smile when He sees a sinner hidden in the Christ who made a full and complete Atonement for his sin!

Where can any of you flee *from* the Presence of God? If you ride upon the sunbeams, He will track you. If you plunge into the deeps of the sea, He will discover you. If you could climb up among the stars, He could pluck you from your hiding place, for He is everywhere. But if you flee to God in Christ to hide you, you must be safe forever! I have read an old story of a rebel who was hunted by a certain king, but who disguised himself and entered into the king's tent and partook of his hospitality before anyone discovered that he was the very man whose life the king had been seeking. And the king nobly and generously refused to kill the foe who had fled for shelter to his own tent. O poor guilty Soul, this is the message of the Gospel—Flee to God to hide you from God! Turn to Him as the prodigal returned to his father to obtain forgiveness of the wrong which he had done to his father!

And you Christian men and women, this is to be your constant joy, that *you always can hide in God*—that there is no trouble, difficulty, or danger from which God will not be a shelter to you, for, as He is a shelter from His own Justice, He must be a shelter from everyone else and everything else that would harm you! And *you may always hide in God*. You will never say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me,” until you know that you may hide in Him. Yes, Beloved, you may flee to God to hide you, for God is never more truly God than when He receives poor souls that make Him to be their hiding place. It is said that on one occasion when certain wise men were sitting together in council, a poor bird, which was pursued by a hawk, flew into the bosom of one of the counselors and he—the only man in the whole company who would have done such a thing—plucked the trembling bird out of his bosom, wrung its neck and threw it away from him! Whereupon the other counselors all rose up and voted for his immediate expulsion from their assembly, for they all felt that any man who could do such a deed as that was unworthy to have a place in their ranks—and we may be quite sure that the ever-merciful Jehovah will never take a soul that has flown in His bosom for shelter and destroy it!

You dread God, poor Soul, but you need never do so. If you are in Christ Jesus, God is so fully reconciled to you that when you are pursued by sin, or Satan, or trouble of any kind, the safest place for you to fly to is His bosom and there you are safe forever, for He will never

cast you out! If you have this confidence in God, you will say to Him, as David did, “I flee unto You to hide me.”

**V.** One thing more is needed and that is ACTIVITY OF FAITH.

There are some of you who have heard what I have been saying about hiding in God. And as you go home you will say, “Yes, we know that we are in danger, we know that we are weak, we know that we need a secure hiding place and we know that God is willing to hide us.” Well, then, if you know that, will you not at once flee to Him to hide you? Beloved, you who have often fled to Him to hide you, will not you again flee to Him? Some of you may have a new form of trouble which has just come upon you and it is of such a kind that you do not like to tell anybody about it. I pray you, do not keep it to yourself for even another minute, but flee to God and tell Him all about it! I must confess my own folly in this respect, for I have been foolish enough, partly through weariness of body and brain, to nurse a trouble which I ought to have cast upon the Lord long ago. One does not mind nursing his own children who may grow up to be a comfort to him, but it is always a pity to nurse trouble, for that often means taking a serpent’s eggs and putting them into our bosom to hatch there into serpents that will sting us! This is a most foolish course of action—would it not be far wiser for us if as soon as any trouble comes upon us, to flee to the Lord to hide us from it? Let us be cowardly enough to run away from our trouble! No, it will not be cowardice, but true bravery to always run to God as soon as any trouble comes upon us, each one of us crying to Him with David, “I flee unto You to hide me.”

Suppose that 20 troubles should come to us in a day and that we should flee to God 20 times with them? I think that we might almost pray to God to send 20 more troubles, so that we might flee to Him 40 times a day! Any reason for going to God must be a blessing to us, for going to God is going to bliss! So we may even turn our troubles into blessings by making them drive us to Him.

I want to steer you, dear Friends, to the practical point of my subject. Have you been worrying yourself, since you have been here, about a trial that you expect to fall upon you towards the close of this year? You fear that Christmas is not likely to be “a merry Christmas” to you—there are many bills coming in and not much hope of the money with which to meet them. Well, then, flee to God with that trouble and whatever is burdening your heart or your mind, flee to God about it and leave it all in His hands—and go on your way rejoicing!

Last of all, is there not some poor sinner here who has never yet believed in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior? How happy I should be if even before you leave this place, you would flee to the Lord to hide you! You do not need even to go into the vestry to talk to the elders. You may do that, if you like, and they will be glad to see you—but your best plan is to tell the Lord, while you are sitting in that seat, that you are a sinner far off from Him and that you wish that He would save you. Ask Him, for Christ’s sake, to have mercy upon you. Trust His dear Son to save you. Tell Him that you do trust Him to save you and He will do it, for, according to your faith shall it be unto you. Flee to Him to hide you!

There are His dear wounds and you are a poor feeble dove—and the cruel hawk is after you. You cannot fight with him for he would tear you in pieces—you can only escape from him by flying to the wounds of Jesus! Do so, then, for your pursuer cannot reach you there—

**“Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds!  
This is the welcome Gospel-Day,  
Wherein free Grace abounds.”**

God bless you all, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 143.**

**Psalm 143:1, 2.** *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. And enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.* That is, of course, apart from the wondrous system of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ whereby Believers are made the righteousness of God in Him! Apart from that righteousness, no man living can be justified in the sight of God.

**3, 4.** *For the enemy has persecuted my soul, he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.* Are any of you passing through this trying experience? If so, does it not encourage you to find that somebody else has been this way before you? The road is very rough, but there is a man’s footprint there, the footprint of a man whom God greatly loved, even the man after God’s own heart! Ah, dear Friends, in those deep sorrows of yours, you are not alone—David has passed this way before you and, what is still better, David’s Lord has traversed this rough road! In all our afflictions He was afflicted. He was tempted in all points like as we are, so He can most perfectly sympathize with us in all the troubles through which we are called to pass.

**5, 6.** *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Selah.* One of the things which God’s people are in the habit of doing, when they are in deep trouble, is to look back upon their past experiences. You may have seen the bargemen on the canal push backwards that they may propel the barge forwards and, sometimes we who believe in Jesus Christ have to push backwards—to look back on our past experiences in order to derive fresh courage for the present hour of trial. So the Psalmist says, “I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands.” Yet in David’s day of distress, when he had meditated upon his experiences in the past, that did not satisfy him. He wanted his God, therefore he cried unto the Lord, “I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land.” When the fields have long been dry because there has been no rain, you see how the earth opens its mouth in great cracks

as if it gaped for the rain it so sorely needs—and David’s soul seemed thus gaping with a strong desire after the living God—“My soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land.”

**7, 8.** *Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails: hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your loving-kindness in the morning, for in You do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto You.* This is a beautiful prayer which any of you might present to the Lord—“Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.” You are perplexed as to what you ought to do. You wish to do that which is right, but you are not sure what is right. Yet God can cause you to know the way wherein you should walk—He leads the blind by a way that they know not and in paths which they have not seen. So breathe this prayer to Him in the hour of your perplexity—

**“Guide me, O You great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land!  
I am weak, but You are mighty,  
Hold me with Your powerful hand!”**

Or say with David, “Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto You.” He seems to say, “My soul is like a dead weight which cannot lift itself up; but in the strength which You do impart to me, I lift it up, I will not let it lie like a dead log before You—I lift up my soul unto You.”

**9, 10.** *Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies: I flee unto You to hide me. Teach me to do Your will.* This is another most blessed prayer—“Teach me to do Your will.” Most of us want to have our own will and to go our own way—but each one who is truly wise prays to the Lord, “Teach me to do Your will.”

**10, 11.** *For You are my God; Your spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O LORD, for Your name’s sake: for Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.* What earnest pleading is this and how powerful it is! Every word is so fitting that if I had time to explain it, you would note the force and appropriateness of every syllable that the Psalmist here uses.

**12.** *And of Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Your servant.*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—57, 821, 195.**

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

# PICTURES OF HAPPINESS

## NO. 3365

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1913.

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

*“Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy  
are the people whose God is the Lord.”*  
*Psalm 144:15.*

SOMETIMES God’s people are unhappy when they ought to be happy. God observes this. Therefore He tells them when they possess the materials of happiness and gives them a description of the peace and prosperity of those who are truly happy men. Thus recollecting the choice mercies which surround them and not attaching so much importance to the little trials of the day, they may become of God’s mind and feel themselves to be as happy as He declares they are. The pure in spirit are said by our Savior to be blessed. They often think themselves to be cursed and feel as if there were no blessing for them. But blessed they are, for Jesus knows whom He has blessed! And though God’s people are sometimes, in their own consciences, unhappy, they are a happy people and to be congratulated on their condition notwithstanding. They have reasons for happiness. They have satisfactory grounds for happiness. They have springs of happiness. They have future prospects of happiness. If you are God’s people, you cannot err in exercising faith about this thing. You are numbered with those who are the happiest people under Heaven!

The text speaks not only of the persons, but also of the condition of God’s people—a condition which I believe is, to a great extent, parallel to our own as a Christian Church. It seems to me that we have, according to the Gospel standard of interpretation, all the privileges, all the blessednesses, which, in the verse preceding the text, David ascribes to this happy people. I shall ask you, therefore, to look at these things, that each particular may be an incentive to gratitude. He declares here—

### I. THE ELEMENTS OF HAPPINESS.

First, David accounts those to be *a happy people who are in a healthy and vigorous condition*. The sons have “as plants grown up in their youth. And the daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” It is a great blessing to a Church to have in her midst fruitful, earnest young men, yes! And I will say that whatever their age may be, it is no small measure of a Church’s strength to have her sons about her, who, having grown up and become mature in knowledge, mental force and spiritual vigor, bear fruit unto the Glory of God!

There has been a tendency in the Christian Church to decry instrumentality. But God always has worked by instruments. So far as we know, He always will. When Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive, the gifts which He received for men were men, Apostles, Prophets, teachers, Evangelists, and the like. It is no small riches to a Church to have in her midst men—teachers qualified to teach and seeking to save as well, to become Evangelists—in this way and in any other way, thus aiming to promote the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Ah, unhappy is that church where her sons are all slumbering, where they are all stereotyped in their beliefs and in their several states never make any advance, feeling no throbs of sacred ambition, never caring to come to spiritual attainments, resting satisfied with the lowest possible eminence of Divine Grace, without any desire to advance to a high degree of love to God! Blessed is that Church where her sons seek to grow up and to bear fruit unto God! And not less blessed to have in her midst Sisters who are like those pillars we sometimes see in public buildings—beautifully fluted, carved, polished—the very adornment of the structure, placed at the corner, cornerstones that help to cement the entire structure and bind it together! It seems to me to be one of the peculiar gifts of the Christian Sisterhood to be the means of holding the entire fabric of the Christian Church in sacred love! And though in our belief they ought not to do this by public speech, yet by quiet conversation, active sympathy and the patient endurance and holy tenacity of affection, they may help to keep the Church well bolted together, well barred and banded, well cemented, so that the stones of the Church shall not be detached, the one from the other. Happy is the Church that abounds in Christian matrons and younger women willing to be serviceable for Christ!

If I remind you that this is our happy case, you may, perhaps, think little of it and lightly esteem the cause for gratitude. But were you in some churches where there are not men nor women enough to take the Sabbath school—and such churches I have visited—where there are none, positively none to assist the pastor, where the whole work must be confined to a one-man ministry because the rest of the members do not seem to be alive in the sacred service—if you were members of such churches, you would deplore their lamentable poverty both day and night! God has made it otherwise with us—let us bless His name and, while thanking Him, acknowledge that we are happy to be in such a state!

Next to that the Psalmist describes *plenty as a peculiar pleasure*. “That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.” Bountiful provision of the Gospel! The ministry is to have all things desirable for Christians if they are to be made happy. Unhappy they who can seldom hear a sermon, or who, hearing it, might well have spared their ears the trouble of listening to the words! Thrice happy they who hear the pure Truth of Jesus Christ, even though it is spoken in a rough manner and in a style that has no enchantments for the soft lovers of rhetoric and elocution! If

ever you are laid up a while upon a bed of sickness, you may heave a deep sigh for the privilege you scarcely know how fully to appreciate till you lose it, that you can go up to the House of God! I heard but the other day from one who has been unable to worship with us for months such words as these, "Oh, Ziona, Ziona, the loved of my heart, when shall the day return that I shall again rejoice with the multitude that keep holy day and lift up my song with them, and bow my head in the midst of the great congregation?" By your regrets which you will feel when you are thus laid aside, value the privilege while you possess it—the privilege of having an open Bible expounded and of being able to join with the whole company of the faithful in the worship of the most high God! If at any time the Word has been marrow and fatness to you, then think yourselves happy, yes, rejoice tonight and give to God the gratitude of your souls!

Further, the Psalmist represents *multitude as being a cause of thankfulness*. "That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets." Sheep are always a favorite type of the servants of the Lord Jesus. I cannot, nor indeed, need I, enter into the illustration—you yourselves understand it so well—but the peculiar blessing is when these sheep are multiplied by thousands and by ten thousands. Alas, for the Church when she is satisfied with an increase of one or two during a year! Ah, miserable Church that shall be content if the pool of Baptism is never stirred by those that profess their faith in Jesus or if at the sacramental Table there should be no fresh visitors at the feast of love! Ah, miserable state of religion in which the Churches shall think this to be their fit and proper condition and shall say they are comfortable while the world is perishing and none cares for souls! Oh, what a joy it is when every member of a Church becomes fruitful in leading others to Christ! I know this is much the experience of my dear Brothers and Sisters in Church fellowship here. The greater number, I believe, are striving to be missionaries for Christ. I wish I could honestly hope that all were so doing. It is to the shame of those who are not doing so that they can sit side by side with earnest Christians and not be more earnest themselves! Yet I thank God and take courage as I remember many of you who, by tears and prayers, and afterwards by earnest labors—some of them of the most self-sacrificing kind—have gone forth to bring others to Jesus, so that from a handful of men we have multiplied and shall multiply yet as the dispensation of God's Grace shall be continued to us!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, these may not seem to some selfish spirits any great things to rejoice in. But lovers of Christ, who have some of Christ's likeness in their hearts, will account it a matter for which to clap their hands and indulge in holy mirth when souls are converted! Is it not better to see a sinner saved than to see your purse full or your lands extending? Should it not give you greater joy that Christ is glorified than that anything, however desirable, should transpire for your own carnal

gratification? Let Him reign if I perish! Let the crown sit well upon His head if I am trodden like mire in the street! Let Him be King of kings and Lord of lords even if His poor servant dies forgotten and unknown!

The next blessing mentioned in the Psalm is *the happiness of God's people is their strength*—"That our oxen may be strong to labor." I think here, by oxen, there is mystically and spiritually intended all the workers of the Church, but especially ministers of Christ. Paul expressly calls these the oxen—"You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn." It is a blessed circumstance when those that try to plow any part of God's field are qualified for the work. Whenever I see a man driving a horse with a lead that is too much for it, I thank God it is not my task to have such work as that! A company of people attempting a work for which they are not qualified either by gifts or Grace is an unhappy spectacle. If God makes men strong to labor so that their labor is their delight and the service of God is a very recreation to them, it ought to be and it must be a cause of thanksgiving! Perhaps some of you have been refreshed of late. I know my Sunday school teachers can bear me witness. You have had such visitation from God that teaching in the Sunday school has become a greater joy to you than it ever was! There are, I know, others of you whose service to Christ is by no means misery. You go forth to the battle not with dolorous sounds, but with music in your hearts, with a happy beaming of your eyes, with the precision of saints and with the attendant symbols of victory! Be thankful for this, for it is no small blessing when the laborers are strong for their work.

Then comes *the blessing of peace*—"That there be no breaking in, nor going out." No secession fomented by discord. No heresies invading the midst of the happy family and rending asunder hearts that should be as one. If it should ever be your wretched lot to be a member of a church that has been distracted by schism and discord, you will confess that, perhaps of all things in Christian experience, there is nothing that humbles the soul more, nothing that wounds the heart more and that does more mischief to the inner life than personal jealousies and the party divisions they occasion! It is an unspeakable blessing when God keeps so many hearts in holy union! We so easily divide. Our tastes are naturally so different. There are such varieties of circumstance and of temperament among us—some rich, some poor, some lively and cheerful, some gloomy and desponding—it is not likely that a company of men will all agree together year by year without some jarring, where peace rules and there are no breakings forth of the waters of strife! Everyone ought to devoutly bow his head in a gratitude which he cannot express and say, "Lord, with You there is no breaking in nor going out."

The last mercy which David mentions is that of *satisfaction*—"that there is no complaining in our streets." And can we not appropriate this when, instead of hearing the voice of murmuring on the right hand and on the left—murmuring against the preacher, murmuring against the officers, murmuring against one another—each one is encouraging his fel-

low to do the work of the Lord and all are unanimous together in this sole regret, that we can't love more, can't work more, can't glorify God more? Oh, this makes a happy Church! It is evidence of a people near to God. Theirs is a happy case.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, these things may have in them little interest for strangers, but they will have, I trust, some force, though I put them thus hurriedly to you who have been with us from the beginning and whose history has proven how God has multiplied His blessings. Unworthy of the least of all His mercies we were and the Church was brought low by affliction and sorrow till it seemed as though our name would be blotted out from His Israel and Ichabod was written on our wall—but God turned His hand in mercy upon us! That is 15 years ago. And by the space of these revolving years He has never ceased to bless. We have had no startling phenomena of revival. We have had no excitements such as have passed over different parts of the Christian world. But steadily, as though all had been regulated by an ever-progressing geometry, we have gone on to increase and to multiply—and have been led on from service to service in the name and strength of the Lord God! Not one particle of this is ascribable to human agency, only so far as God may have pleased to use it! The whole of it belongs to God! We then, at least, whatever others may say, ought to keep in the same frame of mind in which we were last Monday evening when we gathered round that Communion Table, instant in prayer, constant in fellowship, continuing to be happy in blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord!

## II. THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

The latter part of the text carries us up to higher ground. Happiness, a practical outflow from the favor which God shows, is traced to its Source, the God of All Grace, and accounted for by the Covenant relations into which He has entered. "Yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Now, Beloved, our God is the Lord, our God is Jehovah! Let me refresh your memories with this Truth of God in two or three of its aspects that you may remember and act in the spirit suggested by them. Our God is the Lord!

*He has revealed Himself to us in that Character.* We knew Him not. We said, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" When we heard of Him in the preaching of His Truth, it only reached our outward ears—we felt no power in our spirits till it pleased God to reveal Himself to us. It was years ago with some of us—it was only a few months with others of you. Oh, I charge you, go back to that blessed day when those blind eyes were opened and when that dead heart began to feel the Divine Light! Oh, then it was you said, "He is my God." You did not come to Him and ask Him to be your God, but He who gave Himself to you in the Eternal Covenant before the world was, in the fullness of time, gave Himself to you by His effectual Grace, making you willing to accept Him and to kiss

His silver scepter! Yes, you have been changed from an enemy into a friend! Your back is no longer toward your God—

***“But now subdued by Sovereign Grace,  
Your spirit longs for His embrace.”***

Now bless Him for that with all your heart tonight!

Moreover, He is your God because *you have been brought to acknowledge Him as such*. Most of you have been baptized into the name, the one glorious name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and by that act you declared to all men that you would be dead to all the world besides and alive only to Christ! You came forward years ago, moved by earnest zeal, and you said, “Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” This work of Grace led you from believing with the heart to confession with the mouth. I trust that many a time since then you have stood in the gap for God when His name has been dishonored by the ungodly and that you have avowed it in your family and business that you are the Lord’s servant. While others have disregarded His Law and oppressed His Truth, my soul follows hard after Him unto shame and derision! And I will follow where my Savior leads! Now you are happy to be able to do this.

Happy is the people who acknowledge God to be the Lord! Be happy tonight, then, and show your happiness by praising the name of the Lord in your heart. The Lord has been your God since then, inasmuch as you have believed in Him. In the day of trouble your soul has found peace by confiding in His goodness. When you have felt the weight of sin, you have got rid of that weight by coming to the pardoning God. Oh, the mere professors do not know what it is to take God as He really is! They take Him to be, what shall I say?—to be anything but their Almighty Sovereign! They take the Lord to be their lackey, to help them in some grievous hour when they can’t help themselves—to be their make-weight, in an emergency to supply a few of their deficiencies. They pick and choose His commands. They will be fruitful enough in duties that bring *them* honor, but they are barren enough in any duties that are sacred—that only belong to God and their own soul. As to outward ceremonies, they can indulge abundantly, but to spiritual religion they are utter strangers! They have never taken God to be altogether their God. Why, that means something more than Master, more than Father, more than King! Oh, do you know what it means? Is He All-in-All to you? That is what Godhead is—All-in-All. Do you take Him to be All-in-All to you, henceforth and forever? Happy are the people that can say that in very truth! It may cause them loss. It may often make their course run contrary to flesh and blood. But if they acknowledge God to be their Lord, so as to give Him entire obedience as His Grace enables them, they are pronounced happy by the highest authority—and happy they shall be, come what may!

We have taken God to be our God, not merely to trust in Him, but, to go further, *to enjoy Him*. Have you not had sweet enjoyment with your God, Beloved, when He has brought you to feel that all things around

you might be shadows, but that God was true? Have you never so realized God in your little chamber that you forgot there was a world of sin and sorrow, and care—and only remembered Him? Have you never felt as you have come down from that mount of fellowship, that when the atheist said there was no God, you could laugh him to scorn, for your spirit had seen Him face to face and your soul had come into contact with the soul of the Infinite God, and you had as truly communed with Him as ever man communed with his fellow, or ever heart had fellowship with heart! Yes, oh, seek this yet again! Yes, let it be your element to live in the enjoyment of communion with God, for those are the happy people who, to the highest degree by inward fellowship, take God to be their God!

And then, over and above that, having enjoyed something of the Lord, we have *taken the Lord to be our God that we may serve Him*. It has been our delight, when we have had opportunities, to try and spread abroad the theme of His great and glorious name. You have chosen to give Him of His substance—I trust you have not held back any of the talent which your Master has entrusted to you. In proportion as any man or woman here answers to the description we have been reviewing—in that proportion shall they be truly happy! If you have but partly trusted and partly communed, and partly served, your happiness may well be shallow. But if you have trusted with your whole heart, leaning your entire weight upon the Lord—and if you have loved with all the power of your passion and communed day by day in closest fellowship with Him—if you have served Him with your whole heart, soul and strength, then happy are you! God declares you such and in the highest degree you certainly shall be such, world without end!

The Believer who has thus taken God to be his God is happy because he has a portion with which he never can grow discontented. Men outgrow their books. Students come to look on the volumes they once valued as being worn-out things. Men outgrow their friends—those that were once their superiors, they can outstrip. Men outgrow their substance and their wealth. The comfort they once had in these things they find no longer. The most pleasant pleasures of the world are the first to expire as men advance—especially as they grow old—that which once contented them becomes vanity of vanities in their account! But no man outgrows his God! No soul ever runs at such a rate that he passes beyond the powers that God has given him! No, Beloved, but the more our capacities are enlarged and our desires expanded, the more perfectly satisfied are we with the Lord our God! He that has this portion has one that can never be taken away from him. The world did not give it and the world cannot steal it. The devil has tried full often to take away from us our God, but he shall never do that. Time may rob us of our health. The world may rob us of our wealth. Sickness may deprive us of a thousand comforts, but there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in

Christ Jesus our Lord! Our inheritance cannot be alienated—it is where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal!

Hence the Lord's people are a happy people because they have a portion they can die with. They have a pleasure that can make their dying pillow soft! And they have riches they can take with them through the last grim river—can pass its floods without losing a single farthing of their heritage—no, can pass the flood and land upon the other shore to enter more fully into the bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him!

I wish we were all such happy people! I wish we were, all of us, happy to the fullest degree! If you are not, you may be! If you are not, if you trust in Christ, you shall be, if you come empty-handed and simply take Christ to be your Savior! He never did reject one, yet, and never shall! He will accept you tonight and put you in the same happy case as others of His people. I know there are some here that are hard to comfort, but the Master, I trust, will do it yet, for He releases the prisoners and delights to find out the hard cases and to deal with them! If there is a dungeon door that no key can open, He delights to come with the mighty hammer of His Word and smash the door in pieces and give the spirit liberty! May He do that tonight, and then we will sing together of His pardoning power. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 103; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.**

This Psalm is a song of exulting thanksgiving, of overflowing joy and praise! Let each one of us read it as speaking for himself. Let it, here and now, be our own personal tribute of peculiar mercy received by each of us!

**Verse 1.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* If things without are not joyous, let all that is within wake itself up to praise my God! He will hear me, even though I speak not. If I keep the praise within myself, He will hear the music of my soul. “Bless His holy name.”

**2.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do it again. If you have blest Him once, bless Him again. Does He not multiply to bless you? Bless Him repeatedly, continually! Then never weary of the work. Repeat yourself in grateful praise.

**2.** *And forget not all His benefits.* Your poor memory has often been the grave of His mercy, but now call for a resurrection and let His mercies rise before your eyes, and let your praises rise with them. “Forget not all His benefits.”

**3.** *Who forgives all your iniquities*—Yes, that is done. Tonight you are a forgiven sinner. “All your iniquities,” and they were very many, have gone from you once and for all! Will you not sing about that?

**3.** *Who heals all your disease*—You are raised up from the bed of pain. What is still better, the Lord is at work with your sinful nature, purging and cleansing you of your corruption—healing you of your pride, your sloth, your unbelief. Will you not praise Him for this? “Who heals”—goes on to heal—continues to heal—“all your diseases.”

**4.** *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Who has redeemed you with His own precious blood and given you a life above all life—the life of God within you—a *redeemed* life! Oh, by the precious blood that bought you, will you be silent? Will you not sing about Redemption? Is it not the sweetest theme to sing about that ever can be imagined?

**4.** *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* Treats you like a king! As a king gives to a king, so gives He His mercies to you—crowns you! What? Shall a crowned head refuse to praise Him who crowned it? No! “Bless the lord, O my Soul!”

**5.** *Who satisfies your mouth with good things.* He might have left you to pine in spiritual hunger, but instead He has fed you—made you to know what is good, to love what is good, to feed upon that which is good—and to rejoice in that which is good! Will you not praise Him for this?

**5.** *So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* Oh, you are strengthened! You grow young again, your faith is revived, your hope is brightened, your love has been stirred up and the smoldering flame begins to burn anew with vigor! Will you not bless Him who restores you after this fashion? Surely, you cannot refuse to praise.

**6.** *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor of the earth praise Him for this! Let the despised—those who are trampled on—exult in the fact that God is the executioner of the proud and the executor of the poor. “He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

**7.** *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* He is a God who makes Himself known! He might have hidden Himself behind His works, instead of which He has given us a Revelation—a Revelation in the Old Testament which made David sing! But you and I have a Revelation in the New Testament—not made to Moses this time, but to great David’s greater Son! Shall we not praise Him for making known His ways and His acts to us in the Person of His Son, in a bright and lustrous manner unknown before? “My Soul, bless you the Lord.”

**8.** *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* And should not this make us plenteous in song? So good a God to such great sinners! Merciful—full of mercy and gracious! Full of Grace, love and kindness! So slow to anger and so quick to forgive! O my Soul, be you slow to murmur! Be you quick to praise!

**9.** *He will not always chide.* So that even you, who feel His chidings tonight, ought to bless Him because they last such a little while. Such are our faults that if He were always chiding, we could not find any fault

with Him. But He will not always chide. He will sometimes. He makes us know the folly of our hearts when we wander from Him, but, “He will not always chide.”

**9.** *Neither will He keep His anger forever.* It is very short-lived towards His people. In fact, it is not anger of that sort which He lets loose against rebels, for He has said, “I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”

**10.** *He has not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Come, will you not praise Him for this? If He had dealt with us according to our sins, we certainly would not have been in the House of Prayer. We would have been now in the house of punishment! We would have been driven from His Presence instead of being invited to seek His face! “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

**11.** *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Sing loud, then, and praise Him greatly, for His mercy is so great!—

**“Loud as His thunders shout His praise,  
And sound it lofty at His Throne!”**

What music can be equal to such mercy as this?—“As high as the Heaven is above the earth.” Surely, the best music our lips can give, and better than that, should be offered to Him!

**12.** *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Oh, what a mercy this is! In the third verse, you see, He gave us the note upon which here, in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse, He enlarges—“Who forgives all your iniquities.” How does He forgive them? Why, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” They were ours! We could not deny them, but He has removed them—taken them right away from us and laid them on a Scapegoat. That Scapegoat has carried them away—they will never be found again. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Now comes in the next note. The third verse was, “Who heals all your diseases.” This is what He says of it—

**13.** *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* While they are sick in body and while He looks at them with great tenderness, feeling for them, suffering with them—

**14.** *For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.* He knows that our sickness is but a premonition of that death which will dissolve this mortal frame, which is only kept together by a continuous miracle. It is strange that such a heap of dust as our body is, does not dissolve much sooner. That it should return to the dust from where it came is no wonder. The wonder is that it returns not at once—and it would, were it not for that next mercy mentioned in the fourth verse, “Who redeems your life from destruction.” He is singing about that now. “He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.”

**15, 16.** *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone: and the place*

*thereof shall know it no more.* Shall we sorrow about this? No, for we remember that we have another note yet in the fourth verse, “Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.” So He chants that again in the 17<sup>th</sup> verse.

**17, 18.** *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children, to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Mercy for ourselves! Mercy for our children! What a blessing this is—that our father’s Friend is our Friend, and is the Friend of our children, too! As David loved Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake, so does God still look upon the children of His children and keeps His Covenant with them!

**19.** *The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens.* Blessed be His name, He crowns us and we are glad that He should be crowned, too! “Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.” And here we see Him—who it is that crowns us. “The Lord has prepared His Throne in the heavens.”

**19, 20.** *And His Kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, you His angels—*As if David could not do it well enough, himself, and so he called in the angels to help him! You bright spirits that behold Him day and night and circle His Throne, rejoicing with your never-ceasing symphonies, lend me your harps and tongues! “Bless the Lord, you His angels.”

**20, 21.** *That excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto this voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.* Sun, moon, and stars, the hosts of Heaven, and all creatures that dwell in this lower sphere of whatever form you are, burst forth into song and extol Him! And oh, men—the bests that should be the hosts of God—when you are made willing in the day of His power, go forth to praise Him! “Bless the Lord, all you His hosts.”

**21.** *You ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* You servants of His, whether you are wind, and rain, and snow, or whether you are intelligent agents, so long as you are doing His pleasure, praise Him as you do it!

**22.** *Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul.* In the spirit of that, I think, we must always sing our hymns of praise unto God. No, more, our whole life should be a Psalm of joyous thanksgiving and thanks-living!

### **1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.**

In this Chapter the Apostle magnifies the Cross of His Lord as God’s greatest gift to the world and as the highest glory of God’s self-revelation to men! He praises God that the Corinthian Christians have experienced the saving Grace that comes by faith in the sinner’s sacrifice on Calvary. He rejoices, too, that that same Grace has taught them to look forward to the Savior’s return in Glory. But he is compelled to reprove them for some divisions and rivalries that sprang from their glorying in gifts rather

than graces. This leads him to remind them how God had disparaged mere worldly wisdom by saving mankind by the death of Jesus. And he brings all to a very practical application in the verses that we now ponder.

**25.** *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* And yet you will perceive that the Church is always looking after wise men after the flesh. If it can find these, it immediately cringes before them, and asks these learned doctors to teach it something more than the simplicities of Christ. This is the old disease of the Church! May God yet cure her.

**26.** *For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* There are a few such. Remember how the Countess of Huntingdon used to say that she was very thankful for that letter “m,” for it does not say “not *any* noble,” but “not *many* noble are called.”

**27, 28.** *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not—Seem scarcely to have an existence, not worth notice, not put down in the list of existences.*

**28, 29.** *To bring to nothing things that are. That no flesh should glory in His Presence.* This is what flesh always likes to do. Proud flesh we speak of, and all flesh is such. Flesh has a great tendency to swell, to corrupt—it is easily puffed up—but God will not have it so. What is flesh to God? Did not He make all things? Shall the thing formed boast itself against the Former?

**30.** *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* In fact, we have everything in Christ! We have in His Prophetic office, wisdom. In His priestly office, righteousness and sanctification. And in His royal office, in which He paid the price of our salvation, we have redemption!

**31.** *That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* Here is room for glorifying and it is our duty to glory in God. Let us do so more and more!

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

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

# CONCERNING SAINTS

## NO. 1796

**A SERMON PREACHED ON A THURSDAY EVENING  
IN THE SUMMER OF 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“All Your works shall praise You, O LORD; and Your saints shall bless You.”  
Psalm 145:10.***

Do not throw yourselves back in your seats and say, “This will be a sermon for saints and, therefore, we may be excused from listening to it.” Do you not see that the first clause gives you a fair word and a kindly hint? “All Your works shall praise You, O Jehovah.” Through this you may enter, as by an open door, for if you are *not* Jehovah’s saints, you *are* His works and are bound to praise His name! In these days of harvest and full summertime, every created thing appears to praise God by its very existence. Insect and fern, pebble and rippling brook, star and cloud, wind and dew—all reflect the wisdom and goodness of the Most High! Many a man’s works are no credit to him and, even in cases where men have worked well and produced much which is to their honor, yet certain of their works are not to *their* credit, but deserve to be plunged in darkness.

It is never so with a single work of the Eternal—all His works are perfect! He puts no bad work into them, He uses no base material, He never makes up with paint and varnish for grievous deficiencies. Set all His works in the sunlight—yes, put them all under the strongest magnifier—and they tell no tale against Him, but they all publish Him as the best of workers, the grandest of thinkers, the most complete of designers. You may range high Heaven, or descend into the depths of the sea, or dig into the darkest mines, but you will come upon nothing which can find fault with Him. You may break God’s works in pieces and examine them in minute detail. You may pass them through the fire again and again, but tested as they may be, they bear but one witness—

***“The hand that made us is Divine,”***

and that Divine hand is excellent in knowledge and power.

All God’s works also praise Him by a sort of intent—they make praise His glory as of set purpose. We are speaking of the inanimate creation—we say *inanimate*—but in this matter they seem to be all alive to the glory of the Lord! The worlds that roll through space and the dust that dances in the sunshine; the fire bolt that levels the tower and the snow-flakes that dance in their wintry courts; the yeast of the foaming sea, the pollen of the ripening flower and the cleavage of the crystal—all vie with one another in proclaiming the greatness of the wisdom and the goodness of the Lord! Not only are the heavens proclaiming the Glory of God, and the firmament showing His handiwork, but the earth and the air, the sea and all

deep places, the hillside and the cottage garden are all emulating each other in the blessed work of praising Jehovah!

How often at sunset has it seemed to us as if God held His court far away in the west, amid the bright and burning clouds and there the seraphs bowed as visibly as before the throne above! Looking across the sea, when the sun has just been rising in the morning, we have seen the gates of Heaven opened and the skirts of the Lord's robes have been as visible to us as once they were to Moses! At hush of midnight, when ten thousand stars are adoring, earth's stillness proves her to be a profound worshipper. There are a thousand times when Nature keeps her special Sabbaths and in God's temple does everyone speak of His glory!

Awaken, then, my Friend! You are a creature, if not a new creature in Christ Jesus. Adore your Benefactor if you do not know your Savior! The known may be a step to the unknown. In joining God's works in His praise, you may be led to join with Himself. You have never fully and properly attended to this first call—you cannot, therefore, complain if you find yourself too feeble for the second. Have you nothing for which to praise the Lord? Is not your body a specimen of His handiwork? Are not the organs of nutrition and the supplies which are given to them, proofs of His goodness? Your deliverance from fever and a hundred other deaths is something worthy of a song! All your domestic hopes, joys and desires, though they reach not to eternal things and are but draughts from the nether springs, yet they come from the same hand as the higher gifts! And they may lead you home, for the prodigal, who came back to his father, was sweetly tempted there by the remembrance of the bread in his father's house, of which there was enough and to spare.

Yet I confess that there is, in the text, much that is special for a chosen people. It speaks to those who dwell within the inner circle, who, by position, character and privilege are elevated to the highest form of service. Praise is high as Heaven and lasting as eternity—and yet there is something that is better, for it is written—"Your saints shall bless You." Everywhere throughout the Word of God you see a very clear and sharp distinction between those that fear God and those that fear Him not—between the two seeds, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—between those that are living in sin and those that have been delivered from it, and so are made saints unto God. There are *two* peoples and always will be while the present dispensation lasts.

And the difference between them is great and vital. For this reason it must be difficult, if not impossible, to compose forms of prayer which shall be suitable for two conditions of men so essentially opposite. There should be, in our public prayers, as there is in the Word of God, this distinction clearly made and manifested. There is a line which divides, today, between Israel and Egypt, even as there will be a line of fire, proceeding from the Judgment Seat, which will effectually and finally sever between the heirs of God and the heirs of wrath. At the very beginning we shall have to remind you that the text suggests this. We are all God's works. "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves," but we are *not* all "His people and the sheep of His pasture."

We have not yet *all* been brought within the bonds of the Covenant. We have not yet all been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation and, therefore, we are *not* all His saints! Divide yourselves by a Scriptural judgment. “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves.” Rest in no neutrality! Dream not of communion between Christ and Belial. “You cannot serve God and mammon.” You are either *with* God or *against* Him—and the sooner you know your true position, the better. I shall never preach to you as if you were all alike, for I know you are not. Some of you are in Christ and others of you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. I shall not, tonight, forget that I have tares as well as wheat before me—and I shall try to make that distinction appear all through my sermon.

I shall want you carefully to notice three things. The first is, that *God has a people whom He calls His saints*—of these we read in the text. Secondly, *these are placed in the first rank*, for while it is said, “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord,” the saints occupy a special position and are spoken of by themselves. They are put before all others—“and Your saints shall bless You.” Thirdly, *these people render a special homage*. While they join in the praise which comes up from all God’s works, they stand in an inner circle and fulfill a peculiar ministry and, therefore, we read, “Your saints shall bless You.”

**I.** Come, then, to our work. May the Holy Spirit help us! First, GOD HAS A PEOPLE WHOM HE CALLS HIS SAINTS. Who are they? Are they all *dead*? It is supposed so, for the usage of the Popery around us is to call men saints who have been long in their graves, while living men are not regarded in that light. I notice, even among those who call themselves Protestants, a great many relics of the old harlot of the seven hills, and among the rest, this nonsense of dead saintship! Somebody wrote me the other day about his, “sainted mother.” What did he mean? Had the Pope canonized her? Or did she become a saint by dying? Does death, which came in through sin, bring *sainthood* with it?

Assuredly not! If men are not saints before death, they certainly cannot be made saints after death. Do the coffin and the grave bring you this canonization? Does corruption in the tomb create an odor of sanctity? I am sure that it is not so, for it is written, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. And he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. And he that is righteous, let him be righteous, still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Where death leaves us, judgment will find us! You cannot make a sinner into a saint by killing him. He who does not live as a saint, here, will never live as a saint hereafter.

When the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the Churches, he called the members of them saints. They were living men and women of whom he thus spoke! They were ordinary men and women like ourselves; poor in rank, greatly deficient in education and often without house or home. In some respects, they were even inferior to ourselves, for their former conversation had been so exceedingly lax that they ignorantly tolerated sins which, in these days, would not be endured for a moment! I believe that the Church of God at this day, taken as a whole, is better than the Church at Corinth was. For instance, there is no Church that I know of,

worthy to be called a Church of Christ, that would tolerate, in its membership, one who had been guilty of incest. We would be quite sure to deal with such an open and crying crime as that! We have many faults today and they had a great many faults, then, for the Apostle had to write to some Churches twice over to warn them of certain very apparent evils. And yet, for all that, there were saints in those Churches, and Paul was accustomed to address those who were joined together in any one place as those who were called to be saints.

Saints, then, are not people who are dead and buried and are stuck up in niches for us to admire. There are saints, no doubt, before the Throne of God and we, too, are saints here below if we are what we should be—and if we have received that Grace which brings with it deliverance from the reigning power of sin—and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart. These saints are to be met with in our own country. Many persons have a high esteem for ministers whom they have never seen, who labor in exceedingly remote districts. Of course these good men and their churches must be absolutely perfect—a race of saints! Distance lends enchantment to the view! For my part, I love to believe in the holiness of those who are round about me, in the sanctity of my fellow laborers and in the fervent devotion of those who hold up my hands, from day to day, in my work of faith and labor of love.

There are as many saints in England as there are in America. I am not inclined to look to the Plymouth Church, or the Romish Church, or the Greek Church, or any other Church, for my saints—I find them right here in the Tabernacle!—

***“There my best friends, my kindred dwell,  
There God my Savior reigns.”***

It is all very fine to believe in the saintship of the Brethren in the Sunderbunds, or in Cathay, wherever those regions may be, but it argues a great lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit if we do not believe in His sanctifying influence upon the fellowship at *home*! I look for my saints among the Christian men and women who are busy all around me in Sunday school teaching, street preaching and other soul-winning work! It is the pure in heart who see God and I believe it is the pure in heart who see the saints of God. If we were more saintly, ourselves, saints would not be half as scarce as they are!

What is it to be a saint? Some people do not want to know, for with them it is a term of contempt. They say, “Oh, he is one of your saints!” They lay the emphasis on the word, “*saints*,” as if it were something very disgraceful, or, at least, despicable and hypocritical! Whenever I have that said to me—and it has happened more than once—I take my hat off out of respect to the title. I had rather be a saint than a Knight of the Garter! Sometimes I have said, “I wish you could prove your words,” for surely nobody need be ashamed of being called a saint unless he is afraid that he cannot maintain the name. But if you really *are* saintly and men apply the title to you in scorn, wear it upon your sleeve as your honor and make no attempt, whatever, to conceal the soft impeachment! I suppose that nobody would, as a general thing, be ashamed to be called a peer of the realm—and, certainly, to be a *saint* is a far more honorable thing than to

be a Duke! The peerage the Queen can give—but saintship only God, Himself, can give—and if you have that, you need never be ashamed of it!

I have sometimes heard of the “Latter Day Saints.” I do not know much about them, but I greatly prefer the, “Every Day Saints.” Those people who are saints anywhere and everywhere are truly saints! And he that is *not* a saint everywhere is not a saint *anywhere*, for this is a thing that cannot be put off and on like our Sunday dress! *Holiness* must be a part of ourselves—it must be our nature to be saintly. Who, then, are saints? Some will tell us that they are persons who are totally free from sin in thought, word and deed. But where will you find these marvelous beings? I have never met with such! I have seen a few hare-brained enthusiasts who said that they were perfect, but you had only to watch them for a single day to discover their defects. A man absolutely free from all tendency to sin I have never seen on earth, nor have you—I thought we were all sinners and I have not altered the opinion.

I would not think he was much of a saint who did not confess that he was still somewhat of a sinner. I would be afraid that he did not know himself and that his standard of saintship was not as high as it ought to be. When a man is so good that he cannot be *better*, I perceive that, in some respects, he is so bad that he could hardly be worse! For instance, in the matter of pride, he has gone some few degrees beyond Lucifer, himself. When a soul is thoroughly saturated with the belief that it can be no better, it *will* be no better. That holy restlessness which makes a man lament his imperfections and pine after something more Christ-like, is part of the force by which we move upward towards higher degrees of spirituality and Grace. Self-satisfaction is the death of progress and, at the same time, the discovery of falsehood. The very power to become sanctified has departed from the man who boasts that he is so!

A certain great painter had been accustomed to perform great feats with his brush, but one day, having finished a picture, he laid down his palette and said to his wife, “My power to paint is gone!” “Oh,” she asked, “how is that?” “Well,” he answered, “up to this day I have always been dissatisfied with my productions, but this last picture I have painted, perfectly satisfies me and, therefore, I am certain that I shall never be able to paint anything worth looking at again.” As long as a man is dissatisfied with himself, he will be capable of great things. But when he feels that he has attained and is perfectly satisfied—depend upon it—nothing will come of him during the rest of his life. He has lost the very faculty of progress!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if we know ourselves and our God, every idea of our being absolutely perfect will make us sick to the death! We know we are nothing of the sort! Still, we also know that sin does not have dominion over us and that we are holiness unto the Lord—and in this we do and will rejoice and bless the Lord our God. Taking all that into consideration, we again ask the question, who are saints?

Saints, in the first place, are those whom God has *set apart for Himself*. He chose them to be His own portion from before the foundations of the world. He gave them, as men whom He had set apart for Himself, into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the people whom Christ speaks of when He mentions, “those whom You have given Me.” These are the

saints. These, Christ has effectually and specially redeemed from among men, according to that text, “These were redeemed from among men.” And again, “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Whatever the general aspect of redemption—and it has a general one, wide as the race of men—yet it has also a *special* aspect towards those chosen ones whom God has taken to be His own from among all the inhabitants of the earth. These people, being thus God’s own, by His electing love, are, in due time, *called effectually by His Grace*.

“Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Having been redeemed by blood, they are, in due time, redeemed by power. The power of the Holy Spirit brings them out of Egypt’s bondage into the glorious liberty of God’s dear Son. From that day, these people become manifestly saints, a people that live *in God, with God, for God, to God, by God*—a people that do not belong to the rest of the world! “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” “The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” They are a singular people, “a peculiar people.” I have heard it objected, sometimes, “If I were religious, I should be so peculiar.” Of course you would! Scripture says that you would be. “Oh, but I should be one by myself!” Of course you would! “Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” These are the *saints*, then—a people dedicated unto God through His own rich Grace, to live for Him—for them to live is Christ! “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

But who are the saints, again? How shall we know them? Well, they are known, next, by *their holy life*. They are not only dedicated to God, but they are made meet for God’s use by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Forget not all I have said about our imperfections, but, for all that, God’s people are a holy people! “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” A man is described in Scripture, not by his infirmities, but by the general run and current of his life. We say of a river, that it runs to the south, although there may be eddies along the banks which run in an opposite direction to the main stream. Still, these are an inconsiderable matter. The main stream of the Thames is running constantly towards the sea and we speak not amiss or untruthfully when we say that it is so. And the main stream and set of the current of the life of a child of God runs towards that which is right, true and holy—both towards God and towards man.

If it is not so with you, dear Friend, I make very short work of it—you do not know the Lord! You have need to be born again and to be delivered from the power of sin. “His servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” Depend upon it, that which governs you is your king—and if *evil* governs you, then you belong to the Evil One! But where there is Grace in the heart, Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. “Holiness is imputed,” says one. I say it *cannot* be imputed! The *righteousness of Christ* is imputed to us, but *holiness* is quite another term and you never find in the Word of God mention made of an imputation of holiness! That cannot be.

David says, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” These are *actual* qualities, not *imputations*. God’s saints are not drunks. God’s saints are not liars. God’s saints are not dishonest. God’s saints are not ungenerous and unloving. God’s saints are not a people that take delight in iniquity and follow after the wages of evil, like Balaam of old. God’s people are a people that follow after holiness and will never be satisfied till sin is exterminated from their hearts—root and branch! In fact, they will never get to Heaven till they get that holiness—and when they get it—*they will be in Heaven*, for they will awake in the likeness of their Lord! These, then, are the distinguishing marks of the saints of God. “Where shall we find these saints?” asks one. Slander says, “Nowhere,” but truthfulness affirms that there are many of them to be found. They are the ornaments of our households, the pillars of our churches, the delights of our communion and the glory of Christ. Oh, that we might be numbered among them!

Now I want to call your mind back to where we started. Our text speaks of saints, but they are said to be *God’s* saints. “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and *Your* saints shall bless You.” The devil has his saints and Rome has her saints, and self-righteousness has its saints and ceremonialism has its saints—but these are not *God’s* saints. God has His own saints and *they belong to Him*. They are peculiarly and especially His. They are as the signet upon His finger. Their names are engraved upon the palms of His hands. You remember how the Good Shepherd speaks of those who believe on Him—“My sheep”—notice that word “MY”—hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” They are so completely His that they shall be His forever and ever—and they can NEVER be taken away from Him!

**II.** Well, now, secondly, I want you to notice that THESE ARE PLACED IN THE FIRST RANK. And the reason is of God’s Grace and mercy because He has done the most for them. “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord,” and “Your saints shall bless You,” because they are, in a very peculiar and remarkable manner, God’s works! God has created all things, but He has *twice created* His saints. He brought the world out of chaos, but He brought His people out of the land of darkness and of the shadow of death, from under the power and domination of every evil thing—yes, even from death and Hell, itself! For them He worked a creation and a resurrection! You that are His people have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Of you He says, “Behold, I make all things new.” You are, “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The new creation of saints infinitely surpasses the creation of the world. Saints are even placed higher than the angels who are around the Throne of God, “for unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?” But He has said that unto you, so that in the scheme of creation, you rank above all once-created beings, for you are the twice-born, the twice-made. As in the king’s army of old there was a bodyguard that

always stood around the king, whom they called the immortals, so in God's great host there is a bodyguard—His holy ones, His saints, the twice-born, the immortals, of whom Christ says, "Because I live, you shall live also."

But, again, God's works of Grace are not only created by His own power, but they stand in great favor, in a *covenant relation* with Himself. Behold, He has made the covenant of day and night which shall not be broken. And He has made the covenant with the earth that He will no more destroy it with a flood. And He has covenanted that while the earth endures, seed time and harvest, and summer and winter shall not cease. After the same fashion has He made a covenant with His own redeemed that He will not be angry with them, nor rebuke them, world without end! The rainbow in the clouds is the token of the covenant of preservation which He made with all His works—but when you come to the *spiritual covenant*, that Everlasting Covenant is made of God, in Christ Jesus, with His chosen—and with them only! None but His own believing people can be said to be partakers in the Covenant of Grace, ordered in all things and sure—for the Man, Christ Jesus, was the Representative of those who are His own body, His own brethren, of whom He says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me."

The second Adam is the Head of the new race which is born under the New Covenant, not according to the works of the Law, but according to the promise of the Grace of God. Isaac, the happy child of Sarah, the free woman, born according to the promise, lives at home with his father and is heir with his father forever. But Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, born according to the strength of nature, is banished and cast off, as it is written, "Cast off this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with My son, even with Isaac." Oh, rejoice, you people of God, that if there is a covenant with God's ordinary works, there is a higher, better, deeper and more spiritual covenant made with you!

Further than this, God's *most tender consideration* is given to His saints. He cares for all the works of His hands. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without being noticed by our Father. God cares for every fish of the sea—and even such fish as never see the light, but dwell in black pools in the monster caverns of the earth—are not forgotten of Him. But as for His children, what care He gives them! No farmer has as much care for his barn-door chickens as he has for his own little chicks indoors. The Lord cares for all those countless multitudes that wait upon Him, but there is the tenderer care of the Father for all those who are allied to Him by nature and are heirs with Him by Grace. Remember that text, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." There is a special *fatherly* consideration and pity that the Lord has for all His children!

Let us look back and think how God has loved us long before we thought of Him and how He has thought of us when we have forgotten Him. One said to me, the other day, "What will become of Gordon?" I answered, "He is safe enough, I believe, for he has given himself into the hands of God, and He will take care of him." To this the questioner replied, somewhat flippantly, "It may be so but, you see, he is so dashing

that he gives God a great deal to think of and to do.” I did not like the expression, but still, it is exceedingly applicable to many of us, for the office of “Preserver of Men” is no flippant title in the case of the Most High. Even a quiet life at home is crowded with the most spiritual, minute and tender thoughts of God. The Lord’s guardian care extends to *everything* and to every *particle* of everything, so that *nothing* in the whole of life is left to chance, or regarded as a trifle!

And how sweetly the Lord cares for us! He does all so quietly, calmly, perfectly. Martha, you see, cannot go about her little room without making a fuss and complaining of Mary. But the great Father goes about His great house and takes care of *all* His children and never makes a complaint about the greatness of their needs, or the urgency of their necessities, or the repetition of their faults! He “gives liberally and upbraids not.” You who are God’s saints are first in the Almighty’s care. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me,” says David. It is worthwhile to be poor and needy, if for that reason we have more of the thought of God set upon us! See what a special position you occupy, oh, you sanctified ones—not only in creation and in the Covenant—but in the tender care of God!

And what a position you have as to *God’s visits!* “You visit the earth and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water.” But the visits of God to creation—what are they compared with His visits to *us*, His own redeemed? When He came to Bethlehem, He did so visit us that He took our nature and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! And He still wears that nature. God is still Incarnate—

**“He is at the Father’s side  
The Man of Love, the Crucified.”**

To none of His other creatures has He paid such a visit as that! Even now, today, you who are humble and contrite are nearer to God than kings and princes. God, in His visitations of men, astounds us. “What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him?” Yet He will come to your cottage, come to your chamber, come to your sick bed. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” “You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” You see, the saints have the first seats, all along, and they hold them to the end of the chapter—for *they shall be crowned* with glory and honor.

God crowns the year with His goodness. The time is coming when the Lord will cover the earth with the wheat sheaf and with the barley crown—and these shall be followed by the ruddy fruits of the orchard. God shall make glad the heart of man with the varied gifts of His bounty! The earth has its coronation, but what is the coronation of the saints? “You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in his season.” Or, if it is not so with you, you shall behold your Lord coming here to receive you, for He has said it, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.”

There is a glory yet to come to the whole of creation, for its groans and travail will lead up to its new birth. What a zodiac of glory will flame from the new heavens above the new earth at the latter day! But what of that? The greatest glory is for us to be fashioned, as we soon shall be, in the

image of the Son of God—and then to dwell at His right hand forever! Between God and man there seems to be an infinite distance, yet when you see the God-Man, Christ Jesus, you perceive that God has made His creature, man, near of kin unto Himself! God has taken man into the nearest possible degree of affinity to Himself and has illustrated this by varied degrees of relationship. He has made us to be His sons and daughters and, as a corporate body, He has made us to be the spouse, the bride, the Lamb's wife. The Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren! Thus are we child, spouse, brother, sister!

The nearness of our kin to Deity ought to overwhelm us with humble gratitude and intense delight. God has done infinitely more for us than for all His creatures besides. Rise as you may in creatureship, even till you reach the cherubim and the seraphim—even above these stands the Son of God—the Son of Man—and we are one with Him! Oh, the exceeding riches of the Grace and the Glory of God in His saints!

**III.** So I finish by noticing, dear Friends, that as God has a people called saints, and as He has put them in the front rank, **THEY RENDER A SPECIAL HOMAGE** to Him. This homage is true praise and yet it has a certain difference of principle in it, so that it is instructive to say, "All Your works shall *praise* You, O Lord," but, "Your saints shall *bless* You."

Praise is a very proper thing to render to God and, in common with all His works, we do render it. But praise has not in it those elements of warmth which belong to *blessing* God. For instance, you can praise a man and yet have no kind of regard for him. I suppose that when Wellington defeated the French at Waterloo, there could hardly be found in all the ranks of Napoleon's army men who did not praise Wellington. They said, "He must, indeed, be a marvelous warrior to have annihilated such an army as ours." They could not help praising him, but they could have no *love* for him and would, no doubt, have been heartily glad if he had never existed! In the same way, you probably know men towards whom you personally have no warm feelings and yet, when you see their works, you are bound to praise them.

A man is an eminent painter and you exclaim, "His pencil is instinct with life." Still, the man is no friend of yours—you pronounce no blessings on his name. It may be that your feeling towards him is that of deep regret that such abilities should be united with so evil a character. A certain person is exceedingly skillful in his profession, but he treats you unjustly and, therefore, though you often praise him for his extraordinary performances, you cannot *bless* him, for you have no cause to do so. I am afraid that there might be such a feeling as that of admiration of God for His great skill, His wonderful power, His extraordinary justness—and yet no warmth of love in the heart towards Him. Cold-blooded philosophers have written of God as if He were some far-off abstraction—and they have allowed words to fall from their pens, like masses of ice which, when we have dissolved them, have been fragrant with reverence. Such men stand like the Israelites, outside the bounds, and gaze at the fire and smoke of Sinai, awe-struck and trembling.

As for us, it is our delight to come up unto God, even within the thick darkness, and to commune with Him as a man communes with his friend!

Others may praise God, but it is ours, with our whole hearts, to bless His name! “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” Praise is a form of worship in which we cannot attain to communion with God of the highest order—for that we must ascend another step and learn to bless Him! I never read that God praises men. It may be true that in some sense He does so when He says, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” But I do not find the expression used in Scripture. God *blesses* men. Everybody knows that and, therefore, when we bless God, we enter upon a singularly happy fellowship with Him. He blesses us and we bless Him—and herein is communion! I grant you that between the two blessings there is a very great disproportion, but it is the same word, with much of the same meaning.

Again, God’s *works* all praise Him. The lily lifts itself upon its slender stem and displays its golden petals and its glittering ivory leaves—by its very existence it praises God! Yonder deep and booming sea rolls up in storm and tempest, sweeping everything before it—and every dash of its waves praises God! The birds in the morning and some of them all through the night, can never cease from praising—uniting with the ten thousand other voices which make ceaseless concert before the Throne of God! But observe, neither the flower, nor the sea, nor the bird praises with *intent* to praise. To them it is no exercise of intellect, for they do not *know* God and cannot understand His worthiness. Nor do they even know that they are praising Him! They exhibit His skill, His goodness and so forth—and in so doing they do much—but *we* must learn to do more. When you and I praise God, there is the element of will, of intelligence, of desire, of intent. And in the *saints* of God, there is another element—namely, that of *love* to Him, of reverent gratitude towards Him—and this turns the praise into blessing!

Oh, do you not feel, sometimes, as you behold the Glory of God, “Let His name be praised forever and ever”? When you stand at the foot of Calvary, you are not only astonished at the glorious love of God in Christ Jesus, but you are melted down and every beat of your heart is to the tune, “Blessed be His name!” Your soul goes out towards Jesus. It is not merely the sense of what He is, but the sense of what He is to *you*. “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” There is a consequent love and gratitude to Him who gave these benefits, and then there is a desire that you could do something by way of expressing your deep gratitude to Him. You have almost wished that Christ were at your door, hungry, so that you might feed Him. You cannot do it *literally*, but He tells you that you can do it in the person of His poor saints. You have thought, “Oh, that He were at my door on some cold night, when the snow was drifting, that I might open unto Him and give Him the best place at my table and my choicest bed! What a host I would be if He would but be my Guest!” Now *that* is blessing Him—an active benevolence towards Him. It is not merely praising Him, but it is feeling a good-will, a practical desire. If it were possible for you to bestow some good thing on Him, you would rejoice to bestow it. If you could do anything to make Him more happy than He is, if that were possible, you wish to do it!

It is the end and design of our actions which Christ looks at. It is not merely the hymn we sing, nor the alms we give, nor the service that we render—though all that is part of it—but the innermost soul of blessing God is loving Him! It is the love that bows over His feet and wets and waters and washes them with tears—that unbinds one’s locks to wipe those feet—that finds the precious alabaster box to break and pours the contents upon Him! It is that love that is not satisfied unless it can do something to *show* its love—this is blessing Him! Such love thinks nothing of what it does. All its thought is of *Him* and how it will please *Him*. Oh, for a crown to put upon His head! Oh, for a song to sing at His feet! Oh, for a perfect heart, that I might reserve it for Him, alone! Oh, that I had a soul as wide as Heaven, that I might entertain my Lord and Him, only!

No, even that were not large enough! Oh, that I could turn space into a great mouth with which to speak His praise and make all eternity the song and infinity the music! We cannot reach half way to our desire and so we have to wind up by saying, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” Go in, dear Hearts, and sit like David before the Lord, and cry, “Why all for me?” Then go out and talk about Him to your friends—and say great things and choice things concerning Him! Make Him a glorious God in their ears! Tell them there never was such a Friend, or Helper, or Savior, or Father, or Brother, or Husband as your God has been to you! Make them hear it—that you are the happiest of men because you have found the blessed God! Make *all* to know it—that you are the most content of men because you have chosen the good part, by His Grace, which is to sit at the feet of Jesus!

Bless Him in secret and then bless Him with the few that are your daily companions. And if God has given you the tongue of eloquence, bless His name before the crowds and never be ashamed! Tell them that there is no life like life for God; there is no joy like joy in Christ; no riches like the riches of God’s Grace; no Heaven like the Heaven of dwelling forever with Him! Oh, speak well of Him, and when you have spoken your best of Him, then wish to begin again and speak better! And when you have reached that, and said your best things, then say, “These are nothing compared with what He deserves. I will try again and yet rise beyond the loftiest conceptions of the present!”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 145.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—145, 135, 221.**

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# CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION NO. 2695

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 7, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE AUTUMN OF 1858.

*“They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.”  
Psalm 145:11.*

YOU have only to look at the preceding verse and you will discover, in a single moment, who are the people here spoken of who shall speak of the Glory of God's Kingdom and talk of His power. They are the saints—“All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” A saint will often be discovered by his conversation. He is a saint long before he knows it. He is a saint as being set apart unto salvation by God the Father in the Covenant decree of Election from all eternity. And he is a saint as being sanctified in Christ Jesus and called. But he is more especially a saint as being sanctified by the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit which renders him truly sanctified by making him holy and bringing him into conformity with the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Yet it is not at all times easy to discern a saint except by Scriptural marks and evidences. There is nothing particular about the countenance or dress of a saint to distinguish him from his fellows. The saints have faces like other men—sometimes they are sadly marred and furrowed by cares and troubles which worldlings do not know. They wear the same kind of garments as other men wear. They may be rich or they may be poor, but, still, there are some marks whereby we can discern them, and one of the special ways of discovering a saint is by his conversation. As I often tell you, you may know the quality of the water in a well by that which is brought up in the bucket—so may we tell a Christian by his conversation.

It is, however, much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of Him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that in many cases it is a mass of froth and falsehood and, in many more cases, it is altogether objectionable. If it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the Gospel and does not minister Grace unto the hearers. I consider that one of the great lacks of the Church, nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian *talking*—not so much Christian prayer in the Prayer Meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlor. How little do we hear concerning Christ! You might go in and out of the houses of half the professors of religion and you would never hear of their Master at all. You

might talk with them from the first of January to the last of December and if they happened to mention their Master's name, it would be, perhaps, merely as a compliment to Him, or possibly by accident. Beloved, such things ought not to be! You and I, I am sure, are guilty in this matter—we all have need to reproach ourselves that we do not sufficiently remember the words of Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name."

Possibly some will ask, "Well, Sir, how can we talk about religion? Upon what topic shall we converse? How are we to introduce it? It would not be polite, for instance, in the company with which we associate, to begin to say anything about the Doctrines of Grace, or about religious matters at all." Then, Beloved, do not be polite! That is all I have to say in reply to such a remark as that. If it would be accounted contrary to etiquette to begin talking of the Savior, cast etiquette to the winds and speak about Christ somehow or other. The Christian is the aristocrat of the world. It is his place to make rules for society to obey—not to stoop down and conform to the regulations of society when they are contrary to the commands of his Master! Christ is the great Maker of laws, the King of kings and Lord of lords—and He makes His people also to be kings! Kings make rules for ordinary men to obey, so must Christians do. They are not to submit to others—they must make others, by the worth of their principles and the dignity of their character, submit to them! It is speaking too lightly of a Christian's dignity when we say that he dare not do the right because it would not be *fashionable*! We care nothing for that, for "the fashion of this world passes away," "but he that does the will of God abides forever."

Another says, "What could I speak of? There are so few topics that would be suitable. I must not speak upon doctrinal subjects, for it would offend one of the party. They might hold different views. One might be a Wesleyan, one might be a Baptist, one might be an Independent, one a Calvinist, one an Arminian—how could I talk so as to please all? If I spoke of Election, most of them would attack me at once! If I began to speak of Redemption, we would soon differ on that subject, and I would not like to engender controversy." Beloved, engender controversy rather than have wrong conversation! Better dispute over the Truth of God than agree about lies! Better, I say, is it to dispute concerning good doctrine! Far more profitable is it to talk of the Word of God, even in a controversial manner, than to turn utterly away from it and neglect it.

But, let me tell you, there is one point on which all Christians agree and that is concerning the Person, the work, and the blessed offices of our Savior. Go where you will, professors, if they are genuine Christians, will always agree with you if you begin to talk about your Savior—so you need not be afraid that you will provoke controversy! But supposing the mention of your Savior's name *does* provoke dispute, then let it be provoked! And if your Master's Truth offends the gentlemen to whom you speak of it, let them be offended! His name we must confess! Of His Glory

we will continually talk, for it is written in our text, “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.”

Now, then, first, here is *a subject for conversation*— “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” Secondly, we will try to find out *some causes why Christians must speak concerning this blessed subject*. And then, thirdly, I will very briefly refer to *the effect of our talking more of Christ’s Kingdom and power*.

**I.** First, here is A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION. “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” Here are two subjects, for God, when He puts Grace into the heart, does not lack a subject upon which we shall converse!

First, we are to converse concerning *the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom*. The Glory of Christ’s Kingdom should always be a subject of discourse to a Christian. He should always be speaking, not merely of Christ’s priesthood or His prophesying, but also of His Kingdom which has lasted from all eternity—and especially of that glorious Kingdom of Grace in which we now live, and of that brighter kingdom of millennial Glory which soon shall come upon this world to conquer all other kingdoms and break them in pieces.

The Psalmist furnishes us with some divisions of this subject, all of which illustrate the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom. In the 12<sup>th</sup> verse he says, “To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts.” The glory of a kingdom depends very much on the achievements of that kingdom so, in speaking of the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom, we are *to make known His mighty acts*. We think that the glory of Old England—at least, our historians would say so—rests upon the great battles she has fought and the victories she has won. We turn over the records of the past and we see her, in one place, vanquishing thousands of Frenchmen at Agincourt. At another period we see the fleets of the Spanish Armada scattered by the breath of God. We turn to different battles and we trace victory after victory, dotted along the page of history, and we say that this is the glory of our kingdom.

Now, Christian, when you speak of the Glory of your Master’s Kingdom, you must tell something of His great victories—how He routed Pharaoh, cut the Egyptian Rahab and wounded the dragon of the Nile. How He slew all the firstborn in one night. How, at His command, the Red Sea was divided. How the children of Israel crossed over in safety and the army of Egypt was drowned in the flood. Talk also of how God overcame Amalek and smote Moab. How He utterly cut off those nations that warred against Israel and caused them to pass away forever. Tell how Babylon and Nineveh were made to rue the day when God smote them with His iron hand. Tell to the world how God has crushed great nations and overcome proud monarchs. How Sennacherib’s hosts were left dead within their camp and how those that have risen up in rebellion against God have found His arm too mighty for their strength and prowess. Tell of the terrible acts of our Savior’s Kingdom! Record His victories in this world. But don’t stop there! Tell how our Savior routed the devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt Him. Tell how He—

***“All His foes to ruin hurled,***

***Sin, Satan, earth, death, Hell, the world.***

Tell how He has bruised the head of Satan. Tell how death has lost his prey. Tell how Hell's deepest dungeons have been visited and the power of the Prince of Darkness utterly cut off. Tell how antichrist himself shall sink like a millstone in the flood. Tell how false systems of superstition shall flee away like birds of night when the sun rises too brightly for their dim sight to bear. Tell all this, tell it in Askelon and in Gath! Tell it the wide world over that the Lord of Hosts is the God of battles! He is the conqueror of men and of devils. He is Master in His own dominions. Tell the Glory of His Kingdom and rehearse "His mighty acts." Christian, exhaust that theme if you can!

Then, in speaking of the Glory of Christ's Kingdom, the next thing we talk of is *its glorious majesty*. The Psalmist further says, in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse that the saints shall not only "make known God's mighty acts, but also the glorious majesty of His Kingdom." Part of the glory of England consists not in her achievements, but in the state and majesty which surround her. In ancient times, especially, monarchs were noted for the great pomp with which they were surrounded. Thousands of houses would be razed to the ground to find a site for one dwelling for a king. His palace must be gorgeous with riches. Its halls must be paved with marble and its walls set with jewels. Fountains must sparkle. There must be feather beds of the richest down from sea ducks on which monarchs may recline. Music such as other ears do not hear. Wines from the uttermost regions of the earth and all manner of delights are reserved for kings! Precious stones and gems adorn their crowns and everything that is rich and rare must be brought to deck the monarch and increase the majesty of his kingdom.

Well, Christian, when speaking of Christ's Kingdom, you are to talk of its majesty. Tell of your Savior's glorious majesty. Speak of the many crowns that He wears upon His head. Tell of the crown of Grace which He wears continually. Tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs He has won over the foe. Tell of the crown of love wherewith His Father crowned Him in the day of His espousals to His Church—the crown which He has won by ten thousand hearts which He has broken and untold myriads of spirits which He has bound up. Tell to all mankind that the Glory of your Savior's majesty far exceeds the glories of the ancient kings of Assyria and India. Tell that, before His Throne above, there stand, in glorious state, not princes, but angels! Not servants in gorgeous liveries, but cherubs, with wings of fire, waiting to obey His mighty behests! Tell that His palace is floored with gold and that He has no need of lamps, or even of the sun to enlighten it, for He Himself is the light thereof! Tell the whole world what is the glorious majesty of His Kingdom!

But once more, Christians, in speaking of the Glory of Christ's Kingdom, you must talk of its *duration*, for much of the honor of the kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted. In verse 13 the Psalmist says, "Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations." If one should say to you, concerning an earthly monarch, "Our king sits upon a throne which his ancestors have

occupied for many generations,” tell him that a thousand years are to your King but as one day! If another tells you that his king has crowns which were worn by kings a thousand years ago, smile in his face and tell him that a thousand years are as nothing in Christ’s sight. When they speak of the antiquity of churches, tell them that you belong to a very ancient Church. If they talk to you of the venerable character of the religion which they profess, tell them that you believe in a very venerable religion, for yours is a religion which was from everlasting. Christ’s Kingdom was set up long before this world was brought forth—when as yet neither sun, nor moon, nor stars had been created—Christ’s Kingdom was firmly established! I wish Christians would more often talk about the Glory of their Master’s Kingdom with regard to the time it has lasted. If you would begin to talk of the past history of Gods Church, you would never have to exclaim, “I have said all that can be said about it, and I have nothing more to say.” You would need *eternity* to keep on going back, back, back, until you came to God alone! And *then* you might say—

***“In His mighty breast I see,  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”***

Then you may speak concerning the future duration of your Master’s Kingdom. I suppose if you were to talk much about the Second Coming of Christ, you would be laughed at. You would be thought diseased in your brain, for nowadays there are so few who receive that great Truth of God, that if we speak of it with much enthusiasm, people turn away, and say, “Ah, we do not know much about that subject, but Mr. So-and-So has turned his brain through thinking so much about it.” Men are, therefore, half-afraid to speak of such a subject, but, Beloved, we are not afraid to talk of it, for Christ’s Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and we may talk of the Glory of the future as well as of the past! Some say that Christ’s Church is in danger. There *are* many churches that are in danger—and the sooner they tumble down, the better! But the Church of Christ has a future that shall never end. It has a future that shall never become dim. It has a future which shall eternally progress in Glory. Her Glory now is the glory of the morning twilight—it soon shall be the glory of the blazing noon. Her riches now are but the riches of the newly-opened mine—soon she shall have riches much more abundant and far more valuable than any she has at present. She is now young, but, by-and-by, she will come, not to her dotage, but to her maturity. She is like a fruit that is ripening, a star that is rising, a sun that is shining more and more unto the perfect day—and soon she will blaze forth in all her Glory, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” O Christian, here is a topic worthy of your conversation! Talk of the Glory of your Master’s Kingdom. Often speak of it while others amuse themselves with stories of sieges and battles. While they are speaking of this or that or the other event in history, tell them the history of the monarchy of the King of Kings! Speak to them concerning the fifth great monarchy in which Jesus Christ shall reign forever and ever!

But I must not forget to briefly hint at the other subject of the saints’ conversation—“*and shall talk of Your power.*” It is not simply of Christ’s Kingdom of which we are to speak, but also of His power. Here, again,

the Psalmist gives us something which will help us to a division of our subject. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> verses, mention is made of three kinds of power of which we ought to speak—"The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season."

First, the Christian should speak of *Christ's upholding power*. What a strange expression this is, "The Lord upholds all that fall!" Yet remember John Bunyan's quaint old saying—

**"He that is down needs fear no fall;  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble, ever shall  
Have God to be his guide."**

So David Says, "The Lord upholds all that fall." What a singular expression! How can He hold up those that fall? Yet those that fall, in this sense, are the only persons that stand! It is a remarkable paradox, but it is true. The man who stands on his feet and says, "I am mighty—I am strong enough to stand alone"—down he will go! But he who falls into Christ's arms, he who says—

**"But, oh! for this no power have I,  
My strength is at Your feet to lie"—**

that man shall not fall! We may well talk, then, of Christ's upholding power. Tell it to Christians—tell how He kept you when your feet were going swiftly to Hell. Tell how, when fierce temptations beset you, your Master drove them all away. Tell how, when the enemy was watching, He compassed you with His mighty strength. Tell how, when the arrows fell thickly around you, His mighty arm did hold the shield before you and so preserved you from them all. Tell how He saved you from death and delivered your feet from falling by making you, first of all, fall down prostrate before Him!

Next, talk of *His exalting power*—"He raises up all those that are bowed down." Oh, how sweet it is, Beloved, sometimes to talk of God's exalting power after we have been bowed down! I love to come into this pulpit and talk to you as I would in my own room. I make no pretensions to preaching at all, but simply tell you what I happen to feel just now. Oh, how sweet it is to feel the raisings of God's Grace when you have been bowed down! Cannot some of us tell that when we have been bowed down beneath a bed of affliction, so that we could not even move, the everlasting arms have been around us and have lifted us up? When Satan has put his foot on our back, and we have said, "We shall never be raised up any more," the Lord has come to our rescue! If we were only to talk on that subject in our conversation with one another, no Christian need have spiritless conversation in his parlor! But nowadays you are so afraid to speak of your own experience and the mercy of God to you, that you will talk any stuff and nonsense rather than that! I beseech you, if you would do good in the world, rehearse God's deeds of raising up those that are bowed down.

Moreover, talk of God's *providing power*—"The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season." We ought often to speak of how God provides for His creatures in *Providence*. Why should

we not tell how God has taken us out of poverty and made us rich? Or, if He has not done that for us, how He has supplied our needs day by day in an almost miraculous manners? Some persons object to such a book as Huntington's, "*Bank of Faith*," and I have heard some respectable people call it, "The Bank of Nonsense." Ah, if they had ever been brought into Huntington's condition, they would see that it was, indeed, a bank of faith, and not a bank of nonsense—the nonsense is in those who read it in their unbelieving hearts, not in the book, itself! And he who has been brought into many straits and trials—and has been Divinely delivered out of them—would find that he could write a "Bank of Faith" as good as Huntington's if he liked to do so, for he has had as many deliverances and he could write of the mighty acts of God who has opened His hands and supplied the needs of His needy child! Many of you have been out of work and you have cried to God to furnish you with employment—and He has! Have you not sometimes been brought so low, through painful affliction, that you could not rest? And could you not afterwards say, "I was brought low and He helped me"? Yes, "I was brought low, and He helped me out of my distress!" Yes, I see some of you nodding your heads, as much as to say, "We are the men who have passed through that experience. We have been brought into great straits, but the Lord has delivered us out of them all."

Then do not be ashamed to tell the story! Let the world hear that God provides for His people! Go, speak of your Father. Do as the child does, who, when he has a little cake given to him, will take it out and say, "Father gave me this." Do so with *all* your mercies! Go and tell all the world that you have a good Father, a gracious Father, a heavenly Provider! And though He gives you a hand-basket portion and you only live from hand to mouth, yet tell how graciously He gives it—and that you would not change your blest estate for all the world calls good or great!

**II.** I must be brief in speaking upon THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER.

One cause is that *it is the Kingdom of their own King*. We do not expect French people to talk much about the victories of the English. And I suppose there is no Russian who would pay very many compliments to the prowess of our arms. But they will all talk about their own monarchs. Well, that is the reason why a Christian should speak of the Glory of his Master's Kingdom and tell of His power because it is the Kingdom of his own King. Jesus Christ may be or may not be another man's King, but, certainly He is mine! He is the Monarch to whom I yield absolute submission. I am no longer an alien and a stranger, but I am one of His subjects and I will talk concerning Him because He is my King.

Secondly, the Christian must talk of the King's victories, *because all those victories were won for him*. He recollects that his Master never fought a battle for Himself—never slew an enemy for Himself. He slew them all for His people. And if for me—a poor abject worm—my Savior did this, shall I not talk of the Glory of His Kingdom, when He won all that glory for me? Will I not speak of His power, when all that power was

exercised for me? It was all for me! When He died, He died for me. When He suffered, He suffered for me. And when He led captivity captive, He did it for me. Therefore, I must and will speak of His dear name! I cannot help testifying to the Glory of His Grace in whatever company I may be.

Again, the Christian must talk of it, *because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles*. You know how old soldiers will “shoulder their crutch and tell how fields were won.” The soldier, home from the Crimea, when he reads the accounts of the war, says, “Ah, I know that trench! I worked in it myself. I know the Redan—I was one of the men who attacked it.” He is interested because he had a share in the battle. “*Quorum pars magna fuji*” said the old soldier, in the days of Virgil. So we, if we have had a part in the battle, like to talk concerning it. And, Beloved, it is this which makes our battles dear to us—we help to fight them. Though there was one battle which our great Captain fought alone, and “of the people there was none with Him,” yet, in other victories, He has permitted His people to help crush the dragon’s head. Remember that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord and that, in the Last Day, when He gives away the medals in Heaven, you will have one! When He gives away the crowns, you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them! We can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them! It is to our own praise as well as to our Master’s when we talk of His wondrous acts!

But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this—*if he has Christ in his heart, the Truth of God must come out*—he cannot help it. The best reason in all the world is the woman’s reason, who said she should do it because she would do it. So it often happens that the Christian cannot give us much reason why he must talk about his Savior except that he cannot help it, and he will not try to help it! It is in him, and it must come out. If God has put a fire inside a man’s heart, do you think it can be kept down? If we have Grace in our souls, will it never come out in conversation? God does not put His candles in lanterns through which they cannot be seen, but He sets them on candlesticks. He does not build His cities in valleys, but He puts them on hills so that they cannot be hid. So He will not allow His Grace to be concealed.

A Christian cannot help being discovered. None of you ever knew a secret Believer—a secret Christian. “Oh,” you say, “I am sure I have known such a man.” But look, he could not have been a *secret* Believer! If you knew him, he could not be wholly secret! The fact that you knew him proves that he could not have been a secret Christian. If a man says that nobody knows a thing and yet he knows it, he contradicts himself. You cannot, then, know a secret Believer, and you never will. There may be, indeed, some who are secret for a time, but they always have to come out, like Joseph of Arimathaea, when he went and begged for the body of Jesus. Ah, there are some of you sitting in your pews who fancy I shall never discover you, but I shall see you in the vestry, by-and-by! Some of you keep on coming Sunday after Sunday, and you say, “Well, I must go, by-and-by, and make a profession of faith.” Yes, you will not be able to

sit there long—if you have the Grace of God within you, you will be obliged to come out and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized in His name! Why not do so without further delay? If you love your Lord's name, come out at once, and acknowledge it!

### III. Lastly, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND POWER?

The first effect would be *that the world would believe us more*. The world says, "What a parcel of hypocrites Christian people are!" And they are about right concerning a good many of you. The world says, "Why, just look at them! They profess a deal of religion, but if you hear them talk, they do not speak differently from other people. They sing loudly enough, it is true, when they go to church or chapel, but when do you hear them sing at home? They go to the Prayer Meeting, but have they a Prayer Meeting at their own family altar? Believe them to be Christians? No! Their lives give the lie to their doctrines and we do not believe them." If we more often talked of Christ, I am sure the world would think us to be better Christians and they would, no doubt, say so.

Again, if our conversations were more concerning Christ, we, *as Christians, should grow faster and be more happy*. What is the reason of the bickering and jealousies between Christians? It is because they do not know one another. Mr. Jay used to tell a story about a man going out, one foggy morning, and seeing something coming in the fog. He thought it was a monster. But, by-and-by, as he came nearer, he exclaimed, "Oh, dear me! That's my Brother John!" So it often happens, when we see people at a distance and hold no spiritual conversation with them, we think they are monsters. But when we begin to talk together and get near to one another, we say, "Why, it is Brother John, after all!" There are more true Brothers and Sisters about us than we dream of. Then, I say, let your conversation, in all companies, wherever you may be, be so seasoned with salt that a man may know you to be a Christian. In this way, you would remove bickering better than by all the sermons that could be preached—and be promoting a true Evangelical Alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form!

Again, if we more often talked of Christ like this, *how useful we might be in the salvation of souls!* O Beloved, how few souls have some of you won to Christ! It says, in the Canticles, "There is not one barren among them." But are not some of you barren—without spiritual children? It was pronounced as a curse upon one of old that he should die childless. Oh, I think that though the Christian is always blessed, it is half a curse to die *spiritually* childless! There are some of you who are childless tonight. You never were the means of the conversion of a soul in all your lives. You hardly remember having tried to win anyone for the Savior. You are good religious people so far as your outward conduct is concerned. You go to the House of God, but you never concern yourselves about winning souls for Jesus! O my God, let me die when I can no longer be the means of saving souls! If I can be kept out of Heaven a thousand years, if you will give me souls as my wages, let me still speak for You! But if there are no more sinners to be converted—no more to be

brought in by my ministry—then let me depart and be “with Christ, which is far better.”

Oh, think of the crowns that are in Heaven! “They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.” So many souls, so many gems! Have you ever thought what it would be to wear in Heaven a starless crown? All the saints will have crowns, but those who win souls will have a star in their crown for every soul! Some of you, my Friends, will wear a crown without a star—would you like that? You will be happy, you will be blessed, you will be satisfied, I know, when you will be there, but can you bear the thought of dying childless—of having none in Heaven who shall be begotten unto Christ by you—never having travailed in birth for souls—never having brought any to Christ? How can you bear to think of it?

Then, if you would win souls, Beloved, talk about Jesus! There is nothing like talking of Him to lead others to Him. I read of the conversion of a servant, the other day. She was asked how she came to know the Lord. “Well,” she said, “my master, at dinner, happened to make some simple observation to his sister across the table.” The remark certainly was not addressed to the servant—and her master had no notion that she was listening—yet his word was blessed to her! It is well to talk behind the door that which you do not mind hearing afterwards in the street! It is good to speak that in the closet which you are not ashamed to listen to from the housetop, for you will have to listen to it from the housetop, by-and-by, when God shall come and call you to account for every idle word you have spoken!

Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be always on your tongue. Let Him live on your lips. Speak of Him always! When you walk by the way, when you sit in your house, when you rise up and even when you lie down, it may be that you have someone to whom it is possible that you may yet whisper the Gospel of the Grace of God! Many a sister has been brought to know the Savior by a sister’s pleadings that were only heard in the silence of the night. God give you, Beloved, to fulfill our text—“They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” They shall do it, mark you—God will *make you do it* if you are His people. Go and do it willingly! Begin, from this time forth, and keep on doing it forever!

Say, concerning other conversation, Be gone from here! Be gone! This shall be my constant and only theme. Be like the harp of old Anacreon which would never sound any other note but that of love. The harpist wished to sing of Cadmus and of mighty men of wisdom, but his harp would resound of love alone. Be, then, like Anacreon’s harp—sing of Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus, Jesus only! Make Him the theme of your conversation, for “they shall speak of the Glory of Your

Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” God give you Grace so to do, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 137.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.* Babylon was full of canals and rivers. The captive Israelites sought out lonely places where they might be away from their oppressors and might, in the company of their countrymen, pour out the sad stream of their griefs and sorrows. “The rivers of Babylon” seemed congenial to them and they mingled their tears with the flowing waters. They “sat down” as if they felt they were to be there a long while and were not soon to go back to their own land. And they “wept”—not simply because of their banishment and their woes, but also because of the mournful condition of their beloved Zion, which had been ravaged by the Chaldeans, plowed as a field and given over to desolation. Some of these poor captives had been singers in the courts of the Lord’s House which had been burnt with fire. And others had brought their “harps” with them into their captivity, but they could not find any music in their hearts and, therefore, they fetched no sweet notes out of their harp strings. They did not break their harps, however, for they might need them some day, so they hung them up on the weeping willows which abounded by the water. Then came one of the sharpest trials they had ever had—a piece of bitter cruelty on the part of their oppressors who had no compassion upon the poor prisoners whom they had taken from their own land.

**3.** *For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* As no cups except those that were taken out of God’s holy House would do for Belshazzar when he wanted to make himself drunk, so no music would suit these heathen captors of Israel but the songs of God’s House—“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” These poor people were crestfallen and utterly broken, yet their enemies cried, “Make mirthful music for us, sing us one of your sacred songs.” They only wanted to laugh at it, or, at the very best, to listen to it simply as a piece of music that they might criticize, so they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” But the captives could not and would not sing for any such purpose. Zion’s songs were not meant to be sung for mere amusement, nor were her chants intended to be made the theme of mockery and ridicule by the ungodly.

**4, 5.** *How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.* “No,” they said, “if we were to make mirth for the Babylonians, we would be doing serious damage to Zion, we should be traitors to Jerusalem.” So the harpers said, “Sooner than we will play a tune to make mirth for you, let our right hands become paralyzed.”

**6.** *If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.* They said it, each one, for himself—they would sooner be dumb than sing these sacred songs for the amusement of the ungodly revelers who had gathered round them. Instead of a song, they offered a prayer which must have sounded terrible in the ears of those who mocked them. It was a fierce prayer—a prayer made under a very different dispensation from that under which we live—a prayer by a patriot who had seen his wife murdered and his children dashed to pieces—and he prayed thus—

**6, 7.** *If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation!* Those Edomites, who ought to have been like brothers to the Jews, were their most ferocious enemies, and they stirred up the Chaldeans to be more terribly cruel than they otherwise would have been.

**8, 9.** *O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed: happy shall the one who repays you as you have served us. Happy shall be the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the stones.* For these people had gone all over the world, wherever they could, murdering and mutilating. Tens of thousands of little children had they brutally killed, multitudes of women had they ravished, a vast number of cities had they destroyed! They were the scourges of all nations and, therefore, moved to righteous indignation, the Jews felt that anybody who should overthrow that city of Babylon and put to death its inhabitants would be doing good service to the rest of mankind. And, mark you, all this came to pass in due time. When Cyrus turned aside the waters of the river which had been Babylon's great protection, and left the riverbed quite dry, he marched his troops right into the center of the city! And when the Babylonians, to defend themselves and a part of the city, were driven to great straits, we are told by historians that they destroyed their own wives and children, calling them useless mouths, that they might be able to defend themselves a little longer from the sword of Cyrus, so that, literally, it came to pass that the man who had destroyed his own children thought himself happy to be rid of them that he might maintain the fight.

How dreadful is God when He deals with nations that have been cruel and ferocious! Go to Babylon this day, and see what ruinous heaps He has made, what desolation He has worked in that land.

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

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

# HOW “THE UNSPEAKABLE” IS SPOKEN OF NO. 1828

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1885,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON OCTOBER 9, 1884.**

***“And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: and I will declare Your greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.”  
Psalm 145:6, 7.***

In this Psalm David has reached the Beulah land of his songs where we hear nothing else but praise. He begins, “I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.” And he closes with, “My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.” Happy is our condition when the glory of God fills both heart and tongue! Oh, to swim in a sea of gratitude, to feel waves of praise breaking over one’s joyful head—and then to dive into the ocean of adoration and lose one’s self in the ever-blessed God!

The royal singer strikes a high note as he repeats the stanza, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.” We never reach the height of that great argument until we confess that it is far above us and altogether unsearchable. We have not apprehended God if we imagine that we have comprehended Him.

Next David found comfort in the thought that he was not the only worshipper of the Lord and that the praise of God would not cease when he fell asleep in death. He foresees an endless line of praiseful hearts and utters this sure prophecy, “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” But, as if he would not and could not leave the blessed task to others, but must continue his own joyful hallelujahs, he cries, “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works.” Whatever happens, we must, each one, extol the Lord! Whether the world grows atheistic or devout, our duty and our joy are one and the same—we are still to magnify the Lord our God. We do not wish to avoid this profound pleasure; no, rather we would abound in it more and more!

All this leads up to a consideration of the various ways in which men speak of the Lord and His acts when their minds are moved in that direction. All see not the same points of His greatness, neither do they see with the same eyes, nor speak in the same spirit. It is ours, at this time, to review the various orders of mankind, and to observe how the revelation of God to them affects their minds and moves their tongues. There is an as-

ending scale in the four sentences of our text, as the poet-Prophet observes and records the ascending forms of human thought and speech.

I. We begin at the lowest step of the ladder. *"Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts."* We mingle with the multitude during a great occasion of national calamity, or upon the receipt of thrilling news from a foreign land—and we hear THE AWE-STRUCK TALK of the throng. We join a sobered and thoughtful company—they have come together under a common fear and they speak, one to another, of the terrible acts of God because they impress them at the moment. They are of the Athenian kind, desiring continually to say and hear some new thing, and now they have found a novel subject which has the piquant devour of terror. God has been doing terrible things and they cannot help speaking of them—they have overlooked His mercies, but they must notice His judgments, as it is written, "Lord, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed." Not only shall they see, but they shall speak, too—"Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts."

There have been times in human history when this text has been fulfilled with tremendous emphasis. The first men who lived after the flood must have been affected with the solemn memory of the universal deluge. They must have often spoken to one another concerning God's terrible acts, when He drew up the sluices of the great deep and burst open the reservoirs of Heaven to drown a guilty world. They that dwelt over against the five cities of the plain, once so prosperous and rich, withal so luxurious and vicious—they, I say, that dwelt in the neighboring cities must have said, one to another, "Have you heard what has happened—how God has rained fire out of Heaven upon those wicked cities?" Men, after all these ages, can scarcely go that way and mark how desolation rules over the Dead Sea, without speaking in bated breath to one another, and saying, "Here vengeance triumphed."

Egypt was full of this talk, once, when the plagues followed each other like terrible claps of thunder. One peal had not ceased before another blast astounded them! The noise thereof went beyond Egypt and, in many a palace, monarchs heard how Jehovah had gotten unto Himself honor upon Pharaoh. It was as Moses sang, "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which you have purchased."

So was it, also, when the sword of Joshua was taken from its scabbard in the name of the Most High, and Jehovah began to deal out execution against the nations that had gone into uncleanness and given themselves over to abominable lusts. When Israel went from city to city, as the appointed executioner of the Most High, then men everywhere spoke, one to another, of the might of Jehovah's terrible acts, "until their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore."

These are but early instances in the gray old past, but they are typical of like judgments which are scattered throughout history. The terrible acts of the Lord are few, but no age is quite left without them, for the Lord still

lives and He is always the same. He punishes nations in this present life. Seeing that there will be no resurrection for nations as nations, and no Judgment Day for nations as nations, they are judged in time and their sins are followed up by *national* judgments. Have you not heard of the might of His terrible acts that happened to Babylon? Know you not that He made Nineveh to be such a heap of ruins that for many a century it was altogether hidden away from mortal sight?

Have you not heard what God did to the colossal empire of Rome, when it had filled up the measure of its iniquity? Do you not remember how He broke it in pieces as with a rod of iron? No Englishman should ever forget, in modern times, how the Armada of Spain was given as chaff to the wind and that cruel, persecuting power was degraded from her pre-eminence. Men have spoken, again and again, to one another as they have hidden away from the scourge of war, or as they have stood weeping at the graves of their beloved ones slain by the pestilence which walks in darkness. And they have said, "Behold the might of Jehovah's terrible acts!" Men will speak of that side of the Lord's dealings if they are dumb concerning His innumerable benefits.

When God's judgments are abroad in the world, the inhabitants shall learn righteousness. And this is a consolation in times of disaster and death. None of us would dare to desire these judgments—we are of another spirit from Elijah, who, in holy jealousy for Jehovah, His God, could pray that there should be no rain by the space of three years except according to his word. But yet, the thought must have crossed the mind of many a faithful follower of God that atheistic nations ought to feel the rod to startle them into thoughts of God and oppressing peoples ought, themselves, to taste the bitter cup of tyranny. "By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God." "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" Will He not smite the beast and the false prophet and put down falsehood and wickedness? It shall be so in due time!

The least that we can do, whenever these terrible acts are abroad, is to turn them into special prayer and cry mightily to God that men may speak of the might of His terrible acts and may learn to, "kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and they perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." It behooves us, when we see the black clouds overhead, to pray that they may break in mercy upon the nations and that God, Himself, may appear in infinite love, though He should make the clouds His chariot and ride upon the wings of the wind.

"Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts." These things leave a mark and make, for a while, a manifest impression. Such, however, is the heart of man that oftentimes the impression is as when one lashes the water and no scar remains, for it is natural to fallen man to forget God! Sinners pray in a storm and curse, again, in the calm. When the pestilence is abroad, they tremble and adore—but they become atheists when the graves are all filled—and things return to their usual course. When God sends forth pestilence, (and He has of late scourged cities that are scarcely a day's ride from us), let us pray that the scourge may not fall upon our own land. Yet I do remember, when first I came to this city, how

many days and nights I stood at the bedside of men and women dying of cholera. And though it was a grievous thing and this neighborhood felt the scourge very heavily, yet I noticed that infidelity was singularly quiet and that persons who never entered a place of worship, before, began to attend our services.

Bibles were routed out of the dust in those times and religious talk was tolerated. The minister, who was formerly the subject of their caricatures and jokes, was viewed with reverence, for the time being, and his visits were sought for in the hour of sickness. It is amazing how men laugh on the other side of their mouths when God begins to deal with them—how those who scoffed the loudest are the first to wince when the lash falls on them! The boldest blasphemers are the first to cry out when the Lord binds them with His cords. They cannot bear the touch of God's finger and yet they have often dared to challenge His hand to be laid upon them! O Lord, men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts when they are driven in utter dismay to bow their ungodly heads and acknowledge that the Lord reigns!

Dear Friends, whenever you find sickness in a house, or death in a darkened chamber, seize the opportunity to speak for your Lord. Your voice for the Truth of God will likely be heard, for God Himself is speaking, and men must hear Him whether they will or not! Meanwhile, plead earnestly that the hammer of God may only break hard hearts and that the fire of God may consume nothing but that which is evil. Pray that the Holy Spirit may work with the chastisement to produce health and healing to the souls of men.

**II.** Be ready with the second part of our subject, which is this—THE BOLD DISCOURSE. Observe how the one follows the other—"Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: *and I will declare Your greatness.*" After the many have spoken in awe, I will deliver my soul with courage. Come in, O single testifier for God, for now you will be welcomed! When they have advanced so far as to tremble at God because He has begun to smite them, you step forward and declare His greatness! The might of His terrible acts has made them see the greatness of His power—they perceive what plagues are in His quiver and how easily He can draw them forth like arrows, shoot them from His bow—and never miss the mark! They are obliged to confess all this and thus a good groundwork is prepared for something more.

Tell them of the greatness of His justice and how He will by no means spare the guilty. Tell them of the greatness of His Grace and how, in the Person of Jesus Christ, He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. Tell them of the greatness of His fatherly love and how He presses returning prodigals to His bosom and kisses away their tears. Tell them of the greatness of His saving power to lift up men from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people! Speak exceedingly brave concerning the greatness of His sovereignty, how He can create or can destroy. Tell them that, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." Point to the greatness and splendor of His love—how He receives sinners,

how He gives Grace to the graceless and how His Son, in due time, died for the ungodly.

I heard it said of a certain preacher by one who was no ill judge, though a simple countryman, "I have heard many preachers, but I never heard one that seemed to make God so great as that man does." I would like to have such praise, or at least, to *deserve* it, for I think it should be the main objective of the preacher to make God great in men's esteem. To-day, my Brothers and Sisters, the most approved preaching makes much of *man*. Philanthropy, which is good enough in its place, has supplanted loyalty to Jehovah! The Second Table of the Law of God is put before the First and, in that position, it genders idolatry—the worship of *man*—which is only a form of self-adoration. All divinity is now to be shaped according to man and from man's point of view. And men are to think out their theology and not take it from God's mouth, or from the Book inspired by the Spirit of God.

Men are such wonderful beings in this 19<sup>th</sup> Century that we are called upon to tone down the Gospel to "the spirit of the age"—that is, to the fashions and the follies of human thought, as they vary from day to day! This, by God's help, we will never do—no, not by one diluting drop, nor by the splitting of a hair! What have I to do with suiting the 19<sup>th</sup> Century any more than the 9<sup>th</sup> Century? We have to do with the Immutable God and with the fixed Truths which He has revealed to us! Having taken our foothold upon the Rock, we shall not stir from it, by God's help, while there is breath in our body. Yet so it is—man has made *man* his god and Jehovah is dethroned in his thoughts. I believe in God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—if there is another god, newly come up, let those worship him who will—my resolve is to always magnify the stern God of the Old Testament, the loving God of the New Testament!

Time may yet come when men will hear the old Gospel once more, but whether they do or not, I will declare Jehovah's greatness! There are many shifts and changes, but if we stand still and bide our time, the current which runs this way, today, will set in an opposite direction tomorrow! And if it should not do so, what is that to us? We are not accountable for popular opinion, but only for our own loyalty to the Truth of God! He who is faithful to his God and declares His greatness in this evil time, shall be accepted as a faithful servant in the day of the last account. Of course he will be stigmatized, today, as, "behind the times," and be little esteemed by those who deem themselves cultured and advanced, but of this he may make small account.

Thus I have taken you over two of the sentences. I have shown you an awe-struck people talking together of God's terrible acts and then the child of God coming in with his personal testimony, saying, "I will declare Your greatness."

**III.** In the third sentence you see a company of godly people together and in their talk you mark THE GRATEFUL OUTPOURING of thankful spirits. "*They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.*"

The Hebrew word has something to do with bubbling up—it means they shall overflow, they shall gush with the memory of Your great goodness—and in handling this sentence I should like to dwell only upon that meta-

phor. A Christian man in reference to the goodness of God to him should resemble a springing well. There should always be fresh matter from him upon that blessed subject—"the memory of Your great goodness." Did you ever tell the story of your life to the fullest to anybody? Did you ever write it? I am sometimes not a little amused, certainly not surprised, when I get, as I did this week, a letter upon foolscap [large sheet of paper measuring 13 by 6 inches]—both sides, 24 pages—all filled up with the story of a man I never saw, who lives far away in the backwoods. Nothing will do but he must tell somebody or other what God has done for him and he has selected me to be the receiver of the narrative!

He has only followed the example of many others. I regret that so many of these autobiographies come to me, for such good things ought to be a little more evenly distributed. I have scarcely the time to get through that length of writing and, having so many other epistles, it is possible that I am not as grateful for this one as I ought to be. But it is a good theme of which we cannot weary. I would encourage all Believers to abundantly utter what they remember of the Lord's love—and if they cannot tell it *viva voce*, they must write it. You need not send *me* the manuscript—but do not let it be lost. Tell your friends the happy tale of Jesus and His love!—

**"Oh, bless the Lord, my Soul,  
Nor let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in unthankfulness,  
And without praises die."**

I like the instinct (and I think it is always an instinct of a child of God) that makes a man feel, "I must tell what the Lord has done for me."

They shall *abundantly* utter, they shall gush, they shall overflow with the memory of Your great goodness. Now, if somebody could give you all his time to listen to you about what God has done for you, could you not keep on forever? I was about to blunder and say I could keep on forever, and then begin again! I feel like David, when he said that he would praise God's name forever and then said, "and ever," as if he could spend two "forevers" in God's praise. We can never exhaust it. We may tell it forever and yet it shall remain untold. It is so fresh, so new, that no fountain can excel it.

See, too, how *freely* a true testimony of holy experience is given out by grateful Believers. It is refreshing to yourself to proclaim it. Fountains never grudge their streams—they sparkle and they flash, their crystal diamonds glitter in the sunlight—they are things of beauty and joys forever. Even so it is a holy recreation to let our gratitude well up and overflow to the praise of God. Is it not a refreshment to those who come within the sound of it? Oftentimes you might relieve a Brother's woe if you told him how God relieved you. There may be sitting in your own pew some person with a very heavy heart whom you could readily relieve if your tongue were not frost-bitten. Oh, that out of the midst of your soul would flow rivers of living water! Child of God, you may be carrying in your bosom that key of Doubting Castle which will open every door and will not only let *you* out of it, but your companion in tribulation, too, so that the two of you shall come forth and fairly escape from the giant by the use of the key!

They shall abundantly utter, they shall overflow with the memory of Your great goodness, O Lord! Does not this imply a measure of *continuance*? Let us *now* praise the Lord. Use your memory at this hour. Go over your life story. You have not kept a diary. I suppose not, I almost hope not, for such daily records are apt to grow stilted. People feel that they must put *something* down every day and, perhaps, they write the most when they have least to say. But, at any rate, in your *memory* you ought to retain the recollection of the Lord's deeds of love and Grace to you—and you should utter them as they come fresh to your memory at this moment.

Such utterances would help us in reference to the former sentences of the text. When men are speaking of the terrible acts of God with bated breath, then you come in and say, "But He is good! These acts of judgment are few and far between. It is not often that we have a thunderstorm. What soft, bright mornings; what clear days; what dewy evenings we have and only now and then a tempest!" Tell them of God's great goodness. And when, at other times you have declared His greatness, it will be wise to change the strain and soften down the terror of His grandeur by speaking of the majesty of His love. I do not think you should abundantly utter His terrible acts—you need not abundantly utter His greatness, but you may dwell with peculiar emphasis, freeness and fullness upon His *goodness*—His goodness to you! This third rung of our ladder is a golden one and I am loath to leave it, for it is my joy to utter the memory of the Lord's great goodness to me.

**IV.** And now, you see, all the while it has been *talk*, but now, in the fourth part, we rise a stage higher, for we come to *singing*. Listen to THE SELECT SONG. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and *shall sing of Your righteousness*."

When good men talk of God, they soon find that the tongue leaps with liberty, for the strings that held it are broken. Then they cannot be satisfied with talking to men—they must rise to something better and talk with God in holy song. "They shall sing." Singing is the language of joy, the special vehicle of praise, the chosen speech of Heaven! Singing is language married to music, words winged with melody. Verily the Lord's redeemed may well have much of it, for it every way becomes their state and their prospects. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord."

But is not this a very singular text? Do you not wonder at the subject of their song? "They shall sing of Your righteousness." You remember in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, David says, "My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness"? That is a strange theme. Why didn't he say, "They shall sing of the memory of Your great goodness"? Certainly that is a choice topic for song, but yet the more select, the higher subject for music, is the *righteousness* of God. Is it not a singular choice? Probably a large part of my audience will not understand how it can be regarded as a joyful subject. The righteousness of God is a theme of terror to many—they wish He were not righteous! He will by no means spare the guilty, but will hold His plummet to every bowing wall and tottering fence. And His hail shall sweep away all the refuges of lies! And because of this, men dread the Lord and turn away from Him! And yet, you see, there are hearts that can sing of His

righteousness and who, having other themes, having God's terrible acts, having God's greatness, having God's goodness to sing of, yet prefer this for their song—"They shall sing of Your righteousness."

What is there to sing about in this?

Before I answer that question, I want you to notice how this subject of God's righteousness is put and how it is connected. Let me read you the sentence before it and the sentence afterwards, and you will see how this singing of His righteousness is, so to speak, sandwiched in between two other themes. Look, now—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, *and shall sing of Your righteousness*. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy." Here are two cakes of honey and my text is put between them. Here is a blessed supper for you at this hour if you do but know how to feed upon it! Between the two testimonies of goodness and of Grace comes in this of righteousness—and I greatly delight in the thought that the great subject of song, here, is a righteousness which is encompassed about with goodness—a righteousness which does not hinder compassion!

This righteousness is surrounded by mercy and, therefore, the mercy is not unrighteous, but is strictly just. Oh, Friends, the very glory of the Gospel is that righteousness and peace have kissed each other in it—that the sword of justice is not snapped across the knee of mercy, but it is sheathed in the scabbard of the Atonement, there to abide in its majestic rest, never to be brought out again to smite a soul for whom Christ has died! Oh, the joy of getting hold of a righteousness perfectly consistent with the goodness and Grace of God!

What is there concerning this righteousness that we are able to sing about? Just let me enlarge upon it for a minute or two. I count it a very great joy to every Christian that God is essentially righteous. What an awful thing it would be to have an unrighteous God! If the heathen who worshipped Jupiter, for instance, had sat down and deliberately studied the character of Jupiter, as taught to them by their own priests, they would have felt it a degrading thing to be under the rule of such a detestable being as Jove was said to be. A licentious god—fancy that! An unrighteous god who could do what he pleased and pleased to do iniquity! What a horror!

God in His infinite sovereignty is to be admired because it is not possible for Him, in the exercise of His sovereignty, to do anything that is unrighteous! No creature of His shall ever have just cause to blame the deeds of the Most High. He does as He wills and He gives no account of what He does, for He has absolute dominion and none can call Him to his bar—but His will is holiness, justice and righteousness—and His Being is love. I delight to think that I serve a righteous God. An unrighteous God? That were to remove the foundations upon which all things must rest, for, after all, the Character of God must be the basis of our confidence. If He were not righteous, what reliance could we place upon Him? His promises of Grace might be broken; His Covenant might be a fiction; the Atonement, itself, might turn out to be a sham and save nobody—unless the contract involved in it had been made by a righteous God.

He is righteous! Let us be sure of it and sing about it—*righteous in all that He reveals*. There is no Revelation of God in the Bible, or anywhere else, that is unrighteous. A man says, "This is revealed to me, but it is not consistent with the perfect righteousness of God." We know that he sees not the Light of God at all and knows not what he says! There is nothing revealed by God concerning Himself and His dealings with men but what is perfectly righteous "The Word of the Lord is pure."

Again, there is nothing *commanded* by Him but what is perfectly righteous. He has not commanded sin—He has not in, all those Ten Commandments put down a single precept which is contrary to integrity. Everything that He bids us do is safe to do, for it is right and just. If He is a holy Master, so is His service perfect holiness.

Neither is God unrighteous in His *decrees*. We cannot climb to Heaven and turn over those folded leaves, where everything that is, and has been and is yet to be, will be found written by His prescient pen—but there is *nothing* in those decrees which savors of injustice. We may be sure of that. Nothing could come forth from the heavenly court but that which is perfectly right and just. And this makes us sing—we feel right glad that everything can be trusted with our Lord and King. He shall judge the world in righteousness and the people with His Truth. Let Him do what He wills and ordain what He pleases—our spirit bows before Him and cries, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him," for "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works," and blessed be His name forever!

It is the same with God's *doings*. The Lord has never performed an unrighteous act. I want you people of God, especially, to feel this, so that if you have lost anyone very dear to you, you may hold your peace, like Aaron, even if you cannot go further and bless the Lord in the midst of your trials. Nothing harsh or unduly severe has come from the Divine hand. He has not dealt with you according to your desert, for if He had done so, you would be, now, where His mercy is gone forever! Beloved, let us feel that this is a settled point, concerning which no question can be raised. Let us have no quarrels with God! I would not merely say that He is righteous to you, His dear people, but more, that He is invariably tender and kind. That surgeon's knife of His does but remove a cancer. That bitter medicine does but heal you of a disease that otherwise would be your death. Therefore, accept all that comes from God and kiss the hand that smites and honor the lips which upbraid.

And here is matter to sing about. The Lord is righteous in all *His judgments*. You may not need this fact at the present, but you may require it in some darker hour when you lie under a false charge and your defense is not believed. You have been doing your best in your situation, but you are accused of dishonesty and you cannot clear yourself. Perhaps the circumstantial evidence is against you, though you are as innocent of the deed as the Angels of Light. If you have faith enough, you may now sing of the righteousness of God. Some of us have sung of it when everybody has misrepresented us and we have been sustained thereby. It little matters what men say, for they are not our judges. To our own Master we stand or fall! The Lord is righteous and we can afford to leave our case in His

hands—He will defend the right and rectify the wrong. If we have acted with single-eyed honesty and uprightness, we may appeal to His court and calmly abide in His decision. He will execute judgment for the oppressed and, therefore, the children of God sing concerning His righteousness.

But the loudest song and the sweetest is concerning *the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus*. He would not, even to save His own elect, do an unjust thing! Even that His mercy might be glorified, He would not stain His justice. Forth came His Son, His other Self, to take upon Himself the nature of man, that man's guilt might be imputed to Him and that He might bear the penalty upon the Cross. The Cross is, at once, the loudest proclamation of Divine righteousness and the most plain proof of Divine love! The Lord is able to save to the uttermost, but He is not able to retract His declaration, "The soul that sins, it shall die." He must punish, even though He must pardon. It is necessary that the authority of Law should be sustained and, therefore, the Lord will not withdraw from the execution of justice upon the ungodly though it is His strange work and He desires it not. On His Son He has executed justice for all those who are in Him. The Man, Christ Jesus, was the federal Head of His own chosen and He has borne their grief and carried their sorrows. He has finished their transgression and made an end of their sin—and brought in for them an everlasting righteousness.

And now, at this time, I want you to sing of the Divine righteousness, because the righteousness of Christ is yours. If you are Believers, you can joyfully wrap yourselves up in the righteousness of God, Himself! "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." See Jeremiah 33:16. Notice the feminine—it is not, "wherewith *He* shall be called," but, "wherewith *she* shall be called." The wife takes the husband's name—the Church is named after Christ, her Bridegroom. It is a wonderful sentence to be in God's Book—that His Church shall bear His name and Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, shall become the righteousness of poor sinners like ourselves! He is made of God unto us, righteousness at this hour. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us sing in our hearts concerning that glorious wedding dress which adorns us, at this very moment, and shall adorn us in the day when we enter into the joy of our Lord!

"They shall sing of His righteousness." If you do not sing about the righteousness which God imputes to you, when will you sing?—

***"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."***

But I must close, and I want, therefore, to say to you, dear Friends, that I conceive this singing of God's righteousness to be the choicest evidence of real conversion, reconciliation to God and of likeness so God. If we were more sanctified, we should be less tempted to quibble at the righteousness of God. Here is a man who takes down his Bible and he reads, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Can't stand it," he says. It is because you do not fully know the mind of God, or else, ter-

rible as it is, you would say, "It must be right if God determines it." Instead of that, the man assumes to judge God and dares to weigh the Word of God in *his* scales and say, "This does not suit my inner consciousness and, therefore, it is wrong." Is our inner consciousness infallible? Is Revelation a nose of wax to be shaped by our inner whimsies? When a man once alters the Word of God a little, within a year he alters it again!

I have noticed brethren who have began their wanderings from orthodoxy with the life-in-Christ theory and who have now reached the restitution of all things, devils included! Why preachers who believe this last theory keep on preaching, I do not know, for there is no practical reason why they should! If what they say is untrue, they had better hold their tongues. And if what they say is true, their occupation is gone, for clearly, it is only a matter of time and everybody will come right! Let people swear and live as they like—what difference can it make if, in a short time, they will all be restored? As well be wicked as righteous, since, in the long run, one shall be as the other!

I see how it is. God's Word is nothing—these new notions are everything. The modern men blot out what they like and tear out what they please from the Book. Or they lay the Book aside altogether—for they, themselves, make their own bible and every man is his own inspiration and will, before long, proclaim himself to be his own god. But when the soul is brought to know God, it does not question His Word or His doings any longer. It sits down before a great mystery and cries, "I do not understand this! I cannot measure it. Oh, the depths! But what God says I believe. What God does I accept."

Brothers and Sisters, let me not deceive you by pandering to the idle prattle of the times. Men dream and then assert that their visions are the Truth of God. If there is anything of conjecture and of "larger hope," so be it. I may conjecture and I may imagine—but for me to *preach* my conjectures and my imaginations as doctrines would be damnable! It is an atrocious disloyalty to the majesty of Revelation to add to it the maunderings of our poor fallible judgments! The better thing is always to feel as a little child at his father's knee when we are reading the Scriptures—and to ask to be taught of the Spirit. Whatever the Truth of God may be, I shall never quarrel with God! However terrible His acts, if I am unable to rejoice in the Light of His face, yet in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice!

When He seems to spread that great wing and hide the sun, I will go and nestle beneath Him and cry, "It is the Lord, and it must be right." Paul was known to silence those who had objections to offer concerning the ways of the Lord—he did not argue, but he simply said—"No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" "Bad argument," modern thinkers dare to say. Yet it is the best that such people deserve and the best that Inspiration deigns to offer them. The cricket on the hearth is not to be debated with when it questions the sun for shining, or the thunders for having a voice louder than its own.

My Brethren, say, each one of you, unto the Lord, "I will sing of Your righteousness." It is an awful Truth of God! It is a Truth that makes me tremble as I utter it; but I read in the Revelation, concerning those that are tormented day and night, that it is, "in the presence of the holy angels,

and in the Presence of the Lamb." Whatever that torment may be, it must be right. Nothing in the presence of the angels of God can be contrary to their joy over repenting sinners—nothing in the Presence of the Lamb can be contrary to His ineffable love! The Lord shall judge the world by that same Jesus who came into the world that the world, by Him, might be saved. *Love* will inflict the sentence of justice. Nothing with regard to the future of the impenitent can come from God but that which will be supremely righteous. It is not for us to explain to others, or even to *understand* for ourselves, all that the Lord does or is. But it *is* our duty, as His subjects, our pleasure as His children, to bow before Him and adore!

Oh, eternal God, I do not understand You! If I could comprehend You, You were not God, or I not man! The parts of Your ways which You have revealed stagger and almost slay me, but, as I fall at Your feet as dead, my heart cries, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." For the Lord is good and righteous are all His ways. Hallelujah, though the world should perish! Hallelujah, though my soul should die with fear! The Lord shall forever be extolled. My Hearer, when you speak thus from your heart, you are a converted man! There is no mistake about it—you are reconciled to God, indeed, when you thus honor Him!

Alas, many are only reconciled to the half of God, or to the 10<sup>th</sup> part of God! Indeed, I fear that many have shaped a god for themselves and are not reconciled to the true God at all! We want a conversion which shall make us run in parallel lines with the God who has revealed Himself by His Prophets and Apostles—and by His always-to-be-adored Son. So may it be with each one of us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 145.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—179, 245, 116 (SONG I).**

**LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:**

DEAR FRIENDS—Nothing has happened to throw me back and I judge myself to be restored in bodily health and to be gradually recovering physical strength. The mind, also, is renewing its youth, and the spirits are returning to their proper height. For all this I am intensely grateful and I am most hopefully looking forward to return to labor under the Divine blessing. If I could also obtain a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, it would be a far greater GIFT than even life itself! This age needs the Gospel in its purity and power. Oh for help to proclaim it that it might conquer all hearts! Jesus is dishonored by a teaching which evaporates the essential meaning from every doctrine and leaves nothing but the husks of rationalism. May the Lord glorify His own Son by vindicating the Gospel of His Grace in the consciences of men! So prays  
Yours in the eternal truth,

**C. H. SPURGEON.**

Mentone, March 8, 1885.

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

# **THE PHILOSOPHY AND PROPRIETY OF ABUNDANT PRAISE NO. 1468**

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

***“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness,  
and shall sing of Your righteousness.”  
Psalm 145:7.***

THIS is called “David’s Psalm of praise” and you will see that all through it he is inflamed by a strong desire that God may be greatly magnified. Hence he uses a variety of expressions and repeats himself in his holy vehemence. Run your eyes down the Psalm and notice such words as these—“I will extol You.” “I will bless Your name.” “Every day will I bless You.” “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.” “One generation shall praise Your works to another.” “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.” “Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts” and other words of the same meaning down to the last verse—“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.”

David is not content with declaring that Jehovah is worthy of praise, or with pleading that His praise ought to be felt in the heart, but he will have it publicly spoken of, openly declared, plainly uttered and joyfully proclaimed in song. The inspired Psalmist, moved by the Holy Spirit, calls upon all flesh, yes, and upon all the works of God to sound forth the praises of the Most High! Will we not heartily respond to the call? In following out his design of praise, David had spoken in verse five of the majesty of God, the glorious King. His eyes seem to be dazzled by the glorious splendor of the august Throne and he cries, “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.” Then he thinks of the power of that Throne of majesty and of the force with which its just decrees are carried out and, so, in verse six he exclaims, “Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts and I will declare Your greatness.”

Here he speaks briefly both as to the majesty and the might of the dread Supreme, but when he turns his thoughts to the Divine goodness, he enlarges and uses words which indicate the stress which he lays upon his subject and his desire to linger over it. “They shall abundantly utter,” says our text, “the memory of Your great goodness.” Now, our desire, this morning, is that we, also, may praise and magnify the name of the Infinite Jehovah without limit and may especially have our hearts enlarged and our mouths opened wide to speak abundantly of His great goodness. O that in the whole of this congregation the text may become true—“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness”—and having uttered it in plain speech, may we all rise a stage higher and, with glad-some music, sing of His righteousness!

You see our objective, an objective in which, I trust, you all sympathize. Come, one and all, and praise the Lord! Is the invitation too wide? Observe the ninth verse—"The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You." I will not limit the invitation of the Lord since you all drink of the river of His bounty! Render to Him, all of you, such praises as you can. But there is a special invitation to His saints. Come and bless His name with spiritual, inward, enlightened praise. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel. You that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." In your heart of hearts, extol, adore and make Him great, for it is written—"Your saints shall bless You."

Verily this shall not be written in vain, for our souls shall bless the Lord this day as the Holy Spirit shall move within us! We shall speak upon two things that we may promote the objective we have in view. The first is, *the method of securing the abundant utterance of God's praise as to His goodness.* And, secondly, *the motives for desiring to secure this abundant utterance.*

**I. THE METHOD OF SECURING THE ABUNDANT UTTERANCE OF THE DIVINE PRAISE CONCERNING HIS GOODNESS.** Our text gives us the mental philosophy of abounding praise and shows us the plan by which such praise may be secured. The steps are such as the best mental philosophy approves. First, we shall be helped to abundant praise by careful observation. Notice the text—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." Now, in order to memory, there must first of all be *observation*. A man does not remember what he never knew! This is clear to all and, therefore, the point is virtually implied in the text. In proportion as a fact or a truth makes an impression upon the mind, in that proportion is it likely to abide in the memory.

If you hear a sermon, that which you remember afterwards is the point which most forcibly strikes you while you are listening to the discourse. At the time you say, "I will jot that down, for I should not like to forget it, for it comes so closely home to me." And whether you use your pencil or not, Memory obeys your wish and makes a record upon her tablets. It is so with the dealings of God towards us. If we want to remember His goodness, we must let it strike us—we must notice it, consider it, meditate upon it, estimate it and allow it to exert its due influence upon our hearts—then we shall not need to say that "we must try and remember," for we shall remember as a matter of course. The impression being clearly and deeply made will not easily fade away, but we shall see it after many days.

The first thing, therefore, towards the plentiful praising of God is a careful observation of His goodness. Now, see what it is that we are to observe—God's *goodness*. Too many are blind to that blessed object. They receive the bounties of His liberality and are in His care, but they attribute all that they receive to themselves or to secondary agents. God is not in all their thoughts and, consequently, His goodness is not considered. They have no memory of His goodness because they have no observation of it! Some, indeed, instead of observing the goodness of God, complain of His unkindness to them and imagine that He is needlessly severe.

Like the unprofitable servant in the parable, they say, "I knew You, that You are an austere man." Others sit in judgment upon His ways, as we find them recorded in Holy Scripture, and dare to condemn the Judge of all the earth! Denying the goodness of Jehovah, they attempt to set up another god than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who for this enlightened 19<sup>th</sup> Century is a god much too just. In this house, however, we worship *Jehovah*, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and none other than He. In many a place of worship this day they adore new gods, newly come up which our fathers knew not—not like the God of the Old Testament, who, in the opinion of modern philosophers, is as much out of date as Jupiter himself.

This day we say with David, "This God is our God forever and ever." "O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hands." As we find the Lord revealed both in the Old and the New Testament, making no division in the Revelation, but regarding it as one grand whole, we behold abundant goodness in Him! Mingled with that awful justice which we would not wish to deny, we see surpassing Grace and we delight that God is Love. He is gracious and full of compassion. He is slow to anger and of great mercy. We have no complaints to make against Him! We wish to make no alteration in His dealings or in His Character! He is our exceeding joy—our whole heart rejoices in the contemplation of Him. "Who is like unto You, O God? Among the gods who is like unto You?"

We are, then, to consider what many will not so much as believe—that there is great goodness in Jehovah, the God of Creation, Providence and Redemption—the God of Paradise, of Sinai and of Calvary. We are to thoroughly acquaint ourselves with Him as He has made Himself known and we are continually to consider His great goodness, that we may retain the memory of it. If we are willing to see, we shall not lack for opportunities of beholding His goodness every day, for it is to be seen in so many acts that I will not commence the catalog since I should never complete it! His goodness is seen in Creation—it shines in every sunbeam, glitters in every dewdrop, smiles in every flower and whispers in every breeze.

Earth and sea and air, teeming with innumerable forms of life, are all full of the goodness of the Lord! Sun, moon, and stars affirm that the Lord is good and all terrestrial things echo the proclamation. His goodness is also to be seen in the Providence which rules over all. Let rebellious spirits murmur as they may, goodness is enthroned in Jehovah's kingdom and evil and suffering are intruders! God is good towards all His creatures and especially towards the objects of His eternal love for whom all things work together for good.

It is, however, in the domain of Divine Grace that the noblest form of Divine goodness is seen. Begin with the goodness which shines in our election and follow the silver thread through redemption, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the calling, the adoption, the preservation, the perfecting of the chosen—and you will see riches of goodness which will astound you! Dwell where you may within the kingdom of redemption and you will

see rivers, yes, *oceans* of goodness! I leave your own minds to remember these things and your own lips to abundantly utter the memory of the Lord's great goodness in the wonders of His salvation! It is not my design to speak for you, but to stir you up to speak for yourselves!

The point which struck the Psalmist and should strike us all, is *the greatness* of the goodness. The greatness of the goodness will be seen by the contemplative mind upon a consideration of *the person upon whom the goodness lights*. "Why me?" will often be the utterance of a grateful spirit. That God should be good to *any* of His people shows His mercy, but that He should make *me* to be one of His and deal so well with *me*—here His goodness exceeds itself! Why me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord? What am I, and what is my father's house? It is *great* goodness because it visits persons so insignificant, yes more—so *guilty* and so deserving of wrath! Blessed be God that He is good to persons so ungrateful—to persons who cannot, even, at the best, make any adequate return—who, alas, do not even make such return as they could! Ah, Lord, when I consider what a brutish creature I am, it is easy to confess the greatness of Your goodness!

The greatness of the goodness becomes apparent when we think of *the greatness of God the Benefactor*. "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" That God Himself should bless His people. That He should come in the form of human flesh to save His people. That He should dwell in us, walk in us and be to us a God—a very present help in trouble—is a miracle of love! Is not this great goodness? I can very well understand that the infinity of His benevolence should commit us to the charge of angels, but it is amazing that it should be written, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

Oh, the greatness of such personal condescension, such personal care! O heir of Heaven, from the fountain of all goodness shall you drink and not only from its streams! God Himself is your Portion and the lot of your inheritance! You are not put off with creatures—the Creator, Himself, is yours! Will you not remember this and so keep alive the memory of His goodness? The greatness of the goodness is, on some occasions, made manifest by the *evil from which it rescues us*. Nobody knows so well the blessing of health as he who has but lately been tortured in every limb—then for his restoration he blesses Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord. None know what salvation from sin means like those who have been crushed beneath the burden of guilt and have been racked by remorse.

Did you ever feel yourself condemned of God and cast out from His Presence? Did the pangs of Hell commence within your startled conscience? Did your soul long for death rather than life, while thick clouds and darkness shrouded your guilty spirit? If so, when the Lord has put away your sin and said, "You shall not die." When He has brought you forth from the prison, broken your bonds asunder and set your feet upon a rock, then has the new song been in your mouth, even praise forevermore! Then have you known it to be great goodness which thus delivered you. We may imagine what the bottom of the sea is like and conceive what it must be to be borne down to the lower deeps where the weeds are

wrapped about the dead men's brows, yet, I guarantee you that our imagination but poorly realizes what Jonah experienced when the floods compassed him about and he went down to the bottom of the mountains!

When the Lord brought his life up from corruption, then he had a strong and vivid memory of the great goodness of God, seeing he had been delivered from so great a death! It is in the storm that we learn! O praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! If I might have it so, I could wish my whole life to be calm as a fair summer's evening when scarcely a zephyr stirs the happy flowers. I could desire that nothing might again disturb the serenity of my restful spirit—but were it to be so, I suspect I should know but little of the great goodness of the Lord. The sweet singer in the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm ascribes the song of gratitude not to dwellers at home, but to wanderers in the wilderness—not to those who are always at liberty, but to emancipated captives—not to the strong and vigorous, but to those who barely escape from the gates of death. Not to those who stand upon a sea of glass, but to those who are tossed in tempests upon a raging ocean. Doubtless so it is—we should not perceive the greatness of goodness if we did not see the depth of the horrible pit from which it snatches us.

You were almost ruined in business, Friend, but you escaped with the skin of your teeth—then you praised God for His great goodness! Your dear child was given up by the physicians; your wife apparently sickened for death—but both these have been spared to you and herein you see the heights and depths of mercy! Now, therefore, lay up this great goodness in your memory to be the material for future Psalms of praise! Nor is this the only way of estimating God's great goodness—you may estimate it by *the actual greatness of the benefits bestowed*. He gives like a king! No, He gives like a God! Behold, your God has not given you a few minted coins of gold, but he has endowed you with the mines, themselves! He has not, as it were, handed you a cup of cold water, but He has brought you to the flowing fountain and made the well, itself, your own. God Himself is ours! "The Lord is my Portion, says my soul."

If you must have a little list of what He has given you, ponder the following items—He has given you a name and a place among His people. He has given you the rights and the nature of His children. He has given you the complete forgiveness of all your sins and you have it now. He has given you a robe of righteousness and you are wearing it now. He has given you a superlative loveliness in Christ Jesus and you have it now. He has given you access to Him and prevalence at the Mercy Seat. He has given you this world and world to come. He has given you all that He has! He has given you His own Son! And how shall He now refuse you anything? Oh, He has given like a God!

The greatness of His goodness this tongue can never hope to tell and so I ask you to think it over in a quiet hour at home. As for myself, I will speak of my Lord as I find Him, for the old proverb bids us do so. Whatever you shall say, Brothers and Sisters, I have nothing to speak but what is good of my God, my King from my childhood until now. He amazes me with His mercy! He utterly astounds me with His loving kindness! He causes my spirit to almost swoon away with delight beneath the sweet-

ness of His love! Yet He has not spared me the rod, nor will He and, blessed be His name for that, also! “Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall we not also receive evil?” asked the Patriarch.

But we will go beyond that and assert that evil is no evil when it comes from His hands! Everything is good which He ordains. We may not see it to be so at the time, but so it is. Our heavenly Father seems to rise from good to better and from better to yet better in infinite progression! He causes the roadway of our life to rise higher and higher and carries it over lofty mountains of loving kindness. Our life path winds always upward to yet higher summits of abounding mercy—therefore let His praise increase and the name of the Lord be still greater and greater!

I want to urge you, dear Friends, to observe the goodness of God carefully for your souls’ good. There is a great difference between eyes and no eyes—yet many have eyes and see not. God’s goodness flows before them and they say, “Where is it?” They breathe it and they say, “Where is it?” They sit at the table and they are fed upon it! They wear it upon their limbs! It is in the very beating of their heart and yet they say, “Where is it?” Be not blind! “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib”—let us not be more crude than beasts of the field—but let us know the Lord and consider well the greatness of His goodness!

I have said that the text contains the philosophy of great praise and we see this in the second stage of the process, namely, diligent memory. That which has made an impression upon the mind by observation is fastened upon the memory. Memory seems to be in two things—first in retaining an impression and then in recollecting it at a future time. I suppose that, more or less, everything that happens to us is retained in the mind, but it is not easy to reproduce the fainter impressions when you wish to do so. I know in my own mind a great many things that I am sure I remember, but yet I cannot always recollect them immediately. Give me a quarter of an hour to run through a certain arrangement of ideas and I shall say, “Oh yes, I have it. It was in my mind, but I could not recall it at the time.” Memory collects facts and afterwards recollects them. The matters before us are recorded by memory, but the tablet may be mislaid—the perfection of memory is to preserve the tablet in a well-known place from which you can fetch it forth in a moment.

I have dwelt rather long upon observation with the view that you may begin aright from the beginning and, by getting vivid impressions, may be the better able to retain and recall them. We cannot utter what we have forgotten and, therefore, the use of close observation to make a strong memory touching the Lord’s great goodness. How are we to strengthen our memory as to God’s goodness? First, we should be well acquainted with the documents in which His goodness is recorded. A man may be said to keep in memory a fact which did not happen in his own time, but hundreds of years before he was born—he remembers it because he has seen the document in which the fact is recorded.

In a certain sense this is within the range of memory—it is within the memory of man, the united memory of the race. Beloved, be familiar with the Word of God! Store your memory with the ancient records of His great goodness! Drink in the whole narrative of the Evangelists and despise not

Moses and the Prophets. Soak in the Psalms and the Song of Solomon and such Books till you come to know the well-recorded goodness of the Lord! Have His Words and deeds of goodness arranged and at your fingertips because they are in your heart and then you will be abundantly sure to utter the memory of His goodness, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Next, if you would strengthen your memory, diligently observe the memorials. There are two in the Christian Church. There is the memorial of your Savior’s death, burial and resurrection which is set forth in Believers’ Baptism, wherein we are buried and risen with the Lord Christ. Forget not that memorial of His deep anguish when He was immersed in grief and plunged in agony, for He bids you observe it. And as for the Holy Supper, never neglect it, but be often at the table where, again, you set forth His death till He comes. He has bid you do this in remembrance of Him—devoutly cherish the precious memorial!

Great events in nations have been preserved upon the memory of future generations by some ordained ceremonial and the Lord’s Supper is of that kind. Therefore observe well the Table of the Lord that you forget not His great goodness. Look how the Jews kept their Exodus in mind by means of the Paschal Lamb—how they ate it after the sprinkling of the blood—how they talked to their children and told them of the deliverance from Egypt, abundantly uttering the memory of God’s goodness and then after supper they sang a hymn, even as our text bids us sing of the righteousness of God. Strengthen your memories, then, by reverent attention to the historical documents and the memorial ordinances.

Still, the most important is the memory of what has happened to yourself, your own *personal experience*. I will not give a penny for your religion unless it has taken effect upon yourself. The power of prayer! What of that? Did you ever receive an answer to prayer? Did you ever wrestle with the angel and come away victorious? What do you know about prayer if you never prayed? You are very orthodox? Yes, but unless the Doctrines of Grace have brought to your soul the Grace of the doctrines—and you have tasted and handled them—what do you know about them? Nothing certainly to remember! O, dear Heart, were you ever born again? Then you will remember His great goodness! Were you ever cleansed from your sin and justified in Christ? You will remember His great goodness! Have you been renewed in heart so as to hate sin and live in holiness? If so, you will remember because you know something which flesh and blood have not revealed unto you. Let every personal mercy be written upon your personal memory!

I have heard that the science of mnemonics, or the strengthening of the memory, for which I have not a very high esteem, lies in the following of certain methods. According to some, you link one idea with another—you remember a date by associating it with something that you can see. Practice this method in the present case. Remember God’s goodness by the objects around you which are associated with it. For instance, let your bed remind you of God’s mercy in the night watches and your table of His goodness in supplying your daily needs. My garments, when I put them on this morning, reminded me of times when my hands were unable to

perform even that simple task. All around us there are memoranda of God's love if we choose to read them.

The memory of some deed of Divine goodness may be connected with every piece of furniture in your room. There is the old armchair where you wrestled with God in great trouble and received a gracious answer. You cannot forget it—you do not pray so well anywhere else as you do there—you have become attached to that particular chair. That thumbed Bible, that particular one I mean—it is getting rather worn, now, and is marked a good deal, but, nevertheless, out of that very copy the promises have gleamed forth like the stars in Heaven and, therefore, it helps your memory to use it. I remember a poor man giving me what I thought great praise. I visited him in the hospital and he said, "Ah, you seem to have hung this room round with your texts, for everything reminds me of what I have heard you say, and as I lay here I recollect your stories and your sayings." In much the same way we should remember what God has done for us by looking at all the various places, circumstances, times and persons which were the surroundings of His mercy. O for a clear remembrance of the goodness of God!

Memory is sometimes helped by classification. You send a servant to a shop for a variety of articles—she will forget some of them unless you so arrange the order that one suggests another. Take care, then, to set God's mercies in order before you and reckon them up in number, if you can, and so fix them in your memory. At other times, when persons have very bad memories, they like to write down on a piece of paper that which is important to remember. I have often done so and have placed the paper where I have never found it again. A thread around the finger, or a knot in a handkerchief and many other devices has been tried. I do not care what it is, so long as you try and remember God's mercy to you by some means or other. Do make some record of His goodness.

You know the day in which you lost that money, do you not? "Yes, very well." You remember the day of the month of Black Friday, or Black Monday, up in the City. You have evil days indelibly noted in the black pocketbook of memory—do you remember, as well, the days of God's special loving kindness to you? You should! Take pains to make notes of notable benefits and to mark remarkable blessings and so you shall, in future days, utter the memory of God's great goodness! The first two processes for securing abundant praise are observation and remembrance.

The next is utterance "They shall abundantly utter." The word contains the idea of boiling or bubbling up like a fountain. It signifies a holy fluency about the mercy of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are, many of them, idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work to do. May the Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women—but it matters not how fluent men and women are if they will be fluent on the topic now before us. Open your mouths! Let the praises pour forth! Let rivers of it come! Stream away! Gush away all that you possibly can! "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." Do not stop the joyful speakers—let them go on forever. They do not exaggerate—they cannot!

You say they are enthusiastic, but they are not half up to the pitch yet! Bid them become more excited and speak yet more fervently. Go on, Brother, go on! Pile it up! Say something greater, grander and more still fiery! You cannot exceed the Truth of God! You have come to a theme where your most fluent powers will fail in utterance. The text calls for a sacred fluency and I would exhort you to exercise it liberally when you are speaking of the goodness of God. “They shall abundantly utter it”—that is, they shall constantly be *doing* it—they shall talk about God’s goodness all day long! When you step into their cottages they will begin to tell you of God’s goodness to them! When you bid adieu to them at night you shall hear more last words upon their favorite theme!

Very likely they will repeat themselves, but that does not matter, you cannot have too much of this truly good thing. Just as the singers in the temple repeated again and again the chorus, “His mercy endures forever,” so may we repeat our praises! Some of God’s mercies are so great and sweet that if we never had another thought throughout eternity, the recollection of the single favor might forever remain! The splendor of Divine Love is so great that a single manifestation of it is often all that we can bear! To have two such revelations at once would be as overpowering as though God should make two suns when one already fills the world with light! Oh, praise the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, with boundless exultation! Awaken all your faculties to this Divine service and abundantly utter the memory of His goodness!

You cannot praise abundantly unless your memory supplies materials and, on the other hand, your memory will lose strength unless you utter what you know. When you went to school and had a lesson to learn, you found out that by reading your lesson aloud you learned it more quickly, for your ears assisted your eyes. Uttering the Divine goodness is a great help to the memory of it! By teaching we learn—by giving the Truth of God expression, we deepen its impression upon our minds.

Now I come to the last part of this admirable process. When we have abundantly uttered, then we are to *sing*. In the old Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, is the mother of the Muses and surely where there is a good memory of God’s loving kindness the heart will soon produce a song! But what is surprising in the text is that when the joy is described as mounting from plain utterance to song it takes another theme—“Sing of *Your righteousness*.” When the heart is most adoring and selects the grandest theme for reverent song, it chooses the meeting of goodness and righteousness as its topic. How sweet is that canticle—“Mercy and Truth are met together, and Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.” The Atonement is the gem of the heart’s poetry. Do not your hearts burn within you at the very mention of the glorious deed of Jesus, our great Substitute?

Parnassus is outdone by Calvary! The Castalian spring is dried and Jesus’ wounded side has opened another fountain of song! The goodness of the Lord to us in all the blessings of His Providences we gladly chant, but when we tell of the Grace which led our Lord Jesus to bleed and die, “the Just for the unjust to bring us to God,” our music leaps to nobler heights! Incomparable Wisdom ordained a way in which God should be righteous

to the sternness of severity and yet should be good, illimitable good, to those that put their trust in Him! Lift up, then, your music till the golden harps shall find themselves outdone! Thus, we have explained the method of securing an abundant utterance—may the Holy Spirit help us carry it out.

**II.** In the second place, we shall very briefly note THE MOTIVES FOR THIS ABUNDANT UTTERANCE. These are right at our fingertips. The first is because we cannot help it. The goodness of God *demands* that we should speak of it. If the Lord Jesus, Himself, should charge His people to be silent as to His goodness, they would scarcely be able to obey the command. They would, like the man that was healed, blaze abroad the mighty work that He had done. But, bless His name, He has not told us to be quiet—He allows us to abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness! The stones of the street would cry out as we went along if we did not speak of His love!

Some of you good people seldom speak of the goodness of God! Why is this? I wonder how you can be so coldly quiet. “Oh,” said one in his first love, “I must speak or I shall burst” and we have sometimes felt the same when the restrained testimony was as fire within our bones! Is it not a sacred instinct to tell what we feel within? The news is too good to keep! Indulge to the fullest the holy propensity of your renewed nature! Your soul says, “Speak,” and if etiquette says, “Hush, they will think you a fanatic,” regard it not, but speak aloud and let them think you are a fanatic if they please! Sir, play the organ very softly when the subject is *your own* praise, but when you come to the praises of *God*, pull out all the stops—thunders of music are all too little for His infinite goodness!

Another motive for abundantly uttering the praises of God is that other voices are clamorous to drown it. What a noisy world this is with its conflicting and discordant cries. “Lo here,” cries one. “Lo there,” shouts another. This uproar would drown the notes of God’s praise unless His people uttered it again and again! The more there is said *against* our God, the more should we speak *for* Him. Whenever you hear a man curse, it would be wise to say aloud, “Bless the Lord.” Say it seven times for every time he curses and make him hear it. Perhaps he will want to know what you are doing and you will then have an opportunity of asking what *he* is doing—and he will have more difficulty in explaining himself than you will in explaining yourself.

Try, if you can, to make up for the injuries done to the dear and sacred name of God by multiplying your praises in proportion as you hear Him spoken ill of. I say unless you give forth abundant utterance, God’s praise will be buried under heaps of error, blasphemy, ribaldry, nonsense and idle talk! Abundantly utter it so that some of it, at least, may be heard! Praise the Lord abundantly because it will benefit you to do so. How bright the past looks when we begin to praise God for it. We say, “I am the man that has seen affliction,” and we are to fill the cup of memory with gall and wormwood—but when we see the goodness of God in it all, we turn the kerchief with which we wiped our tears into a flag of victory—and with holy praise, in the name of our God, we wave the banner!

As for the present, if you think of God's mercies, how different it seems. A man comes to his dinner table and does not enjoy what is there because he misses an expected dainty. But if he were as poor as some people, he would not turn his nose up, but would bless the goodness which has given him so much more than he deserves! Some I know, even among Christians, are growlers in general and always finding fault. The best things in the world are not good enough for them. Ah, my Brother, abundantly utter the memory of God's goodness and you will find nothing to grumble about—nothing to complain about—but everything to rejoice in! As for the future, if we remember God's goodness, how joyfully we shall march into it. There is the same goodness for tomorrow as for yesterday and the same goodness for old age as for youth—the same God to bless me when I grow gray as when I was a babe upon my mother's breast. Therefore, forward to the future without hesitation or suspicion, abundantly uttering the loving kindness of the Lord.

Again, I think we ought to do this because of the good it does to other people. If you abundantly talk of God's goodness you are sure to benefit your neighbors. Many are comforted when they hear of God's goodness to their friends. Draw a long face and lament the trials of the way—sit down with somber brethren and enjoy a little comfortable misery and see whether crowds will ask to share your vinegar.—

***“While here our various needs we mourn,  
United groans ascend on high,”***

says Dr. Watts, and I am afraid he speaks the truth, but very few will be led in this way to resolve—“We will go with these people, for we perceive that God is with them.” Is it good reasoning if men say, “These people are so miserable that they must be on the way to Heaven”? We may hope they are, for they evidently need some better place to live, but then it may be questioned if such folks would not be wretched even in Heaven!

You smile, dear Friends, as if you said you would not be much attracted by sanctimonious misery, nor do I think you would. Therefore do not try it yourselves, but, on the contrary, talk much of the goodness of the Lord! Wear a smiling face! Let your eyes sparkle and go through the world as if you are not slaves under the lash, or prisoners in bonds, but the Lord's free men! We have glorious reasons for being happy—let us be so and soon we shall hear persons asking, “What is this? Is this religion? I always thought religious people felt bound to be down in the dumps and to go mourning and sighing all their days.” When they see your joy they will be tempted to come to Christ! There is a blessed seductiveness in a holy, happy life. Praise, then, His name! Praise His name forevermore! Abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness and you will bring many to Christ!

Such happy utterance will help, also, to comfort your own Christian friends and fellow sufferers. There is a deal of misery in the world—just now more than usual. Many are sorrowing from various causes. Therefore, my dear Friends, be happier than you ever were. That venerable man of God, now in Heaven, our dear old father Dransfield, when it was a very foggy morning in November, used to always come into the vestry before the sermon and say, “It is a dreary morning, dear Pastor. We must rejoice

in the Lord more than usual. Things around us are dark, but within and above all is bright. I hope we shall have a very happy service today.” He would shake hands with me and smile till he seemed to carry us all into the middle of summer. What if it is bad weather? Bless the Lord that it is not worse than it is! We are not altogether in Egyptian darkness—the sun does shine now and then—and we are sure it is not blown out.

So, when we are sick and ill, let us thank God that we shall not be ill forever, for there is a place where the inhabitants are no more sick. And now, today, if your harps have been hanging on the willows, take them down! If you have not praised the Lord as you should, begin to do so! Wash your months and get rid of the sour flavor of murmuring about bad trade and bad weather! Sweeten your lips with the pleasant confection of praise. I will tell you this, Brothers and Sisters, if any of you shall confess to me that you have sinned by going too far in blessing God, I will, for once, become a priest and give you absolution! I never tried my hand at that business, before, but I think I can manage as much. Praise God extravagantly if you can. Try it! I wish you would say within yourself, “I will go beyond all boundaries in this matter,” for there are no boundaries to the deserving of an ever-blessed God!

Lastly, let us praise and bless God because it is the way in which He is glorified. We cannot add to His Glory, for it is infinite in itself—but we can make it to be more widely known by simply stating the truth about Him. Don’t you want to give honor to God? Would you not lay down your life that the whole earth might be filled with His Glory? Well, if you cannot cover the earth with His praises as the waters cover the sea, you can at least contribute your portion to the flood! Oh, keep not back your praises, but bless and magnify His name from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same!

It will lift earth upward and heavenward if we can all unite in praise—we shall see it rising as it were beneath our feet—and ourselves rising with it until we shall stand as upon the top of some lofty Alp that has pierced the vault of Heaven! And we shall be among the angels, feeling as they feel, doing as they do and losing ourselves as they lose themselves in the eternal hallelujah of, “Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

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# THE LORD—THE LIBERATOR

## NO. 484

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1862,  
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The Lord looses the prisoners.”  
Psalm 146:7.*

WHEN preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offenses within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the Gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the Law beneath us.

Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us. But the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas, what a picture is this of many in our congregations! We preach liberty to the captives. We proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. But how many remain, year after year, in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin? We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in Heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas, their hearts are unused to gratitude. Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found.

Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, “Lord, break the fetters and set free the captives. Glorify Yourself this morning by proving Yourself to be Jehovah, who looses the prisoners.” The little circumstance which I have mentioned fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my daydream I thought that some angelic warden was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me, time after time, as I looked sorrowful, that “Jehovah looses the prisoners.”

What I thought of, I will now tell you. The dress of the sermon may be metaphorical. But my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial Truths of God, and may the Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them and rejoice that the Lord has loosed you.

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called the *common prison*. In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It were useless to attempt to count them. They are legion. Their number is ten thousand times ten thousand. This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here. And those who this day are perfectly at liberty once wore the heavy chains, and were confined within

the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected, notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter.

The mirth was boisterous and stubbornly defiant. The profane were cursing and blaspheming. Others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals and saw sparkling gaiety—their aspect was rather that of wedding guests, than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free! And when I spoke to them of their prison and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, “We were born free, and were never in bondage to any man.” They bade me prove my words. And when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved. It was only my dull and somber mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains.

There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks cried out to me that they were free thinkers. Truly, I had never seen such bond slaves in my life, nor any so fast manacled as these. But always did I mark, as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free! And those who were in the dark part of the dungeon, thought they had the most light. And those whom I considered to be the most wretched and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth!

I looked with sorrow, but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the Shining One. He went out and I knew, for I had read the text—“The Lord looses the prisoners”—I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But I noted that as he went forth, his late bond fellows laughed and pointed with their fingers, and called him sniveler, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all sorts of ill names, until the prison walls rang, and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched and saw the mysterious visitor touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared.

The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad. That they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free forever—emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken. And I remembered that I had somewhere in an old Book read these words—“The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you.”

As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they

had worn before—but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow prisoners, and, oh, how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had, that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake.

At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, “Let us be free.” But no. The more these men pleaded, the harder the others seemed to grow. And, indeed, I found it the same when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the Shining One was felt, our pleadings easily prevailed. But except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger, all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Then I was cast into a state of meditation, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free. For well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love. When I hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison. I grasped the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yes, dainty morsels, fit for princes! How it came to pass that Sovereign Grace should have set me free, I cannot tell. I know only this—I will sing forever, while I live, and when I die, that, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Our gracious God knows how to bring us up from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us His people and keep us so forever. Alas, how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?—

***“Oh, Sovereign Grace, their hearts subdue;  
May they be freed from bondage, too.  
As willing followers of the Lord,  
Brought forth to freedom by His Word.”***

**II.** I asked the warden where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free. But that before their complete jail deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me there. It was called *the solitary cell*. I had heard much of the solitary system and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—“PENITENCE,” and when I opened it, I found it so clean, and white, and so sweet, and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a House of Prayer than a prison.

And my guide told me that indeed, so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast, made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners in it were likely to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was that in Heaven there would be no cell of penitence.

Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms. Peter also wept bitterly here. And the woman who was a sinner, here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation. But he learned that he must be saved alone, if saved at all. He had been accustomed previously to go up to the House of God in company and thought that going there was enough.

But now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threat smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old Book I quoted just now—"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. And the land shall mourn, every family *apart*. The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone, and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned a lot, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances, some words of unbelief. Alas, were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. 'Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell, I say it had been an oratory for Heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly and destroyed his soul eternally.

How foolish his fears were, all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it, there was a Shining One standing ready outside who would open the door at once! Yes, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called *faith* and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin and cleansed him forever from all iniquity.

So I spoke to this penitent and bade him trust in the blood and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner. But this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, it is the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

**III.** I passed away from that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I stopped at another. This, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warden com-

ing and when he opened the door for me, it grated horribly upon its hinges and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into *the silent cell*. The wretch confined here was one who said he *could not pray*. If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—"I would, but cannot, pray. I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word. My guilt has smitten me dumb."

Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing. All was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary sighs and groans. Verily, thought I, this is a sad and singular case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself, I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried ever so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer. I dared not pray, I was too guilty. And when I did dare to pray, it was hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard.

"No," I said, "it is presumption. I must not plead with Him." And when at times I would have prayed, I could not. Something choked all utterance, and my spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray. I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning, you will remember it and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But do you know there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it, he might have made his escape at once.

This was the key, and these were the words thereon—"The Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary: from Heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner. To loose those that are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans. If he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from Heaven, with this purpose, that He may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free. For though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it *has* prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me.

I reminded him that the Book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak. And I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly, too. I turned to the Book of Jonah and read him these words—"Out of the belly of Hell cried I and You heard me." I quoted the words of Elijah, "Go again seven times." I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God's ear. Besides, I told him, we have an Advocate with the Father who opens His mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have One to speak for them.

I told the man that whether he could pray or not, he was bid to look at the blood marks over his door. I told him that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony, that the Lord Je-

sus is, “able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him,” that He waited to be gracious and was a God ready to pardon. But after all, I felt that the Lord, alone, must loose His prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

**IV.** We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me, and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! It was dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called *the cell of ignorance*. I groped as a blind man gropes for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marveled why this place should be darker than the rest. Then I recollected to have read of some that sat, “in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.”

I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light *to him*. I felt for one of the ancient light holes but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness. I touched it with my hand, and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the Doctrines of Grace which had greatly perplexed him. It was called Election.

He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen His people, and he felt persuaded that He had not chosen *him*, he was lost forever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags—filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening—caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of Divine Sovereignty.

As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, “It is a mercy for you that there is such a doctrine as election! For if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for you. Salvation must either be by God’s will or by man’s merit. If it were by man’s merit, you would never be saved. But since it is by God’s will, and He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, there is no reason why He should not have mercy on you—even though you may be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile He bids you believe in His Son, Jesus, and gives you His Divine Word for it, that, “Him that comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.”

The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—The Fall—or *Human Depravity*. The man said, “Oh, there is no hope for me, for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceedingly vile. There is no hope for me.” I pulled the rags out of this window, too, and I said to him, “Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you *are* lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty.”

He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master’s glory by its means. It was

the doctrine of *Particular Redemption*. “Ah,” said he, “suppose Christ has not redeemed me with His precious blood! Suppose He has never bought *me* with His death!” I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskillful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleans *us* from all sin.” “Ah,” he said, “but suppose I am not one of the ‘us?’” I told him that he that believes and trusts Christ is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved.

I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence. But a ransom which did redeem all Believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them. The Truths of God had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the Doctrines of Grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened, and the man could see, he saw written over the door, “Believe and live!” And in the new light which he had found, he trusted his Lord and Savior and walked out free, marveling that he had been so long a slave.

I marveled, not but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life. Ignorant souls, who know not the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well. Be diligent in attending upon a Free Grace ministry—labor after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation and it will often please God that when you come to understand His Truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by the Truth that, “the Lord looses the prisoners.”

**V.** I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle and a huge cannon ball fixed to it—a military punishment, they said, for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This *clog of habit* troubled the prisoner much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavoring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence on it.

But these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warden told me that this was the chain of *habit* and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off, and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison. The door of *unbelief* must be opened, and they must trust in the one great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors. After that, upon the anvil of Divine Grace, with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off.

I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning Grace. He had previously labored to escape from his drunkenness but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood, and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian, he could no more love his cups. At

one stroke of the hammer, the ball was gone forever. Another was a swearer. He knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ—and then he never blasphemed again—for that foul thing was abhorred.

I noticed some and methinks I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away—yet on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things, we have to say, “Except these bonds.” Once we were chained with both hands together. The Divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or two are left hanging there. Ah, often has that link made me cry out—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. “When I would do good, evil is present with me.”

O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh! Would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with Heaven’s glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect forever! There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief, and coming to Christ. Then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence, though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the staple. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but it is not in the staple now.

The bird can fly—though there is a remnant of its cord about its foot—it mounts up to Heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must loose prisoners from their evil habits. He can do it! A drop of Jesus’ blood can eat the iron away and the file of His agonies can cut through the chain of long acquired sins and make us free. “The Lord looses the prisoners.”

**VI.** I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labor for them. In the prison I went to see in my daydream, there was a *hard labor room*. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people. They held their heads very high and would not bend. They were birds with fine feathers and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined. But being in confinement, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty.

They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could, by-and-by, set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a treadmill. They were going to the stars, they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might! But though they had been laboring for years and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies.

Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs. They were turning wheels and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing, they worked on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company labored to build houses of sand. And when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded—but they renewed their efforts—for

they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished, they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavoring to make wedding garments out of fig leaves, by sewing them together. But the fig leaves were of a sort that were shriveled every night, so that they had to begin again, the next morning, their hopeless toil.

Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well. The veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked on without result. As they labored, like Samson, when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thronged whip called *the Law*, the terrible Law—each lash being a Commandment—and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners. Yet still they kept on—work, work, work—and would not turn to the door of Divine Grace to find escape.

I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies. And there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit. Then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a Shining Spirit and carried out of the prison and made free forever.

Then I thought within myself, “Surely, surely, these are proud self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by Divine Grace, therefore He brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.” I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison to bring them to Jesus—yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage—and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—“By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” And to these other words, “By Grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

I had seen enough of that prison, for I remember being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so would I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son makes me free I shall be free, indeed.

**VII.** We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells. For we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called *the low dungeon of despondency*. I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the Prophet said, “He has led me and brought me into darkness and not into light.” I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place. Down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warden’s lantern, a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case.

He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it. He had been convicted of sin. He had heard the Gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not. There were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of

light did come. Once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever.

I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the , and if he would but climb it, he might escape. But the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a Divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his arm-holes. But I seemed as one that mocked him, and I heard some that tormented him, bid him call me “liar.” These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of Heaven, and had a right to liberty.

Finding myself powerless, I thus learned the more fully that the Lord must loose these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a day. Yet it was a great comfort to remember that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ and cried for mercy through His blood. No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord. It might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eyelids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse—but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to believe that Christ is “able to save, even to the uttermost.”

And then, by God’s Grace, they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—“He has brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. He has set my feet upon a rock and put a new song in my mouth and established my going.”

**VIII.** Shudder not at the clinging damp, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last. It is called *the inner prison*. Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison. But in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is the *hold of despair*. I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there. And I pray you never may. Ah, when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul.

John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab tree club better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly damp of that horrible pit. Are any of you in that dungeon today? Do you say, “I have grieved the Spirit and He is gone. My day of Grace is over. I have sinned against light and knowledge. I am lost”? O Man, where are you? I must have you free. What a splendid trophy of Divine Grace you will make!

My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that He may exhibit His power to save. Oh, what a platform for my Lord to rear the standard of His love upon, when He shall have fought with you, and overcome you by His love! What a victory this shall be! How will the angels sing unto Him that loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I have more hope for you than I have of others. For when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first.

If there is a man who has broken his finger only, "Oh, let him be," they say, "he can wait." But if there is a poor fellow who is much mangled, "Ah," says the surgeon, "I must see to this case at once." So is it with you. But *the Lord* must loose you. I cannot. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief. Come, look over this bunch of keys—"He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." Brothers and Sisters, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus—

***"The gates of brass before Him burst, the iron fetters yield."***

**IX.** I am getting to the end of this dark story, now, but let us tarry a moment at the grating of *Satan's torture chamber*, for I have been in it. Yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream. I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan's "Grace abounding," if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God. The truth of Scripture. The manhood of Christ. Then His deity.

And once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah, I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down and cried to the merciful God that He would save me from them.

Oh, the foul things which Satan will inject into the spirit! The awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den—which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts, in such hosts, and so quickly one after the other—that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle. And though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah, well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate Them, they are none of ours. If we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's, and God will, in due time, bring us to be free from these horrors.

Though the hosts of Hell may have ridden over our heads, let us cry, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise again." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. "*It is written*"—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab! Tell him that, "God IS, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner—and the Lord Himself must loose these prisoners.

**X.** Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined in it have called *the condemned cell*. I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself. He feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abides on him. He wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up. He is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness. He marvels that he has his

breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state. He not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now.

The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the building of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the lair, as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away forever.

Oh, that condemned cell! Next to Tophet, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience, he shall never be condemned. When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though Hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out—but not to execution. Led out, but not to perish—“he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls. When they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God’s sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is *then* that Sovereign Mercy steps in and cries, “I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins. Your sins which are many are all forgiven you.”

And now, You glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto You be praises! All Your redeemed bless You and those who are today in their dungeons cry unto You! Stretch out Your bare arm, You mighty Deliverer! You who did send Your Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now Your Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty where You make them free. And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Israel’s one Redeemer, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

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# THE LORD'S FAMOUS TITLES

## NO. 2347

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,  
FEBRUARY 11, 1894.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 10, 1889.**

***“The LORD looses the prisoners: the LORD opens the eyes of the blind:  
the LORD raises them that are bowed down: the LORD loves the righteous:  
the LORD preserves the strangers, He relieves the fatherless and widow: but  
the way of the wicked He turns upside down.”***  
**Psalm 146:7-9.**

This morning as well as I could, looking to God for help, I tried, in Christ's place, to persuade men to be reconciled to God. I showed that there was a great spiritual drought and neither dew nor rain to be had except as God should send it. And I tried to press my hearers to go to God, to wait upon Him, to look to Him and, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to seek and find in God all that would be necessary for their eternal blessedness. [Sermon #2115, Volume 35—*The Drought of Nature, the Rain of Grace and the Lesson Thereof*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] I pressed hard and some yielded, not to *my* pressure, but to a Divine impulse that went with my pleading! But there were some who did not yield, this morning, so I am going to make another attempt to win them, now, calling in our August Ally, even the Divine Spirit, without whom we can do nothing! May He bring many to God in penitence tonight!

You know that it helps men to come to a person when they know who he is, how good he is and how likely it is that they will find benefit by coming to him. My text tells us something about God, the Lord Jehovah. Five times the word occurs at the head of a sentence, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah. Sometimes, when a great king or prince has a high day, a herald proclaims the titles of His Majesty. He is prince of this, and lord of that, and emperor of the other—too often a lot of empty sounds. But when we come to speak of *God*, every title of His falls short of what is His real Glory and honor! Tonight we have five of His titles put together, five wonderful achievements of God, five things for which the Lord would have Himself noted. I want each one of you here to hear about them and to say, “That encourages me,” or, “That cheers me,” or, “That helps me.” At any rate, out of the five great magnets that I will try to use, tonight, may one or other draw all our reluctant hearts to God, that we may find rest and peace in Him!

I. There are five famous titles of God here. The first one is, THE EMANCIPATOR. Read the latter part of the seventh verse—“*The Lord looses the prisoners.*”

It is God's Glory that He is an Emancipator. How often, in the Old Testament, and in the New, too, you find the Lord loosing the prisoners! It was so notably in the case of Joseph, when God brought him out of the prison and set him up as Lord over all Egypt. And it is still more notable in the case of Israel in Egypt when, with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm, the Lord brought forth His people from all the tyranny of Pharaoh, whom He destroyed in the Red Sea. You may keep on reading Scripture and you will continually find that it is true, “The Lord looses the prisoners.”

I want some of you who are here to catch at that thought. Are you *mentally a prisoner* under gloom, tonight? Did a cloud come over you a little while ago? Does it still rest upon your mind? Can no physician remove it? Listen to this word—“The Lord looses the prisoners.” Are you in the bondage of error? Have you been misled by false teachers? Have you fallen into mistakes about the Word of God? Are you denying the great Truths of God which would comfort you? Are you believing the great errors which becloud your spirit? Come to God for teaching! He can emancipate you from any form of error, even though you have been brought up in it from a child. “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Or have you come under some gross delusion? Are you the victim of some false impression which you cannot shake? I pray you, if you are harried and worried by temptations of Satan and he seems to have a firm foothold in your spirit, and cannot be driven out, let this text, like a silver bell, ring out comforting music to you, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Oh, that you who are in mental bonds might be set free tonight!

There are, however, worse bonds than those, the chains of *moral slavery*. This man is a drunk and though he has taken the pledge, he cannot escape from the terrible craving which intemperate habits have brought upon him. Ah, Friend, come to Christ! He can take away the love of strong drink and set you free! “The Lord looses the prisoners” and He can do that for men and women who have given themselves up as lost. God have mercy upon wretched women when they become the prey of strong drink! To my certain knowledge, this evil is becoming much more common than it was a few years ago. More frequently do we have to mourn over fallen sisters than we did some years back. It is sad that it should be so, but the glorious fact remains that “the Lord looses the prisoners.” Do not despair, poor women! Have hope of deliverance! God can yet loose you from the bonds of strong drink.

Has anyone here fallen into bondage to a lust? Has some evil passion got a tight hold on you and you cannot break the bonds? There is One who can set you free! Yes, though you have been indulging in the evil for many years and seem to be wedded to an evil habit from which you cannot escape, still is it true, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Do not trust in

yourself to get rid of the evil, but look to Him who died for sin upon the Cross and trust in Him, for it is written, "He shall save His people from their sins." I cannot stay, tonight, to mention all the kinds of moral bondage into which men and women fall, but let this sweet message be like a stray note from the harps of angels to all who are in bondage, "The Lord looses the prisoners."

Perhaps you are held fast in *spiritual bondage*. This is where we are all by nature—we are born slaves. Are you, to-night, my Friend, conscious that you are a slave to sin? Are you fast bound by your trespasses? O spiritual slave, there is an Emancipator who can take your chains from you! "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, "and He is able to do it with a single word! Only trust Him, only yield yourselves up to Him as willing captives, and you shall be free from that moment! God make you free tonight! Yes, and He can loose you from every iniquity in which you may be enslaved!

There is another kind of emancipation which the Lord is constantly giving to the prisoners of hope, even deliverance from this present evil world. You are sick, tonight. You are sad, you are cast down and troubled because of the burden of the flesh. "The Lord looses the prisoners." There is many a prisoner who has been loosed during the last week or two—dear members of this Church who had been confined to sick beds. The Lord has opened the cage door and the bird, set at liberty, has gone caroling up to the skies! The body has been put into the grave and lies imprisoned there in vile durance, but He shall come, who, Himself, rose from the dead, and when His feet shall touch the earth, again, and the angelic trumpet shall sound the summons, their bodies shall come forth—

***"From beds of dust and silent clay  
To realms of everlasting day,"***

for "the Lord looses the prisoners!"

Here is a theme for a whole evening's discourse, but I do not want to take up any more time over this point. I wish rather to drive home this wedge—if you are prisoners, if you are under any form of bondage—come to God in Christ Jesus and put your trust in Him, for, "the Lord looses the prisoners."

**II.** We must hasten on to notice a second famous title for the Lord, that is, THE ILLUMINATOR—"The Lord opens the eyes of the blind."

If you will kindly look at your copies of the Bible, you will find that the words, "the eyes of," are inserted in italics by the translators, so that the text really is, "The Lord opens the blind." Ah, He opens the very *soul* of the blind and lets the Light of God in where there are no eyes! Have you not noticed that it is so? If anybody were to say to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, pick out a dozen of the happiest people that you know," ten of them would be blind people! We have some dear Friends, members of this Church, who are among the happiest souls that God has ever made! It is long since they saw the light, but God has opened their hearts in such a way that they enjoy a wonderful quietness of spirit, great placidity of mind and an

inward Light and splendor which persons with eyes might well envy! I have noticed that blind people are often among the happiest people and blind Christians certainly might take the chief place among us for their quiet and rest of mind! The Lord Jesus Christ opens the blind—He comes and sheds a Light when the windows of the body are closed—and gives Light within, so that they are full of brightness.

But if you like to take the text as it is in our translation, it will do very well. *When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He opened the eyes of the blind.* He touched many a sightless eye, and the light streamed in! Read the Evangels through and you will find this miracle constantly recurring. Blindness is a very common ailment in the East and the miracle of recovering the sight of the blind was, therefore, frequent with our Lord.

Next, *the Lord enables blind souls to see.* Here is a great mercy. The Lord has opened the eyes of many a man who could not see himself and so proved how blind he was—and could not see the Lord and so showed, still more, how blind he was. The Lord has given the inner sight to many a man who was without spiritual understanding, to whom the Gospel seemed a great mystery, of which he could make neither heads nor tails. The Lord has made the scales to fall from many blind mental eyes and enabled those who were blind, first, to see themselves, and then to see their Savior. Blessed be His name!

And whenever the blind of the earth fall asleep in Jesus and enter into Heaven, *they shall have no blindness in Glory.* There, their eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold His face and rejoice in His love. Jehovah is a great Eye-Opener—cannot some of you blind people catch at this Truth of God and say—“Then we will come to Him, for we need to have our eyes opened”?

Perhaps someone says, “Sir, I do not quite comprehend all that you say. I have been a hearer for some time and I want to understand the Gospel. I try to grasp it, but, somehow, I cannot get at the Truth of God.” Come, in prayerful faith, to God, Himself, tonight, and *He* will explain it to you! I can hold the Light of God to your eyes, but, if they are blind, I cannot make you see. But the Lord can give the sight as well as the Light and I beseech you to ask it at His hands, tonight. There is nothing really difficult in the Gospel and if you will come to Jesus like a teachable child and ask to be instructed of Him, you will find that it is all plain to him that believes. Of the way of holiness it is written, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”

If you come to God for Grace, dear Friend, He will never limit you. You need not be poor Christians—you may be “rich to all the intents of bliss.” You need not have shallow Grace—you may, if you wish, get into “waters to swim in.” Giving will not impoverish Him, withholding will not enrich Him, but, rather, giving enriches Him, it enriches His very heart with great joy, for He delights to give! Come, and take freely, and learn the liberality of God! I remember one who called himself, “a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of God.” Some of us can take the same title.

We have had a hand basket portion for many years—not a sack full at a time, but a full hand basket! That is a good way of living. If a girl gets a portion from her father and the old gentleman never gives her anything else, she does not receive so much as her sister who has a hand basket portion many days in the week. A present often comes to her from the old house at home. Father sends it every time with his love and she receives more love and more thought, and he, too, receives more gratitude in return, perhaps, than if he had given his daughter one lump sum, and then his generosity was all over. It is a blessed way of learning the liberality of God, to be receiving freely and receiving *continually* from Him! “He gives more Grace.”

Come, then, to God by Jesus Christ, because He is, first, the Emancipator and, secondly, the Illuminator.

**III.** Now for the third bright title of the Lord. That is, THE COMFORTER. Read the middle sentence of verse eight—“The Lord raises them that are bowed down.”

Some are bowed down with *bereavement*. Well may she be bowed down who has just committed to the earth the beloved of her heart. And well may he go mourning whose first-born son has been taken from him by a sudden stroke. Well may some lament who have lost the choicest friend that man ever had, and find that half their life is gone in the death of that beloved one, yet, “The Lord raises them that are bowed down.” Come, tell your grief to Him who pitied the widow at the gate of Nain! Come, pour out your sorrow before Him who wept with the beloved sisters at Bethany when Lazarus was dead! He can help you, for He, “raises them that are bowed down.”

Some are bowed down sadly by *the burdens of life*. They have more to carry than most men have. They stagger along, from day to day, beneath a load that threatens to crush them into the dust. Oh, come to my Lord who gives new strength to bear burdens, for He raises up those that are bowed down! It is amazing what a man can do when God has laid His hand on him and said to him, “Be strong.” You are faint and you will faint without your God, but you will be strong if you come and trust Him, for, “Jehovah raises them that are bowed down.”

Maybe you are bowed down *with inward distress*. Ah, there is no cure for some forms of distress but to go straight away to God! The scandal of our ministry is the despondency that we cannot disperse. How often I have come down from talking with some dear friends, here, whose minds have been distracted, and I have had to confess myself, “dead beat.” God has helped me to comfort many—it is my lot, almost wherever I may be, to be followed by persons suffering in mind. I sometimes laugh and tell them that “birds of a feather flock together” and that they must think me half-cracked and so they come to me to sympathize with them! Well, so be it—there is a kind of sympathy between me and them. But I have learned this lesson, that to bring comfort to a diseased mind is not within the preacher’s power except his Master shall specially qualify him for the task

and, in any case, I say to you, dear troubled Friends, go straight away to Him of whom you read these sweet words, "The Lord raises them that are bowed down."

Have I the extreme joy, tonight, of addressing in this congregation one who is bowed down by *a sense of sin*? Where are you, Magdalene, hiding your face in tears? Where are you, poor erring prodigal, longing to come back to your Father, but too bowed down to start upon the journey? Listen—"The Lord raises them that are bowed down." He loves to find the poor sinner crouching on the dunghill, putting his head into the dust in very despair of heart, and He delights to come and put His hand upon him and say, "Stand upon your feet; fear not." There is a great God of mercies who glories in doing wonders of Grace, forgiving even the blackest sin! I say again, I would like to ring this text like a silver bell in the ears of every penitent sinner here, and say, "The Lord raises them that are bowed down."

**IV.** We are getting on with our text, for we have come to the fourth great title. God is THE REWARDER—"The Lord loves the righteous." Come, dear Friends, here is a wafer made with honey! Here is a feast of fat things, full of marrow for you who are the people of God, you whom He has accounted righteous because the perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you!

First, "the Lord loves the righteous" with a love of *complacency*. He takes delight in them. He loves them, not merely with a love of benevolence that desires their good, but He looks with pleasure and delight at righteous men, those whom He has made righteous, those who love Him because they are righteous and who are like He in being righteous. The Lord looks at them and rejoices over them. How that ought to cheer any of you who have been made holy by God's Grace! The Lord's delight is in *you*! He calls you His Hephzibahs, saying, "My delight is in them." Wherever there is anything of Christ, anything of righteousness, anything of holiness, there is evidence of the Lord's love! So, in the first place, "the Lord loves the righteous" with a love of complacency.

He does more than that. He loves the righteous with a love of *communion*. Remember how the Lord puts it, by the mouth of Isaiah, "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." I doubt not that God often talks with righteous men. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." He lets them speak to Him and He speaks to them in return. Do you know anything about this communion with God? If you do not, never say that others do not, for we are as honest and truthful as you are—and we bear our testimony that there *is* such a thing as walking with God! We declare, from happy, heartfelt experience, that there is such a thing as talking with God, knowing that He loves us and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

God also loves His people with a love of *favor*. He loves them so that He will give them anything that they need. Yes, He has said, through the Psalmist, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." He loves the righteous so that, when they go into their chamber to pray to Him, He may let them plead a little while because it is for their good to do so, but He will always yield to their desires. He has said, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." He does that with His people. The Lord loves the righteous so as to favor them with extraordinary blessings, things of which I cannot talk, here, for there is many a love-passage between Christ and the righteous soul that must never be told. We do not talk of our love-passages in the streets—that would be half profane. Nor can we even tell of them here. There are favors which the Lord shows to His righteous people, which they know, and He knows, but which no one else can know till that day when all things shall be revealed!

And once more, the Lord loves the righteous so that He will *honor* them. If men are righteous, the world will hate them and, as a proof of its hatred, it will begin to splatter them. There are always some in the world who say, "Throw plenty of mud, some of it will stick," and oh, how they delight to throw it! Their hands seem to take to the dirt naturally. But, Beloved, if you follow God fully, your character will never be long tarnished. Do not try to answer those who slander you. If a donkey kicked you, would you kick the donkey? If a fool brings a charge against you, do not reply to him. Let him rail on—*God* will vindicate you. Remember that Psalm from which I quoted just now, the thirty-seventh—"commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." It may even happen to a man that he may perform an action that will never be understood while he lives. But the true man of God lives for eternity, not for time. He says, "I do not care if it takes 500 years for the righteousness of my action to be seen by my fellow men, it will not make it any more righteous when they do see it, nor will it be any *less* righteous while they do not see it! What have I to do with men? I serve the living God." If you get into that condition of heart, you can trust your reputation, your life, your usefulness entirely with God, for "the Lord loves the righteous." A day shall come when all the world shall know it, when they who are righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and God shall say of them, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord."

Now, then, will you not come to Him, since His favorites are the best people in all the world? Kings and princes have often been known to choose their associates among the worst of their subjects—men who ministered to their baser passions. The favorites of kings have often been the offscouring of the earth, but our King loves the righteous! He will have none to be His courtiers, to come near to Him, to dwell before His face, but those who walk uprightly through His mighty Grace! I think that there

is something very inviting there to you who are of a true heart, something which ought to induce you to come to such a God as this—the Lord who loves the righteous.

**V.** But now, last of all, and, perhaps, sweetest of all, the fifth name of God is THE PRESERVER—“The Lord preserves the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.” My time is so nearly gone that I can only just ask you to apply, by God’s help, the few words that I shall say.

Notice, first, that *God preserves strangers*. In all nations, in the olden times, strangers were driven out. They did not want any foreigners settling among them. In this country, in almost every village, it used to be the practice for a stranger to be regarded as a kind of mad dog. And if he happened to wear a different garb from that of the villagers, all the boys hooted him. It seems that our depraved humanity is naturally unkind to strangers! I often hear people say, even now, “Oh, he is a foreigner!” O you proud Englishman! Is he not as good as you? You are a foreigner when you get to the other side of the English Channel! It was God’s order to His ancient people that they were to be kind to strangers. Wherever they came, they were to be allowed to dwell and were to be taken care of. God put it thus to Israel—“You shall neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” And because God loved them when they were strangers in Egypt, they were to take special care of strangers and foreigners who came into their midst.

What a grand trait this is in God’s Character, “The Lord preserves the strangers!” If any of you feel to be strangers here, tonight. If you are strangers to religion, strangers to religious observances, strangers to everything that is good. If you feel, when you hear the Gospel, that you are altogether a stranger to it—it sounds so odd in your ears, come along, dear Stranger, “The Lord preserves the strangers!” Come under the shadow of His wings and you shall find shelter there. Father is dead, mother is dead, friends are all gone and even in the very village where you were born you are a stranger—come along, your *God* is not dead, your Savior lives—“The Lord preserves the strangers.”

Then notice the next sentence in our text—“*He relieves the fatherless and widow.*” If you turn to the first Books of the Bible, you will see, there, God’s great care of the fatherless and the widow. Who had the tithes? Well, the Levites, but also the poor, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow! If you look at Deuteronomy 14:28, or 26:12, you will find that the tithes were not exclusively for the priests, but they were also for the widow, the fatherless and the strangers. Besides this, the Israelites were never to glean their fields twice, for the gleanings were for the widow and the fatherless. And they were never to shake the olive tree or any fruit tree twice, but to leave what remained upon it for the widow and the fatherless. There was also this Law of God made, that they should never take as a pledge the raiment of a widow. That is pretty often done in London, but it might not be done, then—the garment of the widow might

never be taken in pledge. Wherever the legislation of God for His people touched upon the widow and the fatherless, it was immeasurably kind. Now, then, you who feel like widows. You who have lost your joy and earthly comfort. You who feel like the fatherless and say, "No man cares for my soul," oh, may the sweet Spirit of the Lord entice you to come to Him, for, as I reminded you in the reading, "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation."

But the view of God's Character would not be complete if it were not added, "*The way of the wicked He turns upside down.*" You see, the godly and they who trust God are always in danger from the wicked, but He turns the way of the wicked upside down! Take an example. Joseph's brothers sell him into Egypt and make a slave of him. God turns this arrangement upside down and makes a prince of him! Think of Mordecai. Haman will have him hanged—he has the gallows ready, but Haman is hanged on his own gallows! God knows how to make the malice of men promote the benefit of those against whom they turn their cruelty! "The way of the wicked He turns upside down."

Be you just and fear not! Rest in Christ's atoning Sacrifice! Trust Him only! Come to your God and be His servant from this day and forever, and you shall see how He will break your bonds, open your eyes, cheer your spirit, indulge you with His love and preserve you even to the end! "There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." God bless you, dear Friends, and may you all come to God, tonight, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 146; LUKE 17:11-19**

**Psalm 146:1.** *Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah." I am sorry to see that great word, Hallelujah, Hallelu-Jah, praise to Jah, Jehovah, become so hackneyed as it is, by talk about "Hallelujah lasses," and Hallelujah—I know not what. The Jews will not even pronounce the word Jah, or write it. It seems a great pity that it should be thus dragged in the dirt by Gentiles. "Praise you the Lord." Whenever you make use of the word Hallelujah, let it be with the due reverence which should be given to that blessed name, for remember, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that uses His name in vain."

**1.** *Praise the LORD, O my Soul.* Whatever we exhort others to do, we should be ready to do ourselves. Yes, our own soul should praise the Lord most of all, since, if we rightly know our obligations, no one in the world is so much indebted to God as each one of us should feel himself to be. "Praise the Lord, O my Soul." Not my lips, only, but my innermost spirit, for soul-music is the soul of music—"Praise the Lord, O my Soul."

**2.** *While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.* I will lisp His praises when I can do no more.

When my being seems to be dried up, in the weakness of the death-throe, still, "I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

**3.** *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.* What is the connection, here, between *praising* God and *not* trusting man? Why, this connection, that we never praise God better than by exercising faith in Him! Quiet trust is among the sweetest music that reaches the heart of God and when we put our trust in man, we rob God of His Glory—we are giving to others the confidence which belongs, alone, to Him.

**4.** *His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.* What is man—with a life dependent upon his breath, such a vapory thing, such a thin, unsubstantial thing is human life—what is he that we should trust in him?

**5.** *Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.* He is the happy man who has learned to trust in the invisible God.

**6.** *Which made Heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keeps the Truth of God forever.* Never did His promise fail. Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not pleaded the promises enough of late. Then the Mercy Seat is the place where promises must be pleaded, with the certainty that then they shall be fulfilled.

**7.** *Which executes judgment for the oppressed: which gives food to the hungry. The LORD looses the prisoners.* Souls that are in bondage will never get freedom till the Lord looses them! Oh, that prisoners of hope, who are here, this evening, might have Grace to look to God! You cannot pick the lock of your prison, yourself, nor forge your way through the iron bars of despair, but, "the Lord looses the prisoners." Yes, but when they get loose, they are blind, for man, by nature, is blinded by sin! Therefore the Psalmist adds—

**8.** *The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.* He will not only give you liberty, but understanding, insight into His Word, a knowledge of Himself! Yes, but when men get their eyes opened, they see much to make them sorry and He that increases knowledge often increases sorrow! Yes, but look at the next words—

**8.** *The LORD raises them that are bowed down.* He can take away depression of spirit and relieve the heart of its burdens and, as the woman who was bowed down for many years, was made straight by the word of Christ, so can those that suffer from mental infirmity be restored. And best of all—

**8.** *The LORD loves the righteous.* He loves them and His love is wealth and health. The love of God is all a creature needs.

**9.** *The Lord preserves the strangers.* When our eyes are opened and we are no more bowed down, but feel we have a sense of God's love, yet we still know that we are exiles, banished ones, strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were. It is comforting, therefore, to be assured that, "the Lord preserves the strangers."

**9.** *He relieves the fatherless and widow.* He does so literally—"A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation." He also relieves such *spiritually*. When any feel themselves to be poverty-stricken and unable to help themselves, let them look to Him who is both able and willing to succor them, for, "He relieves the fatherless and the widow."

**9.** *But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.* Where they looked for joy, they experienced disappointment. Where they expected success, they met with defeat, and whereas they thought to heap to themselves pleasures according to their lusts, they find that they have only increased their misery.

**10.** *The LORD shall reign forever, even your God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise you the LORD.* The Sovereignty of God should be the delight of His people. God anywhere is blessed, but God on His Throne should make His people shout their Hallelujahs with all their heart. Now let us read in the New Testament about one who glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus.

**Luke 17: 11, 12.** *And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: Lepers were allowed to enter villages, but not to go into the large walled towns. They were, however, commanded to stand at a certain distance from other people—and these men did so. This must have been a terrible sight! Ten men afflicted with such a horrible disease, all in one group! It shows how prevalent, at that time, was this disease, now happily so rare, at least among us—"Ten men that were lepers." It seemed as if the effect of sin in men became more conspicuous in the day when the Great Healer of men was here in Person. Then Satan's chain was lengthened that he might have greater power over the bodies of men, that his Master might subdue him and that Christ Jesus the Lord might have the greater victory over the Prince of Darkness.*

**13, 14.** *And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! And when He saw them, He said unto them, go show yourselves unto the priests.* There was a tacit promise in that that they should be healed, for, of course, the showing themselves to the priests was not that they might be pronounced *unclean*, for they were so pronounced already by their own confession, but that they might be pronounced clean! They were to go to the priests and there was an implied promise that if they so went, when the priests looked upon them they would be healed.

**14-16.** *And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and, with a loud voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.* He was probably the only one out of the 10 that was a Samaritan. Though Jews and Samaritans did not usually agree, yet, as sorrow brings a man strange bedfellows, so in this case, these partners in a general sorrow forgot their sectarianism and were

blended into one sad company. Now that they were all healed, only *one* felt true gratitude to God, and to his Benefactor—"and he was a Samaritan."

It is very singular to notice that Luke tells us that this man glorified God, "with a loud voice." We have, sometimes, heard complaints that, at certain revival meetings, the singing was very loud and there was even shouting. Let the converts shout, Brothers and Sisters, let them shout! They have good reason to shout, for Christ has made them whole. We have a great deal too much of respectable death about us—let us have a little noisy life. I would sooner by half hear the praises of God shouted with a loud voice than hear the mockery of praise in a tone that is scarcely to be heard, while some machine grinds out music to God's glory—and men forget to sing or are drowned in loud bursts of wind from the instrument! Do not be ashamed to let it be known that you are saved. Praise the Lord with all your might and, if they say that you are excited, tell them that you are and that you wonder if anybody could help being excited if he had been healed of leprosy or had his sins forgiven!

But, at the same time, note the humility as well as the zeal of this man—he "fell down on his face at His feet." I would like to see more of this action. In some revivals, there is plenty of shouting, but very little falling down on the face at Christ's feet. Oh, for deep prostration of spirit, a humble waiting upon God, a gracious, tender confession of thanks to Him for all that He has done for poor leprous sinners!

**17, 18.** *And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?* Often those who are thought to be the worst of people turn out the best. Many of the most precious pearls have been found in the deepest sea and some of the most grateful hearts have been discovered among those who were most immersed in sin and error.

**19.** *And He said unto him, arise, go your way; your faith has made you whole.* Christ uses the word, "whole," in an emphatic sense—"Not only your body, but also your *soul* is made whole, and you are holy from this day." There is a wonderful connection between these two words, "whole," and, "holy." A holy man is a whole man, but he who is not holy is unsound and not whole in the sight of God. The Lord make us wholly holy for Christ's sake! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 560, 504.**

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# FEARING AND HOPING

## NO. 2524

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 4, 1897.  
*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1885.

*“The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him,  
in those that hope in His mercy.”  
Psalm 147:11.*

This Psalm, I think, was intended to set forth the singularity of God. In it we are exhorted to praise Him who is our God and to give honor and glory to Him alone. The Psalmist does not dwell, here, upon those attributes which usually call forth our praise, or the praises of men in general, but he touches some special strings of the harp from which he brings forth joyous music for the children of Zion, that they may be glad in their King. This is one of the notes of the Psalm—that although God, Himself is so high, He has a very tender regard toward those who are lowly. He turns His thoughts, not to those who are brilliant and attractive, but to those who are broken in heart and wounded in spirit! While the gods of the heathen are pictured in their mythologies as dealing with kingdoms and with wars and with other matters upon a large scale, this gracious God of ours is so infinitely condescending that He waters the grass, feeds the cattle and listens to the cries of young ravens! This is, indeed, a specialty with God and one which unconverted men do not readily discover, or even think much about when it is spoken of in their hearing. But you who know Him, you who love Him, delight in these wondrous condescension of His Grace—His dealing in mercy with the contrite and broken in spirit, His filling Heaven and yet filling you, His ruling the stars and yet managing your mean affairs—His fiat that creates a universe and His gentle promises suited to the understanding of a child, to the healing of a widow's sorrow, and the loosing of the bonds of the prisoner! Oh, yes, we feel that we are bound to our God with cords of a man and with bands of love! He considers us when we are of low estate, therefore we will give all diligence to acquaint ourselves with Him that we may be at peace.

Having spoken of the singularity of God, the Psalmist dwells, in the verse before us, upon the specialty of His favor. Great kings are known to have their favorite objects in which they delight with peculiar pleasure. Many monarchs have gloried in “the strength of a horse.” Their squadrons of cavalry have been their confidence. Others have taken more delight in “the legs of a man.” The muscles and sinews of their soldiers have been their boast. You must have noticed, in the Assyrian sculptures, the importance that was attached by the workmen and by the monarch, also, to “the legs of a man.” They represent the warriors as brawny and strong, swift in running and firm in holding their place in the day of battle. But our God takes no delight in cavalry or infantry! No

armies of horse or foot soldiers give Him any gladness—the Lord takes pleasure in very different persons from these. His delight, His joy, His solace—if we may use such a word—are found in other company than that which is martial. He turns His eyes quite another way. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

**I.** First of all, dear Friends, let us think of THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS HERE DISTINGUISHED.

They are distinguished, first, from *physical strength*. I have already told you what is meant by the Psalmist in the previous verse, “He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.” When a man was to be chosen to be king over Israel, the Lord, who knew the weakness of the people, gave to them one who was head and shoulders above the rest of them. It is natural to men to have regard to the comeliness of the person and the stature and apparent strength of the individual who is to rule over them. And, oftentimes, men and women are so foolish as to imagine that there is something about the beauty of their face, or the excellence of their person that should not only make their fellow creatures admire them, but should make their God admire them, too! True, there are old proverbs which bid us think lightly of the kind of beauty which is but skin deep and that tell us that “handsome is that handsome does.” But still, there is the temptation in a man who finds himself healthy, vigorous and strong—the personification of power—to fancy that, as he has a measure of influence over his fellows, he may have favor with God.

But, ah, that would be indeed a vain and idle dream! Let no man thus delude himself. You, good Sir, with all your beauty and your strength, may be but a day’s march from the grave! Then will you be *food for worms*, like the rest of those who have gone before you! “Beauty is vain.” What is man, “whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” God thinks nothing of you in that matter of your personal strength and beauty, however greatly you may pride yourself thereon! Physical force is found in a greater degree in a horse than in a man—and if there were to be some honor given to man because of his physical strength, it ought to be given still more to the rhinoceros, or to the elephant, or to the whale! Therefore, dear Friends, you can clearly see how absurd it would be for a man to value himself upon his bodily comeliness or strength.

There are not many, I should think, who would fall into that gross absurdity, but there are some who seem to think that *mental vigor* will surely be respected of God. The man who is the deepest thinker, who can look into the very heart of a subject, who can see farthest into a millstone—surely *he* shall have some commendation from God! And there is a kind of superstition current that if a man has been very clever, if he has written some very entertaining books, it must be all right with him! Straightway, he who in his life sneered at saintship is enrolled among the saints! And for anyone to question the character of such a person, even though it may be well known that it was utterly deficient in every kind of virtue before God, is almost regarded as *treason against the majesty of literature*. Well, such a delusion may rule the shallow minds that yield to it, but rest you assured that cleverness, ability, culture and learning, in

and of themselves, have no influence with the Most High! He delights in the lowliest of men, when they turn to Him, when they sit at Jesus' feet and learn His Words. But the greatest conceivable ability, if it is united with forgetfulness of God, will ensure to its possessor a more terrible punishment from the right hand of God than would have fallen upon the man had he been ignorant and without gifts, "for unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required."

It is a good thing to be learned and wise, and the more you can cultivate your minds, the better, but remember the words of the Apostle—"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And, oftentimes, the wisdom which is merely that of the mind may even prove like scales upon the spiritual eyes, hiding from the soul the blessed sight which alone can save it! It is true mentally as well as physically, that the Lord takes no pleasure in any of the faculties which a man possesses if he is destitute of Grace.

Another thing in which the Lord takes no pleasure is that *self-reliance* which is much cried up nowadays. This is only another form of "the strength of the horse" and "the legs of a man." Some persons proudly say that they are self-made men—and I generally find that they worship their makers. Having made themselves, they are peculiarly devoted to themselves. But a man who is self-made is badly made! If God does not make him anew, it would have been better for him never to have been made! That which comes of man is but a polluted stream from an impure source—out of evil comes evil, and from a depraved nature comes depravity. It is only when God makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus that it is any joy for us to be creatures at all! And all the praise must be given to Him. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves," if this day, "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Therefore, although you should exercise every faculty that you possess and push with might and main in the battle of life, do not rely on yourself.

It is foolish to worship a god of wood, or of stone. It is equally foolish to worship a god of flesh. And it is *most* foolish when that god of flesh is yourself! Worship the Lord, trust in God—"Trust in Him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before Him." "Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The Lord takes not pleasure in the boastful self-dependence wherein some glory.

Nor, dear Friends, do I think that God takes pleasure in any mere *capacity for service* which exists in any of us, whoever we may be. "The strength of the horse" and, "the legs of a man" do but set forth what I now intend to speak of. Suppose a man is a child of God and a preacher of the Word—and that he possesses peculiar gifts to set forth the Truth of God—let him not, therefore, exalt himself, for in mere capacity, even though it is the capacity to preach the Gospel, God takes no pleasure! A

preacher has a talent which brings with it great responsibility—it will not be a blessing bringing a reward unless Grace is given to him to use it to his Lord's Glory!

Are you, dear Friend, peculiarly adapted for teaching in the Sunday school, and has God put honor upon you there? Then remember that what your Master will look to will not be your ability, but your *fidelity*—not your capacious mind, your firm grasp of the Truth of God, and your power to impart it to others—but the Grace with which you use this faculty and this ability. I believe that there may be many a godly woman who teaches her handful of infants to do little more than read, and who is scarcely able to convey a profound idea to their minds, who, nevertheless, may be a greater blessing than that teacher who has gathered many about him, whom he has been able to instruct with marked ability, but without corresponding Grace. I am sure that it would have been better for some of us who have to come before thousands of hearers with our message and yet we are not faithful to your souls—if we had occupied the lowliest pulpit and preached to only 10 or 20 people, or if we had never spoken at all! For God values none of us by our position, or our ability, or even by our apparent success! He does not take pleasure in all this of itself—it is in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy—in our spiritual relationship to Himself and our spiritual dealings with Himself, that He does have a keen delight. All the rest may or may not be delightful to Him. He may or may not look upon it with complacency—that will entirely depend upon whether we are those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy!

**II.** Now, in the second place, I want your earnest attention while I notice THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. “Them that fear Him: those that hope in His mercy.”

You see, dear Friends, these are *things which relate to God*. God's favor is displayed to those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy. You are truly, dear Friend, what you are towards God, and God regards you according to what you are in reference to Himself. If you are a philanthropist, a lover of mankind—that is well as far as it goes, but it is always evil to put the second table of the Commandments before the first. The first is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” And then the second table bids you, “love your neighbor as yourself.” But he who does not love his God has not learned aright how to love his neighbor! There is a worm at the core of philanthropy when it is not accompanied with true religion. Depend upon it, that what you are toward your God, that you *really are*, and so does He regard you. What if you fear *evil*? Yet if you fear not *Him*, you are not really His! And what if you have hope this way or that? Yet you are not right before Him unless you have hope in His mercy! You have not come to your right condition unless your emotions, joyous or sorrowful, have relation to Him.

Notice, next, that this description of character applies to *true servants of God in their earliest and weakest form*. Observe, it is not said, here, that God has pleasure in those who possess full assurance, though that is most true, but He has pleasure in “them that fear Him”—who can get no further in the spiritual life than to fear the Lord, and who, as yet, even

have something of the spirit of bondage connected with that fear! Yet, if there is also in them a little of that brightness which comes of hoping in His mercy, the Lord takes pleasure even in such poor feeble creatures! They have not yet attained to full confidence in God's mercy—they are only hoping in it at present—yet, if it is a real fear of Him and a true hope in His mercy, however little it may be, the Lord takes pleasure in them! You do not take much pleasure in yourself, poor hoping-fearing one, do you? That may be and it may be quite consistent with God's taking pleasure in you! There are some who take pleasure in themselves, but in whom God has no pleasure—and there are many who loathe themselves in their own sight, who, nevertheless, are delightful in the sight of the Most High! Our judgment of ourselves is a very different thing from God's judgment of us.

Dear Heart, do you fear to come before God because of your sin? Do you tremblingly stretch out your finger to touch the hem of your Savior's garment, that you may be made whole? Is your faith feeble? Do you trust His Word, but weakly? He will not, therefore, spurn you, but will receive you, for, as He healed the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and bade her go in peace, so will He do with you. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." If they never get beyond that point for the present, they shall get into a higher stage, by-and-by, but even now the Lord takes pleasure in them! "Therefore comfort one another with these words." The description in our text is intended to embrace the *weakest forms of spiritual life*. I am sure it is, because of the kind of grammatical structure between our text and the verse that precedes it—"He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man." That is, He has no pleasure in the strong things, the powerful, the vigorous, but He has pleasure in the weak, though true—in the trembling, though sincere. He takes pleasure in those who are so little that all we can say of them is that they fear Him and that they hope in His mercy!

Yet I also think that this description comprises *the noblest form of religion in the very highest degree of it*. After all, we do not get beyond this point—fearing God and hoping in His mercy! A little child grows, but when it has grown to manhood, it is the same being as when it was a child. It has not grown another eye, or another hand, or another foot—all that is in it when it is a man, was in it when it was a child! In like manner, all the Divine Graces of our holy religion are in the new-born babe in Grace—not perceptibly as yet, nor called into action, but they are all there—and when the babe in Grace shall reach the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, there will be in him just what there was in him when he was a little and weak child. Therefore, let us grow as we may, we shall always fear God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, but not that *filial fear* which is here meant, that child-like reverence and holy awe of the Most High that shall grow and shall deepen, world without end.

And as to hope, Beloved, why, we had hope when we began our spiritual life, and we still have hope—and that hope will continue with us—I will not say in Heaven, though I think it will, for there is something to hope for in the disembodied state. We shall hope for the Day of Resurrec-

tion and there will be something to hope for even in the resurrection, for, throughout the ages we shall have a good hope that still we shall be “forever with the Lord.” Certainly, he who knows God best, fears Him most and also hopes in Him most! Fear deepens and hope rises and I believe that very much in proportion as a man has the fear of God before his eyes, he will have a hope in God within his heart. And as he learns to hope in God, and to hope nowhere else, his fear of God will become more and more operative upon his entire nature and life.

I should like you also to notice that the persons favored of God are represented *as a sort of sacred blending of different characters*. “Them that fear Him”—“those that hope in His mercy.” These two things, fear of God and hope in His mercy, go well together, and what God has joined, let no man put asunder! Blessed is that man who has a trembling fear concerning his sinnership, who knows that he deserves the deepest Hell, bows before God under the burden of sin and always loathes himself to think that he should have been such a sinner—but who also hopes in God’s mercy! He is sure of sin, but equally sure of sin’s forgiveness. He is humbled by guilt, but equally rejoicing in the fullness of that Atonement which has covered his transgression and cast his iniquity into the depths of the sea! I fear because I am such a great sinner. I hope because Christ is such a great Savior! I am down in the very depths whenever I think of my guilt, crying out unto God, but I am also up in the very heights as I think of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and am led, thereby, to hope in the mercy of God! It is a beautiful blend, that fear of God, and hope in His mercy!

It is well every day to have this sacred blending in another fashion, to be always afraid of yourself, fearful to begin the day without praying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” never indulging in self-confidence in the least, yet always hoping in the mercy of God that He will keep you, and never suffer you to perish, for He has said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” This is a blessed blending of fear and hope, fearing before God, knowing what a frail and feeble creature you are and yet confident in the Lord, knowing how mighty, how faithful and how unchangeable He is to keep the souls that are committed to His care!

Then there is that holy form of fear which causes a jealous anxiety concerning yourself. I do not wish to ever be rid of that kind of fear.

There is a doubting of yourself which it is well to cultivate until honest and faithful self-examination has enabled you, in all impartiality, to conclude that you are the child of God. But, oh, never let that fear degenerate into a looking to frames and feelings as your ground of confidence! Let your hope always be in God’s mercy, whatever may be the result of your self-examination. These two things should always go together—“Lord, search me, and try me, and know my ways.” “Yet, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You, and that my hope is fixed upon You, and I do not doubt that You are able to keep that which I have committed to You.” There, you see, is the fear of the Lord, but there is also hope in His mercy. And these two streams run side by side in the life of the man in whom God takes pleasure.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, to turn the text around the other way, I trust we shall always have a hope of final perseverance. He who has begun the good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Are we, therefore, as some suppose we might be, careless about how we live? Oh, no! We are afraid of sinning! The very shadow of sin is obnoxious to us! We hate the garment spotted by the flesh. The very appearance of evil terrifies us. How is that consistent with the full belief in our perseverance unto the end? If we cannot explain it, many of us know that it is practically so.

So also we have a hope, most sure and steadfast, that we ourselves shall, like our Representative, enter into Heaven. But for all that we have a daily fear lest we should seem to come short of it! We know that "there remains a rest to the people of God," and we are persuaded that we belong to that happy company. Yet we keep under our body and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. If you ask, "How can a man feel these two things?" I answer—he does feel them and if he is born of God, and God delights in him—he feels them pretty much with equal force. As two battledores keep up the shuttlecock, so often I believe a man is kept in his right place by the action of these two contrary forces as they seem to be. As the earth goes round the sun, keeping in its orbit, it is under two influences—the centrifugal that would drive it off at a tangent and the centripetal that would pull it into the sun at once—but between the two, it keeps its proper course, and so does the Christian. Oh, that the centripetal force might speedily conquer the centrifugal, that we might fly unto our God and be forever with Him rejoicing in the fullness of eternal happiness!

I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that we who believe have a hope of perfection. In some senses, we have it already, for we are complete in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved. But even that blessed assurance is attended with a measure of fear. We are mourning our transgressions, our defects and our shortcomings. We are not what we ought to be, we are not what we wish to be, we are not what we shall be—and while we grasp the, "*shall be*," with the hand of faith, we sigh to think that as yet we have realized so little of its blessedness! Brothers and Sisters, may God grant to us hope whenever we have fear, and fear whenever we have hope. May we have hope in God's power to deliver us when we are under the fear of any trial or danger! May we have hope in God's Providence to arrange for us whenever we are poor, or sick, or in any straits or difficulties! When we have any fear of God's wrath, let us have hope in His pity, and whenever we are doubting or troubled, let us have hope in God's promises which cannot fail, but, in due season, shall surely be fulfilled.

This fear, mingled with hope, is, I believe, to be the contexture of our religious life. I know that it is of mine with regard to the world at large and the Church at large. I have a daily fear and trembling for the state of the Church of this present time. If anybody asks the watchman what he sees, I answer that I see no morning coming, but deeper darkness constantly falling upon us. Yet even that fear is mixed with hope, for I am certain that God's Truth will, in the end, win the day. It does not matter which way the current of modern thought may happen to run, the Truth

of God will come to the front, by-and-by. Puritan Divines are at a great discount today, but I believe that some of us will live to see them prized more than they ever were! The Doctrines of Grace are, for a while, trod in the mire, but after infidelity has emptied the chapels, and the churches have lost the true missionary spirit, they will come back again to the grand old Truths of the Gospel, and we who are spared shall see a revival of them such as our hearts have longed for! Whatever we fear for Zion in her travail, we have hope in the birth that shall come of it by God's good Grace!

This same principle ought, I think, to be applied to our ordinary daily life. We hope in God's mercy whenever we are in trouble, but we fear whenever we are prosperous. If we are in health, then we fear, for we may be struck down in a moment. If we are sick, then we hope, for we may be raised up just as quickly. If we are in adversity, then we hope, for the longest tide turns, at last. When we are prospering, then we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God causes to pass before us. I, for one, must say that I usually feel confident and joyous whenever I am in trouble. But whenever I have a grand day of success, I go home sinking into my shoes, for I am always afraid that something evil will follow!

It is with that blended hope and fear that we come to God in prayer—trembling to take upon ourselves to speak to Him, for we are but dust and ashes—yet coming with holy boldness to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. In this way, also, we go to our service for our Lord. Luther said that, often, when he went to preach, his knees knocked together for fear. But when he was preaching, he had such hope in God's mercy that he was like a lion! That is the way we expect to die. We will go to our dying bed and gather up our feet with fear, for we are men—but also with hope, for we are men of God—fearing the Lord, but hoping in His mercy!

**III.** I have not time to preach upon the blessings implied in this Divine favor, so I will give you only an outline of them.

When God takes pleasure in any man, the outcome of His favor may be learned from the pleasure which we take in our own child. For instance, when any mother takes pleasure in her child, she likes to *think* of her child, she likes to *look* at her child, she likes to *speak* to her child, she likes to *minister* to her child. She loves her child's prattling talk, its little broken syllables are all music to her ears. She takes pleasure in all that her child is, in all it does, in all it is to be. It is altogether a delight to her. Now, without enlarging upon this point, I will say that if you fear the Lord and hope in His mercy, God takes as much delight in you as you do in your dear child—and far more, because God's is an infinite mind and from it there comes infinite delight, so that He views you with infinite complacency!

Can you believe it? You do not view yourself so—I hope that you do not, but God *sees you in Christ*. He sees that in you that is yet to be in you! He sees in you that which will make you grow into a heavenly being and, therefore, He takes delight in you. It does not matter what others think of you. I want you to go home and feel, "If my Heavenly Father takes delight in me, it really does not concern me if my fellow creatures do not understand or appreciate me." If you and I want to be pleased by other people's good opinion, we shall lay ourselves open to be wounded

by other people's *bad* opinion. Live so as to please *God* and if your fellows are not pleased, well then, they must be displeased. It should be the one aim of your life to be able to say, "I do always those things which please Him." Walk with God by faith, as Enoch did, that you may have a like testimony to his, "he pleased God." And if you have pleased God, what matters it who is not pleased? Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, and praise the name of the Lord, for He "takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

I trust that there is some poor sinner who can squeeze into the Kingdom of God through that description. "I fear Him," says one, "I have a feeble hope in His mercy." God bless you, dear Friend! He takes pleasure in you. If you are but consciously guilty of sin and, therefore, fear—and if you are but believingly looking to Christ, alone, and, therefore hope, then you are His, and His forever! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 147.**

This Book of Psalms ends its golden stream in a cataract of praise. The last Psalms are Hallelujah Psalms. This one begins and ends, as several others do, with "Hallelujah."

**Verse 1.** *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God.* He is, "our God," whether He is the God of other men or not. He is "our God" by His choice of us, and by our choice of Him—"our God" by eternal Covenant, to whom we also pledge ourselves "*This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.*" Then let us "sing praises unto our God," for, "it is good" so to do.

**1.** *For it is pleasant; and praise is comely.* It is the most pleasurable of all exercises! It is the occupation of Heaven. "It is pleasant." It is delightful to the heart. Nothing tends to lift us out of sorrow and trouble like giving ourselves to singing the high praises of God. "It is good." "It is pleasant." "It is comely." It is becoming, fitting, beautiful. Praise and Jehovah should go together. He is so worthy to be praised that to withhold His praises would be an uncomely thing! But to adore Him, to magnify Him, is the very beauty of holiness.

**2.** *The LORD does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* There is the first reason for praise. The Jews were pleased to behold their city rising out of the heap of ruins. They were glad to see the scattered ones, the outcasts, coming back to their native place and entering into citizenship in Zion. Shall not the Church of God, of which Jerusalem was a type, praise God that He is steadily and solidly building up a Church to His praise and Glory? He is building it out of strange materials—outcast sinners who were far from Him by wicked works are brought near by the blood of Christ! Stones from Nature's quarry are changed into living stones and then built up into a living Temple for His praise. "Jehovah does build up Jerusalem." Not the minister, not the workers in the Church, but the Lord Himself does it! "He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." An uplifted Christ draws all men to Him! The gathering power is with Him. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Let

us praise God that this takes place, in a measure, in our midst, and in other Churches where His name is honored.

**3.** *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* He is such a condescending God that He walks the hospitals and is familiar with dependency—and enters in sympathy into the cases of distress which others shun because they are unable to help. Where He comes as the Good Physician, “He heals the broken in heart.”

**4.** *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* I call your attention, dear Friends, to the wonderful change from the sick to the stars—from the broken in heart to the starry hosts of Heaven! Our God is equally at home with the little and with the great—with stars, which to us are countless—and with men, who to us are comfortless. God is just as great in dealing with our sorrows as in guiding the stars in their courses! He is as great as He is good, and as good as He is great!

**5.** *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.* There are three things here predicated of Him—first, that He is great in Himself, great in the vastness of His Being. Next, that He is of great power and, then, that He is of great, yes, of *infinite understanding*. Here is the mercy of it all, that He brings that greatness, that vastness of power, that infinity of knowledge to bear upon poor broken hearts—that He is just as wise in meeting our distresses as He is in marshalling the stars that He has made. Oh, what a God is ours!

**6.** *The LORD lifts up the meek; He casts the wicked down to the ground.* Ours is an amazing God. There is none like He. He is undoing all the things that are, turning things upside down. The lowly, He lifts up, but the proud, He throws down to the ground, even into the dust. This is His way and this is always a special note in the songs of God’s people. Remember how Mary sang, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away”? This singular behavior of our God, who has no respect unto the persons of men, is a special cause for our thankfulness. Therefore, let us magnify His name!

**7.** *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.* Let every form of melody and harmony be consecrated to Him. Give Him thanks-*giving* and thanks-*living*. And as He is always giving to you, take care that you give to Him what you can—namely, your thanks.

**8, 9.** *Who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* God, the Infinite One, makes the clouds—not the laws of Nature, which are dead, inoperative things without Him! But Jehovah Himself fashions the clouds and prepares the rain. There is an Infinite Wisdom about the preparation of every raindrop and the sending of it in such form and way that it shall be balanced upon each blade of grass and shall hang there glittering in its perfection, and nourish even the least herb of the field. Only Infinite Wisdom could have thought of or prepared a single shower of rain! This rain is for the grass—does God think of the *grass*? Yes, not only of the cedars of Lebanon, but of grass, and not only of the grass that grows in the fruitful meadow, but of those little tufts which are, here and there, upon the

rugged mountains! He thinks of clouds, of rain and of grass which He makes to grow upon the mountains, that He may feed cattle. Does God, the high and lofty One, stoop to give to the beast His food? Ah, and more than that! He feeds all those wild birds that seem of no use to men—even the young ravens which clamor for the parent bird to return and fill them when they are hungry. Does God turn feeder of ravens? Ah, so it is. Then, again, blessed be His name! Praise you the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to such a condescending God as this! I am sure that you can draw the inferences for your own comfort. Do you seem like a little bit of grass on the bare mountainside? He has clouds and rain for you! Do you seem like a neglected bird in its nest, crying for food? He who feeds the ravens will feed you! The Hebrew has it, “the sons of the ravens,” and if God gives food to the sons of the ravens, He will certainly feed His own sons!

**10, 11.** *He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.* Again, you see, it is the same strain. It is not the great things or the mighty things that attract Him, but the little things, and the weak things, and the despised things.

**12, 13.** *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.* There shall be special hallelujahs from God’s own people. His holy city and His holy hill should magnify the thrice-holy God. O Beloved, if we are, indeed, children of that Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all Believers, let us prepare a new song to the Lord our God for all His mercy to us! Praise Him in your own houses, in “Jerusalem.” Praise Him in *His* own house, in “Zion.” Let your praise thus be continuous, where you dwell and where He dwells! “He has strengthened the bars of your gates.” The fortifications are finished and He has made all secure. Therefore, magnify His name.

**14.** *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat.* When the Church is peaceful and when the Gospel fills the saints—and they feed upon it and feel it to be the very finest of the wheat—should not God be praised? Does not the hallelujah come in here, again? Praise you the Lord for spiritual meat, and spiritual peace, and spiritual security!

**15.** *He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.* Oriental kings made a point of having swift postal arrangements by which they could send their decrees to the extremity of their dominions, sometimes on horses, and sometimes on swift camels. But God’s command, God’s decree, God’s “Word runs very swiftly.” He dwells in the midst of His people and He sends forth from Zion His decree. He dispatches His couriers and they run very swiftly to work His will. It is so in Providence—it is assuredly so in Grace! As to Providence, see what God does—

**16.** *He gives snow like wool.* People say, nowadays, “It snows.” They said among the Hebrews, “HE gives snow.” There seems to be a tendency to get further and further away from God in these very learned days. If this is all that science can do for us—put God further off—it shall be our injury rather than our blessing! “He gives snow like wool.” The flakes are

like the fleece and fall softly. Snow clothes the earth with a white, warm garment, as the well-washed sheep are clothed with wool.

**16.** *He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.* There are black frosts and white frosts—and you know how, sometimes, vegetation appears to be burnt up with cold. It is God who does it all—

**“He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.”**

**17.** *He casts forth His ice like morsels.* The hailstones come like morsels—like *crumbs*, that is the word—like crumbs of ice, or, as the ice is formed upon the lake, it comes like *crusts*. Either way, “He casts forth His ice like morsels.”

**17.** *Who can stand before His cold?* If God displays Himself as fire, who can stand against His flames? Or if He chooses to display Himself in cold, there is as much of consuming force about intense cold as about vehement heat! “Who can stand before His cold?”

**18.** *He sends out His Word, and melts them.* The icebergs float southward and are melted. The rivers that had been held in chains of ice leap into liberty and all at the Word of the Lord—“He sends out His word, and melts them.”

**18.** *He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow.* “This is the result of the laws of nature.” So say those who are still in nature’s darkness! “This is the work of God,” say those who have come out of that darkness into His marvelous light!

**19.** *He shows His word to Jacob.* Observe that when God’s people know God’s Word, it is as much the work of God as when the waters are loosed from their bands of ice!

**19.** *His statutes and His judgments to Israel.* The Lord does it according to His own Sovereign will.

**20.** *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD.* Here, you see again, is a peculiar reason for thanksgiving! “Praise you Jehovah.” “It is good to sing praises unto *our* God, for He has dealt with us in a special manner, with peculiar and discriminating Grace. ‘He has not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.’” Therefore are they silent, but let us not be dumb. With such a Revelation as we have, with such teachings of His Spirit to make the Lord known to us, let us not be ungrateful, but always praise His name!

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

# PEACE AT HOME AND PROSPERITY ABROAD

## NO. 314

**DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS, ON BEHALF OF THE  
LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.**

*“He makes peace in your borders and fills you with the  
finest of the wheat. He sends forth His commandment  
upon earth: His word runs very swiftly.”  
Psalm 147:14-15.*

PARDON me, my Brethren, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The Psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us, I think, this great Truth of God, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home and the going forth and the spread of God’s Word abroad. Both in the provinces of our own land and throughout the regions of the world. Our own Churches must be in a prosperous state.

As the second verse has it—“the Lord does build up Jerusalem.” We may then rest assured that “He will gather together the outcasts of Israel.” If there is in the Churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors and give us to see our heart’s desire. If this is not precisely the critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening’s discourse will be the connection between a healthy Church at home and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the Church of Christ. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this Psalm—“He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders and fills you with the finest of wheat.” When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show the connection between this and the sending forth of God’s commandment upon earth—the running swiftly of His Word. And then we shall conclude by pushing this principle home to the necessary inference.

**I.** First, then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important—the true piety of all her members. A Church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor—she never can be in such a condition that God can smile upon her complacently—if she is mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters are not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God’s people. If we take into our Churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger roll-book, we might, perhaps, be able to parade our numbers before the world and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain—but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward.

We have not conquered the world. We have only *yielded* to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for Church fellowship. I will grant you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage.

This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided. But on the other hand it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior’s mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the most stern firmness in executing a sacred trust and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible Church. If we could tomorrow bring into the Church a sufficient number

of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should, by succumbing to the temptation, procure a curse instead of a blessing.

In our purity, and in our purity, alone, we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles—let us once come back and attempt to nationalize the Church and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the Church and the world—and God’s blessing will be withdrawn from us. We shall cease to be strong within and mighty without.

Oh, that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of His Church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep’s clothing! That He would give us grace whereby we would be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly—to those who come before us seeking communion without satisfactory evidence that they belong to the living family of God—“You must go your way until the Spirit of God has touched your heart, for until you have received

the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of His faithful ones.”

Next to the sincere piety of all our Church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the soundness of that Gospel which we proclaim and preach. Soundness I say—and here, possibly, I may be touching upon a delicate subject—but that subject is of the utmost and highest importance! There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity—for that is not consistent with life—but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence.

I do not think the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in the millennium, when every Brother will be able to subscribe to every other Brother’s creed, when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences and expositions of the Gospel in the fullest sense of the word. But I do maintain there should be, and there must be, if our Churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Truths of God.

I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity’s sake and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated. When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice, Mr. Whitfield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same Truths of God and that the vitality of godliness was not mainly at issue in the controversy.

But, my Brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Spirit—if it should come to a matter of using Gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth—if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of Divine justice and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole Gospel, as they have been delivered to us—then it is time, my Brethren, once and for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn.

Against any who assails those precious vital Truths of God which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same Truth of God. We are continually told when one man contradicts another, that he does but see with other eyes. No, my Brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened.

There may be two views of the Truth of God, but two views of Truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other

the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to anticipate the time can come when “yes” and “no” can lie comfortably down in the same bed. I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Do you think such things might exist? Verily there were giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men. And we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God’s own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth.

A want of union about the Truth of God too clearly proves that the body of the Church is not in a healthy state. No man’s system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the Church. Alas, if her doctrines are tainted, her faith will not be maintained and the Church will become unsound. Who can tell what next may occur?

But not to tarry here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the Church at home will be more and more of the spirit of union. This Society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat denominational—it was never intended to be. Nor is it the fault of the maintainers—it is not because they have made it exclusive—but because other denominations have somewhat seceded and established societies of their own. The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the Establishment or not. I believe we are all eligible to become members and all may, as far as we can, assist in sending forward the Gospel by its means.

But alas, there lingers among our Churches—and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire—there lingers still a spirit of disunion because we do not agree in ceremonies. We must have many communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless, we are really and vitally one. We must have, I suppose, different walks—and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family and as parts of the same Divine body. Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand, there must be something like madness in the body. There cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself.

And if there are among us any remnants of the spirit of division, if there is anything in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off Brethren because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main—if it is so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy disease—there must be gray hairs here and there, which have stolen upon us though we knew it not. Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus.

I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Dis-

trust may arise from want of personal acquaintance—we need more frequently to come into company. And if the Churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think exists. And oh that this unity may grow and continue and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact! That its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points—purity of life, soundness of doctrine and unity of the ministers of the Church of Christ—will help to constitute a healthy Church at home. All these things, however, will never happen unless there is added another, namely, constant activity. We all have our times when we feel dull and listless and heavy—when we would rather be in bed all day than get up—rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit. Or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire.

We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the Church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness. Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but later they sit down again in calm security. We have hundreds of our Churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the enquiry, “How do you prosper?”—“Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the Church, but we are very comfortable.”

That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying and sinners perishing—when Hell is filling and the kingdom of Christ is not extending—yet quite comfortable they are. And they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the Church as wonders and prodigies, rather like comets that come now and then, than like sums which are to abide with us. And they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit and thinking that when the Church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking and is intoxicated.

When she is in health she is at work without her hands, praying with all her tongues, weeping with all her eyes and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors. Oh, my Brethren, we are all wrong when we think that the Church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. Is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the graveyard, the health of a fainting fit—a fit that is on the very verge of death—healthy? God be pleased to let loose some blood from us, that we may discover what the Church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair dishev-

eled and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity?

Rise up Virgin Daughter of Zion and let us behold you in your beauty. Shake yourself from the dust and put on your beautiful garments and ascend to your throne—then shall men see what you are. When you are idle and careless and prayerless, you are sick and ready to die. But when you are anxious and striving and travailing, then are you in the state in which your Lord would have you—you bless Him and He has blessed you.

One more point and I will conclude this description of the Church's healthiness. The Church is never healthy except when she abounds in prayer. I have known Prayer Meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple—a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter in order to spin out the time. Or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has caned upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes and then concluded by asking pardon for his short-comings.

And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those Brethren come and go and never feel that God has been in their midst—that they have never been near to the Throne of God, never had the wrestling with the angel, never brought a blessing down—for the man has been praying against time, “an occupying of the few minutes,” as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God.

Now, what Church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the Church is not prosperous if the Prayer Meetings are thin. It signifies nothing if that Church has sent up a hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society—write “Ichabod” on her walls, unless the Brethren meet together for prayer. The most erudite minister may instruct the people. The most earnest preacher may plead God's cause with men—but if he has not with him a band of men who plead man's cause with God—his pleadings will be in vain.

Shut up that house in which men have ceased to pray. Or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer. I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself—and I think I can speak for many others—a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us as the destitution of London does. For the City Missionaries and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day. We do pray for our own families and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away.

We may now and then see a Mohammedan in the street, or the dark face of a Hindu, and then our soul breathes a silent ejaculation. But alas,

for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen, who are in darkness, before the Throne of God. And how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations? Zion must avail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons but if she keeps back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan's weapon of "all-prayer," she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls.

Yes, my Brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us—then we may conclude that all is well with us. It shall be left to each individual heart and each member of the Church to answer for himself whether his own Church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test, namely—purity, soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

**II.** I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the Churches to degenerate into a lack of life and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result, God's people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word—places begin to get empty. Prayer Meetings become more and more deserted. The efforts of the Church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine. There is no life, no heart in it.

I am supposing a case, you see, a case which I trust we never may see. Things get worse and worse. The doctrines of the Gospel become expunged and unknown. They that fear the Lord no more speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the Society and foreign missions are sustained. Can you not imagine reading in the next report, "We have had no converts this year. Our income is still maintained. But notwithstanding that, our Brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages. In fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work" ?

Another year—the missionary spirit has grown cold in the Churches, its funds decrease. Another year and yet another—it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are necessary or not. We have come at last to the more advanced point which some have already reached and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, "Is it needful that we should extend the Gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it. We see it does nothing at home—shall we send that across the sea—that which is a drug on the market here? Shall we send and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Sidon and of Tyre, that which has not healed the daughters of Jerusalem?"

I can conceive that first one station, then another, would be given up. Those that would be maintained would only be kept up by reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of Evangelists. I can imagine the Church degenerating further and further and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad. You have only to look abroad upon nature and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties. Men come and some are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail. By some means or other the water is removed to another place and the spring is no more there.

You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare—there would no longer be visitors. Where multitudes of men and women were accustomed to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen. Or, suppose again there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits Suddenly the sun's fire dies out—its attractive power decreases also and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it? How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power that kept them there is gone? Prophecy is fulfilled. The sun is turned into darkness and the moon into blood and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the Church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God—the light of the world? And are not those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total blank darkness cover all the nations? Oh, yes, my Brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test. If once England's glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nothing? No. We must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders and we must be filled with the finest wheat, or else God's Word will not run very quickly, nor will His Commandments be sent far upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to show what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the purity of the Church at home and the progress of Christianity abroad—a direct connection. We shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by-and-by. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ's kingdom in other lands. An excellent minister of the Church in France told me—and told it with a sorrowful earnestness, too—that Protestantism received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of English Christian men there—those who claim Protestantism at least—if they were not members of our Churches.

“Now Sir,” said he, “when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant—an English Protestant—I will not say an actual member of your Church certainly—when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath Day.” And Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the Holy Day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, “Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here—do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?”

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris that it is a frightful and lamentable fact that men, when they go on the Continent, seem to go there to get rid of their religion. When they land on those shores they assume the garb of a traveler and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord’s Day! They are not seen worshipping God with their Brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained. I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad.

In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of L’Oratoire I think I speak also—I think I speak for five of them at least—I do beseech Christian men who are going abroad not to permit themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God.

Let me give you another fact which proves that when the Church is unsound at home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society I observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed. A trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness. Certain Brethren holding rather extreme Church views thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed. The effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was that by giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service.

The result was just this—they were informed by these pastors—good men doubtless—that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindus answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another—that there were professors of this one religion who had a greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon the Truth of God.

My Brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our Church members and of our missionaries upon the heathen world will be far more healthy and

effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive knowledge of the proceedings of the Church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great drawbacks upon our success abroad.

And yet the Agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect—but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our Churches are not true, if they are not kept by God, if they are not pure and holy and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit and when the missionary spirit evaporates, of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it. Yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave. Or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault! Put on its shroud and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions is lost in the Churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society.

We all know what the missionary spirit is and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of Grace in their own lands. It is that they may have those means carried to them—that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying and to earnest prayer for those that are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the Church and you have lost that spirit. We can never expect the ruddy flush of health upon the cheek, unless there is health within.

The missionary spirit is just that bloom which will soon be taken away as if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the Church. But further, if you take away the missionary spirit—all prayerfulness and that all powerfulness to rend the clouds of Heaven are withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, Brethren, once depart from our Churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails all spread and her spars well rigged—but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service. She can bring no glory to her God—carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of Heaven, unless there is prayer at home to wake up all the winds and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course.

With that want of prayer, too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our Churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing nowadays a lack of ministers for our own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them. I do know a brother who always makes it a rule if a young man displays any sort of ability and applies to him for a recommendation for College or otherwise—positively to throttle him if he can. “You,” he says. “Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, Sir—you are no good.”

And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one Church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service. Of course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train—them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved—we shall not have a right to expect God's blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out. But at times He works by means. And He makes the Church use means to bring out members.

The old Church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the Church had one young man with him and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor—there he was ready to work among the young men who had come out of that Church.

Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed. We do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our Churches ought to grow all that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them among themselves. They do not go *abroad* for *deacons*! Why not have pastors from among themselves that were raised from childhood in the Church? Ah, should we once become unsound in our Churches and prayer become cold—where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose blood was shed by heathen hands?

Where shall we find the successors to Knuibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingston, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of Divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your call? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him and a station where he may be maintained—but another thing to find your man. And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them. You may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift.

They might come up to that by-and-by. Your striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare—God may enrich them. And then you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard who never could surrender—but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them—even to the ends of the earth.

**III.** The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it is true and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the Church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear Brothers and

Sisters, let us remember that it must have also a connection with our own personal standing in the sight of God. Truth is like the crystal which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the *whole Church* is equally sure—when we bring it down to this—that our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness and Godliness of each individual.

If you were as a Christian, my Brothers and Sisters, a separate and distinct organism—a body entirely separate from everyone else—you might be terribly sick and no one else would suffer. But you are not so. Remember that you are a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. And we hold it to be a precious fact that if one member suffer, all the members suffer. If one member rejoice, all the members share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole? The Church had all things common in the Apostles' days in temporals. To this day she has all things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury—on the other hand we ought to contribute to the same.

If you contribute less, there is the less in the treasury. If your efforts are more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole Church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there are no temporal unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts and words of any one man does in a degree—however inappreciable to our senses—affect the deeds and actions of every living man and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation. There is no end to a word—it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake—the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bounds. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another and he upon another still, till the pulse of time—no, of eternity—may be made to throb through something that you have said or done.

You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of Hell forever and ever, or you may do a good work, which under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another. Look, then, you cold, you careless ones, look on this—you are not clear, you have helped to spoil the Church. Next time you go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the Church's prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the Church's lack. Next time you would complain of any minister's dullness, or of any Church's want of energy, oh, reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide.

If every man mended one, all would be mended. If every man had but one soul stirred and that soul his own, the whole Church would be stirred up! If it were possible for every member of the Church to be sound how

could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, how could there be any complaints? We have grown into the habit of praying for the Church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we should tie up and then take the ten-thronged whip of the Law and pull off strip after strip of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely—ourselves—our own individual selves. I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them.

I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what I can do for it. And so each of you ought to look on his fellow man. No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself. If it did so—or if you ever thought so—you have been both mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is cast on each one of us and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself and hear the, “Well done good and faithful servant,” or else, “You wicked and slothful servant.”

My dear Christian friends—members of our Churches—are you doing all you can for the souls of men? You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling tomorrow for someone who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, “I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that man’s salvation”? No. You cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, “If that man perish, I did not leave a single stone unturned.” No, we might say we have done something, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude—that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure—are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens—there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Hottentot in his kraal—perhaps further off from the kingdom of Heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the Gospel of Christ—a sin he has never committed, seeing he has never known it.

Ah, my Hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, “Such-and-such a broken-hearted penitent sat there.” These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans they have heard and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women. And is there not one here tonight who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined—ruined utterly, helplessly and

hopelessly—so far as you yourself are concerned, there is no hope of your salvation.

But there is help laid on One that is mighty to save—even Jesus Christ. Look out of yourself to Him and you are saved. Cast away all self-confidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickening words are, “Believe and live.” Oh, may the Lord enable you now to trust Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins ever so many. The hour which sees you look to Christ sees sin’s black garment all unbound and cast away. The hour which sees your eye salute the bleeding Savior, sees the eyes of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy.

“He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved,” be his sins ever so many. “He that believes not shall be damned,” be his sins ever so few. I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those who are “weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the Fall,” now to take the Savior, even now, for He is yours. You have a personal right to him, so surely as your hearts are willing to receive Him.

If you have nothing of your own, Christ is yours—take Him—His grace is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it. No one can deny you. Drink even to the full—and there shall be joy in Heaven and joy on earth over sinners saved.

May the Lord add His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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# THE SWIFTLY RUNNING WORD

## NO. 1607

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“His Word runs very swiftly.”*  
*Psalms 147:15.*

A WORD is the expression of the mind. What a man has thought may live and die within himself, but when he wishes his thought to live in the outer world, he embodies it in a word and thus his thought is made known. Thought without expression is as an arm uplifted, working nothing, though it is the mainspring of action. But according to the ability of the man, his thought is carried out into fact if he is able to speak a powerful word of command. Hence, as the garment of thought and the accomplishment of wish, a word is a very important thing. A word is the manifestation of a man. Dryden says—

*“Speech is the light, the morning of the mind.  
It spreads the beauteous images abroad,  
Which else lie furled and shrouded in the soul.”*

“Speak,” said the old philosopher, “that I may see you.” More of a man is seen in his words than in anything else belonging to him. You may look into his face and be mistaken. You may visit his house and not discover him. You may scan his business and misunderstand him. But if you hear his daily conversation, you shall soon know him! The heart babbles out its secrets when the tongue is in motion. As the full bucket betrays the water of the well, so is a man discerned by his speech. Thus a word takes a most prominent place in reference to all intelligent beings and this is peculiarly the case with the Lord our God. God’s Word is the manifestation of His secret thought. By it He reveals His decrees. By it He manifests His Nature. By it He carries out His purpose.

“He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.” If you wish to know God, you must know His Word. If you wish to perceive His power, you must see how He works by His Word. If you wish to know His purpose before it is actually brought to pass, you can only discover it by His Word. When you watch the events of Providence you are only observing what the Word of God is accomplishing as He sends it forth into the world. As He said to His servant, Ezekiel, so it is—“I am the Lord: I will speak and the Word that I shall speak shall come to pass.”

According to our text, “He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.” The Word, as it comes from God, takes several forms. At first it came forth as a fiat—“Let it be”—and it was. When there were no angels to hear Him. When matter did not exist to obey Him. When there was nothing but Himself, the Self-Existent One, Jehovah spoke and the things which are, began to be! Since then, He has spoken to His creatures by the word of command, which should always be obeyed

even as David said, “I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.” The Word of the Lord comes forth in the form of a precept from His Temple or a statute from His Throne and we ought most reverently to treasure up every syllable that God speaks to us in that form, for we are His servants.

He also speaks by way of teaching. He instructs us by revealing Himself through His Word. All true doctrine is the Word of God and is to be devoutly believed. Our prayer should be, “Give me understanding according to Your Word.” His Word is also spoken in the form of promises rich and free and gracious, the Word on which His children live. In this form it is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. It flashes forth, also, like lightning flames in threats, when God dooms the ungodly or warns them of what shall follow unless they repent.

Terrible, indeed, is the Word by which Justice takes vengeance upon the wicked! But chief of all and above all is THE WORD of whom John speaks—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God.” This is He of whom we read in Revelation, “He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God.” That Word is the Incarnation of God, wherein God has been pleased to manifest Himself more fully than by all other words or works, for in His Son we see the brightness of the Father’s Glory more than in all else besides, according to His own testimony—“He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” The name of God is written in plain letters in the Person of Jesus, so that even ignorant men may spell it out when their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit.

The Person, life, death, Resurrection and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are the Word which speaks out the heart of God and in His ministry, our Lord set forth the mind of God most fully, even as He said of His disciples, “I have given them Your Word.” To all these forms of God’s Word our text may be appropriately applied, for in each case, “His Word runs very swiftly.” I shall, first, ask you, by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to learn the lesson of the text. Secondly, let us look to the particular instances which illustrate the truth of the text. And then, thirdly, as the Lord shall help us, let us see what teaching we may individually gather from it for our own cases.

**I.** First, LET US LEARN THE LESSON OF THE TEXT—“His Word runs very swiftly.” We understand from this sentence, first, that the Word of God, which operated of old, is *still* operating. “By the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.” But God did not create the world and then leave it, otherwise it had crumbled back into the nothingness from which it came—“the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word, kept in store.” Creation is not like a watch which God has made and wound up to go by itself, but every movement of every wheel of the machinery of Nature is dependent upon the constant outgoing of power through the Word of God—for of Him and through Him are all things—and “by Him all things consist.”

Our wise men are continually talking of the laws of Nature and we know that there are such laws, or, in other words, it is a fact that God

usually acts in such-and-such a way. But to suppose that there is any *power* in the mere laws of Nature is absolutely absurd! You may make laws in your household that things are to be done in such-and-such a way, but unless somebody carries them out, laws are nothing. Locomotives obey certain laws of motion, but without steam to drive them the laws of motion will allow them to rust in the engine house! There is a law of gravity, but the force of gravity comes not from the *law*, but from *God*. There is a law of growth, but the power by which plants and animals grow is an energy which flows from God.

It may be a fact that force operates in such-and-such a manner, as a stream runs in a certain channel, but, as the channel is not the stream, so the *rule* of Nature is not the *power* of Nature. Man lives and all Nature exists by the Word of God, for, "none can keep alive his own soul." It is of our Lord that we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "upholding all things by the Word of His power." The Word of power with which God made the world is still pulsing through space. When we saw the comet the other evening flaming through the sky, we saw as much of the hand of God as did the angels when, for the first time, they beheld the morning star heralding the dawn! The light of the stars which you and I have seen so many hundreds of times is as much the result of Divine power as if, for the first time, those lamps of Heaven were hung out in the midnight sky.

The planets move in their mighty orbits with a force which is new every moment. The Lord of Hosts orders their marching. The fixed stars abide in their places because the hand which placed them in their sphere preserves them in it! Order is the result of the Lord's might constantly put forth, otherwise would all things run into a carnival of chaos and dissolve into destruction. As the bubble on the breaker bursts and is gone forever, so would the universe be dissolved at once and lost in nothingness were You not there, O God! His Word still operates and runs swiftly, even as of old. The heavens and the earth would be dissolved were it not that His Word upholds the pillars thereof. Well might they sing of old, "You, even You, are Lord alone; You have made Heaven, the Heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and You preserve them all; and the host of Heaven worship You."

Let us go a step further. The Word of God which operated at the first is still operating with the same degree of force. The text says, "His Word runs very swiftly," that is to say, it keeps its ancient pace. It has not begun to slacken its speed and we know what that was, for, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes He did fly upon the wings of the wind." There might be a gradual slackening and decline in the forces of Nature if they had been created by God and then set to drift by themselves. But as God is, still, everywhere present, working in the heavens and in the earth and in the seas, in all deep places and as in *everything*—all power continually proceeds from the hand of God—and there is no failure in anything.

Creation may, if God so pleases, wax old as does a garment, but the hand which created it is as full of power as ever. The sun's light and all else that is necessary for man will continue, according to the Divine ap-

pointment, and will never be exhausted while the Lord supplies them. If any natural force fails, it simply means that the Divine power is being withdrawn from that particular form of work. But the Word of power is the same. If science could prove that any force is waning, we should only believe that God is permitting certain created energies to slacken because He means to bring them to their end, having answered His design by them.

Men are always ready to object to the doctrine of the Divine working—"All things continue as they were," they say one day. And then another day they say, "All things are declining." Neither declaration is precisely true. There are great changes in the operations of God, but there is no change in the hand that operates! And still, today, as of old, God speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast. This world shall abide as long as God pleases—but when the time shall come, He that once spoke to the deeps and they deluged the world—will call to flames of fire and the earth shall be wrapped in them and the works of men that are therein shall be burned up. No palsy has seized upon the eternal arm—the closing scene of the world's story will be as grand as that with which the chapter of Creation opened!

"He faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding." Yet it is worthy of notice that the Word of God spoken of in the text operates in a *silent* manner. We are told that He sends out His Word and melts the ice, the frost, the snow. Did you *hear* that Word of God? You have seen stern Winter yield to the breath of Spring and you believe that the genial change was effected by God's Word—but did you *hear* a whisper? No, and *none* heard it, for the Word of God in Nature is the going forth of His silent will. "No speech, no language; their voice is not heard; yet their line has gone out through all the earth." Still it is called His *Word* and I want you to notice that fact because you are apt to think that God in the kingdom of His Grace is dependent upon *men's* lips and tongues and words.

I tell you that the Word of God which returns not to Him void is not the word from *my* tongue, but the Word from His own mind. God can, if He will, speak deep into the human heart without so much as a whisper from the preacher! His Word can enter men's souls though not a single sound is heard! We have known instances of persons who, when far away from the means of Grace, have, nevertheless, been reached by the still small voice of the Word of God in their spirits, which Word of God, "runs very swiftly." If God uses tongues and voices, as He generally does, let Him have all the Glory that He is pleased to link His potent Word to such a feeble agency. But the secret Word of power which runs swiftly is entirely independent of sounds and noises, of tongues and ears!

This is a fact that should comfort us all and it should make some of you who have been silent try to speak, since God's blessing does not rest on oratory and talent and the like. Have you not marked in this house—I speak without egotism—how, for more than 20 years the people have come together at every service, crowding these aisles and God has saved multitudes of souls? Critics say, "This man is not an orator!" And they speak the truth. I have never cultivated the arts of eloquence, or exhibited

the elegancies of language. I speak what I know of God's Word and bear my honest witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such words as come to hand. The almighty Word of God reaches and renews the heart and the more it is allowed to work in an unencumbered manner, in its own natural simplicity, the more victorious it will be! The Word, of itself, "runs very swiftly" and carnal wisdom does but hamper it!

Oh to let it lay aside every weight! I could wish that men would take oratory by the ears and hang it up like a felon, for it has been the plague and curse of the Church of God that men try to speak finely and prettily, garnishing their sentences with poetic flowers and polishing them with needless elaboration! Preach the Gospel, Sir, for *that* is your business! We are not place-hunters, who must please if they would win, but soul-hunters, who seek not to amuse men, but to save them! Proclaim God's Word in such words as your heart suggests. Pluck up by the roots the flowers that grow in God's fields and go not to the conservatory of learning and art to gather your fine prose! God will bless His own Word, for it is *His Word* which runs very swiftly!

Yet, note again, according to the text, God's Word is most effectual. This is the meaning of the phrase, "it runs very swiftly." None can deny this is the meaning of the phrase, "it runs very swiftly." None can resist it, for God is in it. It is God's will and when God wills it, what matters if all creation wills the contrary? "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The will of God would bear all opposers away as with a flood and sweep them like sear leaves before the tempest. There is little wonder that His Word runs very swiftly, for if God wills it, how can it be hindered? As it cannot be prevented altogether, so it cannot even be impeded if it is the very Word of God.

There *is* a Word of God which may be hindered—His Gospel, as proclaimed—it may be resisted and cast aside. But the veritable Word of God, the inward Word, the secret will of the Highest is not resisted—it sweetly conquers the human will without violating its free agency and leads men captive in chains which they do not wish to break—it holds them spell-bound by a force which they delight in! And they yield, charmed by the music of the love of God! It is glorious to think that God is still operating in the realm of Grace as well as of Nature by a power which is Omnipotent and this power runs very swiftly. There is no such thing as *time* with God, to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He may take centuries to accomplish His purposes, but if He wills it, all can be done in an instant! He may lengthen out the drama of Providence, even to thousands of years, but this is not for lack of power, for when He pleases, "He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

God's Word is never slow or lame. Neither can it be said of Him as of the hosts of Pharaoh, that His chariot wheels were taken off so that He drove them heavily. The counsel of the Lord stands forever! "The Lord of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Over your heads, O mor-

tal men, let the voice of this dread thunder roll—The Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Think not because you boast of your free agency that this can deprive Him of His almightiness— He still does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Who can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” Where the word of a king is, there is power, but what is the power of the word of the King of Kings? It “runs very swiftly.”

**II.** Thus I have tried to set forth the general Truth of God, now LET US NOTICE THE PARTICULAR INSTANCES OF IT. First, God’s “Word runs very swiftly” in the matter of Creation. What says the first chapter of Genesis about the making or fitting up of this world? It tells us that in its present condition this world was arranged in six days and on the seventh day the Lord rested from His work. Was ever such a word as this? Was ever so vast a deed accomplished in such a space of time?

It is possible that the creation of the world had taken place long before, for “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” but even for that first creation He needed no space of time, for His Word could create the universe with a flash. The Lord may have allowed ages upon ages to roll by before He ultimately came forth to perform the last upholstering of it for mankind—yet all was done when He spoke. God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He said, “Let there be a firmament,” and it was so. He spoke into being fish, fowl and beast and it was so—“In six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”—for His Word runs very swiftly.”

We still see, in the works of Nature, the changes which God works. The wind may blow ever so fiercely from the north, but when the Lord commands, it whirls about towards the south and the calm may be profound. But almost in an instant the hurricane sweeps and tosses up the mighty waves of the sea. The vast changes which God works in Nature are, to us, gradual in their results, else we should be unprepared for them and catastrophe would follow catastrophe. But still, as far as God is concerned, He acts instantaneously when He wills and as He wills—and His will in Creation is achieved the moment that it comes to be an expressed Word!

Look further into the field of Providence and see how the Word of God has been operating there and has run very swiftly. Consider His providential judgments. God warned men that He would destroy them for their sin. He gave them space for repentance and sent His servant, Noah, to be a preacher of righteousness. He made the ark to be a visible sermon to them. But when, at last, His patience was ended, it did not take Him long to pull up the sluices from below and to open the bottles of Heaven from above. How speedily did He cover the tops of the mountains with the destroying waves! Peter tells us that by the Word of God, the world which then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

Look further on to the cities of the plain. When they were ripe for destruction, Lot saw the sun rise on Sodom and all was quiet and still as on this Sabbath morning, but in an instant the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and destroyed it. When the Lord came to blows with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, how thick and fast the strokes came till the proud

tyrant's will was broken and he let the people go! Yes, "His Word runs very swiftly." Whether it is to turn the river into blood, or cover the land with darkness, or destroy it with hailstones, or to slay all the first-born of Egypt, "His Word runs very swiftly."

With a Word He slew the hosts of Sennacherib and stretched rider and horse in the deep sleep of death. His judgments are amazing! Look at Jerusalem—enquire for the ruins of her Temple—see how swiftly God fulfilled His decree of overthrow. Journey to Tyre, or Moab, or Edom. Get away to Babylon and Nineveh. Go and search and see where mighty empires once rioted in luxury. He told His Prophets that it would be so and lo, it has come to pass, for "His Word runs very swiftly." Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder! He burns the chariot in the fire, "for His Word runs very swiftly."

So also has His Word run very swiftly when it has been sent in peace. When God has meant to bless men, how swiftly His angels have taken wing to bring the gift from Heaven! Think of Israel shut up by the Red Sea with mountains on either hand. Oh how speedily the Lord descended from on high when He came to the rescue of His people!—

***"On cherub and on cherubim  
Full royally He rode,  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad."***

He divided the Red Sea and led Israel through it like a flock of sheep in the wilderness, swiftly coming, by His Word, to make a way for them through the heart of the sea. So all through Scripture you will observe that in the afflictions of God's people they have cried to Him and He has sent His Word and healed them! Glory be to the name of our Covenant God! In all His works, whether of judgment or of mercy, He tarries not for man, but executes His purpose even as He pleases.

For a moment let us reverently think OF THE ESSENTIAL WORD, to whom I referred, just now, whose name is to be always mentioned with deep devotion. How swiftly He ran upon His Father's business. As our poet puts it—

***"Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste He fled."***

The life of Jesus upon earth reached little beyond 30 years and yet His work was finished before He left this earth for Glory. The Redemption of mankind, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the finishing of transgression, the fulfilling of the Law—all was done in a short season! No, you must shorten that, because the major part of His life was spent in obscurity, doing, doubtless, much, but not doing that part of His lifework which is perceptible to us. In some *three* years or so His Father's public business was all accomplished!

With what diligence He worked! As to the actual Atonement, although I conceive it embraced the whole of His life, yet the central part of it lay in His passion and death. In the comet which has lately surprised us, much of the brilliance lies in its streaming tail, but the starry portion, or nucleus, is supposed to be the solid part of it. Even so, the reconciling work

of Jesus shines from the manger to the garden and yet the more apparent parts of it are crowded into the few hours between Gethsemane and the Cross. In that space was Satan bruised, Death slain, Hell vanquished, sin wiped out forever, the saints redeemed, God glorified and the earth purchased out of bondage! In a few hours of agony and shame and death our Lord effected all. "His Word runs very swiftly."

What a running that was when our Lord came forth as a Bridegroom out of His chamber and rejoiced as a strong man to run His race! He ran so swiftly for the joy that was set before Him, that He sweat, but not such sweat as yours and mine—it was a sweat of blood—such was the agony with which He ran to achieve the work which His Father had set before Him! He was no laggard. Does He not reprove your tardy footsteps and mine that, in so short a space, so grand, so infinite, so *eternal* a work should have been achieved? "Truly He ran very swiftly." But now, to leave that point, this is true of the Word of God in matters of Grace—"His Word runs very swiftly." I shall be sure to have your deep attention if you know the extreme importance of the Truth of God I am about to proclaim, namely, that the Word of God, when it comes to work effectually upon the hearts of men, is able to accomplish its end very swiftly, indeed.

I conceive that conviction of sin is, in many cases, if not in all, commenced in an instant! The unregenerated mind of man is like a flint and you do not break a flint by degrees—by *one* blow it is shivered. Here is the mind of man like a dark dungeon. God throws back the shutters and in streams the daylight at once. Conviction is like a wound—the mighty Spirit draws the great bow—away flies the arrow and in an *instant* it has pierced the heart! Through coats of mail of prejudice, that barbed shaft has gone and slain sin in the heart of man and that in a second of time! "His Word runs very swiftly."

I know that God works thus in regeneration. Regeneration is not a work of years—from the necessity of the case the essential part of it is worked in an instant. There must be a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is made alive! There can be no interval in which he is neither dead nor alive. Quickening must be an *instantaneous* operation. There must either be some life, however feeble, or else the man is dead—and the line between life and death must be narrow as a razor's edge. Though you and I cannot see any sharp line between the line, yet there is such a line. A man is either dead or alive. The quickening of a soul into spiritual life remains a proof that God's Word "runs very swiftly."

So, also, with regard to justification. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he is justified at once. I can show you that this must be so. A man may be guilty or not guilty, but he cannot be anywhere between the two. He may, according to the legal language of Scotland, be in a condition in which the charge is, "not proven but before God, who needs no proof, a man must either stand condemned or pardoned, and there cannot be an instant between the two." In one moment God says to the guilty, "I forgive you." Pardon is an instantaneous gift. You can be forgiven all your sins in half the tick of a clock and pass from death to life more swiftly than I can utter the words!

How wonderful it is to see the change which the Grace of God makes in the human heart in conversion! A man is not turned round and converted all at once, but the commencement of that turn comes at some particular moment and just at that moment it often happens that his most cherished idols come tumbling down! The idolatry of his soul is effectually rebuked. He cannot understand it, but the thing he once loved he begins to hate, while the things he hated, all of a sudden he loves and there is achieved in him a marvelous change! An objector declared, the other day, that we make out that a character is produced in men in a few hours. That a life-building is run up during a single service. I am not about to deny the charge! The statement is not quite correct, but it will suffice!

We have all heard of the minister who visited a dying woman and was the means of bringing her to a joyful faith in Christ. But before he had left the house she was dead—he was known to say that he found her in a state of Nature, saw her in a state of Grace and left her in a state of Glory—and all within an hour! And so we do not make much of the power of God to accomplish wonders in a brief space of time! The new birth is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. It is impossible under any other view of things. If this miracle could be taken away from Christianity, what would remain?

Conversion and regeneration remain as the standing phenomena by which Christianity is continually proven to be Divine. The Word of God all of a sudden transforms the very nature of men and they enter into an altogether new state of life out of which there comes a character which glorifies God! The essence of that character is created in an instant! The Seed of God out of which it will all come is implanted at once. “His Word runs very swiftly” Adoption is also one of these rapid gifts. A man is made a child of God in an instant, for he may not be a child of God and he may be a child of God, but he cannot be half way between. There must be an instant in which adoption is bestowed and that instant I quote to illustrate the text—

***“His Word runs very swiftly.”***

Note again, dear Brothers and Sisters, that this is not only true of salvation at first, but it is true of the work of Grace in the heart all along. Do you feel dull and heavy this morning? God can revive you in a moment! “Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Have you backslidden like Laodicea? Have you fallen into lukewarmness? “Ah, it will take months,” you say, “for me to get back.” It need not, for here is Christ’s Word to Laodicea, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Open the door and let Christ come in and all will be healed! “His Word runs very swiftly.”

Are you desponding, are you despairing? He can take away your ashes and put upon your head the coronet of beauty in an instant! What said the spouse in the Canticles? “The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” It need not take a long time for you to be refreshed and restored—Jesus can come with the riches of His Grace and straightway make you to rejoice in Him! Did not

Jesus work immediate cures on the palsied and the lame? Is He not equally mighty to bless? Our Churches frequently require backsliders to wait a long time before they can be received. If a Brother wanders, the Churches generally deliver him for years to Satan and then, perhaps, try to get him back.

But it should not be so! John looked after Peter directly after Peter had been cursing and swearing and denying his Lord. And Jesus, Himself, said, "Go, tell My disciples and Peter," within three days after Peter had fallen. My Lord's forgiving love runs very swiftly! My Lord's restoring Grace is swifter than an eagle's wings! As it is with individuals, so it is with Churches. A whole Church can be revived on a sudden—no, not only a whole Church, but a *group* of Churches! No, not only that, but, if God wills it, *all* the Churches in Christendom may be refreshed with showers of blessing within another week. "His Word runs very swiftly."

Remember how it was at the first. Within a short time after Pentecost all nations had heard the Word of God, so that Paul could say, "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Like the coming of the morning, the Word of the Lord shone forth under the whole Heaven right speedily! It will be so again, but we must first be prepared for it. The vessels must be purged before the Master can use them in His great work. If God were to use most Christians and most Christian ministers in their present condition as instruments with which to accomplish His work, we might pass through centuries of centuries before it would be finished! But He can change all this and make His servants to be like angels and His ministers like flames of fire!

Many move along in Christ's work at a snail's pace, but if the Lord were to visit the aforesaid trudging fathers and make them leap like a hart with intense desire and bravery of faith—and *then* send His own Word by them—what is there to hinder a great revival? Suppose all the Church should wake up tomorrow with desires for days of prayer? What is there to prevent God's hearing the united cry of His people? What is there to hinder Him from raising up hundreds of ministers to preach with tongues of fire? What is there to prevent missionaries going forth to the utmost ends of the earth? Who can stay His hand when once He makes bare His arm and comes forth to the fight?

Let us have greater belief in God! We scarcely believe in Him now! We are always measuring the balance to the credit of the missionary societies and counting up the agents. I believe in our excellent societies, but I believe in *God* over the head of them all. I believe in agencies, modes, systems, methods, but I believe much more in *God*, who can do far more abundantly than we either ask or think! May the Lord take us out into the deep and then we shall let down our nets for a catch and take a great multitude of fish! Alas, now we paddle about near shore and catch a few shrimp and boast of our wonderful success.

**III.** We shall close by noting WHAT IS THE TEACHING THAT YOU AND I MAY GET OUT OF THIS SUBJECT? One lesson is this. The seeking sinner can be saved *now*. If he seeks salvation at once, he can have it at

once. Is there a movement in any mind after God? Do you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father"? Have you got as far as that? How long will it take you to get to your Father? Well, I cannot tell you—it is a long way—but let me whisper in your ear that there is another calculation. How long will it take your Father to come to you? The parable proceeds to say, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran."

I cannot guess how fast the old gentleman in the parable could run, for hearts are often stronger than legs, but I know that He to whom the parable points when *He* runs, is not to be overtaken! If God runs, my Brothers and Sisters, what a pace must be meant! Sinner, if you are rising to go to Him, He runs to meet you! "His Word runs very swiftly."—

**"Oh, how swift Divine compassion  
Runs to meet the mourning soul!  
And by words of consolation  
Makes the wounded spirit whole!"**

We read in the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm of those who drew near to the gates of death and in their extremity, at the last gasp, they cried unto the Lord. Immediately, we read, "He sent His Word and healed them." The cure was as speedy as it was complete! Why, the Lord can outstrip *time*! Is it not written, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"? This beats the telegraph! You get an answer *before* you send the message, or while you are writing the message, here comes the reply!

O poor Soul, be comforted! You may have immediate pardon, immediate adoption, immediate justification! Mercy comes in a moment to you and you may go your way saying, "I have it! I have it! Why have I been looking so long for it, when the Word of God is near me, on my lips and in my heart?" God grant you Grace to receive, at this moment, the Word which saves the soul. Another lesson, and that has reference to our work for the souls of others. If God's Word runs very swiftly, then it can even overtake those who run away from it! Not only can the Lord come quickly to those who *seek* Him, but He can overtake those who hasten away from Him! I can see the sheep running away. At what a rate they rush! Sheep never run so fast after the shepherd as *away* from him—they are nimble enough when once they get through a gap. Away they go!

They are over the hill and out of sight in no time. Will the shepherd catch them? That blessed Word who is their Shepherd, can He overtake the wanderers? Yes, "His Word runs very swiftly—"He can overtake the runaways. If a sheep has reached the brink of a precipice, the Great Shepherd runs so swiftly that He can save it even now. I say this to you workers that you may be encouraged to go to sick beds; that you may be encouraged to speak to aged men and women; that you may not think *anybody* is too far gone for Christ. If it were certain that without conversion a person would be in Hell in five minutes, it would *still* be both your *duty* and your *privilege* to preach the Gospel to him and to do it believing that in the space of *five minutes* the Grace of God could save Him!

"Dangerous doctrine," says an objector, "people will be tempted to put off conversion." Alas, if they did not forge an excuse out of this Truth of God, they would manufacture it out of another, for when men mean to do wrong, any perversion will serve their turn! I cannot deny a Truth because

wicked men pervert it; that would be ridiculous! A rope is a good thing—would you have us destroy all the ropes in the world because a few madmen hang themselves with them? We will proclaim it to the ends of the earth that the Lord can save at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour! It is not too late for any of you, however aged you may be. What if you are to die tomorrow? I leave an impression that some here are not far from their end, yet, “His Word runs very swiftly,” and even *now* He can save you!

The dying thief forbids the idea that any praying penitent shall apply to Christ and find it too late. Postpone not salvation—but if you have delayed for years, make haste at once and may God’s infinite mercy come to you at the same hour. I close with this further remark. If you and I, dear Friends, are not numbered among the unconverted, but are really saved this morning and yet we are very heavy of heart, there is comfort here. The Lord can, at once, give us joy and peace. “I have a great trouble,” you say, “and if I do not get help by tomorrow night, I do not know what will become of me.” Well, God can deliver you by tomorrow night—“His Word runs very swiftly.”

“Oh, but I have a dread upon my heart and if I do not soon get rid of it, I shall be driven to despair.” He can console you at once, for the Comforter is already given. “I should like to come to the communion table,” says one. “I have not been there for a long time, for I do not feel fit and I do not think I can be prepared for the solemn service in the short space of one afternoon.” Oh yes, you may, for, “His Word runs very swiftly.” If Jesus washes your feet, you shall be clean every whit and clean at once! He can bear you up to the heights of fellowship and bring you into very close union with Himself in a moment of time. Limit not the Almighty as to speed—limit Him not in *any* way—with God all things are possible!

He can cause your dry rod to bud and blossom and bear fruit in an hour. Commit yourself to Him and pray Him to make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight and He can do it—and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

[Some years ago we prepared a large work for use at Family Prayer called, “The Interpreter.” It is an arrangement of the Scriptures for daily reading and short comments of our own are added. We are afraid that the present generation of our readers do not know of it. It cost us two years of steady labor and we should like to see it largely used. It is a fine volume and if purchased in the best binding it is a family treasure, to be handed down as an heirloom.—C. H. S.]

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# FROST AND THAW

## NO. 670

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes;  
He casts out His hail like morsels.  
Who can stand before His cold? He sends out  
His word and melts them;  
He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.”  
Psalm 147:16-18.*

LOOKING out of our window one morning we saw the earth robed in a white mantle—in a few short hours the earth had been covered to a considerable depth with snow. We looked out again in a few hours and saw the fields as green as ever and the plowed fields as bare as if no single flake had fallen! It is no uncommon thing for a heavy fall of snow to be followed by a rapid thaw. These interesting changes are worked by God, not only with a purpose toward the outward world, but with some design toward the spiritual realm. God is always a teacher. In every action that He performs He is instructing His own children and opening up to them the road to inner mysteries.

Happy are those who find food for their Heaven-born spirits, as well as for their mental powers in the works of the Lord’s hand. I shall ask your attention, first, to the operations of nature spoken of in the text. And, secondly, to those operations of Divine Grace of which they are the most fitting symbols.

**I.** Consider first, THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE. We shall not think a few minutes wasted if we call your attention to the hand of God in frost and thaw, even upon natural grounds.

**1.** Observe the directness of the Lord’s work. I rejoice as I read these words, to find how present our God is in the world. It is not written, “the laws of nature produce snow,” but, “HE gives snow,” as if every flake came directly from the palm of His hand. We are not told that certain natural regulations form moisture into frost—no, but as Moses took ashes of the furnace and scattered them upon Egypt, so it is said of the Lord, “HE scatters the frost like ashes.” It is not said that the Eternal has set the world going, and by the operation of its machinery ice is produced. Oh no, but every single granule of ice descending in the hail is from God—“HE casts out His hail like morsels.”

Even as the slinger distinctly sends the stone out of his sling, so the path of every hailstone is marked by the Divine power. The hail is called, you observe, “His hail.” And in the next sentence we read of His cold. These words make nature strangely magnificent. When we look upon every hailstone as *God’s* hail, how precious the watery diamonds become! When we feel the cold nipping our limbs and penetrating through every garment, it consoles us to remember that it is *His* cold. When the thaw comes, see how the text speaks of it—“He sends out His word.”

He does not leave it to certain forces of nature, but like a king, “He sends out His word and melts them; He causes HIS wind to blow.” He has a special property in every wind—whether it comes from the north to freeze, or from the south to melt—it is HIS wind! Behold how in God’s temple everything speaks of His Glory. Learn to see the Lord in all scenes of the visible universe, for truly He works all things.

This thought of the directness of the Divine operations must be carried into Providence. It will greatly comfort you if you can see God’s hand in your losses and crosses. Surely you will not murmur against the direct agency of your God! This will put an extraordinary sweetness into daily mercies, and make the comforts of life more comfortable still, because they are from a Father’s hand. If your table is scantily furnished it shall suffice for your contented heart when you know that your Father spread it for you in wisdom and love. This shall bless your bread and your water! This shall make the bare walls of an ill-furnished room as resplendent as a palace, and turn a hard bed into a couch of down.

My Father does it all. We see His smile of love even when others see nothing but the black hand of Death smiting our best beloved. We see a Father’s hand when the pestilence lays our cattle dead upon the plain. We see God at work in mercy when we ourselves are stretched upon the bed of languishing. It is ever our Father’s act and deed! Do not let us get beyond this—but rather let us enlarge our view of this Truth of God and remember that this is true of the little as well as of the great. Let the lines of a true poet strike you—“If pestilence stalks through the land, you say the Lord has done it—has He not done it when an aphid creeps upon the rosebud? If an avalanche tumbles from its Alp, you tremble at the will of Providence—is not that will as much concerned when the sere leaves fall from the poplar?” Let your hearts sing of everything—Jehovah-Shammah—the Lord is there.

**2.** Next, I beg you to observe with thanksgiving the ease of Divine working. These verses read as if the making of frost and snow were the simplest matter in all the world! A man puts his hand into a wool-pack and throws out the wool. God gives snow as easily as that! “He gives snow like wool.” A man takes up a handful of ashes and throws them into the

air so that they fall around. "He scatters the frost like ashes." Frost and snow are marvels of nature! Those who have observed the extraordinary beauty of the ice crystals have been enraptured, and yet they are like morsels—just as easily as we cast crumbs of bread outside the window to the robins during wintry days!

When the rivers are frozen hard, and the earth is held in iron chains, then the melting of the whole—how is that done? Not by kindling innumerable fires, nor by sending electric shocks from huge batteries through the interior of the earth—no—"He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow." The whole matter is accomplished with a word and a breath. If you and I had any great thing to do, what puffing and panting, what straining and tugging there would be! Even the great engineers who perform marvels by machinery make much noise and stir about it.

It is not so with the Almighty One. Our globe spins round in 24 hours, and yet it does not make so much noise as a humming top! And yonder ponderous worlds rolling in space track their way in silence. If I enter a factory I hear a deafening dropping over a wheel. There is a never ceasing click-clack, or an undying hum—but God's great wheels revolve without noise or friction! Divine machinery works smoothly. This case is seen in Providence as well as in nature. Your heavenly Father is as able to deliver you as He is to melt the snow, and He will deliver you in as simple a manner if you rest upon Him. He opens His hand and supplies the want of every living thing as readily as He works in nature. Mark the ease of God's working—He does but open His hand.

**3.** Notice in the next place the variety of the Divine operations in nature. When the Lord is at work with frost as His tool, He creates snow, a wonderful production—every crystal being a marvel of art. But then He is not content with snow—from the same water He makes another form of beauty which we call frost, and yet a third lustrous sparkling substance, namely glittering ice! And all these by the one agency of *cold*. What a marvelous variety the educated eye can detect in the several forms of frozen water!

The same God who solidified the flood with cold soon melts it with warmth. But even in thaw there is no monotony of manner—at one time the joyous streams rush with such impetuosity from their imprisonment that rivers are swollen and floods cover the plains. At another time, by slow degrees, in scanty driblets, the drops regain their freedom. The same variety is seen in every department of nature. So in Providence the Lord has a thousand forms of frosty trials with which to try His people, and He has ten thousand beams of mercy with which to cheer and comfort them!

He can afflict you with the snow trial, or with the frost trial, or with the ice trial if He wills. And another time He can, with His word, relax the bonds of adversity, and that in countless ways. Whereas men are tied to two or three methods in accomplishing *their* will, God is infinite in understanding and works as He wills by ways unknown of mortal minds.

**4.** I shall ask you, also, to consider the works of God in nature in their swiftness. It was thought a wonderful thing in the days of Ahasuerus that letters were sent by post upon swift horses. In our country we thought we had arrived at the age of miracles when the axles of our cars glowed with speed, and now that the telegraph is at work we stretch out our hands into infinity! But what is our speed compared with that of God's operations? Well does the text say, "He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly." Forth went the word, "Open the treasures of snow," and the flakes descended in innumerable multitudes. And then it was said, "Let them be closed," and not another snow-feather was seen.

Then spoke the Master, "Let the south wind blow and the snow be melted," and it disappeared at the voice of His word. Believer, you cannot tell how soon God may come to your help. "He rode upon a cherub and did fly," says David, "Yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." He will come from above to rescue His beloved. He will rend the heavens and come down! With such speed will He descend that He will not stay to draw the curtains of Heaven, but He will rend them in His haste and make the mountains flow down at His feet—that He may deliver those who cry unto Him in the hour of trouble. That mighty God who can melt the ice so speedily can take to Himself the same eagle wings and hasten to your deliverance. Arise, O God! And let Your children be helped, and that right quickly!

**5.** One other thought. Consider the goodness of God in all the operations of nature and Providence. Think of that goodness negatively. "Who can stand before His cold?" You cannot help thinking of the poor in a hard winter—only a hard heart can forget them when you see the snow lying deep. But suppose that snow continued to fall! What is there to hinder it? The same God who sends us snow for one day could do the like for fifty days if He pleased. Why not?

And when the frost pinches us so severely, why should it not be continued month after month? We can only thank the goodness which does not send "His cold" to such an extent that our spirits expire. Travelers towards the North Pole tremble as they think of this question, "Who can stand before His cold?" For cold has a degree of omnipotence in it when God is pleased to let it loose. Let us thank God for the restraining mercy by which He holds the cold in check.

Not only negatively, but positively there is mercy in the snow. Is not that a suggestive metaphor? "He gives snow like wool." The snow is said to warm the earth. It protects those little plants which have just begun to peep above ground and might otherwise be frostbitten. As with a garment of down the snow protects them from the extreme severity of cold. Watts sings, in his version of the hundred-and-forty-seventh Psalm—

***"His flakes of snow like wool He sends,  
And thus the springing corn defends."***

It was an idea of the ancients that snow warmed the heart of the soil, gave it fertility, and therefore they praised God for it. Certainly there is much mercy in the frost, for pestilence might run a far longer race if it were not that the frost cries to it, "Up to here shall you come, but no farther." Noxious insects would multiply until they devoured the precious fruits of the earth if sharp nights did not destroy millions of them so that these pests are swept from off the earth. Though man may think himself a loser by the cold, he is a great ultimate gainer by the decree of Providence which ordains winter!

The quaint saying of one of the old writers that, "snow is wool, and frost is fire, and ice is bread, and rain is drink," is true, though it sounds like a paradox. There is no doubt that frost, in breaking up the soil, promotes fruitfulness, and so the ice becomes bread. Thus those agencies which for the moment deprive our workers of their means of sustenance, are the means by which God supplies every living thing. Mark, then, God's goodness as clearly in the snow and frost as in the thaw which clears the winter's work away.

Christian, remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity. Rest assured that when God is pleased to send out the biting winds of affliction He is in them, and He is always love—as much love in sorrow as when He breathes upon you the soft south wind of joy. See the loving-kindness of God in every work of His hand! Praise Him—He makes summer and winter—let your song go round the year! Praise Him—He gives day and sends night—thank Him at all hours! Cast not away your confidence, it has great recompense of reward.

As David wove the snow, and rain, and stormy wind into a song, even so combine your trials, your tribulations, your difficulties and adversities into a sweet Psalm of praise, and say perpetually—

***"Let us, with a gladsome mind,  
Praise the Lord, for He is kind."***

Thus much upon the operations of nature. It is a very tempting theme, but other fields invite me.

**II.** I would address you very earnestly and solemnly upon THOSE OPERATIONS OF GRACE OF WHICH FROST AND THAW ARE THE OUT-

WARD SYMBOLS. There is a period with God's own people when He comes to deal with them by the frost of the Law. The Law is to the soul as the cutting north wind. Faith can see love in it, but the carnal eye of sense cannot. It is a cold, terrible, comfortless blast. To be exposed to the full force of the Law of God would be to be frostbitten with everlasting destruction. Even to feel it for a season would congeal the marrow of one's bones and make one's whole being stiff with fear. "Who can stand before His cold?"

When the Law comes forth thundering from its treasures, who can stand before it? The effect of law-work upon the soul is to bind up the rivers of human delight. No man can rejoice when the terrors of conscience are upon him. When the Law of God is sweeping through the soul, music and dancing lose their joy—the bowl forgets its power to cheer—and the enchantments of earth are broken. The rivers of pleasure freeze to icy dependency. The buds of hope are suddenly nipped and the soul finds no comfort.

It was satisfied once to grow rich, but rust and canker are now upon all gold and silver. Every promising hope is frost-bitten, and the spirit is winter-bound in despair. This cold makes the sinner feel how ragged his garments are. He could strut about when it was summer weather and think his rags right royal robes—but now the cold frost finds out every tear in his garments, and in the hands of the terrible Law he shivers like the leaves upon the aspen. The north wind of judgment searches the man through and through. He did not know what was in him, but now he sees his inward parts to be filled with corruption and rottenness.

These are some of the terrors of the wintry breath of the Law. This frost of Law and terrors only tends to harden. Nothing splits the rock or makes the cliff tumble like frost when succeeded by thaw, but frost alone makes the earth like a mass of iron breaking the plowshare which would seek to pierce it. A sinner under the influence of the Law of God, apart from the Gospel, is hardened by despair and cries, "There is no hope, and therefore I will go after my lusts. Whereas there is no Heaven for me after this life, I will make a Heaven out of this earth! And since Hell awaits me, I will at least enjoy such sweets as sin may afford me here."

This is not the fault of the Law—the blame lies with the corrupt heart which is hardened by it. Nevertheless, such is its effect. When the *Lord* has worked by the frost of the Law, He sends the thaw of the Gospel. When the south wind blows from the land of promise bringing precious remembrances of God's fatherly pity and tender loving-kindness, then straightway the heart begins to soften and a sense of blood-bought pardon speedily dissolves it. The eyes fill with tears, the heart melts in tenderness, rivers of pleasure flow freely and buds of hope open in the cheerful

air! A heavenly spring whispers to the flowers that were sleeping in the cold earth—they hear its voice, and lift up their heads, for “the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

God sends His Word, saying, “Your warfare is accomplished, and your sin is pardoned.” And when that blessedly cheering Word comes with power to the soul and the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit acts like the warm south wind upon the heart, then the waters flow and the mind is filled with holy joy, and light, and liberty!—

**“The legal wintry state is gone,  
The frosts are fled, the spring comes on.  
The sacred turtledove we hear  
Proclaims the new, the joyful year.”**

Having shown you that there is a parallel between frost and thaw in nature and Law and Gospel in Grace, I would utter the same thoughts concerning Grace which I gave you concerning nature.

1. We began with the directness of God’s works in nature. Now, beloved Friends, remark the directness of God’s works in Grace. When the heart is truly affected by the Law of God. When sin is made to appear exceedingly sinful. When carnal hopes are frozen to death by the Law. When the soul is made to feel its barrenness and utter death and ruin—*this* is the finger of God! Do not speak of the *minister*. It was well that he preached earnestly—God has used him as an instrument—but God works all.

When the thaw of Divine Grace comes, I pray you will discern the distinct hand of God in every beam of comfort which gladdens the troubled conscience, for it is the Lord, alone, who binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds! We are far too apt to stop in instrumentalities. Folly makes men look to sacraments for heart-breaking or heart-healing, but sacraments all say, “It is not in us.” Some of you look to the preaching of the Word and look no higher. But all true preachers will tell you, “It is not in us.”

Eloquence and earnestness at their highest pitch can neither break nor heal a heart. This is *God’s* work! Yes, and not God’s *secondary* work in the sense in which the philosopher admits that God is in the laws of nature—but God’s personal and *immediate* work. He puts forth His own hand when the conscience is humbled, and it is by His own right hand that the conscience is eased and cleansed. I desire that this thought may abide upon your minds for you will not praise God otherwise. Nor will you be sound in doctrine.

All departures from sound doctrine on the point of conversion arise from forgetfulness that it is a *Divine* work from first to last—that the faintest *desire* after Christ is as much the work of God as the gift of His dear

Son—and that our whole spiritual history through, from the Alpha to the Omega, the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. As you have evidently seen the finger of God in casting forth His ice and in sending thaw, so I pray you recognize the handiwork of God in giving you a sense of sin and in bringing you to the Savior's feet. Join together in heartily praising the wonder-working God who does all things according to the counsel of His will—

***“Our seeking Your face  
Was all of Your Grace!  
Your mercy demands and shall have all the praise:  
No sinner can be  
Beforehand with You,  
Your Grace is preventing, almighty and free.”***

2. The second thought upon nature was the ease with which the Lord worked. There was no effort or disturbance. Transfer that to the work of Divine Grace. How easy it is for God to send law-work into the soul! You stubborn Preacher, you cannot touch him! And even Providence has failed to awaken him. He is dead—altogether dead in trespasses and sins! But if the glorious Lord will graciously send forth the wind of His Spirit, that will melt him.

The swearing reprobate, whose mouth is blackened with profanity—if the Lord does but look upon him and make bare His arm of Irresistible Grace—shall yet praise God and bless His name! And he will live to His honor. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel. Persecuting *Saul* became loving *Paul*, and why should not that person be saved of whose case you almost despair? Your husband may have many points which make his case difficult, but no case is desperate with God! Your son may have offended both against Heaven and against you, but God can save the most hardened. The sharpest frost of obstinate sin must yield to the thaw of Divine Grace. Even huge icebergs of crime must melt in the Gulf stream of infinite love.

Poor Sinner, I cannot leave this point without a word to *you*. Perhaps the Master has sent the frost to you, and you think it will never end. Let me encourage you to hope, and yet more, to *pray* for gracious visitations. Miss Steele's verses will just suit your mournful, yet hopeful state—

***“Stern winter throws his icy chains,  
Encircling nature round.  
How bleak, how comfortless the plains,  
Late with bright verdure crowned!  
The sun withdraws his vital beams,  
And light and warmth depart.  
And, drooping lifeless, nature seems  
An emblem of my heart—  
My heart, where mental winter reigns  
In night's dark mantle clad,***

***Confined in cold, inactive chains!  
How desolate and sad!  
Return, O blissful sun, and bring  
Your soul-reviving ray—  
This mental winter shall be spring,  
This darkness cheerful day.”***

It is easy for God to deliver you. He says, “I have blotted out like a thick cloud your transgressions.” I stood the other evening looking up at a black cloud which was covering all the heavens and I thought it would surely rain. I entered the house and when I came out again the sky was all blue—the wind had driven the clouds away. So may it be with your soul. It is an easy thing for the Lord to put away sin from repenting sinners. All obstacles which hindered our pardon were removed by Jesus when He died upon the Cross, and if you believe in Him you will find that He has cast your sins into the depths of the sea! If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believe.

**3.** The next thought concerning the Lord’s work in nature was the variety of it. Frost produces a sort of trinity in unity—snow, frost, ice—and when the thaw comes its ways are many. So is it with the work of God in the heart. Conviction comes not alike to all. Some convictions fall as the snow from Heaven—you never hear the flakes descend—they alight so gently one upon the other. There are softly coming convictions—they are felt, but we can scarcely tell when we began to feel them. A true work of repentance may be of the gentlest kind.

On the other hand, the Lord casts forth His ice like morsels—the hailstones rattle against the window and you think they will surely force their way into the room! And to many persons convictions come beating down till they remind you of hailstones. There is variety. It is as true a frost which produces the noiseless snow as that which brings forth the terrible hail. Why should you want hailstones of terror? Be thankful that God has visited you, but do not dictate to Him the way of His working.

With regard to the Gospel thaw. If you may but be pardoned by Jesus, do not stipulate as to the manner of His Grace. Thaw is universal and gradual, but its commencement is not always discernible. The chains of winter are unloosed by degrees—the surface ice and snow melt—and by-and-by the warmth permeates the entire mass till every rock of ice gives way. But while thaw is universal and visible in its *effects* you cannot see the mighty power which is doing all this. Even so you must not expect to discern the Spirit of God.

You will find Him gradually operating upon the entire man, enlightening the understanding, freeing the will, delivering the heart from fear, inspiring hope, waking up the whole spirit, gradually and universally working upon the mind and producing the manifest effects of comfort, and

hope, and peace. But you can no more *see* the Spirit of God than you can see the south wind. The effect of His power is to be *felt*, and when you feel it, do not marvel if it is somewhat different from what others have experienced. After all, there is a singular likeness in snow and frost and ice, and so there is a remarkable sameness in the experience of all God's children! But there is still a great variety in the inward operations of Divine Grace.

**4.** We must next notice the rapidity of God's works. "His word runs very swiftly." It did not take many days to get rid of the last snow. A contractor would take many a day to cart it away, but God sends forth His word and the snow and ice disappear at once. So is it with the soul—the Lord often works rapidly when He cheers the heart. You may have been a long time under the operation of His frosty Law, but there is no reason why you should be another hour under it. If the Spirit enables you to trust in the finished work of Christ, you may go out of this house rejoicing that every sin is forgiven!

Poor Soul, do not think that the way from the horrible pit is to climb, step by step, to the top! Oh, no! Jesus can set your feet upon a rock before the clock shall have gone round the dial. He can, in an instant, bring you from death to life, from condemnation to justification. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," was spoken to a dying thief, black and defiled with sin. Only believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!

**5.** Our last thought upon the operation of God was His goodness in it all. What a blessing that God did not send us more law-work than He did! "Who can stand before His cold?" Oh, Beloved, when God has taken away from man natural comfort and made him feel Divine wrath in his soul, it is an awful thing! Speak of a haunted man—no man need be haunted with a worse ghost than the remembrance of his old sins.

The childish tale of the sailor with the old man of the mountain on his back who pressed him more and more heavily is more than realized in the history of the troubled conscience. If one sin does but leap on a man's back it will sink the sinner through every standing place that he can possibly mount upon! He will go down, down, under its weight till he sinks to the lowest depths of Hell. There is no place where sin can be borne till you get upon the Rock of Ages—and even there the joy is not that *you bear* it—but that Jesus has borne it all *for you!*

The spirit would utterly fail before the Law if it had full sway. Thank God, "He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind." At the same time, how thankful we may be that we ever felt the law frost in our soul. The folly of self-righteousness is killed by the winter of conviction. We should have been a thousand times more proud and foolish, and worldly

than we are if it had not been for the sharp frost with which the Lord nipped the growths of the flesh.

But how shall we thank Him sufficiently for the thaw of His loving-kindness? How great the change which His mercy made in us as soon as its beams had reached our soul! Hardness vanished! Cold departed! Warmth and love abounded, and the life-floods leaped in their channels! The Lord visited us and we rose from our grave of despair even as the seeds arise from the earth! As the bulb of the crocus holds up its golden cup to be filled with sunshine so did our new-born faith open itself to the Glory of the Lord!

As the primrose peeps up from the sod to gaze upon the sun, so did our hope look forth for the promise, and delight itself in the Lord. Thank God that spring tide has with many of us matured into summer, and winter has gone, never to return. We praise the Lord for this every day of our lives, and we will praise Him when time shall be no more in that sunny land—

***“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.  
A thread-like stream alone divides  
That heavenly land from ours.”***

Believe in the Lord, you who shiver in the frost of the Law, and the law of love shall soon bring you warm days of joy and peace. So be it. Amen.

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# GOOD CHEER FOR OUTCASTS

## NO. 1302

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”  
Psalm 147:2.***

DOES not this show us the great gentleness and infinite mercy of God? And as we know most of God in the Person of our Lord, Jesus Christ, should it not charm us to remember that when He came on earth He did not visit kings and princes, but He came unto the humble and simple folk? He did not seek out Pharisees, wrapped up in their own supposed righteousness, but He sought out the guilty, for He said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.”

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost! It would have seemed natural that our Lord Jesus, when He came here, should, first of all, have addressed Himself to the most respectable people He could find and should have sent His message to the rabbis of Jerusalem, to the senators at Rome, to the philosophers of Greece. But instead, the common people heard Him gladly and He rejoiced in spirit while He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

I think you may judge of a man’s character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it, he is ambitious and self-seeking. But when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom *he* must do everything, you know that he, himself, is not seeking, but that pure benevolence sways his heart. When I read in the text that the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel—and when I see that the text is truly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, because this is just what He did—I see another illustration of the gentleness of His heart, who said, “Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

Be glad tonight, dear Friends, that we gather around such a Savior as this, from whom all pride and self-seeking are absent and who, coming down among us in gentleness and meekness, comes to gather those whom no man cares for—those who are judged to be worthless and irreclaimable! He comes to gather together the outcasts of Israel! Applying this text to our Lord Jesus Christ, we not only see His gentleness, but we also clearly see an illustration of His love to men, as men. If you seek only after rich men, suspicion arises—and it is more than suspicion—that you seek their wealth rather than they. If you aim only at the benefit of wise men, it is probably true that it is their *wisdom* which attracts you, and not their manhood.

But the Lord Jesus Christ did not love men because of any advantageous circumstances, or any commendable incidents of their condition. His love was to manhood. He loved His own chosen people as *men*, not as this or that *among* men. He has no respect for rank, nor care for wealth. A man is a man with Christ whether the “guinea-stamp” is there or not. He died not for titles and dignities, but for men. “Not yours, but you,” our Lord Jesus could truly say. Where Jesus Christ sees a man, though he is an outcast, an outlaw or one condemned by the law of his own country—He sees a human being—a creature capable of awful sin and terrible misery, but yet, renewed by Grace, capable of bringing wondrous glory to the Most High.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by gathering together the outcasts, proves that it is not the *things* which surround men, but the men, themselves, that He cares for. He considers not so much *where* a man is, but *what* he is—not what he has learned, or what he is thought of, or what he has done—just what he is. The man is the jewel. The immortal soul is the Pearl of Great Price which Jesus seeks as a merchantman seeks goodly pearls. Another thing is also clear. If Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel, it proves His power over the hearts of men. There is a certain class of men who follow that which is morally good because the Lord has given them a noble disposition. Thank God, He has, in mercy, been pleased to give some men a desire after that which is beautiful and true. They, too, are merchantmen seeking goodly pearls, and it is not difficult, when the heart is brought into such a desirable state, for the excellence and beauty of Jesus Christ to attract it!

But here is a tug of war—there are men still left in the guilt and filthiness of human nature who have no desire after that which is good—but whose entire longings are after evil, only evil and that continually. These have no more eye to anything that is high and noble than the swine has for the stars. The minister of Christ may appeal to them, but he will appeal in vain. And Providence may warn them, by the deaths of others and by personal sickness, but they are not to be separated from the earth to which they are glued. Yet our Lord Jesus can gather together even these, the outcasts of Israel! Such is His power that He does not stop till He sees good desires in men—He *imparts* those desires to those who have them not! Such are the charms of His Cross, that blind eyes are made to see by its beauty! Such is the music of His voice, that deaf ears are opened by it! Such is the majesty of His life, that the dead hear His voice and they that hear are made to live!

No groundwork of goodness is asked or expected from any man that Christ may come and act upon it—He takes man in his ruin and in the extremity of his depravity—and begins with him then and there. When the good Samaritan came to the wounded man, he did not wait for him to make the first advance, or come a little towards him. He went to him, where he was, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine. So the Lord comes where hurtful nature is and, bad as its condition is, He stoops to it and He gathers together the outcasts of Israel! Oh, it is a wonderful thing, this, that there should be attractions about the Lord Jesus Christ

which can draw to Him those whom nothing else that is good can possibly stir!

You may preach virtue to the sinner, but he does not practically yield to its charms. You may preach to the drunk, to the unchaste, to the immoral, the beauties and excellences of honesty and of all the virtues and the Graces, but little good will come of it—the result is infinitesimal. You may charm very wisely upon those subjects, but these deaf adders do not care for charming. We have heard of a Divine who said that he had preached honesty till he had not an honest person left in the parish! And he preached of virtue till he did not know where Diogenes, with his lantern, could find it! Nothing worth having comes of preaching when *Christ* is not the theme!

You may preach the Law and men will be frightened by it, but they will forget their fears. Yet if Jesus Christ is preached, He draws all men unto Him. The most wicked will listen to the news of Him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. The most stubborn have been known to weep when they have heard the story of His grief and of His love! The most proud have found themselves suddenly humbled at His feet, of which some of us are witnesses, for we marveled to find the hardness and loftiness of our hearts suddenly removed by a sense of His goodness! I do not believe that we preachers have half enough, or a tenth enough faith in Jesus Christ. If we could preach Jesus Christ to a company of convicted felons, should we be wrong in hoping to see the larger part of them converted on the spot?

If we had but faith enough to preach to them as we should, aiming directly, distinctly and believingly at their souls, might we not look for great results? We go so timidly, so doubtingly to work. We pray that God would save *some* out of our congregations and that He would be pleased to bless the Word here and there! But, such a splendid Gospel as we have to preach should not be preached so, nor should we so pray about it! When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, it was not with this prayer—“Lord, grant that one or two of those who are bitten by the serpent may look and live.” No, Moses came out boldly with his serpent high upon the pole! He believed that *thousands* would look—they *did* look—and they lived! May we, after the same manner, proclaim Jesus who “gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

Now, with this introduction, I would speak upon the text a little more particularly, and we shall observe with brevity, first, *to whom the text applies*—“He gathers together *the outcasts* of Israel.” Secondly, we shall consider *in what sense He may be said to gather them*. And then, thirdly, *what lesson this teaches us*.

**I.** First, then, TO WHOM MAY THIS TEXT APPLY—“He gathers together *the outcasts of Israel*”? It refers to several classes in different ways. First, it is a fact that our Lord Jesus gathered together some of the very *poorest and most despised among men*—those who might, under some respects, be regarded as outcasts. And it is certain that, to this day, the Gospel comes in the largest measure of power to the poor of this world. Often, too, it comes with amazing power to those who are despised by others, or are regarded as being of inferior degree.

You know that at this time it is boastfully said by the enemies of the Gospel that the culture, the brain, the intellect, the education of England is all on the side of skepticism. I am not so sure. When people say that they possess a great deal of brains, I am not certain that their claim is correct, unless it is that as sheep have a good deal of brains and yet are not the wisest animals in the world, so these gentlemen, also, are no wiser than they should be. As to those gentlemen who so evidently claim to be the cultured people, who monopolize all the sweetness and the light, I am not clear that they have all the *modesty*. It does seem to me that if they talked in a lower key, it would be as well. And if they thought a little less of their own culture and allowed a little more to other people, we might have more faith in this wonderful “culture” of theirs.

Some of us have failed to see the deep thought and the profound learning we were told to look for in the books of the skeptical cultured mind and, therefore, we are less patient when we hear the perpetual bragging of our foes. Still, let it stand so. We will not quarrel with it. Suppose it to be so—that none but foolish people embrace the old-fashioned faith—Puritanism which, they say, is nearly dead—the old evangelism which they ridicule as being exploded. Let it be so, that we are an inferior order of people with very little brains and all that. Well, we are not out of heart on that account, because we find that it so happened in our Savior’s day and has happened all days since—that the wisdom of the world has been at enmity with God.

And it has also flamed out that the foolishness of God has been wiser than men and God has mastered human wisdom by the foolishness of preaching! By that Gospel which wise men laughed at as being folly, God has brought carnal wisdom to nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ looks with love on those whom others look down upon with scorn—

***“He takes the fool and makes him know,  
The wonders of His dying love,  
To lay aspiring wisdom low,  
And all our pride reprove.”***

I am thankful when I meet with poor saints and see what a grip humble men and women get of the promises of God. Laboring men, humble shepherds and the like have often been more distinguished for deep insight into the mysteries of Grace than learned doctors of divinity! Where there has been little in the cupboard and the provision on the table has been but slender, there has been more enjoyment of the favor of God than among the great ones of the earth!

They may regard those who still stand by the old-fashioned Truth of God as being outcasts from the commonwealth of letters and not worthy to be named among the cultured intellects of the age, but if the Lord will but gather us continually to His bosom and refresh us with Himself, we shall be content! The text should be a source of joy to us if any of us happen to be extremely poor—so poor that even Christian men are so ungenerous as to give us the cold shoulder, or if we happen to be the despised ones of our family. Here and there, sad to say it, there will be, in families, a better one than the rest, less thought of than the others—a Joseph whom his brothers hate because he loves his God.

Well, you may become as a stranger to your mother's children and you may have no one to give you a good word, yet may you put this verse under your tongue as a sweet morsel—"He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." Those who are lowest in the esteem of men are still remembered by the Lord! The text may be applied very well to those *who have made themselves outcasts by their wickedness and are deservedly cast out of society*. May God grant that none of us may be, or may have been, among that number. But if I should be addressing any such at this time, I have a word for them. If there should be some such here, tonight, who do not often attend places of worship, but have dropped in from curiosity, I may suppose your case to be that of one who has broken a mother's heart and brought a father's gray hairs to the grave with grief.

You have lived such a life that your own brothers could scarcely be expected to acknowledge you. You have sinned and sinned terribly. Man or woman—for woman, also, becomes an outcast—she is too severely treated, as a general rule, and more often becomes an outcast than the man who deserves it more! If I address such, it is a great joy to me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ can save the most wicked of the wicked, the most fallen of the fallen, the most depraved of the depraved! If you have sunk so low that there is not much to choose between you and a devil—and some men and women do get as low as that—yet Jesus Christ can lift you up!

If your life story is such that it would be a pity it should ever be told and most grievous that it should ever have been enacted, yet Jesus can wash all the stains of your life away and save you, even you! Only one such may be present here to-night, but I make no apology for concentrating my whole thoughts upon one single person! I leave the 99, to go after the one lost sheep, that in the one lost one may be revealed the richness and freeness of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ! Come, then, Outcast! Come to your Redeemer and find pardon! "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow! Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool!" Jesus is able to wash away every transgression from those who are steeped in guilt. Countless iniquities dissolve and disappear before the presence of His mighty love, for He, even Jesus, gathers together the outcasts of Israel!

Is there no helper on earth? Yet is there One in Heaven! Is there no friend below? Yet is there One above! Is there nothing that can save you? Do you contemplate suicide? Stop, stop your hand, for Jesus is "able to save *to the uttermost*"—to the uttermost—"them that come unto God by Him." Let the prayer go up, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and go your way with hope in your soul, for "He gathers together the outcasts of Israel."

A third class of persons consists of *those who judge themselves to be outcasts*, though, as to outward actions they certainly do not deserve the label. Many who have written about John Bunyan have been surprised at the description which he gives of his own life, for it does not appear that, with the sole exception of the use of blasphemous language, John Bunyan was one of the very worst of mankind. But he thought himself to be so. Now it often happens—I do not say always, but I think it is *generally* so—

that when the Spirit of God comes, with power, to the conscience and awakens it, the man judges himself to be the very chief of sinners.

For it may be that you have never gone into actual vice. You have never been a blasphemer or dishonest. You have, on the contrary, from the instructions of your childhood, been led into the path of right—and yet, when you are awakened, you may feel yourself to be vilest of the vile. Everything that is lovely and of good report has been found in you—you do not know the time in which you would not have been shocked to hear a blasphemous word—and yet when the Holy Spirit awakens you, you will plead guilty among the very worst! I know in my own case I had a horror of ungodliness. And, yet, when the Spirit of God came to me, I felt myself to be far worse than the swearer or the drunk—for this reason—that I knew that many who indulged in those open sins did so ignorantly. They did so from the imitation of those in whose society they had been brought up.

But as for me, with a godly parentage, with a mother's prayers and tears, with light and knowledge, understanding the letter of the Gospel, having read the Bible from my youth, up, I felt that my sins were blacker than those of others because I had sinned against light and knowledge. And you must have felt the same, I am persuaded. Perhaps you are even, now, feeling it. You remember that night when you stifled conviction, when conscience had an earnest battle with you and it seemed that you must yield to God and to His Christ—but you deliberately did violence to the inward principle and resolved to go on in sin. Do you remember that? If you do, it will sting you as does a serpent, now that you are under conviction of sin—and you will feel yourself to be the very chief of sinners on account of it, though no public sin may ever have stained your life.

Well, I should not wonder, if such is your condition, that you also judge that there is no salvation for you—that God might save your mother, your brother, or your friend—but not you. You believe the blood of Jesus to be very precious, but you think it never will be applied to you. You heard, the other day, of the conversion of a friend and you felt glad, but at the same time you thought, "Grace will never come to *me*." When the preacher has exhorted his hearers to believe in Jesus Christ, you have said, "Ah, but I—I cannot! I am in a condition in which that Gospel is of no use to me." You think yourself an outcast. You feel that you deserve to be.

You are not content to be so, but, at the same time, you could not blame the Lord if He left you to perish. You feel that your transgressions have been so great that if He should leave you out of His gracious plans and Grace should come to others and not to you, you could only bow your head in bitterest sorrow and say, "You are just, O God." Now, listen, you who have condemned yourself! The Lord absolves you! You who have shut yourself out as an outcast, you shall be gathered! For whereas they call you an outcast, whom no man seeks after, you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord's delight is in you! Only believe in Jesus Christ and cast yourself upon Him! Outcasts of this sort are the people who most gladly welcome Christ. People who have nowhere else to go but to Him—people so cast down, so full of sin, so everything but what they ought to be—*these* are the people to whom Christ is very precious!

“Oh,” says one, “but I do not feel like that. I cannot feel my guilt as I should.” Very well, then, you are one of the outcasts *among the outcasts*—you do not think yourself to be as good, even, as they are! You are, in your own esteem, one of the worst outcasts of them all because you lack even the feeling of your need. You say, “I have a hard heart. I cannot see sin as others have seen it who have found Christ. I wish I could. I smite my breast and mourn that I cannot mourn, for if anything is felt, it is only pain to find that I cannot feel. I seem made of Hell-hardened steel which will not melt or break.”

Well, I see that you are, but, “such were some of us.” We, also, knew our insensibility and lamented that we could not lament! But He gathered us! And there stands the text, “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” If you have not a broken heart, only Christ can give it to you! If you cannot come to Him *with* it, go to Him *for* it! If you cannot come to Him wounded, come to Him that He may wound you and make you whole! You need bring *nothing* to Jesus! I would like to whisper in your ear just this—that those people who think themselves insensible, generally think so because they are more than usually *sensitive*. And those who think that they do not feel, are usually those who feel the most! I do not think we are ever good judges of our own feeling in this matter.

The day may come when, in looking back, you will say, “I did, after all, mourn over sin when I thought that I did not. I had such a sense of how black it was that I felt I was not mourning enough, even when I was deeply mourning!” Brother, you never will mourn enough. Enough? Would oceans full of tears be enough to mourn the guilt of sin? No, but, blessed be God, we are not asked to repent or to mourn up to a certain standard! O outcast Soul, trust in Jesus and He will save you! I must not dwell, however, on this class, but proceed further to notice that there is another sort of people whom Jesus gathers who are even more truly the outcasts of Israel.

I mean *the backsliders from the Church*—the outcasts of Israel who have been put out, and properly put out, for their unholy lives and inconsistent actions—those whom the Church is obliged, alas, to look upon as diseased members that must be removed. They are sickly sheep that infect the flock and must be put away. They are lepers that must be set aside from the camp. O Wanderer, banished from a Church, there is a word in the Gospel for you, also—even for the backslider! The Lord calls back His wandering children. Though His Church does right to put out those who do dishonor to His holy name, yet she would do wrong if she did not follow her Lord in saying, “Return, you backsliding children.”

It is not easy to persuade one who has been a backslider to come back to his first love. The return journey is uphill and flesh and blood do not assist us in it. Many new converts come, but the old wanderers remain outside and sometimes they do this because they fancy they will not be welcome. But if you are sincerely repenting of the sin which has put you away from the Church, the Church of Christ will be glad to receive you! And if you are, indeed, the Lord’s believing one, though you have defiled yourself, He does not forget you! He does earnestly remember you, still,

and He bids you come, in all your defilement, and wash in His atoning blood!

The fountain that Jesus has opened is not only for strangers, when they are first brought near—but it is opened “for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem”—those who know the Lord, that they may be daily purged from their transgressions and be cleansed from the filthiness of their backslidings. The Lord gathers together those who have been carried captive by their sins and makes them, once more, to dwell in the land of uprightness—and all His wandering sheep He brings back to Himself.

The expression of the text may certainly be applied to *those, also, who have loved the Lord for years, but who have fallen into great depression of spirit*. We happen, every now and then, to meet with some of the best of God’s people who get into the Slough of Despond and stick there by the month together—yes, by the year together! These are Believers who take periodically to despondency, as birds do to molting, and when the fit is on them you cannot cheer or comfort them. They then write bitter things against themselves and call themselves all the ugly names in the dictionary—until they make us smile to hear them—because we know how mistaken they are. We are admiring their consistency and they are mourning over their foolishness.

We see their generosity towards the cause of God and their devotion to everything that is good. Yet they say there is nothing good in them. We know where they are, for we have been laid in iron, ourselves, and set fast in the very same stocks. What a mercy it is that when you who love the Lord thus, and sit down and commune with your despondencies—I mean you, Miss Much-Afraid, you, Mr. Ready-to-Halt and you, Mr. Feeble-Mind—my Lord does not leave you nor judge you as you judge yourselves! He is pleased to gather together, in mercy, those who think themselves outcasts in Israel.

Lastly, upon this point, there are some who become outcasts through their love to Christ and of these the text is peculiarly true. I mean *those who suffer for righteousness’ sake till they are regarded as the off-scouring of all things*. Are there any that serve God faithfully, who have escaped the trial of cruel mockery? The names of those who are eminently useful are generally used as footballs for an ungodly world. The world is not worthy of them and yet their enemies think they are hardly worthy to live in the world. We do not hear much about persecution nowadays, but in private life there is a world of it! The cold shoulder is given where once friendship was sought—hard, cruel, cutting things are said where once admiration was expressed—and separations take place between good friends because of Christ.

It is still true, in the Christian’s case, that a man’s foes are they of his own household. But if you should become an outcast upon the face of the earth for Christ’s sake, there is this for your comfort—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Of the persecuted He makes pillars in His holy temple forever. Blessed are those who are outcasts for Christ! Rich are those who are so honored as to be permitted to become poor for Him! Happy are they who have had this

Grace given them—to be permitted to lay life, itself, down for Jesus Christ's sake!

**II.** Now a few words upon the second point—IN WHAT SENSE DOES THE LORD JESUS GATHER TOGETHER THESE OUTCASTS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES? Of course I should have to vary the explanation to suit each case, but as that would take a long time, let me say that the Lord Jesus has several ways of gathering together the outcasts. He gathers them *to hear the Gospel*. Preach Jesus Christ and they will come! Both outcast saints and outcast sinners will come to hear the charming sound of His blessed name! They cannot help it. Nothing draws like Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ next gathers them *to Himself*. The parable of the wedding feast is repeated again, "Go out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled." "Bring in here the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." In this sort, the Lord Jesus Christ gathers multitudes where He is faithfully preached. He gathers all sorts of characters and especially the odds and ends of society—the despised of men and the despised of themselves. He gathers them to Himself.

And oh, what a blessed gathering place that is where there is cleansing for their filthiness, health for their disease, clothing for their nakedness and all-sufficient supplies for their abundant necessities! He gathers them to Himself—which is to gather them to *God*—to gather them to blessedness and peace through reconciliation with the Father. "To Him shall the gathering of the people be."

When He has done that, He gathers them *into the Divine family*. He takes the outcasts and makes them children of God—heirs with Himself. From the dunghill He lifts them and sets them among princes! He takes them from the swine trough and puts the ring on their fingers and the shoes on their feet—and they sit down at the Father's table to feast and to be glad! Jesus Christ, as the good Shepherd, gathers the lost sheep, the lame, the halt, the diseased and feeds them. He makes them to lie down and restores their souls and, finally, He leads them to the rich pastures of the Glory Land.

In due time the Lord gathers together the outcasts *into His visible Church*. As David enrolled a company of men that were in debt and discontented, so does Jesus Christ gather the indebted ones and the malcontents and makes them His soldiers. These are known as the Church militant. Surely as David did great exploits by those Pelethites, Cherethites, Gittites and strange men of foreign extraction whom he gathered to himself, so does Jesus of Nazareth do great things by those great sinners whom He greatly forgives—those hard-hearted ones whom He so strangely changes and makes to be the Old Guard of His army.

Yes, He gathers them into His Church and He gathers them *into His work*. The outcasts of Israel He uses for His own Glory. And when He has done that, He gathers them *into Heaven*. What a surprise it must be for any man to find himself in Heaven when he remembers where he *once* was! The outcast remembers the ale-bench on which he sat and soaked himself in liquor till he degraded himself below the brute beast. And now to be cleansed in the Redeemer's blood and to sit among the angels—this

will be surprising Grace, indeed! “Oh, to think,” one might well say, “that I, who was once in lewd company, polluted and defiled, am now made to wear a crown and sit at the Redeemer’s feet!”

When we reach Heaven, Brothers and Sisters, I do not suppose that we shall forget all the past. And sometimes it must burst in upon us as a strangely Divine instance of love that Christ should have brought *us* there and set *us* among the peers of His realm! And yet He will do it! And you, Mrs. Much-Afraid—*you* will be there! And you who think, “surely *Satan* will have me!” you will be there! You who are stumbling over every straw! You who seem stopped by every little gully in the road and who fancy, “Surely, there is no Grace in *my* heart.” And yet you are still holding on, “faint, yet pursuing.”

You who touch the hem of Christ’s garment, but have so little faith that you are afraid that you have none at all—*you* shall get up from that mourning and moaning, you shall rise from that despondency and distress—and among the sweetest music of Heaven shall be your songs of gratitude and joy! “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

**III.** Well, now, WHAT IS THE LESSON OF THIS? I think there are three lessons and I will just hint at them. One is this—*encouragement to those who are unworthy, or think themselves so, to go to Jesus Christ tonight.* I have been trying to think of all I know and I have lifted up my heart to the Holy Spirit to guide me that I may cheer some discouraged one. It was my objective, last Sunday night, to comfort the broken-hearted, and I do not seem to have gotten out of that vein, yet.

I believe there are some here, whom God has sent me to, who really believe themselves to be out of the region of hope. My dear Friends, if God gathers together the outcasts, why should He not gather *you*? And if it is true that Jesus Christ does not look for goodness, but that He only considers our sin and misery, why should He not look upon *you*? May I urge you to try my Master? If you go to Him confessing your unworthiness and trusting yourself with Him, if He does not save you, I would like to know about it, because you will be the first person I have ever heard of that trusted himself with Jesus and was rejected! It will *not* be the case, whatever your condition may be, however desperate your state!

You think your condition to be worse than I have pictured it to be and you fancy that I cannot know anything about how bad you are. Well, I do not know your special form of rebellion, but you are the very person I mean, for all that. I say, if you are as black as Hell. If you are as foul as the Stygian bog. If you have sinned till your sins cannot be counted and if your actions are so heinous that infinite wrath is their just desert—yet come and look to those five wounds and to that sacred head once wounded, and to that heart pierced with the spear! There is life in a *look* at Jesus crucified! Will you try it? As surely as God’s word is true, if you do but glance your eyes at Him who “died the just for the unjust,” you shall be brought to God and reconciled!

And that *now*—note—while sitting in that seat, before the last word of this sermon shall be uttered, for whoever believes in Him shall be saved! “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but

have eternal life.” O that you would believe on Jesus now! We sometimes sing—

**“Venture on Him: venture wholly.  
Let no other trust intrude.  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

But, Sinner, it is not a venture! As surely as you cast yourself upon Him, He will be sure to save you! I will not multiply words, but I would, if I thought *words* would draw you. I pray the blessed and eternal Spirit to sweetly influence your minds, young people, tonight—and old people, too, and middle-aged people, too—that you may have done with trying to *do* anything, or to *be* anything in order to your own salvation, and know that it was all done when Jesus bled and died, all finished when He cried, “It is finished!” You have only to take believingly what He presents to you and accept Him as your All in All. God help you to do it!

The second reflection is this. *If Jesus Christ received some of us when we felt ourselves to be outcasts, how we ought to love Him!* It does us good to look back to the hole of the pit from where we were dug. We get to be very top-lofty at times, my Brothers and Sisters. We are wonderfully big, are we not? Are we not experienced Christians, now? Why, we have known the Lord these 25 years! Dear me, how important we are! And perhaps we are deacons of Churches, or, at any rate, we have a class in the Sunday school and we pray in the Prayer Meetings—considerable importance attaches to us and we are high and mighty on that account.

Ah, I have heard say of a man worth his thousands that once he had not a shirt on his back—and if he remembered what he sprang from he would not carry his head so high! I do not see much in that, but I do see something in this—that if we remembered the time when we were dead in trespasses and sins. When we had not a rag to cover us. When we were under God’s frown and were heirs of wrath even as others—if we remembered our lost and ruined state by nature—I am sure that we should not lift our heads so very loftily and want to have respect paid to us in the Church, or think that God ought not to deal so very harshly with us, as if we had cause for complaint!

Dear Friends, let us remember what we used to be, and that will keep us low in our own esteem. But, oh, how it will fire us with zeal to remember from what a depth He has lifted us up! Did Jesus save such a wretch as I was? Then for Him would I live and for Him would I die! This ought to be the utterance of us all. We ought to live in that spirit. God grant we may! Then, again, let us always feel that *if the Lord Jesus Christ took us up when we were not worth having, we will never be ashamed to try and pick up others who are in the same condition.* We will not count it any lowering of our dignity to go after the most fallen of all. We will reckon that they are no worse than we were, if we were viewed from a certain point, and we will, therefore, aim at their conversion, hope for it and expect it!

This lesson is peculiarly applicable to some Christians here present. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you really feel yourselves to have been outcasts and yet have been received into the Divine family—and are now on the road to Heaven—I ask you to pay every attention to any whom you

meet with who are, now, what *you* once were! If you meet with any in great despair of soul, say, “Ah, I must be a comforter here, for I have gone through this. I will never let this poor soul go till, by God’s help, I have cheered him.” If you meet with one who is an open sinner, perhaps you will have to say to yourself, “I was an open sinner, too.” But if not, say, “My sins were more secret, but still they were as bad as his and, therefore, I have hope of this poor soul and will try whether he cannot be loved to Christ by me.”

Mark my expression—“*loved to Christ,*” for *that* is the power we must use—sinners are to be *loved* to Christ! The Holy Spirit uses the love of saints to bring poor sinners to know the love of Christ! Search after them and do not let them perish. May God put this resolve into your soul—“If there is anything that I can do, in the name of Jesus, and with the power of the Holy Spirit upon me, that might save that soul, it shall be done and, if that soul dies lost, when I hear the passing bell I will, God helping me, be able to say, ‘I did set Christ before that soul. I did plead with that conscience. I did seek to bring that sinner to Jesus.’”

The outcast, when converted, should seek after his brother outcasts. Young man, did you ever swear? Seek the conversion of swearers! Young man, have you been fond of the card table? Have you been a frequenter of low resorts of pleasure? Then addict yourself to looking after persons of the same sort! George Whitefield says that after his own conversion his first concern was the conversion of those with whom he had taken pleasure in sin. And he had the privilege of seeing many of them brought to Christ! Have you been a man of business and have you been associated in wrongdoing with others? Seek the salvation of those who were associated with you! It is a natural obligation which Christ imposes upon all of any special sort, that they should seek those of their own sort, and labor to bring them to repentance.

May God bless you, Beloved. We shall soon be in Heaven. I can see some here tonight who, owing to their age, cannot be long before they enter the Glory of Christ. I see others of us who are younger, who do not know, from feebleness of health, how long it may be before we see the face of the Beloved. But we would say of Him tonight, what a blessed Savior He is and what an infinity of love there must be in Him to have ever revealed Himself to such as we are!

Oh, when shall we be near Him and worship Him forever and ever? Make no tarrying, O our Beloved!

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 147.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587; 147 (SONG II.); 784.***

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# CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

## NO. 2260

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 12, 1892.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 9, 1890.**

***“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.  
Psalm 147:3.***

OFTEN as we have read this Psalm, we can never fail to be struck with the connection in which this verse stands, especially its connection with the verse that follows. Read the two together—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.” What condescension and grandeur! What pity and Omnipotence! He who leads out yonder ponderous orbs in almost immeasurable orbits, nevertheless, is the Surgeon of men's souls and stoops over broken hearts! And with His own tender fingers closes up the gaping wound and binds it with the liniment of love. Think of it and if I should not speak as well as I could desire upon the wonderful theme of His condescension, yet help me by your own thoughts to do reverence to the Maker of the stars, who is, at the same time, the Physician for broken hearts and wounded spirits!

I am equally interested in the connection of my text with the verse that goes before it—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” The Church of God is never so well built up as when it is built up with men of broken hearts. I have prayed to God in secret many a time, of late, that He would be pleased to gather out from among us a people who have a deep experience, who should know the guilt of sin, who should be broken and ground to powder under a sense of their own inability and unworthiness, for I am persuaded that without a deep experience of *sin*, there is seldom much belief in the Doctrines of Grace and not much enthusiasm in praising the Savior's name. The Church needs to be built up with men who have been pulled down! Unless we know in our hearts our need of a Savior, we shall never be worth much in preaching Him. That preacher who has never been converted, what can *he* say about it? And he who has never been in the dungeon, who has never been in the abyss, who has never felt as if he were cast out from the sight of God, how can he comfort many who are outcasts and who are bound with the fetters of despair? May the Lord break many hearts and then bind them up, that with them He may build up the Church and inhabit it!

But now, leaving the connection, I come to the text, itself, and I desire to speak of it so that everyone here who is troubled may derive comfort

from it, God the Holy Spirit speaking through it. Consider, first, *the patients and their sickness*—"He healed the broken in heart." Then, consider, *the Physician and His medicine* and, for a while, turn your eyes to Him who does this healing work. Then, I shall want you to consider *the testimonial to the great Physician* which we have in this verse—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Lastly, and most practically, we will consider *what we ought to do* towards Him who heals the broken in heart.

I. First, then, consider THE PATIENTS AND THEIR SICKNESS. They are broken in heart. I have heard of many who have died of a broken heart, but there are some who *live* with a broken heart—and who live all the *better* for having had their hearts broken—they live another and higher life than they lived before that blessed stroke broke their hearts in pieces.

There are many sorts of broken hearts and Christ is good at healing them all. I am not going to lower and narrow the application of my text. The patients of the great Physician are *those whose hearts are broken through sorrow*. Hearts are broken through disappointment. Hearts are broken through bereavement. Hearts are broken in 10,000 ways, for this is a heart-breaking world! But Christ is good at healing all manner of heartbreaks. I would encourage every person here, even though his heartbreak may not be of a *spiritual* kind, to make an application to Him who heals the broken in heart. The text does not say, "the *spiritually* broken in heart," therefore I will not insert an adverb where there is none in the passage. Come here, you that are burdened, all you that labor and are heavy laden! Come here, all you that sorrow, be your sorrow what it may! Come here, all you whose hearts are broken, be the heartbreak what it may, for He heals the broken in heart!

Still, there is a special brokenness of heart to which Christ gives the very earliest and most tender attention. He heals *those whose hearts are broken for sin*. Christ heals the heart that is broken because of its sin so that it grieves, laments, regrets and bemoans itself, saying, "Woe is me that I have done this exceedingly great evil and brought ruin upon myself! Woe is me that I have dishonored God, that I have cast myself away from His Presence, that I have made myself liable to His everlasting wrath and that even now His wrath abides on me!" If there is a man here whose heart is broken about his past life, he is the man to whom my text refers. Are you heartbroken because you have wasted 40, 50, 60 years? Are you heartbroken at the remembrance that you have cursed the God who has blessed you, that you have denied the existence of Him without whom you never would have been in existence, that you have lived to train your family without godliness, without any respect to the Most High God at all? Has the Lord brought this home to you? Has He made you feel what a hideous thing it is to be blind to Christ, to refuse His love, to reject His blood, to live an enemy to your best Friend? Have you felt this? O my Friend, I cannot reach across the gallery to give you my hand, but will you think that I am doing it, for I wish to do it? If there is a heart here broken

on account of sin, I thank God for it, and praise the Lord that there is such a text as this—"He heals the broken in heart."

Christ also heals hearts that are *broken from sin*. When you and sin have quarreled, never let the quarrel be made up! You and sin were friends at one time, but now you hate sin and you would be wholly rid of it if you could. You wish never to sin. You are anxious to be clear of the most darling sin that you have ever indulged in and you desire to be made pure as God is pure. Your heart is broken away from its old moorings. That which you once loved you now hate. That which you once hated, you now, at least, *desire* to love! It is well. I am glad that you are here, for to you is sent the text, "He heals the broken in heart."

If there is a brokenhearted person anywhere about, many people despise him. "Oh," they say, "he is melancholy. He is mad, he is out of his mind through religion!" Yes, men despise the broken in heart, but such, O God, You will not despise! The Lord looks after such and heals them.

Those who do not despise them, at any rate avoid them. I know some few friends who have long been of a broken heart and when I feel rather dull, I must confess that I do not always go their way, for they are apt to make me feel more depressed. Yet would I not get out of their way if I felt that I could help them. Still, it is the nature of men to seek the cheerful and the happy and to avoid the brokenhearted. God does not do so—He heals the broken in heart. He goes where they are and He reveals Himself to them as the Comforter and the Healer.

In a great many cases people despair of the brokenhearted ones. "It is no use," says one, "I have tried to comfort her, but I cannot do it." "I have wasted a great many words," says another, "on such and such a friend, and I cannot help him. I despair of his ever getting out of the dark." It is not so with God! He heals the broken in heart. He despairs of none. He shows the greatness of His power and the wonders of His wisdom by fetching men and women out of the lowest dungeon wherein despair has shut them!

As for the brokenhearted ones, themselves, they do not think that they can *ever* be converted. Some of them are *sure* that they never can—they wish that they were dead—though I do not see what they would gain by *that*. Others of them wish that they had never been born, though that is a useless wish *now*. Some are ready to rush after any new thing to try to find a little comfort, while others, getting worse and worse, are sitting down in sullen despair. I wish that I knew who these were—I would like to come round and say to them, "Come, Brother. There must be no doubting and no despair tonight, for my text is gloriously complete and is meant for you! 'He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.'" Notice that 5<sup>th</sup> verse, "Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite." Consequently, He can heal the broken in heart! God is glorious at a dead lift! When a soul cannot stir, or help itself, God delights to come in with His Omnipotence and lift the great load—and set the burdened one free!

It takes great wisdom to comfort a broken heart. If any of you have ever tried it, I am sure you have not found it an easy task. I have given much

of my life to this work and I always come away from a desponding one with a consciousness of my own inability to comfort the heartbroken and cast-down. Only God can do it. Blessed be His name that He has arranged that one Person of the Sacred Trinity should undertake this office of Comforter, for no man could ever perform its duties. We might as well hope to be the Savior as to be the Comforter of the heartbroken! Efficiently and completely to save or to comfort must be a Divine work. That is why the Divine Holy Spirit heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds with infinite power and unfailing skill.

**II.** Now, secondly, we are going to consider THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS MEDICINE—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Who is this that heals the broken in heart?

I answer that *Jesus was anointed of God* for this work. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me *to heal the brokenhearted.*" Was the Holy Spirit given to Christ in vain? That cannot be! He was given for a purpose which must be answered and that purpose is the healing of the brokenhearted. By the very anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit, you may be sure that our Physician will heal the broken in heart!

Further, Jesus was *sent of God* on purpose to do His work—"He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted." If Christ does not heal the brokenhearted, He will not fulfill the mission for which He came from Heaven. If the brokenhearted are not cheered by His glorious life and the blessings that flow out of His death, then He will have come to earth for nothing! This is the very errand on which the Lord of Glory left the bosom of the Father to be veiled in Human clay, that He might heal the broken in heart—and He will do it!

Our Lord was also *educated* for this work. He was not only anointed and sent, but He was trained for it. "How?" you ask. Why, He had a broken heart, Himself, and there is no education for the office of Comforter like being placed where you, yourself, have need of comfort, so that you may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith you have been comforted of God! Is your heart broken? Christ's heart was broken. He said, "Reproach has broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness." He went as low as you have ever been and deeper than you can ever go. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was His bitter cry. If that is your agonized utterance, He can interpret it by His own suffering. He can measure your grief by His grief. Broken hearts, there is no healing for you except through Him who had a broken heart Himself! You disconsolate ones, come to Him! He can make your heart happy and joyous by the very fact of His own sorrow and the brokenness of His own heart. "In all our afflictions He was afflicted." He was tempted in all points like as we are." "A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." For a broken heart, there is no physician like He!

Once more, I can strongly recommend my Lord Jesus Christ as the Healer of broken hearts because He is so *experienced* in the work. Some people are afraid that the doctor will try experiments upon them, but our Physician will only do for us what He has done many times before. It is no

matter of experiment with Him—it is a matter of *experience*. If you knock, tonight, at my great Doctor's door, you will, perhaps, say to Him, "I am the strangest patient, my Lord, that ever came to You." He will smile as He looks at you and He will think, "I have saved hundreds like you." Here comes one who says, "That first man's case was nothing compared with mine! I am about the worst sinner who ever lived." And the Lord Jesus Christ will say, "Yes, I saved the worst man that ever lived long ago—and I keep on saving such as he. I delight to do it." But here comes one who has a curious odd way of brokenheartedness. He is an out-of-the-way fretter. Yes, but my Lord is able to "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way." He can lay hold of this out-of-the-way one, for He has always been saving out-of-the-way sinners! My Lord has been healing broken hearts well near 1,900 years! Can you find a brass plate anywhere in London telling of a physician of that age? He has been at the work longer than that, for it is not far off 6,000 years since He went into this business! And He has been healing the broken in heart ever since that time.

I will tell you one thing about Him that I have on good authority, that is, He never lost a case yet! There never was one who came to Him with a broken heart but He healed him. He never said to one, "You are too bad for me to heal." But He did say, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." My dear Hearer, He will not cast you out! You say, "You do not know me, Mr. Spurgeon." No, I do not, and you have come here, tonight, and you hardly know why you are here—only you are very low and very sad. The Lord Jesus Christ loves such as you are, you poor, desponding, doubting, desolate, disconsolate one! Daughters of sorrow, sons of grief, look here! Jesus Christ has gone on healing broken hearts for thousands of years and He is well up in the business! He understands it by experience, as well as by education. He is "mighty to save." Consider Him! Consider Him and the Lord grant you Grace to come and trust Him even now!

Thus I have talked to you about the Physician for broken hearts. Shall I tell you what His chief medicine is? It is His own flesh and blood! There is no cure like it. When a sinner is bleeding with sin, Jesus pours His own blood into the wound—and when that wound is slow in healing, He binds His own Sacrifice about it. Healing for broken hearts comes by the Atonement—Atonement by Substitution—Christ suffering in our place. He suffered for everyone who believes in Him and he that believes in Him is not condemned and never can be condemned, for the condemnation due to him was laid upon Christ! He is clear before the bar of justice as well as before the Throne of Mercy! I remember when the Lord put that precious ointment upon my wounded spirit. Nothing ever healed me until I understood that He died in my place—died that I might *not* die! And now, today, my heart would bleed itself to death were it not that I believe that He, "His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "With His stripes we are healed," and with no medicine but this atoning Sacrifice! A wonderful heal-all is this, when the Holy Spirit applies it with His own Divine power and lets life and love come streaming into the heart that was ready to bleed to death!

**III.** My time flies too quickly, so, thirdly, I want you to consider THE TESTIMONIAL TO THE GREAT PHYSICIAN which is emblazoned in my text. It is God the Holy Spirit who, by the mouth of His servant, David, bears testimony to this congregation, tonight, that the Lord Jesus heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! If I said it, you need no more believe it than I need believe it if *you* said it! One man's word is as good as another's if we are truthful, but this statement is found in an Inspired Psalm. I believe it—I dare not doubt it, for I have proven its truth.

I understand my text to mean this—*He does it effectually*. As I said last Thursday night, if there is a person cast down or desponding within 20 miles, he is pretty sure to find me out. I laugh, sometimes, and say, “Birds of a feather flock together,” but they come to talk to me about their despondency and, sometimes, they leave me half desponding in the attempt to get them out of their sadness! I have had some very sad cases, lately, and I am afraid that when they went out of my room, they could not say of me, “He heals the broken in heart.” I am sure that they could say, “He tried his best. He brought out all the choice arguments he could think of to comfort me.” And they have felt very grateful. They have come back, sometimes, to thank God that they have been a little bit encouraged, but some of them are frequent visitors—and I have been trying to cheer them up by the month together!

But, when my Master undertakes the work, “He heals the broken in heart,” He not only tries to do it, He *does* it! He touches the secret sources of the sorrow and takes the spring of the grief away. We try our best, but we cannot do it. You know it is very hard to deal with the heart. The human heart needs more than human skill to cure it. When a person dies and the doctors do not know the reason why he died, they say, “It was heart disease.” They did not understand his malady—that is what that means. There is only one Physician who can heal the heart, but, glory be to His blessed name, “He heals the broken in heart.” He does it effectually.

As I read my text, I understand it to mean *He does it constantly*. “He heals the broken in heart.” Not merely, “He healed them years ago,” but He is doing it *now*. “He *heals* the broken in heart, and *binds up* their wounds.” What? At this minute? Ten minutes to eight? Yes, He is doing this work *now*! “He heals the broken in heart.” And when the service is over and the congregation is gone, what will Jesus be doing then? Oh, He will still be healing the broken in heart! Suppose this year, 1890, should run out and the Lord does not come to Judgment—what will He be doing then? He will still be healing the broken in heart! He has not used up His ointments. He has not exhausted His patience. He has not, in the least degree, diminished His power! He still heals.

“Oh dear!” one says, “If I had come to Christ a year ago, it would have been well with me.” If you come to Christ *tonight*, it will be well with you, for, “He *heals* the broken in heart.” I do not know who was the inventor of that idea of “sinning away the Day of Grace.” If you are willing to have Christ, you may have Him! If you are as old as Methuselah—and I do not suppose that you are older than he was—if you want Christ, you may have Him! As long as you are out of Hell, Christ is able to save you! He is

going on with His old work. Because you are just past 50, you say the die is cast. Because you are past 80, you say, "I am now too old to be saved." Nonsense! He *heals*, He *heals*, He is still doing it! "He heals the broken in heart."

I go further than that and say that *He does it invariably*. I have shown you that He does it effectually and constantly—and He does it invariably. There never was a broken heart brought to Him that He did not heal! Do not some brokenhearted patients go out at the back door, as my Master's failures? No, not one! There never was one yet that He could not heal! Doctors are sometimes obliged, in our hospitals, to give up some persons and say that they will never recover. Certain symptoms have proved that they are incurable. But, despairing one, in the Divine Hospital, of which Christ is the Physician, there never was a patient of His who was turned out as incurable! He is able to save to the uttermost. Do you know how far that is—"to the uttermost?" There is no going beyond "the uttermost," because the uttermost goes beyond everything else, to make it the uttermost! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Where are you, Friend "Uttermost"? Are you here tonight? "Ah," you say, "I wonder that I am not in Hell." Well, so do I, but you are not, and you never will be if you cast yourself on Christ! Rest in the full Atonement that He has made, for He always heals without any failure! "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds."

As I read these words, it seems to me that *He glories in doing it*. He said to the Psalmist, by the Holy Spirit, "Write a Psalm in which you shall begin with Hallelujah, and finish with Hallelujah. And set in the middle of the Psalm, as one of the things for which I delight to be praised, that I heal the broken in heart." None of the gods of the heathen were ever praised for this! Did you ever read a song to Jupiter, or to Mercury, or to Venus, or to any of them, in which they were praised for binding up the broken in heart? Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—is the only God who makes it His boast that He binds up the broken in heart! Come, you big, black sinner! Come, you desperado! Come, you that have gone beyond all measurement in sin! You can all glorify God more than anybody else by believing that He can save even you! He can save you and put you among the children! He delights to save those that seemed farthest from Him.

#### **IV.** This is my last point—consider WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO.

If there is such a Physician as this and we have broken hearts, it goes without saying that, first of all, *we ought to resort to Him*. When people are told that they have an incurable disease, a malady that will soon bring them to their grave, they are much distressed. But if, somewhere or other, they hear that the disease may be cured, after all, they say, "Where? Where?" Well, perhaps it is thousands of miles away—but they are willing to go if they can. Or the medicine may be very unpleasant or very expensive—but if they find that they can be cured, they say, "I will have it." And if anyone came to their door and said, "Here it is! It will heal you and you can have it for nothing and as much as you want of it," there would be no

difficulty in getting rid of any quantity of the medicine so long as we found people sick!

Now, if you have a broken heart tonight, you will be glad to have Christ. I had a broken heart once and I went to Him and He healed it in a moment and made me sing for joy! Young men and women, I was about 15 or 16 when He healed me. I wish that you would go to Him, now, while you are yet young. The age of His patients does not matter. Are you younger than fifteen? Boys and girls may have broken hearts—and old men and old women may have broken hearts—but they may come to Jesus and be healed! Let them come to Him, tonight, and seek to be healed.

When you are about to go to Christ, possibly you ask, "How shall I go to Him?" Go by prayer. One said to me, the other day, "I wish that you would write me a prayer, Sir." I said, "No, I cannot do that, go and tell the Lord what you need." He replied, "Sometimes I feel such a great need that I do not know what it is I need! And I try to pray, but I cannot. I wish that somebody would tell me what to say." "Why," I said, "the Lord has told you what to say! This is what He has said—'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.'" Go to Christ in prayer with such words as those, or any others that you can get. If you cannot get any words, tears are just as good, and rather better! And groans and sighs and secret desires will be acceptable with God.

But add faith to them. *Trust the Physician.* You know that no ointment will heal you if you do not put it on the wound. Oftentimes when there is a wound, you want something with which to strap the ointment on. Faith straps on the heavenly heal-all! Go to the Lord with your broken heart and believe that He can heal you! Believe that He alone can heal you and trust Him to do it! Fall at His feet and say, "If I perish, I will perish here. I believe that the Son of God can save me and I will be saved by Him! But I will never look anywhere else for salvation. 'Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!'" If you have come as far as that, you are very near the Light of God! The great Physician will heal your broken heart before very long. Trust Him to do it now!

When you have trusted in Him and your heart is healed, and you are happy, *tell others about Him.* I do not like my Lord to have any tongue-tied children. I do *not* mean that I would want you all to *preach*. When a whole Church takes to preaching, it is as if the whole body were a mouth and that would be a vacuum! I want you to tell others, in some way or other, what the Lord has done for you, and be earnest in endeavoring to bring others to the great Physician. You all remember, therefore I need not tell you again, the story that we had about the doctor at one of our hospitals, a year or two ago. He healed a dog's broken leg and the grateful animal brought other dogs to have their broken legs healed. That was a good dog—some of you are not half as good as that dog! You believe that Christ is blessing you, yet you never try to bring others to Him to be saved! That must not be the case any longer. We must excel that dog in our love for our species and it must be our intense desire that if Christ has healed us,

He should heal our wife, our children, our friends, our neighbors—and we should never rest till others are brought to Him!

Then, when others are brought to Christ, or even if they will not be brought to Him, be sure to *praise Him*. If your broken heart has been healed and you are saved, and your sins forgiven, praise Him! We do not sing half enough. I do not mean in our congregations, but when we are at home. We pray every day. Do we sing every day? I think that we should. Matthew Henry used to say about family prayer, “They that pray do well; they that read and pray do better; they that read and pray and sing do best of all.” I think that Matthew Henry was right. “Well, I have no voice,” says one. Have you not? Then you never grumble at your wife. You never find fault with your food. You are not one of those who make the household unhappy by your evil speeches. “Oh, I do not mean that!” No, I thought you did not mean *that*. Well, praise the Lord with the same voice that you have used for complaining!

“But I could not carry a tune,” says one. Nobody said you were to do so. You can at least sing as I do. My singing is of a very peculiar character. I find that I cannot confine myself to one tune. In the course of a verse I use half-a-dozen tunes—but the Lord, to whom I sing, never finds any fault with me. He never blames me because I do not keep this tune or that. I cannot help it. My voice runs away with me and my heart, too! But I keep on humming something or other by way of praising God’s name. I would like you to do the same. I used to know an old Methodist and the first thing in the morning, when he got up, he began singing a bit of a Methodist hymn. And if I met the old man during the day, he was always singing. I have seen him in his little workshop, with his lap stone on his knee, and he was always singing and beating with his hammer. When I said to him, once, “Why do you always sing, dear Brother?” He replied, “Because I always have something to sing about.”

That is a good reason for singing! If our broken hearts have been healed, we have something to sing about in time and throughout eternity! Let us begin to do so to the praise of the glory of His Grace, who “heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” God bless all the broken hearts that are in this congregation tonight, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

## EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

### *Psalm 147.*

This is one of the Hallelujah Psalms. It begins and ends with, “Praise you the LORD.” May our hearts be in tune, that we may praise the Lord while we read these words of praise!

**Verse 1.** *Praise you the LORD*—It is not enough for the Psalmist to do it, himself. He needs help in it, so he says, “Praise you the LORD.” Wake up, my Brothers! Bestir yourselves, my Sisters! Come, all of you, and unite in this holy exercise! “Praise you the LORD.”

**1.** *For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.* When a thing is good, pleasant, and comely, you have certainly three excellent reasons for attending to it. It is not everything that is good—but here you have a happy combination of goodness, pleas-

antness, and comeliness. It will do you good to praise God. God counts it good and you will find it a pleasant exercise. That which is the occupation of Heaven must be happy employment. "It is good to sing praises unto our God." "It is pleasant" and certainly nothing is more "comely" and beautiful, and more in accordance with the right order of things than for creatures to praise their Creator—and the children of God to praise their Father in Heaven.

**2.** *The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* Praise His name for that. You love His Church—be glad that He builds it up. Praise Him who quarries every stone and puts it upon the one Foundation that is laid, even Jesus.

**2.** *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* Praise Him for that. If you were once an outcast and He has gathered you, give Him your special personal song of thanksgiving.

**3.** *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* Praise Him for that, you who have had broken hearts! If He has healed you, surely you should give Him great praise.

**4.** *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* He who heals broken hearts counts the stars and calls them by their names, as men call their servants, and send them on their way. Praise His name! Can you look up at the starry sky at night without praising Him who made the stars and leads out their host?

**5.** *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.* Praise Him, then. Praise His greatness, His almightiness, His infinite wisdom. Can you do otherwise? Oh, may God reveal Himself so much to your heart that you shall be constrained to pay Him willing adoration!

**6.** *The LORD lifts up the meek.* What a lifting up it is for them, out of the very dust where they have been trod down by the proud and the powerful! The Lord lifts them up. Praise Him for that.

**6.** *He casts the wicked down to the ground.* Thus He puts an end to their tyranny and delivers those who were ground beneath their cruel power. Praise His name for this, also. Excuse me that I continue to say to you, "Praise you the Lord," for, often as I say it, you will not praise Him too much—and we need to have our hearts stirred up to this duty of praising God which is so much neglected. After all, it is the praise of God that is the ultimatum of our religion. Prayer does but sow—*praise* is the harvest! Praying is the end of preaching and praising is the end of praying. May we bring to God much of the very essence of true religion and that will be the inward praise of the heart!

**7.** *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our Go.* "Unto our God." How that possessive pronoun puts a world of endearment into the majestic word, "God!" "This God is our God." Come, my Hearer, can you call God your God? Is He, indeed, yours? If so, "Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God."

**8.** *Who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains.* They did not talk about the "law of Nature" in those days. They ascribed everything to God. Let us do the same! It is a poor science that pushes God farther away from us instead of bringing Him nearer to us. HE covers the Heaven with clouds! HE

prepares the rain for earth! HE makes the grass to grow upon the mountains!

**9.** *He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* Our God cares for the birds and the beasts. He is as great in little things as in great things. Praise you His name! The gods of the heathen could not have these things said of them, but our God takes pleasure in providing for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. The commissariat of the universe is in His hand! "You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

**10, 11.** *He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.* Kings of the olden times rejoiced in the muscles and sinews of their soldiers and their horses, but God has no delight in mere physical strength. He takes pleasure in *spiritual* things, even in the weakness which makes us fear Him—even that weakness which has not grown into the strength of faith and yet hopes in His mercy. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

**12.** *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion.* Let whole cities join together to praise God! Shall we live to see the day when all London shall praise Him? Shall we, ever, as we go down these streets with their multitudes of inhabitants, see the people standing in the doorways and asking, "What must we do to be saved?" Shall we ever see every house with anxious enquirers in it, saying, "Tell us, tell us, how can we be reconciled to God?" Pray that it may be so! In Cromwell's day, if you went down Cheapside at a certain hour of the morning, you would find every blind drawn, for the people were all at family prayer. There is no street like that in London today! In those glorious Puritan times there was domestic worship everywhere—and the people seemed brought to Christ's feet. Alas, it was but an appearance in many cases—and they soon turned back to their own devices! Imitating the Psalmist, let us say, "Praise the Lord, O London; praise your God, O England!"

**13.** *For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.* As a nation, we have been greatly prospered, defended and supplied. And the Church of God has been made to stand fast against her enemies and her children have been blessed.

**14, 15.** *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His Commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.* Oriental monarchs were very earnest to have good post arrangements. They sent their decrees upon swift camels. They can never be compared with the swiftness of the purpose of God's decree. "His Word runs very swiftly." Oh, that the day would come when over all the earth, God's Writ should run, and God's written Word should come to be revered, believed, and obeyed!

**16.** *He gives snow like wool.* Men say, "it" snows. But what "it" is it that snows? The Psalmist rightly says of the Lord, "HE gives snow." They say that according to the condition of the atmosphere, snow is produced. But the Believer says, "He gives snow like wool." It is not only like wool for whiteness, but it is like it for the warmth which it gives.

**16.** *He scatters the hoar frost like ashes.* The simile is not to be easily explained, but it will often have suggested itself to you who, in the early morning, have seen the hoar frost scattered abroad.

**17.** *He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?* None can stand before His heat, but when He withdraws the fire and takes away the heat, the cold is equally destructive! It burns up as fast as fire would. "Who can stand before His cold?" If God is gone, if the Spirit of God is taken away from His Church, or from any of you, who can stand before His cold? The deprivation is as terrible as if it were a positive infliction. "Who can stand before His cold?"

**18.** *He sends out His Word, and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.* The frozen waters were hard as iron. The south wind touches them and they flow again. What can God *not* do? The great God of Nature is our God. Let us praise Him! Oh, may our hearts be in a right key tonight to make music before Him!

**19.** *He shows His Word unto Jacob, His statutes unto Israel.* This is something greater than all His wonders in Nature. The God of Nature is the God of Revelation! He has not hidden His Truth away from men. He has come out of the eternal secrecies and He has showed His Word, especially His Incarnate Word, unto His people. Let His name be praised!

**20.** *He has not dealt so with any nation.* Or, with any *other* nation. He revealed His statutes and His judgments to Israel, and since their day, the *spiritual* Israel has been privileged in like manner—"He has not dealt so with any nation."

**20.** *And as for His judgments, they have not known them.* Even today there are large tracts of country where God is not known. If we know Him, let us praise Him.

**20.** *Praise you the LORD.* Hallelujah! The Psalm ends upon its keynote—"Praise you the LORD." So may all our lives end! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 537, 587.**

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# HEALING FOR THE WOUNDED

## NO. 53

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.”  
Psalm 147:3.***

The next verse finely declares the power of God. “He tells the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.” Perhaps there is nothing which gives us a nobler view of the greatness of God than a contemplation of the starry heavens, when by night we lift up our eyes and behold Him who has created all these things. When we remember that He brings out their host by number, calls them all by their names and that by the greatness of His power not one fails, then, indeed, we adore a mighty God and our soul naturally falls prostrate in reverential awe before the Throne of Him who leads the host of Heaven and marshals the stars in their armies! But the Psalmist has here placed another fact side by side with this wondrous act of God. He declares that the same God who leads the stars, who tells the number of them and calls them by their names, heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! The next time you rise to some idea of God by viewing the starry floor of His magnificent temple above, strive to compel your contemplation to this thought—that the same mighty hand which rolls the stars along, puts liniments around the wounded heart—that the same Being who spoke the worlds into existence and now impels those ponderous globes through their orbits, does, in His mercy, cheer the wounded and heal the broken in heart!

We will not delay you by a preface, but will come at once to the two thoughts. First, here is a *great ill*—a broken heart. And secondly, a *great mercy*—“*He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.*”

Man is a double being—he is composed of body and soul—and each of the portions of man may receive injury and hurt. The wounds of the body are extremely painful and if they amount to a breaking of the frame, the torture is singularly exquisite. Yet God has, in His mercy, provided means whereby wounds may be healed and injuries repaired. The soldier who retires from the battlefield knows that he shall find a hand to extricate the shot and certain ointments and liniments to heal his wounds. We very speedily care for bodily diseases. They are too painful to let us slumber in silence and they soon urge us to seek a physician or a surgeon for our healing. Oh, if only we were as much alive to the more serious wounds of our *inner man*! If we were as deeply sensible of *spiritual* inju-

ries, how earnestly would we cry to “the Beloved Physician”—and how soon would we prove His power to save! Stabbed in the most vital part by the hand of our original parent and, from head to foot disabled by our own sin, we yet remain as insensible as steel—careless and unmoved—because though our wounds are known, they are not felt! We would count that soldier foolish who would be more anxious to repair a broken helmet than an injured limb. Are not we even more to be condemned when we give precedence to the perishing fabric of the body and neglect the immortal soul? You, however, who have *broken hearts*, can no longer be insensible. You have felt *too acutely* to slumber in indifference! Your bleeding spirit cries for consolation—may my glorious *Master* give me words in season for you! We intend to address you upon the important subject of broken hearts and the great healing provided for them.

**I.** Let us commence with THE GREAT ILL—a broken heart. What is it? We reply there are several forms of a broken heart. Some are what we call naturally broken and some are spiritually so. We will occupy a moment by mentioning certain forms of this evil, naturally considered. And verily our task would be a dreary one if we were called upon to witness one tenth of the misery endured by those who suffer from a broken heart!

There have been hearts broken by *desertion*. A wife has been neglected by a husband who was once the subject of her attachment and whom even now she tenderly loves. Scorned and despised by the man who once lavished upon her every token of his affection, she has known what a broken heart means. A friend is forsaken by one upon whom he leaned, to whose very soul he was knit, so that their two hearts had grown into one. He feels that his heart is broken, for the other half of himself is severed from him. When Ahithophel forsakes David, when the kind friend unto whom we have always told our sorrows, betrays our confidence, the consequence may possibly be a broken heart. The desertion of a man by his fellows, the ingratitude of children to their parents, the unkindness of parents to their children, the betrayal of secrets by a comrade, the changeableness and fickleness of friends—along with other modes of desertion which happen in this world—have brought about broken hearts. We know not a more fruitful source of broken hearts than disappointment in the objects of our affections—to find that we have been deceived where we have placed our confidence. It is not simply that we leaned upon a broken reed and the reed has snapped—that were bad enough—but in the fall, we fell upon a thorn which pierced our heart to its center! Many have there been who have gone to their graves not smitten by disease, not slain by the sword—but with a far direr wound than the sword could ever give, a more desperate death than poison could ever cause! May you never know such agony.

We have also seen hearts broken by *bereavement*. We have known tender wives who have laid their husbands in the tomb and who have stood by the grave until their very heart did break for solitary anguish. We have seen parents bereaved of their beloved offspring, one after another. And when they have been called to hear the solemn words, “earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” over the last of their children, they have turned away from the grave, bidding adieu—longing for death and abhorring life! To such the world becomes a prison—cheerless, cold, unutterably miserable. The owl and bittern seem, alone, to sympathize with them and anything of joy in the whole world appears to be but, intended, as a mockery to their misery. Divine Grace, however, can sustain them even here!

How frequently might this be supposed to occur to our brave countrymen engaged in the present war? Do not they feel, and acutely feel, the loss of their comrades? You will, perhaps, imagine that the slaughter and death around them prevent the tender feelings of nature. You are enough mistaken if you so dream! The soldier’s heart may never know fear, but it has not forgotten sympathy! The fearful struggle around renders it impossible to pay the usual court and homage at the gates of sorrow, but there is more of real grief, oftentimes, in the hurried midnight funeral than in the flaunting pageantry of your pompous processions. Were it in our power to walk among the tents, we would find abundant need to use the words of our text by way of cordial to many a warrior who has seen all his chosen companions fall before the destroyer!

Oh you mourners! You who seek a balm for your wounds—let me proclaim it unto you—you are not ignorant of it, I trust, but let me apply that in which you already place your confidence. The God of Heaven knows your sorrows, repair to His Throne and tell your simple tale of woe! Then cast your burden on *Him*. He will bear it! Open your heart before *Him*—He will heal it! Think not that you are beyond hope. You would be if there were no God of Love and Pity, but while Jehovah lives, the mourner need not despair!

*Poverty* has also contributed its share to the number of the army of misery. Pinching need, a noble desire to walk erect without the crutch of charity, and inability to obtain employment have, at times, driven men to desperate measures. Many a goodly cedar has withered for lack of moisture and so has many a man pined away beneath the deprivations of extreme poverty. Those who are blessed with sufficiency can scarcely guess the pain endured by the sons of need—especially if they have once been rich. Yet O child of suffering, be patient—God has not passed you over in His Providence. Feeder of sparrows, He will also furnish *you* with what you need! Sit not down in despair—hope on, always hope! Take up arms against a sea of troubles and your opposition shall yet end your dis-

tresses. *There is One* who cares for you. One eye is fixed on you, even in the home of your destitution. One heart beats with pity for your woes and an Omnipotent hand shall yet stretch out to you the needed help! The dark cloud shall yet scatter itself in its season—the blackest gloom shall have its morning! *He*, if you are one of His family, with hands of Grace will bind up your wounds and heal your broken heart!

Multiplied, also, are the cases where *disappointment* and *defeat* have crushed the spirits. The soldier fighting for his country may see the ranks broken, but he will not be broken in heart as long as there remains a single hope for victory. His comrade reels behind him and he, himself, is wounded, but with a shout, he cries, “On! On!” and scales the ramparts. Sword in hand, he still goes carrying terror among the foe, himself sustained by the prospect of victory. But let him once hear the shout of defeat where he hoped for triumph. Let him know that the banner is stained in the earth, that the eagle has been snatched from the standard. Let him once hear it said, “they fly, they fly!” Let him see the officers and soldiers flying in confusion—let him be well assured that the most heroic courage and the most desperate valor are of no use—then his heart bursts under a sense of dishonor! Then he is almost content to die because the honor of his country has been tarnished and her glory has been stained in the dust. Of this the soldiers of Britain know but little—may they speedily carve out a peace for us with their victorious swords! Truly in the great conflict of life we can bear anything but defeat. Toils on toils would we endure to climb a summit, but if we must die before we reached it—that were a brokenness of heart, indeed! To accomplish the objective on which we have set our minds, we would spend our very heart’s blood. But once let us see that our life’s purpose is not to be accomplished—let us, when we hoped to grasp the crown, see that it is withdrawn, or other hands have seized it—then comes brokenness of heart. But let us remember, whether we have been broken in heart by poverty or by defeat, that there is a hand which “binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds.” Even these natural breakings are regarded by Jehovah, who, in the plentitude of His mercy, gives a balm for every wound to each of His people! We need not ask, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” *There is a balm! There is a Physician* who can heal all these natural wounds, who can give joy to the troubled countenance, take the furrow from the brow, wipe the tear from the eyes, remove the agitation from the bosom—and calm the heart now swelling with grief. He “heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.”

But all that we have mentioned of woe and sorrow which the natural heart endures, is not sufficient to explain our text. The heart broken not by distress or disappointment, but on account of *sin*, is the heart which

God peculiarly delights to heal. All other sufferings may find a fearful center in one breast, and yet the subject of them may be unpardoned and unsaved. But if the heart is broken for sin by the Holy Spirit, salvation will be its ultimate issue and Heaven its result! At the time of regeneration, the soul is subject to an inward work, causing considerable suffering at the time. This suffering does not continue after the soul has learned the preciousness of a Savior's blood, but while it lasts, it produces an effect which is never forgotten in later life! Let none suppose that the pains we are about to describe are the constant companions of an heir of Heaven during his entire existence. They are like the torture of a great drunkard at the time of his reformation, rendered necessary, not by the reformation, but by his old habits. So this broken heart is felt at the time of that change of which the Bible speaks, when it says, "Except a man be born-again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The fruit of the Spirit is afterwards joy and peace, but for a season we must, if saved, endure much mental agony.

Are any of you at the present moment disturbed in mind and vexed in spirit because you have violated the commands of God? And are you anxious to know whether these feelings are tokens of genuine brokenness and contrition? Hear me, then, while I briefly furnish you with tests whereby you may discern the truth and value of your repentance.

1. We cannot conceive it possible that you are broken in heart if the pleasures of the world are your delight. We may consent to call you amiable, estimable and honorable, even, should you mix somewhat in the amusements of life—but it would be a treason to your common sense to tell you that such things are consistent with a broken heart! Will any venture to assert that yon gay reveler has a broken heart? Would he not consider it an insult, should you suggest it? Does that libidinous song, now defiling the air, proceed from the lips of a broken-hearted sinner? Can the fountain, when filled with sorrow, send forth such streams as these? No, my Friends, the wanton, the libidinous, the rioting and the profane are too wise to lay claim to the title of broken-hearted persons, seeing that their claim would be palpably absurd! They scorn the name as mean and paltry—unworthy of a man who loves free living and counts religion *cant*.

But should there be one of you so entirely deceived by the evil spirit as to think yourself a partaker in the promises, while you are living in the lusts of the flesh, let me solemnly warn you of your error! He who sincerely repents of sin will hate it and find no pleasure in it. And during the season when his heart is broken, he will loathe to detestation, the very approach of evil! The song of mirth will then be as a dirge in his ear—"As he that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart." If the man who makes merry with sin is broken-hearted, he

must be a prince of hypocrites, for he pretends to be worse than he is! We know right well that the wounded spirit requires other cordials than this world can afford. A soul disturbed by guilt must be lulled to a peaceful rest by other music than carnal pleasures can afford. The tavern, the house of vice and the society of the profligate are no more to be endured by a contrite soul than the jostling of a crowd by a wounded man!

**2.** Again, we will not, for one moment, allow that a *self-righteous man* can have a broken heart. Ask him to pray and he thanks God that he is every way correct. What need has he to weep because of the iniquity of his life, for he firmly believes himself to be well-deserving and far enough removed from guilt! He has attended his religious duties, he is exceedingly strict in the form of his devotions. Or if he cares not for such things, he is, at any rate, quite as good as those who do! He was never in bondage to any man but can look to Heaven without a tear for his sin. Do not conceive that I am painting an imaginary case, for there are, unfortunately, too many of these proud self-exalting men. Will they be angry with me when I tell them that they are no nearer Heaven than those whom we reproved a few moments ago? Or will they not be equally moved to wrath if I were so much as to *hint* that they need to be broken in heart for their sin? Nevertheless, such is the case, and Pharisees shall one day learn with terror that self-righteousness is hateful to God!

But what is a broken heart? I say, first, that a broken heart implies a *very deep and poignant sorrow on account of sin*. A broken heart—think of that. If you could look within and see everything going on in this great mystery called man, you would marvel at the wonders thereof. But how much more astonished would you be to see its heart, not merely divided in two, but split into atoms! You would exclaim, “What misery could have done this? What a heavy blow must have fallen here!” By nature, the heart is of one solid piece, hard as a nether millstone. But when God smites it, it is broken to pieces in deep suffering. Some will understand me when I describe the state of the man who is feeling a sorrow for sin. In the morning he bends his knees in prayer, but he feels afraid to pray. He thinks it is blasphemy for him to venture near God’s Throne! And when he does pray at all, he rises with the thought—“God cannot hear me, for He hears not sinners.” He goes about his business and is perhaps a little diverted. But at every interval, the same black thought rolls upon him—“*You are condemned already.*” Mark his person and appearance. A melancholy has rested upon him. At night he goes home, but there is little enjoyment for him in the household. He may smile, but his smile ill conceals the grief which lurks underneath. When again he bends the knees, he fears the shadows of the night. He dreads to be on his bed, lest it should be his tomb! And if he lies awake, he thinks of death, the second death—damnation and destruction! If he dreams, he dreams of

demons and flames of Hell. He wakes, again, and almost feels the torture of which he dreamed. He wishes in the morning it were evening—and at evening it were night. “I loathe my daily food,” he says. “I care for nothing for I have not Christ! I have not mercy, I have not peace.” He has set off running on the road to Heaven and he puts his fingers in his ears and will hear of nothing else. Tell him of a ball or concert—it is nothing to him. He can enjoy nothing! You might put him in a Heaven and it would be a Hell to him! Not the chants of the redeemed, not the hallelujahs of the glorified, not the hymns of flaming cherubs would charm woe out of this man as long as he is the subject of a broken heart.

Now I do not say that all must have the same amount of suffering before they arrive at Heaven. I am speaking of some who have this especial misery of heart on account of sin. They are utterly miserable. As Bunyan has said, “they are considerably tumbled up and down in their souls”—and conceive that, “as the Lord their God lives, there is but a step between themselves and eternal death.” Oh, blessings on the Lord forever! If any of you are in that condition, here is the mercy. Though this wound is not provided for in any earthly pharmacy—though there are found no physicians who can heal it, yet, “He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.” It is a blessing to have a broken heart, after all!

Again—when a man has a broken heart, he not only feels sorrow for sin, but he feels himself *utterly unable to get rid of it*. He who believes himself able to save himself, has never known the meaning of a broken heart. Those who imagine that reformation can atone for the past—or secure righteousness for the future—are not yet savingly brought to know themselves. No, my Friends, we must be humbled in the dust and made to look for all in Christ, or else we shall be deceived, after all! But are you driven out of yourself? Are you like the wounded soldier crying for someone else to carry you to the hospital of mercy and longing for the aid of a mightier than yourself? Then be of good cheer, there shall be found a great deliverance for you! So long as you trust in ceremonies, prayers or good works, you shall not find eternal Grace. But when stripped of all strength and power, you shall gain a glorious salvation in the Lord Jesus! If morality can join the pieces of a broken heart, the cement shall soon cease to bind and the man shall again be as vile as ever. We must have a *new heart* and a right spirit, or vain will be all our hopes!

Need I give any other description of the character I desire to comfort? I trust you are discovered. Oh, my poor Brothers and Sisters, I grieve to see you in distress, but there is pardon through Jesus—there is forgiveness even for you! What? Though your sins lie like a millstone on your shoulders, they shall not sink you down to Hell! Arise! He, my gracious Lord, calls you! Throw yourself at His feet and lose your griefs in His loving and cheering words! You are saved if you can say—

**“A guilty, weak and helpless worm  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All.”**

**II.** We have spoken a long time on the great ill of a broken heart. Our second thought will be the GREAT MERCY—“He *heals* the broken in heart.”

First, *He, only*, can do it. Men may alleviate suffering, they may console the afflicted and cheer the distressed, but they cannot heal the broken in heart, nor bind up their wounds! It is not human eloquence, or mortal wisdom. It is not the oration of an Apollos, nor the wondrous words of a prince of preachers. It is the “still small voice” of God which alone confers the “peace which passes all understanding.” The binding of the heart is a thing done immediately by God, oftentimes without any instrumentality whatever! But when instrumentality is used, it is always in such a way that the man does not extol the instrument, but renders grateful homage to God. In *breaking* hearts, God uses man continually—repeated fiery sermons and terrible denunciations break men’s hearts. But you will bear me witness when your hearts were *healed*—only God did it! You value the minister that broke your heart. But it is not often that we ascribe the healing to any instrumentality whatever! The act of Justification is generally apart from all means—only God does it. I know not the man who uttered the words that were the means of relieving my heart—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” I do not remember what he said in the sermon and I am sure I do not care to know. I found Jesus then and there. And that was enough for me! When you get your wounds healed, even under a minister, it seems as if it were not the minister who spoke. You never heard him speak like it in all your life before. You say, “I have often heard him with pleasure, but he has outdone himself. *Before*, he spoke to my ears, but *now* to my heart.” We are, some of us, rejoicing in the liberty of Christ and walking in all the joy of the Spirit. But it is to *God* we owe our deliverance and we are grateful neither to man nor book, so much as to the Great Physician who has taken pity on us. Oh that Jesus would walk through this Bethesda now! Oh, poor sick, dying man, does guilt weigh heavy on your soul? Turn not to any helper but to Him that sits on the Throne!

Then He only *can* do it. I defy any of my Brothers to bind up a broken heart. I have often labored to do it, but could never effect it. I have said a word to console the mourner, but I have felt that I have done but little, or have, perhaps, put the wrong mixture in the cup. Only HE can do it! Some of you seek mercy through Baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or regular attendance at the House of Prayer. Some of you, again, have certain forms and observances to which you attach saving value. As the Lord lives, NONE of these things bind up the broken in heart apart from the

Holy Spirit! They are empty wind and air. You may have them and be lost! You can have no peace and comfort unless you have immediate dealings with God, who alone, as the Great Physician, heals the broken in heart! Ah, there are some of you who go to your ministers with broken hearts and say, "What shall I do?" I have heard of a preacher who told his anxious hearer, "You are getting melancholy, you had better go to such-and-such a place of amusement. You are getting too dreary and melancholy by half." Oh, to think of a nurse in a hospital administering poison, when she ought to be giving the true medicine! If he deserves to be hung, who mixes poison with his drugs, how much more guilty is that man who tells a soul to seek for happiness where there is none—who sends it to a carnal world for joy when there is no joy to be found except in God?

Then again, God only *may* do it. Suppose we could heal your broken heart? It would be good for nothing. I do beseech the Lord that I may never get a broken heart healed, except it is by God. A truly convinced sinner will always rather keep his heart broken than have it healed wrongly. I ask you who are suffering whether you would not rather keep your broken heart as it is, than allow a bad physician to cure it for you and so deceive you and send you to Hell, at last? I know your cry is, "Lord, let me know the worst of my case. Use the knife. Do not be afraid of hurting me! Let me feel it all. Cut the proud flesh away rather than let it remain." But there are not a few who get their wounds glossed over by some pretended good works or duties. Oh, my Hearer, let no man deceive you! Be not content with a name to live while you are really dead. Bad money may pass on earth, but genuine gold, alone, will be received in Heaven. Can *you* abide the fire?

In vain your presumption! When God shall come to examine you, you will not pass muster unless you have had a real healing from His hand! It is easy enough to get religious notions and fancy yourselves safe, but a real saving work is the work of God and God, alone! Seek not to the priest—he may console—but it is by deluding you! Seek not to your own self—you may soothe yourself into the sleep of Hell! See that your heart is washed in the blood of Jesus. Be careful that the Holy Spirit has His temple in it and may God, of His great and Sovereign Grace, look to you that you deceive not yourself!

But next, God *will* do it. That is a sweet thought. "He heals the broken in heart." He WILL do it! Nobody else can, nobody else may, but He will! Is your heart broken? He WILL heal it, He is sure to heal it, for it is written—and it can never be altered, for what was true 3,000 years ago, is true now—"He heals the broken in heart." Did Saul of Tarsus rejoice after three days of blindness? Yes, and you, also, shall be delivered! Oh, it is a theme for eternal gratitude that the same God who, in His loftiness and

Omnipotence stooped down in olden times to soothe, cherish, relieve and bless the mourner, is even *now* taking His journeys of mercy among the penitent sons of men! Oh, I beseech Him to come where you are sitting and put His hand inside your soul—and if He finds, there, a broken heart, to bind it up! Poor Sinner, breathe your wish to Him, let your sigh come before Him, for, “He heals the broken in heart.” There you lie wounded on the plain. “Is there no physician?” you cry! “Is there none?” Around you lie your fellow sufferers, but they are as helpless as yourself. Your mournful cry comes back without an answer and space, alone, hears your groan. Ah, the battlefield of sin has one kind Visitor. It is not abandoned to the vultures of remorse and despair. I hear footsteps approaching! They are the gentle footsteps of Jehovah! With a heart full of mercy, He is hastening to His repenting child. In His hands there is no thunder, in His eyes no anger, on His lips no threat—look how He bows Himself over the mangled heart! Hear how He speaks, “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And if the patient dreads to look in the face of the mighty Being who addresses him, the same loving mouth whispers, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake.” Look how He washes every wound with sacred water from the side of Jesus! Mark how He spreads the ointment of forgiving Grace and binds around each wound the fair white linen, which is the righteousness of saints. Does the mourner faint under the operation? He puts a cordial to his lips, exclaiming, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Yes, it is true—most true—neither dream nor fiction, “HE HEALS THE BROKEN IN HEART AND BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS.”

How *condescending* is the Lord of Heaven, to thus visit poor forlorn man! The Queen has kindly visited the hospitals of our soldiers to cheer, by her royal words, her loyal defenders. By this she has done herself honor and her soldiers love her for it. But when the God of the whole earth, the Infinite Creator, stoops to become Servant to His creatures—can you conceive the majestic condescension which bows itself in mercy over the miserable heart and with loving fingers closes the gaping wounds of the spirit? Oh, sin-sick Sinner! The King of Heaven will not despise *you*, but you, too, shall find Him your Comforter, who heals all your diseases! Mark, moreover, how tenderly He does it. You remember that passage in the Psalms, “Loving kindness and *tender* mercies”? God’s mercies are “tender mercies.” When He undertakes to bind up the broken in heart, He always uses the softest liniment. He is not like your army surgeon who hurries along and says, “A leg off here, an arm off there.” But He comes gently and sympathizing. He does not use roughness with us. But with downy fingers He puts the wound together and lays the

plaster on. Yes, He does it in such a soft and winning way that we are full of wonder to think He could be so kind to such unworthy ones!

Then He does it *securely*, so that the wound cannot open again. If He puts on His plaster, it is Heaven's court plaster and it never fails. If He heals, He heals effectually. No man who is once saved of God shall ever be lost! If we receive mercy by faith, we shall never lose it. When God heals once, He heals forever! Although some who teach false doctrine do assert that children of God may be lost, they have no warrant in Scripture, nor in experience, for we know that He keeps the saints. He who is once forgiven cannot be punished. He who is once regenerated cannot perish. He who is once healed shall never find his soul sick unto death. Blessings on His name, some of us have felt His skill and have known His mighty power! And were our hearts broken, now, we would not stop a moment, but go at once to His feet and we would cry, "O, You who bind the broken in heart, bind ours! You who heals wounds, heal ours, we beseech You."

And now, my Hearers, a parting word with you. Are you careless and ungodly? Permit me to speak with you. Is it true that after death there is a judgment? Do you believe that when *you* die, *you* will be called to stand before the bar of God? Do you know that there is a Hell of eternal flame appointed for the wicked? Yes—you know and believe all this—and yet you are going down to Hell thoughtless and unconcerned—you are living in constant and fearful jeopardy of Hell's fires—without a friend on the other side the grave! Ah, how changed will your note be soon. You have turned away from rebuke, you have laughed at warning, but laughter will then give place to sighs and your singing to yells of agony! Think about it, my Brothers and Sisters, before you again place your life in peril. What will you do if your soul is required of you? Can you endure the terrors of the Almighty? Can you dwell in everlasting burnings? Were your bones of iron and your ribs of brass, the sight of the coming judgment would make you tremble! Forbear, then, to mock at religion. Cease to blaspheme your Maker, for remember, you will soon meet Him face to face—and how will you then account for your insults heaped upon His patient Person? May the Lord yet humble you before Him!

But I am seeking the distressed and I am impatient to be the means of his comfort. It may be my words are now sounding in the ears of one of my weary, wounded fellow countrymen. You have been a long time tossing on the bed of languishing and the time for thought has been blessed to your soul by God. You are now feeling the guilt of your life and are lamenting the sins of your conduct. You fear there is no hope of pardon, no prospect of forgiveness—and you tremble lest death should lead your guilty soul unforgiven before its Maker. Hear, then, the Word of God! Your pains for sins are God's work in your soul! He wounded you that

you may seek Him. He would not have showed you your sin if He did not intend to pardon you! You are now a sinner and Jesus came to save sinners—therefore He came to save you! Yes, He is saving you now! These strivings of soul are the work of His mercy. There is love in every blow and Grace in every stripe. Believe, O troubled one, that He is able to save you unto the uttermost and you shall not believe in vain. Now, in the silence of your agony, look unto Him who by His stripes heals you. Jesus Christ has suffered the penalty of your sins and has endured the wrath of God on your behalf. See yonder crucified Man on Cavalry and mark you that those drops of blood are falling for *you*. Those nailed hands are pierced *for you* and that opened side contains a heart within it, full of love *to you*—

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

It is simple reliance on Him which saves! The Negro slave said, “Massa, I fall flat on de promise.” So if you fall flat on the promise of Jesus, you shall not find Him fail you! He will bind up your heart and make an end to the days of your mourning. We shall meet in Heaven, one day, to sing hallelujah to the condescending Lord! Till then, may the God of all Grace be our helper. Amen.

***“The mighty God will not despise  
The contrite heart’s plea for sacrifice.  
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,  
Rises accepted to the Throne.  
He meets, with tokens of His Grace,  
The trembling lip, the blushing face.  
His heart yearns when sinners pray—  
And mercy bears their sins away.  
When filled with grief, overwhelmed with shame,  
He, pitying heals their broken frame—  
He hears their sad complaints and spies  
His image in their weeping eyes.”***

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

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

**~END OF VOLUME ONE~**

# THE RAVENS' CRY

## NO. 672

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1866,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.”  
Psalm 147:9.***

I SHALL open this sermon with a quotation. I must give you, in Caryl's own words his note upon ravens. “Naturalists tell us that when the raven has fed his young in the nest till they are well fledged and able to fly abroad, he thrusts them out of the nest and will not let them abide there, but puts them out to get their own living. Now when these young ones are upon their first flight from their nest and are little acquainted with means how to help themselves with food, then the Lord provides food for them.

“It is said by credible authorities that the raven is marvelously strict and severe in this—as soon as his young ones are able to provide for themselves, he will not fetch any more food for them. Some affirm the old ones will not suffer them to stay in the same *country* where they were bred, and if so, then they must wander. We say proverbially, ‘Need makes the old wife trot.’ We may say, ‘and the young ones too.’”

It has been, and possibly is, the practice of some parents towards their children, who, as soon as they can shift for themselves and are fit in any competency to get their bread, to turn them out of doors as the raven does his young ones out of the nest. Now, said the Lord in the text, when the young ones of the raven are in this pinch, that they are turned off, and wander for lack of meat, who, then, provides for them? “Do not I, the Lord? Do not I, who provide for the old raven, provide for his young ones, both while they abide in the nest and when they wander for lack of meat?”

Solomon sent the sluggard to the ant, and learned, himself, lessons from conies, greyhounds, and spiders! Let us be willing to be instructed by any of God's creatures and go to the ravens' nest tonight to learn as in a school. To the pure nothing is unclean, and to the wise nothing is trivial. Let the superstitious dread the raven as a bird of ill omen, and let the thoughtless see nothing but a winged thing in glossy black—we are willing to see more, and doubtless shall not be unrewarded if we are but teachable.

Noah's raven brought him back no olive branch, but ours may! And it may even come to pass that ravens may bring us meat tonight as of old they fed Elijah by Cherith's brook. Our blessed Lord once derived a very potent argument from ravens—an argument intended to comfort and cheer those of His servants who were oppressed with needless anxieties about their temporal circumstances. To such he said, “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them. How much more are you better than the fowls?”

Following the Master's logic—which you will all agree must have been sound, for He was never untruthful in His reasoning any more than in His statements—I shall argue tonight on this wise: Consider the ravens as they cry! With harsh, inarticulate, croaking notes they make known their needs, and your heavenly Father answers their prayer and sends them food! You, too, have begun to pray and to seek His favor—are you not much better than they? Does God care for ravens, and will he not care for you? Does He not hearken to the cries of the unfledged ravens in their nests when they are hungry and cry unto Him to be fed?

Does He, I say, supply them in answer to their cries, and will He not answer you, poor trembling children of men who are seeking His face and favor through Christ Jesus? The whole business of this evening will be just simply to work that one thought out. I shall aim tonight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to say something to those who have been praying for mercy but as yet have not received it—who have gone on their knees, perhaps, for months, with one exceeding great and bitter cry—but as yet know not the way of peace.

Their sin still hangs like a millstone about their neck. They sit in the valley of the shadow of death. No light has dawned upon them and they are wringing their hands and moaning, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut His ear against the prayers of seeking souls? Will He be mindful of sinners' piteous cries no more? Will penitents' tears drop upon the earth and no longer move His compassion?" Satan, too, is telling you, dear Friends, who are now in this state of mind, that God will never hear you. That He will let you cry till you die! That you shall pant out your life in sighs and tears and that at the end you shall be cast into the Lake of Fire!

I long, tonight, to give you some comfort and encouragement. I want to urge you to cry yet more vehemently! Come to the Cross and lay hold of it, and vow that you will never leave its shadow till you find the gift which your soul covets. I want to move you, if God the Holy Spirit shall help me, so that you will say within yourselves, like Queen Esther, "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish." And may you add to that the vow of Jacob, "I will not let You go, except You bless me!" Here, then, is the question in hand: GOD HEARS THE YOUNG RAVENS. WILL HE NOT HEAR YOU?

**I.** I argue that He will, first, when I remember that He hears the lowly raven cry, and that you, in some sense, are much better than a raven. The raven is but a poor unclean bird whose instant death would make no sort of grievous gap in creation. If thousands of ravens had their necks wrung tomorrow I do not know that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the universe about them! It would simply be a number of poor birds dead, and that would be all.

But *you* are an immortal soul! The raven is gone when life is over—there is no raven any longer. But when your present life is past, you have not ceased to be—you are but launched upon the sea of life—you have but begun to live forever. You will see earth's hoary mountains crumble to nothingness before your immortal spirit shall expire! The moon shall have paled her feeble light, and the sun's more mighty fires shall have been

quenched in perpetual darkness, and yet your spirit shall still be marching on in its everlasting course—an everlasting course of misery, unless God hears your cry—

***“Oh, that truth immense,  
This mortal, immortality shall wear!  
The pulse of mind shall never cease to play;  
By God awakened, it forever throbs,  
Eternal as His own eternity!  
Above the angels, or below the fiends:  
To mount in Glory, or in shame descend—  
Mankind is destined by resistless doom.”***

Do you think, then, that God will hear the poor bird that is and is not—is here a moment and is blotted out of existence—and will He not hear you, an immortal soul, whose duration is to be co-equal with His own? I think it surely must strike you that if He hears the dying raven He will also hear an undying man. The ancients said of Jupiter that he was not at leisure to mind little things, but Jehovah condescends to care for the least of His creatures, and even looks into birds' nests! Will He not mercifully care for spirits who are heirs of a dread eternity?

Moreover, I never heard that ravens were made in the image of God! But I do find that, defiled, deformed, and debased as our race is, yet originally God said, “Let Us make man in Our own image.” There is something about man which is not to be found in the lower creatures, the best and noblest of whom are immeasurably beneath the meanest child of Adam. A council was held as to the creation of man, and in his mind, and even in the adaptation of his body to assist the mind, there is a marvelous display of the wisdom of the Most High.

Bring here the most deformed, obscure and wicked of the human race, and—though I dare not flatter human nature morally—yet there is a dignity about the fact of manhood which is not to be found in all the beasts of the field, be they what they may. Behemoth and Leviathan are put in subjection beneath the foot of man. The eagle cannot soar so high as man's soul mounts, nor the lion feed on such royal meat as man's spirit hungers after. And do you think that God will hear so low and so mean a creature as a raven and yet not hear you, when you are one of the race that was formed in His own image?

Oh, think not so harshly and so foolishly of Him whose ways are always equal! I will put this to yourselves. Does not Nature itself teach that man is to be cared for above the fowls of the air? If you heard the cries of young ravens, you might feel compassion enough for those birds to give them food if you knew how to feed them. But I cannot believe that any of you would succor the birds, and yet would not fly upon the wings of compassion to the rescue of a perishing infant whose cries you might hear from the place where it was cast by cruel neglect! If, in the stillness of the night, you heard the plaintive cry of a man expiring in sickness, unpitied in the streets, would you not arise and help him?

I am sure you would if you are one who would help a raven. If you have any compassion for a raven, surely much more would you have pity upon a man! I know it is whispered that there are some simpletons who care more for houseless dogs than for houseless men and women—and yet it is far more probable that those who feel for dogs are those who care most

tenderly for men. At any rate, I should feel a strong presumption in their favor if I needed aid. And do you not think that God, the All-Wise One, when He cares for these unfledged birds in the nest, will be sure also to care for you?

Your heart says, "Yes." Then from now on answer the unbelief of your heart by turning its own just reasoning against it. But I hear you say, "Ah, but the raven is not sinful as I am! It may be an unclean bird, but it cannot be so unclean as I am morally. It may be black in hue, but I am black with sin! A raven cannot break the Sabbath, cannot swear, cannot commit adultery! A raven cannot be a drunkard! It cannot defile itself with vices such as those with which I am polluted."

I know all that, Friend, and it may seem to you to make your case more hopeless, but I do not think it really does so. Just think of it for a minute. What does this prove? Why, that you are a creature capable of sinning, and, consequently, that you are an intelligent spirit living in a sense in which a raven does not live. You are a creature moving in the spirit-world! You belong to the world of souls in which the raven has no portion. The raven cannot sin, because it has no spirit, no soul. But you are an intelligent agent of which the better part is your soul. Now, as the soul is infinitely more precious than the body! And as the raven—I am speaking popularly now—is nothing but body while *you* are evidently soul as well as body—or else you would not be capable of sinning—I see even in that black discouraging thought some gleam of light!

Does God care for flesh, and blood, and bones, and black feathers, and will He not care for your reason, your will, your judgment, your conscience, your immortal soul? Oh, if you will but think of it, you must see that it is not possible for a raven's cry to gain an audience of the ear of Divine Benevolence and for your *prayer* to be despised and disregarded by the Most High—

***"The insect that with puny wings,  
Just shoots along one summer's ray.  
The flower which the breath of Spring  
Wakes into life for half a day.  
The smallest mote, the most tender hair,  
All feel our heavenly Father's care."***

Surely, then, He will have respect unto the cry of the humble, and will not refuse their prayer!

I can hardly leave this point without remarking that the mention of a raven should *encourage* a sinner. As an old author writes, "Among fowls He does not mention the hawk or falcon, which are highly prized and fed by princes. But He chooses that hateful and malicious bird, the croaking raven, whom no man values but as she eats up the carrion which might annoy him. Behold then, and wonder at the Providence and kindness of God, that He should provide food for the raven, a creature of so dismal a hue and of so hideous a tone—a creature that is so odious to most men, and ominous to some. There is a great Providence of God seen in providing for the ant, who gathers her meat in summer—but a greater in the raven, who, though he forgets, or is careless to provide for himself, yet God provides and lays up for him."

One would think the Lord should say of ravens, Let them shift for themselves or perish! No, the Lord God does not despise any work of His hands. The raven has his being from God, and therefore the raven shall be provided for by Him. Not only the fair innocent dove, but the ugly raven has his meat from God. Which clearly shows that the want of excellence in you, you black, raven-like sinner, will not prevent your cry from being heard in Heaven! Unworthiness the blood of Jesus shall remove, and defilement He shall utterly cleanse away. Only believe on Jesus, and you shall find peace!

**II.** Then, in the next place, there is a great deal of difference between your cry and the cry of a raven. When the young ravens cry I suppose they scarcely know what they want. They have a natural instinct which makes them cry for food, but their cry does not, in itself, express their need. You would soon find out, I suppose, that they *meant* food—but they have no articulate speech—they do not utter so much as a single word! It is just a constant, croaking, craving cry and that is all.

But *you* know what you need, and few as your words are, your heart knows its own bitterness and dire distress. Your sighs and groans have an obvious meaning. Your understanding is at the right hand of your hungry heart. You know that you want peace and pardon. You know that you need Jesus, His precious blood, His perfect righteousness. Now, if God hears such a strange, chattering, indistinct cry as that of a raven, don't you think that He will also hear the rational and expressive prayer of a poor, needy, guilty soul who is crying unto Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Surely your reason tells you that!

Moreover, the young ravens cannot use arguments, for they have no understanding. They cannot say as you can—

***"He knows what arguments I'd take  
To wrestle with my God,  
I'd plead for His own mercy's sake,  
And for a Savior's blood."***

They have one argument, namely, their dire necessity, which forces their cry from them, but beyond this they cannot go. And even this they cannot set forth in order, or describe in language. But you have a multitude of arguments ready at hand, and you have an understanding with which to set them in array and marshal them to besiege the Throne of Grace. Surely, if the mere plea of the unuttered need of the raven prevails with God, much more shall you prevail with the Most High if you can argue your case before Him and come unto Him with arguments in your mouth! Come, despairing one, and try my Lord! I do beseech you, now, let that doleful ditty ascend into the ears of mercy! Open that bursting heart and let it out in tears if words are beyond your power!

A raven, however, I fear has sometimes a great advantage over some sinners who seek God in prayer, namely in this: young ravens are more in earnest about their food than some are about their souls. This, however, is no discouragement to you, but rather a *reason* why you should be more earnest than you have been. When ravens need food, they do not cease crying till they have it. There is no quieting a hungry young raven till his mouth is full, and there is no quieting a sinner when he is really in earnest till he gets his heart full of Divine mercy. I would that some of you

prayed more vehemently! "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

An old Puritan said, "Prayer is a cannon set at the gate of Heaven to burst open its gates." You must take the city by storm if you would have it! You will not ride to Heaven on a featherbed. You must go on pilgrimage—there is no going to the land of Glory while you are sound asleep—dreamy sluggards will have to wake up in Hell! If God has made you to feel in your soul the need of salvation, cry like one who is awake and alive! Be in earnest! Cry aloud! Spare not! And then I think you will find that my argument will be quite fair—that in all respects a reasonable, argumentative, intelligent prayer is more likely to prevail with God than the mere screaming, chattering noise of the raven—and that if He hears such a cry as the raven's—it is much more certain that He will hear yours.

**III.** Remember that the matter of your prayer is more congenial to the ear of God than the raven's cry for meat. All that the young ravens call for is food—give them a little carrion and they have done. Your cry must be much more pleasing to God's ear, for you entreat for forgiveness through the blood of His dear Son. It is a nobler occupation for the Most High to be bestowing spiritual than natural gifts. The streams of Divine Grace flow from the upper springs. I know He is so condescending that He does not dishonor Himself even when He drops food into the young raven's mouth, but still there is more honor about the work of giving peace, and pardon, and reconciliation to the sons of men.

Eternal Love appointed a way of mercy from before the foundation of the world, and infinite Wisdom is engaged with boundless power to carry out the Divine design. Surely the Lord must take much pleasure in saving the sons of men! If God is pleased to supply the beast of the field, do you not think that He delights much more to supply His own children? I think you would find more congenial employment in teaching your own children than you would in merely foddering your ox, or scattering barley among the fowls at the barn door because there would be in the first work something nobler, which would more fully call up all your powers and bring out your inward self.

I am not left here to conjecture. It is written, "He delights in mercy." When God uses His power He cannot be sad, for He is a happy God. But if there is such a thing possible as the Infinite Deity being more happy at one time than at another, it is when He is forgiving sinners through the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, Sinner, when you cry to God you give Him an opportunity to do that which He loves most to do! He delights to forgive, to press His Ephraim to His bosom, to say of His prodigal son, "He was lost, but is found. He was dead, but is alive again." This is more comfortable to the Father's heart than the feeding of the fatted calf, or tending the cattle of a thousand hills.

Since then, dear Friends, you are asking for something which will honor God far more to give than the mere gift of food to ravens, I think there comes a very forcible blow of my argumentative hammer tonight to break your unbelief in pieces! May God the Holy Spirit, the true Comforter, work in you mightily! Surely the God who gives food to ravens will

not deny peace and pardon to seeking sinners. Try Him! Try Him at this moment! No, stir not! Try Him now!

**IV.** We must not pause on any one point when the whole subject is so prolific. There is another source of comfort for you, namely, that the ravens are nowhere *commanded* to cry. When they cry, their petition is unwarranted by any specific exhortation from the Divine mouth. But you have a warrant derived from Divine exhortations to approach the Throne of God in prayer!

If a rich man should open his house to those who were not invited he would surely receive those who were invited. Ravens come without being bid to come, yet they are not sent away empty! You are commanded to come as an invited guest—how shall you be denied? Do you think you are not bid to come? Listen to this: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

These are exhortations given without any limitation as to character. They freely invite you—no, they bid you come. Oh, after this can you think that God will spurn you? The window is open, the raven flies in and the God of mercy does not chase it out! The door is open, and the Word of Promise bids *you* come—don't think that He will deny you, but believe rather that He will “receive you graciously and love you freely,” and then you shall “render to Him the calves of your lips.” At any rate try Him! Try Him even now!

**V.** Again, there is yet another and a far mightier argument. The cry of a young raven is nothing but the natural cry of a creature, but your cry, if it is sincere, is the result of a work of Divine Grace in your heart. When the raven cries to Heaven it is nothing but the raven's own self that cries—but when you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner”—it is God the Holy Spirit crying in you!

It is the new life which God has given you crying to the source from where it came to have communion and communication with its great Original. It needs God Himself to set a man praying in sincerity and in truth! We can, if we think about it, teach our children to “*say* their prayers,” but we cannot teach them to “*pray*.” You may make a “prayer-book,” but you cannot put a grain of “prayer” into a book, for it is too *spiritual* a matter to be encased between leaves. Some of you, perhaps, may “read prayers” in the family. I will not denounce the practice but I will say this much of it—you may read those “prayers” for seventy years and yet you may never once pray—for prayer is quite a different thing from mere words.

True prayer is the trading of the heart with God, and the heart never comes into *spiritual* commerce with the ports of Heaven until God the Holy Spirit puts wind into the sails and speeds the ship into its haven. “You must be born again.” If there is any *real* prayer in your heart, though you may not know the secret, God the Holy Spirit is there! Now if He hears

cries that do not come from Himself, how much more will He hear those that do! Perhaps you have been puzzling yourself to know whether your cry is a natural or a *spiritual* one. This may seem very important, and doubtless is so—but whether your cry is either the one or the other, still continue to seek the Lord!

Possibly you doubt whether natural cries are heard by God. Let me assure you that they are. I remember saying something on this subject on one occasion in a certain Ultra-Calvinistic place of worship. At that time I was preaching to children and was exhorting them to pray. I happened to say that long before any actual conversion I had prayed for common mercies, and that God had heard my prayers. This did not suit my good Brethren of the superfine school! And afterwards they all came round me professedly to know what I meant, but really to cavil and carp according to their nature and practice.

“They compassed me about like bees. Yes, like bees they compassed me about!” After awhile, as I expected, they fell to their usual amusement of calling names. They began to say what rank Arminianism this was! And another expression they were pleased to honor me with, was the title of “Fullerist”—a title, by the way, so honorable that I could heartily have thanked them for appending it to what I had advanced! But to say that God should hear the prayer of natural men was something worse than Arminianism to them, if, indeed, anything could be worse! They quoted that counterfeit passage, “The prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord,” which I speedily answered by asking them if they would find me that text in the Word of God, for I ventured to assert that the devil was the author of that saying, and that it was not in the Bible at all.

“The *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord” is in the Bible, but that is a very different thing from the “*prayer* of the wicked.” And moreover there is a decided difference between the word *wicked* there intended and the natural man about whom we were arguing. I do not think that a man who begins to pray in any sense can be considered as being altogether among “the wicked” intended by Solomon, and certainly he is not among those who turn away their ears from hearing the Law, of whom it is written that their prayer is an abomination.

“Well, but,” they said, “how could it be that God could hear a natural prayer?” And while I paused for a moment, an old woman in a red cloak pushed her way into the little circle round me and said to them in very forcible way, like a mother in Israel as she was, “Why do you raise this question, forgetting what God Himself has said! What is this you say, that God does not hear natural prayer? Why, doesn't He hear the young ravens when they cry unto Him? And do you think *they* offer *spiritual* prayers?”

Straightway the men of war took to their heels—no defeat was more thorough—and for once in their lives they must have felt that they might possibly err! Surely, Brethren, this may encourage and comfort you! I am not going to set you just now to the task of finding out whether your prayers are natural or spiritual—whether they come from God's Spirit or whether they do not—because that might, perhaps, discourage you. If the prayer proceeds from your very heart, *we* know how it got there, though *you* may not. God hears the ravens, and I do believe He will hear you, and

I believe, moreover, though I do not now want to raise the question in your heart, that He hears your prayer, because—though you may not know it—there is a secret work of the Spirit of God going on within you which is teaching you to pray.

**VI.** But I have mightier arguments and nearer the mark. When the young ravens cry, they cry alone. But when you pray you have a mightier One than you praying with you! Hear that sinner crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Hark! Do you hear that other cry which goes up with his? No, you do *not* hear it because your ears are dull and heavy, but *God* hears it. There is *another* voice, far louder and sweeter than the first, and far more prevalent, mounting up at the same moment and pleading, “Father, forgive them through My precious blood.”

The echo to the sinner's whisper is as majestic as the thunder's peal! Never sinner prays truly without Christ praying at the same time! You cannot see nor hear Him, but never does Jesus stir the depths of your soul by His Spirit without His soul being stirred, too. Oh, Sinner, your prayer, when it comes before God, is a very different thing from what it is when it issues forth from you!

Sometimes poor people come to us with petitions which they wish to send to some Company or great Personage. They bring the petition and ask us to have it presented for them. It is very badly spelt, very strangely written, and we can but just make out what they mean. But still, there is enough to let us know what they need. First of all we make out a fair copy for them, and then, having stated their case, we put our own name at the bottom. And if we have any interest, of course they get what they desire through the power of the name signed at the foot of the petition.

This is just what the Lord Jesus Christ does with our poor prayers! He makes a fair copy of them, stamps them with the seal of His own atoning blood, puts His own name at the foot, and thus they go up to God's Throne. It is *your* prayer, but oh, it is *HIS* prayer, too! And it is the fact of its being *His* prayer that makes it prevail. Now, this is a sledge hammer argument—if the ravens prevail when they cry all alone, if their poor chattering brings them what they need of themselves—how much more shall the plaintive petitions of the poor trembling sinner prevail who can say, “For Jesus' sake,” and who can clench all his own arguments with the blessed plea, “The Lord Jesus Christ deserves it! O Lord, give it to me for His sake”?

I do trust that these seeking ones to whom I have been speaking, who have been crying so long and yet are afraid that they shall never be heard, may not have to wait much longer but may soon have a gracious answer of peace! And if they shall not just yet get the desire of their hearts, I hope that they may be encouraged to persevere till the day of Grace shall dawn. You have a promise which the ravens have not, and that might make another argument if time permitted us to dwell upon it. Trembler, having a promise to plead, never fear but that you shall be heard at the Throne of Grace!

And now, let me say to the sinner, in closing, **IF YOU HAVE CRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY, STILL CRY ON.** “Go again seven times,” yes, and seventy times seven! Remember that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is your

only hope! Cling to it, then, as a drowning man clings to the only rope within reach. If you perish praying for mercy through the precious blood, you will be the first that ever perished so! Cry on! Just cry on! But oh, *believe*, too! For believing brings the morning star and the day dawn.

When John Ryland's wife, Betty, lay dying, she was in great distress of mind, though she had been for many years a Christian. Her husband said to her in his quaint but wise way, "Well, Betty, what ails you?" "Oh, John, I am dying, and I have no hope, John!" "But, my Dear, where are you going, then?" "I am going to Hell!" was the answer. "Well," said he, covering up his deep anguish with his usual humor, and meaning to strike a blow that would be sure to hit the nail on the head and put her doubts to speedy flight, "What do you intend doing when you get there, Betty?" The good woman could give no answer, and Mr. Ryland continued, "Do you think you will pray when you get there?"

"Oh, John," said she, "I should pray anywhere. I cannot help praying!" "Well, then," said he, "they will say, 'Here is Betty Ryland praying here. Turn her out! We won't have anybody praying here! Turn her out!'" This strange way of putting it brought light to her soul and she saw at once the absurdity of the very suspicion of a soul really seeking Christ, and yet being cast away forever from His Presence! Cry on, Soul! Cry on! While the child can cry, it lives. And while you can besiege the Throne of Mercy, there is hope for you! But *hear* as well as cry, and believe what you hear, for it is by *believing* that peace is obtained.

But stay awhile, I have something else to say. Is it possible that you may have already obtained the very blessing you are crying after? "Oh," you say, "I would not ask for a thing which I had already got! If I knew I had it, I would leave off crying, and begin praising and blessing God." Now, I do not know whether all of you seekers are in so safe a state, but I am persuaded that there are some seeking souls who have received the mercy for which they are asking. The Lord, instead of saying to them tonight, "Seek you My face," is saying, "Why cry you unto Me? I have heard you in an acceptable hour, and in an acceptable time have I succored you. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. I have saved you. You are Mine. I have cleansed you from all your sins. Go your way and rejoice."

In such a case *believing praise* is more suitable than agonizing prayer. "Oh," you say, "But it is not likely that I have the mercy while I am still seeking for it." Well, I do not know. Mercy sometimes falls down in a fainting fit outside the gate. Is it not possible for her to be taken inside while she is in the fainting fit, and for her to think all the while that she is still on the outside? She can hear the dog still barking, but ah, poor Soul, when she comes to, she will find that she is inside the wicket and is safe!

So some of you may happen to have fallen into a swoon of despondency just when you are coming to Christ. If so, may Sovereign Grace restore you, and perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of doing it. What is it you are looking after? Some of you are expecting to see bright visions, but I hope you never may be gratified for they are not worth a penny a thousand. All the visions in the world since the days of miracles, put together, are but mere dreams, after all—and dreams are nothing but vanity! People

eat too much supper and then dream—it is indigestion, or a morbid activity of the brain—and that is all! If that is all the evidence you have of conversion you will do well to doubt it. I pray you never to rest satisfied with it—it is wretched rubbish to build your eternal hopes upon.

Perhaps you are looking for very strange feelings—not quite an electric shock, but something very singular and peculiar. Believe me, you need never feel the strange motions which you prize so highly. All those strange feelings which some people speak of in connection with conversion may or may not be of any good to them, but I am certain that they really have nothing to do with conversion so as to be at all necessary to it!

I will put a question or two to you. Do you believe yourself to be a sinner? “Yes,” you say. But supposing I put that word “sinner” away? Do you mean that you believe you have broken God’s Law, that you are a good-for-nothing offender against God’s government? Do you believe that you have in your heart, at any rate, broken all the Commandments, and that you deserve punishment accordingly? “Yes,” you say, “I not only believe that, but I feel it! It is a burden that I carry about with me daily.”

Now something more—do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can put all this sin of yours away? Yes, you do believe that. Then, can you trust Him to save you? You *need* saving. You cannot save yourself. Can you trust *Him* to save you? “Yes,” you say, “I already do that.” Well, my dear Friend, if you really trust Jesus, it is certain that you are saved, for you have the only evidence of salvation which is continual with any of us! There are other evidences which follow afterwards, such as holiness and the Graces of the Spirit, but the only evidence that is continual with the best of men living is this—

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

Can you use Jack the huckster’s verse—

**“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All”?**

I hope you will go a great deal farther in experience on some points than this, by and by, but I do not want you to advance an inch farther as to the ground of your *evidence* and the *reason* for your hope. Just stop there and if now you look away from everything that is within you or without you to Jesus Christ, and trust to His sufferings on Calvary and to His whole atoning work as the ground of your acceptance before God, you are saved! You do not need anything more! You have passed from death unto life. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes has everlasting life.”

If I were to meet an angel presently in that aisle as I go out of my door into my vestry, and he should say—“Charles Spurgeon, I have come from Heaven to tell you that you are pardoned,” I should say to him—“I know *that* without your telling me anything of the kind! I know it on a great deal better authority than yours.” And if he asked me how I knew it, I should reply, “The Word of God is better to me than the word of an angel, and He has said it—‘He that believes on Him is not condemned.’ I do believe on Him, and therefore I am not condemned—and I know it without an *angel* to tell me so.”

Do not, you troubled ones, be looking after angels, and tokens, and evidences, and signs. If you rest on the finished work of Jesus you have already the best evidence of your salvation in the world! You have God's Word for it—what more is needed? Cannot you take God's Word? You can take your father's word. You can take your mother's word—why cannot you take God's word? Oh, what base hearts we must have to suspect God Himself!

Perhaps you say you would not do such a thing. Oh, but you doubt God, if you do not trust Christ—for, "he that believes not has made God a liar." If you do not trust Christ, you do in effect say that God is a liar! You do not want to say that, do you? Oh, believe the truthfulness of God! May the Spirit of God constrain you to believe the Father's mercy, the power of the Son's blood, and the willingness of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to Himself!

Come, my dear Hearers, join with me in the prayer that you may be led by Divine Grace to see in Jesus all that you need—

***"Prayer is a creature's strength, his very breath and being.  
Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of mercy.  
Prayer is the magic sound that said to fate, so be it.  
Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence,  
Therefore, pray, O creature, for many and great are your needs.  
Your mind, your conscience, and your being, your needs commend  
you unto prayer,  
The cure of all cares, the grand panacea for all pains,  
Doubt's destroyer, ruin's remedy, the antidote to all anxieties."***

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# **JUBILEE JOY—OR, BELIEVERS JOYFUL IN THEIR KING NO. 1968**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”  
Psalm 149:2*

YOUR streets will ring with joyous acclamations when the Queen and court pass through them to the Abbey—and well they may! The jubilee of a good and great Queen is an event to be celebrated with enthusiasm. Our hearts are fully in accord with those who bless and praise God for His goodness to this country in giving us 50 years of the peaceful reign of Victoria.

*God save the Queen!* None pronounce these words with a more emphatic meaning and fervor than we do this day. We not only do not grudge our fellow countrymen all the joy they have in their Queen, but we share with them to the fullest their loyalty and gratitude. Had we known what some countries have known of tyranny, war, or anarchy, we would have a much more vivid sense of the benefits bestowed upon us through the long and happy reign of our well-beloved Sovereign. Let us take care to blend a holy gratitude to God with our fervent patriotism. Be it ours to praise and bless the God who has sent us these favors! Wishing boundless blessings upon our earthly Queen, we ascribe all her prosperity and ours to that higher King from whom all blessings flow. Religion must always sanctify loyalty. It would be idolatrous to think of the human and forget the Divine. “Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?”

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us learn from the citizens of an earthly kingdom to rejoice in our heavenly King. Let us elevate our fervor into the higher sphere. There is another King, one Jesus and, as believers in Him, we are more truly citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem than of any city or country upon earth. Our Divine Lord has called out Believers from among the sons of men to make them a peculiar people, a nation set apart unto Himself. The text, under the term, “children of Zion,” indicates all who fear God, put their trust in Him and yield joyful service to His crown. Are we “children of Zion?” Do we glory in the one living and true God? Are we loyal to His Anointed, whom He has set as King upon His holy hill of Zion? This is the question for each man’s heart and conscience. We must be “born again” before we can be the happy subjects of the King of Kings, for He is King of a spiritual nation and by nature men are not spiritual. The carnal mind is enmity against God and to become His friends, we must

receive new hearts and right spirits. We must be born into His kingdom by a heavenly birth, by the work of the Holy Spirit upon us! And the token of this new birth is a child-like faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us ask ourselves whether we have kissed the scepter of Jesus, the Anointed Son of God. Do we believe and trust in Him who is Prophet, Priest and King to His people? Is He our bosom's Lord, sole monarch of our hearts? If so, we are called upon by the words of the text to be joyful in our King!

There have been kings in whom nobody could be joyful. They have been tyrannical, cruel, selfish—and their rule has oppressed their people. England has no such burden to bear. Under God, our forefathers delivered us from despotism and our Queen has faithfully observed those covenants which harmonize monarchy with liberty. For this may God be praised! Looking, however, to the higher sphere, we are joyful that Zion's King is of such a sort that His government is an unmingled blessing. There are many gods whom the nations have set up over themselves, but in none of them can their votaries rejoice. The worship of these false deities is one of dread and terror—and their adoration is more fitly paid in dirges than in songs. Our God is known as, "the blessed God." He would have His people happy and, by His Grace, He makes them so! We rejoice in our King because our King makes us rejoice! He bids us "come before Him with thanksgiving and show ourselves glad in Him with Psalms." And we willingly do so because He is "our exceeding joy." Blessed religion, in which happiness has become a *duty*! Such is the Character of our God and King, that—

***"His Nature and His works unite  
To make His praises our delight."***

I pray that the Holy Spirit may shed abroad the perfume of the "oil of joy" this morning. May the beauties and glories of our King charm us into delightful praise! Away with care and sorrow! Away with doubt and despondency! Let us praise the Lord upon the loud cymbals! Let us praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals! I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to produce in us the fragrant spikenard of holy joy—and may that holy joy, like the precious ointment of the woman who loved much—be all poured upon the Person of our Lord and King!

**I.** In order that we may carry out the exhortation of the text, LET US BEGIN BY FEELING THAT THE LORD JESUS IS OUR KING. Alas, many who should be of a better mind are forgetful of this Truth of God—they are not joyful in their King for they have not yet learned His sovereignty.

Brothers and Sisters, Jesus must have the pre-eminence among men, since *He is in Person and Character pre-eminent*. Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared unto the Lord? When the princes of the earth are gathered in their glory, who among them can be named in the same day with the Prince of Peace? Jesus is the best, therefore is He the Chief—His Person and Character wear about them a superlative majesty—let every hand present a crown to Him. "He is the standard bearer among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." Since the Lord Jesus has no equal nor even rival, He is a born King—and were not men most blind and fool-

ish, they would all salute Him with loyal homage. From every corner of the globe, if men were unfallen, there would arise the cry—

***“Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of All.”***

Our King not merely has the power, but the *right* to reign—He is, in Himself, royal. As Saul, the first King of Israel, was head and shoulders above all other Israelites, so is our Lord and King higher than all others in an infinitely nobler sense, for in dignity of Nature and glory of Character He surpasses all! Let us distinctly recognize that Christ is infinitely above all others even of the saintliest, wisest and noblest. He is not one among many great teachers—He is, Himself, *the Truth of God*. He is not one star in a constellation, but the one Light from which all lights are kindled! As the sun, at his appearing, causes the stars to hide themselves for very shame, so does all excellence and honor veil before the superior brightness of our Lord Jesus! He alone can claim universal sovereignty by right of indisputable pre-eminence.

When we have remembered that He is thus the best and noblest, let us remember that *to each Believer He is a King to be obeyed*. He said, “You call Me, Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.” It is easy to think of Christ as a Savior and yet to forget that He is Lord—but the thought is as evil as it is easy. The doctrine of Justification by Faith alone is a most important Truth of God—it is the vital *essence* of the Gospel—but it must never be dissociated from the fact that He who saves us must reign over us! When His blood cleanses us, His love rules us. He saves us from our sins, thus recovering us from our rebellions and revolts into a happy loyalty which finds its delight in obedience to the Divine will. Those who would have Jesus for their Redeemer must—

***“Know, nor of the terms complain,  
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign!  
To reign and with no partial sway,  
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”***

Do any of you accept the promises of our Lord and neglect His precepts? This is to sin against Him in a grievous manner! You proclaim yourselves rebels and yet wish to share in the pardon which He brings? Is not this to act the part of hypocrites? Is His Cross precious to you? How can it be if you turn your back on His crown? For once I will reverse a time-honored motto and say, “No crown, no Cross.” Jesus will not be your Savior if you refuse to let Him be your Sovereign! You cannot have half of your Lord. He must be to you *Christ*—the Anointed King—or He will not be *Jesus* the gracious Savior. Do not attempt to divide your Lord’s offices! The robe of Christ is without seam and if even the rough soldiers cried, “Let us not tear it,” we earnestly beg you not to tear it. Let us accept sanctification as well as justification, righteousness as well as peace, the cleansing water as well as the pardoning blood!

If we have a special joy in Jesus in any one capacity more than another, let us be joyful in Him as our King. It should be bliss to us to be subject to His holy rule! If there seems anything hard about His claim of absolute sovereignty over heart, lips and life, why, then, at the very outset we are disqualified from rejoicing in our King! Let us entreat His Spirit to

bring us under the rule of Grace until we yield our members instruments of righteousness and every thought is brought into captivity to Jesus' love. O my Brothers and Sisters, it will be Heaven to us when Jesus reigns over our entire nature as Lord of All!

Further, let us follow this thought into a region where it is much needed. *Jesus is King in the midst of His Church.* How often is this Truth of God overlooked! There are disputes about what ought to be believed and practiced in the Church of England and those disputes are settled by a court of law, or by reference to the Book of Common Prayer. No, Sirs, this is not according to the Kingdom of Heaven—we fear it reveals a sad disloyalty to King Jesus! Secular courts have no authority in the Kingdom of Jesus! In His realm, He is, Himself, the supreme Head and the Bible, alone, is the one law-book. Certain Christians are fond of deciding questions by the practice of the early Church, but we know no authority in the practice of any church when it quits the *faith* once and for all delivered to the saints! The acts of the Lord Jesus and His Apostles are precedents enough for us!

Certain churches refer to the minutes of deceased leaders, or to the decisions of councils, or to the theological systems of eminent reformers—but all this is forgetfulness of the one supreme Authority. We have no king in the Church but Christ. The crown rights of Jesus must not so much as be questioned, or all loyal hearts are wounded. I wish that with sound of trumpet we could today, again, proclaim our King. There is but one Head of the Church and that Head is Jesus Christ! There is but one law-book in the Church and that is the Holy Scripture, inspired of the Spirit of God. There is but one supreme center of unity in the Church and that is the living God, of whom and by whom and through whom are all things! The divisions and schisms of this day are mainly due to those secondary authorities within the Church which have, to a sad degree, obscured the supreme authority of our Lord. Would to God we could come back once more to “one Lord,” for then we should also come back to “one faith and one Baptism!” There can be no unity in the Church except in Jesus and in obedience to His undivided rule. It is only under the Lord's own King that the promise shall be fulfilled—“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.”

The sovereignty of our Lord must be observed not only by the Church as a whole, but by each individual member of the Church. We must not go beyond our Lord's commands. We are not legislators, but *subjects*. Officers of the Church are administrators of Christ's Law under Him, but they must not be makers of laws, nor creators of doctrines, nor inventors of ceremonies. We may not amend His statutes—no, we may not cross a “t” nor dot an “i” apart from Him! Let this be sounded everywhere as with a trumpet—Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and sole King in the midst of His people! Distinctly recognize this, or you cannot rejoice in your King.

Another Truth of God is also too much overlooked, namely, that *Jesus Christ is Head over all things for His Church*. His Kingdom rules over all. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. In truth, He is the blessed and only Potentate. The kings of the earth wear their crowns and sway their scepters by license from His Throne. Propose what they may, they shall only fulfill His secret purpose and will. Fear not because of the great ones of the earth, for you have as your Friend, One who is greater than all! You look at cabinets and you are distracted. You think of emperors and princes and you are bewildered as you observe the windings of their diplomatic devices. Be comforted! There is One whose counsel governs councils and whose Kingdom rules over kings! All things are committed unto Him by His Father and without Him shall not a dog move his tongue! The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as He has given Him. He has put all things under His feet. Clothed with honor and majesty, He waits till His enemies shall be made His footstool. To this thought I call your minds once again, that you may be encouraged amid the conflicts of the hour—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," even as this day He gives it to His Son.

*Jesus will be seen to be King in the day of His Second Advent*. If you will listen and your ears have been opened, you may hear this day the trumpet which announces His speedy arrival. "Behold the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him," is the voice of these latter days to a Church that slumbers! Both wise and foolish virgins sleep. The midnight starts at this clarion note—"He comes! He comes!" "He shall reign in Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously." Behold He comes as King to judge the earth in righteousness and His people with equity. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." We are to look for this and to pray for this, saying every day in our prayers, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven; for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever."

O you saints, at this hour set your Lord on His throne! You have seen Him in His crimson vesture, bowing in the garden of His agony. You have seen Him "despised and rejected of men." You have seen Him on the tree of doom. Dry your eyes. He is no more the "Man of Sorrows," nor the "acquaintance of grief"—Heaven adores Him, He has gone up to His Throne again amid the hosannas of the angels and the hallelujahs of the redeemed! Let us praise and adore Him this day. We sang, "Crown Him, crown Him," but we thought not of any visible pageantry—we can make no gallant show for Him! What if we could? What honor could our pomp confer on *Him*? He, in Himself, far transcends all the splendor that ever was devised of the intellect, or pictured by the imagination! But you *can* crown Him in your hearts to-day as King. Salute Him with the intense devotion of your souls. Render Him those deep-throated praises of which we read in this Psalm, if we note the margin—"Let the high praises of God be in their throats." My soul adores the Lord Jesus and blesses Him with all her strength in fullness of delight! Let the children of Zion fully recognize their King, that they may be joyful in Him!

**II.** Secondly, LET US GO ON TO STUDY HIS ROYAL CHARACTER, that we may be helped to be joyful in Him. Was there ever such a Prince as our Emmanuel, if we think of His Person, His pedigree, His descent, His Nature? This King of ours is not only the flower and crown of manhood, but He is also very God of very God! He is God over all, blessed forever—the Son of the Highest! What a wondrous Nature is that of Jesus, our Lord! Perfect Manhood is, in itself, wonderful—we have never seen it and never shall see it till we are taken up to behold Him as He is. Perfect Humanity, as seen in the glorified Jesus, is the wonder of the skies! In the Character of Jesus there is neither deficiency nor redundancy—He is without spot and without lack. In Him is perfect humanity steeped in love! His life is love. He is Love! He lives as the Head of the New Covenant, as the Second Adam, the Father of the new-born race. Think of Him in that light and then link His humanity in your minds with His Godhead, without confusion of idea. In Jesus we do not see humanized Godhead, nor deified manhood, but He is distinctly God and distinctly Man, yet both of these are in one Person and must neither be confounded nor severed.

Was there ever such a King? Among the shining ones, the brightest cannot be His comrade. “To which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You?” Though He is reckoned among men and is thus said to be “anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows,” yet to whom else but He could it have been said, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever”? “When Jehovah brings in the First-Begotten unto the world, He says, Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Think of your king in His Person and rejoice in Him! My words fail to express my inward joy in that Divine Lord who is not ashamed to call us brethren! I sit down at His dear pierced feet, now covered with eternal light, and I feel a sweet content, yes, an overflowing joy! I see a world of wonders meeting in my Lord—Heaven come down to earth and earth raised up to Heaven—and I am joyful in my King!

We further follow our Lord joyfully as we think of *His deeds of love to us*. Well may we be joyful in our King, since His loving kindness to us has exceeded all bounds! The true splendor of kings lies not in what their people do for *them*, but in what *they do* for their people—and herein our Lord excels all the princes that ever lived! He took our nature and was born a Babe in Bethlehem. He did more than that, He lived among us and bore the brunt of poverty, hunger, homelessness, contempt and treachery. He *died* for us! Having given up for us His last garment, for they stripped Him at the Cross, He then gave up Himself! With tenderness we can each say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” How royal was His love when the Cross was its throne! What a crown was that which was made of thorns! What a scepter was that which was held in His pierced hand! I call *this* real kingship. All else is mere stage-play.

O Sovereign Love! Incarnate in Jesus, you are imperial! Behold your King! Not only does He bleed beneath the lash of man, but He also bows beneath the bruises of His Father’s justice and cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” I beseech you, O loyal hearts, by the bitterness of your King’s agony, be joyful in Him! It He loved you so, can you re-

fuse to rejoice in Him? He has poured out His heart for His people that He might redeem them unto Himself—shall we not be glad in Him? Our acclamations shall all be given to Him who has proved His greatness and His goodness, not by a largess of gold, but by the gift of *Himself!*

When He had given this supreme proof of love, He was not yet satisfied. Having slept in the grave a while, He awoke and left His sepulcher. But He did not leave His love—He arose to meet His followers and nerve them for future service. After a while, when He had manifested Himself to them in most familiar ways, He rose to Heaven, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight! Then He changed His place, but He did not change His love. Ah, no! He went into Heaven bearing the pledges of His affection in His hands, feet and side. He entered Glory to carry on His intercession within the veil. His royal life is now spent in pleading for transgressors! All His thoughts are *of* His people—all His power is *for* His people, all His glory is in His people! I pray you, think not of my Lord and King according to the measure of my faltering speech, but joy in Him according to that love of His which passes knowledge—

***“Love which will not let Him rest  
Till His people all are blest!  
Till they all for whom He died  
Live rejoicing at His side.”***

Let us think a moment further of *the glorious achievements of our King*, that we may the more fully be joyful in Him. This King of ours has fought for us and won great victories on our account. Our King met the battalions of our sins in conflict. He encountered Satan, that tremendous foe. He fought hand to hand with Death itself! The shock of battle was terrible. The sun was darkened, the earth shook, even the dead arose from their sepulchers to behold the war. Our hero stood alone—“of the people there was none with Him”—yet He trampled down all our enemies as the treader of grapes crushes the clusters in the winepress. Thus He made an end of sin, broke the head of the old dragon and put Death, itself, to death and led our captivity captive! Behold He comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save! Shall we not salute Him with hosannas? Will we not be joyful in Him? Daughters of Jerusalem, will you not go forth to meet Him, even as the maidens of old went forth to meet young David when he returned with Goliath’s head? Will you not, also, sing, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands”? Remember how Miriam and the virgins sounded their timbrels at the Red Sea and spoke saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!”? In like joyous manner sing unto the Lord, your King, and magnify His name!

It should stir you to enthusiasm to think of *the principles of His government*, for they are fountains of peace and purity. Jesus founded His empire upon love and His own Self-Sacrifice is the corner stone of that Imperial fabric. His action is always love and His teaching is always love. As He loved us and gave Himself for us, so His golden rule is that we do to others as we would that they should do to us. This is sadly forgotten, even by some who call themselves Christians, but if this principle once took possession of men’s minds, we should have no schemes of the poor to rob

the rich and no greed on the part of the rich by which they grind down the poor! If our King were obeyed, man would no longer be man's worst enemy, but the bands of brotherhood would unite mankind in a league of mutual sympathy! If we heard our Lord say, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another," and if we practiced that commandment, what a Kingdom of Heaven should we see upon the face of the earth! Let us trust and hope and pray that it may yet be so. Oh for the time when the Shepherd King shall judge the poor and needy and break in pieces the oppressor! "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." His blessed principles of truth and love should make His people joyful in Him.

I think I might appeal to every Christian here and say, *you have personal reasons for being joyful in your King.* You love Him because He has first loved you. He has been wondrously condescending to all His saints and to us among them. Many a time has He appeared unto us and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." He has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love. We ought to be joyful in Him for His love to others. But if not, we would be worse than brute beasts if we did not rejoice in Him for His love to ourselves. O my Brothers and Sisters, be joyful in Him! What do you know about any other king compared with what you know of King Jesus? On His bosom you have leaned and His secret is with you. He has kissed you with the kisses of His lips and His love is better than wine to you. He is your Husband. You are married unto Him and He calls you His Hephzibah and says, "My delight is in her." "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy." Therefore in such a condescending King, Brothers and Sisters, let the children of Zion rejoice!

**III.** I shall not detain you long while I touch upon a third point—LET US MARK THE BENEFITS OF HIS REIGN which entitle Him to our highest regard this day.

For, first, remember that the nation over which He reigns *He has created.* "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him." There was no Israel till God made Israel, Israel—and there was no Church over which Christ could reign till He made His own Church. He is the Father of the age in which He is King, the Creator of His own empire! Most kings *inherit* what other swords have won, but Jesus, Himself, with His own blood, has purchased a Kingdom to Himself! Each one of us must acknowledge for himself—and all of us together unitedly—that He has made us and not we, ourselves. By His Sovereign Grace He has chosen, redeemed, called and sanctified us! Therefore will we be joyful in Him.

Brethren, while our King has created His own Kingdom, *He has also sanctified and sustained that Kingdom.* That there is a Church in the world at all is due to Jesus. We had gone back to chaos and old night if it had not been that His light is never dim. He whose Sovereign Word said, "Let there be light," still bids the light abide in the Church to lighten those who come into the world. Yes, we each of us live through Him if we live unto God. He says, "Because I live, you shall live also." The Church as a corporate body would cease to be were He not its continual Life and

Strength. Let the streams rejoice in the fountain, let the walls of the temple be joyful in the foundation! We ought to rejoice today in our King because *it is He that has saved us and given us peace*. In the days of Solomon, Israel had such peace that every man sat under his own vine and fig tree. But oh the peace our greater Solomon has given us! I was as restless, once, as those ever-flying birds which hover over the waters of the Golden Horn at Constantinople. They are never seen to rest and hence men call them, “lost souls.” Such was I! I found no place for the soles of my feet till I knew the Lord Jesus. My soul was a dread battlefield of conflicting thoughts, a very Esdraelon trodden by innumerable hosts of doubts and fears! But when my King came, then the enemy fled and I found rest and joy! He is our peace. Jesus has given us the true Sabbath. Crown Him, then, as Prince of Peace, you once weary spirits who now joyfully abide in Him!

But, Beloved, time fails me to speak of all the benefits our King has brought us. Is there anything that is necessary which He has not given? Is there anything that is good that He has withheld? Have we any virtue? Have we any praise? Then not unto us, not unto us, but unto *His name* be the glory! Nor is it alone in the past and in the present that we are debtors—we look forward to a future of obligations. He will keep us from all the power of the enemy. He will secure His Zion from invaders and fill her with the finest of wheat. Forever and ever will He preserve us and be our Guide even unto death. Again we say hallelujah, as we think how He loves unto the end!

In due time He will remove our Zion and all its inhabitants to the land of cloudless day and unwithering flowers. A little while and we shall be translated to the place where there is no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing! Our King has great things in store for His Church. His best will be last and His last will be best. Glory dwells in Emmanuel’s land! In Him we possess earth and Heaven, time and eternity. All things are ours in our King. All Heaven lies at our feet. O you chosen, lift up your eyes to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south—all this land is yours in Him who is your Lord and King! Know no boundary to your expectation, for such a King to a people so beloved will give a heritage which shall be forever—and the bliss thereof shall know no limit!

**IV.** Very briefly, in the next place, LET US BE JOYFUL IN THE CONTINUANCE OF OUR REDEEMER’S REIGN. Fifty years is a long time for Her Majesty to have reigned. May her days yet be many! Fifty years, as we measure life, is a long space, but 50 years in the measurement of *human history* is far less—and 50 years as compared with *eternity* is nothing! King Jesus has a Kingdom of which there shall be no end! This is our joy, that *the ages past have not taken away from the length of His reign*. So much the less has any king to reign as he has already reigned, but it is not so with Him, for still is the voice heard, even the same voice that made the Red Sea resound—“The Lord shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah!” Let us, this day, be right glad concerning our King, since He, only, has immortality and, therefore, He will live forever. He communicates that immortality to all His people and thus He is the undying King of an undy-

ing Kingdom! True, we shall pass through that river which is named Death, but it is a misnomer! Like the Jordan when Israel passed into Canaan, the Lord has rebuked it and it is dried up. We shall pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and that is all—and thus we shall reach a higher stage of being in which we shall be “forever with the Lord.” Shall not those whom the King has made to live, be joyful that their King lives and reigns world without end?

Brethren, *the age of our King has not enfeebled Him.* John, in vision, saw Him with His head and His hair “white like wool, as white as snow,” but to His well-beloved spouse, He is not gray with age, for she sings of Him, “His locks are bushy and black as a raven.” He is as youthful and vigorous as ever! His age is eternity and eternity has not the fretting tooth of time. He is still the same Christ—as mighty in power as when He routed the hosts of Hell! Let us be joyful in our King.

*As to His kingdom, there is no fear of its failing.* The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. His kingdom is one and indivisible. And His Throne shall never be shaken. There is no dynasty to follow His dynasty; no successor to take up the crown of our Melchisedec! My immortal spirit rejoices in the hope of rendering endless homage to the eternal King. He lives and reigns and we shall find it the bliss of our endless life to serve Him day and night in His Temple! In prospect of such bliss, let us bestir ourselves to rejoice in our King with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

**V.** Once more, being joyful in our King, LET US OBEY HIM WITH DELIGHT. Let us weave delights into our duties. When Moses’ mother made the ark in which she placed her darling boy, she worked it in this holy fashion—she took a bulrush and a prayer and plaited them together—every bulrush had a fervent prayer twisted with it. And so the ark was made of the prayers of a mother and the rushes of the Nile. How could the child be otherwise than safe? Let us take into our hands a duty and a thanksgiving, a precept and a praise! Let us make up our whole life of the intertwisting of duty and delight. Let us be holy and happy! Let us turn obedience into gladness. That which otherwise were drudgery, we will exalt to a priestly sacrificing as we serve the Lord with gladness and rejoice before Him.

What a joy it would be to me if this midsummer morning some of you who have never trusted in this King should *begin to do so!* This is a high day and a day of glad tidings—the trumpets of jubilee load the air with music. Our King will forgive your former rebellions if now you turn to Him. He proclaims, today, a general amnesty to all rebels! This day He grants a jail delivery to all prisoners of hope. You who have revolted may come back again—He will receive you graciously and love you freely. He sits upon His holy hill in Zion and He cries to you, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

It would be a joy to me, on this the day of my birth [Brother Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834] if it might also be the birthday of many a precious soul among those who hear me. Why should it not be so? The King

is among us—come and adore Him! You never had such a Master as He will be to you! He will make you happy in His love! Trust Him and live forever! Oh, that some *young* friends would listen to this call!

Some of you have known Jesus many years and have been professors for a long time. Perhaps you are getting into rather a dull state of mind. All elder brothers have not a pleasing character—do not become like he in the parable who envied the returning prodigal. What a wretched temper he showed! He said, “Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” “Oh,” you say, “we are not in *that* state of mind.” I am glad to hear it, but lest you should, in the future, fall into that state, I would advise you to often make merry with your friends. If that elder brother had, every now and then, held a grand merry-making with his friends, he would never have been able to make such a wretched speech! He was such a steady old plodder that he always kept to his work and never had a thought about rejoicing in his home and his father! Work without joy is not good for us. What the old proverb says concerning “all work and no play,” is true of all service and no joy. I want the children of God to hold high festival at this time! Why should not we have our Jubilee as well as others? “Praise the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song and His praise in the congregation of the saints.”

You have heard machinery at times complaining wretchedly—it has gone on with horrible grating and creaking. It has set your teeth on edge! Fetch the oil can! We must cure this jarring. Every now and then we need a few drops of the oil of gladness to make the wheels of our work move pleasantly. Men of the world teach us the value of joyous song. How readily the anchor rises when the sailors unite in cheery cries! Soldiers, when weary on the march, find their spirits revived when the band strikes up a stirring tune. Let it be so today. I would have you praise God with the sound of the trumpet. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King!

“Ah, dear minister,” you say, “you do not know what state of mind we are in! You do not know all our troubles, worries, frets and weaknesses.” Do I not know? I have been in that same oven! I know the secrets of your prison house. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us not rob our King of His revenue because all things are not quite to our mind. Are we going to blame our Lord for the chastisement which our own sins require? We are never right with God unless we feel at peace with Him, no, *happy* in Him! The right state of mind for a child is to be happy in his Father’s love. It was well with Israel when “whatever the King did, pleased all the people.” It is well with us when we love Jesus so that He may even do whatever He pleases with us and we will still exult in Him! May you come to this delightful state! The streams of our misery flow from the fountains of un-humbled self. When Jesus is so loved that His will is our will, then life on earth becomes like life in Heaven. Reign, O Lord, reign absolutely, for so we see our murmuring and complaining slain and these are the worst adversaries of our peace.

It is time to finish and, therefore, I would invite all that love my Lord to proclaim a Jubilee for their Lord and King. Keep it after the best fashion.

Endeavor to enlighten the world! Put candles in your windows. Illuminate all your streets. Let no sinner die in the dark. Publish the love of God to men. Light up your houses, all of you, with a holy cheerfulness and a clear confession of Christ. Hang out your flags of joy! You have them lying by and the moths are eating them. Bring them out! Give the streamers of your mirth to the breeze! Tell all around you what God has done for you. Do not be ashamed to acknowledge your indebtedness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. You very retiring people, may I invite you to come out of your shells? You that have been slothful and cold of late, I pray you shake yourselves from the dust. At this time, when the pulse of the world beats fast, let yours be quickened. Begin this day something new for Jesus. I wish the Church of God would think that Christ's Jubilee was, indeed, come, and so would kindle beacons upon every hill till all the nations beheld the great Light of God. Let the flame be seen across the sea! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! "Arise, shine; for your light is come." May the Divine Spirit come upon all His people at this hour and move them to show their joy in their King by special deeds of love!

Lastly, if our king were here and I were to say to Him, "How shall I close this sermon?" He would answer, "Tell them to honor Me by showing their love to the poor and needy." Our King is glorious in His gifts to men. I told you just now that the true splendor of a king lies in what he does for his people. I trust our Queen's Jubilee will be memorable for some illustrious deed of generosity. A great-hearted action is more worthy of acclamation than all the glitter of state! Some special gift to the poor and needy of this crowded city. Some truly royal mindfulness of the sick poor would be seasonable and commendable. I trust there will be no failure on this point, or some of us will feel that the pageant of the 21<sup>st</sup> is a vain show.

It will be the best of Jubilees if the poor are largely thought of. Let them be thought of by all of us today! Let us give largely to the hospitals for Christ's sake! David, when he kept a high day, gave to every man a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine—and thus sent them all home full and happy. If this cannot be done for all the poor, let it be abundantly done for the sick by our collection for the hospitals. Beds are empty from lack of funds—shall they remain so? The sick poor are languishing—will you withhold your bounty? Children of Zion, honor your King by your generous gifts at this hour!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
Psalm 149. and 150.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—335, 333, 417.**

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

# OUR KING, OUR JOY

## NO. 963

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 27, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”  
Psalm 149:2.*

THE book of Psalms ends in a sacred tumult of joyous praise. There is praise all through it, though sometimes it is but a still small voice. But when you reach the concluding Psalms you hear thunders of praise! There God is praised with the sound of the trumpet and upon the high sounding cymbals. All the force and the energy of sacred minstrelsy are laid under contribution that Jehovah may be extolled. Let the Book of Psalms stand as an image of the Christian's life. If we began with the blessing of the man who delights in the Law of the Lord. If we proceeded to obtain the blessing of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. If our soul learned to pant for her God as the hart for the water brooks. And if we went onwards till we sang, “He crowns me with loving kindness and tender mercies,” let us not pause now, but advance to the hallelujahs of the closing pages of our book of life!

He who ends this life with praising God will begin the next life with the same delightful employment! As our latter days are nearer the land of Light, let them be fuller of song. Let us begin below the music which shall be prolonged through eternity. Like the birds, let us welcome the break of day, which faith in the close of life gladly perceives to be very near. I shall, this morning, call upon the veterans of Christ's army to be first in the fulfillment of the duties of praise. I shall pray that those who have tasted longest that God is gracious, may utter the loudest notes of thanksgiving, so that the younger pilgrims may learn from them, and be strengthened and comforted by their joyful example.

At the same time I shall pray that all of us, whether we have been long in the Divine life or not, being citizens of the new Jerusalem, and subjects of the Prince Immanuel, may this day be joyful in our King. The time of the singing of birds is, I trust, come! Awake and sing, you who have dwelt in darkness.

I. I shall invite you to consider our text, first, by the remark that the joy to which we are here exhorted is PECULIAR TO A CERTAIN PEOPLE. “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” No others can be joyful in Him, no others have any reason for being so. Those who are not the children of Zion have reason for *dismay* at the very thought of God's supremacy. “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice,” is a song for *saints*, but remember there is another side of it—“the Lord reigns let the people tremble!” “He is angry with the wicked every day.” The glory of the Son of God

can be no comfort to those who are despisers of Him, for when He shall come, as come He will, it will be with no silver scepter in His hand for *them*—with no reward of Grace prepared for *them*—but He will come with a rod of iron to break them in pieces as potters' vessels.

Those who are not the children of Zion cannot, therefore, rejoice in their King. He is no King to them in the sweet and gentle sense in which He is the Prince of Peace to us. His rule extends over them, but its greatest display will be one of justice, not of mercy. He will exhibit His power in executing the righteous sentence of God upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And, seeing they have rejected Him, He will be the object of their deepest dread. Children of Zion, you are the people who should be joyful in our King, and there are sacred principles within you which make it certain that you will be!

The first is your loyalty. The children of Zion are loyal to their King. They delight to think that "the Lord reigns." They are glad that He has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion. Why, if it could be put to the vote among Believers today who should be the Head of the Church, there would be but One chosen. If we were asked who should rule over us, what other name should even be mentioned in our presence but the name of Jesus our Lord and King? We are so loyal to Him that I am persuaded, though we justly fear we should deny Him if left by His Grace, yet if supported by His Spirit the most bitter pangs of torture, and the most dreadful terrors of death could not separate us from His love.

If we are His followers, come fair, come foul, come life, come death—none shall ever divide us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Prove your loyalty this day—rejoice in His Sovereign will even though He may be exercising it in a manner against which the flesh rebels. We will receive evil from His hand as thankfully as good, for that which appears evil we are well assured is good if He ordains it!

Loyal subjects do not only submit to those decrees of their Monarch which are pleasing in themselves, but they give in their unwavering adhesion to the entire administration of their King. His throne and dynasty to them are paramount, and in his actions they take delight. In the case of our great Lord and King the rule is absolute—what He commands we desire to do. What He wills we seek to will. We acquiesce in His determinations, and hope even to rejoice in the most painful of His Providences.

Christian loyalty finds music in the name, and Heaven in the Person of King Jesus. None can extol Him too much. Our hearts are never surfeited with His glories, our ears never weary of hearing His praises. His rule is so good, so kind, so loving, that no other people ever had such a monarch! Every day we elect Him afresh in our heart's warmest love, and we sing again and again—

***"Crown Him, crown Him  
King of kings, and Lord of lords."***

Zion's citizens are something more than loyal to the Monarch, they are attached to His Person. Apart from the Throne and Crown of the Lord Jesus

we feel a devout attachment to His very Person. As the Son of God, we worship Him and adore Him, and our heart reverently confides in Him.

As bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, our Brother, our Redeemer who has purchased us with His own heart's blood, He is the Beloved of our souls. He has engrossed our warmest love, and none can rival Him. The savor of His name has oftentimes revived our fainting spirits, and a sense of His Presence has filled us with the new wine of holy exultation. He is in Himself All in All to us. His offices, His works, His honors—all these are as garments perfumed with myrrh and aloes—but He Himself is Fragrance itself!

Nothing grieves us so much as when any speak slightly of Him. Nothing so excites our indignation as when men do despite to His Cross and Crown. Our greatest joy is to hear of saved souls in whom He is glorified, to see Him revealing His healing power among the sons of men, and the sons of men acknowledging that healing power by yielding themselves to His service. We show that we are attached to the Person of our King by the joy we feel when our minds consider Him. We are joyful in Him because our love finds her center of rest, and her circle of motion in Him and Him alone.

When the children of Zion rejoice in their King, this indicates that they sink themselves in Him. What matters it to the true child of God what becomes of himself so long as his King is great and glorious, so long as the Lord Jesus rides forth prosperously in His chariot of salvation, and His name is hallowed and His kingdom comes? The citizen of Zion is content to be poor, to be unknown, or to be obscure if the Prince of the House of David is but glorified.

In the olden times the children of Zion often courted death for their Lord's sake. They scorned to fly when the accusers sought them out. They came before the world's judgment seat and there confessed that if it were a crime to worship the Christ, they gloried in confessing that they worshipped Him—and if the price of faithfulness to Him were death—they asked to die that they might show how truly they loved Him!

Shall we, who owe as much to our Lord as they, be less willing to deny ourselves and to resist even unto blood, striving against sin? May the Spirit dwell in us so richly that for us to live may be Christ and not self at all! May we count all things but loss for Christ's sake! May we never pine at the hardness of our lot, or the extremity of our grief, if we are bearing hardness for Jesus' sake. But rather may we rejoice that we are counted worthy to take part in such a cause. Loyalty, attachment to His Person, and self-abnegation all make us joyful in our King, and there must be added to these an unbroken confidence in Him.

If we suspect our King's fidelity, or His wisdom, or His power. If we begin to think that He has made mistakes in His government, or that He has omitted us in the administration of His liberality, we shall not be able to rejoice in Him. But if we feel that Heaven and earth may pass away, but never can His love be changed. That the ordinances of Heaven might be broken, but never could His purposes and decrees fall to the ground. If we

can feel that all is well and all safe in His hand, that the government is upon His shoulders, and therefore never suffers damage. That He, with the key of the House of David opening so that no man shuts, and shutting so that no man opens, rules wisely and well in all matters—if we can feel this, we shall be devoutly joyful in our King! Put these various feelings towards our Lord Jesus together, and you have so many fountains of rejoicing in Him.

If we add to all this an intense admiration for the great King in Jeshurun, we shall not fail to rejoice. The thought of His coming down from Heaven to suffer for our sins, the remembrance of His life of holiness, and His substitutionary death of sorrow—these, I say—have won our hearts to deepest admiration. Surely there was never such a one as He, no love could be compared with His for a moment. He is to us “the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely,” to whom all the beauties of earth are ugliness, compared with whom the brightness of the morning is but darkness. If we do, indeed, so admire Him, that we see nothing else to admire except what first of all came from Him, then joining this with confidence, and attachment, and self-denial, and loyalty, we must, we *shall* be joyful in our King!

I wish we had not only these Divine Graces, which like many rare spices well blended make up a holy anointing oil, but that they were so in us and did so abound that the savor of them filled all the chambers of the Church till all the household of faith were transported with delight in their King. In proportion as we become what we should be, as children of Zion, by the work of Grace within us—in that proportion we must inevitably and necessarily be a joyful people rejoicing in our King.

An old Negro who had long known and loved his Master, and who with little knowledge yet had grown much in Grace, was noted for being always happy, and therefore someone asked him why it was he always rejoiced. He said, “Because I always rejoice in God.” “Well,” said one, “but suppose your master should beat you?” “If God suffers me to be beaten I will thank Him.” “But suppose you have no food given you.” “If I have meat I will thank Him, if I have no meat I will thank Him. If I live I will thank Him, if I die I will thank Him. But I will always thank Him, for He is always a good God and deserves to be thanked.”

May we get to just that state of heart, until the excellence of our King shall be our most prominent thought, and the joy of having such a King shall outweigh every other emotion! This will be sure evidence that we are of the chosen race. By this shall we discern our pedigree and citizenship. If we are joyful in our King we are the seed which the Lord has blessed.

**II.** Secondly, THIS JOY HAS A MOST PROPER OBJECT. We are to be *joyful* in our King. And it is most fitting that we should be so. There is nothing unreasonable in the exhortation. There is no more legitimate subject for joy in the universe. First, it should be a subject of intense joy to us to be ruled by Him. His Law is perfect, His government is gentle, His yoke is easy, His burden is light. If we were ruled by another we might soon

find cause for complaint. Yes, and it might reach such a point that it would be our highest duty to rebel, and cast off the tyrant.

When we were in bondage to sin, we did well to shake off the yoke of the spiritual Pharaoh. Why should the freeborn seed of Israel be slaves to tyrant lusts? To serve Jesus is to be perfectly free. No command of Christ is an imposition upon our rights, or a curtailment of our joys. We are freest when we are most obedient to Him. Whatever Christ bids us to do is for our profit as well as for His glory. If we are Christians, indeed, we do not desire to escape our Lord's dominion, but we ask that He may more completely subject us to His delightful sway.

We would have our judgment controlled by His teaching, our affections enamored of His Person, our will subservient, no, *acquiescent* to His desires, and our whole selves in every thought, and word, and deed, molded by His hands. We would be to Him what the wax is to the seal. When He overcomes our raging passions, and controls our emotions and thoughts, then are we joyful in our King. Not merely as a Savior but as a King we delight in Him. We rejoice in Him, also, not only as King over us, but as Lord of All. It is always a subject for congratulation to the true Believer that Christ's kingdom extends over *all* men, over *all* angels, over *all* devils—that it has pleased the Father to commit to Him all power in Heaven and in earth.

We are joyful to think that not an angel bows in the courts of Heaven who would refuse to perform the will of Jesus our Lord, and not a devil howls and bites his iron bonds in the nethermost Hell who can effectually resist the purpose of the Crucified. No powers—physical, moral, or spiritual—predominate over Christ or are apart from His sway. We are joyful in our King because of His dominion, which has no end. He is the Almighty Savior, and we will bless and praise His name—

***“Blessing, honor, glory, might,  
Are the Conqueror's native right;  
Thrones and powers before Him fall;  
Lamb of God, and Lord of all!”***

We rejoice, too, in the power of our King and in the various displays of it. We are very weak and feeble—without Him we can do nothing. Sometimes we are much discouraged when the Gospel makes slow progress, but it is delightful to the last degree to fall back upon the thought that it might subdue the whole world tomorrow if Jesus willed it—for all power is in His hands. He can do great wonders yet, and that, too, when it seems as if the age of wonders were over. The Lord of Pentecost is mighty still to save. His arm is not shortened. Awake, O Lord, and let the arm of Your strength be made bare. Are You not the One who cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?

The enemy knows the power of Jesus' name, and though Christ may put up His sword for awhile, it is ours with importunity to cry, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty,” for He *is* most mighty, still. If He should once take His bow of might and shoot forth the arrows of conviction among His foes, the battle would soon be turned, and the victory

would be unto the banners of His Church. The time comes when we shall see far greater things than our eyes have yet beheld—the future is His with glory—

***“Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing—  
For He shall have dominion  
Over river, sea, and shore,  
Far as the eagle’s pinion,  
Or dove’s light wing can soar.”***

We rejoice, then, in all the triumphs He has achieved, and all the power that He has in reserve for future conquests.

And, Brethren, do we not, this day, delight in our King’s present glory, and in the glory yet to be revealed? That He rules me is delightful! That He rules all worlds is also inspiriting. That He has power to execute His righteous will is also joyous. But oh, to think of His Glory! O you whose hearts have followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem in all His shame! O you who have stood with weeping eyes at Calvary’s foot and seen Him there in death in all its bitter pangs, let your hearts be joyful this day when you remember that He has done with the Cross and the crown of thorns! Behold Him in His Father’s courts! These dim, bleared eyes of yours cannot as yet steadily gaze upon Him face to face, but let your faith behold Him.

Like the sun in the firmament His glory flames forth! Angels and principalities, and powers are lost in the blaze of His brightness. Hear their hymns! They are all for Him. Behold them as they bow. They bow before the Lamb once slain. Unto Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore, the song of cherubim and seraphim ascends. And yonder white-robed ones, once like yourselves wrestling hard with temptation, now conquerors! What music have they but the music which they bring to Him? All harps praise and all hearts adore the King in the midst of Zion! Blessed be His name! O that I had permission to bow so near to Him as to kiss His feet!

Would God I might but steal into the lowest seat among the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, and but for a moment gaze upon that God-like face which was stained with spittle for my sake! I would ask no higher joy than to look upon that Person once despised and rejected on my account, but now adored of angels and admired of all the saints! You, you suffering Saints, are in your shame, but think little of it, for He is in His glory. You are in your suffering, but what matters since He is in His triumph? Children of Zion, enter into this joy, and this day be joyful in your King!

I might thus enlarge upon the Divine Object of our joy, but I will not, except to say well may we, who are the children of Zion, be joyful in our King, because of all that our King has done for us. Is it a fair city in which we dwell, in the Church of God? He built it! Every stone is His quarrying, the architecture of every pinnacle is His. Nor is there anything of good

within her walls which does not bear His mark, for every good gift has come from His hand.

Are we well clothed today? The robe of righteousness we wear was worked by Him. Every ornament of our sanctification is His royal gift. Are we satisfied at the Gospel feast? Then He Himself is our Bread. Out of the storehouses of our great Solomon come forth the fine flour and the fat things full of marrow which satisfy all those that wait at His Table. Have we a portion and a heritage? We have received it all from Him! Are we saved from the second death, are we delivered from the guilt of sin? It is all through Him!

The old poem of one of our writers sings of the “Man of Ross,” and declares that every institution of the town told of his liberality and benevolence—you asked, “Who built this fountain?” or, “Who founded yonder school?” The one answer was, “The Man of Ross.” So surely if you ask us concerning our privileges, possessions, hopes, and enjoyments, we trace them all to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our salvation. He elected, ordained, redeemed, called, established and built up His Church, and to Him, our Lord and King, be praise forever and ever! O children of Zion, be joyful in Him!

**III.** Thus I have spoken of the persons who rejoice, and the King in whom they rejoice. We will now remind you, thirdly, that THIS JOY IS PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE. One is very grateful to think that there is beneath the stars one joy which need never be suspended. Everything here below is uncertain. We build, as we fancy, for eternity, and find our fabric demolished in an hour. The brooks of earth are deceitful, but here is a river whose joyous floods no winter can freeze, no summer can dry up. Today our reasons for disquietude are many. You are lovers of the Gospel, and if so, I know that in this age you will see much to distress you. My heart is joyous in Christ, but it is very heavy in many respects, especially concerning the precious interests of the Truth of God and holiness.

Look around us at this time at the numerous misuses of the doctrines of the Gospel among our ministers and leading men. First one and then another—those who seemed to be pillars are shaken like reeds in the storm. A pestilence has gone forth from which few of our Churches are free. Human intellect is adored as an idol, and in its pride it changes the teaching of the Word of God, and sets up new dogmas which the Word of God utterly rejects. If these things depress our spirits, nevertheless let us be of good courage. For if we cannot be joyful in our ministers, we will be joyful in our King!

If the pulpit fails us, the Throne is ever filled by Him who is the Truth. And if we have to suspect the orthodoxy of one, and to know the heterodoxy of another—to see Judas here and Ahithophel there—nevertheless Judah still rules with God and is faithful with the saints. Our King abides, and His Truth endures to all generations. At times our heart is bowed down because of the backslidings revealed in the moral and spiritual characters of our Brethren. They did run well, what hindered them? They

were foremost once, where are they now? They were burning with zeal—why are they now so lukewarm? Where has their ardor gone?

We hoped that they would be our joy and crown, but they have gone out from us because they were not of us. Moreover, we mourn that those who are truly saints do not exhibit the spirit of Christ so manifestly as we would desire. We see among them too little earnestness, too little holy jealousy. Well, if we cannot be joyful in our fellow citizens we will be joyful in our King! When our heart is ready to break because we see so much of our labor lost, and so many tempted of Satan, turning aside, we will rejoice that the honor of our exalted King is still safe and His kingdom fails not!

This is an age—I fear I must say it—of very general declension in spiritual things. Much profession of religion and little earnest contention for the faith. Much talk of charity but little zeal for the Truth. Much boast of high-toned piety but little vital godliness. Yet if the famine in the Church should grow worse and worse, till the faithful utterly fail, and rebuke and blasphemy abound, we must not cease to rejoice in the Lord!

We, ourselves, have grave cause to complain of ourselves when we examine ourselves before the Lord. Never pray we a prayer but what we would wish to have it forgiven as well as answered. Our faith is frequently so weak that we scarcely know whether to call it faith or unbelief. As for ourselves, we are a mass of flaws and infirmities. O God, we might be very heavy if we thought only of our own personal barrenness, but we will be joyful in our King! We will sing again the royal song. There are no flaws in Him, no imperfections in our Beloved, no coldness, no turning aside in Him.

Glory be to His name! My Brethren, you who are at work for the blessed Master, I know you do not always feel satisfied with your success. I am, myself, pining for greater harvests. I would I heard of more converts. I would be delighted to lose my eyes if I might but know that many found sight through Christ. I would welcome any affliction if I did but know that souls were being saved. But when we preach in vain and say, “Who has believed our report?” it is delightful to return unto our rest and feel, “Nevertheless, the pleasure of the Lord does prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul.” If I cannot be joyful in my converts I will be joyful in my King!

Many of you, perhaps, are passing through deep waters in your temporal circumstances. If you cannot be joyful in your property, be joyful in your King! Perhaps your children are not turning out as you could wish. I am sorry you should have such perplexities with those who have been the subjects of so many prayers. But if you cannot be joyful in your children, be joyful in your King! It may be you, yourself, are much afflicted in body, and you are afraid the affliction will grow more severe. Well, if your heart and flesh fail you, yet your King will not! The eternal springs are out of reach of change.

How little does your joy depend upon the creature! Your bottle, like Hagar’s, may be dry, but yonder is the well of water which never can fail you.

There is always reason for being joyful in your King! And when you come to die, and the pulse grows faint and feeble, oh, *then* will be the time for you *more than ever* to be joyful in your King, whose Face you are *soon to see* in all its beauty! Whose praises are to be your eternal employ! Here, then, is a joy for all God's people, a joy that is founded in reason, grounded and bottomed in solid realities, seeing it is a joy in an immutable Christ.

Our joy is no passing meteor, but a fixed star. When the wicked have spent their penny, our treasure will be undiminished. Jesus, our King, never changes, and never will lose His preciousness in our esteem. His name is always sweet, His fullness is always abounding, His love is always overflowing. We have always cause, even in our worst estate, to be joyful in our King. The saints shall sing aloud upon their beds.

Let me thrust in one sentence here. I do not think it is so difficult to rejoice in our King in dark afflictions as it is to remember to rejoice in Him only in our sunniest days. Successful minister, are you rejoicing in your success? Hear Him say, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in *this*, but rather rejoice that your name is written in Heaven." Successful merchant, happy parent—are you rejoicing in these outward comforts? Hold them loosely, for they are slippery things. Set small store by them, for they will soon melt away. Do not, like the Russian queen, attempt to build a palace of ice. Its brilliance is too short-lived. Hold to the Well-Beloved when the way is smooth, even as you held to Him when the path was rough. As in your adversity you found all in Him, so in your prosperity see Him in it all.

**IV.** I will add, in the fourth place, THAT THIS JOY OF OURS, THOUGH SO PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE, HAS CERTAIN OCCASIONS FOR ITS MORE SPECIAL DISPLAY. Jordan was always full, but it overflowed at certain seasons of the year. Our lake of joy is full now, let me pull up the sluices for a minute, that the floods of bliss may leap forth. When does a nation rejoice in its king? Well, there are two or three seasons in which nations set apart holidays to celebrate royal events. The first is at the *coronation*. Then they hang out all the flags and streamers, and adorn the streets and houses. Then all the music sounds, and the bells ring merrily, and all the pomp of the country is displayed. So let us this day be joyful in our King, for He is crowned King in our souls.

Look back to the time when first you crowned Him in your hearts—that happy day when first you saw Atonement through His blood, and looked to Him and were saved. That coronation day will never be forgotten by you. It is to you the day of days, even as the night in which the children of Israel came up out of Egypt. Keep the record of that coronation day in your hearts. "I was forgiven, I was accepted of Him." He stretched out His silver scepter and said, "I have pardoned your iniquity," and because of this I called Him "My Lord, my God, my King." My heart shall rejoice in Him whom again, today, she crowns King of my body, soul, and spirit.

Another day of joy with nations is the day of the royal *marriage*. Did I not see you climb to the very chimney tops, crowd your windows, and line your streets when but the other day a prince brought home his spouse

from afar? And should it not make our souls rejoice within us when we hear that Christ has married His Church to Himself, and taken us to be His spouse in bonds of love? Last Sunday morning's doctrine, I hope, has not gone from your souls—"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit," and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart it is to feel that you are one with Jesus—by vital, indissoluble union—one with Him.

Keep up the recollection of your Immanuel's marriage in your souls, for it is your highest glory. Be faithful to your solemn marriage Covenant. Forget your kindred and your father's house—so shall the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord—and worship Him with joy this day. People rejoice in their king, too, when he makes *peace*. We had rejoicings for peace some years ago, and right glad we were to hear that the treaty of peace was signed. Jesus our King is our peace. Peace with an angry God. Peace for our torturing conscience. Christ has made and signed and brought peace in—yes, He Himself is our Peace.

Then people rejoice in their king's *victories*. They hear that the royal arms have been victorious in battle. Then they make high holiday. In the olden times we read of the conduit of Cheapside running with wine instead of water on the event of some astounding victory of the English king over the French. O my Soul, when you remember Christ's victory over sin, death, and Hell, let your ordinary emotions which are but as water turn to generous wine of joy and thankfulness and consecration. All hail! Great Lord of Heaven and earth. Long live our King!

Take your timbrel, Miriam, and join in the song, O Israel! For the right hand of the Lord has done wonderful things! This is known in all the earth. He has led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Rejoice, you angels, sound all your music, you spirits, who triumph with Him. Crown Him! Crown Him King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Sometimes I have heard, and you older men remember an instance right well, that a nation rejoices when a king keeps his *jubilee*. If he has been king for a long unbroken period, then will they rejoice in him. But our King keeps many a jubilee. He has the dew of His youth, and yet He is the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth were of old even from everlasting. He is the ancient King of Zion. Our great Melchisedec, without beginning of days and without end of years!

Praise His name forever and ever! There is a rejoicing in the nation, too, when the king holds his *receptions*, when he has reception days, when he displays his majesty to his friends, and when he rides forth in splendor. I hope it is such a day as this with many of us at this time. May you sing this morning in your hearts—

***"The King Himself comes near,  
And feasts His saints today.***

***Here we may sit and see Him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray.  
One day amidst the place  
Where my dear God has been,  
Is sweeter than ten thousand days  
Of pleasurable sin."***

This afternoon may the King show Himself to you through the lattices, revealing Himself to you in your meditations and private prayers. In your work for Him in the school may you see His glory. May He hold His reception today, and you be presented to Him in love as the attendants of His court, feeling yourselves to be accepted in the Beloved, and partakers of His joy. So you see, though our rejoicing in our King is one perpetual festival, yet we have our high days when the light of the sun is as the light of seven days.

**V.** And now, to close. This being joyful in our King IS A JOY WHICH IS SURE TO HAVE PRACTICAL RESULTS. As time fails me, I will be but very brief on this point, and tell you an Eastern story. An Eastern merchant of great wealth employed a skillful workman in certain works of Oriental skill and elegance. His workman, by some means, had gradually sunk deeper and deeper in debt. Through extravagance, or loss, or many other causes, he had first fallen into a little debt, and then had borrowed, and loans and usurious interest had heaped up the amount till it was beyond hope that he should discharge it.

The man grew daily more and more depressed, and as he sank in spirit he was smitten with sickness, and the skill he once showed in his master's service began to decline. Each product of his hand revealed less art and cunning. The hand of his art was paralyzed. Meanwhile his creditor became more exacting, and at last threatened to sell the poor man's children as slaves, according to the Law of the land, unless the debt was paid. This weighed more heavily upon the poor man's soul, and he worked less industriously and with decreasing skill.

At last the merchant enquired of the steward of the workroom. "Ah," said he, "was there ever a more cunning workman and he worked most dexterously. How is it that I see now no masterpieces come from him? His fabrics are few and in the market they are lightly esteemed. Our name suffers in the bazaar. Rival traders excel me in my works." "My lord," said the steward, "he is daily of a sorrowful countenance and forgets to eat bread. He keeps a long and bitter fast, for he is drowned in debt to a cruel creditor, and his soul pines like the heath of the desert. And therefore his hands are slow as that of an herdsman, and his eyes as dull as that of the owl in the sunlight. Beauty has forgotten him, and art has fled from him. He declines like one sick unto death."

"Send for him, bring him here," said his lord. And he brought him to his chamber, "What ails you, Ali? What clouds your eyes, and chains your hands? You are not unto me as before. You were skillful as Bezalel who worked for Moses, but now you are no better than the baseborn son of an infidel mother. Is it that you are deep in debt? Behold your discharge, your debt is paid! What do you think? Will not your cunning return to your right hand?" That servant worked with a diligence never before seen! In the joy of his heart his mind became as nimble as the gazelle on the plain, and his work as precious as the pearls of the Indian gulf. The merchant found himself abundantly rewarded in his servant's skill and toil, for having thus set his heart at rest.

Shall not it be thus with every ransomed soul to whom Jesus has brought the news of salvation? You cannot serve our King after the best sort with a downcast mind. You cannot give yourself entirely to His service unless you have the oil of joy to anoint your head! The wheels of the chariot are heavy till joy is harnessed to the car. The Lord Jesus has forgiven all your debt and given Himself to be your Joy forever, and should you not, from now on, be first in His service, manifesting an enthusiasm in His cause, a force, a power, an elasticity, an energy which otherwise you could never have felt? Joyous spirits, see to it that you keep your joy bright and clear, for you will honor your King the more.

He wants not slaves to grace His Throne—rejoicing hearts are His delight. You who are sad, pray that the King will lift up the light of His countenance upon you, so that your drooping hands and feeble knees may be strengthened. Do not let us be sad, for the Bridegroom is with us! Let us not tremble for the ark of the Lord—Dagon will fall before it yet. Though the hosts of the Lord may appear to melt away and their numbers lessen, when they are few enough to be trusted with victory, the Lord will grant it. God will reserve unto Himself the handful of men that lap, and these shall go forth and cry, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” until the enemies of the Lord destroy one another.

Let not the enemy laugh us to scorn because of our trembling. But let us charge home with renewed vigor, for Truth, for God, for Christ, for the Cross, for the everlasting decrees of a sovereign God, for the majesty of the Holy Spirit who will effect those decrees in the heart of men! Let us set up our banners anew and advance to the fight! Let us strengthen ourselves in God this day and go forth to the conflict, which if it is severe, will, nevertheless most certainly yield all the more glorious a victory to Him who is our King, and to us who loyally serve Him, even as we rejoice in Him this day!

O that all were subjects of this King! Would God that those who are not reconciled to our Almighty Monarch would seek His face this morning! He will give them mercy through Jesus the Savior—may they seek it and find it. Amen.

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

# “BEAUTIFUL FOREVER”

## NO. 2508

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 14, 1897.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1885.**

*“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”  
Psalm 149:4.*

I FIND that the text bears other interpretations. I will mention two of them. It might be read—and I think correctly—“He will beautify the *afflicted with deliverance*.” Let me speak about that meaning first of all, for it is worth retaining. God’s own people are frequently made to mourn. Their Lord takes pleasure in them, but yet, for their good, He often sends them grief. At times they are distressed and their enemies appear to triumph over them. They are brought into sore straits and burdened and surrounded with difficulties, but, though “many are the afflictions of the righteous,” “the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

The day will come, dear Friend, when your cheeks, all fouled with weeping, shall be washed and made fair to look upon. Your eyes may be weary with waiting and watching, and red with weeping, but that weeping shall endure only for a night. “Joy comes in the morning,” as surely as the morning comes after the night! Bear your sorrows bravely, for they are appointed by your Heavenly Father in supreme wisdom. Bear them joyfully, for they will bring forth to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You shall not be losers by your trials, you shall be gainers, and when your face has been washed by the rolling billows of the briny wave, you shall lift up your head and your countenance shall seem more beautiful than if it had not been thus submerged. You shall come up from your sorrows like the sheep from the washing in the days of the shearing. You shall be made white as snow through these very trials which now so sorely distress you. Therefore, I say, anticipate the joys of the future and let not the grief of the present quite swallow you up! Think not so much of the stormy sea that you traverse today as of the sunny shore upon which you soon shall stand, never to be tempest-tossed again!

There may be at this moment but a step between you and Heaven—you cannot tell how soon you may get away from all that worries you—you do not know how near you have come to the gate of pearl. Oh, did you know it—did you know that within a month your hands shall strike the harps of joy and wave the palm branches of victory, and the pure white raiment shall be about you, and the immortal crown shall deck your brow—did you but know all this, you would very patiently plod on through the few weeks of trial that would remain to you here! Remember

that you are going Home and that your home of bliss is *eternal!* Therefore, comfort one another with the words of our text as they are thus rendered—"He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance." You shall come again rejoicing, for "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Another rendering of our text which also seems to be accurate, is this—"He will beautify the meek with *victory.*" This is a very wonderful expression. In this world, as a rule, it is not the meek who appear to get the victory—they are trod on and trod down, and a meek-spirited man is often much despised among his fellow men. Therefore, when Moses writes of himself, "The man Moses was very meek," I do not see the least reason why he should not have written it, though many think it would have been impossible. But, indeed, in that age and now, also, it is not self-praise but rather *self-humiliation* to confess that you are meek! When a man is not willing to go to war when others clamor for it. When the sacred honor of this dignified country needs that we dip our spears in blood, it is with a sneer that a man is called "white-livered and meek." And if he, himself, were to say, "Yes, I am meek," there would be no *pride* in that confession, for the most of men would count that he was confessing to a weakness! Therefore I think that Moses might deliberately write, "the man Moses was very meek," for nobody would accord him any honor for such a declaration in that age and not very much, even, in this age, for *men* have not yet come to value meekness as *God* values it, but still look upon it as a kind of cowardice. They like a man who goes about the world with his fist always doubled, ready to knock down everybody who dares to think that the braggart is not the king of all his fellows. They admire the great hero who will not have anything said or done against his superlative dignity and, although that pride is earthly, sensual, devilish, yet there are many who admire it. And when it goes by the name of "British pluck," then, probably, "a mean-spirited man" is the mildest appellation that they give to one who is really meek!

Now, the Lord, seeing that those who are truly meek would have to battle for it, and would be persecuted, and even cast out by their fellows, has given them this gracious promise, that, "He will beautify the meek with victory." The victory of the man who gives a kiss for a blow is not the thing desired by most men, today, but the Lord will beautify the meek with victory! The turning of the cheek, instead of rendering railing for railing, does not appear to give the promise of victory, but the promise is true, "He will beautify the meek with victory." In the day when our King's white horse shall be brought forth from its stable and the meekest of all men, clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, shall ride forth at the head of the heavenly armies, the meek of the earth shall follow Him on their white horses, too, for that shall be the true triumph which Jehovah, the King of Kings, shall give to them at the last! Inasmuch as they have little victory set to their account among their fellow men, they shall have it in that Day when angels, principalities and powers shall look down with delight upon the conquest accorded to gentleness—and sing and clap their

hands with holy exultation! Therefore, Beloved, bear and forbear, be gentle and lowly, remembering this blessed promise, “He will beautify the meek with victory.”

But now, taking the text as it stands in the Authorized Version, “He will beautify the meek with salvation,” there is a pretty thought which comes to me out of the position of my text, “Jehovah takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.” You remember that Jacob had 12 sons and he had a measure of love to all his offspring, so “the Lord takes pleasure in His people.” But there was one among his children whom Jacob loved better than all the rest, and that was Joseph—and how did he show his love to Joseph? It was not in a fashion that you and I would follow, but according to the Oriental method it was the correct one. Because he loved him above the rest of his sons, he adorned him with a coat of many colors. Now read the text in that sense, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” They shall have the coat of many colors, they shall be beautified with salvation because, out of all the Lord’s people, He takes most pleasure in those who are of a meek and quiet spirit. These are most like Jesus and, inasmuch as the Father delights best in the Well-Beloved, He delights, also, in those who are most like He. He sees in them the image of the Only-Begotten and He takes special pleasure in them and beautifies them with salvation.

I shall try to speak, first, concerning the *character to be aimed at*, that is, meekness. Secondly, of the *favor to be enjoyed*—“He will beautify the meek with salvation.” And thirdly, if we have time, we shall think of the *good results to be expected*—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation.

**I.** First, then, let us think of THE CHARACTER TO BE AIMED AT. Who are these meek people? Who are those whom God will beautify with salvation?

I am afraid we are not all meek, perhaps not all who are God’s people have yet learned to be meek and lowly. But this is what they all *ought* to be and, therefore, let us hold up the perfect Law of the Lord to you that you may look into it until, by looking in it you shall be transformed into the image you desire to reach.

What is this meekness? I should say, first, with respect to our relation towards God, meekness means *entire submission to the Divine will*. The meek, whom God will beautify with salvation, are a people who do not quarrel with God. They have left off that pernicious habit. They do not find fault with God’s teaching. What they read in God’s Word they are willing to believe without asking any questions. They see, there, much that is mysterious, but if God conceals the meaning of it, they believe that it is to His Glory to have it concealed, and they do not attempt to pry within the veil. There is much in God’s Word that is difficult—they are not sorry for that, for there is so much more room for the exercise of their faith! They do not expect to be as God—he who could fully understand God must be, himself, a god! These meek people are satisfied to be the children of God. And as the children of a man do not expect to understand all that their father says, but are willing to believe very much

which they cannot comprehend, so is it with the children of God who are meek and teachable. They open their hearts for the Lord to write His Truth thereon and they do not say, “We cannot receive *this*,” or, “We cannot accept *that*.” It is written, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” and it is so in a very special sense with God’s meek children—they submit themselves to His teaching.

They submit themselves to God’s chastening as well as to His teaching. If he scourges them, that scourging is no more pleasant to them than it is to others, but they do not resist the rod, but ask that it may be sanctified to them and they prepare themselves to endure all the will of God. There are some nominally Christian people who quarrel a great deal with God—some who have lost friends and they have never forgiven the Lord for taking them away—some who have become poor and they have a standing grudge against the Most High because He has dealt with them as He has done. This kind of conduct brings no good to anybody and it often causes increased suffering. The more the ox kicks against the goad, the deeper is the sharp point driven into its flesh. Our sorrows are multiplied tenfold by our rebellions! If we were not only resigned, but actually acquiescent to the Divine will, we would not smart nearly as much as we do. This, then, I take it, is part of what it is to be meek—to be perfectly submissive to Divine teaching and to Divine chastening.

If a man is truly meek, he yields himself up to all the influences of the Spirit of God. You know that if you see a cork out in the river, if there is but a tiny ripple, it moves. If there is only a breath of wind, it goes up and down at once. But if some great ship is lying there, it does not stir, it stays quite still. I daresay you think, “I want to be just as responsive to the Divine will as that cork upon the surface of the stream is to every movement of the water. I wish to be as the feather that is wafted by the breath of God whichever way He pleases. Oh, that He did but will anything, and that I did it at once! Oh, that He did but speak, yes, oh, that *before* He spoke, I might catch the very glance of His eyes and do what He desires!” His promise is, “I will guide you with My eye,” and He says, “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you.” Oh, to be so meek as to feel at once the motion of the Spirit of God upon the soul—and to yield oneself to it, as the plastic clay that can be molded into any shape by the potter’s fingers. The Lord make us such—for these are the people whom He will beautify with His salvation!

I have spoken of meekness towards God, but those who are truly meek are also *gentle towards their fellow men*. I wish that all Christians had this character and that they might not be rough, overbearing, proud, and intimidating as some are. There are some who seem to think that nobody would esteem them if they did not kick everybody as they went along. They seem to fancy that all other people as well as themselves are made of iron and that their power will not be known unless they dash themselves against all who come near them! But it should not be so among the children of God. Oh, that we might learn that holy courtesy which is one of the true marks of a Christian! Oh, that we might have a tender re-

gard for other people’s feelings because we have a fellow-feeling with them and that we might pass through the world, not anxious to be noticed, but rather to be *unnoticed!* Not desirous to be great, but willing to be *little*, eager rather to wash the saints’ feet than to have them crown our heads, desirous not so much to be ministered to as to *minister*, for true greatness lies in the sacrifice of self for the good of others! Remember how our Lord said to His disciples, “Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant”? This is always the rule in the Church of Christ—God makes it to be so, though it seems not according to the usual bent of human nature. The Lord takes great delight in those who are of such a meek, quiet, humble and lowly disposition.

These meek people bear, and forbear, and forgive, even though they have just cause for resentment. For a man to be good-tempered when he is never provoked is no great credit to him. It has been said that the devil himself is good-tempered when he is pleased—and I daresay he is. But for a man who is much provoked, for one who is foully slandered, for one who wishes to do good, but who is misrepresented in all that he does—for such a man to still feel, “It really does not matter. I shall not take any notice of it. I wish I had not even observed it. It is for me to be just as kind as ever I was to those who are most ungrateful—in fact, to heap coals of fire upon the head of him who does me injury, and to do the more good to those from whom I receive the most ill”—this is the way to go through the world feeling that you will not take offense at anything that people say or do! It takes two to make a quarrel and if I will not quarrel with you, then you cannot quarrel with me! Blessed are these peacemakers who keep the peace, themselves, by readily forgiving the wrong done to them by others.

They, also, are meek who can continue to love with much perseverance. To love the unlovely—this is the love which the Spirit of God works in our hearts! To love those who are not only unlovely, but actually unloving, and who return evil for our good and cursing for our blessing—this, indeed, is to be a child of God!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you who the meek are towards God, and towards men. Will you judge whether you deserve that title? Such people are also *lowly in themselves*. “Oh!” says one, “I will try to be meek.” No, my Friend, do not *try* to be meek, because he who is meek is meek without trying! I do not know anything that is more nauseous than the attempt some people make to be amiable, Their pride pokes out at every corner and though they try to be very gentle, there is no real gentleness in them and, consequently, it cannot come out of them! Dear Friend, will you learn this lesson? You are a poor sinner—therefore, be meek. You may well forgive others, for you have good cause to ask others to forgive you. You may well be patient with those who provoke you, for you have often provoked your God, yet He has been wondrously patient with you. You may well put up with affronts from your fellows, for who are you, after all? If you have a right idea of yourself, you are so little and so inconsiderable, that whoever affronts you, affronts a mere nobody—so it does not matter! Whoever treads on you does but

tread upon the dust, for you are dust—so who shall blame him? "You are setting us hard lessons," says one. I know that I am! And unless the Lord shall teach you, you will never learn them! It takes a long time to put out the fierce fires of pride—and when you think you have really become meek and lowly in heart, it is sadly surprising how, with a little breath, the ashes begin to glow—and soon the old fires are burning up again! Some people say, "You know, it is a natural pride," as if its being a natural pride made it any better! Oh, that God would tread out the last spark of it, so that we might obey that blessed command of our Lord, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls."

**II.** Having described the truly meek people, now let us consider, in the second place, THE FAVOR TO BE ENJOYED BY THEM. God says that "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

It is a circumstance worthy of your notice that there are mentioned in Scripture three men whose faces shone. I do not recollect more than three. The first was Moses, the man who was very meek, and you remember how it is recorded that his face shone so that he had to put a veil over it. God had beautified that meek man. Another of the meek ones was Stephen, whose dying prayer for his murderers proves how meek and forgiving he was. It is written of him that when he was accused before the council, they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." This was the second meek man. And the third was—but you long ago anticipated me—and wondered that I did not mention Him first! Not only did His face shine, but His whole Person shone and His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them—that was our blessed Lord, who could truly say, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

See, then, how God puts the beauty of His own brightness upon meek men! Not upon great men. Not upon those who profess to be great. Not upon obstinate and hard-hearted men. I do not think that even Elijah, great as he was, ever had that beauty upon him. And John the Baptist, though the greatest in the former dispensation, had not that beauty upon him. There is a certain sublimity of roughness about the two Elijahs, but the meek have the beauty of the Lord, our God, upon them. That very softness and, what some men think the weakness of their character, is the background upon which God throws His brightness, so that they become beautiful in His sight. "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

What is this beauty that God puts upon the meek? O dear Friends, there are some of you who would like to be beautiful—"beautiful forever," I have no doubt. There have been silly women who have been trapped with those words as an advertisement—but my advertisement is a true one! Here is the way to be beautiful forever—"He will beautify the meek with salvation."

The Lord beautifies the meek, I think, in this way—He puts into them a *peace of mind* which fiery spirits never have—and which quick spirits do not know. They are not easily ruffled or disturbed. They have, as others have, much to annoy them, but they are so put into Christ that they

cannot be put out. They are rendered so deeply calm, so solidly patient by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, that they bear without seeming to bear—and that which would crush another seems to have no weight with them. The deep peace of mind of a truly meek Christian is, I think, a very beautiful thing.

Over and above that, these meek people have a *delightful contentment*. Whatever happens to them, they accept it as God’s will. “Good day!” said one, and the other said, “Sir, I never had a day that was not good, for God arranges all.” “Oh!” said the first speaker, “but it is good weather today.” “Ah!” was the reply, “but whatever weather comes, to me it is good, for God sends it and I am happy, let it be what it may.” When self rules, you are never pleased. It is too hot for some of you today, is it not? Not many months ago it was too cold. When it rains, though it is raining bread from Heaven for millions of people, you cry out in a fret, “What a pity it is such a wet day!” And when the sun shines, you would like to be delivered from the burning heat, though that heat is ripening the corn for man and the grass for the cattle. He that will not be pleased with God is never pleased with himself. But he that is of a meek and quiet spirit goes through the world feeling that all is right, whatever comes, and he continues to praise and bless the Lord. I have known some Christians of this sort—I wish I could say that I knew more. There was a dear man of God, an elder of this Church, who, when he came to me one Lord’s-Day morning, when I was half-choked with a horrible November fog, said cheerfully, “Dear Pastor, may we have a happy Sabbath today! It is foggy outside—may it be all bright within! I hope the Lord will strengthen you to be full of holy courage because some people may feel dull through the bad weather. At any rate, let us rejoice and be glad in our God.” I have some such Friends around me, now, thank God, but may we have many more!

Sometimes, God puts upon the meek the beauty of *great joy*, as if the light of Heaven shone right through them. The light that God has kindled in their hearts shines through their faces and you can see that they are among the happiest of men because God has beautified them with salvation!

Then He puts upon these meek people a beauty of *holy character*. I daresay you know some persons of this sort, as I rejoice to say that I do. I always feel that it is a great honor to be in their company. They are not very famous people, or very clever people—they will never do very much which the world will notice and put in the papers—but when I get near them, I seem to be like a ship that has entered the harbor, or that has come under a huge bluff where it is sheltering from the wind that is blowing out at sea. They are so good and so gracious that it is a blessing to be with them! I was with such an one this week and I looked up to the truly grand old man with the utmost reverence as he spoke of what God had done for his soul in foreign lands, and of how the Lord had helped him to bear hardship and trial for Christ’s sake. I experienced a great delight as I listened to his holy words and felt the unction that rested upon him. Dear Sister or Brother, God can make *you* just such a saint as that!

He can make you to be full of holiness so that everybody who comes near you will see that there is a Divine beauty upon you! That is poor beauty which consists merely in bright eyes and rosy cheeks, or in the fair whiteness of the lily that will fade like the lily or like the rose. But that beauty which God puts upon us by the Grace that shines from *within*—the beauty of holiness such as there was upon Christ—*this* we ought to cultivate, praying to God to fulfill in us the promise of the text and to beautify us with His salvation!

As men and women who are what they ought to be in Christ, grow old, their temper mellows and their *whole spirit ripens*. There are some godly matrons and some venerable men whose words are most weighty and wise—you cannot hear them speak without remembering their very tones, for there is a long and deep experience at the back of their testimony. When I listened to George Muller, some years ago, I do not think there was very much in what he said if I took the words apart from himself. But then it was George Muller who said it, with that holy blessed life of faith at the back of every word—I was like a child, sitting at a tutor's feet, to learn of him! I pray God to make you, my Brothers and Sisters, men and women of that sort! May He not only save you, but beautify you with salvation! May He not only make you penitent, but make you meek! May He not only take you to Heaven, but bring Heaven down to you and pour it into your soul that you may begin to enjoy the bliss of Heaven even while you are here below!

**III.** So I come to my last point, which is, THE GOOD RESULTS TO BE EXPECTED—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation. If you and I, by God's Grace and the power of His Spirit, become truly meek and are beautified with His salvation, this will be the result of it all.

First, *God will be glorified*. God was not glorified by you, Brother, when you made that fiery speech the other night. You were very zealous, I know, but you used some very strange language and God was not glorified by it. Sometimes, in a dispute, a person who does not know anything about the quarrel can tell which of the two is right by seeing which one controls his temper the better. Use hard arguments, Brother, hard arguments but *soft words*. And if you can get the two together, you will win the victory! If we are not meek, we do not adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. But if we are meek, then God is glorified.

Further than that, by our meekness *Christ is manifested*. When a man can bear provocation and does not utter an angry word, then those who are round about say within themselves, "That is the spirit of Christ." They cannot see Christ, Himself, for He has gone into Glory, but when they see the meek Believer, they say, one to another, "Surely that must be something like what Christ was when He was here below." God grant that you, dear Friends, may be living photographs of your Divine Lord!

I feel sure, too, that this meekness *makes a Christian attractive*. Your high and mighty man is not wanted in any company. Here is one who is wonderfully good in his own estimation—he is so holy that he cannot mix with his fellow men! You feel, when he comes into the room, "Here comes

the perfect man—let us get out of the way. He is so superlatively good that he will make some of us feel very bad before long, for we do not like holiness set in that kind of frame.” I know some people who seem as if they meant to make religion as objectionable as ever they could—and as if they had attained to a high degree of Christianity when they had made everybody dislike them—but it should not be so! O Brothers and Sisters, we must be meek and be beautified with salvation, for then we shall be able to attract others to Christ! If we want to draw them to Him, we must let them see how sweetly blessed is the Christian life and how a man can be sternly upright and yet, at the same time, be blessedly cheerful! How he can be dead against sin and yet full of holy love to the sinner—how he would not, to save his life, budge an inch from that which is right and true and yet would give his life away if, by blessing another, he might bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord beautify us thus with salvation and great good will come of it. May the Lord grant to some of you, who are not meek, but the very reverse, that you may come under the touch of His renewing Spirit and be born again! Then will you be capable of becoming truly meek—and then will God beautify you with His salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SURGEON:  
**PSALM 149; MATTHEW 5:1-12.**

**Psalm 149:1.** *Praise you the Lord.* This is a Hallelujah Psalm. It begins with, “Praise you the Lord,” and finishes in the same way. It is a complete circle of praise. The long streams of the Psalms end in glorious cascades of hallelujahs. One after another these jubilant notes roll out, as in Handel’s magnificent Hallelujah Chorus.

**1.** *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints.* There was an old song previous to this new one—in the 148<sup>th</sup> Psalm—the Psalm for sun and moon and stars, for deeps and dragons, for old men and maidens, and so on. But this is a Psalm for *saints*, so it is “a new song” for the new creation. Therefore, let all the new creatures of God sing it from their hearts!

**2.** *Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.* This is the best and highest form of creation—the making, not only of men, but of men of God, the making of Israels, the making of prevailing princes.

**2.** *Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.* Let them rejoice that their Maker reigns, that He rules over them, and that He rules over all things—“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

**3.** *Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.* That is, let them repeat the joy of Israel at the Red Sea, when Miriam “took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” So, O you children of God, let the praises of your God and King ring out as with the music of the timbrel and harp!

**4.** *For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.* Then, should not they take pleasure in Him? If He looks upon them with Divine delight, should not they look up to Him with adoring gratitude? What is there in us to give Him any pleasure? But if His delights are with the sons of men, surely the sons of men should have their delights in Him—“For the Lord takes pleasure in His people.”

**4, 5.** *He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory.* Let them glory in God and be joyful in Him. Let their spirits seem to rise even beyond Grace up to the anticipation of Glory—“Let the saints be joyful in glory.”

**5.** *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.* If they are sick, or if they lie awake at night, or if they have enjoyed sweet rest, let them not fail to praise God for it—“Let them sing aloud upon their beds.”

**6.** *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand.* But let it be a *spiritual* sword, that two-edged sword of God’s Word which will cut through coats of mail. And as they wield it, let them ever rest satisfied that victory shall surely be theirs. One of the poetical versions of this Psalm rightly renders this verse—

**“You saints of the Lord; as round Him you stand,  
His two-edged sword, His Word, in your hand,  
To sound His high praises your voices employ!  
To victory He raises, and crowns you with joy.”**

**7.** *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.* So they had to do in those old times. But we, happily, have not to do so, now, except it is in a *spiritual* sense that, with the sword of God’s Word we are to cut down the idols of the heathen and subdue the nations to our King.

**8.** *To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.* Reading the passage in a Gospel sense, we lead men captives in the bonds of love that are stronger than fetters of iron! O soldiers of Christ, army of the living God, this is the battle you have to fight—be this your victory, too!

**9.** *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise you the LORD.* So the Psalm ends upon its keynote—“Hallelujah.” “Praise you the Lord.” Now let us turn to the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew and see what we have to rejoice in there.

**Matthew 5:1.** *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him.* You notice that the Preacher sat down and that His disciples stood around Him. If you find it somewhat warm and trying, tonight, remember that you have the best of it, for you *sit* while the speaker stands! Concerning our Lord, we read, “When He was set, His disciples came unto Him.”—

**2.** *And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.*—Perhaps someone says, “He could not have taught them without opening His mouth!” I have found that a great many try to teach without opening their mouths, but the earnest preacher speaks with all his might. So did Jesus in the open air on the mountain side—“He opened His mouth and taught them.” Such grand things as He had to say ought to come from

open portals, so He mumbled not, but, “opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.”

**3.** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.* “Blessed.” See how Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount? He begins with benedictions! He is a cloud that is full of rain and that empties itself upon the earth. The moment you begin to know Christ, you begin to have blessings! And the more you know of Him, the more blessed you will be. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Not those who boast themselves of spiritual riches and personal goodness, but the lowly, the meek, the trembling, the humble, the poor in spirit, “for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

**4.** *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* Let them now be comforted in the prospect of future comfort. There are no mourning hearts that mourn over sin and mourn after God that shall be deserted by their God—“they shall be comforted.”

**5.** *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* They do in the truest sense enjoy even this life—their contented spirit makes them monarchs. The great man, with all his wealth, is often uneasy with a craving ambition for more, but the quiet spirits of God's people find a kingdom everywhere. The mountains and the valleys belong to him who can, with happy eyes, look upon them and then lift his face to Heaven and feel, “My Father made them all.”

**6.** *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.* They want to be better. They are hungry and thirsty after more holiness. They boast not of personal perfection, they are hungering and thirsting after *righteousness*, but they have not attained to it yet.

**6.** *For they shall be filled.* God will fill them and when He fills men with His fullness, they are full, indeed!

**7.** *Blessed are the merciful.* The forgiving, the generous, the kind. “Blessed are the merciful.”

**7, 8.** *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* There is such a connection between purity of heart and purity of understanding that the man whose eyes are clarified by holiness shall see God!

**9.** *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.* They shall not only be the children of God, but people shall *call* them by that name. There is something so God-like in trying to put away discord, to remove anger and to promote love that it makes men feel that peacemakers must be the children of God.

**10, 11.** *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.* It is not when men truthfully speak evil concerning you, but when they say it *falsely*. Not when they say evil against you because of your ill temper which provokes them, but when they do it *falsely*, for Christ's sake, then, “blessed are you.”

**12.** *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* And

you are treading in their steps, so you are entering into their heritage. You have your beginning with them and, 'you shall have your end with them. If persecuted with them, you shall also reign with them.

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

# HALLELUJAH! HALLELUJAH!

## NO. 2421

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 14, 1895.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1887.**

***“For the LORD takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands.”  
Psalm 149:4-6.***

I THINK I have read that, once, when the seraphic Samuel Rutherford was preaching, he came, before long, to speak on the high praises of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was a theme upon which he was at home, and when he reached that point, and had spoken a little upon it, the Duke of Argyle, who was in the congregation, cried out, “Now you are on the right strain, man; hold on to that!” I thought that, this morning, we, also, struck the right key. [See sermon #1968, Volume 38—*Jubilee Joy—Or, Believers Joyful in Their King*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] We were trying to extol our God, our King, and to magnify His holy name and something seemed to say to me, “Hold on to that strain! Let us have the same note, again, tonight, and let us continue to laud and praise and magnify the name of the Most High.”

So, without further preface, I remark, first, that our text contains *some reasons for praise*. We had a great many this morning, but here are some more—“For the Lord takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Then our text gives *special phases of praise*. It shows us how, in a peculiar manner, we may praise the Lord—“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands.” There is plenty of sea room for a preacher here, but as we have not much time, we will make for the nearest port and our words shall be as few as possible.

**I.** First, here are SOME REASONS FOR PRAISE.

The first of these reasons is *the delight of God in His people*—“The Lord takes pleasure in His people.” Therefore let us praise Him! It is delightful that God takes pleasure in us who are His people. We feel that this is a great stoop of condescending Grace. What is there in us in which the Lord can take pleasure? Nothing, unless He has put it there! If He sees any beauty in us, it must be the reflection of His own face. Yet, the text says so and, therefore, it must be true—“The Lord takes pleasure in His people.” In the 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm we read, “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him.” You who tremble at His Word, you who stand in awe of

Him, you who trust Him and seek to obey Him—you are those that fear Him and He takes pleasure in you! He that is infinitely blessed—can He take pleasure in us? He that has the harps of angels to make music for Him, He that has the host of cherubim and seraphim to be His attendants, He that can make a world with a wish—does He deign to take pleasure in *us*?

I am sure this is true, not only because it is stated, here, that the Lord takes pleasure in His people, but because we see this Truth of God in action! The Lord takes pleasure in His people's prayers. What poor imperfect things they are! Yet He opens His ear to hear them. He would sooner miss the song of a cherub than miss the prayer of a broken heart. He is charmed with the prayers of His people—they hold Him, they prevail with Him—He will do anything for those who know how to pray. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the world." He must take great delight in His people, or else He would not listen to their prayers! And He is pleased with their praises, too. There is never a hymn that is sung by a true heart but God accepts it. No one may hear it on earth—it may not be worth the hearing, for the sound may be discordant. But when a true heart seeks to praise God, He cares not for the vocal sounds—He has regard to the voice of the spirit's thanksgiving. Must He not take great pleasure in us to notice our praises and our prayers? Yet He does so.

This will be still clearer to us, dear Friends, if we remember that while He delights to hear us praise and pray, He also speaks to us. The Lord has a wonderful way of revealing Himself to His people. You who are spiritually blind can go through this world and never see Him, but there are others who have had their eyes opened and they have seen the King in His beauty! You who are spiritually deaf can go through the world and never hear His voice, but they whose ears have been unstopped have heard Him say to them, "Seek you My face," and many a blessed word of promise has He spoken home to their hearts, making them glad. Jehovah does not shut Himself up within His palaces. The Lord Jesus comes forth out of the ivory palaces wherein they make Him glad, for His delights are with the sons of men—and He loves to commune with His own people as He does not with the world! Does not this show what pleasure He must take in us—first to hear us speak, and then to speak to us, Himself?

Beloved, you who know the Lord must feel that He never would have dealt with you as He has done if He had not taken great pleasure in you. Why, you are His children! I saw just now, from the window, a man playing with a child, and he seemed so happy as he tossed the little one about. It was but a baby, but I suppose the charm to him was that it was his own, and it seemed to give the father great delight. When I see a father playing and toying, thus, with his child, and finding joy in his offspring, I understand, a little, how it is that the Lord takes pleasure in His people. Are we not born of Him? Has He not carried and nursed us many a day? And does He not daily feed and supply us with all necessary things? Therefore, we marvel not that He takes pleasure in us.

But why is this? Surely it is His own Grace that makes Him take pleasure in us. If you want a person to love you, be kind to him. Yet you

may fail even then. To be certain of his love, *let him be kind to you*. A child may forget the mother—it receives much from her—but gratitude does not always come to her in return. But the mother never forgets the child to whom she has given so much! What she has given is a firmer bond between her and the child than ever gratitude is from the child to the mother. Now, God has done so much for us, already, that this is why He continues to love us. Jesus remembers that He died for us, the Holy Spirit remembers that He strove with us, the great Father remembers how He has preserved us—and because of all this goodness in the past He takes pleasure in us—

***“With joy the Father does approve  
The fruit of His eternal love;  
The Son with joy looks down, and sees  
The purchase of His agonies.”***

Moreover, I think that the Lord takes pleasure in us not only because of all that He has done, but because He sees something in us that pleases Him, something which is His own work. A sculptor, when he commences on the marble, has only a rough block, but, after days and weeks of hard working, he begins to see something like the image he is aiming at producing. So I believe that God is pleased when He sees in any of us some Grace—some repentance, some faith, some beginnings of that sanctification—which will, one day, be perfect. You know how pleased you are with your children when they begin to talk, yet it is poor talk, is it not? It is baby talk, but you like to hear the sound of it! The first little sentiment that drops from the child’s lips is nothing very remarkable, yet you tell others and brothers and sisters quote it as an instance of opening intelligence! So does God take pleasure in the tears of penitence, in the broken confession, in the first evidences of faith, in the trembling of hope because He has worked all this and He is pleased with what He has done, pleased to see that, so far, His handiwork has been successful!

Besides, I believe that every true sculptor can see in the block of marble, the statue that he means to make. I doubt not that the artist could see the Laocoon of the Vatican after he had chipped for a little time, the figure of the serpent, and the father, and the sons all standing out in that wondrous group long before anybody else could see it. And the Lord takes pleasure in His people because He can see us as we shall be. “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” but it does appear to Him! In the cast of His mind and the shaping of His eternal purpose He knows, dear Sister, though you are now struggling with your fears, what you will be when you shall stand before the blazing lamps of the eternal Throne of God! He knows, young man, though you have but a few days turned from sin and begun to struggle with vice, what you will be, when, with all the blood-washed host, you shall cast your crown before His Throne! Yes, the Lord takes delight in His people as knowing what they are yet to be.

As I talk to you about God’s delight in His people, I feel as if I must take delight in Him. I think that if the Queen were to send for you all to come and see her, and if you went in and out of the palace, and she was very pleased with you all, and showed great affection for you, you would

be sure to have the same esteem for her. It would so completely win your hearts that you would not be able to help it—and you would not wish to do so. Now, the great King has made us His creatures, His favorites, yes, His sons and daughters! And He has said that we shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies and, therefore, we must praise Him. God forbid that we should be silent when we receive such love from Him! Praise Him! Praise Him, “for the Lord takes pleasure in His people.”

The next reason for praising God is found in *the beauty He puts upon His people*. The second part of this verse says, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Great kings and princes have often tried to magnify themselves by beautifying their courtiers. They that stand nearest to thrones are expected to be bedizened after an extraordinary rate. Well now, our King takes the meek and lowly and He beautifies them with salvation! They have no beauty of their own—they do not think themselves beautiful, they often mourn their own deformities and imperfections—but the Lord is to be praised because—“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

I find that, according to different interpreters, this text may be read in three different ways. First, as in our version, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Next, “He will beautify the afflicted with deliverance.” Hear that, you afflicted ones! Jot it down for your comfort. And, next, “He will beautify the meek with victory.” The men that cannot fight shall be beautified with victory! The men that *will not* fight, the men that resist not evil, the men that yield and suffer in patience—the Lord will beautify them with victory! When the fighting men and those that stood up for their own rights will find themselves covered with shame, “He will beautify the meek with victory.”

How does God beautify those who are meek? In the Scriptures you will find that the most beautiful persons were the meek persons. I remember only three people whose faces are said to have shone—you remember those three, do you not? There was, first, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose face shone when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration so that the people came running together to Him. How meek and lowly of heart was He! Another person whose face shone was Moses, when he came down from the mount of communion with God. Of him we read, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” The third man whose face shone was Stephen, when he stood before the council and, in the meekest manner pleaded for his Lord and Master. If your face is to shine, dear Friend, you must get rid of a high and haughty spirit—you must be *meek*—for the brightness of the Divine Light will never rest on the forehead that flashes with anger. Be gentle, quiet, yielding, like your Lord, and He will then beautify you.

Meekness is, itself, a beauty. We read of “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” There is many a Christian woman who has been all but divinely beautiful in her gentleness, bearing all sorts of provocation’s, going about her domestic duties with great quietude. I am sure that I have known one or two good old Quaker ladies who looked to me as nearly like angels as ever mortals could be. There was about them a quietude of

manner, a gentleness, a sort of unworldliness or unearthliness of beauty, though they wore no jewels and were decorated with no adornments that might have commended them to the taste of fashionable folk. The Lord gives great beauty to His people who are very quiet and submissive. If you can bear and forbear—if you will not be provoked to speak a hasty word—that meekness of yours is, itself, a beauty!

Beside that, God beautifies meek people with peace. They have not to go and beg pardon and make up quarrels, as others have, for they have had no quarrel. They have not to think at night, “I really said what I ought not to have said,” for they have not done so. There is a great beauty about the peace that comes of meekness!

Another beauty which God puts on the meek is contentment. They that are of a quiet and gentle spirit through the Grace of God are satisfied with their lot. They thank God for little—they are of the mind of the godly woman who ate the crust of bread and drank a little water, and said—“What? All this, and Jesus Christ, too?” There is a great charm about contentment, while envy and greed are ugly things in the eyes of those who have anything like spiritual perception. So meekness, through bringing contentment, beautifies us.

Out of meekness also comes holiness—and who has not heard of “the beauty of holiness”? When one is made to subdue his temper and curb his will, and yield his mind sweetly up to Christ, then obedience to God’s will follows and the whole life becomes lovely! Let us praise the Lord that ever He put any beauty upon any of us. And let us bless God for the holiness of His people whenever we see it. It is a pity that there should be so little of it, but what a comfort it is that the Lord has some among His people who are of a meek and gentle spirit, whom He beautifies with salvation!

Here I cannot help breaking away from my subject to tell you what happened to me this morning after the service was over. When I went into the vestry, there was a number of American friends and others waiting to shake hands with me. I was glad to shake hands with them. But there was one person present who did me more good than all the other Brothers and Sisters put together. He was a father and he said to me, “If my emotions will permit me, I would like to tell you something that is on my heart. I feel that I must tell it to you.” This friend came from a distant city. He continued, “My son left my house well clothed and well stored with money, but for a long, long while I never heard from him. He plunged into all kinds of sin till he reduced himself, by disease, to beggary and want. He had not even shoes for his feet.”

As he passed by the front of the Tabernacle—(you young people, here, listen to this story and take home the lesson of it)—all in rags, on a Sunday afternoon, a young man asked him to come into one of the classes here and gave him a tract. He uttered an oath, threw the tract on the pavement, and trampled on it. After a few seconds, some sort of compunction seized him and he turned back and picked up the tract, whereupon this young Brother, quick and alert—(as I hope you young men and women always will be in looking after poor sinners)—spoke to him and

said, "Oh, you have picked it up. Now will you read it?" "Yes," he answered, "I will read it."

The young man then said, "Come into our class," but the poor fellow replied, "Look at me." "Yes," he said, "but we will not look at you if you will come in. They will all be glad to see you. Perhaps it may be a turn in your life." The young man did go into the class and he came in the evening to hear the sermon. They put him somewhere where people would not stare at him, and God blessed Him! He sought out some friends in London who, at first, could not believe that he was the son of this person. They had seen him, before, in better days, so they questioned him and they found that he knew so much about the father that they said, "Yes, no doubt you are his son." His feet were bleeding and he, himself, was sick, so they cared for him, clothed him and he came in and out of this House of Prayer, his father told me, for many months serving God. His father saw him and rejoiced over him!

Now this story was told, with many tears, in the vestry behind me—told as I cannot tell it—and the good man invoked every blessing on me and upon that young Brother, whoever he may be, that brought his son in. "And then, Sir," said the father, "He could not find any work to do so he enlisted in the army, and was killed at Tel-el-Kebir." He left in his knapsack a letter to his father to say that he died in perfect peace, and that he had found the Savior at the Tabernacle. Our friend was so glad and I could not help telling this story because that Brother outside, I hope, was one of the meek ones, and God has beautified him by bringing that soul to Christ! And we who try to preach very plainly and never aim at adorning our discourses with the flowers of eloquence, but try to talk to people from our hearts—may God give us great beauty in the eyes of many when we bring their children or themselves to the Savior's feet! I only wish that somebody, like that young man, might be converted, by the Grace of God, through this sermon.

I think that I have said enough upon those reasons for praise. Let us praise God with all our hearts and bless and magnify His name because He takes pleasure in His people, and because He beautifies the meek with salvation and, sometimes, does it by making them the means of salvation to others!

**II.** The second portion of my sermon, which is to be concerning SPECIAL PHASES OF PRAISE, shall be delivered with great brevity.

The first way of praising the Lord is by *glorifying in God*—"Let the saints be joyful in glory." "That means the saints in Heaven, does it not?" asks somebody. No, no, no! The Psalmist is not writing for *them*, he is writing for us! "Well, but we are not in Glory," says one. I do not know. I think that we are. First, we are in Glory by contrast. Look, dear Friends, a little while ago we were in sin and we were condemned under sin, but now we are delivered, we are absolved from guilt! Surely that is like being in Glory! A little while ago we were cast down and troubled—and had not a ray of hope. Now we have rest in Christ and perfect peace. Is not that like being in Glory? Why, years back, when I had been preaching in Wales, I heard a Welshman cry out, "Gogoniant!" and others have shouted,

“Glory,” and I thought it was all right. There is enough to make the saints cry, “Glory!” to think that they have been redeemed from death and Hell, and that their feet have been taken out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set upon a rock and their goings established! Why, truly, it is like being in Heaven, or Glory! Therefore, “let the saints be joyful in glory.”

Next, as we are in Glory by contrast, so we are in Glory by *anticipation*. What will Glory be? It will be a peace with God, but we already have that. Glory will be rest and we also have that. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” Glory will be communion with God and we have that, too. “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Glory will be victory and we have that. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith.” “But,” asks one, “you do not mean to say that we have Heaven already?” Yes, I do. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” Are not those the Words of Scripture? Here is another Word of Scripture—“God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” By anticipation and by foretaste we have already obtained life eternal—therefore, “let the saints be joyful in glory.” Rightly do we sing—

***“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below.  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.  
The hill of Sion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets!  
Then let our songs abound,  
And every tear be dry—  
We’re marching thro’  
Immanuel’s ground  
To fairer worlds on high!”***

“I cannot get up to that,” says one. Try, dear Brother, try! At any rate, get as far as this—wherever there is Grace there will be Glory. Grace is the egg and glory is the hatching of it. Grace is the seed and glory is the plant that comes out of it. Having the egg and the seed, we have practically and virtually the Glory! Therefore, I say, again, with the Psalmist, “Let the saints be joyful in glory.”

The next special kind of praise is joy in special circumstances—“Let them sing aloud upon their beds.” This is a message for the time of sickness. Praise the Lord when you are ill! Sing to His Glory when you cannot sleep! Sing when the head aches, for that is the highest kind of praise that comes out of the body that is racked with pain! “Let them sing aloud upon their beds.” There are, sometimes, infirmities of the body that seem to quicken the soul. There are aches and pains that make us more fresh and vigorous of heart. But there are others that paralyze the mind and, reaching the very core of one’s being, seem to freeze up every spring of activity. It is little wonder that under such infirmities the brave heart grows faint! And it is especially so when there is mental affliction added to the physical pain. I have known men of God, highly favored, and Sisters in like condition, who have walked in the Light as God is in

the light, and have had great blessing from Him and, by-and-by, they have had strong inward temptation, an awful fight within, till sometimes they have had to cry out in their very souls to know whether they were with God, or God was with them at all! Doubts have insinuated themselves into the mind and there have been grave and solemn questions about matters most vital and important. And, at such times the man of God, though he still believes in his God and is obedient to the Divine will, yet feels a chill creeping over his very soul and he is ready to faint! Then is the time for him to sing aloud upon his bed, for praise to God under such circumstances will be especially acceptable!

Your bed? Why, that is the place of seclusion! There you are alone. Have you ever felt so happy that you did not want to sleep? I have sometimes had such joy in the night that I have tried to keep myself from falling asleep lest I should miss the hallowed fellowship which my heart has had with God! Commune with God upon your beds and sing His praises, if not aloud with the voice, yet aloud with the heart!

Upon your bed? Why, that is the place of domestic gathering, for the bed here meant is a couch on which the Orientals reclined when they *ate*. Sing the Lord's praises on your couches—that is, when you gather with your families. "Praise you the Lord: sing aloud upon your couches." I wish we had more family singing—we ought to have more. Matthew Henry says, with regard to family prayer, "They that pray every night and morning do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray and read the scriptures and sing, do best of all." And so say I—that is the best of all family worship! Let us take care, in our domestic relationships, that we praise this blessed God who is the God of our households as well as the God of our sanctuaries!

Upon their beds? Why, that means the bed of death! We shall soon go upstairs and gather up our feet in the bed. Oh, then, you dear children of God, praise Him aloud upon your beds! I believe that the sweetest praises ever heard on earth have come from lips that were just closing in the silence of the tomb—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,  
And praise You as long as You lend me breathe.  
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,  
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Always praise Him! Always praise Him! When nobody hears you, in the silence of your bedchamber, still sing aloud unto your God!

We must press on, though we have not time for much that ought to be said. The next special phase of praise is elevation in song. The sixth verse says, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth." As I told you when I read the Psalm, [Exposition at the end of the sermon—ED.] it is "in their throat" in the Hebrew, for God's people sing from their hearts and so they are a deep-throated people who do not merely sibilate praise with the lips, but send it up from the depths of their soul!

What does the Psalmist say? "Let the high praises of God be in their throats." Our praises ought to be very high praises, for there is a high objective before us. We praise a great God! We should, therefore, praise Him with high feelings, feelings wound up to the highest point of high de-

light and high desire! Our praises should climb up to Heaven's gate—running up Jacob's ladder even as the angels did—till we cast our praises right at the foot of the eternal Throne of God. Let us sound forth the high praises of God with our mouths! Let us extol Him, magnify Him and make Him great! Say noble things of God wherever you go, for He well deserves it at your hands.

The last phase of praise concerns *courage in conflict*—"and a two-edged sword in their hands." Songs in their mouths and swords in their hands! It is something like the sword and the trowel—the trowel to build with and the sword to smite with. God's people must sing and fight at the same time—and they fight best who sing best. Not those that *growl* best, but those that *sing* best, fight best

But with whom are we to fight? That depends upon what your sword is. If you had a sword of steel, you would fight with men—but that is no part of your business. You are not called to that cruel work, but, as you have the sword of the Spirit, which is two-edged, which is, indeed, *all* edge, for it cuts whichever way you turn it, go forth and praise God by the use of that two-edged sword which is the Word of God!

Let me stir up God's people here to do this. Go and proclaim the Gospel! Proclaim the Gospel. I think I have, to a large extent, attained my wish in this congregation. I miss such a large number of our friends on Sunday nights and I am delighted to miss them, for they have no business to be here, then! They are out preaching, teaching, working in Ragged-Schools, mission halls and all sorts of holy service. That is what you ought to do if you love the Lord—get a good meal, once, on the Sabbath, and then go and do a good day's work the rest of the Sunday! Praise God with your mouths and have the two-edged sword in your hands! To war against ignorance, to war against vice, to war against drunkenness, to war against infidelity and sin of every kind is one of the best ways of praising the Most High! Until the last sinner is saved, see to it that you keep the two-edged sword of God's Word in your hands and then forever let the high praises of God be in your mouth!

I have been talking all this while about praising God and there are some here who never praised Him in all their lives! What wretched creatures you are! God has been blessing you all this while and you have never praised Him. I have seen hogs under an oak munching acorns—how they enjoy themselves! They never stop to thank the oak—such a thought never enters into their swinish heads. Do not blame the swine, but think of the numbers of men who are worse than they are! God is to them far more than the oak is to the animals. All things come of Him—their health, their strength, their daily comforts—and yet they never thank Him! Have you some little chickens at home? Let them chide you! Whenever the chick stoops down to the saucer to drink a little water, up goes its head as if to thank God for every drop! Oh, begin to praise God! Begin to thank God at once!

Perhaps this may be the beginning of something better, for when you have begun to praise Him, you may begin to dispraise yourself—and that is next door to feeling your sinfulness, which will lead you to seek the

Savior! And if you seek Him, He will be found of you. Seek Him now, this summer's night, while all God's bounty is being poured upon the earth to make it fertile! Oh, that He might pour some heavenly beams on you to make you fruitful to His praise! May He do it and to His name shall be glory, world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALMS 149; 150.**

The whole Book of Psalms is full of praise, but the praise culminates at the close. There are five "Hallelujah Psalms" at the end of the Book. They are so named because they both begin and conclude with the word, *Hallelujah*, "Praise you the Lord." It must be to the intense regret of all reverent persons to find the word, Hallelujah, so used today in such a way that it is made to be a commonplace instead of a very sacred word—Hallelujah, or, Praise be unto Jah, Jehovah! He who uses this word in a flippant manner is guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain!

**Psalm 149:1.** *Praise you the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song.* You have had new mercies from the Lord—give Him, in return, a new song! You have a new apprehension of His mercy. You who live under this Gospel dispensation have something more to sing of than even David experienced! Therefore, "sing unto Jehovah a new song"—throw your hearts into it! Do not let it be a matter of routine, but let your whole soul, in all its vigor and freshness, address itself to the praise of God!

**1.** *And His praise in the congregation of saints.* All saints praise God—they are not saints if they do not. The praise of any one saint is sweet to Him, but in the congregation of saints there is a linked sweetness, a wonderful commixture of precious things. Sing His praise, then, in the congregation of His holy ones.

**2.** *Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.* Adore your Creator for your being and for your well-being. He has twice made you, you people of God! Give Him, therefore, double praise—not only the song of those who sang when creation's work was done, but the praise of those who sing because they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus!

**2, 3.** *Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance.* The holy dance of those days differed altogether from the frivolous and lascivious dances of the present time. It was a sacred exercise in which the whole body expressed its delight before God.

**3.** *Let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.* The one to be struck and the other to be gently touched to yield its stringed sweetness.

**4.** *For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.* Should not *they* take pleasure in the condescension on His part to take any pleasure in them? Oh, what a lift up it is for us when we learn to take pleasure in the Lord!

**4.** *He will beautify the meek with salvation.* He dresses all His children, but the meek are His Josephs, and upon them He puts the coat of many colors. And they shall inherit the earth.

**5.** *Let the saints be joyful in glory.* God is their glory! Let them be joyful in Him.

**5.** *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.* If they cannot come up to the congregation, yet, when they rest at home, or when they *suffer* at home, let them not cease from their music. God's praise comes up sweetly, I do not doubt, this Sabbath evening, from many a lonely chamber where the saints are waiting for the appearing of their Lord.

**6.** *Let the high praises of God be in their mouths.* "In their throats," says the Hebrew, for God's saints sing deep down in their throats. There is a deeply rooted music when we praise God, which is altogether unlike the mere syllables of the lips that come from a hypocrite's tongue.

**6.** *And a two-edged sword in their hands.* For we have to fight, today, with principalities, and powers, and wickednesses everywhere! With the sword of the Spirit in our hands, we fight the battles of the Prince of Peace!

**7, 8.** *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.* So was it when Israel came into Canaan, ordained to execute the vengeance of God upon the heathen nations. We have no such warrant and no such painful duty—but there is a prince who shall be bound with chains and with fetters of iron one day. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly and, meanwhile, we fight against the powers of evil of every kind. Oh, that God would help us to bind King Drunkenness with chains and King Infidelity with fetters of iron! Would God the day were come when impurity, which defiles so many, were overcome and vanquished by the two-edged sword of the Spirit of God!

**9.** *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints.* Or it may be read, "He is the honor of all His saints." "Unto you that believe He is precious," or, "He is an honor," says the Apostle, and there is no honor like that which comes of being coupled with God, living in Him, and living for Him!

**9.** *Praise you the LORD.* What bursts of praise must have risen from the hosts of Israel when they gathered for their annual festivals and sang together these last great Hallelujah Psalms!

**Psalm 150:1.** *Praise you the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary.* Notice how, in this last Psalm, it is praise, praise, praise, all the way through! I think we have the word, "praise," some 13 times in the six verses. It is all. "praise Him, praise Him, praise Him." It is not enough to do it once, or twice, we should keep on praising the Lord till we should make the very heavens ring with the music of His praises! "Praise you the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary." That is, in His Holy Place where He dwells. Begin, you angels, cherubim and seraphim—pour forth His praise!

**1.** *Praise Him in the firmament of His power.* Let every star shine forth His praises, and sun and moon cease not to extol Him—"Praise Him in the firmament of His power."

**2.** *Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness.* There is a task for us—we shall never attain to that height. We sometimes sing—

***“Wide as His vast dominion lies,  
Make the Creator’s name be known!  
Loud as His thunder shout His praise,  
And sound it lofty as His Throne.”***

But who can compass such a feat as that?

**3, 4.** *Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.* So that there were all kinds of music in those days praising God—the wind and the stringed instruments, the timbrel and the pipe. Everything that can praise God should praise Him. The spiritual significance of these verses is this—let men of different orders and different sorts praise the Lord—men, women, children, those who are deeply taught and those who know but little, those who are great and those who are small. Let every heart regard itself as an instrument of praise and use itself wholly for the Lord’s praise. Having gotten so far, the Psalmist remembered that there were discs of brass, which were struck together, and gave forth a sound to be heard at a great distance, so He said—

**5.** *Praise Him upon the loud cymbals.* Crash!

**5.** *Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.* Then came another crash!

**6.** *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise you the LORD.* A Jewish Rabbi once remarked to me that the name, Jehovah, was not made up of letters, but only of a series of breaths. [The preacher here uttered the three syllables of the sacred name, Je-ho-vah, as though they were not composed of letters, but only a succession of breaths.] That is the nearest approach to the name of God, three breaths—therefore since all breath comes from Him—and His very name can only be pronounced by breath, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord.” Hallelujah!

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